MATTERS OF FACT

THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON: TO GIVE AND RECEIVE

Individual Requests: $11.2 million from engineer Ralph Mershon, Class of 1890, that has funded thousands of scholarships, Mershon Auditorium and Mershon Center, a public policy education and research institution. $25 million from retailer and College of Business alumnus Leslie H. Wexner for the Wexner Center for the Arts.

$1.7 million worth of Madison County farmland from alumna Molly Caren, which is now the site of the Molly Caren Agricultural Center. Gibraltar Island in Put-in-Bay from trustee Julius Stone, who designated it for use as a lake laboratory.

Collections: The Thurber Collection of manuscripts and sketches, most of it donated by James Thurber’s widow. Scripts, manuscripts and artifacts donated by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, authors of “Auntie Mame” and “Inherit the Wind.” Items relating to the polar explorations of Admiral Richard Byrd in The Byrd Polar Research Center. The Don Brown Collection of 23,645 recorded animal sounds. The designer and...

BEST GIFTS TO OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Landmark Gift: Ohio Stadium, whose construction cost was financed primarily with contributions from individuals around the state, started with $100 from faculty member Fred Ives.

original gowns from private donors in The Historic Costume Collection.
INTRICATE designs created by talented artisans never seem to grow old. Each new look at them is a refreshing experience.

An ivory pagoda and a rare Japanese vase in the lobby of Mershon Auditorium at North High Street and 15th Avenue in Columbus, are good examples of this phenomenon. Concert-goers have seen these two works of art often in the two years they have been exhibited there in large glass cases, but some of those people still pause frequently for another glance and manage to see something different to admire every time.

The art treasures are a gift to Ohio State University by Mr. and Mrs. Christian E. Burckel. He was graduated from Ohio State in 1922, and he has not forgotten the school and his fraternity brothers who helped him financially along the way. He has repaid them many-fold.

The ivory pagoda is over seven feet tall and contains nearly 1,400 individual pieces, each painstakingly carved by a Chinese craftsman named Au Kuan who accomplished the monumental task in his spare time over a period of 50 years in Hong Kong. It was completed in 1954. The design is unique, having nine levels whereas most pagodas are three to seven levels. Its value is estimated at more than $100,000.

The vase, exhibited at the other end of the Mershon lobby, was made in Japan more than 100 years ago. It is one of a class known as Imari vases, so called because they were shipped from the seaport of that name. It is beautifully decorated in many colors including shades of blue, red, green, yellow, pink and white, each of which required a separate firing. From an initial batch of 100, only 15 or 20 saleable vases survived this process. In addition, Burckel has been advised that there probably are
By KENNETH ROBERTSON

Photos by Gordon Kuster Jr.

A decorative motif from “Tales of Genji,” a story of an Oriental Don Juan, adorns this century-old Imari vase from Japan.

no kilns anywhere in the world today that could fire such a large vase. The decorative motif is from the “Tales of Genji,” a story about an Oriental Don Juan. Valuation of the vase is about $30,000.

Other pieces presented to the university by Burckel are housed at present in Hopkins Hall, the new fine arts building on campus. They include a $12,000 ivory chess set carved in Chinese figure design with the dark pieces stained in tea; four ivory Chinese gods representing the seasons of the year; and several vases including a pair bearing the portraits of German authors Goethe and Schiller in blue and white, and a pair of rose and gold vases of Turkish origin.

In addition to works of art, several years ago Burckel gave the OSU library some two tons of United Nations publications and records, including documents on the UN’s birth at San Francisco in 1948. He and his wife also are bequeathing their home estate on the edge of Bronxville, New York, with its unique statue-dotted “Garden of Peace and Tranquility,” and their collection of artifacts and antiques to Ohio State.

Burckel is a man of many abilities, ideas and varied interests. After obtaining a degree in civil engineering at OSU in 1922, he tried manufacturing storage batteries in Cleveland, taught school in New York City, moonlighted as a magician, and started a neighborhood newspaper. Since 1924 he has published The College Blue Book, a reference on secondary and higher educational institutions. New editions are made available about every three years. They have included several articles by Ronald B. Thompson, executive dean of statistical services at OSU, on the problems of rising enrollments.

Financial success came through his talent as a consultant for several large corporations and branches of the armed forces. He has always been interested in the basic abilities of mankind, and the manual dexterity of ivory-carvers led to a hobby as a collector of fine ivory pieces.

At age 72 Burckel is retired, but he is currently planning a lecture trip to Africa. Some people never quit.
These four ivory Chinese gods represent the seasons, from left, spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Designs of small flowers appropriately decorate two rose and gold five-spouted vases from Turkey.
Du Pont gives OSU $151,500

The Ohio State University has received $151,500 from E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. to support projects in the colleges of engineering, pharmacy, arts and sciences, veterinary medicine and business.

The company has given the university $2.25 million since 1918:

Gifts this year are:
- A $50,000 young faculty grant, which consists of $25,000 for mechanical engineering and $25,000 for chemistry. These are the fourth and last year of Du Pont's commitment in honor of OSU Professor Emeritus Melvin S. Newman.
- A $5,000 minority education grant in engineering, with $2,000 designated to the DuPont Achievement Award.
- A $6,000 computer and information sciences grant.
- A $6,000 business grant for the undergraduate accounting program.
- And an $84,500 science engineering grant, with $20,000 going to chemical engineering, $14,300 to chemistry, $10,000 to electrical engineering, $20,000 to mechanical engineering, $8,000 to pharmacy and $12,500 to veterinary pathology.
Wexner, Limited foundation donation to Ohio State is the largest ever given to the school — by far

By Encarnacion Pyle
and Tim Feran
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Ohio State University is about to receive the largest gift in its history.

Leslie H. Wexner, his wife and the foundation of the company he founded will donate $100 million to the university in what OSU President E. Gordon Gee calls "a transformative moment" for the school.

"It's been obvious to me over the past 30 years that Ohio State is the most important institution in this community," said Wexner, founder of Limited Brands and current chairman of the OSU board of trustees. "The breadth of all the things the university does touches almost all parts of human endeavor."

To date, the largest single gift to Ohio State was $30 million, which Columbus lawyer Michael E. Moritz gave OSU's law school in 2001.

The Wexners' gift, in cash, will be donated within nine years, with the first $20 million coming this year. Leslie and Abigail S. Wexner will contribute $65 million from their own funds, and the Limited Brands Foundation will contribute $35 million.

Leslie Wexner is chairman and CEO of Limited Brands, the parent company of such chains as Victoria's Secret, Bath & Body Works and Henri Bendel. The foundation is the company's charitable arm.

Wexner, a 1959 graduate of Ohio State, said the roots of the donation began long ago.

"The way I think about it, See GIFT Page A4
In a 2007 photo, football coach Jim Tressel points to a quote from Leslie H. Wexner that says, "Without Ohio State, I could have never gone to college."

GIFT

FROM PAGE A1

It probably began about 35 years ago," he said. "But for Ohio State, I wouldn't have gone to college. It was an important institution in my life."

In part out of gratitude for that contribution to his life, the Wexners had recently discussed making "a significant gift," he said. "It's not intended as an estate gift," said Mr. Wexner, who is 73. "It's not I hope to leave a large gift — and live a long time. I'm very critical of people who make a gift like that. This is a milestone, but this isn't the end.

"It's a real gift. It's real money."

With the announcement, the Wexner family and Limited Brands Foundation have given, raised or pledged a total of nearly $200 million to Ohio State. More than half has come directly from the family.

The university attracted another big windfall in December, when Ohio State learned it had won a $100 million federal grant to add a radiation oncology center next to its $1 billion Medical Center expansion.

Gee said the Wexners' donation came about so quickly that many details are yet to be finalized.

Wexner said simply, "We can figure out where it goes at a later time."

Gee said the gift will mainly be used at the university's Medical Center, Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute, as well as the Wexner Center for the Arts.

The arts center, which opened in 1988, was founded with $25 million from Wexner, and his company has contributed an additional $50 million since then.

This donation is coming from the couple, but Mrs. Wexner broached the subject with Gee.

"I was at a Medical Center board meeting (in December) and Abigail said that she'd like to talk to me afterward," Gee said. "And when we did, she said, 'Now is the time to make a significant donation.'"

"Generally, it takes years to get a major donation like this. But this one was simply, 'We want to give money. It's such a pleasant way to do it.'"

Mr. Wexner said he was worried that, as chairman of the university's trustees, there might appear to be an ethical conflict if he made the first move.

"In a way, I'm Gordon's boss, and I didn't think that was appropriate," he said.

Mr. Wexner said that while some people "do good deeds anonymously," he felt this was not the time for such a donation.

"I appreciate that kind of ethic," he said. "But some things have to be done in a way that sets the bar higher. I would hope someone will place the bar higher again in the future."

Mr. Wexner has personally given more than $500 million to philanthropic causes over the past 25 years, the majority focused on education.

Gee said the Wexners' gift will have an impact in three ways at the university:

- By aiding OSU's $2.5 billion comprehensive fundraising campaign; "This donation will be a propelling moment in a time of economic uncertainty."
- By stimulating the number of donors; "People like to be part of a winning tradition."
- And "he is signifying real confidence in the university, that the university is one of the most important places in the state to invest."

Wexner said that the gift also symbolizes his confidence in Gee's leadership.

Gee said that although he has a "longstanding and close personal friendship" with Mr. Wexner, the gift is "a true partnership gift. Sometimes, one partner is reluc tant. But I have to say in this instance, their enthusiasm is of equal value."