

# B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning  
Winter '99/2000 • Volume 8 • Number 2

## Winter 2000 Semester

A wide variety of courses are being offered during the winter semester which begins on January 6 through February 17 at the Quality Inn on Route 7 in Lenox. Bring your lunch; coffee is available. See the catalog for complete details, and don't forget to register!

### MONDAYS starts January 10

#### MAGIC OF THE BERKSHIRES:

10:30 am to 12 noon

#### January 10 Educational Institutions

*No Longer With Us* – Dorothy Rowe

#### January 17 Old Gravestones and Their Carvers – James Parrish

#### January 24 The Berkshire Spur of the Underground Railroad – Barbara Bartle, Elaine Gunn and Eve Perera

#### January 31 Wild Animals, Then and Now – David St. James

#### February 7 The Quarrying Industry – Martin Deely

#### February 14 Mohican Indians in the Berkshires – Lion Miles

TODAY'S HEADLINES: 1 pm to 2:30 pm – David Orenstein, Moderator

### TUESDAYS starts January 11

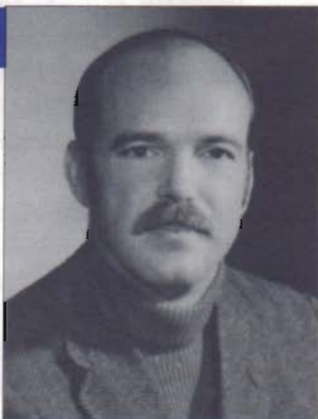
EMILY DICKINSON'S LETTERS: 10:30 am to 12 noon – Janet Cook and David Peirce

INTERPRETATION OF FAIRY TALES: 1 pm to 2:30 pm – Barbara Bliss

### THURSDAYS

FROM GREASE TO DIAMONDS: *The World of the Carbon Molecules*  
starts January 13 10:30 am to 12 noon – Hodge Markgraf

ROMANCE IN THE BERKSHIRES: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Berkshire Art\*  
\*starts January 6: 1 pm to 2:30 pm – Maureen Johnson Hickey



Lion Miles, Lecturer

## Third Annual Winter Film Club

Each of the four classics selected for this series includes an introduction followed by the viewing and a discussion led by moderators Elliott Vines and Jack Rubin. The films will be shown at BCC in the Little Theatre (Room K111) on Wednesdays from 1 pm to 3:30 pm. The fee is \$15 for the series or a \$5 fee for a single film.

DECEMBER 15, 1999

*The Treasure of Sierra Madre*  
(1948) John Huston, director

JANUARY 12, 2000

*The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*  
(1971) Vittorio De Sica, director

FEBRUARY 9, 2000

*Paths of Glory*  
(1957) Stanley Kubrick, director

MARCH 8, 2000

*Save the Tiger*  
(1973) John Avildsen, director

## Spring 2000 Highlights

Museum of Television and Radio  
Backstage Tour of Metropolitan  
Opera  
British Museum of Art  
Munsen-Williams-Proctor Arts  
Institute  
Convocation  
"Ragtime"

Watch your mail for flyers.

**Happy Holidays!  
Happy New Year!**

## Celebrate the New Millenium!



Sunday, January 2, 2000  
11:30 am  
Country Club of Pittsfield

Bring Friends, Children, and Grandchildren  
Gourmet Buffet, Music, and More

For Your Entertainment – MISBEHAVIN'



## President's Letter

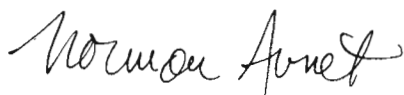
Sometimes I wonder why I enjoy my role as president of B.I.L.L.; it involves a great deal of time and energy. But, then, when I go to the many classes I take, I realize that the excitement of learning something new is a wonderful experience.

When Roz and I toured New Zealand and Australia last November, we met people who kept asking us how we could stand "all those lectures that come with Elderhostel trips." We laughed all the way to the intellectual bank.

There is an intellectual challenge I feel every time I speak with someone about possible courses for B.I.L.L. These courses will stimulate someone else and, selfishly, myself as well.

I wish I could communicate the energy that invades every Curriculum Committee meeting. Starting with an idea, comments by the committee members and the choosing of faculty, deciding whether it will be a fall, winter, or spring course — all these make the committee a whole entity with only a single goal.

Our objective is to bring spirit, vitality and enthusiasm to B.I.L.L. members. It has worked.



## 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 (1995 to 1999) who are also B.I.L.L. members for their commitment and dedication—many have led more than one course:

Barbara Bliss, Ilse Browner, Hal Cantor, Robert Chandler, David Citrin, Janet Cook, Judy Easton, Paul Flaum, Phyllis Jaffe, Arlene Leven, Ed Levin, Elliot B. Lowell, Bob McInerney, Wilma Michaels, Pauline Pierce, Dorothy Rowe, Elske Smith, Paul Stein, Jack Stern, Loet Velmans, Harriet Vines, Sandor Wax, Irene Willis, Alan Wolff and the moderators of the Headlines course Norman Avnet, Michael Feltser, Philip Knowles, David Orenstein, Jack Rubin, Morton Weiss, W. Donald Zaik

## Our Gift to Williams College

B.I.L.L.'s gift to Williams is earmarked for the American Reads Program. President Clinton encouraged this program with an extra appropriation of federal College-Work Study Program monies for college students with the understanding that these students would help with a national reading initiative.

Williams College was eager to assist the local schools, therefore, this program seemed an ideal way to encourage undergraduates to assist the local elementary school, located just a block away from the campus. Because no funds for training or evaluation had been appropriated, B.I.L.L.'s gift of \$1,000 was used to help pay a senior reading teacher to take on this extra assignment.

During the past three years, there have been between 40-50 Williams students working with elementary school students, being trained and supervised by Mary O'Connor, a devoted reading teacher who continued her work with the program even though she had retired from the school system in June 1998.

Our commitment to this reading program will continue each year. As Nancy McIntire, B.I.L.L.'s liaison at Williams College states, "The connections across generations which this program provides with your support was particularly appealing."

## Chaos and Fractals

Did geometry fracture you in high school? Did chaos reign in your house until your teenagers left for college? Does the mere sound of "chaos and fractals" give you the heebie jeebies? Don't jump too quickly to the conclusion that this B.I.L.L. course was for math freaks only. Sometimes the names of courses can be misleading.

This fall's course, "Chaos and Fractals," presented by Dr. Cesar Silva was anything but a solid math course. It was a "WOW!" course. Every fifteen minutes you found yourself exclaiming, "WOW. No kidding!"

It can be startling to find out that a butterfly flapping its wings in Hong Kong can affect the weather in Paris a week later, or that you can manipulate a simple square a few times and turn it into a very pretty fern leaf. We saw fractal patterns that were so unexpectedly lovely that you gasped first before you could even say, "WOW!"

Why is it so hard to predict economic trends or population variations, the weird behavior of disease epidemic, not to mention the weather? The world around us seems to be filled with processes that exhibit randomness or chaos. Chaos theory is turning up in virtually every field of inquiry.

I love having courses in which all the heavy work has already been done, and the interesting implications for the future are distilled for us. That is, I believe, the nub of the success of B.I.L.L. How exciting to find a course at an intellectual level that kept our aging brains hopping around.

— Dorothy van den Honert

## B.I.L.L. BOARD

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## Letter to the Editor

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

How B.I.L.L. has grown with time. Three years ago, for personal reasons, I dropped out of the courses. However, I returned this September delighted to find extended areas of interest, a wider variety of offerings at added locations and trips to cultural spots such as museums and plays. Also included in the expansion were special social gatherings such as a New Year's brunch.

B.I.L.L. has evolved not only intellectually but has become a repository of social and cultural happenings. Right on! A firm march into the 21st Century.

— Eleanor M. Clary

## Do you know

Who attends every B.I.L.L. course and makes sure that every lecture runs smoothly? Who checks that the equipment works properly and that lecturers have what they need for the course? Fran Dichter, class management chair — that's who. Thank you, Fran.

## Getting To Know You

### ILSE BROWNER

When Ilse moved from Westchester County to Pittsfield, she said, "A great thing happened. I discovered B.I.L.L. and B.I.L.L. discovered me." Almost immediately, Ilse became actively involved in those crucial early development days of B.I.L.L. She has seen it grow from an initial group of 34 to its present membership of over 750. "It was marvelous to see B.I.L.L. grow and to know that I played a part in it."

Ilse thrives on involvement and getting things done. She chaired the Curriculum Committee starting in the second semester and continued for ten semesters (four years). She has written numerous B.I.L.L. catalogs, scheduled courses, served on the Board as second vice president and now serves as a Director-at-Large.

Ilse brings to B.I.L.L. great intelligence, common sense and a marvel-



ous sense of humor. She graduated from Vassar and received a post graduate degree from Cornell University in Physical Chemistry. Although trained in the physical sciences, Ilse's ability to work with groups as well as with individuals has led her into the field of personal

money management.

Ilse chairs the annual Lenox Library Booksale that allows her to work with old books, a "great passion" of hers. As a volunteer in Westchester, she spent 34 years running a major scholarship book sale.

In addition, Ilse is an involved mother and grandmother. She has two daughters and three grandchildren who reside in Pittsfield and a husband who prepares many dinners while Ilse is at work with B.I.L.L. business.

— Karl Easton

## B.I.L.L.'s First Overnight Trip

In pouring rain at 7:30 a.m., our intrepid group of 30 left for Burlington, Vermont; it seemed that B.I.L.L.'s incredible record of near perfect weather for Special Events trips was changing. By the time the bus arrived at the Shelburne Museum, the rain had stopped and there was bright sunshine.

Situated amidst the rolling hills of the Vermont countryside, the Shelburne, with its 35 buildings and countless works of folk art, fine art, furniture, tools, locomotives, and a full-size steamboat, is one of the most unusual and impressive museums in the country. Nearly all of the 18th and 19th century buildings were moved from other Vermont locales, dismantled and reassembled to house the various collections by its founder, Electra Havemeyer Webb.

We stayed at the Radisson Hotel in Burlington in walking distance of excellent restaurants and shops. The next morning, we returned to the Museum and then spent the afternoon in Middlebury, Vermont, a "park-and-walk-around town." There we found lovely restaurants and shops with wide selections of Vermont crafts. Dinner at the *Sirlöin Saloon* in Manchester, Vermont, owned by Pittsfield's Dakota Restaurant was a delicious end to the trip.

Thanks to careful planning by Dolly Harte and Arline Breskin (with my assistance) our first overnight was a success.

— Lenore Rubin





*Inside Some of Our Classes – Fall 1999 Semester*



*Freud: Why Did I Do That?*



*Today's Headlines*



*The Twentieth Century (left), Three Faces of Opera (above)*



*Bach and All That Jazz*

*Medical Journal Review*



## RESEED "Retirees Enhancing Science Education Through Experiments and Demonstration"

Preparing to teach my first sixth grade class as a RESEED volunteer in the fall of 1997 was an eye-opening experience. The RESEED program is based at Northeastern University in Boston and has chapters throughout Massachusetts.

I had recently retired from medical practice and relocated to Pittsfield when my wife Edith found a notice on the Lee Library bulletin board asking for volunteers for the RESEED program to teach middle school enrichment classes in science. The notice asked for retirees who had careers in science, and feeling comfortable with my experience in medical science, I volunteered. It soon became apparent that most of the other members of this group were former professionals with excellent backgrounds in physics, chemistry or science teaching.

I spent that first summer immersed in a refresher course taught

by our group leader, George Haus. He transformed his kitchen table into a teaching laboratory and taught the basics of motion, electricity, light and sound, measurement, and much more. It was one of the best educational experiences of my career.

Armed with this new knowledge, a desire to succeed and a box full of equipment for science demonstrations, I nervously faced my first class that October. I set up my demonstration table and waited. After the fourth period bell sounded 25 ten- and eleven-year olds swept in, clattered to their seats and 25 pairs of eyes regarded me. The regular teacher would remain in the classroom during each session — but the class would be 'mine' for each 47-minute hour.

The rest of the school year was rewarding for both my students and me. I began each class with the demonstration table set up to invite curiosity and questions. Students

milled around and handled the objects for lessons to be presented. Class "experiments" involved students working in groups to prove some basic physical principle.

Together we learned about measurement, area, volume, mass, force, Newton's Laws of Motion, magnetism, electricity, light and sound. But more important than teaching them facts — some students learned that science can be exciting, discovery can be fun, and learning can be a rewarding experience.

At the end of my last class this year, one of the student's "thank you" letters was memorable. The 4-line poem she composed expressing her appreciation for my teaching said a lot: "Maybe you don't know it, because we don't show it. How much we have learned, AND HOW LITTLE YOU HAVE EARNED."

— Ralph Reichert

### A Blue Dot Means Chicken Dinner, Not Lobster!

That's what they told me in response to my inquiry about the blue dot on my nametag as we set out for the Mystic Aquarium. As our two buses barreled through seemingly disastrous cloudbursts, we feasted on cranberry and maple oatmeal muffins and juice, watched a great video about the aquarium and bemoaned our lack of umbrellas.

As we neared the entrance, the rain stopped and stayed away all through the time we spent at this wonderful site. What a great place to visit. The highlight was the exhibition prepared by Dr. Robert Ballard's *Institute for Exploration's Challenge of the Deep*. Anyone care to dive to 35,000 feet to the ocean bottom? The variety of life forms and adventures fire the imagination. The dolphin show and many other exhibitions were fascinating.

Off to Flanders in East Lyme for dinner. The LL's (lobster lovers) were in heaven; there wasn't a clean pair of hands among them. The ice cream that followed topped off a terrific day and put us all in the mood for the nap on the way home.

— Art Sherman



Playful Seals at the Mystic Aquarium

### Domestic Relations Takes Unexpected Turn

A lovely lunch and a mock divorce trial constituted the last session of Judge Rudolph Sacco's course, "Domestic Relations: Legal and Social Perspective." Bonnie Schur hosted this event at her home. At the mock trial, Norman Avnet played the husband, Bonnie the part of the wife, and Judge Sacco presided. The issues to be resolved were given to the class ahead of time. The enthusiastic response of the class evolved into plans to build a course around the idea of mock trials — Judge Sacco to continue in his role.

— Ilse Browner

Are you leaving town? Call the B.I.L.L. office and let Sharon know.



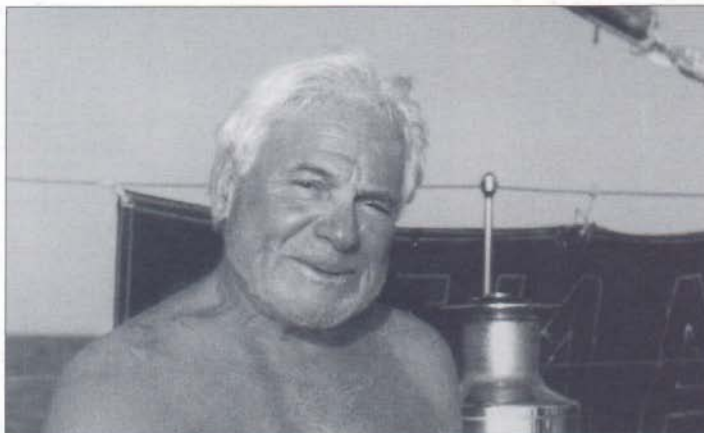
## My Sailing Adventure

I knew it would be an adventure when I wheedled my son-in-law into allowing me to accompany him and his stalwart young crew in sailing a 60-foot boat from Puerto Rico back to his home in Maine for refurbishing. The boat was super seaworthy but totally primitive when it came to comfort and plumbing. However, as a man of 77, I couldn't resist the challenge, especially since we were to sail directly across the Atlantic some 1,600 miles without deviating from our course come "hell or high water." Inspired by the memoir writing course I took with Len Bernstein, I decided to keep a record of our journey.

Although I took my turn on watch, I had to leave the heavy stuff to the young crew. I foolishly ignored sun block and soon burned to a crisp. We saw only a few ships in the distance the entire journey. The weather started exquisitely with the ship dancing along on the sparkling waves by day and the nights full of stars. Dolphins danced a water ballet around the boat, and whales spouted and breached. The sunsets were magical — deep blue water with pink and purple hues, and we actu-

ally saw the rare green flash as the sun went over the horizon.

And then the weather became horrific. Because it was impossible to go on deck unless tethered, I stayed below for three days. The boat, behaving like a bucking bronco, throwing me against the bulkhead until I was bruised and bleeding. My seat or feet had to be



well planted, and I had to sleep on the high side of the bunk if I didn't want to be thrown out. The floor was strewn with objects that had been hurled out of place. Preparing food was extremely difficult. When I tended the soup while the gallant crew wrestled with the sails and the ship rolled back and forth, two bowls splashed back on my head. Using the

toilet was a real challenge; coping with the valves and pumps under normal conditions was bad enough but in a storm I was constantly worried about being hurled off the "throne" and being dashed against the bulkhead. Hygiene became a wistfully remembered luxury and, of course, we wore the same clothes day and night.

Finally, calm again. We had been unable to contact land and knew our loved ones were worried. Suddenly a gorgeous little bird with a fat golden belly and a happy face appeared and perched on a line for a while before

flying away. We were reassured that land was near. We began to see fishing boats, and soon we were in a familiar harbor. After greeting my joyful family, I returned to Pittsfield in record time to a hot shower (the first in two weeks), a comfortable bed, and a happy, very much relieved Pam.

— Herb Sandick

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