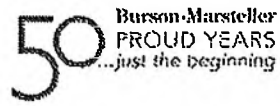

Eighth of a 50th Anniversary Series

Public Service:
Good Citizenship is Good Business

When I returned to New York from Army service in Europe in 1946, most of the people I knew, other than the two clients that enabled me to start my own business, were business magazine editors and reporters I had cultivated when I was doing publicity for the big engineer-builder I worked for. Immediately, I resumed my earlier practice of lunch dates with reporters/editors several times a week even when I did not have a specific story I wanted to place. My assumption, in addition to having a friend when I needed a placement, was that, from time to time, they would be asked to recommend a public relations consultant and I wanted my name to be "top of mind" with them. Actually, it worked. In 1948, Hartley W. Barclay, a business writer at The New York Times, recommended me to the American Watch Assemblers Association and I got the account. And it was through another friend at The New York Times, Harry Leather, that I met Bill Marsteller in 1952.

In my previous pre-army job, I was a one-person publicity department in addition to my assignment as aide to the CEO. I was responsible mainly for travel arrangements, his appointment schedule and reminding him of his promises and commitments. I knew only a handful of publicists and the term "public relations" was just entering my vocabulary. I was determined to know others in my line of business and was fortunate in meeting one of the most respected (and, for me, most memorable) public relations counselors of the time, one G. Edward Pendray. Pendray's then mid-sized firm (about a dozen people) represented Brookhaven National Laboratory where my client, Ferguson, was designing and building the first nuclear reactor for the peaceful use of atomic energy. Before starting his own business, Pendray was senior public relations officer at Westinghouse, in those days an industrial giant. Pendray was well-known for creating the Westinghouse "time capsule" at the 1939 New York World's Fair. The capsule contained artifacts of the pre-World War II era and was buried at a site on the fairgrounds. It would be opened a century later. He also was a cohort of rocket pioneer Charles Goddard and was actively promoting the space age in the 1930s. In 1948 Pendray proposed me for membership in the National Association of Public Relations Counsel, which a few years later joined with another group to form today's Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

At that time, PRSA was the gathering place for the country's top public relations executives. Regular attendants at its meeting were powerful people like John Hill (Hill and Knowlton), George Hammond (Carl Byoir & Associates), Tommy Ross (Ivy Lee and T. J. Ross), Pendleton Dudley (Dudley Anderson & Yutzy), Farley Manning and Jim Selvage (Manning Selvage & Lee) Kal Druck (Harshe Rotman & Druck) and on the corporate side, Kerryn King (Texaco), Harold Brayman (DuPont), Tony DeLorenzo (General Motors), Bob Fegley (General Electric), Lee Jaffe (New York Port Authority). I

started working on PRSA committees and soon got to know most of the mighty in public relations – among them the one-of-a-kind Denny Griswold who edited Public Relations News for almost fifty years, the self-appointed doyenne and guardian of public relations. For about ten years starting in the early 60s the "in" party at PRSA annual conferences was hosted by Burson-Marsteller for 75/100 clients and prospects. We went all out selecting unique venues – an ante-bellum home in the French quarter in New Orleans, the Dodge mansion on the outskirts of Detroit, an 1890s home of a wealthy brewer in St. Louis, Villa Viscaya in Miami, San Diego's fabled zoo. We continued the parties until senior executives stopped attending PRSA conferences.

As noted in an earlier installment (Third of a 50th Anniversary Series), I also was active in several other public relations organizations that brought me together with fellow entrepreneurs and practitioners both agency and corporate. Throughout my career I have learned from them and enjoyed their company and many became both clients and friends.

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In the early 70s – a time when the name Burson-Marsteller began to be recognized in the broader business community -- I sought out opportunities in the not-for-profit sector to gain visibility. It was – and continues to be – my belief that public service is both good citizenship and good business. It's worked that way for me.

The public institution with which I have been most closely identified is the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington. My introduction to Kennedy Center dates back to 1973, only two years after it opened as a memorial to the assassinated president. It came about when Marsteller Advertising executive Dick Brecker told Jillian Poole, Kennedy Center's enterprising development director, that I might be helpful to her. Unbeknownst to Jillian, my cousin, Abe Fortas, a former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, was a Kennedy Center trustee and close confidante of its top executive Roger Stevens. On learning Jillian was interested in enlisting me as a resource, Abe encouraged me to participate and arranged for my election to the board of Kennedy Center Productions Inc., a private-citizen group that funded Kennedy Center initiatives, usually new plays. The play I remember most clearly started with a telephone call from Fortas. He was calling for Roger Stevens who wanted my vote to invest $250,000 to bring a new musical called "Annie" to Kennedy Center for which we would get a twenty-four percent interest. I told Abe that all I knew about "Annie" was "it got bad reviews at its New Haven preview." He responded that the play had been rewritten and "Roger thinks it will be a big hit." Since in addition to heading Kennedy Center, Stevens was one of Broadway's most successful producers, I felt I had little choice but to vote with him for making the investment. Kennedy Center's "take" from "Annie" exceeded ten million dollars.

Almost overnight, I became a Kennedy Center "insider" – but at the price of knowing I was there only because I was perceived to be someone who could help Kennedy Center raise money from the corporate community. Happily, I can point to three situations I initiated which produced the favorable financial returns that were expected of me.

* * * *

At a Kennedy Center Productions meeting in late 1974, an agenda item was "capitalizing on the U.S. Bicentennial to build the Center's unfinished fourth theater." Countries, industry groups and corporations at the time were planning Bicentennial gifts and other undertakings to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Not fully realizing what was happening to me, Abe Fortas saddled me with responsibility for "raising three million dollars from your well-heeled corporate friends." Fortas delighted in setting impossible goals that challenged one to prove his/her worth. I pleaded that I had no experience raising that much money and I was not even aware that a fourth theater was ever planned for Kennedy Center. I was quickly escorted to a vast "empty space" between the ceiling of the Eisenhower Theater and the underside of the Kennedy Center roof. I later learned the small, intimate theater that was to have occupied that space was eliminated because the construction money ran out. Stevens and Fortas were determined to build the theater. Abe's interest was his love for chamber music and Kennedy Center had no suitable venue. Roger simply wanted to complete the originally planned structure. Both seemed certain I would unearth the benefactor(s) who would provide the wherewithal -- three million dollars in hard cash.

I decided early on it would be easier to get three million dollars from a single donor than from multiple donors. But that was before I learned the gift did not provide a "naming" opportunity. The only names that can be associated with the cultural center on the Potomac, by act of Congress, are Kennedy and Eisenhower. Three serious prospective donors emerged, two corporations and one trade association representing a basic industry. Each of the three, I believed, had good reason to demonstrate in a dramatic manner their gratitude to their country on the occasion of its two hundredth birthday. But each of them respectfully declined, acknowledging the value of the cause but pleading bad timing from their individual perspectives.

While preparing for a business trip to our then-new office in Tokyo, it occurred to me that the Japanese business community and/or government ought to be interested in making a highly visible U.S. Bicentennial gift. After all, Americans were buying a lot of Toyotas, Datsuns (later Nissans), Sony and Panasonic electronic products and the Japanese economy was booming. The chairman of the Fuji Bank was, in a sense, my business partner and we were on the way to becoming friends. He also was a leader of the Keidanren, the Japanese equivalent of our Business Roundtable. I wrote him that I wished to make him aware of an opportunity that would be extremely beneficial to the Japanese business community when I visited Tokyo. He obliged by having CEOs of two other large corporations at our meeting, each of them a senior Keidanran officer.

The day we met was my fifty-fourth birthday, February 15, 1975. My first iteration to them of the proposal, calling for a gift of three million dollars to build a four hundred-seat theater at Kennedy Center, was disappointingly underwhelming. They gave me a polite hearing, but I quickly realized that I had generated no enthusiasm for my cause. I then asked the direct question, "has the Japanese government and/or business community decided what its Bicentennial gift to the United States will be." After about two minutes of inside discussion (which, of course, I did not understand), I was told that the decision

was not yet final, but it was likely that a Japanese rock garden would be created at the Freer Gallery of Art, a part of the Smithsonian complex. Later, I learned the Japanese government gift of cherry trees to Washington D.C. in the 20s, a major success, inspired the choice of a rock garden.

Probably out of politeness, my hosts asked my opinion on the appropriateness of a rock garden as a Bicentennial gift. Having read books and articles on Japanese cultural sensitivity, I praised my hosts' generosity and their ingenuity. Then I posed the seemingly innocuous question, "are you also endowing the rock garden for perpetual care?" I soon learned that "perpetual care" is not a top of mind concept in Japan. Only when I explained that burial site purchases were often accompanied by arrangements for "perpetual care" did my friends grasp what I was asking them. I suggested that, though possessed of many virtues, one should not assume the U.S. Park Service has special expertise caring for Japanese rock gardens. Demonstrating some humility, my hosts then asked me to repeat my presentation on the theater at Kennedy Center. The session ended with the comment, "Mr. Burson, we thank you for saving us from a possible embarrassment." I was also told that my written proposal (translated into Japanese) would be discussed at the Keidanren and with appropriate Japanese government officials since such a gift had to be endorsed by Japan's legislative body, the Diet.

Reporting to Messrs. Stevens and Fortas, I evinced a modicum of optimism that Japan would come through for us. At the least, I was almost certain that Japan's Bicentennial gift to the United States gift would not be a rock garden. After my return to New York, an international bribery scandal dominated the Japanese Diet agenda for several months and the silence in Tokyo caused my friends at Kennedy Center to question my original optimism. Every other week, I telephoned friends in Japan to determine the status of the gift. Invariably, I was reassured that "the matter is where it should be at this time, considering the preoccupation of the Diet with other issues." As spring went into summer, both Stevens and Fortas delicately suggested that I should consider alternative donors.

Instead, I visited Burson-Marsteller offices in Europe during the month of July (one of my waggish associates once termed such visits as "Harold's definition of a vacation"). Returning from dinner in London late one evening, the telephone rang. It was Roger Stevens asking "do you know why the Japanese ambassador wants to see me in his office tomorrow morning?" I suggested to Roger that it was not likely that the Japanese ambassador would invite him to his office to give him bad news. Swallowing his words as was Roger's wont, he agreed. I then asked if Kennedy Center had any other matters pending with Japan. The answer was negative. I told Roger I suspected we had the money, but I would call Tokyo for confirmation. My call to my Japanese friend was greeted with, "I tried to reach you in New York. The Diet approved the gift of three million dollars this afternoon."

A few months later, Prime Minister Miti made a state visit to Washington. He brought with him a check for three million dollars. President Ford received it in the Rose Garden on behalf of Kennedy Center. My wife Bette and I were invited to the state luncheon

honoring the Prime Minister. I was one of four trustees responsible for selecting the renowned architect Philip Johnson to design The Terrace Theater. The opening performance in 1979 was a Kabuki performance paid for by the Japanese government. Although President Carter was scheduled to attend, a conflict developed and I escorted First Lady Roslyn Carter and Amy to the opening. Since that time, The Terrace Theater has provided a venue for all manner of chamber music and solo offerings and even mini-opera. It is a jewel of a theater – once a "big hole in the ceiling" above the Eisenhower Theater.

* * * *

The idea for a "national center for the performing arts" arose during the Eisenhower administration when a tract of property in Foggy Bottom along the Potomac was put up for sale by Washington's gas company. Congress appropriated funds to buy the land but not enough to construct a theater complex. Congress continued to refuse construction funds for the better part of a decade despite public fervor for a cultural center worthy of our nation's capital city. Two months after President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, Congress passed legislation establishing The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as a memorial to the slain President and provided twenty-three million dollars subject to raising a like amount from the private sector. When that condition was met, Congress authorized a loan from the U.S. Treasury for an additional twenty million to be repaid after ten years. It was an odd financing arrangement for a presidential memorial whose total cost was about seventy million dollars.

The corporate sector contributed a substantial fraction of the private sector funds. But after the three theaters were built – the Opera House, the Eisenhower Theater and the Concert Hall – no sustained effort was made to enlist business support on a continuing basis. Instead, when funds were required for musical or theatrical productions whose cost exceeded ticket sales, Kennedy Center's development office contacted corporations for grants to cover the deficit. In return, the donor was named as a sponsor in programs and promotional materials. When Jillian Poole described this process to me, I thought it was a scary way to live – calling on corporations, hat in hand, at the last minute for funding for a scheduled production. Instead, I proposed a mechanism that would provide continuing corporate support. The result was The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund.

The case for corporate support for Kennedy Center is easy to make, although we would soon learn that many companies whose headquarters are distant from the nation's capital argued "we support our local symphony and ballet company in Houston or Cincinnati or Minneapolis so why should we support a performing arts center in Washington?" Our response was simply that Washington is our country's most visited tourist destination and the primary international gathering place for government officials and leaders in all walks of life. Families, friends, employees, customers and business associates of all major U.S. corporations regularly visit Washington and, until the arrival of Kennedy Center, were deprived of a world class cultural experience. It was an easy argument to make.

My idea was to name a board of governors of approximately twenty chief executives of leading corporations who would contribute themselves and seek donations from their

business counterparts. We arranged for the announcement of the Kennedy Center Corporate Fund to be made by President Gerald Ford at The White House in November 1976, a strategy that positioned the fund as a national philanthropic priority. And we were fortunate in enlisting Don McNaughton, CEO, Prudential Insurance, to be its first chairman. The fact that McNaughton was chairman of the prestigious Business Roundtable was a major factor in attracting participation and financial support from his peer group. Among CEOs who followed McNaughton as chairman of the Kennedy Center Corporate Fund are Jack Welch, General Electric; James E. Burke and Ralph Larsen, Johnson & Johnson; John DeButts and Charles Brown, AT&T; Rawleigh Warner, Mobil; Roger Smith, General Motors; Frank Carey, IBM; Ed Woollard, DuPont. The first year we raised a million-and-a-half dollars and in the past quarter century we have raised a total of almost one hundred million dollars.

Mine is the only name listed as a "governor" throughout the entire history of the fund. Because of this association, I have met literally scores of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies over the past quarter century.

* * * *

Abe Fortas died in April 1982. Bette and I were in Tokyo and had returned to our hotel about midnight. When traveling abroad in those pre-CNN days, I relied on Armed Forces Radio Service for the news. The lead item on the newscast was that Abe Fortas was dead at age 72, the result of a ruptured aortic artery. Since he had never mentioned having a heart problem and was vigorously healthy when I had seen him less than a fortnight ago, I was both surprised and saddened. We had had a relatively close relationship from the time I first visited him in Washington in 1941. He was then 31 years old and was Under Secretary of the Interior. I recall even today that his office was the size of a tennis court.

In the last two decades of his life Fortas played a leading role making Kennedy Center a national center for the performing arts. One of President Johnson's most trusted political advisers and personal friends, Fortas had considerable influence on cultural matters at The White House. I felt his extraordinary contribution to Kennedy Center should be memorialized in a lasting manner.

Starting in high school Fortas had a deep-seated passion for music. He was a highly competent classical violinist whose talents were recognized by world class musicians. Isaac Stern was among his closest friends and the two often played recreational duets or participated in living room string quartets. Intuitively, I thought it made sense to marry Abe's passion for chamber music with his abiding interest in The Terrace Theater. After he had goaded me into finding a patron who would finance its construction, he and I were among the four trustees who had oversight for its design and construction. In fact, Roger Stevens often referred to The Terrace Theater as "Abe's chamber music playpen."

Stevens favored my idea of memorializing Fortas with a trust fund that would endow a continuing series of chamber music concerts at The Terrace Theater.

Carolyn Agger Fortas, Abe's widow and, for all intents and purposes, his sole survivor, was also supportive and even suggested names of Fortas friends and clients who would be likely contributors. Most important, Carol directed me to Bella Linden, a New York attorney with whom Abe collaborated through the years whose specialty was representing classical music artists and institutions.

Our goal was modest – we wanted to create an endowment to underwrite two chamber music series a year. We were advised that a million dollars would be adequate. The first two solicitations that Bella Linden and I made resulted in one-quarter of our goal. The late John Loeb Sr., an eminent investment banker, donated $125,000, followed by a gift in the same amount by the late Arnold Bernhard, founder of the Value Line investment group. Loeb had been a long-time Fortas friend and client. Bernhard's relationship was of more recent vintage as client and neighbor in Westport, Connecticut, where Carol and Abe had a summer home for many years. Several additional gifts came in at the $100,000 level (most of the major donors had not previously contributed to Kennedy Center). Though we fell a bit short of the million dollar goal, we had sufficient funds to launch the Fortas Chamber Music Concerts in the 1983-84 season.

While Carol Agger Fortas was interested in our money-raising efforts, neither Bella nor I asked her to contribute, nor did she offer. For a decade after Abe's death, Carol joined my wife, Bette, and me at the Kennedy Center Honors gala on the first Sunday in December. For the first few years, she was my guest, but when the price of admission increased, she insisted on paying for her ticket and Kennedy Center always accommodated us with three seats together in a front orchestra row. As soon as the final applause ended, my task was to rush to the bar for a generously-poured double Jack Daniels on the rocks for Carol. She sipped it slowly while smoking her post-performance cigar, and, on more than one occasion, asked for a refill.

Kennedy Center Honors night was an annual ritual for the three of us until Carol became afflicted with Alzheimer's disease in the early nineties. In what was to be our last conversation, she inquired about the Fortas chamber music concerts. I reported it was ongoing as planned, although I bemoaned the fact that the passing years had seen the loss of many of the classical music audience who still recognized the Fortas name. Her rather indeterminate response was something to the effect, "it would be a shame not to continue the series in view of Abe's great personal and professional commitment to Kennedy Center and his passion for chamber music." Following her death five years later, she bequeathed one-third of her approximately twenty-five million dollar estate to the Abe Fortas Memorial Fund, (Barnard College and the Yale Law School received equal amounts). Today the fund has more than ten million dollars in assets. That will buy a lot of chamber music! I continue to be one of the fund's trustees.

* * * *

My association with Kennedy Center led to another Washington undertaking that I found stimulating and, I believe, served the public interest. For as long as Roger Stevens headed Kennedy Center, he tried unsuccessfully to get me a Presidential appointment to

the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees. Once, however, I came close. In the waning days of the Carter administration, I received word that my name was on the list of new appointees – recognition for my services to Kennedy Center over the past decade (I had no "special" connection to the Carter White House, although I knew Press Secretary Jody Powell). During the last week of the Carter presidency, Terry Straub, an assistant to President Carter who later joined U.S. Steel and whom I came to know and respect, telephoned me the bad news that my name was dropped as a Kennedy Center appointee in favor of a relative of a Carter political adviser. Having read my supporting data, Terry thought I was getting a raw deal and, as a consolation, told me I could have one of two appointments still available before President Carter left office. One was as a member of the oversight board of the Federal prison system. The other was as a member of the Commission of Fine Arts. It didn't take long for me to decide I wanted no part of the Federal prison system. But I asked Terry if he would keep the Fine Arts Commission offer open for just a few hours – until I could talk with J. Carter Brown, the Commission's long-time chairman whom I had met through my Kennedy Center work. My question to Carter Brown was simply, "do you think I can make a contribution as a member of the Commission." He said he would welcome my appointment and that it was "in keeping with the legislation establishing the Commission" that called for "representatives of the public interest" in addition to architects, artists, sculptors and others in the fine arts community. I telephoned my acceptance to Terry Straub and thanked him for his efforts in my behalf. My appointment to the Commission of Fine Arts, signed by Jimmy Carter, is dated January 18, 1981, just forty-eight hours before Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as the fortieth President of the United States.

The Commission of Fine Arts is a super zoning board for three specific areas in the District of Columbia: the Federal Triangle, Georgetown and areas contiguous to Rock Creek Park. When I joined the members included two distinguished architects, an eminent landscape architect, a Washington real estate developer, a Carter supporter in Pennsylvania and its chairman, the then director of the National Gallery of Art and one of the most personable and resourceful individuals I have ever known and worked with. The two projects that interested me most during my five years on the Commission was the ongoing Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment and the Vietnam War Memorial.

The Pennsylvania Avenue project called for reviewing and approving architectural design for a dozen or so major buildings on the majestic corridor that connects the Capitol with the area immediately adjacent to The White House. They included the Canadian Embassy, the JW Marriott Hotel and the office building extension of the Willard Hotel. We were even able to preserve the traditional period facades on Pennsylvania Avenue fronting the new George Washington University building several blocks west of The White House. The Commission was unanimous in wanting to retain the institutional quality of the extra-width boulevard traversed every four years by newly sworn-in Presidents to their home a mile or so distance on Pennsylvania Avenue. Almost without exception, the Commission deferred approval of architectural plans on the first submission. Usually, revisions involved changes in colors or textures of building materials (usually more subdued), further setbacks of upper floors to retain a consistent height line when viewed from street level or, in one instance, to reduce building mass to

conform to other structures along the avenue. One night I remember was when Commission members gathered at nightfall along Pennsylvania Avenue in mid-winter to determine which of several lighting standards would line both sides of the avenue and to agree on a specific illumination intensity. Nowadays when I travel Pennsylvania Avenue between The Treasury Building and Capitol Hill, I take pride in having been one of seven whose taste and judgment are reflected in the architectural legacy that we had a role in fashioning.

Perhaps the most exciting and suspenseful building project in the near hundred year history of the Commission of Fine Arts was the Vietnam Memorial. Few would disagree that the war itself was one of the most divisive events since the Civil War. The intense division intensified from the time a design submitted by a twenty-one year old Yale architecture student, Maya Lin, was selected in a competition against hundreds of other entries. Her design was a wide-angled V-shaped black granite wall exceeding five hundred feet in length on which were engraved the names of the more than fifty thousand American soldiers who lost their lives in Vietnam in the order in which they died. The monument was located on the National Mall on a plot paralleling Constitution Avenue about a hundred yards east of the Lincoln Memorial, one of Washington's most-visited historical sites. Opposition to the design formed even before the design was formally presented for approval by the Fine Arts Commission. The principal objection to Maya Lin's design was that it was said to be "a tombstone" that failed to recognize the heroism of the men and women who gave their lives in the cause of freedom -- "a black gash in the earth" was one description. The opposition was led by former Vietnam veterans who had support from one member of Congress in particular and, subsequently, from Ross Perot, who, at the time, was believed to have presidential aspirations.

Anticipating opposition at the open Commission meeting at which the Vietnam Memorial design was to be presented, Carter Brown asked me to meet with him beforehand. He had reviewed Maya Lin's plans as soon as they were formally submitted to the Commission and was enthralled with the design. But he believed, and I concurred, that those antagonistic to her design would aggressively challenge her design. Commission of Fine Arts approval was only one of several required for a memorial on the National Mall. Other approvals had to come from the Secretary of the Interior who has oversight of federal land; the National Park Service, which maintains and manages national monuments, and other planning groups. At the Commission meeting, we expected a protest demonstration by Vietnam veterans that would make the evening television news. In the face of all that angst, Carter Brown was determined to preserve the integrity of the Maya Lin design and he skillfully presented his case to each of the Commission members. Perhaps fortuitously, the Commission was unanimous in its support of the original design from the outset.

The law governing the Commission of Fine Arts provides a formal challenge procedure and proponents of "a more heroic monument" called for a second hearing on the Maya Lin design. In addition to their general dislike of what they believed was a massive gravestone, they bemoaned the lack of an American flag and the absence of soldiers. On the basis of their public statements, they appeared to want both the flag and some

representation of soldiers in battle mode to be inserted at the apex of the "V" which, of course, would have seriously compromised the original design. To assure continued solidarity among the seven members of the Commission at a time when one or two members may have been amenable to what Chairman Brown considered an inappropriate accommodation to the group that considered themselves the "true patriots," Brown called for a recess of the second meeting to get a first-hand view of the monument site. He had arranged for the rental of a large van that accommodated the full Commission and, on the drive from the Commission's headquarters to the site near the Lincoln Memorial, he revealed the details of a compromise which he felt would protect the integrity and spirit of the original design and hopefully mollify those opposed to the original design. One element called for erecting a flagpole about a hundred feet to the west of the granite wall's terminus where a large American flag that could be seen by those visiting both the Vietnam Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial. The other element called for a sculpture of four figures in military dress to be placed in a wooded area a hundred or more yards distant from the wall. The sculpture would consist of three males – a Caucasian, an African-American and a Hispanic -- in a posture that approximated patrol duty and one female, a nurse. The mood of the Commission was to stand firm, but Brown patiently outlined the "politics" that could defer construction indefinitely. Maya Lin was highly protective of her original design; she let it be known that she felt that any accommodation would compromise her design. After further open discussion, Carter Brown's compromise was accepted and Maya Lin's design became what today is one of Washington's most visited monuments.

Although I very likely could have remained a member of the Commission after my term expired, I chose to retire. I had been a party to preserving the majesty of Pennsylvania Avenue and to memorializing in a tasteful manner the 50,000-plus Americans who lost their lives in Vietnam. Also, I had been a member of the Commission for one of only two occasions when it was overruled. The first was when President Truman added a small balcony to the second floor on the South side of The White House. The Commission of which I was a member was overruled by the Mayor of Washington when we denied approval for building a large commercial/residential structure on the Potomac in Georgetown because its large scale and its potential to create traffic problems.

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It was only natural for me to be interested in the U.S. Information Agency from the time it was formed during the Eisenhower Administration. My first active involvement was in the early 60s after President Kennedy appointed the premier television anchorman of the day, Edward R. Murrow of CBS, to be its director. Murrow appointed a private sector advisory committee and I was one of its members. While I continued to maintain contact with USIA directors in subsequent administrations, I did not seriously reengage myself until Charles Wick was appointed by President Reagan to head the agency. Charlie Wick expanded private sector involvement exponentially. Among others, he created a private sector public relations advisory committee chaired by my friend Henry Rogers, the co-founder of the Rogers & Cowan public relations firm. Henry asked me to join. In the process, Charles Wick became one of my close friends (and he and his wife, Mary Jane,

remain so some two decades later). At the end of President Reagan's first term, Henry Rogers stepped down as chairman and I succeeded him.

The USIA Private Sector Public Relations Advisory Committee consisted of approximately 20 of the country's leading public relations executives from both corporations and public relations firms, in the main those representing organizations with global reach. Our role was totally advisory, although from time to time various of our members served both as a resource to USIA public affairs officers in embassies around the world as well as linkages to the private sector. We met quarterly and, almost invariably, had perfect attendance for the briefings we received from Director Wick, Richard Carlson, who headed the Voice of America, and other senior USIA executives. Our members were frequently asked to provide input and critique for USIA policy and communications initiatives. When Charles Wick retired after eight years as the longest serving Director of USIA, I hosted his retirement party at the Pan-American Union. The special guest of the evening was President Reagan and I exercised my prerogative as host by seating myself next to him. (Wick was his other seat mate and the table included Katharine Graham, publisher of The Washington Post, seated next to me and Roberto Goizueta, CEO of our client, The Coca-Cola Company.) Although I had had receiving line encounters with other Presidents and was once briefly with President Reagan in the Oval Office, this was the first time I had ever had two hours' face time with a President of the United States. Some months later, after he left the Presidency, I was to become more closely associated with President Reagan, but that evening in November 1988 when I hosted 347 guests, one of them the President of the United States, was one I will never forget. Yes, I was sad that my Mother had not lived to see it!

# # # #

Harold Burson
October 1, 2003