Peggy and Mark Curchack have been Penn Museum members for over thirty years and Mark has served as a Museum Docent for three years. We sat down with the couple recently to learn more about their experiences at the Museum.

How did you first become involved at the Penn Museum?
It happened when we moved to Philadelphia. There are a lot of cultural institutions that we join that do not necessarily define us, but the Penn Museum was one that was very close to areas of our interest and our hearts. Also, shortly after moving here, Peggy got a job at Penn and would occasionally take her lunch break in the Museum and she developed affection for it.

Mark, as a docent, what do you enjoy most about providing tours through the Museum’s Africa Gallery and Native American Voices exhibition?
It is the opportunity to teach again. I was a professor for a long time, and then became an administrator, and I missed the classroom. I’m pleased to make people aware of the diversity of human practice in Africa and its importance to world history. In Native American Voices, it is a similar sort of mission, because, again, some people have stereotyped notions of Native Americans and the exhibition works very hard to counter those.

What is a favorite fact that you like to share with visitors on your tours?
The extraordinary diversity of people, of practice, of styles, and of ways of life in Africa. And the fact that it is not one place, but a place that is more complex than North America in terms of what you can find there.

What is your favorite Museum gallery or object?
Peggy: I like to visit the Rotunda. The crystal ball and its base are pieces in the Museum collection that I treasure. For me museums are places that—like libraries or bookstores for some people—just kind of lower my blood pressure. It’s a place to be quiet. It’s a place to be contemplative.

Mark: We started with a very large, Northwest Coast raven mask, complete with raffia fringe articulated jaw. It was quite a colossal piece that I loved, and it was displayed in my office. We have also donated a few small pieces from African travels—a Tuareg tent peg and some trade beads. When I retired and we moved, we had less display space so we decided to see if the Museum would like them.

In addition to your generous support of Membership and the Annual Fund, you have also donated objects to our collection. Please tell us briefly about those items and what motivated you to donate them to the Museum.

Mark: There are a couple of Chilkat blankets in the collection that are my favorite things.