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Letters Hyatt Hotel; Series I; File 159

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February 1, 1988

Honorable David A. Collins
Master District Council Member
Room 1414 City Hall
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Dave:

Enclosed please find a letter from the New York State Nurses Association to David Beecham, General Manager, Hyatt Regency of Buffalo. I would appreciate it if you would put this on the agenda for your next Convention and Tourist meeting. There must be some way that we can resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

GEORGE K. ARTHUR
PRESIDENT
BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL

cc: Juanita Hunter
Enclosure
I am extremely disappointed that I have been unable to convince you that a gesture of some form of compensation would not only be fair, but would be a sound business practice.

Sincerely yours,

Martha L. Orr
Executive Director

cc: Juanita K. Hunter, President NYSNA
Darryl Hartley-Leonard, President, Hyatt Hotels Corp.
Paul Astleford, Vice-President - Sales, Hyatt Regency
James Griffin, Mayor, City of Buffalo
George K. Arthur, President, Buffalo Common Council
Richard Slisz, Erie County Legislature
William P. Hart, President, Hart Hotels
Roger Schutt, Buffalo Chamber of Commerce
No room at Buffalo inns for nursing delegates

By MARY PATTERSON

There was no room at the inns for some participants of the recent New York State Nurses Association convention held at Buffalo last month. The nurses group reported that many of its members arrived at area hotels expecting rooms but had to find the hotels in which they had made reservations overbooked.

"The hotels overbooked," said Anne Schock, director of conventions and public relations for the nurses group. "That created a lot of I'll will. There was some talk about passing a resolution about never coming to Buffalo again."

The convention, held Oct. 20-21, attracted 1,400 delegates to the city.

Particularly troubling, Schock said, was that convention officials arrived at 10:30 p.m. on the first night of the conferences to find that there were no rooms reserved for them at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo, though the hotel had a master list of the officials and had been informed they would be getting in later than the usual 5 p.m. check-in deadline.

Members of that group raised a fuss, which resulted in the hotel finding rooms for them, she said. The general manager of the Hyatt Regency Buffalo, David Rechman, refused to comment.

"The managers say it is policy not to talk about groups that have been here or are going to be here," said a Hyatt spokesman. This confirmed, however, that the hotel "walked" five people one night and 33 the next day. In the hotel industry, walking means a hotel finds rooms for people at other rates, pays for the rooms, and provides transportation to and from the homeowner.

The actual number of rooms booked at the hotel was 87, said convention organizer Karen Means, director of organizational services for the state nurses association.

Many more were initially desired rooms for which they had guaranteed reservations, she said, but none who complained eventually were given rooms. Some convention attendees also were bumped from rooms at the Hyatt, she said.

The Buffalo Hilton also ran short of rooms for nurses attending the convention.

"There were three rooms that we had to relocate one night," Hilton general manager Rudi Rainer said. "That doesn't happen often, and we pay for those people's accommodations."

That number also was low, Means said. She said the plans to send a correspondent to attend and determine the extent of the problems encountered at Buffalo hotels.

The hotel was short on rooms because some previously reserved guests had not checked out, Rainer said. Under state law, it is illegal to evict a hotel guest who chooses to extend his stay.

Reports that another downtown hotel provided only 10 of 30 promised rooms could not be confirmed.

"Some of those rooms were booked in June and July," said a local member of the nurses' group. "It was a farce."

The newly elected president of the state association, Jeannette Huster, is a clinical nurse specialist at the State University of Buffalo. After the convention, she and two other members of the state nurses' group met with representatives of the Greater Buffalo Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Division to discuss the problem.

The meeting with William Hart, vice chairman of convention and tourism, and Roger Schott, vice president of the division, produced a promise to meet with representatives of the hotels.

"We will be meeting with the individual

And on playing the host

This kind of thing happens all the time. You arrive at your destination at midnight. Even though you called ahead to say you'll be late, the hotel gave away your room or has no record that you ever even reserved one.

But when it happened in Buffalo recently to more than a handful of delegates at the convention of the New York State Nurses Association, what resulted was more than a little inconvenience and irritation. The nurses considered voting never to hold their convention again in Buffalo. In the end, they didn't take that vote. They didn't need to. The convention business is a competitive one, and next time they look for a location to meet, they'll already have a reason not to do it here.

We are not surprised that a number of delegates arrived to find that their reservations had been found up. There just aren't very many hotel rooms in downtown Buffalo when it comes to a weekend of a home football game, a couple hockey games and a 1,400-delegate convention.

From everything we've heard, the hotels involved handled the problem as gracefully and graciously as possible. But what distresses us is that these problems arise at a time when Buffalo is trying to increase the size and number of conventions it draws. That won't happen if the city gets a reputation for being unable to host what, in the business, are considered fairly moderate-sized meetings.

Perhaps we just aren't ready yet to play host to 1,400 or more people. If not, we ought to be able to come up fast. Larger conventions are coming soon.

And if we're not ready when those conventions arrive, that will be worse than never having the conventions at all. Because in this business, the only thing worse than no reputation is a bad reputation.
Nurse Image Needs a Boost

The public has recently been given much information about AIDS and health care providers. Unfortunately, some reports have been as misleading and false as were previously reported.

Of particular concern to organized nursing is the impression that nursing schools statewide are experiencing enrollment decline due largely to fear of AIDS. There is another side to this issue which the public should be aware of.

While enrollment in all programs of nursing education nationally and at the state level have declined approximately 8 percent over the last four years, nurse leaders and others cite the following reasons for this decline: (1) the envolving role of women in our society; (2) the decline of the young adult population; (3) the availability and accessibility of other careers for women, such as medicine, law or dentistry; (4) the decline of federal support for nursing education and (5) the current public image of nursing.

To state, as some have reportedly done in your newspaper, that AIDS is the singular cause of the enrollment problem in nursing education is misleading, and, in many cases, could be harmful to the public and to the nursing profession.

While fear of AIDS may in the future become an additional factor in this complex, interrelated situation, that situation has not been documented, nor is the situation a widely accepted and substantiated factor like those previously identified.

Additionally, if it were true that fear of AIDS has caused a drop in nursing school enrollments, then the corresponding rise of women in medical schools would not be occurring.

Nursing care is an important component of the health care services, which are provided to clients in multiple settings. The care of AIDS patients represents one of the major challenges today that confront nurses who provide those services. AIDS is one example of the challenge to provide quality nursing care to patients with communicable diseases.

The public, nurses and potential nursing students need timely, accurate and objective information to assist them in related professional and personal decision-making related to the AIDS crisis. Clearly, the media has an important role to play in this process.

A concern about recruitment and retention in schools of nursing prompted the New York State Nurses Association to hold a two-day workshop in May of this year. The outgrowth of that conference was development of a comprehensive plan designed to aggressively address recruitment and retention of nurses. Nurses, consumers and other health professionals have been invited to participate in the implementation of this action plan.

A major component of this recruitment effort will be the use of the media to positively portray the profession of nursing to prospective students as a career option with a lifetime of opportunity.

We invite your participation and assistance in this endeavor.

JUANITA K. HUNTER
President
New York State Nurses Association
Dear Mr. Freedom

As you are aware, the New York State Nurses' Convention was held in Buffalo, New York, Oct 23-25, 1984 and many of our members were dissatisfied with the service they received at the Hyatt Regency in Buffalo. Subsequently, numerous correspondences have been sent to you.
Dear Mr. Hartley-Leonard:

I have reviewed the enclosed correspondence related to the recent convention of the New York State Nurses Association and wish to inform you that neither I nor the Board of Directors is satisfied with the lack of resolution of our complaints.

The annual convention of our Association is a major source of revenue. If our members and guests are dissatisfied with a particular convention, our experience has been that the subsequent year's convention registration reflects that dissatisfaction. At this time, I am greatly concerned that the Association may indeed experience reduced attendance at our 1988 convention because of the members' extreme dissatisfaction with the Buffalo Hyatt's treatment of them.

I would also like to call to your attention the fact that the Association's conventions for 1989, 1990, and 1991 are tentatively scheduled for the Hyatt Hotel in Albany, New York. Given the recent experience with the Hyatt, it is not unlikely that the Board of Directors will ask for a review of those plans.

Finally, you should also know that the Hyatt Hotel in Kansas City is the beneficiary of a major corporate account with the American Nurses Association, of which NYSNA is a constituent member.

I realize that it is not possible to correct a situation which is past. However, I suggest that Hyatt Corporation consider some form of compensation to the Association and/or the many members who were so inconvenienced. I would be pleased to discuss this request with a representative of the Hyatt Corporation or the Hyatt Regency in Buffalo as you suggest.

I look forward to a prompt response to this request. It will be necessary for me to report the outcomes of this correspondence to the Board of Directors at its meeting on January 21, 1988. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Darryl Hartley-Leonard
President
Hyatt Hotels Corporation
5616 North Western
Chicago, Illinois 60659

cc: David Beechum
    General Manager
    Hyatt Regency Buffalo

    Paul Astleford
    Vice President - Sales
    Hyatt Regency

    Juanita K. Hunter
    President, NYSNA
November 9, 1987

Darryl Hartley-Leonard
President
Hyatt Hotels Corporation
5618 North Western
Chicago, Illinois 60656

Dear Mr. Hartley-Leonard:

Our Association recently held its annual meeting at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. My job was that of organizer.

In all my experience I have never seen a hotel treat convention attendees with such extreme disregard. Although I have yet to gather all the evidence against the Hyatt Regency Buffalo, I can firmly state that no fewer than 47 people were relocated the first night. Many others were inconvenienced for hours before receiving a room. It's probably easy for you to imagine the ill will and chaos which prevailed.

I am curious to know the corporate standards the Hyatt places on its franchisees. Please forward this information at your earliest convenience.

It's truly unfortunate that the Hyatt Regency Buffalo seriously damaged your otherwise respectable corporate image.

Sincerely,

Karen Maune
Director
Organization Services

cc: David Beecham,
    General Manager
    Hyatt Regency Buffalo

November 23, 1987

Ms. Karen Maune
Director
Organization Services
New York State Nurses Assoc.
2113 Western Avenue
Guilderland, N.Y. 12084

Dear Ms. Maune:

Thank you for your letter regarding your reservation at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo.

I was concerned to learn of the difficulties you encountered with your reservations. While the staff at the hotel does everything they possibly can to avoid overbooking situations, occasionally incidents such as the one you experienced occur. Please accept our sincere apologies for any inconvenience you suffered.

I am forwarding your correspondence to Mr. David Beecham, General Manager of the property, to ensure he is in receipt of your letter and has had the opportunity to review your concerns and respond to you personally.

Thank you for taking the time to inform me of this matter. I only hope this incident will not prevent you from joining us in the future.

Sincerely,

Darryl Hartley-Leonard
President

cc: Mr. David Beecham, General Manager
    Hyatt Regency Buffalo
November 12, 1987

Ms. Karen Maune
New York State Nurses Assn.
2113 Western Avenue
Albany, New York 12203

Dear Ms. Maune:

Thank you for selecting Hyatt Hotels and Resorts for your 1987 Annual Convention this past month. I was sorry to learn from Mr. Joe Donahue, Sales Manager at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo, however, that you felt the success of your program was compromised by difficulties at our hotel.

Our objective at Hyatt is to contribute to the success of your function. I sincerely regret if we have disappointed you in this respect.

As a valued customer of Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, you will hopefully recognize that this occasion does not typify the high quality service and product that the name Hyatt has come to represent. Therefore, it is very important to me to get your feedback. This will enable us to pinpoint areas of concern so as to avoid problems like this in the future.

Ms. Maune, thank you, in advance, for your evaluation. We do appreciate your business, and look forward to regaining your confidence.

Sincerely,

Paul Actleford
Vice President - Sales

PA:bb

Enclosure
Karen Maune
Director
Organization Services
New York State Nurses Association
The Center for Nursing
2113 Western Avenue
Guilderland, New York, 12084

Dear Karen:

This responds to your November 4 letter concerning the problems encountered at the Hyatt Regency Hotel during your Association's Convention.

We have researched the applicable law in New York and I regret to inform you that, in this State, the courts do not recognize any action to collect damages against an "innkeeper" for the types of problems encountered by Association members at the Hyatt. To collect anything, your Association would have to establish that the Hyatt's actions were wanton, malicious or precipitated by wrongful motives.

For your information, I enclose copies of (1) a portion of a Syracuse Law Review article concerning "Hotel Overbooking" and (2) a court decision in Pollock v. Holsa Corp. concerning damages against an "innkeeper".

I do suggest, however, that your Association, either you or Martha Orr, communicate directly with the chief executive officer of the Hyatt Hotel chain to alert him or her to what happened at the Convention. It very well may be that you will receive some type of satisfaction through that route.

Please call me if you have a question about any of this.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Silber

enclosures: 2
November 12, 1987

Roger Schutt
Greater Buffalo Chamber of Commerce
107 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202-2801

Dear Roger:

Several weeks have passed since our "Buffalo Experience" and I'm now somewhat ready to write the last chapter of Convention 1987.

Below is a list of vendors used in conjunction with our meeting. I've categorized them as "acceptable" or "unacceptable". A brief description accompanies each vendor in the "unacceptable" category.

Please know that "acceptable" means much more than the word implies - providers in that category were exemplary. Kathleen Hartman, Tony Kozek (Buffalo Chamber), Mei Florizzare, Lynn Evans, Larry Gibbs, Mario Muscarrelli, Joe Puzzella (Convention Center), Chris Back (Hyatts, Audio Visual Manager), Michael (in charge of the Foundation Luncheon and Awards Banquet), and representatives from Silent Partners and Balloons-Over-Buffalo were professional, reliable, accessible and a pleasure to do business with. Their efforts to produce a quality convention matched my own expectations.

Acceptable
1. Buffalo Convention Center
2. Silent Partners (Tour Company)
3. Balloons-Over-Buffalo (Awards Banquet Decorations)

Unacceptable
1. Hyatt Regency Buffalo

Apparent lack of organization and central contact. Unreturned phone calls from Joe Donahue and Walter Mezzanti leading to confused messages and late receipt of spec sheets.

Disregard of Master Hotel List. Five out of 15 rooms on VIP list blocked for Regency Club Level bumped two to three times before settling on Club Level. Substantial.

Beyond industry standards, overbooking resulting in no less than 47 people being relocated on October 22.

Reports of no record thereby no credit on final bill although room guarantees had been confirmed, late processing of confirmation (began on October 2, 1987). 3 credit cards lost, breach of agreement for Awards Banquet, confusion in billing-some VIPs allowed to charge for incidentals, others not, errors on bills. Moved the October 25 Board of Directors meeting without advanced notice.

Lenox Hotel

Released room block in early August without consulting me thereby creating a potential room shortage (Reservation cut off was September 27). Tony Kozek on the Chamber creatively and quickly established alternative arrangements.

Mark Custom Recordings

Audiotape company for continuing education programs. Reduced the schedule for the audiotape sales desk but still did not send a representative during agreed upon hours. Would not release one copy of tapes until convention attendee labels were sent.

Aerobic Instructor

25 minutes late first day of class. Reported to have been in automobile accident the second day. A Convention attendee instructed both classes.

The Floristry

Sent a bouquet of flowers with carnations when specifically instructed on the bill not to include carnations.

Ad Art

Used for sign needs. Delivered rather overpriced, unsophisticated signs a day late.

Peacock Productions


The above touches on some of the frustrations. I believe most of the problems can be corrected but I leave the methodology up to you and yours. Good luck Roger.

Sincerely,

Karen Maune
Director
Organization Services
Dear Jerold,

Thank you for your letter of November 2 concerning your recent visit to the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. Please accept my apologies for the difficulties you described as experiencing during your stay.

I am asking Mr. David Beecham, General Manager of the property, to look into these matters and respond to you directly. You will be hearing from him shortly.

It is unbecoming to our reputation that your stay was not perfect. I am sorry if you feel you were inconvenienced in any way. We look forward to regaining your confidence in Hyatt Hotels and the opportunity to serve you again.

Sincerely,

DH-LL
Darryl Hartley-Leonard
President

cc: Mr. David Beecham, General Manager
Hyatt Regency Buffalo
December 15, 1987

Mr. Jerold S. Cohen, R.N.
Director of Patient Services
BROOKHAVEN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
MEDICAL CENTER
101 Hospital Road
East Patchogue, NY 11772

Dear Mr. Cohen:

I am in receipt of your letter to our President and his response to you concerning your recent stay with us while attending the New York State Nurses Association Convention.

Please accept my sincerest apologies for our many shortcomings. I know we fell short of your expectations and have taken steps to correct the problems you experienced.

I want to thank you for taking your time to write and bring these specific areas of concern to our attention. I have held a meeting with the managers of all the areas you mentioned, as well as others, to recap in detail what went wrong and why so that we may prevent this type of occurrence in the future.

Once again, please accept my sincerest apologies. I hope this entire matter has not left you with an irreversible impression of the Hyatt Regency Buffalo or Hyatt Hotels and that we will have the opportunity of serving you again in the future. I would like to ask that on your next visit to the Buffalo area you call my office so I may personally handle your reservation needs.

Sincerely,

David Beecham
General Manager

DB/j