

*Statue and Memorial Garden Dedication Ceremony*

*honoring alumnus*

# Jim Henson



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

Adele H. Stamp Student Union

Wednesday, September 24, 2003



## ***Program***

### **Willard Scott**

Master of Ceremonies

### **C. D. Mote, Jr.**

President of the University of Maryland

### **Faiz Ahmad**

Representative for the Classes of 1994, 1998 and 1999

### **Timothy Daly**

President of the Student Government Association

### **Honored Guests**

Jane Henson

Lisa Henson, Cheryl Henson, Brian Henson,  
John Henson, Heather Henson



### **Colours**

Northwestern High School

The Jim Henson School of Arts, Media and Communications

William Ritter, Principal

Jason Cook, Colours Program Coordinator

*Soul Child* (originally *Soul Man* by Isaac Hayes and David Porter)

*Ain't No Mountain High Enough* by Marvin Gaye

*One Small Voice* by Jeff Moss



## JIM HENSON

Jim Henson was born at King's Daughters Hospital in Greenville, Mississippi on September 24, 1936, the second son of Paul and Betty Henson. Jim spent his early years in Leland, Mississippi, where his father had an assignment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He remembered spending countless happy hours exploring the shorelines of Deer Creek, not far from his parents' house. Throughout his childhood, Jim Henson had an interest in both art and television. Young Jim was particularly close to his maternal grandmother and visited her often at the family home in Maryland. As an avid painter, quilter, and needleworker, she was supportive of his artistic efforts and encouraged him to use his imagination and to take delight in the world around him.

When Jim was in the fifth grade, the Henson family moved to Maryland where Jim, often with his older brother, Paul, experimented with a variety of artistic techniques. In 1954, while still in high school, he began his television career performing puppets on a local Washington, DC, Saturday morning program on WTOP-TV. The following year, as a freshman at the University of Maryland, he was given his own twice-daily, five-minute show, *Sam and Friends*, on the local NBC affiliate, WRC-TV. Jim's first performing partner was Jane Nebel, whom he met at the University, and who later became his wife. *Sam and Friends* introduced many Muppet mainstays—music, snarky humor and technical tricks. The show also featured an early version of Kermit the Frog, who later became the most famous Muppet of all.

The success of *Sam and Friends* led to guest appearances on such national network programs as *The Steve Allen Show*, *The Jack Paar Show* and the *Today Show*. At the same time, Jim began making hundreds of humorous commercials for sponsors throughout the country. In 1961, as Muppets, Inc. grew, Jim and Jane brought on puppeteer and writer Jerry Juhl, who would become one of Jim's major collaborators.

The demands of national television appearances brought Jim and his family to New York in 1963. With weekly appearances on the *Today Show* and an ever-growing list of commercial clients, Jim sought out the talents of master puppet builder, Don Sahlin, and young puppeteer, Frank Oz. They worked together to develop the Muppets' first nationally-known character, Rowlf, who appeared regularly on *The Jimmy Dean Show* from 1963 to 1966.

Having established a group of talented collaborators, Jim Henson was able to pursue his career in puppetry and develop his strong interest in filmmaking. Between 1964 and 1969, Jim produced several experimental films including the award-winning *Timepiece*, *Youth '68*, and *The Cube*.

These projects expanded Jim's knowledge of various film techniques, leading to greater innovations with the Muppets.

In the mid-1960s, Joan Ganz Cooney, a public television producer, began work on *Sesame Street*, an educational children's television show that would premiere in 1969. Based on Jim's success in creating short, funny puppet pieces, Cooney asked him to create a family of characters to populate *Sesame Street*. These included Ernie and Bert, Oscar the Grouch, Grover, Cookie Monster, and of course the 8 foot, 2 inch Big Bird. Working with Children's Television Workshop (recently renamed Sesame Workshop) on *Sesame Street* also gave Jim Henson the opportunity to continue his experiments with film techniques. With his talented team, Jim produced over two dozen live action and animated shorts to teach children how to count, learn the alphabet and other educational concepts.

*Sesame Street* illustrated the Muppets' appeal to children, but Jim's larger goal was to entertain a wider family audience. After years of promoting the idea for *The Muppet Show*, Jim finally received backing from London-based television producer, Lord Lew Grade. Production began in 1975 at Grade's ATV Studios. There, such unforgettable characters as Miss Piggy and Fozzie Bear, performed by Frank Oz; Gonzo the Great, performed by Dave Goelz; Scooter, performed by Richard Hunt; Lew Zealand, performed by Jerry Nelson; and Rizzo the Rat, performed by Steve Whitmire, were born. Hosted by Kermit the Frog and serenaded by Doctor Teeth and the Electric Mayhem, the Muppets, along with weekly guest stars, demonstrated the breadth of Jim Henson's humor and imagination. *The Muppet Show* family of characters has starred in six feature films: *The Muppet Movie*, *The Great Muppet Caper*, *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, *Muppet Treasure Island* and most recently *Muppets From Space*.

In addition to the Muppet movies, during the 1980s, Jim Henson also brought two fantasy films to the big screen. *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*, both inspired by the artwork of British illustrator Brian Froud, challenged Jim to develop elaborate three-dimensional characters with advanced movement abilities. *The Dark Crystal* was five years in development, using scores of

designers, builders, technicians, and performers from across the globe. Jim Henson's compelling story and Brian Froud's imaginative vision produced a phenomenal showcase of puppetry and animatronics. Jim Henson and Brian Froud collaborated again on the feature film, *Labyrinth*, produced by George Lucas and starring David Bowie. Production of *Labyrinth* provided Jim Henson another opportunity to make technological advancements in the field of animatronics.

The extensive multi-talented staff that worked on these two films formed the basis for what is now known as Jim Henson's Creature Shop™. Founded in 1979, the shop continues to be one of the premiere creature building workshops in the entertainment industry in its original London office as well as the Los Angeles office. To this day, the award-winning animatronic work produced by Jim Henson's Creature Shop™ sets industry standards while bringing previously unseen worlds to life.

Jim Henson continued throughout the 1980's to also create memorable television specials and television series such as *Fraggle Rock*, *Jim Henson's Muppet Babies*, *Jim Henson's The Storyteller*, and *Jim Henson's Greek Myths*. *Fraggle Rock's* Fraggles, Gorgs and Doozers sang songs celebrating friendship, brotherhood and peace. *Jim Henson's Muppet Babies* was awarded four consecutive Emmys for "Outstanding Animated Program". *Jim Henson's The Storyteller* was an original series conceived by Jim Henson to convey the metaphoric richness of ancient stories. All of the episodes were based on authentic folk tales, with several written by Academy Award-winning writer/director Anthony Minghella. With a strong literary research team in combination with the magical visual effects and animatronics produced by Jim Henson's Creature Shop™, *Jim Henson's The Storyteller* and *Jim Henson's Greek Myths* are rare combinations of ancient tradition and modern technological artistry.

We continue to marvel at Jim Henson's characters on television, in feature films and in Jim's last project, the special installation of *MuppetVision 3\*D*, a short film attraction he directed for a custom-made theater at Disney/MGM Studios theme park at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida.

On May 16, 1990, after a brief illness, Jim Henson died in New York City, but his prolific work continues to entertain a global audience through The Jim Henson Company. Jim Henson had the keen ability of drawing together a strong team of performers, artists, and collaborators who shared his vision and creativity. The Jim Henson Company continues to dedicate itself to continuing the work that Jim had so successfully accomplished during his lifetime.

As a brilliant innovator, Jim Henson sought to stretch the capabilities of advancing technology. As a preeminent popular artist, he contributed to the diverse visual vocabulary of the twentieth century. And as a performing genius, he brought delight and wonder to international audiences.

## JAY HALL CARPENTER

A professional sculptor for a quarter century, Jay Hall Carpenter earned his reputation during 20 years as sculptor for the Washington National Cathedral. He created the original carver's models for over 500 sculptures that adorn the gothic, limestone building. These sculptures include saints, angels, grotesques, and gargoyles. Many American churches contain his work, as do the State Department, the Smithsonian, Canterbury Cathedral, and the New England Medical Center. Other clients include West Point Military Academy, the Washington Theater Awards, and the State of Maryland.

Carpenter was elected into the National Sculpture Society before the age of thirty and has won numerous national awards for his sculptures. Recently Carpenter won the competition to create an eight-foot bronze sculpture of Maryland State Comptroller Louis Goldstein for the state capital in Annapolis. He was commissioned by the University of Maryland Class of 1998 to create a life-size bronze and granite sculpture of Jim Henson and Kermit the Frog for the University, where Henson was a student in the 1950's.

After a national search for sculptors, Saint Anne's Catholic Community in Barrington, IL commissioned Carpenter to create its twelve-stature program, Community of Saints and Holy People. These powerful, near-life-size interpretations of historic and modern saints adorn a dramatic new worship space. Carpenter's education includes study at Pratt Institute and The Catholic University of America. He has served as sculptor's assistant to Master Sculptor Frederick E. Hart, working on Hart's major projects for the Washington National Cathedral, and the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, DC. Carpenter has also served as Sculptor-in-Residence at the Washington Cathedral, Wesley Theological Seminary, and The Catholic University of America, and has taught at the Art League School in Alexandria, VA, and Montgomery College in Rockville, MD. His sculptures and drawings are exhibited in fine art galleries throughout the United States.

## WILLARD SCOTT

Willard Scott is a great advocate of honoring centenarians. He wishes happy birthday to over-100-year-olds each Tuesday and Thursday mornings on "Today." In addition, he substitutes for Al Roker as weather reporter. Scott has anchored coverage of Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade since 1987, and for more than 30 years, he has lighted the national Christmas tree in Washington, DC. Scott has made numerous appearances throughout the country, and he was also the first Ronald McDonald.

He began his career with NBC as a page at the Washington station in 1950. At that time he was also a weekend disk jockey for Washington radio station WINX. He joined WOL Radio that same year and, with Ed Walker, formed The Joy Boys broadcast team, moving in 1953 to WRC-AM, the NBC radio station in Washington, DC, and remaining there until 1972. They broadcast from WWDC, Washington, from 1972 to 1974. His weather reports were broadcast on WRC-AM from 1956 until 1972.

Scott has distinguished himself with his public-service efforts. He has been named both Distinguished Virginian by the Virginia Association of Broadcasters (1990) and Washingtonian of the Year by Washingtonian magazine (1979). He also received the Great American Award from the Bards of Bohemia in New Orleans (1990) and was named Humanitarian in Residence by the National Society of Fund Raisers (1985). In 1985 he was recognized by President Ronald Reagan with the Private Sector Award for Public Service.

The author of four books, Scott is a graduate of American University in Washington, DC, with a B.A. in philosophy and religion. He is married to the former Mary Dwyer, and they are the parents of two daughters, Mary and Sally. Scott was born March 7, 1934, in Alexandria, VA.

## **Great ideas require Dedication, Vision and Creativity.**

### **The Classes of 1994, 1998 and 1999 make today's dedication possible.**

Like many generations of Terps before them, in the Fall of 1997, the University of Maryland Senior Council began discussion of their class gift. The Class of 1998 wanted to honor fellow Terp and famous Maryland alumnus Jim Henson, leave a visible legacy on campus, and through their gift express their pride in and dedication to the University. The Class of 1998 was well aware of the fact that Jim Henson '60, beloved puppeteer and creator of the Muppets, first introduced Kermit to the world while a freshman at the University of Maryland. Through their vision, creativity and commitment to Jim Henson, his beloved creation Kermit, and the Senior Class of 1998, the concept of this sculpture was born. The Class began discussions with Jane Henson '55, who offered her assistance and participation in the process of commissioning the sculpture.

As the concept came together, the Class of 1999 added their assistance to the project and through their generous gifts have made the surrounding gardens possible. In addition, the Class of 1994 voted to support this project and added their class gift funds to this wonderful project. Jim Henson left the world a better place than when he found it. The Classes of 1994, 1998 and 1999 are proud to have honored his achievements.

### **The Colours Performing Arts Program**

The Colours program is based at The Jim Henson School of Arts, Media and Communications, Northwestern High School, which is part of Region V in Prince George's County Public Schools. Students range from 5th grade through 12th grade. The troupe is comprised of students representing 15 different schools and 10 different communities. The student-performers are required to maintain honor roll, develop leadership skills, and operate as an ensemble in order to be in Colours. Colours is about making a positive difference in the lives of the performers and the audience.

