



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 4

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

DECEMBER 2002

Leader's Message

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ESSEX,

As we approach the year's end, the days become shorter and shorter, the temperature drops, and both light and warmth diminish. Yet for many of us in the U.S.A. of the 21st Century, our streets are lit brightly, our homes are warm, and the time filled with holiday celebrations. Unlike our ancestors, we do not fear the darkening days and are quite certain that they will soon begin to lengthen again. Our lack of fear in this



is based on our scientific knowledge, not on faith or trust or hope. However, our level of comfort would be much diminished if we were not adults and our emotions were deeply engaged. Children fear the dark and their sense of time passing is often quite different from adults. The length of a day or a night for an adult can be experienced by a child as an eternity. And often no amount of factual information or other forms of reassurance will suffice to dispel a child's fear of the darkness.

What can comfort such a child, however, is a parent's willingness stay with the child through the night or until she or he falls asleep. Here the meeting of the emotional need with compassion and understanding makes all the difference.

Adolescence can also present similar emotional challenges. The turbulence of sexual awakening for many teenagers is a period filled with massive fears and anxieties and deep doubts about whether these problems will ever be resolved. When this transitional period is also marked by additional challenges such as being gay or lesbian within cultures insensitive or indifferent to the needs of such adolescents and young adults, young people can be at significant risk in the absence of solid human support. Our own culture of the 21st century has but recently emerged from the ignorance of our stone age ancestors as regards understanding and acceptance of sexual diversity. Many an adolescent has struggled alone in the dark. Sun., Dec. 1, I will discuss those challenges and how they can be met. Join me then and bring your thoughts to share with others. *Till then, Boe*

BULLETIN BOARD

Join us—the ETHICAL CULTURE CHORUS—singing in harmony under the masterful, engaging and enjoyable leadership of Jeanine Rosh. With a repertoire of traditional folk, showtunes, and fetching, inspirational songs on many topics, the Chorus will be rehearsing weekly Thurs. evenings 7–8:45 p.m. at the Ethical Society. Everyone is welcome.

FUND RAISING EVENTS: A Giant WHITE ELEPHANT SALE is planned for this coming May, 2003. Last year's successful sale began with sorting and ticketing items well in

advance. Start bringing your bags of clean items to the society. We will ticket and sort them for the sale. Get rid of your extra stuff now and help us have our best sale yet. • We need hosts for our "Entertain at Home" DINNER EVENTS. Can you sponsor an event in your home sometime this year? It can be dinner, cook-out, quilting party, game evening, musical night, poetry evening or any other get-together you would enjoy. Use your home and your talents any way you can. You pick the date and the event, we supply the guests. Please call Nancy Bohn, Jeanine Rosh or Jill Fox to host an event.

"COMINGS AND GOINGS"

Our custom at Sunday Platform is to share personal news and events with our Ethical family. As an extension of such sharing, we offer this occasional column. —Rosalie Sussman

MARION JOSEPHSON's new address is Rm. 2226 of Morrisview, on W. Hanover Ave., Morris Plains, NJ 07950. Letters should be sent to P.O. Box 437. By the way, Marion has graciously taken on the task of calling greeters and refreshment people each week to remind them that it's their turn. Thanks, Marion!

ESTHER BARCUN celebrated her 60th (no!) birthday in October at a

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, *Leader*

Ted Seagull, *Assistant Leader*

Jim White, *Leader Emeritus*

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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THE NEWSLETTER INVITES YOU to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication.

Items must be received by the first of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition.

Items should be no more than 150 words, preferably submitted via e-mail to the editor but can also be delivered to the office, att: Editor, Ethical Society Newsletter, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Please call the office, 973-763-1905, and leave word especially if your item is time-sensitive.

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

For those interested in receiving their copy of Ethical Culture Monthly by First Class Mail for a charge of \$10/year or \$5/half year (beginning in January), call the office, 973-763-1905, and request our First Class Mail Special.

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lovely luncheon party. Family and friends gathered to wish her a healthy, productive year and many more years of joy!

Welcome to new members DOUG PROOPS, MD, and JUDY GRAEFF. Also, to TERRI SUESS. We are delighted and proud to have you join us at Essex Ethical and welcome your participation and input in our activities.

Our president SUSAN KENNEDY, BARBARA COTLER and ROSALIE SUSSMAN travelled to the AEU Growth and Development Conference in Brooklyn Nov. 2, attending workshops to help us become more effective in making the Society grow.

Call Rosalie with items for this column, 973-763-3819.

Peace Workshop well attended

“Creating Peace in Violent Times,” a workshop (Nov.2) sponsored by our society and NJ Peace Action was led by Naomi Drew, educator, peacemaker and author. There were 36 participants among whom were 13 members and friends of our society, and other N.J. peace site members. The workshop raised consciousness about peacemaking and, incidentally, raised some funds for our society. Naomi is the first person to introduce peace education in the public schools. She generously donated 10% of the proceeds of her book signing to our society. Thanks to Ethical Society members for their help—Nancy & Dick Bohn, Anita Roberts, Gigi Goldstein, Barbara Cotler, Ted Seagull, Win Thies and Jack Tiner.

• The first anniversary of our Peace Site rededication was celebrated Nov. 10 with a dedication of our Peace Garden created by Mahasin Nor-Pomarico and Gigi Goldstein, art work by our Sunday School children and a presentation by

Patty and Bob Bender on their hosting the *Hibakusha*, survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
—Betty Levin

“Churchill Fortnight”

by Winthrop Drake Thies

Our Society has designated the period Dec. 1 through 15 as “Churchill Fortnight” in commemoration of honorary American citizen Sir Winston Spencer Churchill. During the “fortnight,” all 4 of the 50-minute segments of “The Complete Churchill” will be shown at the Society. This series was produced in 1991 by BBC and A&E to great acclaim. Each screening will be followed by a short discussion period, with refreshments for the evening shows. Admission free, all are welcome—invite friends and neighbors.

Considered by many the iconic heroic figure of the 20th century, Churchill was an indifferent student, who later noted: “I never let school get in the way of my education.” (In fact, if a subject interested

CHURCHILL VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

SUN., DEC. 1, 1 P.M., video segment 1:

“Maverick Politician”

MON., DEC. 2, 7:30 P.M., segment 2:

“To Conquer or To Die”

SUN., DEC. 8, 11 A.M., “Churchill:

from Defeat to Triumph—Thrice!”

(see Platforms, pg. 4).

Video segment 3, “Beginning of The End,” follows at 1 p.m.

TUES., DEC. 9, 7:30 P.M., segment 4:

“Never Despair”

SUN., DEC. 15, 1 P.M., we will see video

of a professional actor's portrayal of Churchill, presenting some of his most glorious speeches and writings. (90 min.) This was produced by General Dynamics Corp. as part of its show, “Winston Churchill / Ike.”

him he engaged with it totally.) He stubbornly opposed learning Greek, Latin and mathematics. Reduced to English, he “learnt it well,” obtaining the Nobel Prize for literature in 1953. His writings include multi-volume histories of WWI and II, a bio of his father, Lord Randolph, a *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, a highly lauded bio of his illustrious forebear, the first Duke of Marlborough, plus numerous other books of his campaigns and adventures, essays and speeches.

He was ethically brave: he took risks on behalf of his beliefs, twice in effect “crossing the aisle” to change party allegiance. He was a natural leader, a brilliant writer and orator: truly a Renaissance man for our time. He was remarkably resilient: with the ability to bounce back from seemingly crushing defeat. At a crucial time for democracy, when Hitlerism seemed on the verge of unstoppable success, he stepped in to defend democracy and lead it to victory. A grateful Congress made him an honorary American citizen.

Building Committee: Handicapped Access to Meeting Room

To begin our building’s second century, some members consider that provision of handicapped access should take priority over further efforts toward preservation. Access to the meeting room is a primary objective and the shortest way is via the corner nearest the garage. There, the floor is only 39-1/2 inches above ground. Just outside the door is the small porch under the fire escape. The porch floor is 35-1/2 inches high, so

to match the inside it must be raised 4 inches. Beyond this, two access alternatives have been considered.

A ramp would occupy 250 sq. ft. of prime space. Its mass would impede access for deliveries via the kitchen door. The playground and picnic area most used by the membership and tenants that rent classroom space would be obliterated. Seen from a distance, a ramp out in open space would interfere with the clean lines of the building. Any ramp will require disparate expenditures of funds for detailed architectural work and materials. Only some of the labor might be done “in house”. The final result would be difficult to use, especially during snow and ice storms.

In contrast, an electrically-powered lift would be much smaller and not consume useful ground area. It would require no expenditure of energy by the disabled, with or without a wheelchair, and would be operable in any kind of weather. Compared to a ramp, a lift may cost a fraction more at the outset, but it would require no labor on our part: it is available as an off-the-shelf package. A properly chosen lift would be a lasting addition to the value of our property, both for the Society and its tenants.

—*Jack Tiner, for the committee*

Patricia Fressola Idrobo letter

My Washington trip [Oct. 26] went very well. No one knew quite what to expect and we were pleasantly surprised to see so many people. It was very energizing... police estimated 100,000, organizers

estimated 200,000. There were people of all ages, a lot of college students, all races and nationalities.

I spent a lot of time just reading everyone’s signs. I am very sensitive about the impact of signs. I don’t like signs that divide people into “us” versus “them,” or are personal attacks on a politician (as opposed to their policies). To me that is not very peaceful and also doesn’t advance the cause. My favorites were, “Peace is patriotic,” “Globalize this: (peace sign)”, “Our country should never start a war,” “War is not the answer,” “Peaceful thinking is the answer,”...

There were over two hours of speeches, including famous speakers such as Jesse Jackson, Ramsey Clark, and Susan Sarandon. I liked Jackson’s speech and tone. Again, I don’t like speeches that are personal attacks and create a wide gap between groups with opposing views. Jesse Jackson basically said that we are a great nation and our actions should not be based on political or economic expediency, but on what is right. He said we will lose our moral authority if we attack Iraq. He said Saddam Hussein should be held accountable for his actions. But, he said, that is a good argument for a World Court, not an attack on Baghdad...

We walked to the White House. It was like a parade, some people had drums and music, some sang or chanted, and there were some, well, colorful groups.... I’m glad I went and I hope we have some effect on the direction our country is taking.

Patricia Idrobo is a former member and friend of our Society.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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Sunday Morning Platforms

*Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome.
Platforms are subject to change without notice.
Sunday School 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.*

DEC. 1 · Boe Meyerson: GROWING UP GAY. Boe is not only the leader of our Essex Ethical Culture Society, but also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University in NYC.

DEC. 8 · Win Thies: WINSTON CHURCHILL AS HERO. Win Thies, graduate of Princeton and Harvard Law School, is also the founder and president of the Hemlock Society of New Jersey, Inc. He has appeared in debates on radio and cable TV.

DEC. 15 · SOLSTICE CELEBRATION with the Sunday School!

DEC. 22 · HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS: INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND SHARING with Boe Meyerson

DEC. 29 · OPEN DISCUSSION with Doris Rados

JAN. 5 · Boe Meyerson: NIETZSCHE'S JOYFUL WISDOM

New Project: Saturday Night Religion

We shall be starting a series of lecture/discussions to be held in members' homes on selected Saturday nights. The host will provide dessert. The first series of meetings will be on the subject of Comparative Religion. Boe Meyerson will facilitate. If you are interested in attending

and/or hosting any one of these meetings, contact the office and leave your name and number. This program was initiated and will be coordinated by Freda Fink-Armstrong.

Philosophy at Essex

On every 2nd and 4th Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., the Philosophy Group meets to engage in philosophical discussion. We sometimes explore the ideas of historically important ethical philosophical theories, sometimes analyze current events and personal issues from a philosophical perspective, and sometimes simply enjoy the play art of philosophical dialogue. Whatever the subject, we have a good time arguing, exploring, probing and having adventures in the world of philosophical ideas. Boe Meyerson (trained in philosophy at Columbia University) facilitates the discussions. Join us. Admission is free and there are no "pre-requisite" courses required.

On-line Discussion Forum

I have started a discussion forum at *Quick Topic* for our topic "Ethical Culture." To join in (or just to read), use your web browser to go to:

<http://www.quicktopic.com/17/H/79855qyB6Vi>

You don't have to register or sign in, and you can choose to receive email for newly posted messages — just click the *Subscribe* button when you get there.

—Sue Willis