MEET OUR MEMBERS

Matthew Storm

Matthew Storm is a member of the Director’s Council and the Loren Eiseley Society, and a Penn alumnus living in Miami. He spoke with Expedition just before bringing his children (ages 6, 9, and 10) to the Museum for the first time.

How did you first discover the Penn Museum?
At Penn I studied International Relations: Political Science, History, and Economics. I visited the Museum as an undergrad, probably in 1992 or 1993. I wandered in by complete happenstance. I remember having a hard time fathoming that it existed. I had frequented museums as a kid and that had instilled a love for antiquity in me early on. When I found the Penn Museum on Penn’s campus, I was blown away.

What inspires you about the Museum?
The Museum contains these objects that exist nowhere else, artifacts that really capture our common past, our evolution. They are like little milestones along the way that completely take down the barriers erected between ethnicities and cultures. In the Museum you can trace the lineage of these objects, and the Museum is rightly proud of the fact that so many of them were found by Penn archaeologists. You can follow an unbroken line from the dig to the exhibit that is out of this world! The Gordion exhibit [The Golden Age of King Midas ran at the Penn Museum from February 13 to November 27, 2016.] is a fantastic example. The labor, blood, and sweat—and tears, I’m sure—of Penn in the field for the last 60 years brought this extraordinary exhibit to the Museum.

How do you stay involved as a family?
I’m actually taking the kids to the Museum next week! They are as fascinated by the Museum as I am, even though they haven’t stepped foot in there yet. My 6-year-old has been badgering me incessantly, “When are you taking me, Dad?”

I hope this sparks the same love affair with the place that I have, and that as they get older they’ll return and avail themselves of some of the summer internships or classes for high school students.

Why is it important for you to support the Museum, especially while living out-of-town?
The Museum has an active mission. It’s not a dusty place where something unearthed 150 years ago sits under a dim light. It may sound grandiose, but it’s the reality: the Museum works in the field for the benefit of humanity. Penn’s work with Turkey, or the Penn Cultural Heritage Center’s activities in Syria—those are unbelievably relevant today.

The Museum also belongs to the world in so many ways and speaks to our common patrimony. It is a world-class institution: the treasures it holds go far beyond Penn and Philadelphia. It’s of global importance. I love the mission of the Museum today. Williams Director Julian Siggers has been spearheading the effort to take a more academic-oriented institution and turn it into precisely what it should be: a global, cultural resource like the Met, the British Museum, or the Smithsonian.

I loved the idea of joining the Director’s Council and helping in some small way to accomplish that transformation and to spread the word. I don’t stop babbling about the Museum. The Director’s Council is a great opportunity to do so in an official capacity. To the extent that I can support the Museum with my time and other resources, I’m honored to do so. ●