Member Appreciation Day at the Penn Museum

1. Members received an exclusive *Building Transformation* tour with Brian Houghton, Chief Building Engineer, taking a walking tour of areas that will be affected by the Museum’s major renovation project. Here, guests toured the under-renovation Harrison Auditorium.

2. Emily Wilson, Ph.D., Professor of Classical Studies at Penn, who published her translation of *The Odyssey* in December, presented this year’s Petersen Lecture, “Translating *The Odyssey*: Why and How.”

3. Members at the Fellows level of the Expedition Circle and up, members of the Sara Yorke Stevenson Society (planned giving), and members of the 1887 Society (10+ consecutive years of membership) joined Dr. Wilson for a reception following the lecture. Here, Dr. Wilson is joined by Alexander C. Spiro, Lila Spiro, and Elizabeth Clark, descendants of Howard C. Petersen, the former Penn Museum board chair for whom the Petersen lecture is named.

4. Dr. Wilson signed copies of her book for guests.
MEET OUR MEMBERS

Jay and Gretchen Riley

Jay and Gretchen Riley have a long history with the Penn Museum. The Museum spoke with Gretchen Riley.

Jay grew up in Gladwyne, and when he was a little boy—8, 9, 10 years old—he used to beg his father to take him into Philadelphia to see the Penn Museum. I came to the Museum later, when I was a student at Penn. I took anthropology courses, specifically cultural anthropology; I remember studying Native American tribes from the Southwest. And I’ve always been captivated by Egypt and the Middle East, so the collections at the Museum really spoke to me.

Fast forward several years, I joined the Women’s Committee in the early ’80s, and got reacquainted with the Museum then. It was wonderful to continue my love of the Museum from my undergraduate days through that experience. Later, Jay was invited to join the Director’s Council, a volunteer group that brainstorms projects to support the Museum.

A belief in the power of the Penn Museum collections.

I think that not only should the Museum be promoted within the Penn community, but also to the city and the world. It’s such an incredible museum—the depths of the collections are extraordinary. I really believe they have to be preserved for future generations, to be made available to as many people as possible, because the more you know about ancient and other civilizations, the more capable you are of being a good citizen of the world.

An excitement for the future of the Museum.

Jay and I are excited that the energy of the current director and the prior one has rejuvenated the idea that the Museum is open to the public, and I’m looking forward to redoing so many of the galleries and welcoming people to them. We’re very excited about the new Middle East Galleries. That whole collection of objects associated with Queen Puabi is incredible—her headdress, everything. Seeing its sister collection in the British Museum underscores just how world-class the Penn Museum really is.

One thing I appreciate about the new Middle East Galleries is how everything will be displayed contextually, in a way that also reveals the study of archaeology and conservation of objects. I think the way that squished lyre is displayed is quite wonderful—it shows you some idea of what condition objects were found in, and how conservation can bring these pieces to life. It’s one thing to be at the right place at the right time and be creative and dig them up, but then to preserve them and show them is something the Penn Museum does so well. It’s so exciting to see these collections finally be properly displayed.