

THE TRICORN

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

MARCH, 1975

An Auspicious Event:

It has finally come to reality -- an idea and hope that has lain dormant in the we-ought-to stage for a long time. The idea was this. Fuse the three Northeast Great Books Councils -- Philadelphia, Boston and Long Island, into some unified form. As a single family there could be more interchange of ideas; closer communications on ways to improve the functions of the Councils and to make the whole Great Books program in the northeast sector a more exciting and productive adventure for all Great Bookers right down to grass roots level. After all, these three Councils co-sponsor the Great Books Summer Institute at Colby. Why not carry this cooperative effort to many points beyond?

Importantly, this in no way will mean any loss of autonomy for any of the Councils. They will still operate independently. Now, however, they'll be joined by a common umbilical cord.

Thus, on January 4, the first Great Books Council Workshop was held in Philadelphia to bring this plan to fruition. Representing the Philadelphia Council were Iz Wachs, Elizabeth Flynn, Rosemary Porter, and Mort Charleston. For the Boston Council: Jack Hockett, Connie Lawson and Ann Levison. For Long Island: Steve Browning, and June and Chuck Ferrara. The meeting was chaired by Iz Wachs. Here are some of the matters that were discussed and decisions reached:

- 1) A joint, tri-Council newsletter will be published, covering news and activities from all three Councils, and distributed to all Great Bookers.
- 2) Financial records of each of the Councils will be exchanged and discussed.
- 3) The Councils will report on their respective Leader Training programs, plus plans and ideas for the future.
- 4) Ways to improve the services and effectiveness of the Great Books Councils. For example, there was a brainstorming session on the question: "If your Council had all the money it needed, how would you best use it to achieve an ideal level of services and functions for all Great Bookers?"
- 5) The Council Coordinators will submit requests and ideas as to how their respective Councils can provide more help for individual Great Books discussion groups-- and ways to stimulate growth for the Great Books program as a whole. For example, Philadelphia's Coordinator, Rosemary Porter, reported on their Mini-Institutes, Secretaries' Committee, Leaders' Club, publicity techniques, and other ideas that can be used by other Council Coordinators.

It was an auspicious beginning for a long-smouldering concept that finally burst into flame. But now, finally, the ship is launched. The destination is simple but noble: to build the strength of the Great Books program, and to make the Great Books experience an even more stimulating and enjoyable adventure for all Great Bookers right to the grass roots level.

The First Tri-Council Newsletter:

This newsletter is one of the products emerging from that initial tri-Council meeting. For starters, we'll be publishing it twice a year. Later, we may expand it to a quarterly. Bill Rossi, of the Boston Council, has been appointed editor. However, this is your newsletter. That means we want and welcome your comments, suggestions, ideas, contributions, viewpoints. Send them to us. This newsletter is an "us" effort, not a "them and us" project. So come on in. The door is constantly open.

Why Tricorn?

A whole committee brainstormed like mad to come up with a name for our new "Northeast" group Great Books newsletter. Finally is settled on Tricorn (the suggestion of Steve Browning, of Long Island). What does the name mean or signify? Its origin is from the French "tricorn", meaning three-horned. But its more modern version, spelled tricorn, means a three-cornered hat, such as that worn in Colonial days. We thought the name quite appropriate for our new, combined, three-group sectors: Philadelphia, Boston and Long Island. The attractive masthead for our newsletter was designed by Ann Levison, of the metropolitan Boston Great Books Council.

1975 Colby Summer Institute: In Search of Self:

Self-searching. It's a universal and timeless adventure. The questions gnaw at us: Who am I? What am I? Why am I? What is my ultimate destiny, if any? What is my natural link to nature, to all life, to a possible supra-nature, to time or eternity? The questions are always there. But are there answers?

In Search of Self. That will be the provocative theme at the Colby Great Books Summer Institute this year. But first the essential information:

Date: Week of August 10, 1975.

Place: Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

The readings:

- 1) An Outline of Psychoanalysis -- Sigmund Freud
- 2) Childhood In Society -- Eric Erikson.
- 3) Phaedo -- Plato.
- 4) Demian -- Hermann Hesse.
- 5) Song of Myself -- Walt Whitman.

Cost: \$160 per person for the week. Includes books, lodging on campus, meals, gratuities, everything. Advance deposit of \$60 required. This is refundable, minus cost of books, if notice of cancellation given before July 15. Send deposit checks payable to Great Books Summer Institute, c/o Isadore Wachs, 500 Lewis Tower Building, 15th & Locust Streets, Philadelphia 19102.

Note: Two specifications should be made with your deposit: (1) how you want your name listed; (2) whether you want to be in a Leaderless group, or with the same Leader for the week, or have a different Leader for each discussion.

As usual, we must urge you to register early. Even at this early date, advance reservations are more than half booked -- and, as most know, there's a limited capacity. The Colby regulars know that this magnificent event is always a sell-out. So our appeal is to the prospective first-timers -- to make your reservations as quickly as possible. We're especially eager to see more first-timers. If you haven't yet been exposed to the annual Colby week, be assured it's something you'll cherish in memory way into your rocking-chair days. An idyllic scenic setting, provocative discussions, lots of social mobility -- and beautiful people. What's more, Iz Wachs always makes a pact with The Great White Father that never fails to bring us glorious weather during Colby week. So start or continue your quest In Search of Self by making yourself a gift of a Colby week. And do it now.

PHILADELPHIA

Spring Institute:

We thought we'd run out of all the "Lib" movements -- Women's Lib, Gay Lib, Youth Lib, Senior Citizens Lib, Campus Lib, Ethnic Lib, Welfare Mothers Lib, etc. But the Philadelphia area Great Books group has focused its theme for its upcoming one-day Spring Institute on the most obvious yet most overlooked lib concept of all: Human Lib. You're all invited to participate. Here's the information:

Date: May 18, 1975 -- 10 AM to 4:30 PM.

Place: Philadelphia College of Textiles (Henry Ave. & Schoolhouse Lane).

Readings: Morning: The French Lieutenant's Woman, by John Fowles.

Afternoon: Man's World, Woman's Place, by Elizabeth Janeway.

Fee: \$10.00 (\$8.75 without books).

Advance registration: send check payable to Philadelphia Great Books Council, to Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia 19151.

Annual General Meeting:

The Philadelphia area Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 16, 2-5 PM at Beaver College, Classroom Bldg., Room 11. All local regional Great Bookers are invited to attend and participate in the election of the new Executive Board. The annual report, plus details on progress of the Great Books program, will be presented. The election will be followed by refreshments and entertainment.

Adult and Junior Great Books Councils Sponsor Film:

The first cooperative effort co-sponsored by Philadelphia's Great Books Council and Junior Great Books Council will feature a most unusual film: King of Hearts. The event is scheduled for Friday, March 7, at 8 PM (film showing promptly at 8:15). It's being held at the Performing Arts Center, Chestnut Hill Academy, 500 Willow Grove Ave. Donation is \$3 per person -- tickets at box office. Following the showing of the film, which has received enthusiastic reviews, there'll be a discussion, refreshments, and pleasant social turmoil.

Leader Training Course:

A leader training course for both Adult and Junior Great Books programs has been scheduled for April 9-10. Fee is \$16. The course consists of two 2 1/2-hour sessions, 9 AM to 3 PM (with one hour lunch break), over the two-day period. It's open to any adult who is committed to co-leading an Adult or Junior Great Books discussion group. The course trains leaders in "shared inquiry," the Great Books Foundation's method of discussion. No homework is required. Three hours of college credit is available to leaders who complete the course, plus active leading experience and attendance at a training seminar. Those interested can contact Lee Sharpe, 1417 Hillside Road, Wynnewood, Pa. 19096.

1974 Fall Institute:

The Fall Institute held last November at the Pocono Manor under the auspices of the Philadelphia Great Books Council, again proved a smashing success, with an attendance of 235. This expanding event, held Friday through Sunday, is now entering its fifth year, and continues to grow in popularity and participation. An increasing number of Great Bookers from the Boston and Long Island areas are also attending. But events like this don't just grow like Topsy. A tremendous amount of pre-planning and committees activities are behind the scenes of its success.

The weekend theme was "Self Discovery." The three readings were Jung's "The Undiscovered Self"; Synge's "Playboy of the Western World"; and "Call It Sleep", by Henry Roth. An even bigger Fall Institute for 1975 is under way, with vigorous planning already in motion.

Hail to the Great Books Secretaries:

The Philadelphia area has over 50 Great Books discussion Groups, covering 1st to 10th year readings. Attendance in most groups is consistently good because of enthusiastic participation. There's a good reason for this high level of success: the group secretaries.

The Philadelphia group some time ago made an important discovery: an active secretary is essential to the sustained vitality of any discussion group. He or she is often the glue that coheses a group. The secretary fulfills a variety of important functions: advance notices to group members about meetings and readings; one-to-one contact with group members by phone or in person; close working relations with the leader; getting group members to help with local publicity (posters in libraries, churches, etc.); organizing bring-a-friend nights; getting aides to help with special events; culling membership for potential leader training personnel; and various other activities.

In Philadelphia, the group secretaries have achieved such important status that they meet periodically to discuss problems, functions, new ideas, etc. There's an old adage: behind every man's success is a woman who made it happen (with today's women's lib, the process may also work in reverse). Anyhow, the same principle applies to the Great Books secretaries. Much of the success of a group is owed to them. The Philadelphia area is to be complimented not only for "discovering" the secretaries, but for giving them the high recognition they deserve. Boston and Long Island take note.

BOSTON

Why Do Some Drop Out?

Why do some persons start with a Great Books discussion group, then shortly after drop out? Why do some stay with the program two or three years, then drop out?

Some attrition has always been regarded as a "natural" part of any organization or group activity, whether it's a college, a business, a church, a social group, or whatever. There are reasons why, of course. But the "why" aroused the curiosity of the Metropolitan Boston Great Books Council. After all, if you're going to build or expand a Great Books program, you have two main routes: (1) start new groups with new members; (2) keep the attrition rate of present participants to a minimum.

Recently, therefore, a "survey" was conducted. A brief questionnaire was sent (self-addressed, stamped return envelope enclosed) to as many dropouts as the leaders of various groups could select from their local membership lists. This was in no sense a complete survey. But the findings provided some helpful insights and answers. Here, listed in order of importance, and based upon about 50 replies, are the chief reasons for dropouts:

- 1) Have become too busy or involved with other obligations or activities.
- 2) Find some or many of the readings too "heavy" for me.
- 3) Have moved away from the locality.
- 4) Local group meetings held at inconvenient time or days for me.
- 5) Lost interest due to death or illness in family, or other problems.
- 6) Great Books not quite what I expected (lectures, instruction, etc.)
- 7) Uninspiring or passive leadership by the group leader.

Many suggestions or comments were volunteered about the Great Books readings and program. Most weren't particularly new, or were too personalized for general application. However, two comments or suggestions received frequent mention:

- 1) Intersperse more contemporary readings with the regular Great Books series. One person summed up the consensus: "The world of great ideas or great books didn't stop 50 years ago with Freud or Dewey or Henry James. There are new ideas under the sun. Let more of the 20th century come into Great Books."
- 2) "If I like the reading, I attend. If not, I don't. I don't find all great books that great. So I attend irregularly."

The issue of intermixing some contemporary selections with the classical readings persists as a controversy in Great Books. There are persuasive arguments for both sides. Perhaps now that the Tri-Council plan has been organized, this debatable issue can one day soon be brought out of the pigeon hole and onto the table for discussion and action.

As to the matter of spasmodic attendance, depending upon interest or disinterest in the particular reading, almost every discussion group has had this experience. Some readings consistent "outdraw" others. A selection such as Harvey's "Circulation of the Blood" can hardly be expected to pack the house. Hard-core Great Bookers are conditioned to derive benefit and enjoyment from any reading or discussion. But while Great Books admittedly isn't for everybody, neither is it designed for a hard-core elite. Anyhow, the many volunteered comments on this matter is a revealing answer to hot-and-cold attendance by some participants.

One-Day Institute:

The annual One-Day Institute will again be held in early June. The exact date and location haven't yet been fixed, but official announcements will be going out shortly, covering all details. This popular event consists of two readings and discussions, lunch, plus morning and afternoon refreshments. This year's theme: The Search For Meaning. The readings: The Book of Job, and The Sybil, by Par Lagerqvist.

Theatre Weekend:

A New York theatre weekend has been planned cooperatively by Boston's 3rd-year group and the Peabody, Mass., group. It's scheduled for April 5-6, and will include attendance at the evening performance of Candide on April 5. Return to Boston will be after lunch on Sunday. The cost will depend on total number of persons going, but will be approximately \$47 per person, double occupancy, \$52 single. This includes transportation, meals, theatre tickets. Reservations are limited. So is deadline. Those interested in particulars should contact Rich Stromer (evenings 423-9726) at once (not later than March 7).

Great Books at Boston Book Fair:

The Metropolitan Boston Great Books Council again conducted a successful booth exhibit at the city's annual Book Festival last October 4-5-6. This event, held in the huge Hynes Auditorium in the Prudential Center, is sponsored by the Boston Globe. The Great Books exhibit booth is contributed without charge. This is the fourth consecutive year that Great Books has been represented here, and the exhibit's success increases each year.

This event draws an attendance of about 35,000. Many prominent authors appear on the three-day speaking programs. There is an abundance of book-related exhibits. Incidentally, Boston is the only city in the country that has been able to support a paid-admission book fair. So despite rumors to the contrary, Boston can still hold claim as the Athens of America -- even if at times it's only by a precarious fingernail grip.

The Great Books booth itself is attractively decorated and equipped by Great Bookers themselves. The booth is manned by Great Books volunteers sharing time schedules from many communities. Some 600 brochures were distributed, describing the Great Books program. There were scores of one-on-one conversations to answer questions of visitors. Many of these persons, at their request, were referred to Great books groups in their respective communities. A large map of the metropolitan Boston area was posted on the booth was showing the locations of Great Books groups in the area. Many newcomers have been brought into the Great Books program via this book fair. The exhibit and all its involved arrangements were under the supervision of Peg Mahoney, who did her usual effective and enthusiastic job.

New Great Books Groups:

New Great Books groups in the metropolitan Boston area were launched for the 1974-75 season in the following communities: Bridgewater, Cambridge, Holbrook, Norwood, Milton, Topsfield, Wakefield. Another is scheduled to start in the spring in Brookline. Connie Lawson, Boston Council Coordinator, has played an active role in getting these groups started.

Unusual Display:

Last Fall the Cambridge Public Library had a large and unusual Great Books display that attracted much attention and interest. It was initiated and arranged by Joseph Sakey, who is director of the Cambridge libraries, and who himself leads two Great Books discussion groups in that city. Such displays could well serve as an inspiration and model for Great Books groups in other communities.

Leader Training Course:

The next Leader Training sessions will begin this spring (dates and place will be announced shortly). This program, which consists of four evening sessions, is under the direction of Gus Soderberg, whose extensive Great Books training experience covers many years. There's no charge for the course. Those interested should contact Coordinator Connie Lawson (472-5532) as quickly as possible. With new groups constantly sprouting, there's a real need for new leaders.

Leaders Get-Together:

Last November, Carol Batchelder and Ann Levison arranged a special get-together of Great Books leaders in the metropolitan area. It was well attended and highly successful. Purpose of the meeting was to discuss leader methods, problems, fresh ideas, etc. There was also a short "test" reading discussion (Yeats' poem, "The Long-Legged Fly") used as a model.

A second such meeting is scheduled for this spring (details to be issued shortly). A brief reading and discussion will again be part of the meeting -- probably selections from "The Dubliners" or from "The Death of Ivan Ilych".

Acknowledgement:

The Metropolitan Boston Great Books program is made possible with the support of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

LONG ISLAND

Long Island Council Leaders Meeting:

Bryant Library, in Roslyn, was the site for a recent Sunday afternoon meeting of about 40 Great Books leaders, with Helen Glannon serving as hostess. The reading and discussion was Tocquville's "Democracy In America", with Rachel Leon as discussion leader. This was followed by an open-forum critique of the discussion itself -- how it might have been improved by different leading procedures or approaches. The Long Island Council found the Bryant Library and its environs so attractive that it has decided to hold its Spring Institute there.

One-Day Spring Institute:

The Long Island Great Books Council will hold its One-Day Spring Institute on Sunday, May 4. It will be held at the Bryant Library, Roslyn, N. Y. The discussion theme: Realms of Consciousness. The readings:

- 1) Three Essays by Emerson: The Oversoul; Compensation; Nominalism and Realism.
- 2) The Natural Mind, by A. Weil.

Cost will be \$9 per person. This includes books, lunch, refreshments. Send advance registration checks (payable to Long Island Great Books Council) to Great Books, P. O. Box 821, Port Washington, N. Y. 11050.

Tricon Editor: Bill Rossi
Steamboat Lane
Hingham, Mass. 02043
Phone: (617) 749-1551

LONG ISLAND GREAT BOOKS COUNCIL

P. O. BOX 821

PORT WASHINGTON, N. Y. 11050