

Interview with G. Webster Miller, former president of the Board of Associates, Mar. 3, 1986

Allen: This is G. Webster Miller, otherwise known as Webb and this is Monday, March 3, 1986. Now Webb, you were president of the Board of Associates in what year?

Miller: '79, '80 and a repeat in '80 and '81.

Allen: O.K. and you came prepared, you made some notes.

Miller: I made some notes.

Allen: So why don't you talk about the Board of Associates during the time you were president.

Miller: Let me start by going through the notes I made from our annual meeting which was held in May of '81, covering that year and as I went down the agenda, I came up with the following:

1. Our treasurer that year was Brad Morehouse, W. Bradley Morehouse, attorney, and we started that year with \$11,996 in finances. Our year ended with \$14,395, an increase which is unusual for the Board of Associates.
2. We did have some fairly large expenditures, the largest was our second payment of \$5,000. on the pledge of \$25,000. to the new recreation center.
3. They also gave a \$500. grant for the UB film which was being made for advertising purposes and recruitment purposes.
4. A \$900. grant to the music theory program.

Our membership committee that year was headed up by another attorney, Norman K. Parsells, and as chairman of that committee, he extended an invitation to 35 prospective new Board of Associate members. I assumed that the majority of them accepted because we did have an increase that year. Our projects and program committee was Mrs. Alfred Galluci, and we had a number of successful dialogues that year which was a beginning, I think, of a new program and the university for the Board of Associates.

I have a list of them if you would like to know what they were.

Allen: Yes, if you have a list of who they were.

Miller: The first one was in October and entitled "The Mid East, Roots of Conflict and the Prospect for Stability". The speaker was the Ambassador Abdullah Jacub Bishara. In November, the

topic was "Education for Survival, coping with the changing times", and the lecturer was Dr. Aaron Stern. In December we had the "Changing Social Policies, a focus on the Caribbean" and on that occasion we were honored by his excellency, Rodrigo Carazo, President of Costa Rica. He spent some time at the University, I recall, with Pres. Miles and a very interesting gentleman.

Allen: I still see him occasionally.

Miller: Do you.

Allen: With IAUP.

Miller: In March we had "Family Finances, surviving the 80's" and we had a panel of six investment specialists, at that time, Brokers, Bankers. I don't have their names and on April 30th there was a special program presented by that committee entitled "French Coutouriers Seminar." Mrs. Louis Kanel was the lecturer and she worked for quite some time with eight fashion merchandising students from the university, and they were used to model several each of her original designs from from the 40's and 50's. During the program Mrs. Dorothy Thurmond also provided some entertainment and she sang three numbers.

The next committee chairman, Ray Avery, headed up the development fund raising committee that year. That committee had a goal of \$38,500 from 225 prospective donors. As of May 15th the report given at this meeting, \$39,867. was received from a 161 donors and the year before a comparison year, we had received \$35,908 from a 179 donors so the progress was a plus of \$3,959, so in two years and from 18 less donors so the giving was up proportionately. That committee also developed a new life membership program that year, and the result had been 22 board members becoming life members.

Allen: What did they have to do to become life members?

Miller: To be life members, you must donate \$1,000. to the Board of Associates. We revised that program that year to make it easier to become a life member by allowing the settlements be set up over a four year period, \$250. a year, and I think that was instrumental in getting 22 new life members at that point, and at that time there were 200 life members on the board and it represented 65% of the total membership. Life memberships provide a permanent endowment fund for the university and the income of which is used for the Board of Associates scholarship program, and other university purposes that might be decided by the Board throughout the year. Life members become permanent members, they are still encouraged to take part and they also solicited for social projects after they have finished their life membership payment. They helped us also in other purposes such as long range development. Their active participation in activities and

their responsibility to the Board is needed and sought.

The purposes of the Board of Associates are to support university activities and project by means of an annual contribution from all members. At that meeting, we gave out two distinguished service awards. Only the second time in the history of the university that these awards were given out, and one went to Bill Hawkins who was the retiring president of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce at the time and a very active member of the Board of Associates during his association here. The second was given to Austin W. Mather, which is a familiar name, an architect and designer of five of the university campus buildings, and also a very loyal member of the Board of Associates, a past president over the years. As I understand it, the only two previous awards were given to Ruth Carlson Horn and to Albert E. Diem, some time previous to this award.

Also during that year, and you probably remember very well, that Dr . Miles was in the midst of a controversial project to consolidate the Housatonic Community College with UB and then later on was exploring the possibility of merger with the Univesity of New Haven.

Prior to this meeting the new UB film was shown for the first time to the Board of Associates in the Mertens Theatre. Those are the notes that I have written.

Allen: Wonderful.I wish everyone would come to one of these prepared like that . This is terrific. You've give me an awful lot of good informtion. I would like to ask a few other questions.

Miller: If I can answer them,. I will be happy to.

Allen: Am I correct in assuming that the life membership went into the endowment fund.

Miller: The life membership, yes, it`s in the endowment fund and I think I said it`s basically used for scholarships and of course other purposes such as the one that I mentioned previously the board decides such as music theory program and the Exxon thing.(?).

Allen: What, in your own words, do you think the, what's the purpose of the Board of Associates in your own words.

Miller: Well I've always thought of it, Bill, as a means of assisting the university to accomplish its goals. It gives the participants, mostly, although not certainly true anymore, mostly local, because the university has reached out over a wide area now and we do have members from lower Fairfield County and I guess up into New Haven County. But it does give them an oppor-

tunity to participate in the activities of the university, see its growth, and become a part of it. In have profited from it in my own life, it's given me a great opportunity to be close to something that I've seen grow over the years and is still growing, I guess, except perhaps in enrollment.

Allen: Have you had any other association with the university other than the Board of Associates.?

Miller: Basically, that's my association and I'm still involved with the Board and this year have taken the job of chairman of the development, fund raising committee. I'm still active and it gives me an opportunity to-

Allen: Do you try to raise money from other board members or do you go outside of the-

Miller: Basically, it's other board members but I've just had a discussion with Jeff Lockhart before I came over here and he would like my continued participation in his end of the business which is corporate donors, etc. I gladly told him, although I prize my free time greatly, that I'm sure we can get together.

Allen: This is very much in accord with the early objectives of the Board of Associates as it was established. And the original definition is a group of prominent men and women in the civic, industrial, financial and mercantile life of the community served by the college who accepted an invitation to form a board of associates. Their fundamental purpose is to develop a friendly spirit of cooperation between the public and the college to give advice and counsel upon problems which the Board of Trustees may bring to their attention and to foster and advance and welfare of the institution. That definition remains basically the purpose of the board over the 50 years.

Miller: I would agree. I see no reason for that to change.

Allen: Over the years, it's done a remarkable job.

Miller: A great group of people and most of them are still very loyal to the unievrsity and they do attend meetings which is important.

Allen: I noticed that. I attended many of the meetings over the years when I was Dr. Miles's assistant, and I know he has put a lot of emphasis upon the board .

Miller: He does a marvelous job of explaining what's going on in the University when he attends our meetings.

Allen: Something else that I always appreciated was that we often had visiting fireman from abroad, and it was always very easy

to get the Board of Associates to sponsor a public speech and you had quite a few of those. Not only Carazo but the Japanese former foreign minister, and I appreciated that cooperation over the years too.

Miller: I participated in several of those, both of those you mention I remember very well. I received a letter from him which was very nice, a prize which I've kept .

Allen: A very interesting fellow, and still is

Miller: What's he doing now?

Allen: He's president of the Council which is the Board of Trustees for the University of Peace and he spends a lot of time traveling whipping up money and interest for the Univ. of Peace.

Miller: Are you still involved in that?

Allen: Only through the Executive Committee of the IAUP but being retired, almost everything has gone by and I busily at work here.

End of Tape.