A TRIBUTE TO
JOHN E. (JACK) FOBES

Jack Fobes was one of those rare individuals who touched people on many different levels. He did so through his commitment, compassion, administrative abilities, and dedication to UNESCO, the United Nations, and making the world a better place for all.

I first met Jack in 1975. It was at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. I was there to receive a briefing prior to undertaking an advisory mission to New Zealand for the organization. While I was in Paris, I had arranged to meet with Guy Métraux, editor of UNESCO's *Cultures*, to discuss a paper of mine - Towards a New World Order: The Age of Culture - he had accepted for publication. As it turned out, Guy was a close friend of Jack's - a friend who did as much to advance UNESCO's scholarly interests as Jack did to advance its administrative and developmental interests.

You can imagine how thrilled I was when Guy informed me that the Deputy Director General of UNESCO - Jack Fobes - had asked to meet with me when I was in Paris. He went on to say that Jack had ordered a special printing of my paper for distribution to delegates at the *Round Table on Cultural and Intellectual Cooperation and the New International Economic Order* planned for 1976. In retrospect, this confirmation by Jack of my writing on the subject of culture was a defining feature in my life. It convinced me to spend the rest of my life working to broaden and deepen understanding of culture and cultures in general and the role they are capable of playing in the world of the future in particular.

Following our meeting in Paris, Jack and I stayed in touch on a number of issues. However, I did not see Jack again until 1980, when we were asked to attend a series of meetings in Durango and Mexico City on *The Future of the Past: Historical Identity and Permanence and Change* organized by Jack's friend, Magda Cordell McHale. Since the meetings extended over many days, I had the opportunity to get to know Jack and his charming wife Hazel on a more personal basis, as well as to become more acquainted with Jack's formidable talents and accomplishments. I will always remember how impressed I was with Jack's humanity, humility, and considerable administrative capabilities. As chair of many of the sessions, he demonstrated a remarkable capacity to guide and steer the discussion. He knew exactly how long and how hard to push the delegates, as well as when it was time to take a rest and "fluff the pillow" as he liked to call it.

Jack and I stayed in touch following our get together in Durango and Mexico City on a number of matters of mutual interest and concern. He was particularly helpful to me when I started the World Culture Project to

commemorate the World Decade for Cultural Development in 1989, acting as an advisor to the Project. It was at this time that I became aware of the fact that Jack was not only well-known in the cultural community, but also in the futures' and political communities. In addition to his numerous others skills and abilities - skills and abilities that made it possible for him to accomplish an enormous amount without ruffling many if any feathers - Jack possessed an incredible capacity for far-sightedness and vision. He understood very well the need for new thinking and new ideas with respect to international affairs, multinational relations, the world of the future, and especially the role all the diverse cultures and peoples of the world and civil society could play in this.

When the United States pulled out of UNESCO, Jack was deeply hurt. While most people would throw up their hands and lament the fact that little or nothing could be done about it, Jack immediately started a powerful movement to push for the return of the United States to UNESCO. He did so by creating Americans for the Universality of UNESCO, now Americans for UNESCO. It is a cause that Jack worked on tirelessly for two decades. While it is largely conjecture on my part, I do not believe the United States would be a member of UNESCO today if it hadn't been for Jack's persistent efforts in this regard.

When I think about Jack's contributions to people and countries in all parts of the world - from the local and regional to the national and international - I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King's comment that "I seek nothing more than to leave behind me a life wholly dedicated to a cause." That was Jack. He was wholly dedicated to the cause of improving the quality of life for all members of the human family and humanity as a whole. In the process, he became "a world citizen" and "mighty oak" as one colleague described him who touched, moved and assisted people from many diverse walks of life and parts of the world. His countless friends, colleagues and admirers throughout the world will be eternally grateful to him for this.

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