

Celebrate the Fellows!

Conventions are like state or county fairs: it seems they're the same year after year, and yet, if you compare this year's to the one a few years ago, there will be small differences. But sometimes, significant changes take place between one fair and the next.

Until this year, the social highlight of the annual convention was the President's Gala. A black tie dinner, with all that entails - including formal dresses and tuxedos - along with meeting the new president and witnessing the investiture of Fellows, was the grand finale. This year we tried something different. The events of the Gala were separated, some being added to other events, some becoming new events. Instead of being among the last events, the investiture of Fellows was moved to Tuesday evening, and the introduction of Distinguished Members was moved to the opening general session Wednesday morning.



When the new format was presented to the College of Fellows board of directors last January, it sounded good. We knew a lot of members saw the Gala as the high point of the convention, but the cost made it difficult for many members to attend this great event. This year, part of the plan was to make the presentations of various awards more visible and more accessible to more members. The investiture of Fellows would be open to all, at no charge; the Celebration of Fellows, a social event following the investiture, would cost only \$35; and many awards would be presented at the annual meeting.

As the months went by, I began to have some reservations. The convention schedule, which is so tight it always irritates someone, put the investiture up against the welcome reception, and I feared it would be hard to pry people away from the party. The location of the Celebration presented two potential problems: attendees had to submit their names ahead of time for a background check, and it was in a different building.

As it turned out, the new format was a great success. The scheduling of the investiture and the introduction of Distinguished Members made those events more accessible and more affordable than before. Even though the investiture began before the welcome reception was over, registered attendance was 227, and more than that attended. Attendance at the annual meeting was 291, and I suspect there were three hundred or more people at the opening session. Not only was the attendance good, but making these two of the first events gave members the rest of the week to congratulate the honorees.

The weather was good, so the short walk from the welcome reception to the Celebration of Fellows, at the top of the Baltimore World Trade Center, presented no problem. The walk itself became an event due to the surprise appearance of a piper who led the procession from the investiture to the Celebration of Fellows. The piper was Mike Young, former president of the Denver Chapter and part of the group that assembled Ann Baker's Fellowship submittal. On his own, he decided the new Fellows should be piped in, and he made it happen. I was reminded of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Chapter's award night the year I was chapter president. I've always loved bagpipes, and our chapter awards committee arranged for one to lead us from the lobby to the theater. I'd like to see a piper as part of every Celebration!

Another break from tradition occurred during the investiture. In the past, endorsement letters remained confidential, so most Fellows did not know who wrote letters or what they said. This year, some of those who wrote letters were asked to say a few words about the Fellows they endorsed, making the investiture much more personal.



Thanks to the Institute board members and staff who proposed the new format (and invited the Blue Angels), the formal social activities were a great success. Attendance at the Celebration was 173 this year, and I'm sure that elimination of the security check will increase attendance in the future. I'll look for you there next year in St. Louis!

Sheldon Wolfe, FCSI
Chancellor, CSI College of Fellows



Invasion of Fellows!



Four jolly good Fellows



View from the Top of the World



2014 Jury of Fellows