



INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS & EVENTS ASSOCIATION

FOUNDATION

THE CAROLYN &
LEE CRAYTON

LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP



When Carolyn and Lee Crayton relocated to Macon, Georgia in 1970 little did they realize in their wildest imaginations what an impact this move would have upon their lives and the lives of others.

From the beginning of her arrival in Macon, Carolyn was awed by the beauty of the incredibly lovely Yoshino cherry trees and their pink and white blossoms. Eventually, she and Lee were introduced to Mr. and Mrs. William A. Fickling, Sr., the persons responsible for the trees being a part of the city's landscape. She prevailed upon Mr. Fickling to plant cherry trees along the right-of-way in her neighborhood. Convincing the local power company to dig the holes and a department store to provide the fertilizer, she and Lee persuaded their entire neighborhood to volunteer to plant the trees. This initial effort resulted in more than 360,000 donated cherry trees being planted in Bibb County throughout the years that followed, and, as a result, Macon is blanketed in a pink haze each spring.

In 1974, Carolyn was instrumental in having Macon become one of the first affiliates in the country of Keep America Beautiful, and her abilities to entice community leaders and volunteers to support and fund the program are legendary.

Carolyn wanted to thank Mr. Fickling for his generosity toward making Macon a more beautiful place in which to live so in 1981 she organized a group of volunteers

to plan a weekend celebration of thirty events to demonstrate the community's appreciation. The weekend was enormously successful and the community responded with such enthusiasm, the group decided to make this an annual event. Using the Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful Commission as the primary sponsoring organization, Carolyn used her amazing vision, skills, and talents to found the world renowned Cherry Blossom Festival with its motto "Love, Beauty, and International Friendship." The fact that the Yoshio cherry tree is indigenous to Japan worked in perfectly with the fact that Macon was home to three Japanese companies-YKK, Texprint, and TKG. The Japanese community in Macon and the state were delighted.

Realizing that she needed additional training in order to promote and operate a successful festival, in 1983 Carolyn began to attend International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA) meetings. She also requested the fledgling Cherry Blossom Festival Board to permit her to gain her CFEE (Certified Festival & Event Executive) professional certification through the IFEA. Frequently, board members reached into their own pockets to pay her registration fees because the festival had no money.

Never one to enter anything halfheartedly, Carolyn soon became a familiar face at IFEA's annual meetings and workshops. Meanwhile, she was encouraging other festivals to realize the value of participating in this international organization. She was diligent in ensuring that Macon's Cherry Blossom Festival entered as many of the IFEA award categories as possible, and she usually



returned home from annual meetings with an array of Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards. As she became more and more involved in international festival activities, she frequently was asked to lead workshops at IFEA meetings. Many times members of her board accompanied her to these annual IFEA meetings.

Carolyn, always willing to assist other festivals, began the popular festival exchange program several years ago. She regularly is a guest judge at festival parades and events such as The (Indianapolis) 500 Festival, Fiesta San Antonio, Pasadena Tournament of Roses, Greeley Stampede, Kentucky Derby Festival, Gator Bowl Queen and Princess Pageant, and the National Football Hall of Fame Festival, to name a few.

The citizens of Macon wholeheartedly embraced the Cherry Blossom Festival and during her events (most of them being free) Macon traditionally welcomed state and national dignitaries, international guests from more than 25 countries (including seven sister cities), and guests from other festivals. The festival was named one of the Top 100 Events in North America, in the Top 75 Events by Senior Group Traveler, and in Top 20 Events in the Southeast.

Upon her retirement in 2002, Carolyn was named Founder, President, and CEO Emeritus of the Keep Macon/ Bibb Beautiful Commission and the International Cherry Blossom Festival and remains on the boards of both organizations. She has/currently serves on many additional local, state, national and international boards and foundations including the IFEA President's Council and IFEA Foundation Board of Directors; Keep America Beautiful, Inc., Board of Directors; National Arbor Day Foundation Board of Trustees; State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs; the Museum of Aviation Board of Directors at Robins Air Force Base; Middle Georgia Technical College Board of Trustees; and Middle Georgia State College Foundation Board of Trustees.

Throughout her career Carolyn has received more than forty-five prestigious awards and honors including the IFEA Hall of Fame; Queen Mother Award, Keep Britain Tidy; Japanese-American Appreciation Award; Lady Bird

Johnson Award, Keep America Beautiful; Woman of the Year Award, Keep Georgia Beautiful (now the Carolyn Crayton Award); Who's Who Among American Women; Georgia Festival Director of the Year; Gracious Lady of Georgia; Woman of Distinction, Girl Scouts of America; and Honorary Colonel, Air Logistics Center, Robins Air Force Base. The KMBBC and CBF headquarters were given by YKK Corporation to honor Carolyn and there are two awards named in her honor.

Lee Crayton was greatly admired and loved by all who knew him. His life's story is an inspiration especially to his family and friends. Upon graduating from high school as valedictorian of his senior class in his hometown of Concord, North Carolina, he proudly answered the call to serve his country during World War II. He enlisted in what was known in WWII as the United States Army Air Forces (later named United States Air Force) and quickly advanced to crew chief on P-38's and B-29's. After the war, he enrolled in the School of Textile Engineering at North Carolina State University and graduated with honors. His career path rapidly advanced in the textile industry, and he became recognized as a leader in the areas of finance and cost management. Textile companies competed for his expertise, and he moved his family from North Carolina, to Tennessee, to Georgia. Lee thoroughly enjoyed his chosen life's work and actually retired twice - first from Bibb Manufacturing Company and later from Boeing Aircraft Company. Surprisingly, this brought together the two career fields in which he excelled - textiles and aircraft.

Carolyn will be the first one to tell you that none of her career would have been possible without the loving support, dedication, and encouragement of her husband and lifelong partner, Lee. His pride in her and her accomplishments were evident in every facet of their lives. Because of his calm and quiet demeanor, he was frequently referred to by friends as "Saint Lee." He was one of those unique individuals who was "comfortable in his own skin," and his family and friends deeply valued and respected his opinions and advice. Lee passed away September 13, 2015.

Carolyn and Lee have a son and a daughter, four grandchildren, and two great-granddaughters.