Transcript

00:00:00 Nicole Marshall

Thank you all so much for listening with us through our very first season of Foodborne. As you know, this first season has been a collaboration with our friends at the International Outbreak Museum in Portland, Oregon. Hillary Booth is the President of the Board of the Outbreak Museum and an Epidemiologist with the Washington State Department of Health. As I wrap up to our final outbreak episode, we sat down with Hillary to chat with her about the history of the museum and how this unique resource came to be.

00:00:25 Hillary Booth

So the outbreak museum it wasn't international when it first started. That took a little while, but the outbreak museum first started around 1993 in the office of Dr. William Bill Keene, the late great epidemiologist at the Oregon Public Health Division. He figured out early on that outbreaks were a really important part of what we do as applied infectious disease epidemiologists and that it's important that we come up with a way to showcase the different ways that we've figured out that people have been getting sick from different types of foods.

00:01:00 Hillary Booth

There's things in their animals. There's all kinds of different environmental ways that people have made themselves sick, and this museum was Bill's idea of enshrining the successes and the ways that we were learning about how to better figure out what is causing these outbreaks and stop them. So that happened, started, we think, about 1993, is about when we think his first exhibit entered the museum. Though there are some exhibits that date back to the 70s.

00:01:22 Nicole Marshall

If you're wondering, like us, where the pieces displayed in the outbreak museum came from, Hillary had an answer for that too.

00:01:30 Hillary Booth

So originally, Bill was kind of the main exhibit submitter, but as people caught on to what he was doing and really liked the idea, they started sending him exhibits of their own from their own investigations in different states, and eventually different countries to talk about the different vehicles, outbreak vehicles that have been discovered or a classic

situation where we did a very good job and people could learn from the efficiency of the outbreak investigation.

00:01:56 Hillary Booth

But anything was accepted if it was part of an outbreak; it could be part of the museum. Eventually, and this was in Bill Keene's office the whole time from 1993, and it actually still remains there now, though he is no longer with us. It is in use at the Oregon Public Health Division as an outbreak museum today.

00:02:17 Hillary Booth

And exhibits are still being added in fact, anyone who has investigated an outbreak is still welcome to submit an exhibit, and they can contact folks at the Oregon Public Health Division or at the Washington State Department of Health for more information about how to do that.

00:02:34 Nicole Marshall

Speaking of visiting, our podcast team had the chance to tour the International Outbreak Museum this year with epidemiologist June Bancroft at the Oregon Public Health Division in Portland, Oregon. June showed us some of her favorite exhibits and memories.

00:02:48 June Bancroft

This is one of my favorite exhibits is the deer he gave Bill . That deer head with a strawberry. So that was an E coli outbreak that was associated with strawberries from a particular farm side stand that they we went out to, I personally didn't participate but a group of people went out and looked at the field and low and behold, there were deer feces throughout the field.

00:03:10 June Bancroft

So our recommendation for that one was, you know, if you see feces in the field, don't serve the strawberries to anyone.

00:03:16 Nicole Marshall

Always great advice to avoid eating poop. June really tells the best stories, doesn't she? She told us about some of the other impactful exhibits in the museum and a little bit of wisdom for finding the right sampling location.

00:03:27 June Bancroft

Another big one is this one, Bill's claim to fame. So this is a whole cabinet on a dairy and local dairy of Salmonella Braenderup. The outbreak went on for about a year and we couldn't figure out what it was. It was kids, it never went north of Salem, which is the state capital here. So there weren't cases in the Portland area.

00:03:44 June Bancroft

There weren't cases in other states. First, we thought it was salsa or a locally made product. We tested the milk because there are a lot of children who reported illness. And the dairy was perfect, the milk was fine, and so Bill and our EIS officer. And I wanna say a few other people went down to the actual dairy and did a bunch of environmental swabbing.

00:04:04 June Bancroft

I think they took 300 environmental swabs and it turned out they found the outbreak strain in the drain. So, a good place to sample we've learned over time is where the water is draining out of the restaurant, out of the facility because all the stuff accumulates in the drain and you can do like an environmental swab.

00:04:22 June Bancroft

And you can be lucky and identify the outbreak.

00:04:24 Nicole Marshall

By the end of our visit, after scouring the archives from across the country spanning decades, we gained a new appreciation for all of the work that the public health workforce does to keep our food system safe.

00:04:35 Nicole Marshall

But as much of a monument to the work of food safety as it is, the IOM is also a dedication to the legacy of the late Dr. Bill Keene, and it's clear that Bills legacy not just as an epidemiologist but as a person, lives on through his friends and colleagues who have continued his work at the museum.

00:04:52 June Bancroft

Quotes by Bill Keene "Eating cookie dough off the spoon is just as bad as having unprotected sex while smoking" was a common Bill thing. How "we are not potted plants" was when CDC referred to us as a food net site "because we are actually real people that do real work" - Dr. Bill Keene. And I like this one here, "only an idiot would eat raw shellfish, these guys sit there like vacuum cleaners, if there's junk in the water, they just suck that stuff up and concentrate it" - Dr. Bill Keene

00:05:16 June Bancroft

“Let's just say that raw milk is good for my business and my line of work” - Dr. Bill Keene. And then this one here, that “people should consider sprouts”, we have a whole cabinet of sprout outbreaks. “Should consider Sprouts as potential source of Salmonella, they are the raw milk of the salad bar” - Dr.Bill Keene. This is very witty.

00:05:31 Nicole Marshall

Thanks for exploring along with us today. If you're interested in submitting an exhibit to the museum or taking a tour, check out their website at outbreakmuseum.com. They'd love to hear from you. Thanks for joining us today. This has been Foodborne.