

## **A Retrospective Glance at the WCGTC- An Expanded History**

### **The Initiative**

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children originated over 35 years ago upon the inspiration of a prominent British educator of the gifted, Henry Collis. As Director of the National Association of Gifted Children, already having set up branches all over England, Hamburg, and Belfast, it was his vision to unite the educators of the gifted around the world who were already convening at national levels. This vision evolved into the non-profit organization of educators in the field of gifted education that spans the globe today.

### **The First Conference**

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children was founded in London, England in 1975 at the First International Conference for Gifted and Talented Children, chaired by Henry Collis. It was held in the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn. Besides receiving support from Her Majesty's government through the Department of Education and Science, and from John Burrows, Chief Inspector of Schools, he was also supported by Dr. Harold C. Lyon, Director of the Office of Gifted and Talented from the United States of America, who, at the closing session of the conference proposed that the participants join in a world-wide initiative to form an organization to advocate for the gifted children of the world. In response to this proposal 150 educators in the field became members of the founding organization. More than 500 people from over 50 countries attended the first conference.

### **The First Executive**

At the London conference, the first executive was elected. The first President was Dan Bitan, the Director of Gifted Education in Israel, and Henry Collis was the first Vice-President. The remaining elected officers were from the United States, namely, Alexis DuPont DeBie as Executive Vice-President, Dorothy Sisk as Secretary, and Elizabeth Neuman and Marjorie Craig as Co-Treasurers.

### **The Incorporation**

The World Council was officially incorporated and registered in the state of Delaware as a non-profit organization on March 30, 1976. The officers at the time were representatives from three nations: from Israel, President Dan Bitan; from the United Kingdom, Vice-President Henry Collis; and from the United States of America, Executive Vice-President Alexis DuPont DeBie, joint Secretaries Dorothy Sisk and Elizabeth Neuman, and Treasurer Bob Swain.

### **The Second Conference**

Bob Swain, from California, had proposed that San Francisco be considered as the site for the Second World Conference, and it was held there in 1977. Representation in the new seven-member executive expanded to seven nations: President Iraj Broomand of Iran, Vice-President Dorothy Sisk of the United States of America, Marie Schmidt of Venezuela, Levcho Zdravchev of Bulgaria, Warren Lett of Australia, Henry Collis of the United Kingdom, and Dan Bitan of Israel.

In 1978, with the Iranian conflict disrupting the ability of President Iraj Broomand to continue to serve as President of the World Council, Vice-President Dorothy Sisk

assumed the presidency according to the World Council constitution, until Henry Collis was elected President at the Jerusalem conference in 1979. He held the post until 1981.

### **A Developing Organization: The Constitution, The Journal, The Secretariat, The Newsletter**

As a requirement of incorporation, a constitution for the World Council was drafted by a subcommittee consisting of Dorothy Sisk, representing the board, and two other founding members, Alexis DuPont DeBie and Elizabeth Neuman.

A major undertaking was discussed at the San Francisco meeting: the creation of a journal. Levcho Zdravchev agreed to edit and publish a journal for the WCGTC, which was entitled *GATE: Gifted and Talented Education*. He published three issues of *GATE*, absorbing the cost of the journal through his Bulgarian office.

At the San Francisco meeting, Dan Bitan had proposed Jerusalem as the site for the 1979 Conference. At the Jerusalem conference, Dorothy Sisk became the editor of the journal, now to be named *Gifted International*. In the 1990's, under the editorship of John Feldhusen, the name was changed to *Gifted and Talented International*. Subsequent editors have been Joyce Van Tassel-Baska and Maria McCann. The current editor is Taisir Subhi Yamin.

A third development, in 1979, at the request of President Collis, was the creation of a permanent Secretariat. It was established at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. The Executive Administrator, Milton Gold, organized the Executive Committee and A. Harry Passow served as Honorary Director.

A further undertaking was the development of a newsletter. In 1980, *World Gifted* was produced by Dorothy Sisk and published by Milton Gold, assisted by Beverly Goodloe Kaplan. The hosting university has customarily published the newsletter as it is today.

### **Successive Conferences and Presidents**

Conference proposals were submitted for prospective sites. Successive conferences took place upon the initiative of various leaders in the field. Bruce Shore submitted a successful bid for the 1981 Montreal, Canada conference. It was attended by 200 delegates and 350 presenters. James Gallagher assumed the presidency for a four-year term.

Aurora Roldan's bid for Manila brought the next conference to the Philippines in 1983 and spawned the South East Asian organization.

After several successful events, the organization looked to Europe for a conference and held the sixth biennial conference in Hamburg, Germany in 1985, as proposed by Harold Wagner and William Wiczerkowski. The conference boasted 500 presentations from seven different countries. A. Harry Passow became the next president.

Calvin Taylor's proposal brought the next conference to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1987. The organization had grown, as evidenced by its 1756 participants and 400 presentations involving 775 presenters.

The next conference, proposed by Ken Imison, was held in Sydney, Australia in 1989. Norah Maier was elected president. Vice-President Franz Monks brought the next conference in 1991 to The Hague. Norah Maier, who had successfully proposed Toronto

for the 1993 site, retired as president that year and was succeeded by Wu Tien-Wu from Taiwan, who had been responsible for bringing the first strong delegation from Taiwan to a world conference in Montreal.

Biennial conference sites thereafter were Hong Kong in 1995, Seattle in 1997, Istanbul in 1999, Barcelona in 2001, Adelaide in 2003, New Orleans in 2005, Warwick in 2007, Vancouver in 2009, and Prague in 2011. We now look ahead to our 2013 conference that will take place in Louisville, Kentucky USA.

The four-year presidency terms during these years were held by Barbara Clark from 1997 to 2001, by Klaus Urban from 2001 to 2005, and Den- Mo Tsai from 2005 to 2009. The current President is Taisir Subhi Yamin who was elected in 2009.

### **Headquarters**

In 1983, for various reasons, the Secretariat was transferred from New York to the University of South Florida in Tampa with Dorothy Sisk as Executive Secretary. Five years later, it was moved to Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, with Dorothy Sisk still as Executive Administrator. In 1993, the Secretariat was moved to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and administered by the graduate students of John Feldhusen. Partly due to a financial incentive from David Belin, the office was moved to the Belin-Blank Center for Gifted and Talented Development at the University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1995, with Nicholas Colangelo as the Executive Director for two years. Subsequently, the Headquarters was moved to Northridge, California, to the business consulting company of Sheila Madsen and Dennis Stevens. In May 2005, the Headquarters was located to The University of Winnipeg where it was supported by the Faculty of Education. In January 2011 the Headquarters was relocated to Western Kentucky University. A generous gift from Dixie and Pete Mahurin of Bowling Green, Kentucky made the move possible.

### **Continuing Mission**

The World Council continues to focus world attention on gifted and talented children in order to ensure the realization of their valuable potential to the benefit of humankind. Established by Iraj Broomand and the executive in 1977, this overriding objective continues to guide the World Council in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is no small accomplishment for the World Council to have continued to meet its objectives all these years. The organization has benefited from the vision and energy of its founders and their successors in office, from its dedicated and hard working Executive Committees, from its support from elected delegates world-wide, from its generous donors and hosting institutions, and from its members across the globe.