'78 Reform Act Affects Staff

Here's an update on the Smithsonian Office of Personnel Administration's efforts to implement the provisions of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978:

- Since August 1979, all of the Institution's first-line supervisors and managers have been required to serve an 18-month probationary period. An employee who does not work out as a supervisor will be returned to a position at no lower grade than his former rank. Vacancy announcements now make note of this new requirement.

- Smithsonian executives GS-16 through Executive Level IV are exempt from the new federal Senior Executive Service which covers most federal personnel of comparable levels. Beginning in January, however, Smithsonian executives will be covered by a performance appraisal system. The approximately 40 federal and trust fund employees in these positions will be rated by their supervisors at the end of each fiscal year.

- Personnel is currently developing performance appraisal systems to be used as the basis for a number of personnel and pay decisions. Pay increases will be tied more closely to the performance standards for each employee.

- The appraisal system will be implemented in several stages, with the current system for upper level staff as the initial step. Supervisors and managers in grades GS-13 through GS-15 will be the next group to be included in the system. Coverage will be extended on a gradual basis to all employees during 1980 and early 1981.

- Personnel Office is developing a merit pay program that will replace the present annual comparability and within-grade increases for supervisors and managers between the grades GS-13 and GS-15. Annual increases for these employees will be tied directly to their performance. Personnel Director Howard Toy anticipates that the merit pay program will go into effect by October 1981.

- The Act requires that agencies set up a minority recruitment plan focusing on occupations where few minority members are represented. Personnel and the Office of Equal Opportunity are working together to develop such a program at the Smithsonian.

Smithsonian magazine's Ed Thompson to take sabbatical. See interview, Page 2.

Scientists Discover Ancient Bird Family

By Thomas Harney

A previously unknown fossil group of giant, flightless, penguinlike birds has been reported by Dr. Storrs Olson, a paleobiologist at the Museum of Natural History.

Olson described his find in the Nov. 9 issue of Science magazine, in an article co-authored with Yoshikazu Hasegawa, a colleague at Tokyo's National Science Museum.

On the cover is an artist's reconstruction of the largest species of the new family, shown to scale with the outline of the largest living penguin. Both are diving. (See photo, Page 6.)

The bird, the big penguinlike species on the cover probably measured more than 2 meters from bill tip to tail tip. The fossil evidence indicates that it lived about 30 million years ago in areas bordering the North Pacific.

For the most part, the fossil skeletons resemble those of today's Pelecaniformes (See Fossil Birds, Page 6.)

Frer Acquires Chinese Calligraphy Collection

The Freer Gallery of Art has acquired a major collection of Chinese calligraphy through the Regents' program for acquisitions of outstanding quality. "Each of the 12 hanging and hand scrolls included in the collection are of the finest quality, and several of them are unique works by the greatest masters in Chinese calligraphic history," Freer Director Thomas Lawton said. The group includes some of the most important examples of Chinese calligraphy in any American museum or private collection."

The works were purchased from a private collector in this country. They were discovered by the Gallery's curator of Chinese art, Dr. Shan Fu, an expert in Chinese calligraphy and arts of China.

In China, calligraphy is esteemed as the highest form of artistic accomplishment, being even more highly regarded than painting. The earliest examples of the art can be seen on oracle bones and bronze vessels dating as early as the second millennium B.C. Since then, calligraphy has been integrated into all aspects of the culture. Museums and private collectors in the West, however, have emphasized their collections of Chinese paintings, sculpture and ceramic art, resulting in a dearth of examples of fine calligraphy.

The calligraphy collection is the Freer's first acquisition under a 3-year program established last year by the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Under this program, the Institution may use a combination of non-appropriated trust funds and private matching funds to make major acquisitions.

Holiday Fêtes Around SI

December is always one of the busiest months at Smithsonian museums, and this year is no exception. There's the annual holiday party sponsored by Secretary Ripley, the Trees of Christmas at the Museum of History and Technology, and a 6-day Christmas celebration mounted by the Division of Performing Arts and film series presented all over the place.

The Trees of Christmas exhibit, sponsored by the Office of Horticulture and MHT, will open Dec. 14 and continue through Jan. 2. Thirteen 8- and 12-foot trees, some of them reflecting the diversity of the country's ethnic heritage, will fill the central corridors of the Museum's first and second floors.

Holiday decorations will be scattered among the Museum's exhibits. The one-room post office, originally from West Virginia, will be trimmed with evergreens brought from its home state. A 1920s creche will be placed in the Italian-American living room in "Nation of Nations." And the standing candelabra outside the First Ladies Hall will be trimmed with evergreens similar to recent White House decorations.

The Hirshhorn Museum will present the fourth annual Holiday for children on Saturdays, Dec. 1, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., sponsored by the Museum's education department. The program includes skits, sketches and special performances as well as cartoon showings.

The annual employees' Christmas party is set for Thursday, Dec. 20, from 3 to 5:15 p.m., in the Museum of Natural History rotunda. Everyone's invited to join in the festivities with Secretary and Mrs. Ripley.

Visitors to MHT between Dec. 26 and Dec. 31 will hardly be able to miss the Christmas festivities which will be put together by Shirley Cherkasky and staff members at DPA. It will have everything (See 'Holidays.') Page 8.

A 19th-century Santa with friends from MHT's collection of business Americana

Three Poems of Wu K'uan

Calligraphy is an ancient Chinese art form, esteemed as the highest form of artistic accomplishment. It is even more highly regarded than painting. The earliest examples of the art can be seen on oracle bones and bronze vessels dating as early as the second millennium B.C. Since then, calligraphy has been integrated into all aspects of the culture. Museums and private collectors in the West, however, have emphasized their collections of Chinese paintings, sculpture and ceramic art, resulting in a dearth of examples of fine calligraphy. The calligraphy collection is the Freer's first acquisition under a 3-year program established last year by the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Under this program, the Institution may use a combination of non-appropriated trust funds and private matching funds to make major acquisitions.

By Ming dynasty poet and calligrapher Wu K'uan (1436-1504)

1. "The Four Poems"

By Ming dynasty poet and calligrapher Wu K'uan (1436-1504)

2. "Four Poems"

3. "Four Poems"

Section from a scroll with Chinese calligraphy in any American Museum or private collection. By Ming dynasty poet and calligrapher Wu K'uan (1436-1504)
Ed Thompson: Aiming High

Edward K. Thompson, editor and publisher of Smithsonian magazine, will begin a sabatical Jan. 1 to pursue personal writing. Secretary Ripley has announced.

After a 30-year career at Life magazine, which he edited from 1961 through 1967, Thompson agreed to serve as founding editor of the new magazine envisioned by Ripley for carrying the Smithsonian story beyond the Mail.

"The momentum in productivity, quality and diverse approaches developed by the loyal and united efforts of the magazine staff over the years since our first issue of 1970 has been notable in the world of magazine publishing," the Secretary said. Executive Editor Don Moser has been named acting editor of the magazine and Associate Publisher Joseph J. Dughi will serve as acting publisher, beginning Jan. 1.

Thompson was awarded the Smithsonian's Joseph Henry Medal in 1973. An accompanying citation described him as "dauntless in purpose and purely persevering" and spoke of his "unerring taste and warm devotion to the task" of founding the magazine.

In an interview with Torch Editor Susan Bliss and public affairs staffer David Maxfield, Thompson talked about his work at the magazine, its goals and accomplishments and the quality of magazine publishing today.

Why has Smithsonian magazine enjoyed such wide success? Was it right for the times—the interest in conservation and ecology, for example? Was there a ready-made audience out there?

Nothing is ready-made. You have to work for it. There was a considerable amount of pessimism about starting a new magazine. The Saturday Evening Post and Look had folded. But we didn't intend Smithsonian to be like the big magazines. And it did appear there was a place for it.

There were more specialized magazines in existence, like Golf. But this was specialized in another sense to find readers who were intelligent and curious about the world out there. My experience in the business is that readers are considerably smarter than editors frequently give them credit for. You're far better off aiming at something a little bit higher than one thinks the readers may accept. As far as we can find out, we have turned up with a mature but curious audience.

Someone recently observed that you could never tell from issue to issue whether Smithsonian was going to be a science or art magazine. That was meant as criticism. But couldn't that also be a strength?

Your friend wasn't a very good observer, because each issue has a certain amount of science, a certain amount of poetry and conservation, a certain amount of art and history.

The Secretary wanted to extrapolate the character of the Institution to the country as a whole, to reach out. I think we have done that.

We did consciously try to keep the reader interested. We told a U.S. story and a world story. Smithsonian readers seem quite a loyal group. Is that something unique to this magazine?

True, so far—but one can't take anything for granted. If it hadn't been generally appealing, its following would have fallen away long ago.

Are there particular stories readers have enjoyed or complained about?

When we did the story on the tiger, we sold 50,000 posters. You can't go wrong with animals, on the other hand, you can dog readers with too many. For the October issue, we got a lot of complaints about the Depression art cover. They said, "I can't stand to put that on my coffee table."

They are a very powerful tool for conveying information. The idea is get the copy and the pictures to complement each other. But sometimes it's not possible to do that. Then they run in parallel. The article gives something, the picture gives something else.

It seems some magazines can be approached on two levels: reading the text or just enjoying the photographs and captions. Is this true of Smithsonian?

It's hard to look over the reader's shoulder and decide. At Life it used to drive me nuts when I'd see readers on the commuter train carefully studying at the back of the magazine, after all the trouble we went to achieve momentum and change of pace in articles.

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Are you headed for a larger circulation? We're staying pretty steady. We're trying to attract the same kind of audience—we don't write down to kids, although they may be smarter than any of us. But we do need the momentum to replace those subscribers we lose. We need the renewals, plus a little more.

Are the articles written on assignment or on the editor's ideas?

Both. A reasonably small percent come in absolutely unsolicited. On the other hand, we get offers to do articles from writers we know, and from some we don't. Then we consider the ideas and see if they have possibilities. Many ideas which originate within the staff develop into assignments.

How do magazines of today compare to earlier periods, the 1920s and 1930s, say?

It really depends on your taste. There were those who were aware by Literary Digest. But magazines, in any form, take up people's time, and they have to be better because there are so many temptations now to engage in—television, bowling... The survivors have to be better.

Still, I miss head-to-head competition. It doesn't seem to matter much anymore if you're a newspaper on the stands a half-hour before the other guy. You're now competing for the reader's time in all areas of activity.
Exhibit Design at the Smithsonian

Zoo Graphics Staff Speaks For All The Animals

By Linda St. Thomas

Zoo symbol: Adult eagle with eagle symbol.

The National Zoological Park, with its 2,500 animals and 163 acres of woodland in Rock Creek Park, maintains a staff of eight full-time designers planning attractive and natural-looking settings for the animals is only one aspect of their work.

"The purpose of our design program is to make the visitors' trip to the Zoo more comfortable," said Chief Designer Robert Mulcahy. "When people can find their way around and move easily from the lion and tiger exhibit to the giant pandas and back to another. Beaver Valley, which opened in late May, has three-dimensional scenes with natural-looking setings for the animals is only one aspect of their work.

"The purpose of our design program is to make the visiters' trip to the Zoo more comfortable," said Chief Designer at the Zoo these days in -..."
SI Press Publishes in Black

For the first time in its 13-year history, the Smithsonian Institution Press finished in the black in fiscal 1979, with a net surplus of $290,000 against a deficit of $199,200 the preceding year.

Net sales also increased dramatically, from $411,500 in fiscal 1978 to $1,966,000 in the year just completed.

The surplus was derived from sales of the 26 trade and scholarly books among the Press' 141 publications.

No revenue is received from federal publications, which make up about 80 percent of the Press' total publishing picture. Sales depends heavily on the Smithsonian's distribution, and on revenues going to the U.S. Treasury.

When SI Press Director Dr. Edward Rivinus took charge in 1975, he established a 5-year goal of increasing Press output to 26 to 28 new titles annually and to increase sales of trade and scholarly books to $400,000.

The figures indicate that the goal has become a reality ahead of schedule.

An important factor in this success story, Rivinus said, was the cooperative arrangement with art publisher Harry N. Abrams Inc. for sales of "The National Air and Space Museum" book and for co-publication of "The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics." Thus far, Smithsonian Associates have purchased more than 4,000 copies of the NASM book and over 25,000 copies of the comics collection.

Rivinus and Felix C. Lowe, deputy director, have the "team work and professionalism of the Press staff, who produce quality books within a reasonable time frame," Rivinus said. "None of this would have happened without Lowe's guidance, have improved. "An SI Press staffer calls on wholesalers every three months to check on back orders of books at least twice a year," Lowe said.

"Books published by the Press can be found in shops from Berkeley, Calif., to Budapest, N.Y., as well as in Washington, D.C., bookstores.

Rivinus believes the Press seasonal catalog now helps move books that had been gathering dust in the warehouse for years. With a distribution of 80,000, the catalog is mailed to libraries, selected academic and book-broker lists and Smithsonian Resident Associates and is distributed through Smithsonian museum shops and the McGraw-Hill bookstore at MHT.

The Press uses to rely on another publisher, who acted as exclusive commission agent. Now, the Press distributes its books to book stores with no minimum. An extensive direct-mail list capability has been developed and tested particular audiences.

"Revenues of the Press' marketing processes has included the establishment of a foreign sales representatives. SI Press books now have sales in Europe through (a London-based distributor); in Latin America, Japan, Australia, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Southeast Asia through Fehlert and Simon Inc. and in Canada through Macmillan of Canada.

The Press also imports and distributes books in the United States for the British Museum, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. of New Zealand.

Julian E. Stimson, project manager of public service, under whose office the Press falls administratively, had this to say: "The goal was to improve, Rivinus put together and rounded out the positive aspects of the operation by placing Lowe in charge of marketing."

—the Editors

Comings and Goings

Patrick Corrigan has joined NASM's Administration Department to head special projects. He will be responsible for special projects and learning-disabled visitors. Corrigan comes from the division Silver Hill, where he worked from 1977 to 1979.

Dorothy Blaska is the new secretary to the chief of the Education Division at NASM. Previously, she was executive assistant to James Boldt, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Staff changes at the Silver Hill facility include two new museum specialists, Judith Jordan and Edward Thayer. Three members of the facility's staff recently left: Pat Merchant, museum technician, moved to the Eastern Shore after 7 years with the Smithsonian; administrative clerk Mike Mikish has retired after 20 years at Silver Hill, and Larry Metzger, museum technician, has accepted a position with a local advertising agency.

Van D. Hardesty is a new museum specialist in NASM's Aeronautics Department. Hardesty, Greenwich, Conn., graduated from Harvard in 1976-78, taught European and Russian history at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio. His research specialty is Soviet air power, and he is writing a book on the history of the Soviet Air Force's series. Describing Singer's presentation as "something special," a Baltimore Sun reporter said the art work and the photographer's feeling for the things friends had written about the "living death—"his fascinating complexity, his intelligence, intensity and ambiguous ambition, his many, many books."

People

An extensive illustrated article in Popular Photography on MNH's Kjell Sandved described the methods Sandved uses in photographing close-up images of the natural world.

The Phoenix (Aria) Gazette reported on "Martha's" summer's exhibits. "Something, indeed, is happening at the Aquarium" says the Gazette, adding, "The aquarium looks better than ever."
Ode To A Saga Of Flight

"I've never seen a product with which I fell in love more readily," Deputy Director Melvin Zieflein, of the National Air and Space Museum, said. It's easy to understand why, "The National Air and Space Museum," newly published by Harry N. Abrams Inc., is an airplane-lover's saga of flight, all wrapped in one strikingly illustrated 504-page volume, weighing a hefty 7 pounds. There are 305 illustrations, including 259 in full color. Zieflein and Smithsonian Under Secretary Michael Collins, NASM's first director, who provided a foreword, were involved in the book project from its inception. To Zieflein, the book is notable from several viewpoints. It is the only work which successfully weaves NASM's exhibits into a non-technical history of flight. But what's truly remarkable, in Zieflein's

Books

The New York Times Book Review described the big new book on the Air and Space Museum as "a lively and joyous celebration of one of the things Americans do best." Author C.D.B. Bryan is "clearly in love with the quirks and eccentricities of his material," reviewer Henry S. F. Cooper Jr. wrote. Cooper found the color photographs "stunning," describing many of them as "works of art."

The camera editor for the Washington Star described the NASM book as being "more than gloriously photographed, designed and reproduced. Its text, unlike "more

Star

does,為了 the book's ability to anticipate problems and to propose alter-

works belong to the Museum of History and Technology through Dec. 31. The exhibit, which has traveled to six other cities since its opening at the
divided into nine sections—basketry, musical instruments, quilting, wood carving, pottery, blanket weaving, boatbuilding, architecture and graveyard designs.

At MHT, the last stop on the tour, there will be a further attraction—an introduced section in the first-floor pendulum area announcing the new exhibit on the floor. For this added starter, Community Life curator Richard Ahlborn has pulled together some 50 items from the NASM museums—the majority from MHT.

Fond Words As Fried Leaves

Charles Blitzer calls her the unsurrr "Ter-

Ripley simply said, "How do you bestow encomiums on someone who deserve them all?"

Watson Steps Down

Thomas J. Watson Jr., chairman of the Executive Committee of International Business Machines Corp., resigned his ap-

Art Index Update

In "Sorting Out the National Collec-

the Smithsonian, he said, "I do know that my life will be more difficult and

functions have enabled the Institution to achieve many of its objectives," said David Chalidoff.

Smithsonrr, however, speaks of herself as a member of a team. "I'm just one of the many who have contributed," she said. Because of its effort, you feel part of it, even though you don't get your name on anything."

Secretary Ripley simply said, "How do you bestow encomiums on someone who deserves them all?" She will be very much missed.

Richard Ahlborn (left) and James Piper with a few from the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of African Art.

African American

The grand finale of the exhibition, "The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts," is on view at the Museum of History and Technology through Dec. 31.

The exhibit, which has traveled to six other cities since its opening at the

Cleveland Museum of Art last year, is divided into nine sections—basketry, musical instruments, quilting, wood carving, pottery, blanket weaving, boatbuilding, architecture and graveyard designs.

At MHT, the last stop on the tour, there will be a further attraction—an introduced section in the first-floor pendulum area announcing the new exhibit on the floor. For this added starter, Community Life curator Richard Ahlborn has pulled together some 50 items from the NASM museums—the majority from MHT.

Director for both portions of the exhibit is

In the main exhibit and in his 175-page il-

Museum of History and the Museum of African Art. Designer for both portions of the exhibit is

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Congress Okays S1 Budget

By David Maxfield

A bill containing the Smithsonian’s fiscal 1980 budget was approved by both houses of Congress on Nov. 9 and forwarded to the President. It contains $140,000,000 for salaries, expenses and construction projects recommended by the Smithsonian Advisory Commis-

sioner. The final amount came to $353,000 more than the sum initially approved by the House July 30 and $4,000 above the Senate Oct. 18. The Smithsonian has requested $145 million for the year.

The largest portion of the budget—$103.8 million—goes to salaries and other expenses, followed by $20.6 million for construction of the new Museum Support Centers and $4.9 million for storage, conservation and study of the S collections. Additional funds for projects were expected to be approved in 1980 and construction completed by late 1982.

Other building projects funded by Congress include $6.3 million for construction and improvement of the New South $350,000 for bringing the Museum of African Art into compliance with the Institution’s building codes and regulations.

Taping Decade of Information Radio

“The Smithsonian,” a weekly taped half-hour program produced by the Office of Telecommunications, celebrated its 10th birthday last month at a party complete with old radio sets and highlights of past programs.

Among the guests were the past and present “Voice of the Smithsonian,” Cynthia Helms, who with producer Fred Gray initiated the service; Therese Keane, who now heads the operations for KETA-FM, and the current researcher and interviewer, Carroll Paul Johnson is ex-

ecutive producer.

Helms reminisced about her favorite interviews with the early radio-arts figure, Saul Bellow, MNH’s Meredith Jones, astronaut John Hicott and the World People’s Congress in Mexico City. She also had new things about archaeology, geology, anthropology and other branches of science.

At first, “Radio Smithsonian” was car- ried only by WGBH-AM/FM. That station still airs the program on Sunday morning.

Radio Smithsonian

Broadcast on WGBH-AM (170) and WGBH-FM (103.5) Sundays at 9 p.m.

Dec. 2 “Callin’s Indian Gallery,” and “The Captain Ahab of the Pho­ natic” —The medical implications of our forces into space.

Dec. 9 “Popular Culture in the Soviet Union.”

Dec. 16 “The Singer of the Storyteller”—The great Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer, who received the Nobel Prize in 1978, talks about his life; and “A Century of Ceramics” —look at a new exhibition on this subject.

Dec. 23 “As Time Goes By”—Howard Koch, co-author of the screenplays for “The Longest Day” and “ Paths with the Gods” —The mysterious and sacred drawings of the Nasca Desert in Peru.


The $500,000 Smithsonian, request for planning the South Quadrangle develop- ment was approved by Congress. The Senate earlier had earmarked $250,000 for initial planning of an Oriental arts facility, a new home for the Museum of African Art and support facilities, including parking lots and a library. The House denied the funds, and the Senate conference accepted that position. In its report on the bill, the Senate Appropriations Committee said “more precise planning, including proposals for non-federal financing, needs to be accomplished before a federal com-
mmitment is made.” (Secretary Ripley traveled to South Korea and Japan in September to raise funds for the Oriental art gallery. See below.)

Rep. Sidney R. Yates (D-Ill.), chairman of the House Appropriations Subcom-
nittee on Interior and Related Agencies, in- dicated during the conference meeting on the budget that even a small amount for planning implied a full commitment to the complete project. In the House debate for the Appropriations Conference Report, Yates said that the Quadrangle planning funds were removed “in order to provide an opportunity for further reviews of certain aspects of the project.”

The House and Senate also deleted $457,000 requested for the Research Awards Program established in 1966 to fund, on a competitive basis, innovative Research by the Smithsonian staff. The report on the budget, the Senate Ap-

propriations Committee said, “Simulating research through grants to scientists is an important program which should enjoy full congressional support from the Smithsonian and restricted trust funds.”

A principle of the appropriations bill, however, contained $233,000 for work at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panam a, stemming from treaty-related re-

quirements.

Fossil Bird compared with silhouette of modern penguin for cover of Science magazine.

(fossil birds) (Continued from Page 1)

But now we have a very special material consisting of several single elements or associated partial skeletons from six localities in Japan.”

“In addition, we have received a partial skeleton for our own Museum collected in the state of Washington. Of the major skeletal elements, only the end of the bird’s bill remains unknown. Differences in size indicate that as many as five different specimens may exist.

What happened to drive the bird to ex-
tinction about 25 million years ago? Olson has the noted paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson may have explained the ex-

planation.

Simpson, an expert on penguins, has suggested that the ecological niche oc- cupied by the giant penguin in the Southern Hemisphere may have been pre-empted by seals during their period of great diver-
sification 25 million years ago. “The fact that the Pho­topterus disappeared simul-
taneously and occupied niches similar to those of giant penguins but in a different hemisphere may mean that they also were able to keep them in the seabirds.” (Smithsonian)

Olson has a special interest in sea birds and a knack for making exciting fossil finds in this area both in the field and in the Museum’s collections. His field finds in- clude the first discovery of a fossil skull of the Ascension Island flightless rail, and a later collection drawer, he recently came upon a long-overlooked skeleton of an Enormous Frigate bird, the earliest Frigate bird so far discovered in the fossil record.

Smithsonian Society Donates Art

Four new acquisitions and two Smith-

sonian activities have been selected for funding by the unrestricted contributions of Annual Members of the James Smithson Society.

They were selected by the Secretary’s Executive Committee and a representative from the National Board of the Smithson-

ian Associates.

The acquisitions include the Benjamin Lay portrait by William Williams for the National Portrait Gallery, a Turkish brass candelabrum of the Ottoman period for the Freer Gallery of Art, a Colonial American silver teapot by Samuel Case for the Museum of History and Technology and “Icarus,” a sculpture by Michael Ayrton for the National Air and Space Museum.

Funding also was provided for a plant- based house, for the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama and for support of a feasibility study by the Visitor Information and Associates’ Recep-
tion Center on transportation around the Mall for persons with ambulatory aid-

cilities.

The James Smithson Society was es-

tablished in 1977 by the Smithsonian Board of Regents and the National Board of the Smithsonian Associates. Contributions of contributing membership. Annual Members are individuals who make annual contri-

butions of $1,000 or more in a given year. Life Members are those who give $25,000 or more, either in one lump sum or in cumulative contributions over a five-year period.

The Freer’s Ottoman candlestick.
Newsmakers

By Johanie Douthit

Wilcomb E. Washburn, director of the American Studies Program, has been appointed a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar for 1978-80 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. Washburn will visit nine institutions of higher education to lecture on such topics as the legal status of the American Indian, the early history of the Smithsonian Institution and American Indian tribalism.

Several media sculptures by Rita Benton and graphic designs by Richard Stamm, both display technicians in the Museum Shops Design Department, are included in the "Abstraction to Realism" show at the Art Institute. Their works represent the "realism" side of the exhibit on display now, through December.

Emile May, assistant curator of political history at MHT, was recently interviewed by a radio station in his historic appointment. Women's organizations and what artifacts representing their work should be saved for future historical collections. The interview was turned into a series broadcast around the country in early October.

John Harris, editor at the St Press, wrote an article on Jane Fonda and the Women's Notes on Women's Roles in Some Recent American Movies," for Unicorn Times.

Maurine Paley, associate curator at NPG, spoke on "Pennsylvania German Culture," at Washington Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German at a meeting held at Georgetown University.

Pat Chieffo, NCA's chairman of professionals, training program, represented NCA at a Georgetown University seminar on local internship opportunities.


Nadine Nolan, associate, curator of prints and drawings at NCA, made selections from the Museum, with Kai Yawkey Woodburn Art Museum's bird art exhibition for display at NCA in February. In Wisconsin, she was interviewed by WSAU-TV.

Michaelson, NCA's chairman of professional training program, represented NCA at a Georgetown University seminar on local internship opportunities.

Nora Panzer, contract manager at NCA, conducted a 2-day contract workshop for the Arkansas State Art Council and for volunteers at the Little Rock Arches Center.

Andra K. Dupree, senior researcher assistant at CFA, and Lee Hartman, CFA's principal research physicist, co-authored "For Black Holes" in a recent issue of Nature.

Michael Lawson, researcher historian at NPG, presented a paper on "Socio-Enviromental Impact of Federal Dam Projects on Suwannee Reservations" at the annual conference of the Western History Association in San Diego. He recently received a grant from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation to study the implementation of Indian self-determination programs during the Johnson administration.

Lori Buff, NPG's coordinator, participated in the "Explorations in the Walters" workshop at Baltimore's Walters Art Gallery: making a presentation on Neolithic artifacts.

Resident Associate Program Director Janet W. Stullinger attended the National Council of Museum Public Relations Meeting held at the International Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, Holland.

Mike Lyons, museum technician at Silver Hill, won four awards for his model aircraft entries at the International Plastic Modelers Society's regional convention held in Washington. Lyons was awarded two first place honors, a second place and an honorable mention.

NASM curator Glen Sweeting attended the eighth annual U.S. Army Museum curators' conference held at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Robert B. Meyer Jr., curator in NASM's Department of Aeronautics, delivered a lecture on the "History of Aeroneto Engines" to a group of University of Virginia students.

Nad W. Himms, NASM director, has been elected to a 2-year term as a trustee of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research. UCAR is composed of 46 universities and manages the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., under contract to the National Science Foundation.

Walter H. Finn, curator of astronautics at NASM, delivered a lecture on "20 Years of Manned Space Flight" to the National Capitol Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences has invited Karen Runyan to be a member of the nominating panel to screen National News and documentaries for the 1978-79 Emmy Awards. Loveland is director of the Motion Picture Unit of the Office of Exhibits Central.

Fram A. Stoffers, MNH research associate, and Richard Cowan, senior botanist at MNH, have been awarded a Citation of Special Recognition by the Associates of the National Agricultural Library of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Beltsville, Md. They were honored for their authorship of the first two volumes of "Taxonomic Literature," a selective guide to botanical publications and collections covering the period 1753 to 1938. The first two volumes, 6 years in preparation, each run 1,000 pages. The final four volumes in the series, equally massive, are expected to be completed by 1986.

Geologist Studies Chinese Deserts

Geologist Farouk El-Baz, research director of the National Air and Space Museum's Center for Earth and Planetary Studies, was one of six American scientists visiting China on a recent 4-week tour sponsored by the National Geographic Society.

After attending lectures in Peking at the Institute of Geography of the Academy Sinica, the group began a train trip across thousands of miles into western China.

In Lanchow, the team studied programs developed to halt the encroachment of desert on arable land.

In the Tengri desert, the team witnessed a program designed to stabilize the movement of the dunes with 3-foot squares planted with grass and irrigated by water from the nearby Yellow River.

"Though the grid method may seem un-sophisticated to us," El-Baz said, "it works very well. In fact, I found the Chinese's ability to stabilize the dunes without calling for fancy technology or chemical sprays impressive."

El-Baz's relationship with China will resume next spring, when the National Geographic Society plays host to six Chinese scientists studying deserts in the American Southwest. El-Baz expects to show them around the Earth and Planetary Studies Center and escort them to Arizona on a desert field trip.
Q & A

Should you find your young child in the back yard feasting on brightly colored berries from an unknown plant, don't panic. A quick way to identify the offending growth is to call one of the botanists in the Museum of Natural History. Many people already know concerned parents and identify plants by phone. Dan Nicolson, now in his 15th year with the Museum, handles many of the calls from parents referred by local poison control centers. He was interviewed by Torch staff writer Kathryn Lindeman.

Q. What poisonous plants do we have in this area?

A. There are three outdoor plants around here that parents need to worry about: yew (or Taxis), climbing nightshade (a relative of the potato) and pokeweed (or inkberry). We get our calls on these from September through December.

Q. What about indoor plants?

A. We can expect a call on something like Diefenbachia in the dead of winter because it's a house plant. But eating Diefenbachia is what I call a self-correcting activity—a person can't eat enough to kill him before the irritation begins. It doesn't bother him for a minute, then smoke comes out of his ears. Diefenbachia is called the mother-in-law plant because the tongue will swell up and the victim can't talk. A lot of people want to eradicate these plants because they are poisonous, but that isn't really necessary.

Q. How do you get enough information over the phone to identify the plants without seeing them?

A. Sometimes the adult is so concerned about the child that I can't get information about the plant. The parent doesn't know how many berries or leaves the kid has eaten, or always reassure them immediately that there probably wasn't a dangerous amount. Diefenbachia is the one that does a lot of the berry or foliage because they just don't taste good. I soothe the caller so that I can elicit a description—it's a shrub, tree, herb? I get the common name by asking "What do you call it?" As soon as I get an idea which plant it is, I ask for specific questions: "Are the leaves alternate?" and so on.

Q. How easy has it been to identify these plants?

A. About 95 percent of them turn out to be well-known plants. Jazzy, hazy names used by commercial companies can lead you astray for a while, like miniature watermelon which is called "sugar lamp." Of course, knowing what a season helps me.

Q. What happens after you've identified the plant?

A. If the plant is poisonous, I refer the caller back to poison control, particularly if I know the plant is a yew or pokeweed, if there are any symptoms or if the parent knows the child ate a lot of it. It's hard to know how many berries it will take to affect the child—much depends on his weight.

Q. Do you know if any of the calls have revealed cases of serious poisoning?

A. We don't get any feedback from the callers or from the poison control center. I've never discovered the outcome of any of my phone identifications, so I don't know how serious any of the incidents have been. But the potential is always there. I read about the death of an ingenious 5-year-old girl who took a bunch of the purple pokeweed berries, crashed them and gave them to sugar and water to simulate grape juice. This made it palatable enough for her to consume a large quantity of the poison.

Q. How many of these calls do you get?

A. Through the year, we have about two or three calls a month on house plants. People have called about plants which later discovered were jade plants, Swedish ivy, peperomia, etc. With the fall fruiting in September and October, we get more inquiries, including about two or three a week on outdoor plants.

Nicolson with a poisonous pokeweed sample

Flora Smithiantha

By James Buckler

Deck the halls with pomander balls at Yuletide! These dried, natural decorations are made with cloves inserted into apples, oranges, lemons or limes. They add a spicy fragrance to traditional arrangements of pine, spruce and cedar boughs.

Each apple requires approximately one small clove of whole cloves, so you will need a lot of them. You might try a restaurant supply house which may be willing to sell you a commercial-size can.

To make an apple pomander ball, begin at the top of the apple and insert rows of cloves from top to bottom as closely as possible. Cover the entire apple in this way, trying not to leave any open spaces. The apple will be rather soft when completed, but it will harden within a week, or sooner if placed in a warm, dry place, preferably in the sun. For the apple will continue to ooze during the hardening period, so it should be placed on a towel or cloth.

Citrus pomanders should be made in a slightly different way. The cloves should be stuck into the fruit at random, rather than in straight lines, in order to prevent the skin from cracking. If you find the skin difficult to pierce, or if your thumb begins to look like a pin cushion, start the holes in the fruit with a skewer.

Once the surfaces are covered with cloves, mix equal parts of ground cinnamon and orris root (available at drug stores) and just a hopping teaspoon in a small bag. Shake each clove-stuck orange, lemon, lime separately in the bag to coat well with this preservative mixture. Place fruits in a foil-covered tray or basket and store in a dry place until fruit shrinks and hardens—usually 3 to 4 weeks.

Once the pomander balls are hardened, wrap them individually in a cradle of net or gold lace, tie a colored ribbon around them and fasten a hanger at the top. They make excellent decorations or gifts. Year round, they may be hung in closets or placed in bureau drawers—they have a lovely smell and they repel moths.

Pomanders last for many years and can be refreshed by adding fragrance oils, rose, patchouli, vetiver, clove, jasmine, sandalwood, bergamot or orange blossom. For lemon pomanders, add oil of lemon verbena. Although all oils—not perfumes, which are diluted with alcohol—have a very strong smell for the first few days, they soon mellow and blend with other scents. Each Christmas, place several in the dining room, hall and living room among the arrangement of fruit, cones, pods and fresh-cut evergreens.

To 19th-century minds, this card from MHT's collection was an apt holiday greeting.

'Holidays' (Continued from Page 1)

From puppet shows and 17th-century family games to jugglers and carolers.

Special holiday programs will be presented at MHT; the National Collection of Fine Arts and the Renwick. For titles and schedule information, consult the Smithsonian Print Calendar.

Events marking Kwanzaa, a 7-day Afro-American celebration, will begin at the Museum of African Art on Dec. 26 with a candle-lighting ceremony. Story-telling sessions and jam sessions for young musicians will be held at 11:30 a.m. each day on the 27th, 28th and 31st. There will also be Kwanzaa gift-making workshops, tours of various exhibits in the Museum and two dance performances in MNH's Baird Auditorium—one on Saturday, Dec. 29, and another on Sunday, Dec. 30. The final observance of Kwanzaa will be held New Year's Day.

This month the MAA boutique will offer jewelry from West Africa, an unusual collection of guards and baskets, animal figures made of soapstone and other handcrafted items. For details on Kwanzaa activities, call 547-6222, ext. 44 or 45.

Again this year, the museum shops will be all dressed up for the holidays, with a Victorian theme in four Mall museums. At the shops in MHT, Arts and Industries, MNH and Air and Space, Victorian decorations in purple and orange will be grouped among evergreen bouquets.

On the Renwick, the A&I shop will have the most Victoriana, with lots of lace and ribbons and a fully decorated gilded tree. Needing to add to Richard Mancini, the new shop designer. Last year's decorations in that building won Display Technician Ron Barns an award from Visual Merchandising, a national trade magazine.

The display case near the tiger at the MNH shop will boast a deer covered with moss in an arrangement that look something like a forest fantasy.

The Renwick has an exhibit for the entire season this year called "Toys and Other Pastimes: Not for Children Only," complete with dollhouses, wooden put-together toys, batiks and backgammon. All the items are handmade by American craftsmen and many are one of a kind.

Many of the items in the shops are also listed in the Christmas catalog. Among the popular catalog gifts this year are: a Lenox vase (a reproduction of an early 18th-century vase), a Smithsonian bronze elephant, an Earth and space globe, a pressa silk scarf, a framed print and, as always, the calendar, "What's different this year is that people seem to be buying the higher-priced and higher-quality items," Virginia Fleming, marketing manager, says.

Mountain Housing

The author of this special editorial, otherwise known as the "MHO Hilton," is now 80 percent complete and scheduled to be ready for occupancy by Christmas.

The two-story structure, designed to accommodate astronomers at work on the new Multi-Mirror Telescope, will sleep 10.

To ensure quiet for the scientists, who must work at night and sleep by day, walls are constructed with double-thick, sound-proof panels. All wood is fire-resistant and windows are double-glazed.

At the end of the day, the telescopes facing southwest provide a pleasant place to relax and watch the sun go down over the Bobo- quaviri Mountains.

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By James Buckler

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