



July 1959

THE SMITHSONIAN

TORCH



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION • WASHINGTON, D. C.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Daisy Fields
Paul H. Oehser
Olive Powell

Elizabeth Walsh
Clifford Evans
Ernest Biebighauser

Contributions are encouraged from all employees of the Smithsonian Institution. If you have an item for THE TORCH please give it to the secretary of your department or send it directly to Mrs. Fields in the Personnel Division.

CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD BE RECEIVED BY THE LAST DAY OF THE MONTH.

July 1959

Number 51

TAXIDERMIST RETIRES

William L. Brown, taxidermist of the U.S. National Museum, retired on June 29 after 50 years of service with the Smithsonian.

On that date Mr. Brown was feted at a party in the Great Hall of the Smithsonian Building.

Highlighting the occasion was the presentation by Secretary Carmichael of a certificate of award and a cash award in recognition of Mr. Brown's superior performance in the office of exhibits.

The Secretary spoke as follows:

"When the Smithsonian Institution accepted the gift of the Fénykövi elephant, it presented almost insurmountable problems in engineering, humidity control, and weight distribution, to name but a few, in addition to the taxidermical problems of tanning and preparing the huge skin.

"Through your ingenuity, the formidable task has been accomplished and the Fénykövi elephant, the largest on exhibition in any museum in the world, now stands in the rotunda of the Natural History Building as a fitting monument to the half century of loyal and talented service you have rendered to the Smithsonian Institution.

"In extending my congratulations I wish to thank you for your superlative achievements which have brought great acclaim to many of the exhibits within our respected Institution."

PERSONNEL OFFICER APPOINTED

Leland C. Westfall was appointed chief of the personnel division on July 1. Mr. Westfall transferred to the Smithsonian Institution from the Veterans' Administration where he served since 1947 as training officer and subsequently as supervisory personnel officer. A former high school teacher, Mr. Westfall entered Government service in 1946 after 4 years' active duty as a naval officer.

- - -

NEW ASSOCIATE CURATOR

Dr. Gus W. Van Beek has replaced Dr. Ralph Solecki as associate curator, division of archeology, in charge of the Old World collection.

For the past five years, Dr. Van Beek has been research associate, Arabian Publication Project, in the Oriental Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University. During the past year he also served as lecturer in Near Eastern Archeology at the University. He studied with the distinguished Orientalist, Prof. W. F. Albright of the Johns Hopkins University, and received his Ph.D. degree in 1954.

Dr. Solecki has accepted a position as assistant professor in the department of anthropology at Columbia University.

- - -

PRESIDENT OF THOREAU SOCIETY

Paul H. Oehser, chief of the editorial and publications division, was elected president of the Thoreau Society at its annual meeting at Concord, Mass., on July 11.

- - -

IT'S NOT TOO HOT

The number of blood donors drops as the temperature rises in the summer. But there is no medical reason for not donating in hot weather. The minimum daily goal at the American Red Cross Blood Center is 100 pints, but a recent day's collection was only 59 pints; the collection requirement for the blood-mobile was 350 pints, but only 313 pints were collected.

If you would like to help relieve the shortage of blood, call Lorraine Thomas on Extension 385 and make arrangements to accompany the group of Smithsonian donors who will visit the Blood Center on July 30.

- - -

ELECTED OFFICER OF BOTANICAL ASSOCIATION

Dr. A. C. Smith, Director of the Museum of Natural History, has been elected vice president of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy.

Officers of the IAPT serve from one International Botanical Congress to the next, in this case from August 1959, when there will be such a Congress in Montreal, probably to 1964.

The new president of the Association is Dr. W. Robyns, Director of the Jardin Botanique de l'Etat, Brussels.

Dr. Smith has also accepted appointment as organizer of the division of botany for the 10th Pacific Science Congress, to be held in Honolulu in 1961.

- - -

RECEIVES NSF GRANT

The National Science Foundation recently announced that a grant in the amount of \$21,900 has been awarded the Smithsonian Institution for the support of basic research entitled "Endocrine Basis of Parasitic Breeding in Birds,"

under the direction of Dr. Herbert Friedmann, head curator of zoology.

The grant became effective on June 10 and will be three years in duration.

- - -

ART OF LISTENING

Federal managers must learn the art of listening -- all in the interests of better employee-management relations, Civil Service Commissioner Barbara Bates Gunderson told the Federal Personnel Management Conference in San Francisco recently.

Asserting that Government's success with its incentive awards system is "one of the most inspiring aspects of the whole Federal personnel picture," she said that the record clearly shows that "Federal employees are creative thinkers, and that many of them make superior contributions to the important work of Government."

- - -

RIGHT NUMBER, PLEASE

On a single day recently the National Herbarium's division of cryptogams received six phone calls for non-botanical information because its telephone extension is 411.

Consequently, the division of cryptogams furnished information which, ordinarily, is outside its bailiwick: When you want a telephone number within the Smithsonian, dial "0" and ask the Operator; when you want information for an outside number dial "9" and then "411."

- - -

SATELLITE TRACK MEET

Satellite trackers of the Astrophysical Observatory met at the Observatory's station in Las Cruces, N. Mex., for a general conference June 15-19. This was the first such conference to be held by tracking-camera observers since the optical tracking program began in 1957. Discussion covered the whole range of operation of the satellite-tracking cameras.

Present at the conference was an observer from each of the Smithsonian's 12 tracking stations, which are located in Argentina, Australia, Curacao, Florida, Hawaii, India, Iran, Japan, New Mexico, Peru, South Africa, and Spain.

Also present were 11 Smithsonian workers from Observatory headquarters in Cambridge, and a representative of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

After the New Mexico sessions there was a further discussion with Smithsonian Institution officials in Washington from June 20-22, and with Observatory headquarters men in Cambridge from June 23-26.

The satellite-tracking cameras were especially designed and constructed for the Observatory. In less than two years of operation, these cameras have taken more than 3,000 pictures of the artificial earth satellites launched since October 1957.

From such pictures, locating the satellites against a star background to an accuracy of a thousandth of a second, will come information about the size, shape, and composition of the earth; upper atmosphere density; and composition and behavior of space.

Already, position studies of the satellites have yielded valuable new knowledge of earth shape and upper-atmosphere density.

- - -

RIVER BASIN NEWS

The first field party of the Missouri Basin Project left on June 4. This party consisted of Dr. Warren W. Caldwell, archeologist; William P. Dunson, assistant; and a crew of four. They will work in the Big Bend Reservoir at the Useful Heart Site and at a series of nearby sites.

Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., Director of the River Basin Surveys, spent several days in early June at the Lincoln office.

Charles H. McNutt returned to official duty on June 15 after a leave of absence during which he completed his doctoral thesis.

Richard P. Wheeler has transferred to the National Park Service at the Wetherill Mesa Project in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.

G. Hubert Smith has returned to duty at the Lincoln office after several months in the Chattahoochee area of Alabama and Georgia, where he investigated historic sites. He was accompanied by William M. Bass, physical anthropologist, and Mr. Bass's assistant, who plan to do research work in the Plains during the summer.

Robert W. Neuman, who has also worked in the Chattahoochee area during the past several months, returned to his official duty station at Lincoln on June 29.

Lawrence L. Tomsyck recently drove the Project truck to Washington, hauling processed specimens to the National Museum. From Washington he drove down to the Chattahoochee area where he loaded the specimens recovered by the parties of Smith and Neuman, as well as those of Harold A. Huscher, and returned them to Lincoln. The Chattahoochee specimens will be processed in the Lincoln laboratory.

- - -

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Training should fulfill the needs of the employee being trained as well as of the organization, Civil Service Chairman Roger W. Jones told Federal agency representatives meeting recently in Washington, D.C., in a day-long conference on "What the Training Act Means."

"The Government Employees Training Act," the Chairman pointed out, "places on each employee the responsibility for 'self-education, self-improvement, and self-training.' The act places on the manager the responsibility for supplementing and extending the employees' efforts through Government-sponsored training programs to develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Both emphases are proper. Neither can fully succeed without the other."

Successful management and successful training, Chairman Jones said, "march together for better or worse. . . We do not find people influenced to change by impersonal, intangible organizations, but by flesh and blood managers, supervisors, and fellow employees."

Mr. Jones predicted that "in time our Government will recognize that it needs a staff college for civilians to fill the gaps that non-Governmental organizations cannot fill."

RIDES WANTED

From Smithsonian Building to 7223-16th St., NW., weekdays at 5:15. Call Miss Betesh, Buildings Management office (ext. 266).

Need ride from College Park-Hyattsville area, or would join carpool with somebody having a parking space. Call Mrs. Nancy Vaughan, Division of Textiles (ext. 396).

NORWEGIAN TAPESTRIES

The Traveling Exhibition Service of the Smithsonian Institution has announced a special loan exhibition of "Norwegian Tapestries" to be presented in five major U.S. museums within the next year. Organized in cooperation with the Norwegian Government, and under the patronage of King Olav V, it will be the most important collection of Norse folk art ever presented in this country.

The first section of the exhibition comprises 40 outstanding examples of 16th-18th century Norwegian tapestry, hand-somely mounted on fabric-covered screens. The primitive designs present themes borrowed to a great extent from contemporary religious literature and from the Bible.

King Solomon, looking almost like a portrait of King Christian IV, receives the Queen of Sheba; the New Testament parable of the Five Wise and the Five Foolish Virgins is represented by rows of little maids in aprons and enormous head-gear. Among the more elaborate compositions are three versions of the Feast of Herod. Before Herod, seated at the table, a very proper Salome receives the head of St. John the Baptist; above, other scenes such as The Annunciation and the three Magi are depicted.

In another section, devoted to folk art other than tapestry, are included carved and painted wooden cupboards, chests, and chairs; beerbowls, cups and tankards in animal shapes, and other household objects and embroideries.

Mr. Paul Koht, the Norwegian Ambassador, will formally open the exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art on September 21. After being shown in New York and Kansas City, but before continuing on to Santa Fe and San Francisco, the tapestries will be exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution from December 15, 1959, to January 17, 1960.

LEARN TO DELEGATE

The following article appeared in the May 1959 issue of Management Highlights, a publication of the Department of the Interior. It consists of excerpts from Nation's Business that were reproduced in the February issue of Navy Management Review.

HOW TO LET GO

"Learning how to let go of authority is one of a manager's trickiest tasks.

"That is the conclusion of management researchers and business leaders who have been taking a new look at the practical problems you encounter when you try to disperse decision-making powers widely and deeply through your company.

"They emphasize that without proper preparation and followup, you may get not delegation but a haphazard abdication of executive responsibility.

"Managers who have achieved successful delegation agree that there are two essential requirements--a philosophy and a plan.

"The philosophy is willing acceptance of a calculated risk. If you cannot bear the thought that somebody may goof, you will never be able to give more than lip service to delegation.

"H. E. Humphreys, Jr., President of U. S. Rubber and a leading exponent of decentralization, readily admits that an inexperienced subordinate who is 'cut loose from close supervision' may 'get his fingers burned.' 'So, perhaps, will the company,' says Humphreys. 'But that is the risk we must take if we want combat-experienced executives.'

"General Electric's Ralph Cordiner believes that mistakes at lower echelons are a reasonable price to pay for the agility which an organization acquires when effective power is dispersed widely and deeply as it is in his company.

"The decision to place responsibility and authority closer to the scene

of the problem,' says Mr. Cordiner, 'provides the organization with an ability to turn on a dime not possible with centralized arrangements.'

"You may find these arguments only half-convincing. Many managers secretly entertain grave reservations about the wisdom of delegation, even though they publicly profess that it is a good idea. Before you go any further, sit down and think the whole issue through for yourself, not as an abstract question of management methodology, but in specific reference to your own company.

"What is it costing you--in time, money, and efficiency--to force all important decisions upward through your organization? Is this cost greater or less than the cost of the mistakes that would inevitably result from unshackling subordinate managers? Are you developing responsible leadership at every level of operation under your present setup? Or are you running a bureaucracy in which the only smart thing to do is pass the buck up?

"Careful consideration of these questions may bring you to wholehearted acceptance of the calculated risk of delegation. If it doesn't, don't try to kid yourself.

"Effective decentralization exists only where top management is honestly convinced of its value. It grows out of attitudes, not organizational charts. Until you are sold on the philosophy, don't meddle with the techniques. It is much better to run a frankly autocratic organization than to confuse everyone with empty gestures of delegation.

"Sincere belief in the principle, though indispensable, is not by itself a guarantee that decentralization will work in your organization.

"Like everything else in business, delegation calls for intelligent planning.

"The biggest booby trap you can fall into,' says Nat Stewart, principal lecturer in organization at the American Management Association's Academy, 'is to begin passing out authority before goals are clear. This leads to chaos--not effective management.'

"A good first step is to centralize all decision-making power in one man--on paper. Pretend that your company or unit has only one manager. List everything he would have to do, all of the various types of decisions he would have to make--in financing, purchasing, production scheduling, sales, public relations and so on. Rate these functions in terms of their relative importance to the total enterprise. Make a rough calculation of how much time is spent on each. This procedure not only yields an inventory of the tasks which must be allocated; it serves as an excellent guide to the type of responsibilities which should be delegated.

"Many executives who make this kind of analysis are shocked to find that they have been spending about 90 percent of their time on functions which they rate as least important, and only 10 percent on the truly vital decisions which are the proper province of top management.

"Another yardstick which several companies have used is the span of future time affected by decision. To oversimplify the formula for purposes of illustration, you might say that top management deals with things that will matter 10 years from now; middle management worries about the coming year; and lower management wrestles with today's production, tomorrow's purchases, and next month's sales.

"The boldest approach, advocated by William B. Given, board chairman of American Brake Shoe, is called 'Bottom-up management.' All authority which is not expressly reserved to top management is considered to be delegated to lower management. Each individual is encouraged to reach out for as much authority as his capacity will permit him to exercise. Few authorities would quarrel with Mr. Given's main thesis that delegation should always be in terms of broad responsibilities, rather than specific duties.

"So far you have been thinking solely in terms of the powers that top management chooses to delegate. But in a practical business situation, there is usually a gulf between what you'd like to do, and what you can do.

"The actual amount of decentralization that takes place in your organization ultimately will depend on the readiness of lower echelons to accept heavier responsibilities. Much has been written in recent years about the role that delegation plays in a good executive development program. Here is the other side of the coin. An organization must have budding management talent all along the line if it is to decentralize efficiently. If you've neglected this problem in the past, you may have to do some recruiting and basic training before you can push your staff off the dock into the deep water of managerial responsibility.



"One more trick like that, young man, and we send you back to Blue Cross."

"They will be inclined to think of responsibility as 'something I can be blamed for' rather than an opportunity to grow. You can often overcome this attitude by having a man-to-man talk with each subordinate to whom you propose to delegate some of your authority. Ascertain whether the job you have mentally assigned to John Smith is one that John would like to do. Help him to see the

opportunities it offers for growth and advancement. Tell him that you expect him to make some mistakes, and that you prefer that he make them, and learn from them, rather than come running to you with every problem. Let him know that, while he can be forgiven for any number of different mistakes, you will not look kindly upon his making the same mistake twice.

"When you have reached a good understanding with John, the authority which you have delegated to him should be widely advertised throughout the organization. 'It is important not only that the individual know what he is supposed to do,' says Prof. Harold Guetzkow of Northwestern University, 'but also that everyone else know.'

"Remember that your own superiors--or your directors and stockholders, if you are the executive--still hold you accountable for everything that is done in your company or unit. An executive can (indeed must) delegate authority, but he can never delegate his own responsibility. You can't pass the buck downwards.

"It follows that you have not only the right but the duty to police the performance of your subordinate managers. You can do this, without being unduly meddlesome, by applying the production man's concept of quality control through random sampling. Every now and then, check John Smith out on his handling of a problem. Did he show boldness and imagination in dealing with it? Did he examine all the angles or shoot from the hip?

"If he approaches all or most of his problems in this fashion, is he likely to have a high batting average of right answers? In this way you gain an insight into the man and his methods, which is a far more effective form of supervision than trying to post-audit every important decision that a subordinate makes.

"The final stage of delegation arrives when you and Mr. Smith have worked together long enough to evolve--explicitly or by tacit understanding--three clear categories of decisions.

"One is the type of decisions on which you want to be consulted before any final action is taken. Ideally, there should be few of these. Some involve matters of transcendent importance to the company's future. Others may involve relatively trivial problems which are touchy because they affect your relationship with the chairman of the board, or with a big customer. At the next level are the decisions which John Smith makes himself, but which he is expected to report to you. Finally, there is the broad area in which he operates entirely on his own, reporting results rather than decisions and actions.

"The goal of delegation is to get all of your subordinates so well trained that about 90 percent of their problems will fall into category three, 9 percent into category two, and only 1 percent will come bouncing up to you for decision.

"Then you will have time to put your feet on the desk, look out the window, and brood about 1968--which is the true executive function."

- - -