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Manitoba Humanist

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President:
Barrie Webster

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Web!

See us at:
mb.humanists.ca

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Editor: Catherine Ousey

Next Meeting

Viscount Gort Hotel

Saturday, September 9

5:30 PM

Dinner may be ordered off the coffee shop menu

After Dinner

Video and Discussion: The God Who Wasn't There

Everyone Welcome

Notice to our vegan members: The Viscount Gort has new
vegan entrees that will be different each month

HAM Holds Summer Social Event

By Catherine Ousey

On Saturday, August 19, David Parker hosted HAM's traditional summer potluck social event at his house in Silver Falls.

Fine weather, few mosquitoes and some delicious dishes combined with the usual good spirits to make a successful

event.

There was lively discussion of several issues, including the current federal government and Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan. We celebrated the birthday of one of our members, Len Evans with a birthday cake.

Entertainment was by Barrie Webster playing a mean banjo until a string broke, cutting short the sing-along.

HAM members wish to convey their heartfelt thanks to David Parker for once again opening up his house for our summer social event.

HAC Holds National Conference and AGM

By Catherine Ousey

The Humanist Association of Canada held its annual conference and Annual General Meeting in Vancouver from June 15 to 18. The theme of the conference was: Humanism Without Borders-Towards Global Harmony.

Keynote Speaker Madeline Weld spoke about the human and ecological problems posed by overpopulation in developing countries.

Another session titled Genocide – An Unholy Alliance of Church and State dealt with the issue of residential schools for aboriginals. Conference attendees heard from a survivor of such a school.

The British Columbia Humanist Association (hosts of the conference) also conducted a rally in

support of residential school survivors, missing aboriginal women and the homeless.

A panel discussion was held on the Fundamentalist Threat of extreme religious belief. All agreed that the threat is real and we need to address it.

The Conference introduced two new humanists with a desire to establish stronger ties to HAC. Justin Trottier and Jennie Fiddes are two university students in Toronto who have formed The Toronto Secular Alliance to provide students with an alternative to Christian student groups.

The Humanist of the Year, Homa Arjomand, was honoured at the banquet for her work in opposing Sharia law in Ontario.

At the AGM, members discussed the report of the task force on federation and referred the document to the new board for discussion with the component organizations of HAC.

HAC elected some new board members and a new president, Gary Bauslaugh. The new president stated that, "...we have a lot of work to do ...to be a more effective voice of humanism in Canada."

Attending the conference from HAM were: Barrie Webster, Miep van Raalte, and Catherine Ousey.

"...the threat (from religious extremists) is real and we need to address it."

Book Review

By Catherine Ousey

A Short History of Nearly Everything
Bill Bryson
Anchor Canada
2004

A departure from his usual travel books, Bill Bryson has attempted a look at the history of nearly every discipline in science.

Witty, clear, and current, his writing explains some controversies in Physics, Biology,

Geology and Cosmology for the non-scientist. His curiosity led him to research many questions in these sciences for three years. He spoke to many experts in many fields. The result is a readable and entertaining book.

Bryson does not shy away from controversy, outlining some of the most contentious issues in

science in the past and today. He illuminates all sides to many questions and is not afraid to state that it may be too early to reach conclusions about some questions.

But the evidence is all in on this book. I heartily recommend it. The section on evolution will be of particular interest to Humanists.

Editorial: Doing The Right Thing In Vancouver

By Catherine Ousey

It's a common sight in Vancouver's West End to see street people or panhandlers. But it was unusual to see one inside an upscale restaurant. I was eating lunch in one of Vancouver's fine dining establishments when my interest was piqued by the arrival of an odd couple, an older man and a

young man. The older man was well dressed and well groomed, exactly the kind of patron one would expect to find in an expensive restaurant. The dirty, shabby clothes and emaciated face of the young fellow testified to the likelihood that he had slept the previous night and

possibly many others on the beach or huddled in a doorway. He was most definitely not a regular in this restaurant.

I was not close enough to them to hear any of their conversation, but to their credit, the staff were as attentive to

"He was most definitely not a regular in this restaurant."

"Was the old man simply a caring individual who wanted to help a young man so obviously down on his luck?"

"...a renewed sense of wonder at the capacity of humans for doing the right thing."

this pair as they were to the rest of their patrons. I wondered what was the story here. Was the young man a relative of the older man? Was he perhaps a nephew or grandson? Was the older man simply a caring individual who wanted to help a young man so obviously down on his luck? Not being completely naïve, I knew that the lunch might simply represent a payment for services.

While this odd pair activated my curiosity, this story isn't really about them. At another table sat a youngish man also eating

alone, an observer of humanity like myself. As he ate his lunch and worked on a laptop he glanced at the odd couple from time to time.

After their meal the older man approached the front desk to pay for the meal with his bank debit card. While his back was turned, the young man pocketed the \$10 that the older man had left on the table as a gratuity for the server.

The pair left the restaurant and I sat there in stunned silence. To my surprise, the young man working on the computer called the

server to his table. He explained what had happened to the money left by the old man and handed the server a ten-dollar bill.

"I don't want you to be done out of your tip because of this," he said.

I left the restaurant after giving the good-hearted young man my biggest smile. He had given me something much more precious, a renewed sense of wonder at the capacity of at least some humans for doing the right thing.

Important news

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE MEMBERS

71 Wildwood Park
Winnipeg, MB
R3T 0C8

August 30, 2006

Members
Humanist Association of Manitoba

The Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency has just advised us that our application for charitable status has been successful. This status places HAM on an equivalent level with many religious organizations and other registered charities. Your executive will be proceeding with appropriate care to make this new status work for HAM.

The new charitable status also means that donations given to the Humanist Association of Manitoba will be eligible to be recognized with a receipt for income tax purposes. Your support will help make sure that HAM is as effective as possible in pursuing its objectives in the coming years.

Yours sincerely

Barrie Webster
President

Helen Friesen
Treasurer



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Manitoba**

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Editor Calls for Material

As you can see from the bylines of this issue, the editor has not received any news, letters to the editor (except the letter on page 5), stories or book reviews from members this summer, hence the one-person show this month.

Understandably, members of HAM have been enjoying a summer of rest and relaxation unencumbered by official business, as has the newsletter editor.

However, the fall season is upon us and we would appreciate any material from our

members whether news or opinion pieces. Editing for space and copyediting service will be provided.

We strongly urge our members to inform their fellow humanists and express their passionate arguments for current topics.

The last word...

HAM member Ivan Pokus was featured in the front section of the Winnipeg Free Press on Monday August 28. He was

interviewed about his work on getting religious training and prayers out of the public schools. He was quoted as saying

that someone should take the government to court. Kudos to Ivan for his continuing battle against religion in public schools.