
the
UNFOLDING
of an
Idea

A Brief
History
of The
Corvallis
Arts Center

Written by
Marion Gathercoal
October, 2002

DEDICATION

"Faith laughs at impossibilities and says 'it shall be done.'"

This history is dedicated to all the wonderful people in the Corvallis community who jumped on the proverbial band wagon as it started to roll, who had faith in my idea of the need for an organization to coordinate the arts, namely an arts council. Many people worked together to overcome "impossibilities." They said "it shall be done" and with hard work and faith, it was done. We fulfilled our dream – the Corvallis Arts Center.

I gratefully acknowledge and deeply appreciate the support of all who gave of their time and talents in helping to create and develop the Corvallis Arts Center – and to my family, a thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your help and encouragement.

I would like to personally thank:

- Corrine Chaves Woodman, without whom the Corvallis Arts Center would never have gotten off the ground
- Kitty Bunn, Corrine's right-hand assistant, who worked all day in every way to get the exhibits and programs started
- Robert Mix, who advised us on all legal matters and anticipated our future needs
- Joe Malango, who helped from the first meeting and is still today a vital part of the organization

- Martin Chaves, who saw the cobwebs in the rafters and the structural needs and organized dedicated work crews to make the building usable
- The community-minded Corvallis Elks Lodge, who in 1962 loaned us the historic Episcopal church to use
- Stan Wilt, who generously gave us the building when it was moved to its permanent location on Madison Avenue
- The City of Corvallis, who shared our dream and gave us the land to make a permanent site for the Corvallis Arts Center
- The citizens of Corvallis, who have supported this organization in many ways – through memberships, by supporting the bond levy, by donating materials and labor. These citizens have given us a firm foundation on which to build
- Ruth Gallagher, who generously typed my first manuscript
- Corby Stonebraker, former Corvallis Arts Center Director, who valued this project and worked on the original script to move it toward publication

My hope for the years to come is that the Corvallis Arts Center will forever keep the spirit of the arts alive and thriving in our community; it is a treasure.

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*The Episcopal Church at
its former location on
the corner of 7th and
Jefferson Streets where the
Corvallis Gazette-Times
building now stands*

The Corvallis Arts Center How It Began

Community projects begin with an idea, and after hard work and good fortune, the most hardy ideas materialize. The history of the Corvallis Arts Center is such a story.

As president of the Corvallis Woman's Club in 1960, Marion Gathercoal was looking for a community project. A friend handed her a small red book entitled *Survey of Arts Councils* and the idea was born. Until 1959 only a few

artists, widely scattered throughout the community, had talked of coming together. By the early 1960s, theater groups, painting groups, reading groups, musicians, and crafters emerged, and Gathercoal began to envision the formation of an arts council and the ultimate organization of an arts center.

The Treasury

To tap community response to this idea, an Allied Arts Festival was planned for April 15 - 16, 1960 at the Woman's Club building in Corvallis. Jan Hanson, arts chair of the Corvallis Woman's Club, gathered paintings, ceramics, handcrafts, music, and dancers in an all-community arts show. This was the first of its kind in the community, and a huge crowd of children and adults lined up to enter. Half-way through the first afternoon, someone suggested a receptacle for contributions. A serving bowl was brought from the kitchen and put on a pedestal near the entrance. By the end of the festival \$74 had been collected. Now more than just an idea, there was money!



*Interior of an
early Arts Center
Christmas sale.*

The festival was a great success, but the need for a coordinating council was even more apparent. An OSU orchestra

concert was held the same night as the high school play. Many people would have attended both events, but there was no clearinghouse for scheduling events.

During the summer of 1961, Marion called together the chairs of the humanities departments at Oregon State University, representatives of the Corvallis public schools, heads of arts groups in the community, and those in charge of the Allied Arts Festival. There was enthusiastic discussion and the decision to form and support a Corvallis Arts Council was made.

At the first organizational meeting, September 12, 1961, the Corvallis Arts Council included more than 30 cultural groups. It was the 21st arts council to be organized in the United States and the first in the state of Oregon. A date was set for a second organizational meeting.



Marion Galbercoal, second from left, with leaders of the local Campfire Girls organization.

Founding Membership Organizations

- Oregon State University
 - Music Department*
 - Dance Department*
 - Drama Department*
 - Art Department*
 - Liberal Arts Program*
 - Information Department*
 - Architecture Department*
- Corvallis - OSU Music Association
- Corvallis Public Schools
 - Art Department*
 - Music Department*
 - Drama Department*
- Friends of Music
- Valley Round Barn Theater
- KOAC-AM-TV
- Corvallis Art Guild
- Corvallis Weavers Guild
- Benton County Arts and Crafts
- Corvallis-OSU Symphony Orchestra
- Classic Foreign Films
- Corvallis PTA Mother Singers
- Corvallis School of Ballet
- Reader's Theater
- Clay Clan
- Corvallis Garden Club
- Oregon Music Teachers Association (*local*)
- Town Choir
- *Corvallis Gazette-Times*
- Friends of the Library
- Corvallis Recreation Department
- City of Corvallis (*via city manager*)

That first year the council sponsored an arts page as a regular weekly feature in the local newspaper. The page included a calendar of arts events for Corvallis and adjoining communities. They also began to explore the possibility of a community arts center. From the beginning, President Marion Gathercoal and Secretary Corrine Chaves Wooman, kept track of donations in a small notebook. The first mailing address for the Corvallis Arts Center was Marion's home

1961 Area Arts Calendar in the Corvallis Gazette-Times

Tuesday, 9 a.m. Tickets for University play "Shadow and Substance" go on sale at the Mitchell Playhouse box office.

Tuesday, 8 p.m. Classic Foreign Film, "Le Million" (French) at the Home Economics auditorium. Public invited.

Wednesday, 8 p.m. Liberal Arts School Dean E.H. Volkart will review "Mankind Evolving" by Theodosius Dobzhansky in Memorial Union, 105.

Thursday, 8 p.m. Corvallis High School Band and Orchestra Pops Concert at high school auditorium.

Thursday - Saturday, 8:15 p.m.

University Play, "Shadow and Substance" at Mitchell Playhouse.

Friday, 9 p.m. Benefit dance for the Valley Round Barn Theater at the Adair Officers Club. Music by the Stereos.

Sunday, 8 p.m. Violin concert by Mary Jo Roberts at the Arts Center.

Current Art Exhibits

Lipmans - "Signs of Spring" theme with paintings by Kathleen Neal, Erma Uebel, and Gertrude Lahti.

Public Library - Paintings by Jane Monroe.

Monroe High School Library - Paintings by Frances Phinney.

Chase TV - Paintings by Kitty Bunn.

Memorial Union, Kidder Hall - Annual Oregon State Student Art Exhibit through June 7.

Corvallis Arts Center, Seventh and Jefferson - Theater Gallery has paintings by Hawaiian children. Little Gallery - Paintings by Marvin Dubbe.

address. Each day the mail brought words of encouragement along with donations. Marion vividly remembers the landmark day they received a check for \$150 from Jim and Ruth Howland: "We were so excited; we thought we had it made. Now our husbands, who thought we were crazy to tackle such a big project, would be believers and not worry that they would be financially responsible for our 'folly.'" As the funds grew and the council was established, Billie Hayes became treasurer.

In 1962, Marion Gathercoal attended the Community Arts Councils convention in Chicago and received helpful ideas and encouragement. She felt like a little fish in a big pond among those who had huge councils, museums, arts centers, and money! Convention President George Irwin encouraged her, saying the promotion and coordination of the arts are important functions of a community council and you do not need lots of money. Instead the Corvallis Arts Council focused on its dreams. In April of 1962, they planned an extensive six-week festival



Visitors attend a musical presentation at the Corvallis Arts Center.

Charter Members of the Corvallis Art Council

Robert Walls
OSU Music Department

Gordon Gilkey
OSU Art Department

D. Palmer Young
OSU Mitchell Playhouse

Mary Neville and Doris Williams
Corvallis OSU Music Association

Chester A. Garrison
*Classic Foreign Films and
Liberal Arts Program*

Eleanor Rycraft, *Clay Clan*

Nina Lowry
Valley Round Barn Theater

Clancy Bates and Mary Albright
Art Education, public schools

Jerre Lee Hyde
PTA Mother Singers

Aileen Block and
Gertrude Lahti
Corvallis Art Guild

Joe Malango
*Drama Department,
Corvallis High School*

Robert Irwin
Corvallis School of Ballet

Betty Lynd Thompson
OSU Dance Department

Warren Hovland
Reader's Theater

Mrs. Marion Gathercoal
Chairman Pro-tem

Mrs. Jane Hanson
Secretary Pro-tem

Robert Mix
Attorney for the Council

of the arts, to be held at the Woman's Club building. The festival highlighted work with the public schools, the guilds, and classes.

Finding a Home

Number one on every Corvallis Arts Council meeting agenda in 1962 was the search for a vacant building to house the arts center. By summer of that year, the Corvallis Episcopal Church had vacated its building at the corner of 7th and Jefferson and moved to its beautiful new church at 35th and Harrison. The old property

was purchased by the Corvallis Elks Lodge #1413. Arts Council Secretary Corrine Chaves Woodman offered to contact

the Elks to see if they would loan the vacant church for use as an arts center. In two days the keys were in their hands.

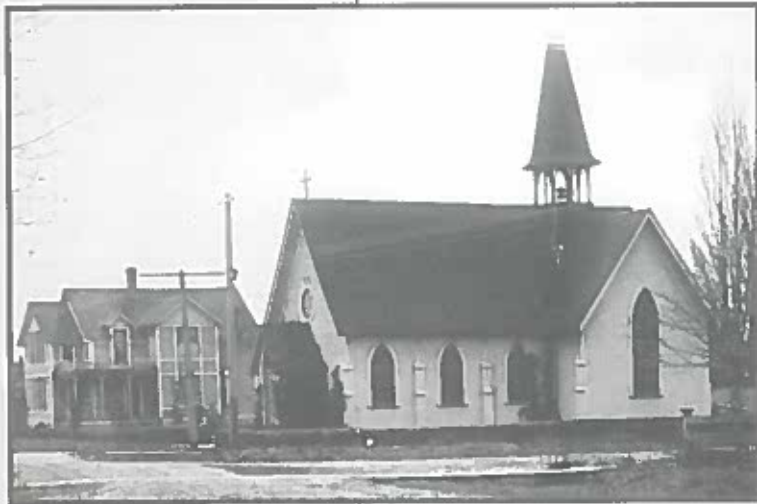
But as the church was opened for the first time, hearts sank. Everything had been removed.

There were no pews, no altar; cobwebs decorated the tall rafters. It looked impossible to put into shape. A call went out. Martin Chaves spearheaded a volunteer effort to begin the renovation. Junior and Zenith Woman's Clubs refurbished the kitchen and lounge. Men brought the tallest ladders to clean the rafters and

paint the ceiling. Crews came in to decide how best to refinish the floors. Knowledgeable volunteers repaired the heating and the fireplace. A crew cleaned up the landscape. On and on, in endless detail, volunteers worked because they wanted Corvallis to have an arts center. Eleanor Rycraft, Robert and Ruth Rosenstiel, artists, and club members volunteered hours of unglamorous work as janitors and



*Volunteers prepare to
repair and clean the
Arts Center building*



*The Corvallis Arts
Center moves to 7th
and Madison Streets.*

groundskeepers. Sometimes Marion Gathercoal even took home the garbage!

The next Council meeting was held in the lovely large theater gallery in the church. With no seats! In three years' time the Corvallis Arts Center had become a reality. Scores of

people willingly gave their time and talents in the interest of the arts. They were thrilled with their building.

In addition to the main gallery room, which seated 200, the church's little chapel made a perfect small gallery. A basement housed the Clay Clan and enamelists. Former church offices became home to the Weavers Guild. A lovely fireplace lounge became a meeting room, sales-rental gallery, and Art Guild workshop area. Among the many useful donations were five doors that served as work tables when sawhorses were found.

Since the pews were gone, 250 chairs were ordered. They arrived with a bill for \$1,225. Marion Gathercoal, knowing the Arts Council had very little money, started to put the chairs back into the box when D. Palmer Young, head of the OSU Drama Department, came into the center. He told her to leave the chairs out. They would be paid for.

Time after time people stepped forward to help. Zonta International's local chapter organized a chair campaign with the slogan,

Buy a Chair and Leave it There. A Mason-Hamlin grand piano was donated by Mrs. Lucy Gruetzmacher. In addition there were many other community contributions.

A chance for the public to take a look at the Corvallis Arts Center came on December 1, 1962, at the Christmas Arts



Corrine Chaves Woodman, Mayor Ken McGregor, and Marion Gathercoal (foreground, left to right), host the opening of the new Arts Center.

Sale. Members of the Clay Clan suggested and organized the sale. The Weavers Guild, enamellists, OSU arts students,

Friends of the Library and Reader's Theater — all Arts Center affiliates — offered items for sale.



Mayor Ken McGregor cuts the ribbon as Marion Gathercoal (far right) proudly observes the opening ceremony.

The Grand Opening of the Corvallis Arts Center took place on January 26 - 27, 1963, with ribbon cutting by Mayor Kenneth McGregor. Marion Gathercoal dedicated the Center and thanked the Elks for making it possible.

As Marion recalls, "For two days, an estimated 1,000 people of all ages celebrated the Center's opening. The play had begun and the last act had not yet been cast. We had to hurriedly organize, jump right in, and begin classes and programs."

Off the Beat

Mary Jo Bailey, society editor of the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, wrote of the Arts Center opening in her new "Off the Beat" column:

It's double checking and following hunches that lead to the biggest successes, and the grand opening of the Corvallis Arts Center over the weekend was no exception.

Early in the planning, it was decided that the tolling of the church bell would enhance the excitement of the ribbon cutting ceremony performed by Mayor Ken McGregor.

About 11 o'clock the night before the dedication ceremony Martin Chaves decided to try the bell. He carefully unwound the new rope that Frank Gonzalez had installed the week before and then pulled cautiously. Nothing happened. Chaves pulled harder. Nothing happened.

Chaves gave a mighty tug and when nothing happened he called Joe Malango who agreed that something must be done before 10 a.m. the next morning. At 11:15 p.m. Friday Malango put in a rush call for Frank Gonzalez, who knew all about scaling the tower from his escapades the week before when he attached a suitable rope to the bell.

Anyway, at midnight Friday, Gonzalez and Malango are reported to have been industriously climbing to the belfry. There they found that someone else in town was apparently familiar with the way to the roof of the old church, for the bell's clapper had been removed from the bell and neatly laid to one side with the pin in place.

Thanks to the curiosity of Chaves and the midnight climb of Malango and Gonzalez, the bell did ring for the dedication ceremony and as expected, it did add that extra excitement to the occasion.

Committees and Classes Convene

The Center was open to the public and staffed daily by a group of volunteers who greeted guests, handled sales and rentals, and took care of other special events. Mrs. Celeste

Dickinson was the first chairperson in charge of hosts and hostesses.

Committees were formed as needed. The Corvallis Arts Council board of directors guided the operation of the Center. Many citizens participated in the development of the Center, creating a community feeling of responsibility and involvement. Classes in art, pottery, enameling, weaving, puppetry, and dance were organized for adults and children. Other activities in-

cluded musical events, recitals, monthly art exhibits, and drama. Reader's Theater presented regular performances. On May 1, 1963, a service committee was established to provide speakers in the performing and visual arts for civic group programs. The Corvallis Arts Center became an important asset to the community.



*Members of a
dance class
perform at the
Arts Center*

As the Center grew, paid staff were added to the many volunteers already working with the Center. A director, class instructors, and part-time maintenance personnel were needed. Office space and other improvements in the building were accomplished through contributions and reduced rates for labor and materials from local businesses.

After the Corvallis Arts Center was officially opened in 1963, Dr. and Mrs. Warren Hovland spearheaded a patrons program for \$10 donations. Mrs. Leah Buchanan, a lifetime resident of Benton County, was the first to respond with a check of \$25. (Her mother, Mary Barclay, a Benton County pioneer, used to travel from Irish Bend to attend services at the Corvallis Episcopal Church in the late 1800s).

There were 252 residents and organizations who donated a minimum of \$10 to become charter patrons. These funds

Reader's Theater rehearsal



*By the 1960s, the
Corvallis Art Guild had
already established
clothesline art sales.*



enabled the Arts Council to renovate the building; pay the heat, light, and water bills; and buy insurance to cover expensive works of art. And they still had their original \$74!

Support of the Arts Center meant more than support of art exhibits. It included support for a crafts workshop, a studio for students, a theater for drama, a concert hall for musi-

cians, space for dance classes and programs, a book discussion forum, and a gallery for painters.

On March 15, 1963, the sales rental gallery of the Corvallis Arts Center opened in the fireplace lounge. A host or hostess was always on duty during open hours to welcome anyone who wished to drop in and browse.

One of the purposes of the sales rental gallery was to enable anyone in Corvallis to have an original oil or watercolor painting in their home for as little as \$4 for three months rental.

On June 12, 1963, the junior students of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Oregon State University, under the direction of Assistant Professor Richard Blakeley, had a contest for designing the grounds around the Corvallis Arts Center. They worked in teams of two for the project. Each team submitted five designs, including sculptures. A jury of judges was selected and three first-place winners for landscape plans were named, plus one winning sculpture.

In April 1964, architect Daniel Read began work on the sculpture patio between the wings of the center based on a composite of landscape designs submitted by the students. The Elks gave permission to build the patio, but in the event of a move, the committee planned a movable patio. All materials were donated, and the labor was provided by volunteers, lured by Mr. Read's invitation, "Come and help learn to build your own



Historic Church Built in 1889

The style of the church is *Carpenter Gothic* architecture with a scissor truss system in which the cross beams and arches are the reverse of a railroad bridge. In 1877, Wallis Nash, a lawyer from England, came to Corvallis as counsel for the railroad under construction between Corvallis and Yaquina Bay. Nash, along with his crew of railroad workers, built the church on the corner of Jefferson and 7th Streets in 1889. The architect, an engineer from the railroad, donated his services. Many of the building materials were salvaged from the Episcopal girls' school and chapel, located then in Central Park.

*Professor Gordon Gilkey,
chair of OSU Art Department
(second from left) and Marion
Gathercoal (far right) discuss
the National Convention
with guests in 1963.*



patio." Another milestone in 1964 was the establishment of the gift gallery, an important outlet for local artists to showcase and sell their work.

National Recognition

The National Community of Arts Councils had been monitoring the Corvallis Arts Center's progress. The national

council invited Corvallis Arts Center President Marion Gathercoal to tell the Corvallis story at its national convention in San Francisco in June 1963. The entire speech was printed in the July 1963 issue of the American Symphony Orchestra League magazine.

Mail started to arrive from all over the U.S. Everyone wanted to know "how we did it" and how to achieve the same goal for their community.

Sunset magazine wrote, saying that they would be interested in visiting the Corvallis Arts Center for a possible future story. Pictures were taken February 19, 1964 and an article appeared in the June 1964 issue. Then the inquiries really came in. After initially writing a reply to each letter, the Council had to draft a form letter to respond to the many requests. Jacob Javits, U.S. Senator from New York, sent a congratulatory telegram from Washington, D.C., and Oregon Governor Tom McCall wrote asking the council to serve as consultants to the Oregon Arts Commission.

On October 25, 1964, the Arts Center was featured in Oregon Educational Television's *Kaleidoscope* publication.



Marion Gathercoal poses with Arts Council President, and artist, Tom Allen in 1964.

A brief excerpt from a Reader's Theater production, a pictorial tour of the Arts Center, and a demonstration of a potter's art were part of the program.

Community Votes to Support Arts Center

In 1970, the levy was extended for ten years and added \$4,000 a year for capital improvements and restoration. In 1978, voters replaced the five-year levy with a ten-year serial levy for \$25,000 a year. The levy increased to \$40,000 in 1988, and continued at that amount through 1991. In 1995 a five-year levy of \$65,000 passed. The levy has since been absorbed into the city of Corvallis' general funds, but remains designated to the Arts Center's annual operations budget.

City Shows Support

In June 1965, a special election was held by the city of Corvallis to give the Center a five-year \$5,000 annual levy for operations. The levy passed by a two-to-one vote. That year 4,000 people visited the Center.

One of the most valuable volunteers at the Arts Center was council secretary Corrine Chaves Woodman. She also took on the responsibility of volunteer coordinator. She

had the knowledge of the arts and expertise to know what it took to make the Center work. If there was a job to do, she saw that it was done or did it herself. In 1965 the Center was able to pay her a small belated salary for her role as director. Robert Walls, council president, introduced an Oregon State University work study program into the Arts Center operations in 1966. The additional staff was a big help to everyone.

A Moving Force

The Arts Center building, on loan from the Elks, was sold in July 1967 when the Elks planned construction of a new lodge.

Contractor Stan Wilt acquired the property and generously donated the Arts Center buildings to the Arts Council. But the buildings needed to be moved by August 1970, when the Gazette-Times would build its new offices on the Jefferson Street property.

Where could the Arts Center go? Was there vacant land nearby? How would the Center obtain a lot? How could you move the buildings? The Center had no money for such a project. The city owned property on the corner of 7th and Madison, a short block from the Arts Center. A group from the Arts Council led by Robert Mix, volunteer legal counsel for the Center, approached the City Council and asked if the lot could be used for the Arts Center. Only the main building could be



*Arts Center arrives safe
and sound at its new site
on 7th and Madison.*

*Robert Mix generously
donated all the legal
work for the Arts Center*



moved. The rest was too fragile structurally. The City accepted the idea and became the owners of the Arts Center.

The Arts Center's executive board and a dedicated group of patrons helped Mrs. Ruth Jones, chair of the financial drive, to raise the funds needed to move the Center to its new location.

Robert Mix, building committee chair, filed documents to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places, which not only included the Arts Center on its list, but also arranged to have the government contribute \$40,000 to move the building. Robert Wilson Construction company of Corvallis, an Arts Center supporter, dug a basement free of charge.

Before the move, temporary headquarters for the Arts Center rental gallery was located at the Independent Lumber company at 6th and Western Streets. Classes were held at various churches. Pottery and ceramics classes moved temporarily to Dale Donovan's farm.

*Dale Donovan turns a pot
in the Arts Center basement,
where he taught classes.*





The Arts Center occupies a temporary home while the church building is moved to 7th and Madison Streets.

The theater gallery building was moved in one unit on June 9, 1970, one block down 7th Street to its new home at 7th and Madison Streets. The Arts Center remained on stilts for a while, but the main floor was usable.

On Sunday, November 21, 1971, the Corvallis Arts Center reopened its doors. The event was a “resounding, howling, smashing success” according to Corrine Chaves Woodman,

Center director. An estimated 1,000 people attended the event, which featured an art exhibit, live music, and refreshments. Appropriately, Robert Mix and Marion

Gathercoal received lifetime Arts Center memberships. An era of community arts programs and the Corvallis Arts Center was born.



*Community members
jury an exhibit at the
Corvallis Arts Center in 1987.*

and educational organizations in the community” – continues to unfold in dynamic ways, supported by its proud legacy of dreams and dedication.

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APPENDIX I.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Marion Gathercoal



Marion Gathercoal, 1979

Leadership should be Marion Gathercoal's middle name. As a child her mother taught her to "take advantage of all her opportunities, no matter how small" and she has spent a lifetime living by that teaching. She was born in Cando, North Dakota, in 1911, and from her childhood on, the arts were an integral part of her life. Later at Northwestern University she majored in drama and minored in music and appeared in eight operas for the Chicago Conservatory of Music.

She married Paul Gathercoal in 1931 and moved to Corvallis in 1940. At that time the population was only 7,000 and "everyone knew everyone." In the midst of raising four children (Paul, Bonnie, Peggy, and Forrest), Marion found time to lead community and state organizations, ranging from Woman's Clubs to Mother's Clubs, created the Corvallis Centennial Pageant and two Fourth of

July pageants, developed a children's theatre, served on the Governor's Advisory Committee for the Arts and Humanities from 1966 to 1973, and was honored in 1964 with the Corvallis Citizen of the Year Award, in recognition for her outstanding community service. Literally, her accomplishments take several pages to list. However, the achievement she holds most dear is the founding and development of the Corvallis Arts Center.

Quick to give credit to everyone involved with the establishment of the Center, she defines leadership as simply "working with and knowing people." However, people who know her insist that without her the Center would never have happened. The affectionate adjectives people use to describe her range from "dynamic," "the driving force," "organized," "sophisticated and elegant," to "the protective spirit over the whole enterprise." Now in her nineties, she still exudes this dynamic and dramatic temperament.

This history of the Corvallis Arts Center is her most recent gift to those who shared her initial vision and to those who have developed and enjoyed it over the last 40 years.



Corrine Chaves Woodman, 1964.

Corrine Chaves Woodman

Picture the character Auntie Mame and you will have a clear image of Corrine Chaves Woodman: flamboyant, warm, optimistic, and a “free spirit” before that phrase was coined. An actress, singer, and visual artist, Corrine actually played the role of Auntie Mame for the Albany Civic Theatre; the story is that when she walked in to audition, the director simply looked at her and said “I have my Auntie Mame.”

Born on December 5, 1926, in Portland, she married Martin Chaves and moved to Corvallis in 1946; it was here that her two daughters, Niki and Marlea, were born. She was involved as an actress and vocalist in The Valley Round Barn Theatre and Albany Civic Theatre, was a member and director of The Albany Creative Arts Guild, and became Marion Gathercoal’s key collaborator in the creation of the Corvallis Arts Center. As Marion describes it, they had a “perfect partnership”—Marion supplied the organizational skills while Corrine, who knew a diverse range of artists, took charge of creating the exhibits, classes, and events for the Center. Both women had

a “can do” attitude, strengthened by their respect and affection for each other.

Corrine was the first director of the Corvallis Arts Center from 1962 - 1964 and served again from 1969 - 1976. The early exhibits featured prominent artists from Portland, among them Louie Bunce, Amanda Snyder, George Johanson, Frederick Littman, and Wayne Taysom. Kitty Bunn, Corrine’s best friend, laughingly recalls that “Corrine just called them up and asked them to exhibit. Then we drove up to Portland to bring the works back in her station wagon. The artists wanted to help out the Center; at that time there was nothing like it, even in Portland.” No doubt Corrine would have remained the director if she had not had to fight debilitating rheumatoid arthritis, a disease she fought with humor and courage. After her divorce from Martin Chaves, she married Frank Woodman in 1970 and moved back to Portland in 1989.

Her daughters and Kitty attest that the creation of the Corvallis Arts Center was the achievement for which she felt most proud. She died in March of 1993; the memorial tribute to her was held, fittingly, at the Corvallis Arts Center, where her legacy is a living one.

APPENDIX II.

PIONEERING WORK

For those of us who have grown up with arts councils and arts administrators, it is hard to imagine that 40 years ago the formation of the Corvallis Arts Center was pioneering work. Letters poured in from all over the country, asking Marion Gathercoal and Corrine Chaves Woodman “how they had done it.” Eventually, they had to type up a standard letter of reply, but initially, Marion answered each letter individually. The following is an excerpt from one of her letters:

Now permit me just one more moment. May I tell you what to me seems to be the most important reason why we have the success we have and which may prove valuable to you in forming a council? Everyone – heads of departments at Oregon State University, business and professional people, housewives – all worked together for the one common goal – an Arts Council for the coordination, cooperation, and encouragement of the arts in our community. No one had petty differences; no one thought of what can I get out of

this for my particular field of the cultural arts. There was a constant feeling of friendliness and cooperation. Everyone worked hard and long for the organization of our Arts Council. It paid off. We have this lovely Arts Center for the education, enjoyment, and use of people of all ages in our community. You too can do this. We stand ready to help you.

List of Inquiries

California:

Anaheim
Berkeley
Carmel
Concord
Crescent City
Eureka
Los Angeles
Merced
Palo Alto
San Francisco
San Rafael
Visalia

Oregon:

Gearhart
La Grande
Portland

Other States:

Columbia, Missouri
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Kailua, Oahu, Hawaii
Louisville, Kentucky
Mercer Island, Washington
North Las Vegas, Nevada
Payson, Utah
Pueblo, Colorado
Quincy, Illinois
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Individuals:

Jacob Javits,
U.S. Senator from New York
Tom McCall,
Governor of Oregon

APPENDIX III.

CORVALLIS ARTS COUNCIL AND CENTER CHAIRS

1961 - 1963 Marion Gathercoal

1964 - 1965 Tom Allen

1966 Gilbert Knapp

1967 Robert Walls

1968 Alex Wallace

1969 - 1970 Brent Olsen

1970 - 1972 Jack Donaldson

1972 - 1973 Carolyn Blatchford

1973 Judy Blackledge

1974 Sally Wong

1975 - 1977 C. V. Bennett

1977 Vince Zettler

1978 Linda Adams

1978 - 1979 Kent Buys

1979 Cora Wetter

1980 - 1981 Duke Castle

1982 Linda Humphrey

1983 Dave Strohmeier

1984 - 1985 Dorothy Beaton

1986 John Domini

1987 Barbara Edwards

1988 William Siebler

1989 Linda Modrell

1990 Ron Miller

1991 - 1992 Kay Bernard

1993 Beate Evey

1994 - 1995 Courtland Smith

1995 Harrison Branch

1996 Marti Ayers

1997 Hal Eastburn

1998 Laura Welch

1999 Jan Konzak

2000 Karen Emery

2001 John Hope-Johnstone

2002 John Morris

2003 Curtis Kiefer

APPENDIX IV. CORVALLIS ARTS CENTER DIRECTORS

1962 - 1964 Corrine Chaves Woodman
1965 - 1966 Joice Carroll
1967 Nancy Wagner
1968 Michelle Davidson
1969 - 1976 Corrine Chaves Woodman
1977 Connie Onstad
1978 Connie Onstad/Jan Senne (interim)/Judy Carlson
1979 - 1981 Judy Carlson
1981 - 1983 Kay Chadwick Ness
1984 Mary Ann Trout
1985 - 1992 Susan Johnson
1993 - 1999 Corby Stonebraker
2000 - 2001 Steve Rothermond
2001 - Present Victoria Fridley

APPENDIX V.

EARLY MEMORIES & TRIBUTES

Joe Malango

Early member, Corvallis Reader's Theatre

It is hard to believe that 40 years ago on the evening before the formal opening and dedication of the Corvallis Arts Center, Frank Gonzalez and I climbed to the belfry to find out why the bell would not ring. We were called for assistance for this late night mission. We were entering new territory by climbing the ladder to the loft area above the entrance; we were not quite sure what we would find. Carefully making our way up the narrow ladder – trying to avoid the dust and cobwebs and possibly expecting to see Quasimodo – we discovered the problem. The clapper was not attached to the bell; we remedied that and prepared it to ring out for the next day's celebration.

My strongest memory of that time was the excitement and anticipation of what was about to happen and what the event held for the cultural future of Corvallis. Although the bell

does not toll daily, for me ArtCentric still rings with excitement and anticipation for the next exhibits in the galleries; the artist receptions; Hester Coucke's knowledgeable and humorous introductions; the new items in the sales gallery; the music and vibrations from the tapping classes; the docents meeting to learn and lead; the children working on their clay and wood and painting creations; and above all, the efficient and friendly staff with a director whose name can be easily juxtaposed with friendly.

Having worked at the front desk from time to time, it is always a pleasure watching both strangers and regulars view the exhibits, often with a sense of wonder and even reverence. I feel fortunate to have been a small part of Marion Gathercoal's dream.

Kitty Bunn

Early member, served on the program committee for 12 years

Looking back it seems like we were perched on what was a national art awakening. It doesn't seem possible now but in 1961 there were three art galleries in Portland: The Foun-

tain, Image, and rental sales through the museum. Around the same time, Seattle hosted the World's Fair. Their art pavilion was filled with the works of famous New York artists. Maybe that's why it was so unusual for a town the size of Corvallis to open an Arts Center.

I have so many memories but some of my favorites are of the dinners we had – ah, those Arts Center dinners. I suppose the main object was to make money, but mostly we had fun. I worked on all the dinners. Let's see...there was the Greek dinner. We had a belly dancer for the entertainment, Fenika, who also taught dance at the Center. Those of us who took her class discovered how "talented" we were, many spine alignments later! The night of the dinner, Demetrios Jameson, art professor at Oregon State University, gave his own rendition of the Greek line dance!

We also had an East Indian dinner. I remember it was good, probably a curry. For the French dinner I worked on desserts. Jeanne Smith, who was of French extraction, and Ron Noto, who taught French at the high school, taught me how to make dessert crepes. I made them in my sleep; perhaps

that's why I can't remember the entertainment from that night. I only recall apple crepes and an image of Jeanne and Ron in tall chef hats!

Robert Mix

Lifetime member, donated his legal services

My fondest memory of the Arts Center is our first show. By way of background, the community had struggled for years to establish an identity separate from Oregon State University, which historically dominated our cultural life. At the time our only other community cultural organization was The Valley Barn Theatre, which operated in temporary facilities (which it later lost). The Arts Center was our first year-round, hopefully permanent, cultural center.

The first show consisted of works by community artists. The critics probably would have been aghast at what they saw. But it was ours and it was us. It marked the beginning of growth of the visual arts in our community. Comparable shows today demonstrate the high level of artistic skill which

now characterizes community artists, skills which the Center not only nurtured and encouraged, but for which it provided a home.

The growth will continue.

Alan Munro

Painter/artist and early member; served on the program committee

Shortly after I arrived in Corvallis as a young, new assistant professor at Oregon State University, Gordon Gilkey assigned me the task of serving on the first program committee for the Corvallis Arts Center. I didn't quite know what a program committee was supposed to be; we were all feeling our way, but we met two to three times a month – and every meeting lasted two to three hours! Everything moved so quickly; our first meeting was in October in someone's living room and by January the Center officially opened and we presented our first exhibit. The development of the Center and the structuring of the Art Department at OSU (its curriculum and degree offerings) are inseparable in my mind and both owe a great deal to the inspiration of

Gordon Gilkey. At the time I only partially realized the incalculable and permanent effect of the Center's creation on the community and Oregon State University.

What is most important to me is for people to realize that no one person can be credited for its success. Hundreds of people volunteered time, energy, and often money over a period of time to get the Arts Center up and running.

Vida Krantz

Early member and co-founder of Corvallis Reader's Theater

As the bell rang to commemorate the opening and beginning of the new Corvallis Arts Center, the reverberation was figuratively felt around the world. Many of us who were out of the area at the time of this beginning sign were thrilled by the news that it had actually happened. "It actually happened" were words that foretold a veritable fireworks of art that had been waiting to explode in Corvallis for a long time. The performers, the artisans, the educators, the art dreamers had their fancies restored, nudged, and emboldened, because they now had a place that acknowledged their being. To some

the Center was symbolic, to some it was a sign of positive response and encouragement, to some it was a spiritual renewal, but above all it was real. A lovely, classic, visual bit of architecture built on blocks of dreams, sweat, hard labor, personal effort, cooperation, conceptions, and volunteerism. It was a home for all.

Speaking for the performing arts, and for the Corvallis Reader's Theater in particular, the new Arts Center meant a handsome, professional, highly-adaptable setting in which to perform. Since its inception, CRT's performances had been held wherever room could be found large enough to house an audience. Many persons and organizations had assisted in the struggle for performance, but one by one the accommodations that they had been offered disappeared as the city made way for expansion and modernization. Now, we had a place to zoom in on and light up the action. What a coup! What luxury! A vision realized. CRT – and art, in all of its costumes – were moving to the fore. We had place. Resident art was given the nod. We all joined together and smiled, wherever we were.

Cathrine Young Feikert

Long-time volunteer, past president of the Corvallis Art Guild

Before the building became an arts center, my daughter was married in the church and my son sang in the choir. My husband, Dee Palmer Young, was very involved in the formation of the Center, since he was the chair of Oregon State University's Drama Department. I wore many hats: as a member of the Docents, I led many tours of exhibits, had my own work exhibited, was on the Board of Directors when the building was moved to its permanent site, and served as president of the Corvallis Art Guild. The Corvallis Arts Center has been woven into the fabric of my life.

Jim Howland

Early supporter, founder of the Madison Avenue Task Force

Twenty-eight years ago Corrine Chaves Woodman, the first Arts Center director, was on the committee to pick the winners in a city and university-wide competition for plans to beautify and improve Madison Avenue. That group then became the Madison Avenue Task Force (MATF). Ever since

that time the Arts Center has been deeply involved in the project. Each director has been a member of the Task Force during their years of Corvallis Arts Center service, and often, as volunteers afterward. The first piece of sculpture on Madison Avenue, the “Ballerina,” was developed by Raymond Hunter and modeled in both clay and molded paper while he was an artist-in-residence at the Arts Center. Each piece of art one sees along Madison Avenue – Alley Art, the City Hall fountain and sculptured pane, the “Clever Disguise” sculpture – in some way had Corvallis Arts Center involvement.

Nancy Spencer

Early member, created several programs

The Arts Center was a very important part of my life during my twenty years in Corvallis. I loved the space, and I loved the feeling that always came over me when I was there that good things were happening. I served on the board and as a member of the program committee for several years. Through the years, I helped put together various musical

and dance events that were available to the public at little or no cost.

The Sunday-at-the-Center concerts, which began in 1963, brought in local musicians on a regular basis for late afternoon programs. An outgrowth of those concerts, as I remember, was the Wednesday Musicales, a group of 25 or 30 women who convened once a month on Wednesday mornings at the Arts Center to perform pieces for each other. There was always a theme — “The Dance Suite” or “The Evolution of the Sonata,” for instance — and presented an opportunity for both professional and amateur musicians to play and sing before an understanding and sympathetic audience.

After a few months spent in London in 1975, where I attended many noontime concerts, I originated the “Lunch and Listen” concerts, which took place on Tuesdays. These concerts were a mix of classical and folk music and became quite popular as a place to bring a sack lunch and enjoy good music.

Also in the mid-seventies we managed to get a grant for a more ambitious series of concerts. Named the “Northwest

Artists Series," it brought in classical musicians from the Bay Area and from Seattle, Portland, and Eugene. Each season also included an artist or group of artists from the Corvallis area. I like to think that I gave the Kronos Quartet their start, as they were on the series for the first season in 1975-'76. Based in Seattle, they were a burgeoning string quartet, playing, for the most part, the well-known quartets. David Harrington, their first violinist, is the only member of that original quartet still playing with them, and it's his vision that has given them international recognition.

During the controversy over whether to move the old building to its present location or to build a new Arts Center at the north end of town, I was at one time called "an enemy of the people" because I wanted the old building to be preserved and to remain in a convenient location for people wanting to walk to it from OSU and from downtown. When it was moved to its present happy location, it was possible for the Arts Center to make use of Central Park for outdoor folk concerts, art gatherings, and other events.

Corvallis is fortunate to have such a wonderful building for the arts, and, as I write this, I'm wondering why Ashland,

where I now live and which is so culturally alive, lacks a space of that sort. I guess I'd better get on it. Thanks for the memories.

Judy Rycraft Juntunen in remembrance of her mother
Eleanor Rycraft

Charter member of the Clay Clan and the Corvallis Arts Center

Two honors that my mom, Eleanor Rycraft, cherished were her charter memberships in the Corvallis Arts Center and the Clay Clan (now the Willamette Ceramics Guild). She was always proud of the fact that she had played a small part in the formation of the Arts Center. Mom never saw herself as a leader, even though she was. Uncomfortable whenever singled out, she always tried to share the limelight. Her scrapbooks document the first years of the Arts Center, particularly the Clay Clan's activities, and go through 1977. Notes are sometimes penciled beside articles, such as one about the 1962 Christmas Art Sale: "Clay Clan organized and suggested the first Christmas sales in the Arts Center." At the time, the Clay Clan was the Arts Center's newest member group. It had been organized the previous summer by Rich-

ard Trojan, an OSU art instructor, and a group studying with him. Mom always had high praise for Rich, those early Clay Clan members, and other groups and artists that made the Arts Center a reality.

Mom may be best known for Rycraft Cookie Stamps, which she originated and first sold at the Arts Center in 1967, but it was her other ceramic creations that were her first love. Her scrapbooks document workshops sponsored by the Arts Center and Clay Clan, such as those featuring well-known “potters” that provided her with fresh inspiration. Some of those activities took place on the family farm down by the Marys River, where enthusiastic participants dug kilns in the river bank and made pottery using local clay.

One of Mom’s legacies is the encouragement she offered to other artists. She was always willing to share her knowledge – either through classes or conversation – and often purchased the work of aspiring artists. In her quiet way Mom left her mark on many lives.

APPENDIX VI. TODAY & TOMORROW

ArtCentric, home to the Corvallis Arts Center and Linn-Benton Arts Council, continues to be guided by the vision of founder Marion Gathercoal and the first Corvallis Arts Center Director, Corrine Chaves Woodman. Our mission is to nurture artistic expression and to serve the creative life of our community. Over 86,000 people are served by our programs and services each year.

- The Corvallis Arts Center hosts 20 exhibitions a year in two gallery spaces, the Main Gallery and the Corrine Woodman Gallery; the exhibits feature the work of local, regional, and national artists. Main Gallery exhibitions feature artist receptions and gallery talks.
- From the beginning the Corvallis Arts Center has had a strong educational focus. Year-round we hold a diverse range of classes, from tap dance to pottery to visual arts classes; over 1,000 children attend our classes each year.



ArtCentric

*To go with the new organizational
name, the logo was designed
by Daniel Obsen, a graphic
design student at Linn Benton
Community College.*

We also provide enrichment classes as part of the community after-school program, STARS.

- Our Docent Program offers free educational tours of our exhibits to schools and community organizations.
- The Arts in Education program, supported by a grant from the Oregon Arts Commission, serves children in both Linn and Benton counties through its artist residencies.
- *Artspirit*, a free monthly arts publication, is distributed in Linn and Benton counties and mailed directly to our members. The Arts Directory and Arts in Education Directory are also publications of the Linn-Benton Arts Council and serve as informational resources for the region.
- We are proud to be the home of nine art guilds, whose combined membership represents over 500 artists.
- We serve as the Visual Arts Committee for da Vinci Days

and staff and administer the City of Corvallis Public Art Selection Commission.

- In 1998 we began a program called Arts Reaching Youth At Risk, supported by grants from the Oregon Arts Commission and Benton County Commission on Children and Families. Artists are placed in educational settings and social service agencies to utilize creative art approaches to meet the needs of youth. The arts have a unique way of helping youth discover their innate creativity, self worth, and self discipline.
- In 2002 we began a new program, ArtsCare, focused on enhancing the healing role of the arts in medical environments. This program is in its infancy but is rapidly developing, due to the enthusiasm of everyone involved.
- The Central Park Art Shop features the work of local and regional artists and our Winterlight Holiday Gift Show features unique artwork from around the state and outside it, providing an important way to support and showcase artists.

- On the stage of the Main Gallery we offer Reader's Theater, concerts, literary readings, and other events. Many community organizations rent this space for cultural events as well.
- As one of nine regional arts councils in the state of Oregon, we also have an important arts advocacy and leadership role.

We believe strongly that the arts are not a frill but an integral part of our community life. It is our goal to continue to create programs and services that respond to the wide range of needs in our region – and to the unique character of this landscape and its people.

APPENDIX VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff and Board of Directors at ArtCentric would like to thank the Benton County Historical Museum for its gracious assistance and for providing the photographs listed below. A special thank you to Judy Rycraft Juntunen, Assistant Director/Librarian and Mary Gallagher, Collections Manager.

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