



Ethical Views

Summer 2009 Vol. 123, No. 10 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Summer Sundays 2009

Although our regular Platforms will be in abeyance until after Labor Day, we will have Sunday morning events almost every Sunday during the summer. **All will start at 10 a.m.** and will be held in our air-conditioned meeting space with coffee following. Members are taking responsibility for the Colloquies (a meditative, reflective event on a different theme each time) and for leading the Book Discussions. They will be looking for helpers, so check your schedule and be ready to volunteer when asked.

| June | July | August |
|--|---|---|
| June 7 Picnic at Camp Linden | July 5 Colloquy | August 2 Colloquy |
| June 14 Discussion of Transgender Concerns, with Richard Juang, Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality | July 12 Book Discussion led by Richard Kiniry Peter Singer, <i>The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty</i> | August 9 Book Discussion led by Jack Schwar Avraham Burg, <i>The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise from the Ashes</i> |
| June 21 Book Discussion led by Ellen Rose Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge." | July 19 Colloquy | August 16 Colloquy |
| June 28 Colloquy | July 26 Book Discussion led by Harry Thorn Dasher Keltner, <i>Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life</i> | August 23 Book Discussion led by Ken Greiff Herman Melville, <i>Moby Dick</i> |
| | | August 30 Colloquy |

Summer Sundays Events



Camp Linden Flower Beds (and Volunteers)

The **57th Annual Camp Linden Picnic** will take place on **Sunday, June 7**, starting at Noon. Lots of Friends. Lots of Food. Lots of Fun. Henry Pashkow will coordinate food sign up. Think of what picnic favorite you'd like to contribute: desserts, salads or side dishes like baked beans and deviled eggs. The Society will provide

beverages, hot dogs, hamburgers and veggie burgers. The cost of the picnic is \$10 if you bring something and \$15 if you don't (but please bring something!) Please tell Henry or the office if you need a ride or can provide rides to others. Rides will meet in front of the Society at 10:30 AM. Directions to the Camp are available on our website <http://www.phillyethics.net/cl-directions.php>

On Sunday, June 21 **Ellen Rose** will lead a discussion of at least one story (two, if time permits) by Flannery O'Connor (1925-64), the "Southern Gothic" writer considered by many to be one of America's greatest writers of short fiction. A devout Roman Catholic, O'Connor probes—with dark humor and acid irony—profoundly moral questions in her limited but brilliant corpus (two novels, thirty-one stories, some speeches and letters). Two of her most frequently anthologized stories—"A Good Man is Hard to Find" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge"—should provoke lively discussion and controversy. Both stories can be downloaded from the internet, and photocopies will be available at the Society.

On Sunday, July 12 **Richard Kiniry** will lead a discussion of Peter Singer's *The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty*. For the first time in history, it is within our reach to eradicate world poverty and the suffering it brings. Singer claims we face a profound choice: If we are not to turn our backs on a fifth of the world's population, we must become part of the solution.

On Sunday, July 26, **Harry Thorn** will lead a discussion of Dacher Keltner's *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. Dacher Keltner is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, director of the Greater Good Science Center and co-editor of *Greater Good* magazine. His research focuses on pro-social emotions, power, and moral reasoning. In this book Keltner investigates an old mystery of human evolution: why have we evolved positive emotions like gratitude, amusement, awe, and compassion that promote ethical action and are the fabric of cooperative societies? *Born to Be Good* is a profound study of how emotion is the key to living the good life and how the path to happiness goes through human emotions that connect people to one another.

In This Issue

- 1 Summer Sundays 2009; Summer Sundays Events
- 2 President's Message; Summer Seconds Sale; Forum on the Current Crisis in Darfur
- 3 Calendar of Various Summer Meetings and Events
- 4 Summer Birthdays

(Continued next page)

Sunday Events (Continued)

On Sunday, August 9, Jack Schwar will lead a discussion of Avraham Burg's *The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise from the Ashes*. How can we move beyond the Shoah? How can we return Judaism to its universal values? These are the questions Burg raises. He tells us never to forget but also not to be forever held hostage by the memory of the Holocaust. He urges readers to move from the faith of pessimism to the faith of optimism.

On Sunday, August 23, Ken Greiff will lead a discussion of the great American classic, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, in which Captain Ahab and his crew confront a creature that was clearly not made with humans in mind – immense, landless, heartless and “sharkish.” The metaphysical argument of the book ruminates about the creator of such a creature, referring to it variously as God, the devil and atheism. Ken will analyze this metaphysical argument and explain how it furthered his personal interest in Ethical Humanism. The sacredness of human connectedness is an anti-poison to the idea of an Inhuman God. <>



**President's
Message**

Is It Real?

by Temma Fishman

In November, my husband Arnold and I attended the NJ Bar Association Convention in Disneyworld in Orlando, FL. We stayed at a “Victorian” hotel, which was actually new, but fashioned in the style of that period. In spite of its fake antiqueness, it was quite charming, appointed with beautiful art work, ceramics and furniture. It had every modern convenience, so that visitors of today could be perfectly comfortable in the presence of the internet, air-conditioning, conference rooms and cable TV.

The hotel was built on a boardwalk that was spanking clean, free of discarded cigarette butts, the usual plastic and paper trash and in perfect repair. Cute restaurants lined the boards, with catchy signs painted in the bright colors of Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Discreetly wafting through the indoor and outdoor areas came songs prompting nostalgia – “Bicycle Built for Two,” “Shine on Harvest Moon” and the like. The boardwalk was beside a man-made lake, with charming white boats powered by muted engines gliding back and forth, carrying visitors to and from the parks to all the resorts on the boardwalk.

I had entered the world of the surreal. I got the feeling conveyed by actor Jim Carrey in the movie, *The Truman Show*. Carrey's character, Truman Burbank, lives

unknowingly on the set of a reality TV show. Unlike poor Truman, whose true condition as an unwitting actor leading a scripted life in a fake town gradually dawns on him, I knew I was in the land of make-believe. Like the town in the movie, everything was brightly colored, ultra- clean, and staffed with relentlessly cheery workers.

To be fair, the Disney Corporation pays particular attention to making the park handicapped accessible. Wheelchairs and strollers are available everywhere, making it possible for the mentally and physically challenged of all ages to take part in the fun. Buses are equipped with devices to get people safely on and off and employees are assigned to help those who need it.

Recycling is encouraged with handy, well-marked cans strategically placed all over the park. Beautiful plantings are everywhere, but hardly a dead or dying branch can be seen among them.

There is some homage paid to nature. Shows featuring real, although somewhat trained animals, do help to promote the understanding of wildlife. There are veterinarians in residence conducting research and caring for the animals in Safari Park. Oh, the anticipation of Safari Park! The promise of an African adventure! We were briskly whisked through it on an adorable little train at a speed guaranteed to prevent anyone from being bogged down with too much learning. All the while, our guide was chattering non-stop in a perky manner so as to insure no one would not ask serious, thoughtful questions about the animals. Seriousness is out!

But, isn't that what we paid for, escapism on a grand scale? And how American it all was! Opportunities to spend money and to pretend that the world is totally safe and endlessly amusing were everywhere. So, like Truman, I became one of the actors in the show. It was either that, or constantly ruminate on how artificial it all was. Consumerism is an art form in Disneyland. Memorabilia and clothes emblazoned with logos of Disney characters were ubiquitous and almost identical in every store over the vast park. It would be un-American to return without souvenirs and “gifts for the kids”. And the kids were everywhere – eating, crying, sporting Mickey ears and fairy princess gowns with tiaras, being wheeled and carried, loving the rides, being scared to death by the rides and blissfully unaware of the true meaning of it all.

So, what was so terrible? Nothing, I guess, so long as you can hang on to the fact that this is a representation of life, rather than the real thing. Perhaps one day, when my granddaughter is old enough, we will take her to Disneyworld. But I won't be able to resist reminding her that this is all make-believe, even as we enjoy what it offers. Fantasy has its place, I think.



The Fishmans at Disneyworld

Disneyworld is the antithesis of simple living, a value we often hear leader Richard Kiniry address. As Ethical Humanists we are encouraged to be in touch with the real world, with

all its beauty and nastiness, and to try to make it better. We struggle together to figure out what's really going on instead of accepting the simplistic analyses and shallow reporting favored by the mainstream media. We dig beneath the superficial to seek the truth. We worry about consumerism, about spending our way out of our problems while we damage the environment and ignore the needy. Reality is for us, with all its joy and pain. It was refreshing to get back to my Ethical Humanist community and leave *The Truman Show* behind. <>

Calendar of Various Summer Meetings and Events

June

- Wednesday, June 3 at 6:30 PM - Finance Committee meeting
- Sunday, June 7, 10:30 AM in front of building - Camp Linden Picnic. \$15 per person, \$10 with a dish to share.
- Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 PM - Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty meeting
- Saturday, June 13 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session
- Saturday, June 13 at 12:00 noon – Camp Linden Volunteer Day
- Sunday, June 14 at 12 PM - Service Auction - reading of the more heinous Shakespearean Act V carnage scenes at the Ethical Society, by Ken Greiff. \$15 per person.
- Wednesday, June 17 at 7:30 PM - Board of Trustees meeting
- Saturday, June 20 at 7 PM - Service Auction vegetarian dinner in the Dubb's garden. \$30 per person
- Wednesday, June 24 at 7:00 PM - Camp Linden meeting
- Wednesday, June 24 at 6:30 Education Committee
- Thursday, June 25 at 7:00 PM - Amnesty International meeting
- Thursday, June 25 from 3 PM to 9 PM - Setup for the Summer Seconds Sale
- Friday, June 26 at 4 PM - Deadline for Contributions for Summer Seconds Sale
- Friday, June 26 from 3 PM to 9 PM - Setup for the Summer Seconds Sale
- Saturday, June 27 10 AM to 5 PM - Society Fund-Raiser - Summer Seconds Sale
- Saturday, June 27 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session

July

- Wednesday, July 1 at 7:30 PM - Community Committee Meeting
- Wednesday, July 8 at 6:30 PM - Education Committee meeting
- Wednesday, July 8 at 7:30 PM - Ethical Action Committee meeting
- Thursday, July 9 at 6:00 PM - Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty meeting
- Saturday, July 11 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session
- Thursday, July 23 at 7:00 PM - Amnesty International meeting
- Saturday, July 25 - Service Auction Richard Kiniry's Garden Party, beginning at 5:30 PM. \$25 per person
- Saturday, July 25 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session

August

- Saturday, August 1 from 7 to 11 PM - Service Auction Canoe Carnival and picnic at the Fishman residence on Medford Lakes. \$20 per person.
- Wednesday, August 5 at 6:30 PM - Finance Committee meeting
- Saturday, August 8 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session
- Thursday, August 13 at 6:00 PM - Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty meeting
- Saturday, August 15 at 7 PM - Service Auction mostly Vegetarian dinner at the Machles - Bradley home. \$25 per person.
- Wednesday, August 19, 7:30 - Board Meeting
- Saturday, August 22 at 11:00 AM – Nonviolent Communications Practice Session
- Thursday, August 27 at 7:00 PM - Amnesty International meeting



Summer Seconds Sale - Plan to Help & Shop

On Saturday, **June 27, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM**, the Ethical Humanist Society Fund Raisers (that's all of us members) will be having a sale of books, buttons, art objects, jewelry and other valuable small and non-electronic things.

We will need more **items to sell**. We are looking for good quality books, not-too-ribald political or other buttons, art work & beautiful things, jewelry, briefcases and hand bags, easy-to-carry chairs and tables and other such stuff. **No** stuffed chairs, sofas, beds, dressers, desks and the like; **No** electrical appliances or electronics (unless operational with good batteries); **No** clothing. Phone the office **(215) 735-3456** if you are uncertain.

Do not bring items in until the week starting after colloquy on Sunday, June 21st. (We do not have room to store and sort things before then.) But **bring them before Friday, June 26, 4:00 PM.**

We will also need **volunteers** for sorting in days before, setting up the sale on Friday, helping during the sale and helping to remove unsold items afterwards. We may need help, too, with selling snacks and drinks. Please phone the office to find out what and when help will be needed.



FORUM ON THE CURRENT CRISIS IN DARFUR SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 3 P.M.

This event has been planned by the Darfur Alert Coalition and Amnesty International Group 112 and is co-sponsored by our Ethical Action Committee. It features an African drum concert and talks about the current crisis in Darfur with the theme "giving support to political prisoners." Food will be provided. Information can be obtained by calling **(215) 474-0791**.



Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

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

**Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia**

Richard Kiniry, Leader

Board of Trustees

Temma Fishman, President
Jeffrey Dubb, M.D., Vice President
Nick Sanders, Treasurer
Jean Bradley, Secretary
Ron Coburn
Arnold Fishman
Ken Greiff
Saul Machles
Henry Pashkow
Irene Putzer

(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org

Summer Birthdays

JUNE

June 03 Temma Fishman
June 03 Ellen Rose
June 07 Janice Moore
June 10 Monica Peer
June 18 Robert R. Allen
June 19 Sylvia Barnkoff Polizzi

JULY

July 03 Dawn Morningstar Cox
July 09 Harry Thorn
July 13 Elit R. Felix II
July 22 Laura Katz Rizzo
July 23 Carole Erb
July 23 David Ralston
July 24 Jim Erb
July 26 Elisabeth Lightbourn

AUGUST

August 09 Amber Anderson
August 12 Carole Karash



**Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia**
1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103