



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 5

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JANUARY 2012

JANUARY PLATFORMS

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, call 973-763-1905. Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

Jan. 1 New Year's Colloquy: "Reviewing and Resolving"

Jan. 8 Meredith Sue Willis, "Barbara Kingsolver's *The Lacuna as a Political Novel.*" Novelist Meredith Sue Willis will speak about how novels can be political, using as her primary example Barbara Kingsolver's recent book, *The Lacuna*, which examines



the relationships of people in society through events like the assassination of Leon Trotsky as well as through fictional situations and conflicts. This talk is based on a paper Sue presented at the Emory & Henry College Barbara Kingsolver Literary Festival.

Meredith Sue Willis, fiction writer and native of West Virginia, teaches novel writing at NYU. She is a past president of the Essex Ethical Culture Society and past chair of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. Her most recent book is a short story collection called *Re-Visions: Stories from Stories*. Her newsletter for readers and writers is online at <http://www.meredithsuewillis.com/booksforreaders.html> She lives in South Orange with her husband Andy Weinberger, a rheumatologist in private practice. Their son Joel and his wife Sarah are graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley.

Folk Friday

Bring instruments and come to sing, 2nd Friday of the month, Jan. 13th, 7:30–9:30 p.m., coordinated by Anja Moen and Lisa Novemsky.

Jan. 15 9:30 a.m. Leader Martha Gallahue will host an Ethical Culture Study Group on ethical "right relationship" in our communities.



11 a.m. **Platform:** "Connections That Matter." **Jackie Fox**, Director of Valley Settlement House and **Martha Gallahue** will share the podium and discuss why our connection with one another matters. What does right relationship look like between our two organizations? We will welcome additional comments from President Anja Moen and Gus Lindquist who teaches science and arts to the youngsters at VSH. We hope to have a couple of young people from VSH to participate.

Valley Settlement House is a non-profit social service agency. It is the oldest "Settlement" in New Jersey and the third oldest in the United States. The Settlement House programs have provided educational and cultural development and continue to seek volunteers to work on those programs.

Valley Settlement House is concerned with the family and each of its members. It aims to afford opportunities for each to find and develop his/her potential for a positive life in the home, neighborhood and community. (www.valleysettlementhouse.org)

At Valley Settlement House, from left to right: Luis Grados (Assistant Manager for the art show), Martha Gallahue, Director Jackie Fox, Anja Moen, Zarina Jackson, Gus Lindquist, Eva Bouzard-Hui (her work is in the background) and Gabriela, Eva's assistant.



Jan. 22 Dr. Geri Fee, "Biofeedback as an Adjunctive Technique in Treating Medical Conditions."

Biofeedback is defined as the technique of using equipment to reveal internal physiological events in the form of visual and auditory signals in order to teach patients to manipulate these otherwise involuntary or unfelt events. Teaching patients to control a wide range of physiological processes



has profound effects in managing physical symptoms. For example, biofeedback has been successful in the treatment of hypertension, migraine and tension headaches. Scientific studies have provided evidence that objective neurological signs and symptoms can be altered.

Dr. Fee will demonstrate the Open Focus technique, and will show how biofeedback equipment is used.

Jan. 29 Lenny Bornstein, "Bullying: Looking at causes, and ways to stop it"

Whether we're talking about bullying, teasing or hazing, intentional humiliation and harassment have been around for a long time. Some might even include the treatment of inmates in concentra-

(continued next page)

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*
Boe Meyerson, *Leader Emeritus*
James White, *Leader Emeritus*

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Lisa Novemsky, *Vice President*
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Editor/graphics: Howard Gilman

Editor's Note

Newsletter articles, announcements, etc., not to exceed 150 words in length, must be received by the FIRST of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition. Submit items to: Howard Gilman, newsletter editor, preferably via email at: gilman.howard@gmail.com. Items can also be dropped off at 15 So. Pierson Rd., Maplewood; or, if you put something for the newsletter in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please give me a call at (973) 763-3914 to be sure I know about it, especially if your item is time-sensitive. — *Editor*

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

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Our web site: www.essexethical.org

**...act so
as to elicit
the best
in others
and in
ourselves**

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to info@essexethical.org to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

tion camps, or the treatment of minorities. Drawing on his decades of work within regular and special education, Lenny Bornstein examines the phenomenon of abuse, what it stems from, and how to counteract it.

Lenny Bornstein has been a teacher, a school principal and educational administrator, and a frequent speaker at colleges and professional organizations, and operates Premier Events and LB Entertainment, an interactive entertainment company based in Millburn. He is the author of *NoHop*, *The Kangaroo Who Thought He Couldn't*, a book about bullying for pre-schoolers. He is also a fervent supporter of Arts Unbound (which has a store in Maplewood), a non-profit organization that provides arts education, skills building and vocational opportunities in the visual arts to youth and adults with mental, developmental and physical disabilities.

LEADER'S MESSAGE

From Jim White, Leader Emeritus

Darkness, Light.

Daily the sunlight recedes. Many of us feel regret, at least, with the shortening of our daytime. Nature grows less welcoming. Time for our outdoor tasks grows more constrained. The discomfort, the dangers of winter — sleet, snow, cold — come near on us. Even this month of holidays and their celebrations bring mixed feelings, particularly to the lonely. And who of us has never, at least once or twice, felt alone?

Darkness. Terrifying to our ancestors. The earliest humans truly feared that the waning winter light just might not return. And they knew that the light of the sun meant life to them. So the solstice festivals they created were rooted in the desperate effort to ensure the return of the light. The imperceptible lengthening of the days that would again restore to them the glowing verdure of spring and summer.

And, indeed, we can share the deep-rooted fear of those long gone from the earth: the terror of a post-holocaust nuclear winter that would eclipse the sun fatally for humankind;

the drastic darkness following a full climate meltdown brought on by our abject failure to harness the sun for our need for energy; and the very near tragedies now happening because of climate change. The “freak” Halloween blizzard we’ve just suffered robbed hundreds of thousands of their electric power for many days. In a neighborhood near mine an elderly couple died in a fire caused by the kerosene lamp that was their only source of light and heat. A horrible victimization of climate change.

But isn't the greater tragedy that they were alone? So alone that no one realized the danger of a kerosene lamp placed too near to a wheelchair. So far from family and friends that their vulnerability proved fatal. I mean to judge myself in writing this. We've just become aware that a house on our block is now for sale — the elderly woman that had lived there is gone. We never introduced ourselves to her. We did not know what she may have needed. We were never there for her.

We are — all of us — part of a fragmented, broken world. Our Ethical community is here to deny this night of loneliness. We come together because we know our need to be together. To celebrate, certainly. But equally to hear. To understand. To empathize. To support. To help. To heal. And in this solstice time we can help each other to look up through baring branches to a night sky at its most brilliant.

Together, then, we can say with Felix Adler “I affirm that there is... a best beyond the best I can think or imagine, in which all that is best in me, and best in those that are dear to me, is contained and continued. In this sense I bless the universe. And to be able to bless the universe... is the supreme prize which we can wrest from life's struggles, life's experience!”

Together in Light, Jim

Opportunity to Join Spring Human Faith Group

Articles to appear in next month's newsletter will describe plans to form a human faith group—a dynamic experience, free-of-charge, to be led by Calvin Chatlos, starting in the Spring. *Call E. Betty Levin, 973-763-1033.*

Armistice

Many Americans know that Veterans' Day began as something different. First, it was Armistice Day, invented to celebrate the end of The Great War, supposedly at the 11th minute of the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month 93 years ago in 1918. I lately had the thrill of discovering what that event meant to one who had lived at the time.

I read a letter from my grandfather, Is Agree (a man whose name is two



verbs!), written to his then sweetheart, my future grandmother, Mary Hurwitz (he wrote Marie) from his home in Astoria, NY to her at her cousins' home "in the mountains" where she was "taking a cure". After several lines of mundane courtship comment, he wrote the following:

"Just as I have ended the above paragraph, there came the sound of factory and steamer sirens blowing loud enough to be heard, I believe, all over the country. Perhaps you are hearing them now, for surely if there is any kind of a siren in your locality it has joined the rest in proclaiming the advent of peace.

"If you have read this morning's newspaper you know that Marshal Foch was to hand over the terms of the Allies for an armistice to the German mission sent for that purpose and the blowing of these sirens is to announce that the terms of the Allies were accepted by Germany.

"Think, imagine, if you can, the meaning of this announcement. How many tears of joy will this announcement bring forth in the eyes of the millions of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and sweethearts of the fighting men all over the world. How many more tears
(continued next page)

Fred Sebastian

A memorial was held December 11 for Fred Sebastian who died of natural causes at home in West Orange over Thanksgiving week. The Solidarity Singers, Spook Handy, Ingrid Heldt, Janet Mangano, Jeanine Rosh and Birgit Matzerath performed.

Born in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico, Fred lived for years in Rockland County and attended Pearl River High School. He had owned an electronics store in upper Manhattan, started a music and CD distribution service and moved to West Orange.

Fred did much volunteer work for New Jersey Peace Action and other organizations and helped with the founding of Union County Peace Council (www.ucpeace.org) and co-sponsored UCPC documentary film showings.

He also organized lectures, concerts and film showings at the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, where he was a member of the Board of Trustees.

Fred, along with his book and CD table, became a regular presence at many peace and environmental festivals and local street fairs. He is survived by two sisters and his son, Jesse.



Donations can be made in Fred's name to New Jersey Peace Action, 673 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, NJ 07003 (www.njpeaceaction.org); or to the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County (www.essexethical.org), where the Fred Sebastian Film Series is being founded in his name to continue Fred's vision for enlightenment, peace and activism.

Soul of Brevity

by D.C. Beeny

As a match ignites, flares up briefly,
then abruptly fizzles —
Plunging all into sudden darkness,
The brief arc of a shooting star,
A spirited conversation that fades,
words left hanging in the air;
A laugh stifled, a song cut short.
The whirl of a computer, the roar of an engine;
A clap of thunder, the crash of surf,
the snap of a twig;
Reverberations that hang in the air,
Then — engulfed by hushed silence.
Like the rustle of leaves, once green and lush,
Then too quickly yellowed and browned —
Blown off in a gust.
The fruits of summer, tomatoes on the vine,
Soon withered and gone,
only bare branches left behind;
Roses and fields of brilliant blooms, now faded.
A chorus of crickets and humming insects —
Now only stillness reigns.
Birds flown away south.
A sudden shower, a gust of wind,
A brief ray of sunshine through parting clouds.
Deer gliding past under moon lit skies.
A book quickly perused, then too quickly forgotten.
A candle that sputters and extinguishes itself,
Leaving only the briefest puff of smoke.
A life too soon gone. — *For Fred*

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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of sorrow and grief will this bring forth from the eyes of those who have had the misfortune to have contributed the life of one who was dear to them, to the death toll that this greatest international human butchery called war, has extracted. And how many hearts all over the world will throb with hope that, with the passing of these clouds of fomented hatred and strife, there will appear a new horizon. A horizon that will disclose signs of the coming of a freer and better world. A world in which there will be no room for strife to attain things at the expense of others, no room for hatred both individual and national.”

Here, the writing is interrupted, continuing below the entry of the following days' date.

“The above I had written you yesterday and, I would have undoubtedly

finished this letter yesterday if not for the extraordinary rush on the sale of American flags, which had caused me to lay this letter aside until now. Now I am thinking of whether I should send it to you or not. The news of yesterday has been reported false and although it is probable that in a few days we will hear the same news again and this time well confirmed, yet what I have written above seems out of place...”

Fortunately, he did finish the letter and send it. It was written on November 7 and 8, 1918.

I came away from my encounter with this letter thinking:

For a 24-year-old who had been speaking English for barely half his life, my Grandpa was eloquent!

Why is the story of the “false” announcement of peace never related in our histories, when it clearly had a huge

impact on the people who heard it?

Was Grandpa's (and others') joy at the final announcement of the peace — when it did come — diminished by this experience, as I suspect from reading this it may have been?

And today I reflect. The Great War, of course, gave way to a greater one. And on and on and on. The progress of the ideals held a century ago and the hopes they created has been fitful, and humanity has never overcome its propensity for butchery. So this Armistice Day, in memory of my grandfather, who wasn't a veteran, and my father, who was; and in tribute to those who lived and those who died, those who won and those who lost, those who fought and those who refused to fight; I reiterate my grandfather's hope for an end to war.

—Rob Agree