

The Megaphone

December 29, 2000

An organ of the Rascals Rogues and Rapsallions

Number 11

Editor's note

Well, it looks like I'll get this in the mail with one day to spare before the millennium ends.

This year began with a lot of introspection for Lair 1. Are we doing too much, spread too thin, with an unwieldy bureaucracy? When it got down to it, being a rascal involves two key elements: availability and ability. The whole point of membership is for men of noble character [including those of you who are snickering right now] to delve into our God-given abilities four times a year to entertain, amuse, and uplift our fellows. Setting aside litter pickup and other extracurricular activity, we decided to focus our efforts on the quarterly meetings. A modest combination of availability and ability makes for a tremendously fun time. To this end, I congratulate the newly chartered Lair 3. After grilling Dan Morrison, Tim Esaias, and me about the workings of Rascaldom a dozen men enthusiastically committed to propagating our kind of fun throughout the Delaware valley. We wish them the best of luck. Their first meeting as a constituted lair will be a mass challenge to discover what of interest happened exactly 100 years before their birth date.

-- Charlei George

Ball 2000

On a February day that would have been ideal for a summer picnic about 1/2 dozen rascals and their spouses gathered at South Park lodge for an evening hoe-down. The rustic lodge provided ample space with plenty of room for smokers and non-smokers to enjoy one

another's company and breathe freely. A barbecue chicken banquet was served by Margaret Lee. **Lee Wolfson** contributed a unique selection of beers. **Brian Holly** led us in grace by reading "The Prodigal Son in F", an alliterative narrative which **Vic Norman** had sent us.

During dinner, **Charlei George** reviewed the previous year's shenanigans. This included a reenactment of **Craig Elias'** tunneling expedition and video greetings from **Vic Norman**, **Dave McFadden**, and **Andy Deen**. The JZL award was given to **Tim Esaias** who, to the thorough amusement of all present, re-read the text of his winning challenge. The rascal of the year award was bestowed upon **Charlei George**, whose services as assistant director in 1999 were appreciated in spite of many bungles.



The dancing began with Mike Stroup, who stepped us through a number of square dances and



country line dances capping the night with the Virginia reel.

The Mass Challenge 2000 was announced: to seek out the most rascally character of the Common Era. Lest any stone be left unturned, a century (1st through 20th) was assigned to each currently living rascal at random. From all figures great and small of his chosen century, a member was to identify the most rascally and prepare a 5 minute presentation in defense of the chosen character being the most rascally of the past two millennia.

Trophy Trivia

The Rascal of the Year trophy currently abides atop the George household piano (much to Susan's consternation). Aside from reminding one of the abiding love of the members of one's lair, it also inspires awe in visitors (some who actually spend the night under the watchful eyes of the penguins, robots, and aliens). Here are just a few of the comments elicited:

Dave George: "What did you ever do to deserve that?"

Dan Morrison: "What happened to the pink puff balls?"

Jim Goldsmith, Sr.: "I wasn't sure if I should call animal control or prepare a sacrifice."

William Kortas: "What do I have to do to go to a club where they give out that thing?"

Bernie Herbstritt: "Here's a packet of pink pom-poms for your trophy."

Jacob George: "Mom, where can we hang these colored lights if you don't want them on the Christmas Tree?"

Sports Section

In April, **Dan Morrison**, shamelessly offered to talk about himself: "Or, more precisely, to talk about my great-uncle and my latest research project."



"For about a year, I have been doing research on the Bethlehem Steel Football (i.e., soccer) Club.

Between 1914 and 1930, the Bethlehem Steel Company, of Bethlehem, Pa., sponsored a soccer team for its employees. This team was one of many athletic opportunities that the forward-looking company offered its employees.

"Very quickly, however, the amateur team became a serious enterprise and the boundary between amateur and professional was clouded. Billy Sheridan, Bethlehem Steel's director of athletics, took regular summer trips to England and Scotland to recruit crack soccer players for his team. My great-uncle, Bobby Morrison, was one of the players recruited from Glasgow, Scotland.

"These players were offered passage to the US and a job working in the steel mill. On Saturdays they played against teams from other large industrial firms, such as Babcock & Wilcox, Robins Dry Docks and Disston Saw Works.

"Between 1914 and 1919, the team collected no less than four national championships and five league championships. Archie Stark, one of the star forwards for the Bethlehem Steel F. C., holds until this day the US record for the most career goals. Forget about Pele. By 1921, the

team was fully professional and Bethlehem Steel F. C. was a founding franchise in the first professional soccer league based in the USA: the American Soccer League.

"The athletic fortunes of the Bethlehem Steel F. C. declined following their 1918-1919 National Championship season, as many Steel players were lured away by more lucrative offers from other companies. The players Billy Sheridan recruited formed the backbone of the US soccer for a full decade following his earliest work for the Bethlehem Steel F. C. The Steel team and the ASL came crashing down during internecine warfare in the national bodies regulating the soccer, bringing to an end a golden age in US soccer – an age yet to be recreated.

"To accompany my rambling remarks regarding my research, Maestro Greg Scheer composed a new song: "The Bethlehem Steel Soccer Club Fight Song" which was rendered with mixed results by the Rascal Quartet."

Rascals for Centuries

Continuing the celebration of this millennial year, fourteen members and guests met at Max's Allegheny Tavern on June 3rd, to peer into the well of history and bring forth the figure deserving to be called the Rascal of the Common Era. The span of 20 centuries was divided among rascals and guests alike, each having been assigned a century in which to search.

From the 1st century, **Charlei George** made his case for Pliny the Elder, famous for his Natural History (which codified the notion in the ancient West of an earth-centered universe) who died watching the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii. **Dan Morrison** composed "Cliff Divin'

Moses", a country western song



in honor of Moses of Crete who in 436A.D. vowed to return the Diaspora to Jerusalem, doing to the Mediterranean what his namesake did to the Red Sea. In lieu of a 14th century rascal, **John Blair** showed off his



levitating top. **Wil Kortas** put forward the Black Death as the most notable character of the 14th century. **Mark Miller** made his case in verse, reciting the "Miller's Tale" and arguing for Geoffrey Chaucer as an exemplary 15th century rascal. **Bob Edmunds** proposed Voltaire from the 16th century. **Tim Esaias** claimed the 16th century as the most rascally of the era -- citing a litany of



rascals as proof, and made his case for Giordano Bruno as the chief -- having been burned at

the stake for declaring the earth was not at the center of the universe. To the tune of the "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6", **Woody Cunningham** praised



18th century rascal **Antoine Laurent Lavoisier**, whose last challenge was to find out how long the brain (his) would function after the guillotine (the answer: as long as it takes to blink nineteen times). If not for the misfrancs among us **Woody** may have taken the bitter cup, the current incarnation of which is an authenticated **Elvis bougger**. As it was, second place was awarded to last year's JZL winner, **Tim Esaias**.

The Vatican: Home to Rascal of the Bi-Millennium

The winner of the mass challenge, proving that clothes do make the man, was **Lee Wolfson**, who took on the persona of **Andreas Fagiolini** to



tell the tale of Roman rascal of the 12th century, "**Octavian**". **Octavian** was elevated to the papacy after his father, **Alberic**, Prince of Rome, while dying at the age of 40, instructed his supporters to take him to altar above the tomb of **St Peter** and had the nobles swear upon the

bones of the apostle that they would vote his son as prince of Rome ... and upon the death of the pontiff elect him pope ... which they did! Taking the name of **John XIIth**, he was the youngest pope ever elected!



As **Andreas** went on to explain, **Octavian**, had an "attractive insolence ... an ability to talk his way out of tight situations ... he was eager to copy his father ... but only so long as it did not require any real effort. He went on military campaign ... which ended disastrously ... and he returned to Rome to pursue debauchery. Now, the Romans were not shocked by much, and sure ... he turned the Lateran into a brothel ...", but more shocking to the Romans was his generosity toward his concubines. "He gave them land, and this really made everyone angry!"

His politics were torn between **Berengar King of Italy**, **Adalbert** (**Berengar's** son), and **Otto of Saxony** and "the **HUNS!** of whom very bad movies were made". **Sr. Fagiollini** recounts, "a lurid tale unfolded --including stories of women and Cuban cigars--" and **John's** temporary replacement by **Leo VIIIth**. "The Romans, as much as they despised **John**, hated **Otto** more. They reinstated **John**, who then went about cutting out tongues

and eyes and such. When word got to **Otto** he was on the verge of victory against **Adalbert** ... **Berenger** had long since retired from the whole thing ... so **Otto** could not immediately return to Rome ... well, this is where I come in ..."

Andreas concluded his story with **John** taking up his usual routine of "comforting" the ladies of Rome. Unfortunately one of those comforted happened to be **Andreas' very own Maria Francesca**. The Roman tabloids never named the enraged husband who bludgeoned **John** in the midst of his extra-papal activities, but for **Andreas**, 10 centuries incognito had been cruel on him. He felt the one way to absolution was to bring us the life and times of **Octavian** in hope that we would bestow upon him the illustrious title of **Rascal of the Bi-Millennium**. But why choose **Lee Wolfson** as a medium? Well, for starters **Lee** drew **Octavian's** century, and secondly only **Lee's** wife, **Jane** - maker of the rascal flag, would have the skill and the passion to make an outfit in which **Andreas** could comfortably make his case.

Picnic

The **Rascals Family Picnic** at **Morain State Park** was held on a splendid summer Saturday in



August. We rascals have grown more gentle and massive over the years. So that our traditional amusement racing chariots would not be overlooked, our children volunteered to port the son of the **Rascal of Year** throughout the picnic area.

My Summer Vacation

For our September meeting **Steve Rine** reported on a couple of weeks he had spent with Pitt's Learning Integrated with Needed Construction Service (LINCS) project in Rumichaca village (a subdivision of Utabamba Peru). Steve embarked on the project in order to chalk up a few course credits, to get out of the country for a while, and to get a feel for third world construction techniques. His first lesson was one in third world politics. They had to wait for various parties involved to agree to the planned building site of Baja Rumichaca, as opposed to the site of Alta Rumichaca, which was proposed seemingly on the spur of the moment by the councilman who greeted the team at the airport.

Other unique aspects of the construction involved work with

adobe bricks and eucalyptus trusses. One of the goals of LINCS is to use local resources as much as possible to ensure sustainability of the project. The LINCS team did most of the grunt work, allowing skilled craftsmen to guide the construction. The team also brought ceramic tiles of the alphabet (with paintings of Latin and Quechua words) to give the classroom a true kindergarten feel.

Steve's presentation on behalf of the LINCS team was well received. One of his teammates, **Brian Bacon**, was also present and gave us the privilege of being first to sign the team's guestbook.

Odds and Ends

Dennis Looney returned from Semester at Sea with tales of many adventures in the Pacific – including speculation on

condoms as currency. **Ron DiOrio** reports that Burgetstown no longer has free HBO. **Greg Bruns** claims he collapsed after 4 miles (not 3 as had been circulated around town) in the Pittsburgh Marathon, although the longest mile has been the protracted recovery. **Dave McFadden** is now officially retired, and warned us to be prepared for more comic books.

Look for these articles in the next issue of *The Megaphone*.

The Shooting of Frank Piano: A Jeffry Brooks Mystery

Surfing the air waves: a Hendershot how-to guide (Morrison-Esaia Editors)

Oldest Brew - Newest View: Ron DiOrio's guide to the galaxy as seen from Pittsburgh's North Side.

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