

Museum Stories that Shape Us: A place where Guam's story grows

By Kelly Marsh-Taitano
For Pacific Daily News

The story of the museum begins decades ago, nearly 100 years in fact.

The first museums were small buildings at Plaza de España, with most of its years at one of Guam's oldest buildings, the Garden House.

Within those spaces, the early care of CHamoru collections was shaped by Joaquin T. Aguon, the first CHamoru curator, and Agueda I. Johnston, a long-time advocate who helped develop the museum, rebuild it after the war, and oversee the Ancient CHamoru collections. Their work began much of the journey of gathering, caring for and sharing ancestral and historical heritage with the community.

There is still much to learn about those early collections. How large were they and what did they consist of exactly? Which objects did they choose to tell the story of i Manaotåomo'na, the People of Before?

And if they could walk through the museum today, what would they think? Would there be pieces they marvel at and others they fondly recognize as their generation's part of the island's journey? Would there be a particular aspect of the culture or a village whose artifacts they would most want to see?

In recent years, the museum has taken an important step forward with the addition of its cultural repository and specialized staff. This was not a new idea.

Since the 1980s, community members and organizations, including the Guam Historic Resources Division and Guam's former historical society, advocated for a museum complex in Hagåtña that included a dedicated repository. They saw the need to create a special place to care for all the artifacts and other materials that may not be



COURTESY OF GUAM MUSEUM
Outside the pre-World War II Guam Museum building, young women pause to read the sign for a large latte that once stood there.

on display but may be in the future.

Today, that vision is a reality. Through sustained community advocacy, the museum now houses, curates and studies far more materials than ever before.

What once may have been a few hundred items cared for by Aguon, Johnston and others has grown into a collection of hundreds of thousands of pieces of ancestral and historical heritage, along with records that help tell their stories.

Within these collections are objects that reflect the ingenuity of CHamoru ancestors across thousands of years as they continuously refined pottery, fishhooks,

lusong (mortars), stone tools such as chisels, knives, and adzes, shell graters and scrapers, shell beads, åcho' atupat (slingstones) and more. Together, these speak to lives of constant learning, testing and refinement.

As the collections grow, so, too, does the opportunity to share them. More heritage is being examined, interpreted and brought into view through exhibits, talks and programs, some for the first time, which we will explore in future articles.

In this, the museum continues the work envisioned early on. It is not only a place where objects are displayed but a place where knowledge is created, chal-



Marsh-Taitano



COURTESY OF GUAM MUSEUM
Guam Museum curator Michael Lujan Bevacqua, PhD, reflects, "Many who grew up in Guam during these postwar years remember visiting the small, but quaint Garden House version of the Guam Museum and joining a tour of the space with Mrs. Glenn," who began working at the museum in 1955.



COURTESY OF GUAM MUSEUM
After World War II, the Garden House at Plaza de España served as the Guam Museum for numerous years, with the small latte in its garden still standing today.

lenged and carried forward.

Aguon, Johnston, and those who worked alongside them would likely be amazed at the breadth of what is now cared for, at how much we have learned from their ancestors, and proud that these stories continue to be shared in more ways than ever before.

Kelly Marsh-Taitano is a curator at the Guam Museum, where she leads the Cultural Anthropology and History Unit. At the University of Guam, she has taught Guam History and Anthropology and co-led courses with cultural practitioners on latte quarrying and carving. She served as senator in the 35th Guam Legislature.



GUAM BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR PHARMACY REGULAR BOARD MEETING Thursday, May 21, 2026 at 7:30 A.M.

194 Hernan Cortez Ave. Terlaje Professional Bldg, Suite 209 Hagatna, Guam 96910

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84950038559?pwd=cQXqvQqHUY1qfscidCaHgwuYsUJTx.B.1>

Meeting ID: 849 5003 8559
Passcode: 421215

Meeting Agenda:

- I. Call to order:
 - (a) Roll Call
 - (b) Confirmation of Public Notice
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Review & Approval of Minutes: April 30, 2026
- IV. HPL Administrator's Report
- V. Chairperson's Report
- VI. Complaint(s):
 - (a) GBEP CO-16-01
 - (b) GBEP-CO-24-02
- VII. Old Business:
 - (a) 2025 Renewals
 - (b) ITC Pharmacy II – Relocation and Request for Inspection
- VIII. New Business:
 - (a) Pharmacist by Endorsement
 - (b) Pharmacy Intern
 - (c) Collaborative Practice Agreement
- IX. Next Board Meeting
 - (a) The next Guam Board of Examiners for Pharmacy Regular Session Meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2026 at 7:30 a.m.
- X. Adjournment:

To view the names of the applicants being considered go to <https://guamhpl.org/gbep>
LIVE Streaming link https://go.opengovguam.com/meetings_list/gbep
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