

President's Message

CONVENTION: How are sites selected?

Over the past months there has been some discussion about the choice of UFDC convention sites. We would like to share the process of site selection so all members will understand how these decisions are made. For over sixty years, UFDC has produced a beautiful convention enjoyed annually by over 10 percent of the membership. The planning of this event takes hours of staff and volunteer time. This is truly a labor of love.

UFDC has a convention each year because our Bylaws mandate the organization hold an Annual Meeting of the members. Over the years convention has grown to surround our annual meeting with numerous opportunities for doll study. Convention brings together doll researchers, program presenters, collectors, and workshop instructors united by the common goal of sharing their knowledge and dolls through exhibits, lectures and classes making convention a wonderful and exciting week for all in attendance.

According to our Bylaws the task of selecting convention venues shall be determined by the Executive Committee. This is why convention locations are not discussed nor voted upon at the Annual Meeting. The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to hear reports, elect officers and directors, and attend to other business brought forward by the Board of Directors. Further, Delegates may introduce business as long as the procedure/topic isn't in conflict with the Bylaws.

Members may express their preferences to the Executive Committee and Regional Directors. Members may also participate in discussion at the Open Forums at Convention and at Regional Conferences or ask their club delegates do so. All opinions are factored into the decision-making process. Decisions regarding the location of conventions are based solely upon the needs of our members and our organization, nothing else. UFDC is a business and in the end this is a business decision. Once a contract is signed by the UFDC President at the recommendation of the Executive Committee, legally it cannot be broken without serious financial penalties to UFDC.

The question still remains, HOW ARE CONVENTION SITES SELECTED? I have asked Linda Edward, President-elect who has had considerable experience in both selecting convention sites and planning and executing conventions to describe this process. She submits the following:

Convention sites rotate throughout the USA varying from east, central, west, north and south year by year to enable more members to attend convention. Once a target region is determined the process of choosing a host hotel begins. UFDC's years of convention experience have resulted in the development of a highly refined set of logistical requirement specifications. These specifications cover all of the public and work spaces needed for convention such as sales room space, classroom space, meeting rooms, offices, storage rooms, program space, meal event spaces, exhibit spaces, etc.

Our specification outline is dispersed to hotels with meeting facilities in our target geographic region. Those that can accommodate our needs



and target dates send us prospectus on their properties. These are studied to confirm logistical requirements as well as to assess guest services.

This process generally leads to a limited number of properties that are possibilities for convention. These sites are then visited by UFDC officers, sometimes accompanied by our professional hotel negotiator, to further assess each property. The cost of this trip is shared by the hotels and visitors bureaus in the prospective region.

During this portion of the process we look not only at the meeting spaces but also consider many other checklist items including, but not limited to:

- Distance from airports, cost of travel/shuttle options
- Parking availability/cost
- On site storage for UFDC shipping containers
- Interesting places or historic sites nearby for our attendees to visit
- Cleanliness, safety and accessibility of the facility and surrounding area
- Number /style of handicap guest rooms
- Cost of guest rooms based on double, triple and quadruple occupancy
- Food cost for the catering department
- Dining options/cost within the facility and in proximity to the facility
- Location of nearest hospital/emergency
- Loading dock and freight elevator location/ accessibility
- Well lighted, wide guest corridors free of trip hazards
- Walking distance between guest rooms and meeting spaces
- Number and location of guest elevators
- Shipping and receiving services for meetings and guests
- Options for contracted decorator services and for contracted audio-visual equipment providers
- Support from the local visitors bureau
- Quality of internal information system and signage
- Commitment of facility managers and staff to the needs of our convention and our members, including issues related to baggage services, check-in facilitators, wait staff in restaurants, housekeeping services, and a willingness to provide specialized programming and services for our convention and members.

Once these items are checked the highest rated facility is chosen based on its ability to serve. Then our professional negotiator goes to work to get UFDC the best contract possible. Once a final agreement has been reached a contract is signed and the next 2 to 3 years are spent working on the million and one details needed to bring the members of UFDC an outstanding convention filled with opportunities for business meetings, education, sharing, fun and friendship.

In Unity,

Ada Diedrich

UFDC President

Linda Edward

UFDC President-elect