Oregon’s Museum

By Jon Erlandson, Executive Director

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History may be located in the Eugene-Springfield area, but it serves diverse constituencies across the state of Oregon. Since 1935, it has been the official repository for archaeological and ethnographic collections owned by the state of Oregon. This puts it in league with the Oregon State Archives and the Oregon Historical Society as one of the primary guardians of Oregon’s rich human history.

As Greg Retallack discusses in his column, 82 years after the founding of the museum, the State of Oregon has designated the MNCH’s Condon Collection as the Oregon State Museum of Paleontology—the official repository of state-owned fossils and other geological specimens. The new law, which passed unanimously in both houses of the Oregon Legislature, recognizes the enormous value of preserving Oregon’s heritage and greatly strengthens the MNCH’s role in protecting and interpreting it.

During its 2017 session, the Legislature also unanimously passed an important law directing the Oregon Department of Education to work with Tribal partners in developing statewide curriculum about Native Americans in Oregon—including Tribal history and culture, treaty rights and sovereignty issues, current events, and more. School districts will be required to teach these topics to K-12 students beginning in 2019-20. Although many Oregon districts already incorporate Native American history into their curricula, a coordinated and collaborative statewide effort is long overdue. A world-renowned center for the study and interpretation of Oregon’s 15,000 years of Native history, the museum will be an important resource in this effort. As Ann Craig describes in her column, the MNCH excels at collaborative programming that celebrates the history and diversity of Native American cultures in the Pacific Northwest—and Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

As Pam Endzweig notes in her column, the MNCH recently announced the creation of an important new initiative, the University of Oregon Rock Art Research Archive (UO RARA). A highly significant aspect of Oregon’s archaeological history is the amazing array of petroglyphs, pictographs, and other rock art created by Native American artists over the millennia. Threatened today by forces ranging from erosion to development and vandalism, these precious cultural resources will be better preserved through UO RARA, making them accessible for many generations to come. As Tom Connolly stresses in his column, such preservation and protection efforts—especially in collaboration with Oregon Tribes—isn’t just about research and education, it’s also about social justice.

Now more than ever, the MNCH is truly Oregon’s museum, and I have never been more proud to be its executive director. Thank you for your continuing support.

University of Oregon
Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Jon Erlandson
Executive Director

Scott Fitzpatrick
Associate Director

Thomas Connolly
Director of Archaeological Research

Ann Craig
Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs

Pamela Endzweig
Director of Anthropological Collections

Greg Retallack
Director of the Condon Fossil Collection

FIELDNOTES
Published by the Museum of Natural and Cultural History

Jon Erlandson, General Editor
Kristin Strommer, Managing Editor
Alex Wijnen, Designer

National Geographic spotlights Scott Fitzpatrick’s research

In July 2017, National Geographic dove into questions surrounding an ancient seafaring adventure—the settling of the Pacific Islands—and MNCH associate director Scott Fitzpatrick joined in. The story, titled “Voyages of Old,” zeroes in on a new study to which Fitzpatrick contributed research. The study combines archaeological and climate data with computer seafaring models to develop scenarios for the original settlement of the Pacific Islands.

“Archaeological evidence points to a gap of about 2,000 years between the time that people first reached western Polynesia and the time they ventured eastward to Oceania,” said Fitzpatrick. “The study helps explain that gap. Ancient seafarers had the wind at their backs as they voyaged as far as Samoa, but there the wind changed direction, effectively stranding them.”

As the study suggests, when early island cultures developed the technologies required to sail against the wind, they were able to undertake successful voyages to Hawai‘i, Rapa Nui, and New Zealand—journeys that may have taken as long as two months.

“They were exceptional seafarers, no doubt about it,” Fitzpatrick said in the article.
We are delighted to announce that the museum’s Condon Collection is soon to become Oregon’s official home for publicly owned paleontological collections—a landmark achievement with important advantages for the museum, the University of Oregon, and the people of our state.

The state Legislature established the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology in 1935, making our museum the official repository of state-owned archaeological and ethnographic collections, but no parallel legislation has existed with regard to fossils and other paleontological materials.

During the Legislature’s 2017 lawmaking session, Representatives Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene), Julie Fahey (D-West Eugene and Junction City), and Phil Barnhart (D-Central Lane and Linn Counties) set out to change that. They cosponsored House Bill 2399, which would officially establish the MNCH’s Condon Collection as the Oregon State Museum of Paleontology and make it the default destination for any paleontological materials coming into the State of Oregon’s possession.

Along with MNCH fossil collections manager Edward Davis, I testified in Salem in support of the bill’s passage. In our testimonies, we described the dangers facing the state’s fossil collections—pointing to out-of-state transfers, the downsizing of public collections facilities around the state, and other trends that threaten our ability to preserve a comprehensive record of Oregon’s deepest past. The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Oregon State University, and Southern Oregon University have all lost fossil collections in recent years, and important Oregon fossils have been donated to out-of-state institutions. Without procedural guidelines and other state protections in place, what would become of such collections in the coming years?

Fortunately, the bill passed unanimously through both houses of the Legislature and was signed into law toward the end of May by Governor Kate Brown. It goes into effect on January 1, 2018. The new law will allow the Condon Collection to better attract orphaned collections of significant specimens and make us more competitive when it comes to adopting Oregon specimens that are desirable to out-of-state institutions. The law also cement the University of Oregon’s status as the state’s premier paleontological research university, bolstering our reputation and lending strength to future fundraising efforts. Finally, and most importantly, the law ensures that Oregon fossils will have a safe and permanent home right here in Oregon and that the state’s rich fossil heritage will remain intact and accessible to scientists, educators, and the wider Oregon public for generations to come.

Paleobiology to publish study by Edward Davis

The widespread extinction of large Ice Age mammals across North America represents an unsolved puzzle. One hypothesis suggests that these extinctions were the product of overhunting by humans. But findings from a new study by MNCH paleontologist Edward Davis suggest that a different process was at work.

The study, coauthored by UO alumnae Meghan Emery-Wetherell and Brianna McHorse, was recently accepted for publication in the journal Paleobiology. Using geographic information science to analyze human and large mammal coexistence during the Late Pleistocene, the authors found evidence that humans and megafauna overlapped for thousands of years in some parts of the continent, while not at all in other parts.

“This pattern is inconsistent with the overhunting hypothesis, which would involve human-megafauna overlaps everywhere extinctions occurred,” said Davis.

Instead, the study suggests a slower process of ecological change known as a trophic cascade. In this model, growing human populations would have gradually destabilized the ecosystem, having a less direct but still detrimental impact on large mammals. Coupled with the climatic cooling that occurred around 12,000 years ago, the authors conclude, these cascading human impacts likely drove the continent’s large-mammal extinctions.
Honoring Indigenous Peoples
By Ann Craig, Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs

Fall is a time for celebrations—across the state, around the nation, and right here at the museum. We’ll be marking occasions like Oregon Archaeology Month and National Fossil Day with compelling exhibits and a great blend of new programs for kids, families, and adults.

At the heart of our fall 2017 celebrations is Indigenous People’s Day on October 9 and National Native American Heritage Month which takes place in November. In connection, we’re welcoming to the museum the internationally acclaimed DIGNITY: Tribes in Transition, an extraordinary photography exhibit honoring Indigenous Peoples around the globe. Spanning three decades and four continents, Dana Gluckstein’s 60 black-and-white portraits relate the stories of people who are fighting for their traditions, their lands, and their lives in a rapidly changing world. From Latin America to Africa to the Pacific Islands, these breathtakingly beautiful images insist we acknowledge hardship and loss, and invite us to think about social justice and sovereignty in new and meaningful ways.


“It is my sincere wish that DIGNITY will serve as a critical call to action in support of all Indigenous Peoples,” says Gluckstein, who will join us at the museum as we celebrate the exhibit’s Eugene opening.

We invite you to explore the exhibit and meet its remarkable creator during her October 4 Ideas On Tap appearance, and at our members-only exhibit preview on October 5.

We look forward to celebrating with you.

Campbell River Indian Band Teenage Girl, Canada, 2008. From DIGNITY: Tribes in Transition, © Dana Gluckstein

UO Museums Host National Conference

The MNCH and the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art teamed up in June to co-host the 20th annual Association of Academic Museums and Galleries (AAMG) conference. Participants traveled from some of the best academic museums around the country to meet at the UO campus for three days of keynote speakers, sessions, and workshops.

The theme, Why Museums Matter: The Teaching Museum Today, focused on the ways academic museums can help shape and inspire the next generation of museum professionals. Internship program leaders, student advisors, and students themselves gathered to share insights and explore possibilities for the future.

“Excellent universities have excellent museums,” said MNCH director of exhibitions and public programs Ann Craig. “Ours exemplifies the key role museums can play in advancing their universities’ teaching and research missions. It’s great to be able to share lessons from our experience and gather insights from other professionals at academic museums.”
Through 60 stunning and intimate portraits, critically acclaimed photographer Dana Gluckstein pays homage to Indigenous Peoples around the world. Taken in Africa, the Americas, the Pacific Islands, and beyond, the images tell the stories of imperiled cultures in an age of rapid global change, and shine a light on the profound interconnectedness of all people. **On view through Sunday, December 17.**
WOLVES
AND WILD LANDS
IN THE 21st CENTURY

THROUGH SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

How can wolves and people coexist in our modern world? From Alaska to Oregon to North Carolina, explore the epic story of North America’s wolves—and the vital role humans play in shaping their future.

Organized by the International Wolf Center and the Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota.

The Moon

THROUGH SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

THE MOON is a place where mountains form in moments and astronaut bootprints might last for millennia. Take a lunar expedition through striking NASA photographs and explore the fascinating landscape of our closest celestial neighbor.

OREGON—WHERE PAST IS PRESENT

14,000 years of Oregon stories—from the First Americans at Paisley Caves to the dynamic cultures of today’s Tribes.

EXPLORE OREGON

300 million years of Northwest natural history
**Programs for Adults**

**FALL ARCHAEOLOGY TALKS**

**Indigenous Anthropology: Views From The Field**
Fridays | October 13 and 20 | 5:30 p.m.
MUSEUM GALLERIA | FREE ADMISSION

**OCTOBER 13**
**Indigenizing Curatorial Practice**

Native scholars have written extensively on decolonizing museums that feature Native American history and culture. But is it possible to truly change the European-American model that guides most U.S. cultural museums? Join anthropologist, curator, and activist DEANA DARTT (Chumash) and explore ways that museums can interrupt historic, European-American narratives and apply indigenized practices.

**OCTOBER 20**
**Potlatch and The Southwest Oregon Research Project**

In 1995, four members of Oregon’s Coquille Tribe embarked on a research excursion to Washington, DC, hoping to find archives of Tribal history and language. They returned with nearly 60,000 pages of materials. What happened next changed Oregon’s history. Join anthropologist and University of Oregon Tribal liaison JASON YOUNKER (Coquille) for an exploration of this revolutionary project and what it has meant for Oregon Native empowerment.

**WOLF TALKS**

Join us for a trio of talks celebrating wild wolves and their relatives in Oregon and beyond. Wolf Talks are included with regular admission; they’re free for members and UO ID card holders. All talks take place from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the MNCH Galleria.

**Thursday | September 14**
**Exploring the Human-Canine Bond**
with Oregon State University psychologist Monique Udell

**Thursday | November 9**
**Kalapuya Stories**
with Coos and Komemma Kalapuya Tribal member and storyteller Esther Stutzman

**Thursday | December 14**
**Oregon’s Wolf Management Story**
the Fun, the Sad, and the Fascinating
with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Wolf Program coordinator Russ Morgan

**NEW!**

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**IDEAS ON TAP**

**PUB CONVERSATIONS**

**September 6**
**How Have Mind-Altering Substances Shaped Humanity?**
with University of Oregon archaeologist Scott Fitzpatrick

**October 4**
**Can Art Change the World?**
with internationally acclaimed photographer Dana Gluckstein

**November 1**
**Can Wild Wolves and Humans Coexist?**
with National Geographic author Brenda Peterson

**December 6**
**What Can We Find in Oregon’s Winter Skies?**
with University of Oregon astronomer Scott Fisher

Cosponsored by Claim 52 Abbey, La Granada Latin Kitchen, NEDCO, Pig and Turnip, and 100 Mile Bakery.

Open Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
# September 2017

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**HOW FOSSILS FORETELL OUR CLIMATE FUTURE**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20**

6:00-7:30 P.M. at the Eugene Public Library

Oregon has an extensive fossil record from a period when carbon levels were as high as they are expected to be by 2100. Join GREG RETALLACK, director of MNCH paleontological collections, and discover how we can use the fossil record to develop a picture of climate changes to come. Free admission.

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**October 2017**

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**NATIONAL FOSSIL DAY TALK**

**FOSSILS AS GUIDES TO CONSERVATION**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11**

3:00-4:00 P.M. at the museum

On this National Fossil Day, join MNCH paleobiologist EDWARD B. DAVIS and explore how the fossil record can help us better manage Earth’s ecosystems today and in the future. Included with regular museum admission; free for MNCH members and UO ID card holders.

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1680 East 15th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon · 541-346-3024 · natural-history.uoregon.edu
# November 2017

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<td>Get out in nature, rain or shine, and explore fun activities for the whole family. Be sure to visit the Museum of Natural and Cultural History’s booth at this exciting annual event. Admission is free. Learn more at mountpisgaharboretum.com.</td>
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# December 2017

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<td>Winter Wednesday</td>
<td>Little Wonders 10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>13 Winter Wednesday</td>
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<td>14 Wolf Talk 3:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Winter Wednesday</td>
<td>Winter Solstice Celebration 5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>23 MUSEUM CLOSED</td>
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Open Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Family and Community Programs

GET READY FOR FALL FAMILY FUN!

Wolf Pack Family Day
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21 • 11:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

Bring the whole pack to the museum for a day of family fun! Explore the exhibit Wolves and Wild Lands in the 21st Century and enjoy crafts and activities celebrating the connections between people and our amazing canine friends. Snacks provided.

$10 per family; $5 for families presenting EBT cards; free for MNCH members. Not a member yet? Sign up during Family Day and get your new family membership for half price!

Winter Solstice Celebration

HOWL AT THE MOON!
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15
5:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

From live music to crafts to hands-on science activities, our annual winter solstice celebration means a howling good time for the whole family!

$5 general admission. Admission is free with a non-perishable food donation (per person) to FOOD for Lane County. Museum memberships make the perfect gift. Purchase a new membership for half price during the celebration!

At the Museum:

SEPTEMBER 8
An Apple a Day
OCTOBER 13
Big, Bad Wolves
NOVEMBER 10
Take Flight!
DECEMBER 8
Rock and Roll

Little Wonders is included with the price of admission. Families presenting Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are admitted at a reduced rate through the Museums for All program. See our website for details.
Visitors and Volunteers

SEPTEMBER IS VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT MONTH!

LEARN. INSPIRE. CONNECT. Volunteering at the museum is a great way for lifelong learners to make new friends and share their passion for science and history. From leading exhibit tours to helping with children’s events, the museum offers a variety of fun ways to get involved.

Volunteer applications will be accepted through September 23. Visit our website to apply or learn more. The volunteer training program will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays, October 3 through 26, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

QUESTIONS? Contact our volunteer coordinator at mnhvolunteers@uoregon.edu or 541-346-1671.

GO DUCKS! Weekends

Bring your game day crew and enjoy free admission to the museum during UO home game weekends throughout the 2017 football season. 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

September 2–3
September 9–10
September 30–October 1

October 7–8
October 28–29
November 18–19
November 25–26

Enhance your museum visit with an exhibit talk and tour! Perfect for solo visitors, couples, or small groups, 2PM Walk & Talks are included with the price of admission. Topics range from the geology of the Cascades to Oregon’s dynamic cultural heritage. Call 541-346-3024 to find out what we’re talking about today!
Join Us! Museum membership has its rewards.

☐ NEW MEMBER

☐ Individual—$40
Membership benefits:
• Free admission to all exhibits and events
• Invitation to members-only exhibit previews
• Membership card and sticker
• Subscription to Fieldnotes, the museum newsletter
• Priority registration for museum field excursions, workshops, and classes
• 10 percent discount on purchases at Past and Presents, The Museum Store
• Reciprocal benefits with more than 300 museums and science centers worldwide with the Association of Science–Technology Centers

☐ RENEWING MEMBER

☐ Family—$50
• All previous rewards for two adults and up to four youths

☐ Supporter—$100
Enjoy the previous benefits plus:
• Reciprocal benefits with the North American Reciprocal Museum Program

☐ Contributor—$250
Enjoy the previous benefits plus:
• Two complimentary family memberships to give as gifts

☐ Director’s Circle—$500+
Enjoy the previous benefits plus:
• A special reception invitation and a behind-the-scenes tour of MNCH collections

☐ Sandal Society—$1,000+
Enjoy the previous benefits plus:
• You get to vote on how your contribution is spent.

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Name 2______________________________
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☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

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Expiration Date______________________________
Signature______________________________

Mail with payment to the University of Oregon Foundation,
1720 E. 13th Ave., Suite 410, Eugene OR 97403-2253 or join online at natural-history.uoregon.edu.

For more information, contact Ruth Hyde at rhyde@uoregon.edu.

Allow at least two weeks for your membership packet to arrive.

Thank you for supporting the museum!

Membership contributions are tax-deductible. Some membership levels include benefits subject to IRS fair market disclosures. Seniors may apply a ten percent discount to any level.
The MNCH is Oregon’s legal central repository for state-held anthropological collections. In this capacity, we preserve archaeological materials from across the state. These include such diverse items as stone tools, ceramics, food remains, and even desiccated feces—the now famous coprolites—from Oregon’s Paisley Caves, as well as a variety of records like archaeological fieldnotes and photographs.

But not all products of human activity are collectible. In early June, I presented a poster at the annual meetings of the American Rock Art Research Association (ARARA), held this year in Redmond, Oregon. More than 200 people came from across the country and I was impressed by their knowledge and dedication.

While not as well known internationally as rock art from Western Europe or Australia, Native artists were prolific across Oregon. MNCH founding director Luther Cressman was an avid scholar of Oregon’s rock art. Among his first archaeological undertakings was a pioneering rock art survey that resulted in his 1937 book, Petroglyphs of Oregon. Other studies followed, including the extensive work of J. Malcolm and Louise Loring; multiple studies led by James Keyser and reported by the Oregon Archaeological Society; and long-running projects by Bill Cannon, Don Hann, and Eric Iseman. Over the years, the MNCH has become the repository for the notes, photos, and drawings of many of these researchers, representing a vast database on one of Oregon’s most important cultural resources.

In light of the abundance and significance of Oregon’s rock art—and the growing toll taken by development, vandalism, and the ravages of time—we recently established the University of Oregon Rock Art Research Archive (UO RARA) at the MNCH, an endeavor dedicated to the preservation of this irreplaceable record. At the heart of the archive are Cressman’s rock art survey notes and photos—invaluable resources considering that many of the pictographs and petroglyphs he recorded have since disappeared. The Lorings, Bill Cannon, and Eric Iseman have added their valuable records and images to our collections. We are deeply grateful to have received these gifts, which add tremendously to the new archive. We look forward to building on UO RARA and continuing to preserve Oregon’s amazing rock art resources for future generations.

Sophia Jamaldin, a graduate student at the University of Nevada, Reno, came to the museum last June to research artifacts from Oregon’s famous Fort Rock Cave. Using a portable X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer, Sophia measured and analyzed a variety of archaeological specimens from the site, using the XRF data to match raw materials—particularly obsidian—to their original sources. Through her studies, Sophia hopes to gain a larger understanding of how the First Americans used Fort Rock Basin caves during the Terminal Pleistocene and Early Holocene.
This fall, the museum will welcome visitors to its newest exhibit, DIGINTY: Tribes in Transition. Through a series of startlingly beautiful portraits, the exhibit honors Indigenous Peoples around the world and calls attention to the challenges and possibilities facing traditional cultures in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and beyond.

The exhibit emphasizes the interconnectedness among people and their changing environments, inviting us to consider how Indigenous cultures can inform our collective approach to the future: How will we care for our resources, for our planet, and for each other in this era of rapid global change? How can we cultivate justice in the wake of a long history of injustices against the world’s Tribal communities and the resources on which they depend?

A brief scan of United States history yields manifold examples of such injustices. In 1957, for instance, the building of the Dalles Dam submerged the mighty Celilo Falls, a place of unmeasured significance to many Tribes. Celilo was once the most productive fishery on the continent, the center of a vast regional trade network spanning the western half of North America (a place Lewis and Clark called the “great mart” of the West), and a central place in the spiritual life of the southern Columbia Plateau Native peoples. Despite the substantial cultural, economic, and spiritual impacts on Tribal communities, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers forged ahead with the dam project, effectively stripping the Tribes of their economic base and forever altering the ecology of the Columbia River.

If the Dalles Dam were up for consideration today, it likely wouldn’t be built in the wake of the range of environmental regulations enacted in the 1970s. Yet, despite this progress, natural and cultural resources on Native American ancestral lands continue to be imperiled—especially now that the regulatory framework which protects such resources is itself imperiled in our current political climate. The controversial Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) project emerges as a poignant example.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe brought a lawsuit challenging the legality of the DAPL, and Judge James Boasberg ruled in June 2017 that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers “did not adequately consider the impacts of an oil spill on fishing rights, hunting rights, or environmental justice, or the degree to which the pipeline’s effects are likely to be highly controversial.” The ruling found, as the Tribe has long maintained, that the federal permits authorizing the pipeline violated the law. At the time of this writing, it remains uncertain whether the pipeline will ultimately operate. Still, the ruling is being hailed as an important recognition of Tribal treaty rights and may set a key precedent around questions of environmental justice.

Wherever we stand on these issues, they point to a need for more effective collaboration among Tribes, other governments, and private interests. We can look to a recent Oregon project for insights: In the 1970s, the Oregon Department of Transportation was planning a road project in Klamath County that would damage a large archaeological site in an area of great cultural significance to the Klamath Tribes. The project was then abandoned, in part because newly enacted laws protecting archaeological sites had not been considered in the initial planning. The project was revived in 2002, and completed in 2010—but this time following years of discussions with the Klamath Tribes. In this case, in addition to the archaeological investigation undertaken by the museum’s Research Division, an effort was made to formally document the social, spiritual, and cultural history of the place, involving interviews with more than 30 Tribal members. There were compromises all around, and in the end the project was built, with the support of all parties. The process produced an important, permanent record of archaeological and historical information, and stronger positive relationships among all involved parties.

There is much to learn about the cultural values, languages, and traditions of those whose histories differ from our own, but learning the ways of others enriches our lives, and ultimately builds a stronger community. I hope you’ll join us at the museum this fall to explore the new exhibit and its celebration of our collective, connected humanity.
Congratulations and Big Thanks to Roben Itchoak

Please join us in extending our heartfelt thanks to Roben Itchoak, Curator of the Paul H. Jensen Arctic Collection, for her service to the museum and her long-time stewardship of this remarkable collection.

Roben came to us in 2014, when the Jensen Collection was transferred from Western Oregon University (WOU) to the UO. Having served as the Jensen curator at WOU for seven years, Roben’s expertise was unmatched, and we were fortunate to have her join our Anthropological Collections staff at the time of the transfer.

Roben’s contract with the museum ended in June 2017. In the three short years she was here, she managed the unpacking, inventory, and rehousing of more than 5,000 Jensen items and associated archives; curated an exhibit; and provided lectures, guided tours, and web gallery content related to Arctic cultures and peoples—and all this while completing her Master of Community and Regional Planning degree at the University of Oregon. An Inupiaq woman from Nome, Alaska, Roben has engaged visitors, students, staff, and volunteers by connecting objects in our collections to her personal experience, to stories, and to cultures of Arctic peoples. She approached her work every day as an opportunity to illustrate the interplay of environmental change with the Arctic’s traditional lifeways, artistry, and natural resources. We are immensely grateful for her insight, professionalism in museum practice, and advocacy of this important collection and its legacy. We congratulate Roben on her new degree and wish her the best in her future adventures!

IN MEMORIAM | Don Hunter: The Slide Show Guy

By Patty Krier, Director of Public Programs, Retired

Have you ever seen a squirrel race across the top of a fence, go off the side, and then scurry back to the top with swiftness and grace? These antics always remind me of Don Hunter back in the early 1980s, as he shot photos for a slideshow to accompany my master’s thesis about Sam Hill and the Old Columbia River Highway. I remember him climbing up to the top of the masonry walls that encircle the Rowena Loops, or shooting from atop the many waterfalls that decorate that highway. I was frantically watching and scolding Don—he was in his 70s!—but nothing could stop him from getting the perfect photo.

Don’s relationship with the museum goes back more than thirty years. He documented the construction of our current building and, during our 1987 grand opening, presented it as a slideshow to the tune of the Ballad of the Green Berets. His iconic, multi-projector shows were a big part of our programming in those days.

Don devoted his life to recording the beauty of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. He was a pioneer in visual and audio documentation, working long hours in the field to photograph or record sounds of trains, birds, landscapes, and factories. He spent many more hours searching out the perfect music and painstakingly weaving all into masterpieces that immersed the viewer in our region’s history and geography.

In 2003, the museum was awarded an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant to convert nine of Don’s productions to digital format—including, at his request, the Sam Hill slideshow. Today, thousands of his slides and recordings are housed at the Lane County Historical Museum, and more reside in the Special Collections at UO Libraries. Thanks to Don, we have a permanent photographic record of the museum’s history and a precious collection of uniquely “Oregon” sights and sounds.

We were fortunate to know Don, and we are immensely grateful for his many years of friendship with the museum.
After more than 20 years at the museum, the formidable Judi “JP” Pruitt is retiring. In addition to managing membership, JP has had a hand in just about every aspect of the museum—from security to the museum store to event planning.

JP has not only witnessed enormous growth at the museum; she’s been a catalyst for it. Not one to back down from challenge or change, JP is always on the lookout for the next way to improve the museum. One of her greatest accomplishments has been the founding of our Visitor Services unit, which now houses three full-time staff members, more than 60 volunteers, and dozens of UO student employees.

JP taught us a lot about grace under pressure. Over the years, she never sweated the catering mix up, the room change, the contractor’s mistake, or the dozens of other “surprises” that came up every week. We aren’t planning to replace JP—it’s simply not possible—but we are doing our best to change and adjust with grace, just the way she has done for so many years.

Fortunately for us, JP will be around over the next few months to help with the transition and complete a major overhaul of our membership database system. Please stop by to offer your congratulations on her next chapter—a chapter that will happily involve no alarm clocks.

We’ll miss you, JP. From all of us at the museum, a heartfelt THANK YOU for your years of exemplary service.