



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 5

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JANUARY 2003

Leader's Message

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

During this time of year I am usually in a fairly good mood. I love winter, snow, and the celebrative atmosphere of the season. Unfortunately, I confess that the darkening political scene has definitely dampened my spirits. Our nation is vigorously preparing for an Iraqi war which, if UN inspections succeed, may not have to be fought. The financial costs of our preparations are massive and their incursion at a time of economic instability is difficult to understand or to justify. Would you plow millions of dollars into a house you might not need? Iraq is available to be attacked now or next fall. What could justify this haste and expense but the absolute prior commitment to make war whatever the outcome of the inspections? And if we did fight and of course win, what would be the fruits of victory? Control of oil, and possibly a less tyrannical regime, elimination of now only hypothetical weapons of mass destruction as well as the reduction of a military threat to its neighboring states. What would be the non-financial cost? Significant loss of life among Iraqi civilians and all combatants and risk of destabilizing the entire middle-east. All this we are prepared to suffer when we are still engaged in a costly international struggle against al Qaeda, a group

which has no proven relationship to Iraq. Why are we doing this? While I support the UN action which should have been taken long ago against Iraq, I am nevertheless increasingly leaning toward the conclusion that our aim is not the righting of wrongs or the protection of the innocent but rather the control of oil resources, a motive which is utterly without any moral justification.

With such deeply moral issues under consideration at this time, you may well wonder why I have chosen to give my next Platform Address on a philosopher who labored long and hard to attack the foundations of traditional morality. He is the author of a work with the disturbing title of "Beyond Good and Evil." He is the one who spoke of the slave and the master mentality. One of his most ill conceived aphorisms is, "A good war justifies any cause." He is Friederich Nietzsche. If you are curious to learn why I have chosen this subject, come and join me on Sunday, January 5, 2003, when I speak on the topic of "Nietzsche's Joyful Wisdom." *Till then, Boe*

Peace Site

by Gigi Goldstein, 11-10-2001

Peace to all who enter here
 Be restless and aggrieved no more
 This building is a Shrine of Peace
 And not a monument to war

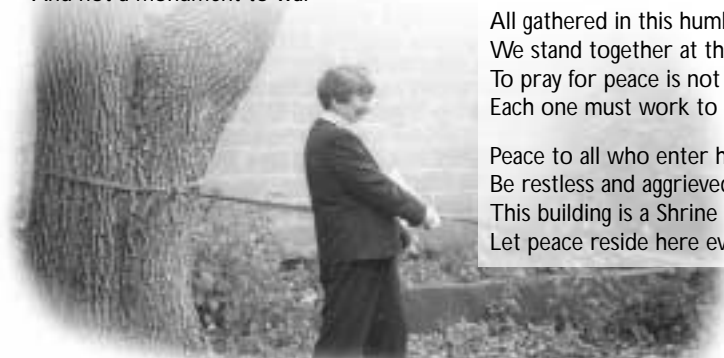
Take the welcoming outstretched hand
 No matter what the shade or size
 For here is worth and dignity
 For all who seek to realize

All gathered in this humble place
 We stand together at this site
 To pray for peace is not enough
 Each one must work to make it right

Peace to all who enter here
 Be restless and aggrieved no more
 This building is a Shrine of Peace
 Let peace reside here evermore.

Nov. 10 Rededication Anniversary — Contemplating Many Forms of Peace

P*Peace is like nature, just let it grow*, read the banner presented by sunday school students Michele and Jennifer Barthole as we commemorated the first anniversary of our building's rededication as a Peace Site: leader Boe Meyerson cut the ribbon to the Peace Site garden (a product of the creative imaginations of Gigi Goldstein and Mahasin Nor-Pomarico) with colorful garden tiles (designed and produced by Mahasin) commissioned by members in honor of special ones in their lives; Patty Bender spoke poignantly about hosting the *Hibakusha* (Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors); and sunday school students planted daffodils bulbs. A milkweed plant to attract butterflies will be planted in the spring, when additional



Peace Garden ribbon cutting

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, *Leader*

Ted Seagull, *Assistant Leader*

Jim White, *Leader Emeritus*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nancy Bohn

Richard Bohn

Gigi Goldstein

Bill Graves, *Vice President*

Lisa Novemsky

Jim Quigley, *Treasurer*

Pat Thompson, *Secretary*

Andrew B. Weinberger

Susan K. Kennedy, *President*

Gigi Goldstein, *Office Manager*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Howard Gilman,
EC Monthly Editor / Graphic Designer
howardgilman@netscape.net

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.

Ethical Culture Society
of Essex County,
516 Prospect St.,
Maplewood, NJ 07040.

Visit our web site:
www.essexethical.org

plants to enhance the garden will be welcome. Betty Levin's talk, "The Culture of Peace," gave as examples our Peace Site movement and other grass roots programs. In one such program, "Reinventing Justice," first time offenders are given opportunities to make amends in lieu of prison time, apologizing to their victims and discovering remorse, which can contribute to empathy. Suzanne Gluck-Sosis in Massachusetts, and Hilary Kramer-Melnikoff in Vermont (daughter of member Sylvia Kramer) are involved in such programs.

On an international scale, the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission operates with the idea that perpetrators of crimes against humanity need to be given the opportunity to become members of a moral humanity. As distinct from the Nuremberg trials, which operated under a "duty to prosecute," the TRC embraces restorative justice. Therein genuine remorse humanizes perpetrators and transforms their evil from the unforgivable into something that can be forgiven. Anger and hate can dominate one's life as it did with the Oklahoma City bombers, McVeigh and Nichols. One victim's family noted with horror the "blood lust" of some and felt the necessity for finding forgiveness: "To allow revenge and hate to dominate our lives, like it did for McVeigh and Nichols, allows the cycle of violence to go on and on."

Peace takes many forms. —*Betty Levin*

Fund Raising Events

Giant White Elephant sale planned for this May — 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. If you cannot host an event, you may be asked to assist one of the other hosts. Please call Nancy Bohn, Jeanine Rosh or Jill Fox to host an event.

Membership Committee

With delight and pride, the society welcomed three new members last month.

Educator, activist, artist and writer, **TERRI SUESS** grew up in Seattle and, after college, moved to NY where, while fighting municipal service cuts in the 1970's, earned a Masters Degree in Urban Affairs at Hunter College. Later, in NJ, Terri worked with the Newark Coalition of Neighborhoods, became a graphic artist and formed a computer consulting company. She has studied art and has had several solo art exhibits. Terri continues in the work for peace and justice as a member of NJ Peace Action. She recently worked to save WBAI and Pacifica radio. Terri has lived in Newark's Vailsburg section since 1979. She has been supported emotionally and intellectually through her varied life experiences by her friend, partner and companion Jeanne Fortin. Terri looks forward to enjoying the EC programs and to contributing to the vitality of the Society.

JUDY GRAEFF was raised "as a middle child, in a middle class protestant family, in the mid-west." Upon graduation from the University of Michigan she joined the Peace Corps, teaching English in a small Ivory Coast town for 2 years. Theafter, she worked in international public health and earned graduate degrees in psychology and

in public health. She has worked on projects promoting child health in developing countries, including three years in Morocco. Recently, she has started a job at UNICEF.

Judy says, among other things, living overseas strongly influenced her spiritual thinking: "Most people are so busy following the tenets of their own particular religion that they lose sight of the fundamental commonality." Her spiritual thinking brought her to EC where she expects to feel at home.

DOUG PROOPS grew up in West Virginia. When there on family visits, he still finds comfort in the ritual aspects of singing in the Episcopal Church he attended in Charleston as a child. When he was 11 years old, his parents joined a UU Church "where we actually talked about things that seemed to have relevance. The Bible stories of youth seemed to become fairy tales in comparison."

Doug moved to Morristown, NJ, in 1995 with his wife, Judy, and their two children, Nora and Alex, to take a position in occupational medicine. Finding a spiritual "home" of like-minded folks for themselves and their children became important. In NJ, "we learned about this special place, Essex Ethical. We hope that by joining, we will deepen our connection to the others here."

Doug says "our children are the primary focus of our lives." Nora and Alex are quite social and outspoken. (Alex attends Sunday school, Nora graduated last June.) Besides family time, Doug's passion is gardening and keeping active: swimming, running, and playing tennis.

Platform Committee Planning for Next Season! Next meeting after platform February 23, 2003

At the meeting on Dec. 1, co-chairs Sue Willis and Doris Rados distributed an updated schedule of platforms for the rest of the season. You may see this season's tentative platform topics at our website, <http://www.essexethical.org>, click on "Schedule." Sue and Doris also thanked Mira for her good publicity pieces that have been showing up regularly in the News-Record.

Alice Robinson-Gilman made a short presentation on the Member Panels that she and Sue are planning for May 11 and June 15. She described the process of choosing a topic and pre-discussing it as a way of preparing a panel that is not simply four people giving four opinions. She also offered to help people who might want to organize their own panel.

Doris noted the need for more participation in the tasks of the committee and in presiding at platforms. Boe suggested that 3rd Sundays would be good for members to preside, as she is always present on 2nd and 4th Sundays for Philosophy, and the president or other officer usually presides on the 1st Sunday, when she speaks. Several people suggested training sessions for presiders as a way to make this work well.

The kinds of platforms people like best were discussed: for some, it is the social action topics, for others the platforms that build community by sharing our lives or the ones with music or interviews with artists. The important part, most agreed, was a

balance of topics. In order to get a better sense of what the general audience at platforms wants, however, the group decided to consider offering "town meetings" open to everyone and to try posted lists of past and possible topics to be taped to the walls and commented on in writing by people attending platforms over a period of several weeks, probably in April or May. Doris will work on the town meetings, and Sue and Alice will work on the posters.

Among the specific ideas for platforms were an interactive environmental program; other platforms in the fall to continue the environmental theme, and more platforms exploring Gay/Lesbian rights issues. Everyone is interested in getting information from the ACLU on threatened civil rights in the present climate, and Anita is working on a speaker to analyze poverty in East Orange. Doris suggested a speaker about the Mount Laurel law and/or all the new luxury housing in South Orange.

As always, Boe is open for suggestions for topics she might prepare for us, and the committee is also interested in suggestions for speakers—we're beginning to think about the 2003-4 season now! If you have an idea, please get in touch with Sue Willis at 973-378-8361 or Doris Rados at 973-762-7704. You may also email Sue at MsueWillis@aol.com.

Member News

Best wishes from Mahasin Nor-Pomarico and Jim Pomarico. Their new *info* is: 239 Clermont Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11205; 718-623-3138; e-mail: jpomarico@msn.com

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

516 PROSPECT STREET
MAPLEWOOD, NJ 07040
(973) 763-1905

www.essexethical.org

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT N° 48
MAPLEWOOD, NJ

ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 5

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JANUARY 2003

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

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

Jan. 5 · **Boe Meyerson: Nietzsche's Joyful Wisdom** Boe (who was trained in Philosophy at Columbia University) will discuss some of the extraordinary insights of this ground breaking philosopher whose work has been so fruitful and so controversial.

Jan. 12 · **Facing Race Panel** Facing Race is an organization that allows students the opportunity to discuss issues related to race, gender, and sexuality. Faculty advisors: Roberto Reyes and Sara Mastellone.

Jan. 19 · **The Academic Achievement Gap** A panel made up of members of the Schools Committee of the South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race will present basic ideas about the gap in academic achievement between racial groups, some possible reasons for it, and ways to address it.

Jan. 26 · **Brian Cody: Ethical Investing** Brian Cody, a financial consultant at Smith Barney, will speak on the ethics of personal investing in our present climate of financial downturns and undermined confidence in corporate responsibility.

Feb. 2 · **Androgyny as a Phenomenon and a Spiritual Ideal** Boe will explore the ethical and spiritual dimensions of this subject using some of the insights of Carl Jung and of others.

Book Club at the Society

Two more exciting book discussions are planned for the next few months. Sun., Jan. 19, at 1 p.m., Boe Meyerson will lead discussion on *King Lear*, the great Shakespearean tragedy. Sun., Mar. 9, at 1 p.m. we'll meet again to discuss Books 4, 5 and 6 of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Mira Stillman will lead the discussion. Though Milton's great poem is in glorious verse, it reads like a novel. Don't be afraid to try it. You will be amply rewarded. Please join us, everyone is welcome.

New Poetry Group Begins

Starting Mon., Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m., (to meet the third Monday of each month thereafter) our society will sponsor a poetry group entitled "Third Mondays at Essex Ethical." Meetings will present a featured reader as well as opportunities for attendees to share some of their poems. Tom Obrzut, a published poet living in Maplewood, will moderate. The first meeting will feature a workshop with Sylvia Kramer, poet and poetry practitioner. All are welcome.

Philosophy at Essex

9:30–10:30 a.m., 2nd and 4th Sundays, the Philosophy Group meets to engage in philosophical discussion. We explore the ideas of historically important ethical philosophical theories, analyze current events and personal issues from a philosophical perspective, and 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 facilitates the discussions. Join us. Admission is free and there are no "pre-requisite" courses.

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 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.