

## **Glenn Scott**

*Executive Director of North Dakota 1974-80*

Interviewer: Maryo Ewell

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I. 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?

*What I heard around this state, from the Chairman of the North Dakota Arts Council (NDAC) was Europe, and the comparison as far as the arts were concerned, and federal, state, county, whatever, spending for the arts in comparison with Europe, and the fact too that at that time there was money available as far as tax dollars, the economy was booming, certainly towards the end of the 60's, so there was money available and there was a lot of people interested in the arts at the time -the Woodstock generation as it were (who have all become, what, businessmen? And so it goes...)*

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?

[Q: You were the second director, right?]

*Yes, well, the first one who had a salary. Dr. Hovey who was Chairman of the Arts Council at that time, of course was in the English Department, an assistant professor at that time. Acted as the director of the arts council. My job, as it was outlined to me, I had been in broadcasting, and I had covered the legislature, so I knew the process. And they were looking for funding. And my first job was to get funding for the state arts council. They had always had a terrible time, for a number of reasons you know, not the least was one person who insisted upon going to the meetings, and telling the state legislators that*

*they were - how can you put it politely – a little “behind” in support of the arts. And that doesn’t go down well, of course, with those people.*

*At that time, there were immediate concerns. I had to develop applications and guidelines for getting the funding, and develop a plan for getting the arts out of the 3 major cities (Fargo, Grand Forks and Bismarck at the time – and Minot of course). So it was getting around the state, promoting the arts in a sense, getting funding from the legislature, and then developing all those administrative documents and putting together the grants, etc.*

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 felt good about it. I thought I’d reached the point of doing where I had done everything I had wanted to do, and I looked around and thought, “Someone has to be fired” and it was me.*

[Q: Were you satisfied with the funding level?]

*No, not that. Not satisfied, but as good as could have been gotten at the time, on the local level. They weren’t about to put a lot of money into arts other than the state agency grants. [He is referring to the NEA’s Basic State Grant.] So it was mostly administering the state agency grant, and then getting additional grants, or helping local organizations get grants directly from the National Endowment, through the application process, that sort of thing.*

[Q: So some of your ND organizations did get directly funded?]

*Oh yes.*

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

*Developing a community arts program, the written documents for that, and then helping some of those smaller communities put something together. There might be, say, a group of quilters, then trying to get them to organize, go through that process, and then get, say, an artistic quilter to come in, do a show*

*and tell or something, put on a master workshop. Then also to get some arts out to them, which is where the Affiliation, the Regional Arts Council, came in. We didn't find ourselves in conflict with the regional arts organization because we could use any help we got from them.*

*And then - I almost forgot when I started – it was the train, ArtTrain. I had to get that together. That was one of the first jobs. Of course I didn't know ArTrain from whatever at that point, and I had to sit down and figure out how these people would get grants, so I knew that it had to be simple, so I just thought, "Well, what are they going to do, how much is it going to cost, and what is the shortfall" and that would be the grant amount for the application. So I kept it simple. I didn't want to use it as a sifting point, give them a 10-page application or something.*

E. What was most frustrating to you?

*Not enough money. And then the backbiting because of it. Between the arts council – not me so much, because I would tend to be honest with them, I would stay in touch with them, and if they were sending in a huge grant application I would say, "I doubt that's going to go through – if you're serious you can send it in. But what is it in here that you really need? I need to know your bottom line you know. So that at the meeting I can offer some direction." Because it was the Council, not the director, that made those decisions.*

[Q: So it was conflict between the arts groups and the Council?]

*It was always that, a little bit of that. And of course the council members themselves, fighting with me – "Why aren't you in this town? Why aren't you doing anything for this?" – that sort of thing.*

[Q: How many staff did you have when you came?]

*Zero. The second person would have been Artists in the Schools, about 76. I did it all, at first. Then I managed to get a part-time secretary who was also part time with the English department, then she became then full time for me after a while. Then she became Director after I left.*

[Q: How many staff when you left?]

*Four.*

F. What was most surprising to you?

*In general? No, I don't think so. I knew that there political concerns; I knew I could handle those. I guess I learned that it wasn't so much about art as it was about getting money.*

*I don't know if that makes sense or not.*

[Q: Yes. I've heard it was all about money and politics?]

*I didn't have that ... well, towards the end I did this the woman who was secretary, I knew she was a good friend, had been for years, with the chairman of the arts council. And he would tell me about it too, and laugh. He knew what was going on. She and I didn't get along all that well, she was rather stiff and formal – a North Dakota Norwegian, you know. (I'm a Minnesota Swede.)*

[We digressed for a few minutes of personal reminiscence about his family living in Wisconsin and the research his brother-in-law is doing.]

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

*I thought it [relationship with NEA] was very good. They were great people at the Endowment level. I liked Michael Straight, I got along with him, as well as Nancy Hanks. My immediate superior, the chairman of the arts council, had been on the literature panel at one point. I didn't, I don't know that I approached them for a whole lot of extra money, because we didn't have any need it at that point; none of the arts groups in the state were looking to put on major exhibitions, although there was one point when Andre Cortez was going to come here for a show, and for a couple of master classes, and the Endowment said "No." They didn't believe he would come to North Dakota. But we had a couple of very good photographers here, I can't remember their names now – Muri Lemmling [sp??] was one of them, who had studied with him, and met him in New York. I guess Andre Cortez had never been in North Dakota, or the Dakotas and wanted to see it, so that was why he was willing to come here.*

[Q: Did the NEA eventually fund it?]

*I believe they did. I said, “No, no, he’s coming! He will be here!” “Really?” “Yes!” There was that sort of thing on the part of the other states, certainly the Endowment, they looked on North Dakota as somewhat strange, but every state has had major artists come and go, that were born here. I would point out William Gass, Rosenberg, and of course there’s always Lawrence Welk. But I always that that was rather strange. They would prejudge because of its relative size – that it can’t have anything.*

[Q: What about NASAA? The other states? Were they important?]

*Yes. Because they could get grants to bring some of the Minneapolis organizations like the Guthrie, or a show – well, we never did really get a show from the Gallery – but we did get a lot of tours from the Guthrie which everyone around here liked, or the St. Paul Chamber, and some other children’s theater; we didn’t have any of those types of organizations on that level, so everyone enjoyed it.*

*But there were some states who were a little bit concerned because their own situation within their own state, there were groups they thought as major as those . The Milwaukee Symphony or whatever.*

[Q: What about NASAA?]

*NASAA was ... remind me again what it was ...*

[It was the association of state arts councils.]

*I’m sure I went to the conference. That was about it. I found that at most of these national meetings, my interests not compatible with anything; usually they talked about major organizations.*

[So it just wasn’t relevant to you?]

*Right.*

- 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. 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?)

*All of them as I knew them, that had spoken to them and interviewed them for about six years before that. [He's referring to his previous career as political broadcast journalist.] But the most helpful was the fellow who was chairman of the appropriations committee, of course. He and I had become friends because my wife was from Jamestown, which is where he lived, and my father-in-law knew him. This is a state of 600,000 people – so you can't help but know these people.*

[Q: So he went to bat for you?]

*Yeah, and the night before we were having a drink, which is what one did in those days, and he said: "Here's what's going to happen. You're going to come in and make your presentation. Keep it short. We want nobody else from the arts council. It's going to be approved something like 7-5 and one abstention. The one abstention turned out to be the most important because he was ultra-conservative. So the fact that we had him walk away said something.*

*And then there were other things, like you would have there, a western sheep-raiser. His nemesis was coyotes and communists. He'd been head of the John Birch Society. But because I had funded an organization, unbeknownst to myself, that his wife was a member of, he thought it was a good idea. So he supported me. And a couple of the senators said, How the hell did you get his support?" I said "I don't know." So you never know where your friends or enemies are coming from.*

*Well, as I made my presentation, one of the arts council members wanted to put her two cents-worth in about the backwardness again. I said "No, you're not going in." So she became an enemy of mine for the rest of the time I was there.*

[Q: Did she get in your way?]

*No, she never did. She would harrumph because ... well, but I had to. I said "Look, it's all taken care of. We don't need any more. Just be quiet!"*

J. How did you use your time:

1. Can you describe a prototypical day?

*A typical day would be on the road in one form or the other. Going around the state, talking to arts organizations or arts council members because they all wanted me to stop in if I were in their town. I caught hell if I didn't. I guess that's one of the major frustrations – it's not your enemies, it's your friends – arts council members – that need their feeding. They need their egos fed. They were always nice to me, except one or two. I was trying to develop community arts councils, so I would be on the road a lot. And then be in town [Fargo] 1 day per week. NDSU gave us office space. Because of the English Department. I had a small cubicle. But our approach was to keep the bureaucracy as small as we could, get out the artists in the schools programs, and build from there.*

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

[Note: the incomplete info below is as much as I could get on this]

grant administration      10%  
advocacy/lobbying with public  
field/constituency communication

*I was finding out what people needed and wanted. Finding out what they needed and what they wanted. Because I wanted to know, and I went in to a council, a grant session, just what this organization was doing, what they really needed for dollars, so I could be of help to them, and gently prod the arts council members. I'd occasionally say, "Well, I don't know if they can live with that amount. I think \$7,000 is about it," or something like that.*

50%  
agency strategic planning    *I was working on community arts councils going, I developed a booklet on what to do.*  
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)

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

*It was pretty much that way when I left. I burned myself out a little bit. But my missions had been accomplished. And I didn't know what else to do. I was thinking, "Well, we've seen a 200-300% increase in funding, and staff and everything else; the next steps will be baby steps again, for a while." And so it goes. But I was getting tired of being on the road. And of course, a new governor came in and that was really the issue; it went from a Democrat to a Republican, and many of the alleged new arts council members were people I hadn't even heard about, and I thought, "Oh, I don't want to go through this again."*

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?

*As I said, a small state, you know everybody on many levels sometimes; you might know him to be a state senator, but you stop in and see him at, he owns a John Deere dealership or something, so have a cup of coffee with him. So even now, I know our senators in Washington and our congressmen, which some people found to be very strange. I know them to be good people. One of them was the head of the state tax department while I was with the arts council; we'd have coffee.*

[Q: Have you talked to them about the arts?]

*I haven't, no. No, not recently.*

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

A. If so:

1. From your experience, how has the role and the activities of SAAs changed since you began your career?
2. From your experience, what skills/competencies do you think are most important to incoming SAA staff? To SAA leadership?
3. Would you pursue a career in SAAs/public arts management today if you were starting out?
4. Has the field lived up to its promise? Why or why not?

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

*No. I talk to people, and they just mumble. I don't know what's happened. I know that after the 2 people that I had worked with had been directors and had left, the next person had been a hairdresser (not that hairdressers can't be smart, I don't want to insult hairdressers), but she was most helpful to the Governor's wife in funding little coffee klatches with the money, some of the money. They made it much more bureaucratic. Some of the arts organizations like here in Fargo really didn't need them any more. I don't know what the grant is, the state agency grant is at this point, but I don't think it's enough that people can't find money elsewhere, and can do on their own; so there is some of that, "we don't need you any more." I'm sure they apply for special little grants, for a master workshop or that sort of thing. But beyond that, no, I haven't heard about the council, I haven't seen anything in the paper – you never see "funded by the arts council," so I've sort of stayed away. The fear of remembering things past, you know.*

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

*It's getting the right person, the right people in there. I don't know if because of what I see around here, if the NEA is being tough enough on these state agencies to make sure they are getting the word out. It used to be, it was a demand - that if it was an arts organization or an event funded by the arts council, it bloody well had to include the NEA and the arts council's name on it somewhere. And we held them to that. I don't know if it's true anymore.*

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

*I would ask them about their administrative background, their love for the arts. I would say, "Go talk to the Governor or his minions, one of them; check out any available openings, check out the arts council, see what they're doing. Find out about openings across the county, if you want to get into arts councils, and look for good community arts organizations. There are some out there that are much bigger than ND Arts Council with million dollar budgets, multi-million I'm sure.*

[Q: Do you it's worth being in public sector arts administration these days?]

*Yeah. Myself, I would have enjoyed working on a single project, a Spoleto Festival – it wouldn't have to be that large! - or a Shakespeare festival. I had to be spread too thin. A lot of times when I was back here, I was a lit major, a creative writing minor, so I hung around with teachers and poets. So that's how I would spend my time away, at readings and such.*

[Q: You mentioned how you'd have liked to work on a single project – does that mean that a SAA skill is juggling?]

*Yeah. You have to sound knowledgeable on everything – it's like a river 2 miles wide and an inch deep. But I reached the point where I decided just to tell the truth – "I don't know about that," or "I don't know what the arts council would give you, I don't think they'll give you that much so forget about it, you know." I thought telling the truth was - at least I could remember it. Secondly, it forewarned them. I wouldn't be that blunt about it of course, I would say "With all the grant requests, we've got 100% over the amount that we're getting, so you do the math, I can't foresee that you'll give you all that money that you're asking for, to be honest. So that's why I need to know, what is it you really need, that you can't live without?"*

[Q: So one of the skills a young person would need is the ability to tell the truth? Truth and diplomacy?]

*Yeah.*

V. Information about you:

## A. Education

### 1. Educational Level (has, ba, some grad, ma, PhD)

*BA*

### 2. Major/field

*Double major: broadcasting and American lit/creative writing. During that time, working part-time in TV, doing news reporting.*

## 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)

[See above observations about juggling, telling the truth, and diplomacy as key skills.] *I would say it was my contacts made in broadcasting. And I could write press releases, I knew the importance of that sort of thing, so I could get out press releases and get them in the papers, and I would do things like: Mary Gray – happens to be a board member there – has announced that ... you know! I knew enough about the legislators and the process not to be afraid of it. I knew who to talk to in most cases, the committees it was going to go through – the bill – and I would always hang around, not lobbying (of course), but readily available to answer questions; and I go up to the Governor's office and sit down and talk to him. He was a good, quiet farmer from western North Dakota. Which is a lot like Eastern Colorado. They were always nice people.*

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

*After graduation, reporting at a TV station, and substitute anchorman. It was getting awful. Somewhere in early 70 the consultants came in – the result is what you see now – bathos and crime. Little stories on what really matters, like how the state or city is spending your money.*

#### *ND Arts Council*

*N Lake Tahoe Regional Arts Council – “which didn’t exist” - to establish it. Nightmare – the money and the people involved. A lot of those people retire early. They’ve been somebody, they’ve made a lot of money. The first year, they’re going to snow ski, water-ski. Then they’re on the board of the golf course, they start drinking and pretty soon it’s one drinking party after another. The arts organization became a reason to drink, and talk about the arts. Lasted 6 months.*

*Auto racing team in Bay Area. I was at a cocktail party for someone who built a car, “a big plastic thing.” I was talking to someone in the oil business who had a racing team in San Francisco who wanted help on developing sponsors for the team. He was in the Can Am, so he needed serious money. We were talking about a million dollars then... At that point they were having trouble with someone doing land work for them, policing oil wells so they thought I could do both, so ArCO would pay my salary. So I was doing both. But then everything went sour in the oil business. So I became a ...*

*...Stock broker – moved back to N Dakota.*

*Retired in 2000.*

*Now I'm a member of our local bird club, parrot club, taking care of birds at our local shelter.*

[Q: I wonder if working with birds is like working with artists?]

*I don't know. Parrots are smart, they squawk a lot, and they are manipulative....*

D. Do you pursue any art form? Which?

*Yes, I'm working on a novel and have been for 10 years. I reached the point where I said – I always planned on it. I always had these reservations: “am I as good as...,” “what will people say,” “what if it doesn't get published.” I finally said, to hell with all of that. It's only me. If it doesn't get published, fine. I certainly wish I could be someone like Pynchon, or even John O'Hara for that matter, or even Truman Capote. [Digression into personal matters.] I did take an evening class in writing at Berkeley. [Other personal matters..family, real estate, etc. I turned off the tape here.]*

E. Demographic information:

1. Gender        *M*
2. Age range    *63*
3. geographic region he or she lives now    *Fargo, ND*
4. political/partisan identification    *I suppose Democrat, “Although I am a card-carrying socialist. It's only lately after reading Gene Debs and John Reed that I said, ‘We need something like this’ so I sent them \$25 to be on the mailing list.” [He said this after I had turned off the tape]*

[He was also asking me who is in charge at the NEA now, how the Basic State grants is distributed. Seemed quite interested.]