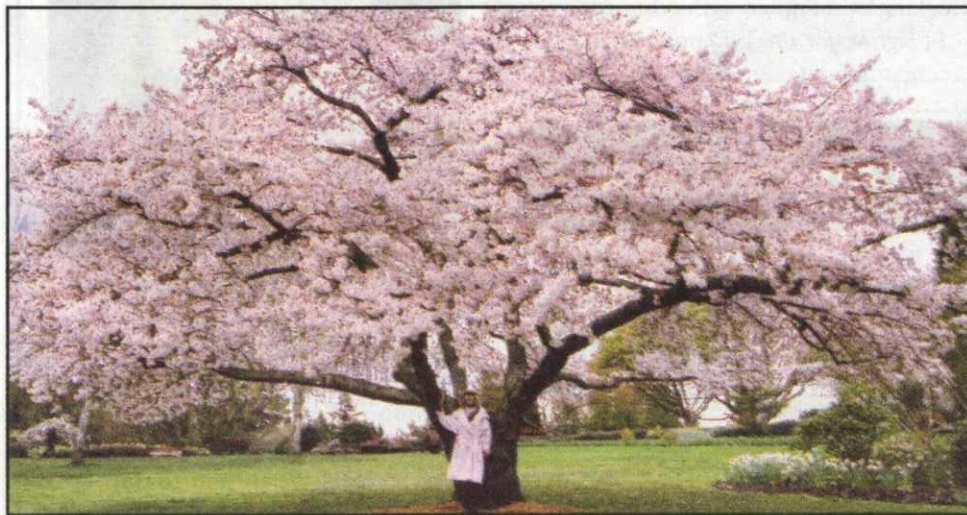




spirit of VANCOUVER®

Cherry Blossom Festival marks beginning of spring



Linda Poole stands beneath one of Vancouver's 36,000 cherry trees during last year's Cherry Blossom Festival. The 2007 festival kicks off in mid-March with Cherry Jam Downtown.

BY GREG DESCANTES

Most people have a few reasons why they look forward to spring. **Linda Poole** has more than 36,000. That's one for each of the beautiful pink-blossomed cherry trees that line our streets and brighten our city each spring. They've been a part of Vancouver life ever since the mayors of Kobe and Yokohama presented the **Vancouver Park Board** with

500 Japanese cherry trees for the Japanese cenotaph in Stanley Park in the early 1930s.

Poole is the creative director of the **Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival (VCBF)**, a West Coast version of the Sakura Celebrations of Japan, where budding blossoms inspire new music, poetry, art, and romance and companies send their junior employees to claim spaces for company picnics under the most impressive canopy of blossoms.


Last year, Vancouverites, **The Vancouver Board of Trade's Spirit of Vancouver®** campaign, and high-profile corporate sponsors such as **JTB International, Japan Airlines, TransLink, DVBlA** and **Mission Hill Family Estate** embraced the first ever VCBF, and its many events including Plein-air Blossom Painting, the B.C. Blossom Watch photo contest, *Vancouver in Bloom* art exhibition, cherry blossom viewing picnics, guided tree talks and walks, workshops on haiku, origami, and Ikebana flower arranging, and the internationally popular Haiku Invitational.

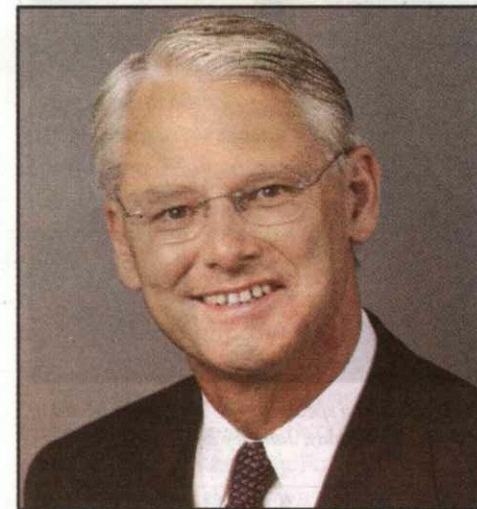
The 2007 Invitational, which invites writers to submit a previously unpublished haiku poem, was announced in November and has already received submissions from Canada, the US, Italy, New Zealand, Russia, Croatia, France, Romania, the UK and Australia.

Winning haiku will be featured on more than 400 buses and SkyTrain cars and be read by **Christopher Gaze** during Cherry Jam Downtown, VCBF's kick-off event and free concert, in mid-March.

This spring, Poole invites Vancouver to celebrate this event with the VCBF. "We also have a few opportunities left for sponsors to

get involved and help showcase what's beautiful about Vancouver at springtime."

For more information, visit the Festival website at www.vcbf.ca. 



Feel the blossom's breath
White petals fall at my feet
Life each day is new

Haiku by Premier Gordon Campbell