



International Festivals & Events Association

HERB MELLENEY **2007 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee**



Herb Melleney has a very unique connection with the IFEA because for many years he was the IFEA!

As one of the founding members of what was then called the “International Festivals Association” (IFA), Herb provided executive leadership for more than 26 years, then served as the association’s first full-time Executive Director from 1984 to 1988. On top of that, Herb has made a tremendous contribution to the event industry.

In his 22-years as Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Festival of States, Herb led the organization to national fame through the Champions on Parade Field Show, featuring top out-of-state bands in field competition. In 1969, he initiated the Festival’s Illuminated Night Parade and in 1971 created the National Flag Pageant, a history of the United States depicted through music and presentation of the various American flag changes. For a number of years, the National Flag Pageant was taken on the road to other festivals around the country.

Herb’s creativity resulted in several other festival events that have been widely replicated throughout the nation. The Clown Alley program, teaching youngsters the art of being a clown, was started in 1978, along with a marathon race. The Second Time Arounders Marching Band was begun in 1983 for people of all ages who previously played and/or marched in a high school band. It has now grown to over 500 members, and is known as the “Official Festival of States Marching Band.”

Herb’s approach to the annual coronation of the Festival of States Sungoddess was also unique and dramatic. In a pageant not typically associated with royalty coronations, Herb marched a full high school marching band through the coronation auditorium, creating a spectacularly dramatic event climax.

Herb’s legacy in the festival business is probably most appropriately focused on his dedication to high school music education programs. Through the field, marching, jazz and stage band competitions he created, thousands of music students were able to enjoy recognition of their excellence and achievements. To this day, Herb is remembered by now grown-up band students who will never forget their participation in the Festival of States competitions.

“I have known Herb Melleney since 1969,” said Ray Gove, retired band director of the Long Prairie Marching Ambassadors from Long Prairie, Minnesota. “The Long Prairie High School Band, which I directed at that time, was invited to the 1970 Festival of States in St. Petersburg, Florida and Herb Melleney was the Executive Director. That festival and the opportunity to meet Herb was the greatest boost to my career as a band director that I can ever recall. Not only did we participate in the 1970 festival, but we returned to the Festival of States five more times in my 36 years as the Long Prairie High School band director. Why? Because of Herb Melleney.

Herb was a dedicated festival director, but he was really special to the bands and the kids that participated in his festival.

He was not your usual festival director, where once a band was invited you were on your own. Herb was in contact with us before, during and after the festival. He is the only executive director that I know who personally traveled to the towns after the festival to present the winning band their awards. He came to our town in central Minnesota at least four times to share our excitement with the school and community who we represented at the Festival of States. To Herb, the bands and the kids were the “stars of the show” in St. Petersburg. I learned more from Herb and the band directors that Herb put me in contact with, than any other source. Herb Melleney was a band director’s friend, a band director’s mentor, and one heck of a festival director at the same time. I could give you a list of band directors as long as my arm that would agree with me.”

During his career as a festival director, Herb was often called upon to lead seminars and workshops on various areas of festival management during the IFA conference. He was also kept busy with requests for his expertise from other developing festivals and events. Herb was very generous with his time and talents, and welcomed calls from IFA members requesting advice and direction. He was instrumental in assisting many small festivals in their start-up and growth periods.

In 1984, following the sudden death of volunteer IFA Executive Director, Ken Walstad, Herb was asked by the IFA board to take over the reins of the Association. He agreed, and for a minimal salary of \$15,000 a year and a budget for two part-time staffers, he moved the headquarters for IFA to St. Petersburg, Florida. While modestly admitting that he “furnished the office out of his own pocket”, he made a great personal contribution of his time and talents to take IFA to the next level of growth. He was extremely successful in increasing membership to over 300 members, and dedicated a great deal of time and effort to supporting the growth of small festivals throughout the nation.

In addition to his IFA leadership, Herb served on the boards of several Florida festivals associations during his career, sharing his knowledge and expertise in the area of festival management.

As a footnote to Herb’s induction to this year’s IFEA Hall of Fame, 2008 marks the first time that the 550 member Awesome, Original Greater St. Petersburg Second Time Arounders Marching Band will appear in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

If you ask Herb to reflect back on his festival and event career, it is the organization of musicians, young and old, into “One More Time” marching bands, that live in his fondest memories! Having been adopted by over a dozen top festivals worldwide, Herb’s all volunteer marching band concept has created a lasting legacy for thousands of performers and hundreds of thousands of festival-goers for years to come!