

THE TRICORN

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

FEBRUARY 1995

COLBY 1995: DEMOCRACY AND AMERICA

"When in the course of human events..." begins the Declaration of Independence (1776) which sets forth the assumptions justifying the emergence of a small new state huddled on the eastern shore of the vast continent America. Self-evident truths (that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed) are asserted.

Sixty years later, a young French aristocrat, Alexis de Tocqueville, published his analysis of the workings of these assumptions in the New World republic: *Democracy in America*. It remains a classic, outstandingly perceptive and comprehensive.

At Colby this year (1995), one hundred fifty years later, we will read this masterpiece and consider for ourselves its ongoing relevance in light of the flood of "human events" that have deluged us since it was written.

In addition, we will consider the case of a young American girl with radical values scandalizing European society (Henry James's *Daisy Miller*.) Also, the contemporary classic *Death of a Salesman* (Arthur Miller.) And finally, E. M. Forster's "What I Believe" (from *Two Cheers for Democracy*.)

This will be a rare week of self-examination and self-knowledge. Come.

WILMINGTON'S SPRING SEMINAR The Devastation of War

Euripides' *Trojan Women* and Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* (He's the much lauded author of *The Remains of the Day*) depict the dreadful aftermath of wars fought many centuries apart. The Ishiguro novel is just as original and involving as his better known work.

Date: Saturday, March 25

Place: First Unitarian Church, 730 Halstead St., Wilmington, Delaware

Cost: \$25 for lunch, books, refreshments

Please send checks made out to the GB Council of Delaware to:

Lois Myota
1224 Evergreen Rd.
Wilmington, DE 19803
Phone: (203) 762-4938

BEHIND THE GRATERFORD GATES

Training Lifer Leaders

I came to Graterford (a maximum security prison for men) on a rainy Saturday in December to run a Great Books Leader Training Workshop. The group has been meeting for about five years with Milton King as leader. Julia Cass, Philadelphia Inquirer staff reporter for the prison, and Joan Waldbaum, a volunteer, have been regular participants.

I was glad that Milton drove, because on my own, I might never have found the place, and certainly would not have known or anticipated the protocol. Clearly, the guards didn't welcome us. Security clearance took only ten minutes, but we were kept waiting more than an hour for a guard to escort us down the hall to the room where the men were awaiting us.

The group of 20 men (many serving life sentences), plus the three outsiders, formed a larger group than most leader training classes. They had read Plato's *Apology* in preparation. I forgot the extraordinary and oppressive horror of the place in the process of what was a very ordinary, technical training session. I ran the workshop pretty much as I usually do, with some variations for the size of the group and the time constraints. Six participants volunteered to lead a practice session. Some were better than others, as usual. The discussion about the discussion was good, with relevant and interesting questions on process. The group had already been well trained in the rules for discussion; sticking to the text, exploring through interpretive questions, not allowing outside authorities. It was, as always, exciting and exhausting. Only later when I replayed the session in my head did I begin to experience the incongruities of time and place and subject matter.

The group, already successful, intends to try using newly trained co-leaders. That should work, given the number of potentially good leaders. With everyone knowing something about what makes for a good Great Books discussion, the Graterford group should continue to do well.

Sibyl Cohen

More Moll Cryptograms

The success of Philadelphia Council member Louise Moll's first book of cryptograms is no secret. Devotees of this puzzle form found much enjoyment there, resulting in a second book, *Clever Cryptograms: 300 Quotations from Philosophers and Great Thinkers*, just now appearing in bookstores. Here's a sample:

G JGO SNW XWYQ OWV VNMOT RWD NMJQR, XWYQ OWV VNMOT GV GUU. (Ans: p.8)

APPLICATION (Please Print)

Make checks payable to Colby Summer Institute)

Name(s) _____

Last Name , First Name

Address _____

Street or P. O. Box Apt. # City State Zip Phone

Notes and comment (Please list juniors' ages as of August 1995): _____

Prefer leaderless group

Reg. # _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Latest Yr. _____

Reg. Grp. # _____

Deposit # _____

Status Code _____

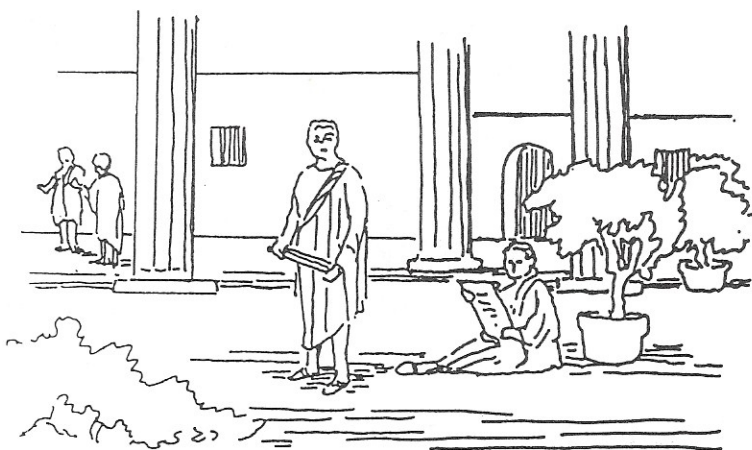
Bal. at Reg. _____

Bks. Shipped _____

THE 39TH ANNUAL
Wachs Great Books
Summer Institute
at Colby College

August 6 through 12, 1995

**A week of reading, discussion,
fun, and friendship on the
beautiful campus of Colby College
in the hills of Waterville, Maine**



DEMOCRACY AND AMERICA

Democracy in America, by Alexis de Tocqueville (3 sessions)

Death of a Salesman, by Arthur Miller

Daisy Miller, by Henry James

What I Believe, by E. M. Forster

WHAT IS A GREAT BOOKS DISCUSSION?

A group of readers, sharing their understanding of a stimulating work of literature or philosophy in a well-conducted discussion, can reach a level of insight rarely achieved by those who read alone. Great Books is for people who love to think and talk about the world's great ideas, and whose greatest pleasure is to spend time with others who share that joy.

Cost: \$408 per person covers dormitory room (single or double), meals, discussions, and books, as well as swimming, tennis, a film, group social activities, the warm hospitality of the Colby staff, and a real Maine clambake on the shores of Belgrade Lake. Boating, golf, music, and summer theater are nearby.

Junior Program: Families with children between the ages of four and fourteen are welcome. The cost is \$280 for children four through nine and \$320 for children ten through fourteen. Juniors attend morning activities while adults are attending book discussions; junior book discussions take place on three afternoons. Evening supervision is available so that adults can attend social events. This year's readings for older juniors are The Education of Little Tree, by Forrest Carter; The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Rip Van Winkle, by Washington Irving; and selected American poems. There will be a program for younger juniors if enrollment is sufficient. For more information call Ginny Thurston, 508-456-3505.

Application and refunds: A \$100 deposit per person is required with application, \$25 of which is refundable for cancellations before July 1. For juniors, the refund is \$75. The balance is due at registration on August 6. Books and additional information will be sent upon receipt of deposit.

Mail Application to:
Colby Summer Institute
P.O. Box V
Harvard, MA 01451-0560
(508-456-3505)



OUL SURVIVORS

Long Day's Journey Into Night, by Eugene O'Neill

The English Patient, by Michael Ondaatje

Poem #41 from *Proverbs and Song-Verse*,
by Antonio Machado

N. E. GREAT BOOKS SPRING INSTITUTE

Sheraton Inn, Plymouth Mass.

APRIL 7 TO 9, 1995

The New England Spring Institute will be held again this year in the historic town of Plymouth, Massachusetts. Among the area's many pleasures are Plimoth Plantation, the Mayflower, Plymouth Rock, and the windswept waterfront. Best of all, savor the joy of discussion with friends old and new who love great books and great ideas.

The cost of the weekend is \$198 per person double occupancy and \$268 per person single occupancy. Prices include books, discussions, lodging, six meals, gratuities, and all social activities. Commuting is an option at \$55, which covers books, discussions, and all social activities. Commuters may also sign up for meals; price information will be sent with commuters' books. A fund is available to pay part of the cost for those who would otherwise not be able to attend. For information, write Ginny Thurston at the address to the right or call her at (508) 456-3505.

To register, mail the form below with a deposit of \$100 per person for double occupancy or \$150 per person for single occupancy, or the \$55 fee for commuters, to:

Virginia Thurston
P.O. Box 545
Harvard, MA 01451-0545

Make checks payable to the Spring Institute Committee. If you cancel by March 17, your deposit or commuter's fee, less the cost of books and mailing, will be refunded.

REGISTRATION

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____
street p.o. box or apt. #

_____ city state zip

TELEPHONE () _____ SINGLE OCCUPANCY___ DOUBLE OCCUPANCY___ COMMUTER___

NUMBER OF RESERVATIONS _____ ROOMMATE PREFERENCE _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____ PLEASE LIST ADDITIONAL RESERVATIONS ON THE BACK OF THIS FORM.

Notes, Comments, Special Requests _____

GREAT BOOKS TO JOIN IN "NATIONAL CONVERSATION"

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) plans a "National Conversation" in 1995 on American pluralism and identity. Such immensely important matters as the positive and negative aspects of multiculturalism, and the values we must all share to operate as a united nation will be discussed and debated across the country by many groups in many formats. The Philadelphia Great Books Council has applied for an NEH grant to enable us to join in the National Conversation in our own unique way. Marney Hague, our publicity chairman, has labored throughout the past autumn to work out the following plan:

On July 8, we will stage a major, day-long event at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Center City Philadelphia to launch our program, co-sponsored by representative ethnic and religious groups in the area, so that the issues of multiculturalism and American identity can be broadly examined. This July 8 event involves multiple small group discussions during the morning and afternoon, plus a large audience town-hall meeting panel discussion in the evening with panel members from city government and community group leaders.

The small group discussions would follow the Great Books discussion group format: 15 participants in a round table setting, discussing selected passages from classic and contemporary authors as a focus for each themed, two hour discussion. The intent is to have each co-sponsoring group provide a core group of participants who would be trained in advance of the first event in group discussion leadership techniques by Great Books trainers. It is our hope that the same ethnically diverse group would continue intact from the first event for the succeeding six months, allowing for real, in-depth discussions and the building of confidence, understanding, and community ties across ethnic and religious lines. The themed discussions would focus on reading selections provided to group participants prior to the opening of the seven- month project. The readings would provide the initial focus of the discussions, allowing for personal interpretations and the exchange of local points of view on the topics.

The one day event on July 8 will be coordinated with other simultaneous one-day events to be held in Chicago and San Francisco by local Great Books Councils. Taking advantage of possible national radio, TV, and press coverage opportunities, we will also explore live video conferencing transmissions between three sites for the town-hall portion of the Philadelphia program.

To insure the success of this undertaking, many hands and many minds will be needed. To volunteer your help, call Marney Hague at (215) 977-7873.

PHILADELPHIA THEATRE PARTY

We've had a fine run of luck at Temple University productions for several years running, so we'll gladly return this spring to see Brendan Behan's *The Hostage*, a tragi-comic play about "the troubles" in Northern Ireland. Behan, who followed Dylan Thomas's path to a tragic early grave, wrote with ebullient spirit and irresistible energy. Playgoers who saw *The Hostage* in its local production decades ago still retain some of its sharp images and even some of its language. This updated production should be a fine experience.

Date: Saturday, April 8, Matinee at 2:00 PM
Place: Tomlinson Theatre, Temple University, 13th and Norris Streets
Free parking on Diamond Street, east of 13th.
Reservations: Please send your check for \$12, payable to Philadelphia GB Council to:

Fritzie Green
2401 Pennsylvania Ave., Apt. 10B21
Philadelphia, PA
Phone (215) 978-7828

Tickets will be distributed at the theatre.

Editor: Norma Oser, 7919 Heather Rd., Elkins Park, PA 19117
Long Island Correspondent: June Ferrara, 14 Bay Second St., Islip, NY 11751

LONG ISLAND NEWS

Spring Institute Theme: THE DIVERSITY WITHIN

The Readings:

LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL by Martin Luther King, Jr.

King's response to a public statement of concern and caution issued by eight white religious leaders. It espouses the non-violent restructuring of America's social order and takes a stand between two opposing forces in the black community.

THE PIANO LESSON by August Wilson

A Pulitzer Prize Drama dealing with a black family's dilemma: to cherish and preserve the old piano carved with the history of the family's slavery, or to sell the symbol of that legacy to buy and profit from the land their ancestors worked as slaves.

DATE AND PLACE

Sunday, June 11, 1995, at the Bailey Arboretum, Locust Valley, New York, formerly a North Shore Estate now a park featuring a collection of trees and shrubs from other lands. The discussions will be held, and lunch served, in the main house, built in the mid-1800's. Enrollment will be limited because of the size of the facilities.

The Cost:

\$23.00, includes readings, travel directions, coffee at registration, lunch and post-discussion refreshments.

Mail to:

Long Island Great Books Council
P.O. Box 821
Port Washington, NY, 11050

(Please send before April 1, 1995)

Please reserve _____ places at the Long Island Institute at \$23.00 each, enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

Answer to the cryptogram on page 3

A man who does not think for himself, does not think at all. (Oscar Wilde)

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GREAT CONVERSATION VS. SHARED INQUIRY

The Great Conversation is an historical process by which thinkers attempt to find truth by building on existing ideas through criticism, advocacy and invention. The truth found is personal, not necessarily believed by others and not necessarily enduring. Great Books used to promote participation in the Great Conversation.

But the sirens of no-pain whispered to Great Books saying, "In this pain free society, no one should endure the pain of changing opinions and beliefs." Heeding this, Great Books abandoned the Great Conversation and fled to Shared Inquiry. At bottom, Shared Inquiry is a feckless scheme devoted to seeking interpretations to questions seen as having no right answer. Leaders are told to pry loose answers, but never allow any one answer to emerge victorious. To prevent this, leaders interrupt with a new question, and the cycle continues.

The Great Conversation is a goal directed activity intended to have participants ask those questions that have always been of primary concern and *seek the best answer*. Shared Inquiry is a process by which we try to figure out what might be meant by what someone else has said.

Presley Brown

Editor's Note: Letters commenting on Tricorn articles and letters containing original thought will be carefully considered for publication.

Great Books
14 Bay Second St.
Islip, NY 11751