

March 2012



The Christian Universalist

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"God will seek us - how long? Until he finds us. And when he's found the last little shriveling rebellious soul and has depopulated hell, then death will be swallowed up in victory, and Christ will turn over all things to the Father that he may be all and in all. Then every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

- Clarence Jordan (founder of Koinonia Community)

"It is often remarked by those who oppose the doctrine of universal salvation, that if God is the Savior of all men, then there is no difference between the saint and the sinner, the believer and unbeliever. Those who make this remark, seem to forget, that while God is declared to be the Savior of all men, he is also said to be **ESPECIALLY** the Savior of the believer. Though it is true, that God is the Savior of all, yet a little more attention would teach you, that all along, in Scripture, there is a salvation held forth as the **SPECIAL PROPERTY** of the believer, in which the unbeliever can have no part or lot. Though all shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, yet the believer **ALONE** can enjoy this special salvation."

- Rev. I. D. Williamson, 1840
The Nature of Salvation



Historic Universalist Church

The First Universalist Church and Society of Barnard, Vermont, was established in 1802 and led by the Rev. Hosea Ballou. The present church was constructed in 1844 and dedicated on June 25th, 1845, when the service was ministered by the Rev. Hosea Ballou, who was then 74 years of age. Hosea Ballou was the founder of the Unitarian Movement and delivered sermons in neighboring towns traveling by horse and buggy. The church was entered in the Vermont State Register of Historical Places in 1977. This historic church is nestled in the Green Mountains in the quaint town of Barnard on the Southern shore of sparkling Silver Lake, one of the cleanest lakes in Vermont. The town was chartered on July 17th, 1761 and celebrated its 250th year anniversary with the reading of the Charter on the July 17th, 2011 at the church.

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The Christian Universalist

The Christian Universalist is a digital newsletter published monthly by *The Christian Universalist Association (CUA)*, with news, information and commentary for anyone interested in Christian Universalism. Editorial reports, letters to the editor and photos are welcome.

Deadline is the 24th of the month preceding the month of publication. Reports and photos may be emailed to the editor at patmor123@gmail.com. Please send all photos and illustrations as separate JPEGs at high resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of *The Christian Universalist Association*.

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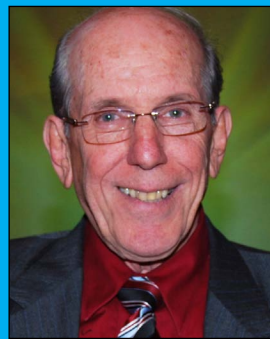
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Kalen Fristad, Chair; Mary Keller, Vice-Chair; Sharon McCauley, Treasurer; Marquis Hunt, Steven Rowe, Mikal Rasheed, Judy Sheriff, Susan Smith, David Spatz, Eric Stetson.

The **CUA** is an international movement of persons, groups, congregations, and ministries, spreading the Good News of the grace of God for the salvation of all people. The **CUA** holds conferences, publishes literature, and sends out this monthly digital newsletter to members and others.



From the Editor

Pat Moauro

Pat Moauro, Editor of The Christian Universalist, can be reached at patmor123@gmail.com

Positive postings on CUA FB page

Congratulations to *CUA* Board member **David Spatz** for stepping up to become the manager of the official Facebook group of the Christian Universalist Association recently.

The site has been getting many positive, enthusiastic postings from believers and supporters of universalism. Check it out at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Christian-Universalist-Association/213009216790>. It's the official Facebook group of the Christian Universalist Association (*CUA*), the largest and most diverse organization representing Christians who believe in a universalist view of the Gospel.

Visitors to the page are also informed that: "We are going to begin to use this page for announcements related to the *CUA*. We would like to invite everyone over to the *CUA* GROUP, where we can discuss theology, books, ordination, answer/ask questions and so on. Please go to <http://www.facebook.com/groups/212981733316/> and join if you would like to be a part of this discussion group. Thanks!"

On another note, this digital newsletter's new two-column layout seems to have met with the approval of at least some readers. Thank you to the readers who took time to email me and *CUA* Coordinator **Rich Koster** to comment on how much they enjoyed the new format of the February issue.

Our correspondents noted that the articles were much easier to read and to scroll down to other articles and pages. Overall, they enjoyed both the layout and the content of last month's issue. I hope you have an opportunity to read all the articles and columns in this month's issue, including a personal "testimony" by a fellow Canadian, **Helen Grasman** of Brampton, Ontario, is on page 5.

She recounts growing up in the Dutch Christian Reformed Church (with its Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and eternal punishment in hellfire). Helen also tells how she learned about universalism and recognized that eternal torment and torture in hellfire could not be reconciled with the idea of God as a loving father.

Peace.

Pat

From the Coordinator

... Rich Koster

The “God Particle” and Extra Dimensions

Have you heard the news about the purported “discovery” of the Higgs Boson? Look up **Lisa Randall**, physics professor at Harvard, and read how she says the Higgs Boson is a clue to the possibility of “extra dimensions” to the universe.

I wrote a longer article about it in *The Universalist Herald*, a quarterly magazine I edit; contact me and I will send you a copy of the article.

Check out Randall’s erudite book, *Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe’s Hidden Dimensions*. The upshot, she suggests, is that right here and now, there are dimensions of reality that go beyond the three dimensions we can see and by which we explore the universe. Thus, the disliked moniker for the Higgs Boson: the “God particle”.

There may be scientific support, after all, for the idea of a supernature that we can see only at its edge where it touches upon nature.

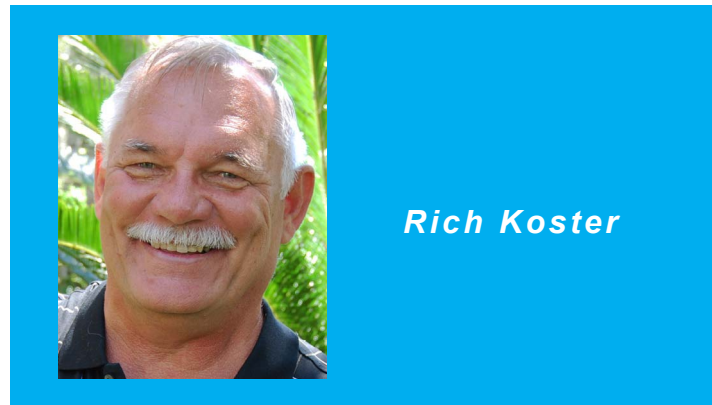
Glossing over “clear Biblical assertion” about sin?

Back in 1988 the reputed “dean” of American psychiatry, **Karl Menninger**, wrote a book that no one ever expected: *Whatever Became of Sin?* Menninger wrote the book because he was somewhat exasperated by the modern inclination to “psychologize away” the rough edges of human society, as when people did evil things to other people. But that word too, “evil”, as with the word, “sin”, is often dismissed as the remnant of primitive religion before we became enlightened.

I wonder if we are prone to do something similar in the way we define the love and grace of God, as though the universal salvation we find in our Savior Jesus Christ is disconnected from that dark side of our psyche **Karl Jung** called our “shadow aspect”, and which the Bible simply calls sin.

In all our talk about human beings being formed in the image of God and our being innately divine beings, are we glossing over the clear Biblical assertion that in our actuality we seriously mar that image and we often fall far short of the divine potential that is in us.

It’s a question to ponder as we read the news and look deep inside our own selves, here in the middle of



Rich Koster

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Lent as we prepare to remember the death of Christ on the cross.

CUA Board Activities

It is with delight that we welcome **John Licitra** as our newest member of the board (see announcement on page 5).

The Ordination Program continues to take center stage as we now have 32 men and women either taking the course or applying to do so.

But we are also doing more to connect CUA members with one another, and a major step in that direction is the revival of our Facebook CUA page under the leadership of Board member **David Spatz**. Check it out!

In Men Whom Men Condemn As Ill

*In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still,
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I do not dare to draw a line
Between the two, where God has not.*

- **Joaquin Miller (1841-1913)**

If you have any questions please call me at 269.352.4457, or email: richkoster.cua@gmail.com

From the Board Chair

... Kalen Fristad

Despite storms in life, God's unconditional love prevails

Hello friends. On February 18 my wife, Darlene, and I traveled from southern Alabama to a campground at Abita Springs, Louisiana. We knew that the weather forecast was for significant rainfall (and possible severe weather) along the entire route we would be traveling.

As we progressed to the west through southern Alabama, then southern Mississippi, we drove through intermittent rain, none of it heavy. In our trek across Mississippi it was heavily wooded in many places, and we came across an area of about a hundred yards wide and several hundred yards long that crossed the highway, in which most of the trees were broken off and laying on the ground. It appeared certain that all the broken trees was the result of a tornado that had passed that way, perhaps earlier in the day.

After driving a few miles into Louisiana we stopped at a Walmart to buy some items. We were feeling fortunate that we had not run into any heavy rain or strong wind, and that we hadn't encountered the tornado as it crossed the highway.

After getting back on the highway to drive the remaining miles to our campground, however, we soon ran into extremely heavy rain, which made it necessary to drive very slowly with flashers on. The lightning was close and sharp, and the thunder was booming. Lightning struck something within 200 to 300 feet to our right, resulting in a brilliant ball of fire. We, however, didn't encounter high winds, and within perhaps twenty minutes the storm began to subside.

We felt relief as we turned off Interstate 12, and proceeded toward our campground. The landscape, however, was littered with countless small branches, and many large ones, which was an indication of high winds having gone through the area. The road ditches were completely full of water, and in some places it was lapping up on the roadway, with evidence of it having previously gone across the road.

As we were getting close to our campground, we came upon numerous flashing lights ahead. Police had stopped traffic so a wrecker could pull a car out of the ditch. After waiting for the car to be pulled out of the water, we were able to proceed to the campground.

When we arrived at the campground, we discovered that the electricity was out (and we were told that it might not be restored for several hours), which also meant that there was no running water. It was still raining, so we were quite wet by the time we got our camper set up at our designated site.

It was a bit gloomy, as we were sitting in our camper



Kalen Fristad

Kalen Fristad, a minister and Chairperson of **The Christian Universalist Association Board of Directors**, can be reached at kkfristad@hotmail.com

with the furnace running and beginning to dry out. At the same time, it was becoming rather cozy. We realized that, while we didn't have running water, we did have milk or pop to drink, as well as having plenty of food. Darlene began to prepare a meal while I went out to hook up the water hose so we would be ready when the electricity and running water was restored. After hooking up the hose I turned on the faucet. As I did so, I realized that the water was running and, at that time, Darlene called out from the camper that the electricity had come on.

Everything had returned to normal.

As I reflect upon our experiences of that day, I am reminded of how vulnerable we all are. We may not have fared well at all if we and the tornado had crossed that stretch of highway at the same time, or if the bolt of lightning had hit closer, or if we had encountered the strongest winds of that day's Louisiana storm, or if we had been driving into our campground at the same time that the tree blew down across the campground entrance, damaging the roof of an adjacent building.

It is inevitable for each of us to experience storms at times as we go through life. But as one who believes in universal salvation, I am reassured that God loves us unconditionally, is with us through the storms, and that no matter what comes our way, all will be well in the end.

While it is true that none of us will get out of here alive, even that is not a reason for despair. On the contrary, we can all look forward to ultimately experiencing fullness of life, as we bask in God's loving presence and enjoy unending loving relationships with others.

Have a good day, and a magnificent forever.

With best wishes,

Kalen

God's "compassionate, all-consuming love" unstoppable

By Helen Grasman

Hello! I'll tell you a bit about myself. I was born in the Netherlands, but only seven months old when my parents immigrated to Canada, so I consider myself pretty much a dyed-in-the-wool Canadian.

I received a strong, thoroughly Christian upbringing, attending the Dutch Christian Reformed Church every Sunday, a private Christian elementary school from grades 1 through 8, as well as weekly Catechism classes that taught me the history and theology of the reformed faith. I'm eternally (pun intended) grateful for my grounding in the Bible and for my sustaining faith in the Lord and the knowledge that Jesus is the Savior of the Universe.

"Troubled" by eternal damnation dogma

My first real encounter with universalism and the concept of no hell happened about 25 years ago when I read an article on the subject in *Plain Truth* magazine. Like many Christians, I had always been troubled by the dogma of eternal damnation, and had difficulty reconciling the idea of God as loving father with the concept of hell and eternal torment and torture for most of humankind. My way of dealing with the incongruity of these two theologies was to embrace the former and basically ignore the latter as best I could.

The article in *Plain Truth* magazine impacted me strongly and provided me with my first insight into an alternate belief system in which God was not an angry, vengeful judge, who was waiting to crush me if I didn't measure up to his standards. It was incredibly liberating to think that I could love God for the beautiful qualities of grace, peace, forgiveness, and restoration without the nightmarish threat of eternal damnation being involved. Loving God would then be a choice, not a fearful avoidance of eternal torment.

It took several more years of study, and of reading, praying and growth before I adopted my current belief system, that God is the Spirit of Light, the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Love. I can't even type those names, without smiling! That, more than anything else is what convinces me of the truth of Universalism and ultimate reconciliation of all humankind.

God's kindness, beauty, compassion, love "exciting and wonderful!"

The fact that the Spirit within me rejoices and exalts when I think about his kindness, beauty, compassion and most of all, his love for all humanity and indeed for the universe is exciting and wonderful!

Socially I'm a liberal leaner. I do believe that there are moral absolutes, and that there are consequenc-

es for ignoring God's laws for living but at the same time, I believe that we humans are here on this earth to learn, and that ultimate perfection will only be attained in heaven. Consequently, it's my belief that people always come first, and that God is the only judge of us all. Regardless of race, creed or orientation, I consider anyone who is sincerely seeking the Lord in Spirit and in Truth to be my Christian brother or sister.

I have not been able to find a Christian group or Church that officially shares my belief in Ultimate Restoration. I occasionally attend traditional church services, but generally don't attend anywhere at the moment. Perhaps you would be able to provide me with the nearest group or church that espouses the Universalist Creed.

If not, I'm content to wait because this message of hope and love is bound to spread to my neck of the woods eventually. It's too important not to! The truth of the Lord's compassionate, all-consuming love for his creation cannot be stopped! Peace and Blessings to you and to all at "headquarters"!

Helen Grasman is from Brampton, Ontario, Canada. She can be reached at: helgras@yahoo.com

John Licitra of New Jersey newest CUA Board member

John Licitra of New Jersey is the newest member of the *Christian Universalist Association (CUA)* Board of Directors. John, who comes from an ecumenical but predominantly Charismatic Christian background, served for many years in nursing home and prison ministries and pastored for a year in a fledgling ministry in Seaside heights, NJ.



John Licitra

He is currently attending the New Brunswick Theological Seminary to prepare for a post retirement career as a hospital chaplain. John has been active in the last several years in the ministry of interfaith dialogue. He serves as the New Jersey affiliate leader of the Interfaith Alliance and is a board member of the Monmouth Center for World Religions and Ethical Thought.

John, a wealth management adviser with Wilmington Trust, also serves on the board of Urban Promise Trenton, a ministry devoted to serving the needs of underprivileged children in impoverished urban areas.

John said he views the theology of Christian Universalism as foundational for both the work of interfaith peace activism and for his future role as a hospital chaplain.

Tutu calls for a society infused with spirit of Ubuntu

This is the second and concluding article on Ubuntu theology and Universalism. The first article appeared in the February issue.

By Mikal Rasheed

For both **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** and **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**, the organizing principle for their vision, ideas and practice was community. For Tutu, a new South African must not represent only a nonracial, just and democratic society.

More significant for Tutu, the spirit of Ubuntu facilitates bringing the white Afrikaans, the Black South African, and the Indian South African together into an interdependent society. It would be through this interdependence with others that all would experience the fullness of God's creation and the fulfillment of mankind.

For Tutu, as for King, no one can be a human alone, for a human being can only be a human being in community. Thus being intertwined in a communal network of relationships, the suffering and dehumanization of one impacts others; and the one who dehumanizes is dehumanized.

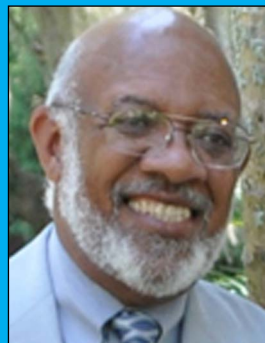
Common ground between Tutu and Christian Universalism?

To view the thoughts of **Desmond Tutu** (and **Martin Luther King**) from a Christian Universalist perspective I would like to refer to the works of **Waslaw Hryneiwickz**, a Polish Catholic theologian who was born in 1936 and still remains in Poland. His social and historical context of course is not South African or American. He experienced the ravages of World War II and the post-war era in Communist Poland. In much of his work he speaks to the state of Christianity in Eastern Europe.

From my limited understanding, Christianity is quite marginal in the consciousness of Eastern Europeans. But I've also read that there has been a limited, yet steady, revival of Christianity in the former Soviet Bloc countries. In spite of these experiences, Hryneiwickz's theology is clearly and unabashedly Universalist. Hryneiwickz's work continues to refer to the Early Church Fathers, such as **Origen** and **Gregory of Nyssa**. His reliance on the Greek translations of Scriptures reiterates the Greek understanding of apokatastasis and aionios.

In the following excerpts from *The Challenge of Our Hope: Christian Faith in Dialogue* by **Waslaw Hryneiwickz** we can draw some instructive insights on the implicit universalism in **Desmond Tutu's** vision. Hryneiwickz states:

"Christianity's future will depend largely on whether it becomes a wise teacher and witness of true spiritual transformation, whether it sounds more convincing and



Mikal Rasheed

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optimistic – or whether it continues to increase human fears with visions of eternal punishment, on whether it becomes a messenger of good hope, moves closer to life and, remaining a demanding faith, develops more tolerance for human shortcomings, on whether it continues to concentrate on human sin and fault, or become friendlier to people and their strivings, acquiring a deeper understanding of the dramatic gift that is human freedom...

"Christians must be involved in process of shaping, healing and changing reality. Christianity is not a religion of transcendental egoism and exclusive concern for personal salvation, but a faith inseparable from love, compassion and hope for universal salvation ...

"Early Christianity considered the idea of apokatastasis a dangerous heresy with far-reaching consequences (... meaning here the restoration of all creatures to the primeval friendship with God and mutual reconciliation) ... Hope for universal salvation is not merely a dream about the future of eternal happiness for all (this would be a pure 'eternalism' and a sign of our wish to escape our earthly tasks). This hope carries on a remarkable, strong imperative to shape human life here and now. If once we are to become a community of beings reconciled with our Creator, among ourselves and with the whole nature, then we should start building it here on Earth. Let there be as little misery, sorrow, tears, and pain as possible! In our innermost depth we are closer to one another than we imagine ...

"The universalism of hope is a cure for the temptation to appropriate the gift of salvation for the benefits of one's own religious community and to deny it to all other people The duty of expecting salvation for all may then become an eschatological motive of love and concern. It is not only a passive hope that someday God will be able to

Continued on page 7

reconcile all the creation and gather it in the harmony of a new world. The hope of universal salvation relates also to the present day”

Hryniewicz’s reflections on Universalism addresses not only the Universal Salvation of all humans but the Universal Salvation of the total of God’s creation. Universal Salvation is thus for the human order, the social order, and the natural order. It is a Universal Salvation that focuses our attention not solely on our postmortem existence or the here-after-here. For him the here is the “here now”, and it is “the-here-in-the-now” in which we must become engaged as Christian Universalists.

The engagement must be not only interpersonal, social, and cultural, but perhaps political; however, not in the partisan sense. Additionally, this engagement may involve encountering those social structures and social policies that marginalize and stigmatize individuals.

Hryniewicz’s message resonates with Tutu, King

The goal of this engagement would be to contribute efforts to establish a universally reconciled and restored society. Herein we see the work of **Desmond Tutu** as he calls for a society infused with Ubuntu.

For Hryniewicz, the Christian witness and the focus on salvation is that we are not saved from an eternal hell but we are saved to a hope of the universal salvation of all in both the here and the here-after-here. I think there is something in Hryniewicz’s message that resonates with Desmond Tutu and Dr. King, in that the latter two men were concerned that efforts of redemption and salvation be grounded in a social, political and ethical context, while maintaining a transcendental hope in a Divine reality.

In summary, I am suggesting that, in examining the activism of both Tutu and King, we may discover the foundational elements of a socially engaged Christian Universalism. *cu*

A Word To the Calvinists Anne Brontë (1820-1849)

You may rejoice to think yourselves secure,
You may be grateful for the gift divine,
That grace unsought which made your black hearts
pure
And fits your earthborn souls in Heaven to shine.
But is it sweet to look around and view
Thousands excluded from that happiness,
Which they deserve at least as much as you,
Their faults not greater nor their virtues less?

And wherefore should you love your God the more
Because to you alone his smiles are given,
Because He chose to pass the many o'er
And only bring the favoured few to Heaven?

And wherefore should your hearts more grateful
prove
Because for all the Saviour did not die?
Is yours the God of justice and of love
And are your bosoms warm with charity?

Say does your heart expand to all mankind
And would you ever to your neighbour do,
-The weak, the strong, the enlightened and the blind
-
As you would have your neighbour do to you?

And, when you, looking on your fellow men
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture then?

May God withhold such cruel joy from me!
That none deserve eternal bliss I know:
Unmerited the grace in mercy given,
But none shall sink to everlasting woe
That have not well deserved the wrath of Heaven.

And, O! there lives within my heart
A hope long nursed by me,
(And should its cheering ray depart
How dark my soul would be)

That as in Adam all have died
In Christ shall all men live
And ever round his throne abide
Eternal praise to give;

That even the wicked shall at last
Be fitted for the skies
And when their dreadful doom is past
To life and light arise.

I ask not how remote the day
Nor what the sinner's woe
Before their dross is purged away,
Enough for me to know

That when the cup of wrath is drained,
The metal purified,
They'll cling to what they once disdained,
And live by Him that died.

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*Treasurer's Report
for February, 2012*

Beginning February Balance: \$5,795.05
Income: \$ 815.00
Expenses: \$1,647.67
Bank of America Balance
as of February 29, 2012: \$4,833.54

Sharon McCauley
Treasurer

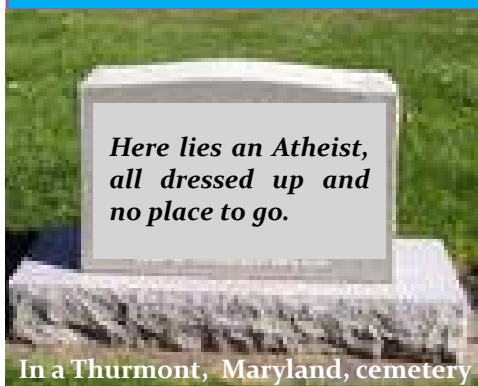


Billiards Be Still and Listen!

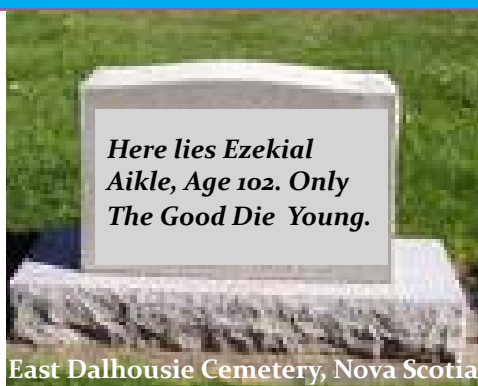
The cracking sounds of billiard balls and the solemn sounds of worship in a retirement home near Sublimity Oregon simply don't mix. Thus this sign asks residents not to play billiards during the worship service. Thanks to **Lance W. Haverkamp** of Colorado Springs for submitting this photo.

Holy Humor!

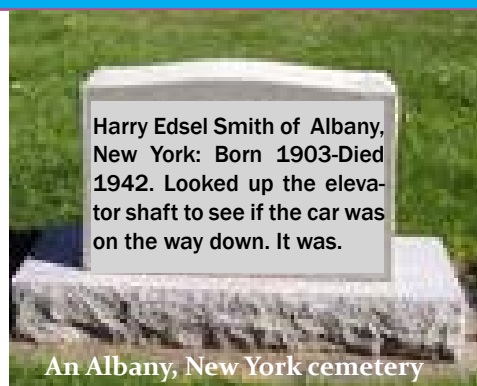
Old tombstones tell tales of deceased
May seem funny, but could be verse



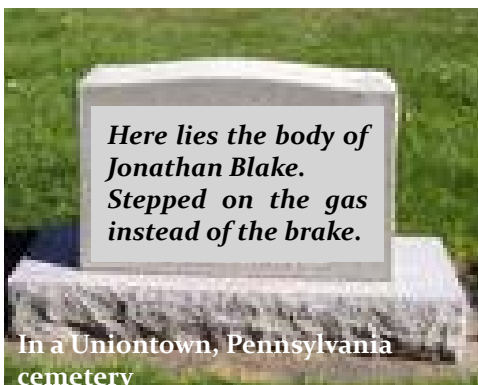
In a Thurmont, Maryland, cemetery



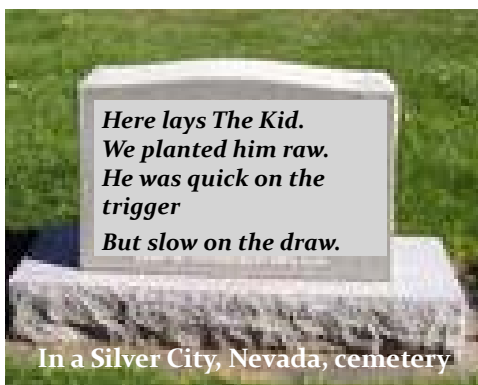
East Dalhousie Cemetery, Nova Scotia



An Albany, New York cemetery



In a Uniontown, Pennsylvania cemetery



In a Silver City, Nevada, cemetery



A lawyer's epitaph in England