

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

July, 2014

It's summer, so let's have some fun - a contest, a joke, and dueling poets. We take a national-holiday look at America's politics, ignorance and religious fog, consider the left's McCarthyism and expose their secret plan to breed more Democrats. We examine the Founders' intent on guns, and offer you the ugliest gun-crazed quote ever. We explain humanist ethics and the necessity of atheism, and take a prisoner's-eye look at prisons. But first, we do something we didn't want to do. – JR

A HUMANIST VISITS THE 9/11 MEMORIAL MUSEUM John Rafferty

(Reprinted from *TheHumanist.com*, 10 June 2014)

Let's start with a conclusion: the 9/11 Memorial Museum, the displays and artifacts it houses, and the memorial park in which it is all situated, are a spectacular success.

Like many New Yorkers of my humanist-liberal stripe, I had no intention of ever visiting the park, let alone paying admission to the museum. After more than twelve years of 9/11-related pompous piety and political posturing, proposed designs both grandiose and unworkable, petty bureaucratic turf wars, and the endless tooth-and-nail squabbling by dozens of interest groups with both real and imagined claims on our collective memory of what we all now simply call "9/11" – which conservative columnist Peggy Noonan called "the narcissism of small differences" – I had no interest in visiting what I thought would be a shrine to more of the same.

Wrong. It's a beaut. It works. And I'm glad *TheHumanist.com* asked me to take a humanist look.

It's 8:45 on a Saturday morning, and after staring into the park's beautiful sunken fountains for a few minutes, I turn the corner around the blank steel outer walls of the museum and see somewhere between 200 and 300 people in line at the entrance, all clutching the same e-ticket I have for the 9:00 am opening. But the line moves swiftly even as it grows longer behind me, and in a few minutes I step from bright spring sunshine into a gray cavern.

If "cavern" suggests vast space to you, then I have chosen the right word. The outside dimensions of the museum belie the enormous volume of its interior. This is an underground museum – seven stories down to the

very foundations of the original twin towers. And in spite of literally thousands of displays and artifacts within it, a visitor feels a deep-in-the-earth emptiness, emphasized by subdued lighting and a gathering grayness as we descend.

The first display in which humanists may be interested is the Virgil quote: *No day shall erase you from the memory of time*, pronounced on a middle level in a 60-foot long inscription of 15-inch letters cut from steel of the towers. Someone must have thought it was a classy quote with which to memorialize the 9/11 victims, but the "you" Virgil was writing about in the *Aeneid* was a pair of murderous Trojan warriors (gay lovers, by the way) who had just hacked to death sleeping Rutulian soldiers, and then been killed themselves. The incongruity has been pointed out many times, but the inscription stands.

"SEPTEMBER 11, 2001" is the simple title of the main exhibition that threads through the lowest, foundational level of what *New York Times* art critic Edward Rothstein called "a museum of experience". And it is an experience like no other I have had. Divided into Before, During and After sections, and starting with the "We have a report ..." interruption of NBC's *Today* show, it presents the events of that awful day and its aftermath in TV clips, photos, short looped videos, and seemingly countless artifacts. (If you walk more hurriedly than I did, you'd miss the footage, behind a blank wall, of people jumping from the towers.)

But most moving of all are recordings made by survivors – and poignant phone calls from the soon-to-be-dead – that are matched to minute-by-minute explanatory schematics of the towers, of the Pentagon, and of Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania. There is a reason there are tissue dispensers wherever one of the dozen or more different two- to eight-minute "shows" are projected.

"Islamist extremist group." "Islamist terrorists." The Museum does not pull punches in describing exactly who

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Individual membership \$40 per year; Family membership \$65; Subscription only: \$30.

Articles published in PIQUE are archived in www.shsny.org. They may be reprinted, in full or in part, in other newsletters. SHSNY is an Affiliated Local Group of the Council for Secular Humanism, a Charter Chapter of the American Humanist Association, and an Affiliate Member of Atheist Alliance International.

committed the atrocities, and why, in either its literature or in “The Rise of Al-Qaeda,” an eight-minute film narrated by Brian Williams on the Afghanistan/Osama bin Laden/“Islamist extremist” lead-up to 9/11. There have been many *Islamophobia!* complaints about that, but not from this observer.

The infamous “Miracle Cross” is in the After section and, in spite of my worst anti-theist, humanist imaginings, I’m okay with what the museum has done. It’s not treated as a “miracle” nor given any special place or attention. It stands in a small grouping of artifacts that the exhibit card said gave some workers “spiritual solace”. Let’s face it: the damned thing *is* part of the 9/11 story. It *was* dragged out of the wreckage by construction workers, who *did* make a big deal of it (as did professional theists with agendas) and it *was* part of the media circus for a long while. But the museum treats it as just one more artifact among many. You really could walk by it without noticing it, and while I stood there at least 10 minutes taking notes, I did not see any special attention being paid to it.

Now on to the museum store. Much has been made by the easily offended about the appropriateness of selling knick-knacks on “hallowed ground”. Hello? This is America—we sell stuff. So yes, \$20 plush dogs and teddy bears; \$13 book marks; NYPD and Fire Department t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies and badges; jewelry, charms and chachkas from \$3 to \$65; \$20 commemorative mugs (as Sarah Silverman said on *Real Time with Bill Maher*, “How could you remember 9/11 without a mug?”) and loads of “I Love NY More Than Ever” crap for tourists who wouldn’t live here on a bet. This is all on top of a \$24 admission price (\$18 for seniors like me, and Tuesday evenings are free). Why? Because Congress, New York State and New York City, in their collective wisdom, appropriated zero dollars to cover any of the museum’s \$63 million annual operating budget. And I saw no religious references in or on any of the materials. Let’s just get over it.

None of the gift shop offerings tempted me, so I headed for the escalator to leave and mused again on the silence after the subdued conversations in the store. Wait, not quite silent ... what’s that canned music? Of course: “Amazing Grace”. Ah, what the hell—one more small offense to humanist sensibility, and I guess it could have been worse (Barbra Streisand’s “You’ll Never Walk Alone”? Tom Jones’ “I Believe”?).

Sunshine, finally, was never more welcome. The 9/11 Memorial Museum is exceptional and successful—not one to like, but one to respect. Visit once—but only once.

E PLURIBUS UNUM

Paul Krugman

(From The New York Times OpEd page, 7/4/2013)

It’s that time of year — the long weekend when we gather with friends and family to celebrate hot dogs, potato salad and, yes, the founding of our nation. And it’s also a time for some of us to wax a bit philosophical, to wonder what, exactly, we’re celebrating. Is America in 2013,

in any meaningful sense, the same country that declared independence in 1776?

The answer, I’d suggest, is yes. Despite everything, there is a thread of continuity in our national identity — reflected in institutions, ideas and, especially, in attitude — that remains unbroken. Above all, we are still, at root, a nation that believes in democracy, even if we don’t always act on that belief.

And that’s a remarkable thing when you bear in mind just how much the country has changed. America in 1776 was a rural land, mainly composed of small farmers and, in the South, somewhat bigger farmers with slaves. And the free population consisted of, well, WASPs: almost all came from northwestern Europe, 65 percent came from Britain, and 98 percent were Protestants.

America today is nothing like that, even though some politicians — think Sarah Palin — like to talk as if the “real America” is still white, Protestant, and rural or small-town.

But the real America is, in fact, a nation of metropolitan areas, not small towns. Tellingly, even when Ms. Palin made her infamous remarks in 2008 she did so in Greensboro, N.C., which may not be in the Northeast Corridor but — with a metropolitan population of more than 700,000 — is hardly Mayberry. In fact, two-thirds of Americans live in metro areas with half-a-million or more residents.

Nor, by the way, are most of us living in leafy suburbs. America as a whole has only 87 people per square mile, but the average American, according to the Census Bureau, lives in a census tract with more than 5,000 people per square mile. For all the bashing of the Northeast Corridor as being somehow un-American, this means that the typical American lives in an environment that resembles greater Boston or greater Philadelphia more than it resembles Greensboro, let alone true small towns.

What do we do in these dense metropolitan areas? Almost none of us are farmers; few of us hunt; by and large, we sit in cubicles on weekdays and visit shopping malls on our days off.

And ethnically we are, of course, very different from the founders. Only a minority of today’s Americans are descended from the WASPs and slaves of 1776. The rest are the descendants of successive waves of immigration: first from Ireland and Germany, then from Southern and Eastern Europe, now from Latin America and Asia. We’re no longer an Anglo-Saxon nation; we’re only around half-Protestant, and we’re increasingly nonwhite.

Yet I would maintain that we are still the same country that declared independence all those years ago.

It’s not just that we have maintained continuity of legal government, although that’s not a small thing. The current government of France is, strictly speaking, the Fifth Republic, we had our anti-monarchical revolution first, yet we’re still on Republic No. 1, which actually makes our government one of the oldest in the world.

More important, however, is the enduring hold on our nation of the democratic ideal, the notion that “all men are created equal” — all men, not just men from certain ethnic

groups or from aristocratic families. And to this day – or so it seems to me, and I’ve done a lot of traveling in my time – America remains uniquely democratic in its mannerisms, in the way people from different classes interact.

Of course, our democratic ideal has always been accompanied by enormous hypocrisy, starting with the many founding fathers who espoused the rights of man, then went back to enjoying the fruits of slave labor. Today’s America is a place where everyone claims to support equality of opportunity, yet we are, objectively, the most class-ridden nation in the Western world – the country where children of the wealthy are most likely to inherit their parents’ status. It’s also a place where everyone celebrates the right to vote, yet many politicians work hard to disenfranchise the poor and nonwhite.

But that very hypocrisy is, in a way, a good sign. The wealthy may defend their privileges, but given the temper of America, they have to pretend that they’re doing no such thing. The block-the-vote people know what they’re doing, but they also know that they mustn’t say it in so many words. In effect, both groups know that the nation will view them as un-American unless they pay at least lip service to democratic ideals – and in that fact lies the hope of redemption.

So, yes, we are still, in a deep sense, the nation that declared independence and, more important, declared that all men have rights. Let’s all raise our hot dogs in salute.

UNITED IN WHAT? STUPIDITY?

CJ Werleman

(Excerpted from “The shocking numbers: Americans are dangerously ignorant on politics”, on Alternet, 6/18/2014)

The health of a democracy is dependent on an educated citizenry. Political illiteracy is the manure for the flourishing of political appeals based on sheer ignorance. ...

[N]o less than 200 million Americans, according to a number of polls ... believe the U.S. Constitution and our laws are based on Judeo-Christian values. On any given Sunday you will hear Christian-right politicians claim absurdly that U.S. laws are based on the Bible. Spoiler alert: they’re dead wrong. The Constitution’s secular provisions came into being thanks to the Founding Fathers, who shared a deep suspicion of both organized religion and the supernatural. The Constitution was framed with a conscious omission of any mention of God and a prohibition of all religious tests for public office. Moreover, the First Amendment’s declaration that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” embodied the founders’ view that religion has no place in the political domain.

That not a single major media outlet [bothers to correct our political] ignorance represents America’s continual decline in American civic and cultural literacy.

“Every shortcoming of American governance is related in some fashion to the knowledge deficit of the public – if only because there is no widespread indignation at policies

shaped by elected officials who suffer from the same intellectual blind spots as their constituents,” observed Susan Jacoby, author of *The Age of American Unreason*.

The nation’s collective ignorance as it pertains to cultural and civic literacy paves the way for extremist politicians to convince the public of the validity of extreme positions.

So how bad is America’s political literacy?

A 2007 National Constitutional Center poll found that two-thirds of Americans couldn’t name all three branches of the U.S. federal government, nor a single Supreme Court justice. Another poll found that 91 percent couldn’t name the current Chief Justice, which is staggering considering the number of high profile, politically polarizing cases deliberated upon by the nation’s highest court in recent years – including the rulings on the Affordable Care Act, same-sex marriage and campaign finance laws.

It gets worse. When respondents were asked whether they could recall any of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, a majority could name only free speech. More than a third were unable to list any First Amendment rights. The National Constitution Center also found that 42 percent of Americans think the Constitution explicitly states that “the first language of the United States is English;” and 25 percent believe Christianity was established in the Constitution as the official government religion.

Only 40 percent of adults know that there are 100 Senators in the U.S. Congress, while a great majority of Americans have no idea of when or by whom the Constitution was written. A 2010 Pew Research Center survey of Americans’ knowledge of public affairs and politics revealed that political literacy has been in rapid and continual descent since high water mark of the 1950s. ...

This rising tide of ignorance threatens the very foundation of American democracy. Bertolt Brecht, the 20th century German playwright and poet, wrote,

“The worst illiterate is the political illiterate; he doesn’t hear, doesn’t speak, nor participates in the political events. He doesn’t know the cost of life, the price of the bean, of the fish, of the flour, of the rent, of the shoes and of the medicine, all depends on political decisions. The political illiterate is so stupid that he is proud and swells his chest saying that he hates politics. The imbecile doesn’t know that, from his political ignorance is born the prostitute, the abandoned child, and the worst thieves of all, the bad politician, corrupted and flunky of the national and multinational companies.”

Brecht nails it! Political illiteracy is what propels middle class workers to protest the expansion of collective bargaining laws, [as] happened recently in Tennessee when Volkswagen allowed its workers to vote for union membership by holding placards sponsored by Americans For Prosperity ... [whose] sole purpose is to ensure the continued prosperity of David and Charles Koch, which ultimately comes at the expense of the same middle class workers holding Americans For Prosperity placards.

An embrace of infantile emotionalism has supplanted

political literacy. Henry Giroux, author of *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*, writes:

It [infantile emotionalism] is perfectly suited for emptying the language of public life of all substantive content, reduced in the end to a playground for hawked commodities, promoting celebrity culture and enacting the spectacle of right-wing fantasies fueled by the fear that the public sphere as an exclusive club for white male Christians is in danger of collapsing. For some critics, those who carry guns to rallies or claim Obama is a Muslim and not a bona fide citizen of the United States are simply representative of an extremist fringe, that gets far more publicity from the mainstream media than they deserve. Of course this is understandable, given that the media's desire for balance and objective news is not just disingenuous but relinquishes any sense of ethical responsibility by failing to make a distinction between an informed argument and an unsubstantiated opinion.

There are a great number of reasons for the decline in American political literacy. One that cannot be overlooked is the absence of national standards, which is why American children know so much less about their history than European children know about [their] history. Another is the collapse of journalistic standards. Giroux writes:

"The United States is a country that is increasingly defined by a civic deficit, a chronic and deadly form of civic illiteracy that points to the failure of both its educational system and the growing ability of anti-democratic forces to use the educational force of the culture to promote the new illiteracy. As this widespread illiteracy has come to dominate American culture, we have moved from a culture of questioning to a culture of shouting and ... have restaged politics and power in both unproductive and anti-democratic ways."

In other words, when Republicans say there is no such thing as gravity, and Democrats reply that gravity is real, CNN and the like say, "Look, Democrats and Republicans are fighting again," which not only exacerbates the nation's anti-intellectualism and anti-rationalism, but also increases the likelihood of extremist views and falsehoods taking hold in the national electorate.

THIS IS NOT IGNORANCE, THIS IS MENDACITY

Dennis Middlebrooks

S.E. Cupp, alleged atheist and conservative CNN news analyst, commented May 27 on an atheist protest over a Christian crucifix on public land in California: "The separation of church and state was not intended to keep religion out of government, but only to protect religion from government interference."

Van Jones, Cupp's co-host and a supposed "liberal Democrat", added, "Amen to that!"

Comment: Glamourpuss Cupp - who knows better - would have us dunces believe that the Founders who added the First Amendment to the Constitution were not aware of 200 years of European bloodshed over religion in government. - JR

WHAT DID THE FRAMERS REALLY MEAN?

Joe Nocera

(From The New York Times OpEd page, 5/26/2014)

Three days after the publication of Michael Waldman's new book, *The Second Amendment: A Biography*, Elliot Rodger, 22, went on a killing spree, stabbing three people and then shooting another eight, killing four of them, including himself. This was only the latest mass shooting in recent memory, going back to Columbine.

In his rigorous, scholarly, but accessible book, Waldman notes such horrific events but doesn't dwell on them. He is after something else. He wants to understand how it came to be that the Second Amendment, long assumed to mean one thing, has come to mean something else entirely. To put it another way: Why are we, as a society, willing to put up with mass shootings as the price we must pay for the right to carry a gun?

The Second Amendment begins, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State ..." and that's where Waldman, the president of the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, begins, too. He has gone back into the framers' original arguments and made two essential discoveries, one surprising and the other not surprising at all.

The surprising discovery is that of all the amendments that comprise the Bill of Rights, the Second was probably the least debated. What we know is that the founders were deeply opposed to a standing army, which they viewed as the first step toward tyranny. Instead, their assumption was that the male citizenry would all belong to local militias. As Waldman writes, "They were not allowed to have a musket; they were required to. More than a right, being armed was a duty."

Thus the unsurprising discovery: Virtually every reference to "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms" — the second part of the Second Amendment — was in reference to military defense. Waldman notes the House debate over the Second Amendment in the summer of 1789: "Twelve congressmen joined the debate. None mentioned a private right to bear arms for self-defense, hunting or for any purpose other than joining the militia."

In time, of course, the militia idea died out, replaced by a professionalized armed service. Most gun regulation took place at the state and city level. The judiciary mostly stayed out of the way. In 1939, the Supreme Court upheld the nation's first national gun law, the National Firearms Act, which put onerous limits on sawed-off shotguns and machine guns — precisely because the guns had no "reasonable relation" to "a well-regulated militia".

But then, in 1977, there was a coup at the National Rifle Association, which was taken over by Second Amendment fundamentalists. Over the course of the next 30 years, they set out to do nothing less than change the meaning of the Second Amendment, so that its final phrase — "shall not be infringed" — referred to an individual right to keep and bear arms, rather than a collective right for the common defense.

Waldman is scornful of much of this effort. Time and again, he finds the proponents of this new view taking the founders' words completely out of context, sometimes laughably so. They embrace Thomas Jefferson because he once wrote to George Washington, "One loves to possess arms." In fact, says Waldman, Jefferson was referring to some old letter he needed "so he could issue a rebuttal in case he got attacked for a decision he made as secretary of state".

Still, as Waldman notes, the effort was wildly successful. In 1972, the Republican platform favored gun control. By 1980, the Republican platform opposed gun registration. That year, the N.R.A. gave its first-ever presidential endorsement to Ronald Reagan. The critical modern event, however, was the Supreme Court's 2008 Heller decision, which tossed aside two centuries of settled law, and ruled that a gun-control law in Washington, D.C., was unconstitutional under the Second Amendment. The author of the majority opinion was Antonin Scalia, who fancies himself the leading "originalist" on the court — meaning he believes, as Waldman says, "that the only legitimate way to interpret the Constitution is to ask what the framers and their generation intended in 1789".

Waldman is persuasive that a truly originalist decision would have tied the right to keep and bear arms to a well-regulated militia. But the right to own guns had by then become conservative dogma, and it was inevitable that the five conservative members of the Supreme Court would vote that way.

"When the militias evaporated," concludes Waldman, "so did the original meaning of the Second Amendment." But, he adds, "What we did not have was a regime of judicially enforced individual rights, able to trump the public good."

Sadly, that is what we have now, as we saw over the weekend. Elliot Rodger's individual right to bear arms trumped the public good. Eight people were shot as a result.

REMEMBER "JOE THE PLUMBER", THE RADICAL RIGHT'S "REAL AMERICAN"?

(Excerpted from Salon.com, 5/27/14)

No doubt having noticed it had been quite some time since anyone paid him any attention whatsoever, pseudo-celebrity and all-around political crank Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher (Joe the Plumber) recently penned an open letter to the grieving parents of those killed by Elliot Rodger [who killed six people in Isla Vista, CA, May 23], informing them that he feels sorry and all about their children being murdered but that he still has a constitutional right to play with guns.

"I am sorry you lost your child," he writes, "but your dead kids don't trump my Constitutional rights."

The true test of a civilization is, not the census, nor the size of the cities, nor the crops — no, but the kind of man the country turns out. — *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

WE HAVE A NEW DUMBTH CANDIDATE, WHO SAYS "SEX ED MAKES DEMOCRATS"

(Based on "Conservative Activist: Sex Ed is a Plot to Destroy Families, Gain Democratic Votes," by Brian Tashman on Rightwingwatch, 6/3/2014)

Meet Marjorie Holsten, reactionary Minnesota activist who in a radio interview last month said that the only reason schools teach sex ed is that liberal educators are trying to increase the number of Democratic (of course she said "Democrat") voters.



"People say to me, Why would they teach such awful things to our children? If you go deep down and you connect those dots, you see that when children are desensitized to sexual things, that affects their ability at a later date to bond with a spouse. And so if you have somebody who can't bond, they're not going to have a stable marriage. When you have unstable, broken households, how do they vote? Democrat."

She also agreed with her radio host Jan Markell that lessons about violence towards African Americans and Native Americans in early American history, along with curricula on child labor laws and the environment, smack of "liberal bias", and then predicted that teachers will be punished (by liberal administrators, presumably) if they do not "teach that Obama's the messiah".

Ms. Holsten joins three other nominees for the not-so-coveted 2014 horse's-ass award. First, Arizona Congressional candidate **Jim Brown**, who thinks slavery was not as bad as modern-day "entitlements", because ... "Basically slave owners took pretty good care of their slaves and livestock and this kept business rolling along."

Ex-Senator **Jim DeMint** also weighed in on the subject of slavery. Ignoring the Civil War, the collusion of churches in the South's "peculiar institution", and the Emancipation Proclamation, he claimed that the movement to free the slaves "... did not come from the federal government. It came from a growing movement among the people, particularly people of faith, that this was wrong. ... So no liberal is going to win a debate that big government freed the slaves."

And let's not slight our old favorite, former Republican House Leader (and convicted money launderer) **Tom DeLay**, who re-wrote American history in April when he announced to an interviewer that ... "God created this nation and He wrote the Constitution."

Moral certainty is always a sign of cultural inferiority. The more uncivilized the man, the surer he is that he knows precisely what is right and what is wrong. All human progress, even in morals, has been the work of men who have doubted the current moral values, not of men who have whooped them up and tried to enforce them. The truly civilized man is always skeptical and tolerant, in this field as in all others. His culture is based on "I am not too sure."

— *H. L. Mencken*

SHSNY CALENDAR: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2014

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, JULY 10, 7-8:30 pm
(Note change to second Thursday)
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK

28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
 (3 doors West of the church - red door)

We'll discuss
THE AGE OF ATHEISTS:
How We Have Sought to Live
Since the Death of God.
Intro and Part 1

Peter Watson

From one of Britain's most distinguished historians comes the stirring story of one of the modern world's most important intellectual achievements: atheism. Watson offers a sweeping narrative of the secular philosophers and poets, psychologists and scientists, painters and playwrights, et al, who have forged a thrilling, bold path in the absence of religious belief.

From Nietzsche to Habermas, Watson's narrative explores the revolutionary ideas provoked by these great minds and movements.

"This book has so much to offer," says Book Club Editor Elaine Lynn, "that we're going to give it in-depth study over two sessions, and concentrate on just the Intro and Part 1 this month."

Join us even if you haven't finished reading.

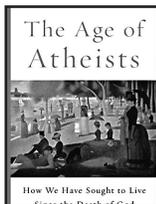
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AND MEET US ON MEETUP

www.meetup.com/shsnny-org/



SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, AUG 7, 7-8:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
THE AGE OF ATHEISTS
Parts 2 and 3

Our wrap-up discussion. "Even the casual reader will find much to delight and enlighten as Watson elegantly connects the dots from Nietzsche and William James to Bob Dylan and jazz."

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, SEP 4, 7-8:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
DOUBT: A HISTORY
The Great Doubters and
Their Legacy of Innovation
from Socrates and Jesus
to Thomas Jefferson
and Emily Dickinson
Jennifer Michael Hecht

Historian, poet (and SHSNY Honorary Member), Hecht champions doubt as one of the great, if unheralded, intellectual traditions that distinguish the Western mind. This is an account of the world's greatest "intellectual virtuosos", and of their attempts to reconcile the seeming meaninglessness of the universe with the human need for meaning,

PLANNING AHEAD

The usual SHSNY schedule is ...

Book Club: First Thursday
 at the Community Church of NY

Movie Night: Second Monday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.

Brunch: Third Sunday
 at The Stag's Head

Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.

Humanism 102: Last Monday
 at the Community Church of NY

More info: www.shsnny.org,
 and/or 646-922-7389

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION
SUNDAY, JULY 20, 12 NOON
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
The Stag's Head
252 East 51 St.



The Stag's Head offers an American-traditional brunch menu of eggs and omelets several ways, crepes, burgers, frittatas, burritos and short-rib hash, all in the \$10.95-12.95 range., and including a drink. Join 19 other freethinkers and humanists (private space in back seats 20) for food, fellowship and well-fed fun.

After-Brunch Discussion:
Just How Ignorant Are We?
(See pages 2-4)

MONDAY, JULY 14, 7:00 pm
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
FOR THE BIBLE



TELLS ME SO

We meet five Christian families, each with a gay or lesbian child. The stories told by these nine parents and four adult children alternate with talking heads and with clips of fundamentalist preachers and pundits and news clips of people in the street. They discuss scripture and biblical scholarship ... and how much of Christianity's homophobia represents a misreading of scripture, a denial of science, and an embrace of quack psychology.

After-film discussion:

Who cares what the Bible says?
SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

SHSNY CALENDAR: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2014

**GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, JULY 23, 7:00 pm**

**Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)
AMERICAN FREETHOUGHT
Part II**

**The Abolition Movement
Seeds the Women's Rights
and Freethought Movements
Rick Bradford**

In Part 2 of this outstanding history of secularism, free speech and censorship in America, we'll meet Elizabeth Cady Stanton and suffragist/freethinker Matilda Joslyn



Gage at the Seneca Falls women's rights conference, measure the impact of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and watch the rise of "Great Agnostic" Robert Green Ingersoll and of D.M. Bennett, editor of *The Truth Seeker*. We'll also encounter the religious resistance, e.g., The American Tract Society and "morals crusader" Anthony Comstock - all coming together in America's first Culture Wars.

Great Lectures on DVD is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

Looking ahead ...

**GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, AUGUST 27, 7:00 pm
(date is tentative)**

**Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
ENEMIES OF REASON
Richard Dawkins
& Derren Brown**

Dawkins introduces us to atheist and paranormal-debunker Brown, the "playfully mendacious" master of "magic, suggestion, psychology, misdirection and showmanship". Should be fun.

**OTHER REASONABLE
NEW YORK EVENTS**

www.reasonablenewyork.org
CFI-NYC. Mon, Jul 14, 10 pm, Goo-gie's Lounge (Upstairs at the Living Room), 154 Ludlow St.: *Skeptics on the Mic Karaoke*.

New York Philosophy: Date and place for July *Cocktails & Conversation* to be determined. Check www.nyphilosophy.com and/or reasonablenewyork.org

NY Society for Ethical Culture:

- Sun, Jul 6, 2 pm, *Sunday Assembly-NYC*. How can you volunteer? Coffee & Cookies. Free.
- Wed, Jul 9, Great Books Discussion Group: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in the *Norton Critical Edition*. Suggested donation \$5.
- Sat-Sun, Jul 12-13 and Sat-Sun, Jul 26-27: *Ethical Sleepovers - Constellation Night* and *Ethical Dreaming Night*. Family Nights include stargazing, pot luck dinners, scavenger hunts, sleepover crafts. Whole Families welcome (children under 5 must be accompanied by a guardian). Members free. \$20 contribution for families and potluck offerings. RSVP (a must!) to: EthicsforChildren@nysec.org
See the full RNY calendar at reasonablenewyork.org

PLUS

Agnostic A.A.: Fifteen weekly AA-endorsed meetings in four boros (not Queens). Info at agnosticAA.nyc.org/meetings.html
Atheism History Week - With SHSNY's John Rafferty, 5:30 p.m. every Wednesday, MNN Ch. 1997 in Manhattan, and live streaming on your computer anywhere at www.mnn.org.

Drinking With Atheists: Every Friday, fun and conversation. meetup.com/GothamAtheists/

Feminist Freethinkers of New York: Check schedule at feministfreethinkers.org
Manhattan History Buffs: Every 3d Tues, 6:00, dinner/talk at Lili's rest, 83-84th/3rd. Jul 15: *The Life & Times of Eugene Debs*. Reservations required: 212-802-7427

**AND SHSNY MEMBERS
ARE ALSO ...**

- **Through July 13**, Artist **Harvey Offenhartz**'s exhibition of new abstract work, "Drawing Color", continues at the Souterrian Gallery, West Cornwall, CT.
- **Thu, July 24**, 6-9 pm, **John Rafferty** will read from and discuss his book, *A Fit of Pique*, with the Humanist Society of Metropolitan New York at the Moonstruck Diner, 31 St. & Third Ave. (upstairs private room).
- **Wed, Aug 27 thru Sun, Sep 7**: Artists **Irene Christensen** and **Donna Marxer** are curating "The Suitcase Show" of works by 28 Artists In Residence In Everglades at Galerie Schaeffersgate 5, Oslo, Norway.
- **Wed, Sep 10 thru Sun, Sep 21**: **Ms. Christensen** and **Ms. Marxer** will exhibit in a two-woman show at the same gallery in Oslo.
NOTE: If you are a member of SHSNY and *actively* involved in an event open to the public, send your info to editor@shsnys.org.

**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER
ISSUE OF PIQUE**

Due to the travel schedule of the entire editorial and production staff of PIQUE (Norway-Italy-Norway late August to early September), we will break precedent and publish in early August, with Calendar pages covering both Aug and Sep events.

AMERICA: WHERE FACTS ARE LOST IN FOG

Charles M. Blow

(Reprinted from "Religious Constriction" on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times, 6/8/2014)

I am both shocked and fascinated by Americans' religious literalism. One Gallup report issued last week found that 42 percent of Americans believe "God created humans in their present form 10,000 years ago."

Even among people who said that they were "very familiar" with the theory of evolution, a third still believed that God created humans in their present form 10,000 years ago. It's not clear what the respondents meant by being "very familiar" — did they fully understand the science upon which evolution's based, or was their understanding something short of that, as in, very familiar with it as being antithetical to creationist concepts?

Whatever the case, on this issue as well as many others in America, the truth is not the light.

That is in part because, compared with other developed countries, America stands out for the level and intensity of its religiosity. People are generally more likely to say that religion is an important part of their daily lives in relatively poor countries, but as Gallup pointed out in a 2010 report:

"The US is a rich country that bucks the trend. About two-thirds of Americans — 65 percent — say religion is important in their daily lives. Among high-income countries, only Italians, Greeks, Singaporeans and residents of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states are more likely to say religion is important. Most high-income countries are further down the religiosity spectrum."

And in America, when people say that they are religious, they overwhelmingly mean Christian. In fact, nearly eight in ten Americans identify as Christians.

It's not only that Americans are more religious — Christian, in particular — but that for many, their beliefs in their religious text — the Bible, in particular — are literal.

As Gallup pointed out ... nearly a third of Americans continue to believe that the Bible "is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word".

Furthermore, nearly half believe that it is "the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally". (I am curious which parts would get a pass from most of these respondents and which wouldn't. Would the origins of the world fall into the literal camp? What about the rules — all or some — in books like Deuteronomy?)

About a fifth of Americans said they believe the Bible is "an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man".

Now, I don't seek to deny anyone the right to believe as he or she chooses. I have at points in my own life been quite religious, and my own children have complicated views about religion. As my oldest son once told me, "I'd hate to live in a world where a God *couldn't* exist." That is his choice, as it is every individual's choice, and I respect it.

What worries me is that some Americans seem to live in a world where facts can't exist.

Facts such as the idea that the world is ancient, and

that all living things evolved and some — like dinosaurs — became extinct. Facts like the proven warming of the world. Facts like the very real possibility that such warming could cause a catastrophic sea-level rise.

How does America remain a world leader in an increasingly technological, science-based world, when so many of our citizens — and even our leaders, including Republicans who might run for president — deny basic science? Marco Rubio told *GQ* in 2012: "Whether the Earth was created in 7 days, or 7 actual eras, I'm not sure we'll ever be able to answer that. It's one of the great mysteries."

During a debate in 2007, Mike Huckabee made clear that he believed that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," but didn't know when it was done or how long it took. Bobby Jindal has voiced his support of creationism being taught in public schools alongside intelligent design and "the best science", and allowing students to "make up their own minds".

Americans, particularly political leaders, who choose religious piety must also create an intellectual framework in which things of faith that exist without proof can make space for truths for which there is proof. Religious fundamentalism at the expense of basic scientific facts threatens to obscure America's beacon of light with a bank of fog.

ATTENTION, KEN HAM: PAT ROBERTSON THINKS YOU'RE CRAZY

Brian Tashman/Rightwingwatch

(Reprinted from "Pat Robertson: 'You Have to be Deaf, Dumb and Blind to Believe in Young Earth Creationism'" on *Alternet.com* 5/22/14)

Fielding a question about the age of the Earth on a recent "700 Club", Pat Robertson once again criticized Young Earth Creationists who believe the Earth is approximately 6,000 years old. Robertson, who earlier this year described YEC as "a joke", today said, "You have to be deaf, dumb and blind to think that this Earth that we live in only has 6,000 years of existence, it just doesn't, I'm sorry."

"To deny the clear record that's there before us makes us look silly," he said. "There's no way that all this that you have here took place in 6,000 years, it just couldn't have been done, couldn't possibly have been done."

Robertson may have to take this up with his own TV network, which promotes Young Earth Creationist material and publishes articles claiming that opposition is heretical.

Comment: So, what, we're worried that Pat Robertson (sole holder of the SHSNY Lifetime Achievement Award in Dumbth) is logically inconsistent? Are we also going to fret about the toilet habits of bears in the woods? As the reporter of the above also points out, if you believe in evolution and a billions-of-years-old earth, Christianity itself is logically inconsistent, even impossible. God supposedly punished Adam and Eve — and every living thing, including all of us — with death because of their "sin". But if organisms, eventually including people, had been living and dying for millions of millennia before 6,000-years-ago Eden, then ... well, you get it. — JR

WHAT MAKES SOMETHING RIGHT OR WRONG?

Stephen Fry

Actor, director, writer, atheist and humanist Stephen Fry has made four short illustrated and animated “That’s Humanism” videos for the British Humanist Association:

- How Do We Know What Is True?
- What Should We Think About Death?
- What Makes Something Right Or Wrong?
- How Can I Be Happy?

They are available at <https://humanism.org.uk/> or on YouTube. We transcribed the first two from the above list in PIQUE in May and June, and offer the third right here ...

What makes something right and wrong? Some people believe that what is right or wrong never varies from situation to situation, and that it can be expressed in constant, unchanging commandments. They often look to religious texts, or authorities, to discover what they think a god wants them to do.

A humanist view of morality is different. Humanists do not look to any god for rules, but think carefully for themselves about what might be the best way to live. This approach means we have always to be empathetic, and think about the effects of our choices on the happiness—or suffering—of the people, or sometimes other animals, concerned. We have to respect the rights and wishes of those involved, trying to find the kindest course of action, or the option that will do the least harm.

We have to consider carefully the particular situation we find ourselves in, and not just take any rule or commandment for granted. We have to weigh up the evidence we have available to us about what the probable consequences of our actions will be. This way of thinking about what we should do is explicitly based on reason, experience, and empathy, and respect for others, rather than on tradition or deference to authority. It might sound hard, but luckily most of us do it most of the time, without really thinking about it.

Morality is not something that comes from outside of human beings, gifted to us by an external force, like a god. When we look at our closest relatives in the animal world we see the same basic tendencies we recognize in ourselves: affection, cooperation, all the behavior needed to live in groups and thrive. It is clear that our social instincts form the basis of morality, and that they are a natural part of humanity.

Of course, that is not the end of the story. The long experience of tens of thousands of years of human beings living in communities has developed and refined our morality, and we are all the lucky inheritors of that hard work. But it does not mean that there are not people who do harm, or make bad choices. But ultimately, morality comes from *us*, not from any god. It has to do with people, with individual good will and social responsibility. It is about not being completely selfish, about kindness and consideration towards others. Ideals of freedom, justice, happiness, equality, fairness, and all the other values we may live by, are human inventions. And we can be proud of that, as we strive to live up to them.

THE CHICKENS COME HOME TO ROOST

Jonathan Engel

Very interesting article in the April 29 *New York Times* by Michael Paulson entitled “State’s Gay-Marriage Ban Is Challenged by Church”. It states, “In a novel legal attack on a state’s same-sex marriage ban, a liberal Protestant denomination on Monday filed a lawsuit arguing that North Carolina is unconstitutionally restricting religious freedom by barring clergy members from blessing gay and lesbian couples.”

You may have thought that religious-oriented lawsuits and proposed statutes that have been all the rage (and I do mean rage) in recent days were the exclusive province of religious conservatives. And for the most part, you would be right. But it doesn’t have to be that way, as this lawsuit attests.

So what will those clamoring for “freedom of religion” when it comes to Hobby Lobby’s right on religious grounds to deny insurance coverage for its employees’ contraceptive needs have to say about this? We don’t have to go far to find out, as later in the article Tami Fitzgerald of the North Carolina Values Coalition is quoted as saying “It’s both ironic and sad that an entire religious denomination and its clergy who purport holding to Christian teachings on marriage would look to the courts to justify their errant beliefs.” Oh, I get it now. The civil courts of the United States of America exist to uphold the religious rights of conservatives only. But unfortunately for Ms. Fitzgerald, and fortunately for the rest of us, our laws do not work that way. All those conservative groups that were so eager to use civil law (both in the courts and in various legislatures) to protect their “religious freedom” now are faced with a liberal-leaning church doing the same thing, and they do not appear to like it one bit.

The courts are not allowed to take a position on which beliefs are “errant” or not; they can only ensure that freedom of religion is not improperly infringed upon for all religious beliefs. If conservative opponents of marriage equality want to prevail in court in this new case, they will have to come up with a better argument than “We’re right about scripture and they’re wrong.” That kind of argument is simply not within the court’s jurisdiction. Freedom of religion cuts multiple ways, and it is conservatives who have blazed the trail of going to court to enforce their so-called right to get around civil law by claiming First Amendment Free Exercise rights. Now that a liberal religious denomination is doing the same, the chickens appear to be coming home to roost, and there’s nothing that religious conservatives can do about it.

Of course, if they truly revere the Constitution’s Free Exercise clause, they would support this lawsuit on purely Free Exercise grounds, even though they do not agree with the ultimate goal of the lawsuit’s petitioners, which is to be allowed to perform same-sex marriages within their particular denomination. But that would force them to relinquish one of their most cherished values: rank hypocrisy.

They're the ones who have been arguing for the right to circumvent established civil law by claiming it interferes with their right to exercise their religion. Now that liberals are following their tactical lead, they will just have to accept that what is good for the goose is good for the gander (which will be the last poultry-related metaphor in this essay).

A 19th Century Poet Questions the Deity IF GOD IS INFINITELY GOOD ...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

(Excerpted from "The Necessity of Atheism".)

If [God] is infinitely good, what reason should we have to fear him? If he is infinitely wise, why should we have doubts concerning our future? If he knows all, why warn him of our needs and fatigue him with our prayers? If he is everywhere, why erect temples to him? If he is just, why fear that he will punish the creatures that he has filled with weaknesses? If grace does everything for them, what reason would he have for recompensing them? If he is all-powerful, how offend him, how resist him? If he is reasonable, how can he be angry at the blind, to whom he has given the liberty of being unreasonable? If he is immovable, by what right do we pretend to make him change his decrees? If he is inconceivable, why occupy ourselves with him? If he has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Gary Cox

(Reprinted from Humanist News and Views, newsletter of Humanists of Minnesota, June 2014. Gary Cox is a member of HofMN and an inmate at the Oak Park Heights prison. He is co-editor of the prison inmate publication, A New Perspective, from which the following is excerpted.)

The above proverb (the title) is likely familiar to most everyone. Yet how many of us fully appreciate just what a profound truth it actually expresses? ... We depend on our sense of vision much more than we realize - or *should*, once the scope of the situation is properly grasped. As the notoriously cryptic Yogi Berra might once have quipped, We are often blinded by what we can't see. ...

An example of this is prisons. What are we to make of the ever-expanding number of lockups in the world, and in the U.S. especially? When and how did incarceration become *the* primary mode of punishment for suppressing crime in industrialized countries?

Interestingly, prisons of this sort were invented in the 1790s, in (where else?) America. Earlier, jails, dungeons and the like did exist but they served mainly as holding facilities for people awaiting trial or as the *temporary* confines for drunks and petty criminals. Occasionally they also served as dumping grounds for the political enemies of the ruling elite - a more punitive and intimidating alternative to exile, it seems. Generally speaking, however, once caught and convicted, your run-of-the-mill felon of this pre-incarceration era was likely to face only one of two fates:

either some form of corporal punishment (being flogged or placed in the stocks, for instance) or death. That was pretty much it. The idea of locking someone away for years or even *decades* would've been considered, if not cruel, then certainly a waste of precious resources. Simply put, swiftly torturing and/or executing "serious criminals" was deemed the most pragmatic way of maintaining order.

But literacy rates increased and the printed word, particularly in the form of newspapers, became more prevalent, people's opinions on issues involving crime and punishment began to evolve. By the late 1700s, primarily in Europe and North America, a demand for an alternative to these crude methods of crime suppression was eventually manifested. Influential segments of society came to view incarceration as being (at least potentially) a more humane and effective tool for dealing with the problem of crime. And hence "penitentiaries" and associated notions of "rehabilitation" were born. A sea change occurred wherein physical torments were largely replaced by psychological ones. That is, instead of attacking people's bodies in order to impact their minds, we began assaulting their minds more discretely by depriving them of many of the joys and freedoms which lend life its essential value. Of course, the threat of physical force was always present in the event that a prisoner might resist these psychological measures (as it remains today), but these overt acts of violence became the tactics of last resort. Thus the art of running a prison "successfully" came to be judged, in part, by how infrequently force needed to be used to gain compliance.

Yet even in those cases where physical violence is wholly absent from the prison experience, the pain imposed on the minds of prisoners over the course of years spent incarcerated is still quite substantial. Indeed, in much the same way boxing gloves merely hide from an audience the damage that is done to the brains of boxers, prisons hide from the public the full extent of the sufferings visited on the minds of prisoners. The fact is prison walls not only keep the "bad guys" *in* but serve equally well at keeping the eyes—and consciences—of the public *out*. And if you think I'm overstating the case then consider this argument: what person serving a lengthy prison sentence would not gleefully exchange the balance of their time for a good old-fashioned whipping? Or even an amputation? Would not literally giving one's right arm seem a small price to pay when staring down the barrel of a twenty- or thirty-year stretch? Thus, assuming society was "humane" enough to offer prisoners such a choice, no doubt many of us would exercise that option.

In the end, using prisons instead of whips may allow us to fool ourselves into thinking we're more ethical and humane than our predecessors, but in truth these institutions have only increased our sophistication at masking the evidence of our cruelty. For when we're forced to look at the scars on the back of a man who's been whipped, for example, there's no denying the suffering he endured - suffering that was deliberately *inflicted* on him. (And many of us would then likely feel some measure of guilt for what was done to

him in our names.) But the same is not true of a man who has been kept in a cage for many years, deprived, tormented and harassed in an infinite variety of petty ways that a free and sane person could scarcely imagine. There's nothing one might *look at* that testifies to the misery impressed on his soul. The "scars" are on his mind rather than his body, and so his pain becomes—for others at least—a purely abstract notion. Your average citizen would have no hope of comprehending the true dimensions of his ordeal.

And that's the way many modern societies *want* punishments meted out on their behalf: quietly, discretely, with no visible reminders of what's actually being done. Put another way, the undeniable physical agonies of a man who's been whipped—the screams, the blood, the scars—rocks our souls, while the more abstract notion of prolonged psychological torments being endured by a prisoner barely causes us to raise an eyebrow.

Out of sight, out of mind.

MODERN-DAY McCARTHYISM?

Editor: As Richard Perez-Pena reported in *The New York Times* of June 15, "Commencement speakers made news this year mostly by their absence. Protesters on the left assailed speakers who had been invited by colleges and universities, and in some cases, they got their wish, driving away the intended guests.

"Brandeis University rescinded its invitation to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born activist for her denigration of Islam. Others withdrew in the face of protests: Condoleezza Rice, the former secretary of state (for her role in the Iraq war), from Rutgers University; Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund (for the I.M.F.'s treatment of poor nations), from Smith College; and Robert J. Birgeneau, former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley (for Berkeley's rough treatment of Occupy protesters), from Haverford College. This topic of scuttled speakers was on the minds of many of those who did speak, including some who addressed colleges where the protests succeeded."

MIKE BLOOMBERG AT HARVARD: "THE PURPOSE OF A UNIVERSITY"

Intolerance of ideas, whether liberal or conservative, is antithetical to individual rights and free societies, and it is no less antithetical to great universities and first-rate scholarship. There is an idea floating around college campuses, including here at Harvard, that scholars should be funded only if their work conforms to a particular view of justice. There's a word for that idea: censorship. And it is just a modern-day form of McCarthyism.

Think about the irony: In the 1950s, the right wing was attempting to repress left-wing ideas. Today, on many college campuses, it is liberals trying to repress conservative ideas, even as conservative faculty members are at risk of becoming an endangered species. And perhaps nowhere is that more true than here in the Ivy League. ...

Requiring scholars — and commencement speakers, for that matter — to conform to certain political standards undermines the whole purpose of a university.

READERS RESPOND TO JUNE PIQUE

To the Editor: It's always a sunny day at the Appleman's when we find a PIQUE in our mailbox, and this [June] issue is a real gift, from Borowitz's Alito and Rafferty's Bible passages all the way to Honest Abe's wise words. Thanks.

— Phil Appleman

To the Editor: Excellent issue, as usual. Provocative articles and an editor who's not afraid to take a stand. Accolades again for superb work. That said, I did think you were a bit too harsh on Bill Chapman for his evoking the McCarthy era as a comparison to the request made of him to boycott Firefox for its alleged misdeeds and mistaken stances ["On the OKCupid Boycott of Firefox"]. While I do agree with you that the magnitude of harm done in the McCarthy era was way beyond the pale of this incident, I'm assuming that given Mr. Chapman's excellent record in defending those whose constitutional rights have been attacked in the past by the extreme right, that he was attempting to make that same point, as he and we confront the continuing dismantling of the First Amendment.

The recent shocking ruling by the Supreme Court was enough to send shudders down our collective spines in its utter disregard of the First Amendment and the doctrine of separation of church and State. The fundamentalist religionists and libertarians are indeed having a field day filling in the huge voids of ignorance and gullibility of the American people. Every poll taken by those interested in protecting the Constitution in the past ten years has shown an alarming ignorance by the American people of not only the Constitution in general, but of the Bill of Rights in particular. It harks back to the lengthy crusade of George Carlin, as mentioned in another article ["Case in Point: 'Corporatist' Fact Twisting from 'The Heartland'"] where, foul language removed, he correctly rails at our education system for not producing graduates who can think critically.

As a former high school principal and life-long educator, I recently vented on that very issue in PIQUE by indicting our schools for being too subject- and test-centered, rather than reaching the higher learning levels of evaluation, which is where critical thinking takes place. Nor am I optimistic about change anytime in the near future.

Unrelated observation re: Your admonishment of us readers to not notice your error in citing the numbers of teen birth rates in Mississippi ["Correction, Apology, Admonition"]. The probable cause of this oversight, by the editor, copy editors and all of us readers, is that whenever we see a Mississippi statistic, we've been so conditioned to expect the worst that we're "anesthetized" to whatever statistic that follows. Apologies to all Mississippians.

Finally, re: "What (else) SHSNY Members are Doing", I just published my fourth book, *The Magic Fruitcakes*, a whimsical novel about one teen-age girl's attempt to perpetuate "Peace on Earth, Good Will toward others" all through the year via Acts of Kindness (AOKs). It also has a related anti-bullying theme, and all those themes expressed through my secular humanist lenses. — Stan Friedland

**JUST FOR SUMMER FUN:
WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE LINE EVER?
(And maybe win a dvd of the movie)**

"Play it, Sam, play 'As Time Goes By'."

"I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

"Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

And frankly, if you can't identify all three of the above quotes from three of the biggest-hit movies ever¹, you need a crash course in American pop culture. It's amazing how many of us have used Dorothy's great line from the scene in which she first looks around at Oz, what Jack Nicholson's fanatical Marine colonel snarls when Tom Cruise demands "the truth", or Dirty Harry's dare while pointing his .44 Magnum at the bad guy². For better or worse, those lines are part of our culture, our heritage, and we all have our favorites.

So, just for summer fun, what's *your* favorite movie line ever? Email your choice to editor@shsny.org - and get your friends and family in on the fun, too, everyone's welcome. We'll publish all the entries in August-September PIQUE, and blind-draw the name of one lucky winner to receive a dvd of the movie his/her line comes from.

Need a memory jog? Go to YouTube and type "AFI's 100 Years, 100 Movie Quotes" into the search box, then enjoy ten-and-a-half minutes of great film clips.

¹*Casablanca; Apocalypse Now; Gone With The Wind.*

²*"Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore", The Wizard of Oz; "You can't handle the truth!", A Few Good Men; "Go ahead, make my day", Sudden Impact.*

RAFFERTY TO HUMANIST INSTITUTE BOARD

SHSNY President John Rafferty, a graduate of the Humanist Institute Leadership Program, has been elected to the Institute's Board of Directors.

**A 20th Century Poet Questions Church
on Summer Sundays**

**I DIDN'T GO TO CHURCH TODAY
Ogden Nash**

I didn't go to church today,
I trust the Lord to understand.
The surf was swirling blue and white,
The children swirling on the sand.
He knows, He knows how brief my stay,
How brief this spell of summer weather,
He knows when I am said and done
We'll have plenty of time together.

**A HUMANIST JOKE BROUGHT BACK
FROM THE AHA CONVENTION**

(Thanks to Natalie Angier, New York Times science columnist and 2014 Humanist Media Award winner.)

Making his rounds of Heaven, St. Peter is about to pass God's office when he notices the Supreme Deity hunched over his desk, weeping.

"Dear Lord," Peter exclaims, "what's the matter?"

"It's impossible," God sobs. "I've fallen in love with an atheist, and she doesn't know I exist."

**A Summer-Fun Contest
(Win a classic movie dvd)
Page 12**

**Modern McCarthyism?
Page 11**

**How Politically Literate
... or Stupid ... Are We?
Pages 2-4**

**A Humanist Visits
the 9/11 Museum
Page 1**

Secular Humanist
Society of New York
FDR Station
PO Box 7661
New York, NY
10150-7661

