

A World of Accordions Museum Wins GEMmy Award

**Midwest Travel Writers Association presents award to Helmi Harrington
June 22, 2005**

A World of Accordions museum and its founder, Helmi Harrington, have earned a GEMmy Award from the Midwest Travel Writers Association, the nation's oldest association of professional travel writers.

The honor is given to travel destinations that are judged to be gems. Sites or services are selected because of their uniqueness and the potential to experience another culture or tradition. They also demonstrate the benefits that travelers can gain when they get off of the beaten path.

Virginia Hirsch of Heritage Tours of Bayfield also has been awarded a GEMmy for her nightly "Ghost Walk" tours of the city. Both GEMmys were presented at the June 22 "Ballyhoo Night" at Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua, Bayfield.

Members of MTWA toured Bayfield and Superior last September, after their autumn meeting in Duluth, Minn. The awards were presented by two MTWA board members: Gary Knowles (a contract consultant to the Bayfield Chamber of Commerce) and Mary Bergin (a syndicated columnist, travel writer and photographer from Madison).

MORE THAN A MUSEUM

A World of Accordions, which opened in 2004, has about 1,700 accordions and chronicles the world history of the instrument. Music scholars from as far away as Austria have come to use the museum's archives. Some of the world's finest accordionists have performed in the Harrington Art Center's 1,000-seat concert hall. The building also houses the nation's only technical college program for accordion and concertina repair.

Helmi Harrington's mother made a living by playing, repairing and teaching others how to play the accordion. Mother and daughter moved to the U.S. from Germany, shortly after World War II. Helmi, who has a doctorate in musicology, describes the accordion as both a humble and exceedingly complex instrument.

"This is not simply a project or hobby for her, and the music world benefits because of it," the MTWA's Bergin said of Helmi, in support of the GEMmy nomination. "She is a living encyclopedia on the instrument," added travel writer Nancy Baren Miller of Akron, Ohio.

THE GEMmy AWARD

The GEMmy Award was created by MTWA in 1992 to help focus public attention on "the extraordinary attractions, facilities, events, tours and experiences that make travel so enriching and

enjoyable." These are exceptional discoveries that represent the joy of travel, "the surprises and discoveries that add an unforgettable magic to the travel experience."

Awards are presented as the result of MTWA member nominations, which are reviewed by a GEMmy committee before being approved by the MTWA board.

Founded in 1951, MTWA is the oldest association of professional travel writers in the United States. The organization includes writers, editors and public relations professionals who live in one of 13 Midwestern states (Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota and Kansas). Many of the writers are published in major newspapers and magazines nationwide and also write travel books.

PREVIOUS GEMmy WINNERS

2005 (to date)

"Ghost Walk," Bayfield, WI
A World of Accordions, Superior, WI

2004

Mandan Drug, Mandan, ND
Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, ND
Brownsville, NE
Renfro Valley, KY
California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento, CA
Motown Museum, Detroit
National Cowboy Hall of Fame & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, =
OK

2003

Farmington Valley, CT
Scala's Restaurant, Sonoma County, CA
Irish National Potato Famine Museum, Strokestown, Ireland
Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Foynes, Ireland

2002

Seelye Mansion, Abilene, KS
Prairie Museum of Art & History, Colby, KS
University of Okoboji, IA
Aunt Eunice's, Huntsville, AL
Hotel Hacienda los Laureles, Oaxaca, Mexico
Chocolate Mayordomo, Oaxaca, Mexico

2001

Fort Scott, Kansas
Granville Island Museums, Vancouver, Canada
The Rocky Mountaineer, Canada
Frederick Meijer Gardens, Grand Rapids, MI

2000

Beluga Interaction Program, San Antonio, TX
Spirits of San Antonio Tour, San Antonio, TX
Aerie Resort and Restaurant, Victoria, Canada
Banff Centre, Banff, Canada
HH Bennett Studio, Wisconsin Dells, WI

1999

Strategic Air Command Museum, Ashland, NE
Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison, WI
Little Norway, Blue Mounds, WI
The Fireside, Fort Atkinson, WI

1998

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, CA

1997

Living History Farms, Urbandale, IA
Bata Show Museum, Toronto, Ont., Canada
The Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, IN
Ottawa & Canada's Capital Region, Canada
Steamboat Arabia Museum, Kansas City, MO
Toy & Miniature Museum, Kansas City, MO

1996

Fantasy of Flight, Polk City, FL
Indiana Medical History Museum, Indianapolis, IN
Columbus, Indiana, Visitor Center, Columbus, IN

1995

Wilton Candy Kitchen, Wilton, IA
Breitbach's Country Dining, Balltown, IA
D.C. Booth Historic Fish Hatchery, Spearfish, SD
Hotel Alex Johnson, Rapid City, SD
Prairie Edge Trading Co., Rapid City, SD
Reptile Gardens, Rapid City, SD
Waldo County, Maine, Waldo, ME

1994

EAA Air Adventure Museum, Oshkosh, WI
Heritage Hill Living History Museum, Green Bay, WI
Fox Cities Children's Museum, Appleton, WI

1993

Langdon Hall, Cambridge, Ont., Canada
Southmoreland on the Plaza Inn, Kansas City, MO
Hidden Valley Inn, Tucson, AZ
Amerind Foundation, Dagoon, AZ

1992

Forest View Gardens, Cincinnati, OH
Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury, MD