



Camp Linden Summer Views

June 2020

As Chair of Friends of Camp Linden I want to thank you for your past support. Your generosity has made it possible for thousands of inner-city children to participate in the Camp Linden Children's Summer Program over the years.

In our Summer Views newsletter we are usually describing in glowing terms the activities we have planned for campers in the approaching season. Instead, it is now my sad duty to inform you that the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Ethical Society has decided to cancel the 2020 Summer Children's Program because of the danger of spreading COVID-19.

Camp Linden partners with agencies that run inner-city day camps serving low income families, which transport children to Camp Linden for a program of environmental education and swimming. Our partners were closed or operating remotely because of COVID-19 restrictions at the time the Board decision was made in May. Although day care programs were permitted to open when Philadelphia moved to "Yellow" as of June 5, they remain subject to social distancing requirements which effectively preclude the bus ride to Camp Linden.

We plan to use this hiatus to make needed major repairs and improvements to the Camp Linden infrastructure. We received a \$10,000 gift from Ellen McBride's family foundation in honor of Richard Kiniry. We plan to devote this gift, and others made in Richard's honor, to pay for these repairs and improvements.

Richard Kiniry, Leader Emeritus of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, passed away December 18, 2019. The Society has decided to name the main cabin at Camp Linden "The Richard L. Kiniry Cabin" in recognition of his leadership in reconstructing the camp facilities and establishing the current Children's Summer Program. We are devoting this issue of Summer Views to honoring Richard's memory and telling the story of how Richard and a small group of stalwart volunteers saved Camp Linden and made it what it is today.

The enclosed Response Form gives you the option of directing part or all of your contribution to "The Richard Kiniry Fund". Gifts to the Kiniry Fund will make Camp Linden more efficient and attractive when it reopens in 2021 and into the future. Gifts which are not directed to the Kiniry Fund will be used to support general expenses, including the costs of maintaining the property, which arise even when the camp is not in operation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeffrey Dubb, MD
Chair, Friends of Camp Linden

Remembering Richard Kiniry



Richard Kiniry was born and raised in in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. As a Catholic seminary student in Washington, D.C. in the turbulent 60s, Richard found himself more profoundly influenced by activism inspired by the civil rights movement than the theological debates within the Church. In 1968 he

abandoned his path to the priesthood and joined the Peace Corps in India.

When he completed his Peace Corps service Richard returned to Philadelphia and joined the artists and craftspeople revitalizing the South Street corridor, which became known as the "South Street Renaissance". He worked as a stain glass artisan and purchased a building in the area which he renovated as his home and studio. He attended a

Newsletter layout and design by Ruth Dubb

number of philosophical and social service groups looking for a movement of like-minded people who shared his naturalist views on religion and commitment to social justice. He eventually found what he was seeking in Ethical Culture.

Richard joined the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 1984 and immediately became involved in the work of its Ethical Action Committee, including direct service projects in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood of North Philadelphia. He joined forces with Dr. Carol Love to prevent the sale of Camp Linden and return it to its purpose as a summer program for inner-city children. Richard's central role in the revival of Camp Linden is detailed in "Saviors of Camp Linden" on page 3.

As Richard became active in the Ethical Society, his clerical aspiration revived in a more congenial philosophical setting. He undertook leadership training and was certified as a Clergy Leader by the American Ethical Union in 1989. The following year he became Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society.

As Leader Richard employed his artistic imagination to enlivening the Sunday Platform meetings. He moved the podium from the stage to the floor, on the level with participants, and introduced a



regular classical music program with accomplished pianists who would choose and explain their selections as they related to the subject of the Platform presentation. He designed scenic rituals featuring candles, wintergreens and poinsettias as the setting for a program of music and readings for the Winter Solstice, and an indoor garden with plants and a flowing stream for the Spring Equinox. In the 1990s Richard was a frequent columnist on ethical humanism in the Philadelphia Inquirer, which helped spread religious humanist ideas to a broader audience and attract members for the Society. His Platform presentations provided stimulating analysis of ethical choices and values in the context of life's personal challenges as well as current events. His influential writings include a long essay entitled "Ethical Humanism as Religious Approach", setting forth the specifics of his Ethical Culture beliefs,

emphasizing the intrinsic worth of humans, acting so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in yourself, loving life in all of its individual uniqueness, personal living, and social justice.

As an active participant in the American Ethical Union, the umbrella organizations of Ethical Societies in the United States, Richard served in a variety of leadership capacities including the Leadership Committee, as President of the National Leaders Council, and as chair of the AEU Ethical Action Committee. When he retired as Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 2010 Leaders of Ethical Societies around the country traveled to Philadelphia to attend the dinner in his honor.



Richard was also active in the larger community of Humanists and advocates for the rights of non-theists. He graduated from the Humanist Institute. He was a named plaintiff in a lawsuit brought in 2017 challenging the Pennsylvania House of Representatives policy disqualifying non-theists from giving the invocations that open its legislative sessions. The trial court found the practice was unconstitutional, but that decision was reversed on appeal.

Richard is remembered fondly by all who knew him. Supporters of Camp Linden are particularly indebted to him for his leadership in preserving the camp property and ensuring that it continues to welcome inner-city children to experience the natural world. The honor which the Philadelphia Ethical Society Board of Directors has bestowed upon Richard in naming the main cabin at Camp Linden after him is most appropriate and richly deserved.



Saviors of Camp Linden

Camp Linden originated as a component of Southwark Neighborhood House, a settlement house serving an Irish Catholic immigrant population in South Philadelphia. The settlement house movement, a phenomenon of the Progressive era with origins in London, spread to Philadelphia in the 1890s as a large influx of needy immigrants and oppressed minorities living in unsanitary conditions attracted the attention of reformers. Living among the poor, settlement house volunteers (primarily college educated young women) sought to improve living conditions by teaching skills which fostered independence and upward mobility. Settlement houses often established residential summer camps in rural settings to temporarily remove children and youth from the negative moral influences and unhealthy conditions of their congested neighborhoods.

Dr. S. Burns Weston was the Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 1906 when he and Jenny Fels spearheaded a campaign to purchase and renovate four row-houses at Front and Elsworth to establish Southwark Neighborhood House. Dr. Weston took on the role of head worker and led efforts to fund and operate a summer camp experience for the children of Southwark. In 1915 the Ethical Society purchased a small farm in the Perkiomen Valley for use as a children's overnight camp. That property was sold in 1926 when Samuel Fels donated a sixty-nine acre property along the Brandywine Creek in Chester County, the current site of Camp Linden. The barn was converted to a dining hall and a pool, bathhouse and bunkhouses were constructed.

Through a series of mergers with other settlement houses in South Philadelphia, Southwark House became a part of United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia, a United Way agency, which took over management of Camp Linden. The Ethical Society continued to hold title to the property, make financial contributions, and hold its annual picnic at the camp property.

Over time the camp buildings deteriorated. In 1981 United Communities closed Camp Linden because it was unable to secure funds to make necessary repairs. Responsibility returned to the

Ethical Society, which was unable to find another organization willing to operate a children's camp at the site.

At the Ethical Society's Annual Meeting in 1984 a proposal was brought to the membership to sell the Camp Linden real estate for residential development and use the proceeds to increase the Society's endowment. Dr. Carol Love, made a motion to table pending further investigation, which was approved by the membership. She argued that because the property had been given to the Society to provide a summer camp experience for inner-city children, the Society had an ethical obligation to ensure that it was used for that purpose.

Richard Kiniry and Jean Bradley then joined with Carol in planning the reconstruction and reopening of the camp. Richard put in months of hard work with the real estate agent and the local government officials to set aside and sell eleven acres, including the old house, the barn and part of the frontage on the creek, to generate funds for the camp's restoration. The sale was concluded in 1987.



A stalwart group of volunteers undertook the demolition, renovations and construction, much of it with their own labor.

The pool and bathhouse were upgraded. The main cabin and the sleeping cabins were demolished. A smaller cabin was stripped and rebuilt on its existing foundation and structure. In 1989 Lewis Buckingham supervised the building of a new main cabin designed by draftsman Joe Burke. This is the cabin, pictured above, that the Society intends to dedicate to Richard Kiniry.

Subsequently, Charles Loomis and Chariss McAfee were brought on as architects. They drafted a development plan for the property which was approved by the West Bradford Township Council in 1994. This plan provides for use of the property as "a multi-purpose camp for children of diverse backgrounds, and as a retreat for groups and organizations reflecting the values of Ethical Culture". It includes three double bunkhouses, a caretaker's residence and a dining hall in addition to the existing facilities. Work was completed on the foundation for the dining hall when construction stopped for lack of funds in 2001. A single bunkhouse with covered porch designed by Loomis and construct-

Saviors of Camp Linden continued

ed with the assistance of many dedicated volunteers, pictured below, was completed in 2005.

Ethical Society volunteers began transporting children to Camp Linden for day trips in 1988. In 1990, and for a few years thereafter, members paid for a bus, a lifeguard and extra food for the children. By 1993 counselors were hired to serve a few city day camps two or three days a week. The program gradually expanded to providing services five days a week, with a different group attending each weekday and returning the same weekday for six weeks.

Additional income for the camp was derived from rentals, from the Philadelphia Ethical Society, the Rose Rappaport Long fund, the Schreiber family foundation through Ellen McBride, the Sara Bowers Fund of the Kennett Monthly Meeting and other grants and individual contributions. Carol Love funded construction of an enlarged septic system. In 1992 Carol initiated the Friends of Camp Linden, asking supporters to pledge \$100 a year. The annual Caribbean pool party was part of the schedule of fund-raising events for the Friends each season.

A governing Board was organized in 1987, which was later transformed into a standing committee of the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Richard Kiniry served as Board President through 2002. In 1997 Jean Bradley was hired as Executive Director. Jean promoted construction of a raised bed vegetable garden. In 2004 Jean hired her partner, Saul Machles, as Director of the Children's Program. Carol Love served as President from 2003 through 2005. Jeffrey Dubb held the leadership position from 2006 until he became President of the Board of the Philadelphia Ethical Society in 2011.

Other "Saviors of Camp Linden" who were part of the effort to rebuild and reopen the camp in the early days are Chuck and Felicia Hinson, Bertha Waters, Susan Jo Klein (now D'Alessio), Deborah Hodes, Joe and Jesse Zelnick, and Temma and Arnold Fishman.

In 2010 the Camp Linden Committee undertook a long range planning process which revealed that it would be extremely difficult to fund ongoing operation of an overnight children's camp, even if the necessary construction was completed. It also revealed that the higher level of amenities necessary to serve adult groups made the plan to develop a facility that could also function as a retreat more unattainable. In 2011, after extended discussion, a decision was made to focus on the current successful day program. Richard Kiniry was disappointed because he had a deep personal commitment to his vision of Camp Linden as an overnight children's program and Ethical Culture retreat. However, he continued to support Camp Linden as a Committee member and volunteer.

The Committee's mission statement was revised to read:



(1) to provide a camp experience for inner city children that promotes appreciation of the natural world, acknowledges the intrinsic worth of all human beings, and encourages campers to develop self-reliance, integrity and ethical relationships.

(2) to serve as responsible stewards of the land and preserve it as a place to commune with the natural world.

(3) to provide a place where Society members and other humanistic organizations can hold events or retreats.

(4) to provide an opportunity for members of the Society to carry out their commitment to ethical action by supporting the camp through volunteer efforts and financial contributions.

As a result of the commitment of Richard Kiniry, Carol Love and the other saviors of Camp Linden, the property donated to the Ethical Society by Samuel Fels in 1926 remains a mostly wooded natural setting, whose primary purpose is to provide a summer camp experience for inner-city children. Thousands of children have had the opportunity to participate in the Camp Linden Summer Children's Program since 1988. With your financial support, this invaluable opportunity will continue to be made available to deserving children in the future.