

# The



# HUMANIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMANISTS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA

PO BOX 1143 ORMOND BEACH FL 32175

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

February 2005

**OUR GOAL IS THE APPLICATION OF REASON AND SCIENCE TO UNDERSTAND NATURE AND TO EXERCISE HUMAN COMPASSION TO SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEMS**

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## **MONTHLY ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

**General Meeting : 02.12. 12:30 PM**  
**Ormond Beach Library**

**Board Meeting : 02.16. 10:15 AM** *Ormond Beach Library*

**Brunch / Bunch : 02.27. 10:30 AM** *Riviera Country Club*

***The Humanists of NE Florida***

will meet on Saturday

## **February the 12<sup>TH</sup>**

at **12:30 PM** at the Ormond Beach Library, located at 30 S. Beach St. in Ormond Beach. The topic will be

## **“The World Crises and the Failure of Education ”**

presented by **Mario Kamenetzky**.

Mr. Kamenetzky is a former resident of Argentina, a Graduate Chemical Engineer who was employed by the World Bank, has taught at the college level and is the author of a book titled **“The invisible Player.”**

Our pre-meeting lunch on February the 12<sup>th</sup> will take place as always at 10:30 AM in the Dining Room of the

## **Royal Floridian Hotel**

located at A1A opposite Granada Ave., in Ormond Beach. If you wish to attend the pre-meeting lunch, please give **Rosalyn** a call at **(386) 761-1456**.

**A brief coffee/social hour will again take place after this meeting**

## ***January Meeting***

In January we had the pleasure to be entertained and informed by Skip Lowery about the various social and philosophical ideas expressed by one of the greatest story tellers in US history. We were pleased to welcome 52 participants who

enjoyed Skip's professional delivery which at times created the illusion Mark Twain spoke to us. At this place we like to take the opportunity to thank Skip for that wonderful afternoon which let us appreciate the lesser known side of a great American.

### **March meeting**

In our March meeting we like to welcome Peggy McIntire as our speaker. The topic was not known at the time of preparing this newsletter. Therefore details will appear in our March issue.

### **February Board Meeting**

The board meeting for the month of February will be as usual on the third Wednesday, which is

#### **February the 16<sup>th</sup>**

at 10:15 AM. It will take place in the Ormond Beach Library and is followed by our monthly luncheon at 12:30 noon in the dining room of the **Royal Floridian Hotel**, located A1A opposite Granada Ave. in Ormond Beach.

### **Brunch with the Bunch**

Brunch with the Bunch will be on the **last Sunday** of each month; in this case it will be **February the 27<sup>th</sup>** at **10:30 AM** at the Riviera Country Club, located at Calle Grande Ave. in Ormond Beach. As usual it is always a casual, friendly get-together, which provides the opportunity to exchange those special and sometimes even trivial thoughts. **Everybody is welcome – we love your company!!** If you plan to join us,

please give Rosalyn a call. Her phone number is (386 ) 761- 1456. If you can not reach her please contact any of the other board members listed on last page of this newsletter.

### **Thoughts of the Editor**

## **The Universe- The Earth and The Pea**

Very frequently during the course of my life I grappled with the immensity of the universe and the place our tiny planet with its billions of occupants plays in this vastness. Needless to say I never could accept the idea that one mighty power called god created or designed intelligently those billions of stars and designated a tiny bubble quivering around the sun on the periphery of our known milky way as the home of the homo sapiens. But not only supposedly did he/she create a home for those billions of earthlings, he/she also laid down the rules or guide lines via special messengers how to live and behave. Since this mysterious super designer created also this micro earthling called Harald, he/she also provided him with the ability to question and to imagine.

So let's do it !

Envision out there are billions of stars. Many of them probably larger than our own sun. The closest of them is the Proxima Centauri a modest 4.2 light years away. But most of the others are hundred's if not thousand's of light years away. As a matter of fact many if not all astronomers speak about million of light years. Since the creator most presumably designed all of it, he/she was around long before homo sapiens or homo erectus began to fight for their survival. Can you envision a super genius **millions** creating billions of stars and galaxies then making a decision to pick a tiny bubble **of** light years away as a home for our species. In the grand scheme of things this speck we call earth compares to the rest of the universe like a pea to our earth. According to those holy self appointed messengers "our paradise" was created five or six thousand years ago. This pea – size world is to day occupied by 6.2 billion human species. In universal dimension expressed they have no greater significance than a microbe on a pea. It is hard to believe that each of them is supposedly guided by a higher power to live, to fight and after a flash of cosmic time to die. Don't you think there is something wrong with the historic holy picture presented to the general population ? Oh, I forgot, one is not to think in those terms, but just to believe in a

higher purpose. Only sound reasoning and compassion for each other on a global scale will in the long run ensure a decent life for all the species while they occupy this tiny planet.

## MEMBERS FORUM

### **AGNOSTICISM, ATHEISM, AND SCIENCE**

**Dan Kennedy**

*In recent issues of the Humanist Newsletter there have been expressions of thoughts concerning the relation of science to agnosticism and atheism. These have been directed at my placing of atheism toward the closed end and agnosticism toward the open end of an open vs closed minded continuum. I would like to explore this issue a bit more. Below are a few comments from prominent scientists regarding the nature and philosophy of science.*

*"Science, to put its warrant as concisely as possible, is the organized, systematic enterprise that gathers knowledge about the world and condenses the knowledge into testable laws and principles."* **Edward O. Wilson**

*"It has often been emphasized, particularly by the philosopher Karl Popper, that the essential feature of science is that its theories are falsifiable "*

**Murray Gell-Mann**

*"There is no absolute knowledge. And those who claim it whether they are scientists or dogmatists, open the door to tragedy. All information is imperfect. We have to treat it with *humility*."*

**Jacob**

**Bronowski**

*"One thing I have learned in a long life: that all our science, measured against reality, is primitive and child like and yet it is the most precious thing we have."*

**Albert Einstein**

Among the major concepts prevalent in the philosophy and methodology of science is that of testable hypotheses that are open to falsifiability.

Lets examine a few statements relative to this concept.

"There is Intelligent Design (or God) behind the creation and working of the Universe." Is this statement falsifiable? In defense of the statement one might argue that the immensity and complexity of the Universe and the overwhelming odds against life evolving on our planet

constitute evidence of Intelligence Design. But, is there really any clear concrete proof that the statement is true

Or false?

"There is no Intelligent Design." Is this statement falsifiable? One might defend this statement by arguing that the degree of chaos in the Universe and on our planet hardly suggests Intelligent Design. But, can we clearly and concretely show that this statement is either true or false? "I don't know whether Intelligent Design is behind the creation and working of the Universe." This statement does not neatly fit with the falsifiability concept and is the agnostic position. Not being falsifiable it could be held to be outside of the realm of science, which would also be true of statements 1 and 2. Statement 1 tends to characterize believers, statement 2 atheists, and 3 agnostics. The truth is that we do not know whether or not Intelligent Design is responsible for Existence. "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."

**Carl Sagan**

The burden of proof does rest on those making the claim. On the other hand, the open ended/open mindedness of agnosticism would appear to be more compatible with science than a flat out acceptance or rejection of an Unknown-- especially an Unknown that has challenged some of the greatest minds throughout history. Another aspect of agnosticism that appeals to me is that it encourages a continuation of questioning, searching, and interesting speculation. I can almost hear (well, at least imagine) some voices saying "Science is not about speculation." Well, please consider that ideas such as wormholes and other universes, the chaotic inflationary *universe* paradigm, aspects of string theory, and questions such as "Can something be created out of nothing?" have thus far generated no testable hypotheses, yet reputable mainstream theoretical physicists have certainly been speculating about them.

"The important thing is not to stop questioning."

**Albert Einstein**

### IN MEMORIAM

***With deep regret we have learned that our long time member and friend***

***Arthur Brenner***

***has passed away. Arthur was a native Yonkers, New York man who retired from his position as a Professional***

**Engineer some years ago. He is survived  
by two daughters and son.**

**The Board of 2005**

|                            |                                      |        |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| The President              | Dennis Deshaies<br>(904) 794-2706    |        |
| Vice President             | Larry Munding<br>(904) 471-6148      |        |
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| Secretary                  | James Christianson<br>(386) 677-1176 |        |
| Editor                     | Harald Podgora<br>(386) 257-5628     |        |
| Publication<br>Coordinator | Emily Seibert<br>(386) 615-1920      | Social |
| Chairperson                | Rosalyn Pluzynski<br>(386) 761-1456  |        |



Please note  
OUR WEB SITE:  
<http://northeastflorida.humanists.net/>

**Dear Members and Friends**

**Please note:**  
Due to new library hours we had to adjust the  
beginning of our meeting each second Saturday to  
12:30 PM. . Please adjust your schedule  
accordingly.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES**

**TO ALL THE WONDERFUL  
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

**who entered this world during the months  
of February and March many years ago.**

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Emily SEIBERT | 02.03 |
| Eleonore NASH | 02.06 |
| Dan KENNEDY   | 02.06 |
| Jim STRAYER   | 03.01 |
| Bert GIEBEL   | 03.08 |

**SOMEBODY MISSING ???**

Please let us know !!!



**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

We wish to welcome our new member:

**Joseph GLYNN**

We hope you will find the same companionship  
and intellectual stimulation  
as many of our current members have learned to  
appreciate. We are looking forward to see you  
soon.



**Whatever you do**

**Wherever you go**

**Please**

**Take good care of yourself !!!**