

Introduction

Janet H. Johnson
Director

It is again my pleasure and privilege to welcome you all, vicariously, to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, to share with us what we (faculty, staff, and volunteers) have been doing for the last year and a few thoughts about where our work is headed. Although our primary goal is to head toward the past, to learn who, what, when, where, why, and how things happened in antiquity in the Near East, we are also heading to the future with revised questions based on what has already been learned and more and more with revised methodology and technology. Computers are revolutionizing our field work and publications (e.g., the sophisticated graphics ability of modern small computers allows the rapid preparation of site plans by computer, as mentioned by Mac Gibson in his report on Nippur) and our Museum and archival collections management (the new “data bases”) will allow staff, faculty, and visiting scholars quicker access to information about objects and to the objects and records themselves. We have a formal architectural plan for the “air conditioning” (including temperature and humidity controls and control of noxious fumes) of the Oriental Institute building, first and foremost to preserve and protect the irreplaceable objects in the collection, but also to make visits to the Museum, the lecture hall, classes, and the like much more pleasant and attractive to visitors (and staff). We hope that we’ll be able to move forward on this plan in the near future. ▼ As you read through the reports on the various projects sponsored by the Oriental Institute and the independent research which is being carried out by the faculty, staff, and senior graduate students in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, you will be struck once again with the diversity of interests and research approaches which work together to shed light on the complexity of our ancient past. Whether you are fascinated by dirt archaeology and broken pottery and what they can tell us about who, when, even why, or whether you are struck by the resemblance of ancient people to ourselves as you read translations of literature or legal texts studied by philologists, we are delighted that you share with us an appreciation for how knowledge of the human past can help make our lives more complete. You will also see as you read through this year’s *Annual Report* how we become more and more dependent on our numerous friends and benefactors (people who give of their time, as well as people who are able to provide financial support) to be able to carry out our research, analyze and prepare for scholarly publication the

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results of the research, and convey to the general public in an up-to-date fashion the who's, what's, when's, where's, why's, and how's as we have come to understand them.

This introduction gives me a chance to welcome to the Oriental Institute several faculty whose work you will come to know over the coming years. Doug Esse, who was a Research Associate here for several years working on the publication of the excavations at Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) in Israel and then as Assistant Director for Larry Stager's Ashkelon excavations, has returned as Assistant Professor of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. He has resumed his work on the area around Beth Yerah and hopes to be in the field in the summer of 1989. Peter Dorman, our new Field Director for the Epigraphic Survey, is also returning to the Institute, having received his Ph.D. in Egyptology from the University and spending the last 10 years working in the Egyptian Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Karen Wilson, whose degree in Mesopotamian art and archaeology is from New York University, became Curator of the OI Museum in August. She worked most recently as Coordinator of Curatorial Affairs at the Jewish Museum in New York. I would especially like to take this opportunity to thank Raymond Tindel, who served as Acting Curator of the Museum for over a year while the search for the new Curator took place. Ray took on a time-consuming job which was likely to produce

innumerable headaches and very few thanks and committed himself to it with a spirit and energy which have served the Museum and the Oriental Institute extremely well. I know that he is happy to be able now to apply himself and his energies to the registration questions facing him, but we all appreciate how much of himself he gave when asked. Thanks, Ray!

Much sadder is the need to say "goodbye" to old friends of the Institute who have passed away during the past year. Mrs. C. Phillip Miller (née Florence Lowden) had been an active and valued member of the Visiting Committee to the Oriental Institute for many years. The first time she travelled to Egypt and the Near East in the late 1920s with her family, they travelled on the same boat as Breasted and the Rockefeller party and she became intrigued with the ancient Near East from listening to Breasted's lectures. When she returned, she took classes at the University for several years and she remained interested and supportive of the work of the Institute throughout her life. We shall miss her astute observations and her wonderful memories.

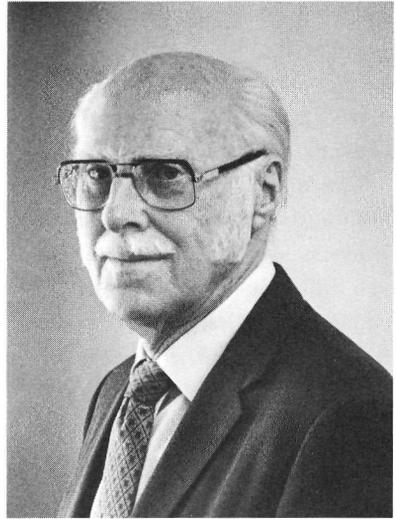
Two other long time Visiting Committee members also died in 1988. Albert Hardy Newman had served on the Committee for more than twenty years and Mrs. Chester



D. Tripp had been a member for thirty years. Their presence will also be sorely missed.

More recently the Institute suffered the loss of Professor Charles F. Nims, a retired Egyptologist who had spent most of his professional life as epigrapher, photographer, and finally Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor. His life touched that of generations of Egyptologists as they came through Luxor and stopped at Chicago House for a chat and tea or for a chance to look up something in the library. His wide-ranging interests (from Demotic legal texts to the geography of ancient and modern Luxor), his joy at sharing his knowledge and ideas with colleagues and visitors, and his love of photography and travel (he and his wife Myrtle spent much of their time since his retirement travelling the world and making their friends slightly jealous with the wonderful photographs they brought back) mean that his loss is felt by us all.

As my second and final term as Director comes to an end and I look forward, gleefully, to the chance to return full time to teaching and my Egyptological research, I would like to take this opportunity to express to



Charles Francis Nims

all of you the pleasure which I have derived from my time as Director. It has given me the opportunity to learn in greater detail, and therefore appreciate more fully, the projects and activities of my colleagues. But even more, it has given me a chance to get to know many members of the Oriental Institute. Your questions, comments, and observations about our work and the general question of the rise of civilization in the ancient Near East have frequently set my mind to thinking and given me an exciting new perspective on an old question. I shall continue to look forward to seeing my new friends around the building, at Institute functions, or, most interestingly, somewhere in the Near East or the world's museums housing her ancient treasures.