

Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

Tim Hartman

I love Pittsburgh. I was born two blocks away from here at Allegheny General Hospital. I'm really interested in Pittsburgh history. I'm really interested in teaching kids about kindness, generosity, self-sacrifice—those kinds of things. I'm really interested in making sure that kids sort of know about that—know that that's sort of a viable way to live.

So, when I sort of struck out on my own and you guys were doing shows that dealt with some of the things that I was interested in, I was just blown away—it sort of met all my needs as far as what I was interested in being a part of. The whole process was something I really enjoyed and I loved this place.

I really didn't know the Children's Museum before that because I'd been away at college when the whole thing got started. So, coming into that building for the first time, I was, "Oh my gosh." There was so much history there. There were all the architectural things that you guys had been given over the years.

The big statue of Joe Magarac from the old Manchester Bridge. That story I'd been telling since '83 or so, Joe Magarac, is about an enormous man. He's like Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyan. He's a tall tale. He's a tall tale of Pittsburgh. The whole story comes out of the Hungarian folks. He's a big man who is made of steel; he was created in the middle of an iron ore-bearing mountain; he's a big, scary kind of silly man; big and strong; and he can bend steel in his bare hands; and he drinks [laugh], he drinks molten steel like it's soup. You know, silly things like that—you know, wonderful, silly stories.

But then he gets to the place where he's such a hard worker, and makes so much steel, that he puts all of his friends out of work because they can't sell it all, he's made so much. He realizes if he stays around that he will continue to put his friends out of work and so, for the community, he's a man who is made of steel, so he melts himself down so they can create a new steel mill out of his body and continue on working in Pittsburgh. And that sort of met all my criteria: it's a wonderful story of self-sacrifice, may I say, a Christ figure; and he comes from the steel industry.

So, it let me tell kids about what used to be here, which—starting in '88, maybe, for you guys—as I was telling that story, children had no idea about the steel industry, not a clue, not a clue. And, so, it's a wonderful thing to allow kids to see why Pittsburgh looks the way it does, where all these wonderful places that they go to every year, you know, every kid goes to the Carnegie Museum to see the dinosaurs. Why do we have that? Well, we have that because of, you know, Andrew Carnegie, and him being a generous benefactor to this area because of the steel industry allowed us to have these wonderful places.

I just want people to realize the great stuff that we have here because of what happened many, many, many years ago. The kids are so hungry for somebody talking to them that takes them somewhere and allows them to use their imagination because I think, in our culture, everything is

handed to the children now because there's so much computer screen-looking, there's so much video games where they don't have to input anything except making a little character move around and do whatever it needs to do. So, an experience of a guy coming in who they just sit and their heads expand because they're allowed to do the work of creating the world you're talking about. Kids are very receptive for that.