The Future For Voluntary Action

Several months ago when I accepted Charlie Kimball’s invitation to speak on the topic of voluntarism, January 29, 1986, sounded like a long, long time away, with more than enough time to prepare my remarks.

I knew I would enjoy not only thinking reflectively about voluntarism, but also, maybe even more importantly, having the opportunity to reconsider why we invest such a great portion of our time in voluntary endeavors.

I was looking forward to my assignment!

What I hadn’t counted upon was the amount of time it would take to get me ready! The feelings of inadequacy, a little stage fright, and, at times, just a little sheer panic have not dissipated.

Maybe by January 30. Not by today.

I did gather enough courage and inspiration from rereading the addresses of many of those illustrious persons who have preceded me at this podium to make it at least this far. I was once again moved by Gordon Kingsley’s magnificent address, “Sort of Higher Education: An Overview from Underneath”; inspired by Wally Nielsen’s “Corporate Social Responsibility”; and filled with pride in Bill Hall’s discussion, “To Whom and How Much,” to name but a few.

On reflection of those addresses and others, my feelings of anxiety heightened as the sense of humility deepened.

But I’m here and still standing. Part of that must be due to the welcome, sustained, and necessary support of Donald, my appreciated, respected, and much-beloved mentor. Honey, you don’t have to take any responsibility at all for the dumb things I do, but you deserve any occasional credit. He is the one from whom I have learned so many, many things and the one responsible for the many opportunities I have had. I am grateful.

Charlie, I especially want to thank you for your invitation and your nice introduction. Both are very much appreciated. You know you have been one of my most valued mentors. Charlie is the one who initially put into perspective for me the value of time. He said, “When you give money to a charitable cause, there is a future opportunity to replenish it. But if you think about it, you will see that a volunteer’s time is not replaceable as would be a financial gift. The week, month, or whatever time is devoted to a cause is gone. There is no way to replace or respond it. The time, therefore, has a nobility that can never be matched.”
Charlie has that rare ability to place most everything, including time, in its proper perspective. No wonder it is, then, that this series is appropriately named Midcontinent Perspectives, reflecting not only one of his special abilities – perspective – but also, as the name implies, the influence of the organization with which he is so closely connected – MRT – upon the large midcontinent region of America.

In 1832, de Tocqueville observed the special American characteristic of people coming together in a voluntary association to solve their common problems. His observations captured the important realities that make our country what it is.

A century and a half have enriched the central reality he described when he wrote,

_I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and then in getting them voluntarily to pursue it. Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainment, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the Antipodes. In this manner, they found hospitals, prisons, and schools. If it is proposed to inculcate some truth, or to foster some feelings by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society. Wherever at the head of some new undertaking you see the government of France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association._

What de Tocqueville was describing, of course, is voluntarism, the kind based on wide citizen participation, and the principle that everyone – not just men or women, rich or poor, black or white, business or labor, but everyone – can give something to someone in need, according to whatever time is available to him or her.

The fabric of our American society was initiated, developed, and has been maintained by voluntary activity in the private sector.

In any community across this land, good people, such as Jacob Loose, John Gage, William Rockhill Nelson, William Volker, Jerry Smith, and countless others, come and go in a continuity that joins one generation to the next. Without them and their voluntary action, we would not have the quality of life that our citizens enjoy today. In many respects, Kansas City is the envy of other cities around the world. I believe that our recognition of the needs of those less fortunate, our ability to marshal public and private financial support, and our willingness to supply the volunteer effort to meet those needs to the very best of our ability are an integral part of that image. Sharing good fortune is just one of the great traditions of our society and the noble mark of a free civilization.

Today, we have self-help organizations, vest-pocket parks, and even hospitals primarily because, in the beginning, one caring person saw a need, assumed some leadership, and attracted other caring persons. Thus infused with all the right motivators, they made the vital commitment of willingness to devote the necessary time, money, and human effort – without compensation – to the betterment of a segment of society.
Habits of caring permeate the pages of our rich and diversified history. They are completely ingrained into the very fabric of our society and have had a very profound impact on the shaping of our country’s institutions and on the relationships between society and government.

Yes, both our national and local history are indeed full of the exciting examples to which de Tocqueville was referring. The ability to be enterprising through the voluntary sector and high public regard for the individual perception of the human climate have always been major cornerstones of our society. Bureaucracies are so much less able to respond constructively and react to new challenges, so much less able to promote progress and change, and often so much less able to accurately assess the forces and dynamics at work.

Yes, there is no doubt that without voluntary initiatives and support, America would be a much poorer and much less democratic society.

Why have I invested a great portion of my life in the voluntary sector? Why do you? Why does anyone? The answers, of course, are varied. But I might suggest that one answer for each of us is that we have felt, probably on many occasions, the true spirit of voluntarism. It’s one thing to study the voluntary sector, to read books, to know about the field, and to learn some how-to’s about working in it. But oh, to feel it! It’s not just something we go out and do on Tuesday morning or Thursday at noon. It’s more than that!

Because each one of us has at one time or another been “volunteered”! We have been helped, ministered unto, in maybe only a brief but a special moment when someone has come to our aid. Whether the car wouldn’t start and someone brought a jumper cable, or we had too many packages to carry and someone gave us a hand, or we were newcomers to a community and felt the warmth of new neighbors, each one of us has had a spirit touched and thus let loose at a time when someone helped us. And we were united with another human being at a very basic level for a single instant. That is the volunteer spirit each of us has felt at one time or another.

And because we can actually feel this kind of volunteer spirit through these kinds of basic volunteer acts, America is the most compassionate society on earth. I believe it is this spirit that causes us to value so highly our opportunity to participate in the rich heritage of the Judeo-Christian ethic. Voluntarism is a daily opportunity for personal investment in a better tomorrow for our community and for all of us. And these privileges carry with them the obligation to pass along the voluntary spirit, or caring spirit, to our children and our children’s children.

At a time when values, goals, and human relations are being altered, I know that what I want to leave our children are articles for living – among them a caring for the volunteer spirit. That is much more important than passing along material possessions.

Contrary to some perceptions, voluntarism is not an immutable institution. It is integral to our democratic form of government, but it has evolved over the decades as the people and the times have brought changes in our society.

The meaning of voluntarism is well captured by remembering the barn raisings, the husking bees, apple bees, and quilting and cellar-digging bees of rural America. Or think of neighbors directly helping each other or of voluntary associations such as the volunteer fire department or community libraries.

As our society grew more complex with the influx of the immigrants and the explosion of the cities, voluntarism found additional expressions. By the turn of the twentieth century, it
provided the vehicle for women to affect society more directly. Clara Barton, Juliette Low, and Jane Addams. Many of the health and human service initiatives to aid the poor and needy were started by women volunteers or women-led social agencies. And yet it would not be until 1920 that women were allowed to vote.

And then came World War II, which galvanized the volunteer spirit of all America. Everyone was involved in the war effort. Children saved string, newspapers, and the tinfoil from cigarette packs and gum wrappers. People voluntarily turned off lights and rationed their food. As a result, the important values of the volunteer spirit and community service became even more deeply ingrained in the generations growing up during the war and are widely reflected in its support of the community today.

The 1960s saw yet another expression of America’s volunteer spirit when thousands of young people responded to President Kennedy’s call for service in the Peace Corps and VISTA, sharing their talents and dreams with others less fortunate around the world. Government and voluntary agencies began to work hand in hand to find solutions to the nation’s growing social problems.

Unfortunately, in the 1970s, Watergate and the aftermath of the Vietnam War negatively affected the way America saw itself. Special interest groups of narrow vision emerged, and authority at all levels was severely challenged. Community service still held value, but its expression took different forms. This was especially true among the younger generation, who rallied around the issues of environment, consumerism, and nuclear disarmament.

For this decade of the ‘80s, three forces are central to shaping voluntarism:

1. The movement of women from the home into the marketplace. This important source of America’s volunteer power will need to be replaced.

2. The substantial changes in social values and lifestyles that are taking place which are the result of the evolving structure of the American family and the changing demographic makeup of the population. These changes have given rise to many new needs and attitudes which, in some ways, are similar to those of the ‘60s and which have spawned a multitude of single-interest groups and new voluntary organizations. Some of these are in direct conflict with one another.

3. Volunteers of the ‘80s are faced with unusual, competitive pressure for their individual time. While in earlier days voluntarism may have been a partial social and entertainment outlet, those kinds of options for social interaction are varied, numerous, and widespread.

What kind of volunteer climate lies ahead in the next 15 years for our community and the nation? Let me submit the following scenario:

1. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS WILL NOT GROW, at least not substantially. As a society, we will have to rely more and more on individual and community initiatives to solve local problems. Voluntarism will be essential to bring together all the different community segments and resources to address our local problems.

2. EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR PRIORITY. I believe our society today is in danger of creating a permanent “underclass” of poorly educated students. Unless children receive basic skills, including computer skills, they will be ill-equipped for the future job market. The effective use of trained volunteers will be of critical importance to the
survival of quality public education – one of the most prominent components of a democratic society.

3. TECHNOLOGY WILL OPEN NEW WAYS FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR TO BE EFFECTIVE. Computer networks will enable the sharing of information in ways we cannot yet imagine. Television will be used more creatively to recruit and recognize volunteer involvement.

4. CORPORATIONS WILL PLAY AN EVER-INCREASING ROLE IN VOLUNTARY SERVICE. That was illustrated in a recent presentation at the Independent Sector national conference by the author of the 1956 landmark book, Organization Man. William Whyte, Jr. compared the values of the “organization men” of the 1950s with those of their children of the 1980s. He said that the ‘50s “organization man” saw business as just making a profit and as separate from his individual social responsibilities. The children of “organization man,” however, do not see any dichotomy whatsoever. Whyte stated that most of today’s corporate leaders see “community service as good business.” That is certainly well illustrated by so many of you in this room this afternoon.

Cause-related marketing, pioneered by American Express, whose CEO, Jim Robinson, serves as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the United Way of America, is now an accepted approach by many companies. Business involvement and financing of major projects such as the restoration of the Statue of Liberty and the 1984 Olympics are perhaps only harbingers of more good things to come.

I believe that corporations will provide more volunteer professional assistance through loaned executives and will encourage employee groups to take on community projects. Labor unions will expand their efforts to encourage volunteer participation in the solution of community problems.

5. A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON CARING WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE UNDERGIRDING IN THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR. The high tech society of the last 15 years of the century will make the high touch qualities of generosity, human warmth, caring, sincerity, kindness, and enthusiasm even more important. It will also extend to caring for an idea, an ideal, caring for a community, an organization, an institution.

In that halcyon climate, how can voluntary action function best? How can we preserve, nurture, and make even more effective the voluntary caring system that has served this nation so very well?

To be most effective, we will need to do many things, but in my opinion we will need to give priority to the following:

1. A RESPONSIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE WILL HAVE TO BE ESTABLISHED which enables an optimum relationship between the governing board of a voluntary organization and the chief executive officer. There are between 800,000 and 2 million nonprofit institutions in this country. Too many of those under-emphasize the importance of good management and good governance. Nonprofit does not mean nonprofessional. I am reminded of one of Bob Long’s comments: “I am not interested in a report of activity. I want a report of the accomplishments.”

You in this room have so much experience in business, religious, civic, health, educational, cultural, and philanthropic organizations. You must help raise the effectiveness of
volunteer leadership. Some volunteers, entrusted to leadership roles in not-for-profit institutions, occasionally handle matters as trustees in ways they would find inappropriate as corporate directors. Organizational staff alone cannot increase effectiveness. Today’s trustees must be prepared to make the really hard, tough decisions just as corporate directors make in the private sector.

2. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF WOMEN MOVING OUT OF THE HOME MUST BE UNDERSTOOD. I don’t believe that this understanding has yet happened. Over the last 30 years, the percentage of women who work for pay has grown from 29 percent of all women 16 and older to 53 percent. This long-term trend is expected to continue and the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 1995, 60 percent of all women will be employed. Obviously the roles of women in our society are undergoing a very fundamental change. Not only are more women working now than worked 30 years ago, but different kinds of women are working. While the percentage of single women in the work force has remained fairly constant over the last 30 years, the proportion of married women who have gone to work has doubled. In 1950, 23 percent of all wives worked; in 1980, 50 percent of all married women were working outside the home.

The sharpest increase in married women working is among mothers of young children. Since the late 1940s, the rate of increase of participation among women with pre-school-age children has been double that of women with older children. A majority of women with school-age children are working outside the home, and more than 40 percent of women with pre-school-age children also work. This has powerful societal ramifications.

A growing number of working couples with children try to care for their children by working staggered shifts. According to an article in a July 1984 issue of *Science* magazine, in more than one-third of two-income families with children, one parent works an evening shift so that the other can be with the children for most hours of the day. Volunteer organizations that thought they would attract evening volunteers will have to rethink that approach. And time spent at home and in leisure activity will become more highly valued as there is so much less of it. These trends have major implications for volunteer enterprises.

3. THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR MUST DOUBLE ITS CAPACITY, MAYBE EVEN TRIPLE IT, in order to address, adequately, the health and welfare needs of the less fortunate. A significant portion of our population still feels that the voluntary sector has not solved society’s problems and is reluctant to support voluntary efforts.

4. THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS GOING TO NEED TO COME TO THE TABLE, roll up its sleeves, and work together with the private and the not-for-profit sectors. Too often, government agencies view their relationship with the not-for-profit sector as all or nothing. It is appropriate that the public sector be a catalyst for growth of the volunteer world. It’s in the public sector’s best interest to do so.

5. THERE WILL NEED TO BE AN INCREASED UNDERSTANDING THAT MINORITY NEEDS ARE SOMETIMES OUTSIDE OF GENERAL COMMUNITY NEEDS. The voluntary sector can best address these needs. For instance, a recent nationwide poll of Hispanics indicated that the organizations most responsive to Hispanic community needs were those in the private, nonprofit sector.

6. A CORPS OF NEW LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO BE DEVELOPED. I recently heard Ray Anderson, president of Lockheed, tell of the challenges in the Los Angeles area posed
by the influx of Asians, Filipinos, and Mexicans into the area. He described how the corps leadership in Los Angeles “took a chance,” in his words, and asked a relative newcomer, a Japanese man of significant stature, to head their fund-raising drive for a music center. His goal was $14 million. The Japanese businessman accepted the challenge and also the risk that the goal might not be met. He attended meeting after meeting, displaying occasional discouragement, but kept trying. When the final report date arrived, he had doubled the goal. Unfortunately for Los Angeles, that businessman has returned to Japan and now is the head of Nissan Motors.

It is a dramatic story but worth consideration. Volunteers in decision-making roles often won’t take the risks we need to take by reaching out to others who are “different” or “untried.” But there will be more and more challenges, as many of these who migrate to our shores do not completely share our Judeo-Christian ethic of voluntarism, of caring for one another. We will need to integrate them and invite these groups to be a part of our decision-making models.

There are increased and important resources for new corps leadership development elsewhere.

In addition to corporations, which already have begun to adopt policies allowing their employees to pursue goals designed to enhance the voluntary sector, the elderly will be another important resource. In the year 2000, one of every five citizens will be 65 years old or older. With life expectancy at 80-85 years, that means our elderly can play a significant role in voluntary activities and leadership, creating an entirely new array of the intergenerational activities of day-care and homemaking. As the ancient Greeks revered their elderly for their wisdom, we must find new ways to tap into the wisdom and experience of our over-65-year-old citizenry, who, we must remind ourselves, will be the best educated in history.

7. VOLUNTEERS MUST FEEL THAT THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE MEANINGFUL. This means there must be adequate feedback so that they feel rewarded in one way or another. I was startled to find that a substantial portion of working women feel that contributions at the work place allow them to make a difference in the world. They report that they would continue to work, even if they didn’t need the money. Additionally, they listed the rewards of working and, again, I was startled to see how similar these are to the rewards of the voluntary sector. In order: (a) co-workers who are friends; (b) job security (here in the voluntary sector we have a little edge in that, I believe!); (c) enjoyable work; (d) support of co-workers and boss; (e) responsibility for decision-making; (f) opportunities to learn new skills; (g) recognition for contribution; (h) high salary (you notice how far down the list salary is); (i) opportunity to contribute to society; (j) prestige. I found that a fascinating list.

As de Tocqueville pointed out, Americans are a curious people. There is just something about this land of ours that inspires our people to participate. It is a part of our national heritage and community culture. It’s an enthusiastic spirit that infects everyone, regardless of from what country or tradition they come. And after a while people become Americanized. They get involved in shaping their communities through voluntary activities and efforts, and plain old-fashioned hard work.

I do think voluntarism will be just as exciting and challenging in shaping America in the year 2000 as it is today. The motivations for volunteering may be many, but the basic reasons will be the same. And it does seem to bring out the best in us. It is a curious paradox of life that when people voluntarily give of themselves to help others, they often find themselves receiving much more than they ever give.
I know because that is the way it has always been and is with me.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: Do you see anything of interest in the general union community in performing volunteer service?

ANSWER: Yes I do. The United Way of America from time to time has felt a little concern about this because labor unions perceive themselves as being the only care-giver at the workplace and on occasion have resisted United Way programs. They do have a good record for giving service to employees.

QUESTION: Would you mind elaborating a bit on the mentor/mentee concept?

ANSWER: I think that is the best way in the world to learn. I see so many of you in this audience who have been my mentors. Avila College had, and I assume continues to have, a program of introducing young women into community service volunteer work, and assigning them to work with a skilled, experienced volunteer in the community. That is one of the best ways to learn. As the women in the work force explained, happiness with their co-workers was one of their most appreciated rewards. Volunteers often find it pleasant, and appreciate working with one another. That doesn’t mean there have to be only pleasant tasks and easily solved problems, but if there is good and helpful feedback from the mentor to the mentee, and encouragement enough, the pursuits will be continued.

QUESTION: Do you have any dreams for Kansas City in the voluntary field?

ANSWER: Yes, and I would like to hear the dreams of many of you in the audience. My dream would be for that public private partnership, the one we have tried so hard to effectively forge throughout the years, to become a reality. So many of society’s problems are so large and are not going to be solved simply, unilaterally, or uniquely just by one segment of our society. It is going to take that partnership, that give and take, that expansion of thinking, that relinquishing of some turf on all sides, and that committed determination to solve a problem by the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors willing to work together to solve the enormous societal needs. I would like to see that dream come true.

QUESTION: Expand your remarks on specific roles of the elderly in our society in the next 10 to 15 years.

ANSWER: There are some outstanding examples. For instance, St. Louis has done a very fine job computerizing a list of the elderly which is used in both the heat of summer and cold of winter to check on their well-being. It has become a model around the country. The Salvation Army in Kansas City has done a very fine job with its housing on the East Side, providing a building which can bring intergenerational families together. For the working parents, there is a grandmother close by to watch after the children when they come home from school. For the older person, there is the exuberance and lightheartedness of youth. For far too long our society has isolated its older people. The opportunity it provides for the elderly to fill useful roles is very healthy and very much needed.

QUESTION: Can’t corporations do more in the pre-retirement phase to introduce those who are about to retire into the possibilities of volunteer work?
ANSWER: Yes, and many of them are. Widely known are the programs of the Telephone Pioneers. This group of retired telephone employees has been very involved in programs for children. At Hallmark, retirees are involved in the Longfellow Elementary School and other projects. Retirees offer a pool of talent because of their time, their wisdom, and their understanding of human needs. I hope more and more corporations will see the opportunities these retirees offer.

QUESTION: How would you recommend someone going about finding a volunteer opportunity in the community?

ANSWER: I saw Ann Jacobson early, and her hand just shot up in the back of the room! She represents my first answer: through the Voluntary Action Center.

QUESTION: What about the new person in the community, who maybe wants to volunteer but is a little hesitant to do so, maybe feeling a little intimidated for whatever cause, real or perceived?

ANSWER: I think we see that a lot. I asked Roy Anderson to describe the single most critical problem in the Los Angeles area, and I thought he might list the illegal alien problem, the need for day-care, or the problems related to teenage pregnancy or drugs. To my surprise, he quickly answered that the biggest problem in the Los Angeles area is developing the new corps of leadership.

Anderson felt that he and his colleagues were nearing the end of the time of their heavily committed volunteer leadership service. Additionally, they were feeling the impact of women’s entry into the workplace – of women who heretofore had assumed leadership roles. And so he was very concerned with what would happen to the leadership of the symphony, the United Way, etc. Their single most important problem is developing the new corps of leadership. They don’t know today precisely who is, included in this new corps of leadership, and in such a large metropolitan area their problems of identification are compounded. But it’s there. In the newcomers, in the elderly, in the corporations.

This is a real issue in the Kansas City voluntary sector. How well are we reaching out to new people? Are we getting them involved? Are we making them feel free to get involved? The new person in the community will lose those feelings of intimidation when he or she is brought into the corps of leadership and given meaningful roles.

QUESTION: What kinds of tools are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the organizations that are operated and manned by volunteers?

ANSWER: Some not-for-profit organizations do a very fine job of evaluating effectiveness, others do not. Many feel it is very, very difficult if not impossible to evaluate effectiveness in not-for-profit endeavors. There are others who feel that the same standards that apply in the business world, without blinking an eye, can be applied in the volunteer world. There does not appear to be any unanimity of opinion on applying standards for judging effectiveness.

I believe that effectiveness can be measured. And not always by the bottom line. Unfortunately, we tend to look at that first. But what about the mission statement? Does the organization really have a good, clear mission statement of who it is and what it is they are trying to do? To hammer out a short, concise, and accurate one is very difficult. So it is not too surprising but unfortunate that many organizations can’t get their hands around a clear, focused
mission statement. What are the goals of the organization? And what are the objectives that have been put into place to achieve those goals? Does the organization have a strategic long range plan? If they know where they want to be in five years, are the tools in place to get them there?

Some organizations evaluate the effectiveness of their volunteers very well. And then the key question becomes, what do they do with the results of that evaluation? If the committee chairman is not doing a good job, is he or she moved to another position? Is there a good leadership training program to help those in leadership roles? Is appropriate action taken when an effective job is not being done?

QUESTION: Make the accurate observation of the Kansas City Tomorrow program.

ANSWER: Kansas City Tomorrow along with several other Leadership training programs has done an excellent job of identifying and preparing a number of young people. The challenge for this program and others is to effectively use that trained young talent. I believe greater linkage is needed between the training program and the programs that need these young people.

QUESTION: What are some examples of areas, particularly in the field of education, where the volunteer-staff relationship has worked well? One of the difficulties in voluntarism is the relationship between volunteer and staff.

ANSWER: There are some good examples of programs that are working well. In Washington, D.C., a Catholic high school requires students to complete a program of community service before graduation. That brings those who plan that program into day-to-day administrative contact with the professionals who run the school. I am sure there are some good programs in Kansas City.

QUESTION: What is being done to encourage our youth to enter the field of voluntarism?

ANSWER: There are many outstanding examples of good programs aimed at youth involvement. I am most familiar with United Way. Many cities will conduct a United Way annual campaign among their school children. Maybe just 10 cents is all they are invited to contribute, but the idea is to get them in the habit of contributing and then to be encouraged about where their money goes and what is accomplished by it.
ADELE C. HALL is one of Kansas City’s best-known civic leaders, universally respected for her tireless dedication to activities and institutions that better the quality of life.

She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Kansas City Association of Trusts and Foundations (vice president), the Salvation Army (vice president), Children’s Mercy Hospital, and the United Negro College Fund. She has served as president of such groups as the Central Governing Board of Children’s Mercy Hospital, the Heart of America United Way, the Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri, and the parents’ associations of both Pem Day and Sunset Hill schools.

On the national scene, Adele is currently serving as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the United Way of America, the largest volunteer organization in the country.

Adele was graduated in 1953 from the University of Nebraska, Phi Beta Kappa, majoring in English and elementary education. That year she married Donald J. Hall and moved to Kansas City, where her continued interest in children and education has changed the course of many organizations in Kansas City and beyond.

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MIDCONTINENT PERSPECTIVES was a lecture series sponsored by the Midwest Research Institute as a public service to the midcontinent region. Its purpose was to present new viewpoints on economic, political, social, and scientific issues that affect the Midwest and the nation.

Midcontinent Perspectives was financed by the Kimball Fund, named for Charles N. Kimball, President of MRI from 1950 to 1975, Chairman of its Board of Trustees from 1975 to 1979, and President Emeritus until his death in 1994. Initiated in 1970, the Fund has been supported by annual contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Today it is the primary source of endowment income for MRI. It provides “front-end” money to start high-quality projects that might generate future research contracts of importance. It also funds public-interest projects focusing on civic or regional matters of interest.

Initiated in 1974 and continuing until 1994, the sessions of the Midcontinent Perspectives were arranged and convened by Dr. Kimball at four- to six-week intervals. Attendance was by invitation, and the audience consisted of leaders in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The lectures, in monograph form, were later distributed to several thousand individuals and institutions throughout the country who were interested in MRI and in the topics addressed.

The Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, in cooperation with MRI, has reissued the Midcontinent Perspectives Lectures in electronic format in order to make the valuable information which they contain newly accessible and to honor the creator of the series, Dr. Charles N. Kimball.