

“Let’s remember the gift shop.”

The Danville News

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Thursday, August 5, 2021

“Museums”

Word Count: 750

Despite zoom fatigue, one pandemic godsend has been virtual tours of famous museums. Those blessed with internet access can enrich themselves by touring the Louvre, the American Museum of Natural History, the British Museum, the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. Cooperstown’s Baseball Hall of Fame offers virtual field trips. Since we speak of significant museums, how about Danville’s Montgomery House going virtual? It’s our special gem. A favorite for virtual tours has been the Smithsonian, “the nation’s attic.” We congratulate the Smithsonian Institution as it celebrates its 175th anniversary this August 10th. Virtual isn’t as fun as visiting in person but it does make parking easier and you can avoid driving I-95. We hope to return to D.C. and enjoy the Smithsonian. We can choose from amongst nineteen museums and galleries, zoo too.

The last time we visited was years ago. We took my wife’s mother to the Air and Space Museum. My wife’s mother, working communications for British Intelligence during World War II and the daughter of a British General, couldn’t stand being stationed in the safety of the USA so she returned to be with her Londoners in 1944. She recounted how friends left their baby with a sitter to watch a movie. During the movie an air-raid occurred. Given the buzz bomb’s unpredictability, few rushed to shelters. The couple returned to find their block gone. Entering the Air and Space Museum she surveyed the two story V-2 Rocket. “Oh,” she said, “so that’s what Mr. Hitler was sending our way.”

Museums: windows on our past, for good and ill, offering visions of our future. The collections tell us who we are by showing us who we’ve been. Then we can decide who we can be. Such are the lessons of history, for the brave and honest.

What will be featured in the Smithsonian collections for their 200th anniversary, unless the obstructionist, duplicitous autocrats and the sick anti-American extremists have been allowed to subvert our Republic? What grieves me is why anyone – family, friends, neighbors – would want their name associated with them. What will the Smithsonian Institution reveal about the United States 100 years from now? How will we be remembered in history? When I served Grove Church my habit was to plan for twenty years. What’ll be the long term consequences for what we decide today? Another inside scoop: When we installed our time capsule for our 1996 addition, we encased it in glass with the plaque inviting future church members to open it in 2096. Inside Todd Jeffrey’s pottery, among typical items representative of our time, we inserted descriptions predicting what our Sunday school children imagined 2096 would be like. Mischievously, we included a \$100 savings bond and wrote (giggling) that since it took Grove over a century to add this expansion, here are funds toward the next.

What will be our place in history? Is one of your eyes focused on your legacy? What will they say at your funeral? Writer David Brooks calls these, “eulogy virtues.” Virtues eulogized? Or will an honest obituary describe you as a horse-thief?

If they built a museum about you, what would the curator of history include? What would be exhibited in your Hall of Miscues and Missed Moments, the Hall of Betrayal and Lies, the Hall of Choosing Wisely, the Hall of Losses and Tears, the Hall of Joy, the Hall of Integrity? Which hall will display the largest

collection? Let's remember the gift shop. Love a little shop. Which souvenirs will be popular? Will the museum be made of marble, complete with rotunda and café? Or will it be a tar paper shack near the tracks?

Most people, I believe, want to do what's right and decent, and, I believe, they mostly assume they are, even when we disagree over how. It's a reckless few, disregarding duty, who begin wrecking things, bringing discredit and dishonor to themselves -- themselves over country, themselves over others, themselves over what's decent and right. Will we call them to account now rather than later, regardless our personal positions? Silence endorses the wreckage. Do you envision your grandchildren and their children discovering who you were, what you may have accomplished, what you stood for? Will they be able to look back with respect, along with an appreciation for their heritage? Reverse this. How many descendants will look back, admitting, "Boy, was he a family disgrace! He may have been a columnist, Congressman, President, Senator, but we don't want to talk about him."