

The Oriental Institute

News & Notes

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PERSON TO PERSON: The Museum Docents

Webster defines a docent as "a teacher, lecturer," but these words do not describe what we do. A much better definition for an Oriental Institute Docent would be "a learner, listener."

Almost every day except Monday, when the Museum is closed, groups of interested people have made appointments with the Museum office to have a one hour tour of the Museum galleries. It might be thirty senior citizens, or a church study club, or a college class in history, art, design, or language study. It might be a school class from Chicago or any one of 72 surrounding communities that visited the Museum in 1978. It might be a group of grade school or high school youngsters. (In 1978 13,280 school children came to the Oriental Institute Museum.) Each group is different. And we learn to guide each one differently.

The Oriental Institute docents are waiting to greet them, to usher them into Breasted Hall where they can leave their coats and sit down, and where we can find out why they have come, what in particular they would like to see, and how we can best serve their needs. We don't tell the senior citizens to leave their chewing gum in the waste basket, but we certainly remind the school children to do so. We ask all groups not to touch the stone statues and bas-reliefs, and we try to explain very briefly what important things happen upstairs in scholarly research, in the basement workshops, and in our archeological fieldwork.



Docent Jane Imberman fields a question from a young scholar in the Egyptian gallery.

We like to have four or five docents on duty each morning and another four or five each afternoon so that the larger groups can be divided up among the docents. As we shepherd our charges through the galleries in a clockwise direction, we try to point out artifacts that will have special meaning to our visitors, and to place them in a framework—historical, anthropological or whatever—that they can understand and appreciate. We also try not to bump into the docent ahead of us.

The ancient Near East is part of our past. Where did man first learn to produce his food? Why? Who invented writing? Why? Why did the Egyptians mummify the bodies of their dead? We ask our Museum



Pointing out a rosette on a Persian bas-relief is Jill Maher, formerly the docents' Volunteer chairman.



The winged Assyrian bull looks out over one of the docents' working luncheons.

visitors to think with us, to make sense out of the lives of those who lived thousands of years before us. We ask them questions, and they ask us questions. We try to answer. Yes, that is a real mummy. No, Tutankhamun was not really that tall. Well, I don't know the answer to that question. Let's look it up.

Our docents also greet Museum visitors from behind the cash register of the Suq. Our Suq docents join the Museum docents in the training courses and all of our special educational activities. They, too, impart their knowledge and enthusiasm to the public, and from the profits of the Suq enterprise, we help the scholarly pursuits of the Oriental Institute.

It was in 1965 that Director Robert Adams asked Carolyn Livingood to organize a volunteer guide program. The first training course began in January 1966. It was Carolyn who gave shape and substance to our program. She organized the first members' courses, for she realized the importance of continuing education. She instituted special lectures and study tours for us. She drew up bibliographies and wrote papers which we still reprint for new docents. Her able successor, Jill Maher, has kept the enthusiasm of the docents high, has continued our education in matters historical and archeological, and has attracted many able and devoted people to our programs.

The docents know that they are needed in the Oriental Institute Museum and in the Suq. The Director of the Oriental Institute, John Brinkman, endorses our efforts constantly with moral as well as financial support. The Volunteer Program is



Walking through the museum with these eager-eyed youngsters, docents share in the wonder of discovering an ancient world.

CORRECTION

Verner M. Meyers of Lincoln, Nebraska, has kindly brought it to our attention that the menorah depicted on the north face of the Oriental Institute building (as shown in the December issue of *News & Notes*) is not taken from the Column of Trajan, but from the Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum. Thank you, Mr. Meyers.

S. Fisher



very fortunate now to be under the aegis of our Curator, John Carswell. His help, encouragement, and scholarship have enriched us all, and inspired us to do our best for the Museum and the Institute. David Nasgowitz, Assistant Curator, is never too busy to give us a careful answer to an educational inquiry, or to explain a fine point in Syro-Palestinian history, or to tell us more about an artifact. In fact, all the Museum staff give us support and encouragement for which we are grateful.

The next Docent Training Course will begin on Monday, April 2, for a series of eight Mondays of lectures by professors in the Oriental Institute and gallery study tours with Carolyn Livingood.

We will also offer, as an experiment, an eight week Saturday course for volunteers who work during the week and would like to be weekend docents. This series will be centered around the spring Saturday morning members' courses, followed in the early afternoon by gallery study tours presented by Judi Franke, former Acting Curator.

Whether you are young, old-young, young-old, male or female, consider enrolling in a Docent Training Course this spring and become a Listener and a Learner with us. For more information call the Docent office (753-2573) or leave a message in the Museum office (753-2475).

Peggy Grant
Volunteer Chairman

DIGGING IN EASTERN IRAQ

The Oriental Institute's Nippur Expedition is not to be found at its usual place this season. This year it is involved in a new part of Iraq in an important salvage operation. In September McGuire Gibson and his crew went to Nippur to pack up all the dig equipment—and haul it up to the Jebel Hamrin area 50 miles northeast of Baghdad, on the main route to Iran. This region is due to be flooded for a reservoir in two years. The Director of Antiquities in Iraq has called upon all foreign archeologists to help with salvage in the area, so that our dig is only a few kilometers

(though those few kilometers might involve a long and rugged journey by jeep) from at least twenty other sites being excavated by the British, Germans, Belgians, Spanish, French, Austrians, Italians, and Japanese. Our dig has been a joint expedition with the Danes from the University of Copenhagen, and the combined effort has been a huge success. McGuire Gibson will return to the Institute late in March with a full report for the members, but as a preview of coming attractions I may mention round structures from the Early Dynastic I period (ca. 2900 B.C.), quite unlike any previously known, which may have been fortifications on the Iraq-Iran military and trade route that traverses this area.

Jill Maher

JOSEPH MARTIN SHELLEY, JR., 1926 - 1979

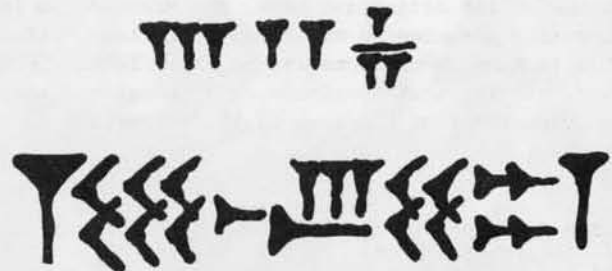

Joe Shelley served as custodian of the Institute building for only eighteen months, but he left an unmistakable impression on its occupants. His cheerful greetings livened up many a dull morning along the second and third floor corridors. His interest in the esoteric disciplines going on around him led him to post door-signs in cuneiform and in Arabic script and to fill his basement headquarters with Egyptian and other memorabilia. He took such pride in the appearance of the building,

and especially of the museum, that he often came on his own time on Saturdays to do extra polishing. Early last summer in the garden courtyard of the Institute, he and his wife hosted a "Pig Snoot Bar-

beque" for all the staff; and the stone walls echoed with the sounds of vintage music. His easy-going affection was genuinely reciprocated by those with whom he came in contact; and his happy presence was much appreciated and is sorely missed.

Shelley is survived by his wife, Vivian, by nine children and five grandchildren, and by his mother. Persons wishing to make a gift to the family may send a check, made out to the Oriental Institute, c/o Susan Smith in the administrative office.

John A. Brinkman



A REMINDER: NEW ORLEANS TOUR AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS

There are seats still available for the Members' Tour to the New Orleans Museum of Art, where "Africa In Antiquity: The Ancient Arts of Nubia and the Sudan" is on view. This is an exhibition that you should not miss, made up of 250 objects from 4,700 years of Nubian civilization. Bruce Williams, the James Henry Breasted Research Associate at the Oriental Institute, will lead the tour.

The tour will leave Chicago on Friday, June 1, and return on Sunday, June 3, 1979. There will be a reception for the group in New Orleans Friday evening, and a full day at the Museum on Saturday.

The cost of the tour is \$310.00, which includes a (tax deductible) \$30.00 contribution to the Oriental Institute. The price includes round trip airfare, two nights lodging at the Marriot Hotel (located in the French Quarter), transfers from/to the News Orleans airport, portage, the evening reception, and lunch at the Museum.

A deposit of \$30.00 will hold a place for you; full payment must be made by April 10 in order to secure the Group Charter rate for airfare. The deposit check is payable to the Oriental Institute. The balance is payable to Archeological Tours. Mail to:

Albert Haas, Office of Membership Development,
Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street,
Chicago IL 60637

For further information contact Mr. Haas at 753-2389 or Carol Green at 653-2757.



The Qustul Incense Burner loaned by the Institute for this exhibition contains representations of three boats sailing toward a shrine. The side shown above is the best preserved, showing a feline of some sort; the burner also contains the earliest (3,500 B.C.) self-evident representation of a king (see Bruce Williams' article in News and Notes No. 37: Nov. 1977).



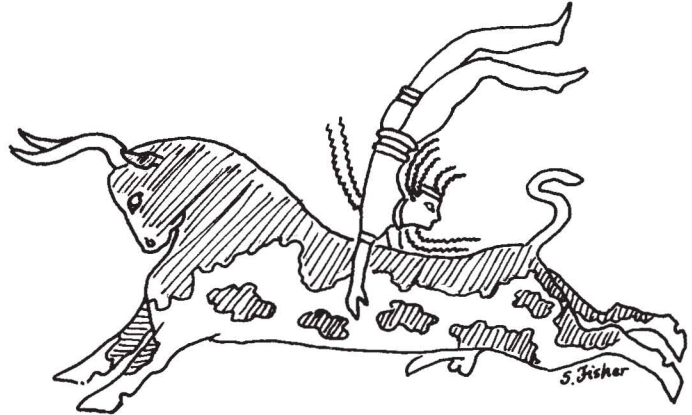
Details from the Chicago Cattle Bowl

PHOTO CREDITS: P. 1, Peggy Grant, Volunteer Chairman; pp. 2 & 3, David Nasgowitz, Assistant Curator, Museum Archives.

NEWS & NOTES STAFF: Ronald Brown, Editor; Shirley Fisher, Production & Artwork.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE PALACE AT KNOSSOS

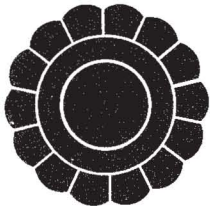
The highly-developed and artistic Minoan civilization is still largely unknown, and its destruction is a mystery, but the graceful wasp-waisted young men and women, the powerful bulls, and the beautiful flowers adorning the walls of the palace at Knossos still fascinate us. Sinclair Hood will lecture on "The Last Days of the Palace at Knossos" on Monday, March 19, at 8 p.m. in Breasted Hall. Mr. Hood is the former director of the British School of Archaeology in Athens, the excavator of such sites as Knossos, Chios, and Melos, and the author of the definitive work, *The Minoans*. He is currently attached to Great Milton College, Oxford. This lecture is co-sponsored by the Oriental Institute, the American Institute of Archaeology, and the Department of Classics of the University of Chicago.



Bull-leaper from Knossos

(The Quadrangle Club, 1155 East 57th Street, will be open to Oriental Institute members who wish to make dinner reservations. Please call Mrs. Schlender, 493-8601. Please remember that the privilege of the use of the dining room at the Quadrangle Club is a courtesy extended to members of the Oriental Institute only on nights when there is an Oriental Institute lecture.)

A REMINDER: On Thursday, March 15, Mr. Robert Anderson will deliver an Oriental Institute lecture entitled QASR IBRIM: WATCHDOG OF THE NILE. The lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. in Breasted Hall of the Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street.



The Oriental Institute
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