



Ethical Views

November 2004 Vol. 119, No. 3 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

November Platforms

Sunday, November 7

Platform: Richard Kiniry, Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, will speak on the topic *"Now What?"* No matter who is elected on November 2 (assuming we will know who was elected by Nov 7) we will have plenty to talk about this Sunday. So many issues have been avoided during the election battle and basic human needs don't seem to be on the agenda of either of the two big parties. As people committed to an ethical culture, we must challenge the ongoing neglect of our social system.

Sunday, November 14

Platform: Dr. Jean E. Campbell Moore, associate professor emerita, School of Social Administration, Temple University and creator, host, and executive producer of University Forum, an award-winning public affairs program on WRTI-FM Temple University Public radio, will speak on the topic *"A House in the Suburbs - Dream Versus Reality,"* highlighting the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia, Inc., the oldest fair housing council in the country.

Sunday, November 21

Platform: Margaret Downey, founder of the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia, the Anti-Discrimination Support Network, and the Thomas Paine Memorial Committee, will speak on the topic *"Planting the Seeds of Freethought."* If freedom of thought is considered a seedling, then anyone equipped with the proper gardening tools can plant it, nurture it, and delight in the development of a full harvest. Perspective gardeners will receive planting guidelines and will be inspired to till the fertile fields of Philadelphia.

Sunday, November 28

Our annual Humanist Thanksgiving will be celebrated on November 28th with member Carol Love's famous turkey and fabulous side dishes prepared by members and friends. Feel free to bring a dish of your own to share. And please bring a donation of \$5, which will be dedicated to the handicapped access fund. In addition to the feast, revel in the joy of the season with song and poetry. Welcome our new members to the Philadelphia Ethical Society community. RSVP to the Society, 215-735-3456, by November 24, if you're planning to share this occasion with us. <>



Leader's Message

Unfairadelphia

by Richard Kiniry

Living in Philadelphia can lead to the loss of a natural sense of justice. You can get accustomed to the wrong people winning too often and get out of the habit of being outraged by injustice. We all remember feeling as children the rage at unfairness - when the whole class gets punished for one person's mistake, your brother gets a new bicycle and you get his hand-me-down, or you're blamed for something you didn't do and no one will listen. Well, now that we are big boys and girls, that sense of unfairness has been tempered with a bit of life-weariness. There are all kinds of petty injustices that become the expectation that life isn't fair and we have to just live with it. Trouble is that petty unfairness habituates us to greater injustice.

A sense of fairness is basic to a person's sense of self. It is also the grounding of law and the idea of right and wrong. Every individual yearns for their fair share and the manner in which we respond to that need determines how we relate to each other. Some of us stop expecting fairness and choose whining bitterness as a life-stance. Others decide that fairness means that they get everything they want, and the hell with the rest of us. Most of us develop a relatively balanced sense of fairness, and through the years, through repeated experiences of unfairness, we learn not to expect the world to be just.

(Continued on page 2)



Sunday School Assistant, Lily Locke, guides students, Marley & Audrey Orange.

BRING OUT THE BEST IN YOUR CHILDREN

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

Leader's Message (Continued)

But living in Philadelphia can also be a stimulant to a renewed sense of outrage at the lack of fairness. I have spoken before of my disabled neighbor and the difficulty he experiences getting around the streets of the city. Knowing him has increased my empathy for those who need assistance. I notice how many perfectly healthy people are getting out of cars with Physical Disabled license plates. On weekends, each time my neighbor moves his van from his PD designated spot, he loses it to a carload of teenagers with a disabled card hanging from the car mirror. And from the other side of the issue, the street signs reserving the space in front of supposedly disabled people are blossoming like dandelions. Taking advantage, unfair advantage, becomes an expectation.

There are other examples. Take the disregard for parking laws by our official government handlers. While ordinary citizens are given tickets for minor infringement of laws that are supposed to be in the public interest, police, parking authority officers, politicians, and the well-connected ignore the rules. Then there is "pay to play," and building and health standards avoided with a few bucks in the right hands. In the last few years schoolyards all around the city have been confiscated from the children and given to teachers as parking lots.

Compare the roads, schools, and public institutions in poor and middle class neighborhoods. Compare the Greenfield Elementary School in Center City and the Robert Morris School in North Philadelphia. No outrage? Oh, well.

Moving from institutional unfairness to the individual version, consider the unfairness of all of us having to live with the wastefulness of SUV owners, and all of us paying for sports stadiums for the few.

Of course, since the beginning America was not supposed to be fair and therefore our natural outrage at unfairness has not been encouraged. The founding fathers (not the mothers, they were behind the scene) promised us liberty and the pursuit of personal happiness. They certainly did not promise equality and fairness. Individuals have to fight for their fair share. America has not been big on the common interest and fair distribution of anything.

The great injustices of preemptive war, a regressive tax system, etc., depend on people getting used to unfairness, losing their sense of outrage. So, as politicians speak of "quality of life" issues, which is code for getting homeless and young, noisy people out of sight, and when they talk of other plans to improve our community, take some time to question who the improvements hurt. <>

November Events

Nov. 2, 8:00 p.m.

Watch the Election Returns at Jill Leeds Rivera's house. RSVP, and please feel free to bring wine, soft drinks, and munchies to share

Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m.

Get to Know Us Social at the Society

Nov. 14, 2:00 p.m.

Newcomers' Social at the home of Jean Bradley and Saul Machles



Tim Ribchester, playing a selection for a Sunday morning service.

**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!**

Workshop on Kids, Consumerism and Choices: Choosing Toys and Video Games for Children

Sunday, November 21, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Frankly you don't get it. Four year old Evan desperately wants an 18 inch plastic he-man complete with toy arsenal. Seven year old Lily really "needs" a Barbie doll. And Marco, who is twelve, knows just the video game he'd like. You want your gifts to be on target, but these requests make you uneasy. (Besides you just saw a wonderful series of children's books on real American heroes like Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr.) Why do kids want these things anyway?

Join other parents, grandparents and friends for a discussion of kids, consumerism, and choices as we approach the holiday gift giving season. You'll come away with new ideas, resources, and greater clarity.

Joan Reivich, former Director of Neighborhood Parenting Programs and a consultant to schools and corporations will facilitate. She is a parent, grandparent, and former child.



President's Message
by Howard Peer

As we approach the election I find it almost relaxing to have the Society as a distraction away from the general turmoil, drama, and tension. The Society has real things that need to be done that we can get our minds around and our hands on. Sometimes the world out there just seems too big and unwieldy. Here we can do something and make a difference.

But while we're still thinking about the election, remember to gather at Jill Leeds Rivera's on Election Night to watch our fate unfold before our eyes. Jill has graciously volunteered to provide eats. For those who can't resist homages to the hostess I recommend munchies, drinks (soda and wine), and maybe some handy wipes. Pessimists - bring crying towels. Optimists - champagne. Doors open at 8:00 p.m.

We are making slow but steady progress towards making the building handicapped accessible. We have put off the fund-raising for the stair climber to do a quick reevaluation of our overall goal and direction. A new idea about how to get an elevator into the building has been floated and it deserves some consideration before going forward. So we will be consulting with our architects once again before bringing a plan before the membership. I hope to report a firm decision on our direction by next month, December at the latest.

You may have noticed a nasty water stain on the dining room ceiling and some damaged molding, the result of two roof leaks that we hope are minor.

Jean has called out the roofers and they have addressed the matter, so no more leak. Still we have to deal with the damaged ceiling. This will entail removing the stained tiles and replacing them with new ones. There is another soft spot in the crown molding that needs attention. There is no cause for alarm; these are just normal housekeeping activities.

Kudos to our cleaning crew: Lyle, Dave, Jean, and their cleaning brigade, who arranged with some young adults for cleaning services in lieu of rent. They then drove them with demonic energy with miraculous results: the dining room chairs have been cleaned, chandeliers polished, and rooms cleaned. By the way, did you notice our new carpets in the Assembly room?

Last month I reported that Joe Monte gave us a computer and I hoped to use that for a more dynamic display in the lobby. I have had a chance to mess with the application a little and we have the beginnings of a presentation. Maybe by next month I'll have something out for people to see.

Recently our co-trustees to the Endowment have asked us for some more direction on our investing policy. Our policy was revamped and reaffirmed a few years ago so we provided them with a copy. Our policy is very brief:

The Philadelphia Ethical Society directs the co-trustees of the PES Endowment Fund to avoid investments in the following areas:

- (a) *US Treasury Bonds*
- (b) *The Tobacco Industry*
- (c) *The Arms Industry*
- (d) *The Nuclear Weapons Industry*

It's been a long time since this policy has been reviewed, so the Board referred it to the EAC for review and comment.

Another summer season has been concluded at Camp Linden. But our busy volunteers have started work to make next year's program another success. Camp Linden is truly a year

round effort. A lot is going on: fundraising, creation of slide shows, and construction on the new building.

In September, the Board reauthorized the Executive Committee, and reestablished the Leader Advisory Committee (Betsy Lightbourn, Irene Putzer, Jill Leeds Rivera, and Mary Lou Da Silva.) The Finance Committee (Jeff, Jean and Saul) was appointed but we are still looking for another volunteer to help bring balance. And finally the Board did not appoint a Long Range Planning Committee but is rather assuming those duties itself. <>



Member Profile:
Temma Fishman
by Nancy Freilich

Temma Fishman, Chair of the Education Committee and Vice-President of the Board of Trustees, was born June 3, 1940 in Philadelphia. She grew up in Northern Liberties and Mt. Airy, where she attended public schools. Her mother, an immigrant from Russia, was a homemaker and active volunteer for Deborah Hospital, while her father, a native Philadelphian, worked as an accountant. Her only sibling, Alvin Wolf, is deceased.

Temma graduated from Temple University in 1962 with a B.S. in Education and subsequently taught elementary school in the Philadelphia, Oaklyn, and Woodlyne, NJ public school districts. She retired from teaching in 1998.

In addition to her service on the Board and Education Committee of the Ethical Society, Temma helps with everything from cooking to event-planning and ushering. She also serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Robert Morris Charter School and works as a Literacy Volunteer.

Sunday Morning Volunteers

Ushers - Saul Machles, Chair

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles and Joe Monte

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

November 7. From Mary Lou Da Silva in honor of her mother Mary Walsh's 102nd birthday (September 29th).

November 14. From David Ralston in honor of the birthday of Valerie & Stephen Ralston, brother & sister of David.

November 21. From Katie & Jordan Orange in honor of Audrey Orange's 4th Birthday.

November 28. From Arnold Fishman in honor of Ethical Culture: the religion for the here and now.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Chair

November 7 Joe Monte
November 14 Saul Machles
November 21 Harry Thorn
November 28 Saul Machles

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

November 7 Harry Thorn
November 14 Ken Greiff
November 21 Saul Machles
November 28 Irene Putzer

Coffee Hour Lunch

November 7 Howard Peer & Doris Leicher
November 14 Jean Bradley
November 21 Ken Greiff & Janice Moore
November 28 Thanksgiving Celebration

We appreciate the volunteers who prepare lunch and coffee each week. This note is a reminder that we ask the volunteers to clean up afterwards, including wiping the tables.

Member Profile

Temma Fishman (Continued)

Temma and her husband Arnold, who was profiled in the September newsletter, were born Jewish but embraced Ethical Humanism after listening to a platform address by our leader, Richard Kiniry. Temma considers her ethnicity to be an essential part of who she is. The couple have two children—Cindy, a veterinary pathologist, and Craig, an attorney. Both live in Center City, where Temma and Arnold maintain an apartment, although they mostly live in Medford Lakes, NJ.

Temma enjoys swimming, reading, travel, music, animals, and science. A liberal Democrat, she considers the environment and women's issues of primary importance. <>

Platform Summaries

September 19: The Fall Equinox Festival ushered in an early beginning to the fall season. The still-green pressed leaves were a lingering reminder of summer, but the gold, yellow, and brown chrysanthemums suggested the approach of autumn, the season when we stow away new growth for the following spring. The music played by Tim Ribchester struck the perfect chord with the old favorites This Land is Your Land and Autumn Leaves, then later a solo performance by guest baritone Andrew Cummings.

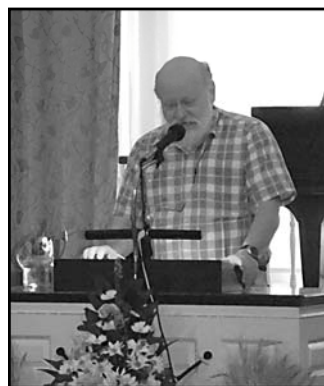


Tim Ribchester and Andrew Cummings

Members elaborated on the fall theme with readings ranging from Virginia Woolf's Moments of Being (selected by Ellen Rose) to classic texts of

nature writing such as Walden. Two members delivered personal observations: Bob Moore recalled raking leaves as a boy and then discontinuing the activity because it was judged bad for the environment, and contrasting that responsible ethos to the one of continued assault on the environment that prevails today. Dorothea Leicher used the fall season when night and day are equal as a metaphor for balancing our lives.

—Betsy Lightbourn



Top: Ellen Rose
Middle: Bob Moore
Bottom: Doris Leicher

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Platform Summaries (Continued)

September 26: Dr. Bob Kay spoke on the topic "How to behave like an animal (and why we should)." Early in his career Dr. Kay studied with Konrad Lorenz and Desmond Morris, so the relationship between human and animal behavior has long been a topic of interest to him. Each species has a norm of social and family behavior. Animals tend to maintain those norms. Humans, by contrast, often violate normal social, tribal, or family relationships; engage in self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse; and engage in unnecessary or gratuitous violence against members of our own families or against strangers, as individuals or groups (as in war). There are examples of animals that have some social structure. There is evidence that primate groups not exposed to humans demonstrate some cooperative behavior. Yet when they are exposed to an unknown threat such as humans, aggressive, hierarchical, alpha male behavior then becomes more pronounced. In fact, excess violence is not a norm among primates, including humans. We are a peace loving primate. Excess human violence is therefore a learned and a social behavior. It is not entirely inherited, instinctual, or necessary. Dr. Kay quoted Hermann Goering, "It is impossible to get the German people to fight a war unless you fill them full of lies." As Shakespeare proposed, our main problem is us, not our stars or our biology. Sartre, an advocate of social psychology, said "Hell is others." Revising Freud and Skinner, biology and the environment are conditions we work with but not our destiny.

—Harry Thorn

October 3: Richard Kiniry spoke on the topic, "War and the Future." Initiating October's focus on children, Richard directed our attention to our attitudes toward war and how these attitudes are setting the reality in which children live and in which they struggle to find meaning in life.

Richard drew on military research from the 1940's by S. L. A. Marshall that showed that in World War II "about 15 per cent of American riflemen in combat had fired at the enemy." He said that "Fear of killing rather than fear of being killed, was the most common cause of battle failure in the individual." In "The Price of Valor," Dan Baum argues that in the 60 years since that study the military has worked hard to change such attitudes. And Richard argued that popular culture today is also contributing to a change. While we have a long tradition of anti-war literature stretching from classical literature to contemporary studies, Richard sees us currently in a time of validating a new militarized culture, a time of justifying war, of accepting a belief that ends not only justify means during war situations but also a time when we see the means as honorable and valorous. Richard argued that "just war" theory is no longer useful for people concerned about human ethics. He argued that we are at a watershed moment when we must devote our most creative thinking to find ways to resolve conflicts without war and without legitimizing violence. We must change the current glorification of power and force so as to create a reality more conducive to the contexts of life for all of our children throughout the world. Exclusionary thinking, whether as parochialism, sectarianism, or nationalism, is no longer appropriate for ethical thinking. He concluded by quoting Howard Zinn, "There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people."

—Lyle Murley

October 10: Dr. Jacqueline Leonard, Associate Professor of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology in Temple University's School of Education, explored the plight of inner-city African American children in her talk, "Still Not 'Saved': The Power of



Dr. Jacqueline Leonard

Mathematics to Liberate the Oppressed." Recalling the words of Jeremiah, "The harvest is past and we are still not saved.[. . .]Why then is the health of my poor people still not restored?" she pointed out the injustice of a 74% jobless rate for those 16-19 years of age and a life of poverty for one out of three African-American children in this country. Many more black children than whites score below grade level in math: 0% score at an advanced level in the subject, and only .5% major in math in college. Nationwide, there are only 16 African-Americans holding PhDs in mathematics. Dr. Leonard sees these undermining of economic security for African-Americans. The majority of black children attend racially segregated schools because their neighborhoods have become ghettos of desperation. Dr. Leonard offered some hope and solutions. Black children must be exposed to good teachers who understand their culture. Math must be made meaningful and relevant and be seen as a means to success. Families, churches, and schools must be involved and promote the idea that it's OK to be good in math. She urges churches to use math in sermons – proposing problems like, "How many people could Jesus feed with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish? How about 10 times that amount or 100 times?" Parents and teachers should use math to convey meaning: point out how

(Continued on page 6)

Platform Summaries (Continued)

hairstylists and barbers use math in their work; reveal the math inherent in music and art - teach children the patterns and shapes created by them. Math can be learned through games like dominoes, chess and basketball. Dr. Leonard urges us to "mathematize the culture". We should work for equitable school funding so that the spirit of Brown vs. the Board of Education, the 1954 ruling that ended legislated school segregation, can be realized. Increase the likelihood that some black youth can get the 1.3 million jobs requiring math skills that will be out there in 2006. Economic parity and freedom from oppression must be transformed into reality.

—*Temma Fishman* <>

From the Editor

As some of you may recall, last year in one of his monthly Leader's Messages, Richard suggested—in these pages—that in addition to regular messages from the Leader and President of the Board of Trustees, *Ethical Views* should feature a monthly "Member's Page," where members could contribute reflections, book or movie reviews, poetry, even graphic and photographic works pertaining to issues relevant to Ethical Culture. Beginning with the December 2004 issue, on the unanimous recommendation of the Communications Committee, members are invited to submit such contributions to the editor for inclusion in *Ethical Views*. Send your submissions by mail to Ethical Views Submissions, Philadelphia Ethical Society, 1906 South Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103, or by email <erose@temple.edu>. As space permits, we will include your contributions in each month's *Ethical Views*. The deadline is the 10th of the month preceding the next issue of the newsletter (e.g., on November 10 for the December issue).



Remember burning leaves?

It was a daytime chore, every October,
on the Eisenhower-era city block
where I lived
with dozens of postwar baby boom kids.

The bigger kids raked
mountains of leaves,
soft, scratchy, colorful.
The little kids, giggling,
would scatter them about,
scolded for it.

And then a grownup would light a match ,
and the white smoke rose
to the blue autumn sky,
pungent, acrid, sweet.





As the leaves reduced to ashes,
some suitably responsible adult figure
would lean on a rake and watch the fire,
thinking his or her own thoughts.

But then sometime around 1960
scientists found that particulate pollution
from 'residential yard waste burning'
in the ever-spreading suburbs
irritated the lungs.
Local governments posted various warnings,
and the practice stopped.
People's behavior changed.
Their idea of what was right and wrong changed.
The grown-ups stopped burning leaves
(so now we get bulging plastic bags waiting for pickup).

I may nostalgically miss that white smoke
and the Autumn raking rituals.
But above all,
I miss that sensible postwar society,
where people listened to the scientists,
and the grownups were in charge,
instead of the kids scattering the leaves.

—*Bob Moore*

N O V E M B E R

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Election Returns at Jill Leeds Rivera's home R.S.V.P.	3 <u>Meeting</u> 730 PM Camp Linden Board of Trustees at the Society	4	5	6
7 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Now What?"  Irene Putzer	8 7:30PM Get to Know Us Social	9	10 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee	11	12	13  Joe Monte
14 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "A House in the Suburbs – Dream Versus Reality" 2 PM – Newcomers Social at home of Jean Bradley & Saul Machles	15 7:30PM Weston Room <u>Class</u> Better Living Through Better Relationships	16	17 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Executive Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	18 7:30PM Weston Rm. <u>Class</u> History of Ethics	19	20
21 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Planting the Seeds of Freethought" 1:30-3:30PM Workshop on Kids, Consumerism and Choices	22 7:30PM Weston Room <u>Class</u> Better Living Through Better Relationships	23	24 7:30PM Weston Rm. <u>Class</u> The Qur'an and Islam	25	26	27
28 11 AM <u>Platform</u> Humanist Thanksgiving Celebration	29 7:30PM Weston Room – <u>Class</u> Better Living Through Better Relationships  Howard Peer	30				 Birthdays

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

Editor, Ellen Rose

Layout and Photographs, Janice Moore

Distribution, Jean Bradley

Web Master, Bob Moore

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New Class in November

Better Living Through Better Relationships

Mondays, November 15, 22 and 29 at 7:30P.M.

What is your style of manipulation? Awareness of your style of relating can change your life. Such understanding is the goal of this workshop. This is our advanced course in ethical living. We human beings tend to isolate ourselves inside our heads and miss the fact that we live in a world of relationships. We create our lives in our relation with others and the world. We can learn to be more aware of that world of relationships and improve our lives in the process.

Using material from the book, [Straight Talk](#), this course presents tools for understanding our patterns of action and styles of relating, and offers practical methods of communication that can result in more satisfying relationships with family, friends and co-workers.



Several moments from
last year's Humanist
Thanksgiving Celebration.

—○—

We welcome you to join
us for this year's event.

Please RSVP to the
Society, 215-735-3456, by
November 24, if you're
planning to share this
occasion with us.

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