



Our cultural soul

by Scott Lebin

The true soul of a country, a state or a community is recorded for history in their cultural output and achievements. We have learned much about past civilizations by the literature, music, plays, movies, and art they have left behind. Cultural activities reveal core feelings, beliefs, actions and interactions by which people have revealed their core values.

It is important as we evaluate the cultural imprints of specific times in history that we understand them not by our current value system but by the acceptable standards of their time. Judgments of past societies can be understood only if we have a sense of history and interpret the artifacts left to us in relation to the times in which they existed. If we apply current standards to events of the past, we really don't get a valid understanding of what it was like to live in a different era than ours. Thus, a sense of history and the anthropologic development of human beings become very important in correctly understanding the importance of past artifacts.

How we will be understood by future generations will also relate the recorded history of our time. In Geneva there are many experiences and opportunities that reveal our cultural environment. The Geneva Arts Commission, the Fox Valley Folk Music and Storytelling Festival on Island Park, the Renaissance

Repertory Theatre presenting Shakespeare, Moliere, and children's shows on Island Park, Swedish Days and the Chamber Fine Arts Fair, the weekly Classic Car Shows, the oral biographies recorded at the Geneva History Museum, the Concours d'Elgance, and the Geneva Film Festival provide some of the experiences for my memory bank of cultural events in Geneva over the last 40 years.

How from these events will future generations evaluate the times in which we have lived? The advantage of living close to one of the largest cities in the country and yet having the charm and special nature of the people who work, live and play in a small community on the banks of the Fox River will deserve some special analysis.

The many cultural activities created by local residents and local institutions should reveal a profound focus on the importance of people living together as a community. Even in a technological age the ability of a community to create events and special opportunities to join together with neighbors is important. Creating unique experiences that celebrate the humanity of the entire community should be the essence of the story that conveys what it means to be active in our community.

Our school system is also how the community continues to emphasize the importance of culture to our

next generation. Yes, we do fund the most important part of any community, the providing for an educated next generation. The opportunities for our young people to explore art, music, theatre, dance, singing, and great literature is not only part of their inheritance but also the means by which we will all have significance long after our generation is gone. Many of these young students have shown an aptitude for creative cultural endeavors and they are as much a part of what our community has to be proud of as all the other public cultural events in the city.

It is important to remember that "culture" should not be an elitist term but should represent how we as a community identify what is important to us. It is the revelation of our souls and we in Geneva have much of which to be proud. ●

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