



For Immediate Release – Sept. 16, 2019

KENTUCKY BOURBON HALL OF FAME TO INDUCT SIX NEW MEMBERS & BESTOW LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

BARDSTOWN, Ky. – The Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame on Thursday will induct six individuals into its hallowed ranks and bestow its Parker Beam Lifetime Achievement Award on a beloved icon who patiently resurrected one of the state’s most historic distilleries and returned the family-owned brand to global prominence.

“This is a special year as six venerable professionals whose dedication, ingenuity and enthusiasm have contributed to Kentucky’s Bourbon boom will be so publicly recognized,” said Eric Gregory, President of the Kentucky Distillers’ Association.

“Each of these industry champions has found ways to influence and spur the growth of Kentucky’s beloved Bourbon industry, and it’s time we show our sincere appreciation for their vision and commitment to our timeless craft.”

Kentucky Bourbon Festival Chairman Josh Hollifield of Barton 1792 Distillery said, “This year’s inductees have advanced many facets of Kentucky’s signature industry. From executive leadership, to production, to marketing and brand promotion; this year’s class truly represents a wide influence on Bourbon culture.”

This year’s inductees are, in alphabetical order:

- Katrina Egbert, Visitor Center Marketing Coordinator, Wild Turkey Distillery
- Wesley Henderson, Co-Founder/Chief Innovation Officer, Louisville Distilling Co.
- Larry Kass, Director of Trade Relations (Ret.), Heaven Hill Distillery
- Charles W. Medley, Master Distiller, Medley Distilling Co./Charles Medley Distillery
- Peggy Noe Stevens, Founder & President, Peggy Noe Stevens & Associates
- Even G. Kulsveen, Executive Director, Willett Distillery (Lifetime Achievement Award)

A limited number of tickets are still available at www.kybourbonfestival.com for the event on Thursday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the My Old Kentucky Home Rotunda in Bardstown. Tickets are \$40 and include drinks and hors d’oeuvres.

Created by the KDA in conjunction with the Kentucky Bourbon Festival in 2001, the Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame recognizes individuals and organizations that have made a significant and transformational impact on Bourbon's stature, growth and awareness.

It is the highest honor given by the signature industry and is presented annually during the Kentucky Bourbon Festival, which runs through Sunday in Bardstown.

Candidates may be nominated each year by the KDA, its member distilleries and the Kentucky Bourbon Festival from four categories: Industry, Journalism, Roll of Honor and Lifetime Achievement. Nominees are then sent to the KDA Board of Directors for final selection.

Kulsveen will be honored with the prestigious Parker Beam Lifetime Achievement Award.

Born in Norway, Kulsveen's attention to detail served him well in the myriad of roles he has taken on throughout his life. He moved to America at the age of 14 and went to college in Gunnison, Colorado. He later served in the merchant marines where he worked as a chef.

He got to know Thompson Willett, owner of what is now Willett Distillery, while working as a glass decanter craftsman. He married Willett's daughter, Martha, and together Even and Martha purchased the distillery property from her father in 1984.

His expertise in export markets became an immediate and imperative value. While popularity for brown spirits in the U.S. was on the decline, Asian markets demonstrated a thirst for whiskey and an appreciation for artistic packaging.

Kulsveen positioned Willett to provide the best of both. He even took Japanese language classes at night to better serve his clients.

During the distillery's dormant years, Kulsveen sold premium-aged products overseas, marketing single barrel and small batch selections. He developed the heightened palate discretion of a Master Blender - a gift that has shaped Willett's current boutique small batch collection.

Willett Distillery remains independently family owned and operated. Under the leadership of parents Even and Martha Willett Kulsveen, siblings Britt and Drew Kulsveen are continuing the family tradition of spirits excellence, generosity and southern hospitality.

Rick Robinson, Chairman of the KDA's Board of Directors, said Kulsveen is an exemplary figure whose progressive strategy in the global market allowed him to position his family's company as an influential brand at home and abroad.

"Even has demonstrated disciplined leadership, strategic decision-making and bold forward-thinking" said Robinson, who is Vice President of the Global Supply Chain for Campari. "He

has built a family legacy that will last for generations to come, and we thank him for his significant contributions to Kentucky's booming Bourbon industry."

KDA President Gregory hailed Kulsveen for his vision to forecast and leverage business trends that have tremendously impacted the global demand for Kentucky Bourbon, long before others foresaw the impending Bourbon boom.

"Even has worked on all sides of this industry from bartending to distribution to imports," he said. "His intricate knowledge of marketing, along with his principled work ethic, enabled him to build brands and cultivate the type of loyalty that drives consistent consumer demand."

Willett President Britt Kulsveen said, "Our father has lived several lifetimes with all of the career paths he has taken – from tending bar to having a glass factory that produced decanters and envisioning the kingdom we have built together as a family today.

"We have always said that he is lifetime's ahead of his time with all of the innovative, genius creations he has imagined and brought to fruition," she said. "This award is a long time coming."

The award is named for Parker Beam, who joined Heaven Hill in 1960 as a sixth-generation distiller in his storied family. He became Master Distiller in 1975 and earned numerous awards for distilling, aging and selecting some of the world's most acclaimed Bourbons.

He was named Master Distiller Emeritus in 2013 shortly after being diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease. His public advocacy for ALS research, care and awareness has generated millions for his "Promise of Hope" fund.

Beam died in 2017 at the age of 75.

The induction ceremony will be held during an evening reception on the grounds of My Old Kentucky Home in Bardstown, one of the state's most revered historic sites.

Federal Hill, the Georgian style mansion built around 1795, inspired Stephen Collins Foster to write his immortal song, "My Old Kentucky Home." It is now part of Kentucky's parks system and symbolizes the Bluegrass State's gracious hospitality and genteel culture.

KBF Interim Director Mike Mangeot said, "The Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame was created in 2001 to recognize individuals whose work has had a significant impact on the Bourbon industry. There is no doubt that each member of the 2019 class fits that description. We offer our thanks for their contributions and congratulations on this prestigious honor."

KDA President Gregory will present each inductee with an engraved miniature copper still before an elite crowd of whiskey luminaries. Each inductee's name also will be added to a Hall of Fame display at the Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History in Bardstown.

“We look forward to celebrating these six distinguished individuals by paying tribute to their hard work and life-long dedication to preserving and improving Kentucky’s distilling heritage,” Gregory said.

-30-

For more information, contact Colleen Thomas at (502) 777-4690

*Visit the Kentucky Bourbon Festival online at www.kybourbonfestival.com.
Learn more about the Kentucky Distillers’ Association at www.kybourbon.com.*