



THE MUELLER RECORD

Summer 1997

A Summer Afternoon . . .

It took place on the first rare *nice* day in June--Saturday, June 14, to be exact.

It was almost eerie. There, in front of the Mueller Mausoleum in Greenwood Cemetery, stood Hieronymus Mueller--grey muttonchops, gold-handled cane, bushy and crooked eyebrows--and all. Seated beside him at a small tea table was Fredericka Mueller, dressed in a grey woolen dress with black high top boots.

They began speaking. Fredericka spoke first, telling how she came from Prussia and met Hieronymus, a native of Mannheim, Germany. She spoke in a soft and gentle voice, the kind of tone a wife of a genius might have.

Hieronymus explained how he came to the United States at the age of 17, settling in the Chicago area where his two brothers, Henry and Adolph, were already located.

"My brothers told me to find a town where there were two railroads and grow with it, so I ended up in Decatur," Hieronymus said.

Fredericka told how they raised their six sons and one daughter in a rented house. "It was very tough when Hieronymus left to join the Pike Peak's Gold Rush after the birth of our firstborn, Henry. It was lonely, and I had to sell a pair of shoes for \$2.50 to buy medicine for the baby."

Hieronymus explained that he made guns which "everyone used because most people hunted what they ate. I also made keys and other items. In 1871, I was named Decatur's first plumber. My job was to bring water into the homes and businesses, which was a tough business because it usually meant a good soaking. But after a lot of thinking, I came up with a machine that actually tapped into the water main and received a patent on the tapping machine."



Fredericka (Paula Cross) and Hieronymus (John Arnold) on a summer afternoon in Greenwood Cemetery.

Hieronymus told about his auto, the Mueller-Benz, which won the first unofficial road race in the United States in 1895. Then, he took a long puff on his cigar and slowly turned and walked away.

Fredericka explained how he had died in 1900 while working on one of his automobiles he and his sons, Oscar and Philip, were developing.

And thus the afternoon passed, with Fredericka and Hieronymus retelling their stories to the 120 visitors who took part in Decatur's first cemetery tour, which was sponsored by the Heritage Network, and included visiting eight gravesites of prominent Decatur persons.

Paula Cross, project director of the Center for American Archaeology, portrayed Fredericka; and her husband, John Arnold, a field service engineer, took the part of Hieronymus.

And for a little while on a summer afternoon, they really *were*.

For the Record . . .

by Nancy Jo Batman, Manager

It all started with a brief item in an old Mueller Record about John J. Smith, a member of the "Hydrant Hounds," who took 145 photos of Mueller-made hydrants around the country. After his death, his widow, Beatrice Joynt, gave them to the Mueller Co.

"Wouldn't it be great to have an exhibit featuring these photos?" I said to myself one day when there was no one else to talk to.

It soon became my Life's Work. I made phone calls, wrote letters and bugged every volunteer who entered the door, asking for fire hydrant-related objects.

We named our eclectic exhibit: "Vibrant Hydrants." We set an opening date for the reception, June 1. We sent volunteers Don and Leota McQuality and my dad (John Scott) around with flyers. We sent news releases.

Alas, we never did locate the photos, but we did manage to find at least 90 items relating to fire hydrants, which will on display in the Museum through August 31.

Items include the ridiculous--"The World's Smallest Fire Hydrants" worn as earrings on a magnetized lady-saying "I'm Having a Senior Moment"--to the sublime--a Lladro figurine of a fireman and hydrant.

In between we have oil paintings, photographs, salt and pepper shakers, trophies, banks, a bourbon decanter (thanks to Del Parks who sent it from Florida!), children's artwork, gift wrap, t-shirts, mugs, a plate, a doorstop, an eraser, dog candy in a plastic fire hydrant, key-chains, and fire hydrant jokes. Mary Lou Wetherell even submitted an "Ode to a Fire Hydrant."

Nancy Shoop, a local artist, curated the show, which meant telling all of the volunteers to shut up so she could *think*. (We used a professional because my boss, Jane Mueller, was afraid I would just line everything up like I do my manger scene at Christmas. You know, the donkey next to the shepherd, next to Mary, next to a baby lamb, next to an angel, etc.)

A total of 104 persons visited our exhibit during the reception where we served fire hydrant cookies from a cookie cutter donated by Norma Elliott, a former employee of Mueller Co. Thanks to Hoby Pulford of the Mueller Co., we also passed out souvenir fire hydrant tie tacks to visitors.

Since that time, our attendance has picked up greatly as the word has gotten around that this is really a neat exhibit.

So if you haven't made it out to the exhibit, please stop by. You won't see John J. Smith's photos, but you will see more fire hydrant stuff than you ever dreamed existed--including a photo of a "human fire hydrant."

New Museum Members. . .

☐ Patron--\$500

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Steppin' Out . . .

Reason #5 to become a member of the Hieronymus Mueller Museum: You have the advantage of marking October 16 with the words: "Tea/style show" before the rest of the public beats you to it.

That is the date of the Museum's fall/winter exhibit opening: "Steppin' Out," which will feature the clothing of the Mueller and Staley women.

Clothing will include the original wedding dress and veil worn by Lenore Mueller for her marriage to A.E. Staley Jr. in 1926. Another knockout evening dress is a burgundy colored two piece outfit made from sequins, topped with a fur jacket dyed to match. Accessories from the early 1900s will also be exhibited.

The exhibit and style show will include hats made by the whimsical hat designer, Bes-Ben from Chicago. Bes-Ben (Benjamin Benedict Green-Field) was referred to as Chicago's "Mad Hatter" for his imaginative hats which were worn by Helen Hayes, Elizabeth Taylor, Marlene Dietrich, and Hedda Hopper, who wore a Bes-Ben hat decorated with razor blades for the *premiere* of the film *Razor's Edge*.

Bes-Ben hats included the whimsical--a zebra with battery-operated eyes; the quirky--a pair of penguins in green leather neckties stalking across a small expanse of felt; and the lavish--a jewel-bedecked hat which sold for \$1,075.

Details about this exhibit will be provided in the fall issue of the *Mueller Record*.

He still had cold feet

In the 1860s, the wealthiest resident of Decatur was Mr. William Ennis, a civil engineer who helped build the railroads and invested in Illinois soil.

All of Mr. Ennis' wealth, which was enormous, could not keep his feet warm at night, even though he had every known convenience of the day.

Hieronymus Mueller heard of this, and his ingenious mind went to work. He told Mr. Ennis he could solve his problem by making a copper hot water container. This was the earliest example of what we now know as a hot water bottle.

Mr. Ennis hired Hieronymus to product it. This copper container was hand made and water tight. It was used by Mr. Ennis with great satisfaction.

It remained in the Ennis family for many years, finding its way back to the Mueller Co. in 1939, and then to the Hieronymus Mueller Museum where it is on display. Come see it!

--Richard McKinley, Volunteer

Annual Membership Information

Student/Senior Citizen **\$15**
Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

Regular Membership **\$20**
Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

Family Membership: **\$25**
Free admission for member and up to four family members, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

***Support Membership:** **\$50**
Free admission for member and up to four family members, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, exhibit preview reception.

***Sponsor Membership:** **\$100**
Free admission for member and up to four family members, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, exhibit preview reception, museum notecards.

***Patron Membership:** **\$500**
Free admission for member and guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, exhibit preview reception, museum notecards, museum mug, recognition on museum donor board at Patron level.

***Benefactor Membership:** **\$1000**
Free admission for member and guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, exhibit preview reception, museum notecards, two museum mugs, museum t-shirt, recognition on museum donor board at Benefactor level.

Please circle the type of membership preferred

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HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

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The Hieronymus Mueller Museum is a privately funded non-profit museum and depends upon donations for its operations.

Think about it . . .

"Life is just an everlasting struggle to keep money in and teeth and hair and vital organs from coming out."--Mueller Record, 1940

Do you remember?

● The Industrial Engineers bowling team were in first place in May, 1971. Members included: **Dale Reidelberger, Howard Mayberry, Martin Troia, Dick Ferrill, Jim Fleckenstein, Al Seitz and Morey Sefton.**

● **Charles O. Bafford**, sales service manager-water since 1960, has been named to succeed **Tony Yunker** as manager of Decatur Sales Office. --*Mueller Record*, October, 1964

● **Carolyn Ashcraft**, daughter of Harold Ashcraft of Dept. 80, has been named homecoming queen at Stephen Decatur High School. She also represented her school in the "Elite Eight" queen contest at the state basketball tournament in Champaign. --*Mueller Record*, March-April, 1965

● **Robert W. Mallow** was elected president of the Mueller 4-X Club for 1964-65, succeeding **Larry Luckenbill**. Other officers were: **Carl Schuman**, vice president; **Fred Campbell**, treasurer; **Bob Jesse**,

secretary; **Bill Knorr**, program chairman. --*Mueller Record*, July-August, 1964

● The Mueller Golf League in Decatur elected **John J. Smith**, chief products engineer, president, succeeding Roy Thompson. Other officers are: **Maurice Sefton**, secretary and **Fred Campbell**, treasurer. --*Main Connections*, May 1964

● **Wilbur H. Sweazy**, cupola repairman in Decatur, was elected Worshipful Master of Ionic Lodge 312 of the Masonic Order. --*Mueller Newsletter*, June, 1971

● 1st shift fire squad (Nov. 1944): **Jerry Yonker**, captain; **Emory Langley, Ancel West, John Phillips, Wayne Moore, Charles Girard, Othello Bruce, Melvin Hardy, Heck Whittington, Perry Wray, Tom Bowman, Art Bauer**; 2nd shift: **Fred Nash**, captain; **Wilbur Sternes, Donald Oakleaf, Edwin Nalefski, Dan Truett, Willard Grider, Herbert Thompson, Harold Ashcraft**. --*Mueller Record*

HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

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