



# Ethical Views

December 2007 Vol. 122, No. 4 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

## Platforms

December 2, 2007

### *Too Many People*

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

Can you love humankind and still say there are too many of us? Working to limit population growth is an act of love for future generations and for the earth.

December 9, 2007

### *Nonviolent Communication: A New Way of Thinking about Conflict*

**Speaker: Keith Pacheco, Workshop Leader, The Center for Nonviolent Communication**

For thousands of years we've communicated competitively and judgmentally. Nonviolent communication can teach us how to make non-judgmental observations, identify our feelings and needs and make requests instead of demands.

December 16, 2007

### *Green Holidays*

We will be presented with suggestions about celebrating all the winter holidays in an environmentally supportive fashion. Members and friends are encouraged to tell their stories of simpler days and ways of keeping the holidays happy and green.

December 23, 2007

### *Winter Solstice*

Join us as we use candlelight, poetry and music to celebrate the Winter Solstice. Our members and friends will come together to honor the essential core of the holiday season – community, love for life together with family, friends and all humankind. All are welcome.

December 30, 2007

### *No Service*



Photo by Ken Greiff

## President's Message

by Howard Peer

I was sent once to a Dale Carnegie course by a boss intent on improving my "people skills." They stress that because "the sweetest sound a person can hear is their own voice" it is very important to remember people's names and to use them. I have once in my life met a man who "figured it out." He was quite a character. I never knew him well but he has stuck in my mind. Jack was short with spindly arms, a WWII brush haircut and a harsh raspy voice acquired from smoking 3 to 4 packs of Pall Malls per 8-hour shift. He always had at least one going and up to three if he was agitated. He greatly helped me quit smoking in a funny way. Around him I would get my nicotine fix without going through the physical routine. When he transferred several months later, I went through nicotine withdrawal

Jack was a supervisor with a large staff. He knew, or more correctly was known by, several hundred people in each of several employments. The second time I worked with him he was around a couple of hundred people whom he had known previously but had not seen for 15 or 20 years. While the faces were familiar the names were lost. But, hey no problem for Jack. To Jack everyone had a name: for men it was "Johnnie" and for women it was "Suzie." Two sexes, two names, zero problem. Jack had "people skills."

Jack had a way of greeting you and saying "Johnnie (Suzie), how's it going Johnnie (Suzie)?" that somehow just made you feel good and like he really



knew you. And so what if he forgot your name, we all knew where he was coming from. Right up front, he was honest about his limitations, and that made it acceptable and gave you the idea that he could understand your limitations. Jack was fallible, Jack was human.

This is not to say that Jack ever forgot his responsibilities. He expected you to do your job and do it right. And don't expect special treatment. Jack ran a maintenance organization with trucks and equipment and the like. Ages before, he had gotten his son a job here. Now Jack was back and his son worked for a Foreman who worked for a Supervisor who worked for Jack. One day Young Jack came back to the yard a bit frisky and did a little fancy footwork with the gas and brake pedal on the company truck. I think it's called "cutting doughnuts." His glory was short lived. Jack had him summarily fired. End of story.

But Jack had his own issues. One day, after Jack had been "promoted" to an

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## ***President's Message*** (Cont'd. from Page 1)

office job, my buddy Joe was coming to work at about 7:15 am when he had a flat. He needed to make a call and, in those days before cell phones, he went into a local gin mill to use a pay phone. While waiting for the service person and as his eyes adjusted to the dim light Joe made out a familiar figure hunched over the bar – Jack bracing himself for another day. We had known Jack was a good bit more chipper after lunch, but neither of us expected this.

Jack didn't last much longer. I can't really remember exactly what got him but there were many possibilities. Joe too is gone, though he gave up both smoking and drinking, got remarried and joined a new age Christian/Jewish Synagogue. Come to think of it, Joe and Jack were pretty much the same age, early 60s. I miss them both for totally different reasons. But today it is Jack who is making me smile. Merry Christmas.



## ***Living Ethical Humanism***

On November 4, 2007 four members of the Society spoke eloquently about how ethical humanism in general and their participation in the life of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia in particular have affected their professional and personal lives. Hoping to encourage other members to share their reflections with us, I am publishing two of those talks in this month's newsletter. Space permitting, I'll publish the other two in January's *Ethical Views*.

— **Ellen Rose, Editor**

I have to confess that our original motivation to come to the Philadelphia Ethical Society was not mine. My wife, Dawn, wanted to become part of a wider community of like-minded people and for our son Noah (and



**Scott Cox**

now Liam) to know that there are like-minded people, who value ethical behavior without tying that behavior to supernatural commandments. I was finally persuaded that giving our boys a Sunday School experience was a good enough reason to give the Ethical Society a try.

Of course, when we arrived, we found that the Sunday School, more often than not, *was* Noah. This was very different from our image of an established group of youngsters who made a tradition of service projects and bonding activities. And at that point, it would have been very easy to tell Dawn, well, we tried it, it's not what we were looking for, back to the drawing board.

But by then, a funny thing had happened. My original reluctance to be involved with the Society was replaced with a real enthusiasm. When Dawn and I talked about what Noah was getting, or not getting, out of our Sunday pilgrimages to the city, I found loads of arguments on behalf of the Society: Noah really enjoyed his activities with Lily, and then later with Josh; Monica had been the only kid around, and she wanted to be involved in the Sunday School; and we could work to bring in other families, and then, sure enough, the Katz-Rizzo family and the Oranges became involved in this project with us.

Honestly, I was even more motivated by my love of what we found at the Society. I eagerly looked forward to Richard's platforms, and enjoyed discussing them with Dawn and other friends. Even when Richard wasn't speaking, I could count on Tim's musical program to raise my spirits and think more deeply about music. I enjoyed learning about the social action projects of guest speakers, and finding out what we could do through the Ethical Action reports. I admired the work of the Society at Camp Linden, and enjoyed its beauty on clean-up weekends. And maybe most of all, I really appreciated knowing that I was not alone in my beliefs.

It has meant a lot to me, though I don't advertise it everywhere, that I am a member of a religious organization. After learning about the principles of Ethical Humanism, I have been able to shift my focus from what I *don't* believe to what I *do* believe. And I have been able to shift my focus from how I am different from others to what I have in common with others, and how I can behave differently to bring out the best in all of us. I find these themes permeating my life, in my interactions with family, colleagues and students. I am so glad that Dawn convinced me to give it a try. My life has become much richer for it!

— **Scott Cox**

I think we all have a story to tell about the private battles we fight, when trying to make ourselves more real, more whole. Usually they're not big battles on a grand scale, nothing



**Henry Pashkow**

outwardly monumental, just a battle with some private fear that we rarely share with one another. This is one of mine.

I used to be a social worker at a homeless shelter. This is how I felt about it. The bureaucracy was self-serving and corrupt. The processes were rigid. I was simply a means to a bureaucratic end. We made adjustments. Sometimes we did good. I may be underestimating that part of it. I learned a few things.

A very few of the homeless men I met were happy. They didn't have a pot to piss in and they were happy. I could tell when it was real. I learned never to think I had too little.

But like I said we made adjustments. We used to complain about "the system," how self-serving it was. Well, we were the system. We found a way to achieve an identity in it, make ourselves comfortable with it. Complaining was

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## SCHOOL FOR ETHICS

### DEFINING HUMANISM

In our final meeting of History of Humanism discussion group, we will bring together all the definitions of Humanism and each find our own understanding. All are invited to participate in the fun.

*Third Thursday of the month,  
December 20, 7:30 PM*

### ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

Our children's program continues to grow. We strive to challenge the child's understanding of right and wrong. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our *Ethics for Children* brochure. Call the office with your contact information, 215-735-3456.

*Each Sunday morning, 10:45 AM*



### Get to Know Us Social

**Wednesday  
December 5  
7:30pm**

In December we will hold a casual informational event for those who are curious about the Society and its philosophy. Members will be there to talk about their involvement and growth. Leaders of the Society will be present to answer your questions. Refreshments will be served.

### Living Ethical Humanism

*(Continued from Page 3)*

part of it, like comfort food. Even the homeless guys, most of them, succeeded in finding an identity. They cycled in and out of the homeless system. For many of them, that was their identity, their way of achieving a level of comfort despite the deprivation. Certainly not optimal, but that's the way it was. It felt like a huge morass drawing us all in. It felt all encompassing. More importantly, I wasn't real.

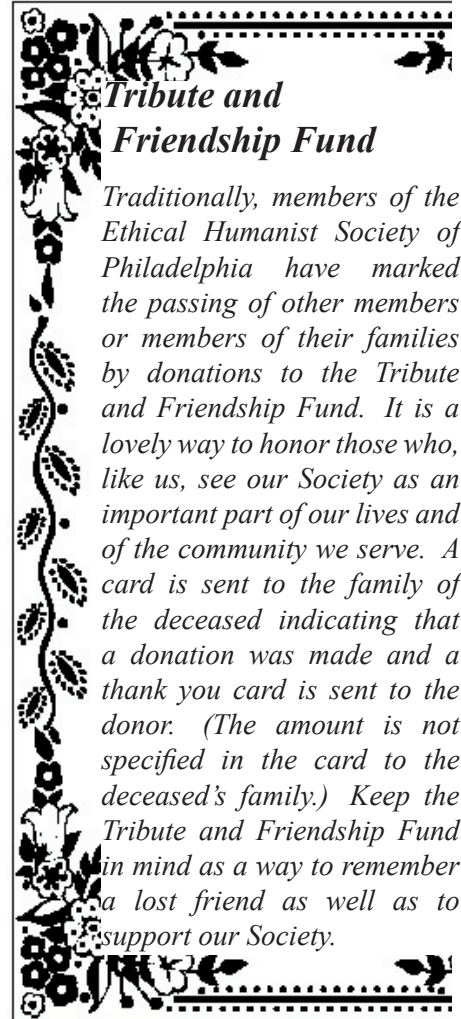
That's another thing I learned: when I make an adjustment to a corrupt system like that, one as spiritually debilitating, I'm responsible for what it does to me. It was sapping my spirit, and I was feeling helpless. To fight off that feeling I would tell myself that those men in that shelter are not to blame for where I wound up, and I can act to bring out the best, first, by taking the focus off myself, getting past their initial defensiveness, making that connection. I was good at that.

My current battle is different. It's with writing stories the way they should be written. I'm hooked on telling stories. But it's a struggle. I ask myself, do I have anything worthwhile saying? Do my sentences bring out the themes I'm working with? Well, I've been re-writing for the past year, so maybe not quite yet. Do my characters get in the way of the plot and is there enough of a plot yet? I don't know.

Sometimes I feel like I'm chiseling form out of a block of marble with a kitchen knife. But I have the discipline and I have the drive. It's good to be doing something I can believe in.

There's a line from that anthem we sing at the end of the service here. "We would be one in searching for that meaning that binds our hearts and points us on our way." Only stories serve in that capacity.

— **Henry Pashkow**



### Tribute and Friendship Fund

*Traditionally, members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia have marked the passing of other members or members of their families by donations to the Tribute and Friendship Fund. It is a lovely way to honor those who, like us, see our Society as an important part of our lives and of the community we serve. A card is sent to the family of the deceased indicating that a donation was made and a thank you card is sent to the donor. (The amount is not specified in the card to the deceased's family.) Keep the Tribute and Friendship Fund in mind as a way to remember a lost friend as well as to support our Society.*

### Name a Chair

*Honor yourself, a family member or friend by donating an auditorium chair. Compose a tribute or memorial to be engraved on a beautiful brass plaque, which will be attached to the back of the chair. Help support the work of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia while you celebrate someone who has made a difference in your life. \$60 for one chair or \$100 for two. Mail your check to the Ethical Humanist Society, 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103. For more information, contact the Society office at [office@phillyethics.org](mailto:office@phillyethics.org) or at 215-735-3456.*





## Does the Ethical Society Support the Millennium Development Goals?

As introduced in the November newsletter, the Ethical Action Committee and Board of Trustees will be bringing to the membership the question of whether we as a Society want to express our support for the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Because many people are not familiar with the MDGs, we invited **Dr. Christiaan Morssink**, vice president of the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia and public health scholar at the

University of Pennsylvania, to speak to us. He discussed issues raised by the MDGs and talked about his work on water scarcity as related to the MDGs.

Dr. Morssink sees the MDGs as a means to create some synergy of action among the more than 20,000 companies, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are associated with the UN globally, over 100 of which are located or have chapters in the Philadelphia area. However, he also critiqued the developers of eight MDGs on several issues. The goals are not well integrated with each other, there is a tendency for ranking, and the goals do not address the fact that development as well as lack thereof can result in social conflicts. Such conflicts should have been expected and addressed as part of an overall strategy. The MDGs have been created without much historical analysis and with a blind eye to the dialectic, colonial and neocolonial forces that have led to the current human drama. In that sense he argues that the goals of the MDGs (e.g., gender equality and education) can have negative consequences, such as the tremendous brain drain in developing countries. Nonetheless, Dr. Morssink believes that these problems would exist with or without the MDGs, and on balance that the MDGs are worthwhile in that they provide guidance and a mandate for concentrated efforts on major development.



Dr. Christiaan Morssink

One such effort with which Dr. Morssink is associated is the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative (PGWI), which involves – among others – the Philadelphia Water Department, scholars from the University of Pennsylvania, Engineers without Borders, private citizens and the UN Association of Greater Philadelphia. The folks of PGWI, working to meet the needs for water and sanitation in some parts of the world, hope that they can stimulate people in other parts of the developed world to take up their challenge. To learn more about this effort, visit [www.pgwi.net](http://www.pgwi.net).

— *Nick Sanders*



### DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE WAR IN IRAQ



The demonstration was one of several major city demonstrations held on Saturday, October 27. The Ethical Society was represented by members **Arnold and Temma Fishman, Betsy Lightbourn, Henry Pashkow, Ron Coburn, Mary Lou DaSilva, Ramona Ward, Harry Thorn** and **Nick Sanders**. Non-members **Ann Freed, Paul Leonard, and Deena Stryker** joined the EHSOP group.

They were a part of a "chain" that went from 38th and Woodland (the VA Hospital) to 6th and Market (in front of the Visitor's Center on Independence Mall). Between 12:30 and 1:30, our group was along Market between 19th and 20th, after which they joined the march.

Photograph, top left by Nick Sanders. All others by Betsy Lightbourn.

# DECEMBER 2007

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> <b>Ethics for Children</b> <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> <b>Too Many People</b> Richard L. Kiniry	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>  <b>Get to Know Us Social</b> 7:30 p.m.	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>  Jesse Zelnick Dale Drews  <b>Camp Linden Workday at Noon</b>
<b>9</b> <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> <b>Ethics for Children</b> <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> <b>Nonviolent Communication: A New Way of Thinking About Conflict</b> Keith Pacheco	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> <b>Meetings - Weston Room</b> 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee 7:45 p.m. Education Committee	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>  Richard Kiniry	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> <b>Ethics for Children</b> <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> <b>Green Holidays</b>	<b>17</b>  Roberta Wood	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <b>Meetings</b> <i>Weston Room - 6:30 p.m.</i> Finance Committee <i>Weston Room - 7:30 p.m.</i> Exec. Committee/ Board of Trustees Meeting	<b>20</b> <b>Class</b> <b>The History of Ethics</b> 7:30 p.m.	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> <b>Ethics for Children</b> <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> <b>Winter Solstice</b>	<b>24</b>  Bob Moore	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>  Carol Anne Riddle	<b>29</b>  <b>The Party Before New Year's</b> 7:00 p.m.
<b>30</b>  <i>No Service.</i>	<b>31</b>					 Birthdays

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**Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia**

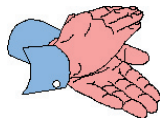
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## SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

**Flower Dedications** - Ken Greiff, Chair

**December 2** - Henry Pashkow in honor  
of all those he has yet to insult.

**December 9** - Betsy Lightbourn in  
honor of Dale Drews, her beloved co-  
conspirator in life and love, on the  
occasion of his birthday.

**December 16** - Tom Carroll in honor of  
his Aunt Ethel, who lived a good life and  
died at the age of 104.

**December 23** - Temma Fishman in loving  
memory of her mother, Esther Wolf.

**Ushers**

**December 2**  
**December 9**  
**December 16** T.B.A.  
**December 23**

**Greeters** - Saul Machles, Head Greeter  
For the month of December, Saul  
Machles and friends

**Coffee Hour Lunch**

**December 2** - Group A-E  
**December 9** - Group F-L  
**December 18** - Group M-P  
**December 23** - Group Q-Z

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