
Ann Barry and Bud Wolff

Setting the Foundation for Future Success

Interview held December 2006

This year, as Career Transition For Dancers celebrates its 22nd year, we look back on how much the organization has matured into adulthood. Celebrating some of the pioneers of CTFD — the essential people who helped lay a solid foundation for the future growth of this organization, we acknowledge the collective efforts of current Grants Administrator, and CTFD's first President and Administrative Director, Ann Barry and former Board Member, Sanford (Bud) Wolff. CTFD rejoices in the success and growth that the organization has experienced since its birth in 1985, and remembers the impact the efforts of this devoted couple have made on the lives of thousands of dancers, nationwide.

"What started as a union supported program is now a nationally recognized arts service organization" says Ann as she reflects on CTFD's evolution. The topic of career transition arose at an international conference in London in 1981. The issue was later brought to a national dance conclave at Lincoln Center, New York City, which recognized the problem that always existed but had never been addressed by the dance community.

All dancers eventually become aware that their careers will not last forever, and when faced with this eventuality many find themselves in a serious crisis.

The result of the conferences was to make people in the dance world realize "that there was a void that could be filled by supporting dancers during their transitions." Thus, it was the performing arts unions that decided to address this issue more proactively, and the Actors' Fund of America initiated a pilot program funded by the unions which counseled dancers in the process of transition. Ann served on the advisory board of this program and emphasized that "this was the Unions' way of giving back to its dancers."

As the program grew, Ann realized that changing the way the organization was structured would improve the long-term benefit to dancers.

At this point, Ann looked to her husband Bud, an experienced lawyer and union leader who

had served as Executive Director of AFTRA, and was now AGMA's National Executive Secretary.

"[CTFD] was truly driven by Ann Barry," said Bud, "she really pushed it." Ann recalls how "Bud always had an affinity for dancers," and since his work exposed him to the needs of all dancers, he was really responsive towards helping Ann. "I leaned on Bud since he was a lawyer... he was always there... and the guidance he provided - I couldn't have done without it." Ann and Bud worked together to establish CTFD's not-for-profit status, and since their goals for the organization truly mirrored each other, they were able to focus on bettering the organization and reaching out to as many dancers as possible.

"We shared the same views," says Ann, "that this was a program that was much needed and the unions could be of great help — which they were and still are."

Bud notes that some of their original concerns were "how do you make this attractive to contributors?" and more importantly, "how do you make it attractive to the people you're trying to help?" These are challenges Bud and Ann faced together, along with CTFD's other board members and volunteer leaders.

Bud and Ann both agreed on the importance of approaching issues within the organization with a personal touch.

"Personal relationships are instrumental in getting people to become involved," says Bud, "so that help becomes welcoming and not forbidding."

Thus, Ann's current role as Grants Administrator is essential to the organization. Her warmth and ability to connect with dancers is important towards keeping the organization personal. "She has terrific patience," Bud added. However, Ann's tremendous patience and reverence for dancers aren't the only things that she contributes to CTFD programs and services, her personal experience as a former dancer adds to the services she provides. Ann previously had a career dancing on Broadway and in films and television, and was able to work within the industry as

a stage manager when she made her transition. Since she had found a profession closely tied to her previous one and something she felt a great passion for, she realized that each transition is an individual process. "This," she adds, "is one of the reasons why our organization can be so responsive — we recognize the individuality of each dancer and the individuality of each dancer's transition process."



As CTFD moves into the future and realizes more and more opportunities for growth, the organization will always remain grateful for the foundation and original goals Ann and Bud set together. Ann and Bud hope that CTFD's fundamental philosophy of empowerment for dancers continues.

Throughout her years with CTFD Ann has witnessed how "dancers have 'found their voice' sooner than they used to... they are more aware and willing to accept that dance is not the be all and end all of their lives."

As an empowerment program, CTFD encourages dancers to take charge of their lives and to take charge of managing change. "We are here to help them understand," says Ann, "that they have the ability to take charge and do what is necessary." When asked about CTFD's role in the future as dancers become more proactive and independent, Ann states: "I think there will always be an element of concern as how to transfer the passion that one has for performing as a dancer to another career. Although people may be more able to identify what the challenge is, they may not have the tools or see right away how they're going to achieve their goal."

This is when dancers come to CTFD for the organization's guidance and support. And because of the hard work of Ann Barry and Bud Wolff along the organization's many supporters and advocates, dancers are able to continue through the transition process and create meaningful change for themselves.