

Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

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Next HOS Meeting: The Objective Value of Sports

The June meeting will feature a presentation by Clark Hamilton and Brian Phillips titled "The Objective Value of Sports".

The meeting will focus on the value members find in various sports. The integration of mind and body, the achievement of goals, and the status of athletes as heroes will be among the issues addressed.

Members will participate in the meeting by briefly describing how a sport in which they participate, or are a fan, embodies these characteristics. Members who would like to make such a presentation should contact either Clark or Brian. Members planning to attend should read Thomas Bowden's article "In Praise of Spectator Sports" in the August 1983 issue of *The Objectivist Forum*.

The meeting will be held on June 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the Clubroom of The Meridian apartment complex, 6263 Westheimer (between Hillcroft and Fountainview), across from Payless Shoes. The Clubroom is located upstairs facing Westheimer.

NOTE: Attending members are asked to contribute \$2 to help pay for the expenses of renting this clubroom. We have not been recovering rental costs, and would like to encourage those who have not been contributing to do so. Those attending are asked to bring snack items.

Ayn Rand: A Sense Of Life

by Pete Jamison

I confess that when I first heard of this project I wasn't sure that the documentary format was up to conveying the drama of a writer who helped change the twentieth century. I wished it well but was skeptical that a simple recitation of the facts would be enough.

I needn't have worried. Facts are powerful.

The story of the creator of rational egoism opens with a mysterious black-and-white cityscape of a mist-enshrouded 1930's Manhattan much as Rand first found it. The film cycles between present-day interviews with figures in Rand's life (Leonard and Cynthia Peikoff, Harry Binswanger, Mike Berliner, John Ridpath, Mike Wallace and others) and a chronology of a life that, ending in New York, began in a monarchy soon to be destroyed in the bloodiest of revolutions and proffering little chance of escape to any Russian. Leonard Peikoff describes her at the end, working on proofs of scripts and articles only hours before death.

And in between are snapshots of a remarkable life:

Rand and her family developed a system of understatement that functioned as a secret code by which to

convey information through the Soviet mails. In this way Rand kept them informed from New York, Chicago and Los Angeles of efforts to get them out, as well as the fact that she was now Ayn Rand and not Alissa Rosenbaum (a prudent change considering the Soviet tendency to jail relatives of foreign anticommunists).

As a penniless screenwriting hopeful, she and a man in a convertible she recognized as Cecil B. DeMille struck up a conversation from the sidewalk that led to a job as extra on the set of "King Of Kings" (silent). Crowd scenes from the film were blown up to reveal her, young and costumed in flowing Arab robes. During this production, a dashing palace guard in Roman armor caught her eye and she memorized his blocking movements across stage to trip him deliberately;

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thus she met her future husband, Frank O'Connor.

At the time she and Frank met, he confided to a brother that the interesting Russian girl he'd seen on the set spoke in such fashion that he couldn't understand a single word she said. Less than ten years later, Rand was writing *The Fountainhead* in her new language of English.

One of her favorite actors, Gary Cooper, was chosen to play the male lead in Hollywood's version of *The Fountainhead* and the contest for the female lead provoked rivalries (if they didn't already exist) between Barbara Stanwyck, Bette Davis, Veronica Lake and a half-dozen others. The studio's compromise was Patricia Neal, chosen to end the fight due to the fact that she was an unknown.

In the process of the writing of the book and movie screenplay, she struck up a friendship with architecture titan Frank Lloyd Wright, who at one point was considered for set design on the film. Though he didn't get this assignment, they remained friends and he designed a house for her (unbuilt due to a move from L.A. back to Manhattan). The film shows Wright's presentation drawing for the four-story hillside design, wrapped around a fountain with a small figure of a woman, back turned toward the viewer, beholding the house.

And there were the interview segments with Rand herself, one of which was located at the University of Michigan film archive with the assistance of our own Janet Wich. The fractious incident and second, more controlled situation with Phil Donohue were seen, as well as Tom Snyder's "Tomorrow Show" segment, which is my favorite.

Snyder: "... and there are some people who would say you're daft!"

Rand: "Oh, they don't think that."

Snyder: "They don't?"

Rand: "They want YOU to think that."

Snyder's professional and sympathetic approach elicited this most quotable interview, including also the spectacle of a premier atheist explaining why she liked to say "God bless you" to people ("I like what people mean when they say that"). It's here as well that she had the occasion to

smile and say, as if in answer to disgruntled former associates, that there were no regrets: "I've had my time. I can't complain."

Guaranteed only a week by the Greenway theater's sales guidelines, the show ran three weeks in Houston (April 10-23) and is scheduled to open in Austin in July. A poster and coffee-table hardcover book are now carried by Second Renaissance Books, which will carry the video as soon as available.

Intellectual Activism

We have an incredible double standard when it comes to pollution.

Industrial activity is blamed for even the minutest increase in particulate matter in the air, and dubious assertions are made about the consequent health hazards. When objectively harmful pollution comes from the Mexican fires, however, we blame it on "El Nino." The fact is that it is the lack of industrialization that makes third world economies like Mexico use a slash and burn technique to clear land. The absence of mechanized farming is more to blame than the forces of nature for the haze over Houston. Anyone who wants to get rid of the smoke should forget about blaming it on the weather, and promote the freedom and rationality that leads to a highly industrialized society.

Warren S. Ross
Houston Chronicle
May 17, 1998

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The Houston Objectivism Society supports Objectivism and the Ayn Rand Institute; however, we do not purport to represent or speak for the same. HOS membership dues are \$15 per year (single), \$25 (couple), \$5 (student). The Newsletter address is: P.O. Box 112, Bellaire TX 77402.

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brian@philpaint.com (Brian Phillips).

Meeting Summaries

The April HOS meeting featured a bookshare hosted by Janet Wich. After announcements, attendees read and discussed a review of Ayn Rand: A sense of Life by Jeff Millar of the *Houston Chronicle*. Members identified more than a dozen fallacies in the article, as well as numerous factual errors. (The review is available at the *Chronicle* web site-- www.chron.com).

Members then divided into three groups for the main feature of the meeting. Each attendee presented a book which would be of value to other members. Members then moved to another group, so that by the end of the meeting, each member had heard a presentation from every other member.

The books presented covered a wide range of topics, such as introspection, music, an

autobiography, and business.

The September HOS meeting will feature a movie share, which will provide members with an opportunity to present a favorite movie.

The May HOS meeting featured a showing of *Love Letters*. The screenplay was written by Ayn Rand. The plot is similar to *Cyrano de Bergerac*, though more benevolent.

Peikoff on Radio and TV

Leonard Peikoff, host of Philosophy: Who Needs It (PWNI) radio program, was recently interviewed by the Dallas PBS station. The two programs are titled "Liberal, Objectivist and Conservative: Divergent Voices in America" and "Ayn Rand and Objectivism: Is Atlas Shrugging?" Members are encouraged to contact the local

PBS affiliate-- KUHT-- and urge them to broadcast the interviews. KUHT can be contacted at (713) 748-8888 or by e-mail at www@kuht.uh.edu.

Andrew Lewis, producer of PWNI, has been in contact with local radio stations KTRH and KPRC/ KSEV about carrying the program. Members are encouraged to contact both stations, urging them to carry the program. Contact information is:

Doug Roach
Station Manager
KSEV/ KPRC
11767 Katy Frwy. Ste. 1170
Houston, TX 77079
Phone: (281) 588-4800
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

\$ Clark Hamilton is taking an inventory of audio and video tapes owned by the HOS Library. If you have any of these tapes, please contact Clark at 713-528-5638 or by e-mail at clarkh@flash.net.

\$ Members submitting letters to the editor are asked to send a copy to Brian Phillips.

Andrew Bernstein Speaks at Rice

On April 1, 1998, the Rice Objectivist Club held its first major event, hosting Andrew Bernstein's lecture, "Rational Egoism in Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*." Approximately eighty attended the lecture, a figure close to the ninety for the same lecture one week earlier at Michigan, a much larger school. A lively question and answer period followed.

One interesting note is that club president Chris Klick succeeded in wheedling a \$50 donation from the Philosophy Department, which Andrew Bernstein said he would "spend with particular glee."

Intellectual Activism

The antitrust thugs are out in the open now, goaded by Microsoft's envious competitors and flushed with self-righteousness in the glare of the media's sympathetic spotlight.

Their entire argument rests on a feeble equivocation between economic power (the power to produce) and political power (the power to fine and throw someone into jail).

Unlike the government, Microsoft has no power to force anyone to do anything. It can only offer better and better

products at lower and lower prices-- free, in the case of its technologically superior browser.

As members of a civilized society, we are rightfully incensed at Mafia hoods who would threaten the property and lives of honest businessmen. We should be even angrier when this same mentality infects the Department of Justice.

Chris Land
Houston Chronicle
May 26, 1998