



Miracle of America Museum

MEMBER:
MUSEUM ASSOC.
OF MONTANA
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OF MUSEUMS

Autumn 2022

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

36094 Memory Lane Polson, MT 59860 406-883-6804 www.miracleofamericamuseum.org • info@miracleofamericamuseum.org

Executive Board of Directors

Gil Mangels, Chief Executive Officer and Board Chair;
Helen Mangels, Secretary;
Ryan Gage, Treasurer;
Board members: Brandy Wallace, Cathleen Wilde, Art Mangels, Sam Allred, Carol Edger, and Julie Weber

Live History Days was a Record Breaking Success

with many new attendees, thanks in part to the advertising tourism grant from the Montana Department of Commerce.

All in all, things went very smoothly. We couldn't have done it without all the volunteers. My son Ron came all the way from Louisiana, Granddaughter Dez, all the way from Arkansas, and great-grandson Ryker, from Utah. Both Dez and Ryker also performed musically in the meeting room to the audience's delight.

We are always planning for next year's third weekend in July 2023 Live History Days.

Before that though and not that far away will be another activity. Our second annual Winterfest which will be the second Saturday in January and we have been promised even more participants from the Western Montana Vintage Snowmobile Enthusiasts giving rides. Pictured is our most recent vintage snow machine circa 1947. More info in the next newsletter, but mark your 2023

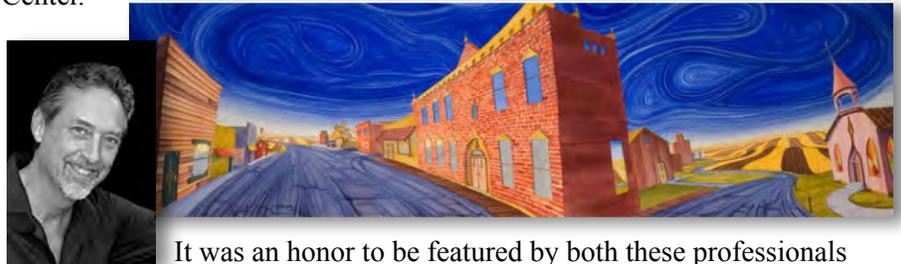


calendar for the 14th of January. We can't guarantee the weather, but this year all had fun, even with a minimal amount of snow.

MOAM Promoted Widely; Visitation Up

The heat, fires, and smoky haze seemed to lengthen out the summer, but the numbers on the calendar kept falling off, and here already is another deadline for me.

We are encouraged by the increased morale and financial support, and folks including us in their programs and performances. Among the latter was "Trucker Randy" Bishop of a Michigan Radio Talk show calling us for a 20 minute live talk about the museum. Then composer/pianist/visual artist, Scott Kirby, featured us for about a fourth of his presentation at the Mission Valley Live program at the Ronan Performing Arts Center.



It was an honor to be featured by both these professionals and fun working with them. Of course they were both from out of state and enthralled with the museum. Many folks from out of state are hearing about us on their local programs. Florida and Texas seem to have the record numbers.

We were surprised when French tourists visited and showed us that we were listed as a "must see" attraction while in Montana.

Mayflower tours again brought a group. They base out of Spokane, WA, but attendees fly in from all over. The only complaint was from a man who said that the one-and-a-half hour allotted by the tour company wasn't enough time to tour our museum.





Soviet Escapee Feels “the Spirit of Freedom”

International visitors especially appreciate our mission, “To restore a belief in America and the free enterprise concept guaranteed by the Constitution.”

A motorcyclist who was a policeman in the Czech Republic toured Miracle of America and said, “I feel the spirit of freedom here.” He went out to his saddlebags, returned, and donated the Czech police patch shown.

The couple especially enjoyed our freedom message as most foreign born folks do. Joe was born in communist controlled Romania, but the family escaped when he was 11 years old. He later became a citizen, attended West Point and joined the Special Forces because he felt he could do the most damage to the communist in that organization.

While we were visiting, his partner, Jamaican born Shelly – now a US citizen – exclaimed, “I love America.”

It often takes those that grew up under worse conditions to appreciate what we have in America. It warmed my heart to spend time with this couple. All seem concerned about America’s sliding into socialism, because they have experienced it in their native countries. *See their message and photo, page 4.*



Scouts Appreciate Displays

We were pleased that 90 Boy Scouts summer camping on Melita Island toured our museum in 4 separate groups. They were very attentive and appreciative of Gil’s patriotic displays, lecture, and the vast collection of scouting memorabilia. Fortunately, there are dedicated leaders that uphold high morals that lead these young people in following the scouting principles.

Bitter Sweet Moment

This 1870 concert harp was my first wife, Joanne's, and she learned to play it in high school. If I had a rough day in the field or the shop she would play it for me to soothe my soul, much like David played the harp for King Saul when he was troubled.

It has been on display in the music section since we started the museum 36 years ago, only to leave once when granddaughter, Dez, played it at Joanne's memorial service in 2012.

Joanne had willed it to Dez who has become an accomplished harpist on a regular harp, but this pedaled concert harp will enhance her playing even more.

So while I am sorry to see it go, I am glad for my granddaughter to take it to her home in Arkansas.

The other part of the sweet is that subject to board approval, Dez will serve as my Chief Executive Officer successor! She would move to Polson in the summer of 2025 and work as my assistant full time until I am no longer able to fill the role. It would be a great relief to know the legacy we have worked so hard to build will be in such



capable hands. You will meet her at upcoming events. When she was here in July, she helped us transform displays throughout the museum.

Dez has a degree in Computer Science from the University of Washington and owns her own company as a digital transitionist. We really need help to bring the behind-the-scenes museum work into the 21st century. In addition to her expertise with computer systems, she also has sharp interpersonal skills and is a talented leader. Particularly organizing people to cooperate in group events. She is working on a degree in welding and taking courses on Museum Management. The future looks bright for the Miracle of America Museum. Not only will I have family nearby, but will be able to listen to the harp again.

She and her husband will be looking for either property to build on, or a home in our area.

Can you benefit from a donation of property?

I mention this because I have noticed the donation of properties and homes to universities or other worthy causes for a direct credit toward tax liability or merely to remove the burden in declining years. Our history of being a successful 501 C-3 nonprofit museum for 40 years bodes well for our future. If you believe in our mission, please consider us in your financial planning.

Endowment Ensures MOAM's Future

We still need to **enlarge the endowment fund by \$2 million** to provide funding for the future. We never take from the fund, only the investment returns (interest) will be used.

Did you know you may take advantage of a fantastic endowment tax credit while supporting the important work of the museum FOREVER?

Our Museum endowment was established at Montana Community Foundation for the permanent benefit of our organization. Even better, qualified contributions to this endowment will enable donors to take advantage of the Montana Endowment Tax Credit (METC) – a direct credit toward your Montana state tax liability. Individuals can claim up to \$10,000 in METC annually or \$20,000 for couples filing jointly, and business donors are eligible for up to \$10,000 as well.

If you are able to make a gift of \$2,500 or more to help ensure a strong and vibrant future for the Miracle of America Museum and could benefit from a direct credit on your Montana taxes, this is an excellent opportunity to consider. For more information, contact us and we'll get you in touch with an expert at the Montana Community Foundation.



Our financial friends are so important to us

We salute our members and Donors!

Monetary donations are not only important for the endowment fund and improving the museum collection, but it is a welcome vote of confidence to what we are doing. Occasionally a visitor will drop an anonymous donation in the tip jar as big as a \$100 bill, but we do like to acknowledge each donor.

Last quarter's donors include: Sandra Close as a memorial for **James Dudley Kemp; Ann Ross: Garry and Janie Wunderwald, Darrel and Diane Dudley, Charles Tremblay, Jim Pomajevich, Frank Hale, Western Montana Community Tel/Jay Preston, and Rocky Mountain Twist.**

Life and beyond: **Ronald McClellan; and Don and Denise Loveless.**

Annual Support Levels: Single \$50; Family \$100; Corporate \$200; Life \$1,000.

Membership includes free admission, newsletter and discount in our Gift Shop, plus the satisfaction that you are supporting our mission to preserve history.



We always encourage shop at home first, but if you turn to Amazon, it costs nothing more to use "Amazon Smile" and state the Miracle of America Museum as the non-profit recipient. Last quarter Amazon shoppers yielded us \$42.07, and since we registered with Amazon, donations have totaled \$444.00.



MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS

Donations this last quarter were as diverse as the museum and I won't have the room to list all.

Bill Carroll donated some beautiful Schnitzmeyer photos of 1916 era Polson. You'll have to visit the museum to view them as I don't think they will show up well here; **Melodee Seelye** donated her late husband Tim's beautifully built radio controlled model of a WWII B25 Bomber with a 7-ft wingspan.



We have owned the 1880s Montana hearse since the late 1980s and Gil has been wanting to find manikin horses and dress harness ever since. A donation of dress harness by brother-in-law, **Gary Abbey** was incentive enough to double our efforts to find a pair of life size manikin horses and finally the internet paid off. Gil had them shipped from Texas to Missoula and saved \$500 freight by picking them up in Missoula. The harness itself is pretty historic as Gary joined other Montanans during the 1964

Territorial Centennial and 75 years as statehood on a wagon train drive all the way to New York City. They rode the train back east and stopped at 18 cities along the way and did parades and shows on the way to the world fair at which the 2nd day was designated "Montana Days".

Gary and wife Francis also used the same harness hitched to a wagon with hay bales to give day rides in Glacier National Park.

Jim Pomajevich donated a frame for the missing dashboard on the hearse and pledged to cover the costs of having it correctly restored with leather. We have sent it to Pennsylvania and are eager to install it. It would have protected the driver from the horse's hooves kicking debris and other matter from the road. We had hoped to display this and



other funerary items in a wing on a village church, but it seems there is no grant money available for that. Anyone want to build one for the museum? We already have a large bell, stained glass windows, etc. While the church would be non-denominational, a prominent plaque could be affixed to a donor or as a memorial.

Chief picker, **Howard Hudson** has a keen eye for unusual items that many pickers would pass over. How many of you remember the small openers for Cheez Whiz or Heinz 57 products? A small wrench for a military signal corp apparatus and a wrench for an emergency spark plug operated tire pump round out this little grouping.



Here's what recent visitors say about Miracle of America Museum . . .

Meeting you and visiting the Miracle of America museum is a highlight of our Montana super adventure.

You have captured the core spirit of America, the reverence for individual liberty which enables us to live a life of meaning and purpose, for ourselves and for others. We really loved not only the displays but how you chose historical examples to make powerful declarations about our heritage.

Your family story is America's story. We look forward to a revisit.

All our best,
Joe and Shelly



Romanian born Joe shared his story of escaping communism at the age of 11; Shelly is a native Jamaican. Both are now US citizens. Their note to Gil is at left. See page 2 for more detail.

Enjoy the Museum's YouTube Channel!
QR codes and WiFi is available throughout the grounds to enhance your enjoyment of the displays.



To my Facebook friends, some of my experiences will sound familiar because I have posted there. I apologize for that. I have to check on newsletter back issues to make sure I'm not duplicating myself. A few folks are mentioned repeatedly in the donor section because they continue to bless us financially or bring artifacts. – Gil

We're open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. all year long!

**Mark your calendar! Plan now
to bring your family and friends
to our second annual Winterfest
January 14, 2023!**



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