

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AATF ANNUAL CONVENTION IN LIEGE

The 82nd annual AATF Convention, July 16-19, 2008 in Liege, Belgium had as its theme, "Le Français au coeur de l'Europe." It actually began a few days earlier with a pre-convention excursions to Brussels and Spa. Nearly 60 teachers spent the day visiting these two historic locations. Those in Brussels were treated to a visit of the European Parliament in addition to all the historic sites in Brussels. Those in Spa strolled the quaint streets and were able to spend a few hours on a beautiful day in the *thermes*. The participants in the summer seminar (see pages 14-15) had also spent the previous week at the *Université de Liège* after having spent a week in Geneva, Switzerland.

The AATF Executive Council spent two days deliberating before the convention began. They met on July 14 at the *Palais provincial* where they were welcomed by Pascale Pitance, *Inspectrice de la Province de Liège*, and treated to lunch. In the evening, Patrick Fers, the French *consul*, invited the Executive Council to the annual Bastille Day reception followed by a gala dinner that lasted into the wee hours. Convention-goers who arrived early were treated to an open-air concert by French singer Gérard Lenorman just outside the Holiday Inn. On July 15, the Executive Council was invited to meet at the CERAN Lingua school in Spa where we were again treated to a wonderful lunch thanks for the generosity of Fabienne Carmanne, Managing Director, and Roland Bartholomé, Commercial Director. Special thanks to CERAN Lingua for organizing the Spa excursion and for sponsoring our Outstanding Chapter Officer Award (see page 2).

The convention opened officially on Wednesday, July 16. In the usual bustle of arrivals, numerous Executive Council members and attendees were interviewed by a local television station. The interviews were broadcast several times during our stay. AATF President Marie-Christine Koop welcomed attendees, and then she introduced the dignitaries, Michel Foret, *Gouverneur de la Province de Liège*; Willy Demeyer, *Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège*; Patrick Fers, *Consul général de France à Liège*; Christos Sirros, *Délégué général du Québec à Bruxelles*, et Françoise Lejeune, *Directrice générale de la SPI+ de Liège*. After their welcoming remarks, Roger Dehaybe, *Administrateur général honoraire de*

l'Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (actuelle OIF), gave the plenary lecture. After the opening session, nearly 150 *congressistes* and guests attended the Welcome Luncheon.

Sessions and workshops began in earnest following the luncheon and continued

Marie-Simone Pavlovich, herself a finalist in *la Grande Dictée* run by Bernard Pivot. Winners were announced at the beginning of the AATF Delegate Assembly. At the end of both Day 2 and Day 3, eight groups of attendees, numbering over 200 total, left for two-hour Walking Tours of the *Coeur historique* or the *Itinéraire Simenon*.

Guest speakers included Alain Braun, *Université de Mons-Hainaut*, Geneviève Briet, *Université catholique de Louvain*, Annie Cornet, *Université de Liège*, Pierre Coenegrachts, *Office de Tourisme Wallonie Bruxelles*, Jean-Marc Defays, *Université de Liège*, Michel Firket, *Échevin de l'Urbanisme, de l'Environnement, du Tourisme et du Développement du-*

nable, Jean-Pierre Hupkens, *Échevin de la Culture*, Jérôme Jamin, *Université de Liège*, Quentin Michel, *Université de Liège*, and Paul-Émile Mottard, *Fédération du Tourisme de la Province de Liège*. The expertise of our local guest speakers is what makes meeting in a Francophone location such an enriching experience for teachers. Other special sessions and meetings included numerous exhibitor and commission sessions, as well as meetings of the National French Contest Administrators (see the complete program on the AATF Web site).

Participants took advantage of the locale to shop, to sample Belgian cuisine and beers, and to absorb the Francophone culture. Sampling local brands of chocolate was



Executive Council members at work at the *Palais provincial*

throughout the next two and a half days. To close the opening day, participants were able to get a first look at the Exhibit Hall (find out more about our exhibitors on the AATF Exhibitor Web page at [www.frenchteachers.org]) during a wine and cheese reception cosponsored by the AATF and, as they have for many years, by the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Washington.

Following the exhibit opening, Marie-Dominique Simonet, *Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche de la Communauté française de Belgique*, offered all attendees and their guests a walking dinner, *un dîner pérégrinatoire*. Walking dinners are a concept that was new to many of us but are very popular in Belgium. Welcome remarks were conveyed by Mme Simonet's aide, M. Gonfroid.

Day 2 was a full day of sessions and workshops, many highlighting the theme of the convention, "Le Français au coeur de l'Europe." During the lunch break, many members participated in the fourth annual *Dictée* organized by



Executive Council at CERAN Lingua

a favorite pastime, as well as *gaufres*.

Day 3 of the convention was equally busy. In addition to the many sessions and workshops, there was a morning coffee break in the exhibit hall where lucky attendees won valuable prizes at the exhibitor raffle, including a number of *séjours*. The raffle was expertly organized by AATF intern Jordan McGuire with the help of Lisa Narug, Director of the National French Contest. Be sure to check out the Exhibitor Web page on the AATF Web site at [www.frenchteachers.org] as well as the list of convention sponsors (see page 20).

In the afternoon, the AATF Assembly of Delegates met to ratify the decisions of the Executive Council, and the *Dictée* winners were announced (see page 35).

Nearly 140 members participated in the

for the recipients which they receive in addition to a year's complimentary membership in the AATF and a one-year subscription to *Le Français dans le monde*. This year, we awarded for the second time, the AATF CERAN Lingua Outstanding Chapter Officer Award which was received by Janet L. Smith, Immediate Past-President of the Houston AATF Chapter (see page 2). She will enjoy a one-week stay in one of the CERAN Lingua programs. Intercultural Student Experiences again sponsored the

ISE Language Matters Award which was given to Tracy Lambert (see page 4). The award includes a cash prize. We also were delighted to recognize M. Bauduin Blairon, *SPI+ de Liège*, Chair of the Local Committee, whose help was invaluable in making the convention a success.

Those who did not have Saturday departures were able to take advantage of the final half-day of sessions and workshops and further explore the city. The last official activity



New Honorary Member Alain Braun with Executive Director Jayne Abrate

Awards Banquet at the *Château de Limont* (see the complete list of honorees on page 42). After a short bus ride out into the countryside, the festivities began with an *apéritif* followed by a short interactive performance by Belgian singer Raphy Raphael. Following dinner, we welcomed three new honorary members (see page 11), Alain Braun, Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, and Margot Steinhart, honored Outstanding National French Contest Administrators, and recognized our outgoing Executive Council member, Region II Representative Jean-Pierre Berwald, who will finish his term in December (see page 4). Among the numerous award recipients were Hervé Le Guilloux, Samantha Godden-Chmielowicz, and Eileen Angelini who received the 2008 AATF Dorothy S. Ludwig Excellence in Teaching Awards at the Middle School, Secondary, and University levels (see page 1). This award is sponsored by former AATF Region I Representative and Honorary Member Robert Ludwig who provides a cash award

of the convention was the departure on Sunday morning of more than 40 participants on two excursions, one to Anvers, the diamond capital, and the other *La Route de la Bière*.

Although the weather was gray and somewhat rainy, the sun shone periodically and the showers were usually brief. One convention-goer got the photo of the Holiday Inn she had been waiting for with a rainbow in the background on her last day in Liege (unfortunately, the rain-



Raphy Raphael

bow does not transfer well to black and white). The view from the *Palais des congrès* on the Meuse River was exceptional, and the welcome everywhere was warm. In short, the 423 participants were able to enjoy 151 sessions and 4 workshops, 40 exhibit booths, numerous guest speakers and performers, and several unique excursions. The AATF would like to thank the staff members who helped make the convention such a success, Administrative Assistant Darla Phoenix and intern Jordan McGuire who helped us throughout the convention. AATF staff members were aided in their work by the personnel of the *Palais des congrès*. Finally, the Local Committee worked tirelessly to ensure a memorable convention. The AATF would like to thank the speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors (see page 20) without whom the convention could not have happened.



New honorary member Margot Steinhart with Executive Director Abrate