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Fiddle fans flock to Whitewright for Second Annual Louis Franklin Fiddle Fest

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By Allen Rich
May 28, 2006

There is something very special about the sound of a fiddle. Word is getting out that there is also something very special about an annual fiddle contest in Whitewright that draws gifted performers from several states.

The flying fingers of dozens of talented fiddlers filled the Whitewright Middle School auditorium with music lovers May 27 for the Second Annual Louis Franklin Fiddle Fest. Everyone enjoys going for first place, but it was also obvious that for many of these musicians it was an honor to perform in a contest named after seven-time world champion fiddler Louis Franklin.

The entire Franklin family plays a major role in this annual Memorial Day event sanctioned by the Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association. Louis Franklin was on hand to visit with the musicians, many of whom grew up in the shadow of this renowned fiddler, and one of his sons, Larry Franklin, was Master of Ceremonies along with Julie Johnson. Larry is an amazing fiddler in his own right and he entertained the crowd while Julie added the vocals.

Accompanying Larry and Julie, as well as many of the fiddlers in the contest, were two more gifted members of the first family of fiddling, guitarists Ray Franklin and Royce Franklin. This unique family's influence may eventually span more generations, because Jordan Franklin and one of Louis' grandsons, Jason Andrew, competed in the 16-30 age group.

Fiddlers from Missouri, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas competed in four separate age divisions and then the winners came back to see who would go home as the grand champion of the Second Annual Louis Franklin Fiddle Fest. Dale Morris, Jr., of Watauga, Texas won the top honors in 2006. Tonya Hopkins of Porter, Texas took second place, Bubba Hopkins of Sapuina, Oklahoma came in third and Jason Andrew finished fourth.



1st place: Dale Morris, Jr.



2nd place: Tonya Hopkins



3rd place: Bubba Hopkins



4th place Jason Andrew

Results were: Age 60+: 1st-E. J. Hopkins, Porter, TX, 2nd-Benny Bennet, Magnolia, TX; 3rd-Tom Fonville, Flint, TX; 4th-Boyd Long, Wolfe City, TX; 5th-Buck Ragsdale, Aubrey, TX; 6th-Walt Hardin, Granbury, TX.

Age 0-15: 1st-Rebekah Enright, Watauga, TX; 2nd-Douglas Thompson, Rose, OK; 3rd-Lydia Elseth, Nacogdoches, TX; 4th-Malekia Nugent, Burleson, TX; 5th-Jacob Duncan, Sapuina, OK; 6th-Michael Thompson, Rose, OK.

Age 16-30: 1st-Bubba Hopkins, Sapuina, OK; 2nd-Jason Andrew, Whitewright, TX; 3rd-Jordan Franklin, Burleson, TX; 4th-Lauren Hodges, Ragley, LA; 5th-Sarah Price-Bowie, TX.

Age 31-59: 1st Dale Morris, Jr., Watauga, TX; 2nd-Tonya Hopkins, Porter, TX; 3rd-Carl Hopkins, Watauga, TX; 4th-Monte Gaylord-Odagah, OK; 6th-Marty Elmore, Bowie, TX.

Accompanist Division: 1st-Ray Franklin, Marion, TX; 2nd-Royce Franklin, Roanoke, TX; 3rd-Anthony Mature, New Waverly, TX; 4th-Steve Williams,

Lampassas, TX; 5th-Bobby Christman, Pottsboro, TX; 6th-Jacob Johnson, Burleson, TX.

The Grand Champion was selected from the top two in each category.

Louis Franklin, "7 Time World Fiddling Champion", gave the honors to the following: 4th-Jason Andrew; 3rd-Bubba Hopkins; 2nd-Tonya Hopkins; 1st Dale Morris, Jr.

If you haven't seen this yet, please try to make next Memorial Day Weekend a must!

Thanks to all: the fans and sponsors of Fiddle Fest, Larry Franklin, Julie Johnson, Jason Andrew, Jean Tykoski, Whitewright Chamber of Commerce and of course, Louis Franklin.



Louis Franklin studies the competition



Loius Franklin watches Jordan Franklin perform



Carl Hopkins



Eddie Davis





Lauren Hodges





Marty Elmore



Monte Gaylord



Sarah Price



Wes Westmoreland





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