



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 1

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

SEPTEMBER 2002

Leader's Message

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ESSEX,

I hope your summer days have given you some respite from the workaday world of imperious schedules and deadlines. My summer holiday has been good for me, refreshing and renewing. Meeting so many Humanists from all over the world at the IHEU Conference in Holland was inspiring. Experiencing life in two of the most humanistic governments in Europe (Norway and Holland) was deeply moving. All citizens receive



medical care and all are supported in times of real need. I felt strangely at home — in fact, more at home than when home. It was a pleasure to speak with strangers and find similar commitments to issues concerning ecology, peace, international cooperation and a general acceptance of communal responsibility. It was good for a while to not be a minority voice. Not only the social but also the physical experiences worked a sort of magic for me. Climbing on Norway's awesome glaciers and balancing between yawning chasms helped to focus the mind dramatically. Consequently I was not totally surprised to see that upon returning home, I took great pleasure in simple things and was able to tackle routine or even tedious tasks with more energy and less resistance than previously.

Yet within but a few days my sunny disposition was soon tempered by the news that a sterling young couple (Cindy and Carter) that I had married a few years ago in Santa Fe had just suffered the loss of their unborn daughter. I had known Cindy since she was a child because she is the daughter of a lifelong friend. Cindy and Carter are jugglers and when they exchanged rings at their wedding, they also exchanged the larger rings of their art. And when they processed out of the hall, they did so under a broad archway formed by the sailing clubs of their colleagues. They are ceaselessly innovative

in their work, constantly inventing new types of performance which never fail to delight adults and children throughout the world. As the ceremony clearly shows, they also bring the same creativity to their personal life. Yet for all their vivacity, the loss of their unborn child was devastating, especially for Cindy. While I was still thinking how to best respond to her, I received a ten page memoir written by Cindy about the ordeal. In it she describes their experience — from the initial awareness of pregnancy, to the anticipation of a child, and then the loss and her efforts to cope with it. The true coping method, however, is the writing itself. It is cathartic. It is filled with joy, hysteria, sadness and art. In it she makes allusions to Moby Dick, Job and the Biblical story of Rachel. In so doing, she joins her personal experience to the strands of our common human fate and our universal vulnerability. While this does not bring solace, it does bring some balance.

I have shared these recent personal experiences with you in part because they are relevant to the subject of the address with I shall give at our first Sunday Meeting on September 8 when I speak on the topic of "The Arts of Living: Sources of Human Renewal and Human Endurance." Bring your thoughts on this topic to share as well.

Till then, *Boe*

PHIL SOSIS, long-time member and friend of our Society, passed away in June of this year.

By strange coincidence, I happened to visit with him a few days before he died. He shared his beautiful poetry and I promised to read some for opening words.

On the next page are the words of his wife, Suzanne Gluck-Sosis, delivered at his funeral in New England.
—Boe

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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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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of Essex County,
516 Prospect St.,
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President's Column

I took this job, imbued with a purpose that we must effect some meaningful changes in our Society now, or in ten years or less we won't have one. Period. The end. That's why I took the job.

In the last years I have grown to feel that there was "something missing" in our Society, but I was never able to define it. It was that inexplicable element that caused some very viable members to depart, often deserting to other congregations.

It has occurred to me that we do have a society, but what we don't have is a Community: and I believe that is the missing element for growth, for retaining the loyalty of the current members and attracting new members. We must build for ourselves a Community and really figure out what that means.

Fortunately, community building isn't rocket science. Books have been written and other successful denominations have studied the methods in detail. As President, I am going to convene a Community Building Committee to study the process. In effect, as I see it we need a Committee for the Future of the Society.

And lest we not forget, I see the continuing issues of Lenox Avenue, membership growth, and the upkeep and improvements to the building as preeminent items on the agenda for this year.

—Susan Kennedy

Celebration of Life

My words at Phil's Celebration of Life Service,

All Souls' Church, Greenfield, Ma., Saturday, June 29, 2002

I would like to talk with Phil about our time together. Remember, we discovered we were soul mates. We had known each other for 30 years and were unaware of that fact. My perception of you was that you were a powerful being who moved forcefully and determinedly in the world fighting for the rights of others. I admired that.

Remember, Phil, when Ellie was ill and finally died and I acted as your support group? I noted and appreciated your loyalty, devotion and steadfastness to your wife. I observed that you knew who you were, were proud of it, and exulted in the joy and struggle of life.

A few months after she passed on in June of 1994, you underwent a triple bypass. And were advised you had Parkinson's Disease. We already had a deep sense of trust in each other. So we proceeded with plans to wed. We were married at the Essex Ethical Culture Society in New Jersey in 1995 and moved to Greenfield a year later. We thought we were in heaven! This was a whole new world — one that we were delighted with: it fit your vital, dynamic, passionate throbbing for freedom, peace and justice for each human in this vast universe....

And lastly, remember that the most precious part of our relationship was loving to embrace each other flesh to flesh — we were one — we are one. You are me — and I am you.

Thank you for a great adventure! Peaceful journey, my dear, sweet prince!

—Suzanne Gluck-Sosis

Social Action Committee to meet Sunday, September 22, 2002 at 12:30, after the Platform.

The Social Action Committee's last meeting before a summer break was on June 2, 2002. We began with agreement to write a letter to the New Jersey Senators and to the local paper in opposition to development of the "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetration" device as likely to increase problems with nuclear proliferation. The letter appeared in the *News-Record* on June 13, 2002.

Next, Betty Levin reported on her project for activating our 20 year old Peace Site. She has obtained agreement from Naomi Drew to do a three hour Conflict Resolution training session on November 2, 2002 from 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM. Up to 60 people can be trained, and

they will come probably from local peace organizations and other organizations. We will probably charge \$25 to 30 (there was some discussion about whether the cost was too high—there will be scholarships available). After the trainer's reduced fee is paid, there might be some money left for the Society.

We then spent the largest portion of the meeting discussing what action to take concerning the Resolution passed by the Society on Physician-Aided-Dying. It was decided that, because of the actual wording of the resolution, a letter to the American Ethical Union describing our Society's action should be the first step. Seymour pointed out that the AEU had already passed a resolution on this issue some years back. Next, we discussed the possibility of a general press release

because, since the society voted on a public issue, it would seem proper to make it public. Further discussion expressed the continuing fears of the issue causing division within the Society as well as general fears that a decriminalization of PAD might lead to terrible abuses for the poor and disabled.

Finally, we came to a consensus that Sue would draft an op-ed style piece describing the process of working through the issue that the Society has gone through, and the eventual outcome. This op-ed piece, after feedback from the entire committee, was published in the *News Record*. To read the piece, see "Forum on Physician Aided Dying" at our web page, <http://www.essexethical.org>.

Our next meeting will be Sunday, September 22, 2002 at 12:30, after the Platform. Please join us!

"Creating Peace in Violent Times"

We are activating our Peace Sites in New Jersey!

Our first dynamic program to activate our peace sites is a workshop, "Creating Peace in Violent Times," conducted by Naomi Drew on Saturday afternoon, November 2, 1:30-4:30. Hold that date. She has had 3 books published on peace, with a 4th coming out September 11, 2002. As she says: "A world of peace starts with each of us — in our homes, communities and beyond. Become part of the solution." There will be a fee involved but a reduced fee for a participant who is a member of an organization that is a peace site, like the Ethical Culture Society. More information and a registration form will appear in the next newsletter.

Making Our Building Accessible — Let's All Support It!

I have committed myself to surveying our Members and Friends to raise money for acquiring an elevator to make our building accessible. This is both an ethical

and practical commitment, a "natural" choice for humanists. Expect a telephone call from me asking for a special contribution for this purchase. The cost is approximately \$10,000, a hefty sum. So write a BIG number on your checks when I telephone. Of course, all size contributions will be welcome. The first contributions have already been pledged (\$1,000 as of the latest tally). You don't even have to wait for my call — call me at 973-763-1033.

—Betty Levin

It's a Gift — Grateful Thanks!

We are the beneficiaries of the Divine Healers who purchased an air conditioner and hired an electrician to install it and create a separate electrical line.

\$600 Gift

In gratitude for Jim White's having performed the memorial service, the Siritoff Family, in memory of Evelyn Siritoff, has made a \$600 gift to the 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.*

**September 8—Boe Meyerson—
The Arts of Living: Sources of Human
Renewal and Human Endurance.** The
season begins with an address by
our leader, Boe Meyerson. Boe is
not only the leader of our Essex
Ethical Culture Society, but is also
the Humanist Chaplain at Colum-
bia University in New York City.

**September 15—Panel—Gay Par-
ents & Schools.** Several gay or lesbian
parents of children in Maple-
wood/South Orange schools discuss
their concerns and hopes for work-
ing with teachers, school administra-
tors, other parents and children to
foster a school environment of inclu-
sion for children of gay and lesbian
parents. Facilitator Kimi Nakata, co-
parent of a first-grade child in S.
Orange/Maplewood, is a public
health educator.

**September 22—David Rothen-
berg: Update on WBA.** David
Rothenberg has been with commu-
nity radio station WBAI 99.5 FM

for over thirty years. He was the
founder and first executive director
(for 18 years) of the Fortune Society,
a self-help organization for ex-
offenders. He has worked in the the-
ater, producer and
press rep for over
100 Broadway and
off-Broadway pro-
ductions including
Fortune and Men's
Eyes, which led
directly to the creation of the For-
tune Society. He has served on a
multitude of Boards and Commis-
sions including the New York City
Human Rights Commission, and
the Board of the NYCLU and the
National Council of Crime and
Delinquency. Rothenberg says, "A
woman named Christie Todd Whit-
man was also on that Board, which
means serving on a Board doesn't
mean you learn anything."



**September 29—Rowland Bennett:
Peace Corps Memories.** Rowland
Bennett was a college senior when
the Peace Corps, an initiative of
President Kennedy's new administra-
tion, sent volunteers abroad in 1961,
the first year of its existence. A year
later, he too was headed to Syracuse

University to begin training for a
Peace Corps project to provide
teachers for secondary education in
Malawi, Africa, where he served in
1963 and 1964. After Peace Corps,
Mr. Bennett married, studied librari-
anship and theology, and subse-
quently came to Maplewood to be
Library Director in 1974. He and
his wife settled in town and reared
two sons, who attended local schools
and Columbia High School. But the
Peace Corps never lost its grip on his
heart, and he continues to be active
in the National Peace Corps Associa-
tion and the Returned Peace Corps
Volunteers of New Jersey. He is pres-
ident of this latter group. His talk
will cover the origins of the Peace
Corps some 41 years ago, its stated
goals and unanticipated benefits, its
accomplishments and failures. He will
also make forecasts about changes
anticipated under George W. Bush
in a time when a "war against terror-
ism" has displaced the cold war
stance which was part of its founda-
tion when established back in 1961.

**October 6—Boe Meyerson:
The Wisdom of Spinoza**

**October 13—Larry Hamm:
Racial Profiling**