

THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

A HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH (HOFW) PUBLICATION

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Briefs

Texas Secular Convention 2015 slated in Austin

The Secular Coalition for America and other secular groups will sponsor the 2015 Texas Secular Convention in Austin, February 27 - March 3 at the Sheraton Austin Hotel near the Capitol.

The theme of the convention is "Imagining a secular Texas." The schedule kicks off from noon until about 1:40 p.m. on Friday with a rally on the South Capitol steps and a variety of speakers.

So far 16 speakers are scheduled. David Smalley of the Dogma Debate, Clifton Stucky, and Nick Lee, will give introductions and will be followed by other speakers to be announced. Panel discussions will follow in hotel conference rooms at 6 p.m. Friday.

The Saturday schedule includes panel discussions about effective ways to build coalitions among progressive religious and secular communities and about policy areas Texas secular voters can realistically have an impact on in the near future.

A range of other speakers will be present or discuss issues throughout the day and will be followed by a live Dogma Debate broadcast and social events.

Sunday the convention will close with a celebrity breakfast and additional speakers in the morning.

Group registration rates of \$149 a night are offered through February 4th, as long as rooms last.

Additional registration fees apply to attend events. Various registration options are available on-line at the following link: <http://texassecularconvention.org/>

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Research of HoFW history and other atheist groups offers insight into growth of atheism and links to global trends

by Wanda Foster and Minister Emeritus Russell Elleven, Westside Unitarian Universalist Church

(This article opens a series exploring trends, ideas, motivations, and histories of Fort Worth area humanist, agnostic, atheist, and secular organizations formed in the Fort Worth – Dallas area since 1985. This growth seems to coincide with a global increase in unaffiliated populations.)

Something happened in the Fort Worth – Dallas area starting around 1985 when the Metroplex Atheists organization was initially formed. It was followed by an explosion of other similar organizations emphasizing the rational and removing religion from the social equation in increasing numbers. Our own organization, Humanists of Fort Worth, was one of them, officially chartered June 3, 1999 by the American Humanist Association. Unofficially, we estimate that this organization is approximately 98 percent atheist or agnostic.

Many atheist groups have expressed misunderstanding of our somewhat unique relationship with a church. In most statistics, the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church and other organizations similar to it are counted as religions, and our organization, HoFW simply leases space from them. But that is not the whole story. In fact, Minister Emeritus Russell Elleven, former minister of Westside, surmises that some 60 percent of the church was atheist, including himself, when he left in 2013. The church was founded in 1994.

Since that time, some 18 to 20 atheist, agnostic, and secular organizations--and probably more--have popped up in the Fort Worth – Dallas Metropolitan area. This number excludes business interests, such as the Dogma Debate, a

talk radio show that boasts 145,000 listeners each month and downloads of more than 2.4 million podcasts. David Smalley, a former Christian musician, leads the organization.

He reportedly became an atheist after 14 years as a student of Christianity and other world religions. Dogma Debate broadcasts on-line on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. central time on topics of interest to atheists and agnostics, including atheist and agnostic viewpoints and problems with religious dogma. These broadcasts are found at the following Web link: <http://dogmadebate.com/listen/>. A portion of the service is subscription, but archived events can be viewed or heard on audiotape without subscribing.

While many atheist organizations are new, they have been here long enough to have a history and a reason for existing. The reasons are seldom fully understood other than to say most want to commune with like-minded people. Reviewing their interests on the social Web site, www.meetup.com Web pages for each organization often yields further information about other shared common interests, including the arts, culture, current events, democracy, education, environmental concerns, history, law, philosophy, politics, public service, rational inquiry, and science.

Social media sites like Meetup also show common interests even outside of these specifically atheist organizations. For example, a sampling of the Cultures, Cuisines, and Conversations Meetup site reveals more than a smattering of Freethinkers, atheists, and humanists, including at least two HoFW members. They show up in each other's company at film festivals, art museums, dinners, and theater all over Fort Worth and Dallas.

Social gathering of like-minded people is hardly a phenomenon, but the facts seem to show that the growth of atheism, agnosticism, and secularism has become both a global trend, as well as a local one.

Counting atheists and agnostics and tracking their demographics are daunting tasks. This is largely true because we are counted in ways that fail to identify us as a clear population. For example, atheists and agnostics often are counted as part of both religious and unaffiliated categories to which we do not belong, or we are placed in mislabeled, "other" categories in ways that limit ability to establish a clear, nontheist identity or association. Still, some excellent attempts have been made to do this.

Two sociologists, Michael Hout and Claude Fischer, reported in 2002 that the number of Americans who claimed no religious belief doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent in the 1990s. The trend appears to have continued at a rapid pace, since a newer 2013 Pew Research Center poll shows that today roughly one in five adults or 20 percent of the U.S. adult population claims no religious affiliation. Pew further breaks that total down by age and states that one-third of those under 30 report no religious affiliation.

These are the highest percentages ever recorded in Pew Research polls, which are well-respected in the statistical industry. Overall, the number of self-described atheists and agnostics totals 13 million. As shown in the 2012 chart, an even larger group of some 59 million people across North America simply say they have no religious affiliation, which can mean many different things to different people.

(continued on page 4)

Lone Star Film Festival Opens with "The Imitation Game"

Film presents life of Alan Turing, Enigma Machine code breaker

By Wanda Foster

Humanists, freethinkers, and atheists were well-represented at the 2014 Lone Star Film Festival on opening night, November 5th, at the Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art (the Modern).

The main attraction of the evening, the acclaimed independent film "The Imitation Game," at that time was only one of several movies nominated for a Golden Globe Award. By mid-December, however, the film had been nominated for five Golden Globes, including Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Picture. Many reviews suggest the film may be Oscar worthy.

Besides receiving Golden Globe nominations, the film already has won a 2014 American Film Institute award in

the Top Ten Films category, the 2014 Hollywood Film Awards Best Director Award, and the 2014 Aspen Film Festival Special Audience Recognition Award. The film presents a combination of unique circumstances that offer eye-opening opportunities for humanists to explore human traits, including the highs and lows of human nature, the natural virtues of science and reason, and how human intolerance has potential to limit human success.

Film critic Christopher Kelly opened the night by speaking to a completely packed audience of some 150 or more people. He presented the overarching theme of the movie and of other films in the 2014 festival—great people overcoming great odds to achieve great things. (continued on page 5)



Alan Turing, Mathematician, Father of the Modern Computer

Opinion

Another Visit to the Two Americas

by Sam

Huge U.S. corporations could owe as much as \$700 billion in corporate income taxes on their foreign profits. Corporations owe income tax on their foreign profits just like they owe income tax on profits made here, but tax law lets them defer paying those taxes until they bring their profits back into the U.S.

The rationale for letting corporations defer taxes on foreign profits is that they might need to invest their foreign profits outside the U.S. That investment hopefully will allow them to make even more money and result in even greater tax revenue for the U.S.

Unfortunately, many corporations keep their foreign profits outside the country simply because they do not

want to pay income tax on the money. Worse, some of them use accounting tricks to make it appear profits made in the U.S. were made outside the country. One of these companies, Pfizer, charges higher prices here but reports a loss in the U.S. while reporting huge profits outside the U.S.

It is estimated that American corporations with multinational operations hold more than \$2 trillion outside the country. Consequently, at the top 35-percent tax rate, which in reality no one pays, they could owe up to \$700 billion in income tax.

Eric Garner was described by his friends as a neighborhood peace-maker and as a generous, congenial person. He had six children, one of whom was only 3 months old at the time of his death, and three grand-

children. He had been arrested several times in the past for selling "loosies," single cigarettes from untaxed cigarette packs. Obviously, he needed the money and was depriving the state a few cents in tax revenue. He had filed a handwritten complaint in federal court in 2007 accusing a police officer of conducting a cavity search of him on the street, "digging his fingers in my rectum in the middle of the street" while people passed by. Did the cop think he stored his cigarettes there, or did he just want to subject Eric Garner to the worst indignity in his power and humiliate him in front of his friends and neighbors?

On the last day of his life, Eric Garner was probably doing nothing more than standing on the sidewalk, but a cop, Daniel Pantaleo, says he suspected Garner was selling indi-

vidual cigarettes to passersby as he had done in the past. According to bystanders, including Ramsey Orta, a friend of Garner's who videotaped the incident, Garner had just broken up a fight before his death.

When the cops told him they were taking him in, he said, "Get away [garbled] for what? Every time you see me, you want to mess with me. I'm tired of it. It stops today. Why would you? Everyone standing here will tell you I didn't do nothing. I did not sell nothing. Because every time you see me, you want to harass me. You want to stop me [garbled] selling cigarettes. I'm minding my business, officer, I'm minding my business. Please just leave me alone. I told you the last time, please just leave me alone."

(continued on page 3)

Book Review, *In Defense of Secular Humanism* by Paul Kurtz

By Morris Meador

The book read and discussed at the November Humanist Book Club was *In Defense of Secular Humanism* by Paul Kurtz. This book of essays published in 1983, is a bit dated. Kurtz originally authored them for a num-

Book Club meets fourth Saturday of each month

The Humanist Book Club formed by HoFW member Morris Meador meets the fourth Saturday of each month at 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, 76110, except during the holiday season.

The November Book Club meeting was held Saturday, November 23rd, to avoid any conflict with Thanksgiving. Six members spent a rainy afternoon reviewing and discussing the humanist values of Paul Kurtz, author of *In Defense of Secular Humanism*.

Discussions covered the importance of tolerance to free institutions and societies and human capability to solve human problems rather than relying on magic or prayer.

ber of different periodicals. As a result, a good bit of subject matter and ideas are repeated among the 28 essays in the volume. We handled this in our book club discussion by having members report on one or two essays each. This worked well, and we were able to get a good sense of Kurtz's secular humanistic philosophy in our discussion. Despite some dating in terms of context, Kurtz's philosophy is as relevant today as it was 20 years ago.

Paul Kurtz was born in 1925 and died in 2012. A professor of philosophy for many years at New York State University, Buffalo, New York (SUNY), he is known as an author, publisher, and founder of several secular humanist institutions and as the independent humanist publisher known as Prometheus Books.

Kurtz founded the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine and the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Paranormal in 1976, *Free Inquiry* magazine and the Council for Secular Humanism in 1980, and the Center for Inquiry in 1991. He was a long-time editor of *The Humanist* magazine and the primary author of *The Humanist Manifesto II*. Many people have dubbed Kurtz the Father of Secular Humanism.

Kurtz believes humanism should be separated from its religious organizational roots to stand alone as a secular institution. He in fact thinks secular humanism should be an international force, operating beyond national boundaries much in the fashion of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

While humanism differs from religion because of its insistence on rationality, free inquiry, and the scientific method as a basis for knowledge, Kurtz believes humanistic leaders of his time spent too much time arguing against theism. Instead the question that secular humanists should be asking is how humans should live. One of his most famous dictums declared, "No deity will save us, we must save ourselves." Developing a foundation for ethical and fulfilling life is a major theme in Kurtz's writing.

One essay reviewed in our discussion was about the principle of tolerance. Kurtz says this is a "fundamental normative principle of liberation humanism. Tolerance . . . and respect are terms that all point to the same principle: we ought to respect the rights of other individuals or groups to exist and to express beliefs, attitudes, values and lifestyles



different from our own." He adds that this does not mean we have to approve of them.

Another group of essays reviewed in our discussion concerned Kurtz's interest in debunking paranormal and nonscientific thinking. When this book was written stories of Big Foot, the Loch Ness monster, and horoscopes were popular. One of the organizations Kurtz founded specifically sought to debunk this pseudoscience. Our discussion pointed out that creationism and intelligent design fall into this category.

While *In Defense of Secular Humanism* is somewhat redundant as a book of essays and a little dated, it allowed us to explore the thinking of one of the greatest leaders of international secular humanism in our century.

Letters to the Editor

All HoFW members and other readers who wish to write Letters to the Editor responding to articles that appear in this publication are invited to express their own views and provide feedback.

Our newsletter policy requires letters to reference a specific article that has appeared in one of the two most recent issues. We do not publish open letters or third-party letters.

Responders should limit their letters to 150 or 175 words and provide the writer's e-mail address. In addition, for those who require anonymity, please provide the name you would like published with the letter.

All letters should be exclusive to *The Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* and should not be published in any other publication.

Anyone who would like to submit a letter can do so by e-

mailing the editor at the following address: vice-chair@hofw.org.

Space is limited, so we make no guarantee that all letters will be published. Letters may be edited or shortened to fit the space.

We request that all content show a respectful tone, even when viewpoints differ from those of *The Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* or any other party.

THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

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Opinion

Another Visit to the Two Americas

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When Pantaleo came up behind Garner and attempted to handcuff him, Garner pulled his arms away, reportedly saying "Don't touch me, please."

Eric Garner was then murdered by Pantaleo and perhaps another New York cop. He was not the victim of negligent homicide or involuntary manslaughter.

Eric Garner was murdered for refusing to be arrested for an administrative offense: failing to pay New York sales taxes on the cigarettes he sold on the sidewalk.

For this grievous violation of the law, officer Pantaleo grabbed his neck from behind and held him in a choke hold, forced him to the ground, **GROUND HIS FACE INTO THE PAVEMENT** and continued to deprive him of oxygen **AFTER** he managed to whisper **SEVERAL TIMES** with the last bit of air in his lungs that he could not breathe.

Pantaleo or another cop knelt on or otherwise compressed his chest further preventing him from drawing air into his lungs. The coroner's report states that compression of the neck and chest and Garner's posi-

tioning on the ground while being restrained by police during the July 17 stop caused his death.

The crime of murder includes reckless indifference to human life and a **CONSCIOUS DISREGARD OF AN UNREASONABLE RISK OF DEATH** or serious bodily injury sometimes referred to as murder with an abandoned and malignant heart.

What is a conscious disregard of an unreasonable risk of death and a reckless indifference to life if it isn't continuing to choke someone and continuing to compress his chest **AFTER** he manages with his last

breath to whisper that he cannot breathe? Who would not have the decency to stop choking someone who manages to utter that he cannot breathe except someone with the most depraved and malignant heart?

Neither the CEO nor any of the board members of Pfizer will be harassed on the street by the police. None of them will be forced to drop their pants in a public place and be humiliated by a body cavity search for all passersby to witness, and none of them will be murdered by the police for their refusal to be arrested for failing to pay billions of dollars in corporate income taxes.

HoFW Humanist Perspectives

by Wanda Foster

My bet is that many people have been atheists or agnostics for a long time without realizing they have no actual belief in a god. People above 8 years old seldom spend much time thinking about the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus either because they know these two caricatures will arrive on time, as long as they have family and are economically privileged enough to participate in holiday shopping. Of course, no one beyond the age of 11 ever wants to track the tooth fairy again.

When I was as young as 2 years old, many of my fondest memories surrounded church social events woven into my genetic fabric for what seems like centuries before I was born. While my immediate family was normal in size (one sister, one brother, one much older half-brother no longer at home, and my parents), my extended family was huge. I had 3 great uncles; 13 uncles and their wives (my aunts by marriage); 1 other aunt, my mother's half-sister; 2 grandmothers; and passels of uncountable cousins maintained through the fifth level. These all were tracked with a special software—my maternal grandmother's mind—which upon request served up verbal kinship data files she never wrote down even once.

My predecessors, great-great grandfathers and their extended families, all lay safely beneath the ground in the countryside cemetery across from my church. Plots cost nothing, but you have to be a member of the church to be buried there, and the church has always cared for the dead since about 1811. These ghosts were not frightening. They were just members of the family, who happened to be infused in the soil.

When Mother's Day came around, we had a church tradition. The grandmothers, not so much the mothers, hand-made crepe paper flowers by tightly weaving green crepe paper around a wire to make a stem and then attaching and forming

crepe paper petals in red and white. Since my grandmother was one of my favorite people, I spent hours helping her as she willed her arthritic fingers to cut the paper and then curled the petals into life-like forms with a pair of scissors. Most of that side of the family probably came to America from Holland, and they love their flowers. This art had been handed down a few generations before I arrived.

To preserve the flowers for the rainy spring, she dipped them in wax and arranged them in a nice vase. During the church service, the oldest woman and the youngest woman received a rose. The rose was red if the woman's mother was still alive and white if she had passed on. Of course, mostly the older women wore a white rose.

Children played together on the lawn. After this ceremony, 30 of my extended family gathered for lunch at my uncle's farmhouse. These were good times, meeting, greeting, socializing. I would never take that sort of joy from anyone.

When we moved to town, the churches were a little more uptight. They had smaller parties, and wearing really nice clothes was the most important religious tradition, colorful cottons and gabardines for spring and knits or even velvets at nice occasions for winter. At the country churches, the minister could be anyone who was licensed. Town churches wanted doctoral seminarians. The social life was fun, but life began to be segmented into those things you do at home and those things you do at church. Saturday night was set aside for young people to be wild and crazy, while on Sunday they sat sleepily in their pews.

Common threads existed in the country and in town. Adults prayed silently or publicly with all of their might. In the country, where people were less affluent, they held prayer services that lasted for an hour or more, and some people could almost pray forever, out loud on their knees.

This was a powerful experience as a child to watch your people pray together, oddly with your eyes shut. It was like wishing on a star, while speaking very eloquently to the unseen.

As I grew from childhood into adolescence and beyond, I noticed quite a few things, unspoken. Those who prayed with deep honesty and lived with great integrity remained poor, dependent on forces apparently beyond their control, strong in their ability to withstand suffering, but weak and needy in terms of their ability to do anything about the suffering. Those who prayed in public for the appearance of piety remained unchanged and behaved after the prayer almost in the same way as they had before.

The prayers were endless, but suffering was not. If people were poor, sick, or dying in their midst, people prayed for them, stayed with them, and maybe gave them some hand-me-downs and a casserole. The people remained poor, sick, and dying. If some perceived injustice befell someone, people also prayed for them, but the injustice remained, for the large part, unjust.

For years as a young adult, I tried, like many younger generations, to play around the edges of church. I was required to be there and I liked the camaraderie, but not the weakness and dependency. When my prayers stopped for real I am unable to say. They just slipped away. Instead I began to look for a way to be myself without the judgment or the limitations associated with the god people.

We used to read the Bible regularly and memorized the verses, which still often spring up to me without being called. But they do not always work as intended. One famous Bible verse in James 2 says faith without works is dead. Why is that true? Did the author or the translator realize that God, the all-powerful Oz, actually needed humans to do the work because he was unable to be there?

From the Editor:

Most HoFW members favor science and rationalism over religion, magic, and dogma. Within that realm, we remain a very diverse group, however, with different thoughts, perspectives, and ways of arriving at our beliefs in a world often unfriendly to secular thought. This column presents our stories. Many of the names have been changed or limited to first names to protect the innocent.

One day—after years of avoiding religion—I woke up and thought for the first time, "Oh, I am really, actually an atheist," a word I had never previously uttered as a label for myself. Perhaps a more scientifically accurate term I could use is agnosticism. Admittedly, I could not know beyond a shadow of a doubt the non-existence of a god, especially since he is never present to disprove scientifically, but I prefer the word atheist. The term is clear, true, and bold enough to express what I feel, which is that my atheism is like Ivory soap, 99.44% pure. The rest is air bubbles.

Many people out there may be like me. They may never have thought about the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus because they know people who fulfill those duties, and repeating the line "the Easter Bunny does not exist" seems more than a little strange. Yet I have never seen the person or the entity behind the gods of this world. Somehow the havoc they create and the emptiness they leave for those who follow them is a burden to many and damaging to some, especially the most devout who weave their whole lives together with the fabrics of unanswered, unfulfilled prayers that could have been attainable if they had instead pursued hopes and dreams.

For me, saying out loud—at least among friends—that I am an atheist affords me the freedom to live life as freely as the free person I am. For this reason, I treasure knowing other atheists and agnostics for the first time in my life. HoFW is finally a place where I can be me.

Religious education provides backdrop for Elleven's history of HoFW charter

(continued from page 1)

The Pew Research Center keeps some of the most respected records of global unaffiliated populations, yet a review of even these statistics reveals a statistical problem. From a global viewpoint, worldwide the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life reported in 2012 that 1.1 billion people around the world—16 percent of the global population—were religiously unaffiliated in 2010. However this group includes more than a few people with some religious beliefs. The report points out the following statistical issue:

“The religiously unaffiliated include atheists, agnostics, and people who do not identify with any particular religion in surveys. However, many of the religiously unaffiliated have some religious beliefs. For example, belief in God or a higher power is shared by 7% of Chinese unaffiliated adults, 30% of French unaffiliated adults, and 68% of unaffiliated U.S. adults.

“Some of the unaffiliated also engage in certain kinds of religious practices. For example, 7% of unaffiliated adults in France and 27% of those in the United States say they attend religious services at least once a year. And in China, 44% of unaffiliated adults say they have worshipped at a graveside or tomb in the past year.”

Tarrant County records are even more confusing. The more readily available information on religious affiliation comes from a Web site, City-data.com, which collects and reports a wide range of demographic data available from public sources. The site is owned and operated by Advameg, Inc. This site reports that 52.45 percent of Tarrant County residents are affiliated with a religion compared to 50.2 percent of other Americans.

In this County, even the Tax Collector Assessor, Ron Wright, openly works to place the motto “In God We Trust,” on official paperwork issued to residents with few repercussions. So it is not surprising that the County likely is 36 percent Southern Baptist, 22 percent Catholic, 13 percent United Methodist, and 29 percent other.

The confusion begins in the category known as other, which includes affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Church we know has a high percentage of atheist and agnostic members. It also includes Buddhists, who support a philosophy even though Buddha himself purportedly did not believe he was a god.

As previously explained, Minister Emeritus Elleven was an member of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church and an atheist. While statistics show a trend, these esoteric explanations of statistics hardly an-

swer the human questions that can be answered and understood by another human without leaving the sense of rationality.

Education engenders rational thinking and unbelief

For reference and a better understanding of our organization, Elleven explains the formation of HoFW this way. As a student at Texas Christian University (TCU), he really became humanist while studying religion at TCU. This is familiar because the same thing started to happen when Wanda Foster, vice chair of HoFW studied religion at TCU.

Elleven said he started studying religion, specifically Christianity “because I thought I was going to hell. The reason I thought I was going to hell was because I starting doubting all the things I'd been taught in church, like heaven and hell, like a virgin birth, and then the very concept of a God.

“Once I really began to study the Bible and other religions I realized there really was no God, or Jesus (though I still think he was an historical person), or hell. I've heard it said before than many nontheists are better-versed with the Bible than devout Christians. I think that is often true.”

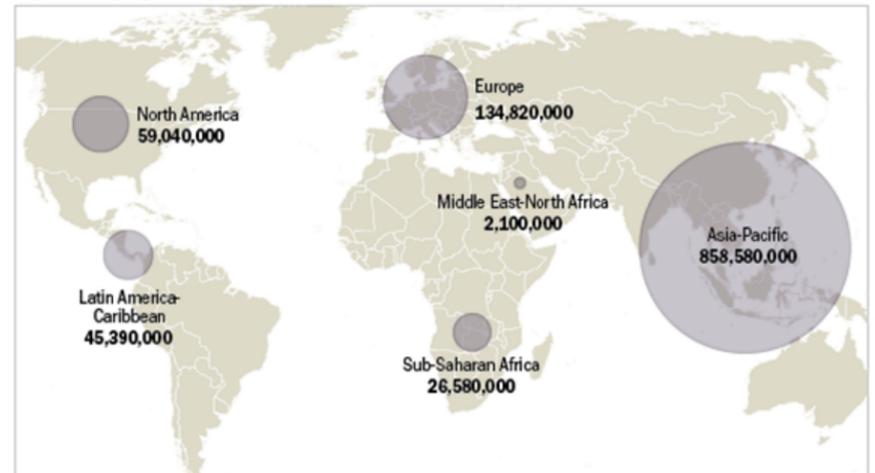
At that point his report is that he began to seek answers, which led him to initiate the process of forming HoFW. Following is his account of the formation in his own words:

In 1998 I moved from Denton to Fort Worth. I'd been working at the University of North Texas and had been hired for a better position at Texas Christian University. I went to TCU as an undergrad and had actually become humanist (though I did not know the term then) while studying religion there.

While in Denton I had been formally introduced to Humanism by the Rev. Dr. Don Fielding. Don was the minister of the Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and had introduced me to the American Humanist Association. He also lent me several books on the topic. Initially, I thought all Unitarian Universalist ministers were humanist. However, when I moved to Fort Worth I found that was not the case. So, in order to have some sort of humanist presence in Cowtown I decided to contact the AHA to see if they would share addresses of members in the area. They did.

I sent out letters to, I believe, about 50 people saying that I'd like to start a Fort Worth Chapter of the American Humanist Association. I was encouraged when about 10 people responded. I arranged to meet with the interested folks at First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church to see if we might be able to get this thing off the ground. Don Fielding had

Regional Distribution of the Unaffiliated
Population by region as of 2010



Percentage of world unaffiliated population in each region as of 2010



Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

North America had more than 59 million unaffiliated people in 2012

contacted the Rev. Craig Roshaven, minister of First Jefferson to pave the way for space. Additionally, as it turned out, two or three of the initial interest group were current or past members of the congregation.

Evidently, there had been a humanist group in Fort Worth before. I'm uncertain whether it was AHA affiliated. It appears that after the organizer left the group sort of withered away. So, it seemed to me, it might be prudent to set up an organization with by-laws and officers, rather than a club run by one individual.

I had also been in contact with the Dallas chapter of the AHA. A few of us decided to attend one of their meetings to see what a group looked like. If memory serves, it was me, Dick Trice, and Dennis Burke, who drove over to Dallas. The three of us actually doubled their attendance! I cannot remember the subject of the presentation but the three of us left knowing we could do a bit better. The Dallas chapter (no longer in existence) was very kind and gracious and supportive of a Fort Worth group but they honestly did not have much going on in Big D.

The Humanists of Fort Worth had its first real meeting in April of 1999. Those monthly meetings continued to take place at First Jefferson. However, about a year after official formation of HOFW the church began to do some renovations to their building. The first meeting at Westside Unitarian Universalist Church (where I was a member) was November of 2000 when the congregation was on McCart Street. There was a fire in March of 2005 to the McCart location. The present-day location of Westside on Page Avenue continues to this day.

It is sometimes difficult for me to believe that the Humanists of Fort Worth, in its current form, has been around for 15 years. We were such a small group in the beginning. When I left Fort Worth for Chicago last year (2013) there were wonderful crowds of 30 to 50 people in attendance. HoFW continues to change and progress. It continues to serve a

need for community. It continues to serve an intellectual need. That is exactly what I'd hoped for when a group of us decided to get make sure there was a humanist presence in Fort Worth. I hope it will do so for years to come.

Those interested might consider looking through the newsletter archives on www.hofw.org. It is wonderful to see how far HOFW has come. Wishing you all well!

Minister Emeritus Russell Elleven, Westside Unitarian Universalist Church, Founding member and First Chair, Humanists of Fort Worth

Officially, signers of the current charter were Jim Fogleman, G.T. Armstrong, Jean Tant, Dennis Burke, BJ Armstrong, Marcia Ver-nor, Russell Elleven, Iona Burke, Jeff Rodriguez, and Dick Trice. Reed Bilz is another early member with many memories of the early days, which started some 15 years ago for HoFW. Additional records have been captured from other organizations in an attempt to record the history of our atheist, humanist, and agnostic communities. These will be reported in future articles.

U.S. Public Has Warmest Feelings for Jews, Catholics and Evangelicals

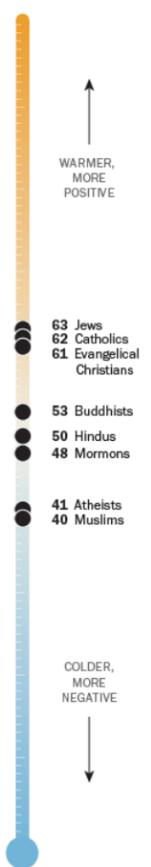
Respondents in a Pew Research Center poll were asked:

“We'd like to get your feelings toward a number of groups on a 'feeling thermometer.' A rating of 0 degrees means you feel as cold and negative as possible. A rating of 100 degrees means you feel as warm and positive as possible. You would rate the group at 50 degrees if you don't feel particularly positive or negative toward the group.”

Results at right show total mean ratings of each religious group



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Screenwriter answers questions live after “The Imitation Game” screening

(continued from page 1)

A movie directed by Morten Tyldum, a Norwegian film director well-known for his prize-winning ambitions, “The Imitation Game” presents the extraordinary life of Alan Turing, a homosexual, mathematical genius who cracked the impossible codes of the Nazi Enigma Machine by constructing an early computer that enabled England to win World War II. Although Turing’s work gave the British the power to crack all of the codes for a long time during the latter part of the war, they conducted only carefully selected military strikes to prevent the Germans from realizing their codes were broken.

The screenplay for “The Imitation Game” was written by young, independent screenwriter Graham Moore, who was present at the Modern and answered questions after the showing. He championed the film to obtain independent funding when mainstream backers were unwilling to invest in it. In 2011 when “The Imitation Game” made The Black List, an annual survey of the most popular screenplays not yet produced, the screenplay already had been written for several years. Moore had a particular affinity for the Turing story and managed to meet other Turing enthusiasts, Nora Grossman, Ido Ostrowsky, and Teddy Schwarzman, who helped him produce the movie even though they had no prior film production experience. Grossman and Ostrowsky purportedly were between television acting jobs at the time. The film gained traction and was purchased by The Weinstein Company for \$7 million in February 2014.

The 1-hour, 54-minute feature was inspired by the biography, Alan Turing: The Enigma, by Andrew Hodg-

es, which Princeton University Press recently updated and rereleased. The movie and the book contain elements of the dramatic thriller genre and combine covert operations intrigue with Turing’s immense personal struggles.

An extraordinary mathematician, crypto analyst, and logician, Turing exhibited poor social skills and if he lived in the current world likely would be diagnosed with Asberger Syndrome or some other autism spectrum disorder. While this disorder made him socially unpopular and awkward, it is possible to also surmise that it enabled him to focus on logical clarity without excess consideration of social factors, making these same traits key to his intellectual success. His life was further complicated by the fact that he was gay in an era when homosexuality was illegal in England.

The movie opens in 1938, the year Turing returned to England after 2 years of studies at Princeton. He was recruited by the military and likely by MI-5 or MI-6 to serve as a member of a specially selected team handpicked to crack the intricate codes of the Enigma Machine, a device roughly the same size as a typewriter, but with more than 17,500 ring settings and 60 possible wheel orders. The machine supplied the Germans with millions of code variations based on a preset key. Each night at midnight, the key was reset, and the search for the next day’s code began anew.

Other members of the team spent each day working tirelessly and failing to crack a single code. Meanwhile Turing, masterfully played by Benedict Cumberbatch, worked alone constructing intricate drawings and drawing the ire of military management and other members of his

team. He was accused of wasting time while soldiers died at sea.

Incensed, Turing shouted that while all of his team members wasted time trying to break uncrackable codes every single day, he was building a machine that would crack all of the codes on all of the days. As military management worked to shut down the project, Turing eventually used connections to Winston Churchill to become leader of the group and override the military leadership and develop the code breaker he had designed. The work of Turing’s group closely coordinates with and includes the work of the Bletchley Park code breakers during the same time frame.

The film opens with dramatically striking scenes of historic London buildings burning and lying in rubble. People file underground and hide during air raids. Throughout the film, flashbacks to Turing’s childhood provide poignant glimpses of a young student taunted by other children and even boarded up beneath the floor by his classmates at one point. As a boarding school student in England, he had only one close friend, a male classmate with whom he shared a close bond. He was deeply affected by the loss this friend who died as a teenager.

As an adult, Turing formed a close bond with a female member of his team played by Keira Knightley, a well-known British actress and singer. The pair agreed to be married until Turing admits his homosexuality to her and chooses to break the engagement.

When World War II ended, the British government required the team to destroy most of their work, although remnants of Turing’s early, computer-like machine remained at his home until his death in 1954. Despite his

service to the government, his life ended in relative obscurity, and his homosexuality posed an ongoing problem. Gay people often were incarcerated for homosexual acts, and Turing was arrested at one point. To avoid incarceration, he agreed to take medicines that chemically castrated him. While he was on this medication, Turing allegedly committed suicide, although longstanding mythology suggests that one of the security services may have had a hand in these events. In recent history, British Prime Minister David Cameron called for a new inquiry into this question and posthumously pardoned Turing for these charges.

Turing’s productive life yielded a string of scientific and mathematical advancements and achievements not fully covered in the movie. He studied and taught at various universities having graduated from King’s College Cambridge in 1934 and receiving a Fellowship of King’s College in 1936. In 1936, he won a Smith’s prize for work on probability theory. At Cambridge University, he developed a proof that automatic computation cannot solve all mathematical problems. This concept, dubbed the Turing machine, serves as a key basis of modern computational theory. He also was a marathon runner and spent 2 years at Princeton University before returning to England in 1938.

Besides his code-breaking work and building the Colossus, the electronic computer at Bletchley Park, he also helped build a device known as Automatic Computing Machinery. Later, in 1951 at Manchester University, he helped construct the Ferranti Mark 1 Computer.

Turing was born in June 1912 in Maida Vale, London, United Kingdom and died June 7, 1954, in Wilmslow, United Kingdom.

	January 2015	February 2015	March 2015
Key HoFW Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, January 14, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX, HoFW Speaker Morris Meador, Humanism January social to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/#calendar HoFW Book Club, Saturday, January 31, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, February 11, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX February social to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/#calendar HoFW Book Club, Saturday, February 28, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, March 11, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth March social to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/#calendar HoFW Book Club, Saturday, March 28, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX
Other Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Secular Movement Update Call, January 8, 2015 - 12:00 - 12:30 and weekly at the same time; Telephone 559-726-1300 Code: 953064 Freethinkers Day, also known as Thomas Paine Day, January 29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas Secular Convention 2015, Sheraton Austin Hotel, February 27 - March 1 Events will be added at the following Web site as they are scheduled: http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/#calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events will be added at the following Web site as they are scheduled: http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/#calendar

Humanists of Fort Worth Monthly Meeting Minutes, November 12, 2014

by John Fisher, Secretary

Chair Sam Baker called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Members and visitors were present.

The speaker, Julie Bassett, a Prevention Specialist for SafeHaven of Tarrant County, presented a discussion about family violence in Texas and things local communities can do to help recognize and prevent it. Ms. Bassett works in the field assessing family violence among students in grades 4 through 12. She also provides community education on topics such as bullying, domestic violence, communication, and peer pressure. Ms. Bassett’s advocacy career began

in case management, where she first coordinated a children’s camp at SafeHaven, before entering primary prevention work. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from Texas Christian University and is currently pursuing a Master’s of Public Health from the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

SafeHaven of Tarrant County is a local non-profit agency meeting the needs of survivors and working through prevention to end violence in our community. After the presentation, a question-and-answer session. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Sam Baker.