



Ethical Views

October 2006

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

October Platforms

Sunday, October 1

HONESTY AMONG THIEVES

Richard L. Kiniry, Leader of the Society. What does personal honesty mean in the age of globalization, job insecurity, cutthroat business practices, sexual freedom, no-fault insurance, reality television, Wal-Mart, cameras everywhere, DNA testing, and the FBI listening to our phone calls?

Sunday, October 8

A LOOK AT HOW OUR BEHAVIOR AFFECTS THOSE AROUND US

Dorothea (Doris) Leicher, a seasoned practicing psychoanalyst, is fascinated by ways in which we develop (and change) our behavioral habits; how these habits, in turn, shape our perception of the world; how our fantasies create history for better or worse.

Doris will examine these dynamics through dialogue and interactions of the main figures in Toni Morrison's opera, "Margaret Garner."

Sunday, October 15

Marlena Santoyo, Grandmothers for Peace

Sunday, October 22

URBAN VIOLENCE

Dr. Elijah Anderson, the Charles and William L. Day Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania and author of the classic sociological work, *A Place on the Corner: A Study of Black Street Corner Men*. Of all the problems besetting the poor inner-city black community, none is more pressing than that of interpersonal violence and aggression. It wreaks havoc daily with the lives of community residents and increasingly spills over into downtown and residential middle-class areas. The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor – the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and lack of hope for the future.

Sunday, October 29

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

Kathy Kelly, teacher in Chicago area community colleges, active with the Catholic Worker Movement. She helped initiate Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign to end the UN/US sanctions against Iraq. In October 2002, she joined Iraq Peace Team members in Baghdad throughout the bombardment and invasion. In 1988 she was sentenced to one year in prison for planting corn on nuclear missile silo sites. Kelly served nine months of the sentence in Lexington, KY maximum security prison.

Kathy will share her recent experiences: sitting with grieving mothers in Lebanon, her frustration in being unable to travel freely in Iraq to check on friends, her trip into Kurdish Iraq, and the shift in attitudes toward Americans.



Leader's Message

SOCIAL CRITICS

by Richard L. Kiniry

Being an old or at least an aging curmudgeon, I hope I am given a break by the younger generation and will be forgiven just a bit for my negative view of contemporary life. I am known for my bewilderment at automobile seat-warmers and like many people my age I am always ready with a new joke about people on their cell phones. (They keep trying to hit me as they drive, talk on the phone, and turn corners.) But although I disapprove of our insatiable urge for more and more comfort, my issue is: what are all the so-called advances in technology doing to us? Does it make any transcendental difference that because of my very helpful computer, I no longer know how to spell or count?

With the Industrial Revolution and the factory system enormous wealth was produced and human beings were freed from the feudal system but life also became more regulated and controlled. Pride in one's work was replaced by acquisition of the things those factories produced. My father came of age in the era of the automobile. He loved his first car because it got him out of a house with too many people. Not only could he take trips around the country, he could get back and forth from his job in a half-hour (it would have taken a hour and a half by public transportation), and he car pooled. In those days you didn't waste a ride on just one person. Dad never went to work in a car with fewer than three people. I don't think he ever imagined how the automobile would transform our politics, economics, and life-styles. (How many babies have been conceived in the four-wheel bedroom?)

The blessing of the automobile has in many ways turned into a curse. Besides pollution, crowded streets, suburbs and destroyed neighborhoods, consider the effect of the automobile on human nature. I'm not sure why but the automobile enhances human aggression. We sit in a metal box that can not go through or easily around other metal boxes, and since the metal box isolates us from the faces of other drivers, even a city street becomes a contest of speed and advantage. I believe this behavior spreads through to the rest of life. The lessons learned on the highway become the rules for relating to friends, family, and strangers. The automobile has made human nature more frustrated and aggressive.

In the last twenty years we have had an electronic revolution, the latest technology-driven transformation of culture. Small children and grandmothers are emailing friends and family and

(Continued next page)

(Leader's Message continued)

using the internet. Everyone seems to have something in their ear. If it isn't a phone, it is an Ipad. Recently as I was searching a supermarket shelf, I thought the woman next to me was talking to me, but no. Then I thought she was on the phone, but no, there was no cord or device in her ear. As far as I could tell she was not crazy but I surmised that she was so used to talking that she has an ongoing conversation to no one in particular.

And that seems to be an appropriate metaphor for the effect the electronic revolution has on human nature - a constant conversation. Human life has always been a conversation but until our present times that conversation was happening in our heads. It is new that we can be in continual verbal connection with our personal circle. As I eavesdrop on the constant conversation it tends to be about what he or she did to me, what a great time I had last night or what a great time we will have tonight, where are the kids? and money on all levels. In other words, every thought gets feedback.

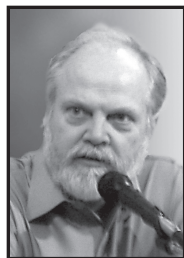
To be fair, maybe this is good. Maybe in an age that supposedly lacks community and with everyone bowling alone, this constant communication is progress. Or maybe, like television, the great promise of electronic communication will turn into another level of mindless chatter.

My point is, when it comes to new technology we should not just accept the inevitability of so-called progress but be social critics and take a longer view. We can reject some uses of new technologies.



Member **Amber Anderson** married **Shawn O'Brien** on September 17 in an outdoor ceremony. It was the third Ethical Society member wedding in 13 months. Officiating was Leader **Richard Kiniry** (background).

Does constant conversation destroy independent reflective thinking? Too much of any good thing can kill you and although advertising makes jelly of our better judgment, we should make choices and express our opinions to the world. ◇



President's Message

by Howard Peer

Turn on the radio, tune in WHY Y, listen to the news, I can tell you what is going to be on. It's not magic: it's so predictable that any of us could be a news anchor person. The other day I was doing something around the house. I turned on WHY Y and the news was about bombs blowing up somebody because of something. The refrain is....."Today, _____ blew up _____ in their continuing battle over _____."

I got depressed, not an uncommon event these days, and turned the radio off. That upset me because I really like WHY Y. I've been listening to All Things Considered nearly since the beginning and I can remember when Morning Edition was launched. Hell, I can remember Dwight Eisenhower. But I can't remember a time when the news did not fit this format. Part two on this particular line of logic is that we are humanist. This, briefly, means we believe that we control our destiny and that we are responsible for our actions. While we do not reject a supernatural world, we do proclaim that we should act as if no supernatural world exists. We act as though no God is coming to bail us out. Or do we?

Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Does that not describe most people's view of prayer? People pray and pray and pray to an absent god. They search the tea leaves for coincidences that support their belief that their way of controlling the world is effective. But how different are we in the Society?

How many times have we appealed to the common sense and wisdom of our leaders? Don't we entrust our fate to the greater wisdom of the crowd? Isn't that what we call democracy? Yet how many times has the crowd failed us? Nixon/Agnew, Reagan/Bush, Bush/Quail, Bush/Cheney? Yes sometimes our guy wins but is it because of some intellectual clarity? Or is it chance? And, did our guy really forward our agenda? Kennedy/Bay of Pigs? Johnson/Vietnam? Carter (my hero) /Iran?

Clinton/Lewinsky? "We" have made progress on civil rights and the environment. Or have we? Did these changes happen because we were active and moved the system? Or did these things change because of forces outside of us, forces upon which we had no influence? When a Rainmaker does his dance and it rains, is it luck or divine intervention? It makes no sense to play the lottery, unless you win. Worse, our actions may delay change. Who is emerging as an advocate of climate protection but the insurance industry? Transport yourself back to 1938. Would you have advocated arming against Germany or perhaps even a preemptive strike? Had you been FDR, would you have allowed the bombing of Dresden?

These are the kinds of questions that bedevil me. For most of my life I have had an opinion on each and every issue. This was right and that was wrong and here is why. I think I inherited this attitude mostly from my father during my formative pre-adolescent years when things were simple, black and white. That was before the race riots and Vietnam. Not to mention beer, pot, girls, and cars (not necessarily in that order). That's when things got hard, really hard. My father and I did not speak for years. Later, when the wounds were healing and he was retired, he would go away for weeks at a time to his cabin. He needed time to think. He said that even Jesus needed to retire to the desert to think and sort things through. At times that is what I really need, and what I find uniquely valuable in the Ethical Society is that we provide a space for thought.

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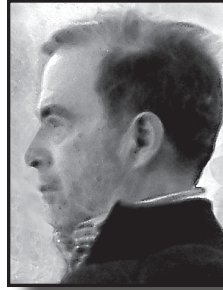
Introducing New Members

by David Ralston

Please be sure to look for and welcome one of our newest members, **Ronald Coburn**. He is originally from Grand Rapids, MI and has been in the Philadelphia area for about thirty years. Ron's hobbies are classical music, playing the piano, reading, and travel. He found the Ethical Society while attending a Choral Arts Society rehearsal at the ES. As he wandered into the lobby, he found a piece of literature and immediately identified with Ethical Humanism.

Ron has worked for several years on Haiti issues. He has made connections between Port-au-Prince Hospital in Haiti and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He is also active in some anti-war organizations.

Ron loves being able to walk to work from his West Philadelphia home. He earned his MD at Northwestern and then practiced in the Pulmonary Disease Division at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. He now spends most days doing research.



Ron Coburn

In addition to his wife Shari, a Freudian psychoanalyst who studied at the New School of Psychoanalysis in New York City, he also has two bright thirty-something daughters in California. One is a patent attorney and the other teaches in the Department of Graduate Education at the University of California at Berkeley.

Past Platforms: April 16, 2006 - With great enthusiasm **Jane Golden** told us about the Mural Arts Program (MAP) of Philadelphia. In the beginning (the mid 1980s) Mayor Wilson Goode recruited her from Los Angeles, where she had established a privately-operated mural arts program, to develop a program to combat graffiti.



Jane Golden

Early on she enlisted prominent Philadelphia graffiti artists Tran, Knife, and eight to ten others. Because she had an ample budget, she was able to employ them on the condition that they would create no more graffiti (an agreement they kept).

Beyond engaging graffiti artists in alternative art, a second major aspect of MAP has been involving residents of a neighborhood in deciding what will be in a mural in that neighborhood. This aspect underscores the sense of ownership and pride the program has fostered among many in the city, including

young people truant from school and adults in prisons. MAP now has the support of many businesses and other organizations, and it has also become an important public service department of city government.

Jane Golden's platform ended with a slide show of some of the many murals MAP has produced. Her thorough knowledge of, and enthusiasm for MAP grows out of her belief that art is for everyone, not just in a museum, but right where they live. I am sure that many who heard her platform address agree with her that MAP has made Philadelphia a model of municipal betterment.

—Nick Sanders



School For Ethics

THE HISTORY OF ETHICS

This is a lively discussion group. We have been examining the evolution of ethical systems through history. We start the year in September with a new direction. We will be discussing what passes for Humanist Philosophy. We will begin by asking what is wrong with Sam Harris's book, *The End of Faith*, and move on to Postmodernism. All are invited. Call for current materials.

Third **Thursday** of the month,
October 19, 7:30 pm

Ethics For Children

Sundays, 10:45 a.m.

Our children's program began with the opening Sunday on September 10. We now have a staff of three with our new lead teacher, Josh Bickford. Below are some of the goals of the program. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our Ethics for Children brochure.

Some of our Goals of the Ethics for Children Program

- ☐ Exploring values such as integrity, honesty, responsibility, courage, and commitment.
- ☐ Affirming the value and uniqueness of each individual.
- ☐ Promoting knowledge and celebration of diversity among people.
- ☐ Inspiring social responsibility toward individuals, groups, and our environment.
- ☐ Developing identity as part of a community of people sharing humanistic values.
- ☐ Learning about those ethical teachings which are common to the world's religions.



Get to Know Us Social

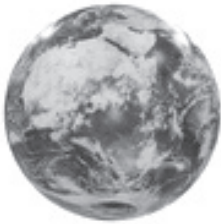
Wednesday, October 4, 7:30pm

Every other month we 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.

*Project for Nuclear Awareness
and
The Ethical Society of Philadelphia*
present

Bob Edgar,
General Secretary, U.S. National Council of Churches
joined by

Craig Eisendrath,
Chairman, The Project for Nuclear Awareness
at the



Philadelphia Ethical Society
1906 S. Rittenhouse Square
October 15, 6:00–7:30 PM (free)

Wine and Light Fare Buffet Reception, 7:30–8:30 PM

Reception \$50 at door, \$40 reserve by October 10th

Students and Seniors, \$20/ person - (215) 568-1702

Join us to discuss urgent changes to U.S. foreign policy.

Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty*

presents

Vicki Schieber,
Mother of Shannon Schieber
murdered in Philadelphia in 1998



Vicki and Sylvester Schieber's 23-year-old daughter Shannon was murdered while attending graduate school in Philadelphia. The killer, who was not arrested until 2002, is now serving multiple life sentences in Pennsylvania and Colorado. Vicki Schieber has testified against the death penalty before the U.S. Senate and before state legislators in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Tuesday, October 24, Huntsman Hall F85, University of Penn, 7pm
Wednesday, October 25, Chapel, St. Joseph Univ., City Line Ave., 7pm







"Losing a beloved family member to murder is a tragedy of unimaginable proportions. There is no such thing as closure when a violent crime rips away the life of someone dear to you. Killing Shannon's murderer cannot stop the unfolding of the world around us with its constant reminders of unfulfilled hopes and dreams.....For us, the death penalty is not the way to honor our daughter's life."

***Cosponsored by the Ethical Society of Philadelphia**

OCTOBER 2006



Birthdays

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1 <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Richard L. Kiniry <i>Honesty Among Thieves</i>	2	3	4  Get to Know Us Social 7:30 p.m.	5  Jeffrey Dubb	6	7
8 <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Doris Leicher <i>A Look at How Our Behavior Affects Those Around Us</i>	9	10	11 Meetings <i>Weston Room</i> 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee 7:45 p.m. Education Committee	12	13	14  Doris Leicher
15 <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Marlena Santoyo <i>Grandmothers for Peace</i>	16  David Collier	17	18	19 <i>Class</i> The History of Ethics 7:30 p.m.	20	21
22 <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Dr. Elijah Anderson <i>Urban Violence</i> Meeting <i>Weston Room - 1:30 p.m.</i> Board of Trustees	23	24	25	26	27  Halloween Party 7:00 p.m.	28
29 <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Kathy Kelly <i>Voices in the Wilderness</i>  Gladys Huber	30	31				



Halloween Party

Friday, October 27, 7:00 PM



Do you want the willies in the best of company? Come to our Halloween party whose theme is **Old Bat Rising**. Wickedly produced and directed by members **Doris Leicher**, **Howard Peer** and daughter **Monica**, this year's event promises to be the weirdest and funniest ever!

Join all of us creepy creatures on Friday, October 27 at 7:00 pm at the Ethical Society of Philadelphia. Have you yearned to be Batman, Batlady, or just a plain ol' bat? How about a vampire vamp or Ethical Vulture? Here's your chance to actually be one! Be sure to wear your ghastliest batty, vulture, or vampire finery.

Bring a bloody good friend and a dish to drool over. We need some really scary music to lurch along to. Do you have any? Let us know and bring it with you. Be there, or we'll have to come get you - and you won't like that one bite or bit! \$5 if you bring a tasty dish to share, \$10 if you don't. To offer your hand (we love hands!), food or music, or for more information, contact temmafish@aol.com or the Society office at 215-735-3456.

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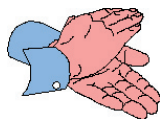
Philadelphia Ethical Society

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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Ushers - Arnold Fishman, Head Usher

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

October 1 - Temma and Arnold Fishman:
In Loving Memory of Alvin Wolf.

October 8 - Nick Sanders: In
celebration of my 5th wedding
anniversary with Molly.

October 15 - Ellen Rose: Happy
Anniversary to my daughter Emily and
her husband Mike.

October 22 - Janice Moore: To
celebrate the colors of Autumn!

October 29 - Richard Kiniry: In loving
memory of my aunt, Mary Hagan.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Head Greeter

October 1 - Saul Machles
October 8 - Harry Thorn
October 15 - Nick Sanders
October 22 - Temma Fishman
October 29 - Saul Machles

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

October 1 - Temma Fishman
October 8 - Amber Anderson
October 15 - Harry Thorn
October 22 - Bob Moore
October 29 - Nick Sanders

Coffee Hour Lunch

October 1 - Doris Leicher and Howard
Peer
October 8 - Jean Bradley
October 15 - Ken Greiff
October 22 - T.B.A.
October 29 - T.B.A.

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