

# B.I.L.L. BOARD

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NUMBER 3

NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE INSTITUTE FOR LIFETIME LEARNING

## Spring 2003 Semester

The Curriculum Committee has once again put together an exciting and varied array of courses and lecturers to "whet" your appetite. Seventeen courses will be offered at several locations: BCC Main Campus, Canyon Ranch, Clark Art Institute and Simon's Rock College of Bard. Courses begin on April 7 and run through May 22. Refer to the catalog for exact times and dates. The courses and locations are:

### MONDAY – BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

*Energy Choices for America (But Nimby!)* – S. Chandra, B. Lubin, R. Williams  
*Irish Fact, Irish Myth: Irish History Through Fiction* – Kevin Cahill  
*Inside TV News* – Robert Chandler

### TUESDAY – Clark Art Institute, Williamstown

*RNA: A Molecule for All Seasons* – Marcia Altschuler  
*Some Aspects of Italian Renaissance Painting* – John Leavey  
*The Time of the Crusades* – B. Cohen, W. Darrow, Rabbi J. Stern

### WEDNESDAY – Simon's Rock College, Great Barrington

*Globalization: The Media and the Message* – Peter Cocks, E. Ahmet Tonak  
*American Antiques* – S. Herrup, A. Katz, E. Snyder, G. Snyder, R. Wilkins

### WEDNESDAY – Canyon Ranch, Lenox

*Rejuvenation and Preservation: Staying Healthy Through Midlife and Beyond* – S. Beling, M. Bernstein, C. Geyer, M. Hyman, J. de Kadt, M. Liponis

### WEDNESDAY – BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

*Great Books/Great Films* – Barbara Greenbaum, Jack Rubin, Paul Smilow

### THURSDAY – BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

*The Survival of (Egyptian) Pharaonic Culture* – Lenore O. Congdon  
*William Shakespeare: "For Ever and a Day..."* – Diane Hitter  
*Today's Headlines* – Ann Trabulsi, Dick Whitehead, Moderators  
*Health Care in the Berkshires II* – Gray Ellrodt, David Finck, Ed Hornstein, Jack Ringler, Alex Sabo

### FRIDAY – BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

*Faust in Music, Art and Literature* – Walter Bemak  
*Mythology* – Paul Flaum  
*Lives in Music, Music in Lives* – Stuart Feder, Charlotte Kaufman



Barry Lubin, Lecturer



Marcia Altschuler, Lecturer

## Special Events For 2003

- April 5:** Boston Ballet – All Balanchine, Wang Center, Boston
- April 27:** Florence Griswold Museum – Old Lyme, CT and Connecticut River Museum – Essex, CT
- May 28:** Convocation – BCC
- May 29:** Bronx Zoo and Arthur Avenue – Bronx, NY
- June 3:** Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary – Lenox
- June 19 or 26:** Jacob's Pillow (Thursday night performance)
- July 10:** New York City Ballet – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, SPAC
- September 3:** Historic Deerfield, MA
- September 14:** *Very Good Eddie* – Goodspeed Opera House, East Haddam, CT
- November 3:** Rembrandt Exhibit – Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

## Game Day

Wednesday, March 12, 2003  
12 noon to 5 pm

Berkshire South Regional Community Center, Great Barrington

What's your game?  
Bridge, Scrabble, Poker?  
COME AND HAVE FUN!

\$10 pp – Light Lunch Buffet including coffee and cake

Reservations: 413-499-4660, Ext. 456



## President's Message

Berkshire winters are never quiet at B.I.L.L.

Winter '03 set a new record for the number of courses and attendees. Over 250 members from all over the county and beyond registered to occupy over 500 seats in response to the rich course offerings. Many took advantage of the new facilities at the Berkshire South Regional Community Center where courses have been offered for the first time. Registration for the film series, held at the Triplex Cinema in Great Barrington, was at an all-time high. The spring '03 semester catalog is complete, and planning for the fall '03 and winter '04 semesters is well underway.

The Special Projects Series has continued to generate strong interest. The *Art of Criticism* featured a panel discussion by five major critics and the managing editor of *The Berkshire Eagle* followed by brunch at the Country Club of Pittsfield. Over 140

members attended. This concept of reaching out to major organizations in the community has resulted in additional exciting programs throughout 2003 as part of Special Projects.

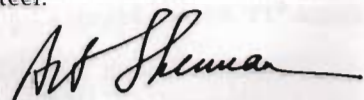
The creativity and diversity of offerings by the Special Events Committee and their commitment to excellence was never more evident than during the multi-day trip to Salem. Perhaps nothing exemplifies the caliber of the B.I.L.L. membership better than the indomitable spirit of the 54 members who drove in a raging ice storm to meet the bus to Salem at the rink in Lee. Everybody got there, most looking as if they had driven their dog sleds in the Iditarod. Full of spirit and good cheer, we all had a marvelous time together. What a fantastic group! The New Year began with the well-attended traditional Brunch and a heavy schedule of events follows throughout 2003.

The Extended Travel Committee trip to Ireland in June '03 is a go! We are also planning a customized

Elderhostel Charter trip in concert with a course on the Civil War to be given in the fall '03 semester. The trip will take place in June '04.

The Educational Assistance Committee, working with the BCC administration, is developing an initial program to mentor BCC students. More information will be forthcoming in the spring. Discussions are also under way at the public school level. This is a program that will offer members the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the community.

Catalog preparation, course scheduling, publication of B.I.L.L. BOARD, website management, office operations and liaison with our sponsor schools and supporting institutions allow relationships to develop with members and representatives from all of these areas. This is one of the great rewards for participating as a B.I.L.L. volunteer.



## Jeremy Yudkin

You are invited to participate in "What Is Good Music? A Day with Jeremy Yudkin" at BCC on Saturday, April 12. Dr. Yudkin is a professor of music at Boston University, the leader of the famous Summer Music Seminars at Tanglewood and an extremely engaging lecturer. This will be an all-day event in which Professor Yudkin will discuss those magic ingredients that distinguish great music from good music. In the morning he will discuss classical music and the great works of Mozart, Beethoven and others, and in the afternoon he will consider great American popular songwriters such as Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin and the Gershwin brothers.

Don't miss this special day of great music!

## Convocation

May 28, 2003

Morton Owen Shapiro, professor of economics and the sixteenth President of Williams College, will be the speaker at B.I.L.L.'s Convocation on May 28 at BCC.

Dr. Shapiro began his career at Williams in 1980 as an assistant professor of economics. He became an associate professor in 1987, a full professor in 1990 and served for three years as Assistant Provost. In 1991 he went to the University of Southern California where he was Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and later served as Vice President for Planning.

Considered one of the nation's leading authorities on the economics of higher education, Dr. Shapiro has particular expertise in the areas of college financing and affordability as well as trends in educational costs and student aid. He has written more than 50 articles and 5 books and has earned many academic awards.

## B.I.L.L. BOARD

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## How This "Snowbird" Survives Without B.I.L.L.

Picture this: a brand new building with a state-of-the-art auditorium seating about 500 people and a state-of-the-art visual and sound system — easily run from a control booth similar to those found in the newest Broadway theaters. Add to these a raised stage suitable for concert and chamber music performances. Make the entire place fully handicapped accessible. Put all of this on a new (postwar) University campus and give incentives (in the form of money) to that university's faculty so that they will gladly do a series of eight lectures three times a year. What you then have is South Florida's Lifelong Learning Society and its new Barry & Florence Friedberg Auditorium on the Boca Raton Campus of Florida Atlantic University.

Like B.I.L.L., the Lifelong Learning Society is run by a cadre of dedicated souls from among over 10,000 members. Like B.I.L.L., courses are given in three semesters. But there the similarity ends. Some of the more popular courses fill the Friedberg Auditorium (in some cases multiple sessions of the same courses are offered). The huge size of the undertaking means that there is little intimacy and even less camaraderie. Tickets are sent out to course registrants, and there is no such thing as inviting guests or dropping in on a particular lecture in a course for which you are not registered. Lifelong learning is strictly business and the business is lectures, not field trips, not brunches and certainly not informal picnics.

Ken and I have enjoyed the several courses we've taken in Florida. But I must admit that there are times, when I'm sitting way in the back of that large auditorium, immersed in a learning experience, that I'd like to click my heels three times and say, "there's no place like home," and find myself back here at B.I.L.L.

— Fran Rubenstein

## Getting To Know You

HERB ESKWITT, M.D.

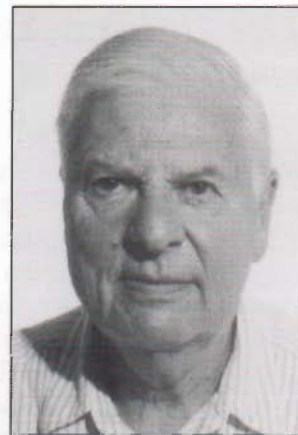
Herb Eskwitt was a very early member of B.I.L.L. and presently serves as a Director-at-Large. He is particularly interested in the Curriculum Committee and has recruited numerous lecturers from academia as well as from other personal contacts.

After attending public schools in NYC, Herb went to Cornell University and to New York Medical College. Upon receiving his medical degree, he specialized in pediatrics. He served in the Army of Occupation from 1951 – 1953 in Stuttgart, Germany, after which he developed a large pediatric practice in New Jersey.

Herb has had his summer home in Hillsdale for thirty years. He knew about the Berkshires from having spent many summers at camp in Monterey. After retiring as Associate Chief of Pediatrics at Englewood Hospital in New Jersey, he and Joyce (who met while at Cornell) moved full time to the Berkshires twelve years ago. Since that time, Herb has been able to satisfy his nascent and passionate interest in studying current events as related to their historical roots. After receiving permission to audit courses at Williams College, he actively participated in classes and was enthusiastically welcomed by the faculty. He stated, "I was of great interest to the students since I had actually lived through many of the events we were studying and could make contributions from a personal vantage point." Herb tried to set up a program at Williams College for senior citizens, but before this could be finalized, B.I.L.L. was founded.

Clearly, Herb is consumed with a desire to learn as well as to impart knowledge; he enjoys recruiting people who can share their expertise with others. His final comment was, "B.I.L.L. is an important part of my life . . . a reason to get up in the morning."

— Karl Easton



## Afghanistan

As part of the Special Projects Series, Professor David B. Edwards, Chair of the Anthropology Department at Williams College, will speak on May 3 at BCC. His talk is entitled "Afghanistan Since the Fall of the Taliban."

Dr. Edwards has spent five years living in Afghanistan and working with the Afghan refugees. He is the Director of the Williams Afghan Media Project which seeks to preserve photographs, film, video, audio and other media having to do with the history and society of Afghanistan.

He has also written several books, the latest being *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the African Jihad* published by the University of California Press.

## B.I.L.L. NEEDS YOU!

We want to take advantage of your expertise. Many of you have the background, personal interests and experiences that our membership would like to know about and share. Have you ever thought of teaching a course to other B.I.L.L. members? Are you concerned about how best to prepare and/or present these materials?

We have a solution to your concerns. A number of B.I.L.L. members who have taught classes to their peers have agreed to serve as mentors if you would like to take advantage of their expertise. For more information about this program, please contact me, Paul Flaum, at 413-623-6171, e-mail mpf29@juno.com or Paul Stein at 413-499-3523, e-mail pjstein@berkshire.net. We would be happy to help you share your wealth of knowledge with other B.I.L.L. members.

— Paul Flaum

## The Golden Age of Salem

November 17-19, 2002

Our trip to Salem on Sunday got off to an exciting start due to the snowfall. The trees were covered in ice as we passed through Becket, but we arrived safely and began our exploration of the Golden Age of Salem with an architectural tour led by Jim McAllister, a Salem historian, photographer and author. Jim introduced us to the city's history as we viewed many houses dating primarily from the Georgian-Federal period. He continued that evening with a slide presentation at the historic Hawthorne Hotel.

Salem grew to be a prosperous seaport during and just after the American Revolution. Settled in 1626, by 1800 it was a major port for trade to the East Indies, becoming known as the "Venice of the New World." The Derby Wharf warehouses on Salem Harbor were filled with silk, tea, cotton, china and spices.

On Monday morning we walked the few blocks to the Peabody Essex Museum, the oldest continuously functioning museum in America, for a lecture by DeWayne Whitehead on maritime trade and Salem's sea merchants. One of these, Elias Hasket Derby, was the country's first millionaire. We also viewed the finest collection of Chinese export in the country, including porcelain, silver and furniture.

After lunch we visited the John Ward house (ca. 1684). Escaping from the damp and cold outside to the comfort of the Philips Library (the original Essex Institute), we heard about the Salem witch trials and conducted a "witch" trial ourselves — the witch was found GUILTY. Then time was available for a visit to the National Park Service site at the waterfront where we saw the vessel "Friendship" and the Custom House. The last tour of the day took us to the Crowninshield-Bentley House (ca. 1727) and the Gardner-Pingree house (ca. 1804), homes of prosperous Salem traders.

On Tuesday we continued to Marblehead which was founded in 1629 as a commercial fishing operation. It was part of a complex and flourishing mercantile economy. Our first stop was at Abbott Hall, where we learned about Marblehead's history and viewed the Hall's collections including the painting *Spirit of '76* and the Maritime collection.

We walked the historic streets, crowded by houses of the 18th century, visiting shops along the way to the waterfront where we enjoyed a view of the water and a seafood lunch at The Barnacle.

And then the bus trip home — fortunately driven by someone else!

— Dick and Ruth Degenhardt



*The "Friendship" is a reconstruction of a 171-foot, three-masted Salem East Indiaman built in 1797. She is the largest Coast Guard certified, wooden sailing vessel to be built in New England in more than a century.*

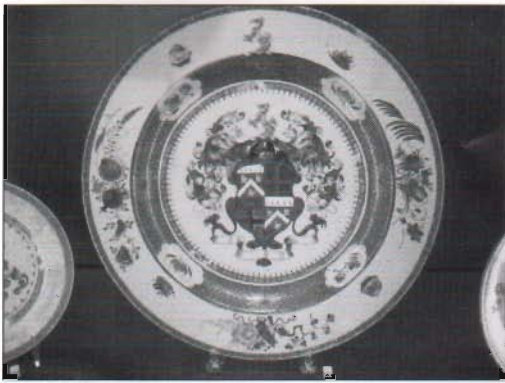


*The Gardner-Pingree House (ca. 1804), built by John Gardner during Salem's most prosperous era, had lavish interior and exterior wood ornamentation designed by Salem's master builder and carver, Samuel McIntire.*



*Jim McAllister talks about the history and architecture of Salem.*

PHOTOS BY DICK DEGENHARDT



*An example of Chinese porcelain displayed at the Peabody Essex Museum.*



*DeWayne Whitehead speaks about the sea captains of Salem between 1780 and 1820.*



*The Crowninshield-Bentley house (ca. 1727) was built in the Georgian-Colonial style by Captain John Crowninshield and was home to four generations of the family.*



*Abbott Hall in Marblehead is the seat of town government and houses one of the country's most famous paintings, The Spirit of '76, by Archibald Willard.*



*Built in 1818, the U.S. Custom House collected between 8 and 12 percent of the nation's revenues during the early 19th century. Nathaniel Hawthorne worked there as a Customs Surveyor between 1847 and 1849.*

*A special thank you to the Special Events Committee and events leaders Arline Breskin, Ann Dulye and Bobbi Liebert for a wonderfully organized trip.*

## Lecturers Have Their Say...

From Lion Miles, Winter 2002 *The Mohicans of Berkshire County*

"Lecturing for B.I.L.L. has been one of the great pleasures of my life in retirement. The friendliness and enthusiasm shown me by B.I.L.L. staff and membership is extremely rewarding, and I always look forward to every class. Besides, I have never once had any disciplinary problems with the students!"

From Diane Hitter, Spring 2002 *The World of Wilde*

"For me, teaching literature at B.I.L.L. is like hosting a six-week party with one of my favorite authors as the honoree. Knowing the student "guests" will be (unfailingly) bright, articulate, witty, enthusiastic and curious, I have only to serve up some decent course work refreshments — then join the party. I always hate to see it end."

From Dr. Manfred Hecht, Fall 2002 *Strauss' der Rosenkavalier and Salome*

"Preparing for my lectures became a source of great pleasure and satisfaction and caused me to do a lot of work. The more I got into the very familiar subjects, the more I wanted to know. In the editing of the operas as well as in preparing my comments, I kept on hearing their music in my head and felt the thrill it always had given me. To share my excitement with others and, I hoped, enable them to experience similar joy was something wonderful to look forward to. My audience was most cooperative, attentive and seemed very appreciative. In retrospect, I was a little surprised at the absence of any critical or negative comment; there was no feeling of controversy. Some of this was possibly due to my over enthusiasm which may have squelched complaints. T'was fun!"

## The Táin Bó Cuailnge

The *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) is an Irish heroic saga that emerged in manuscript form between the 12th and 14th centuries. The stories and characters themselves are much older, having enjoyed a long oral tradition before being set down and Christianized by monks.

One of the reasons I am including a discussion of this saga in the B.I.L.L. course on Irish history and fiction this spring is to give it greater publicity. After all, most people, even most Irish Americans, are more familiar with the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* or *Beowulf* and the Icelandic sagas than they are with the *Táin* or other sagas of pre-Christian Ireland. The great stories and characters that are contained in the Irish oral tradition became increasingly remote from the general population as the English came to dominate more areas of Irish life in the nearly 300 years between the Tudors and the Gaelic revival in the late 19th century.

During that period, the Gaelic aristocracy fled and the Irish speaking population was decimated by numerous famines, wars and immigration. By the 19th century, even the up and coming Irish middle classes had abandoned Irish as an economic liability. The *Táin Bó Cuailgne* was very close to being lost forever. Therefore, another reason to talk about the *Táin* is its resurrection at the hands of the Gaelic revival and the consequences both in terms of the Irish language and the politics of the time.

Aside from these issues that make the *Táin* (and its own history as a document) relevant to past events, it is worth examining purely as a window on the world of pre-Christian Ireland. One important aspect is the pivotal role that women, as queens, warlords and lovers play over the life of the saga. Hints emerge about a pre-Celtic maternally dominated society struggling with a Celtic paternally led society.

Immediately observable contradictions appear in the plots, genealogies, and even chronology of the stories — all meant to satisfy the need for drama, the demand for dynastic predominance by the Gaelic families who controlled the transcribing monks and undoubtedly the personal prejudices of translators.

The most recent, competent translation of the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* is by the Irish poet Thomas Kinsella (Dolmen 1969). The brush drawings by Louis le Brocquy make this edition of a beautiful and artful translation even more interesting.

— Kevin Cahill



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Kevin Cahill will be offering a course in the spring 2003 semester entitled Irish Fact, Irish Myth: Irish History Through Fiction. He will also be leading the Extended Travel trip to Ireland in June.

## Thank You

B.I.L.L. thanks the Berkshire South Regional Community Center for providing a wonderful place in which to hold our classes. Their facilities are spacious, comfortable and offer much-appreciated media equipment.

A special thanks to Nick Broad, Executive Director, who has taken care of our scheduling and media needs most graciously.

# New Year's Brunch 2003

A wonderful start to the New Year! B.I.L.L. members and guests enjoyed the delightful presentation of food and great entertainment by the Sweet Adelines at the Country Club of Pittsfield.



*Friends • Family • Food • Fun • Entertainment!*



PHOTOS BY BOB AND BONNIE DESROSIER

## The Blizzard of '88

It was not as if there was no warning. After all, an amateur weather prognosticator, Levi Beebe, had predicted that a terrible storm would strike around March 12. In describing his system he explained, "Old Greylock is my barometer." Mr. Beebe lived alone on Beartown Mountain in South Lee. He looked at upper, middle and lower level winds on the last twenty days of March, June, September and December stating that, "as the air currents move on these days, so they will continue." In a column subtitled "Bygone Berkshires" published years later, columnist Bernard R. Carman summed it up with the headline "LEVI BEEBE HIT IT ON THE NOSE."

A blizzard warning is given when the wind is expected to exceed 35 mph with the temperature below 20°F with snow. The warning is upgraded to a "severe" blizzard if the wind is expected to reach 45 mph with the temperature below 10°F and visibility reduced by blowing snow. The worst blizzards occur when the jet stream curls around an upper level low pressure area and the swirling winds extend down to a surface low pressure area. The most common time for this to occur is in March.

March of 1888 came in like a lamb, but on Saturday the War Department Signal Service reported one large storm in the Rocky Mountains and another one tracking up the coast from Georgia. The New York City forecast stated "cloudy weather followed by light rain and clearing" for Sunday, March 11. The office closed as usual, and when it reopened late Sunday evening, the operator telegraphed Washington for an update. The lines were dead. The two storms, one cold and one wet, were converging.

Sunday in Pittsfield was not bad — a little snow with gusts of wind. But as evening approached something changed. By Monday morning 12 inches of snow had fallen, and by afternoon the wind had risen to gale speed. By late evening drifts blocked the roads. Mills and stores sent their female employees home early.

Tuesday saw 12-foot drifts in places. Homeowners dug tunnels to get out



North Street, Pittsfield, after the blizzard

of their houses. Police checked the streets all night for drunks who could freeze to death, and the fire department stationed men where fires

were common. A westbound train got stuck in the Washington cut, and the passengers ate 300 raw eggs found in the baggage car along with a few crackers obtained at a nearby house. Help arrived over twenty-four hours later from Pittsfield.

The blizzard of '88, often referred to as "The Great White Hurricane," was one of the worst snowstorms this area has ever experienced.

— Walter Gehring

*The author thanks the people at the local history section of the Berkshire Athenaeum for their kind assistance.*

COURTESY OF THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT ARROWHEAD

Phone: 413-499-4660, Ext. 456 Website: [www.berkshirecc.edu/lifelong/bill.html](http://www.berkshirecc.edu/lifelong/bill.html) E-mail: [smack@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:smack@berkshirecc.edu)

B.I.L.L. adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination towards its members and students and will admit all those who apply regardless of race, religion, color or national origin.

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