

Puget Sound Folk Harp Society Winter Folk Harp Festival:

WHY ARE WE MOVING?

It's probably clear to all who have attended this Festival that we would need to move from Fort Worden sooner or later. One obvious reason is the facility itself: we use "225 Upstairs" because it is the Fort's best match for us, but it is unlikely that Washington State Parks will ever have the resources to upgrade or even thoroughly maintain the building. (This is not a criticism, just a statement of fact.)

Since the Festival moved to Fort Worden in January 2004, we've faced many of the same facilities issues every year. We cannot control the temperatures in any of the rooms; the plumbing and electricity have at least one malfunction during every Festival; and many of the sleeping rooms have had the same cracked windows, torn curtains, and flat mattresses since our first year. We cannot make our space secure if another group has rented the first floor, and of course there are the ever-formidable stairs (with their perpetual absence of caution tape and some missing handrails).

When we first moved to Fort Worden from Fort Flagler, the upgrade was so striking that many of us could ignore these issues. (Who could forget Flagler's swampy bathrooms or sleeping alcoves?) But as time has passed, "details" like physical accessibility, heat, and security have become more important.

The other obvious reason behind our move is the cost. In 2004, our first year at Fort Worden, Festival registration was \$125. Since then, Fort Worden price increases have added \$90/person to the fee (two examples: linen service is now mandatory, and we must buy meals for 50 if we want cafeteria service, even though there are never 50 of us). The current State budget has cut Parks funding by 70%, so Fort Worden fees will likely increase dramatically; our Festival registration prices would have to follow suit.

Though external costs keep rising, PSFHS Board members have found many ways to cut administrative expenses, and our Festival directorship continues to be completely volunteer. Despite this, the 2011 Festival barely broke even; if two of last year's presenters hadn't generously donated back their honoraria to the Society, the 2011 Festival would have shown a loss. This is simply not sustainable.

Fortunately, after a multi-year search, we have found a venue which has excellent facilities and lower costs: Camp Brotherhood, about ten miles from Arlington, on 200 acres of forest and farmland. "Camp" is really a misnomer for our facilities, which include motel-style (double occupancy) rooms with private baths, a spacious dining hall with a beautiful view, a very large workshop/céilidh room which we can lock, flat entry everywhere (no stairs!), and thermostats in every room. Our meeting and dining rooms are in one building, and sleeping lodges are a very short walk away via paved road.

It's true that some of us will have a longer journey to get there, but most will have a shorter trip (it's about 75 minutes' drive from downtown Seattle). The food will be simpler, but the quality is good; those with dietary restrictions will be happy to know that there are small refrigerators and microwaves in the lodge lounge areas, and that the cook is always present during meals to answer questions.

It's too early to say exactly what 2013 Festival registration will be, but odds are good it'll be back under \$200. Save money *and* get heat, private bathrooms, and no stairs – what's not to like??

We've created a lot of wonderful memories at Fort Worden, just as we did at Fort Flagler before that. The PSFHS Board of Directors voted unanimously to move this Festival to Camp Brotherhood, and we believe that wonderful memories await us there too. Come be part of the adventure in January 2013!