

Willow Is Always Our Cup Of Tea: Convention 2007

Submitted by Nancee Rogers

'Tea for Two', the IWC convention held July 12 – 15, 2007, in Harrisburg, PA, was truly a delightful tea party! By pairing willow with tea and chocolate, the convention chairpersons – mother and daughter team of Suzie Crist and Jen Cather – gave the 90+ attendees a weekend filled with good food, good information and good friendship. But don't take my word for it. Jen and Suzie sent out a report summarizing the evaluation forms. Let's see what everyone else had to say...

People generally liked the food. The 'chocolate' factor was the overwhelming favorite in meals and activities. From a chocolate dessert buffet following Show and Tell to the country fair theme luncheon, the food was appreciated very much.

The speakers were also well received. Jeff Siptak took the group on another fascinating trip, entitled 'Tea & The Willow Pattern: Your Passport to the World'. We did travel around the world visiting China, Japan, Holland, England, Sri Lanka and the U.S.A. Being world travelers, we were each issued a passport at the beginning of the lecture. (It was amazing how quickly everyone got processed and approved!) As we visited various countries to learn of their influence on tea and willow, we had to stamp our passport with the appropriate sticker. You had to be there to appreciate our passport agent, Gladys, with her glasses and hairdo from the 1950's! Next, Connie Rogers

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Jen Cather, Suzie Crist



Jeff Siptak



Connie Rogers



Nancee Rogers



Alexis, Benny, Christy and Ben Sturtevant



Chocolate reception buffet!



Irene Black, Ford Nashett



Jen Cather, Edie Cronk



Convention cont'd

presented 'Taking Tea the British Way' and we viewed pictures of tea wares from the 1800's forward. It was suggested we could create our own "tea sets" by combining and coordinating pieces of our collections. The pieces can be beautiful together, even though they were not originally made as a set. The last lecture offered a new twist and was enjoyed by the group. We ate the main course at lunch on Saturday, and then yours truly gave a brief lecture titled, 'Tea and Chocolate: Eat, Drink & be Healthy'. For our dessert and



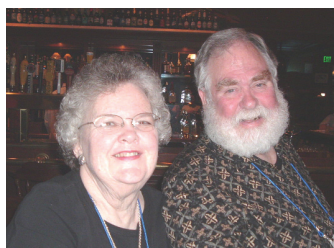
Harry Hall, Auctioneer



Ruth Swartz, Caroline Tomkiw

beverage, we each hopped up to make a cup of tea and grab a piece of chocolate. We did this three times to taste combinations of three different kinds of tea with three different chocolates. The crowd favorite was the raspberry tea with the milk chocolate. Of course, prior to doing this, we learned the many steps about the 'proper' way to make tea (no dunking of the tea bag) and the 'proper' way to taste chocolate (including the 'snap'). Again, the

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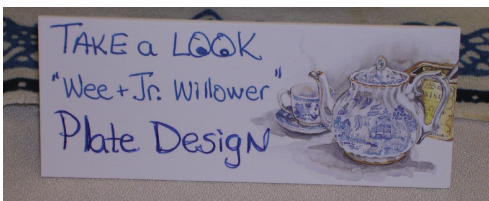
Zeta & Charles Hollingsworth



Taking a break between events



Bob & Kay Boob selling lotto chances.



Arnold Cohen, Don LaFont



"I'm a little teapot, short and stout..."

Convention cont'd

chocolate was a big hit – particularly when we learned that because it contains antioxidants and flavonols, it is healthy for us to eat in small portions!

Harry Hall auctioneered another great auction for us, and did over 500 lots in a very good time. People commented on how well organized the auction was and they appreciated the speed. Some noted that there were several new, uninteresting items that went for low prices, but overall, selling was brisk and prices were fair.

The raffle was received positively overall. We had lots of items, mostly smaller things, ranging from a wall fan to tea bags. Jen and Suzie added a little zing by having a PA daily lotto as a separate event. Playing off their state's Daily Lotto game, they offered two special drawings a day to those who had purchased special wristbands with lucky numbers. Those gifts included some unique handmade willow items, which went to the daily winners.

The kids had a fabulous time this year, because they had one of "their pro's" running the convention! It didn't take us too long to figure out that Jen is a music teacher in the public schools. We opened each morning with a singsong "Good morning, Mrs. Cather"! The children had special activities and events ranging from designing a willow plate to going on a scavenger hunt. As adults we got to admire the children's handiwork and learned that we have a lot of talented "Wee Willowers" among us!

From the evaluation forms, it was obvious that the overwhelming big "hit" of the convention was The Holiday Tea for Two Place Setting Competition held on Saturday. Each participant was very creative in following the theme in his or her own special way. The professional quality of the displays was really impressive to the crowd and they noted that by giving the event top ratings. It was truly a beautiful display o admire and photograph.

Saturday's evening brought the banquet, which was quite delicious, but the real fun was in the games we played after dinner was over. We even had prizes! My favorite game was "TWILO" – the 2007 willow version of Bingo. Each playing card had blocks named after willow or tea items and companies. Using candy as covers for our cards, we listened carefully as the numbers were called. "T- Burleigh; W – Teapot; I – willow tree; L – green tea and O Masons" was good for a TWILO on my card! By Saturday evening, most people felt the friendliness and "at home" atmosphere that permeated the weekend.

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Convention cont'd

Sunday brought the final day of the convention. And, once again, Pastor Tom Eden managed to deliver a concise, meaningful sermon woven around willow. He compared a fine porcelain teacup in the willow pattern to a red plastic, disposable cup. Each had great value for a certain job at a given time. After breakfast, the sale began. Rita Cohen was back after being gone a few years, and her beautiful array of pieces were marked 50% off or more. She told us if she had to “give things away”, she would rather they go to a friend, than some stranger from eBay. Jeff had several tables, too, and then there was a nice additional group of dealers each with a table or two. I was thrilled with three pieces of Burleigh that I found. It has been several years since my shopping bag was that full!

All in all, it was a great time in the heart of chocolate country! We look forward to next year when we hope to get “lucky” and find Elvis!



Joette Hightower, Rita Cohen



Angela Harland, Brenda Nottingham



Tables at the Sunday Sale



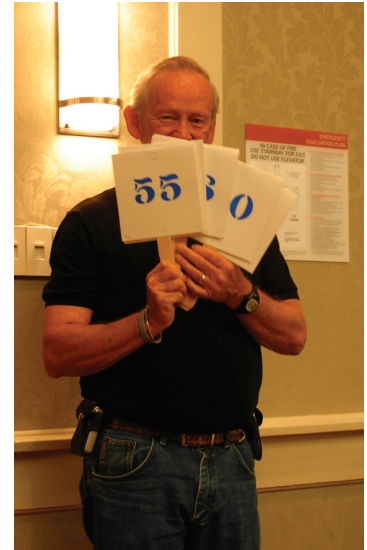
Chrysoula Komis, Metha Hillard, Bob Hillard, Michael Curtner



Zeke Jimenez, Harry Hall looking over 2008 convention sale visitor materials



Anna Simons-Bailey



Warner Hull ready to bid



Suzie Crist, Jen Cather



A scary Halloween table setting



Rose Gray wins at the auction



Auction tables ready for bid-



Willow makes everyone smile