



Ethical Views

Summer 2006

Vol. 120, No. 10

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Summer: Now with Air Conditioning!

Summer Sunday Mornings

(Schedule on page 3)

Although our regular Platforms will be in hiatus until after Labor Day, we will have Sunday morning events almost every Sunday during the summer. With our new building air-conditioning, we will be meeting in our usual meeting space with coffee following. Members are taking responsibility for the Colloquies and for leading the Book Discussions. They will be looking for helpers, so check your schedule and be ready to volunteer when asked.

54th Annual PES Picnic Sunday, June 4 at 12 PM

It's that time of year again. As the Society moves to a summer schedule of colloquies and book discussions in air conditioned comfort, Camp Linden will transition to those warm, sultry days with a picnic that embraces tradition. Join us for traditional picnic fare, but with enough choice to satisfy vegans. We'll provide beer, wine, soft drinks, hamburgers, hotdogs, veggie burgers and all the fixings! \$10 or \$5 if you bring a dessert or salad to share.



Calling All Members

All the good things we do at the Society are planned and executed by the members. We need everyone to do their part. We have three committees that try to deal with the needs of the members and the role of the Society

in the community. Please, think about getting involved with one of these committees:

Temma Fishman for the Community Committee.

Would you like to help us attract new members and plan activities for our community? Join the Membership Growth/Community Committees. We meet the first Wednesday of every other month at 6:30 p.m. If you've got a flair for social events, or just want to be helpful, we need you! Contact Temma Fishman at temmafish@aol.com or the Philadelphia Ethical Society office at 215-735-3456. Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 5 at 6:30 at the Society. Come find out what we're about.

Henry Pashkow for the Education Committee.

In the Education Committee, we search for speakers whose ongoing work articulates issues central to our everyday lives. We want speakers whose lived experience inspires us to shape the world ethical humanists are striving for. We meet every second Wednesday at 7:45 p.m. to discuss themes that give focus to our platforms, and help us to select our speakers. We even try to lighten up once in a while. Come join us and see for yourselves! Next meeting: June 14.

Nick Sanders for the Ethical Action Committee.

The Ethical Action Committee's mission is to offer an Ethical Humanist response to social problems — a social analysis that expresses Ethical Humanist principles and pinpoints the origins of social, economic, and political wrongs. We are committed to work in our community to correct social justice, work that involves the entire Society and our friends. All members are invited to attend our next meeting, June 14, 6:30 p.m.

Retreat At Camp Linden

10 a.m. Saturday, July 15 to

1:30 p.m. Sunday, July 16

Central to Ethical Humanist religion is belief in the capacity of every person to make life a caring, good experience. During our overnight adventure in the woods of Chester County, we will collaboratively question how to live our belief in the worth of each person. Childcare will be provided if needed. Let us know. Bring bedding and towels. Fun is part of the agenda. The local farm stands will supply vegetables and after each contributing \$20 to Camp Linden, we will split the cost of food, including the bounty of the local farms. For more information, call Richard Kinary at 215-735-3456 or at his home.



Volunteer Opportunities At Camp Linden

The children of Camp Linden need you! Join the Camp Linden regulars on weekends as we work and recreate together to prepare the camp for summer. We share a lovely lunch and fellowship. Transportation is available from Center City or 69th street. You can also volunteer on summer weekdays with children. Contact Saul or Jean to inquire about this challenging, and rewarding opportunity. Volunteering a day at Camp Linden gives you one free night's stay as a guest of the Camp. You have your choice of either the artist's cabin or the new cabin. Call Jean or Saul today at 215-735-3456.



President's Message

by Howard Peer

Last summer on a sailing vacation I spent a couple of nights on the water, all alone, with no human contact but the weather radio. I didn't think anything of it at the time but upon returning to work it occurred to me that I couldn't recollect another time in my life when I had been without contact for so long. Was my experience weird or was it representative of society? I started asking colleagues and have probably asked a good dozen or so people by now. It takes people a minute to think before answering. You can almost see the wheels turn.

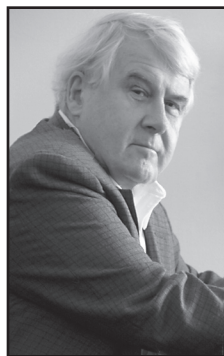
I recently read a book about a true adventurer, who married a kindred spirit. They have spent months together alone on their small boat crossing the great oceans. They had planned to spend an entire arctic winter frozen in the ice, alone but together. They spent nearly two years in preparation and reaching their wintering spot they were frozen in for the winter. Then they got word that her father had terminal cancer with only a couple of months to live. She was air lifted out and he stayed behind for the duration. In truth he was alone for "only" about four months, between visits from the Inuits and others. But in that short time he went nearly nuts from the isolation.

What does this prove? Well, nothing much really, except that it highlights just how social we are. How much we rely upon others. It brought home to me the idea that we really and truly are all "humanist." We need human interaction just as we need air, water, and food. We (and us macho guys in particular) like to think of ourselves as individuals — rugged and self sufficient, capable of taking care of ourselves, and not needing others. Bull.

So, here we are, together. We are approaching the end of another year here at the Society. Summer for us has traditionally been a time when we

suspend activities and go our own way only to return (migrate back?) in the late summer. Yet each year we have been offering a more intense summer program and this year is no different. There will be some programming virtually every Sunday with colloquies, book discussions, and other interesting activities. And now, with the building air-conditioned, we can enjoy it all in cool comfort, with warm friendships.

Platform Summaries



Photograph by Janice R. Moore

Richard Kiniry

April 2 talk, "Secular Religion." Richard cited many examples of "creeping religiosity," such as the christianization of the military, the assault on the right to abortion, and the blocking of gay and lesbian rights. While decrying the theocracies of foreign states, Washington tries its best to establish one here. We must accept that currently there really is no clear line between church and state. As humanists, we believe the founding fathers had it right when they wrote the Constitution, the document that levels the playing field between opposing religious groups and erects a wall between Church and State. We embrace the principle of freedom in the secular space. Richard propelled us forward with these suggestions: 1. Make a fuss; 2. Challenge irrational ideas; 3. Sit during the Pledge of Allegiance; 4. Work to establish science and critical thinking courses in schools; and 5. Be sure to tell others that you are a Humanist. Richard reminded us of his firm belief that "There is no higher arbiter of right and wrong than the human conscience."

— **Temma Fishman**

Paying attention to our secular space by keeping it sacred and free of religious dogma is something we need to be doing at all times — not just in times of crisis, urged Leader **Richard Kiniry** in his

In Do What I Do, Not What I Say, **Richard Kiniry** discussed the core values of Ethical Culture — a religion that promotes good, honest expression with each other and a positive, satisfying world view. Throughout the talk, he contrasted our foundational philosophy that can build a better world with the more common wrongheaded concepts promoted by hierarchical religious and cultural norms. A world ruled from the top creates a nasty public life marred by conflict and lies, where bosses and politicians care less about people than they do about profits and power. Traditional beliefs say that men are one way and women another, also that children should be seen and not heard. We are encouraged to please others, dress for others, believe what we are told, and above all be accepted, else we just won't feel right about ourselves.

Ethical Culture, in sharp contrast, stresses intrinsic worth. We should look within ourselves for acceptance, pay attention to our relationships with others and journey together in a quest that starts by accepting the quality of all others. We should treat one another as equals, as individuals, each with his or her own unique values. Richard ended by saying the aim is "to own your life and to live it with everyone."

— **Jean Bradley**



"*Still Waters Run Deep*," an artwork by **Richard J. Watson** is shown at the Art Jaz Gallery and on the gallery website.

Richard Watson, Director of Exhibits at the Afro American Museum, spoke of his experience as a black man facing discrimination in America, as a participant in the Civil Rights movement, and finally as an artist trying to make his way in the world. He didn't pose what

(Continued next page)

Platform Summaries cont'd.)

he had experienced as a problem we seek solutions to. He didn't focus on corrective measures to those issues at the heart of our movement. What he said, or sang, did not beg for debate. He shared his life, and like a troubadour of old, picked up his guitar and sang his story when the projector broke and he couldn't go on showing his slides. Homer might have sung his original poem this way. I was truly impressed by how he seemed to have found a way to peace in the clatter and discord in our world.

— **Henry Pashkow**

Summer Schedule: (Sunday Meetings at 10am)

Saturday, **June 3** — Baltimore Society members at Camp Linden

Sunday, **June 4** — Camp Linden Picnic

Sunday, **June 11** — Book Discussion: *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, Richard Sennett, Led by Richard Kiniry

Wednesday, **June 14** — Ethical Action Committee, 6:30, Education Committee, 7:45

Sunday, **June 18** — Colloquy, Led by Richard Kiniry

Wednesday, **June 21** — Board Meeting, 7:30

Sunday, **June 25** — Book discussion: *Cane*, Jean Toomer, Led by Lyle Murley

Monday, **June 26** — 16th Camp Linden Summer childrens program begins

Sunday, **July 2** — Colloquy, Led by Henry Pashkow

Wednesday, **July 5** — Community/Membership Growth Committee, 6:30

Sunday, **July 9** — Book Discussion: *Cane*, Jean Toomer, Led by Lyle Murley

Wednesday, **July 12** — Education Committee, 7:45

Saturday & Sunday, **July 15 & 16** — Society Retreat at Camp Linden

Sunday, **July 16** — Colloquy, Led by Lyle Murley



Other Notable Speakers in 2006:

Top Left: **Arnold Fishman**, President, AEU

Top Right: **Jane Golden**, Director of Philadelphia Mural Project

Bottom Left: **Maria Sliwa**, Advocate, Anti-Slavery

Bottom Right: **Gary Francione, Esq.** Animal Rights Activist

Photographs by Janice R. Moore

Sunday, **July 23** — Book Discussion: *Collapse*, Jared Diamond, Led by Adam Pine

Saturday & Sunday, **July 29 & 30** — Caribbean Pool Party - Camp Linden

Sunday, **July 30** — Colloquy, Led by Temma Fishman

Sunday, **August 6** — Book Discussion: *Collapse*, Jared Diamond, Led by Adam Pine

Wednesday, **August 9** — Education Committee, 7:45

Friday, **August 11** -- Camp Linden summer day program ends

Sunday, **August 13** — Colloquy, Led by Adam Pine

Wednesday, **August 16** — Board Meeting, 7:30

Sunday, **August 20** — Book Discussion: *Breaking the Spell*, Daniel Dennett, Led by Bob Moore & Nick Sanders

Sunday, **August 27** — Society closed

Sunday, **September 3** — Society closed

Sunday, **September 10** — Opening Platform of New Season!

Ethical Action Committee Report

Since our last report in *Ethical Views*, there have been several actions by the Society. First, in reaction to the South Dakota legislature's vote to ban abortions in that state, four PES members — **Henry Pashkow**, **Richard Kiniry**, **Lyle Murley**, and **Terry Martin-Murley** — joined the local Planned Parenthood Chapter on March 9 in support of a National Day of Solidarity for the women and families of South Dakota held in front of the Philadelphia Court House. There are now 11 states that have bills that would ban abortion (introduced or carried over this session). We believe we need now to show our opposition to this growing trend.

In another realm, members **Ellen Rose** and **Judith Will** provided the meal for the Trinity homeless men's shelter in April. (The Ethical Society has provided one meal each month over the six coldest months of the year, as it has done for the past several years. April was the final month for this year, but we intend to continue this community service next year. Twelve different members and friends of the Society volunteer each year to fulfill this service.) During this spring we have also been able to deliver food to the People's Emergency Center in West Philadelphia, thanks to contributions of food from member **Jessie Harmath** and delivery by members **Temma Fishman**, **Jim Cummings**, and **Nick Sanders** on three Sundays over the past month.

The Ethical Society has also presented two forums related to concerns expressed in the Ethical Action Committee. **Richard Kiniry** was the prime mover in giving us an opportunity to better understand our country's relationships with the Syrian and Iranian governments. In a forum at the Ethical Society on April 23, Lawrence Davidson and Janet Amighi — who had made a trip in the fall of 2005 to those countries with a group of other university professors with expertise in the Middle

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Ethical Action Committee Report cont'd.

East — provided a positive viewpoint from their experiences with leaders and daily life in those countries that has not been presented in the mainstream press.

On May 9, we became very well informed about the health care situation in the U.S. and about one effort by the Pennsylvania Senate to rectify many problems. This forum was developed by member **Bob Moore**, who arranged a presentation by Adam Gilden Tsai, M.D., a medical researcher at the University of Pennsylvania and the Veterans Administration. Dr. Tsai provided us with a related action by offering to accompany us to visit our state legislators to urge their support of the Pennsylvania Senate Bill 1085, which would handle many issues in health care with a single-payer system for the citizens of the state.

Finally, anticipating action in the future: The Society is allied with the Pennsylvania Abolitionists United

Against the Death Penalty (PAUADP) and there are a number of events coming up in September. First there is a Friends and Family of People on Death Row event at First United Methodist Church of Germantown in September. We will be asked to both attend and help with chores during the event. Also the 2006 National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty, which is coordinated by Amnesty International, has been scheduled for October 20-22. We will be planning our own events and participating in other larger events.

— **Nick Sanders**



Dr. Adam Gilden Tsai (left) continues conversing with Ethical Society members on health care issues after his talk.

AIR CONDITIONED

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