

CTPA Quarterly Meeting - Minutes

Thursday, October 10, 2013

.....at Second Presbyterian Church on South Michigan Avenue

Thirty (30) people attended the fourth quarterly CTPA meeting of 2013, down from the 41 who had signed up. Extenuating circumstances abounded. Competing with a Bears game was the CSO's performance of Verdi's Requiem, sold out at Symphony Center but broadcast at Millennium Park, and at anyone's home computer via simulcast technology. It would have been a beautiful night to be at Millennium Park and was great weather for the Bears, who won their game.

The third and probably most significant extenuating circumstance was the relocation of our meeting place from the most excellent confines of Lawry's to the more humble community room in the back of the sanctuary of Second Presbyterian Church. As we learned, Lawry's has had changes in personnel and the CTPA may not be able to continue to have meetings at Lawry's in 2014.

Nevertheless, we were welcome to tour the historic church at 5:15pm for complimentary brief church tours before our meeting, with social time from 5:30pm until the meeting began at 5:50pm.

A table was set with bags of potato chips, 2 large trays from Jewel's catering: a tray of cheese, salami and crackers, and another of assorted fruit. A cooler of cold drinks were also available as were carafes of Dunkin Donuts decaf coffee. Thank you to our esteemed leaders (Donna Primas & Sharon Sylvester) for bringing in the provisions!! The church hospitality room was lined with tables and comfortable chairs. There was a pull down screen in the large room and the church's microphone/speakers and CTPA's projection equipment performed perfectly.

CTPA president Donna Primas told everyone about the loss of Lawry's, and made remarks about business:

- Dues will remain the same for 2014 with invoices to be sent out in November.
- The next event for us to attend is at the Field Museum, regarding their "opening the vaults" on **November 12**. A flyer will be sent to all.
- For the winter, we're hoping to plan a "movie night" and informal visits to a few small venues.
- The testing for those seeking the coveted CTG – certified tour guide – designation continues. A number of CTPA members have taken and passed the written test and will soon be examined for the "slide test."

Donna advised us as to what CTPA officers would like from members:

- Suggestions for future presentations (topics/speakers) for 2014 quarterly meetings.
- Suggestions for where to hold these future presentations!
- Suggestions for where to hold a holiday party, if that's possible.

As always, new members, visitors, and tour company people were introduced:

- Carolyn Guilford is a new 2013 member.
- Paul Pfeffer is a new member in 2013.
- Veronica Uribe, a Spanish speaking guide who plans to join in 2014.
- Corporate members present included:
 - Antoinette Gonzales of Aries Charter (announced that Aries would be providing the transportation for a Tiffany themed Driehaus tour that will visit Second Pres).
 - Gilbert Longoria of the Chicago Tour Company.
 - Alice Tell of My Kind of Town.
- Jo Lieb came as a guest of Mike Stillerman

PROGRAM

Our speaker was introduced at 6:00pm. **Michael Corcoran CTG**, author of the Second Edition of "Hollywood On Lake Michigan" has been a CTPA member since 2003 and became a Certified Tour Guide in 2004.

Michael developed his love and expertise for Chicago's history and architecture while at DePaul University. Michael served on the CTPA Certification Committee and with his wife Kate created www.brainsnack.net, a photo-rich site of excellent Chicago information. As a tour guide, Michael can call upon his experience as a writer, storyteller, and professional stand-up comedian in addition to his knowledge of Chicago and its history. Among Michael's specialty tours is his most popular "Cinematic Chicago," which he admitted cribbing from the first edition of the book.

Michael works with the Albany Park Community Center teaching English as a second language. He has developed a series of lectures about the Columbian Exposition, and can be seen at clubs around town, reading poetry or making music on his harmonica.

We heard how the second edition of this book came about – initially by Michael repeatedly requesting of Sharon Woodhouse of Lake Claremont Press to produce an update. In 2007, she advised that Arnie Bernstein, who wrote the 1998/first edition/original book, was too busy to work on a new edition, and Michael got the job. The manuscript began in earnest in the summer of 2008. It was supposed to appear as a book in November of 2009, but was put on indefinite hold. Remember the recession? Michael waited four years and by that time, a new publisher was interested. The book appears now thanks to the Chicago Review Press.

Michael allowed how it was difficult for this presentation to distill a 400+ page book into 60 minutes, adding that he is not an expert but merely an enthusiast. He imparted his enthusiasm for movies made in Chicago, and reminded us all of many of them.

The book itself features an overview of the history of film in Chicago combined with stories and locations of famous Chicago films, and interviews of Chicago movie people from behind the scenes and actors in front of the camera. Michael's tales of interviews for the book were most entertaining.

Ranging from silent movies to today's blockbusters and indie films, the revamped second edition chronicles the significant contributions by Chicago and Chicagoans to more than a century of American filmmaking. In his talk, Michael covered the development of film technology by early major players Essanay Studios and Selig Polyscope Company, and spoke of the first African American-owned and operated film studios. He displayed images of old Chicago movie palaces, some long gone, and talked about the importance of Second City, Goodman, and Steppenwolf theaters as training grounds for the industry's best comedic and dramatic talent.

We enjoyed hearing behind-the-scenes stories of local favorite movies, especially "The Hunter" with Steve McQueen from 1980. Michael reminded us that basically the first 50 minutes of the movie are boring, but it picks up speed, literally, with the characters hopping on the L (atop the L!) and then being somehow underground and heading into lower levels of Marina City. The car chase inexplicably goes from the bottom of the parking levels to the top, at which point we all know the car plummets into the Chicago River. Michael also said that he watches a lot of really bad movies so we don't have to!!!

Most interesting was to learn that it wasn't until the 1960s that Hollywood filmmakers took cameras and crew outside of California and begin to film "on location." In the 1980 film "The Blues Brothers," Chicago itself became a character and played a role in the film. John Hughes filmed all over the suburbs and the City, and one of the best ever filmed-in-Chicago movies is still "The

Fugitive” with Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones. The director, Andy Davis, was a Chicagoan and knew how to show off this city. The movie was a big hit.

Michael covered many architectural stars featured in the Chicago movies, like 77 West Wacker in “The Negotiator”. The Wrigley Building is in “Call Northside 777” (an oldie), and the Jewelers Building in “Transformers 3” and the first Batman movie.

Rich stories in the book came from Michael’s interviews with a number of movie people, like production designer Nathan Crowley, responsible for the entire “look” of a film, working from pre- to post-production. From 2005 to 2009, Crowley worked on four pictures in a row here in Chicago, “Batman Begins,” “Lake House,” “Dark Knight” and “Public Enemies.” He loves the skyline and the architecture. The actual Lake House was built locally in a forest preserve in the suburbs.

Michael was able to find Bob Janz, a retired CTA Manager who handled liaisons with movie people wanting to shoot on the CTA from the mid-70's to the early 90's. Bob told Michael many great stories and gave him several fantastic behind-the-scenes photos to use in the book.

Speaking of stories, the book relates details of how fake snow had to be produced for the movie “The Weather Man” with Nicholas Cage. Even though filmed here in the winter, prior to critical filming days, we had warm days that melted the winter’s accumulated snow.

In the acknowledgments in the book, thanks were given to Donna Primas, Holly Jensen and Al Walavich for their help. Al provided info on cemeteries where movies were filmed; Holly was IN a number of movies filmed here; and Donna is a Source Of Information, Period. During the meeting, Gina V Driskell shared that she was an extra in both the “Blues Brothers” and “The Hunter” (at the Uptown L station wearing a big blue sweater and sunglasses)!

The book can be found in stores now for \$18.95, published by Chicago Review Press, paperback, 400 pages. Find Michael Corcoran’s blog at <http://chicagocinema.net>, a companion to his new book.

Judith Randall
CTPA Co-Secretary