

Keeping Ailey on its toes

Chairman brings in big bucks for dance group, her passion

BY MIRIAM KREININ SOUCCAR

IN HER 10 YEARS as chairman of Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Inc., Joan Weill has raised \$75 million for the organization's state-of-the-art building; helped to more than double its annual operating budget, to \$29 million; and more than tripled the amount of funds

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Joan Weill

brought in at its annual opening-night gala. At the same time, she's managed an even harder feat: turning husband Sandy, former chairman of Citigroup, into a dance lover. At this year's gala, on Dec. 1, Ms. Weill, 76, will be honored for her service.

What are you most proud of accomplishing as chair of Ailey?

I'm very proud of our programs like the Ailey camps and other outreach programs. Just recently, on our 50th anniversary, Congress selected us as

cultural ambassadors to the world. I've been at performances in China, Russia and France. To see the audience respond to us as people of the United States, for them to see what we're really like, is so important.

You must get hundreds of requests from nonprofits. Why do you devote so much of your time and resources to Ailey?

I danced a little bit when I was younger, and I saw Judith Jamison

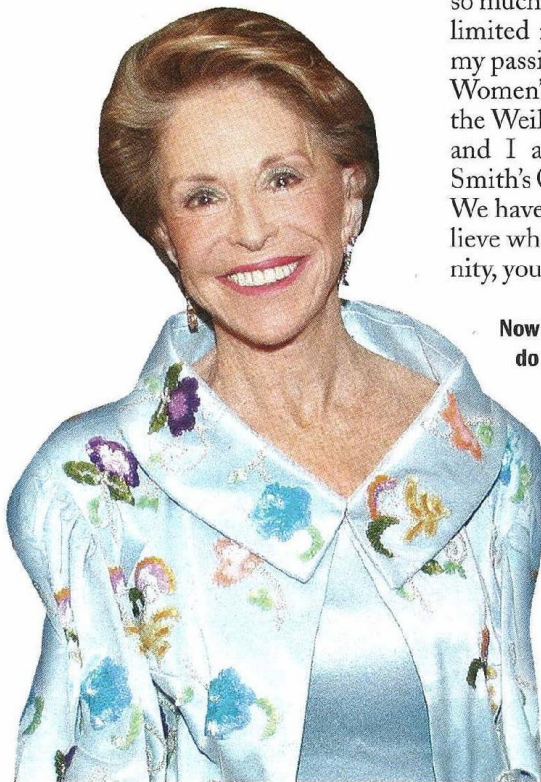
dance, and I realized I should get a better day job. She was such a wonderful role model. [Ms. Jamison is the outgoing artistic director of the dance troupe.] I love the diversity of the board, the audience and the dancers. To see people of all colors and backgrounds just having a wonderful time together is thrilling.

What other causes are you active in?

I believe in focusing, and there is just so much I can do and do well. I have limited myself quite a bit. Ailey is my passion. I'm also involved in the Women's Health Symposium [at the Weill Cornell Medical Center], and I am on the board of Paul Smith's College in the Adirondacks. We have a home up there, and I believe when you're part of a community, you need to give back.

Now that your husband is retired, do you like having him around the house more?

Well, that's been interesting. It's actually better than I thought it was going to be. We're actually having some fun. We travel and devote time to our family. We've been partners for 56 years, so we have a lot in common. Plus, he now goes shopping at the supermarket, which is a miracle! ■



KWAME BRATHWAITE