



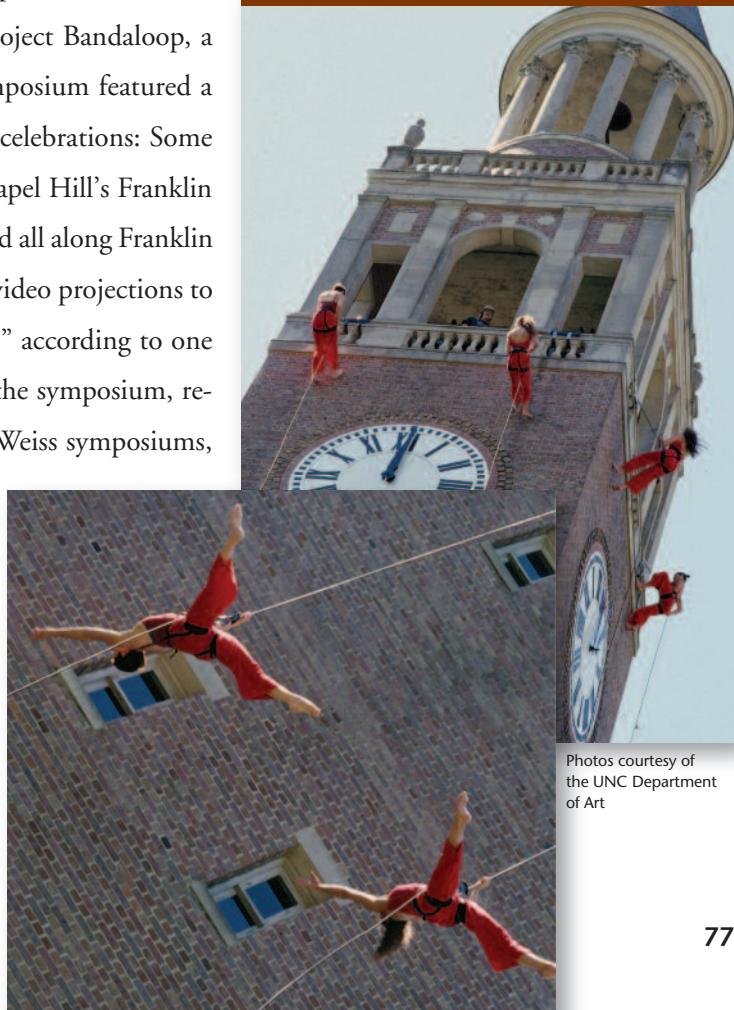
Creating a Lasting Legacy

The turn of the century found the Weisses and the Urban Livability Program both going strong. In the spring of 2000, UNC's Department of Art sponsored the truly memorable 2000 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium. The two-day extravaganza explored "Public Art: A Symposium for Artists and the Public," and it was kicked off by Project Bandaloop, a troupe of aerial dancers who rappelled down the Bell Tower. The symposium featured a daylong program of expert speakers as well as several public theatrical celebrations: Some of the more memorable pieces included a 100-performer history of Chapel Hill's Franklin Street involving circus arts, dance, stilt-walkers, and visual arts, performed all along Franklin Street; and a commission by Carolina alumnus David Solow that used video projections to turn the Hanes Art Center and Alumni Sculpture Garden "inside out," according to one UNC news release. Jim Hirschfield of the Art Department organized the symposium, recruiting many more University and community sponsors. As with all Weiss symposiums, the entire event was free to the public.¹

"What a spectacular thing it was, watching those dancers leap down the Bell Tower!" said Shirley, who was there with Charles to watch the event.

Also that spring, the Weiss Fellows produced "Work and Home: An Urban Livability Study of the University as Community," which used interviews with members of the University and surrounding areas about issues of urban livability, public transportation, and community.

Project Bandaloop kicked off the 2000 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium by rappelling down the UNC Bell Tower in a coordinated aerial dance. UNC's Department of Art sponsored the symposium, titled "Public Art: A Symposium for Artists and the Public."



Photos courtesy of the UNC Department of Art

Mary Santiago, the 2000-2001 Weiss Senior Fellow, studied public administration at UNC.



The 2000-2001 Weiss Fellows studied Southern Village, a planned community south of Chapel Hill, to determine whether the community had fulfilled the goals of its creators.



The Fellows publicized their findings in local newspapers and shared the findings with UNC's director of community relations.²

In October, the next class of Weiss Fellows began planning the 2000-2001 Weiss project: a case study of Southern Village, a “New Urbanist” planned community built just south of Chapel Hill in the mid-1990s. After hearing a presentation by the developer who built Southern Village, the Fellows embarked on a study that investigated whether the community’s design had fulfilled its goals of economic and social diversity and increased citizen involvement. The Fellows researched the history of planned communities, conducted a survey of Southern Village residents, analyzed street and sidewalk widths, and interviewed the principal of the local elementary school. Their study culminated in a public presentation that April 18, attended by many interested parties, including Charles and Shirley.³

By 2001, both Charles and Shirley entered their 80s; recognizing their accumulated wisdom and experience, in early 2001 Graduate School Dean Linda Dykstra invited the Weisses to serve on the Graduate Education Advancement Board, a group that helps generate support and funding for graduate education at the University.⁴ They agreed, and began offering their energy and expertise to UNC in yet another capacity.

Later that year, Charles and Shirley flew to San Francisco on one of their frequent opera trips. They were looking forward to hearing two performances at the San Francisco Opera, in particular a new Armenian opera they had tickets to see on that Tuesday, September 11.

But before Charles and Shirley could get to the opera, tragedy struck. Early in the morning of September 11, two hijacked airplanes struck the World Trade Center towers in New York

Classical Voice of North Carolina

In the spring of 2001, Charles and Shirley found themselves at the forefront of another good idea. While waiting to see a performance in the lobby of UNC’s Hill Hall, they began talking with several other music lovers as well as four local classical music critics. The music critics were recently unemployed due to decisions at local newspapers to stop reviewing local classical music performances, and someone among the group asked what the writers planned to do to fill the void. After the initial moments of laughter, Charles and Shirley were among the first to urge the writers to create an online non-profit classical music journal targeted to the Triangle area. Charles and Shirley were

enthusiastic that such a model could work, and they even contributed start-up funds to the subsequent new organization. Several months later, Classical Voice of North Carolina was up and running in time to review music for the 2001-2002 season; it still operates today as a voice of serious commentary on the arts in the Triangle region of North Carolina.

“It was neither the first nor the last time that the Weisses—one of our state’s leading philanthropic couples in classical music—had without fanfare come to the aid of the performing arts through financial support and personal service,” wrote one of the group’s original music critics afterward.⁵

City; a third plane crashed into the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C.; and fourth crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

"When we found out what had happened, we immediately called Shirley's sister Lillian in New York," Charles remembered. "Lillian lived on West 9th Street in an 11th-floor apartment, and she could see the towers clearly from her window."

Fortunately, Lillian was unharmed. Charles and Shirley were anxious to return home as soon as possible, but planes were grounded across the country. The Weisses spent three days at the San Francisco Airport Marriott waiting for the airport to reopen. When they finally made it home on September 16, they breathed a sigh of relief.

Though they completed most of their travels as planned that year, the new security measures in place at airports around the country—combined with their increasing mobility difficulties—sounded a warning note for the Weisses that air travel would no longer be as easy as it once was.⁶

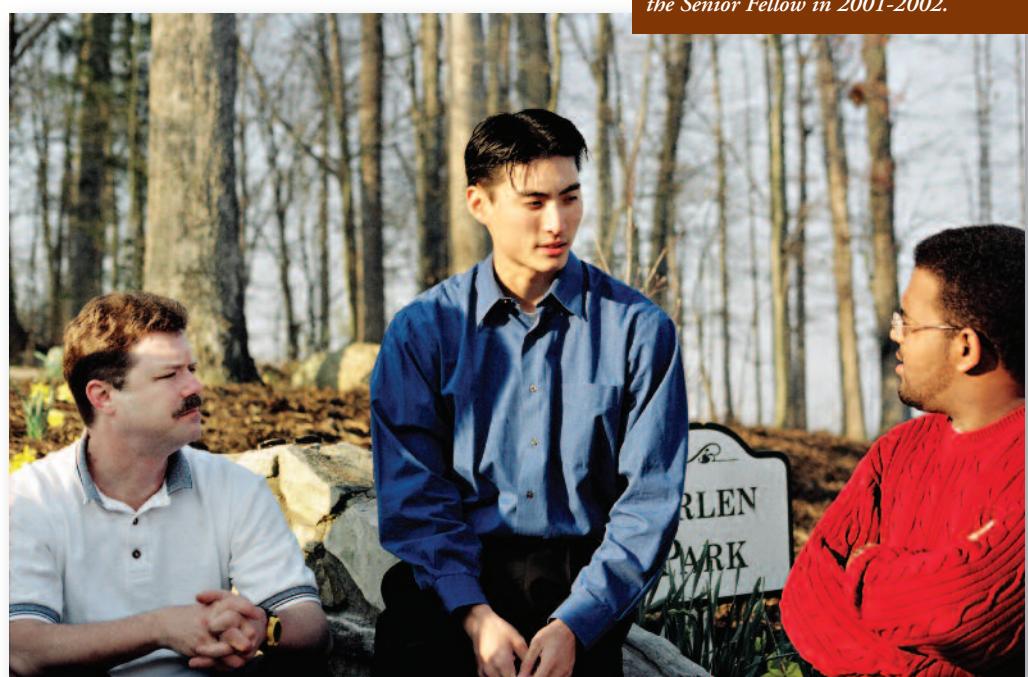
Back in Chapel Hill, on the morning of September 11, Senior Weiss Fellow Michael Woolley had just arrived at The Graduate School for a meeting with Hoeflich and several board members to begin planning the 10th anniversary Weiss Symposium, when he heard about the terrorist attacks.

"We all continued with our meeting that day anyway, although I remember little of what was discussed," Woolley recalled. "But clearly the events of that day had a significant influence on our planning of the symposium."⁷

The 2002 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium addressed "Challenges for Cities in a Time of Change" and considered the potential impact of future terrorism and other challenges on urban livability in America. Joseph Riley—mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, and longtime friend of Charles and Shirley—addressed the crowd gathered at the Carolina Inn that April 5 as keynote speaker and McKissick Visiting Scholar. The next day saw presentations from four experts on the livability and safety of American cities; the speakers covered topics such as how to protect citizens from biological



In 2001, Shirley and Charles began serving on the Graduate Education Advancement Board, a group that helps generate support and funding for graduate education at UNC.



Weiss Fellows Michael Woolley, Kenneth Ho, and Conaway Haskins in 2000. Michael Woolley, left, went on to become the Senior Fellow in 2001-2002.



At the 2002 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium, "Challenges for Cities in a Time of Change," Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston, South Carolina, addressed those gathered as the keynote speaker and McKissick Visiting Scholar.

warfare and other attacks, and how to move populations out of cities in times of crisis.⁸

"The 2002 symposium was really a good example of how relevant urban livability issues continue to be, even in the midst of a changing world," said Hoeflich. "After the events of September 11 happened in New York—arguably the most emblematic city in America—we couldn't imagine addressing any other topic at the symposium that year."⁹

In the spring of 2002, The Graduate School also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Weiss Urban Livability Fellowship with a special presentation to Charles and Shirley. The 2001-2002 Fellows had researched the history of the Urban Livability Program, interviewing past Fellows and the Weisses themselves to create a multi-media presentation, "A Decade and Counting: The Weiss Urban Livability Fellowship."¹⁰

Though Charles and Shirley loved to travel, by 2002 they were taking a hard look at their travel habits in the context of their increasing mobility challenges and the growing difficulties of travel. Though they had already discontinued several opera subscriptions—the Los Angeles Opera and San Diego Operas in 1998; the Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2001; and the Washington Opera in 2002—they still maintained their subscription at the Metropolitan and New York City Operas.

"By that time we had such good seats at the Metropolitan Opera—front row, just to the right of the conductor—that we almost couldn't bear to let go of them," Charles explained.¹¹

And so as fall of 2002 approached, Charles and Shirley made plans to attend operas in New York City well into December. Their trip to New York scheduled for December 5-10 included four performances at the Metropolitan Opera.

But nature had other plans. As Charles and Shirley were completing their morning chores on December 4, a freezing rain was forecast for the afternoon and evening. When Charles walked outside that afternoon to drive the half-mile to their neighborhood drug store, he found that the ice coating the car was already too thick to scrape off.

"Each drop of rain that was now falling was freezing on contact with a surface," Charles said later. "The 'mother of all ice storms' had started."¹²

With freezing rain that fell for two days, the storm knocked out power for days in nearly



Charles and Shirley with 2001-2002 Weiss Fellows at the 2002 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium

The ice storm of 2002 shut down large parts of North Carolina and signaled to Charles and Shirley that they needed to scale back their travels.

Photo courtesy of Peter White



Charles and Shirley with the 2002-2003 Weiss Fellows

all parts of Chapel Hill and central North Carolina, setting new records for power outages, traffic accidents, school closings, and fatalities from an extreme weather event. Many communities were left paralyzed for days, some for over a week.¹³

Miraculously, though, the Weisses' apartment on Hamilton Road was one of the few places that did not lose power. Aside from not being able to drive on the local streets for two days and missing their flight to New York, Charles and Shirley suffered no ill effects from being ice-bound. And their housebound interlude gave them a unique opportunity to reflect on their travel habits.¹⁴

"We felt lucky—not only that we didn't lose power, but that we hadn't gotten ice-bound somewhere else, like New York," Charles said. "We were getting to where we just couldn't move around as well as we used to be able to. Getting ice-bound *away* from home at our ages could have been very unpleasant."¹⁵

After talking it over, Shirley and Charles both agreed: Though it grieved them to do it, it was time to give up their opera subscriptions in New York.

"We've kept a record of how many operas we've actually attended," Shirley said a few weeks later during an interview at UNC. "It turns out the number of different operas we've seen is something over 400, and the actual number of performances is way over 800."¹⁶

Though she and Charles finished out their spring opera schedule as planned that year, it was with somewhat heavy hearts that they informed the Metropolitan and New York City Operas that they would not be subscribing again in the fall.

Though disappointed to let go of their opera subscriptions, the Weisses were looking forward with excitement to a new phase in their lives together. After carefully considering their retirement community options, both Charles and Shirley agreed that Carol

Shirley, right, speaks with Associate Dean Sandra Hoeflich, September 2003.



Charles, right, speaks with Donald Fox, left, a colleague and member of the Urban Livability Program's faculty advisory board, while Shirley speaks with Dean Linda Dykstra, September 2003.



Woods Retirement Community in Chapel Hill was the best fit for them. Many University faculty had retired to Carol Woods, and the facility had an air of learning about it. After four years on the waiting list, in November 2002 they had finally come near enough to the top of the list to begin talking with the staff about what kind of apartment they would like.

Then in April 2003, Charles and Shirley got a call: There was a two-bedroom apartment available. On April 14, Charles and Shirley signed the contract for the apartment and started planning their move to Carol Woods.¹⁷

The next few months were a whirlwind. After signing the papers, Charles and Shirley packed their bags for their annual Spoleto Festival USA trip and drove to Charleston for three weeks in May and June. Then it was back to Chapel Hill, where they got the keys to their new apartment. Four days later, they flew to Santa Fe for three weeks to attend the Santa Fe Opera Festival and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, where they served on the national council and the board of trustees, respectively.¹⁸

Flying back home on August 5, they knew it was time to get serious about packing up their Glen Lennox apartment.

"Accumulations and collections of 42 years don't disappear quickly," Charles said. "We had been disposing of our extensive libraries since 1998, but the sight of bare wall or floor was still elusive!"¹⁹

The Weisses began living at Carol Woods on August 26. But it took many carloads to the new apartment before they handed in their keys to the Glen Lennox management early in October, marking the end of their 47 years in Glen Lennox and 42 years at 155 Hamilton Road.

Happily, Shirley and Charles soon felt right at home at Carol Woods. One of Charles' former

colleagues from the Chapel Hill Planning Board had moved in just after the facility opened, and he was among the first residents to welcome them when they moved in that August.

"It may sound very institutional, but our new apartment has proven to be very comfortable," Charles wrote to friends at the time. "The transition to a new daily lifestyle has been very easy for us, since we simply moved across town and found many of our University colleagues in residence at Carol Woods."²⁰

Shirley and Charles both had received many awards and recognitions over the years—



Shirley received UNC's Distinguished Alumna Award on October 12, 2003, University Day. Here, she and Charles smile after the awards ceremony, Shirley wearing her dark blue academic robes from Duke University and Charles wearing his yellow robes from the Johns Hopkins University.

even co-winning the AAUP's 1992 Tacey Award for outstanding service to a conference and the 2000 Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival's Gifford Phillips Award. Still, it was with delighted surprise that Shirley had opened and read a letter from UNC Chancellor James Moeser the week after the December 2002 ice storm.

"Dear Shirley," the letter read, "It is my pleasure to inform you that the Faculty and the Trustees of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have authorized the awarding to you of the Distinguished Alumna Award at exercises, which will be conducted on University Day, Sunday, October 12, 2003."²¹

Presented annually, the Distinguished Alumna and Alumnus Awards are among the top honors given by UNC.²² And so it was that six days after turning in their key to Glen Lennox, Charles and Shirley donned their academic robes and headed to Hill Hall, where the ceremony took place.

"I call this the *pièce de résistance!*" laughed Shirley. "I never expected anything like this—as faculty marshal, I used to lead the parade at University Day, and I never dreamed at that time that I'd ever be on the platform!"²³

While Charles and Shirley's lives had been changing, the Urban Livability Program was going strong. The 2002-2003 Weiss Fellows had a very successful year: Focusing on transportation issues in urban settings, the Fellows produced a guide to bikeways in Chapel Hill and the surrounding area. In addition to a map of local bikeways, the pamphlet provided an overview of bike laws and safety tips for cyclists and drivers. The Fellows distributed 3,000 copies of the pamphlet to 13 area locations as well as local apartment complexes. And that spring, the Fellows coordinated a bicycle helmet collection at local bike stores; they then donated the helmets to the Chapel Hill Police Department for a local bike education program for children.²⁴ The following year, the 2003-2004 Weiss Fellows explored the unique livability of the Chapel Hill area, focusing on unusual and little-known gems in the area. After interviewing community members and conducting research in the North Carolina Collection at UNC's Wilson Library, the Fellows created a website titled "Chapel Hill and Carrboro: A Unique Place to Live," which focused on the history, landmarks, nature, and lifestyles of the area.²⁵

The Urban Livability Program had proven quite successful over the years. But as costs for all program elements—including tuition and stipends—continued to rise, in 2004 it became necessary to review the program to ensure its long-term viability. Sitting down to discuss the matter with Dean Linda Dykstra and Associate Dean Sandra Hoeflich, Charles



*Charles and Shirley with the
2003-2004 Weiss Fellows*



Charles and Shirley's commemorative brick in Charleston, South Carolina, home of Spoleto Festival USA, sits in King Street.

Charles and Shirley attended their last Spoleto Festival opening ceremony in 2004. The Weisses were dedicated supporters of Spoleto Festival USA, attending every festival but one from 1977 to 2004. They always made sure to sit in the front row of the opening ceremonies, braving the Charleston heat to show their support.



and Shirley decided to maintain the fellowship program and trim a few of the other elements, such as the visiting scholar position, allowing for the continuation of the program. Charles and Shirley also renewed their financial commitment to the Weiss Urban Livability Program, and Dykstra renewed The Graduate School's commitment to continue providing matching financial support wherever possible.²⁶

"The Weisses clearly wanted to maintain the fellowships as the core of the program," remembered Dykstra. The fellowships thus remained a vital scholarly opportunity for graduate students.

In the spring of 2004, Charles was 85 years old and Shirley 83. With their ages advancing, their once-frequent travels had been slowing for some time. As they climbed into their car that May to make the five-hour drive to Charleston for Spoleto Festival USA, both suspected that this would likely be the last time they made the trip.

"We made it to every Spoleto Festival except one from 1977 to 2004," said Charles proudly. "But finally the exigencies of travel became too much for us. It was a lot easier to stay home and bring the music to us!"²⁷

At Spoleto that last year, Charles and Shirley sat in the front row of the opening ceremony, as they had for so many years before. Wanting to recognize the Weisses' commitment to the festival and to the arts in general, Mayor Joe Riley asked them to stand. The crowd cheered as they did so.²⁸

Though the 2004 Spoleto Festival was their last festival trip, it wasn't long before



Photos courtesy of Frances Ehni

The Opera Man

As part of the Carol Woods festivals and throughout the year, Charles helps coordinate opera screenings at Carol Woods. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of opera and in part from his own DVD collection, Charles and fellow opera buff David Sices screen recordings of opera performances on the big screen in the Carol Woods assembly hall on the last Friday of every month. "He's the Opera Man!" said Shirley proudly.²⁹

Charles and Shirley both helped form a new committee at Carol Woods dedicated to bringing performers to Carol Woods during the summer months. The Carol Woods Summer Festival kicked off in 2005, bringing musicians and performing artists to Carol Woods three nights a week from June through August. In December, Shirley and Charles helped start a Winter Festival as well; it now runs for 10 days every December.³⁰

As it matured, the Weiss Urban Livability Program continued drawing excellent graduate students to UNC. Each year the Fellows organized seminars with speakers who matched their various interests and also exposed them to new ideas and different disciplinary perspectives. During their twice-monthly meetings, they engaged in interdisciplinary dialogue and shared what they learned in their own fields with one another. In the spirit of the Weisses' generosity, the Fellows continued giving back to their community, creating service projects each year that contributed to the livability and vitality of the University campus and its surrounding communities.

In 2004-2005, the Weiss Fellows worked with the Orange County Habitat for Humanity to develop a site plan for a neighborhood park in northern Chapel Hill. After gathering input from the neighborhood's future residents, the Fellows developed a plan for a park that would include a playground, a picnic area, and landscaping and would contribute to the neighborhood's short- and long-term vitality. And in 2005-2006, the Weiss Fellows explored home energy efficiency, with a focus on how the issue affects low-income households. They created a final report describing their findings and suggesting a future research study.³¹

By 2005, Charles and Shirley had slowed their travels to the local Chapel Hill area. Their generosity, however, had not waned. In 2005, UNC's School of Public Health³² dedicated its new Michael Hooker Research Center, which featured the Weiss-Kuenzler-Wetzel Environmental Sciences Laboratory. Believing firmly in the ability of research to help further public health, Charles and Shirley gave generously toward establishing the new laboratory. They chose to name the laboratory after the first three



Charles and Shirley with the 2004-2005 Weiss Fellows



Weiss Fellows Crystal Lamb, Alexis Silver, and Lindsey Hirschfeld at the 2004-2005 Weiss Fellows welcome reception, September 2004



Charles and Shirley with the 2005-2006 Weiss Fellows



Above: Shirley and Charles with the 2006-2007 Weiss Fellows

Below: Weiss Fellow Michael Schwartz speaks with faculty advisory board member Don Fox, August 2006.



The 2007-2008 Weiss Fellows organized a campus-wide seminar in 2008 to mark the 15th anniversary of the Weiss Urban Livability Program. Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston, South Carolina, center, returned to UNC as the seminar's keynote speaker.

limnologists to serve on UNC's faculty: Charles, UNC's first limnologist; the late Edward Kuenzler, the second; and the late Robert Wetzel, the third. All three greatly influenced the field, and with the Weisses' generosity and naming of the laboratory, the three limnologists' names will be connected with work conducted there far into the future.³³

Following in the Weisses' spirit of giving back, the 2006-2007 Weiss Fellows performed a series of community projects. Not only did they help the local Blue Urban Bikes bicycle sharing program increase its reach to historically

underserved populations, but they also helped protect areas around Chapel Hill's Bolin Creek from invasive species, volunteered at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, and helped set up and organize a job fair through Chapel Hill's Blue Ribbon Mentor-Advocate Program.³⁴

The 2007-2008 class of Weiss Fellows followed in the same vein, tackling three discrete service projects. With varied interests in the group, the Fellows divided into three groups, and each led a project throughout the year. The first group organized donations for an arriving family of refugees from Burma. The second group assisted students at the School of Law helping to support a research project into the effects of the 287(g) program in North Carolina, which deputizes local law enforcement officers to act as immigration officers in the course of their daily activities; this group also volunteered at a conference in April to further discuss immigration policies. The third group focused on local community service: They cooked food for the local homeless shelter, volunteered at the Durham Food Bank



warehouse, and volunteered at Earth Action Day for the Town of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department.³⁵

That spring of 2007 also marked the 15th anniversary of the Weiss Urban Livability Program. To help mark the event, Charleston Mayor Joe Riley returned to UNC as keynote speaker at a campus-wide seminar celebrating the 15th anniversary. Mayor Riley, the longest serving mayor of any U.S. city at that time, shared how Charleston had overcome the challenges of urban decay to become one of the most beautiful and livable cities in America. His insights and experiences with the economic, political, financial, and logistical challenges of this planning and development feat, and the resulting increases in quality of life for Charleston citizens, informed and impressed the large audience in attendance. Charles and Shirley were, as always, delighted to see Mayor Riley, whom they had visited every year during their trips to Charleston for the Spoleto Festival.³⁶

By 2007, many people in the community thought it was high time that the Weisses were recognized for their legacy of philanthropy. In the fall of 2007, Charles and Shirley were surprised to receive awards and recognitions for their philanthropy three months in a row. In September 2007, the Weisses received word that Classical Voice of North Carolina—the online arts journal they had helped found six years earlier—wanted to honor the two of them with the Bella Voce Service to the Arts Award.³⁷ Then in October, the

Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston, South Carolina, on Charles and Shirley Weiss

I got to know Charles and Shirley soon after they began coming to Charleston for Spoleto Festival USA in 1977. Every year during their stay here, Charles and Shirley would come see me to talk about what had been going on in the city for the last year. Shirley would often teach about Charleston in her planning classes, about issues we were dealing with, and they subscribed to the Charleston newspaper so they could keep informed about our city redevelopment initiatives. So we would meet every spring, and they would have their list of questions about what was going on and what I was doing. I considered my visit with Charles and Shirley each spring as one of my Spoleto Festival events, and I looked forward to it.

That's how we became friends. And they were just two of the loveliest people: so in love with each other, and so kind, supportive of, and proud of each other. It was joyful to be in their presence. Even though I would just see them once a year—except for the few times when I gave a lecture at Chapel Hill—



Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston, South Carolina, shared how Charleston had overcome the challenges of urban decay in his keynote address at the 15th anniversary celebration of the Weiss Urban Livability Program.



Charles and Shirley visit with their longtime friend Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston, South Carolina, during his visit to UNC in 2008.

we kind of got to be like old friends. It could be a year since we'd spoken, but we just started up again almost in mid-sentence.

And so until 2005, the first year that they couldn't come, they were part of Spoleto. They would come to the opening ceremony here and sit in the front row. For me, that was like the first sign of spring, or flowers blooming. You knew that Spoleto had begun when you saw Charles and Shirley in the front row.

I admire them very much, and we've shared so many common interests, and they were so delightful—just really two of the nicest people I've ever known.³⁸



In September 2007, the Classical Voice of North Carolina honored Charles and Shirley with the Bella Voce Service to the Arts Award.



*Above: The 2008-2009 Weiss Fellows
Right: Graduate School Dean Steve Matson speaks to the incoming class of Weiss Fellows, August 2008.*



Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle—to which Charles and Shirley had been contributing since 1994—honored the Weises with an award of recognition for their support.³⁹ Finally, in November, the Triangle chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals honored Charles and Shirley with their Philanthropist of the Year award.⁴⁰

“It was a thrill to sit with Charles and Shirley at the awards luncheon and experience their utter selfless humility as they accepted this honor,” said UNC’s Priscilla Bratcher, who had nominated Charles and Shirley for Philanthropist of the Year. “The Weises have been true philanthropists, giving to causes that are meaningful in their lives, and wishing absolutely nothing in return.”⁴¹

By this time, Charles and Shirley had settled into a routine at Carol Woods, where they had quickly become known as “the Doctors Weiss.” Though they missed traveling, both enjoyed helping put on the Summer and Winter Festivals as well as taking the Carol Woods

bus to local music performances as they were able.

Shirley, however, was experiencing progressing health difficulties. Osteoporosis, which robs the bones of minerals, proteins, and strength, had plagued her for many years and was now seriously limiting her mobility. Both Charles and Shirley grew thankful for the excellent health center provided at Carol Woods.

As the 2008-2009 class of Weiss Urban Livability Fellows began meeting in the fall of 2008, they shared how inspiring they found Charles and Shirley’s lives and stories. Realizing that both Shirley and Charles were growing older,

The 2009-2010 Weiss Fellows



Kari Kozlowski describes her research interests.



Charles and Shirley greet the 2009-2010 Weiss Fellows, September 2009; Graduate School Dean Steve Matson listens.



The 2010 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium addressed “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Community Activism through Engaged Scholarship.” Left: Local developer and neighborhood preservation advocate Gary Kueber spoke at the 2010 Weiss Urban Livability Symposium.



and wanting to preserve some of their stories for future generations, the Fellows began an oral history that would tell the Weisses' stories and record the history of the Weiss Urban Livability Program.⁴²

The following year, the 2009-2010 Weiss Fellows collaboratively developed a symposium that they could present to both the University and Chapel Hill communities. The fellows brought together a group of University scholars and community professionals to discuss social, economic, and environmental issues of significance to North Carolina. The speakers discussed how they engaged with those issues to solve problems in their communities and how they built relationships between academia and local communities to effect positive change and foster social justice. Though Shirley's mobility limitations kept her and Charles from attending, they cheered the symposium on from Carol Woods. Both were thrilled to hear how the Fellows were engaging the wider University community in such critical urban livability issues. The Weiss Urban Livability Program was truly doing what they had envisioned so many years before: helping students to grapple with urban livability issues in ways that positively impact their communities.⁴³

In late August 2010, Charles and Shirley joined the Carol Woods festival committee in toasting another successful Summer Festival season at Carol Woods. Charles brought Shirley to the celebration in a walking chair from her room in the Carol Woods health center, where she had been staying for several days. After enjoying the dinner—Shirley even had a glass of wine, her first in many years—Charles helped Shirley back to her room in the health center before returning to their apartment for the evening.

When he came back to the health center the next morning, however, Shirley's health was declining. Charles sat by Shirley's side and held her hand as she passed away, just after noon on August 31, 2010. She was 89 years old.⁴⁴

Shirley's memorial service was held on September 25 at Carol Woods. It was attended by friends from far and wide who remembered her vibrant life, her pioneering spirit, her quick intellect, her generosity, her bravery, her kindness, her love of music and the arts, and her love for Charles.

Near the end of the memorial service, Charles rose to speak. He and Shirley had attended countless musical performances together during their 68 years of marriage—many of them at Memorial Hall and Hill Hall on the UNC campus. Though Shirley would no longer be able to join him, Charles announced his plans to honor Shirley's memory through the Carol Woods Shirley F. Weiss Memorial Concert Series. Charles would provide tickets and transportation for up to 28 Carol Woods residents—the capacity of Carol Woods' largest bus—to attend 10 concerts at UNC from October through April.



"Shirley was one of the most caring people I have ever known. She was beautiful, she was smart, she was generous. We all loved her."

—May Daniels, *longtime friend of Charles and Shirley*⁴⁷

"Shirley took us to conferences, of course, to present papers and to meet other people in the field. Everybody in the field knew Shirley Weiss, so it was great to be introduced by Shirley. But she would also make sure that you knew where the best restaurants were in that city—anywhere in the United States. She would always insist, 'We need to go to this restaurant, you need to know about that.' And she was the most loyal, dedicated advocate for her mentees. I didn't realize this until after I was a colleague on the faculty, but she went to bat for her mentees and for people she didn't have to—fought for them tooth and nail in dissertation defenses or comprehensive exams. She was a very, very loyal friend, a great, great lady."

—Ed Kaiser, *Professor, UNC Department of City and Regional Planning*⁴⁸

"Shirley was always particularly sensitive to the Weiss Fellows' needs. She connected with all of them on a very personal level. Every year the Fellows have reported that their interactions with both Shirley and Charles were among the most valuable aspects of the fellowship experience."

—Sandra Hoeflich, *Associate Dean, The Graduate School at UNC*⁴⁹

Friends Remember Shirley

"Shirley Weiss was part of my life for almost 50 years. She was a friend, she was a colleague, she was a mentor, she was a teacher. She was the first faculty person I met when I came back to Carolina for my master's degree. She taught my first land-use course in my master's degree program. She supported my doctoral field studies in Reston and Columbia with a grant from her New Towns research project. We served on a lot of committees together, and we had faculty offices just down the hall from each other for many years. I will miss her very much."

—David Godschalk, *Professor Emeritus, UNC Department of City and Regional Planning*⁴⁵

"Talking with Shirley about performances she had witnessed was like experiencing the event with her all over again. Her eyes twinkled as she used just the right word to describe the power, the delicacy, the technical challenge, or the emotion of a performance. As we sometimes say in the world of the arts, 'She got it.'"

—Priscilla Bratcher, *former Director of Development, UNC Office of the Executive Director for the Arts*⁴⁶

"This will be a memorial to Shirley and her love of music," said Charles.⁵⁰

As the Weiss Urban Livability Fellowship neared its 20th anniversary, Charles continued to be involved with the Fellows and the life of the Weiss Program: meeting with the Fellows and sharing insights and experiences, providing them with copies of newly published books and articles on urban issues, and continuing to cheer on their work through the Weiss Program and beyond.

That fall, the 2010-2011 Weiss Urban Livability Fellows began their project with an awareness of the hardships that people in urban areas were undergoing as a result of the ongoing economic recession that had begun in 2008. Wanting to better understand how economic recession was impacting the local community and ways that different urban groups were dealing with economic hardship, each Fellow interviewed a representative of an urban group to learn about their perspectives and challenges.⁵¹

The Weiss Fellows in 2011-2012 also began their project wanting to learn more about their local community. "We wanted to be involved in a project that would connect us with the area, teach us about it, and allow us to have a lasting impact," explained Senior Fellow Caitlin Rubitschun. After connecting with SEEDS (South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces)—a Durham non-profit that engages with the surrounding urban community through gardens and gardening initiatives—the Fellows took on the project of building and stocking a chicken coop for SEEDS, providing them with chickens as well as educational materials for teaching children about raising chickens. The project allowed the Fellows to engage in a project beyond the academic year, gave SEEDS a supply of eggs to sell at the farmer's market, and enabled SEEDS to teach the local community about another aspect of urban farming.⁵²

"I'm so proud of what Shirley and I have accomplished with the Fellowship," Charles said as he reviewed their life together. "It's one of the most important things we've done. It's been just wonderful to watch it grow, and to see young people spending time together and learning from one another."⁵³

In 2012, the Weiss Urban Livability Program began its 20th year of fostering creative



Charles with the 2010-2011 Fellows



Charles with the 2011-2012 Fellows



Thaddeus Guldbrandsen, 1999-2000
Weiss Fellow, serves as vice provost
for research and engagement at
Plymouth State University.

interdisciplinary dialogue about urban livability issues. Since its inception, The Weiss Program has given Weiss Fellows a unique learning opportunity that has prepared them for future success. Thaddeus Guldbrandsen vice provost of research and engagement at Plymouth State University, was a Weiss Fellow in 1999-2000. He recounted:

"As I reflect on my time as a fellow, I can see the presence of all of the ingredients of my current career: interdisciplinary collaboration, creative problem solving, and community engaged scholarship. Charles and Shirley Weiss were an inspiration for me personally, and I truly benefited by collaborating with talented, community-minded peers from diverse backgrounds and departments across UNC. We studied and debated the important social, economic, and environmental issues of our time. We organized seminars and symposia. We worked together on meaningful projects that still make me proud. During my career as a faculty member and director of community-engaged research centers at the University of New Hampshire and Plymouth State University, I have continued to benefit from and further develop the knowledge and skills I encountered in The Graduate School at UNC over a decade ago. Now, as I embark on the next phase of my career, I find my thoughts returning once again to the things I learned at UNC and the innovative Weiss Urban Livability Program, which remains as relevant and inspiring as ever."⁵⁴

The Weiss Urban Livability Program blended perfectly Charles' and Shirley's interests and passions. Through the skilled stewardship of The Graduate School, this unique interdisciplinary program stands as a legacy to Charles' and Shirley's lifelong love of cities and their commitment to giving back to their communities. The idea that began on an airplane napkin has become a leading edge in the quest for greater urban livability. Through their tremendous generosity, Charles and Shirley Weiss created a groundbreaking program that will continue to mentor and inspire graduate students well into the future.

Weiss Fellows in Their Own Words

"The Weiss fellowship has been one of the best parts of my graduate school experience. The ability to interact with other graduate students in different fields has encouraged me to look at issues that I would never before have considered. This fellowship has had a lasting impact on how I think about cities and our relationship with them."

—Caitlin Rubitschun, 2011-2012 Weiss Senior Fellow⁵⁵

"The Weiss Fellowship was an opportunity which we have too few of during our intensive graduate programs—an opportunity to interact with people from a wide variety of disciplines around a common issue. The mix of interests represented among the group was indicative of the challenges we face in order to make our urban areas more livable. We need perspectives from

sociology, geography, social work, planning, religious studies, environmental sciences, and many more to address the cultural, social, economic, environmental, and spiritual needs of cities.

"The experience has helped me to think about urban places relationally. For example, even the finest technological solutions are not enough if they do not address cultural and social needs and norms. Being a Weiss Fellow has helped me shape my research around similar issues, as I seek to understand how a technology—in my case the development of electricity in North Carolina—is entangled with a number of cultural, social, economic, and geographic issues, all of which combine to make a place more or less livable."

—Conor Harrison, 2010-2011 Weiss Fellow⁵⁶