

Press Release

A World of Accordions Museum
1401 Belknap Street, Superior, WI 54880
(715) 395-2787

FLORIAN CHMIELEWSKI

CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF ACCORDION MUSIC

"ACROSS THE GENERATIONS"

BENEFIT CONCERTS AT ACCORDION

MUSEUM

Former Senator—and ever-accordion-aficionado—Florian Chmielewski is celebrating 60 years as one of the north-countries' most popular and visible entertainers. On stage at *Harrington ARTS Center*, 1401 Belknap Street, Superior, WI, he and his musical family will be surrounded by over 1,000 accordions when they present concerts benefiting *A World of Accordions Museum* on April 23, 2005. The concerts are entitled "Across the Generations."

Since 1882, the Chmielewski family has been synonymous with accordion music. Over 100 years later and into five succeeding generations, the Chmielewski's music has never stopped. In 1989, the "Chmielewski Family Funtime Band" swept the Minnesota Music Awards for three consecutive years by winning nine out of eleven awards in the polka field. They produced over 2000 television shows broadcast throughout the USA and Canada and currently airing on cable channel 8. In 1973 popularity polls, their polka show was ranked second most favorite, even surpassing "All In The Family."

Florian Chmielewski was inducted into Minnesota Music Hall of Fame (New Ulm, MN) in 1994, and into Ironworld Discovery Center Polka Hall of Fame (Chisholm, MN) in 1995. Florian's daughter Patty Chmielewski Devitt follows in her dad's famous footsteps as Polka Hall of Fame inductee of 2003. Perhaps their accomplishments will be continued by her gifted children, Nick, Alexis, and Kati, who are already veteran stage performers at the tender ages of 12, 10, and 4. They have just released a new CD entitled "Another Generation."

The group is welcomed at over 100 national and international venues each year, and has covered more than five million miles traveling to over 10,000 events since Florian took over leadership in 1945. They have produced more than 40 albums, cassettes, and videos.

Additionally, Florian brought his style to the Capitol and beyond. The beloved entertainer from Sturgeon Lake was elected to the Minnesota Senate (1970-1996), where he remained a dedicated proponent for the special concerns of northern Minnesota.

Chmielewski's interest in accordion music extends far beyond entertainment. In 1991, while appearing as headliner at Ironworld USA Polkafest, in Chisholm, MN, and while serving as Advisor to Red Wing Technical College, he announced from the stage that a search was on for an accordion-concertina technician to head the newly-forming college department. Then followed his first meetings with Helmi Harrington, Ph.D., and his support during the years RWTC offered this curriculum. Florian remained a friend after the 1994 systems-merger of Minnesota colleges discontinued the repair program and Harrington established "***Accordion-concertina Repair and Technicians' School***" (***ARTS***) with its subsidiary ***A World of Accordions Museum***. First located in Duluth, ARTS moved to Superior, WI, in 2002, and has only recently reopened to the public in its expanded and enhanced capacities as ***Harrington ARTS Center***, 1401 Belknap Street, Superior, WI 54880.

Impressed by the museum's instruments and artifacts collections, its emphasis on cultural heritages evidenced through accordion-family-instruments, its historic importance as a regional attraction and the only institution of its kind in the USA, Chmielewski was moved to a personal commitment of support. On Saturday, April 23rd, the Chmielewski family of musicians will present concerts at 1:00 and 3:00 PM at ***Harrington ARTS Center***, combined with tours of ***A World of Accordions Museum*** beginning every half hour from 10:00AM until 5:00PM. Tickets are only \$10.00 per person, less than half-price of conventional admissions. Lunch will be available at \$6.00 additional. Door prizes and a raffle will round out the historic event.

In addition to her respect for the Chmielewski Family achievements, Harrington states special pride in these concerts: she teaches Lexi Devitt, and helps with music-arrangements for Lexi and Kati at her Accordion Concertina Music studio in Burnsville.

All proceeds will be donated to support the museum. A goal of \$10,000 has been set. Call (715) 395-2787 or (218)372-3616 for tickets or more information.

Additional information about "A World of Accordions Museum" can be found online at www.accordionworld.org.