The American presidency: An office filled with prestige, pain and glory

By Jo Ann Webb
Smithsonian Office of Public Affairs

Few people ever assume a burden so heavy. Thomas Jefferson described it as a "splendid misery." To Theodore Roosevelt, it was a "bully pulpit." Warren Harding said, "It's hell. No other word to describe it." Harry S. Truman said, "It's like being a jackass in a hailstorm—all you can do is stand your ground and take it."

The American presidency, the nation's highest and most important job, may also be the hardest, according to a new permanent exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History titled "The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden." The show addresses the lives and times of the country's 42 presidential administrations.

The exhibition

The show is one of the largest ever mounted by the Smithsonian, and it was put together in eight months, instead of the typical two to three years.

The exhibition was initiated by Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence M. Small. When he took office in January 2000, Small noted that the Smithsonian had never addressed the office of the presidency, a uniquely American institution, with a permanent tribute. He challenged the National Museum of American History to open a show on the American presidency, in conjunction with the 2000 presidential election.

The exhibition's curators, says, "The American presidency is a topic that we had been thinking about for years. But we had thought of and worked on it in sections."

This exhibition, spanning 200 years, pulls it all together. It looks at the office of the president from historical, cultural, political and social perspectives and emphasizes the personal sides of the office as well.

"While it was a challenge to put the exhibition together in such a short period of time," Rubenstein adds, "it was the opportunity that drove us forward. The compressed schedule made everything a bit more demanding, but we worked very hard at not making any compromises in the quality, material or depth of the content of the exhibition or its accompanying books."

The exhibition, divided into 11 themes, takes visitors from the campaign trails, through family life at the White House, to assassinations and mourning, to life after the presidency.

The objects

In rich detail, the more than 900 objects "tell" the story of the office of president. There's the top hat worn by Abraham Lincoln the night he was assassinated and the wooden lap desk on which Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. George Washington's battle sword and general officer's uniform and the carriage Ulysses S. Grant rode in to his second inauguration in 1873 are on view. A decorate bear inspired by Theodore Roosevelt and Bill Clinton's saxophone, along with his daughter Chelsea's ballet slippers, are in the exhibition as well.

"Both Harry and I are trained in political history," says Lonnie Bunch III, then associate director of curatorial affairs at the museum and also one of the show's curators, "but we knew that we had to play to the strength of our collections in order to get the show up in time. There was a limited time to borrow artifacts and limited time and space to tell the story."

According to Bunch, there's always that tug-and-pull between selecting objects that are personal favorites and making sure that they are the best ones for the show. "It's a challenge to choose the right object that best tells the story in a fresh and exciting way, yet have the objects that are intrinsically interesting to people," he says.

"We knew that our collections were strong," Rubenstein adds, "but our challenge was to fill in huge gaps. It required a lot of object research. We had to make sure that the objects were what we thought they were."

Mining the collections

Distribution of Political History Collections Manager Lisa Kathleen Graddy, who played a major role in coordinating production of the exhibition, recalls spending last Easter weekend going in and out of the collections areas compiling lists of thousands of objects that could be included in the exhibition.

As museum staff combed storage cabinets for presidential artifacts, some items stood out as favorite finds. For example, an intern found an ivory seal used by President James Polk during a stately Washington, D.C., summer when he sent staff home and completed work himself. Some finds were amusing. Harding's silk pajamas gave everyone a chuckle, "We opened up the storage drawers, and there were these amazing silk 1920s pajamas," Graddy says. The pair on display is turquoise with white appliquéd leaves. Theodore Roosevelt's African safari camp desk arrived from storage in Sitka, Alaska, "packed up like a port-a-crib" in a vintage canvas bag. Graddy says. Only about 5 percent of the objects were borrowed, "which speaks to the strength of our collections," Rubenstein adds. Those objects include cowboy boots with the presidential seal, from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library; a gun from the Secret Service that Sara Jane Moore used in an assassination attempt on Gerald Ford; and from the White House's Presidential Library, a naval cloak worn by Franklin D. Roosevelt to the World War II conference at Yalta.

"We knew that our collections were strong," Rubenstein adds, "but our challenge was to fill in huge gaps. It required a lot of object research. We had to make sure that the objects were what we thought they were."

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Research Reports
Profiles in Research

Curator Liza Kirwin • When Liza Kirwin was growing up, she enjoyed the same things her friends did—dolls, tree climbing, listening to music. But she also liked going through old trunks in her family's basement, unfolding moldy papers and reading letters from relatives long gone.

Now, as curator of manuscripts at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, Kirwin has found the perfect niche, where her natural tendencies can benefit American art history. "We provide researchers and the public with access to the largest collection of documents on the history of the visual arts in the United States," Kirwin explains. "This consists of the papers of artists, dealers, critics, art historians, curators, administrators, and the records of art dealers and museums. It's an intimate view of American art history."

Kirwin's relationship with the Smithsonian began in 1979, after her senior year at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, when she tried to get hired by the Archives. "When I was in college studying art history, a job in an art history research facility was a dream come true," she recalls. "But they wrote me a nice letter saying nothing was available. So I went to work at the Hall of Records in Annapolis, Md." There she developed an interest in archival work. "Unfortunately, I was tremendously bored with my first position—cataloging 19th-century chancery court records." That same year, however, a position opened at the Archives, and Kirwin was hired as an archival technician.

After getting a master's degree in library science at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., while working full time at the Archives, Kirwin became a documents collector. "My assigned area was the Southeast of the United States," she says. "I would go on the road for weeks, from Jackson, Miss., to Mobile, Ala., to Charleston, S.C. It's really important for collectors to meet artists, dealers, people in historical art societies and the curators." Kirwin's mission involved more than getting the word out. "They all had a sense of what the Smithsonian was, but not necessarily what the Archives was," Kirwin says. "And that is why I was there, to tell them about the Archives and to impress upon artists the need to save their papers and, of course, to gently persuade them to donate their documents to us."

Kirwin's mission also required a tender touch and a thick skin. "Most of the artists I contacted were of an advanced age. Many had had their heyday in the 1930s or 1940s, and no one had been around since then to show interest in their careers," she says. "Some of these artists would wear their Sunday best to reminisce about their lives in the American art world long ago. It was touching, and they had fabulous documentation."

Some artists, however, were not so eager to be immortalized. "I've been called a 'black widow spider.' It was a joke, of course," Kirwin recalls. "But I do read the obituaries. It is important to be in touch with the artists' heirs to express our interest in papers that might otherwise be thrown away and lost forever."

Kirwin eventually pursued a doctorate in American studies at the University of Maryland in College Park. Her doctoral thesis focused on the art market in New York's East Village in the 1980s. After 20 years at the Smithsonian and a variety of responsibilities, collecting and preserving documents is still the work closest to Kirwin's heart. "The process can be very long and slow," she says, "but when you rescue something that has been neglected and is deteriorating, something of importance to the artist, the region and the history of American art, it is a thrill."

—Angela Cervetti, Smithsonian Office of Public Affairs

Environmental Science

Neighborhood birdwatching program is more than just for the birds

By Angela Cervetti
Smithsonian Office of Public Affairs

While most people look at their back yards and see tasks that have long gone undone, Bart Hutchinson makes mental notes of the birds he sees behind his house: ...Cardinals seem to like that bush...House wrens building a new nest...Are those chickadees new? Hutchinson and about 70 other volunteers are part of Neighborhood Nestwatch, a year-old program developed by Peter Marra, a terrestrial animal ecologist at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Md.

"The program has multiple purposes," Marra explains. "The first is to understand how the factors that drive the population dynamics of birds in this area. By that, Marra means that the study seeks to understand the impact of urbanization and human population growth on the reproduction and survival of resident and migratory birds. "Birds are an important part of our local ecosystem. It's important to understand how they interact with their environment," he says.

Marra, however, preferred not to do this alone. His second goal involved the community. "I wanted to develop an outreach component to my research and for people to get excited about science the same way I did when I was a boy," he says. Besides, I needed their back yards."

Marra's passion for birds started when, at 5 years old, he saw a naturalist hold a bird in his hand. "I was fascinated by that," he remembers. "Ever since then, birds have had a special place in my heart."

Marra wants others to feel the same way about all types of birds, including the backyard variety. "The birds that form the focus of the study live and breed in urban and suburban environments, from southern Pennsylvania to the tip of southern Maryland," he says.

Involving volunteers

But studying birds in the suburban areas where they live presents some complications. "You can't go around with binoculars and scientific equipment looking for birds in people's back yards. You'd get shot at, chased by dogs or thrown in jail," he says.

'Birdwatching', continued on Page 6

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David Umansky, Communications Director
Kathryn Lindeman, Associate Director
Jo Ann Webb, Editor
Callison Hornberger, Assistant Editor

Telephone: (202) 357-2627
E-mail: researchreports@publicaffairs.si.edu
Internet: www.si.edu/researchreports

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Smithsonian archaeologist uncovers shipwreck buried for 171 years

By Michael Lipske
Special to Research Reports

Some ships are steady, serious sorts. They trudge along the sea laces for decades without attracting much attention. Other vessels own the face lane. Like ill-starred celebrities, they rocket from bright beginning to bad ending in an eye blink.

As an example of the latter, consider the amazing eight-year run of America’s first ocean-going yacht, Cleopatra’s Barge. Built entirely for pleasure and grandly outfitted by one of the country’s richest men, George Crowninshield Jr., the 100-foot brig drew thousands of gawkers daily as she was being built in 1816 in Salem, Mass. In an age when ships were launched only for war, whaling or trade, the pleasure yacht was an extraordinary sight.

Thousands more people came to see the yacht during its six-month Mediterranean cruise the following year. But by 1820, Crowninshield was dead, and his ship swapped for a fortune in sandalwood to Hawaii’s King Kamehameha II, a member of America’s only authentic royalty.

Rechristened Ha’aheo o Hawaii (Pride of Hawaii), the ship plied the Hawaiian islands as the royal yacht. But four years later, in April 1824, it had sunk to the bottom of Kaua’i’s Hanalei Bay, wrecked after a drunken crew steered it into a reef. The wreck was tested for 171 years. Only now has the wreck been uncovered, thanks to Paul Johnston, curator of maritime history at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, Johnston, who has done archaeological studies in the Indian Ocean and the Baltic and Mediterranean seas, recently concluded four summers of excavation at the Ha’aheo o Hawaii wreck site, retrieving the only material remains from the brief reign of Kamehameha.

Discovery of the yacht

Johnston learned about the ship in 1981, when he was a curator at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Many of the yacht’s original furnishings are displayed at that museum, and the New England history of Cleopatra’s Barge is described in several books.

But all of those books end with: And that is all. Johnston says. “When he was a curator at the Peabody Essex Museum and the New England history museum, Johnston sought a state permit to investigate the wreck, but his request was rejected. He was intrigued with Nelson’s adventures. Luckily, Nelson’s adventures did not require a formal environmental assessment for review by state and federal agencies plus the general public—just part of the gauntlet that Johnston ran when he sought a state permit to investigate the wreck site. Basically, I had to undergo the same process I would for building a hotel on the shores of Hanalei Bay,” Johnston says of the bureaucratic wall he encountered.

The search begins

By the summer of 1995, the archaeologist was cleared to search for the sunken yacht. Guided by an American missionary’s written account of the wreck and deploying a magnetometer and other remote-sensing gear, Johnston’s team hunted for the ship’s remains from a 40-foot work boat. They quickly located the scattered wreckage, buried under the sand in 15 to 20 feet of water at the southeastern corner of Hanalei Bay.

The wreck is in a very dynamic surf zone,” Johnston says, “and that makes it kind of confusing.” Prevailing winds and waves have pushed objects, old and new, into the corner of the bay where the yacht sank. As a result, scuba gear, surfboard scraps and Clouse boxes were mixed in with pieces of copper hull sheeting and other yacht remnants.

Several artifacts in Johnston’s horde resemble chunks of concrete. These lumpy concretions were formed when rusting iron objects bonded with sand at the floor of the bay. Ron Cunningham of the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education at the Smithsonian’s Museum Support Center in Suitland, Md., is making X-ray photos of the mystery lumps to help identify their contents.

Years of research on artifacts from the wreck lay ahead of Johnston. He is consulting with archaeologists who work in the Hawaiian Islands and also is searching through published and unpublished accounts of other excavations in an attempt to compare objects from the sunken yacht with similar artifacts that date from the same era. He also has been piecing together the story of the ship itself.

The rarest find

In his office, Johnston picks through a box on the floor. “This is the coolest thing of all,” he says, holding up a bronze object recovered from the wreck. As a concretion fresh from the sea, it had resembled a modern truck piston. Cleaned and restored, it turned out to be the ship’s pump. The object is extraordinary, for the simple reason that when such pumps were being manufactured, no one considered saving one for posterity. “As far as I know, there’s nothing like this that’s ever been preserved in museums,” Johnston says.

The pump is engraved with the names of its manufacturer and designer, and Johnston plans to comb through early 1800s patent records to assemble the full story of the contraption. “This is where we can make a contribution to artificial, as well as historical, knowledge,” he says of the lonely little pump.

More information on the wreck site is available by logging onto www.si.edu/ nh2nd/ship.arc.html.
Conservators race against time to save space shuttle suits from decay

By Evelyn Kent
Special to Research Reports

A good conservator looks to the future, as well as to the past. That’s exactly what a team of conservators at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum is doing as they work on threatened artifacts from the Apollo Space Program.

In March 2000, the museum launched an 18-month conservation program, headed by Conservator Lisa Young, to preserve the yellowed and cracking suits that American astronauts wore on their voyages to outer space. Eventually, the suits will be stabilized so that they can be displayed and preserved for future generations. Despite all that the conservation team has learned about the suits, members still have a long way to go.

“One of the Apollo spacesuits being conserved by a team at the National Air and Space Museum’s Paul E. Garber Facility (Samantha Snell photo).”

“Spacesuits,” continued on Page 5
A Grand Salon is restored to its Victorian splendor of 100 years ago

By Angela Tortelli
Smithsonian Office of Public Affairs

Perched atop a hydraulic lift 25 feet above the floor, Robyn Kennedy and George Gurney carefully studied approximately 40 paintings laid out below them in a careful arrangement. “It was a good way to see how they all worked together before putting them on the wall,” says Gurney, deputy chief curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Gurney and Kennedy, a designer at the museum, were largely responsible for arranging the art that now adorns the Grand Salon—the 99-foot-long-by-45-foot-wide Victorian art room inside the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Going back 100 years “the whole idea is to bring in work that had not been exhibited in years, in a grand setting,” Gurney says. “We are pleased with how it turned out. It makes for a wonderful experience.”

“The walls represented a massive project,” says Kenneth Trapp, curator-in-charge at the Renwick Gallery. “Not only did they work in the Renwick Gallery. “The whole idea is to bring in work that had not been exhibited in years, in a grand setting,” Gurney says. “We are pleased with how it turned out. It makes for a wonderful experience.”

Making the Grand Salon a “wonderful experience,” says Gurney, is the “very useful to give us an idea of what they told me. “When researching this as a great opportunity to exhibit paintings from our collection,” Gurney says. “We also decided to have all American art, as opposed to the mix of European and American artists that hung here before.”

Kennedy devised a system of maquettes, or paper replicas, of each wall. She then digitally photographed each painting, reduced them to scale and pasted them on the paper maquettes. “This was crucial to see how they would fit together and so avoid moving paintings unnecessarily,” Kennedy says. “The Morans, for example, are massive, with delicate frames and not easily transported.”

Three enormous Western landscapes by Thomas Moran, each weighing approximately 500 pounds, serve as anchors in a sea of 136 works that span a period from the early 1800s to the beginning of the 20th century. They are displayed salon-style, one right next to the other. “We have been able to present a comprehensive review of American art during that period, bringing in work that had not been exhibited in years, in a grand setting,” Gurney says. “We are pleased with how it turned out. It makes for a wonderful experience.”

The lighting, through the laylight, is supposed to give the illusion of natural light, says Scott Rosenfeld, an exhibits lighting specialist at the American Art Museum. “But the old laylight had holes, which revealed the ceiling and different shades of replacement panes. All illusion of natural light was completely lost.”

In the end, the entire laylight—approximately 39 feet long by 17 feet wide—was replaced and raised about a foot to make room for a new system of track lighting that can be directed to particular artworks on the walls. The lights also can be adjusted to reflect the time of day.

“It is really working out well. The new system makes the room and the art in it look great,” says Rosenfeld, who, together with staff from the Smithsonian’s Office of Facilities Management, occasionally straps himself to a beam above the laylight and hovers 40 feet above the ground to adjust the lights.

The finishing touches

Finally, the room was ready, painted in soft rose with cornices accented in gold leaf and windows draped in curtains made in France especially for the Renwick. Kennedy, Gurney and the American Art Museum Exhibitions Office staff were ready to start the delicate process of hanging the artwork.

“Since the American Art Museum’s main building is closed for renovation, we saw this as a great opportunity to exhibit paintings from our collection,” Gurney says. “We also decided to have all American art, as opposed to the mix of European and American artists that hung here before.”

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Going back 100 years

“Everything” started with how the salon should look. “Historical accuracy was important,” Kennedy says. “At the same time, the building had been changed many times, so the way the room would eventually look was based on research about how art was exhibited in Victorian times.”

During her research, Kennedy found a watercolor of the room painted in 1874. “It was very useful to give us an idea of how things were arranged 100 years ago,” she says.

With that vision in mind, the different teams tackled their respective challenges. “The walls represented a massive project,” says Ellen Myette, operations administrator at the Renwick Gallery. “Not only did the crew have to prepare those huge walls and paint them, they also had to deal with lead paint abatement. Each of the areas they worked in had to be sealed off with plastic, and everyone wore protective clothing and masks. This work had to be done before any other work could begin.”

From left, George Gurney, Robyn Kennedy, Kenneth Trapp and Ellen Myette in the Renwick Gallery’s newly refurbished Grand Salon (Photo by Richard Strauss)
Archives and the Secret Service. In addition, Bunch says, "They feel warm and light and full of
quality of its fabric. As a result, the banner eventually will be replaced with a graphic
reproduction or another object."

"But as I began to do research," Bunch continues, "I began to realize Roosevelt's appeal. After watching hours of newswr
footage that we 'interacted' with the objects and wanted. We had to make sure that the
videos 'interacted' with the objects and that they supported and helped pull the exhibition together."

Putting it all together
Research took the curators and their research support team to numerous libraries, including the Library of Congress and presidential libraries, the National Archives and the Secret Service. In addition, the curatorial team used the expertise of presidential scholars.

Each day, the research, whether object-related or scholarly, yielded new discovery
ings, incubation and feeding nestlings.

Generally, volunteers spend a few hours
for Theodore Roosevelt than I had prior to
research the film
and presidential libraries, the National
research support team to numerous
exhibition together."

"The American Presidency is made pos
sible by the generous support of Kenneth E. Benich, the History Channel, Chey
Chase Bank, Cisco Systems Inc., Elizabeth and Whitney MacMillan, and Heidi and
Max Berry, with additional support pro
vided by Automatic Data Processing Inc.; KPMG LLP; Sears, Roebuck and Co.; and
T. Rowe Price Associates Inc.

Did you know?

- George Washington gave the shortest inaugural address—135 words—at his
second inauguration in 1793.
- William Henry Harrison gave the longest inaugural address—8,445 words—in 1841.
- In 1977, Jimmy Carter was sworn in using his nickname, Jimmy, instead of his
given name, James Earl.
- Abraham Lincoln has been repre
sented in more than 150 films, making him the most frequently portrayed
president.
- Theodore Roosevelt wore a ring to his
1905 inauguration that held a lock of
Abraham Lincoln's hair, cut off after Lin
coln was shot.
- After taking office in 1797, John Adams was the first president to live in the
White House, starting in 1800.
- Benjamin Harrison had the first elec
ctric lights installed in the White House, in 1891, but his wife, Caroline, never
turned them on, since she was afraid of
electric shocks.
- Warren G. Harding was the first pres
ident to ride in an automobile to his inau
guration, in 1921. Also, in 1922, he was the first to use a radio in the White House.
- Richard M. Nixon was the first presi
dential candidate to campaign in all 50
states, winning him the 1968 election.
- Rutherford B. Hayes' wife, Lucy, was the first presidential candidate to
call a press conference when Hayes took office in 1822.
- Millard Fillmore ordered the first kitchen stove to be installed in the White
House during his term, from 1850 to 1853. His wife, Abigail, estab
lished the White House library.
- Franklin Pierce introduced the first White House Christmas tree, in 1854.
- Bill Clinton gave the first presidential Internet address to the nation in 2000.

The feedback has been very positive," SERC's Marra says.

A win-win experience
For volunteers like Hutchinson, Neighbor
deed Nestwatch enhances his lifelong
interest in birds. "It definitely makes back
yard birdwatching more interesting. Once
birds are banded, you can keep track of them from one year to the next," he says. "It establishes more of a connection.

Even though Hutchinson has two young
children and not a lot of time to spare, he intends to volunteer again next year. "It is
definitely something I can do with my
oldest son," he says. "It is great way to get children excited about nature."

Next year, Marra hopes to attract 250
volunteers and even more the following year. Beyond that, however, a big question
mark looms on the horizon. "The Mills Corp. has very generously provided fund
ning for the next three years. After that, we'll see," Marra says.

In the meantime, Marra and his fellow
bird trackers can be seen in neighborhood
yards setting up nets, consulting with vol
unteers, and banding cardinals and
cardinals. "It is important for people to realize they don't have to go to the Blue Ridge
Mountains or the Chesapeake Bay to see
wildlife," he says. "It's their own neighbor
hoods."

Hutchinson agrees. "Every fall, these
birds migrate to places as far as South
America and somehow manage to come
back to this little parcel of land that is my
back yard, without maps or guides," he says. "I find that truly amazing."

To learn more about the program, log onto www.nestwatch.si.edu. If you live in the
Maryland area and would like to vol
unteer during the next breeding season, send an e-mail to nestwatch@serc.si.edu.

Birdwatching, continued from Page 2

This drum, played during Abraham Lincoln's
funeral in 1865, can be seen in the exhibition.

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Giant panda cubs. Two long-awaited giant panda cubs arrived at the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park in early December amid much fanfare. According to National Zoo officials, Tian Tian, a 3½-year-old male, and Mei Xiang, a 2½-year-old female, weighted the 17-hour trip from their native China very well. To ensure that the pandas were disease-free and well-adjusted to their new home—a newly improved Giant Panda House equipped with caves, ponds and a sand wallow—they were quarantined for a period of time. The cubs were introduced to the public on Jan. 10, when the giant panda exhibit opened. The pandas can also be seen online at nationalzoo.si.edu/zoo/en/exhibits/panda.

New director named. Paul Warwick Thompson, former director of the Design Museum in London, will be head of the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York City beginning early this year. He replaces Dianne R. Northrop, who retired last January, after 12 years as director.

New moons found. Four new moons have been discovered in orbit around Saturn, giving that planet a total of 22 known moons, according to a group of astronomers from around the world who made the discovery. The astronomers included Brian Marsden of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Mass. A telescope device that amplifies light helped the astronomers spot faint pinpoints of light in orbit off Saturn, a gaseous giant that is the second largest planet in the solar system. The astronomers estimated that the new moons, based on the amount of light they reflect, are six to 30 miles in diameter.

Ancient morsels. Researchers digging in the remains of an ancient settlement in Panama have uncovered what they say are the earliest direct evidence of the cultivation of root crops in the Americas. Archæobotanist Dolores Piperno and her colleagues and collaborators at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama and Temple University in Philadelphia found the starchy grains, which are generally less than half the width of a human hair, at an archaeological site near the Pacific coast of Panama. The grains were found in milling stones that date from 5000 to 7000 years ago. By comparing the size and other characteristics of the grains to those from modern domesticated and wild versions of the same root plants, the researchers were able to determine that the ancient grains came from domesticated plants.

Ferrets released in the wild. Last year, the Smithsonian’s National Zoological Park released 10 black-footed ferrets on a Sioux reservation in South Dakota. The black-footed ferret is the most endangered mammal in North America. By the mid-1980s, there were only 18 alive, because plague, poison and loss of prairie had reduced the prairie dog population, which is the main food source for black-footed ferrets. Now, there are about 600 black-footed ferrets. Half are in captive breeding facilities, including the National Zoo’s Conservation and Research Center in Front Royal, Va. The restoration program, coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, involves more than three dozen government agencies, breeding programs, environmental groups and landowners.

Sea urchin pathogen. A bacterial pathogen that caused the die-off of the sea urchin Diadema antillarum and devastated many of the reefs of the Caribbean is the focus of a research study by Kimberly Ritchie, a Smithsonian postdoctoral fellow working at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. With the assistance of staff biologists Harlaos Lessios and Fumelo Barnes, Ritchie will analyze the pathogens to better understand its characteristics and to determine its potential threat to other marine echinoderms.

Black memorabilia. Collecting art and historical objects has been a central activity for artists and scholars at the nation’s historic black colleges and universities for decades. Many of these pieces have found their way into the holdings of some of the nation’s best-known museums. Portia James and Gail Lowe, both historians at the Smithsonian’s Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, are researching these holdings and the stories they tell about the history of African Americans. Selected institutional holdings will be featured in a museum-sponsored traveling exhibition titled “Precious Memories,” scheduled to open first at the Smithsonian in 2002.

Viewing the universe. Your home computer can become the portal to a wonderland of stars, thanks to a massive infrared sky survey supported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation and conducted in large part from the Smithsonian’s Whipple Observatory in Arizona. An online repository of nearly 2 million images of galaxies and stars—the equivalent of 6,000 CD-ROMs—was gathered by the Two Micron All-Sky Survey (2MASS), the most thorough census of stars ever made. The images can be found at www.ipac.caltech.edu/2mass/gallery.

To Hanoi and Back: The U.S. Air Force and North Vietnam, 1968-1973, by Wayne Thompson (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, $27.95). Drawing upon 20 years of research in classified records, the author integrates operational, political and personal details to present a full history of the Air Force role in the war against North Vietnam.


Black Tents of Baluchistan, by Philip Carl Salzman (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, $55). Having spent 37 months among the people of the Yar giámuli tribe of Iranian Baluchistan, the author relates the details of their lives and their shift between decentralized, egalitarian, segmentary lineages and centralized, hierarchical, chief-based polities.

Insights and Artistry in African Divination, edited by John Pemberton III (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, $65 cloth; $29.95 paper). Fifteen essays by leading scholars reveal the similarities and differences in the practices of a wide range of sub-Saharan cultures.

Henry Norris Russell: Dean of American Astronomers, by David DeVorkin (Princeton University Press, 2000, $49.95). This is the first book-length biography of Henry Norris Russell, who, more than any American of his generation, worked to turn an observation-centered discipline into a theory-driven pursuit centered on physics. Copies of the book may be ordered by calling 1 (800) 777-4726, or order online at pww.prcinceton.edu.

The Genesis of Flight: The Aeronautical History Collection of Col. Richard Gimbels, by Tom D. Crouch, Clive Hart, Paul Maravala, Ellen Morris, Dominick A. Pisano, Holly Pittman and Edward Rochette (University of Washington Press, 2000, $60). The history of flight, from the time man first dreamed of flying to the advent of powered flight at the beginning of the 20th century, is covered. The book, which contains a CD-ROM, may be ordered from the University of Washington Press, Marketing Department, P.O. Box 50096, Seattle, Wash. 98145-5096, or by calling...

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The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden

By Lonnie G. Bunch III, Spencer R. Crew, Mark G. Hirsch and Harry R. Rubenstein
(Published by Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, $50 cloth; $24.95 paper)

Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence M. Small writes in the foreword to The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden, "In these pages, you will find portrayed both the grandeur of the office of the presidency and the gravity of the personal toll it can exact." This richly illustrated 208-page book provides a revealing glimpse of the culture, particularly the material culture, of the presidency—the duties, responsibilities, rituals, representations and personal effects. The American Presidency accompanies a new permanent exhibition of the same name, which opened at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in November 2000. (See story, Page 1.)

Using an array of objects from the National Museum of American History's vast collections, the book reveals how the presidency has changed and how presidential administrations have shaped and been shaped by relationships with the American people. Lonnie Bunch III, then associate director of curatorial affairs at the National Museum of American History, says they did not start on the publication until about two months into the exhibition project. "This was very difficult to do, because not only did we have exhibition scripts to write," he says, "but we also had numerous meetings with designers and with the people at the History Channel [who produced the videos that are shown in the exhibition]."

Like the exhibition, the book is divided into 11 sections. Deciding who would write which chapters was easy. "We decided that we would follow the exhibition format and that the curator who wrote the section in the exhibition would take primary responsibility," Bunch says. "But I must emphasize that Mark Hirsch, senior editor for American studies at Smithsonian Institution Press, played a crucial role in writing or editing the chapter headers. We all read and reread the book and changed it based on our internal assessments."

Bunch says they used some of the museum staff in Research and Collections to obtain and double-check the images and to review the copy for accuracy. With limited time for review, the curators also asked Don Ritchie, Richard Norton Smith and Alan Lichtman, all presidential scholars who advised throughout the project, to either review or provide guidance for the publication.

When asked if the research from the exhibition lent itself to the book and provided the opportunity for the book to almost "write itself," Harry Rubenstein, curator of political history at the museum, smiles and says, "There were many days that I wished it would have."

—Jo Ann Webb

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Science, Cold War and the American State: Lloyd V. Berkner and the Balance of Professional Ideals, by Allan A. Nedell (Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000, $60). The origins and management of the partnership between American science and those U.S. government agencies responsible for planning and executing American national security policies during the Cold War are traced. To order copies of the book, write to Gordon and Breach Publishing Group, P.O. Box 32160, Newark, N.J. 07102, or call 1 (800) 545-8398, or order online at www.gbhap.com.

Ella Jenkins: Songs, Rhythms and Chants for the Dance (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2000, $15 CD). Children's recordings by Ella Jenkins often involve both songs and movements. In this unique release, she produces music made especially for dancing.

Books published by Smithsonian Institution Press can be ordered from ROI, Box 960, Herndon, Va. 20172-0960. To order by phone or for more information, call 1 (800) 782-4612. There is a $3.50 postage and handling fee for the first book ordered and $1 for each additional book. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings can be ordered by writing to Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order, 750 Ninth St. N.W., Suite 4100, Washington, D.C. 20560-0953. To order by phone or for more information, call (202) 275-1143 or 1 (800) 545-8398. There is a $5.50 fee for shipping and handling of the first 15 recordings ordered; call for other shipping prices.