

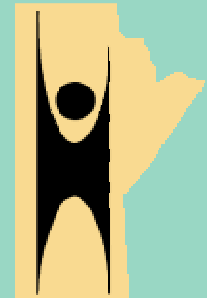
Manitoba Humanist



The English Garden at Assiniboine Park

Published by and for the Humanist Association of Manitoba

“We are beyond belief”



www.mb.humanists.ca

PICNIC IN THE PARK – HAM’S SUMMER PARTY!

Yes, we’re going to have a Summer Party! (BBQ - Picnic - Pot Luck)

Please join us on Saturday, August 13th at Assiniboine Park. We have Picnic Site #3 reserved from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Site #3 is located in the north-west corner of the park. A map can be found at www.assiniboinepark.ca.

We’ll be supplying the basic fixings for hamburgers, hotdogs and veggie burgers. (i.e., meat, buns and condiments). If you’d care to bring something extra to share – such as a salad, snack, soft drink or Granny’s secret-recipe deviled eggs – please feel free!!

And, of course, please remember to bring anything

else you’d require. Your own beverages, any special food items, lawn chair, bug spray, Frisbee or softball if you’re the athletically inclined type.

But if you just want a chance to kick back, relax and enjoy a pleasant low-key afternoon/evening and some interesting conversation, here’s your opportunity.

My psychic abilities have assured me that we’ll have beautiful weather (giggle). However, if my predictive power fails me, (there’s been rain on two of the last 10 August 13^{ths} – both in the last two years), there is a shelter at the site, although a complete “rain plan B” has not yet been developed. (Ideas anyone?)

(con’t next page)



Assiniboine Park Pavilion

The event is free and open to all. **However, please RSVP to ham_librarian (at) yahoo.com** so that we know whether to buy enough to feed 5 or 25. Thanks! See you there!



SECOND ANNUAL MASH FILM FESTIVAL

So far, the organizers behind this year's MASH Film Festival have been rather silent regarding this year's lineup of films.

What we know is that there are a number of short films on the agenda, and they include individuals such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Tim Minchin and Al Gore.

I do recall hearing that there may be a screening of something new, something local, something original. But darn, nobody's talking!

Here's all organizer Jeff Olsson would say:

"This year the film festival will focus on the question, "Can we be good without God?" and just like last year we will have an eclectic mixture of ideas related to atheism, skepticism and humanism. This year we will present a number of short films rather than having a feature length film. Come prepared to laugh and to think."

There you have it. No details! Guess we're all just going to have to be there on Sunday, August 14th at the Park Theatre, 698 Osborne Street at 6:30 p.m., to satisfy our curiosity.

Admission is by donation, and tickets for HAM's "Get Real" raffle will be available. You could win \$150 in gift certificates to McNally Robinson, a Kobo e-reader, or even an Xbox360 with Kinect!

IMPRESSIONS FROM A FIRST-TIME TAM ATTENDEE

It was my first time at The Amazing Meeting (TAM), at meeting James Randi AND in Las Vegas – exciting!

I was curious about the word 'AMAZING' in the name... I thought, "Well, they won't die of modesty, that's for sure!" I guess it found its explanation when it turned out that Randi had started (long ago) his career as a magician: as such you've got to help your slow public to realize that you do, indeed, do 'amazing' things!

And Randi does do them: almost single-handedly he created those Skeptics' meetings by having started some 15 years ago with a mere 150 participants. TAM 9 can boast 1500 participants from every state of the USA, from UK and most European countries, from Australia, Japan, Iran, Israel, Turkey etc.

Out of 1500 51% attended first time like myself. 40% were women, all skin colours, all ages, many youth. An impressive progress in 15 years! He created the place to meet for the like-minded people, to feel at 'home' with them, to learn that there is, actually, a multitude of us – undoubtedly a hugely beneficial development for everyone involved! No wonder, the general mood in the crowd was all smiles, easy laughing, people obviously enjoyed themselves and made friends. And it didn't harm that they fed us. This is a spectacular Randi's top achievement in my eyes.

What else? The first day – the workshops – was a disappointment; maybe, just my bad luck, or, perhaps, I had some wrong expectations having had previous experience only with the medical meetings that were... well, they were science. Here it was anything but... a circus? At the one workshop about UFOs we were taught how to make a believable photo of a 'UFO' from a coffeepot lid... It was, hm, fun... but not worth its money. Next days were better: the presentations (of variable interest but many quite superficial) alternating with the panel discussions (mostly friendly contests of witticisms). Randi turned out to be nice to talk to; he said he invented his surname Randi because his real one was

Danish, long and hard to spell out.

On the negative side I should mention two things. First - it was, alas, my strong impression that a peculiar 'Randi-cult' creation has been halfway through... His initials splashed literally everywhere, on the walls, papers, tablecloth, anywhere you look, like Mao or Stalin's. He was very publicly (and long) interviewed at the scene in front of the audience... He was never tired to pose for yet another picture with yet another adoring stranger. His 'beard' (some white-fiber imitation) was selling as a souvenir... as were T-shirts with his name... He was like a lovable Hollywood star with beard rather than breasts – the only difference. It was all generally far too much commercialized, but maybe they wouldn't have had enough money without...

And the second thing was about the crowd: among other activities there had been endorsement of vaccination (against fears of autism it allegedly might provoke etc) and at one point a 'vaccination clinic' was opened: everyone could get a shot of anti-diphtheria + anti-tetanus + anti-whooping cough vaccine (old well known 'triple-vaccine' for children) free as a matter of propaganda. I was dismayed to see a long-long line to get it.

I tried to reason with them: "It doesn't help any promotion, not here, but there is a small but definite risk that a foreign protein (antibodies) might dis-balance your immune system and provoke any of autoimmune conditions – what for?!" It was hopeless... And these were the SKEPTICS! Crowd mentality and gullibility rule the world...

- Sophie Shulman

HUMANISM, A PERSONAL VIEW

When I first heard of humanism I'll have to admit I had to look it up.

In the short time I have identified myself as a humanist my research has found it has no rulebook, it has no ancient tablets, no exalted leader, no grand poo-bah and no pope. We have

basic principles we all share but even these are quite malleable; they can change with new evidence or better Ideas. Humanism is not a religion. It is not some warped form of "up with people". I have found most of the principles of humanism are innate in our species, even though most people don't define themselves as humanist.

The word is obscure to some. Case in point, recently a co-worker of mine insisted his father had purchased a small humanist at a garage sale to keep his good cigars in. I assured him what his father had purchased was a humidior, not a humanist. So if you haven't heard of humanism don't feel bad.

Someone once asked me to define humanism in one sentence. I couldn't do it, but here are a couple of examples that I like.

- *Humanism is an ethical alternative to religion based on human experience.*
- *Humanism; the ongoing result of our species trying to understand itself.*

So what is humanism? To answer that question my first stop was the dictionary, after checking about ten definitions from as many different dictionaries, there seems to be a consensus. "Humanism: A system of thought that rejects religious beliefs and centers on humans and their values, capacities and worth."

After some more research I found, what was for me, one of the best essays that brought me to realize that I've probably been a humanist for most of my life. The essay is called "The Core Principles of Secular Humanism: Twelve Fundamental Principles Stated and Examined", by Victor A. Gunasekara. You can find it here: <http://uqconnect.net/slsoc/manussa/coreprin.htm>

It's not a very long read and the only real problem I have with it was in the title. Isn't humanism secular by definition? Kind of the same feeling I get when I'm referred to as a godless atheist.....it's like, well ...yeh. What other kind is there? Maybe someone will explain that to me.

I can see the author's reason for the division. A quick surf of the interwebs will reveal all kinds of humanism. Renaissance humanism, existential humanism, Marxist humanism, Buddhist humanism and, probably the most egregious misappropriation of the word, Christian humanism.

We all can agree one can be a good person and still be religious; many millions are. But some religious people are unable to separate where their reason starts and their theistic dogma ends. Christian humanism claims to be the fire that lit the renaissance, all the while doing the utmost to stifle scientific progress. Christian humanism claims it brought about the end of slavery in Britain and the US. This is demonstrably false.

There are no passages in the new testament that speak against slavery. Jesus himself says; *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear.* (Ephesians 6:50). Jesus didn't seem to have a problem with people owning other humans as property. No, slavery didn't end because of Christian doctrine or because people got more religion. It ended because people became more reasonable, ethical and caring. They became in effect, more humanistic.

What does it mean to be a humanist? That's a little tricky. I'm sure everyone you ask would give you a different answer, so this is my take on it.

Humanists will set aside comfortable and comforting beliefs in favour of truth and reason. A humanist places a high value on intellectual integrity. We won't be swept up by fancy claims or appealing ideas that aren't backed by proper evidence or logic. Humanists take full responsibility for our actions and ethical standards. We know these standards will evolve as we do. We are not dependant on ancient holy books for moral guidance or a supernatural entity to heap praise or blame on. We understand the idea that being a humanist means living with uncertainty. There are no absolutes, there aren't always answers to our questions, and, lots of times, decisions and situations have many shades of grey.

Finally, humanists realize we may be alone in this universe and this little rock we live on is all we have for now. It is home to almost seven billion people. It is up to us to make our own purpose, our own meaning and our own future. Being a humanist means we are accountable to each other for what we make of this world and we'd better get it right.

That's why I'm a humanist.

- Pat Morrow

CAN YOU DEVELOP A HUMANIST "ELEVATOR PITCH"?

An attendee at the last Amazing Meeting has a short article online about developing an "elevator pitch" for skepticism. Let me explain.

When you're at an event like TAM, or if you're telling people where you're going, it's not unusual for them to go "What's Skepticism?" Which is why this person was trying to develop a short description, suitable to deliver in a sentence or two (i.e., while riding in an elevator).

With that in mind, here is his elevator pitch for skepticism:

"Skepticism is the intersection of science education and consumer protection. We help people learn from science to avoid spending their money on products and services that do not work."

He goes on to add:

Note the use of positive terminology. Science education is a good thing. Consumer protection is a good thing. How can the intersection between these two good things be anything other than positive?

His example's pretty good. Perhaps not perfect, but a good start. So, keeping it in mind, can we also come up with an "elevator pitch" for Humanism?

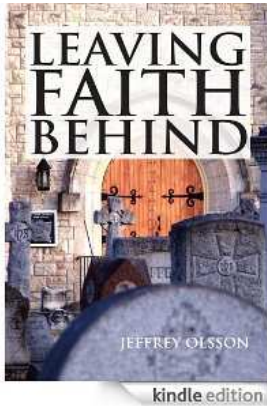
Here's my take on an "elevator pitch" for

Humanism:

“Humanism is using science and rational thinking to live a good life, without a belief in anything supernatural.”

I'd like to hear what you can think up. Send them to me at the Ham_Librarian email, and I'll include them in the next newsletter.

- Donna Harris



LEAVING FAITH BEHIND IS NOW AN E-BOOK

For those who might not have heard, our president, Jeff Olsson, wrote a book last year about his transition from an Anglican priest to a humanist/atheist.

Leaving Faith Behind is now available as an e-book, at BarnesandNoble.com (as a Nook eBook for \$7.99) and at Amazon.com in Kindle format for \$9.99. You can also still buy the hard or soft cover versions of the book from many other outlets.

Congratulations Jeff!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, August 13, 2011

HAM Summer Party

Location: Assiniboine Park, Picnic site #3

Time: 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Cost: Free. Hot dogs, veggie burgers and hamburgers provided. Please bring your own special foodstuffs, treats, supplies, etc.

Sunday, August 14, 2011

MASH Film Festival

Location: Park Theatre, 698 Osborne Street

Time: 6:30 pm

Theme: "Morality Evolved" – short films, provocative dialog and compelling ideas

Cost: By donation

Saturday, September 10, 2011

Regular Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue

Time: Meet & Greet 5:00 pm, meeting 5:30 pm

Speaker/Topic: **Laura Creek Newman**, Registered Dietician, on food myths and fallacies

Cost: Free. But individuals pay for their own food & drink

Saturday, September 17, 2011

The Winnipeg Skeptics' Skepticamp

Location: Aqua Books, 274 Garry Street

Time: 11:00 am to 6:00 pm

Speaker/Topic: Winnipeg's annual open conference celebrating science and skepticism

Website: tinyurl.com/SkeptiCampWinnipeg

Friday, September 23, 2011 through Sunday, September 25, 2011

Red River Freethinkers Convention

Location: Ramada Suites, Fargo, North Dakota

Speakers/Topics: Michael Shermer, PZ Myers, Richard Carrier, Richard Haynes and Robert M. Price

Website: www.project42convention.org

Saturday, October 15, 2011

Regular Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park

Speaker/Topic: TBA

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca



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

* After July 1st, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

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

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

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

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