

EVERGREEN

Soon after I retired, I learned about the Evergreen Program at Boston University. I guess I was excited about it because it was such a bargain. Seniors, euphemistically called “evergreens,” were eligible to take classes. BU defined seniors as anyone over 58. I have no idea how they came up with that number. You were eligible for Social Security at 65, and you could join AARP at 50. When I started taking classes, we paid only \$20 a course. Kids are paying tens of thousands of dollars, and I can take the same classes for \$20 a pop. These days (2009) it is up to \$80 a class.

The drill was simple: You go to the Evergreen office during registration week; go through the catalog of classes; pick the classes you want to take; write them down on the registration form; bring it to the registrar in the office who looks over the classes; you pay your money, and the registrar hands you a card that you are supposed to give to the instructor. I believe we were limited to three classes. The first time I started going through the catalog, I felt like a kid in a candy store. There were classes in English and History and Economics and Religion and Philosophy and Music and Art. All kinds of classes that I would love to take. And then I realized that among the art classes were sculpture classes—in a studio—with clay—which you can fire--and plaster—which you can cast—and live models—which you can stare at. That’s for me.

I developed a routine that I followed for several years: I would identify a sculpting class that I wanted to take and noted the time: For example--Monday and Wednesday from 9 am to 12 noon, or Tuesday and Thursday from 2 pm to 5 pm. Then I would find a second class that would fit. I would register for them and I was set. I was back in school. Or I envisioned my going to BU as if I was going to work.

Getting to BU was fairly simple: I would take the D train from Brookline to Kenmore Square, walk up the stairs, cross the upper platform, down the stairs, and take the C train to BU. After the first few weeks of this routine, I thought, “why not bike to school?” So I got on my bike, rode to St. Paul Street, and confronting the traffic and the hills, turned around and gave up the idea. Within a year, I gave up my bike entirely. Occasionally, I drove to school, but finding a parking place was a hassle.