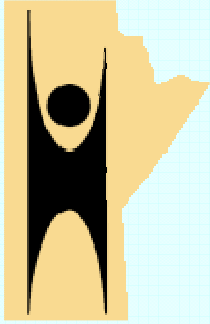


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# Manitoba Humanist



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Humanist  
Association of  
Manitoba

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## Humanist Association of Manitoba

### Upcoming events

Humanist Association of Manitoba

#### Annual General Meeting

**Saturday, January 10, 2009**

Viscount Gort Hotel, 1670 Portage Ave. at Route 90

Annual General Meeting (Members Only) 4:30pm  
Dinner and Meeting (Everyone welcome) 6:00pm  
Attendees may order dinner from Coffee Shop Menu

#### On the Agenda:

**Election of new executive members**

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#### Monthly Meeting

**Saturday, February 14, 2009**

Viscount Gort Hotel, 1670 Portage Ave. at Route 90

#### OUR VERY SPECIAL DARWIN DAY CELEBRATION

**Guest Speakers: Heather McDonell, Barrie Webster  
and Barry Hammond**

## HAM's 2008 Solstice Party

Members of the Humanist Association of Manitoba held their traditional Winter Solstice Celebration on Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at Mondragon Bookstore and Coffeehouse.

The meal was a vegan feast, emphasizing locally sourced foodstuffs. Barrie Webster spoke about the meaning of solstice, its history in human culture, and its importance to everyone.

Thanks to the organizational talents of our own Heather McDonell, two teams participated in a spirited "pictionary" style game – Humanist style. Choices included words like Bullshit, skeptic and Mythbusters. Loads of fun were had by all!

We even gave away door prizes such as Solstice mugs, books, and tote bags.

As is customary, HAM used the opportunity to raise funds for worthy local organizations. HAM decided on two charities of choice this year, the Sexuality Education Resource Centre, and the Spence Neighbourhood Association.

Thanks to everyone who attended, and especially to those who helped make it happen.

- Donna Harris



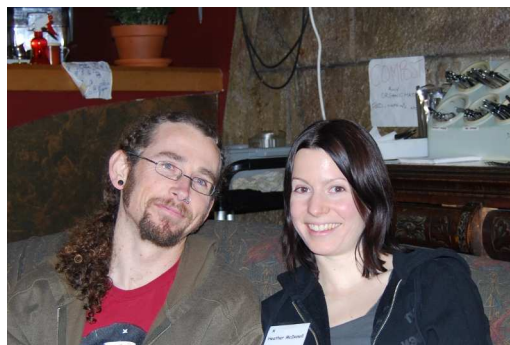
Olga



Alex



Marlene and Neil



Colin and Heather



## 40 days (approximately) to Darwin's Birthday!

Charles Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England. He set sail on the Beagle on December 31, 1831, and published The Origin of Species in 1859. He died on April 19, 1882.

medical advancements that have resulted from this discovery, it becomes abundantly clear that this truly is a birthday to celebrate!

- Jeff Olsson

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*"There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with a mouse."*

- Charles Darwin

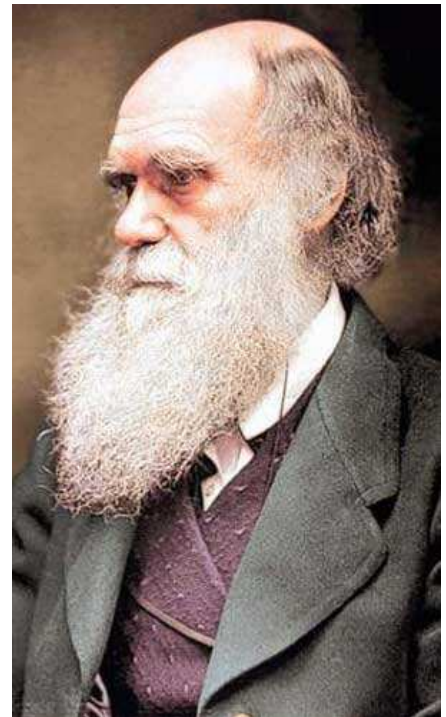
Charles Darwin came from a family interested in biology and the natural sciences. His father was Robert Darwin, a physician, and his grandfather was Erasmus Darwin, a poet, philosopher and naturalist.

Darwin originally intended to study medicine but was unable to bear the sight of surgery performed without anaesthesia. His second choice of career was as a clergyman but after taking a degree from Cambridge University, he began to focus more on naturalism, taking the position of naturalist aboard HMS Beagle, which set sail for the South Pacific at the end of 1831.

Darwin's experiences and research on the Beagle led to his development of a theory of evolution. He published his famous book On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection in 1859, leading to a storm of controversy which has not abated to this day.

But Darwin's realization that evolution occurs is not just about controversy, it's about scientific facts and truth and better way to understand who we are.

When Darwin's Birthday arrives on February 12th, be ready to celebrate one of the greatest discoveries ever made by modern science. Evolution. When you consider the wealth of scientific and



## HAM in the news

Thanks to our president, Barrie Webster, we here at HAM received a most excellent holiday gift!

On December 24<sup>th</sup>, we opened our local Winnipeg Free Press to see a photo of Barrie and an article. On page 2, no less!

Under the title, "Humanist association voice for those in secular world", Carol Sanders asked Barrie about the holiday season, Humanist beliefs, Solstice traditions, and HAM itself.

Barrie reports that Carol called him when our fellow non-believer, Tim Wall from the Winkler area, made the news. Tim has decided to start his own organization, the Humanist Society of Southern Manitoba.

Following is an excerpt from Carol's story:

*"Many folks are wide-eyed with wonder when they hear the Christmas story of Jesus's birth. But even at the age of six, Barrie Webster wasn't buying most Bible stories -- lumping them in with fairy tales and biting his tongue throughout Sunday school. "I found them to be unbelievable," said the Anglican-raised president of the Humanist Association of Manitoba.*

*The Manitoba group has about 60 members and is growing in number and declining in age, said Webster, who has served as president for five years but is stepping down in January.*

*The group, which formed in the 1990s, has been busy with two big events -- the winter solstice in December and the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin on Feb. 12. "It's a source of social support," said*

*Webster, a retired University of Manitoba science professor. "Maybe you're not alone because you've come to the conclusion there is no God."*

*The Humanist Association of Manitoba is pushing the province and the city to declare Feb. 12 Darwin Day.*

*The father of evolution spent a lifetime studying nature and publishing his discoveries about the origin of the species, which have rocked religious authorities to this day.*

*"He was somebody who stuck his neck out and said, 'Look -- this is the way things work,'" said Webster. That doesn't mean humanists lose their sense of awe and wonder, said Webster, who says playing the cello and mandolin are "spiritual" experiences for him.*

*While humanists don't believe in religion or God, they do believe in some time-honoured traditions. They will put up a tree and light a yule log to celebrate the Dec. 21 winter solstice because it's an astronomical fact regardless of culture, mythology or religion...."*

If you'd like to read the entire story yourself, you can head over to the Winnipeg Free Press website ([www.winnipegfreepress.com](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com)) and search for "Barrie Webster", or cut and paste this link: <http://tinyurl.com/8zq3x9>.

Again, congratulations Barrie! Well done.

- Donna Harris

## The Real Cost of Gold

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*“Gold is forever. It is beautiful, useful, and never wears out. Small wonder that gold has been prized over all else, in all ages, as a store of value that will survive the travails of life and the ravages of time.”*

- James Blakely

One of my favorite movie stars is Marilyn Monroe, and one of my favorite songs is “Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend”. But, like many others, I was already familiar with the controversies around diamonds. The De Beers “a diamond is forever” marketing campaign has been one of the driving forces behind the popularity of diamonds (and their prices), not to mention the tragedies behind “blood” or “conflict” diamonds from Africa.

However, did you know that gold is just as controversial?

The latest issue of National Geographic magazine (January 2009) contains an eye-opening article on the mining and global sale of gold.

Gold is not an infinite resource. There are fewer and fewer large remaining sources of gold. Forget those images of huge veins of gold, or golf-ball size nuggets. What gold remains is in smaller and smaller quantities – even microscopic amounts – in remote corners of the world, which means more mines are relying on increasingly difficult methods of extracting the metal.

And, of course, those areas where gold mining is still taking place are often in the developing world, where regulations may be less stringent. The National Geographic article focused on the town of La Rinconada in Peru, and the Batu Hijau mine on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa.

These mines are definitely a mixed blessing, because they do bring jobs, technologies and development. Many people make their livelihood from mining. The article quoted a recent estimate that there are between 10

and 15 million “artisanal” miners around the world, with about 30 percent of those being women and children.

However, gold mining can also take a heavy toll on the local environment, as well as the health of those individuals involved in mining.

Many small-scale miners use mercury to separate gold from rock, spreading the poison in both gas and liquid forms. UNIDO (The United Nations Industrial Development Organization) estimates that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all mercury released by humans into the environment comes from artisanal gold mining.

All of this information has made me re-consider my fondness for gold, and whether it’s really worth our global obsession.

- Donna Harris

### GOLD FACTS

- In the past eight years, the price of gold has risen from \$271 per ounce on September 10, 2001, to \$1,023 in March, 2008.
- In all of history, only 161,000 tons of gold have been mined, barely enough to fill two Olympic-size swimming pools.
- The open-pit mines run by the world’s largest mining companies are so massive they can be seen from space.
- Extracting one ounce of gold from the Batu Hijau operation in Indonesia – the amount in a typical wedding ring – requires the removal of more than 250 tons of rock and ore.

COUNTDOWN TO DARWIN DAY – FEBRUARY 12<sup>TH</sup>

RANDOM DARWIN FACTS

- Darwin entered Cambridge as a student in 1827, when he was 18. He was a member of Christ’s College, and was enrolled for a general degree which included the study of theology and mathematics. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1831.
- As a student Darwin enjoyed Cambridge life to the full, hunting, collecting natural history specimens – especially beetles – and, with a group of like minds, forming the “Glutton Club”, a dining club devoted to eating “Birds and beasts which were before unknown to human palate”.
- When he began to consider marriage, Darwin – used to jotting down daily notes on animal breeding, scrawled rambling thoughts about career and prospects on two scraps of paper, one with columns headed “Marry” and “Not Marry”. Advantages included “constant companion and a friend in old age ... better than a dog anyhow”, against points such as “less money for books” and “terrible loss of time”.

Executive

Barrie Webster  
Barry Hammond  
Helen Friesen  
Heather McDonell

Members at Large:

Randy Gibson  
Donna Harris  
Brian Latour  
Jeff Olsson  
Grant Rogerson  
Neil Schipper  
Sophie Shulman

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Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member       Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership      \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income      \$10.00
- Household Membership\*      \$45.00
- Household Limited Income      \$15.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone#: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**DONATION** (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10     \$20     \$30     \$50     \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT:     Cheque       Money Order  
                   Visa       Mastercard     Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque or money order payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: *Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.