



The Separationist

Volume 23, Issue 1

January, 2016

Bob Scott

A Secular Mountain Town Mayor

Sunday, January 17, 2016, 4:00 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Inside this issue:

[Upcoming Events](#) **2**

[Herb Silverman](#) **6**

[Charity of the Quarter](#) **8**

[Find Us](#) **10**

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.

When Bob Scott was sworn in to his second term as mayor of Franklin, North Carolina in December 2015, he pledged to uphold the duties of his office by swearing on a copy of the U.S. Constitution instead of a bible. Bob is a self-identified Humanist with a firm commitment to the separation of Church and State.

Bob will talk about what it means to be the mayor of a small mountain town that is undergoing a huge demographic shift and how his constituents are either embracing or

University, with a BS in Criminal Justice. He served more than 20 years as a mission pilot for the Civil Air Patrol. He previously served 11 years as a Town of Franklin Alderman.



Bob will talk about the reactions-pro and con-to his decision to swear on the Constitution. The names he has been called. The negative impact on his friends and his work as mayor. But he will also share examples of the many good wishes and support his action has elicited, especially from some of some of his most "conservative" friends.

resisting the resulting changes. He will talk about what it means to be a secular mayor who wants his town to be open to diversity.

Bob describes himself as a "Mountain Humanist with an ACLU bumper sticker on his pickup truck." He is a native of Greenville, SC, who has lived in Franklin since 1967. He is a graduate of Western Carolina

When: Sunday, January 17, 2016 at 4pm
Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street
Cost: Free!

SHL will provide light

snacks during the check-in and social period prior to the meeting.

We will be going to Leaf Restaurant after the meeting and everyone is invited to join us.

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.

January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 Movie Club
10	11	12	13	14 Happy Hour	15	16 Volunteer Activity
17 Monthly Meeting	18	19 Girls Night Out	20	21	22	23
24 Book Club	25	26	27 Team Trivia	28	29	30
31						

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, January 9, 2016, 3:00pm

Home of Sue Edward, [20 Wespanee Dr, West Ashley](#)

Join us for a viewing of the Academy Award-winning classic film [Gentlemen's Agreement](#). Bring your own snacks and beverages. Following the film we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Adapted by Moss Hart from the novel by Laura Z. Hobson, this film stars Gregory Peck as recently widowed journalist Phil Green. With a growing son to support, Green is receptive to the invitation of magazine publisher John Minify to write a series of hard-hitting articles on the scourge of anti-Semitism. In order to glean



his information first hand, Green decides to pose as a Jew. As the weeks go by, Green experiences all manner of prejudice,

the most insidious being the subtle, "gentleman's agreement" form of bigotry wherein anti-Jewish sentiments are merely taken for granted.

Though warned by several Jewish film moguls that to produce the film would merely "make trouble," 20th Century-Fox chieftain Daryl F. Zanuck saw the project through to its conclusion. The wisdom of Zanuck's decision was proven when Gentleman's Agreement not only made a fortune for Fox, but also won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director (Elia Kazan) and Best Supporting Actress (Celeste Holm).

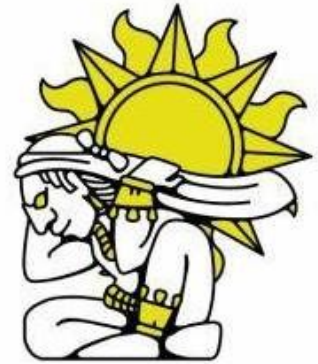
SHL Happy Hour

Thursday, December 14, 2016, 6:00pm

Raul's Maya Del Sol, 1012 E. Montague Ave, North Charleston

Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends!

This month we will meet at Raul's Maya Del Sol in the Park Circle neighborhood. Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy - come join us!



Pay it Forward

Do you have usable items that you no longer want or are you in need of an item? If so, join the [Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry Pay It Forward facebook group](#). This is a closed group for SHL members to post things they want to give away and for others to claim them. All items are free. Whether you are spring cleaning, looking for a few items for your apartment or dorm, looking for things you can make into crafts, or just want to free up a little space in your home, this is the place to post/find them.

Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Volunteer Activity: Pet Helpers

Saturday, January 16, 2016, 10:00am

1447 Folly Rd, Charleston, SC

For our January 2015 volunteer activity, SHL is returning to one of its most popular locations: *Pet Helpers!*

[Pet Helpers](#) is a non-profit pet shelter and low cost spay/neuter clinic on James Island. SHL volunteers will be assisting with the animals' "morning rituals" of cleaning, feeding, walking and more. Volunteers coming to help out will also have an opportunity to play with the animals!



Come and meet us at Pet Helpers (1447 Folly Road) at



10:00 AM on Saturday, January 16th. Children are welcome to come and help out as

long as they are supervised by an adult. All volunteers should wear long-pants and closed-toed shoes. Pet Helpers also accepts donations of pet toys, Pedigree canned dog food, Friskies or 9 Lives canned cat food, towels and sheets, etc.

SHL Monthly Meeting

Sunday, January 17, 2016, 4:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Join us for our monthly meeting with speaker **Bob Scott**. See page 1 for details.

Girls Night Out

Tuesday, January 19, 2016, 6:00pm

Riso Noodle House, 1890 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston

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



Interested in an activity but don't see it listed? Let us know! Volunteers are always welcomed to lead events such as bridge walks, bowling, billiards, biking, bocce, board games, etc.

**Contact
president@lowcountryhumanists.org
with your ideas!**

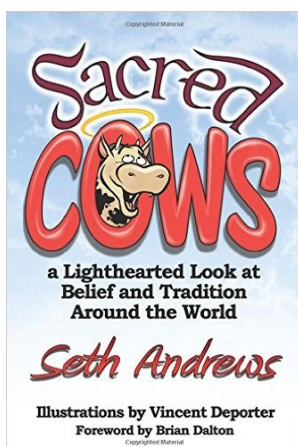
Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Book Club

Sunday, January 24, 2016, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston

Our next meeting will be January 24, 2016 at 4pm to discuss the new book "Sacred Cows: A Lighthearted Look at Belief and Tradition Around the World." The author, Seth Andrews, is the host of one of the largest online atheist communities in the world, [The Thinking Atheist](#).



Barb Childs checked after the meeting at Barnes & Noble and they do not have copies in their store for sale. So, she arranged for 4 copies of the book (\$15.95) to be placed in reserve at the store under her name for our reading pleasure.

You can also [purchase a copy from Amazon](#) and a portion of

the purchase price will automatically be donated to SHL.

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>

Team Trivia

Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 7:00pm

Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer Blvd, Mt Pleasant

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 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. Contact

president@lowcountryhumanists.org for more info.



Herb Silverman

To Show Solidarity with Muslims, I Spent a Day at a Local Mosque

After the Paris and San Bernardino terrorist attacks, followed by **Donald Trump's inflammatory speech** on the aircraft carrier Yorktown near my home in Charleston, South Carolina, my wife **Sharon** and I wanted to do something to counter some of the unfair anti-Muslim sentiment in our state and country. So we made an appointment to stop at the local mosque and say how pleased we are to live in the same community with Muslims.

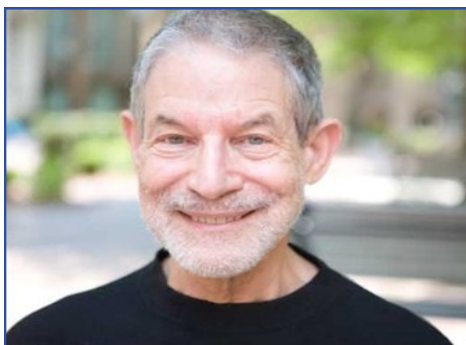
Waiting to greet us were the imam and three other leaders, and they appreciated our taking the time to stop by. I mentioned that atheists are also sometimes demonized, and it's important for those of all faiths and none to find common ground and work together.

They agreed, but the imam asked, "How can you not believe in God?"

Sharon had wisely recommended that I not talk about religion during this visit, so I said, "That would be a long discussion, but the bottom line is that I see no evidence for any gods." I didn't respond when the imam told me there is evidence everywhere.

As we were leaving, they all invited us to return for a "Meet Your Muslim Neighbor" open house on the following Saturday, an invitation we happily accepted. The main speaker at the event was **Imam Eesaa Wood**. He introduced himself as a "redneck" from North Carolina who had converted to Islam after 25 years as a Protestant. Imam Wood is a polished and friendly speaker who specializes in community outreach presentations.

Wood thanked the audience for its willingness to learn about Islam from a Muslim and not from people



Herb Silverman is founder and President 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.

hostile to Muslims. He told us that Islam means "surrender to God" and jihad means "to struggle." Islam is a religion of peace, he said, with violence a last resort only if Muslims are attacked. Even then, if the other party is inclined to peace, Muslims must also be peaceful. He added that we shouldn't believe what mainstream media says about Muslims. We don't hear that thousands of Muslims openly condemn ISIS, or that Muslims offer free medical service without regard to race, color, or creed.

Imam Wood wanted to make Islam sound like a reasonable addition to the other monotheistic religions. Not only do Muslims believe in the Quran, he said, they also believe everything in the Old and New Testaments. Muhammad is the final prophet, but Muslim prophets include Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and all prophets in Judaism and Christianity. Wood said that a Muslim is anyone who believes in the one true God, and that Christians who believe that Jesus is the messiah can still go to Heaven. He added that there is no compulsion

in Islam. People are free to leave at any time.

Imam Wood gave the same answer to all questions about atrocities committed by Muslims: "They aren't true Muslims." And he also had the same response to violent-sounding quotes in the Qur'an, like killing infidels: "That passage is taken out of context. We study and understand the whole Quran based on how Muhammad lived it."

Here are some Muslim beliefs I had never before heard: Each of us has two personal angels, one recording our good deeds and the other our bad deeds. The two lists are read on the Day of Judgment, and then our punishment or reward is up to God's mercy. And to make a point that Christians shouldn't hold all Muslims responsible for the misguided actions of a few, he said that Muslims today don't hold all Christians responsible for the "undeniable fact" that Christian Crusaders regularly killed and ate Muslim babies. When an audience member asked the local imam about the Muslim position on gays, he said that being gay is wrong and there are no gay Muslims.

Afterwards, I said to Imam Wood, "Almost no Jews believe literally in the Old Testament, and most Christians don't believe literally in the New Testament. What percentage of Muslims doesn't believe literally in the Qur'an?" He said that not believing literally would be grounds for excommunication. When I asked about the death penalty for blasphemy in some Muslim countries in the Mideast, he said there are no Muslim countries there. There are dictators who are kept in power by their Secular Humanist allies. When I asked for the name of a Secular Humanist in Saudi Arabia, he couldn't come up with a name.

Herb Silverman cont.

Recently, Dutch pranksters [dis-guised a copy of the Bible as the Qur'an](#), and read provocative quotes to passersby. The pranksters asked them if such beliefs were consistent with Western norms and values. The people queried thought the quotes from the Qur'an were ridiculous, unbelievable, and oppressive. And the respondents developed even less respect for Muslims until learning how they had been pranked.

I take it as a positive about Jews and Christians that they either don't know or don't care about

some of the ridiculous passages in their ancient scriptures. Since all the "holy" books contain horrible passages, I hope one day to see Muslims openly disavow the kind of passages in the Qur'an that most Jews and Christians reject in their own holy books.

The hundred or so Muslims and non-Muslims at the Central Mosque of Charleston open house were uniformly friendly. Our mayor-elect **John Tecklenburg** was there and spoke warmly about the obligation for our "Holy City" (Charleston's nickname) to [extend tolerance](#) to those of every

faith and none. All in all, it was a nice counter to the bad news that seems to dominate the media.

The event ended with a terrific buffet. I consider myself a "gastronomic Jew" because I still enjoy the Jewish food of my childhood. The buffet at the mosque has also turned me into a "gastronomic Muslim."

This piece was originally posted 12/25/2015 on patheos.com

Become a dues-paying member of SHL! Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. The available membership levels and corresponding dues (new members and renewals) are:

- Individual \$35.00
- Family \$50.00
- Sustaining \$100.00
- Benefactor \$150.00
- Lifetime \$500.00

Dues are tax-deductible, as we are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. (As we like to joke, we are also a "non-prophet" organization!)

There are 3 easy ways you can join/renew:

- You can pay by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting.

- You can also mail a check to:

SHL
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-2256

Make checks payable to SHL and note "Membership" and level in the memo line. Please include your name, address, phone number, and email address.

- Or securely [pay online](#) and select your membership level in the dropdown box.



Jack's found a new religion
on Craig's List.

Charity of the Quarter Caring for Our Own

Four times a year SHL board members select a local non-profit as our Charity of the Quarter. Funds are collected from SHL members during the quarter and then donated in the name of SHL.

However, for the first COQ of 2016 we are collecting for one of our own. Long time SHL member Mickie McClain suffered a stroke on Sunday, November 8. Mickie is making tremendous progress but still has lots of work ahead of her.

She has no insurance, and her partner Bernie is disabled and cannot drive. Donations will be collected by SHL and given to Mickie to help her and her family make ends meet during her long recovery.

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!](#)



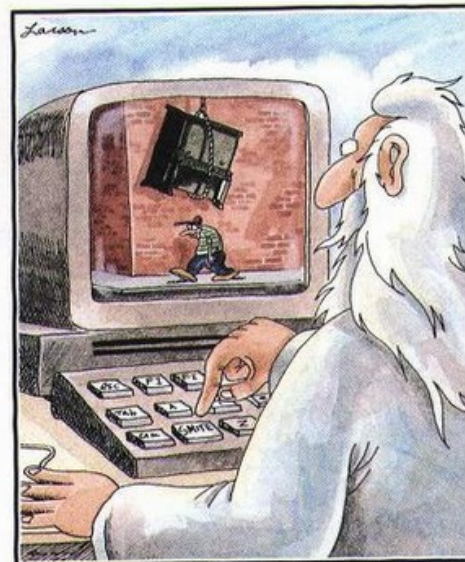
Bernie and their 13-year-old daughter Miranda need rides from their home in Moncks Corner to visit Mickie at Heartland of West Ashley Rehabilitation & Nursing Center as she recovers her health. If you can help, please check [sign up for a turn.](#)

Just for Fun



"It's a nice day. Why don't you two go out and pray."

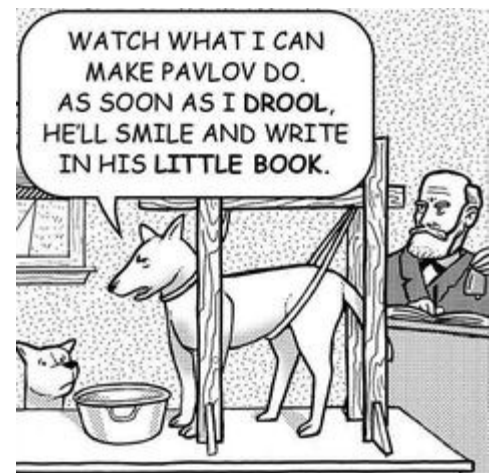
The Internet Scavengers - PMSLweb.com



God at His computer



Biblical Convenience Stores



SHL Board for 2015-2016

President: Sharon Strong
Vice President: Herb Silverman
Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen
Secretary: Laura Kasman
Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward
Webmaster: Alex Kasman

Amy Monsky
Brian Murtaugh
Ed Stephens
Bonnie Cleveland
Renee Madden
Baldomero Garcia

Contact us!

SHL
Post Office Box 32256
Charleston, SC 29417-2256
843-670-0290
president@lowcountryhumanists.org

SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

SHL is a non-prophet
organization!

Find us online! We're (nearly) omnipresent!



[Meetup](#)



[Facebook Group](#)



[YouTube](#)



[Facebook Lounge](#)



[Web](#)



[Facebook Families Group](#)



[Email Lists](#)



[Yahoo Families Group](#)



[Facebook Page](#)

The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

Opinions expressed in The Separationist are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.