

FAX FROM

THE ORANGE SHOW

1 July 1994

To: Larry Harris

From: Susanne Theis

Dear Larry,

Another amazing thing has happened. Sunday at The Orange Show Board retreat we clarified our mission and acknowledged that preservation of environments – The Orange Show and others – was at the center of our purpose. Wednesday we received a call asking to help save with a near-mythical Houston site, the Hyde Park Miniature Museum.

D. D. Smalley, a draftsman for the Southern Pacific Railroad, gathered and assembled an astonishing array of objects; common, exotic, rare and insignificant, he seemed to appreciate everything. His wife objected to sharing her home with all this stuff, so in 1941 he opened his museum in his Montrose attic. He had a sign-in book, donation box (complete with a monkey which clapped for each gift). Each item in the museum was tagged with a printed card labeled 'Hyde Park Miniature Museum' and carefully written in his draftsman's hand was the number and name of the object. The objects are displayed on shelves that run the length of the perhaps 40' room, in the center of the narrow room is a huge miniature train set on a table, underneath which are stored complete collections of Popular Mechanics and Life magazines. D. D. Smalley died in 1958.

Barbara, Carl, Anne Bohnn, Pam George and I went with Frank Davis (D. D. Smalley's grandson) and Helen Fosdick (a family friend who helped restore the site in 1971) to see the museum this morning. So many images stay with me, but especially these. A cigar box, filled with neat rows of postage stamps, perfectly steamed off envelopes, piled in neat little bundles of 100. There were 14 boxes like that at one time, some have been stolen now. Another great image: D. D. Smalley figured out how to use a tiny tool to carve flowers in a the interior corner of little lucite cubes. He also added really intense color and cut an angle into the cube so the image would be multiplied many times when you looked at it. Next to about 15 of these cubes – our guides said this is the key to the whole museum – is a giant jar all the lucite shavings from his carving. He threw nothing away and respected everything.

For a few years following the 1971 restoration, the musuem was open to the public, and many people who are friends of The Orange Show today have visited and loved it. Basically it has been closed for more than a decade and the house in which it's located has been sold and the collection must move.

That's where we come in. We don't have much time, but we have more than we did with Ida. More cooperation too. Would you like to schedule an Eyeopeners meeting one evening next week at Rudyard's (how about Thursday July 7th?) on Waugh. The musuem is just around the corner and we can all go see it. I promise it is a treat that no one will forget.

By then we'll have a plan to talk about. Many many thanks. Attached are pictures if they fax at all of the site to picque your curiosity!