A History of the Federation of Fly Fishers’ Casting Instructor Certification Program
February, 2010
By Macauley Lord

Except where otherwise noted, all names mentioned in this document are current, former or emeritus members of the FFF Casting Board of Governors.

Abbreviations:
BOG- [Casting] Board of Governors
CCI or CI-Certified Casting Instructor
CICP- Casting Instructor Certification Program
FFF-Federation of Fly Fishers
MCI-Master Casting Instructor
THCI- Two-Handed Casting Instructor

This history is selective. Based on a combination of all-too-human memories and incomplete archival materials, it omits much. For reasons of brevity, it omits details of the tens of thousands of hours of work by men and women whose names may not even be mentioned here. Unless otherwise noted, all endnotes refer to materials in the FFF archives.

Beginnings
Mel Krieger had a dream. Having written perhaps the most acclaimed fly-casting book of all time, having trained fly-casters and their instructors across North America and Argentina, and having founded a fishing travel company, he set his sights on a big idea. Why not, he wondered, do for flycasting what the sports of golf and tennis had done to promote competency in their instructors? These sports had an official certification process for their instructors. Aspiring golfers and tennis players could readily find a qualified instructor in their field merely by contacting the certifying bodies in the respective sports and requesting the name of a qualified instructor in their area. For tennis, it was the United States Professional Tennis Association; for golf, it was the Professional Golf Association.

Mel’s original vision did not include the FFF. A few years before the FFF entered the picture, he had tried to start up a program under the aegis of a different organization. In the 1980’s, he had a meeting at his home with Al Kyte, Tim Rajeff and others to discuss the idea but it went nowhere.¹ Eventually, he approached the FFF’s VP for Education, Judy Lehmberg, about his idea. She persuaded the FFF board to approve the program and she chaired the first planning meeting of the program—there was no Board of Governors yet—at the FFF Conclave in Calgary in July, 1992.²

Here’s how Mel described it to Fly Fishing Retailer magazine in 2000: “The FFF established this certification program with fifteen of the best-known names in American flyfishing. Our goal was to enhance the sport of flyfishing in three important areas: 1. To educate flycasting
instructors; 2. To establish communication between instructors; 3. To offer learners a more accepted entry into our sport and a more qualified group of instructors.”

After announcing the idea at the FFF Conclave in Calgary, Alberta, in July 1992, Mel wrote a letter to those fifteen names on August 4, 1992, asking them to join him and the FFF in the effort. The Casting Board of Governors (BOG) was incorporated in the fall of 1992 under the auspices of the FFF. Its founding members were iconic figures in American fly casting or fly fishing. They were:

Gary Borger
Leon Chandler
Chico Fernandez
Jim Green
Lefty Kreh
Mel Krieger
Al Kyte
Steve Rajeff
Bruce Richards
Allan Rohrer
Barbara Rohrer
Doug Swisher
Lou Tabory
Dave Whitlock
Joan Wulff

The Board’s early bylaws called for each Governor to be appointed for life; most of the Founding Governors served on the Board for many years. But the challenge of coming to agreement on standards of testing and certification were great. With distance-casting styles ranging, for example, from Joan Wulff’s to Lefty Kreh’s, would the FFF endorse one style over the other? What would be covered on the test and how would it be administered? Would Certified Casting Instructors be required to join the FFF? These were just some of the questions that had to be resolved.

The first BOG meeting was held at Park High School in Livingston, Montana, at the 1993 Conclave. Judy Lehmberg remembers: “From the beginning it was quickly apparent that there were at least two camps in the room, the Mel camp and the Lefty camp. When you consider how many well known, good fly casters were in the room it was amazing they got anything done. The one thing I remember throughout that meeting and my entire time spent with the program was that Allan Rohrer, Barbara Rohrer, and Leon Chandler were extremely congenial, easy to work with, and went out of their way to help in any way they could.”

Lefty Kreh and Dave Whitlock left the board within the first two years of its incorporation and were replaced by Barry Beck and Al Buhr, thereby keeping the Board’s number at fifteen.

The Flycasting Instructor Advisory Committee
The Board quickly established an Advisory Committee to offer advice and suggestions to the BOG and to grow the public profile of the CICP. The Board appointed Committee members by fiat. Appointees received an elegant diploma that read, “______ is an Outstanding Flycasting Instructor and is Therefore Recognized as a Member of the Flycasting Instructor Advisory Committee”. It was dated and contained the facsimile signatures of the FFF President and Secretary and all the founding Governors.
The Board moved remarkably quickly to grow its profile in the flyfishing industry. One appointee to the Advisory Committee remembers his elation at being named to such a prestigious body, only to learn with a phone call to the FFF office that he was now one of over 200 members!

Mel reflected on this in 2000. “Our beginnings were a bit rocky. We set standards too low and we offered honorary certification to many established flyfishers and casters, hoping to gain acceptance in the flyfishing community.” By late 1994, the Advisory Committee had served its marketing purpose and was disbanded.

**The First Tests**

Initially, the test consisted solely of a performance portion. The equipment standards were the same as today’s and the test requirements were:

- Roll cast 50 feet [The examiner could adjust the distance if roll casts had to be made on land.];
- Roll cast, off-shoulder, 45 feet;
- False cast five or six times, using the rod-hand only (no hauling), presenting the fly to a target approximately 40 feet away, demonstrating reasonably good timing and a controlled loop. The fly must land reasonably close to the target area;
- Cast tailing loops and wide loops on demand.
- Demonstrate the single and double haul.
- Cast a minimum of 75 feet.

By July, 1993, a written test had been proposed—it would consist of multiple-choice questions—in addition to the performance test. Joan Wulff was concerned about the overall testing process. Voicing concerns that some Governors and Masters echo to this day, she wrote to the Board in July, 1993, that she was “uncomfortable certifying anyone to be an instructor without requiring them to demonstrate their ability to teach.” She continued, “I believe that each of us who does the certifying can create a test for the applicant in which he or she must actually teach. I, the certifier, can be the pupil and incorporate faults into my casting that an instructor must be able to deal with…It’s teaching that concerns me. Let’s address it.”

Joan’s clear-eyed reasoning and respectful tone notwithstanding, Mel would later describe the Board Governors, obviously with great fondness, as “fighting like caged lions,” a sentiment later echoed by Al Buhr and by FFF VP Judy Lehmberg, who chaired the first meeting. A Governor who joined the Board in 1996 recalls that, by that time, most disagreements among the founding members were agreeable, and that Governors generally interacted with a degree of comity and mutual respect.

It should be noted here that the Board consisted entirely of volunteers, although some did charge a fee to test applicants. Many were name-brand fly fishing professionals with demanding schedules, jobs, and families. Combine these factors with the uncomfortable truth that no two Governors agreed closely on how casting should actually be taught and you had a prescription
for inertia. Joan’s suggestion to incorporate a true teaching component into the test was not formally implemented.

In what was probably the first of many revisions, Al Kyte and Mel Krieger spent three days together in December (as Al recalls), 1993, rewriting the proposed written test.  

**Mass Certifications**

As soon as the program was rolled out and announced to the public through the fishing magazines and word-of-mouth, there was a flood of casters interested in the program. Says Judy Lehmberg, “I knew the program was becoming popular when I started getting phone calls at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning from people in France, Spain, Italy, etc., who wanted information about it (and didn’t know anything about time zones, apparently). People were calling from all over, not just from overseas, wanting to know how to get certified.”

Many of the first tests were given en masse. While some applicants were truly interested in teaching, some had no background or interest in teaching and were interested only in seeing if they could cast as well as a “real” casting instructor. With so few Governors spread so thinly around the country, and with some being inactive as examiners, it simply wasn’t possible to carefully examine each applicant to assess his or her aptitude for teaching fly casting. Combined with the complication that some of the applicants were friends or fly-fishing business associates of the Governors, this led to many people being certified who were not qualified to teach casting.

Tom White reported in the first issue of *The Tailing Loop*, “Steve Rajeff & I tested 31 applicants and certified 29 as instructors. Most of these were former students. It's gratifying to see people progress in the sport. I feel there will be people who will be teaching without being certified but as an organization we can make them better instructors through the sharing of knowledge.”

Tom’s observation about the sharing of knowledge underscored the most important reason for founding the program: Get instructors to talk to each other about what and how they teach and the tide of teaching will inevitably rise, lifting instructors and students alike.

Because of the low standards for certification in the early years, the Board actually voted to require that all those certified prior to the 1995 Conclave be retested. Coming to its senses a few months later, it rescinded this decision.

**The Written Test**

The early written test was further developed by Steve Rajeff and Gary Borger and was revised in 1996 by Dave Engerbretson. It consisted of 36 true-false and multiple-choice questions, just as it does today. Applicants had to get 30 questions correct to pass the written test before being eligible to take and pass the performance test. During the early years, many who were unsuccessful on the written test were debriefed by a Governor about which questions he or she missed and why, and then simply went home with no experience on the performance test. Governors were sometimes hard-pressed to test all the applicants; the accepted limit on applicants one Governor could test in a day was six! Consequently, they often didn’t have time to run someone who had fallen short on the written test through the performance test as a courtesy and as continuing education. Seeing the lost potential in that way of doing things, it is
now BOG policy that the teaching workshop, the written test and the performance test may be completed successfully in a 12 month period, but in any order.

**The Master Test**
At the 1995 Conclave in Livingston, Montana, the BOG gave its first Master Test. The thirteen applicants took the written component—which was dropped shortly afterwards—in a classroom at Park High School. Applicants judged by the graders to have answered sufficiently well were matched up with two members of the BOG and went outside to perform the casts required on the performance test. The required distance cast then was 90 feet. Hopper fishing must have been great that day: it was hot and dry, with winds gusting to perhaps 30 mph. The examiners made accommodations for the conditions but both governors had to be in agreement that the applicant met the standards. Eleven applicants passed. Of those, most eventually joined the BOG.

The written component of the test consisted entirely of essay questions and proved challenging for the examiners to evaluate uniformly. It gave way at the next year’s Conclave to an exclusively oral component.

**Early Governance**
The early Board’s governance went through rapid changes. The FFF understandably wanted to be sure that the BOG coordinated its efforts with the mission and goals of the Federation. Accordingly, the first Chairs of the BOG were not Governors; they were appointed by the FFF. They were called FFF Assistant Vice Presidents for Casting and reported to the FFF’s VP for Education, who oversaw the management of the program. Some of the early FFF Education VP’s and Assistant VP’s for Casting included Judy Lehmberg, Tom Travis, Tom Theus and Susan Halblom and Jack Sherrill. The Board, consisting as it did of many people who were accustomed to a high degree of autonomy in their fly-casting lives, chafed at having people who were not fellow crazed casting wonks (although all were passionate flyfishers) appointed by the parent organization to herd them.

**The Board of Governors Expands**
With a new tier of testing and with many people around the country clamoring to be tested, the Board saw that it was too small. The Board therefore added ten new Governors between the 1995 Conclave in August and the spring of 1996. Of those, most became very active in the work of the Board. Tom Jindra eventually served as Chair, two became editors of *The Loop*, approximately seven served on the Board’s Executive Committee and nearly all became active in testing. This represented a significant change for the BOG. Most of the new members were not iconic, household names in the sport. Rather, they were simply professionals who were passionate about casting and teaching. That most of the newcomers had passed the Master Test was no accident. The Board recognized that it needed a way to assess the pool of talent across the continent—Denise Maxwell, being the first Governor from Canada, internationalized the Board—and the Master Test was the perfect way to attract exceptional instructors to the Board.
The Quest for Autonomy
At one point, the Board was so upset with its relationship with the FFF that it came extremely close to taking the entire program to the American Casting Association. Of that dark time, Al Kyte said, “only the appeals for patience by Bruce Richards kept us in the FFF.”

In 1997, the FFF finally bowed to BOG objections and relinquished its direct control of the Board. Jack Sherrill had been serving as the FFF’s Assistant VP of Casting but had also passed his Master Test. To the BOG, he was One Of Them. In a balletic organizational maneuver, Jack was named to the Board of Governors, making him the first Master Instructor and BOG member to chair the Board. Two other members joined the Board that year: Floyd Franke would later succeed Jack Sherrill as Chair and Tom White would win the BOG’s Mel Krieger Award in 2008. Their appointments began a tradition of BOG members being named who had passed their Master Tests. Although it would not become policy for a few more years, the BOG was now giving strong preference to Masters, to those who had “come up the hard way” and were recruited for their demonstrated abilities more than for whatever stature they may have had within the flyfishing industry.

An early desire of Mel’s was that the program be as inexpensive as possible for its members. In 1996, the Certified Casting Instructor examination fee was $50.00. An additional $50.00 fee was due upon passage and a $25.00 annual fee was required to remain certified. In the first three years, the program did not require FFF membership but the FFF in 1996 began requiring that all certified instructors become FFF members. Tom Jindra, who was President of the FFF then (and later Chair of the BOG) made the decision. At the time, he wrote, “Rather than isolate participants in the Casting Certification Program from the organization by merely providing a certificate, it is our goal to strengthen the fly fishing community by uniting program participants through FFF membership.”

The “Basic Test” Becomes the CCI Test
Prior to the Master Test, there was only one designation. It went by a variety of names over time that ultimately coalesced at “Certified Casting Instructor.” The one that made some Governors want to slash their own waders was “Certified Caster,” a name that implied that the test had nothing to do with teaching. After the inception of the Master Test, the original test came informally to be called the “Basic Test.” With Governors holding each other to higher testing standards, the success rate of applicants tested was dropping. The “Basic Test” surely wasn’t basic to most who took it! One applicant told a Governor that he was more nervous about his Basic Test than he was during the oral exams for his PhD. To honor the difficulty of the certification, the BOG changed the name from Basic Test to Certified Casting Instructor (CCI or CI) Test in 2000.
Some Statistics

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The renewal rate—the those who renewed their membership as CCI’s and MCI’s—was growing dramatically. The renewal rate went from 70% in 1995 to 90% in 1997 to 94% in 2001. The program was working! Or was it?

Bad Press

Having left the Board in about 1994, Lefty Kreh would tell *Fly Fishing Retailer* magazine in 2000 that the certification process, “wasn’t about teaching. It was about performance. Can you make a roll cast of 40 feet? Can you make a tailing loop? Can you do this? Those are competency tests, not tests on whether or not you can teach something. I’m a firm supporter of the Federation, but I’m just not a supporter of that particular program within the Federation…A good many of the people who are certified casters aren’t decent fly casters, let alone instructors…I think the thing has brought a lot of discredit to the Federation.”

Barry Beck had left the board over similar concerns. “I don’t think it’s working under the present program,” he said. “I know some people in the Federation have worked very, very hard to make this work, but I still don’t see that it is.” Seeing a need for more emphasis on teaching and follow up after the certification, he said, “We never really evaluate these people after they’re certified…Does anyone really keep an eye on these people, and say, ‘Hey, are they doing their
job?” Or, is it just some kind of title we give them that gives them free license to do whatever?30

Lefty and Barry were not alone in their disappointment over the program. Governors heard from CCI’s and Masters regularly and from those who had been unsuccessful on the tests about what the Board should be doing to improve the program.

The Style Wars
Al Kyte had been studying the detailed mechanics of professional athletes for decades. In a pioneering study first published in 1993, he and kinesiologist Gary Moran filmed seven elite-level casters, including Lefty Kreh, Bruce Richards and SAGE rod designer Jerry Siem. They found big variations in the amount of and types of body movement the casters used to achieve long casts. They wrote, “Sometimes fly casting is presented as a precise sequence of movements, and any deviation is treated as an error. This tendency to teach style as if it were substance often leads to confusion about casting form.”31 Is there an instructor reading this history who has not at one time effectively attempted to impose his or her style as the “correct” or “best” way? Al had just named the elephant that had occupied the room since the birth of the CICP.

A manufacturer’s representative in the industry complained publicly about the style wars and his comments are still echoed in critiques of the CICP from casting instructors. He wrote, "When are you/we going to rise to the next level and provide our teachers with a single, core curriculum that conveys a simple, step-by-step learning program that is used and supported from coast-to-coast?" Citing the Professional Ski Instructors of America’s program as an example, and alluding to the style wars between casting instructors, he said, "When you travel from one resort to the next, you are given the same teaching regimen and not basically told to disregard the previous instructor’s $75/hour wisdom…"What we have is a number of different methodologies of casting …which, from what I’ve seen, truly confuses people…I would really like to see the appropriate players come to a table and leave the room with a unified format to teaching…"32 This was not to happen. As a former Governor said to an active Governor in 2000, “You’re a friend of mine so I can say this to you: You cast wrong and you teach wrong.”

The beauty of Mel’s vision was that getting instructors to be in the same room or on the same lawn together would bring them together in more than just the physical sense. It would happen when Bruce Richards and Mel Krieger—with their very different styles—would cast together and when Tim Rajeff would demonstrate the differences between his distance style and that of his brother. Tim’s description honored both styles. He would say, in effect, “Steve’s style is best for him and my style is best for me. There is a style that is best for you and it may not be the style in which your instructor casts.”

The Gammels’ Booklet
Bill Gammel and his father, Jay, wrote a casting booklet for the FFF in 1990, predating the BOG.33 It laid out the essentials of casting as they identified them. The booklet remains highly regarded for its clarity, factuality and brevity. However, because it was sold by the FFF and recommended to all those who aspired to certification, many applicants assumed that it laid out the BOG-endorsed method of teaching casting. It did not. Like all the other books by members
of the BOG, it laid out the *authors’* method of teaching casting. The BOG still did not endorse a single method of teaching nor does it today. While the diversity of Governor’s teaching styles was once seen as a weakness by many, it is today rightly seen as a strength.

**The Borgers’ Tape**

Jason Borger and Gary Borger created a videotape in 1996 documenting the most common casting errors that beginning students are likely to make. The tape was 13 minutes long and, like the Gammels’ book, is available from the FFF. For many applicants who were schooled solely on the commercial videos of Joan, Lefty and Mel with their beautiful casts, it was the first time they had ever seen videotape of *bad* casts. The Borgers, like the Gammels, completely donated their content to the FFF, showing the kind of generosity that remains a hallmark of the Board today.

**The CCI Test Is Improved and Standards Inch Higher**

John Van Dalen and Bruce Richards were well acquainted with the shortcomings of the written test. Like any new product that is designed by a committee and then rolled out to the public, the test benefitted from the regular feedback of those taking and giving it. In 1997 and again 2000 (then with Floyd Franke), John and Bruce revised the questions that were confusing to applicants and even to some Governors.

With each passing year, Governors held each other to more rigorous standards in testing. Stung by the perception among many in the casting instruction world that testing standards were applied differently by different Governors, they worked to educate each other about the unusual situations they encountered while testing. They talked about which errors on the performance test were fatal and which were survivable.

**The Tailing Loop and The Loop**

FFF President Al Beatty and Gretchen Beatty edited the first volume of *The Tailing Loop*, the journal for casting instructors, in 1994. FFF member John Seidel began editing it soon after and continued doing so until FFF staffer Evelyn Taylor took it over in 1995. Macauley Lord began editing it in 1996, the first Governor to do so. It was later edited by Jason Borger, who changed its name from that of a definite bad cast to that of only possibly a bad cast. Jason also modernized its graphics. After another editing stint by Macauley, Denise Maxwell and Liz Watson took it over in 2003 and quickly digitized it, making it and all old issues available online at [http://www.fedflyfishers.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4469](http://www.fedflyfishers.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4469). Denise remains its editor today.

Some seminal articles included Dave Engerretson’s Fall 1997 *Education of An Instructor*; Floyd Franke’s Winter 1997 *The Lesson Plan*; Bill Gammel’s Late-Winter 2000 *Distance Casting: A Method For Improvement*; Bruce Richards’ Spring 1999 *A Six-Step Method*; and Al Kyte’s Fall 2002 *Arm Styles*.34

**Standardizing Testing**

In 1999 Floyd Franke led a formal effort to standardize the way that Governors assessed the results of a CCI performance test. Floyd succeeded Jack Sherrill as Chair that year and brought an emphasis on professionalism to the Board’s committee work and deliberations. Under Floyd’s leadership, many of the contentious issues—there were still plenty—were hashed out in
the months leading up to the annual meeting. This led to a dramatic increase in the Board’s effectiveness. Most importantly, Floyd tackled the question of testing fairness and consistency, knowing that it was crucial to the credibility of the program.

From feedback they received from some unsuccessful applicants and from their own observations, it was clear despite their informal efforts at uniformity that different Governors emphasized different aspects of the performance test. Simply put, there was no consensus on what constituted a successful test. Floyd polled the Board and developed a document detailing the standards that applicants were expected to meet on every requirement of the test. They include such things as the size of the loops permissible on various casts and the fundamental points to be covered on each of the oral/teaching questions at the end of the test. The same standards are in use today, with only slight modifications.

**Feedback Form**

Like all his actively testing colleagues on the BOG and among the Masters, Joe Libue had to fail many applicants. The standards were high and the pass rate on the test was low. Like all Governors and Masters, Joe wanted to see *every* applicant pass. To that end, he developed a form that examiners could hand to an unsuccessful applicant at the end of the test that would document exactly how the applicant had fallen short. It provided the unsuccessful (and often crestfallen) applicant at least part of a roadmap for success upon retesting. The form was incorporated into the tests in 2001 and remains an important part of the testing process today.

**The Pain of Failure**

People who take the tests offered by the CICP do so in part from a desire to become better instructors. But every applicant comes to their test with at least some vulnerability. In the case of some, that sense is very strong. For many, the outcome on their test is a validation, or repudiation, of who they are as a person. An ego is at stake, and hundreds of unsuccessful applicants over the years have been wounded by an adverse outcome. It would be hard to find a Master or Governor who, having delivered an adverse judgment of a test result, has not seen at least one of the following: crying, a physical threat, a legal threat (yes, this really happened), public character assassination and a variety of displays of angry and wounded behavior.

Gary Borger co-conducted a Master Test in 1996 that ended with the applicant indignant and offended at not passing. Afterwards, Gary drafted a letter for distribution to all prospective Masters about the difficulty of the test and the very high standards for certification. In his cover letter to the Board, he wrote, “Everyone should know going in THIS IS NOT A CAKEWALK; IT’S TOUGH AND WE INTEND TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.”

The Board adopted Gary’s proposed letter to the applicants word-for-word and today it makes up the opening words to all aspiring Masters on the FFF’s web site. It reads, “Certification at the Master’s level requires more than just meeting a specified set of casting requirements. It also requires that the applicant have a broad range of experience in casting itself. Certification is the end of a process, not the beginning. The Master Caster must be the exceptional individual, able to teach others how to teach. These are rather demanding requirements, but they are the requirements that FFF wishes to be assessed.”
One Governor who had served actively for a few years understandably resigned from the Board because he no longer had the heart to tell candidates they had failed. BOG Chair Tom Jindra considered following him for the same reason, but, in his words, “…I decided I was helping more people than I hurt. A couple of years later, a phone call confirmed that I had made the right decision. To make a long story short, a young fellow who flunked my test decided to enroll in college, because I had inspired him. It was kind of hard to quit after that.”

The BOG Asks More of Its Members
Leon Chandler resigned from the board in 2000, having served it with distinction since its beginning. Floyd Franke, BOG Chair, and the rest of the BOG’s Executive Committee sent a letter to all the Governors in 2001 noting, “the inspiring example of Leon Chandler, who resigned from the board saying that there were others who could now contribute more than he. For his years of dedication and service to the program, the board named him Governor Emeritus, the only former Governor to have that honor.” He continued, “We are just a working board. The cost of our decision to cap our membership at about 30 is that it places a considerable work load on those Governors who are most active in the program. We now find that we need more participation from our members to meet the demand we have created. …We ask each member of the Board of Governors to serve on an assigned committee or to participate in teaching workshops and certifications.”

Terms for Governors
Thinking that the Board needed a regular infusion of highly motivated Governors who wanted to share the increasing work load, Macauley Lord proposed that Governors now serve five-year terms. They could serve for as many terms as they wished, provided they sought and received the Board’s approval for a successive term. The terms would be staggered so there would never be more than six Governors leaving the Board or up for renewal in any one year. In 2003, the Board amended its bylaws to make the change. Since then there has been an average turnover of three or four governors each year.

The Rise of the Masters
Perhaps the most important change in the history of BOG came with true acceptance of the Masters as partners in the mission of the Board. It started with the BOG’s annual meetings being opened to observation by all Masters at the 2002 meeting. Meetings are now open to observation by CI’s, too. By late 2003, Masters were joining Governors in officially testing applicants. Prior to this, the testing load had fallen exclusively to Governors, making it very difficult for some applicants to find a tester, particularly in parts of the country not served by a Governor. For many, fishing shows and Conclaves were the only testing option but also for many, they were too expensive to travel to and attend. After the Board voted to enable two Masters to serve in the testing capacity of a single Governor both on the CCI and Master tests, applicants nationwide found their options for getting tested and certified expand dramatically. All this had the effect of increasing both the Board’s productivity and its sense of shared mission with the Masters. Within two years, the Board decided to accept its new members only from the ranks of the Masters and was inviting any Master who was interested to actively seek nomination to the Board.
Thus, it was Leon Chandler’s gracious resignation that truly set the stage for CICP as we know it today. He could later be found in his retirement from the Board, floating down the Missouri to Wolf Creek in his kickboat and shuttling himself on a motor scooter over the dusty road, back up to Holter Dam.

**The Master Test Study Guide**
Dusty Sprague saw that aspiring Masters needed a study guide. As he prepared for his Master Test, he prepared rigorously. After passing his test and then conferring with other Masters and with Governors, he compiled an extensive document that laid a foundation for anyone studying for the test. He rolled it out to the public in January, 2002, at the Denver Fly Fishing Show. It was a big hit with those preparing for the test and the Board moved enthusiastically to embrace it. A committee headed by BOG Chair-to-be Tom Jindra worked with Governors and Masters to round out the Guide. It was then posted to the FFF site. This spirit of taking one person’s good idea and making it better through collaboration is a hallmark of the BOG throughout its history.

Gordy Hill and Tom White built on the push for better-prepared Masters and established a program in the Florida Keys that would rigorously prepare Master applicants to take the test. In doing so they created a successful model that would be widely admired. Gordy has expanded their program into the world’s first online university for fly-casting instructors.

**The Code of Conduct**
In 2003, Tim Rajeff proposed that the Board adopt a code of conduct for examiners (this included Masters, along with Governors). Tim was the first chair of the committee and, with the help of Tony Vitale’s research, he drove the development of the code that was ultimately adopted by the Board. Phil Gay shared Tim’s desire to rid the Board forever of even the appearance of conflicts of interest and was an important contributor to the effort. The Code was adopted in 2004 and it changed the game for all examiners. No longer were they permitted to test people who had paid them to be prepped for the test, nor could they test their friends or business associates. They could test mere acquaintances. (In situations where there was a potential for a conflict of interest, an impartial witness who was certified had to attest to the fairness of the test.) These new strictures made getting tested harder. But they eliminated something that had dogged the program in the first few years--the whispers that getting certified was more about whom you knew than what you knew.

**Whatever Happened to FFF-Europe?**
A European affiliate of the FFF was created in the late 1980’s, only to collapse in 1996. Though FFF-Europe failed, a number of its instructors were allowed to continue operating their own casting instructor program under the FFF name. But while the group chose to operate as an affiliate, they created standards different from those of the Board of Governors in North America. Their standards emphasized casting performance over teaching ability, the latter being a hallmark of the North American FFF testing philosophy.

That led to problems when Europeans who rejected the European program—one that emphasized casting skills more than teaching skills—asked to be tested under North American standards. In 2005, BOG Chair Tom Jindra concluded the situation was untenable and, in 2006, he ordered
FFF-Europe to comply with the North American standards. Instead, it dissolved its relationship with FFF and reconstituted itself as the European Fly Fishing Association, or EFFA.

**The CICP Goes Global**

After separating from FFF-Europe, the BOG saw increasing interest in certification from non-North American (mostly European) fly fishing professionals. The Board responded by forming the International Committee to oversee international training and testing. The Committee has flourished and developed an exciting momentum behind the energy of Chair Dan McCrimmon, who had travelled much of the world professionally, and has developed testing agreements with fly-fishing organizations in places as far flung as Hungary and Malaysia. The Committee has now established the CICP as the leading casting instructor program in the world. Since its first trip—it was to Scotland in 2006—it has conducted testing events in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Russia, Japan, New Zealand and Australia! The result of these events is that many of the top fly fishing instructors around the world are now active participants in the CICP. As of this writing, in Europe alone there are three Governors, 45 Masters, 74 CI’s and 18 THCI’s who are certified under the BOG standards.

The Committee’s Interim Chair, Denise Maxwell, speaks of the challenge of testing in international locations, in that it requires striking a delicate balance between tactful diplomacy and a clear definition of certifiers’ expectations. Add in the difficulty of translating from one language to another and of differing casting terminologies and you have a challenge indeed! Dan McCrimmon echoes a recurring theme of the success of the CICP when he describes all the background work put in over the years to make the International Committee the success it has been. There’s a lesson here for those preparing to take the CI or Master Test for the first time. Wanna make something good happen? Work at it.

A visit to the FFF’s *Find a Certified Instructor* web page is a treat, as it now lists instructors in 25 countries, representing every continent but Africa and Antarctica. Need some casting instruction in Russia? There’s a Two-Handed Casting Instructor in St. Petersburg and there are CI’s in Moscow, Novosibirsk (Siberians need to double-haul, too) and Kandalaksha (suburban Murmansk.) This managed explosion of international talent has brought vital new expertise and diversity to the CICP and has brought the Program to the world.

**The Two-Handed Instructor Certification (THCI)**

Mel first proposed a spey instructor certification at the FFF Conclave in 1999 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It may have been the first mention of spey-casting in the state’s history. A committee was formed, consisting of chair Mel Krieger, Al Buhr, Dennis Grant, Jim Green, Denise Maxwell and Tom White. The committee’s makeup evolved over the next two years but the problem was that spey techniques were still alien to most of the BOG. The idea languished.

It was in Montana, at the at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the BOG. Mel banged the table and shouted at the four Governors—friends of his, all—who were sitting across the room from him. “You’re cowards!” His volume increased, “You’re all COWARDS!!” The four had pushed
back at Mel’s insistence that advanced spey techniques be incorporated into the Master Test and basic spey techniques into the CI test. He wanted to promote acceptance of two-handed techniques with single-handed rods, and not just with two-handers. Opposing close integration of spey techniques into the existing tests, the majority won the battle. But Mel blessedly won the war. The Board agreed to offer a stand-alone test in two-handed casting instruction by 2003. This action inspired many on the Board who were barely literate in spey to learn the techniques. (At this time, Board members had to know at least enough to assess a passable single and double spey on the Master Test.)

Bill Gammel is from Texas, which ranks right up there with Tennessee in its embrace of two-handed fly-casting. Bill, in part because he was agnostic about spey teaching or techniques, was assigned to lead the spey-casting gurus to agree on testing standards. He initiated a step-by-step plan with several goals to develop the performance test and study guide and a roadmap for program administration. By spring of 2003 a draft performance test was completed for review. At the 2003 Annual Meeting, the Board authorized the Spey Committee, as it was then known, to administer the program under the Board’s aegis.

The group adopted a new name, Two-Handed Committee, to reflect the program’s focus on the two-handed casting. (This was prompted in part by the increasing and enthusiastic use of spey techniques by Governors and Masters in their single-handed fishing and in part by the growing use of two-handed rods by flyfishers in the U.S.) In January, 2004, the FFF Board of Directors formally approved the THCI as an FFF certification program, allowing the program to give its first exams.

The committee named Simon Gawesworth, who had joined the Board in 2002, as the first examiner. However, because of the stain of favoritism and the overt “grandfathering” that had dogged the early CICP program, the Committee decided that all THCI examiners had to first pass the test themselves. In an elegant resolution of the chicken/egg dilemma, Simon Gawesworth tested Al Buhr, with Denise Maxwell as the officially qualified witness. After Al passed, he turned around and tested Simon, again with Denise witnessing. By the end of 2004, fourteen two-handed casting instructors had been certified. For the first time, the FFF had rolled out a casting instructor certification that has been largely free of controversy.

The test has been incrementally revised three times, mostly to clarify certain wordings, and is comparable to the Master Test in its rigor. Some statistics: By June, 2004, 19 tests had been given of which 12 passed. By the end of 2004, there were two more certified. By 2006, there were 24 certified THCI’s. In 2007, 13 new instructors were certified and the THCI committee grew to seven members, each with a three-year term. By the end of 2009, there were 56 THCI’s.

Al Buhr, who now chairs the Committee, contrasts the deliberations of the THCI Committee with those of some early meetings he remembers of the BOG. “There has been no fighting among Committee members. Many votes have been unanimous. While the Committee doesn’t completely agree on all topics, all members work toward understanding and compromise, as we have from day-one.”
Training and Testing Large Groups
More and more guides and fly shops today value the FFF instructor certification status they’ve earned and tout it as a way to stand out from their competitors. When Rick Williams received a request from a large western U.S. fly shop in 2007 to test its staff of 40 guides, he set up a training and testing sequence that took 18 months to complete. It involved five other Governors and two MCI’s in testing all the candidates and resulted in 23 new CI’s and one new MCI coming into the CICP. That experience spurred the BOG to establish a Professional Development Committee. Headed by MCI Molly Semenik, its mission is to establish a protocol for and then implement group-testing events for fly fishing professionals. In a fruitful symmetry, that effort is coordinated with the protocols being used by the International Committee for its overseas events.

In response to the oft-stated desire for continuing education among those already certified and seeing a need to more broadly distribute the teaching insights of leading casting instructors, Al Kyte founded the Continuing Education Committee. Al arranged for a yearly expenditure of $1000 from the FFF to offset the travel costs for those itinerant Professors of Casting we know as Governors and MCI’s. When Tony Vitale took over as Chair, he codified the procedure for awarding that money. David Diaz, who now chairs the Committee, nurtured a gathering organized by MCI Rod McGarry in Massachusetts in early 2010 of nearly 51 CI’s, Masters and Governors. They came from 11 states—including Florida and Alabama—and from three Canadian provinces to learn about advanced teaching techniques, the state of the art in casting physics, tournament casting—both accuracy and distance—and about volunteer teaching opportunities with children and disabled military veterans. Other continuing education events have been conducted in Southern California, Oregon, and Arkansas.

What a remarkable turnabout these two examples of large-scale teaching and testing represent for an organization that wrestled with itself and its destiny as much as the BOG did in its early years. One wishes to be in a room today with the late Leon Chandler, Jim Green, Mel Krieger and Allan Rohrer to hear them marvel at what has come of the all labors they invested long ago in their fledgling casting instructor program.

A Founding Member Chairs the Board
Bruce Richards chairs the BOG today. He and Steve Rajeff are the lone founding members remaining on the Board. Long-time Governors can recall many times when Bruce’s cool head and warm humor lowered the temperature in an argument. It didn’t hurt that Bruce, the world’s foremost expert on fly lines, knew and worked closely with more people in the industry than perhaps anyone else alive. One Governor remembers how Bruce broke the bad news to an unsuccessful Master applicant at a 1998 test. Instead of sitting across the table from him with the other examining Governor, Bruce sat next to him. Bruce wanted him to know that he was with him in his journey to become a Master and not opposite him. When Bruce asked the aspiring Master how he thought he had done, he answered that he had not met his own standards. It was then easier for the applicant to hear the decision of the examiners; he had already come to the same conclusion.

Longtime FFF VP for Education Judy Lehmberg recalls a day in Livingston, Montana, in 1993. “The first BOG meeting was about to start and I was pretty nervous about having to run the
meeting with all the famous fly fishers there. There was one youngish guy who I didn’t know and I told him we were about to have a meeting so he would need to leave the room. It was Bruce Richards."

Dedication

To the memory of those founding members of the Federation of Fly Fishers Casting Board of Governors who are no longer here to read of what they built:

Leon Chandler
Jim Green
Mel Krieger
Allan Rohrer

They taught us how to teach.
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Barbara Wuebber, for her able administration and for CICP statistics from the FFF office.

Joan Wulff, for invaluable documents from the earliest days of the CICP.

1 Al Kyte, email to Macauley Lord, September 17, 2009.
2 Judy Lehmberg, email to Macauley Lord, September 23, 2009.
6 Judy Lehmberg email.
7 Advisory Committee diploma, Macauley Lord archives.
8 Just nine weeks after Mel invited the founders to create the Board, the Advisory Committee comprised 185 people. FFF staff, Certification Committee as of 10/9/92.
9 Mel Krieger rebuttal.
10 Tom Travis, in a letter [fragment] to the BOG, ca. Fall, 1993.
11 Joan Wulff letter to Judy Lehmberg, for distribution to the BOG, July 24, 1993.
12 Ibid.
13 Mel Krieger rebuttal.
14 Judy Lehmberg email.
15 Al Kyte email. Al thinks it was in December, 1993, that he and Mel did the re-write.
18 Ibid.
20 *Casting Program Organizational Structure*, FFF document ca. 1996.
21 Al Kyte email.
22 http://www.fedflyfishers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=WlSmQqXnyTY%3d&tabid=4469&mid=3361
30 Ibid.
32 http://www.fedflyfishers.org/Portals/0/Casting/Master%20study%20guide%20articles/Al%20Kyte/SubstancevsStyle.pdf
33 J. Michael McGovern “Who Needs It?—Casting Certification?”
35 All may be found at: http://www.fedflyfishers.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4469
36 *FFF Performance Tasks and Certifiers’ Expectations*, ca. 1999.
37 Masters Certification: Commentary and Overview.
43 Derived from Tom Jindra, email to Macauley Lord, January 22, 2010.
44 Dan McCrimmon, email to Rick Williams, February 3, 2010.
45 Derived from Rick Williams, email to Macauley Lord, February 3, 2010; Denise Maxwell, email to Macauley Lord, February 14, 2010; Dan McCrimmon, email to Macauley Lord, February 14, 2010.
47 Derived mostly from Denise Maxwell, email to Macauley Lord, January 5, 2010; and Al Buhr, email to Macauley Lord, December 15, 2009.
50 Judy Lehmberg email.

**History of FFF CICP, February 19, 2010**