

Ethical Views

April 2005

Vol. 119, No. 8

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

April Platforms

Sunday, April 3

Platform: *Women – Nature – Justice.*

Through the millennia women have been defining womanhood. Each woman takes the constraints of nature and runs with them in her own direction. Nature can be a woman's friend or foe. Justice as a communal value is where the rest of us get involved. Justice would seem to demand that we offer a woman as much room as she needs in defining her own life. This will be a relatively short Platform to allow more time for women to respond.

Sunday, April 10

Platform: Dr. Robert Fleming, associate professor of architecture at Philadelphia University, will deliver the platform "*Green Architecture: Understanding the ethical, technical, social and aesthetic requirements for design in the 21st century.*" The discussion will look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a road map for achieving sustainability.

Sunday, April 17

Platform: Tim Ribchester, our own Oxford-educated pianist-in-residence and music director, will speak on "*Ethics in Music.*" Before the late 20th century, music was understood primarily as a situation in which real people communicated directly with each other through sound, and that the sounds were analogues of social behavior, created and perceived as human gestures. The modern concept of music as digital sound waves that provide us with a soundtrack to our lives, or the common categories "popular" and "classical" music are largely generated by corporate interests; thus they have little to do with music's potential to be a positive

social force in culture. Tim will adapt and clarify Theodor Adorno's anti-populist arguments in order to open an understanding of music as a framework of sonic gestures that make sense in relation to each other, but that also provide both performers and audience space to move, breathe and live in the moment.

Sunday, April 24

Platform: To honor *Earth Day*, members will present the Earth Charter, and Arnold Fishman will offer a briefing on the 2005 AEU Assembly. ◇



Leader's Message

by Richard Kiniry

One of the nice things about Spring is, it comes just as we are really sick of Winter. In particular, this winter has stayed on way past its welcome. After you have piled on coats and scarves, etc. for three months, it becomes a real bore. Since our jobs don't continually offer change and most of us stay in one place for years, at least we can depend on the seasons to turn our world around. Seasonal change is slow, but if we are not too busy we can notice as we change with the weather.

Unless you are poor, which necessitates constantly coming up with new ways to survive, or you are rich and able to pay for constant new stimulation, most of us must put up with a certain amount of >



Tim Ribchester, pianist, joined Society members in applauding guest soprano, Julia Madden. They performed works by Purcell and Handel at the PES Spring Equinox celebration on March 20th.

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!

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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

routine and boredom. Teenagers are famous for complaining about being bored and their parents can only secretly wish to be there when the teenager discovers how routine adult life can be.

Personally, I'm not good with routine chores. In fact, I'm sort of famous for getting bored and moving onto new

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Leader's Message

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projects. My house is a series of tableaux of unfinished creative dreams. I sometimes worry that my personal habits are becoming the style of the Society – we too often come up with great ideas that never seem to arrive at fruition.

Since this is a Leader's Message, I should offer something meaningful about routine and change. How about this? If you can't stand routine, you should stay out of the kitchen - the dishes always need washing. Big boys and girls have responsibilities and those duties are not always romps through the park. And yet, we should run screaming from any job, relationship or habit that has become only a bore.

This is actually another plug for our Voluntary Simplicity group. Part of the thrust of the group is getting to the essentials of our lives, intentional living, living the life we actually want. With more simplicity in our lives, besides being more friendly to the environment, we can have more freedom to be daring in the choices we make. With less stuff, our lifestyle is less of a financial burden that requires regular feeding. We are less heavily chained to jobs we may not like. A mortgage offers security but also limits other possibilities. Simplicity does not mean poverty but does mean being clear about what is important in your life. As adults we have no choice but to chain ourselves to relationships and responsibilities, we should make those chains both friendly and of our own choosing.

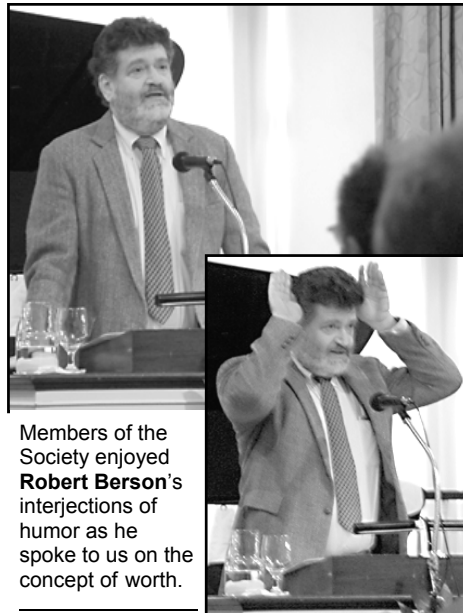
Spring is here, time to plant something. We should not let this time of change pass without some personal dreaming about new possibilities and projects. <>

Platform Summaries

February 13: Our annual love Festival this year included the

beautifully inspired Philadelphia Doctors Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Fawzi P. Habboushe. The symphonic concert presented a program of classical selections from Mozart, Saint-Saens, and Vivaldi, and 21st century selections from Theatre Music, a work-in-progress, composed by Martin Heyworth, a physician at Veterans Hospital. Members of the PES read poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Andrienne Rich, and John Osborne that reflected upon and paid tribute to love.

February: 20: Robert Berson, Leader of the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester, examined basic Ethical Culture views of personal worth. He presented "worth" as a concept necessary to ethical culture, one he sees as an ideal attributed to each human and a first principle for our ethical stances and actions.



Members of the Society enjoyed Robert Berson's interjections of humor as he spoke to us on the concept of worth.

Furthermore, he argued, we can confirm the validity of affirming individual human worth by its effectiveness in life, i.e., by observing concrete instances of its role in human decisions and human actions. From his own pragmatic approach, then, Berson discussed ways in which the assertion of personal worth is and has been a necessary, inspirational, and practical principle for ethical culture. He distinguished "worth" from

"value" by asserting that worth must be equal for all, must adhere in every individual, and exists as potential even in the face of actual failings. "Worth" should be a basic principle in our struggle to enable others, and ourselves, to live lives at their full potentials.

February 27: Fritz Williams, Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society, spoke on "A Living Faith."

Mr. Williams was ordained as an Episcopal priest 40 years ago, on the Feast of St. Thomas. "Doubting Thomas" was honest enough with himself to respect his own point of view, and even in the presence of Jesus, asked for evidence and proofs of things rather than accept everything on authority. Mr. Williams now admires Thomas's stand, and so, when he began to question his orthodox faith, Mr. Williams left the life of the cloth. But, Williams asked, how does the faith of a humanist add to or differ from belief in a supreme being? Pointing to a number of polls, Williams indicated orthodox, rigid beliefs many seek to provide comfort fail to do just that. They make one more fearful, more pessimistic and less happy. Doubt and questioning, however, correlated (in the polls) with openness and tolerance. Mr. Williams highlighted the process, which involves the cultivation of self respect, and inspires courage and faith in oneself. This leads to faith and the confidence that answers may be found.

—Harry Thorn

March 6: Our leader, Richard Kiniry, explained that the title of his talk, "Travels As Education," reflects his attitude toward travel: an active learning experience. In this platform, spoke about his recent trip to India, and how the place has changed since his two years there as a Peace Corps volunteer in the late 1960s. He returned to Malawala, the village where he had served his Peace Corps assignment, and moving from the

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Platform Summaries

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beaten path, was able to find some Indians who still live the simpler, happier life he remembered. But the filth and corruption that he had initially reacted against in the '60s were still present, and were magnified considerably by the now omnipresent gasoline-burning vehicles and the contrasting, glass-walled high-rise corporate centers and trendy retail stores — clear signs of globalization.



Richard Kiniry pulled no punches while reporting on his recent return to India — how globalization has damaged that country since his life there 35 years ago.

From these observations, Richard challenged us to consider how we can personally go beyond individual material consumption and focus on a more fulfilling way of life.

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Also on March 6th, Lyonel LaGrone, of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County, informed us that among the large cities surveyed for illegal forms of housing discrimination by the federal agency HUD, Philadelphia had the dubious distinction of being next to worst. He invited us to participate in rectifying that situation by becoming "testers," a safe and easily-conducted activity that -- in addition to being socially positive -- provided some pay. Four of the twelve of those attending from the Ethical Society signed up right away for the training needed to be a tester. Others interested in this ethical activity may contact Mr. LaGrone at (215) 576-7711.

—Nick Sanders

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President's Message

by Howard Peer

It's hard to believe, as I sit writing this article that there is only one more until the end of our 2004-2005 season. Time flies.

Springtime is busy for the Society and for the Board. We are engaged with three principal activities: the Annual Pledge Drive, preparing next year's budget, and selecting candidates to hold office next year. I thought it might be useful to recap how the Board is arranged and how we go about selecting Board members.

The Board consists of 10 members, including four officers (Pres, VP, Treasurer, Secretary), who represent the major committees (Community, EAC, and Education.) We have an election each year, but there are two election cycles. One cycle elects the President, VP and one representative from each committee. The other cycle (this year's) elects the Secretary, Treasurer and remaining committee representatives. Thus the posts are for two years. Under normal conditions we have five positions to fill in each election, but, as is the case this year, we occasionally have someone drop off the Board and have to fill a remaining one-year term. So we will have five two-year terms and one one-year term to fill.

Often members are willing to succeed themselves without limit, though Presidents are limited to two consecutive two-year terms. In February (or thereabouts), the Board appoints a Nominating Committee of three members who are charged with finding willing volunteers who can fill the posts. This year's Nominating Committee includes Carol Love, Mary Wasserman, and Doris Leicher.

The Board consists of only ten members, yet it is important to remember that the whole Society has only 60 members, and many of us are unable to serve due to prior commitments, infirmity, or other reasons. This leaves us with a relatively small pool to draw from. As such, we are still looking for a few good men/women to serve on the Board. Serving on the Board is not an arduous task. We meet about 10 or 11 times a year, on the third Wednesday of the month, except in the Summer. It is a great way to become involved with the Society and get a deep understanding of how the organization runs. It's also a wonderful way to help make a positive difference.

By now we will have had our Pledge Luncheon. But that does not mean that the Pledge Drive is over. No sir, we are still looking to get those financial commitments. Have you ever done any cold call selling? I did... once. It was brutal. It may sound easy to just go up to the door and knock and say, "Will you buy this wonderful gadget, please?" But it is actually terribly difficult, because it runs against our social norms. We are socialized not to overtly ask for things. Well, the Pledge Drive is a little like cold calling. It sounds easy but is terribly difficult work, for me at least. But it is necessary work. And so I ask for your money and support.

This Society is blessed with an endowment fund and our wonderful building. Many other Societies do not have these assets. They have to rent or lease meeting space. Yet every year we are strapped for cash and barely able to make ends meet. I always wonder how the other Societies do it, yet the answer is simple. They collect enough from their members to pay for a Leader and rent a space. They are required by their circumstances to "put their money where their mouth is." Were we able to apply the same rules to ourselves we then should be able to run our affairs without touching the

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President's Message

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endowment income. If we could fund ourselves without relying upon our predecessors' largess we would be able to salt away the endowment income. That fund produces something like \$10,000 per year. If we were to simply reinvest that income we could easily fund an elevator and make the building handicapped accessible in a few years.

What does that mean in real terms? Well, in rough numbers, we contribute about \$500/member/year or about \$30,000. If we set aside the income from the endowment account, we would have to make up about \$10,000 or a little under a \$200/member/year increase. That is about what it would take to make us self sustaining. And that would be a great goal toward which to strive. <>



CRIMINAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE: DYNAMO WILL SPEAK APRIL 3—ALL INVITED!

Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Mary Leftridge Byrd, will speak on Sunday, April 3, at 1:00 PM in the Parish Room of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia. Lunch will be served at 12:30. Come hear this outstanding woman mine her experience as warden of the women's prison in Muncy and the state correctional institution in Chester. It is an honor to have her, a truly dynamic person.

SEEKING SCRIBES



The PES Education Committee is seeking willing scribes to summarize platforms (150 or less) on the "Open" dates in the following schedule. Volunteer scribes should call or e-mail Betsy Lightbourn at 215-575-1128, elightbourn@earthlink.net

April 3 - Richard Kiniry, Speaker;
Betsy Lightbourn, Scribe

April 10 - Robert Fleming, Speaker;
Needs scribe

April 17 - Tim Ribchester, Speaker;
John Hall, scribe

April 24 - Earth Charter reading;
Nick Sanders, scribe

May 1 - Richard Kiniry, Speaker;
Janice Moore, Scribe

May 8 - Nurturers' Day;
Needs scribe

May 15 - Founders' Day;
Betsy Lightbourn, Scribe

May 22 - Richard Kiniry, Speaker;
Needs scribe

Sunday Morning Volunteers

Ushers - Saul Machles, Chair

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles and Joe Monte

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

April 3. From Janet Norton with a dedication
TBA

April 10. From Jim Cummings in memory of
Russell Cummings.

April 17. From Aissia Richardson in honor of
Sheila Waters' birthday.

April 24. From Howard & Doris in honor of
their vacation seeing the whale sharks in
Belize.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Chair

April 3 Irene Putzer

April 10 Bertha Waters

April 17 Saul Machles

April 24 Harry Thorn

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

April 3 Doris Leicher

April 10 Saul Machles

April 17 Harry Thorn

April 24 Henry Pashkow

Coffee Hour Lunch

April 3 Howard Peer
& Doris Leicher

April 10 Jean Bradley

April 17 Ken Greiff
& Janice Moore

April 24 T.B.A.

Awards




Party

The best durned **awards party** ever is on the horizon. Write down Friday April 15th at 7 pm somewhere (even if it's thru the dust on yer pickup truck's window). Yep - it's a country-western theme, so wear yer best 10-gallon hat, Wrangler's, and boots (spurs not required). Round up yer favorite western vittals and bring them too. \$5 with a dish, \$10 without.

We need folks to help (food, setup, music, purty decorations), so talk to Amber Anderson for details. Or call her at 215-432-1905 or send her an email: Amber.D.Anderson@gsk.com



A P R I L

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 11 AM <u>Platform</u> Women - Nature - Justice	4	5	6 <u>Meeting</u> 730 PM Camp Linden Board of Trustees at the Society	7	8	9
10 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Green Architecture: Understanding the ethical, technical, social and aesthetic requirements for design in the 21st century" 1:30PM Weston Rm. Intro to Ethical Humanism	11  Jeanette Kohler	12	13 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee	14	15 Awards Party 7:30PM	16
17 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Ethics in Music"	18	19	20 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Financial Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	21 7:30PM Weston Rm. Class History of Ethics	22  Kate Esposito	23
24 11 AM <u>Platform</u> Earth Day Celebration	25  Chuck Hinson	26	27 Voluntary Simplicity Group 7:30pm	28	29	30



Once PES members had enjoyed lunch, they were entertained by a skit in which two 'grumpy old men' (**Arnold Fishman and Howard Peer**) argued over what constituted an excellent meal.

Pledge Luncheon Moments



After the frivolities, the Society's Treasurer, **Jeff Dubb**, talked with members about the Society's current financial status. Members were encouraged to consider a tithe of 2% of their gross income to realistically cover expenses.



With spontaneous intensity, **Sylvia Bornkoff Polizzi** hurried to the mike and declared, "If the Philadelphia Ethical Society ever disintegrates, then you might as well disintegrate me! Pledge what you can. Do the best you can."

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Meet Our New Editor
John Anderson Hall

John Hall graduated with a degree in Literary and Cultural Studies from the College of William and Mary in 2000. He then moved to Philadelphia for no particular reason, but found the Ethical Society soon after. He has been a member since 2003. John teaches yoga and is currently studying for the LSAT.

Congratulations



During the festivities of the Love Party on February 18th, PES members, **Saul Machles**, and **Jean Bradley** became engaged. A summer wedding is planned.

Wednesday, April 27, 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.

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