



# Ethical Views

September 2006

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Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society



## September Platforms

**Sunday, September 10**

### **PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**Richard Kiniry**, Leader of the Society  
I want to start on a personal and positive note. Yes, we are confronted with a world of problems — environmental, political, social, and economic — and rather than run away from that reality, we desire integrated lives, lives that are personally satisfying but also help make a better world. That is my theme. Opening Day Luncheon will follow.

**Sunday, September 17**

### **SOCIETY'S ROLE IN THE REINTEGRATION OF EX-OFFENDERS**

**Raynaud L. Jones**, Director of Ex-Offender and Parenting Services of Impact Services Corporation. Ray Jones will offer a historical perspective on the experience of ex-offenders as they face barriers in employment, housing, and education. He will discuss Restorative Justice and programs to help ex-offenders in their relationships with family, work, and the community.

**Sunday, September 24**

### **FALL FESTIVAL**

We celebrate the arrival of autumn with stories, music, and a chance to think about what each of us can do to make life better in the coming year. The theme is "Bringing out the Best." Fall is the time to get back to work and during the Festival we will reflect on what we individually commit ourselves to doing during the coming year. There will be a few stories about activities in the community and time for you to add your own suggestions for worthy projects. <



## **Leader's Message**

### **Always War**

by Richard Kiniry

More war — this time between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah. Or is it between Israel and Lebanon, or is it Israel against the entire Muslim world, or is Israel working with the United States in the war on terrorism? By the time you read this it may have cooled down into an unsatisfying cease-fire or it may have gotten much worse. Either way, hundreds, thousands of human beings will be dead and we must ask, why? Is life better off? Always war, war, war. Isn't there a better way?

As we look at the death and destruction of this newest war and to the absence of any positive return on the war, it is easy to just declare yourself a pacifist. No more moral or intellectual hairsplitting, just no war. As a pacifist you make a personal decision against all war and you hope for the best but live with the worst. The more pragmatic of us accept that this is an imperfect world full of people who feel abused and who will attack others. In such situations military response may be necessary.

That said, I repeat, isn't there a better way? Has imagination died completely? It is amazing what governments such as Israel and the United States and semi-governments such as Hamas and Hezbollah feel free to do in the name of the Nation, or the Homeland, or the Fatherland, or the Promised Land. No government such as Israel's should sit back and allow its people to be killed but since governments too often

make unjust, self-interested decisions that make enemies of other peoples, how can they, without shame and embarrassment, expect their people to participate in the killing and destruction of another nation?

Well, the people do participate and this new war highlights one of the consistent causes of war — human need for a sense of identity, and our need to protect that identity. Presently we are stuck in the blame game, justifications in the form of history and stories of serial abuse. It is the usual story. The chants are similar worldwide: remember the Maine, Pearl Harbor, September 11<sup>th</sup> or remember the Holocaust, Moses, the Six Day War, or remember our Homeland, the Caliphate, Sabra and Shatilla. Behind war there is always a fragile sense of identity. You are not just you, you are.....(fill in the blank). Who are you? Are you your gender, your skin color, your sexual orientation? Are you the religion, the ethnicity, the language of your parents or great grandparents? Yes, each one of your identities expects and deserves respect but who are you beyond your identities and when do you become only a fellow human being?

We are never alone. We always have our group, our tribe, our identity wrapped around us. It is a feeling of connection, of membership, of belonging that is deeply part of a person's identity as a self. Problem is, it is also a sense of "us versus them," an emotional lever that governments can pull as they justify and legitimate the killing.

Democracies may encourage the sense of internal equality (I said "may") but as nations they continue to reinforce "our" story in contrast to "theirs." How is it that democracies that supposedly

*(Continued next page)*

## **Leader's Message** (Continued)

respect life can revert so easily to the ultimate tool, war, which kills more civilians than combatants? The answer is sadly simple: governments depend on the people's attachment to identity. Protecting identity makes us stupid. Our actual self interest and the interest of the group or nation get lost as we defend our myths and excuses. We would rather defend the histories, the stories that legitimate our sense of moral superiority, than accept that life is a dialogue and that the other side also has needs, has grievances, has stories just like ours.

It doesn't matter who is right. The "right" just becomes another tool in the argument. Presently the "enemy" may use terror as a tool but we always seem able to kill more of them than they of us. They do wrong, they do evil, but we also sometimes do wrong and do evil. They are not evil. Primarily, they are just different, they see the situation differently, and until we accept that their interest is as legitimate as ours, there will be no peace, only war. <



### ***President's Message***

by Howard Peer

For vacation this year I was off once again into the hinterlands of Canada. This year that was actually a pretty apt description of some of the places I visited. Pretty obscure by most objective measures, including a French territory right here in North America! I had many memorable experiences, some of them verging on adventurous. I'm aching to tell anyone I can about my summer in painstaking detail, with pictures. So be forewarned: I have photos and I'm dangerous. This was not a life-changing experience, perhaps only because my outlook had changed

before I left and I saw only things that confirmed my world view. And my world view has not been pretty.

I sailed my boat from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Newfoundland, then to St. Pierre, then back to Newfoundland and finally back to Sydney. The towns and locations I visited were Grand Bank, St. Pierre (France), Grand Bank, Hare Bay, François, Grey River, and Burgeo. St. Pierre, with only 7,000 people was by far the largest town I visited. It is a bona fide French territory with its own elected officials in the French parliament. And it is French (I was there for Bastille Day): their electricity is 220V 50Hz, they drive Peugeots and Renaults, and all business is conducted in Euros. Grey River, with 120 people was the smallest populated spot. Hare Bay is unpopulated except for a few cabins where the people from Grey River and François (pop 180) go to "get away from it all." I happened to arrive in Grey River on the eve of their annual celebration, Grey River Days. Apparently each little town along the South coast has an annual celebration. In Nova Scotia the celebrations are all coordinated to happen on a single day, and it is a province-wide holiday. But here it is spread out and people come from adjoining towns, by boat. It is an excuse to get out, drink beer, socialize, drink beer, party, drink beer, gossip, and drink beer. I drank beer. But I digress.

These are historic towns. They, with Boston and Gloucester, were the heart of the Grand Bank fishery and the Grand Bank was the heart of the cod industry and cod was BIG BUSINESS. The French and English skirmished (and more) repeatedly over these areas. St. Pierre, a small island 11 miles from Canada and 2,500 miles from Paris, is French because the French valued it highly as a staging area for lucrative fishing. But the cod are gone, despite a decade-long moratorium on fishing. A few locals have switched to arctic shrimp, clams, scallops, or crabs. But the Asians are flooding the markets and fishing the Grand Bank is largely

uneconomical. Still, where they can, they are fishing. The fellows in Newfoundland appear to fish so that they can qualify for unemployment for the balance of the year. Everywhere I went, even in Nova Scotia, the story was the same. All the working-age fellows are taking employment in the tar sands in Alberta. They are making good money but they hate the work. They are gone months at a time living in remote camps, working 60, 70 or 80 hours a week. The sense is that the investment money is rolling in because Uncle Sam desperately needs an alternative source of oil.

I was reminded of the Society frequently and for disparate reasons. In Sydney there was great camaraderie between like-minded folks and everyone was friendly and quick to lend a hand. With the economic story I was reminded how important our mission is and how far we have to go to gain a sustainable future. In Grey River I was reminded of our Socials and how we at the ESP so are much like a small, small town within a much larger wilderness. <



### **OPENING SUNDAY LUNCHEON SUMMER HARVEST**

Celebrate Summer's Harvest at our Opening Day Luncheon at 12:00 noon following the 11:00 am platform on Sunday, September 10. At the luncheon, sponsored by the Community Committee, members and friends of the Ethical Society of Philadelphia will reconnect with each other after the long summer to share news and summer's bounty lovingly prepared by our own hands. Would you like to bring a dish to share? Contact Temma Fishman at [temmafish@aol.com](mailto:temmafish@aol.com) or 215-735-3456. Newcomers are welcome.

Coming soon: a Halloween Party  
Friday, Oct. 27, 7:00 pm



## Members Wear Hats For Peace

On June 8th, Grandmothers for Peace organized to get signatures from passersby in Rittenhouse Square to petition Philadelphia City Council urging it to adopt a resolution to bring the troops home from Iraq now. Among many soliciting signatures and distributing literature on the war were members and friend of the Ethical Society of Philadelphia **Dr. Robert Kay, Terry Martin-Murley, Pat Leopold, Temma Fishman, and Carole Erb**. Volunteers were requested to wear straw hats to call attention to this protest against the war and concern for the troops.



Left to right: **Dr. Robert Kay, Terry Martin-Murley, Pat Leopold, Temma Fishman, and Carole Erb**



### My Ethical Culture

Each Sunday there is time (3 to 5 minutes) during the Platform for "My Ethical Culture," an opportunity 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 quotation. If you are interested in presenting your version of "My Ethical Culture," speak to Richard and he will find a date for you.

### Ethics For Children

Our children's program will start 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.



## School For Ethics

### INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL HUMANISM

The Ethical Society of Philadelphia is part of a 130-year-old humanist religious tradition. This class is a chance to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers, and members are invited to examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Does it make sense and can it make your life better? We will examine the philosophy, spirituality, and social theory of Ethical Humanism. Using the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture as a tool, we will look at the core principles of the intrinsic worth of every human being and ethics as a way of life.

Parking available with Society flyer.

**Wednesday, September 27,  
7:30 pm**

### 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.

Third **Thursday** of the month,  
**September 21, 7:30 pm**

**Ethics For Children** classes  
will begin each Sunday Morning  
at 10:45A.M.

# SEPTEMBER 2006

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
					1	2
3	4	5	6 Meeting 6:30 PM Community Committee  Class - 7:30PM Weston Room Intro to Ethical Humanism	7	8	9
10 11AM Platform:  Richard Kiniry <i>Part of the Solution</i>  12 Noon Opening Day Luncheon	11	12	13 Meetings Weston Room 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee  7:45 PM Education Committee	14	15	16
17 10:40AM Usher Training  11AM Platform: Raynaud L. Jones <i>Society's Role in the Reintegration of Ex- Offenders</i>	18	19	20 Meeting Weston Room 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	21 Class - 7:30PM Weston Room History of Ethics	22	23
24 11AM Platform:  Fall Festival	25	26	27 Class - 7:30PM Weston Room Intro to Ethical Humanism	28	29	30  BIRTHDAYS:

## Usher Training

Ushering on Sunday mornings is actually rather easy and it offers a chance to chat about politics or your health or just get to know each other as you prepare the Auditorium. We would like all members to be familiar with the ushers' duties and on September 17<sup>th</sup> before the Platform, we will have a training session. If you are interested in helping, arrive at 10:40 a.m.

## ***The Ethical Society Year***

by Bob Moore

It takes years of participation to discover that the Ethical Society year has a certain regularity to it, a shape. The shape is determined, I suggest, by three factors: (1) the school year, (2) the society-at-large's calendar of seasonal festivals and holidays, and (3) our unique Service Auction fund-raising cycle.

First, the School Year Cycle. The Ethical Society Year resembles the traditional scholastic year, with nine months of purposeful and challenging activity followed by a three-month summertime respite. Like school kids, we race out the door in June to our separate holidays. And also like school kids, we eagerly anticipate our return to familiar faces and activities in September. Of course, the Society's summer vacation is not really empty. Almost every Sunday, there's a book discussion or a spiritual colloquy, open to the public and organized by a member. And there's usually a party or two and a retreat at Camp Linden to maintain connections. But with all this, the summer is definitely slower. From June to August, there are no formal Sunday platforms, and the usual pace of committee meetings and e-mail traffic comes close to a standstill.



**CAMP LINDEN PICNIC: (Left to Right) Jean Bradley, Irene Putzer, Mary Lou Da Silva, Bertha Waters, Ken Greiff, Fritz Williams, Jeannette Kohler, Saul Machles, Bob Moore and Fritz Williams X 3 on Various Musical Instruments.**

Second, we have the Society's Holiday Cycle. The Ethical Society participates in the traditional social and seasonal festivals of our culture. There's a Harvest Celebration in September, Halloween in October, Thanksgiving in November, Winter Solstice, New Year, Valentine's Day, and a Spring festival — all events people have been celebrating for millennia. Sometimes amid all the media noise and commercialization and hype, it feels like we are keeping Western Civilization alive.

A third pattern is the Society Service Auction Cycle. It is more subtle than the other two patterns. It involves the annual Service Auction. It begins at our February Valentine's Day Party, at a table covered with sign-up sheets. On those sheets, members offer to host events, for a fee, payable to the Society: for instance, a dinner, an expedition, a party, a walk, a game night — the list goes on, as widely varied as the members' interests. Members and friends of the Society sign up. As it happens, many but not all of these events take place over the summer. Sign up for most of the events, and you'll have a full social calendar. (Besides room rental and dues, the Service Auction is the Society's main fund-raising activity.)

So that's the Ethical Society Year. A summer-off School Year Cycle; overlaid on the traditional Western Civilization holiday calendar; and augmented by a calendar of highly individual private Service Auction events. And you know what? It works!



### **United Against the Death Penalty**

The Society has a relationship with the Pennsylvanian Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty and there are two events coming up that members might be interested in attending. On Saturday, September 23 an event entitled *UNITED BY LOVE, DIVIDED BY BARS* will be held from 9am to 2pm at the First Methodist Church of Germantown. There will be speakers and workshops on the theme of the impact of Pennsylvania's criminal justice and capital punishment system on you, your family, and your community.

Amnesty International has declared the weekend of October 21-22, Weekend of Faith Against the Death Penalty. We hope to have a speaker on the issue that Sunday and there will be a number of other events over that week. We will keep you informed.

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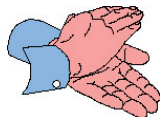
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Richard Kiniry, Leader

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## **SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS**

**Ushers** - Arnold Fishman, Head Usher

★

**Flower Dedications** - Ken Greiff, Chair

September 10 - Bob Moore: "Glad to be back!"

September 17 - Harry Thorn: "Welcome grand-neice, Ruby."

September 24 - Ken Greiff for Abbey.

**Greeters** - Saul Machles, Head Greeter

September 10	Saul Machles
September 17	Jean Bradley
September 24	Saul Machles

**Coffee Hour Hosts** - Harry Thorn, Chair

September 10	Harry Thorn
September 17	Ken Greiff
September 24	Mary Lou Da Silva

**Coffee Hour Lunch**

September 10	Community Committee - Summer Harvest
September 17	Ken Greiff and Janice Moore
September 24	Jean Bradley

### **★ Usher Training**

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