

A Leisurely Walk through PLATO's History

How Things Were Done in 1990

by Michael Stevens

Deb Elsas, daughter of PLATO founder Bob Elsas, recently donated some of her father's papers concerning PLATO's early years. One of the most interesting pieces was a single piece of paper, printed on both sides and dated 1990, that served as the equivalent of our modern website, weekly e-mail, fall course list, annual meeting notice, and membership form.

The 1990 general meeting was held at the Wisconsin Historical Society in a room that comfortably seated about 25. PLATO was rightfully proud that it increased the number of fall courses by 67%—from three to five. (This past fall, PLATO announced 51 courses.) Its membership stood at 72. (Today we are nearing 1,300 members.)

It is interesting to note how PLATO's founders chose courses with lasting popularity. The 1990 courses consisted of Short Stories, Current Events, Biography, Reminiscence Writing, and the Psychology of Religious Experience. Nearly thirty years later, four of those courses still appear in PLATO's offerings, and two of them still meet on the same day of the week as they did in 1990.

Enjoy reading about PLATO the 1990 newsletter and see how things have changed and stayed the same.



THE PLATO SOCIETY
University of Wisconsin-Madison

PLATO Fall Program - 1990

Sept. 11--General Meeting (open to anyone over 50)
1:30 P.M., Sellery Room, State Hist. Soc.

Speaker: Staff Member of the Elvehjem

Topic: WHAT'S NEW AT THE ELVEHJEM?

Sept. 18--PLATO study-discussion groups begin.
(Group descriptions on back; registration
on bottom.)

TO ALL POTENTIAL PLATO MEMBERS

We warmly welcome you to join our society. Although called the PLATO Society, we have never yet studied Plato...or any other Greek philosopher.

Our discussion groups offer a variety of easy-going intellectual give-and-take. The titles of our groups offer some indication of what we discuss each week: a character in a short story; the greatness of Clara Barton or Gen. Marshall; a religious principle; the oil crisis; or how to write about an event in your own life.

No tests, no grades, no dress code. Members leave each session feeling mentally well fed--sometimes also nourished by delicious brownies. Wait no longer. Join now.

PLATO Registration Form /or/ Newsletter Subscription

I wish to join groups: 1___, 2___, 3___, 4___, 5___.

Please check: ___ (I enclose \$15.00 for PLATO membership.)

___ (I cannot join now but enclose \$1.00 for the Newsletter.)

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip _____

MAIL TO: Mary Jo Biechler, 905 University Ave., Madison, WI 53715-1005
--or bring FORM to first meeting. Ph. 262-2115

STUDY-DISCUSSION GROUPS -- 1990 Fall Session

1. Short Stories Coordinators: Ivar Lohman and Howard Peck
This group, which discusses the many facets of two stories each meeting, will probably have a longer run than CATS.
*Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30, starting Sept. 18 in the Sellery Room of the State Historical Society (Stories for 1st meeting available at General Meeting or by phone: 241-7158.
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2. Current Events Coordinator: Paul Butler
Participants report that they often feel electricity generated from the sparkling discussions of major current events.
*Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30, starting Sept. 19 in the Wisconsin Center--check lobby TV for room.
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3. Biography Coordinator: Irwin Probst
We discuss the fascinating lives of the great and the near-great, often stepping on feet of clay.
*Thursdays, 1:30-3:30, starting Sept. 20 in the Sellery Room of the State Historical Society
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* Two N E W Groups *
4. Psychology of Religious Experience Coordinator: Ann Laird, M.D.
We will explore the common denominators of religious experience the world over: the basic psychology of how religious experience is induced, what happens in our minds during spiritual growth, and what are the psychological and personality consequences of the transforming religious experience. We will also read passages from the great mystical writers of various religious traditions and learn to look for their secret meaning.
*Thursdays, 10:00-noon, starting Sept. 20, Sellery Room, S.H.S.
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5. Reminiscence Writing Coordinator: Barbara Nodine
We believe in writing down our memories, remote and recent, for ourselves, our grandchildren, perhaps for publication. We also believe writing is a communal affair, best done with friends. Join us for mutual support, critiquing, and a study of how the pros do it.
*Fridays, 10:00-noon, starting Sept. 21, Sellery Room, S.H.S.
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« SPECIAL NOTE »

.....IF you do NOT WISH to join a group this semester but WISH TO CONTINUE RECEIVING the Newsletter(perhaps finding future study groups of interest to you), we are asking you to send \$1.00 to cover printing and mailing. Please use enclosed form.
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