



The Separationist

Volume 21, Issue 4

April 2014

Margaret Downey: Exploring the Freethought Trail

Sunday, April 20, 2014, 4 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

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About SHL

The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

Our members are freethinkers of many kinds. We call ourselves agnostics, atheists, skeptics, secular humanists, rationalists and scientific naturalists. We welcome you and all who are interested in participating in our friendly community, either as members or observers.

The purpose of our non-profit, educational organization is to promote the non-theistic, human-centered viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse and to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church.

The Freethought Trail

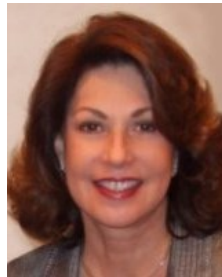
lies in New York State between Rochester and Syracuse, and is the nation's richest trove of free-thought and radical reform history. It was a bubbling cauldron of radical social innovation: freethought, women's rights, abolition, anarchism, radical politics, and more.

Margaret Downey will bring the knowledge she's gained through travelling the Freethought Trail as an activist and tour guide in an engaging presentation. From the great agnostic orator Robert Green Ingersoll to feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to many more famous free-thinkers, Margaret will share her love of free-thought history by highlighting important people and historical events that shaped the freethought movement in the nineteenth century.

If you consider yourself a freethinker, don't miss her presentation and, by all means, don't miss out on the opportunity to meet Margaret Downey.

Margaret Downey has herself played an important

part of twentieth and twenty-first century free-thought history. Her first major involvement as a nontheist activist was when she took on the Boy Scouts of America



for not allowing her son to renew his membership since he was raised in a nontheist household. Since then, Margaret has been a prominent public representative of atheism, and her achievements are vast and impressive.

She founded the Freethought Society and the Anti-Discrimination Support Network in 1993. In 1994, Margaret founded the Thomas Paine Memorial Committee. She has been published two books, "Parenting Beyond Belief" and "Voices of Disbelief."

Margaret has represented the interest of the nontheist community (since 1995) at several United Nations conferences. She is a past board member of

the American Humanist Association, The Humanist Institute and the Thomas Paine National Historical Association. She is a current board member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Scouting For All and is a member of the Advisory Board Member of the Robert Green Ingersoll Museum. In the year 2002, Margaret became the first "Secular Humanist Celebrant" in Pennsylvania. Margaret created the Richard Dawkins Award in 2003. Margaret served as president of the Atheist Alliance International for two years. In 2007, Margaret designed the Tree of Knowledge. Media Training Worldwide has endorsed Margaret to conduct media training for the nontheist community. Margaret has been a guest on National Public Radio's Talk of the Nation and Radio Times. Television appearances include features on local news stations as well as ABC's Nightline, PBS and Fox News.

When: Sunday, 4/20/14, 4pm
Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston
Cost: Free!

We will not have pre-meeting refreshments this month. Instead, we will have a potluck following the meeting. See page 2 for more details!

Sunday Speaker Meeting, cont.

Sunday Quest, our humanist youth program, provides our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal with Sunday Quest is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews, think for themselves, connect with their community, and build a strong ethical foundation. Each class will offer fun, interactive games and activities.

After Margaret's program, the children of Sunday Quest will present an original skit. They will delight you with a creation story that they made to explain the origin of the universe. In it, you will also see the development of a humanist society through their eyes as they incorporate the ethics and values they've explored through this past year at Sunday Quest.

The American Humanist Association and the Chapter Service Committee have awarded the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry a grant in the amount of \$1,000 to build our Sunday Quest humanist youth program.

Congratulations to SHL's Sunday Quest!

A Sunday Quest Special Presentation!

When: April 20, 2014

Where: Gage Hall

While learning about many world religions and famous free-thinkers, our Sunday Questers have been encouraged to think critically, and become empathetic, knowledgeable, and ethical secular-humanist leaders in a multicultural world. Come enjoy an original creation story designed and performed by the kids of Sunday Quest!

Who: The kids of Sunday Quest

What: Sunday Questers will be presenting an original skit for all those attending the April 20th meeting including guest speaker, Margaret Downey.

Save the Date!



Everyone is invited to stay following this month's meeting for a potluck. Bring a dish to share and get to know your fellow members over dinner. We are not assigning items, simply bring whatever food item you wish — salads, entrees, side dishes, and desserts are all good choices. Items can be homemade or store bought. Since we will be eating after the meeting, please bring a dish that is ok at room temperature. SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

Upcoming SHL Events

Events sometimes get added after The Separationist is posted. Keep up to date with SHL events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) group.

Flowertown Festival

Friday, April 4, 2014, 9:00am—6:00pm
 Saturday, April 5, 2014, 9:00am—6:00pm
 Sunday, April 6, 2014 9:00am—4:00pm

Main Street, Summerville

SHL will have a booth at the Flowertown Festival in Summerville this year! Please stop by booth **M260** and say hello! This would be a great time to wear your SHL – or other favorite freethought – shirt!



This is an excellent opportunity to let other like-minded people in the area know that not only are they not alone, but that Charleston is home to one of the most active and vibrant humanist communities in the region.

We hope to help remove the stigma of the negative stereotype traditionally associated with atheists and atheism by demonstrating that we, as humanists, atheists, agnostics, and others, are normal, happy, ethical, and productive citizens, just like they are. We want to show that we are not monsters!

We can do this by presenting a positive image of ourselves, by sharing what we DO believe in, by showing that we have an identity of our own (as opposed to merely a reaction to religion), but, most importantly, by just being there.

If you're interested in volunteering to staff the booth, please email president@secularhumanists.org.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, April 5, 2014, 7:00pm

Park Circle Film Society, 4820 Jenkins Ave, North Charleston

Please join us for a viewing of the 2014 Oscar-nominated live action short films. Meet us inside the theater at 6:45pm. Following the movie we will enjoy drinks or a late snack/dessert at a nearby restaurant.



Aquel No Era Yo (That Wasn't Me) (Director: Esteban Crespo, Spain/Spanish).

Paula, a Spanish aid worker, has an encounter with an African child soldier named Kaney.

Avant Que De Tout Perdre (Just before Losing Everything) (Directors: Xavier Legrand and Alexandre Gavras, France/French)

Miriam has left her abusive husband and taken refuge with her children in the local supermarket where she works.

Helium (Directors Anders Walter and Kim Magnusson, Denmark/Danish)

A dying boy finds comfort in the tales of a magical land called HELIUM, told to him by the hospital janitor.

Pitääkö Mun Kaikki Hoitaa? (Do I Have to Take Care of Everything?) (Directors: Selma Vilhunen and Kirsikka Saari, Finland/Finnish)

Sini tries frantically to get her family ready to leave for a wedding, but her husband and two children are interfering with her efforts.

The Voorman Problem (Directors: Mark Gill and Baldwin Li, UK/English).

A psychiatrist is called to a prison to examine an inmate named Voorman, who is convinced he is a god.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

SHL Happy Hour



Tuesday, April 8, 2014, 6:00pm

Manny's Neighborhood Grille, 1680 Old Towne Rd (West Ashley, near the North Bridge)

Join us for a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and food with old and new friends! Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy—come join us!

Volunteer Activity: Summerville Cares Day of Service

Saturday, April 12, 2014, 8:30am—1:00pm

**Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site
300 State Park Rd, Summerville**

As part of the Summerville Cares Day of Service, SHL will be helping to restore Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site and park. What we'll be doing: Tasks will include using "loppers" to clear invasive vegetation along the river, mulching paths and filling pot holes.

Who is invited: This is open to everyone, all ages. In fact, we will need all the help we can get for this large project. Please RSVP by e-mail to volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org or on Meetup so that we have an idea of how many people to expect.

What to bring: Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, closed toed shoes and bug spray are recommended for everyone. The most important tools will be your hands and hard work, but if you can also bring rakes, shovels, loppers, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, or wader boots those would also be appreciated. Note that power tools (chainsaws, weed whackers, etc.) are not allowed in the park.

Where to go: To get to the park, follow these driving directions:

Take exit 199-A on I-26. Travel 3 mi on Hwy 17 through downtown Summerville to Hwy 165. Turn left onto Hwy. 165/E. Carolina Ave. Stay in right lane and travel .5 miles and veer right and continue on Hwy. 165/Bacons Bridge Rd. Travel 2.5 mi to Hwy 642/Dorchester Rd. Turn Left at intersection of Bacons Bridge Road and Dorchester Road. Travel 2 mi. and park entrance will be on the right.

Check in at the registration table near the parking lot where we will be waiting with an SHL sign to welcome you. (Note that there will be a lot of other people there as well!) We have been warned that parking is limited. So, arrive early and car pool if possible.

When: Although the work will not begin until 8:30AM, if you arrive at 8AM there will be breakfast served and a "kick off party" for all of the Summerville Cares Day of Service projects right there in the park. The work project ends at 1PM, but is followed by a hot dog picnic to which all volunteers are invited.



Let us know if you plan to join us or if you have any questions by writing to us at volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Paintball

Saturday, April 12, 2014, 11:00am

Mount Pleasant Paintball, 2637 Clements Ferry Road

Let's play paintball!

Cost: If you don't have your own equipment, Mount Pleasant Paintball rents all necessary equipment and sells the paintballs and air. You can either purchase your admission and equipment directly (prices at <http://mountpleasantpaintball.com/services-and-rates>), or – if there are at least 10 people we can get a group rate of about \$20 per person, including admission, equipment, and paintballs/air. (Please bring cash for group option.)

Lunch: If you want to eat lunch there, you can bring your own, or we can collect money and pick up pizza from Little Caesars.

Ages: This is for all ages. However, getting hit with a paintball hurts and can even bruise. This is recommended for 12yo, but parents can make their own decision regarding younger kids. Parents bring their kids at their own risk and must remain on site.

Sunday Funday at the Park

Sunday, April 13, 2014, 11:00am

RM Hendricks Park, 4953–4999 block of Virginia Ave, North Charleston

Bring the kids and meet other like-minded families in a fun, casual, and judgement-free environment. Dogs on leashes are welcome, too! Don't have kids? No problem! Come on out! Sundays are fundays for everyone.

This Sunday Funday is a special edition! Sunday Quest leader Chrystal Dively will be helping the kids assemble items the Sunday Questers have been assembling over the past months into care packages for the homeless for the Global Youth Service Day. Non-Sunday Questers are welcome to participate by bringing in items as well.



Global Youth Service Day

Please contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org for more information or to get the list of suggested items.

Please call 843-291-8248 if you need help.

Inclement Weather: Northwoods Mall Play Area; Determination will be made by 10am that morning, if applicable.

Girls Night out

Monday, April 14, 2014, 7:00pm

Riso Noodle House, 1890 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston (West Ashley)



A fun night for girls to socialize! Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only, please.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Team Trivia



Wed, April 23, 2014, 7:00pm
Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer
Blvd, Mt Pleasant

Note: there is no Monck's Corner
trivia this month

Come out for a night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free.

Our team **Happy Humanists** is officially registered, so our points are cumulative and will be going for season totals.

Team Trivia offers trivia nights at various places throughout the Charleston area on different days and times. Team members are welcome to play using the team name at any Team Trivia night. And if you would like to organize an SHL trivia night in your part of town (hello, West Ashley!) let us know. Organizers are responsible for checking in using our team name, welcoming players, and using any winnings from the previous week to purchase appetizers for the team. Please contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org for more info.



Join us for dinner at Phuong Vietnamese restaurant in North Charleston.

Although Charleston has many wonderful restaurants, there aren't as many options when it comes to good ethnic cuisine. This is our second international dinner, and we hope to continue to make this a regular event, enjoying a different ethnic cuisine every couple of months or so. Suggestions for future locations welcomed!



This dinner is open to anyone – men, women, brave children. We will make reservations two days before (Wednesday, 4/23), so please get your RSVP in and finalize any maybes by then.

When: Friday, 4/25 at 6:30pm

Youth Programs: Soil and Water Conservation

Saturday, April 26, 2014, 1:00pm (PreK/elementary)

Saturday, April 26, 2014, 2:30pm (middle/high)

Wannamaker County Park, North Charleston

SHL has partnered with Charleston County Parks and Recreation to put together a themed set of programs

SHL International Dinner

Friday, April 25, 2014, 6:30pm

Phuong Vietnamese Restaurant, 5634 Rivers Ave,
North Charleston

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

for the year. This is the final of four programs in this Natural History of the Lowcountry series.

In this program, kids will learn the importance of soil, soil types, erosion, conservation practices, and the hydrologic cycle, complete with activities.

Each program is 90 minutes.

Cost: \$5/child

RSVPs required: president@lowcountryhumanists.org or RSVP on Facebook with the child(ren)'s name(s) and age(s).



Children 5 years old and younger need an accompanying parent. Parents do not need to pay admission and are welcome

to enjoy the park while their child(ren) attend the program.

SHL Book Club

Sunday, April 27, 2014, 4:00pm

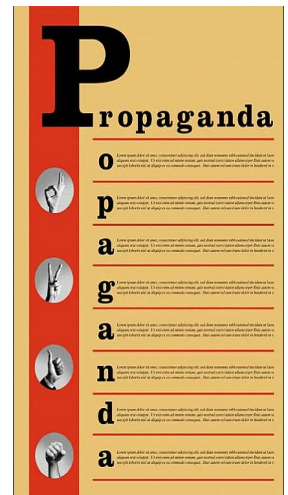
Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

Our selection for the month April is "Propaganda" by Edward Bernays. Following is a brief description from Amazon.com. (Remember that if you purchase your copy of the book from them using our links [here](#) then

SHL gets a portion of the purchase price.)

"Bernays' honest and practical manual provides much insight into some of the most powerful and influential institutions of contemporary industrial state capitalist democracies." -- Noam Chomsky

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country." -- Edward Bernays, Propaganda



The SHL Book Group will review Propaganda on the 4th

Sunday, April 27th at our usual time and location, the Barnes and Noble on Sam Rittenberg Blvd between the hours of 4 and 5:30. Keep in mind we will go out to socialize at a local restaurant after the meeting so bring your dining ideas in the West Ashley area.

SHL is affiliated with the Amazon Associates program! Our organization earns up to a 15% commission on items purchased at Amazon.com through the links on our Website. So, if you are buying the book club book (or anything else from Amazon), this is a super-easy way to contribute to SHL! Simply use the link at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php>

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Reasonfest!

Thursday, May 1 2014, 7:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry will host an event called Reasonfest on Thursday, 5/1, to mark the National Day of Reason.

Reasonfest will feature entertainment by stand-up comic and co-founder of Freethought Blogs, Ed Brayton, as well as a presentation by Jason Torpy, president of Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. An open-mic session hosted by local poet and songwriter Jim Lundy will follow. Audience members will be invited to share their personal "pathways to reason," or how they left religion to become atheists or agnostics, and to read passages from their favorite free-thought writers.

A \$10 suggested donation at the door will raise funds for SHL's 20th year anniversary celebration in the fall.



Baked goods will be available for purchase.

The National Day of Reason was established in 2003 by the American Humanist Association and Washington Area Secular Humanists. It serves as a critique of the federally sponsored National Day of Prayer, which occurs on the same day and which many secularists regard as an unconstitutional violation of the separation between church and state.

Secular Coalition for South Carolina Lobby Day

Friday, May 16, 2014

South Carolina Statehouse, Columbia

Join the Secular Coalition for South Carolina for our first Secular Lobby Day to make our voices heard in the halls of government in Columbia!

You do not need any experience lobbying, we will provide training in the morning. After training everyone will split into small groups and go to pre-scheduled appointments at the offices of elected officials.

Please sign up as soon as you can, so that we can begin to schedule appointments with the

offices of the legislators. The last day to register is Friday, May 16. [Go here to register](#) and for information on the location and preliminary schedule.



Save the Dates!

Mark your calendars for these upcoming SHL events!

SHL potluck and annual business meeting

Sunday, May 18

Night at The Joe! Riverdogs game & fireworks

Friday, June 20

10 Things I Wish Everyone Knew About Atheism

Set your stereotypes aside and get to know atheists all over again

I'm a "big-tent" atheist, which includes whatever non-theistic labels people prefer: agnostic, humanist, secular humanist, freethinker, secularist, and more. This list applies to the whole tent:

1. The prefix "a" can mean "anti" or "non." While some atheists are anti-theists, most are non-theists who have no desire to destroy religion. We don't have a problem with believers until they try to force their beliefs on others.

2. Atheists are not necessarily protesters, though that's how they are usually portrayed in the media. When they do protest, they protest government privileging of one religion over another or religion over non-religion.

3. Atheists are not angry at God (just as they are not angry at the Tooth Fairy), and most of us didn't become atheists because something bad happened to us. We became atheists because we find no evidence for any gods.

4. Atheists are not less trustworthy just because we don't believe in a judging God. Believing that of us only makes us think you would be untrustworthy were it not for your fear of God.

5. We can find joy without belief in God and an afterlife. We may not see any cosmic purpose of life, but we do find our own joyful purposes in life.

6. Most religious people are secular most of the time. Ask yourself how you would behave



Herb Silverman is founder and President Emeritus of the [Secular Coalition for America](#), author of [Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt](#), and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston.

differently if you stopped believing in God. If you can't come up with a good answer, then you are what I call a functional atheist.

7. Calling atheism a religion is like calling baldness a hair color. The "religion" of atheism and secular humanism is not taught in public schools, unless you think that conveying the best available scientific information is a religious act. If you wind up abandoning faith in supernatural things because of science, as many do, that is a collateral benefit to critical thinking.

8. Most atheists don't go around proselytizing or promoting atheism. For every open atheist you know, there are probably dozens of non-identifying atheists whom you

assume are religious. Many are afraid to come out of their atheist closets, and the varied reasons for that would require another list of ten or more things that I wish everyone would know.

9. Atheists don't fit your stereotypes. There are good and bad atheists just as there are good and bad Christians, Jews, Muslims, men, women, and any other category. Judge people by their actions and the content of their character, not by their professed religious beliefs.

10. Most of the atheists I know have a good sense of humor, so I'll end with a joke:

A Jewish atheist hears that the best school in town happens to be Catholic, so he enrolls his son. Things are going well until one day the boy comes home and says, "I just learned all about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The boy's father is barely able to control his rage. He grabs his son by the shoulders and says, "Joey, this is very important, so listen carefully. There is only ONE God — and we don't believe in Him!"

If you missed last month's debate *Christianity or Atheism: Which Makes More Sense?* between Herb Silverman and Wallace Marshall at the College of Charleston or if you simply wish to enjoy it again, it is now available on [YouTube](#).

Charity of the Quarter

Our March-April Charity of the Quarter is [We Are Family](#).

We Are Family has been providing support, resources, and leadership development opportunities to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, (LGBTQI) and straight ally youth since 1995.

We Are Family's mission is to provide support and resources that have a lasting and measurable impact for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex (LGBTQQI), and straight ally youth ages 11-23 in Charleston,

Berkeley, and Dorchester Counties.

We Are Family's vision is that LGBTQQI and straight ally youth



feel empowered to find their places in the world, in their families, and in their communities.

Four times a year SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy local charity. You can donate by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to

*SHL
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-2256*

Make checks payable to SHL and note COQ in the memo line.

Or securely [donate online!](#)

Member Update: Elizabeth Taylor

SHL congratulates Elizabeth Taylor on her engagement to fiancé John Taylor. Elizabeth and John live in Summerville, and they and their 7 children are looking forward to their wedding date of 8/2/2014. Elizabeth and John are one of our several "mixed" couples. She is a Humanist and he is an open-minded Christian, but they love each other anyway.



Happy Anniversary SHL!

2014 marks the SHL's 20th anniversary! Watch for upcoming special events!

SHL Youth Update



Congratulations for a job well done to our secular teen youth group who served dinner at Palmetto House this past weekend. Would your teen like to be a part of this fantastic group? Contact president@lowcountryhumanists.org for more information.

T-Shirt design contest

SHL needs your help designing our new T-Shirts! Announcing our SHL T-Shirt design contest! We are now accepting submissions in two categories: a general design and a 20th Anniversary design. Winners will have their original designs on shirts worn by members all across the lowcountry. How cool is that!

* Contest is open to all dues-paying members.

* Deadline for all submissions is June 1, 2014.



* Submit original designs via email to shl@lowcountryhumanists.org. Use subject line "SHL T-Shirt Contest" and include your name, address, email, and phone number in the body of the email.

* You may submit your design in .png, .jpg, or .pdf format. We may require that winning entries be resubmitted later for format and resolution changes based on the printer's requirements.

* You may submit as many entries as you like.

Good luck everyone!

Remembering Ed Kagin

Herb Silverman remembers Ed Kagin

Edwin Kagin and I had a lot in common. Many people asked his wonderful wife Helen (now deceased) how she had the patience to put up with Edwin's many idiosyncrasies and sometimes inappropriate sense of humor. Some people now ask my wife Sharon the same question about me.

But even I thought Edwin was eccentric. He and Helen stayed at our house when he spoke to our Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry group in South Carolina. He arrived with enough luggage to stay with us permanently, and the first thing he did was to pull an imposing sword out of his cane. Helen immediately told an alarmed Sharon not to worry because Edwin was harmless.

Edwin was not harmless, at least not to the religious right. His brilliant and satirical writings showed that his pen was far mightier than his sword. Edwin's talk to our group in 1995 was "On the Coming American Religious Civil War." The audience enjoyed the talk, but thought Edwin was overstating the dangers. Sadly, some now view him a prescient.

In 2004 he asked me to write a blurb for his de-

lightfully irreverent book *Baubles of Blasphemy*, and here's what I said:

"Is Edwin Kagin another Mark Twain? Not really. Mark Twain would have considered these writings blasphemous. Will this book win Edwin Kagin a Nobel Prize for literature or poetry? Probably not. But we would be living in a much better world if it did."

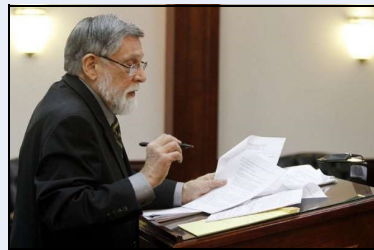
Despite his gruff exterior, Edwin was always kind and willing to volunteer his efforts whenever needed to enhance secular causes. It was a better world when Edwin was with us.

Sue Edward remembers Ed Kagin

I attended an American Atheists convention in Atlanta in 2009. I had the pleasure of meeting and hearing from some of the most prominent

leaders in the Atheist community. But the funniest and most memorable part of the conference was getting debaptized by Ed Kagin. I will fondly remember Ed and that event forever.

Greenville, South Carolina native **Edwin Frederick Kagin, J.D.**, died on March 27, 2014. Ed was an attorney at law in Union, Kentucky.



In 1996 Ed co-founded Camp Quest, the first secular summer camp in the United States for the children of secularists, atheists, agnostics, and other freethinkers.

As an outspoken public critic of religious intrusions into government, Kagin was a frequent speaker and debater at local and national events

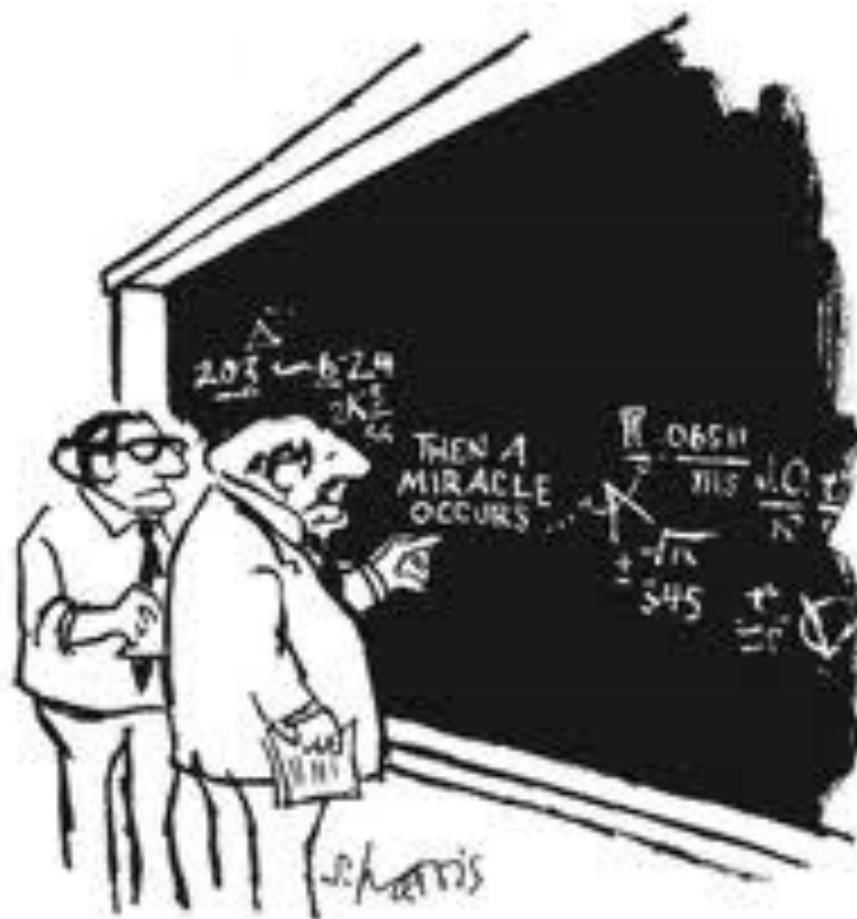
and has appeared on hundreds of radio and television programs. He has also spoken at several SHL meetings.



Ed conducting a debaptism by hairdryer ceremony at the 2009 American Atheists conference in Atlanta.

He served as the National Legal Director of American

Atheists from 2006 until his recent death.



"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

Our Officers

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organization!*

SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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