

Part IV

IDEAS AND OPINIONS

The chapters that follow are based on discussions with some of those persons who have been important to the history reported in this book, as well as on their written pieces and speeches. Each of these individuals, in some way, has influenced the community arts council field that serves the arts today.

All interviews were based on the same set of questions. In the course of conversation, the interviewees carried the answers in the direction of their individual interest and emphasis. The following inquiry forms the framework for some of the thoughts reflected:

1. Generally, what do you see as the place of the arts in the community?
2. How do you see the growth and development of arts councils?
3. How do you see the role of arts councils?
4. Has their role changed from the first days? How so?
5. What are your views on leadership in the arts council movement at present?
6. What are the largest issues facing local councils today?

Their responses are reflected in the following chapters.

14

The Washingtons and Jeffersons

THE PEOPLE: IRWIN, HANES, AND NEWTON

GEORGE IRWIN: Cautious builder – the George Washington.

Irwin Paper Company, Quincy, Illinois; Peoria Paper House, Inc., Peoria, Illinois; and Decatur Paper House, Inc., Decatur, Illinois: Personnel Director 1950–69, Chairman of the Board 1961–69. Quincy Symphony Orchestra: Founder and Conductor 1948–64, General Director 1964–67. Quincy Society of Fine Arts (a community arts council founded in 1947): Board Member, Founder, and first President 1948–78. Illinois Arts Council: first Chairman 1965–71, Member 1965–75. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago: Member, Board of Trustees 1967–74; Life Member. American Symphony Orchestra League, Vienna, Virginia: Board Member and Officer, 1952–67. American Council for the Arts, New York: Honorary Board Member; a Founder, former President, and Chairman 1961–73. Council on Foundations, Inc., New York: Board of Directors and Executive Committee 1966–72. Business Committee for the Arts, New York: Founding Board Member 1968–71.

R. PHILIP HANES, JR.: “The secret is involving people” – a businessman’s view and champion of the private sector.

Textile Company Executive, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. National Cultural Center for the Performing Arts 1962–65, by appointment of President Kennedy. National Council on Arts: Member 1965–70, by appointment of President Johnson (Advisory Music Panel: Member 1970–72). North Carolina State Arts Council: Chairman and Founder 1964–66. Arts Councils of America: President 1964–66. American Council for the Arts: Vice-Chairman and Founder 1966–69. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: Board Member 1975– , by appointment of President Ford. Business Committee for the Arts: Member 1977– , Board of Directors 1980– . American Symphony Orchestra League: Director 1958–61. Alliance for Arts Education: Director 1976–

MICHAEL NEWTON: “Practical wisdom by which far-fetched ideas can be made real.”

Performing Arts Council of the Music Center of Los Angeles County: President, 1979– . Associated Councils of the Arts: President, 1974–78. Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis: Director, 1966–72. Kansas City Gilded Cage and Circle Theaters: Founder and Producer, 1958–66. American Council for the Arts, Board of Directors, 1972– . Author of *Persuade and Provide: The Story of the Arts and Education Council in St. Louis*, 1970.

1. *Generally, what do you see as the place of the arts in the community?*

GEORGE IRWIN: When the community can say, “We are proud of *the arts*,” not just the symphony or dance company, it will have happened as it should. The sum is greater than the parts. The arts need to be thought of as an integral part of the community, as are the Boy Scouts, the “Ys,” the hospitals.

PHILIP HANES: It usually is not possible to revitalize a central business district without the arts. You can do the cosmetic things, but in so many cases it can be proven that the arts are critical to revitalization.

The day the Arts Council won [in Winston-Salem] was on the occasion of the dedication of a new building which was to house the Arts Council, United Way, and the Chamber of Commerce. John D. Rockefeller [III] spoke, and when he spoke, he emphasized the arts more than anything else.

MICHAEL NEWTON: What the *Americans and the Arts* [Louis Harris] studies demonstrated to a suspicious and unbelieving art world was how the audience for the arts and the numbers of participants in the arts has grown. No longer are the arts the province of a band of pil-

grims distinguished by the paucity of their numbers and the purity of their thought. Suddenly we came to recognize what the lines at our museums, the demand for tickets at our theaters, the explosion of dance, . . . are telling us— that a new generation of better-educated, more affluent Americans have different expectations of life— and among these expectations are the arts.

2. *How do you see the growth and development of arts councils?*

GI: Community arts councils traditionally gave assistance to other struggling organizations, and represent “a breath of spring” and demonstrate the benefits that accrue when there is a community that works together. They have come a long way since just doing calendars, which still may be very appropriate if they are *arts* calendars instead of being only dance [or other single-discipline] calendars. They are more mature and sophisticated. The arts are about challenge and change, and arts councils, if they do not pretend to be everything to everybody, will have limitless possibilities and even greater impact in the next 30 years.

PH: Arts councils take on the pattern appropriate to their communities. Intuition tells me that arts councils, while developing at a rapid rate, have also affected the growth of such things as business support for the arts. The arts council is a vehicle for getting people involved. It often involves people who might not have been reachable by individual arts organizations.

MN: Arts councils or commissions run the gamut from being first rate to being unrepresentative and ineffective, from being powerhouses to having few assets other than a mimeo machine and an out-of-date mailing list. Some are private, some are public, but that is no clue as to how effective they are. How can you know? The best are representative of artists, of the people for the arts, of small organizations and of major arts organizations. These agencies can be especially useful if you want to know how to involve artists.

3. *How do you see the role of arts councils?*

MN: [In a discussion in St. Louis in 1978 on “City Government and the Arts,” Newton, then President of the ACA, outlined needs to which arts commissions should address themselves:]

- a. The city as a governmental agency needs to make its own statement of concern about the arts.
- b. Coordinate what the city itself does in the arts.

- c. Make joint approaches to federal and state agencies on behalf of those needs and opportunities.
- d. Develop resources that exist within the city itself.
- e. Offer accessibility to existing arts opportunities to those who lack them by reason of age, education, transportation, or other handicaps.
- f. Ultimately the single most important role of many of the commissions that now exist has been in acting as an advocate within city government to assure that the potential of the arts and needs of the arts are taken advantage of and understood in every aspect of the city government's own functioning.

The role of the arts councils commissions is changing.¹

PH: The private sector must remain strong. In the United States, the government dollars should be the least important.

GI: Community councils need to have their major base a private support one so that they remain free to work flexibly. If they are government agencies, there will be a tendency to be expedient and bureaucratic. There are great amounts of money that can be generated in a community – there is no automatic low limit; most people think too small. Business support for the arts has grown amazingly in the last 15 years and most importantly will continue to grow, but arts groups must continue to earn that support.

PH: Arts councils give the businessman (who had previously had little contact with the arts) opportunities to look the field over and select his focus. One report shows that if one puts a price tag on the donated time, it would equal the dollars given by the corporate community, and that the more time given the more dollars given. Most people usually try to get the money first. But if someone is donating time, they soon begin to give dollars, go to concerts, etc.

4. Has their role changed from the first days? How so?

PH: The early founders of the arts council movement played entrepreneur. That kind of person should get out and leave it to the professionals. The “good old boy” days are over.

GI: The arts councils must “know their communities in order to know themselves.” They should not try to do everything; rather, decide what are the right things for them to do. There is a uniqueness to each community – it is not just a small version of a big city.

MN: [in his book with Scott Hatley, *Persuade and Provide*] During its early

years the council wrestled with the problems of survival. . . . Tomorrow's task is to dramatize the problems and opportunities which lie ahead. The challenge is to determine where the community's true interests lie and then to present a program which is reasonable in both the short and long term. The goals must be finite and attainable. Only the promise and the vision must be infinite.²

5. *What are your views on leadership in the arts council movement at present?*

GI: The community leaders should find the arts council boards a valued position and serve on them. Creative talent is always needed. The trick is for the artist or creative individual to recognize his role. The degree of awareness differs – and the creative person can often help others to see. Arts groups must remember that they don't make art – artists do. The individual artist must not be overlooked.

MN: We need to find ways to orchestrate the voices of all concerned citizens to insure that legislators at the national, state, and local levels know of our needs and the services the arts can perform. This is a place where community leaders can be most helpful.

PH: Leadership is developing in young business persons.

GI: Those coming into the field have come with a social awareness brought on perhaps by the events of the [19]60s. There is greater sophistication in some ways, and a better quality arts management person in some ways, but the zeal and missionary enthusiasm are not around as in the [19]50s. There are better-paying jobs – and of course more of them. The present crop is not motivated as much by commitment, adventure. The feeling I have is that the training institutions are turning out fuzzy thinkers, more pedantic leaders. The vision is not there.

6. *What are the largest issues facing local councils today?*

GI: There should be a dedication to quality, to standards in artistic and business management. The arts groups must earn the support of business, media, and local government by acting in a mature, administratively efficient manner. However, [they should] be prepared to take an occasional risk or chance, especially in support of the individual artist. Better planning goals are commensurate with the mature agency.

MN: It is vital that each of us ask whom we are intending to serve. Are we to serve arts organizations? Or artists? Or the public for the arts? I believe that increasingly the answer is that we should serve all three in-

terests, and our board should reflect that concern . . . people from government, business, labor, minorities, education, philanthropy, all geographic sections of the community and representatives of all major sources of income. But you would be surprised how many of the old-style delegate boards still exist and in so many cases destine their agencies to proceed at the pace of the slowest.

PH: The successful councils have concentrated on board members who can give or get. These councils understand management. The councils which have loaded the board with artists have problems because the artist does not usually understand management. They really get in the way of arts council progress.

MN: An arts commission can be a body which reviews everything that is being done by the city government to see where the arts could have a role to play.

NOTES

1. Michael Newton, "City Government and the Arts" (speech given in St. Louis, 1978).
2. Michael Newton and Scott Hatley, *Persuade and Provide* (New York: Associated Councils of the Arts, 1970), p. 230.