

QUINTESSENTIAL PEOPLE

KIND
FUNNY
PATIENT
GRACIOUS
CREDIBLE
CONSIDERATE
CONSISTENT
INSPIRING
EXPERIENCED
PROFESSIONAL
THOUGHTFUL
QUIET VISIONARY
SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

ROLLIN
POTTER

Barrington's Impresario

BY BARBARA L. BENSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS BALSAMO

DR. ROLLIN POTTER HAS COME HOME TO BARRINGTON. From an earlier position opening the Music Department at Schaumburg High School, when he lived in Barrington for a few years—to his retirement, now living in Barrington again. The lifetime in between is one devoted to the arts and humanities in communities nationwide.

And he has brought that lifetime of experience back to Barrington as Cultural Director for Barrington's White House. Since the community and cultural center opened four years ago in what was, when built in 1898, "the grandest house" in Barrington, Rollin has quietly and thoughtfully crafted a calendar of events to appeal to a wide range of interests for the greater Barrington community. With the support of the Barrington Cultural Commission and the Village of Barrington, which owns the White House, he is also quick to emphasize the community's support for the venture.

Where did his life's rich journey begin? Rollin Potter's original home was Somonauk, Illinois, a town near Aurora, and by high school, his chosen instrument was the saxophone. He entered the Illinois High School Association's annual music competition for soloists and won first place in his first year. Resolving to enter again the following year, he was told that winning for consecutive years was highly unlikely. He entered anyway, and won, and the next year and the next year!

Rollin went on to earn a Bachelor of Music Degree from DePaul University and Masters in Music Education from VanderCook College of Music, and thus equipped, he founded the Music Department at Schaumburg High School, District 211, after which he studied for his Ph.D. in Music Education from Northwestern University.

Undecided on his dissertation, he learned that Northwestern's School of Music was the repository for the papers and memorabilia of the eminent conductor Fritz Reiner, who from 1953 to 1962 was Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and led it to become one of the finest orchestras in the world. Intrigued, Rollin approached Mrs. Reiner for her approval to access the collection, and thus, for his dissertation, in 1980, published the first official biography of Fritz Reiner: "Conductor, Teacher, Musical Innovator". Later Rollin became a Governing Member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

A position at Southwest Minnesota State University Department of Music was the first of his university teaching assignments that would include instrumental conducting, music education, woodwind instruction, and band directorships. But the need for organizational changes in the Department of Music there took his career in the direction of administration. Recommended by his colleagues for the post, the president of the university invited him to become Chair of the Music Department, the first of such positions that would take Rollin to different parts of the country. He later became Chair of the Department of Music at the College of New Jersey. Across the country he took an academic appointment as Chair of the Department of Music and then later as

the Founding Director of the School of the Arts at California State University Sacramento. There, in the early '90s, he briefly met Joanne McDade, then a graduate student at the university. About 10 years later he attended a recital of hers in Sacramento. Meeting her again led to their courtship and marriage.

The final phase of his career was in Conway, Arkansas at the University of Central Arkansas as Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication. Here he found a broader community role, helping to develop the Conway Alliance for the Arts, and eventually leading the founding of the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, the state's only professional Shakespearean company.

Dedicated to bringing the arts to unserved communities, he initiated and prepared a proposal to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, resulting in 2009 in the National Symphony Orchestra's residency throughout

the state of Arkansas, giving more than a hundred musical presentations in major venues, smaller communities, and schools. It is a time which he recalls with great satisfaction for the community outreach that was achieved in those years. He was honored with a feature story in "The Chronicle of Higher Education".

Rollin has spent 10 years as a site visitor and accreditation committee chair for the National Association of Schools of Music visiting colleges and universities in 10 states, and he was also a board member of the Association. He is a past president of the Arkansas Deans Association and has contributed to many scholarly publications.

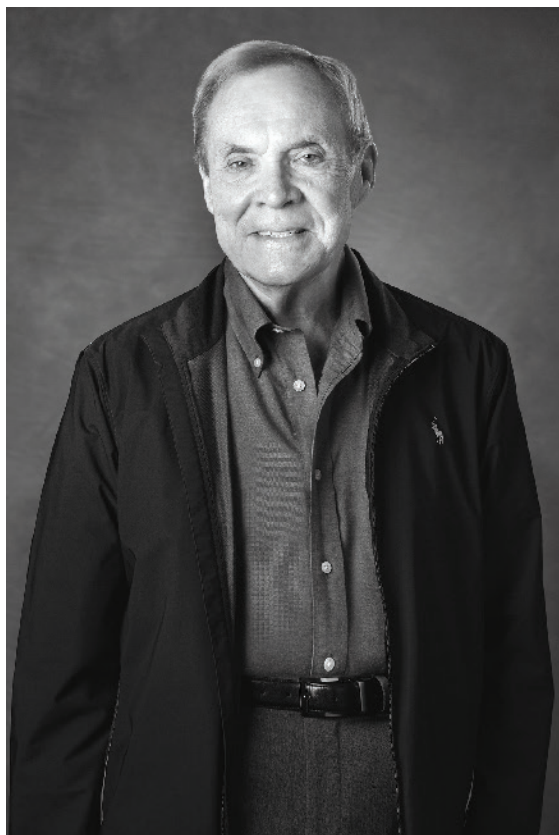
It might be thought that when he and Joanne moved to Barrington after his retirement in 2013, they would lead a quieter life. Joanne has private piano and voice students and is a soloist at area venues. And Rollin? His curiosity got the better of him, and when plans for Barrington's White House emerged, he cautiously approached the village, believing that he had something to offer the community from his life's work. He did indeed, as

Barrington's White House is now recognized for the excellence of its programs, enjoyed in its gracious and unique environment. And the much-honored Doctor Rollin Potter is leading the cultural way.

HERE ARE SOME WORDS THAT OTHERS SHARED ABOUT ROLLIN POTTER

Thomas Balsamo, COLLEAGUE

I work closely with Rollin on the Barrington Cultural Commission bringing visual art to the community through the Barrington White House 3rd Thursdays Art Night Out and beyond. It is always a pleasure working with Rollin, as he is a visionary and has set the bar high for bringing culture and talent to our community. His enthusiasm and dedication have set the tone for a constant lineup of events at the White House that attract people from the Northwest Suburbs and Chicago. I feel fortunate to work with Rollin!



Karen Darch, VILLAGE PRESIDENT OF BARRINGTON

I met Rollin four years ago when he first volunteered to work with our Barrington Cultural Commission and our new Barrington White House. Today, I am thrilled that he is the Cultural Director for the Barrington White House and our Barrington Cultural Commission.

In “To Sir with Love”, Lulu sings, “How do you thank someone who has taken you from crayons to perfume, it isn’t easy, but I’ll try”. I feel that way about Rollin Potter. What a gift to Barrington Rollin has been. Not that our cultural IQ was at the crayon stage, but Rollin has brought so much to elevate it. The vision for the Barrington Cultural Commission and later the Barrington White House existed and was being pursued nicely, but with Rollin’s engagement four years ago that vision soared and has reached new heights in so many ways. Rollin’s willingness to share his decades of experience in music and education with our community has opened doors to outstanding artistic performances and new intellectual opportunities. Who knew about the Pacifica String Quartet, pianist Llewellyn Sanchez-Werner, or actor Ron Keaton before Rollin arrived? Who else would have so quickly brought us to the thrill of Plein Air art events or the potential for inspiring collaboration with the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute?

Barrington has been truly blessed by Dr. Rollin Potter’s decision to spend his post-professor and academic administrator retirement years as the Cultural Director for Barrington’s White House and our Cultural Commission. I have been excited by Rollin’s love of all things musical and culture-enhancing, and I have loved observing him bringing them forth for all of us to enjoy. He is the consummate professional in the planning, scheduling, negotiating, and hosting of each terrific performance or event he has brought to the community. I know I speak for so many in expressing our heartfelt thanks to him for all he has shared with us and inspired in us, and our fervent hope that he will continue to do so for years to come.

Jill Funk, FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIR. OF KALEIDOSCOPE SCHOOL OF FINE ART; FOUNDER OF ART IN THE BARN

I met Rollin when he requested that I create a sculpture of a violinist for Mary Galvin, a prominent Barrington philanthropist and patron of the arts. While creating Mrs. Galvin’s sculpture, Rollin would visit my home to check on the progress of the violinist. While there he noticed the eclectic array of art that I had created over the years and asked if I would like to be featured during a Barrington’s White House 3rd Thursday event. Rollin was so kind and generous with his time during the next few months while we planned the exhibit. He went above and beyond to make the night outstanding. The show was one of the highlights of my career and I will be forever grateful to Rollin. He is a true gift to the arts and our community.

Peer Lykke, COLLEAGUE

The first time I saw Rollin was sometime during the Spring of 2015 when I was a fresh volunteer at Barrington’s White House. I usually wore jeans and a T-shirt. Rollin is not a T-shirt and jeans kind of guy. He entered our volunteer work room looking fully professional in sportcoat and tie. He was pleasant but smiled little. His arms crossed over his chest seemed forbidding to me. I remember thinking be careful, tread lightly! We now know that Rollin has, in fact, given us our cultural identity and become the firm ground that allows we volunteers to play a role in our area’s ever-growing cultural scene. He is the magician who creates and orchestrates a panoply of entertainment that draws

enthusiastic audiences for nearly every performance. I am most drawn to Rollin the person—the warm and humorous man behind the crossed arms; Rollin with a true passion for his work and a true heart for the performers he attracts as well as for we who serve beside him. His smile may not be the biggest in the world, but it is 100% authentic.

David Nelson, COLLEAGUE

I met Rollin through our work together at Barrington’s White House. We were both volunteers and he was willing to share his talents with those of us who were trying to enhance our local cultural portfolio. He has a gift for recognizing exceptional artists and through the years has developed a wide range of contacts in artistic communities across the United States. He has drawn from his extensive list of friends from Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, and beyond, to bring our little village, Rollin and Joanne’s home, some truly amazing cultural experiences.

He is also one of the most positive, upbeat people with whom I have ever worked. He is masterful at introducing performers at the White House, making them feel welcome, and he devotedly attends events throughout the area. It could be said that Rollin has put Barrington on the cultural map, and we should all be extremely grateful that he has chosen to devote so much time and talent to all of us!

Beth Raseman, COLLEAGUE

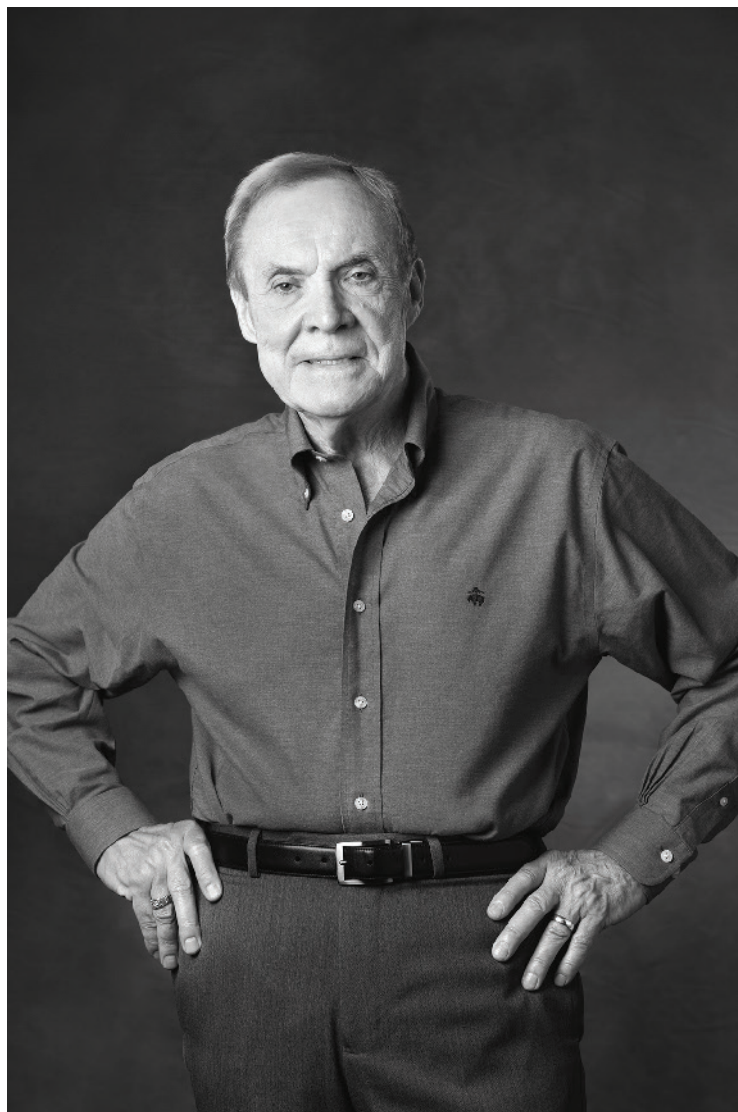
I have had the privilege of working with Rollin for the past five years in bringing Barrington’s White House cultural and community programming to life. I have watched him create a vibrant center that encompasses wonderful performances, speakers, and artists, as well as collaborations with universities and diverse cultural organizations. Rollin’s work in university fine arts programs and passion for classical music, and his ability to forge relationships with talented people, programs, and organizations has made Barrington a cultural destination. I am excited to see what the next five years will bring with Rollin conducting the orchestra!

Dr. Sally A. Roden, RETIRED UCA PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE PROVOST AND DEAN OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Dr. Rollin R. Potter is a man of many talents. His most outstanding talent is his unique ability to see and develop opportunities to enhance the arts, whether it be in a university or in a community setting. I was a colleague of Dr. Potter’s at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) in Conway while he served as Dean of Fine Arts and Communication. He is a visionary who has the uncanny talent of making visions come true. I saw this time after time during his tenure at UCA, and I see it in programs and procedures occurring now in his position as Cultural Director for the Village of Barrington. Dr. Potter can identify certain strengths in individuals and then empower them to bring their shared visions to life. What he has created is a two-way process of making others feel good about themselves and audiences feel good about artistic success. Dr. Potter never takes credit for his role in “making music” for others, but he is the guiding force behind the music that repeats itself and gives the community such consistent and ongoing pleasure and entertainment.

Jack Schaefer, FRIEND

I met Dr. Potter four years ago when he became the Cultural Director of Barrington’s White House. The advisory board of the BWH, of which I am a member, was looking for just the right person we needed to secure and manage a



wide range of cultural events for our newly opened cultural center. It was our good fortune to find Rollin. His extensive background as a Professor of Music and head of University Fine Arts Departments gave instant credibility to the mission of our beautiful historic venue. Rollin hit the ground running in the very first year by booking highly sought-after performers, speakers, and groups.

Rollin has an easy collegial manner about him that makes him a joy to work with. That quality, along with his understanding of what would best suit our audiences' interests, only partially explains his success—there is also much hard work behind the scenes that involves contract negotiations and performance details. Rollin's efforts and passion for the arts have resulted in working relationships with The Art Institute of Chicago, Northwestern University, The Lyric Opera, The Elgin Symphony, The University of Chicago, and many others who have provided speakers or performers to appear at Barrington's White House. I am grateful to know Rollin, work with him, and call him a friend. He has made an enormous contribution to our community.

Mary Smith, FRIEND

Pure good luck comes infrequently, and it arrives without introduction or fanfare. Recognize this gift when it comes, and smile. The renovation of Barrington's White House began in 2013. In 2014, pure good luck walked into the

unfinished house with an offer that would make our new community house also a cultural center for all of Barrington. Our good luck came in an offer of time and attention from a man many of us did not yet know.

Good luck has a name, and it's Rollin Potter. With degrees from DePaul University, Master of Music Education from VanderCook College of Music here in Chicago, and his Ph.D. from Northwestern University, his musical education is Chicago-centric. Rollin is an educator, writer, former Governing Member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and a nationally known advocate for the arts.


I met Rollin when Barrington's White House opened its doors for the first time. He is a quiet man, and with his typical tilt of head and side-long glance, you know he's listening not only for his own sake, but for the continuing successes he helps bring to Main Street. He is a friend of mine.

Donna Lampkin Stephens, COLLEAGUE

I met Dr. Potter when he became dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at the University of Central Arkansas, where I was a lecturer in Journalism. The next summer, I received a small merit raise, and I sent him a thank-you note. A few months later, he called and wanted to come see me in my tiny office in Stanley Russ Hall. He walked in and said, "You'll never guess why I'm here." He wanted me to come to work in the dean's office. I asked him sometime later, "Why did you pick me?" and he said, "You were the only one who wrote me a thank-you note after that round of raises." Dr. Potter likes to support and empower people to help them succeed. He is unafraid to dream big, but he also has a realistic streak. He is my No. 1 mentor.

Many people were saddened and upset in the spring of 2013 when he decided to leave UCA. I hosted a television show that featured the College, and a Rollin retrospective, for our final show of the semester. He was joined on set by three department chairs to talk about his accomplishments and at the end of the show we surprised him by calling his many supporters to join us on the set. He was quietly thrilled to see all the support. Many, many people were sorry to see him go. Our loss is Barrington's gain.

Tamara Tabel, COLLEAGUE

You may not notice him at first, sitting in his tweed "college professor" jacket sipping coffee and nibbling on chocolate or a pastry. (He has a terrible sweet tooth!) When he speaks, his voice is soft and kind. His insights deep. And in his quiet and dedicated way, he has amassed an amazing list of accomplishments. Rollin stepped into the role of Cultural Director of Barrington's White House and made it his own. With his passion for the arts, his knowledge of music and performance, and his vision, he has brought Barrington to a level none of us could have imagined. World-renowned speakers and performers have graced our stage. Rachel Barton Pine. Pacifica Quartet. Martha Nussbaum. And he continues to raise the bar. Rollin taught me that face-to-face conversations are critical to building relationships and trust. Each month, he meets with an extensive list of contacts. Rollin fills me with quiet inspiration. I am proud and fortunate to call him my friend. 

Publisher's Note: Quintessential People™ is a heartfelt collaboration between our publication and portrait artist Thomas Balsamo. Our goal is to share exceptional images and words that ring true about some of the finest, most inspiring people in our community. For more information, contact QB at publisher@qbarrington.com, or Thomas Balsamo (Portraits By Thomas) at 847-381-7710, or visit www.portraitsbythomas.com.