The Larsen Arts Lottery

George W. Thomson

Iowa State University

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THE LARSEN ARTS LOTTERY

Periodically, about once every ten years, I get a really good idea. About half that often others agree with me. The LOTTERY may be one of the good ones.

When I became Chairman there were two things that I wanted to do immediately. One was to encourage the women in Forestry by having a two-day seminar devoted to the subject “Women and Men Working Together in Forestry”; the second was to stimulate Forestry students to become more aware of the performing arts while on campus. Why? So that there might be one more source of enjoyment to draw from for a lifetime and because the arts have a broadening effect that the science-management expert can profitably use.

Being brought up behind two much more talented brothers and once warned by my father, I hope in jest, that he would break my back if he ever caught me so much as whistling, I learned early that listening to and watching talented artists could be as enjoyable as watching athletes, horse races, or tractor pulls. When I began to realize that a great many college students in Forestry had never once gone to a concert or a play while in school I was appalled at the opportunities missed.

It was when an ordinary North Carolina farm boy, James Hilton, became President at ISU and spearheaded the $25,000,000 drive that gave us one of the world renowned centers for the performing arts right here on campus that I finally decided it was little short of criminal if a student left Ames without seeing the type of performances that have given so many people enjoyment.

In 1976 we took $60 from one of the Alumni donation accounts and bought one ticket for each of 26 events booked for Stephens, Hilton and Fisher. That first year 415 students signed up for the 26 free lotteries. The program was launched to mild acclaim although it soon became apparent that it would be a great deal more popular if the winner received two tickets. In all following seasons two tickets have been acquired for each winner.

Upon the death of Dr. J. A. Larsen, long-time Forestry professor here, a sizable memorial fund was established by his daughter and son, Margaret Blumenschein of Omaha and Einar Larsen of Newton. With the approval of the family the ISU Alumni Foundation established the Larsen Memorial Fund for the Arts (Forestry) in October of 1977 and placed $1140 at the disposal of the Chairman of Forestry for use in encouraging ISU Forestry students to attend performances booked into the various Center auditoriums. This was particularly appropriate because of the life-long interest J.A. (Skipper) Larsen had in painting (several of his water colors can be seen in the Forestry Office and Reading Room), in literature and in theater. The 1977 AMES FORESTER is dedicated to Dr. Larsen and tells much more about his life.

From 1976 to 1980 2256 students had signed up for 70 events covering a wide range of performances from Benny Goodman to Marcel Marceau to Beverly Sills to Guthrie Theater to the Boston Pops to the Cleveland Symphony. It rather soon became evident that there was a lot of pretty enjoyable stuff available and even if it was not sometimes as exhilarating as hoped it was still fun to win something. Early in the life of the Lottery one student won tickets to a chamber music quartet that put on a program that was unbelievably difficult. I asked this fellow how he liked the concert. “I hated it,” he said, “but I’m sure glad that I tried it.” That was rather close to my reaction to WW II.

In the years since we started the Lottery we have spent the initial $1140 and the donors have put in $370 more. Although enrollment in Forestry has dropped sizably since 1976 the number of participants in the Lottery has steadily increased. Last year we had 558 sign-ups for 17 events of two tickets each at a cost of about $140.

The idea of the Lottery is not to cultivate a phony “high-browism” but, instead, to provide a mild prodding to look into the unfamiliar. Tractor pulls and rock concerts have their place but have been excluded from the Lottery simply because they are part of the culture that students already know. While the pipers of the Black Watch and the razzle-dazzle of the Chinese Acrobat are tremendously entertaining both are

Another hopeful signing up for a chance at free tickets
unfamiliar and expensive and thus might be easy to pass by. The Amsterdam Concertgebouw sounds forbidding and perhaps the inexperienced and broke of pocket book would not be likely to try this great orchestra. The purpose of the Lottery is to give two people free tickets while simultaneously reminding several dozen others that an event worth experiencing is at hand.

After eight years of watching the Larsen Arts Lottery I can say that I am glad that I had Skipper Larsen as a model when I was a student and that Iowa Staters had C.Y. Stephens as a fellow alumnus. It's Stephens' statement that you can read in the Auditorium named for him the next time you are there:

"I would have liked to write a fine poem or a great book or possibly made a worthy discovery in science but since all of these accomplishments have been denied me I shall use my ability to accumulate money in such a manner as to make it possible to train many others to do the things I would have done."

Perhaps the Lottery is a small memorial to two ordinary men who had an extraordinary perception of what is important.

★★★★★★
George W. Thomson
Chairman, Forestry
March 3, 1984

FORESTRY CLUB

by Maureen Connolly

During the 1983-84 school year, forestry club members were involved in a number of activities. October was Conclave month. Fall Forester's Day took place at Iden Farm, providing practice time for Conclave hopefuls. Sharon Baas, Janel Peterson, Dora Schrodt, and Barbara Zylstra represented Iowa State University at the Midwest Conclave, held at the University of Illinois in late October. We finished twelfth out of twelve schools and received the booby prize — a toy chain saw.

Additional activities occurred early in the fall semester. A firewood cut at Saylorville Lake in September was sponsored by the Club and the SAF Student Chapter. Reinee Hildebrandt organized volunteers to help with old-time logger events and educational displays for Scout Day at Adventureland Park. Sixteen members enjoyed a club-sponsored canoe trip down the Des Moines River between Holst State Forest and Ledges State Park.

Activities for the rest of the year included an appearance on the Floppy show to promote the annual Christmas tree sales, firesides at professors' homes for talk and munchies, a t-shirt design contest, the Game Banquet, and work on VEISHEA displays.