

Silver Linings Martin Flowerman

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Martin Flowerman played bass in the Cleveland Orchestra for 44 years before retiring in 2011.

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Martin Flowerman has felt a deep connection to music and the arts since he was young. This deep-seeded love led him to pursue a career with The Cleveland Orchestra that spanned 44 years until he retired in 2011. The Beachwood resident couldn't let his involvement in the arts end there – as he continues to volunteer with the orchestra and the Beachwood Arts Council in his free time.

CJN: What organizations do you volunteer for?

FLOWERMAN: Unofficially, I'm a consultant to The Cleveland Orchestra archives department. They know that they can call me anytime to help furnish information that they are not certain about. Those first couple of years following my retirement, I volunteered in the office every week and spent about four hours each time to help with things they needed done. I also recently joined the executive board of the Forest City Hebrew Benevolent Association. I also served

on a committee at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, where we implemented new and different approaches towards gaining more members. I, along with my wife, devote much time to the Beachwood Arts Council of which we are board members.

CJN: What caused you to get involved with the Beachwood Arts Council?

Flowerman: We have been members of the BAC for many years because of our strong belief in supporting the arts and how impressed we were in all the activities the Beachwood Arts Council has been involved in. A few years ago the president of the BAC asked me if I would like to serve on the board. I agreed and asked if my wife may join the board as well. The answer was yes.

Little did I realize at the time that the Beachwood Arts Council had plans to increase their programs and activities to include Sunday afternoon musical programs. Because I had been a member of The Cleveland Orchestra for many years, it was thought that I would be a good prospect to serve on the board.

A music committee was formed, and in addition to my wife, we have two of the best co-chairs I could ever have imagined. We are proud of the wonderful programs we have brought to our Beachwood community.

CJN: How did your career with The Cleveland Orchestra shape your volunteer life?

Flowerman: The orchestra has been and always will be known as one of the greatest orchestras. Having been chosen by George Szell to join The Cleveland Orchestra has been the greatest honor of my life. The discipline the orchestra taught me has stayed with me over the years, not only musically but also in my everyday life. I have very little tolerance for mediocrity. I saw perfection within the orchestra that I had to aspire to. I knew that in the orchestra, whether it was rehearsals or concerts, we were constantly under the gun and under tremendous pressure to deliver perfection at all times. Nothing less was tolerated. And I would say this reflects my volunteer life immensely. Being accustomed to perfection, I try to carry this over to my volunteer duties as well.

CJN: Has music and the arts always been important to you, even as a volunteer in many arts-related causes?

Flowerman: It came naturally to me. In fact, when I went up to the CEO of the orchestra with my letter of resignation, he read the letter and it looked like he was going to cry. He said something to the extent that the orchestra could not let me go. I said I wanted to stay connected to it because next to my wife, it was the love of my life. Some time later, when I spoke to the music director of the orchestra, he said to me that he spoke with the CEO and they were trying to find a way to keep my brain on the payroll. I have an uncanny memory, filled with all sorts of information. Music has always been a huge part of my life – and my involvement with the orchestra has been a testament to that.

CJN: Where do you see your future going as you continue your retired life?

Flowerman: I went to Menorah Park and spoke to the director about volunteering there. They gave me some paperwork to take home to fill out. My intentions there are good. I haven't been able to follow up on that because within the last few months – my life has gotten pretty hectic. My family is extremely important to me, so I've been helping my brother move here from New York. We'd love to give more in terms of volunteering but his move has been a major obligation for us. We assured my brother a long time ago that we'd do all of the legwork for him and get him settled. It's the first time since 1966 that the two of us are living in the same city together. But as far as volunteering, we have continued to stay very much involved with the Beachwood Arts Council.

Though he hasn't been exploring new opportunities for volunteering at the moment, Flowerman said there is no shortage of things for him and his wife to do right now. They take the days in stride and find different things to keep them as busy as they want to be.

“My wife Barbara and I retired about the same time in 2011,” he said. “While we love the freedom of being our own boss for the first time in our lives, we can choose to be as busy as we care to be. For the most part, we find ourselves running from one obligation to another, mainly joyful ones. We enjoy spending lots of time together and we share most of the same things.”

Flowerman said they attend seminars, art exhibitions, concerts and ceramics classes. He wanted to start exploring woodworking while he is still a member of the orchestra but realized he could not afford to injure his hands.

“Silver Linings” is a feature about life after retirement. If you are a retiree with an interesting story about your new life or know of someone who fits the bill, email your suggestion to editorial@cjn.org and include “Silver Linings” in the subject line or tweet us at @CleveJN.

“Since I’ve retired, I’ve realized that if I were to work with wood or power tools. I still didn’t wish to damage my fingers, so I gave up on that idea,” Flowerman said. “Nonetheless, when I attend art shows and wood carver shows, I drool when I see beautiful pieces of wood art and have to control myself from buying too many pieces at one time.”

Flowerman said he and his wife also enjoy traveling and taking trips; as they have gone to Israel and on an Alaskan cruise. He hopes to continue their travels once his brother is fully settled in his new home.

Martin Flowerman

Age: 70

City of Residence: Beachwood

Busy “work”: Volunteerism, seminars, art exhibitions, concerts and ceramic classes

Career: Cleveland Orchestra for 44 years

Retirement year: 2011 **To read about other Silver Linings, visit**
bit.ly/CjnSilverLinings