

THE LAFF SOCIETY

For the men and women engaged in Life After the Ford Foundation

Fall 1994

No. 9

Gift Inspiration

It had to happen eventually. Someone has given a membership in The LAFF Society as a gift.

The giver is Chika A. Iritani of the Foundation's New Delhi office, who gave the subscription to F.C. Bhambri on the occasion of his retirement from the Foundation after 35 years of service.

What's Due?

Holding the inflation line, LAFF dues remain at \$5 a year. You can tell whether you're paid up by examining your name on the mailing label; the number following is the date you are paid up to. 1995 dues are now due. You may pay more than one year if you wish.

We are still far from our potential membership, so if you run into former colleagues, tell them about LAFF and urge them to join.

Send checks and correspondence to The LAFF Society, c/o Roditti, Box 163, 954 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Write!

This newsletter is a two-way street. One way is to read it. The other is to write us something--news about your own activities, or short essays, reminiscences, or whatever else you want to ventilate (within the usual bounds).

Longer pieces should run not more than 500 to 700 words, say.

If we don't hear more, and from more people, the street will run one way, and sooner or later off the edge.

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Thanks. --The Editor.

The LAFFing Parade

Matt Cullen (Public Affairs), responding to the appeal for reader literary contributions in the last LAFF Letter, conveys two observations: "Blessed be he, who having nothing to say, can't be persuaded to say it," and "You can't get more light from a bulb by pressing harder on the switch." Thus he recommends that we "rest on our laurels, declare a period of restful repose - say, five years - and become an intermittent episodic event rather than struggling artificially to be a continuing one." (Hughes Bay Road, Lope Island, Washington). Other readers' reactions are welcome-Ed.

Emmett Carson (Governance and Public Policy) has been appointed president of the Minneapolis Foundation (A 200 Foshay Tower, 821 Marquette Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55402), thereby increasing the former Ford Foundation presence in the Twin Cities. Earlier this year **John A. Foster-Bey, Jr.** (Urban Poverty, Program Related Investments) joined the Northwest Area Foundation as vice president-program. (E-1201 First National Bank Building, 332 Minnesota St., St. Paul, MN 55101). **Terry T. Saario** (Education), as noted earlier, is a president of Northwest Area. **William A. Diaz** (Governance and Public Policy) is a staff member of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota (301-19th Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55455). Coincidentally, Diaz in October chaired a panel at a National Conference on Race Relations and Civil Rights at which **Richard Magat** (Reports, 1982) presented a paper on black workers, labor unions, and foundations.

Sheila Gordon (National Affairs) received the Alumni Federation Medal at the 1994 Columbia University commencement. She was Alumnae Trustee, president of the Associate Alumni of Barnard, and founding member of the Barnard Business and Professional Women.



Mary Hannon-Haley (new married name) served in the Library for 22 years then left in April 1991. After marriage and travel, took a job with the Library of Congress, then switched two years ago the Urban Institute. She survived a fire in her house on Christmas night, 1992, and spent six months repairing the damage. (1243 Independence Ave., S.E., Washington 20003)

Lilith M. Haynes (MEA-Cairo Field Office, 1976-79) is now Program Administrator, Harvard Institute for English Language Programs, Division of Continuing Education. Writes, "I look forward to being able to take a day off for the next reunion." (51 Brattle St. Cambridge, MA 02138).

Norman MacLeod (Treasurer's Office) is recovering from open-heart surgery and is interested in learning of the whereabouts and activities of Rowan Gaither's assistant and secretary, whose names, unfortunately, he does not recall.



Iris Harris (Vice President's Office) invites LAFF Society members to volunteer for Big Apple Greeter, an organization set up in 1992 by Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger. Iris

(cont. on p. 2)

The LAFF Society

c/o Roditti, Box 168
954 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Vice President: Oscar Harkavy
Secretary - Treasurer: Esther Roditti

Coordinating Committee:

Whitman Bassow
Harcourt Dodds
William Gornbley
Gladys Krasner
Jane McCarthy
Siobhan Oppenheimer-Nicolau
Marshall Robinson
Esther Roditti
Robert Tollas
Basil Whiting

Editor: Richard Magat
Graphic Designer: Ruth Neumann

most unusual in the world of philanthropy: He was a good listener....

"Frequently unrecognized... was his long and useful citizenship in New Jersey [in] schooling, higher education, and public broadcasting. When New Jerseyites come to Manhattan, they are often seen as outlanders--citizens of a less complete world....Ed gracefully ignored this challenge to his sophistication. He just did his thing in his own way. His strength was the common touch."

Other speakers were Fr. Jim Larkin, Jerome Murphy, Sharon Franz, Terry Clarke, and Louis Rabineau.

Consolations of Retirement

by F. Champion Ward

Prompted by Robert Schrank's comments on retirement in the last issue ["On Doing Nothing"] Mr. Ward has sent along his own rumination on the same subject. Excerpts follow. The full text may be obtained from him at Evergreen Woods, Apt. 336.28 North Hill Rd., North Branford, CT 06471.

Once you've decided that from now on what you are will be more important than what you do, you'll find many things to do that follow from what you've decided to be.

Take the old trio "healthy, wealthy, and wise." I can add nothing helpful on being well or remaining solvent....How to be wise, however, is less well understood.

So here are some suggestions:

Be Quaint

If you're blessed with descendants whose good opinion you cherish, it's best not to try to keep up to date. An effort to be with "with it" is sure to fail and will only embarrass the next two generations, particularly your grandchildren, who rather count on you to remind them of times when there was no faxing and, as they like to believe, people helped each other through the Great Depression.

You are also free to reminisce. The future is now short but the past is long. So gaze back on the latter, on the worlds you've lived in, the events you've witnessed, what you did or tried to do, the friends and family you've had, and see what, on reflection, you make of it all. It may help to imagine a fascinated descendant, curious to learn about an ancestor who lived and loved and worked in another time....

The LAFFing Parade

(cont. from p. 1)

was on the Benefit Committee for the 1993 dinner. The organization serves domestic and foreign visitors to New York. Special projects research disabled persons, ethnically diverse neighborhoods, and international business travelers. (1 Centre Street, 19th Floor, New York 10007).

Ed Meade... A Celebration

The theme for a memorial service for Edward J. Meade Jr., who died May 20 (see Summer 1994 Letter, pp. 7-8) was "A celebration of a life dedicated to learning, teaching, and giving." It was held at Montclair State College June 17. Excerpts from a eulogy by Harold Howe II follow:

"Ed supported and enriched the thinking and action of numerous other staff members at the Foundation. His ideas and suggestions undergirded the quality and effectiveness of their work. I count myself among them.... [His] Style was open and direct and was accompanied by a virtue that is

Art Lore... Continued

The latest word on the Three-Fords fresco (see Letter, No. 8, Summer 1994, p. 4) is that it remains, crated, in the Foundation building!

Which brings up another art tale, reports Charles DiStefano, who was in charge of the Foundation's art work inventory. During a Trustee's meeting,

Henry Ford II brought in a 16x20 framed cartoon and had it hung near the elevator. Possibly a New Yorker cartoon, it showed a person emptying a basket out a window and two persons looking up from the street. The caption read (to the best of DiStefano's recollection), something like, "It must be the Ford Foundation giving out their grants."

After it was on display for a few days, DiStefano was ordered to remove it to the Building Services office. "I never saw it again," he reports. Has anyone??



Be Kind

In retirement, when the excuse of being too busy is no longer available, there is time to be nice to people. After years of disuse, being thoughtful may be difficult at first. But gradually you will find time and inclination to visit the sick, help the poor, resume old and half-forgotten friendships, answer letters of limited importance, and support good causes....

Be Amused

In one of his "Dialogues in Limbo," Santayana has the ancient philosopher Democritus say that "The young man who will not weep is a savage, and the old man who will not laugh is a fool." Age helps us to recognize and accept our modest place in the human comedy and thus spares us and those we care about the unrelieved solemnity that so often attends old age.

Paul Ylvisaker: Toward the End

by Henry Saltzman

For those who either worked with Paul Ylvisaker or know him through his writings, lectures, teaching and extensive consulting with other foundations, I would like to share this recollection of a last meeting spent together in his hospital room, the day before his death.

The call came from Alma Armstrong, Paul's loyal former secretary, reporting that he had suffered a massive heart attack at Washington's National Airport and that he was in critical condition. By a twist of fate, I was then en route to Washington. Paul's son, David, encouraged me to visit and so, on a cold sun-drenched late afternoon of a cloudless winter

day, I made ready to see my old boss once again.

When I arrived at the hospital about 4 p.m., no visiting was permitted. But, following the sage advice of another former Ford colleague, Homer Wadsworth, I announced myself as Dr. Saltzman to see patient Dr. Ylvisaker.

Paul was in the intensive care unit. The head nurse informed me that he was gravely ill, his heart hopelessly impaired. All they were trying now to do was prepare him so he could get back to Cambridge to be with his family for one last time.

I walked into Paul's room and stood beside his hospital bed. He looked absolutely terrific! That familiar rosy complexion glowed, like that of a man resting after a vigorous walk or run around the block. His shoulders and arms were strong and full, the limbs of a mature man unbowed or shriveled by illness or age. It was unimaginable to me that this man was now dying!

Even as he strained to do so, I knew he couldn't see the details of my face because of his failed eyesight. I leaned to him and whispered my name.

He turned, holding his too-large oxygen mask to his face with his left hand, and reached out his hand. "Henry, oh Henry." For a few precious moments, I stood over him in silence, holding his right hand in both of mine, squeezing my feelings to him, he responding with a grip as firm as ever.

Paul Ylvisaker dying, shocked and racked as his body had been by pain and trauma, was not diminished in either appearance or spirit. He had suffered much, he told me, yet he had not distanced himself from the living, not withdrawn in the tight ball of depression I had seen in others at the end.

On the wall at the foot of the bed was a child-like drawing, bouquets of flowers arranged under "I love you Dad," placed where Paul would see it whenever he opened his eyes.

I pointed to it and Paul smiled, his eyes glistening. "Oh, that's David," spoken as if his youngest son's freely given love for him was just the essence of David's personality, and not also a father's well-earned due.

Paul talked about his resentment of the doctors' intervention. He was angry for not being allowed to die.

"Henry, I am ready to go," he said. "I have suffered all that I can and I am prepared. It is time to go. But the bastards wouldn't let me." Then with a kind of grim smile he added, "But I think I've got them scared enough now so they will stop torturing me and send me home. All I want to do is wait until all the kids get here and then I'll gladly go."

We reminisced about those wonderful years in the early to mid-sixties when we worked on the Great City Schools Improvement Program and the Gray Areas projects. He was as gracious as ever, remembering my early childhood grants and our excitement as those projects and others became part of the Nation's programs for dealing with poverty.

"It was a burst of creativity," he mused as if a bit astonished at it all.

As the first shadow touched the window, he tired and it was time to leave.

I said my goodbye and then, as his eyes closed, whispered to him my eternal gratitude for the confidence he showed in 1959 by hiring me, a young high school teacher from Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant, thereby changing my life utterly.

He nodded with a delighted smile, "You wrote a great report," gave my hand one squeeze and turned away--forever.

In Memoriam

Nancy Boggs Sheldon

Nancy Boggs Sheldon, former graphics manager in the Office of Reports, died July 15 in Rockport, Maine at the age of 64. She had also led the Foundation's efforts to use film and television to disseminate the results of Foundation-supported innovations.

A memorial service was held Sept. 21 at the Film Forum, an outlet for independent films of artistic merit that she had served as chairman. Karen Cooper, president of Film Forum, observed, "Nancy believed there was a public for art film, for documentation and for the kind of quirky and personal cinema she enjoyed enormously." In 1981 Film Forum opened its twin cinema, built with a low-interest loan from the Ford Foundation. "Nancy's commitment was pivotal was the real turning point in our history: We finally look and felt like a real movie house....Nancy is the friendly, loving spirit who hovers over us as we sit here this morning. All New Yorkers who love film owe her a tremendous debt."

David Sills recalled a decade of friendship centered on and his and his wife's sailing acquaintance with Nancy

and Dick Sheldon. "Nancy, with her sparkle, her wit, and her warmth was a great comfort to Dick....and a good sailing companion. (Perhaps that is code for never complaining and never doubting the wisdom of the captain.)"

Tributes were also given by three former colleagues, Oona Sullivan, who read three prayers, Felice Levin and Richard Magat.

Ms. Levin said, "Nancy had a Russian soul with a heavy WASP overlay, undoubtedly solidified at Vassar. She was extremely bright, exceptionally observant, funny, down to earth with an artist's eye and imagination, totally dependable, ever flexible, and always ready to help if she could." Magat said, "She brought us into the movie business. She was a quick study, and soon managed to meet all the right people. They were glad to teach her, not simply because she had some money to spend, but because she was eager to learn and greatly valued what they were doing....It is fitting that we meet here to celebrate her life. Her light has gone out, but as in great films, there has appeared in the darkness a memorable story--of a blithe spirit, a talented and charming woman, and a dear friend."

Gifts in her memory may be made

to the Farnsworth Art Museum, P.O.Box 466, 19 Elm St., Rockland, ME 04841; Bay Chamber Orchestra, P.O.Box 191, Camden, ME 08483, or Moving Image, Inc. c/o Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St., New York, NY 10014.

New Officers

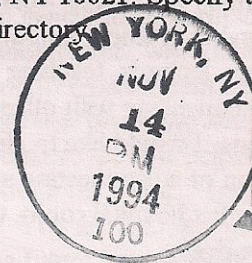
Free of sound bites and negative campaigning, the following have been named officers of The LAFF Society for 1995: President, **Oscar Harkavy**; Vice President, **R. Harcourt Dodds**; Secretary-Treasurer, **Esther Roditti**.

Directory, At Last

After a long delay and after growing demand, a directory of members of The LAFF Society is being published and is expected to be available in December or January. We need to know how many people are interested, so please send your check now for \$6.50 to LAFF, c/o Esther Roditti, Box 163, 954 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10021. Specify that it is for the Directory.

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