

Stanford, Charles Whitson, Jr. ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

13 Sept. 1924–19 May 1990

Charles Whitson Stanford, Jr., museum director, was born in [Durham](#) ^[2], the son of Charles Whitson and Mary McIver



Image of Charles Whitson Stanford, Jr., from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Yackety Yack Yearbook, [p.113], published in 1947 by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Presented on

Digital NC. ^[3]Stanford. He was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[4] in 1947, did postgraduate work at [Columbia University](#) ^[5] (1948–49) and [Princeton University](#) ^[6] (1949–53), and served as curatorial assistant at [Colonial Williamsburg, Inc.](#) ^[7], in 1955–56. From 1958 to 1970 he was curator of education at the [North Carolina Museum of Art](#) ^[8]. The museum was then located near the state capitol, and Stanford inaugurated tours for teenagers, senior citizens, newcomers, and working people on lunch breaks.

Stanford conceived of and established the [Mary Duke Biddle Gallery for the Blind](#) ^[9], the first museum sculpture gallery for the blind. He was commended for having "discovered that touching an object, holding it in one's hand, feeling its texture, studying its proportion and examining its physical features produced a sensation of beauty that thrilled the mind and soul of the blind." The reception this gallery received led many other galleries across the United States to follow his example. He frequently lectured on art history on television and radio and in 1968 was one of two Americans invited to address the Soviet Committee of the International Council of Museums in Leningrad and Moscow.

In 1968 Stanford received the North Carolina Award in Fine Arts, and in 1969 he became director of the North Carolina Museum of Art. He also was a member of the executive committee of the [North Carolina Symphony](#) ^[10], the North Carolina Art Society, and the humanities division of the [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction](#) ^[11]; he served on the advisory board of [North Carolina Educational Television](#) ^[12]. He was the author of *Masterpieces in the North Carolina Museum of Art* ^[13] (1966, 1972) and (1976).

Stanford, who never married, was a member of the Presbyterian church. In 1971, while traveling in Greece as a member of the art museum building commission, he fell and broke his leg. It never healed properly, and he was able to function as museum director infrequently thereafter. He retired soon afterwards to his home near [Chapel Hill](#) ^[14].

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