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**THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES DEATH OF JOEL N. BLOOM**  
**PAST DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT; MUSEUM PIONEER**

**Philadelphia, PA – September 24, 2008** – Joel N. Bloom, past Director and President of the Science Museum and Fels Planetarium of The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and one of the foremost museum directors in the world, has died. He passed away Tuesday, September 23 after a long illness at St. Barnabas Hospital in Livingston, New Jersey, said his daughter, Margo. He was 83.

Director and President of the Science Museum from 1969 until he retired in 1990, Bloom molded the Institute into a world-class museum during his tenure. Bloom's contributions to the local, national and international museum communities were legendary. He co-authored the influential *Museums for a New Century: A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century* in 1984. He was a past president of the American Association of Museums (AAM) – the first science museum president to serve in that capacity; chairman of the U.S. National Committee of the International Council of Museums; and founding president of the Association of Science-Technology Centers and recipient of its highest honor – the Fellow Membership Award.

*“Joel was truly a legend in the museum community,”* said Dr. Dennis Wint, current president and CEO of The Franklin Institute. *“I deeply appreciated his warmth, friendship and counsel when I joined this institution of which he had been such an important part. His contributions are immeasurable, and his commitment to taking the resources of interactivity and science outside the museum walls transformed the mission of science museums throughout the world.”*

Says Nancy Kolb, President and CEO of Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum, *“It is hard to imagine the museum world without the presence and influence of Joel Bloom. Always an innovator and leader, Joel always took the time to reach back to ‘newbies’ in the field and serve as a personal and*

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*Page Two*

*professional mentor. He was particularly supportive of women leaders at a time when it was difficult for us to move forward. At critical moments in all of our careers, we would receive a “Joel gram” post card full of humor and encouragement. Joel’s legacy at The Franklin is well-documented, but it is his legacy of people who have gone on to be leaders in their chosen fields that is the most lasting.”*

Bloom was born and educated in New York City, earned his bachelor’s degree at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, and his master’s from Columbia University. In 1948, he married the late Paula Bloom, and moved to Israel, where he worked for the Israeli defense ministry. In 1958, Bloom joined the Institute as director of the systems science division of the Franklin Institute Research Laboratories. In 1968, he was asked to evaluate the science museum and make recommendations for its improvement – a year later, he was named director to implement his plan.

He soon made his mark with new exhibits, created by in-house designers; Day-Glo signs that brightened up the museum’s hallways; and “do-its” – hands-on science experiments that were printed on packages of Mrs. Paul’s fish sticks and Tastykakes pastries. His largest addition to the museum’s collection was a full-sized Boeing 707 that, for 13 years, delighted millions of visitors.

During the 1980s, Bloom led two ambitious capital campaigns to refurbish the museum’s facilities and exhibits, the first with Richard T. Nalle, Jr. and George E. Bartol III, the second with Charles L. Andes. His tenure culminated in 1990 with the completion of the Tuttleman Omniverse Theater and the Mandell Futures Center.

Bloom recognized the potential for science museums to make real contributions to public science education, and leveraged his position at The Franklin and in professional organizations to change the role of science museums. Under his leadership, the Museum launched the most extensive museum-school partnership in the nation, training teachers and placing hands-on science kits first in Philadelphia’s public and diocesan elementary schools, then elsewhere in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This influential effort pioneered the involvement of museums in supporting school improvement efforts in science nationally.

Throughout his career, Bloom was deeply involved in Philadelphia’s cultural community as well as in national and international circles. In Philadelphia, he served on the Mayor’s Cultural Advisory Commission as president of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance.

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*Page Three*

Upon his retirement from The Franklin Institute in 1990, the Philadelphia Inquirer credited him with taking the lead in “transforming The Franklin Institute over the last two decades from a dusty bin of outmoded exhibits into what is probably the most advanced science museum in the world.” He was named an Honorary Member of the Board of Trustees in 1996 in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to The Franklin Institute. In 2002, The Franklin dedicated its newly renovated observatory as the Joel N. Bloom Observatory in his honor.

Bloom continued to be active for many years within the museum and educational communities, consulting for the Newseum, Scholastic, Inc. and many others. In 1993, he was honored with the prestigious Award for Distinguished Service to Museums from the American Association of Museums. In 2005, he was also included in the Centennial Honor Roll of 100 of America's museum champions who have worked to innovate, improve and expand museums in the US over the last 100 years by AAM.

He is survived by his three children, Margo, Ron and Dan; a brother, Gabriel and six grandchildren. His wife Paula passed away in 2006.

Relatives and friends are invited to services Friday September 26, 2008 at 1:00 PM at Joseph Levine & Sons, North Broad Street above 71st Avenue. Interment Mt. Sharon cemetery. Shiva will be observed at the late residence following the interment through Friday evening. Saturday evening and Sunday at the residence of Margo Bloom and Mark A. Seal. Monday morning at the home of Dan Bloom and Naomi Weinstein. The family respectfully requests that contributions in his memory be made to American Technion Society or to the National Parkinson Foundation.

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