

The Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society of Madison

Vol. 4, No. 5

NEWSLETTER

November 3, 1971

Upcoming Programs:

November 7 - "War Requiem" by Dave Meyer

November 14 - "Middle Class Value System #3" coordinated by Boris Frank

November 21 - A Tribute to Minos Theodorakis, composer of "Zorba the Greek"
- by George Calden

November 28 - "Death and Dying" - coordinated by Melinda Roznoy

THE TRIAL BALLOON DEPARTMENT

Suggestion has been made that those of us at Prairie and First Society who will not be entertaining or going out of town on Thanksgiving get together to feast and give thanks on an organized pot luck basis.

The dinner would be held in the Hearth Room of the First Unitarian Society on University Bay Drive. Dinner would start around 5, with dessert about 6:30.

Providers of turkey would be reimbursed by a small fee charge. Those wishing to share just dessert would have that option.

An adult program of music and readings, coordinated by Dave Meyer, will complete the festivities.

Interested people are asked to sign the sheet available starting November 7. If you have any questions or suggestions, contact Karen Anderson or John Zahn.

TO RE OR NOT TO RE: THAT IS THE QUESTION

On December 5 the second trimester of the Religious education program begins. To date only one person has agreed to teach:

Several changes have been made in the curriculum for first through sixth grades. Read on and see if YOU should be involved.

Each program, centered around the themes of (1) people celebrating, (2) people belonging to minority groups, and (3) people making decisions, will be open to any child first through sixth grade.

The class emphasis will be on the child's participation in various projects, which he designs and implements, that relate to his chosen subject. Films, creative writing, and play-acting are suggested approaches to these programs. The possibilities are unlimited.

We need persons who are willing to know and involve themselves with our young people. If you are not willing, the alternatives are simple: our children stay home on Sundays or they sit in the adult program. Become involved: Call Pat Meyer (221-0255). NOW

THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE will meet at 8 p.m., Nov. 8 at Nancy McElreath's, 309 Eugenia.

Lilo Koehl would like COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS about the Upham Woods Retreat. Call her at 233-7383.

We need a PIANO for the Portal-Foster Center. Please call Fran Remeika, 845-7292.

11/3/71

Kent State by James Michener (Random House)

Michener has become known as a writer of "Big" books. He seems almost preoccupied with length as a criterion for quality. Kent State: What happened and why is no exception. The book contains a wealth of fact, carefully sifted and compiled from multiple sources, though unfortunately without subpoena power. Though I found many of the anecdotes and incidents, much the detail (particularly on background material), and some of the opinions and interpretations dull or seemingly extraneous, in the long run they did all seem relevant. Michener has, it would seem, attempted to carefully structure the book so that anyone reading it might view not only the specific events at Kent, but also the entire context in which those events took place. One may judge much of the material quite independently of Michener's conclusions and interpretations -- a quality which highly recommends the book. However, the book is so very long sometimes so very circuitous that most readers will never get far enough in it to be able to make the independent judgments for which Michener clearly hopes. Obviously, some of this problem may be set at the feet of the general public, rather than Michener, though a means of circumventing it might have been found by a writer of more imaginative and less voluminous tendencies.

There are a number of powerful impressions which come slowly in Kent State as the events and people unfold into a huge tableau. First, the amount of stumbling, uncomprehending incompetence exhibited in the events at Kent State is almost impossible to conceive. It is as if there were a conspiracy to keep anyone with real understanding or capability as far from the centers of decision-making as possible. Whether it was Governor Rhodes, the local authorities, the radical student leadership, or the National Guard leadership seems to have mattered: all blundered with equal aplomb. And in nearly all cases their blundering was the result at least in part (sometimes totally) of biases and/or motives totally inappropriate to the campus or the specific situation. All too often decisions were made in the light of the political futures of various figures involved, or on the basis of a doctrinaire "These punks got to learn law and order," or "Pigs off campus," position which made conversation and reconciliation impossible.

Another impression from Kent State which haunts me is alienation, both psychological and physical, which seems to have overtaken our society. Almost no one within the community of Kent opposed the actions of the Guard. Many comments were recorded in the local letters to the editor which indicated that 400 would have been killed murder seems to have social sanction -- violence becomes a sort of "final solution to the Youth culture problem". A frighteningly high percentage of students (many of whom were on the hill in the shooting) were told by their parents that every student there should have been killed. The emotional alienation which this bespeaks (not to mention deepens) is astonishing. And this alienation has not changed in the past year and a half. Though campus violence and demonstrations have almost vanished, the feelings are still there, perhaps more deeply imbedded than ever. The quiet is more a sense of despair and frustration, than a calm return to rational discourse and inquiry.

Michener, in an attempt to play the reconciler, has tried to soften most of his harsher judgments, sometimes to the point of absurdity and soft headedness. This element of the book is in some ways the most irritating, although understandable and in some ways commendable. One possibility which I at least hope for but which Michener does not see is that the quiet on campus (and the alienation which accompanies it) may be a move on the part of students both to calm the nation down (and themselves) and to reexamine, study, and think through many issues and concerns in order to deal more successfully in the real world of practical politics and programs.

Dave Meyer

Our sympathy goes out to the family of Jack and Betty Jallings at the death October 30 of Betty's mother, Mrs. Bertha Franklin at the age of 84. Whenever Mrs. Franklin was among us I was struck by her wit, intelligence, and that special perspective of age so often missing in our young Society. All who knew her will miss her presence.

Ruth Calden

11/3/71

THE SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE REPORTS:

The Social Action committee, as one of its projects, has been trying to provide emergency assistance (financial, furniture and household items) to families in Madison. It was found that there is great need of this kind, and that there is an already established service organized and run by Father Robert Shaw of St. Andrews Episcopal Church.

The Committee learned that the Father Shaw Fund (including many voluntary services) is supported by persons from several churches in Madison. The Prairie Social Action committee decided to join the Father Shaw Emergency Fund and offer at least our services, and possibly money, if there are enough members and friends who care to contribute.

One of the major areas in which the Fund needs help is in finding and distributing used furniture and household

items. Trucks and manpower are available through the Fund but the organization and follow through are not worked out. The SA Committee is considering the possibility of taking on this responsibility.

If public funds are used to build a public building, does that necessarily prevent people from praying in an organized way in the building? House Joint Resolution #191, a draft amendment to the Constitution, will say "no" to that question. According to Bob Koehl, "the First Amendment protects the right of prayer; all this resolution will do is open doors for certain public officials to force prayer in public buildings."

Bob suggests people write congressmen about this issue, asking that the resolution be defeated. (Do you know you can wire a 15-word public service message and have the \$1 charge put on your telephone bill?)

NEW MEMBERS AT PRAIRIE SOCIETY

Seven people have signed the membership book this fall, and Prairie Society members and friends are very pleased to welcome them into the group.

Theron and Bill Caldwell come from Nashville, Tenn. Bill is in radio therapy research at the University. Their children are Ben, 16; Sam, 15; Alan, 13; Megan, 10; Erica, 7; and Bret, 5.

Kathy and Mike Lyman are both students at the University. Mike will get his teacher's certificate in January, after receiving a master's degree in education. He already holds a master's degree in physics. Kathy is studying social work and child development for her master's degree. Their children are twin girls Alice and Emily, 1½ and Sara, 3.

Sandra Stephens and son Chuck, 11, are from Philadelphia. She is a secretary at Marshall Erdman Architectural Associates.

Barbara and Dan Willard have been in Madison about a year, after coming from Austin, Texas. He is an ecologist by way of landscape architecture. Their children are Martha, 14 and Nellie, 10.

Pat Werner has been under the impression for some time that he was a member, so just to make sure he signed the membership book. Pat is with the Wisconsin Tax Department, and spends his spare time rallying 'round the Goose Pond Wildlife Refuge issue.

Ready to toss away those dog-eared directories of last year's members and friends? Then please help your wild-eyed membership committee working to bring names and addresses up to date. If you have even the remotest suspicion that you will be incorrectly listed in the November directory call Ruth Calden 233-5717 or Rebecca Clark, 238-4333, immediately.

