

# B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning  
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## Art Historian to Lecture on Picasso

The elements that distinguish Picasso and revolutionized art were already evident in his Blue and Rose periods. Join Arline Leven for a look at his unique genius which emerged so early in his long career. The date is Monday, November 3, 1997 at 9:30 AM. The session at Berkshire Community College is open to all B.I.L.L. members at no charge.

Ms. Leven is a highly regarded art historian who taught at Washington University in St. Louis, served as art gallery curator, and docent at the Clark Museum, Storm King and many other locations. She kindly offered to speak about this timely subject and is one of the many deeply appreciated resources within B.I.L.L.



*Child Holding A Dove by Pablo Picasso.  
Private collection on loan to the National  
Gallery, London*

## A Great Day Ahead in Boston

On November 6, 1997 B.I.L.L. members will attend a rehearsal of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and tour the Picasso Exhibit, "The Early Years 1892-1906," at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Bernard Haitink will conduct the rehearsal featuring noted pianist Murray Perahia. Works include Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Sharp Minor and the Shostakovich Symphony No. 4.

The Picasso exhibit will allow us to answer the question, "If Picasso had died at the age of 25 in 1906, when the last of the works shown in this show were made, how would we regard him today?"

## The B.I.L.L. Book Club

On September 24th the new B.I.L.L. Book Club discussed "Martin Dressler," by Steven Millhauser. This will be followed on October 15th by "The First Man," the last novel by Albert Camus. What great good fortune to have Phyllis Jaffe lead these two initial sessions!!

The Book Club will meet periodically during the winter and we would like to find additional discussion leaders. This is a great opportunity to get together during the "quiet" winter months and do some wonderful reading as well. If you are interested, please contact our Curriculum Committee Chair, Ellie Sack at (413)-528-9771. Members should watch for additional announcements and reading list.

## Meet The Author — A Curriculum Extra

We listened avidly to Professor Parmet's course, "Our Living Presidency" last spring. Now, we will have the opportunity to hear him speak about his just-published biography, "George Bush: Life of a Lone Star Yankee" (Scribners, 1997).

This open lecture will be free of charge and take place on Wednesday, October 29th at 1:30 PM at Berkshire Community College. The book will be available at local book stores in early October and Professor Parmet has kindly offered to autograph any brought to the lecture.

A noted historian and biographer, Herbert S. Parmet was born in New



*Professor Herbert S. Parmet*

York City where he spent most of his life. His professional duties took him to Washington, DC and other parts of the world, and since 1985 he has lived in Hillside, NY. He is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of CUNY and President of the Society of American Historians. His major publications include books on Nixon, on Kennedy, and "The Democrats: The Years

After FDR."

He is "still decompressing" after finishing the Bush biography but admits he is thinking about his next book already; one on presidential power.

## President's Letter

How do we spell success??? — B.I.L.L.!!! The fall session is well underway with capacity classes and fantastic lecturers delivering stimulating information to responsive, alert students. Group discussions at lunch and happy people involved in learning, abound. New member enrollment is at an all time high.

We're listening to what you told us you want. Extended activities are planned for the late fall and winter. There will be four sessions of our Winter Lecture Series, the monthly Book Club, a mini-Winter Session, an Opera Club, a Film Study Group, and additional special events.

I have established two new committees; a B.I.L.L. travel program committee with Dr. Norman Avnet, First Vice President, as chairperson, and a Strategic Planning Committee chaired by Art Sherman.

Continued success requires your participation in committees, leading classes or study groups, and input of new ideas. B.I.L.L. is replete with member talent and we ask you to come forth; work with us. The Berkshire Institute for Lifetime Learning is your organization; it's strength lies with all of you.

### B.I.L.L. Explores Travel

I have been appointed to form a committee to determine the feasibility of a B.I.L.L. travel program. Other ILR groups have done this in varying ways. Some provide information to members. Others set up Study Groups, pick an area, a region, or a country, study it, and then plan a vacation study to the location.

I am looking for interested volunteers from the general membership of B.I.L.L. to meet and discuss all options. If you would like to participate, please contact me at B.I.L.L., BCC, 1350 West Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201.  
— Norman Avnet, Vice President

## Convocation Launches Fall '97 Semester

The Opening Convocation featured an address by Dr. John Sears, Executive Director of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and Library at Hyde Park. Brief welcoming remarks by Ms. Ann Dulye, B.I.L.L.'s President and Ms. Barbara A. Viniar, President of the Berkshire Community College preceded his comments.

Dr. Sears discussed the Roosevelt legacy, calling to mind the many problems which beset our country throughout their stewardship. He focused on the fundamental changes which took place during these years; changes which altered our way of life and survive, despite intensive efforts to overturn them.

He spoke about the enormous contributions of Eleanor Roosevelt acting as the eyes, legs and conscience of the administration. Following the President's death, President Truman appointed her a delegate to the United Nations. She turned an apparently trivial assignment to a human rights subcommittee into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; an achievement which will be celebrated this coming year throughout the world. A National Coordinating Committee for UDHR50 has been established and member organizations will integrate the 50th anniversary celebration into their program planning to support the goals of the Declaration.



Barbara A. Viniar, Dr. John Sears, Ann Dulye

## Fabulous Trip to Hyde Park

Weather wonderful, food good, company lovely. This would have been enough, but B.I.L.L. members developed much deeper insights about the life and times of Roosevelt. Very interesting on a personal basis was the cottage where Eleanor lived her own private life, managing a company making replicas of continental furniture. We came away more fully appreciating the difficulties she faced trying to live in her disapproving, dominating mother-in-law's house.

The Museum is a remarkable window into the lives of these unique people. The key role played by Eleanor in keeping Franklin in politics despite his



Touring Hyde Park

mother's wishes following the polio attack is very clear, as are the enormity of his great challenges. His strength, personality and leadership are documented through excellent multimedia presentations which rekindled old memories.

Many thanks to Arlene Gilbert, Arlene Breskin and Susan Orenstein for their support, and to Lillian Cohen for her encouragement and advice.

## Editor's Comments

Your input is very important to us. We solicit articles and letters about your travels, science, arts or educational experiences. Please contact 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

Responding to many requests for courses during the normally fallow winter months, a sub-committee, headed by Elliot Vines is developing a four week movie-plus-discussion series. Also in the works is a continuation of the popular, "Magic In the Berkshires" course by Anna Pollock. We will keep members advised. Also look for our Spring 1998 Semester to offer very exciting courses in both Williamstown and Great Barrington. We need your thoughts and ideas; that's how we progress together.

— Ellie Sack, Chair, Curriculum Committee

To B.I.L.L. Board Editor

Rabbi Jack Stern's lecture on the Exodus was thoughtful, insightful and enlightening, given by a scholar of the highest caliber. Indeed, I have found the B.I.L.L. courses over the past three years similarly valuable. They have enhanced the quality of my life after retirement to the Berkshires.

My first meeting as a member of the Editorial Staff, including officers and chairpersons, was for me, a dynamic display of profound intellectual and emotional investment in the organization by all involved. I was very impressed. The enormous amount of creative thinking and action behind the scenes helps explain the phenomenal success of B.I.L.L.

— Karl Easton, M.D.

## Getting To Know You

### PHYLLIS JAFFE

Her Spring '96 course, "Gertrude Stein and Her Friends," revealed Phyllis Jaffe as one of the best kept secrets in the Berkshires.

She and Joe (CPA), have two daughters and a son, and are grandparents of a very special five year old. Phyllis is an avid bridge player (talks during games), a dedicated (not expert) tennis player, a loving cook (favorites are soups and cakes), an ice dancer, and an adventurous traveler who also flew in a hot air balloon.

Since "retiring", she has been curriculum consultant at a NYC alternative high school, guest lecturer at many organizations, and a dedicated "cuddler" at the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Vincent's Hospital. Her book clubs have grown in popularity



because of the vitality, intellectual expertise, scholarship and passion that characterize her programs.

Her decision to become a High School teacher of English after graduating from Brooklyn College (BA) and NYU (MA) proved an excellent choice; she was named New York City High School Teacher of the Year in 1984.

Hooked on TV cop shows, for relaxation, she loves English mysteries and the Regency novels of Georgette Hyer. But, Trollope and Austen remain her favorites. Modern authors she admires are first and foremost, Toni Morrison—then John Updike, Flannery O'Connor, Nadine Gordimer and Robertson Davies.

Truly, a B.I.L.L. treasure!!!

## What To Do When Traveling ???

Why, seek out another Institute for Lifetime Learning!!

Jack and I spent the summer in Evanston, IL where through a former colleague at Northwestern University, we discovered the website of the local ILR. They describe themselves as a "peer-learning, member-driven program for retired men and women." They pursue "academic goals" in seminar-style study groups, exploring literature, history, politics, science, philosophy, media and the arts. The program has operated for ten years offering 25 courses every fall and spring, and ten in the summer. Examples are: Music or Opera Appreciation, The Short Story, Science Today, Philosophical Theories of Feminism, Genetics, Yiddish Literature, and African-American Influences in American Culture. A course is devoted to stimulating articles in the New Yorker magazine. Membership is \$180 per year.

We were cordially invited to attend any class session as their guests. We chose one of their music appreciation courses and one of a course devoted to Woody Allen films. The music session offered background on the composer, Franz Schubert; we listened to the "Trout" symphony and enjoyed the lively interaction among the students. A nice touch was the cookies and soft drinks served midway in the session.

The mini-lecture and discussion following Woody Allen's "Crimes and Misdemeanors" was very enjoyable. The length of the film, required scheduling a double session.

We didn't know people, but felt comfortable because they so closely resemble the people at B.I.L.L.. It was a delightful experience and something that B.I.L.L. members might pursue when they travel.

— Lenore Rubin

## October Makes Space History — Past and Present

At 10:10AM on October 14, 1947, over Muroc Lake, CA, Captain Charles (Chuck) E. Yeager, US Air Corps, flew the Bell XS-1 at Mach 1.05; the very first time, a manned aircraft exceeded the speed of sound in level flight. A postage stamp is being issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this historic event.

The dramatic flight is recorded in Chuck's very simple six paragraph report which he typed himself. It was Classified at the time, but some information about this and subsequent flights was released on June 11, 1948. From a declassified copy, the key fourth paragraph reads as follows:

"At 42,000 feet in approximately level flight, a third cylinder was turned on. Acceleration was rapid and speed increased to .98Mach. The needle of the machmeter fluctuated in this reading momentarily, then passed off the scale. Assuming that the off-scale reading remained linear, it is estimated that 1.05Mach was attained at this time. Approximately 30% of fuel and lox remained when this speed was reached and the motor was turned off."

At the other end of the exploration spectrum is Cassini, the most complex interplanetary spacecraft ever built. It will survey Saturn and it's moons, with particular emphasis on Titan. This moon, nearly the size of Mars and bigger than either Mercury or Pluto,

is believed to hold clues to how the primitive Earth evolved into a life-bearing planet. The nitrogen-based atmosphere is Earth-like, with the surface believed coated with a residue of a sticky brown organic rain and containing chilled lakes of ethane and methane.

The launch window for the long journey opens on October 6th at 5:39AM and closes November 15th. The most powerful US launch vehicle, USAF Titan IVB/Centaur System, will put Cassini onto the very sophisticated interplanetary trajectory, delivering the spacecraft to Saturn almost seven years later on July 1, 2004. On November 6, 2005, the Huygens probe (built by the European and Italian Space Agencies) will be released from Cassini and parachute into Titan's thick atmosphere to provide direct sampling and photographs of the surface.

President's Note: B.I.L.L. is fortunate to have a personal insight into these events because of Art Sherman's early career involvement as Director of Research and Engineering of the pioneer rocket engine company in the US which developed the propulsion system for the XS-1 and subsequent rocket powered aircraft and other vehicles. He retains an avid interest in space exploration.



Bell XS-1 Rocket Plane

### B.I.L.L. Member Perk

Berkshire West has extended a special offer to B.I.L.L. members. Normal monthly membership fees of \$82 are reduced to \$42. This is an excellent opportunity to attend exercise classes, use the workout machines, pool programs, etc. and get into shape for the fall and winter, after a summer of outdoor activities.

### Away From the Berkshires???

Don't miss important announcements, or the Spring '98 catalogue. Notify Sharon Mack of your forwarding address and dates. MAIL: B.I.L.L., Berkshire Community College, 1350 West Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201. FAX; (413) 447-7840. E-MAIL; smack@cc.berkshire.org.

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