

2004 Four Freshmen Convention News

Mary & Jack Morrison: Convention Chairmen

Welcome to Grand Rapids, Michigan and the FFS 2004 Convention, July 29-31st. We have been to thirteen conventions and will enjoy meeting with old and new friends from around the U. S. as well as Europe and Japan. It is always a treat to meet with our guests, former Freshmen and wives, and to receive our yearly hug from Ross Barbour.

The highlight of the convention will, of course, be two nights of concerts by the amazing group of Four Freshmen. However, there will be plenty more to do. Dick Baldwin's popular "Fresh Talk" panel of current and former Freshmen will answer audience questions. The membership meeting will keep members informed of the Society's activities. Singers (Freshmen "wannabes") will meet around the piano to sing Frosh arrangements several times over the course of the week in our specially reserved Music Room. Bob Lininger will be selling Frosh CD's and videos in the Music Mart/Hospitality room along with others selling merchandise that may include anything from T-shirts to old "Freshmen" LP's. It is a good place to sit around and meet new members or catch up with members you met at previous conventions. Those present on Thursday night will certainly enjoy the informal Jam Session. This impromptu jam session is traditionally headed by former freshmen Ray Brown and is always a lot of fun. All fans are encouraged to bring your instruments and join in.

After conventions in Washington D. C. and Orlando, with their well-known attractions, people have asked us what Grand Rapids has to offer. We are sure that you will be pleasantly surprised with all that is available. The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum is conveniently located in the heart of downtown, only 15 minutes from the hotel. Boasting a new \$11 million expansion, America's most entertaining presidential museum is better than ever. Across from the Ford Museum is the Van Andel Public Museum Center with 4 floors of displays, the state-of-the-art Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium, and an operating 1928 carousel. Just up the street is the Grand Rapids Art Museum with a permanent collection of over 5,500 pieces and national caliber changing exhibits. On your way to the Art Museum, take a walk through the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, a 4-star, 4-diamond hotel with portions that date back to 1913. The ceiling in the elegant Pantlind Lobby is the largest application of gold-leaf in North America.

Grand Rapids is also known for its public art including La Grande Vitesse, a 43 foot-tall sculpture by Alexander Calder, as well as works by Marshall Fredericks, Joseph Kinnebrew and Maya Lin.

Near downtown is Heritage Hill, one of the largest areas on the National Register of Historic Places. Over 60 architectural styles are represented including Voigt House, a Victorian Museum, and the Meyer May House, a 1908 Prairie Style home by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The West Michigan Whitecaps, our minor league baseball team, will be hosting the Peoria Chiefs while we are in town. Take in a game at Fifth Third Ballpark, conveniently located off US 131 with plenty of on-site parking.

Michigan's West Coast offers miles of sandy beaches, dunes and lighthouses along with quaint shoreline towns, specialty shops and unique restaurants. And there is nothing quite like a sunset over the shimmering waters of Lake Michigan, it's sure to be a highlight of your trip.

We plan to offer one four-hour bus tour on Friday at 11:30 am. The bus will take us on a short guided tour around downtown and Heritage Hill, then drive us out to Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park for lunch. You will be able to walk trails, take a tram tour to view modern sculpture, visit the conservatory and/or just enjoy the gardens and gift shop. The Gardens encompass 125 acres and include the largest indoor conservatory in the state. The Sculpture Park has the largest collection of outdoor sculpture in the Midwest with works by such artists as Rodin and Liberman and the majestic three story high Leonardo daVinci Horse. The tour will cost \$27 and includes motorcoach transportation, all admissions and lunch at the Gardens. Be sure to check the box on your registration form for this wonderful excursion.

There will be a staffed information table at the hotel with details and brochures for all of the local attractions. We hope that you will be able to enjoy all that Grand Rapids has to offer. To make sure you have time to see and do everything, the Crowne Plaza will offer our convention rates for two days prior and two days post convention. For more information on Grand Rapids go to www.visitgrandrapids.org. For more information on western Michigan, visit tourist bureau web site at www.wmta.org. Be sure to watch future issues of the newsletter for additional information on things to see and do in Grand Rapids.