

THE TRICORN

NEWSLETTER published jointly by the BOSTON •
LONG ISLAND • PHILADELPHIA GREAT
BOYS COUNCILS

August, 1986

THE BEST IS YET TO BE

If Father William wants to stand that way, why not? If Mother Mehitabel feels good about doing somersaults, where is it written that she should not? Accentuating the positive about old age is all too rare. Somehow it is easier to regard the aged with pity and, often, scorn. They are over the hill. They are old-fashioned. They forget things or they are childish.

As one whose ship has come in, I am an authority on both sides of the attitude. The ship is senior citizenship, and do not knock it if you have not been around long enough to board your own. If you have greeted your ship, you know what I am saying. Much of you may be false – teeth, hair color, some of your shape. That is one side, the port side.

I prefer the positive side, the starboard. At threescore and five, a proper privilege is being able to say what I think. Perhaps that should be “feeling able” more than “being able,” but it is a good feeling. Having rocked a number of cradles, I can rock the boat now if I want to.

Once there were 9-to-5 days. Then with those cradles and crawlers, 12-to-12-to-12 days. Wonderful years. But so are these, with a freedom better than childhood's because I can appreciate it. “The last of life for which the first was made,” as Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra said.

The ship has a cargo of mental videotapes of my life. I have far more past than future years, so I can entertain myself by turning on, at will, good memories. There's lots of choice.

Remembering the times when I was “too young” to do this or read that or go there, I prize these ripe years. I have been there, and now I am here, with treasures of retrospect. If this is the prime of senility, I like it. I like to think about the things that have been phased out, but are worth remembering with wry amusement. For example:

- * Drugstores that stocked little more than medical supplies.
- * Five-and-tens that sold nickel-and-dime items.
- * Butchers who wore straw hats at work.
- * Vacant lots full of ballplayers instead of used cars.
- * A bureau that was simply a piece of furniture.

The only red menace was long winter underwear, and the sky was the limit.

By virtue of having existed this long, I have become grand. Society says so. At least I am as grand a mother as my children's children are grand. And that is great.

Now I know my own worth and can watch with empathy as another generation goes from green to gray in no easy lessons. Now that I have said my piece, I will hold it. I shall cover my typewriter and move into the easy chair with a book. Its title is “In Praise of Older Women.”

Claire Gerber

Reprinted from The N. Y. Times

IN WINE THERE IS TRUTH

A Sensory Input in One Act

(A sidewalk cafe. Two men sitting at a table. One is short, in modern dress. The other wears a powdered wig. An unopened bottle of wine stands on the table.)

- ADLER: From the way the light shines on the bottle, it appears to have the color of **Burgundy**.
- LOCKE: What I perceive supports the cognitive idea that it is **Bordeaux**.
- ADLER: You were supposed to say **claret**. But even so, what you said is impossible. A cognitive idea cannot be that which you perceive and at the same time that which you apprehend as something else.
- LOCKE: I said **Bordeaux**, Morty, and that is what I meant. **Claret** is an unofficial term for **Bordeaux**, and not a precise definition. Now, if I may set you right a second time: the idea represented by that wine bottle is in my mind a wine bottle; the cognitive idea suggested by that particular bottle is **Bordeaux**.
- WAITER: (With two glasses and a corkscrew.) Who ordered the clean glasses?
- LOCKE: I did, and you may open the **Burgundy**.
- ADLER: The **Bordeaux**.
- WAITER: (Wiping one glass with towel and placing it before Adler.) Which bottle do you want me to open?
- ADLER: That bottle which we publicly experience that holds a wine that one of us subjectively experiences in error.
- LOCKE: Your epistemology is bad, Morty, but your oenology is even worse.
- ADLER: (Rising) By what authority do you say that, John?
- LOCKE: Sit down, shut up, and pay the waiter the tuition for the lesson you are about to receive. First: do not cite as examples things about which you are ignorant. Wine, in this case. Second: **Burgundy** and **Bordeaux** cannot be distinguished in the bottle no matter how the light shines. Their bottles are always made of dark green glass. Third: My idea that this wine is **Bordeaux** is based on the **shape** of the bottle. **Bottle shape** is the **concept** from which I obtained my **cognitive idea**, and about which you are ignorant. You see, this bottle has shoulders, which means that it is a **Bordeaux**. **Burgundy** is never put into bottles with shoulders. It is put into bottles that slope gradually from neck to body, without a break. (Waiter, having removed cork, pours, picks up money and leaves.)
- ADLER: But **Burgundy** had such a ring of truth to it, John.
- LOCKE: (Clinking glasses) Here's your **ring of truth**, Morty! Drink up!
- ADLER: . . . and here's mud in your visual sense organ, John!

THE END

Charles L. Ferrara

Yes to Pres

Dear Norma:

It was good to see Pres Brown's article (Feb., '86) on the decline of evaluation. Even worse than turning into book report meetings, without evaluation our Great Books sessions could become lecture groups or classes.

For almost twenty years, my wife and I (I help her with the hard words), have found the best part of Great Books to be the judging for ourselves. We are able to do this because twenty people get together with a text and nothing else but good manners and listening skills. We leave our backgrounds and the experts outside. It is possible that we interpret Plato incorrectly. He shouldn't have written in Greek. But

if there is only one correct explanation of Plato, how come so many people make a living by telling us what he really meant? What is important is that we now have many ideas of what the text has done to us. We leave the session with more questions than we had at the start, plus a suspicion that others don't read as well as we do.

A great book is "great" because of its universality. What difference when or where or why it was written, as long as it has ideas relevant to our lives? At some sessions we hear that "in those days" there was slavery, and slaves were not allowed to join unions. Or we learn that there was no popcorn in the Globe Theatre of Shakespeare. Or that people wore corsets, even women. This information helps us to feel superior as we look down on "those days." And we can remain aloof and discuss thoughts as though they are other folks' problems. But if the book is "great" it is about **us**.

Life has played us a dirty trick: we are unique beings. If you don't believe this, examine someone else's jeans. Yet there is so little opportunity to show our individuality. A Great Books session gives us a chance to do so, but only if the book has ideas, we are all equals, there are no exact answers and no experts.

Experts tell us that we need an engine tune-up when a 39¢ gasket will do. Experts ask for military stuff for the Nicaraguan Contras, since they are Spanish-speaking Jeffersons. Experts write prescriptions as though side effects were good for us. I think there were experts in charge of the space shuttle. We don't need them in Great Books.

Irving M. Rosenwasser

Each June I Make a Promise Sober

Every summer I truly intend
My intellectual sloth to end,
Leave Dumas and Conan Doyle behind me,
And let the dog days, when they find me,
Find me beside the sea perusing
Volumes of Mr. Hutchins' choosing,
Congesting my uncultured head
With famous books I haven't read -
With Milton's *Areopagitica*,
The almanacs of Gotha and Whitaker,
With *Lysistrata* and *The Frogs*,
And lots of Plato's dialogues,
With Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*,
Erasmus and Tyl Eulenspiegel,
Corneille and Moliere and Racine
And *Rasselas* and *The Faerie Queen*.
Every summer with me I wager
That I'll read these masterpieces major.

Each June I made a promise sober,
That I'll be literate by October,
Lose d'Artagnan and Sherlock Holmes
In worthier and weightier tomes,
In Nietzsche and even preachier Germans,
And Donne's more esoteric sermons,
The lofty thoughts of Abelard,
And Rilke, Kafka, and Kierkegaard;
Loop in one comprehensive lasso
Turgeniev, Thomas Aquinas and Tasso,
The *Conquest of Peru*, by Prescott,
And *David Harum*, by Edward Westcott.
Of the classics, from *Beowulf* to *Baedeker*,
I know less than a 1st or 2nd gradeke,
So every summer I truly intend
My intellectual sloth to end,
And every summer for years and years
I've read *Sherlock Holmes* and *The Three Musketeers*.

Ogden Nash

Wilmington News

Following the now-traditional three summer sessions, The Delaware Great Books Council sponsors five area groups ready to start their fall schedules. Looking ahead another two seasons, the council has already selected the date for the 1987 Spring Seminar: Saturday, March 28. Readings will be Bruno Bettelheim's **The Uses of Enchantment**, and a selection of fairy tales.

from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

Language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, while all the time we long to move the stars to pity.

PHILADELPHIA NEWS

Summer Sessions

The Ethical Culture Society on Rittenhouse Square was host to two summer sessions that attracted both regular GB members as well as a number of prospective new ones. The June and July meetings used hand-out readings (poems, and a Tolstoy fable) to make summertime participation carefree. The planning committee also operated in a casual manner, never actually meeting, but simply carrying out their traditional tasks as if in a remembered dream. Eva Bix, former non-chairperson of the committee, who had always seen to it that everything necessary was done, insisted that she now was non-non-chairperson. Some of the committee, thinking that the two negatives cancelled each other out, took this to mean that Eva was chairperson, a mistaken conclusion. At any rate, despite the lackadaisical committee tone, new member Charlie Barnes made it all happen.

POCONO WEEKEND at Pocono Manor November 14 - 16

Back to the Poconos for a wonderful fall weekend with Great Books. We look for this to be a super time. The theme is "The Use and Abuse of History." Nietzsche's **The Use and Abuse of History**, Kundera's **The Book of Laughter and Forgetting**, and Stoppard's **Travesties** are not only exciting to read but should give us a new slant on how we look at the world around us.

We've always felt the weekend is a great way to introduce new people into Great Books. Help us - and them - by introducing a friend to Great Books, via the Pocono Weekend.

Cost is \$168.00 per person double occupancy, or \$230 for single occupancy (on an "if available" basis). Price includes everything: meals, lodging, books, entertainment, and tips.

Register by sending a deposit of \$68.00 per person (double) or \$100.00 (single) along with the registration form to:

Sylvia Perelman
8214 Marion Road
Elkins Park, PA 19117

*REGISTERING REPRESENTS A COMMITMENT TO READ ALL THE BOOKS AND ATTEND ALL THE DISCUSSIONS.
Cancellation date: October 8. Your deposit, less charge for books, will be refunded.*

REGISTRATION FORM

Enclosed is deposit of \$ _____, made payable to Fall Institute Committee.

Names (please give first and last name of each person)

(first) _____ (last) _____

non-smoking group	smoking group	no preference
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(first) _____ (last) _____

Address _____

(city) _____ (state) _____ (zip) _____ (phone) _____

Please tell us any special requests, and we'll try to accommodate you.

New Leaders - New Groups

The four new groups started last fall are alive and well in the Philadelphia area. Old leaders handled the first few sessions, until new leadership emerged from the groups themselves. Philadelphia Council President and Leader Trainer Sibyl Cohen then conducted a two-session course in the winter for the leaders-to-be. By spring, another group of trainees took Sibyl's course, with a total of twenty newly trained leaders from the two courses. That successful system will be repeated this fall, when groups will be started at several new locations. Call Liz Eidelson (667-2284) if you wish to be notified when the next leader training course is scheduled. Liz can also provide anyone with an updated Group Directory.

Annette Zeff has undertaken to set up an advanced leader training course early in 1987, to which all trained leaders, old and new, are invited.

New Classics Series

Aaron Heller (333-4627) has sample copies of The Great Books Foundation new classics series two through five for the perusal of anyone considering their use. The new series one, available since fall 1985, can be had from Liz Eidelson (667-2284).

In Memoriam

"Here, right here on page 35 he explains that term," interjected **Max Kasser** in his calm and knowledgeable voice. Philadelphians and Colbyites heard such let's-get-back-to-the-book-and-see-what-he's-really-saying remarks often over the years. Max, a much-respected ophthalmologist, wanted people to "see" well, in both senses of the word. He himself chased down odd bits of information enthusiastically, and delighted in sharing them with others. He was a generous sharer of his time and his professional talents also. We are sorry that Max's death last April ended this sharing, but many of us will continue to see better for having known him.

* * * * *

Last summer, six Colby groups experienced a new leader, a woman who uniquely combined brilliance, modesty, and kindness. **Doris Auspos** was booked for a return engagement in 1986, but her unexpected death this past May has deprived us of her presence. In her many years of enthusiastic Colby participation, Doris made friends from all over. So many people thought of her as their special friend, a person who understood and cared about them. Back home in Wilmington, she sparked the Delaware Great Books Program as Council president, book selector, and super leader. Doris directed her life with an unconquerable spirit, ignoring as much as possible continual assaults by serious illnesses. What prodigies she would have accomplished with sound health! Great Books has lost a great spirit.

Editor:

NORMA OSER
7933 Heather Rd.
Elkins Park, PA 19117

**Long Island
Correspondent:**

JUNE FERRARA
14 Bay Second St.
Islip, NY 11751

**Boston
Correspondent**

ANN LEVISON
175 East Bare Hill Rd.
Harvard, MA 01451

BOSTON NEWS



Spring Weekend

The Metropolitan Boston Council's spring weekend in Salem, Mass. was a success as always, with good talk, good friends, and good fun.

Clockwise from upper left: Dot Broberg, Pat Kabele, and Reg McKeen in discussion. All work and no play would make Peg Mahoney an entirely different person. Mary Lauro and Florence Kessler after hours. Ruth Hockett and Bonnie Lahey display listening skills. Tim Holland pays close attention to Art Katims.

(Photos by Walter Levison)



Calvino in Philadelphia

Last May 18th, 142 people had read Italo Calvino's **If on a Winter's Night a Traveler** in preparation for the Philadelphia Spring Institute, admirably run by Fran Jacobs and Ruth Allen. For those several thousand additional Tricorn readers who were unable to come to Chestnut Hill Academy on that lovely spring day, here's a chance to discover how Calvino snares his readers:

"... So, then, you noticed in a newspaper that **If on a Winter's Night a Traveler** had appeared, the new book by Italo Calvino, who hadn't published for several years. You went to the bookshop and bought a volume. Good for you.

In the shop window you have promptly identified the cover with the title you were looking for. Following this visual trail, you have forced your way through the shop past the thick barricade of Books You Haven't Read, which were frowning at you from the tables and shelves, trying to cow you. But you know you must never allow yourself to be awed, that among them there extend for acres and acres the Books You Needn't Read, the Books Made For Purposes Other Than Reading, Books Read Even Before You Open Them Since They Belong To The Category of Books Read Before Being Written. And thus you pass the outer girdle of ramparts, but then you are attacked by the infantry of the Books That If You Had More Than One Life You Would Certainly Also Read But Unfortunately Your Days Are Numbered. With a rapid maneuver you bypass them and move into the phalanxes of the Books You Mean To Read But There Are Others You Must Read First, the Books Too Expensive Now And You'll Wait Till They're Remaindered, the Books ditto When They Come Out In Paperback, Books You Can Borrow From Somebody, Books That Everybody's Read So It's As If You Had Read Them, Too. Eluding these assaults, you come up beneath the towers of the fortress, where other troops are holding out:

- the Books You've Been Planning To Read For Ages,
- the Books You've Been Hunting For Years Without Success,
- the Books Dealing With Something You're Working On At the Moment,
- the Books You Want To Own So They'll Be Handy Just In Case,
- the Books You Could Put Aside Maybe To Read This Summer,
- the Books You Need To Go With Other Books On Your Shelves,
- the Books That Fill You With Sudden, Inexplicable Curiosity, Not Easily Justified.

Now you have been able to reduce the countless embattled troops to an array that is, to be sure, very large but still calculable in a finite number; but this relative relief is then undermined by the ambush of the Books Read Long Ago Which It's Now Time To Reread and the Books You've Always Pretended To Have Read And Now It's Time To Sit Down And Really Read Them. . . ."

And Yet Another Book List

This list of categories of Books to be Shunned, compiled by humorist Peter Andrews, is introduced as follows:

" I have developed my system until it is now ready for publication as a public service. Keep one copy with you at all times and post another inside the medicine cabinet where the whole family can refer to it.

DO NOT READ:

Any book by someone who has personally known Henry Kissinger, Judy Garland, the Kennedys, Hugh Hefner, or Donny and Marie Osmond.

Any book that promises to raise your consciousness or lower your weight.

Any book that 'reads like a veritable Who's Who of show business.'

Any book by an author who has inherited the mantle of either Damon Runyon or Macaulay.

Any book of serious poetry by a Latin American author who has won the National Book Award within the last five years. (In the case of Nobel Prize winners, it is best to wait at least seven years.)

Any book by Norman Mailer about women.

Any book on Norman Mailer by a woman.

Any book by an ex-nun or an ex-prostitute. This is especially true if one has become the other.

Any compilation of the wit and wisdom of anyone.

Any book on philosophy by a manual laborer or any book on manual labor by a philosopher.

Any book on the funny things that kids do.

Any book that promises to fill every moment of every day of the rest of your life.

Any novel set in a plane, bus, train, ship or any other conveyance where people from all walks of life meet and share one climactic moment that changes their lives forever.

Any novel that spans the life of three generations of a mighty family whose compelling story is told amid the holocaust of war.

Although the list is long, be sure to keep plenty of blank paper handy because new categories are being added every day.

PHILADELPHIANS! SAVE SEPTEMBER 28 FOR AN EXCITING FALL KICK-OFF EVENT!

Great Books
14 Bay Second St.
Islip, NY 11751

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PHILA, PA.
PERMIT 1509