

2007 June 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Volume 3, Issue 6

# Manitoba Humanist

Published by  
and for the  
Humanist  
Association of  
Manitoba

President: Barrie  
Webster

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**Contents:**

Humour Corner 2  
Tales from the  
Linden Woods 3  
Film Alert 3  
Book Review 4

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## Upcoming events

Humanist Association of Manitoba

### Summer Solstice Party Saturday, June 16, 2007

Helen and John Friesen's property  
7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, Manitoba  
(Mitchell is southeast of Winnipeg on Highway 52,  
and just west of Steinbach)

Starting at 2:30 p.m.  
Ending around 9:00 p.m.

This is a potluck event: salads and desserts

**See page 2 for more details...**

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### Next Get-Together Summer Party Saturday, August 25, 2007

Location: Barrie Webster's home  
71 Wildwood Park – Section E

More Details to Follow

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and also mark your calendar:

### First Fall Meeting Saturday, September 15, 2007

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## Solstice Party Details

### Directions:

From Winnipeg take the # 59 highway to the # 52 highway. Turn east on the #52 (that's the only direction one can take) and proceed to Mitchell.

In Mitchell, turn north on Centre Street N., which is at the corner with a Co-op Gas Bar. Drive north on Centre Street till the very first street that goes east. This is Pinehurst Lane. The Friesens are at the north/east corner of Pinehurst and Centre Street. The house is off-white vinyl-clad with a paving stone driveway.

Note: Be sure you are driving NORTH on Centre Street. You should pass Centre Street going south first. Don't turn here, keeping going straight until you come to Centre Street North.

### The Meal:

Our hosts will provide barbequed chicken for everybody. If you would

prefer a different main course you're welcome to bring whatever you'd like. Coffee and all small items, such as napkins, condiments, etc., will also be provided. All you need to bring are whichever side dishes you wish (salads, desserts, buns, pop, etc.). BYOB if desired.

### Extras:

Feel free to bring anything else you feel would be useful. Extra lawn chairs might be good, although our hosts believe they probably have enough. Some examples of extras: games, music, sunscreen, etc.

### Contact Info:

The Friesens' phone number is 204-326-8181 in case you have any questions, or if you get lost on the way.

See you there!

## Humour Corner: The Value of Skepticism

During the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, one morning's executions began with three men: a rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a rationalist skeptic. The rabbi was marched up onto the platform first. There, facing the guillotine, he was asked if he had any last words. And the rabbi cried out, "I believe in the one and only true God, and He shall save me." The executioner then positioned the rabbi below the blade, set the block above his neck, and pulled the cord to set the terrible instrument in motion. The heavy cleaver plunged downward, searing the air. But then, abruptly, it stopped

with a crack just a few inches above the would-be victim's neck. To which the rabbi said, "I told you so."

"It's a miracle!" gasped the crowd. And the executioner had to agree, letting the rabbi go.

Next in line was the priest. Asked for his final words, he declared, "I believe in Jesus Christ -- the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost -- who will rescue me in my hour of need." The executioner then positioned this man beneath the blade. And he pulled the cord. Again the blade flew downward -- thump! creak! -- stopping just short of its mark once more.

"Another miracle!" sighed the

disappointed crowd. And the executioner for the second time had no choice but to let the condemned go free.

Now it was the skeptic's turn. "What final words have you to say?" he was asked. But the skeptic didn't hear. Staring intently at the ominous engine of death, he seemed lost. Not until the executioner poked him in the ribs and the question was asked again did he reply. "Oh, I see your problem," the skeptic said pointing. "You've got a blockage in the gear assembly, right there!"

*originally printed at  
www.cyberdespot.com/  
unattributed*

## Tales from the Linden Woods: A Ride on a Garbage Truck

by Sophie Schulman

My son, then a pre-schooler with a passion for cars and a devoted collector of any car-related experience, once blurted out in frustration, "I have never yet ridden in an ambulance!" He angrily expressed his belief that this catastrophic injustice was all his parents' fault. Now, half a century later, I can say that I'd never ridden on a garbage truck, nor did I ever hope to. That is to say, until one day last summer, when I was taking a walk in Linden Woods Park. It was a bright summer morning, and I was enjoying a walk along our beautiful lake-shore path when I heard a garbage truck coming up behind me. Two aging men – a driver and the other man – were emptying into the truck all the garbage cans, some of them overflowing, that were placed at intervals along the path. They caught up with me at one of the garbage cans and I

thought they both looked tired, when I saw one of them mopping his brow with the back of his hand, after they emptied a can. Something came over me, and before I knew it, I said, "What a wonderful job you people are doing! Thank you!"

It happened so suddenly, I did not even stop to talk; I spoke to them as I passed by and continued walking straight ahead, not looking back. I was a little bit embarrassed about my spontaneity. I could hear the truck behind me turning left, traveling down a different route.

It usually takes me half an hour to reach the farthest point on my route. By this time, that fine summer day had abruptly changed. A chill wind arrived suddenly, blowing in dark clouds full of rain; a storm was looming out of the blue. There was no shelter nearby, and I knew that I am prone to catch cold all too easily. I headed for home but it was too far away – the storm was bound to beat

me home.

Suddenly I again heard the garbage truck coming.

They had abandoned their work when it was only half done. "Where do you live?" the driver asked as he motioned to me. "Sit here", he said. "We are going to take you home!" They did not have to ask me twice! They delivered me to the door of my seniors' complex just as the first drops began to fall then quickly turned into a downpour.

When I waved goodbye to them through the glass door – safe, dry and relieved – I felt grateful, deeply touched and moved by what they had done

I was initially unwilling to admit even to myself that I hadn't lost my touch. But I couldn't help but smile.

"Hey, grandma," I muttered to myself, "It seems like you are still capable of winning a man's heart! Even better: the hearts of two men at once! Good for you, girl!"

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*"I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in the kindness of human beings. I am so absorbed in the wonder of earth and the life upon it that I cannot think of heaven and angels."*

- Pearl S. Buck

## Film Alert: Eye of the Beholder

A film recently came to my attention through the Myspace network. It's called "Eye of the Beholder", and tells the true story of Ken and Carol Tipton, who opened one of the first video rental shops in St. Louis, Missouri, back in the 1980's. Their chain of video stores was later picketed by a religious group from the

National Federation for Decency, who demanded that they ban a variety of controversial films. The couple was taken to court, and eventually won, but not before their business was bankrupt and their marriage over.

The movie was released in 2005, and has won several Best Film awards at smaller film festivals.

More information about the film can be found at [www.beholder.com](http://www.beholder.com).

I'm not endorsing the film, as I've only watched a couple of short clips. But I would be interested in your opinion if you've seen it. Send me an email at [ham\\_librarian@yahoo.ca](mailto:ham_librarian@yahoo.ca) and let me know what you thought.

## Book Review

## The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice

### The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice

by Christopher Hitchens  
Verso, 98 pages

Reviewed by Donna Harris

This may be a small volume, but it certainly delivers a wallop. Its primary aim is to uncover the very real, and perhaps far less sympathetic, person behind the saintly image that has been popularized in our culture. Mother Teresa has long been held up as a model of devotion and compassion, but here she is pictured in decidedly unflattering terms. It must be pointed out that Hitchens ignores the good works that Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity have done over the years. However, it can almost be guaranteed that the average reader's opinion of the Catholic nun will be much different once they've finished this volume.

Christopher Hitchens is an author, journalist and literary critic. He has been a columnist at Vanity Fair, The Nation, Slate and Free Inquiry. This book is actually a follow-up to a documentary on Mother Teresa which Hitchens narrated and co-wrote. The film was entitled Hell's Angel, and was broadcast in November

1994 on Britain's Channel 4. In this volume, Hitchens' clear purpose is to knock the Albanian nun from the pedestal on which she has been placed.

Using a combination of careful journalistic research and a caustic, yet elegant writing style, Hitchens lays out his evidence. While he doesn't hesitate to spell out his opinion of her and her activities, he relies more on a wide variety of sources. Quoting from a range of other individuals lends credibility to his assertions. Some of the more startling revelations include:

- While donations poured into the Missionaries of Charity organization, little of it was spent on the members of the order – the Sisters themselves – or their efforts to bring aid and comfort to the poor and downtrodden. Most of the money remained in the bank.
- Patients at the long-established Home for the Dying in Calcutta were not provided with stronger painkillers than perhaps aspirin, even though many of them were dying of painful conditions such as cancer.

- Mother Teresa actively used various occasions, including events where she was presented with international awards, to lobby against all forms of contraceptives, abortion and divorce.
- In the homes for the dying, the sisters were taught how to secretly baptize those who were dying, including Hindus and Moslems.
- Mother Teresa knowingly accepted over \$1million in donations from Charles Keating, one of the architects of the American Savings and Loan scandal.

While Hitchens' command of the English language is often laudatory, at times he does tend toward the obscure and cryptic. And on one or two occasions, the point that was being made may have been lost somewhere in the prose. But overall, this was a volume well worth reading.

The Missionary Position was my first experience in reading any of Hitchens' numerous books, and it has left me looking forward to other works. First on that list is his latest book: "god is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything".

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*"I devoutly believe that words ought to be weapons. That is why I got into this business in the first place. I don't seek the title of 'inoffensive,' which I think is one of the nastiest things that could be said about an individual writer."*

- Christopher Hitchens