

The Prairie Unitarian-Universalist Society of Madison

Vol. 5, No. 3

NEWSLETTER

October 4, 1972

THERE'S A JLS IN ALL OF US, AND FRIDAY NIGHT IS OUR NIGHT

As I write this I can only think of you, for this story is about how the two of us can learn to continuously be in each others thoughts. It's about a sea gull who learned to understand living not as a means to staying alive but as a means to learning more.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull was no ordinary gull. He didn't fly to find food. He flew to learn. One day, over a silent ocean, practicing his speed diving from 2,000 feet, Jonathan set a world record with a blazing 90-mile-an-hour vertical dive.

"But the victory was short-lived. The instant he began his pullout, the instant he changed the angle of his wings, he snapped into that same terrible uncontrolled disaster, and at 90 miles per hour it hit him like dynamite. Jonathan Seagull exploded in midair and smashed down into a brick-hard sea.

"When he came to, it was well after dark, and he floated in moonlight on the surface of the ocean. His wings were ragged bars of lead, but the weight of failure was even heavier on his back. He wished, feebly, that the weight could be just enough to drag him gently down to the bottom, and end it all.

"As he sank low in the water, a strange hollow voice sounded within him. There's no way around it. I am a seagull. I am limited by my nature. If I were meant to learn so much about flying, I'd have a falcon's short wings, and live on mice instead of fish. My father was right. I must forget this foolishness. I must fly home to the Flock and be content as I am, as a poor limited seagull.

"The voice faded, and Jonathan agreed. The place for a seagull at night was on shore, and from this moment forth, he vowed, he would be a normal gull. It would make everyone happier."

On his moonlit flight over the dark waters, it hit him:

"Short wings. A falcon's short wings! That's the answer! What a fool I've been! All I need is a tiny little wing, all I need is to fold most of my wings and fly on just the tips alone. Short wings!

"He climbed 2,000 feet above the black sea, and without a moment for thought of failure and death, he brought his forewings tightly in to his body, left only the narrow swept daggers of his wingtips extended into the wind, and fell into a vertical dive.

"The wind was a monster roar at his head. Seventy miles per hour, 90, 120 and faster still. The wing-strain now at 140 miles per hour wasn't nearly as hard as it had been before at 70, and with the faintest twist of his wingtips he eased out of the dive and shot above the waves, a gray cannonball under the moon."

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, by Richard Bach (with photographs by Russell Munson; MacMillan Co., NY, NY, 1970) is dedicated "To the real Jonathan Seagull who lives within us all," because Jonathan is the kind who looks at you deeply and says "You are free."

At his trial for irresponsibly not learning that "life is the unknown and the unknowable," Jonathan, who had learned so much about flight and so wanted to share it, could only cry out to the Flock:

"Irresponsibility? My brothers! Who is more responsible than a gull who finds and follows a meaning, a higher purpose for life? For a thousand years we have scrambled after fish heads, but now we have a reason to live—to learn, to discover, to be free! Give me one chance, let me show you what I've found..."

This Friday at 8 p.m. in the First Society's meeting house auditorium, Mary Burton, a minstrel from the Meadville Unitarian-Universalist seminary, and Ric Beinecke, her husband, will give a multimedia telling of the JLS tale.

---Mark McElreath

CALENDAR

Sunday, October 8 at 10 a.m.--Drugs. The LRY group to present program. Ben Caldwell, coordinator.

Sunday afternoon: Meet at 2 p.m.--at P.F. Center for an outing with Dan Willard.

Monday, October 9 at 7:30 p.m.--Organic Gardening with Barbara Willard, 2217 West Lawn.

Tuesday, October 10--Noon luncheon at First Society's meeting house. Speaker, Ms. Margaret Harris, board member of the Unitarian-Universalist Women's Federation, will talk about "A New Look at the UUWF." Luncheon-reservations should be phoned to 233-9774.

Thursday, October 12 at 8 p.m.--Board meeting at Portal-Foster Center.

Sunday October 15 at 10 a.m.--Poisons and Foods and the Mind. Program by the Willards.

Sunday afternoon, outing with Dan Willard every Sunday, 2 p.m. Meet at P.F. Center.

Monday, October 16 at 7:30 p.m.--Organic Gardening with Barbara Willard.

Saturday, October 21 at 7:30 p.m.--Play reading at Genia Gordon's, 2209 East Washington.

Sunday, October 22--Tentative program: The Ecology Gods. Coordinator, Al Nettleton.

Sunday afternoon outing with Dan Willard.

Monday evening organic gardening with Barbara Willard.

Thursday, October 26 at 7:30 p.m.--Program Committee meeting at McElreaths', 309 Eugenia.

Friday, November 3 at 7:30 p.m.--Board meeting at Portal-Foster Center
8:15 p.m.--Parish meeting and party at Portal-Foster Center
Agenda: budget and election of member of Committee on Committees.

Monday, November 6 at 8 p.m.--Some folks need 76 of them to make it sound good, but not Richard Roznoy who will give his trombone recital at 8 p.m., Nov. 6 in the Morphy Recital Hall of the Humanities Bldg. Erroneously announced in local papers as October 22.

The CIRCLE DINNERS will begin this month. Four groups of 8-10 people each have been formed. All those who signed up will be telephoned in the next week or two to plan the first meeting of their group.

PRAIRIE SOCIETY MEETS EVERY SUNDAY MORNING AT THE PORTAL FOSTER CENTER, 1806 West Lawn

Lay Ministers: Barbara and Dan Willard.....256-2801

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