
The Memphis Liberty Bell is back

By Christopher Conley

Thursday, July 30, 2009

The 3,000-pound Memphis Liberty Bell returned home Wednesday following a brief stay in Tunica, resolving an issue that pitted Mid-South Fair officials and citizens who claimed ownership.

The return of the bell, which stood for more than 30 years at Libertyland, resolved one controversy but left another open-ended: what to do with a time capsule that accompanied it.

"Let freedom ring," proclaimed Shelby County Commissioner Steve Mulroy at a brief ceremony at the Mid-South Fairgrounds, where the bell was put in a warehouse behind fair offices Wednesday afternoon. Mulroy, with grass-roots support, championed the cause of returning the Memphis Liberty Bell.

Jim Rout, general manager of the Mid-South Fair, agreed last week to turn the bell over to the Memphis Park Services for placement at a yet-undetermined location, possibly the Memphis Pink Palace Museum or the Benjamin Hooks Central Library.

"Wherever it ends up, it should be available for all Memphians to view," Mulroy said.

The bell was removed this spring as the Mid-South Fair packed up its belongings to head for an eventual home in Tunica.

Members of the Save Libertyland organization and Boy Scout volunteer Doyle Silliman sought the Bell's return.

Silliman said that hundreds of Boy Scouts and elementary school students bought \$1 shares in the Bell when it was first introduced at the 1976 Bicentennial, so they are the real owners.

Cindy Childress, president of the board of directors of the Mid-South Fair, said the time capsule is being kept in the same warehouse as the bell and that the issues about where to keep it and whether to open it will be revisited in October, after the Mid-South Fair.

7/30/2009

The Memphis Liberty Bell is back :...

"The time capsule is being secured, and it will be addressed after Oct. 4," she said.

The situation with the time capsule "is still unresolved," said Mulroy.

"I hope that we have a chance to take part in the dialogue. ... It should be a joint decision," he said.

"We're happy to have a win, but we are not stopping by any means," said Sarah Stramel, a Libertyland advocate.

-- *Chris Conley: 529-2595*



© 2009 Scripps New spaper Group — Online