

Ethical Views

September 2005

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Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

September Platforms

Sunday, September 11

Platform: **Richard Kiniry**, Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, will inaugurate the 2005-06 season of platforms with a talk entitled, "**Life is Enough.**" Richard poses this thought: "I suspect that most people who supposedly believe in heaven and hell don't plan their lives with an afterlife in mind, but of course that is part of their theory about life. Since we explicitly don't expect such life insurance, should we live differently, behave differently?"

Sunday, September 18

Fall Equinox Celebration. Our theme for this interactive celebration is change. As we take notice of the change of season, we will be asking each other about experience we have had with change, how we handle change, and the excitement change brings to life.

Sunday, September 25

Platform: **Fritz Williams**, Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society, will speak on the topic "**Religion for the 21st Century.**" At a time when religion is at war with science, secularism, and modern values, Fritz says we need to abandon the supernatural beliefs and practices of traditional religion in order to rediscover the enduring relevance of a religious approach to life. ◇

A REMINDER

Each Sunday there is time during the Platform for "My Ethical Culture". This is a space (3 to 5 minutes) for members to offer their personal take on Ethical Humanism's approach to life. On Sundays when we don't have a personal version from one of you, we find an inspiring quote. If you are interested in presenting your version of "My Ethical Culture", speak to Richard and he will find a date for you.



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!

— — —
Child care is provided



Leader's Message

Up the Hill

by Richard Kiniry

When the results of public opinion surveys are announced, one of the answer categories often reflects the positive/negative attitude of the people questioned: do they think the nation is going in the right direction? Are they feeling secure? Well, if they did a separate survey of just our membership, they would probably find an attitude of depression mixed with anger. As we start our new season at the Society, we are faced with a long list of public and private reasons for feeling unsure, and to be worried about the future.

That fact presents us with an agenda for the coming season. Two or more decades ago, the focus within liberal

religion shifted to the personal side. While never giving up on concern for social problems, the emphasis leaned to what was called the spiritual life. Well, that has shifted again. The individual's spiritual life must now respond to our place in community. As many people who have a personal relationship with God decide that "God helps those who help themselves", those of us with a personal relationship with life must examine the effect of our lives on the lives of others. We want our place in communal life to be effective as positive force in these dark times. Our agenda is bringing the communal into the personal.

As a religious institution entrusted with the care of the spiritual lives of our members, we must face the reality in which we live and respond with positive answers. If we were Buddhists, I could recommend detachment; I could say "accept of the endless flow of life and play your part." But we have a more active religious perspective and we will do what we have always done - with our belief in human reason and the goodness of human beings, and with our faith in progress we will continue to push the rock of social betterment up the hill.

The present crisis of faith in the direction of the nation and the world is so obviously a clash of world views. Since the Age of Reason in 18th century, progressive religion has believed in the inevitable march of rationality and justice. We were going to make a world that served people's needs. We can no longer be so confident. The warriors keep marching off to kill people; the poor get poorer; famine and disease are growing. And the sense of doubt gets personal.

(Continued next page)

(Leader's Message continued)

Some people can separate their public and private lives, stepping over the bodies on the way to the jacuzzi. They can maintain that other people's problems aren't theirs. Other people's suffering or failures are punishment from above or the result of their bad character. We can't do that and shouldn't. We find the meaning of our lives in living—in relationships with people and all of life. If things are getting better for the rest of life, that makes life better for us personally. And if there is a lot of unrelieved neglect and suffering, we feel it and it is a drag on the pursuit of our own happiness.

Actually, we can thank the present reactionary climate for providing a revelation. The meanness that seems to be the foundation of the philosophy that is presently triumphant in Washington gets the progressive juices boiling but it also reveals the impotence of progressive solutions to social problems through the last forty years. The right-wing, in its brutish selfishness, attempts to bluster past problems. But in the process, they reveal those problems as unaddressed, long-term ones—unaddressed in both liberal and conservative times. The curtain is pulled back to reveal a great deal of talk but little action that would address the underlying inequality of our more perfect union.

Honest hope is not wishful thinking but an expectation based on clear thinking. Pushing the rock up the hill doesn't make sense if it is the wrong hill. We may be very certain of our Age of Reason inspired values but they are so much theoretical discussion until we make them personal. Why are so many people rejecting our rational and equalitarian approach? We have to unpack our world view and let it speak both to those people and to our personal lives. Politicians do not have the answers. People of faith living their values and fighting for those values is the answer.

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Fall Followup

Platform Summary

On May 8th, Dr. Lyle Murley used his knowledge of poetry to artfully weave a tapestry upon which various members displayed the pictures of their thoughts and stories of their feelings in celebration of Parents' and Nurturers' Day. We heard personal reflections on how parenting, being a librarian, teaching the young, capturing and viewing life through photography, neighborhoods, and Elderhostel trips all play a role in nurturing ourselves and others.



Photo collage by Bob and Janice Moore

We reveled in the joy of caring and being cared for. Joe Monte led off with a rousing rendition of Julia Ward Howe's 1870 Mother's Day Proclamation - an impassioned plea for peace urging women to promote the alliance of different nationalities. Dr. Murley reminded us that "We in Ethical Culture recognize the value of nurturing; we see mothering as a real way to relate to each other."

Temma Fishman

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Top to bottom: PES Leader **Richard Kiniry** & AEU Pres. **Arnold Fishman**; **Jean Bradley**, **Saul Machles** and **Carol Love** presenting Camp Linden display; New leader **Randall Best**, speaking at Leader Certification Ceremony of AEU Platform; **Arnold Fishman** presenting the Elliott-Black Award to awardee **Dr. Franklin E. Kameny**; **Billy Dechand** performing at the Platform of the AEU Assembly – **Jone Johnson Lewis**, Leader of their Northern VA Ethical Society.

90th Assembly of the American Ethical Union

Hosted by the Northern Virginia Ethical Society, the 90th Assembly of the American Ethical Union was held on Memorial Day Weekend at the Days Hotel & Conference Center in Herndon, Virginia. This year's theme was "Our Best Practices." Following are a few photos from the event taken by **Temma Fishman**.



Big Turnout to Celebrate the UN's 60th Anniversary

by Nick Sanders -- Event Coordinator

On June 26, the Ethical Society hosted a presentation by Senator Harris Wofford, a discussion by Craig Eisendrath, and a luncheon managed by Madeleine Suringar in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Reminding the audience that the Ethical Society has long been active in support of the UN was Richard Kiniry, the master of ceremonies. Although there was no official count, there were at least 85 persons in attendance and the Ethical Society auditorium looked pretty full -- more full than many of us had ever seen it for an Ethical Society program.

The event was also intended to alert people to the need for greater support from our U.S. government for the United Nations and for those suffering in the undeveloped world from hunger, disease, and war. Attendees were encouraged to join and otherwise support the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia (UNA-GP) and the One Campaign, a coalition of groups pressing our government for loan forgiveness, trade reform, and aid to those undeveloped countries whose governments are taking credible steps to foster economic development for their citizens. Both groups manned information tables at the event, with Amanda Dougherty and Omarr Lofton at the UNA-GP table and Nick D'Arecca, Angela Viano, and Kenya Royal at the One Campaign table.

The Society partnered with the UNA-GP to present the celebration. Norma VanDyke, Bill Double, and Ed Gracely of the UNA-GP were especially involved in the planning and publicity for the event. Amanda Dougherty, a student at Bryn Mawr College who is interning with the UNA-GP, not only helped at the UNA-GP table, but was also essential to Madeleine Suringar in providing the luncheon. Among others in the Ethical Society who gave some time to preparing and conducting the event were Jean Bradley, Arnold Fishman, Temma Fishman, Ken Grieff, Saul Machles, Terry Martin-Murley, Bob Moore, Janice Moore, Lyle Murley, Henry Pashkow, and Howard Peer.

In the spirit of the event, consider your support of the UNA-GP (www.unagp.org) and the One Campaign (www.one.org).

TOP TO BOTTOM:

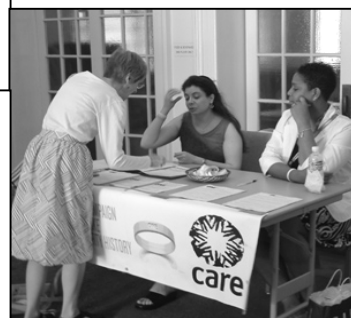
Guest Speaker, Senator Harris Wofford

A packed PES auditorium

Harris Wofford and Craig Eisenrath invite questions and comments from the audience

UNA-GP table

One Campaign table



Photograph by Janice R. Moore

Founders' Day Celebration

May 15, 2005

Keynote speaker, **Dr. Dale Drews** recalled our origins as an organization: those who created the Ethical Society and why they did it.

School for Ethics

Ethical development is a lifelong process. To support this development the Philadelphia Ethical Society offers courses for adults and children which help participants enhance their sense of meaning and purpose in life and to improve the ethical quality of their relationships with family, friends, co-workers and the larger community.

The following courses are starting in September. If you are interested or need more information, call the Society Office at 215-735-3456. ***Except for the Getting to Know Us Social, you must sign-up beforehand for the courses.***

GETTING TO KNOW US SOCIALS

Each month we hold a casual informational event for those who are curious about the Society and its philosophy. We will discuss the history of the Ethical Culture Movement and its core principles. Members will there to talk about what they get out of the Society and the leaders of the Society will be present to answer all questions. Refreshments will be served. The first social this season will be on **Wednesday, October 5th, 7:30pm, Weston Room**

HISTORY OF ETHICS


The group will start the season with a practical approach to ethics. We will spend three sessions reading and discussing Arthur Dobrin's book, Ethical People and How They Get to Be That Way. Dr. Dobrin used his thirty years experience as an Ethical Culture Leader to write the book and he looks at both the research into the origins of ethical behavior and the life stories of people who have demonstrated ethical courage. Using his book, we will look at empathy, shame, prejudice and practical answers to ethical questions. Our goal is to understand better how we personally act as ethical agents and how people become good persons.

Three sessions, third Thursday of the month, starting **Thursday, September 15th, 7:30pm, Weston Room**

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

In an age of materialism and consumption as a way of life, we are forced to question our own lifestyles. Being ethical no longer means just being honest and good-hearted. How do the choices we make effect the earth and the billions of people living in poverty? 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 ethical simplicity. We will start again on **Wednesday, September 28th at 7:30** by discussing the solutions in Thom Hartmann's The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight.

SEPTEMBER 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM – <i>Weston Room</i> Community/ Membership Committee	8	9	10
11 11:00 AM <u>Platform</u> Richard Kiniry <i>Life is Enough</i> 12:00 pm - Lunch by Community Committee	12	13	14 <u>Meetings</u> <i>Weston Room</i> 6:30 PM-Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM-Education Committee	15 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM – <i>Weston Room</i> History of Ethics	16	17
18 <i>Fall Equinox Celebration</i> 	19 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM - Carol <i>Love's House</i> Camp Linden Board Nancy Freilich	20	21 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM <i>Weston Room</i> Board of Trustees	22	23	24
25 11:00 AM <u>Platform</u> Fritz Williams <i>Religion for the 21st Century</i>	26	27	28 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM – <i>Weston Room</i> Voluntary Simplicity	29	30  Birthdays	

For those of you who like to plan ahead, here is this season's Schedule of Community Committee Events:

COMMUNITY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sunday	Sept. 11	12:00 Noon	Opening Day Luncheon - theme - <i>Summer's harvest</i>
Friday	Oct. 28	7:00 PM	Halloween Party
Sunday	Nov. 20	12:00 Noon	Humanist Thanksgiving Luncheon
Saturday	Dec. 17	7:00 PM	Solstice Party
Friday	Feb. 17	7:00 PM	Service Auction & Valentine's Day Party
Sunday	Mar. 19	12:00 Noon	Spring Equinox & Pledge Luncheon
Friday	April 7	7:00 PM	Humanist Seder
Sunday	May 12	12:00 Noon	Founder's Day Lunch



President's Message

by Howard Peer

I have just returned from vacation and yet another summer is nearly over. In going through my mail I came upon a wonderful article titled "Oh, Grow Up" in the recent issue of the AARP magazine. I thought it was a good metaphor and more for us here at the Ethical Society. The gist of the article is that we spend our early years, prior to middle age, meeting the goals and requirements demanded of us by family, society, and culture. But in middle age we have the opportunity to shrug off these external drives and finally lead life as we want to. Apparently the idea has quite a following with the Jungian crowd and Jung himself likened our life's passage to the transit of the sun, with 40 being about high-noon. The article points out ways to maximize the value of our life's second half, which includes a significant reawakening of the inner self and finding some spiritual outlet.

So, here we are at the end of summer, not high noon but close enough metaphorically. The true beginning of life is at its middle. I think it is pretty safe to say that most of us have come to ethical culture rather late in life, surely few of us were born into it. The beginning is in the middle. And here we are starting our new season at the beginning of the second half of the calendar year. The beginning is in the middle. Interesting. The article is a good read, I recommend it.

The Board met with Charles Loomis, our Architect, during July in lieu of having a regular Board meeting. We reviewed and discussed the preliminary plans that were debuted during our annual meeting in May. The consensus was to pursue a plan that would provide us with some short term access from the rear of the building while not precluding the installation of an elevator. The Board gave Charles direction to firm up his preliminary plans in this matter and report back to us early this year. Early studies suggest that we can provide this access with the funds at hand and perhaps have functioning handicapped access by late winter or early spring 2006.

As work progresses Charles will develop the elevator plans over the fall and early winter sufficiently to have a concrete working estimate and plan. At the same time the Board will be developing a fund-raising strategy. These three efforts — the interim access, the more formal plans, and the fund raising-strategy — should all be completed about the same time. Then the hard work of fund-raising will begin, and we will be looking to the general membership for help. At this time we have momentum to get the project started and it will be important to keep the momentum going if we are to see it through.

Obviously the elevator is a large project but it is something that is within our grasp. I know that for years I was petrified that the roof would fall in and we would not be able to do anything about it. Yet we now have a new roof, nearly paid for. We have new chairs for the assembly room, new carpets, and new air conditioning.

Speaking of achievements, through the largesse of an anonymous donor we have been given the financial wherewithal to complete the cabin at Camp Linden. The work is under contract and progressing. We have had another successful season out there and next year things will be even better.

Damn, we are good. The PES is a place where things happen. This elevator IS something that we can, and will, collectively achieve.

Welcome back, see you on Sunday.

SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Ushers - Arnold Fishman, Chair

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry and Joe Monte

Helpers - Saul Machles and John Hall

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

Flowers for September platforms
T.B.A.

Greeters - Saul Machles, Chair

September 11 Nick Sanders

September 18 Saul Machles

September 25 Temma Fishman

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

September 11 Harry Thorn

September 18 Nick Sanders

September 25 Irene Putzer

Coffee Hour Lunch

September 11 Jean Bradley

September 18 Ken Greiff
& Janice Moore

September 25 To be announced



Photo by Janice R. Moore

**On August 20, Society members
Saul Machles and Jean Bradley
became husband and wife.**

***Ethical Action Committee (EAC)
Philadelphia Ethical Society (PES)
Report on 2004-5 Activities***

This report is a summary of the activities of the PES EAC during the 2004-5 fiscal year. For more detailed information, readers should see the EAC minutes for each of its meetings during the year (thanks to Ellen Rose, EAC Secretary).

The EAC had meetings from approximately 6:30 to approximately 7:30 at the Philadelphia Ethical Society on the following Wednesday evenings: 9/8/04, 12/8/04, 1/12/05, 2/9/05, 3/9/05, 4/13/05, and 5/11/05.

The EAC was inactive for much of the fall 2004, because the members agreed that they should have the time to work on the Presidential and other elections.

Service Activities:

1. As in recent years, we distributed dictionaries to all (almost 100) third grade students at the Robert Morris School. Temma Fishman coordinated the project. Cherin Silver procured the dictionaries. Nick Sanders organized an event in which eight persons attached bookplates to the dictionaries after the platform on December 19. Temma Fishman and Lew Wilkinson presented the dictionaries to the students on December 20.

2. Also as in recent years, we prepared and served box lunches or dinners and coffee to 18-20 men at the Trinity Urban Center once a month for five months (November through March). Judith Will coordinated this project, and participants included Judith, Maria Markovich, Mary Wasserman, John Hall, Amber Anderson and her friend Sean, Lyle Murley, Terry Martin-Murley, and Jean Bradley.

3 & 4. Although not conducted by the EAC, two other service activities were supported during the year by the PES: tutoring at the Robert Morris School and volunteering at Camp Linden.

Social Change Activities:

1. In support of economic justice, after the platform on October 3, we sponsored and publicized a discussion of the book *Greed and Good*, led by the author Sam Pizzigati. Nick Sanders coordinated and publicized this event.

2. To express our concern for the suffering in the Darfur region of Sudan, we sent a poster-sized petition to the Sudanese embassy demanding that the Sudanese government cease committing genocide against its own citizens. After many false starts by several committee members to express our concern, Bob Moore developed this idea created this petition for those attending the platform on April 24 to sign.

3. With concern for making sure that every vote counts (and counts only once), we sponsored a forum on Election Reform after the platform on May 15. Bob Moore coordinated and carried out most of the preparation for this forum. The presenters were Mary Beth Kuznick, Lynn Landes, and Josh Mitteldorf.

4. In continued support of the United Nations and to publicize the local United Nations Association (UNA) and the One Campaign for U.S. support for developing countries, we partnered with the UNA of Greater Philadelphia to have a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The celebration included a presentation by Senator Harris Wofford with discussion by Craig Eisendrath, followed by a luncheon. Nick Sanders coordinated the event, and Madeleine Suringar managed the luncheon.

Important Additional Information:

In addition to the above, there were a number of concerns researched and discussed in the EAC that never resulted in action. Some were resolved before action could be taken, while others required support from outside that was not forthcoming, and still others were finally judged not within our resources or purview. Among these were coordination with the First

Unitarian/Universalist Church on criminal justice issues, testing for the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County, and protesting aspects of TV programming and advertising with regard to unprotected sexual relations.

Also, in the functioning of EAC, we have frequently called on Richard Kiniry for program support and Jean Bradley for providing some publicity and handling the financial aspects of our activities.

Procedural Stance:

Several times during the year, there was discussion of how activities are determined for the EAC. During the year, we have taken direction from members who want the PES to act in some area of ethical concern. This source of direction is presented in contrast to one that has directions set elsewhere or at other times as to what an EAC ought to do. Taking the member-driven direction is a practical matter -- acknowledging that as volunteers we must have persons who are willing to invest themselves in researching, formulating, making arrangements, and coordinating in order to get anything actually acted on. Of course, the EAC does provide a forum for discussing whether an activity is appropriate to pursue, but this has during the past year taken the form of making adjustments to the proposed idea in such a way to garner support of others on the EAC.

The EAC of 2004-5:

Temma Fishman, Ken Greiff, Richard Kiniry, Bob Moore, Ellen Rose (Secretary), ***Nick Sanders*** (Co-chair), ***Lew Wilkinson***, and ***Judith Will*** (Co-chair) ◇



Temma Fishman and Lew Wilkinson hang sign on front of PES building to advertise the Election Reform Forum.

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

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Photos by Temma Fishman/Collage by Janice R. Moore

Camp Linden Annual Picnic - A good time was had by all!

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