

THE MAN WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF ARKANSAS HISTORY



IN 1953, WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER came to Arkansas and planted the seed for radical change. He fell in love with the landscape and people, and invested himself wholly in Arkansas's future. Governor Rockefeller used his name and his wealth to encourage conversations on the toughest issues facing Arkansas. After becoming governor in 1967, he was able to

see his ideas become reality as he influenced integration, minimum wage, prison reform and more. Today, organizations like the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, Winrock International and the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture keep his memory alive. Here is the story of the man, his vision and his far-reaching legacy.

Governor Rockefeller truly made a difference in Arkansas.

Starting with his inauguration in 1967, he helped carry out integration in Arkansas's schools, raised teacher pay, integrated the Arkansas State Police, enacted Arkansas's first minimum wage and tackled sweeping prison reforms—all just a fraction of what he ultimately achieved in two terms as governor. In his inauguration speech he stated, “Without the faith and confidence of the people, government can accomplish nothing.” He dedicated much of his time as governor to build that faith and confidence.

For more than 40 years since his death, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has continued



Winthrop Rockefeller and Orval Faubus shaking hands, 1955.

Governor Rockefeller's legacy to improve the lives of all Arkansans in three inter-related areas: education; economic development; and

WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

economic, racial and social justice. The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation carries the governor's legacy through strategic grant making, partnerships and advocacy that help close the economic and educational gaps that leave too many Arkansas families in persistent poverty. It has awarded

more than \$150 million in grants and program-related investments over the life of the Foundation.

Governor Rockefeller envisioned a thriving and prosperous Arkansas that benefits all Arkansans. His vision united Arkansans

across racial, political and geographic lines around the big idea that “There is no place for poverty in Arkansas.” With that as a goal, the Foundation invests for the long term in efforts that promise

sustained and positive impact for Arkansas. And like Governor Rockefeller, it champions policies, programs and organizations that increase prosperity in our state. With faith, confidence and vision, the Foundation believes the needle will move from poverty to prosperity for all Arkansans.



Assorted elephants from the memorabilia in the Winthrop Rockefeller Collection.

AN OPEN BOOK

The Winthrop Rockefeller Collection

Stored carefully in acid-free housings, neatly organized and documented among more than 2,000 boxes of the Winthrop Rockefeller Collection, is the 1967 address, program booklets and photographs related to the inauguration of Arkansas's first republican governor since Reconstruction. Winthrop Rockefeller was an enormous force for change in the state, and the materials he created before, during and after his 1966 inauguration are preserved and available for use at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's (UALR) Center for Arkansas History and Culture (CAHC).

His archival collection includes papers, photographs, audio and video recordings, and memorabilia from each period in his life from 1912 until his death in 1973. The collection chronicles his activities before he arrived in Arkansas in 1953, and then as a public figure and governor from 1953 to 1970. Also included are files from his arts promoter and social activist wife, Jeannette Edris Rockefeller, whom he



1967 commemorative inaugural coin.

married in 1956.

The materials detail Governor Rockefeller's successes, ranging from educational improvements and prison reform to the passage of the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act and increased visibility for civil rights issues in the state.

Materials have proven useful to

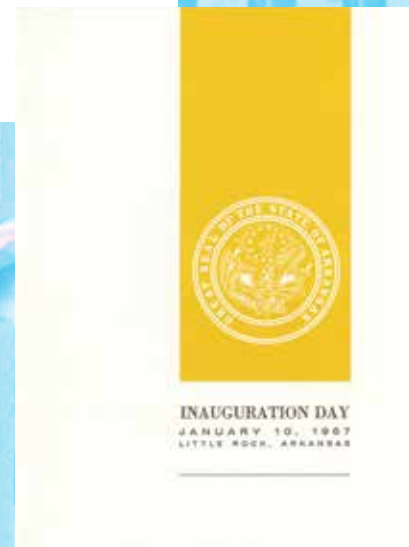
historians, students and many others since they were donated to the university in 1980. For instance, the BBC World Service produced a program on Governor Rockefeller's partnership with the famed Arkansas singer Johnny Cash that brought attention to Arkansas's prison conditions and the need for reform. Another visible example is scholar John Ward's biography, "The Arkansas Rockefeller," which is best summarized by one reviewer as "a portrait of a man who lived his life openly, whose every success and every failure was a matter of public record for the two million citizens of his adopted state."

The Center itself has created a virtual exhibit to highlight the collection and Governor Rockefeller's legacy. The exhibit aims to feature Rockefeller's major contributions to the state and encourage further use of the collection.

Visit CAHC's website to access the virtual exhibit or to search the catalog to find materials in the collection itself. The research room is open from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Saturday at 401 President Clinton Avenue. For additional directions or to contact the Center for more information about the Rockefeller Collection, visit ualr.edu/cahc.



Winthrop and Jeanette Rockefeller.



1967 inauguration program.

Fifty years ago this month, Winthrop Rockefeller was inaugurated as the first Republican governor of Arkansas in 93 years. His two terms in office (he was re-elected in 1968) had a transformational impact on the state that is still very much evident today. Governor Rockefeller's governorship capped an extraordinary life story that brought one of the richest men in the nation to one of its poorest states.

Born May 1, 1912, Winthrop was the fifth child of John D. Rockefeller Jr., the sole male heir to the Standard Oil fortune, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the daughter of influential Republican politician Nelson W. Aldrich. Winthrop's siblings were older sister Abigail, and older brothers John D. III, Nelson (who served as governor of New York and as vice president under Gerald Ford), Laurance and younger brother, David.

Winthrop attended Lincoln School in New York, which was part of the Teachers College of Columbia University. Lincoln pioneered progressive new educational ideas that focused on experiential learning. Although Winthrop enjoyed Lincoln, his parents felt that it was not equipping him adequately in his academic studies. He transferred to Loomis School in Windsor, Connecticut, a more traditional scholarly boarding school, in the eleventh grade. In his first semester, Winthrop flunked all his classes and faced an uphill struggle to get into university. He did eventually get accepted to Yale in the fall of 1931, but still struggling academically he quit in the spring semester of 1934 to pursue a career in the oil industry.

Winthrop entered the oil industry on the ground floor, working the oil fields of Texas and Louisiana as a roustabout and roughneck from 1934 to 1937. For the next few years he pursued various interests, briefly working as a management trainee at Chase Bank in New York in 1937; playing a major role in the Greater New York Fund charitable campaign in the first six months of 1938; and becoming a founding member of Air Youth Corps, Inc., an organization dedicated to youths interested in all things aeronautical, in 1939. In early 1939, he went back into the oil industry, working in Socony-Vacuum's (now part of Exxonmobil) foreign trade department.

World events intervened in the next phase of Winthrop's life. With war breaking out in Europe, in July 1940 he enrolled at Plattsburg Businessmen's Training Camp in upstate New York. Plattsburg, as it had done in World War I, provided volunteer pre-enlistment training for private citizens. On Jan. 22,

THE LIFE OF WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER

Fifty years ago, the inauguration of Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller contributed to a legacy of transformation in Arkansas.

BY JOHN A. KIRK



Abby and John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s children, circa 1917. From left: David, Winthrop, John, Abigail, Laurance and Nelson.



Winthrop Rockefeller portrait in Army uniform, circa 1941-1945.

1941, Winthrop enlisted in the U.S. Army, becoming the only one of his siblings to see active service on the front lines. It was the beginning of a peripatetic six-year tour of duty that initially took



Winthrop Rockefeller and Barbara Sears Rockefeller wedding ceremony, Feb. 14, 1948.

him from postings coast-to-coast in the United States before traveling overseas to Honolulu, Hawaii, in April 1944, having risen to the rank of major.

Winthrop was involved in three cam-

paigns in the Pacific, in Guam and Leyte in 1944, and in Okinawa in 1945. On his way to Okinawa in April 1945, a Japanese kamikaze pilot attacked his ship the USS *Henrico*, resulting in a significant number of deaths and injuries, leaving Winthrop as the only surviving officer on board. He suffered flash burns on his face and hands, and was sent back to Guam for a short period of treatment and recuperation, returning to Okinawa in May 1945. A few months later he was back in the hospital again with his second attack of infectious hepatitis of the war. While in his hospital bed, Japan surrendered, bringing an end to hostilities. Since it was clear that Winthrop would need an extended period of recovery, he was shipped back to the United States for convalescence. He ended up in the Rockefeller Institute Hospital in New York for a number of months.

Even before getting out of the hospital, Winthrop was planning his next project. Since it was clear that on his doctor's advice he would not be fit for a return to active duty anytime soon, Winthrop suggested to the War Department that he work on a study to make policy recommendations about the resettlement of returning veterans. After being released from the hospital, he travelled extensively to complete his "Report on Veterans Adjustment" in July 1946. Soon after delivering the report, he was discharged from the army as a lieutenant colonel and started work again at Socony-Vacuum where he travelled overseas in Europe and the Middle East.

When he was not working, Winthrop was out enjoying the nightlife of New York's "café society." He enjoyed socializing on the party circuit and after six years of military service he was more than ready to live a carefree life for a while. Earning the title "the most eligible bachelor in America" in the national press (all his brothers were married by then), Winthrop was featured in the society pages on a regular basis and romantically linked with a long string of starlets. One of these was Barbara Sears, better known through her nickname of "Bobo." Born Jievute Paulekiute to Lithuanian immigrant parents, Bobo grew up in Noblestown, Pennsylvania and in Chicago in modest circumstances. She caught a break in 1933 by being named "Miss Lithuania" at the Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago, and then launched a modeling and minor acting career. On a theater tour production of Erskien Caldwell's "Tobacco Road," she met and married prominent Boston socialite Richard Sears. The couple were estranged and headed for divorce

when Bobo met Winthrop in New York in 1947.

As the clock struck midnight on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 1948, Winthrop and Bobo were married in Palm Beach, Florida. The press hailed it a "Cinderella wedding" and the couple received a good deal of attention, capturing the public imagination. Seven months later, on Sept. 17, Winthrop's only biological son, Winthrop "Win" Paul Rockefeller, was born. Win Paul would later also find his home in Arkansas, and follow his father into political office there as lieutenant governor from 1996 to 2006.

Winthrop and Bobo's marriage was short-lived. Barely a year after the birth of Win Paul the couple separated. A contentious and protracted divorce followed. Much of it was covered in painful detail by the popular press. The divorce caused a great deal of trauma and disruption in Winthrop's life. He spent extended stays in Venezuela working for Socony-Vacuum to escape unwelcome publicity. In 1951, he left the oil industry to join the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC), a company set up by his brother Nelson to focus on private investment in economies in developing countries. Winthrop served as chair of IBEC's Housing Corporation, which developed a mechanized, poured-in-place concrete building process that by 1954 had created 9,000 new housing units in Puerto Rico.

With a continuing focus on his private life in the press, in June 1953 Winthrop decided to move from New York and relocate to a new life in Arkansas. Army friend and Little Rock insurance man Frank Newell had boasted about the beauty of his native state to Winthrop for many years. Winthrop visited Newell and became enthralled, too. The press claimed that it would only be a temporary stay and that Winthrop was moving simply to take advantage of Arkansas's more liberal divorce laws. Yet Winthrop spent the remaining twenty years of his life based in the state, founding a homestead that he named Winrock Farm atop Petit Jean Mountain, 60 miles northwest of Little Rock.

He and Bobo were divorced in Reno, Nevada in August 1954. Winthrop remarried in June 1956 to Jeannette Edris, daughter of a prominent Seattle family, who lived with him at Winrock along with her son Bruce and daughter Anne, both from a previous marriage.

Winthrop's unlikely move to Arkansas paired one of the richest men in the country with one of its poorest states. He looked to put his wealth and experience gained from his New York years to

good effect in his newly adopted home. Winthrop engaged extensively in philanthropic endeavors and launched a number of social experiments. One of the first was an effort to create a model school system in Morrilton. This was hindered by the local population's insistence on maintaining segregated schools and an aversion to paying higher taxes

and to stem the flow of people. He knew that Winthrop, with national connections and business acumen, was exactly the person to lead the campaign. Winthrop was happy to help. He ran a tremendously successful operation that increased his popularity and profile in the state, bringing 600 new plants and more than 90,000 new jobs to Arkansas.

development. It drove a wedge between the two former allies. These tensions grew further when Winthrop met the residency requirements for governor in 1960, after living seven years in the state.

Rumors abounded that a political challenge was in the cards. Winthrop did nothing to dispel them. Indeed, he added fuel to the fire by holding a "Party for Two



Winthrop Rockefeller at the closing of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, April 7, 1968.

for better education. Winthrop helped to establish a clinic in Perry County, a pioneering effort in providing rural healthcare. He championed the arts through the building of the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock, and taking art to the people through the creation of an Artmobile, a "gallery on wheels."

Not long after relocating to Arkansas, Winthrop was called into service by Gov. Orval E. Faubus. In 1955, Faubus declared a state of emergency. Arkansas was hemorrhaging population at an alarming rate. Still wedded to its dwindling cotton economy, people were leaving for expanding industrial jobs elsewhere. Faubus set up the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission (AIDC) to lure industry to Arkansas

However, Faubus soon discovered he had unwittingly created a political rival. From a staunch Republican Party family, Winthrop found himself in what political scientist V.O. Key labeled in 1949 the "purest one-party" Democratic Party stronghold in the South. Winthrop was initially happy to work along nonpartisan lines, but there were some things he was not willing to tolerate. When Faubus called out the National Guard to prevent the desegregation of Central High School in September 1957, it offended Winthrop's long-standing commitment to racial equality, which included serving as a trustee of the civil rights organization the National Urban League since 1940, and threatened to undo all of his good work in economic

Parties" at Winrock in an effort to revive the largely moribund Republican Party in the state. Governor Rockefeller provided the funding and leadership to resuscitate the Republican Party in Arkansas. After resigning as chair of the AIDC in early 1964, Winthrop ran against Faubus for the governorship later that year. Faubus was the record-breaking five-term Democratic Party incumbent and the Republican Party was still cranking back into life through rusty gears. Winthrop knew he had little chance of victory and was beaten handily by Faubus. But Winthrop received far more votes in the election than any other Arkansas republican candidate had in many years. Without skipping a beat, he kept on running for office with his eye on 1966.

In a surprise development, Faubus decided not to run for governor again in 1966, leaving the democratic field wide open. The democrats nominated former Arkansas Supreme Court justice James D. Johnson. Johnson was a leading segregationist and former head of the White Citizen's Council in Arkansas, which had led opposition to school desegregation in the state. In an unlikely match-up, Winthrop, the New York Yankee from a family background of wealth and privilege, took on the self-styled "Justice" Jim Johnson, the home-grown good-old-boy segregationist from Crossett. The voters chose Winthrop, but only narrowly. On white votes alone, Winthrop lost the election. Black votes carried the day for him, boosted by civil rights activism and voter registration campaigns in the 1960s.

Winning the election was one thing; governing was another. The Arkansas General Assembly contained only three fellow republicans out of a total of 135 seats. Winthrop battled valiantly to get his progressive agenda for reform passed, albeit with mixed success. Hostility to raising taxes to support the state's infrastructure stymied many of his ambitions to build a better Arkansas. He did use the office to improve race relations by employing more black state employees and appointing more blacks to state boards, many of which were desegregated for the first time. After the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, Winthrop was the only southern governor to hold a public memorial service in King's honor. He tried to reform the state's archaic criminal justice and penal system, and, notably, in his last act in office, he commuted the sentences of all men on death row to life in prison in an act driven by his own personal opposition to the death penalty. Arkansas did not execute anyone else for more than twenty years. Finally, he campaigned with some success for more transparency in state government.

Winthrop was re-elected to office in 1968, but lost to political newcomer, democrat Dale Bumpers, two years later in 1970. Bumpers offered what Arkansas voters still truly hankered for: a Winthrop Rockefeller in Democratic Party clothing. As testimony to Winthrop's impact in the state, the Democratic Party had gone through a profound transformation during his time in office, and would no longer put forward an old-guard segregationist candidate. Although Dale Bumpers took office in 1971, Winthrop's influence was still palpable in state politics, not least since Bumpers' legislative program borrowed heavily

from his republican predecessor.

Sadly, Winthrop lived a tragically short life after leaving office. He and Jeannette divorced in 1971, due in part to the strains his time in office had placed on their marriage. In September 1972, he was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer and died in Palm Springs, California, seeking to escape the Arkansas winter, on Feb. 22, 1973.

Winthrop Rockefeller's legacy lived on. Dale Bumpers was the first of a new breed of progressive southern Democrats in Arkansas to gain political office. He was followed by a number of others, including Bill Clinton, who used the governor's office as a springboard to the presidency of the United States in 1992. Ironically, Winthrop's progressive republicanism paved the way for the success of progressive democrats in the state. The Republican Party faded once more, to be resurrected in later years as a force that would revive the conservatism of the pre-Winthrop Rockefeller Arkansas Democratic Party.

Today, Winthrop Rockefeller's legacy lives on most tangibly in the number of organizations that bear his name in the state. Winrock International focuses on overseas development, echoing Winthrop's earlier efforts with IBEC. The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation focuses on issues of education and social justice, twin concerns that formed central threads throughout Winthrop's life. The Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, part of the University of Arkansas System, is located at Winthrop's beloved Petit Jean Mountain property, which, much as it did when he was alive, still forms a hub for conferences and meetings to formulate innovative and dynamic solutions to a range of contemporary problems. A Winthrop Rockefeller archive collection at UALR's Center for Arkansas History and Culture documents the former governor's life through written materials, film, audiotapes, photographs, and memorabilia. Fifty years after his inauguration, Winthrop Rockefeller still maintains a significant imprint and influence on life in Arkansas.

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Winthrop Rockefeller standing in front of WR sign at Winrock.

FARM-TO-INTERNATIONAL LEADER

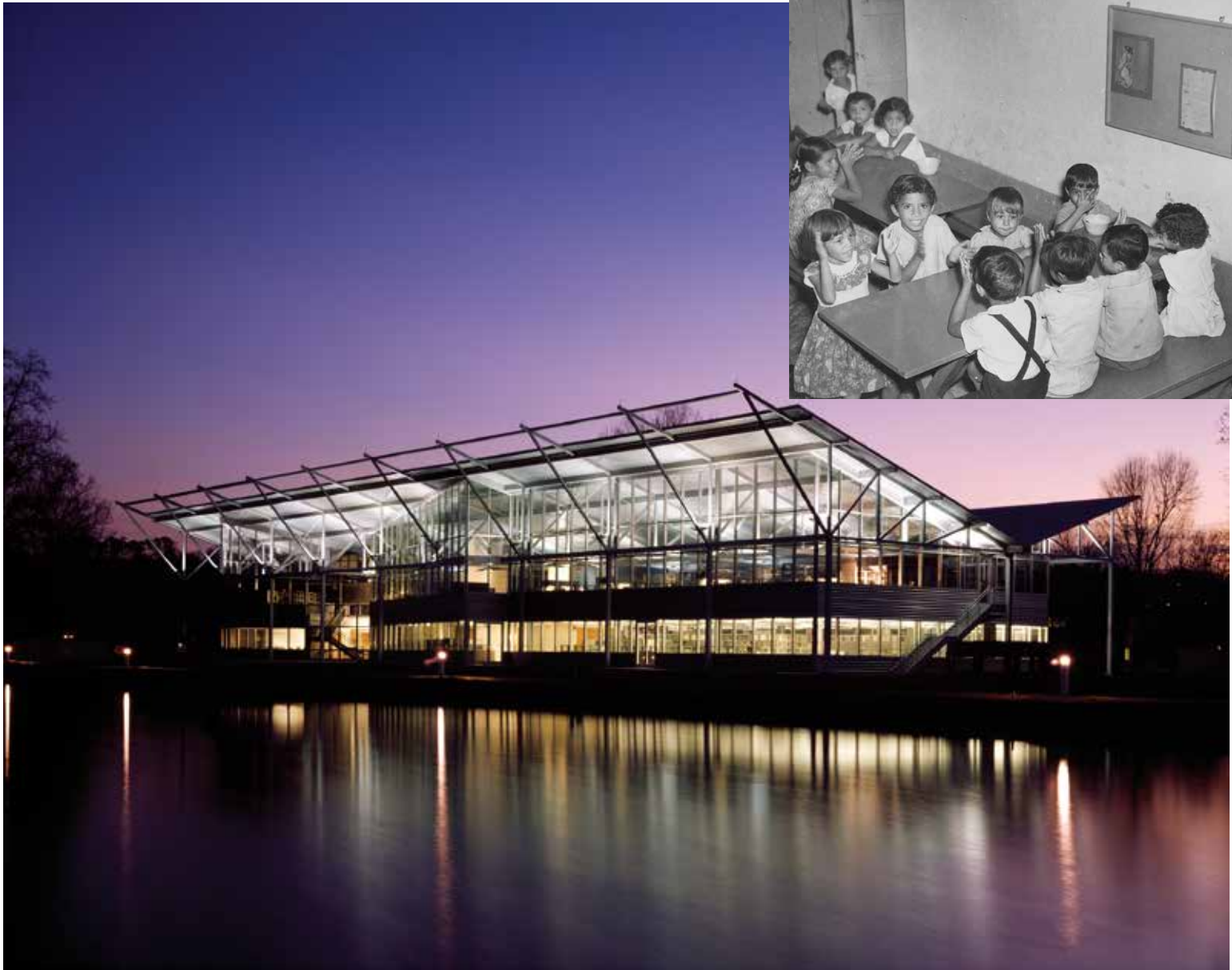
Winrock International began as a humble farm atop Petit Jean Mountain and has grown into a leading organization in international development.

Winrock International is a \$100 million-a-year international economic development organization with 1,000 employees in more than 40 countries.

It grew from parallel dreams and a shared vision. It also grew from the land—a 927-acre tract atop Petit Jean Mountain in Arkansas, where Winthrop Rockefeller, grandson of

Standard Oil's John D. Rockefeller, established Winrock Farms in 1953. He brought in a herd of hardy Santa Gertrudis cattle from Texas and created a model farm and livestock center to demonstrate state-of-the-art agricultural methods.

Economic development was a hallmark of Governor Rockefeller's two terms as governor of Arkansas, and



Winthrop Rockefeller visiting school in Puerto Rico for IBEC, 1950.

PHOTO: CRAIG DUGALL; PHOTO STUDIO, HEIDRICH BLESSING

Winrock International headquarters in Little Rock

after his death in 1973, trustees of his estate created the Winrock International Livestock Research and Training Center to further his wish that the farm be “venturesome and innovative,” and provide tools to help people help themselves.

While Winthrop was focusing on livestock research and rural development, his brother John D. Rockefeller III was concentrating on Asia’s burgeoning population and its food shortages; creating the Agricultural Development Council (ADC) and the International Agricultural Development Service (IADS), organizations that would later merge to form Winrock International.

The ADC was a unique organization begun in 1954 with a focus on developing the most talented agricultural specialists in Asia. Ultimately responsible for training multiple generations

of Asian academics—many of whom went on to assume significant agricultural roles across Asia in the decades to come—the ADC and Winrock names are revered across Asia.

IADS was an international economic development organization that worked to build up agricultural research programs in developing countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, a tradition that Winrock International continues to this day.

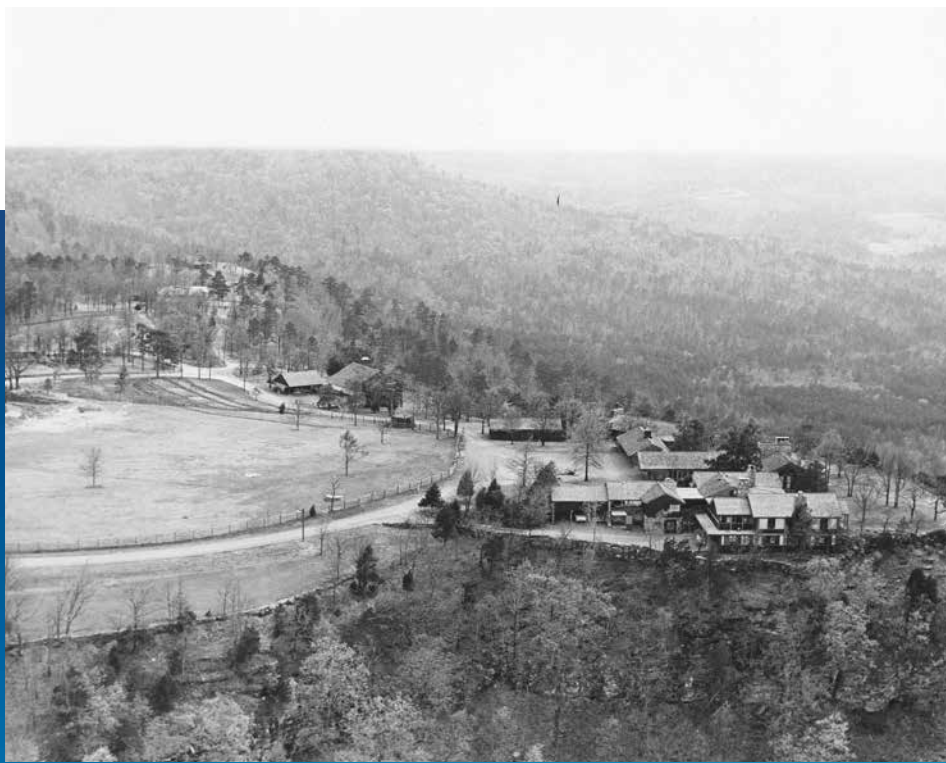
In 1985, the three organizations merged to create a new Winrock International with a strongly expanded international presence. Experts fanned out across the state, nation and globe, pairing international reach with a passion for local capacity-building. This approach proved a winning combination, as Winrock quickly became a leader in U.S. and international development.

Winrock pioneered such projects as the acclaimed Farmer-to-Farmer program, which sends American volunteer agricultural experts to provide technical assistance to farmers around the world, and (with early board member Norman Borlaug, known as the father of the Green Revolution) helped to establish the World Food Prize, which since 1987, has recognized people who have advanced the quality and availability of food in the world. Winrock’s American Carbon Registry became the nation’s first voluntary carbon-offset program, and its senior scientist Dr. Sandra Brown, a carbon accounting pioneer, was honored for her contribution to work that was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Current Winrock projects include the Sustaining Forests and Biodiversity Project in Cambodia, which was just

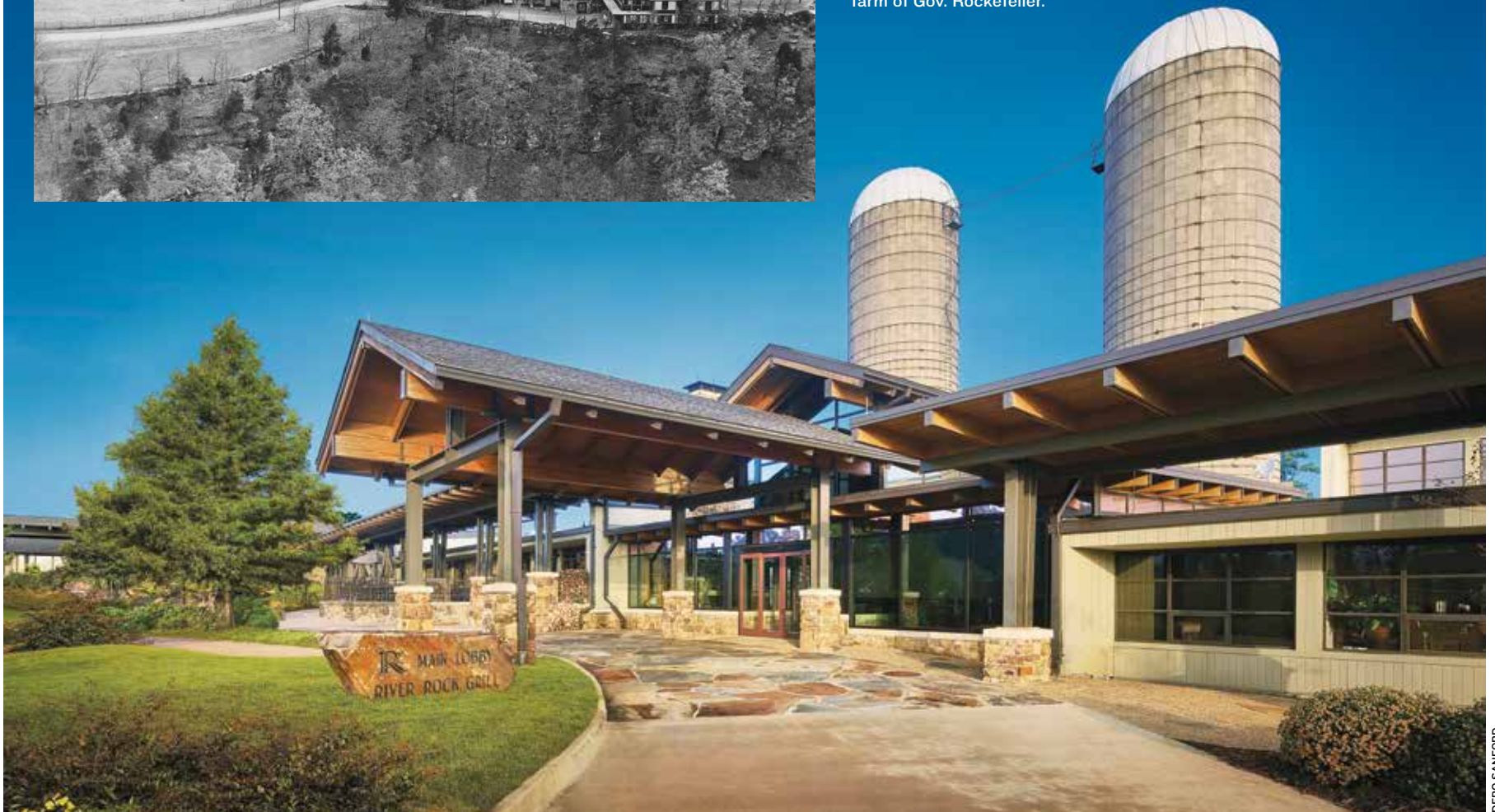
awarded the highest honor the government gives to foreigners, and USAID’s Value Chains for Rural Development, which has launched specialty coffees grown by small farmers in Myanmar into the world specialty market.

Winrock maintains offices in Little Rock; Arlington, Virginia; Manila, Philippines; and Nairobi, Kenya. And with more than 120 projects in 46 countries, the organization truly has a global presence—improving food security in Ghana and protecting wetlands in Bangladesh. Yet, domestic initiatives such as the Innovation Hub, a collaborative makers’ space, and the Wallace Center with its support of locally produced food and food hubs, demonstrate its continuing commitment to a strong U.S. portfolio. Decades of growth have not changed the Winrock mission; they have only increased its reach.



Left: Aerial view of Winthrop and Jeannette Rockefeller's home on Petit Jean Mountain.

Below: Today, the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute campus consists of 188 acres that was once part of the home and cattle farm of Gov. Rockefeller.



DERO SANFORD

NEVER STOP ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS

The Winthrop Rockefeller Institute keeps the conversation going in a picturesque setting.

Established in 2005, the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute is the former home and working farm of Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller, who first came to Arkansas in 1953 and transformed the state's politics, economy and the way we think about ourselves. Governor Rockefeller used his name and his wealth to bring people together on Petit Jean Mountain

for summit-style meetings to find solutions to the toughest issues facing Arkansas—an approach that was so successful he used it more than 200 times, bringing together people who were thoughtfully concerned about Arkansas's future. The Institute serves to honor Governor Rockefeller's belief in the power of collaboration by making sure those conversations continue

to happen, and that we never stop asking the big questions about our future.

The Institute takes two approaches to this goal. First, by convening important programs, often working with fellow organizations within the University of Arkansas System, to help drive discovery, dialogue and resolution for some of Arkansas's most important topics and issues. Programs engage primarily in five foundational areas: agriculture, arts and humanities, civic engagement, economic development and health. Programs utilize a wide range of models from ongoing initiatives such as Healthy Active Arkansas and Uncommon Communities, and academic conferences such as the Nanotechnology for Health Care

Conference. Programs often engage leaders in government, academia, policy and culture to consider a brighter future for our state.

Second, the pastoral campus is located on a portion of Governor Rockefeller's original home and cattle farm. New structures have been erected and historic ones have been renovated to create a premier conference and retreat center. Meeting space can be booked for use by outside groups, and the tranquil, scenic setting, along with Governor Rockefeller's "productive energy" that still permeates the campus, makes it an ideal place for strategic meetings and retreats. 🌲