



CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN

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A CHICAGO HOUSE CHRISTMAS; OR: LAISSEZ ROULEZ LES BON TEMPS

By an Anonymous Contributor

Are you ready for this? Here's a line-up of gala doings at fabulous Chicago House on the palm-lined banks of the Nile: exciting events of the season to come and golden highlights of Christmases past. Don't ask me which is which. Guess the answers to the questions and win . . . well, something. The Director just vetoed my first and second prizes.

RUN shrieking to the suq three days before Christmas to finish your shopping. The purple glitz scarf or the gold one? The torpedo fish or the one painted with the German flag? Which German flag?

BAKE like crazy with our master bakers, Tina and Sue O. and Kathy! Nut crescents! Chocolate chips! Brownies! You name it! If the stove will cooperate, that is. It's basically an iron box with two kerosene lanterns underneath. VOLUNTEERS ACCEPTED to destroy evidence of less than perfect cookies. (Care packages are not an option. The last recorded fruit cake shipment was posted about Columbus Day. It arrived heavily dented, ripped apart and sort of stuck together with plastic string and bitumen, but just in time . . . for Easter. The Egyptian postal service defeats even the most determined of grandmothers and aunts.)

DECORATE two gross of sugar cookies. Let's see, that's five golden rings, that's Santa's head, that's a goose-a-laying, and that so help me is a maid-a-milking. Yes, purple is a yucky color for icing but that's all there is left. No, the icing gun broke last year and you'll have to make do with wax paper cones. The pretty cookies (well, relatively pretty ones) go to the foreign missions--we eat the green and yellow sea slugs.

OOOH AND AHHHH over Ray's gingerbread Luxor Temple. The obelisk is just fine, as are the statues and sphinxes, but the Egyptologists are bound to carp about ithyphallic Min on the façade for goodness sakes?

CUT your own Christmas tree! (Here's Question #1: How many Chicago House staff, vehicles, and workmen does it take to cut one Christmas tree?) Ride out to Abd el-Zaher's farm, drink tea, eat biscuits, and select your tree from among the surviving tamarisks. Pet the puppies and calves, count the goslings, rest under the grape arbor as the workmen cut the tamarisk branches. It's a dramatic performance involving ladders and ropes, hand saws and shouting as Hassan bounces up and down on the wrong end of the branch until it cracks off. Lash the branches to the top of the Land Rover, and please if possible obscure Abd el-Hay's windscreen totally.

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THE 1991 FRIENDS OF CHICAGO HOUSE TOUR

By Jay Heidel, Artist

The 1991 Friends of Chicago House Archaeological Tour to Upper Egypt was not held last February as originally planned, due to the Gulf War, but rather was postponed and held over the recent Thanksgiving weekend, when fifty-seven people descended on Luxor to augment our staff of twenty-two, making it the largest FOCH tour yet.

The tour began a little differently this year, in a setting reminiscent of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, with confusion, crowds, and a sense of anticipation. Most of the travelers met at Ramesses Station in Cairo on the evening of Wednesday, November 27, to board a train with several cars reserved for the FOCH group. As the train pulled out into the night, everyone congregated for drinks in the bar car, where armchairs and floor space were quickly filled, and several kind souls had brought home-made hors d'oeuvres to share with the conversation. Train stewards announced a postponed dinner at least three times before the group unwillingly broke up to feed-many returned to the bar car afterward to continue the festivities.

Thursday morning the train lurched into Luxor Station, from whence the sleepy guests were spirited off to Chicago House for a breakfast buffet and an introduction to (or for many a reunion with) the staff members. This was followed by a tour of the library and visits to the research facilities, art studios, archives, and photographic labs. The photo lab tour included an exhibition of some of the early photographic equipment used at Chicago House (including an early 8 x 10 mahogany camera with ivory inlay), and was accompanied by the commentary of staff photographer Tom Van Eynde who covered some of the latest advances in photographic technology and showed off some of our new equipment which contrasted our technical capabilities of today with our more limited capabilities of only a few years ago.

Only a brief afternoon recovery period was allowed at the Jolie-Ville before the next event: a private viewing of Luxor Museum's recently discovered and installed Luxor Temple Statue Cachette. The FOCH group then re-entered the museum where Chicago House staff Egyptologists led small groups through the permanent collection. A dramatic visit to Luxor Temple by night followed, with Field Director Peter Dorman giving an introductory tour for first timers, while for our returning friends, Senior Artist Ray Johnson discussed the temple's building phases and stylistic changes in its decoration. The first day was finally brought to a close with Thanksgiving

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CHRISTMAS*(continued from page 1)*

WATCH as twelve well-educated adults and two children are **BEWITCHED** by ten ounces of black and white fluff and a pair of jade green eyes. Yes, Abd el-Zaher says you may keep the kitten, Emily.

MULL wine for the carol sing, or if you can't sing, **CONCOCT** the eggnog. We got real cream one year from a hotel, tried a dreadful pseudo-cream called Klop-Klop once, and used ice cream another year. Ice cream nog isn't bad the first night, but by the second day it looks like the ingredients on the label--separately. Recently we've settled for milk punch.

HAUL out the boxes of Christmas trimmings. **FOR-TIFY** yourself with eggnog and cookies. The tree itself may or may not be cooperating. Sometimes it starts half way up the room and suddenly mushrooms out right under the rafters. Or it may lean back and try to cram itself into the farthest corner. Tamarisk branches are not a neat little fir. Tamarisks are dusty and they drop their fine gray-green needles in a sullen shower. But they are real, and plastic just isn't the same.

TEST the lights for enough strings to drape the tree from tip(?) to toe. Try to find the hooks for the ornaments, which are new, handmade, or possibly decades old. (Question #2: How old is the Barbie doll transformed into our Isis/Angel?) Hang the icicles **ONE BY ONE**, and we need some up there. **DRAP**E the living room, foyer, and dining room with paper and glittery swags. The wreaths go there. Where are the candles for the angel chimes? And where is our beloved Demon Santa Claus? He's battery operated and rings a bell as his eyes flash on and off red.

SING Deck Us All With Boston Charlie three times and the Hallelujah Chorus four. This session is designed for non-singers: no tone, key, or pitch required, but do shut the door.

(We pause now for a word from our sponsor: The Franciscan church celebrates Christmas Eve Mass at 10 PM,

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dinner at the Jolie-Ville, complete with local versions of turkey and dressing.

Friday morning began (not too early--for those who had not slept on the train!) with a ferry ride from the hotel to the West Bank. Upon reaching the "beautiful west" the group was split in two; some chose to hike up Thoth mountain and others chose to see monuments in the valley. On the agenda for those who stayed below was a tour of two private tombs in the Theban necropolis: the 26th-dynasty funeral monument of Pabasa, steward of the Divine Votress Nitocris, and the magnificent 18th-dynasty tomb of Kheruef, who had lived seven centuries before Pabasa. (The tomb of Kheruef was published by the Epigraphic Survey, and Senior Epigrapher Richard Jasnow gave a short on-site demonstration of what our techniques of documentation can accomplish.) Rising from the tombs, Richard and fellow Epigrapher John Darnell next led the throng to the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of Rameses II, for a general overview of one of the few monuments in Egypt that still appears as it did in the 19th century. This was followed by a simple but tasty picnic lunch at the Ramesseum rest house.

The twenty-three hardy souls who chose to climb the mountain scaled the heights to the top and enjoyed clear, bright weather and beautiful views in every direction. Along the trail Staff Artist Carol Meyer discussed the geological strata of the western cliffs and pointed out the flint and fossil fields and an exposed vein of quartz crystals near the top--tour members Dave Work and Peter Manoogian offered their knowledge as geologists as well. At the summit, Epigrapher Debbie Darnell discussed the crumbling mud-brick remains of the small temple and pointed out other historical notes about the immediate area. After a much-needed picnic lunch and a brief rest at the summit, the group made a quick descent, with the younger tour

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CHRISTMAS*(continued from page 2)*

all welcome, Catholic, lapsed, or non. Do go early because the church is packed. The service is in Arabic and Italian, the Kyrie in Greek, the sermon in Arabic, the Epistle in Arabic, Italian, English, and French, and the Gospel sung. Peace on earth, and God help you all.)

SLEEP LATE Christmas morning. You might as well, because brunch isn't until 10, and what'll you have? Scrambled eggs or cheese souffle? Cinnamon buns or German stollen-cake? Orange juice with or without? Sometimes, bliss of bliss, there is a Canadian bacon. The cooks hate it. They have to clean up and they need the oven anyway for the turkey.

TOAST the season with a glass of champagne, and five hundred blessings upon your head, Eberhard, for importing those bottles one by one. Pour yourself a cup of coffee and stand back for . . .

PRESENTS, accumulated, imported, wrapped, beribboned, and (hopefully) tagged, and piled. We achieve total litter in ten minutes flat. According to Neiman-Marcus the winner is: the Horus falcon with the cat on his head, impeccable selection of Mr. and Mrs. John Darnell and Ms. Susan Lezon. Perennial favorites: chocolates. If you're not a card-carrying member of Chocoholics Unanimous at the beginning of the season, you will be by Christmas. (Question #3: How many Egyptologists can you buy for a box of Frango mints?)

DRESS for dinner, unless of course you're setting up the tables in the courtyard or trying to make the appetizers look appetizing or arranging flowers or polishing the last of the silver. Richard, get out of those khakis and you look very handsome in the suit so shut up. **WELCOME** the guests. (Question #4: How many this year? Two, ten, or thirty-plus?) **APPLAUD** the cooks' presentation of The Bird, and clap at Abd el-Zaher's annual speech even if you didn't understand a word.

ENJOY the FULL ARRAY of holiday goodies, or at least what we can wangle. Turkey, stuffing, and gravy! Cranberry this year? Creamed onions, peas, sweet potatoes! Pies and the special plum pudding, and did anyone take the hard sauce out of the freezer in time? Did anyone make hard sauce? Egyptians have the very great charm of worrying about the quality of food rather than its cholesterol or fiber content. A touch of wine? Watch the late afternoon sunlight gleam on the hawks sailing overhead.

BID FAREWELL to the guests and the day, move in for a cup of coffee by the fire. Pull up a tiny, turkey-stuffed, green-eyed kitten and put on *Casablanca* for the thirty-first time.

Signed,

Anonymous
(They'll kick me out of the Society Of American Papyrologists if I sign this.)

END

MARTHA RHOADS BELL

Many of our readers will be greatly saddened to learn of the tragic death of Martha Bell in an automobile accident on November 11, 1991. Martha was the wife of Lanny Bell, Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey from 1977 to 1989, and was a well known figure in international Egyptological circles and especially among our many friends in Cairo. She had just received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania last June.

FOCH TOUR '91*(continued from page 2)*

members sprinting out ahead.

With both groups reunited, we scanned the horizon in vain for a mob of sixty-five donkeys that were scheduled to provide the Great Annual Donkey Ride. (We later found out that the donkeys had misunderstood our directions.) So an impromptu hike over the scenic cliffs of Deir el Bahri was announced, leading from Hatshepsut's temple to the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. Here the final event of the day took place--a tour of the Egyptian underworld, in two versions found in the exquisite royal tombs of Amenhotep II (Dynasty 18) and Ramesses III (Dynasty 20). The appalling heat and humidity in the tomb of Amenhotep gave everyone a prime lesson in the dangers of allowing crowds of tourists into fragile monuments.

Dinner that evening was served in the ballroom of the Luxor Hilton, highlighted by an enormous styrofoam bust of Nefertiti (an unexpected decoration) and two door-prizes. George Preston won the drawing for the early morning balloon ride, and Norm Rubash won the print of a fetching odalisque. Sue Lezon produced this unforgettable image from the Chicago House glass-plate negative archive on printing-out-paper toned with gold.

The next morning the traditional all-day excursion outside the Theban area took the FOCH tour south this year to Gebel el Silsila, a great sandstone barrier that cuts across the course of the Nile. The first stop was at the Wadi Shatt el Rigal, for a look at the great relief of Mentuhotep II and other ancient graffiti carved along the curving wadi, partly silted in now with

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red sand. After a pickup lunch on the west bank of the Nile, it was on to Gebel el Silsila itself, where Richard and John led two groups through monuments that few tourists ever see: the rock-cut temple of Horemhab, largely decorated by the Prince Khaemwase under Ramesses II and containing graffiti of the 1884 British expedition to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum; the sandstone quarries, where chisel marks and extraction techniques are to be seen everywhere; and smaller shrines overhanging the swirling waters of the Nile. Everyone deserves congratulations for their fortitude in scaling the sometimes difficult rock faces of the quarries.

It was just as well that most people catnapped on the way back to Luxor; the fun continued that evening when the formal (black tie, if possible, but any getup will do) gala began in the Chicago House courtyard. Candles on the staircases and tangos playing from our vintage 1930's 78 rpm record collection lent an old world flavor to the dancing under the stars. The beat of stomping feet filled the night, but a group photograph of the assembled mob ended the evening all too soon.

Waking at 5:00AM for their balloon ride, Paul and George Preston and Hanne Al Homaizi began the final day a bit earlier than the rest of us. While they rode their hot-air balloon over the Valley of the Kings, the West Bank tombs, and Luxor and Karnak temples, the other FOCH members toured Karnak. Led by Peter Dorman, one group prowled the central axis of the great temple of Amun, after which Debbie Darnell described the Seti I battle reliefs and the great Hypostyle Hall. Meanwhile, a tour of the Temple of Khonsu was given by Ray Johnson for the returning FOCH guests. As the FOCH members were finishing their Karnak visit the balloon landed there for a late breakfast.

In the afternoon of the final day, some chose to shop at the suq, but many opted for an on-site demonstration of the Chicago House method by our epigraphic staff at Luxor Temple. Finally, all that was left was an informal buffet lunch at Chicago House, a chance to relax and talk to the staff members and then to say goodbye until next time . . . watch this space for the dates!

END**ADDRESSES OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY:****October through March:**

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