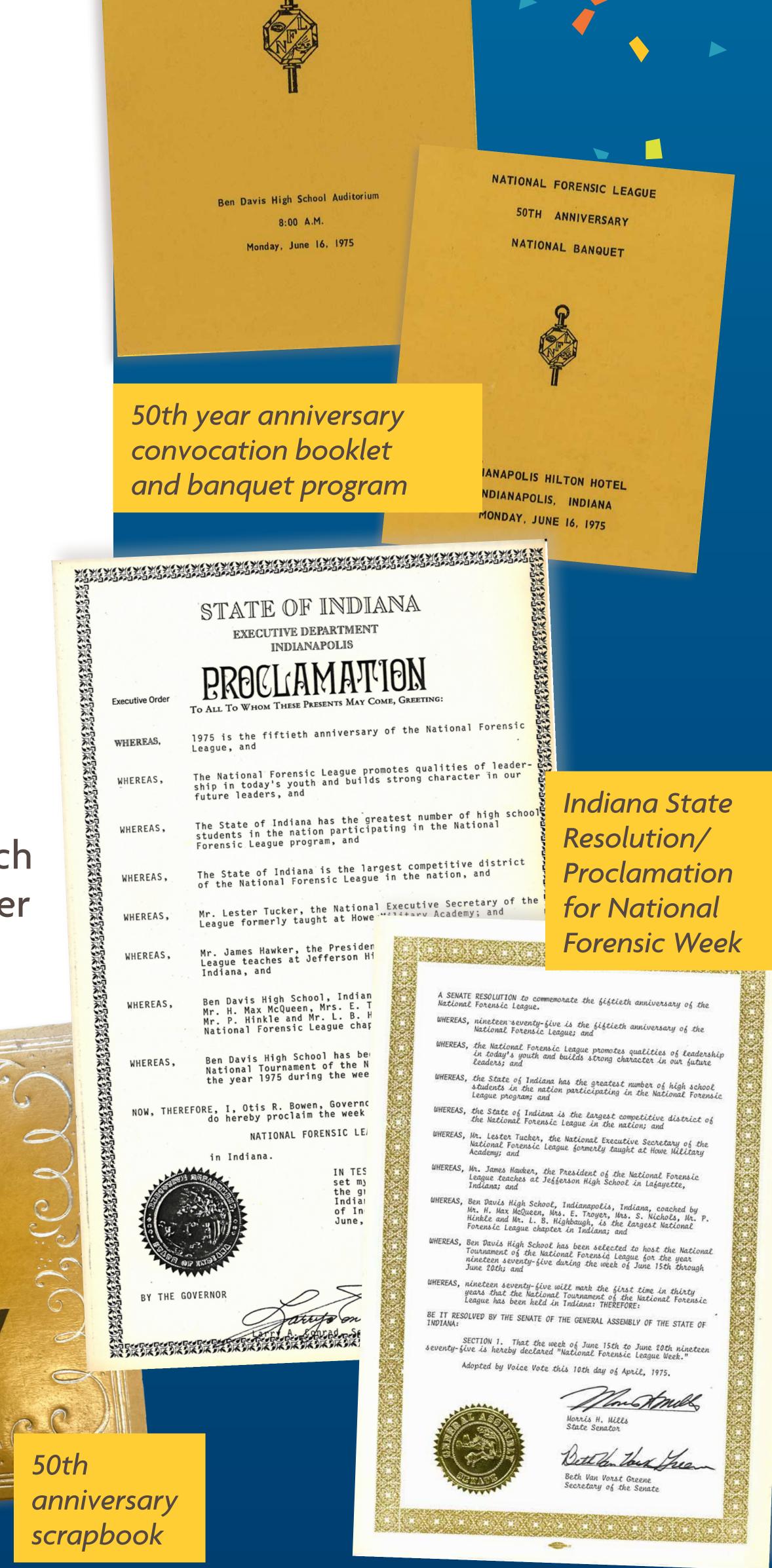
1975

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The NFL celebrated its golden anniversary! After 50 years of business on the Ripon College campus, the National Forensic League moved into its own building in the town of Ripon, Wisconsin.

To celebrate the anniversary and importance of speech and debate activities, the first National Forensic Week was declared. The Governor of Indiana proclaimed June 15-21, during the National Tournament, as National Forensic Week. This was the predecessor to National Speech and Debate Education Day, later established in 2016





NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

50th ANNIVERSARY

1976

LEGACY AND LAUGHTER AT NATIONALS

To honor his legacy with the NFL, the Karl E. Mundt Foundation donated funds to underwrite Student Congress.

Another new event was added to the National Tournament. Humorous Interpretation, now known as one of the most popular events, was added as a main event for district and national tournaments in 1976.

1977-1978

HISTORIC HONORS

Following a significant push for women's rights in the 1970s, Carmendale Fernandes served as the first female Board President of the National Forensic League. She was triumphed as a coach, teacher, and leader who inspired multiple generations of female students to engage in an activity that valued their intellect and diligence.

The NFL established the Hall of Fame. This recognition remains the highest honor for high school speech and debate coaches. Founder Bruno E. Jacob was one of the first 12 inductees.



1978

NEW LEADERSHIP

Executive Director Lester Tucker retired and Dennis Winfield from Iowa was appointed to lead the National Forensic League. At this time, the League had 1,315 chapters and 694 affiliates.

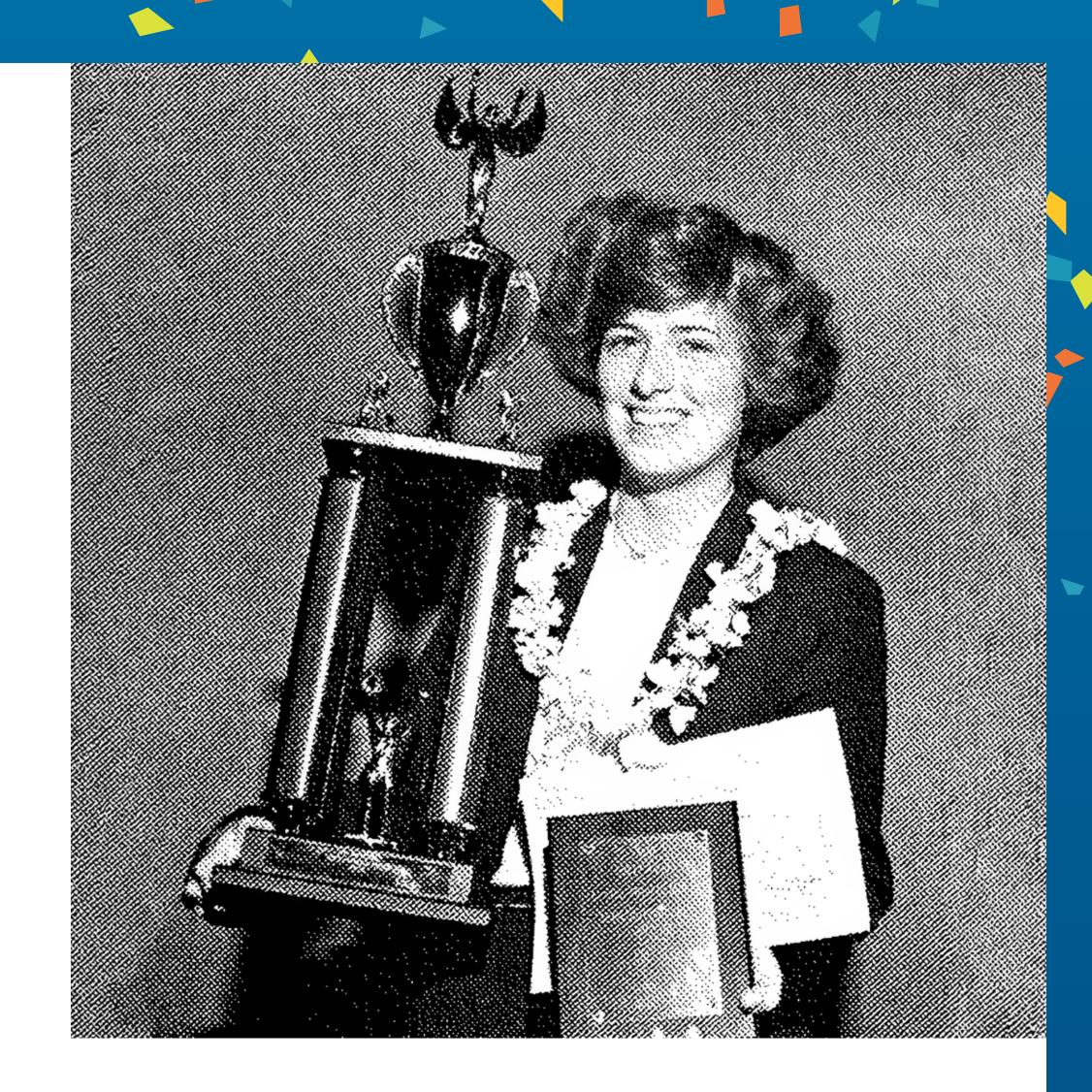
1979

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE DEBUTS

Lincoln-Douglas Debate, named after the historic 1858 debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas for an Illinois Senate seat, debuted at the National Tournament in 1979. Today, somewhat like the old debates, LD focuses on the conflicting values of social and philosophical issues.

Rostrum,

September 1983



Mary Ambrose, Omaha Marion HS, Nebraska, First Lincoln-Douglas Debate Champion, 1980

1980-1982

INVESTING IN EXCELLENCE

Student membership fees were increased to \$5, the first increase in seven years.

Champions at the National Tournament had an opportunity to win scholarship money. National debate winners were awarded \$2,000 from Who's Who Among American High School Students.

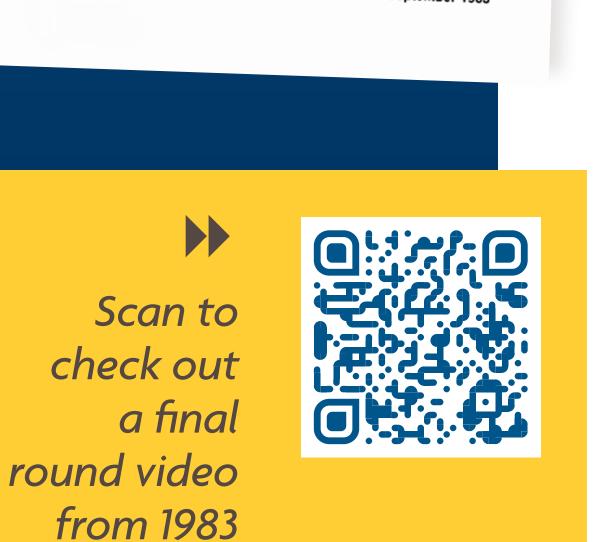
VIDEO AND VOICE

1983-1985

Using a camcorder and VHS tapes, National Tournament final rounds were recorded for the first time.

With a goal of challenging students to further understand national and international current events, United States and Foreign Extemporaneous Speaking were established in 1984. The following year, Boys' and Girls' Extemp were combined to create United States and International Extemporaneous Speaking at the 1985 National Tournament.

This was also the first year National Tournament competitors qualified exclusively via district tournaments.



1983-1985

SAVING THE LEAGUE

James Copeland was appointed Executive Director in 1985. He is known today for saving the organization from a financial crisis. After being advised to declare bankruptcy and close the organization in the 1980s, Jim, who was previously retired, returned to help lead the NFL out of financial issues.

Frank Sferra, another leader in the NFL, was elected Board President. Frank was well known and loved by many in the speech and debate community. Decades later, the organization created the Frank Sferra Director's Commendation to honor his legacy. The award is still given out annually at the National Tournament.

(top to bottom) James Copeland | Frank Sferra >





Scan to watch a video on the near-dissolution of the NFL » Crisis and Copeland



NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION



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NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION

A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

