



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

53 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215 (718) 768-2972

Volume 93, no. 1

Upcoming Platforms

The Platform Committee has chosen the theme for this Season: *Finding personal, social, and natural meanings in times of transition*. Leader Lisel Burns plans to use different elements of this theme as a starting point for all her platform addresses this year. She will open the Season with three consecutive platforms, each exploring ways in which we find personal meanings in this constantly changing world:

September 20: Endings and Beginnings

September 27: Tradition and Culture

October 4: Building Local Community
(The Power of Place) with *Anne Klaeyesen*

For the rest of the Season, Lisel's addresses will be given on the first Sunday of every month. Two weeks prior to each First Sunday address, Lisel and the fledgling Adult Education Group will host a potluck dinner and reflection on the upcoming topic. The potlucks are open to all who plan to attend the First Sunday platform, and all those interested in participating in reflective exploration of meaningful issues. The first potluck is Wednesday, September 16.

Also, on **October 25**, former Leader **Lois Kellerman** will be returning to BSEC to give her first platform address to the Society as "Leader Emeritus."

Leader Notes: Transition Breezes by Lisel Burns

In summer, the sounds at the Meeting house change. Fewer comings and goings interrupt the quiet. Summer breezes do bring neighborhood noises, but inside there are fewer groups meeting, and more building improvement projects.

One such day not long ago this summer, I was standing just outside the second floor Leader's Office while it was being prepared for painting. Sheila Kosoff came by, smiled and asked "Shall I order a new sign?" Just at my eye level, the current office sign looked back at me. It said: "Lois Kellerman, Leader." Noticing a slight clenching in my stomach area, I nodded and said, "Yes, please do that."

What happened? I didn't expect this. My normally reliable inner voice is telling me that no such sign change is needed. Lois Kellerman is the senior clergy Leader here. She is the person responsible for the open-ended (go til you drop or they shoot you) clergy and pastoral duties here. That same voice tells me that I, on the other hand, was hired by BSEC as a part-time Associate Leader, working largely within bounds of specific projects and time limits.

At the same time, I know differently. Lois, our Senior Leader for more than a decade, has gone.

We are in a new stage, of in-between, a stage we are calling "The Transition." An energetic Transition Committee, appointed by the Board and chaired by our President Charlie Horowitz, has adopted a creative one-year Transition Plan. I have agreed to serve the Society for the 98-99 Season, as an Interim Leader, committed long term to the Society (I'm not going anywhere soon). At the same time I may not continue on in the role of the primary clergy Leader at BSEC. The Transition Committee will propose a creative long-range plan in the Spring of '99, from one of many scenarios for the BSEC future we will have dreamed up together.

I like this plan. To me it already has the feel of a good community decision: good for the parties involved, good for the group as a whole, and consistent with our stated values. And it is a chance to postpone bigger decisions for a few months at least.

In a way, certainly for Lay Leaders and others active here, this leave-taking qualifies as a big loss or change in a relationship with someone who has been both important and close to us. Common sense tells us now is not a great time for big decisions. Wise are they who can refrain from selling the house, starting a big romance, or reinvesting all available savings in the first six months after a big change or loss. The good news is that we have given ourselves this time: an official interim period, a few months to help ourselves and the community respond to these changes at our best.

Making meaning out of it will take longer. Now is a time to reflect on roles and roads taken up to now, as well as some now barely visible on this year's map. It is a time to seek and stay open to new possibilities. I also see this upcoming Season as a chance "out of tradition", a chance to try things and name them "transition experiments", without worrying about setting BSEC precedents difficult to take back later.

And our transition is nothing compared to the culture-breaking, world-shaking economic

continued on the back page

Celebrating Traditions!

Bluegrass & Oldtime Jamboree September 25-27

The Good Coffeehouse, a Brooklyn Ethical Culture tradition for over twenty years, is starting a new tradition this season. On Friday, September 25th, at 8 PM James Reams and the Barnstormers kick off a weekend of bluegrass and old-time music. James Reams is well-known to many BSEC members as the living embodiment of the Kentucky mountain song. He has gigged and recorded with a host of legends, including players from the New Lost City Ramblers and John Herald of the Greenbrier Boys. Because he feels a responsibility not only to continue the tradition of bluegrass and old-time music, but also to increase interest and good will, Reams conceived of an annual Jamboree, a musical event including workshops, a jam and song-swap, dancing, children's activities, plenty of good food, and a performers' showcase. Saturday's festivities start at 12:30 PM and continue into the evening, with a "Brown Jug" award presentation scheduled for 10 PM. Admission to the Friday concert is \$8 at the door. A donation of \$1 is requested for Saturday's event. Carrying on the theme through Sunday, Leader Lisel Burns will present a platform service at 11AM entitled: "Traditions: Keeping Old Ones and Making New Ones."

Help start a new tradition at BSEC! Please volunteer to help with the Jamboree and join in the fun. For more information, call the office at 768-2972.

VIEWPOINT:

Ethics and the Law: Their Relation to Managed Care

by Dr. Abe Lieberman

In previous issues of "Ethically Speaking", I wrote about the abuses that were inherent in the practice of HMOs. With managed care becoming an ever greater presence on the scene, it might well be time to reflect on the difference between ethics and law.

The concept of managed care is a good one. But the abuses in the managed care industry are beginning to outweigh its potential benefits. Transactions in a commercial setting can be completely within the law, and yet at odds with ethical standards, especially when in a third party setting. The third parties, the insurance companies, are there to make money. And while the principle of "caveat emptor" is dominant, acceptable and legal in the marketplace, it is highly questionable in the patient-doctor relationship, where principles such as trust and honesty are indispensable.

It is clear that the ultimate criterion of the managed care entity will be financial. Legal? Yes. For profit? Surely. Ethical? That's not so certain.

The Mountain: A Very Personal View

by Ann Klaeysen

You might not know it to look at or listen to me, but I am essentially a skeptic and a cynic. Talk of the "religious" as transcendent or inspirational leaves me cold. I do not experience "Aha!" moments, but rather am grateful for the "Whew!" moments. So it was with mixed emotions that I faced the decision of whether to attend the AEU Lay Leadership Summer School at the Mountain in North Carolina. With my younger child due to graduate from Sunday School next May, and my older child showing no interest in Y.E.S., I was at a crossroads. My involvement with Ethical Culture, I realized, had been primarily an outgrowth of my children's enrollment in the Sunday School. Did Ethical Culture have any real meaning for me personally? And if so, what real contribution could I make? I sought answers at the Mountain.

The isolated rural setting in the mountains of western North Carolina was conducive to reflection. The magnificent view from the lodge -- waves of muted smoky ridges stretching to the horizon -- drew us together, embraced us. The AEU staff planned a rigorous schedule of philosophy lectures, organizational classes and practica, ceremonies, and "journey" dialogues, with enough free time for students to network, converse and play. I was impressed by the quality of the curriculum, the caliber of the staff, and the high level of intellect, wit and compassion among my fellow students. I delighted in each and every one of them, and have, since my return, spoken to, written or e-mailed all of them: my new Mountain congregation.

I still maintain my cynicism. Perhaps in this time and place I wear it as a defensive garment. But the texture of my life has changed since my week at the Mountain. I listen more acutely and speak more deliberately. I carry with me and cherish the many conversations I shared, the dancing, star-gazing and laughter. During the final leave-taking ceremony, I was surprised to feel my eyes burn and my lower jaw tremble, and comforted to fall into the arms of another and hold him tightly. Ah, to be human, to hold each other and our dreams dear.

Aha!

How NOT to Celebrate the 4th of July

by Marshall Dubin

Did you ever eat a thing called head-cheese?

Head cheese is not exactly a delicacy. In fact, the name itself is questionable. It has nothing to do with cheese as we know it.

Webster's International Dictionary defines head-cheese as "meat from a pig's or calf's head, boiled and pressed in a mold in its natural aspic." Not exactly a tasty dish, either in during or after the Fourth of July.

Yet, memory reminds me, that one unfortunate time during the 4th of July holiday, the United States army was obliged to serve this dish to a number of soldiers while they were on maneuvers in California. (The 13th Combat Engineer Battalion, U.S. Army, 1941)

For once, our officers were apologetic during maneuvers. We were informed that this particular dish was the only food available, but we were assured that we would be compensated with roast turkey at a time soon to come.

The Army kept its promise. We enjoyed the turkey and we did our best to forget this particularly misspent Fourth of July.

Head-cheese soon receded from the mind. I never came near this foul dish again.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**
53 PROSPECT PARK WEST
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
(718) 768-2972

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Sunday School: Remi Gay 768-2972

Youth Group: Rita Wilson & Tony Severo

Ethically Speaking is published six to ten times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Abe Lieberman, Marshall Dubin, Remi Gay, Alex Mogelieff, Lisel Burns, Tony Severo, Martha Hoffman, and Ann Klaeysen.

Ethically Speaking is written by a number of BSEC members. Views expressed in this publication are always open to friendly discussion. Our newsletter staff, like the membership at large, may vary in their thinking on many issues, yet we are all committed to putting deed before creed, and to strive constantly toward living out, each in our own particular way, the Ethical Ideal of eliciting the best from ourselves and others.

Visit our website!

<http://www.bsec.org>

SEPTEMBER 1998 BSEC CALENDAR

9/1 -9/12

TUESDAY 9/1

7:30 - 9PM: Brooklyn Women's Chorus directed by Bev Grant. Call 768-2972 for more information.

WEDNESDAY 9/2

6:30 - 10:30PM: Folk Open Sing with potluck supper & snacks. Bring your voice and instruments.

FRIDAY 9/4

6 - 9PM: Y.E.S. meeting, first Friday of every month.

TUESDAY 9/8

7:30 - 9PM: Brooklyn Women's Chorus

FRIDAY 9/11

Art exhibit opens.

9/13 -9/19

SUNDAY 9/13

10 AM - 12:30 PM: Children's Sunday Assembly Open House and Registration with breakfast. (see feature article)

1 - 3:30 PM:

Haiti Projects in Partnership meeting.

TUESDAY 9/15

6-7 PM: Meditations with Remi Gay. Guided meditation based on Native American practices to create peaceful mind. Newcomers and drop-ins welcome. Suggested donation \$2-10.

7:30 - 9PM: Brooklyn Women's Chorus

WEDNESDAY 9/16

6:30 PM: Adult Education Potluck Dinner at Leader Lisel Burns' home.

SATURDAY 9/19

Art exhibit closes.

9/20 -9/26

SUNDAY 9/20

10 AM - 12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly

11AM: Opening Platform Service with Leader Lisel Burns.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch

WEDNESDAY 9/23

7-9PM: Newcomers workshop with Leader Lisel Burns.

FRIDAY 9/25

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series: James Reams & the Barnstormers play bluegrass. Admission \$8 at the door.

SATURDAY 9/26

12:30 - 10:30PM: First Annual Park Slope Bluegrass & Old-Time Jamboree, including music workshops, song-swap, fiddle contest. children's activities, food.



9/27 -10/3

SUNDAY 9/27

10 AM - 12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly

11AM: Sunday Platform Service with Leader Lisel Burns.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

TUESDAY 9/29

6-7 PM: Meditations with Remi Gay.

7:30 - 9PM: Women's Chorus

FRIDAY 10/2

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents guitarist Danny Kalb in an evening of blues. Admission \$8 at the door.

Membership News

Rose Castro was hit by a Taxi in July, while crossing the street near her home in Chelsea. She is currently at home, recovering with a broken ankle, painting and enjoying the time.

Dorothy Klein underwent a hospital procedure this past month, and is doing fine.

Mary Holland and Mark Kaufman were back from Moscow briefly to celebrate their son Andy's first birthday with family and friends here in the New York Area.

Jeffrey Silverstein has been teaching in China for several years, and will be returning to the United States in September with his wife, Liu Yu.

Ann Klaeyesen, Remi Gay, and Bob Strock spent a transformational week in July as students at the second American Ethical Union Lay Leadership Summer School at the Mountain Retreat in Highlands, NC. Angela Lockhart, a student two years ago, was a member of the talented staff.

Don't forget your pledge!

Welcome back, everyone, to a new and exciting fall season at BSEC! As I enter my third season as Pledge Secretary, I am very proud to announce that we finished up the 1997-1998 fiscal year with over \$26,000 in pledge payments.

I believe at least part of this success is due to the "Pillar of the Society" campaign. To be counted as a "Pillar of the Society," all members are asked to consider pledging 2% of their net income to BSEC. This past year, about 15% of our members made the commitment to become "Pillars." In addition, many members who could not commit to pledging 2% of their net income nevertheless made a significant increase in their pledges.

At this time I would like to mention one special "Pillar" of our Society, our Leader Lisel Burns. Lisel not only pledged to be a "Pillar of the Society" last year, but she has also increased her annual pledge this year by \$100, and has made an even further commitment to try to increase her pledge by an additional \$100 each year. Her commitment to the Society is outstanding, and I hope that others will choose to follow her example.

To those who have already handed in their pledges for the new fiscal year, thank you! If you haven't already pledged, please make your pledge by the end of September. Extra pledge forms are available from me, Bruce Leibowitz, or at the literature table at Sunday platform.

Bruce Leibowitz, Pledge Secretary

Colloquy: Reflective Ceremony

At 11AM each Sunday morning this past August at the Meeting House, Constance Pigozzi, Rita Wilson, Angela Lockhart and others joined together for colloquy ceremonies. The services were well attended, and allowed a time of very meaningful reflection and sharing for those involved. Look for announcements of more colloquies to be held throughout the season.

Note from the Editor:

I welcome all criticisms, suggestions, questions, and praises, although not necessarily in that order. Submissions will be accepted based on deadlines, space, and appropriateness.

There is a Newsletter Mailbox at BSEC, but I really prefer to receive material via e-mail. Please send communication of all types to strock@mindspring.com, or contact the BSEC office at 768-2972.

Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

53 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York 11215

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Children's Sunday Assembly: Open House September 13

Our children's Sunday program meets every Sunday from 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM in the Poly Prep/Woodward School building, 49 Prospect Park West at 1st Street. Our program runs from September through May. Our focus is on the importance of ethics, personal responsibility, and choice; we foster religious tolerance and a multi-cultural perspective.

September's Curriculum Theme is: *Family Traditions (Our Human Heritage Part I)*. This month we look at our family backgrounds. We will share the differences between them and find the common elements that make us part of the human family. We will also prepare to be part of Heritage Weekend Platform on October 11th. September's Ethical Action Project is: *Taking care of our surroundings*.

In our Children's Sunday Assembly, we emphasize the importance of ethics, choice, and individual responsibility in our daily lives,

taught on a level appropriate for the age of the child. The importance of right relationship to friends and family, and our connection to the world around us, be it neighborhood, city, or planet, is an ongoing concern of our curriculum. Children have an opportunity to learn respect for, as well as facts about, many religious and cultural traditions. In addition, we have celebrations and activities that acknowledge the urge to share the good times and the bad, and the passages of life that we all experience as human beings.

If these concerns are your concerns, please come by and check out our program. We have a special open house on Sunday, September 13, from 10 AM to Noon, after which our gorgeous garden will be open for a potluck picnic. If you cannot attend that day, registration is open throughout our school year. Call 768-2972 for more information.

- Remi Gay, Director

Religious Education Retreat: Fellowship Farm, Philadelphia PA October 16-18

For Sunday School teachers, parents, youth, families, and anyone interested in religious education in Ethical Culture. Come for one day, overnight, or for the entire weekend. For information and registration, contact the BSEC office, or Margaretha Jones at the AEU 212 873-6500.

Cost should never be a reason not to attend. If you would like to attend the conference, but are concerned about finances, please contact the office to discuss sponsorship options.

Sponsor a Y.E.S. Member!!!

Several members of the YES group (Youth in Ethical Societies) will be attending the full retreat. If you would like to sponsor a YES member for half or more of the cost, please contact the Tony Severo at 854-0710, or Rita Wilson at 284-0241. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Leader Notes, continued from page one...

transitions now affecting every local community on the globe. Forces are operating out there with a minimum of moral accountability (and not a single BSEC Transition Committee in sight). If we clarify our own ways of seeing, being, and doing in the coming months, I think we will be able to make better choices as we continue to try to have a positive influence in the larger community.

It is a great privilege to love both the work and the people you work with and for. If this working companionship with people of purpose and delightful integrity, the experience I'm having this summer working with many of you, is the job offer for the year ahead, it couldn't be better. Thank you. I think it's going to be a good year.

Lisel Burns, Leader

Art Exhibit at Meeting House September 11-19

An exhibit of fine art, organized by Antoinette Valiente, will find its home at BSEC in September. Painter Kathleen O'Rourke, an Art Therapist at the Prospect Park Nursing Home, will be exhibiting her work in the Meeting Room. Sculptor Suzanna Starr will be presenting her pieces in the Sun Room.

All are encouraged to drop by the meeting house to enjoy the work of these talented individuals. For more information contact the BSEC office at 768-2972.

See the world as your self.
Have faith in the way things are.
Love the world as your self;
then you can care for all things.

- Tao Te Ching