

The Cornerstone

WINTER/SPRING 2001

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 6, NO. 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

by Karen Rogers

Much of the inspiration for this issue of the *Cornerstone* came from a phone call that Professor John O'Neil placed to Roberta Stokes right before the New Year. Mr. O'Neil was the founding chairman of the fine arts department at Rice and felt that the timeline in the Spring, 2000, issue of the *Sallyport* overlooked the true origins of the department by emphasizing the amazing transfer, in 1969, of the entire University of St. Thomas art department to Rice. Mrs. Stokes called John Boles, who referred the matter to Mary Dix and to me. The result has been a delightful pair of interviews with Mr. O'Neil as well as several telephone calls conferring with him about many fine points of the history of the department. Mr. O'Neil is quick to point out that, even though Rice had decided to begin its institutional life on the science and engineering end, there have been courses offered in the arts for many years. In *The Book of the Opening* Dr. Lovett pledges that Rice will "interpret in a very large way its dedication to the advancement of letters, science, and art," although all of the early art courses were offered under the umbrella of the architecture department. Dr. Lovett foresaw the purpose of these courses "to lead men...to a comprehensive



*Fine Arts faculty 1967: (left to right)
Sandy Havens, David Parsons, Katherine Brown,
John O'Neil, Earl Staley, James Chillman*

understanding of the art of building; to acquaint them with the history of architecture from early civilization to the present age; and to develop within them an understanding and appreciation of those conceptions of beauty and utility which are fundamental to the cultivation of ability in the art of design."

Prior to Mr. O'Neil's arrival, several courses had been offered in drawing,

painting, sculpture, and art history under the tutelage of Charles Schorre, David Parsons, Katherine Brown, and James Chillman as well as Jasper Rose, an Englishman who taught painting and art history in the sixties, and Eleanor Evans, who came in 1964 to teach a basic design course for freshmen architects.

Mr. O'Neil recalls, "In 1965, I was invited to come to Rice University for

Continued on page 3

The Rice Historical Society

PURPOSE

*To collect and preserve for the future
the history of Rice University*

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*The Rice Historical Society welcomes letters
to The Cornerstone, its official newsletter.
Rice alumni and friends are encouraged to
contribute photographs and remembrances
of historical interest which may be used in
future issues of The Cornerstone. Items
cannot be returned and will be donated to
our archival collection.*

NEWSLETTER DESIGNED
BY TOMORROW'S KEY

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*April 6 and 7, 1928,
were days of high excite-
ment for lovers of music
in Houston. Famed
French composer, pianist,
and conductor Maurice
Ravel had arrived to
speak and perform as
that year's guest at
the Rice Institute
Lectureship in Music.*

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an interview. At that time I was teaching and directing the School of Art at the University of Oklahoma and was asked to come as chairman of the department of fine arts, then hopefully emerging from under the wing of the humanities section. I accepted the offer only on the basis that it was an ‘acting’ chairmanship since I was not sure what type of situation I was getting into.” He then took a two-year leave of absence from his post at Oklahoma and began organizing the department at Rice. This was the first time that a fine arts curriculum was offered on its own, although Mr. O’Neil recalls that in the first year most of the classes were filled with architecture students. “At that time the department was temporarily housed. We had four offices in the basement of Fondren Library and the studio courses were taught in a temporary metal building at the base of the track stadium.”

Mr. O’Neil notes that Sandy Havens, director of the Rice Players, apparently sensing that drama fit more comfortably into the fine arts department than the English department to which he had been previously assigned, requested a lateral transfer.

By 1967 Mr. O’Neil decided that he could no longer resist the challenge of making the department into a legitimate part of the university, so he accepted a permanent appointment at Rice. “We moved to Allen Center in 1968 where we had two studio spaces and we established the first art gallery at Rice, a very nice but small space.” The first year they staged, among other shows, an important exhibit of Dorothy Hood drawings and the second year, photographs by Geoff Winningham.



John and Dominique de Menil, pictured here in 1971, provided the initial support to establish the Rice Media Center.

Around this time Rice decided to begin building a permanent collection. Mr. O’Neil remembers that they had a small budget to purchase items for the collection and they also began accepting various artifacts from private collections. He was able to buy good quality but inexpensive American and European prints, and they received a significant collection of Pre-Columbian sculpture. Plans were being prepared for Sewall Hall, in which the fine arts department was promised space.

Then, in 1969, Mr. O’Neil recalls, “something totally unexpected and exciting happened when Dominique and John de Menil left the sponsorship of the art history department and gallery at the University of St. Thomas and proposed moving these activities to Rice. There was no precedent for this merger but it seemed like such

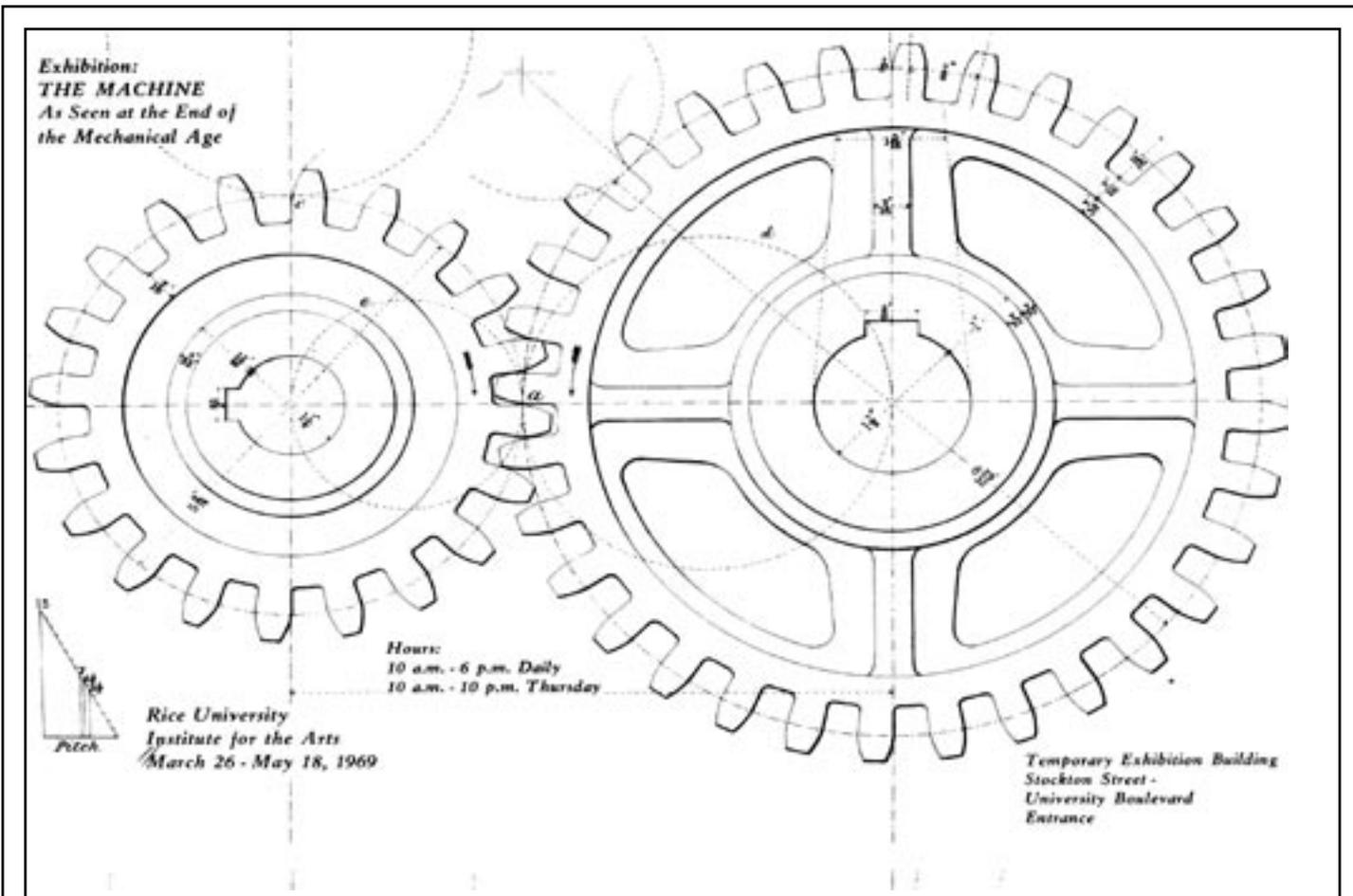
a wonderful proposal we would work it out some way.” Ann Holmes, in a December 17, 1968, article in the *Houston Chronicle* reported, “In what appears to be a surprising shift

of focus, Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil are reportedly withdrawing their interest and financial support from the University of St. Thomas and are exploring the possibilities of moving the entire art department – collection and staff – to Rice University.” The de Menils had reportedly disagreed with the Basilian fathers who ran St. Thomas

over teaching methods and board representation. After much discussion with Rice’s dean of humanities Virgil Topazio, trying to reconcile Rice’s strong focus on science and engineering with the de Menils’ highly successful art programs, the proposal was accepted. This was a great opportunity for Rice. The university had been hoping to bolster its offerings in art history but had been hampered in recruiting faculty. In the merger, art historians William Camfield, Walter Widrig, Mino Badner, and Philip Oliver-Smith joined the Rice faculty, as did Thomas McEvelley, who taught the history of myth. In addition, the de Menils had been staging spectacular art exhibitions of worldwide importance. Their final exhibition for St. Thomas had been shown at the Museum of Fine Arts and had received favorable reviews in the *New York Times*, the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and the *Art Journal*. At the time, Ann Holmes alluded to the “unfinished projects” of the de Menils at St. Thomas: “construction not only of a museum and a library but of a chapel,” for which they had already commissioned Mark Rothko to create a series of paintings.

In 1969 the move was completed and the de Menils’ Institute for the Arts at Rice was born. It was not authorized to offer credit for courses but rather mounted major exhibitions

John de Menil credited Dean Topazio with the idea that “the Institute for the Arts could do, with complete freedom, what most academic programs cannot do because of the necessary academic demands for credits and degrees.”



Invitation for "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age," the first exhibition of the Insitute for the Arts.

and brought to the campus scholars and lecturers and did, according to Mr. O'Neil, "extraordinary things."

John de Menil credited Dean Topazio with the idea that "the Institute for the Arts could do, with complete freedom, what most academic programs cannot do because of the necessary academic demands for credits and degrees." The de Menils brought many items from their private collection to the campus to augment or illustrate instruction in the arts. Mrs. de Menil had been the head of the art department at St. Thomas but had no desire to assume the chairmanship at Rice.



Dominique de Menil, 1981

Mr. O'Neil continued in that capacity and Mrs. de Menil was director of the Institute for the Arts.

In a 1971 article in the *Rice Review*, Marguerite Johnston reported that "reactions to this transfer *en bloc* of a whole art department were mixed but when the first exhibit *The Machine* opened it was evident that this was going to generate a lot of excitement. It was gratifying to realize that this exhibit – to be seen only in three cities in the country – should have a more spacious and evocative display in the 12,500 square foot Barn than it had in the newly

enlarged Museum of Modern Art in New York." The "Barn," along with the Media Center next door, (located at Entrance 8) was the "temporary" structure the de Menils had commissioned Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry to design and build in 1969. Ms. Johnston goes on to predict that "more would emerge from 'this invasion' than this unusual building and a cutting-edge art exhibit." Rice had gained "new professors in art history, a staff of people who seemed to enjoy what they were doing regardless of the hour of day or night, an astonishing number of guest lecturers from other great centers of learning and visiting VIPs like Roberto Rossellini, the film maker, and Jean Tingley, the sculptor."

The Media Center of the department of fine arts offered photography and film courses under Geoff Winningham and James Blue. Filmmaking was taught as an under-



Italian director Roberto Rossellini, left, and James Blue, co-director of the Media Center in 1970.

graduate discipline, not as a program for turning out filmmakers as in most schools. Mr. O'Neil remembers that the film program was initiated by the showing of Andy Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*. The day after the show, two important Rice personages came to see him. "They looked me in the eye and said, 'Is this what we can expect to develop at Rice University in the art area?' They were very distressed. I said, 'I don't know what to expect; we will have to find out by keeping an

open mind.'" He says this is a representative example of the resistance he sometimes encountered to teaching art at Rice. "There was a traditional attitude that was a hold-out from the

years when Rice was an institute and not yet a university. Even so, some saw art as frivolous." Mr. O'Neil says that one of the "benefits of the exhibitions done by the Institute for the Arts, were the accompanying scholarly catalogues of great beauty." During the course of the de Menils' patronage many significant shows were mounted at the Institute for the Arts, including "Raid the Icebox with Andy

Warhol," "Seventeenth Century Dutch Masters," "Claes Oldenburg," "Ten Centuries that Shaped the West: Greek and Roman Art in Texas Collections," "From Within: Selected Work by the Artist Inmates of the New York Correctional Facilities at Auburn (Maximum Security)," "Homage to Picasso," "Antwerp's Golden Age," "The Hindu Pantheon: Miniature Paintings and Bronzes from India," "Three Centuries of French Posters," "Art Nouveau," "The Graphic Work of Francisco Goya," "Secret Affinities: Words and Images by René Magritte," "Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980," and "The Indelible Image: Photographs of War, 1847-Present." Mary Dix recalls the momentous Max Ernst exhibition of early 1973. This show, "Inside the Sight," the opening of which Ernst himself attended, was the initial exhibition in the United States of a "most distinguished and rich reservoir of work by the greatest of the surrealists," according to the *Houston Post*.



Left: Media Center

Above: Media Center, interior, 1970

Below: The Rice Media Center, left, and the Institute for the Arts, right.



Many of these exhibitions were done in collaboration with institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Smithsonian, the Guggenheim, Rhode Island School of Design, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The de Menils also sponsored a series of lectures by art critic Rosamond Bernier, the cofounder of the international art review *L'Oeil*. A part of the Paris art scene for many years, she personally knew such artists as Picasso, Matisse, and Miró.

In the early seventies, the art department moved to their new quarters in Sewall Hall, where they had studios, offices, and classrooms. A master of arts degree in history of art and a fifth year bachelors degree in studio were offered for the first time in the seventies and eighties. The name of the department changed in 1978 from the fine arts department to the department of art and art history. The Sewall Hall Art Gallery replaced the small space in Allen Center. Mr. O'Neil says "when the gallery opened, I initially envisioned two purposes for it: to show exhibitions that supplemented the instructional programs of the department of art and art history and to exhibit the work of faculty and students." He remembers the time when the Institute for the Arts and the department of art and art history were both mounting exhibits: "There was a wonderful series of years where there were two art galleries at Rice."

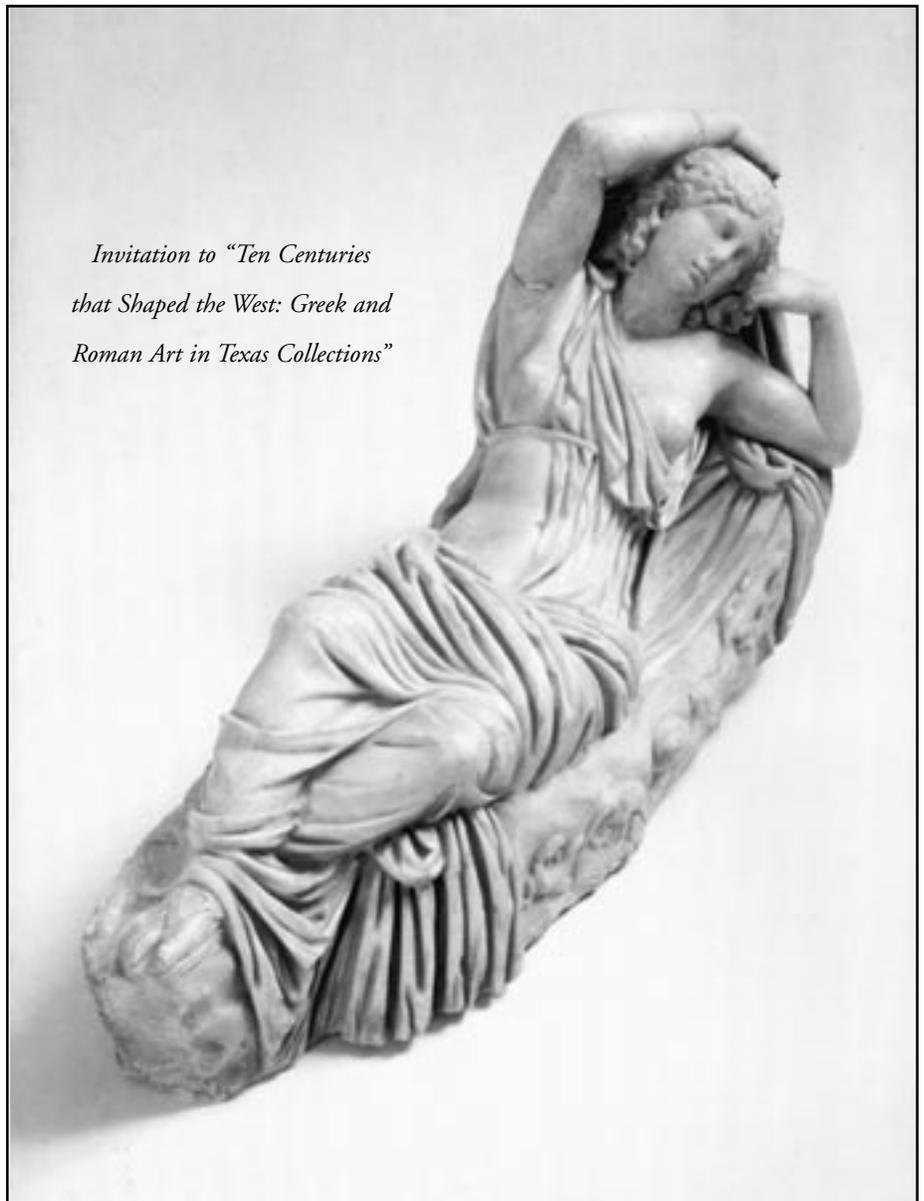
Mr. O'Neil says that the fine arts department received government grants to invite well-known artists to campus for a month. They were given studio space and, at the end of a month, gave a public lecture and invited students to come see what they had done. Two outstanding artists were Wayne Thiebaud and Gyorgy Kepes and "others of that caliber."

By 1984, however, the museum for the Menil Collection that Ann

Holmes had mentioned in 1968 was under construction in the Montrose area near St. Thomas, and Rice was contemplating the prospect of having a single art department for the first time since 1969. In a 1986 *Cite* editorial, Drexel Turner suggests "a modest but adequately supported university museum or gallery is a well-known aspect of institutions that Rice might seek to emulate." About the Institute for the Arts, he concludes, "For various reasons the Rice Museum was never fully assimilated into the university but remained an autonomous and ultimately transient enterprise, however lustrous."

John O'Neil and several other faculty members have commented on the high number of former students who have made their careers in the field of art or have contributed in some way. According to Mr. O'Neil, "Many Rice alumni who majored in art and art history or had taken courses as minors in those disciplines became successful professionals in some area of the arts such as painting, printmaking, photography, filmmaking and theater. Others did research and art criticism and filled staff positions in museums and galleries. A few have developed as informed art collectors. I believe all view their visual education at Rice as an enlightening experience."

*Invitation to "Ten Centuries
that Shaped the West: Greek and
Roman Art in Texas Collections"*



SANDY HAVENS AND THE RICE PLAYERS

by Karen Rogers

John O'Neil mentioned in his interview about the early days of the fine arts department at Rice that Sandy Havens, director of the Rice Players, transferred from the English Department to Fine Arts in 1965 when the department was formed. Since the Rice Historical Society was privileged to participate in Sandy's retirement festivities in the fall of '99, this seemed like a good time to reminisce about the Rice Players and Sandy's involvement with them.

Margaret Jelinek, in her chapter about theater in *A History of Student Life at Rice*, cites "an important part of the Rice experience" in which Rice students "receive more than a book education." She calls attention to the fact that Rice has no theater department yet produces many dramatic works every year and many alumni continue in theater work when they leave.

Although Rice had a dramatic club from the very early years, the Rice Players made their appearance in the early fifties. Willard Thorpe, a visiting professor in American Studies from Princeton, is sometimes credited with organizing the Players. While he

undoubtedly encouraged them, they already had that designation when he arrived. Sandy recounts this anecdote: The drama club had been producing a play in the Faculty Chamber (now the Founders' Room) in which there was a bar scene. Apparently a university official was horrified one day to discover some of the props – liquor bottles – and banned dramatic club

productions from the Chamber. The club, which had been toying with the idea of energizing the group with a name change anyway, decided that they might undo the damage if they came back as another entity. The Rice Players were born! (Sandy mentioned in an aside that the administration and faculty of that long-ago era were much less sensitive to students' feelings than they are now.)

While Dr. Thorpe did not invent the Rice Players, he did play some significant roles in their history. He is credited with inaugurating the outdoor Shakespeare series that contin-

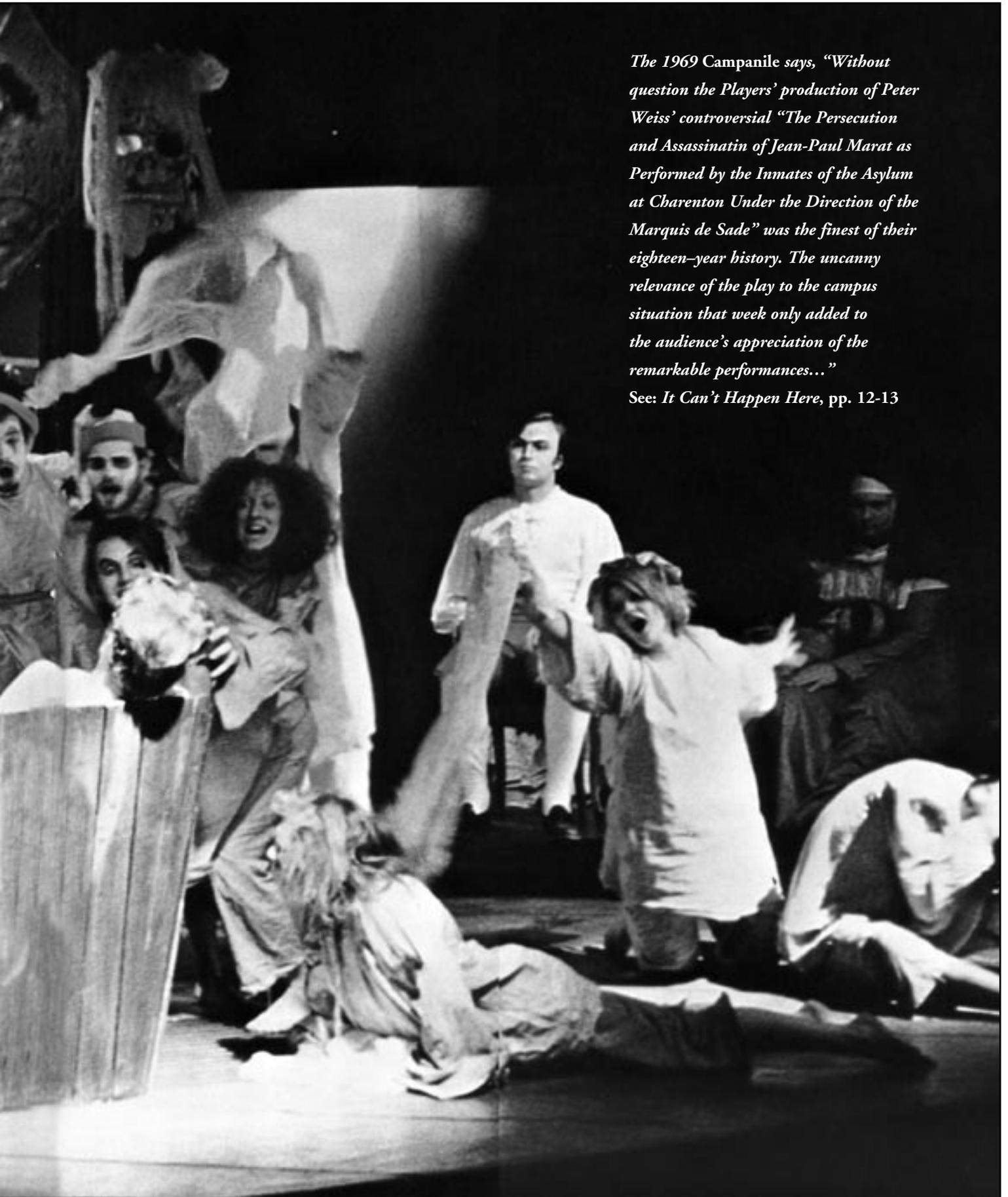
ued for many years. At the time no Shakespeare was being produced in Houston. Dr. Thorpe looked around the Rice campus and saw the perfect

setting, so in the spring of 1952 the Rice Players produced scenes from various plays. They began at the corner of Lovett Hall and the Physics Building and then performed the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* on the side of the Chemistry Building, then a scene from *Macbeth* in front of the building and finally another in the courtyard. Sandy participated in this series and remembers that it was in April or May – a beautiful spring evening with cape jasmines in bloom. More enduring than the Shakespeare series, is the "Miles Thorpe Tradition." Graduate students who did not want their advisors to know they were spending time acting in Player productions and undergraduates who were on probation or whose parents would not allow them to participate used the "Thorpe" pseudonym in the programs for their last names and frequently (though not always) a unit of measure for the first name. One year they had three graduate students – all "Thorpes" – listed as League, Rod, and Miles.

Sandy arrived as a student at Rice in 1952 expecting to major in physics, although in his senior year in McCamey, Texas, he had become infatuated with reading plays. His drama teacher had taken courses from a professor who had studied under John Parish, a Rice faculty member working with the Rice Players. She told Sandy to look up Dr. Parish when he got to Rice. In the spring of his freshman year he played some small parts in one-act plays at Autry House and then participated in the Shakespeare series. Because of this involvement he was invited to be a Rice Players Coordinator, of whom there were three that year. The Coordinators functioned as an executive board, although the tradition of the Players is not to have officers.







The 1969 Campanile says, "Without question the Players' production of Peter Weiss' controversial "The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum at Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade" was the finest of their eighteen-year history. The uncanny relevance of the play to the campus situation that week only added to the audience's appreciation of the remarkable performances..."

See: It Can't Happen Here, pp. 12-13

Since they were organized before the Student Association required officers, they have been allowed to keep this structure. The Coordinators oversee all of the elements regarding Player activities but consult the other members. Sandy regards this arrangement as “better because it is a meritocracy, not a popularity contest.”

In the academic year 1954-55 Sandy remembers that the Players started having productions in the Exam Room in the basement of Fondren Library. This room was off the area where the campus bookstore, a snack bar, and the *Thresher* and *Campanile* offices were. The performance space was set up as a theater-in-the-round.

At the time, the Rice Players were still among a handful of theater companies performing in Houston. Sandy remembers that the Alley Theatre and

Theatre Incorporated were about the only two competitors and the Rice Players “had good audiences.” The Houston newspapers reviewed college theater.

In our discussion of events leading up to Rice’s decision to hire a full-time director for the Players, Sandy gave the following history. He had graduated from Rice in 1956 and had gone on to Indiana University to get a master’s degree in theater. After a stint in the army and in the family business selling oil field equipment, he and his wife Helen moved to New York in the early sixties. He worked as

an assistant buyer for boys’ clothing at Bloomingdales while trying to break into the theater scene. He worked on two Broadway productions as a production assistant and stage manager for famed director Joshua Logan.

The Players at Rice in the meantime had begun to hire

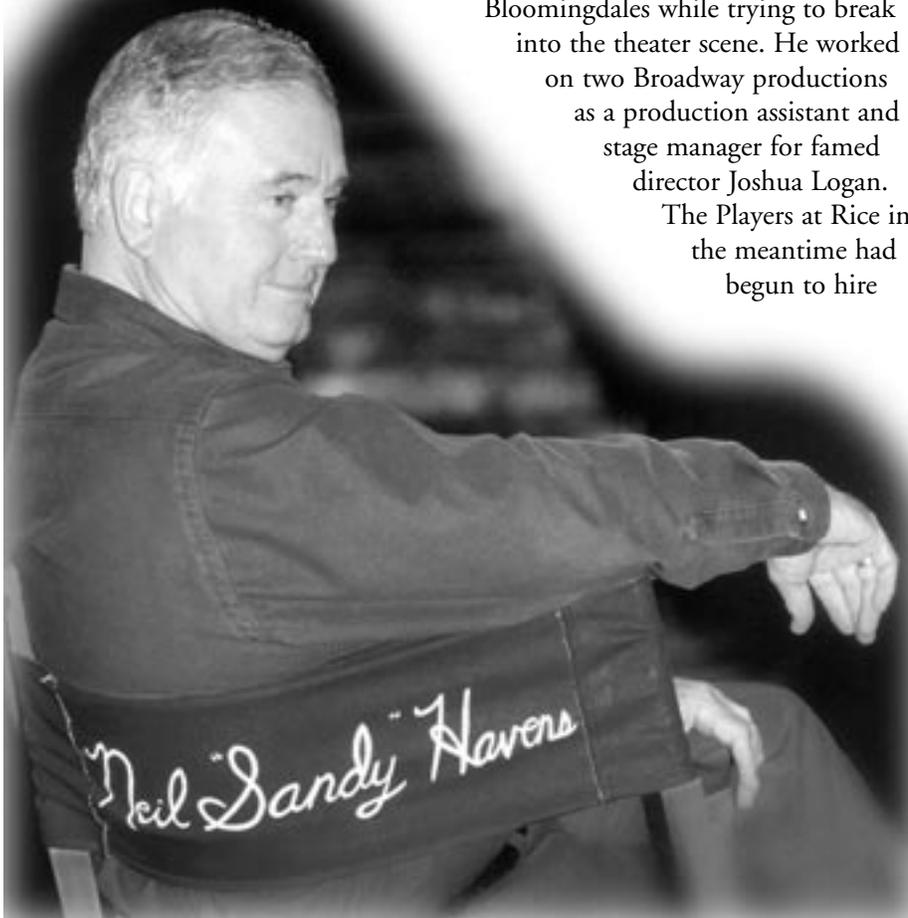
off-campus professional directors who were friends of some of the Players but not necessarily involved with the school. Margaret Jelinek mentioned that Rice had started giving the play-

ers some funds in the fifties so that they would not compete with the institute in fundraising. Sandy talked about one of these directors, David Dannenbaum, a well-liked man whose productions were successful. He was Sandy’s main competition when he applied for the job of director. In the early sixties the Players hired a New York director to produce Bertol Brecht’s *Galileo*. This was a hugely successful pro-

duction, but the director raised a good bit of money outside the guidance of the development office. Donors were not properly thanked, and it caused major difficulties for the president of the university. Sandy said, “Some of these off-campus directors did not play by the university rules and it created resentment by the administration against the Players.” However, one of the Coordinators was dating President Pitzer’s daughter so the two factions were able to communicate their concerns and it became apparent that it would be desirable for the university to hire a full-time director. This person would be answerable to the university and would be of benefit to the members of the Players, “since this person would treat them right.” In 1964 Sandy heard from a friend on the Rice faculty that the Rice Players were looking for a director.

Sandy was invited to come to Houston to interview for this position. He was met at the airport by a student Coordinator and brought to the campus to speak with Street

When Havens was hired as the Rice Players’ first full-time director he wanted the organization to remain primarily student run; thirty-five years later, it still is.



Fulton, the dean, and Will Dowden, chairman of the English department. Part of the arrangement was that the director of the Players would teach a freshman English course for scholarship athletes and a public speaking course for sophomores. Sandy had known Dr. Dowden from his years as an undergraduate. He was then grilled by the members of the Rice Players for a period of three hours in the Weiss Commons before returning to Dr. Fulton, who said they would be in touch regarding the students' decision. Sandy remembers his telling him, "We don't quite know how this has come about, but the students get to make the choice."

Of course, he was hired, and thus began a remarkable period in the history of the Rice Players. The Winter 1999 *Sallyport* noted that "From the beginning Sandy has treated the Rice Players as a serious professional theater company." When he was hired as the Rice Players' first full-time director he wanted the organization to remain primarily student run; thirty-five years later, it still is. They have six student Coordinators who function as the main decision-makers. Sandy said, "With me they pick the season and pick the cast." He mentioned that they do occasionally have visiting artists direct productions, but there is a full-time director who is answerable to the university.

In 1964 the university gave the Rice Players \$2,000 and Sandy's salary. By 1976 they were told to use box office receipts to meet production expenses, although the university promised that they would help out if the Players ever found they were in financial difficulties. So far they have only called on the university twice.

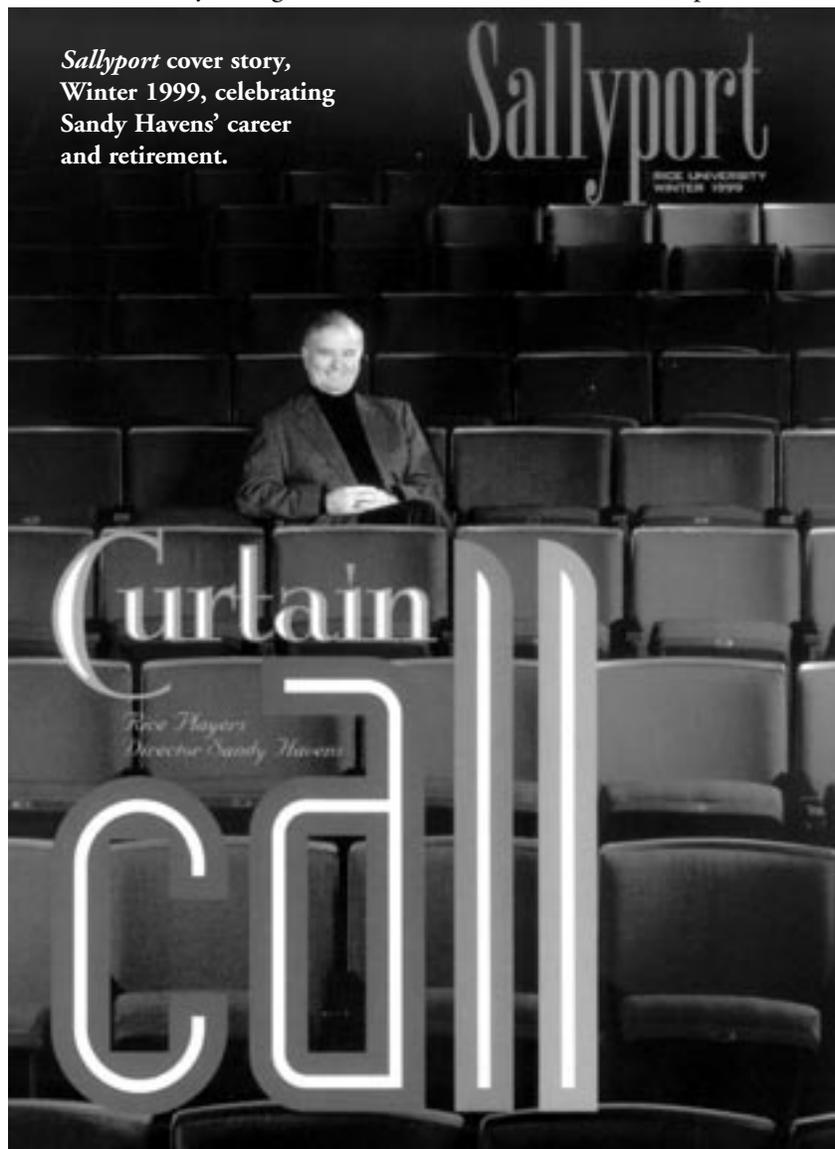
Sandy recounts a story of unusual timing. In 1969 the board of governors at Rice had named William Masterson president of the university without consulting faculty or students. Since this group had expected to be part of the deliberation process,

much protest was made. By chance the Players had scheduled the opening performance of *Marat/Sade* for the evening of the day a vote had been taken by faculty and students. Everyone was edgy waiting for the results of the vote and seeing a play about revolution when there was one playing out on the Rice campus seemed like an appropriate thing to do. It turned out to be a powerful performance and, as Sandy said, "really put the Players on the map."

Like John O'Neil, Sandy takes pleasure in the surprising number of former Players who have made their careers in theater and related fields. He uses this story to illustrate how many there are just in the Houston area: Some three years ago he needed

a special piece of furniture for a production, so he started calling his local network: Dr. Jonathan Middents, head of productions at the University of Houston; Claire Rimlinger McDonald of the St. Thomas drama department; the tech director of the Tomball Community College; Becky Udden, artistic director at Main St. Theater - all former Coordinators - as well as the tech director for Stages, who was a former Player.

The *Sallyport* article concluded, Sandy "took an extracurricular student drama group and turned it into a major theatrical force in Houston." The Rice Players during his tenure consistently drew high praise - a pretty impressive record for a university without a drama department!



IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

Dr. William H. Masterson, president-designate of Rice University, becomes the first Rice graduate to return as the University's chief executive. Masterson, a Houston native, served Rice previously in the capacities of professor of history, presidential assistant, chairman of the college masters, and dean of humanities. He was named the first Master of Hanszen College in 1957. Masterson left three years ago to assume the presidency of the University of Chattanooga.

FRIDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 1969

The faculty of Rice university vigorously protests the procedures used to select the new president. Specifically the faculty objects that the student-faculty committee, which was requested by the board and duly elected, was not consulted about the final appointment. We emphatically request that this appointment be reconsidered after appropriate consultation with appropriate faculty-student presidential selection committee. (61 signatures)

FOR RELEASE 12:00 NOON C.S.T., SATURDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 1969

The following is the resolution passed by the student body by a vote of 951 to 7: The students of Rice University vigorously protest and cannot accept the procedures used to select the new president. Specifically the students object that the student-faculty committee, which was requested by the Board and duly elected, was not consulted about the final appointment. We emphatically request that this appointment be reconsidered after appropriate consultation with appropriate faculty-student presidential selection committee.

SATURDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 1969

"There is a responsibility to express dissent where there is dissent, but don't get yourself dismissed for having done the right thing in the wrong way." Dean of Students Paul Pfeiffer.

FOR RELEASE 1:00 P.M. C.S.T., SUNDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 1969

A group composed of college presidents, officers of the Rice Student Association, and student members of the Student-Faculty Committee on Presidential Selection met with Dr. Masterson for five hours yesterday, Feb. 22, 1969. Dr. Masterson has refused any further meetings with this group or with the Student-Faculty Committee...

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 1969

CIRCLE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- I. I approve of the procedure used in the selection.
I disapprove of the procedure used in the selection.
- II. Given the present situation:
I approve of the choice made by the Board of Trustees.
I disapprove of the choice made by the Board of Trustees.

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 1969

"Legally and historically the Board of Trustees have the clearly defined responsibility to select and name a new president. Those men are well-intentioned, honest, strong, and forceful. What they did not realize was the depth of the experience and generation gap which separates them from you...The Trustees feel that they had followed due process. They had asked for advice, but in their hearts, they thought the final selection was theirs alone."

Lee Estes, Development Office

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 1969

Wiess College asks the Board to give the properly elected representatives of the student-faculty committee on Presidential Selection a veto on the final choice of the President of Rice University. We call attention to the precedent set by the faculty consulta-

tion committee during the selection of President Pitzer.

PRESS RELEASE TO HOUSTON NEWS MEDIA FROM THE JOINT CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TO RICE UNIVERSITY

We have sent a telegram to the Board of Trustees recommending the following actions:

"The immediate rescinding of the appointment; a reaffirmation of the integrity previously established with the Advisory Committee; the assurance that future nominations will be made in consultation with this committee."

KHOU EDITORIAL, 6:00 P.M., 24 FEBRUARY 1969

The controversy over the appointment of the new president of Rice University can only be viewed as unfortunate. Rice is run by a board of Governors, which appointed a Student Faculty Committee to help screen presidential applicants when Dr. Kenneth Pitzer announced his resignation last summer. That committee had been working from a list of some twenty such candidates and chose five which were submitted to the Board of Governors for further consideration. Although Dr. William H. Masterson's name was on the original list, it was not one of the five the committee chose to give to the Board of Governors. Students and faculty alike are now upset because the Board went ahead and appointed Dr. Masterson as president, despite the trend toward student and faculty control of the country's colleges and universities. In the end the Board exercised that responsibility. The appointment of Dr. Masterson is an accomplished fact. Neither he nor the Board of Governors has given any indication there will be a reconsideration. By naming Masterson, the Board rejected the first five names submitted by its committee and chose not to ask further recommendations. Any complaints the Student-Faculty committee might have should be handled in a different manner from the method

used thus far. The only thing that will be accomplished should this controversy continue, would be to give one of this nation's finest institutions somewhat of a black eye.

TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1969

Mr. H. Malcolm Lovett, Chairman of the board of Governors of the Rice University, announced that at a called meeting today, the Board accepted with regret the resignation of Dr. William H. Masterson as president of the University.

TELEGRAM SENT TO

*DR. W.H. MASTERSON, 6:00 P.M.,
TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1969*

The faculty and students of Rice University, as represented by the Academic Department Chairmen, the College Presidents and the Student Association Officers wish to express their deep gratitude for your statesmanship in the action you have taken with regard to the University's dilemma. You have again demonstrated your devotion to Rice.

We regret the personal strain and suffering that this experience has caused you and your family and send you our heartfelt wishes for your success and well-being.

*W.E. Gordon and Warren Skaaren
for Faculty and Students*



THE RICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S FIRST PUBLICATION

The Rice Historical Society has published its first book: *The Meaning of the New Institution*. This handsome 134-page paperback book contains Dr. Edgar Odell Lovett's entire address from the formal opening of the Rice Institute in 1912 along with an extensive introduction by Dr. John B. Boles and more than thirty archival photographs and illustrations. The dark blue cover is embossed with the shield of Rice University and stamped in silver foil print.

Rice Historical Society members receive a 20% discount off the retail price of \$15. For information about ordering this book, contact **Karen Rogers** at 713.960.8600 or 1.800.768.4539 or khrogers_68@yahoo.com

LETTER FROM THEO KELLER

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I would like to correct several inaccuracies in the article about Ye Old College Inn in the fall issue of the Cornerstone. The Owl Drive-in was located on the northeast corner where Hermann Drive [now North MacGregor] dead ends into Main, across from Gate 3, not at the main gate where Sunset crosses Main.

George Martin built the Varsity Room, not Ernie Coker. In 1935 J. I. Campbell and I built a small office on the property next to the Inn which we leased from the Institute for \$50 per month. We were the architects for the Varsity Room. We closed the office in 1940 due to the entry of the U. S. into World War II. The room was built between 1935 and 1940. In addition to the events mentioned in the article, the South Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects held their annual meetings there with a steak dinner for \$2.50. Another event was the play-by-play telegraphic report of the Rice-Purdue football game, I think in 1939.

I first met George when a freshman at the Institute in 1921. We became good friends and he was a good client. He once told me that he borrowed \$6,000 from the Institute at 9% interest to build Ye Old College Inn. I am very familiar with George's life from the time he jumped ship in Galveston, through the success of the Inn, to his retirement after selling the Inn to Ernie Coker until his tragic death returning from a fishing trip. He tried to beat a train at a crossing.

— Theo F. Keller '25

RICE MEMORIAL CENTER PLANS ANNOUNCED

When plans were announced in 1955 to build a student union and chapel at Rice,

the location was expected to be between Cohen House and the road (now running from Entrance 3) that ran beside East Hall (now Baker College). Ray Brochstein, a member of the architecture class of 1955, told the *Cornerstone* about a letter his classmates had written to the *Thresher* expressing their concerns about the design of the buildings. The letter was signed by Morton Levy, James Thomas, and Hyman Applebaum but, according to John Joiner, the whole class had input into the wording. The list of things they did not like about the buildings were:

“The Lounge is a windowless, inside room that seems to function best as a path of circulation between the front entrance and everything else instead of being a significant improvement over what the basement now offers.

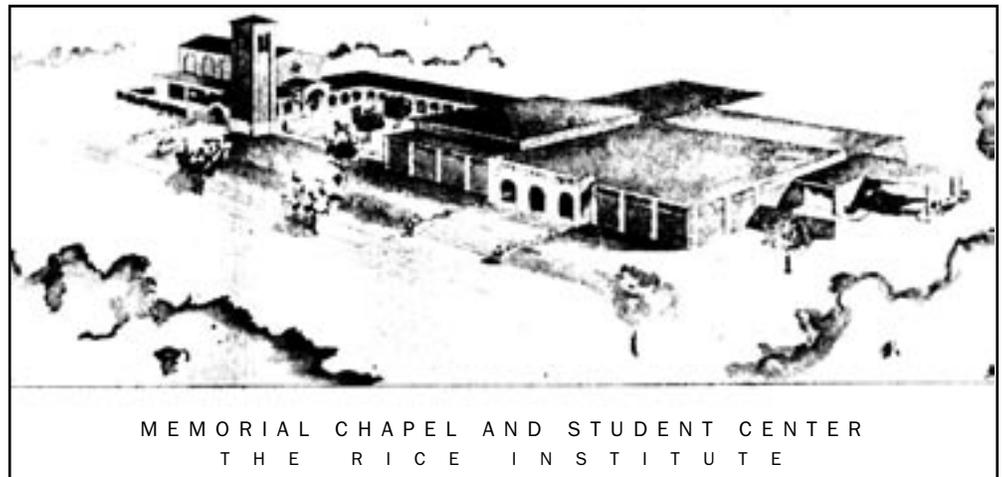
The Roost is somewhat bigger than the present one, but it is still the same stepchild relegated to the same dark corner with the same windows opening into the lounge.

The site affords a fine view of one of the proposed dormitory courts and the beautiful tree lined roads, but the ideal places for this view are filled by the windowless Coop and the chair storage in the Activity Hall.

Any view toward the academic buildings is blocked by the mass of the chapel; this may be unavoidable but coupled with all the other blocked views it is unfortunate. The chapel's orientation especially seems to deny the presence of other buildings on the campus – turning its side to the road

and dormitory court opposite, and its apse to the approach from the academic area.

proximity to the Activities Hall should be so arranged that it offers the most possible use as an outdoor extension



MEMORIAL CHAPEL AND STUDENT CENTER
THE RICE INSTITUTE

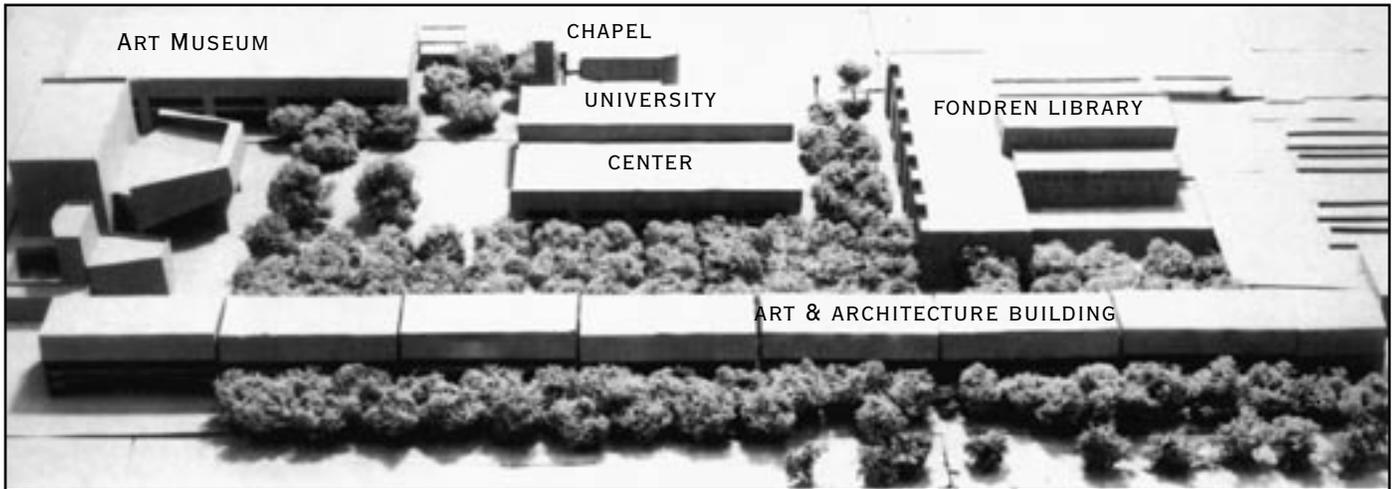
The view to the other direction – through the courtyard and cloister to Cohen House and landscape beyond is blocked by offices. In a campus program that for a good number of years has been striving for close faculty-student relationships – as evidenced by the college system – the layout of the new buildings is strongly criticized in its complete omission of Cohen House as a part of the plan composition and the absolute denial of circulation between the student and faculty centers except by a most devious and awkward route.

Not only is there a denial of the existing campus by windowless rooms and building masses that unnecessarily disturb vistas that could have been preserved, but there is also a denial of the opportunity afforded by Houston climate – and especially called for in the design of a completely usable student union – of planned space for outdoor activity

As soon as one sees the obvious need for such outdoor activity, it takes little imagination to picture outdoor spaces for lounging, dining, and partying. The main courtyard, with its

of the Hall, but its poor exposure – both in terms of sunlight and breeze – and the indication of a minimum of paved area predicate a lost opportunity. Corollary to this point, it is very unfortunate that the arrangement of the Lounge and Roost makes any outdoor activity in connection with them an impossibility. In contrast to this omission, the garden courts of the chapel are an unfortunate and possibly disturbing addition.” The architecture students claimed that, although “there are good points to the design”, the faults are “very fundamental and deserve recognition for the effect they will have on the Rice campus and those who will use it in the future.”

A year later, the *Thresher* reported that “plans for the memorial chapel and student center...have not been completed.” Still one year after that, a *Thresher* headline announced “Student Center Plan Moved to New Site.” This location, west of Fondren Library was where the Rice Memorial Center was eventually built. Twelve years after its opening, Louis Kahn proposed tearing it down (see related story on the Fine Arts Complex).



Kahn aligned the complex with the back of Sewall Hall. He extended a long, thin four-story building between a double file of street trees and the south alley, which he assigned to the art and architecture departments. Prefaced by a lecture theater behind Rayzor Hall, the art and architecture building comprised seven regular units of equal dimensions into which classrooms, studios, and offices could go. At the end of the great square where the trees ended, Kahn located two large auditoriums, each with deep tall stage houses with a low two-story building connecting them. A four-story art museum was proposed for the site of the Rice Memorial Center, which Kahn wished to demolish. The chapel and Ray Courtyard were to remain. To the south of the chapel, in the middle of the central green was a new university center with an underground parking garage.

A GRAND DREAM: LOUIS KAHN AND THE FINE ARTS COMPLEX AT RICE

About the same time that Dominique and John de Menil were transferring the St. Thomas art department to Rice, the Rice art department was temporarily housed in cramped quarters in Allen Center; they had, however, been promised by Kenneth Pitzer, then president of Rice, enlarged quarters in the soon-to-be-constructed Sewall Hall. In the meantime, the de Menils had built a “low-tech, barn-like building,” according to Drexel Turner, meant to be a “temporary and expedient solution to the need for space.” This exhibition hall, nicknamed “The Barn,” along with its next-door neighbor the Media Center, was placed on the edge of the campus at the Stockton entrance. The de Menils, according to John O’Neil, never felt that the Sewall space would be adequate, so in 1969 they approached Louis Kahn to produce a schematic drawing and a model for a

fine arts complex at Rice. Stephen Fox in *The General Plan of the William M. Rice Institute and its Architectural Development* says that Kahn was the first architect of national prominence to be consulted by Rice since the death of Ralph Adams Cram. He had received critical recognition for his addition to the Yale University Art Gallery in 1953 and had achieved international acclaim for the Richards Medical Research Library at Penn in 1961 and the Salk Institute in LaJolla in 1965. In 1969, while he was working on plans for the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, he was commissioned by the board of governors, presumably at the de Menils’ suggestion, to prepare drawings for a fine arts center for Rice. It was to house the School of Architecture, the Department of Art and Art History and the Institute for the Arts as well as facilities for the fledgling Sheperd School of Music and the Rice Players.

Plans included the construction of a 2,500-seat auditorium. In 1970 Kahn proposed to the board a complex of buildings around what would have been the “great square of the general plan; although cut off from the campus by Fondren Library...the square retained some measure of its originally intended configuration with the triple allees of mature live oak trees which lined the central green,” according to Fox.

Kahn had been asked to work with a budget of six million dollars. These plans were estimated to cost forty million. Because the university was apparently experiencing operating deficits at the time, the project was dropped.

In 1973 Kahn was commissioned by the de Menils to plan a group of buildings to house their collection in the Montrose area near the Rothko Chapel. He died suddenly a year later, and Howard Barnstone was asked to prepare some drawings. Barnstone was succeeded in 1980 by Renzo Piano, whose design was made public in 1981. The Menil Collection opened in 1987.

RAVEL AND RICE

by Mary Dix

April 6 and 7, 1928, were days of high excitement for lovers of music in Houston. Famed French composer, pianist, and conductor Maurice Ravel had arrived to speak and perform as that year's guest at the Rice Institute Lectureship in Music. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor some outstanding musical figures, among them Nadia Boulanger and Sir Henry Hadow, had visited the city in previous years, and 1928's guest was no less distinguished.

President Edgar Odell Lovett was deeply involved with the planning, as telegrams and newspaper clippings in the Woodson Research Center's files show. In his correspondence with Bogue Laberge Concert Management, a New York firm arranging Ravel's United States lecture schedule, he agreed on a fee of \$2,000 for the two concerts and lecture, \$1,500 to be paid at the time of the performance and the final \$500 upon receipt of the manuscript of the composer's lecture. Rice Institute published a translation of Ravel's lecture in *Pamphlet*, Volume 15, Number 2, in April 1928.

President Lovett also gave firm directions to the management and staff of the Rice Hotel to protect Ravel's privacy, with the result that newspaper reporters were denied

access to the visiting celebrity but so were the soprano and violinist who came to practice for their performances with him. When the press was finally admitted for an interview, they were dismayed to discover that the

so he planned to go to Galveston and perhaps to Mexico.

Both in the interview and in his lecture Ravel expressed his appreciation of American jazz; in fact his latest composition included an interlude



Portrait of Maurice Ravel inscribed to Dr. Lovett.

world-renowned composer spoke animated French; his English amounted to little more than "yes," "no," and "just one minute." Fortunately, Marcel Moreau, a Rice professor of French, appeared to serve as translator.

One reporter described Ravel as "small...gray-haired, with the stern face of a severe Roman senator" and remarked on "his dark eyes aflame with the fever of thought." Ravel told the interviewers that he liked the United States, "the buildings, the wealth, its bigness." He also revealed that there was a clause in his contract that he must see the Gulf of Mexico

of "blues." He found two springs of inspiration in any composer's work – national consciousness and individual consciousness – not in any "academic attempt to establish permanent laws."

The concert took place at the Scottish Rite Cathedral before a delighted audience. A young Houston violinist, Barbara Lull, who was winning critical acclaim in the East and in Europe, and soprano Esther Dale performed with Ravel in a demanding program representing the range of his compositions. Houstonians, thanks to the anonymous donor, were thus treated to two exceptional evenings.