

# THE TRICORN

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

MARCH, 1977

## The Colby Story

The Colby Summer Institute launches into its 16th year, with its 1977 theme: Man's Quest. This Great Books week at Colby College in a ShangriLa setting is already two-thirds booked in advance. The usual early sellout is expected, so please make your reservations now. Remember the old adage: He who hesitates ain't gonna get in. Total cost for the week is \$170 per person, which includes lodging, meals, books, gratuities - - and a bank of priceless memories. Deposit is \$70, refundable, minus charge for books and mailing, if notification of cancellation is before July 15. The 1977 Colby readings:

Between Man and Man .....by Martin Buber  
Man's Search For Meaning..... by Viktor Frankl  
The Castle..... by Franz Kafka  
Doll's House .....by Ibsen  
Epic of Gilgamesh  
Lapis Lazuli.....by Yeates

In the 16 years of Great Books weeks at Colby an enormous range of topics and discussions has been covered. But what have been the themes? And the readings. So we put our Summer Institute historians to work and they have come up with the complete record for every year but the first, 1962. So here they are, the year-to-year themes (in caps) and the readings:

### 1963: THE CARDINAL VIRTUES:

Protagoras - Plato  
The Inferno - Dante  
Don Quixote - Cervantes

### 1964: ETHICS:

The Red & the Black - Stendhal  
Enemy of the People - Ibsen  
Foundations of the Metaphysics  
of Morals - Kant  
Beyond Good and Evil - Nietzsche

### 1965: EASTERN RELIGIONS:

The Way of Zen - Watts  
The Way of Life - Lao Tzu  
The Upanishads  
Mysticism East & West - Alto  
Teachings of the Compassionate  
Bhudda

### 1967: NICOMACHIAN ETHICS - Aristotle

### 1968: THE OUTSIDER:

Victory - Conrad  
Steppenwolf - Hesse  
Beast in the Jungle - H. James  
Lafacadio's Adventures - Gide  
The Stranger - Camus

### 1969: PERCEIVING THE EXTERNAL WORLD:

Some Main Problems of  
Philosophy - Moore  
The Foundations of Empirical  
Knowledge - Ayer  
Sense & Sensibilia - Austen  
The Concept of Mind - Ryle  
Individuals - Strawson

**1970: REVOLUTION:**

The Russian Revolution — Trotsky  
 Man's Fate — Malraux  
 The Rebel — Camus  
 The Wretched of the Earth — Fanon  
 Marat-Sade — Weiss

**1971: THE COUNTER CULTURE:**

Howl — Ginsberg  
 Revolution For The Hell of It — Hoffman  
 The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test — Wolfe  
 Politics of Experience — Laing  
 The Making of A Counter Culture — Roszak  
 Study of History — Toynbee

**1972: MAN'S SYMBOLS:**

Mythical Thought — Cassirer  
 Black Elk Speaks — Neihardt  
 Myths, Dreams & Mysteries — Eliade  
 Theseus — Gide  
 Memories, Dreams and  
 Reflections — Jung

**1973: THE WORLD OF ART:**

Portrait of An Artist As A  
 Young Man — Joyce  
 World of Art — Weiss  
 Old Man and the Sea — Hemingway  
 Peter Quince at the Clavier — Stevens  
 Dear Theo — Stone (editor)

**1974: THE WORLD OF SHAKESPEARE:**

Henry V  
 The Tempest  
 Othello  
 Measure For Measure  
 As You Like It  
 King Lear

**1975: IN SEARCH OF SELF:**

Phaedo — Plato  
 Song of Myself — Whitman  
 Introduction to  
 Psychoanalysis — Freud  
 Demian — Hesse  
 Childhood & Society — Erikson

**1976: WAYS OF LIFE:**

Patterns of Culture — Benedict  
 Communitas — Goodman  
 Walden II — Skinner  
 The Horse's Mouth — Carey  
 The Phenomenon of  
 Man — de Chardin

**1977: MAN'S QUEST:**

Between Man and Man — Buber  
 Man's Search For Meaning — Frankl  
 The Castle — Kafka  
 Doll's House — Ibsen  
 Epic of Gilgamesh  
 Lapis Lazuli — Yeats

**The Search For Meaning**

The situation regarding the availability of Great Books sets from the Foundation in Chicago, for years one to nine, is still in a nebulous state. Or, if you prefer, in a "state of transition." Sets for certain years are now out of print or not available, while sets for other years are being retained, or being combined. We'll be able to be more precise about this shortly. Meanwhile, Eva Bix of the Philadelphia Council is working out an arrangement with a major paperback book distributor to obtain all or most of the Great Books readings for the "missing" years. If these are purchased in reasonable volume for use or distribution by the three Councils (Philadelphia, Boston, Long Island), the price per set would be about \$16, or only \$2 more than the price for current sets obtained from the Foundation. One difference. The books in the sets we obtain through our own resources will be the complete reading, rather than the usual selections from the books as now provided by the Foundation's sets. This should pose no problem. Each Great Books group can decide which books they want to read in complete form, or selections from it. The plan is a simple, practical and economical way to resolve the problem.



In the three Council areas there is currently much talk about the Foundation's innovative venture, the new "Search For Meaning" set of readings introduced this year (1976-1977). As many of you know, this set of 16 readings consists of all fiction, and all by contemporary authors. Essentially, it is a group of short stories. It is a radical departure from the concept of the "classics" as contained in the Great Books program since its inception. The Foundation is planning to have ready shortly its second innovative set, a two-volume set of plays, arranged for 16 discussions. Other new sets, following the "Search For Meaning" pattern, are on the planning boards.

Well, what about "The Search For Meaning" set and its new direction for Great Books discussion? What has been the reaction to date? The Foundation reports that it is having "tremendous success" with sales of this set so far. But how about the Great Books groups that adopted this set for this year's readings and discussions? They've been living with it and they ought to know. Well, so far the opinions are split - - strongly in favor, strongly opposed. Few seem to be passive or neutral about it. Here are samplings of some of the feedback:

The Long Island Council, which polled all of its groups, reports that The Search For Meaning readings and discussions have attracted more participants - - especially new ones more interested in discussing contemporary fiction and authors rather than the traditional classics. The test, they feel, will come next year in seeing whether this interest can be sustained. However, The Search For Meaning has been given credit for starting some new groups that might otherwise not have commenced. Other favorable comments: the readings are shorter and easier to read because they are fiction; readers can identify easier with these contemporary works and settings. Similar reactions have come from groups in Boston and Philadelphia.

But the opposing views are both extensive and intensive. This is especially true of those who have been in the Great Books program for three or more years - - those in a position to compare the "old" with the "new". Some direct quotes: "The Search For Meaning is a sop for the lazy and the uninitiated." . . . "After you've read the first few, you've read them all. Too much repetition in the story themes, plots, characters." . . . "Is the Great Books program going to become a kind of 'literary tea' discussion group?" . . . "If we submit to this, then T. S. Eliot was right when he called us 'hollow men, stuffed men whose world would end not with a bang but a whimper'." . . . "Who will remember these authors and their works 50 or 200 years from now, as we remember the classicists who have been the traditional backbone of Great Books?" . . . "Have we swapped thinking for entertainment?"

That gives you some idea of the mood on both sides. It seems to boil down to a matter of popularity versus mental challenge. What worries some is whether the readings and discussions in this new direction can sustain themselves over a period of years; and also whether the Great Books concept itself is being compromised, to use a genteel word. But perhaps a small measure of compromise may be the answer, such as an intermixture of contemporary and classical readings. It is a dilemma that must be kept under surveillance.



## Philadelphia News

Iz Wachs, patriarch of Great Books, celebrated his 80th birthday last December, and his numberless Great Books friends threw a memorable bash for him. Iz the Whiz defies all the laws of nature, attending the many Great Books activities in his area (as well as outside), leading his own Great Books group, conceiving new projects - - and running his own law practice. He has been an enormously cohesive force, not only in the Philadelphia Council, but in the other Councils, as well, plus the pillar of Colby. When last December and the 80 candles were blown out, Iz expressed only one regret: "How come when I look at a pretty girl now, nothing happens?"

Membership meeting. All Great Bookers in the Philadelphia area are invited to the annual membership meeting on March 20, 2 P.M. at Beaver College, in the Classroom Building. A brief business meeting will include election of officers and board members, followed by an interesting discussion, refreshments and socializing.

Leaders Training. The third annual Leaders Training Course begins March 6. The course consists of eight weekly sessions at the First United Methodist Church of Germantown. Cyril Keller, formerly affiliated with the Great Books Foundation, teaches the first four sessions, and Fran Jacobs, a professional in group leadership, teaches the remaining four sessions. Those interested contact Norma Oser (Me5-3504).

Delaware Valley Council. Aaron Bechtel of the Delaware Valley Council will conduct an Advanced Leader Training session this spring. Its theme: "Improving Communication and Thinking in Great Books Discussion Groups." The sessions will handle the following topics: Listening To Understand; Distinguishing Fact From Inference; Clarifying Ambiguity; Non-Critical Thinking. This will be an extension for experienced leaders.

Love and Power. The Philadelphia Council invites all Great Bookers to its annual Spring Seminar, to be held on Sunday, May 15, at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. Co-chairpersons Aaron Heller (DE3-4627) and Sylvia Kasser (VI9-3939) have arranged a day with Cleopatra. Bernard Shaw will give us Caesar's Cleopatra, and Shakespeare will give us Antony's. Love and Power will be the focal points of the day's discussions. Cost is \$10.25, and includes morning coffee and cake, a full luncheon, a final punch-and-cookie get-together, plus copies of the two plays. Please don't just barge in last minute. Fill out and return the registration form below.

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Please return to: Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Phila., Pa. 19151.  
Checks payable to Philadelphia Great Books Council (\$10.25 per person).

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Name (s)

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Address

Zip

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Phone

Name of your Great Books leader, if any



Leaders Club. Philadelphia has its own club for group leaders, an extremely active group involved in advanced leader/moderator techniques. Its guests are sought and selected deliberately for their mind-challenging ideas. At the last meeting, the work of artist Maurits Escher served as this kind of stimulant. On March 4, the Leaders Club will go to the top of the intellectual mountain with Dr. Jacob Schwartz, scholar in occult subjects, who will speak on "Survival and Reincarnation". Dr. Schwartz, on the faculty of Temple University, is known as the originator of Diagrammatic Aspetarian (huh?). Everyone is to turn up at Rusty and Phil Lindy's, 8300 Fenton Rod., Laverock, at 8 P.M.

Fall Institute. Plans are now under way for the 7th Annual Week-End Institute at Pocono Manor from Nov. 18th to 20th, 1977. This Institute has always been oversubscribed. It is suggested that you call or write Bob Blumenthal, 1205 Cromwell Road, Wyndmoor, Penna. 19118 (215-AD3-3655) for additional information.

Memorial Lecture. A memorial lecture in honor of Louis B. Kaye will be held at the YM-YHMA under the aegis of their series, "Culture and Politics," at Broad and Pine Streets, Philadelphia, on Wednesday, April 6, at 7:30 P.M. The lecturer is Mr. Av. Westin, formerly ABC Vice President in Charge of Evening News. His topic: "The Impact of the Media On Contemporary Society." Admission is \$1.50. Lou Kaye, who passed away several years ago, was one of the first Great Books discussion leaders in the Philadelphia area, and continued his leadership role as long as he lived. This honor in his behalf is long overdue.

Free 1976 Colby Readings. At the end of last year's Colby Summer Institute, Bill McConeghey collected an appreciable number of books from the week's readings, to be reused by interested groups. Available titles are: *Communitas*, by Paul and Percival Goodman; *Walden Two*, by B. F. Skinner; *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Teilhard de Chardin. These used books are available without cost. Contact Bill McConeghey, 938 Wesdale Place, Springfield, Pa. 10064 (K13-7628).

Thank you, Mary. Mary Donahue, President of the Philadelphia Great Books Council for the past two years, gives up her official gavel in March. During her tenure in office, Mary had to assume a difficult dual role. By nature a modest, gentle, pacific and affable person, she at times had to impose a forceful, self-assertive and firm hand so uncharacteristic of her. But she prevailed with grace, ability and tact. So from all of us, thank you, Mary.

Philly's Fifty-Nine. The Philadelphia Great Books Council reports that there are now 59 Great Books discussion groups currently active in the Philadelphia area. That's a net gain of five over the previous year.

Stop the mail! Please help your mailing committee. If you no longer wish to receive Great Books mailings, take a moment to cut off your address label from this issue of the Tricorn and mail it to Leigh Hebb, 431 Flamingo St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19128. Add the words: "Please remove from mailing list."



## Long Island News

### Upcoming Events:

May 7: The first of four Leader Training sessions at the Wantagh Public Library. Saturday afternoons, 2 to 4 pm, with Rachel Leon directing. Follow-up meetings: May 14-21-28.

May 22: The One-Day Institute will be held at the Bryant Library in Roslyn. The reading for the day: *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered*, by E. F. Schumacher. The reading comes highly recommended and should make for a lively discussion.

Fall Pep Rally: A business meeting and a discussion of an Archibald MacLeish essay, "Bicentennial of What?" were the highlights of the Long Island Council's annual Fall Pep Rally. The Council has adopted a new policy of inviting group leaders to each of the Council meetings to give them a better insight of Council activities that affect all Great Bookers in the area. Rose Ermidis, Long Island Coordinator, led the discussion on the MacLeish piece, which dealt with the Declaration of Independence as Jefferson had meant it to be - - a revolutionary proclamation applicable to all mankind. The challenge: are we to believe in human liberty for ourselves alone?

Hail to Heyel! Carl Heyel surely has to be one of the most dedicated Great Bookers and leaders to be found anywhere in the U.S. Though Carl is in retirement and in his "advanced years," as he says, younger men of any age inevitably have to regard his energetic and innovative approach to the Great Books program with awe and admiration. Carl's remarkable distinctive design for Great Books leading cannot be found anywhere - - unique for its originality and its thoroughness of preparation for each discussion for both himself and the group participants. Here is a brief inside look at what he does:

A few days or a week prior to each meeting, his group participants receive a 4- or 5-page, single-spaced, typewritten "preparation" report. Prior to putting this together, Carl immerses himself in research about the reading, the author and his times. Like a literary surgeon, he dissects every tissue of the operation with a keen-edged scalpel. His final preparation report includes such details as pertinent notes about the author, his background and other writings; a "history" of the reading; comments about the author's style; comments on the reading by qualified critics; a general analysis of the reading; significance of the title or theme; background information on some of the characters or events. Yet, despite this abundance of insight information, no attempt is made to "do the thinking" for the participants, or to infringe upon their own free interpretation and analysis.

Hence, the participants are able to come to each meeting of Carl's group richly prepared for discussion. As a consequence, the discussions have more depth, range and insight than usual. Regarding the customary sessions by most Great Books groups, Carl says, "People are asked to read a selection on a subject with which they are more likely than not to be totally unfamiliar. The reading is just thrown at them with no introductory information setting it in any sort of perspective, or giving them any explanatory information to help them understand what they are to read."

It might be advisable for the officials of the three Councils to get sample copies of Carl's "preparation reports" and to distribute them to leaders in their own respective areas. Some leaders may want to adopt his plan, at least in some condensed or modified form. Even a reading of them is an enlightening experience, and certainly comprises a new plateau of Great Books leading. Carl does not know how much longer we will be able to continue with this program as he keeps one eye on the calendar. But Carl is a man with a sense of the future. He smiles and says, "Who knows? Bertrand Russell and G. B. Shaw lived well beyond 90." (Carl's address: 39 Papermill Road, Manhasset, L.I., New York 11030.

## Boston News

One-Day Institute: The annual One-Day Institute, sponsored by the Metropolitan Boston Great Books Council, will be held in the spring (late May or early June). Details on the date, place and charge will be forthcoming shortly. The readings have already been selected:



Sex and Temperament In Three Societies . . . . .by Margaret Mead  
Pride and Prejudice . . . . .by Jane Austin

Winter Event. An evening of theatre is scheduled for Tues. March 8, at the Lyric Stage Theatre, 54 Charles Street, Boston, starting at 7:30 p.m. The play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," by Oscar Wilde. Tickets are \$3.50. This will be a special performance for the Great Books group, presented by the professional company of this theatre. A discussion of the play will take place after the performance, with the actors and actresses participating with the Great Books groups. For tickets or further information, contact Peg Mahoney, 21 Clark Street, No. Quincy, Mass. 02171 (328-6238).

Fall Institute. The Fall Weekend Institute proved a smashing success, with an attendance of about 90. Held at historic Northfield Inn, Northfield, Mass., snuggled in colorful Berkshire foliage country, the weekend was a mixture of scenic beauty, lively discussion, and home-style New England socializing - - including a Saturday night square dance with a professional "caller" who kept the dancers in a whirl.

New Coordinator. Sylvia Soderberg has been appointed the new coordinator for the Metropolitan Boston area. She is the wife of Gus Soderberg, currently President of the Boston Council, and a long time associate with the Great Books Foundation in Chicago. Sylvia, richly equipped with energy, a bright mind and enthusiasm, is ideally suited for her new post.

Leader Training. A Leader Training program has been scheduled for the spring. Those interested in the course, which will be under the expert leadership of Gus Soderberg, may contact Sylvia Soderberg, 30 Braddock Park, Boston 02108 (262-1899).

On-the-job Leader Training. The Council is planning to introduce a kind of expedient on-the-job leader training plan. Sometimes new groups start in outlying areas where no leader is available. In such cases the Council will send a leader for the first few sessions, who will both lead and at the same time train one or more of the participants to assume a leader role for the group. This will serve to keep the group intact until one of the participants takes the "official" leader training course. The objective is to encourage new groups and avoid having a group disband due to lack of a leader.

### The Athens of America's Great Books Program

For 40 years, St. John's College in Annapolis, Md., has been the Athens of America's Great Books program. This college is almost an anachronism in contrast to university structures today, for its entire curriculum and program is centered solely on the Great Books. It is a small and exclusive college (360 students meticulously selected), but since 1937 it has graduated 1,400 young men and women whose liberal arts education has consisted strictly of four years of the reading and discussion of the Great Books classics (each classic in its entirety, not simply selections).

The graduates are among the most analytical and disciplined book readers in the world, sophisticated in the refinements of thinking, discussion and the communication of ideas. Only extremely serious students can survive at St. John's. Practically everything is directed at the life of the mind, and even many highly intelligent students have trouble digesting the rich intellectual diet put before them right at the start. The freshman reads Homer, Aeschylus, Thucydides, Euripides, Herodotus, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Lucretius, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, Lavoisier, Nicomachus, and 22 others. And that's just for starters.



There are no lectures at St. John's, and no conventional classrooms. After reading, say, 100 pages of a certain book, the students gather around in small groups to discuss what they have read. These seminars are guided by a tutor, who avoids projecting his own opinions into the discussions, but is assigned to defending the text. Each student is entirely on his own, and academic pressure is intense. There is none of the usual cramming as in other schools, for the student must read some 100 pages of very heavy stuff every day or two. Along with the great books, students are also required to study music, mathematics, Latin and Greek (75% of all words in the English language - - and a large share of the words of European languages - - have Latin or Greek origins.)

Well, after four years of immersion in the classics, what is a St. John's graduate good for? Says dean Curtis Wilson, "The student has learned to think. He has not simply acquired knowledge. He has learned to be intellectually independent, to develop his own ideas and express them articulately." Most graduates go into teaching, then next into law - - and they comprise an elite corps within their respective professions.

Look back at the 55 members of the Constitutional Convention, brought together 200 years ago to structure our American Constitution. Some 31 were college graduates at a time when college graduates in America were less than one per 1,000 of the population. By 1776, America's three largest colleges - - Harvard, Yale and Princeton - - had fewer than 2,500 graduates alive and active. The biographies of all 55 show that most were remarkably well read in philosophical, legal, theological, or classical literature, and the King James version of the bible was a common source of understanding. Most would have been model students for the St. John's program. And if today the world continues to admire the American Constitution, it is because it was structured by men trained to think in terms of the universal ideas and truths. Hence they were able to do justice to the concept of Thinking Man.

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