

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKSHIRE INSTITUTE FOR LIFETIME LEARNING

Winter 2003 Semester

From January 13 through February 21 and from March 6 through March 27, B.I.L.L. will again be offering new and exciting courses for the Winter 2003 semester.

Genealogy sessions will be held at the Silvio O. Conte Archives off Dan Fox Drive in Pittsfield. All other courses will be held at the Berkshire South Regional Community Center, 15 Crissey Road, off Route 7, north of Great Barrington.

See the catalog for complete details, and **don't forget to register!**



Virginia Sullivan Finn, Lecturer

JANUARY 13 – FEBRUARY 21 MONDAY

- 10:30 am to 12 noon . . . *Excellence in the Arts* – K. Cooper, M. Hickey,
K. Maguire, J. Michelman
1 pm to 2:30 pm *Naked Eye Astronomy* – Walter Gehring

TUESDAY

- 10:30 am to 12 noon . . . *Today's Headlines* – David L. Orenstein, Moderator
1 pm to 2:30 pm *Is Reel Love, Real Love?* – Andrea Staskowski

WEDNESDAY

- 9:30 am to 11 am *House & Garden: The Architectural Eye of
Edith Wharton* – Thomas Hayes
11:15 am to 12:30 pm . . *Science For Grandparents* – George Haus
1:30 pm to 3 pm *Did Justice Triumph?* – L. Cohen, R. Goldin,
F. Jakubowicz, P. Perachi

THURSDAY

- 11 am to 12:30 pm *A Contemplation of Place* – Virginia Sullivan Finn
1:15 pm to 2:45 pm *Edna St. Vincent Millay: Her Poetry and Life* – J. Kraft
3 pm to 4:30 pm *Living Life to the Max* – P. Bhark,
S. Marshall, J. Migdow, M. Pettus,
J. Spector, A. Wasser

FRIDAY

- 10:30 am to 12 noon . . . *The American Revolution in the
Berkshires* – L. Miles
1 pm to 2:30 pm *Demystifying the Chip* – T. Sullivan

MARCH 6 – MARCH 27 THURSDAYS

Held at the National Archives, 10 Conte Drive, Pittsfield
10 am to 11:30 am *Genealogy* – Jean Nudd

Special Events For 2003

Jan. 5: New Year's Brunch – Country Club of Pittsfield

Feb. 2: *Beguiled Again* – Rodgers & Hart, Capital Repertory Theater, Albany, NY

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: Jacob's Pillow (Thursday night performance)

July: New York City Ballet – SPAC

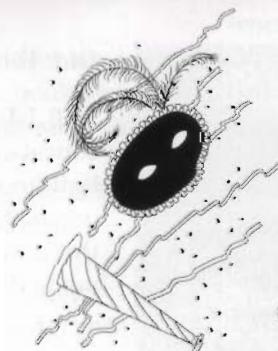
Sept. 3: Historic Deerfield, MA

Nov. 3: Rembrandt Exhibit – Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

New Year's Brunch

**Sunday, January 5, 2003
11:30 am**

Country Club of Pittsfield
Bring Friends, Children, and Grandchildren for a Gourmet Buffet, Music, and More!



For your entertainment — the Sweet Adelines

President's Message

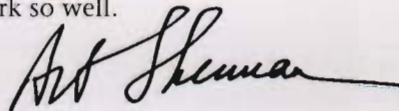
At the Annual Meeting in June 2001, I said that as the first President of B.I.L.L. who is not a member of the founding group, I am in an enviable position. We have a marvelous history to look back on and a solid foundation upon which to grow.

I have always believed that the most important role for B.I.L.L. leadership is to develop a consensus about future direction, focus the efforts of the many committees and volunteers toward that objective, make adjustments as we move forward and work toward developing a pool of interested and interesting people to take up the work for the future.

No organization as complex and as rapidly growing as ours can function without such direction and purpose. It is very easy to become consumed by reactive response to the many random crises of the moment. If this happens, then the analogy of a sailboat whose rudder doesn't work is appropriate, and we would simply mill around in the wind. But direction is not enough; there must be some movement, or it is impossible to calibrate where you are in relation to where you want to be.

Beginning with a well-conceived, long-range plan, we have been successful at making it happen. Membership is now well past 980. This fall semester set a record with almost 1,100 seats occupied in classes. A wide variety of Special Events programs and Special Projects lectures and happenings are sold out well in advance. We are going on two extended trips—one to Salem in November and the other to Ireland in June '03. Our membership support programs have been strengthened, and our public relations efforts have brought the organization broad recognition. We are financially sound and are using our financial and human resources to reach out to a community in which we have become a significant factor.

The future is secure if our growing, capable membership is prepared to assume leadership roles in these very exciting and rewarding activities. If you believe, as I do, that B.I.L.L. has significantly improved the quality of your life here in the Berkshires, please step forward. Volunteer to serve on the many important committees that make B.I.L.L. work so well.



Happy Holidays!
Happy New Year!

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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Did You Know...

B.I.L.L. is a not-for-profit educational organization. Contributions made to B.I.L.L., a 501(c)3 organization, are tax-deductible by the donor. Contributions can be made through the B.I.L.L. office.

Enchanted (Twice)

The B.I.L.L. tour to Farmington and New Britain, Connecticut, was a double treat.

The Hill-Stead Museum, a 1901 colonial Revival mansion with an extraordinary sunken garden, is located on 152 acres in the village of Farmington. This comfortable, beautifully preserved house was the home of Theodate Pope, one of the nation's first female architects. Her gift of this house to the community enabled us to view her family's collection of clocks, sculpture and porcelain as well as works by such artists as Monet, Degas, Manet, Whistler and Cassatt hung in rooms filled with 18th and 19th century furniture.



Hill-Stead Museum

The New Britain Museum of American Art, the first museum of strictly American art in the United States, is located in the turn of the century mansion of George Landers, a New Britain industrialist. In 1903, private citizens began a collection of American art for the enjoyment and education of the public. Grace Judd Landers gave her home as a permanent site for this collection in 1939. Over 5,000 oils, watercolors, drawings, graphics and sculptures are in the collection. It is so extensive that we saw only a third of these works—a glimpse of 250 years of the nation's art history. A search for a new site is underway to enable more of the growing collection to be shown.

We also enjoyed a delicious lunch in a lovely setting at Apricots. This popular eating place is located in a house on the shore of the Farmington River. A trip to these houses in Connecticut is highly recommended for a pleasant day of art, history and fine food. — Aleva Henderson

"Synthespians" in North Adams

B.I.L.L. members were recently treated to a firsthand look at the high-tech processes used to produce visual effects and animation for Hollywood feature films, major theme parks and TV commercials. As part of the September special event at Mass MoCA, the Kleiser-Walczak Construction Company (KWCC) gave us a fascinating and informative two-hour tour of their production facilities.

Mainly for quality of life reasons, Jeff Kleiser and Diana Walczak moved the bulk of the production end of their business from Los Angeles to the Berkshires, built a diverse team of about 40 talented graphic artists, animators, sculptors, computer wizards and filmmakers, and set up shop upstairs in the Mass MoCA complex. Their output, mostly in the form of digital imagery and data, is generated in PC workstations and specialized Silicon Graphics computers and then transmitted via broadband connection to their film studio in Hollywood or to other locations such as Universal's theme park in Orlando. KWCC did much of the work for Universal's *Spider Man* ride.

In one example of their work, we saw how digital stunt doubles ("synthespians") were created for the movie *Judge Dredd* (Sylvester Stallone). Stallone's body was sculpted and digitized, while cyber-scans of the actor's head provided skin texture and facial expressions. With particular attention given to lighting and shadows, the digitally created scenes were seamlessly synchronized and integrated into the overall movie.

With their work ranging from mainstream features like *Stargate* and *Clear and Present Danger* to the evolving digital opera *Monsters of Grace*, Kleiser-Walczak is a unique company that mixes computer animation and technology with a creative, new age, artistic atmosphere.

— Bob Desrosiers

Getting To Know You

DOROTHY ("DOT") ROWE

Someday a number of us who are mystery novel lovers may be reading an absorbing new mystery revolving around Herman Melville and his life at Arrowhead where he wrote his most famous work, *Moby Dick*. The writer of this whodunit will be none other than our Dot Rowe who has been ruminating about the details based upon certain facts she has uncovered while working as a volunteer at Arrowhead. She will not even hint at the plot that is actively germinating in her mind.

Dot is a musician as well as a writer of poetry and fiction. For the past ten years, she has been a flutist in a musical group which meets frequently and provides the music at a local church several times during the year. She grew up in a musical family where her father, a psychologist and professor, was also a musician as were her two sisters.

Dot attended Antioch College in Ohio where she majored in American Literature. She did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, received her teaching degree at North Adams State College and then, for the next thirty-six years, taught at the elementary level in the Pittsfield school system while her husband was employed at General Electric.

During her retirement, in addition to her reading, writing, volunteering and musical activities, Dot has been actively involved in B.I.L.L. stating that, "B.I.L.L. has been very important to me." She has given lectures on the early educational institutions in Berkshire County, off-Broadway theater, *As You Like It*, *Shay's Rebellion* and Melville, Hawthorne and Holmes in the Berkshires. For several years, she was also responsible for scheduling the spring and fall semester courses and was on the Board of Directors as a Director-at-Large.

B.I.L.L. is indeed fortunate to have Dot in its midst.

— Karl Easton



Special Projects a Success

A series of individual lectures, interspersed among the courses and between semesters, was started under the Special Projects subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. To date, approximately eight such programs, featuring outstanding personalities in their fields, have been offered to thunderous membership response.

Future sessions are programmed well into 2003. They involve not only figures prominent in the arts and music but also major authors, poets, critics, filmmakers, directors, scientists and educators in a broad range of leadership, medical and political subjects.



Humorist Roy Blount Jr., the first lecturer in the "Writer's at B.I.L.L." series, and Mona Sherman, Chair of the Curriculum Committee and Special Projects.

The Battle of Bennington

A Berkshire Victory

In 1805 Thomas Jefferson wrote that the Battle of Bennington was “the first link in the chain of successes which issued in the surrender of Saratoga.” He was defining the Revolutionary War engagement which took place only 10 miles north of Berkshire County on August 16, 1777. That fight was the first check to the southward advance of a British army under General John Burgoyne and led directly to the decisive Battles of Saratoga two months later. The glory of the victory belongs largely to the Berkshire militia.

When Burgoyne reached Fort Edward, New York, he found his supply line from Canada overextended. Consequently, he sent a detachment of his finest German troops, commanded by Lt. Col. Friedrich Baum of the Brunswick Dragoons, toward Bennington with orders to collect cattle and horses. Baum’s force eventually numbered 1,000 men, including Brunswickers, Hessians, British marksmen, Canadian Indians, and American loyalists (Tories). When they reached the Walloomsac River in Hoosick, New York, they learned that there were considerably more Americans in Bennington than anticipated. Baum decided to halt, dig in along the river and send back to the main army for reinforcements.

Quite by coincidence, a large number of militia from New Hampshire and Massachusetts had collected at Bennington on their way to support the main American army opposing Burgoyne. At the same time, the advance of Baum’s detachment had alarmed the surrounding countryside. Express riders fanned out through Berkshire County with an urgent message:

A large body of the enemy is at old Hoosick . . . Begging help as soon as possible without delay, hoping we shall repulse [them] before they get much further down. Pray don’t delay.

At once the militia from every town in Berkshire headed north, many on horseback. Companies from Williamstown to Great Barrington arrived at the scene of battle in time to turn the tide towards victory. Nearly 700 Berkshire men took part in the fight—more than the number from any other area.

The American commander, General John Stark of New Hampshire, devised a three-pronged assault on Baum’s entrenchments and led his “little army” of 2,000 to the attack at 3 p.m. on August 16. In bitter fighting for nearly two hours often hand-to-hand, Berkshire men distinguished themselves. Col. Benjamin Simonds of Williamstown, Joab Stafford of Cheshire, Enos Parker of Adams, Rev. Thomas Allen of Pittsfield, and Daniel Buck of Lanesborough deserve special notice for bravery. Shortly after Baum’s force surrendered, a reinforcement of 600 Brunswick troops under Lt. Col. Heinrich von Breymann arrived at Hoosick, and the battle was renewed. The militia routed this second force and pursued them into the woods until nightfall. By the end of the day, the Americans had killed about 200 of the enemy and taken 650 prisoners, losing only 20 or 30 of their own men.

As a Continental Army officer observed shortly after the battle:

General Stark and the militia under him have gained immortal honor—don’t think all history from Adam to this day, can produce such an instance where an unequal number of raw undisciplined militia have attacked a superior number of well disciplined regular troops entrenched in lines, beat them out and gained so complete a victory.

It was Berkshire’s finest hour.

— Lion Miles

Lion Miles has taught many courses for B.I.L.L. and will be teaching a course in the winter semester entitled The American Revolution in Berkshire County.

Sleepy Hollow

When you hear the words “Sleepy Hollow” most of us think of “The Legend of . . .” but, in this case, I’m referring to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, MA. We visited there as part of a B.I.L.L. trip called “A Transcendental Journey.” There is sheer beauty in the place—the trees, the glacial topography and the variety of stones and memorials.

When we entered the grounds from town with our guide, Bill Bailey, we saw *Mourning Victory*, also known as the Melvin Memorial. Sculpted by Daniel Chester French in 1906-1908 to honor Asa, John and Samuel Melvin who died in the Civil War, it is a moving and stunning piece of public sculpture.

Famous authors are buried in a section of the cemetery called Authors Ridge. Henry David Thoreau is in the family plot, and his stone is carved with a simple “Henry.” Nathaniel Hawthorne has head and footstone only. Nearby is the Alcott family plot—a simple “L.M.A.” and the year of her birth and death mark Louisa May Alcott’s grave. A jagged slab of pink granite is unlike any other marker in Sleepy Hollow, and beneath it rests Ralph Waldo Emerson. In other areas, we found stones for Daniel Chester French and Margaret Sidney, author of the *Five Little Peppers* series.

Even though it was a cold, rainy Saturday in October, the experience was not to be missed. — Carol Sabot



Mourning Victory

Your Membership Committee at Work



October – New Member Reception



March – Game Night at the Quality Inn



July – Picnic at Tanglewood

Choosing Children's Books

A friend told me that the most difficult thing she does is choosing a bathing suit, but another says that the most difficult thing by far is selecting books for her grandchildren. Here are a few hints from a former children's librarian, author and, more important, a grandmother.

The littlest ones like paper wrappings and ribbons—cloth books for the bathtub and board books for chewing. Toddlers like repetition and cumulative tales, stories with refrains, animal stories and any book anyone will read to them!! Pre-schoolers are ready for stories about children just like themselves. Kindergartners and those beginning to read enjoy large type beginning readers and slightly longer chapter books with illustrations and clues to vocabulary.

The 8-11'ers are at different levels of sophistication and skill. Boys usually like books about sports figures, science fiction novels, statistical facts compiled into the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the *World Almanac* and *Ripley's Believe It or Not* and blood and gore. Girls usually prefer introspective

stories about other girls, fantasies with girl characters. Both enjoy series books. Both like books about orphans—they feel empowered without parents.

Hardest of all are what are called "Young Adults," the 12-18'ers, a huge span of maturity. The books for this age group may shock you—they are often about incest, abuse, family dysfunction and violent confrontations. Remember that your grandchildren live in a different world than you did and their books, if well written, could help them understand and cope with difficult situations.

A few general points:

- Reviews of books for children are hard to find. Patronize a bookstore with staff that is knowledgeable and a stock that is well chosen.
- Go to your public library and talk to the librarians who work with children.
- Click on to the American Library Association website (ALA.org) and follow the links to the age group you want; and find lists of prizewinners. Then log on to Amazon.com

where you can find reviews, commentaries, and, usually, content summaries of books.

- Books for older readers can be notches above grade level—it makes them feel respected. Choose paperbacks rather than hardcovers; they're easier to carry around. But be sure they have sophisticated covers!
- Books to keep forever should be suitably presented; sign them and date them. Those books can be special printings of poetry, myths, legends, tall tales or fairy tales—contents with appeal for all ages.
- Before buying books you loved when you were young, reread them. Do they still appeal? Be sure once common stereotypes have been edited out.
- Don't teach!! Children feel cheated when a book they think will be pure pleasure is, insidiously, a lesson.

Most of all always be ready to read aloud, even if your grandchild is able to read. It's not the story but the closeness of reader to reader that counts.

— Marge Lewis

"The Great Bore" a.k.a. the Original "Big Dig"

When we look at the slopes of the east-west mountain passes through the Berkshires and Vermont, it is easy to see that these mountains would have presented a formidable obstacle to railroads and to horse-drawn wagons. It is understandable, too, that by the mid-1800's, after the West had been opened, New England manufacturers and traders were desperate to obtain direct and efficient east-west transportation of their goods.

Alvah Crocker, who owned paper mills in Fitchburg, successfully lobbied the Massachusetts legislature in 1848 to construct a 4.82-mile tunnel through the Hoosac Range. Everyone knew that digging the longest transportation tunnel in the world would not be easy, but the project was sold in large measure by the promised capability of a new steam-driven, 20-foot diameter boring machine. Tested on site in 1851, it failed miserably when its steel cutting edges were quickly worn out by the mica schist of the eastern side of the Hoosac.

Work on the tunnel continued sporadically using the conventional mining techniques of hand drilling and

black powder blasting. Finally in 1868, Massachusetts hired the Shanley Bros. of Montreal to complete the tunneling, and the first train passed through the Hoosac tunnel on February 9, 1875.

The tunneling had proceeded from both ends to meet in the middle, making for a very difficult surveying and engineering problem. Two vertical shafts of 328 feet and 1,028 feet were sunk from the top of the mountain. These enabled tunneling from inside the mountain, aided surveying and provided increased ventilation. Reference towers were erected on the line of the tunnel over the top of the mountain; these towers were sighted with transit instruments to calculate and establish the alignment of the tunnel sections. When the east and west sections of the tunnel finally met in 1873, the alignments were in error by less than an inch!

During the height of construction, about 900 men were employed on the project including many experienced Irish and Welsh immigrant miners. A total of 196 lives were lost in accidents with the worst single incident occurring



East portal of the Hoosac Tunnel in the town of Florida

in 1867 when fire completely destroyed the lift building above the central shaft, dropping tons of steel drills and burning debris on 13 miners trapped below.

Some very significant technical advances were pioneered in the construction of the tunnel including electric fuses that enabled simultaneous explosions, the use of compressed air hammer drills and the first large-scale use of nitroglycerine. The Hoosac Tunnel, owned and maintained by Guilford Transportation, is still in use today by occasional freight trains.

— Bob Desrosiers

There is an excellent exhibit about the Hoosac Tunnel at the Western Gateway Heritage State Park in North Adams.

Phone: 413-499-4660, Ext. 456 Website: www.berkshirerecc.edu/lifelong/bill.html E-mail: smack@berkshirerecc.edu

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