

# Journey Program stimulates students' interest, provides world perspective

by George Fricke

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Field Museum is an awe-inspiring place. With three floors of exhibits covering subjects from Stone Age man to the moon, it simply cannot be explored in one day. Yet, there is so much that can be learned if one only knows where to begin. The Raymond Foundation, a part of the Museum's Education Department, developed the Museum Journey Program to give children a starting place for their visit to the Museum and to provide a guide which would help them learn from the exhibits.

Journeys are self-guided tours which take boys and girls to exhibits illustrating a particular phase of natural history. They contain information about this subject and questions for the visitor to answer. Four Journeys are offered each year. The first Journey, "Drums," was taken by 80 youngsters in the spring of 1955. Subsequent Journeys attracted more and more children, and the Raymond Foundation staff noticed that some of the same boys and girls were taking each succeeding Journey. They felt that these youngsters deserved recognition for their accomplishments and, in the spring of 1956, 13 boys and girls were invited to attend an award ceremony. The success of the program is evidenced by the fact that this spring, 227 children were invited to receive congratulations and recognition for their work in the Museum.

Children who earned an award continued to take the Journeys and to broaden their knowledge of natural history. So, over the years, various award categories were initiated. After completing four Journeys, a youngster receives the Museum Traveler Award. Continued participation in the pro-

gram enables him to earn intermediate awards until, after four years of work and 16 Journeys, the youngster becomes a Museum Beagler. Each Beagler receives a copy of Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and a special Journey highlighting some of the things Darwin saw on his famous journey. When this Journey is completed, the young man or woman becomes a member of the Museum Discoverers' Club.

Club members have privileges that are similar to that of an annual Museum membership, until they reach the age of 18. Since the Club began in the fall of 1959, 198 boys and girls have become Museum Discoverers. They are a select group. Each year, approximately 1,200 children turn in a Journey for credit; about 220 receive an award. However, only a handful become Discoverers. Members of the Discoverers' Club have taken full advantage of the Journey Program and have evidenced an early and sustained interest in natural history.

Several past members of the club were inspired by the program to study some aspect of the natural sciences. Ronald Bonneau, who hopes to do graduate work in marine biology, believes that the Journeys helped him gain an appreciation for the natural outdoors and encouraged his interest in wildlife preservation. For Herbert Nipson, a Princeton University biology major, the program stimulated an interest in living things. David Janus feels he gained an interest in the natural sciences leading to his choice of botany as a major field of study. He has been a Shinner Scholar in the Museum's Botany Department.

Of course, not all children who take the Journeys turn them in for credit. Thousands take the sheets home as a

souvenir of their visit to the Museum. Classes often take a Journey as a group and discuss their results in school, and Scout groups have incorporated the program into their own award system.

Many parents have made the Journey Program a family project and bring their children to each succeeding Journey.

The Journey Program is growing and spreading. More children take Journeys every year, and many adults have thanked us for the knowledge they gained while taking a Journey with the youngsters. Inquiries about the program have come from museums as far away as Sydney, Australia, and many museums have begun a similar self-guided tour of their own. At a time when knowledge of our environment is so important, the Journey Program has proved itself of value in helping Museum visitors to gain a real perspective of the world around them.



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