

# B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning  
Fall '98 • Volume 7 • Number 2

## Exciting Winter '99 Semester in the Works!

A preview to "whet" your appetite. Courses begin the second week in January and run until the middle of February. Details have not been finalized.

### THE BERKSHIRES

- **Skiing Then and Now** – Three of the "old timers" who helped bring skiing here share their stories, their pictures, and their priceless memories. Bart Hendricks, John Hitchcock, Win Gutmann
- **Literary "Lions"** – Focus will be on the Berkshire experience of several famous male writers who lived and worked here during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Dorothy Rowe
- **Literary "Lionesses"** – Women writers from this area whose 19th Century works are largely unknown today will be discussed. Lois Raskin
- **The Berkshire Street Railway** – There was a time when trolley cars carried Berkshire residents throughout the county and beyond. Kinsley Goodrich

• **Papermaking** – Making paper was one of the earliest industries to locate here, and it one of the most enduring. Crane Paper Company and Schweitzer-Mauduit International Inc.

### THE PACIFIC RIM

- **Economics of Asian countries as it relates to the U.S.** Professor Abu Selimuddin of BCC
- **The political history of the region and the major historical trends that define the current climate – political and economic – will be explained.** Dr. Samuel Crane of Williams College
- **The relationship between the U.S. and China will be explored in depth as one example of the challenges and the opportunities that are**



Berkshire Trolley, circa 1929

present. Dr. Carolyn Reeves of Williams College

• **The Poetry of Emily Dickinson** – This course is being repeated because of its popularity, and it will feature poetry not examined before. David Peirce

• **Mathematical Principles for the Ordinary Mortal** – This science/math course will be taught in plain English. Arthur Phinney, BCC, Retired



David Peirce, Lecturer

## Very Special Events

The Special Events Committee has planned trips along with lectures for a stimulating fall and winter season. Watch your mail for more information.

- October 19 . . . . .Lecture by Paul Flaum on Kennedy and Adams
- October 29 . . . . .Trip to Adams National Historic Site in Quincy, Massachusetts, and JFK Library in Boston, and dinner at the Publick House in Sturbridge
- November 30 . . . .Lecture by Arline Leven on Monet
- December 3 . . . . .Trip to Boston – BSO rehearsal, lunch and Monet Exhibit
- January 1 . . . . .New Year's Day Brunch at Crowne Plaza Pittsfield

## And There's More . . .

The **Winter Film Club** which was received enthusiastically last winter, will once again present a series of classic films, each followed by a discussion.

Depending upon the availability of interesting speakers, the **Winter Lecture/Luncheon series** will resume in December. Information about these two exciting series will be available soon.

## President's Letter

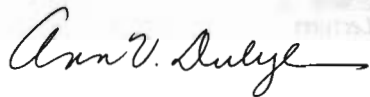
B.I.L.L. starts its fifth year with an impressive roster of stimulating courses and specials events. Our enviable growth has provided more than 655 members with a curriculum program that has expanded to five days a week and special events that stretch across every month of the year.

So plentiful are B.I.L.L.'s course offerings that it will be a challenging task for our members to select one or several to attend. More and more B.I.L.L. members are enrolled in eight or more classes!

B.I.L.L. thanks Art Sherman and his staff for two years of producing B.I.L.L.BOARD, our publication, with consistent quality and professionalism. B.I.L.L.BOARD has grown to exceed our expectations for information and insight about our plans and events. Art's diligence and dedication has inspired all of us.

Wilma Michaels and her team now take over the helm of B.I.L.L.BOARD. I invite all of you to join me in wishing Wilma well. I encourage your involvement in the production of our publication; your feedback makes B.I.L.L.BOARD succeed. Please send Wilma articles, letters and photos about B.I.L.L., our members and our activities. Through your contributions, our newsletter becomes more personal, interesting and informative.

See you in class!!



## Editor's Comments

Your input is very important to us. Send comments, articles of educational interest or travel experience to:

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## A Day at Interlaken

If you happen to notice a number of your B.I.L.L. colleagues sporting a chic T-shirt with a unique "paint-tube" logo, ask them about their day at the Interlaken School of Art.

Forty or more of us spent an exciting, well-planned day attending a class on watercolor led by Pat Hogan and one on pottery led by Andrew Francis. Having attended B.I.L.L. events in the past, I knew this would be memorable. Indeed it was! Both instructors were excellent. Pat Hogan stressed her dedication to the teaching of "technique." These methods have evolved because her experience lacked such an emphasis. During the many art courses she took, teachers lectured and gave assignments but omitted the "how to do" aspect of art. Pat's students are fortunate; she is a gifted teacher of technique.



The ease with which Andrew Francis demonstrated his pottery making belied the many skills that dovetailed as he produced the well-proportioned coffee mug and the graceful vase. His receptive manner encouraged a wonderful interaction with the class.

Not to be overlooked — the luscious fruit platters and home-baked cakes provided by Arline Breskin. A nourished body sharpens the intellect — right?? And so the lifetime learning continues. We thank you, B.I.L.L.

— Anne M. Lostrangio

## A Special Letter

Dear Members of B.I.L.L.:

The concept of B.I.L.L. was a natural for a community college dedicated to lifelong learning, so I was glad to say yes to the Eastons four years ago. But the success of B.I.L.L., and the ways in which it has enriched BCC, have exceeded my expectations. The days you are on campus I hear lively conversations and debate in the halls and cafeteria. Our faculty and students have been able to take advantage of the talented lecturers you attract. Lecturers and participants alike speak of the intellectual challenge of B.I.L.L. courses.

Although the growth in B.I.L.L.'s membership is astonishing, I think the greater accomplishment is the ongoing creativity in programming, and the growth in participation. It is a testimony to your leadership that so many people are willing to contribute their time and expertise to this endeavor.

I am so pleased that BCC has played a part in your success, and look forward to our continued partnership. Have a great year.

Barbara Viniar  
President, Berkshire Community College

## Getting To Know You

### FRAN DICHTER

Fran's flower garden at the entrance to her home is representative of her personality: bright, colorful and interesting. Fran has been living in the Pittsfield area for the past 28 years. In addition to being a licensed psychotherapist, having studied at the Columbia University School of Social Work in New York City, she is involved at the Children's Clinic at the Berkshire Mental Health Association. Her professional activities include doing nursing home consultation.

Fran's endeavors are myriad, indeed. For the past 25 years she has been an usher at Tanglewood. She has been a docent at the Berkshire Museum for the last 18 years and serves as the chairperson in charge of the staffing



for the Festival of Trees program.

As an important member of the B.I.L.L. Curriculum Committee, Fran coordinates the facilitators and the media needs of all the lecturers. She communicates with the local booksellers regarding reading lists for B.I.L.L. courses. Fran is also a

vital member of our Special Events Committee.

Somehow she finds the time to do all the things she does and is a serious tennis player. "Although my son-in-law is faster, I beat him with my placement shots." She sews creatively and works diligently doing aerobics. She is quite remarkable, you must agree.

## Einstein & Shakespeare: A Midsummer Double Treat

Two geniuses—worlds and centuries apart—were the subjects of two lectures. The Curriculum Committee joined with the Special Events Committee to present Dr. Robert Resnick on July 29 and Phyllis Jaffe on August 5. The Little Theater at BCC was filled for both events attracting members and potential members.

Dr. Resnick spoke on "Misconceptions About Einstein," analyzing seven myths which the public believes to be true. He clarified in a most organized manner how the myths came about and what the facts are: the first one concerning the Nobel Prize (not given for relativity), to his reputation as "the father of the atom bomb" (he was not involved in the research or the making of it). With rarely seen slides of the young and old Einstein illustrating his life, his quirks, and his beliefs, the audience acquired a better understanding of the man who set 20th century science on a new path.

The audience sat rapt throughout the lecture, asked questions until the time was up, then gathered around Dr. Resnick for more discussion. Not until the lights were dimmed could the last questioners be persuaded to let Dr. Resnick depart for a well-deserved lunch.

A week later Phyllis Jaffe, B.I.L.L. lecturer and member, teamed up with Barry Marcus, actor and director, to discuss preconceived ideas about *The Merchant of Venice*. Phyllis' vivid depiction of Shakespeare's time and his audience's attitudes led into an analysis of the characters in the play. Barry and Phyllis then took turns guiding us through each scene. At the end of their superb discussion, they presented their interpretations of the characters and the meaning of the play. This excellent lecture prepared us for Shakespeare & Company's production.

B.I.L.L. thanks the three lecturers who gave so graciously of their time and expertise.

— Ilse Browner

## Williamstown Theater Festival Encore

On June 22 members of B.I.L.L. were once again treated to a stimulating "behind the scenes" look at the WTF. Jenny Gersten, associate producer of WTF for the past two years, guided us through the day.

Dana Reeve, an actress appearing in the Nikos Stage production of Clifford Odets' play, *The Big Knife*, described her "journey" as an actor. Starting as a student working with WTF's founder Nikos Psacharopoulos, progressing as a non-equity actor, she finally starred in a stage production as an equity actor. She was especially appreciative of WTF as a place to learn and to be nurtured.

David Murin, costume designer for the mainstage production of *The Glass Menagerie*, traced his 24-year career. He reads scripts (often six times) beginning the process of dressing the actors. He has an extensive library and categorized picture files of various historical periods. The creation of costumes involves selection of just the right fabrics, working closely with

the theater's costume shop and staff that constructs the clothing. David's work involves everything the actors wear from top to bottom—including their undergarments.

Jenny Gersten provided an overview of WTF's business aspects. As an assistant to Michael Ritchie, the producer, she helps in overall administration, choosing directors, actors, and designers for the two theaters.

We observed an acting class engaged in "impromptu improvisation" involving wordless movement, and watched the set of the mainstage being constructed for the production of *The Glass Menagerie*.

We came away with an enhanced understanding of the complexities of mounting a professional production at one of the Berkshires' cultural treasures.

— Lenore Rubin



## Habitat for Humanity in Guatemala: The Movers and Shakers of Cajolá

Last February I participated in an Elderhostel/Habitat for Humanity International project to help build a concrete block house in Guatemala. Ten Americans from all over the U.S. worked with local members of the Habitat for Humanity affiliate in San Juan Ostuncalco in the highlands.

When we arrived for work at the nearby village of Cajolá, the Guatemalans had already dug the foundations for the walls and were installing the metal rods to connect the blocks. Most of the local people were family members or friends of the prospective homeowners.

Although they spoke their own Mayan language, the people we worked with also spoke Spanish. Though we did not get to complete the house during our stay, we progressed from a bare foundation to virtual completion of the walls to the roofline. The house was about 25 by 25 feet.

The construction crew set the concrete blocks in place. We volunteers moved blocks preparatory to laying and mortaring them; sifted (shook) sand to be mixed with cement; mixed mortar with hoes; carried water, buckets of mortar, and bags of cement; loaded gravel into wheelbarrows; and heaved blocks up to the crew to lay on the walls as these grew higher. We came to refer to ourselves as the movers and shakers of Cajolá!

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Yes, we speeded up the construction, but more important, we created goodwill and in a small way, helped international understanding. Certainly we learned a great deal from those we worked with, and they earned our respect. Perhaps they too learned to respect us; they seemed genuinely pleased that we were prepared to work hard and really get our hands (and everything else!) dirty on their behalf.

Habitat has built about 2,000 houses in Guatemala since 1979, all made with concrete blocks and corrugated zinc roofs. This construction makes them much more earthquake resistant than the traditional adobe

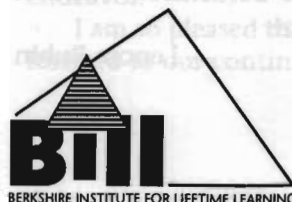
houses with tile roofs; earthquakes are a constant danger in this country with dozens of volcanoes.

We stayed in the town of San Juan Ostuncalco. On *Fiesta* day, people in their colorful traditional clothes crowded the streets. Sidewalks sprouted market booths selling fruits and vegetables, grains, clothing, pottery, tools and the local version of fast foods – tortillas, tamales, and fried plantains. A marimba band played in the central square.

Cultural events for Elderhostelers were scheduled at the end of the workday, for Elderhostel puts a premium on providing educational experiences. These included Spanish classes, a Latin American dance session, and a talk about Guatemalan indigenous women and their political development. The tour ended with a two-day stay in Antigua for sightseeing and shopping. I traveled to the impressive Mayan ruins at Tikal.

This was a most rewarding experience, combining service with travel adventure and learning about a country and a culture I had only known about superficially. — Elske Smith

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