The Egyptian exhibit at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center includes this mummy of a girl believed to be about 7 years old. The name on the coffin in the foreground identifies her as Ta-Sheret-Min, which means "beloved daughter of the god Min."

**Tomb tours**

Guided tours of the Louisiana Arts and Science Center's Egyptian Gallery are given between 10 a.m. and noon on Tuesdays through Fridays to school groups who make reservations during October through April. During these months, the gallery is open to the general public on Tuesday through Friday afternoons and on Saturdays and Sundays. The museum is closed on Mondays. The museum's hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is $3 for patrons 2 through 12 years of age; $4 for those 13 years older; and $3 for senior citizens and university students. Admission on the first Sunday of each month is free.

For more information, call 225-344-5272. The museum is located at 100 River Road.

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**Mummy Dearest**

LASC mummies are a BR tradition

By DANNY HEITMAN

Caitlin O'Ceallaigh-Walker wasn't surprised when a reporter showed up at her workplace in search of a Halloween story. As a tour guide at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center's mummy exhibit, she's grown accustomed to her mummies' popular reputation as creatures of horror. It's an image that O'Ceallaigh-Walker spends a lot of time trying to dispel, though she realizes that she's waging an uphill battle.

"I have to deprogram them," O'Ceallaigh-Walker said of the youngsters who visit the museum. "I have to say, 'Mummies don't ever kill you. Mummies don't get up and walk.' I still had one little girl who said, 'Yes, they do. I saw it in a movie.' Oh, well. You can't argue with Hollywood."

LASC's mummy collection began in 1964, when a now-defunct Philadelphia museum agreed to donate a mummy to some Baton Rouge civic activists who were developing the forerunner of the present arts and science center. Former Baton Rougean Walt Dameron Satz, then living in California, learned about attempts to develop the Baton Rouge museum from her close friend, the late Shelby Taylor. Taylor and several other volunteers, including her husband, the late B.B. Taylor Jr., were hard pressed to find exhibits for their fledgling museum. Satz, who had lived for a time in Philadelphia and worked in the same complex with one of its city museums, had an idea.

"A light went off," Satz recalled. "I called David Marder, the curator of..."
This brass replica figure of Tutankhamon, who was crowned king as a boy of 8 or 9 years, is part of the Egyptian exhibit at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center. The exhibit is popular with children.

"That was not the custom."

To affirm the mummy's identity in the afterlife, "it was important that they place a living face mask on the mummy," O'Ceallaigh-Walker said. "The person's name was also written on the coffin."

Sadly, the adult LASC mummy's inscribed coffin and mask were absent when it was acquired for the museum. Records indicate that the mummy was recovered around 1921 by the Egyptian Exploration Fund, an effort financed by private individuals and corporate donors.

The child mummy on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art was acquired by the New York museum in 1900, but its date of excavation is unclear. Its coffin, which is also on display at LASC, identifies the child as Ti-Shetet-Min, which means "beloved daughter of the god Min."

As the excavation of Egyptian antiquities gained publicity, many myths about Egyptian culture also entered the popular life, including the idea that tombs were carved.

"A tomb was supposed to be a holy temple. No unclean person — no for- eigner — was supposed to enter," said O'Ceallaigh-Walker.

"All was prepared as a curse, and Hollywood got carried away with it," said O'Ceallaigh-Walker in a seminar.

"In truth, Egyptian religious belief forbade the devout from making contact with the dead," she said.

"As for the King Tut curse, which you're going to ask about, it's not true," said O'Ceallaigh-Walker.

"As mummies go, the 2,300-year-old corpse at the LASC is relative youngsters."

"These aren't old mummies," O'Ceallaigh-Walker said. "There's one in the British Museum that's about 5,000 years old."

"The mummies in LASCs exhibit hail from the subset of ancient Egyptian culture, a period presided over by the Pharaohs, who were Greek."

"Some people don't even consider this dynasty to be part of Egyptian history," said O'Ceallaigh-Walker.

"As ancient Egyptian culture faded out, mummies lost their most obvious champions. Strangely, the use of unheated mummies as a natural resource became routine. Scores of excavated mummies were ground into fertilizer or burned as fuel. In Victorian times, ground mummies were used as a medicine," O'Ceallaigh-Walker said.

"In Double Fold," a recent book that touches on the preservation of period newspaper editions, author Nick Bilton suggests that the harvested linen bindings of excavated mummies may have been used in making 19th-century newspapers.

In a new book called "Shrinking The Cat," author Sue Hobbell writes that during the late 1800s, boatloads of excavated cat mummies were used as ballast in ships headed from Egypt to England, then ground into fertilizer once they reached port.

O'Ceallaigh-Walker answers questions from school children visiting the Egyptian exhibit at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center. The exhibit originated in 1964, when a now-defunct Philadelphia museum donated a mummy to the forunner of the LASC.