

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE INSTITUTE FOR LIFETIME LEARNING

Spring 2004 Semester

The Curriculum Committee has once again put together an exciting and varied array of courses and lecturers to “whet” your appetite. Nineteen courses will be offered at several locations: BCC Main Campus, Canyon Ranch, Clark Art Institute, Hancock Shaker Village and Simon’s Rock College. Courses begin on April 12 and run through May 25. Refer to the catalog for exact times and dates. The courses and locations are:

MONDAY — BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

McCarthyism — Elliott Vines

Art History Perspectives — Maureen J. Hickey

A Tapestry of Ideas: Numbers and Great Minds — T. Sullivan

Six Egyptian Pharaohs and Their Lasting Contributions — L. Congdon

TUESDAY — Canyon Ranch, Lenox

Pathways to Health — Gayle Andrew, Stephanie Beling, Marcia Bernstein, Richard Butler, Jess Kielman, Mark Liponis, Kathie Swift

TUESDAY — Simon’s Rock College, Great Barrington

The Psychology of Gender — Barbara Lafer

Eight Poets — James Kraft

Writers From the Other Europe — Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr.

TUESDAY — BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

Great Books/Plays on Film — Nada Samuels, Paul Smilow, Harriet Vines

WEDNESDAY — Williamstown

Chekhov: The Comedy of Sadness — J. Rosenberg (Williams College Faculty House)

Virtual Archaeology: Digitally Reconstructing Ancient World Sites — Donald H. Sanders (Clark Art Institute)

Evolution of the Universe — Karen Kwitter (Williams College)

American History Through Documents — R. Volz (Williams College Chapin Library)

THURSDAY — Hancock Shaker Village, New Lebanon, NY

“Something Wicked This Way Comes”: The Tragedies of William Shakespeare — Diane Hitter

Today’s Headlines — Ann Trabulsi, Richard Whitehead, Moderators

Irreplaceable Dance Treasures — Norton Owen

Health Care in the Berkshires III — Ruth Blodgett, Herbert Bote, Leslie

Fishbein, Alexander Kloman, Mark Pettus, Parvis Sadighi, Henry Tulgan

FRIDAY — BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield

Imaging in Meteorology, Astronomy, Medicine and Entertainment — Jerome M.

Auerbach, Robert Desrosiers, Robert B. Geehr, Stuart Masters, Elske Smith

Facets of Opera Performance — S. Gruber, M. Hecht, K. Kibler, W. Powers



Lecturers Elliott Vines,
Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr.,
Karen Kwitter



RICHARD BALMERY

Special Events

March 21: MusicWorks — Hawthorne String Quartet, South Congregational Church, Pittsfield

April 18: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater — Wang Theatre, Boston

May 22: DIA Art Center — Beacon, NY

May 26: Convocation — BCC

June 24: Grupo Corpo — Jacob’s Pillow

June 28: Berkshire Opera — *Rigoletto*, Chapin Hall, Williams College

July 2: Berkshire Opera — *Rigoletto*, BCC, Pittsfield

July 15: New York City Ballet, SPAC

President's Message

As B.I.L.L. enters its tenth year, I continue to be amazed at how our organization expands with the passage of time. With over 1,000 members, we are at an all-time high. And with increased size, have come increased opportunities. New members mean new ideas and new skills. I have asked all of our committee chairs to add new members to their committees in order to take advantage of these talents. Each of you has a contribution to make, and B.I.L.L. thanks you for your efforts.

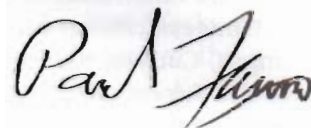
This spring, we will begin to implement one of these new ideas.

Our Educational Assistance Committee will use the information many of you provided to establish a core group of mentors for BCC. We are very pleased that we can provide this service to a college which has done so much for us. If you would like more information about this program, contact the office for details.

We still hope to develop an Extended Travel Program for our members. Please respond to the survey that the committee has prepared. We want to determine if this is a program that interests our members. Your Board and committees are anxious to

provide expanded services, but we need to know what it is that you want. Please keep the ideas for new activities coming.

Meanwhile, be sure to mark September 12, 2004, on your calendar. That is the date of our 10th Anniversary Celebration. The committee planning this event has been responsive to your suggestions, and you will be pleased with their efforts.



A Journey of Light

From the leadership of Audrey Schlanger and Barbara Greenbaum to the delicious scones baked by Carol Sabot, *Rembrandt's Journey* was a very special event. Musings are a lasting benefit of our October trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Because we had been treated to a warm-up seminar on Rembrandt the previous week, along with an informative video en route to the M.F.A., B.I.L.L. members were prepared for their very own insight into the genius of the Dutch master. This outstanding exhibition displayed more than 200 etchings, engravings and paintings from all periods of the artist's career. In each, the artist brings forth an inner light that connects with the viewer.

Throughout the exhibit, Rembrandt portrays human beings with individual feelings. When viewing his *Night Watch*, a flamboyant Baroque ruler, Samson or his self-portraits of a lonely, debt-ridden man, we meditate on what makes each of us unique.

The artist's use of light — from within the darkness of a landscape, from the almost black darkness of a room and from the darkness in the human soul — is a spiritual experience. The fine line defining a painting as spiritual rather than religious can evoke limitless opinions and definitions. For some, "Let there be light" is a Biblical reference to the Creator and therefore strictly religious; I believe, in Rembrandt's work, the creation of light by the artist is spiritual. *Rembrandt's Journey* could as well be called *A Journey of Light*.

— Anne Lostrangio



Rembrandt's Self-Portrait in a Cap (1630)

Educational Assistance

The Educational Assistance Committee has met with Christine DeGregorio, Coordinator for the TRIO Program at BCC, and she is very enthusiastic about B.I.L.L. members mentoring students in her program. Over 75 of our members have replied to a Career Survey. A reference book is being compiled with a list of the career experiences of our members, and they will be called upon for their help as needed.

Thanks to the committee and to all who participated in the survey. Watch for updates!

— Sue Gorham, Chair
Educational Assistance
Committee

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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Special Projects For 2004

March 14: *Concert of Psalms and Spirituals* — Concord Chorus, BCC

March 18, 25: *The History and Techniques of Printmaking* — James Ganz, Clark Art Institute

April 24: *A Day with Jeremy Yudkin: Mozart and Armstrong* — BCC

June 1: *Behind the Success of the RoundTable* — Susan Arbetter, Joe Donahue, Paul Elisha, BCC

June 12: *The Influence of Science on Fine Art Photography* — Panel, Berkshire Museum

June 14: *The U.N., the U.S. and the World* — Sir Brian Urquhart, BCC

June 28: *Volcanoes to Earthquakes* — Simon Winchester, BCC

B.I.L.L.'s 10th Anniversary Celebration

Get ready for a party! A gala celebration is being planned for Sunday, September 12, 2004, at 6 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza in Pittsfield.

Committee members Arline Breskin, Ruth Degenhardt, Wilma Michaels, Marty and Audrey Schlanger, Paul Smilow and Elliott Vines listened to your concerns and ideas and have planned a wonderful party.

The cost is \$60 per person which includes a cocktail hour with a cash bar, a sit-down dinner, a program about B.I.L.L. and background music for your listening pleasure.

Look for B.I.L.L.'s roving camera at the spring courses. Perhaps YOU will be on the big screen that evening. Invitations will be sent out in the late spring. We hope you will share an unforgettable evening with your B.I.L.L. friends!

— Marilyn Flaum, Chair
10th Anniversary
Celebration Committee

Getting To Know You

JOE GERARD

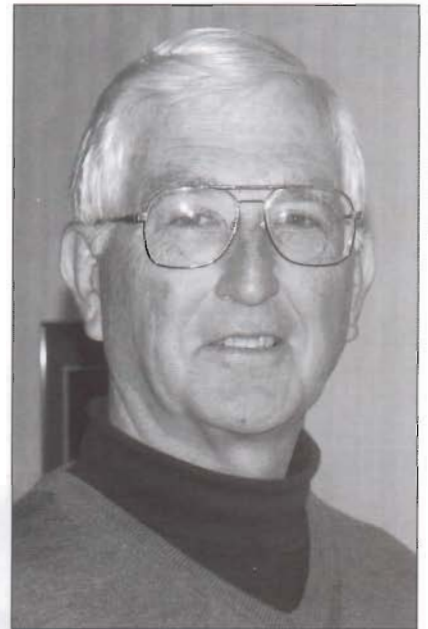
I first became aware of Joe's vital importance to B.I.L.L. during Paul Flaum's wonderful lecture series on the Civil War. Before starting his lecture one particular morning, I noticed Paul frantically pacing in front of the audio-visual equipment muttering loudly, "Where's Joe? I can't start without his adjusting this equipment." In fact, Joe, who has been serving as Secretary of B.I.L.L. for the past two years, volunteered to chair the Class Management Committee as well.

You see Joe at many class sessions — the tall, distinguished-looking gentleman at the door, who greets you with a big hello. He oversees the needs of lecturers, particularly support equipment that includes microphones, loudspeakers, VHS tape players, overhead slide projectors and LCD projector-laptop computer setups. He remarked emphatically, "Our top class B.I.L.L. presenters should have their presentations enhanced with top technology."

After 30 years service in the U.S. Air Force, Joe retired as a colonel in 1984. He worked with radar equipment, computers, crypto machines, electronics and other technical equipment. While in the service, he was stationed at 19 different locations all over the world and found those years "exciting, mind-expanding and culturally enriching with many opportunities for meeting people and learning about new technologies."

Joe and his wife, Chris, have found the Berkshires the ideal retirement location. Their four children are located in various parts of the country, and he and Chris love to spend time visiting with them. Joe says that he is extremely impressed with "the dynamic people" in B.I.L.L. Indeed, B.I.L.L. is lucky to include Joe as one of those dynamic people!

— Karl Easton



Convocation

MAY 26, 2004

Bryan K. Blanchard, recently appointed as the fifth President and Chief Executive Officer of Berkshire Community College, will be the speaker at B.I.L.L.'s Convocation on May 26 at Berkshire Community College.

Dr. Blanchard has extensive experience in education at the community college level and has served as Executive Vice President and Provost of the University of Maine at Augusta. Prior to coming to BCC, he was President of Vincennes University in Indiana for two years.

He holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education: Management and Policy from the University of Colorado at Boulder. At the University of Minnesota, he was a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, Department of History, and earned both his M.A. and B.A. in History from Wake Forest College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Dr. Blanchard's personal interests include volunteer activities (United Way, Habitat for Humanity, Alzheimer's Association), reading (especially non-fiction and biography), jogging, skiing, tennis, golf and bicycling.

New Year's Lunch 2004

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 Beartown Mountain Ramblers at the Seven Hills Inn in Lenox.

*Below left: Arline Breskin, Special Events Chair and Lenore Rubin, Event Leader.
Below center: Julie Weiss, Event Leader dancing with Joe Gerard. Right: Beartown Mountain Ramblers.*



Friends!



Family!



Bluegrass music!
Handclapping!
Foot stomping!



Food!



Fun!



Laughter!

Memories!
Smiles!
Storytelling!



When the Lights Go Out

As a professional electrical engineer who has worked on the design and development of power systems for many years, I am more aware than most of how we get our energy and how it can fail. We all live in a symbiotic relationship with a very large monster from which we demand reliability — the North American Electric Power System.

On August 14, 2003, the lights went out all over the East. The following story is just one version — the exact sequence of the collapse may not be known for a long time. To start with, from 12:05 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. on that day, about 1,700 megawatts of energy generation went out of service in Ohio and Michigan. At one plant, 700 megawatts went back into service quickly, but that still left almost 1,000 megawatts disconnected.

Other power plants started supplying the needed energy, and that meant

that the power lines from those plants had to carry a heavier load than usual. Here is where “Mother Nature” stepped in and created all sorts of mischief. Someone (or lightning) ignited a brush fire under one of the lines that was hauling that extra energy. When the flames got up near the wires, an electric arc sprung up between them resulting in a “flashover.” This transmission line was quickly shut down. Power was diverted to other lines causing them to overheat. One of these overheated wires stretched and sagged into a tree resulting in another flashover and shutdown. Two more lines had to be switched off when their current exceeded safe limits. This series of linked events caused the flow of power from the Ohio-Michigan region to the eastern states to be badly upset.

More distant power plants and other lines were called on to pick up the load including some in Ontario, Canada, but those lines were already loaded, and they were disconnected. The situation started to cascade like

dominoes, and around 4 p.m. the lines began to trip out one by one. Within seconds, large areas of the eastern United States started going dark.

Getting a power grid functioning again after such a failure is difficult. The massive turbine generators must be brought up slowly to exact speed to “synchronize” with other generators already running on the grid. This process may require disconnecting large areas of the country, connecting each plant to the grid and then gradually reconnecting cities and towns as soon as the power plants can supply them without overloading.

The North American grid is old (averaging fifty to sixty years) with many circuits operating far beyond their design life spans. The cost to modernize the grid has been estimated at \$50 billion to \$100 billion! Hard decisions will have to be made, but little will be done until public outrage reaches a crescendo. — John G. Anderson

Consulting engineer John Anderson is an internationally recognized authority on high voltage and power transmission.

The Reading of Poetry

It is necessary to acknowledge that the reading of poetry, even for the serious reader, is not generally easy nor is it done as one usually reads prose. Poetry is concentrated prose, prose that is full of stuff like sound, rhythm, rhyme, symbols, figures of speech, ideas. It is like an intense flavor that has to be slowly and carefully discovered — over time. Even when prose has some of these qualities, it is seldom so demanding.

The more poetry one reads, the more one begins to appreciate how poetry combines meaning and sound and intensity in its own special way. It can be read silently or aloud; one often finds meaning when poetry is read aloud that might not be so readily found in reading poetry silently. The sound of poetry — when it is good poetry — makes a great difference in appreciating it as the sound — and the rhythm — contribute to the meaning.

It is not easy to read poetry quickly or only once — at least not good poetry — and it is not easy to read much at one time as it so demands attention. It may be fair to say there are no sloppy readers of poetry as sloppy readers soon stop. And, it is an acquired taste; it takes several attempts — many attempts — to become someone who enjoys reading poetry. Then it becomes a special experience in the pleasures it brings. At the start, it is best just to read it and not worry how much you are getting or missing; it will slowly come to you, if you are patient and thoughtful.

The course I will offer in the spring of 2004 is about the reading of poetry. It includes eight American poets, with quite different voices, who offer an opportunity to experience the pleasure of reading poetry — and much will be read aloud. The eight are Witter Bynner and Elinor Wylie, Marianne Moore and E.E. Cummings, Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, Elizabeth Bishop and Richard Wilbur.

— James Kraft

Destination North Pole!

JULY 2003

We were on top of the world — emotionally, as well as literally! It was questionable the whole way North whether we would reach our destination. The group before us ran out of time and only reached the 86th parallel before the ship had to turn around. We were aboard the I/B Yamal, a 75,000 horsepower Russian nuclear icebreaker considered the most powerful in the world. It pounded and smashed its way toward the North Pole — no water to be seen, solid ice on the surface.

This was the worst year for ice in the Arctic in over ten years, according to Captain Pat, a Canadian submarine captain who cruised the Arctic and now lectures aboard the Yamal. It was also the coldest winter in Spitsbergen, an island in Norway's Svalbad archipelago.

After departing Newark Airport, we flew to Oslo, Norway, then to Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen and finally shuttled by Mi-8 helicopter to the Yamal. A nuclear ship was not permitted in the waters of Norway; hence, the need to take a thirty-minute helicopter trip.

Under "sail," we spent the next few days watching the ship break ice and seeing chunks 3 to 9 feet thick act like ice cubes under the Yamal's power. As we headed North toward our destination, we were fortunate to see a polar bear with a kill, a single lone polar bear and a mother with two cubs. There were numerous lectures and nature films to educate us about the history, geography and wildlife of the Arctic Circle.

Finally, 90 degrees — the geographic North Pole! We disembarked and stayed on the ice, the first and only time off ship in fifteen days. A few brave souls went for a quick swim. Passengers brought all kinds of memorabilia for photo shoots at the North Pole. Santa Claus paid us a visit as well, and many Christmas cards have since been sent with his picture or with signs that read, "Greetings from the North Pole."

We boarded the ship after about three hours and headed for Russia's Franz Joseph Land where we hoped to see walrus. The ice was so thick and under such extreme pressure that we ran out of time and had to head back to Spitsbergen. The fog cleared for a couple of days so we were able to take two more helicopter rides. The pilots landed in front of the Yamal as she was breaking ice — it was quite impressive.

Twelve hours later than planned, after two weeks aboard ship, we exited from the helicopter and stepped on land at Longyearbyen. Not a smooth trip, but a very exciting one.

— Helen-Mary and Judy Shaffer



A Day With Jeremy Yudkin

You are invited to participate in "A Day with Jeremy Yudkin" at BCC on Saturday, April 24. 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 focus on two very different geniuses in the world of music. In the morning he will help us understand the breathtaking abilities of Mozart. In the afternoon, we will listen to the gravel-voice of one of the great figures in jazz, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong.

Don't miss this special day of great music!

Richmond Iron Works

When the Richmond Iron Works opened in Richmond in 1829, it started an era that would leave an indelible imprint on the community. A dot on road maps still says Richmond Furnace, for instance, although that's not a town and never was.

Some of the abandoned limestone quarries are popular swimming holes. On Lenox Mountain, what appear to be vernal pools are former mine shafts. Anyone who thrusts a long pole into one won't touch bottom. Along Route 41 near the company's smelting furnace are company-built houses, basically similar in style but extensively remodeled. And Richmond children still collect iridescent pieces of slag, a waste product of smelting.

Smelting required limestone and charcoal, so Richmond's rich limestone deposits made it a logical center for processing ore. Richmond's farmers added to their incomes by cutting trees and making charcoal in deep, smoldering pits.

Experienced men from the British Isles and Ireland came to work the mines, including those named Turan, Lindsay, Stephens and Mitchell, some of whose families are still represented

in Richmond. The Italian immigrants came later, and a teacher named Sarah MacDonald taught them English at night at the Richmond Furnace one-room school.

Iron was a major industry in the 19th century in the Berkshires, northwestern Connecticut and adjacent New York State. Then the Bessemer process reduced the price of iron, large ore beds opened elsewhere, and the price of charcoal rocketed. In 1923, Richmond Iron Works closed. The most spectacular remnant of iron mining days is a stone stack built in 1831. Today, it is on private property and not open to the public. Other Iron Works structures were either sold or torn down.

But the superior strength of Richmond iron had made its mark. For 40 years, two railroad companies bought the entire Richmond product for train wheels. Local lore also has it that Richmond iron was used on the ironclad Monitor, the ship that defeated the Confederacy's Merrimac in a crucial Civil War battle. No one has proved the truth — or falsehood — of this, but it is conceivable that Richmond iron was used.



COURTESY OF THE BERKSHIRE ATHENAUM

Long before the Iron Works came, early settlers were aware of the iron deposits. According to Katharine Huntington Annin's "Richmond, Massachusetts" history, Micah Mudge — one of the first two settlers — sold a piece of his land in 1764 and reserved "a half interest in all the iron that might be found on or in it."

The supply was not exhausted, but the mines will remain history. As the selectmen noted in 1795, the ore "lies deep and is raised at great expense." It shows up, however, as a major mineral in the water from many homeowners' deep wells. — Ruth Bass

Ruth Bass is a regular contributor to The Berkshire Eagle.

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