

B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning
Winter 1997 • Volume 6 • Number 4

New and Exciting Winter Programs

Winter Semester Announced!

Wintering in the Berkshires? A full semester begins January 13th through February 18th. Courses include "Today's Headlines"; "Magic of the Berkshires II"; "Emily Dickinson, the Myth of Amherst"; "Introduction to Word Processing"; and "Microsoft '97, An Introduction".

The computing courses utilize the computer teaching facilities at BCC. "Magic of the Berkshires II" covers Shay's Rebellion, Textile Industry, Prominent African-Americans in the Berkshires, Pittsfield Commemorative Streets, Hoosac Tunnel and Future of Pittsfield.

Note: Spring '98 semester begins April 14th to May 22nd; Fall '98 from September 15th to October 31st.

New Film Club Starts

An exciting winter first!! Lenore and Jack Rubin moderate *The Graduate* on December 10th, launching the new Film Club. Elliot Vines follows on January 14th with *The Bridge On The River Kwai*. *High Noon* and *All About Eve* follow on February 11th and March 11th respectively. Each session consists of an introductory overview of the film, followed by viewing and a discussion.

Winter Book Club

Arline Leven moderates *Mrs. Ted Bliss* by Stanley Elkin (December 1st), followed by Trudy Moskowitz, *A Map Of the World* by Jane Hamilton (January 7th). The third session, *The Optimist's Daughter* by Eudora Welty (January 27th) will be moderated by Ilse Browner. She is followed by Carol Sabot and, *Woman Of The Inner Sea* by Thomas Keneally (February 24th). Harriet Vines and, *Crossing To Safety* by Wallace Stegner (March 25th) closes out the winter club readings.

Expanded Winter Lecture Series Begins

Michael Vale, television and screen star begins the series on December 13th, followed on January 24th by Julianne Boyd, Artistic Director for the Barrington Stage Company. Appearing on February 21st and March 21st respectively are Dr. Jeffrey Nolte, noted opera teacher and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Walter V. Hickey, Historian at the Silvio O. Conte National Archives.



Michael Vale



Julianne Boyd

Happy Holidays!

NEW YEAR'S DAY BRUNCH
Berkshire Plaza Hotel,
Pittsfield

Contact Special Events Chair
Arline Breskin @ 413-243-3640

Fall '97 Courses At Williams "Take To The Road" In Spring '98

What makes courses meaningful and valuable, for the stimulation and insights offered in the present, but also as they affect one's future thinking? "At The Sea's Edge", by Professor William Fox and "Masters of Twentieth Century Architecture", by Professor Edward Johnson were such courses.

Professor Fox, presented in layman's terms Continental Drift, Plate Tectonics, earthquakes, volcanoes and coastal features. He explained the influence of the bowl shape of the Pacific Ocean on repetitive El Ninos. Beach formation, erosion, migration and wave action were discussed. While studying plant and animal life of the beaches in relation to tides, the class became so enthralled, that when a day trip, led by Professor Fox to Cape Ann, was suggested, essentially the entire class voted to go along this coming spring.

Professor Johnson presented the work of seven noteworthy architects, revealing the unique contributions each made to the field, beautifully illustrated by slides and enhanced by extensive background information and his dry wit. Beyond the pleasure
(continued on page 4)

President's Letter

"B.I.L.L. gave me a life;" a sentiment expressed by many members following the fall courses. The more than 375 participants was the largest class attendance in B.I.L.L.'s history.

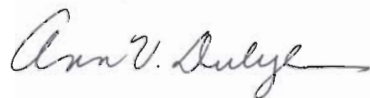
We salute the lecturers for enriching our lives. They increased our knowledge of current affairs, history, literature, architecture, environment, health and healing options and the beauty of the English language.

The learning will not stop with the coming of winter. A full program of lectures, courses, events and clubs begins this month. We are grateful to the lecturers who consented on short notice to participate, and to BCC for providing the classrooms. There is no reason to hibernate this winter—B.I.L.L. is there to brighten the gray days!

I have been encouraged meeting new members, who offer their time to serve on committees and to Peer teach. This is the B.I.L.L. spirit!

Approaching the Holiday Season and New Year, we look ahead and realize that our rapid growth and broadening of our programs require effective planning if we are to continue contributing to the quality of life for our members. It will be an exciting 1998!!

Enjoy the holidays — see you at the New Year's Day Brunch.



"What A Day!", Says Ellie Chandler

You know that when spirits are high in a group of 91 people at 7:15am, everyone's in for a great day.

With a touch of *deja vu* for field trips we took as kids, things quickly took on a rich adult texture as we were treated to a fantastic combination of great music and great art. The first stop was a lovely, acoustically perfect rehearsal of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Guest pianist Murray Perahia played Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor. The Overture to Mozart's Magic Flute and Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony in E-flat followed. Andrew Davis conducted; an added bonus was Steven Ledbetter's lecture.

Arline Breskin's Special Events Committee prepared a delightful lunch served in a comfortable room adjoining the concert hall. Then off to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts to view (and hear, thanks to advance planning for audio cassettes) "Picasso, the Early Years." B.I.L.L. member, Ruth Guttman loved the Picassos as well as the Glass Today exhibit. She had time to view American drawings and Chinese pottery, and with husband Ralph, enjoyed tea in the Museum's Tea Shop, complete with piano player. Margaret Hirschfield found the Picassos so atypical of his more commonly seen works.

Roz Avnet noted the combination of music and art was "sensational," and everything went so easily because it was so well planned. Marge and Jerry Light commented, "On a scale of 1 to 10, the day was an 11." Many thanks to Event Leader, Mona Sherman and Committee members Carol Kaplan, Lorraine Feldman, Arline Gilbert, Susan Orenstein, Shirley Clark, and Fran Dichter.

Even the weather was fine, and the spectacular sunrise to start and sunset on the way home, were perfect bookends for the day.

Tom and Judy Easton Speak At Rotary Club

Founders, Tom and Judy Easton spoke to the Rotary Club of Pittsfield, describing the "early days" of B.I.L.L. The support given by Williams College and Berkshire Community College, our sponsors, the Elderhostel Institute Network, and the devoted, creative working of the thirty member Charter Committee were discussed. Much to the committee's delight, the BCC auditorium was filled with over 300 enthusiastic individuals at the first spring '94 Convocation. Equally surprising was the registration for the first series of courses (125, not the expected 50).

Rapid growth to the present 500 plus members, many serving as committee volunteers and peer teachers was described. Tom discussed the greatly expanded curriculum and the courses at Williamstown and Great Barrington (Spring '98); programs further enhanced with a Winter Semester and many other educational activities and Special Events.

Also shown and appreciated by the audience was the film about B.I.L.L. directed, filmed, produced and edited by Ron Gilbert and Phil Lewis, and narrated by Phil.



Left to right: Mona Sherman, Shirley Clark, Carol Kaplan, Arline Breskin, Fran Dichter

Editor's Comments

Happy Holidays!! Help continue improving information and educational content of B.I.L.L.Board. Send comments, articles of educational interest or travel information to:

Arthur Sherman, P.O. Box 139, Housatonic, MA 01236. Fax to (413)-274-1436 or E-Mail to GDMADS@AOL.COM

Letters To The Editor

To B.I.L.L.Board Editor

Eight B.I.L.L.L. members were among the twenty lecturers this past Fall '97 semester. The great job they did requires special mention and "Thank You".

Paul Flaum, Paul Stein and Julie Lowell taught full six week courses. For Paul Flaum this was the second foray into American History, clarifying major issues to an enthusiastic class who all want to hear from him again. For Paul Stein it was the third time around; Melville, then Henry James and now Walt Whitman — all of them not easy to appreciate without Paul's superb guidance. Julie Lowell recreated Joan of Arc for us, placing her in her medieval setting as deftly as though Julie had been there herself.

Jack Stern, Mort Levy and Bob Chandler each gave us a class while Jack Rubin and Norman Avnet moderated Headlines. In their hands, the Exodus, Underground Railway, Dunkirk and critical issues of the day came alive for us.

— Ilse Browner, Vice President

To B.I.L.L.Board Editor

Thanks to Julie Lowell for the great program she presented on Joan d'Arc. Her knowledge of the title subject and the historical events surrounding her life was incredible. If I had instructors like her when I went to school, a lifetime ago, I might have learned something.

— Herbert J. Messinger

Getting To Know You

ARLINE LEVEN

In the true spirit of B.I.L.L., she volunteered to present what proved to be a wonderful talk about Picasso's early works, upon learning of the pending trip to Boston. Many of us became aware of Arline at the B.I.L.L. Book Club, hearing her thoughtful comments on Camus' "The First Man". Or, you might remember

her talk on Naumkeag as part of "The Cottages of the Berkshires".

Arline is a native of St. Louis, Missouri; has always been fascinated by art; experiencing it has always been her goal ("you can't know it unless you've seen it"). She did her graduate work in Connoisseurship at Washington University, where she



taught and worked in the gallery for fifteen years.

A piscine vegetarian, she has lived in Hilton Head, NC, where she owned a high-end crafts gallery. Why the Berkshires? Possibly because it's near Boston, where her daughter, a violinist (with the Pops, and Boston Baroque Ensemble), her granddaughter and

neurobiologist son-in-law live. "It has everything I like. . . . it's as close as possible. . . . and there is an ease of sociability, facilitated by B.I.L.L."

The Berkshire also affords her the opportunity to don her hiking hat several times a week and affords us the opportunity of being in her company.

A Somewhat Different B.I.L.L.

Imagine attending B.I.L.L.—like classes in a gated, garden-filled community on a magnificent lake located between Jamestown and Buffalo. Courses range from art to yoga. Tennis, sailing, canoeing, speed-boating and day camp for visiting grandchildren are available. Accommodations include a Victorian style hotel, beautifully appointed condominium apartments, or boarding houses with wrap-around porches and hanging geranium-filled baskets. Restaurants abound. Attend a film classic, concert or dance program every night. Sound nice?? It's called Chautauqua!!

The Chautauqua Institution was begun more than 100 years ago as a retreat for Methodist Sunday school teachers. The nine-week season features a weekly theme; speakers address the topic in the mornings in a large outdoor shed, seating about 3000. Other classes, workshops, recitals and lectures occur throughout the day.

Elliott and I camped in our RV three miles down the road and biked in every morning. Our first week's theme was Art and Humanities: Recording Our History. Michael Beschloss, discussed the deleterious effect that subpoenaing public figures' personal notes was having on historians' ability to do research; fewer diaries are now being kept. Richard and Doris Kearns Goodwin spoke of their personal experiences with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

The last week's theme was Health and Wellness. Doctors from Cleveland Hospital, including Bernadine Healy, former NIH Director, gave very informative presentations. I also took courses in desk-top publishing, chess and weaving (which I loved and have a rug and shawl to prove it).

All in all, not a bad B.I.L.L.-like summer camp.

— Harriet Vines

Is American Psychiatry Beginning To Endorse Herbal Medicine For The Treatment Of Depression?

In a front page article entitled, "Alternative Medicine: Past is Prologue," Psychiatric News, the official newspaper of the American Psychiatric Association, stated that the father of American psychiatry, Benjamin Rush, MD . . . "wouldn't be surprised to hear that his modern heirs are using herbal medicines to treat the maladies of the mind."

Psychiatrists, like other Americans, have not escaped the flood of publicity on alternative — particularly herbal — medicine, the most striking example being the utilization of St. John's Wort for the treatment of depression as substitutes for standard psychiatric drugs.

Organized psychiatry has keenly noted that the utilization of St. John's Wort has been effective in soothing of the symptoms of patients suffering with mild to moderate depression without the debilitating side effects, such as sexual dysfunctioning, often associated with chemical antidepressants.

Psychiatric News reported to the entire psychiatric readership that St. John's Wort has been widely used in Europe for 15 years. . . . that its usefulness, cost effectiveness and paucity of side effects have been supported by hard data, especially the analysis of 23 randomized trials of 1,757 outpatients reported in British Medical Journal (8/3/97), a prestigious and significant publication.

Despite the accumulating evidence that herbal medicine such as St. John's Wort and other alternative medical practices are effective, funding for the National Institutes of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM), established by Congress in 1991, has been challenged by some psychiatrists who believe it legitimizes unscientific medical practice.

The fact of the matter is that, according to government estimates, one-third of Americans are using and spending \$14 billion annually on alternative treatments despite their doctors' disapproval. Thus, it cannot be argued against that further inquiry is merited since, as OAM Director Wayne Jonas stated, "The goal of biomedical sciences is, after all, to provide us with tools to alleviate human suffering, and not to hold on with blind faith to methodological and conceptual dogma within a narrow worldview." — Karl Easton, MD



St. John's Wort

Editors Note: We are devoting this page of the B.I.L.L. Board to member articles which contain educational or informational material. They can be based on your profession, experience, hobbies or other interests. We encourage you to share your knowledge with us. That's what B.I.L.L. is all about!!!

Fall '97 Courses At Williams . . . Continued from page 1

of his lectures, he taught how to think about architecture, how to look at buildings and to "read" them.

B.I.L.L. members Herb Sandick and Jack Rubin had high praise for the course; Pam Dwyer's response was typical. "Because of the course, I look out for things". Recently in Spain, she took particular interest in the Barcelona architect Gaudi, who was listed in the handout about Picasso in connection with the B.I.L.L. trip to Boston. This brought home the "interconnectedness of the arts."

Professor Johnson will lead a day trip this coming spring to view some of the works described.

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