



ETHICAL CULTURE

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SEPTEMBER 2006

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Ethics at Everest

Reading mountaineering stories has long been one of my favorite pastimes. The rigors of climbing the highest peaks of the Himalayas often involve extended periods in the death zone, elevations at which bodily functioning degrades. Only climbers with the greatest physical development are able to summit on such mountains. But along with the demands for physical endurance there are also demands for moral strength as well. Climbing in the death zone offers both physical and moral challenges of extraordinary dimensions. Stories of human triumph and failure in both areas abound in the literature of mountaineering.



Mountaineers are often faced with the demands of high altitude rescue, not only of their climbing buddies but of total strangers as well. In taking on such a rescue mission, they often risk not merely a rare opportunity to summit a great mountain but also their own life and limb. Stories of moral heroism abound in the literature and have long captivated me. Although risks have been reduced by technology, the basic dangers abide. This has been amply illustrated in two recent news events this past May. One story exhibits moral strength of an exceptional degree and the other speaks to us of moral failure.

On May 15, 2005, British climber David Sharp was climbing on Everest after becoming separated from his climbing partner. He collapsed and was discovered by Mark Inglis, an accomplished mountaineer. When he found Sharp, Inglis was in the process of attempting a dramatic and unprecedented ascent of Everest after a frostbite injury to both his feet had previously made him a double amputee. He was also guiding several paid clients. Sharp was found to be unconscious and with minimal life signs — his only movement an eye blink. After some minimal attempts to revive him and reportedly after being so instructed by radio communication with the expedition leader (well-known climber, Russell Bruce), it was concluded that Sharp was far too close to death to be rescued and the climbing party, consisting of almost 40 members, continued on to successfully summit. Sharp died and Inglis became the first double amputee to summit Everest. Later much criticism was leveled at both Inglis and Bruce with multiple denials and explanations, often contradicting each other.

After learning about the event, Sir Edmund Hilary expressed disgust at the decisions made to abandon a dying man and continue on before exhausting all rescue efforts.

This story stands in marked contrast to a similar one with a very different ending concerning an event which occurred later that month. Here Lincoln Hall, a 50-year-old climber, was descending from a successful ascent of Everest when he collapsed. His co-climbers and Sherpa guides pronounced him dead and abandoned him at 28,500 feet. The next day, he was discovered by an American guide, Dan Mazur, who gave up his chance for the summit and stayed with Lincoln until his Russian led expedition arrived with the help they had called for and revived the hypoxic Lincoln with oxygen and hot liquids. Sherpas successfully brought him down from the death zone.

And what does all this teach us. While there are no absolutes, there is much to be learned. Certainly Inglis, Bruce and every one of those forty climbers bears responsibility for abandoning a dying climber. While there is still life, we have an obligation to attempt to preserve it. The history of mountaineering is filled with stories of those who did so at unimaginable cost to themselves. Rescuing often involves life risking efforts. It is also a part of the tradition of mountaineering.

(continued on page 3)

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

As we approach the opening of a new season, the fundraising committee is planning exciting events for the year. In addition to bringing you our traditional concerts, White Elephant sale and theater, we are reaching out to our members and friends for innovative new ways to have fun and raise money for the society. Perhaps you have an interesting skill or specialty you can share with us — like “How to make fishing flies” or “The Fundamentals of Lion Taming”, or having some people over to taste your specialty meal. We will handle the details — you provide the skill or craft or idea, and we will work it into a profitable evening. If you have already committed to do a dinner or event, please contact Alice Robinson-Gilman or Jeanine Rosh to set up a date for the event.

As you know, our fundraiser chairperson, Nancy Bohn, is relinquishing her position in order to concentrate her efforts in other Ethical pursuits. We all join to say “thank you Nancy, you are the greatest — and best wishes”.

—Jeanine M Rosh

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, Leader
Jim White, Leader Emeritus

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Editor's note

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 email to the editor (howardgilman@netscape.net). Items can also be delivered to: 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.

Ethical Culture Society
of Essex County,
516 Prospect St.,
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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

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

President's Letter



I am honored and pleased to become president of our Ethical Culture Society again. In attending our American Ethical Union Annual Meeting in Chicago this summer, I again discovered the breadth and depth of our extraordinary Ethical Culture Movement. Meeting members from across the country – Texas, Missouri, California and learning of their Society's activities is exhilarating. Finding common ground on important issues creates much satisfaction, cohesiveness and triggers new ideas. I hope to bring some of these ideas to our Society so that we may profit as well. It was delightful also to renew treasured acquaintances from the past – Susan Teshu from Boston, no Co-leader of the new Ethical Culture Without Walls (ECWOW),. How good to see Michele and Ron Baiman and their children who moved from New Jersey to Chicago. Dorothy Lockheart, longtime friends with my cousin and dear friend who were my entry into the Ethical Movement in my teenage years. They opened a whole new world for me that continues to shape me. As I often say, whoever I am today, for good or ill, is largely due to my association with the Ethical Movement. It was poignant to reconnect in Chicago where my roots of this extraordinary religious/educational movement were laid. You will no doubt hear me speaking of some of these ideas this coming year.

— Betty Levin, President

Have the Precepts of Ethical Culture Helped You in Difficult Situations?

Please share your story with us. We are organizing a platform comprising a panel of members who have dealt with trying situations from which we can all learn. Please volunteer to share your experiences. If you would like to be on the platform. Please call our platform chair, Elaine Norstein, 973-275-1633.

— Elaine Norstein, Platform Chair

By Special Request

Many of you remember the talk Dr. Jeffrey Rubin presented last May "Human Flourishing in Time of Peril" and he ignited the audi-

ence. Many of you asked that he return and we listened to you. He will speak on the same topic, Part 2, on Sunday, October 8. Come enjoy his exciting message again.

Board Meeting

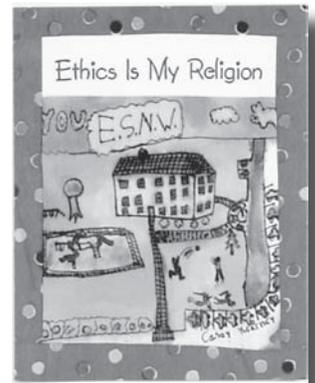
The Board of Trustees of our Ethical Society will meet on Sunday, September 10 at 1:30 p.m. following the Platform. All members are welcome to the meeting whether or not you are a trustee. Further Board meetings are October 15, November 19 and December 19. All are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. following the Platform. Your thoughts and ideas are welcome as part of our discussions though not your votes if you are not a member of the Board of Trustees.

Ethical Culture Greeting Cards

Now Available

A series of 12 greeting cards has been designed by children of the Northern Westchester Ethical Society. The 12 cards can be purchased for \$10

by phoning our office, 973-763-1905. Our member Barbara Lipton has graciously offered to handle the orders. Please speak slowly and clearly, leaving your name, telephone number and number of series you wish to order. Barbara will subsequently contact you and let you know about payment.



Louisa Lubiak has moved!

Due to her laborious commute to Trenton each day, Louisa has reluctantly decided she must relocate to a more reasonable location nearer Trenton, about a 20-minute commute. Her address and telephone number will be reported in the new Membership Directory. Louisa reassures us she will be at all our board meetings (she is secretary of the board) and other Ethical Culture events as is possible. She is a particularly involved member of our Society and we hope she can attend as her schedule permits. Good luck to you, Louisa.

Memorial Service for Phil Sosis



On July 16, 2006, a memorial celebration was held at the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and in its Memorial Garden for

Phil Sosis, who passed away June 22, 2002, in Greenfield, Mass. Phil and his wife Suzanne Gluck-Sosis have been members of the Essex Ethical Culture Society for many years. Family members and friends spoke of Phil's lust for life, people and poetry.

Photos and more examples of Phil's poetry are featured on a page in memory of Phil at the Society's web site, www.essexethical.org.

I Turn

I strip the Bark
The tree is a slender maiden
I swing my arm back and throw the ball
At many miles per hour.
The catcher wears a red hat
Waves upon the air
Bullets sway in the heated air
Human fruit falls from the branches of
The tree

There is no returning.
I turn
Strip the tree of its bark
The ack-ack of the bark
Draws a silhouette
Whose arms reach out
and cry for love.
We gather our forces
Which wrestle with concepts
Questioning. Questioning
Time is immemorial
And we are playthings of the Spirits

You are my kin.
Won't you be my brother?
My bark may be of different color
but my scars are the same.
Enclose your arms around me
Draw me tight
Draw me close
Absorb me
I turn. I turn.
by Phil Sosis. Dictated April & May 2002

What Means Old

I have lived on the land
of adult age
Over seven decades –
Rich in experience
active, creative,
raising a family in family
living in family of peoples –

slowly I slipped onto
the desert of

old age –
suddenly
not as agile
aches in joints
pains in chest
hips that feel like glass –
and
moans that come all too easily

with white hair that flags me
wherever I go . . .

at times, an oasis,
a hug that's sweet
a concert that moves me
a dancer soaring . . .
then continuum
condemned to the future
with no way out
and no way back
I await my days in creative captivity
writing

I look forward to the sun
casting another shadow
shorter perhaps than mid-life
but with an élan and passion
looking for the colors blaze
being positive with love/life/hope

Someday time will call me
that is when I urge you to
celebrate my life
have a party/read poetry/sing of the joy
that Death has finally come to round out
my circle cry out MAZEL TOV
by Phil Sosis, 1995. From The Rookery

Leader's Message (cont'd from page 1)

Yet there is more than a typical morality tale here. We also need to ask why this is happening so often now and why such abandonment was so much rarer in the earlier periods of mountaineering. A possible answer lies in the contemporary nature of the sport which has now been highly commercialized. Until recently Himalayan expeditions consisted only of the most experienced climbers in the world. They often shared a common commitment not only to the goal but also to each other. While their history is not without moral failings, there is nothing like the loss of life characteristic of this contemporary period. Since Hilary climbed Everest, there have been a total of 200 deaths on the mountain. In April and May of this year there have been a total of 15 deaths. At this time inexperienced climbers are paying up

to \$60,000 to summit Everest. Guides compete with each other for customers and those guides with the greatest rate of success at bringing them to the summit get to stay in business. Recall the disaster in 1996 described in "Into Thin Air." We are looking at unprecedented commercially supported inappropriate thinking and acting.

While ultimately every person holds individual responsibility, we also need to look at the factors which substantially increase the difficulty involved in making the moral choice. We owe it to all who engage in this wonderfully challenging and life enriching activity.

— Boe

Social Action Committee

The committee is giving occasional support to Anja Moen's work with Sew for Hope (which is responding to a need for fabric, needles and thread in

Afghanistan). Anja is organizing a tag sale to raise money for the project on Sept. 9–10 and she'll tell us what concrete help she needs from the Committee and the Society. Please join us, and especially get in touch with Anja for her Sew For Hope tag sale.

Sept. Platforms (continued from page 4)

at the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems headed by Barry Commoner at Queens College. Jim has also been on the environmental sciences faculty at several colleges, most recently Ramapo College of New Jersey and worked as executive director of the New Jersey Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability during its first three years. Jim has a 15-year-old son David, resides in East Orange, NJ, and is the son of a former Ethical Culture Society Leader, the late Harold J. Quigley.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

Sept. 10 Boe Meyerson:

“What Is Freedom?”

Leader Boe Meyerson will discuss the nature of freedom and its various dimensions. She will explore such questions as: are there different types of freedom such as internal vs. external freedom? Intellectual vs. emotional freedom? freedom from vs. freedom for? Is freedom always desirable? What are the relationships between freedom and creativity, between freedom and the growth of knowledge, between freedom and discipline, between freedom and ethical responsibility? Those attending will have the opportunity to contribute to this exploration. Boe is Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

Sept. 17 Katherine Joyce, Jay

Kappraff & Anne Barron: *“The fight for a fair voting system in NJ”*



As a founding member of the Essex County Task Force on Voting, Katherine Joyce worked with approximately two dozen other core volunteers and hundreds of Essex County citizens to obstruct the passage of funding for the purchase of the Sequoia Advantage DRE voting system by county officials. The task force's six-month effort delayed the purchase,

helped raise public awareness of issues and concerns about voting systems, and better informed elected officials and members of the media about the complex issues related to voting machines and systems.

She will be talking about “New Jersey — an all-but Sequoia state, so where do we go from here?” and discussing what it will take to make the elections in this state fair and accurate.

Katherine Joyce is a Montclair resident who made her career in organizational communication, producing strategies and materials for Fortune 100 companies, as well as educational institutions, municipalities, and non-profit clients. A social activist, her resume includes volunteer leadership and organizing in numerous areas, including antiwar and pro-peace efforts, race relations and equality, environmentalism and the organic food movement. Through leadership in the New Jersey affiliate of Democracy for America, the Essex County chapter of which is largest in the state, Katherine also leads and organizes volunteers in direct political action for progressive candidates and causes.

Anne Barron is project director of ACLU-NJ's *Voting Rights for All* Project.

[ed. note:]

Watch for further information on a possible teach-in after the platform on resisting these machines on the Ethical Culture website www.essexethical.org.

September, 2006

Platforms begin at 11 am. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. Sunday School 11 am–12:15 pm. Youth of Ethical Societies (YES): contact Society office.



Sept. 24: Jim Quigley:

“Energy & Climate Crises: On a Collision Course at a Fork in the Road”

Will the world run out of oil? Will the largest

industrial countries turn to coal, load the atmosphere with more carbon and accelerate climate change? Should we embrace nuclear power? Does solar energy hold out any hope? In the midst of increasingly aberrant weather patterns, rising sea level, and internationally explosive conflicts in oil-rich lands, how can we make sense of the social, political, economic and ethical challenges of these crises? Hear one perspective on this and share yours, too, in the Q&A/Comment period to follow.

Jim Quigley, PhD is operations director of the Center for Sustainable Energy. Jim has worked for 25 years in the environmental field. He installed a windmill on a Pacific atoll as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the late '70s and later joined the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu in 1985 where he authored a report on energy consumption by Pacific Island nations. His masters thesis (Ohio U.) covered renewable energy applications in developing countries. Jim's dissertation (U. of Penn) addressed the trash crisis of the 1980s and analyzed the burn, bury or recycle options for waste management. He worked for seven years as a researcher *(continued on page 3)*