

THE LAFF SOCIETY

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

Winter 1994

No. 7

Gala Reunion

On Thursday, Oct. 21, 1993, the President of Burundi was assassinated. . . Prudential Securities, Inc. agreed to pay \$37 million to victims of a fraud. . . Russia suspended a plan to dump more nuclear waste into the Sea of Japan. . . a Jackson Pollock retrospective opened at the C&M Gallery. . . and the Philadelphia Phillies won Game Five of the World Series.

These events faded into insignificance for the 135 Ford Foundation alumni and their guests who attended the first LAFF Society Reunion Dinner. Through a driving rainstorm they came, from as far as Maine and Texas and California, from as close as around the corner from the National Arts Club on Gramercy Park South, scene of the festive event.

The club building, a Victorian Gothic townhouse built in the 1840s, was the home of Governor Samuel J. Tilden and later the museum and watering hole for some of the nation's leading artists and collectors. (See "Cultural Landmark," p. 2)

The reunion had been planned by **Jane McCarthy** and **Basil Whiting**, who overlooked no detail. Hot and cold hors d'oeuvres accompanied drinks. The main meal consisted of poached salmon, chicken breasts, rack

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”

of lamb, a buffet of salads, three pasta varieties, and a dessert table.

But the principal courses were



Mr. and Mrs. Willard J. Hertz and McGeorge Bundy

food for laughter and thought. The first was provided by Aldon James, Jr., president of the National Arts Club, who gave a history of the place and its architectural significance. Thereafter the program was orchestrated by **Edward J. Meade, Jr.** (Education and Culture 1989), master of ceremonies. "Is there life after the Ford Foundation?" he began. "From the looks of everyone in this room tonight, the answer is clearly yes!" He concluded by introducing the principal speaker of the evening, former president

McGeorge Bundy, who spoke of the blessings of giving and receiving (See "Giving and Receiving," p. 2).

Warming up, Ed reported a phone call he had at 7:30 that morning from **Don Stewart**, telling him that because of an emergency he could not attend. "There were many others who couldn't come," Ed noted. "We might have a LAFF newsletter devoted to excuses, like 'I'd love to come, but I'm in Sri Sanka and it's hard to get over the mountains'."

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The LAFF Society

46 Roditi, Box 163
554 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10021

President: Edward J. Meade, Jr.
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Editor: Richard Magat
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Cultural Landmark

Before it became home to the National Arts Club, No. 16 Gramercy Park South was the mansion of Samuel J. Tilden, a Democratic adversary of Tammany Hall, Governor of New York from 1874 to 1876, and unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency in the notorious 1876 election of Rutherford B. Hayes. Tilden constructed an underground passageway to an exit on 19th Street so that he might escape bores and political enemies.

The building adjoins another splendid club, The Players. Among the striking features are a stained glass window panel of John LaFarge and a vaulted glass dome by Boston artisan Donald Madonna.

The early members included such collectors as Henry Frick, Benjamin Altman, and J. Pierpont Morgan. Artists included Frederic Remington, Robert Henri, and George Bellows. The club was open to full membership by women from the outset. Members were required to donate one of their works, and the club's Grand Gallery is one of New York's largest exhibition spaces outside a museum. The building has been designated a New York City Landmark and a National Historic Landmark.

Giving and Receiving

Following are remarks by McGeorge Bundy, former president of the Foundation, at the LAFF Society Reunion Dinner:

It's a great pleasure to be part of this reunion. Thinking about my own connection to the Ford Foundation, if I were really to play hardball I would argue that it's just as blessed to receive as it is to give. In varying ways I've been one or the other ever since the 1950s. The normal thought of the dean of any academic institution, which I was, when members of the faculty come in looking for money was, "Can we get it in New York?" The largest target through most of the 1950s was that brand new outfit, the Ford Foundation. We got an enormous amount of money from the Ford Foundation, mostly on its own initiative in those free-handed days -- faculty salary grants and things of that sort, of the magnitude that staggered the imagination of contemporary grantmakers.

Thanks to another Ford Foundation veteran, the president of the Population Council in the 1970s, I got onto that board and eventually became the chairman and we got a lot of Ford money. That's been a great contribution, and I don't think my case is unusual. The majority of the members of LAFF would find that they have been nonprofit kinds of people, whether giving or receiving in the formal sense.

I agree that the RGA was a terrifying document, and the officers meetings were boring, but they were not the center of the enterprise. That, rather, was finding, identifying, either by our initiative or by selection among the many who came through, the kinds of people who could make something happen in a different way. We all learned on the job and on balance we did all right.

Giving is more a privileged and easy activity. It's probably not a very good thing to be only a giver or only a receiver to understand the world of effective nonprofit action. Coming and going in a great institution like the one on 43rd Street reflects a good condition. I'm very proud to have had a part of that, proud of the things we did, even prouder of the people who came in those years and not too troubled by the mistakes we made, because we are all stuck in the human condition.

I think that whether or not by any contribution of our own, the overall condition of private foundations as a class of entities is stronger in the society, partly for the accidental reason that explicitly right-wing organizations have learned to rely on this device, which means a little more room for people who merely think right, the way we do, with a small "r."

The other day I was reading my own testimony in the famous hearings on 501c3 organizations and private foundations back in the 1960s. The kinds of questions that were put then are not much heard today. It isn't so much that the specific offenses that gave pain have been replaced by others, but rather the clear expectation today that this kind of institution is a useful part of the natural effort for encouragement of excellence in all kinds of human activities, including thought on public issues. So whether we are still giving money away or learning how to get others to give us money for virtuous activity -- whatever kind of nonprofit work we are in, and even if we are not in nonprofit work, I think we carry with us the experience of trying to do something because it is right, and try to make something happen by a skillful choice of the ways you support it.

We are all lucky we had that chance. We're lucky to have had it in the Ford Foundation, and we're lucky to have had it before the Ford Founda-

tion, as so many of us did. I'm proud to be in this group, and I think the decision to come to the Ford Foundation and the decision to leave the Ford Foundation were two of the four best career decisions I ever made, and I'm not sure which was the better.

Life Before the Ford Foundation

Mitchell Sviridoff, former vice president for National Affairs, recalls "my first real job," from a talk given in New Haven in 1962 marking the choice of New Haven as one of the Foundation's six "gray area" community development sites and his choice as executive director.

In the early '40s, we had just emerged from the Great Depression. I was fed up with being an underpaid store clerk. Quite by accident one day I ran into a Yale graduate student who was getting his doctorate in vocational guidance and testing. We talked of my burning desire to do something more satisfying. He suggested that I take a battery of tests, which he was then giving.

One afternoon soon thereafter another mixed-up young man and I took the tests. The other fellow, incidentally, sported Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma XI keys from Yale; I, a tattered old General Course high school diploma. The tests showed us to be intellectual giants; but to our amazement it was also discovered that we were mechanical geniuses. My young wife, who up to that point had been doing all the odd plumbing, electrical work and carpentry around the house -- not to speak of occasional



auto repairs -- was more than mildly amused.

No jobs were then available for intellectual giants. The Ford Foundation was not yet in existence. Indeed Ford was considered by some an enemy of the workers, as I was soon to learn on becoming a member of the United Auto Workers.

There were opportunities, however, for mechanical geniuses, if not for intellectual ones. Europe was at war. The aircraft industry was beginning to boom, but aircraft skills were in short supply. So the Vought-Sikorsky Company and the State Vocational Administration started a retraining school in Bridgeport for prospective aircraft mechanics. No pay. Forty hours a week of intensive training for 10 or 12 weeks and then maybe a job.

We applied -- my Phi Beta Kappa friend and I. We managed to get referrals from the State Employment Service and then hitchhiked to the plant, where we joined a line of about 500 eager competitors for these 10 to 12 weeks of unpaid training -- and maybe a job.

I was selected; my friend was rejected as being overeducated. He offered to sell me his Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma XI keys cheap. I told him I wouldn't take them for free. They were nearly flung that day into the Housatonic River.

So I trained for 10 weeks, and then came the shocking announcement -- no more jobs! But for the eager ones, the opportunity to take post-graduate work was available. And so I took a masters in drafting for about five more weeks, and then a doctorate in mold lofting and pattern making.

I began to fear the dangers of overeducation when suddenly, like the clear sound of trumpets, came the announcement that there were jobs for well-trained mechanics. I jumped with joy.

I was re-interviewed, photo-

graphed, fingerprinted, examined for physical and mental defects, and then finally the job -- a rivet gun at 62 1/2 cents an hour. I was about to argue that they were not making the best use of my aptitudes and training, but the joy of a job overwhelmed me. So I riveted. For five weeks the rivet gun was music to my ears.

Then suddenly a layoff! No more rivet gun. A pink slip, a brief exit interview with the boss (whom I later met at the collective bargaining table where I resisted evening old scores, or did I?). Then to the tool crib to check out company tools. The tool crib boss was a White Russian who had come over before the Revolution with Sikorsky and DeSeversky -- his name, Vladimir Koodroff. When he saw my name he looked up and smiled.

"Sviridoff -- hmm -- good Russian name.. You need job, Sviridoff?" "Sure I need job." "I've got friend," said Koodroff. "Name Petroff -- open up sub-contract shop in Bridgeport. You go see Petroff, you tell him your name, Sviridoff. You tell him Koodroff sent you. Remember, Petroff, Sviridoff, Koodroff (a kind of Slavic Tinkers to Evers to Chance). You get job."

And so I sought out Petroff. I gave him the Petroff, Sviridoff, Koodroff bit. But Petroff was no fool. He looked at me with a hard quizzical look and said, "What church you father go to?" I gulped, "Orthodox." Another quizzical look and I could see him thinking to himself, "Vladimir Koodroff could not be such a fool. This kid must mean Russian Orthodox."

The fact is that my father had long abandoned his Jewish Orthodoxy (though not his basic Judaic commitment). This qualified, I suppose, as a *White Russian* lie.

In any case, I didn't go to work for Petroff. I returned one day to Vought/Sikorsky and told the personnel interviewer that I was being

wasted. He agreed. I got my rivet gun back again on the night shift -- and I helped the UAW organize the place at just about the time the Ford Motor Company was being organized.

And here I am now, about to take on an irresistible challenge from the Ford Foundation to find some effective answers to deteriorating city neighborhoods.

Just one postscript. I ran for president of the Vought/Sikorsky UAW local in the mid-forties. I was 26, my opponent a mature 58. There was a strong block of White Russian tool makers who were very friendly to me because of my Russian sounding name, my opponents thought. And so, on the morning of the election my opponents distributed a leaflet in the tool room which was headed, "The rumor that we are opposed to Sviridoff because he is a Jew is untrue. No man should be judged because of his race and religion. Sviridoff is a Jew. But we are opposed to him not for this reason but because he is a *RAT!*"

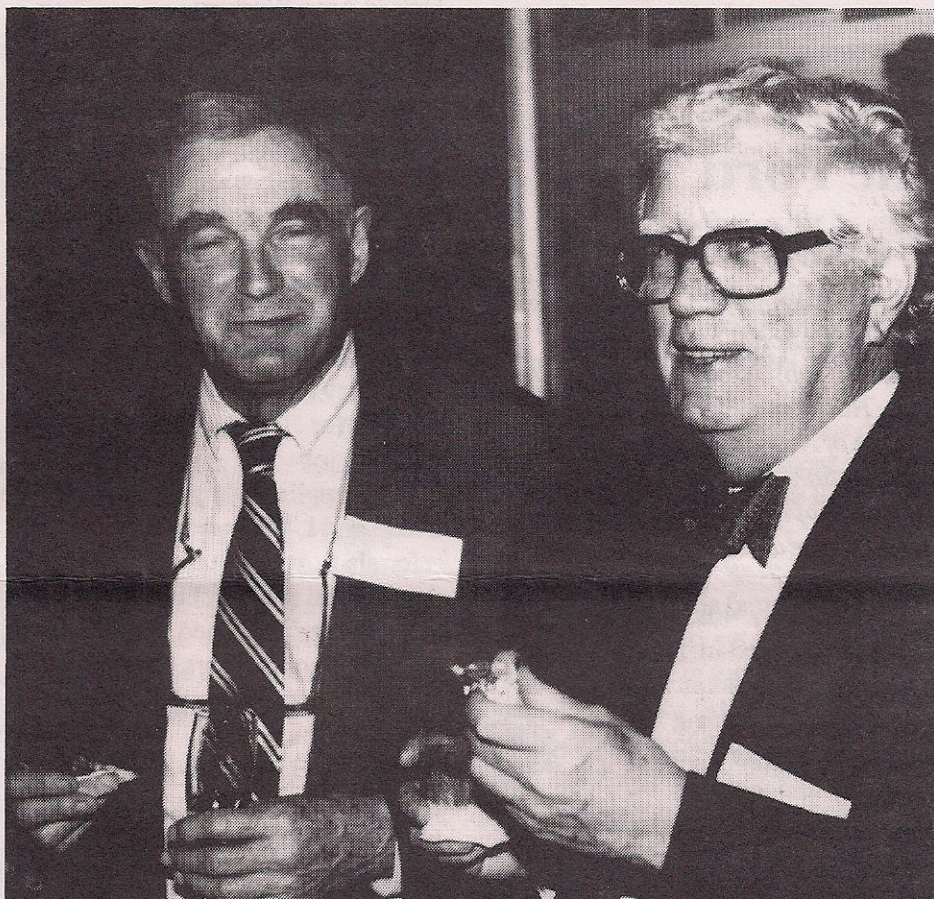
I carried the tool room -- White Russians and all -- three to one, and defied, I suppose, all the ethnic rules of politics. I also carried the election at large -- two to one.

Gala Revisited

(Cont. from p. 1)

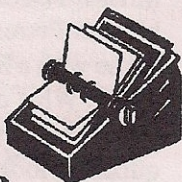
That led Ed to recall the Fidel Castro/Ford Foundation escapade (See "The Castro Connection," p. 6).

Meade also singled out a few guests "for their remarkable contributions to the Foundation." Referring to the National Arts Club ambience, he quoted



Harold (Doc) Howe II and Francis Sutton

Directory Assistance



Responding to certain undercurrent demands, The LAFF Society will publish a directory of persons on its mailing list. If you do *not* wish to be in the directory, please so indicate to Ms. Dorothy Nixon (212)243-1110., or write her c/o Academy for Educational Development, 100 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010.

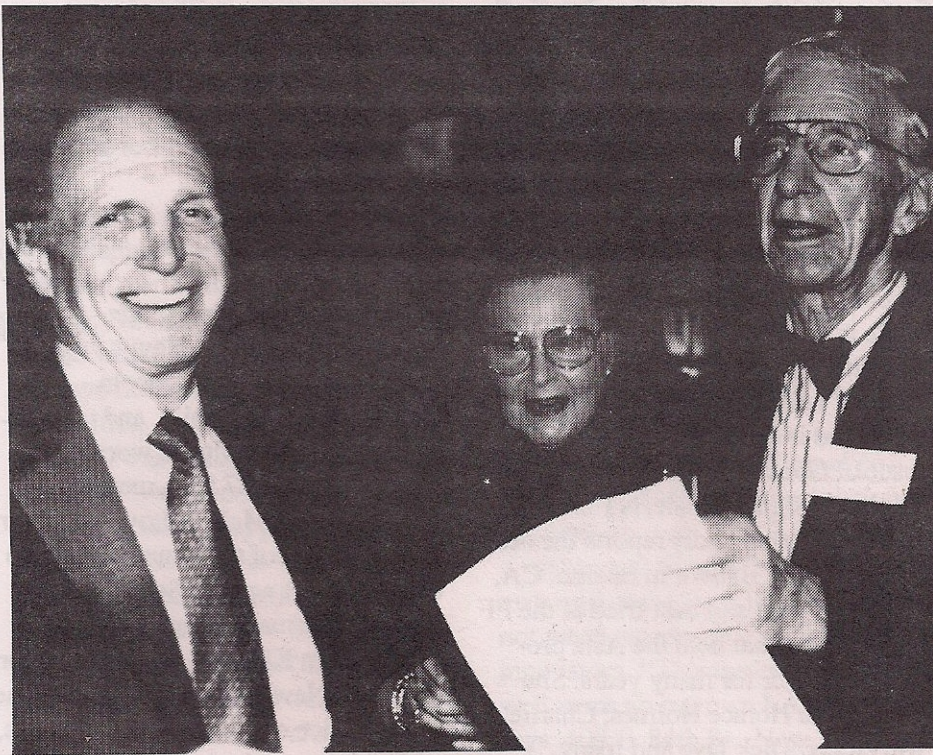
The Directory will be ready in 1994 and will cost \$5. Advanced orders may be placed with Ms. Nixon.

Marshall Robinson as noting that the only indigenous art form contributed by the Ford Foundation was the RGA. Meade said he was working with the club president to have a suitably framed RGA hung on the wall.

There followed a short contest on the longest RGA ever written -- "10 pages? 20 pages? 30 pages? More?" Willard Hertz nominated the RGA for the Henry Ford Hospital. Replied Meade, "Since it was written by Doc Howe that was a Howe-itzer, not an RGA."

Attempting to use the evening to clear up a continuing mystery, Meade asked about the fate of a painting of Henry Ford, Edsel Ford, and Henry Ford II. (See "For Art's Sake," p. 7.

Reminiscent of high-school reunions, prizes were awarded for people coming the farthest distance to attend. The winner was Richard Catalano, from San Francisco. Louise Keady, from Menlo Park, was second. "Even though it's a bit farther than San Francisco, it's a shorter ride for you, Louise, than for Catalano, who probably walked," said Meade. Another Californian at



Edward J. Meade and Mr. and Mrs. F. Champion Ward



Basil Whiting and John Doran

the reunion was **Laura Lake** from Los Angeles, which of course was ruled practically around the corner from New York. The long-distance prize, in wrapped facsimile \$20-bill paper, was a 1960 Ford Foundation Annual Report.

Prizes for the shortest distance went to **Ursula Kreutzer** of 81 Irving Place and **Sonia and Howard Dressner** of Peter Cooper Village.

Other contests concerned the earliest year of service at the Foundation and the longest term of service of those present. The winners were, respectively, **John Howard** (1951) and **Oscar Harkavy** (35 years). **Frank Sutton** came a close second, to which Meade remarked, "Didn't you start with that funny thing called social sciences," and to Harkavy, "Bud, remember that there's no such thing as a career at the Ford Foundation."

Prize for the most recent LAFF member present went to Ursula Kreutzer, who retired in 1989. She too was awarded an Annual Report, about which Meade quipped, since she had served in the Office of Reports (now Communications), "You're going to get tired of reading this stuff. But you used to edit it, and so it's only fitting." "There are a lot in the basement," she responded. "Makes wonderful starter for fires," was Meade's next-to-last word.

The last words pointed to the broad spectrum of LAFF members: "This Society's hallmark is collegiality. We're delighted that it includes all the different persons who made up the Ford Foundation -- the spenders, the lenders, the money-makers, the managers who keep some of us honest and straight, the secretaries and editors, and the people who saw to it that the building opened and functioned each day. The Ford Foundation is a place that draws on everybody, hardly that of just the people who entered the officers and trustees meetings."

The LAFFing Parade

Anna Marie Castagnetta reports doing work for the New York Botanical Garden, the Rusk Institute, and the National Music Theater Network. She has access to not-so-expensive theater tickets; interested persons should call her at (718)885-1757. 72 Earley St., Bronx, NY 10464.



John R. Coleman is host, proprietor, and sometime chef of The Inn At Long Last, Chester, Vermont.

Florence Knipschild (Comptroller's Office, 1989) says LAFF conjures up "memories of a trial or tribulation in recording 'FAPs,' 'FAGs,' etc. How many remember consolidating files from Pasadena, then the move into 445 Park Ave., again to 477 Madison and finally to 320 E. 43rd St. As one who handled the books for six Foundation spinoffs, I agree with Ed Meade -- 'On FF payroll, you are an alumnus.'"

Linda Knoepfle (Reports) lives in Houston, "the range, prairie, swamp, oven, a place actually not too different from NYC although the murders, robberies, and rapes are hardly NY quality." 2400 Briarwest #1602. Houston, TX 77077.

Courtney Nelson (Middle East) lives in Pawlet, Vermont and does consulting for such agencies as the Agency for International Development and Harvard.

Susan T. Newman (Library) is Head Librarian ("of the underground -- 'physical location, not political position') of the City University of New York Graduate School on East 42nd Street." "Many of the students come from the Third World and from other boroughs of New York," she reports. "They provide my amazing adventures." Her "outstanding achievement" was "becoming a tenured full

professor without having to go to the trouble of earning a Ph. D." 17 Riverside Dr., Apt 6K, New York, NY 10024 (212)973-2449 or Mina Rees Library, CUNY Graduate School, New York City. (212)642-2881.

Sheldon J. Segal (India 1963) visits Delhi almost annually in his work with the Rockefeller Foundation and the Population Council. His experience in India is apparent in several novels of his wife, Harriet. Her latest, *The Skylark's Song*, will be published in April and is excerpted in the January issue of *Good Housekeeping*. 9 Topland Rd., Hartsdale, NY 10530.

Marion Weber sadly reports the death of **Lillian W. Brown** in Encino, CA, "my very first and best friend at the FF and the glue that held the Asia program together for many years. She worked for Horace Holmes, Charlie McVicker, Dick Dye and many others." 1702 Atrium Dr., Sun City Ctr., FL 33573.

The Castro Connection

At the reunion dinner, Master of Ceremonies Meade reported receiving a telegram from Fidel Castro, hoping he would be able to free himself of state duties to attend the event. "For those of you who were in the Foundation in 1961," Meade recalled, "Mr. Castro was scheduled to come to the Foundation for lunch following his appearance at the United Nations during his triumphal post-revolution visit to New York." The Foundation's Assistant Secretary, William Nims, was stationed on the balcony (at the Foundation's 477 Madison Avenue offices) to give notice to the kitchen so that when the motorcade toiled up Madison Avenue, the steaks would be tossed onto the broiler. "Nims was out there for two-and-a-half hours," said Meade, "but Castro fell way behind

schedule and never appeared for lunch." Which explained the telegram regarding the LAFF dinner. . . . for which he also failed to appear.

Tribute to Lowry

In an altogether fitting place -- the Promenade of the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center -- friends, family, and leaders from the cultural world gathered September 27 for a memorial service for **W. McNeil Lowry**, former vice president of the Foundation, who died June 6 at age 80. Selected excerpts of the many tributes follow:



Lincoln Kirstein, general director emeritus, New York City Ballet: "The great service of his life was to the arts, and perhaps particularly to the arts of spectacular performance. . . . He offered a remarkable role as the embodiment of a bridge between boards and staffs. . . . And this was something of a miracle: he understood the aspirations of artists, artistic administrators and educators, not as visionaries, but as worthy workers in the normal world. . . . [And] that he was able to convince a very tough segment of potential support that artistic freedom was necessary was an heroic effort."

Peter Zeisler, co-founder, Guthrie Theatre Company: "Mac's enormous *joie de vivre*: Tell him of an interesting artist or performance -- and off he bounded with his extraordinary editor and critic, his wife Elsa.

Mac's success as a philanthropist was due to his uncanny ability to listen. The Ford Foundation arts programming was always based on what he heard and sensed from the field, rather than on what he thought the field 'should do. . . . His determination and skill [in the 1950s] led the Foundation to make support to the arts

one of its primary concerns. It is hard now to realize what a revolutionary idea that was. No one previously had stated that the formation of the National Endowment for the Arts signaled the federal government's recognition. . . ."

June Wayne, founder, Tamarind Lithography Workshop: "Mac was a complex man with a profound sense of history. He recognized. . . .that he had landed where he could significantly improve the condition of the arts and humanities. . . .He saw that the potential was of such a magnitude that neither he nor anyone else might happen on such an opportunity again. The course he ran was breathtaking. . . .His indispensable garment was the one no one could see -- his hair shirt. Unless you know about 'hair shirt' you cannot understand how this man could have done more for the arts of this country than the Medicis did for the Florentine State. And do it without becoming a 'personality' or a 'celebrity.'"

Francis Mason, Editor, *Ballet Review*: "Mac got interested in ballet when he went to the balcony of the City Center with his wife Elsa and watched Balanchine's work. . . .He focused on where the art came from, on professional training. Like a businessman, he zeroed in on the raw material for the product and how much it cost. The Foundation's grants for the San Francisco Ballet and for the School of American Ballet scholarships. . . .and its subsequent grants to other schools 'round the country and to other ballet companies nurtured the development of the art Kirstein had hoped for since the 1930s."

Other tributes and recollections were presented by Albert C. Bellas, chairman, School of American Ballet; Mrs. James B. Reston; Eleni Mravili; Dr. Clarence York, president Emeritus, Bancroft School; Dr. Sigmund Koch, Boston University; Helgi Tomasson, artistic director, San

Francisco Ballet; Congressman Sidney R. Yates, and Julius Rudel, New York City Opera.

The program was introduced by H. Graham Lowry, Mr. Lowry's son, and began and ended with some selections of his father's classical and jazz music.

First Verse

"Are you open to original poetry?" asks **Shirley Teper** (National Affairs).

Why not? Simply because we are no longer at the Ford Foundation does not mean we are not cutting edge innovators. "This threesome pretty well sums up my own LAFF," she says. 409 E. 84th St., New York, NY 10028



I swim an ocean of freshest waters
I drink the dreams of deepest seas
I breathe the grass of greenest meadows
And knead the dough of distant streams
And do you know, I have been told
There is more, there is more,
there is more.



Trust betrayal and more trust
Trust betrayal and more trust
Trust in its erratic way--
As steadfast as God is
In Wondrous Play.



my favorite fragrance
is essence of universe
it is the scent
of fresh fall'n snow
it requires no container.



For Art's Sake

Some years ago, a painting of Henry Ford, Edsel Ford, and Henry Ford II, was commissioned from an Italian artist. For reasons shrouded in historical dust, the Foundation declined to display the resulting triptych in its building. While a decision on its fate was pending, the work was crated and stored in the Foundation's garage. At the LAFF reunion dinner, the master of ceremonies said that several inquiries about the triptych had been received. He asked Howard Dressner, former Secretary and General Counsel, "probably the person most able to give some enlightenment, where, and in what condition, is the famous painting of the three Ford men?"

To which Dressner replied, "I'm committed to hold that information until after my death."

The master of ceremonies responded, "There are some people who wish that perhaps the fumes from the cars in the garage would alter the paintings substantially and put them to rest."

Readers who *do* know the fate of the triptych are invited to

(Cont. on p. 8)

New Editorial Policy

The LAFF Newsletter, in addition to short biographical notices, now invites alumni to write essays, reminiscences, and comments on matters in general (see, for example, Mike Sviridoff's reflections, page 3). Or something specifically on one's professional experiences, or on the significance of work for the Foundation, or other aspects of one's career, family, etc.

Submissions should be reasonably short--not more than 500 or 700 words, say--but if longer seems of interest to LAFF readers, don't hesitate.

Please let us hear from you. If we don't hear from readers, the newsletter won't be able to publish with any sort of regularity.

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(Cont. from p. 7)
inform the LAFF newsletter. Likewise, readers who have suggestions as to where, if found, the triptych might be consigned.

Dues Due

1994 dues are now due. Fighting inflation, the Coordinating Committee of the LAFF Society has voted to keep the dues at \$5. Some persons have paid in advance; this is indicated by the number following your name on the mailing list.

Send dues to The LAFF Society, c/o Roditti, Box 163, 954 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10021.

In Memoriam

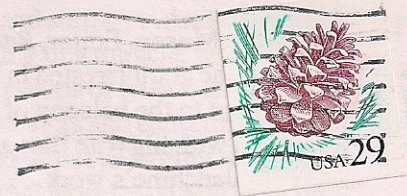
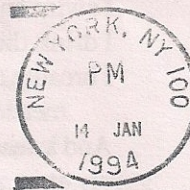
Marvin Feldman (Education and Research 1969) died Nov. 26 at the age of 66. Feldman joined the Foundation in 1964 from the presidency of a leading technical college in California. He directed Foundation programs in

vocational and technical education. Thereafter he was for 21 years president of the Fashion Institute of Technology, which he expanded both in size and academic scope. Under his stewardship the institute began awarding bachelor's and master's degrees as well as the associate degree.

Following his retirement, the Fashion Institute renamed its Administration and Technology Center the Marvin Feldman Center. A remembrance of Feldman by his friend and colleague, Edward J. Meade, Jr. will appear in the next issue of the LAFF Letter.

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