



ETHICAL CULTURE

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MARCH 2014

Mar. 2 Sid Frank, "What you might not have known about our Presidents"

Sid Frank, author of "The Presidents: Tidbits & Trivia," will chat about the fascinating and little-known tales of our nation's leaders. Learn the interesting facts NOT found in our history books, and discover insights that help make sense of the men this nation has chosen to lead it through peace and war.

Springfield resident Sid Frank, in addition to being a docent and educator at Liberty Hall Museum in Union, is an author, playwright and lyricist. He has written 33 one-act plays, including "Life & Tragic Death of Union County's Fighting Parson, James Caldwell, and The Trial of his Killer," which is performed at the museum. Sid has written several musical reviews, including one about New Jersey called "Jerz" that traveled throughout the state. He wrote the lyrics for the Gold Record "Please, Mr. Sun," that was featured in the movie "The Last Picture Show." Sid has also written songs that were recorded by Frank Sinatra, Billy Eckstine and Sarah Vaughan. His speech, "The Presidents, Tidbits and Trivia," is excerpted from his book by the same name. He lives in Springfield with his wife, artist Helen Frank (who is temporarily using studio space on the second floor of ECS). His daughter, Holly Scalera, a poet and organic gardener, has spoken at Ethical about the environment and about poetry.

Mar. 9 Michael Lally, "Our roots — a source of strength or conflict?"

Poet/actor/author Michael Lally writes Lally's Alley, a much-visited blog (See <http://lallysalley.blogspot>.

com/) in addition to working on several books. He will discuss with the audience the benefits and drawbacks of identifying with one's roots and/or those of other groups — and, as he has in his past appearances at Ethical, read some of his poems.

Born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1942, youngest of seven in an Irish-American family of cops, priests and politicians, Lally started out playing piano and reading his poetry in coffeehouses and bars in 1959. In 1962 he joined the Air Force. After more than four years as an enlisted man, he later used the G.I. Bill to attend the University of Iowa Writers Workshop.

Lally's first book was published in 1970. There have been twenty-six more since, including "The South Orange Sonnets," which garnered him the 92nd St. Y Poetry Center's 1972 "Discovery Award," and "It's Not Nostalgia," a 2000 American Book Award winner. Other awards include two National Endowment for the Arts in 1974 and '81, the latter causing two Republican Representatives to denounce the NEA on the floor of Congress for promoting "pornography."

In 1982, to find work, Lally moved to L.A. where, as Michael David Lally, he acted in movies and on TV and wrote and "doctored" screenplays for a living. He returned to New Jersey in 1999, retired from acting and screenwriting in 2009, but has continued writing, reading and publishing his poetry.

Mar. 16 Martha Gallahue, "The American Ethical Union and What it Means to Us"

With the upcoming Assembly, Summer School, and recent appoint-

ment of National Director of Ethical Education, Dale McGowan, Martha will review the history, development and purpose of The American Ethical Union, the name of the Federation within which all ethical culture members belong.

She will highlight what a Federation is and why it came into being. She will use both her experience and Howard Radest's excellent book "Toward Common Ground."

Martha, Leader of ESEC, has served on the national AEU Board and chaired the Board Development Committee during her tenure. She has visited 15 Societies throughout the country and noticed some of the gaps along with the benefits of member awareness about the AEU's importance to the growth and inspiration of the ethical culture movement.

Mar. 23 Russell Pinzino, "The less discussed problems that the LGBT community faces"

The recent legalization of same-sex marriage in New Jersey was a big success for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community in the state. Gay marriage has been one of the most discussed social justice issues in the 21st century, and has almost become the poster image for the gay rights movement. This talk will go over some of the less discussed problems that members of the LGBT community face, in the SOMA community, New Jersey and around the world, such as bullying, suicide, discriminatory laws and more.

Russell Pinzino, who lives in Maplewood, is a gay student at Columbia High School and is Co-President of Spectrum, the school's gay-straight

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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Editor's Note

Newsletter articles, announcements, etc., not to exceed 150 words in length, must be received by the FIRST of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition. Submit items to: Howard Gilman, newsletter editor, preferably via email at: gilman.howard@gmail.com. Items can also be dropped off at 15 So. Pierson Rd., Maplewood; or, if you put something for the newsletter in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please give me a call at (973) 763-3914 to be sure I know about it, especially if your item is time-sensitive. — *Editor*

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

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www.essexethical.org



alliance. He is passionate about issues in the LGBT community, but is also very interested in the arts. At CHS, he is a member of the A Cappella group, co-leader of the Improv Club, a member of the Excelsior Choir and a member of the Wind Ensemble. He also participated in the North Jersey Regional Chorus and the New Jersey All-State Chorus.

Mar. 30 Deborah Prinz, "Religion beyond stained glass windows — An insider's view of Rabbi Joachim Prinz"

Deborah Prinz, the daughter of the legendary Rabbi Joachim Prinz, will talk about her father — as a family man, religious leader and outspoken political commentator, and the new documentary about him, "Joachim Prinz: I Shall Not Be Silent," made by Maplewood filmmakers Rachel Fisher and Rachel Pasternak, which opens at the JCC in West Orange in early April. See:

http://www.joachimprinz.com/Joachim_Prinz/Home.html

Deborah Prinz, the youngest of the rabbi's five children, is the executive director of the Achieve Foundation of South Orange and Maplewood, and before that was a psychotherapist for 25 years. She lives in South Orange and is the mother of three grown children.

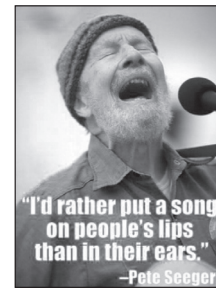
Ethical Society and Super Bowl

The Seattle Seahawks selected team members rejected by the "draft" of other high power teams but with a big difference — their goal was to work together, bringing out the best in one another. Head Coach Pete Carroll practiced the best Ethical Culture principles, though not a dues-paying member of our humanist community.

Such is the story related to me by our long-time member and past president, Terri Suess, recently moved to Seattle, who telephoned me, gloriously boasting about the fabric of the extraordinary Super Bowl victory.

— *Proudly shared by E. Betty Levin, Board Member; Always ready to highlight our Guiding Principles*

Folk Friday singalong to Honor Pete Seeger, Mar. 14, 7:30 p.m.



Sing-along and jam with friends second Friday of each month through June, at Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening. Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to include crafts people to come and listen to music while doing crafts. Open to all comers, all ages, everyone is invited! Email Inovemsky@comcast.net or call (973) 763-8293. — *Lisa*

LEADER'S COLUMN

Humanistic Community

The American Ethical Union has recently hired as National Director of Ethical Education, Dale McGowan. The following article sheds some light on his thoughts. Dale has visited several ethical culture societies in recent years. I was there



when his first visit took place at the Brooklyn Society. Here is what he said about us:

"In the past seven years or so, I've seen quite a few humanistic organizations from the inside: free thought groups, Ethical Societies, Congregations for Humanistic Judaism, UUs, etc. Met a lot of wonderful people working hard to make their groups succeed. All of the groups have different strengths, and all are struggling with One Big Problem: creating a genuine sense of community.

I've written before about community and the difficulty free thought groups generally have creating it. Some get closer than others, but it always seems to fall a bit short of the sense of community that churches so often create. And I don't think it has a thing to do with God.

The question I hear more and more from free thought groups is, "How can we bring people in the door and keep them coming back?" The answer is to make our groups more **humanistic** — something churches, ironically, often do better than we do.

Now I've met an organization founded

on free thought principles that seems to get humanistic community precisely right. It's the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture (<http://www.bsec.org/>) ... and the single most effective humanistic community I have seen.

So what do they have going for them? My top ten list:

10. A great space. Not every group can meet in a neo-Jacobean mansion with lions guarding the stairs, dark woodwork, high ceilings and art-glass windows — but too many groups meet in sterile, fluorescent-lit common rooms full of metal folding chairs and free of even a scrap of inspiration or warmth. Budgets are tight, but every group should do whatever it can to warm up the spaces in which they meet — curtains, wood, carpet, tablecloths, art, etc.

9. Music. When I walked into the Brooklyn Society, a member was playing show tunes on an old upright piano as people stood around chatting and laughing. Twenty minutes before the gathering began, they switched on a CD of jazz standards. Think of what music does for a dinner party, filling in gaps in conversation and casting a glow around the room. EVERY GROUP should have music playing 20 minutes before the meeting begins.

8. Food. Everybody loves to eat. All meetings should start with yummy food. Not a box of pink frosted cookies. Food, glorious food.

7. A call to action. Have a prominent display calling members to collective social action: a donation box, a chart tracking funds raised, a sign-up sheet for the next Habitat for Humanity day. Keep social action as prominent as any intellectual content. And make sure to include human-centered social action like soup kitchens, food pantries, battered women's shelters, etc., not just trash pickup and book sales.

6. Ritual. (*Uh oh, I lost half the audience.*) Ritual doesn't have to mean fuzzy-wuzzy woowoo. In the case of the BSEC, leader Greg Tewksbury

started the gathering by yanking on a tubular wind chime that hung at the side of the lectern. He tugged it again at each dividing point in the gathering. Gives a nice sense of rhythm and structure.

5. Emotion. Free thought groups naturally like their intellectual content, but it frequently happens to the complete exclusion of emotional and inspirational elements. BSEC managed to include a constant feeling of emotional warmth without the slightest theistic feel. Since my talk was on parenting, Greg opened by asking those present to turn to the person next to them and share a time they nurtured someone or were nurtured by someone. Five minutes of discussion followed, centered not on debunking this or that but on human emotion.

4. Symbolism. Like the UU chalice, the two candles on the lectern were a clear reference to light, warmth, knowledge, and life. Adds a very nice touch.

3. Diversity. Most groups I've visited are 80 percent white male. They don't want to be, but they don't know what to do about it. It helps to live in a place like Brooklyn, which made for the most diverse crowd I've addressed in years. If you are elsewhere, do some outreach and networking to invite folks from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to a meeting.

2. Multiple generations. I know, chicken and egg. But I cannot begin to tell you what a fabulous sense of community the Brooklyn Society gets from 20 kids running in and out among the legs of the adult members in the half-hour beforehand. And with kids come parents — people in their 20s-40s, another demographic missing from many free thought groups. Attract families by building community. Build community by doing what's on this list. Especially the next one:

1. A warm welcome. This is #1 on the list for a reason. It's no surprise that we rational freethinking types

aren't generally good at sticking our hands out to welcome strangers into a room. I'm terrible at it. But there is no less welcoming feeling than entering a new space full of strangers without anyone saying word one to you.

This happens to me alllll the time as I travel around. I show up, walk in, and am promptly ignored. Ten minutes of awkward pamphlet reading later, someone finally walks up and asks if I'm new to the group.

Not at the Brooklyn Society. No fewer than five warm and pleasant people welcomed me in the first five minutes and chatted me up BEFORE they even knew I was the speaker.

The difference this makes is enormous. Every free thought group should find the person most comfortable with greeting fellow mammals and assign him/her to watch the door and enthusiastically usher newcomers in, show them around, introduce them to others.

And it needs to go well beyond one greeter. EVERY MEMBER of EVERY GROUP should make it a point to chat up new folks — and each other, for that matter. And not just about the latest debunkey book. Ask where he's from, what she does for a living, whether he follows the Mets or the Yankees. You know, mammal talk. (Now now ... I joke because I *love!*)

Can't manage everything on the list? No problem. Start with #1, then add what you can when and how you can. Before you know it, you'll have a thriving, warm, humanistic community where people visit *and then return*, bringing their spouses and children and friends and neighbors. If I lived in Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture would get my sorry butt out of bed every single Sunday."

And that's saying something.

Welcome Dale! For more on Dale McGowan, go to: <http://parentingbeyondbelief.com/blog/?p=1957>

— Martha Gallahue

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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We continue to collect children's books, canned and boxed foods, and toys for distribution by the Parenting Center in Maplewood.



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, call 973-763-1905. Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org



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