

# Community House Continues By Grace of Citizen Support

By TED SHURTLEFF

Those who know it best share a fear for the Community House—the possibility that it will be taken for granted.

From the first president to the current head of the community's keystone culture, they are sometimes uneasy over the prospect that area residents might forget the Community House was laboriously created and remains only by grace of citizen support.

Mrs. Charles J. Shain, who estimates she conducted more than 1,000 meetings in four years to gain backing for the home, looks upon it as "one of the greatest

cohesive forces Birmingham has had."

MRS. SHAIN, president from 1923 to 1930, says that she has yet to enter the Community House without feeling a glint of pride.

"There is nothing like it in the United States. Other cities have no idea what a non-political, non-sectarian, non-institutional-gathering place such as this can do to pull a town together. The cultural life of the community is so much there that people just take it for granted," she says.

Charles Kass, president in 1951-53, recalls the time when the Community House had to be shut down

for 10 days because of a fuel shortage.

"That closing had quite an impact on the community," he said. "A pattern of life was broken. Those 10 days brought a renewed appreciation."

KASS SAID he thinks the Community House's vital role has been underscored several times by planning groups, many of whom foray into the future with little regard to traditions.

"Not a single planning survey has ever even hinted that the House should not be a part of the area's future."

Thoburn H. Wiant, 1961-62

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president, commented:

"For many years, the Community House in Birmingham has served as a model for other cities throughout the United States. People elsewhere have looked with admiration—sometimes even with envy—at the programs and activities that our Community House regularly provides to area residents.

"THE PRESENT directors and officers are proud of the past and present but are searching intensively for new ways to improve the future. They are convinced that the Community House will soon become an even more vital force for civic service, accomplishment and pride as greater numbers of citizens learn what goes on at the Community House and share its support."

Publisher Paul N. Averill of The

Birmingham Eccentric, Community House President from 1944-45, said the facility is of "tremendous importance" to residents of the area. "One can not publish this area's weekly newspaper without becoming respectfully aware of its importance. Item after item, story after story finds the Community House as the setting for a wide range of activities of our more than 180 social, civic and cultural groups and organizations.

"These groups and organizations," Averill said, "reflect, and are the expression of, suburban living and its complex programming for a satisfying and meaningful life for our residents.

"The House's founders had great foresight in establishing this community facility, and today's residents have every right to be proud of it and should gladly accept the opportunity of giving it their generous financial support each year."

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