
MIT Senior Focus

The Association of MIT Retirees

#24—April 2006

Annual Spring Lunch at Endicott House

Friday, May 12

Reception begins at 11:45 a.m.

Lunch served at 12:30 p.m.

Guest speaker: Dr. Kirk Kolenbrander,
Senior Advisor to the President

Just \$35 per person covers lunch, service & gratuity

MIT Retiree Summer Picnic June 27

There will be a picnic again this year at Lincoln Laboratory. This was a great way to kick off the summer last year; over 300 attended and all had a very great time. This is an opportunity for those whose careers kept them in Cambridge to see Lincoln Laboratory and find out a little about life on the Lexington Campus. The plans will be finalized in April and there will be a mailing with an invitation and all the details in May.

Here is the preliminary information. The event will be from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., an agenda similar to last year with lunch at noon at the Pavilion. Each Association member is welcome to bring one adult guest. The cost is expected to be \$10 per person and advance registration is required. There will be transportation from and back to the MIT Kendall Square shuttle stop. The event is handicap accessible. We have requested good weather, however the pavilion is under cover. Socializing and camaraderie were the main activity by everyone last year and I hope you can make it.

– *Dick Dolbec*

Temporary Employment for MIT Retirees

Are you retired from MIT's administrative or support staff and interested in doing temporary work on campus? Several departments including the Media Lab and the Biology Department would like to hear from you. These departments would love to draw on the wealth of experience that MIT retirees have when it comes to filling temporary assignments. For more information, please contact Ramona Allen in the Media Lab at ramona@media.mit.edu or (617) 253-0655 or Mary

Markel Murphy in Biology at markel@mit.edu or (617) 253-4729.

Hot Trend: “Must-Have” Cell Phone Number

Open your cell phone now. Look at the list of people and choose the one you would want to be notified in case you're involved in an accident or emergency. Then add the letters ICE before that name. ICE stands for “In Case of Emergency” and is a designation emergency personnel understand.

ICE program started in England after the July 7 terrorist attacks when emergency personnel had difficulty identifying some of the victims. Now it's gaining momentum in the United States. For example, teenagers can put ICE before Mom and Dad's names. Married people can put ICE before their spouse's name. You can even designate three or four ICE numbers. It's a simple thing that will allow first responders to an accident to notify your family if you're unconscious or unresponsive.

British paramedic Bob Brotchie who conceived the idea offered the following advice, “First agree with your designated person that they be that contact. They must (be able to) confirm your date of birth, your name, preferably your address. Other relevant information includes allergies, blood type, and any previous medical history. Information can be rapidly relayed to the hospital to expedite treatment and next-of-kin can be contacted.”

To work, your cell phone has to be turned on, not locked and not damaged in the accident. That's why emergency personnel suggest that in addition to the ICE designation on your cell phone, you carry emergency contact information in your wallet. Here's another benefit: If your cell phone is lost or stolen and later recovered, police can call the ICE number to get in touch with you.

– *Picked up and relayed by Bob Blake*

Medical Task Force Releases Final Report

Excerpted from the MIT Faculty Newsletter,
Vol. XVII, No. 2, November/December 2005

After more than a year of work, the Task Force on Medical Care for the MIT Community released its final report in early November. The Task Force examined all aspects of medical care, medical insurance, and related educational and community support programs available to MIT students, employees, retirees, and post-docs through the MIT Medical Department, as well as through outside health insurance programs administered by Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Tufts Health Plan, and Delta Dental.

The Task Force concluded that the existing MIT model for providing health care and health insurance has performed well historically, that the MIT community is generally highly satisfied with it and that it can continue to serve MIT well in the future if various reforms are implemented. The report offers over 40 recommendations aimed at improving access to and quality of health care provided by the MIT Medical Department, improving satisfaction with health insurance options, reducing the cost of providing health care and health insurance, and enhancing “wellness” and related health care education initiatives. The Task Force report can be found at web.mit.edu/task-force/medical.

Ask Jane

Retiree: Is there somewhere on campus where I as a senior can test my driving skills?

Jane: The AgeLab at MIT has a program called “Driving Miss Daisy.” Miss Daisy is a bright red Volkswagen Beetle with a computer-generated simulator that collects driving data such as speed and reaction time. The AgeLab is looking for AARP member volunteers (call 866-448-3621 or email ma@arp.org). Or contact the AgeLab directly (617-253-0753).

Retiree: Is there a way I can retain my MIT email address after retirement?

Jane: It is our understanding that this is possible if your department will sponsor you. The Association has been exploring ways to sponsor such a program, but to date has not been able to work out the kinks.

Retiree: Will I ever need to show my Social Security card now that I am retired?

Jane: At our December seminar, Francine Kollias of the Social Security Administration, mentioned that it is surprising how many times a retiree may need to show his Social Security card – for instance if he needs to replace a Medicare card. So take a look around your house and files, in case you haven’t seen your card lately. Can’t find it? Visit the Social Security Web site at www.socialsecurity.gov. Click on forms and find form number SS-5. You will get an Adobe form to print (the first four pages are instructions – the last is the actual form). The instructions state that even for replacement cards, you would have to go to a Social Security office and show two forms of ID.

Retiree: What do you know about the new T cards being issued to seniors?

Jane: The “Charlie” pass is a picture ID being issued by the MBTA to seniors for use on the T, busses, and trains. The fares are 35 cents on the T, 25 cents on the bus, and 25 or 35 cents fare on the trains. Where the new fare collection equipment has been installed, just follow the instructions for card use and payment; if there is a collector, just show your card and drop cash in the receptacle.

Medical Consumers’ Advisory Council (MCAC)

David Hogarth has been nominated by the AMITR to be the Association’s representative on MIT’s Medical Consumers’ Advisory Council (MCAC), the user response group for MIT Medical. The Committee has membership of about ten people, including senior medical people and representatives from each constituency providing feedback – students, faculty, administrators, support staff, union, and retirees. The committee meets about four times each year to discuss the medical concerns of the community, and how MIT might best address them. The council reports annually to the Medical Management Board, which is the governing board of the Medical Department within the MIT structure.

MIT AgeLab Seminar, August 16

The 50+ population is the fastest growing segment worldwide. Our next seminar on Wednesday, August 16, 2:30 p.m. features the MIT AgeLab. Research Associate Roz Puleo will lead a discussion on the Lab’s exciting and innovative projects addressing safe driving, wellness and self-empowered health, independent living and caregiving, and business strategy and policy innovation. We’ll send a flyer during the summer with all program details and RSVP and parking arrangements. In the meantime, visit the AgeLab’s

Web site <http://web.mit.edu/agelab/> to learn more about their projects or to sign up for a study.

– Mathilde Wood

Carl H. Much Joins Advisory Committee

Carl Much who retired from Lincoln Lab circa 1999 has recently joined the AMITR Advisory Group. His wife *Ardeth (Grant) Much* is also a Lincoln Lab MIT retiree and they reside in Groveland, Massachusetts. An electrical engineer and a Group Leader at Lincoln Laboratory, Carl was in Division 7 “Engineering” where he was leader of Group 76, “Control Systems Engineering,” comprised of about 20 members.

Retiree Workshops, a Fun Learning Experience

We recently completed our third series of workshops and wish to thank the many participants and instructors who have made these fun and interactive groups such a worthwhile learning experience. Our appreciation to the following workshop leaders: *Bruce Wedlock* (woodworking); *Jerry Burke* (computer); *Nita Regnier* (creative writing); *Bill Flannery* (flower boxes); *Tim Healey* (cooking); and *Dick Vidale* (digital camera).

Mathilde Wood and *Bill Piacentini* share these class notes from their woodworking and cooking groups, respectively.

I so much enjoyed participating in the “Shaker Boxes Workshop” with *Bruce Wedlock*. Bruce has an incredible woodworking shop in his home basement. He and wife *Marjorie Wedlock* built an exhaust system so that there is not a speck of saw dust floating about. (No fear for anyone who might be allergic to dust.) Also to my liking is that Bruce is a knowledgeable and articulate instructor. “Do it this way, or parts of the box will not fit,” Bruce guided, and he was right. With Bruce’s patience, all participants created a set of Shaker Boxes that deserve a place of honor in their homes.

For any MIT retiree I can highly recommend taking this workshop. For me the sessions were most uplifting, and learning to use different power tools was a thrill. During these woodworking sessions I experienced different and new disciplines which I value. I am proud of the Shaker Boxes I created under Bruce’s instruction. Bruce and wife *Marjorie* are delightful individuals and are most gracious to open their home to pass on their knowledge to other MIT retirees.

Two of MIT Chef Coordinator *Tim Healey*’s Kitchen Confidential workshops were “Chicken Breast 101” with new recipes and techniques on preparing the old standby chicken, and “Muffins and Scones” with hints and surprising facts on baking. During the chicken class I learned that “brining” the chicken prior to cooking helps to keep any food moist and flavorful “to the bone” during the entire cooking process. We also experimented with “half-strength” brine. It is up to individual tastes which one is favored. The Muffins and Scones class made the best blueberry muffins, cinnamon-currant scones, and (a surprise addition) thick and chewy chocolate chip cookies. Here is another tidbit (pardon the pun): brown sugar makes the texture of cookies soft and chewy. It turns out that invert sugar contains both glucose and fructose. This makes the invert sugar “hygroscopic,” meaning that it pulls water from the air, even after the cookies are baked! Only brown sugar has invert sugar. The granulated sugar must lose invert sugar during processing. Each class finished deliciously with a full lunch. We were very lucky to have mahi-mahi following the Muffins and Scones class. The only thing missing was a fine wine! There was talk of perhaps having a pasta class in the future. I can only imagine a *frutti di mare* over linguine! *Mangi bene!*

– *Bill Piacentini*

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Tour

A sunny but cold, windy March 15 saw 22 members and guests touring the Gardner Museum. Not knowing that you can’t be admitted early, most of us arrived well before our tour began. Some just meandered around and others found a convenient hallway at Simmons College until our two guides began the tour by explaining that *Isabella* had made a will, specifying how she wanted to present all her paintings and other antique pieces in her house. What impacted all of us were *Isabella*’s instructions of limiting the amount of light (to protect the art), making the building too dark for some of us to see very well. No lighting on the walls and paintings on the second floor: a pity, because they were covered with gorgeous hangings, including a needlepoint piece from ceiling to two meters above the floor.

The one *Van Gogh*, a small self-portrait as a teenager, was close to a window with light to reveal his mastery of illumination. Other paintings by *Vermeer*, *Rembrandt* and *Manet* were famously stolen in 1990 and have not been recovered. The

third floor *was* bathed in light from many windows. A portrait of Isabella hangs in one corner, she wisely specified in her will that it be placed there, and it looks magnificent. She designed the rooms herself and displayed furniture and other objects she had collected from her wide travels in Italy and elsewhere. She was the first U.S. citizen to travel to Cambodia in the 1800s, having her husband's support – as she did in all her undertakings.

Our two groups met after the tour, with some heading for lunch in the café, to Copley Place or home. Everyone had a great time and I hope will consider joining future excursions. Thanks to those who joined this tour of Isabella's mansion!

– *Elsa Tian*

Truly Important Ingredients for Birthday Cakes

I want to tell you a funny experience about my teenaged grandson, Nicholas. All of the characters and places in this story are true.

Nicholas called me Sunday evening to ask if he could come to my house with his friends to make a birthday cake for his mother (my daughter). I said, "Of course you can." He and his friends came to the house about half an hour later with "all the ingredients." After Nicholas arrived he told me that he did not want any help from me, he wanted to make this birthday cake with his friends only. I stayed in the family room listening to them working on this project in the kitchen.

Shortly, Nicholas came to me to ask where could he find the Wesson oil. A moment later, he asked about eggs, a measuring cup and a large bowl to mix in all the ingredients. I listened to them discussing whether this was enough oil, enough water – they were trying to be exact in their measuring. All the time I was chuckling – softly, so they wouldn't hear me. The mixing of the birthday cake was finished about 30 minutes later.

Nicholas and his friend Dan asked me for a 9" by 13" pan for the cake mix. The boys hovered over the stove the entire time – 45 minutes – while the cake baked. I told them to put a toothpick into the cake and if nothing stuck to it, the cake was done. I heard them laughing in loud tones and calling, "It's done, it's done." The next step was to let it cool before spreading the frosting. In the meantime Nicholas looked over and asked me if he should have sprayed anything on the pan before pouring in the ingredients. I told him, "Yes, otherwise the cake

would stick to the bottom," which it did. After the cake cooled, Nicholas and the boys decided to frost the cake – in the pan – and write "Happy birthday, Mom, from Nicholas and the boys."

Nicholas put the cake in the fridge until the next day, my daughter's birthday. After school that evening, March 6, Nicholas presented his mother with the birthday cake – that had one large ten inch candle – and sang Happy Birthday to her. (Nicholas admitted to me that the bottom of the cake was stuck to the bottom of the pan. I don't think he told his mother.)

I'm sure that even though my daughter might have eaten a piece of the pan with each piece of the cake, she will remember this as the best birthday cake she ever received. And possibly the only birthday cake ever made by a teen-aged boy and his gang. Just another day in the life of a grandfather.

– *Jim Coleman*

Senior Focus is published by the Association of MIT Retirees for its members. The Association is part of the Community Services Office; Ted Johnson is the CSO director. Dick Dolbec, Bob Blake and Jane Griffin are co-chairs of the Association.

Send address changes and suggested news items or activities to the Association of MIT Retirees, 77 Massachusetts Ave., Room E19-432, Cambridge, MA 02139-4307. We can be reached at 617-253-7910, or email retirees.assoc@mit.edu.

Visit our Web site at web.mit.edu/retireesassoc.