

THE TRICORN

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED JOINTLY BY THE NEW ENGLAND ♦
LONG ISLAND ♦ PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS COUNCILS

AUGUST 1998

GREAT BOOKS GREECE INSTITUTE

Everything in Greece is uphill: the slippery steps of the Acropolis in the rain; the ascent on Santorini by cable car, mule, or six hundred steps; the sacred way to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi; and the gangplank from the bouncing tender to the safety of the MTS Olympic Countess, our floating resort hotel.

However we had spent the day, we Great Bookers regathered at mealtimes and for discussions. We were a cross-generational, cross-country group of travelers with a common bond. Together we explored the country and its literature, discussing three classics in the very surround that inspired the works while the ship moved us to the next port-of-call.

As we watched from shipboard, the islands emerged and disappeared in the mists. Their shapes, their shadows, their mystery, suggest the source of ancient myth and legend; and we could easily understand the challenge of sailing the Aegean in a single-sailed boat manned by forty oars.

At Delphi we watched the goats grazing on the mountainside where Lagerkvist's *Sibyl*, a pythia exiled from Delphi, raised the son of god. When our excellent guide said there was a difference between the sibyl and a pythia, we were confused. Our questions confused her. Alice Colby, our unflappable trip coordinator, will send her a copy of the novel.

A part of Themistocles' wall, erected as a defense against the Peloponnesians, was uncovered when our hotel in Athens was constructed. These ruins have been showcased and line the corridor to the dining-room. We read of this wall in Thucydides last summer at Colby. Talk about history coming alive!

At the end of our Institute, one participant remarked, "Some people go on a cruise and have a good time. They lie in the sun and they swim in the pool. I go on a cruise and get stuffed full of information." It really wasn't a complaint. We'd like to *Great Books Abroad* again, but next time, on level ground.

Carol Batchelder and Leah Blumenthal

May 1998

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LONG ISLAND NEWS

Reflections From The Spring Institute

Science and Imagination

or

Bacon's *Four Idols* as They Relate To Great Books Discussions

The Four Idols, according to Bacon, are the false notions in possession of human understanding that prevent the truth from entering our minds. They are:

- 1- The Idols of the Tribe (or group) found in human nature itself, giving rise to the false assertion that "the sense of man is the measure of things".
- 2- The Idols of the Cave (or participant) that are in the individual, who looking out from his private den, "discolors the light of nature" with the peculiarities of his own mindset and education.
- 3- The Idols of the Marketplace (or discussion) formed by human intercourse and communicating with "ill and unfit choice of words" that overrule the understanding and lead to "empty controversies and idle fancies."
- 4- The Idols of the Theater (or reading) that infiltrate human minds with dogmas of philosophy, axioms of science and accepted systems that, like stage plays, portray unreal worlds of their own creation.

And, finally, not cited by Bacon but generally understood would be

- 5- The Idol Unto Itself (or leader), the final cause that orders the confusion and contentiousness of our little Great Books World.

The Privileged Thorn

Charles Ferrara's poems have graced our pages from time to time. Now his first book of poetry is available for sale. His many admirers can get a copy by making checks out to the author (prices include shipping) . . \$11.50 for one copy, \$21.50 for two and \$32.00 for three. Send orders to Charles Ferrara, 14 Bay Second St., Islip, NY 11751 4406, or call 516-501-5032. For a sample poem, read to the right:

The book includes forty-nine other poems.

Night Prayer

(from *The Privileged Thorn*)

At night, when you're in bed
and pillow-creases ray
from the sleeping sun of your head,

Your face, glazed in repose,
is a Della Robbia Madonna
with its eyes closed.

Sliding in, under the covers,
my body spoons to yours;
so fitting we are lovers

I can almost believe in God,
pray in your warmth
for those who sleep alone.

PHILADELPHIA NEWS

New Directions: An Infusion of Spirit

The adult great books program is not just alive and well; it's becoming young and vigorous. Cyra Gross, Klaus Traumann, and I returned from our weekend with the Foundation in Chicago excited and delighted with the variety of successful projects taking place in Chicago, San Francisco, West Chester, and Houston among other places. Our problem was not what to do but where to begin in introducing some of these ideas to Philadelphia Great Books Council.

We decided to focus on three projects because we believe they are all doable and would prove the most useful.

1. The foundation under the guidance of Mark Cwik, a member of the staff, is putting together a project celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ratification of *The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The Foundation will have available a set of readings that will include theoretical as well as practical information that would be relevant to in-depth discussions of this document. Mark has enlisted the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) in helping to provide the readings as well as to work with Great Books in setting up programs. Each council is encouraged to use what will be available in its own way.

2. One very successful enterprise that Chicago started was setting up groups in Borders and Barnes & Noble Bookstores. We have been given lists of these chain stores in our area and the name of the Barnes & Noble person from Chicago who can be contacted for reference if necessary. It is not only a wonderful venue for starting groups but it also provides publicity to those who already read and who would be interested in what Great Books has to offer.

3. Gary Schoepfel, Director of the Adult Great Books Division of the Foundation, has done some marathon training sessions in San Francisco and in West Chester, New York. We will try to arrange for him to come here. The training would be for:

- wannabe leaders,
- participants who want to make their own Great Books group even better, and also
- leaders who have been through a training session.

If you are interested in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights project, please contact Klaus (302-478-4058, greatbooks@dol.net); for the bookstore project contact Cyra (302-475-3914); for the training contact me, Sibyl Cohen (215-568-9827, cohen@alpha.lasalle.edu).

Philadelphia's 28th Annual Great Books

FALL INSTITUTE WEEKEND

Invites you to join us as we look into

Trials

In the Courts
In the Streets
In the Soul

November 13, 14, 15, 1998

Pocono Manor

A Civil Action Jonathan Harr
To Kill A Mockingbird Harper Lee
The Oresteia Aeschylus

*As formerly we suffered from crimes,
So now we suffer from laws.*

Tacitus

COST: \$215 per person double occupancy,
\$280 for single occupancy. Price includes meals,
lodging, books, entertainment and tips.

TO REGISTER: Please send a deposit of \$115
per person for double occupancy and \$150 for
single occupancy with your registration form to:

CANCELLATION: Your deposit, less a charge
for books and mailing, will be refunded if notice
is postmarked by October 10, 1998.

Sylvia Perelman
8214 Marion Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

REGISTRATION FORM

Enclosed is a deposit of \$ _____ \$115 per person double occupancy or
\$150 per person single occupancy
Made payable to Fall Institute Committee.

Names (please give the first and last name of each person)	Non-smoking group	Smoking group	No preference
(first) _____ (last) _____	[]	[]	[]
(first) _____ (last) _____	[]	[]	[]

Address (street) _____
(city) _____ (state) _____ (zip) _____ (phone) () _____

Special requests should accompany this form. They will be honored if possible.

(Optional) I would like to room with _____.

News from New England

The best way to describe the organization's current status is "under construction." The council conducted a survey during the Spring Institute and prepared the first draft of a financial plan. It is currently reviewing issues of training and appreciation of volunteers and is putting together a Fall One-Day Committee and an Outreach Committee. If anyone is interested in helping out with any of these activities, please contact me or one of the council members.

Of the approximately 140 participants at the Spring Institute, 83 completed our 1998 Survey which covered issues of participation, leadership, and volunteering. Of the respondents 46 were from New England, 15 from Philadelphia, 3 from Long Island, and 19 other. The council would like to thank all those who responded, as well as the Spring Institute Committee for conducting the survey. We would like to extend a special thank you to Bill Shea who single-handedly tabulated the results. Because the survey was not taken from a random sample, it should only be viewed as a very rough estimate of where the rest of the organization stands on issues; nevertheless, here are the results.

Concerning Participation

Approximately 70% of the respondents were female, and the average age was 67.5.

Concerning length of participation there were three groupings:

17% new, 30% in the 5 to 10 year range, and 37% over 15 years.

30% participate in local groups more than 9 times a year.

67% participate in special events 2 or more times a year.

25% of the respondents would like to be put in touch with a local group.

For reading selections 72% would like to see an even mixture of classics and contemporary while another 24% would like mostly (not all) classics.

The desired group size is twelve to thirteen participants.

Concerning Leadership

54% have been leaders and of those 61% have had training.

27% lead 1 to 3 groups a year while another 6% lead more than 15 times a year.

20% of the respondents would be interested in taking leader training.

Concerning Volunteering

Here, not unlike in so many of the classics, we find a paradoxical situation:

51% of respondents felt that recruiting new participants was strongly important and another 20% felt it was of the utmost importance;

however, only 9.6% would be willing to help out with recruitment.

Still, there were 43% of the leaders who would be willing occasionally to help out a new group that is just forming.

25% said they would be willing to help out with special events.

Time-wise, 20% could spend 8 to 12 hours per year helping out, while another 10% could spend more than 24 hours a year.

12% offered to donate approximately \$10 per year

13% offered to donate from \$20 to \$50 per year

13% offered to donate over \$50 per year.

News from New England (Cont'd.)

With approximately 70% of the respondents indicating that recruitment is either strongly important or of the utmost importance, it makes sense to have a financial plan to determine how the council could finance such an effort. The first draft of the financial plan includes an income statement and balance statement for each of the past five years (1993--1997). The good news is that our average annual growth rate is 5.7%, which means we are keeping ahead of inflation (which is approximately 3%). Assuming that we could live with a 3% growth rate, that would leave only \$350.00 a year for recruitment efforts. The council's next move is to plan out our recruitment effort and see how much it will cost per year. If the cost is greater than \$350.00 a year, we will have the options of adjusting our markups on events and/or having a fund raiser.

Another issue related to a recruitment effort will be to review our training program. From the meeting that I attended in Chicago this past April, I personally came away with a notion of training that would be more appropriately called Great Books Training rather than Leader Training. I see three essential parts to training, as follows:

1. in addition to leadership styles there are also participant styles that everyone should be aware of in order to enhance the quality of the discussion;
2. many participants are unaware of the objectives of a discussion as set forth by the founders of Great Books and why, for instance, we have a rule prohibiting references to outside sources;
3. lastly, as a volunteer organization we depend on volunteers and it would be good for participants to know how the organization is structured and how they can help.

On another front, I hope that when New England members receive this newsletter there will be a notice inside it for the Fall One Day event. Unlike previous years when a single champion has come forward and done the approximately 50 hours of organizational work necessary to make this event happen, this year I am hoping to have a committee of seven people each of whom will do approximately eight hours of work. At the time of this writing (mid-June) four of the seven coordinators needed have been found. If for some reason the council is unable to find additional support, New England members may find only a notice for the Annual Meeting. In this case, the Fall One-Day may have to be postponed to a later date.

One of the strongest conclusions that came from the meeting in Chicago this past April was the need for each council to have an Outreach Committee. There are a host of things that we could be doing to encourage new participants, such as putting together an information packet, or coordinating leaders either for a series of readings at a local book store, or for a special event like the UN Declaration of Human Rights, to be held sometime this winter. If there are any leaders who would be interested in leading one or more discussions related to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, or if anyone would like to participate in the Outreach Committee please get in touch with Richard Ffrench at (617) 332-1514. Also, New England group leaders should send their reading schedules for next year to:

Abbi Deeran
40 Maple Street
Marblehead, MA 01945
(781) 631-1197

so that she may publish them on our web page (<http://members.aol.com/NewEngGbks/index.htm>).

News from New England (Cont'd.)

In closing, I would say that a great deal of work has been done but there is also much to do. The survey indicated that 20% of the respondents would be willing to donate from 8 to 12 hours per year. If all our members contributed that much time to the organization, we would be thriving. I would like to see New England Great Books thrive. Our discussions are enjoyable, are introducing many people to a rewarding intellectual life, and are resulting in lasting friendships. New England and the world could use more of what Great Books has to offer.

COLBY '99

The theme of the 43rd Annual Wachs Great Books Summer Institute, August 1-7, 1999, will be:
DO UNTO OTHERS.

The readings will be:

Moliere's *Tartuffe*
Kant's *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Hallie's *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*
Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*
Shaw's *Major Barbara*
Dostoevsky's *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man.*

Plan to attend. You could be a better person for it.

Great Books Council of Delaware

Circle this date: Saturday, October 24, 1998

We are planning a Delaware Theatre matinee on this date -- so watch for another flyer in August. The play is *As You Like It* by the Bard ! A fun time with discussion and light refreshments will follow the performance. Information after 8/15. Please call: Cyra Gross, 302-475-3914.

Philadelphia Online Committee: Great Books on the Internet

Since the electronic age is upon us, we are making use of its quick and easy sharing of information. News of several Great Books Councils is now on some of the 50 million pages that make up the World-Wide-Web:

G.B.Foundation information (with links to all Regions): <http://www.greatbooks.org>
Nationwide calendar of Great Books events: <http://www.dol.net/~greatbooks/newslett.htm>
New England Council news (see page 6, bottom) <http://members.aol.com/NewEngGbks/index.htm>
Philadelphia, Delaware, and Colby news: <http://www.dol.net/~greatbooks/gbevents.htm>

Philadelphia Region group leaders, please note: Send your reading schedules to Klaus Traumann for publication on the Philadelphia GB web page: <http://www.dol.net/~greatbooks/philadel.htm>
Klaus's mailing address: 502 Whitby Dr., Wilmington, DE 19803-2217
Questions? e-mail to greatbooks@dol.net (Klaus Traumann's e-mail address) or call 302-478-4058.

The Reader's Right

"Every volume, once begun,
You must stick with till it's done;
You owe this effort to the writer
Of a huge tome or a slighter;
A partial reading isn't fair -
You must plow through all that's there."

Quite a few espouse this view,
But there are many others, who
Bid an author toodle-oo,
And his other works eschew;
When their interest starts to wane,
They say "There's nothing more to gain."
They say "Books are many, years are few;
I'll move on to something new."

Are you type A, the trudging trueheart,
Or type B, who seeks a new start?

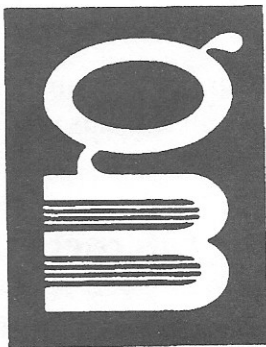
What are YOUR reading habits?

Do you feel guilty if you don't finish every
book you start?

Do you read one book at a time, or do you
have an upstairs book, a downstairs book, a
bathroom book, an office book, all of which
engage you during the same period of time?

What's your favorite spot for you and your
book? What position?

Write and let us know.



**GREAT BOOKS COUNCIL
OF PHILADELPHIA**

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