



## International Festivals & Events Association

### **John Geisler** **1994 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee** **Formerly of Saint Paul Winter Carnival**



IFA Founding President, John Geisler, got his start as Executive Director of the Aberdeen, S.D. Jaycees in 1946, which sponsored the South Dakota Snow Queen Festival. From 1952 – 1970, Geisler managed the St. Paul Winter Carnival. It was there that he helped found IFA and became its first President.

He and other early IFA members gained a lot from exchanging information and developing contacts across the country. “And I think today’s overseas factor is amazing,” he said.

Geisler felt that the Winter Carnival served as a lightning rod for the fledgling industry as they hosted 12 national TV shows including Ed Sullivan, Dinah Shore, Gary More and Steve Allen. The festival also brought in Omar Sharif to play bridge at a tournament which drew people from five states.

“People don’t think of things like bridge, but festivals need to enlarge their base or go to a higher level.”

Geisler also served as a Public Affairs Executive for the Hamms Brewing Co, a lobbyist for the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce and Executive Director of the St. Paul Convention & Visitors Bureau. Named Minnesota Tourism’s 1985 Man of the Year, Geisler helped start the Minnesota Festivals & Events Association after he retired from the Convention & Visitors Bureau in 1986.