

IFEA 50th Anniversary History

The Growth of IF(E)A

Bruce Skinner, IFEA's president from 1990 to 2001, was a former chair and longtime board member when he took over day-to-day administration of the Association.

A native of Port Angeles, Washington, where he still resides today, Skinner was a University of Washington journalism graduate who embarked upon a career in athletics administration in 1968. Following stints with the University of Washington athletics department, the NCAA in Kansas City, the NBA's Houston Rockets and a newspaper in Longview, Washington, Skinner joined the staff of the Fiesta Bowl in 1973.

For the next seven years, he served as assistant executive director of the Phoenix-based holiday football bowl. In 1980, he was named the Fiesta Bowl's executive director, a position he held for the next decade. During the 1980s, Skinner was instrumental in the Fiesta Bowl's successful bid to crack the coveted New Year's Day bowl-game lineup, moving the game to January 1st in 1982. Skinner created a 60-event festival, including a nationally televised parade and football classic. The bowl game's budget escalated from \$1.5 million to \$11 million on Skinner's watch, while the

pay-out for team's competing in the New Year's classic increased more than six-fold, from \$475,000 to \$3 million.

Bruce Skinner became a member of IFA in 1977. He was elected to the Association's board in 1980, was chairman in 1983-1984, and "served on the board every year except one between 1980 and 1991."

'Pages and Pages of Notes'

Skinner will never forget his first IFA convention in Honolulu in 1977. "There was a grand total of 77 attendees," Skinner said, "and 11 of them were from the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous."

But what the convention lacked in attendance, it more than made up for in the warmth of the welcome it afforded the assistant executive director of the Fiesta Bowl. "I was absolutely amazed at the depth of knowledge of the attendees. And there was just such an eagerness to share. I was even more amazed at how willing everybody was to share information. I came away with pages and pages of notes."

Skinner admitted he has "never had an original idea. I've stolen a lot of my best ideas. But I learned so much from those early IFA members." He was in the first

class that received its CFE (Certified Festival Executive) designation from Purdue University in 1986, and when he left the Fiesta Bowl after 17 years in 1990 to do consulting, the Association was his first client. Later that year, executive director Don Lunday, who served in that position from 1988 to 1990, left the IFA and Skinner was asked to replace him as president of the organization. This also represented an organizational title change reflective of the changing industry the IFA represented. The Association's CEO position changed from executive director to president and the IFA board president position now became the board chair.

"Even though I had an athletics background," he said, "at the Fiesta Bowl, the philosophy was to expand into other events. We realized that only 20 percent of America reads the sports pages. We always wanted to appeal to the other 80 percent."

That was a similar philosophy that Skinner brought to the IFA. The festival and events business was undergoing a sea of change at the time, with corporate sponsorships taking an ever more prominent role in the financing of North America's events. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics had

