Secretary Ripley Discusses Folk Interest in Myths

In this article Secretary Ripley examines the subject of the first in a series of TV programs concerning Smithsonian interests. It was adapted from Mr. Ripley's comments recorded for the program.

By S. Dillon Ripley

For many years, as I have travelled on research expeditions around the world, I have been interested in mythology. There seems to be an essential and continuing validity to myths as myths. Through the ages, man has manifested a need to believe in scientifically unproven facts as a way to reinforce his other beliefs.

Such myths have become part of the traditional folklore of many civilizations, both old and new, as humans seek to explain somehow a practice, a belief, or a short or long-lived phenomenon. What is fact? What is fiction? The scientific method often can be used to ferret out the truth. Mythology, however, still confronts modern science with some animal legends that still offer challenges to those who seek to explain them.

One of the more fascinating, interesting, and rewarding things that the Smithsonian Institution's large staff of scientists and cultural historians does, as a part of its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge, is to verify whether "facts" brought to our attention are really facts. This information often comes to our attention from the public at large in the form of suggested ideas about objects or reports of occurrences. A good example was our study of the famous Kensington stone, a piece of rock found in Minnesota that appeared to have runic inscriptions on it, leading one to believe that the Vikings may well have explored the interior of our continent as early as the 14th century. We spent considerable time studying this stone and finally concluded that it was a hoax. Over the years we have often been challenged by the question of whether certain animals actually occur in the world or are merely myths or hoaxes. On one occasion a report that seemed at first fantastic turned out to be true. The coelacanth, a fish thought to be extinct for 60 million years, was found in 1938 still alive near South Africa in the Indian Ocean. So it goes, some of the mysterious reports that the Smithsonian investigates prove to be myths, some prove to be true.

One report that I have had a particular interest in for a long time is the existence of the so-called Abominable Snowman. For years I have been traveling in the Himalayas, that range of mountains that fringes Northern India and Tibet and Pakistan.
The new “Sunning Everyone” exhibit at the National Museum of History and Technology is the result of the work of many people from all parts of the Museum who were not mentioned in the story about the exhibit that appeared in the October issue of THE TORCH.

Following is a list provided by the Museum staff of those who had a part in preparing the exhibit:

Curatorial staff—Claudia Kidwell, Grace Cooper, Donald Kloster, John Hoffman.
Hall Designer—Nadya Makovenyi.
Curatorial Support Staff—Margaret Christian, Karen Harris, Shelly Foote, Kathy Dirks, Lois Vann, Daniel Stanton, Susan Helm, Valerie Davis, Mary Poggioli, Julia Hadley.
Office of Exhibits—Benjamin Lawless, Harold Skramstad, Richard Vargo.
Designer Support Staff—Steven Tiber, Kip Cordero.
Exhibits Production Staff—Stanley Santoroski (Chief), Walter Lewis, Hubert Ray, Melvin Welch, Albert Martin, Nicholas Mishaya, John Wink, Emil Haralpy, Sandra Ross, Patricia Meyers, Susan Wallace.
The Shop—Robert Klinger, Donald Holst.
Lighting—Carole Lusk, Edwin Robison.
Office of Director—Charles Rowell, Sterling Buell.
Building Manager—Lawrence Bush and his staff.

Dr. Hindle Elected Foundation Trustee

Dr. Brooks Hindle, Director of the National Museum of History and Technology, has been elected a trustee on the board of Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation, Wilmington, Del.

Dr. Hindle has long been associated with the Foundation. He served for a time as senior resident scholar, and his term as a member of the advisory committee expired this year.

The Foundation is a non-profit educational corporation devoted to American economic and industrial history. It administers the Hagley Museum and the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library at Wilmington.

OUTSTANDING GUARDS—Outstanding members of the Smithsonian guard force for July have been named by the commanding officers of each of the five companies that comprise the force. Honored were (top, from left) Cpl. Michael Squarros, Company A; Pfc. Lacey Lucas and (second row, from left) Pfc. Donald Bollack, Company B; Pfc. Douglas Byers, Company C; (bottom, from left) Pfc. Elean House, Company D, and Pfc. Masou Williams, Outpost Detachment.

Jordan Heads New SI Group

Harry J. Jordan, Assistant Director for Administration at the National Air and Space Museum, has been elected chairman of a new Conference of Administrative Officers at the Smithsonian.

Fine Arts, has been elected chairman of a new Conference of Administrative Officers at the Smithsonian.

John Whitehead, Executive Officer at the National Air and Space Museum, was elected secretary. John Jameson, Assistant Treasurer, discussed the Fiscal 1975 budget at the group’s first working session October 16.

Under Secretary Robert A. Brooks presided at the organizational meeting of the Conference on September 9. In his opening remarks, Mr. Brooks noted that responsibilities of administrative officers in the various components of the Institution have expanded steadily over the years as bureau directors have assumed more control over support functions. He suggested that the officers plan three kinds of meetings: position-oriented association of all administrative officers; functional groupings—such as curatorial, exhibits, library, and maintenance offices; and sessions and sessions for general learning.

VISITOR SHOWS APPRECIATION—Dr. David Challinor, Assistant Secretary for Science, (left) presented a check for $100 to the Smithsonian Recreational Association’s Treasurer, Mrs. Dorothy Lewis, on October 22. The check was sent by Mrs. George Brown of Houston, Tex., in appreciation of the work of the Rockburne Heights (right) of the Smithsonian guard force as the guard most responsible for locating and returning the jade earing she lost at the opening of the Hirshhorn Museum. The contribution will be used by the Association to support the touch football team on which many of the guards play.
Smithsonian Opens Hirshhorn Museum

6,000 Works in Collection; 900 in Opening Exhibition

With champagne toasts, a specially composed musical salute, and a carefully chosen selection of art works, the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden was opened the first week of October.

The Hirshhorn quickly became a popular attraction as the newest museum of the Smithsonian Institution. The daily average of 6,000 to 10,000 persons the first week it opened and a peak attendance of 30,000 was reached the first Sunday.

The week of opening festivities began September 30 with a day-long press preview on the evening of October 1, high government officials and other dignitaries attended dedication ceremonies. The following night was set aside for guests from the art world to take a look at the Hirshhorn collection. The opening formal opening was held the evening of October 3 for Smithsonian Associates. The building was opened to the public on the evening of October 4.

The Hirshhorn Museum brings to the nation’s capital one of the most comprehensive collections of 20th century art. Masterworks by leading modern artists reflect major trends and styles that have evolved in the century and the latter part of the 19th century. The museum provides full public access to a national museum of modern art.

The Museum’s purpose is to encourage a broader understanding of the modern and contemporary art through exhibitions and research programs. The Museum resulted from the gift to the nation in 1966 and 1972 of the collection of paintings, sculptures and objects donated over 40 years by Joseph H. Hirshhorn.

Scope of Collection

As it opens, the Museum’s collection numbers some 4,000 paintings and 2,000 sculptures tracing the development of modern art from the late 19th century to the most recent manifestations. European painting from the last three decades is also well represented. The opening exhibition of 900 works in all media represents highlights from the Museum’s collection. The paintings, sculptures and media arranged in historical sequence fills the entire Museum and includes works from all phases of the collection. Works by European and American artists exhibited side by side show how they influenced each other and with one another. The inaugural exhibition includes major art movements of the 20th century as Cubist, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, and Minimal Art.

Special Music

Special music for the opening was composed by William Schuman. The work is called for a Great Occasion, the work was scored for wind and percussion instruments. It was played at opening ceremonies by the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Antal Dorati. A recording of the opening fanfare was played over the Museum’s sound system at intervals during the special events.

An inaugural book published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. illustrates 1,000 works in the permanent collection, with 290 plates in full color. The 796-page book includes a foreword by Secretary Ripley, an introduction by Abram Lerner, the museum director, and essays by leading writers in the field of art history and criticism. A catalog of the Hirshhorn collection provides full documentation of each work, short bibliographies of the artists and many statements by them. Other printed literature about the collection is also available.

Special educational program includes films, lectures, music and dance productions. Volunteer docents conduct tours for school children. The Hirshhorn also provides prints available for rent, information presents in English and Spanish on selected works in the galleries.

‘Birthday’ Gifts

Secretary Ripley announced at the press preview September 30 that the Hirshhorn Museum had received on the eve of its opening an additional gift from Mr. Hirshhorn of four monumental sculptures by three more contemporary artists.

Two of the sculptures are by Reuben Nakian: Goddess of the Goddesses and St. Lawrence. One, by Henry Moore, is Two Piece Reclining Figure; Foyer. The fourth is the Needle Tower by Kenneth Snelson. The works were placed on the roof plaza of the Museum for the inaugural exhibition.

Opening night ceremonies October 1 in Museum Court.

Secretary Hails Opening As ‘An Exceptional Moment’

Following are the remarks by Secretary Ripley at the dedication of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden October 1.

This is an exceptional moment for all of us at the Smithsonian. We welcome this occasion as an answer to prayer. We welcome this Museum and Sculpture Garden as an answer to prayer also.

As I pointed out at the ground-breaking ceremonies in January 1969, Congress had legislated for the creation of a new gallery in the Smithsonian 36 years ago. Such an institution would act as a foil for the then newly created National Gallery to house Andrew Mellon’s munificent gift of old master paintings. Such a gallery was to stimulate and encourage contemporary art, and to develop a panoramic view of the progress of the arts in America. Much of the latter has been and is being splendidly developed by other aspects of the Smithsonian, most notably the National Collection of Fine Arts, but the ensuing years since 1938 had managed to bring little if any recognition by the Smithsonian of itself of the incredible surge of activity in contemporary art in this country. Thus the effort by a number of us to make up for a generation of neglect, which has culminated in a gift to the nation by Joseph Hirshhorn and his foundation, filling the gap in time. We have been caught up, in one giant step, to match the exponential increase in productivity in art, in interest in art collecting, and in the incredible attendant inflation in marketplace values in art.

Without Mr. Hirshhorn and this gift of his “children” as he calls them, there would have been no single way in which the Smithsonian could have lived up to its Congressional mandate. This is a fact easily forgotten or glossed over by those without a broad understanding of the recent history of art and art collections. It is not one which any museum curator can afford to forget.

Let us be thankful therefore that Mr. Hirshhorn (who continues to give us works of art, witness the Nakan and Snelson now on our plaza, and who will continue with treasures and funds to support this great gallery) friends of the Museum and donors alike, as well as the Congress and everyone in or near Washington to think how we can maintain the momentum without which a contemporary collection will sink backwards, and which was in the original imagined plan put forward years ago.

The Congress has generously provided the funds to build and open this new gallery, but our first endowment fund, a million dollars from Mr. Hirshhorn, had, by his permission and that of the Congress, to be diverted specifically for the surge in construction costs.

And what of the site? We have had to wrestle to develop it, beginning with the moving of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology Museum to Walter Reed Hospital, a move in which the Congress and then Secretary McNamara greatly aided us. Additionally, an architect had to be chosen and we found Gordon Bunshaft, one of the deans in his profession, one with whom, as I related in 1969, we developed most amicably, plans for a functional building, novel in its shape, box-like, with “a texture of tweed,” as Sir Nicholas Pevsner once described another contemporary structure.

(Continued on page 6)
Media Views of the Hirshhorn

From The Washington Post

A NEW MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

With the opening of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in a series of festivities this week (Oct. 1, 2, 3), the art of this century is at last firmly established (in fact; looking at the building; you might say entrenched) in the national capital. It has taken a long time—36 years, to be exact. For it was in 1938, while the National Gallery was still under construction, that Congress passed legislation calling for another art gallery on the opposite side of the Mall, to be devoted primarily to the work of contemporary artists. The Finnish-born father and son team, Elieff and Eero Saarinen, won the national competition for the design of the proposed modern museum. Most critics at the time loudly praised the arrival of the new bare and square architectural style among the temples of the Mall. Most congressmen quietly condemned this new-fangled modernity. And in the end, even Eero Saarinen said he was glad the asymmetrical structure, with its 3-story tower and low-slung exhibit halls, was never built. For all its forbidding, almost intimidating rudeness, Gordon Bunshaft’s cylindrical concrete container for the Hirshhorn collection seems more appropriate for monumental Washington.

Nor does it seem likely that a Smithsonian Gallery of Art, as envisioned in 1938, could have mustered anything like the artistic bounty Joseph H. Hirshhorn gave to the nation in 1966. ‘‘Like the Medici or, closer to home, such American tycoons as Henry Clay Frick and Charles Lang Freer, Mr. Hirshhorn collected art with the same aggressive spirit that he brought to the owning of a vast fortune. He often dashed out of board meetings of his various enterprises for half an hour, running to some gallery or artist’s studio, striking quick bargains and occasionally buying paintings literally by the dozen. The opening exhibition, which fills three gallery floors of the new museum as well as its plaza and sculpture garden, displays less than one-sixth of the enormous collection Mr. Hirshhorn has donated—some 900 of the 6,000 paintings and sculptures. So vast an assortment obviously varies in quality. There are critics who complain that some of the work including objects displayed in the inaugural exhibition, are less than outstanding. But critical tastes, after all, are capricious. Art works that only yesterday were disparaged as mediocre are suddenly discovered to be magnificent. A few decades ago, critics and collectors did not deign to look at the work of Georges de La Tour, whose “Repentant Magdalen” has just been triumphantly acquired by the National Gallery for several million dollars.

The sum of Mr. Hirshhorn’s collection, in short, is far greater than its many great parts (and the parts include masterpieces, such as Rodin’s “Burghers of Calais,” Eakins’s “Portrait of Mrs. Thomas Eakins” and Picasso’s “Baby Carriage”). Just about every artist deemed significant to the creative mainstream of this century is represented, including a great many Americans whom Mr. Hirshhorn is proud to have discovered and to have helped. This wealth will enable the Hirshhorn, better perhaps than any other museum, to present a comprehensive account of the development of modern art from the mid-19th century to the present. There are no strings attached to the Hirshhorn gift. That means that under the protective mantle of the Smithsonian Institution, the new museum can sell and trade individual items and thus gradually turn this grand private collection into a great public museum.

What’s so great outdoors? Well, everyone will have his favorites, but ours include among Henry Moore’s pinheads his seated “King and Queen,” serenely resigned to their eminence; and Bourdelle’s “Great Warrior of Montauban” with the shadow of that huge, spread-fingered left hand thrown against the pebbled wall behind it by the afternoon sun; and Manzù’s superb “Young Girl on a Chair,” her eyes half closed against the sun to which her face is slightly raised. All this would be lost indoors.

The same goes for Marino Marini’s spread-eagled “Horse and Rider,” the
Secretary Ripley greets Mr. Hirshhorn on opening day. Abram Lerner, Museum Director, speaks to assembled dignitaries.

From The New York Times

NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM

The birth of a new museum in the nation's capital is not an unusual event; they appear with elephantine regularity. But in the case of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the fanfare of this week's multiple openings is justified. This is the overdue inauguration of a national museum of modern art, something the capital has conspicuously lacked.

Washington has extraordinary collections, from the impeccable old masters of the National Gallery and the oriental treasures of the Freer to the "nation's attic" esoterica of the Smithsonian Institution. And the city has talked about an official modern art museum since the 1930s. But only with Joseph H. Hirshhorn's remarkable gift of 6,000 works of contemporary art, including some of the more spectacular sculpture of this century, has the dream come true. This work will form the sizable nucleus of a collection, under the aegis of the Smithsonian, that can be refined and expanded as time goes on.

Mr. Hirshhorn has had the commendable foresight to allow future curators freedom to sell and exchange material—the often necessary deaccession process—and thus strengthen the whole, for a truly national museum.

The capital is less fortunate in the museum's architecture than in its art, however. It is regrettable that the new structure is one more stillborn monument on the Mall. Doubts that were raised about putting a sculpture garden on that uninterrupted greensward have not been allayed by the unremittingly concreted setting. The sculpture would have graced the site more eloquently with no architectural design at all.

But the museum functions well in other ways, and the works of art, in comfortable galleries, are often glorious. With only about one-seventh of the total on display, overwhelming. Both the capital and the nation are the beneficiaries of Mr. Hirshhorn's desire to go public, and an extra and lively dimension has been added to Washington's impressive art and museum resources.

Hirshhorn Trustees

The trustees of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden are:
Warren E. Burger, Chief Justice of the United States (ex officio)
S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian (ex officio)
Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Chairman
H. Harvard Arnason
Leigh B. Block
Theodore E. Cummings
Anne d'Harnoncourt
George H. Hamilton
Taft B. Schreiber
Hal B. Wallis

Daniel P. Moynihan, Chairman of the HM&SG Board of Trustees, was a participant in opening ceremonies.
Chronology of The Museum

May 17, 1966—President Johnson recommends to Congress enactment of legislation enabling the Smithsonian to accept the Joseph H. Hirshhorn collection of contemporary sculpture and paintings and to establish and construct the Museum.

November 7, 1966—Congress authorizes construction of the Museum, designates the Mall site, and provides that the Museum and Sculpture Garden bear Mr. Hirshhorn's name and be under administration of the Smithsonian Board of Regents.

June 24, 1967—Congress appropriates funds for planning the Museum.


July 25, 1968—Congress appropriates $2,000,000 in construction funds and contract authority in the amount of $14,197,000 to construct the Museum and Sculpture Garden.

January 8, 1969—Official groundbreaking ceremonies led by President Johnson, Secretary Ripley and Mr. Hirshhorn. A competitive bids received by the General Services Administration and construction contract awarded with approval of the Committee General.

March 23, 1970—Mr. Hirshhorn agrees to give $1,000,000 toward construction of the building.


July 2, 1971—President Nixon appoints eight persons to be members of the Board of Trustees of the Museum and Sculpture Gar­den. They were H. H. Arnason, Elizabeth Houghton, Taft B. Schreiber, Hal B. Wal­lis, Leigh B. Block, Theodore E. Cum­mings, George Heald Hamilton, and Daniel P. Meynahan.

March 6, 1972—Mr. Hirshhorn agrees to transfer to the Smithsonian 326 additional works of art with an aggregate value of more than $7,000,000.

April 7, 1974—Full legal title to the Hirshhorn Collection passes to the Smith­sonian.

September 30, 1974—Beginning of special events to mark opening of the Museum and Sculpture Garden.

October 4, 1974—Museum and Sculpture Garden opened to the public.

Secretary's Remarks (Continued from Page 3)

The original proposed marble exterior coating, which we had planned, was defeated by the expense of domestic marble. Escalating costs nearly prevented us having any museum to speak of at all, and I think great credit must be paid to the General Services Administration as well as to the architects that we are open tonight. To the contractor I must give credit for precise and elegant workmanship and an evident pride in his craft in spite of the rigorous schedule we have all been dancing these past three years has been more of a long sleep than anything else.

Suffice it to say that this building and its attendant garden of sculpture have been appropriately controversial. If it were not controversial, in almost every way it would hardly qualify as a place to house contem­porary art. For it must somehow hold together in the midst of an administrative and decorative chaos all about on the plaza and garden with chase magnificence. Let its as­semblage of shapes and objects continue to stir our skeletal minds and jog our sen­sibilities as they are designed to do. Man alone with his higher primate relatives is gifted, like the birds, with a seeing eye for color, design and symmetry. But we are lazy most of us and our eyes are blinded, as customed to patterns, the familiar land­scape, the gray blob of the American art and classically re­strained oriental art, the Freer, academicism at its best.

So the Hirshhorn challenges you to make what you will of it on the exterior or if you choose, but works beautifully within. As no one can deny, and sets off its sculpture col­lections all about on the plaza and garden with chaste magnificence. Let its as­semblage of shapes and objects continue to stir our skeletal minds and jog our sen­sibilities as they are designed to do. Man alone with his higher primate relatives is gifted, like the birds, with a seeing eye for color, design and symmetry. But we are lazy most of us and our eyes are blinded, as customed to patterns, the familiar land­scape, the gray blob of the American art and classically re­strained oriental art, the Freer, academicism at its best.

The purpose of the Hirshhorn is to remind us all that life is more than the usual, that the human mind in its relentless diversity is capable of seeing life subjectively, and being stirred by objects into new and posi­tive ways of thought, thus escaping from the numbing pnumebra of the ritual known as everyday. That is what the Hirshhorn is for and why we are so grateful to the donor, to our government which accepted and pro­vided for housing his gift, and to all who helped in its creation.

Lighted gallery windows and spectacular fountain provide an artistic touch.

The Architecture

Architect: Gordon Bunshaft, Partner in Charge, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of New York. Other major buildings designed by Bunshaft: Lynden Baines Johnson Li­brary and Sid W. Richardson Hall, Univer­sity of Texas in Austin; Lever House, New York; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Addition to the Altgeld-Knoss Gallery in Buffalo.

Height of the Museum: 82 feet

Diameter of the Museum: 231 feet

Height of the Four Piers on Which Museum Stands: 14 feet

Thickness of Exterior Walls: 3.25 feet

Surface of the Museum: Precast and cast­in-place concrete with Swenson pink granite aggregate.

Excentricity of the Museum's Circles: 4 feet

Inside Court Diameter of the Museum: 115 feet

Walls to Interior Court: Glass window wall

Diameter of the Bronze Fountain in the Museum Court: 80 feet

Site Area Including Garden Complex: 4.4 acres

Area Occupied by the Sculpture Garden: 1.3 acres

Distance Below Ground Level of the Sculpture Garden: Varies from 6.3 feet to 14 feet

Height of the Wall Surrounding the Museum: 8 feet (approx.)

Depth of Exterior Coffers: 9 feet

Floor Areas of the Museum: 168,000 square feet

Height of the Exhibition Galleries: 15 feet high with concrete coffers three feet deep

Auditorium Seating: 280

Corridor and Escalator Lobby Floors: Veteran Terrazzo

Number of Paintings in Inaugural Exhibi­tion: 400

Number of Paintings in Inaugural Exhibi­tion: 5,000

Number of Sculptures in the HMSG Collec­tion: 4,500

Number of Sculptures in the HMSG Collec­tion: 1,500

Dimensions of the Sculpture Garden: 536 square feet

Date of Groundbreaking: January 8, 1969

Engineers: Owings

Foundation: 99 steel "H" piles under each of four core supports.

Superstructure: Four reinforced concrete core supports carry two ring girders of rein­forced concrete which are cantilevered off inner and outer edges of core supports. Can­tilever beams are reinforced with 30 post tensioned tendons per support. The two ring girders carry balance of superstructure. The exterior wall is 28" thick concrete; inner wall is glass window wall set back from concrete spandrel beams and columns.
Women's Committee Sponsors Film Theater

(Staff members not familiar with the Free Film Theater may be interested in the following account written by Mrs. Edith Schafer, Free Film Coordinator.)

In 1965 Secretary Ripley suggested that the Smithsonian should have a program which would provide an orderly presentation of films on a wide range of subjects. Thus began the Free Film Theater which plays a useful role in the overall Smithsonian mission.

In the beginning, films were shown in Baird Auditorium at the National History Building, and the program included an introduction by a specialist. This format proved so successful that Wednesday and Thursday noon shows were soon added. The Wednesday show, with larger attendance dropped for the evening show, and it was discontinued, but the noon shows remained popular. However, personnel shifts then occurred and audiovisual programs were placed on hold. The Free Film was stopped one summer and not resumed that fall.

In the autumn of 1970, the Women's Committee joined the Associates and took it up, offering to provide volunteers for the screenings and to help with previewing films. At about this time, the Free Film Theater moved to the Carmichael Auditorium at the National Museum of History and Technology where films are screened Wednesdays and Thursdays at 12:30.

The audiences are enthusiastic, generally almost filling the auditorium. If the film is especially popular it can usually be repeated again in following weeks in special cases, such as The Ascent of Man, the schedule is further expanded to fit the demand.

Some of the popular films have been a series on poets, a China and Black Africa series, The Ascent of Man, and films on technology such as tunnel and bridge building. Other popular subjects are archeology, natural history, anthropology, earth sciences, art, music, and almost all of the other areas of interest embraced by the Smithsons.

The Free Film Theater will be a natural venue for films produced for the Bicentennial. We would also like to maintain a closer relationship with current SI exhibits. We seek suggestions of quality films that amplify, or coordinate with, exhibits and programs (we need two months advance notice), or are simply worth showing on their merits. (Please contact Edith Schafer at 381-5911.)

The film program thrives on diversity — the more variety the richer the fare, as can be seen from the December film schedule: Dec. 3-5, The Contemporary — explores the tension of avant-garde edge, BP/S, centennial circle, Delphic languages, life in outer space, "theatres of the imagination". Dec. 11-13, Life in the Front Line and the Society for the Fourth Front — the storage and mystery of that sensibility race in the Poles. Dec. 17-19, The Great Western Railroads: the case of adipose — rare, breast, threatened.

Dec. 21-23, Passage of a Free — natural walking only of Africa's "aquadive" trees and the variety of life it supports, including a wonderful sequence of a beehive's nest.

Two on SI Staff
Pass CPA Exam

Mr. Holohan and Mr. Palmer, native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a graduate of Duquesne University where he received his BS in business administration. He is a member of the Federal Government Accountants Association and has been with the Smithsonian since December 1972.

Mr. Palmer, a native of Spartanburg, South Carolina, is a graduate of Howard University. He is a member of the Federal Government Accountants Association and the National Association of Black Accountants. He has been with the Smithsonian since April 1973.

Shelton, Myers Join OFPES Staff

James Shelton and Thomas Myers have recently become members of the Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services staff.

Mr. Shelton is a special assistant for exhibit matters. He will be primarily involved in the coordination of exhibit projects and their interface with the various engineering, design and contracting functions.

Mr. Myers is a civil engineer, previously associated with Control Data Corporation. He is working in the Facilities Planning Branch of OFPES, planning and developing a wide range of construction projects for the Institution.

Shelton, Myers Join OFPES Staff

Richard Ault at the controls of a towplane.

One Smithsonian staff member gets his weekend relaxation towning and flying gliders.

Richard L. Ault, Director of Support Activities, is a charter member of the Warrenton Soaring Center, Inc., operating from a small airport three miles south of Warrenton, Virginia, and offering flying in its finest form in a setting of pastoral beauty. The warren was born with the appetite for flight. The Center includes a municipal judge’s wife, a city mayor (who is also an airline pilot), an army contract specialist (who is also an airline flight instructor) and several retired and active military pilots. All have at least two things in common: a love of flying and years of experience as pilots.

The Center’s stable includes three sailplanes, two of them seaplanes, which are launched by two tow planes. Their flying every weekend, and on Government holidays, includes demonstration flights and instruction in sailplanes, plus sailplane rentals.

"After a trying work week, soaring is wonderful therapy," Mr. Ault says. "All the natural setting among the trees and pasture land surrounding Warrenton Airport is restful in itself, but viewing this lovely mosaic in the quiet flight of a sailplane is sheer poetry in motion, a truly exhilarating experience."
The Smithsonian Mammalogical Association of Natural History sponsored its “first annual scientific expedition to the Himalayas.” Wheeler and Mignon Arnold of the Natural History, and a group of students, set out outside the main circulation desk of the NMNH library. Winners were: Best color, Mrs. Davis; best black and white, Mrs. Davis; Honorable mention, Mr. Purdy, Mr. Carpenter, third, Robert Purdy; Man’s Technology, first and second, Mrs. Purdy, third, Mr. Carpenter; People, first, Kathy Stebler, second and third, Mrs. Newfield; Honorable mention, Mr. Carpenter, Mrs. Mann and Mrs. Davis.

Myths: ‘No Hard Evidence’

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expert at this and can examine the cellular construction of hair under a microscope and tell whether it belonged to a pig or a bear or to a primate. So far no primate hairs have been found.

Then there is the matter of footprints that have been seen in the mountains and photographed. These prints are very elusive and controversial because in the snow footprints enlarge or become smaller with the melting and freezing cycle in the high mountains. None of the footprints are really compelling in being able to determine ‘yes,’ that is a primate or some other animal—elephant, tiger, or leopard. There is nothing like that which really enables one as a scientist to say that the footprint is quite obviously a primate, a higher primate, a gibbon, or some other equivalent animal.

And, of course, there is the fact that a great many of the reports of the people who live in the Himalayas—Tibetans, yak herdsmen, Chinese, Sherpas, Nepalese—are fanciful and mythical.

On the first trip I made in the western Himalayas, when I was 13 years old, I became aware of the sensitivity of the Tibetans who live there toward myths and folk tales. I have since become convinced that the vast high altitude area in which they live has an effect on them that may have something to do with this. It is quite possible, as you go up a mountain, for a stone to come rolling down soundlessly just missing your head, and for you to believe that someone, some evil being, just rolled that stone down. It is a question of mental imagery at a high altitude. Think of people living for generations in this atmosphere where they believe in giants and all kinds of imaginary people as inhabiting those mountains and rolling stones down on them! Naturally, or course, there is a remote possibility that there are animals up there which we have still not yet discovered. I wouldn’t totally exclude it, because the vastness of the landscape, the distance, the difficulty of moving as a human being through these high altitude mountain ranges, is immense.

This animal, if it exists, and is not just a series of folk tales, certainly should not be called ‘Abominable’ or ‘a monster.’ If it’s the sort of small harmless primate gibbon-like creature that I think it could conceivably be, it’s certainly not abominable, it is merely some living species of animal, that is as yet unknown.

Our purpose at the Smithsonian is to make a tabulation of all the species of plants and animal forms on the face of the earth and under the seas and in the skies. It will require generations to complete this task, and there are many, I am sure, that may disappear and become extinct before we’ve even known of their existence.

Abominable Snowman

As for the possibility that the Abominable Snowman is a myth, I think that it is common to everybody to be fascinated by the idea that perhaps things exist that we don’t know about. It’s a phenomenon that we are all aware of as children when we wonder if there are spooks up in the attic. This is merely a more modernized version of the same sort of thing that occurs when you live out in the vast reaches of an enormous mountain range where you hear things at night. You are worried about the weather, changes in the climate, seasons. You are living close to the soil and your crops and livestock very much depend on the cycle of the seasons. Predators, dangers, landslides, violent storms, menacing animals, all these things tend to create a mythical way of looking at things. You propitiate the spirits—you have to—in order to make sure that you really are on the side of the gods.

In this process, you develop folklore, just as people have done in central Europe in the mountains over generations. Certain things just are not done because they are considered bad luck. Certain animals do not wish to see because they are considered bad luck. You try by living right to assure your fortune and have the gods on your side. Out of this, superstition evolves. And you are surrounded in the process of developing good luck for yourself with a tremendous body of legends which have to do with things that are spirits, good or evil, that have to be propitiated or avoided. These legends may involve mythical animals and some of them may become so compelling that you actually may believe them.

Now social anthropologists are the ones who are concerting with tape-recording legends, myths and accounts of life from oral testimony. This is far different than the work of physical anthropologists who want bones or some other vestige of an animal or a person to handle with their hands, see with their own eyes. We have to convince these scientists that those who are interested in myths and legends are capable of being considered scientifically worthwhile in their study and research, even if the myths and legends are not considered to be facts.

Scientific Hoaxes

There and the possibility is, of course, that all of these legends can be scientific hoaxes. Scientific hoaxes can be fun. They can be entertaining, they can be amusing and generally they are not dangerous. Remember when I was a student at Harvard University and there was a Professor Wheeler there. Once a week, Professor Wheeler had a question and answer period in his course on insects. An insect which a student had painstakingly put together after weeks of work was put on his desk by a student who had quite a bit of imagination. The student had put it together painstakingly with weeks of work in his room and we were all on pins and needles to see what Professor Wheeler would say. He looked at it. He held it up in front of the class, examined it minutely and then exclaimed: ‘Gentlemen, this is a humbug.’

I also recall that I had a bird in my collection that was a ‘humbung.’ It was created as a present for one of my Japanese colleagues as a new species, which he described because he was taken in. And, I had the interesting task of taking this bird apart under low-powered magnification, and showing that this specimen really was made of several different kinds of birds laboriously pinned together by a Japanese taxidermist. Very clever, those Japanese!

As for myself, I suppose I am a traditionalist and I would not just take the legends and stories about various mythological animals as fact without eventually having an opportunity to see the bone or a piece of the hide or a hunk of hair. My Dear Watson, I would like to see some solid evidence.