



Ethical Views

September 2010 Vol. 125, No. 1 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

September Platforms

Sunday, September 12, 2010

The Failure of Religion

Speaker: Richard L. Kiniry, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Whether you participate in any religion or not, you must face the fact that institutional religion occupies a central place in the way a people understand the meaning of life, understand how to live a good life. But look around, what has happened? Either the only message getting across to people is disrespect and hate for other people or people are no longer listening to religion. As the cultural voice for caring, just living, religion has failed.

Sunday, September 19, 2010

Being an Ethical Neighbor: Everyday Implications of the Immigration Debate

Speaker: Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Director of Outreach and Program Evaluation, Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

Public discussion of immigration issues is often conducted at a furious pace, using incendiary language and racial shorthand to fan fears and anxieties. In today's discussion, we will step back from the heat of that conflict to explore the daily human impact of such rhetoric and its related policies. After a brief factual overview of the demographics in the Philadelphia region and the mission of the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, we will focus on the ethical imperatives of being a good neighbor—both literally and figuratively, for immigrants and native-born Philadelphians alike. How can reasonable people debate their policy differences? How can people

who are not attuned to those debates assess their own daily impact on the lives of their fellow community members? These and other questions will be used as a prism through which to view our opportunities and responsibilities as ethical neighbors.

Sunday, September 26, 2010

Fall Festival

To remind ourselves of our commitment not only to the worth and dignity of each individual but to the larger universe of which we are a part, we will celebrate the fall equinox by taking a searching look at the environment. What are the real environmental issues? What can we do, personally and politically, to make a positive impact? Susanna Murley will tell us what ideas are being generated at Planet Forward to move us towards a smart, clean, green energy future. Check out www.planetforward.org. <>



Leader's Message

Next Steps

—Richard L. Kiniry

As most members know I am planning on retiring soon, and while that news is not as earth-shattering as Global Warming, it will be a significant change for the Society. Of course how I handle my departure from the position of Leader of the Society will be a reflection of my character and to tell the truth, I may have trouble keeping my mouth shut about the direction of the transition.

There is a mountain of literature on leadership transitions in religious congregations. And although we aren't a normal religious congregation, the Society's Board is taking the advice of the experts on the subject. The Board will of course tailor that advice to our needs.

(Continued on page 2)

Ethics for Children

Each Sunday the Society offers a children's program at the same time as the Platform. Although this is a "one-room school house," we will have age-appropriate activities for all age groups. The underlying theme of the classroom will be the children's growing awareness of the world around them and developing an appreciation of all forms of life. Relationships with parents, siblings, animal and human friends and plant life are stressed. We have a certified teacher and will use the text, "Love Your Neighbor."

For information call
(215) 735-3456



Leader's Message (Continued)

I have offered June 2011 as my departure date and between now and then there is an enormous amount of work to be done. A survey of all members is planned plus a very careful process for selecting a Search Committee that will have the challenging job of searching out and selecting possible worthy candidates.

This can be a very exciting time for all of you. An essential part of the process is the expectation that all our members and friends will be involved in this work. The whole focus and direction of the Society will be examined and you will have the opportunity to have your needs addressed as the Society moves into the future. The Society can be an important part of your life if you make it so, if you make it work for your better self, if you make it work to enhance your relational and spiritual journey with life.

And by the way, the entire process will be open to a membership vote. The Nominating Committee will offer a slate of trustworthy members to serve as the Search Committee and the whole membership will have an opportunity to vote on that slate. And any candidate the Search Committee chooses will need to be accepted by the membership.

While all that is going on I will continue in the role of Leader and since this will be my last time to present as a whole my view of Ethical Humanism, I will be shameless in pressing my opinion that our philosophy has power to change the world. It is a rational, naturalistic and humanistic understanding of living that can be the foundation for a more respectful, honest, sustainable and satisfying approach to living for everyone.

With that in mind, I will during the year address many aspects of everyday living. I will start in September with a foundational talk entitled "The Failure

of Religion." It will be foundational in that I want to start by situating the Society as a "religious" community. Since religion is supposed to be that part of the culture that offers an understanding about the meaning of life and about how to live a good life, it appears that religion has failed at its job. Meaningful living does not seem to be a cultural priority and too few people are taking responsibility for the world we are making. My questions will be, are we doing better? Have we faced reality? If we know of a better way of living and I think we do, are we doing it or are we, like so many other religious groups, saying one thing in the "sacred" space but in our living accepting the escapists' consumer values of the larger culture? If our agenda is making a better world, where do we start?

In the following months I will discuss particular issues: our relationship with the natural environment, raising children in a media-saturated reality, what we can personally do about economic inequality, a new understanding of maleness, redefining work, achieving an honest spiritual life and accepting our failures.

I anticipate a year of lively conversation, but of course conversation with a productive focus. We have work to do as we create the next stage of the life of the Society. I hope you can get involved in the fun.

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Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Sunday, October 3, 1:30pm

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is part of a 127 year old humanist religious tradition. This is a chance to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Do they make sense and can they make your life better? Using the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture we will look at our core ideas - the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism, and ethics as a way of life.

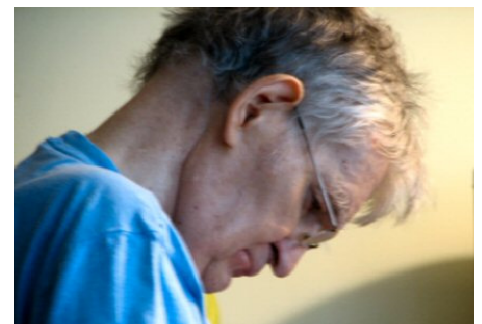
-- Led by Richard Kiniry.

Dale H. Drews 1935-2010

A Man of Grit

—By Betsy Lightbourn

Dale Drews, my beloved partner and co-conspirator, died on July 2, sharply reversing what had been a slow recovery after a long illness. The day his obituary was published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the desk clerk in our apartment lobby greeted me with, "I had no idea Dale had done all those things." After hearing several similar comments, I realized the value of obituaries as a way of connecting the many lives lived during a lifetime. In Dale's case his later life disabilities—hearing loss, speech hesitancy and slurring and a severe balance disorder masked the qualities that made his other lives possible. Throughout his adult life Dale held and acted upon strong humanist, pacifist and social democratic convictions; and in the words of Edward L. Ericson, Leader Emeritus of the Washington Ethical Society, he had "the grit to live out his convictions at whatever cost to himself."



Born on Dec. 8, 1935, Dale grew up in Coffeyville, Kansas, where after a quasi-delinquent boyhood, he transformed himself into a serious adolescent whom a classmate described as willing to debate any philosophical issue at any given time. Abandoning his early Methodist roots for Unitarianism, he attended a church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he became acquainted with Ericson who was then a young Unitarian minister. From there Dale hitchhiked himself into the University of Chicago, with a goal of eventually entering the ministry, and

in the late 1950s became a confirmed pacifist and civil rights activist.

At age 18, Dale successfully submitted his Conscientious Objector application based on humanist convictions and refusing to answer the supreme being question. As a pacifist, he not only performed alternative service as a conscientious objector, but wrote a detailed manual published in 1970 by the American Ethical Union, *Humanist Conscientious Objection: A Guide for Men of Draft Age*, directed specifically to those who did not belong to a peace church but argued their case on moral grounds.

As a member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Dale was one of seven arrested in an interracial group seeking service at Jennie's Café in Chicago in 1956. As a member of Washington CORE, he picketed and was ejected from Gwynn Oak Park in Baltimore in 1959 as part of a protest against the exclusion of blacks from private parks, testing the constitutionality of Maryland's trespass law.

After receiving his BA from the University of Chicago in 1962, Dale pursued graduate study under a Sutro Fellowship and became a Certified Leader in the American Ethical Union in 1964. He served as an Ethical Humanist Leader in Queens, NY 1964-1967, leaving the Society after he early opposed the Vietnam War. He then served a part-time leader at large for the American Ethical Union (1967-1971) while he returned to graduate school. He received an MA in sociology from the New School for Social Research in 1970 and a PhD from Temple University in 1990.

Dale taught sociology at Glassboro State College (Rowan University) from 1971 to 1976 and through 1994 served as adjunct faculty at Rutgers University, Temple University, Trenton State College and other Philadelphia area colleges.

In 1994 he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and became unable to continue his academic career. He reconnected with Ethical Humanism, becoming a member of the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 1999. He delivered occasional addresses through 2006 and served as Board Vice President in 2003.

A memorial service will be at 2 pm, September 19, at the Society. Donations in his memory are appreciated and can be made to the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia or any other organization consistent with his values.

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Worldly Wisdom: Great Books and the Meaning of Life

James Sloan Allen has created a humanist approach to the Great Books. His book, *Worldly Wisdom*, is a series of commentaries that follow human wisdom from Homer's *Iliad* to the works of Sartre and Martin Luther King. His focus is the humanist ideas that appear in all these historic writings. This is a chance for members and friends of the Society to read and discuss those books we meant to read earlier in life while following the course of humanist thinking through the ages. Another advantage of this reading group is we will have the opportunity to examine our own lives in the presence of ideas from around the world and through the ages.

This will be a monthly series with participants taking turns in leading the discussion. We will have copies of Allen's book to be lent to those leading the discussion and participants will be expected to have read at least part of the selection for that month.

Since the meetings are planned for the third Tuesday of the month, our first meeting will be October 19th at 7:30pm. The book for this month is Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

Summer 2010 at Camp Linden

—by Joshua Hantman, Head Counselor

There were changes made to the program of Camp Linden this summer. More activities and areas of interest were included, to pique campers' interest and build social, personal and technical skills. The amount of time spent at each program area was also modified, so as to make room for this increased variety of activities in a given amount of time. Greater emphasis was put on showing enthusiasm for the campers' sake, in terms of activities planned and also of the counselors' personal styles. I like to think that these changes made for a more exciting summer-camp experience for the children. Their simple smiles seemed to bear me out on this one.



In the "Games" area, namely the large sports field, Lauren led the campers in non-competitive games and fun activities. Not one single child walked away from the sports field as a "loser" this summer, as there were no winners or losers in any games this year. The children who come to Camp Linden have already experienced their share of competition. Instead, Lauren focused on timeless classics and "new" games from the sixties, such as Newcomb, Hagoo, Elbow Tag and "fox-rabbit-leaf." These games foster a sense of real group-thinking and general camaraderie. Lauren must have gone through at least a thousand water balloons this summer in her quest for the perfect water-balloon fight.

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Summer 2010 at Camp Linden

(continued)

At the “Woodshop” area, down in the cabin near the horse pasture, Clare worked on one hundred and seventy wooden sailboat models with the campers. Each camper got to make their own small working model sailboat from some really sweet knotty pine, filing the edges with antique rasps, drilling the hole for the masts and gluing that part in, and fitting main sail and jib before painting the craft to their heart’s delight. A few of the campers decided to make tiny log cabins with Birch sticks instead, but the vast majority of our campers chose the challenge of lofting their first sailboat, and all were able to bring their projects home at summer’s end.

All projects were constructed using recycled materials. And, while I’m the first to admit the resulting fleet would have won no naval beauty prizes, the dreams of a hundred and seventy children will sail true.

Down by the pool, Tyler and Megan continued to liven things up with their zany water-side antics, their goofy doggy-paddle races and their infamous “Mister Goodbar” candy trick. The water sparkled like dappled sunshine and in such a pristine state of cleanliness that the frogs from far and wide came to extol the virtues of a Tyler-kept pool. From what I understand, many campers learned to swim this summer, and everyone loved the pool.

And back at the main cabin, I managed to make a right mess of things in nature, mixing brand-new binoculars with sudden rain showers, wildflowers with poison ivy, and Chickadees with the e-Coli bacteria. Fortunately the good paramedics of the Marshalltown Fire Brigade were always there to lend a helping hand, and none of the children ever had to spend the night at Chester Medical Center. The campers each made little “Nature Notebooks” in which we kept small notes and drawings of the various plants and animals we observed and glued leaves

from the Linden, Tulip and Maple trees. Our annual “River-walk” not only cheered the children and taught about biodiversity but provided our good friends, Hal and Nancy the paramedics, with valuable training in CPR and artificial respiration. All around, good times were had by everyone.

The final week of camp was dubbed “Fantasy Week,” and the celebrations featured an assortment of Walt Disney movies in action. Strange Disney-themed games cropped up all over the camp, bizarre dwarves with hand-drills and exceedingly weird versions of Pocahontas sprang forth from the forests, and poor Nemo had never been so pursued by screaming, happy sharks before. We served the children a delicious, colorful, meatless Mexican buffet and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. Fantasy week was the crowning glory of our summer, a perfect ending.

And always there were the tomatoes. Tomatoes ad nauseum and zucchini like big, ugly green babies. Does anyone out there like ratatouille? Seriously. < >



Clare, the Woodcraft Counselor, writes:

“I can eat some berries now?” This question bombards me from all angles, and I am surrounded by children all asking permission for something that gives the kids excitement, a full tummy and fear. Berries? Without a label? Some kids come to camp with a warning from their parents not to eat anything at camp, because they don’t know where it came from. Eating

berries that grow in the wild without the help of pesticides or farmers is just one experience the campers are exposed to at Camp Linden. The moment they arrive at camp they are shuffled along through the busy schedule, going to activities such as swimming, non-competitive games and nature lessons.

This year, however, a new part of camp was introduced: woodshop. The campers have spent most of their time at the wood cabin filing, sanding and using tools to manipulate the wood in new creative ways I never would have imagined in order to build their very own masterpiece: a sailboat. Each camper goes home with their boat, and every piece of it is together because of their handiwork.

The kids are able to build confidence as they create. The boat curves just so because they filed it; the string guides the sails just so because they attached it; the mast stands tall because they glued it. The boats are not all they have been working on, though. Some kids find their creative expression in building little log cabins, designing their own house and seeing it come together. Whichever their interest, the little creators have been eager to expand upon their projects and do as much as they can.

It seems as there is no harder task than to wait for the instructions before experimenting with new tools, and the kids’ eagerness never wanes. I am constantly kept on my toes, making sure the kids do not drill holes into the picnic tables where they work, and satisfying the many appeals for further instructions. At the end of the day, though, no matter how exhausted I feel, there is no greater reward than to hear someone say: “I wanna keep working! Can we stay longer?” And I always get just a little more energy to look at the camper and smile, telling them not to worry, we will still be here when they get back. < >

*(more from Camp Linden
on the following page)*

Summer 2010 at Camp Linden

(continued)

Lauren, the Non-competitive Games Counselor, writes this:

Working at Camp Linden was a great learning experience for me. I learned a lot about how to work with kids in a relaxed and easy-going environment. I got to connect with the kids and build lasting relationships with the other counselors and the kids. As a future teacher I love working and spending time with kids. Being the games counselor has showed me how to get along with the kids and just have fun, without keeping score. We played a variety of games including volleyball and tag, and our special game called: "fox, rabbit, leaf." I had a blast working at Camp Linden this summer.

Tyler, the Lifeguard, writes:

Working at Camp Linden is a great way to spend the summer. I enjoy working with the kids and having fun at the pool. Over the duration of camp, the one thing that brings me the most joy is seeing the kids learn to swim and improve with each week. The kids are the reason I work at camp each summer; seeing how much they learn and grow here at Camp Linden brings me happiness. Not only do the kids learn and grow, but I do as well. Camp Linden is a great place to spend the summer.

And Megan, the Lifeguard, writes:

The kids who came to camp this summer really enjoyed swimming at the pool. The feeling of seeing a camper finally being able to float by themselves or overcome the fear of getting their face wet is heart-warming. One thing Camp Linden has to offer is a great swimming facility. The kids look forward to swimming from the moment they jump off of the bus. During free swim I enjoy watching the attempts at hand-stands and the outrageous jumps into the pool. < >



Our Spaces

—by Nick Sanders

You will probably not see two very important enhancements to the Society's building unless you know where to look. They are not that obvious.

Of the two enhancements, the more dramatic one is our new entrance for people with mobility problems, those who need to use a wheelchair or otherwise have difficulty negotiating steps. Those persons can now enter the auditorium by way of an entrance on Manning Street. We now have an intercom at the bottom of the ramp on Manning Street and a wheelchair lift inside the entrance at the top of the ramp. Although the person will not be able to enter the Society without help from someone on the inside, they will need only someone to open the entrance door and position the wheelchair lift. There is no need for the direct physical support that has been required when someone in a wheelchair entered from the Rittenhouse Square side of the building.

Over at least the past seven to eight years, many in the Society have supported the development of this entrance. The payments for lunches—provided by various members and others attending Sunday morning platforms—have slowly accumulated, and big boosts have come from sales of name plates in our sidewalk on Manning Street. In addition, over the past year we have had two very large contributions, one from the estate of a

deceased member and another from a present member. And, finally, we were able to re-negotiate the price of the wheelchair lift with the vendor, Del Val Enterprises. Thanks to all who contributed to this effort over the years, we now have an accessible entry to our building.

The other important enhancement is the replacement of two antiquated fuse boxes and associated electrical wiring with circuit breakers and a better wiring arrangement. You may remember that this enhancement was prompted by several dramatic failures of lights and other electrical appliances in February and March, which adversely affected our live-in custodians, our Sunday morning preparations and groups that had rented space in the building.

We had earlier realized from a thermographic study that our current electrical system was not adequate. The study revealed that we could easily experience outages, though not a fire danger. It was not just a matter of repair; it was a matter of substantial improvements. But at the time of the study, we did not have the resources to take action. When the outages did in fact occur, we still did not have the resources to remedy the problems. It was then that we decided to issue a special appeal for money to pay for the needed work. In response to our appeal, eighteen of us responded with contributions from \$50 up to a very generous \$1,000, for the total of just over \$3,500 to have the work done. Other members of the Society should be very grateful to these contributors for this permanent improvement.

These two improvements are significant additions to our very valuable inheritance of this fine building on Rittenhouse Square. You can look forward to the Society's further efforts to add value to this building for those of us and others who use its spaces in the future. < >

A New Administrator

As many of you know, Jean Bradley has resigned from the position of Society Administrator after over a decade of service in that position.

The Society's new Administrator is Peg Shaw. Peg most recently was the general manager and co-owner of The Beehive Hair Salon, Inc., which she and her partner started ten years ago and sold earlier this year. Previously, she worked as a neighborhood planner and economic development specialist, fund-raiser, front-line social service worker and administrative assistant. She has a BA in Social Thought and Political Economy from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has completed graduate coursework in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington in Seattle.

As the new Administrator, Peg's first order of business has been handling the rentals for the building and learning the overall status, capacity and needs of the facility. She has begun initiating improvements in this area and is developing new strategies to increase tenant satisfaction, identify and recruit new tenants and streamline the booking process. She looks forward to expanding her responsibilities as these priority systems become established. Until she is able to take on the other responsibilities of Administrator, such as the various Society member services, the Leader, Treasurer and other officers of the Board of Trustees are volunteering.

Peg's current schedule in the office is Tuesday-Thursday, 9:30-5:30. Many long-term tenants and Society members have already stopped in for a visit, and Peg invites everyone to do the same by first calling her at the office to make sure she's available.

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Jewish Dialogue Group

Society members and friends participated last spring in this organized conversation about the Israel-Palestine conflict and the process will continue starting on August 23rd. The Jewish Dialogue Group, a nonpartisan grassroots organization based in Philadelphia, provides carefully structured, facilitated dialogue sessions. We do this in conjunction with Leyv Ha-Ir, the Reconstruction Synagogue that uses our building. Members who have already signed up are reminded of the dates and time: Monday, August 23; Monday, October 4; and Monday, October 25.



There will be minor changes in the arrangements for the Coffee Hour after Platform in the coming season. We will continue dividing the weekly responsibility by alphabetical groups - A-D, E-K, L-O, P-Z. Each group will be responsible for making the coffee and tea and for offering the light lunch/snack.

Each group will have a leader, and each group will organize itself. It is suggested that a group designate a couple of people to take responsibility each month on a revolving schedule rather than the whole group having responsibility each month.

The food offered should be light fair so that everyone get a bit of food to tide them over and others just a snack but the amount of food is up to the individuals responsible that particular Sunday. Some Sundays we will have a more substantial lunch, as on Festivals and special occasions.

We will continue having a donation basket and the funds will go to the maintenance of the handicap lift.

Lunch for September 12

September 12 is our first day back from summer, and as such deserves a somewhat more substantial meal. We would like to ask the First Sunday Group to join the Second Sunday Group in preparing this meal--people with last names beginning A through K.

Pot-Luck for AEU Board Saturday, September 25th at 7pm.

Meet & greet the leaders of our national movement. Share a pot-luck dinner and conversation with the members of the American Ethical Union Board of Directors on Saturday, September 25th at 7pm. Bring your favorite dish to add to the feast or \$10 to help the cause of Ethical Humanism. Contact Ken Greiff to offer food or help setting up or cleaning up. RSVP by Sept. 15 to Ken. We need to know how many to prepare for.

Thursday Night Talkies

Movie, Discussion and Refreshments (water, soft drinks, beer, popcorn, chips)

On September 16 at 7:15 PM we will be showing "The Age of Stupid," a drama-documentary, animation hybrid set in the future after the earth has been largely destroyed. A man is looking at archival footage to find out why we did not stop climate change when we had the chance. The footage shows different people with various degrees of awareness of the crisis and their dreams.

September 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 6:30 PM Education Committee 7:30 PM Ethical Action Committee	2	3	4
5 <u>NO Platform</u>	6	7	8 6:30 PM Finance Committee	9	10	11
12 11:00 AM <u>Platform</u>	13	14 7:00 PM Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty	15 6:30 PM Executive Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	16 7:15 PM Thursday Night Talkie: "The Age of Stupid"	17	18
19 11:00 AM <u>Platform</u> 2:00 PM Memorial Service for Dale Drews	20	21	22 7:00 PM Camp Linden Board of Trustees at the Society	23 7:00 PM Amnesty International	24	25 7:00 PM Pot-luck dinner for the American Ethical Union Board
26 11:00 AM Fall Festival 1:00 PM Special Membership Meeting to vote on Search Committee	27	28	29	30		

September Birthdays

5th - Katie Orange

14th - Tom Carroll

18th - Sue O'Connell

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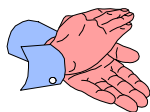
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Flower Dedications - David Ralston, Chair

September 12 - Harry Thorn: To a
nice season beginning in the Ethical
Society.

September 19 - Betsy Lightbourn:
In loving memory of Dale Drews, my
life partner and co-conspirator.

September 26 - Ken Greiff: In
dedication to bringing out the best
in others while bringing out the best
in ourselves.

Ushers - Betsy Lightbourn, Chair

September 12 - Jim Cummings
and Nick Sanders
September 19 - Kate Esposito
and Temma Fishman
September 26 - Lyle Murley
and Terry Martin-Murley

Greeters - Ken Greiff, Chair

September 12 - Doris Dabrowski
September 19 - Ron Coburn
September 26 - David Ralston

Coffee Hour Lunch

September 12 - Group A-D
and Group E-K
September 19 - Group L-O
September 26 - Group P-Z

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