

## HISTORY OF FFDC AND ITS ACTIVITIES

By Pat Henderson with assistance from Judith Baizan.

Edited and formatted by Dan Lampert June 8, 2004.

In the last newsletter, Ann Kessler had a discussion on the date of camp with the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the camp coming up next year. I consulted with Judith Baizan who was a charter member of the council and she sent me the following information. After the council started, groups in various cities hosted workshops with Tampa sponsoring at least 15 instructors. In the early 1980s, the council decided to have an annual camp on President's Weekend. Occasionally, groups will sponsor a workshop outside of camp. In 1974, the first Folkdancefest was presented where groups from various cities would put together a performance and each group would select a specific country or countries to represent. Authentic costumes and show dances were presented. Cities that hosted the Folkdancefest include Tampa, Daytona Beach, Orlando and Tallahassee and some more than once. In a nutshell, here is a chronology of FFDC and its activities.

1. Late 1971                      Several folk dancers met in the home of Gretel Dunsing and became the Florida Folk Dance Council
2. Sept. 1-4, 1972              **Tampa, FL:** First official FFDC event: "Florida Folk Dance Council Dance Workshop Weekend" Dances taught by: Judith Baizan. David Digby, Gretel Dunsing, Harold N. Pelta, Donna Pezdek, Bea Statnick, Nelle Westergard and Cubby Whitehead.
3. March 2-4, 1973              **Avon Park, FL:** Florida Folk Dance Council Camp. Teachers: Gretel Dunsing, Julius Horvath, Bea Statnick, Harold Pelta, Cubby Whitehead.
4. Feb. 1, 1974                  **Tampa, FL:** First Folkdancefest.
5. Jan. 1981                      FFDC was incorporated as a nonprofit organization
6. Feb 13-16, 1981              First Annual George Washington's Birthday Folk Dance Camp. Teacher: George Tomov.
7. Feb. 1983                      **Ocala, FL:** FFDC President's Weekend Camp moved to Camp Ocala (4H Camp).
8. Feb. 1993                      **Silver Springs, FL:** FFDC President's Weekend Camp moved to present location, Christian Church Conference Center, Silver Springs

The FFDC is approaching nearly 33 years in existence and the February camp will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. Our previous "25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" was in 1991 when the syllabus and t-shirts had 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FFDC on them. It should have

been the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary instead. So, enter the contest for the graphics to use for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Florida Camp in February 2005! It truly will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the camp. Also, it is amazing how many dancers are still active who have made major contributions to the organization over the years. It is never too late to thank them for keeping our organization alive and well.

## **SUPPORTING COMMENTS**

The above dates were reviewed by David Digby, an FFDC founder.  
The following comments come from an email by David Digby to Dan Lampert on May 30, 2004. Edited and formatted by Dan Lampert June 8, 2004.

**Item 1** was definitely "late 1971" and not early 1972 as previously described. If I can find my old flight log, I can give you an exact date, but don't hold your breath, I have to find it first. I flew a rented 'plane down to the airport north of St. Petersburg, and one or more of the other folks picked me up for the meeting at Gretel's house. I think I still have an early draft copy of the FFDC constitution.

**Item 2** - The names look good, but I don't remember any details about this specific event.

**Item 3** - I don't remember that we went to Avon Park quite that soon, but I'm sure we went there several years in a row, and I'm pretty sure that it was already considered to be an annual event, maybe even on George Washington's Birthday, before we gave up Avon Park as being too small. The lodge there was a wonderful place to dance, even with the posts to dance around, and there was a swell lake right outside!

**After item 6**, there was a deleted item, *Feb. 12-15, 1982. Second Annual George Washington's Birthday Folk Dance Camp Leesburg with teachers: Karin Gottier and David Henry*. We certainly did have camp in Leesburg, for several years in a row, in the early 80's, but I don't think 1982 was the "second annual camp". It might have been the second one held in Leesburg, but I'm pretty sure we had the first camp LESS than ten years after we organized FFDC. And I think that goes for having it on George Washington's Birthday, too.

**Items 7 and 8:** These places are good, and the dates sound about right. This is recent enough for more people to corroborate.

**Last Paragraph:** OK, the coming 33 years is right on the money, and the 20th anniversary is right for 1991. But regarding the annual dance camp, I think 2005 will be closer to being the 30th anniversary, rather than the 25th. Apparently nobody has actual records of all those years, and there is room for disagreement over just what constituted the "first annual camp", since we had quite a few less "annual" camps and workshops before that. Whenever it was, however, I don't remember anything being considered as an "annual camp" on any date other than George Washington's Birthday.