LEGACY of Laughter

The mission of the Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy is to continue the Legacy of Red Skelton through inspiration and education.

Dr. Phillip M. Summers
August 23, 1939 - September 29, 2013
When one thinks of Phillip M. Summers, it is difficult to pin down just one memory or aspect of his larger-than-life personality. Educator, mentor, leader, father, words that many have used to describe the man who was such a presence in the Vincennes community for so many years. People who were lucky enough to know him can think of other descriptors as well...entertainer, philanthropist, fraternity brother. The list seems to be endless. Everyone has a favorite story or remembrance of Dr. Summers, but those stories are only a portion of what we have left of a man who devoted his life to being kind, generous, and a leader of the oldest university West of the Alleghenies, and north of the Ohio river.

Many memories have been shared in the weeks since his passing, with most reminiscences involving Dr. Summers’ leadership and vision for the endeavors of which he was a part. His organization, attention to detail, and kind spirited generosity were living examples of what is required to be remembered so fondly by all who knew him. He exhibited respect and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?” The needs of a student and dedication to all students. If student expectations were not met, his response was, “How can we help this student become successful?”

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Generosity was a key trait for Dr. Summers. As the VU President, it was unlikely that a student or group would be refused the President’s time, even if it was during a walk to an event, possibly his third of the evening. His daily calendar began with breakfast in the dining hall with students, followed by an official breakfast meeting of some sort, then on to a full day’s schedule. Lunches were spent with a community group or university gathering, and evenings were spent with Dr. Summers opening a dinner with one group, attending a meeting of a second group, and having dessert or closing with a third.

A man who lived his Christian faith, Dr. Summers never opened a luncheon or dinner meeting without a devotion or prayer. If the faith of the group was unknown, a talented student vocalist, violinist, or pianist would be called in to perform the meditation, thus not offending the visitors, while still holding on to the faith that was lived by this very good man.

Giving to others was a large part of Dr. Summers life. When meeting him during the 1980’s as a coach for Special Olympics, he gave me a sweatshirt with the inscription “Volunteering is the rent you pay for the space you take”. He never missed an opportunity to give or to provide for others, whether it was a personal note of thanks, a hand picked gift, or playing piano duets at his beloved First Christian Church.

His leadership and vision for the Red Skelton Museum was phenomenal. Dr. Summers’ generosity, dedication, and appreciation for those who helped with the start-up of the Red Skelton Museum of Comedy was evident. Much activity needed to occur to prepare the museum for opening – reviewing and cataloging artifacts, moving boxes, working to prepare for inside construction work to name just a few tasks. The need for additional manpower was evident, and Dr. Summers welcomed men and women from the Knox County Work Release program to help, once again recognizing potential and good in people experiencing all circumstances of life. Dr. Summers would make extra effort to stop by when the work was being done, welcoming and thanking the laborers with his warm smile and deep baritone voice. To show his appreciation for the work, VIP tickets were given to two men who had provided several days of work at the museum. His generosity and thoughtfulness allowed these men to enjoy the fun and excitement of the grand opening and to feel the value of their individual contributions.

Dr. Summers...he left us way too early. His influence on the VU campus will be remembered and visible for decades, but it is his less visible impact on the lives of those whom he touched – the students, the volunteers, the community leaders – that will never be forgotten and indeed changed lives.

In his own words, as he ended many of his letters, “We wish you the best, dear friend.”

By Kim and Dennis Everett

Red’s Dream Team

Red’s Dream Team is composed of local volunteers dedicated to the memory of Red Skelton, Vincennes’ finest son. The Dream Team helps with all Red Skelton Museum related events and activities and gift shop operations. To be a part of this exciting group, contact Anne Pratt at (812) 888-2105 or apratt@vinu.edu.
Red’s Christmas Wonderland

Open in the Red Skelton Museum
NOVEMBER 9—DECEMBER 31
included in regular museum admission

Wander through a Christmas Wonderland featuring beautiful wreaths decorated and donated by area organizations and businesses. The wonderland features many of Red’s original Santa Claus and holiday paintings. This special exhibit will include some of the Skelton family ornaments and stockings from the 1970’s as well as, some beloved toys. See the Red statues all in the same place for the first time since 2006.
Also on display will be an extensive Christmas Village collection.

Please consider a donation to the Red Skelton Museum.
Watch your mail for our annual appeal letter.

Enjoy Red’s Rockin’ Christmas with
Terry Lee and the RockaBoogie Band

A SPECIAL SHOW FEATURING ALL YOUR HOLIDAY FAVORITES AND SOUNDS FROM THE 50’S AND 60’S

Sunday, December 8th
6:00 PM

Appetizers and Cash bar 6:00-7:30 PM
Show begins at 7:30 PM
Silent Auction on Wreaths closes at 7:15 PM

Red Skelton Performing Arts Center • General Admission: $30.00

Contact Anne Pratt 888-2105 or apratt@vinu.edu for more information.
“It’s a great thing that his town has honored him with something of this scale, I don’t know of many other performers who have a museum and a performing arts center in their name, that’s something he’d be really proud of.”

~ Valentina Skelton
Museum Welcomes New Staff Member

We would like to introduce, Jerri Johanningsmeier as our newest part-time employee at the Red Skelton Museum. You will see Jerri’s smiling face welcoming guest to to Museum and leading them on tours or assisting with purchases. Jerri is a native of Vincennes and recently retired from the Vincennes Community Schools. She earned her A.S. degree in elementary education from Vincennes University and her B.S. and M.S. from Indiana State University. Presently she is teaching an education class at VU. In her leisure time, Jerri enjoys being with family and friends, sewing projects, performing arts events, golf and reading.

Membership Opportunities

Your membership supports programs and artifact preservation efforts which educate, illuminate and document Red Skelton’s Legacy of Laughter.

Membership Levels:

Junior: The Mean Widdle Kid — $15
(Student/College)

Freddie the Freeloader — $25
Individual/Senior Citizen)

George Appleby — $50
(Family)

Cauliflower McPugg — $100
(Contributing)

Sheriff Deadeye — $250
(Sustaining)

San Fernando Red — $500
(Patron)

MEMBER BENEFITS: (by level)

Junior & Freddie
(Student/Individual/Senior Citizen)
art print
admission for 1 per visit

George Appleby (Family)
art print
newsletter
admission for 4 per visit

Cauliflower McPugg (Contributing)
art print
newsletter
10% museum store discount
admission for 6 per visit

Sheriff Deadeye (Sustaining)
art print
newsletter
10% museum store discount
admission for 8 per visit

San Fernando Red (Patron)
all benefits
behind-the-scenes tours
admission for 10 per visit

Your support is greatly appreciated. For your convenience, use the attached envelope for your membership submission. Your completed form will be processed and membership card(s) will be mailed to the address provided.

Join Today!

www.redskeltonmuseum.org
We Feel Red Would Be Proud

We have had a very positive response to the opening of the Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy. On average, we are welcoming 60 visitors a day to the facility. It is very heartening to hear laughter throughout the exhibit gallery as people rediscover the comedic genius of Red. Many of our visitors have traveled from outside the immediate area. Individual visitors have come to the museum from Chicago, Indianapolis, and St. Louis. Some of the states represented are Illinois, Ohio, Florida, Colorado, and California. Many of these visitors have shared their fond memories of seeing the Red Skelton Show when they were children. We are also seeing a growing list of bus tours choosing the Red Skelton Museum as a destination. We are pleased to add another attraction to our community and to share with our guests the heritage attractions, restaurants, retail outlets and hotels that Vincennes provides.

So, now that we are open, what’s next for the museum? Well, as many of you know, the museum exhibits are not yet complete. We look forward to opening Phase Two exhibits next year. The new exhibits will include Red’s radio and vaudeville career including the walkathons where he acted as emcee. Red’s movie career will be showcased with clips, photographs, posters and scripts. You will also see more on Red’s television career including a stage set featuring Freddie the Freeloader courtesy of Old National Bancorp Foundation. Red’s Masonic life, his good works as a Shriner, his USO tours, and acts of philanthropy will round out the new exhibits.

Phase two exhibits will also feature more interactive spaces where you will be able to learn about the art of comedy in several ways. Learn about the body language of comedy as you follow in Red’s footprints. Listen to a radio show and be part of the action as you provide the sound effects that make the story come alive. Practice your comedic timing by learning how to tell a joke.

For us, Red Skelton is just the beginning of the story that we will tell. As we develop our educational program series, we will explore the science of laughter, the role of the comedian in today’s society, the healthful benefits of humor, as well as the development of comedy in the 20th century.

Museum to Host AATH Conference

Healthy Humor: What Is It, Where to Find It, Who Needs It... and Why?

Join in on the informative fun as Association for Applied & Therapeutic Humor (AATH) gathers at the Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy for its 27th annual international conference April 3-6, 2014.

The conference will include keynotes, workshops, CEUs, Humor Academy, research poster session and scholarships. Curriculum tracks will focus on Healthcare and Wellness, Education, Speakers & Leaders, and Therapeutic Clowning!

Come to learn, to laugh, to network and share “best practices”, to see old friends and make new ones, and to be uplifted by the heartwarming, collegial experience!

For more information visit AATH.org or RedSkeltonMuseum.org.

VOLUNTEER Spotlight

Our volunteer spotlight shines on Jan Hedstrom Witteried this month. Jan started volunteering at the Museum back in the fall of 2011. Jan not only volunteers at the Museum store, but is instrumental in all decorating endeavors and any special events. She is always willing to help and we appreciate her very much. Jan is married to Clem Witteried and has three children Tyler, Hannah and Bret. Jan is also the creator of our exquisite “Red Jewelry” that is on sale in the Museum Store.
• **Red’s Christmas Wonderland**
  **NOVEMBER 9 – DECEMBER 29, 2013**
  Visit this special exhibit to view seven of Red’s original paintings with a Christmas theme, a beautiful holiday vignette with handmade ornaments from the Skelton Family and the “I dood it” game from the collection. Also on display are the hand painted Red Skelton Statues from around Vincennes and an extensive Christmas Village collection.

• **Red’s Rockin’ Christmas**
  **DECEMBER 8, 2013 - 6:00 PM**
  Join us for a special Christmas event at the Red Skelton Performing Arts Center and Museum to start your Christmas season. Terry Lee and the Rockaboogie band will perform a selection of Christmas favorites and sounds from the 50’s and 60’s, this event also will feature a silent auction of beautiful Christmas wreaths donated by area businesses. There will be cocktails and appetizers and special museum tours prior to the show. Tickets on sale at the RSPAC and Red Skelton Museum. $30

• **Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor Conference**
  **APRIL 3-6, 2014**
  Join in on the informative fun as AATH (Association for Applied & Therapeutic Humor) gathers for its 27th annual international conference. Keynotes, Workshops, CEUs, Humor Academy, Research Poster Session and Scholarships. Curriculum Tracks Will Focus on Healthcare & Wellness, Education, Speakers & Leaders, and Therapeutic Clowning!