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# We Remember...

***By Roman Borek
Ambassador Auditorium House Manager, 1974-87***

Herbert W. Armstrong deeply appreciated the world of the fine arts, whether it be the performing arts or the visual arts. Mr. Armstrong believed the creative gifts God gave to mankind, coupled with the Holy Spirit, could produce unimaginable beautiful works of art. With God’s inspiration, the human potential to create fine art through the various disciplines (architecture, music composition, dance, drama, literature, painting, photography poetry, and sculpture) had infinite possibilities.

Mr. Armstrong often said that if God did not call him into His service, he would have been a concert pianist. He was a great believer in great music. Music, to Mr. Armstrong, was an act of worship. He loved music for it nourished his soul. He said *music is the highest expression of the human spirit that is resident in our biological makeup*. Music is able to convey emotions that words, whether spoken or written, could even begin to do.

He was inspired by the soaring melodies of a symphony, the intricate structure of a fugue by Bach, the timeless beauty of a composition by Mozart, the passion of a Chopin nocturne. He said music produces a kind of pleasure that human beings cannot do without.

When I stayed with him at his residence, we would often spend a considerable amount of time in the living room where he played the exquisite rosewood Steinway grand piano. He especially loved *My Moonlight Madonna* (also called *Poem*) by Zdenko Firich and William Scotti. Lyrics were by Paul Francis Webster. Like John Logan, he believed *music is the medicine of the mind.*

Mr. Armstrong also had an appreciation for the visual arts. He especially enjoyed oil paintings created by the masters and had a keen eye for composition (line, texture, balance, background, foreground, perspective, color) and quality of design. I understand the oil paintings Mr. Armstrong purchased for the enjoyment and education of the Ambassador College community, appreciated ten times greater than their original purchase price. It proved to be a great investment for the Work, both artistic and financial.

Fine art is that moment in time when the hand, the head, and the heart of man come together. Mr. Armstrong personified this sentiment.

John Keats said it best: *A thing of beauty is a joy forever.* Mr. Armstrong loved the soaring columns of a well-proportioned architectural masterpiece, the majestic melodies of a symphony, the captivating prose of a Pulitzer Prize novelist, the creativity of the sculptor’s inner eye, the physical poetry of the human body in dance, the artist’s revelation of the human soul through painting.

Michelangelo said, *My soul can find no staircase to Heaven, unless it be through Earth’s loveliness.* Mr. Armstrong wanted to add to earth’s loveliness by promoting the fine arts on the Ambassador College campus. This was done in a grand manner for he believed this was a noble and high calling   to nurture the soul, promote beauty, and enrich the lives of the young Ambassadors.

The idyllic Ambassador College campus was voted, at least, five times the most beautiful campus in the United States. This was not accidental. Mr. Armstrong was a dynamic force in recognizing the importance of fine art in our lives. He had the courage and resolve to make a difference. Mahatma Gandhi said: *We must be the change we wish to see in the world.*

The Ambassador College campus is a garden of Eden with its sculptured lawns, manicured gardens, accented by stately trees, streams, fountains and statuary. There are so many fine art treasures to explore on the Pasadena campus.

As soon as finances permitted, Mr. Armstrong wanted to have a fine arts center on the Pasadena campus. The Fine Arts Hall was dedicated in March 1968. The hall features a David Wynne bust of Yehudi Menuhin, internationally renowned violinist, and a David Wynne bust of Sir Thomas Beechman, the highly gifted conductor of the Royal Philharmonic.

Sir David Wynne, knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, created other works of art on the Pasadena campus – the soaring egret fountain in front of the auditorium, the circling birds on the upper campus, and the mother swan protecting her cygnet (carved out of Italian carrara marble) on the lower campus.

Other examples of contemporary masterpieces on the campus are *Birds in Flight* by the American artist Rafe Afleck, which is featured on the exterior wall of the gymnasium, and in the Italian Gardens is a George Hall waterfall creation, affectionately called *Elephant Ears.*

Ambassador Auditorium, the architectural jewel and acoustically perfect concert hall, was a sanctuary for gifted artist of the performing and dramatic arts. For twenty years, the auditorium was a mecca where the finest artists in the world flourished in a grand manner.

Carlo Maria Guilini, Arthur Rubinstein, Luciano Pavaroti, Joan Sutherland, Vladimir Horowitz, General Omar Bradley, Yitzhak Rabin, Lionel Hampton, Kiri Te Kanawa, the Berlin Philharmonic, Aaron Copland.

Imagination and creativity will carry us to worlds that never were. And without it, we go nowhere. What a wondrous journey! Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was a true ambassador of the fine arts. His efforts have been translated into invaluable works of art, and it is at this juncture, he touched eternity.

July 2003