



Publicity
and Finances

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IFEA 50th Anniversary History

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The two issues that charter members in attendance at the first annual meeting of the then Festival Managers Association in New York City on October 31st, 1956 were most concerned about were publicity and finances.

The four guest speakers at the luncheon, held in a ballroom at New York's Park Sheraton Hotel, gave the assembled managers some valuable tips on how to get publicity – what a later generation would call marketing and brand identity – for their festivals. The four speakers agreed on several basic strategies.

They advised the managers to set firm festival dates six months in advance of the actual event and to call local and state media frequently to remind them of that date. The travel and entertainment media representatives urged the festival managers to submit complete reports of festival events to their local media on a timely basis, including photographs. 'Know your media' was a message that all four media representatives repeated.

In advice that presaged the electronic media age, the four media representatives gave delegates advice on how to get network television coverage of their festivals. Network television in 1956 was just beginning to supplant radio as a national entertainment medium. The media representa-

tives, two of whom worked for television networks, advised the festival manager to go to the owner of their local network affiliate for advice on how to get network coverage.

When it came to financing festivals, the second issue that was of most concern to festival executives in 1956, the managers themselves had numerous ideas to share. John Geisler of the St. Paul Winter Carnival and Roy Erickson of the neighboring Minneapolis Aquatennial told the group how they raised money for the two Twin Cities festivals through the sale of booster buttons. J.H. Van Aernam, chairman of the Albany Tulip Festival, related the story of how the festival canceled a social ball that made no money and replaced it with a very profitable community dance.

Jack Batten, executive director of the Wichita Mountain Easter Sunrise Service in Lawton, Oklahoma, described how his group forged an association with the local United Fund, while Dr. Alfred Shoemaker, director of the Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival in Bethel, Pennsylvania told how his group sold regional food and craft ware to help finance the festival.

Several of the festival managers spoke of their experiences in booking and attracting name entertainment to their festivals,

including Charles Gillett of the Summer Festival in New York City. Jack Golbert, director of the Festival of Seven Arts in Pike, New Hampshire, told of how his festival greatly reduced the cost of providing professional entertainers by block booking acts.

Other festival managers shared their financing ideas with colleagues. Joe Mickler, executive officer of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla Pirate Festival, related how his festival relied on a paying membership plan which restricted attendance at festival social functions, but was so popular that there were waiting lists. Reynolds Andricks, managing director of Fiesta San Jacinto in San Antonio, discussed the role of float sponsorship in his festival's popular annual parade.

How to finance festival events remained a staple of IFA meetings from then on. Madeline Neupert, who was active in IFA throughout the 1960s and served as the Association's president in 1963, recalled that one of the great benefits of membership was the opportunity to learn how colleagues raised money for their festivals.

"The people from the Minneapolis Aquatennial gave me the idea of having the local bank sell festival tickets at their branches," Neupert said. "We controlled the tickets, but they did the bookkeeping."