

Subject: [Fwd: Phifer's Fountain]

Date: Sun, 04 Nov 2001 14:12:49 -0800

From: Brian Platts <brian_platts@telus.net>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: Phifer's Fountain

Date: Sat, 3 Nov 2001 18:48:03 -0800

From: "Dave Sadler" <davesadler@telus.net>

To: "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@district.north-van.bc.ca>

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Dear Mayor & Council:

While overlooking Councillor Denault's remarks (which I can only describe as ignorant), I found Council's debate of Sept.10 surrounding the funding & acquisition of Phifer's Fountain as somewhat perplexing.

Firstly, funding was to be provided by the Lynn Valley Community Amenity Fund, established from the massive redevelopment & densification of the Lynn Valley core as a 'reward' to its residents. Although explained to Council, this fact was ignored in deliberations. The cost remained the primary concern to most Councillors throughout the debate.

Secondly, no mention was made of Bylaw 7156, the Public Art Program Reserve Fund established on April 10, 2000 with a opening balance of \$59,000. It would seem Council had completely forgotten about the availability of this fund. Moreover I believe it was remiss of Ms. MacMaster, Manager of Arts & Culture, to not bring this Bylaw to the attention of Council in her report or during the debate when the issue of funding arose.

In regards to Phifer's Fountain, I have never been enthused about this sculpture in it's present form. However, Ms. Martin's article in the NSN & her interview with Mr. Phifer changed my mind. Imagine if we added the water component which the artist had originally planned? And to "reproduce the mystical feel of the Queen Charlottes and their totem poles." Wouldn't it be exciting to fulfil the artist's original vision albeit 30 years later?

I believe District Council should take this matter under serious consideration **now**, instead of thinking about it at the last minute as is the too frequent practice of District staff & Council.

Yours truly, Dave Sadler

NSN NEWS Sept 28, 2001



NEWS photo Cindy Goodman
NORTH Vancouver landscape architect
Harry Haggard peers through a
section of western red cedar. It's the
same type of wood used by his friend
Michael Phifer, who built a sculpture
North Vancouver District would like to
own.

'Dead' sculptor surfaces in Seattle

Annette Martin newsroom@nsnews.com

WHEN Harry Haggard told Michael Phifer he'd been declared dead in the press, the two old friends laughed at the similarity to Mark Twain's famous quote, "The report of my death was an exaggeration."

Said Phifer, a mere 59 years old, "I was surprised at my prematurely reported death."

Although Haggard, a North Shore resident and a landscape architect, hadn't seen Phifer for 18 months, he was pretty sure he would have known if Phifer had passed on. "We've been like brothers," he said.

Phifer is the artist responsible for the gigantic 1970s wooden sculpture - incorrectly labelled Phifer's Fountain - that Cadillac Fairview wants to move from its plaza at 200 Granville Street to make way for more development.

North Vancouver District has expressed an interest in acquiring the piece. Other serious contenders are the UBC Faculty of Forestry and the municipality of Princeton.

Originally, Kevin Redmond of Cadillac Fairview said the company wanted to give the piece of public art away when an unnamed art historian concluded that Michael Phifer had died.

American-born Phifer had come to British Columbia to work on this job before heading back to Oahu, Hawaii, where he and Haggard had attended high school.

Phifer now lives in the Seattle area and works as a graphic arts designer. He believes he's "got some pretty good projects under his belt."

While Phifer doesn't want to retrieve his sculpture, he does want to be involved in the process of relocation, including picking out the most appropriate new site. He would also like the final owners to understand his original concept of the piece, which was not a fountain of wood.

"The plaza was not built as it was designed. Half of it wasn't built and this sculpture was the third or fourth design," he said.

Haggard explained, "It was supposed to have water and pebbles around the base to reflect the bay and the mountains in the water. And the plaza was supposed to step down to the water, which would have been in concrete raised areas around rocks to give a feeling of the ocean."

Phifer said, "I thought it was probably the last time we'd see trees like this and I wanted to reproduce the mystical feel of the Queen Charlottes and their totem poles."

He designed stepping stones through the water so people could walk on and around his sculpture. The wood was supposed to rot, taking on a timeless look and feel.

"The idea was that people could stop a minute on their way to making money and reflect. The poles would be seen against the skyline of mountains in the background."

Although he had envisioned a slight circulation of water and a filter to keep the water clean, his sculpture was not intended to represent a fountain. He acknowledges that the cost of such maintenance is often more than the cost of construction.

Budgets were fairly tight and the original concept was compromised.

"The sculpture was stained, which was never intended and they put signs up telling people not to sit on it," said Phifer.

MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. (now part of Weyerhaeuser, the international forest products company) donated the huge slabs of timber used to create the piece in return for the publicity.

The wood was brought down from the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Haggard says the timber used has really tight rings, or circles, that start at the centre of the columns. He estimates the lumber to have been more than 500 years old.

"If it was done now, it would never have been allowed to be brought down here. You couldn't get it (old-growth cedar) out of there now," he said.

Haggard would love to see the sculpture on the North Shore although he says it's "not too cool to take it apart. It would be good if it could be reflected (as Phifer had first envisioned).

"But quite frankly, parts of it are already around the North Shore," he said, explaining that two-foot-square remnants left over from the sculpture were used in municipal "jungle gyms" like the one in Canyon Heights.

"The government provided LIP (Local Initiative Program) grants to fix up playgrounds," he said, adding that none of the cedar cuttings from the sculpture went to waste.

Phifer, meanwhile, finds it ironic that he had to take down some of the original pieces because "they were too tall and would spoil the view corridor. "Now they want to build on the plaza. What happened to the view corridors?" he asked. But the artist still loves Vancouver and would be willing to donate his time to help reposition the sculpture.

"Everything we do is art," said Phifer.