

# 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](http://communities.madison.com/canary)

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## FOUR CANARY-TRAINERS EXPLORE 'SECRETS AND ENIGMAS'.

Four members of the Notorious Canary-Trainers made their way to Minneapolis July 6-8 to join other Sherlockians from around the world for the "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" conference sponsored by the Norwegian Explorers in conjunction with the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

In attendance from Madison were Thom Boykoff (*Godfrey Norton, Esq.*), Jim Briggs, Vicki Fredrick, and Mike McCoy (*Billy the page*), joining perhaps 100 or so attendees from throughout the U.S., as well as Canada, England, and Japan.

The bulk of the conference sessions took place Saturday, which one speaker noted was a special date not only because of the day's numerical designation -- 07-07-07 -- but more importantly because it was the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Arthur Conan Doyle (in 1930).

Jim and Vicki, the first-timers among the Madison group attending a Sherlockian get-together such as this, agreed to share some of their general impressions.

"We really didn't know what to expect," they said in a joint report. "But we had a most instructive and enjoyable time, and wished we could have shared it with more of you."

"The hotel amenities were excellent, with discount rates available to attendees. The conference was an easy 10-minute walk, no problem even in the 90-degree heat.

"The conference itself was a single-track format, which meant that no one had to miss anything. Most sessions were about an hour long, including Q and A, with generous breaks between presentations. On Saturday, the only full day, an on-site lunch was provided.

**"It was evident at once that the presenters were all serious scholars** and experts in their field. Topics were highly specialized, yet still engaging even to the more casual Sherlockians.

"They included a meticulously researched quest for the 'real' Bruce-Partington; an overview of several original Doyle manuscripts; a detailed charting of household servants' titles and duties in Victorian homes, town and country, rich and modest; Holmes's use of disguise and other theatrical devices; and a detailed prospectus, by the authors, of a soon-to-be-published book of Doyle's letters.

"The stature of the speakers, and the equally obvious acuity of the hearers, was a little scary to a couple of dilettantes such as ourselves. But it was far more stimulating than intimidating, and everyone was most cordial and congenial -- not a whisper of snobbery or pedantry anywhere -- and we soon felt entirely comfortable.

"Saturday night there was an honest-to-goodness banquet, complete with toasts, music, and a Sotheby's style auction of rare Holmes memorabilia, which brought astonishing prices. And another rarity -- people actually dressed for dinner! I wish I'd brought a tie!

"In short, we had a fine weekend, and came away with a refreshed and renewed interest in our favorite detective. We hope to see more of our fellow Notorious Canary Trainers at similar events in the future."

For more news from this conference, see some of the other articles in this issue. We also may carry more information from this conference in our next number.



**WILL THE REAL BILLY THE PAGE PLEASE STAND UP?** Some of the more veteran members of the Notorious Canary-Trainers will recall the popular TV game show in the 1950s and 1960s, "To Tell the Truth." The format called upon a panel of celebrities to question, in turn, three individuals, all purporting to be the same person. When the panel was called to vote, each panelist would choose one of the three, and the host -- initially Bud Collyer but later Gary Moore, Bill Cullen, and others -- would say, "Will the real \_\_\_\_\_ please stand up?"

Now you get to play the game -- loosely modeled on the TV show -- by looking at the photo and trying to identify the real "Billy the Page."



Because we know you can't ask questions given the format, we posed one ourselves to each of the above: "Please identify yourself." Each person responded: "Billy the page."

While you're deciding and before we confirm whether you're right, the photo was taken by Thom Boykoff at the Saturday banquet of the "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" Conference.

**OK, if you've made your decision**, we're now ready to solve the mystery by asking, "Will the Real Billy the Page please stand up?" You'll notice that, in fact, all three already are standing, which should give you a tip to the truth. All three have used the name of "Billy the page."

On the left is **Terry Kilburn**, who played the role of Billy the page in the 1939 Basil Rathbone-Nigel Bruce movie, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." He now is retired and living in the Minneapolis area, something only recently discovered by the Norwegian Explorers.

If you attend our monthly meetings, you probably recognize the one in the middle as **Mike McCoy** (aka *Billy the page* within the Notorious Canary-Trainers.) The one on the right may be a familiar face, if not his name. He's **Curtis Armstrong**, who made his first film appearance opposite Tom Cruise in "Risky Business" in 1983, and has appeared in other more recent films such as the "Revenge of the Nerds" series, "Ray," "Dodgeball," and "Akeelah and the Bee," as well as on TV's "Grey's Anatomy," "Boston Legal," and others.

As this photo was being taken, Curtis was recalling having read the part of Billy the page for a friend who had a Sherlock Holmes script (she? he?) was hoping to get produced on the New York City stage. It was a "loft" reading, where actors performed the script in a New York apartment for a small group of friends. Curtis wanted the role of Watson, but it already was filled. He accepted the role of Billy, even though Curtis thought himself too old for it.

What adds interest to the story is that Curtis had gotten his first acting job through Terry Kilburn, and Curtis was familiar with Terry's portrayal of Billy the page in the 1939 movie. He based his own portrayal for the reading on Terry's rendition and apparently nailed it as someone there (and not aware of the Armstrong-Kilburn connection) remarked afterward that he had played the role just like Terry Kilburn had. Kilburn, meanwhile, learned of this story from Curtis only at the Minneapolis conference.



## CANON SHOTS

- **Curtis Armstrong**, who is profiled above, also was one of the presenters during the Saturday session in Minneapolis, with his topic "The Theatrical Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." He is a member of the Baker Street Irregulars ("*An Actor and a Rare One*") and his talk also appears in the current (Summer 2007) issue of the Baker Street Journal (a publication available by subscription only.) The article is entitled "An Actor and a Rare One." Fortunately, this article is available for reading online or downloading at <http://www.bakerstreetjournal.com/currentvolumevol57/actorandarareoneno2.html>
- **Mike McCoy had lunch with Peter E. Blau** during the Saturday session of the Sherlock Holmes conference in Minneapolis, during which the well-known Sherlockian and editor/publisher of the monthly Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press asked a number of questions about the Notorious Canary-Trainers and its current activities.

He has a special connection to our group as he was invested as a Baker Street Irregular as "Black Peter," the case which provides the source of our scion's name. Blau also revived the Red Circle Society of Washington, D.C., in 1970, dormant for 15 years, following his move to the city. According to a 1997 Washington Post interview, Blau is "the closest thing Washington has to a full-time Holmes." For the full article, go to <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/community/clubs/redcircle.htm>

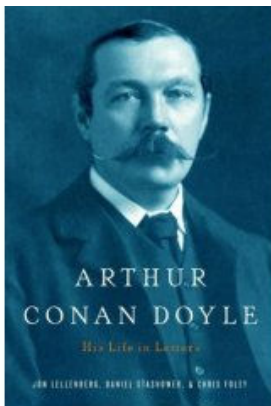
- **As noted above, July 7 was the anniversary of the death** of Arthur Conan Doyle, whose end came at age 71 at 8:30 in that 1930 July morning. Burial was under an oak tree in Minstead Churchyard, Hampshire, with this epitaph:

*Steel True  
Blade Straight  
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE  
Knight  
Patriot, Physician & Man of Letters  
22 May 1859 - 7 July 1930*

- **The June 2007 issue of Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** is available online for downloading or reading on the Web at <http://members.cox.net/sherlock1/scuttle.htm>, as are back issues to 1985. Each of the recent issues runs about six pages. For more on the publication, read the article appearing later in this issue.



**FALL BOOK TO DISCLOSE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF ACD.** A new book offering unique insights into someone very important in the life of Sherlock Holmes, "Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters," will be published Nov. 1. Two of the three co-editors, Daniel Stashower and Jon Lellenberg, spoke about the book and some of the findings from the letters at the Minneapolis conference.



According to the publisher, "this remarkable annotated collection of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's previously unpublished private correspondence offers unique insight into one of the world's most popular authors.

"For the first time, Conan Doyle emerges from the shadow of Sherlock Holmes, revealing a man whose character and exploits rival that of his famous creation. In particular, Conan Doyle's correspondence with his mother exposes his endless search for fulfillment and success outside the Holmes stories....

"As the public clamored endlessly for Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle explored other pursuits: He was a doctor during the Boer War, a World War I correspondent, and the foremost spokesman for Spiritualism. As his life changed, Doyle's correspondence with his mother remained constant.

"In his letters to 'the Mam', Doyle shares the dismay he felt over the critical reception of his other writing, and as his irritation with the Holmes adventures mounts he announces his desire to kill off the character. She is his confidante and trusted counsel throughout her long life.

"The editors are known for their expertise and scholarship on the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. Daniel Stashower is an award-winning mystery novelist and author of *Teller of Tales*, a widely praised biography of Conan Doyle.

"Jon Lellenberg is the U.S. agent for the Conan Doyle estate and author of *The Quest for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. Charles Foley is the writer's great-nephew and executor of the estate. *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* will be a must-have collection for readers interested in the author, Sherlock Holmes, and the Victorian era."

**Sherlockian Randall Stock**, another Minneapolis conference speaker, notes: "Based on what I've learned so far about it, this book should prove invaluable to anyone interested in Conan Doyle or Sherlock Holmes. It supplies the full text of many Conan Doyle letters and the indispensable, uncensored details of his life. Since most of the letters are undated, the editors examined them in depth to determine their true chronological order. This difficult but critical sequencing should transform the raw data of primary sources from around the world into a useful and compelling portrait of Conan Doyle's life."

He adds: "Since it includes so many personal letters, in many respects it will be an autobiography without the usual self-censorship. For those interested in more details about the book, including an excellent backgrounder by Jon Lellenberg about the book and how it was created, see my web page on it at [http://members.aol.com/\\_ht\\_a/shbest/ref/conan-doyle-life-letters.htm](http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/shbest/ref/conan-doyle-life-letters.htm) (or if that URL is too long <http://tinyurl.com/yo9mek>)"

**Some of the letters reviewed for the book** are in the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota and currently are on display in the University's Elmer L. Andersen Library.

You may wish to inquire at either of our host bookstores -- Barnes & Noble or Booked for Murder -- about ordering a copy for your personal enjoyment and your collection. The list price is \$37.95. Based on the information Stashower shared at Minneapolis, it will be well worth it.



**MORE ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS PRESENTATIONS....**Another of those present in Minneapolis who shared some observations about the conference is a member of the Hounds of the Internet scion, Karen Murdock. She and our own Tom Drucker (*Windigate*) are long-time acquaintances. Some of the highlights she noted in reports from the conference to the Hounds:

"Mpls. is the Center of the Sherlockian World this weekend....We have had one presentation so far, by Michael Kean of Monterey, California on 'Who Was Bruce-Partington?' (he concluded the submarine should have been the "Hill- Garrett" submarine).

"The second paper presented...was 'Who Wrote the Canon?' by the Hounds' own Cliff Goldfarb. The title pays homage to Richard Elliott Freeman's book 'Who Wrote the Bible?' Goldfarb noted many similarities between Biblical and Canonical scholarship, especially the 'documentary hypothesis' on the multiple authorship of Holy Writ. Goldfarb said that he has come up with 'The WHOD Hypothesis' to determine which stories were written by Watson, Holmes, Doyle, or some unknown Other or Others.

"**As proof that there may be hidden meanings** in the Canon, Goldfarb used a method of study used by scholars of the Torah. The Torah was written without vowels or punctuation. If the story DANC (a code story) was written in this fashion, Goldfarb hypothesized that he would find the name 'Arthur Conan Doyle' therein. And, sure enough, the combination "rthr" appears 19 times in DANC, "cnn" 11 times and "dl" 73 times! Ronald Knox would have loved this paper!!

"The final paper (Friday) was 'A Case for Langdale Pike' by Michael Dirda. Dirda asked that his recent remarkable discovery not be 'bandied about'...so of course I feel honor-bound not to reveal any details of his talk, but let me just say that it is a remarkable story having to do with Langdale Pike, Sherlock Holmes, Ellery Queen, John Bennett Shaw, Martin Gardner, Emily Dickinson, William Butler Yeats, Jeeves, "The Thinking Machine," and Winston Churchill. Dirda said he hopes to soon annotate and publish his finding..."

One of the papers presented Saturday was by Bill Mason, "who discussed GREE, a case in which 'nothing can be taken at face value'. Sophie Kratides, said Mason, was 'a true angel of death' and possibly the most enigmatic character in the Canon."

"Mason feels that the entire opening of GREE was staged for the benefit of the gullible Dr. Watson and that really Mycroft had a professional working relationship with Melas and not merely a slight acquaintance and that Melas was 'well known to foreign spies' in London. Melas, according to Mason, was 'bait for the trap' to catch Kemp and Latimer and that poor Paul Kratides was simply 'collateral damage' in The Great Game of espionage.

"Finally, asserted Mason, Sophie was an international spy who went on to kill the crown prince of Austro- Hungary and who became the mother of 'the most famous detective ever born in the Balkan'" (Nero Wolfe) -- not Irene Adler! Adler, said Mason was:

1. 'used, in fact well used goods'
2. married (which Holmes knew because he was at the ceremony!)
3. dead ('This is the clincher!' said Mason)"

"The first presentation of Sunday morning July 8 was by the Hounds' own Randall Stock... His talk was on 'Manuscripts and More: Some Descriptions, Discoveries, and Digressions'. He talked about four manuscripts from the 1920s: SUSS, 3GAR, ILLU, and 3GAB and noted some fascinating changes in ACD's manuscripts. By the way, the ms. for SUSS recently sold for nearly \$400,000!! Randall promised to update the census of Beaton's Christmas Annual 1887 on his website later this month in time for the Hounds' discussion of STUD. (The easiest path to Randall's website is to do a google search on 'stock221b'.)

"One of the most interesting changes to the manuscript of ILLU that Randall Stock pointed out was changes to the character who became Kitty Winter. Her original manuscript name was Claire Wyndham. This was later changed to Kitty Wyndham and finally to Kitty Winter. It's a good thing that ACD sometimes revised his stories!"



## **PETER BLAU'S SCUTTLEBUTT NEWSLETTER REACHES AGE 36.**

Mention above of Peter Blau brings to mind that we haven't drawn sufficient attention in the past to his very interesting Sherlockian publication, so we correct that oversight in this issue.

Peter explains on the Scuttlebutt Web site (link provided above) how the publication began and how it continues today. He also explains the unusual name of the newsletter.

"Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press has been published monthly ink-on-paper, with occasional illustrations and enclosures, for thirty years, and now costs \$10.55 a year to addresses in the United States (\$13.90 to Canada, or \$16.90 overseas) for six or more pages a month of whatever gossip I find appropriate.

"Much of the gossip is quite trivial, but most of it is Sherlockian or Doylean. And the subscription price will increase whenever postage rates increase.

"The newsletter started in 1971 as sheets of paper, kept by my typewriter, so that I could write paragraphs of minor news for my friend John Bennett Shaw. Eventually others found out about what I called 'information sheets' and asked for photocopies, and the number of copies required soon reached the point where I started charging for them to recover out-of-pocket costs.

"When I acquired my first computer in 1985, things became much easier and the format more consistent. Philip A. Shreffler, editor of The Baker Street Journal in 1987, suggested that readers of the BSJ might welcome the opportunity to read all that gossip, trivial and otherwise, and I finally named the newsletter, starting with the January 1988 issue.

"**The Spermaceti Press is the imaginary establishment** from which my seasonal souvenirs for the Sherlockian birthday festivities in New York in January have been published for many years, named in honor of a real (and the only known remaining) spermaceti press, preserved at the Nantucket Whaling Museum, where it once was used not to publish anything for whalers, but rather to process whale oil.

"And the name of the press seemed appropriate, considering my Investiture in The Baker Street Irregulars ('Black Peter') and the fact that when I named my press I was living on Holmes Road in Pittsfield, Mass., just up the road from Arrowhead, the home in which Herman Melville lived when he wrote Moby Dick.

"**Scuttlebutt is an appropriate pun**, since it means gossip, and comes from the barrel (butt) of water used to provide drinking water for the crew of whalers and other ships. Gossip was as common around the scuttlebutt then as it is today around office water-coolers. I must confess that if I had realized how long it took to explain the name of the newsletter, I might have named it simply Gossip, but what's done is done.

"And thanks to Willis G. Frick for providing web-space for an archive of back issues of the electronic version back to 1985. I'm not sure why anyone is interested in old gossip, but I've received requests, and bits and bytes make it easy to provide at least some ancient history."

**For a subscription**, send payment to Peter E. Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401. You may wish to reconfirm the current subscription fee by contacting him at that address or at 301/229-5669 or blau7103@comcast.net



**HERE'S OUR UPCOMING CASE STUDY SCHEDULE.** Our meeting dates and case studies for the rest of 2007 are as follows. All meetings will be at Barnes & Noble West starting at 3 p.m. unless otherwise announced. The November and December meetings likely will be held at Booked for Murder on University Ave.; we'll confirm that soon.

□ **July 15**, Norwood Builder □ **August 19**, Bruce-Partington Plans □ **September 16**, Veiled Lodger  
□ **October 21**, Sussex Vampire □ **November 18**, The Missing Three-Quarter □ **December 16**, The Abbey Grange

Here are the cases we've already discussed this year:

□ **February 18**, The Empty House □ **March 18**, The Golden Pince-Nez □ **April 15**, The Three Students  
□ **May 20**, The Solitary Cyclist □ **June 17**, Black Peter. (There was no case study in January because of our Sherlock Holmes birthday celebration.)



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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