

THE ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE AT 100

Oklahoma City 2009 Marks a Major Association Milestone

by Richard H. Gross, MTS

The Stained Glass Association of America celebrated a major milestone at its Annual Summer Conference held last June in Oklahoma City; this Conference was the 100th Annual Summer Conference held by the Association, and the schedule of events reflected both the tradition of the organization and the SGAA's desire to embrace new trends and movements in stained, decorative and architectural glass.

The Oklahoma City Conference was a resounding success, and credit for the planning and vision of the Conference goes to Karen Hendrix, whose hard work and dedication was evident to everyone who attended this landmark event. Though Karen could not be physically present at the Conference — she passed away on December 8, 2008, following a long and courageous battle with cancer — her presence was all around those in attendance.

This year's Conference featured a new Suppliers' Showcase, which allowed industry manufacturers and suppliers to present new products to Conference attendees and answer questions in a trade-show-like forum. As it was popular with both the suppliers and the attendees, the Suppliers' Showcase seems destined to not only become a regular part of the Conference but to also grow in the coming years as more and more of the leading manufacturers and suppliers take advantage of this opportunity to see their major customers face to face in an environment tailored to stained glass.

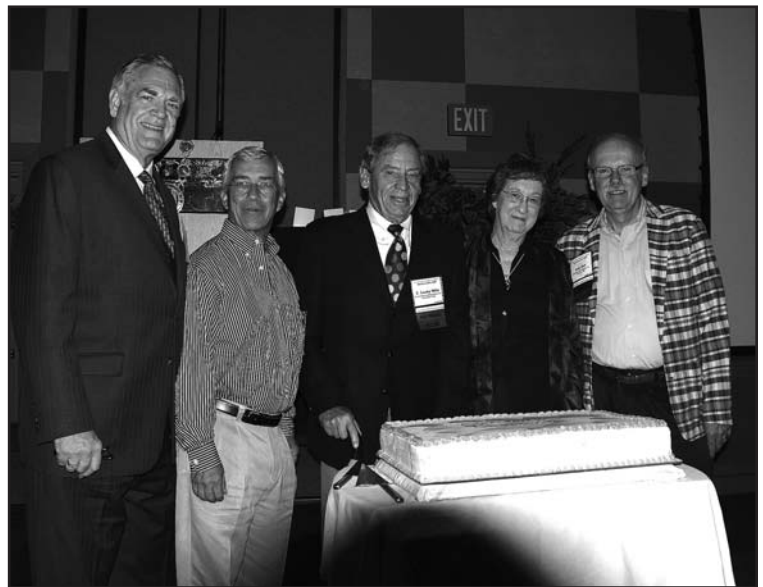
The Suppliers' Showcase opened this year with champagne-and-straw-



First Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is a soaring Gothic structure and is a major architectural landmark. The many Willet stained glass windows are often called the “Jewels of the Southwest.” First Presbyterian Church was one of the stops on this year’s tour of area stained glass installations.



Shown here are two examples of student paintings from Bob Markert's pre-Conference painting class. The class, in which a dozen students participated this year; is scheduled to be repeated at next year's Summer Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.



Richard Mesmer of Northwest Art Glass, Redmond, Washington, and Elizabeth Perry of Perry Stained Glass Studio, Issaquah, Washington, at the Awards Banquet. Mesmer was elected to the SGAA's Board of Directors at this Conference and was appointed Controller; Perry is a past-President of the Association.

President Jack Whitworth (far left) and past-Presidents Paul Pickel, E. Crosby Willet, Elizabeth Perry, and Gary Helf present a birthday cake to the membership at the Awards Banquet to celebrate the 100th Annual Summer Conference of the Stained Glass Association of America.

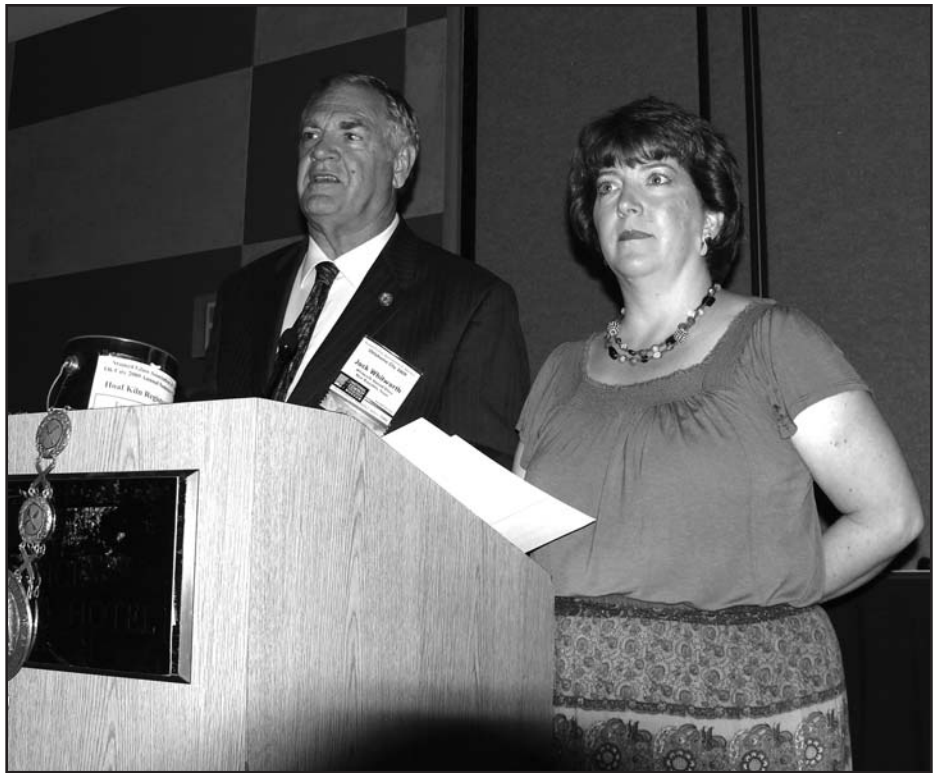
berries reception hosted by Northwest Art Glass. Champagne was served in a commemorative champagne flute with the Conference logo etched on the front of it.

Pre-Conference classes were presented by Bob Markert and Jerome Durr. Markert focused on new painting techniques, while Durr's class examined techniques of design. The painted pieces produced in Markert's class were fired in a HOAF kiln, which was demonstrated as part of the Suppliers' Showcase. The kiln that was used in this demonstration was then offered for sale at a substantial discount.

The First Business Meeting was followed by the traditional Welcome Reception and a buffet sponsored by Reusché Paints and Wissmach Glass Company. Following the reception was a powerful presentation by Martin Rambusch on the planning of a bas-relief memorial for firefighters lost in the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center. Rambusch's presentation skillfully presented not only the technical aspects of planning, designing, sculpting, fabricating and installing this stunning monument but also presented the human side of the story — both of lives tragically lost and of those who live still and remember the men and women who were lost not only as heroes but as friends. Look for further coverage of this important Rambusch installation in a future edition of *The Stained Glass Quarterly*.

Friday began with a breakfast meeting and roundtable discussion. Tables for ten were set up, and, following breakfast, moderators at each table presented a variety of topics for discussion with participants. Every eight minutes, participants would switch tables and experience a new topic for discussion.

The event was popular with both moderators and participants; the only complaint seemed to be that eight minutes was too short a time to fully engage



Jennifer Banbury and Jack Whitworth draw names for door prizes at the Awards Banquet; this year's prizes were ten-pound spools of solder from MAYCO Industries. Dennis Roberts of IHS Studios was one of the winners; he donated his prize to the SGAA Stained Glass School for use in workshops.



The newly elected Board of Directors of the Stained Glass Association of America includes Jack Whitworth (far left), Diane Eissinger, Jim Piercey, Jerome Durr, Jennifer Banbury, Bryant Stanton, Richard Mesmer, and David Garducci. Not available for the photograph were Sue Shea, Christopher Haynes, Jules Mominee, and Gunar Gruenke.



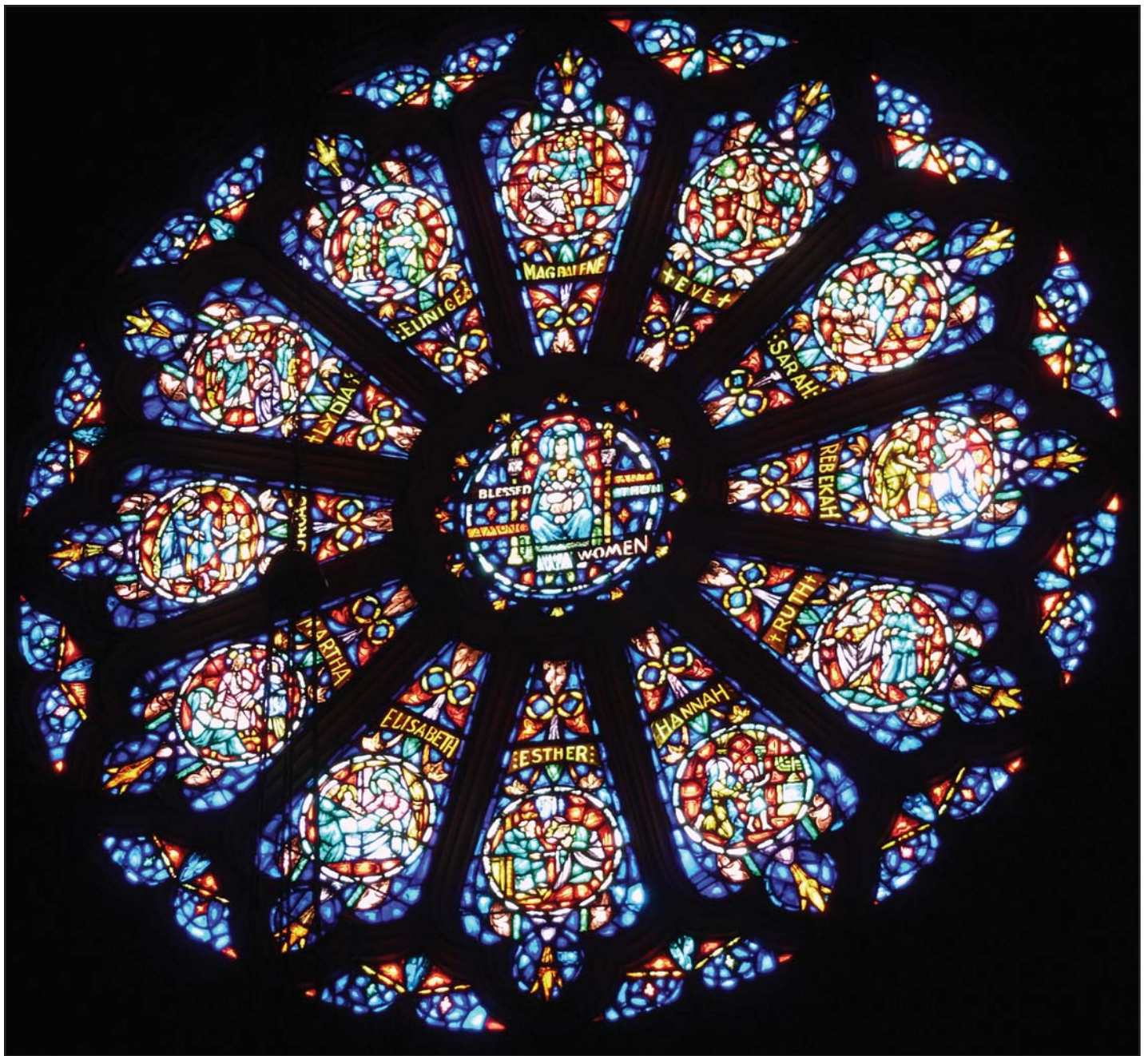
Above: One of Karen Hendrix's last installations, this window from Deaconess Hospital, Oklahoma City, was a part of the Annual Stained Glass Tour.

Left: This year's tour also visited the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, which includes this piece by Dale Chihuly. The Oklahoma City Museum of Art is home to the most comprehensive collection of Chihuly's glass in the world. Only the top third of this work is shown in the photograph.



the topic under consideration. Expect this event to appear again at future Conferences, with a longer time allotted for discussion. Several great ideas for full presentations at future Conferences came out of this event, as well as very useful feedback on the future direction of some important SGAA projects.

The morning's theme was the contemporary glass movement. Attendees



This Willet rose window, which celebrates women of the Bible, is one of the “Jewels of the Southwest” seen at First Presbyterian Church.

enjoyed presentations from Ellen Mandelbaum, Kathy Barnard and Kathy Jordan.

Ellen Mandelbaum’s presentation examined the work of fellow artists with whom she has exhibited around the world. This generously illustrated presentation allowed attendees to encounter the work of artists who are exploring the

boundaries of glass in the contemporary glass movement.

Kathy Barnard’s deep, sculptural carving in glass is widely known; she shared the story behind the journey she takes with clients as she comes to know a space and creates a work that will be a lasting joy for her client. This approach has resulted for her in many repeat clients over the years and allows her to

create art pieces that have an inner life and create a sense of wonder in the viewer.

Kathy Jordan transitioned to the afternoon’s theme of restoration in her presentation of the restoration painting she did at St. Bernard’s Episcopal Church following the devastating fire there. Jordan’s ability to replicate historic painted work is widely known, and



Jack Whitworth, right, on behalf of the Stained Glass Association of America, was pleased to present Crosby Willet with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. This award celebrates Crosby Willet's lifelong pursuit of excellence in the art and craft of stained glass.

she demonstrated that it is her meticulous attention to detail that has earned her that reputation.

Disaster restoration was the theme of the afternoon. Roy Loman discussed the restoration efforts following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. The damage to four churches in the vicinity of the Murrah Federal Building was extensive, and restoration efforts were hampered by circumstances that arise from the terrorist nature of the attack.

The loss of artwork precious to a congregation is devastating to that congregation regardless of whether the loss comes from a larger event or is localized within the church building. Jules Mominee's presentation on recovering one church's stained glass following a major tornado highlighted many of the difficulties faced in restoration efforts following such a catastrophic event.

Cynthia Courage discussed restoration efforts in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Her description of

dealing with loss and devastation on a massive scale, much of which remains unrestored to this day, was truly enlightening.

Regardless of whether loss comes within a building, in a localized area, in a region, citywide, or even on a larger scale, restoration efforts are required to bring life back to what it was before the loss. There are many similarities in different disaster-restoration scenarios, and much can be learned by analyzing past events and applying what is learned to



A very special "Thank You" goes out to Evenheat kilns, who donated an Evenheat Studio Pro kiln that was given away as a registration prize. Boris Livak of Kansas City, Missouri, won the kiln.

Congratulations, Boris!

the benefit of future events. This sharing of knowledge and advancing of efforts in disaster restoration was the Association's goal in dedicating these sessions to a common theme. It is vitally important to build on past successes for the benefit of future projects.

Some attendees, following last year's conference, visited Gordon Huether's Napa Valley studio and were so impressed by his work that they asked for a presentation from him at this Summer Conference. Friday evening, Keynote Speaker Gordon Huether presented an inspiring look at his architectural art glass and the direction his studio is taking.

Saturday's tour of area stained glass installations and museums featured stops at First Presbyterian Church, which is home to an impressive collection of Willet windows; Deaconess Hospital, one of the last installations completed by Conference Host Karen Hendrix; the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, which features an extensive Dale Chihuly collection; and finally concluded at Oklahoma City's National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

That evening's Awards Banquet, sponsored by S.A. Bendheim, was marked by the installation of a new President, Jack Whitworth, and by the presentation of the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award to Crosby Willet.

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The evening concluded with a memorial presentation by this writer, Richard Gross, commemorating the life and work of Karen Hendrix.

Karen, a past-President of the SGAA and a long-time supporter of the Association, was an important influence in this organization. She was also my friend and a true inspiration to me. Karen and I worked together on many projects over the years, including this Conference. While we did not always agree — and in fact sometimes argued heatedly, though it was always done with mutual respect and with the good of the organization as our only focus — it was always a pleasure to find the creative solutions that resulted in better outcomes that might not have been achieved otherwise.

I hope Karen is very proud of her Conference; she has every reason to be. This Conference was one of the most dynamic, exciting and engaging Conferences that I have ever attended, and that is a direct result of Karen's vision. This Conference stands as an example of what can be achieved when many creative people come together to work for a common goal: the advancement of stained, decorative and architectural art glass in America and around the world.