

## *Gathering Our Voice*

Interview with Confluence Gallery & Art Center

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

Transcribed by Kristi Roberts, AmeriCorps volunteer

Nancy Warner: Ok. It's August 27, 2009. I know I have the year right. And this is Nancy Warner and I'm here at Confluence Gallery with a group of people and we're going to talk about how Confluence got started and some of the basics of the gallery. So let me just ask each of you to introduce yourself on tape. Just say your name if you would and where you live in the valley.

Richard Wrangle: I'm Richard Wrangle and I live in the Carleton area.

Phil Ager: I'm Phil Ager and I live up by the golf course just south of Winthrop.

Sybil Macapia: I'm Sybil Macapia and I live on Texas Creek.

Mary Thompson: I'm Mary Thompson and I live on lower Beaver Creek, which is about 4 miles south of Twisp.

Theresa Miller: I'm Theresa Miller and I live about 4 miles north of Winthrop on [?].

Bill Hottell: Bill Hottell. I live about 5 miles up the Twisp River beyond Twisp. [laughter] And I just realized all of us are wise enough to live out around the hills [laughter].

NW: Go ahead and introduce yourself.

Amy Stork: Amy Stork and I live in the town of Twisp.

Terry Piper: I'm Terry Piper and I live about halfway between Twisp and Winthrop. [laughter]

Cheryl Dawes: Cheryl Dawes and I live in Wenatchee.

NW: Okay, good. Well we have good geographic representation. So let's just go around the room and talk a little bit about how you first got involved in the gallery – kinda lay down that foundation. So let's start with you, Richard.

Richard: It's funny. There's an interview here that we did with a group in Syracuse, NY, in which we talked about how we came to be in the valley and how we got involved in the gallery. Things were really in flux when we first came here. There were about 12 vacant buildings in town. And a lot of people, some people, thought that this community was dying. I think that's really rather humorous looking back, because there's no way it would've happened. But somehow we thought that the gallery could make a difference in the future, particularly given the

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constituency in the valley – the kind of people that were here, the fact that we had a theater group that was very active and a lot of emphasis on things that were artistic in nature. And we felt, if we had a gallery or at least an art program, it would be one way to bring people together so that we could support them and provide for them, for their voice. So that's generally our involvement initially.

NW: And what year was that?

Richard: That was, oh gosh, about 1988.

NW: So the mill had been closed for quite a while at that point?

Richard: It had.

NW: Phil, how did you first get involved?

Phil: I moved here in 1991 in the fall and the first person I met was Richard. And the second person I met was Sarah Borgenson. And between the two of them, I had a difficult time refusing to participate as a board member. I came here being fully convinced that I never wanted to attend another meeting in my life after 30 years of faculty meetings and all sorts of weird political situations, and the fact that I taught in an alternative college, which only amplified it. So I was a board member and my wife and I were both trying to remember for how long. And I don't remember. I think, Mary, in some of the lowest times of the gallery – in terms of the economic situation.

Mary: I'm not very good at thinking chronological. I can remember one time there was a low ebb in the gallery and Richard called a meeting of "put up or shut up." And that roused... I think that's when we were on the board together.

Phil: That's right, because I can't remember when Sarah left, but there was a period after she left as sort of the director.

Mary: They hired Sharon.

Phil: Right. And Sharon's function was slightly different, I think, at that point. Sharon Cohen. So the board took on – or pretended to take on – some of the issues. We tried to make it a working board, but it didn't always work, particularly in terms of the fundraising. So that's kind of a real thumbnail sketch of where I was and times. How the whole place survived is literally a miracle, I think, coming from that particular time in history.

NW: Where did you teach – you said you came from an alternative...?

Phil: Western Fairhaven College.

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Bill: He was head of the music department, weren't you?

Phil: I was.

NW: Well, it's good you joined the board. Good work! [laughter]

Phil: It was delightful the people that were participating and we working with and amongst. I got to know the people who were really interested in the arts. And I participated to some extent the music area – Cascadia and worked with community choir for a couple of years.

NW: So, Sybil, what's your story? How did you get involved?

Sybil: I bought land here in the '70s at the instigation of Richard and his wife Cheryl who were from Seattle. And then I moved on it full time in '95. I had previously, from vacation, knew about Confluence starting, was very excited about it, came to see exhibits whenever I was in the valley. But after I had been living here for about a year, Richard came. And I still remember him coming and sitting on the deck and saying that Confluence was in trouble and could I help. And, as he talked about the situation, one of the things he said was that people were leaving the board. So I thought, well okay. I'll join the board. So that's how I got involved. And this was 1996.

NW: Mary?

Mary: I think – I'm a little hazy – I think the first time I was on the board – been on the board a couple a times, and was the bookkeeper for a while. [10:00] So I appear every 4 or 5 years [laughter]. I was basically with Cascadia. I came to the valley probably in '75, moved here in '81. Started out a 6 room hotel and I started a book store, about 150 square feet. Joanie Hager had helped me do screens, a painting of Matisse's "Jazz" for a backdrop of a Cascadia production and I owed her a favor for that [laughter]. And so one day she came to collect [laughter] and she was on the board and Sarah was the board director at that time. And she approached me with the board needed somebody and would I please show up. And so I owed Joanie. I think I've paid off this debt 2 or 3 times over the years [laughter] and became a board member. And once you get acquainted with people, you're part of it, yeah, whether you're on the board or just show up or whatever. I'm on again, off again.

NW: You're a phased board member [laughter]. Yeah it's good. I'm glad you're here. So Theresa, how about your story?

Theresa: I came at it from a very strange angle. I am not a painter or a sculptor. I do work in the performing arts, however, and have for many years. As Richard pointed out, we were pretty strong in the performing arts because it was seated in the high school. And that high school program depended on locals to fill in on costuming and all the contributions that you would need to have to put on a performance. We performed in really strange places because there was no performance place. But one thing I learned early on, on a community level, because I've worked on opera houses and still was working Seattle Opera House when I started living here. I learned early on that, because there weren't too many of us here that occupied the valley full time... I

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think there were 50 of us that lived here year round in the [?] area, because that's where I started. What I learned early on is that, was my first real experience in a community and never really had a part in community until I volunteered to do a fundraiser so we could continue to do these plays and continue to pay rent to someone in the community center or borrow someone's extra room or... In fact, I think I did a musical, not a musical but a dinner theater in The Virginian, the side room, because we just didn't have a place. So my lesson was that we're terribly interested in watching each other, not only perform but... Somehow when a person does perform, there in that animation, suddenly you're transposed away from the person you know and you're watching someone you don't know somehow, in our minds. So that became really fascinating to me. As our animal kingdom goes, we're the only ones who dress up for each other. So it became a really interesting study. So I continued to put on these benefits year after year after year to continue to support financially anything that was happening. And we were starting to be born. We were starting to show up, as Mary had said. We sort of depended on each other, all of us, even though we didn't get together only once a year – whether that was being in the audience, borrowing something, being in a meeting, or serving on a board – but we all held hands in this situation. Confluence is 20 years old this year, isn't it? [voices in background] Anyway, I've been doing this for 30 years and it's still a compliment to be a thread in the fabric of this community. And who would've thought? Yeah. Phil is right. There were times when we circled the wagons more than once. Sorry. Three times I can remember coming here sitting out here saying, what do you think we ought to do? Do we dare close the doors? We all, I think, leave with whatever capacity we have to feed this thing back again. And we made it. We survived and we're thriving now.

[15:00] NW: I was going to say you are past survival.

Theresa: In these economic times, it's hard to say.

NW: Well that's great. So, Bill, I know you guys came about 30 years ago, didn't you? Diana?

Bill: I was living up in Twisp and I think this is our 38<sup>th</sup> year. We came up here the year before the North Cascade Highway was open. I remember almost nothing about the origins of the Confluence Gallery. I have a different perspective, except my vague memory is that Richard Wrangle seemed to be the principle mover in creating the art gallery. He was very modest in his statement.

NW: Yeah, we're gonna circle back to him.

Bill: But from my viewpoint, I was interested in the unexpected uses that the Gallery has been put to since it began, about 22 years ago did you say? Sybil asked me quite a few years ago if I'd do something with art for the gallery. That is to say, to teach classes. I teach in Italy and Greece a lot.

NW: Doing what?

Bill: I'm a study leader on tours with the Smithsonian for several years, Chicago Group right

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now. I'll be in Croatia 2 weeks from now and Venice. Anyway, Sybil asked me to do a course on art history and it was an inspired idea. So we got a really good turnout for a 5 week course, 5 sessions. I did slide lectures on the Renaissance period the first year. Another year we did the art of the ancient Greeks right here in the gallery. Another year we did the Baroque period. And we did the Renaissance, I think, a second time. Another idea of Sybil's was, there was an exhibit and I think it was a woman painter from Chelam who had a gallery filled with paintings related to Greek and Roman mythology.

Sybil: Susan Kim from Entiat.

Bill: Yeah, from Entiat. It was a great exhibit, all these paintings ranging from Horus crashing to Zeus in various forms from a lover to a seducer of many mythological characters. Anyway, Sybil's idea was that I do a slide lecture on Greek mythology to reflect some of these paintings, about 20 of them. So I did the slide lecture using different artists ranging from Reuben to Picasso on some of the same themes. Europa... And that was an interesting combination, so my slide lecture, with Renaissance, Baroque and other painters, reflected the contemporary paintings that were on the wall. That was hugely attended actually not even standing room only because people couldn't get into the gallery. That was well received.

NW: About what year was that?

Bill: Oh, about 4 or 5 years ago.

Sybil: A little longer than that. You know, we hate to realize. I think actually it was, I got involved around '96. It was probably around 2000, 2001. Something like that.

Bill: I'm in a time warp.

Sybil: We all are. [laughter]

[20:00] Bill: And then Diana is not here. If I could just say one thing, she... Well there have been all kinds of interesting uses of the gallery besides just the art gallery. Musical performances, many, many interesting courses and slide lectures. But Diana every Sunday morning comes to yoga out in the Gallery. And so Diana says that many, many times she has been in the downward dog position or the snake position and looked up at art sculptures and the paintings on the wall. And so it's art below art. [laughter] So she characterizes it as yoga under art as in under glass. So she's had a different perspective. [laughter] And also my own history class, I teach a history class every winter for 14 years, and the folks many retired age didn't want to quit in March so we've had a history book club that meets in the gallery year round. And we've been doing that for almost 14 years, I guess. And so we sit in a circle. We are circling the art out there. We have sculptors in the group. We have to change our circle to configure the aptitude of the circle [laughter]. We've had some very odd shaped circles.

NW: That's her doing, isn't it?

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Bill: Theresa has a genius, by the way, for doing that – configuring art shows.

NW: I saw that “Home Sweet Home.”

Bill: And then, this room right here, are Tuesday morning a group of which we’ve been doing probably like 9 years. Do you think, Richard? Our Tuesday morning study group, every Tuesday 7 o’clock to 9 o’clock meet in this room right here. And there are many other groups that meet here regularly. So there’s been many unexpected uses of the gallery which I never imagined when I first began.

NW: Yeah, that’s what strikes me about it. It seems like a blend between an art gallery and a community center.

Bill: It really is a community center. It’s really a gathering place for the community.

Phil: There’s also the expected use rather than the unexpected use for many of us. I retired early from my musical life because I sort of shared Beethoven’s problem and decided that all my life I wanted to be a wood artist. So, shortly before we came here I got involved in that. So I’ve had the opportunity to show a lot of work. And I think Richard has done the same thing. We’ve had shows together and separate. And put pieces in the gift shop. And that’s an interesting opportunity for local artist. And one of the really interesting things that is possible for people here in the valley is it could be a place to show their work or it could be a place where they could sell it, if that’s something they prefer to do.

NW: I want to ask you one thing because I’ve heard bits and pieces about Confluence over the years and I know I think I first heard of it from Bill Laymen. And when I got to know more people in Wenatchee it started coming up and I started to come in and I got to know it for myself and I’m still getting to know it. So this is fun to talk to you about it. It’s gone through some rough spots and so on. So if you could each tell me a little bit. Richard, I’d really like to start with you on this. How has the vision for what this was changed over the years? Is it like Phil said, did it start as a place where local artists to market their work primarily or was it always envisioned as more of a community center? Could you talk a little bit about that?

[25:00] Richard: Well, looking at our original thought. We didn’t really know what it would become. When we did the building, and by the way we really haven’t talked about that, we purchased the building and completely remodeled. I mean, we tore it to its bare bones and started over with plumbing and heating and insulation all thermal pane windows and wiring and all that. So there was a lot of expenses. And in the process, we built in some things that we thought we might someday do. For instances, we put some exotic wiring in that room back there that we thought we would use for pottery because we thought we would have a pottery room. We never had a pottery room [laughter]. We put together a building, a room upstairs for photography with all the vents and stuff. We’ve never had that. So what I’m saying is, with you look at the original intent – and I’m one of these people who expects thing to happen the way I plan them – so I almost had a nervous breakdown [laughter]. I’ve seen all these things fall by the wayside. And,

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in the mean time, all these wonderful things were happening. And I thought, after a while I had to put the breaks on my own nervous system and say okay. It might not be happening the way you want it to, but it's happening and this is good. And that's kind of where we are. That's the best I can say about this. That's the way it's gone. And it didn't happen the way I thought it would. It's much better than I ever thought it could be. I'm serious. We had an art walk the other day. And Ellen Lamaman, who should've been here but just couldn't be, we worked on the art program together generally and we were standing over there in the other gallery...

Sybil: Allegro?

Richard: Allegro. And she said, "Richard, did you ever think it would come to this?" In other words, looking back and just two people having the chance – and we've been going separate directions in our own ways – but coming together and saying "look what's happened." And it's very satisfying to do that. It gives your life some meaning to realize that all your energy amounts to something. And that's the best I can do with that.

NW: That's great. And maybe you can feature the exotic wire sometime in one of the shows. [laughter]

Theresa: We already got it cast as the bride of the Frankenstein. [laughter]

NW: Well, Phil, how 'bout you?

Phil: Well early on, and I was just in the early '90s, the discussion in the board began. We kept throwing out things like classes and I don't when the library was born. That was one idea that was early – collecting art books and that sort of thing for people to use. But nothing... We weren't able to make it happen. And I think part of that was the lack of foresight in. We were so focused on surviving financially that we didn't realize that those sorts of things that hold a community in – in a way that it is now – could be a solution to the financial thing. It was like two compartments. One compartment is what are we going to do to pay the rent next month when it comes due. And the second part is sort of, well... Here's a whole catalog of ideas, but we'll get to them as soon as we figure out how to pay the rent. And that went on for a significant length of time, 3 years at least.

NW: What broke the log jam?

Phil: Well you know, I don't know, because I don't think the log jam was broken until after I no longer participating. I think it was a constant effort in the late '90s to try to figure some way to purchase the building or to have someone purchase the building to be somewhat a benevolent landlord. Was that a fair description, Richard?

Richard: Mmm-hmm.

Phil: And then that did not... That's dangerous. I mean, how benevolent to they have to be, if

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they can afford to be benevolent. So I think that idea died a natural death. We sure were hoping for something like that for some time. But little by little, and particularly after Sybil came, the financial workings of the gallery really came stabilized finally.

Richard: Can I say something to that? Sybil broke the log jam.

NW: That's what I getting to.

[30:00] Richard: There's no question to that. I gave a talk some time ago and I said any institution that has been successful has had a magic person and Sybil has been our magic person. It's true. She had, and I'm probably embarrassing her, but she has a very good business sense and a lot of discipline to how to make things work. And people respect her and this has made it work. I mean, all of us has worked, but we need this very special person and she was it. And you never know. I mean, you just don't know for sure. You risk. It's life. You try things. And some work and some don't. And this was something that really worked for us, because it was the perfect marriage for this gallery.

Phil: We were up and down, Richard, for I'd say 12 years I would say. Wouldn't you?

Richard: Yes and it was sad, because we got to the point where we thought we were spending more time thinking on how to pay the bills than we were on how to make an art program function in the way it should.

NW: Typical non-profit story. I mean, it happens a lot in non-profits. So did you... Were you the first staff person? I thought you were the first.

Sybil: Yes, there had been a succession of staff people when the gallery began. When the gallery began they hired at very minimal salary. One named Sarah Morganson, who isn't in the valley anymore and she was their first director. When she left, which I think was after 4 to 6 years, something like that, a woman named Sharon Cohen, who is still in the valley, was the director for 2 years. When Sharon left, a woman named Karen Baldwin was the director. Karen Baldwin is now Cory Carpenko's wife. When I came up to the board, as I recall, the board had to lay off Karen. They were, I think, 3,000 dollars in debt with no cushion. And so, for one year we operated as a complete volunteer organization because we had no money. And my expertise was not in art, but I had done lots of community organizing so I had suggested that we and myself would try to organize a volunteer corps to keep Confluence going. And so the log jam was broken, not just by me but by Mary and Theresa and the continuity of Richard was incredible. Both Richard and Cheryl, as founders, hung in and hung in and were always here for advice and help and support. It's just been a miracle to have that length of continuity. Anyway, something about hitting bottom also. There's a mythology about it. You know, you hit bottom and maybe everything changes in a positive direction. And I think that's what happened to Confluence.

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Confluence was absolutely flattened. The call went out to volunteers and I think the first meeting 17 people showed up who were interested in becoming volunteer staff for us to keep Confluence going. The whole, still the whole show committee, all the curators the people who are, like Theresa, responsible for everything that is part of the gallery – they're all volunteers. They don't get paid at all. So anyway, we had one year of entire volunteer work myriad, volunteer book keeper, a couple of board people did the volunteer graphics. [35:00] We just pleaded with everybody. There was one very wonderful support that was offered during that period and that was the board of Cascadia, the music division invited several Confluence board members to come to a Cascadia board meeting. And I was not there but I was told about it my first board meeting here. And what the representatives were saying is that we went to that meeting expecting to tell them they were on the verge of closing. And what the Cascadia board was saying is that "you mustn't. You're far too important to this community to close and we want to help you in every way we can. And our first suggestion is that if you can organize something like a benefit dinner, we would provide with our positions all of the entertainment for it for free." And so maybe that broke the logjam in its own way. Suddenly the board went from just feeling down to feeling that the organization had a significance and had appreciators. When 17 people show up to volunteer you feel like the community does appreciate it and maybe you just didn't have a way in until Confluence was so flattened, that in that flattening the doors flew open. So I think it was the whole community that broke the logjam. And then as we recognized how dependent we were going to be on volunteers and the community we started to look at community relations. Even simple things like what is the show about, what is an exhibit, what is the title. A lot of the titles of exhibits were titled in such ways that referred to the mediums so you might have an exhibit that was like ink, water and stone – because it's going to have sculpture and I'm assuming paintings and water colors – which is meaningless to someone unless they know enough about art to get it. And so suddenly there's a change. The first show that I remember being changed was the garden exhibit. Never before had this gallery, as far as I know, have a garden exhibit. The key to me – because every day I would take the money to the bank, which was then half a block away so I knew all of the tellers, lovely women, never saw them in the gallery. Ever. The garden art show opened and I went out on the sidewalk for some reason and I saw this quintet of bank tellers walking down the street and walking in to Confluence gallery. And I just knew this is it. We found it. We followed the garden show with Valley of the Horses. And you know, I really think we've been up and running since then. It was just finding the key to unlocking the doors of Confluence and letting the community in and then to give them programming that they would want to participate in.

Theresa: In a way, that's the same thing I was talking about with the performing arts. We perform for each other, it's the same thing.

NW: It is. Well that's great. That's wonderful. So one thing that would be interesting for us,

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besides trying to get a handle on what happened as far as the years, which I know can be kind of stiff, it might be really interesting just to look at the history of Confluence on exhibits to see when the logjam broke. What happened? It would be interesting to look at that – just the titles of the exhibits. And that might be a way to organize this story. So this is so interesting and really useful to other non-profits – what you said, what you just said is so useful to many other non-profits, including IRIS. We're just getting started. So anyway, thank you for that. Anybody else on how the vision has changed? Mary?

[40:00] Mary: Well it's not so much the vision, but my take on the valley in the early days is if you have three people who have an idea – that's about all it took to get something going. And if you had the right synergy it was like it was like of course we can do that. And Sybil and I, at one time, were a very covert team [laughter], meaning we don't tell all about it. And I think part of the logjam, maybe it was the thinking behind it, is when we decided to take ourselves seriously and become a non-profit.

Sybil: That's right.

Mary: Part of that is it's wonderful to be artistic and do all these wonderful things, but if you don't run something solidly then, and don't take yourself seriously enough in that aspect of it, then it's the other side of the bird, the two wings if you will. And I think that that really was, I mean there was a lot of things that happened at that time, because we were debating whether or not we wanted to be caretakers of a building and all sorts of things. But I think the effort to make this become a non-profit and take up minutes [laughs] of meetings. There was a big – and this might be something that other organizations experience – there was this bizarre, big fear factor about the work involved in even applying for a non-profit status and the probability of not getting it. This is an imaginary mountain. What we dealt with really was a mole hill of work in comparison to how people envisioned it. So breaking through that fear factor was really important I think. And that's what got all the paper work to proceed and of course and, retrospectively, it was a total no-brainer. And there we were three months later.

Sybil: Well, basically we made friends with whoever was on the other end of the line. They were wonderful.

Mary: Yeah, very supportive and so were the office of the IRS.

NW: Great. Well, they recognized a good cause, I suppose. Do you have any thoughts on that, Theresa? On how it changed?

Theresa: No, I wasn't involved in the early days. I was not involved until I was asked by Cheryl to be a guest curator and that was, I think, 12 years ago. And I've been with them for 12 years now.

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NW: So you came on after the logjam?

Theresa: No. I served on board and we all changed chairs. As far as participating on a regular basis, as how Confluence serves our community through exhibits, I've been continually at it for 12 years now.

NW: Great. So it would be really neat to have a list of the exhibit titles, to see where the garden one where the tellers came down the street. That's such a good story. From your experience as a non board member with the gallery, did your vision for what it was change along with it?

Bill: I don't have anything to say about the vision, especially the early days. Except no one has mentioned where the gallery name comes from. It started in Winthrop at the confluence of two rivers, the Chinook and the Methow. And then, fortunately, it moved from Winthrop to down here and kept it's same name. But the other thing I wanted to mention, whenever we talked about the art walk, a month or two ago – Winthrop has done it a couple of times and Twisp's first art walk... Confluence is really what started focusing on art in the valley. But, as if it climaxed this summer as the most extraordinary event, the art walk – there were three different places on Main Street blocked off and there were hundreds of people filling the town going to the four stops on Main Street. But to me that was the most beautiful event. It really pulled the community together in the most beautiful way. And it was the Confluence that started that.

[45:00] Theresa: I'd like to say something, too, on that very same note. I think that is one of the magic ingredients to this community [background noise interrupts]. It has to do with what Bill was just talking about. There's a real human factor involved here. And I think that's part of the arts, which always survive in societies. I think that would be really difficult to articulate why exactly. But I think in experiencing here in the valley over the years as we have, I think that the human factor, the fact that the arts are another language for us – be it music or be it painting or dancing or whatever the expression is – it is a side of us that we all possess. We already know that, whether you have been able to let it out or not, we all possess it. And I think one thing that Confluence does allow – and again it's precedent setting by Richard and Cheryl – and that was kind of an open arms “I'm interested in hearing what you have to say” approach. By that never having those doors closed to anyone that had anything to say, step by step, one foot in front of the other, the community began to express itself. And so I think that's one of the things that we continue to see here is the “okay, you're on next, we'll applaud for you” thing. It still exists, whatever it is.

NW: That's a great way to put it. You're on next and we'll applaud for you. Oh I love that. That's great.

Theresa: It's true. I remember at one of the benefits that I did and I think... Well it had to be for the performing arts 'cause that's all I... I think I'd find it a little funny in those hard days of the

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gallery I was mostly committed to keeping the performing arts program running here. And I remember going to Claude Miller. And I said, "Claude I really need to raise some money here. Would you be willing to do something for me." And he said, "Sure little darling." And I said, "Okay, here's what I need you to do. I need you to show up on your horse at midnight and at the stroke of midnight I need you to punch through these doors. I need you to ride your horse through the gym and go out the other end. Okay. That's all you need to do." [laughter] I was expecting him to say, "You have got to be kidding me." Instead he said, "Sure. I can do that." And sure enough, I decided that again... Because we started with icing up after Halloween, the 31<sup>st</sup>, you know we get some pretty firm ice. So I decided I really couldn't throw too much of a big thing here past that date. So I decided to do it as a Halloween thing. I had gone so far to get Alisha, this wonderful girl in our valley, to lay down in a real casket I got from Okanogan. I had it trucked over here and I laid her in the casket. And our food was served off of her [laughter]. So all in the same night. So this community will go to all kind of lengths to entertain each other. They keep doing it. And we applaud it for each other. Especially when Claude made it on time and went out the door and his horse didn't slip. Of course I didn't get permission. And I don't think anybody knows that horse ran through the gym.

Sybil: Except for the 300 people that watched it. [laughter]

NW: Well, I'm mindful of the time and let's go to one more question around the room. Well, we've been kind of addressing this "what kept you going." That's a really important question I think in any organization and some of you have made comments about that. You know, what kept you going until you worked your way through the crisis point. But if anything has anything else to add to that. Mary?

[50:00] Mary: One thing that Confluence does better than probably any other non-profit - they are a way for new people moving into the valley to volunteer and get acquainted. But for a newcomer coming here there's not too many places that you can easily get involved. So to me it's not necessarily on a list of purposes but it has served that function and done it very well so newcomers have a chance to get acquainted.

NW: That's huge.

Richard: Two of my favorite new people I met in the valley because they volunteered to work at the desk here at Confluence. That is a wonderful way to work at the gallery and meet new people.

NW: So that goes back to the open door policy that you and Cheryl dedicate to that. That's the culture of this place.

Mary: And I think for a gallery having never had closed doors is an exceptional statement. It

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didn't have to embrace the things that it embraces. It didn't have to embrace the kind of talks that Bill was mentioning or people that gather here or all the other things that people come to the building for. It didn't have to do that. It could've started and stayed as an art gallery.

Richard: One thing that we really did try to do – and I have to say something about Cheryl, my wife – Cheryl worked with the show committee and she was always so careful not to try to alienate people by making them feel as though their work wasn't good enough, sometimes even when it wasn't. And that's hard. I knew when we got into this we were in trouble at the very beginning. And we did have a group of people who said, "Oh those people. They're snobs." It's inevitable even if you're working as hard as you can not to let it happen. I think we accomplished that remarkably well. People did not feel rejected on the whole.

Phil: I think it's a lot of self selection because it was a lot of really fine stuff and I think people recognize that if their work wasn't up to snuff in the early days... Before you even said that I was going to comment on what I saw as a growth in the quality of the work that was being shown. There've been some shows here that would get rave reviews I think in a city art museum or art gallery, simply because we don't limit it to locals or regional. We've had all sorts of folks from all over and I think it has improved the quality of art in the valley. I think a lot of artists profited not by competition but the fact that they can show their work but they can see it beside work often that was much better. Or they could see a show that was really first rate and they could compare it to what they were putting in to the gift shop part of the gallery. And I know there were a lot of people in my time showing in the gallery that are still doing work but not doing it. And I think it's a lot of self selection. I think people have always been welcomed. I think of my own work, initially, in the first years I'm ashamed I sold some of it. It's true. But nobody said that's no good. Customers make those sorts of choices I think.

Richard: But there was a standard of quality always and it was there and it was in the air. It was expected. I think your statement of self selection was a good one. That is the way it happened. People just knew where to monitor themselves.

Mary: And I think the show was committed. Because your individual piece is treated with enough care for it and attention to placement and how it balances as any group. You walk in the door and people know that their piece is going to really be given the best possible care and attention.

Sybil: I would agree. It seems to me in fact every exhibit in itself is a work of art and it is the work of curators. It incorporates all of these individual works of art. Part of what keeps us going is the quality of artists in the valley, the quality of artists that either have been here a very long time or are still coming. That's a wonderful connection. The fact that we actually have a place for artists to exhibit is part of what encourages new artists to come to the valley, encourages

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existing artists to stay here. So what keeps us going are the artists, the volunteers – absolutely we could not run with the paid staff that we have. If the volunteers were wiped out, Confluence would be wiped out. Whereas we proved that you can wipe out paid staff for a year or so you can make it. And so the third thing that keeps it going is, beyond volunteers, there's a whole community that supports Confluence – perhaps not with their volunteer energy, but by coming in the door, buying a work of art, by giving a donation, all of those things. It's all of the piece and it's all of a very growing and dynamic piece and I think that's what keeps Confluence going and I think what keeps me going is it's just never dull. An exhibit – every 6 weeks I walk through a totally different environment. You can't burn out when things aren't dull. So far I haven't.

NW: Yeah, that's great. That's what I was wondering – the personal perspective on that, because Confluence is a community of people. So anybody else want to offer what has kept you going, personally? I have a better understanding now about the whole gallery, but...I'm looking at you.

Phil: Last chance. He's stubborn.

NW: A very good characteristic.

Richard: Sybil is not... She's too self-evasive in a way, my dear. If it hadn't of been for that leadership we wouldn't be alive. We might still be... In a totally different level and in a totally different way, all volunteer maybe.

[60:00] Sybil: Thank you. I appreciate what you're saying. And Richard, what you've said and what everybody else has said. I just assure you that no one person, no one of us, no genius, no Barrack Obama could just – out of sheer energy or personal grit – pull off something like Confluence. It truly is this incredible coming together. Your word about the threads in the tapestry was really appropriate. This is the tapestry. We're all threads. Some of us are short. Some of us, like Richard, have the longest threads in the whole tapestry. But that's what it is and it's not possible for any one person to create that.

Theresa: I have another observation to make and that is for me that the volume of art that we exemplify at Confluence – and not just Confluence, its trajectory is pretty big – has contributed to tourism. That was a thought I don't think we had in the beginning. We all decided to put some money on the plate of the arts. I don't think any of us thought that in the future people would come here for the arts. But we're there now. We're just starting to realize that.

Richard Wrangle: When we first started, course we were in Winthrop for a year . . . people said we should stay in Winthrop because that's where the money is. We said the focus is not on money but it's on community and we felt we had a better chance in a relatively undefined environment. You know, Twisp was in a state of flux. And I think we made the right decision.

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Theresa Miller: Oh yes, I agree.

Richard: Wrangle: And we can take it from there in terms of what's happened to Twisp. Twisp is just a very dynamic community now. And it's a community based community. It's not tourist based. We like to have the tourists. It's wonderful, but our primary focus is on community.

NW: I can see that as a visitor. I see a big difference between Winthrop and Twisp. Can I ask you one more question, because I know we need to wrap this up? If you could just think of one thing that you are most proud of personally in your experience here – and it doesn't have to be in any particular order. I'm just interested.

Theresa: Here in Confluence?

NW: Yeah, here. Your contributions to this place, here in Confluence. And I realize it has lots of tentacles, lots of threads going on, lots of directions. So you don't have to be limited by the building. You said a few things as we've been talking, but I just wondered if there were other things that you might reflect on.

Sybil: I'll start because we were talking about fear factor earlier and the times that Mary and I collaborated. And there was another fear factor that I think hobbled Confluence for some period of time and we broke through that and that was the fear of taking on an essentially half a billion dollar campaign to buy this building. This building, when it was first bought was bought by private people before Confluence. But they were the owners that remodeled it, that Richard was talking about. He was the general contractor in this building that was in private ownership. It was eventually sold to another private owner. And when that owner said he was going to sell it, Confluence had the opportunity to mount a capital campaign. We had a wonderful donation from Moccasin Lake Foundation. But it was still upon Confluence to actually raise the money. After subtracting the magnificent donation from Moccasin Lake Foundation, there was still about 300,000 to raise. I'm just so proud that we did it. I didn't realize at the time how frightened some people were, because actually to me it looked like "Well of course." But there was a lot of fear about that and there was a wonderful coming together of the least fearful among us and that brought other people into the group and two years later we own the building and we don't owe anyone a penny and hooray.

Bill: Dozens of moments jumped to mind when you asked us what we're proud of. And the first one was every December there's a banquet out here. The place is packed with people eating dinner. It's a fundraiser. One of the early ones, Craig Weaver played solo cello during dinner and it was one of the most magnificent... I still glow when I think of it. He did *Tchaikovsky's 6<sup>th</sup> and Cornish Rhapsody* – all my favorite cello solos. *The other thing I'm most proud of is Richard Wrangle is just a giant of a person. As far as I know, he came up with the original idea*

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*of Confluence Gallery, he and Cheryl. And just helped create it. I'm really proud of Richard for doing that.*

*Richard: Well, that's very kind of you. One thing I always say when we get into this, where we were able to shine was in able to make the right decision. If the people weren't to have been here we would not have succeeded. But the exceptional human beings that are in this valley... I look around all the time. We could have never done this. This is a very special... This institution is so special because of the people who are here and it reflects that quality of humanity. We're lucky. We always feel lucky.*

*NW: It seems Twisp is pretty lucky that you and Cheryl moved here. A convergence of lucky things. So those are good things to be proud of and very inspiring to other non-profits that face these hurdles. Overcoming the fear factor. You do have a lot to be proud of, obviously. We talked about a lot of it, but is there anything else that you'd like to say. This isn't the end of this project. I'm thinking of other non-profits that are struggling right now and your story is quite inspiring to those that might be going through that switch point.*

Sybil Macapia: I want to mention something even though it is a bit off point. We've been applauding the community as we should and pointing to all of the factors that make this organization possible. I love you for introducing me to this valley Richard but I didn't come because of my great friendship for you and Cheryl. I came because at your invitation I saw the valley. And I didn't know about the community and didn't care about the community. The valley was just exquisite. So that's sort of the unspoken partner in everything that goes on in our lives and in the organizations we give our time, energy and allegiance to. Everyone is in one way or another here – they came here because of this valley, they were born here and they stayed here because of this valley and the artists truly I think are here because of this valley.

NW: Would you say that it's the unspoken partner?

Sybil: Yeah, it's the underpinning of everything and that's the exquisiteness.

Theresa: Another thing to add to that, Sybil, is that I think we sit at 50-55% of 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners here in the valley.

NW: Yeah, that's pretty high.

Richard: 63%

Theresa Miller: So I think, based on that number alone, what Phil was talking about, it takes the longevity to sustain these long winters and to find the beauty in the hardship. For every time we've gone off the road, or had to call because you had to get towed away, had to get towed out

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of something, or it's too dang cold so just send them the money. For all those reasons that there was longevity here it is the willingness to witness this place year round. And I think that that in itself is the inspiration for the kind of art that we talk about here which is artful living really. It's making choices that you choose to live by, that you choose to embrace as who you are and how you live with it. And I think that's what Confluence does, it exemplifies artful living because it embraces all aspects all expressions that we as a community want to express. We have a home tour, we have lectures, we have classes for children and adults. We are artfully living to the best of our capacity. And the new set of people who come to the Methow they have a different platform on which to participate than we did. We planted the seeds and we could only take turns watering it so to speak. So they are the recipients of that. It's a different platform to work with.

NW: It'll be interesting to sit in this room 20 years from now and interview another group of people about Confluence. I think this recorder might be out of date by then. Well, thank you. This was great. What a wonderful conversation.

Sybil: Nancy, thank you so much.

NW: Oh, thank you for having me. Gosh, that was fun.

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