

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/lifestyle/209835_mysterymuseum.html

Mysteries lurk between the walls of Capitol Hill museum

Monday, January 31, 2005

By **D. PARVAZ**

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

The truth is out there -- heck, it could even exist in a basement in Capitol Hill.

Amid the bars, fetish shops and cool-kid boutiques on Broadway you'll find Seattle Museum of the Mysteries. If for some reason you miss the museum's name on the brown awning outside, just look for the purple-clad dwarf inhabiting the stairwell (hello, photo opportunity!).

The space downstairs can be underwhelming. You may find either one of the museum's co-directors, Philip Lipson or Charlette LeFevre, manning the front desk. Pay the \$3 suggested donation and go inside to see ... a room lined with shabby bookshelves.

Wait. Don't leave. It's three bucks -- you can't even buy a large latte for that kind of chump change. In a city accustomed to high-tech razzle-dazzle, this place is an oddity. It's a bit like the dusty basement of an eccentric aunt or uncle.

Those old bookcases hold some pretty neat stuff -- and if you just let your guard down, you could get sucked into all the ghost stories, UFO tidbits and Bigfoot info.

"We're really not into the whole New Age thing," says Lipson, adding, "We're not really true believers either." In other words, he and the other members of the Seattle UFO Paranormal Group (which formed in 1998) just find this stuff interesting.

They opened the museum a year ago, and Lipson says they've been thrilled with the response.

"We get all sorts of people through here," he says, including large groups of school kids.

There's a little bit here for everyone.

From ghost stories and photos of apparitions in Seattle Landmarks (Did you know Pike Place Market is haunted?) to information on the gadgets used by the Amateur Ghost Hunters of Seattle Tacoma (A.G.H.O.S.T.) -- they actually use equipment to hear the voices of ghosts, like Michael Keaton does in the movie "White Noise."

Seattle Museum OF THE MYSTERIES**EXHIBITS, LIBRARY, CULTURAL CENTER**

WHAT: Exhibits on regional mysteries and art gallery, plus weekly special events, movie nights, etc.

WHERE: 623 Broadway E.

HOURS: Monday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.- 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m.-midnight; Sunday, 1-8 p.m.

TICKETS: Suggested donation of \$3 for adults, \$2 children ages 8-16. Children under 8 free. Annual membership \$24. For more information, call 206-328-6499 or go to www.seattlechatclub.org



 zoom

PHIL H. WEBBER / P-I

Philip Lipson, co-director of Seattle Museum of the Mysteries, hopes its collection on UFOs, ghosts, Bigfoot and more will "inspire people's sense of wonder."

If UFOs are more your speed, you're in the right spot: The first official UFO sighting took place near Mount Rainier on July 24, 1947. It turns out someone else spotted a UFO on July 21 of the same year over Vashon Island, but the July 24 one is considered the first official, reported sighting.

You can hear a tape recording of Kenneth Arnold, the man who clocked the UFO's flight between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams at just under 2 minutes, being interviewed by a radio station. It's oddly gripping: There's a sense of wonder in Arnold's voice that's infectious, nearly 60 years later.

For those who like their mysteries in a more organic package, there's Bigfoot -- a map of sightings, replicas of casts, photos, etc. This isn't to say that there really is or isn't a Bigfoot, but somehow the idea of a big, friendly giant ape-type roaming through heavily wooded areas is kinda sweet.

There's much more in there -- the shelves are crammed with books on all sorts of conspiracies, and, yes, Elvis has a place there, too.

"We're hoping to offer something to inspire people's sense of wonder," says Lipson.

To that end, you'll find some non sequiturs there -- a little something on Frances Farmer (the tragic Seattle actress), mysterious and overlooked inventor Nikola Tesla and even an oxygen bar (\$5 for a five-minute treatment). Why this stuff? Because all of them have an outsider-ish element to them. Farmer was forcefully institutionalized; Tesla (aka the Forgotten Father of Technology) died a pauper despite his prolific knack for invention and innovation.

As for the oxygen tank: "Well, that's just here because it's considered alternative," says Lipson. "It's not accepted by the traditional medical community."

Ultimately, he says the museum should be a place where people feel free to come in, take a load off and chat about whatever -- a community center of sorts.

"We're a lot of different things to a lot of different people," says Lipson.

"There are very few places like this."

P-I reporter D. Parvaz can be reached at 206-448-8095 or dparvaz@seattlepi.com.

© 1998-2007 Seattle Post-Intelligencer