Our mission is to maintain a tranquil and ecologically sound Asian research center and library to promote scholarship through research activity and conferences that honor the legacy of Elling O. Eide.
Greetings, friends of The Elling Eide Center! Welcome to the second edition of The Elling Eide Center’s newsletter. As we approach the 10th anniversary of Elling Oliver Eide’s passing in January, we look back fondly on our accomplishments at the Center. After an unprecedented year of worldwide trials and tribulations, we are looking forward to a year of renewal and hope in 2022. We appreciate your continued support of the Eide Center.

The Elling Eide Center first opened its doors in 2016 in memory of Elling Oliver Eide, a well-known scholar and visionary preservationist. The Center dedicates its work to the study of classical Chinese literature and art. It provides a unique, scholarly role in its coastal Florida location, offering students the opportunity to learn about different cultures and civilizations.

This year, we enter a new chapter for the Center and continue to navigate and evolve our resources following the pandemic. For the past year, we put many of our programs on hold, but we are now looking forward to bringing programming and other events back to the public. We are very excited to announce that we have recently welcomed a new team member to our staff, who you will read about within this newsletter.

Recently, we had the honor of hosting George Aaron Broadwell, Elling Eide Professor of Anthropology at the University of Florida. He shared his knowledge of Native American culture and linguistics specific to the Florida region. Inviting him to the center provided our team with the opportunity to see what Elling’s endowment to the University of Florida has meant to preserve native culture.

The Elling Eide Center hosts scholars from all over the world to lecture and utilize the center for research. This season we will have a number of presentations for the community and continue to offer outdoor tours. We have spent the last year preserving and protecting the unique artwork and treasures of the center while sharing our unique assets with visitors.

This new year brings many new and exciting opportunities for the Center, including a season of new exhibits and programs. As the anniversary of Elling’s 10-year passing nears, I think he would be very proud of the progress we have made with the Center in honor of his legacy.

Warm Regards,

Harold Mitchell
President and CEO
MEET OUR TALENTED TEAM

None of our important work could be accomplished without the dedicated staff at The Elling Eide Center.

From left to right: The Elling Eide Center Team members, including: First row - Hannah Liu, Librarian; Georgia Hudson, Operations Director; Second Row - David Moulton, Maintenance and Grounds; Dr. Matthew Wells, Director of Research; Harold Mitchell, President and CEO; and Shawn Moulton, Maintenance and Grounds.

THE LEGACY OF ELLING O. EIDE

It was obvious at a very early age that Elling was gifted, and teachers from his grade school would often comment on his abilities and interests. Elling might say it was because of his Bohemian upbringing: growing up on an isolated Sarasota homesite while his parents cared for his aging maternal grandfather. While at Sarasota High School, he was class president and voted “Most Likely To Succeed”. When his grandfather made his annual trip north to live with his son from late spring to fall, Elling and his parents would seize the opportunity to travel the world.

In 1953, Elling was off to Harvard, and in 1957 he graduated summa cum laude with a degree in Far Eastern Language. He served on the staff of the Harvard Lampoon and was a member of the Spee Club. He obtained his master’s degree from Harvard in 1958, then enlisted in the United States Marine Corp. Elling was stationed in Japan in 1960 to 1961 and returned to Harvard in 1961 to 1967 as a Harvard Junior Fellow. Elling then went to live in Taiwan to study and perfect his Chinese language skills.

While he was an Assistant professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Illinois, it became necessary for him to return to Sarasota to care for his aging parents. Although he gave up his teaching career, he continued his independent research and studies, contributing many articles to Asian Studies Journals such as his well known “On Li Po”, which was published in 1973 in the symposium volume, Perspectives on the T’ang. Over the years, Elling’s work inspired many.

Over time, Elling’s personal library collection grew in reputation throughout the academic community. It has been suggested the Eide Library is the largest, most complete specialized privately owned library. Elling had hoped that one day a research center of Asian Studies would be located on his land in Sarasota. Unfortunately, Elling passed away before that vision became a reality. Four years after his passing in 2012, The Elling Eide Center opened.

The Center emphasizes Chinese Literature, history, religion, art and inner Asian Studies. The library contains an impressive collection of rare and valuable books collected by Elling, and many works are in Chinese, Japanese, German, French and Russian.

Elling was also a tireless supporter and philanthropist of Chinese studies and native languages of the U.S. One such gift was to endow a professorship in native language to the University of Florida. He was a lifelong member of T’ang Studies Society and a contributor to the society’s journal and programs.

Elling will always be remembered as an inquisitive researcher, excellent scholar and true original. His memory and inspiration will remain everlasting with his students and admirers, and although he passed away on January 2, 2012, his legacy will live long into the future.

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The Elling Eide Center has long been known as a private research library and preserve in Sarasota, Florida, but what many people may not realize is that the historic grounds are also open to the public to tour. Norman Burr is a docent with the center who focuses on providing tours of the grounds in hopes of educating the community about the property’s history, as well as the more than 450 plant species found within the preserve.

“This truly is a unique estate that I hope is on the way of being preserved for ongoing generations,” said Norman. Norman is a native of western New York and then lived in California for a number of years. He has an extensive background as a geophysicist. Prior to joining The Elling Eide Center in early 2021, Norman spent time working in the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and also taught botany at Santa Barbara City College. He also served as a docent with Lotusland, a botanical garden in Santa Barbara.

He had previously heard about The Elling Eide Center, but had never had the chance to explore it until he made his move to Florida. Given his interest in botany, Norman wanted to delve into the lush property himself, so he applied for a volunteer position at the center.

Bringing over 20 years of experience in the botanical industry, Norman is truly seen as the resident storyteller of The Elling Eide Center. Not only does he share his knowledge of the plants and ferns that the property boasts, he also enjoys speaking about the science of the greenery on the property.
Last spring, The Elling Eide Center hosted its first arboretum and grounds tours with Norman. The tours range from 60 - 90 minutes and are open to the public. They require reservations in advance of the day and time scheduled. During these tours, Norman discusses a variety of the plants featured within the center and bestows much of his own knowledge to those that join him for his tours. One species featured on the ground, the Ylang Ylang tree, originates in Southeast Asia and is grown on plantations for its flowers. Norman says that “the flowers are processed to obtain the essential oils or scents from them to create many perfumes — one famous one being Chanel N°5.”

Norman also speaks about the inhabitants of the property during his tours in addition to the exotic plants that were planted by Elling O. Eide, his mother, father and grandfather from the mid-1930s and on.

“People’s reactions to the property range from excitement to often surprise over the sheer amount of species that we have on the property today,” said Norman. “Even other botanists have been shocked by the amount of material that we have here. One of my favorite things to do is to put the world into perspective through these plant species during these tours.”
The Elling Eide Center attracts a diverse array of both workers and visitors annually. Dr. Matthew Wells, director of research at The Elling Eide Center, who started with the center last summer, brings a unique background and 20 years of experience in Asian studies to his position. Dr. Wells is responsible for The Elling Eide Center's programming and is working to reinvigorate its schedule to achieve its pre-pandemic levels. He also helps his colleagues in Asian studies, organizes professional meetings, prepares for conferences, plans speaker series and works to raise the profile of The Elling Eide Center both in the academic world and in the local community.

Dr. Wells also brings in researchers whose work extends beyond China. For example, The Elling Eide Center recently welcomed George Aaron Broadwell, a professor of Anthropology at the University of Florida, to discuss Native American linguistics and languages from the Gulf Coast region.

“I hope to further increase the profile of The Elling Eide Center so that it becomes a destination for scholars while also connecting it to Sarasota and surrounding communities,” said Dr. Wells.

Dr. Wells is originally from California, but attended the University of Washington in Seattle, graduating with a bachelor's degree in history. While in college, he studied French and Chinese. He went on to obtain a doctorate in Chinese from the University of Oregon, specializing in the field of early Chinese culture. He then went on to teach in Oregon and Kentucky before moving to Florida to accept the position with The Elling Eide Center in July 2021.

“I knew about Elling Eide through the articles he had written, and I heard about the Center through colleagues who teach in the area and are familiar with Elling’s collection,” said Dr. Wells. “When the job opened, I thought it would be a fantastic opportunity to use my
experience, live in a beautiful area and work with material that is a lifelong passion for me.”

Dr. Wells brings a unique perspective on education to The Elling Eide Center. His research focuses on religious prose, more specifically, biographies and autobiographies that circulated within religious communities. Dr. Wells enjoys learning about these different religious perspectives, even from his colleagues’ point of view, as it helps to expand his viewpoints. He spent three years in mainland China for language training, research and teaching, and lived in Taiwan to conduct research. He has also lived in Europe and throughout the United States.

“I’ve lived in Asia, Europe and all over the United States, so it’s always just so amazing to come to a new place to learn and start
Why did you visit the Elling Eide Center?
I learned about The Elling Eide Center from the Eide Library Director, whom I met at a Southeast Early China Roundtable meeting in fall of 2018. I was aware the Eide Center had a visiting scholar program, and soon thereafter I reached out to ask if I could do a winter stay. My visit to the Center was fueled by manifold interests. On one hand, I wanted to take advantage of the wonderful research library and the Center’s installations. At that time, I was finishing my book manuscript and starting new research on Wang Bi’s hermeneutics, so I needed a nice, quiet space with plenty of resources. On the other hand, since I was teaching at Gettysburg, I could only travel for a research stay during the winter break, and I didn’t want to leave my family behind for the holidays. The Eide Center was very accommodating in both respects, offering a guest room for all three of us and opening the library throughout the winter break. visit the place where he penned all those inspiring articles and rendered beautiful translations of Li Bai’s poetry.

What did you learn from your visit?
I was able to complete my book manuscript, which has now been published (Adapting. A Chinese Philosophy of Action, OUP 2021), and to make good progress in my new research, resulting in a chapter that will soon appear in a collective volume under the title “Wang Bi and the Hermeneutics of Actualization.”

What was the best part of your experience?
There are two things I’d like to remark in regards to what made my experience particularly positive. First, Harold Mitchell and his wife were extremely welcoming of me and my family, and we quickly developed a friendship that continues to this day. Second, knowing that my partner and daughter were enjoying the nice weather and beautiful beaches in Sarasota (as opposed to being housebound due to the cold winter in Gettysburg) while I worked on my research made all the difference. And I enjoyed the beach and the natural parks too! The research stay felt like a vacation with family and friends, and I still got my work done.

What surprised you most about your visit to the Center?
I had read the description of the Center on the website, but it doesn’t compare to experiencing it in person. The biodiversity is simply awe-inspiring. I found the magnificence of nature surrounding me to have both a calming and energizing effect. It helped me focus on my writing with a sense of peaceful and pleasant fulfilment rather than struggle.
ELLING EIDE BOASTS RARE MANUSCRIPT AMONG MORE THAN 114 VOLUMES RELATED TO MISHIMA WITHIN THE RESEARCH LIBRARY

The research library at The Elling Eide Center boasts an impressive number of inscriptions and original manuscripts. The research library itself contains more than 60,000 volumes that cover every period of Chinese and Asian history from ancient times to the modern era. It also contains a large number of scholarly journals, including more than 300 titles from around the world. Approximately 114 books and 34 articles in the research library are either written by acclaimed author Yukio Mishima or are about his life and work.

One of the manuscripts in the research library is an original and rare Mishima manuscript. Mishima is widely recognized as one of the most important authors of postwar Japanese literature. He was nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature three times and was a finalist in 1968.

The manuscript itself is a short novel in eleven chapters written by Mishima. Its title roughly translated into English is The Poet’s Journey. It was published in 1950 as part of the novella, Sunday. The team at The Elling Eide Center is currently working on finding a Japanese translator to interpret the entire text.

Elling Eide felt a strong connection to Mishima as he lived in Japan at the height of the author’s critical and popular success. Mishima was born in 1925 and died by suicide in 1970. Eide entered the U.S. Marine Corps in 1959. He served primarily in Japan from 1959 to 1962, attaining the rank of lieutenant. Within this time frame, Eide and Mishima both resided in Japan, which may or may not have sparked Eide’s interest in the acclaimed author.

The research library believes that the manuscript was personally purchased by Eide in Chiyoda City, Tokyo, within the district of Jimbocho. This district is famous for its antiques, used bookstores and publishing houses. Eide created a hard copy of the manuscript in 1970 to allow people to hold and see the book in person.

While the research library has not yet determined when the original manuscript was written, the team hopes to understand more about the origin of the manuscript once they are finished gathering more information.

The research library is currently trying to determine exactly when Eide purchased the manuscript and whether he informed his friends about this rare acquisition. They hope to better understand why Eide felt drawn to Mishima and if the manuscript inspired his own poetry writing.
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