



IT WAS 1986

In the midst of a major national economic recession, Quad City Arts and its volunteers rose to rally around the first annual premier holiday kick-off event — Festival of Trees. What was to be a celebration of joy turned into a celebration of a life well-lived.

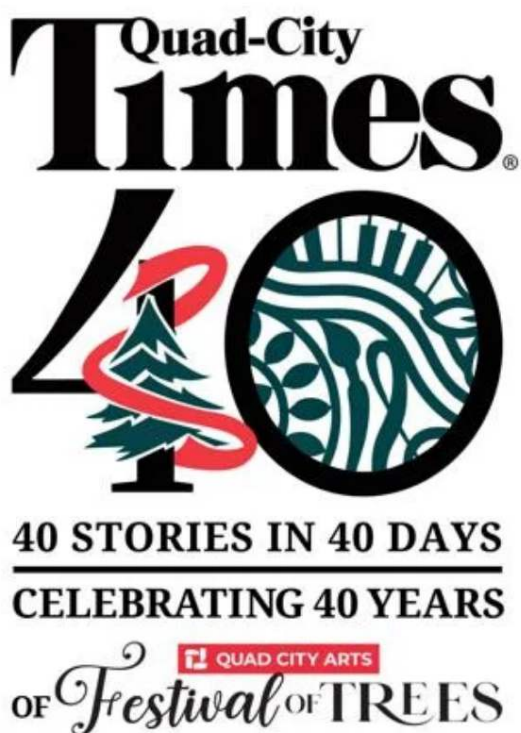
A debonair king of Hollywood was to perform the evening of Nov. 29 at the Adler Theatre in Davenport with his popular show, “A Conversation with Cary Grant” — a storytelling journey through his extraordinary life, followed by questions from the audience. It would have been magical.

Instead, that afternoon, while rehearsing, the world-famous actor suffered a stroke and was rushed to St. Luke’s hospital with his wife by his side. He died a few hours later. The Quad Cities mourned the loss with the rest of the nation.



Linda Bowers, then 37, was busy growing a business, raising a family and helping build this community she loves, and barely noticed the actor’s death ... until she opened the Quad-City Times the next morning to Bill Wundram’s story, headlined “A Legend Dies in Our Arms.” What a dichotomy — the death of a star and the birth of a stellar premier event.

That was the year Bowers started going to Festival of Trees. She considered it the treasure of the Quad Cities largely because of its volunteer heart and support from area businesses. Each year she eagerly awaited the Quad-City Times article about that year’s theme and logo. The morning after the Premiere Party, she would scan the paper for pictures of glamorous attendees and beautifully decorated trees and wreaths.



Now it’s 2025 — the 40th anniversary of the Festival of Trees — and Bowers is board chair of the Cultural Trust.

“I’m deeply invested in sponsoring all the Culture Bright events that kick off the holiday season,” Bowers said. “We want to guarantee their success in both revenue and excellence.” Now 76, Bowers describes herself as “deeply involved in building the community I love, still admiring the gala attire, and still in awe of the generosity of time, talent and treasure from the folks at the Quad-City Times.”

All because Culture Matters Here, and it always will.