

The Tweet Sheet



The occasional newsletter of The Notorious Canary-Trainers of Madison, Wisconsin
A Scion of the Baker Street Irregulars • communities.madison.com/canary

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SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: CELEBRATING OUR 40th!



THE NOTORIOUS CANARY-TRAINERS HAVE MUCH TO CELEBRATE in 2009, particularly the group's 40th anniversary celebration Sunday, April 19, on the eve of our founding date.

It's also the group's regular monthly meeting date, when members and visitors will gather to discuss the adventure of "The Blanched Soldier," our case study of the month.

That will be followed a day later by a one-hour anniversary program at 7 p.m. Monday on Madison's WORT 89.9FM. The broadcast, conceived and produced by Richard MacDonald (Inspector MacDonald) will feature several members of the group talking about all things Sherlockian. Scheduled to participate with Richard are Tom Drucker (Windigate, proprietor of the Alpha Inn), Jim Briggs, Peter Priegel (Birdy Edwards/John Douglas) and Mike McCoy (Billy the page).

The broadcast will be one of several likely events celebrating our anniversary over the next year. We're talking about a picnic in conjunction with our September meeting and a combination Sherlock Holmes birthday dinner and viewing of a new major Hollywood film about Sherlock Holmes (starring Robert Downey Jr.) being released Dec. 25.

We also will be scheduling a meeting with Susan Flaherty, a founding member of the group now living in Milwaukee, to talk about the group's early years. More details about these and any other planned events will be announced.

We'll also be celebrating next month the 150th anniversary of the May 22 birth of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the Baker Street Irregulars, the preeminent Sherlockian group in the United States.



RECALLING OUR HISTORY: The Notorious Canary-Trainers scion was founded by Sherlock Holmes' enthusiasts in the Madison area, with its first meeting held April 20, 1969. The group began its existence, however, under another name, as the Amateur Mendicant Society of Madison -- a name it kept for several years.

The Amateur Mendicant Society was an organization investigated by Holmes in 1887 which "held a luxurious club in the lower vault of a furniture warehouse," according to the account in "The Five Orange Pips" case study. The first issue in 1971 of the AMS newsletter, *Journal of the Amateur Mendicant Society*, contained this account of the founding of the group:

"The Holmes addicts of Madison...wished to form a group of devotees, led by Mr. Ira Fistell, host of Radio Station WKOW's 'Nightline' program, who became our first president and has since moved on to Milwaukee."

Fistell also was the first recipient of the group's first award, the Mycroft trophy (a form of recognition no longer presented). Fistell later left Milwaukee for Los Angeles, where he continued to work in radio hosting talk programs as late as 2006. The newsletter has been renamed the *Tweet Sheet* and now is published six-eight times a year.

According to Rita Wlodarczyk, one of the founding members who died in 2007, the organization's establishment was prompted by Fstell's asking callers trivia questions about Holmes on his "Nightline" radio program.

Because of the response that program generated from callers, there appeared to be enough interest in the Canon to justify an organizational meeting. According to the first newsletter, "There were approximately fifteen charter members, of whom five are still with us, including the present president (Miss Joanna Overn) and vice president (Mrs. Donna Kopecky)."

The group eventually submitted a request to the Baker Street Irregulars, the leading American Sherlock Holmes organization, for formal recognition. But as the Madison group soon learned, the Amateur Mendicant Society was a name used by a group in Detroit. Since BSI discourages duplicate names for organizations it recognizes, it proposed in 1975 the name the group adopted and uses today.

An organization recognized by BSI is called a Scion, although membership of individuals in BSI remains by invitation only. No current members of the Notorious Canary-Trainers are members of BSI.

The group first held its meetings in downtown Madison at the Community Center. Later meetings moved to the Wisconsin Union (Room 221, of course), to members' homes for parties and picnics, an antique shop, and eventually the Canterbury Booksellers and Coffeehouse at 315 W. Gorham.

Between July 1996 and August 2008, the group usually met at Barnes & Noble Booksellers/West Towne. As of September 2008, we began meeting at Booked for Murder on University Ave., a location we earlier had used for several years each November and December when meeting space at Barnes & Noble was not available due to holiday displays. (We had been one of the first groups to begin meeting at the Barnes & Noble location when the store first opened.) Booked for Murder was an appropriate location for us in part because the bookstore had been owned and operated in its first years by our own Rita Wlodarczyk.

In spring 2006, the group adopted the practice of formalizing the use of Canonical names by those members wishing one. So far, a total of 16 such names have been claimed.

The group's newsletter, now called the "Tweet Sheet," once was named "Notes from a Notorious Card Club" as a joint publication of the Notorious Canary-Trainers and a similar group in Milwaukee called the Bagatelle Card Club. The editor of these publications and a member of both groups was Susan Flaherty, the only remaining original member of the Madison group. The current editor of the Tweet Sheet is Michael H. McCoy (Billy the page).

We now also have a worldwide presence with two organizational Web sites. One is at the Community Pages of Madison.com while our separate interactive Web site, which was established July 2, 2001, allows those participating -- currently 83 subscribers -- to post messages and read those from others. It may be found at groups.yahoo.com/group/nct1969



IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN PART OF THE NOTORIOUS CANARY-TRAINERS, what are your memories of past times with us? You're encouraged to share them with the rest of us by addressing your email to nct1969@yahoogroups.com for viewing by all those subscribing or to nct1969-owner@yahoogroups.com for consideration. Otherwise, give or mail whatever you care to write to Mike McCoy at the address shown below.

We're also interested in obtaining originals or copies of items from the past years of the Notorious Canary-Trainers, for our Archives. If you have anything to share,, please contact us at [this email](#) address. Thanks!

To nominate items for publication, send them to Michael H. McCoy at mikemccoy1852@yahoo.com or One Hiawatha Circle, Madison, WI 53711. This and future editions of this publication will be posted in our Web site archives. For information: Thom Boykoff 608/833-3369 • Mike McCoy 608/274-1638