



THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

November 2013

A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> zelda@amadorbooks.com

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque
HSNM meetings are free and open
to the public unless otherwise
noted.

Saturday, November 9

10:10am to noon

HSNM Informal Meeting

HSNM Members and their Guests
Only. For invitation or questions,
please contact Zelda Gatuskin at
505-344-6102

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian
School NE, Albuquerque, NM
Refreshments: Leland Franks

Saturday, November 16

10:00am to noon

HSNM Topical Discussion

*Do We Really Have Two Political
Parties?*

Special Collections Library
423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, November 23

10:00am to noon

HSNM Speaker Meeting

Tibetan Buddhism

Judith Bailie

First Unitarian Church
3701 Carlisle NE, Albuquerque
Refreshments: Carolyn Glen
Humanist Minute: TBD

Other Meetings of Interest

Tuesday, November 12

7:00 to 8:30pm

**First Unitarian HUumanist
Group**, 1st UU Church, Fellowship
Hall

Wednesday, November 13

7:00 to 9:00pm

NMSR

Quantum Bayesianism

Carlton Caves

Museum of Natural History and
Science

Saturday, November 16

1:15pm Spl. Collections Library

**Meet'n Greet Other Humanists
...and Tom Flynn!** see inside

Saturday, November 23

1:00pm

Freedom from Religion, Local
Chapter

See [http://www.meetup.com/
FFRABQ/](http://www.meetup.com/FFRABQ/) for meeting details

Roswatheists

Roswatheists meets every other
Saturday. To find out more please
visit [http://www.meetup.com/Ro-
swatheists](http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists)

President's Message for Novem- ber 2013

Someone special died. I know that
everyone is special to somebody, or
to a few or many others. But I write
of someone who wasn't a close
personal friend of mine - she was
someone I knew and she was spe-
cial.

We all know people like that.
They shine. They uplift by their
very presence. Here was a woman
beautiful inside and out, talented
and hardworking, smart and gener-
ous. I know there must have been
times when she didn't smile, but I
never witnessed any. She was in the
middle of life and full of life, even in
the face of a cancer that had taken
the lives of close family members
and would eventually take hers.

Nature's pretty sneaky with those
genes. The science of it can leave one
feeling powerless or alienated. If
we are each just a cocktail of chemi-
cals that's been cooked up in a long
series of unsupervised experiments
to no particular purpose, then what
is the point of ... anything? It would
not be unreasonable to drift from
this existential dilemma into ni-
hilism and submerge oneself in an
indulgent lifestyle of excess and ex-

The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association
Member of The New Mexico Coalition of Reason

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officers/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President

Bill Kimbrough: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Leland Franks: Past President

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership

Jay Lee Evans, Member-at-Large

Ashley Jordan, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Sylvia Ramos, Chair, Feminist Caucus-HSNM

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$20 annually, HSNM membership is \$20/year (\$30 for two adults in the same household. Send subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, paragon2012@comcast.net or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit www.americanhumanist.org for more information about the American Humanist Association.

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

citement, even - or especially - if that meant hastening the inevitable end. Yet I have never known anyone who was facing impending death who did that. Yes, they re-prioritized, but the principles and the people they cared about didn't drop down on the list just because chemistry had decreed the situation to be hopeless.

"Stuff" happens, as they say. Stuff that's hard to accept, impossible to undo, painful to remember. Reinterpreting events with a spiritual spin or in a mythic context can be a healing practice. Meditation, dreamwork, therapy and prayer have proven to be effective techniques for dealing with sudden change and misfortune. But I draw the line at looking for any kind of moral or karmic "reason" for a jumble of events in which I and mine are mere, fleeting specks. For me, the superficially random but actually quite consistent processes of nature offer more comfort in trying times than the idea that we have arrived at this place by some willful action of an outside force. Or willful inaction. (If such a force exists, it is appalling indeed - I don't see how I could possibly appease it even if I tried.)

I was asked recently, following a talk I gave about humanism, where I find hope in the absence of religious faith and belief in god. "In humanity?" the questioner guessed with a hint of disapproval in his voice.

"Well, yes, in humanity," I told him. "But what I was going to say is that I find my hope in the fact that humans don't have all the answers, that we're capable of learning more and being better, and figuring out how to solve our problems and live together. I know it's easy to look around at today's society and say, 'Not much hope here,' but my hope, my belief, is that it isn't going to be this way forever. This is not all there is, this is not the best we can be. We can and will continue to evolve."

Well, there were no more questions after that! But many questions remain for me and for humanists. Looking for the answers is what pushes us forward and keeps things interesting. Our curiosity is a kind of hope. As for comfort, our minds and imaginations allow us to transform intense emotional experiences into a story that does have meaning as it threads its way through all the highs and lows of life. I suppose that's why I write - so that I can start out with a lament, "Someone special died," and work my way around to, "Someone special lived, and I was lucky to know her."

But I'm still p.o'd at those stupid genes.

Important Governing Board Topic to be Discussed

by Bill Kimbrough

Important notice! The November Summit meeting will include a description of a decision by the Governing Board to be presented to the general membership for the purpose of incorporating HSNM in New Mexico while remaining a chapter of the American Humanist Association. This decision has been reached after consultation with the legal counsel of AHA and review by GB members, in particular Leland Franks and Bill Kimbrough. Both Leland and Bill will be present to explain and answer your questions.

Humanist Speaker Meeting November 2013

“Tibetan Buddhism”

This talk will focus on the key reasons that the West is fertile ground for the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. In the United States, Tibetan Buddhism frequently gains new practitioners, and many are those who grew up in Judeo Christian traditions. When the thoroughly dualistic mind meets the eastern paradigms, the conversations are transformational.

Judith Bailie is a community-based trainer and facilitator with over 40 years of experience working in diverse settings with persons from many different groups and agencies. Ms. Bailie has worked in the Massachusetts court and prison systems as a teacher and alternative sentencing advocate. She was the founder and first director of the first rural food bank warehouse in the Second Harvest/Feeding America network. Since 1990, she has worked as a full-time consultant trainer, facilitator and curriculum writer for colleges, universities and community-based groups. She has been involved in design and delivery of training for Senior Corps, Learn and Serve, AmeriCorps and VISTA. Ms. Bailie has worked with tribal groups, student organizations, GLBT groups and state agency directors concerned with alcohol and drug abuse treatment and prevention.

Recently she has worked with volunteer groups and boards of not for profit organizations, focusing on successful board management, planning, volunteer recruitment and retention. Training in New Mexico has included The Santa Fe Community Foundation, Santa Fe Public Schools, the New Mexico Department of Health, and many others. Ms. Bailie has also taught liberal arts classes through the University of Phoenix in

New Mexico. Judith holds an MA in history from The College of William and Mary and an Masters of Divinity from Harvard. Judith has received training in the Buddhist 16 Guidelines for Life, and teaches “Buddhism in a Nutshell” for Thubten Norbu Ling Tibetan Buddhist Center in Santa Fe.

Save the Date: Human Light Party on December 14

Once again we will hold our Human Light party and Roadrunner Food Bank collection at the Summit Apartments on the second Saturday in December. Instead of our usual morning Informal Meeting, we will convene for a potluck dinner and festivities from 4 til 7 pm (set-up at 3:30, cleanup 7-7:30). Please plan on coming with something yummy to eat, donations of canned/boxed food and/or checks for Roadrunner, smiles and laughter. We will need all hands on deck to bring in extra tables and chairs and other supplies. You can sign up for a task at upcoming HSNM meetings or contact a board member. Also let us know if you need a ride or can offer a ride. Your family and guests are welcome.

Meet’n Greet Other Humanists

by Ron Herman

The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) of Amherst, NY, is sponsoring a special event in Albuquerque on **Saturday, November 16, at 1:15PM. The event will feature a presentation on “The Trouble with Christmas,” a very timely and controversial topic, by Tom Flynn, Executive Director of CSH. The event will be held in Botts Memorial Hall in the Special Collections Library at 423 Central Ave NE, just east of Broadway Blvd.** The HSNM Topical Discussion will be held in another room in that library at 10:00AM that day. We encourage members to return from lunch after that to hear Tom’s exceptional presentation and to meet other humanists.

HSNM is one of the CSH Affiliated Local Groups, along with the Secular Humanist Meetup. The event is also being sponsored by the local chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, FFR-ABQ, and the Secular Student Alliance at the University of New Mexico.

Tom Flynn has been recounting the history of the year-end holidays since his book *The Trouble with Christmas* came out in 1993. He offers his own rollicking rationale for why secular humanists should just sit the merri-

ment out. His presentation is now fully illustrated in a lavish PowerPoint presentation containing more than 200 slides. ("Fear not," as the angel never really said; some of those slides go by really, really fast.) In "The Trouble with Christmas" Flynn will examine where our most treasured holiday traditions came from – from the Christ Child to Santa Claus, from the wassail bowl to the tannenbaum – and ask whether there's still time to "send them back." It's an information-filled, thought-provoking, yet wildly funny audio-visual extravaganza. Missing this presentation would be like getting a lump of coal in your stocking! In my review of his book in the HSNM newsletter in December, 2011, I suggested that this is exactly the book we should all read and talk about with our friends and families. Christmas is one of the hinge-pins of Christianity, ... and clarifying its true history may be one of the most important messages we can deliver to our wider community.

In 1984, having recently given up his religious beliefs for atheism, Flynn stopped celebrating Christmas, because "it was no longer the birthday of anyone I knew." Flynn urges fellow unbelievers to make themselves more visible by sitting out the winter holidays. He argues that Christmas is too narrowly Anglophile to continue much longer as the compulsory winter holiday of an increasingly diverse America. And he maintains that "Yes, Virginia, believing in the Santa Claus myth is harmful to young people's mental development."

After writing *The Trouble with Christmas* in 1993, Flynn made hundreds of radio and TV appearances in his role as the curmudgeonly "anti-Claus." A leading authority on the Santa myth, he appeared in A&E Network's Biography segment on Santa, which has aired hundreds of times. His other books include the science-fiction satire novels *Galactic Rapture* and *Nothing Sacred*, and the reference work *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, which he edited. Most recently he served as executive producer and an on-screen presenter in the forthcoming four-part video miniseries *American Freethought*. Flynn is also Editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine and Director of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum.

Please note: parking meters around the library are in force on Saturday and there are many zones posted as no-parking areas. However, parking is not a problem, and there are free spaces available at these locations: the abandoned Pop'n Taco across the street from the Li-

brary on Edith; the large vacant lot one block east of the Library on the NE corner of Central and Walter and a smaller one on the south west corner of that intersection; on Gold Avenue one block south of Central; and at various spots around the library about one block away on Copper, Central, and Arno.

Darwin Day 2014

We know that every year the anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth falls on February 12. So why do we let it sneak up on us? If we want to have a Darwin Day 2014 event, we need to start planning now. It's time to start coordinating with other freethinker and educational groups to plan Charlie's birthday bash, so we will be ready to get the word out to the media and the public right after New Year's. A public celebration of Darwin Day gives us the opportunity to promote the value of science education and highlight the exciting and significant discoveries of science. We are hoping to partner with the NM Museum of Natural History and Science on a Darwin Day program. If you would like to be in the loop as plans evolve, sign-up at an HSNM meeting or contact Zelda

Noble Action

by Jean O'Hara

Veterans come in many stripes of life;
It seems that the arena can be that
Of politics, war or old age's strife
Depending on society's worn hat
And whether the existence is muted
Of that civilization by people
Who prefer lives over deaths polluted?
Or want something like a Monet steeple.
Yes, the challenge is there, good versus evil,
One way is always better than another's,
The Greeks and Romans before us - civil -
As Sophocles showed us what crime smothers,
And today's Vietnams must cease
Lest the whole world becomes morgued like D.C.'s