



The Ethical Humanist

Newsletter of the Boston Ethical Community

Ethical Society of Boston

MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

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IN MEMORIAM

Edward Locke

November 9 1928 -

March 20 2016

Marline Miller

Editor's note: Ed Locke, who passed away in March, was a former president of the Ethical Society of Boston.

Ed gave to us in the Boston Ethical Community years and years of love and friendship. If you ever went on a walk with the walking group, which Ed led for some years, you might have heard the frog story.



If you attended some potluck suppers, you might have tasted Hunters' stew. Ed cooked it so he would know the ingredients were ones that he could eat.

Perhaps you were at a potluck at Ed and Janet's house where everyone brought only desserts.

Attending the discussion after seeing a movie on Sunday afternoon with the movie group, Ed often gave us many insights.

When Ed led the presentation of a book for the book discussion group you knew the book was covered in great depth.

Starting the new year on New Year's Day with a hike in the Blue Hills and some event at Ed and Janet's, a video or brunch, was a great start for the year.

Perhaps you attended a mini-course that Ed prepared, on "The Tempest" or "Hamlet" or "The Merchant of Venice" or Nietzsche — lucky you!

Or perhaps you were at a fun Ice Cream Extravaganza, with an unbelievable number of choices of ice cream and toppings.

In so many other ways over the years, as president,

newsletter editor, membership chairperson, master of ceremonies at the 50th anniversary celebration and at the Chinese auctions at our annual members' meetings, Ed gave of himself to the Ethical Community. He always had the amazing help of Janet.

Ed, we hope you knew that we all thank you for many, many years of love, friendship, and service and all the ways you have enhanced our lives and our community.

BEC Launches Grantmaking Program

Fred Hewett

The Boston Ethical Community, announced on April 15th the launch of a grantmaking initiative, the first in the organization's history. The organization will begin accepting proposals immediately, and expects to announce the award of the first grant this fall.

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The Way It Is (?)

Marvin Miller

Double Standards

The phrase "double standard" is used to describe having different ethical attitudes toward similar kinds of activity depending on who does the activity.

The phrase is often used with reference to extramarital sexual activity by men and by women. Our language has many words for women who do this, which carry connotations of condemnation and contempt. There are fewer such words for men, with connotations that are less harsh and may include a little envy and admiration. If Hillary Clinton had the same history of well-known extramarital affairs that her husband has, she couldn't even consider running for president, while if Bill Clinton weren't prevented by the Constitution from doing so, he could run and probably win.

There are other kinds of double standards. If a government official uses his position to enrich himself at the expense of the public, it's called corruption. If a business executive uses his position to enrich himself at the expense of the public, it's called success.

If a civilian were to do what soldiers regularly do, those

acts would be called crimes and would be severely punished. But soldiers, in all societies, are praised and honored. We have two holidays honoring them.

Governments don't kidnap people; they arrest, detain, and imprison them. They don't steal property; they confiscate it. They don't murder people; they execute them. The different words used express different attitudes toward what

"If a government official uses his position to enrich himself at the expense of the public, it's called corruption. If a business executive uses his position to enrich himself at the expense of the public, it's called success."

is done, based on who does it. To some extent, the differences in attitude go back to pre-modern times when "the king could do no wrong".

There are different attitudes toward government actions depending on whether the government doing them is the government of the place where we live (or another government with which our government is currently friendly) or one that our government regards as unfriendly. An outstanding example of this is possession

of nuclear weapons. Such possession by our government or its allies is criticized only by a relatively small number of anti-nuclear protestors, while similar possession by unfriendly governments is widely condemned.

There are double standards in news reporting: violent events in the U.S. and western Europe are more extensively reported here than similar events in other places.

Shoplifting is more reported than wage theft and other abuses of workers by their employers, though the latter crime is more injurious to its victims than the former.

The "Black Lives Matter" movement arose in protest against instances of a double standard toward police officers who used deadly force against people of color who had committed minor offenses or none at all.

It's always easier to observe others' faults than one's own. We readily overlook or forgive ourselves, and those with whom we identify, for actions that we condemn when others do them. A humanistic ethical position would have a single standard for approval or disapproval, independent of who performs the action.

ETHICAL ACTION

Member Honored for Volunteer Service

Terry Goldzier, treasurer and longtime member of the Boston Ethical Community, was honored on April 17, 2016 by the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Terry was given the Jane Falk Award for Volunteerism for 27 years of service.

Since 1989, Terry has been assisting a visually impaired person with her grocery shopping on alternate weeks.

Terry has been involved in many, many volunteer activities since high school and thinks it is an important thing to do — "pay it forward".

"It's nothing extraordinary.", Terry says. "People need to help each other if they can. In an ethical community, volunteering is part of one's life".

Courage and Commitment

Pat Cantor

On May 7, 2016 at 7 PM at the historic Arlington Street Church, 351 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116, climate activist Tim DeChristopher, criminal justice activist Andrea James and Joia Mukherjee of *Partners in Health* will participate in a forum on the sources of their inspiration

and what motivates them to put themselves on the line for their beliefs. Emceed by Robert Meeropol, founder of the Rosenberg Fund for Children, DeChristopher, James and Mukherjee will talk about their personal experiences of standing up to entrenched power and how everyone can participate in the movement for a just and humane society.

The program also features portrait artist Robert Shetterly, creator of the *Americans Who Tell the Truth* series. Shetterly's portraits recognize courageous and committed Americans who have fought for social, environmental and economic fairness. Rousing music from the Leftist Marching Band and topical rhymes from Foundation Movement will round out the program.

The event is in celebration of the World Fellowship Center's 75th anniversary. Since 1941, World Fellowship has offered peace and social justice educational and cultural programs at its non-profit camp and conference center in Conway, NH. At the May 7 event, Shetterly will present his portrait of Willard Uphaus, World Fellowship's second Director, who, during the 1950s, resisted governmental intrusion by refusing to give up World Fellowship's guest, speaker and staff lists.

Many Boston Ethical Community members and friends have visited World

Fellowship in New Hampshire and participated in World Fellowship programs. The two groups share a commitment to humanist ideals and social justice. On May 7, people from both groups can come together and celebrate their common values and be inspired for the future.



Grantmaking, continued from page 1

The grantmaking approach will favor projects having measurable impact on the broader community and the potential to create long-lasting change. For 2016, BEC has identified a broad set of areas of interest, including racial justice, climate change awareness, civil liberties, homeless advocacy, public health, and voting rights. The maximum grant is \$10,000.

BEC is partnering with Associated Grant Makers of Boston (agmconnect.org) to facilitate the grantmaking process.

"In launching this initiative, we're using our financial resources to help other organizations carry out important programs that align with our core values", said BEC President Brian King. "We believe this is the most effective way to expand our service to the greater community".

The Issue of "Frankenfoods"

Peter Denison

The science of genetics has been growing so rapidly that it must be hard for even a scientist in the field to keep up. Both animal and plant breeders have been modifying various plants and animals for several millennia. The standard way had been to grow a crop of, say, wheat, and then select the seeds of those which seemed the best in desired qualities. Gradually the wheat crop would give better wheat, and after a sufficient length of time, the wheat crop would have little resemblance to the original wild wheat. If there is such a thing as "intelligent design," this is it. The fresh fruit we eat often bears little or no resemblance to its wild ancestors. Break open the pit of a peach and one will find a nut resembling an almond, but not one which is edible. All dogs have evolved from one breed of wild wolves, although many fashionable breeds nowadays hardly resemble a wolf.

It is only recently that geneticists have been able to change a species by actually removing a defective gene and replacing it with a better mutation. This technique shows promise in medicine as well as in agriculture. Plants can be made more nutritious, hardier, resistant to pests, etc. There is much promise that farmers can raise more and better food, improving

living standards and health, really for everyone, but especially in the Third World. Now scientists have found they can successfully add a gene from a different species. Perhaps an ear of corn could have a gene taken from an insect that will improve the corn in some way.

This type of genetic experimentation may contain much promise, but what about the side effects? Many people questioning these practices have coined the term " Frankenfoods," implying that there is a great danger of deleterious side effects. That is certainly a possibility which should not be ignored. Nor, on the other hand should we ignore the great promise that genetic modifications also offer.

There are many calls for transparency in this area of business as in others. All foods that have been genetically modified should be labeled as such. Unfortunately, business interests such as Monsanto have objected having to label GMO foods. This resistance has been a tactical mistake on the part of business interests. They should have originally agreed to, or even promoted GMO labeling. If their products are so much better, they should proudly display the fact in their labeling behavior.

But they did not; they stonewalled instead. This is typical of business leaders. When citizens' groups try to

get laws passed which will help the consumer to make a more informed choice, they fight back. Often when they lose the battle, they find that the change has actually improved their profits. Business interests seem so protective of their authority that they habitually and irrationally fight changes which would actually be beneficial to them as well as to the consumer. (Economists should team up with psychologists to figure out why CEO's often irrationally fight changes which can actually be beneficial to their bottom line. But that issue is for a different essay.)

Any genetic modification, no matter how promising, can be accompanied by deleterious side effects. Sometimes the side effects can be acceptable as a price of progress, but sometimes not. Some promising drugs have had to be taken off the market. One thinks of thalidomide. But many drugs have improved life for millions. There is no perfection. We should keep watch for side effects, but make no blanket rulings.

We as humanists know that humans are not always rational. Far from it. It is easy to see the irrationality in others, much harder to see it in ourselves. Everyone is liable to fall for certain rumors. Many people, both liberals and conservatives, have fallen for various ones — the rumor about vaccinations causing autism has done a lot of damage. So-called



“frankenfoods” do carry great promise as well as risks. We should treat the issue more rationally than many of us have. Unfortunately the opposition to GMOs has

induced corporations to fight any labeling. Once people perceive critics as enemies they have a hard time being rational.

Professor Juliet Schor Accepts 2016 Humanist of the Year Award

Fred Hewett

On April 10, 2016, BEC honored Professor Juliet Schor of Boston College as the 2016 Humanist of the Year.

Professor Schor’s talk, entitled “New Perspectives on Climate Economy” gave an overview of the economic challenges that confront a world beset by climate change.

She called for dramatic changes in our energy usage. “In the global north we need to move

quickly to very large emissions reductions, well outside of the range of historic experience”, she said.

Schor emphasized the need to question the dogma of growth, saying the metrics we use to gauge economic success must include using our productivity to reduce work hours, not just consume more.

“We have to make some structural changes that will reduce the underlying demand of the economy for energy”, Schor stated.

It was a memorable meeting. BEC is proud to have selected Professor Schor as this year’s Humanist of the Year.



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The Ethical Movement

Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and educational movement working to create a better world through ethical actions. We are dedicated to the ideal that the highest value is human worth and that our relationships to each other are of greatest ethical concern. Our commitment is to the worth and dignity of the individual and to treating each human being so as to bring out the best in him or her. Members join together in ethical societies to assist each other in developing ethical ideas and ideals...to celebrate life's joys and support each other through life's crises.

<http://bostonethical.org>



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Sunday Programs in May 2016

May 1

Brian King, President, Boston Ethical Community

"Religions and Babies"



What is the relationship between religion and birth rates and what does it mean for the global population? BEC President, Brian King, will present a brief overview of the work of the Gapminder Foundation and its efforts to use statistics and data visualization to show trends in the health and wealth of countries around the world and to promote sustainable global development. A video and discussion of a TED talk by Hans Rosling, a physician, statistician, and Professor of International Health at Karolinska Institute in Sweden will follow.

May 8

Michael Bleiweiss, Vice President, Boston Ethical Community

Colloquy



BEC Vice President Michael Bleiweiss will lead a Colloquy.

Colloquy provides an opportunity for self-reflection and contemplation within a nurturing, group environment. Participants use readings, music, and quiet sharing to reflect on a selected theme.

May 15

Roy Harris, Journalist and Author



Roy Harris has been a journalist for some of the nation's most respected news publications, including *The Wall Street Journal* and *CFO Magazine*.

His latest book, *Pulitzer's Gold*, is the first book to trace the century-long history of the coveted Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

May 22

David Salstein, Atmospheric and Environmental Research

Earth system science ... and ways we impact the global system



The Earth can be viewed as a system with a number of components – solid Earth, atmosphere, ocean, land-based hydrosphere. They interact with each other according to the natural physical laws related to quantities like energy, momentum, and mass,

with water mass a special case. David will discuss this view, which has been recognized by climate scientists and those trying to make careful measurements using a number of different techniques.

May 29

Memorial Day Breakfast

BEC members and friends gather to observe the Memorial Day holiday. All welcome.

~ Program Schedule for May 2016 ~	
May 1	Video and discussion: <i>Religion and Babies</i>
May 8	Michael Bleiweiss, Vice President, Boston Ethical Community <i>Colloquy</i>
May 15	Roy Harris, Journalist and Author
May 22	David Salstein, Atmospheric and Environmental Research <i>Earth system science ... and ways we impact the global system</i>
May 29	Memorial Day Breakfast
Sunday Meetings are held at 10:30 AM at 33 Garden St in Cambridge	

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