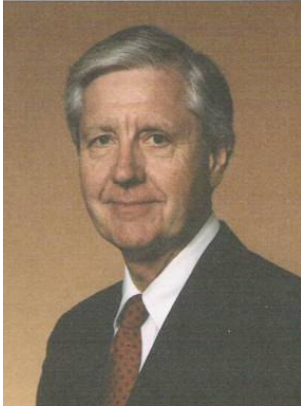


## Discussion Group

The Discussion Group meets at 9:15 a.m. and consists of the people who appear on any given Sunday. Occasional attendees and people who are in town for just one Sunday are as welcome and as able to participate as the core of "regulars." They are, if anything, even more desired by all as fresh faces with fresh ideas.



### History

Our Discussion Group was formed under the direction of Phil Elliott on June 19, 1971 to read and discuss the report of the President's Commission on Civil Disobedience, known as the Kerner Report. By the time the group had finished with this report they had all considered it a worthwhile experience and decided to continue the discussions. They also felt that it would be much better to limit the subjects to matters that could be covered in not more than a few weeks. Because most people could not be present every week, the 'few weeks' format evolved into the current one day format. The topic is selected just one week ahead and even then is subject to replacement (by majority vote) on the day of

the discussion.

[Celebrating 35 years of Leading the Discussion Group – see below](#)

### Topic Selection

The topic to be discussed is selected this way: Everybody present is invited to suggest a topic. By voice vote the topics are narrowed down to just two, and then the topic is selected by majority voice vote. The process usually takes about five minutes.

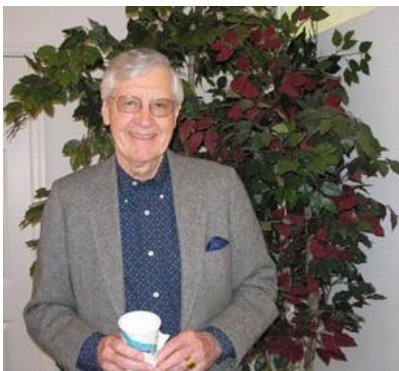
### Discussion

The following week, the discussion is started by the suggester of the topic (if he or she is present). Each person speaks for not more than three minutes. Everyone is given the opportunity to speak once before anyone speaks twice.

### Range of Topics

The topics selected are quite varied: The UU religion is a frequent suggestion by new members to the group. National, state and local issues are often presented as topics. Philosophical and ethical questions are frequently suggested directly as topics and frequently come out in the discussions of other topics.

## Celebrating 35 years Leading Discussion Group



November 2006 Pot Luck:

The following was composed and read by Natalie Williamson:

Phil and Joyce Elliott came to Daytona Beach in 1958 when Phil joined a law firm here soon after getting his law degree at the University of Virginia . In 1961 he opened the Trust Department at the Florida Bank and Trust Company.

Phil said he felt at home with the Unitarian religion philosophically after hearing a sermon at the Unitarian Church in Charlottesville. He attended our Society irregularly while adults were meeting at the Little Theatre (now the Playhouse) on Jessamine Avenue in the Seabreeze area of Daytona Beach and the children met

nearby in the firehouse at the corner of Halifax and University. Phil also went to services then at Holy Trinity by the Sea Episcopal Church with Joyce and their daughter, Kathleen.

At that time and for years afterward we were a fellowship with a relatively small membership, no regular minister and -- without air conditioning -- no summer services. Our founder, Herbert M. Davidson, editor and publisher of The News-Journal, or others arranged for speakers, and George Beauchamp, a former Ethical Culture Society minister in Washington, D.C., came over often from Kissimmee to speak to us. Liliane Davidson, HMD's wife who didn't like organized religion so attended but never joined, provided the music from The News-Journal radio's record collection.

The Society bought the property at 56 N. Halifax Drive (formerly an unpaved road called the Fire Trail) and built the Religious Education Building on land the Ormond Hotel had used for garbage disposal and coal storage. It was across the street from the golf course where John D. Rockefeller had played and given away dimes. The Society planned to erect the primary meeting hall (or sanctuary) in the large space left in its property to the north of the RE building. (The Club Condos and the Christian Science Church hadn't been built then.)

Phil joined the Society in 1961 and was put to work almost immediately on the board of trustees as secretary. He has remained on the board and was president twice -- from 1964 to '66 and from '69 to '70 -- and chaired the finance committee frequently. During the late '70s Phil was program chairman and brought many terrific speakers to UU. He served on the committee that redrafted the charter and the bylaws, then got the new charter filed with Florida's secretary of state. As attorney, Phil obtained the tax exemption determination letter from the IRS, the contract for and the closing of the purchase of the parking lot land, the contracts with most of our ministers, preparation of promissory notes and annuity agreements, and restoration of the ad valorem tax exemption for the northern part of our property (after it had been denied by the county property appraiser).

After Phil had encouraged his daughter, Kathy, to learn about Unitarianism, he taught a religious education class for a couple of years and said he enjoyed it.

On June 19, 1971, Phil started the Discussion Group and has continued with it since. He has a special format for participation and the group has enjoyed great success. In the early years Phil's office was near here -- first on Vining Court and then on Granada. He tells of memorable experiences with a mimeograph machine, producing the Sunday program and our newsletter. He remembers his secretary usually handling the job but sometimes doing it himself with much use of messy correction fluid. He calls that an example of the "not so good old days."

In 1979 Phil chaired the capital campaign to buy the land for our present parking lot. The owners of the old Ormond Hotel sold it to UU before they sold the land for the Ormond Heritage Condominium. And Phil persuaded the hotel owners to contribute generously to our purchase.

When this building was constructed, Phil worked on the capital campaign committee, and he continued to play an important role advising the board. He works on the program committee, is chair of the finance committee and he's a resource for any legal problems we have.

Besides the many jobs Phil has done for UU, he has been very active in the larger community. He received the Daytona Beach Jaycee's Distinguished Service Award as "Outstanding Young Man of the Year" in 1963 and the "Champions of Higher Education in Florida" Award of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida in 1971.

He was city prosecutor for the city of Daytona Beach in 1964 and judge of the Small Claims Court from '64 to '73. He was appointed by Gov. Farris Bryant to the Northeast Florida Development Authority and by the City Commission to the Daytona Beach Committee on Housing Assistance.

Phil has been president of many organizations, including Central Florida Legal Services, East Volusia-Flagler Division of the American Cancer Society, Florida Association of Judges of Small Claims and Magistrates Courts, the Navy League, the Jaycees, the Reserve Officers Association, Volusia Estate Planning Council, Volusia Association for the Gifted and The Heart of Volusia.

Other organizations he's aided include the Committee of 100, YMCA, Red Cross building fund, Junior Service League Orthopedic Center, Daytona Beach Forum, TOPIC (a weekly television program), Volusia Advisory Committee on School Libraries, Committee on Mental Health, Daytona Beach Chamber of Commerce, Volusia Society for Crippled Children and Adults, and the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Planning Committee. He's a volunteer in the Guardian ad Litem program and he mediates Circuit Court civil cases. Phil grew up loving flying. When he was 16, he worked at Woodrum Field, Roanoke, Va., where he secured planes that had flown there to seek shelter from storms and guided pilots as they taxied in or out. As an adult he built on that role here as legal counsel for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University from June 1965 until March 1998 and as a member of the ERAU board of trustees beginning in '65. In May 2004 Embry-Riddle honored him with a doctorate. For 40 years as a trustee he had helped the school emerge from its origins as a flight institute and develop into the modern university it is today, another trustee said. Gen. William Spruance, trustees chairman emeritus, said "He kept the rules straight, the bylaws strong and the committees acting as they should. He was a major stabilizing influence in the development of Embry-Riddle."

I must end this with a confession. In 1961, when Phil joined the Society, I saw a handsome, intelligent young man and thought "he's too good to be true – he won't be with us long." Now, after 45 years, I'm happy to admit I couldn't have been more wrong.