

# THE TRICORN

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

AUGUST 1975

## An Open-Arms Welcome To Colby:

The Colby Summer Institute Committee extends a warm welcome to the more than 250 Great Bookers attending Colby week. It was the usual early sellout. But the Committee, with its customary mystical and magical juggling, managed to accomodate almost everyone on the waiting list. With "In Search Of Self" as the Colby week discussion theme, we hope that those who begin the week with "Who am I?" will be able to leave saying "This is who am I."

While you're under the euphoric spell of Colby, please keep in mind the Charles Djerf Institute Fund, which is set up to financially assist one or more Great Bookers to attend Colby week -- persons who otherwise could not afford to come on their own. The Fund is also used to help sponsor the special concerts at Colby which are enjoyed by all. Your generosity can be expressed directly to either Iz Wachs or Mort Charleston, in charge of the Fund.

## Tricorn Says Thanks:

Our first issue of The Tricorn, in March, brought many nice letters and comments -- and nobody cancelled their subscription. So thanks for your nice reception. But while we're gratified with your kind and encouraging words, what we'd *really* like is publishable contributions -- suggestions, ideas, controversial viewpoints. The steak is more edible when it sizzles.

## PHILADELPHIA COUNCIL NEWS

### New Officers:

The new officers elected by the Philadelphia Council are: President, Mary Donahoe; Vice President, David Perelman; Treasurer, Mort Charleston; Recording Secretary, Rita Heller; Corresponding Secretary, Sylvia Perelman. New members of the Board of Directors: Sibyl Cohen, A. Moore Lifter, John Moberly, and Gertrude Ullman. Norma Oser has been appointed Adult Coordinator. Mary Donahoe follows Elizabeth Flynn as the second woman ever to head the Philadelphia Council. Iz Wachs was overheard to mumble that this was an unusual phenomenon probably due to agitation of the sun spots -- but others see it simply as a natural emergence of excellence.



### **Rosemary Retires:**

Rosemary Porter, for the past seven years coordinator of the Philadelphia Great Books program, has resigned her post. "Retirement" seems so incongruous, for Rosemary packs enough energy to carry her well into the next century. During her memorable service she disproved that perpetual motion was not a reality. She was constantly conceiving new tasks for herself to add growth and momentum to the Great Books program. She worked with every committee on every project; dreamed up mini-institutes; phoned far into the night; maintained a ceaseless stream of correspondence; drove her car to the edges of civilization to bring books to groups; generated publicity; in one season personally led three new groups. For the Philadelphia area she was the 12 apostles wrapped into the missionary zeal of one, because Great Books was Rosemary's Baby. The hundreds of Philadelphia Great Bookers will miss her talents and dedication.

### **Fall Institute Weekend:**

Philadelphia's spectacular Fall Institute Weekend is scheduled for December 5-7. This time a new location, Shawnee on the Delaware, one of Pennsylvania's loveliest resorts. The Great Bookers will occupy the entire hotel and facilities for for the weekend. But advance warning: the hotel is limited in size, which means accommodations for fewer participants than last year at the Poconos -- and also no single rooms available. So the Institute Committee is urging early registration. It also urges that you *not* register unless you intend to read the books and be an active discussion participant. The book selections are, *The Only Dance There Is* by Ram Bass; *Journey To Ixtlan* by Castaneda; *Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* by Ouspensky.

Cost of the weekend is \$70 per person, and includes lodging, meals, books, entertainment and tips. Deposit of \$25 is required with advance registration, refundable if cancellation is made by or before October 31. For advance registration, contact David Perelman, 8214 Marion Road, Elkins Park, Pa. 19177.

### **Adult Leaders Training:**

Philadelphia has just completed a new and expanded 8-weeks Adult Leader Training Course. The first four weeks were under the direction of Cy Keller, training leader from Chicago's Great Books headquarters. The next four sessions, an innovation, were conducted by Elizabeth Flynn. This moved into a new area of group dynamic theory. In one session, for example, trainees were asked to list seven categories which they believed were the most important traits of an effective leader. A discussion of these qualities followed, leading to a clarification of goals for trainees. The total training program under this new plan, now provides new leaders not only with the how-to but the why of good group leadership.

### **Human Lib In The Spring:**

Philadelphia's Spring Institute centered on the theme of Human Lib. The one-day event discussed Mill's "The Subjection of Women," and Fowles' "The French Lieutenant's Woman." Hunger was also liberated for the 200 participants with a repast of Seafood Newburg and finger-lickin'-good fried chicken. It was a day of deliverance for the free spirits immersed in the fantasies of emancipation.



### **Mini-Institutes Bring Maxi-Results:**

To promote Great Books, recruit new members, start new groups, and bring together old members -- Philadelphia is planning another series of Mini-Institutes this September. Five city and suburban locations will be the sites for an evening of mini-discussions. The Mini-Institutes held last Fall were highly successful and proved one of the best ways to introduce prospective participants into the Great Books program. A mailing will go out in advance to inform everyone of dates and places. If regular Great Bookers have names of prospects to suggest, send them to Norma Oser, 6 Surrey Road, Melrose Park, Pa. 19126 (635-3504).

### **Council Co-Sponsors Film Series:**

The Philadelphia Council served as co-sponsor for a film series presented by the National Project Center for Film and the Humanities during April and May. Five films dealing with "The Identity Crisis" were shown at the Art Alliance in Philadelphia. Discussions led by trained Great Books leaders followed each showing. The films lend themselves exceptionally well to the Great Books method, and with more meaningful results. This experience suggests that other Councils might well consider trying such discussion of great music or great paintings. (Several years ago, the Boston Council tried such a one-day event -- a piece of music and a painting -- with memorable success).

### **Philadelphia Takes Bicentennial To Evening Schools:**

"Rediscover America Through Books" is the Bicentennial theme of the Philadelphia Council for a program of readings and discussions offered to local adult evening schools. The 10-week program, conceived as "Great Readings For '76," and administered by Council member Eva Bix, has already had enthusiastic endorsement by a number of school boards in the Philadelphia area.

Volunteer leaders are being provided by the Council. A tentative reading list includes the Declaration of Independence, The Federalist Papers, selections by Locke, Tocqueville, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Crane, Benet, Arthur Miller, and other American poets. All titles are available in public libraries, and at least two will be furnished free by the Council. Additional Bicentennial plans beginning Fall '75 are being formulated by Chairman Iz Wachs and Coordinator Norma Oser, and will include a repeat of last Fall's very successful neighborhood open-house mini-discussions to attract new participants.

### **Guides Versus Gurus:**

Should a group leader act as guide or guru? Should the leading be from the head or heart? Should the leading be an egghead exercise or a transcendental trance? What's the proper degree of humility a leader should muster toward group participants? What traits constitute the Compleat Leader? How should the leader deal with non-readers and book-burners?

These were some of the provocative topics discussed during the Annual Leaders' Workshop by the Philadelphia Council. And they inspired spirited debate, with advocates on both sides. Among the Faculty Members were Emil Bix, Mary Donahoe, Sylvia Cohen, Norma Oser, Esther Solomon, Iz Wachs, Bill McConeghy, and the Blumenthals.



### **Lancaster Summer Institute:**

The Lancaster County Great Books Council announces its 18th Annual Summer Institute, to be held Saturday, August 23, at Fairview Hall, Elizabethtown College. The one-day event will feature two readings and discussions: Open Marriage, by Nena and George O'Neill, and The Awakening, by Kate Chopin. Single reservation is \$8, and includes one set of books and lunch. For reservations (which close August 9) contact or send checks to Susan Bowser, Elizabethtown Public Library, N. Hanover and Oak Streets, Elizabethtown, Pa. 17022.

### **Comment of the New Philadelphia Coordinator:**

"After doing my terms as a leader of adult and junior groups, I was appointed last March to the Coordinator's post. It has now been a 5-months romance with the Philadelphia Council, and the honeymoon spirit still prevails as cordiality and cooperation from everyone abound. My eyes are still wide with enlightenment as I learn of the vast scope of the program which I hadn't fully realized before.

"Fifty-odd groups (some odder than others) meet regularly in the metropolitan Philadelphia area. Add to this 75 junior groups meeting in local schools, largely the result of the efforts of Junior Coordinator Lee Sharpe, now retiring. Another half dozen new adult groups will be starting in the Fall. A large number of our existing groups, now in their second decades, are continuing stronger than ever. The outlook is both encouraging and exciting" -- Norma Oser.

Norma announces two upcoming Executive Board meetings of the Philadelphia Council: Sunday, October 2, at 2 PM -- at Norma Oser's, 6 Surrey Road, Melrose Park, Pa.; and Sunday, January 18, at 2 PM -- at Sylvia and David Perelman's, 8214 Marion Road, Elkins Park, Pa.

## **BOSTON COUNCIL NEWS**

### **New Officers:**

At the annual meeting of the Boston Council in June, the following new officers were elected: President, Ralph Soderberg; Vice President, Carol Batchelder. Continuing their posts are Frank Vallier, Treasurer, and Lorna Feeley, Secretary. Three new members were elected to the Board of Directors: Edward Geschelin, William Haynes, and Richard Stromer.

### **Fall Institute:**

The Great Books Fall Institute will return to Provincetown Inn at picturesque Provincetown, Mass., October 8-19. The charge, not yet firmly fixed, will be between \$35 and \$38, and will include one-night lodging, meals and gratuities. Three readings and discussions are scheduled:

- 1) Beyond Freedom and Dignity, by B. F. Skinner (Bantam, \$1.95).



2) A Separate Peace, by John Knowles (Bantam, \$.95 or Dell \$1.65).

3) Murder In The Cathedral, by T. S. Eliot (Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, \$1.65).

Participants will buy their own books, which in this instance are easily available in paperback.

Provincetown, as most everyone knows, is the farthestmost tip of Cape Cod, where the spectacular view is 3,000 miles of blue Atlantic, next eye-stop Europe. A beautiful setting and a dramatic time of year with the Fall foliage at its peak. Special rates at the Inn have been arranged for those wishing to come early or stay late to extend their visit. All Great Bookers are invited. For reservations or further information, if needed, contact Ann Mogan, 317 Grove St., Wellesley, Mass. 02181 (237-3855).

#### **June One-Day Institute:**

This was held on Saturday, June 14, at Dana Hall, Wellesley College, with an attendance of 85. The readings: The Sibyl, by Par Lagerkvist, and The Book of Job. The Sibyl, a 1951 Nobel Prize winner, is a kind of book that touches off mental and spiritual earthquakes. It has the provocative substance for several discussions. The Book of Job made an ideal mate for it. Both are probing inquiries into man's patience with God, and vice versa.

#### **Hospital Honors Dr. Djerf:**

A new children's playroom at Quincy City Hospital has been dedicated to the late Dr. Charles Djerf, whose professional life as a noted pediatrician was devoted to child care. Quincy's mayor, Walter J. Hannon, spoke at the dedication. As just about everyone knows, Charlie was a prime pillar of the Great Books program for many years, both in the Boston area and at Colby.

#### **Leader Training Sessions:**

A Leader Training program is scheduled to start in Boston on Thursday, September 11, at 8 PM. It will continue for four consecutive Thursdays. There is no charge, and all training materials are furnished free. The sessions will be under the supervision of Gus Soderberg, a skilled and experienced Great Books leader training director. All interested persons may contact Mrs. Connie Lawson, 48 Sherman St., Quincy, Mass. 02170 (472-5532).

## **LONG ISLAND COUNCIL**

#### **Ambitious Plans Ahead:**

Long Island ended its Great Books year this Spring with 20 groups in operation, three of them first-year groups -- one in Huntington, led by Joe Crowley; the second in Manhasset led by Carl Heyel, and the third in Cutchogue led by Helene Kohn.



With the large number of leaders who recently completed the training program and are now available, there is expectation of a large influx of first-year groups next year. Rose Ermidis is scheduling a mid-summer reunion of these recent graduates so they can renew acquaintances and make plans for organizing new groups in the Fall.

At the June Council meeting, a schedule of activities for the 1975-76 year was drawn up. These include:

**A reorganization meeting of the Council**, to which will be invited a leader and a member of each Discussion Group. The Council will be enlarged from its present seven to twelve members, enabling the formation of a Leaders' Committee and an Advisory Committee as part of the Council. There is now a strong spirit of revitalization, and the new target is *growth*.

An advanced Leader Training Session and reception has been scheduled for November, for both new and established leaders.

*Another 4-session Leader Training Course for a whole batch of new leaders has been scheduled for Spring, 1976 (Rachel Leon will conduct the Leader Training activities). This is all part of the Council's new thrust for growth.*

**A One-Day Institute will be held next May** at the Roslyn Library with its excellent facilities. The likely discussion theme will be Freedom.

#### **The May Institute:**

The Emerson quote on the poster for the MIND and REALITY One-Day Institute in May read: "For men are wiser than they know." After discussing the Emerson Essays and Weil's "The Natural Mind," the 65 participants became wiser than they knew. Even the Leaders thought so. You can't discuss transcendentalism and higher consciousness without getting turned on to the exciting world of Great Books -- especially when there is such a stimulating variety of viewpoints to exchange.

Joe Crowley's flyer with the William Blake illustration captured the spirit of the theme and the readings, which were selected by Pearl Steinberg. Helen Glannon arranged for the facilities of the Roslyn Library, and for the beautifully prepared luncheon which was served and prepared by a group of senior citizens. The discussion leaders were Joe Crowley, Rose Ermidis, Chuck Ferrara, Pearl Steinberg, and our favorite guest leader, Rachel Leon.

A fortuitous addition to the esoteric mood of the Institute was the arrival, in colorful regalia and beads, of Yogi Berl Rakousky, who is perhaps the world's foremost exponent of Joy Yoga. He had seen our poster and wanted to experience the Great Books discursive approach to the subject of consciousness. Unfortunately, the Yogi hadn't read the books so he wasn't allowed to participate in the discussion. Instead, he sat cross-legged on the floor observing both the participants and the cosmos while giving off a strong scent of attar of roses.

#### **Now THIS Is Dedication:**

Many Great Bookers have been in the program for many years. But some kind of special tribute goes to Lewis Thistle of Lynn, Mass., who has been an active leader for some 20 years. A former teacher and principal of Lynn Classical High School, Lewis retired in 1965 -- but not from Great Books where he continues as an active leader and an enthusiastic generator of new groups and new leaders in the Lynn area.



Lewis' memory takes him back to World War II and the army camps in Europe. The University of Chicago, seat of the Great Books program and Foundation, sent some of its Great Books discussion leaders to Europe to introduce and develop the program among soldiers awaiting return and discharge in the states. The program was so well received that it eventually led, at the end of the war, to the formation of the Great Books Foundation on a national basis for all interested adults.

But back to Lewis. A group from the Foundation in 1947 conducted a Great Books training session for General Electric executives in Lynn, and Lewis attended. It was a case of instant addiction. This led to the formation of several Great Books groups in Lynn, and Lewis was both a participant and leader. Further impetus was given to the program with a demonstration session led by Charlie Djerf (says Lewis, "Charlie's enthusiasm and gadflying really hyped us about Great Books.")

Lewis took it from there on his own initiative. His expanding groups even became "specialized" -- teachers, school committee members, engineers, executives, ministers. In fact, one group was launched at the Boston Engineers Club. Inevitable spinoffs occurred. Two teachers, Great Books participants brought in by Lewis, introduced the program as part of their high school English classes. A Junior Great Books program was started in the Lynn Public schools. But there were rough spots, too. A couple of years later the Deputy Superintendent of Schools made a shocking discovery: the "vulgar" Chaucer was included in the Junior program. Shades of Salem Witchcraft he cancelled out the Great Books program in the schools.

The Lewis Thistle story isn't so much one of one man's long participation in the Great Books program, but rather what dedication and enthusiasm by one person can do to create a contagion of Great Books participation throughout a city, touching all ages, and varied segments of the population. The power of conviction is a great power indeed -- and Lewis Thistle is a living model of that power.

#### **Leaders Seminar:**

In a five-month period, November and March, two special post-graduate leader training seminars were held for Boston area leaders. The session last November, already reported, dealt with Yeats' "Long-Legged Fly," a short poem and selected deliberately for its challenge for discussion of a short, esthetic work. The second session, in March, centered on James Joyce's "The Dubliners," a group of short stories. Here again the idea was to test the ingenuity of leaders in creating a provocative discussion of a short story without making it appear like a book review. In the March session, each leader was required to bring an opening question sufficiently stimulating to launch a full-scale discussion. First the questions themselves were examined. Then each of three leaders led discussions, each followed by a critique.

These leader seminars, which will continue through the 1975-76 Great Books season because of their success and popularity, have enabled leaders to appraise their own leadership procedures against those of other experienced leaders in test discussions. The leaders themselves, drawn from the metropolitan Boston area's 40 groups, span the spectrum of experience: newly trained leaders; those who've been isolated with their groups in outside areas for 10-12 years; participants from groups where the leadership rotates among the group members; leaders who have completed the 9-year Great Books series and are now discussing books of their own selection.

This productive leader-learning program is under the direction of Carol Batchelder and Ann Levison. The next seminar is scheduled for the Fall. Judy Jacquart and Kathy Henderson, two relatively new co-leaders, will handle the logistics for the next get-together. These seminars have confirmed a long-known fact: leaders enjoy nothing better than a well-led discussion.



### **New Leaders:**

For the first time in a number of years the Long Island Council was able to attract enough people to run a Leader Training Course. Rose Ermidis' posters and letters, stressing the theme "You Learn By Leading," was sufficiently potent to attract 20 prospective leaders. They attended four Saturday afternoon training sessions in May at the Bryant Library in Roslyn (thanks to Helen Glannon's arrangements. They engaged in discussing, leading and critiquing Plato's *Apology*, Tocqueville's *Democracy In America*, Machievelli's *The Prince*, and Shakespeare's *MacBeth*.

At one session the group was addressed by Victor Gough, who represented the Long Island Council. Victor, an example of the wisdom obtained from 20 years of leading Great Books discussions, talked about what it means to be a Great Books leader in today's society, and encouraged the new leader prospects to assume an active leadership role in the program. Following the final session a social reception was held for the graduates.

### **The Super-Vocalists:**

Chuck Ferrara says that surely Britain's Aneurin Bevan, when making this remark about Winston Churchill, must have had in mind some participants in a Great Books discussion: "He never spares himself in conversation. He gives of himself so generously that hardly anybody else is permitted to give anything in his presence."

## **IDEAS TO THINK BY**

### **For A Long Great Books Life:**

Some centenarians recommend that for a long life the best formula is regular hours, a daily 5-mile walk, and abstention from sex, booze and gluttony. Others take the opposite view: a daily fifth of Old Whatever, uninhibited release of the appetites, and the credo that early to bed and early to rise means you miss meeting all the regular guys. For longevity, then, there seems to be no single path.

Does it apply to Great Books groups? Some groups stay intact a couple or few years, then fade. Others, however, hold together and thrive for 10-15 years and more. Why the difference? Recently, a number of experienced Great Books leaders brainstormed the matter. Here's what they concluded were among the essentials for group longevity, based on an analysis of existing long-life groups:

- 1) A devoted, capable leader, and an equally devoted secretary.
- 2) The continuous effort of hard-core participants to recruit new members to replace drop-outs.
- 3) A group social event of one kind or another at least once a year.
- 4) Invite an occasional guest leader -- especially on a provocative book or theme -- as a change of pace and approach.
- 5) Use of reminder postcards for the next meeting and reading.



6) Use of a large, permanent poster at the regular meeting place (such as the library), with a slot announcing the reading and date of the next meeting (to attract new people).

7) Vocal participation of *all* group members -- not a division between the dominants and the recessives.

### What's A Secretary To Do?

Experience shows that the most successful groups are those with active and devoted secretaries. Yet, some groups still fail to use a secretary -- a mistake often grave enough to result in ultimate dissolution of the group itself. But what is the function of a secretary? And how can he or she maximize this function? Recently, a group of experienced and active Great Books secretaries put together a suggested "rule book" of what they consider the areas of activity of the Group Secretary for most effective results. Here they are:

#### Organizational:

- 1) Keep an up-to-date list of participants' names, addresses and phone numbers. At the start of the year, send a copy of the list to the region Coordinator so that all participants are on the mailing list. Later, send along new names.
- 2) Towards the end of the reading year, take orders and money from participants on books for the following year -- or give each participant an order form.
- 3) Make arrangements for the use of the meeting place.
- 4) Bring to the group any notices received about Great Books events, Institutes, new programs, etc. Read them to the group. Keep informed about these so you can answer questions.
- 5) Be the intermediary between the group and the Council.

#### Group Dynamics:

- 1) Send reminder postcards to group members citing date and reading of next meeting. At start of reading year, collect cost of year's card mailings from each participants (\$1.30 for 16 mailings).
- 2) By phone, call participants who've missed two consecutive meetings. Let them know they've been missed. Try to learn why they haven't attended. Keep a record of the "why's".
- 3) Send a get-well card, signed by the group participants, to those who've been absent because of illness.
- 4) Introduce and welcome all new members. Make them feel wanted -- and that they've contributed to the group discussion.
- 5) Suggest and arrange for at least one group social occasion each year: a theatre party, or a party at one of the member's homes, etc.
- 6) If the group develops problems (personalities, leadership, etc.), take 15 minutes at the end of the meeting to talk it out with the group and resolve the problem.



**Promotional:**

- 1) Make sure Great Books promotional or publicity material gets good local exposure.
- 2) Encourage the group to invite new people -- friends, neighbors, relatives. Hold a special Bring-A-Friend night.
- 3) Send out an occasional one- or two-page "newsletter" to *local* members and prospects. Especially the start of the year. And occasional follow-ups. Make it newsy. Things now happening and things to come.

**Useful Information On Tap:**

- 1) Know the name, address and phone of the Council Coordinator -- your main contact for "what's happening."
- 2) Know the schedule of all upcoming events planned by the Council. Keep your group informed about them.
- 3) Sets of books are \$12 per set (first year is \$11), via the Great Books Foundation, 307 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60601. Indicate year, number of sets, amount of money enclosed, to whom sets should be delivered. Delivery is about three weeks.

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