

A Brief History of the International Whistlers Convention

The Beginning

In 1970, Allen de Hart, director of public affairs at Louisburg College, Louisburg, North Carolina, founded the Franklin County and Louisburg College Folk Festival. The annual Festival emphasized the traditional music and dance and heritage arts and crafts of the southeastern states. It was held in the Louisburg College Auditorium.

Professional performers and competition for amateurs, were part of the Festival, which became national in scope in 1973. In 1974, Darrell Williams from Durham, North Carolina, requested to whistle his original composition of “Little River Blues” rather than sing it. The judges accepted it in a solo vocal category. It was the beginning of what developed into the National Whistlers Convention.

After Williams won again in 1975, de Hart organized and directed a separate whistling festival within the main festival. Instead of it being on stage nightly (which was usually the last Friday and Saturday of each March) with the folk music and dance program, it was scheduled outdoors on Saturday afternoon as the Whistling Contest of the Festival.

Jack Lewis of Raleigh won the championship in 1976 and Bob Winslow of Little Rock, Arkansas, won in 1977 (He was the contest delegate to the Whistle-Off in Carson City, but did not attend). Arnie Solomon of New York City won in 1978. Pat Morgan of Lexington, North Carolina, won in 1979, but Eric Vernon agreed to be the delegate to the Carson City International Whistle-Off. The Raleigh News and Observer reported that Morgan (who imitated a horse whistle among her selections) “won with a whinny.” Bobby Brandon of Wilmington, North Carolina won the championship in 1980 to the cheers of an increasingly large outdoor audience on the west campus of Louisburg College; Maury York of Greenville, North Carolina, won in the classical category. With an expanded program and increased public audience, the College requested the Whistling Contest find a new sponsor.

Convention and Museum

The Franklin County Arts Council, Inc., also founded by Allen de Hart in 1978, accepted the sponsorship of the Whistling Contest. De Hart and the Arts Council changed the name to the National Whistlers Convention (NWC) in the summer of 1980, and the Arts Council opened its official headquarters in downtown Louisburg at 109 North Main Street, the office of the Council’s attorney, Parker Lumpkin.

De Hart had also founded the National Whistlers Museum in 1975; the museum title and the convention title were trademarked by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, D.C. (Numbers 121127 and 1212025). The Museum maintains a collection of rare and significant recordings, books and magazines, photographs, news articles, souvenirs and whistles.

By 1981, the Council began to invite distinguished guest whistlers to conduct seminars and workshops in the public schools and to perform in special public performances at the Convention. In 1982 they were Jason Serinus, San Francisco, California; Fred Newman, New York City; Carlin Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida; and Maury York, Greenville, North Carolina.

In 1981 and 1982, Tobe Sherrill, a commercial design student from Greensboro, North Carolina, won the grand championship at the Convention held in the Franklin County Courthouse, downtown Louisburg. He was the Convention delegate to the International Whistle-Off. National media coverage (wire service and networks) also increased during this period. Marge Carlson, Fullerton, California, was among the guests of honor in 1982. Others were Fred Newman, New York City; and Carlin Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida.

Growth and Expansion

In 1983, the schedule of events expanded from a two-day program to four days, April 13-16, increasing exposure to the school children and special population. Media coverage included all the wire services, NBC and CBS TV media, and a special taping of material for CBS's On the Road with Charles Kuralt for the summer of 1983. By now the Convention had expanded its seminars, workshop, concerts, contest, street fairs, mercantile displays, street dancing, heritage arts and crafts, and historical displays. The Whistle Collectors Society was formed this year to provide a time and place for collectors to meet and share their mutual interest. The council nominated Carlin Morton, the "World's Champion Whistle Collector" from Fort Myers Beach, Florida, for the first member. The 1983 guests of honor were Roy Thoreson, Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Carlin Morton Fort Myer Beach, Florida; Irving Cohen, Oakland, California; Lillian Williams, Clarksville, Arkansas; Fred Newman, New York City; Tobe Sherrill, Greensboro, North Carolina; Neil Wyric, Miami, Florida; and Samuel Brylawski, Washington, D.C.

The Grand Champion for 1983 was Ralph Stecker of Raleigh, North Carolina, and the second-place champion was Irving Cohen of Oakland, California.

Children's Champion

At the 11th Annual Convention, 1984, guests of honor were John W. Hanley, St. Louis, Missouri; Dr. Jack Cohen, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; and Fred Newman, New York City. This year the Convention added a dinner concert with Dr. Jack Cohen presenting the concerts with members of the North Carolina Symphony at the Murphy House in Louisburg.

The Grand Champion for 1984 was Irving Cohen of Oakland, California and the second-place champion was Peter Hasell of New Rochelle, New York. Amy Rose of Louisburg was named the Children's Champion, a new division of participants.

Guests of honor in 1985 were Cliff W. Pratt, Auburn, California; Fred Newman, New York City; Carlin Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida; and Ron McCroby, Cincinnati, Ohio. The dinner concert was held at the Green Hill Country Club and McCroby performed with the backup of Triangle Jazz Ensemble. In 1985 Peter Hassell of New Rochelle, New York, was named Grand Champion and the second-place champion was Joel A. Brandon of Richmond, California. Amy Rose of Louisburg, North Carolina, was named Children's Champion. She received considerable publicity nationally and internationally. She became a remarkable ambassador of good will for Franklin County and Louisburg in her children's radio, TV and personal shows.

Hall of Fame

Purves Pullen, Nut Tree, California; Fred Newman, New York City; and Cliff Pratt, Auburn, California were the guests of honor in 1986 at the 13th annual convention. Pratt was the concert performer. Joel A. Brandon of Richmond, California, was the Grand Champion for 1986 and Daniel Bell of Roseville, California was the second-place champion. Amy Rose of Louisburg, North Carolina, was named Children's Champion. The Lillian Williams Award, presented for the first time in 1986 in memory of "American's Whistling Sweetheart," went to Purves Pullen (stage name of "Dr. Horatio Birdbath"). The Hall of Fame Award, presented for the first time, honored Agnes Woodward for founding Woodward School of Whistling

In 1987, the guests of honor were Fred Newman, New York City, who was the MC; Milton Briggs, Carmichael, California; Carlin Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida; and Peter Hassell, New Rochelle, New York. Briggs was the concert performer. The Grand Champion for 1987 was Joel A. Brandon of Chicago, Illinois, and the second-place champion was Ugo Conti, of El Cerrito, California. Jennifer Simmons of Youngsville, North Carolina, was named the Children's Champion. Milton Briggs of Carmichael, California, received the Lillian Williams Award. The Hall of Fame Award honored Bing Crosby.

Teenage Champions

In 1988 Roy Thoreson of Calgary, Alberta, Canada; Carlin and Luella Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida; Joel A. Brandon, Chicago, Illinois; Peter Hassell, New Rochelle, New York; and Tina Seldin of WRAL-TV 5, Raleigh, North Carolina, who was MC, were the guests of honor at the 15th Annual Convention. Roy Thoreson was the concert performer. Daniel Bell of Sunnyvale, California, was the Grand Champion for 1988 and Gregory N. Smith of Raleigh, North Carolina, was the second-place champion. Mike DeVente of Raleigh, North Carolina, and Patrick Riley of Efland, North Carolina, a duo, were National Teenage Champions, and Amy

Rose of Louisburg, North Carolina, was second-place champion. For the Children's Division, Jennifer Simmons of Youngsville, North Carolina, was Grand Champion and Jeffrey Tillitt of Louisburg, North Carolina, was second-place champion. The Lillian Williams Award was presented to Roy Thoreson of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The Hall of Fame Award honored Lillian Williams.

In 1989 the guests of honor were Robert F. Larson, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Carlin and Luella Morton, Fort Myers Beach, Florida; Peter Hassell, New Rochelle, New York; Cenieth Elmore, Buies Creek, North Carolina; Edith Anderson, Louisburg, North Carolina; Jamie Eller, WVOT-AM Radio, Wilson, North Carolina, MC; and Mitch Hider, Monroe, Oregon. Larson was the concert performer. The National Grand Champion was Sean Lomax of Aiea, Hawaii, and the second-place champion was Ugo Conti of El Cerrito, California. Amy Rose of Louisburg, North Carolina, was the National Teenage Champion and second-place was Tracey Solomon of Louisburg, North Carolina. Terri Long of Louisburg, North Carolina, was the National Children's Champion and Tawonda Glover, of Franklinton, North Carolina, was the second-place champion.

Bob Larson of Minneapolis, Minnesota, received the Lillian Williams Award. The Hall of Fame Award honored Don Robertson and Fred Lowery.

Whistlers in Public Schools

Marge Carlson, Fullerton, California; Robert Larson, Minneapolis, Minnesota; David Harp, San Anseimo, California, who was MC, were the guests of honor in 1990 at the 17th Annual Convention. Marge Carlson was the concert performer. The judges were Edith Anderson, Louisburg, North Carolina; Cenieth Elmore, Campbell University, North Carolina; Charles Johnson, Greensboro, North Carolina; and James Marshall, Raleigh, North Carolina. Gregory N. Smith of Raleigh, North Carolina, was the Grand Champion for 1990 and Sean A. Lomax of Los Angeles California, was the second-place champion. Amy Rose of Louisburg, North Carolina was the National Teenage Champion and Tawonda Glover, Franklinton, North Carolina, was second-place champion. Marge Carlson, of Fullerton California, received the Lillian Williams Award for 1990. The Whistlers Hall of Fame Award went to Purves Pullen of Nut Tree, California.

The guests of honor in 1991 were Scott Alburger, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Milton Briggs, Carmichael, California; Robert F. Larson, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Kenneth Woodward, Raleigh, North Carolina; Cenieth Elmore, Campbell University, North Carolina; Edith Anderson, Louisburg, North Carolina; and Bob Vernon, WRAL-TV, Raleigh, North Carolina, who was MC. Greg Nye Smith, Raleigh, North Carolina, was the National Grand Champion and Mimi Drummond, Horsham, Pennsylvania, was the second-place champion. Suzanne Stafford was the National Teenage Champion and Mark Hodge was the second-place champion both from Louisburg North Carolina. The Children's Champion in 1991 was Jeff Tillitt, Las Vegas, Nevada, and second-place champion was Carrie Murry, Castalia, North Carolina. Barry Rector,

Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, was the International Division Grand Champion, and Danny Gain, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, was the second-place champion. Recipient of the Lillian Williams Award was Bob Larson and of the Hall of Fame Award was Elmo Tanner, Sr.

National School for Whistlers

On April 23-24, 1992, the NWC opened the National School for Whistlers in Louisburg, North Carolina, under the direction of Milton Briggs of Carmichael, California.

Thirteen lucky whistlers enrolled and completed the courses. The NWC, April 23-26, was the largest ever in attendance and contestants. For the first-time, Masaaki Moku, from Osaka, Japan, attended with Mr. and Mrs. Hal Gold of Kyoto, Japan. The Grand Champions for adults were Sean Lomax, Murrieta, California, first-place; Tanguay Desgagne of Quebec, Canada, second-place; and Margot Solberg, Brooklyn, New York, third-place. Other adult winners in classical were first-place, Patty Ediger of Dayton, Oregon; second-place, Michael Cooney, Edmonton, Canada; and third-place Dan Bell of Sunnyvale, California. In popular categories were Madeleine Deslisle of Quebec, Canada; second; Kilgour Shives of Vancouver, Canada; and third, Peter Bennett of Cortland, New York. Allied Arts: first, William Bartley of Kittery, ME; second, L'Vai Kildow of Olympia, Oregon; and third, Dick Shaw of Apopka, Florida.

Young whistlers from the Louisburg area were teenage champions: Suzanne Stafford, first-place; and Anthony Alson, second-place. Other teenagers were Mark Hodge, first in classical and Billy Tillitt, first in popular. For the children, the National Champion was Jeffrey Tillitt, and second-place went to Kirsten Davis (age 7). Other children were Latoia Harris, first in classical, and Sarah Shearon, first in popular. The Lillian Williams award went to Barry Rector of Vancouver, Canada. He was the distinguished guest for the concert on April 24. The highest honor went to Bob Larson, Minneapolis, Minnesota, who received the Whistlers Hall of Fame Award.

Honored guests and judges were Mike Caplan, MC, from Durham, North Carolina; Barry Rector from Vancouver, Canada; Roy Thoreson, from Calgary, Canada; Robert Larson; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Edith Anderson, Louisburg, North Carolina; Milton Briggs, Carmichael, California; James Marshall, Raleigh, North Carolina; and Cenieth Elmore Franklinton, North Carolina.

International Champion

The national grand champion for the NWC, April 22-25, 1993, was Tanquay Desgagne, a Canadian from Sherbrooke, Quebec, and the first whistler outside the United States to receive top honors in the history of the NWC. He had been the second-place grand champ in 1992, a prelude to his eminence. Second-place champion in 1993 was Jason Serinus, Oakland, California, and third-place champion was Michael Cooney, Edmonton, Canada. The teenage national champion was Amy Rose, a freshman at UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and

Elizabeth Burchette of Louisburg as the children's champion. First-place winner in the allied arts was Dick Shaw, Apopka, Florida, and the youngest (5 years) whistler was Michael Caldwell, Bunn, North Carolina. First-place classics went to Tanguay Desgagne, and first-place pops went to Jason Serinus. Second-place teenage champ was Jeff Tillitt and second-place children's champ was Kirsten Davis, both from Louisburg. Mark Hodge, Louisburg, was second-place to Rose in popular music, and Jeff Tillitt was second-place to Rose in classical music.

The Lillian Williams Award was received by Jason Serinus, and the Hall of Fame honors went to famed turn-of-the-century New York whistler Alice Shaw. Bob Larson, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Betty Sylliaasen, Sacramento, California, were directors of the National School for Whistlers. Jack Cohen, classical whistler, and Davis Joachim, guitarist, Montreal, Canada, were distinguished concert guests for April 23, 1993. They also served as judges with Greg Nye Smith, Raleigh, North Carolina; Edith Anderson, Louisburg; and Cenieth Elmore, Franklinton, North Carolina. Mike Caplan of WTVD-TV, Durham, North Carolina was the MC. The competition and concert were held in the new Louisburg College Auditorium, and an arts and crafts show was held outside. The museum display was in Gallery A of the Auditorium.

Children's Duet is Champion

In 1994, the children's national champions were a duet, Tim Pender and Charlie Glover from Franklinton, North Carolina, and second-place was Steven Floyd from Bunn. Teenage national champion was Suzanne Stafford, Louisburg, and second-place was Tony Woodard, Epsom, North Carolina. Together the teenage champs received the Allied Arts Award. First-place for the national adult grand champion was Chris Ullman of Washington, D.C., and second-place was Tanguay Desgagne of Quebec, Canada. Third-place was Marge Carlson from Fullerton, California.

Receiving the Lillian Williams Award for distinction in the art of entertainment was Mitch Hider from Monroe, Oregon. The highest award, Hall of Fame, for a whistler of international recognition went to Roy Thoreson, from Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Directors of the National School for Whistlers were Mitch Hider and Milton Briggs, the latter from Carmichael, California. Performing in concert on April 22, with the Bill Evans Dance Company were Roy Thoreson and Bob Larson, the latter from Mesa, Arizona. The year's museum display was in Gallery B of the College Auditorium, the Music Festival was in the adjoining Norris Theatre, and the Arts and Crafts Show was outdoors. Susan Dahlin, CBS-TV Programmer with WRAL-TV in Raleigh, was Convention MC, and Chris Ullman and Suzanne Stafford performed on the Tonight Show in Los Angeles, May 10, 1994.

Record Number of Contestants

A record number of 30 adults and 30 teenagers and children were the finalists in competition for 1995. Tanguay Desgagne, 34, of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, puckered his way to the grand championship of the 22nd NWC in the College Auditorium April 22. In

addition, he achieved first-place in classical music and first-place in popular music. (He was the 1993 grand champion.) Chris Ullman of Washington, D.C., won second-place as grand champion. Third-place grand champion was Thomas Bryant of Key West, Florida. National teenage champion was Suzanne Stafford, 17, of Louisburg. Kirsten Davis, 10, from Franklin County, won the children's championship. More than twenty-five other awards were presented, five of which were in allied arts where whistling is used as a theatrical and advertising medium. Both Bryan and Desgagne won awards in this category.

The Lillian Williams Award, honoring the entertainer of the year, went to Betty Sylliaasen of Sacramento, California. Two Hall of Fame Awards honored the late Elmer Mullen of Bunn, North Carolina, and Ronnie Ronalde, one of the world's great living whistlers, from New Zealand. Fred Newman was MC. The National School for Whistlers was directed by Mitch Hider. The National Whistlers Museum Display was in the lobby of the College Auditorium. Distinguished concert guests were baritone Steven Herbst and pianist David Fairchild, both from New York City.

International Convention

Always welcoming whistlers from around the world, the 1996 Convention was attended by Ronnie Ronalde, from Silverdale, New Zealand, as a guest performer. He is one of the world's most distinguished whistlers, has performed in Radio City Music Hall and Toronto's 25, 000-seat Grandstand, and among his CDs is "Around the World on a Whistle." At the Convention he received his 1995 Hall of Fame Award. Attending from Germany, was contestant Astrid Hillebrand of Nottuln.

It was also the year the Arts Council officially presented an international award to both men and women. Chris Ullman, Washington, D.C., won the male Grand Championship, and Mary Frances Herndon, Sedalia, Missouri, won the female Grand Championship. Second-place for the men was Steve Herbst, New York City, and second-place for the women was Laura Loftsgaarden from Los Angeles, California. The Teenage Grand Champion was Marco Gualtieri from Dollard Des Ormeaux, Quebec, Canada, and second-place was Steven Floyd from Louisburg, North Carolina. The National Children's Champion was Kirsten Davis from Franklinton, North Carolina. The duet winners were Elaine Clark from Sterling, Colorado, and her daughter Claudia Hutcheon from Spring Lake, North Carolina. The Canadian Championship award went to Tanguay Desgagne from Sherbrooke, Quebec, and second-place to Michael Cooney from Edmonton, Alberta Canada.

MC for the Convention was Roy Thoreson, the Carson City Whistle-Off international champion four times, a world record. The 1996 Hall of Fame Award honored Mitch Hider (who could not attend), who had been the 1982 International Grand Champion in Carson City and who from 1979 to 1984 directed a whistler's festival "Holiday for Lips" in his home state of Oregon. The Lillian Williams Award honored Fred Newman of New York City for his many years as a national entertainer and host of the Disney Channel for top-rated comedy/variety shows. He is

author of MouthSounds and a children's book Zounds, and host of CBS's Livewire.

International Male and Female Winners

In 1997, Joel Brandon, internationally known whistler from Chicago, and former grand champion in 1986 and 1987 of the national Whistlers Convention, was back in Louisburg to receive the Convention's highest award, the Hall of Fame Award in the vocal art of whistling. In 1988 he was among the Convention's guests of honor.

Tanguay Desgagne of Sherbooke, Quebec, Canada, won first-place in the International Whistling Grand Championship for men. His winning songs were Samba and Hungarian Dance, by Brahms. He has also won the Grand Championship in 1993 and 1995. The first place in the International Whistling Grand Championship for women was Mary Frances Herndon of Sedalia, Missouri. Her winning songs were Kiss of Fire Tango, and Symphony #9 From the New World by Dvorak. She also won the 1996 championship. Second-place in the top honors were Michael Cooney of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and Madeleine Deslisle of Quebec, Canada. The International Grand Championship awards for teenagers in first-place went to Tony Woodward, Louisburg, North Carolina, and second-place to Spencer Wright, Southampton, New York. First-place Grand Championship awards for children went to Michael Barimo of Winter Haven, Florida, and second-place went to Angelica Barker of Franklinton, North Carolina. In Allied Arts, awards for firstplace were Michael Barimo in children's category, and Roy Thoreson from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, in the adult category.

The Lillian Williams Award (highest entertainment award in arts associated with the vocal art of whistling) went to Greg Smith of Raleigh, North Carolina. Ruth Olley, a female contestant from Essex, England, received a special award from the Louisburg Chamber of Commerce for having traveled the farthest to attend the Convention. In 1997, Mitch Hider from Monroe, Oregon, was the Convention's Musician-in-Residence for the Franklin County Elementary School classes in a project for "Musical Enrichment for Children." He and Mary Frances Herndon directed the International School for Whistlers. The Jim Marshall Chorale of Raleigh, North Carolina, presented a concert of international music, and the Master of Ceremonies for the competition sessions was Dick Shaw from Apopka, Florida.

Convention's 25th Anniversary

The 25th International Whistlers Convention, April 16-19, 1998 had a major change in programming. For the first time the convention schedule had two days and an evening for prolonged competition. This resulted in the finalists having to be prepared for as many as eight songs instead of two. The Convention was part of a "Happy Whistlers Week" designated by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners and the Governor of North Carolina as for many years in the past.

Honored judges were Milton Briggs, a prolific composer of classical and popular works

for whistlers. From Carmichaels, California, he was also the director of the 1998 International School for Whistlers held on April 16. Other judges were Juanita Williams, a retired music teacher, performer, and world traveler; Joe Shearon, musician and choir member, and member of the Louisburg Town Council; and Edith Anderson, retired musician of choral music and music theory with the Governor's Award of excellence. The latter three judges were from Louisburg, North Carolina. From Franklinton, North Carolina was another judge, Cenieth Elmore, a retired composer, teacher, and concert performer from Campbell University; Mitch Hider, from Monroe, Oregon was the Convention's Master of Ceremonies. He is a professional whistler and has written a history of whistling.

Children's International Whistling Champions were first-place Blair Haggett of Alexandria, Virginia, and second-place to Joseph Pellegrino of Franklinton, North Carolina. Teenage International Whistling Champions were first-place Michael Barimo of Winter Park, Florida, and second-place to James Smith of Louisburg, North Carolina. In the adult division for the International Whistling Champions were males Tanguay Desgagne of Sherbrooke, Canada for first-place, and Chris Ullman of Arlington, Virginia in second-place. The female champion for first-place was Mimi Drummond of Horsham, Pennsylvania, and second-place was Astrid Hillebrand of Nottuln, Germany.

The whistler who traveled the farthest was Leo Eide from Jarfalla, Sweden. Mary Frances Herndon of Sedalia, Missouri, was winner of the Lillian Williams Entertainment Award. Sidney Stafford of Louisburg received the 25th Anniversary Special Service Award. In the Division of Allied Arts, the first-place teenage winner was Michael Barimo of Winter Park, Florida. For the adult females, first-place was Kathleen Radspinner of Hughesville, Pennsylvania, and second-place went to Norma Pugh of Austin, Texas. Adult men were firstplace winner John Ross of Silver Spring, Maryland, and second-place to Clinton Hyson of Seat Pleasant, Maryland. Milton Briggs won the 1998 Hall of Fame Award, the Convention's highest honor for a leader in the musical art of whistling.

School for Whistlers Expanded

Directed by Mary Frances Herndon of Sedalia, Missouri, the International School for whistlers was extended to three sessions for April 15 and 16, 1999. Competition for the 26th International Whistlers Convention began on the afternoon of April 16, included the evening, and all day April 17. The closing luncheon was at noon on April 18. Master of Ceremonies for the Convention was Mitch Hider from Monroe, Oregon. Sid Stafford, sponsored by WHLQ and WYRN Radio in Louisburg, portrayed Benjamin Franklin to honor Franklin County. Judges were Beth Isley, Brian Miller, Mark Campbell and Cenieth Elmore, all highly qualified musicians and from Franklin County.

Winners in the Children's Competition were Whitney Harris (third-place); Joseph Cutchins III (second-place); and Blair Haggett, from Alexandria, Virginia (first-place). Jeff Tillitt was teenage champion, from Louisburg. Female adult champions were Patsy Ediger,

Dayton, Oregon (third-place); Betty Sylliaasen, Sacramento, California (second-place); and Mimi Drummond, Horsham, Pennsylvania (first-place). Male champions were Robert Stemmons, Jenks, Oklahoma (third-place); Kilgour Shives, Vancouver, Canada (second-place); and Christopher Ullman, Arlington, Virginia (first-place). In allied arts female winners were Patsy Ediger (second-place) and Mimi Drummond (first-place). Male winners were Howlett Smith, Los Angeles, California (second-place), and Robert Stemmons (first-place).

James Gardner, from Bateau Bay, Australia, was the contestant who had traveled the farthest; Christopher Ullman was the Lillian Williams Award winner for the whistling entertainer of the year, designated by the board of directors of the Arts Council; and the highest award of all-the Hall of Fame Award went to Betty Sylliaasen from Sacramento, California.

Convention's 27th Anniversary

International whistler Barry Rector of Coquitlam, B.C. Canada was the director of the International School for Whistlers during the 27th International Whistlers Convention April 13-16, 2000. Master of Ceremonies was Mitch Hider from from Monroe, Oregon. Blair Haggett, from Alexandria, Virginia was the Children's Grand Champion, a repeat for three years. Second-place in the Competition was Joseph Cutchins, III from Franklinton, N.C., and third-place was Laura Green from Raleigh, N.C., Teenage Grand Champion was Jeff Tillitt from Louisburg. (There was not a second-place or third-place champion). Adult female champion was Emily Eagen, International Grand Champion from Cincinnati, Ohio. Second-place was Laura Loftsgaarden from Los Angeles, California, and third-place was Norma Pugh from Austin, Texas. Adult male champion was Chris Ullman, International Grand Champion from Arlington, Virginia. Second-place was Michael Cooney from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and Third-place was Yoshiharo Takamoku from Osaka, Japan. (Takamoku received the Town of Louisburg Award for having traveled the farthest to the Convention.) Michael Cooney received a special award in honor of his outstanding production of Millennium World Whistling Championship September 11, 1999 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Patty Ediger from Dayton, Oregon won the Lillian Williams Entertainment Award. The highest award presented was the Hall of Fame Award to Marge Carlson of Fullerton, California. She died in September, 1999 at the age 73. She began whistling at age three and toured internationally as a concert singer and whistler.

International News Coverage

The 28th International Whistlers Convention was held April 19-21 in 2001. Mitch Hider of Monroe, Oregon was the lead instructor for the International School for Whistlers and Master of Ceremonies for the Convention. The International male grand champions were Michael Cooney, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (1st place); Steven Herbst, New York City (2nd place); and Kilgour Shives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (3rd place). International female grand

champions were Emily Eagen, Cincinnati, Ohio (1st place); Mary Frances Herndon, Sedalia, Missouri (2nd Place); and Stephanie Von Furstenberg, Zurich, Switzerland (3rd place).

Teenage champions were Joshua Moore (male), Castalia, and Christian Leonard (female), Louisburg, both from North Carolina. Among the children's championships were Tre Cutchins (1st place) Franklinton, Casey Aycock, Louisburg (2nd place); and Laura Ann Green (3rd place), all from North Carolina. The 2001 Hall of Fame Award was presented to Mary Frances Herndon of Sedalia, Missouri; and the Lillian Williams Award (for long-term professional performances) was presented to Michael Cooney of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Stephanie Von Furstenberg was recognized for traveling the longest distance and received the Town of Louisburg Award. The Washington Post provided international coverage.

The 29th International Whistlers Convention was held April 17-21, 2002. The winners for adult International Grand Champions are Steven Herbst, male, 45, from New York City, New York, a vice president of Bernard Hodes Group (an advertising agency). His winning numbers were "Danny Boy" and Hungarian Rhapsody # 2". The female adult Grand Champion was Carole Skinner, 62, from Miller, South Dakota. Her winning selections were "Time Was" and "The Swan." She is a retired rural mail carrier. Second place for adults were Dan Gilliland, male, 45, from Dadeville, Alabama and Betty Sylliaasen, female, 77, from Sacramento, California. Third place for the adults were Ernest Barreto, male, 33, from Centreville, Virginia and Patty Ediger, female, 55, from Dayton, Oregon.

Teenage Grand Champion was Spencer Wright, male, 17, from Santa Cruz, California. The Children's Grand Champion was Blair Haggett, male, 12, from Alexandria, Virginia, and second place was Tre Cutchens, male, 11, from Franklinton, North Carolina.

Other awards were the Hall of Fame Award, the Convention's highest, given to Dick Shaw, a Navy veteran, 76, from Apopka, Florida. He is president of the International Association of Whistlers and editor of Whistlers' Notes. The Lillian Williams Achievement Award was presented to Stanley Dalrymple, male, 80, for 65 years of promoting whistling nationally, touring as a whistler. He is from Thomasville, North Carolina.

30th Anniversary

The IWC celebrated its diamond jubilee in 2003. Contestants and non-contestants represented 37 states and five foreign countries. Two of the latter had grand championship winners: David Morris from Dobcross, Oldham, England was the male adult champion, and Cal Fenwick, was the male teenage champion from Kirkfield, Ontario, Canada. The female adult grand champion was Carole Skinner, from Miller, South Dakota, and who retained her title from 2002; the female teenager was Christian Leonard, from Louisburg, North Carolina, and who retained her title from 2002.

Second place male adult winner was Steven Herbst, from New York City, New York, and the female adult was Carole Kaufman, from Pasadena, California. Third place male adults was a tie of Ernest Barreto of Centerville, Virginia and Terry Rappold of Harahan, Louisiana. Third

place female adult was Mimi Drummond, from Hersham, Pennsylvania. For the children, the grand champion was Casey Aycock, from Louisburg, North Carolina. Second place was Ashleigh Kibbe, from Youngsville, North Carolina.

The Lillian Williams Entertainer/Achiever of the year Award was presented to Steven Herbst, from New York City for his outstanding record of public performances and media blitz. Jason Serinus, from Oakland, California received the Hall of Fame Award, the Convention's highest honor.

Whistling adult students in the School for Whistlers numbered 24. The instructors were Mitch Hider of Monroe, Oregon and Milton Briggs of Carmichael, California. Among the highlights of the Convention was the exceptional coverage by the media. Included were CBS (for 4 days), the results of which was a feature of the Sunday Morning program May 4, 2003; BBC (3 days) from England; PBS preparing a documentary, local TV stations representing ABC and NBC; and dozens of newspaper reporters. A special activity at the Convention was the availability of a first-day U.S. postal stamped envelope honoring the 30th Anniversary of the IWC and the 100th year of the Wright Brothers first flight.

Documentary Film on Whistling

A highlight of the 31st Convention was the filming of a documentary, "Pucker Up: The Art of Whistling," by David Heilbronner and Katie Davis of New York City. Major TV networks again covered the competition on April 23-24, 2004. Contestants and non-contestants represented 36 states and 4 foreign countries. Geert Chatrou of Mierlo, The Netherlands, was the male grand champion. His winning classical song was "Recordarder Concerto in C- Minor by Vivaldi, and his popular song was "Finger Prints." The female grand champion was Sandra Henzler of Fort Collins, Colorado. Her classical song was "LaTraviata Forte" by Verdi and her popular piece was "Wishing You Were Somehow Here." Teenage grand champions were: Cal Fenwick of Kirkfield, Ontario, Canada, whose winning songs were "Blue Danube Waltz" by Strauss and "Over the Rainbow;" and Malia French of West Jordan, Utah, whose winning songs were "Gira Con Me Questa Notte" by Quarannotto, and "I Dreamed a Dream." Second place male and female adult champions were Steven Herbst of New York City, and Carole Anne Kaufman of Pasadena, California. Second place for teenagers were Todd Dickerson of Hickory, North Carolina, and Casey Aycock of Louisburg, North Carolina. Winners in the childrens' division were Emily Edwards, first place, from Louisburg, North Carolina, and Queena Stewart of Ithaca, New York.

Winners of the Lillian Williams (Entertainer of the Year) Award were Steven Herbst of New York City and Carole Skinner from Miller, South Dakota. The Hall of Fame Award, the highest award of the Convention, went to Patty Ediger of Dayton, Oregon.

The Capacity Year

The year of 2005 (April 21-24) will be remembered as the capacity year. Both contestants and whistling students for the school reached the limits of time and space. Contestants and visitors were from China, Japan, Thailand, India, Canada, Brazil, The Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. Thirty-two states were represented.

Among the highlights of the Convention was the North Carolina premiere of "Pucker Up: The Fine Art of Whistling" in the Norris Theatre on the Louisburg College Campus. Hall of Fame Award went to Barry Rector of Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada. The Entertainer of the Year Awards (honoring Lillian Williams) were Steve Herbst of New York City, NY, and Phyllis Heil of Hickory, NC. Male first place grand champion was Geert Chatrou from Mierlo, The Netherlands, whose winning music was "Fete de la Belle" and "Concerto in C Major;" and female champion was Sandra Henzler from Fort Collins, Colorado, with "Poor Wandering One" and "Queen of the Night Revenge Aria." The teenage champion was Todd Dickerson of Hickory, NC. His song was "Air des Bijoux," and the children's champion was Emily Edwards of Louisburg, NC, with "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

After the 2005 Convention, the Franklin County Arts Council, sponsors of the Convention, realized that the council had to reorganize for improved service to the Convention's participants, plan for additional space for the school, increase the hours of renting and leasing the auditorium and facilities, receive additional financial support, and acquire additional volunteer help from the Louisburg community. But the delay did not prevent the awarding of two Entertainers of the Year, Geert Chatrou of The Netherlands and Phyllis Heil of Hickory, NC, USA: and the Hall of Fame Award to Mimi Drummond of Horsham, PA, USA on April 17, 2006. With more time to plan, the regular Convention will be held again on April 18-22, 2007.

The Record Attendance Year

The 2007 IWC set a record of attendance from whistlers and visitors to Louisburg. Part of the reason was the two-year wait and the changes in planning of events. For the latter, the Grand Opening Concert of choirs and soloists singing and whistling increased attendance, both from whistlers and visitors and from residents of the Louisburg area. There would have been more attending the school and competition if the IWC volunteers had more time and financial support to accommodate those on a waiting list. Changes in 2007 included location of the school to the downtown Training Center, more lodging in private homes, national anthems before each whistler performed from each nation, and a Saturday night reunion honoring whistlers who had not attended for a few years. Top championships for children and teenagers and the female adult were from Japan, more than ever from another nation. Steven Herbst, from New York City, received the Hall of Fame Award. Phyllis Heil from Hickory, NC and Tom Bryant from Saint Petersburg, FL received Entertainers of the Year Awards.

Convention Held in Japan

The 2008 IWC July 18-21 was another first in IWC history. For the first time, the competition was held outside Louisburg, NC, USA, in Japan. The Japan Whistlers' Federation (JWF) was the producing and host organization, working closely with the FCAC. In addition to the standard male and female adult categories, and the children and teen categories, a Senior category was offered for the first time. Geert Chatrou of the Netherlands won International Male Grand Championship; International Female Grand Championship was won by Carole Anne Kaufman, USA. Mitch Hider, long-time MC of the convention, filled that role again in Japan. Lillian Benton, chair of the Board of the FCAC, represented the Arts Council and presented the Entertainer of the Year Awards and the Hall of Fame Award. Named Male Entertainer of the Year was Geert Chatrou, the Netherlands, and Female Entertainer of the Year: Kimiko Wakiyama, Japan. Bobbejaan Schoepen of Belgium was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Many long hours by a dedicated Federation and convention committee gave everyone who attended this 2008 IWC memories to relive and cherish.

Date January 1 2009