

Wildly Successful Whitewater Hall of Fame Induction Raises the Bar

McHenry, MD October 26, 2006

An enthusiastic crowd of almost two hundred dignitaries, officials, corporate sponsors, honoree family and friends, and other well-wishers came together to honor the 2006 Class of Inductees into the International Whitewater Hall of Fame (IWHOF) Induction at the dinner and ceremony on October 20, 2006 at the Wisp Resort in McHenry, Maryland. A reunion-type atmosphere pervaded as paddling legends, past and present, were re-acquainted and reminisced about their whitewater experiences. Guest speaker Bob Woodward, long-time outdoor industry writer and founder of SNEWS and GearTrends, added to the upbeat atmosphere with stories about whitewater of the past to the present.

The induction ceremony began with a ten-minute video (produced by Penstock Productions) introducing the Honorees: *Advocates* Tom Johnson and Martin Litton (both of California), *Champions* Scott Shipley (Colorado) and Gisela Grothaus-Steigerwald (Germany), *Explorer* Herbert Rittlinger (Germany), and *Pioneer* Jim Snyder (West Virginia). The six Honorees were selected through a rigorous process of nomination, evaluation and election by peer groups throughout world. Nominations submitted by IWHOF Affiliates were reviewed and evaluated by a diverse, knowledgeable and experienced screening committee that identified nominees for election by a world-wide Electorate body of whitewater practitioners. The results of the elections were announced August 10 at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Show in Salt Lake City.

Ovations and accolades from the enthusiastic crowd greeted the Honorees. Tom and Martin received long heart-felt standing ovations as they accepted their awards for their lifelong advocacy for whitewater. Scott and Gisela were not only honored for their outstanding careers as world-class athletes and top competitors but also for their world-class support in other areas of whitewater. Honoree Davey Hearn, a 2005 Champion Inductee, recalled Gisela as his slalom coach at the Madawaska Kanu Centre at the beginning of his career. Accepting Herbert Rittlinger's award, daughter Judith Steinbacher, recalled her father's explorations beginning in the 1920's in Europe and later expanding globally including his solo first descent of the Amazon from the Andes to the ocean in the 1930's. The ever humble Jim Snyder graciously accepted his award while acknowledging the influence and contributions of whitewater legend, Jess Whittemore, on his whitewater career.

Many of the founder-owners of this year's corporate sponsors attended the dinner including event sponsor Rick McLaughlin and John Anderson of the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group (Denver, CO), honoree sponsors Imre and Janet Szilgyi of Appalachian Wildwaters (Rowlesburg, WV), Carl Belt of The Belt Construction Group (Cumberland, MD), Mimi Demaree of Demaree Inflatable Boats (Friendsville, MD), Claudia Van Wijk of Madawaska Kanu Centre (Barry's Bay, ON, Canada), and Joe and Sue Kowalski of Wilderness Tours (Beachburg, ON, Canada).

Phil St. Moritz of Bill's Marine Service (McHenry, MD) sponsored the evening's special guests from Team River Runner, wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars recuperating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center using whitewater boating to find health, healing, and new challenges.

In addition to members of Adventure Sports Center International's (ASCI) Board of Directors and IWHOF Board of Governors, other notable guests at the dinner included Maryland State Senator John Hafer, Deputy Director David Bahlman of Maryland Office of Tourism and representing Maryland Governor Ehrlich, Tim McGrath representing U.S. Senator Paul Sarbane, and Garrett County Commissioner Frederick Holliday.

Joe Kowalski, owner of Wilderness Tours, expressed his overall impressions when he said, "The high quality of the event was commensurate with the high quality of the inductees. The event surpassed my expectations. As a long time river outfitter and paddler, I was thrilled to know I was in the same sport/industry as these wonderful people."

The induction weekend events wrapped up with the Whitewater Legends Brunch on Saturday morning which included a tour of the newest and most unique artificial whitewater course in the United States – the centerpiece of ASCI's mountain top facilities. Scheduled to open Spring 2007, the whitewater course includes river-like features created by the patented McLaughlin Wave Shaper (McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group). The natural-looking course will be able to change while the water is flowing to create calm, beginner or training environments as well as a venue for world-class slalom, freestyle or squirtboating. A video of the tour of the new course can be seen at the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SU7-XSDNBCU>

The Honoree video can be seen at the following link:

http://www.downstreammedia.net/kayakjournal/segment_archive/IWHOF_Web.mov

About IWHOF and ASCI:

The International Whitewater Hall of Fame and Museum, being constructed as part of ASCI's Adventure Sports Center, recognizes and honors individuals who have made significant accomplishments in and contributions to whitewater related activities. The history, development and major achievements made in these activities will be depicted through displays of related equipment, art, artifacts, mementos, etc. Interactive and virtual components will further enhance the museum experience.

ASCI is a non-profit organization with a mission to create an International Adventure Sports Center that is recognized as a focal point in the emerging and expanding adventures sports industry. The Center, located in McHenry, Maryland, works to promote, educate, and facilitate participation in a wide range of adventure-based recreational activities and competitions.

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