



Philadelphia Branch of The English-Speaking Union

# Courier

1221 Locust Street, Box 502 Philadelphia, PA 19107

January 2023

## SAVE-THE-DATE

Saturday, May 6, 2023

Garden Party to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III



Prince Charles's invitation to the Coronation 1953

Artist Joan Hassall

This event to celebrate the Coronation will be at The Highlands Mansion and Gardens  
701 Sheaff Lane, Fort Washington, PA 4pm-7pm

Each guest will receive a special King Charles III pin (while supplies last) with the official Royal Cypher



## Philadelphia Club Luncheon Speaker Series - NEW

We have been privileged to be invited by The Philadelphia Club (1301 Walnut Street, Philadelphia) to attend their Luncheon Speaker Series. The Speaker Luncheons are on Fridays and include the lecture and lunch, including coffee and dessert. Wine will be available for a fee. ESU members will receive on-line invitations with the ability to register on-line or by mailing a check. Payment must be received in advance of the lecture to reserve your place. See below for information on upcoming lectures.



**January 27th at noon: Mac Griswold on *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise*** The story of Bunny Mellon, the great landscape and interior designer, becomes a revelatory exploration of extreme wealth in the American century.

In *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise*, Mac Griswold—who knew Bunny Mellon personally—delves into her closely-guarded personal archives to construct an unrivaled portrait of a woman as complex and multifaceted as the gardens and homes on which she left her mark. This book explores the tension between Mellon's idea of herself as a "poor little rich girl" and her own enterprising spirit. Mellon tested the 1950s model of woman-as-wife-and-mother by getting a divorce, admitting candidly to her first husband that she wanted a richer one. She imperiously traded old friends for new, and ultimately used her reputation, her connections and above all her money to help fund John

Edwards's short-lived presidential campaign. She led an American version of a royal court that, over the years, included Jackie Kennedy, Hubert de Givenchy, and I.M. Pei.

How Mellon's character, style and taste developed together to produce her greatest accomplishments — private and public — is the real subject of this biography.



**February 10th at noon: Dan Rottenberg on *The Education of a Journalist: My 70 Years on the Frontiers of Free Speech*** Through 70 years of media turmoil, Dan Rottenberg carved a rewarding career as editor of seven publications, author of 12 books, business writer, press critic, film critic, arts critic, and dining critic. A champion of free speech, he successfully defended seven libel suits and survived protest demonstrations and death threats. Along the way, he helped launch the alternative media movement, the modern Jewish genealogy movement, and the "Forbes 400" list of wealthiest Americans. He also covered the trial of the "Chicago Seven" for *The Wall Street Journal* and chronicled billionaires for the magazine *Town & Country*. In his latest book, Dan records his firsthand impressions of notable people he encountered, including Frank Rizzo, Riccardo Muti, and Donald Trump. He recalls how journalists practiced their craft during the last decades of the print-

ing press and suggests how - even in today's digital age - aspiring journalists might follow in their footsteps.



**February 24th at noon: Live from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania preceded by a reception and lunch at the Philadelphia Club**

**Club Reception, at 11:30 a.m. with Lunch, at Noon; Presentation at HSP, 1300 Locust Street, at 1:15 p.m. Andrew Diemer, Associate Professor of History, Towson University**

***Vigilance: The Life of William Still, Father of the Underground Railroad***

ESU members are cordially invited to lunch and an illustrated presentation by noted historian Andrew Diemer on his acclaimed new biography of Philadelphia abolitionist William Still:

*Vigilance: The Life of William Still, Father of the Underground Railroad* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2022).

William Still was born free in New Jersey, the youngest son of parents enslaved in Maryland.

Although his father succeeded in purchasing his own freedom, his mother was forced to run away.

As a young man, Still settled in Philadelphia, where he found a vibrant free Black community, of which he later became an important leader. He would live here for the rest of his life. In 1847, Still took a position

*Continued on page 5*



## President's Column

Happy New Year everyone and I hope you all had a joyous holiday season!

Introducing a new regular program: The Philadelphia Club has most graciously agreed to invite

our members to their monthly in person Distinguished Speakers Series programs.

This is a wonderful benefit of ESU membership and thank you to Philadelphia Club member Jay Stiefel, in particular, for all of his assistance. Each month look for an email from our office with all of the particulars to hear world class speakers in an intimate setting. Some of these programs will include the opportunity to purchase the speaker's current publication and abridged advertisements are included within this newsletter.

An update on Shakespeare: The ESU National office has been hard at work creating new programs to offer our students to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of The ESU National Shakespeare Competition. Our branch will now be offering The ESU National Shakespeare Writing Program - I AM Shakespeare! This is a sonnet writing contest sponsored by the English -Speaking Union where students will strictly follow the form of a Shakespearean sonnet (14 line, ending couplet, volta, iambic pentameter) and write a contemporary sonnet inspired by their lives. New, innovative and so out of the box! And, cash prizes will be awarded by both National and our branch. Here's a link to provide you with more information and please pass this on to anyone whom you feel would benefit from this program. <http://www.esuus.org/esu/programs/national-shakespeare-writing-program/>

And, to round out our Spring calendar, we will be celebrating both our Annual Garden Party AND The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on Sunday, May 6, 2023 at The Highlands!!!! More information will be forthcoming as our celebration's plans develop.

Wishing you all good luck and good health in this new year!!

Very Truly Yours,

*Debbie Smith Webster*  
President

ESU National, Chairman of the Board, Dr. Quinn Peeper, introducing staff to the attendees and updating branches on a change in personnel. As a branch of a National Organization, it is nice to put a face to an email.

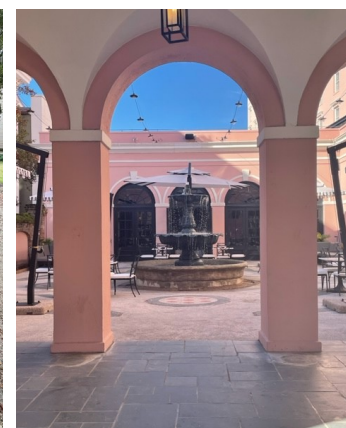


## ESU Annual General Meeting Charleston, SC

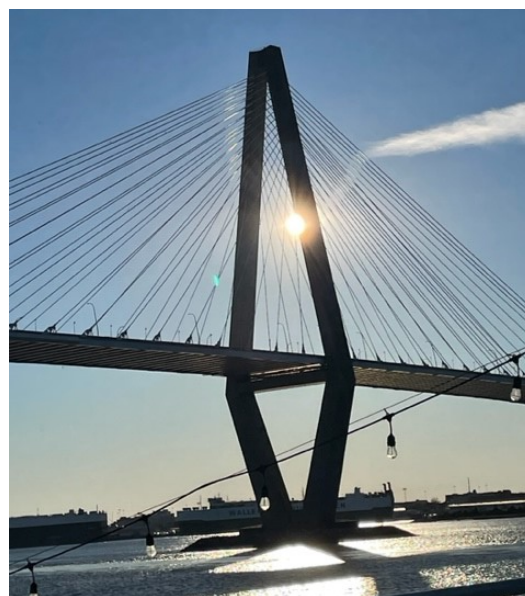
Our Executive Director, Judith Francis, attended the National Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Charleston, South Carolina in November. ESU Charleston hosted a lovely conference with lots of information about changes, growth and updates to our National Organization. Many of these changes will trickle down to the branches with support and new opportunities. There are new programs in the works and an updated website for all of the branches that should be completed soon.



Philip Simmons Statue. One of the stops on a historic tour provided by the ESU Charleston Host Committee



Mills House  
Conference location



The Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge taken from the sunset cruise offered to conference attendees



### Alastair Bruce

On Wednesday, November 30th, ESU members were invited to The Acorn Club to attend a talk and luncheon with Major General Alastair Bruce of Crionaich, Governor of Edinburgh Castle. He shared stories of his many royal duties and his time on the set of Downton Abbey as their historical advisor.

Major Gen. Bruce also explained details of the upcoming coronation for His Majesty, King Charles III. Pictured here is his reenactment of HRH Prince Philip discharging his coronation oath to The Queen during her coronation. President Debbie Webster was called up for the "duty" as Her Majesty's stand in. Thank you to our members, Matt and Susan Dupee for arranging for this exceptionally entertaining talk with their friend, Alistair Bruce.

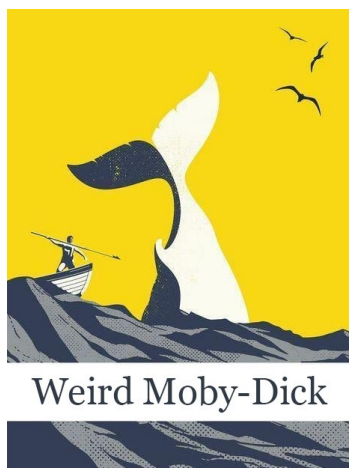


Wednesday, February 1, 2023 at 4 PM (EDT)

Weird Moby-Dick with Dr. Hester Blum

Moby-Dick has a monumental reputation. Less well known are the novel's unexpectedly weird, funny, tantalizing, messy, and wondrous moments. Hester Blum will discuss her new Oxford edition of Melville's best-known novel, which is designed to be an edition for the 21st century: one that recognizes that each generation of readers will remake classic novels anew.

Moby-Dick. Second Edition. Herman Melville Edited by Hester Blum Oxford World's Classics. Edited by a leading Melville scholar, past president of the Herman Melville Society, and a participant in the 38th Voyage of the Charles W. Morgan, the world's last surviving wooden whaleship and the sister ship to the Acushnet, in which Melville sailed.



Weird Moby-Dick



Wednesday, January 11th at 5 PM (EDT)  
Port Wines with Dr. Phil Williams



Take a journey with Dr. Phil Williams, President of the ESU Charlottesville Branch, and share a life-long fascination with Port wines, the nectar of the gods, and some of the grand stories which make it taste all the more wonderful. Whether one prefers White, Ruby, Tawny, Late Bottle Vintage, or Vintage Port, the history, politics, and traditions of Port are the stuff of legend.

*"Be sometimes to your country true  
Have once the public good in view  
Bravely despite Chamapgn at Court  
And choose to dine at home with Port."*

- Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

To register for these on-line lectures, go to [www.esuus.org](http://www.esuus.org) and click on *News and Events, Happy Hour Series*.

### MEMBERSHIP

If you know anyone who wants to join, please direct them to our website at [www.esuus.org/philadelphia/](http://www.esuus.org/philadelphia/) or have them email [philaESU@gmail.com](mailto:philaESU@gmail.com) to request a paper application.

**We appreciate your support!!**



*Philadelphia Club Luncheon Lectures continued from Page 2*

at the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and, soon after, became chairman of the city's Vigilance Committee, the institution responsible for aiding the hundreds of fugitive slaves passing through the city on their way to freedom. In this position, Still had a hand in some of the most dramatic events of the 1850s, a decade in which the United States was increasingly torn apart by the conflict over slavery. Still would later become a prominent civil rights leader, businessman, and philanthropist. In 1872, Still published his magisterial work, *The Underground Railroad*, drawing on his own voluminous records, and providing historians with their best single source on the lives of fugitives who fled from slavery. Still's private records are among the greatest rarities of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, where they may be viewed after Mr. Diemer's presentation. They include a journal in which Still secretly recorded the true identities of some of the hundreds of enslaved people whom he helped transit to freedom under new names. To avoid disappointment, members planning to attend or wishing to reserve copies of the book for inscription are asked to contact: philaesu@gmail.com.

### 36th ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION



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Judith K Francis

Tel. 215-545-3619

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition is a performance-based educational program serving grades 9-12. Since 1983, the competition has engaged more than 400,000 young people. Approximately 2,500 teachers and 20,000 students in nearly 60 ESU Branch communities participate each year.

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition is aligned with modern educational practices. Participating students:

- ◇ practice essential skills such as critical thinking, close reading and public speaking
- ◇ work through all 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy, from recall to creation, increasing self-confidence through reading, analysis and performance of Shakespeare
- ◇ have multiple points of entry to explore universal themes and are challenged to decode for themselves the complex beauty of Shakespeare's language
- ◇ work with teachers and peers in a student-centered program of experiential and cross-curriculum learning
- ◇ meet local, state and national standards in English Language Arts and Drama.

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition has been recognized by the Globe Center (USA), the Children's Theatre Foundation of America and the American Academy of Achievement.

The Philadelphia competition is on Monday, February 13, 2023 and will be held at the Museum of the American Revolution. Philadelphia area High School students perform and recite Shakespearean monologues in front of a panel of Judges. ESU members are invited to attend at no cost. There is also a reception on March 19<sup>th</sup> where the top 3 winners will attend, perform their monologues and receive their scholarship checks presented by the Competition Benefactor, Andrew Webster.

Our first place winner also receives an all expense paid trip to New York to compete at the National Level at Lincoln Center

with the winners of 55 other ESU branches.

Our winners receive scholarships for 1st (\$1,500), 2nd (\$1,000) and 3rd (\$500) place.

All Philadelphia contestants receive gifts and certificates of participation.



The Philadelphia Branch is looking for sponsors to support this program. Sponsorships range from \$500-\$1,500 and include being listed in the program, recognition in our promotional materials and tickets to the Reception on March 19th. For more information, please contact Judith at philaesu@gmail.com.