

**Presentation by Mildred H. Gilman
at EMLC's 36th Annual Celebration May 11, 2006**

C H A N G E

Good evening! Thank you for helping us to celebrate another anniversary! We are thinking about change tonight, but only a change of name. As you know, change could be negative but it can also be for a very positive good.

Think for a moment of large changes: gas-lighted homes to electric-powered homes with all their added gadgets; or, in our field, pen and paper to computers. A dynamic organization makes changes as it grows.

Change has also happened in our literacy associations. When I began tutoring in 1966, the name of the national organization was NALA, the abbreviation for National Association for Literacy Advance (now, that's quite a mouthful). This national name was followed by Laubach Literacy International in order to include our work all around the world. Now, as you know, it has become ProLiteracy.

Originally our local council was composed of a few Wayland, MA, Laubach enthusiasts and was named West Suburban Literacy. After I was asked to direct it, the name changed to Eastern Massachusetts Literacy Council. Now our new name, English at Large, is much more inclusive of all our activities. It almost begs newcomers to ask what our program includes, and it opens a conversation.

As we have both said, tonight we are only presenting a name change; but we should note that teaching materials have also changed over the years: When I first started tutoring, we concentrated on the Laubach series called *The New Streamlined English Series* with its manuals and skill books. (As an aside, I suggest that if you write a book or dissertation, think twice before using the word *new* in the title, as a newer approach may follow). At this time, we only taught basic English, and the material was updated periodically.

Meanwhile the need for ESL tutors for the growing numbers of new arrivals on our shores was increasing, and new materials and workshops were needed.

By 1991 the *Laubach Way to English* series was created by Marti Lane and is still used today. (It was my good fortune to have most of my ESL training led by Marti. Workshops were held at national and regional conventions.) Do attend one of these if you can and learn from the topnotch people in our field and be inspired by them.

Our new name will not change how you are serving your learners, whether you are a tutor, office volunteer, conversation, or group leader. I imagine that a new curriculum with new teaching methods will evolve in the future as they have in the past, but they would easily fit under our new umbrella name. The name change is an important step forward for our organization. I and others are excited to be a part of the next chapter of our history.

Thank you.

