

## **Kucimat Interview with Harold Horn August 2000**

▫ **What drew you to a career in City Management?**

I saw a news story in the Kansas City Star that KU had received a grant from the Carnegie Foundation to establish a Graduate School program in Public Administration for the training and development of future City Managers. I was graduating from Baker University in nearby Baldwin Kansas and having been recently married and needing to establish a career path, the idea of entering the competition for one of the first six fellowships was very challenging. As fate would have it, Carol and I by coincidence attended a picnic at Baldwin where I met Ed Stene for the first time. He encouraged me to submit an application. Following up with a series of interviews with several area City Managers and what seemed like never ending interviews with the Deans of the Business School, Graduate School, Engineering School, Ethan Allen, Ed Stene and all of the faculty members of the new program, I received word of my acceptance into the program.

▫ **What were the hot issues in Lawrence when you served as its City Manager?**

The first issue that comes to mind was that a few days after my selection as City Manager but before I arrived on the scene, the editor of the weekly newspaper initiated a campaign to get rid of the “City Manager Plan” of government. Fortunately, Jim Wigglesworth, my predecessor, and Bob Kipp who stayed on with me as my Assistant and City Planner had done such excellent work and established a very high degree of professionalism the “campaign” never really got off the ground. Besides, I think in the public’s mind, the new “kid on the block” was being given a chance to prove himself.

Another project (not necessarily a hot issue) involved the acquisition and development of several downtown off street parking lots that permitted adjacent business establishments to create attractive rear entrances to their buildings.

The development of a comprehensive plan became a major public policy issue and included a program of citizen participation involving over 360 people that volunteered their time on sub-committee activities over a four year period. This proved to be “in-service training” for scores of citizens that later took on active roles in their local government.

The fast growth that was taking place at the University and from industrial, commercial and residential expansion led us into major utility construction programs that resulted in the shifting of the cost burden to the developers. This almost cost me my job, but calmer heads prevailed.

Flood protection programs, the lobbying of Congress to create the Clinton Dam and Reservoir, expansion of the park and recreation facilities all contributed to filling the policy agendas of the City Commission.

Near the end of my tenure in Lawrence in 1964, racial issues were beginning to heat up. Working with the University, we assisted in establishing one of the first Human Relations Commissions to begin to address the racial problems the community was facing. In hind sight, racial issues should have become a major public priority years earlier, as Lawrence, a few years after my departure, became involved in racial riots, destruction by fire and several fatalities.

▫ **What drew you to leave Kansas city management and serve ICMA?**

With the advent of the “Great Society” in 1964, the attention of the entire country increasingly became focused on the problems of our complex urban areas. Washington had become the center of a great deal of urban thought and research. The professional opportunity to assist ICMA, which at that time was located in Chicago, to be directly participating toward the solution of national urban problems was a challenge that could not be ignored. When the ICMA Executive Board created the position of Associate Executive Director and Orin Nolting extended an invitation to me to serve in that capacity, I immediately said yes.

I commuted each month between Chicago and Washington and in July 1966 I was privileged to open the first Washington Office of the International City Manager’s Association. Part of our mission was to advise, on request, federal agencies on implementing policies affecting local governments and assist in their development through professional suggestions of the ICMA staff and City Managers themselves. The involvement of ICMA in Washington was to place emphasis on the administrative, operational and coordinative aspects of these federal programs rather than the political judgments that were involved in the question of whether such programs should be initiated in the first place.

While serving ICMA in Washington I worked with 150 government and private organizations involved in urban problems. I also served on the Public Officials Advisory Council to the Office of Economic Opportunity working with Sargeant Shriver.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey and his staff took a particular interest in ICMA and on two occasions he arranged for the President’s entire Cabinet to meet for an entire day with City Managers assembled in Washington from all over the country. The Vice President even hosted a reception at the State Department for both groups.

During this period I received top security clearance and was appointed by President Johnson to serve as liaison for local governments to the Executive Office of the President in the event of a National emergency. I was also appointed by the President as an advisor to the District of Columbia in the first major reorganization of that government. Representing ICMA I was privileged to be invited to meet with the President in the oval office, attend several White House receptions, and meet with presidential assistants Horace Busby and Jack Valenti over lunch on several occasions. I also served on a national committee on beautification headed by Lady Bird Johnson.

▫ **What did you do after you left ICMA?**

Because of my nationwide involvement with local governments and familiarity with their problems and where to go to look for solutions, I was recruited by Booz, Allen and Hamilton and placed in charge of their state and local government consulting work working out of New York City and Washington D.C. I supervised many municipal and state government studies concerned with evaluation of organizational structures and their degree of effectiveness in meeting their responsibilities. One of the significant studies was for the Florida State Legislature in the reorganization of the Florida State Government.

Working for a large firm like Booz Allen resulted in “early burn out”, so when the opportunity came for a graceful exit, I accepted the Vice Presidency of Doxiadis Associates, a major international planning firm headquartered in Athens, Greece. My responsibility continued to be working with local governments in

the United States but I also served on the board of directors and was given an ownership interest. We were located in Washington on the C&O Canal in Georgetown.

Working with Constantinos Doxiadis was one of the most interesting periods of my life. The firm was staffed with 850 professionals, representing all of the disciplines, and clients were from all over the world. This man had incredible charisma and could spellbind audiences where ever he spoke. A unique feature of this organization included a formal advisory group that served to critique each of our client projects in quarterly seminars. This interdisciplinary group included Buckminster Fuller; Margaret Mead; Dr. Jonas Salk; Whitney Young; Martin Meyerson, President of the University of Pennsylvania; Maurice Kilbridge, Dean of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard; Robert Wood, Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies at MIT and Harvard; Charles Harr, Professor, Harvard Law School; and Waldemar Nielson, President African-American Institute.

The focus of all of our planning and architectural assignments was from the perspective of Ekistics or the Science of Human Settlements. This was Doxiadis's trademark to a complete interdisciplinary approach to problem solving. This included the study of the interrelationships of Nature, Man, Society, Shells (structures) and their connecting Networks.

The untimely death of Dr. Doxiadis ultimately resulted in the closing of the USA Office. This was an excellent example of what can happen to an organization that permits itself to be dominated by the personality and charisma of a single dynamic leader. Our clients wanted us to deliver Doxiadis himself on all of our assignments. When he was no longer available, the USA operations declined.

This brings me to the last 28 years of my story and a total of 52 years of uninterrupted service to local governments. In 1972 the Cable Television Information Center, a division of the Urban Institute in Washington asked that I join them to initiate a service to local governments as they begin to consider the future of this new technology. This group had just received a major grant from the Ford Foundation and the Markle Foundation to provide educational assistance to local governments as they consider permitting cable television to be installed in their communities. The Center had developed a staff of engineers, programming specialists, lawyers and financial experts but had no one familiar with local governments and how they function, which is why I was recruited. In 1980, as grant money gave out, and cable television was beginning to be more widely accepted, I created a for profit consulting corporation CTIC Associates and separated from the non profit Urban Institute. CTIC has assisted over 3000 communities in understanding the public policy and regulatory aspects of cable television. We have assisted in the selection; evaluation and actually franchising of cable services to over 50 million people in 394 cities and 25 urban county governments.

Some of the clients that we have assisted in obtaining cable television include Dallas, Ft. Worth, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Denver, Tucson, El Paso, Kansas City, Long Beach, Jacksonville, Omaha, Sacramento, Washington D.C. and Fairfax County, VA.

Typically in working in the center cities we were also asked to serve many of the suburban communities in the same areas. In working with hundreds of local governments we have been able to keep in touch with many city managers as they have moved about the country. In fact, we have often spent many hours listening to the frustrations managers were facing on a whole variety of issues. I believe we have also worked with probably every variety of City Council that exists and every variety of community activists that exists. While it has been fascinating to assist local officials as they deal with this one issue, and having to sit through hours of council meetings, I am always grateful that I can leave to go to another City rather than having to stay, like the city manager, to deal with the hundreds of other and usually more important agenda items.

I am currently winding down our operations. I am no longer taking on new clients but finishing up currently outstanding contracts. At 73 it is time to think seriously about retirement and how to spend over 2 million frequent flyer miles.

- **What issues have changed in city management and what has stayed the same during your career?**

While I have been actively involved with local governments for 53 years I have been away from city management for 36 years so my observations are of limited value. In my “era” we were for the most part dealing with the operational side of management. If we kept the streets clean, the infrastructure in good repair, kept a tight reign on the budget, avoided major increases in local taxes, and always hired better people than ourselves; we might be entitled to be called successful. Issues today tend to correctly be more focused on the health welfare, and safety of the citizenry. Learning to communicate more effectively with the staff, the City Council and the public is of paramount importance today. Our Council agendas were only a few pages in length compared to the hundreds of pages I see at Council meetings today. Part of this is because many of the issues the staff used to take care of rather routinely whereas now, many Councils want to see or be involved in every decision a City makes. For the most part, however, there are far more issues to deal with today than we used to have.

The following are issues that are new or have taken on new importance since I was in active city management. We thought coming out of graduate school with an MPA and a successful internship we were well prepared to take on any City. The new things I have observed since the “good old days” are: personnel issues of discrimination, affirmative action, fair employment practices, drug testing, employee retirement programs, labor union negotiations and collective bargaining; performance measurement, legal liability issues, unfunded mandates of the federal and state governments, race relations, homelessness, keeping up with fast changing technologies and knowing how to effectively use them, information technologies, recycling of solid waste, air and water pollution, the need for the “public’s right to know” vs. the need to discuss sensitive issues with Council, regional governments, special districts, block grants, contract cities, and I am sure the list can go on and on. I have the utmost admiration for today’s City and County managers. Their job has almost become impossible yet we keep raising the bar on what we expect of them. I still believe, however, that there is no job on earth that is more personally satisfying and rewarding or where one can see and realize a greater sense of accomplishment than the position of a City or County Manager.

- **You were part of the group who founded the KUCIMATS... who were some of your other partners? What were the group of you hoping to achieve through the organization? What advice or suggestions do you have for the organization today?**

Here I have to admit to having a “senior moment.” I do not recall much about the origination of KUCIMATS. I feel sure I was in attendance and it seems to me there was much discussion and some disagreement on what the name should be. Exactly who came up with the name I do not recall, but I must have been a party to the decision to stick you all with that name. I am not even sure when and where the organization was created. The first several years after our first class we would all try to get someone to pay our way to the ICMA conferences. In the early years the money from the Carnegie fellowships was used to convince many of the smaller cities that they didn’t need to pay the interns a salary since they were receiving the fellowship and money from the GI bill. The idea of municipal internships was new and untested but “free help” was readily accepted. Conference attendance was usually limited to the City Manager. Gradually we would meet as a small group at the Conference and one of us volunteered to find a restaurant and pass the hat to pay the bill. As we grew from a dozen or so to 50 then 100 someone probably thought we needed to organize. What else would you expect from these types of individuals? I

for one was relieved because I seemed to be the guy more than once that was left holding the bag when the last person left and the bill had to be paid.

I suppose somewhere in the archives there may well be a statement of purpose, maybe a set of minutes and perhaps even a treasurer's report. As to advice or suggestions, keep up the newsletter. Even at this point in life I am interested in learning about what KUCIMATS are doing and who has gone where and what the many achievements have been made by KUCIMATS. I wish ICMA had as a part of its many programs a way to encourage a continuing connection between the many former managers who have gone into other fields of work, or have retired. The thing we all have in common is an understanding of what each other has gone through. Being a City Manager can be a lonely profession since usually there is no one else locally with whom you can let your hair down. Groups like the KUCIMATS and ICMA can be great therapy. You only thought you had problems until you hear first hand what another manager is going through. Some of the greatest and closest friendships are developed through these groups but it is difficult to keep them up when there is no longer a reason or a purpose in attending. The ICMA Circuit Rider program partly fulfills this need for some managers. The rest of us may just be looking for an organized but inexpensive way to socialize occasionally with old friends and lie about all of our achievements.

▫ **What do you do for fun?**

I still enjoy travel, but have learned that a cruise is far more fun than airtravel. I love to see and hear about the accomplishments of our four "children," our nine grandchildren and our first great grandchild. I love photography, exploring the Pacific Northwest, exploring my computer, and the freedom to do all the things I have been putting off doing for so many years.