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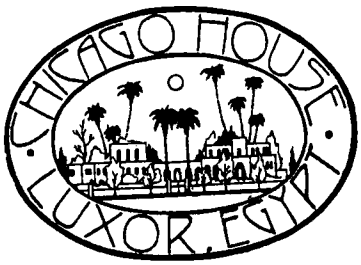

CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN

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A CHICAGO HOUSE THANKSGIVING

Carol Meyer, Artist

Expatriate holidays are always a bit of a challenge—the Chicago House staff is overseas for all the great kooroborees except the Fourth of July—and Thanksgiving is moreover a peculiarly American institution. Supplies and ingredients for the feast have to be imported, shipped, bought, grown, or faked from any available source. Cranberry, dried mincemeat, and sage arrive item by item in the suitcases of staff members, and pumpkins are bought annually in Qus. This year (as in the past) a fabulous shipment of yams, marshmallows, and other specialities, highlighted by two fine fat Butterball turkeys, arrived from Cairo as a gift from Ken and Ann Robinson, with the shipping details organized by Ron and Ann Wolfe.

Thursday morning at 7:30 the regular kitchen staff hit the decks running. Our two chefs, Taya and Abd el-Zaher, were fully occupied with baking pies, roasting the turkeys in our somewhat primitive ovens, washing and peeling and chopping, preparing the sweet potato casserole, creamed onions, mashed potatoes, gravy, and candied carrots. Shafei, the butler, made repeated bicycle trips to the suq to fetch whatever the cooks had just run out of. Individual staff members pitched in as well: shredding bread for stuffing, making ice, setting the table with the good cloths, checking pies, arranging flowers, shelling peas, polishing silver, pulling out extra serving china.

Good things, like bananas, come in bunches, and at 11:00 on Thanksgiving morning we accepted a special invitation from Dr. Mohammed Saghir, Chief Inspector of Luxor, to view the hoard of twenty-five statues recently excavated

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Season's Greetings
from the staff
at Chicago House

XEROX FOUNDATION GRANT

This fall the Epigraphic Survey became the recipient of a generous three-year grant of $30,000 awarded by the Xerox Foundation, headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut. One of the primary goals of the Foundation is the study and preservation of the written word. When Peter Dorman and Carlotta Maher visited the Foundation headquarters in Stamford, Connecticut, last June, they discovered a sizable museum in the main lobby, which traces the development of writing from earliest times to the present, and illustrates the evolution of printing and publishing techniques. Among the ancient objects represented— which immediately caught our attention— were numerous inscribed Egyptian objects, including a Middle Kingdom account papyrus, as well as other documents from the ancient Near East.

Fortunately for the Survey, our proposal was strongly advocated by John Marrs, General Manager of Xerox Egypt, and by Oswaldo Liang, his predecessor and long-time friend of Chicago House. With their letters of introduction, Robert Gudger, Vice-President of the Foundation, kindly gave us an interview to discuss the goals of the Survey and favored us with his support. In early November, shortly after the present field season opened, Carlotta and Peter were invited to Xerox headquarters in Cairo for a presentation ceremony, where John Marrs offered Chicago House the first annual check for $10,000 in unrestricted funds. This amount will be used to support a staff member for the duration of our six-month field season and represents a most significant contribution to our continuing task of documenting the reliefs of Luxor Temple.

In the meantime, another gift from Xerox continues to lend fundamental support, something no office can do without: a Xerox copier. We are also grateful to John Marrs for renewing our lease on the machine for another full year; in fact, it is thanks to Xerox that the present bulletin is being duplicated for our readership. ◆

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A NEW SEASON BEGINS AT CHICAGO HOUSE

Richard Jasnow, Senior Epigrapher

After five hectic days in Cairo, Peter Dorman and I arrived at Luxor about 7:30 A.M. on October 5. We had come ten days before the rest of the staff in order to open up Chicago House. "Open up" is precisely the correct expression. Our season lasts only from October every year to the following April, and the building is unoccupied for about six months. The effects of summer heat (about 105 Fahrenheit in the shade), desert sand, and insects can be easily imagined. To minimize their impact, Chicago House is carefully sealed up in April.

During my one previous season here as student epigrapher in 1981-82, I had arrived on October 15th to find my room ready to move into. The staff enjoyed hot meals and could use the library from the very start. I gave little thought then as to how much had been done before I got there.

This season, as our taxi pulled in the gate, most of the workmen, led by Saleh, the Chief Engineer, were there to receive us. The initial greetings past, Peter set right to work. The first order of business was to distribute the keys to the workmen so that they could begin cleaning and setting up the areas in their charge. This was no simple task, in view of the bewildering collection of keys, of all shapes and sizes, filling four cabinets in the office. Shafei had to get into the kitchen and the food magazines; Yousef needed the keys to the darkroom; Abdel Hay the keys to the Land Rovers and garages. And so on and so on. Some doors, however, must be unlocked every year by the Director himself. When Chicago House is shut down in April, the more important doors are wired shut and sealed with the University of Chicago seal. It was Peter's duty to cut these seals, an operation solemnly observed by myself and the servants.

As an Egyptologist, thinking of Carter's first look into the burial chamber of Tutankhamun, I could hardly resist the query, "What do you see, what do you see?" as Peter peered into the reopened rooms. As we entered the darkened house that Thursday, there was indeed an eerie, tomblike stillness in the air. The stillness of the house was particularly to be felt late at night, when all the servants had left, apart from the watchman at the gates. We ate our first meal while contemplating a living room stripped of rugs and draperies, with its furniture forlornly stacked in the middle and hidden under white cloth. The long dining table itself was but a bare wooden plank, and it was difficult to believe that within a few days

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1990 FOCH TOUR

The fifth annual Friends of Chicago House (FOCH) Archaeological Tour to Upper Egypt is scheduled for March 8-11, 1990. The proposed itinerary includes one of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and a walk over the cliffs to Deir el Bahri, for a visit to the temple of Hatshepsut and the tomb of Senenmut, with its astronomocial ceiling. Due to popular demand, another donkey ride is planned, this time through the tombs of the nobles and over to the workmen's village of Deir el Medina--though a bus will be available as an alternative means of transport. Other highlights: a day's trip to the Ptolemaic temple of Dendera, and a dawn watch from the top of the first pylon at Karnak, where the avid photographer can get spectacular shots of the great temple of Amun in all directions.

The social activities will culminate with a black-tie gala reception at Chicago House, where tour members will enjoy hot hors d'oeuvres and dancing in the courtyard of the Residence under a full moon. It is expected that the tour will coincide with the annual festival of Abu'l Haggag, the Moslem saint whose mosque is located within the court of Luxor Temple. The feast is celebrated with a large procession of colorful boats, which are dragged around the temple. There are many similarities between this festival and the ancient feast of Opet, the subject of the reliefs in the great Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple, which Chicago House is currently documenting. There is already a waiting list of participants for this weekend, since space is limited, but inquiries should be directed to Ann Wolfe at Professional Business Services: tel. 353-1913 / 356-0741. A report of the highlights of the weekend will appear in the Spring Bulletin. ◆

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RECEPTION IN ZAMALEK

Carlotta Maher, Assistant to the Director

Five years ago, six decades of peaceful and scholarly obscurity came to an end for Chicago House. When "counterpart funds" from the United States government ceased to flow in 1985, we were forced out into the business world to seek new funding, both in the U.S. and in Cairo. It is not only financial support that has resulted: the Chicago House staff has acquired a group of delightful and enthusiastic new friends here in Egypt who enhance our lives in many ways.

This lovely trend took a more multi-national turn when Director Peter Dorman and Carlotta Maher were guests at a cocktail reception in the home of Ruth Steinholtz and John Batchelor on November 16th. Ruth is a lawyer with the firm of Baker and McKenzie, and John is General Manager of British Petroleum in Cairo. Their elegant flat in Zamalek (for U.S. readers: this is one of the nicest parts of Cairo, a garden island of old private villas and embassy residences) was the setting for a party to introduce Chicago House to thirty guests who were unfamiliar with its mission to record the monuments.

Other oil companies represented in the gathering were Suco, Unocal, Mobil Exploration, and Denison; other firms included Carrier Air Conditioning, Sonesta Hotel, Professional Business Services, British Airways, Xerox, and E.N.I. of Italy. A display of large prints, documenting the history and the work of Chicago House, had been prepared by photographer Sue Lezon, and was a prominent feature of the evening.

John, Peter, and Carlotta spoke briefly. The guests were new to the story and horrified to hear how desperately far damage to the monuments has gone. All of them accepted our invitation to visit Luxor, where the work can be seen at first hand—we find that visitors to Chicago House invariably become devoted to the cause. Our remarks were kept short, and after John announced that British Petroleum would make a second corporate donation to Chicago House—BP is the first non-American company to do so, and British Airways the second—the group resumed the party with renewed fervor! ◆

Thanksgiving *(continued from page 1)*

from the Luxor Temple. We all washed our hands and prepared our professional faces to meet the statues, and for an hour we strolled among the rediscovered splendors of a lost age. The statues are magnificent, varied, and important indeed—but the gentle reader will have to wait for the official opening of a new gallery in the Luxor Museum later this month.

Back from the sublime to the frenetic, further volunteers appeared to wash spinach for salad, set up the courtyard for preprandial drinks, lay out the trays of crudités, and whip up dips and salad dressing.

By 2:30 all were coolly changed into damask and gold, suits and ties. Guests included Nigel and Helen Strudwick of the Christ College Theban Tombs Project; Jean and Helen Jacquet and two staff members from the Karnak Nord project; Patricia Bochi from the University of Pennsylvania; Barbara Arnold, former Chicago House artist; and William Spreadberry, captain of the Hilton hot-air balloon. With the help of our many friends and staff, we enjoyed a dinner that was lavish, leisurely, and authentically American, tailing eventually into coffee and conversation in the living room. Some took advantage of the last of the sunset over the Nile to stroll down the newly-completed Corniche, some relaxed around the fireplace, and most quit very early. For those not quite replete, turkey sandwiches and cranberry sauce could be had for a late evening snack.

Now for the festive holidays of December and New Year's Day. ◆

Season Opens *(continued from p. 2)*

twenty people or more would be crowded about at dinner time.

Naturally, readying the living quarters is always the top priority. Despite all precautions, the fine desert sand invariably seeps through every crack and settles in a fine layer over every surface. The rooms must be aired out and repeatedly swept and dusted, the linens and soap supplied, plumbing checked. While all this is going on, the food stocks must be replenished. I accompanied Saleh several times to the Coptic grocery, where we bought vast

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New Season *(continued from p. 3)*

quantities of soft drinks, bully beef, canned fruits, and other delicacies. It was then that I made my first acquaintance with the Kimo ice cream store, and tried, in vain, to memorize the Arabic for apricot jam and condensed milk. After the living quarters were presentable, we turned our attention to the library and the staff offices.

The library, with its fifteen thousand volumes, was a particularly daunting sight. All the books had been carefully wrapped in Arabic newspapers and liberally sprinkled with moth balls. Here the dust was thicker, the atmosphere more oppressive after the long summer. Still, mirabile dictu, the experienced Egyptian staff rendered the library accessible in just a few days. Being a pessimistic soul with regard to computers, I was especially doubtful that our Apples could have survived the dust and heat. Nevertheless, we soon had the computers up and running; the high-pitched sound of the printers filled the air.

By the time the staff arrived on the fifteenth, Chicago House was ready for its sixty-sixth season. Tea was once more being served at five o'clock under the benign gaze of Nefertiti. Our watchdog Fuzzy had plenty of visitors to harass and staff members to cajole for treats. The work could begin.◆

ADDRESSES OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY:

October through March:
Chicago House
Luxor,
Arab Republic of EGYPT
tel. (011) (20) (95) 38-2525

April through September:
The Oriental Institute
1155 E. 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
tel. 312-702-9524

THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY
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