

Ralph Hay

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Lifetime Achievement Award was established by the BOD in 1999 to recognize an individual for their cumulative achievements with CASI throughout the years. This individual should be someone who has shown tireless dedication, unwavering commitment and support to CASI and whose life work leaves a lasting impression on the people they have touched.

This year I had the privilege of awarding CASI's first Lifetime Achievement Award to such an individual, **Ralph Hay**. I wanted to share with you why we decided to select Ralph Hay for such an important award.

Ralph started his life long career with CASI and chili in 1976 when a group of friends got together and formed the Buffalo Bayou Chili Team. He was hooked. The team disbanded but Ralph, along with his wife Dee continued attending chili cook-offs. 38 years later he is still dedicated to serving CASI in any way that he can.

In his early years, Ralph served as Head Judge. Running the judging at cook-offs primarily in the Houston area and then all across Texas, Louisiana, Mexico, and, in the 80's, ran the judging for two years at TICC. Because Ralph is such a people person folks easily gravitated toward him and volunteered to help. He developed his own team of helpers, referred to as "Ralph's Girls" who helped him in numerous areas. "Ralph's Girls" are no longer around but that has not stopped him from continuing to oversee and run the judging at various cookoffs, including the Schulenburg Cookoff which he has helped run for over 25 years.

In 1977 he formed the Pasadena Pod and served as the first Great Pepper and held the position of Great Pepper intermittently for 10 years. He was also Great Pepper of the Houston Pod for two terms and in 2002 was named Great Pepper of the Year. He has served in the capacity of Area and Regional Referee. From 1983 to 1989 he was the referee for the St. Croix cook-offs. It was Ralph's idea to propose at the 1989 Great Peppers' Meeting that St. Croix and St. Thomas would be treated as individual states for automatic qualification. Along with Hut Brown, CASI ED at the time, Ralph helped to seed the Virgin Pod at the 1994 Great Pepper's Meeting. Since then, he always helps the teams coming from St. Croix and St. Thomas to TICC by finding them a spot and providing them tables, chairs, an extra stove, pot, utensils, spices, whatever was needed to make them feel welcome at Terlingua.

Ralph is a Lifetime Member of CASI and served on the CASI Board of Directors for 10 years from 1987 to 1997 - 6 years as TallyMaster, 2 years as Vice President and 2 years as President. Ralph has served as Chairman of the Texas Ladies State Cookoff for 2 years, was inducted into the Houston Pod Hall of Flame in 1983, and along with his wife Dee, was named Co-Chili Heads of the Year in 2006 with Glyn and Jo Anne Gaines. He won the Texas Open Championship in 2007 and has placed twice in the top ten at TICC.

In 2004, Ralph was elected to serve as The Alcalde at Rancho de Los Chisos. He has remained in that position for the last 10 years, retiring this year. Ralph never meets a stranger and is known by many throughout the chili world, from the east coast to the west coast. He does not hesitate to walk up to a new cook, introduce himself and tell them all about CASI. He has been known to mentor new cooks, helping them in any way he can. Ralph has always been there for me when I have questions about where we came from and how things were done and why we do what we do today. He is a wealth of knowledge for anyone who takes the time to get to know him.

No task is too small. From being a table monitor, running beer at judging, helping with the tallying, refereeing a cookoff to serving as board and non-board support, he has practically done it all. He is truly the definition of someone who has shown tireless dedication and unwavering commitment to CASI and leaves a positive, lasting impression on everyone he meets.

Jenny Windsor