

B.I.L.L. BOARD

SUMMER 2001
VOLUME 9
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NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE INSTITUTE FOR LIFETIME LEARNING

Fall Semester 2001 in the Works

The Curriculum Committee is putting together a wide array of stimulating courses and instructors for the fall 2001 semester. Courses will be given at several locations: BCC Pittsfield and Great Barrington, Williams College and the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Simon's Rock College of Bard in Great Barrington, and Canyon Ranch in Lenox. Courses will be offered in the Arts, Literature, Sciences, and Social Sciences. These course offerings range from small study groups to large survey courses — something for everyone.

Watch your mail for the catalog which lists the times, dates, and locations of the courses.

ARTS

A Tanglewood Tale – Juliane Glantz, Stephen Glantz, Michael Hammond, Dan McCleary

Exploring the Art of Collecting – Maureen Hickey, Moderator

Remembering Lennie – Simon Wainrib

The Autobiography of the Theatre – James A. Rosenberg

The Process of Interior Design – William Caligari

LITERATURE

Beowulf – Phyllis Jaffe

Great Books/Great Films – Elliott Vines, Moderator (Evening Course)

Thomas Mann: An Introduction – Paul Stein

Your Short Stories – Jim Michelman, Moderator

SCIENCES

Health, Illness and the Human Psyche – Elliot Friedman, Marlene Sandstrom, Kenneth Savitsky

Medical Journal Review: A Discussion Group – Drs. Sandor Wax and Robert McInerney

Optimum Aging – Eileen Lawlor, Kristine Huffman, Ruby Goodnoff, Kathie Swift, Carl Pratt (at Canyon Ranch)

Virtual Archaeology – Donald H. Sanders

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Also-Rans – Morton Sussman

America Becomes a World Power – Paul Flaum

Economics – Henry Bruton

Issues for the 21st Century – James D. Gorham, Roger Gorham, Sheila Keator, Edward Lahey, Phyllis Jaffe, Elske v.P. Smith

Leadership Studies – Susan Dunn, George Goethals, George Kennedy, Caroline Reeves, Barbara Viniar

Nature of Prejudice – Robert N. Kerbel

Today's Headlines: News of the Week – James W. Cotter



Maureen J. Hickey, lecturer



Barbara Viniar, lecturer



Henry Bruton, lecturer

B.I.L.L.'s First Evening Course

GREAT BOOKS/GREAT FILMS

This exciting course to be offered this fall in the evening (Yes, B.I.L.L.'s first!) will examine and discuss three literary works made into memorable movies.

Watch your mail for complete details.

Past President's Message

Two years have passed since I became president of B.I.L.L. These two years have been a wonderful experience for me and, I hope, productive ones for B.I.L.L.

At this time, I want to say "Thank You" to the Executive Board, Board of Directors, committee chairpersons, and our administrative assistant for their tireless dedication. Thank you all for working together to produce the courses and the events of which we have become so proud. "Thank You" to our membership for your continued support and encouragement.

I have worked very hard to bring to B.I.L.L. the kinds of experiences that promote and sustain interest. B.I.L.L. has become such an important part of my life. I truly feel that B.I.L.L. has enriched my life with new knowledge, new experiences, and new friends. I loved my profession (Radiology) and faced each day with anticipation and interest; in my retirement, B.I.L.L. has given me those same feelings of anticipation and interest.

Ancient Jewish sages said that education begins with learning our own traditions and culture and then moving outward and absorbing knowledge from people and events in our lives, the philosophy behind B.I.L.L.

As I step down as president, I know I join our entire membership in congratulating our new officers and Board members and wishing them success.

Once again, thank you, B.I.L.L.!

— Norman Avnet

President's Message



Thank you for entrusting B.I.L.L. to our new Officers and Board of Directors. We will work hard to merit your continued confidence.

As the first president who was not one of the founding group, perhaps I realize more than most that our future accomplishments rest upon the enormous efforts of previous administrations. B.I.L.L. is especially indebted to Dr. Norman Avnet for his tireless, broad-ranging, and very productive efforts.

As B.I.L.L. grows larger and moves beyond the dedicated efforts of the founders, maintaining the intensity of dedication that started it all is the key to how we will evolve in the future. Our challenge is to utilize the enormous reservoir of talent that resides in

B.I.L.L. to further enhance the quality of life of our membership.

We have the capability to explore seriously many new and rewarding educational, social and special events programs, and cultural relationships in the months to come, and to develop those that prove to be successful. But a handful of officers and board members cannot do this alone.

I ask you to remember that B.I.L.L. may be largely a group of retired people, but we have certainly not retired from a very exciting, rapidly changing world. All we are really doing is changing the way in which we choose to utilize our very considerable talents. As president, I expect to call upon you to use these talents for our mutual benefit and for the benefit of our community. I am confident you will respond.

You Too Can Act!

On April 3 at BCC, as part of B.I.L.L.'s expanding curriculum, over 100 B.I.L.L. members and non-members saw a performance of "Bottom's Dream," an adaptation by Vincent Dowling of the play within the play, from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Anne Lostrangio, a B.I.L.L. member and a self-proclaimed Dowling groupie, introduced Vincent Dowling to the audience. Dowling thanked B.I.L.L. for inviting The Miniature Theater of Chester's community outreach program to perform.

He explained that what the audience was about to see was a non-equity performance; the actors, by profession, were a mailman, a photographer, five former teachers, and one former actor who had played on Broadway. When queried, Anne said, "I admire the outreach to community, and I like the idea of involving people whose vocation is not acting — it makes us aware that we, too, can take part."

B.I.L.L.'s play readings also encouraged non-actors to participate.

— Carol Sabot

B.I.L.L. Office Moved

The B.I.L.L. office has been moved temporarily to the lower floor of the Jonathan Edwards Library between Rooms E11 and E12. We hope to be in our permanent office prior to the start of the fall semester. We will keep you informed.

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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Trip to New York City — A Space Odyssey

In spite of poor weather predictions, B.I.L.L.'s trip to NYC in January to the Museum of Natural History and the Rose Center for Earth and Space was terrific. The day was glorious. The view of the New England snowscape was a calm prelude to the journey of the universe so well depicted for us at the Rose Center.

An early arrival at the Museum gave us a full day that began with a docent-led tour of the exhibits. We could not have had a more knowledgeable or a more enthusiastic docent than Alan Zazeela, a Berkshire and Manhattan resident. Alan developed several themes as he led us through various "rain forests," emphasizing the interdependence of all forms of life.

We went through the "Scales of the Universe" exhibit with replicas of planets and other cosmic objects suspended from neck-craning altitudes. We awe-struck seniors, in the company of hundreds of awe-struck school children, entered the Big Bang Theatre and experienced the first cacophonous moments of the universe. Leaving this, we followed the Cosmic Pathway, which circles the Hayden Sphere, a path that chronicles the 13-billion-year evolution of the universe. At the Space Theatre, using the most advanced Star Projector and Digital Dome Projection System, we got the clearest images of the night sky.

At day's end, our senses were heightened by the marvel of the human mind and spirit. Whether we attribute the intricate workings of our still-evolving world to a detached Prime Mover, involved Creator, or fortuitous Chance, there is a balance each of us must help maintain.

This is indeed a museum for the 21st century dedicated to exploration and understanding of human cultures, the natural world, and our universe.

Thanks to Sandra and Mort Josel for their efforts in making this a special B.I.L.L. experience.

— Anne M. Lostrangio

Getting To Know You

WILLIAM T. FOX

You wouldn't know it from his youthful appearance, but Bill retired from full-time teaching five years ago at Williams College and is now a Professor Emeritus. He taught at Williams since 1961 and had been chair of the Geology Department. His geological interests have revolved around oceanography, meteorology, environmental geology, and paleontology.

In retirement, Bill is extremely active in an important research project in the Hopkins Forest in Williamstown which, if successful, could put together the story of forest succession in New England. He is planning a B.I.L.L. course on this experience.

Bill loves to teach and savors contact with students. Members of B.I.L.L., who were fortunate enough to participate in the Special Events oceanographic field trip in May 1998 to Cape Ann led by Professor Fox, have related that it was a wonderful experience. It really was a memorable "special event."



According to Bill, "Teaching and taking courses with B.I.L.L. has been a wonderful experience for me and has added lots of pleasure to my retirement. I am looking forward to teaching a new course for B.I.L.L. in the fall of 2002."

It is interesting that Bill originally had planned a career in business and had actually

worked in the business world for a short period after graduating from Williams College with a major in Geology. Fortunately, he never forgot the fascination he felt with the coastal region in Michigan after spending several summers there and quickly changed his career choice. His honors and publications in his field are numerous.

His wife, Norma, a former piano student, received a degree in sociology at North Adams State College. They have three children and three grandchildren. With all of his interests and research endeavors, Bill still has time for serious study of the piano.

— Karl Easton

Letters to the Editor

Dear B.I.L.L.BOARD Editor:

I've been a class manager for several classes over the last few semesters; it is an easy and enjoyable way to get involved in B.I.L.L.

All you need to do is come to class 10 to 15 minutes before it starts and set up the equipment that may be required. The Media Department at BCC will help and show you how to operate it. A bonus in being a class manager is the extra time you spend with the speaker—a time that can be informative and most enjoyable.

I look forward to continuing to assist B.I.L.L. in this worthwhile task, and I hope that other members will consider volunteering as class managers.

— Robert Mainzer

To the Editor:

Long before my retirement from a scientific career, I learned about B.I.L.L. from a close friend. After attending three classes, I shared her enthusiasm, and I am particularly impressed by the range of subject matter and the quality of the presentations.

I have focused on material science for much of my professional life; it is, therefore, a great joy to branch out into new directions and study art, literature, and history. B.I.L.L. is a contributor to my new sense of discovery, and I look forward to many additional classes in a variety of subjects. Thanks B.I.L.L.!

— Gudrun Hutchins
Pownal, Vermont

Special Events Committee Presents



ANNUAL SPAC DAY IN SARATOGA

Thursday, July 19 • 8:30 am – 6:00 pm

Tour the new Tang Teaching Art Museum at Skidmore College
Lunch in the Hall of Springs, Saratoga Performing Arts Center
NEW YORK CITY BALLET Matinee

Program includes: *Ash, Dances at a Gathering* and
Stravinsky Violin Concerto

Event Leaders: Arline Gilbert and Evelyn Zwerner



MUSIC AT THE MAHAIWE

Monday, August 13 • 8:00 pm

Debut event for the Berkshire Opera Company at its new home on Castle Street in Great Barrington.

Concert performance features an outstanding cast singing beloved arias and ensembles previewing 2002 grand opening season.

Event Leaders: Rose Foster and Irene Lichtenstein



GOODSPEED OPERA HOUSE in East Haddam, CT

Sunday, September 16 • 9:30 am – 6:30 pm

See the "new" musical comedy, *They All Laughed!* You will too!

A singing and dancing Gershwin jubilee of bootleggers, cads, and chorus girls includes such standards as "*He Loves and She Loves,*" and "*Let's Kiss and Make Up.*"

Lunch at The Gelston House

Event Leaders: Ruth and Ed Levin, Carole Schwimmer and Bob Mainzer

THE COLONIAL THEATER in Boston

Saturday, October 20 • 8:45 am – 6:30 pm

See a new musical, *MAMMA MIA!*

"Abbasolutely fab!.... The lovely surprise of a thoroughly enjoyable new musical with two dozen old ABBA songs is a proper story which exploits the jangling, nostalgic score to great effect..." says *The Daily Mail of London*.

From London on its way to Broadway – see this BIG HIT!

Event Leaders: Rose Foster and Lillian Katz



Flyers with details will be mailed to you. All reservations to B.I.L.L. office.
Special Events Chair: Arline Breskin (413) 253-3640

Renewable Energy

Rolling blackouts in California, gas and oil prices going up! What's happening?

In California, a convergence of problems led to too much demand chasing too little supply under lopsided deregulation. As these problems hit the news this winter, B.I.L.L. presented a course on "Renewable Energy."

Peter Berle, member of the Joint Public Advisory Committee for Environmental Issues under NAFTA, spoke on his own role in planning for electricity deregulation in New York State. He believes fuel cells will be a major power source 20 years from now, but meanwhile feels we need significant growth in existing renewable energy systems. Major benefits of such growth include less pollution and less dependence on imported oil.

Federal investment in Renewable Energy research has declined since the 70's and progress has been modest.

The major existing technologies are: Hydro, Wind, Photo Voltaic (solar), Solar Home Heating, and BioMass. Each of these topics was a lecture subject.

HYDRO: Eighty percent of renewable energy in the U.S. is from water-power, but giant dams are environmentally unsound. Small systems, however, are friendly and effective. Surprisingly, this proven technology is not getting as much support as more glamorous technologies.

WIND: Popular in California, Texas, and Europe, wind turbines have become quieter, and more efficient, and are already cost competitive. Here in the Berkshires, the Brodie Mountain project is about to start construction.

PHOTO VOLTAIC: Useful in remote locations, but not competitive where the "grid" is available. A familiar conundrum: costs will come down when PV cells are mass-produced — but until costs come

down, sales will be limited. However, some power companies are subsidizing domestic installations, and the winners see their electric meters "spin backwards." Someday new houses may come with PV cells integrated in the roof.

SOLAR HOME HEATING: More popular in Europe than here, it is practical today to obtain a significant portion of home heat and hot water from the sun.

BIOMASS: Wood pellet sales exploded this winter as people sought relief from higher heating oil prices. The technology is simple, and the supply of "junk" wood, cornhusks, etc. is essentially endless.

The renewables picture is encouraging in terms of improved technologies, but some government research and subsidy is needed until mass production lowers initial cost and they become truly competitive and viable.

— Phil Knowles

Thank You, Lecturers

The success of B.I.L.L.'s courses is the result of a tremendous effort by many individuals who are willing to share their expertise. We want to specifically acknowledge the following lecturers for their commitment and dedication for the academic year fall 2000, winter 2001, and spring 2001—many have led more than one course:

Marsha Altschuler, Ella Baff, Milton Bass, Robert Bayt, Donald deB. Beaver, Stephanie Beling, Walter Bemak, Peter Berle, Barbara Bliss, Paul Boudreau, John Brooks, Eric Bruun, Edward Burger, James M. Burns, Robert Chandler, Roselle Chartock, Lew Clark, Leonard Cohen, Lenore Congdon, Averill Cook, Tim Cook, Stephen Cope, Stuart Crampton, William Darrow, Steve Dixon, Robert Donelan, Karl Easton, Moe England, Susan Engle, Stuart Feder, Sanford Fisher, Paul Flaum, Andrew Flaxman, Walter Gehring, Michelle Gillett, Ben Glick, Kinsley Goodrich, Rosalind

Gordon, Howard Gorham, Barbara Greenbaum, Diane Hitter, Christopher Hocker, Peter Hopkins, Yehuda Hunani, Richard Intres, Phyllis Jaffe, Charlotte Kaufman, Robert Kelly, Christopher Kilfoyle, David LaBerge, Edward Lapointe, Janice Lawry, Arlene Leven, Katherine Levitan, Marc Lynch, Carmen Massimiano, Robert McInerney, Eugene Michalenko, Frank Michelman, Laurie Norton Moffat, Elizabeth Neale, Harold Novick, Joel O' Brien, Joan Olshansky, David Orenstein, Norton Owen, Clara Park, Herbert Parmet, Paul Perachi, Rob Putnam, Spencer Reiss, Joel Revzen, Paul Ross, Dorothy Rowe, Jack Rubin, Kenneth Rubinstein, Carol Sabot, Richard Sabot, Rudolph Sacco, Steven Satullo, William Sheperdson, William Simons, Paul Stein, Allison Tracy, Simon Wainrib, Sandor Wax, Joseph Wheelock, Jr., Don Williams, Alex Willingham, Tracy Wilson, Ethan Zuckerman, and the moderators of the Today's Headlines course Norman Avnet, James Cotter, and Bob Kerbel.

Thank You, Clark Art Institute

B.I.L.L. thanks the Clark Art Institute for providing us with a wonderful place in which to hold our classes. The auditorium is spacious, comfortable, and offers much-appreciated media equipment.

A special thanks to Judy Ensign, our liaison with the Clark, who has taken care of our scheduling and media needs most graciously.

HAVE A
WONDERFUL
SUMMER!



Evan Dobbelle Speaks at B.I.L.L. Convocation

Celebrate “the simple joy of learning something new,” Trinity College President Evan S. Dobbelle told B.I.L.L. members when he addressed B.I.L.L.’s seventh annual convocation on May 30. “We are all participants in the world community of learning. Its opportunity and its return are boundless.”

He cited an AARP survey as evidence that learning for its own sake, as well as the drive to keep growing, be mentally active, and keep up with the world, spurs older adults to embrace programs such as Trinity’s Academy of Lifelong Learning and B.I.L.L. Inculcating that “simple joy,” he said “is central to a Trinity education.” But educational institutions can be a force for social progress as well. He described how Trinity, under his leadership, helped transform the physical and educational landscape of its Hartford, Connecticut, community.

President Dobbelle began his stellar career in politics in Pittsfield and then in educational administration. His resume includes service as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, Chief of Protocol under President Carter, Assistant Secretary of State with rank of Ambassador, president of Middlesex Community College, and chancellor and president of City College of San Francisco. He made his mark as a turnaround specialist for institutions of higher learning, and has accepted a new challenge — the presidency of the University of Hawaii.

During the follow-up question-and-answer session, he commented on both educational and political topics. On testing he said, “It is the greatest unfairness I’ve ever seen in public policy.” Instead of tackling societal failings that make children perform poorly, “we put it all off on the teachers.” On generating positive momentum in Pittsfield, he stressed community leaders should have a thoughtful, creative, strategic plan and not “be afraid of spending a little money.” On whether he would be the next presidential candidate, he promised his wife, Kit, not to seek any office until his son (now 14) graduates from high school.

President Dobbelle left an opening for the future, however, saying that he loves politics for its capacity to make a difference — and agrees with Elliot Richardson that politics is a noble profession.

— Judy Katz



Evan S. Dobbelle

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Office Assistant Needed

The B.I.L.L. office needs a volunteer assistant. Do you know how to keyboard? Do you know WORD or WordPerfect software? Do you have good people and telephone skills? If you answered yes to these questions, please call the office at 499-4660 ext. 456 to find out how you can help.

B.I.L.L. 2000 – 2001 Volunteers

B.I.L.L.'s strength and vitality comes from its corps of active, committed volunteers — the people who plan the courses and special events, recruit lecturers, keep our membership growing, help in the office, publicize our activities, communicate with our members, supervise class arrangements, provide leadership, and pitch in wherever help is needed. These are the men and women, 135 strong, who gave B.I.L.L. their time, energy, creativity, and skill during the past year. We hope we included everyone. They are our engine and our fuel, and we give them our thanks.

Elaine Andersen	Paul Flaum	Margo Krupp	Rosalind Riegelman
Rena Asci	Andy Flaxman	Gus Leibowitz	Dorothy Rowe
Norman Avnet	Steffi Fletcher	Arline Leven	Francine Rubenstein
Joyce Bacharach	Rose Foster	Ed Levin	Lenore Rubin
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Michael Feltser	John Koffel	Anna Pollock	
Marilyn Flaum	Judi Korostoff	Margaret Poutasse	

Ventfort Hall A Lenox Landmark

Hidden behind trees and a row of ranch houses in downtown Lenox is one of the least known local landmarks. Despite its lack of fame, however, three recent movies have been made relating to the property or its residents.

Built in 1893 by Sarah, sister of J. Pierpont Morgan, and her husband, George Morgan, as their summer home, Ventfort Hall at \$900,000 was the most expensive Berkshire Cottage built in Lenox up to that time. It is an imposing mansion that typifies the era of the Gilded Age when Lenox was considered the "inland Newport." Rotch & Tilden, prominent Boston architects, designed the house.

Described at the time of its completion as "one of the most beautiful places in Lenox," the house has 28,000 square feet with "15 bedrooms . . . and 17 fireplaces." Typical of the period, the interior features a soaring three-story great hall and staircase with wood paneled detailing. Other rooms include an elegant drawing room, paneled library, dining room, billiard

room, and a bowling alley in the basement. It was designed with all the modern amenities of the time; both gas and electric lights, elevator, burglar alarm, and central heating.

Ventfort Hall was constructed on the site of a house called Vent Fort ("strong wind"), built in 1853 by Elizabeth and Ogden Haggerty. He was a successful merchant in New York City. In 1863, the Haggertys' daughter Annie married Robert Gould Shaw, Colonel of the "54th Mass." regiment, the first black regiment of the Union Army. They spent their short honeymoon at Vent Fort and, 77 days later, Shaw was killed in the battle at Fort Wagner, South Carolina. A statue in his memory was completed by the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and erected on Boston Common. Colonel Shaw's story is told in the movie, *Glory*.

A second movie associated with this property and its residents is the PBS production of *Geisha*, which tells the story of Yuki Kato, a Japanese Geisha who married George, a son of George and Sarah Morgan, the builders, in 1904. Because she was never accepted



in this country, they lived in Japan and in Paris.

And, in 1998, Ventfort Hall was the major location for the filming of the movie, *The Cider House Rules*, starring Michael Caine. The deteriorated condition of the house made it a perfect stand-in for a poor orphanage. The rear of the house with its long verandah was used as the main entrance to the orphanage, and the great hall and staircase served as the interior of the children's home. The movie was awarded two Oscars in 1999.

Ventfort Hall was saved from the wrecking ball in 1997 by a group of concerned Lenox citizens, and today is being restored and is open to the public.
—Joan R. Olshansky

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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