

# THE TRICORN

NEWSLETTER published jointly by the BOSTON +  
LONG ISLAND + PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS COUNCILS

March, 1982

## Colby: A Fresh Enticement

"Communication for Understanding" was the theme of Colby Week last summer. One of the readings took participants into the special problems in cross-cultural communication. This summer, Colby will focus entirely on "Communicating Across Cultures", with discussions based on a wide range of brilliant books, works of both ideas and imagination. Seminal French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, internationally acclaimed Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and South African playwright Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* are among them.

No theme could be more worthy of consideration. New world crises burst upon us constantly, while the old crises smoulder unresolved. Weapons of doom fill the arsenals of ever more nations. There is world-wide paranoia about the intentions of those on the other side of the frontier. We must learn to know each other and drive the phantoms away. Clearly, we must live together or we must die together.

Haynes Johnson, *Washington Post* correspondent and *Washington Week* panelist wrote last December, "We need to know more about the economic forces shaping these critical, volatile new nations, to understand their history, their culture, their religious heritage, and a great deal more about the people who lead them . . . It's not a matter of do-good innocent Americans wanting to be loved by reaching out, in our old missionary style, with our familiar philanthropic impulses, to alien cultures. It's a matter of pure self-interest, perhaps even survival. Before we can deal with our enemies properly, we have to understand them. At least we ought to know that they are something more solid than phantoms on a TV screen."

The introduction to papers from a Unesco conference, "Getting the Message Across," notes that "No doubt each culture has its own inner logic, and different countries may have very different economic problems. And it would be fine if all that was needed for the success of a large-scale, long-term development programme was the communication of technical knowledge and the provision of necessary resources. But the myriad day-to-day judgements that have to be given in the execution of such a programme will depend at many points on motivational factors. To put it in a nutshell: without a Yankee ethos, can you reasonably expect a Yankee success? . . . there comes a point at which the apparatus of modern communications can do irreparable damage by intruding too deeply into the delicate equilibrium of values and expectancies that is so crucial to the self-respect of a culture. It is easier to restore a polluted landscape than a corrupted culture." Obviously, cross-cultural communication is at the same time enormously difficult and pressingly necessary.

With this topic, Colby as usual will offer wonderful discussions with the best of companions. Places are always completely filled in the spring. To assure your participation, send your reservation at once for this year's Great Books Summer Institute at Colby College, Waterville, Maine, August 8-14. Rooms, meals, books, and all social events are included in the \$220.00 cost. The \$110.00 per person deposit is refundable, less the charge for books and mailing, if you cancel before July 1, 1982. Please let us know how you want your name listed, if you want to be in a leaderless group or have a different leader for each discussion, and whether you want a no-smoking group (if it can be arranged). Please make your check payable to The Colby Summer Institute Committee, C/O Isadore S. Wachs, 1822 Lewis Tower Bldg., 15th and Locust Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19102.

## A Testimonial

With winter here, it is difficult to recall the warm, sunny days we spent at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Being novice Great Bookers, the one week we spent discussing some truly great works (and some not so great) made an enormous and lasting impression. The enthusiasm was catching — people would spill out of their groups, still talking about the books we'd read, continuing on throughout the day, sometimes to bubble up again at the Wachs Works, or at late night parties in dorm rooms.

The kinship of the group was another astounding feature. Concern that people would be stuffy intellectuals was way off the mark. The camaraderie was unique, especially in an amalgam of people of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

We look forward to seeing you next year!

Roxanne and Hank Bernstein

## Clearing-house for Dates

To avoid bumping dates for regional institutes, the TRICORN will serve as a clearing-house for scheduling. **All Councils:** Let the TRICORN know dates you choose tentatively for upcoming seminars so that conflicts with other Councils can be avoided. This March, Boston and Wilmington have scheduled institutes for the same date, forcing a number of participants to choose between them, and of course lowering attendance figures for both.

## Help Wanted

If the return address on your TRICORN is 5800 Tulip St., Philadelphia, your cooperation is earnestly requested.

In order to ascertain how many of its recipients actually read the TRICORN, we beg a small favor of you. **Please** return the tear-off below to Mack Blank, 4750 Larchwood Ave., Phila., PA 19143. (If you prefer, use a postcard, marking the back "Tricorn Survey," and giving your name and address.)

And just to add a little interest, a respondent drawing will be held within the next 30 days. The winner will be sent a non-great book guaranteed to be of interest.

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Dear Mack:

I read the TRICORN.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## BOSTON NEWS

### *Charlie Djerf: A Man to Remember*

Who was Charlie Djerf? What is the Djerf Memorial Fund? Newer Boston Great Bookers ask these questions when they learn of the fund, which underwrites special projects, and provides scholarships to Great Books events. But how to describe Charles Djerf, M. D.? Physician? Educator? Humanitarian? Gadfly? Charlie was all of these, and more.

As a physician, his concern for humanity was all-encompassing. Though his pediatric practice was large and demanding, he found time to play the gadfly and prod officials, the medical fraternity, and others to form the South Shore Medical Health Center, which today serves nearly every community south of Boston. This concern for humanity directed him, in the mid-'60's, to the pitiful condition of young drug users. Frustrated by the lack of proper treatment centers, he started treating them illegally himself, jeopardizing his practice. Again he became the prodder, besieging local police, school officials, industry, and medical groups to do something for those so desperately in need. He formed a committee of these people, and with them investigated treatment centers in other cities; promoted fund-raising activities; interviewed prospective staff members; contributed the use of a building for the first center; and after two years of effort founded Survival, Inc., today rated one of the best such facilities by federal investigators.

When it came to Great Books, his enthusiasm was endless. In 1960, when Chicago could no longer supply services, he, along with Persis Johnson, Lorna Feeley, and others founded and incorporated the present Metropolitan Boston Council. He encouraged, even goaded everyone with whom he came in contact to become Great Bookers. Before his death, the area south of Boston boasted the greatest concentration of active Great Books groups in the country. In 1961, Charlie, Persis, and Lorna, along with Is Wachs and others in the Philadelphia Council, established the Colby Committee. I need not tell any Great Booker what a tremendous event this Summer Institute has become.

Charlie Djerf's interests and energy ranged more widely yet. When he was dissatisfied with the quality of education in Quincy, he waged a vigorous campaign and was elected to the School Committee. Later, he helped to establish Quincy Community Junior College. Is that all? By no means – 25 years or so ago, he played trombone with a fledgling symphony orchestra – today the Quincy Symphony Orchestra is a large, well-organized group which presents four or five concerts each year.

Still more? Yes, he radiated love and was much loved in return. I have a feeling that if Charlie were looking over my shoulder (and he could well be – he got around!) he would tell me to "cut out the baloney." So I will. I'll let Is Wachs read this to him – they converse regularly!

Charlie suffered his first heart attack at Colby, and after recovering, resumed his practice and other activities. He was lost to us on February 13, 1973. To honor this remarkable man, both the Colby Committee and the Boston Council established memorial funds – the former to provide scholarships to the Colby Institute, and the latter to promote Boston leader training and special events.

Frank Vallier, Treasurer, Boston Council

### **Boston Officers**

The Metropolitan Boston Council recently reelected its officers for another term, and added two new members to its Board of Directors. The officers remain Walter Levison, President; Ann Mogan, Vice-President; Eleanor Jenson, Secretary; and Frank Vallier, Treasurer. Elected to new three-year terms as Directors were Watson Greenfield and Christine Silva; Ed Geschelin, Ann Levison, and Ginny Thurston were reelected for additional three-year terms.

## Boston Great Books Presentation to Librarians

Two leaders from the Boston Council presented the Great Books program to a group of 14 librarians at the semi-annual convention of the Massachusetts Library Association on January 21. Boston board member Jack Hockett, a local library trustee, set up the initial contact with the association; John Mogan and Ann Levison made the presentation.

John opened the hour-long program with a brief history of Great Books, after which Ann led a short discussion of Yeats' poem, "The Long-Legged Fly." Only one of the librarians had had previous experience with Great Books, but the discussion was enthusiastic, fruitful, and remarkably free of literary allusion and "outside authority."

When the discussion was over, Ann conducted a brief analysis of it. She focused on the role of the leader as moderator rather than teacher, showing how the leader's questions were meant to open up issues, not elicit certain answers. She pointed out how all the insights about the poem had come from the group itself. The idea was to demystify the leading process so that librarians interested in starting groups in their own towns might consider learning to lead the groups themselves.

Money was the theme of the library convention, since Massachusetts libraries are currently threatened by state cutbacks resulting from the infamous new Proposition 2½, an austerity measure inspired by California's Proposition 13. In his closing remarks, John Mogan emphasized that a single Great Books program brings at least 20 or so residents into the library every two weeks at almost no cost – an argument useful to a library seeking funds from its municipal government.

The librarians appeared favorably impressed with the discussion and with John's persuasive remarks. Nearly all requested more information and follow-up contact, so we hope to get at least a few new local groups from the day's work.

## Ibsen in Boston

About 120 Great Bookers from the Boston area attended a production of Ibsen's *The Master Builder* on a Sunday afternoon in February. The Metropolitan Boston Council sponsors such a low-cost, low-key winter event annually; this year's event, run by Connie Lawson, was a sell-out.

The Lyric Stage on Boston's Beacon Hill is a tiny repertory theatre whose production of *The Master Builder* was excellent – imaginatively staged and insightful. After the performance the cast and director sat with the audience for a half-hour or so to talk about their conception of the play and to respond to questions and comments. Serious actors and directors evidently put the same kind of effort into sorting out the motivations of their characters and understanding the intentions of the author as Great Bookers do. The difference is, at least in this case, that the cast decides on a particular reading of the play. "It's good for us to have this chance to talk with an audience," the director remarked, "because we can see whether we're putting across what we want to put across."

Interestingly, though, none of the ambiguity of Ibsen's play was lost, despite the cast's attempt to present a single, coherent interpretation. For instance, the Lyric company had the advantage of having read a letter of Ibsen's in which he made it clear that Halvard Solness "definitely fell" from the tower, lured by Hilda, whom Ibsen termed "an avenging angel." Nevertheless, there was enough evidence in both the play itself and in the actors' emphases to support the view that Halvard might at least have wanted to fall – and that ambiguity came across in spite of both Ibsen's and the cast's conscious intentions.

The afternoon was an unqualified success. Cheap enough at \$5.50 to appeal to a wide audience, it seemed to be as stimulating to the actors as to the Great Bookers.

## Old and New Leader Training

Reading the December '81 TRICORN made me aware of how old a Great Books old-timer I really am. The article about Wilmington using and preferring the old leadership training program brought back memories and ideas I hadn't thought about for years. As someone who trained and worked with both techniques, I feel compelled to add my two cents to the discussion. (Ed. note: This makes 4¢ that has come in so far.)

It is important to remember that when Great Books began, knowledge of group dynamics barely existed. Today we know much more about such things as table arrangements, authority roles, and emotional components of questions. It is easy to forget how far we have come since the days when leading Great Books discussions was something of an art form.

The old technique called for a great deal more individual style on the part of leaders, most of which I recall as unfortunately quite bad. There is no question that some of the most exciting discussions I have ever participated in have been under the old technique. These were discussions where the leaders had such control of and respect for the material that they were able to move gracefully and creatively in and out of the discussion, giving the participants a lovely opportunity to explore the mind of the author (my ideal, incidentally, of what constitutes a good discussion). The group flew and the experience was fantastic. Unfortunately, some of the worst discussions I was in also used the old technique.

I realized what the flaws of this leading style were. It contained almost no controls for either the group or the leader. Frequently leaders reacted to a minor segment of the author's work and kept the entire discussion on that small point. Leaders also spent hours agonizing over opening questions, as if one question alone could be magical enough to sustain a good two-hour discussion. There was also a lot of wallowing around in "feeling" questions — third level/evaluation types. In addition, some leaders had so many unrelated questions to pose that discussions became jumpy, disconnected, and skittered across the surface of the work. Also part of the old technique was the use of generalized canned questions Chicago had developed: "Questions to use in a philosophical work"; or "Questions for a work of history." These were terrible for discussion as they were never specific to the work.

Thus very early in the game I realized I had to focus the technique. I hit upon the procedure of breaking each work into the areas I felt the author was discussing, generally three to five. Since the discussion of one concept often required the understanding of another, I then ranked the areas to make sure the discussion would proceed in a coherent manner. I worked out a question for each area and noted page references. This eliminated discovering in the last fifteen minutes that the group had misread the basic concept of the book.

Then the Foundation developed the new technique in the early '60's. Maybe others were having the same problems I had with the limitations of the old technique, or maybe more was known by now about the whole process and this seemed a good time to develop new material. When I became Philadelphia Coordinator, the new technique had been taught for a few years, and it seemed important for me to become familiar with the format the new leaders were using. I discovered that my own practice of dividing books into important areas was an elementary version of the new basic question and follow-up cluster technique. I found the new a vast improvement over the old, removing its greatest evils while only moderately curtailing its strengths. It freed leaders to really listen to their groups, instead of worrying about what they would do next. I have never seen a leader leading in the new technique do as bad a job as leaders sometimes did with the old style. I never went back. Neither, may I add, did any of the other old leaders who took the new training.

So my message to Wilmington is of course do as you wish. Each of us in Great Books does. In my opinion, though, you are just reinventing the wheel. What might make you happiest is getting the basic question system under your belt and then flying with it. When I was coordinator, I used to tell my new leaders that the technique was like a recipe. It worked. If you got bored with it or felt it could be improved, you could change it to suit yourself, just as you could alter a recipe. But when you hit disaster (and we all know discussions like unrisen souffles) you could return to the original and work out what went wrong.

Annabel Lindy

## LONG ISLAND NEWS

### Classics Series Available

Sets of Great Books series C and D are available on Long Island. Call 516/581-5082 if you need these sets. Fast delivery can be arranged.

### Carl Heyel's *The Manager's Bible* Published

For the top executive, or the middle manager ready to move up, Carl Heyel, a recognized authority on management skills, has gathered over 100 real-life episodes, scenarios, vignettes and parables that dramatize the dozens of problems managers at all levels are likely to encounter in the course of a business career. The book appeared last October. Carl Heyel says, "Maybe TRICORN readers will be interested to learn that as leader of the Manhasset Library's Great Books program for seven years, I decided I should write a book as well as discuss books written by others."

### Plutzer Plans Seminar

In cooperation with the Men's Club and Ladies Guild of West End Temple in Neponsit, Long Island, Jesse Plutzer has arranged a one-day seminar on the theme "In Our Continuing Search for Values - Who Is Dead - God, Man, or Both?" Participants will discuss Erich Fromm's *You Shall Be as Gods* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes From Underground*. Call Jesse Plutzer at 212/634-1739 for further information.

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### Long Island Council One Day Institute

Join us at the Welwyn Conference Center and Woodland Preserve on Long Island's "Gold Coast" to discuss the good life and its relation to economic and political systems.

The theme:	Society and \$elf interest
The readings:	<i>Power and the Powerless</i> - Michael Parenti <i>Two Cheers for Capitalism</i> - Irving Kristol
The place:	Welwyn - the imposing Georgian mansion, one of six built on adjoining properties in Glen Cove by the sons of oil magnate and philanthropist Charles M. Pratt.
The date:	Sunday, June 20
The investment:	\$14.00 (includes books & modest lunch in sumptuous setting)

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Mail to: Long Island Great Books Council, P. O. Box 821, Port Washington, NY 11050.  
Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places at the Long Island Institute, at \$14.00 each.

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

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## PHILADELPHIA NEWS

### Mary Donahoe Memorial

The Philadelphia Great Books Council has established the Mary Donahoe Leader Training Fund to honor its sadly missed past president. Since Mary worked zealously to see that new leaders were continually available to sustain the program, training scholarships will be the disposition of this memorial fund. Chairman Bob Blumenthal would be glad to receive contributions from Mary's friends everywhere. His address is: 1205 Cromwell Rd., Wyndmoor, PA 19118.

### Leader Training Course

Coordinator Fran Jacobs and Trainer Sibyl Cohen will plan the next Philadelphia Leader Training course as soon as a viable number of students request training. If you are interested in becoming a leader, please contact Fran Jacobs at IV-2-1367, or write to her at 7517 Valley Ave., Phila., PA 19128.

### Philadelphia 23rd Annual Spring Institute

**SURVIVAL!** How can we ensure survival for ourselves and our children? To be certain of surviving at an honorable level, how should man live? How should man love?

At the Philadelphia Spring Seminar on Sunday, May 16 (a date definitely this side of doomsday), we'll see how a theologian and a novelist-philosopher look at the destructiveness at work in our world as we misuse, pervert, and banish love. In *Love, Power, and Justice* Paul Tillich considers the essential meaning and interrelationship of these concepts. Walker Percy, in *Love in the Ruins* (subtitled "The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World") gives us a hero who suffers and laughs his way to survival through a tangle of sex clinics, racial warfare, alcoholism, and alienation.

As always, the fee (\$16.00) covers books, luncheon, start-off coffee and cake, and last-licks punch and cookies. As last year, the seminar will be at beautiful Chestnut Hill College. Out-of-towners: We offer, as usual, our night-before party for leaders and guests, as well as overnight accomodations with Great Books hosts.

For further information, please call Ceil Cooper at 233-1964, or Sue Ross at 885-3450.

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Please send check or money order payable to Philadelphia GB Council @\$16.00 per person to Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19151.

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home Group \_\_\_\_\_

## "The Memory Be Green"

First his jaunty beret and French accent attracted us. Then he charmed us with his courtly manners and his liveliness. And ultimately he won us over completely with his intellect, which ranged both wide and deep. Andre Juliard knew a great many of us, since he got to as many Great Books institutes as he possibly could, even during the years when he returned to Aix-en-Provence to live. And so it is that many Great Books people were saddened last November to learn of his death.

All who knew this Belgian-born scientist and teacher remarked his unusual openness to new ideas. In his memoir entitled "Bon Papa," his grandson, Paul Pruitt, writes, "Though until the age of thirty he had been a strictly scientific person, an agnostic whose views were firmly grounded in observable reality, a meeting with a clairvoyant psychic shook his beliefs heavily. This event changed his life drastically and he became a happier man. The scientific man believing in psychic phenomena and spiritual experiences was part of his attraction." Among his grandson's memories is one of Andre "when I was twelve and he was seventy-one, showing us some yoga positions, standing on his head and contorting his body like the pictures in the book." And most vivid to him is his last recollection of his grandfather terminally ill in the hospital: "He refused to discuss himself and his problems. All he wanted to talk about was how we were doing, and what our plans were. I was happy because this was always how we had known him."

All of us who knew him have our own intense recollections of Andre Juliard, memories that will continually give us pleasure.

Long Island Great Books Council  
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