



Ethical Views

December 2004 Vol. 119, No. 4 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

December Platforms

Sunday, December 5

Platform: Richard Kiniry, Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, will speak on the topic, *“Abortion is Life.”* Abortion is both a political issue and a benchmark of different philosophic views. The high levels of emotional commitment to positions for or against abortion indicate how basic this issue is to people’s understanding of life.

Sunday, December 12

Steven W. Ginsburg, ME, an addiction/mental health psychotherapist, will speak on the topic, *“Professional Treatment and Resources for Helping Addicts.”* Based on his successful treatment of persons with addictions in outpatient psychotherapy, he will discuss how twelve-step programs are a crucial component of helping addicts along with psychiatric medication (as needed) and talk therapy.

Sunday, December 19

Platform: Our Winter Solstice program of candlelight, poetry, music and inspirational readings, orchestrated by leader Richard Kiniry and presented by members and friends of the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Our community comes together to offer warmth and comfort to each other as we face the cold months ahead and to celebrate the beauty of the season. All are welcome to join us.

Sunday, December 26

Platform: On what the British call “Boxing Day,” we will have a colloquy rather than a platform.

Colloquies are contemplative, meditative experiences accompanied by music during which we thoughtfully consider a specific topic, introduced by a facilitator, concerning how we relate to ourselves and to each other, and reflect on its meaning by pondering a related question, readings, and parable. You may speak if the spirit moves you, or remain quiet. These gatherings provide enlightening and tranquil respites from the distractions of the busy world outside.



Leader’s Message *Catholic Ethical Humanism?* by Richard Kiniry

The Catholic Church is really getting on my nerves, especially after its institutional performance during the election. I cannot deny that it does worthy and even noble things in many communities but in the final analysis, its world view and its positions on social issues are too often a negative presence in our communal life. In fact, its presence is counterproductive in making a better, more humane world.

There was promise at one time: reform and increased rationality appeared in the 60s. The spirit of Jesus took over, and even if Jesus is a mythical character, the Jesus message of caring, loving, and giving took dominance over the transcendent metaphysic, miracles, and heaven and hell. It didn’t last long. The openness was denied and crushed by the reactionary Vatican and the Pope of controlling love.

(Continued on page 2)

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



Harry Thorn,
as he read by holiday
candlelight last year

Workshop on Choosing Books for Children

Sunday, December 5, 1:30-3:00 p.m. (snow date: December 19)

What’s new in the children’s book world? Which of the classics would still be fun and interesting? Selecting books that can compete with television, picking the right books for the children you care about takes some careful thought. Let others know, too, and join parents, grandparents and friends for these timely presentations. You’ll come away with new ideas, resources, and greater clarity as we approach the holiday gift-giving season

Sara Nerken of *Children’s Book World* in Haverford will present many of the best and newest choices in children’s literature. She has been on *Radio Times* and *CN8* and leads yearly, in-store conferences for teachers and librarians. There will be an opportunity to buy following the talk.

Leader's Message (Continued)

I am a product of those open times. Even with all that weird Catholic stuff – virgin birth, death and resurrection, and the pagan sacrificial Mass – I found a life stance within Catholicism. I like to say they educated me so well that God and Catholic theology became untenable. What remained was a creative understanding of life, the sense that the essential fact of Christianity was the Jesus approach to life - respect for everyone no matter how bad, the passion for justice, and love as a creative force. There was the attitude that life became meaningful only as part of a community of people wanting to make life better for all.

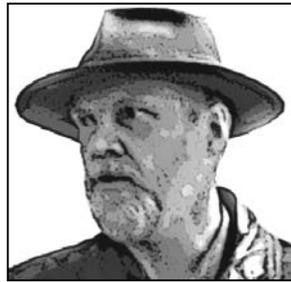
When it became clear that the institution was going to insist that the theology and the weird practices were the essential part of Catholicism and not the Jesus approach, I moved on. But even in my outsider position, there remains a sadness that the promise was unmet – that Jesus couldn't break through the ancient paganism.

When I discovered Ethical Humanism, it was not a great jump from the life stance I learned as a Catholic. What Humanism provided was intellectual order on which to hang my feelings. Unlike the theology of Catholicism, Humanism offered a philosophy that actually worked with the Jesus message. For me Humanism means the acceptance that we live in a subjective, relational experience with every other human being. Together we create this human world out of our feelings and thoughts as we struggle through our shared evolutionary journey. The central fact is there are not absolutes but relationships. Life becomes what we individually and together make it.

Since I am no longer a Catholic, you might figure it is none of my business how authoritarian and irrational the Church becomes, but I care. Many of the best, most engaged Catholics are, as I once was, believers in the Jesus message but trapped in the institutional

myth. It is embarrassing to hear them twist the English language and their own mental faculties to keep their remarks within the accepted dogma.

I don't believe you can be a Catholic and an Ethical Humanist at the same time but I do think you can be a disciple of Jesus and an Ethical Humanist. The Catholic world view precludes the Ethical Humanist acceptance of the ethical, relation experience as primary, but Ethical Humanism could certainly benefit from the inclusion of disaffected Catholics looking for a more sensible world view. If you know of any, invite them in. <>



President's Message

by Howard Peer

For those of you who missed it, Election Night at Jill's was a very nice event. It was good to be around friends and like-minded free thinkers on that evening. The quick-witted repartee was defiantly coming from those in the room and not emanating from the box. At least not until Joe Monte convinced us to switch over to the Daily Show. The sarcastic humor fits my general psychic make up. And Jon Stewart has more guts to get to the point and highlight the absurdities of a situation than any of the so-called normal network anchors. It is sort of like MAD Magazine for those too lazy to read and too vain to give up on social commentary. You know the kind. People like me!

With the election over I am reminded of the old adage that "idle hands do the Devil's work." And the Devil has no better handiwork than depression. God knows we have a lot to be depressed about. My personal

recommendation is to take three aspirins, have a good sob followed by a good night's sleep, then find something constructive to do in the morning. There is nothing as restorative as doing something productive. And I have some suggestions:

1. You can assist in feeding the homeless. Once a month at Trinity.
2. You can volunteer for Camp Linden activities. There are tons of things to do from upkeep of the physical plant to summer planning to fundraising.
3. Speaking of fund raising, the Society will be starting our annual Pledge Drive in a couple of months. We could really use some volunteers to come forward to assist or even lead the effort.
4. Would social action brace your spirit? Well, the Ethical Action Committee may be for you.
5. How about educating the populace? Now there is a golden opportunity waiting to be mined. You could get deep into the Education Committee.
6. Are you feeling lonely and outnumbered? Are you heartened by an enthusiastic crowd of like-minded free thinkers? Consider becoming a member of the Membership Committee.
7. But you know we all really do enjoy a good party. And I'm not talking about political parties. I for one have had enough of them for a while. I mean there are times when you just need to relax and chat and bitch and kibitz. And eat. And maybe take a tippie or two, for medical purposes. The Community Committee is sort of like the PES fraternity boys and sorority girls: always there when you need them and in search of enthusiastic recruits.
8. And, finally, should you feel repentant and in need of a dose of reality on the morning after the night before, we do have one vacancy on the highly respected and prestigious Finance Committee available for the right sort of person to fill.

Keep the faith. See you on Sunday.<>

Sunday Morning Volunteers

Ushers - Saul Machles, Chair

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles and Joe Monte

Flower Dedications - Ken Greiff, Chair

December 5. From Doris Leicher in honor of Howard's birthday (belatedly).

December 12. From John Hall in honor of the dream of a functioning world community.

December 19. From Janice Moore in honor of Bob's 60th birthday (23rd) & her mother, Emily Moore's 91st birthday (27th).

Greeters - Saul Machles, Chair

December 5 Ken Grieff

December 12 Irene Putzer

December 19 Saul Machles

Coffee Hour Hosts - Harry Thorn, Chair

December 5 Harry Thorn

December 12 Maria Markovich

December 19 Bob Moore

Coffee Hour Lunch

December 5 Howard Peer
& Doris Leicher

December 12 Jean Bradley

December 19 Ken Greiff
& Janice Moore

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.

AEU Report

THE American Ethical Union received a gift from the Kaufman Trust for children's ethical education. The board determined that we would grow the fund, and then offer it to the Societies to support worthy projects. A task force to review appropriate proposals is being formed, and information as to submissions will follow. On a somber note, the Board gave the Veterans Administration permission to bury veterans under the AEU logo.

Member Profile Carol Love

By Nancy Freilich



Dr. Carol Love, chair of the Community Committee and the Camp Linden Committee, was born in Glasgow, Scotland on January 10, 1946. Her father was a physician but changed course and came to America to do cancer and virus research; her mother was a political activist and economist. She has two brothers—Angus, born in 1949, and Duncan, born in 1959. The family moved to the Philadelphia suburbs in 1960, after having lived in Scotland, England, Pearl River, NY, and Bethesda, MD.

Carol attended school at Lower Merion High School in Ardmore and graduated in 1969 from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in English. In 1978, she graduated from Jefferson Medical College and completed her residency in family medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in 1981. Carol has been a family physician in Germantown for over 23 years.

Although Carol was raised an atheist, she experimented with various religions until 1968 when she joined the Philadelphia Ethical Society. As a child Carol "invented" the word "humanist" to describe her beliefs. She served on the Board of Trustees of the Society for 20 years (two years as secretary, treasurer for 15 years). She has also been the Society representative on the Hadley Committee for 25 years.

Carol holds offices in the Philadelphia Academy of Family Physicians and the Philadelphia County Medical Society. Her interests include literature, art, karate, reggae and gardening. She lives in the family home in Penn Valley with her partner, Marvin Friedman. <>

Platform Summaries

Inexplicably omitted from previous newsletters (Editor's mistake):

September 12. Richard Kiniry launched the 2004-2005 platform cycle with a talk entitled "Why Bother Making Your Life Mean Something," which proposed the honorable practice of being thoughtful. Thoughtfulness asserts the primacy of meaning. Making meaning, in Richard's view, is the issue. Of course, any consideration of meaning includes confronting the pain and horror resident in the world. Richard asserted the power of reason lies in the possibility to make the world better. Richard asked whether there is anything worth being thoughtful about. Ethical Humanists believe thinking is worth the trouble because of a conviction that the world is produced by individual minds making a whole world view. Meaning, Richard asserted, is in trouble. In the past the "elite" were charged with interpreting meaning, now, too often, Madison Avenue does. As a result, meaning has become lost, cheapened, and deteriorated. Ethical Humanism is based in the Enlightenment ideal of a belief in reason and the worth and dignity of every human being. Today, our perception of what is meaningful has been corrupted by artificial rules that don't have much to do with individual wellbeing. Ironically, at the same time as meaning has been undermined by consumerism, the world has gotten smaller. The worth and dignity of all individuals in the world has become our responsibility. It is unconscionable to be blind to world's problems as everyone is our brother or sister. In summary, Richard posits the indisputable responsibility to change the way we think. If meaning is dependent on individuals, we share the burden of making ethical choices in a messy world of our own devising. We have the choice to make our life a model of ethical responses to life.

— Terry Martin-Murley

(Continued on page 4)

Platform Summaries (Continued)

October 31: Dr. Marc Sageman, forensic psychiatrist and former CIA case officer, blasted stereotypes out of the water with his talk, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Author of a book by the same name and in-depth investigator into the history and composition of Al Qaeda, he painted a picture in stark contrast to the one presented by the media and our government. Overwhelmingly, Al Qaeda members come from upper middle class intact families, are college-educated professionals — physicians, engineers, and, like bin Ladin, architects. Seventy-two percent are married with children. Only 13% attended madrasas. There were no psychopaths or sociopaths in the group he studied, which numbered in the thousands. They are not losers, but society's best and brightest. Most are expatriate Egyptians who formed strong social bonds — “a bunch of guys,” as Dr. Sageman put it. Most had been sent abroad to study, where out of homesickness and the need for friendship, they formed a collective identity with others like themselves whom they met at mosques. The in-group love and out-group hate that arose caused them to distance themselves from society and to form strong cliques, some of which adopted the violent script of terrorism. None had been recruited; all were volunteers. Al Qaeda today is composed of about two thousand loosely connected members and is operationally dead. It would be almost impossible for it to coordinate an attack similar to 9/11, according to Dr. Sageman. Now, however, there is the internet with about 1,000 jihadi web sites, so a hierarchy isn't needed to initiate action. Dr. Sageman feels that George W. Bush is bin Laden's best recruiter. A very real threat to us, he thinks, are the rising number of Muslims in Western Europe who live in shantytowns and have not been integrated into society. What do we need to do? We need to shift our focus away from military action and move toward preventing young Muslims from joining jihadi groups. We must understand that we're engaged in a war of ideas. We must talk truth — we've lost credibility. Only three or four percent of people in the Middle East

support U.S. policy. We must regain the high ground with justice and fairness — the essence of the American dream. We must take responsibility for promoting a government that engages in the ethical action of telling the truth.

— Temma Fishman

November 7: Leader Richard Kiniry acknowledged the need to wallow in self-pity following the election in his talk, “Now What?” He admitted that the outcome of the 2004 election is evidence of something radically wrong — that we are living in a “Never, Never Land,” where a childish, limited, unremarkable man who used his riches to avoid combat won the presidency over a truthful, intelligent war hero with a distinguished legal career. And the issues were character and moral values. “It's nuts!” asserted Richard. Meanness, intolerance and fanaticism won. The strict parent view of the world trounced the nurturing, caring parent perspective. “We,” who belong to the second group, disagree with “them” on the reality of what America is. What are we to do now? Richard offered hope and urged taking action. Keep fighting the negative parts of the President's agenda. “Kick the opposition in the rear end and make it stand up for our founding fathers' values.” We have to start caring for those red state people by helping them out of their fear and ignorance. Spread the word that life is something great and that we create meaning. Our territory is morality and the meaning of life and we should be proud of what we stand for — a free, open acceptance of each other and comfort in the natural world and science, a caring community with governmental support of old age, medical, environmental, and educational well-being. Offer our beliefs to others as a better way of living. Pick up the Black man's, atheist's, Humanist's, gay and lesbian's burden, and care enough to free people. Our message is that we are all different from each other, but different people can be trusted. Richard closed with these words from Sloan Wilson's *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, “It is not an insane world — at least our part of it doesn't have to be.”

— Temma Fishman

November 14. Dr. Jean E. Campbell Moore presented an autobiographical narrative of a fifty-year set of experiences regarding African-American families' struggles for dream homes in the suburbs. She recalled her family's experiences during that time as they bought their own Delaware County dream home forty-five years ago. Both racial prejudice in business practices and personal fears stood in the way of dreams and set hurdles in the daily lives of people who asserted their right to live where they chose. A further basis of her talk was her continuing concerns for fair housing, especially in the Philadelphia environs. One focus of her discussion was on the role of governmental actions, another was on civil rights movements, a third stressed local groups such as the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia, a fourth recounted roles of such business activists as Suburban Fair Housing, Inc., and, in personal ways, she recalled roles of significant individuals. Both her platform address and the ensuing discussion gave attention to current expansions of the fair housing mission, a mission that still needs our attention, vigilance, and action in Philadelphia as well as in the suburbs.

— Lyle Murley

December Events

Sunday, December 5, 1:30p.m.

Introduction to Humanism

Friday, December 17, 7:00 p.m.

The Holiday Party

Mark your calendars for our exciting holiday party. By popular request we are bringing back the audience participation popular in Britain referred to as “turns”. Those who wish to participate can volunteer to get up and do a “turn.” It can be a joke, song, poem, story, or even an acrobatic accomplishment! No need to sign up in advance - just step up when the time comes! We do appreciate your signing up to attend and/or to bring a dish. The price of admission is \$5 if you bring a dish, \$10 if you don't. We will also have our mitten tree that you can decorate with mittens, gloves, scarves, or hats for donation to the needy. We have not yet found an “Impressario” for this event so for the time being, Carol Love, Chair of the Community Committee, will be working on the plans.

D E C E M B E R

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 <u>Meeting</u> 7:30 PM Camp Linden Board of Trustees at the Society	2	3	4
5 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Abortion is Life" 1:30PM Weston Rm.-Intro to Ethical Humanism 1:30-3:00PM Workshop on Choosing Books for Children	6	7	8  <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee 	9	10	11
12 11 AM <u>Platform</u> "Professional Treatment and Resources for Helping Addicts."	13	14  Richard Kiniry	15 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Executive Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	16 7:30PM Weston Rm. <u>Class</u> History of Ethics  Roberta Wood	17 Holiday Party 7:00 PM	18
19 11 AM Winter Solstice Celebration	20	21  Bertha Waters	22 7:30PM Weston Rm. <u>Class</u> The Qur'an and Islam	23  Bob Moore	24	25
26 11 AM Colloquy	27	28	29	30	31	 Birthdays

(FUN-LOVING) VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SOCIALS!!

The Community Committee needs volunteers for our socials for the rest of this season - Here are your choices!!

You will be provided with a task list and helpful hints and ideas from the committee:

February 18 - LOVE PARTY and Service Auction - A valentine theme

March 20 - Pledge Luncheon - a Sunday event with Board and Treasurer's presentations

April 29 - Awards and Confessions - Honoring and listening to our members

May 15 - Founders Sunday and Luncheon

IN MEMORIAM

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

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Philadelphia Ethical Society

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Membership Growth Committee

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Eli Shneyer died in late October of this year. He was a sweet and loving man and will be greatly missed.

Eli, born on October 1, 1916, was active on the Ethical Action Committee for many years, and was especially interested in ending nuclear proliferation and protecting the environment.

He has many friends who knew him as a tireless activist in organizations throughout Philadelphia. He is survived by his wife Bella and his daughter Sharon.

Emily Thorn died November 5 in Wilmington, Delaware, at age 89.

After her three sons were born, she worked as staff director for the Delaware Preschool. She then worked as Religious Education Director for the Unitarian Church in Wilmington (1955 to 1975).

She served as director for religious education for the American Ethical Union from 1976 to about 1984. During these years, she traveled to the AEU in New York and to Ethical Societies around the country to assist in developing their Sunday school programs.

A memorial service was held at the Unitarian Church in Wilmington on November 20th.

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