

# Olson Scholarship reflects Love of the arts...

**By Julianne Endres**

Watertown Area  
Community Foundation

Love stories...they certainly don't always begin with "Once upon a time," or end with "happily ever after..."

Of course, the best kind of love story is one that never ends at all. Some love stories truly stand the test of time ... so much so that even in one's passing, the love continues and becomes a meaningful legacy to others.

Charles (Chuck) and Ruth Olson were married in 1978. Chuck reminisces often about their many travels. "We were gone for nearly every anniversary we ever had," he said, explaining that they only missed the last two anniversaries due to Ruth's poor health. Ruth passed away Dec. 22, 2016.



**Ruth Olson**

Among their travels, the couple visited New York seven times to take in Broadway shows. They had been to New Orleans five times for the love of jazz music, twice to England and four times to Vienna, Austria, where they enjoyed operas, ballets and symphonies.

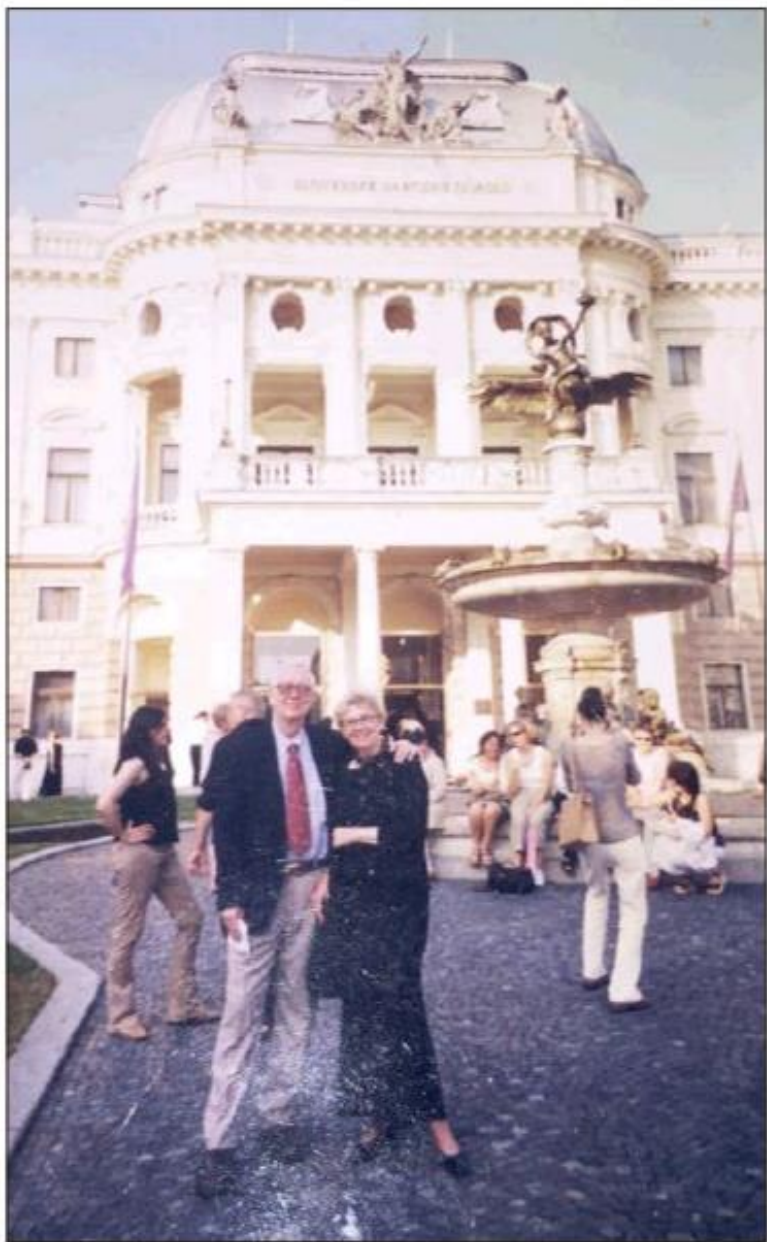
They were typical "hick tourists," Chuck said, but they didn't take the tour bus to see the sites with the rest of them. They



**WACF photo**

Chuck Olson looks at a photograph from a vacation with his wife, Ruth. Olson established a scholarship through the Watertown Area Community Foundation so his wife's love of the arts could live on.





Courtesy photo

Chuck and Ruth Olson pose for a photo before seeing an opera at Bratislava, Slovakia, during one of their trips overseas. The couple shared a love of the arts, and a scholarship has been established in Ruth Olson's name so that love can continue to bloom

ventured out on their own so they could pick and choose, take their time and enjoy their favorite things, especially the arts.

"The arts, basically, is something we always did," he said. Locally, they have been deeply involved with Town Players, attended the Watertown Concert Association series, Symphony concerts when they came here, and, of course, school productions.

Ruth taught in the Watertown School District for more than 40 years (English), before retiring in 2003. "We never had a family," Chuck said. "But she always used to say she had 3,000 kids, referring to her ninth-grade English students."

It was all of the above that made it an easy decision for Chuck to establish a scholarship fund at the Watertown Area Community Foundation in honor of his Ruthie.

"It's really not a memorial," he explained. "And it really doesn't matter that the young people don't know her or me. It's about carrying on her love of literature, language and the arts."

Ruthie's English Scholarship awards \$2,000 per year to the recipient for a total of \$8,000 over four years if the student continues to meet the requirements.

"I hope the recipients get a lot more than the money," he continued. Ruthie was a little girl from Goodwin, S.D. She was a baton twirler in high school. She was a tap dancer. She continued to play piano, violin and the organ. "This is about her traditions carrying on.

"I'm not holding her up on a pedestal," he continued. "I don't want anyone to do that - she wasn't that type of person. But she would really be pleased about this scholarship to carry on her tradition: The

---

"It's really not a memorial. And it really doesn't matter that the young people don't know her or me. It's about carrying on her love of literature, language and the arts."

- Chuck Olson

---

love of arts and education. It's just something I wanted to do," he said.

Chuck, himself, will continue to enjoy the arts, just closer to home. "I'm not traveling anymore because it wouldn't be any fun without her," he said.

He often pulls out an old record from his collection to listen to at home. "If I play a certain song by a certain artist, it's bittersweet," he said. "There's particularly one by English singer Vera Lynn that always brings a tear to my eye: 'We'll Meet Again Some Sunny Day.'"