

60 People

Membership Program

Eugene Cruz-Uribe

The role of the Membership program at the Oriental Institute is a pivotal one. Its primary goal is to provide its members with information and discussions concerning current research and discoveries about the ancient Near East. This is achieved primarily through its newsletter, lecture series, tour program, Members' Day, and education courses. At the same time the Membership Office channels contributions from the membership to help cover the expenses of the Institute and the many diverse projects it sponsors. The success of the Membership program continues to be the result of the generosity and interest of our members. I would like also to mention the work of Malinda Winans, the Membership Assistant. The many suggestions provided by Albert Haas have once again proved to be very useful to the maintenance of our program.

The Opening Lecture, this year presented by David Stronach, who discussed the Persian capital of Pasargadae, began our series entitled "Cities of the Ancient Near East." During the course of the year, we had lectures on Ebla, Carthage, Nippur, Persepolis, Sardis, Tell el-Amarna, and Malkata. After each lecture, members were treated to a variety of goodies including an ice cream social in January at which it is rumored that the membership secretary dressed as a soda jerk to help dispense the ice cream.

In October, 25 members journeyed to the People's Republic of China on an Institute-sponsored tour. They were able to visit the Great Wall as well as the vast excavations at Sian. In February I had the pleasure of leading the Institute tour to Egypt. An expanded itinerary took us to many new sites including Kharga Oasis and its many monuments. This coming year we are planning tours to Egypt and to Greece.

The members' education program has become a more vibrant entity. We have joined advertising efforts with the University Extension Division. This has led to increased enrollments in all our

course offerings. We are adding summer courses to our schedule after the success of last summer's hieroglyphs course. Among the offerings this year were Egyptian Magic, The Persian Empire, Babylonian Astrology and Astronomy, and Egyptian Art. Previously, Egyptian hieroglyphs was the only ancient language offered to members, but a course in Biblical Hebrew was so popular that we are planning to offer it and continuations on a more regular basis.

The year's programs were capped by the successful fund-raising dinner "Caught in a Wedge of Words." The dinner was sponsored by the Oriental Institute's Visiting Committee to help raise matching funds for an NEH grant for the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary. Following the dinner, Erica Reiner, editor of the dictionary, introduced members of the staff who performed several musical selections to a delighted audience.

These were only highlights of this past year's activities. I hope to see you all again soon.