

BESpeak

OCTOBER 2011

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Ethical Inspiration

by *Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader*

The thing about inspiration is that you can't often choose when or where it strikes. So you'll have to forgive me for sharing with you inspiration that – like last month – came from watching my children. This time it was watching my youngest son Justin run in his first cross country meet of the season. I love going to these races. I love how the competition is more internal – one competes with oneself to stay focused, overcome exhaustion, and better one's previous time. I also love that the races are long. Unlike sports that require bursts of energy, cross country demands persistence and patience.

When I began working as an Ethical Culture leader, I knew I would need these same personal strengths. After all, the work I had taken on was not only about helping the Baltimore Ethical Society flourish, but also about creating a more ethical world. It was about replacing hate with love, greed with generosity, and war with peace.

Such grandiose goals are not something that can be achieved overnight, if ever. As with cross country, Ethical Culture leadership requires that I look within myself, stay focused, and prepare for a long race. Even Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture knew he made only modest progress towards his ideals, and he was engaged in Ethical Culture Leadership for *57 years!*

During my leadership training, I read a metaphor, in some organizational development literature, that illustrates the importance of steady focus on large tasks. The author asked, "If one wanted to move an iceberg, how would one do it?" Well, ramming a boat into it is certainly not the right answer. Should the ship avoid sinking, it still would barely move the mountain of ice. Instead, the author suggests getting a tug boat, easing up to the iceberg, and slowly pushing. Progress will be slight, but the iceberg will slowly begin to move.

So, in your own attempt to grow closer to your ideals, to live more fully and ethically, take the long view. Look within yourself, nurture persistence, and see the big picture. If we all do this, and work together, we might actually build a more beautiful future. It is, of course, a long race. As Adler wrote, "The radiant future stretches forth its arms towards us and binds us to be willing servants to its work, to serve that far-distant course."



CELEBRATING

60
YEARS

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

OCTOBER 2

"Environmental Ethics"

Ned Tillman

Sustainable Growth, LLC

OCTOBER 9

**"World Peace
from the Inside Out"**

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

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**"Together We Can
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*Board member and former President
of the American Ethical Union*

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and American Health Policy"**

Karen Kruse Thomas, PhD

The Johns Hopkins University

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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Video Series & Stories

by Rosemary Klein, BES President

Once again, I have had a chance to reflect on how the programs and activities of BES lead us to explore the world around us. This past summer – in those months when informal discussions led by our members replace our formal platforms – Bob Corbett did a fine job of introducing us to the work of cultural historian Thomas Berry.

In books such as *The Dream of the Earth*, which formed the basis for Bob's talk, Berry spent his life exploring how our ever-expanding technological culture separates us from the earth. His hope was for us to reconnect with our universe by developing what he termed a "new story," one inspirationally motivating us to forge links between ourselves and the creative energy of the earth.

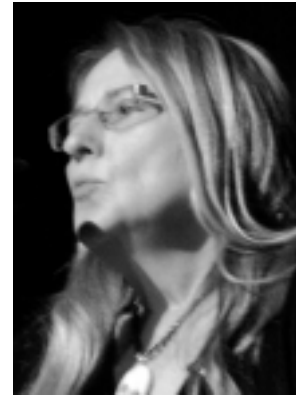
One of the participants at Bob's talk asked the all-important question: "Why do we need a story?" That question hit our pause button: for a moment we contemplated what it was that helps us make sense of our world and our lives in it. Is it our own individual thoughts and feelings, some larger theory or "story," or something we don't well or completely define?

Now a yearlong video and discussion series centered on James Burke's *The Day the Universe Changed* is being offered by our leader, Hugh Taft-Morales. The series, offered also in a book with the same title, began on September 12.

The Day the Universe Changed has long been a favorite volume of mine, probably ranking in my top ten. Burke is a thinker who has made it his lifetime challenge to understand how knowledge, in all its twists and turns, has either allowed us or kept us from the finding of "truths," real or otherwise. He helps us grasp how the momentous changes occurring in our world and our society gave rise to significant institutions and profoundly influenced the way we perceive our lives.

Whether you attend one or all of Hugh's yearlong series based on Burke, you will surely find stimulating discussion about issues such as the ability of science to represent and explain the real world. Burke scrutinizes a host of momentous events from the medieval founding of the world's first university to the competition between medicine and astrology as to which would become accepted as *the* reliable, authoritative professional body of knowledge. You will learn how statistics became commonplace descriptors of our universe during the French Revolution, how the first dinosaur fossils were discovered, and how study of shock waves lead to the discovery of the speed of sound. History's influences on our present culture is another marked benefit offered by Burke's often surprising, always thoughtful explorations.

Another BES documentary and discussion program open to all – members, friends, interested parties – is the Ironweed Film Club, thoughtfully begun and ably overseen by Emil Volcheck. Through programs such as these we come to more deeply understand and question our world and ourselves – surely fundamental elements towards fulfilling the Ethical Culture goal of realizing the best in ourselves and bringing out the best in others.



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 4:00–6:00 P.M.

The Day the Universe Changed

A philosophically fun video and discussion series

Come view and discuss a video series by James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed*. Burke explores with wit and wisdom links between knowledge and reality through stories about the history of western civilization. Join Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales every month, September through May. The second installment

is on Sunday, October 9, from 4:00-6:00 p.m.: *In the Light of the Above: Medieval Conflict – Faith & Reason*. Come even if you missed the first episode. Open to the public.



BESpeak is Going Green

The newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society is going through a process of reconstruction. Hopefully, you noticed some of the significant changes in our September (and in this) issue: the staff is new (many, many thanks go out to former editor Karen Elliott who is taking a well-deserved sabbatical), much of the content has taken on a fresh spin, and *BESpeak* sports a totally new design in its pdf/print and online editions.

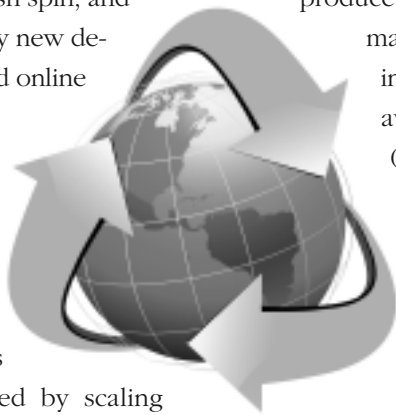
Now the staff of *BESpeak* is committed to taking a step further in an effort to reduce our carbon footprint. This will be accomplished by scaling back, almost fully, the print edition.

Many BES members and friends have already opted to receive the newsletter online, either by downloading the PDF from the BES website or by perusing the electronic version specifically designed for email. Our newly designed electronic *BESpeak*, which first debuted in September, will

be delivered to you – beginning in November – via email (provided we have your email address) in lieu of you being sent a paper copy.

Please aid us in our efforts to be socially responsible by realizing that while you might prefer having traditionally printed copies, it is simply not in the best interests of our planet to produce our newsletter in that manner. The print edition – in PDF format – will still be available on our website (and we trust that to assist with our carbon footprint reduction, you'll only print those newsletter pages that you really need!).

We're hoping that you'll embrace our *BESpeak* environmentally friendly efforts and "get green" by becoming a devotee of our snazzy online email edition. If we don't have any – or a correct – email address for you, please quickly get one to us at editor@bmorethical.org or by filling out the subscription form in the sidebar of the BES website.



ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, Oct. 2, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, Oct. 9, 9:30 a.m.

Moveable Treats

Sunday, Oct. 9

Board Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 9, 12:30 p.m.

Video and Discussion Series

Sunday, Oct. 9, 4:00 p.m.

Ethical Action

at Moveable Feast

Thursday, Oct. 13, 5:45 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 23, 9:15 a.m.

Lunch with the Leader

Sunday, Oct. 23, 12:30 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

Wednesday, Oct. 26, 7:30 p.m.

Newcomers' Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 30, 12:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

Last names starting with:

A to F	Oct. 2
G to L	Oct. 9
M to R	Oct. 16
S to Z	Oct. 23
Everyone!	Oct. 30

BES MEETUP

Check out our new MeetUp site
at meetup.com/bmorethical.

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

OCTOBER 2

“Environmental Ethics”

Ned Tillman

Sustainable Growth, LLC

Mr. Tillman, author of *The Chesapeake Watershed; A Sense of Place and a Call to Action*, will address questions regarding individual responsibility and how it impacts both how we live our lives and treat the environment of which we are a significant part. He will be available to sign copies of his book following the service.

Ned Tillman is chair of the Howard County Sustainability Board and past chair of the Howard County Conservancy. He works with the City of Baltimore on the implementation of better sustainability practices. Sustainable Growth, LLC, his new firm, is a partnership that will advise businesses, non-profits, and government agencies on becoming sustainability leaders through the embedding of good sustainability practices into everything they do.

OCTOBER 9

“World Peace from the Inside Out”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Since its birth, Ethical Culture has advocated peaceful solutions to all forms of conflict – from interpersonal conflict, to street crime, to global war. As an inspirational humanist philosophy, Ethical Culture makes what is perhaps one of its most unique contributions in its counsel to start with ourselves. Hugh Taft-Morales explores the truth behind Thich Nhat Hanh’s advice: “Root out the violence in your life, and learn to live compassionately and mindfully. Seek peace. When you have peace within, real peace with others is possible.”

Hugh Taft-Morales serves as Leader for both the Baltimore Ethical Society and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and also works with the Ethical Society Without Walls (ESWoW). He taught philosophy and history in high school for twenty-five years, graduated from Yale College in 1979, and earned a Masters in Philosophy in 1986 from University of Kent in England. Taft-Morales, who lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, received a certificate in Humanist Leadership from the Humanist Institute in 2009.



OCTOBER 16

“Together We Can Make a Difference”

Arnold N. Fishman, Esquire

*Board member and former President
of the American Ethical Union*

What is the role of the American Ethical Union (AEU) in Humanist affairs? How does it carry out that mission and why should it? How can we, as a local society and individuals, help? Fishman answers the questions based on experience gained from his service in both national Ethical Union and local Ethical Society positions.

Arnold Fishman is currently completing his second three-year term as a member of the Board of the American Ethical Union (AEU). He was president of the AEU from 2003 to 2007. He is also on the Board of Trustees of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and has served as president of that organization. He was instrumental in restructuring the AEU from a membership organization to a federation of Societies. He is an attorney in private practice with his son and has been a member of the New Jersey and D.C. bars for 45 years.

OCTOBER 23

“The Journey Through Atheism to Humanism, Ethical Culture, and Beyond”

Peter Bishop, PhD

Member, Washington Ethical Society

Among those in attendance at the Baltimore Ethical Society, some might reply when asked what their religion is either “none” or “atheism” or the reply might be either “humanism” or “Ethical Culture.” Bishop will consider the philosophical journey through atheism, then on to humanism, and to Ethical Culture. The journey Bishop will lead us on will also show what might happen beyond these points resulting in an even more mature philosophical and religious outlook, one which BES members may find themselves comfortable describing as Ethical Culture.

Peter Bishop received his PhD in Computer Science from MIT in 1977 and was one of the developers of object-oriented programming. During his successful 30-year software career, he played an active role in the humanist community. He now devotes his time to humanist philosophy and is Webmaster

PLATFORMS (continued)

and Humanist Philosopher for the International Federation for Secular & Humanistic Judaism. He has authored the essay "An Alternate View on the Relationship Between Science and Religion," a Sunday school course on the philosophy of humanism, and – with other Sunday school parents – a humanist songbook.

OCTOBER 30

“Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy”

Karen Kruse Thomas, PhD
The Johns Hopkins University

In every aspect of southern public life, segregation was plainly unequal – except, perhaps, in health care. Public health was one of the earliest government-sponsored services to include black citizens on a fully equal basis. In many southern communities blacks were a majority of clients at public health clinics, which also employed increasing numbers of black physicians and nurses. African American reformers and medical activists praised the U.S. Public Health Service as the most racially liberal federal agency. When Congress enacted the multi-billion-dollar Hill-Burton federal hospital construction program in 1946, it contained both a non-discrimination clause and a separate-but-equal clause, making it the only instance where the principle of racial parity was ever federally enforced. The result was the proliferation of biracial but internally segregated new hospitals in the nation’s most medically underserved areas. Integrationist physicians called these facilities “deluxe Jim Crow” and urged black organizations to adopt a zero-tolerance stance toward segregation and to boycott any further private or public funding for non-integrated health facilities.

Karen Kruse Thomas is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of the History of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, where she is writing a history of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Her talk is drawn from her forthcoming book from University of Georgia Press, *Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy, 1935-1954*. She received a PhD in 20th century U.S. history in 1999 from the University of North Carolina, where she did field work for the Southern Oral History Program. She has published articles in the *Journal of African American History*, the *Journal of Southern History*, *Social Science and Medicine*, and *Nursing History Review*, and lives in Arbutus with her two children.

LUNCH WITH THE LEADER

Sunday, October 23, 12:30–2:00 p.m.

Join Hugh Taft-Morales for a casual lunch at a local eating establishment to talk about Ethical Culture, shared interests, life...you name it! Open to members and visitors interested in learning more about Ethical Culture and the Baltimore Ethical Society.

Member News and Updates

John and Janet Nugent write:

“On Thursday, September 8th, John officially retired as President, CEO from Planned Parenthood of Maryland. As some of our BES friends know, we have sold our home in Parkville and have found a new home in San Diego, CA close to our family. We close on our house on the 14th of October, heading to San Diego immediately after turning over the keys to our buyers.

We have loved our involvement with Baltimore Ethical Society and will miss the annual picnic in our backyard and the friendships we’ve made. Our email address will remain the same in order to continue to keep in touch with BES and we’ll look forward to hearing from and seeing BES people when they visit our area. We’ve loved our time in Baltimore and the adventures we’ve had here.”

bmorethical t-shirts

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TODAY!**

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blue, and white

ONLY \$15

IRONWEED

film

CLUB

Wednesday, October 26,
7:30 p.m.

Join us this month at the BES Ironweed Film Club when we screen *The Corporation*, winner of a Sundance Audience Award, followed by discussion.

The Corporation explores the nature and spectacular rise of the dominant institution of our time. Part film and part movement, *The Corporation* is transforming audiences and dazzling critics with its insightful and compelling analysis. By taking its status as a legal "person" to the logical conclusion, the film puts the corporation on the psychiatrist's couch to ask "What kind of person is it?"

The Corporation includes interviews with 40 corporate insiders and critics – including Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Milton Friedman, Howard Zinn, Vandana Shiva and Michael Moore – plus true confessions, case studies, and strategies for change. (145 min)

Screenings are open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Contact Emil at volcheck@acm.org about free membership. *Donations are requested for refreshments.*

AEU RELIGIOUS FALL CONFERENCE

The American Ethical Union's 2011 Religious Fall Conference and Family Weekend will be held **November 2–6** in **Stony Point, New York**, at the Stony Point Conference Center. Contact Aimee Neumann, the AEU Religious Education Director, at aneumann.aeu@gmail.com or visit www.aeu.org for more information.

A Modest, Enduring Legacy

Belva and I are using money we were given by members of the Baltimore Ethical Society when I retired to create a professional video of some of my most popular children's stories and to publish several books containing my poetry and my Ethical Culture talks. This summer I accomplished the first of these "retirement" goals. Working at First Generation Video, a production house only 15 miles from our home, I videotaped nine of my children's stories, and they'll soon be available on a user-friendly DVD.

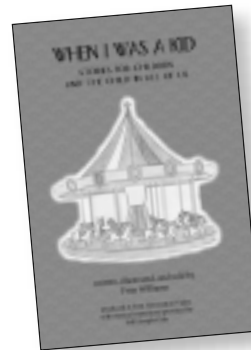
Before I recorded the stories, I spent several weeks making new drawings, improving the quality of some of the old ones that didn't satisfy me, and doubling the number of drawings that

appear in stories overall. In several cases, I made small additions and improvements to my scripts, but they're all stories I've told in Baltimore a number of times. Some friends of ours who play all kinds of modern and traditional

instruments gave me permission to use music from their CDs to create musical bridges. I already have a master DVD of my own, and as soon as they're available, I'll send the first two dubs to the Baltimore Ethical Society.

My years at the Baltimore Ethical Society were years of experimentation, learning, and growth. With your encouragement and support and the health and strength to carry on, these creative works will become a modest, but enduring legacy of our years together.

— Fritz Williams



MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, October 9, 9:30 a.m.

The Mindfulness Group resumes its second Sunday meetings in October. Come and breathe with us to guided meditation from Thich Nhat Hanh. No meditation experience necessary. Want to know more? Contact Karen Elliott at KarenSElliott@aol.com.

Why Rabbits?

by Kathleen Wilsbach, BES Member

When I tell people I have pet rabbits, sometimes the reaction is disappointingly dismissive. Rabbits are unintelligent. They don't do anything but sit in a cage, eat, and poop. When people learn, also, that I am an active member of the House Rabbit Society (HRS), their incredulity rises still further. Why do we need a whole organization devoted to promoting rabbit welfare? Why is it rabbits and not hamsters or chinchillas or some other species that we have chosen to save and protect? Why is it important to save rabbits?

First, let me say that I don't think rabbits are more important than other animals. I think saving and humane treatment of any kind of animal is important. It's just that HRS wants rabbits to have their fair share of saving. Rabbits have had less than a fighting chance in our society's "humane" hierarchy. To an extent far exceeding other animals, rabbits exist in a no-man's land of ambiguity, classified both as companion animals and as livestock. They are farmed, experimented on, eaten, worn, trivialized, and made into lucky charms and toys for other animals. Breeding, both intentional and accidental, has produced a lot of them, along with confused instructions: maybe to fondle them – but maybe to eat them. And some people, with bizarre inconsistency, are even able to do both.

Humane ordinances that apply to companion animals don't always apply to rabbits because of their ambiguous status. And when classified as livestock, they are considered poultry and humane slaughter laws don't apply to them.

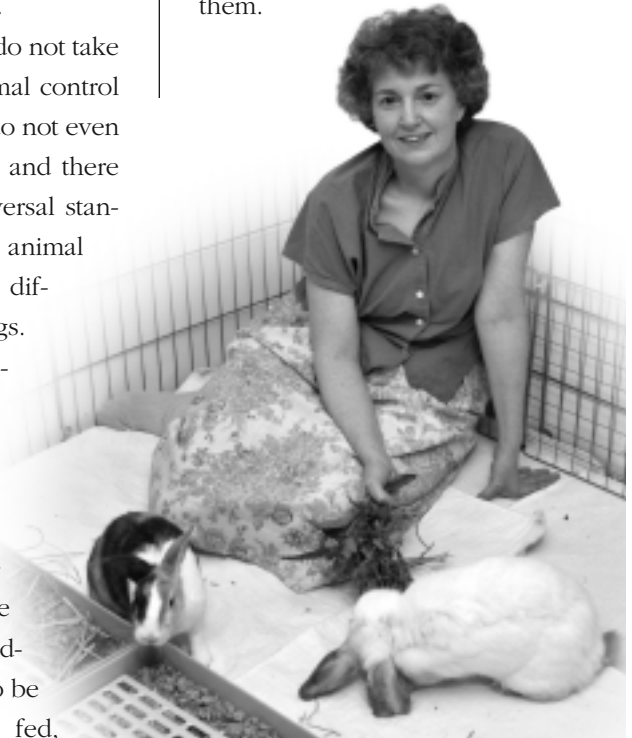
Even as pets, rabbits bear a heavy load of abuse. Rabbits are curious, intelligent, social, and opinionated individuals. Yet typically, they are kept alone in a small outdoor hutch. These gregarious animals spend their lives in lonely isolation, deprived of exercise, medical attention, human or animal contact, and, often, appropriate food or fresh water. Many rabbits are dumped in parks, forests, and by highways when their humans tire of them; an uncountable number are euthanized in animal shelters.

Some humane societies do not take in rabbits at all. While animal control must accept rabbits, some do not even put them up for adoption, and there are no consistent and universal standards for their care. Every animal shelter in every city has a different way of doing things. Only the House Rabbit Society has universal standards for the level of care and treatment of rabbits.

We're an all-volunteer organization, so I'll give you an idea of some of the things our volunteers (including me) do. Rabbits need to be picked up from shelters, fed,

cleaned up after, provided with exercise and mental stimulation, and taken to the vet. I care for the older rabbits who have been returned and can't be placed because of health issues. Emil (my husband) and I have 7 rabbits who share our home, most of them on medication and with special needs. I spend about 90 minutes a day on the physical care of my foster rabbits.

In 2008 HRS celebrated 20 years as an organization. In those 20 years, we have rescued over 20,000 rabbits and touched the lives of many more through education and advocacy. We are attempting to build a more humane world. The bottom line for why I spend my time doing what I do for rabbits is because they've brought me joy, and I want to give joy back to them.



BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, October 13,
5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join the volunteers at Moveable Feast, 901 N. Milton Avenue, on Thursday, October 13, from 5:45–8:00 p.m. Moveable Feast provides nutritious foods and other services in order to preserve the quality of life for people with HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening conditions. We will be helping Heide Morgan, who organizes the once-a-month "baking night." For questions contact Hugh at leader@bmoreethical.org.

BESpeak

BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

306 W. Franklin Street, Suite 102, Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

NEWCOMERS' MEETING

Sunday, October 30, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Attended a meeting or two? Thinking about joining? Come to the Newcomers' Meeting, held following the last platform of every month, and learn more about Ethical Culture and about our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and attendance is recommended before becoming a member. See John Reuter or Hugh Taft-Morales for more information.

MOVEABLE TREATS MOVES TO SECOND SUNDAYS!

Baked Goods – Sunday, October 9

Other Items – Every Sunday

Support Moveable Feast in their work to feed people with AIDS, blood cancer, or breast cancer and their families. Guidelines for donations are posted at the Society. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at www.mfeast.org.



ETHICAL ACTION MEETING – OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS!

Sunday, October 23, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the Ethical Action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

Welcome to BESpeak, the newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Donations from readers like you help us keep it in production. Send checks payable to Baltimore Ethical Society to: BESpeak, 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102, Baltimore, MD 21201. Thank you.