

Friday digest

December 16, 2011

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New today from the *Century*:

- An interview with [ecologist Sandra Steingraber](#): "Chemical trespass and climate change are often dealt with by two separate groups of environmentalists. I am interested in bringing these two together." (subscription required)
- Debra Bendis [reviews Steingraber's book](#): "It's time for the talk, says Sandra Steingraber: the talk about the pollutants that are infiltrating our lives and threatening the health of all of us, especially our children." (subscription required)
- Ryan Dueck on [Christopher Hitchens, who died today](#): "The thing I appreciated most about Hitchens was the strong element of moral protest that characterized his atheism. He expected better--from God, from religious institutions and from those who claimed to have some divinely inspired insight into the nature and purpose of the cosmos."
- Steve Thorngate on [food drives](#): "There's something powerful about donating actual food for people to eat. Of course, it'd be far more effective to just write a check."
- John Petrakis [reviews Martha Marcy May Marlene](#), which "is at its best in showing both how the attractive and easily swayed

Martha is won over by the structure, discipline, camaraderie and faux gentleness of the cult community."

In the news:

- [Renowned writer and polemicist Christopher Hitchens dies at age 62](#)
- [Obama defends his Israel policy at Jewish conference](#)
- [In Canada, Jewish, Muslim comedians joke about Christmas](#)
- [On Dec. 25, atheists celebrate a different birthday](#)
- [Christopher Hitchens' atheism was a gift to believers](#)
- [Religious freedom panel gets 11th-hour reprieve](#)