

12/31/08

Director  
Alfred P. Sloan Museum  
1221 E. Kearsley Street  
Flint, Mi. 48503

Director  
Sloan/Longway Planetarium  
1310 East Kearsley Street  
Flint, Mi. 48503

Ref: 2008 Great Lakes Treasures Program

Dear Directors,

If your planing a repeat of the 2008 Great Lakes Treasures Program, forget it. I have previously filed a verbal complaint in reference to several issues and feel a written version is in order. The program demonstrated a total lack of necessary experience on the part of the Sloan/Longway staff in holding this type of event.

- \* The program was split between two facilities, The Sloan Museum and the Longway Planetarium. These building are approximately one city block apart. Patrons had to walk through snow and slush to cross a busy city street because sidewalk and street cleaning was inadequate. The walk proved too long for several elderly people. In two cases, wheelchair bound individuals could not make their way through the ice and snow and had to remain either at the museum or planetarium. The safety and comfort of the ticket buying public was compromised and handicapped patrons were discriminated against because your staff did not adequately plan the programs in a single venue. It must have been luck that no one was seriously hurt by falling in the ice, slush and snow that covered some of the sidewalks and the street. For those that did transfer between buildings, it meant walking more than six hundred yards in harsh conditions.
- \* The dual program schedule for the day caused patrons to miss certain presentations because humans can't be in two places at once. One event would be held at the planetarium at the exact time that a worthy event was beginning at the Sloan Museum. Therefore, patrons had to choose which few events they wished to attend rather than observing all of them.
- \* Several rooms where events were held were too small, dimly lit or had no adequate sound system. Some patrons had to stand at the back or were turned away. In the room where Mr. Mixter was presenting, the sound system was not working. In the little room where the Kohl's gave their program, people were uncomfortable in the limited seating and had to stand.

In the room used by Mr. Mixer, the lights could not be dimmed so it was extremely difficult to see the screen when video tape was presented. The rooms were dirty and trashy. Certain rooms contained storage items shoved against the walls. Trash was on the floor and not from the patrons.

- \* The person in charge of this terrible event was Heidi. She acted like a drill sergeant and was actually rude to many patrons. When we were told to come into the hall between programs to enjoy cookies, coffee and punch, we had just began to eat and drink when "Heidi" clapped her hands and announced: "OK everybody, finish your refreshments now, throw your cups away and go to your proper rooms." She then got stern and began to bark orders to "put down the cups now." People threw away half eaten cookies and full cups of coffee. Throughout the entire afternoon, "Heidi" seemed to follow the patrons around, stand in the back of the rooms during programs and stare and generally act like she was mad that we had paid to attend. She was not the only rude and disrespectful staff member but she was the most visible one, showing up everywhere. It was evident that Heidi had very little experience or training in managing this type of event and she seemed irritated at the number of people who attended. Moreover, when many of the patrons complained about the screwy program schedule and the two venue issue, she became rude rather than understanding what the people were going through.
- \* After purchasing my tickets in advance, I was forced to purchase another ticket to tour the Great Lakes Treasures exhibit. The girls at the Sloan Museum counter acted like Heidi, that the unusual crowds were a big discomfort and bother to them. While I'm not certain of the names of the employees working there, Pam and Michelle come to mind.
- \* Roscoe John Clark. This individual came to the event in a suit with a Genesee County Sheriff card on his coat, claiming to be a producer for Comcast and filming a program to be aired on Comcast. I questioned this arrangement with "Heidi" and asked her to confirm Roscoe Clark's connection with Comcast. Several other presenters also were suspicious of Clark's intent. Later, Heidi stated that she confirmed that Clark was a Comcast producer and would be broadcasting a show devoted to the Sloan/Longway event. Some of us were interviewed for the "show." There was just one problem. We and Heidi were duped. Later, I was contacted by the director of security for Comcast who confirmed that Roscoe John Clark was not an employee of Comcast. Accordingly, there was never any cable program on the Great Lakes Treasures and all the interviews were kept by Clark who refused to provide copies when confronted later.

- \* The only high point of the event was the excellent dinner provided by Italia Garden's. Unfortunately, many ticket holders had left before the food was provided because of the long delay in setting up the buffet.
- \* Because the food service was late, patrons had to eat while Mr. Trotter gave the "keynote speech." This room was darkened to show his video, like the other rooms should have been, but that caused the patrons to eat their food in the dark. The delay was the result of Heidi's staff refusing to allow people to eat when the food was first brought out.
- \* Earlier in the afternoon, in this same Jupiter Room, while Mr. Trotter was giving his program, a group of noisy and rowdy kids were playing in the next area. Their screams and yells disrupted the entire program because there was only a false wall separating the rooms.
- \* At the end of the event, the remaining patrons were given a survey to fill out. Heidi even told us what to say, so any comments made on these forms were prompted. By this time, after trying to adapt to an impossible program schedule, trudging through ice and snow in cold and windy weather, walking long distances between buildings, being told to choke down our cookies and drink, sitting through presenters we could not hear, in cramped and trashy rooms and being interviewed by a bogus Comcast television show producer.....well it was time to bring down the curtain on one of the most disappointing events ever held in Flint.

What makes this detailed overview so sad is that the idea for a "Great Lakes Treasures" program for Flint, Michigan was an excellent one. With the exception of Richard (Ric) Mixer, the speakers were informative. David Trotter, Chris & Joan Kohl and Valerie van Heest are well liked and respected in the field of Great Lakes exploration and history. But the Sloan Museum-Longway Planetarium staff under the direction of "Heidi" spoiled the event with poor planning, poor scheduling, poor public relations and a very poor attitude toward the ticket buying patrons in general. The real opinion, not the one on the survey sheets, is that your facility and staff are not prepared to host another such program and our diving group would not support it.

*Arthur Evans*

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