

B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning
Fall '99 • Volume 8 • Number 1

Preview of Winter 2000 Semester

Six exciting courses have been assembled for Winter 2000. Courses begin in January at the Quality Inn on Route 7 in Lenox. Watch your mail for the catalog.

MAGIC OF THE BERKSHIRES

- *Early Educational Institutions* – Focus will be on facilities (including medical) that were part of Berkshire's history. Dorothy Rowe
- *The Mohegan Indians* – This Native American tribe lived here before the first white settlers arrived in New England. Lion Miles
- *Underground Railroad* – An underground network existed pre-Civil War to help Black people reach Canada. Barbara Bartle, Elaine Gunn and Eve Perera
- *Wildlife (Then and Now)* – The ecology of wildlife population that previously existed and wildlife that is part of our environment today. David St. James.
- *Quarrying* – There was a time when hundreds of quarries existed in the Berkshires; few have survived. Martin Deely
- *Old Gravestones and Carvers* – Interesting Berkshire cemeteries and gravestones. James Parrish

ROMANCE IN THE BERKSHIRES – Maureen Johnson Hickey, Ph.D., will present five lectures on 19th and 20th Century Berkshire Art with a focus on American artists who worked in the Berkshire area.

EMILY DICKINSON'S LETTERS TO THE WORLD – Janet Cook and David Peirce will analyze and discuss the many categories of letters written by the poet.

INTERPRETATION OF FAIRY TALES – Barbara Bliss will present psychological insights to fairy tales. Class members will discuss their favorites.

FROM GREASE TO DIAMONDS: The World of the Carbon Molecules – Hodge Markgraf will show how three simple bonding patterns



Pittsfield General Hospital, late 1940s

of carbon can lead to millions of diverse structures including the building blocks of life.

HEADLINES – David Orenstein will moderate a discussion of events that shape our lives.

Media Event

Before an audience of B.I.L.L. members, Alan Chartock will moderate the WAMC Media Project, a roundtable discussion with guests from radio, TV, and the press on Friday, December 10, at the Crowne Plaza in Pittsfield. The audience will be invited to ask questions at the conclusion of the broadcast. This event was enthusiastically received last winter, and B.I.L.L. hopes to present it annually. Watch your mail for more information.

Special Events in the Works

- **Trip to Shelburne Museum**, Burlington, Vermont – October 20/21
- **Two Bites of the Big Apple** – October 28
The Museum of Radio and Television
Backstage Tour of the Metropolitan Opera House
- **The Listener's Art – Preparing for a Live Experience**
Classes and Concerts at Williams College
October 21/22 and November 18/19
- **New Year's Brunch**, Pittsfield Country Club, Sunday, January 2, 2000

President's Letter

When B.I.L.L.'s latest catalog of fall courses arrived, I wanted to register for all 17 courses. In fact, I realized I signed up for two courses given at the same time. But, I was tempted by the great quality of all the courses and congratulate the Curriculum Committee then chaired by Ilse Browner and Ellie Sack. Elske Smith, the new curriculum chairperson, promises to continue the quality of courses that have been offered in the past. I have great faith in her and her committee.

Incidentally, I recommend to those of you who would like to lead a class to step forward and volunteer as a peer teacher. B.I.L.L. has the people resource! In fact, I am interested in world geography and would love to develop a course in world geography taught by B.I.L.L. members. Many of our members have traveled the world and know how geography affects world economy and world politics. I urge you to get involved as a peer teacher. We need you! B.I.L.L. welcomes your participation.

Norman Arnet

Keep Us Posted

Leaving the Berkshires for the winter? The Postmaster has informed us that bulk mail, which B.I.L.L. uses for its Berkshire County mailings, is not forwarded but *discarded*. Let the office know your temporary forwarding address (with dates) whenever you are away from Berkshire County so that we can send mail directly to you; otherwise, you will not receive your catalog, issues of B.I.L.L.BOARD, or Special Events announcements. Call Sharon Mack at 499-4660 Extension 456 and give her the information.

A Day at the Theater



Bus trip to Hartford

On June 10 over 100 B.I.L.L. members, enlightened by Phyllis Jaffe's excellent lecture, set out for the Hartford Stage Company to view Horton Foote's new play, *The Death of Papa*.

This saga of the fictional Vaughn family is a thinly disguised version of Foote's early life in Texas. The year is 1928 and the Vaughns must deal with the tensions and crises arising from their patriarch's death. The play portrays familial conflicts filtered through Foote's memory and enriched by his adult understanding.

It was a portrait of his childhood that was rich and rewarding.

While not everyone shared a high opinion of the play, most of the group agreed that the direction, action, and accomplished cast were highly professional. The playhouse, designed for up-close theatrical experiences, was well suited to this intimate family drama.

Before the show, we lunched at No Fish Today. The reviews of the restaurant were also mixed: "the fish was delicious," "the restaurant was too noisy," and "wonderful pasta dish."

While 100 B.I.L.L. members might have 150 opinions, the group was of one mind when it came to an overall evaluation of the day. "Theater trips are wonderful — let's keep doing them to Hartford and beyond!"

— Ruth Levin

President Appoints New Committees

Two new permanent committees have been formed. The Office Staff Volunteers Committee chaired by Shirley Tremblay will work with Administrative Assistant, Sharon Mack, to handle the increasingly heavy and varied B.I.L.L. office workload. Your help is needed! Call Shirley at 442-5219.

The Computerization Committee chaired by David Citrin will work to assure that B.I.L.L. is entering the 21st century with appropriate means of computerization.

B.I.L.L.BOARD

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Letter to the Editor

A medical misadventure resulting in an indefinite professional disability gave me the time to become enthusiastically acquainted with the B.I.L.L. program during the winter term. Unfortunately, just as my ambitious spring session of seven courses was starting, an additional problem arose preventing me from driving for two months. I was disappointed at the prospect of missing the exciting courses, but very shortly many offers of transportation were forthcoming, and I was able to attend the majority of classes thanks to the generosity and patience of my classmates.

I would particularly like to thank Helen and Milton Fink, Trudy and Norman Moskowitz, Arline Breskin, Ilse Browner, and Fran Dichter for their help. The rapid unquestioning offers of assistance meant a lot to me and speak very well for the spirit of the organization and its members.

— Terry Weaver

Mary Cassatt Exhibit

B.I.L.L. members must live under the right stars because the weather was perfect for our trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston on May 1 to visit the Mary Cassatt exhibit.

Using audio guides, B.I.L.L. participants viewed over 100 paintings, pastels, and prints by Cassatt, a gifted artist who was the only American and the only woman invited by Degas and other French artists to join their circle of what came to be called the "Impressionists" in the late 1880s.

Several B.I.L.L. members had lunch outdoors in the courtyard atrium garden of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Many members remained at the MFA for the entire day; others went to Quincy Market.

Everyone enjoyed the day, and on the way home Arline Breskin and the Special Events volunteers provided their usual welcomed snack.

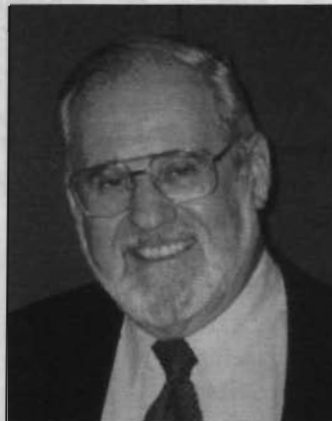
— Lenore Rubin

Getting to Know You

NORMAN AVNET

I recently had the pleasure of having lunch with Norman Avnet, our new President. Although we talked for over an hour, I wish we could have talked longer. His dynamism, energy and curiosity means every minute of his day is filled with cultural, educational, recreational, or significant community activities.

Two years ago, Norman retired from his position as Professor of Radiology, University of Massachusetts. He also had been Chairman of Radiology at the Berkshire Medical Center. He has served on many boards including Jacobs Pillow, the Berkshire Museum, Temple Anshe Amunim, the Berkshire Medical Center, and the Berkshire Community College Foundation. Norman was a founding member of B.I.L.L. and clearly has



been essential in its development. He held the positions of vice president, treasurer, and finance committee chair.

Norman's interests are far reaching. He is an ardent and serious gardener since he was nine when he grew plants on his fire escape in Brooklyn. He con-

tinues on a four-acre plot in Pittsfield (a full-time job in itself). Norman is adventurous; he loves to travel and is excited about his forthcoming trip to Egypt. He enjoys expanding his horizons by meeting new people and learning about new cultures.

While he was a medical student at Rochester Medical School, Norman met and married Roz. They have 3 married children and 4 grandchildren and just celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary.

— Karl Easton

An Evening at Jacob's Pillow

It was a hard combination to beat — the weather, the company of B.I.L.L. friends, Samba lessons, dessert and drinks a la Arline Breskin and the fabulous Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theater. Give it a ten!

The evening of July 23 began with a Samba demonstration lesson. There were quite a few hearty B.I.L.L. folks on the dance floor moving to the strains of Latin music provided by a live music group.

Dinner was among the trees in the grove. The barbecue tables had white tablecloths and pink balloon centerpieces—a class act. The main course out of our own brown bags was followed by dessert worth leaving your cholesterol conscience home for.

Before we went into the theater, we heard a short talk from Susan Carbonneau, resident scholar at Jacob's Pillow. It was an enlightening presentation about the origin, culture and technique of the Grupo Corpo. This set the stage for what was a most exciting evening of dance.

Grupo Corpo, in the last quarter century has come to be the most successful company in Brazil. The group fuses dance drawn from the neo-classical ballet with elements of their native Brazilian culture. The result is remarkable precision dancing with an abandonment that is electrifying. Their brilliant performance capped a perfect evening.

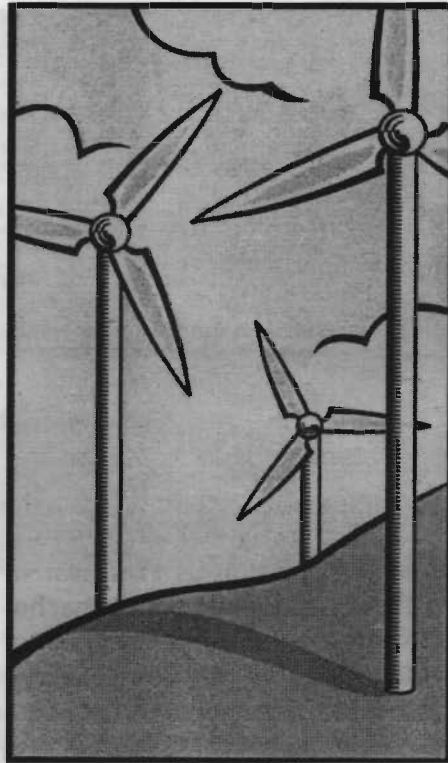
— Ellie Chandler

Global Warming and its Impact on New England

There is substantial evidence that the global climate has been getting steadily warmer, especially in the last half of the twentieth century. Much of this is attributable to the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity for driving motor vehicles and for heating. The amount of carbon dioxide has increased by about 30 percent since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the present and will continue to do so.

Globally, this climate change will adversely impact human health, dislocate agriculture, cause the levels of the oceans to rise, lead to a greater frequency of storms and hurricanes, stress forests and wetlands, and bring on droughts.

What will it mean for us in New England? Tourism, the major "industry" in the Berkshires, is very weather-dependent. The ski industry is likely to suffer because the season may be shorter and the incidence of mid-season rains rather than the needed snow will be more frequent. The fall foliage season that attracts so many "leaf peepers" and tourist dollars



Wind Power Turbines

may suffer also for there may be delayed or muted coloration as well as premature dropping of leaves. Droughts, tree pests and winter freeze-thaw cycles contribute to hardwood diebacks. Heat waves and the influx of infectious disease

carriers such as mosquitoes, ticks and rodents will impact human health.

Yet not all the news is bad. Longer summers will mean longer growing seasons, and possibly longer summer recreational seasons. The increase in carbon dioxide may act as a fertilizer. Some species like white pine and red oak may flourish in a warmer climate, and thus benefit the timber industry.

What can we as individuals do to address the problem? On the political front, we can support legislation and regulations that will reduce the overall domestic emissions of greenhouse gases. We should encourage the installation of renewable electric energy generators like wind power turbines.

On a personal basis, we can make sure that energy is conserved to the greatest possible extent (turn the lights off when we leave rooms!) and opt for renewable energy suppliers. We can help by purchasing fuel-efficient vehicles, driving less, and carpooling. Actions we take now may slow global warming but, alas, cannot stop it; we will have to learn to adapt.
— Elske Smith

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