

James Edgy

Executive Director of Kentucky from 1970 to 1974

Executive Director of other state Ohio from 1974 to January 1978

Interviewer: Susan Neumann

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1. Think back on those early days of SAA's, when you were new in your job and the whole "field" was in formation.

A. What was the "big idea" behind the formation of the NEA and SAA's?

Well, it all came about because of Kennedy and you know he was the one who wanted the arts to be an important part and then after his death Lyndon Johnson was the one who got the legislation through and established the Endowment. You know, the first chair of the endowment was...oh, what's his name, I forget...he owned the Empire State Building; very, very rich. He was powerful not just in the arts but he was powerful in many, many, many different respects. His focus for the arts was on quality and he wanted to deal with principally major institutions. And then when Nancy Hanks came in...and he wasn't very supportive of state arts agencies. He realized that the money that went to them was a political necessity but that wasn't his area of interest. Nancy had a love-hate relationship with the states. She was also focused on quality but she was much more concerned about getting money out to the people than he was; he was more focused on major institutions. She wanted to see the results of what went to the major institutions. And so it was during her term that the focus was set in that sense and she's really the one who had the most influence on the states because, when the Endowment was first created, the states could either get a grant, I think it was a \$50,000, to do a study and to assess and sort of get set up or they would give you \$100,000 if your state would match it and there were very few states took the \$100,000. Kentucky was one of them. And the reason was the state had given to the Louisville Orchestra since probably back in the early '50's \$150,000 a year...something like that at the time in the '60's...and they told them to go tour. They did, but they didn't do anything as far as audience development. I can remember one of the first concerts that I attended when I joined the staff was at Bowling Green and I arrived and the orchestra was there, the bus and everybody was sitting out there and there was nobody there to open the auditorium or anything. Finally they got someone and there were more people on stage than in the audience and I just thought that was awful. But what had happened was that they had taken that money and given that money to the Council, but they told the Council, "Now, you've got to support the Louisville Orchestra." One of the things that Bill Hull had said is, "We've got to develop audiences" and this is where Nancy was also there. And so we took the money away from a direct grant to the Louisville Orchestra and started funneling

it through the communities and only if they would develop a committee and do the whole thing and they had to put money in and ensure that there was going to be an audience and that was certainly a change from the early days of the Endowment. Kentucky was fortunate because it had that money and it could do that. And, if you recall, when I got to Ohio, that was one of the big fights that I had was about giving general operating support. And, you know, I'll never forget that grant from the Cleveland Museum and the Council hated the project. And I said, "You see, this is the reason." I also remember that Council meeting in New Philadelphia. Vince Bowling said some things to me and in a sense he was right because...and this was one of the developmental things that happened, I think, in a lot of state arts agencies where they started off with the idea of getting grants for certain institutions and you had to break away from that. It would have never happened in Ohio had not Irma liked me and had I not been very up front with her before I took the job. Don could never have done it because she couldn't stand Don. She wouldn't do anything he wanted her to do. But those were some of the important times because what happened back then set, I think, the direction of the agencies that pretty much stays in there today and the Endowment had a big although a contentious role in that because a lot of states didn't want the Endowment dictating anything. Nancy played it pretty smart in that she would press and then she would pull back, she would press and then she would pull back. And basically the thrust there though was to empower audiences or participants. Now, I think in some ways that's gone too far today. I think this whole...and this is totally off the subject...to require every organization to have an educational program...there are some of them that shouldn't do it. Chamber orchestras shouldn't have one; they're not equipped. And I think an awful lot of money is being wasted by organizations doing it simply so they can get those points to get the grant. It's ridiculous in my opinion but that's neither here nor there. So I think that the big idea, to get back to this having, you know, been around the moon now...I really think that the big idea of Kennedy was to spread the arts to the people and I think that that was essentially what the Endowment did and did very effectively, more effectively in certain areas than it did in other. Certainly the dance movement in this country has to be attributed to the support of the Endowment.

B. What was your "big idea" when you took your job – what was the situation in your state, and where were you hoping to go?

I think it was true of most of us who got into this back then; I don't think there was a big idea. I think we loved the arts and I think that indirectly we wanted to share that love and work in it but, you know, there wasn't any arts training, arts administration programs or anything of that sort and looking back, there were two types of directors. The successful ones were the ones who truly loved the arts and got into it because of their love for the arts. The other type basically were bureaucrats that came from some other area of state government and were in a position to take what they perceived as being an easy job. There are a number on this list that fit into that category and they never did much, never contributed much.

C. When you left your job, do you think you had made progress in achieving your "big idea"? Or did you change your mind about what was needed?

Yeh, because basically if it's talking about sharing the arts, when I went to Kentucky, there were very few sponsoring organizations in the state and, when I left, there were a lot. When I went to Ohio, I think that the same thing is true and I'm not saying that this is all because of my doings in Ohio. Don had certainly put in some areas a good foundation but Don and I differed, for instance, on the Literary program where he went through the Ohio Poets Association and I just didn't agree with that at all and I felt that it needed to be opened up. And so I think that the fight that I had with the Ohio Poets Association is something that allowed the literary program at the Council to develop as it has. And so I think that there are a lot of things back there. I was always a firm supporter of giving general operating support and, as you know, that was one of my big, big fights and I think the fact that it's still going on today attests to something. I have changed my mind about some of the things. No, I haven't, I haven't changed my mind at all. I still think that focus needs to be there but I think that what has happened like this education is that of at least perceived political necessity people have said the only way that we can get funding for the arts is to associate ourselves with education and so we're going to do that. And I have no problem with that as a strategy for getting the money but I do have a problem then when the thing goes in to requiring everybody. I just think that organizations are too different and I think that today there's too much of a cookie cutter approach to it; let's require everybody the same. I feel the same thing is true, too, with some of the policies having to do with discrimination and I think in some instances the Endowment and the state arts agencies have gotten away from saying, "Let's really look at the quality and give according to the quality rather than according to all of these other things" and I think that's a shame.

D. What were you proudest of having achieved during your time in office?

I don't know, I suppose that we got general operating support through. I never think in those terms so... Other people will have to answer that.

E. What was most frustrating to you?

Governor Rhodes. I mean after all. Did you ever hear that story, do you remember when he tried to do away with the Council or cut out all funding? And so I sent out a memo because, as you'll recall, we had done... I came in July and he was reelected in November and we had redone the guidelines and there was a lot of hope around the state that people were going to get grants other than the Cincinnati and Cleveland orchestras and Trumpet in the Land and Tecumseh and then he was going to cut it all out. And so I sent out a memo to all of these people that we had been working with. Well, somebody sent him a copy of it and he called me into his office, the only time I was ever in his office. And he took this memo and said, "Did you send that out?" and I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Don't you know you can't do that. You're going against my will and you're a part of this administration." I said, "No, sir, I'm not." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I serve at the pleasure of the Council, not the Governor." And he looked at me and he said, "Get out. Get out." And at that point our liaison with his office was Moyer who is now the chief justice and, I'll tell you, he's a Republican that I would vote for if he weren't a Republican.

F. What was most surprising to you?

I think that the thing that was probably the most unexpected was the people who were in the movement. And this is especially true of other state directors but it's also true of the people in the communities, the leadership in the communities because most of them weren't people necessarily of power when you get out into the smaller communities but they were people who wanted to do something for their community or they loved the arts. I was a very different motivation, atmosphere, back then than it is today. People really cooperated and you didn't have this...it was just so different and I think that's the reason that a lot of people on this list...you know there are little groups of people who are still in contact and get together and see each other and those of us who don't would like. A lot of time it's because we don't have the money to get around to see the others. And I don't think you would find that from directors in 1985 or directors in '95. I don't know, I may be wrong about that but I just...I mean we really created some lasting bonds back then.

G. What was your agency's relationship with the NEA like? With other SAA's? With ACA? With local arts agencies?

NEA – I think Kentucky and Ohio, the councils as far as the agency there, we had a good relationship. You know, a lot of my...where I really worked because when I was in Kentucky, we'd send in the application, we'd get our money and we'd do our thing and we pretty much did that in Ohio, too, But when I was in Ohio, I was chair of NASAA and so that was a much more contentious relationship because I wasn't just speaking for Ohio but I was trying to establish the rights of the states and make sure that the federal government didn't overly dictate. And there were times that Nancy and I would have, you know, down-and-out fights but we also ended up good friends and she understood what I was doing and I understood what she was doing and I had great love and respect for her and I think she did for me. We were in Santa Fe at a conference and so Bob Sheets said he had his car there 'cause he'd driven down. And he said, "Let's get Nancy and go up to Taos and spend the day." And I said, "That would be great." So we arranged it for Bob, myself, Nancy and Louise Tate. Well, then Nancy called and asked if Florence could go. And we said, "Errr," but we said, "Alright." Then she said she couldn't go but Florence still wanted to go. Well, Bob and everybody backed down and I said, "Well, we can't do that." I said, "I'll have to go," so I borrowed Bob's car. Well it ended up that Nancy decided to go and it was Nancy, Ray Scott, myself, Florence and I forget who the fifth one was but we had a wonderful day and it turned out that two of us were always with Florence and we would go our different ways. And all of a sudden we'd meet up and another person would go off with Nancy so all three of us had time alone with Nancy. We went in this shop and I saw that piece of ceramic sitting up there and fell in love with it. I said, "I think I'll buy it," and Nancy said, "Do." Well, the guy didn't know the price and I said, "I probably can't afford it anyway but I'll call in the next morning." Nancy was leaving the next morning and so, when I sent down, she had left a note in my box and it said, "Dear Jim, buy the piece and I will pay half if you agree to give it to the Endowment or to a museum." And I said, "Ah," so I called the guy. Well, he started telling me that, you know, the sister piece had just been purchased by the LA museum and I could just see the price going up, up, up, but he finally got to the price and I said, "Fine, I'd buy it." I couldn't resist and so I sent Nancy a note. It said, "Dear Nancy, thank you so much for your great, kind and generous offer and I certainly

appreciate it and will accept it. Please send a check for \$2000.” And I put that in the mail and then she had no more opened it then she called me on the phone, “Jim, what the hell are you talking about?”

SAA’s – That almost depended totally upon the relationship between the two directors and, if you were friends and friendly, you did things together. If you weren’t, you weren’t antagonistic or anything, you just didn’t do anything. In that period there wasn’t much regional activity and that was before the whole regional arts movement came in. It pretty much depended...you know, there were some important things that the NEA did. For instance, they had a travel program for directors to go and visit other state arts agencies and I applied as an assistant director never thinking I’d get it and Clark Mitze gave it to me and that was one of the things that cemented my relationship because I went to Oregon, Washington, California and Colorado and had wonderful time. Back then it was different, too, because when I started with the arts council in Kentucky, Bill Hull said, “You know, one of the easiest things is to start thinking if you only see what’s happening in Kentucky, the best that’s here is what set your standard for quality. I want you to go to some major city at least twice a year. We’ll pay for it...three or four or five days...and I want you to go to museums, and I want you to go to theatre and opera and ballet so that you maintain some objectivity about standards.” Well, those were very wise decisions and, you know, when I got to Ohio we weren’t able to do that yet. I don’t know that Ohio would have ever done it. But going back, one of the things that used to really piss me off, and this was true when Don was in Ohio and I was in Kentucky because we made direct grants to organizations in Cincinnati because they served north Kentucky and he wouldn’t. I think that there are times and this has been one of the problems we have with proliferation of new organizations and many of them are doing the same thing that some other organization is already doing and it just doesn’t make sense. And much of it, especially here, is simply because it’s in northern Kentucky and rather than trying to make it a metropolitan area with everyone working together, they want to separate and I think that’s a disturbing trend not only in religion and politics but also, at least in this area, in dealing with state lines.

ACA – ACA sort of had an annual meeting every year and because there wasn’t a NASAA, we all went to it. In 1968 the ACA conference was in San Francisco. And so they had a meeting of all the states and they proposed creating NASAA. And I’ll never forget E. Ray stood up and says, “Well, I think this is all very well but I just want to know, is this going to be an organization so that those who are ‘in’ can be further ‘in’ and those of us who are ‘out’ can be further ‘out’ or is it going to be for all of us?” Well, Clark Mitze’s secretary applauded and Clark fired her as soon as the meeting was over and put her on a plane back to Washington. Well, that was the beginning of the discussion and actually it ended up, I think that they voted to form a block that was going to be under the administration of ACA. It stayed there and then we started having separate NASAA meetings about ‘70-‘71, maybe ‘72, somewhere along in there. That was when I went on the board. No, I didn’t; it wasn’t that early that I went on, but anyway then friction started with it. The first hurdle was that the states didn’t want to give enough money to support the organization and so NASAA started floundering and in ‘85, Leonard was the chair of NASAA but that was when he left Illinois which was not a

pleasant thing and went to Florida and he was having problems in Florida and he didn't have time and he basically just didn't do anything and that's when they asked me if I would take over the chair which was in Austin, Texas, where we had the meeting and I remember I said, "Look I'll take it," and in my acceptance I said, "Next year this time we'll have a professional organization or I'll will preside over the funeral." And I worked with the people and convinced them and the next year they voted an assessment high enough for us to hire Annie Goejikan and that was when it got itself into a professional thing. I was the first one to have a second term as chair. It had always been one year terms and that was the reason that the exception was made then and, of course, I think that now two years is probably pretty standard but back then it wasn't. And it has grown from there.

LAA's – It was very good. First of all, there weren't many and it was the state arts agencies really that began developing the local arts agencies and the ones that were developed independently primarily did it with CETA money, remember that? And so they...just about every one of those disappeared because they didn't develop their base of support in the community. And this was the reason my stay at the Endowment was so short; that was a fight that I lost because, by that time, some of the community arts agencies were as large and as sophisticated as some of the state arts agencies. And I saw many grants made to organizations that I knew, had they been being judged either at the state or at the local level, these people would not get money. It was my firm belief, and it still is today, that you should have a system where the Endowment basically funds projects at regional or national scope; states should fund at state, regional and local if there is enough visibility; but that there should also be local arts councils that fund some of those things that Expansion Arts used to fund...I don't know that they call it today. But I came up against a real buzz saw because, of course, a lot of these people knew that they wouldn't get it if it were being inspected at the state and local level and it was easier to get it. I remember sitting in...I served on the Expansion Arts panel when I was in Ohio and I remember sitting there one day and a lady from an arts agency in Harlem sitting by me and she says, "You know, I just voted for that project and I didn't vote for this one; and I bet this one that I didn't vote for is better than that one. I just got this gut feeling but the only thing we have to go on is this piece of paper." And this is where I think that the cut in travel for staff to get out and visit; I think also think staff needs to be intimately involved in the decision-making process. It seems to me, and you can correct me on this if I'm wrong, but over the past few years that the staff's role has been pretty much curtailed and these people are judging from a piece of paper and not from firsthand knowledge. One of the things that it taught me in Kentucky is that there are certain people you can give \$500 to and you get a \$5000 project; there are others you can give \$5000 to and you're lucky to get a \$500 project. And that's where this personal assessment and knowledge of what's going on comes into play and I think that much of that has been taken away. And so it's now grantsmanship and I hate grantsmanship. And I'll tell you what had a lot to do with it, too, was the whole Black movement. When I was at the Endowment, there was a Black lady from Cleveland who was very involved...I forget her name; she was a wonderful woman...and she called me and said, "Jim, I'm coming to Washington for this meeting that Liv and you and all are going to be at hosted by the Black congressional caucus. Can I say with you?" I said, "Well, when is

it? I don't know anything about it." And she says, "Well, its next week." And I said, "Well, sure, you can stay with me and I'll go find out." Well, I went down and I said to Liv, "Are you aware that the congressional Black Caucus is having this national meeting and they've invited people all in and that they've advertised that you'll be there?" He had never heard of it and so he called up on the hill to whoever the chair was and they were very antagonistic and, before we went into the meeting, we all got together because we didn't know what it was about and Liv said, "Well, how do you think we should approach it?" Mary Anne Tighe (boy, what a bitch she was) she said, "Let me write up a report for you and you read a paper telling all that we're doing for the Black community." I said, "I think that's totally wrong. What you need to do is go in and say, 'We're so delighted that you have organized the meeting and we realize that the Endowment hasn't done what it needs to do in the Black community and we hope that you will give us our guidance and that this can begin the process of working with you to develop these meaningful programs.'" And I said, "Let it go at that and listen." Well, Liv wouldn't do that; he took Mary Anne Tighe's and, boy, did they murder him and us. I think had that been handled differently, I think a lot of the subsequent things that have effected funding of the Endowment and the arts agencies with the Black community would have been different.

H. (this can be a probe question from g above) What was the single biggest issue or challenge the SAA field had vis a vis the federal government, the regionals, other states, the local arts agencies?

I think overall it was a matter of who did what, the division of responsibilities. I think that that needed to have been better defined because I think that good fences make good neighbors. But I also...saying that you got a division, the danger is that you limit access to the money. And somewhere along the way I think the movement lost track of this whole community support system. You know, I've often thought if I had a lot of money and could create a foundation, I would first of all...my first criteria would be quality but the second would be on giving and it would be on how much the board gives as well as how much the community gives because so many of these board members go and don't give anything. But how you both define the responsibilities and not limit access is a troublesome question.

So that was an issue for all concerned, from the federal down to the local? And everybody grappled with it in different ways and ultimately it sort of ended up with this mishmash where people that I don't think were qualified went to the Endowment and got money and there were other people who were very qualified and had good responsible leadership but they couldn't get in. And I don't know what the answer to that is but I think it's still a problem today probably.

I. Can you think of an anecdote that tells us something about the arts in the political climate of your state at that time? Can you tell us who – if anyone – was a special political ally to you in those days (the governor? A legislator?)

I think that that story I told you about Governor Rhodes trying to end it all is pretty strong. We had two big political allies in those days; one was obviously Stanley Aronoff and the other was Patrick Sweeney from Cleveland, the representative. The other

problem that existed then and I'm sure exists today was that of governors appointing people who weren't...like Marge Schott. I remember that first time that I came down here to see her and meet her and we had lunch at Queen City Club and her first question was, "What is the Ohio Arts Council and is it an honor to be appointed to it?" The only thing I can say about Marge is at least she was honest. She said, "I told the Governor, I said, 'Appoint me to the agricultural commission or something I know something about and am interested in,'" but she says, "But, you know, they said I couldn't get that." And so I said, "Well, something's better than nothing." And then do you remember her first meeting?

In Portsmouth? No, we held it up in that room in the Trinity Episcopal Church. It was a grants approval, it was in May, I suppose, something like that and Tom Quigley was chairing and Irma was there but she just was letting him chair that session. We got to the grant for the Cincinnati Ballet and Marge said, "Why do we want to give money to them? All they'll want do is hire another faggot to run around the stage in black tights." And Tom Quigley was wonderful because he said, "Mrs. Schott, this Council is here to support the arts. We don't care so long as"...basically he didn't say these words...we don't care what the sexual orientation of the dancer is so long as they do it well. That is an inappropriate comment and we will not tolerate that and he was very forthright. And I was so glad because he could do it whereas Irma couldn't have because Irma had to deal with her. And then you remember the next meeting we decided to have a...it was in September, I think...and we invited the Council to my apartment for dinner and we had Ron Aaron and Jeannie Kirstein come to give a house concert. Were you there? *I think so.* So after the concert, we had drinks and Bill Mallory came and they were going around the table. Do you remember this? *Yes, how could I forget it!* But Wayne came in the kitchen and he said, "You've got a fight going on out there." And I said, "What?" And I grabbed the rolls and I went out and dropped them and I went down on my knees to pick them up and I pushed Marge to one side and Bill to the other. Wayne took Bill Mallory and Irma took Marge, I think, and we separated them but they were bickering about that when they were leaving the apartment. The thing is in many ways I had great respect for Marge 'cause, when her husband died, basically that company was bankrupt and she pulled it back and she fought General Motors 'cause they didn't want her to have the...and all of this, and she could be good. I went to Schott Buick and bought a Buick and, when I was in signing the papers, well, Marge came by. Well, she looked in and she says, "Well honey, what are doing here?" And I said, "Hi, Marge. I'm buying a car from you." Well, she said, "Well, did they give you a good deal?" And I said, "I think so. You're better to determine that than I am." She said, "How much are you charging?" And he told her which car it was and she says, "Well, that's not bad. Take \$500 off; that will be better." She was very loyal in her own way. Lord knows, she should never have been on the Council.

Another one of Governor Rhodes' fine appointments, just like John Henle. And, you know, John Henle, the only reason that he and I got along as well as we did and actually we didn't have too much trouble but it was because, you know, before he was appointed, he came to the council meeting and Irma had brought drinks and so forth and, you know,

he wrote it up or did something with one of his things and so after that I called him up and I sat down and we had a drink and I said, "Well, now what do you think the Council needs to do?" It was from that and my whole experience with this letter with the Governor that I said. "We've got to get a statewide organization so that the director doesn't have to go out on the limb like this and do it." And John said, "Well, let me pull together a little meeting." There was an architect in town, very nice older man...what was his name? It seems that it was like Maurice or...but I don't think that's it...had a wonderful house. *It wasn't Byron Ireland?* No, but we had a meeting in his house and we invited two or three people; one or two from out of town and that was way the Citizens Committee for the Arts was created and so I had worked with him and he basically knew that I firmly believed in developing audiences and in empowering local groups and I think had I not had that experience with him prior to his being chair, it would have been worse and I don't think he and Wayne had the relationship that I had with him even though they were together much longer. I thought he was....well, John and dear Judith, they could be fun on occasion but for the most part he was just a crashing bore.

J. How did you use your time?

1. Can you describe a prototypical day?

To give the staff some general vague directions. You know and I'll never forget when I first started with the Kentucky Arts Commission and I started about the first in June. Bill Hull said, "Now we're going to leave next Monday morning and we're going to take a little tour. So we've got a week that we can work here in the office together and then we'll have a week touring together. Then I'm taking my family to my summer place for the summer and I'll be back Labor Day." Basically he said, "Here's the budget. Make sure that when I get back, it's all committed." And part of that was to write guidelines. I was wanting more direction, too, which he wasn't going to give me. And he said, and I'll never forget this, "Jim, just remember that when you write a guideline that you don't draw it so tight that when you turn around you trip." And that's something I firmly believe to this day. And so, you know, all of that "general vague" really had, I think, a purpose because it gave us the room to maneuver out of some tight situations that we wouldn't have had had it been more structured. Now that's my view on it and I'm sure there are alternative views.

2. In a typical year at the beginning, can you give a general idea of how your time divided (in percents, roughly):

- ___ *Grant administration*
- ___ *advocacy/lobbying with public officials*
- ___ *field /constituency communication*
- ___ *agency strategic planning*
- ___ *program development*
- ___ *fundraising*
- ___ *partnership building (with other government agencies, with other types of nonprofits, with private sector, with arts/cultural agencies at other levels of government)*

Can you put any percentages to any of these?

No. It was very different between Kentucky and Ohio. First of all in Kentucky I had it was well established that staff made grant decisions and the Council confirmed and we got to that in Ohio and then Wayne, I think, turned too much power over to the committee groups and I really think Wayne has done a wonderful job with the Council on most things but there are one or two things where he just let it get out of hand and that's one of them 'cause he should have more staff involvement and input there and he should never have allowed the panels to become....and maybe I'm wrong because I wasn't there but that's what it appeared to me and to a lot of other people. In Kentucky I did an awful lot out in the field and I remember when I came to Ohio and I'd been here about 3 months and I'd met a lot of important people and Alice would come in and Ira would come in and they would tell me doing what they were doing and what they'd seen and I was so jealous of them. And I sat myself down one day and had a little chat and I can remember saying, "Look. If you want to be out there in the field, if you want to meet the artists, if you want to deal with the programs, you've got to resign your job because that's not what this job in this state is all about. If you're not going to resign, then you've got to understand that your job is going to be political." And fortunately we had a good staff that took care of most of the administrative things so my job was much more, I think, working the political process and shaping the direction of the agency and trying to build, set up certain foundations for the direction of the agency. So the two states were very, very different and although, of course, I had to deal with the political process, my style has never been...this was true even when I was doing fund raising events up here...is never to do it. I always tried to work behind the scenes. I think Wayne has been much more out front in having his relationship with the single people in power than I was whereas I would go through Council members or through other people much more. Both of them can be effective; I would think it's just a big difference in style. So I would say that agency strategic planning, advocacy, some of the partnership building, those were things I did a good bit of. I did certainly in working with the legislature and all to try to get my budget through and working with other people in state agencies, we did that; and at least we defended the budget under Rhodes and didn't get any cuts because and you know why? *Why?* When it came to crunch time and we'd gotten it restored in the legislature and then Rhodes had threatened to line item veto it and oh, I forget the guy's name...he had been the manager at the symphony here and he was in Cleveland at the time...tall...it's just not coming back to me....everyone said the only person that could save us was the guy who was at the time chairman of board of the Cleveland Orchestra. He had supported Rhodes financially and in other ways and it wasn't Joseph but it was one of the other big...I just don't remember his name. Anyway, I went there. Ken Haas was the manager and I said, "Ken, will you do this for us? Will you talk with him and persuade him to use his influence?" So Ken went and talked with him and he called me back and he said he's going to do what he can. And it was later reported to me that he called Jim Rhodes and he said, "Jim, I supported you all these years. I've never asked for a favor. I'm asking for a favor now and I don't expect to be denied." And he said, "Leave the Ohio Arts Council alone." And so from that for the remainder of my time

including the next budgetary process, Rhodes left us alone. I spent a lot of my time, too, when I was in Ohio with NASAA. Those were two instrumental years of getting NASAA up and on a solid foundation and it took a lot of my time.

3. Did your time use change in any noticeable way from the beginning to the end of your time at the SAA?

It certainly changed from the beginning in Kentucky and to the end of Ohio because I was much more hands on with the arts and the artists. We brought in Joffrey II for a week's residency in Maysville for the Banana Festival. Well, I went down there for the whole week and I hung all the lights and I mean, you know, it was that type of thing whereas, of course, I didn't do any of that and, although I went to a lot of performances and to see a lot of shows but it wasn't the same; I didn't do the same type of thing. I tried to be very careful not to do what Ira and Alice were supposed to be doing.

K. What else - information, stories – can you tell us that you think people in the future ought to know about your agency, or the SAA world in general?

A lot of stories but that covers a lot of it.

II. Have you stayed in touch with the state arts agency field since you left your position as Executive Director?

The answer to that is both yes and no. I've stayed in touch with friends. I was very careful when I came back to Ohio to try and never to be seen as imposing in any way on Wayne. And I've been told that sometimes that I did it to the point that it seemed that I was indifferent and so forth which I wasn't. I was always concerned about it but I tried to stay out of things and so I tried to distance myself from the Council except in those places where I had to but I was much more involved because I, you know, served on a lot of panels in other states and I did a lot of consultancies for councils in other states. I would have loved it had you all invited me; but you never did so I wasn't going to ask.

A. If so,

1. From your experience, how has the role and the activities of SAAs changed since you began your career?

Drastically. They have become bureaucracies and, while I think that they still have some wonderful people on staff, they have more money and with more money you get more scrutiny; there is less flexibility; there is less ability to fund projects and organizations that do good programs but that are not as interested in grantsmanship. I think that the climate has changed so that it's much more competitive and there are, it seems to me, instances where something other than quality...the quality of the art...isn't as totally important. There are other factors that have bitten into that. I wouldn't want to go and work for one today.

2. From your experience, what skills/competencies do you think are most important to incoming SAA staff? To SAA leadership?

You have to have a high tolerance for bureaucracy which I don't. You know, I think that all of those things like job descriptions are much more important today. Nobody cared

much about your job description when we were back there at the beginning. We knew what we were to do but I don't remember that you had a job description. And today it's just so much of protecting your ass whereas back then the emphasis, it seems to me, was much more on how can we really get out there and help.

3. Would you pursue a career in SAAs/public arts management today if you were starting out?

If I were starting out and naïve, I probably would because, I mean, there are many attractive things about it even with the problems.

4. Has the field lived up to its promise? Why or why not?

Yes and no. I mean, just look at the availability of the arts and the more increased audiences for the arts and much of this has to do with the Endowment and the state arts agencies and the programs that have occurred over the last 40 years but have they really gotten to a lot of people—no. I mean the people are involved in the arts are still a very small segment. And the older I get, the more I wonder whether or not you will ever be able to. I think much of it is in the genes. There was no reason for me to love the arts; I grew up on the edge of the Okeefanokee swamp in South Georgia, for god's sake. And yet I've always loved design, I've loved things that are beautiful, I have enjoyed music, but it's...why? It's something that started much, much earlier than high school or college and I don't know why certain people have that and other.... I do know this that a lot of this arts education is a waste of time. There was a study done by Lincoln Center that started before Lincoln Center was opened and it was done with the Philharmonic and the Ballet and Opera in New York. They followed school students who had been bused in to hear these performances for 8 or 9 years and then they followed up with them, I think, 5 or 6 after they got out of high school and they found that there was absolutely no difference between the participation of people who had had all this exposure and those who hadn't. The problem is that we like what we know. Hart Crane wrote a wonderful poem that went something like, "I saw a man in the desert and I said, 'Sir, what are you doing?' and he said, 'I'm eating.' And I said, 'What are you eating?' and he said 'My heart.' And I said, 'Is it good?' and he said, 'No, it is bitter. It is bitter but I like it because it's mine.'" Right there is the essence of what education is all about and, when students are bused into a museum one time a year or to an orchestra or a ballet or whatever, here again, if I had a lot of money and if I were going to do a music education program, I would give money to schools to put a high quality sound system in their dining rooms and I would set up system beginning with the first week of school with Ravel's Bolero and I'd play that thing every day. And then the second week I would interject another one and I would do it and the Bolero. And I would gradually build this up. Then I would do a few segments about this and ultimately, by end of year, I would have them go and hear a concert of those pieces that they had heard all year in recording because it's only when you hear something over and over and over and you get to know it that you begin to say, "Hey, that's not so bad." But we don't do that and so it's this one shot deal; even in some of the best education programs, it's so much one shot and it just doesn't work. So, I think that in those senses, it has failed greatly and I'm feeling very concerned about a lot of the criteria that's being used now to make grants. I think people need to go back and take a long, hard look at it.

B. If you have NOT stayed in touch with the field, why not?

III. Think about the time when you were starting your work with SAAs. What have you changed your mind about, if anything, from then to now?

I think that what I wanted to do then as far as sharing the arts I would still want to do now. I think probably I'm more jaded now. I suppose I'm just disappointed about a lot of things and the direction that things have gone because I don't think they've been effective. But basically I think my basic underlying philosophy is the same. I think it always will be.

IV. Do you have a single piece of advice for a young person entering the field of public sector arts administration today?

Yeh, know something about the arts and remember that the ...there are two broad fields: one is quality product; the other is quality process and judging the project is much easier than judging the process and it seems to me where a lot of the failures have come was on the process end of the spectrum rather than the product end. I think the Cleveland Orchestra and the Cincinnati Orchestra and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra are doing great things...so are a lot of the big museums...but you have to know the good of the product; otherwise you're not going to be able to know how to judge the process to make sure that it's achieving the best product that you can. And I think that a lot of people just have lost sight of the product or never knew it to begin with.

V. Information about you:

A. Education

- 1. Educational level (has, ba, some grad, ma, PhD) - MA*
- 2. Major/field - English*

B. What skills/competencies did you have/did you bring to your leadership position at an SAA? How had you acquired these skills? (experience, professional development training, formal degree education)

I think one of my strengths, and I don't know if I was very skillful at it or not, was my willingness to delegate and the fact that I trusted people to delegate to and let them make their mistakes and tried to let them go out on their own direction, not just mine. I think I was much less directive than Don was and I don't know...I never worked for Don...but that was the impression I got. And I think that's the way you're made. I don't think it has anything to do with...You can hone what's there but basically I don't think you change your make-up. I'm sure that Don was much more detailed oriented than I was...am I right in this? Whereas I wasn't that concerned about the details; that was what you all were supposed to do. I hope I gave you the liberty to do it and to develop and I think that's what allows people to develop their own skills and I think in that sense, I'm very good at being willing to do that. The other side of that coin is that sometimes and there are people who need much more structure; and those are the people that I soon weeded out. Lord knows, Ira was pretty structured and I tried to get him even to...and so it wasn't that I was just going to fire people because they weren't. But I'm sure that he

was much happier working for someone who would give him more direction than he was working for me whereas I think Alice was the opposite.

C. Work Experience

1. Specific arts management experience vs. non-arts management experience

own some restaurants; I have managed and rehabbed old houses, a lot of this is stuff that I did on my own; worked for Aids Volunteers of Cincinnati as director of development; I taught then when to Kentucky as Head Master of Private Day school; organist and choirmaster at many churches; Philadelphia Ballet, President; Cincinnati Ballet, General Manager; Assistant Director, Cincinnati Art Museum; General Manager, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra; Dayton Art Institute; lot of consultancies with mostly nonprofits; president of Cincinnati Arts Council; chair of NASAA; owned some bars; adjunct professor or visiting professor in lots of arts management courses at lots of universities;

2. Did you work for a SAA either before or after your time as Executive Director?

Assistant Director in KY in 1967; early in '70 when Bill left

3. Did you work for a public sector agency – not an SAA – either before or after your time as Executive Director?

NEA – 1978-79

4. It may be necessary for us to just ask them to make a list of their work experience in chronological order – no need for years – including the SAA, and then for us to categorize – jotting one of these categories after they have named the job:

- private sector management
- government agency management
- gallery/performance group
- fundraising/grant administration
- performer/critic/writer
- lobbyist/advocate
- nonprofit sector experience
- elected office holder
- arts education/teacher
- academic
- service organization experience: national or other

Work Chronology

D. Do you pursue any art form? Which?

An organist and a choirmaster at two churches; attend a lot of performances of ballet and orchestra, sometimes the opera; often go to the museums, galleries

E. Demographic information:

- 1. Gender - Male*
- 2. Age range now - 68*
- 3. geographic region he or she lives now - Ohio*
- 4. political/partisan identification - Democrat*