



Ethical Views

September 2007 Vol. 122, No. 1 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



Sunday Platforms

September 9, 2007

Not Enough Love I

Speaker: Richard Kiniry, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

As I remind anyone who will listen, Ethical Humanism is a distinct religion and not just a liberal alternative to supernatural religion. And yet I start our new season by talking about love, a value that is very much a part of traditional religion. Actually, in these talks I wish to mourn religion's failure to saturate the earth with the spirit of love and ask how we Ethical Humanists can do better.

I will take two Sundays to talk about Ethical Humanism's religious approach as a journey of love. I will address our perspective first as a shared communal experience and then as a personal journey.

September 16, 2007

Not Enough Love II

Speaker: Richard Kiniry, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

September 23, 2007

Autumn Equinox Festival

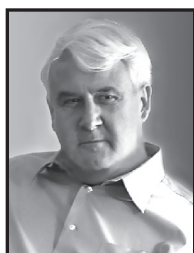
Our theme is Renaissance. September is actually the beginning of the year. We stop lounging around on the beach and get back to serious work — schools open for a new year, organizations introduce their new programs and television offers us new mindless junk. We are asking some members to talk about their approach to the annual new beginning of September. In varied stages of life the yearly cycle means

different things and we will reflect on our experiences as we constantly renew ourselves.

September 30, 2007

Human Rights Violations and Amnesty International

Speaker: Amy Wenzel, Coordinator of Amnesty International Group 112



Leader's Message

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

by Richard L. Kiniry

Although we no longer entirely take the Summer off, each September the Society is born again with the return of our full schedule — the Platforms, classes, Children's Program, and meetings. And as the opening Sunday draws closer, I step back and wonder about what we are doing. Our Sunday mornings can look very similar to other religious services and yet our concerns are definitely earth-bound and practical. Being so different, we are definitionally challenged. More than other religious groups we are defined by what we actually do rather than by our story or theory. Other religions have existed for millennia, and there is little evidence that they have done much to improve life. And as a practical, earth-bound religion, that should be the criteria of our usefulness: have we made life better? We don't make any sense unless we make a difference. So, answering the question about what we are doing is important and my answer this year to that question is: we gather to learn how to be better people. As a group we gather to challenge ourselves and others to be more conscious of the consequences

of our actions and to challenge the comfortable world in which we live with an ethical understanding of life.

Easier said than done. One of the difficulties in making a difference these days is our information-saturated environment. We are deluged with information from the most serious to the silliest, information about the lives of self-indulgent rich people and about death, disease, destruction, corruption, and ignorance. That flood of disorganized messages comes at us as a virtual reality in which we are each a player, yet not in control. We are merely actors who must play our parts but we are not allowed to fiddle with the underlying hardware. This manipulated fog of information and activity is more all-pervasive than it has been in any culture of the past and it becomes the first challenge to making a better world. We have to first peer through the fog of our consumer driven, media filtered, technological

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Leader's Message (Cont'd. from Page 1)
environment to arrive at a gut-level sense of our better selves and a better world.

I entitled this message "making the best of it" for that very reason. There is no way out of this postmodern reality in which we live. It is at least partially in each of us. As we connect with our better selves and our values, we must use the language of our times and work with what we have. We can not nor should we run away from reality, virtual or not. We may dream of a better world but we are not perfectionists, we are just trying to make the best of what we have.

And since religious groups love to have a bit of mystery about them, let me play that game and say: we are the folks who believe in a mysterious fact — our life together floats on a sea of human choices. Deep in the fog of our all-pervasive culture, people have been making ethical choices (or unethical depending on your point of view) and continue to do so. Those choices for better or worse have created our world. The invisible hand of god or nature did not create this human world, the visible acts of human beings did. Making the best of the situation means getting personal about our own choices. We can not reinvent our world but we can question our part in it; we can be the group that helps people to connect with their better selves and the world of choices that underlie all our lives. The fog of culture obscures reality.



Our Ethical Humanist Community is about seeing, feeling life from the perspective of choice, from the perspective of our personal role in the big picture, from the underlying ethical reality within the fog. ◇

Platform Summaries



On May 20, **Professor Patricia Cooper** of the University of Kentucky spoke on the topic "Women, Social Justice, and Spirituality: Opening New Doors for Young Feminists." She contrasted organized, doctrinaire religion to spirituality, which she said is personal and does not conform to doctrine.

Two years ago, Professor Cooper began offering a course on women and spirituality. She has invited women from diverse spiritual backgrounds (she mentioned a Hopi woman in particular) to speak on the divine feminine. The course has become very popular with both female and male students, and she has been surprised by the positive reaction of the many women from conservative Christian backgrounds at the University of Kentucky.

The question was raised of whether spirituality should be gender specific. Her answer, as I understand it, has at least two parts: (1) for spirituality to be meaningful to a person, the person must see it as an aspect of herself. And (2) it should include both the enterprising and belonging values of all persons, regardless of gender.

—**Nick Sanders**




On May 27, Memorial Day weekend, Leader **Richard Kiniry** spoke on the topic "End War, Not Just This War." Richard began by puzzling over the attitude that wars are inevitable, an ingrained aspect of human nature and an imbedded institution of society.

Richard acknowledged that war may sometimes be necessary, but it is never good. It should be the last resort, because it kills people, many of whom

are not even those fighting. In fact, in World War II — which many cite as an example of a good war — it became clear that the military was targeting civilians. And since World War II, the U.S. has been in a state of permanent militarization, ready to annihilate entire nations.

Richard said that we should not blame those in the military for wars. Most of those in the military are there because they want to serve others and believe that service to others is what war is about. But their belief is used for evil purposes. To get people to face the evil of war, we must cause people to face their fears of one another. We need to get people to accept vulnerability. We must realize that in war, most people lose, including those on the "victorious" side. We no longer have any use for war.

—**Nick Sanders**

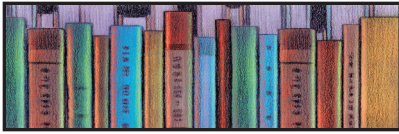


Tribute and Friendship Fund

Traditionally, members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia have marked the passing of other members or members of their families by donations to the Tribute and Friendship Fund. It is a lovely way to honor those who, like us, see our Society as an important part of our lives and of the community we serve. An engraved card is sent to the family of the deceased indicating that a donation was made and a thank you card is sent to the donor. (The amount is not specified in the card to the deceased's family.) Keep the Tribute and Friendship Fund in mind as a way to remember a lost friend as well as to support our Society.



SCHOOL FOR ETHICS



THE HISTORY OF ETHICS

The great philosophical questions are not that complicated. Those issues are actually part of our daily lives and each of us has something to say about them. Besides that, it's fun to play with ideas. In this discussion group we examine the varied pieces of the Ethical Humanist Philosophy by exploring the origins of those ideas in Western History and Philosophy. We are presently finishing Alan Bullock's book, *The Humanist Tradition in the West*, and will be moving on to John Dewey's book, *A Common Faith*, in October. Copies of both books are available on loan from the Society.

*Third Thursday of the month,
September 20, 7:30 PM*

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL HUMANISM

The Society is part of a 130 year old humanist religious tradition, and this class is a chance to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers, and members are invited to examine the basic approach of Ethical Humanism. 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.

Wednesday, September 26, 7:30 P.M.

ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

Our children's program continues to grow. We have a staff of three with **Josh Bickford** (*below left*) as lead teacher. We strive to challenge the child's understanding of right and wrong. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our *Ethics for Children* brochure. Call the office with your contact information, 215-735-3456.



News from the Caring Committee



Lew Wilkinson had out-patient surgery on August 14 to remove a melanoma from his shoulder. He would appreciate cards and phone calls.



Roberta Wood would welcome cards and notes. For her new address, please contact **Temma Fishman**.

Coffee Hour Tasks



We continue the routine of sharing the Coffee Hour responsibilities by dividing the membership into last name groups. Notice some changes to the order. Preparing the coffee, providing the light luncheon and cleaning up will be handled by:

- 1st Sunday of the month: A - E
- 2nd Sunday " " " : F - L
- 3rd Sunday " " " : M - P
- 4th Sunday " " " : Q - Z
- 5th Sunday of the month: Volunteers

NOTE: On Opening Sunday, September 9, the Community Committee will prepare the Luncheon but asks that the 1st and 2nd Sunday groups handle the clean up (A through L).



In Memoriam: **Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine**

by American Ethical
Union Executive
Director, **Katharine
Archibald**

Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, the creator of Humanistic Judaism and the 2003 Humanist of the Year of the American Humanist Association was killed on July 21st in a car crash while vacationing in Morocco. He was 79. Riding with his longtime partner, Richard McManus, both were hit in a taxicab by another driver. Both Rabbi Wine and the taxicab driver were killed instantly. Richard survived and is hospitalized in stable condition.

"Rabbi Wine was a visionary," said Mel Lipman, President of the American Humanist Association. "He inspired generations with the idea that people can do good without belief in a god. He saw Judaism as a shared culture rather than a religion, helping to build several nontheistic communities that directly guided and shaped thousands of lives."

He was the founder of The Center for New Thinking in Birmingham, Michigan, the Society for Humanistic Judaism, the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism and the Humanist Institute.

Among his many claims to fame, he coined the word "ignostic," denoting a person who holds that the god concept is meaningless as opposed to being coherent enough to allow God's existence to be judged true, false or unknown.

Wine taught that human dignity, courage and love are our most important values, not religious obedience. In the words of Greg Epstein, the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, "Let us follow Sherwin's example and dedicate ourselves to building a positive alternative to traditional religion. Let us build communities, organizations and families that do good for ourselves and others, based on the Humanist ethic of reason, compassion and creativity."

A Sampling of Summer Fundraising Events



And a Good Time Was Had By All!

Top to bottom: Picnic at Camp Linden; Walk by the Canal, Lunch, Studio and Phoenixville Visits - Janice and Bob Moore; Reading of *Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing* - Ken Greiff; Garden Party and Chocolate Orgy - Richard Kiniry/Andi and Ray Smith; Baby and Outdoor Barbecue - Amber Anderson, Shawn O'Brien (and Teagan).

Photos by Janice R. Moore

AEU Conference - June 14-17

This year's AEU Conference took place at the Long Island University's lovely C.W. Post Campus and was graciously hosted by the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island (EHSI). EHSOP was well represented by members below. (Not pictured is Howard Peer who slipped in for part of the activities.)




More on the conference will be in our October *Ethical Views* issue.

Top to bottom: Temma & Arnold Fishman; Jim Cummings and Nick Sanders; Richard Kiniry; Bob & Janice Moore.



First three photos - Janice R. Moore
Last photo - Temma Fishman

SEPTEMBER 2007

<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 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Community Committee/ Membership Growth	6	7	8
9 <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> Ethics for Children <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Not Enough Love I Richard L. Kiniry	10	11	12 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee 7:45 p.m. Education Committee	13	14  Tom Carroll	15
16 <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> Ethics for Children <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Not Enough Love II Richard L. Kiniry	17	18	19 Meetings <i>Weston Room - 6:30 p.m.</i> Finance Committee <i>Weston Room - 7:30 p.m.</i> Exec. Committee/ Board of Trustees Meeting	20 Class The History of Ethics 7:30 p.m.	21	22
23 <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> Ethics for Children <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> Autumn Equinox Festival	24	25	26 Class - 7:30 p.m. - Weston Room Intro to Ethical Humanism Meeting 7:30 p.m. Camp Linden Committee	27	28	29
30 <i>10:45 a.m. - Weston Room</i> Ethics for Children <i>11:00 a.m. Platform:</i> HumanRights Violations & Amnesty Int'l. Amy Wenzel	 Mary Wasserman (Sept. 30)				 Birthdays	

Community Committee Schedule of Events – 2007-2008

Sunday	September 9, 12:00 PM	Opening Day Luncheon – Theme: Building for the Future (blocks, chairs)
Friday	October 5, 7:00 PM	Poets Party
Sunday	November 18, 12:00 PM	Humanist Thanksgiving Festival & Service Auction
Saturday	December 29, 7:00 PM	Before New Years Eve Party
Friday	February 15, 7:00 PM	Service Auction (items collected) & Darwin's Birthday Party
Saturday	April 26, 6:00 PM	Humanist Seder

Meetings of the Community Committee on first Wednesdays at 6:30 P.M.

September 5 November 7 March 5 May 7

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

Editor, Ellen Rose
Layout and Photo Editor,
Janice Moore
Distribution, Jean Bradley
Web Master, Bob Moore

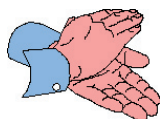
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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

Sept 9 - Howard Peer: A hearty welcome
back for the new season!

Sept 16 - Jean Bradley and Saul
Machles: For all the people who
contributed "\$1.00 or more" to Camp
Linden this year!

Sept 23 - Lew Wilkinson: In honor of his
wife, Jane Wilkinson.

Sept 30 - Ken Grieff: In honor of
Darwin, Galileo and all people who look
at how things are and buck the dogma to
say what they see.

Ushers

Sept 9 Temma and Arnold Fishman
Sept 16 Doris Leicher and Howard Peer
Sept 23 Janice and Bob Moore
Sept 30 Nick Sanders and Jim Cummings

Greeters - Saul Machles, Head Greeter

For the month of September, Saul
Machles and friends

Coffee Hour Lunch

Sept 9 - Community Committee*
Sept 16- Group M-P
Sept 23 - Group Q-Z
Sept 30 - Volunteers

* First and Second Sunday groups to
handle the clean up (A through L)

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