

The Mammoth

A Newsletter for the Friends of the University of Nebraska State Museum
NOVEMBER 2008

University of
NEBRASKA
S T A T E
MUSEUM

Mueller Planetarium's 50th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, August 2nd, was a big day for Mueller Planetarium. We chose this day to celebrate our 50th Anniversary of operation. Big thanks go out to Three Eagles Communications' stations KFOR and KZKX who gave us lots of radio airtime to promote our event. As a result, the Planetarium set a record of 487 people through the theater in a single day in public shows. Six shows were planned and the afternoon ones were sold out so early that we added a seventh show.

Linda Thompson, Leah Carpenter, and the front desk staff did a huge amount of work to help make the day a success. They brought in a popcorn maker and Pepsi dispenser to add to the audiences' enjoyment. Prices for shows for the day reverted to 1950's levels at \$0.50 for adults and \$0.25 for kids. The new fulldome Planetarium show "Black Holes," funded by the Friends of the Museum, wowed the crowds. In addition, I created a special multimedia opening for the show which highlighted the Planetarium's history. I also want to thank Jack Northrup of the King Middle School Planetarium in Omaha, who volunteered for the day and helped me have some relief in running all those shows.

"Black Holes" continues to be featured at the Planetarium. A new show for young children, "The Little Star That Could," also premieres in November.

The photo at right shows those who worked the Anniversary event. Left to right in photo: Jack Dunn, Brandon Earnest, Linda Thompson, Maria Manning, Leah Carpenter, Jack Northrup, and Samantha Koehler-Overton.

Jack Dunn
Mueller Planetarium



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

This issue of the Mammoth features two very special anniversaries—the 50th anniversary of Mueller Planetarium and the 80th anniversary of the gift of “Miss Mie” to the Museum from children of Japan. Each has a lesson for us as we chart our way through the economic turmoil and uncertainties that we are experiencing as 2008 draws to a close.

The newest Fulldome program in the Planetarium is “The Little Star That Could,” a delightful show that everyone can enjoy. When I was a child I loved the book *The Little Engine That Could* and remember my parents repeating the refrain as they read to me “I-think-I-can-I-think-I-can!” As Wikipedia puts it, the book is used to teach children the value of optimism and hard work, and “some critics would contend that the book is a metaphor for the American Dream.” As many of you know, Mueller Planetarium was almost closed during the budget crisis of 2003. It has been the dedication, optimism, enthusiasm, and devoted hard work of Jack Dunn (and his many helpers and Friends) that has not only made it possible to keep our Planetarium open, but transformed it beyond what we ever thought would be realistically feasible. The timely gifts from the Friends to support installation of the new Fulldome capability and the Friends’ purchase of appealing Fulldome shows have made it possible to enhance the Planetarium experience and increase attendance to the extent that Mark Harris was able to arrange the purchase of “The Little Star That Could” entirely from Planetarium attendance income! This is exactly what we hoped would happen in the business model for the new Fulldome programming—running the Planetarium on a combination of Friends gifts and attendance revenue. Thank you for your support! “We Think We Can!”

The second anniversary is that of the Friendship Doll “Miss Mie”—it is 80 years since the gift in 1928 to the Museum of this beautiful doll with her intricate travelling accessories. The Museum hosted a delegation from Mie Prefecture planning to support the expert conservation of the doll by artisans in Japan in 2009. It is indeed sobering to think of all that has happened in our two countries since 1928!

Our visitors from Mie Prefecture were amazed to find that for all this time the Museum had carefully curated and preserved over 150 letters from Japanese schoolchildren to American children about the doll. They are written in beautiful calligraphy on very delicate rice paper and fragile scrolls, and have never been translated, so these really are letters written to future generations! The Japanese delegation was extremely excited about the prospect of translating the letters and trying to make contact either with some of the individuals who wrote them as children, or the families and descendants of the letter writers. It was a special honor for me to be able to help host the delegation, because my husband has participated in two Japanese geological expeditions to Antarctica and spent 6 months at the National Institute of Polar Research in Tokyo; his great-uncle Joseph Grew was Ambassador to Japan from 1932 to 1941.

These 50- and 80-year anniversaries in the Museum remind us that we are custodians of a wonderful institution that is multigenerational not only in delighting children, parents, grandchildren and grandparents, and great grandparents (and all the cousins and the aunts!) who make up today’s audiences, but also that it reaches much farther back in the past and much further ahead in the future to other generations beyond—a reminder that the Museum is a precious legacy that we care for and that will be handed down from us to the future. Please take a moment to reflect on what your State Museum has meant to you and your family, and consider making a special gift to the Friends and the Museum to help us hand down an even stronger Museum to the future.



Miss Mie committee officers visit UNL: Left to right Hideyuki Takizawa (Secretary General), Kazue Yamane (Secretary), Prem Paul (UNL Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development), Takekazu Takebayashi (Committee President, Chairman of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tsu City), Sayo Noro (Vice President and wife of the Governor of Mie Prefecture), and Priscilla Grew. Photo by Missi Paul.

— Priscilla Grew, Director

Miss Mie Returns to Japan

In late July 2009, Miss Mie will return to her "birth place" on the island of Honshu in Japan following an 80-year-long absence. She was recently visited by her homecoming committee from Tsu City in Mie Prefecture on the central coast of Honshu. The homecoming committee included Mr. Takekazu Takebayashi (President, Committee for Miss Mie Homecoming and the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tsu City), Mrs. Sayo Noro (Vice-President of the Committee and Wife of the Governor of Mie Prefecture), Mr. Hideyuki Takizawa (Secretary-General of the Committee), and Mrs. Kazue Yamane (Secretary). The committee was accompanied during their visit in late September by Ms. Deb Sturgeon, who served as an interpreter.



Dr. Priscilla Grew (Director), Susan Curtis (Collection Assistant), Mr. Takebayashi, Mrs. Noro, Mrs. Yamane, and Mr. Takizawa. Photo courtesy of Ted Kirk, *Lincoln Journal Star*.

Miss Mie was among the 58 *Torei Ningyo* (Dolls of Gratitude) or Friendship Dolls that Japanese school children sent to the United States in 1927. Prior to their arrival, the Committee on World Friendship Among Children, founded by missionary Dr. Sidney Gulick, had sent 12,000 "blue-eyed" dolls to children in Japan. Each *Torei Ningyo* had a number of accessories including a passport, a steamship ticket, a wooden base with name plaque, lacquered clothing chests, shoes, two pedestal lanterns, a silk parasol, and many hand-written letters from Japanese children. Our Museum is home for Miss Mie as well as all of her accessories and more than 150 friendship letters.

Public awareness about the Friendship Dolls increased during the 1980s and at least 44 dolls have been located throughout the United States. Four *Torei Ningyo* have returned to Japan for restoration and a homecoming tour. Miss Mie will return to Mie Prefecture next summer, where she will be given a "welcome home" celebration. She will then be restored by the Yoshitoku Doll Company (founded in 1711) in Tokyo. Following her restoration, Miss Mie will visit 12 cities within

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Mie Prefecture during the spring of 2010 and then return to Nebraska accompanied by Susan Curtis, collection assistant, and an entourage of our Japanese friends. Miss Mie's arrival at the Museum will be marked by a public celebration to honor a new and growing friendship with the citizens of Mie Prefecture and the people of Japan.

Alan Osborn
Curator of Anthropology



Miss Mie, a Friendship Doll from Mie Prefecture in Japan, and her accessories.

Further information can be found on the following Internet websites:

<http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/dolls/japanese/locations/index.htm>

<http://www.museum.unl.edu/research/anthropology/asiacoll/eastcoll.html>

