



AHA Chapter

THE NEWSLETTER OF

# The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION of CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

November 2000



ASHS Affiliate

## “Margaret Knight, Humanist Shero”

On Monday, November 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Society of New Haven, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, Mickey Koth will introduce us to the British author Margaret Knight. As promised, here is a biographical introduction to this outspoken Humanist.

Margaret Knight was born in 1903 in Hertfordshire, England. Uneasy about religion throughout her adolescence, she didn't have what she described as the “moral courage” to completely discard her beliefs until her third year at Cambridge. She recounted the experience like this: “A fresh, cleansing wind swept through the stuffy room that contained the relics of my religious beliefs. I let them go with a profound sense of relief, and ever since I have lived happily without them.”

She was a psychologist, librarian, information officer, and editor for the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in London. Additionally, she was a member of the British Humanist Association. She espoused a “Scientific Humanism” (with capital S and capital H), the definition of which she split into two parts. The “Scientific” in “Scientific Humanism” means that humanism does not regard it as a virtue

## Calendar of Events

### NOVEMBER

Mon., 20	Monthly meeting at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike. Coffee and conversation.	7:30 p.m.
	Main Program: Mickey Koth presents “Margaret Knight: Humanist Shero”	8:00 p.m.
Sun., 26	Board meeting at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike.	1:30 p.m.

### DECEMBER

Fri. 8	Humanist Conversations at 700 Hartford Turnpike.	7:30 p.m.
Mon., 18	Monthly meeting at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike. Coffee and conversation.	7:30 p.m.
	Annual meeting and solstice party	8:00 p.m.

### JANUARY

TBA	Humanist Conversations at 700 Hartford Turnpike.	7:30 p.m.
Mon., 15	Monthly meeting at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike. Coffee and conversation.	7:30 p.m.
	Main program: Dr. David Schafer, “The Human Genome, from Mechanisms to Morals”	8:00 p.m.
Sun., 21	Board meeting at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike.	1:30 p.m.

to believe without evidence and that scientific humanism deals with hypotheses, not dogmas. The “Humanism” in “Scientific Humanism” means that it is concerned with human beings and this life, rather than with supernatural beings and an after life and that the primary good lies in human happiness and the development of the various human capacities to their fullest.

She believed that there were millions of unbelievers like herself as well as many half-believers for whom religion was a source of intellectual and moral discomfort of the sort she experienced earlier in life. The scientific method and its emphasis on

evidence and verification made it increasingly difficult to sustain orthodox beliefs. Many who succeeded did so only by “sealing them off in a logic-tight compartment of the mind.” In the 1950s, there was a post-war revival of what was called “Christian ethics,” and the concomitant view that Christian ethics and dogma are inseparable; the former without the latter does not stand.

Knight disagreed. She thought that tying ethics to dogma compromised intellectual integrity and weakened the ethical teaching. But in her time, as is true

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**MEMBERSHIP DUES**  
 Adult . . . . . \$35  
 Family . . . . . \$50  
 In cases of financial hardship, the association may waive the membership fee. The membership year runs from 1/1 to 12/31.

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The deadline for each issue is three weeks prior to the monthly meeting. The editor would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue.

# Humanist Conversations

The next Humanist Conversation will be on Friday, Dec. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Society of New Haven, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden.

On the weekend of November 2-4, 2000, Yale University co-sponsored an conference: "Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe : An Interdisciplinary Symposium." The host of the conference was The Rivendell Institute for Christian Thought and Learning, and the other co-sponsors were the Discovery Institute, the Yale Law School Forum on Cultural and Academic Freedom, and Yale Students for Christ (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ). The Rivendell Institute and the Discovery Institute are both Christian-based, and the former is a "special project of the Yale Students for Christ." The Yale Law School Forum on Cultural and Academic Freedom focuses on the role of Judeo-Christian ethical principles in public policy and modern life. This was a big to-do for the proponents of "intelligent design," one of the latest attempts to combine science and religion, but this time clothed in academic robes.

The October 2000 issue of Atlantic Monthly featured the article "The Opening of the Evangelical Mind" by Alan Wolfe (p. 55-76). Wolfe looks at evangelical Protestantism, which has not been known for its intellectual rigor, and how it is now aspiring to "revitalize" the tradition. One of the ways this is achieved is through conferences of the sort held at Yale, underwritten by huge sums given by sympathetic donors. Other avenues being used successfully are the creation of university departments in Christian colleges devoted to scholarly study of Christian evangelicals, publishing houses churning out scholarly religious literature, and the participation of evangelical scholars in public debate. We can see the effects of these efforts in the fields of law, psychology, and sociology. We will discuss this article on Friday, December 8, at 7:30. Copies of the article will be available at the Nov. 20 meeting.

Coffee and tea will be provided and we will order out for pizza. Call (203-498-8333) or e-mail ([mkoth@snet.net](mailto:mkoth@snet.net)) Mickey Koth for more information.

## Elections - Oh, No!

Yes, it's true, our December meeting, to be held on Monday, December 18, will be our annual business meeting when we elect board members. Nominees will be announced in November and published in the December newsletter. The announced nominees are recommendations from the nominating committee. Anyone may run for office, as nominations from the floor the night of the election are actively encouraged. Don't worry, there will be no butterfly ballots, and only paid members may vote.

In addition to our annual election, we will hold our usual pot luck, a tag sale and various irreverencies in honor of the winter solstice (and any other excuse we can think of).

## Walter Wells Honored by Connecticut Community Care, Inc.

*For those who are new to our group, Walter Wells is a long-time member of the Association, and a former program committee chairman. -ED*

Bristol, CT - Fulbright Fellow and retired United States Foreign Service officer Walter Wells of New Haven received the Connecticut Community Care, Inc., 2000 Successful Aging Award at a ceremony held October 19. The award honors Connecticut residents over 70 years of age who share a passion for life, a hunger to continue the learning process and who personify the belief that older can mean better.

Wells was among a group of four senior citizens who were chosen by an independent panel of judges based on their lifetime achievements and their commitments to making their communities better for young and old.

Wells, a former high school teacher, became a Fulbright Fellow in charge of teaching English as a second language in workshops throughout Italy. A career in the U.S. Foreign Service followed and in 1975 he received the *Cavaliere del Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana* (Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic) for enhancing cultural relations between the U.S. and Italy.

Wells' U.S. Foreign Service Career took him to Vietnam, Peru, Argentina, Haiti, Guatemala and Milan, where he

presented lectures on Italian-American connections in music. Today, he follows a vigorous schedule, delivering approximately 30 multimedia presentations a year on opera, famous singers, conductors and composers to organizations in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

"Walter Wells is a living example of CCCI's mission of helping people maintain their community involvement and personal dignity," said Molly Rees Gavin, president of CCCI. "His energy and determination are goals all of us must strive to emulate as we grow older, and we congratulate him on receiving CCCI's 2000 Successful Aging Award."

Connecticut Community Care, Inc., is a statewide non-profit care management organization committed to assisting older adults at risk for nursing home placement remain at home safely and with dignity. With offices in Bristol, Waterbury, and Norwich, CCCI has provided care management to thousands of elder Connecticut residents for more than a quarter of a century.

## Humanist Professional Directory

To add your listing (free to members) call Carol Stone at (203) 264-8546 or e-mail [editor@cthumanist.org](mailto:editor@cthumanist.org).

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### Wild Notes

Celtic/World/Folk Quartet  
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*Margaret Knight: Continued* even today, it was difficult for the ordinary person to completely abandon Christian beliefs, for the other side was rarely given equal air time. Her solution was to approach the BBC for a series of radio talks, which was originally to be a criticism of the view that the moral education of children should take place in “its natural setting of religious instruction” (as stated by the British Ministry of Education). The BBC asked her to not only present this point of view, but to also offer advice to non-Christian parents not only on moral training, but also on raising children in general. Another goal of her talks was to attempt to show the intellectual weakness of theism and to challenge the view that there can be no true morality without a belief in God. She also wanted to address the popular belief that a non-Christian attitude toward life by necessity must be negative and that any positive belief is better than none. She proposed Scientific Humanism as a positive and constructive alternative to Christianity.

She gave two radio talks, which were published in 1955 as *Morals Without Religion: And Other Essays* London : Dennis Dobson, 1955. She includes in this book the public’s reaction to her talks. Her other publications include the book *Honest to Man: Christian Ethics Re-examined*, published by Prometheus Press in 1974, as well as an anthology of humanist readings *Humanist Anthology, From Confucius to Bertrand Russell*, which was recently reissued and updated.

So what was the public reaction to her talks, in the 1950s in England? What did she have to say about Christian ethics in her book? Bring a friend and find out on November 20!

## ***350 Thanksgiving Dinners!***

Yes, it’s time once again for the Thanksgiving Outreach Program of the Interfaith Cooperative Ministries of Greater New Haven. Meals on Wheels do not deliver on Thanksgiving, so ICM provides 250 meals for frail elderly people in their homes and 100 more for homeless persons at Center Church Parish House, 311 Temple Street. Most of all at this time we still need turkeys, pies, and money, but there are also some volunteer jobs that must be done on Wednesday and Thursday, November 22-23. Call me at 281-6232 if you’d like to volunteer food, money, or time.

This is a wonderful way to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. One of the homeless guests last year said to us, with tears in his eyes, “Thank you for being family. It is so hard to be alone on holidays.” Your help is greatly appreciated.

— June Schafer

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