The Search for Foresight

The World Future Society's Emergence from Dream to Reality

By Edward Cornish

In this second installment of his memoirs, the World Future Society's founding president describes how volunteers sharing "ideas and ideals" were drawn to the new, forward-looking organization.

The World Future Society was still just a dream when we announced its founding on October 28, 1966. The Society had no members, no headquarters, no money, no institutional backing, and no legal recognition. But our tiny organizing committee in Washington, D.C., had succeeded in melding our individual dreams into a shared dream: We had achieved a fairly clear vision of what we wanted the Society to be.

Charles W. Williams Jr., a founder and first vice president of the World Future Society, was an effective advocate for the Society in its early days. From 1969 to 1971, he served as staff director of the White House's National Goals Research Staff. The Goals Staff was established at the suggestion of Daniel P. Moynihan, who wanted to make the U.S. government more future-oriented.

We also had weathered our first crisis: Just before we announced the Society's founding, David Goldberg, who had been a key member of our organizing committee, abruptly withdrew as a vice president and secretary of the Society without giving a clear explanation. I was surprised and dismayed by his unexpected withdrawal, and, for a long moment, I feared that others might also desert, and the Society would become just another failed dream.

But the two other key members of our organizing committee—Charles W. Williams Jr. and Peter Zuckerman—moved immediately to heal the breach. Before I even got word of Goldberg's withdrawal, Williams had spoken to Zuckerman, our prospective treasurer, about taking on the additional duty of being the Society's secretary, which was to have been one of Goldberg's duties. Zuckerman proved willing. So we moved right ahead with our announcement of the Society's founding.

The calmness that Williams and Zuckerman exhibited in responding to this early threat to our enterprise heartened me enormously. They showed themselves to be reliable, competent, and trustworthy in a crisis—and they remained steadfast allies during the Society's critical early years.

So the Society began life with a Board consisting of myself as president, Williams as vice president, and Zuckerman as secretary-treasurer. In the years ahead, the three of us worked together harmoniously with the help of numerous others to nurse our shared dream toward a reality. Meanwhile, Goldberg continued to participate in Society activities, but he never again played a key role in the Society's leadership.

After we announced the Society's founding, Williams began drafting the Society's bylaws and preparing an initial development plan. He also became the public face of the Society. His job at the National Science Foundation put him solidly in with Washington's scientific and policy-making establishment, and he welcomed the opportunity to become more visible in that community. Williams proved to be an impressive advocate for the Society as well as an excellent speaker and master of ceremonies at Society functions.

Peter Zuckerman, one of the Society's founders, served for years as its secretary-treasurer. A survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, Zuckerman has devoted his life to preventing "the holocausts of the future."

Meanwhile, Zuckerman

PHOTOS: WORLD FUTURE SOCIETY ARCHIVE

Roy Mason, co-designer of the Society's first logo, is shown here working on the model buildings of the future that were used in a film about the future prepared for a Society conference. A dynamic creator of visions of the future, Mason was prominent in Society activities during the late 1960s and 1970s.

and I focused on practical tasks that needed doing. Zuckerman kept excellent minutes of our meetings—I have relied heavily on his notes in preparing this memoir—and he performed meticulously the duties of treasurer, once he had some money to take charge of! Later on, Zuckerman's intimate knowledge of computers and systems would enable the infant World Future Society to computerize its membership and financial records at a time when few other associations in Washington had made the transition.

As for myself, I concentrated on two urgent tasks: The first was to prepare a brochure describing the Society so we could start recruiting members, and the second was to edit and publish the first issue of THE FUTURIST, the newsletter that we were promising our future members. These tasks had to be done immediately, and the Society had no money to pay anybody to do it.

I thought that I could handle the writing and editing of THE FUTURIST, but I knew nothing about publishing—typesetting, layout, graphic art, printing, inventory, mailing, etc.—and even less (if that be possible) about being an association leader. In short, I was in trouble. What had I gotten myself into?

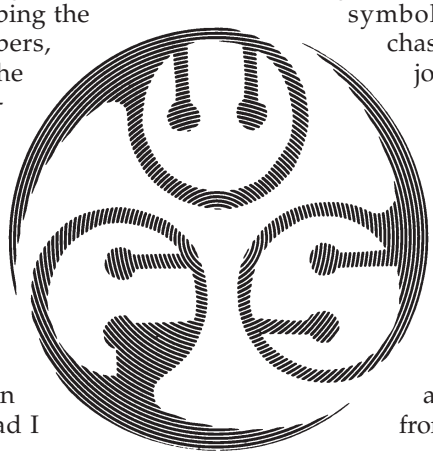
Volunteers to the Rescue

Happily, many of the Society's early members came to the rescue. Their enthusiasm was truly inspiring. One newcomer—who appeared on the scene at just the right moment—was William C. Moore, a talkative lawyer with many grand ideas. Moore agreed to be our legal counsel—a post he was to hold for years—and his guidance proved invaluable. One of his first tips was to incorporate the Society in the District of Columbia because its laws were favorable to nonprofit organizations. Our application did satisfy the District's requirements, and we were duly chartered. Moore's law office in the District of Columbia became the Society's corporate address.

When the U.S. Patent Office refused our application for a trademark for THE FUTURIST, Moore told me to "go in and argue with them." So I did, and we got our trademark. He gave me similar advice when the Internal Revenue Service rejected the Society's initial application for recognition as a nonprofit tax-exempt charitable organization. Again, I defended the Society's case and it worked. As a result, the Society got IRS approval, and we didn't have to pay the thousands of dollars a lawyer would normally charge for the service.

Moore also found a volunteer artist for us—Roy Mason, an extraordinarily creative architect who had been trained at the Yale School of Design. Mason also proved to be a godsend. He had just established a design firm on the ground floor of an apartment building on Massachusetts Avenue just off Dupont Circle, and he had lots of associates whom he could call on as volunteers for Society projects. Mason was so incredibly passionate about his projects that he had no time for levity or laughter, and he had to struggle to express his inner visions in words. One of his charming habits was to confuse the words *idea* and *ideal,* so that he regularly said to me, "Let's get together and share ideals!"

Mason's first project for the Society was designing a logo in collaboration with his associate Kenneth Dresser. The logo incorporated the Society's initials WFS into a background based on the Japanese *tomoye* symbol, which looks like three comets chasing each other's tails. I was overjoyed to get the logo, since it made the Society seem like a well-established organization, and it was finished just in time for the first brochures describing the Society and inviting people to participate.



The Society's logo, designed by Roy Mason and his associate Kenneth Dresser in 1966, was based on the Japanese *tomoye* symbol. The Japanese word means "to bring together as to form a perfect circle." Mason said, "The three-part tomoye brings together in one symbol the basic meaning and motivation of the World Future Society: the dynamic effort to search out, create, and foster a more perfect and lasting future for all mankind."

About the same time, I located another volunteer to help publish the brochure and later THE FUTURIST—Darold Powers, a tall, thin, rather dreamy writer from Iowa whom I had met while on a family camping trip. Powers had self-published a children's book he had written, and in the process had learned something about publishing. When I sought his help, he was unemployed and depressed, but he sprang to life as I discussed the Society. Powers agreed to act as a printer's agent, which meant that he would earn a

commission if he found jobs for a printer or typesetter. The key point for me was that the Society would not be charged for Powers's layout services, though we would have to pay for the typesetting and printing.

The membership brochures, using my text, Mason's logo, and Powers's layout, were printed on single sheets of heavy blue paper, and folded so they could be tucked easily into a coat pocket. Though very simple in design and execution, this brochure proved remarkably effective in recruiting members for the Society.

Powers also arranged to have type set for the first issue of THE FUTURIST and laid out the early issues by himself. His first choice of a printer proved unfortunate, however: The copies were so badly smudged that most of them could not be used. But after that near disaster, Powers located a printer who did excellent work for us.

The Birth of THE FUTURIST

The first issue of THE FUTURIST (dated February 1967) was a crudely printed 16-page newsletter, but it was packed with then-current ideas about the future. I had culled them from news releases, texts of speeches, magazine articles, and whatever other sources I could lay my hands on.

One article carried the byline of Hubert H. Humphrey, then vice president of the United States, and was based on a recent speech in which he foresaw desalinated seawater, a permanent base on the moon, control of weather, elimination of bacterial and viral diseases, the landing of men on Mars, and the creation of primitive forms of life. (I suspect the speech was written for Humphrey by David Williams, a member of his staff who was an early Society member.)

Also in that first issue, oceanographer Athelstan Spilhaus predicted that most ships in the future would be submarines, while Richard Shetler, president of the General Learning Corporation, said we could anticipate a population explosion in non-Western cities, as well as computers that could take dictation. Other forecasts came from science writer Arthur C. Clarke and John Diebold, author of *Automation,* a pioneering best seller on the use of high technology in factories.

This first issue of THE FUTURIST—like other issues published during the 1960s—reflected the enormous optimism in the United States at that time. The world economy was booming, and the U.S. government was spending unprecedented amounts of money. Notwithstanding the soaring cost of the Vietnam War and the Apollo program, Lyndon Johnson's administration was pouring money into an ambitious "Great Society" program designed to end poverty in America, boost educational levels, and open new opportunities for blacks and other demographic groups.

The immediate effect of these government programs was to generate an enormous demand for bureaucrats, allowing many people in Washington to move to higher-paying jobs with the government or firms funded by the government. Due to the shortage of educated workers, Washingtonians felt secure in their jobs and often could pursue volunteer projects for the World Future Society during working hours. They could also take long lunch breaks to attend Society meetings when we began holding them downtown.

The optimistic mood nourished by prosperity and the breathtaking Apollo program also encouraged a widespread interest in the future, which became the subject of many newspaper and magazine articles. Readers enjoyed learning about the wonderful things that they could expect in the future, and editors catered to this interest.

THE FUTURIST was not immune to the mood: Some early issues of THE FUTURIST could be described as "future porn"—glowing descriptions of the glamorous world of tomorrow. But I'm proud to say that, in the June 1967 issue, I did warn that writers on the future were focusing on "future solutions to present problems rather than future problems arising from present actions."

The first issue of THE FUTURIST contained so many specific predictions that, 30 years later, I decided to see how many proved right and how many were wrong. [See "Futurist Forecasts 30 Years Later," January-February 1997.] I began by identifying 60 statements in our first issue as candidates for evaluation. Then I eliminated 26 forecasts because they could not be judged clearly right or clearly wrong due to vagueness in their wording or the fact that the deadline for their fulfillment had not arrived or simply because I didn't feel able to evaluate their accuracy. That left 34 forecasts whose accuracy I felt I could judge.

Trying as hard as I could to be fair, I scored 23 forecasts as right and 11 as wrong—an accuracy rate of 68%. This finding counters the skeptics who claim that predictions are always wrong, but the fact remains that if you had bet on one of those predictions the chances were one out of three that you would have lost your money.

The 1967 forecasters failed most frequently in predicting future developments in space exploration. Though they forecast correctly that there would be a landing on the moon by 1970, their predictions for landings on other planets by 1980 and a manned lunar base by 1986 proved much too optimistic. (In December 2006, NASA said it anticipated a permanent manned base on the moon by 2024.)

Unquestionably, the forecasters were greatly influenced by the extremely rapid progress in space exploration during the 1960s. They hadn't reckoned with the possibility that the U.S. government would drastically reduce funding for space projects after the successful landing of men on the moon in 1969.

Still, considering the February 1967 issue as a whole, I don't think the forecasters did too badly. They anticipated that humans would make dynamic technological, economic, and medical progress in the years ahead, and so we have. The optimism of the 1960s was not entirely unjustified.

The Society's First Members

Six weeks after we announced the Society's founding, only three people had signed up for membership—hardly a promising start. But after we began dis-

tributing our brochures and the first issue of THE FUTURIST, people began to sign up in more significant numbers. By March 1, 1967, the Society had 340 members (along with a growing stack of unpaid bills), and by the end of our first year we had 1,500 members.

Who were these early members? Clearly, most of them were intelligent, imaginative people, many of whom were quite successful in their careers. And they were certainly well-educated as a group. I often felt like a country bumpkin when I found myself surrounded by people with doctorates. Perhaps a third of our early members were university professors or otherwise engaged in higher education. But there were also many government managers, city planners, engineers, authors, and business people involved in long-range planning, marketing, or product development.

These people were clearly interested in new ideas about technology and society, and they seemed to be highly imaginative and free in their thinking. Altogether, I found them the most fascinating group of people I had ever known, partly because they approached the future in so many different ways.

The very first person to become a Society member was, as I recall, William T. Gay, a retired English professor living in Montgomery, Alabama, who had a passionate interest in utopian literature. Gay gave a gift membership in the Society to Marion Bellamy Earnshaw, daughter of the nineteenth-century journalist Edward Bellamy, who wrote the famous novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887.* A best seller after it appeared in 1888, *Looking Backward* described the wonders of Boston in the year 2000: airplanes, electric lights, radio, television, and equal rights for women.

I later recruited Gay to be the utopias editor of THE FUTURIST, and he contributed notable articles on Bellamy and Jules Verne, whose book on a flight to the moon inspired rocketry pioneers Robert Goddard and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.

Other early members included well-known science-fiction writers such as Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Frederik Pohl, and Robert Heinlein. Arthur C. Clarke not only joined but sent in a membership for Stanley Kubrick, the producer/director of *2001: A Space Odyssey.* Gene Roddenberry, creator of the *Star Trek* series on television, also signed up and gave a gift subscription to actor Leonard Nimoy, who played the character Mr. Spock on *Star Trek.*

My sons were very excited when they saw the *Star Trek* envelope containing Roddenberry's application for membership. I had never watched the show myself and had no idea who Roddenberry was. Years later, however, I did get to know him when he spoke at a Society conference where he explained how he developed memorable characters like Spock by imagining a person with certain characteristics and then questioning him to find out what he thought about specific things.

The early members also included some politicians, such as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, who later participated in the Society's 1975 conference.

And, of course, there were corporation executives such as William W. Simmons, IBM's director of exploratory planning, and Ian H. Wilson, who was leading a study of changing American values for General Electric.

Why People Joined

People seemed to have many different reasons for joining the Society. Some wanted to know about the future largely as a matter of personal curiosity. Others had a serious interest in learning what was expected in the future so they could be prepared for it. In short, they were not looking for entertainment so much as enlightenment. In fact, most of our early members believed that knowing more about the future might be of some practical importance in their professions and private affairs.

At least a few of the early members had personal experiences that turned them into futurists. For them, the future was part of a life mission.

Peter Zuckerman, the Society's secretary-treasurer, was such a person. Born in Budapest and raised in poverty, Peter experienced extraordinary suffering as a teenager. In 1944, the German army occupied Hungary, rounded up the nation's Jews, and shipped them to concentration camps. Peter was sent to Auschwitz at the age of 15, escaping the gas chambers only because he was deemed fit to work as a slave laborer for the Nazis. Fortunately, he was liberated by Allied troops in 1945 and eventually was able to emigrate to the United States.

Peter never forgot the horrors of his youth, and he has devoted his life to trying to prevent "the Holocausts of the future." His participation in the founding of the World Future Society and his long service to the Society have been part of his personal mission.

Another survivor of the Holocaust who became a futurist was Robert Jungk, the German-born futurist who addressed the meeting at which the founding of the World Future Society was announced. In the early 1930s, Jungk vigorously protested the rise of the Nazis to power, but he eventually had to flee Germany.

After the war, Jungk campaigned vigorously against atomic bombs. On a trip to Hiroshima, he interviewed a man dying from radiation left by the first atomic bomb, but the man had scornful words for him: "Now you protest against the bomb, but it is too late. You always begin too late."

At that moment, Jungk suddenly recognized that it was only too true. He had spent his life protesting things that had already happened, such as the rise of Nazism in Germany and the creation of atomic bombs. So Jungk developed "future workshops" to help people develop their thinking about the future so that horrors could be avoided and humanity could build a better future world. Jungk also became a regular participant in World Future Society meetings.

Key to the thinking of members like Zuckerman and Jungk is their perception that we can do nothing to alter past events—what's done is done—but that we do have great power to shape the future. We can learn to

Glenn T. Seaborg and Barbara Hubbard, both Board members of the Society, share a laugh at an early Society meeting. Seaborg won a Nobel Prize for discovering plutonium and other chemical elements. Hubbard provided vitally needed financial support for the Society, enabling it to increase its membership outside the United States.

avoid repeating past mistakes and we can collaborate globally to create a better future world.

And some futurists envisioned humans evolving into beings approaching the sublimity of the universe in the years ahead. This transcendent perspective was promoted by Barbara Marx Hubbard, another early Society member. Unlike Peter Zuckerman and Bob Jungk, Barbara was a child of privilege. She was the daughter of Louis Marx, America's largest toy manufacturer. Every child in mid-twentieth-century America played with Marx toys, so Barbara grew up in a real-life toyland. But for Barbara it was not enough, so she began what she calls "an evolutionary journey"—a lifelong search for a positive future not just for herself but for all humankind. In Paris, she had met an American artist, Earl Hubbard, and together they developed visions of man's vast future in the universe.

I found Barbara to be utterly dazzling: She was beautiful, brilliant, charming, and energetic. She also seemed to know everyone who had ever done anything interesting, from President Eisenhower to Jonas Salk, the discoverer of the polio vaccine.

When Barbara joined the Society, she also ordered a gift membership for Abraham Maslow, the psychologist who developed a theory of how human values evolve based on people's psychological needs.

Barbara enthusiastically supported the Society and made two handsome donations. One of them was for general support and the other was to make the Society better known abroad. We did this largely by advertising the Society in scientific publications that had large readerships outside the United States, and this led to an immediate upsurge in our members abroad.

Financial support was critical for the Society, because relatively few of our members contributed anything beyond their membership dues, and we had no government or corporate support. Without Barbara's help, the Society might never have survived its critical early years.

Early Society Meetings

Aside from my regular job and family duties, most of my time during the Society's first few months went into writing, editing, and publishing THE FUTURIST. Quite soon, however, I became involved in arranging luncheon meetings in downtown Washington.

I didn't relish this additional responsibility. I was already swamped with work and I desperately needed to hang on to my paid job at the National Geographic Society. As I saw it, the best way to do that would be to stay out of the limelight so my employer would not realize how much of my time and energy was going into my volunteer activity.

So I was delighted when one of our members, Richard Falknor, was willing to assume responsibility for arranging luncheon meetings for the Society. Falknor was the administrative aide for a new congressman, Thomas Foley of the state of Washington.

When Barbara and Earl Hubbard came to Washington with their children, Falknor arranged a special tour of the U.S. Capitol and lunch in the House dining room. Congressman Foley himself lunched with our party and personally guided us on a tour of what is unquestionably the most fascinating building in the United States. When I complimented Foley on his encyclopedic knowledge of the building's history, he said that he'd been told that if he lost his seat in the House, he might be able to get a job as a guide!

In later years, Foley rose to become Speaker of the House of Representatives, so when Bill Clinton gave his State of the Union addresses, two futurists—Foley and Al Gore Jr., then vice president—sat right behind the president. I was elated at seeing the rise of two committed futurists to positions of power in the U.S. Congress.

How Chapters Got Started

Besides negotiating with restaurants, Falknor's role on Capitol Hill meant that he could recruit outstanding speakers, such as Walter Mondale, a young senator from Minnesota who later became vice president of the United States and the Democratic candidate for the U.S. presidency in 1980. (He lost to Ronald Reagan.)

Downtown Washington proved to be an extraordinarily good place to recruit experts of almost every kind, and most did not require a speaker's fee, which, of course, we were in no position to pay. Besides Mondale, early speakers at our Washington meetings included Harvey Perloff, author of *The Future of the United States Government;* Jessie Bernard, author of *The Future of Marriage;* Mary S. Calderone, America's best-

known sexologist; and Frank Davidson, first president of the newly created Institute for the Future, now located in Menlo Park, California.

Most notable of our early speakers was Glenn T. Seaborg, then chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. I attribute our success in getting Seaborg largely to his speechwriter, Stan Schneider, who was an enthusiastic member of the Society.

Seaborg had won a Nobel Prize for discovering plutonium and other chemical elements, and he would later become the only chemist in history to have an element named for him during his lifetime (seaborgium, element 106). His steadfast support of the World Future Society through the rest of his life was of extraordinary value to us.

The high quality of speakers attracted a growing number of people to the Society's luncheon meetings. Many of them not only joined the Society, but also proved to be enthusiastic volunteers for Society projects. One of the most valuable of these was Frank S. Hopkins, a former diplomat who was then a State Department officer in charge of long-range planning.

Hopkins was willing to take on almost any task for the Society, from the most exalted to the most menial, and this aspect of his character endeared him to me. As a former U.S. diplomat, he had the savoir-faire to deal suavely with top-ranking leaders, as well as the humility and generosity to perform humble but necessary tasks for the Society.

When Falknor could no longer arrange meetings for us, Hopkins took over, so generally all I would have to do was to help recruit speakers. This proved to be remarkably easy, since interesting speakers were generally eager to address Society members.

Still, the luncheon meetings added to my responsibilities as president, and soon there were Society members outside Washington who wanted to establish chapters so they, too, could meet. I was simultaneously delighted and alarmed by this. The members' enthusiasm was exhilarating, but I wondered if we could cope with a network of chapters. My workload as president and editor was mounting higher and higher, and I had been warned by Fred Durant, who had been president of the International Astronautical Federation, not to get involved with chapters due to the many problems they create.

Earl C. Joseph, founder of the Minnesota Futurists, the first of the Society's global network of local chapters and coordinators.

Glenn Seaborg, then chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, chats with Richard Falknor, a congressional aide who arranged Society events in 1967.

In the end, however, I could not resist the eagerness of our members. Earl Joseph, a computer scientist with the Sperry-Rand Corporation, organized the remarkably successful chapter in Minneapolis–St. Paul and also established an impressive journal, *Futurics.* Almost simultaneously, Robert Prehoda, author of *Designing the Future: The Role of Technological Forecasting,* organized a chapter in Los Angeles. Soon afterwards, other chapters appeared across America.

In 1970, Tibor Hottovy in Stockholm organized the first overseas chapter, and our members in London held their first meeting early in 1971, with physicist Dennis Gabor as their speaker. Gabor, who won a Nobel Prize for his discovery of holography, had recently published a book, *Inventing the Future,* in which he argued that the great human challenge is to create or "invent" a better future rather than to predict it, which is largely impossible.

The London chapter, under the highly competent and dedicated leadership of David Berry, proved remarkably stable over the years. But the Stockholm chapter—despite the dedication of its founder, Tibor Hottovy—ran into difficulties because a number of the early participants in the meetings rebelled against belonging to an organization based in the United States. Despite the Society's neutrality, global perspective, and effort to treat all members alike, our organization was actually held responsible for the Vietnam War.

Yes, Fred Durant was right in warning me about the difficulties that chapters bring. Still, they became—and I hope will remain—a vital part of the Society's life.

The Society Starts a Book Service

During the Society's early years, its mail came to a box at Washington's Twentieth Street Post Office. There I would pick it up on my lunch hour and take it home, where I would open the envelopes and try to supply the sender with whatever was requested. Checks for membership would be delivered to Peter Zuckerman at our next Board of Directors meeting. He would deposit

Arthur C. Clarke (center), the famed science and science-fiction writer, is welcomed at a Society meeting by Society President Edward Cornish (left) and Michael Michaelis, a long-time member of the Society's Board and Council. Clarke, a member of the Society's International Council, is now Sir Arthur Clarke, having been knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

Famed European author and futurist Robert Jungk visits the Society's headquarters in 1970 when it was located on the back porch of Edward and Sally Cornish's home in Bethesda, Maryland. The Society's headquarters remained on this back porch until 1972, when operations were relocated to a small business building in Bethesda.

the checks in the bank and pay our suppliers—whenever there was enough in our account to meet their demands.

Printers' trucks made deliveries of THE FUTURIST to the back door of my home, and I would store the copies wherever I could find space. To prepare mailings of THE FUTURIST to our members, my wife, Sally, would organize work parties that might consist of neighbors, Society members, and our children. One amusing incident I recall from this period was an envelope-stuffing contest between our four-year-old son, Blake, and Joseph F. Coates, a bearded chemist who was then working for the Defense Intelligence Agency. (I forget who won the contest.)

As membership continued to grow, addressing and mailing copies of THE FUTURIST to members became increasingly time-consuming. So I was overjoyed, early in 1967, to get an enthusiastic letter from a woman named Juanita Smith, who worked as a secretary for a psychiatrist only a block or two from my own office in downtown Washington. She asked if she could be of help to us. Could she ever!

I immediately arranged to lunch with her and found her very well organized and public spirited. Her job allowed her considerable free time, and she said she would be happy to help with the Society's paperwork. I eagerly accepted her offer, and she became the Society's first Membership Secretary. Juanita's task was to process membership applications and type mailing labels for THE FUTURIST, greatly reducing the burden on Sally and me.

Sally Cornish, the first managing editor of THE FUTURIST, supervised the Society's staff of volunteers and part-time workers who worked on the Cornishes' back porch during the Society's early years. Highly sociable, Sally Cornish took a special interest in the Society's chapters and conferences.

Juanita Smith soon moved to a new job working for the American Freedom from Hunger Foundation in the Matomic Building on H Street, where the Atomic Energy Commission was located. Juanita's boss spent most of his time on the telephone trying to raise money, leaving Juanita largely free to work for the Society.

Meanwhile, I decided to experiment with selling books about the future, such as Arthur C. Clarke's *Profiles of the Future* (1962), one of the best books I had read. So I ordered copies from the publisher and began offering them for sale through THE FUTURIST. Soon we were getting so many orders for Arthur's book (as well as others) that book sales became a growing part of the Society's operations. Since volunteers were doing the work, the book sales helped greatly to defray the cost of producing THE FUTURIST.

We gradually increased the number of books we offered for sale, and to help handle the orders, Juanita volunteered her husband, Walter Smith, a 77-year-old Englishman with an elegant white beard. The Smiths lived next to the post office, and Walter was retired, so he could provide extraordinarily swift service for Society members ordering books. As soon as an order was received, Walter would select the books, wrap them up, and take them immediately to the post office. As a result, our members got quicker service than any profit-making operation could provide, so more and more members began ordering books from the Society. One of our best customers turned out to be Arthur Clarke himself.

Back-Porch Operations

During 1967 and 1968, the Society operated almost entirely with volunteers, but the increase in membership created more clerical work than even dedicated volunteers like Juanita Smith could manage. To make matters worse, Juanita was moving to a new job that

The World Future Society's Advisory Council meets with Society officers on December 1, 1967, in a private room at the Cosmos Club. Starting at far left are: Arthur Waskow, Institute of Policy Studies; Henry David, National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council; Michael Michaelis, Arthur D. Little Inc.; John Dixon, Xerox Corporation; Harvey Perloff, Resources for the Future; Peter Zuckerman, the Society's treasurer; Edward Cornish, the Society's president; and James Kunen, Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation.

would allow her little if any time for volunteer work.

So we faced a new crisis. Peter Zuckerman found a partial solution by locating a reliable computer service bureau that could process the Society's records and print out mailing labels, thus greatly reducing the need for human labor. But computerization alone would not be enough: The Society also needed more volunteers and a place for them to work. The only solution seemed to be to move the operations to the back porch of my home. (Sally and I had been using our back porch as a playroom for our three sons, but they were using it less as they grew older.)

Sally found a few neighbors willing to help occasionally, but accommodating the special needs of the volunteers became an increasing burden, which fell mainly on Sally. The very nice woman who took over the Society's book service was half blind, so Sally had to drive to her home to get her and then drive her back after she finished packing books for shipment to our members. Another problem was that volunteers who were mothers would often bring their children, who tended to wander about our house getting into things. There were even infants who might have to be held while the volunteer was typing labels for us.

We finally decided we simply had to have at least one dependable employee to keep our operations on track, so we hired Ellen Dudley, a banker's wife who lived nearby, to work one day a week at our house. Ellen thus became the Society's first paid employee. As the workload continued to grow, more neighborhood women worked part time on our back porch, such as Lucille Beard, wife of a U.S. Army colonel then fighting in Vietnam, and Joanne Albrecht, whose husband was an electrician. When summer came, the part-timers demanded air conditioning, so Joanne got her husband to install it. (Sally and I had never felt we could afford it.)

As the Society's membership continued to grow, so did the small staff of part-timers and volunteers on our back porch. In 1969, we hired another neighbor, Joan McAlear, as our first full-time employee. Joan lived just down the street from us and was willing to let us use her garage for storing Society books when we no longer had room for them in our house.

Our back porch remained the Society's headquarters until 1972, six years after the Society was founded. By that time, the situation at our house had become totally intolerable, and my long-suffering wife's patience was completely exhausted. Luckily, Peter Zuckerman located some very low-cost office space over a used-clothing store in a downscale area of Bethesda, Maryland. Our new quarters were hardly pretentious, but they met our basic needs. We remained there until 1992, when we moved into a more modern building a block away.

Recruiting Advisors

The Society's initial Board of Directors consisted simply of Charles Williams, Peter Zuckerman, and myself. We held our first "official" Board meeting on November 2, 1966. I was authorized to open a bank account, and Zuckerman and I were authorized to draw checks on it.

At a later Board meeting, Williams proposed and the Board agreed to hold an Advisory Council meeting early in 1967. Our idea was to reach out to others interested in the future in the hope of getting guidance and also building relationships in the Washington community and elsewhere. Williams would try to recruit his boss, Henry David, to be the Council's chairman.

The Advisory Council held its first meeting on February 2, 1967, in a private room at the Cosmos Club, a Washington institution with many famous members. I was delighted to have the meeting there since I was very anxious for our just-born Society to start earning a good reputation among serious people. At the time, most people couldn't imagine that futurists could be anything other than astrologers or science-fiction fans. (I myself would have had such a view only a few years earlier.)

Henry David, who presided at the Council's first meeting, now held a new post as executive secretary of the National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council's division of behavioral sciences. Others at the meeting included Harvey Perloff, an economist with Resources for the Future; James Kunen, president of the Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation; Michael Michaelis, manager of the Washington office of Arthur D. Little Inc., a prominent research firm; Arthur Waskow, a historian at the Institute for Policy Studies; and John Dixon, my oldest friend, who was then working for the Xerox Corporation after a long association with comprehensive designer Buckminster Fuller.

The Council members were very sympathetic to our enterprise and offered many helpful ideas, but one

thing disturbed me: Henry David seemed too authoritarian and argued that the Society should take a positive stance and propose desirable futures. I was convinced that the Society could play a far more constructive role if it were officially neutral on political, social, and ideological issues. Our proper role, as I saw it, was to be a neutral clearinghouse for forecasts and ideas about the future, as well as a nonpartisan forum where people with conflicting perspectives could freely share their views and learn from each other without having to follow a "party line." There were plenty of partisan groups promoting this or that specific cause; what was needed, in my view, was an organization that would be above the fray.

The Advisory Council held only one more meeting—a supper gathering at an ordinary restaurant. The main topic was how best to handle two different sorts of members—"professional futurists" and "interested others." In the end the consensus seemed to be that the Society should provide special services for members willing to pay for them but require no special credentials for membership in the Society. This view was in line with the compromise our Organizing Committee had already worked out: There would be a Supplemental Program for people who wanted to receive scholarly or technical papers dealing with the future.

The Supplemental Program later became largely Charles Williams's responsibility. He invited scholars to submit papers for possible distribution to the Program's participants. Many of his invitees complied, and the program proved enormously popular with subscribers.

However, duplicating and distributing the papers was enormously time-consuming due to the backward state of the office technology at the time. Most of the papers—as well as the *World Future Society Bulletin*—had to be typed, corrected, mimeographed, collated, and stapled. This task fell largely to Williams's wife, Yvonne, and their son Wesley. Once a paper had been mimeographed, the stacks of copies of each page were placed on a Ping-Pong table in the Williams's basement, and neighborhood women would walk around the table, individually assembling each copy of each paper. Back in those days (the late 1960s), computers and photocopying machines were still primitive and far too expensive for ordinary folk, and the Internet had not yet appeared. Only the devotion of the Williams family enabled the Program to succeed.

Recruiting Board Members

Having only three of us on the Society's Board of Directors did not seem enough, so Williams, Zuckerman, and I agreed that we should expand the Board.

I had gotten to know Rowan Wakefield, who was then head of the State University of New York's Washington office. Wakefield had had a lot of practical experience with boards, and his office was on the next block from my own, so he and I could easily meet and discuss the Society's problems. I thought Wakefield would be a useful Board member and invited him to meet with us. We later elected him as our first non-officer Board member.

The successful recruitment of our second Board member was thanks to Sally's networking skills—one of my wife's many contributions to the Society. She had volunteered to run a table for the Society during a meeting of humanistic psychologists at the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington. The hotel allowed her to have a table in the main corridor—a prime spot for catching the eye of people passing through the hotel's lobby between Connecticut Avenue and Seventeenth Street. For instance, one of the passersby who got interested in the Society was Arthur Shostak, a sociology professor at the Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University) in Philadelphia. When I went to the hotel to see how Sally and her exhibit were faring, Art was sitting on a table in the Mayflower lobby reading Society literature, and so began our long association. Art soon became the mainstay of the Society's Philadelphia chapter.

Another interested passerby happened to be Carl H. Madden, chief economist of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, whose very imposing building was located only a few blocks away. Madden had left the hotel by the time I arrived, but I was very excited that someone prominent in the business community was interested in the Society, and I soon got to know him.

Madden proved to be a tall, heavy-set man with a gentle, good-humored manner. A former dean of business at Lehigh University, he was not only keenly interested in the Society, but also exceptionally thoughtful, well connected, open minded, and judicious—just the sort of person we needed to help us make wise decisions. Rowan Wakefield already knew him, and our new four-member Board quickly approved our recruiting him as a Board member.

We also agreed to invite Michael Michaelis and Barbara Marx Hubbard to be Board members. We had found Mike to be a very helpful member of the Society's Advisory Council, and he was well connected with people in government, business, and academia. I was naturally enthusiastic about Barbara as a Board member—and so were the other members of the Board who had met her—so she, too, was invited to join.

Orville L. Freeman, U.S. secretary of agriculture under presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, joined the Society's Board in 1969.

By this time, I was very pleased at our success in getting Board members. I only recall one turn-down—Harvey Perloff, a member of Daniel Bell's Commission on the Year 2000, felt he was already overworked—so I raised my sights. It would be wonderful if we could recruit some people who were not merely distinguished, but really prominent in the American or, better, the world community.

My friend Lester R. Brown was a close associate of Orville L. Freeman, a former governor of Minnesota who had become U.S. secretary of agriculture under presidents Kennedy

French futurist Bertrand de Jouvenel reads the first issue of THE FUTURIST shortly after its publication in 1967. THE FUTURIST then was a newsletter.

and Johnson. I also knew that, after the 1968 election, Freeman had become president of EDP Technologies, the firm that Peter Zuckerman worked for. That gave us two connections to Freeman.

Could we—dare we—invite Freeman to be a Board member? We decided it was worth a try. Brown had become a member of the Society, so I could use him as a reference in soliciting a meeting with Freeman.

Freeman received me very kindly, and we discussed the Society. I asked him if he would be willing to serve on our Board of Directors.

"Let me think about it," Freeman responded.

About two weeks later I got a letter from him saying he was willing to join our Board. I was overjoyed.

This success got me thinking that maybe—just maybe—we could also recruit Glenn Seaborg, the Nobel Prize–winning chemist who was chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. His presence on our Board would clearly establish the Society's legitimacy in the scientific community.

With the help of Seaborg's speechwriter, Stanley Schneider, I had gotten Seaborg to address an early meeting of our Society's Washington members. So I appealed to Schneider for help in getting Seaborg to become a director.

Seaborg agreed to see me, and Schneider led me to his office. Seaborg listened very sympathetically while I discussed what we were doing to build the Society, and he agreed to become a director.

I left his office in a state of great joy and excitement, but I also was pondering two things Seaborg said that surprised me: Near the end of our conversation I asked him if he had any advice for us. Since he was new to the Society, I didn't expect him to say much in response to my question, but he leaned forward and said, very emphatically, "Keep up the editorial quality in the publication (i.e., THE FUTURIST)."

I was surprised at the seriousness with which he offered this advice, but as I thought it over, I decided that Seaborg was quite right: Editorial quality would be critical to our success, so we had to do all we could to maintain it.

The second comment that surprised me came earlier after I described how we had gone about establishing the Society. He said simply, "That shows real dedication."

Later I decided that Seaborg was quite right about that, too: Dedication can make up for a lot of deficiencies. Those of us who were trying to build the Society were dedicated to our task, and that might make up for the fact that we had no money, no real office, no official backing, nothing much at all but ourselves and our dedication.

Working for the White House

By 1969, the Society's revenues had increased to the point where they covered its costs, more or less, so that I no longer had to make up shortfalls out of my own pocket. But my personal life was getting totally out of control due to the ever-growing workload imposed by the Society and THE FUTURIST. I was still desperately trying to hang on to my paid job, and I knew that a choice had to be made. Finally, in the spring of 1969, I made it: I quit my paid job and began working full time for the World Future Society, hoping that somehow I could survive financially until the Society could afford to pay me something.

Quitting my paid job immediately relieved the day-to-day stress, but it also meant that I was living on my savings, which were meager indeed. They would soon run out and, with a wife and three children, I would be forced to give up my work for the Society. I did not know of anyone who would be willing and able to take on the work I was doing without compensation. That meant the Society would likely collapse—or, at best, survive only as a shadow of what we had envisioned.

In the months that followed, my savings steadily dwindled. By early 1970, I thought I would have to surrender to economics and get a paying job. Then, to my complete surprise, Charles Williams got me a temporary job at the White House.

Williams had left the National Science Foundation to become staff director of the White House's new National Goals Research Staff. President Richard Nixon had established the Goals Staff on the recommendation of an advisor, Daniel P. Moynihan, who wanted the United States to become more future-oriented in its public policies. Nixon's former law partner, Leonard Garment, became the director of the Goals Staff, and Raymond Bauer, a Harvard political scientist, was engaged as a consultant to mastermind the preparation of the group's initial "report to the Nation."

I was duly sworn in as a U.S. government employee and given a private office in the Goals Staff's suite in the New Executive Office Building, located close to the Executive Mansion and connected to it by a tunnel.

I came in late on the project and spent only two

months working for the Goals Staff—mainly writing a section of the report entitled "Basic Natural Science"—but my government salary brought some financial relief during a time when I did not have any other source of income. In addition, I got an ego-boost every time a secretary made a telephone call for me: Instead of being just an unemployed journalist I had suddenly become "Mr. Cornish of the White House." I could imagine people jumping up and saluting whenever I telephoned!

Yet, oddly, during my two months working for the White House, what impressed me most was the weakness of the institution. Americans really do live in a democracy, which means that the White House functions at the whim of its boss, the American People. If they care little about anything other than their immediate self-interests, it's almost impossible for the White House to care about the long-term welfare of the nation, let alone the world. So U.S. presidents and their staffs become obsessed with trying to discern what "the people" want between now and the next election rather than what might really be in the people's long-term interest.

Sterling Tucker, head of the Greater Washington Urban League, answers questions after addressing World Future Society members in Washington, D.C., about 1968. Tucker later became the first elected chairman of Washington's city council. Also shown are Society members Marlene Futterman of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and educator Vergil Rogers.

From conversations with my Goals Staff colleagues, I learned that the Goals Staff was generally distrusted by the political leadership at the White House. The scuttlebutt was that Ken Khachigian, a Republican speechwriter, had been sent over to "Republicanize" the report. Khachigian's office was right next to mine; he seemed like a nice fellow, and I never had any trouble with him. Williams told me, years later, that Khachigian was an exemplary employee and never tried to bias the report for political purposes. Still, the fact was that I had received a warning to watch my step politically.

I mention this because dispassionate thinking about the future is not easy in a highly politicized environment. So ever since then, I have wondered how a nation's leaders can get the benefit of nonpartisan analyses of world problems and potential solutions—as well as the latest analyses of public opinion—so that presidents can make wise decisions that will lead to peaceful long-term progress and not just provide immediate political benefits.

The Goals Staff report, entitled *Toward Balanced Growth: Quantity with Quality,* was duly published, but it had, at best, lukewarm support from the White House and attracted little attention. After all, 1970 was an election year.

Planning a Conference

By 1969, the Washington, D.C., area members of the Society began discussing the idea of holding a large conference on the future. I had not encouraged them in any way to think about such a conference and worried that it might be premature. I doubted that the Society had the financial and institutional strength to take such a risk.

Still, I was impressed by one member of the group, John Gerba, who was willing to chair the conference. Gerba seemed to have the dedication (Seaborg's word) to make it really happen, and eventually I gave the project my blessing.

Gerba, who was a city planner with the U.S. Department of Commerce and Transportation, became the conference chairman, and Wilson Sayers of the American Forest Institute became its treasurer.

Since I was totally ignorant about arranging conferences and so much would be at stake, I decided we had better get professional help for the project—even if we couldn't afford it. So I signed a contract with Courtesy Associates, a Washington firm, to help with hotel negotiations, logistics, registrations, and other practical matters. Planning the program and inviting speakers would begin in earnest in 1970, and the conference would be held in 1971. But would anybody come? Once again, I was in a state of great excitement and great apprehension.

Next: The World Future Society's first major conference, growth as an organization, and reflections on the Society's potential role in promoting world peace. □

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