



# Ethical Views

May 2002

Vol. 116, No. 9

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Soc

**Sunday, May 5**

**Colloquy: Foolishness**

**Platform: Lois Kellerman, Leader, American Ethical Union**

***Life Partnership From the Heart***

Lois Kellerman explores what it means to create a deeply inclusive life partnership through promises of the heart. She offers core commitments a couple can make and shares stories and reflections. The talk is based on the groundbreaking book just published by Viking-Penguin, Marriage from the Heart: Eight Commitments of a Spiritually Fulfilling Life Together. This approach frees couples to focus on enlivening values of the human spirit.

**Sunday, May 12**

**Colloquy: Forethought**

**Platform: Dale Drews, Ph.D., Leader, American Ethical Union**

***Fundamentalism and the War on Terror***

Fundamentalism is seen as one cause of terrorism, but fundamentalism is found in all religions and secularism. Also, a brief Mothers' Day address.

Dr. Drews was Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Queens from 1964 to 1967. He taught Sociology at Rutgers, Glassboro and West Chester .

**Sunday, May 19**

**Colloquy: Forgiving**

**Platform:**

**Richard Kiniry, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society**

***The Usefulness of Religion***

Let's be honest. Has religion become useless or, even worse, a curse upon humankind? Should we face the facts and make Ethical Societies into support

**Sunday, May 26**

**Colloquy: Fortune**

**Platform: Hope for the Future**

This platform, the last of the 2001 - 2002 season, will consist of several short talks presented by Society friends and members which focus on political, economic and environmental topics. Hope for the future is found in our interconnectedness with one another and in our faith in the intrinsic worth of all human beings.

Call the office or contact Temma Fishman or Betsy Lightbourn to participate.

**Sunday, June 2 at 12:00 PM**

***50<sup>TH</sup> Annual Camp Linden Picnic***

Join us for one of our most popular events. We'll be meeting in front of the Society building at 10:30 AM to travel to 50 acres of fields and wooded paths in the beautiful and historic Brandywine Valley.

We'll be serving traditional picnic fare, but vegetarians need not worry; they will have plenty to eat.

\$10, \$5 if you bring a salad, dessert or entree to share. Please call the office at (215) 735-3456 to offer or request transportation.

**Colloquies at 9:45 AM**

**Platforms at 11:00 AM**

**Coffee Hour and discussion follow the Platforms.**

**Musical Interludes performed by Pianist Jeremy Gill.**

**Childcare provided at no charge.**

**Leader's Message**

## Hiding Behind God

Richard Kiniry

The poor Catholic Church. The centuries telling everyone that they should deny or control their sexual urges and now they're caught with their pants down. It wasn't so sad, some of us could feel the discomfort the hierarchy is experiencing. The hypocrisy of the righteous posturing is exposed.

There are lessons in this scandal. Time religions tend to believe that propaganda and their arrogance are mistakes. The first mistake ordinary people are of secondary importance. The big-shots and institution must be protected.

It is a shame that all the good performing caring works in the Church are now tainted by the fallout of the Church's obsession with sex. Authoritarian religions invariably have a problem with sex. Since they claim to be perfect systems, the most important aspects of life must also be controlled by those systems. But sex is about control, being free and part of a system. The physicality of sex is a challenge to the otherworldly joy religions promise. People must be allowed to freely express physicality that conflict with the artificial, unspiritual vision of the Church. Authoritarian religions must find

*Leader's Message*

# Hiding Behind God

acceptable within restrictions.

In the Catholic Church we have an institution that is less sexist than the Taliban but, from the perspective of non-Afghans, not by much. It is certainly not as cruel to women, but it is male dominated from top almost to the bottom. This same institution has a cult of a virgin mother, and a cult of the fetus. It makes celibacy a sacred vow for its all-male clergy which guarantees that few heterosexuals will find the priesthood appealing. And then the Church tries to avoid knowing that many, if not most, of its priests are homosexual. It seems apparent to me that this inhibiting, disapproving approach to sex is an obvious explanation for the present scandal. It is not a good idea to put sexually thwarted people into authority positions with children; especially since they have denied themselves the chance to develop a mature sexual identity

If this is an article about what is wrong with some religions, the authority issue is key. The Pope may not have an army, but his clergy has status and power - unearned but real. There is a mystical, aristocratic quality attached to the Catholic clergy. They are better than mere mortals. After all, a priest is called "Father". This holier-than-thou status helps to keep the faithful in their place and priests in their exalted position. That status is the source of the power priests have exerted through the millennia. It offers a free-ride to those who want to coast through life. You don't have to speak truth. Position is more important than substance.

That sense of entitlement leads bishops to think they are above the law. And

special. Besides that, they have a direct connection to God. Secular law is beneath the law of their god. In protecting their "above the law" connection with God, they protect their status. They hide behind the mystic of God to protect that position. Their status depends on the cache of God's exalted position even when they are breaking secular laws. And again the little people are of secondary importance.

Every person wants to be respected but few of us can claim ready-made status. This Catholic scandal is a window into the scandal of authority everywhere. Authority ought to come from ability and conscientious fulfillment of responsibility, and not from a title or an ability to intimidate. The Catholic Church does not seem to understand the principle of legitimate authority. It dishonestly depends on the innocence and faith of its people to secure their position. But priests and bishops are not the only ones who base their sense of worth on titles or use rank to decide who is worthy. Sadly, that is a human habit.



*Education Committee Report*

# Spring and Justice

by Temma Fishman

Dr. Marianne Layden, Director of Education at the Center for Child Therapy, University of Pennsylvania, discussed *The Media and Me About Sexual Violence*. Dr. Layden projected many provocative messages and newspaper ads onto a screen during her talk. She emphasized these images, bombarding us through printed media, television and the Internet, shape our perception of the world. They dehumanize girls and women, lower self-respect, causing them to become accepting of abuse. They encourage men and boys to take callous attitudes and violent behavior toward women are manly. Dr. Layden thinks we should not tolerate graphic ads. They demean us and are especially hurtful to children. I urged us to protest and speak up for what she has done.

continued next page

## ***School for Ethics***

### **The Get to Know Us Social**

A casual social event for visitors and newcomers who are curious about our history and philosophy. Members will share stories of their religious and philosophical journeys and Society leaders will answer questions. This is the last Social of the 2001-2002 season. Refreshments served.

**Monday, May 6, 7:30 PM**

### **Defining the Good Life**

A monthly discussion about the choices we make. We will discuss big issues like racism, sexism and the environment but also more personal issues like lifestyle choices. We will do this within the context of the Ethical Humanist point of view - an understanding that defining values is an ongoing process. This month we will focus on poverty. Do impoverished people have intrinsic worth? Visitors and newcomers are welcome.



from last page

## *Education Committee Report*

# Spring and Justice

Although pianist Jeremy Gill was absent, we were fortunate to have jazz guitarist Ken Procaccini with Kevin Thaxton on bass. Member Bertha Waters provided readings honoring women. Leading us in singing were Carol Kaufmann on piano and Saul Machles on guitar.

As we entered the Auditorium to celebrate the *Spring Equinox*, we were greeted by a cluster of balloons cheerfully floating in one corner of the room. A gurgling fountain was surrounded by greenery, dotted with flowers, and realistically strewn with coffee-cup litter. Leader Richard Kiniry's creation set the mood for loving nature, but recognizing what we do to cheapen it. Through poetry and song, we saluted the beauty of spring, the joy of renewal, hope for the future, and our place in Nature. Member Jeanette Kohler sang *Tiptoe Through the Tulips* and read a poem she had composed. Upon finishing each reading, we placed a balloon in the center of the room. At the end, colorful balloons drifted above our heads, decorating the ceiling. It was indeed a community creation. Throughout the program, pianist Jeremy Gill performed lovely classical pieces to enhance that Spring feeling.

We were fortunate to have member Ethel Boyer's granddaughter, Stephanie Oppenheimer, speak to us about *Perspectives from a Peace Corps Volunteer*. Ms. Oppenheimer devoted two years of her life to organize training programs which helped Senegalese villagers deal with health problems. Because poverty makes access to modern health care and education impossible, they suffer

effect cures. Measles has annihilated entire villages. Blood in the urine, a symptom of schisto-somiasis, is considered normal. The international community, which pledged 100 billion dollars in aid, has not come through. Yet if only 5 billion were collected, AIDS would be eradicated. In spite of these problems, Ms. Oppenheimer felt she made a difference and would love to return to Senegal. After her talk, we honored members Ethel Boyer and Gladys Huber for their many years of dedicated service to the Society. We celebrated at a lovely tea party organized by our Community Committee. Carol Kaufmann provided delightful background music on piano. It was a very special Sunday.

Leader Richard Kiniry, in his talk, *Whose Justice?*, thinks far too many people are deprived of their fair share. Can we universalize our own needs and understand that others have a love of land and family as we do? Justice is always personal and partial - with two steps forward and one back. We mature in stages, climbing the moral ladder as we get better at it. Justice is personal - a feeling we have about ourselves and others and a way to bring out the best as we make life better for all. Ethical Humanists insist that the purpose of our lives is to be the best we can possibly be. It is an individual and personal effort. Life is about growth - physically and morally with each individual finding his way. Richard asserts that the best reason to be moral is to do it for yourself. Ultimately, the only one we must answer to is ourselves.

Dr. Evalyn Segal, former President of the Hemlock Society of Delaware Valley, spoke about *The Right to Assisted Dying*. The Hemlock Society stands for legalizing the right of a mentally competent, terminally ill

must act for herself. Dr. Segal says this is not suicide; it is the disease which is doing the killing. Many people want to have control over who shall live and present and whether or not to live without support. Most prefer to die peacefully with loved ones and have access to the drugs necessary to be pain-free. Dr. Segal thinks it's imperative to have a physician who is sympathetic to the philosophy of the right to die with dignity. The assurance of having needed medication gives many people comfort and the ability to live longer and happier. She said that doctors will help, although many do not talk about it as assisting in a death which is a felony. The Hemlock Society would like to change that. Dr. Segal recommends that families talk about these issues early on to be sure that a wish to die with dignity is respected.

Anne Klaeysen, leader in the American Ethical Union, had us ponder *Would Emerson Do - What Would Emerson Do?* Emerson, a religious man, felt deep kinship with all people. "If I am free; all must be free." As a philosopher, he had a lifelong interest in ethics and in the question, "How do I live?" After September 11 we turned to philosophers, poets and authors whose words failed us. Innocence died with us carries with us our own inner pain in the tragedy. Emerson would have called every relative and friend to find comfort. He would have helped us face our losses and wanted us to trust our moral perceptions. He would say "Trust yourself; do not imitate." He would have had us tell the truth about art, politics, games - in our own expressions - and build a community of love and self-worth in place of the Twin Towers. He would have had us embrace each other; show the world how it is done - and strike a blow for freedom.

## President's Message

# Who and When?

by Arnold Fishman

It is my sad observation that man's inhumanity to man is such that it precludes the possibility that the perpetrator views the victim as a part of the broad collective "we". Early hominids must have looked at the family as we, and so it became "us against them." Later the tribe came under the we umbrella. Now the we seems to be defined by the nation state - at least in the West. Does anyone doubt that the world would unite to defend the Earth from alien attack? Who constitutes we is one of the burning questions of our times.

Our view of "when" is equally problematic. Short-term decisions are imposed where long-term solutions are required. My immediate ancestors left everything - family, friends, and possessions - behind and embarked on a dangerous journey to a land of a foreign tongue. They sacrificed immediate gain for future rewards. Whether it was a net advantage to them is uncertain, but for their descendants there can be no doubt.

Like a hamster in an exercise wheel, we chase economic growth in the futile attempt to keep up with an exploding population. This seems to require the ravaging of the earth - the penultimate in myopia. The when issue looms equally large.

Perception is reality. Our views of who is included and what is the relevant time frame are pivotal to our discourse and decision-making process. Accordingly, our task is simple. All we need do is redefine two words. We means everyone, and when does not mean

o n l y

today.



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**Sunday Morning Volunteers . .**  
make Sundays special for all of us.  
Call the Chairs to enlist.

### Coffee Hour Hosts

Harry Thorn, Chair

May 5 Nancy Freilich  
May 12 Lew Wilkinson  
May 19 Harry Thorn  
May 26 Temma Fishman

### Ushers

Rick Zorger, Head Usher

with help from Richard Kiniry &  
Arnold Fishman

### Flower Dedications

Selma Toth, Chair

May 5 - Janet Norton, in loving  
memory of her father Barton W.  
Belfer.  
May 12 - Madeleine Suringar, to  
celebrate the birthday of her  
daughter Tamar.  
May 19 - Richard Kiniry, in honor  
of the birthdays of his sister Mary  
Eileen and his nephew Edward.  
May 26 - Temma and Arnold  
Fishman, in celebration of the  
birthday of their daughter Cindy.

### Greeters

Susan Jo Klein, Chair

May 5 Susan Jo Klein  
May 12 Jeffrey Dubb  
May 19 Irene Putzer  
May 26 Betsy Lightbourn

### Coffee Hour Edibles

May 5 Howard Peer &  
Doris Leicher  
May 12 Cherin Silver &  
Ken Greiff  
May 19 Jean Bradley

## Ethical Action Committee Update

# Dictionaries for All

by Cherin Silver

The Winter Shelter has closed for the year and will not reopen until fall. EAC members and friends donated time, cooking skills and even ingredients to make this year's monthly dinner at the Shelter a meaningful community experience. The dinners were both nutritious and delicious.

Each third grade student at the Morris Elementary School is provided with a paperback dictionary of his or her own - courtesy of the Philadelphia Ethical Society's Dictionary Project is a nonprofit organization founded by Mary French for the purpose of providing third grade students with dictionaries. The Project now includes every school in Ms. French's home state of South Carolina and is spreading to the northeast. The dictionaries have been ordered and are expected to arrive in about two weeks.

Hundreds of books collected by EAC members and friends were taken to the Robert Morris Elementary School for their children's and community libraries. We have been successful collecting books for more than for children, although all donations are appreciated. Please ask friends and family to consider donating books their children no longer use. The kids also love such high quality educational magazines as National Geographic and the Smithsonian.

Temma Fishman will be announcing petition drives at each platform meeting. Be available to discuss them. If you has any ideas for petitions, please bring them to EAC meetings or discuss them with Temma. The EAC meeting has been moved to the second Wednesday of the month at 5:30 PM. Everyone is invited.

## *Camp Linden Report*

# Off to a Great Start!

by Jean Bradley, Executive Director

This is a very busy time of year for Camp Linden. Though we won't be seeing any campers until the middle of June, several of us have already spent many hours at the Camp.

It's been so exciting to see the raised beds constructed, then filled with a rich combination of mushroom and topsoil. Just yesterday, Ethical Society members Cherin, Zoray, Jeff and Ruth Ann and *Friends of Camp Linden* Bob, his girlfriend, his daughter Devon, Lew and Henry began planting. In addition to the 12 beds, each 48 square feet, we used containers for cherry tomatoes and scented geraniums and eight plastic bags for strawberries. Yes, we are growing about 90 strawberry plants in 8 plastic bags! Each bag has 10 x-shaped slits. We filled the bags with potting soil, then tucked the roots of each plant into a slit. After about two weeks, when the plants are well established, they can be hung and one or two more plants planted on top. Since our campers are city kids, we want them to see ways that they can have gardens even when they don't have acres of land. The volunteers, who are also city kids, were excited about the possibilities for their own homes.

The idea for the garden came in response to increasing incidents of childhood diabetes and other devastating health effects of malnutrition. In addition to the crops we are planting before the campers arrive, the children will plant fast-growing vegetables, such as leaf lettuce, and help gather and prepare the vegetables as they are ready. We will also purchase fruit to supplement the

district. The goals are to introduce a greater variety of healthy foods and cover the basics of good nutrition. Like all our lessons, the emphasis will be on having fun as we learn.

Our swimming instructor Deb Hodies and her husband dropped off a wrought-iron table they had donated. No shabby plastic furniture will be seen at our pool side. Deb recently notified me by email that she has rented space at the First Annual Community Unity Flea Market to be held on Saturday, May 25 from 9-2 at the West Chester Community Center on Market St. in >

West Chester. All proceeds from the sale will benefit Camp Linden!

I must admit that responses to our fundraising have been a bit slow. Some people haven't yet gotten their checks or need more information about our plans. Please call the office at (215) 735 - 3456 for more about the Camp, to volunteer to donate something for the flea market. Thank you Ethical Culture for your standing support of the Camp and the very deserving children we serve.

## **Moving the Climate Change Agenda Forward**

by Seth Dunn & Christopher Flavin

Indeed, the political landscape of climate change has been altered in subtle but significant ways since 1992. This is in part because many industrialized countries have quietly begun to experiment with policies to reduce emissions, while the limited experience of several developing countries suggests that economic development can be decoupled from emissions growth without harming the economy. More dramatically, the Bush administration's abrupt announcement in March 2001 that it would not sign the Kyoto Protocol has had the unintended consequence of galvanizing international determination to reach global agreement.

Historians writing about the rescue of the Kyoto Protocol may come to view the Bush administration's rejection of the pact as a turning point, recharging negotiations that had been bogged down for over three years. The unilateral U.S. move backfired not only with Europe but also with Japan, Canada, Australia, and other nations that had previously been closely aligned with the American negotiations. In Bonn, Germany, in 2001 – to the surprise of numerous observers and participants – representatives from 178 nations finalized many of the protocol's key rules while U.S. negotiators stood by and watched...

Meanwhile, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks have renewed debate over energy security and the world economy's disproportionate dependence on Middle Eastern oil. It cannot be lost on climate negotiators that the same oil that has increased vulnerability to terrorism and international conflict has also made the world more vulnerable to climate change. Both reinforce the case for accelerating the transition to a more efficient energy system that is based on carbon-free, indigenous resources.

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