



Ethical Views

March 2005 Vol. 119, No. 7 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

March Platforms

Sunday, March 6

Platform: Our leader, Richard Kiniry, will speak on *“Travel as Education.”* His recent trip to India (after a thirty-four-year absence) was not a delightful vacation but a learning experience. He had the opportunity to compare what he remembered from the past with the present. He will share with us some of the ways in which modernization, while appearing “a mile wide and an inch thick” has made disturbingly deep changes in some parts of this ancient culture. The old question remains, is progress always positive?

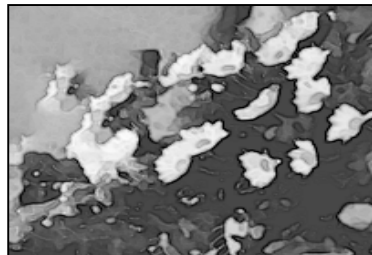
Sunday, March 13

Platform: Kate Lovelady, the part-time Leader Intern of the New York Society for Ethical Culture and the Consulting Leader-Intern for the Ethical Society of Austin, Texas, will give her platform, *“The Terrible, Beautiful Mess of Life: Humanism and the Arts.”* The strength of humanist ethics, she says, is based in the heart as well as in the head. What can a movement that rejects absolutist answers offer to uplift and inspire people in not only intellectual assent, but also deep compassion and commitment to humanity? She will discuss and use poetry to explore the joys and challenges of being human. Ms. Lovelady has a degree in Poetry from Northwestern University and is currently finishing certificates in pastoral counseling at the Post-Graduate Center for Mental Health and in Humanist Studies and Leadership.

Sunday, March 20

We're celebrating the *Spring Equinox*. All members and friends are welcome to attend this interactive program in which we will offer thoughts on the meaning of Growth and how we help ourselves and others to grow.

We will embrace the arrival of Spring with poetry, flowers, music, and leader Richard Kiniry's famous babbling brook.



Sunday, March 27

Platform: Anne Klaeysen, Leader of the Long Island Ethical Humanist Society, will be delivering the platform *“We Are the Ones Building an Ethical Community.”* Ms. Klaeysen is a graduate of the Humanist Institute and is working toward a Doctor of Ministry degree from Hebrew Union College. Her message will include poetry and song and will triumph the virtue of self-reliance in order to build nurturing, caring relationships, the backbone of ethical community. ◇

Platforms at 11:00AM, Sundays
Coffee Hour & Discussion
follow the Platforms.

Musical interludes performed by
Pianist Tim Ribchester.

Childcare provided at no charge.
All are welcome!

Children don't become good people without working at it. The Philadelphia Ethical Society offers an Ethics for Children program that encourages an open search for personal values.

- Age appropriate curriculum
- Community service opportunities
- Arts and crafts
- Workshops for parents: discipline, dealing with aggression, sex, bullies
- Child-care offered for infants & tots
- *Sundays at 10:45 A.M.

For information call
(215) 735-3456

On **March 6, 1:30pm**, the Society's **Ethical Action Committee** is sponsoring a meeting with **Lyonel Lagrone**, a coordinator with the **Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County**. They have requested assistance from the Ethical Society in Philadelphia's Discrimination Testing Initiative. He will talk about how his organization has exposed housing discrimination, and he will also describe opportunities to work as "testers" with the Fair Housing Council to combat ongoing discrimination. The Council needs testers of all races and from all walks of life. Testers work in times that are convenient for them—lunch breaks, evenings and weekends. Testers are contacted each time they are needed for a test and have the option to decline to do that particular test but will remain on the list to be called for future tests. Testing is a great way to earn extra income while helping an important cause. Attend the meeting with Mr. Lagrone on March 6 to find out more. If you cannot attend but want information, phone Mr. Lagrone at 215-576-7711.



Leader's Message *Religion a Curse?*

by Richard Kiniry

My recent trip to India has filled me with opinions. Each experience becomes a speech; each experience is analyzed and built into a position. At the March 6th Platform you will hear some of that analysis but since time is limited, I thought I should share one of my reflections here in the Newsletter.

There are times when all I want to do is scream that religion is a curse upon humankind. This is one of those times.

(continued next page)

Leader's Message

(continued from previous page)

I was surprised at the rise of fanatical religion in India — if not all fanatical, certainly more fervent, more robust. We experience fanatical religion here in the United States from the Christian Right and we know that Islam seems to have been hijacked by radical Islam. Well, it seems fiery, conservative religion is making headway in India also.

All those years ago as I was leaving India, religion was certainly a big presence but the issues of the day were progress, development and how to get a wristwatch and a radio. Now many citizens of India have television and much of the television schedule is religious broadcasting.

I have kept tabs on the news of India, so I knew about the rise of BJP political party. It is a Hindu nationalist party — India for Hindus. They have energized an old irrational prejudice. As in the United States, the powerful majority religion is supposedly under threat from powerless minority. In India this has resulted in a couple of massacres of Muslims and the retaliatory murder of Hindus. The nation is dividing on religious lines. And, as in the United States, this move to right-wing religion is more political than religious. Politicians grab power by encouraging the communal identities of the different religious groups.

Hindus may have started the religious push but Islam and Christianity have matched them in public devotion and power brokering. Since 1970 there has been a vast increase in public demonstrations of denominational faith. Everyone seems to be taking their beliefs right into the faces of opposing religious groups. There have always been Hindu and Muslim religious festivals, but now they are politicized events, declarations of control of territory.

While I was in the city of Mangalore, a Christian festival was held. It didn't fit any Christian calendar I know of, but it was a huge New Year Festival. The festival was spread over a city with a majority Hindu population and the

Christians blanketed the city with their images and presence. I now understand why the Pope is so confident of his conservative direction. The future of the Catholic Church is in Asia and Africa and those are conservative places with masses of simple people. The Catholic Churches of India have the feel of Hindu temples with colorful images and loud devotions.

Thirty years ago, Muslim women could be identified by their distinctive dress — different from Hindu dress — but rarely did you see a woman in a burqa. Now, the all-enveloping black robe is common and Hindu women seem to be matching them in more conservative dress. No longer is the midriff exposed under the sari. Women are more covered, but they have a greater presence in business and public life.

Worldwide, from the United States to the Philippines, fundamentalist religion and religious violence are on the rise and we have to question whether this is just a fad or the direction of the future. How have we strayed from the path of rational religion? Is the truth as simple as the disappointments of modern life? Since "the good life" has not trickled down, do some people gravitate to a world where they are appreciated? If you are nobody in this world, you can be somebody when an all-powerful god needs your affection and worship. As personal commitment, religious devotion can be self-affirming, but when the commitment becomes group identity, you are ripe for manipulation into fanaticism.

India is at a crossroads. There is increased prosperity and energy. At least part of the country is moving ahead at a fast pace and yet the ancient, slow-moving culture remains. In the clash of past and future, of expectations and limited resources, tension rises and religion has become the focal point or scapegoat for that tension. <>

Platform Summaries

January 30: In his talk, "After Arafat: Where Do We Go from Here," Dr. Steven Dinero endeavored to interpret

the Middle East situation and what impact the death of Yassir Arafat may have had.



Dr. Steven Dinero

Emphasizing the importance of symbols, he pointed out that Ariel Sharon is no less a symbolic figure in the Palestinian view than Arafat was in the Israelis' eyes. Leaders, in the form of symbols, are blamed for things clearly not in their control. Dr. Dinero outlined various proposed solutions for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

— Carol Love

February 6: Richard Kiniry recalled that while many of us were "educated" about love from reading Erich Fromm, we changed our tune in the 60's when the Beatles popularized "All You Need is Love." Love in the 60's became the cure for all the world's ills, even though its interpretation was meant to imply an interior sensation, something you feel, rather than a conscious act or something you do. In spite of the best intentions, "60's love" didn't fix the world. Richard noted that love, in its most profound form implies action, and has historically been characterized as a social force for change, improving the lives of the downtrodden (i.e., prohibitions against sweatshops and child labor, the five day week, housing for the poor, social security, the civil rights movement). But has also been the most liberal of us whose love has effected these changes, not the current, popular notions of love, faith, and good works promoted for political expediency.

— Jill Leeds Rivera

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President's Message

by Howard Peer

Where does the time go? I would have sworn on a pile of bibles (like that would have meant anything) that I had prepared this article before leaving on my trip to Nova Scotia, just so I didn't have to do it when I got back. But, no, cannot find, was not done, drats.

So today finds me at the keyboard searching for inspiration. Luckily, today is Sunday and I spent a nice midday at the Society, so I'm pumped up with hope. And, yes, a little merlot.

I had been in Nova Scotia looking at property. We recently sold my parents' place, the small house near the Jersey Shore where I grew up. It was a converted two-car garage with no heat in the upstairs — where the bedrooms were. My Dad built it himself, with help from my Mom and not much else. It was hard to let go. But like so much else, everything is different now; it is not the place I grew up. Still, letting go of the physical property was a bit like burying my parents once again: not pleasant but necessary.

This left me with some cash to invest, and we decided to put some into real estate. Being a dual Canadian/American citizen, I felt it appropriate to buy some land in Canada. We had been through the Cape Breton region a few times and found it just delightful. We were able to buy a 168-acres for a ridiculously low price. We are in final negotiation now. We have no plans to move or even build there, but at least it's more tangible than a stock certificate. At a 600-foot elevation, we may survive global warming, but at 46-degrees North we will have a glacial view in event of an ice age.

Oh well, life is a crap shoot after all.

Returning to more immediate matters, the Society books are colorful recently. We have done away with that boring black and white monochrome motif and substituted a generous helping of red. The reasons are not complicated; we lost a couple of good renters, a couple of renters have stiffed us, and we have had some unanticipated expenses. Because we rely upon the building to generate income, we need to keep it in rentable condition. So when the Auditorium ceiling got water damage, we needed to address it. Also, it made sense to get some other things done while the contractor was mobilized.

These over-expenditures, however, are not an entirely unanticipated matter. You may remember that last year we passed a deficit budget. That is to say that our budget showed us running in the red, by about the amount where we are. We have done this in past years and gotten away with it because Jean has been able to increase rental income to cover the increased costs. The current year's budget was more deeply out of balance than previous budgets, but not alarmingly so.

Those of us more long in the tooth can remember a time not so long ago when the Society was in more dire straits than these. There was a time when we both could not meet our current expenses and had a significantly mounting debt. For two years, I served on a committee that seriously considered selling the 1906 Rittenhouse building and moving to more affordable accommodations. After much thought and debate we decided to stay where we were and fight it out. Comparing now to then we are still in much better shape financially.

Still, there is cause for concern — and action. We need to increase our support base, which means that we need more support from our members.

The Pledge Luncheon will be coming up soon and we of the Board will be reaching out to solicit more financial support. Amongst other things, we would like to encourage members to remember the Society in their wills.

But enough of that kind of talk for now. Enjoy your day and see you soon.

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Sunday Morning Volunteers

Ushers - Saul Machles, Chair

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles and Joe Monte

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

March 6. From Carol Anne and Duke Riddle to celebrate Duke's birthday, *today!*

March 13. From Temma & Arnold Fishman to celebrate their son Craig's birthday.

March 20. From Pat Leopold for her grandchildren Julie, Sam, Jordan, & Jeremy.

March 27. Mary Wassermann in honor of her parents, Fred and Ginger.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Chair

March 6 Nick Sanders

March 13 Saul Machles

March 20 John Hall

March 27 Saul Machles

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

March 6 Doris Leicher

March 13 Amber Anderson

March 20 Mary Lou Da Silva

March 27 Harry Thorn

Coffee Hour Lunch









March 6 Howard Peer & Doris Leicher

March 13 Jean Bradley

March 20 Ken Greiff & Janice Moore

March 27 Amber Anderson

MARCH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1  Jessie Harmath	2 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM Camp Linden Board of Trustees at Carol Love's home	3	4  Terry Martin-Murley	5
6 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Travel as Education" 1:30 PM <u>Talk</u> Lyonel Lagrone, Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County  Duke Riddle	7	8	9 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee	10	11  Lew Wilkinson	12
13 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "The Terrible, Beautiful Mess of Life: Humanism and the Arts."	14 7:30PM Get to Know Us Social	15	16 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Community Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	17 7:30PM Weston Rm. <u>Class</u> History of Ethics	18  Saul Machles	19
20 11 AM <u>Platform</u> Spring Equinox Celebration 12 PM Pledge Luncheon 1:15 PM Ushers' Training	21	22	23 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM <i>New Group</i> Voluntary Simplicity  Susan Jo Klein	24	25	26  Ruth Ann Dubb
27 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "We Are the Ones Building an Ethical Community"	28	29	30	31		 Birthdays

Thursday, March 17– 7:30PM

The **History of Ethics** class will continue their lively discussion group. We have been examining the evolution of ethical systems through history and for the remainder of this year we will be discussing Philip Price's view after reading his book, *Knowledge of Good and Evil*.

Sunday, March 20

11:00am. SPRING FESTIVAL - With the theme of Growth we celebrate the The Spring Equinox with song, poetry, flowers and a babbling brook.

12:00pm. PLEDGE LUNCHEON – This year, the Board members will be doing an amusing skit and we will be talking about the financial health of the Society.

Sunday, March 20

1:15pm. – Ushers' Training

All members who are willing to occasionally come 15 minutes early on sundays to help prepare the Auditorium for Platform, are invited to attend a training session for Ushers. There is nothing particularly complicated but a little knowledge goes a long way in producing a smooth-running Platform.

Ethical Views is published monthly except
July and August.

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Philadelphia Ethical Society

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Membership Growth Committee

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NEW GROUP

Wednesday, March 23, 7:30pm.

Voluntary Simplicity

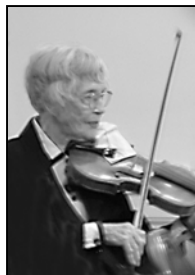
Members and friends are invited to join a new group in the Society. If you are interested in making your life more environmentally friendly and socially responsible, this is the group for you. We will read, discuss and search for better living through simplicity.

APOLOGY



Last month, we wrongly identified this photo of **Bernice Schermer**, long-time visitor at the Society. The photo was to help announce her upcoming performance as violinist in the **Philadelphia Doctors' Chamber Orchestra** scheduled to play at the Society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT



On February 13, Bernice (sans hat) did perform with the Orchestra in a concert at the Society's Festival of Love. For the final piece of the concert, the Orchestra, conducted by **Dr. Fawzi P. Habboushe** (right), played selections from a brand new work by Composer, **Martin Heyworth** (left).

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