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Patrons of the Human Experience: A History of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1941-2016


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Abstract

The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research has played a critical but little-understood role in the development of the social and biological sciences after 1941. For anthropology particularly, its programs have often helped redefine scholarly priorities and research trajectories. Its grants to doctoral students have functioned as an important early sign of scholarly legitimacy, a mark of belonging to the profession. The foundation's history also reflects general transformations in scientific patronage as new landscapes of federal, military, and private funding re-configured opportunities in the social sciences. In this account we track the evolution of the foundation in tandem with the evolution of anthropology during a period of dramatic change after 1941, looking at the Second World War context from which the foundation emerged and the ideas and experiences of those who played a key role in this history. We examine the long-term influence of a philanthropic foundation on the postwar emergence of an internationally oriented anthropology from a tiny, almost clubby discipline with a few key institutions and leaders to a major academic and scientific enterprise with sometimes revolutionary ideas about evolution, human biology, race, culture, power, gender, and social order.

Disciplines

Anthropology | History of Science, Technology, and Medicine

Patrons of the Human Experience

A History of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1941–2016

by Susan Lindee and Joanna Radin

The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research has played a critical but little-understood role in the development of the social and biological sciences since 1941. For anthropology particularly, its programs have often helped redefine scholarly priorities and research trajectories. Its grants to doctoral students have functioned as an important early sign of scholarly legitimacy, a mark of belonging to the profession. The foundation's history also reflects general transformations in scientific patronage as new landscapes of federal, military, and private funding re-configured opportunities in the social sciences. In this account we track the evolution of the foundation in tandem with the evolution of anthropology during a period of dramatic change after 1941, looking at the Second World War context from which the foundation emerged and the ideas and experiences of those who played a key role in this history. We examine the long-term influence of a philanthropic foundation on the postwar emergence of an internationally oriented anthropology from a tiny, almost clubby discipline with a few key institutions and leaders to a major academic and scientific enterprise with sometimes revolutionary ideas about evolution, human biology, race, culture, power, gender, and social order.

An international symposium of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (WGF) is often remembered by participants as a rare pleasure. There are “unforgettable days” of discussion and debate producing “glorious new impressions,”¹ with elegant meals in beautiful settings, evening performances by local musicians and dancers, and long talks around the pool or in the gardens. In 1964, population geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky called his second invitation to the foundation's Austrian castle Burg Wartenstein “irresistible.”² After the castle was sold in 1981, conferences were held elsewhere, but the “Old World” charm of the symposium format endured. In the “dramatic, yet comfortable” setting of Fez, one participant wrote, “I for one felt wanted, and I was able to relax and to attend to intellectual matters fully, without being burdened by other concerns.”³ Another expressed grief at the end of a conference, when “the summerly ‘fairytale of science’ is over.”⁴

From their beginnings in the 1950s through the present, WGF's international symposium programs have inspired scholars to

send gushing letters of gratitude, admiration, and indebtedness. An invitation to a Wenner-Gren symposium is still a delightful thing to receive. It is an elegant invitation to join the clan and the party. Now sent via e-mail, the formal letter from the foundation's president (currently Leslie Aiello) explains a set of non-negotiable rules: there are to be no outsiders (including spouses or family), all papers are to be read before arrival, and there will be significant unstructured time for informal encounters. While it is happening, a Wenner-Gren international symposium can seem like an academic fantasy, the best graduate seminar anyone ever pulled together. And its long-term results, in

1. Alberto Carlo Blanc, Rome, to Paul Fejos, August 26 1958, and Schultz to Fejos, August 25, 1958, in “Burg Wartenstein Symposium #1 Organizer Sol Tax, Current Anthropology, August 18–23, 1958,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

2. Theodosius Dobzhansky to Lita Binns Fejos, January 27, 1964, in “Spuhler, J.N. Behavioral Consequences of Genetic Differences in Man, September 16–26, 1964,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

3. Handelman to Lita Osmundsen, February 19, 1986, untitled folder, Box #DoR-6, WGF.

4. “Though certainly you have received hundreds of grateful letters already after the 27 Wartenstein conferences, let me express myself nonetheless my lasting indebtedness to Wenner-Gren Foundation.” Freidrich Keiter, Hamburg, Gerichtsanthropologisches Laboratorium, to Lita Binns Fejos, October 14, 1964, in “Spuhler, J.N.—Behavioral Consequences of Genetic Differences in Man, September 16–26, 1964,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

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connections forged, theories meshed, and pathbreaking publications, can transform careers, ideas, and fields.

The international symposium is the trademark experience of a foundation that conjured these enticing practices out of complicated origins that bear no relationship to such lofty intellectual aspirations. If the American experience is one of self-fashioning (e.g., Howe 2009), Wenner-Gren is a deeply American foundation. Neither Swedish industrialist Axel Wenner-Gren, who provided \$2,362,500 in stock to create the foundation, initially known as the Viking Fund, in 1941 (primarily as a response to an Internal Revenue Service investigation of his United States operations), nor Hungarian filmmaker Paul Fejos, who became its first scientific director and later president, had any formal training in anthropology (fig. 1). Neither had ever been a PhD student or held a faculty position at a research university.⁵ Yet the Foundation they built with money, ideas, and carefully cultivated social networks has for 75 years played a critical role in the lives of scholars in many fields, most importantly in each of the subfields (social anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology) encompassed in the common, if disputed, understanding of anthropology as a “four-field” discipline in the United States (Hicks 2013; Kuklick 2008; Segal and Yanagisako 2005; Stocking 1988).

In this study of WGF in commemoration of its 75th anniversary, we begin the process of excavating and unpacking the history of an institution that has been critical to the development of a particular academic discipline: anthropology. We consider the evolution of the foundation in tandem with the evolution of anthropology during a period of dramatic change after 1941, looking at the Second World War context from which the foundation emerged and the ideas and experiences of those who played a key role in this history. These individuals include Wenner-Gren and Fejos but also Manhattan lawyer Richard Carley Hunt (personal lawyer to Wenner-Gren and the foundation’s first president), Stanford University professor of English John W. Dodds (a board member and friend to Fejos), University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax (who dreamed up, among other things, *Current Anthropology*), Yale anthropologist Cornelius Osgood (mentor to Paul Fejos), Shakespearean scholar Frank Wadsworth (who served on the board from 1977 until 2006),⁶ University of California Berkeley an-

5. Indeed, Axel Wenner-Gren seems to have ended his full-time, formal schooling at the age of 15, with his studies after that limited to occasional lecture courses and short educational programs. Fejos probably left school at an even younger age. Axel Wenner-Gren’s education is described in Ilja Luciak, “The Life of Axel Wenner-Gren: An Introduction,” paper presented at “Reality and Myth: A Symposium on Axel Wenner-Gren,” Stockholm, May 30–31, 2012 (Luciak 2012). Download the official conference booklet with conference papers at <http://blog.wennergren.org/2012/08/reality-and-myth-a-symposium-on-axel-wenner-gren/> (accessed August 7, 2016). On the clouded educational history of Paul Fejos, who claimed to have a medical degree for most of his life but probably did not, see “P. Fejos and L. B. Fejos Portraits,” Nemesk’ei Report, July 4, 1963, in Box #DoR-10, WGF.

6. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/nytimes/obituary.aspx?pid=159185786>.

thropologist Alfred Kroeber (who died on his way home from a Wenner-Gren symposium), and Lita Binns Fejos Osmundsen (who first encountered the organization as a student at Hunter College, pursued but never completed a PhD in anthropology at Columbia, and married Paul Fejos; she became director of research and later president of the foundation after Fejos died).

We consider the supper conferences, international symposia, and summer seminars, all of which were designed to push participants out of their academic comfort zones by resituating them in settings of Old World glamour at the foundation’s elegant New York brownstone and romantic Austrian castle; the distribution of small grants that have enabled anthropologists to take risks on new kinds of research; the creation of the journal, *Current Anthropology*; the Viking Medal and Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology; and the eventual sale of the brownstone and castle, both lost as the economic downturn of the 1970s threatened the endowment. Each of these particular facets of WGF serve as points of entry into broader questions about the role of philanthropic patronage in shaping anthropology in particular and the human sciences in general since the end of World War II.⁷

Historians of science have recently begun to acknowledge the unique features characterizing the increasing influence of the human sciences during the Cold War (Isaac 2007). They have also emphasized American institutions’ commitments to internationalism; investments in innovative techniques for accumulating, representing, and modeling data; and efforts to remake ideas about the state, society, the species, and the self (Erickson et al. 2013; Heyck and Kaiser 2010; Lemov 2005, 2015). WGF and its emphasis on anthropology as an international field of inquiry are exemplary of the global flows of knowledge, power, and wealth that emerged in the postwar period, with consequences for understandings of what it has meant to be human (Haraway 1988; Wax 2008b). This case study provides a fine-grained analysis of how a system of patronage for anthropology was constructed, maintained, and restructured over the course of the foundation’s 75-year history.

The forced resignation of WGF president Osmundsen in 1986 amid large-scale transformations in the conduct of American foundations and shifting economic policies marked the end of an era and the need to reimagine what the foundation’s role would be (Zunz 2011). Certain members of the board of trustees, whose expertise was overwhelmingly inclined toward money management, questioned whether or not the foundation’s focus should remain on anthropology. WGF ultimately renewed its commitment to anthropology after a period of tur-

7. Historians have long recognized patronage as a crucial feature of scientific practice, from Galileo to biotech (Biagioli 1993; Shapin 2008). The role of private philanthropic foundations, in particular, has been crucial for understanding shifts in the priorities and practices of the natural sciences, medicine, and public health. The Rockefeller Foundation alone has been the subject of many landmark studies, including Kohler (1991), Kay (1993), Cueto (1994), Birn (2006), and Palmer (2010).

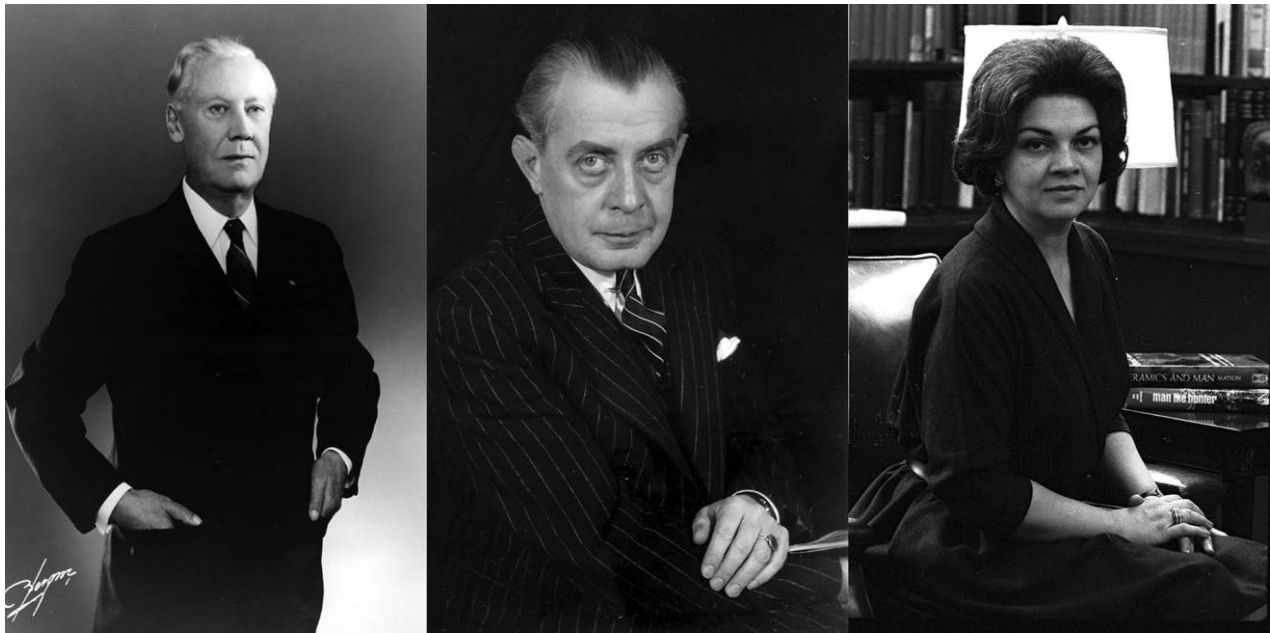


Figure 1. Axel Wenner-Gren, Paul Fejos, and Lita Binns Fejos Osmundsen (WGF archives). Osmundsen took over the foundation after Fejos's death in 1963 and ran the foundation for 23 years until 1986.

moil, and its intellectual and financial health today are largely due to the leadership of those who took over after the departure of the “original cast,” including Sydel Silverman, Richard Fox, and current (outgoing in 2017) president Aiello. The contemporary WGF remains an important source of financial and intellectual support for scholarship and training in anthropology, and many of its current policies and practices reflect the history we explore here.

In financial terms, WGF has not been the most important source of support for North American anthropological research. That honor, in the United States, belongs to the National Science Foundation.⁸ Yet WGF has leveraged its resources to strategically shape and build the discipline.⁹ It continues to support graduate students with grants that launch their research. For many anthropologists working today in the United States, their first fieldwork as PhD students—when they felt they knew very little—was supported by a Wenner-Gren grant. To be awarded a Wenner-Gren grant is to be officially recognized as a legitimate member of the clan. It is an important

8. The NSF, itself a postwar creation, has been extraordinarily influential in supporting the natural sciences in the United States (Appel 2000; Engerman 2010).

9. Along similar lines, although foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation wielded much greater fortunes than WGF, the influence of such philanthropies went further than money. The Rockefeller Foundation's effectiveness “lay in creating and promoting new institutional mechanisms . . . through an extensive system of grants and fellowships” (Kay 1997). The Rockefeller Foundation's network permeated academia itself. The same is true for WGF's influence on anthropology.

line on a CV. In its early years, WGF could support many or most of those who applied. As the discipline has grown in size, competition for these field grants, which are subject to strict peer review, has become more intense, and only about 8%–15% of applicants today can expect to be funded. In addition to access to precious funds, these awards confer on a fledgling anthropologist professional legitimacy and authority for that first field research as they have for generations of anthropologists, and this has given the foundation a special place in the discipline's identity—it is, in the words of one anthropologist, “our foundation.”

At what might be considered the other end of the funding bell curve, WGF's continuing International Symposium Program (now called the Wenner-Gren Symposium Program) engages with established leaders in the field (fig. 2). These elite meetings are by invitation only, and those invited are generally prominent scholars or promising up-and-coming junior scholars from around the world. Bringing together carefully chosen individuals, WGF symposia have long helped navigate shifting theories of culture and personality, evolution, race, primate behavior, the archeological past, or language development and use, among other topics. Through the symposium series sponsored by WGF, one can track the turn to the “new physical anthropology,” molecular genetics, writing culture, postcolonial theory, feminist theory, studying up, and complex ethical debates about the study of “primitive” populations and indigenous rights. Sometimes the meetings have been contentious clashes between different modes of thought and different approaches. Sometimes they have fizzled. And sometimes they have activated a deep and influential consen-



Figure 2. Burg Wartenstein symposium 12, “Economics and Anthropology: Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies,” organized by Raymond Firth and Bert F. Hoselitz and held August 22–28, 1960. Seated on the ground (left to right): Sidney Mintz, F. B. Bailey, Basil Yamey, Sol Tax, Michael Swift; back row (left to right): Lorraine Lancaster, Eric de Dampierre, Chie Nakane, Cyril Belshaw, Fredrik Barth, Bert Hoselitz, Zofia Szyfelbejn, Joan Thirsk, Rudolf Bicanic, Henri Mendras, A. G. Frank, Raymond Firth (WGF archives).

sus. “Every now and then,” Osmundsen told a colleague in 1972, “we have a conference that produces a by-product of almost magic communication.”¹⁰

Indeed, many of the Wenner-Gren international symposia are seen as disciplinary turning points. Those organizing and

participating in the international symposia have included now iconic thinkers in anthropology and other fields over the last 75 years: Gregory Bateson, Eric Wolf, Mary Douglas, Sarah Hrdy, Laura Nader, Julian Pitt-Rivers, L. S. B. Leakey, Alfred Kroeber, Robert H. Lowie, Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, Margaret Mead, Raymond Dart, Alfred Irving Hallowell, Sherwood Washburn, Robert Redfield, Sir Julian Huxley, F. Clark Howell, and many more. In one area alone, human evolution, the symposium series helped define the field, leading to classic publications including *The Social Life of Early Man* (Wash-

10. Osmundsen to Roger D. Abrahams, July 12, 1972, in “Ardrey to Douglas Committee on Afro-American Societies and Cultures,” Box #DoR-3, WGF.

burn 1962), *African Ecology and Human Evolution* (Howell and Bouliere 1963), *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1968), and *The Great Apes* (Hamburg and McCown 1979). Publications of landmark symposia in other subfields demonstrate the breadth of the foundation's intellectual commitments, such as *From 15,000 BC to the Threshold of Urban Civilization* (Braidwood and Willey 1962), *Andean Ecology and Civilization* (Masuda, Shimada, and Morris 1985), *Sepik Heritage* (Lutkehaus et al. 1990), and *Conceiving the New World Order* (Ginsburg and Reiter 1995).

Yet despite the centrality of the foundation to the discipline of anthropology and to social science in general, many anthropologists (and even historians) seem to know little about its history. In a 1978 advisory council meeting, primatologist Irvin DeVore commented that "to most anthropologists the WGF works in mysterious ways."¹¹ Our work elucidates some of the historical forces shaping those "mysterious ways."

The foundation has a strangely operatic past and not only because it played a role in bringing an anthropological opera, *Tamu Tamu*, to the stage in Chicago in 1973 (Hixon 2000: 263–267; Stocking 2000:171–264, esp. 209–213). Until the era of institutional reform inaugurated by Silverman's leadership, the foundation's social networks hummed with personal and professional crises—with mysteries, affairs, political intrigue, profound scholarly disagreements, and even a murder case, when the editor of the WGF-sponsored journal *Current Anthropology* was imprisoned as a suspect in the murder of his wife in Switzerland (he continued to edit the journal while jailed for more than a year).¹² Axel Wenner-Gren, who was blacklisted as a Nazi sympathizer in 1942, was the subject of unsubstantiated rumors that he "shared a lover with John F. Kennedy 2 decades before J.F.K. assumed the US presidency, sold Fidel Castro the *Granma*, the iconic boat of the Cuban revolution, and hid the Nazi gold treasure in South America" (Luciak 2012). Paul Fejos had a first career in Hollywood as a filmmaker—his *The Last Moment* (1928), about a suicide victim recalling his life, is still considered one of the great early experimental films.¹³ He also carried out grueling fieldwork (with no prior training) as an archeologist and ethnographic filmmaker in Madagascar, Peru, Thailand, and other challenging places around the world (De Brigard 1995).

11. This quote is drawn from a summary of notes written down May 5, 1978, after the April 29, 1978, meeting of the trustees with the ad hoc advisory council, by Richard B. Hunt, then trustee and treasurer of WGF. In Advisory Council 1977–1980, Box BoT #10, WGF.

12. Cyril Belshaw managed to continue his editing work while imprisoned in Switzerland on charges of murdering his wife. The foundation's efforts to arrange bail were unsuccessful. Eventually he was found not guilty "by reason of doubt." The story of the resulting scandal is recounted in Godfrey (1981).

13. Mordaunt Hall, "A Guy Maupassant of Film: Interesting Career of Paul Fejos, Bacteriologist, Who Has Produced Weird but Brilliant Screen Study," *New York Times*, February 26, 1928. (Fejos told one of his biographers that he considered suicide twice.)

Fejos's fifth wife, Lolita Binns Fejos Osmundsen, was identified as "Negro" in the 1930 census records, but by the 1950s she occupied a social identity within the foundation and the anthropological profession as white. She became the director of research of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, which was a major scholarly foundation in New York City in 1963—a stature presumably facilitated by her ability to "pass."¹⁴ With its Austrian castle, Burg Wartenstein (fig. 3), the Manhattan brownstone (more properly, mansion) on 71st Street, the high-end paleontological casts that were sold in burgundy velvet bags, and the glittering circles of elite scholars who participated in the foundation's programs, the history of WGF could almost be a television miniseries starring some of the most profound thinkers of the twentieth century.

These details are much more than "quirks," and they are crucial to understanding how power over knowledge can work when supported outside of formal channels of either state or corporate power. Historian Waldemar A. Nielson (1989) has described philanthropy as a "third" sector of American public life that remained relatively independent of oversight or accountability before the 1980s. The history presented here is a detailed case study of the long-term influence of a philanthropic foundation's devotion to a particular domain of knowledge.¹⁵ In the networks that WGF built and maintained, it becomes possible to appreciate previously unexamined features of the emergence of an internationally oriented anthropology after 1941 from a tiny, almost clubby discipline with a few key institutions and leaders to a major academic and scientific enterprise with sometimes revolutionary ideas about evolution, human biology, race, culture, power, gender, and social order. WGF played a crucial role in the transformation of a relatively provincial form of American anthropology into a cosmopolitan enterprise at a time of American imperial ascendancy.

The fact that WGF's endowment came from a wealthy entrepreneur whose primary interest was in making money is consistent with the origins of America's great foundations in general (Nielson 1989; Parmar 2012). Nielson (1989) argues that many of the industrialists and entrepreneurs who have come to endow the great philanthropies of the United States have often found themselves faced with crises of meaning; they do not know what they believe in, so they give in order to allay their conscience. He invokes Thorstein Veblen to suggest that, in this view, those who give philanthropically may be engaging in the most conspicuous form of consumption of all. This certainly seems to have been the case for Axel Wenner-Gren.

14. On the history of passing, see Borstelmann (2009).

15. Here we are inspired by the work of Ian Hacking and his attention to the "looping effects" through which new modes of existence—in this case the postwar academic idea of the human—are created in the exchange between social and scientific ideas (Hacking 1986). The idea that social and technical orders are coproduced (Jasanoff 2004) has also been examined in a range of scenarios.



Figure 3. Burg Wartenstein castle, located 90 km southwest of Vienna, near Raach am Hochgebirge, Semmering, Austria (WGF archives).

That Axel Wenner-Gren was a Swede persuaded by a Hungarian to create a means of studying the cultures of the Americas is also continuous with the deeper history of anthropology's association with facilitating colonial control and imperial trade networks (Anderson 2003, 2006; Kuklick 1991, 2008, 2010; Stocking, 1987). The academic practices WGF sponsored—journals, supper conferences, symposia, meetings, and workshops—were consistent with Cold War models of sociality, the personal character and collegiality that social scientists drew on as idealized models for society in general, at a moment of geopolitical uncertain risk and anxiety. As Cohen-Cole (2009) suggests, one way Cold War social critics and policy makers approached these challenges was through the cultivation of a science of individual character in such a way that it “crystallized a form of the exemplary self that would inoculate America against the dangers of mass society” (219). In the networks associated with WGF, one can see how and why individuals invested in anthropology as a scholarly enterprise, the loyalties they brought to the labor, and the practical problems of negotiation and compromise that shaped their interactions.

The symposium program alone presents a somewhat wild and bracing tour of the intellectual and social history of anthropology: who was invited, who showed up, who fought with whom and what they fought about, over cocktails or

around the table (and for every conference, even some that were canceled, the paper trail has been splendidly preserved). The list of those not invited (or choosing to decline the invitation) can be intriguing as well. Inclusion and exclusion were everyday matters in the history of WGF. The foundation made all such decisions based on the priorities and commitments of anthropologists who were organizing events and responding to proposals, and its archives preserve the decision-making process in all its dimensions in vivid detail.

Indeed, we do not claim that WGF unilaterally caused the shifting fortunes, practices, and orientations of anthropology after 1941. Rather, it was a key node in a network within which those fortunes can be seen, tracked, and understood. Almost every major issue in anthropology of the last 75 years is entangled with the story we explore here. Some decisions and policies of WGF had consequences for the discipline of anthropology, and many anthropologists gave the foundation a great deal of credit for shaping the field, but WGF mirrored the discipline and made decisions and choices that drew on the views of leading academic anthropologists.

By comparison, the Rockefeller Foundation's decision to commit significant resources to Malinowski's social anthropology (an approach that challenged then popular ideas about “diffusionism”) in Britain in the interwar period was a relatively draconian extension of anthropological ideas into the realm of state power. Rockefeller officials from 1930 to 1940 had a stake in the conservation of stable social orders and chose to support anthropological agendas that were scientifically “practical” and “functional,” thereby helping to solve problems of colonial control, particularly in Africa (Fisher 1986; Salamone 2000). The approach of WGF was radically different. In part because it was simply not as well endowed as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Ford, Mellon, or the like, it could not function as an autonomous force—an “outside” foundation with its own agenda to which anthropologists needed to conform in order to receive funding. Yet from the beginning, WGF sought to enable anthropologists to determine their relationships to the field and to society more broadly. The relevance of WGF derived from its status as an embedded resource that reflected rather than determined anthropology's tensions, priorities, blind spots, and concerns.

The fact that historians have not systematically examined WGF is not necessarily an indication of its significance.¹⁶ We interpret this lack of attention to the fact that the history of postwar anthropology remains understudied. This is, to a certain extent, a reflection of historiographic trends; the two leading historians of anthropology of the last generation, George Stocking and Henrika Kuklick, wrote extensively in their lifetimes about methods and theories, fieldwork, ideas, and practices of anthropology. Yet both wrote less about the post-1945

16. For the post-1945 period, theory and practice—including funding sources—in psychology and sociology have been studied much more systematically. See, e.g., Herman (1995) and Solovey and Cravens (2012).

period, and Kuklick focused on anthropology in Britain (Kuklick 1991, 1996, 2008, 2010; Stocking 1966, 1968, 1985, 1987).

The scholarship on postwar anthropology produced by historians of science (including our own work) over the last decade or so has furthermore emphasized the development of physical and biological anthropology rather than the development of four-field anthropology as a whole. Physical anthropology attracted historical attention because of relationships to race theory and connections to public health, nationalism, epidemiology, blood groups, eugenics, genetics, and the rise of molecular biology (Anderson 2003; Braun and Hammonds 2008; Duster 2003; Fabian 2010; Gannett 2001; Goodman, Heath, and Lindee 2003; Kevles 1986; Lindee and Santos 2012; Lipphardt 2010; Marks 1995, 2002; Paul 1995; Radin 2013; Reardon 2005; Schneider 1996; Sommer 2010; Stepan 1982; Wailoo, Nelson, and Lee 2012). In quantitative terms, however, the biologically oriented subfields are a minority. In recent decades, only about 10% of anthropology PhDs are awarded annually in biological anthropology. Meanwhile, historians who work on the social sciences broadly conceived often mention anthropology as one of the most visible social sciences in the postwar period but without directly engaging with its ideas, theories, key leaders, funding sources, or foundation support (Dayé 2014).

Anthropologists themselves have written about the history of WGF and its key actors, signaling their sense of the foundation's role and influence. We have drawn on much of that work as we reconstruct this story. The most important and compelling participant history of WGF is Sydel Silverman's thoughtful 2002 account of the international symposium program, *The Beast on the Table: Conferencing with Anthropologists*.¹⁷ Silverman deftly captures the logic of the symposium format, which privileged small groups (20 or so) insulated from distractions from the outside world during meetings up to 10 days long. She explores how discussions unfolded during the symposia that she oversaw as president of WGF (1987–2000) and suggests that anthropology's continued relevance as a discipline is due to its ability to pose “questions about the nature of our species—cosmic questions that philosophers and many others speculate about but that anthropology can inquire into empirically” (Silverman 2002:225). Silverman's published work and her discussions with us have shaped our interpretations of the symposium program.

In addition, most of the key players in our story have been the focus of some kind of biographical study or extended interview, particularly Fejos and Osmundsen but also Tax, Aiello, Silverman, Fox, Kroeber, and Wenner-Gren. Published profiles, obituaries, personal essays, and work by practicing anthropologists (as well as a spectacularly rich archival collection held by WGF) have been invaluable. But there is nothing published that attempts the synthetic historical portrait of the foundation that we construct here.

17. What were once called the International Symposia are now, as of about 2010, called the Wenner-Gren Symposia.

Hence, it was perhaps with some frustration that current Wenner-Gren president Leslie Aiello contemplated 2016, which would mark the 75th anniversary of the foundation, the influence and contributions of which had not yet been considered in historical perspective. Aiello wanted a history written by historians who were trained in and familiar with the methods and themes used to understand the post–World War II period in general and the Cold War's effect on science and the humanities in particular. We had both worked with her and the foundation as part of a 2010 Wenner-Gren symposium held in Brazil on the history of biological anthropology, and she proposed that we undertake such a project.¹⁸

The immediate appeal of the assignment was obvious: the opportunity to learn about the foundation would provide a unique vantage point from which to consider the history of science and philanthropy during the Cold War and beyond. Aiello and her staff, particularly archivist Mark Mahoney, generously provided us with unlimited access to the archival materials held by the foundation. WGF has carefully preserved its own history in correspondence, reports, photographs, and many other resources. These have informed our work at every stage and are extensively cited here. Yet as we have worked through these records, we have done so with attention also to what has not been preserved, which has influenced how we interpret this archive. Vice President of Finance Maugha Kenny and Conference Program Associate Laurie Obbink shared their intimate knowledge of the day-to-day aspects of the foundation's operations and financial organization, which helped us identify important issues and track down materials. We were graciously granted complete autonomy in terms of our approach and conclusions, and while we have sought feedback from all of those involved who are still alive, our conclusions are our own.

Each section of this history describes an important feature of WGF but also uses those details to highlight more fundamental features of foundations and their role in mediating scientific culture since the Second World War. In our telling, this means providing equal attention to shifts in domestic economic policy and foreign relations and the evolution of intellectual agendas about the study of human origins and experiences as well as the influence of certain kinds of desires and motivations—such as that of assimilation, self-fashioning, and moral cultivation—that can stimulate investments in academic enterprises. Given the foundation's particular focus on anthropology, it has also been necessary to devote special attention to the rituals and the kinds of spaces—be they castles or remote field sites—in which those rituals that are necessary for the social reproduction of distinctive fields of knowledge can be enacted, learned, perpetuated, and sometimes challenged.

Our work can only be a starting point for understanding this foundation and its relationship with anthropology. The records held at WGF in New York are broadly relevant to the

18. Resulting in Lindee and Santos (2012).

history of anthropology—not just in the United States—and have amazing depth and range. The foundation has had an explicit international reach from its earliest programs to the present, and anthropologists around the world have participated in its many projects. Anyone interested in the history of anthropology from any dimension would do well to consult WGF records. We hope our account demonstrates the complex ways in which WGF has been able to serve as an exquisitely and uniquely important patron for the study of the human and, in doing so, also open up some new questions about the fortunes of postwar anthropology and other related sciences since 1941.

Why Anthropology? The Conditions of Possibility for the Creation of the Viking Fund

The year 1941 is an anchor point for this history. This was when Axel Wenner-Gren, or more specifically, his lawyers, created the Viking Fund in New York to resolve a vexing tax issue regarding the sale of a boat moored in the waters off Florida. This fiscal dilemma provided the immediate impetus to create a foundation. Wenner-Gren's Scandinavian heritage provided the inspiration for its name. The foundation, which only assumed his name a decade later, came to focus on a field that in the 1940s and 1950s was small and in some ways incompletely disciplined. Anthropology had porous and unsettled boundaries, and barriers to entry could be relatively low.

Axel Wenner-Gren's own interests in anything resembling what would today be recognized as anthropology had primarily to do with the financial benefits to be gained by learning about the culture of Latin America, where he sought to extend his business interests. He invested in mining and hydroelectric dams, among other ventures. His sponsorship of an anthropological expedition provided a justification for forays into the hinterlands of Peru and other places open to possible exploitation. One of the Viking Fund's first roles was to support a Latin American news clipping service.¹⁹ In its early years, the fund also supported various charities, all more or less in direct and indirect service to Axel Wenner-Gren. It was not at all obvious, except to one person, that the focus of the new foundation should be anthropology.

Paul Fejos had his eye on the nascent discipline. He realized that it might be possible to transform his own rough skills as an explorer and self-trained student of avant-garde filmmaking into a scientific identity (e.g., Heggie 2014; fig. 4). By the time the Viking Fund was created, Fejos and Wenner-Gren had been partners in the field in Latin America for

19. Wenner-Gren's aeronautical laboratory at the University of Kentucky had already received about \$160,000 in 1940—before the creation of WGF—through one of Wenner-Gren's businesses in Panama. After 1941, WGF took over funding this laboratory. See discussion in Karen Holmberg, "Report on the contents of WGF Archives," "Confidential for RGF [Richard G. Fox]," August 31, 2001, in Box #DoR-18, WGF.

more than 2 years, and Fejos, brought in as an advisor and then quickly hired, turned the foundation to the support of a field he had come to love: anthropology. There is more than one account of how Fejos and Wenner-Gren met in 1937—which we attend to in subsequent sections—but in all of them it is Wenner-Gren who suggested that Fejos should undertake archaeological work in Peru. Fejos had no training in archaeology, and apparently in his interactions later with Peruvian scientists he "lamented his lack of training for the work in hand."²⁰ But for different reasons, the two men fashioned a collaboration that brought them into the Andes together.

Both born in the nineteenth century—Wenner-Gren in 1881, Fejos in 1897—the two men died within 18 months of each other (Wenner-Gren on November 24, 1961, Fejos on April 23, 1963) after a long, complicated, almost cinematic, relationship (see Luciak 2012). The two men had a relationship shaped by tensions common to recipient-donor relations. It was not a warm collaboration involving a shared vision. Rather, it was a back and forth negotiation of priorities, expectations, and competing demands. Fejos struggled to keep Wenner-Gren involved in supporting the foundation and adding to its resources and assets. Privately, he mocked the wealthy Swede in correspondence within his inner circle, referring to him as "Our Lord and Master" and joking about his "divine action."²¹ Wenner-Gren occasionally wanted more control over the foundation and may have even wanted his money back after 1945. He probably trusted Fejos, though not as much as he trusted his Swedish confederates, who ended up controlling and eventually losing much of his fortune after Wenner-Gren died (Wallander 2004:20–26).²² Fejos was able to convince Wenner-Gren to buy both a New York brownstone (for \$62,000) and an Austrian castle (for \$26,000) but unable to close the deal for a (massive) proposed international endowment in 1955, which Fejos hoped

20. The quote is from an unsigned memo to the FBI, "Iquitos and the Axel Wenner-Gren Expedition," April 27, 1942. Copies of Axel Wenner-Gren Files from NARA, OSS, at WGF.

21. He is referred to as "our Lord and Master" in file folder "Correspondence re: grants, projects and personal, Brita Procope, miscellaneous correspondence file 1," Box #DoR-7, WGF. Procope was Wenner-Gren's personal secretary. This correspondence is from 1961, when Wenner-Gren was sick. "I am now hoping, barring anything unforeseen, that I could visit you sometime in March, though I am almost superstitiously afraid of making any plans and have them canceled again by divine action of our Founder." Fejos to Dodds, February 13, 1957, folder "Dodds, J & M," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

22. Note that the Swedish foundations were created by the same industrialist but have no connection to the New York WGF. The institutions in Sweden are the Wenner-Gren Samfundet, the Wenner-Gren Center for Scientific Research, and Axel Wenner-Gren's Foundation for International Scientific Exchange. In the 1970s, four members of the board of Wenner-Gren's company, including his closest assistant, Birger Strid, were prosecuted and jailed for their mismanagement of the fund. Fulcrum, the holding company, went bankrupt 12 years after Wenner-Gren died, and by that time his widow, Marguerite, was destitute and living in Mexico. For a contemporaneous account of the scandal, see Folke Schimanski (1974).



Figure 4. Paul Fejos with an unidentified Uitoto-Bora informant, Peruvian Amazon, 1941 (WGF archives).

to control. Together, the Swedish industrialist Wenner-Gren and the Hungarian aristocrat and avant-garde artist synthesized several different kinds of cultural values to create a distinctively American institution that could support the study of anthropology as a form of internationalism. The foundation they built together continues to play a critical role in a discipline neither had been trained to pursue.

Though it had begun to establish graduate programs, journals, professional societies, and some public visibility, in 1941, anthropology was still very much a young discipline in the United States. Anthropology, while it is sometimes traced to ancient texts describing human groups, is usually seen as arising as a form of scientific practice in the nineteenth century in Europe linked to the management of colonial empires. Experts with a wide range of training backgrounds, including marine biology, the study of ferns, mammal behaviors, and so on, began to write about isolated, colonized, and “primitive” groups in ways that could facilitate the control of people who were seen as somehow problematic.

For early practitioners in the United States, the tensions first emerged between settlers and groups who were subject to colonialism. American anthropology—indeed, the very iden-

tity of America as an independent nation—was in its early years defined by the study of groups who had lived there before European settlement (Hallowell 1960). The Bureau of American Ethnology (established in 1879 as the Bureau of Ethnology) found use for experts who could facilitate assimilation and relocation of Indians to reservations. In the process, anthropologists formed collaborations with museums, such as the Smithsonian, that collected salvaged objects, artifacts, human remains, and indigenous arts in a nationalist project of American identity and conquest as part of an effort to understand the history of human development (Darnell 2001).

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) was founded in 1902. The 175 members of its first year came largely from the ranks of the American Ethnological Society, which had been based in New York City since 1842, and the Anthropological Society of Washington, which had begun the journal *American Anthropologist* in 1888. American anthropology took shape as an academic discipline as practitioners moved from work for the federal government to affiliations with private museums and universities, such as Harvard and the Peabody Museum, Berkeley and its eponymous museum, Chicago and the Field Columbian Museum, Pennsylvania

and its University Museum, and perhaps most importantly, Columbia and the American Museum of Natural History.

When the German-born Franz Boas assumed a professorship at Columbia in 1899, where he established connections with the American Museum of Natural History, he helped to transform the stocktaking exercises of the Bureau of American Ethnology and the Smithsonian into a science. In the realm of “biology,” Boas became associated with a politically liberal scientific humanism inherited from his mentor Rudolf Virchow. This led him, during the interwar period, to reject the genetically determinist racism being promoted by Charles Davenport’s Eugenic Record Office (Marks 2008).

Boas also worked to turn the ethnographic field into a kind of laboratory for making knowledge about the human species (Stocking 1966). The establishment of fieldwork as a rite of passage came to be an important dimension of the disciplining of anthropology as a uniquely embodied domain of inquiry (Kuklick 2011). Fieldwork and participant observation were practices that tested the investigator’s endurance by plunging him or her into an unfamiliar context. In the case of anthropology, as Kuklick (2011) has argued, “disciplinary change derived from the premise that witnesses were made reliable by character-molding trials” (1). The reward, in other words, for returning to tell the tale of the experience of immersing oneself in a radically different set of circumstances was the authority to draw comparisons between cultures and, perhaps, to demonstrate how to tame the “savage within” one’s own self (Kuklick 1991).

Boas’s own fieldwork with Pacific Northwest communities contributed to the elevation of the practice as central to anthropological identity even as he sustained his investments in collections of artifacts that could demonstrate cultural variation at the American Museum in New York City (Stocking 1985). For Boas, whose own training was in physics and geography, culture described the relatively autonomous totality that distinguished groups of human beings from each other and could not be reducible to inherited biological traits or psychology. Boas’s approach became known as “cultural relativism,” which held that it was possible to compare one culture with another as a way of enlarging the stock of relations and strategies through which humans could face their problems as a unified species. This was a departure from earlier efforts to use knowledge of culture to establish hierarchy. As the concept of “culture” became a central subject matter of Boas’s anthropology, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was restructured around values of cultural preservation and revitalization. These values were reflected in the best-selling books of his first students, including Margaret Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* (1934).

While Boas’s own research focused on Native American groups as well as immigrants, Mead and Benedict’s attention was oriented to the Pacific, where America had recently annexed Western Samoa, had acquired Hawaii as a territory, and had colonized Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba. This was a reflection of the expansion of American interests

in politics and industry, which since the late nineteenth century had sought access to and control over foreign markets, first in the Caribbean and Latin America and then in Asia. The discipline was still small—by 1928 only 62 PhDs had been awarded—but it was nonetheless emerging from a narrower nineteenth-century instrumentalist role in the management of Native American groups and beginning to address broader questions of global relevance (Patterson 2001).

As his students traveled far and wide, Boas “consciously envisioned a social network” of university-based anthropology departments chaired by those he had trained (Darnell quoted in Vincent 1990:126). The first generation of his students—a pantheon including Alfred Kroeber, Edward Sapir, Paul Radin, Robert Lowie, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Bunzel, Margaret Mead, Elsie Clews Parsons, and A. Irving Hallowell—helped to promote a vision of American anthropology as a discipline united by its interests in culture and biology but also linguistics and archaeology (Darnell 2001; fig. 5). Kroeber assumed a post at Berkeley in 1901, where his ideas about culture as “superorganic”—transcending the actions and agency of the individuals who produced it—contributed to the formalization of the “four-field” Boasian program as the dominant strain of American anthropology throughout the 1920s. The four-field approach, which became a hallmark of American anthropology, would also become a source of tension within the profession. Any patron of anthropologists would have to reckon with the very diverse demands made on resources. This American context shaped the ways that Fejos and others involved in the early years of the foundation thought about the discipline of anthropology.

WGF was committed to four-field anthropology even as it engaged with anthropologists around the world who organized their discipline differently. The idea of anthropology as a four-field domain of inquiry into the human has been a distinctive and enduring dimension of its practice in the United



Figure 5. Ruth Bunzel and Margaret Mead at a Wenner-Gren supper conference, “Are They Happy in the People’s Republic of China,” presented by Dr. Francis L. K. Hsu, 1973 (WGF archives).

States (Segal and Yanagisako 2005).²³ The extent to which this is so is made clear when considering national anthropological traditions in other parts of the world (Handler 2000; Kuklick 2008). In Portugal and its empire, for instance, anthropology was built on a bipartite distinction of culture—focusing on people, language, and customs—and nature—focusing on race, body, and fossils (Santos 2012). In France, the field was similarly divided, with “anthropology” referring to questions that Boas would have classed as biological and ethnology supporting the exploration of archaeology and what today is known as sociocultural anthropology (Blanckaert 1988).

From the start, WGF had an international agenda and also powerful commitments to a particular, nationally specific way of understanding the discipline. Recently, historians have questioned the extent to which the four-field approach is distinctly American, Boasian, or even meant to represent a claim for holism in inquiry into the human. While it has been celebrated as a declaration of the unity of anthropology, there is reason to believe it reflected anxieties about fragmentation that were incipient even in the early years of the discipline. Dan Hicks has argued that Boas’s own connection to the classificatory work of museums—a product of negotiations between American and British anthropologists—was part of what led him to try and classify anthropology into four fields that were emerging as forms of specialization; the four-field idea was “just one element of the classification of anthropological knowledge in nineteenth-century museums” (Hicks 2013).

Intellectual debates were not the only factors that conditioned the emergence of anthropology and its emphasis on fieldwork in the early decades of the twentieth century. Philanthropic funding for anthropology had been significant in the United States since after World War I. In many cases this money reached anthropologists after passing through the offices of the federal government. In 1919, the chairman of the National Research Council—largely funded at the time by the Carnegie Institute—had declared that anthropology should redirect its attention from Native Americans to American interests overseas. In 1925 support for research in anthropology became a part of the agenda of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), which was largely funded by Rockefeller money. In addition to supporting fieldwork abroad, these funders encouraged research into “practical problems” of race and immigration at home, which Boas’s students were well trained to undertake (Vincent 1990:25).

Anthropology was enmeshed with the management of aboriginal communities within its territories but also served the foreign service by training those who would serve America’s industrial and diplomatic interests overseas in places such as the Philippines, Liberia, Oceania, Africa, and Latin America (Kuklick 2008; Mitman and Erickson 2010; Patterson 2001;

Tilley 2011; Vincent 1990). Endowed by a Swede seeking to climb the social ladder and conceived by a Hungarian who had lost his claim to aristocracy, the New York City–based Viking Fund would draw on Boas’s networks to create a foundation to support an anthropology suited for a new era of American internationalism.

The Courtier: Paul Fejos

While Axel Wenner-Gren provided the funding to create the foundation, the person who established and sustained the foundation’s commitment to supporting research in anthropology from 1941 until his death in 1963 was Paul Fejos. Restless, adventurous, artistic (and a decidedly unreliable narrator), Fejos led the foundation with confidence and energy while maintaining cordial relations with its patron.²⁴ In photos he appears both dashing and slightly unhealthy, particularly in his later years when pictured next to his beautiful young wife, Lita Binns Fejos (fig. 6). He spoke with a thick, almost indecipherable Hungarian accent (preserved now in recordings held at WGF) and must have appeared exotic to the anthropological community in the United States in the 1940s. Despite his eccentricities and his lack of formal education, he was an effective and persuasive advocate for the rapidly developing field of anthropology.

Fejos’s most important biographer was Stanford University English professor and dean John W. Dodds (1902–1989), who in 1973 published an oral history of Fejos called *The Several Lives of Paul Fejos* a decade after his subject’s death.²⁵ Dodds served on the WGF board of directors from 1954 to 1982, during which time he became close to Fejos as a friend and advisor. He knew that many of the stories Fejos had recounted were possibly fanciful and, occasionally, Dodds took the liberty of commenting on inconsistencies and omissions. Yet the portrait that emerges from this affectionate study is valuable for how Fejos saw himself and what he imagined his roles to be in the discipline of anthropology and the management of the foundation.

Born in Budapest January 24, 1897, Pál Fejős grew up in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a child of the Hungarian gentry, the landed aristocracy. He reported winters in Budapest and summers at the family estate at Szekszard. He did not remember his father, who died when he was 2 years old, but family legends Fejos told later seemed to suggest a dramatic personality, a man who cut off his own little finger to prove his devotion to his future wife and who set fire to his fields of ripe wheat on the brink of harvest in order to entertain guests

24. Fejos, like Galileo in the Medici court (Bialgioli 1993), was a creative agent indebted to a wealthy benefactor with whom he did not always agree.

25. John W. Dodds’s (1973) biographical study of Paul Fejos, aptly titled *The Several Lives of Paul Fejos: A Hungarian-American Odyssey*, relies extensively on Fejos’s own words (there are many pages of direct quotes from the 1962 taped interviews held at the Oral History Collection of Columbia University).

23. Borofsky has recently argued that over a 100-year period, only 9.5% of the articles in *American Anthropologist* bring the discipline’s subfields together in significant ways (Borofsky 2002).



Figure 6. Paul Fejos and Lita Binns Fejos, taken by Nikolas Muray, 1958 (WGF archives).

leaving a party. Dodds (1973:7) calls it “grand gestures,” but it could also be seen as the desire of a child who never knew his father to elevate him to the status of myth or, more darkly, a kind of madness.

After his father’s death, Fejos moved with his mother and brother to live with his great uncle, his grandfather’s brother, someone Fejos called “grandfather.” The later death of his grandfather, when Paul was still in school, moved control of the estate to his father’s brother, his real uncle, a man who he reported had always disliked Fejos’s father and who therefore treated the son, his nephew, with contempt. When Fejos announced to the family his desire for a career in the theater, he was ordered to earn a degree first, and then, he was told, “if you have one and you are still crazy, then you can go ahead and do what you want” (Dodds 1973:6). These family stories, recounted by Fejos and repeated by Dodds, suggest a family history that was—if nothing else—chaotic and challenging.

Fejos may have enrolled in medical school, at Royal Hungarian Medical University in Budapest, as he told Dodds and others, but there is no record of his attending the medical school. After his death a Hungarian source hired by the foundation tried to retrieve the records of his education but found that such records did not exist. “I [e.g., Dr. Nemesk’ei] made inquiries, but I was not able to find any evidence for his examinations at the Medical School of the Pazmany Peter University. It is possible that he was enrolled, but there is no trace of his further studies. According to information received from his family, he never studied at the Budapest University and never received a Doctor degree or diploma.”²⁶

In a follow up letter a day later, Nemesk’ei revealed that his insights had been significantly bolstered by a discussion

26. “P. Fejos and L. B. Fejos Portraits,” Nemesk’ei Report, July 4, 1963, in Box #DoR-10, WGF.

with a close family member, and he wrote again with darker news. “The widow should know only as much as necessary and we should not offend P.F.’s memory” he warned, but his discussion with this relative suggested that Fejos had failed the fifth grade and been asked to leave the school. “The family had to promise that he does not return.” He was again suspended in the eighth grade for disciplinary reasons, and at still another school, he completed the ninth and part of the tenth grades (the fifth and sixth grades of gymnasium), at which point his education took a significant break. “When he was attending the tenth grade, a provincial theater came to Kecskemet. He had some affair with one of the actresses and he played the main role in ‘Cyrano.’ For this he was forced to leave the school immediately.”

After a year or so he enrolled at the Technological High School, where he studied chemistry for a year and a half. He was then called up for military service. And here, as far as the family and institutional research in Hungary could determine, his formal education ended.²⁷ His military service in the First World War resulted in Bronze and Silver medallions, though he was either common infantry, as his family said, or a member of the Seventh Hussars cavalry, who learned to fly reconnaissance, as he told Dodds.

Discharged when the war ended in 1919, he returned to Budapest and began making films (his first was *Pan*). Communists had seized power in Hungary (Bela Kun’s March 1919 revolution), and his mother had invested unwisely during the war. Fejos was therefore no longer a future country gentleman. He had to earn a living. He attempted to do so as a filmmaker. Between 1919 and 1921 he made seven short films in Budapest—“we made those pictures in a week,” he told Dodds. In 1921, he began staging plays as well, in Budapest and also in Paris. One of his Parisian productions was titled “*L’homme*,” and featured 64 scenes.

Fejos was married five times—Lita Binns was his last wife—and many of these marriages were relatively short.²⁸ His first marriage lasted from 1921 to 1925, and he reported that it resulted in five duels fought with men with whom he believed his wife had flirted. She got fed up with the jealousy and suspicion and the marriage ended. According to Dodds, Fejos was inordinately jealous all his life with all his wives. Fejos moved to New York in the midst of this first difficult marriage (in 1923) and as Dodds (1973:11) wryly observes, “one notices throughout his career, indeed, how frequently a change in that career was tied in with the collapse of a love affair. There were

27. Ibid.

28. 1921–1925, Mara Jankowsky in Budapest; 1925–1929, Mimosa Pfaltz in New York (the divorce was in Nevada); 1936–1942, Inga Arvad in Copenhagen, Denmark (the divorce was in Nevada); 1942–1957, Marianne Arden in Baltimore (the divorce was in Alabama); and 1958 until his death in 1963, Lita Binns. The wives and places of divorce are listed in “Outline of Dr. Paul Fejos’ Life,” in “P. Fejos and L. B. Fejos Portraits,” Nemesk’ei Report, July 4, 1963, Box #DoR-10, WGF.

always other, more or less logical, reasons for the shifts, but somehow they often coincided with matters of the heart.”

Once in New York he scrambled about doing day labor for a few months and worked for a while in a piano factory before landing a job as a research technician in Simon Flexner’s laboratory at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in New York (Dodds 1973:20–21). With his year of training in chemistry, Fejos had the good fortune to be hired by Simon Flexner (who had himself begun his medical career with only a seventh-grade education).²⁹ Fejos told Dodds that he had come to encounter Flexner after he chanced to attend a public lecture at the Chemists’ Club and there noticed an office called “Employment Bureau of the Chemists’ Club.”³⁰ He worked in the Flexner laboratory for almost 3 years and recollected toward the end of his life, “I think I was never so happy in my life as in the Rockefeller Institute. It was a job where I liked what I was doing. I was doing research. It was tremendously exciting. I had no worries, no responsibilities. It was gentlemanly and scholarly work. I really think it was the happiest period of my whole life” (Dodds 1973:22). Fejos had lost his claim to the landed gentry but had gained a taste of what it meant to have a scientific vocation (Weber 1922 [1919]).

If he was happy he was also restless. A part-time opportunity in 1924 to consult on a Hungarian theatrical presentation (Ferenc Molnar’s *Glass Slipper*) at the Guild Theatre stirred his interest again in theater and film. His English was improving, he reported. “You see, one of the great difficulties with my English learning was that at the Rockefeller Institute, where I hoped to learn English, everybody was a foreigner. Hideyo Noguchi was Japanese, [Alexis] Carrel was French, [Karl] Landsteiner was Austrian . . . everybody spoke with a different accent.” He found that the group at the Guild both understood his English and valued his ideas. “I thought maybe it was time for me to try to break into theater or films in the United States. And once this idea lodged in my head, I couldn’t get rid of it” (Dodds 1973:24). In the summer of 1926, he bought a car and drove across the United States to Hollywood. It took a month.

Again in Hollywood he was unmoored. He worked briefly at a lab, directed a play at the Egan Theater, and even tried out professional boxing (which he claimed gave him cauliflower ears for the rest of his life). He said he lived briefly in

an orchard, stealing oranges for food. He wrote a Western screenplay. And then, to his good fortune, he was picked up hitchhiking by someone who wanted to be a producer (Edward M. Spitz, heir to the Quackenbush Department Store chain in New Jersey). During the ride Fejos allegedly confessed that he wanted to be a director, and Spitz confessed his interest in film. After a long discussion, Spitz gave Fejos \$5,000 to make a film.

Fejos is considered a major figure in early film, called one of the most original film directors in Hollywood in the late 1920s and early 1930s (fig. 7). “Today, Paul Fejos’s films stand out even in this group, but exactly how they came to be made has never been entirely clear” (Koszarski 2005:235). He is especially remembered for *The Last Moment*, funded with the money he got from Spitz but now lost, the story of the experiences of a person committing suicide, showing his life flashing before his eyes. In Fejos’s account the details of the remembered life were shaped by the after-hours availability of a variety of sets for other films—if a set showing a hospital corridor was not being used at a time when Fejos and his crew were able to film, the life included a moment in a hospital corridor. This was a kind of bricolage, a modernist convention elevated to a form of epistemology by Fejos’s contemporary and later epistolary friend, Claude Levi-Strauss (in his 1962 *The Savage Mind*). According to film historian Richard Koszarski, *The Last Moment* is now regarded as the first feature-length American avant-garde film. It was also a great critical success.

Two local film critics persuaded film star Charlie Chaplin to see it and helped arrange a preview screening at the Beverly Theater in Los Angeles. This produced a review titled “Introducing You to Mr. Paul Fejos, Genius” (Koszarski 2005). Fejos was soon popular in Hollywood and had a contract at Universal. His 1928 film for Universal, *Lonesome*, has been preserved in the Library of Congress National Film Registry and is recognized as a highly novel film contribution. It employed “color tinting, superimposition effects, experimental editing, and a roving camera (plus three dialogue scenes, added to satisfy the new craze for talkies).”³¹

Along with the American economy, this string of success ground to a halt in 1929 when he directed a major failure, *Broadway*, which barely earned enough to cover the cost of production (it was one of the most expensive films made up to that time). Fejos own comments about his next big production, called *King of Jazz*, had an almost anthropological tone: “the script we are working on goes into Mr. Whiteman’s life as if he were a total stranger. That is what we want to do. You people know all about him. So you take a great deal for granted. We want to fill in the background” (quoted in Koszarski 2005:237–238). Like an anthropologist from Mars, Fejos proposed to produce in his filmgoers a sense of estrangement

29. The biographical summary that is part of the Simon Flexner Papers held at the American Philosophical Society describes Flexner’s early struggles after he dropped out of school at the age of 14. See profile at <http://amphilsoc.org/mole/view?docId=ead/Mss.B.F365-ead.xml> (accessed August 7, 2016).

30. The Chemists’ Club was organized in November 1898 by 154 chemists who had been meeting collegially in empty classrooms and lecture halls. Today, the NYC Chemists’ Club is located physically at the Penn Club, affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, at 30 West 44th Street in New York City. See account at <http://www.thechemistsclub.com/> (accessed August 7, 2016).

31. From the Criterion Collection website, <https://www.criterion.com/films/28212-lonesome> (accessed August 7, 2016).



Figure 7. Paul Fejos (smoking) and Mary Philbin with crew of *Last Performance* (1929; courtesy of Richard Koszarski archives).

from the familiar, in this case a study of jazz orchestra leader Paul Whiteman. This film also failed, and after an abortive start on another film, Fejos never worked for Universal again. He moved to MGM, where he directed the French and German versions of *The Big House* in 1930. Fejos then returned to Europe, ending his Hollywood career after four highly productive and successful years.

Fejos made two films in France in 1931 and 1932 and then two in Austria in 1933 and 1934. In 1934, he left Europe to make ethnographic films in Africa, the East Indies, and the Far East. It was at this juncture that he began to see a way of merging his interest in science with his skill behind a camera and his passionate interest in the human experience. He found support for this new form of knowledge-making in Scandinavia, where he now directed not Hollywood stars but the Danish Ethnographic Expedition to Madagascar and Seychelles Archipelago from 1934 to 1936. While making films, he also accumulated cultural artifacts that he had shipped back to the National Museum of Copenhagen. Soon after, he came

to direct the Swedish film industry's Ethnographic Expedition to East Indies and Siam from 1936 to 1938 and then became the director of the Wenner-Gren Scientific Expedition to Hispanic America from 1939 to 1941. Thus, over a period of about 11 years, Fejos transitioned from a Hollywood film director to an ethnographic filmmaker, collector, and field scientist.³²

He first found himself in Peru, he said, because in early 1937, the Swedish Film Industry, which had seen some film work he had done for Nordisk in Denmark, invited him to Stockholm to talk about a possible project. The board asked him whether he would go on an expedition to produce films for them. "I was somewhat worried about tying myself down" and "not being able to get back to the United States," Fejos said, but the offer was very attractive and involved "quite a lot

32. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0270838/>. IMDb lists Fejos as the director of 44 films (his last is 1944, *Yagua*) and also lists 11 screenwriting credits, five production design credits, three art direction credits, and one producing credit.

of money.”³³ The film board, he proposed, had no particular location in mind, and Fejos was not sure where to go. He had already been collecting for the Copenhagen museum, so he went to visit a different museum director (at the Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum) for guidance. This director suggested that he should go to South America and mentioned the museum’s own benefactor, Swedish industrialist Axel Wenner-Gren. “And I was invited for a weekend to Wenner-Gren’s castle in Sweden and he talked about this, that he’s worried about the museum and all that, and told me that he would have interests in Peru and why don’t I go to Peru. The reason behind it was that he wanted to send to Peru a geological group for certain minerals and this outfit could go with me. So I said fine.”³⁴

This description of the first meeting with Wenner-Gren comes from the 1962 oral history with Fejos. But when Dodds came to write his profile of Fejos in 1973, the story was somewhat modified. Dodds’s account begins quoting word for word much of the 1962 oral history discussion just cited above, from pages 74 to 75 of the oral history, but it leaves out the reference to Fejos meeting Wenner-Gren in Sweden, which is on page 75. Instead, Dodds’s account tells the story of a thwarted tiger attack in which Fejos saves Axel Wenner-Gren’s life. In this story, commonly repeated, Wenner-Gren and Fejos met when Fejos was in Singapore with his then-wife Inga Arvad, and Wenner-Gren and his wife Marguerite arrived in the yacht *Southern Cross* (fig. 8). Fejos and Arvad were invited to dine on the yacht, and some time later Wenner-Gren wanted to go hunting, so Fejos arranged an expedition. According to Dodds,

They flushed a tiger and Paul, always the perfect host, stepped back to let the visitor have the kill. Wenner-Gren fired, but only wounded the animal. Then Paul noticed that Wenner-Gren’s rifle was shaking violently, as was the man himself. He had bad buck fever. Paul moved in and shot the charging tiger about 10 feet away, just as it was ready to leap. (Dodds 1973:62–64)

The agile Hungarian, in this telling, had saved the life of one of the richest men in the world. From then on, for the next 20 years, Paul’s life and that of Axel Wenner-Gren touched each other’s frequently in a relationship that became strangely frustrating at times but that bent Paul’s career into new and productive channels.³⁵

In his own memoir, Cornelius Osgood (1905–1985)—professor of anthropology at Yale, active fieldworker in the Arctic, and curator at the Peabody Museum from 1934 to 1973, who became a sort of mentor to Fejos—expanded on this story

a bit, with some details that are in neither the oral history nor the Dodds biography and with Inga Arvad replaced in his recollection by a Swedish assistant. According to Osgood, while working in Malaya, one of Fejos’s technical assistants was Swedish, and seeing Wenner-Gren’s magnificent yacht, the *Southern Cross*, moored in the harbor of Penang, he wanted to visit it.

This was arranged through one of the ship’s officers and Paul went with him. Somehow the story of his activities spread to the ears of WG himself and shortly thereafter, Paul and his assistant received a formal invitation to dinner on board. Paul, not having dress clothes with him, sent a note of apology in return, and he had his party started back for the interior. They had not gone far, however, before a messenger who had been sent speeding after them arrived with a note asking that they appear in whatever they happened to be wearing. They returned, and at the party that evening, Wenner-Gren stated his desire to go hunting. Paul, having a camp, from which he was taking pictures of the various wild beasts of the area, invited WG to join them. A hunt was arranged in due course and a tiger or some large feline beaten out of the bush, approached the hunters. Paul told WG that the shot was his, and the latter, ordinarily an excellent rifleman, hit the animal too high only a short distance away. Paul was supporting his guest with a double-barrel shotgun. At ten feet he fired both rounds and the dead cat practically slid to their feet. Both men suffered scars and WG took the position from then on that Paul saved his life.³⁶

There are other versions that involve a snake (see Luciak 2012). The various accounts do converge in one way. They portray that first meeting as a moment of intersecting destinies, both oriented away from the Old World and toward the New. Certainly meeting Wenner-Gren had significant consequences for Fejos, as Wenner-Gren provided the means for his third or fourth professional transformation. Whether they met on a weekend visit in Sweden or a tiger hunt in Singapore sometime in 1937, the two found reason to join forces (fig. 9).

Dodds drily proposed that Fejos’s own account of this meeting and of his other fabulous experiences reflected his subject’s “deep sense of what is fundamentally true,” but “in details . . . he has needed to be corrected on some points” (in Dodds 1973:viii). A historian of film writing about Fejos early film work commented on Dodds’s biography that “in 1973 the WGF published an authorized account of Fejos’s career which, to put it mildly, lacks the expected degree of scientific objectivity” (Koszarski 2005:240). Fejos unquestionably invented some elements of his personal history and seems to have in some ways underplayed his importance in film history—perhaps viewing it as less scholarly than his role as

33. Interview by John T. Mason Jr., April 23, 1962, in “Oral History Transcript, Paul Fejos,” p. 74, WGF.

34. *Ibid.*, 74–75.

35. “Buck fever” is a hunter’s term for the equivalent of “stage fright”—the adrenaline fight-or-flight rush that can undermine performance at a crucial moment.

36. From pp. 136–141 of Cornelius Osgood’s unpublished memoir, “Fallen Leaves.” Quoted with permission of Jessica Helfand, who retains a copy of the memoir and lives in the Hamden, Connecticut, home in which Osgood lived until he died in 1985.



Figure 8. Paul Fejos, Marguerite Wenner-Gren, and Axel Wenner-Gren on the deck of Wenner-Gren's yacht, *Southern Cross*, 1941 (WGF archives).

leader of WGF. It is difficult to sort out fact and fiction in his stories, a problem also relevant to Axel Wenner-Gren.

The Ambivalent Patron: Axel Wenner-Gren

The Viking Fund—renamed the Wenner-Gren Foundation after 10 years in 1951 to please and reengage the donor—was created in 1941 as a way to address the tax problems in the United States of Swedish industrialist Axel Wenner-Gren (1881–1961).³⁷ The original name reflected Wenner-Gren's Swedish background and probably his looks (fig. 10). As one publicist (hired by Wenner-Gren) said, "his personal appearance—over

6 feet of slender Nordic height, a tanned, handsome face, and pale, brilliant, 'sea-faring' eyes, strikingly illustrate the fact that he comes from ancient Viking territory."³⁸ This publicist furthermore claimed Wenner-Gren for the United States: "He has an optimistic belief in the future, quite typically American in spirit, rather than narrow, defeatist, and European."³⁹

One of the wealthiest men in the world between the decades bracketed by 1920 and 1960, Axel Wenner-Gren made a series of investments toward the end of his life (1961) that unraveled his fortune after his death. These included his grand development scheme in 1957 for a 2.5-million-acre tract "almost

37. The name change was probably not Fejos's idea. In a January 10, 1951, letter to R. C. Hunt, he thanks Hunt for telling him about the name change. This is mentioned in the Holmberg Archive meeting, August 15, 2001, Box #DoR-18, WGF.

38. Warren R. Lightfoot, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, in "facts about Axel Leonard Wenner-Gren," in file "Wenner-Gren, Dr. Axel LM," Box #DoR 7, WGF. This document is undated, but the content suggests it was written during the war and was probably aimed at burnishing his reputation as fears about blacklisting sharpened.

39. *Ibid.*, 18 (probably 1941).



Figure 9. Paul Fejos, picture signed to Nikolas Muray: "To Nick with esteem, affection and friendship. Paul. NYC, March 21, 1942" (WGF archives).

the size of Ohio" in British Columbia, nicknamed "Wenner-Grenland," that would involve mines, pulp mills, hydro dams, and "10 to 15 towns" tied together with a 180-mph monorail that would cost \$1 billion (about \$8.5 billion in 2016). The Canadian government turned the land over to Wenner-Gren for a bargain, as Wenner-Gren committed to invest his own funds in development. The deal enraged the opposition, and the plan collapsed, as had a costly development project in Southern Rhodesia (after 1980, Zimbabwe).⁴⁰ His widow, Marguerite,

40. See <http://theyee.ca/Life/2013/04/22/BC-Mega-Project-Dream/> (accessed August 7, 2016); "A Tycoon Who Wants to Tame a Wilderness: Wenner-Gren, Swedish Financier, Sets Sights on British Columbia," December 9, 1957, *Life*, December 9, 1957, p. 60. The Peace River Power Project later resulted in the construction of a major dam on the river, but Wenner-Gren played no role by then. Wenner-Gren's initial commitment was apparently less than \$6 million, a sum that would not have bankrupted him. *Life* magazine pegged his net worth in 1957 as \$100 to \$200 million.

died in relative poverty, and today he has been virtually forgotten except as a namesake to the foundations he created in Sweden and the United States.

During his lifetime, however, Axel Wenner-Gren was widely known as an "international man of mystery" who traveled in elite social circles with presidents, cabinet ministers, royalty, and film stars. He built his first fortune with vacuum cleaners, and his investments came to include refrigerators, lighting, communications systems, dams, mining interests, airplanes, computers, and monorails. His family of birth was prosperous, but he leveraged his deal-making and sales skills to new heights of wealth. He had elegant, massive homes in Sweden, Mexico, and the Bahamas, and he owned what was at the time the world's largest private yacht, the *Southern Cross*, which had been previously owned by Howard Hughes (fig. 11).⁴¹

41. He purchased the yacht from Texas-born investor and aviator Howard Hughes. Originally called the *Rover* when it was built in 1930, Hughes renamed it the *Southern Cross* when he bought it in 1933. Later,



Figure 10. Axel Wenner-Gren (date unknown). Bachrach Studio, New York City (WGF archives).

Wenner-Gren was born in Uddevalla, Sweden, into a farming family and to a young mother and a father 27 years her senior (Luciak 2012:13). In 1909 he married Kansas City-born Marguerite Gauntier Liggett—a budding opera star he encountered on an ocean liner passage from New York to Southampton, England. This marriage endured until his death in 1961. Through much of their life together they shared their homes with Marguerite's sister Gene Gauntier, who had been an important and well-known screenwriter and actor in the silent film industry (Luciak 2012:15; fig. 12). The married couple did not, however, always share a bedroom, and they had very different styles, Axel favoring Spartan simplicity and Marguerite gold and brocade.

The young Wenner-Gren saw his first vacuum cleaner in a shop window in Vienna in 1908—it was a model developed in Philadelphia, the Santo Vacuum Cleaner—and promptly invested in the sale and distribution of this machine in Europe. In 1919, he formed the Electrolux corporation—a fusion of a vacuum cleaning company, *Elektromekaniska*, and a light-

ing company, AB Lux (for which Wenner-Gren obtained a large order of incandescent lamps that were used to illuminate the Panama Canal during its 1915 inauguration; Luciak 2012:14–15). He built the Swedish Electrolux company into a global empire of both vacuum cleaners and (later) Swedish-designed refrigerators (fig. 13).

By 1924, he was wealthy enough to purchase a palatial home on Stockholm's Diplomatstaden, the Laboratoriegatan 10. His business successes continued unimpeded through the stock market crash of 1929 and the worldwide Depression that followed. American intelligence agents in the late 1930s—when he had come under suspicion as a possible Nazi sympathizer—estimated his net worth as one billion dollars. He was a flying enthusiast, which later led him to sponsor the development of the MAWEN (Marguerite Wenner-Gren) airplane engine at the University of Kentucky in the United States. He also worked with the Krupp family in the postwar period on the development of an ultimately ill-fated monorail system, ALWEG (Axel Leonard Wenner-Gren monorail system).⁴² Later, he developed a digital computer, the Alwac III-E, which lost out to IBM (Luciak 2012:17–19).

His tax and political problems in 1941 were implicated in the donation of \$2,362,500 in Electrolux and Serval stock to create an American foundation. The original bequest was 300,000 shares of common stock of Electrolux and 50,000 shares of common stock of Serval. He later invoked his wife's status as an American to explain the gift to create a foundation in the United States rather than in Sweden, but tax problems with the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) relating to his American company provide a more direct and obvious explanation. The Viking Fund was a legal response to a problematic boat sale that attracted IRS attention and a quick solution created by Wenner-Gren's legal team. Initially, it had no larger purpose.

While later in his life Wenner-Gren seemed to be quite interested in his philanthropic legacy, this particular foundation was not the result of a thoughtful plan for philanthropy. As John Dodds told Lita Osmundsen in 1972, "Wenner-Gren had not yet been put on the blacklist, the IRS who had been watching his financial activities for some time, began a multimillion dollar suit against him. Wenner-Gren decided to use the proceeds of the business transactions that the government was challenging to found the Viking Fund, which

after Wenner-Gren sold it to the Mexican Navy, it was called the *Zaragoza* and *Orizaba*. It was scrapped in 1960. See the full description of the history of this yacht in Wisner (1975).

42. Surviving examples of the ALWAC monorail include the Los Angeles Disneyland monorail system, which opened in 1959, and the Seattle Center monorail, which opened in time for the 1962 Century 21 Exposition. The Disneyland monorail was declared a Historical Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 2004, and a plaque commemorating this dedication can be found in Disneyland's Tomorrowland monorail station (<http://alweg.de/disneyalweg/thealwegphenomenon.html>, <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2012/06/26/archives/clippings-curiosities/monorail-onetrack-controversy.html>).

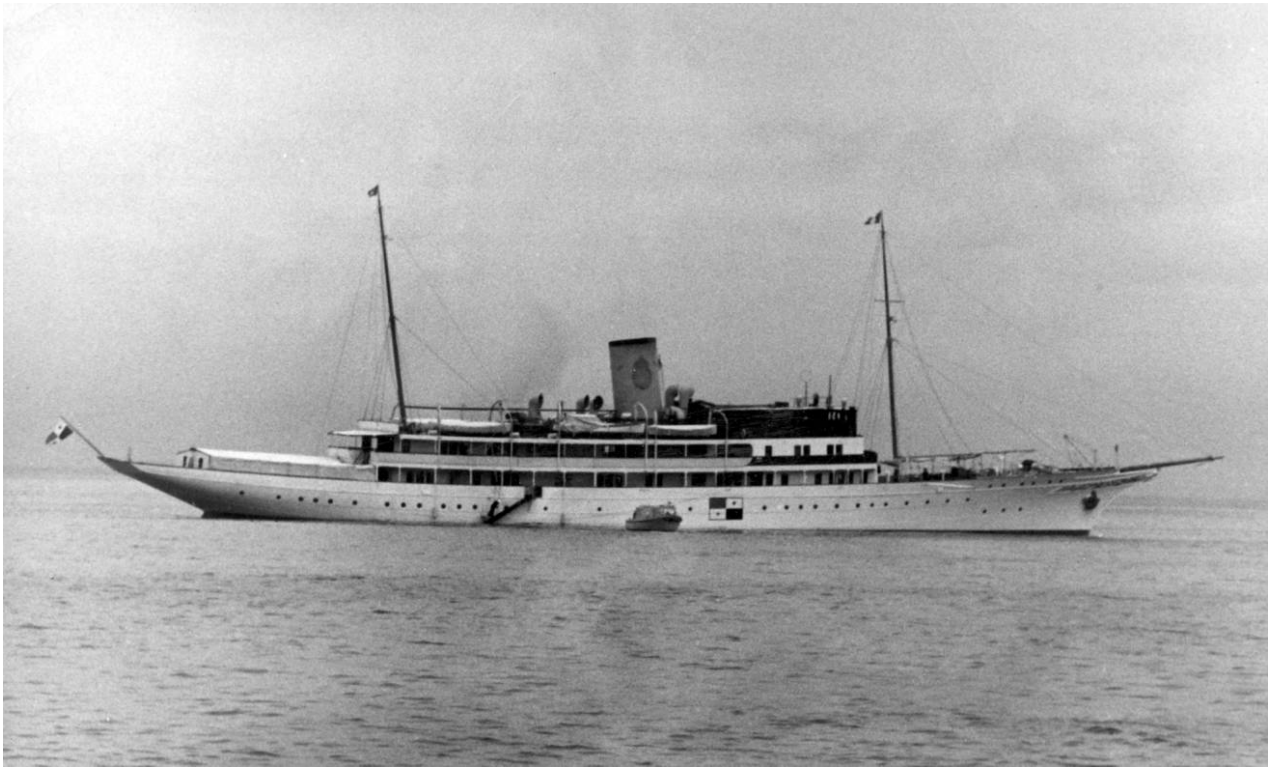


Figure 11. Axel Wenner-Gren's yacht, *Southern Cross* (courtesy of Örjan Lindroth).

he endowed with Serval Corporation stock. It took some explaining a little later.⁴³

From such beginnings, the Viking Fund was incorporated as a Delaware corporation, having "perpetual existence," beginning on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1941, at 9 a.m. Only two incorporators were present: lawyer Richard C. Hunt and William K. Dupree (both of New York and both already Wenner-Gren employees; fig. 14). Wenner-Gren was at his home in Nassau in the Bahamas and signed the documents via notary public. Hunt was promptly elected chairman, Dupree was elected secretary of the meeting, and together they elected Axel L. Wenner-Gren to be a director of the corporation and to hold office for the ensuing year. By the next meeting, Wenner-Gren was both chairman of the board and president, and Dupree was both treasurer and secretary. Shortly thereafter, Wenner-Gren resigned as president, and Hunt took his place.⁴⁴

The original purpose of the fund was described rather broadly as the support of "scientific, charitable, literary, educational or religious purposes." A principal office in the city of Dover in Delaware was located at 19–21 Dover Green, which

was a formal address of an agent who fulfilled the requirement that a Delaware corporation have a Delaware address. The first actual space rental for the corporation involved a lease dated January 23, 1941, on the ninth floor of 10 Rockefeller Plaza, in Rockefeller Center, New York. That lease ran through April 30, 1943.⁴⁵

The first appropriation supported the news clipping service, Publishers Reciprocal Program, which exchanged news and feature material bearing on the Western Hemisphere through newspapers in the United States and in Latin American countries. The program had tax-exempt status in the United States, and the group asked the new foundation for more than \$100,000 in support. The Viking Fund allocated half of that for the initial 6 months and at the same meeting also approved \$30,000 to support the already in-process Wenner-Gren Scientific Expedition to Hispanic America, where Fejos had been in the field at Cuzco with the geologist G. J. Lowther for more than a year.⁴⁶

In retrospect, the decision to support the clipping service and the archeological dig seem linked. Wenner-Gren was in-

43. Dodson to Osmundsen, December 29, 1972, letter, mentioned and quoted in "Archive Project Meeting with R. Fox," August 15, 2001, K. Holmberg, folder "Confidential to RGF," Box #DoR-18, WGF.

44. See meeting minutes in Viking Fund, vol. 1, for 1941 and 1942, WGF.

45. *Ibid.*, 38 (all the page numbers are from Viking Fund, vol. 1).

46. *Ibid.*, 47. Wenner-Gren loved airplanes and designed several (and survived one major crash), and he created an Aeronautical Research Laboratory at the University of Kentucky. There was also a smaller grant, of \$5,675, to this laboratory.



Figure 12. Jack J. Clark and Gene Gauntier on location in Ireland in the 1914 film *For Ireland's Sake*, produced by Gene Gauntier Feature Players and distributed by Warner's Features. It was directed by Sidney Olcott with himself, Gene Gauntier, and Jack J. Clark in the leading roles (courtesy of Irish Film Institute archives).

vesting in Latin America and needed to keep track of press coverage and business news. The archeological dig gave him reasons to spend time in Peru, exploring mining opportunities. In the first round the Viking Fund also supported the creation of a new chair of archaeology at the University of Cuzco (for \$15,000; the letter of award called Cuzco the “archeological capital of the Americas”), and other anthropological initiatives followed in 1942 and in 1943. In December 1941, when Fejos returned to New York City, the Viking fund made a decision to employ Fejos at a salary of \$500 a month as the scientific director of the fund. His formal title was Director of Explorations and Archeological Activities for the Corporation.⁴⁷ He thus became the key person who advised the Viking Fund about who and what research to support. Fejos's influence only escalated the following year, when Wenner-Gren was essentially trapped in Mexico for the remainder of the war and Fejos systematically and enthusiastically turned the fund's attention to anthropology.

47. Ibid., 66–68.

Value in Consequence: The Blacklisting of Axel Wenner-Gren

In January 1942, less than a year after the creation of the Viking Fund, Axel Wenner-Gren was blacklisted by Allied governments, his name added to the *Proclaimed List of Certain Blocked Nationals* under the Enemy Alien Control Program authorized by President Roosevelt just after the December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor. The questions raised by this blacklisting have had an effect on WGF that continues even today. This, in part, has to do with ambiguity surrounding why it was, exactly, that Axel Wenner-Gren was deemed a threat to the United States government. What was it about this glamorous Swedish industrialist that made him a subject of suspicion during World War II? Was he a Nazi? A spy? A threat to the American government's own ambitions? All three?

The blacklisting of Axel Wenner-Gren has been a stain on the foundation's reputation that has generated rumor that over time has swelled into myth. It is also a historical black hole. While our investigation clarifies important details about the circumstances leading to Wenner-Gren's blacklisting, discussed below, others remain shrouded by the opacity of the classified



Figure 13. Electrolux vacuum cleaner advertisement (courtesy of Electrolux Group archives).

archive and wartime secrecy. What emerges as immediately relevant to the present case study, however, is how the reputation of WGF's patron has caused discomfort for anthropologists. The field has overt commitments to justice and openness, but its practitioners have sometimes played complicated and dubious roles in the enhancement of state power in colonial and Cold War contexts. In this sense anthropology was almost "born" into a kind of cognitive dissonance, as a discipline linked to nationalism and racism but sustained by ideals of justice and equality. Any connections between Axel Wenner-Gren and the fascist and murderous Nazi state threaten the discipline precisely because of preexisting internal tensions around spying, loyalty, and state power.

The field of anthropology has faced controversies over political commitments, loyalty or disloyalty, and possible spying since at least World War I, when Franz Boas, in a December 1919 letter to the *Nation*, charged that four (unnamed) American anthropologists were engaged in wartime espionage in Central America. Boas identified this as an abuse of professional position and a threat to the legitimacy of anthropology as a discipline. These anthropologists had, he said, "prostituted science by using it as a cover for their activities as spies" (quoted in Price 2000). Over the next century many other anthropologists and social scientists worked with military or surveillance

agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency, as spies, informants, advisors, and trusted sources. Anthropologist David H. Price (2016) has documented the devastating effect of these political engagements on the discipline in his studies of what he calls "dual-use anthropology" (see also Price 2004, 2011a).

Indeed, rumors of Wenner-Gren's Nazi ties played a role in anthropological responses to the Viking Fund from the beginning. His friendships with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (who were pro-Nazi and lived near him on Nassau) and his business dealings with German industrial interests (which were certainly significant in the 1930s) were invoked to identify him as sympathetic to the Nazi cause. The blacklisting has been generally taken as proof of his financial and political involvements, though the blacklisting alone (see below) is relatively uninformative. Luciak has repeated (in order to ridicule them) the claims that German U-boats were refueled at his estate on Nassau and that the reason his yacht could rescue so many survivors of a particular U-boat attack was because he knew that the attack was coming in advance (Luciak 2012).

Some sources that focus on the practice of "cloaking" investments in Nazi Germany see Axel Wenner-Gren as having been centrally involved. For example, a relatively sensational account by Charles Higham (1983) places Wenner-Gren deeply within the (large and influential) banking networks in the United States and Mexico that were supplying funds and arms to Germany during the war. William Manchester (1964), sometimes with very limited evidence, tracks Wenner-Gren's ties to the

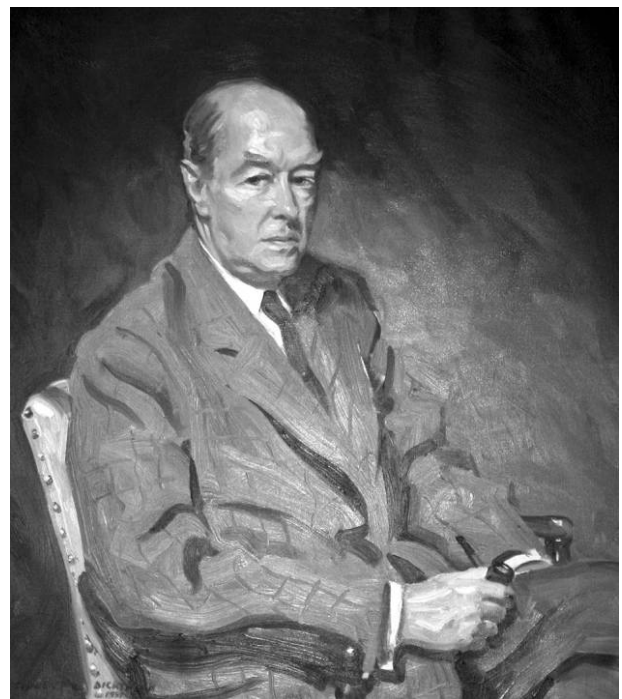


Figure 14. Portrait of Richard C. Hunt by Sidney E. Dickinson, 1951. This portrait currently hangs in the offices of the Wenner-Gren Foundation in New York (WGF archives).

Krupp family and his roles in various wartime business deals with the Krupps.⁴⁸ In general these texts and others are lightly sourced—dependent on wartime newspaper accounts, for example, which seemed to generally identify him as engaged in trade with the Nazis during the war, or on records from J. Edgar Hoover's FBI files, which are notorious for their sensational content. FBI records often include letters from the public containing accusations.

Wenner-Gren's own 1938 book *Call to Reason* is antifascist in style. But it is difficult to assess. Wenner-Gren's draft speech in 1955 (for the WGF-sponsored Princeton conference "Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth") stated that the book was primarily intended to encourage "Nordic solidarity." Nazi racial hygiene theory emphasized the superiority of the Nordic races. But in the interwar period "Nordic solidarity" could refer to cooperation between the Nordic states—Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Finland—as they tried to navigate "neutrality" by the late 1930s.⁴⁹

Wenner-Gren did sustain some business relationships and social ties that linked him to Nazi Germany (as did many other Swedish business owners). Most significantly, he did not speak out against Hitler. He probably did not sever his long-standing ties to German industry during the war. Wenner-Gren was also a self-appointed private emissary between Field Marshal Hermann Göring and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in the summer of 1939, which implicated him in the appeasement of Hitler. He visited with Göring once more in March 1940 after the Nazis invaded Poland, at the very moment when US Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles was in Germany on a peace mission at the request of President Roosevelt. These events, too, have been the subject of rumor and unsourced claims about Wenner-Gren, his relationship with Welles, and his relationship with Göring.

At the same time, Wenner-Gren looked like a threat in Latin America to authorities in the United States whether he helped Hitler or not. He had the resources and interests to be influential in Mexico, Peru, and other places that were critical to sensitive US hemispheric priorities. Luciak (2016) exonerates Wenner-Gren entirely. We think Wenner-Gren was probably sympathetic to Germany (where he had spent some years) and almost certainly continued his financial relationships with

German industry. Full-blown Nazi sympathies—a commitment to the Nazi cause—might have been there, but they are not necessary to explain either the blacklisting or the probable financial ties to wartime Germany.

It is important to understand the nature of the blacklisting program. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI and other law enforcement agencies arrested thousands of suspected enemy aliens, mostly of German, Italian, or Japanese ancestry, living in the United States. The program also targeted pro-Axis sympathizers living in Latin America "on the basis of hemispheric security" and offered to intern such sympathizers in the United States if Latin American countries wished to deport them.

Fifteen countries accepted the offer and eventually deported a total of over 6,600 individuals along with some family members to the United States for internment. Some 2,000 businesses and business leaders were identified in Mexico, which did not participate in the deportation. Wenner-Gren, then living at his home in Cuernavaca, was therefore one of thousands of people identified as having Nazi sympathies and ties in Latin America. In the United States, by the end of the war, over 31,000 suspected enemy aliens and their families had been interned at Immigration and Naturalization Services internment camps and military facilities throughout the United States (Higham 1983; Manchester 1968). These numbers provide a sense of the scale of the program.

Generally, the interest in Latin America was grounded in fears that Axis sympathizers would use the region as a staging ground for an attack on the United States or for a disruption of the Panama Canal or other sites of critical strategic interest. Historian Max Paul Friedman (2000) describes a moment when FDR warned that "Hitler's advanced guards" were readying "footholds, bridgeheads in the New World, to be used as soon as he has gained control of the oceans," asserting that there were "secret air landing fields in Columbia within easy range of the Panama Canal" (563). These words provoked a frantic Colombian denial that such fields existed or that there were Axis sympathizers in the region. The incident ended with a formal apology by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, but the episode echoed broader patterns (Friedman 2000:563). United States officials "disposed to believe the worst" often "took action based on their own, often mistaken, sources of information" and their lack of faith in Latin American governments (Friedman 2000:563).

German residents in Latin America looked like a fifth column of spies and saboteurs, and they seemed to present a threat "out of all proportion to their numbers." In the eyes of US observers, they were gathering intelligence on ship movements, tracking publicly available war production figures, and reading newspapers and conveying what they learned to German leaders (Friedman 2000:567). Meanwhile, the *New York Times* reporter Russell B. Porter traveled through Latin America in 1940 writing "overexcited dispatches on the Nazi threat," reporting that Germans had smuggled armored cars disguised as tractors into Colombia and that there were paramilitary units training in the forests (cited in Friedman 2000:570).

48. An online overview of the available US archival records can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/enemy-aliens-overview.html> (accessed August 7, 2016).

49. Karen Holmberg cites documents in "Settlement of estate of Paul Fejos," Box #DoR-11, relating to this draft speech, which Fejos edited. See Holmberg, "Report on the contents of WGF Archives," "Confidential for RGF [Richard G. Fox]," August 31, 2001, in Box #DoR-18. See also extended discussion of the political meanings of Nordic solidarity, 1923 to the present, in Carl Marklund, "Neutrality and Solidarity in Nordic Humanitarian Action," Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, London, January 2016 (<http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10227.pdf>).

As Friedman's careful study suggests, the official response to Latin American risks had some elements of hysteria. It expanded the economic warfare campaign, and while it was technically concerned with the domestic regulation of US firms (who were prohibited from trading with listed firms), in practice, any Latin American firm that did business with any listed firm would itself be listed and thereby frozen out of trade with the United States (Friedman 2000:575). In Mexico, historian Jurgen Buchenau (2005) argues, the list "ushered in a US witch-hunt . . . that ruined many legitimate small businesses" (100–101).

This perspective on "hemispheric security" provides some context for understanding the blacklisting of Wenner-Gren. By 1943 the blacklist was a 361-page document listing thousands of businesses and business owners around the world but with a strong emphasis on Latin America. Wenner-Gren was listed under both Mexico and Peru, on pages 194 and 223, rather than Sweden, but there were more than 300 Swedish businesses and business owners listed as well.⁵⁰ We mention these numbers not to suggest that they exonerate him but to point out that blacklisting alone—taken without any further evidence of "trading with the enemy" or Nazi sympathies—provides a weak signal of guilt. As several careful historical accounts have demonstrated, many companies and individuals on those lists were unfairly targeted.

It is likely that Wenner-Gren's business activities in Latin America, rather than any rumors of his Nazi affiliation, were most relevant to US concerns.⁵¹ Axel met Manuel Prado, president of Peru, in February 1939, during a trip around Latin America while he was exploring investment opportunities, including mineral interests in Latin America (Luciak 2012:20). By December 1939, he was supporting Fejos on a Peruvian archeological expedition. J. Edgar Hoover was carefully watching Wenner-Gren, and the FBI tracked his travels in the *Southern Cross* in ports from Latin America to the Pacific coast of North America.

50. The 1944 list is posted and searchable online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001118083> (accessed August 7, 2016).

51. Luciak cites in full a 1960 FBI memorandum that suggests that Wenner-Gren was feared because of his influence in Mexico. "In a memorandum from Ladd to the Director [of the FBI] dated 3/6/42 it was pointed out that the Bureau SIS reports since 12/1/1941 had covered activities of Wenner-Gren. During December 1941, information was developed that negotiations were under way leading up to the creation of an Export Control Board in Mexico which was to have an official status yet was to be financed exclusively by Axel Wenner-Gren. If the Board had been created in the form discussed, Wenner-Gren would have become the economic Czar of Mexico and it was determined that the information furnished the State Department relative to Wenner-Gren's plans in Mexico finally convinced them to recommend Wenner-Gren for the black list. Accordingly, just as Wenner-Gren's Export Control Board plan was about to receive the written and official approval of the President of Mexico, Wenner-Gren was placed on the American black list."

The FBI was also watching Paul Fejos's wife at the time, journalist Inga Arvad, who was sexually involved with at least two other men, the journalist Nils Bloch and a young naval intelligence officer Ensign John F. Kennedy, son of the powerful industrialist Joseph Kennedy, then United States ambassador to the United Kingdom. Arvad, a Danish journalist, had ties to Nazi leadership—she had interviewed Hitler and had been invited to Hermann Göring's wedding. She was therefore a suspicious person for US security officials (who knew she was involved with the young Kennedy). Hoover had her phone tapped and the conversations with Kennedy transcribed.⁵²

Others were watching Wenner-Gren, Arvad, and Fejos. A letter sent to Hoover on January 26, 1942, by Marion Hart of the eastern regional office of Friends of Democracy, a "non-sectarian, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization supported by voluntary contributions" based in New York, accused Wenner-Gren of using the Fejos expedition as a cover for spying. The note was sent, the writer said, because "I believe that the association under the protecting cloak of science of two men like Fejos and Wenner-Gren down in South America might be worth a little investigation. An archaeological expedition furnishes an excellent alibi for almost any sort of secret coming and going, and the fact that Pres. Prado of Peru is reputed to be an appeaser makes the setup about perfect for Axis espionage and sabotage."⁵³

This letter is in FBI files collected by WGF, and like many sources collected by the FBI during the war, it is best understood as a measure of public fears and beliefs rather than as a strictly factual account of activities or risks. It suggests at least that to some people, both Fejos and Wenner-Gren were suspicious characters during the war. The blacklisting trapped Wenner-Gren in Mexico for the remainder of the war, when the Bahamas refused him reentry (fig. 15). The Proclaimed List program was dismantled 1946–1948, so the blacklisting ended, but not because Wenner-Gren was "cleared" in any administrative sense. Meanwhile, Fejos began to be embedded in the anthropological community and in US academic and military circles. He began to consider himself to be a scientist, with the help of Yale anthropologist Cornelius Osgood.

The Cultivation of Expertise and Patronage

While Fejos had apparently mastered the rough-and-tumble of fieldwork—the documentation of archeological sites and

52. Inga Arvad's romance with the young ensign John F. Kennedy from 1941 to 1942 coincided with her marriage to Fejos 1936–1942. It was the subject of a farcical play, *Inga Binga* (JFK's nickname for her), written by Julian Wiles and based on FBI documents. In 1991, it was also the subject of a documentary film, *John F. Kennedy and the Nazi Spy*. This film is described at <http://www.nytimes.com/movies/movie/26353/John-F-Kennedy-and-the-Nazi-Spy/overview> (accessed August 7, 2016).

53. Marion Hart to J. Edgar Hoover, in Axel Wenner-Gren file from the National Archives and Records Administration, January 26, 1942, Box #TK, WGF.



Figure 15. Shangri-la, the Wenner-Grens' Paradise Island home, Nassau, Bahamas (courtesy of Örjan Lindroth).

the engagement with isolated groups—he did not have the expertise to turn these experiences into a passable scientific text, the coin of the realm in the academic world of anthropology. He believed that publishing his fieldwork experience was an important rite of passage that would allow him to cultivate his own reputation and make inroads into the discipline.⁵⁴ For that, he needed a culture broker, a mentor. One such figure was Yale anthropologist Cornelius Osgood. Osgood was a Yale University scholar of cultures of the Arctic and East Asia and curator of the anthropology department of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale from 1934 to 1973 and the museum's associate director (fig. 16). He published work on Athabascan tribes of northern Canada and Alaska and wrote a well-reviewed memoir, *Winter*, about his experiences as an unprepared ethnographer on his first winter in the field in the late 1920s. His books included *The Koreans and Their Culture* in 1951 and *Village Life in Old*

China in 1963.⁵⁵ Osgood claimed, in his extensive personal memoir, to have contributed to molding Fejos into a respectable member of the anthropological community and, in turn, established a funding relationship between Yale and the nascent Viking Fund.

It is difficult to assess the accuracy of Osgood's self-reports; in his memoir, he is frequently self-aggrandizing, a personality trait that has been acknowledged by those who knew him when he was still at Yale. He was, at best, an unreliable narrator, at worst a fabulist. This unpublished memoir, held in a private collection in New Haven, may well be as fanciful as Fejos's own accounts of his life, yet it provides some tantalizing perspectives on the early years at the Viking Fund.

It is, however, uncontested that Osgood embraced the new Viking Fund and its inexperienced scientific director and played a formal role in its early efforts to establish its legitimacy as an anthropological foundation. According to Osgood, his relationship with Fejos began in June of 1942, when the Viking Fund attempted to donate to the Peabody Museum

54. Historians and sociologists of science have written extensively on publication as a form of credibility and authority. See, e.g., Latour (1987), Lenoir (1997), Gieryn (1999), and Baldwin (2015).

55. "Dr. Cornelius Osgood Dies: Ex-curator of Yale Museum," *New York Times*, January 7, 1985.



Figure 16. Cornelius Osgood (courtesy of Jessica Helfand).

ethnographic materials from Fejos's upper Amazon River expedition. Richard C. Hunt, then the president of the Viking Fund, had used his Yale connections to contact the university's president, Charles Seymour, who reached out to Osgood.⁵⁶ Osgood was in charge of such acquisitions and was eager to expand Yale's collections of South American material culture.

Fejos, Hunt, and Osgood met at the Viking Fund offices in Rockefeller Center, where Osgood was quickly brought up to speed about the new Viking Fund. Osgood recollected that, "except for the fact that I immediately liked him, [Fejos's] role was by no means as clear as Richard Hunt's." It was at that meeting that Osgood learned that Fejos had drafted a manuscript of his fieldwork among the Yagua, about which he felt insecure. Osgood believed that Fejos saw in him someone who might be able to transform his undisciplined reflections into a scholarly text.

Osgood recognized this as an opportunity to fulfill his own ambitions for cultivating the anthropology department at Yale. He claims that at that initial meeting, he "expressed the wish that the Viking Fund money would be channeled toward a rising profession with exceptional need." He also shrewdly assessed Fejos as the key player in this discussion. Hunt, Osgood observed, was merely "interested in preserving his lucrative role as Wenner-Gren's attorney," while he sized up Fejos as the one who "actually made the decisions." When Osgood expressed his hopes that the new foundation would

56. In the memoir, Osgood describes his first meeting with Hunt: "Although I did not know it at the moment, he represented a line of rich and eminent New Yorkers who belonged to the socially elect summer colony with houses at Newport. Besides being the senior partner of a distinguished metropolitan New York law firm, he was also an alumnus of Yale who called its dignified President 'Charley' with the uttermost assurance."

support anthropology, "in a matter of seconds, I could see that I had merely struck like a fish at the spinner that Paul Fejos had dangled in front of my eyes. His eagerness to develop the idea made his intentions obvious."

Osgood claimed, in his memoir, that the idea for the Viking Fund Publication Series emerged at that lunch, inspired by a prototype already in production at Yale.⁵⁷ Osgood reflected that "The opportunity to find an outlet to disseminate one's research is irresistible to anthropologists. Anyone who will provide it will in large measure reap the reward of the great investment that goes into the training of the scholars and the implementing of their research." What also emerged at lunch were Fejos and Hunt's own anxieties about their affiliation with Axel Wenner-Gren. Osgood recalled that "Before we were through the question of Axel Wenner-Gren's sympathies with the Nazi's came into the conversation, especially involving his entertainment of Göring in Sweden." Osgood claims that Fejos and Hunt took pains to make clear that the finances of the Viking Fund were autonomous from the donor, that the money was not tainted. For Osgood, this was an unnecessary exercise: "It was obvious they were trying to give me security of a kind that I did not need. I responded by saying that if the money we had available could be expended without any direct influence, I would not care if it came from the devil."⁵⁸

Shortly thereafter, the Viking Fund pledged \$15,000 to Yale for its Caribbean Anthropological Program and appointed Osgood editor of the new Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology (VFPA). He promptly became an active mentor to Fejos, providing entree to elite academic circles at a critical moment in the history of the Viking Fund. Osgood shepherded Fejos's Peruvian fieldwork into publishable form (in legitimating publications roughly comparable to a doctoral dissertation), signed Fejos up for membership in the relevant professional societies, and introduced him to key leaders in the anthropological community. Later he withdrew almost entirely (for a long list of reasons recounted in his unpublished memoir, including a number of personality conflicts).

When Osgood arranged for Fejos's membership in the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), he knew that these professional "introductions" were not particularly remarkable or difficult to obtain, but in his memoir he said that to the novice Fejos, they were "symbols of belonging." Osgood characterized their relationship as one of friendship and mutual professional benefit: "He not only liked me, but I was cutting a wide road over which he could move into that segment of the academic world to which he had become wholly devoted."

57. This is the Yale University Publications in Anthropology, begun in 1936. See <http://peabody.yale.edu/scientific-publications/yale-university-publications-anthropology-titles> (accessed August 7, 2016).

58. The quotations in this section come from vol. 14 of "Fallen Leaves," Osgood's unpublished memoir.

The landmark on the wide road was the publication of Fejos's fieldwork among the Yagua as part of the newly created VFPA (Fejos 1943, 1944). On his first Wenner-Gren expedition in Peru, Fejos and his group of workers had started at Machu Picchu (described by Hiram Bingham in 1911) and then went south along Incan roads until they encountered two new Incan cities, Phuyu-Pata-Marka and Sayaq-Marka, "in one of the most inaccessible regions of the Eastern Andes" (fig. 17).⁵⁹ Later Fejos spent a year with the Yagua, a group in northeastern Peru, documenting their practices and cultures. Osgood helped Fejos transform his field notes into two separate scholarly documents, both published under the imprimatur of the VFPA in its first years. These two publications by the anthropological neophyte Fejos bracketed "another of the most conservative kind of scholarly work," Stanley Newman's (1944) "Yokuts Language of California."

The publication of Newman's linguistic analysis in between the more descriptive work by Fejos helped legitimate the series as a whole in the eyes of anthropologists. By choosing to publish a very traditional study of Native American linguistics in this series, Osgood was placing Fejos in unimpeachable company. (Tellingly, Osgood ordered only 300 copies to be printed of the Yagua monograph but 1,000 of all subsequent VFPA publications.) Newman had been a student of Edward Sapir, and he collected his data on the Yokuts from 1930 to 1931, completing his doctoral dissertation at Yale on the subject in 1936. The VFPA volume was basically his dissertation, which, with the support of the Viking Fund, Osgood had sent free to 302 institutions and libraries around the world and to 242 individual anthropologists, only 151 of these based in the United States. Osgood was thinking internationally and trying to use his existing connections to Yale to make the Viking Fund generally known in major centers of anthropological research.

The strategy worked. In his enthusiastic review of the Newman volume, Harry Hoijer of the University of California, Los Angeles, said that "mention should also be made of the Viking Fund, the publishers of this volume, who are new to the field of anthropological publication. This book, by reason of the

59. Fejos's confusion about what he was seeing as he encountered spectacular Incan roads and tunnels is intriguing. "Evidence from native guides is not always trustworthy," he reported. "For instance we have received the information that the road was used by cattle rustlers, who had reconstructed the ancient road, but none of the peons of the Expedition could give any information of drilling or blasting in modern times. . . . There is some evidence which suggests that the holes may have been drilled by the megalithic race who built the highway of which this tunnel is an integral part." Report, September 1941, p. 1, Box #MF33, WGF. "Camp #61 on the southern shore of the Vilcanota," "The Wenner Gren Scientific Expedition to Hispanic America," Fejos to the board of the Viking Fund, September 5, 1941, Box 72, File GR #4. "Wenner-Gren Scientific Expedition to Hispanic America—to uncover and survey [sic] pre-Oclumbian [sic] ruin sites in Cordilleras of Rio Vilcabamba, SE Peru," June 19, 1941 (report, p. 6; report, September 1941, p. 1), Box #MF33 (stored at Iron Mountain).



Figure 17. Paul Fejos in the Andes during the Wenner-Gren expedition to Hispanic America, 1941 (WGF archives).

painstaking care that has so obviously been taken to produce a well-designed and wholly accurate typographical job, will be welcomed by linguists in the American field, who often find it difficult and expensive to get their work into print." He specifically called out Osgood, "the editor of the new series," who he said should be "congratulated on this and others of the publications sponsored by the Fund" (Hoijer 1944:537).

Osgood's next author was Fejos (1944), again, this time for the archeological explorations in Peru. Osgood was defensive about the necessity of twice featuring his patron in the VFPA's first years, remarking that he would not have published Fejos's two volumes if he had not considered them "intrinsically to be of real value." Publishing Fejos's first book on the Yagua required a lot of work, not least because Fejos did not speak English "with anything like perfection, as it was perhaps his fourth or fifth language. Furthermore, he was not sophisticated as a publishing scientist." Osgood claims he actively managed the problem of Fejos's inexperience with scientific writing and poor English language skills by hiring a research assistant to rewrite Fejos's drafts. The Viking Fund was able to offer "generous and immediate payment" to this research assistant as well as certain "advantages that might indirectly accrue by his association with the Fund." While it is difficult to judge the quality of the Yagua monograph (Fejos 1943)—it did not

receive any encomiums similar to Newman's volume—it continues to be cited by anthropologists, as do his archaeological explorations (Fejos 1944).

To bolster the reputation of the VFPA, Osgood secured a contribution from Alfred Kroeber, “a man who was well on his way to being recognized as the greatest living anthropologist in the Western Hemisphere, or for that matter anywhere.” After this volume came out, the VFPA would have provided “contributions in the three main fields of the discipline and, if Paul's work was considered something less than the profession's best, it would be offset by those of the other two authors,” Osgood wrote. Ironically, in Osgood's telling, Kroeber “introduced a new note to the complications of a publisher,” initially hesitating to publish with the series because “he was afraid that his reputation might suffer from having one of his volumes printed in a series financed by Axel Wenner-Gren, a man to whom pro-Nazi sympathies had been attributed.” Osgood was able to persuade Kroeber that the money was completely out of the control of Wenner-Gren, boasting that, “also, Kroeber could see that I had a first-class train of publications under way. He climbed aboard.”

Kroeber's (1944) study, *Peruvian Archeology in 1942*, a summary of the 2 months he had recently spent in Peru, was well received. For Osgood, bringing Kroeber into the Viking Fund orbit proved to be a savvy move. Kroeber remained engaged with the Viking Fund/WGF for the rest of his life. He was one of the organizers of symposium 14, “Anthropological Horizons,” at Burg Wartenstein from September 18 to 24, 1960, and then died in Paris on October 5, age 85, on his way home from this meeting (fig. 18).

In 1947 Osgood withdrew from the Viking Fund and the publication series, declaring in his memoir that he had “accomplished the difficult things by starting the series and by publishing Paul's monographs while at the same time establishing a precedent for putting out first class monographs in the diverse fields of anthropology. . . . I had given what I had to give and I was tired.” Osgood, a notoriously difficult individual, may have also exhausted Fejos's generosity in every sense of the word (Coniff 2016:232–233). With a note of bitterness, Osgood expressed frustration for having been sidelined as the Viking Fund gained prestige, alleging that Fejos had misled him about the role he would be able to play. Fejos, he griped, “had not known any anthropologists at the beginning; now he had an enlarging coterie of contacts and was seeing his road open to the future,” and Osgood would no longer be needed to pave the way.

Osgood also complained that his research assistant, David Bidney (by this time listed as research associate at the Viking Fund) had “become ensconced on the [VF] payroll” and had spoken ill of Osgood to Fejos.⁶⁰ This left a “bitter taste” in



Figure 18. Paul Fejos and Alfred Kroeber at Burg Wartenstein, 1960 (WGF archives).

Osgood's mouth. “More important” than Fejos's opinion of Osgood, however, was Osgood's observation of an emerging dynamic between Fejos and Axel Wenner-Gren that he found distasteful. He had observed Fejos's “desire to undertake activities that would personally impress, and therefore please, Axel Wenner-Gren.” Chief among them was Fejos's decision to purchase “an expensive stone-fronted residence at 14 E 71st street as a permanent home for the Fund.” This gratuitous use of funds for what Osgood called “appearances” offended his WASP sensibilities. He predicted—incorrectly—that the brownstone would not draw scholars to Viking Fund events.

Despite this more formal parting of the ways and Osgood's private bitterness, the two men continued to meet socially. Fejos “always pressed money” on Osgood for projects at Yale, and Osgood, in return, “gave him the same frank advice when he asked for it even though it often hurt him.” Feeling this to be a fair exchange, Osgood concluded, he “remained my most intimate friend.” Osgood even helped Fejos negotiate a teaching post at Yale in 1950–1951 (Bidney 1964).

After Osgood's departure, the VFPA continued with great success. Later editors were almost a roundup of key members of the WGF network, including Ralph Linton (1948–1951),

60. Bidney, who had a PhD when he first arrived at the Viking Fund, stayed on as research associate until 1950. He was then hired as an associate professor of anthropology at Indiana University in Bloomington,

Indiana. His papers are preserved at Indiana University. He became a scholar of Spinoza and wrote a book called *Theoretical Anthropology* (<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?brand=general&docId=InU-Ar-VAA2661&doc.view=print>).

A. Irving Hallowell (1951–1955), Sherwood L. Washburn (1956–1961), Sol Tax (1962–1970, while he was also the editor of *Current Anthropology*), Colin M. Turnbull (1971–1976), and finally Arthur Jelinek (1976–1979). By 1979 the VFPA had produced 57 volumes, including Walter Dyk's (1947) still admired ethnographic “autobiography” of a Navaho and Sherwood Washburn's (1962) *The Social Life of Early Man*. The Spuhler (1967) volume on genetic diversity and human behavior captured the state of human behavior genetics at a critical moment, and other volumes on ethnomusicology, linguistics, and archaeology had a similar effect (Braidwood and Willey 1962; Greenberg 1957; Heizer and Cook 1960; Hoiyer and Osgood 1946; Merriam 1967; Slobin 1976; Watson 1979). The series ended in 1979 because of budget pressures and a changing publication landscape for anthropology.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the brownstone that Osgood considered so ill advised had become a critical resource for the anthropological community, an experimental site, and a key node in the fund's social and intellectual networks.

Headquarters: The Brownstone at 14 East 71st Street

In April of 1945, the Viking Fund established its headquarters off Fifth Avenue on Manhattan's Upper East Side at 14 East 71st Street. The cost did not come out of the endowment: Axel Wenner-Gren provided special funds to purchase the home for the Viking Fund, so in effect it constituted a second gift of a significant asset to the foundation. Though the space is often casually referred to as the “brownstone,” it was, more accurately, a mansion. Built in 1911 by a William W. Cook, a wealthy lawyer, the approximately 17,500-square-foot home had been designed by architects York and Sawyer for occupancy by Cook and his staff of servants. It was purchased “for \$48,000 plus an additional amount for legal and other expenses in connection with the purchase, for an aggregate outlay of \$62,000.”⁶²

The brownstone became an important symbol of the foundation, its grandeur and location a signifier that it had joined the pantheon of foundation headquarters in ornate mansions on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. A photograph of its beautiful street view—with upper balconies, ornate front gates, and decorative columns and porticos—appeared as a full page at the beginning of every annual report of WGF for 30 years from 1946 to 1977 (fig. 19). It was “the New York headquarters,” a place for anthropology on the Upper East



Figure 19. Wenner-Gren offices at 14 East 71st Street, New York City (WGF archives).

Side. Its luxurious interiors gave shape to the lofty aspirations of those who passed through its gilded doors.

One of the new assistants hired to help with setting up the brownstone was Lita Binns. Binns, later Fejos and then Osmundsen, was to become one of the most important leaders at WGF, eventually director of research and then president. She was not yet 20 years old, a mathematics and anthropology major at Hunter College, when she took a job at the Viking Fund unpacking books and washing walls at the new headquarters (just a few blocks from Hunter). According to a profile written many years later by Mary Douglas, “she was hired in spite of the Director's [Fejos's] fears that she was too good-looking to be serious” (Douglas 1986:521).

In 1954 a reporter from the *New Yorker* visited the mansion, noting that it was one of a number of gilded age “imitation-Renaissance *palazzi*” in the neighborhood that had been remodeled for use by foundations. “We don't know how many . . . [foundations] are currently in residence on the East Side,” the visitor wrote, “but there must be a couple dozen at least, and the old houses seem to suit the Foundation spirit to a T, or maybe a \$. And why not, since the getting of fortunes and

61. A complete list of all VFPA volumes is available at <http://www.wennergren.org/history/journals-publications/viking-fund-publications/list-vfpa-volumes> (accessed August 7, 2016).

62. “14 E. 71st St Building—Historical Background,” in “The Wenner-Gren Foundation Headquarters, 14 East 71st St” folder, Box #BoT-6, WGF. This would be about \$840,000 in 2016, but the real estate site Zillow in March 2016 estimated the value of 14 East 71st Street at \$12.7 million, with several other houses on the block closer to \$16 million.

spending of them are in certain respects as alike as inhaling and exhaling.”⁶³

With the acquisition of this space, Fejos prepared to breathe life into American anthropology, remarking in his year-end report that the organization had acquired the “facilities which will enable it to take its place as a major institution for anthropological research and as a meeting place for scientists and scholars interested in the discussion of problems bearing on the integration of the science of man. It is expected that the Fund will gradually assume the functions of a central clearing house, so to speak, for all those who are either actively engaged in anthropological research or are concerned with the practical applications of anthropology to contemporary social problems.”⁶⁴

Fejos set about repurposing the impressive architecture of the mansion (including retrofitting it with an air conditioner manufactured by Servel, of course) to enable it to fulfill its potential as a clearinghouse, but also a home, for anthropology. Its five floors, basement, and subbasement—the site of machine, carpentry, and paint shops—were refurbished with exacting care while maintaining much of the grandeur that characterized the original construction. The house was highly ornamented and luxurious, each aspect of its décor and arrangement carefully considered by the foundation to cultivate an air of gravitas and glamour (fig. 20). A reception area led to a waiting room tastefully adorned with carefully selected artifacts and two carved chairs flanking a fireplace. There was a vaulted ceiling and marble inlaid floor. The wood-paneled meeting room featured an especially ornate fireplace opposite a portrait (eventually) of the foundation’s first president, Richard C. Hunt, personal lawyer to Axel Wenner-Gren and a director of Electrolux Corporation, USA, who had helped Wenner-Gren create the fund in 1941 (he served as president until his death in 1954, when Fejos took over). The former wine cellar was turned into a mail room and, as the visitor from the *New Yorker* observed, “numerous pantries” had become “just-the-right-size repositories for tape recorders, oscilloscopes, and audio-oscillators, which anthropologists require for linguistic research and musicology.”

There was a grand main staircase, with marble and hardwood finish, that occupied a third of the floor space on each of the first to the fourth floors.⁶⁵ There, on the second floor, was the main conference room with a capacity of 75 people, the site of the invitation-only supper conferences. It adjoined a wood-paneled conference room used for smaller receptions and meetings. There was also a library and reading room with massive windows overlooking 71st Street and a table running the length of the room. This library was meant to cultivate

63. These included the Mellon, Sloan, Rockefeller, and Ford foundations.

64. “Annual Report on the Fund’s Activities for the Year Ended January 31, 1946,” WGF.

65. “14 E. 71st St Building—Historical Background,” in “The Wenner-Gren Foundation Headquarters, 14 East 71st St” folder, Box #BoT-6, WGF.

the foundation as not only a patron but also a site of inquiry and erudition; it was to be a space to display works that were hard to find but considered fundamental to the anthropological canon. Built-in bookshelves lined the walls, though the holdings were vast enough that many more of them were stored in stacks on the third and fourth floors and in the basement, the latter of which was the site of a large kitchen as well as sound and photo laboratories, formerly the laundry.

Fejos’s office was watched over by a large photo of Axel Wenner-Gren (still on display in an office at WGF offices in New York today). A visitor who intended to make a pitch for funding or discuss a scheme would visit with Fejos in his office. They might sit on overstuffed leather couches, a massive world map indicating all the places the foundation had funded research (now hanging in the foyer of the Park Avenue South offices; fig. 20). This took up most of the wall behind Fejos’s desk. Viking Fund medals (facsimiles of which are now displayed in the front of the foundation’s current offices) rested on the mantle of still another fireplace (fig. 21). Designed by Mexican artist and anthropologist Miguel Covarrubias, these 3-inch-diameter medals in heavy bronze depict four dancers meant to represent human groups in their biological unity and their cultural diversity. Until 2016, Covarrubias’s design served as the logo of the foundation, and between 1946 and 2005, the medal was awarded for distinguished research and publication to leading anthropologists including Kroeber, Alfred Kidder, and George Armelagos.⁶⁶

Executive offices on the third floor were complemented by space for archiving important foundation-related documents, archives having apparently been a priority very early in the foundation’s history. Guest offices on the fourth floor contained a reproduction of fragments of a mural found during excavations at Teotihuacan near Mexico City, which had been partially subsidized by a foundation grant. The reproduction, installed on the fourth floor landing, was painted by Mateo A. Saldana in 1947 and acquired the following year from the Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City (fig. 20).⁶⁷

One such long-term guest at the 71st Street offices was the Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who had been exiled from the Church in Europe for his he-

66. In 1946, the board of directors of the Viking Fund instituted an annual award for distinguished research or publication. The prize quickly became the most prestigious anthropological honor in North America, with Alfred Kroeber, Alfred Kidder, and Franz Weidenreich being the first cohort of recipients. Until 1961, the recipients for the prize were selected by their respective societies: the AAA, SAA, and AAPA. After 1961, associates of *Current Anthropology* elected the awardee. Later, WGF appointed a special international committee to reflect the four subfields of anthropology to intermittently confer the prize on a single individual. The last medal was awarded to George Armelagos in 2005.

67. “30 Nov 1979. Sale of 14 E 71st St, NY, NY to Thomas S. Weary, Trustee for Delphic Trust,” in folder “Sale of 14 E 71st St. All Correspondence with Buyer,” Box #BoT-6, WGF.



Figure 20. Brownstone interior montage: *upper left*, fourth-floor staircase; *upper right*, fifth-floor “skull” closet; *middle left*, third floor, director of research office; *middle right*, third floor, “gals Friday” workstation; *bottom left*, first-floor waiting room; *bottom right*, first-floor staircase (WGF archives).

retical views about evolution and arrived in New York City in December of 1951.⁶⁸ Though he slept at the clergy house of a

68. Fejos to George B. Barbour, December 3, 1951, in folder “Teilhard de Chardin—1950–1963, Misc No 1,” Box #MF 103-B, WGF.

nearby Jesuit church, Teilhard considered himself intellectually “temporarily lodged at the WGF, which, on Fejos’ invitation, opened wide its arms when I arrived here in November from South Africa.” He could meet “all the interesting American people” and use the time to “profit from my stay here to



Figure 21. Viking Fund Medal front and back, designed by Miguel Covarrubias in 1948. The foundation paid Covarrubias \$500 for the design (WGF archives).

clarify and propagate my ideas on the subject” of humanism and anthropology.⁶⁹

While at the headquarters in New York, Teilhard helped to establish the “Early Man in Africa” program for the foundation (Aiello 2011; Schultz 1961). Not only did the foundation provide him with office space, it supported him logistically. Fejos helped him with extensions of his visa and paid for travel expenses while he was in the United States, including round trip rail journey to Berkeley, California, in 1952. When Teilhard died in April 1955, he was identified in the *New York Times* obituary as a “research aide of Wenner-Gren Foundation” in its headline, and the text of the obituary was copied verbatim from the press release prepared by WGF.⁷⁰

While Teilhard was one of the more illustrious long-term occupants of the offices at the brownstone, most days of the week the house was filled with the small but industrious foundation staff—those who coordinated grants and conferences, managed the library, and so forth—who occupied an additional eight offices on the fifth floor. These staff members used a second, back stairway that linked all floors from the cellar to the roof. (An elevator, installed shortly after the building was acquired, went from the basement to the fourth floor.) Also on the fifth floor was a suite of technical spaces, including a

drafting room, an X-ray and ultraviolet viewing laboratory (former bathrooms), a chemistry lab, and a physical lab equipped with microscopes for examining bones and other artifacts (former servants’ quarters). The former chauffeur’s closet had also been transformed into a storage space for skulls (fig. 20). The *New Yorker* reporter, who in 1954 got a rare glimpse of this particular space, described it as “a grisly array of skulls. Dr. Fejos told us that a few of them were real and that the rest were mostly reproductions of the skulls of such celebrated anthropological discoveries as the Solo man and the Tepexpan man” (since proved to be totally modern). “We use the real skulls to practice our skull-measuring technique on,” Dr. Fejos said. “When it comes to measuring skulls, you can’t afford to get rusty” (Gill and Bunzel 1954). Here, at the distinguished headquarters of the brownstone, began the supper conferences, informal meetings, and seminars that helped make the foundation a central node in a vast and international network of scholars with investments in anthropology. The foundation quickly emerged as a resource for organizing anthropologists who wished to reinvent their field after serving in the Second World War.

Reorganizing Anthropologists: Supper Conferences and Summer Seminars

In anthropology, as in many scientific disciplines in the United States, the war years interrupted the normal arc of professional life.⁷¹ Anthropologists served actively in the armed

69. De Chardin to A. C. Blanc, February 28, 1952, *ibid.*

70. This arrangement served the foundation as much as it did Teilhard; the headline for his April 15, 1955, obituary in the *New York Times* read, “Father Teilhard Scientist, Was 73. Co-discoverer of Peking Man is Dead—Research Aide of Wenner-Gren Foundation.” This text had been reprinted verbatim from a press release prepared by WGF.

71. This section is drawn largely from the work of Little and Kaplan (2010).

forces and also worked on projects relating to scientific mobilization through the federal Office of Scientific Research and Development, run by the indefatigable Vannevar Bush.⁷² They were brought in as experts for the analysis of the culture and personality of the enemy (e.g., Ruth Benedict analyzed the Japanese in a book published in 1946, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, which became required reading for occupation forces in Japan). Or they were sent to the Western internment camps to help manage Japanese American prisoners held there. Some of the most prominent ethnographers of the era worked in the camps, including Robert Redfield, Conrad Arensberg, Edward Spicer, and Solon Kimball (Starn 1986).

Like many other scientists, anthropologists even worked on problems unrelated to their own special expertise. Linguists helped with censorship and translation but also with planning programs at the Board of Economic Warfare. Biological anthropologists developed psychological testing programs. Cultural anthropologists worked as planners for the Strategic Bombing Survey. And archeologists worked in military intelligence or in the Chemical Warfare Service. Some anthropologists, including Gregory Bateson, even joined the Office of Strategic Services (Price 2008:29–39). Fejos himself made a “direct contribution to the war effort, upon request of the War Department,” in his lectures at the Far Eastern Area and Language School of Stanford University.⁷³

One American Association for the Advancement of Science report found that about one-half of all anthropologists in the United States were engaged full-time in the war effort, and “most of the rest are doing part time work” (cited in Price 2008:25). When the war finally ended, the academic community had been disrupted for at least 3 years. Networks were frayed and scholars were out of touch. Research programs had been set aside to do war work. Some anthropologists had even experienced the trauma of frontline and classified service.⁷⁴ It was in this context that WGF and its beautiful brownstone became a critical social and professional space, a place for planning, thinking, and reconnecting. Suddenly the war was over, and anthropologists had an opportunity to think about what shape they wanted their discipline to take.

One of the first WGF programs, begun during the war in 1944 (and before the purchase of the brownstone), involved nothing more novel than a visiting speaker and an elegant dinner, conventional activities in academic life but given a

particular gleam by the privations of the war (fig. 22). In this way, the dinners created a justification for drawing people together from around the region and cultivating conversations that the organizers hoped would serve an agenda-setting function for the field. By virtue of providing the structure, WGF would come to be linked with the content. Fejos said in his 1944 annual report that the monthly supper conferences began with a view to “broadening” the Viking Fund’s “contacts with accredited anthropologists” and encouraging discussion and research among them. The following spring, after the brownstone became the new home of WGF, it provided a highly suitable setting for these suppers.

Early on, the foundation demonstrated an awareness of the power of posterity; it could enhance its authority as a key patron of anthropology by also cultivating an archive of its early activities. In the fall of 1946, some of the monthly talks and question sessions began to be recorded, and these tape recordings now constitute a critical resource for developing an understanding of the people and ideas of postwar anthropology. One can listen to the recorded voices of Raymond Dart, Clifford Geertz, and Ashley Montagu. In one recording from 1947, now posted on the WGF website, Ruth Benedict discusses studying “civilized nations” instead of the “primitive populations” that had been seen as the natural province of anthropology. Teilhard de Chardin speaks in a 1948 recording of the quiet ways of human socialization, and in a March 1962 recording, Raymond Firth discusses culture while disavowing any interest in the popular C. P. Snow notion of “two cultures” that was then reverberating through academic circles.⁷⁵ L. S. B. Leakey’s 1962 discussion of his findings at Olduvai Gorge is riveting history of science, as he anticipates objections to his ideas and explains the uncertainties of his data.⁷⁶

Cultural anthropologist Richard Fox, later WGF president, attended one of these supper conferences in 1966 when he was “wet behind the ears,” and he recalled the intensity of the debate that night. Evans-Pritchard was the speaker, and the collected anthropologists “began to get after him like crazy . . . really badgering him about the anthropology he had done and what he had missed with the Nuer and half a dozen other things. He was not very young and not in good health and they did not show him any mercy. I got the feeling that was the way it was supposed to be—I thought it would be this chummy thing but it was not. It was intense.”⁷⁷

It was at one of these supper conferences that planning began for one of the new Viking Fund’s most important initiatives, the Summer Seminars in Physical Anthropology. These, an even more intense extension of the supper club concept, built on the idea of bringing together professionals and students to discuss and explore new ideas in the profession. In-

72. The best study of Bush and his critical role in American science policy is Zachary (1999). Note that Zachary discusses Bush’s fondness for the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC, an important watering hole for the DC anthropology community.

73. Described in “Report of the President, January 31, 1945,” in “Report on the Fund’s Activities for the Year Ended January 31, 1945, Viking Fund,” p. 8, WGF.

74. Price’s (2008:xi–xix, 18–26) study of anthropologists during the Second World War finds both frontline and classified service, and some anthropologists later chose not to speak about their experiences during the war.

75. On the C. P. Snow debate, one helpful essay is Burnett (1999).

76. All accessed on the WGF website (<http://www.wennergren.org/history/conferences-seminars-symposia/supper-conferences>, accessed August 7, 2016).

77. Phone interview, Richard Fox with Susan Lindee, August 28, 2015.



Figure 22. *Left*, Alfred Kroeber giving a supper conference at the brownstone in the late 1940s or early 1950s. *Right*, Francis L. K. Hsu giving a supper conference, “Are They Happy in the People’s Republic of China,” in 1973 (WGF archives).

deed, they began with a modest proposal for a single seminar presented by Sherwood Washburn at a Viking Fund supper conference in October of 1945.⁷⁸ Later that month invitations were sent to 22 leading members of the field to see whether they would be interested in participating. “At present,” Washburn and Fejos wrote in their invitation, “physical anthropologists are too isolated for a cooperative attack on important issues to be possible. The aim of the seminar will be to deliberate, to do research and to publish.”⁷⁹

The responses were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and highlighted the need for such a program to help remake the field following a war that had not only posed real challenges to the racial essentialism that had characterized the field before but also left its members scattered and out of touch with each other. For instance, Joseph Birdsell, who had been serving in the air force, responded to the query with the observation that “many of us in the armed forces have been more or less completely removed from our natural fields of research for a 2- or 3-year period, and a professional seminar of this type would be extremely valuable to those of us who will have recently returned to our academic fields of investigation.”⁸⁰ Al Damon, writing from his post at the Headquarters for Air Technical Service Command of the US Army in Dayton, Ohio, agreed, pointing out that “the seminar could be extremely valuable, especially to men who may have been out of the professional current during the war, by allowing them to catch up with re-

cent developments and in providing stimulating contacts with colleagues.” He also suggested that the seminar be an annual affair, proposing that “The next summer session could provide an opportunity to present the results for discussion and integration, with the ultimate aim of publishing an annual volume on selected aspects of physical anthropology. During the same session, the research program for the next year could be organized.”⁸¹

This is precisely what happened, with the seminars imagined as physical anthropological analogs to the famed and long-running Woods Hole summer sessions for biologists (Pauly 1988). Instead of a seaside retreat, members of the first seminar would meet twice a week for 6 weeks at the foundation’s comfortable headquarters on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Among the 36 attendees, collaborative fieldwork was encouraged, and incipient critique of racial classification took hold. Subsequent seminars, also held at the brownstone, followed this pattern of reviewing older traditions and providing instruction in newer methods and conceptual approaches. Adding to the spirit of innovation was the fact that all of the instructors had earned their PhDs no more than 10 years earlier, though more senior luminaries in the field made periodic guest appearances.

The success of the first summer seminar led to a huge spike in enrollment in subsequent years: 93 in 1947, 84 in 1948, and 116 in 1949. The 1950 seminar followed almost immediately on the groundbreaking “Cold Spring Harbor Fifteenth Annual Symposium on Quantitative Biology on the Origin and Evolution of Man” (Warren 1950), which was jointly organized by Theodosius Dobzhansky and Washburn. This important symposium, which helped inaugurate the field of human population genetics, was also made possible through funding from

78. Eموke Szathmáry (1991) provides a comprehensive review of the contributions of Viking Fund/WGF to bio anthro in their 50th-anniversary report.

79. Letter from Fejos and Washburn to potential participants, October 25, 1945, in folder “Grant 141—Summer Seminars in Phys Anthropology & Yearbook of Physical Anthropology, 1945–1948,” Box #MF-2, WGF.

80. Birdsell to Washburn and Fejos, November 5, 1945, *ibid*.

81. Damon to Washburn and Fejos, November 13, 1945, *ibid*.

WGF. Human evolution was an enduring concern, though through the years participants brought a range of perspectives to bear on the subject.

There were ultimately six summer seminars held in New York City between 1946 and 1951 that set the stage for the growth of physical anthropology during the second half of the twentieth century. Attendance at the summer seminars tracked very closely to the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) annual meetings during those years. However, in contrast to the AAPA annual meetings, the summer seminars attracted many younger members of the field who were interested in newer approaches to physical anthropology. Washburn, probably more than anyone else in the postwar period, was responsible for the transformation of physical anthropology from a descriptive, typologically oriented science into one in which modern scientific principles were applied. The summer seminars helped to define this transition and clarified and enriched ideas that were published in Washburn's (1951) field-defining paper on the "New Physical Anthropology." Accordingly, the last summer seminar to be held in New York City, in 1951, focused on defining the scope of physical anthropology, which foreshadowed contemporary subareas: evolution, fossil studies, primate studies, anthropometry and measurements, genetics and typology, human ecology, human growth, constitution, and applied physical anthropology.

Two additional seminars were held outside of New York City in 1953 and 1955, in Boston at the Forsyth Dental Infirmary for Children and in Washington, DC, at the Smithsonian, respectively. (In 1952, the foundation and Washburn were preoccupied with the International Symposium on Anthropology.) WGF continued to provide funding for these two seminars, the first of which focused on the relevance of physical anthropology for medical and dental research. The latter Smithsonian seminar, which was perhaps the most "applied" of all, emphasized the role of physical anthropology in the field of human identification. It came at the end of the Korean War, when physical anthropologists were involved with the identification of those killed in the conflict. Given its location in Washington, DC, it attracted representatives from the FBI, the US Public Health Service, and the National Institute of Dental Research.

From the beginning, Washburn, believing that the field needed a means of learning about the insights of the summer seminars, appointed Gabriel L. Lasker—who had served as a conscientious objector during the war—to summarize the state of physical anthropology and reprint important papers that had been published in the preceding year. This became the *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology*, founded in 1946. In this way the summer seminars and the yearbook were linked, as it was thought that the latter would inform those who had been unable to attend. In general, the yearbook included a summary of the seminar, a review of the year's contributions to physical anthropology, and reprints of relevant papers not easily accessible, and it was distributed to interested anthropologists at no charge during these years. The Viking Fund/Wenner-Gren was the sole funder of the production and distribution of the

yearbook until 1953, at which point it became shared by the AAPA, the Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico. With the exception of the years 1972–1978, the yearbook has since been produced without the support of WGF and is currently published by John Wiley & Sons on behalf of the AAPA.

Scaling Up: Internationalizing Anthropology

Fejos quickly recognized the need to build an international community for anthropology. He found his international organizer in an energetic anthropologist named Sol Tax, who was based in Chicago (fig. 23). The two met in 1946, when they were both invited to participate in a US National Research Council Committee on Latin American Anthropology, "formed in response to what was perceived as a critical lack of American specialists in Latin American society and culture." When the committee chose not to endorse Tax's recommendations, he reached out in frustration to Fejos for the Viking Fund to support a seminar for anthropologists working in Central America. Fejos proposed a conference to prepare a "status of research" report on the region to be presented at the Twenty-Ninth International Congress of Americanists in New York in 1949.

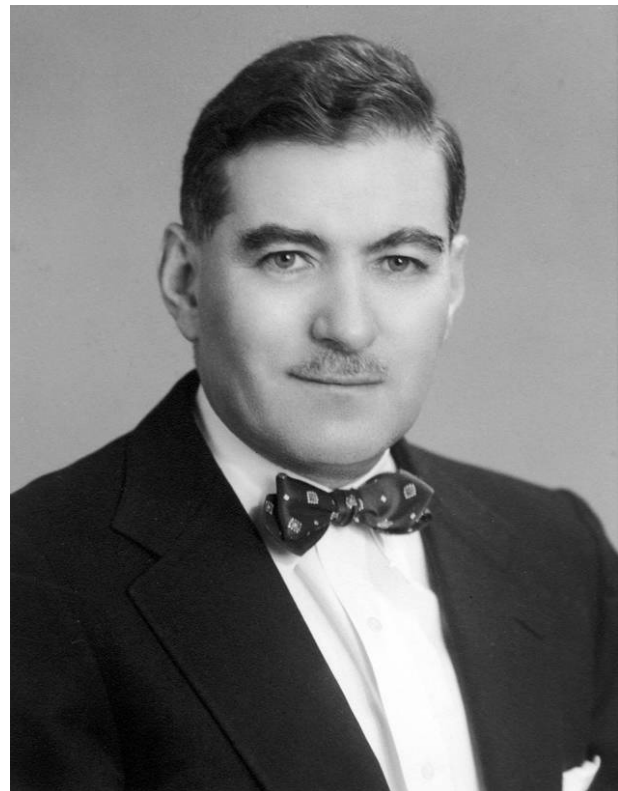


Figure 23. Sol Tax, founding editor of *Current Anthropology* (WGF archives).

The resulting conference and edited volume, *Heritage of Conquest*, would become a model for the future Wenner-Gren symposia series. “A committee set out the major topics they felt should be treated; papers were written, copied, and distributed to all the other contributors and attendees; participants met in person to discuss what they had read beforehand; the authors rewrote their contributions in light of the seminar discussion; and finally a book was compiled and published.” Dustin Wax notes that this system was an “almost textbook example of the area studies approach . . . (perhaps not coincidentally) providing the seminar’s funders, Viking Fund—as well as other funders of anthropology—with a set of criteria with which to evaluate future research proposals” (Wax 2008*b*; see also Wax 2008*a*).

Around the same time, with Kroeber’s leadership, the Viking Fund hosted a symposium (its first symposium) that took stock of anthropology worldwide as a discipline. The International Symposium of Anthropology, or ISA, for short, was a world survey of the status of anthropology. It was an opportunity to discuss “gaps in knowledge that require plugging; new techniques and new theoretical approaches for investigation that have been developed; the cooperative inter- or multidisciplinary investigations that have been undertaken; and the new textbooks or symposia, stressing integration of known data that have been published” (Wax 2008*b*). A press release announced the grand ambitions of the organizers:

The modern anthropological point of view is no less than an integrated “Study of Man.” It is true that anthropology calls for proficiency in a wide range of skills, but its philosophical framework stimulates an awareness of a common intellectual adventure enabling a scholar to move freely in thought over the established methodological barriers customarily used to define the divisions of knowledge into the biological sciences, the social studies, and the humanities.⁸²

Though Fejos had originally had his doubts about the idea of this symposium, the ISA was seen as a huge success. Held from June 9 to 20, 1952, at the brownstone, it is widely regarded as a turning point for anthropology. It was a veritable “who’s who” of mid-twentieth century anthropology (fig. 24).

Preliminary planning for the ISA was conducted by means of a small group of prominent American anthropologists under the chairmanship of Professor Alfred Kroeber. The planning group consisted of Kluckhohn, Wendell C. Bennett, Harry Hoijer, S. L. Washburn, W. Duncan Strong, and David L. Mandelbaum. Later, Ralph Linton joined this group. Kroeber explained in a dispatch following the symposium, published in *Science*, that “this selection was made partly on the basis of general professional distinction, partly on the basis of specialized competence in particular fields, partly to assure the possible maximum of international participation.” He also added that “it is apparent that the Symposium presented an un-

usual combination of features, such as its coverage of a whole discipline-wide internationalism, tight planning to insure coordination of individual efforts in a general scheme, maximal time for discussion, and speedy publication.”⁸³

The ISA covered a huge range of topics that attended both to questions of method and subject area. This included issues of language, culture, and biology—past and present. Together, the planning committee agreed on 48 topics for “inventory” papers that would be used as the basis for discussion and began to assign each topic to the appropriate expert. The profession may have been small (Kroeber estimated that the “number of active professional anthropologists in the world is probably under rather than above two thousand”), “but the subject matter is enormous. As well as unusually varied” (Kroeber 1952:xiii).

The “inventory” papers were defined by Kroeber as providing a “systematic overview of the methods deployed and substantive results obtained by research along a particular . . . subject . . . or field. . . . Each inventory paper takes stock of the methods gradually defined and refined in this subject or field and the principal findings made. At the edge of these findings, just beyond, loom the unresolved problems whose solution will bring the advances of the coming years. The discussion of these problems constitutes the Symposium” (Kroeber 1952:xiii). Such problems stretched from the deep past, including “The Idea of Fossil Man,” treated by Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, “Paleopathology,” by Erwin H. Ackerknecht, and “Evolution and Process,” by Julian Steward, to contemporary life such as “Social Structure” by Claude Lévi-Strauss, “National Character” by Margaret Mead, and “The Relation of Language to Culture” by Harry Hoijer.

Feedback from symposium participants stressed the unique combination of the personal and professional that would come to be the foundation’s hallmark. Kroeber himself wrote to the foundation’s president, Richard C. Hunt, to declare the ISA “an extraordinary success, at once a landmark and an influence on our lives—for which we are grateful.”⁸⁴ He emphasized the level of conversation made possible by having circulated the papers in advance. This feature, applied to both Tax’s *Heritage of Conquest* symposium and to the ISA, would become a key dimension of all subsequent WGF symposia.

Kroeber succeeded in editing a half million precirculated words into a volume that marked the beginning of a new era for the discipline (Bennett 1999). *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory* was published in 1953. In a separate publication, Sol Tax and others (Loren C. Eiseley, Irving Rouse, and Carl F. Voegelin) edited the record of 2 weeks of discussion of these papers by scholars from 21 countries as *An Appraisal of Anthropology Today*. It was no small task to edit some 1,900 pages of discussion and written addenda to the inventory papers into a comparatively modest volume of 395 indexed pages.

83. Ibid.

84. Kroeber to Hunt, June 21, 1972, in folder “RC Hunt,” Box #DoR-5, WGF.

82. Kroeber press release, August 29, 1952, in folder “ISA Press Releases,” Box #MF-1, WGF.

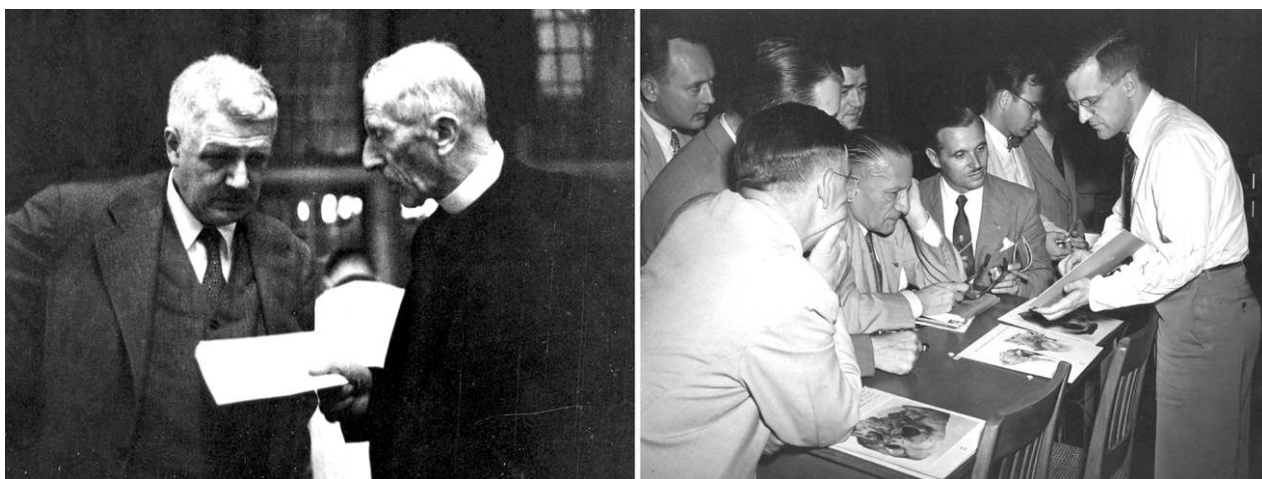


Figure 24. International Symposium on Anthropology, Wenner-Gren offices, New York City, 1952. *Left*, Carlton Coon and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. *Right*, Floyd Lounsbury, Irving Rouse, Carlos Monge, José Cruixent, William Caudill, and Sherwood Washburn (visible faces from the left; WGF archives).

In the preface to this volume, the authors praised WGF in terms that implied that WGF *was* anthropology, that the two were inextricably linked: “In the circumstances of the case it seems a little ridiculous to make a polite acknowledgement to the Wenner-Gren Foundation—for to the foundation, including its board and officers, its director of research, and all its staff, this book owes whatever it is that a proud and hopeful newly hatched chick owes to the hen that laid the egg” (Tax et al. 1953).

The ISA symposium, together with its publications, served to further international exchange among those who attended, building momentum toward one of the most important conferences and volumes, in historical terms, that the recently renamed Wenner-Gren Foundation (1951) had sponsored up to that time. This conference was a self-conscious coming together around issues of environmental change and how human beings were producing it. We can only briefly summarize what happened at this conference here, but we would suggest that further, serious scholarly attention to the arguments and ideas elaborated there is more than warranted.

Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth

As early as 1950, before ISA had come to fruition, Fejos was sending inquiries about the possibility of a symposium in the “form of an interdisciplinary collaboration of geographers and anthropologists. The intent of the symposium would be to explore those areas of man’s knowledge about himself that have been and could be profitably undertaken by joint research between geographers and anthropologists, or by persons with knowledge of the methodology and techniques of both disciplines.”⁸⁵ While this brief description seems relatively mild, the resulting conference was revolutionary in its approaches

and perspectives. It is still often referenced as one of the first elaborations of what today is called the anthropocene.

Held from June 16 to 22, 1955, in Princeton, New Jersey, “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth” rivaled ISA in its scale. Carl O. Sauer, who would later become the co-chair of “Man’s Role,” remarked upon reading the proposal, “Your . . . enclosed documentation has left me aghast, excited, and somewhat scared.”⁸⁶ Having confronted his fear, Sauer helped conceptualize the scheme of the event as containing three parts, “Retrospect, Process, Prospect,” and that the expectation of him was to “ride herd on . . . the history of man from Adam to the AEC in *modifying the face of the earth*” (our emphasis).⁸⁷

The symposium was widely publicized and was attended by 75 participants from 21 different disciplines across the sciences and humanities and across the world (fig. 25). There was also a mix of participants from academia, private institutions, industry, and government. Once again, WGF, with their mixture of hospitality and vision, managed to attract some of the most prominent thinkers of the age. In a 1955 report to the board of directors, Fejos described the mood of the symposium as “relaxed, uninhibited, and sharply focused.”⁸⁸ While 53 background papers—similar in form to those of ISA—were prepared and circulated before the meeting, none were presented there; all sessions were focused on discussion (and were audio recorded and stenotyped). “Man,” Fejos explained, “the ecological dominant on the planet, needs the insights of scholars in nearly all branches of learning to

85. Fejos to Kimble, October 9, 1950, Box #MF-3, WGF.

86. 1954 report to the board of directors, “Personal Historical,” Box #MF-3, WGF.

87. For a discussion of Sauer’s role, see Williams (1987).

88. “Personal Historical,” Box #MF-3, WGF.



Figure 25. “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth.” *Left*, Carl O. Sauer (organizer). *Center*, meeting venue. *Right*, Charles Galton Darwin (participant; WGF archives).

understand what has happened and is happening. The Symposium was the first attempt to provide an integrated basis for such an insight.⁸⁹ It was, in an important sense, an early effort to address problems that have since been conceptualized in terms of environmental history (Crosby 1995) and, more recently, the “Anthropocene” (Crutzen 2002).

William J. Thomas, WGF’s assistant director of research, wrote and received an National Science Foundation (NSF) grant of \$12,000 to defray the cost of publishing the proceedings, which he edited (fig. 26). The massive tome, published as *Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, appeared in 1956 from the University of Chicago Press. Lewis Mumford provided a forward-looking comment that emphasized the need to move away from the reductive tendencies of modern science toward a “common philosophy of human development . . . until we have that, we cannot make enlightened choices and project appropriate goals” (Thomas 1956:1149).

The essays include one focused on a now-riveting collection of 48 midcentury aerial photographs of cities, landscapes, and ancient and modern monuments. The airplane, the author said, was “the instrument which has introduced this new scale as an inescapable reality, bridging the gap between the smallest social unit, the individual human being, and the largest unit, the universe—between, as it were, the social microscope and the social telescope” (Gutkind 1956:3). Sauer’s essay, “The Agency of Man on Earth” proposed that “we present and recommend to the world a blueprint of what works well with us at the moment, heedless that we may be destroying wise and durable native systems of living with the land. The modern industrial mood . . . is insensitive to other ways and values” (Sauer 1956:68).

There was one announcement at the 1955 meeting that Fejos must have come to regret: that Axel Wenner-Gren was about to fund a new international endowment for interdis-

ciplinary scientific research. This new endowment was in theory, in Fejos’s plan, to be allied with the existing foundation in New York and modeled on its practices. But it was not to be. Wenner-Gren changed his plans and left most of his fortune to allies in Sweden. For Fejos, it was a terrible blow (these events are explored in more detail in Luciak 2016).

In 1954 Fejos began building up to what he hoped would be the creation of a new Wenner-Gren endowment. This endowment would inherit, in theory, the entirety of Axel Wenner-Gren’s fortune. That fall Wenner-Gren seemed to be thinking about his legacy, and he announced the creation of the Wenner-Gren Center for Research in Stockholm. In their correspondence, Fejos told Dodds, “this is you will remember, the house which he promised which the Swedes wanted [fig. 27]. It will be 20 stories high; the building of it starts now. What will happen inside it is rather uncertain. The plan only announced that 100 scientists are to be kept in constant residence and they shall be selected from all the existing disciplines. To make it funnier, it is also announced that the enterprise will be self-supporting. I wish we could be clever enough on this side of the ocean to be able to work so economically.”⁹⁰ Dodds was amused: “The picture of a 20 story building full of scholars who are able to make the whole enterprise self-supporting is one of the most imaginative philanthropic conceptions the world of scholarship has ever encountered!”⁹¹

Meanwhile, Fejos was working to persuade Wenner-Gren to create a different kind of endowment. In November 1954 he arranged for Axel Wenner-Gren to have lunch at the foundation with the Danish physicist Niels Bohr. Bohr said he would be willing to serve as a trustee of the not yet created Wenner-Gren international endowment; Julian Huxley said the same, as did Yale School of Law professor F. S. C. Northrup. These

89. Ibid.

90. Fejos to Dodds, in folder “Dodds, John and Marjorie,” Box #DoR-4, WGF.

91. Dodds to Fejos, November 22, 1955, *ibid.*



Figure 26. William L. Thomas in his fourth-floor office at 14 East 71st Street (WGF archives).

luminaries of law and science had become personal friends of Fejos, presumably brought in to help persuade Wenner-Gren that the new endowment would be in good hands.

Wenner-Gren returned to his Bahamian home in Nassau in late November 1954, having left the impression that he did indeed plan to create this endowment with his estate and under Fejos's control.⁹² It would be "an international organization for interdisciplinary research" based in the Bahamas and modeled on the New York foundation.⁹³ Fejos wrote excitedly to Dodds, "As to his Majesty [his nickname for Wenner-Gren], immediately upon his arrival I got my orders that the Endowment is on and that I shall move immediately about the

public announcement." Fejos wanted the steel mills, real estate in the Bahamas, and the "milk companies in Mexico South America and the East" included in the bequest. "It's all in a ferment," he wrote to Dodds, "but I hope within a week I can send you more news."⁹⁴ But the news was very shortly bad. As described in our introduction, by January the plan for the endowment had been abandoned by Wenner-Gren.

After the 1955 endowment proposal tanked, and Wenner-Gren made the other promises to his allies in Sweden that ended so badly, Fejos continued to work to persuade Wenner-Gren to invest further in the New York foundation. His most significant and final success was Wenner-Gren's purchase and gift of an Austrian castle, to be the "European Headquarters" of WGF. This purchase coincided with some critical changes in the funding structure of anthropology in the United States, as the US NSF began to support the social sciences in the late 1950s (see below). As the foundation purchased a European

92. Fejos to Northrop, December 3, 1954, in file "Wenner-Gren Endowment: correspondence, re: in Dalman and Wenner-Gren, Stockholm Sweden," Box #DoR-11, WGF.

93. Fejos, "Prospectus concerning the Wenner-Gren Endowment," p. 14; Fejos to Northrop, December 3, 1954, in file "Wenner-Gren Endowment: correspondence, re: in Dalman and Wenner-Gren, Stockholm Sweden," Box #DoR 11, WGF.

94. Fejos to Dodds, November 30, 1955, "Dodds, John and Marjorie," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

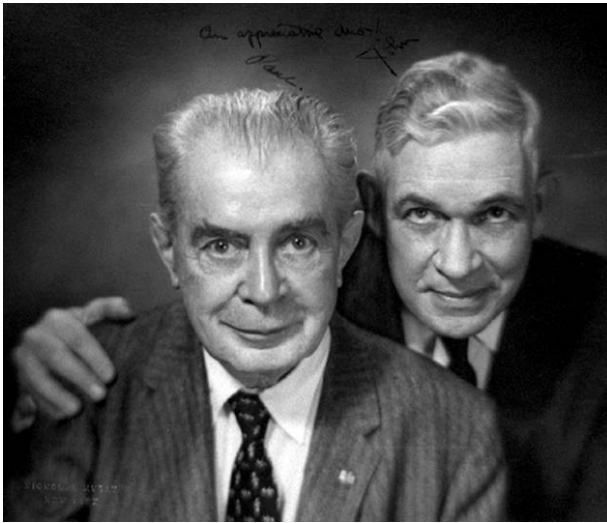


Figure 27. Paul Fejos (*left*) and John Dodds (*right*), by Nikolas Muray, 1958 (WGF archives).

headquarters, it signaled intensifying commitments to international anthropology.

New European Headquarters

In October 1957 Fejos persuaded Axel Wenner-Gren to purchase a twelfth-century Austrian castle for WGF at a bargain price of \$26,000 (\$217,180 in 2015 dollars).⁹⁵ Burg Wartenstein quickly came to epitomize the foundation.⁹⁶ It had 15 acres of steep woods with verandas and gardens, Gothic arches, courtyards, wrought iron gates, rathskellers, and romantic if mismatched sections built over the centuries (fig. 28). Its purchase was a victory for Fejos, who had been trying to persuade Axel Wenner-Gren that it should be the European headquarters of the foundation. “I’m still marveling at the dexterity with which you maneuvered the purchase of the European headquarters by Axel!” Dodds told Fejos late that year. “It was a great stroke; it takes the pressure off in every direction.”⁹⁷

The purchase was framed in the December report for 1957 as though it had been engineered by Axel.⁹⁸ There was a June 1, 1957, letter from Axel Wenner-Gren to Fejos, a letter that seemed to foresee the castle and its charms and that was almost certainly written by Fejos after the successful purchase.

95. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculator of inflation (http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

96. In this way, WGF parallels the Rockefeller Foundation’s acquisition of Bellagio in Italy in 1959 (<http://rockefeller100.org/exhibits/show/evolution-of-a-foundation/1928-1963/bellagio-center>, accessed August 7, 2016).

97. “I was amused by the hunting episode you described.” John W. Dodds to Paul Fejos, December 26, 1957, Dodds to Fejos folder in “Dodds, John W,” Box #DoR-4, WGF.

98. Report on the foundation’s activities for the year ended January 31, 1958.

In this rewriting of history, Wenner-Gren reminded Fejos of conversations long ago “concerning the establishing of the European headquarters for the WGF for Anthropological Research” and urging him to take action that very summer. He had in mind, he said, not an administrative office but a center for science, and he asked Fejos to select a site remote from the noises and distractions of a city atmosphere, with ample space for accommodating scholars, pleasantly situated with a scenic background conducive to meditation and quiet thinking. “The place for which you should look also must have dignity. It should not be simply a shelter or a square box building but should provide the proper aesthetic setting for the conferences and must stimulate interest in historic cultures.” With such an assignment, it was Fejos’s great good fortune, so to speak, to find a bargain castle in Austria almost immediately.⁹⁹ The property in Austria, near Vienna, could “offer all the necessary requirements for the institution envisaged, being conducive to meditation, and stimulating interest in historical cultures.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the castle conformed perfectly to Wenner-Gren’s apparent stated desires, and Fejos had known that it was for sale for at least 3 years.

The massive, 800-year-old Burg Wartenstein contained approximately 40 usable rooms together with (eventually) an auditorium and a farmhouse dairy complex of six buildings. In the foothills of the Austrian Alps, it was about a 75-minute drive from Vienna. It was also less than 50 miles as the crow flies from the Hungarian border. For Fejos, displaced from the landed aristocracy of Budapest, it was almost home (he chose for his ashes to be buried there, and they stayed there years later when the castle was sold, with a special request from Osmundsen that the rose bush at the grave site be carefully maintained).¹⁰¹ The haunting portrait of Fejos that hangs in the WGF offices today features the castle in the background,

99. “I have some three years ago heard of the availability of Burg Wartenstein. It seemed to me an ideal location for such an enterprise.” Fejos to Wilhelm Koppers at the Institut für Völkerkunde in Vienna, November 11, 1957. Koppers had heard about the October purchase and thought that the foundation was moving to Austria full stop. Fejos’s letter to him is a long explanation of the actual plan. In “WGF European Headquarters: Minister of Education, Vienna & Correspondence with Haekel, Koppers & Drimmel,” Box #BW-2, WGF.

100. 1957 annual report, WGF, pp. 1–4.

101. Given that a very good range for the limits of the horizon is about 77 miles and that the castle clocks in at 50 straight miles or perhaps a little less from this border (based on inaccurate Googlemaps measurements), perhaps he could actually see the mountains of Hungary. Fejos chose to be buried on the grounds of Burg Wartenstein, so it must have felt as close to home as he was ever likely to be. Lita Osmundsen, in negotiating the sale in 1980, asked the new owners to take care of the grave. The foundation would “appreciate it” if “the rose bush set within five weeping birches on the eastern side of the castle be maintained; that is the resting place for Paul Fejos’ ashes and thus has particular significance for Lita.” See Wadsworth to Raymond Rich, May 22, 1980, “Burg Wartenstein Appraisal,” Box #BW-7, WGF.



Figure 28. Burg Wartenstein, Semmering, Austria, 1960. Photo by Nikolas Muray (WGF archives).

and beyond that, in the distance, the mountains of Hungary (fig. 29). It was as though he had come home.

The site had a grand and romantic history, which the foundation showcased in a booklet it printed almost immediately and distributed as a souvenir to visitors (Eheim and Winner 1958). Fejos proudly sent a copy to John and Marjorie Dodds in spring of 1958, highlighting the castle's Hungarian origins: "As you see, the place was stolen from the Hungarians in 1042 (but our Matthias Corvinus beat the tar out of them 400 years later and got the castle for Hungary even if only for a year). It may also interest you that the Austrian government has now declared Wartenstein to be a national monument."¹⁰²

While its earliest sections had been constructed around 1100, the castle was by 1957 a bricolage of construction dating from 1180, 1250, 1650, and 1878. Owned by the Lichtenstein family for about a century, it had been under the possession of various family princes. Prince Franz Josef II von und zu Liechtenstein controlled it at the time of the Austrian Anschluss (March 1938), when he ordered all the furnishings of the castle removed. "During the subsequent turbulent years, the castle had been requisitioned by diverse state and army organiza-

102. Fejos to Dodds, April 24, 1958, in folder "Dodds, J and M," Box #DoR-4.

tions, and was finally, in April 1945, in the firing line of opposing forces. It was then occupied by a foreign army and suffered great deterioration and extensive damages" (Eheim and Winner 1958:49).

It had a drawbridge at the main entrance and a series of small, asymmetrical courtyards inside. Perched at the top of a low mountain in the foothills of the Alps, it had commanding views of the tranquil woods, fields, and valleys that surrounded it. One of its most appealing garden vistas was from a turret-shaped circle, made into a seating area, in an older section of the structure. Lodging was either in the "newer" sections, built in the nineteenth century, or in the separate large dairy with its underground dining and drinking area. It was a charming place—however incongruous might be the intersections. Burg Wartenstein brought together the soaring aspirations of peace and human equality that suffused postwar anthropology with the enduring physical legacies (carved in stone) of a medieval feudal system of land, serfdom, and everyday violence. It brought activist anthropologists to lounge on the grounds of a royal preserve (fig. 30).¹⁰³

When Fejos and Dodds examined the castle in the summer of 1957, it had been shorn of furniture and regular domestic inhabitants for almost 20 years, subjected to the depredations of various occupying military forces, used as a training center by a Nazi organization, and caught in the cross fire of an active military front. A brief occupation by Russian troops resulted in significant damage. Its plumbing and electricity were useless. Fejos and his staff began to work immediately on renovations for the castle, including the installation of 16 bathrooms. By February 1958 Fejos could report that the "electric lines are all in (over 10 miles of them!) And so are hot and cold water pipes to all bath and guest rooms." The courtyard had been paved with flagstones, and there was a new stone stairway to the chapel. An auditorium had been created by taking down a wall. Electricity had been run to the kitchen. There was central heating.¹⁰⁴ Fejos felt the summer "breathing down my neck" and worried that Axel might generate "adverse publicity" in light of his continuing tax problems.¹⁰⁵ The cost of repairs also troubled him enough to inspire him to donate \$5,000 of his own funds to the effort.¹⁰⁶ And as was appropriate for a castle purchased by Axel Wenner-Gren, the castle was sent

103. The opening ceremony in August 1958 included attendance by the Archbishop of Austria, addressed as My Lord Archbishop and "Your Magnificence" the Rector of the University of Vienna, who "speaks in the majestic plural as 'we, the Rector of the University, etc.'" Fejos letter to Axel Wenner-Gren instructing Wenner-Gren in the niceties of address and titles for the upcoming event, August 7, 1958, in "Correspondence with AL Wenner-Gren re WGF European Headquarters," Box #BW-4, WGF.

104. Fejos to Dodds, February 23, 1958, in "Dodds, J. M.," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

105. Paul Fejos to John W. Dodds, April 24, 1958, in "Dodds, JW," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

106. Fejos to Dodds re castle, January 3, 1958, in folder "Dodds, J and M," Box #DoR-4, WGF.



Figure 29. Portrait of Fejos with Burg Wartenstein in the background, painted by Robert Fuchs, 1962 (WGF archives).

two refrigerators, a freezer, two vacuum cleaners, and one floor polisher, all from Electrolux.¹⁰⁷

In his opening comments at Burg Wartenstein on August 17, 1958, Fejos invoked its potential to double expectations for high-level thought, what he called “Cloud 18 ideas.”¹⁰⁸ At the castle, he proposed, the foundation would bring together creative minds and create a fine library, a laboratory, and a place for thought in “hitherto taboo” areas. He had found, he said, “in past symposia best contributions not from formal sessions. After-hours, whiskey-soda, cocktails, leisure time. Tongues loosen. No one is recording every word. Inhibitions fall away. One is not ashamed for one’s imagination.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, Fejos established the cocktail hour as an institutional priority at Burg Wartenstein from the very beginning.

That first summer at the castle was a happy time in a happy year. In January 1958, Fejos’s divorce from his fourth

107. Fejos to Elon Ekman in Broma, Sweden, letter of thanks, October 2, 1958, in “Ekman, Elon,” Box #DoR-4, WGF.

108. “Outline of Speech of Dr. Fejos Given at Burg Wartenstein August 17, 1958.” This is a typescript outline of notes. In “Opening Ceremonies—Working Papers; Historical Record 17 August 1958,” Box #BW-2, WGF.

109. Ibid.

wife Marianne went through in the state of Alabama. He was ready to marry Lita Binns—his young assistant and close colleague—immediately, but he had to wait 60 days.¹¹⁰ The wedding joining the 61-year-old Fejos to the 31-year-old Binns was held in New York later that year. After this marriage her influence and role at WGF expanded. She was inside the leadership circle and involved in every key decision either directly or as his spouse and close advisor. Her status in the profession grew, and Fejos depended on her more. She was now known to those closest to her as “Minx,” addressed this way in warm, intimate correspondence and seemingly welcoming the nickname. She herself sometimes signed her letters “Minx,” and Paul called her Minx in correspondence. The nickname was not used publicly, but it was widely used in her inner circle, and it provides a way of measuring her social ties and calibrating her friendships. Those who knew her best called her Minx, defined in the Funk and Wagnall’s *New Practical Standard Dictionary* as a name for “a saucy, forward girl, often used playfully” (Funk and Wagnall 1959:850).

Joining the Wenner-Gren family that summer was an employee of the castle, Frau Maria Haupt, the “castellan,” or manager of the castle, who had lived there for some years before the foundation purchased it. In the WGF years she was photographed, in her Austrian dress, with famous anthropologists such as Alfred Kroeber (fig. 31). She also produced a Burg Wartenstein cookbook that included a colored pencil drawing of her (on the cover) and a rather carnivorous recipe, “Klausenburger Krauttopf a la Dr. Fejos,” which we cannot resist describing. This dish required bacon, beef, pork, and veal to be layered with sauerkraut and sour cream, weighted down overnight with a heavy cutting board, and then baked for 4 hours.¹¹¹ Frau Haupt—apparently a very strict manager of the shifting, mostly female, castle staff—became a critical part of the support team for the Burg Wartenstein symposium series.¹¹² Lita Osmundsen later called her “the beating heart of our castle family,” and she was permitted to live at the castle after her 1974 retirement “so long as ownership of the Burg remains in the foundation’s name, and you are capable, as in the past, of occupying the domicile provided.”¹¹³ As things turned out, she stayed at the castle even after it was sold, living in the gatehouse until her death (see below).

110. Fejos to Dodds re castle, January 3, 1958, in folder “Dodds, J and M,” Box #DoR-4, WGF.

111. It also includes recipes for various soups and desserts. “From the Kitchen of Frau Haupt At Burg Wartenstein” is in Box #BW-7, no folder, WGF.

112. Ibid.

113. Lita Osmundsen to Maria Haupt, November 22, 1974, “BW Expenses by Year & A/C 1958–1975,” Box #BW-7, WGF. The contents of her apartment are mentioned in correspondence with the buyer as things that did not come with the sale: “The contents, including furniture, in the castellan’s apartment under the main office which belong to Frau Haupt,” in Frank W. Wadsworth to Mr. Raymond Rich, May 22, 1980, in “Burg Wartenstein Appraisal,” Box #BW-7, WGF.

The Beast on the Table: The Burg Wartenstein Model

From its purchase in 1957 until its sale in early 1981, Burg Wartenstein was the site of 86 symposia that involved more than 2,000 scholars. It was here that the international sym-

posia format stabilized into what became known as the “Burg Wartenstein model.” Sydel Silverman’s (2002) book described one of Osmundsen’s favorite metaphors, which had been borrowed from Gregory Bateson, who used it at a Wenner-Gren symposium in the 1960s:



Figure 30. Burg Wartenstein. Clockwise from top left: castle kitchen and waitstaff, north tower seen from interior courtyard, battlement patio, dining room, second floor of entrance hall, kitchen, historic map of Burg Wartenstein additions (WGF archives).



Figure 31. Frau Haupt and Alfred Kroeber, Burg Wartenstein, 1960 (WGF archives).

A conference of this kind is a beast. It is gestated during the long period of planning and given its collective birth when the participants come together. When a conference jells, the beast comes to life; it settles down at the center of the table, growing and growling, only to slink away when the conference ends, never to return. (ix)

Growing such a beast involved small, interdisciplinary groups of about 20 people who would be brought together for a week to 10 days of intense interaction and also generous free time for informal discussion and social bonding (fig. 32). More senior scholars stayed in rooms in the castle itself, while more junior ones stayed in rooms in the repurposed dairy, known as “The Stables.” The rooms were generally relatively simple, but the setting was lovely, and the meals, entertainment, and general style of the symposia were elegant. Scholars were expected to read the papers before arrival and to come prepared to talk. There was always significant free time for discussions, bonding, and social relaxation, often with high-quality wines or local brews and local entertainment. People attending an international symposium were placed in a setting conducive to emotional and intellectual connection but disconnected from the stresses and demands of everyday life. They were given a significant challenge and expected to address it, and they were also sent out to lounge in the sun, have a glass of champagne, laugh, and talk.

Anticipating that social arrangements would be critical to the meetings, Fejos had a large round table made so that everyone could see everyone else, with no one at the head. Car-

penters in the nearby town of Gloggnitz built the table to his specifications, and they added a seamless green felt tablecloth, 15 feet in diameter, that would become a conference trademark. Gloggnitz was home to a factory that made felt fezzes marketed in the Middle East, and the wool felt made there was considered of a particularly high quality.¹¹⁴ This tradition of a meeting around a green felt tablecloth has continued into the present, though it must sometimes now be arranged on a square or rectangular table.

Another tradition, which continues today, also began that first summer at Burg Wartenstein in 1958. At the meeting’s first session, a large, leather-bound signature book is presented to participants, and they are asked to sign it. Each meeting has its own page, with the title of the meeting inscribed, and all participants sign on that page. The signatures are fascinating to examine, and participants often flip back through to see famous names and famous symposia (figs. 33, 34). Current president Leslie Aiello jokes that she always explains the history and tells participants that “I won’t reimburse expenses unless their signature is in the book.” The original book begun in 1958—with a formal cover title “Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, European Headquarters, Burg Wartenstein”—is still being signed, page by page, as new symposia are held. It has room perhaps for another decade of meetings. Having signed this book ourselves, we can testify to the feelings of historical consequence the ritual can produce: one joins one’s name to the assembled greats and signs the sacred text.

The critical secular rituals of the “Burg Wartenstein model” thus quickly took form with symbolic physical arrangements, materials, and practices. Social bonds were engineered around the table, and participation was a sign of a particular status: an insider. Membership was performed through a set of agreed on conventions, including the structured use of alcohol (at the cocktail hour) to liberate ideas. The castle was a sequestered space, isolated from the ebb and flow of everyday academic life, like a chapel, and interactions there were bound by strict rules (no reading of papers, no local outsiders). Learning the rules of the Wenner-Gren symposium was a form of initiation into the elite ranks of internationalistic anthropology.

One of the most skilled overseers of this ritual was Lita Osmundsen, who after Fejos’s death in April of 1963 became a “prime master of conference dynamics,” as Silverman (2002:ix) put it (figs. 35, 36). Osmundsen understood that a conference can never be perfectly controlled, that it has a life of its own and is more than the sum of the participants in their particular interventions. She was attuned to the ebb and flow of a symposium over the course of a weeklong retreat and to the nature of the social dynamics that make for success in the outcome. She actively sought insights from her networks on what made conferences work and what made them

114. This factory may still make felt: <http://www.leathermag.com/features/featuremaking-a-superior-tannery-felt> (accessed August 7, 2016).



Figure 32. Sherwood Washburn, Paul Fejos, Henrietta Washburn, and Lita Fejos at the “African Ecology and Human Evolution” symposium, Burg Wartenstein, 1961 (WGF archives).

falder. “If you ever feel like sending us a *confidential* report on ‘where it went wrong,’” she told a friend who had organized a SSRC conference that failed miserably, “we would find it worth its weight in gold. We do pride ourselves on trying to understand how conferences work and how best to structure them to do so.”¹¹⁵ She considered a 3- or 4-day conference to have “little chance of being more than a ritual conference,” and she said that “there are always at least two conferences happening simultaneously—the declared one and the real one.”¹¹⁶ She was famous for her diagrams of the interchanges that took place around the table and their timing. As one participant recalled in his note to her, “I hope you are not embarrassed by compliments, but you run your magic mountain [a reference to the 1924 Thomas Mann novel, *Der Zauberberg*, which is itself an exploration of the roles of science in modern life] like a magus, manipulating the conference’s moods and sense of themselves in a manner which is most likely to get it down to profound business. You and the castle have been the most important participants in both of the conferences I have attended.”¹¹⁷

Indeed, Osmundsen was probably the most important participant at all the conferences she ran. She was watching who

directed comments to whom, paying attention to the rate of exchange, and particularly noticing the danger signs when someone was becoming marginalized. One of her observations was that a person who said nothing for the first day of the conference was unlikely to speak much for the rest of it, so Osmundsen introduced protocols that required everyone to speak on the first day. She also learned to watch for signs of an incipient rebellion and to intervene when necessary. As Osmundsen and others recognized, keeping this week-or-more-long conversation on track, engaged, civil, and productive involved skills that could challenge even an experienced student of human behavior. The format and style of the Burg Wartenstein symposium had to be managed hourly, with awkward issues brought to the table for open discussion and awkward social interactions controlled.

Spouses began to be excluded at Burg Wartenstein, perhaps as a part of this social control, only after Fejos died. Most academic conferences permit scholars to bring along spouses and families, but as any conference goer knows, this can sometimes result in less than perfect attendance at conference events. In the first few years Fejos seemed to be encouraging spouses to attend. Meetings in the summers of 1959 to 1961 included spouses, mostly wives, who often wrote thank you notes themselves to Fejos.¹¹⁸ Fejos scolded Sherwood Washburn’s wife for failing to come to the summer 1959 conference at Burg Wartenstein on the social life of early man: “All of us here send our warmest greetings to you, Henrietta and Stanley . . . particularly warm regards from Minx and me. Tell Henrietta that it is still hard to forgive her for not coming.”¹¹⁹

But after 1963, when Fejos was gone and Osmundsen began to run the program, invitations went only to individuals, who were expected to focus their entire attention on the conference while they were there. If they asked to bring their spouses, they were discouraged. As early as 1964, the first summer after Fejos’s death when conferences were held at Burg Wartenstein (there were none in the summer after he died), this policy was in place. In 1964, when population geneticist Luca Cavalli-Sforza asked whether his wife could come along, he was told politely by Osmundsen that wives were not allowed to be present during the 10-day conference at the isolated castle. “Unfortunately we are not able to accommodate wives of symposia participants due to space and budget limitations. However, there are a number of places in Semmering which is a quarter hour away, and, of course, there is Vienna, one and a quarter hours away. A tourist agency would probably have more information for you on accommodation in the area.” With this note she informed Cavalli-Sforza that there was no room for wives (clearly they cannot share a room with their husband at the castle!) and furthermore that WGF staff would not help

115. Osmundsen to Roger D. Amrahams, July 12, 1972, Box #DoR-3, WGF.

116. *Ibid.*

117. The quote is from Roy A. Rappaport of the University of Michigan, and it appears on p. 9 of the report based on a questionnaire survey sent to 465 participants at Burg Wartenstein conferences (303 replies received) in 1977. “Report on the Results of the Burg Wartenstein Conference Program Questionnaire,” Box #BW-7, WGF.

118. See files in Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

119. Fejos to Washburn, July 15, 1959, in “Social Life of Early Man, Organizer: Washburn, June 22–30, 1959,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.



Figure 33. Signing the symposium book. *Left*, Stefan Helmreich and Karen-Sue Taussig in 2011 at the 144th symposium held at Hotel Rosa dos Ventos, Teresopolis, Brazil (“The Anthropology of Potentiality: Exploring the Productivity of the Undefined and Its Interplay with Notions of Humanness in New Medical Practices”). *Center*, the signature book. *Right*, Amanda Henry in 2015 at the 152nd symposium (“Fire and the Genus *Homo*”) held at the Tivoli Palacio de Seteais, Sintra, Portugal (WGF archives).

by providing a list of nearby lodgings or facilitating arrangements.¹²⁰

Osmundsen probably invented this rule, presumably because she recognized that the demands of spouses could interrupt the flow of a conference. Because the vast majority of those attending symposia in the early years were male scholars (the vast majority of scholars in general were male), the rule meant that she was one of very few women around the table.¹²¹ Also excluded were local or regional or passing-through scholars who had not been on the official guest list. In considering this policy and why it existed, it is perhaps important to recognize that the castle was almost a kind of academic tourist stop (e.g., welcoming in the summer of 1960 a group of 30 undergrads from the College of Wooster for 2 days of visiting and touring, feeding and housing them at Wartenstein). There were visits from Harold Dodds (John W.’s brother and the president of Princeton) plus his family (10- and 8-year-old children), family relations of Osmundsen and others on the staff, and visits by people Paul or Lita met at conferences or meetings. Even on days when scholars were arriving for a symposium, Lita and Paul and later just Lita would welcome people whose only real business there was to enjoy the view and the ambiance. Her letters in response to requests for visits were commonly warm, friendly, even insistent that people should come to Wartenstein for lunch or stay overnight. Art historians who wanted to ex-

amine something held at the castle were welcomed. Swedish employees of Axel Wenner-Gren’s empire were encouraged to come by. Many letters to her mention that “when we met at

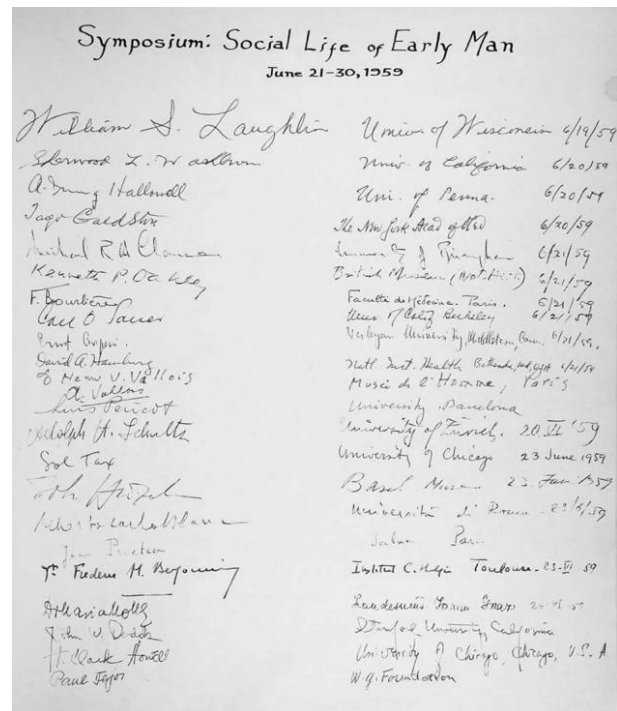


Figure 34. Symposium 15, “Social Life of Early Man,” participant signatures: Williams S. Laughlin, Sherwood L. Washburn, A. Irving Hallowell, Iago Galdston, Michael R. A. Chance, Kenneth P. Oakley, Francois Bourliere, Carl O. Sauer, Ernst W. Caspari, David A. Hamburg, Henri V. Vallois, Luis Pericot, Adolph H. Schultz, Sol Tax, Alberto Carlo Blanc, Jean Piveteau, F. Clark Howell, Paul Fejos (WGF archives).

120. Lita Binns Fejos to L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, May 26, 1964, in “Spuhler, J.N.—Behavioural Consequences of Genetic Differences in Man, September 16–26, 1964,” WGF Papers. Lita’s own handwritten note on his letter requesting that his wife be allowed to join him said in the margins, “Vienna or Semmering only,” with “only” underlined twice. Cavalli-Sforza to Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, May 18 1964, *ibid*.

121. A factor that had epistemological and not merely sociological implications for anthropological theory as described in Milam (2015).



Figure 35. Lita Osmundsen (Hussein Fahim and Alberto Villa Rojas in background) during break at symposium 67, “The Theoretical and Methodological Implications of Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology,” Burg Wartenstein, 1975 (WGF archives).

[wherever] you kindly invited me to visit you at the castle.” She seems to have invited many people to visit Burg Wartenstein.¹²²

Emphatically not welcome, however, were local or regional scholars with relevant expertise who wanted to sit in on the symposium proceedings. The strict rules prohibiting it—the meetings were closed to all but the chosen—were well established by 1961 or 1962. Wartenstein was both a public space and a scholarly sanctuary. The critical space that had to be protected was the sacred space around that green felt tablecloth.

Osmundsen was also the enforcer of other rules, such as about reading papers in advance and about the sequence of discussions. She was the resident expert on the wishes of Fejos and someone who had been privy to his decision-making processes in many ways. She could invoke him when necessary and with some authority. Her diplomacy in all such interactions was exemplary. “We gather by your letter that you would prefer to read your paper in person at the symposium. We can un-

122. The range and number of letters from visitors to the castle, filed in a packed notebook, capture the responses, Box #BW-2, WGF.

derstand your reasons for wishing to do so and we are aware that it has been traditional to read papers in person. However, the policy under which all Burg Wartenstein symposia function is an innovation in that papers are never read in entirety at the sessions, but, at the most, only reviewed briefly in order to refresh the minds of the scholars who have already read the papers under quieter and less pressing circumstances. All our conferences are organized on this basis and we always inform the participants at the very start because we know they are not accustomed to this practice. Admittedly it is a new method but our purpose is to free the time for discussion of common issues.”¹²³

The rough outlines of these rules have persisted into the present, and participants at a Wenner-Gren symposium today still read papers in advance, come without partners or family members (even newborns are forbidden), meet in isolated and beautiful settings, and spend a lot of time enjoying cocktails, hikes, or other relaxing activities.

At first the anthropological community was not sure what to think of Burg Wartenstein. University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax—an insider at WGF—told Fejos that invitees were worried about what to wear. “Several people are worried about how formal the openings of the Wartenstein conference may be. They would like to know whether to bring formal clothes. I have told them that we shall be informal at the Castle but they are not convinced. If you really think that no formal dress will be required, I think it would ease their minds if you would yourself drop a note to each of the persons coming.”¹²⁴

Very soon, however, any such concerns disappeared. Participant reviews of the early conferences at Wartenstein were enthusiastic, glowing. “As I think back on the castle, I think the great green round table impressed me the most—a sort of 20th century Round Table that a modern King Arthur might well preside at.”¹²⁵ A 1959 conference organized by Sherwood Washburn (“Social Life of Early Man”) was called by one participant, “the inspiration of a genius—a far and penetrating vision.”¹²⁶ Raymond Firth invoked the soul: Fejos had described the furnishings as “simple” and Firth said, “if we did not have luxury of the body—and we certainly had very pleasant treatment—we did have luxury of the soul. The beauty of the Castle itself and its surrounding I think can help to contribute a great

123. Lita Binns Fejos to G. Kurth, Göttingen, April 1, 1964 (English version, which was translated into German to send to Kurth), in “Spuhler, J.N.—Behavioral Consequences of Genetic Differences in Man, September 16–26, 1964,” WGF Papers.

124. Paul Fejos, July 1958, in “Burg Wartenstein Symposium #1 Organizer Sol Tax, Current Anthropology, August 18–23, 1958,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

125. To “Minx Dear” (Lita Binns Fejos), and with an illegible signature, July 13, 1959, in “Social Life of Early Man, Organizer: Washburn, June 22–30, 1959,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

126. New York Academy of Medicine psychiatrist Iago Galdston to Fejos, July 13, 1959, *ibid.*



Figure 36. Lita Osmundsen with her dachshunds, Burg Wartenstein, 1978 (WGF archives).

deal to that feeling of intellectual well-being that is such a very important part of harmonious conference proceedings.”¹²⁷ Even the sound of guns (in 1968) could acquire a romantic edge at Burg Wartenstein: “I will always remember the marvelous time at the Castle (with Russian guns sounding over the Czech border, do you remember?)”¹²⁸

When Sydel Silverman later wrote about the symposium program she oversaw at Wenner-Gren, having taken over in 1987 after the castle was gone, she noted that the lore of the castle, like all lore, was a mixture of reality and legend. “There was Julian Pitt-Rivers seizing a coat of armor displayed on the main staircase, putting it on and clanging into the dining room, where he calmly asked the server, ‘Are the pigeons young?’” “There was the story of the sword fight staged in a symposium on human evolution—a story with a particularly masculine message, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century duel, in which scientific disagreement could lead to physical

altercation” (Nye 1997). “At a particularly heated moment in the discussions, they grabbed weapons off the walls, leapt onto the conference table, and went at each other.” There was the more comical occasion when Phillip Tobias was knocked out in a ferocious ping-pong game and passed out on the table. His fellow conferees rushed back to their rooms not for emergency aid but to get their cameras. Silverman herself participated in a 1978 symposium at Burg Wartenstein and recalled it as “a magical place—in many ways ideally set up for conferences of this sort—and invitations were always highly coveted” (Silverman 2002:xiv).

However, she said, not all guests appreciated the studied formality, the regimented program, or the geisha-like role assigned to the foundation staff, which was overwhelmingly young, female, and attractive (fig. 37). Aware of this perception, these young staff members jokingly referred to themselves as the Wenner-Grenettes (a reference to the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes). There was also a general perception in the profession, a perception we ourselves heard in our research and that Silverman mentioned, that invitations to the Wenner-Gren symposium program were controlled by an elite in-group and were in some sense unfair, biased, “fixed.” The sense of being left out could be acute. Certain fields were believed to be favored, especially physical/biological anthropology, and certain institutions were more likely to be represented, especially elite institutions in the United States. Resentment about the symposium program usually focused on not having been invited to a particular meeting in one’s own special area—a slight that could be remembered decades later with a sting (Silverman 2002:xiv). Such feelings provide perhaps a metric of how important the symposia were seen to be by the anthropological profession. Being excluded from a symposium that focused on one’s own research expertise was a serious professional blow. “There was some basis in fact for those perceptions,” Silverman herself concluded, “but they



Figure 37. Lita Osmundsen and Maria Haupt (*second and third from left*) with the “Grenettes,” Burg Wartenstein, 1965 (WGF archives).

127. Raymond Firth to Paul Fejos, August 25, 1958, in “Burg Wartenstein Symposium #1 Organizer Sol Tax, Current Anthropology, August 18–23, 1958,” Wenner-Gren Foundation Files, Box #MF-20, WGF.

128. Fox to LO, November 1, 1985, untitled folder, Box #DoR-6.

were not entirely accurate for the symposia as a whole, especially in the later years” (Silverman 2002:xiv).

Concerns that the wrong people were being invited to the castle—or that some people were being left out—may even have been shared by Axel Wenner-Gren himself. After Axel and Paul were both gone, Marguerite Wenner-Gren complained to Lita Binns Fejos (she had not yet married John Osmundsen) that “Axel was very disappointed about Wartenstein—the fact that scientists of the Scandinavian countries were never invited to partake in the various symposiums held there” (fig. 38).¹²⁹ Osmundsen provided counterevidence: “Since the inauguration of Burg Wartenstein in August 1958, 22 international symposia were held there over four and a half summers. Of these, many were attended by one or more Scandinavians at each meeting. Therefore, it comes as a great surprise to me to learn that Dr. Wenner-Gren was disappointed about Wartenstein in that scientists of the Scandinavian countries were supposedly never invited. We now have conferences planned for 1964 and 1965 and several Scandinavians have been invited to these as well. I am enclosing a list of those who not only attended conferences but who were invited and declined.” Scientists could not be invited based on nationality, she said, but “it was never necessary to make a special effort to include Scandinavians as they frequently excel among world scholars.”¹³⁰

Silverman identified the most important conferences as those that solidified or changed the direction of a field (fig. 39). Her listing included Sherwood Washburn’s 1959 “The Social Life of Early Man” and in the same summer Julian Pitt-Rivers’s “Rural Peoples of the Mediterranean.” Dell Hymes’s 1962 symposium on “The Use of Computers in Anthropology” crystallized systematic perspectives on an emerging technology already important in the natural sciences into the social sciences and has been widely recognized as a pathbreaking conference.

In the 1960s, physical anthropology did seem to be favored, and many of the conferences focused on human evolution. “Man the Hunter” in 1966 was not held at the castle (it was at the University of Chicago) but was widely recognized as an important and field-changing meeting. As historian Erika Milam has suggested, these discussions reflected the professional dimensions of masculine networks of US philanthropic and academic authority in the 1960s and 1970s. Anthropologists and popularizers turned to questions of aggression and “men in groups” as ways of understanding social change and political uncertainty (Milam 2015).¹³¹

Nancy Lurie and Eleanor Leacock’s 1967 “Theory and Method in American Indian Ethnological and Ethnohistorical Research” was a pathbreaking meeting—incorporating historical methods with attention to contemporary politics—and one of the



Figure 38. Marguerite Liggett Wenner-Gren. The inscription appears to read, “Dear Paul, To my protector, from his protectress” (WGF archives).

few early meetings organized by female scholars. Around this time the gender dimensions began gradually to shift. Jane Goodall and David Hamburg organized a critical conference on the behavior of the great apes in 1974, which brought together major ape researchers and provided state-of-the-art assessment of a rapidly growing field. In 1976, Ernest Gellner used a Wenner-Gren symposium to bring together Soviet and Western scientists to talk about anthropology in the Cold War. While there was significant federal support for anthropological research relating to the Cold War in this period, Wenner-Gren funding had the advantage of not requiring security clearance and not having an expectation that the anthropologists involved would produce a classified report about their Soviet colleagues (as was so often the expectation in other state-funded “east-west” scientific exchanges; Price 2011*b*).

The first all-female conference, which included a large number of (what was then called) Third World scholars and explored women’s work in an international framework, was held in August of 1980—the last summer of Burg Wartenstein. “The Sex Division of Labor, Development, and Women’s Status,” organized by Helen Safa and Elinor B. Leacock, signaled the emerging power of feminist theory in anthropological thought. All participants were female, and they came not only from the established centers in the United States and Europe but also

129. Report, “Wenner-Gren Foundation Status, October 29, 1963,” Mrs. Wenner-Gren Correspondence and General Misc., Box #DoR-7, WGF.

130. *Ibid.*

131. Conferences relating to human evolution were held at Burg Wartenstein in 1961 and 1962 and on populations and genetic change in 1964, 1966, and 1969.

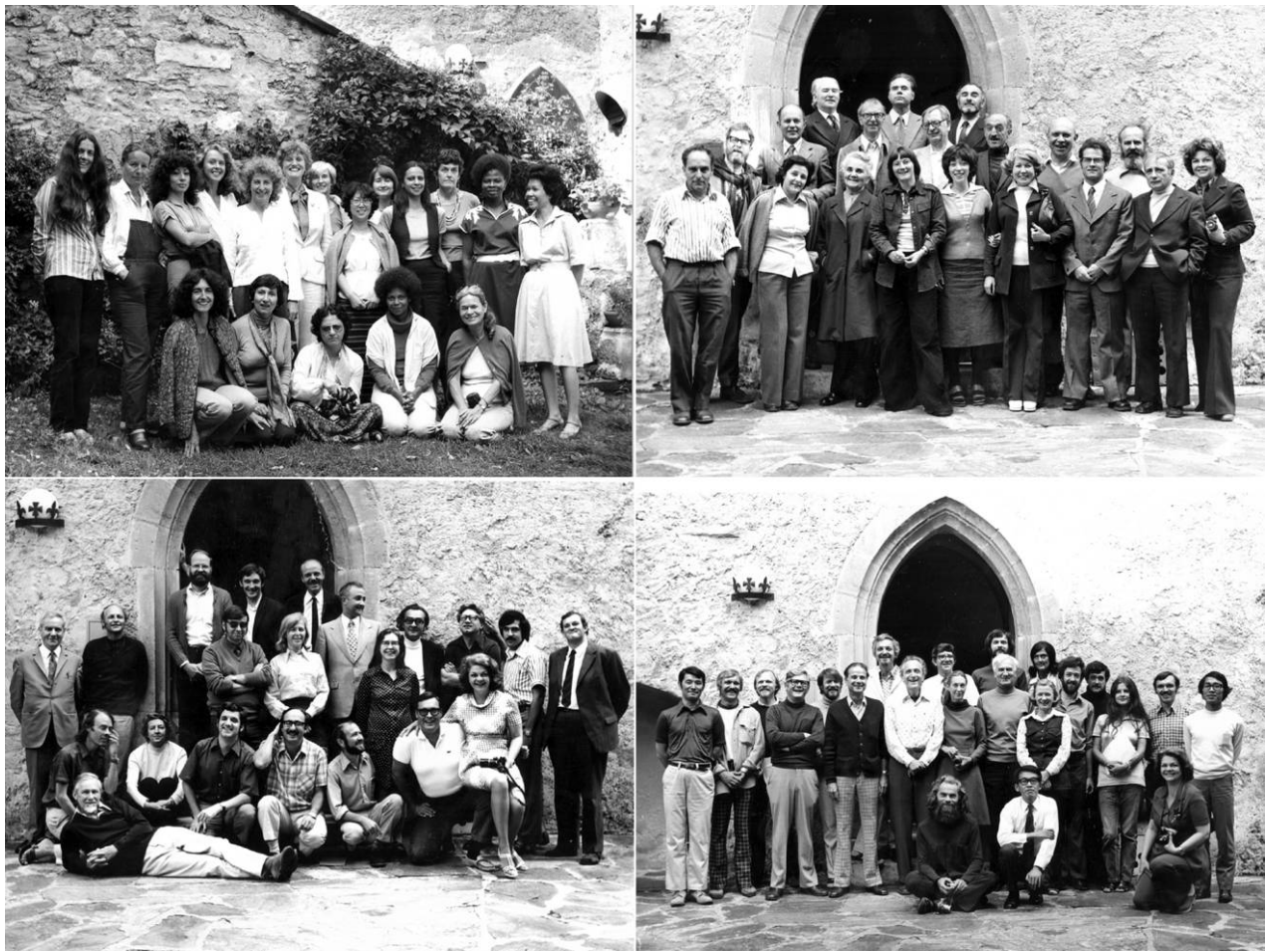


Figure 39. Burg Wartenstein symposia (starting bottom left, counterclockwise). 58, “Stratigraphy and Patterns of Cultural Change in the Middle Pleistocene,” July 2–11, 1973, *front row*, J. Desmond Clark, N. J. Shackleton, M. Leakey, D. Pilbeam, O. Bar-Yosef, G. Isaac, L. Freeman, L. Osmundsen; *back row*, P. Bout, H. Deacon, K. Butzer, E. Butzer, H. De Lumley, B. Isaac, K. Brunnacker, G. Kukla, V. Maglio, J. J. Jaeger; *doorway*, B. Gladfelter, C. Turner, D. Janossy. 62, “The Behavior of Great Apes,” August 20–28, 1974, *seated*, J. Van Orshoven, J. Itani, L. Osmundsen; *front row*, M. Konishi, R. Fouts, D. Horr, R. Davenport, D. Hamburg, J. Goodall, R. Hinde, E. McCown, D. Bygott, B. Galdikas-Brindamour, P. McGinnis, T. Nishida; *back row*, P. Rodman, W. Mason, I. Devore, E. Menzel, W. McGrew, D. Fossey, J. MacKinnon. 70, “The Place of Anthropology amongst the Sciences: The Soviet and Western View,” July 17–25, 1976, *front row*, E. Gellner, L. Drobizheva, J. Petrova-Averkiewa, C. Humphrey, T. Dragadze, N. Ermakova, V. Basilov, A. I. Pershitz; *second row*, J. Goody, V. I. Kozlov, J. Pouillon, L. Krader, M. Fortes, T. Shanin, J. Woodburn, L. Osmundsen; *third row*, Y. V. Bromley, Y. I. Semenov, S. Arutiunov, M. Godelier. 85, “The Sex Division of Labor, Development, and Women’s Status,” August 2–10, 1980, *kneeling*, L. Beneria, M. Leon de Leal, S. Shahshahani, L. Mullings, E. Leacock (organizer); *standing*, D. Bell, V. Stolcke, M. P. Fernandez, W. Minge-Klevana, A. Weiner, H. Safa (organizer), L. Tilly, A. Wong, L. Arizpe, M. Hammam, K. Young, S. Afonja, E. Eviota (WGF archives).

from Nigeria, Mexico, the Philippines, Colombia, Iran, Spain, and Singapore. It was perhaps a fitting end to the staging of intellectual programs of equality and justice in a medieval castle.

Conjuring the Beast on the Page: *Current Anthropology* as “Social Experiment”

Just as WGF created opportunities for anthropologists around the world to meet together to discuss ideas and create new alliances at its New York and Austrian headquarters, it also established and supported publications that did the same in a

more egalitarian way, providing venues for the exchange of knowledge that were explicitly broad and international in approach. Initially, WGF had toyed with the idea of producing a biannual compendium of key scholarship as the *Yearbook of Anthropology*. William Thomas Jr. edited the sole issue, which was published in 1955 with a circulation of 1,200. Finding the publication of books by foundation staff not flexible enough a form of communication and too great a drain on its facilities and human resources, Fejos approached Sol Tax with the proposal that he take over the project. Tax tentatively envisioned an annual or biannual publication examining the latest trends

in various areas of the discipline oriented toward the publication after 10 years of a single “encyclopedia” of anthropology. The following year, Tax edited a partial republication of the yearbook under the title *Current Anthropology* (Bennett 1998).

By this time, around 1957, Tax had begun to envision something more ambitious and fluid. In October of that year, he wrote to Fejos that what he had in mind represented, “both the ‘coming of age’ of the Foundation as the recognized world center of anthropological activities and the culmination of the Foundation’s own publication interests.”¹³² It was perhaps fitting that very first event held at Burg Wartenstein, in August of 1958, was a conference regarding the journal that would become known as *Current Anthropology* (or *CA* as it is known to insiders). In the ennobling setting of Burg Wartenstein, Tax recalled, an international group of 14 experts (including himself and Fejos) “finally decided to stop asking what anthropology was and agree that it was the sum of what the people who called themselves anthropologists wrote” (Tax 1965:242). In the spirit of this emphasis on action and practice, the group set aside initial calls for an encyclopedia of anthropology and began to explore what they imagined as a “social experiment,” to create a truly international anthropology (Silverman 2009).

The proposal they produced had three key elements: (1) that the enterprise be as broad and open ended as the changing sciences of man require, with the widest variety of relevant ideas and data, facilitating communication throughout the world; (2) that it be unitary (rather than divided by fields or specialties), with a single set of crosscutting materials to be available to all; and (3) that it provide timely communication about the field. *Current Anthropology* would be addressed to the world audience of the anthropological sciences. It would publish reviews of broad scope as well as current news, reference materials, and “want ads”—a kind of proto-LISTSERV where scholars could request a hard-to-find article or instrument.

Much as Fejos had imagined the New York headquarters as a clearinghouse for those who visited, Tax envisioned that *CA* could perform a similar kind of function for those who might not be able, by dint of Cold War politics or lack funding, to gather in person. It would be an invisible college for people who did anthropology. The faculty of this college would be known as “associates,” a “community of scholars” that would grow through engagement with the journal and in turn determine the policies of the journal. This communitarian ethos was a reflection of Tax’s personal intellectual and social agenda, which he called “action anthropology.” Action anthropology, in so far as it was oriented toward groups struggling with self-determination, viewed the role of the anthropologist as someone who could not only document the human experience but also facilitate communication and decision making among members of cultural groups (Blanchard 1980; Rubinstein 1991:175;

Tax 1988). As Tax later stated, “I wanted *CA* to be a free market, I didn’t even want a group of advisory editors. Given good people, everyone was equal, and policy advice would come from the whole community” (Rubinstein 1991:177).

Over the next few years, with full WGF support, Tax embarked on a round of 44 meetings across 30 countries involving nearly 650 individuals, including the symposium at Burg Wartenstein. He went everywhere except Australia and the Pacific Islands, an incredible feat under any circumstances let alone at the height of the Cold War. The diplomatic dimensions of the enterprise were not lost on him. In May of 1960, after having attended an international conference on the “Reduction of World Tensions,” Tax took 5 minutes to explain *CA*. Though he said little, he reported that “the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists could not match it anywhere. So *Current Anthropology* became the only operating example of genuine communication that we have as a pattern. Later many people spoke of it.”¹³³ Such experiences validated Tax’s determination to connect with as many of the 3,000 anthropologists that he estimated existed around the world as possible.

The initial list of associates was culled from membership lists of professional organizations and directories. Tax also consulted with editors of other leading academic journals. Each invitation to become an associate included a request for names of possible additional associates or of students. The primary qualification was the ability to make a meaningful contribution to anthropology, broadly defined. “An Associate,” Tax believed, “clearly must be one whose scholarship and reliability are unquestioned, and who has knowledge that we value. Nothing else should matter” (Tax 1965:242).

All associates were obligated to pay a small membership fee and encourage the libraries of their home institutions to subscribe, to submit responses to queries from the editor, and to respond to requests published in *CA*. With these obligations came the privilege of receiving *CA* “free” and receiving Viking Fund Publications at nominal cost as well as voting on the recipient of the Viking Fund medal.¹³⁴ In September of 1959 Tax sent out a “preissue” of *CA* to 3,000 initial associates, and the first formal issue was published in 1960 (fig. 40). As Sydel Silverman observed in her assessment of *CA* at the time of its 50th anniversary, Tax’s genius was that “he was able to sort the huge range of responses he got into coherent plans while seeming to accommodate most opinions, even contradictory ones (he also seems to have been quite willing to have his own opinions overruled)” (Silverman 2009:950).

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of Tax’s stewardship of *CA* was the innovation of what he termed the “*CA* ☆ Treatment.” The aspiration was to create the effect of a Wenner-Gren symposium without the travel, to conjure “the beast” on the page instead of on the table. It would be an op-

132. *Yearbook of Anthropology*, October 7, 1957, in folder “Current Anthropology—Corresp. With Office of the Editor, 1957–1960,” Box #CA-2, WGF.

133. May 13, 1960, in folder “Current Anthropology—Corresp. With Office of the Editor, 1957–1960,” Box #CA-2, WGF.

134. Tax to Fejos, March 28, 1959, *ibid.*

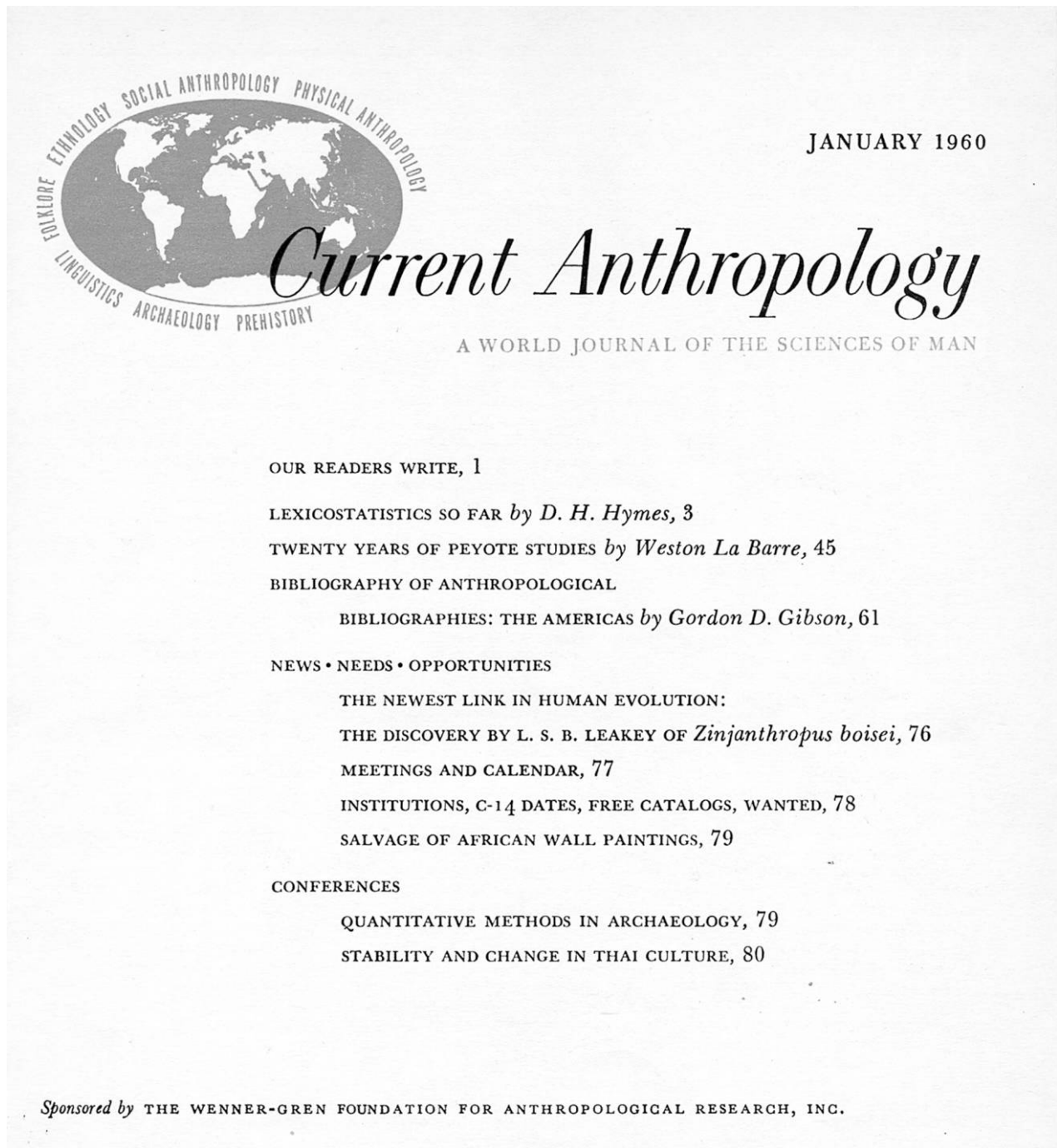


Figure 40. *Current Anthropology*, volume 1, issue 1, January 1960 (WGF archives).

portunity for scholars to debate issues of cutting-edge importance in the field even if they could not meet face-to-face. In its earliest instantiation, the CA☆ Treatment proceeded as follows: reviewed articles would be first set in type and galley proofs sent for comment to a number of associates who were expert, who were clearly interested, in the field or who had worked on the problem or in the area in the past. Commentators would

be chosen in one of three ways: on the basis of individual interest data cards (the so-called roster cards completed by each associate and on file in the CA office); from the authors of works quoted by the author of the review article; and through recommendations by the author, the editor, the assistant editor, or someone who has read the manuscript before its acceptance for publication. The solicited comments were then

sent to the author of the review article, who would then write a reply (Nurge 1965:239). The topics given the CA☆ Treatment were as broad and searching as those taken up at symposia and are still relevant today. Take, for instance, the 1967 CA☆ Treatment of Laura Thompson's "Call for a Unified Anthropology," which was subjected to both serious praise and criticism by 12 scholars from the United States and Europe (Thompson et al. 1967).

Tax spoke of CA as a "new species of scholarly institution"—not a "formal institution" but one "permitted to evolve after the fashion of a 'natural institution,' like the family or a hunting party, with which anthropologists are so familiar." *Current Anthropology* did evolve over time, eventually assuming a more conventional role as a journal, as the papers included in a 50th-anniversary issue made clear.¹³⁵ Yet from the beginning, Tax set a tone for CA as a forum that could accommodate critique and dissent. For instance, in the spring of 1960, Rodney Needham (1923–2006), then a young social anthropologist at Oxford, wrote to Tax to ask for his name to be withdrawn from the list of associates. Needham was concerned that CA was taking valuable funds away from important fieldwork. "The Foundation is supposed to support anthropological *research*, but a number of persons I know have been told that very little or no money can be spared for field research. This is . . . why I feel forced to dissociate myself from it."¹³⁶ Tax did not shy away from the criticism, and, in keeping with his determination to make CA into a forum for open debate, responded to Needham by proposing a public response in its pages.¹³⁷

Tax's openness to a critique on the possible misallocation of resources to support CA suggests an unusual comfort level with reflexivity. It might also have signaled deeper concerns about a quickly changing funding terrain that WGF was struggling to navigate in the late 1950s and early 1960s and that would come to a head by the time Tax stepped down as editor in 1974.

Money and Power

In a critical 1980 essay (Denich 1980) on the "bureaucratization of scholarship" in American anthropology, the anthropologist Bette Denich, then at Barnard, proposed that certain "structural changes have profoundly altered the nature of the intellectual life of the discipline" (153). Anthropologists, she said, "now suffer the same kind of disjunction between image

and reality that their literature reveals among cultures undergoing rapid change." The new structures of funding for science, she said, exemplified Max Weber's forms of bureaucratization. They enacted a shift in authority. Denich also invoked Parsonian terminology: "the collegial relationships of earlier anthropologists were functionally diffuse, affective, and personalistic. The bureaucratic opposites to relationships of this type are functionally specific, instrumental, universalistic (impersonal and objectively standardized)" (153). The striking expansion in the number of anthropologists since 1950, she noted in a later paper (1980), "was financed by governmental agencies and private foundations as part of a general policy that absorbed educational institutions into the expanding corporate sphere." The "rich new sources of funds" constituted a "seduction" of anthropologists who could expand departments and do more traveling and global research. "The new funds glittered indeed." And to get them, anthropologists "had only to learn to formulate research problems in categories established by the Foundations and government agencies in the bureaucratic mode of rational procedure. The research proposal, and the thought processes required to successfully fulfill it, therefore superseded the older more individual approaches to the pursuit of knowledge" (Denich 1980:173). These changes she said constituted just one small part of a wider process in which government funding, tax-exempt foundations, and grant applications permeated all levels of American academe, with their "abstract formulas to which applications must either conform or die" (173).

While Denich was indisputably expressing a romantic nostalgia for a simpler past—for the glory days of a small coterie of acolytes basking in the glow of Papa Franz—she was also capturing very real changes in the discipline. In 1901, Alfred Kroeber received the first PhD awarded by Franz Boas at Columbia. This was only the second awarded in the United States. In the next decade, Columbia awarded only six more PhDs, and the entire profession of anthropology could, as the AAA website states, "hold its annual convention in one small meeting room" in the 1920s.¹³⁸ Even in 1940, the Columbia department had awarded a total of only 51 doctorates, while the Berkeley department, under Kroeber's leadership, granted just 25 PhD degrees between 1908 and 1946 (Murphy 1972 cited in Denich 1977:11). In 1950, 22 PhDs in anthropology were awarded by US institutions. In 1974, that number was 409. That was the year that PhD production exceeded 400 for the first

135. For the 50th anniversary of the foundation, all of the surviving editors (and the long-serving copy editor, Barbara Metzger)—provided their perspectives on the journal and its culture. See <http://www.wennergren.org/history/journals-publications/current-anthropology> (accessed August 7, 2016).

136. Rodney Needham to Tax, April 22, 1960, in folder "Current Anthropology—Corresp. With Office of the Editor, 1957–1960," Box #CA-2, WGF.

137. Fejos to Tax, June 20, 1960, *ibid.*

138. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Trust provided the financing for the new SSRC in 1923, and anthropologists including Margaret Mead were among the very first scholars supported by SSRC. But the SSRC was devoted to political science. Anthropologists were granted about 16% of all SSRC funding 1991–1999, and the SSRC also supported projects that engaged with anthropologists in sociolinguistics and international migration. See Osgood et al. (1965) and Kenton Worcester, *Social Science Research Council 1923–1998*, available online at <http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/1F20C6E1-565F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70/> (accessed February 23, 2015).

time. Things then seemed to stabilize, and about 400 PhDs were awarded every year for the next 20 years.¹³⁹

Other social sciences also saw growth in the postwar period. From the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, as Mark Solovey has observed, the social and psychological sciences in the United States gained new members and new funding sources. The American Psychological Association, for example, had 4,661 members in 1947 and more than 25,000 by 1967. Similarly, the American Sociological Association grew in the same period from 2,218 to 11,000 members (Solovey 2013:1). The same expansion reshaped anthropology, with the post-1945 creation of new departments, graduate programs, journals, and specialized societies for the field and subfields. By the 1990s, the field divisions in anthropology were relatively stable: about 50% of PhDs in anthropology were awarded for studies in cultural anthropology; 30% in archaeology; 10% in biological anthropology; and 3% in linguistic anthropology. The remaining 7% were in applied anthropology.¹⁴⁰

Unlike the federal agencies and some other foundations, WGF operated flexibly with fewer formal demands and fewer rules about the structure and format of applications. Exemplifying this flexibility was critical WGF support for new initiatives that led to the scientific use of carbon-14 dating, a story that has been well told by Greg Marlowe in his 1999 essay in *American Antiquity*. As Marlowe notes, the University of Chicago chemist Willard Libby had worked on applying carbon-14 to chronological problems in archaeology. Libby told James Arnold about this plan in December 1946. Arnold, on his way to accept a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University, in turn told his father about Libby's plans. The senior Arnold was interested in archaeology and was secretary of the US branch of England's Egypt exploration society. Arnold arranged for samples from the Department of Egyptian Art at New York's Metropolitan Museum to be sent to Libby for possible testing (Marlowe 1999:9–12). This may have been premature—Libby simply took the package and placed it on the shelf of his desk—and was apparently not ready yet to engage with archaeologists.

The 1934 Nobel laureate Harold Urey, who was working with Libby on isotope fractionation at the University of Chicago, also connected serendipitously with the Dutch paleo-anthropologist G. H. R. von Koenigswald, then being supported by the Viking Fund, in the summer of 1947. Urey was visiting the Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, which was very near to the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory,

also on Long Island, where Koenigswald was working. When they met, Urey expressed “more than casual interest in early man” and asked Koenigswald for a piece of the original *Pithecanthropus* skull (Marlowe 1999:17). Urey then explained that the chemists at Chicago were trying to make it possible to determine the age of fossils, though it would be possible only if they were no older than about 40,000 years. Koenigswald immediately wrote to Fejos about this encounter. The Java fossil material was too old for carbon-14 dating, but it could be very useful with many other collections.

Fejos recognized the importance of this possibility, and he mobilized Ralph Linton, who had moved from Columbia's department of anthropology to Yale, and Koenigswald to pull together a symposium and a supper conference on “early man” in the fall of 1947. A report of new human fossils collected near Mexico City that September led Fejos to travel himself to Mexico to examine the site. A fossil elephant in the same layer of the excavation seemed to have the potential to be analyzed with carbon-14 dating, and Fejos himself wrote to Urey offering to send this fossil.

Fejos, Linton, and Koenigswald did not understand that carbon-14 dating was not yet possible. Fejos wanted to send grant support to Urey right away, as he would be “the first Nobel Prize Laureate among the fund's grantees.” But in a detailed letter to Fejos, quoted by Marlowe, Libby explained that Harold Urey was not the scientist running the research program. Rather, Urey was helping Libby by talking to anthropologists and reaching out to other scientists. In addition, the carbon-14 technology was not yet ready to go. It would take, Libby estimated, at least a year to complete the research needed to measure unknown materials. By this Fejos understood that bringing this technology into use would require “a rapid infusion of finances,” and the Viking Fund was ready; within a few weeks the group at Chicago had obtained \$5,000 plus an additional \$13,000 grant with “no limitations or conditions” consistent with the fund's policy of relying “upon the integrity and scientific ability of its grantees” (Marlowe 1999:19).

The grantees made good. By 1960 there were more than 20 active carbon-14 laboratories around the world, and Libby had received the Nobel Prize. The Viking Fund's critical role in supporting this research at a time when no other equivalent funds were available with such rapid and effective dispatch played a role in increasing the visibility and scholarly respect. The sequence of events makes it clear that Fejos was a shrewd tactician who saw an opportunity to contribute and knew exactly how to leverage the resources of the Viking Fund to maximum effect.

By 1951, as it transitioned from the Viking Fund to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, it was explicitly and exuberantly devoted to the discipline of anthropology. Fejos favored the name change partly because he hoped to extract more funding from Axel Wenner-Gren and partly to make the focus on anthropology an explicit part of the name of the foundation. But the resources of Wenner-Gren were being eclipsed by federal opportunities at the very mo-

139. These numbers are from a report, David B. Givens and Timothy Jablonski, “Survey of PhD Recipients, 1995,” which is posted on the AAA website at <http://www.americananthro.org/LearnAndTeach/ResourceDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=1499>. More recent data for 2012 are in a report that can be downloaded at <http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/FileDownloads/pdfs/resources/researchers/upload/Graduates-2012-Report.pdf> (both accessed August 7, 2016).

140. <http://www.aaanet.org/resources/departments/SurveyofPhDs95.cfm>.

ment of this transition, and this enhanced its increasing emphasis on anthropology as an international endeavor.

The single most important change in the funding landscape was the creation (in 1950) of the NSF and its turn (in 1958) to the social sciences. This new federal agency, when it finally emerged, satisfied almost none of the players who had debated its proper form and function since West Virginia senator Harvey Kilgore's first proposal in 1942. Its level of funding in the early years was paltry—not approaching the amounts originally proposed. The question of whether it would include the social sciences was contentious, and the final wording in the bill left it vague, with specific mention of the natural sciences and room for unnamed “other sciences.”¹⁴¹ But into this vague terrain the NSF gradually migrated, at first with small steps. The original budget in 1951 was for administrative start-up costs (\$225,000), and NSF's first science research grants were disbursed only in 1952. None of these early grants were to anthropologists. In 1953 the sociologist Harry Alpert was appointed as study director for the social sciences, and later that year a new Anthropological and Related Sciences program was added to the Biological and Medical Sciences division. The first grants to anthropologists were awarded only in 1956, with five small awards totaling \$40,000.

In 1957, signaling more serious interest in anthropology, the NSF awarded more than \$150,000 for research in anthropology to projects on primate evolution (William Strauss at Hopkins), prehistoric hominid research in central Tanganyika (F. Clark Howell at the University of Chicago), “races of the world” (Carleton Coon at Penn), and other subjects in sociology and social and physical anthropology. In 1958 the NSF awarded more than \$220,000 to anthropologists, and on August 1, 1958, the NSF formally established the Social Science Research Program, renamed the Office of Social Science in 1959, and the Division of Social Science in 1961.¹⁴²

Compared with funding for physics and the agricultural sciences (the two dominant areas of NSF support), the funding for the social sciences was a pittance. But for anthropologists it became the most important funding source in the post-1950 period. By 1967, the annual NSF anthropology budget was \$9.2 million.¹⁴³ Wenner-Gren funding, by comparison, was

and remained modest. In 1967, WGF provided \$172,719 in grants to anthropological research and spent a little more than \$80,000 on symposia and conferences. In 1992, the same figure was a little more than \$3 million. Wenner-Gren support was growing, but NSF funding in 1992 for anthropology was more than \$11 million. In 2012, WGF allocated \$6.5 million to programs and research grant support to anthropologists compared with NSF's \$26.8 million.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, changing legislation relating to nonprofit foundations was reshaping WGF's policies and options in terms of spending to support anthropologists. New financial and professional realities—with a rapidly growing discipline of anthropology, new federal funding sources, and emerging debates about tax and legal requirements for tax-exempt foundations—were reshaping the foundation and its roles. Axel Wenner-Gren, his global investments about to implode, died in 1961 (Wallander 2002). Paul Fejos, after a sudden decline in health, died in the spring of 1963. And WGF came gradually under the management and control of that attractive undergraduate who helped wash the walls of the new brownstone in the summer of 1945. Lita took over.

Social Mobility: Lita

She was at various times Lolita Sofie Binns (her birth name), Lita Binns Fejos (her first marriage, to Paul Fejos), and Lita Binns Fejos Osmundsen (her second marriage, to John Osmundsen after Paul's death). For the generation of anthropologists who knew her personally, she was “Lita.” She was networked, known, and admired. Born in New York City in 1926, she was educated in city schools and then at Hunter College, which had been founded as the first free teacher's college (“Normal School”) in the United States and which began to admit female students to its graduate programs in 1914 (fig. 41). She graduated from Hunter and moved on to a PhD program in the anthropology department at Columbia University with Ruth Benedict as her faculty advisor. She never completed her PhD. She took graduate coursework in the four fields of anthropology at Columbia, but the new advisor assigned to her after Benedict's death (in September 1948) would not approve her proposed thesis topic—“The Quest for Privacy among Non-Literate Peoples.” A story about the Viking Fund in the *New York World-Telegram* newspaper in 1949 featured a photo of her at work and opened with the sentence, “Lolita Binns ought to be in pictures. Instead, she's up to her pretty head in skulls. One might expect this young woman, who has an olive complexion, hazel eyes, and dark brown hair, to be taken up with romance at 22. And she

141. This occurred even though many leading physicists supported an NSF that would fund social sciences because they feared the psychological and social problems posed by the atomic bomb. A clearheaded analysis of the protracted debate, 1942–1950, over the form and function of what would become the NSF is in Wang (1995).

142. See discussion of this progression in Gieryn (1999:65–114, esp. 69–70).

143. These growing numbers over time are outlined in Michael Yamaner, *Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions: FYs 2010 and 2011*, NSF Report, October 2014, detailed statistical tables NSF 15–301. The report (and many others showing trends in NSF funding) can be downloaded at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2015/nsf15301/> (accessed August 7, 2016).

144. WGF annual reports going back about 6 years are publicly available on the Wenner-Gren home page, <http://www.wennergren.org/about/annual-reports> (accessed August 7, 2016), and earlier reports are held at the WGF archives in New York. These reports include detailed lists of all recipients and financial data on the foundation's expenditures and investments.



Figure 41. Lita Binns, graduation photograph, Hunter College, New York, 1947 (WGF archives).

is—with the romance of Anthropology.”¹⁴⁵ The reporter went on to note that “brains on the distaff side abound at the Viking Fund” and to express amazement at “the subjects girls work on these days!”¹⁴⁶

The perceived incongruence of beauty and scholarship—the idea that an attractive woman could not possibly be serious about intellectual pursuits—must have shaped Binns’s professional life at every stage. She was a much-noticed beauty, and given the roles that beauty or its absence often play in the lives of women, the comment is not impertinent. She was also registered as “Negro” in the New York City census records for 1930, when she was 3 years old. She lived on 118th Street in New York with her father Irving, her mother Avadne, and her uncle Claude, all recent immigrants from the West Indies, specifically, the complex racial melange of Jamaica.¹⁴⁷

Later she became in social terms white. At some point Fejos described Lita to University of Pennsylvania physical anthro-

pologist and racial theorist Carleton Coon as a “mixture of Scotch, Negro and American Indian,” and Coon himself called her “a colored girl” in a fall 1962 interview. “Wenner-Gren has put up some [money for Coon’s race research]. I’m sure they’ll never put up any more because Paul has married a colored girl.”¹⁴⁸ The person interviewing him, Anne Roe Simpson, had asked, “Is Lita colored?” Simpson was a psychologist trained at Columbia University who was married to the paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson, and she was an insider who knew Fejos, Lita, and their circle. Her husband had only a few months earlier (July 8–21, 1962) participated in a Burg Wartenstein conference on “Classification and Human Evolution.” She knew exactly who Paul was and whom he had married. But she did not know that Lita Binns Fejos was engaged in a social practice that flourished in the twentieth century, when the legacies of Jim Crow laws heightened the economic and social costs of being “colored”: Lita was passing.

She joined possibly thousands of light-skinned African Americans who crossed or hovered over the color line as the “one-drop rule” came to define social and legal relationships in the United States in the late nineteenth century (Davis 1991). After the landmark Supreme Court case upholding state segregation laws in 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, segregation in schools, real estate, the workplace, and other settings became more rigid. A long, complex history of the slave trade, immigration, and black-white sexual contact from the eighteenth century forward meant that populations in the United States were mixed, and Negroes or coloreds or blacks (depending on the decade) were not all the same color. The same was true of European Americans of course, but such variations in precise skin tone mattered less in the “white” category. In Jamaica, where Binns’s parents were born, the history of racial mixing was particularly complex (Patterson 1966).¹⁴⁹

The “liminal position between black and white worlds” that scholars have examined was fluid and even productive for some of those who were able to exploit it in the twentieth century (Crothers and K’Meyer 2007). But the costs of passing or not passing were both high. On one side was access to rights and privileges, and on the other, the support of the African American community and the ties of family and friends, as Allyson Hobbs demonstrates in *A Chosen Exile*. More men than women passed, but “under particular conditions, women passed almost effortlessly” (Hobbs 2014:7). Some who passed as white on the job lived as black at home, and passing could even be geographically variable: some lived as white in the North during part of the year and black in the South the rest of the time (Davis 1991:56). Being discovered to be “inauthentic” could lead to ostracism from the white community—even from spouses and

145. George Keaney, “Greatest Mystery of All: Skulldiggers Hunt Clues to Riddle of Man,” *New York World-Telegram*, March 23, 1949, clipping filed in Box #BW-2, WGF.

146. *Ibid.*

147. According to census records, the apartment building had several other families listed as being from the British West Indies.

148. This is in an interview in the Papers of Anne Roe Simpson, interview of Carleton Coon by Anne Roe (November 1962), p. 4.

149. An evocative sociological paper published in June 1966, when Lita was director of research at WGF, included a sustained critique of the ideas of the anthropologist Melville Herskovits relating to the African diaspora. Herskovits, of course, had won a Viking Fund medal in 1954.

children. Passing could also mean leaving behind family and friends indefinitely, and many blacks were no more sympathetic to those who chose to pass than were whites (Piper 1996). A person who was passing was violating the rules of two communities, not one.

In 1985, when Lita Binns Fejos Osmundsen was fired by the board of trustees of WGF, the great British anthropologist Mary Douglas wrote an appreciation of her and her work (Douglas 1986). Douglas adopted publicly the fiction that Osmundsen was choosing to retire but must have known better—the essay is warm, caring, and quietly angry at the board of trustees. She described Osmundsen as the “chief inspirer and organizer” of the discipline of anthropology and outlined a long list of achievements and skills. “We would do well to ask who this person is without whom neither Axel Wenner-Gren nor Paul Fejos nor a thriving academic discipline could have achieved as much,” she said. And then, her short account of who Osmundsen was took an interesting turn, telling just enough and not too much about both Osmundsen and Douglas. Douglas reported that Osmundsen was born Lita Sofie Binns in New York City, the daughter and oldest child of a cabinetmaker and a seamstress. Her mother “had been educated” in the West Indies and had been a “kind of a late-born Victorian in outlook.” Her parents believed in “work, duty, fairness, public service.” Apparently for financial reasons, during the Depression “the family moved to Jamaica,” where Lita experienced a “British style education” so effective that when she returned to New York, “she was three years ahead of her age-mates” (Douglas 1986:521). Douglas thus elided a racial identity that she probably did not see.

In 1972, the University of Virginia linguist Dell Hymes, discussing the plan of Giancarlo Menotti to write an opera about the Vietnam War (this became *Tamu Tamu*), sent Osmundsen (whom he called “Minx”) a note about the modern world, “making people ashamed of who they are and what they do, catching them between an identity which they can never fully obtain, and one which they can never fully accept—God knows how to express it in a work on opera—but it is a fundamental dimension of what is being done to much of the world today. The carrot of material reward and the stick of cultural shame beat most of us along unhappy paths.”¹⁵⁰ Osmundsen was moved. “You did a masterful job and I myself am intrigued and impressed by many of your thoughts and ideas. The closing sentence of your Postscript [quoted above] is quite beautifully expressed!”¹⁵¹

Under the circumstances, she was a uniquely positioned observer of debates about race, identity, and anthropology in the 1960s. For example, Carleton Coon, who knew that she was “colored,” appealed to her to intervene when his racial theories

were criticized by Theodosius Dobzhansky. (Coon seemed to support polygenism, the old idea that some groups had evolved “earlier” than others.) Those theories were being used by white supremacists to support segregation in the South (Jackson 2005:157–162; Collopy 2015). When Dobzhansky attacked Coon, Coon wrote to Osmundsen to complain—placing her in the odd position of being asked to stand up for him when he was espousing ideas that many anthropologists viewed as racist. She was also in touch with Dobzhansky in this debate. These controversies ultimately led Coon to be deposed from the AAPA (Collopy 2015).

Other people in Osmundsen’s networks were promoting the anthropological study of African American communities in the midst of the civil rights movement. The Boasian Melville Herskovits (a Viking Fund medal winner in 1953) emerged as a controversial “father figure” for African studies whose theories about continuities between African and African American culture were widely contested. Meanwhile Arthur Jensen’s notorious 1968 proposal that African Americans were biologically incapable of higher intellectual achievement provoked a firestorm of discussion in anthropology, and academic meetings focused on race relations were often filled with tension—some that came explicitly to her attention as the director of research of a major foundation focused on supporting anthropology. When a 1972 SSRC conference in Jamaica imploded, for example, because of tense reactions from the African American scholarly community, Osmundsen was among a small circle of people sent a full, confidential report on what went wrong.¹⁵² Osmundsen therefore had a ringside seat in controversies in which she had a direct if covert stake. She held an unusual position as an insider/outsider, powerful enough to shape some of what happened and engaged in her own forms of social mobility.

Of equal importance for Osmundsen was her status as a woman. Women in the scientific community were routinely denied jobs, fellowships, leadership opportunities, and access to field sites in the 1970s and 1980s. Their scientific work was often dismissed, ignored, or stolen; their personal lives were subject to unusual surveillance (children could be seen as a sign of lack of scientific seriousness); their professional performance was scrutinized in ways that did not happen with their male colleagues. For example, young women scientists could be found wanting because they were not equivalent in talent to Marie Curie or other superstars, while young male scientists were not expected to be doing work comparable to that of Nobel Prize winners (Rossiter 1984, 1998, 2012). Osmundsen may not have been a practicing scientist, but she was nonetheless embedded in scientific networks, interacting with many scientists and technical experts, and presumably she was directly affected by some of the same standards that undermined so many other women professionals during this time.

150. This was a draft of a letter he wanted to send to Menotti, but he passed it by Lita first. Hymes to Menotti, May 3, 1972, in “Gian Carlo Menotti Opera,” Box #DoR-5, WGF.

151. Osmundsen to Hymes, May 9, 1972, “Gian Carlo Menotti Opera,” Box #DoR-5, WGF.

152. Roger D. Abrahams, report attached to a letter to Lita Osmundsen, September 29, 1972, Wenner-Gren Symposium, Committee on Afro-American Societies and Culture, Box #DoR-3, WGF.

In Osmundsen's life story, then, topics of recurrent interest in contemporary anthropology—gender, race, class, ethnicity—converge around questions of social mobility enabled by her affiliation with WGF. The rise of a first-generation immigrant Jamaican American woman to an easy social prominence in the elegant worlds of New York foundations and scientific networks involved various kinds of boundary crossing. She gained complete administrative control as director of research and then president of a major scholarly foundation for the 22 years, from 1964 until she was forced out in 1985 (and resigned in December 1986). Wealthy business leaders who served on the board of trustees were charmed; leading scholars in all fields of anthropology admired her management of the international symposia and her support for innovative anthropology. "Many of us have been startled by Osmundsen's comments on what we could or should be doing in the profession, adroit assessments of potential that allowed individuals to take the next step," reported Mary Ellen Morbeck, Mary Catherine Bateson, and Anna Roosevelt in their 1998 obituary for Osmundsen in *American Anthropologist*. She leveraged an incomplete PhD at Columbia into a position that gave her a powerful role in shaping the discipline of anthropology. Clear-headed, probably manipulative, charming, and beautiful, "Minx" sustained a network of connections and collaborators who admired her "British" or "Old World" sensibilities: "the quick first name basis of American social life bothered her," Douglas (1986:521) said, and she was "more at home where social roles are clearly articulated, as in the more formal cultures of Japan or Europe." But what kind of being "more at home" was this?

After her marriage to Fejos in 1958, she became more important to the inner circles at the foundation, and as his health declined in early 1962, she began essentially to serve in his place. Fejos passed away in April 1963, and his widow became director of research in his absence. The first president after Fejos's death, appointed in October 1963, was a member of the board of trustees and a distinguished scientist who had no training in anthropology. Heinz von Foerster was a prominent physicist and philosopher of knowledge from the University of Illinois. He was also a leading cybernetician and the coauthor in 1960 of an (intentionally provocative) theory of population growth that came to be known as the "doomsday equation"—the theoretical point at which human population growth would become infinite—which he and his coauthors calculated would occur in the fall of 2026. Later, other members of the board served as president in a relatively disengaged way. Osmundsen was functioning in the ways that Fejos had functioned but serving only as director of research. This was to continue until 1978, when she was finally named president—at the same that she was removed from the board.

In May of 1965 she became engaged to *New York Times* science journalist John Osmundsen, whom she met at a WGF seminar on "The Creative Process" (fig. 42).¹⁵³ After their mar-



Figure 42. Lita and John Osmundsen, their wedding reception at Burg Wartenstein, 1965 (WGF archives).

riage she gave birth to twins—a son and a daughter—and while the children were young, the family more or less made the castle its summer home. They moved en famille to Burg Wartenstein in May or early June and stayed until the fall.

Osmundsen was therefore in charge of WGF during the most romantic and glamorous period of the foundation's history. Both the brownstone and the castle were in full use; markets kept the endowment growing; anthropology as a discipline was enjoying a period of expansion, influence, and popularity. During the summer of 1963, the summer after Paul died, there were no symposia at Burg Wartenstein. But for the next 17 years the summers were filled with the excitement and challenge of the international symposia, the many thrilling and fascinating guests, and the elegant meals, musical performances, and intense scholarly discussions around the green felt.

At the castle, the 1960s saw a string of pathbreaking meetings focused on primates—on primate variation, social behavior, social organization and subsistence, and systematics in Old World monkeys. The guest list at Burg Wartenstein in the 1960s was a who's who in anthropology, biology, genetics, history, social theory, law, and other fields. Ernst Caspari and Theodosius Dobzhansky were there in 1964; Jane van Lawick-Goodall, Kenneth Boulding, and Marshall Sahlins in 1965; Talcott Parsons and Conrad Arensberg in 1966; Francisco Salzano in 1967; Robin Fox in 1968; Clifford Geertz in 1969. Laura Nader's "Ethnography of Law" conference brought scholars from new disciplines into the Burg Wartenstein mix. Gregory Bateson brought cybernetician Warren McCulloch and environmental activist and biologist Barry Commoner.

By the 1970s the pace at the castle was breathtaking. There were five conferences each during the summers of 1970, 1973, 1976, and 1977. These symposia were generally a week to 10 days long. Osmundsen was therefore overseeing 50 days of nonstop conferencing in these summers—with breaks of about a week between conferences. In other years the pace was "slower,"

153. Lita Binns Fejos to Mrs. H. R. Besserman, May 17, 1965, in folder "Fejos, Lita S. Binns, Misc.," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

at four or even occasionally three conferences, but given the intensity of these meetings and the extreme care that went into planning and managing them, it was a job that demanded both organizational and social skills at a high level.

The glittering attendees in the 1970s, the last castle decade, included scholarly stars from many fields, all of them presumably eager to greet and talk to Osmundsen over cocktails and around the dinner table. Population geneticists James Neel and Newton Morton (who did not always get along) were at Burg Wartenstein together. Pediatric-advice author T. Berry Brazelton showed up one summer, as did Dian Fossey, Desmond Clark, Mary Leakey, Melvin Konner, Fredrik Barth, and Mary Douglas. Napoleon Chagnon attended, as did William J. Schull, Renee Fox, F. Clark Howell, Glynn L. Isaac, Erving Goffman, and Donald Johanson.¹⁵⁴

Osmundsen and her staff were thus at the center of a global network of fascinating and engaged scholars. There were discussions of core questions in hominoid evolution, culture, urban change, the origins of language, human behavior, fossil interpretation, social organization, ethnic identity, animal communication, kinship, art, and local and global politics. It must have been an intoxicating intellectual experience to spend the summer months talking to the world's leading thinkers engaged with core questions of human life and society in such a beautiful setting over the span of 2 decades.

Shaky Foundations¹⁵⁵

Of course, running WGF involved more than summers at Burg Wartenstein. During Osmundsen's term at the helm, the foundation faced many difficult decisions, including the management of an enterprise known as Anthro-Cast; the arrest and trial of *Current Anthropology* editor Cyril Belshaw for the murder of his wife; and the economic consequences of the global recession in the 1970s, consequences that ultimately led to the sale of the two real estate properties.

Anthro-Cast became a particularly thorny issue. What looked like a straightforward service operation that would provide high-quality casts for teaching and possibly research in paleoanthropology became a source of controversy (fig. 43). It eventually cost the foundation about \$1.6 million. The program was abandoned in 1976. Later the entire question of casting fossils was seen to raise ethical questions relating to the originals, their possible damage, and their ownership.

WGF's casting program for human fossils had its origins in a very early grant request from the American Institute of Human Paleontology. In 1945, members of the institute applied to the Viking Fund for money to purchase molds that had been made by cast maker F. O. Barlow of the British Museum of

Natural History (Monge and Mann 2005). The museum at the University of Pennsylvania began a casting program using these molds after their purchase. Later, in 1958, an American inventor named David Gilbert approached the Smithsonian Museum about investing in a new casting technique. The museum was interested but needed funding to support the plan. Once again Paul Fejos came through, providing Gilbert with a grant of \$15,000 to demonstrate that his technique could be used to cast human skulls and paying him an additional amount to write a booklet describing his techniques. For many years, Wenner-Gren also paid Gilbert to train technicians in many of the major laboratories in human paleontology—a practice that was considered to have reduced “the natural reluctance some feel toward letting strangers come in and pour rubber all over their irreplaceable fossils” (Cartmill and Hylander 1974:220).

With WGF support, a laboratory was established in Fairfield, New Jersey, to allow for the development of casts using molds overseen by Gilbert while the process was refined. The idea was that the “Gilbert process” would become a subsidiary of some larger corporation. This was not to be. When no interested buyers materialized, the Fairfield laboratory was chartered as “Anthro-Cast” in 1965. The new corporation was to be separate from WGF itself, lest the sale of its casts became lucrative enough to endanger the foundation's tax-exempt status. This precaution proved unnecessary. By 1970, Anthro-Cast was losing \$139,000 a year. It was folded back into WGF as a division of the foundation's education and training program. This meant that Wenner-Gren would continue to absorb the financial losses of the program.

Although overseen by an international advisory group headed by F. Clark Howell and including Alan Mann, Adrienne Zihlman, C. K. Brain, and P. V. Tobias, the program was plagued with problems from the start. Anthropologists in other subfields accused the foundation of diverting funds to Anthro-Cast (and to physical anthropology) that should have been used to support other kinds of research.¹⁵⁶ And paleontologists accused the foundation of distributing casts for free to an inside clique while excluding those who held views this clique considered unfashionable. Such accusations were never formally substantiated, but they pointed to deeper problems involved with the economy of exchange surrounding the circulation of specimens and the intended audience for the casts. Some observers were pleased that the Wenner-Gren casts eroded the “concept of fossils as semisecret private property” (Cartmill and Hylander

154. A full list of attendees of all Wenner Gren symposia can be found at the foundation website at <http://www.wennergren.org/history/conferences-seminars-symposia/wenner-gren-symposia/cumulative-list-wenner-gren-symposia>.

155. We borrow this subhead from Solovey (2013).

156. For the previous decade, the foundation had supported a large program on human evolution. In 1965 it established the “Origins of Man” program (1965–1972) under the guidance of Walter William (Bill) Bishop, C. K. Brain, J. Desmond Clark, Francis Clark Howell, Louis Leakey, and Sherwood Washburn. In the 1960s and 1970s, over 300 grants were made in palaeoanthropology. Other parts of biological anthropology, and other subdisciplines in anthropology, were not funded at this level. This played a role in concerns about the casting program.

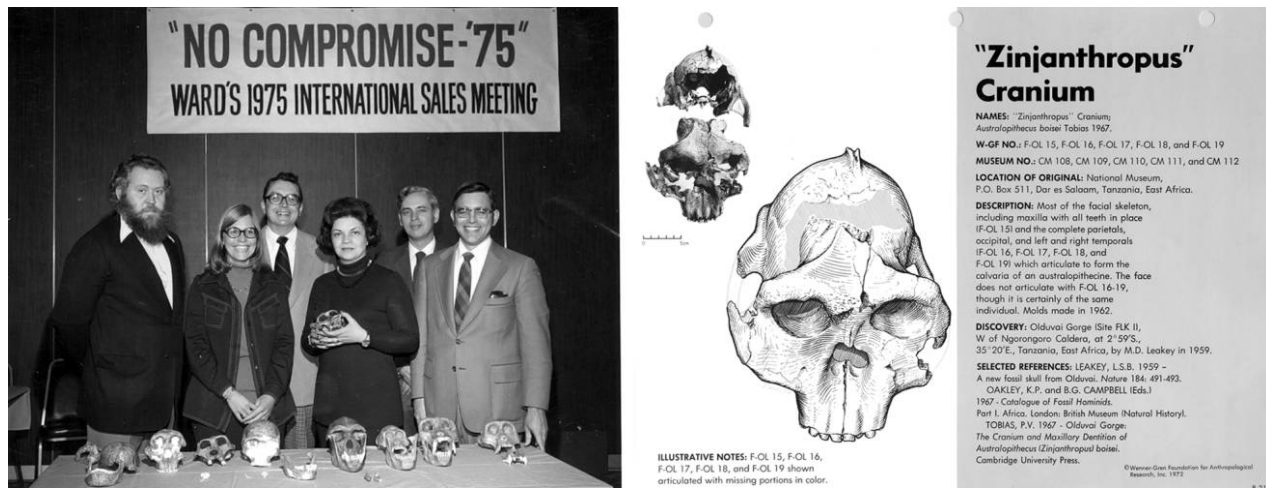


Figure 43. Anthro-Cast staff with Lita Osmundsen (1975) and the "Zinjanthropus" description from Anthro-Cast sales catalog, 1973 (WGF archives).

1974:229). At the same time, illegally produced casts were being made from Anthro-Cast products (Monge and Mann 2005: 105).

A bitter 1974 critique in the *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* proposed that the foundation engaged in misleading marketing, presenting the casts as "something quite special: high prestige items of exceptional quality for the elite professional." Anthro-Cast displayed the casts "dramatically lighted" inside museum-style cases at professional meetings and shipped "each cast inside a lead-sealed bag inside a drawstring pouch of velvet inside an imitation-leather sliding case." These "symbolic gestures" coupled with "more explicit statements in brochures and advertisements, have led some people in the profession to regard the casts as adequate substitutes for the original specimen." The authors reported that at some institutions, Wenner-Gren casts were placed on public exhibit inside mirror-lined cases, and at least one textbook of primate evolution had been illustrated with photos of Wenner-Gren casts, identified incorrectly as pictures of original fossils (Cartmill and Hylander 1974:227). It is hard to know what to make of this complaint. Anthro-Cast was claiming research accuracy for the casts and as a result was destroying four out of every five casts made because the techniques were not up to the accuracy that was being claimed. This is one of the reasons the program was not profitable. In any case there were marketing and production issues with Anthro-Cast.

The confusion might have reflected the fact that Wenner-Gren casts were purchased by three different kinds of constituencies. First were those engaged in graduate- and postgraduate-level training. Second were those who needed casts for wide-ranging undergraduate courses. Finally, some sought to use WGF casts as a research focus in cases when original specimens were not available. These three uses, however, were not compatible. Those in the first group required casts of the highest quality and equivalent expense. Those in the second group

did not require specimens with the same amount of detail and, accordingly, were unwilling to pay top prices. The third group presented a whole different set of challenges, chief among them the concern that those who discovered and curated the original fossils would feel undermined and withdraw their support for casting if casts could actually be used in research.

By 1976, over 16,000 replicas of 180 cast items and accompanying descriptive brochures were distributed by the foundation to the anthropological profession worldwide. The foundation's board of trustees had concluded in that year that it would be imprudent to continue absorbing the costs of the program partly because of concerns about the economy and the endowment. The casting program was terminated, and the production facilities were closed. The remaining casts and the equipment were donated to museums and universities.¹⁵⁷ Many of the surplus casts produced in the program ended up at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology, some of them stored in the special "Lita Osmundsen Room" there. The foundation kept a complete set of casts on premises until its most recent move in 2004, when they were donated to David Lordkipanidze at the Georgian National Museum to help develop a comparative collection in the context of Lordkipanidze's hominin discoveries at the site of Dmanisi, Georgia.

Meanwhile, WGF was facing changes in tax law that had a direct effect on operations. In 1969, the United States Congress passed a Tax Reform Act designed to mitigate abuses believed by members of Congress to occur in private foundations. Members of Congress were concerned that foundations were not distributing their income to charities, that donors were profiting from charitable donations, that investments of charitable foundations were being badly handled and poorly supervised, and that foundation money was being used for noncharitable

157. <http://www.wennergren.org/history/other-programs/anthro-cast>.

or noneducational purposes. The act was essentially an effort by Congress to regulate tax-exempt foundations in the United States. It granted private foundations a new tax status as “public charities,” and it required that nonoperating foundations pay out for charitable or educational purposes each year a fixed percentage of asset value—up to 6%. The act also penalized foundations for making risky investments and barred foundations from sponsoring lobbying or partisan political activity (including things such as voter registration drives; Lore 1975). It included stiff penalties for failure to comply with the law, and it became clear early that the Internal Revenue Service intended to enforce it.¹⁵⁸

In an essay published in 1975, when the issue was still controversial, Homer Wadsworth, director of the Cleveland Foundation, said that the consequences of the Tax Reform Act were not entirely clear but that “the only thing about which one can be quite certain is that those who elect to establish new private foundations do so for other than tax reasons. Almost all the tax incentives for creating new foundations were removed from the law; many new barriers, inclined to discourage rather than to attract potential donors, were erected” (Wadsworth 1975:255).

The legislation forced foundations in the United States to take stock of their situation. “It was . . . for the best that private foundations were reminded that they function as a result of generous provisions of the tax law and that their only legitimate purpose is to serve the public interest,” Wadsworth said. “All private foundations got the message, certainly those which were well aware of the law’s grace prior to the act—and this would clearly be most such foundations—as well as a few foundations that tended to skirt the ragged edges of approved behavior” (Wadsworth 1975:262).

It also spurred increased membership in the Council on Foundations, which by 1975 had 715 members representing “70% of the total assets of all foundations in the country” (Wadsworth 1975:256). Foundations thus began working together to represent their own interests. According to an official history of the Council on Foundations, the legislative debate about the 1969 act sent “shock waves” through the foundation field.¹⁵⁹ The transparency provisions of the act made it possible to get a reasonable picture of foundation assets and the level of their annual spending at the national level. There were then between 28,000 and 30,000 nonoperating foundations in the country that made annual grants for research and program services of various kinds. But most of these had assets of less than \$1 million—often significantly

158. Expenditures at the IRS for auditing foundations increased eightfold, and the IRS planned to audit each private foundation every 5 years and some foundations every other year. In the first 4 years of the act, the IRS assessed penalties, from 1970 through the first month of 1974, of \$469,000, not a particularly high penalty rate (Wadsworth 1975:261).

159. *History of the Council on Foundations*, posted at <http://www.cof.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/History%20of%20the%20Council%20on%20Foundations.pdf> (accessed August 7, 2016).



Figure 44. Cyril Belshaw (*Current Anthropology* editor, 1975–1984, at symposium 68, “International Aspects of Anthropological Publication,” Burg Wartenstein, 1976 (WGF archives).

less. Much of the foundation wealth of the United States was held by the 2,370 grant-making foundations with assets over \$1 million. As of 1971, Wadsworth said, there were only 180 foundations in the country that had assets in excess of \$25 million each. The assets of WGF, in 1971, came to \$21,451,508—bringing it almost, though not quite, into this inner circle.¹⁶⁰

In the context of these legal changes and many other challenges, the fall of 1979 was unusually difficult for Osmundsen. She was under significant pressure from the board of trustees, and she was very unwillingly moving out of the brownstone, which was sold that November. In the same month, she learned that her *Current Anthropology* editor was arrested in Switzerland for the murder of his wife. Cyril Belshaw, an anthropologist at University of British Columbia, was the editor of *Current Anthropology* from 1975 to 1984 (fig. 44). In 1979, while he and his wife Betty, an English scholar, were on sabbatical and staying in Switzerland, his wife disappeared. Belshaw reported on January 16, 1979, that she had disappeared in Paris, where they had gone together. Months later, in late March, af-

160. Assets listed in 1971–1972 biennial report, WGF.

ter Belshaw returned to Canada, a body was found in a ravine in Switzerland. Eventually, this body was identified as Betty Belshaw's.

Swiss authorities suspected his involvement in the murder. Belshaw refused to return to Switzerland to be charged, but did choose to attend a UNESCO meeting in Paris in November 1979. While he was in Paris he was arrested, extradited to Switzerland, and then charged with his wife's murder. He was imprisoned in Switzerland for more than a year, continuing to edit *Current Anthropology* from his prison cell. Osmundsen, loyal to her editor, asked the WGF board to help with bail, seeking their approval for a possible "bonus" that was actually intended to cover the costs to get him out of jail in Switzerland.¹⁶¹ This "proved to be unnecessary" when Belshaw was not approved for bail. Osmundsen told the board that his situation was "continuing to be very upsetting to everyone concerned including himself," and while "most of his letters try to be cheerful," every once in a while "one sees a desperation coming through, and total frustration at the helplessness of his circumstances."¹⁶²

In December 1980 his trial began, and in 1981 he was acquitted under a Swiss legal category "by reason of doubt." Crime novelist and journalist Ellen Godfrey later used that legal category as the title of her book about the case. Her book raised serious questions about the facts and their legal resolution and provided compelling insight into the narrow acquittal (Godfrey 1981). But Belshaw (now 93) continued his scholarly career apparently unblemished by these events, and his Wikipedia entry today does not even mention the murder, trial, or prison time. It was only one of many crises for Osmundsen that were converging in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Breaking Points

Economic crises of the 1970s took a toll on the foundation, and Osmundsen's managerial skills may have faltered as the complexity of the job escalated (fig. 45). The foundation struggled to come to terms with a combination of a falling market, rising inflation, and devastating exchange rates that increased the costs of maintaining the castle by about 75% by 1978. Osmundsen's relationship with the board of trustees deteriorated. She was forced to oversee the sale of both the brownstone and the castle, and for about 10 years, from 1975 until her resignation, she came under almost constant fire from the board.

The early board of trustees of WGF had "elements of a privileged boys' club," with first-class tickets and generous expense accounts the norm. Many early board members had

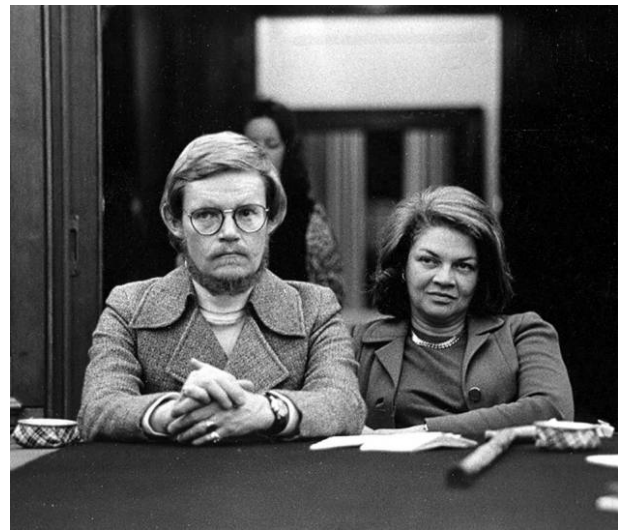


Figure 45. John and Lita Osmundsen, attending "Are They Happy in the People's Republic of China" supper conference held in the WGF library at 14 East 71st Street, 1973 (WGF archives).

ties to Axel Wenner-Gren, and most had no training in anthropology. All were from the United States, and "an attempt to put a Swede on the board in 1970 proved to be a problem with the IRS."¹⁶³ Before Fejos's death, the board was more involved in the day-to-day workings of the foundation. As late as 1963, every grant approved by the foundation was discussed by the board, which for a while met every month. In 1968, WGF established a system of proposal deadlines (rather than rolling submissions) and more formal external peer review that would be decisive, so that board members stopped reviewing every grant. Some members of the board began to propose in the 1970s that the foundation should redirect its efforts away from anthropology to more lucrative means of cultivating its financial portfolio. There was no mention of anthropology in the charter, these board members pointed out as they argued that the resources of the foundation could be better handled by a professional manager. They had grown weary of what they saw as Osmundsen's relatively laissez-faire financial management practices (see below) and in any case had no commitments to any particular scholarly discipline.

In the late 1970s, as the financial meltdown took its toll, the board even began exploring whether the foundation should spend itself out of existence. Richard Scheuch advocated for "generational justice" and keeping the foundation for future generations. Will Jones favored hiring a professional non-anthropologist manager to lead WGF, and eventually others,

161. Lita Osmundsen to board of trustees, September 29, 1980, Box #BoT-8, WGF.

162. Signed L. O. and sent to the board (Dodds, Ekman, Hunt, Jones, Scheuch, Thayer, Wadsworth, and Westen), September 1980, Box #BoT-8, WGF.

163. Karen Holmberg's August 31, 2001, summary (p. 3) of the history of the board is the source here. Holmberg drew on WGF archival materials in her report to WGF president Fox. "Report on the Contents of the WGF Archives," "Confidential for RGF," Box #DoR-18, WGF.

including Frank Wadsworth, Mike Levine, and Don Engelman, went along with the idea of hiring such a manager (to replace Osmundsen). The idea was that this manager could work with academic advisors, and the new structure could open up the question of whether to continue supporting anthropology at all. The board planned to perform the search for a new manager without consulting the newly formed academic advisory council.

This advisory council, which had working anthropologists as members, was created because of the evolving financial concerns at the foundation. Consulting with anthropologists was always a part of WGF regular practice, but the more formal advisory council became crucial as the financial crisis escalated. Some decisions could be expected to stir controversy in the scientific community, and the board needed guidance to understand disciplinary priorities. It needed to know what was most important to sustain. In 1974, the board created an ad hoc planning committee to address these questions. The two real estate assets—the brownstone and the castle—were for various reasons absorbing a larger proportion of the WGF budget, and the grant support was falling.

The ad hoc committee consulted with two prominent anthropologists, Sherwood Washburn and Raymond Firth, to seek their advice on the future of the foundation. Firth and Washburn both seemed to suggest that Burg Wartenstein could go and that the New York building might be underutilized as well. It was difficult in this context to justify the expense of maintaining these properties given the effect they were having on the foundation. They supported phasing out Anthro-Cast, or significantly reducing it in scope, but they did not support abandoning the journal *Current Anthropology*. If economic conditions had been more favorable at the time, they said the foundation would be correct in continuing along its traditional course, seeking more cost-effective ways to operate but still in its customary mode. However, they both agreed that the current ratio between direct services and overhead had become untenable, and bold and positive steps had to be taken to bring the ratio back into a realistic relationship.¹⁶⁴

In 1977 the board engaged a nonprofit management consulting firm, Frantzreb, Pray, Ferner & Thompson, to conduct an internal audit. This auditor recommended the sale or donation of the castle, the sale of the brownstone, the maintenance of the grants program and *Current Anthropology*, and the creation of a new, more formal, advisory council that would take the place of the research associates (anthropologists who served as advisors to the director of research).¹⁶⁵ The new group would be a resource for the director of research but also for

the board: “Most boards of nonprofit organizations need assistance when they are dealing with such areas as Wenner-Gren relates to. Some boards add professionals to give them the necessary insights and knowledge to assist in decision-making.” WGF, he said, needed 12 to 18 advisors (not the three or four who were generally considered research associates), and they should report to the board and be given full financial facts and information so that their recommendations reflected current conditions. In 1978 the advisory council was created with an inaugural membership of Elizabeth Colson (then newly elected to the National Academy of Sciences), H. B. S. Cooke, Irven Devore (the Harvard biological anthropologist and longtime friend of WGF), Fred Eggan, and David Hamburg.¹⁶⁶

Later this advisory council played a pivotal role in a contentious 1985 board of trustees and advisory council meeting in Arrowwood, New York. The board was discussing Osmundsen’s replacement. The council was not privy to this discussion but figured it out when impressions on a blank sheet of paper on a left-behind notepad in a meeting room used by both groups showed evidence of the plan. This would involve potentially redirecting the foundation away from anthropology and the employment of a professional director of research with no commitments to anthropology as a discipline. The advisory council confronted Frank Wadsworth (fig. 46). They persuaded him to reconsider, and he became an ally of the anthropologists. He then insisted to the board that the anthropologists should have been consulted, and he took the search for Osmundsen’s replacement away from the headhunters. The job description was rewritten for an anthropologist, and Jones resigned.

Global economic pressures played a role in these events. As historian Andrew D. Moran noted in his study of Gerald Ford’s reaction to the financial crisis in the 1970s, the US economy enjoyed international preeminence from 1945 until the early 1970s. Economic policy generally was successful, maintaining a strong growth rate, high employment, and low inflation. The US economy seemed stable and secure. The ideas of John Maynard Keynes, which had influenced FDR in his management of the Depression in the 1930s, were widely viewed as effective in fine-tuning the economy to rebalance as needed and “make the business cycle obsolete” (Moran 2011:40). But in the mid-1970s, unemployment and inflation rose together, and “there was no longer a clear choice between larger deficits to stimulate the economy at the price of higher inflation, and lower deficits to reduce inflation at the risk of recession” (Moran 2011:41–42). Inflation—once stable at below 2%—hit 12% in 1974. Unemployment, long below 4%, went higher than 5%. The US share of world trade fell from 25% in 1948 to 10% in 1974. Meanwhile, the oil crisis, in two shock waves in 1972 and 1979, disrupted global markets. Crude oil prices rose more than 500%, and the postwar petroleum regime collapsed (Ikenberry 1986).

164. September 8, 1975, memo to the WGF board of directors from Frank Wadsworth for the ad hoc planning committee relating to budget recommendations. Report in the WGF minute books, September 22–23, 1975 meeting, WGF.

165. David M. Thompson, of Frantzreb, Pray, Ferner and Thompson, to WGF board of directors, June 1, 1977, in minute books, June 7–8, 1977, WGF.

166. April 28–30, 1978, minute books, WGF.

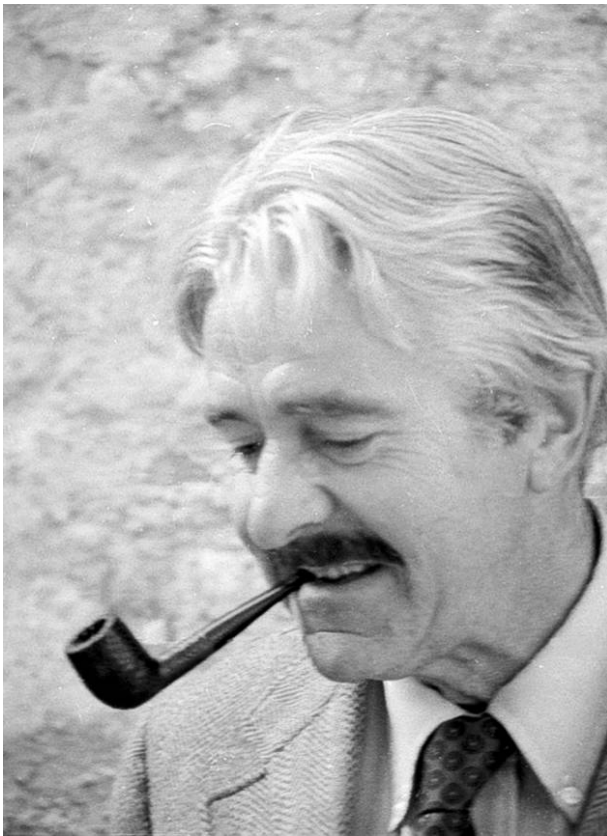


Figure 46. Frank Wadsworth, who served on the Wenner-Gren board of trustees for 36 years, from 1970 to 2006. He played a crucial role in ensuring the future of the foundation, guiding it through the difficult decades of the 1970s and 1980s (WGF archives).

These crises ricocheted through private and institutional lives. The foundation's endowment began to fall, from about \$21.5 million in 1970 to \$17 million in 1978. The eventual recovery in the 1980s was spectacular, and by 2012 the endowment stood at almost \$163 million (fig. 47). But the financial uncertainties of the 1970s generated a crisis mentality in many domains, and the board of trustees began to pressure Osmundsen to cut costs—to eliminate the casting program, sell the brownstone and/or the castle, and trim programs. By the 1979 meeting of the board of trustees, she was at meetings only by invitation and was no longer a member of the board.¹⁶⁷ She was struggling to make sense of why she seemed to be in a constant uphill battle and wrote to Charles Davis, who had recently stepped down from the board, who responded, "The Board did miss your presence and, speaking of Paul, the meeting did make me realize how little he seems to have to do with current concerns of the Board. His flavor and philosophy are still there, but his dynamic is unknown to the newer

167. Board of trustees meeting, February 10–11, 1979, files copies, Drafts of Minutes, Box #BoT-7, WGF.

members and somehow unable to be recreated. We have truly embarked on a new era, and it is good to know you are there to provide healthy roots and perspective about the unhealthier ones."¹⁶⁸

She knew that the board wanted the castle to be sold, and she had a clear view of what that would mean: "We always have and can continue to run conferences elsewhere, but the control and organizational continuity we have there is unique and now world-renowned. It may be best put out in a blaze of glory nonetheless—hence my ambivalence. The emotional side of it—my ties to Paul's dream, so to speak, must be set aside from these considerations—I realize this more than anyone else because I am the one that must do it and was wedded to the creative aspects of that concept. I fear some of the Board may feel I can't and won't do this—but I do honestly fight for the idea more than the nostalgia."¹⁶⁹

The board decided in 1977 to explore simultaneously the possibility of selling the castle or of finding some form of outside support that could decrease the cost to the foundation of maintaining the castle alone. Wadsworth investigated several potential sources of outside support, ranging from professional fund-raising agencies to major foundations such as Ford and Carnegie and specialized organizations such as the Salzburg Seminars and the Academy for Educational Development. At the same time, he spoke to a real estate firm and asked for a full assessment of the value of the property. The initial assessment came in at \$783,125. The agent, however, said there would be a very limited range of buyers for a castle, and he expected the selling price of \$600,000 to be more reasonable and realistic.¹⁷⁰ He also thought it would take 3 years at least to find a buyer.¹⁷¹ Mothballing the large structures (waiting for a buyer) would cost an estimated \$52,000 a year.

When the Austrian government offered the possibility of a subsidy for the castle if the sale could be delayed, the board approved the delay and hoped the Austrian subsidy would come

168. January 25, 1977, in folder "Board of Directors correspondence, Jan-Jun 1977," Box #BoT-7, WGF.

169. Osmundsen to Davis, May 30, 1977, *ibid.*

170. Osmundsen had apparently cut out and saved a story in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 1966, that claimed that more Americans were buying European castles. The correspondent Igor Oganessoff, based in Paris, asked readers whether they were "tired of that split-level life in the suburbs? Need to get away from it all? Want a home that's far out, a house with low taxes, a place where you can feel like a king? Consider a castle." He reported that wealthy Americans were buying castles all over Europe. "Man's Home is His . . . More Americans Buy Old Castles in Europe: Lures include 100,000 gallon wine cellar, moats, turrets; Some prices climb sharply." Pasted into a notebook in Box #BW-2, WGF.

171. Wadsworth had presented an argument in favor of the sale at the board meeting held a few weeks earlier. This reflected growing concerns with increasing costs of holding conferences at the castle. Frank W. Wadsworth, June 16, 1980, "Sale of Burg Wartenstein" in file "Board of Trustees correspondents, January 1, 1980–December 31, 1980," Box #BoT-8, WGF.

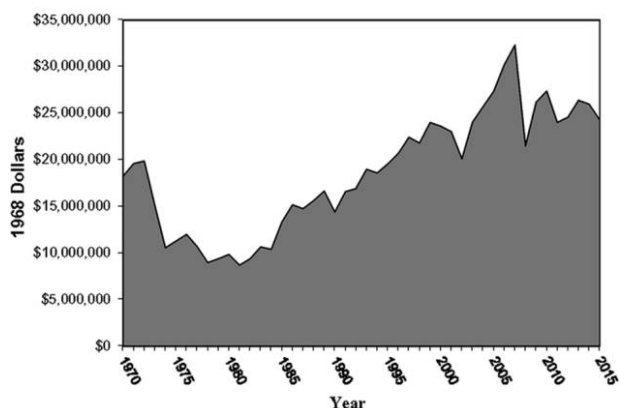


Figure 47. Value of the Wenner-Gren endowment in 1968 dollars, showing the reduction in the endowment in the early 1970s, its decade-long stagnation, the steady and impressive increase from 1985 to 2001, the effect of 9/11 on the financial markets in 2001, the housing bubble of the 2000s, and the crash leading to the “Great Recession” in 2008.

through. The plan to close the castle at the end of the summer 1978 was deferred, and the negotiations kept the castle open for two more years. But anthropologists knew what was up, and in 1977 Osmundsen proposed that meals should be trimmed back a bit for the 1977 summer symposia, with the prime helpings “a half to two-thirds the size of last year’s” because “if only in terms of public image, we still have to make a show of cutting back somewhat.”¹⁷²

Indeed, when 465 anthropologists received a questionnaire about the value of the Burg Wartenstein experience in early 1977, they correctly read the survey as a referendum on the castle itself and whether it would be kept or sold. The foundation undertook the survey in order to understand what was valued about the castle experience—and partly to understand whether it could be replicated in other places. But those queried responded to the underlying threat and sent in lengthy comments about the value of the symposium format and site.¹⁷³ The question that sparked particular debate asked participants, “If you had the choice of receiving a \$3000 grant from the foundation or participating in a Burg Wartenstein conference that was of interest to you, which would you choose?”; 56.1% chose the conference, 16.5% chose the grant, and 17.5% were unable to decide, while 9.9% did not answer.¹⁷⁴ “Many scholars indicated that in their opinion this was the most important question asked and really hit at the heart of our survey.” The “large amount of unsolicited reaction received regarding this question” suggest that participants thought “what we were really asking here was ‘Do you think we should continue Burg Wartenstein as a conference center given the costs?’” Their

172. Kristina Baena to Karl Frey (both employees of the foundation in Austria), May 31, 1977, in “LO-KF Correspondence,” Box #BW-8, WGF.

173. “Report on the Results of the Burg Wartenstein Conference Program Questionnaire,” Box #BW-7, WGF.

174. *Ibid.*

reactions, the report said, “left no room for doubt. Given a choice they would choose participation in a conference.” About 58% of those queried also said they would be willing to pay for 25% of the cost of attending a conference at Burg Wartenstein, and 73% said it would be their first choice for a conference they organized themselves.

Often the praise was spectacular. Emil Zuckerkindl said the Burg Wartenstein conference he attended in 1962 gave him “the definition of the ideal kind of scientific meeting.” The format offered “the greatest opportunity for an in-depth attack on the scientific problems and for conceptual progress.” He said that “in discussions about how scientific meetings should best be conceived and organized, I always give the Burg W. meetings as the outstanding example to follow.”¹⁷⁵ Others echoed this perspective. W. C. Watt of the University of California, Irvine, said that the single Burg Wartenstein conference he attended was “far and away the most rewarding of my career.” It had “a kind of intensity that no other conference has even, in my experience, approached.” The Burg Wartenstein conference attended was “the highlight of my academic and educational career” and “crucial for the development of my own career” or has produced “a series of landmark volumes.” It went on in this vein for more than 40 pages. If the responses of these participants had been the only variable shaping the destiny of Burg Wartenstein, it would have been preserved as a conference center for anthropology forever.

An appraisal of the New York property was also in order during this moment of crisis, and one realtor who considered taking on the 71st Street listing remarked on its “extraordinary detail and spacious proportions,” lamenting, however, that “It is unfortunate that so much of the building is made up of long hallways, which are only wasted space. We feel that the present market value of the building is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$550,000. An asking price of \$700,000 might be worth your consideration.”¹⁷⁶

Around this time a wealthy industrialist named Raymond A. Rich came, seemingly unbidden, onto the scene, and eventually Rich purchased both properties. One of his lawyers (and at the time of his death, companion) Claire W. Carlson had been viewing properties for Rich listed with the Madison Avenue real estate firm Whitbread-Nolan. This firm had been approached by the foundation to provide an estimate of the value of the brownstone should they decide to sell. Though the brownstone was not actually “on the market,” one of the brokers “brought the property to the attention of a Mrs. C.W. Carlson . . . [with the] understanding that it would be premature at this point to discuss an asking price or possible possession date. Nevertheless Mrs. Carlson persisted . . . saying that she would like to see the building anyway.”¹⁷⁷

175. *Ibid.*

176. Jonathan W. McCann of Whitbread-Nolan, Inc., to Nancy Sheehan, August 9, 1977, Box #BoT-6, WGF.

177. Welby C. Wood to Dodds, August 29, 1977, in folder “Sale of 14 E 71st St. All Correspondence with Buyer,” Box #BoT-6, WGF.

In early August a member of the staff at the brownstone gave Carlson and the realtor a tour. She was favorably impressed. Rich then circumvented the realtor (much to their consternation) and wrote directly to John Dodds, then chairman of the board of WGF. Dodds dispatched fellow board member Wadsworth to inform the realtor that “the Wenner-Gren Foundation has no immediate plans to sell its property at 14 East 71st Street. We have been interested in estimating the property’s value as part of a long-range review of the Foundation’s activities, but any decision to relocate would only be made after extensive discussion on the part of the directors and such discussion has not yet taken place.”¹⁷⁸ Wadsworth sent a similar message to Rich as well.¹⁷⁹

But Rich was persistent. He immediately appealed to Osmundsen, having his secretary write to inform her that “should the Foundation accept his offer . . . such action in New York State by a tax-exempt organization requires a minimum two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors officially recorded and certified in the Minutes and attested to by the Directors. In addition, a subsequent court order must be obtained to permit sale of the property.”¹⁸⁰ He also offered to pay cash, and to allow the foundation to remain in the building for one year. We can only surmise that Osmundsen was unmoved by this offer, but Rich may have divined that Wadsworth was more open to talking. He met with Wadsworth for lunch in early October of 1977 and continued to send inquiries to him and Dodds through the New Year’s holiday.¹⁸¹

By July 1978 Wadsworth supported selling both the 71st Street property and the castle. A new appraisal valued the 71st Street property at closer to \$1 million, but “not everyone I talked to thinks that it is wise to sell real estate” because real estate is a traditional hedge against inflation, Wadsworth told the board. His discussions with a financial advisor did suggest that “the property gave us diversification in our portfolio” and “real estate had reacted better against inflation than the bond market.” But he then framed the problem in a way that seemed to legitimate a sale: if the foundation were to receive a new gift of \$1 million (the estimated value of the home on 71st Street), would it buy New York real estate? He thought not, and then he said that the only question about the sale was “financial merit” and not “the context of future directions the Foundation might take: that is to say, does the sale represent sound fiscal policy exclusive of any other consider-

ations?” Wadsworth said he supported the foundation’s work and knew it was valuable. But keeping the foundation fiscally sound would require “firmness on the part of all of us, but particularly on the part of the President.”¹⁸²

The realtor now retained by the foundation viewed the estimate of \$1 million as “acceptable . . . but is *not what we would consider excessive* at the present time.”¹⁸³ But Rich complained to Wadsworth that the \$1 million he was offering was in fact a very high bid. “There is no way the Foundation property is worth \$900,000 to \$1 million. I am *not* saying you can’t get that figure (because I’ve agreed to it), but what I am saying is that . . . their rationale is faulty. . . . Let’s stay in touch because I think this proposal is to the advantage of the Foundation—and on the other hand, as you know, I very much want the property.”¹⁸⁴ In Wadsworth’s reply a month later, he indicated that the board’s decision would ultimately be closely related to what happened to the castle, “as we have been advised by many persons not to dispose of both properties at the same time.”¹⁸⁵ Rich’s reply indicated that he and Wadsworth had previously discussed the possibility of his acquiring the castle as well. However, Rich communicated his opinion to Wadsworth that the castle was likely to have greater long-term value to the foundation than the brownstone and indicated that “I would be willing to consider a \$25,000 a year grant for a few years in connection with Burg Wartenstein.”¹⁸⁶

By April 1979, WGF had agreed to sell the 71st Street property to Rich. That spring, after nearly 35 years in residence, the brownstone was sold to him for \$1.25 million.¹⁸⁷ The foundation took up its new offices in a high-rise at 1865 Broadway. Then Rich pressed forward with an offer for Burg Wartenstein. And very soon after, Wadsworth began to make

182. “If we relinquish 71st Street and are forced to move, then obviously we should try to find as efficient and economical space as is consistent with the foundation’s aims. But there will be priorities to be weighted—location versus amount of space particularly. I think that the basic change that should be given the President is to design a foundation program for the next 10 years that will retain the foundation’s operating status, provide a variety of services including grants and conferences, and continue the foundation’s roles as a facilitator of communications, a catalyst for research, and a friend of the court, as it were. While some features of the foundation’s operations will obviously have to be eliminated or modified, I am confident that the essential characteristics can be preserved, and preserved in such a manner that the foundation can respond quickly to better economic times if the occasion arises. It may well be that the President will need to announce a moratorium on certain activities while she effects the necessary changes—this should be for her to decide—but it will certainly require a significant expenditure of time and energy on her part to cope with these problems in the next year.” Wadsworth to board of trustees, July 20, 1978, *ibid.*

183. John B. Bailey to Wadsworth, July 24, 1978, *ibid.*

184. Rich to Wadsworth, September 1, 1978, *ibid.*

185. Wadsworth to Rich, October 3, 1978, *ibid.*

186. Rich to Wadsworth, October 10, 1978, *ibid.*

187. “Sale of 14 E 71st St, NY, NY to Thomas S. Weary, Trustee for Delphic Trust,” November 30, 1979, *ibid.*

178. Wadsworth to Wood, September 23, 1977, *ibid.*

179. Wadsworth to Rich, September 23, 1977, *ibid.*

180. Anne Hearn to Osmundsen, September 26, 1977, *ibid.*

181. In May of 1978, R. B. Hunt began to pursue the tax implications of selling the brownstone. “The primary question was whether or not we would have to expend either 85% or 100% of our net receipts on the sale of either the New York headquarters building or Burg Wartenstein, and the secondary question was would the 4% excise tax (or whatever lower amount might be the result of new legislation) be imposed on any portion of such net receipts from sale of the properties.” May 1, 1978, interoffice memo from R. B. Hunt to Wadsworth, *ibid.*

this happen. Wadsworth wrote that “I believe that the Board would be delighted to see to you under some arrangement that would permit the Foundation to have limited use of the castle for conferences on a schedule convenient to you. What the trustees would consider an acceptable price, I do not know.”¹⁸⁸

As he explained it to the board of trustees, “since inflation continued to increase and the cost of the conference program to soar,” and since the hoped-for Austrian subsidy materialized in the insignificant amount of \$20,000 annually, the board should dispose of the castle at the best price possible. The resolution was approved at the September 1979 board meeting—5 months after the sale of the 71st Street property. Rich came through with a \$750,000 offer of cash, payable in January 1981, for the castle. The market for properties like Burg Wartenstein was weak, the prospect of selling the castle at all was far from certain, and the Austrian government had “more castles than it could maintain.”¹⁸⁹

A letter explaining the issues was circulated “to the members of the Anthropological Profession” in May of 1978, signed by Wadsworth. He said that the foundation took “great pride” in the “contributions that the Wartenstein conferences have made to research in anthropology and related fields,” including the more than 120 books and many scholarly papers resulting from them. Unfortunately, however, the administrative costs of mounting the conference program had continued to rise, producing a “budgetary imbalance” that was “inappropriate for the Foundation. . . . The Foundation will have no choice but to hold the Wartenstein conferences in less costly locations in the future.”¹⁹⁰ The summer 1978 Wartenstein conferences would therefore not all be held at Wartenstein—one would be an experimental conference, at Mt. Kisco, New York, intended to “educate us to the problems of possible new venues.” Wadsworth assured his readers that the format would stay the same: privacy, extended meetings, intensive discussion, and comfortable accommodations.¹⁹¹

In the end, the symposia held at the castle the summer of 1980 were the last of an era. “The time at the castle was unbelievably depressing,” Osmundsen told Washburn that October. “I had already turned the corner psychologically but was not prepared for the impact of dealing with the people involved. The tears and pain of realization were almost un-

bearable those last weeks.” She said she could barely manage until “the whole nightmare is passed. It is a death in the family in every respect and I thank you for your solace.”¹⁹²

Regime Change: Firing Osmundsen

The nightmare was far from over. By the fall of 1984, the board had reached a breaking point. Wadsworth generated a memo in October of that year commenting that “the board is committed to reaching a decision at the next meeting about Lita Osmundsen’s future role with the Foundation.”¹⁹³ He included with this memo a letter from Will Jones written in July 1979, which provides a particularly vivid portrait of the crisis that had unfolded over the previous decade.¹⁹⁴ Jones had come to see Osmundsen as the fundamental problem and questions of the foundation’s enduring support for anthropology as secondary.

Jones proposed that part of the problem was that the board was insufficiently “firm.” Suggesting the need for a kind of muscular administrative bureaucracy, Jones said that Osmundsen perhaps “did not believe it [the board] really meant what it said. I think that this is a more reasonable charge against the board—weakness of will, rather than fuzziness of instructions. Certainly the board has waffled on the sale of Wartenstein—for justifiable reasons perhaps. But all the same it has waffled. And again, the board has repeatedly voted budgets it disapproved of—again possibly for justifiable reasons. But all the same it has voted them.”¹⁹⁵ He noted that “over her strenuous objections” the board “closed out the casting program. We actively pursued the sale of E. 71st St., despite her protests that if either property had to go, she would prefer to lose Wartenstein. Above all we removed her from membership on the board, which now meets sometimes without her. I submit that these signals are strong enough to alert anyone, especially anyone with Lita’s sensitive antenna, to the fact that the board means business.”¹⁹⁶ He then proposed that the real problem was the “unusual situation” in the relationship between Osmundsen and the board. The board hesitated to fire her, presumably because of the support for her in the anthropological community, and she thwarted their demands as much as she could, trying to preserve the casting program, the brownstone, and the castle—and to protect the commitment to anthropology (which really was threatened; fig. 48).

188. Wadsworth to Rich, August 2, 1979, *ibid.*

189. Memo, Frank W. Wadsworth, June 16, 1980, “Sale of Burg Wartenstein,” Board of Trustees Correspondence, January 1, 1980—December 31, 1980, Box #BoT-8, WGF.

190. Osmundsen’s handwritten calculations of “BW Expenses 1958–1975” calculated the total as \$1,476,763. This did not include, of course, the expenses of the various conferences, travel, etc. “BW Expenses by Year & A/C, 1958–1975,” Box #BW-7, WGF.

191. Frank Wadsworth, letter to the Members of the Anthropological Profession, May 1, 1978, in “Burg Wartenstein Conference Program Questionnaire–1) Misc. correspondence; 2) Announcement re: disposition of BW and Questionnaire Results,” Box #BW-7, WGF.

192. Lita to Sherry Washburn, October 14, 1980, sent to Washburn at Berkeley from Burg Wartenstein, in “Washburn, Dr. S. L.—Misc,” bound folder, Box #MF-106, WGF.

193. Frank W. Wadsworth to the board of trustees, October 15, 1984. In “Statements by Jones, Hunt, Wadsworth,” Box #BoT-9, WGF.

194. Memo, July 3, 1979, labeled as “a letter from an older trustee to a new member of the board (Will Jones)” and included in the file with the October 15, 1984, memo from Frank Wadsworth to the board of trustees, “A Brief History of BOT—Management Relations,” *ibid.*

195. *Ibid.*

196. *Ibid.*



Figure 48. Lita Osmundsen with Wenner-Gren Foundation board members at Burg Wartenstein, 1974. Frank Wadsworth is second from the right (WGF archives).

In his April 1979 report to the board of trustees (which Osmundsen characterized as “impressionistic, superficial” in her handwritten notes in pencil responding to a draft report), Wadsworth summarized the problems at the brownstone. These included staggered work times, so that “staff efficiency” was reduced, and a “leaderless” workplace, where Osmundsen “typically comes in at irregular hours.” The physical structure of the brownstone itself was under attack because of time “wasted going from one floor to another, waiting for elevators, forwarding materials, etc. In addition, it results in a tendency toward solitariness; one gets the impression that staff typically retire to their own offices and work in relative isolation.”¹⁹⁷

In the spring of 1983, the executive committee of the board of trustees drafted what was probably a humiliating (for Osmundsen) “management evaluation” questionnaire and distributed it to all members of the board.¹⁹⁸ This question-

197. *Ibid.*

198. At its winter meeting in 1981, the board had informed Osmundsen that it intended to make a formal review of her performance. She was asked to prepare a “blueprint” that would indicate her plans for the next 2 years and how she intended to keep herself and the board informed of changes in the legal operations and financial environments that would affect the foundation. Here, Wadsworth seems to acknowledge that Osmundsen was not alone in generating these problems. She

naire asked specifically what individual members of the board thought about Osmundsen’s management style, efficiency, ability to handle change, and so on. It included 17 questions about Osmundsen, naming her specifically: “Has Lita Osmundsen achieved a friendly, non-adversarial relationship to the BOT, been fully cooperative?” and “Has Lita Osmundsen demonstrated an appropriate interest in and comprehension of the Foundation’s finances?”¹⁹⁹ The results varied widely among individuals, but the response of the board as a whole was to “rate her relatively high in the areas of professional competency and relatively low in the areas of administrative ability.”²⁰⁰ Later that summer the executive committee reported to the board that “it occurred to us that whether we decide negatively about the caliber of Lita’s performance in the next twelve months, compromise on some form of early retirement, or give her a full vote of confidence, her tenure as President/Director of Research could, for a variety of reasons, end in a relatively short time.”²⁰¹

Wadsworth is now valorized in various official ways by the foundation because of this sequence of events. He ultimately played a crucial role in persuading the board to save the foundation for anthropology. The foundation has named two fellowships after him and says on its website that his “thirty-six years of service included ten years as Chairman of the Board of Trustees (1977–1987), ten years as Vice Chairman (1994–2004), membership in the Executive Committee since its inception (1992–2006), Chairman of the Nominating Committee (1986–2004), and crucial roles on three presidential Search Committees.” Wadsworth, the foundation website says today, “steered the Foundation through a period of profound crisis and more than anyone else in the Foundation’s history, is responsible for its survival and wellbeing. He had to make decisions that were hard and unpopular at the time, but were instrumental in putting Wenner-Gren on a sound fiscal basis. Through his scholarly integrity and personal grace, he also restored the trust of the anthropological profession in the Foundation and its activities. His diligence, courage, wisdom, and dedication ensured that Wenner-Gren would continue to benefit anthropology long into the future.” While he played a critical role in preserving WGF for anthropological research,

was operating in a rapidly changing environment and trying to hold on to a vision of the foundation in which she was deeply invested. The blueprint that Osmundsen eventually produced was essentially to carry out the same programs with a reduced staff. One possible solution would have been to hire an associate director who could and would take care of the administrative details with which Osmundsen was less engaged, and this was considered for a while. *Ibid.*

199. All in “EVALUATION of WG Foundation 1983,” Box #BoT-9, WGF.

200. Frank W. Wadsworth to the board of trustees, “A Brief History of BOT—Management Relations,” October 15, 1984, p. 2, in “Statements by Jones, Hunt, Wadsworth,” Box #BoT-9, WGF.

201. Executive committee to board of trustees, August 3, 1983, in “EVALUATION of WG Foundation 1983,” Box #BoT-9, WGF.

he also led the initiative to sell both the brownstone and the castle, in theory assets that diversified the holdings of the foundation, and he handled the firing of Osmundsen in problematic ways.

For instance, when Wadsworth circulated the questionnaire to members of the profession, Osmundsen was contacted by some of those queried, who asked her what was going on. Leading anthropologists sought out by members of the WGF board of trustees could not fail to notice that these appeals signaled a possible threat, either to the continuation of foundation support for anthropology (there were rumors that their real goal was to turn the foundation to some other focus) or to Osmundsen herself, an individual to whom many anthropologists had deep allegiance and professional debts.

Wadsworth's own personal interviews with leading anthropologists over that winter (1983/1984) led him to conclude that the foundation was "well-known and highly regarded, one person remarking that W-G and anthropology are inseparable in people's minds. Only one person had strong negative comments; these . . . concerned the foundation's 'cronyism' and the inability of the ordinary anthropologist to communicate easily with the foundation. One or two other persons echoed this criticism mildly, noting that W-G does not 'reach out' strongly to the profession 'at large.'"²⁰² The image of both the foundation and Osmundsen was "generally high although there is agreement that the foundation does not 'lead' as it used to."²⁰³ Martin noted that he had heard from Osmundsen that people had called her about the survey. "Some whom I was about to see telephoned her to ask what was going on, [asked her] why these interviews were taking place."²⁰⁴ Harold Martin's report was similar: "Although I took care not to bring up Lita's name myself, in every interview she was praised (even by one anthropologist who said he had 'political' differences with her and had, as well, spiteful things to say) as very capable and well-informed."²⁰⁵

The support of the anthropological community was not enough to slow the train, however. Osmundsen was forced to resign. When the board of trustees met in July of 1985, the minutes included lavish praise for two trustees who were stepping down, describing their "unusually perceptive, objective" qualities and their "financial acumen and well reasoned advice" as critical factors in helping the foundation to maintain financial stability. "The foundation will miss not only the

special qualities but also the friendship of a warm and understanding gentleman" the minutes said in relation to one of these departing trustees. But later in the same minutes, Osmundsen's resignation was treated without even polite praise. "The President and Director of Research, Lita Osmundsen, having informed the Trustees of her resignation effective September 1, 1986, the Trustees adopted the following resolution unanimously after motion had been duly made and seconded." This resolution described the plans for a search for a successor.²⁰⁶ Osmundsen retired at age 59. It was the end of an era.

An announcement appeared in the *Anthropology Newsletter*, and notices (accompanied by a *New Yorker* cartoon) were sent to about 150 eminent members of the field around the world. A list was also made of those 100 or so who replied, including Claude Levi-Strauss in Paris, Mary Douglas in London, Dell Hymes in Philadelphia, Clifford Geertz in Princeton, Richard Leakey in Kenya, Sir Edmund Leach in Cambridge, Sidney Mintz at Johns Hopkins, Shirley Lindenbaum in New York, Laura Nader in Berkeley, Francisco Salzano in Brazil, Phillip Tobais in South Africa, and Sherwood Washburn in Berkeley.²⁰⁷

The news was received by many with a mix of surprise, dismay, and, as Thomas Beidelman wrote, "trepidations about who would replace" her, often combined with expressions of deep gratitude and admiration for Osmundsen's leadership. Bob Ehrlich regarded her leaving as a "catastrophe for the Foundation," but acknowledged that "you have been rather unhappy there for some time." For Brian Fagan, it was a "tragedy for anthropology, which is so sadly in need of aggressive leadership, such as you have provided in your inimitable way every since I have been a member of the community." From Raymond Firth came the recollection that "For so many years now . . . you have been so associated in my mind with the Foundation that the Board and the rest of the organization seemed to be just appendages." Several acknowledged that they knew her recent tenure had been rocky. Mary Douglas described her receipt of the news as a "sad shock." Musing, "whatever can have happened to make it just not acceptable for you to stay on where you had built so much and given so much of your remarkable talents? I fear the worst." She continued, reflecting that, "In a sense, I thought you ought to have resigned before, when the sale of the two buildings was carried through so [illegible]" before remarking, "You are the outstanding first of the many American professional women to make such an impact on me, with their generous support and sympathy—I'll always remember."²⁰⁸

Osmundsen's resignation was a pivot point in the history of the organization and prompted individuals who knew her

202. Wadsworth to BOT, February 2, 1984, p. 1, *ibid*.

203. *Ibid.*, 3.

204. "(Presumably, almost certainly, they called her before they received the explanatory statement and the questions.) I would like to think Lita did not play political games when they called (she said 'a couple' had done so) but I have no way of being sure about that. I did think once or twice that the interviewees introduction of her name into our conversation was somewhat less than casual, but I'm not even sure that is so. I do hope she did not initiate any calls." Martin to Wadsworth, January 26, 1984, p. 2, *ibid*.

205. *Ibid.*, 1.

206. Minutes of a special meeting of the trustees of Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, held July 18 and 19, 1985, minute book, WGF.

207. Unnamed folder, Box #DoR-6, WGF.

208. This is a sampling of dozens of letters of support sent to Osmundsen in September 1985.

personally as well as institutions that had benefited from the foundation's largesse and intellectual leadership to request that she reconsider. To those in the know, this move marked an irrevocable break with a board of trustees increasingly hostile to her perpetuation of an older and perhaps grander "Old World" style of managing the foundation. Her departure from the board represented, as J. Goody put it, "the veritable end of an era!" (December 2, 1985, Goody to LO) that had been sustained on the power of its social networks and the beginning of a new, more standardized, bureaucratized one.

Old acquaintances such as Earl Count observed, "Over the course of the years I had repeated occasion to ask myself, what would Paul think about the fortunes of his brain-child?" (December 22, 1985, Count to Minx). Kailish C. Malhotra, professor at the Indian Statistical Institute in Delhi expressed his sincere "hope that you would kindly withdraw your resignation and that we Anthropologists and the discipline of Anthropology for which you have rendered selfless [*sic*] service will continue to have your valuable guidance and services" (January 31, 1986, Malhotra to LO). Meanwhile, David Hamburg, president of the Carnegie corporation, a peer institution, wrote to express his "shock" and admiration. "I can think of no one in the grant making world, either private or public, who contributed so much as you. Your record is simply superb." He added that with regard to the castle meetings, "I always thought your unique capacity to deal with all of us prima donnas was the key factor in the success of these extraordinary meetings" (November 14, 1985, Hamburg to LO). Many simply could not imagine WGF without her.

Osmundsen was aware of the potential strategic value of this outpouring of support, and she forwarded to the chair of the board of trustees those letters that she believed could be effective. A few highly negative ones—which accused the board harshly—she withheld, but others were copied and forwarded. This had no effect, however. The board's decision was final.

In a nostalgic letter to Osmundsen written in the midst of this crisis, old friend and trustee emeritus John W. Dodds reminded her of happier times. "I often think how much the foundation meant to me over the years, how it educated me (at least partially) in new and exciting directions, how much it meant to be close to you and Paul, how warm and congenial the board was as a group, how thrilling the Wartenstein adventure was—indeed the whole network of relationships. When I retired thinking that it was the proper thing to do at my age, and how the foundation might prosper with some fresh blood, I had no idea that everyone else would grimly hang on, or that the board would expand to a total of 11 members, which makes it, I would assume, a different kind of custodial operation. Do you remember that we used to talk about *anthropology*?"²⁰⁹

209. Dodds to Lita, January 2, 1985, in folder "Dodds, Dr. John W., Trustee emeritus," Box #DoR-4, WGF.

When the time came to choose her successor, Osmundsen had a chance to comment on an early, long list of possible candidates—14 leading scholars in anthropology, ranging across the four fields and with expertise in many different countries. Many were well known to her personally—they had been grantees at WGF, had organized conferences, or had negotiated with CA about some issue—and she knew their research, their quirks, and their strengths. Her comments about them reflect a sharp, critical awareness of how much diplomacy and charm mattered to the foundation. Some lacked diplomacy, in her view, even if they had significant administrative experience; others could not be trusted; were rigid, inflexible, impatient, or intolerant; lacked objectivity; and could be "abrasive." In her catalog of what was lacking in these candidates, Osmundsen mapped an outline of what she saw as her strengths and her proper role as president: open, gracious, flexible, objective.²¹⁰ With her retirement, the foundation entered a new era (fig. 49).²¹¹

Reinvention: Sydel Silverman and the New WGF

When Sydel Silverman became president of WGF in early 1987, the foundation was in crisis (fig. 50). Osmundsen's long, painful exit, at least a decade in the making, had taken a toll on the staff and on programs and even on the public image of the foundation. The real estate was gone, the casting program was gone, and *Current Anthropology* had barely survived. The foundation was in rented quarters at the American Bible Society building near Columbus Circle. (It moved again to 220 Fifth Avenue in March of 1990 and to its present quarters at 470 Park Avenue South in April 2004.) And the board of trustees expected change (a lot of it).

Silverman also had to contend with an emotional legacy in the anthropological community. Many found it hard to imagine the foundation continuing to function without Osmundsen. It had been intimately linked to her personality and style. Silverman recalled that Osmundsen was viewed by many in the profession as a "fairy godmother" who could magically produce the resources to make things happen. Anthropologists whom the foundation supported felt personally grateful to her rather than grateful to an institution. When the AAA gave its first awards for service to the profession in 1976, they went to Osmundsen—a foundation administrator who did not publish—and to Margaret Mead, one of anthropology's most visible public intellectuals.

In contrast to Osmundsen's "fairy godmother" persona, Silverman had a no-nonsense, businesslike style. She described herself as "running a good operation"—oriented around the

210. Osmundsen "Confidential Comments for Chairman's Eyes Only," undated, but probably February 1986, in "Search Committee (Candidates for DOR's position)," Box #BoT-9, WGF.

211. Osmundsen died in January 1998 at the age of 71 as a result of pulmonary hypertension. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/16/nyregion/lita-s-osmundsen-71-an-anthropologist.html>.



Figure 49. Lita Osmundsen in front of the brownstone at 14 East 71st Street, New York City, 1975 (WGF archives).

practical and efficient management of resources. Silverman's mandate was to bring the foundation into a new era that was more bureaucratic, structured, and cautious in some ways. The time of an Old World genteel (even romantic) Wenner-Gren culture was being replaced with practices that reflected broader trends in American institutional life.

Silverman was the first president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research who was a practicing and credentialed anthropologist. She studied four-field anthropology at the University of Chicago (1952–1957) and Columbia University (1957–1963), earning her PhD with a dissertation that focused on an agrarian Italian hill town, Montecastello di Vibio. This relatively novel decision, to focus on a European (rather than isolated or “primitive”) community, was inspired by Conrad Arensberg's cultural anthropological work in Europe. Arensberg, who was on the faculty at Columbia when Silverman was there, proposed that the tools of anthropology could be productively applied to complex modern societies.²¹² His work focused on Ireland, and using his approach as her model, she conducted fieldwork in Umbria, Italy. Though Silverman later said she was “never good at fieldwork,” she published *Three Bells of Civilization: The Life of an Italian Hill Town* in 1975.²¹³ She taught at Queens College in New York (1962–1975) and became executive officer of the City University of New York (CUNY) PhD program in anthropology (1975–1986).

212. Sydel Silverman, interview by Susan Lindee and Joanna Radin, August 25, 2014, New York, NY.

213. Silverman, 2008 autobiographical information on the website of the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa/fa/silverman.pdf> (accessed August 7, 2016).

In 1972 she married anthropologist Eric Wolf (1923–1999), who had studied at Columbia a decade before her (PhD 1951) and who came to the CUNY Graduate Center in 1971. Wolf's (1982) most widely known work, *Europe and the People without History*, is a wide-ranging historical exploration of trade routes and manufacturing industries with a focus on the roles of peasants and laborers in global change.²¹⁴ He was a part of the inner circle at WGF, participating in the September 1960 symposium at Burg Wartenstein on “Anthropological Horizons” and organizing a 1965 symposium at Burg Wartenstein, “The Evolutionist Interpretation of Culture.” In the summer of 1978, Silverman attended a WGF symposium at Burg Wartenstein, with Wolf, on social inequality, and like Wolf she found the setting and the style of the international symposia productive and compelling. Losing the castle, she later recalled, was worse than losing the brownstone.²¹⁵

Her experience with academic leadership prepared her well for her role in WGF. She served as chair of the anthropology department at Queens, revived the PhD program at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center, and served as its acting dean—a job that she did so well she was asked to assume the position in a more formal capacity. Though she turned the opportunity down, the experience helped her realize that she was good at and enjoyed this kind of work. Other people realized it too, and she began to receive invitations to apply for directorships of organizations, including small universities and large foundations and even the role of NSF program officer for anthropology. These leadership roles in academe taught her “not to care about being popular”—something any academic administrator can appreciate—and made her realize that she “really liked running things.”²¹⁶

When the position became available at WGF, she hesitated. “It sounded like a can of worms.” She was interested in the position and the possibilities, but she knew enough about the turmoil at the foundation over the previous few years—“everybody knew”—to be unsure about whether she should apply. When two members of the board encouraged her, however, she did. She recalled her interview, held at the Mayflower Hotel, as stressful. Board members grilled her, pressing her about the value of the small grants to PhD students undertaking their first field research that served, and continue to, as one of the foundation's main forms of support to the profession. Proposing that these small grants were a waste of resources, one trustee commented provocatively, “You get what you pay for, you know,” to which Silverman retorted, “Anyone who says that does not shop at Loehmanns.”²¹⁷ Word

214. For a brief interview and profile of Wolf, see http://www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/theory_pages/Wolf.htm (accessed August 7, 2016).

215. Silverman, interview.

216. Ibid.

217. Loehmann's, now strictly online, was a popular discount retailer known for selling high-quality women's clothing at deep discounts. Silverman, interview.



Figure 50. Sydel Silverman, Wenner-Gren Foundation president, 1987–2000 (WGF archives).

trickled back to her that everyone loved that she had stood up to this somewhat difficult trustee. She was offered the position, and she agreed to accept a 3-year appointment. In the end, she stayed for four terms, 12 years, from 1987 until 1999.

She began the job with Osmundsen still active and making an effort to introduce Silverman to the workings of the foundation. Silverman, for her part, wanted to assure the profession that two hallmarks of the foundation, its small grants program and its investment in American-style four-field anthropology, would continue. She highlighted this in a 1986 profile in the *Anthropology Newsletter*. One trustee objected that she could not speak for the foundation without board approval—but Silverman gradually established a different relationship with the board. Sustaining her scholarly autonomy and her right to act independently of the board in scholarly matters relating to anthropology would be among Silverman's challenges.²¹⁸

Silverman also struggled to maintain the "Old World" culture of WGF while bringing the foundation in line with new expectations. On Silverman's watch, WGF became a modern, operating foundation involved in the active execution of programs and with a required annual disbursement of approximately 4.2% of the endowment. The foundation did not ac-

tively seek donations, meaning any increase in resources would depend on the investment performance of the endowment. She, alongside the board, crafted a spending policy linking annual expenditures to its investment performance. This rigorous fiscal management, both on the investing and spending sides, put the foundation on track to prosper for years to come. WGF had come to terms with the new realities and under new leadership was able to effect change.

In the spring of 1987, newly in charge, Silverman laid out the issues that the foundation faced for the board of trustees. Policy for the foundation should reflect, she asserted, "the kind of discipline anthropology is, and the way research in anthropology is conducted."²¹⁹ She then proceeded to present a brief tutorial on the nature of four-field anthropology, roughly equivalent to a first-semester lecture, and an outline of the existing state of funding for anthropological research. The NSF, with a \$7 million annual budget for anthropological research at that time, was the leading source of designated funds. WGF allocated all its support to anthropology, but many other agencies and foundations offered some funding, including the SSRC, foundations with area interests around the world, special foundations devoted to particular forms of research such as paleontology (Leakey Foundation), and other organizations such as the National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Spencer Foundation. For Silverman, this brief summary suggested the crucial roles of the WGF small grants-in-aid program, which supported PhD students.²²⁰

The foundation, Silverman told her board, should make its best contributions to anthropology by defining an identity grounded in four components. First, it should be inclusive, "embracing the range of subfields, interests and approaches that make up contemporary anthropology." Specializing in a particular subfield would risk missing new developments in the forefront of the field, which Silverman was convinced often happened in the interactions among subfields, and risked being "written off" by "large segments of the discipline." This perspective then explicitly questioned the idea of a special "focus" for the foundation. Second, it should be in the forefront of promoting international communication. "Unless international linkages are aggressively fostered, they will not be there when researchers need them." Third, WGF should focus on special forms of support not available through other funding sources. The foundation could not compete with NSF, but it did have "direct access to the confidence of its constituency, who are prepared to support its efforts with their time and expertise." It also had "flexibility" and a "minimum of bureaucratic impediment . . . without the intervention and overhead charges that come with funding through institutions." Finally, Silverman proposed, the foundation should establish a continuing role in innovation and leadership in anthropology as a whole.

219. Silverman, "Statements of Jones, Hunt and Wadsworth," "The Wenner-Gren Foundation: Identity and Goals," Box #BoT-9, WGF.

220. Ibid.

218. Silverman, interview.

This was part of the Wenner-Gren identity until recent years, and it can be once again. The foundation has the advantage of being independent of institution, national and factional interests, its only commitment being to the discipline as a whole. Moreover, the track record of the Foundation in forging new directions for anthropology is still well enough known for it to be able to aggressively reclaim that role.

The foundation should seek to identify research that “could be advanced by a limited infusion of funds, or that for one reason or another falls through the cracks in the world of funding” and should take the initiative to identify where the field is going and where opportunities with “unusual promise” might lie. “Anthropology,” she emphasized “has gone through a period of increasing specialization and fragmentation, but there is now a growing concern to return to the underlying questions that make it a unified discipline.”²²¹

In her first program review the following fall, she singled out the small grants program as “the single most effective activity of the foundation” which had “benefited from a fairly rigorous review process” and “enjoys credibility within the profession.”²²² Her only important recommended changes focused on the procedures in-house for awarding the grants—revised application forms, eliminating the preliminary application stage, increasing application and award dates to twice a year, and computerization of the grants management process with attendant notification procedures for applicants.²²³ Some things could be safely dropped entirely—the senior scholar research stipends, for example, and the post-doctoral training fellowships, while others should be subject to a longer assessment and some revisions, such as the developing countries training fellowships and the Pacific Studies program.²²⁴

A year later she could claim a kind of success. Her president’s report for 1988 said that the “process of self-reflection and re-evaluation of its programs” during her first year affirmed the focus on an anthropology that embraced cultural/social anthropology, ethnology, biological/physical anthropology, archaeology, and anthropological linguistics. She explicitly prioritized basic research, saying that “applications” to public policy and the like were fine as long as the project would “contribute to the development of basic research.” Silverman also emphasized the unique niche that WGF filled. Because its resources provided “only a minute proportion of the total funding for research in anthropology, . . . Its approach, therefore, is to direct its resources toward needs not met by larger funders, to respond to such needs with flexibility and a minimum of bureaucratic impediment, and to seek opportunities to foster innovation and leadership at the forefronts of anthropology.” In

every element of Silverman’s evolving vision for the foundation, its historical legacy and successes were emphasized. Some elements of the romantic past were gone forever, but the foundation could continue to “fulfill the goals of the Wartenstein symposia in the absence of a fixed facility” and could continue to support creative or risky projects that might need to be nurtured early with minimal bureaucratic interference (fig. 51).²²⁵ The best qualities of Osmundsen’s personal approach could be kept alive even in the new computerized and efficient foundation world of the 1980s.

Through the 12 years of her service as president, Silverman oversaw an improved financial situation, a stabilized and more professional relationship with members of the board of trustees, and the creation of new programs, including the extension of the Developing Countries Training Fellowship to support advanced anthropological training for black South Africans at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand. (This program is now known as the Wadsworth African Fellowship Program and the Wadsworth International Fellowship Program.) She also created the (now defunct) International Collaborative Research Grant, which supported research collaborations between two or more qualified scholars from different countries and representing different, complementary perspectives, knowledge, and/or skills.

Her strong interests in history led to the Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records, also known as CoPAR. A 1992 international symposium, “Preserving the Anthropological Record: Issues and Strategies” was organized by Silverman and Nanci Parezo, an anthropologist and historian of the discipline, to assess the “survival of the historical records” of anthropology. Reflecting concerns befitting a maturing discipline, CoPAR also reckoned with the challenges new technologies, such as computers and e-mail, were posing to the maintenance of unpublished materials: the field notes, correspondence, and data sets from which anthropological knowledge is made.

CoPAR is now a nonprofit sponsored by the major US anthropological organizations in cooperation with the Society of American Archivists, the American Library Association, and the National Park Service. Its website, www.copar.org, maintains guides to anthropological field notes and manuscripts in archival repositories.

Silverman was also particularly concerned with the preservation of the historical record of anthropology and introduced the Historical Archives Program to help anthropologists prepare and deposit their unpublished research materials in archival repositories. Since its inception, approximately 135 grants valued at \$1.3 million have been made to preserve unpublished research materials that might otherwise have been lost and to carry out oral history interviews with significant figures in the discipline. Her leadership is reflected in the historical sensibilities that continue at WGF today.

221. Silverman, October 1987, “President’s Report: Programmatic Recommendations and Five-Year Goals,” *ibid.*

222. *Ibid.*

223. *Ibid.*

224. *Ibid.*

225. *Ibid.*



Figure 51. Symposium 125, “Anthropology at the End of the Century,” held in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, October 28–November 5, 1999. Left to right, Shirley Lindenbaum, Mary Ellen Morbeck, Sydel Silverman, Alan Goodman, and Timothy Bromage (WGF archives).

WGF at the Millennium: Richard Fox

When Silverman stepped down in 2000, her replacement was Washington University cultural anthropologist Richard Fox (fig. 52). Trained in materialist anthropology and ethnography at the University of Michigan (PhD 1965), Fox was a cultural anthropologist whose studies of India explored community change, “culture in the making” (which he viewed as “not anything like the concept of culture as most anthropologists use it”), and the ideas and influence of Mohandas Gandhi (Starn and Bar 2006:159). His work engaged with debates about nationalism and nationalist ideologies, colonialism, social movements, urban experience, and the dynamics of cultural invention and change (Fox 1969, 1971, 1977). Fox taught at Brandeis University, Duke University, and Washington University and also served as editor of both *American Ethnologist* and, later, *Current Anthropology*, before becoming president of WGF.

He was drawn to anthropology as a student by the “wind-in-the-palms variety” of anthropology produced by Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict and then did his first year of fieldwork in a famine year in 1963/1964 in a desperately poor town in India (Starn and Bar 2006). “There were a couple of riots and beatings in the time I was there. Muslims sent their families out of town for safety. It wasn’t a happy place, and in the

famine I also suffered for lack of food since people wouldn’t sell to me on the black market for fear I’d turn them in. It was a very difficult time personally, but I did learn a lot in that town. I had a better understanding of inequality and the political relation between the local and the national and also of Indian beliefs and how I needed to respect them even though I was trying to get away from the notion of India as ‘spiritual’” (Starn and Bar 2006:158).

Recalling his years as president of WGF, Fox highlighted one decision that “might seem small in retrospect, but it mattered to me quite a bit.” This was the decision to stop using the Miguel Covarrubias image of the “diversity of mankind” as a symbol of WGF.²²⁶ The Covarrubias logo features four figures, dancing together and apparently representing African, Greek, Native American, and Asian cultures, or perhaps the “four races” of “man.” It was created at the request of the

226. Designed by Miguel Covarrubias (1904–1957), a Mexican artist and anthropologist who was commissioned in 1947 by WGF (then known as the Viking Fund) to design the Viking Fund medal. The medal was awarded to honor outstanding intellectual leadership and exceptional service to the discipline of anthropology. It was originally struck in heavy bronze with a 3-inch diameter, and it depicts four dancers, representing the diversity of humankind. The design served as the logo of the foundation except for the 5 years of Fox’s presidency, 2000–2005.

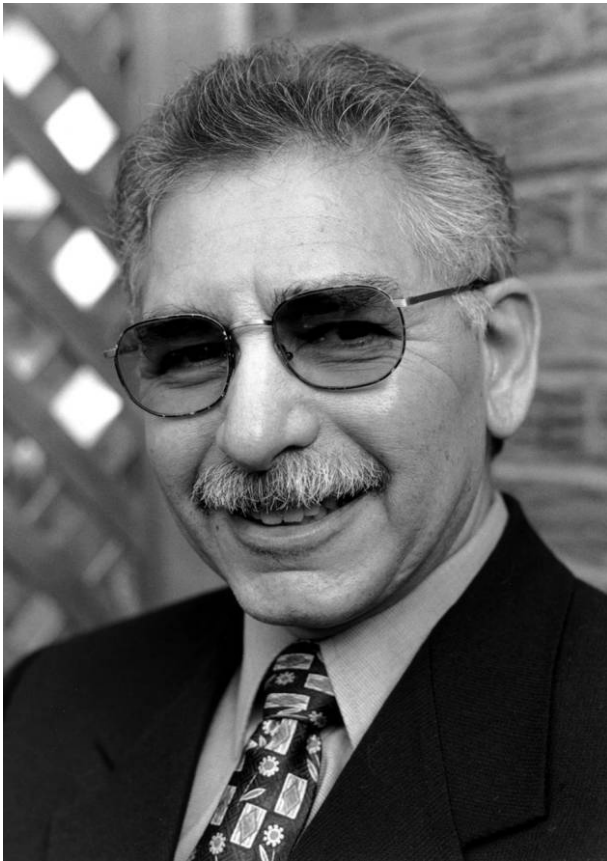


Figure 52. Richard G. Fox, Wenner-Gren Foundation president, 2000–2005 (WGF archives).

foundation in 1947 as a design for the Viking Fund medal and is a clear reflection both of Covarrubias's artistic style and of the times. Covarrubias had made his name as a caricaturist, illustrator (e.g., for *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker*), and stage designer in New York in the 1920s but later established himself as an ethnologist and archaeologist in Mexico in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. He knew Axel Wenner-Gren when he lived in Mexico beginning in the 1940s, and the foundation also funded his archaeological research at the preclassic site of Tlatilco in the Valley of Mexico in the 1940s.

During Fox's tenure, the Covarrubias dancing figure image was replaced by a simple hand print. The new logo, Fox said in his first annual report to the board, was "adopted to better represent anthropology in its current states" and replaced an image "adopted by the foundation fifty years ago."²²⁷ In discussing his decision, Fox said that the logo represented "an anthropology that I did not have any sympathy with. This was for several reasons: One it portrayed people in ways that I thought were racist and sexist. Two it showed people dancing, doing something ceremonial, when I thought anthropology was about more than enjoying funny customs." He convinced

the board to support a competition for a new logo, and the winning design, of a handprint, was adopted during his tenure as president. "The hand could serve as a symbol of cultural or biological anthropology." Fox said he wanted "to see all this antiquarian and elitist background that the foundation rightly or wrongly was seen to have—that glitzy view of anthropology—removed. I thought that by changing the logo we could take the first step to do that."²²⁸

He was not the only president to struggle with the legacies of the 1948 logo, which is intimately bound up with the history of the foundation but which also reflects ideas about anthropology that many find offensive. Silverman had removed the logo from the letterhead during her tenure, though she continued to use it as the symbol of the foundation. Fox created the handprint logo during his tenure, but that never seemed to really catch on. Aiello revived the old Covarrubias symbol because of its historical connection with the foundation. Yet in anticipation of the upcoming 75th anniversary, the board rethought the logo and in early 2016 adopted a new one. The foundation's new logo, Aiello hopes, can resonate with the historically important Covarrubias symbol for WGF but also capture anthropology as it is practiced in the twenty-first century.

Fox took over the foundation in 2001, just before the September 11 attacks in New York City, a few miles away from the foundation's headquarters. He recalled that earlier that September, he had decided that it would be useful to see whether there were any archival records from the first president of the board—the Wenner-Gren attorney Richard Carley Hunt. "So I wrote to the law firm that had become the successor to his own firm, asking if they had any archival materials from Hunt, because we did not have much." This firm's offices were in the World Trade Center. "Then 9/11 came and the whole place went up in smoke. Whether there were records or not we don't know."²²⁹ A piece of Wenner-Gren history was perhaps lost in an attack that reshaped United States culture and politics.

Fox's tenure at WGF was characterized by expanded funding for junior anthropologists by increasing the stipend for the Richard Carley Hunt Memorial Fellowship and an enhanced panel system for peer reviewing all grants and fellowships (fig. 53). He also established the Wenner-Gren International Symposium Publication Series in collaboration with Berg Publishers, a difficult negotiation that went a long way toward guaranteeing that symposium papers would be available to all relevant scholars. Some symposia had not resulted in publications partly because organizers were expected to negotiate with presses to publish them. Fox's decision to support publication with WGF funding—and to negotiate in advance through Berg—established a precedent for the current practice of publishing a special issue of *Current Anthropology*.

227. Fox, 2000–2001 biennial report, p. 4

228. Fox, 2000–2001 biennial report, p. 4

229. Ibid.



Figure 53. Francis Nyamnjoh, Kregg Hetherington, Orin Starn, and Richard Fox (*left to right*) in the wine cellar at Villa Luppis, Pordenone, Italy, location of symposium 135, “Indigenous Experience Today,” March 18–25, 2005 (WGF archives).

Fox recalled his commitments to attracting more international applications to WGF and his efforts to reconfigure some elements of the budget. The Small Grants program was formally renamed the Dissertation Fieldwork and Post-PhD Research Grant programs (“Because there were no ‘large grants’ so why have a ‘small grants’ program?”). He viewed the program as supportive of anthropology graduate programs but not necessarily the most efficient and effective use of WGF funding. He wanted to bring the spending for these advanced graduate students under control. He also worked to reduce the costs associated with the symposium program. Having participated in one of the “old style” symposia, he found that by the sixth or seventh day people were exhausted and the conversations began to lag. He shortened the format he inherited by one day.

In 2006, when he looked back on his work for the foundation, he seemed to see little change. “I think I had a bigger impact on anthropology through the journal, mainly because of starting the electronic edition in 1999” (Starn and Bar 2006: 162). He described the satisfactions of bringing back the Viking Fund Medal (for a senior anthropologist) and moving to a new building in 2004. “But did my work at the Foundation make a major impact on anthropology? I doubt it.” He suggested that early presidents, particularly Fejos, had been in-

fluent, but that the new strategies of the foundation, which do not emphasize large single awards, sustain anthropology but do not drive it.

Leslie Aiello and the Contemporary Foundation

The president of WGF today is US evolutionary anthropologist Leslie C. Aiello, whose work on the Expensive Tissue Hypothesis (with Peter Wheeler) has been broadly influential in the field (fig. 54). The Expensive Tissue Hypothesis posits an inverse relationship between brain size and gut size mediated through the adoption of a high-quality, animal-based diet. Aiello is the first physical anthropologist to lead WGF even though the foundation is widely viewed as particularly influential in physical or biological anthropology. Her route to this leadership role was slightly circuitous. “I was probably a sort of accidental academic.” Educated in California in the 1960s, she was swept along with the huge post-Sputnik expansion of higher education in which jobs were plentiful, and even master’s degree candidates could often earn tenure. She got her master’s and started teaching. “I loved it, loved teaching. I was just a year or two too late to get a full-time job with a master’s. I would have been extremely happy teaching in a community college and staying there.”



Figure 54. Leslie C. Aiello, Wenner-Gren Foundation president, 2005–2017.

She decided, instead, to go back to get a PhD when her first marriage broke up and, with the help of good friends, enrolled at St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School, University of London. After a year, in 1976 an opportunity at University College London in biological anthropology reconfigured her career. "They were desperate to find someone to fill in because the professor had just died unexpectedly." She was hired, and "30 years later I was still there." She became head of her department 1996–2002, then head of the graduate school, in which role she established one of the first ethical review boards for the social sciences in the United Kingdom.

Teaching was difficult, particularly in the early years, because she had a serious speech impediment when she was young. "I still stutter when I get nervous," she said. The first time she tried to get a teaching license in California she failed because of the stutter. Eventually, however, she became someone comfortable enough to appear first on BBC Radio and later even on television. "The first time I did TV I remember telling the producer 'I'm so glad none of my friends are going to see this.' And a quarter of a million people were watching that show. I still won't watch myself on TV or listen to myself on the radio."

For Aiello, taking over the foundation required not only interacting with a broad range of people but coming to terms with the rich diversity of anthropology today. "When Paul and Lita were in charge," she said in an interview, "it was

possible to know almost everyone personally. And an anthropologist could be a generalist." Today the field is both larger and more diverse in every sense, and "people don't see the connections the way they once did." Every subfield has more than one research trajectory. Social anthropology has reflexively critiqued its own historical roles in colonial power and begun to "study up"; biological anthropology has branched out into molecular methods, quantitative analysis, forensic work, public health, and studies of DNA; archaeology is seriously engaged with contract work, museums, heritage, and laboratory research; and linguistics is almost fractured between language computation and old-fashioned fieldwork. Taken as a whole, these basically useful developments have produced "a problem of defining what modern anthropology is." Today, Aiello notes, it is a question of where anthropology ends and other disciplines begin. When does medical anthropology become public health or when does primatology veer so far from anthropological questions to become pure animal behavior or zoology? She proposes that it is difficult to unite today's disparate research methods, assumptions, foci, and practices into a single unified whole.²³⁰

The expansion of the discipline in size and range, Aiello has learned, also means that a preserved endowment, which in real dollars is approximately the same as it was in 1968, cannot go as far. There are too many people and too many projects. WGF cannot have an effect equivalent to the impact it had in the early days, when almost everyone practicing anthropology could be supported or included in some way. When Fejos convinced Wenner-Gren to fund anthropology, the discipline was nascent, and a small amount of funding could make a huge difference. "But we are a mature discipline now" she has said, suggesting that her "main challenge since taking over a decade ago has been to develop new and effective ways to impact the field."

Aiello was not headhunted for the WGF presidency. She "saw the advert" and "it looked like it was written for me." She had never applied for funding from WGF, never acted as a reviewer for the foundation, and never been invited to a symposium. But she "decided immediately that I was interested." Around this time she realized she was "not getting the kick out of human evolution that I used to, was definitely overextended, and I felt that I wasn't doing anything well. I was actually doing too much." Until she arrived at the foundation, Aiello said, "I didn't realize how burned out I was."

She took over in 2005 and enjoyed 3 years of a growing endowment. Then she had to ride out the 2008 financial crisis, which slowly began to affect what WGF could do as assets fell. The foundation's funding protocols were always flexible, and there were relatively few long-term commitments, so Aiello and her Vice President for Finance Maugha Kenny calibrated their options and "put their seat belts on." The foun-

230. All quotes are from an interview with S. Lindee, October 8, 2015, at the Wenner-Gren office in New York.

dation was in the fortunate position of having no “big ticket” items or long-term commitments. The success rate for WGF grants fell, and maximum grant amounts were reduced. “We could manage the outgo in real time,” Aiello said, so that they could control the damage. During the crash, WGF also halved the number of international symposia to one a year. Although the foundation lost a considerable percentage of its endowment during the economic downturn, it has rebounded and is again in a healthy position. Throughout the crisis it was able to preserve both its very experienced staff (who are critical to all the programs) and its support for doctoral students.

The foundation has provided about \$100 million in research support since the mid-1980s, an average of about 200 grants per year, about 50% of those to doctoral students. This has, Aiello suggests, “kept anthropology alive” by supporting PhD students at a critical point in their research. Some of these fledgling WGF recipients do receive NSF or other grants, but “we are always happy to fund good projects that may not succeed with other agencies and we are particularly happy to fund international students who may not be eligible to apply to traditional US sources.”

Partly because of this program, departments of anthropology in the United States, Aiello observed, are more dependent on WGF for graduate student research support than might be ideal. “Are we training too many students?” she asks. While there are many other sources of support for anthropologists in training, WGF plays an important symbolic role that she recognizes. “Right now we can only fund 15% of the applications we get and it is becoming increasingly difficult to fund blue-sky anthropology, that might just be an interesting idea without an immediate practical implication.” This was the sort of thing Fejos often did in the early years, and it was long associated with WGF, which could be receptive to new (perhaps half-formed) ideas that needed support to develop. Under Aiello’s leadership, WGF has developed initiatives that can encourage more cutting-edge programs, including Institutional Development Grants (to raise capacity in anthropology departments outside the United States) and Engaged Anthropology Grants to support grantees sharing project results with their research communities. As this historical account suggests, Aiello today sees the 75th anniversary as a time for the foundation to think about both its origins and its future. The new Fejos Post-doctoral Fellowship in Ethnographic Film celebrates Paul Fejos’s pioneering role in the development of that genre, while one of Aiello’s most important initiatives focuses on “looking outward” to the broader world to encourage public engagement with anthropology as a research field. This takes the form of a “Huffington Post for anthropology,” the evolving website SAPIENS that features accessible and lively reports about anthropology and anthropological research, including essays by leading scholars, topical blogs, debates, and news reports on current research that can help journalists and the public understand anthropology today.

Aiello particularly hopes that the contributions of social anthropology can be brought to greater public attention. New

theories of human evolution often attract journalists, but the social anthropologists may work within theoretical traditions that are less accessible. With editorial offices at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and an editor, Chip Colwell, who has significant experience in public outreach, the site has already generated enthusiasm within anthropology, as editors of journals have agreed to alert SAPIENS.org about new papers and findings (fig. 55).

Colwell has put together a team of science writers and bloggers who will help produce the content, and he has forged connections with *Scientific American*, *Discover*, *Slate*, and other established venues where science stories often appear. WGF has also launched a new grant program, starting in 2015, called “Innovations in the Public Awareness of Anthropology,” which encourages anthropologists to think outside the box and develop projects to raise the profile of anthropology outside of academe. “It’s very easy for a foundation to stagnate,” says Aiello. “We want to raise the profile of anthropology and show people its relevance to their daily lives.”

She has seen her role as effectively stewarding the endowment to best serve the field as it moves forward. “We are re-



Figure 55. Chip Colwell, editor-in-chief of SAPIENS, at the SAPIENS launch held at the American Anthropological Association meetings in Denver, Colorado, November 18–22, 2015 (WGF archives).

sponsible only to ourselves and to the field—that is a luxury.” She does answer to her board, the membership of which does not include anthropologists but does include many trustees with long-standing interest in the field. Board members serve a maximum of 12 years, and the number of members is required to be between 7 and 17. Importantly, half of the board members are financial professionals who help to manage the endowment and ensure that the foundation continues to thrive.²³¹

Of equal and enduring importance is the advisory council, which is composed entirely of anthropologists and is deeply involved in the discipline. The seven-member advisory council now always includes the editor of *Current Anthropology* (currently Mark Aldenderfer), which keeps *CA* connected with the foundation and its work. It also includes the new editor of SAPIENS.org, Chip Colwell. The advisory council meets twice a year, the timing matched to the board meetings, so that the advisory council meeting comes first, and “we have a full-day AC meeting, go over the discussion materials, and decide on program and other recommendations for the board.” The advisory council was not originally given a decision-making roll, but now they make funding decisions for the Institutional Development Grant and the symposium program.

Meanwhile, the symposium program has stabilized in ways that almost replicate the early years at the castle. Generally there is a spring symposium and a fall symposium, usually two each year though occasionally there are more, held in one of an established set of venues that have hosted conferences more than once. These are beautiful places where the foundation has a reliable network of support staff and the food and entertainment are up to the standards of WGF. They have included the Haringe Slott Palace, in Stockholm, Sweden (in Wenner-Gren’s former “Summer Palace”); the Hotel Rosa dos Ventos, in Teresopolis, Brazil; the Hotel Villa Montana, in Morelia, Mexico; and El Parador, in Ronda, Spain.

Increasingly, in recent years, all symposia are held at Palácio de Seteais in Sintra, Portugal, an eighteenth-century mountainside castle that is now a hotel with gardens, mazes, and a spa. Palácio de Seteais is able to supply both spaces and services, and its dramatic architecture and grounds make a

suitable backdrop for the traditional WGF symposium photo (fig. 56). Conference Program Associate Laurie Obbink, who has been involved in managing the symposia for 30 years, takes care of the administrative and planning details and plays a key support role during each meeting. The staff at the Portugal Palácio knows what WGF needs. “It is better than Burg Wartenstein,” Aiello says. “Sintra is a World Heritage site, and within 10 minutes’ walk of the Palácio there is a village where people can go for a beer, coffee, or just a wander. It is near a nature reserve with a Moorish castle on one hill and a nineteenth-century Romanistic palace on another, and it is only half an hour from the airport. It solves all the issues.”

While Aiello was never invited to attend a Burg Wartenstein symposium—she was a junior scholar when the castle was sold—in 2015, when she was in Vienna to give a talk, she went with two colleagues to see it. It looked the same, “like a castle,” and she and her friends ignored the No Parking and No Trespassing signs to drive their car to the plaza near the gate. A man came out of the gatehouse, and when they explained who they were, he revealed that he was the grandson of Frau Haupt, the castellan who wrote the recipe book that included “Klausenburger Krauttöpf a la Dr. Fejos.” He reported that his grandmother Frau Haupt lived in the gatehouse until her death in the 1990s and that his mother lived there still. Raymond Rich, who had purchased the castle from WGF, continued to own it until his death in 2009, and it was now occupied by his partner, the lawyer who initially handled the sale, Claire Carlson. Carlson spends every summer at the house, he said, is well loved in the village, and sponsors a festive Fourth of July party on the castle grounds to which everyone is invited—whether they usually celebrate American independence or not.

For Aiello, running the foundation has been both a challenge and a pleasure. “WGF is just a lot of fun,” she says (fig. 57). She will step down in 2017. After an exhaustive search, the new president is Danilyn Rutherford, a social anthropologist from the University of California, Santa Cruz. The WGF begins a new chapter.

Conclusions: Value Incongruence

After the castle was sold in 1980, some members of the board of trustees were sufficiently disenchanted with the memory of Axel Wenner-Gren to suggest that his formal portrait, then being shipped to New York from Burg Wartenstein, should not be displayed at the foundation (fig. 58). At a spring board meeting, “a somewhat casual but pointed statement [was] made” to the effect that the Howard Chandler Christy portrait “would never be seen again.”²³² Howard Chandler Christy (1873–1952) commanded “lucrative commissions for portraits of Benito Mussolini, Crown Prince Umberto of Italy, humorist

231. The current board members are Leslie C. Aiello (president, WGF), Ira Berlin (department of history, University of Maryland), Cass Cliatt (vice president for communications, Brown University), Henry Gonzalez, (head of research, responsAbility Investments, AG), John Immerwahr (department of philosophy, Villanova University), Meredith Jenkins (vice president and cochief investment officer, Carnegie Corporation of New York), Darcy Kelley, (department of biological sciences, Columbia University), Seth J. Masters (executive vice president, Alliance-Bernstein), Lauren Meserve (deputy chief investment officer, Metropolitan Museum of Art), Barbara Rockenbach (director, humanities and history libraries, Columbia University), Barbara Savage (department of history, University of Pennsylvania), Lorraine Sciarra (general counsel, National Audubon Society), Ted Seides (cochief investment officer and president, Protege Partners).

232. Lita Osmundsen to Elon V. Ekman (board member from Switzerland), August 20, 1980, in “Burg Wartenstein The Move,” Box #BW-7, WGF.



Figure 56. Tivoli Palácio de Seteais, Sintra, Portugal. Symposium 143, “Human Biology and the Origins of the Genus *Homo*,” held March 4–11, 2011, and organized by Leslie Aiello and Susan Antón. *From the left*, Peter Ungar, Chris Rainwater, Laurie Obbink, Jonathan Wells, Andrea Migliano, Chris Kuzawa, Leslie Aiello, Rick Bribiescas, Susan Antón, Gary Schwartz, Susan Pfeiffer, Trent Holliday, Mike Plavcan, Karen Steudel, Katie MacKinnon, Rick Potts, Karin Isler, Josh Snodgrass, Jennifer Smith, Herman Pontzer, Tom Schoenemann, Carl van Schaik (WGF archives).

Will Rogers, aviator Amelia Earhart, and Mr. and Mrs. William Randolph Hearst,” among others, and Electrolux had paid to have the portrait done and donated it to the foundation for Burg Wartenstein. Osmundsen sought the counsel of board of trustees member Elon Ekman, an executive at Electrolux, and Ekman thought the foundation should keep it, though it “shows him with decorations bestowed upon him, which is not customary. Should the foundation hesitate to show the portrait for that reason?” He continued,

I realize that some people have a feeling and no doubt it is a genuine feeling that Mr. Wenner-Gren did not always remember that he had unqualifiedly and once and for all parted with his money and his control of it, once he made the donation; but he is not alone in that respect. There is no denying that he on some occasions was disquiting [*sic*] to those who were responsible for the conduct of the Foundation. I, also, had some experiences along these lines but I also saw his many good sides.²³³

In the end, the portrait was retained, and it is on display in the WGF offices today, but it continues to be a reminder of a complex legacy that our work here cannot entirely resolve. Wenner-Gren’s status as a possible Nazi sympathizer made some anthropologists suspicious of the Viking Fund in the early years. It also had long-term consequences for the reputation of WGF. Over the decades, leaders at WGF sought to

answer the question of Wenner-Gren’s true loyalties, and the foundation supported several scholars who undertook investigations into the question.

It was a legitimate problem. Was the foundation, with its commitments to scholarly research and ethical practice in anthropology, tainted by the possibly fascist and racist loyalties of the Swedish industrialist who first provided the endowment? Was it contaminated, even delegitimated, by the fact of its origins in what was probably an economic cloak for Wenner-Gren’s mining interests in Peru?

Nonprofits of all kinds face these sorts of challenges. The “purity” of a donor can shift over time, and sometimes donations are returned or names are removed from facilities. As the *Nonprofit Quarterly* put it in 2010, “a tainted donor is a previously clean benefactor who has become socially unacceptable because of scandal. A tainted donation is money that was derived illegally or through a socially unacceptable manner.”²³⁴ One of the deepest problems foundations face is that of “value incongruence,” when the norms, values, and actions of a donor conflict with the core values, beliefs, and activities of an organization.

In the case of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, support by its founding benefactor to the Nazi cause would constitute a profound value incongruence. It would be a grotesque historical echo of the roles of German

233. Ekman to Lita Osmundsen, October 14, 1980, *ibid*.

234. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy/2379-when-a-donor-becomes-tainted.html> (accessed August 7, 2016).



Figure 57. Leslie Aiello (*right*) and Tanja Ahlin (conference monitor) at symposium 149, “The Death of the Secret: The Public and Private in Anthropology,” held March 14–20, 2014, Sintra, Portugal (WGF archives).

anthropologists in the industrialized murder of Jews and others—a dark legacy for a foundation that works to build and promote anthropology as a resource for scientific knowledge and human dignity. That the foundation’s presidents have wrestled with this legacy and tried to understand Wenner-Gren’s activities and loyalties is not surprising.

In 1993, WGF president Sydel Silverman personally ordered the collection of about 800 pages of FBI files at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, but the photocopies and a memo assessing them were later lost. Six years later Silverman approved a \$12,000 grant to an anthropologist who wanted to assess the blacklisting. Apparently one motivation for approving this grant was a sense that the foundation should be consistently open to scholarly studies of Axel and his networks regardless of where they might lead. The foundation did not want to seem to be engaged in “covering up” anything relating to Wenner-Gren.

The foundation’s paper records include many documents relating to Wenner-Gren and his loyalties. There are Swedish and Austrian documents, reports from the Austrian history program about the nature of the ways the castle had been used, crank letters from people who had had some sort of interactions with people who had contact with Axel Wenner-Gren, correspondence with the Mexican ambassador, and correspondence with those who researched this history. The density, complexity, and often frivolity of these documentary trails make for an inexhaustible trove of conspiracy theory, paranoia, and myth, but the collected materials do not resolve the key questions. The archive that has been produced in the effort to get the final word on the dubious origins of this now eminent foundation is impressive in its extensiveness. Yet rather than offering answers, these documents raise more questions.

The story of WGF is both unique and typical. Like other foundations, it was reshaped by new legal constraints in the 1970s. Like other scholarly institutions, it was affected by new federal funds for scientific research (as anthropology grew) after 1945. Even in the individual life stories of Fejos, Osmundsen, and Wenner-Gren, broader forces are made manifest. Fejos was an immigrant outsider who forged a new identity as a scientist despite a lack of formal education, but for his generation this kind of career track was an available option at a time when anthropology was relatively porous and only nominally disciplined. Osmundsen was negotiating gender roles and crossing racial boundaries in tandem with thousands of others at a historical moment when the stakes were high enough to justify the costs of doing so. Wenner-Gren himself was financially tied to Germany for decades and sustained those business ties even as Germany descended into Nazism, but he was not alone, and his practices were widespread even among major corporations in the United States, as a growing historical literature makes clear.

Similarly, in the commitments and practices of Tax, Kroeber, and other members of the “inner circle” of WGF in its first decades, some broader elements in the intellectual arc of post-war anthropology are clear. Internationally there were only about 3,000 anthropologists in the entire world when Tax began his travels and consultations. But bringing them into contact to forge a unified and coherent international discipline helped the field grow everywhere. New interest in the power of interdisciplinary research transformed anthropological ideas and practice as various subfields engaged with geography, molecular biology, physics, history, epidemiology, cybernetics, and other fields. The 1955 “Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth” conference at Princeton—in retrospect a vision-



Figure 58. Burg Wartenstein foyer with the portrait of Axel Wenner-Gren by Howard Chandler Christie (photo by Nikolas Muray; WGF archives).

ary meeting—reflected this interdisciplinary approach, which was critical for the elucidation of such large-scale phenomena as the human transformation of the globe.

Meanwhile, political tensions after 1945 made their way into WGF symposium planning and were reflected in support for PhD students, who were on the “front lines” of a rapidly transforming world. Anthropology and anthropologists engaged with big issues: postcolonial states, Cold War fears, justice and human rights issues, the effect of capitalism, and the transition from rural to urban societies. The discipline moved from an uninflected notion of “the primitive” (e.g., in Fejos’s account of the Yagua) to an engagement with indigenous activism and with studying up, the practice of turning anthropological attention to those with more power rather than less (Nader 1972). Feminist theory reshaped studies of primates and their societies. Emerging standards for human subjects research drew ethical steam from biomedicine but also changed ethnographic field research. New technologies reconfigured practices in almost all fields but particularly in biological anthropology.

In all these domains of theory and practice, WGF has been a source of experimentation—not always successful but often bringing together people and ideas in innovative and consequential ways. Its history provides a way of seeing how disciplines function and the challenges they face in both material and intellectual terms. WGF has sustained a sharp focus on anthropology alone since the late 1950s, defining the field in a generous way as “what anthropologists do.” That has included history, sociology, science studies, molecular genetics, and other related forms of knowledge production—even carbon-14 dating. WGF has also sustained a vision of four-field anthropology even as that vision unraveled in some highly visible disputes in departments of anthropology in the United States. It could never provide the sort of funding available through the NSF, but it has provided something equally important: a moral and structural home for anthropologists. Through the case of WGF, it becomes possible to see how an enduring international community was crafted from a patchwork of patronage across place and time.

In a much cited essay, the philosopher of science Ian Hacking (1986:222) proposes that “sometimes, our sciences create kinds of people that in a certain sense did not exist before. I call this ‘making up people’. What sciences? The ones I shall call the human sciences.” Certainly anthropology as a human science has engaged with what Hacking calls making up people. As a knowledge system it has defined categories of identity, from kinship to language group to population, with which individuals can forge alliances and choose roles. The knowledge made by anthropologists (as Sol Tax put it, “what anthropologists do”) has been a critical resource for social and political understanding of a wide range of people—including those alive today, those who lived at various times in the history of human evolution, and surely those who will live in the future.

Those called to the discipline of anthropology as practitioners found in WGF not only a key resource for early sup-

port, which reinforced their professional identities, but encouragement to take risks in research. Individuals navigate work life just as they navigate personal life, and WGF has facilitated that navigation for the last 75 years, functioning as one node in a feedback loop that shaped the possibilities for being an anthropologist. Although the foundation did not lead anthropology in one clearly defined direction, it participated in defining what it meant to be an anthropologist—and what it meant to be a human. The foundation, itself, is a uniquely social beast. Be it at an Austrian castle, a brownstone, a university campus, a conference center, or even via the pages of its journal, WGF has embraced the complexities of human experience and supported a broad range of inquiry. It began, and continues to be, a fascinating “social experiment.” As we suggested in our introduction, almost every major issue in anthropology—intellectual and social, political and ethical—of the last 75 years is entangled at some point with the story we explore here. The conversations threaded through the history of WGF are conversations about the postwar world. They illuminate questions of enduring relevance to the past, present, and future.

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