



SENIOR FOCUS

March 2008, #28

ENDICOTT HOUSE SPRING LUNCH – MAY 22

Plans are in the works for this year's Spring Lunch to be held on Thursday, May 22 at Endicott House in Dedham. Our principal guest speaker will be Julie Soriero, who joined MIT in July 2007 as Associate Professor and Department Head and Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation. Joining her will be a few members of the Athletics staff who will describe MIT's athletics programs, how they have evolved over the years, and how they fit into the education program of the students. The Spring Lunch is always an enjoyable time to get together with old friends and to make new ones, so plan on arriving for the reception at 11:45 a.m. and lunch seating around 12:30 p.m. We'll keep our fingers crossed for a sunny and warm day with lots of flowers in bloom!



MIT RETIREES UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FUND NAMES FIRST RECIPIENT

We are pleased to announce that the first award from this fund has been made to MIT student Laura Harris ('08). Laura is the granddaughter of Paul J. Harris, who retired from Lincoln Lab in 1989. Laura is from Clifton Park, NY and is majoring in Computer Science (Course 6). She has been involved working on a UROP developing vision capabilities for a robotic arm. Congratulations to Laura!

The fund has received gifts totaling \$10,846 from 120 different people. An additional \$7,515 was added to the fund through gifts that had previously been received in memory or in honor of MIT retirees. We thank the many members who gave to this fund which provides valuable resources to enable deserving MIT students to afford an MIT education. To learn more about the fund, visit web.mit.edu/retireesassoc/.

— *Bonny Kellermann*

WELCOME NEW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

We welcome *Nancy Alusow* and *Mary Ann Donofrio* to the advisory board. Nancy retired from MIT Lincoln Laboratory in 2006 after completing 39 years of diversified service with both MIT and the

Lab, including positions involved with contracts and services, site management and a stint on the Kwajalein, Marshall Islands. Mary Ann retired from MIT in 2007 at the end of a career that spanned 41 years. Most of these years were served in the Accounting Office where she advanced through the ranks and retired as Senior Accounting Officer.

THE LEFT HANDED VIOLIN

My story goes back many years. I often thought about what I would do after I retired from MIT. Well, that day came for me in 1992. Before I retired, my wife Dorothy bought me a violin for Christmas. She knew I loved the violin but I never had the time to take lessons. About a year after I retired — and with my wife's coaxing — I made arrangements to take lessons at the South Shore Conservatory. I found the lessons to be very difficult because I am left handed.

After about a year taking lessons I finally stopped because I could not control the bow in my right hand. So I hung up my violin for several years.

Then I attended a group session sponsored by HR to talk to potential retirees. They were interested to hear from the retirees about what they were doing in

their retirement. When it came my turn, I told them I played golf, enjoyed spending time with my grandchildren and wanted to learn to play the violin left handed. I got quite a laugh from the audience.



Well about three or four

weeks after the meeting I received a telephone call from an attendee who had been sitting at my table, to let me know about a man in New Hampshire who was a professional violinist, who had injured his right hand and had had to learn to play the violin left handed. I tracked the fellow down and spoke to him about my frustration. He was very encouraging and explained that I would have to reverse everything on the violin. Taking the top off, reversing the block inside the violin, and reorienting the pins, the strings, and the bridge could cost up to \$3,000 because, of course, it had to be done by hand (both hands presumably!). My new friend said

that he was compelled to buy his violin in Europe and it took him four years to regain his skill and to play professionally again.

He recommended I take my violin to a violin repair shop in Arlington Center, which I did, and had the cost confirmed. I felt that was too much to spend. So I put the violin on the back shelf again. Well, one day at the beginning of 2007, my son was at my house to go to dinner. He heard me listening to a violin CD and, remembering my goal, thoughtfully encouraged me to go on ebay to look for a left handed violin. Well, to our surprise there were two left handed violins for sale. After checking further we found out there really was just one. My son pressed me to bid on the violin. This was a 4/4-student violin and there were only two hours left to bid.

I bid \$87 for the violin and said to my son, "Let's go to dinner." When we returned, my son went to the computer to find out what the winning bid was. It was mine — I could not believe I had the winning bid!

The violin came about two weeks later. I started to practice when some of my grandchildren were in the house — "squeak/squeak." They asked me to go upstairs to practice. I am enjoying the squeaky practice sessions in my retirement. Some day I will be able to open the door and let my family hear me practicing. Then a recital piece.

— *Jim Coleman*

Ed. Note: And then, after "practice, practice, practice," Carnegie Hall or a recital for the retirees!

SPRINGTIME IN MONTREAL

Join *Carole Gunning* and old and new friends for three fun days in chic Montreal. We'll leave from campus on May 8 and return on May 10. We'll lodge in style at the 5-star Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Our activities will include a guided city tour, dinners, a night at the Casino de Montreal (optional), and time to explore on our own. On the way home, we'll stop at the Cold Hollow Cider Mill in Waterbury, Vermont. The cost per person is \$309/double; \$299/triple; or \$429/single. Please email Carole (carolegunning@comcast.net) with questions.



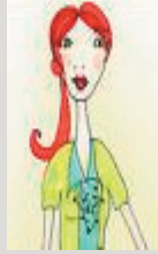
THANK YOU JOAN LORIA

Speaking of exciting travel, we recognize and thank *Joan Loria* who recently stepped down from the advisory board. For a number of years Joan arranged memorable travel adventures for us, and we will miss her advice and counsel on the committee.

ASK JANE

Retiree: Can campus retirees use the medical facilities at Lincoln Lab?

Jane: Absolutely! Contact the medical center at Lincoln (781-981-7080) to schedule an appointment. Lincoln now has a full-time internist on staff. If your



primary care physician is presently in Cambridge, but you decide it is more convenient to go to Lexington, it is advisable to change your primary care physician. However, if, for instance, you have a sore throat and you prefer to go to Lexington rather than to Cambridge, you can make an appointment and receive medical care at Lincoln.

Retiree: Any news on the dental insurance front?

Jane: As of January 1, 2008, AARP is offering Delta Dental insurance to its members. In order to take advantage of this coverage, you must live in Massachusetts and be an AARP member. To get an information packet, contact AARP (1-888-687-2277). Delta Dental offers both single and family plans and has Plan A and Plan B options of coverage.

I contacted our MIT Benefits Office to see if there was any expectation that MIT would offer dental insurance next year. I just had a reply: "It's in the works" and actively being worked on. Stay tuned.

A DICKSON FUND GRANT MAKES LIFE LONG LEARNING POSSIBLE

As I was about to turn 50 I began to think about things that I had always wanted to learn. I had never learned to ride a bike or to speak a foreign language. Despite the fact that I had always heard that these are things best learned when very young, I decided to give them a try. I celebrated my 50th birthday with a bike ride and a Spanish lesson. Since then I have been a big proponent of lifelong learning and have continued to take classes and learn new things including another language, Italian. As I became more proficient in Spanish I looked for higher level classes. Through MIT's tuition assistance plan I was able to take classes at Middlebury College and Harvard Extension School.



When I retired last year and friends asked what I was going to do next I said that I would travel more and take classes. Now I would have time to devote to my studies of Spanish and Italian. The Harvard Extension School offered the level I was looking for but the price was high, even to be a listener. Then I found out about the William R. Dickson Retiree



Education Fund that awards retired Quarter Century Club members with grants of up to \$1,000 for study at accredited institutions. Through the generosity of our former Senior Vice President I was able to sign up for a class, Contemporary Spanish Cinema, at Harvard last fall.

The course aimed to develop proficiency in the basic language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking and introduce students to contemporary Spanish culture through film study. The films were in Spanish without subtitles and classes were conducted solely in Spanish. In addition to viewing films that have become popular here in the United States such as those of Pedro Almodvar, I was introduced to many new films and directors. Since we watched the films on our own, class time was spent discussing the film which was a lot of fun. Being decades older than the other students, I found it fascinating to hear their perspectives which were often quite different from mine. I hope that they took something away from the viewpoints of a senior citizen!

A couple of years ago I took Intermediate Italian II: Readings on Modern Italian Life and Society. One part of the course was based on the book, *L'Italia dal Fascismo ad Oggi* (Italy from Fascism to Today). We explored different topics by reading websites of the popular Italian newspapers and discussed our readings. As a listener, I did not have to make an oral presentation but I thoroughly enjoyed those of my classmates whose topics varied widely. One student brought in letters sent by her uncle, an Italian priest, during the Second World War. Another student from Albania talked about problems related to the immigration of Albanians into Italy. This interaction with younger generations is one of the best things about being a lifelong learner.

To learn more about applying for a Dickson Fund Grant, visit web.mit.edu/communityservices/qcc/dickson.html.

— Joanne Straggas

MEDICAL CONSUMERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

At the February meeting, the fiscal year 2009 Medical Department budget was presented. It represents an increase of \$2.3 million and would provide additional staffing on campus and at

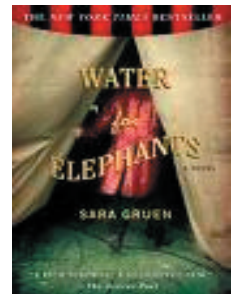


Lincoln Lab. The Director of Medical Information Systems gave an update on the major technology platforms and software applications that were recently brought online to provide a more integrated medical records database throughout the Department. MIT Medical expects to be visited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) in the near future as the normal procedure for renewing its hospital accreditation. This is always done as a surprise visit (they show up unannounced at 8:00 am) in order to check what really goes on. MIT Medical continues to work on diversity awareness as part of better serving students and staff in the multi-cultural population of MIT. A successful Smoke Out Day was held in November on campus and at Lincoln Lab. Several people signed a pledge to quit smoking.

— Carl Much

OF ELEPHANTS, KITES AND FARAWAY PLACES

A friend loaned me her copy of the New York Times bestseller *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, and I found it enchanting. The time frame is the 1930's when small traveling circuses journeyed from town to town by rail, complete with animals (always emulating Barnum and Bailey, nicknamed "Big Bertha" but on a much smaller scale). The troupe set up in an open field for a day or two, and disappeared in the quiet of the night. This delightful story involves the backstage relationships among the performers (called "kinkers") and the brotherhood among the workers who assemble and break down the circus, care for the animals, and look out for each other. There is magic, fantasy, cruelty not only toward animals but toward humans, plus romance, suspense, and laughter. Holding the story together is Jacob Jankowski, age 90ish who lives in a nursing home. He anxiously awaits the arrival of a traveling circus in the field across from the nursing home, and reminisces about his life as a circus veterinarian, his attachment to Rosie, the elephant, and his romance with the wife of the charismatic but twisted animal trainer. I won't spoil the unexpected ending for you. Hope you enjoy the book.



And for a movie, don't miss *The Kite Runner* adapted from the novel by Khalid Hosseini. The title comes from the annual kite competition that declares the champion kite flyer the boy who has the only kite still flying. The kite runner is the boy who runs through the narrow alleys and streets of the Afghan village to catch the dropping last kite. The movie may not be in theaters now, but I'm sure it will be available

on DVD. Quoting movie reviewer Roger Ebert, "How long has it been since you saw a movie that succeeds as pure story? That doesn't depend on stars, effects or genres, but simply fascinates you with how it will turn out?" The family saga begins in San Francisco in 2001 and quickly moves back to 1978 Afghanistan before the Russians, the Taliban, or the Americans. It is the story of boyhood jealousies, and a "remarkable series of old memories and new realities, of the present trying to heal the wounds of the past, of an adult trying to repair the damage he set in motion as a boy." There is great suspense and deep emotion, a view of the devastation of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, and wonderful, dramatic scenes of the skill required for kite flying.

— Jane Griffin

MIT'S EVER-EVOLVING CAMPUS

As we all know, MIT is always in a state of flux, whether it be academic programs or a building program. For those of us who have been retired for a while, the changes in the appearance of the Cambridge campus are dramatic. Many of the offices and buildings we were familiar with are no longer where we think they should be, or are gone. I thought you would be interested in learning about some of the changes completed or planned. I have quoted and extracted liberally from *Tech Talk*.

New academic and research buildings and renovated spaces are bringing departments together and reflect new interests and programs. To begin with, Building 20 was demolished to make way for the Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Sciences at the corner of Vassar and Main Streets. I hear this unusual building has some issues to be dealt with including difficulty adjusting to New England winters with its snow and ice! The East Garage was taken down before it fell down, and groundbreaking has begun for the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research. Building 45 located between the Cyclotron and the Parsons Lab on Vassar Street is no more, and that space is being used for the new Brain and Cognitive Sciences Complex on the corner of Main and Vassar Streets across from Stata.

What was once the CRA lot at the corner of Main and Ames Streets has become the Eli and Edythe L. Broad Institute. The Sloan School of Management will construct a set of buildings between Memorial Drive and Main Street adjacent to its present building at 50 Memorial Drive. Thus another parking lot has bitten the dust, but underground parking is planned. The Media Lab is expanding to former Cenco Building space at the corner of Ames and Amherst Streets. The project was delayed awaiting funding.



The Green Center for Physics has been realized following extensive renovation in Building 6 and features Sol LeWitt's "Bars of Color within Squares."

Additional student housing is springing up. Ashdown House, a graduate residence at the corner of Memorial Drive and Mass. Ave., will be closed and renovated extensively for an undergraduate residence. A new residence (NW35 in the Pacific-Sidney Streets area) will substantially increase graduate student housing, joining another graduate student residence at 235 Albany Street. Undergraduate students are enjoying their new space in Simmons Hall on Vassar Street.

I hear many retirees are enjoying the Al and Barrie Zesiger Sports and Fitness Center located adjacent to the Johnson Athletic Center. Those who used to swim in the old pool will be amazed to see the Olympic-size pool in the new center.

The Charles River skyline is aglow thanks to MIT's Great Dome. New, energy-efficient fixtures that light the Dome use the same amount of electricity as two hair dryers. Shall we speculate as to whether this improved lighting will help or hinder future hacks?

Are you looking for the Cashier's Office in Building 10 and now find a student lounge, or the Credit Union or Accounting Office or Facilities (remembered as Physical Plant!) in E19? Well, plan to do some walking because they are all now at 600 or 700 Technology Square, at the corner of Main and Portland Streets.

A few steps away from the campus is the partially completed University Residence at the corner of Binney and Third Streets. Members of the MIT, Harvard, and MGH communities are eligible to occupy this large complex of cooperatives. If you plan a visit to the campus, consider staying at the Kendall Hotel, the former Kendall Square Fire Station. This should bring back a few memories. Come and take a look around. You will be amazed at the difference and probably dismayed when you can't "get there from here!"

— Jane Griffin

The Association of MIT Retirees publishes SENIOR FOCUS for its members. The Association is part of the Community Services Office. Traci Swartz is staff to the Association. Dick Dolbec, Bob Blake and Jane Griffin are co-chairs of the Association.

Send address changes and suggested news items or activities to:

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