

NEWS RELEASE

DISCUS is the trade association representing producers and marketers of distilled spirits sold in the United States.

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GEORGE WASHINGTON SPIRITS SOCIETY INDUCTS FOUR NEW MEMBERS AT MOUNT VERNON CELEBRATION

WASHINGTON, DC – The George Washington Spirits Society inducted four new members at an industry heritage celebration this evening at Historic Mount Vernon, the Distilled Spirits Council announced. The 2005 Inductees are: former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, U.S. Representative Ron Lewis, Raymond Herrmann, Jr., Co-Chairman of the Charmer Sunbelt Group of companies and Judge Ruth Sussman (posthumous), of the State of New York.

“The George Washington Spirits Society was created in 2002 to recognize distinguished individuals who best exemplify the outstanding qualities exhibited by our nation’s first President in his life, his business enterprises, and his service to his country,” said Distilled Spirits Council President Peter H. Cressy.

In addition, the Council will be presenting a special award – the James Anderson Master Distiller Award – honoring the contributions of Michael Griesser, who, until his passing last November, served as Vice Chairman and Founding Partner of McCormick Distilling Company.

The honorees were inducted into the George Washington Spirits Society during a special reception and dinner at Mount Vernon, hosted by the Council and the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America. Attended by more than 600 guests including legislators, ambassadors, industry leaders and the media, the evening, raised funds both for Mount Vernon’s educational mission and hurricane relief efforts. The highlight of the event was a special tasting and auction featuring a limited edition of 250 commemorative bottles of George Washington Distillery Vatted American Whiskey, a blend of America’s best known Bourbons and whiskies, vatted, aged and hand-bottled on the grounds of Mount Vernon.

Each honoree was inducted as “Guardian of His Spirit” and presented a medal created by the world-renowned Lenox designers. The medals, made through an antique process using burnished silver over pewter, featured an image of George Washington with the words “Heritage, Responsibility, and Integrity” on one side and a replica of George Washington’s copper pot still on the other side.

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The inductees were selected by the Board of Trustees of the George Washington Spirits Society, which is made up of representatives of America's leading distillers and Historic Mount Vernon.

Biographies of this year's new honorees follow.

THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON SPIRITS SOCIETY:

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson, former U.S. Secretary Health and Human Services (HHS), and four-term Governor of the state of Wisconsin is a remarkable and prominent national leader. As Secretary of HHS, Thompson distinguished himself by his extraordinary contributions to the public health of the nation for effective international disease control and for his strong support of alcohol education and social responsibility. He is widely recognized for his effective leadership of HHS in the aftermath of the September 11 crisis.

As Governor of the state of Wisconsin, Thompson achieved outstanding success in forging new and practical approaches to welfare by enacting the states landmark legislation which has served as a national model for welfare reform. He also developed innovative health insurance programs to assist uninsured families and to help the disabled enter the workforce. He established important model programs in education creating new academic standards.

U.S. Representative Ron Lewis has distinguished himself as an outstanding state and national leader. An ordained Minister, successful businessman and teacher, he is a six-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Kentucky. Congressman Lewis has served with distinction on the Agriculture, Government Reform and Veteran and Armed Services Committees. He has been a strong proponent of national security and our nation's veterans.

As a member of the prestigious Ways and Means Committee, Lewis has been particularly active in developing a family and business friendly tax structure. Amongst his many legislative accomplishments, he has been an author or co-author of innovative legislation supporting families, college students, and farmers. Lewis has been a strong and effective supporter of eliminating the inheritance tax and has been the sponsor of the industry's efforts to reduce the federal excise tax.

Raymond R. Herrmann, Jr. has distinguished himself by his dedicated and brilliant leadership of the distilled spirits industry and by his outstanding service to society and his community for over 60 years. He is Co-Chairman of the Charmer Sunbelt Group of companies and has had a long and distinguished career within the wine and spirits industry. His great integrity and commitment to social responsibility have been an essential component of the industry's growth and credibility.

His charitable efforts and service to the nation and society have been extraordinary. He served in the South Pacific campaign from 1943 – 1946 in the US Army during World War II. He is a Founder and a 30-year supporter and Director of the Sky Ranch for Boys. A long term patron of the Arts, he is an active supporter of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He is a 20-year member of the Board of Overseers and generous supporter of the Medical College of Cornell University. Amongst his many other charitable interests has been a serious commitment to the Cancer Fund of New York.

Judge Ruth Sussman (posthumous award) distinguished herself by her extraordinary judicial service and strong state leadership. Until her passing on August 26, 2005 she served as Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York and as presiding judge over the State's first Integrated Domestic Violence Court. In 1995, she was appointed as a civil court judge in New York City where she served with distinction on both the Family and Criminal Courts.

Beyond her extraordinary judicial career, Sussman gave outstanding service to her community as a member of the Criminal Court Anti-Bias Committee, National Association of Women Judges, Governors Judicial Screening Committee, the Criminal Justice Colloquium and in numerous cancer research fundraising efforts. Importantly she greatly assisted the spirits industry's efforts to fight drunk driving and underage drinking during her 11 years of dedicated service to The Century Council as a member of its Advisory Board.

The James Anderson Master Distiller Award

Michael S. Griesser (posthumous award) distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the spirits industry and by his service to his community. Until his passing on November 15, 2004 he served as Vice Chairman and founding Partner of McCormick Distilling Company. He was an active member of the DISCUS Board of Directors and was recognized throughout the industry for his many innovations during a long and colorful career.

He was remarkable for his civic activity. Griesser was a member of numerous professional and philanthropic organizations and was a director of the Dallas Orton Society. He was an ardent supporter and generous donor to the Frisco, Texas YMCA and the St. Francis of Assisi Church and Parish. He served as a key member on the building committees for both of these organizations and was instrumental in their effectiveness and service to his rapidly growing community.

An important member of the distilled spirits industry, an entrepreneur, a dedicated family man and a joyful contributor to every gathering, Michael Griesser is greatly missed.