

# THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

A HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH (HOFW) PUBLICATION

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## Briefs

### MA's Randy Word speaks at September HoFW session

Randy Word, a member of Metroplex Atheists' board for several years, spoke to the September gathering of HoFW about the organization's focus on fighting for separation of church and state and equal rights for nontheists.

Word and others from his organization have periodically protested at area city councils, such as in North Richland Hills and Rowlett, where city governments often insist on Christian-only invocations and set up religious public monuments, such as the In God We Trust sign at the new North Richland Hills City Hall. HoFW members also have participated either in providing protest support or news coverage at these events.

Metroplex Atheists works closely with the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) to obtain legal advice or write letters, but Word said so far FFRF has been unwilling to file lawsuits, largely because they need to concentrate their funds where they can win. Texas is a very hard place to win, he said, given the conservatism of our courts.

Word said the Fifth Circuit Court, which would hear any arguments or appeals against violations of the Constitution's Establishment Clause, is a particularly conservative court which FFRF considers an unlikely place to win a ruling in favor of separation of church and state.

### Corah Satterfield writes about her experiences at Camp Quest in August

Corah Satterfield, one of HoFW's youngest members, attended Camp Quest, a non-profit humanist camp for children, this summer and has written an article for the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* about her experiences (page 5). She wants to attend again next year.

## HoFW, Metroplex Atheists, and Freethinkers pool their resources to give funds, appliances, and supplies to Hurricane Harvey victims

**H**umanists of Fort Worth, Metroplex Atheists, and Freethinkers of Fort Worth proved their collective mettle by gathering and donating some \$1,500 in cash and specifically needed merchandise to help families who lost some or all of their possessions during Hurricane Harvey in Corpus Christi.

The entire effort was successful and took place on short notice. Collections began September 9, when Will (last names withheld), an East Texas Freethinkers co-organizer, contacted HoFW Chair Sam with a list of things people need in Corpus Christi. He has traveled to that area periodically since the hurricane to help with recovery.

Sam then fanned out the information to HoFW board members, who assisted with contacting others in our community, including Metroplex Atheists and Freethinkers of Fort Worth, to begin asking for donations. All three groups activated right away and contributed. By Saturday, September 17, only 8 days after the effort began, all of the cash and merchandise had been collected. This feat is remarkable from the perspective that each of our organizations has many online members, but only a tiny fraction of them pay dues or become otherwise involved with the group or its activities.

All of these special donations are over

-and-above membership dues. Funds and merchandise were 100-percent donated to help Hurricane Harvey victims in Corpus Christi. The city and nearby Port Aransas have received little news coverage, but have suffered considerable loss in some areas.

HoFW Treasurer Adam did everyone the favor of packing up his truck with the donations and driving to a halfway point to meet Will and Christle, the East Texas Freethinkers group organizer, on September 17.

Christle operated another similar do-

nation effort in Longview in the Books-A-Million parking lot Thursday, September 21 before heading back to South Texas the next day to join the Corpus Christi atheist group helping with distribution.

Will said he helps organize collections because he has particular concern for nontheists working through recovery and having to rely on churches for help. Our donations have no strings attached.

We sincerely thank everyone who donated for their generosity.



Besides \$800 in gift cards, donations included two microwaves, two box fans, a coffee maker, a chain saw, diapers, baby formula, children's activities, cleaning supplies, clothing, and other items needed for home repair. (photo by Adam)

### August conversation with a Netherlands thought leader opens international dialog

## Amsterdam and Fort Worth humanists fight for similar goals in different nations

by Wanda Foster

**A**msterdam, a city known in the 1500s as the financial, shipping, and cultural center of the known world, has continued to be a thought leader in the humanist world since modern humanism formed there in 1946 after World War II. So I was more than a little struck by a sense of significance when I was able to meet

Esther Wit there on August 22.

For the past 14 years, Wit has worked as a humanist writer and content developer for Humanistisch Verbond—in English the Humanist Covenant—the Netherlands humanist umbrella organization founded in 1946. The organization serves as the center of thought and representation for humanist groups throughout the country and

internationally. Today, Wit is one of some 14 paid employees of Humanistisch Verbond. Her LinkedIn profile describes her as a person involved in setting employee vision and policy.

An avid cyclist like most Amsterdamers or Dammers as they are known, Wit actually lives 20 minutes away in Utrecht, the home of the Humanist University from which she graduated. Three days each week she commutes into Amsterdam by train and bicycle for work.

Amsterdam is a very large city, but the center of it has a population very similar to that of Fort Worth. It has 813,562 people compared to Fort Worth's 854,113, and both cities are part of larger urban population centers. Also, citizens of both Fort Worth and Amsterdam are proud of their city's friendly, small-town feeling. Part of Amsterdam's sense of intimacy comes from high population density. Amsterdam has some 12,710 people per square mile compared to 2,181 per square mile in Fort Worth.

Amsterdam teems with bicycles. In fact, the locals often say the bicycle population is closer to 1.2 million because many people have two or three bicycles, which they park at different locations. When they step off public transit they have transportation waiting for them. Like the Dutch government, the people are serious about



Edith Wit, humanist writer for the Humanistisch Verbond, sits with her folded bicycle at her right side as she visits Wanda Foster at the Old Bell pub near Rembrandtplein, an Amsterdam public square and gathering place. (photo by Wanda Foster)

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# Opinion

## HoFW Humanist Perspectives

by Wanda Foster

Mickey Zaunbrecher tells his many stories with a Texas-Louisiana, mildly Cajun accent spiced with a smidgen of Spanish twang. This is exactly what anyone might expect from a U.S. - Argentine dual citizen, which he is.

Agile at 69, Zaunbrecher has many stories to tell. His life has stepped comfortably and uncomfortably across large sections of the globe. His formative years, through the age of 18, were spent growing up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he was born. Merely by virtue of his birth into his family, a substantive portion of his future was set into motion and to some degree formed by the fact that his father just happened to be president of the Argentine unit of John Deere, a huge, U.S.-based conglomerate that manufactures large combines for agricultural use worldwide. As most U.S. parents do when their children are born abroad, they registered him as a U.S. citizen with the U.S. Embassy in Argentina in addition to registering him in Argentina as required.

Like most children of corporate executives and government diplomats living abroad, Zaunbrecher went to the corporate-run American School system in Buenos Aires through age 18. During that time he met his wife, Claudia, another HoFW member discussed in the previous issue of this publication. She was 14, and he was 16. A few years later, after he moved to the U.S. for college, they met in Washington, DC and were married.

Although Zaunbrecher was able to avoid serving in the military, both U.S. and Argentina expected him to serve after he reached draft age. Immediately after secondary school graduation, he moved to the U.S. and entered George Washington University. That kept him out of the Argentine Revolution between 1966 and 1973

and the Vietnam War. He obtained an international business degree, married Claudia, and then moved to Louisiana, where he attended Louisiana State University. Law school primarily served to disenchant him with the legal profession.

After that he entered international business in Houston, Bettendorf, Iowa, and later in the Metroplex. But most of that time, he also lived and spent large amounts of time abroad working for huge international businesses across the Caribbean, Venezuela, and the Middle East, mostly in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Egypt before settling in Arlington, Texas.

### Argentine Politics at the Time

Events in Argentina during Zaunbrecher's early years through age 18 were important to helping establish his humanist, secular worldview and his experiences and beliefs with regard to international business, politics, and government.

When Zaunbrecher was born in 1948, Argentina was at the beginning of Peronism, also known as Justicialism (Justicialismo), which brought major political and social changes to the nation. Former President Juan Domingo Perón and his second wife, Eva Perón, led this political movement, which was based on three ideological pillars: social justice, economic independence, and political sovereignty. Perón was elected three times to serve as president.

Perón's second term began in 1946, when he was elected with the strong support of unions. He served through 1955, when he was ousted in a revolution and exiled to Spain. In 1956 radical factions banned Perónists from running for re-election. While Perón had a broad range of supporters and provided some stability, he had many detractors, who resisted his dictatorial rule in which violence, police

action, and governmental controls were applied to maintain order, implement economic policies, and ensure the party's political continuity. Dictators were and are common in various South American nations. They often managed business to serve the needs of their own country in ways that permitted and produced a corrupt business environment.

After Perónism was rejected, a series of fragile governments ensued. They were characterized by frequent coups d'état, currency controls, and development of wide ranging left- and right-wing radicalism. The Argentine Navy revolted in 1963. After the revolution, Perón was allowed to run again and was re-elected in 1973 and served his term until his death in 1974.

### Early Years

Zaunbrecher's early years were spent in the American Community School system in Buenos Aires, known more specifically as the Lincoln -The American International School, which still operates there. Run by a corporate board, the school system, like many other American Schools around the world, is designed to prepare its students academically to enter U.S. colleges and universities.

Large multinational corporations run the schools like a business by selling shares to cover the children of their employees. In addition, tuition is charged for each student. These costs may be paid by either the corporation or the student's family. The corporate board operates and manages the system, and some or all of the funding is managed using a Dividend Reinvestment Plan fund. Ultimately the organization had the means to hire the best teachers and to become an educational center for elites and the well-connected. Some of the nation's largest U.S.-based companies, like the one headed by Zaunbrecher's father, end

**From the Editor:**  
**Most HoFW members favor science and rationalism over religion, magic, and dogma. Within the realms of secularism and nontheism, we remain very diverse with different perspectives and ways of arriving at our beliefs in a world often unfriendly to secular thought.**  
**This column presents our stories. Some of the names have been changed or limited to first names to protect the innocent.**

up owning the most shares and, therefore, overseeing school operations, including hiring and finances.

In Buenos Aires, the school purchased two large mansions, one of them with many acres surrounding the property for grammar school and another located downtown for secondary school.

"Since we were a private school run basically by no-nonsense executives from General Motors, Ford, and people like that, we had a really good board of directors," Zaunbrecher said.

He loved the schools. They were small. His graduating class had only 45 students. He said he never felt lost as a student might feel at a large Texas high school. Students and teachers came from all over the world, including many students from China, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as from South American and the U.S.

"The school was nice. It was a good school, because we had good teachers. I mean we had some outstanding teachers," he said.

Zaunbrecher remembers several of them well, including the chemistry and physics teacher with the surname Mittleman. He said the teacher was a world-renowned physicist and chemist

**(continued on page 3)**

|                        | October 2017                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | November 2017                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | December 2017                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Key HoFW Events</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular Meeting, Topic Religion and Public Schools, Wednesday, October 11, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX</li> <li>Coffee and Conversations scheduling remains to be determined. If any meeting is scheduled, it will be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> <li>Regular Dinner Social, Thursday, October 26, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular Meeting, Wednesday, November 8, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX; "<a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> <li>No dinner social or Coffee and Conversations meetings will be scheduled in December.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winter Party; Wednesday, December 13, 7 p.m. Location to be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> <li>No dinner social or Coffee and Conversations meetings will be scheduled in December.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Other Events</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metroplex Atheists, Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, October 4 - 25, J. Gilligan's Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at this link: <a href="https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/">https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/</a></li> <li>Fort Worth Pride Parade, October 7; arrive at Metroplex Atheists staging area 18 (Taylor Street downtown) by 10 a.m.; \$5 entry fee</li> <li>Freethinkers Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays; October 13, 7 p.m., Edelweiss; October 27, 7 p.m., Press Café</li> <li>Check the link for details: <a href="#">Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX)   Meetup</a></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metroplex Atheists, Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, November 1 - 29; J. Gilligan's Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at the link: <a href="https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/">https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/</a></li> <li>Freethinkers Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays, November 10 and 24, 7 p.m. Check the link for details: <a href="#">Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX)   Meetup</a></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metroplex Atheists, Wednesday Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, December 6 - 27, J. Gilligan's Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at the following link: <a href="https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/">https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/</a></li> <li>Metroplex Atheists schedules a party in December. Please check their Web site for future scheduling.</li> <li>Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays, December 8 and 22, 7 p.m. at link: <a href="#">Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX)   Meetup</a></li> </ul> |

### 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.

Respondents should limit their letters

to 150 or 175 words and provide the writer's email 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 emailing the editor

at the following address: [vice-chair@hofw.org](mailto: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 the viewpoints expressed differ from those of the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* or any other party.

**FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY**

Chair: Sam  
 Editor and Vice Chair: Wanda Foster  
 Assistant Editor and Treasurer: Adam  
 Secretary: Reed Bilz

<http://www.hofw.org/news.htm>

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## Opinion

### HoFW Humanist Perspectives

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who taught at the University of Buenos Aires and at his school. A German Jew, he left Germany during World War II and tried to come to the U.S., but could not get a visa. Argentina accepted many of these rejected refugees and even former Nazis with open arms, especially when they brought skill sets needed in Argentina.

Another American School teacher, Walter Damus of the Netherlands, was a World War II refugee. During the war, he had jumped ship in Galveston in an attempt to avoid the Nazis. After the U.S. caught and deported him, he became an eighth grade teacher at the American School in Buenos Aires to avoid returning to Germany. The stories of German Jews denied entry into the U.S. during World War II sticks in Zaunbrecher's mind.

"There was one ship carrying a shipload of German Jews without visas who tried to land in New York. The port authorities turned them away so they went to Cuba, and they were paying bribes to the Cuban government to get visas. For some reason that fell apart, so Cuba, which was pretty much run by the States, denied them entry, sent the boat back to Germany, and every single one of those Jews was arrested and put into concentration camps. They all died," he said.

As a child, Zaunbrecher was more than just a private school student with privilege, however. He also was a member of the local community. He spoke fluent Spanish and played soccer with other children. As he grew up, he went out to local night spots.

His school was not religious, but Argentina was very religious and Catholic, so he went to mass most Sundays. But by the time he entered college in the U.S. he had noticed how Argentina's people were negatively affected by the interplay between the church and the government.

"I questioned a lot of the dogma of the church. I had seen in Latin America first-hand the overpopulation problems—the poorest families with six and eight kids living in shacks. In Latin America, the church is very powerful. The people believe what the church says, so if you use birth control you are going to go to hell," he said.

"Then there was this alliance between the church and the ruling classes. I mean not all of the priests were like that. I know priests you would call guerilla priests. They worked with the poor people, and they were poor themselves, and they did not agree with the church on some positions. But historically in Latin America the church has been part of the ruling class. In Argentina there was a joke, and I don't know how true it is, that the landowner—the guy who owns the ranch—has an eldest son who goes to the army. His middle son becomes a priest, and the third son takes over the farm. It's an incestuous relationship. The military officer corps, the church hierarchy, and landowners are where all the power and the money are."

Together the government and the church seemed to manipulate the people in ways that did not benefit them. He dropped out of church.

#### Criminal Law and Louisiana

After finishing international business education at George Washington University and getting married, he and Claudia moved to Louisiana where he studied family and criminal law—a decision that led him to distrust the criminal justice system. Like other law students, he was required to provide some pro bono or unpaid volunteer time representing mostly poor people going through child support problems, abandonment, and divorces and some criminal cases. He describes those as awful cases. In criminal cases, he said many who did not deserve a pardon seemed to be able to obtain them, and those who did deserve them often could not. One case in particular bothered him.

"A girl was 18 or 19 years old, and she had an abusive relationship," Zaunbrecher said. "Her boyfriend would come home and beat her up, and she was actually hospitalized a couple of times. They were poor and out in the rural country somewhere. I guess the police weren't very effective, and she ended up shooting him with the rifle he had at home. She shot him with a .22, so she was arrested."

She was poor so she had a bad attorney and was imprisoned for 20 years. Zaunbrecher tried to win her a pardon, but it was denied even though many in the community supported pardoning and releasing her.

A short while later, he dropped law as a career and went to work in international business in Houston. He had an offer to participate in an oil drilling operation in Paraguay with some platforms in the Red Sea.

#### International Business

Zaunbrecher worked for the Houston company for a bit, but found the job was less financially rewarding than he expected, so he took another job, this time with John Deere. They moved to Iowa across a river bridge from John Deere's headquarters in Moline, Illinois. Claudia remained with their children in Iowa, while he spent a few years as territory manager for the Caribbean. While he loved it, Claudia was at home dealing with the children.

"Iowa has terrible winters. I'd be gone two or three weeks and come back all tanned and everything," he said.

Eventually they accepted a different post living together in Caracas, Venezuela, where they had their third child. They were together, but life was difficult. Much of the environment in Venezuela was even more challenging than in Argentina.

An inconvenient truth in international business circles is that the international business world tends to be corrupt. U.S. businesses must comply with the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and laws of each nation, but our requirements often are incompatible with international business abroad. Value systems are very different.

American businesses began to feel the pinch of this conflict in Venezuela during his time there. The police and the government often were corrupt, so everyone experienced some level of crime, even in good areas. They lived in a huge 7,500-square foot compound with body guards and expense ac-

counts, but the children had to stay inside because Venezuela experienced many kidnappings.

"There was nothing that did not have bars. We had a back porch, and at night it closed like a jail. Closed it. Locked it. So the house itself we secure. We never were burglarized, but we had friends who were burglarized. Some of them were pretty awful. They would tie them up and ask where is the jewelry and start beating on them and things like that. It was not nice. And you had to be careful where you went at night because there is carjacking and a very high homicide rate. You have to be careful with your kids because they say blonde kids bring a lot of money," he said. "We had three cars stolen there."

Even police were caught trying to steal cars. Once they found police trying to steal one of their cars trying to hotwire it. Claudia laughed once during the brief interchange, and one of the police put a gun to her head, but eventually released them. No one felt secure for any of the 8 years there.

When they were there, Carlos Andrés Pérez, nicknamed El Gocho, was president of Venezuela (1989 - 1993). During this time, Venezuela went broke and had to go to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to get money to keep the government afloat amid social unrest and many food shortages.

A system known as state capitalism was implemented as a central plan.

"Let's say you are Ford and you want to sell Ford cars in Argentina. You have to get a permit from the government, then open a factory, and start producing automobiles. At first you are allowed to import, say the engines and transmissions. Then as time goes on they force you to import less and less and open up a foundry to make your own engine blocks. You know it's all planned, but since it is all planned it doesn't work," he laughed. "It doesn't really work."

Because locals often lacked the capability or finances to develop equal capabilities in the short time window allowed, shortages occurred and a corrupt system of permitting took over at second- and even third-tier levels not necessarily associated with the company. Government officials began accepting bribes in exchange for permitting some necessary, but illegal items. Delays in permits for contractually required items might go on for months, so companies hired expeditors to help with that process, but some of them were paying bribes to officials to import items.

"By the time it is all said and done, this product now costs the end user in Venezuela maybe twice as much as it would sell for in another country—like Colombia. So what they do is they bring it from Colombia at night across the bridge by paying a bribe to national guardsmen who guard the bridge. I mean, so the whole system now is bad.

"A legitimate businessman wakes up one day and finds that his market is flooded with products from other places not imported the same way he does. So it makes it very difficult for a legitimate businessman to do business and a lot of times they become illegiti-

mate. They say, I have to play the game. That is what caused Venezuela to collapse. Venezuela is still collapsing," he said.

Employees of many American companies started going home. They were easy targets for a corrupt, local system. The environment was dangerous for the not guilty.

"If you are a government official you are not interested in arresting a man who has been paying you bribes because he is going to say I paid you the bribe. Why are you arresting me?" said Zaunbrecher. "So you arrest that person over there who doesn't know what is going on. And you say I didn't do anything wrong. Arrest him."

Zaunbrecher stayed in Caracas much longer than many others because he knew the company wanted to maintain a presence there. Yet eventually it became clear that he was the target of Chinese mafia. Bail did not exist in Argentine prisons, and many people in them were never seen again.

Like many others, he had prepaid an air ambulance company to get them out of Venezuela if necessary. Eventually he felt that his life depended on his using that service.

"What they do is they send an ambulance out to pick you up, and they put you in a stretcher in the ambulance, and they put a tube up your nose—really. They are very good at what they do. And they drive you to this downtown airport, which is huge.

"It's like the size of LA's private airport because a lot of Venezuelans own private planes," he said. "It is guarded by the military, but typically when army draftees see this ambulance, they back up. They don't want any part of it, so they [air ambulance company employees] fly you out. So I decided. I called my travel agent and said can you get me out of here? She said I'll get you out on Monday morning. How about the wife and the kids? She said I can get them out on Tuesday, but you on Monday. So I packed my bag and moved into a friend's house, and on Monday morning I flew out of the country, and I was so glad to get out."

After working back in the U.S. for a while, he took a range of other international jobs with other companies. While the work was interesting, it was less dangerous. Still, Zaunbrecher saw similar problems in other countries, as in the case of an Italian company trying to ship illegal machines to Libya. They were caught and ended up facing hefty fines and possible jail time.

Zaunbrecher left that company for another, which he said ended up being a good find at Trencor - Astec in Grapevine. The company builds large equipment, including large rock machines. He worked on projects involving Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and Iraq until the second Iraq war got ugly. Then his company allowed him to transfer to Grapevine, Texas. They moved to Arlington where they live now. Other than some consulting and equipment leasing, he largely stuck to quieter odd jobs until his retirement in 2015.

As Claudia battles cancer, he said he wants to focus on her recovery. He doesn't play golf, so he is largely at home. He said Claudia wants him to get involved in the Democratic Party.



## Netherlands and U.S. humanists share fight for tolerance, social justice, and power of people

(continued from page 1)

fighting use of fossil fuels. The government has even set a date for parliamentary talks about banning sales of all petrol and diesel cars by 2025.

When Wit arrived at our meeting place, the Old Bell pub at the corner of Rembrandtplein (translated Rembrandt Square) and Utrechtsestraat, I called her name, so she folded her bicycle and joined me at my table.

For the next 2.5 hours, I was delighted to sit outside with her on one of Amsterdam's many humid, 70-degree summer days. We sipped wine, munched appetizers, and ruminated together over humanism and problems affecting humans in each of our nations and globally.

Wit said that statistics reported in the past couple of years show that as many as 56 percent of Dutch people are nonbelievers, although they are not necessarily humanists.

As it is in the U.S., Wit says many of the younger people, the Nones, in the Netherlands and elsewhere have a tendency to avoid joining a movement, preferring to remain independent. This presents some problems in the sense of ensuring the future of humanism as a life stance. Many Dutch humanists are aging as they are in our group, so the organization is doing all it can to determine how to meet the needs of Nones and capture their interest.

“When you are humanist you are part of an organization, and a lot of younger people don't want to be part of a big organization. They are just individuals who do their things. They do their work as well, but this year they do it over here and another year they do it over there, so they don't want to become a member,” she said.

Humanistisch Verbond implements a range of strategies for community outreach. One of those is to provide educated humanist counselors who help with marriage issues or share in the lives of young families by providing humanist celebrants to perform weddings, celebrate the birth of babies, and provide other rituals for events important to the life of a community.

The organization also offers lectures, film nights, debates, courses, walks, and reading clubs. In September they scheduled a film about asylum seekers seeking refuge in the Netherlands and public café discussions about human events and concerns. The café discussions occur twice monthly. The classes cover various subjects, including humanism and the arts. Some of these events occur in Amsterdam and others in Utrecht and surrounding cities.

“Humanism as a thinking culture is very old in Amsterdam, but that was mainly individuals who were political thinkers, etc., but as an organization we began after the second world war—in reaction to the second world war—to prevent having such a moral catastrophe from ever happening again,” Wit said.

World War II loomed large for all countries, but especially for a nation like the Netherlands threatened on its own soil by the specter of death and destruction under the Nazi regime. The country announced its neutrality in 1939, but was invaded by Germany anyway in 1940.

“We had a debate yesterday in the

Netherlands with military personnel, and I asked them if they thought there is going to be a war during their lifetimes, because we haven't had a war in the last 70 years, which is problematic because, while it was nice, it was an exception and we started to sort of experience it as the normal situation.

“You have government that functions, and you have no wars, and these military guys said we got accustomed to having a welfare state in which you have a job, rules, and regulations,” she said, adding that it has become very personal to them to understand that holding onto this world may become impossible at some point in the future.

Donald Trump does not help her feelings about that. She considers his actions unsuitable for the office he holds. In a friendly way, she admits easily, as many of us do, that he is “an idiot” in office. Still, it was a relief that he occupied only a tiny bit of our discussion. The morbid embarrassment of a liberal American in Europe in 2017 cannot be understated.

We moved to other topics—the present and the future of humanism in the Netherlands and the U.S.; the political, religious, and social climate for humanist ideas; immigration, integration, and populism; and solving problems unsolvable within national borders, such as climate change and corporate power which now often exceeds government power and, therefore, dilutes the power of the people.

### Humanist Social Objectives

The Dutch have a long social democratic history in which society is built on the notion of equal rights, a venerated welfare state, and tolerance, but immigration challenges the basis of that liberal outlook. One key humanist goal is to bring immigrant communities into their system of norms so they can become a true part of Dutch culture rather than remain separatist and intolerant as some are now.

A longstanding Dutch government tradition has been to pay each religious or philosophical organization a set amount to help support their educational institutions. Even humanists historically received money under this plan, although recently they have started rejecting it because they recognize a danger to society in giving money to perpetuate religions, particularly those intolerant of others with different beliefs and norms.

For example, Wit said Islamists from the Middle East often do not tolerate their own people who choose to leave their religion. Instead, many cases have emerged in which nontheists from Islamic countries are discriminated against or become victims of violence. Government-funded Islamist schools perpetuate intolerance and condemn aspects of assimilation.

“We thought it would be easy to get people from Turkey and all over the place and they could integrate here, and their children, but we have their children and their children's children now, and they are not integrated. It is difficult to talk about that because you don't want to talk to people as being Turkish or as being Chinese. You want to talk to them as citizens of the country, but it doesn't matter. They have a different culture,” she said.

Another key social objective of Humanistisch Verbond is to improve care



Canal boats converge on the “skinny bridge” center, an Amsterdam foot and bicycle drawbridge that crosses the Amstel River, joining canal district residences with cultural centers, such as the Dutch branch of the Hermitage Museum, the Royal Theater Carré (Koninklijk Theater Carré), the National Opera and Ballet, and other cultural and city destinations of the area. (photo by Wanda Foster)

of the elderly by finding ways to help them get the most out of life and ensure they are not put away in a place that makes them irrelevant to the rest of society. It also means giving them humane end-of-life options, such as euthanasia, when necessary to prevent excessive, prolonged suffering that destroys quality of life.

Homelessness is an issue that to a large degree already has been dealt with since the Netherlands provides shelters for homeless people. While a few people remain homeless on occasion that largely relates to use of hard drugs, she said. Soft drugs, such as marijuana, are available to all citizens in a set amount, and even tourists smoke it in coffee shops or openly in Rembrandtplein near where we met.

### Post-Nationalism and the Need for Above-Government Solutions

While immigration backlash and nationalism rear their heads against globalism, inclusiveness, and multicultural exchange in the U.S. and the Netherlands, both Wit and I agreed the world moves forward. The clock cannot be turned back on some things.

Corporations today tend to have more power than governments at home and abroad. That by definition reduces the power of the people and of democracy itself. As much as we might like to turn the clock back to a simpler time, global issues—climate change, the global economy, and democratic government of the people and by the people—are threatened by simplistic, nationalistic solutions. We also agreed that the political methods needed to manage global affairs and politics have yet to be created.

“We are not post-national,” I said.

“No, we are not post-national at all,” Wit agreed. “Creating above-national sorts of governments doesn't function yet.”

Many large companies have more power today than governments, or they simply purchase government personnel to do their bidding.

“Really that is a big power question and a big issue. We keep focusing on politics, whereas the big issue is, the problem we have in the Netherlands is, that we had economic growth last year, quite a lot of economic growth, so everybody ought to be happy, happy, but the problem is that the money

goes to companies, not to employees of companies. It goes to the companies and their stockholders,” she said.

While both countries have unions, unions increasingly seem to lack the leverage to negotiate. Companies try to spend as little as possible on personnel, while storing cash and buying government power in some cases, thereby reducing citizens to second- or third-place priorities. The problem is borderless and exceeds government.

The Netherlands is one of the founding members of its own, above-national entity, the European Union, and most Dutch support it, but Wit admits many people are confused by its bureaucracy and methods. This explanation left me less disturbed by my own American version of EU confusion—especially the fact representatives are hired rather than voted into office, again moving them further away from the people they represent.

The Dutch have pluralistic elections rather than the winner-take-all election system we have here. They have 15 parties in government, but they still have the same nationalist, populist issues they are holding at bay.

During our 2016 election, many union people supported the Trump campaign. Some analysts say the problem is that unions began to feel increasingly less represented as voters in the party became educated, specialized professionals rather than factory workers. In the Netherlands, Wit said Social Democrats, previously were the most popular party but they had the same problem in the last election.

“People in the mid-class and the lower class, people with less education, the working people used to vote for the Social Democrats, but at the moment they don't feel represented anymore,” she said.

The liberals, the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), won the most votes in the last election, but they did not have a full majority. So for more than a year they have tried to form a coalition government. The parties are working together against nationalist candidate Geert Wilders' party, but they are forced to form coalitions with tiny Christian parties that oppose abortion. So while abortion had been fairly settled in the Netherlands, the debate is likely to return now, she said.



## Corah Satterfield enjoys summer horseback riding, science activities, and other fun at Camp Quest

by Corah Satterfield

Through this article I would like to share my experience at Camp Quest.

This unique camp is nonreligious and science-based. It is a place where you can speak freely about religion and being different. Camp Quest welcomes kids ages 8 to 17 who are atheist, freethinkers, as well as LGBT people. Now that you know about Camp Quest I will tell you about the exciting adventures I participated in.

On the first day my parents dropped me off at Lavender cabin. After I unpacked, we played a game to get to know the other 10 campers in my cab-

in. In the beginning I was nervous, but I quickly made friends. After dinner on the first night all the campers gathered in the dining hall to watch Moana.

Every day starts with morning news for about 45 minutes. We talked about religion and people that were famous like Robert Ingersoll and Jane Goodall. Each day the campers selected a science activity, two water related activities, and an outdoor activity.

These are some of the fantastic activities we got to do at Camp Quest. One day of the week we did Honab which stands for House of Nails and Beauty

so you could get ready for the dance. We also had a talent show. One of the campers sang a Disney song, and it was beautiful.

The camp was science-based, so we did things like egg drops, wind tunnels, and plant pressing. The theme of 2017 was wind.

Every day we did two water activities, such as swimming in the lake, slipping in slides, and canoeing. Some of the outdoor things are hiking, campfires, making and flying kites, horseback riding, and archery.

Personally, my favorite activities were horseback riding and archery.

Camp Quest is an atheist camp where you learn about nonreligious people and be able to talk about it. Most people where I live are religious, but at Camp Quest you can be free. When you are at camp you learn that it is great to be different. When I was at Camp Quest we learned about mythical creatures. My cabin made a fake religion where everyone is equal and it is also easy to make friends. My favorite part about Camp Quest was that you did not have to be someone you are not.

This summer was the best ever. I can't wait to go back next year.



Corah Satterfield goes to Camp Quest, which helps children develop rational thinking, knowledge of science, and decision-making skills. (photo by Myriah Satterfield)



Left, Corah participates in group horseback riding. Right, Corah and other children swim on the grounds of Camp Quest in August. (photos Courtesy of Camp Quest)



## *AHA is part of national, UN, and international nongovernmental humanist organizations promoting human rights, social and economic justice, and religious freedoms worldwide*

by Wanda Foster

As an American Humanist Association affiliate, HoFW is familiar with the organization's work inside the United States, but we tend to receive less information about our work as part of a global humanist community networked with other nations.

The AHA has dealt with humanist issues, including education, equal rights, social justice, separation of church and state, and fair and open democracy for more than 70 years. At the same time, it is a founding member and current member of the larger international humanist organization, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), which participates in both United Nations and various global humanist initiatives.

Founded in Amsterdam in 1952, IHEU's vision is to create a humanist world in which human rights

are respected and everyone is able to live a life of dignity. The organization defends human rights and humanist values worldwide. Members come from countries everywhere, including Africa, Asia, Canada, South America, the U.S., and Western Europe.

Made up of member organizations, the IHEU represents 130 humanist, rationalist, secular, ethical culture, atheist, and freethought organizations in more than 50 countries. Among those are organizations like those we have contacted and written about in previous *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* editions from Germany and Austria in addition to the current issue's article about humanists in the Netherlands.

While the U.S. is less active than many European nations in the IHEU, other American nontheist groups also are represented in it, including the Secular Policy Institute, the Unitarian-Universalist Humanist Association,

and the Freethought Society in Pennsylvania. Many U.S. member organizations are concentrated on the eastern and western coasts of the U.S. A map of all IHEU member organizations worldwide is provided at this link:

<http://iheu.org/membership/our-members/?page=CiviCRM&q=civicrm/profile/map&map=1&gid=4&reset=1>

As an international nongovernmental organization, the IHEU maintains special consultative status with the UN in New York, as well as in Vienna, Austria and Geneva, Switzerland. The organization participates on the Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In New York and on the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, IHEU also has general consultative status at UNICEF. It maintains operational relations with UNESCO in Paris, France

and has observer status at the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Also at the UN in New York, the IHEU takes active part in the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion and Belief. They hold annual conferences to build a unified, global humanist strategy and agenda.

Many European units, including sister organization in Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands are also part of another large organization, the European Humanist Federation. EHF is an umbrella organization uniting more than 60 humanist and secular organizations from some 20 countries. It is the largest humanist umbrella organization in Europe. Based in Brussels, the EHF was created in 1991 to promote a secular Europe, defend equal treatment of everyone regardless of religion or belief, and oppose religious conservatism and privilege in Europe and at the EU level.

### **American Humanist Association, Humanist Manifesto III, 2003**

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The life stance of humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

- Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and

developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

- Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.
- Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.
- Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service

of humane ideals. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the life stance of humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

- Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships. Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival

and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well-being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner. Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

Courtesy

American Humanist Association  
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### **Amsterdam Declaration, 2002**

Fifty years after the first Amsterdam Declaration in 1952, Amsterdam humanists updated the Amsterdam Declaration at the 2002 World Humanist Congress. Subsequently, the IHEU adopted it, and today it continues to be the IHEU concept of humanism. Following is the text of the declaration.

Humanism is the outcome of a long tradition of free thought that has inspired many of the world's great thinkers and creative artists and gave rise to science itself. The fundamentals of modern Humanism are as follows:

**1. Humanism is ethical.** It affirms the worth, dignity, and autonomy of the individual and the right of every human being to the greatest possible freedom compatible with the rights of others. Humanists have a duty of care to all of humanity including future generations. Humanists believe morality is an intrinsic part of human nature based on understanding and a concern for others, needing no external sanction.

**2. Humanism is rational.** It seeks to use science creatively, not destructively. Humanists believe that the solutions to the world's problems lie in human thought and action rather than divine intervention. Humanism advocates the application of the methods of science and free inquiry to the problems of human welfare. But Humanists also believe that the application of science and technology must be tempered by human values. Science gives us the means but human values must propose the ends.

**3. Humanism supports democracy and human rights.** Humanism aims at the fullest possible development of every human being. It holds that democracy and human development are matters of right. The principles of democracy and human rights can be applied to many human relationships and are not restricted to methods of government.

**4. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with**

**social responsibility.** Humanism ventures to build a world on the idea of the free person responsible to society, and recognizes our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents. It is thus committed to education free from indoctrination.

**5. Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion.** The world's major religions claim to be based on revelations fixed for all time, and many seek to impose their world-views on all of humanity. Humanism recognizes that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision.

**6. Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination and recognizes the transforming power of art.** Humanism affirms the importance of literature, music, and the visual and performing arts for

personal development and fulfillment.

**7. Humanism is a life stance aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times.** Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere.

Our primary task is to make human beings aware in the simplest terms of what Humanism can mean to them and what it commits them to. By utilizing free inquiry, the power of science and creative imagination for the furtherance of peace and in the service of compassion, we have confidence that we have the means to solve the problems that confront us all. We call upon all who share this conviction to associate themselves with us in this endeavor.

IHEU Congress, 2002