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Friends of the Museum of the Everglades Newsletter

FME, P O Box 677, Everglades City, FL, 34139, email: FME_98@hotmail.com, website: www.evergladesmuseum.org

Observations Of An English Volunteer by Dr. Tony Trayling

It was always reassuring, whilst sitting at the desk inside the entrance to the Museum of the Everglades as a greeter, to hear the opening bars of the music accompanying the video presentation about Everglades City and the building of the Tamiami Trail. It meant that the visitors had involved themselves with the exhibits and that there would probably be some lively conversation at the desk as they left.

"What exactly was a cracker?"

"Is it far to the Indian Museum?"

"Are those Indian masks real?"

These were the sort of questions which would tax my ingenuity in answering, as opposed to the more mundane enquiries about where to find good food locally. *"What's an Englishman doing here?"* or *"What do you make of the royal wedding?"* would usually lead to more spirited conversation.

People came to the Museum to be informed and entertained. Many had come from far away but they had read of the Everglades and knew, as Marjory Stoneman Douglas had written, *"There is only one Everglades in the world."* I am sure that everyone I met as a greeter went away with the truth of that emphatic statement confirmed by what they had seen at 105 West Broadway. Two visitors, in particular, remain vivid in my mind. One was a schoolgirl from Kentucky who wore shoes which sparkled as she walked. She did not think she would like to have to sit at the school desk which was in the Museum's exhibit and had particularly interested her. We agreed that Cinderella would have been impressed by her footwear, but she wasn't prepared to leave the shoes to go on display at the Museum. The other was a man from Puerto Rico who "worked in timber" and was inspired by the Museum's floor, as were several other visitors.

The way in which the Museum exhibits talented local artists' work combined with items of considerable historical interest in a bright, welcoming atmosphere is something of which Everglades City should be justly proud.

At the Museum's birthday party in April we learned that three thousand visitors had come in March of this year. I hope to be back before March next year to learn of even more people enjoying this gem of a building and the story it has to tell.

Tony and Laurie Trayling live in Kent, south of London, but have a vacation home here and enjoy walking in the surrounding Fakahatchee and Big Cypress Preserves. They are both retired from medical careers.



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Further Experiences of an English Volunteer

by Dr. Tony Trayling

A year ago I wrote an article for the Museum's newsletter in which I tried to explain how much I had enjoyed my time working as a Volunteer in the Museum and how much my wife and I looked forward to returning in 2006.

After reading about the awful experience of last year's Hurricane it was with some trepidation that we returned to Everglades City – so that it will probably not be too much of a surprise to read of our delight to find the Museum acting as kind of a hub around which at the lively second Annual MSD festival events were rotating when we arrived in February this year. Valued friendships were rapidly renewed and the Museum was clearly still alive within Everglades City. The Dade County pine floor had proved its durability once again. Inside the Museum it was heartening to hear, again, the opening bars of the music accompanying the video presentation about Everglades City and the building of the Tamiami Trail. This indicated that visitors in the Museum had involved themselves with the exhibits and there would probably be some lively conversation at the desk as they left. The Museum had just celebrated the arrival of its 100,000th visitor. What a wonderful milestone to pass.

Among many interesting visitors I recall meeting a man from Ireland who was the father of the Custodian of Ireland's outstanding pre-historic monument. One visitor from England casually asked me if I could tell him the Test score? This meant, "How is the Cricket match progressing between England and India" – this floored me as I was quite out of touch with these international sporting developments. This, somewhat to my discomfort, as President Bush had shown an interest and willingness to involve himself in this new sport, for him, when he visited Pakistan in March.

My most moving moment as a greeter was to be present at a visit to the Museum by a man who had spent his working life in a laundry in Kansas. He was fascinated by the machinery, which remains in the Museum, and by the lay out of the building.

Visitors still come from all over the World and appreciate the opportunity to learn something of the history of the region against the background of its outstanding natural beauty. The delight of working as a greeter is they you never quite know what will happen next. It is bound to be a stimulating and challenging experience.

Dr. Trayling and his wife Laurie are seasonal residents who are treasured volunteers both at the greeter desk and at Friends and Museum events.