

THE MEGAPHONE

An Organ of the Rascals, Rogues, and Rascalions

April Fool's Day, 1995

Number 3

Churchyard Tryst Murder Solved!

Brian Holly took the Rascal's Challenge to bring back a story from March 4, 1935 and made his presentation to the regular quarterly meeting of the RR&R on March 4, 1995 — sixty years subsequent to the events of his story.

The story Mr. Holly brought back was about the death of Viola Dennis, of Donora, Pennsylvania at the hands of her boyfriend, William Letherman of Charleroi, Pennsylvania.

On March 4, 1935, the trial of William Letherman opened in the Westmoreland County Courthouse in Greensburg. Mr. Letherman was charged with second degree murder of Viola Dennis, a University of Pittsburgh graduate, on August 18, 1934. At the time of the homicide, the victim was 23 years old and the defendant 25 years old.

Initially, Viola's death was taken to be accidental and a coroner's inquest was not undertaken. However, persistent pressure from the victim's father and Donora city council president, W.W. Dennis, led to an investigation which culminated in charges being brought against Mr. Letherman.

Miss Dennis received her

injuries at Fells Church, an isolated country church and reputed Lovers' Lane, where she and Mr. Letherman had parked shortly before midnight on August 17, 1934. By this time in the evening, they each had had four shots of whiskey and three large beers. According to Mr. Letherman, the couple quarreled because he insisted that she stop drinking. He claims that after a struggle in the parked car, Miss Dennis got out of the car and fell down an embankment to Fells Church Road, where she struck her head on the

Speed Law Needed



macadam surface. Upon finding her unconscious on the road, Mr. Letherman took her to the home of Dr. Ley in Donora — the very doctor who delivered Miss Dennis 23 years earlier. When the extent of her injuries was ascertained, she was taken to the Donora

Hospital, where she died at 6:30 in the morning of August 18, 1934.

The state argued that Mr. Letherman inflicted the injuries which led to Miss Dennis's death, perhaps with the whiskey bottle they had in the car with them. Crucial to the decision of the jury was the fact that the skin above the skull fracture was not lacerated, as it would have been had the injury been produced by a fall to the rough surface of Fells Church Road.

On March 10, 1935 — a short six days after his trial began — William Letherman was convicted of voluntary manslaughter. The case was immediately appealed and the conviction was upheld on November 25, 1935. In his opinion, Justice Maxey wrote: "The defendant received a fair trial. From the evidence in this case, he is fortunate that he was not convicted of a higher crime than that of voluntary manslaughter." Mr. Letherman was sentenced to the Allegheny County Workhouse for not less than two and one-half years nor more than five years.

The eventual whereabouts and subsequent history of Mr. Letherman have not yet been discovered by the Rascals, but further reports will be forthcoming. We must get our man!

The RR&R's First Courageous Cuisine Meeting

Announcements for the first Courageous Cuisine were recently mailed. The organizer of this officially sanctioned Rascal event is **Greg Scheer**, the currently reigning Rascal o' the Year. Courageous Cuisine is a gastronomic Rascal's Challenge and consists of a visit to some ominously dilapidated eating establishment. **Maestro Scheer** says "Courageous Cuisine is a chance to go to all the greasy dives you see on the road but that your wife would never let you enter." While **Maestro Scheer** proposed and organized this first event, he is willing to concede the honor to any other Rascal willing to take up the task.

Courageous Cuisine is an opportunity for an informal Rascal meeting, without the huge amount of work which goes into organizing regular meetings of the RR&R and is a welcome addition to the regular schedule of Rascal events.

Regarding the difficult process of selecting a Courageous Cuisine restaurant, **Maestro Scheer** proposed that "any place we visit must have a condom machine in the bathroom. You can tell a lot about the place by whether or not it has a condom machine in the bathroom."

The first Courageous

Cuisine will also be the occasion of the first meeting of the ad hoc membership committee.

We've Heard That . . .

The Burgettstown video documentary, which had its premier screening at the RR&R's Pauline Pig Fest, will soon be finished and aired on PCTV. Co-producers of the video, **Greg Scheer** and **Dan Morrison**, are looking forward to the time when Burgettstown is safely sealed in the past. There have been calls, however, for **Maestro Scheer** to score an opera on a Burgettstown theme. **Porkliacci** has been suggested as a working title. After seven years of blissful marriage, **Bill Baierl** and his wife, Lisa, have conceived their first child. This comes as a relief as there was some concern regarding the couple's fertility. As it turns out, they are both fertile, but their rhythm and timing stink. As part of their fertility counseling, the happy couple were obliged to make post-coital visits to the doctor, to check how the sperm were swimming. After coitus, they had 15 minutes to get to the doctor's office to have the sperm examined. Lisa reports that they simply left their pants around their ankles in the interest of time. She also reports that they missed a recent 9:00 AM appointment — seems Bill isn't one to perform on

demand, being a more old-fashioned lover. In all events, Bill did his job at 4:07 PM, and they rushed to the doctor just before the 4:15 closing time. A bit of the conjugal cocktail was swabbed from Lisa, who described the process as similar to a Pap Smear. The results were placed on a microscope slide for inspection. Bill's sperm swam well, and made him proud. "Not only did I see my sperm on a slide, but I saw my sperm in my wife's mucus on a slide. There's something spiritual in that," said the happy father-to-be. We have received reports that **Jeff Campbell** was recently arrested while attempting the first multi-person nude crossing of the 10th Street Bridge, via its superstructure, with four O.R. nurses in tow. When Greg Scheer, who made his bail, asked "Why did you do it?" Jeff is reported to have replied, "I was just trying to get home, for Pete's sake! Can I help it that those nurses decided to tag along? And the wind! My God, the wind at the top of that first pier was so strong we decided to take our clothes off, to avoid the danger of being blown into the Mon. Really, it was all very innocent — I'm a Presbyterian, you know." Sources in Maringá, Brazil report that **Ricardo Moliterno** got a straight A on his qualifying exams and will be doing his thesis defense in May. Those of you who

have seen **Jack Brice** sporting a new goatee should know that we received reports that this change in his facial adornment resulted from a bet he made with his brother-in-law, Rev. Peter Coffin of Lancaster, New Hampshire. While there is some disagreement as to the subject of the bet, two theories are presently being investigated. Neither theory has been denied by Jack, Rev. Coffin or Jack's sister, Mrs. Coffin. The first theory is that Jack was, once again, bragging about the dimensions of his male member and Rev. Coffin called his bluff. Speaking incoherently about the shaving of Jack's beard, Rev. Coffin said "It [Jack's beard] is, indeed, shorter than it used to be and it might have involved sharp implements. He was using an ax; he was splitting wood." When asked if Jack was intoxicated at the time of the bet, Rev. Coffin replied, "I'm not sure." The second theory regarding the cutting of Jack's beard is based upon reports from Mrs. Coffin said that this event was somehow connected with a trip to Boston to visit some women who live in a house which used to be a monastery. When asked if Jack had bet his beard that he could get lucky with at least one of these women, Mrs. Coffin said she could neither confirm nor deny such an allegation. She did,

however, confirm that none of the women from the Boston monastery are named Delilah. **David Dunn** is experiencing the joys of the "terrible twos." **Greg Bruns** has safely returned from his 10th annual Spring ski trip to Snowshoe, West Virginia. Estimating that he descended the slopes eighty times, Greg was joined in this five day adults-only ski fest by **Glenn Vernon**, Jeff Stehle, and Lou Mitchell. Oh yeah, their wives went, too. **Greg Scheer**, suffered serious humiliation in a recent bowling grudge match. Starting the night with an inflated ego, **Maestro Scheer** was quickly deflated by **Jack Brice** who showed him how it is done. **Jeff Sivek** reports that he is preparing to raise the roof of his house. Architects have begun drawing plans which will increase the useable floor space in Jeff's attic. Jeff's son, Jeremy has begun his baseball season with the Greenfield league. This comes after the Pittsburgh Pirates rejected his offer to play as a replacement. When asked about the Teamsters' decision to not deliver beer to Three Rivers Stadium for games played by replacement players, Jeff said "It's stupid." **Lee Wolfson** reports that his University of Pittsburgh

Inter-mural Basketball League team, the Western Psych[otics], were undefeated in regular season play. During a recent game, an amazed undergraduate was heard to say "I can't believe we are getting blown out by a bunch of old men." While he is not playing basketball, Lee is studying for the licensing exam he will be taking in the fall. **Harry Plantinga**, whose birthday is April 19, has undertaken another oversized Internet project. This time Harry put online the entire Bible, in four translations, with commentaries. The nifty feature of this cyber-Bible is that netsurfers can use it and leave their own commentary and links behind for the edification of others. However, it seems that a student of the Song of Solomon put a link from Harry's Bible to a porn flick. Harry clipped this link, exposing himself to charges of 'net censorship. **Karl and Diana Williams** will celebrate their 23rd wedding anniversary on April Fool's Day. Having reached the point where they have been married longer than they were single, the Williams have decided the marriage will stick. **Sam Wood** was recently made an editor at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.



The drawback of this new position is that he is now nearly impossible to get in touch with as his schedule has become rather full. **Dan Morrison** recently gave a paper entitled "The Ich as Longing and God as its Proper Object" at the biennial meeting of the North American Fichte Society in Lexington, Kentucky. Just prior to the meeting, he acquired some objects that he has long pursued — four medals associated with the Kingdom of Araucania & Patagonia. He has also established the Araucanian Relief Fund which will aid philosophers who have overspent their budgets in pursuit of Araucanian medals. Contributions to the fund may be sent to 5100 Liberty Avenue, #3, Pittsburgh, PA 15224, payable to Dan Morrison. A copy of the first and only English translation of the 1862 Manifesto of Orelie-Antoine I, founder of the Kingdom of Araucania, will be sent to all contributors. A couple of **Greg Scheer's** choral pieces will be performed in Pittsburgh in the near future. On April 8,

at 4:00 PM in the Frick Fine Arts Center, the University of Pittsburgh Women's Choral Ensemble will premier Greg's "In Monte Oliviti." Greg reports that "it is,



Touting an important philosophical position

naturally, a work of art beyond comparison with anything, except, of course, with other things I've written." The Pitt Men's Glee Club will sing Greg's "I Cry Aloud to the Lord."

This piece was premiered some time ago by the Bellevatones. On April Fool's Day, Greg will be playing with the CMU orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington. **Dennis Looney** will be traveling to New York City to deliver a paper entitled "Ariosto's Erbolato: A Modern Critique of Philosophical Charlatanism" at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. Dennis, who is finishing his first year as the director of the Medieval and Renaissance Study Program at the University of Pittsburgh, has recently found himself in a joint venture with Sam Hazo of the International Poetry Forum. It seems that Dennis

wanted to bring Robert Pinsky, poet and creator of a new award-winning translation of Dante's *Inferno*, to Pittsburgh. Unable to adequately fund the visit, Dennis appealed to Sam, and Pinsky's visit is now a joint venture between the International Poetry Forum and the Medieval and Renaissance Program. Pinsky will lecture to Dennis's students and will read poetry at the Carnegie Library as part of the IPF's daytime poetry series. Dennis and Sam first met each other at the RR&R's Moses F. Gale Day. Having shared a cigar with Sam, no doubt, stood Dennis in good stead. **Peter Kaplan** was fired from PNC, where he was a credit cop. He is now the executive director of East Liberty Development Inc., a non-profit community organization. **Charlei George** followed in his wife's footsteps and traveled to New Orleans recently, to attend a conference of the American College of Cardiology. He didn't step foot on Bourbon Street, however, which his wife reports is lined with porn emporia. Charlei went to Macheul's restaurant and ate crocodile. He brought home a crawdad for his son and a crocodile for his daughter. **Brian Holly** is soon to teach a course in the Philosophy of Buddhism at the University of Pittsburgh. **Jeff Campbell** is about to turn 30. His friends were going to throw

a surprise birthday party for him, but then decided that it would be too depressing sitting around watching Jeff mope about his misspent youth. There will still be a party, but there will be no surprise — not that there would have been anyway. **David and Tammy Dunn** recently went to the City Theater with **Dan and Eva Morrison** to see Spunk. They were mildly amused.

New Members

Welcomed into membership at the March 4, 1995 business meeting, were **John McGeoy**, **Don Kellander**, and **Peter Kaplan**.

John McGeoy comes to us by the good agency of Dennis Looney. During the summer of 1994, John attended the University of Pittsburgh's Summer Program in Feltre, Italy, located in the foothills of the Dolomites, an hour north of Venice. Dennis has taught in this program for several years.

Born and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in what has subsequently become Stuyvesant Town, John spent his early career as an editor of a trade magazine for the television, radio and appliance retail industry.

An advertisement in *Printer's Ink* alerted him to an opening at Westinghouse. Looking to leave New York City, John was hired in Westinghouse's advertising and sales promotion department. This job took him to Baltimore,

Maryland, where he remained from 1952 to 1955. In 1955, he went to Meadville, Pennsylvania to work for Westinghouse's industrial heating division. Later he moved to the Westinghouse "mother plant" in East Pittsburgh. About 1957 John became involved with the Univac I at Westinghouse's Tele-computer center. He became a programmer and in the course of his career held every position possible within that group. Upon retiring in 1986, John did not want to see another computer. However, while in Dennis's program in Italy, John had to write several papers and made use of a Windows-based computer available in Feltre. Since then, John has invested in an Elite, made by Midwest Micro with 486 DX2 processor, operating at 66 megahertz, with 16 megabytes of RAM and a CD ROM drive.

For all of his involvement with computers, John reports that he prefers the arts. Studying Italian, making gold and silver jewelry, and repairing clocks are among his current interests. It should be noted, however, that John has that happy character which causes his interest to fade once mastery has been accomplished. Ever on to a new challenge — a Rascal, indeed.

Peter Kaplan was introduced to the Rascals by his co-worker, Greg Bruns.

He sings in the choir at Third Presbyterian and, more importantly, in the Rascal Quartet.

Don Kellander first visited the Rascals as a guest of Dan Morrison, when he gave his Moses F. Gale Day presentation. Dr. Kellander is a professor of French at Duquesne University and a card shark.



Ad Hoc Membership Committee

At the March 4, 1995 business meeting, it was decided that given the rate of expansion of RR&R membership, a committee needs to be formed to formalize and articulate the RR&R's policy regarding members and their guests. A motion was made and carried that an ad hoc membership committee be formed. **Bob Edmunds** volunteered to chair the new committee. Also on the committee are **Charlei George**, **Brian Holly** and **Dan Morrison**. Any Rascal may serve on or offer suggestions to this committee. Offers should be addressed to the chair.

West Virginia White Water Extravaganza II

Following last years hugely successful white water rafting trip on the Gauly River in West Virginia, the RR&R, under the expert leadership of Bill Baierl, will make a return trip on Saturday, September 23, 1995. The cost per rafter is \$128.71, inclusive of taxes and breakfast the morning of the trip. A minimum of fourteen people are needed to get this rate.

To avoid the insomnia of last year, arrangements will be made to camp at some distance from the Rivermen's Campground.

This year's trip will be longer than last year's, covering the upper and middle sections of the Gauley River, a distance of 14 miles.

If you wish to join this venture, you should contact Bill Baierl as soon as possible at 367-4693.

As the date of the trip is the autumnal equinox, please anticipate and be prepared for unusual events.

First Annual Mass Challenge

At the March 4, 1995 meeting of the RR&R, the first annual mass challenge was proposed.

Using an algorithm written by Harry Plantinga, each Rascal was assigned a unique point to which he was challenged to visit

before the next RR&R meeting. At that meeting, which will take place on June 3, 1995, each Rascal will be given five minutes in which to make a presentation regarding his challenge location.

The idea of a mass challenge was discussed at the very first meeting of the Rascals, Rogues, and RapsCALLIONS, in February 1989. At that meeting it was suggested that each person present at the table should visit a place chosen at random from a gazetteer and the group return three months hence to report on their respective trips. This idea became the foundation of the Rascal's Challenge. With the Mass Challenge, the original idea will be more fully realized.

The assignments for the first Mass Challenge are: Bill Baierl: 40° 5' 40" N, 81° 14' 38" W; Jack Brice: 40° 23' 22" N, 78° 34' 1" W; Greg Bruns: 39° 32' 19" N, 78° 36' 1" W; Jeff Campbell: 41° 28' 41" N, 80° 31' 14" W; David Dunn: 39° 14' 49" N, 81° 20' 7" W; Bob Edmunds: 41° 1' 47" N, 81° 8' 15" W; Charlei George: 40° 33' 51" N, 79° 20' 6" W; Brian Holly: 41° 17' 52" N, 78° 26' 3" W; Peter Kaplan: 39° 30' 39" N, 81° 27' 53" W; Don Kellander: 39° 35' 25" N, 79° 54' 4" W; Dennis Looney: 39° 49' 59" N, 81° 9' 11" W; John McGeoy: 41° 1' 53" N, 81° 8' 28" W; Dan Morrison: 40° 19' 2" N, 79° 26' 8" W; Harry

Plantinga: 39° 9' 24" N, 80° 37' 15" W; Greg Scheer: 41° 44' 53" N, 79° 13' 58" W; Jeff Sivek: 40° 39' 1" N, 80° 6' 15" W; Glenn Vernon: 41° 18' 42" N, 79° 15' 32" W; Karl Williams: 39° 10' 54" N, 78° 51' 4" W; Lee Wolfson: 41° 29' 44" N, 78° 34' 42" W.

Though no decision has yet been taken by the membership, the Secretary thinks it fitting to honor, in some small way, the man who offers the most entertaining and interesting presentation.

RR&R Changes Venue: or Rascals Stink Up Another Place.

After spending parts of two years at Tramps Grand Old Saloon, in downtown Pittsburgh, the Rascals, Rogues, and RapsCALLIONS have changed the venue of their regular quarterly meetings to Max's Allegheny Tavern, on Pittsburgh's Northside.

The March 4, 1995 meeting of the RR&R was the first in their new location, and while all missed the obliging staff and familiar surroundings of Tramps, Rascals seemed generally pleased by the new setting. We have yet to hear reports of how taken the staff of Max's were with the Rascal's however. We can say, however, that they did agree to accommodate us again on June 3rd.

Jon Landgraf: 1965 - 1995

On February 20, 1995, Jonathan X. Landgraf died. He was buried in the churchyard of Grace Episcopal Church, in Yorktown, Virginia on February 27, 1995. Rascals **Rob Viner** and **Dan Morrison** were able to attend the funeral service.

Jon is survived by his mother and father, Liz and Jerry Landgraf of Yorktown, Virginia, and by his two brothers, Mark Landgraf of St. Louis, Missouri, and David Landgraf of Chico Hills, California.

Jon was born in St. Louis, Missouri on November 13, 1965. He grew up, graduated from high school, and was a national merit finalist in Kirkwood, Missouri, a western suburb of St. Louis. Jon attended Washington University in St. Louis and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1986, having majored in research psychology and minored in art history.

Jon came to Pittsburgh in 1990 and remained here until 1994, when he moved to Yorktown, Virginia to live with his parent and to study biology at the graduate school of the College of William & Mary, in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Jon was a man with many interests. His first love was fungus, being a student, gatherer and eater of mushrooms. He was also an avid fossil hunter, beach

comber, and amateur archeologist who enjoyed unearthing fragments of Native American material culture and American Civil War artifacts. He enjoyed sailing on the Chesapeake Bay, watching its life and rhythm. Broadly educated, he was a life-long student of history, literature, music and the fine arts. He enjoyed keeping a garden, and eating its produce, even in the limited space available to him while living in Pittsburgh. He enjoyed camping, was a keen fisherman and an occasional hunter. And unlike most bachelors, Jon enjoyed children and was not in the least squeamish about their peculiar odors, drooling and crying.

Jon was a charter member of the Rascals, Rogues, and Rapsallions and was devoted to its ideals of community and fraternity. He would make the eight hour drive from Yorktown to Pittsburgh to attend quarterly meetings. He was a key advisor to the Secretary in the drafting of the charter and was instrumental in the process of formally organizing the Rascals, Rogues, and Rapsallions. He proposed the use of a modified compass rose in the Rascal flag — a proposal which came to fruition in the flag created by Jane "Betsy Ross" Wolfson and presented for the first time at the First Annual Rascals' Ball. That Ball, held on

February 3, 1995, was, in fact, the last Rascal event Jon attended. In an e-mail message received less than two weeks before his death, Jon wrote to the Secretary that the "First Annual Rascals' Ball will live immortal in my memory." Indeed, it did, and may Jon live forever in our memories.

To ensure the preservation of his memory and to memorialize his contributions to the Rascals, Rogues, and Rapsallions, a proposal has been made and is under discussion to create an annual RR&R award in honor of Jon Landgraf.

Jon's parents may be contacted at: Jerry & Liz Landgraf, P.O. Box 662, Yorktown, VA, 23690.

Rascal Needs

The RR&R needs three volunteers: 1) an Historian whose function would be to write the official history of all Rascal events, to be deposited with the Secretary and entered into our journal of record, the Megaphone; 2) a Photographer to record Rascal events. We have a haphazard collection of snapshots of various events, but some have gone unrecorded; 3) a Press Secretary to handle press and public relations.

Anyone with, experience expertise or desire to work in these areas, please contact the Secretary.

The RR&R depends upon the volunteer labor of its members. Make sure that this load is not unevenly distributed.

~ Parting Shots ~

A Pinch of Dissention

Widely diverse ingredients
Are necessary for fine soup.
While disparate at inception,
How gloriously they recoup.

Too often things overly nice
Resist welcoming a new spice.
Though a worried carrot may shout,
It cannot keep cumin out.

When tasting the final product,
The palate is certainly pleased,
That short-sighted exclusionists
Were for once, at last, not appeased.

~ Bill Baierl

One night on the road, Babe Ruth smuggled a woman into the room; his teammate, Ernie Shore, tried to sleep, but the moans, groans, and squeaking springs were impossible to ignore. Finally, with the sun nearly up, Shore dozed off. When he awoke, he recalls that Ruth was sleeping peacefully and the woman was gone. Shore noted four or five cigar butts next to the bed. When he inquired later, the Babe smiled, saying, "oh, that! I like a cigar every time I'm finished."

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