

# From Deep in the Heart of Texas: Convention 2006

By Nancee Rogers

IWC's 21st convention, held in San Antonio July 6 - 9, 2006, was a fabulous convention overflowing with favorite pieces of willow and oodles of Texas hospitality! Many convention goers were quite stylish with cowboy boots, spurs, and Stetson hats! Speaking of hats, I had fun watching the various ones Franklin Ladner, convention co-chair, wore throughout the events. From the cowboy hat and sombrero, which one expects to see in Texas, to the snappy German mountain-climbing hat at the banquet, Franklin was the consummate picture of the diversity of San Antonio and all it has to offer!

Most of the 100 or so registered attendees arrived at the St. Anthony, a gorgeous vintage hotel filled with crystal chandeliers, on Thursday. They were greeted by the "Willow Amigos", friends and family of the Ladners, who assisted people in whatever way possible. The littlest Amigos, who were too cute for words, also were raffle helpers throughout the weekend and an absolute joy to watch.

Thursday evening was kicked-off with a lecture by Don LaFont, M.D., titled "My Favorite Willow Things". Being a retired pediatrician, Don's favorite things are infant feeders, pap boats, and invalid feeders. He shared pictures of many of those very early willow infant feeders, usually unmarked pieces,

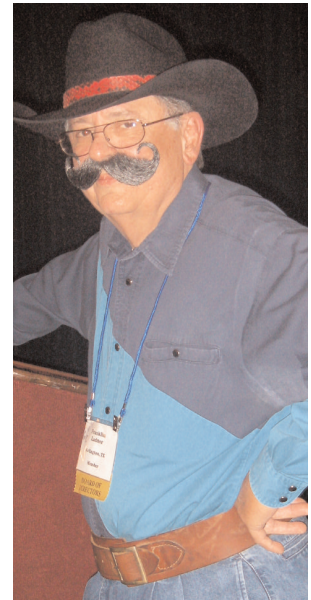


decorated with a pale Broseley pattern. He noted that these pieces were beautiful, yet deadly for infants. Due to the shape of the infant feeders, it was

impossible to clean them well. Old milk would sit in the crevices, harbor bacteria, and end up harming the infant who was trying to get nourishment. Following the lecture, each person introduced himself and discussed his "Show and Tell" pieces. There was a wide variety of willow, in many colors, from all corners of the world.

Friday was the day to shop for willow! Early morning brought the flea market back, where one could find a wide variety of pieces to augment a collection, each with a price tag of \$35 or less. Shopping was brisk! Later in the morning, we all "took

a trip to jolly London for a tour in a double-decker red bus" to find more willow. Jeff Siptak, who has now developed a reputation as a "tour guide lecturer", issued us bus tickets and then showed us various sights in London where willow was to be found. His lecture, "Words on the Willow Pattern: a look at the unique, historical and whimsy", focused on willow pieces featuring words, and the trip was fabulous. Some of the stops included Harrods, Fortnum and Mason, a pub and a church. At each stop, we viewed willow appropriate to the venue. Several times during the trip, Jeff gave away a few Schweppes advertising coasters. Everyone had a fun and an informative time! (Rumor has it there is another tour being planned for Hershey next year! You won't want to miss it!) *cont'd*



Franklin Ladner





The afternoon brought free time to most attendees so they could visit the RiverWalk or the Alamo, while, back at the hotel, a small team prepared for the auction. The auction began in late afternoon



Auctioneer, Harry Hall

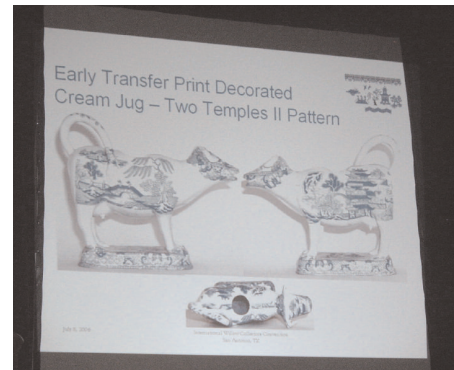
with auctioneer Harry Hall, complete in cowboy boots and a black Western hat, deftly making his way through almost 500 items to raise money for IWC. Bidding was steady and exciting, and at the end of the night, over \$11,000 was sold! A Booth's hot water plate brought the largest sum of the evening.

Saturday morning began with the annual business meeting. Reports were given and officers for the upcoming year were elected. See the enclosed minutes for details. Jeff Siptak shared the new upgraded website that will debut later this summer.

This advanced website will bring the club into current technology, include lots of pictures and be very informative. The members were highly pleased with the presentation and are anxious to see

it online. Jen Cather and Suzie Crist, chairmen for the July 12 - 15, 2007, convention in Harrisburg/Hershey, PA, got us all thinking about willow and chocolate – what a dynamite combination! We can't wait for next year to roll around! The meeting was closed with the presentation of membership pins.

Loren Zeller presented the final lecture of the weekend by sharing his knowledge of "The Willow pattern on popular art forms and tableware". Loren has enjoyed researching and collecting early English figures including Tobies, milkmaids and animals such as whippets and cows. The pictures and information about the evolution of these pieces were superb. It was easy to see why these were some of Loren's "favorite things".



Saturday afternoon featured a popular event – place settings. This year the theme was a "low afternoon tea" and each entry was judged and prizes

were awarded. Judges looked for the number of proper accoutrements as well as overall presentation. The entries were lovely to view and first, second and third places went to Barb and Bob Meyer, Michael Curtner, and Edie and Al Cronk respectively. My vote for best shortbread cookies – both plain and with pecans – went to Michael. So much for the diet that day! *cont'd*



First Place, Barb & Bob Meyer



Second Place, Michael Curtner



Third Place, Edie and Al Cronk



The Saturday evening banquet was an event! Hurricane lamps, hand-painted with the “Willow/Alamo logo” by Debbie Roseboom Davis, adorned each table, and were taken home by the lucky person with a star on his saucer. The food was fabulous, as it was throughout the whole weekend. The new officers and board – Hugh Sykes, President; Jen Cather, Vice-President; Anna Morrison, Treasurer (effective 1/1/07); Franklin Ladner, Secretary; Jeff Siptak, Website; Edie Cronk, Membership, and Nancee Rogers, Editor – were introduced. Hugh’s first official act was to thank Rose Gray for her outstanding job the past two years and award her a plaque, donated by Phil Sullivan, to honor her achievements. The crowd was then pleased to hear that the 2008 convention would be



Loren Zeller, Joyce LaFont, Don LaFont and Connie Rogers



Chairing 2008: Jean Hull, Joyce LaFont and Judy Prophet

held in Memphis, TN. Featuring a theme, “Willow Blues”, it will be hosted by the Sunny Florida Folks, the Hulls and Prophets, along with the LaFons from Tennessee. As dessert was being polished off and coffee was being served, Franklin introduced the night’s entertainment, a German band. The band included friends Franklin has known since his school days! Polkas, waltzes, line dances, and, of course – THE CHICKEN DANCE – filled the evening. It was a leisurely evening of fun and fellowship with great music.



Sunday morning dawned early with a 7:00 a.m. church service. The faithful were there with Pastor Tom Eden and his wife, Daisy, at the keyboard, for an hour of worship and praise. I am always intrigued how Tom manages to wind collecting willow into a sermon. He does it creatively and this year was no exception. Bless you, Tom and Daisy! (Do you think God would pave a small section of heaven with willow shards, just for us? It would be less expensive than gold, you know...)

Breakfast and a brief closing session were held and then it was the big Sunday sale. This year, the convention had a large number of first timers due to the number of Texans who came. They were in awe of the sight as the doors opened. So much blue and white! It was the last chance to shop before heading home and members had their wallets out! From lots of new willow, to jewelry



Irene Black sets up for the sale.



A booth ready for the sale on Sunday.

made from shards, to delicate pieces over 100 years old, there was something for everyone. I shopped the sale and picked up a few things that I knew would fit into my already stuffed suitcase. Buying is so much easier when you drive rather than fly to a convention! Then, it was time to say goodbye to my willow friends – and amigos – and head back to Ohio on the big bird with fond, fond memories of another great convention!



# Around the Convention....



Co-chair Charline Ladner with three of her little amigo granddaughters.



During the banquet, Gary and Sue Morgan follow a dance around the ballroom floor.



Here's trouble...Franklin Ladner and Harry Hall ready for the auction. Bid or they'll shoot!



Bob and Rose Gray enjoy a boatride on the RiverWalk before the convention.



Ready for another raffle drawing.





All smiles at the registration table...Jessie Hall, Joyce Borowiak, Lena Kozielski and Charline Ladner.



Helen Swearingen, with husband Dean, winning the luncheon centerpiece at her table.



IWC President, Hugh Sykes, with wife, Kathy.



The "Dynamic Mother-Daughter Duo" and 2007 Convention Co-chairs, Jennifer Cather and Suzie Crist.



Ford Nashett, Irene Black and Helen Daniels.



Hey, Charline...how about we host the 2009 convention?!

*A special thanks to everyone who shared their convention photos with us for this issue!*