



THE
HUMANIST SOCIETY
OF NEW MEXICO
NEWSLETTER

June 2017

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/>

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com>

president@humanistsocietyofnm.org

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

HSNM meetings are free and open to the public (unless otherwise noted.)

Saturday, June 10th

HSNM Informal Meeting 10am – 12pm

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, June 17th

HSNM Topical Discussion 10:00AM – Noon

How Can Humanists Find Common Cause with Non-Humanists?

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, June 24th

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10am – 12noon

LGBTQ Issues and the New Mexico Legislature

Amber Royster

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Meetings by HSNM Affiliates are held throughout the month.

For more information please visit their websites.

Atheist Skeptical Kingdom of Albuquerque (www.meetup.com/ASK-Atheist-Skeptical-Kingdom-of-Albuquerque)

Freedom From Religion, Albuquerque (www.meetup.com/FFRABQ)

New Mexicans for Science and Reason (www.nmsr.org)

Roswatheists (<http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>)

Santa Fe Atheist Community (<http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Atheist-Community>)

President's Message

by Randall Wall

Hi Everyone! Hope your summer is starting off well! I'm getting excited about my upcoming trip to Yellowstone! How about you?

Last month, Amber Royster, our speaker for our speaker meeting wasn't able to make it due to illness. Arrangements are being made to re-schedule her for our June Speaker Meeting. At press time it was not confirmed whether or not she would be able to speak or not. If it is not confirmed then other arrangements will be made.

In addition, those attending last month's topical discussion were not able to pick a topic for June's meeting. I have made some attempt to solicit suggestions from some members but it

The Humanist Society of New Mexico
A Nonprofit Corporation

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.

Officer/Committees

Randall Wall: President
Tara McCaughin: Vice President/Speaker Programs
Cynthianne Yabut: Secretary
Richard Grady: Treasurer
Cheryl Gatner: Member-at-Large
Jeanette Smith: Member-at-Large

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 submission to: Editor, Randall Wall, Paragon2012@comcast.net. The deadline for Newsletter submission is the third Friday of each month. Website submission may be send 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 humanist responsible for its own affairs.

looks like I'm going to have to take matters into my own hands. I'd like to propose "How Can Humanists Find Common Cause with Non-Humanists?" There are many personal viewpoints out there which intersect with Humanism in many ways but avoid claiming the Humanist label. How big is this tent we call Humanism? Can we tolerate and work with people who don't think exactly like us? Well, I'd like to think so, but let's talk about.

One of HSNM's founding members has passed away recently. Laverne Rison was there when it all started for this group (see her HSNM history below.) As Jerry Wesner recalls, she held many offices and rarely missed a meeting. She provided refreshments for the group for many years with only meager compensation. She also wrote some really clever poetry, I can attest. She even offered to let HSNM have her trailer as office space when she was planning to move into out of it! A very generous heart indeed! See her obituary below for more about Laverne. What an interesting life.

Next Speaker Meeting

Amber Royster, Executive Director of Equality New Mexico (EQNM) will speak on LGBTQ issues in New Mexico pertaining to the legislature's work this session. She will also relate some of her own personal life experience as a gay woman.

Our Speaker's Bio

Amber has served as Executive Director of EQNM since 2013 and has worked diligently throughout New Mexico communities, empowering and uplifting voices in advocacy efforts for LGBTQ equality, women's rights, immigrant rights, racial and economic justice, and more.

Amber grew up in Albuquerque, her family having roots in New Mexico that span six generations. Her professional career started in the U.S. Navy, serving honorably on active duty for six years, including two year long tours in the Persian Gulf. After finishing her enlistment, Amber enrolled at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, completing both her B.A. in Communications and Master of Public Administration/Public Policy degrees. During her time in Olympia, Amber worked for the Washington State Department of Transportation, CHOICE Regional Health Network, and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

About Equality New Mexico

Equality New Mexico is the state's oldest and largest LGBTQ advocacy organization, and is committed to uplifting the voices and leadership of our community in creating a reality of equity, full access, and sustainable wellness for LGBTQ New Mexicans. Visit them online at www.eqnm.org.

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Obituary for Laverne Rison

Laverne Rison passed away on May 5, 2017, just a few days after her 89th birthday. Laverne settled in Albuquerque in 1979 but had lived in Rio Rancho at the Fairwinds community for the past six years. Her family would like to express its sincere gratitude to Alliance Hospice, who cared for Laverne during her final days, and also to Fairwinds for the love and assistance they provided to this special lady throughout her residency there.

Laverne was born on April 29, 1928, in Petrolia, Texas, to Bryan and Della (Worley) Henson. She was the second youngest of six children. She endured many hardships during the Great Depression, as her family moved from place to place throughout the South in constant search of work. Adults and children alike picked cotton and labored in a canning factory in order to survive. They lived by the side of a road at one time, and later in a run-down shack that also served as a chicken coop. But Laverne said that, as a child, she never realized she was poor. The family eventually ended up in Roswell, New Mexico, where she graduated from high school.

Laverne attended New Mexico Teacher's College in Silver City where she met her future husband, Clarence (Sparks) Rison. After transferring to Highlands University, the couple was forced to move to California with their small children following a devastating fire that swept through the student housing apartments where they were living. From there, they moved to a remote Alaskan village where they taught in a two-room school before eventually ending up in Wyoming.

Laverne was an accomplished author, poet and playwright, as well as an outstanding teacher. She was also active in Democratic politics for many years and was involved in the Humanist Society of New Mexico. She was an avid bridge player for much of her life but took up poker just as enthusiastically after she moved to Fairwinds, often walking away with a few extra dollars in her pocket. She was an extraordinary woman who will be greatly missed by the friends and family she leaves behind.

Laverne was preceded in death by her parents, her five siblings, and her husband Sparks who died in 1991. She is survived by her three children, Lynette Murray and husband Frank, Susan Beard and husband Peter, and Bill Rison and wife Emma. Grandchildren are Sean Murray, Shannon Gutwein, Randy Dickson, Kevin Dickson, and Christina Rison Ruiz. Laverne was fortunate to inherit three other grandchildren through her son's marriage: Melissa Cardwell, Francesca Denton, and Carl Denton. She also leaves behind several great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and

nephews.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

A History of the Humanist Society of New Mexico

by Laverne Rison

April 2004

Introduction

I was chosen to write a history of our organization for two reasons. I am a charter member of this group and since I served as president in 1991-92, I have been keeper of the records. Make that three reasons: Our present president, Jerry Wesner wants to know where we come from; and how far we've traveled to get to where we are today.

It all began when a native New Yorker, a more recent transplant from Florida, master gardener and socialist-humanist; Sidney Teller, moved to Albuquerque and was dismayed to discover there was no Humanist organization for him to join. Sidney was born a Jew and abandoned that religion as a boy. His mother was having a baby and was suffering terribly for it. He asked his father how a loving God could allow her to suffer so. The answer was one he could never accept, "She has to suffer because Eve sinned."

While he no longer practiced the religion he was born to, Sidney could not escape the fact that he was still, to die-hard bigots, a Jew. Hitler's Germany made no distinction between believers and unbelievers. If you were born to Jewish parents, you were sent to the gas chambers or abducted into slave labor, where your job would be to help Hitler win his war. He wanted a Humanist Society in Albuquerque because, he explained, "I'd feel safer with one I could belong to."

Sidney contacted the American Humanist Association to inquire how he might go about organizing an affiliate in New Mexico. That was in 1985. He was informed that there had been a New Mexico Humanist Association here from 1978 to 1981. Since the AHA still had a copy of its charter,

he could decide whether to begin with a new application, or opt to revive the original group, which was not dead, merely "in abeyance" since the treasurer turned their money over to the AHA in 1981. AHA put Sidney in contact with Cora Cooper, whom they appointed an Advocate, ostensibly to make certain this newly formed Humanist Society of New Mexico was not to be an embarrassment to the National Organization.

Cora was a charter member of the original group; and since that's the only charter in my files; I must assume that Sidney took the course of least resistance and decided to go with the original rather than begin anew.

However, I have in my files another letter from the AHA where they compliment Sidney on beginning a new Humanist Society of New Mexico; and in which they recognize the following members: Sidney Teller, Cora Cooper, Iva O'shaunesy, Donald and Sally Thompson" Lois Kimbrell, Laverne Rison, and Arthur G. Suber. Those are the eight who are charter members of our present organization. As I said, Sidney met Cora through the AHA. He met Iva O'Shaunesey and Art Suber through Cora. He met the Thompsons through the peace center. And he contacted Lois Kimbrell and me through our letters to the editor of the Albuquerque Journal.

That's how it all began. One man, Sidney Teller, wanted to belong to a local affiliate of AHA, because "he'd feel safer that way." Since there was no organization for him to join, he got together with a few disparate individuals, started his own.

Caring for Our Members

HSNM member David Stelle is looking for IT-related employment. He knows about database application development, MS Access (expert), SQL Server and .NET/C#. Plus a little management and business analyst experience.

Send email to gstelle@gmail.com if you know of a possible opening, even if you're not sure if it's a good fit. Thanks!

