

The National Carousel Association: The Early Days, Part II

By Rol Summit

If the first year was a swelling of exuberant growth for the National Carousel Roundtable, the second was the time for growing pains.

The bill for the flamboyant conference in Flint, some \$10,000 over its allocated budget, remained unsettled. Walter Johnson, the new treasurer, sparred with Armand Winfield, the Flint conference chairman, over legalistic points of order, trying to get an accounting.

Jo Summit, the NCR chairman (the term “chairperson” hadn’t been invented yet in 1974), relied on chair ex-officio Bill Dentzel for legal advice. And both of these gentle souls depended on Bob Sorley, *Merry-Go-Roundup* editor and a U.S. Army battle tactician, for guts.



Bob was the power behind much of the strategic initiative in that crucial second year. Even before the Flint conference, he wrote to Jo with frustration that foundational issues were still to be accomplished. Especially lacking was a policy to energize conservation efforts.

“Let’s get this thing moving,” he said, “before it either dies on its feet or becomes nothing more than an intelligence net for people who want to move in on the remaining carousels.”

The officers elected for the second year (the policy was later changed to mandate two-year terms) were Jo Summit, chairman; Bob Sorley, vice-chairman; and Marianne Stevens, secretary. Eva Landers headed the Membership Committee, and Nina Fraley was chair of the Collectors Committee.



Happy times in Atlantic City. Seated (L to R) are Tina Gottden, Marianne Stevens, Rol and Jo Summit, and Marian Roehl, during the Flint conference.

Bob submitted a draft to the 12 members of the Executive Committee in November. The proposed constitution and by-laws were then published in the March 1975 issue of *Merry-Go-Roundup*, along with a ballot for ratification or revision by the more than 300 members. The documents were ratified by the unanimous response of 81 ballots.

The stated purpose of the organization, accord-

ing to Article II of the new constitution, was “to promote conservation, appreciation, knowledge, and enjoyment of the art of the classic wooden carousel, and especially the preservation of complete operating carousels.” That last clause was to become the banner in the ensuing holy wars of conservation.

One of the growing pains of the NCR was its own success. Fred Fried’s



ker, Chatty Cook Eliason, Harvey Roehl, Stu Gottdenker, ing a Friday night lull before the Sunday storm (9/16/77).



Muller on Muller: Evelyn Muller Johnson and Walter on the Muller Midway Carousel (1975 conference at Cedar Point).

flair for publicity and the propitious timing for a renaissance of interest promoted a ferment of public enthusiasm. The burgeoning Roundtable membership created a ready market for dealers. And the effective work of Barbara Charles and Sally Woundy, in compiling the census of operating carousels, provided a perfect shopping list for carousel art.

In her inaugural mes-

sage (*Merry-Go-Roundup*, December 1974) Jo hailed the census as the guide for "a year of conserving as many of the great carousels as possible for the future." By the next issue, in March, she cautioned that "the most visible effect of the NCR to date has been to put even more of a premium on the carousel carvings at the potential expense of the carousel as a whole.

"If nothing else, we

have created an expanding network of eager and increasingly sophisticated buyers willing to pay almost anything for the best carvings."

Jo made two major discoveries during her year as chairman. One was 300 pounds of Flint conference programs and booklets that appeared on our front porch one morning, shipped collect by the conference entrepreneur. The other was the recognition that the NCR chairman had the prime opportunity either to save carousels—or to sell them off.

Our phone was busy with requests for all sorts of information, including where to find homes for carousels in transition. Members called to report

that their favorite carousel was about to go up for sale. Park operators called for assistance in relocating machines to save them from dispersal. We also became aware of member-dealers who were breaking up carousels that had been referred to them in good faith for preservation as a whole.

The third national conference was slated for September 12-14, 1975, at the historic Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio. It would be headed by the irrepressible Stu Gottdenker. Stu, in his other life a vice president at Grey Advertising, arrived on the carousel scene incidentally as the clock-collecting bridegroom of artist and circus equestrienne Tina



In 1976, conference attendees in Santa Clara viewed Charles Rutter's stippling technique.

Cristiani. He came into his own as ringmaster of the fabulous Coney Island Night at the Flint conference.

"When Stu came on, the voice of Brooklyn and the spirit of Surf Avenue came spilling out like a ghost from the lips of a medium. Stu was the incarnation of the best of the carnivals and stand-up comics spawned on Coney. He was Eddie Cantor and Jimmy Durante and more that night" (*Merry-Go-Roundup*, March 1976). His twinkling eyes and infectious wit belied a sage business sense and a well-honed and dedicated interest in historic preservation. This all came together in planning the Sandusky meeting and his subsequent chairmanship of the NCR. But Stu's pragmatic approach to the dilemmas of conservation were less than a match for the gathering passions.

The 1975 Sandusky conference spotlighted the work of Daniel Muller. Muller's work was so well represented on each of the three carousels in the

park, lovingly restored and maintained by Tom Layton. Two years before, no one distinguished Muller bloodlines apart from the generic Dentzel stable; yet here was a whole morning devoted to the historic details of his life and work.

Central to this breakthrough was Fred's discovery of Daniel Muller's daughter, Evelyn, who emerged at the Flint con-

ference with her husband, the eminent treasurer, Walter Johnson. Evelyn's warmly moving reminiscences of her father were followed on the Cedar Point program by electrifying historical correlations by Fred Fried and yawningly picky details of decoration by Rol Summit. Marge Swenson picked things up again with a spirited and beautifully illustrated presentation of Muller's attention to authentic army tack on his cavalry horses.

An impromptu precedent was set by Barbara

its Abilene birthplace.

Members passed the hat (a plastic ice bucket) for a total collection of \$817 toward the cause (an outpouring prophetic of the response to Fred Fried's rallying call for restoration of the Schenevus, N.Y., Fire Department's wonderful track machine during the 1993 Binghamton convention).

The warm glow in Ohio was chilled in spots, however, by those who muttered their resentment at another of Barbara's conservation "sob stories."

Stu took the gavel as chairman, with Sally Woundy as vice-chairman, Eva Landers as secretary, and Walter Johnson as treasurer. Chatty Cook, circus historian C. P. "Chappie" Fox, Nina Fraley, Cary Kennedy, and Jo Summit rounded out the Executive Committee. Mary Silver took over the *Merry-Go-Roundup* when Bob's government career became too distracting.

Chairman Stu Gottdenker took over an organization not fully formed and already at risk of dissolution. He was the first chairman who was not a founder, and he proposed some fresh ideas and a name change. Because of its medieval connections and the confusion of the acronym "NCR" with that of the National Cash Register Corporation (as pre-eminent in the mechanical age as IBM has become in electronics), he suggested replacing "Roundtable" with "Association."

Stu also championed what he felt was a more



The late Mary Fried on the Asbury Park PTC #87, the last PTC carousel (9/19/77).

ference with her husband, the eminent treasurer, Walter Johnson.

Evelyn's warmly moving reminiscences of her father were followed on

Charles' emotional appeal for financial support of the Dickinson County, Kansas Historical Society's efforts to return a Parker track machine to

reasonable, less idealistic mission for conservation.

Recognizing the economics of scarcity-driven prices as inevitable, and considering that the NCR had no capital with which to buy, store, and broker whole carousels, he proposed compromises through defining priorities for preferential protection of prime machines. He suggested legitimizing quality fiberglass replacements for figures too precious to remain on endangered or marginal carousels, and entrusting the originals to museums and collectors.

But any rationalization for dispersing individual figures from operable machines was seen by many members as dreadful. In four short years of organization, dealer-members had emerged as the greatest threat to the vanishing carousel—far exceeding fire and flood—and were giving park owners a handsome financial incentive to abandon their struggling machines. In pre-NCR 1970, a future member bought an entire Dentzel carousel for \$4,000, with little assurance of making a profit on the individual figures. Now, five years later, members were snapping up single figures for that kind of price.

Annual conferences had become shopping trips for dealers. The Detroit Edgewater Park Dentzel, admittedly in deplorable shape, vanished in the wake of the second conference in Flint.

The amusement landscape was becoming littered with empty frames,

left behind by member-dealers who offered shares in the riding stock to the NCR mailing list.

Before the birth of the NCR, it was considered a commendable, if peculiar mission to gather in odd carvings and save them from rotting away in back yards, basements, and barns. Saving such “strays” was thought to redeem their artistic worth and enhance the appreciation and survival of the remaining machines.

With no specialty dealers and very few collectors, an operating carousel was worth more than the sum of its parts. Now the values were reversed, and hundreds of organized consumers could place orders right off the frames of active machines.

Some collectors and dealers felt the organization had become prejudicial to private ownership of carousel carvings. There also was something of a “mellow West” versus “uptight East” perception.

Concern focused on two key committees, which had been revitalized in Sandusky “to insure that Article II of the NCR Constitution does indeed remain the true purpose of the organization” (*Merry-Go-Roundup*, March 1976).

Smoldering issues flared into crackling disagreements during the joint meeting Barbara Charles’ Ethics Committee and Fred Fried’s Conservation Committee at the Frieds’ Manhattan apartment on January 25, 1976. Constructive ideas and plans emerged, as

reported by Sally Woundy and Fred in the lead article of the March *Merry-Go-Roundup*.

One smoldering ember, nearly obscured by the glowing optimism of that report, was the lingering question of what to do about members who violated the conservation ethic. Public exposure and expulsion had been dis-

His note of urgency was out of step with the upbeat, “see-how-we-saved-this-carousel” tone of the newsletter.

“Surely our organization, as a growing, struggling group of individuals, has some room under its roof for all.”

The unstated context of that plea was the question of public censure then cir-



Tom Layton grabs the brass ring as he rides the Ocean City Borelli carousel (9/17/77).

cussed, but it would be up to the Executive Committee to judge.

Stu, who had attended the joint meeting, used his inaugural column in the *Merry-Go-Roundup* to extol its efforts and to advance his definition of balanced conservation: “Hence the collector of individual carousel art is also doing a worthwhile service to future generations,” he said. “I think it is time we all realized this. And thanked those responsible.

“This is not to condone the wanton destruction of existing machines. The NCR never has and never will condone such behavior. Or stand by idly.”

He ended his column, “Ups and Downs,” with a plea for unity in diversity.

culating among members of the Executive Committee.

The Ethics Committee had voted to publish in the *Merry-Go-Roundup* a letter of censure against a member for the recent purchase and resale of figures from an intact carousel.

This was certainly not the first member to break up a carousel, yet the action of “causing a carousel to no longer be complete or have the potential to operate” placed that membership in jeopardy as a test case for Article IV, Section 10: “Members whose actions are adjudged to be contrary to the purpose of the Roundtable may be impeached and barred



A Barney Illions restoration. Barney applies body colors to the Russian Cossack (Summer 1979).

from future membership by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee.”

The packet sent to directors contained a draft letter of censure and a point/counterpoint exchange of letters to illustrate the divided points of view.

California member Robert Zensius wrote in the member’s defense. He insisted that the carousel was already on its way to extinction, its carvings almost obliterated by sandblasting and neglect. He argued that in the absence of NCR funds to deal in carousels, its members were the only hope to save whatever could be salvaged from doomed carousels.

He proposed that instead of disciplinary measures, the member should be rewarded for “saving one more carousel from the fate of public abuse, ignorance, or neglect. . . . Please rethink your position on this matter and set up realistic guidelines to accomplish what you really want. To continue along the lines you are now traveling will cause a split through the NCR that accomplishes



Master and apprentice. Barney demonstrates color mixing to Jo Summit (Summer 1979).

nothing.”

Barbara’s counterpoint listed members who had made the really significant contribution of mobilizing public support to save endangered carousels as operating restorations. “In all these places, I suspect there were individual collectors who would have liked to acquire the figures, for their own pleasure or aggrandizement. Luckily for the community and for the public at large, there were other people who felt that a carousel is only a carousel when it is whole and operating.”

Nina Fraley circulated her opposing vote to fellow directors and to the

Ethics Committee members in a letter dated March 5, which warned of the potential decline of the NCR from “a marvelously diversified group of people, all in love with carousels” into “an organization out to take advantage of an already existing enthusiasm for carousels, in order to get some power and impact behind one narrow definition of conservation.”

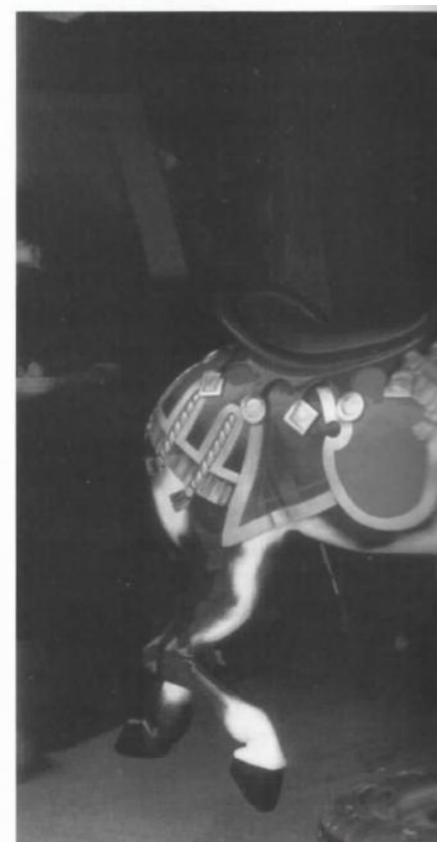
to the Executive Committee members. It was an exasperated vote against censure and a call to return to a more constructive agenda.

“AGAIN I SAY, LET’S STOP IT ONCE AND FOR ALL,” he wrote. “Let us look to the NCR for all the good it can do. . . . Let’s help the park operator. Let’s help provide information to information-starved members. And most of all, let’s put the fun back in the NCR.”

Other directors found the censure issue paralyzing. They were caught in the crossfire of an emerging battle among cherished friends over an issue that seemed to defy reasonable compromise. They could respect the position of each side, but found themselves stigmatized if they tried to defend one side against

Nina compared carousel animals to other museum-quality art that deserves protection from continuing use, which “particularly in a situation of neglect, can destroy it forever. . . . I know that I could never encourage the preservation of a running carousel when such preservation did not also foreclose the destruction of a valued piece of the carver’s art. . . . Let’s get on with the job of educating the public to the value of the heritage of wooden carousel animals, both as functioning machines and as art.”

On March 9, 1976, Stu Gottdenker wrote a “Report of the Chairman”



A finished work then and now.

the other. So they held back from taking sides.

Barbara sent out an appeal on March 15 seeking a response from non-responding directors, stressing their responsibility to decide whether the Ethics Committee was relevant and to determine "whether the NCR as an organization should censure or impeach members who break up carousels."

She concluded, "No matter what the outcome, it is important that all members of the Board of Directors participate and that decisions not be made unilaterally by those who are the most vocal."

The decision was not to decide. The required two-thirds majority did not emerge. The surface of the rechristened National Carousel Association remained unchanged, apparently unruffled. But

at the heart of the leadership there was disillusionment and distrust. A line had been drawn in the sand, challenging the faithful to stand up and be counted—on one side or the other.

Over the following two years, several who attended that fateful union of the Ethics and Conservation Committees would be propelled to represent polarized positions, stereotyped as the prejudicial icons of mutually alienating positions.

The prevailing business of the organization went on. And the general membership had every reason to be pleased with its progress.

The NCA finally achieved non-profit certification, augmenting Stu's hope that it could mobilize philanthropic funds to

buy and protect endangered machines. Fred Fried developed policies and guidelines to establish National Historic Landmark status for the preservation of historic carousels.

The Abilene track machine was so designat-

including the startling revelation of wet-on-wet dappling, shading and blending, the time-honored but virtually forgotten basic style of carousel figure decoration. Charles Rutter, who decorated a PTC horse before our eyes, had worked as a



The master's touch. Barney showed how to stipple wet-on-wet, then encouraged practice.

ed, and so were Harriet Moore's Watch Hill machine and the Martha's Vineyard Flying Horses. Loeff's Riverside, R.I., carousel and its factory building were kept off the auction block and retained *in situ* by community activism.

Nina and Maurice Fraley hosted a delightful fourth national convention, October 22-24, 1976, at Marriott's Great America park in Santa Clara, Calif. It celebrated the first non-eastern conference site with a Kansas County Fair theme, featuring C.W. Parker. The banquet was enlivened by a rollicking, "y'all-come-join-in square-dancing" show. Tobin Fraley and Lise Liepman were among the performers.

The workshops emphasized demonstrations of restoration techniques,

child in the Dentzel paint shop, where his grandfather was foreman.

There was an exhibition of carousel figures in the Triton Museum in San Jose, and an evening reception in the "Christmas Carousel" shop of founding members Jan and Clayton Brock.

But there also was controversy. Nina was chided in a *Merry-Go-Round* letter (January 1977) for planning a program that ignored the preservation of whole carousels.

And a handout printed for the museum show had lauded the role of large corporate parks, museums, and private collections in saving the vanishing wooden figures, with no mention of the importance of community preservation projects.

"These communities are preserving whole carou-



Barney's recreation of the original decoration (photo c. 1912).

sels, not just remnants. Let's give them credit, too!"

Stu summed up his first year in office in the same issue with the hope that the conservation wars were subsiding, in contrast with the earlier "hostility and belligerence of conservation-minded members toward those they termed 'collectors.'"

For, unknown to the huge majority of our membership, much personal malignment has occurred on both sides of this dichotomy. . . . Surely 1976 was a year in which these underlying misunderstandings were brought into the open, where they properly belong. For if one biased group cannot fairly recognize another biased group, then surely we will all suffer."

But this hopeful message was followed by Stu's bitter complaint that he had been accused of selling out to collectors by a handful of members "who have condemned me, questioned my personal integrity, and sought to slander me."

"I still hope that these actions can be contained in a pleasant, democratic fashion. For the resulting failure will only mean another organization. And there is no need of this when only a few are trying to impose their will on the many."

The year 1977 brought a new look to the NCA and the promise of a unified search for enlightenment.

New editor Marge Swenson gave the *Merry-Go-Roundup* a typographical facelift. A graphic arts professional, she used her



Some of the stars at the Atlantic City convention (L to R) were Allan, Natalie, and Roy Herschell; Barbara Charles; Stu Gottdenker; Warren and Shirley Rossin; Mrs. Perelman and Leon J. Perelman, founders of the Perelman Antique Toy Museum in Philadelphia; and Mary and Fred Fried (9/17/77).

own Varityper to produce a wonderful new format. Photos came alive on pebble-toned paper in full-page scale.

In Marge's January issue, Barbara Charles' beautifully researched article on C. W. Parker contained five pictures-only pages, including two full-page panoramic carousel photos documenting a previously unconfirmed Parker style.

Another historical breakthrough, also handsomely illustrated, was contributed by NCA archivist Chatty Cook Eliason.

Chatty introduced an unknown carver, steamboat captain Walker C. Tyler, who patented his track machine in 1889 for the first children's playground in an American public park, the "Children's Quarters" in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

Here was professionalism: scholarly, historical research and visually exciting reading in the proudest traditions of the

NCR/NCA. Marge was heralded as the hope for the future, yet she was doomed to be blamed within the year for betraying the past.

It all came together—and came apart—at the fifth national convention in Atlantic City, held September 16-19, 1977.

The promise had been bright. We would be housed at the Howard Johnson Regency, the city's most modern hotel and convention facility. Warren and Shirley Rossin, convention co-chairmen, had spared no effort in arranging visits to the *twelve* local carousels.

Barbara Charles had sought broad, grass-roots input to plan a balanced, informative, and exciting program. The stage was set for reconciliation and celebration.

Three things went wrong, only one within potential NCA control. One was Atlantic City. Instead of booming as promised with the advent



"Mr. Coney Island," Edo McCullough at Atlantic City (9/17/77).

of casino gambling, the city was still in the throes of deliberate neglect, awaiting the necessary authorization to build the new casinos. Our host hotel was to be demolished within months, and there was only a token effort to keep it presentable in the meanwhile.

The second problem was our conjoint occupancy with another large convention. It seemed as if every one of its attendees was out to party that weekend, leaving all cares of law and order, family,

and basic decency behind.

All ice machines were exhausted into bathtubs full of beer. Drunken hulks stalked the hallways looking for women—any women. We had to mobilize escorts for our own before risking the elevators. An impressive number of prostitutes gathered on the street below for an auction conducted from the balconies by eager bidders. It was difficult to sleep, with men chasing shrieking, naked women down the hallways.

The first meeting of Joy Smith's newly revived Collectors Committee was interrupted by a weight-lifter in a tank top who took the podium and glared at us uncomprehendingly through glazed eyes. And Chatty Cook Eliason was felled in the parking lot as another reveler bounded over the top of one car to another and then pounced on her back.

(Chatty, by the way, has

taken other lumps in this narrative. It was she who sent us the photo of the little girl pictured on the Loeff horse on the Long Beach Pike carousel [Part I]—but she was not the girl, and the clothing was obviously not 1930s costume. The photo was taken before 1920 of Joan McCauley, future mother of the late Pennsylvania Senator John Heinz. Sorry, Chatty.)

The third problem was the Nominating Committee, which met to pick the slate of officers for the next two years.

Stu had promised a committee "with a fair proportion of geographic and philosophical balance" (*Merry-Go-Roundup*, July 1977).

The Sunday afternoon announcement of the nomination of Marianne Stevens as Chairperson lit the fuse to a powderkeg of discontent. Marianne was a *collector* and a *dealer*, as well as a close friend of the *Gottdenkers*.

An alarmed, behind-the-scenes caucus objected that Stu had stacked the Nominating Committee to squelch the chair, who was the token representative of the conservative view. I was part of that caucus.

Despite my personal misgivings for the impact on Marianne, I felt that in this crisis of philosophical standoff and interpersonal distrust, the NCA needed a president free of a polarizing label, neither conservationist nor collector.

The caucus drafted an alternate slate and demanded that it have parity in an open election.

Most of those in attendance did not comprehend the meaning of the issue or the merits of the action. Members who did not witness the Atlantic City revolt and who simply received two different slates to vote on must have been even more confused. Even today, few understand why there are two organizations where

once there was one. Yet it seemed desperately important at the time.

Stu took a hard edge in the next *Merry-Go-Roundup* (October, 1977), citing the "illegal putting forth of pressure" by the dissidents as reason to defend the official slate and to editorialize his strong endorsement of Marianne.

Meanwhile, supporters of the second slate sent out an explanatory letter and a plug for the nominees on their "unity slate" that would restore a traditional balance of interests. Charles Rutter was advanced as the neutral chairman, with Warren Rossin as vice-chairman, Eva Landers as secretary, and Walter Johnson as treasurer.

The directors nominated were Barbara Charles, Fred Fried, Richard Norton, and Rol Summit. My resume stressed the series of articles I wrote for the *Merry-Go-Roundup* on restoring figures, and referred to our extensive collection, as if to appease the collectors.

I was one of the 19 people who signed off on that private mailing. Jo was not.



Pandemonium is a euphemism for the war between the states of belief that ensued. The October issue, which carried the ballots and Stu's electioneering, went out two months late from Marge's California base, becoming lost and shuffled in the crush of holiday mail. The eastern conservatives complained they did not get their bal-



A gathering of the clan. Four generations of Illions in the Summits' living room (March, 1979).

lots in time to vote, noting that the local collectors got theirs early. There was a demand for an extension of the deadline, and some implied that Marge had deliberately withheld ballots from known conservationists.

Others objected that Marge should not receive the completed ballots, as if she had wrested control from the secretary (the constitutionally designated vote-counter) in order to stack the ballot box. The geniality and trust of the previous years were nullified by the nomination showdown; opponents assumed Marge would stop at nothing to redeem the slate she endorsed as a member of the nominating committee.

On January 28, 1978, another private mailing went out to NCA members, saying, "The increasing hostility directed toward collectors by a few conservation extremists of the National Carousel Association, and their failure to recognize that collectors are also conservationists, is resulting in a collectors' mass resignation."

The letter named 25 members who were resigning in protest, along with "many others" unnamed. Four of those named had been on the original Atlantic City slate: Marianne Stevens for president, Earl Duncan for vice-president, Joy Smith for secretary; and Helene Item Sutter for Executive Board member.

Founders Gray and Judy Tuttle were leaving, as well as Nina and

Maurice Fraley and Pat and Bob Zensius. Heading the list of departures were Tina and Stu Gottdenker and Marge Swenson.

The mailing invited subscription to Marge Swenson's proposed magazine for collectors, *Carrousel Art*. It offered the promise of a new network for congenial get-togethers. Out of the promise emerged the second organization, the American Carousel Society.

Marge's farewell *Merry-Go-Roundup* (Winter 1978) was as beautiful and informative as ever, devoted especially to the history and productions of Charles Loeffl—a *tour de force*.

But it also contained a running colloquy of pain, indignation, and loss. Marge printed the accusatory letters and defended herself point by point over a spread of some eight half-pages under photographs of the Loeffl figures.

In a statement she dated December 31, 1977, pointedly before the votes would be counted, she announced she would not renew her membership and would no longer endure the indignity of being in the middle.

The essence of her farewell came toward the end of her self-defense.

"I am sad because I feel the majority of the NCA members have no idea that for several years now, there has been an open tug of war between a handful of NCA members. They've constructed a wall where, in my opinion, a net should stand. A net over which friendly volleys could be exchan-



An historic moment. The first meeting of (L to R) Fred Fried, Herschell, and Barney Illions (Santa Monica, 1979).

ged to make play better for all."



So that's what happened during those desperate years. Debate turned to conflict, affection turned to distrust, and the lobs turned to spikes, where at first they held promise of being friendly volleys.

Neither side should claim the righteous truth or reasonable patience. As in other types of family feuds, the fighting turned vicious even as the issues became moot.

I hope this review is not perceived as an attack on either side—or as an apology. I have deleted the most unflattering remarks and the most hurtful volleys out of respect for the individuals on both sides, hoping to bring to all those who love carousels a compassionate view of both positions.

Some may feel that the whole conflict is better forgotten; this rehash is

provided in response to what seems to be a popular demand for clarification.

I'll skip quickly through the next few years of resolution. With no *Merry-Go-Roundup*, the election results were circulated via a letter from the Executive Committee.

Marianne Stevens was elected, but following her resignation, the gavel was passed to vice-president Warren Rossin, who, along with Eva Landers, was elected from the alternate slate. Walter Johnson was the trusted designate of both slates. The winning directors were all from the alternate slate. John Hayek was duly appointed to the vacant vice-chair position, and Barbara Cole Williams was appointed to the director's position vacated by the immediate past president, Stu Gottdenker.

There was no mass res-



William Dentzel III, Allan

ignation of other collectors. Many simply joined both organizations. The covert antagonism toward collecting softened within the NCA—or was it merely redirected against the competing organization?

Eventually the feud died down with the emergence of a common enemy: auction houses replaced collector-entrepreneurs as the merciless predators of hapless machines.

Chuck Bayliss redeemed the *Merry-Go-Roundup* as editor and brought out a commendable edition in July 1978, fulfilling Marge's promise of a Muller issue.

The conference of reconstruction was held in Sarasota, Fla., from September 29-October 2. Partly because we had recently visited the sites and partly because of the residual pain, the sixth conference was the first

that Jo and I failed to attend.

Jo maintained a liaison with our "other friends" as well; neither of us had wanted to take sides. The divisions were bitter: one of our best friends refused for years to acknowledge my presence whenever we would meet. I had signed the hateful protest. Wounds were slow to heal.

The dual agendas of whole-carousel preservation and historical research got a boost through the combined talents of Barbara Cole Williams, who volunteered to head the seventh national conference, September 14-17, 1979, in Santa Monica.

Barbara had been fervently involved in redeeming PTC #62 in Loeff's original building on the Santa Monica Pier. She bulldozed a recalcitrant city council into taking responsibility for, and genuine pride in, its restoration and preservation.

Barbara also was a documentarian who sifted through thousands of magazines in the Santa Monica recycling center, finding every possible image and message about carousels and sharing them with us in breathless get-togethers.

Her persistent digging led her to stunning advances of knowledge, as when she sleuthed out the true history of John Zalar and his California connection with Charles Loeff. She became the editor of the nearly moribund *Merry-Go-Roundup* with the Fall 1979 issue,

publishing her Zalar research in a dazzling third issue. The good times were coming back.

In the meantime, Jo and I had spent a wonderful summer visiting Barney and Bette Illions in an historic adventure.

Barney agreed to repaint the M.C. Illions "Russian Cossack," recreating the decoration as it appeared in the original catalog. He took the opportunity to apprentice Jo in every nuance of authentic Illions decorating technique. Each day we spent together was celebrated with champagne, take-out fried chicken, and Bette's incomparable three-bean salad. I took hundreds of slides of the process, and Barney agreed to narrate them at the Santa Monica convention.

Barbara's conference was a rousing success, and a gathering of old friends for us. We shared our home and collection, without apparent stigma, with four busloads of conventioners. Fred and Mary were there. And Tracy Cameron. It was old times again. Even Marge Swenson dropped by to greet us all during the field trip to Knott's Berry Farm.

As in the past, the NCA brought friends together for the enjoyment and support of carousels. And as it had for years, it also brought families together. Marguerite Cernigliaro came to share memories of her father. The West Coast enclave of Illions were there to hear Barney's talk and to admire his

work. A bunch of Dentzels were there, and two Herschells.

Without planning or fanfare, there was a momentary conjunction of three major constellations of carousel history, along with the historian who brought their forgotten heritage back to life.

Fred Fried had breathed life into a formless diffusion of carousel interest. He also breathed more than a little fire. But we were all there together, still smiling after all these years.

Through it all, Fred never held back, and he never let down. His dream of a viable carousel association uniting carvers, park operators, collectors, historians, conservationists, and just plain fans has come to pass, and it will have a life of its own beyond our time.

The National Carousel Association has come of age. For all its youthful misadventure, it has emerged all the more strong and mellow.



The real Chatty (Cook) Eliason, with a real horse—in November 1993, her American Quarter Horse, 'Runnin' Late,' won World Champion Amateur and Open classes.