

THE USFG'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL FACETING CHALLENGE, 2003, AND ITS RAISON D' ETRE.

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As far back as 1987 after my first introduction to John & Marian Alden, Vern & Bettie Johnson, Charles & Lillian Hettich and Fred Van Sant, I remember "talk" about the day, when the USA would be able to host its own inimitable International Competition. It would be similar to the Australian International Challenge, which the Australians established in 1986, but would be a competition with our own rules for cutting and judging. There were several other well known personalities, Walter Carrs, Glenn Klein, Jim Ball and Al Whitney, Paul Billet, and Norman Steele who, among others, through the years, were very much involved with the discussion of some day having our own USFG International Competition; their influence was most significant. However, at first, from 1986 and through the ensuing years, the possibility of alternately hosting the Australian IFC under Australia's rules was sufficient enough to delay any immediate dream of 'adventing' an inimitable USA International Faceting Competition.

In 1986, it had been agreed by both Australia and the USA to alternately host the Australian Bi-Annual International Faceting Challenge, IFC, depending upon which Country won the competition. It is now history that the Australians have won all IFC competitions from 1988 through 2000. Thus the original agreement between the "Yank's" and the "Aussies" - whoever won the competition would host the IFC in the Country of the winning team - was never fulfilled by the USA Cutters.

This was the background upon which the USACF began its first serious consideration of hosting its own International Competition. (An interesting outgrowth of the Australian's having won all of the IFC's was their offer or suggestion that the USA alternately host the competition regardless of which country won---The suggestion was considered, but quickly negated by the USFG.) In 1990 the USACF, United States of America Competition Faceters, was founded. In about 1992 The "C" which represented "Competition" was dropped, "America" was dropped and "Guild" was added, hence, the USFG.

It was at one of the USACF's earliest meetings, the Northwest Faceting Conference at Bend, Oregon in 1991, where serious discussion was given to holding our own International. That meeting was the first one ever attended by Ralph Mathewson, who, years later as President and Past President, helped to materialize our first to be 2003 International, AKA, the North American Faceting Challenge (NAFC). The name was suggested by President Jerry Capps and was accepted by the USFG BOD.

The haunting question and possible deterrent was the USFG financial status. By 1998, due to USFG's Editor Fred Van Sant, Treasurer Don Dunn and Membership Chair Jean Marr's, much earlier (92/93) and most clever approach to enlarging the USFG membership, the treasury swelled to several thousand dollars. The

big question was, is the USFG treasury large enough to host an International? (It is interesting to note that an USFG International Competition was discussed even before a closed competition for the members of the USFG was ever considered.) We were very much aware that as far back as 1992, the IFC cost the Australians approximately \$1300 and eventually, almost \$6000 in 1998.

With the advent of e-mail for most of the USFG BOD, a desperately needed means for fast communication amongst the BOD who lived in 5 different states, and for the first time, having a USFG treasury that might be large enough, I, as Vice President, began to discuss with President Ralph Mathewson a possible procedure, in which we could have our First Single Stone Competition, and by first offering a competition to the USFG members only, we might find a wherewithal of offering economically our first International Competition. Our approach was the following: Ralph would do all of the technical work involving the choice of the designs and the scoring procedure, based on his revolutionary judging approach; I would receive the stones from all of the cutters, code them and mail them to the 3 judges, who would judge in their own homes and mail them back to me; I would decode the stones, and then mail the stones and their score sheets to the cutters.

Our doubtful financial outlook, regarding our ability to host an International Competition, was definitely solved via the procedure we pursued during our first closed USFG Single Stone Competition. The total cost was not much more than \$500.00, compared to the Australian \$6,000-3-day-judging-event in which there were at least 12 people involved - 3 Judges, 3 Pencillers, a Cook, and 5 more personnel to check and double check the score sheets. I distinctly remember an e-mail from President Glenn Klein, who was surprised and a little bit suspicious of the amount of the competition's total cost that I had submitted to the USFG BOD. Glenn had reason for doubt; his Riverside, CA, Faceter's Symposium in 1996 cost somewhere around \$4,000 to \$6,000.00. I assured Glenn, the total cost of my operation was \$25.03. We paid our three judges a total of \$630.00 - 21 stones at \$30.00 each; thus, that amount minus the cutter's fees - \$420.00 - left a deficit of \$210.00 which, when added to my \$25.03 costs, amounted to \$235.03. The costs of the plaques and certificates were added to the \$235.03.

In order for the USFG to host its first 2003 North American Faceting Challenge, NAFC, the economical procedure employed in the 2000 Single Stone Competition was the method in which to apply. The possibility that the USFG could finally realize a long time dream, to have our own inimitable International Competition, without any financial disaster to the USFG treasury, will definitely be fulfilled in 2003 -- It took 12 years, possibly 14 years. One last comment, since the Australians hold their IFC every other even year - 2000, 2004, etc., we, the USFG, will hold our NAFC every other odd year - 2003, 2005, etc. §