

## Editor's Preface

Two seminal humanist events marked the gathering of some nine thousand Unitarian Universalists (the largest such in history) in General Assembly this past June in Boston. The first was the release of Humanist Manifesto III by the American Humanist Association, the second the public resurgence of UU humanism as shown by the impressive (over one thousand) overflow crowds at our four GA workshops. Two featured David Bumbaugh's cogent reply to UUA President Sinkford's request for a new UU language of reverence (itself a response to Bumbaugh's earlier call, in this publication, for a "humanist language of reverence!"). The others were "If Not God, What? Humanist Elevator Speeches," delivered by Katy Korb, David Schafer, Sarah Oelberg and Brian Eslinger. Korb's and Schafer's remarks were published in the most recent edition of the HUUMANISTS newsletter.

A steady stream of members, supporters and other curious UUs flowed by the booth that HUUMANISTS shared with AHA and Evolvefish (those freethought friendly folks who will put a walking fish on your car, that says "Darwin"—even though Davidson Loehr isn't sure you should let them). The results were hundreds of endorsements for HM III, and over three hundred new members, subscribers and congregational contacts for HUUMANISTS. I've attempted in this issue to capture some of the enthusiasm and excitement of that week, and the months immediately surrounding it.

We have of course, letters from some of you reflecting on back issues, and from our book review editor, Daniel Ross Chandler, a particular treat—a series of reviews on books about a common theme.

For the opening article, Sarah Oelberg and Brian Eslinger kindly reconstructed their extemporaneous "elevator" remarks from scribbled notes and best recollections. I filled in from the audio tape and appended an encouraging response from UU historian and Christian, Elz Curtiss. To get the full flavor you must imagine yourself in a convention center meeting hall, packed to the walls, with folks in the aisles and crowding in at the doors to catch a few words of what the buzz said was one of the more anticipated events of GA. Given all the ruckus of the previous few weeks, and President Sinkford's call for all UUs to write their "elevator speeches," how would HUUMANISTS respond, and how would that response be greeted by other UUs?

Davidson Loehr, in an address delivered one month following the Boston GA to a UU "summer camp" takes on another of Bill Sinkford's recent challenges: the possible reworking of our UUA purposes and principles. Loehr suggests that the challenge is irrelevant—that the purposes and principles do not determine who we are as a religion, but only as a religious club. He asks us to consider a humanist tradition of liberal religion that predates Unitarian, Universalist and UU identity by two millennia.

This issue of RH is dedicated to R. Lester Mondale, who died in August, the last surviving signer of Humanist Manifesto I in 1933. Walter Wells' biographical sketch and Mike Werner's heartwarming recollection pay considerable tribute to the man, but he is here in his own words as well. While Lester was a magnificent definer and defender of humanism (excerpts from his 1952 Beacon Press essay on ???? will appear in an upcoming issue of UU World), he may have been

at his best when explaining sympathetically views not identical to his own. His thoughts on Deism, from that same Beacon Press booklet, are included here.

After referring to UUA President Bill Sinkford several times, it seems only right to give him his own say: the piece included is not the much debated Fort Worth sermon (posted at [uua.org](http://uua.org)) but a commencement address delivered at Meadville Lombard (UU) seminary in Chicago just before General Assembly. A thoughtful and personal challenge to graduating liberal ministers, it is also an invitation to us all to take a deeper look at who are, and who we do and could attract to our ranks.

Finally, the Humanist chapter of the DuPage UU Church in Naperville, IL, weighs in with a response to HM III—culled from a Sunday service offered in August of this year. Several members of the group offer us biographical reminiscence, scholarly reflection and gut reaction to that document. I couldn't reproduce the instrumental or vocal selections or congregational reaction on these pages, but you know a bunch of "reverent" humanists knew how to use the arts (including spirited verbal to and fro), to enhance the mutual experience. Some of you, had you been there, would have called it "spiritual." Some of you would not—and those respectful differences so well exemplified in the writings of these contributors, are, my friends, why this conversation in print continues.

—Roger Brewin