

THE TRICORN

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

MARCH, 1976

It's Colby Time Again. Hard as it may be to mentally convert the bitter winds of March into the zephyr breezes of August, nevertheless the visions of Colby week are swiftly moving in on us. The Great Books Summer Institute at Colby College, Waterville, Maine, begins August 8. This year's intriguing theme is Ways of Life. And an excellent selection of readings:

Communitas, by Paul and Percival Goodman
The Phenomenon of Man, by Pierre Teilhard deChardin
Walden II, by B. F. Skinner
The Horse's Mouth, by Joyce Cary
Patterns of Culture, by Ruth Benedict

The cost is \$160 per person, which includes room, meals, books, gratuities, and a package of social extras. A deposit of \$60 is required with your application. This is refundable, less charge for books, if you notify cancellation before July 15. Also, specify whether you prefer a Leaderless group, or the same Leader for the entire week, or a different Leader for each discussion.

Advance registrations are already nearly three-fourths of capacity. So make your reservations now. Colby is always an early sell-out. For those of you who've never had the experience of a Colby Great Books week, it's an adventure that will fill all the joy pockets of your memory for years to come. So why wait to die before the beatific reality at Nirvana? Colby week is the closest you'll come to it in your mortal span. You may send your deposit to the Colby Summer Institute Committee c/o Isadore S. Wachs, 500 Lewis Tower Bldg., 15th and Locust Sts., Phila., Pa. 19102.

Those Missing Great Books Sets. Some groups last Fall learned that sets of Great Books for certain years weren't available from Chicago headquarters. This applied to the 3rd, 6th and 8th years. However, we've been informed that these sets have been in the process of revision, and that the new, revised sets will be available this Spring — and certainly ready for the start of the new Great Books season next Fall.

Now to the news reports from the Councils in Philadelphia, Boston and Long Island.

PHILADELPHIA COUNCIL NEWS

A Great Fall Institute.

Nearly 200 Bookies came to Shawnee on the Delaware for the fifth annual Fall Institute weekend in early December. This was the first time they enjoyed the luxury of having a resort hotel all to themselves. After having spent the first four years in a larger, convention-type hotel shared with other groups, Shawnee was a refreshing delight because this time it was a "private affair" for the Great Bookers.

The discussion theme for the weekend was "Other Realities." It featured readings from Ram Dass (who was Professor Alpert in his Harvard Ph. D. days), Carlos Castenada, and P.D. Ouspensky. These three authors are capable of transporting one on a far-out trip to the outer reaches of the mind. In fact, after the experience of the readings and discussions, some Bookies are still dwelling 'out there.'

But as stimulating as the life-insight readings and discussions were, the social warmth and conviviality was a delightful dimension in its own right, aided by a flow of liquid spirits whose faucets were more on than off. From the cordial greetings at check-in time to the final farewells, the weekend bustled with activity. Such memorable events as the Other Realities masquerade ball, to the fortune-telling and tarot-card readings, to the guess-your-own-identity game, the action was perpetual around the clock. Too bad so many late reservations had to be returned for lack of accommodations. It means that next time you'll have to register early to make sure of sharing the enjoyment of this Great Books spectacular.

Leader's Training.

The Philadelphia Great Books Council is sponsoring an eight-weeks leader's training course to start Sunday, March 7. Because of the success of last year's course, the 1976 program will follow the same format. Cyril Keller will lead the sessions for the first four weeks, and Elizabeth Flynn will be in charge of the next four sessions.

Philadelphia Spring Institute.

God-Seekers. That's the compelling theme of the annual Spring Institute sponsored by the Philadelphia Council. Participants will visit both the Eastern and Western mansions of the mind and spirit through readings and discussions of the Bhagavad-Gita and T. S. Eliot's Murder In The Cathedral. The date is Sunday, May 16, and the place is the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, Schoolhouse Lane and Henry Ave. There'll be a splendid lunch and two lesser feedings. Co-chairmen (or nowadays should it be co-chairpersons?) are Rita and Aaron Heller. Registration fee is \$10, which includes all. Make checks out to Philadelphia Great Books Council and mail to Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19151. Here's a convenient application blank.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address and Zip _____

Name of leader preferred, if any _____

Movie Party.

The Junior Great Books Council and Adult Council are jointly sponsoring a movie part to be held at the Sacred Heart School, Haverford and City Line Avenues, on Saturday night, April 3, starting at 8 P.M. The movie to be shown is "Harold and Maude," starring Ruth Gordon. There'll be refreshments and discussions after the movie. The cost is \$3.50 per person. Checks should be made out to Philadelphia Great Books Council. Reservations can be sent to Mary Kay Breen, 314 Dash Ave., Media, Pa. 19063.

Annual Membership Meeting.

This will be held on Sunday, March 14. The place: Room 11 in the classroom building at Beaver College. The time is 2 P.M. All Philadelphia area participants are automatically members of the local Great Books Council, and hence are invited to attend this annual membership meeting. Elections, state of the Council reports, refreshments, socializing.

Bicentennial Great Books Discussions.

A timely innovation being introduced this year is a series of Bicentennial discussions sponsored jointly by the Philadelphia Great Books Council and the Free Library. It will begin in April, according to chairman (damn it, chairperson) Eva Bix. The readings, now in the process of being selected, will be led by Sibyl Cohen in the afternoons at Logan Square Library, and by Emil Bix on Friday evenings at Rittenhouse Square Library. Those interested in more information can phone Mrs. Bix at TU7-7190.

In Search of Wisdom.

Philadelphia's Sibyl Cohen was recently the subject of a long column in the Jewish Exponent, a Philadelphia weekly. Sibyl and her husband Hank have been long-time and enthusiastic Great Bookers. The column, by Gloria Hayes Kremer, gave us some fresh insights into the real Sibyl (why do our real selves take so long coming out of the closet?)

One of the courses Sibyl teaches at Rutgers University is the philosophy of religion (she recently submitted her dissertation for her Ph. D. in philosophy — a critique on Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden's aesthetic theory of literature). "I never planned on becoming a philosopher," says Sibyl. She majored in economics at the U. of Pennsylvania, where she graduated in 1949. After raising three children she returned to study at Temple University, and shortly was teaching in the philosophy department. She says now, "Philosophy is the most exciting thing I can be doing. There is so much to learn — and so much we will never learn. But to seek answers is what life should be all about."

How has this exploration into this seemingly infinite realm of knowledge affected Sibyl? She says that it has thrust her into a new world of people of varying cultures, ages and characteristics. "I began questioning things I had never allowed myself to examine. I have learned almost as much from my students as from my teachers. As a teacher I am merely an instrument. The student is the activist. The educability is with the student, the education in the books. The teacher's job is to bring them together." Now Sibyl is making a career of exactly that — expanding her own scope of life-searching and wisdom and using it to stimulate the mental machinery of others. It's a marvelous gift to give, and an even more marvelous heritage to leave.

BOSTON COUNCIL NEWS

Spring One-Day Institute.

This will be held May 22 at Bunker Hill Community College in historic Charlestown, Mass., a part of Boston proper (though not necessarily proper Bostonian). The readings will be Plato's "Phaedrus," and "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" (Pirsig). The price is \$7.50, which will include books, coffee breaks and facilities, but not lunch. To keep the price as low as possible, it was decided to return to the simple mode. Participants can brown-bag their lunch, or use any of the several restaurants nearby (one fine establishment dates back to pre-Revolutionary times).

The setting is perfect for this Bicentennial year. The college is right at the foot of Bunker Hill Monument. A special two-hour lunch period has been scheduled to allow participants time to visit any of a variety of surrounding historic sites, including museums, the monument, etc., all within close walking distance. The College itself is easily accessible by subway from Boston. Notices of details are being sent to the Boston area Great Books mailing list. Reservations, plus books, can be obtained by contacting the Institute chairperson (right, finally), Eleanor Jensen, 255 Marlboro Street, Boston 02116; phone 267-7137 (evenings). Cutoff date on reservations is May 8.

An Evening of Theater.

This was held at the Boston Repertory Theater on Monday evening, January 12. It was a spectacular success. Despite a 10-inch snow storm attendance was 135. St. Exupery's classic tale, *The Little Prince*, was presented by the Boston Repertory Company. The cost was \$3.50 per ticket, which included the performance, refreshments, and a post-show discussion. The post-play discussion was led by experienced Great Books leaders, and members of the cast joined in with the groups.

The demand for tickets for this event was so heavy that the Boston Council immediately scheduled a follow-up of the same format at the same place for March 4. This will be a one-woman show, "I Am A Woman," performed by Viveca Lindfors. The performance will be followed by group discussions, with Ms. Lindfors participating.

The popularity of these two events simply shows that Great Bookers are theater buffs as well as book buffs. But then, maybe it's only natural. As Aristotle cites in his "Poetics," drama is the acting out of literature, and literature is the language of the theater. They are inseparably married to each other.

Fall Weekend Institute.

This event took place at Provincetown, Mass., in October. It drew an attendance of over 80, despite near-hurricane winds and rains that lashed this picturesque setting on the tip of Cape Cod. Inside, nevertheless, it was snug and warm. The readings were Murder In the Cathedral, by T. S. Eliot; A Separate Peace, by John Knowles; and Beyond Freedom and Dignity, by B. F. Skinner. The event was under the supervision of Ann and John Mogan, with a fine assist from Alice DeGizzi.

The Dr. Charles Djerf Memorial Fund.

This Fund continues to seek contributions to help fulfill its Great Books mission. The money is used to help pay the cost of sending one or more persons each year to the Colby Summer Institute — persons who because of financial limitations, would otherwise be unable to attend. The Fund has been set up in memory of the late Dr. Djerf, who gave so many dedicated years to the Great Books program and to the success and growth of Colby week. Your own contribution to this "good works" effort will be welcome. Checks (tax deductible) can be sent to Frank Vallier, 84 Glendale Road, Quincy, Mass. 02170.

Boston Globe Annual Book Festival.

This event was held last October 17 — 19 at the huge Hynes Auditorium in the Prudential Center, Boston. It played host to more than 30,000 visitors. Great Books again had a booth, contributed by the Boston Globe, which was staffed by some 15 Great Books volunteers over the three-day period. They distributed brochures and explained the Great Books program to the several hundred visitors who stopped to inquire. Those visitors expressing interest in joining a Great Books group were referred to a local group. This is the fourth year of Great Books participation in the Book Festival (largest of its kind in the country). It has not only helped to give more public exposure to Great Books, but has brought in many new participants. Again, Peg Mahoney is to be congratulated for her continuing fine efforts in supervising this for Great Books.

Sex Is Looking Down.

Bill Rossi's upcoming book, The Sex Life of the Foot and Shoe, is scheduled for publication in late April — published by Saturday Review Press, a division of E. P. Dutton. The unusual theme and title of the book (its contents live up to the promise of the title) have aroused considerable pre-publication interest. Publication rights have been sold in Japan, and there's current dickering for rights in England and France. Bill is a long-time Great Booker who leads a couple of his own groups in the Boston area.

The book is based on the documented premise that "the foot is an erotic organ and the shoe is its sexual covering." Though Bill spent several years of research on the subject, with contacts in some 25 different countries, it's no textbook but is written in popular style. The book, illustrated, cites the findings and views of a wide range of authorities: Freud, Jung, Havelock Ellis, Stekel, Kinsey, Karl Menninger, and many others.

There are some startling revelations. For example, the foot is the "mother" of human sexuality and of most of the body's erogenous zones. Chinese footbinding wasn't a "strange and cruel custom" as long believed, but an intense sexual infatuation that lasted 1,000 years and mesmerized nearly five billion Chinese (and non-Chinese). The kinds of shoes we wear are a clear reflection of our psycho-sexual makeup and "libido temperature." And much more.

Says Bill, "The 'Sex Life of the Foot and Shoe' is remote from being a Great Book. But it may prove a Great Adventure that could add a new dimension to traditional views about human sexuality and psychosexual behavior as influenced by the foot and shoe in our everyday lives."

Regional Coordinators.

The Boston Council is trying a new idea in Great Books coordinators. Instead of one coordinator for the entire metropolitan area (40-50 groups), it has decided to divide the role and its multiple functions among three coordinators, one each for the North, South and West territories. Says Council president Gus Soderberg, "By subdividing the area, each coordinator will be able to give more concentrated attention to a smaller number of groups, and more time to launching new groups within the smaller confines of each territory." The Council is now seeking coordinators for each of these areas. Anyone interested in these assignments may contact Connie Lawson (472-5532).

LONG ISLAND COUNCIL

Calendar of Upcoming Events.

March 7: Advanced Leader Training at the Bryant Library in Roslyn, from 3 to 5 PM. Rachel Leon will lead the session.

May 8: The first of four general Leader Training sessions at the Bryant Library in Roslyn. Saturday afternoons, 2 to 4 PM, with Rachel Leon directing. The follow-up meetings will be May 15, 22 and 29.

June 6: The One-Day Institute at the Bryant Library in Roslyn. The discussion theme for this Bicentennial year will be Freedom. The registration fee is \$9 (two for \$17.76). An appetizing lunch will be served by Helen Glannon and her wonderful Golden Agers. The readings will be:

Freedom: the Development of the Concept, by Mortimer Adler

Resolution for the Conciliation With the Colonies, by Edmund Burke

Fall Pep Rally.

A leader and a participant representing each Great Books group on Long Island were invited to the Annual Fall Pep Rally at the Wantagh Library last September. The business portion of the meeting dealt with the 1975-76 Great Books program on Long Island, and expansion of the Council Sheldon Meyers, leader of the 5th year group in Massapequa, reported on the group survey he conducted regarding printed meeting schedules and their use for promotional purposes. The survey showed that more than half of the Long Island groups publish annual meeting schedules; or use the monthly newsletter of the library where they meet to keep participants informed of meeting dates, readings, etc., and also to invite new participants. All agreed that a regular reminder procedure on upcoming meetings is essential to keep groups intact. Included in the evening's program was a discussion of Pablo Neruda's poem, "The Heights of Macchu Picchu."

Open Council Meeting.

The January Council Business Meeting was open to all Leaders and Group Representatives. Five non-Council members attended, participating in the discussion of the Council's function and the need for ensuring a systematic and democratic transition of Council members. Victor Gough was selected to head the committee to evaluate the suggestions made at the meeting and to prepare a formal proposal.

Manhasset Profile.

A recent issue of the Manhasset Press had a feature article on the local Great Books Group and its leader, Carl Heyel. Carl, a management consultant who has authored several books dealing with business administration, completed his leader training last Spring.

The article quotes Carl: "In our educational system, most people go to college to prepare for a career. They begin to specialize before they are educated, and many people actually graduate without ever having been educated." That, of course, is one of the principles often cited by Mortimer Adler, who says that the young go through a process of training, but genuine education is a process that begins in adulthood and continues throughout a lifetime.

Carl thinks that Great Books is one way to fill the educational gap. Incidentally, Carl had a great idea when he arranged with his library to show the movie Hamlet when his group was discussing the play.

Long Island News Items:

..... Wantagh congratulates Alvin Strauss on his appointment to the Library Board as one of its Trustees.

..... Northport Great Bookers made it an unusual New Year's Day by meeting to discuss ideas on their personal philosophies.

..... Long Island Coordinator Rose Ermidis is back in action. Her new address: 1732 Jane St., Wantagh, N.Y. 11793; phone, 785-6028.

..... At the request of Carly Rushmore, a perennial Great Booker, Chuck Ferrara was the guest leader at the Garden City group, which has been meeting for some 20 years, the last 12 of which have been with their own reading selections. Chuck, president of the Long Island Council, and other Council members, are available to all Long Island groups for guest leading if requested.

SOCRATES REBORN

Was the jail cell where Socrates drank the fatal hemlock merely a mythical place, or was it for real? And if so, where was it? An American archeologist, Eugene Vanderpool, believes he has now found the site in the ruins of an ancient building in Athens. Vanderpool can speak with some authority on this matter. He is a retired professor of archeology at Athens' American School of Classical Studies.

Key to the new discovery is the finding of a small marble statue in what was, 2,400 years ago, a prison building. It shows the bearded Socrates barechested wearing a cloak thrown over one shoulder. The stone building was uncovered about 20 years ago near the ancient Agora or marketplace of Athens, and served as the state jail.

The professor said that Plato's account of Socrates' imprisonment in 399 B. C. includes details about the prison and its furnishings. This is what led Vanderpool to his conclusions. According to Plato, Socrates spent 30 days in prison before he drank the hemlock. In the annex of the building a group of 13 small vases of a type usually called medicine pots, was found at the bottom of a cistern. Says Vanderpool, "This was a remarkable concentration and I wonder if these pots did not contain hemlock, within each pot a single dose of the drug."

One cell had a basin sunk into the floor and a large vessel for fresh water. Vanderpool says Plato's account noted that Socrates interrupted his talk with his friends before his death, saying he would take a bath so that his corpse would not have to be washed for burial later.

But Vanderpool believes one of the major clues is the marble statuette found in the debris. He isn't sure why it's there. "But we may recall that the Athenians soon repented for having put Socrates to death. They punished his accusers and later erected a statue to him. Perhaps a prison official thought it was appropriate to have a small replica of that statue placed in the very spot where Socrates drank the hemlock."

Socrates has always been regarded as the prime symbol of the Great Books concept ("a life unexamined is not worth living"). It's comforting to know that despite the decree of death he was revered by his fellow Athenians — and also by that nameless prison official who saw fit to place that statuette in Socrates' cell as a kind of timeless grave marker. For Great Bookers who ever visit Athens, there's now a special place to stop for a silent salute.

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