

## 2020.11.9 Class of '95 - Docent celebration speech

After 25 years, 7 of us are still docents from the class of '95. Here are some of their thoughts:

### **Bev Wiesner remembers training:**

“...scribbling as fast as i could in DrJacobson’s lectures, my fingers cramped trying to keep up with his nimble mind... He is fascinated by these splendors and we caught his fascination too.

In a lecture on Islamic art, he said “the Dark Ages were only dark in Europe” and I had never heard that before. It started a sea change in my world view, that everything is connected, everything is complex and nuanced...

### **Peggy Dietzen:**

I always feel such joy when I walk into the museum. My favorites tours are the younger kids. A kindergartener asked, “How do you know all of that?” In a tone of awe! Then as we moved to the next piece she said, “ How do you know where you are going?” I felt like an important person that day. My favorite exhibit was the St John’s Bible...so interesting to learn and to share...

### **Pam Friedland**

I remember touring the Chihuly exhibit and getting to the room where all the glass was clustered on a low ceiling and all the visitors including myself had to lay down on our backs to enjoy the exhibit. It was such a joyous exhibit.

I am grateful that being a docent led to me becoming so involved with Friends of the Institute at so many levels, meeting some of the most amazing people I have ever met. Being at Mia has given me purpose, passion, skills I did not know I had, and pride in what I do in my life.

### **Rose Stanley-Gilbert**

We were fortunate to have Sheila McGuire lead our trainings. She inspired me to look at art in new ways. And was always patient, positive and supportive.

Each training was like receiving a treasure chest of art objects to love. We made an index cards for each object we toured. No longer used, I still have them.

Our class quickly bonded as we struggled and succeeded with our tours. To know so many people who love art delighted me then —as it still does! “What a docent should be” changed during our training. It evolved quickly from “lecture mode” to a conversation of sharing: using looking and thinking questions and being good listeners.

Mia was about to change also. It would physically expand: 22 new Asian art galleries. A Chinese Reception Hall re-assembled on site. Target Wing expansion. When the Contemporary galleries were created, we learned that art was made after 1970!

We all have memories of visitors who touched us. While showing the Teahouse I talked about “leaving problems outside” for a little while. One 2nd grade boy said his parents were getting divorced and it was OK not think about it sometimes. I nodded, holding back tears.

What can we say after 25 years? Some wisdom remains the same. Be resilient. Be adaptable. Whether for our visitors, our friends or us: Art inspires. That is what keeps the hearts of the Docents of '95 forever young.

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Class of 95: Peggy, Georgia, Pam, Lyn, me, Jane, Beverly

Bev Wiesner: I remember scribbling as fast as i could in DrJacobson's lectures, my fingers cramped trying to keep up with his nimble mind capering about in the cultural treasures he is so deeply knowledgable about. He is fascinated by these splendors and we caught his fascination too. In a lecture on Islamic art, he said "the Dark Ages were only dark in Europe" and I had never heard that before. It started a sea change in my world view , that everything is connected, everthing is complex and nuanced, I would do well to be quiet and listen. More recently, I learned about the effects of colonialism in the world and it gives a deeper and perhaps darker shading to the objects in the collection. which makes the act of spending time in the presence of Jizo ( for example , richer. Leading tours is both humbling and exhaling. Connecting with people is really the best revenge.

I LOVE the PC house, its where I gave my best tours, when I had the most immediate and rewarding responses from guests- I had the director of tours at Fallingwater give me her card and want to correspond. I have 2 floor to ceiling bookcases of books about Prairie School architecture, the progressive movement,, 19th century domestic architecture. then i had an encounter with kaywin. I would love to work on PC house material somehow.

Peggy Dietzen

I've loved being a docent over these last 25 years! I always feel such joy when I walk into the museum; it is such a wonderful place. I've tried to pass on this excitement to the groups I tour. My favorites are the younger kids. I love it when they show their excitement with the art. One humorous story was when a student from a kindergarten class looked at me as we were discussing an art piece and said, " How do you know all of that?" In a tone of awe! Then as we moved to the next piece she again said, " How do you know where you are going?" Again with

a sense of awe. The size of the museum must have impressed her! Anyway, I felt like an important person that day.

My favorite exhibit was the St John's Bible. It was so interesting to learn and to share. It was probably the most difficult because of getting the groups through the crowded spaces. My second favorite was the Hapsburgs.

Being a docent has been a great gift in my life!

Peggy Dietzen

Pam Friedland

Gosh, hard to believe it has been 25 years and we are still at it! I am going down memory lane here trying to think of something to write about.

I remember touring the Chihuly exhibit and getting to the room where all the glass was clustered on a low ceiling and all the visitors including myself had to lay down on our backs to enjoy the exhibit. It was such a joyous exhibit.

I remember the crowds and swimming upstream to tour the Luther exhibit. I have never seen so many people at one time in the galleries and so many people that probably hardly ever step foot in the museum. They were so excited to learn and asked so many wonderful questions. My mind expanded in so many ways!

I remember having little kids wanting to hold my hand as we walked from piece to piece, anxious to tell me all about their families and their adventures. Often they would ask me if all the art in the museum was real, and wow, it all looked so big!!!

I remember telling little kids the Connecticut Room had ghosts in it, and the looks on their faces was priceless.

I remember being proud of representing a world class institution and sharing my knowledge and passion with so many first time visitors.

I remember all the times I have toured the Purcell-Cutts House and shared my absolute love of architecture and especially the design of that time. And all the tours that attracted visitors from out of state and learning what brought them to the house.

I am grateful that being a docent led to me becoming so involved with Friends of the Institute at so many levels, meeting some of the most amazing people I have ever met. Being at Mia has given me purpose, passion, skills I did not know I had, and pride in what I do in my life.

I am sorry not to be at the event this evening but it is my birthday and I will be with family. I say congratulations to my fellow 25 year docents!!! And a huge thank you to the Learning and Innovation staff for their guidance and support.