

# FFS Reunion/Convention - 2001 - EPILOGUE

by Doug Robertson (Convention Chair)

The Reunion/Convention is over. Innovations were observed. Accolades were received. Complaints were registered. Lessons were learned.

On Thursday night the National Corvette Museum welcomed FFS and our local hero, "Doc" Livingston (and Friends) for the traditional Fresh/Fan Jam Session. "Doc," a consummate musician, performed brilliantly whether as a soloist, ensemble performer, or leader of a jam session with unplanned participants. Doc and his group entertained during the dinner of Kentucky Barbecue, beans, coleslaw and Michelob beer.

Society members had the opportunity to tour the Corvette Museum with its many displays heralding the birth and development of the Corvette from the early 50's into the new millennium. The Corvette was first seen in 1953 and has been a constantly improving performer. So is the history of The Four Freshmen, born in 1948, gaining popularity in the '50's, and fine-tuned through numerous incarnations that have permitted the group to tour constantly from year to year since its inception.

On Friday night we gathered at The Lost River Cave that hosted such great bands as Tony Pastor, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman and many others in the 30's, 40's and 50's. Because of an enforced change in dates (from the original September schedule), the weather was seasonably cool, characteristic of October in Kentucky.

"Monktrane" provided a lively session of be-bop jazz reminiscent of the 50's and 60's. And, anticipating the cool weather, chili was served along with a Kentucky favorite - pimento cheese sandwiches, plus "free" Michelob beer and various soft drinks. Monktrane was prepared to play longer and the performers were disappointed at being shut down early, but the cool weather and many underdressed society members combined to start the Freshmen concert at precisely 8:00 PM

With cold hands, cold feet and cold mouthpieces, the newest Four Freshmen (with Curtis Calderon) put on a "stop traffic" performance. Curtis' lyrical, driving trumpet stylings and his immediate grasp of The Four Freshmen mission caused him to be seamlessly integrated into the group. Number 22 can be favorably compared to all of the best groups of the past.

Saturday night was celebrated at the Convention Center where late registrants caused a passing problem with food delivery, but a well-prepared and tasty meal was served from the buffet. The Lost River Cave Big Band, 16 pieces strong, conducted by John Carmichael, provided music during dinner...and backed up the Frosh for three pre-rehearsed numbers. The Freshmen continued, self-contained, to conclude a stellar concert exceeding the one we enjoyed on Friday. The enjoyment of the concert was enhanced by two large video screens, suspended and located in such a way that even those seated farthest from the stage could get close-up views of the performance.

"And so it's over." There were lessons learned, and perhaps some improvements can be made in the future. I learned, first

hand, that you can't please all of the people all of the time. We did depart from tradition in many instances...and that is risky, especially with so many "seasoned citizens" represented in our society. And, although I heard some grumbling from some members "feeling like a tourist" because we celebrated our corner of the world, it is my understanding that the 2002 convention will also provide us with lots of "tourism" experiences next August!

Comments about Convention Expenses: Since reunion/conventions are planned so long in advance, we should all recognize that the fees we pay to arrange meals and convention facilities, in addition to the expenses for honored guests and Freshmen alumni, are a big investment, and a sizable percentage of the fee is guaranteed, perhaps we need to establish specific policy regarding refunds. From our experience in October, we had to make investments well in advance:

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|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| *Concert Venues       | *Additional entertainment      |
| *Food Prices/Numbers  | *And a myriad of other         |
| *Sound Systems        | details related to the events. |
| *Lighting Technicians |                                |

A reunion/convention begins with no money. The budget is based upon the number of people who pay our "FFS Registration Fee." Therefore, if one of us discovers he/she cannot attend less than 3 or 4 weeks before the date, the registration fee we paid has already been committed whether we attend or not.

Our conventions are not designed to make money. They are intended to provide value and enjoyment to FFS members. In the final analysis refund demands caused our 2001 convention to go into deficit. I tried to be understanding and accommodating, but I must admit the effort involved is huge and stressful.

I must voice my appreciation to John Bangs (the expert in FFS convention planning) as well as the continual encouragement of Tom Purvis, who never let me get dismayed. But my greatest thanks go to my wife, Jeane, and other members of my family - Mark, Patty, David and Debbie, who were always there to help. Now, about my trip to the airport on Sunday.....No, I guess I'll leave that one alone!

Despite it all, I look forward to our Washington DC/Reston Convention 2002! And, although I've been there many times, I will again take advantage of "feeling like a tourist" in August!

## State Rep Recognition: November

Beverly Stockard (OH)  
Mike McCoy (WI)  
Art Graham (IN)  
Bob Rulong (MI)  
Mel Myers (AZ)  
George Erwood (IL)

## December

Barbara Myers (NV)  
Mike Collins (W.TX)  
Harrison & Corinne Cole (NC)