

## **Edgar Marston**

*Executive Director of North Carolina.* The reason it requires an explanation, is I became executive director of North Carolina State Arts Council in October of 1968. I was director of the state arts council per se until 1973 but what happened then was there was a new division formed in state government, the division of the arts; and the division of the arts included a number of arts organizations including the state arts council; and I became director of division of the arts in 1973 and was director until 1978; and then I was asked to come to University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. So I was director from 1968 to 1973. I was 28 when I became director; I was told at that point that I was the youngest state arts council director in the county but I don't know if that was true or not; I certainly didn't ask anybody their age. But from 1973 to '78 I was still involved with the arts council because the director reported to me as director of the division of the arts. So I was involved for ten years; I was executive director for five and then oversaw the arts council among other arts organizations for five more years.

*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?*

As I understand it, the big idea behind the formation of the NEA grew out of a number of efforts including a study that had been done at the Rockefeller Foundation; I think Nancy Hanks had been involved with that study. A few other studies had been done showing that we as a nation needed a national arts organization. I think the idea was that we did not need an arts tsar or culture tsar as we had in other countries. It needed to be a very democratic, little "d," and the National Endowment for the Arts, of course, began around 1965, '66 and they put out the word that they wanted each state to study the arts in their state. North Carolina formed an organization to receive the grant and North Carolina received grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1966. Bob Brickle was hired to do that study; he spent about a year and he published a study about the arts in North Carolina that came out in 1967, so we have to say, Sue, at that point the major impetus for the forming of the North Carolina Arts Council was this challenge from the National Endowment for the Arts. Now, I have to say that before then there had been formed the Winston-Salem Community Arts Council which was the first in the country. It was already in existence when the state arts council was formed. I also will give you some history about other arts organization in North Carolina that occurred before the state arts council but I think that's later on in your questions. So the big idea, I think, was a very democratic notion of having arts involvement for the citizens of this country and in each

state that grew out of several studies and, of course, Lyndon Johnson was president and had a lot of clout in those days and eventually wanted to honor John Kennedy with organizations and eventually, of course, the Kennedy Center in Washington.

*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?*

First of all you need to understand that in North Carolina we had a number of major arts organizations that had been started by the state and these were firsts. For example, the first state symphony was the North Carolina Symphony which was started in the 1940's with a grant from the legislature. It was called the horn tootin' bill. The legislature actually appropriated money...I think it was \$2,000...for this symphony, this very small symphony to tour to a number of schools in the state. That was North Carolina Symphony; as I understand it, the first state-supported, state-organized symphony in the country. There was also an organization called the State Arts Society. They were pushing very hard for the state to have an art collection and they started collecting works of arts. They got some money from an industrialist and his name was Pfeiffer and in the 1950's the state of North Carolina founded the North Carolina Museum of Art. They started collecting art in the early 50's. They sent Dr. Valentino, I think, was his name. He went to Europe and he collected works of art. There was a \$1m appropriation from the state to match a grant from the Crest Foundation; that's like Crest stores which I don't think exist any more. So in the '50's the North Carolina Museum of Art was founded and now has a magnificent collection which belongs to the citizens of North Carolina. Then in 1965 Governor Sanford was governor of North Carolina and he saw the need for training the many talented young people in North Carolina. They started the new North Carolina School of the Arts, the first state school of the arts in the country. Of course, there was the New York City School for the Arts and things like that but this was a state school. It actually eventually came under the university system and they concentrated in the early years on dance, theatre and music. So as you can see, Sue, by the time the North Carolina Arts Council was formed in 1967, we already had a major institution in the Museum of Art; another major institution in the North Carolina Symphony which by then was touring across the state performing for school children; a major institution in the North Carolina School of the Arts; a major institution in the Winston-Salem Community Arts Council. So when we started, unlike many other states, we didn't have to concentrate on trying to start a symphony or a state museum of art, things like that. In that way we were different than many other states. So what was my big idea at that point? When I say “my,” I want to point out that I'm going to use the word “we.” It was me as director but it was also a wonderful board, a wonderful board chair and a number of other people who were involved with the arts so I'm going to use the term “we” from now on. A lot of the ideas were mine; a lot of the ideas I gleaned from others. The big idea was arts involvement by the majority of citizens of North Carolina. Our plan was over a long term to have; our hope was to have a community arts agency in every county of North Carolina with a staff, a building and a budget. We have 100 counties; it's a very wide state; ten hours to drive all the way across North Carolina. We also in addition to having a local arts agency in every county in the state with a staff, a building and a budget, we wanted other major organizations to be involved in the arts including business and so, as we go through this, I will tell you how we involved.... We could see that with

our tiny budget and our tiny staff...I mean at the end of 1969 we got three staff people and that was it; me, an assistant and a secretary. You can imagine what the total budget was. We issued biennial reports; the total budget \$254,000; that was it and three of us. We knew that we had to leverage that money greatly; we knew we had to leverage our ideas and programs. And so the long term plan was not only to have local arts agencies in every county in the state but also to involve the following kinds of institutions and I'll tell you how we did that: public schools, the community colleges and technical institutes, the businesses, the churches, synagogues, the local government, the recreation departments; and all of those groups we worked with over the next five, ten years to try to get them involved in the arts and thus to leverage our very small budget to have an effect across the entire state. That was the big idea.

*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?*

I think so. I think that, and I can take you through a few years when I was director later on; I assume you want to hear about that and then tell you about some of the major programs that we did. I assume you don't want to hear about that quite yet. When I left the job, do I think we made progress? Yes, I do. I think that you've got to understand that in North Carolina as with most state governments, you have these huge agencies, huge budgets and very large staffs. You have the state arts council at that point as of 1969 with three people and a couple hundred thousand dollars. We were a gnat on the elephant. Eventually there was formed by Governor Scott a new...Governor Scott came in and there were 300 and some state agencies. Governor Scott who was governor from '68 to '72 decided, first of all he could never meet with all the agency heads. It was impossible. He reorganized state government to 17 major agencies. One of those new agencies was the Department of Cultural Resources and under that department Governor Scott put archives and history, the state library; all the arts organizations. And then as you now know in 1973 there was the new division of the arts formed under the Department of Cultural Resources. I became director of that division. Included in that division were the Museum of Art, Symphony, the North Carolina Arts Council, the North Carolina Theatre Arts, Statewide Cultural Arts Coalition. So as you can see in North Carolina we had this new department around 1972, the Department of Cultural Resources...I think it was the first in the country...and we had a secretary of cultural resources who was appointed and reported directly to governor. Three of us were under that secretary: the Division of the Arts, the Division of State Libraries and the Division of Archives and History. Do I think that we made some progress? Absolutely.

*Did you change your mind about what was needed?* You mean as I was leaving. Not in any major way. Obviously when you're trying to do as many things as we were trying to do with a small staff and a small budget, and basically our efforts were divided into three parts. We had programs; these were ideas that we came up with, funded and promoted across the state. Then we had the regular grants that we would give out to arts organizations across the state. And then, of course, we sent consultants all over the place. With only three staff members, we hired a lot of consultants. Did every program hit a home run? No. Did every grant hit a home run? Of course not, but in broad terms, I don't think that by the time I left as director of the state arts council or even five years

later when I came to the University when I left as director of the Division of the Arts, in broad terms I don't think that I would have made any major changes and I don't want that to sound arrogant. The main reason for that is because we had such a good board; we had such good staff members; we had advisors all over the state; and if you want to know the truth; they kept us from making any major mistakes. If we started down the wrong road, some board member...they were very sharp...would get back with us and say, "Don't think we better go too far down that road." And the Governor would appoint 24 board members; eight rotated each year. And for the most part they were excellent. So I would say as far as major direction, if you would say to me "Do you think you would have changed things in a major way like major programs or efforts," I do not. Not to sound arrogant but because we had such good advice and good help that we were kept on the right path.

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

I think the fact that we were able to involve so many local organizations and so many people across the state in the arts; that was the thing I was proudest of. By the time I came over to the university, I think we had local arts councils in something like 92 out of 100 counties; We had programs...and later on I guess you'll want me to go through them...programs that we had started in the schools, in the community colleges, in the churches, in the synagogues, in the recreation departments, and local government. We did some programs that got us some nice awards and got us some nice attention. I think that we were probably very lucky in that, because we had these already established and funded major state arts organization...symphony, art museum, groups like that...we could concentrate on the populous. In fact, I looked last night and I looked at the first biennial report that came out after I'd been director for two years and I talked about what we did and the last sentence in my report, quote: "And we shall be doing our part to help remove the black tie curtain which exists between the arts and the majority of the population." We were in the middle of the Iron Curtain, of course, made famous by Winston Churchill in his speech in Fulton, Missouri. We saw that, in many instances, there was a black tie curtain between the arts and the folks and so we worked very hard to bring that down. Did we succeed in getting every North Carolinian involved in the arts? Of course not but we got a lot of them and I think that was the thing that I was most proud of.

*E. What was most frustrating to you?*

I'm going to say this and you may not believe it, but very seldom did I get frustrated. We had...by the time I left as director and went on to be promoted to the job of director of the Division of the Arts, the state arts council had a total budget of less than \$1 million. We had a total budget of \$635, 205. Now even in 1973, that wasn't a huge amount of money but because of the good advice we got and the good help from other people, we did an awful lot. This may be out of sequence, but let me just tell you the amazing situation that I encountered and I'll give you a little bit of my background. I grew up in North Carolina; went to Davidson College and got my undergraduate degree. Then I came here to the University and got an MBA degree; was probably one of the few arts council directors in the early days who had an MBA degree. I had been in advanced ROTC at Davidson, got a commission as an officer in the military. I was sent to

Germany with the United States Army. I was assigned to a military intelligence unit; that's a spy outfit basically and for two years I was in an administrative job with a military spy outfit in Germany. I came back here and went to work for state government; I always loved the arts. In Europe I spent a lot of time in museums and performances and in high school I was in all the musicals and the chorus and took piano for three years and I always loved the arts. I was working...you know how fate sometimes brings us to a certain place. This is an amazing story because, when you had an MBA degree in those days, I came back from Germany, went to work for state government; they put me to work in the state bureau of the budget. I'm sure you had conferences with those folks in Ohio. I was working in the state bureau of the budget and one day the director...he would assign us various agencies...the director came to me and he said, "The Legislature's just left town and they've created this new agency; something called the North Carolina Arts Council. I'm going to give you that. You're going to oversee their budget, etc." I looked at that thing and I thought, "Goodness, gracious. Here's this new organization involved in promoting, funding, encouraging the arts and I love the arts." And so with that insider information I found out who had been hired as the new director and kept talking to him over a number of months until he got to the point where he was going to hire an assistant. At that point it was just Bob Brickle and a secretary. He hired me as his assistant so it was Bob Brickle, me and the secretary. A year later when he left, I became director. Well at that point, let me just tell you the kind of situation that we had as far state government. Number one, the man who was director of state bureau of the budget for whom I had worked had played with big band and his wife was a singer in the big band. He loved music; that was amazing; he was the guy who was the head of the state bureau of the budget. The man who was state treasurer, Edwin Gill, loved the art museum more than anything. He was on the board and at lunch he would take people on tours of the art museum. The man who was the state secretary of revenue, Ivy Clayton, loved the opera and he and his wife would go to New York to go to the opera. He loved the museum of art; he was on the board. The man who was head of state board of education was an amateur artist. He loved the arts. We had a situation in North Carolina in which we had these very powerful people in state government who just by chance were involved with the arts and loved the arts. I could go with down with the state bureau of the budget or the secretary of revenue or I could go meet with Mr. Gill who was the state treasurer and then they would call up somebody in the Legislature and it was a situation in which...I told somebody, it's sort of unreal. We had all these people in very powerful places who happened to be involved in the arts. It was an amazing situation. Now did we get huge budgets? No, we did not but sure as heck got plenty of help when we needed it. So again, you say to me, "What was the most frustrating?" Everybody has minor irritations. I don't remember any major frustrations. Have you interviewed anybody else who told you that? *No, no one.* I mean you had the usual people who would try to get our budget cut but that was minor stuff. I had all these major heavy hitters who were supporting us. Well, I had worked in the state bureau of budget for two years, remember. We were the legislature's fiscal research agency. When the Legislature was in session during those two years from 1965 to '67, I was actually over there in the Legislature almost all the time. I was used to those folks; I knew them. In fact, I think one of the reasons Bob Brickle hired me as his assistant was because I knew a number of those people; I knew about state budgets and everything and Bob Brickle who was an ABD in

history, he knew very little about budgets and or the Legislature and knew nothing about politics. He figured, you know, that I might come in handy. Politics didn't surprise me.

*F. What was most surprising to you?*

I didn't think there were many things that were surprising. I don't know if there were any other directors in state government, directors of state arts councils, who had an MBA degree, who'd been in the spy business in Germany and worked in a bureau of the budget and closely with the legislature for two years and worked with politicians constantly. There were very few surprises. No major ones.

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

NEA – It was excellent because of personal contacts that I had. First of all, Clark Mitze who became head of the state arts council unit at the National Endowment for the Arts; Dave Sennema had been my neighbor, arts council director Dave Sennema had been head of the South Carolina Arts Commission; I got to know him quite well. Dave Sennema was hired by Clark Mitze to go to Washington and work with him in the section there that deal with state arts agencies. So I knew Clark but I knew Dave quite well. He and I were old buddies. During my five years as director of the state arts council and then my five years overseeing it as director of the Division of the Arts, I thought we had quite close relations with the National Endowment for the Arts. Nancy Hanks had connections to North Carolina. She became, as you know, the chairman of the NEA. I wasn't obviously close to her; she wasn't somebody that I talked to very often but our relations with the National Endowment for the Arts were excellent;

ACA – Oh, Associated Councils for the Arts; Michael Newton and that crowd. We would go to their annual conference each year held in places like Washington, D.C., and good relationship. I mean we didn't get money from ACA, of course, but they gave us guidance and got us together once a year and that was valuable because you get together for a couple of days with directors of the other 49 states and hear what they're doing and see program highlights and it was very beneficial.

SAA's – Well I certainly knew the directors. Occasionally, eventually we got to the point, of course, where we would do some cooperative programming with them like the National Endowment might offer us a grant if we would take a performing group from let's say, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, programs like that. We didn't do a lot of collaborative things like that because there just wasn't not enough money but from time to time we did and eventually the National Endowment started the program of local representatives. You know, they had a local representative for the southeast and elsewhere and, in fact, they hired my assistant Charlie Springman, their first representative for the southeast. So, therefore, shall we say I had an "in" with our representative because I had hired him. You gotta keep your contacts. I tried to make sure of that. In fact, I recommended Charlie to them.

LAA's – We worked so closely with the local arts agencies in North Carolina. I know that in some states there seems to have been a certain amount of competition, even conflict. I, of course, soon after I was hired, went up and met with the director of the

Winston-Salem Arts Council, found out what they were doing and then eventually as we pushed every county to have a local arts council, we worked very closely with them and we suggested that they form a statewide association. We gave them some money to meet the first time; we got them together; they formed a North Carolina Association of Community Arts Agencies...I don't know if that was the exact title. They would get together once a year at our encouragement. So it was not us versus them; it was us with them. At one point, for example, several programs that we initiated to work with local arts agencies; one was salary assistance program...several states did that about the same time and South Carolina, I think, did it first...we told community arts agencies all over the state, if they would hire a professional, hire a person, the first year we would pay two-thirds of the salary, the next year one-half, the last year, one-third; and ease them out. As I say, I think that's a program that started in South Carolina. That helped a lot of local arts agencies get a paid staff member. Number two, a program that we started which made a great big difference...it seemed to me if we could tap local sources of revenue, lean that money toward local arts agencies that we could have a big effect so I worked with somebody from the attorney general's staff in state government and I asked him to do research and find what kinds of local revenues, tax revenues, could be used for arts programming. They came back and they said, "Okay, certain local tax revenues may not be used arts programming but others, they may." And I went to the National Endowment for the Arts and I said to them, "I want to start a new program of local government matching grants to challenge local governments across North Carolina to come up with some money and we'll match it and that money will go into these new local arts agencies." The first year we didn't get the grant but the second year we did. And we told local arts agencies all over the state, "You go see your county and city governments and tell them that there are certain kinds of revenue which they can legally grant you for arts programming and then, if they will do that, to a certain amount we will match it." And so we began those, a number of local governments started doing that and then each year we would say, "If they will put in increased money, we will match it." If last year the city of Greensboro gave Greensboro Arts Council \$20,000 and then this year they gave them \$30,000, we said, "Okay, we'll match that new \$10,000." And we leveraged that money into a lot of local money for these local arts agencies. It worked well. It wouldn't have happened, of course, if we hadn't done our homework, if we hadn't found out through the attorney general's office what kinds of local revenue could be used for this kind of purpose and, of course, when we went to them I was able to say you can tell your county manager or your city manager that the state attorney general's office has indicated these types of funds, these types of tax revenues, may be used to support your local arts organizations. So we tried to always get ahead of things and make sure that...I told somebody one time, I said, "Every program we start, I get involved two organizations. I get the state attorney general involved to make sure this is legal and number two, I get the state auditor involved to make sure that we're keeping things up to snuff financially.

*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?*

You mean in addition to everybody always saying, "We don't have enough money." I think that one of the more challenging things was the fact that in North Carolina, of

course, we already had the Museum of Art, the North Carolina Symphony, the School of the Arts, major organizations like that that were getting line item appropriations from the state government. We also, of course, had across North Carolina and especially in the major towns a number of symphonies, we had a symphony in Charlotte, one in Winston-Salem, one in Greensboro, one in Raleigh; and we had a number of art museums that were pretty major institutions. And, of course, with our tiny budget we couldn't give them the kind of money they needed. We have in North Carolina, the outdoor drama movement started here. A playwright named Paul Greene started the outdoor drama; the first symphonic...I mean the Greeks had plays outdoors but I mean the symphonic outdoor drama combining music and dance and the story based on history that had taken place right in that location. The first one is titled "The Lost Colony" and Paul Greene wrote the story of the colony that came from England and he put music to it and dance in a very dramatic form and told the story. We had a number of these outdoor dramas across North Carolina; we had a number in the mountains; there's a big one up at Cherokee where the Indian reservation is, etc., etc. So we had a number of institutions, museums, symphonies, local institutions, outdoor dramas, etc., which quite frankly needed a lot more money than we could grant them. We didn't have that much money. It was always a challenge as we organized, for example, the statewide association of local arts agencies and then, of course, I suggested that the symphonies for a statewide association; I suggested the dance companies do that and the museums do that, etc., etc., etc., so we had a number of these statewide associations which we had encouraged. But obviously from time to time a major organization like a very large community symphony would say to me, "We can't get enough money from you. It's just not there. We're going to have to go directly to the legislature." It was always a challenge to try to get them to support an increase in our budget so we could give them more money but human beings being human beings, a number of them especially in the major metropolitan areas were able to go directly to their legislators and get money line itemed directly to them. Did this make me mad or hurt my feelings? No, because I was thinking I'd have done the same thing. If I were running a major symphony in a large metropolitan area and I truly needed a couple hundred thousand dollars and the arts council was lucky to give me \$20,000, what am I going to do even if I might like the director of the state arts council? I'm going to go directly to my legislative contingent and ask them to try to get money line itemed to my organization. Did that take away from the amount allocated to the state arts council? I don't think so. Now it may be that our budget didn't increase as rapidly as it could have if these things hadn't been going on but you know what? It's life. It's life; these major organizations, a number of them with budgets a lot bigger than ours. That was always a challenge and I think they tried to support us and also needed help directly.

*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?)*

Well, I've already listed for you a number of people who because of their own interest in the arts were amazing allies starting with the director of the state bureau of the budget, the secretary of revenue; I've already listed all these people, just a number of them who were very much involved with the arts. I mean the state treasurer who is usually the

person who would say, “No, no, no, no, no, you can’t spend any money,” the state treasurer loved the Museum of the Art. He was on the board. The head of the board of education was an amateur artist and was out there helping us. It was just a number of people including some legislators who truly had an interest in what we were doing. Of course, I’d gotten to know some of them when I worked for the state bureau of the budget for two years so I could go by and sit down with them and say, “We really need your help here.” If they could, they would usually help us. Several of our governors were very interested in the arts. I’m going to tell you a story. I was 28 years old when I became director of the North Carolina State Arts Council. I got married right after that; in fact, I became director of the arts council October 1 and I got married November 23. There was a man who was on our board, state arts council board, and he worked for the department of administration. He had campaigned for the then governor; Governor Moore. One day Bob Gatlin said to me, “My wife and I would like you and your wife to come over for dinner on, let’s say, Friday night and we’ll invite a few other people.” And so my new bride and I...I was 28; well, let’s see, I had turned 29 by then; my wife was 23...went over to this house; big old house over in one of the old neighborhoods in Raleigh and we got seated with Bob Gatlin and his wife. We were having a glass of wine and the doorbell rang. Bob got up and he opened the door and this highway patrol trooper came in and I looked at my wife and I go, “What’s happening? Are we under siege here?” And he looked around and he went back out and he came in with the governor and his wife. And my wife looked at me like, “Are we really sitting here in this man’s living room and the Governor and his wife have just come in?” Governor Moore and his wife came in and the six of us had drinks and dinner. We went home that night and we said, “Did this really happen or is this a Fellini movie? Did we dream this?” Governor Moore’s wife loved the arts. The next governor Bob Scott, he and his wife had a number of receptions at the Governor’s mansion when my wife and I were standing in the line with them; they’d have receptions for the art museum or the symphony or various groups. and it was...they were all allies during the time that I was director of the state arts council. Then, of course, Governor Holhouser came in, first Republican governor in North Carolina in a 100 years and he brought in Grace (?), his Secretary of Culture Resources and she was absolutely amazingly wonderful. He support us. In fact, I don’t remember one time during the 10 years I was involved when some...oh, you know, there was always some grumpy person who would say, “Why are we spending all that money on the arts?”...but I don’t remember a time when a really powerful person came at us and said, “You know, we gotta do away with this thing.” There were people out there who would say, “Instead of all that money going to the arts council, it should come to my local organization.” It was just a few grumpy ones. But I don’t remember any really powerful person going after us. In fact the guy who was head of the advisory budget commission, the senator who was head of the appropriations process in the legislature, I was from his hometown so I could go to him and say, “Senator White, could you give me ten minutes of your time?” and he would. And he was made head of the art museum building commission when they located a new art museum. This didn’t happen in many states. It did here.

*J. How did you use your time:*

*1. Can you describe a prototypical day?*

It's hard to describe a typical day because one day I might be working with people to come up with new program ideas. Another three days I would spend getting ready for a meeting with the board when we had to review hundreds of grant applications. Another day I would be out in the car visiting local arts organizations. I think it would be better for me to give you in a typical year a percent of my time; how was it divided...

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

30% - *Grant administration*

10% - *advocacy/lobbying with public officials* – I was very lucky there because I knew a lot of them. I could just pick up the phone and go over there and sit down with them. I didn't have to spend 50% of my time begging people to let me see them.

15% - *field /constituency communication*

10% - *agency strategic planning*

10% - *program development* – I sort of put those two together (strategic planning) but another 10%.

5% - *fundraising* Here's the caveat. If you mean fundraising by going to foundations and getting them to help support projects, maybe 5%. If you mean fundraising by spending time with Senator White and the rest of them in the legislature to get more money, that was a lot more time than that.

20% - *partnership building (with other government agencies, with other types of nonprofits, with private sector, with arts/cultural agencies at other levels of government)*

We did an awful lot of that with other state agencies, local agencies, local government, local arts agencies.

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

I don't think so especially during the five years that I was director of the state arts agency. No, but when I moved up and became director of the division of the arts, it changed a lot because I had four or five agencies reporting to me including the museum, the symphony, etc. So it changed a lot but during my time as director of the state arts agency, no. It did not change significantly.

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?*

We talk about...people who study organizations say that organizations go through different phases; through revolutionary phases; they go through evolutionary phases. The first six years when I was assistant director and then director of the state arts council, those were revolutionary times. We were coming up with new programs, new ideas. Every day was exciting. Eventually, of course, the state arts council like every other organization settled into more of an evolutionary period in which you've got basic things in place; things are evolving; you're working on increasing your budget; you slowly add new program, new ideas, etc. But the six years I was directly with the state arts council, they were revolutionary times; they were wonderful. I don't know if we could go back and replicate that again. I'm not saying that's any better; it was just different. You know

how it was in the early days with Ohio. Everything was changing; everything was exciting; everything was happening; and then slowly but surely you settle into an evolutionary phase. Unfortunately, of course, during certain of the recessions that occurred in this country and various states, there were probably unfortunately some revolutionary periods where people had to cutback and let people go and stop funding programs. Thank goodness I wasn't part of that. By then I was over here at the University.

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

You mean since I left as director of the division of arts in 1978? I have indirectly. I have tried, first of all, not to play the role of pestering or whatever the directors since I left...there's only been one director, Mary Regan. I've tried to stay out of her hair and not be calling up and saying, "You know, I would have done it this way or I would have done it that way." First of all nobody cares and, number two, it wouldn't have been appropriate. But she and I certainly stay in touch. We get together and go to lunch about once a year and I'll see her socially. I saw her recently at a reception at the history museum. I've certainly kept up with her but I've tried not to interfere because I always thought when I became director, if the first director had constantly been calling me up and saying, "I don't think you should have done that or you should be doing this," it would have irritated the fool out of me.

*A. If so,*

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

It changed in quantity if not so much in principle and by that I mean obviously when I left the state arts council and became director of the division of the arts in 1973, there were five staff members and, as I told you, the budget was 600 and some thousand dollars. It has evolved to at one point where at one point the arts council had 20 some employees, a budget of a number of millions of dollars so the size has certainly changed; scope and the mission have not changed in a huge way. The arts council is still working very hard to promote the arts across the state and involve the citizenry and come up with new program ideas and make sure the support continues. They've been through some ups and downs but not like some states that just about been eliminated. In our state there have been some cutbacks in the budget but nothing mortally wounding.

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

The caveat here is that I came to it as an administrator whereas many people came into the field as artists and I think the best combination would probably be if you were excellent in one of the artistic fields and also an incredibly able administrator. That would be perfect. If I played the violin like Isaac Perlman but also had an MBA degree, I'd be powerful; absolutely. Or if I played the piano like Rubenstein and had an MBA and were an incredible administrator, perfect combination. There were a few people who

had come in as artists and who were also excellent administrators but in my case, I came in as an administrator who loved the arts. Oh, performed in high school plays and all this business but... What skills and competencies are important? Well, I think no matter what your background or education, you have to be a competent administrator 'cause that's what we were doing but you also have to have an understanding and a love and a feel for the arts. Now, does your brow have to be touched by God like Isaac Perlman? I don't think so but you sure as heck need to have a love and appreciation and understanding of the arts. At one point we hired a person to work for the state arts council who was a musician; he was a fine musician. After about a year, he came to me and he said, "Edgar, I can't work with the state arts council. I really thought that I was going to be spending a lot of my time playing music." I said, "That's not your job here." He said, "I didn't know I was going to be like a banker spending all my day thinking about budgets for grantees and everything." I said, "Well, that's what we do." So he quit and he should have. He really thought that he was going to be able to go out as a musician and that's not what we needed. At some point I guess you want me to tell you about some of the major programs we started. We have in the state 61 community colleges and technical institutes, there's one in just about every other county. And at one point we went to head of board of the community colleges and the man who was president of the community colleges. And we said, "We'd think it'd be wonderful if we had artists in residences out at those community colleges and technical institutions." And they said, "Well, we'll certainly think about it." I found out through a former employee that the way all positions were funded at community colleges and technical institutes was something called FTE's; full-time equivalent. (HAD TO CHANGE TAPE AND LOST SOME COMMENTS). Wherein there could be placed visiting artists. And I said, "Could you get somebody to second that?" And I talked to the head of the board and I talked to the president. We didn't know if it was going to happen or not because that if it would happen or not because that was big bucks. That meant potentially 61 positions paying \$15,000 or whatever it was in those days. So I knew the board was meeting on a Saturday and late Saturday afternoon, somebody called me and they said, "They passed it. You won't believe this; they passed it." Instantly we had something like 61 times \$15,000 and that program, we started the visiting artists program and eventually something like 58 of 61 of the community colleges and technical institutes had visiting artists program. We coordinated the selection; they all had to have a master's degree; they came from all over the country; we placed them in these technical institutes and community colleges. That program lasted for years. It wasn't until the 90's in one of the big budget cutbacks that community colleges had to stop it. And then out of that, I don't know if you remember the CETA program in 1976 when the federal government, not the NEA, but out money to help create more jobs. We got over a three year period \$3 million in CETA grants and we hired over a hundred artists in addition to the ones at the community colleges and technical institutes. With these CETA grants we sent these artists out to every county in the state where those counties had been approved because of high unemployment rate. That was an interesting program because two people in our state went to jail based on CETA money that the federal government decided had been misspent. I was the one signing off on these CETA grants and I hired a young woman and I told her, I said, "Let me tell you, you and I aren't going to jail if we can help it. We're not going to approve any of these artist in residences under the CETA program

until local employment security commission has judged this position to be legal and I have certification from them” She said, “Can you imagine all the paperwork?” I said, “I don’t care.” And so every time we hired a visiting artist and these were called Third Century Artists because Third Century we figured, you know, 1976 and we put over a 100 of those people in the various counties. Every one of them had been certified as eligible for the federal money by the local employment security commission. It took a lot of paperwork but over those three years, we got about \$3 million and it was just another example of special programming in which we were trying to reach out across the state.

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

Absolutely. I’ve had two phases to my career: arts administration and, after I came over to the university, I taught theatre management in the department of dramatic art here for four years and I was managing director of the professional theatre company. I could see just between me and thee where it was headed. At least if you were managing director of a symphony or a theatre company or a dance company or whatever, you were going to spend about 90% of your time fundraising just to keep things afloat. Spending 90% of my time fundraising was not what I wanted to do so I went to work here in the University in the department of continuing education. I worked there for seven years and then I was asked to go over to North Carolina State University as director of the office of continuing education; it’s the biggest university in the state. We work with 109,000 people a year in seminars and short courses, etc., and now I got to a point where you did, as of 1997, I had 30 years in the state retirement system. So I went ahead and retired the first time. I came back to work over at this university in Chapel Hill where I worked for the program in the humanities and human values so I’ve had two careers. After I stepped down from arts management, Meredith College, a college for women in Raleigh, hired me to teach arts management in their evening program, a program called cultural resources management. Every Thursday night for two hours I taught mostly women how to manage nonprofit cultural organizations and it was wonderful. I’ve had basically two careers: one in arts management and that lasted 15 years, I guess, plus 10 more teaching people how to manage cultural organizations; and then my other career has been in continuing education. So, when you say to me right now, if you’re 28, would you want to spend the rest of your career in arts education, can’t answer that but I certainly would be very excited about going and becoming director of a state arts council. Our son who is 22 is probably going to have four or five different fields. Who knows how many different fields? I’ve had two; you’ve had one. But I’ve also...I was on the Orange County Arts Commission, I was on the Chapel Hills Arts Commission, I’m now on the executive committee of the literary and historical association of North Carolina so I’ve kept my hand in but my careers have been arts management, 15 years, then teaching arts management for ten but continuing education.

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

Can’t answer that for everybody. I know some people probably left very disgruntled. I know some state arts council directors were let go; some were replaced when new governors came in; some were probably not treated very well because of political reasons; so I know if you had in a room the 250 people (I’m making that up) who had

been state arts council directors room and asked them, “How many you left in a disgruntled way?” a number of hands would go up. “How many of you feel very positive about your experience?” I hope more hands would go up. “How many of you are kind of undecided?” you’d have more hands. So I can’t answer that for anyone but myself and I think if you were talking to Bob Brickle, Halsey North, Mary Regan and me, I would hope that we would say that it’s lived up to its promise for us. That’s the only caveat is I can’t speak for anyone else. Am I sitting here a disgruntled former arts administrator? Heavens, no. They were exciting times and I’ve had exciting time in continuing education and in the spy business and everything else. I’ve had an exciting life. I told somebody one time, I said, “You know, I’m just a little guy who grew up in eastern North Carolina. My father worked at Sears the last years of his life but my life at times has been amazing.” I sometimes look at this and say, “Did you really do that?” like the night my wife and I went home after having dinner with the governor and his wife. I’ve also had Fortuna, the goddess of good fortune that the Romans believed in, I think she has been with me most of my life. Other people can’t say that. I’ve had great....of course, now I’ve had some periods in my life that were not so great but gosh, you have to look at that as a lifetime. Sometimes people will say, “Are you happy?” and the other person will say, “I’m not happy.” That means I’m not happy this morning. To me happiness means a lifetime. Overall has your life been a happy one and mine has.

*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 one of the things was that I was disappointed in myself. For example, when I came over to the university and I taught theatre management, I was on the faculty, and I was managing director of the professional theatre company which was a LORT professional theatre company, I’d always dreamed that we were going to get everybody involved in the arts; I mean everybody in some way. And that’s why we worked with recreation departments and colleges and public schools and community colleges and churches and synagogues and civic clubs and business. One of the first things we did was a statewide conference for business leaders to talk about the arts. But, you know, when you’re managing, for example, a professional theatre company and you look at the statistics and you look at the demographics and you look at your subscribers; and we had 3200 subscribers. What do you think the demographics were? 90 some percent of them were college educated; 90 some percent of them had an income above the average. In that role I was certainly dealing with a very elite group of people. They were wonderful but we tried very hard to get other groups from society to be subscribers, etc.; didn’t have a lot of success. And I think the fact that we were dealing with a very elite group of people and not dealing with people across the society was a disappointment. I think that community arts council people are able to reach out more across society and people in public schools obviously are able to do that in a wonderful manner but people who work for a symphony or professional theatre company or maybe even an art museum, they’re dealing with one strata of society. That was something of a disappointment. I’ve always tried to be very equalitarian. I didn’t come from a wealthy family but I think that was a disappointment not that I’m sitting around moping about it, as you can tell.

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

One single piece of advice? I can't think of one piece of advice I've given. I've taught people for ten years every Thursday night to become cultural resources managers. And, of course, I told them to learn about the arts; get involved in the arts; love the arts; but also find out about finances and budgeting and financial reports; how to work with a board; get a book...of course, I used a textbook...get a book just dealing with a board. I would tell them, "You know, I've known a lot of excellent arts administrators who've lost their jobs because they were very ineffective in dealing with their boards." Learn how to work with community; be out there making sure your organization is not perceived as very elitist and only interested in the top 20% of the people in the community. Become an innovator; think out...you know, all the things we've been teaching them. We taught them marketing and public relations; and I would say to any person thinking of coming into the field: you need all those; you need a complete well-rounded grasp of all those administrative things plus an amazing love and understanding for the arts because if you're not good with finances or you're really terrible in dealing with the board, you're going to fail. I mean you're asking me, I think, as somebody who would be a director of a state arts council. If you're going to work with a state arts council and you're going to be the person in charge of creative writing, then you should be a writer. If you're going to be the person in charge of the dance program, then you should be a dancer or a dance administrator, but for the person at the top, it was all those things I just mentioned. You want to be a complete arts administrator. Do they all have to have an MBA? Of course not, but if you want to be the top person at a state arts agency, you need all those skills and all that knowledge. Of course, then people will say, "How do you expect one person to do all that?" You can't do them all well but you need to have skills in all of them.

*V. Information about you: SEE RESUME*

*A. Education*

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

*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 had, first of all, certain management skills that I'd gotten through my MBA degree. I also through good fortune had lobbying skills because I had basically spent two years working with the legislature. I also had...I don't know if this is a skill or not...but lots of contacts; very important contacts. And then, of course, as an amateur I had been in the school plays and the choruses and I played folk music in a number of amateur folk groups and studied piano for three years and things like that so there was at least an appreciation of the arts and as a person who had tried to learn to play the piano but never played it very well, when I would hear a performer who I had been touched by god, I was very moved having tried it myself as an amateur.

*C. Work Experience*

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

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

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

Before I worked for the state arts council, I worked with state bureau of the budget; after I left the state arts council and arts administration, I worked for the state university in continuing education

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*

*SEE RESUME*

D. *Do you pursue any art form? Which?*

Still going to art exhibits and events; dabbled from time to time with photography but don't pursue an art form

E. *Demographic information:*

1. *Gender* - Male
2. *Age range now* - 65
3. *geographic region he or she lives now* – North Carolina
4. *political/partisan identification* - Democrat

I read study of Rand corporation and it was very interesting; I think that the study seemed to me to be a good one; I think that they perceived more angst between the major arts institutions and state arts agencies; and they perceived a certain amount of competition and in even some cases bitter rivalry and, of course, there's been competition here in our state but I thought it was a good report. I thought it was accurate for the most part; but I don't think we've had at least the kind of bitter rivalry in this state that they've apparently had in a number of them. Obviously there's been competition for limited funds. I think that in North Carolina at least you know the state arts agency has had its budget cut and

brought back up and cut and brought back up but I just think things, considering everything else and I'm trying to be very pragmatic and a realist, I think things have gone well and continue to. We came up with a motto in a number of years ago. We promoted this motto; this was back in 1969/70. We did a series of television commercials and our new motto was: North Carolina, the state of the arts. We promoted that with television commercials and I found this just-beginning hot shot young cinematography to film those early ones for us and we won lots of nice awards; we won gold medal and silver medal; we won in California and New York and places like that because this guy was so amazing. They were promoting North Carolina, the state of the arts. I never will forget at one point I went to lunch with young woman who had come here to work in the arts. She was having a very hard time; she was struggling and she said, "You know, I used to see your motto, North Carolina, the state of the arts, and I came here and it's a real struggle and I've wondered about that motto. Was I misled" And I said, "First of all, I'm very sorry that you're struggling now but you're very bright; you'll do well long term but I never saw our motto as a concrete thing. I saw it more as promise and the promise for the long term and a promise in very real terms. Not everybody who parachutes in here as a dancer is going to make a good living as a dancer. We never saw that. We saw it as promise for the future in a realistic way which can never meet everybody's dreams and expectations for the arts. But we think that overall we're doing pretty well. That's all we can promise. We're human; the state is a human endeavor and, no, we cannot meet that motto in every way but we think we're doing pretty well as far as realistically looking at the situation in this state" and I still feel that way. Is every aspiring actor making a great living? No. Is every young violinist going to be hired by a symphony? Of course not but that doesn't happen in any other field.