



# LAFF

THE LAFF SOCIETY Promoting social and professional contacts among former staff members of the Ford Foundation

Fall 2020, No. 99

## A JOURNEY TO BISMARCK: FINDING “GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT”

By Roberta Uno

I visited South Dakota for the first time in 2004 as part of my work in Arts and Culture at the Ford Foundation. I was building a cohort of grantees that was racially, culturally and geographically inclusive, anchored by leaders at the forefront of arts and social justice. The First Peoples Fund, located in Rapid City and headed by an extraordinary woman, Lori Pourier, an Oglala Lakota, was critical to this work as an exemplar of best practice, both in terms of Native American arts and intercultural issues.

But on this site visit I also had a personal objective, having never visited that area of the country. I added a personal day, with a purpose but no real plan.

Upon hearing that it was my first time in South Dakota, people asked if I would visit any of the famous landmarks. My answer, “I’m hoping to go to Bismarck”, met with baffled expressions. After all, the Black Hills, Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands and more are in South Dakota—and Bismarck is a state away, in North Dakota. Naively, I thought I could rent a car and make a quick day trip. I had no idea what the distances, terrain or territories actually were. And everyone asked, “Why Bismarck!?”

The reason was simple and profoundly personal: My grandfather, George Kumemaro Uno, had been imprisoned at Fort Lincoln in Bismarck during World War II. He was a larger-than-life figure to me as a child, an artist and an autodidact in many subjects. He was also a rare Issei (first generation Japanese



The author and her grandfather, George Kumemaro Uno.

American) grandparent who spoke and wrote impeccable English and expressed his love aloud.

When I told Lori that I hoped to find out where he had been during the war, First Peoples program manager, Randy Ross (Northern Ponca), offered to drive with me. Lori told me it was a long trip, but that Randy knew all the shortcuts. Our trip took us through Lakota territory, through Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River and up through Standing Rock, with Randy illuminating history, discovering we had mutual friends and swapping some good stories and laughs along the way.

The original Fort Lincoln, south of Mandan,

was where Custer was stationed and rode out from for his infamous Last Stand. It was decommissioned in 1891 and a second Fort Lincoln was built in Bismarck in 1900. It has undergone dramatic transformations over time. During World War II, in 1941, under the administration of the U.S. Department of Justice Alien Enemy Control Program, it became a prison camp for some 1,500 Germans and 1,800 Japanese and Japanese American civilians classified as “enemy aliens”. These non-combatants included people of German and Japanese descent who had been moved from South American and Central American countries.

In 1969, it became the home of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), a Tribal Land-grant institution that for 50 years has educated more than ten thousand Native American students from 75 federally recognized Indian Tribes across the country.

At United Tribes, I met its inspiring president, Dr. David Gipp

(Hunkpapa Lakota), a noted artist and faculty member, Butch Thunderhawk (Hunkpapa Lakota) and other members of the UTTC community. I shared that my grandfather had been imprisoned there and that I could not come close to the region without trying to find out where he had been. When he was taken into FBI custody after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, his wife and children had no idea of his whereabouts until a letter arrived postmarked Bismarck, N.D.

Dr. Gipp said that various older men of German or Japanese heritage occasionally came to visit, seeking their connection to  
*Continued on next page*

what the place had meant for them during the war years. It was a history the college had learned more about when Laurel Reuter, head of the North Dakota Museum of Art, curated the *Snow Country Prison* exhibit the prior year, partnering with UTTC.

I was shown the remaining original buildings, including the former barracks on the campus. They had been adapted to college use, but there was still evidence of the past, particularly in the Japanese barracks where Japanese characters are etched into the bricks.

Laurel Reuter's curatorial breakthrough for the exhibit came when she met Satsuki Ina, the daughter of Itaru Ina, who wrote poetry during his captivity at Fort Lincoln and other concentration camps (*Snow Country Prison: the Haiku Poetry of Itaru Ina* satsukiina.com). His beautiful haiku give insight into the suffering endured.

When I was shown where the barbed wire perimeter had been, I stood for a long while thinking how cold and bleak it must have been when my grandfather arrived in February 1942 in a deep North Dakota winter. I wondered if he looked west through the barbed wire aching for word of his wife and children. Itaru Ina expressed the yearning of many when he wrote, "In the field of white snow I starve for the love of my own people."

When the *Snow Country Prison* exhibit opened the year before, October 3 and 4 in 2003 (*Snow Country Prison* catalogue, North Dakota Museum of Art—see story on LAFF's

website for link), the guests and speakers included elderly survivors, including men who bore witness to their experiences. I could not hold back tears when I was shown the video of Hank Naito (*Snow Country Prison* exhibit video—see story on LAFF's website for link), who was imprisoned as a teenager with his father.

I thought of the cruelty of juvenile and family separation and my own father, Robert Uno, who would have been the same age during his incarceration. I also thought, with

### **"In the field of white snow I starve for the love of my own people."**

ITARU INA

gratitude, about the difference in the lives of my daughter and son, enjoying high school and college at the time.

As I watched Hank Naito talk about his life between 14 and 18, being serially moved from Santa Anita racetrack assembly center near Los Angeles to the Heart Mountain, Wyo., concentration camp to the Tule Lake, Calif., Segregation Center to Fort Lincoln, I felt rage at the injustice and suffering endured by my family and all families, then and now, separated by incarceration and immigration detention. Through obtaining my grandfather's FBI file under the Freedom of Information Act, my family has learned of my grandfather's FBI apprehension and incarceration at Fort Lincoln, Lordsburg, N.M., and Crystal City, Tex. A part of the Uno family story was told in the PBS *Asian Americans* series in the episode, "A Question of Loyalty," a landmark PBS series, funded in part by the Ford Foundation (see story on LAFF's website for link).

My father was one of ten siblings, all U.S. citizens by birth, who spanned a range of responses to their country being at war. Having experienced racism, the eldest brother renounced his American citizenship and became a journalist embedded with the Japanese Imperial Army; three brothers enlisted from the concentration camp to serve their country in the Army and Navy; their parents and younger siblings endured family separation while incarcerated, and two became outspoken rights activists.

My aunt, Amy Uno Ishii (Amy Uno Ishii oral history—see story on LAFF's website for link), was a housewife who assembled a carousel of slides and facts. She traveled to speak at schools, community groups and conferences to raise awareness. My uncle, Edison

Uno (Edison Uno bio—see story on LAFF's website for link), called a founding father of Japanese American Redress and Reparations, was the first person to introduce the idea at a time when many Japanese Americans felt it better to remain silent about the racism they experienced and their wartime trauma.

The playwright Philip Kan Gotanda calls the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans "the psychic scar of Japanese America", referring to a trauma even deeper than the abrogation of human and constitutional rights and the enormous economic loss of businesses and property.

In the *Snow Country Prison* exhibit video, internee survivor Max Ebel refers to a spiritual experience at the conclusion of the opening gathering (*Snow Country Prison* exhibit—see story on LAFF's website for link). "I think my mind is a little clearer," he says. "I think the spiritual helped. I can go home now and be at peace." He found such solace when the UTTC hosts offered the formerly incarcerated men a traditional Lakota *Washigila*, a Wiping Away the Tears ceremony to release spirits of the dead and heal grieving.

I, too, owe a good deal of gratitude to the many people I met on that visit for helping me walk part of my grandfather's journey: to Lori Pourier, First Peoples, Randy Ross, David Gipp, Dennis Neumann, Twila Martin Kekahbah and the UTTC community. Time has taken its toll. Randy Ross passed away this past July. He was a co-founder of *He Sapa Wacipi*, the Black Hills Powwow known by thousands around the world. David Gipp died September 11. He was UTTC's president for 37 years, was founder of the American Indian College Fund and made a path to education for generations of Native American students.

My most vivid childhood memories of my grandfather are of sitting with him while he painted, watching magic emerge from each brush stroke. Leaving Bismarck, I thought I understood more about why, having been confined, he chose to imagine vast landscapes. I also left wondering what the world would be like if every military fort could be transformed into a tribal college or other place for healing the land and its people.

And I wondered what it would be like if we all had practices and language to wipe away the tears, and the generosity of spirit to extend that compassion to others. ■

**Roberta Uno**, who was a program officer and then Senior Program Officer for Arts and Culture at the Ford Foundation from 2002 to 2015, is director of Arts in a Changing America (ArtChangeUS), a national project on the arts and social justice affiliated with the California Institute of the Arts.

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## A COLLECTION OF PIECES BY A SINGULAR PATRON OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

### *The Living Legacy of W. McNeil Lowry: Vision and Voice*

Frank Kessel, editor; Peter Lang Publishing, New York; 502 Pages

By George Gelles

Recalling **Mac Lowry**, encomiums abound. During a stellar career spanning more than two decades, W. McNeil Lowry headed the Ford Foundation's education program; launched a seminal program in support of the performing arts that still is acknowledged for its landmark significance; and became the Foundation's Vice President for Humanities and the Arts.

As *The New York Times* aptly noted, he "helped make the Ford Foundation America's largest non-governmental arts patron."

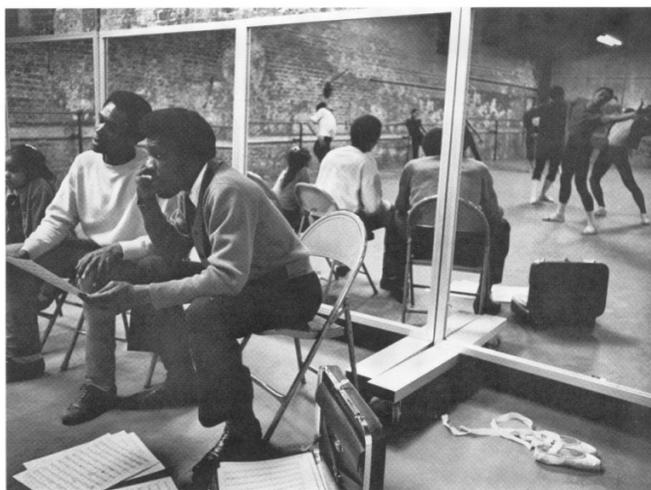
Lincoln Kirstein, co-founder with George Balanchine of the School of American Ballet and of the early iterations of classical dance troupes that evolved into today's New York City Ballet, praised Lowry as "the single most influential patron of the performing arts that the American democratic system has produced."

And the current Ford Foundation president, Darren Walker, has stated that, "In the second half of the twentieth century, few people did more to influence and advance the arts in the United States than W. McNeil Lowry."

A newsmen by background, Mac edited the *Cox Corporation's* daily in Dayton, Ohio, and then went to Washington to oversee the extensive Cox chain. He then served as associate director of the International Press Institute in Zurich, and in 1953 joined the Ford Foundation to head its education program.

A Jayhawk with a journalist's curiosity and a polymath's inclinations, Mac was true to his Kansan roots, suggesting that "... the fact that I was born 80 miles from the exact geographical center of the United States has given the foundation's program a grass-roots approach."

This essential collection of 47 pieces—speeches, research reports, essays and articles—was assembled by Frank Kessel, whose distinguished career has embraced issues of public policy in social science and the humanities. It allows us to share the breadth



**Dance Theater of Harlem from Ford Foundation's 1970 Annual Report. Arthur Mitchell (left) and Coleridge Taylor Perkinson, composer of "Ode".**

and depth of Mac's passions.

Kessel cites Mac's "radical imagination and meticulous care for the arts", and these qualities are everywhere apparent—in his statements to Congress concerning the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities; in his personal salutes to heroes of regional theater, Zella Fichandler and Nina Vance, miracle workers (with Mac's guidance and support) in Washington, D.C., and Houston; in his generous public acknowledgments of milestone achievements of various institutions of professional training, a topic always dear to him, including the Juilliard School and the Minneapolis School of Art; and in his many implorations for a more enlightened and inclusive national policy for the arts.

Mac intuitively grasped the centrality of a vibrant culture to society's health, a culture in which the performing arts would be admired not for their extrinsic values but prized for the creativity at their core. Among the values he deplored were the use of the performing arts as expressions of national purpose; as instruments of image-building on levels local, national and international; as spurs to economic activity; and as pro forma parts of a liberal education.

While these elements might bring ancillary benefits to the artistic enterprise, patronage of the arts—indeed true appreciation of the arts, and concomitant support from philanthropic sources and the public alike—must honor the artist for her- or himself.

Mac then suggested a notion as strikingly simple as it is rarely articulated: "Basically, it means accepting the artists and the arts on their own terms."

He continued: "This does not appear to be a very unorthodox requirement when we consider how easily (in the main) philanthropy accepts, say, scientists or educators on their own terms. But individual patrons, corporations, public officials, and until recently foundations have too frequently chosen to concern themselves with the educational or social uses of the arts, if they have indeed devoted their resources to the arts at all."

Written in 1962, Mac's words still resonate.

He again expressed these views in 1977, in "The Performing Arts and American Society: The Past Twenty Years". This was his Introduction to the 53rd convocation of The American Assembly, the occasional series of meetings hosted by Columbia University. Since its founding in 1950 by former President Eisenhower, who then was the university's president, the organization historically examined broad issues of public policy, including the nature of democratic institutions and issues of the environment, world hunger and technology.

Addressing the arts was an American Assembly first. As described by Clifford Nelson, then president of the group, the conclave "brought together...a group of sixty-one Americans—performers, trustees, critics, directors, managers, and teachers from the worlds of ballet, modern dance, opera, theater, and symphony—to discuss *The Future of the Performing Arts*."

Mac's role was central: He invited the participants and he set the agenda. I had a privileged vantage point. Having months earlier joined the Foundation as part of the team designing "The City at 42nd Street", the Foundation's idealistic reimagining of the once-storied but then-shabby stretch of 42nd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, I soon joined the Office of the Arts to work with Mac and his exceptional program officers: **Marcia Thompson**, **Ruth Mayles** and **Dick Sheldon**, whose portfolios were dance, theater and music, respectively.

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## A “COMPELLING CONTEXT” FOR “PROFOUND PESSIMISM”

***The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America***, by Greg Grandin, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2019

By Tom Seessel

This book explores how the concept of frontier has dominated American ideology and fueled our ascent as a super power. It puts a critical spotlight on the shifting meaning of “frontier” throughout our history: from the wilderness to global influence to Vietnam and to outer space.

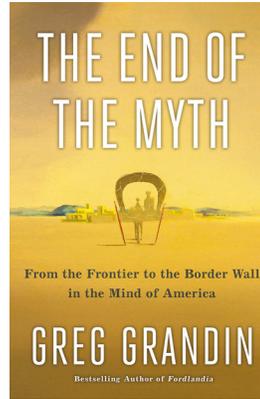
And in a searing conclusion drawn from his timely study of a singular American myth, Grandin expresses profound pessimism about America’s future. His views are molded largely by our having resisted the adoption of a social democracy, and quashed development of a critical, resilient and progressive citizenry. Instead, Grandin finds, we have adopted “a conspiratorial nihilism, rejecting reason and dreading change.... Factionalism congealed and won a national election.”

The book won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction, which praised it as “a

sweeping and beautifully written book that probes the American myth of boundless expansion and provides a compelling context for thinking about the current political moment.”

The author, Greg Grandin, a Yale history professor, passionately and eloquently portrays how “the presence of a frontier has allowed the United States to avoid a true reckoning” with iniquities such as slavery, decimation of Indigenous People, racism and gross inequality.

Grandin tells this story in chronological order, vividly and unforgivingly, beginning with the formation of the country and ending with the Trump border wall. Grandin devotes a chapter to each of the major eras: Jacksonian democracy, annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Spanish-American War, the World Wars, the Depression and New Deal, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War (which supporters and critics alike described



as yet another frontier war), Reagan and the New Right, Clinton’s globalism, the mid-East wars and Trump’s closing of the frontier with a retreat from internationalism. Grandin finds that, in the end, “Instead of peace, there’s endless war.”

*The End of the Myth* details how subjugation or eradication of Native Peoples has been a mission since Revolutionary times. Thomas Jefferson coupled this cause with the pursuit of freedom, believing that the “final consolidation” of American liberty would come only when the continent was occupied by white, English-speaking people with neither “blot nor mixture”. (After the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson established government trading houses that ensnared Native Peoples in predatory debt intended to result in default and forfeiture of

land given as collateral.)

The 1783 Treaty of Paris, ending the Revolutionary War, set the new nation’s western boundary at the eastern side of the Mississippi River, with Spanish territory on the opposite shore. This limit was soon breached when American boats moored on the western bank, offering the justification that pre-steam vessels needed to tack from side to side in order to navigate upstream. Thereafter the boundary was pushed westward by various means,

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### A Singular Patron of the Arts

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One day Mac called me over to talk about the American Assembly. Having worked on two similar initiatives, I anticipated a meeting full of promise. He explained that conversations among Assembly participants would take case studies as their points of departure, essays that examined symphony orchestras, opera companies, theater, modern dance and ballet. And he invited me to write the case study on ballet.

This would be a profile of the Pennsylvania Ballet and its director Barbara Weisberger, who enjoyed a long-standing relationship with both George Balanchine—in 1935, at age 8, she was the first child student of the great choreographer—and the Ford Foundation. Over the course of the weekend conclave, it became evident that these more than five dozen professionals could have been recruited only by Mac.

Notable was Mac’s advocacy of Black performing arts and artists. The Dance Theater of Harlem was a beneficiary of Ford support. It was founded by Arthur Mitchell, the first

Black principal dancer in the New York City Ballet.

Equally esteemed, the Negro Ensemble Company was founded with Ford support. Led by eminent actor-playwright Douglas Turner Ward and actor-activist Robert Hooks, the company would nurture Black actors, including Phylicia Rashad, Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson and Laurence Fishburne, and Black playwrights, among them August Wilson and Charles Fuller. Both companies still thrive today.

In the decades since Mac’s achievements, philanthropy’s face and focus have changed. The embrace and support of varied ethnicities, long overdue, is central to the foundation mission, and not only to Ford’s.

And foundations such as Ford recently have seen their activities complemented by individual philanthropies, among them the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, whose primary interests include world health care and women’s health and empowerment; Bloomberg Philanthropies (medical research, education and the arts); and Marc Benioff’s Salesforce Foundation (health care, the envi-

ronment and issues of social justice).

No Maecenas has yet appeared who marries Mac’s deep sympathies for the performing arts with access to significant financial resources. In truth, the performing arts nowadays are languishing, experiencing, even before the Covid-19 pandemic, existential worries about sustainability in an environment that can seem indifferent.

In troubled times such as ours, I often turn to a sentiment offered by Katherine Anne Porter in a preface she wrote for the 1935 Modern Library edition of *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*. It is a sentiment I feel sure Mac Lowry would share:

“The arts do live continuously, and they live literally by faith; their names and their shapes and their uses and their basic meanings survive unchanged in all that matters through times of interruption, diminishment, neglect; they outlive governments and creeds and the societies, even the very civilization that produced them. They cannot be destroyed altogether because they represent the substance of faith and the only reality. They are what we find again when the ruins are cleared away.” ■

including purchase, but supplemented by encroachment, chicanery, confiscation, vigilantism and war.

Grandin recounts a colorful episode in the pre-Presidential career of Andrew Jackson, who possessed slaves and amassed significant fees processing the claims of land taken from Native Americans. The incident, which Grandin returns to frequently as a crystallization of his thesis, occurred in 1811, when Jackson was moving a slave “coffle,” or procession, along the Natchez Trace, an ancient Indian road parallel to the Mississippi River that traversed Chickasaw and Choctaw lands, which were ostensibly protected by U.S. treaty.

Jackson was stopped by a federal Indian agent checking the passports of travelers passing through. When asked for his papers, Jackson is said to have replied, “Yes, sir, I always carry mine with me,” brandishing the U.S. Constitution, which is “sufficient passport to take me where ever my business leads me.”

Mexico is a major focus of *The End of the Myth*. After the Louisiana Purchase from France, in 1803, the largest remaining obstacle to American ownership of the continent was Mexico, whose territory extended to California. Our 1848 war against Mexico, undertaken in the name of “manifest destiny,” resulted in the addition of a huge area to our domain, comprising roughly two-thirds the amount of land in the Louisiana Purchase.

The credo of advancing liberty through expansion was embedded in the American narrative by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in an 1893 paper maintaining that the availability of unsettled land throughout much of American history was the most important factor determining national development.

The author has mixed feelings about the lasting impact of Turner’s thesis. Grandin agrees that frontier and individualism persist as powerful metaphors for American history, but is troubled that the concept has been distorted to justify opposition to governmental restraints on behavior and establishment of a reliable social safety net.

Libertarian and right-wing political mythology embrace rugged individualism and disparage the role of government. However, as Grandin notes, Turner recognized that government made settlement possible, writing in 1893 that “The West of our day relies on national government because government came before the settler, and gave him land [and] arranged his transportation.”

Grandin, lamenting the lack of social democracy, points out that, contrary to the mythology of individualism, the West has always been “the domain of large-scale power, of highly capitalized speculators, businesses, railroads, agriculture and mining.”

Grandin writes that extension of the frontier westward, after the Mexican and Civil Wars, was led by a new alliance of “slavers and settlers under a banner of freedom defined as freedom from restraint...[and] the virtuous commonweal was defined as expansion...” Sons of the Confederate “Lost Cause” found new purpose in joining with their former enemies in pursuit of Manifest Destiny. Grandin biting refers to this as the southern veterans’ “rehabilitation program.”

Grandin argues that the U.S. provoked the Spanish-American War as a means of creating new frontiers outside the continent. Woodrow Wilson said that, as a result of this war, “We made new frontiers for ourselves beyond the seas.” Turner, who lived until 1932, described the post-1898 United States as having become an “imperial republic.”

Grandin returns frequently, and caustically, to the subject of our changing relationship with Mexico. He writes that, after the Civil War, American corporations and individuals dispossessed long-term inhabitants of the newly-acquired U.S. territory, formerly a part of Mexico, of a “massive amount of property.”

(He misleadingly implies that, south of the border, U.S. corporations confiscated large tracts of Yaqui Tribe land. This actually was the doing of the Mexican government in pursuit of its policy to convert small land holdings into large mining and agricultural uses. Many of these Mexican government takings ultimately ended up in the hands of such U.S. corporations as Hearst, Cargill and Phelps Dodge.)

The trade treaty known as NAFTA was promoted by President Clinton, who said that the “global economy is our new frontier [and NAFTA] is the moral equivalent of the frontier in the nineteenth century.” Grandin details the treaty’s cascading disastrous results for Mexico: He writes that Mexico lost nearly two million agricultural jobs as a result of competition from the highly subsidized U.S. agricultural industry.

Grandin devotes a great deal of attention to Clinton’s two terms, acerbically detailing his retreat from the Democratic base as he championed the benefits of NAFTA and globalism. Grandin asserts that Clinton’s subliminal message was that “global competition would discipline the black underclass and help the Democratic Party break its dependence on groups like the Congressional Black Caucus [which opposed the treaty].”

Reagan’s 1980s’ wars in Central America, followed by the war on drugs and NAFTA, spurred migration northward. Illegal border crossings grew and became an increasingly contentious political issue, leading to ever-harsher attempts to stem the flow. By 2016, Grandin says, the U.S. was spending more on

border and immigration enforcement than on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined, including the FBI.

The first portion of the border wall was built in 1909, and has been augmented sporadically ever since, most often as an appeasement to immigration opponents who insist on securing the border before immigration reform can be discussed. The wall was a Presidential campaign issue for the first time in 1980, when candidate Reagan, contrary to the portrayal of his policies as enunciated by Trump, opposed President Carter’s proposal to construct additional segments. After he was in office, Reagan said that “God made Mexico and the United States neighbors, but it is our duty and the duty of generations yet to come to make sure that we remain friends.”

Grandin gives scant attention to Barack Obama, dismissing his eight years in office as a futile effort to “reach... for a center that no longer existed, that he seemed to think he could reconstitute by the power of his rhetoric and the infiniteness of his patience.”

The book maintains that Trump’s promotion of the border wall with Mexico symbolically marks the end of American expansion: “What distinguishes earlier racist presidents like Jackson and Wilson from Trump... is that they were in office during the upswing of America’s moving out in the world, when domestic political polarization could be stanching and the country held together... by the promise of endless growth. Trumpism is extremism turned inward, all-consuming and self-devouring.”

*The End of the Myth* occasionally drifts into overstatement and confusing metaphors. It seems at times that, in his outrage, Grandin stretches the evidence to fit his ideas. Surely NAFTA, as one example, has produced some benefits that are not mentioned. The immigrant share of our population grew from 4.7 percent in 1970 to 13.7 percent in 2017. And Mexicans made up about a quarter—about 11 million people—of all immigrants living in the U.S. in 2017.

The Covid-19 pandemic occurred after the book was published, but the most incisive critiques of our response echo Grandin’s bleak outlook. An article in the September 2020 Atlantic magazine, for example, says that the Covid-19 “debacle has also touched—and implicated—nearly every other facet of American society: its shortsighted leadership, its disregard for expertise, its racial inequities,... and its fealty to a dangerous strain of individualism.” ■

**Tom Seessel** was a program officer in the Ford Foundation’s Urban and Metropolitan office from 1970 to 1974, and a consultant in the Office of the President from 2002 to 2009.

# LET'S GO BEYOND THE CONFLICT AND TALK

By Linda Stamato and Sandy Jaffe

*This article appeared originally on June 28 on the online site of The Newark (N.J.) Star Ledger and in its print edition and several other newspapers since then.*

Overshadowed in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was an event in New York that was nearly as symbolic of America's racial divide. A brief confrontation between a Black man and a white woman represented much of the tensions over the past few centuries, but it lacked the drama of law enforcement gone awry.

It should not be buried in history, though, because it offers a crucial lesson in lost opportunities.

Mere hours after George Floyd's life was snuffed out under a policeman's knee, a white woman in New York's Central Park threatened to call police on a Black man. He had merely asked her to leash her dog, as required, in that area in the park. The man, Christian Cooper, turned out to be an avid birder and a board member of the city's Audubon Society. He video-recorded what happened, including her angry threats to call 911—and her plea on her phone, "There's an African American man threatening my life."

Unlike most incidents, this one—because it was recorded—went viral when Christian Cooper's sister offered it on Twitter. The video led to the white woman, Amy Cooper, being fired from her job, calls to ban her from the park and a steady stream of criticism as her intemperate, racist actions were repeatedly viewed.

There were no charges. But the video was chilling to many who watched it because things could have ended very differently for a man who seemed "out of place" simply because he was Black.

This encounter with racism, along with others in recent months, renewed national attention to the dangers—the marginalizing, dehumanizing and, for many, the routine reality—of simply "living while Black".

Ending the story there, though, was a lost opportunity.

Cooper's later observation that the incident perhaps should not have led to the woman losing her job sounded like an opening. An opening for conflict resolution, for using a community forum for facilitated conversations, for mediation and, perhaps, for restorative justice.

A mediated conversation involving both people, for example, could have been beneficial to both. Having an opportunity to talk and to listen, to absorb what an experience meant

# THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN RESOLVING DISPUTES

These two articles, on this page and the next, explore the persistent, divisive national problem that has taken on greater significance with the recent eruption of racial conflicts: the pressing need for "serious investments in conflict resolution in our communities". Both stress the increasingly crucial role of local communities in creating "spaces" to bring people together, of finding opportunities to "listen, to heed and to heal".

The first article, published elsewhere and re-printed here, makes a case for "earnest efforts to listen" by local leaders and "public actors", for the need for such local change-makers to create the "spaces, the structures and the support" that are vital to lowering the risk of civil disturbances.

The second, written especially for the newsletter, provides essential background for understanding how actions taken over the last several decades helped create the framework that can make it possible to resolve disputes before they escalate and "threaten the fabric of the community".

and the harm it caused, can lead to positive outcomes for those directly and indirectly involved, serving as a lesson for the public.

Recall the very public story of the arrest of Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and the white police officer who saw a Black man attempting to break into a home in Cambridge, Mass.; Gates was *trying to enter his own home*. This encounter became widely circulated, much-discussed and reported on, and, as is often the case, interpreted differently, as in "the usual racist injustice", for some, and "justifiable police work" for others.

Barack Obama, then America's president, saw an opportunity. He invited both men to the White House, offered to "share a beer" with them, and created a space for a direct conversation between the two, to explore the harm caused to Gates, and the ridicule experienced by the officer, but also to give both an opportunity to listen to each other, and to show the nation that it is possible to generate something positive out of a negative encounter.

Surfacing and distributing evidence of a profound wrong to shame an offender accomplishes only so much. Seeing the wrong as an opportunity for potential gain, however, may benefit both the offender and the offended and, as noted, may well contribute to the public good.

There are many fraught encounters, much less visible, that need to be seen as opportunities for serious investments in conflict resolution in our communities.

When disputes take place between and among citizens, in neighborhoods, in public and private spaces, we need mediators from the community to help manage them

effectively for the good of the parties and the communities of which they are a part. When differences in communities rise to a level that threatens the fabric of the community we need spaces for talking, for listening, for exchanging ideas, to find ways to improve relationships and help cement communities, not only to lower the risk of civil disturbances but to find opportunities to listen, to heed and to heal.

Many believe that there has been a fundamental shift in thinking and political will that may well make "this time" different.

Let us make it so.

We need to undertake earnest efforts to listen to the experiences of Black and brown people in our communities in order to understand, to assist and to make the changes we need. Along with public actors—mayors and civic leaders—we need leaders in the private sector, and those in "the third sector"—churches, mosques, synagogues, schools, universities, nonprofits and, especially, community foundations—to listen, engage and take on critical roles.

But, without the spaces, the structures and the support to provide opportunities for listening, for learning and for helping resolve conflict, we aren't likely to see the changes in our communities that we so desperately need as a nation. ■

*Linda Stamato and Sandy Jaffe are co-directors of the Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy of Rutgers University. Stamato has been a consultant for the Ford Foundation and Jaffe worked at Ford from 1968 to 1983 and was officer in charge of the Government and Law Project.*

# FORD'S ROLE IN MANAGING CONFLICT

By Linda Stamato

*"...we've learned that we can have our differences without demonizing one another."*

HENRY LOUIS GATES

The base for much of contemporary conflict resolution was laid by the Ford Foundation over a significant period of time, starting in the late 1970s, within the portfolio overseen by **Sandy Jaffe**, as he was the Program Officer in Charge of Government and Law during his time at Ford.

National institutions came from that work, the National Institute for Dispute Resolution and the Fund for Research in Dispute Resolution among them. But the significant impact can be seen in the peer mediation programs still supported in elementary and secondary schools and college- and university-based conflict resolution programs, and in courts and communities across the nation.

Some efforts to deal locally with a national problem had begun earlier. Following the civil disorders in the 1960s, many community-based programs were created, some with Federal support, including the Community Relations Service in the Department of Justice, which deployed trained conflict resolution professionals to communities across the country to help manage conflict and to enhance a community's capacity to prevent future conflicts.

Funds were made available, too, to support community policing, and political bodies in several states created Human Relations Commissions to help communities deal with housing and employment discrimination and to provide spaces for community conflict resolution to take place.

It was a "good time" for the Ford Foundation to take on a significant role and it did, supporting community justice centers based largely on the belief that resolving conflict rests mainly with the community itself.

Some of the earliest grants went to the Community Boards Program in San Francisco, the brain-child of the creative and inventive thinking of Raymond Shonholtz. He saw that providing options for managing

received training, and provided mediation assistance, were the very instruments for building and sustaining their communities.

Interest—and support—has waned, though, as Federal and state investment declined and foundations, essentially, moved on. Police have taken on much of the burden even as support for community policing has declined. There is a conflict resolution vacuum in the nation's communities.

And so, decades later, it is hardly surprising that we see the value of having a mediated conversation involving both Amy Cooper and Christian Cooper, a variation on restorative justice, as potentially beneficial to both, demonstrating how an opportunity to talk and to listen, to "absorb"

**When differences in a community rise to a level that threatens the fabric of the community, we need spaces for talking, for listening, for exchanging ideas, and to find ways to improve relationships and help cement communities, not only to lower the risk of civil disturbances but to find opportunities to listen, to heed and to heal.**

community disputes, between and among neighbors, such as for minor offenses involving the police, could not only lead to more satisfactory outcomes, placing responsibility for the implementation of negotiated agreements in the hands of those directly involved, but could potentially have a broader impact, by building sustainable local communities.

Much later research supported that expectation. Indeed, members of communities that

what an experience meant and the harm it caused, communicated directly and honestly, can lead to outcomes that can improve the lives of those directly and indirectly involved and serve as a lesson for the public.

When disputes take place between and among citizens, in neighborhoods, in public and private spaces, we need mediators from the community to help manage them effectively for the good of the parties and the communities of which they are a part.

When differences in a community rise to a level that threatens the fabric of the community, we need spaces for talking, for listening, for exchanging ideas, and to find ways to improve relationships and help cement communities, not only to lower the risk of civil disturbances but to find opportunities to listen, to heed and to heal.

Community forums can also prove vital for the discussion of issues and developing solutions to meet community needs, such as education, housing, parks and social services, thus involving citizens more directly in the governance of their communities.

Fortunately, the model program, started with Ford support, the Community Boards program, continues to provide just such forums for local involvement as it is well-integrated into the community, its efficacy repeatedly confirmed. The program's approach is often called "popular justice": using conflict resolution to build community, reflecting the close involvement of citizens in its design and functioning.

We need to see more of this approach to managing civic life. ■



**President Barack Obama, Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Sergeant James Crowley toast at the start of their meeting in the Rose Garden of the White House, July 30, 2009. Official White House Photo by Pete Souza.**

# TEN THINGS HOLLYWOOD CAN DO TO FIGHT RACISM AND PROMOTE JUSTICE

By Alan Jenkins

This article appeared originally on LinkedIn on June 4 and is reprinted here with permission of the author.

Our shared values call for a justice system that keeps everyone safe, prevents harm and upholds the principles of equal justice, fairness and accountability. Though we've never fully realized that ideal as a nation, recent events are a savage reminder of how desperately far we have to go.

The killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor; the inadequate response from our justice system; the years-long pattern of official killings and assaults and acquittals too numerous to mention; and the larger context of over-policing and over-incarceration of Black and Brown people have become too dire and too urgent to ignore.

As Americans take to the streets to protest an oppressive and discriminatory criminal justice system, many in Hollywood are among those speaking out. A wide range of celebrities and influencers have joined marches and demonstrations. Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, HBO, Starz and other industry players used their social media accounts to call for justice and support the Movement for Black Lives. In New York, several theaters opened their doors to provide a safe space for protesters.

These are crucial steps. But there is much, much more to be done by an industry that has too often promoted harmful racial stereotypes, advanced the narrative of Black and Brown people as dangerous threats and endorsed the idea that police violence, and even torture, are both normal and acceptable.

Fortunately, there are a range of concrete actions that writers, performers, directors, executives, networks, studios and others in the film and television industry can take, right now, to fight racism and promote justice. Here are ten of them:

## 1. Consider a Stereotype Moratorium.

What if studios, networks and streaming services went an entire year without a single storyline featuring violent, menacing, dangerous Black men? A year without storylines



"Go ahead, make my day." There are consequences with *Dirty Harry's* cultural message. Photo: *squeakymarmot/Flickr*. Fair Use screenshot.

in which the only women of color are overly sexualized, rude and sarcastic, "sassy", "spicy" or "exotic"? A year without depictions of Arab, Muslim and South Asian Americans as national security threats? A year without images of immigrant characters engaged in harmful and unlawful activity? A year without depictions of Asian Americans as indelibly foreign, painfully wonky or one-dimensional "model minorities"? A year without erasing Native Americans as lost to history or inextricably, corruptly linked to casinos?

What if screenwriters and showrunners did a "bigotry pass" on their content, just as they do a pass or review of scripts for character, theme or humor? What if studio execs and network Standards and Practices departments considered implicit and explicit bias in their companies' content as a whole, and made decisions in part on that basis?

What if the unavailability of those tired and harmful tropes led to new, vibrant, nuanced characters and stories? And what if millions of Americans got to see themselves in the full, nuanced, flawed and phenomenal ways that reflect their lived reality? Let's give it a try.

## 2. Take responsibility for your part of the big picture.

It's easy—and comforting—to believe that the state of racial justice in our country does not rise or fall with any one film, show, episode or image. And, of course, that's true, especially in an era of 532 television shows and myriad streaming platforms. But the decades-long pattern of harmful, stereotypical and some-

times bigoted entertainment content is made up of thousands of *individual* works and millions of *individual* words and images. They are tiles in a mosaic that influences how Americans think about each other and themselves.

Just as the way in which you do or do not use your vote contributes to our larger political reality, the way in which you use your creative talent contributes to our collective perceptions of each other and the society that we aspire to be. Make sure that your contribution is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

## 3. Be accountable for the moral and message of your story

Know what your content is about and see that it reflects your values. Consider, for example, the underlying theme of Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* versus the underlying theme of Clint Eastwood's Oscar Award-winning *Unforgiven*. *Dirty Harry* tells viewers that our country has given too much deference to the constitutional rights of the accused, and must let cops be judge, jury, torturer and executioner. *Unforgiven* tells us that violence only begets more violence and that killing degrades the killer and society as well as the victim. As Eastwood's Will Munny tells another character in *Unforgiven*, "It's a hell of a thing, killing a man. You take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have."

As a moviegoer I enjoyed both films. I also found entertaining shows like *Homeland* and *24* that sometimes portrayed official torture in a flattering light. But before creating another property in which the protagonist is "forced" to flout the law and torture or kill in the name of "law and order", creatives must understand and take responsibility for the cultural message and consequences to which they are contributing.

## 4. Tell Human Stories about systemic problems and solutions

People respond to human stories, be it over the campfire or dinner table, via TikTok or in film and television. But the most important and impactful human stories are also about *Continued on next page*

systemic problems and solutions. Works like *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Roma*, *Parasite* or *Just Mercy* tell compelling and entertaining (and award-winning) human stories that also connect viewers to larger societal problems and, in some cases, potential solutions.

Not every Hollywood story can or should be about changing the world. But creators concerned about racial justice can contribute to new understandings while bringing in new audiences and revenue. Humanitas and Storyline Partners are among the organizations helping emerging and established screenwriters combine entertainment and conscience.

### **5. Imagine the world you want to see**

One of an artist's greatest gifts is the ability to depict not only the world as it is, but also the world as it could be. Consider as an example how *Black Panther* depicted a fictional African nation, Wakanda, untouched by colonialism, the slave trade or underdevelopment. It offered a powerful vision of AfroFuturism that has inspired thinkers and activists around the world. Here at home, a #WakandaTheVote campaign used screenings of the film to register new voters.

We similarly have no real-world example of a nation in which policing and incarceration have been replaced by culturally competent mental health interventions, a commitment to restorative justice and deep investment in opportunity for all. But activists and artists are envisioning that world, and Hollywood can follow suit.

### **6. Demand diversity throughout the industry**

Calling for greater diversity in the entertainment industry has become routine. But it's both critical and profoundly absent. The latest Hollywood Diversity Report from UCLA found that "people of color remained underrepresented on every industry employment front in 2019." Whereas people of color represented 40 percent of the U.S. population in 2018, they represented less than 14 percent of film writers, just 15 percent of film directors, and only 9 percent of studio heads. A Color of Change report found that 65 percent of television shows had zero Black writers, and only 17 percent had two or more Black writers.

Contributing to these dismal numbers are implicit and explicit racial and gender bias, nepotism and practices that replicate our nation's still-segregated social networks—some of the same dynamics that contribute to discriminatory policing and criminal justice.

Clearly, more aggressive and disruptive efforts are needed. One idea is borrowing from the NFL's recently-expanded "Rooney

Rule", which requires teams to interview two external candidates of color for head coaching vacancies and one for general manager roles. Under an additional NFL proposal, currently on hold, any team that hired a minority head coach would receive a six-slot bump for their subsequent year's third-round draft pick. The point is not that the NFL is a model of racial progress (it's not), but that new, sometimes uncomfortable, approaches are needed, including in Hollywood.

Diversity does not, of course, guarantee storytelling that dispels stereotypes or improves interracial understanding. But it usually helps. The era of peak TV has shown us that new, diverse storytellers expand the definition of "we the people" in the public consciousness. They are also, by the way, highly profitable. The same UCLA study found that, "in 2018, films with casts that were from 21 percent to 30 percent minority enjoyed the highest median global box office receipts, while films with casts that were from 41 percent to 50 percent minority enjoyed this distinction in 2019."

### **7. Divest from discriminatory locales and abusive companies.**

Hollywood wields tremendous economic power and needs to put its money where its mouth is on racial justice. A study released by the Motion Picture Association of America before the pandemic found that the American film and television industry supported 2.1 million jobs nationally, adding high quality domestic jobs and paying out \$49 billion to local businesses across the country. Just as some entertainment companies rightly punished North Carolina economically for its transphobic "bathroom bill", media companies must divest from regions and companies that exacerbate or actively contribute to the nation's unfair and discriminatory policing, detention and mass incarceration systems.

If Wall Street Banks can divest from private prisons, surely Hollywood can go further in eschewing injustice and reinvesting in places and companies committed to equality and inclusion. Conversely, Hollywood should focus its hiring, procurement and spending on places and faces that have been most excluded and exploited.

### **8. Support Racial Justice Organizations Led by People of Color**

This is a time of financial uncertainty for many people around the country and world. It's also a crucial time for those who are financially able to support organizations led by people of color focused on equal justice and opportunity for all. The Movement for Black Lives Fund, for example, supports Black-led

rapid response efforts and long-term strategy, policy and infrastructure investments in the movement for human rights and justice. Consider contributing or, if you can't, share them with your friends and followers.

### **9. Lift up your voice and the voices of others.**

We all have a voice and most of us have a vote. We must use them both to demand justice and equality. Some in the entertainment industry have a louder and more prominent voice than others, and with that great power comes great responsibility. The Opportunity Agenda is a helpful source of communication strategies and messaging to engage and persuade a variety of audiences on issues of racial equity, criminal justice reform and other social justice issues. Remember, too, that sometimes (frequently) being a good ally means acknowledging and supporting the voices of those who are directly affected by the issue.

### **10. Remember that we're all connected and have multiple identities**

In his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., famously said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." The human rights of African Americans are inextricably linked to the rights of other people of color, of women, of queer Americans, of immigrants, of indigenous peoples and, ultimately, to the health of our democracy. Addressing racial injustice and inclusion must happen alongside the continuing efforts of #MeToo, #TimesUp and other movements.

And because we all have multiple identities and experience discrimination in different ways, intersectionality matters. The discrimination that a Latinx woman experiences, for example, may be different from that experienced by either a Latinx man or a white woman. Understanding and responding to that complexity is key to becoming the society that we aspire to be.

Few of us have the resources, influence or bandwidth to do all of these things. But everyone in Hollywood can do some of them. There's no excuse for feeling helpless or hopeless in the face of inequality. Solutions are out there. ■

*Alan Jenkins is a Professor of Practice at Harvard Law School, co-founder and former President of The Opportunity Agenda, and a transmedia writer and content creator. He was a Director of Human Rights at the Ford Foundation.*

# MEMOIRS OF AN INTERNATIONAL LIFE

The following are excerpts from the self-published memoirs of **William Gamble**, who worked at the Ford Foundation from 1955 to 1975 across all international programs: Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean. He marked his one-hundredth birthday earlier this year, a celebration covered in the Winter 2020 issue of this newsletter.

His book is sub-titled “Remembering: Growing Up, Living and Working on Five Continents”, and in these excerpts he tells of when, in 1954, he was approached by the Foundation and offered a contract. He was working in Burma, now Myanmar, with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), assigned to the country’s Education Division of Agricultural Education and stationed at the State Teacher Training College in Kambe, a suburb of Rangoon.

The memoir, as anticipated, is replete with personal and professional details, from mundane to physically harrowing, painting a full and fascinating picture of the life of a Foundation overseas representative and his family in the early days of Ford’s international work, including snapshots of some of the staff who helped develop the Foundation’s international program.

The full book is available online, free, at [http://laffsociety.org/images/news/Bill\\_Gamble\\_Memoirs-of-an-International-Life.pdf](http://laffsociety.org/images/news/Bill_Gamble_Memoirs-of-an-International-Life.pdf). The first excerpt begins “in early March 1954”.

About this time, The Ford Foundation established an office in Rangoon. **Dr. John Everton** and his family took up residence as the Representative of the Foundation. The Foundation was looking for interesting projects which would be in keeping with its policy to assist in projects that would advance human welfare. The Minister and Director of Education asked Dr. Everton to see if they would be interested in supporting the development of the Pyimana Agricultural Institute, since the U.S. TCA was being terminated.

John had hired **Richard (Dick) Morse**, who had been working in Education under the TCA program, to be his deputy, and Dick was quite familiar with the plans for the Institute. After consultation with the Foundation’s New York office, they advised the Minister that the Foundation would like to support the devel-

opment of the Institute. The Minister and the Director of Education then strongly recommended that the Ford Foundation hire me to lead the development of the program.

John contacted me and we discussed the possibility of my joining the Foundation and continuing my work in Burma at the end of my 2-year contract, which was only about 6 months away. I was enthusiastic about the future of the Agricultural Institute but at that time knew nothing about the Ford Foundation. John laid out the proposal that the Foundation was prepared to provide major support for the overall program of the



Institute as well as hire me to lead it. This was very encouraging since I knew that, while the Government would provide support for local costs, the cost of faculty from abroad (which was needed) and the foreign exchange cost for equipment and supplies would need to be covered by external funding....

After considerable discussion with John, and with a strong request from the Minister and Director of Education, Virginia [his wife] and I decided we would accept a position with the Ford Foundation, if I could get a 2-year leave of absence from TCA. I put in my request for the leave of absence and was somewhat surprised to receive a cable from the then Secretary of State, Harold Stassen, approving the leave. In early June the details of my leave and a 2-year contract with the Ford Foundation to commence in January 1955 were completed....

I continued working almost full time on preparation for the opening of the college, which was given the Burmese name equivalent to the State Agricultural Institute. I had to draft a proposal for the 2-year academic

program—subjects, number of semesters for each, a rough outline for each course—and identify the related fieldwork. I knew that the students coming in would [be] high school graduates from various ethnic groups, mostly from rural villages but with little or no real experience in agricultural and livestock production. We expected the graduates to leave Pinyinmana prepared to directly work with and advise farmers or teach agricultural and livestock production in high schools, so they had to gain considerable practical experience.

With a great deal of consultation with my Burmese colleagues, it all began to come together....

In actually planning the class schedule, we had to consider the customary Burmese meal schedule. We decided on morning tea at 6 a.m., practical fieldwork from 6:30 until 8:30, breakfast at 9:30, classes from 10:30 until 3:30, dinner at 4 p.m. and then individual project activities or sports. We also decided that all 2nd year students would spend 3 weeks each semester in a village, living with families and working directly with the villagers on specific agricultural practices, with regular supervisory visits by Institute Staff....

He and his family moved into their house in early July, “the upper floor of a large brick bungalow”.

The house had not been occupied for 10 years, so repairs were required (which were underway). An outdoor toilet and servants’ quarters had to be constructed, and the well cleaned. We drew water from the well with a bucket until we got a hand pump rigged to pump water to the tank in the attic of the house. There was no electricity, so we had to find kerosene and gas pressure lamps and a kerosene refrigerator and stove (we used a kerosene refrigerator throughout our 5 years in Pinyinmana).

It was just like going back to my parents’ early living conditions on the farm, and perhaps even a bit more primitive....

Later that month he traveled to New York City to officially become an employee of the Foundation.

My only contact with the Foundation up to that time was with John Everton, the Foundation representative, so I did not know what to expect. I was very pleased to receive a nice welcome at their offices on Madison Avenue, just behind St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The staff was very friendly and efficient in process-



The agricultural institute where Gamble taught

ing my paperwork, arranging for a physical examination, and briefing me on the Foundation's operating procedures. It quickly became obvious that I was joining a talented group in an organization with a clearly defined goal of the advancement of human welfare.

I was given authority to recruit an agricultural engineering specialist for Pyinmana and after checking many references, I flew to Chicago and visited **George Miller** and family in Medaryville, Indiana. George and his wife had lived in Liberia for a few years when he worked for Firestone as a field engineer on their rubber plantation. I was very impressed with George's qualifications and personality...so I offered George the position and he accepted. It proved to be a good choice....

After our return from the United States, I continued my teaching duties in farm crops and supervision of students' fieldwork. I also started teaching chemistry and had to spend a great deal of time studying to keep ahead of the students....

It was soon evident that the students were not sufficiently advanced in English to participate in English in class. Most could express themselves in writing and understood English fairly well, but could not express themselves speaking it. At the same time, I could under-



A rice field in Pyinmana

stand Burmese quite well but could not express myself as well in the language as was needed for teaching, so we worked out a system that met our needs. I lectured in English and led class discussions speaking English, while the students responded in Burmese. It was really very successful....

*He visited India in October 1955 to observe agricultural colleges and village development projects funded by the Foundation. He learned much about the Foundation, agriculture in India—and Burma.*

I appreciated how much better off Burma was than India. One difference that was particularly noticeable was the role of women. In Burma, when I visited a village or a home, the women were at ease and welcomed me, while in India when I visited a village, the women all retreated behind walls or covered their faces and would not talk to me. There were some women who worked on hand looms or as teachers in the villages impacted by Gandhi's village development programs who were more open, but they were rare....

Soon after I returned from India, we had a visit from the Vice President of the Ford Foundation's International Program, **Dr. F.F. (Frosty) Hill**, his wife Lillian and daughter Peggy, along with Dr. Everton of the Rangoon office. Frosty was educated as an agricultural economist and had an agricultural background in Canada, and Lillian was a plant geneticist. We very much enjoyed their visit. Frosty was born in Canada but had emigrated to the United States when he went to college. He had a distinguished career in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and had served as Provost of Cornell University. Ours was one of the first agricultural programs they had visited since joining the Foundation and Frosty became a strong supporter of the program and my work throughout his time as Vice President. This was the first time any of them had slept under mosquito nets

and I remember they had lots of giggles while trying to get into their beds and get the nets tucked in.

I also accompanied them to Mandalay to visit the College of Agriculture.... We drove to Mandalay in a convoy with a truckload of soldiers in front, and a jeep full of soldiers following us as our security force....

There were still many insurgent troops in our area so the army was on regular alert and made frequent sweeps through surrounding villages, searching for insurgent leaders. When captured, the leaders were transported to Rangoon for trial. Often, for lack of evidence, they were soon released. The military, especially the Gurkhas, were upset about this and I remember the captain telling me that when they captured one insurgent leader for the third time they decided to not send him to Rangoon. Rather, they offered him the opportunity to try to escape, and told him if



The family's first leave, on a cruise ship in Hawaii.

he made it over the hill they would never seek him again. Of course, he didn't make it over the hill....

Visitors continued to swamp us every week. We had a number of visitors from the Foundation offices in Rangoon and New York—the Controller from New York and **Vern Atwater**, Director of Administration, New York. The Controller was a "dark suit, white shirt and tie" person. I finally got him to remove his suit jacket when I took him to visit our students in villages! Vern Atwater was a good guest and much interested in our living conditions. I arranged for him to visit the hospital where there was a patient dying of hydrophobia (from a bite by a rabid dog) and another patient who had been badly mauled by a tiger near his village. We observed many other patients in various states of emergency. Our doctor in Pyinmana always said if he had to operate on one of us he would do it on our dining room table since that would be much more sanitary than the hospital. ■

# GORDON PERKIN, A “CHAMPION” OF GLOBAL HEALTH

**G**ordon Wesley Perkin, a major figure in promoting family planning and international public health programs for more than 50 years, died August 21 at a retirement home in Seattle. He was 85.

He graduated from medical school in his native Canada and practiced medicine in rural areas in that country but had long been interested in reproductive health, which led him first to work for Ortho Pharmaceutical and then Planned Parenthood in New York City.

Mr. Perkin joined the Ford Foundation in 1966 after working with Planned Parenthood, and his interest and experience led to postings in Thailand, Ghana, Geneva, Brazil and Mexico.

In 1980, after 14 years with the Foundation, he assumed the presidency of PATH, an international health NGO in Seattle, which he had co-founded with two colleagues, **Richard Mahoney** of the Ford Foundation's Population office and Gordon Duncan of the Battelle Northwest Laboratories.

After overseeing the growth of PATH into a major international organization, Gordon moved to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in late 1999, where he led the Global Health Program through its first several years. He retired in 2005.

The following is a tribute to the man and his work written for the newsletter by his colleague and friend, Richard Mahoney:

Global health has lost one of its greatest champions.

Gordon Perkin was a modest person who avoided the limelight, but his accomplishments were extraordinary.

During his long association with, and support of, Planned Parenthood, he recommended the Ford Foundation provide support for three regional offices that would coordinate fundraising from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. This enabled Planned Parenthood to receive Federal funding for the first time.

During his time in Thailand for Ford, Gordon developed the first midwife family planning training program, which became a model for other family planning programs. In Ghana, he helped establish the first national



**PATH cofounders Rich Mahoney (left), Gordon Perkin (center), and Gordon Duncan (right). Photo: PATH**

family planning program in Sub-Saharan Africa. His assignment to Geneva was his first opportunity to work on the global stage, playing a key role in establishing the World Health Organization's Program for Research Development and Training in Human Reproduction (HRP). As a hallmark of his later work, HRP's strategy included forming networks of investigators in developing countries.

While in Brazil, Gordon helped establish PLAMIR (Latin American Program for Research in Reproduction), which brought important support to underfunded investigators throughout Latin America. In 1972, still in Brazil, he wrote Contraceptive Introduction, Manufacture and Supply (CIMS), a memo that first laid out the overarching strategy that would guide the rest of his career.

In the early 1970s, family planning was still a very nascent movement making slow progress in helping families decide the size of the family. Gordon saw that for family planning to reach success, it would have to ensure the introduction of new and existing contraceptives, their sufficient manufacture and their cost-effective supply. The CIMS memo led to an international feasibility study under the aegis of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the leadership of Dr. Nafis Sadik, then Deputy Director General of UNFPA.

The feasibility study led to the recommendation to establish an international program charged with carrying out or facilitating the activities foreseen in the CIMS memo. An initial effort was made to add this program to existing organizations. Eventually, Perkin, Mahoney and Duncan concluded that a new

organization was needed.

Under the guidance of the late **Oscar “Bud” Harkavy**, Program Officer in Charge of the Population office at Ford, the three prepared a detailed plan that the Foundation funded with a small start-up grant. Originally called PIACT (Program for the Introduction and Adaptation of Contraceptive Technology), this new organization gradually expanded its activities into health and assumed the name of Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). PATH has grown to be the largest international NGO concerned with health tech-

nology. Its budget is about \$300 million per year with 75 offices throughout the developing world. PATH is an outstanding example of the capability of the Ford Foundation to initiate global change.

There were many major achievements by PATH under Gordon's leadership. It managed a major program to upgrade contraceptive manufacture in China to bring it to international standards. Peggy Morrow, who led that program, cited Gordon's unflinching support. “Gordon modeled a boldness, opportunistic in the best sense, in order to address real needs and to achieve the greatest impact,” she said, “in this case, helping to establish 19 contraceptive factories providing safer, more effective contraceptives for over 50 million Chinese couples.”

Also, during these years, PATH launched the International Task Force for Hepatitis B Immunization, which led to the initial successful efforts to deliver affordable hepatitis B vaccine to developing countries.

PATH developed, scaled and introduced many products designed to meet the needs of underserved communities and address outstanding challenges in maternal and neonatal health, immunization, infectious disease diagnostics and family planning. Some of these products, including Vaccine Vial Monitors (VVM), auto-disable syringes and delivery kits, altered standard practice in global health.

Debra Kristensen, who led the VVM effort, noted, “Despite his responsibilities as PATH's president, Gordon managed to have a detailed technical understanding of

our many ongoing projects and successfully utilized 'management by walking around' to engage staff members at all levels of the organization. We welcomed his drop-in visits as his motives were clearly to learn more to support our work, which he effectively did when high-level engagement was needed with international agencies or collaborators. Gordon was a tireless and passionate advocate for innovations that promised to positively impact health in low resource settings."

Following months of informal discussion with William Gates, Sr., whom Gordon met through the Seattle Planned Parenthood affiliate, he was introduced to Bill Gates, then in the initial stages of laying out the strategy of what would be the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Perkin convinced Gates to focus on health and, in particular, to support the development of such new health technologies as vaccines and drugs.

When Gates hired Gordon as the first head of the Global Health Program, he had a platform from which he could robustly follow through on the vision of the CIMS memo, but in all the high priority diseases in developing countries in addition to family planning.

He initiated the funding of several Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) for malaria, diarrheal diseases, tuberculosis and others. Again, these PDPs were organized

around the principles of the CIMS memo, for in addition to product development they were concerned with introduction, manufacture and supply. To cite just three examples, these PDPs have led to the development, introduction and affordable supply of new drugs against malaria and new vaccines against cholera and meningitis.

Gordon's boldest initiative at Gates was to initiate funding for a global vaccine procurement mechanism that is today GAVI, an alliance of public and private organizations promoting immunization worldwide. The Foundation made two initial grants totaling \$1.5 billion, and GAVI since has procured and supplied billions of dollars of vaccines that have saved the lives of millions of children and helped reduce infant mortality rates significantly.

Even after his departure, Gordon's vision was sustained at PATH with the creation of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC), the largest reproductive health collaboration in the world. As noted by Jane Hutchings, who led its development, "The Coalition has critically changed the world of reproductive health supplies, and its emphasis on partnership is a clear reflection of Gordon's appreciation of and support for collaborative efforts."

One can draw a straight line from the CIMS memo to PATH to PDPs to GAVI and

to the RHSC. Gordon's vision, conceived in the early 1970s while with the Ford Foundation, has changed the world.

Gordon served on the boards of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Planned Parenthood of Western Washington, World Neighbors, Facing the Future and Terrowode Women's Fund in Uganda, among others.

In 2009, in recognition of his contributions, Gordon was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada, one of that country's highest civilian honors.

Gordon's modesty was clearly shown in his eulogy to Bud Harkavy last September. He gave Bud the credit for making it possible for him to achieve what he did. Gordon wrote, "You were always supportive, encouraging and a great mentor. I learned much from your guidance and support. You were probably the most influential person in my life. I will be forever grateful."

Gordon is survived by his wife of nearly 63 years, Elizabeth A. Perkin, known as "Wib", as well as their sons, Scott and Stuart, daughters-in-law Mary and Crissy, and grandchildren Siena and Laurel.

His elder son, Scott, said, "Dad always felt it was possible for people to accomplish great things, if they didn't worry about who gets the credit."

Gordon lived his life that way. ■

## LAFFing Parade



**Andrea Taylor** has been appointed the first senior diversity officer at Boston University, charged with forming an anti-racism working group of leaders from throughout the university to examine policies affecting diversity, inclu-

sion and equity for students, faculty and staff.

The group, said the university in making the announcement, "will examine processes and policies that may inhibit diversity, equity and inclusion..., make recommendations for modifying those policies and practices and develop metrics for monitoring progress... with an aim toward removing systemic racism and bias from the university..."

"It's not easy," Taylor said, "to bring about such a shift as is being proposed in Boston University and the greater society. But I think the time has come and there seems to be a willingness and a recognition that there's no time like the present that we really need to get on this."

Taylor has relinquished her position on

the university's Board of Trustees, where she has been a member since 2009, in order to assume her new position.

She was most recently the president and chief executive officer of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Alabama, becoming head of that civil rights organization after eight years as director of Citizenship and Public Affairs for the Microsoft Corporation.

Before joining Microsoft, she was director of the media program at the Ford Foundation from 2001 to 2004.

Andrea has a long personal and family connection to Boston University. Eight other members of her family graduated from BU, including both parents and an uncle, and she earned her bachelor's degree there in 1968.

She and her family also have a decades-long connection with the national struggle for civil rights. As a teenager, she joined her uncle in the March on Washington, and while at BU she was a member of an African-American student group that, as part of a protest movement, occupied the college's administration building.

**Kim Lew** is the new president and chief executive officer of the Columbia Investment Management Company, responsible for man-

aging Columbia University's more than \$10 billion endowment.

She has been vice president and chief investment officer of Carnegie Corporation of New York since 2007, where she oversaw the investment portfolio of Carnegie's \$3.5 billion endowment.



Prior to joining Carnegie, she was a portfolio strategist at the Ford Foundation and then Senior Manager of Private Equity for more than a decade, beginning in 1994.

Lew earned a bachelor's degree from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and a master's of business administration degree from the Harvard Business School.

"In a career that has spanned three decades," said Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University, "Ms. Lew has established herself as a thoughtful and innovative investor with an immersive approach that yields impressive results."

**Susan Hairston**, a member of the Common Council of Summit, N.J., is one of two public  
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## LAFfing Parade

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figures in that city who will receive this year's "Demmy" Award for Distinguished Service from the Summit Municipal Democratic Committee.

She is being honored along with the city's former mayor, Jordan Glatt.

Susan joined the Council in a special election last year to fill a vacant seat, and is chairperson of the Safety and Health Committee, a member of the Law and Labor Committee and liaison to six community committees, including Affordable Housing and Labor negotiations.

She has a long record of involvement in community affairs, including two terms on Summit's Board of Education, as a governor for Union County College and Foundation and as chairwoman of the Municipal Democratic Committee. She co-chaired the Mayor's Forum on Diversity and was a trustee for the Providing Educational Possibilities Foundation.

Susan went to work at the Ford Foundation in 1997 as a senior grants administrator and, when she left in 2016, was director of the Office of Program Operations and Services.

She wrote about the "confluence of her philanthropic and political careers" in an article in the Winter 2019 issue of the newsletter titled, "My Life at Ford and in Politics: Pursuing the Audacious".



**Nazeema Mohamed**, who had worked as a program officer for social justice in the Ford Foundation's South Africa office, has been elected to a four-year term as deputy chair of the University of Cape

Town (UCT) Council. The university also elected Mamokgethi Phakeng the new chair of the council, making them the first women in UCT's history to head its "crucial governance, ceremonial and executive roles".

The university, in a statement announcing their election, noted that the women have "the task of leading a collective that is responsible for steering the institution at a governance level." The council is comprised of the heads of various university committees, including finance, audit and risk, human resources and buildings and developments. ■

## IN MEMORIAM

**Constance H. Buchanan**, who played a major role in developing a women's study program at the Harvard Divinity School before joining the Ford Foundation to oversee a new initiative exploring the role of religion in justice and human rights issues, died September 16 at the age of 73.

Ms. Buchanan had been a faculty member and associate dean at the Harvard Divinity School (HDS) for more than 20 years, and for six years during that time was a special assistant to Derek Bok, president of Harvard University, helping guide a university-wide project to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

But it was her work as director of the Women's Studies in Religion Program (WSRP) at HDS that stood out in a long career that put "women at the center of the dialogue on the forces that shape societies and cultures", said a statement from the school.

She was named director of the program in 1977, four years after it was begun "in response to the need to transform theological education to reflect the unprecedented presence of women as candidates for the ministry and students of religion." By the time she left in 1997 to work at Ford, it was an "internationally recognized center for research on faith, gender, race and sexual orientation".

Said Ann Braude, who succeeded her as director of WSRP, "She really invented the WSRP out of whole cloth. She had to be able to imagine what was possible, and she had to be able to inspire people to believe that women could have a voice where they had none. She was the catalyst who could both imagine and could bring it to fruition. That took intelligence, commitment, vision and, more than anything, faith in women."

It was those qualities, and her long list of accomplishments, that led to her appointment at Ford to develop a new program in 1997 focused on religion in what was then called the Education, Knowledge and Religion Unit of the Education, Media Arts and Culture Program. She became senior program officer in 2000, and retired from the Foundation in 2007.

"Connie came to the Foundation to begin a new program that would explore religion's role in advancing justice and human rights," said **Susan Berresford**, a former president of the Ford Foundation. "This was a complex and often sensitive area of work, and one that touched on many cultures and tra-

ditions around the world.

"Connie made a series of grants over her years at Ford that spanned original research into overlooked religious histories, popular writing about values and priorities related to religious traditions, support for innovative social service and community engagement by religious leaders, and gatherings of spiritual leaders concerned with justice and fairness, human rights and development.

"Connie's personality and intellect were key to her success at Ford. She was witty, smart, energetic and optimistic. I loved talking with her, and continued to see her after she left Ford but was still living nearby. We would have lunch in her apartment and catch up about people we admired and what was happening in the world around us.

"Her determination to remain active and engaged despite a tough illness was an inspiration."

"Connie Buchanan was a truly remarkable person," writes **Cyrus Driver**, who during his 13 years at the Ford Foundation working on education issues occasionally collaborated with Ms. Buchanan. "She was compassionate, generous, witty and humble. She was at the same time a profound intellect, carrying forward ideas that changed how many people thought, driven by the recognition that ideas truly matter.

"For many progressives and center-left people, the prevailing wisdom included variants on the notion that religion was an 'opiate of the people'. Connie held a much different view. She understood religion to be a system of values that deeply shaped people's world views, and both reflected and shaped society and culture. She saw religion as a contended force that was foundational to movements for justice or, conversely, could animate oppressive white patriarchal dominance," said Driver, who now is Senior Director of the National Public Education Support Fund.

"She did not see religion as a tool to be manipulated but rather as a driving cultural force that needed, first, to be recognized and understood. Her program at Ford focused on elevating scholars and public intellectuals who could help us all to adopt a new outlook on the centrality of religion, and to some measure she was successful.

"Those who worked with her in the Education, Knowledge, Religion (and later Education, Sexuality, Religion) Unit, and

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# THE SPIRIT OF 76

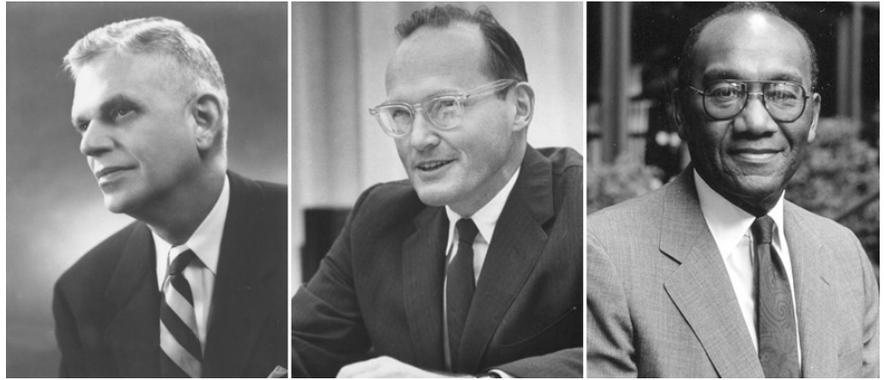
By Howard R. Dressner

*This article appeared in the Spring 1996 issue of the newsletter and, with eloquent and searing language, portrays the world in which the Ford Foundation found its expanding voice—and still struggles. Howard Dressner died on the last day of 2002 at the age of 83.*

It is now three score and sixteen years since I joined the human race. Though I was totally unaware, the world was seething with problems. Not the least of which was how to put this Humpty Dumpty world together again after a war so horrendous that it cried out for a Roman numeral.

As in the 20 centuries and more before 1919, poverty, inhumanity, ethnic and racial hostilities, crime, religious animosities, etc., etc., were everywhere. The Garden of Eden wasn't even on the map.

Six months after my unheralded birth in the Bronx, my parents whisked me off to York, Pennsylvania (25 miles from the sacred place Lincoln gave his Gettysburg Address), where my father served as a foreman of a shirt factory. Sixteen years later, I was on my



Howard Dressner's Ford Foundation career was linked with three presidents: Henry Heald, McGeorge "Mac" Bundy and Franklin Thomas.

way to the Big City. The first stop: business school at New York University, where a D in accounting convinced me that I was not cut out for balance sheets and mergers.

By 1940, with college sheepskin in hand, I had become dimly aware that the world around me was seething with problems: Poverty, war in Europe, etc.

In 1941, totally without the courage of Alexander the Great, I found myself in the Army. I would have gladly transferred to

dancing class, but Uncle Sam's draft number didn't cooperate. Need I tell you again that the world was seething with problems: the debacle at Pearl Harbor, poverty, etc.

Four and a half years later—after marching interminably and carrying my duffel bag through Fort Monroe in Virginia, Hawaii, Wales, London, across the English Channel, France, Belgium, Germany—Major Dressner left Europe to rejoin the gorgeous girl I married in 1942.

By 1946, the two explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki had rocked mother Earth and tens of thousands of soldiers had died, and I became acutely aware that the world was seething with the same problems—and more—as in 1926, 1066, 200 B.C., etc. With an agonizing addition: the barbaric murder of millions of Jewish men, women and children. The chill that enveloped me when I began to comprehend more fully the enormity and bestiality of the crime has never left my body, mind or soul. Inhumanity had reached its zenith.

That chill, and a newly emerging feeling that maybe I could do something to help the wobbly world, led me to Columbia Law School. My newly planned route: law school to public service.

The road ahead took odd turns. In 1948, in order to have a roof over our heads and bagels on the table, I took on teaching public speaking at NYU's School of Commerce. In 1952, I veered over to university administration.

**Henry Heald** was then president of NYU, the same Heald who was appointed president of the Ford Foundation in 1956. That turned out to be a link to my next adventure.

In 1964, Heald brought me to the Ford Foundation as assistant to **Clarence Faust**,  
*Continued on next page*

## In Memoriam

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many others across the Foundation, grew in our collective understanding, and perhaps the broader field of progressive change shifted a bit away from an overly narrow or dismissive view of religion.

"Connie was an intellectual powerhouse within the Foundation in other ways. For example, from approximately 2004 to 2007, she led a committee within the Foundation to more clearly define our shared orientation towards diversity and equity. She often said 'diversity is a fact, pluralism is the aspiration', meaning that we only need to go out on 42nd Street to see people who identify among myriad categories of difference—race, gender, sexuality, language, etc.—while pluralism meant seeing, hearing and valuing each person and each category with full respect and recognition of the dignity of their humanity.

"The report of the committee shaped perspectives about how our work should

strengthen such diverse voices and perspectives, and what our stance towards organizations, and work within the Foundation itself, needed to be in order to further this aim. The report stands the test of time and current moment.

"Connie struggled with a neuromuscular disease that likely was Parkinson's, though she often wondered about her actual diagnosis. Yet, she never slowed in her work and in her drive to promote new ways of thinking about religion, values, difference and the valuing of people. Despite her illness, she was consistently optimistic and generous with her time, often holding court in her fourth floor office—like the Harvard intellectual she had been for 20 years before coming to Ford—with one or two or three people on the issues of the day, the work we each may have been doing, or simply about our lives and families.

"She was a true friend to me and many others, an inspiration for strength and a real gift to the Foundation community and our broader networks. All who knew her are deeply saddened by her loss." ■

The LAFF Society  
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## From the Archive

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formerly dean of liberal arts at the University of Chicago, then a vice president of the Foundation. The world was still seething with problems, and the Ford Foundation was energetically attacking most of them.

In 1967...I was appointed by Heald's successor, **McGeorge the Bundy Tiger**, to be secretary of the Foundation. I was speechless. For 20 years, I found myself in the midst of all the problems the world was seething with. From population explosions to race relations to debilitating urban areas. Bundy served as president until 1979, pausing momentarily along the way to appoint me vice president and general counsel in 1971.

From 1967 until I retired in 1984, my position brought me to every board meeting, to every executive committee meeting, to countless exchanges with **Jay Stratton** and **Alex Heard**, who served as chairmen of the board during the period 1966 through 1984. They were my tutors and inspiration.

*Mirabile dictu*, I was even present for the inner-sanctum deliberations that resulted in the election of **Frank Thomas** in June 1979.

The board couldn't locate calm, collected, cool-hand Frank after its deliberations; ergo, I was commissioned by the board to find and inform the president-elect. Thus it was that, a few hours later, I was the first Founditioner to talk to Frank following his election....

After I retired from the Ford Foundation in 1984, I joined a law firm where I specialized in charitable law. My plan was to savor the experience for a year. I stayed for six....

During that long stretch from 1964 to 1991—and thereafter—the world was, as usual, seething with problems. I began to suspect it would be the same a thousand or two thousand years down the road when, lamentably for me, I would not be around to see the moving picture.

So here I am, now, gratefully one of the world's ancients and still able to say, Oh, what a wonderful morning.

There are more spaces, vast spaces, than fill-ins in this brief accounting. But you have other things to do than hearing more about the life of a guy who held aloft one of the flags in the Foundation's passing parade. And so do I. ■

## WE COULD USE IDEAS AND ARTICLES

The newsletter is always looking for ideas and articles from members, anything that helps illuminate the Foundation's work and the experiences of our members.

There is a good array of examples in each issue, from news accounts to opinion pieces. We like to hear what members are doing: new positions, new ventures, what they are writing and saying.

Reflections and recollections are especially of interest, for they tell the general story of the Foundation and the particular stories of individuals who contributed to the Foundation's history and have been making history of their own.

The newsletter and LAFF's website provide an opportunity for members to share insights drawn from what they have done, and their experiences with what they are doing now.

Ideas and articles can be sent to John LaHoud, editor of the newsletter, at [jlahoud25@hotmail.com](mailto:jlahoud25@hotmail.com)