



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 28 NUMBER 9

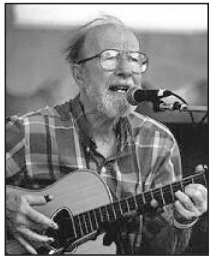
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MAY 2009

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

May 3 Celebration of Pete Seeger's 90th birthday with *Maplewood/South Orange's own* Solidarity Singers.

The interactive concert at Ethical, "For Pete's Sake, Sing!" will be one of the many such events held around the US and other countries to honor Seeger and the humanitarian ideals for which he has worked all his life.



(See page 2 essay: "Why a Nobel Peace Prize for Pete?")

Marie Goonan, an activist in Melbourne, Australia, suggested that May 3, 2009, Pete's 90th birthday, be designated as For Pete's Sake, Sing! with concerts coordinated around the world. She is producing a concert in Melbourne, another is being planned in Copenhagen, Denmark and several are planned in the USA. Big production is not the issue: what a thrill it will be to know that thousands of people around the world are coming together on one day to join voices for peace, justice, the environment and honor to a model of personal integrity.

Go to the web site at www.nobelprize4pete.org to see the moving and sincere comments people have made about how Pete opened their consciousness in so many ways. The petition is to be kept open until the end of the year so that the final document will be sent to the Smithsonian Institution, or wherever Pete's archives will eventually be

housed, as a document for posterity.

This campaign is not to make a hero of Pete. It has to do with creativity and community. Its meaning has to do with understanding that the arts are not frivolity, not a means to fame or entertainment, but for deepening the meaning of civilization.

May 10 Leader Barbara (Boe) Meyerson, "The Obama Mystique"

In his short time in office, President Barack Obama, has made a large imprint in Washington, in the nation, and in the world at large. He has created alliances, promoted new ideas at home and abroad, and managed to transform the face of the US among friends and foes alike. He has engendered enthusiasm, promoted a sense of hope for the future and given reassurance to the general public and to our friends and allies abroad. What makes him so effective and charismatic? Is he like FDR? Like Lincoln? Like who? I suggest that he is like none of the above but certainly shares some traits in common. Yet the key factor is his own personal traits and philosophical approach.

In my platform. I will explore various personal traits and characteristics that have made Obama such a charismatic figure at home and abroad. I will also discuss the domestic and international context in which his skills and gifts play a major role as well as the obvious stark contrast between him and his predecessor.

Since May 10 is also Mother's Day, I will also be discussing the unique

role that Michelle Obama has played on the world stage as well.

Boe is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. She is also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

May 17 AGM — Annual Meeting — to start at 10 a.m. and end at noon. Light refreshments.

May 24 Esther Barcun, "Facing the Future with Confidence: A Conversation"

Former geriatric social worker Esther Barcun will facilitate an interactive discussion on how to be proactive about facing the future and one's increasing vulnerability. She will touch on topics like legal paperwork, communication with children and other people close to you, the Department on Aging and county and municipal agencies, and hazard-proofing your home.

Esther Barcun is a member of the Ethical Culture Society and lives in Edison. Now retired, she is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with certification in gerontology.

May 31 Tom Allibone. In an encore appearance, Mr. Allibone will give us an update on the digital TV conversion now coming



June 12. The much-heralded switch to all digital television broadcasting promises vastly improved service — but the

truth is that millions of Americans forced to lay out money for a digital TV (DTV) converter box may still be left with no service or TV signals

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 EIGHTH 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 (gilman.howard@gmail.com). 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.

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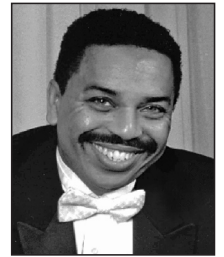
Our web site: www.essexethical.org

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

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to ethicalessex@netscape.com to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

A COMMUNITY CONCERT

Songs of Love, by Richard Alston, Saturday, May 16, at 7 p.m.



Maestro Richard Alston, our Ethical Neighbor, and world-class classical pianist, will grace us with a recital, "Songs of Love: Concert with Commentary". Mr. Alston will perform (on our new Baldwin grand piano) works by Schumann, Chopin, Kreisler, Thalberg, Busoni, Gershwin and Rossini. According to Betty Allen, president emeritus of the Harlem School of the Arts, he is "...outgoing, warm and exciting. Music seems to pervade his very body. When he performs, the infectious love of music is immediately transmitted ... Plays with sensitivity, lyricism, as well as virtuosity." Refreshments will be served. Donations appreciated.

at all. Tom Allibone presents evidence and warns that those who choose to enjoy free TV via the public airwaves which broadcasters are required to provide, may be left without service and with DTV converter boxes that don't pick up signals. Tom will address the real picture, what we are not being told, who *is* at fault and who is at risk.

Tom Allibone, President of LTC Consulting, is the Director of TeleTruth's Auditing Division and Chairman of the TeleTruth New Jersey Chapter. He has been a telecommunications professional with over 30 years experience.



Why a Nobel Peace Prize for Pete?

Pete Seeger is an ambassador for Peace and Social Justice and has been over the course of his 88-year lifetime. Using his prowess as a musician he worked to engage other people, from all walks of life and across generations, in causes to build a better and more civilized world: His work shows up wherever you look in the history of labor solidarity, growth of mass effort to end the Vietnam war, ban of nuclear weapons, work for international diplomacy, support of the Civil Rights Movement, for cleaning up the Hudson River and for environmental responsibility in general. Pete knit the world together with songs from China, the Soviet Union, Israel, Cuba, South Africa and Republican Spain. We learned that Crispus Attucks, born a slave, was the first man to die at the opening of the Revolutionary War, that the Farmer-Labor party in the

mid-west had a socialist philosophy that lasted well into the 20th century, we learned that anti-slavery movements were often inspired by songs that indicated a map of escape, such as "Follow the Drinkin' Gourd," he popularized many of the IWW songs that helped in CIO organizing, and spread the Civil Rights Movement through promoting the SNCC Freedom Singers and making songs such as "We Shall Overcome," known all over the world.

When subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee in August of 1955, at the height of the McCarthy period, Pete defended himself on the basis of the First Amendment, the right of an American citizen to free association, not the Fifth Amendment, protection against self incrimination. When he was boycotted from earning a living and practicing his craft on a national scale Pete appeared at union meetings, summer camps, Junior High Schools, High Schools and Colleges. His pay at times was as little as \$5, but his value was priceless!

Pete also had his mentors: among them Paul Robeson, who said: "The Artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery..." It is time that a cultural worker receives the acknowledgement that, as Bertolt Brecht points out, "Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it." The cultural workers who know the power of the arts for social and political change, also know how difficult it is to gain recognition for cultural creation without either trivializing the art or somehow qualifying for designation of "high art" by an elite. Pete Seeger always held to the principals that people's music is not

only “good art” but is representational art through music. That reality often refers to the conditions of exploitation and oppression that were apparent to formally uneducated folk. Thus “folk music” was not cute or quaint or obsolete, but through Pete, a living, vibrant form of culture.

Pete is again the Pied Piper of an historic environmental movement. When I was a child in New York City the Hudson River was an open sewer, GE alone pumped a million pounds of PCB's into it. Pete developed the idea for the Sloop Clearwater, modeled after Hudson fishing vessels in the 19th century when the river supplied fresh fish for people from Albany to Manhattan; he suggested having song festivals along the river banks to bring attention to cleaning up the river. Of course the idea was derided by everybody except those who knew Pete; he said, “You can't expect people to fight for a cleaner river until they learn to love it.” People learned to love the idea that there were things they could do to clean the river. They pitched in, they cleaned the river, now there is a floating pool where children can swim and the Shad and Sturgeon are edible again. In a segment of the otherwise brutal sitcom Law and Order on CBS a character says, “The Hudson River's clean now, thanks to Pete Seeger!”

... It is time that cultural work receives the recognition that the arts have great influence and global reach, that it is not only a medium of entertainment but of education, compassion and action. It is the desire of the committee that Pete Seeger be recognized as a beacon of integrity and principle in a time, and in a country, more defined by the absence of those qualities than by their honor.

— Eleanor Walden

[Activist Eleanor Walden helped organize the Freedom Song Network, a group of singers and songwriters who perform in support of social justice causes.]

REGISTER NOW!

June 11-14, 2009

**American Ethical Union
94th Annual Assembly**

Hosted by: Ethical Society Mid Rivers. *Where:* Comfort Inn Airport & Conference Center, St. Louis, Missouri. *Please visit the website to view the Assembly Programming and to Register:*

www.regonline.com/aeu

or **www.aeu.org**

For information, call the AEU at

212-873-6500

EVENTS / FUNDRAISERS

Garage Sale, May 2 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We need your donated items! Please bring them from March to April 26 to the Society, marked “Garage Sale” and your name. Place them in the small sun room next to the parlor. If you have items not listed below that you would be willing to sell and donate, you may set up your own table. You will be responsible for set up, selling and clean up. All proceeds will go to the Society.

The items we want must be new or nearly new, small saleable items to be placed on tables, e.g.: jewelry, tools, knick-knacks, games, toys, stationery, cosmetics, toiletries, unopened gifts.

We will not accept large items, or any books, records, garden items, furniture, computers, typewriters, electrical appliances, clothing, shoes, handbags etc.

For information, call Nancy Bohn at (973) 762-0513 or Jeanine Rosh at (973) 258-9395.

Annual Day in the Country

June 21st at 12 noon is our annual afternoon at Boe's Place — A Day in the Country. And yes, the lake is still there, too. This has become a highlight of the summer season. Boe is the host

extraordinaire, opening her home and her heart to as many as will come. The food is always wonderful, and the camaraderie is great. Eat, drink, swim, paddle, hike, and chat. \$25 per person. No charge for children. Rain date is Sunday, June 22nd. Call the office or Jeanine Rosh to reserve.

— Jeanine M. Rosh

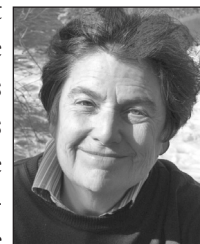
LEADER'S ARTICLE

Rights of Gay and Lesbian People to Marry

A first page article in the N.Y. Times announced that the State of Vermont has officially backed same sex marriage as a legal right. It is certainly a landmark event. The legislators successfully overrode the governor's initial veto of the bill. This makes the great state of Vermont the first state in the Union to grant this right to same sex couples through a legislative act, as distinct from judicial action.

In 2000, Vermont became the fourth state to adopt civil unions for gay couples. It is now the fourth state to allow same sex marriage. The others are Iowa, Connecticut and Massachusetts. In contrast, 26 states have adopted laws against same sex marriage.

Sadly, New Jersey is not among the enlightened and has not yet recognized the rights of gay and lesbian people to marry. The institution of marriage not only meets the needs of a heterosexual couple to form a more perfect and lasting union, but also in general creates more stability in human relations and creates a more stable setting for raising children. The failure to make this institution available to gays and lesbians is not only a disservice to those who wish to marry. It is also a disservice to those orphans living in institutions who might otherwise have found a home with a same sex couple. — Boe



ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · MAY 2009

FROM THE UN

Population and The Status of Women

Population matters! The numbers affect all the planning for everything that contributes to human wellbeing. Everything — food, water, poverty, environmental stress, children's education, jobs, the needs of the elderly — everything that determines the quality of life is affected.

The UN tracks population and revises its estimates every two years. The UN's projection of trends are not forecasts because they have to depend on assumptions about the "agequake", the large increase in longevity, and the fertility rate, the number of children born per woman during a lifetime.

In most countries, rich and poor, people are living longer and women are having fewer children. These facts have profound effects.

The UN's estimate of the current world's population is projected to rise from 6.8 billion to 9.1 billion by 2050. The catch — and it is a big one — is that this estimate is dependent on the continuing drop in fertility by the poor. In an already large population, small differences in the fertility rate have huge consequences. If fertility stops dropping, world population will

reach 11 billion, a formidable increase. Currently, about half of the world's poor are very young, younger than 25. In the world's worst-off countries, the percentage is 60%, a politically explosive condition when so many lack jobs and even hope for a decent life.

What we do now matters!

The agequake of people over 60 is projected as 416 million in the richer countries and 1.6 billion in the poorer countries, the biggest increase. Their needs must be met.

Immigration, a safety valve for the poor, will keep the richer countries' population steady in spite of their lower birth rate. But in the poor countries, even very small increases in the fertility rate means enormous numbers of needy youths demanding the basic necessities for a life.

The 1974 and 1984 UN conferences concentrated on numerical population goals. The language "population control" and "overpopulation" used at the time seemed as if the wealthy were trying to limit the numbers of the poor and people of color, men trying to control women. In spite of this resentment and religious resistance, the fertility rate has continued to drop since the Cairo conference of 1994.

This Cairo Conference, based on extensive research and much lobbying,

concluded that the key to an achievable plan for stabilizing world population lay in the status of women, and in giving women the opportunity to have the children they want, and not by forcing them to have them against their will. It is not surprising that it took so long for women's rights to be considered. Issues such as abortion, contraception, family planning, sex education for teenagers, education for girls and equal civil rights for women still arouse passions worldwide.

Fertility is the key variable in the population story. Why do women and families want fewer children? The movement from countryside to cities, the very important reduction in child mortality, opportunities for women to have paid work — all of these lead to a greater emotional and physical investment in a smaller number of children.

200 million women lack access to family planning resources. This a vital concern for the world's well being and an ethical issue for humanists.

— Phyllis Ehrenfeld
and Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld,

[Phyllis Ehrenfeld, President National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and Representative to the UN; Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld, International Humanist Ethical Union Representative to the UN]