



THE MEGAPHONE

A Vestigial Organ of the Rascals, Rogues, and Rascalions



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BELGIAN BUREAUCRAT TRUMPS MISS UNIVERSE Substance Surpasses Style in Mass Challenge XXXIX

A Botswanan beauty queen turned third-world business developer; a popular, then deplatformed, American cartoonist; a loved and loathed Member of the British Parliament and architect of Brexit; a British journo who covered oligarchs in Azerbaijan and accordion players in rural England; the keeper of the crypt of Saint Maria Goretti in Nettino, Italy; a Haitian refugee attending an American college; and the Director General of the International Cooperative Alliance. Such were the candidates for the honors in the 2024 Mass Challenge. This year's task: Receive a communication from the person most highly ranked on the Great Chain of Being.

Taking the honors in the thirty-ninth Mass Challenge competition was Jeff Sivek, a charter member of Lair No. 1 in Pittsburgh, who in the past couple of years has become a habitué of Lair No. 3. Due to some legal complications arising out of the second Mass Challenge in 1996, Sivek forswore the Rascals. Decades later, he moved from Pittsburgh to the Philadelphia suburbs and reconnected with the Rascals, attending 10 of the last 11 events offered by Lair No. 3.

On December 14, nine men were in the upper room at the Doylestown Maennerchor Society for the contest. A tenth, Hugh Riches, joined online from Grimsby, Lincolnshire, England. George Green ably served as zoom jockey, relieving the director of those responsibilities.

Seven contestants vied for the honors, and they presented in turn, from youngest to oldest.

Calvin Morrison was first with a video from Nigel Farage. The bespectacled architect of Brexit was in his shirtsleeves, relaxed and amused, as he said, "Now, Calvin has given me the full brief. You are without a doubt unquestionably the best men's club in the whole of America. Yes, it's all about



George Green, left, sets to battle with Jeff Sivek for the Mass Challenge honors, while Dan Morrison, Lair Director, looks on.

food, drinks, cigars, merriment and let the best man take home the Jon Landgraf medal as a result of the 2024 Mass Challenge. So guys – fantastic! I only wish I could be in Philly this Saturday for the games. I was trying to do it but I can't quite make it, but one day it'll be huge fun to catch up with all of you."

Calvin argued that as the architect of the exit of Great Britain from the European Union, Farage was responsible for the biggest change in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

George Green also had a video, this one from Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert cartoon strip. On camera, Adams was as awkward and abashed as Dilbert himself. In the ten-second video he said

something like, “Rascals, rogues, and rascallions? Um, hi!” Green opined Adams created Musk and Musk created the Second Coming of Trump, thus Adams must be high on the Great Chain of Being.

Jordan Goretti went third with a sporting non-presentation. Goretti wrote to the keeper of the crypt of Saint Marie Goretti, his great-great aunt, but no message came back from Italy.

Michael Landis had a Jesus-y interpretation of the challenge. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says about poor, sick, foreign, and jailed people, “Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.” Landis concluded that the most exalted person is the most humble. On that theory, he presented his correspondence with a Haitian refugee studying at Manor College.

Michael Moscherosch has met African heads-of-state (i.e., dictators) in his work with Johnson & Johnson. But from his rolodex he pulled Miss Universe 1999 Mpule Kwelagobe and proposed this Botswanan beauty queen as the person highest on the Great Chain of Being because her title is not just for this planet, but for the entire universe! For his efforts, Moscherosch was awarded the James Buchanan medal for the worst Mass Challenge presentation of the year.

Dan Morrison wrote 30 letters to politicians, club leaders, and writers in the United States and abroad. Seven responded and of those Morrison selected the English journalist Hugh Riches as the man highest on the Great Chain of Being, for the

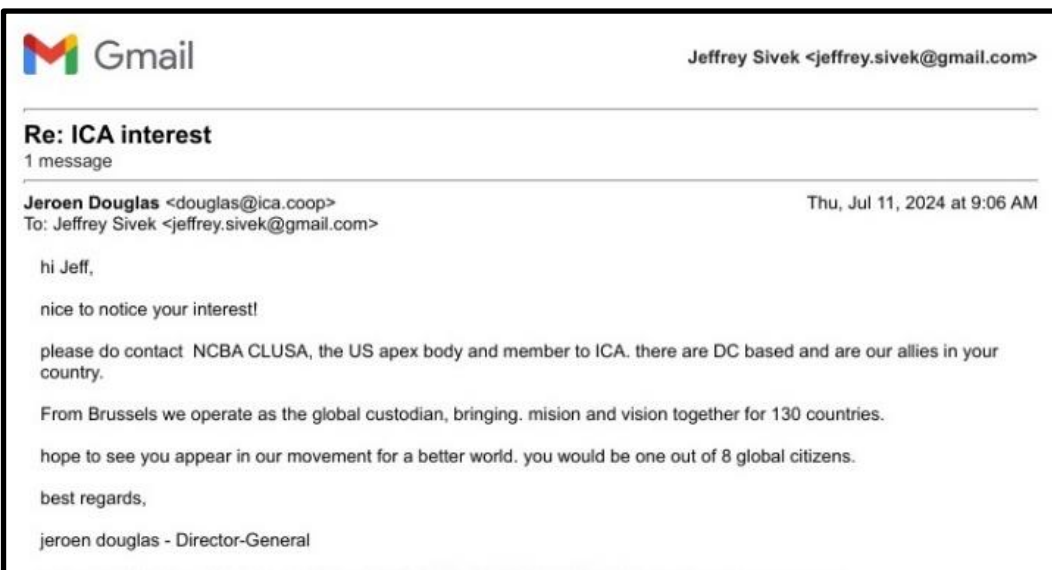


A video greeting from Mr. Brexit, Nigel Farage, was amusing, but did not bring Calvin Morrison enough votes for a win.

simple reason that Riches petitioned to join the RR&R and mailed in his \$20 annual dues as a non-resident member. Earlier in the evening, Riches was elected a member of Lair No. 3 and was on screen in Doylestown via the magic of zoom.

Jeff Sivek presented an email from Jeroen Douglas, General Director of the International Cooperative Alliance, a trade association based in Belgium. As one in eight humans (according to the ICA) are part of a cooperative, Sivek concluded the

Belgian bureaucrat who heads the organization is a very big deal. In the end, voting was tied between George Green and Jeff Sivek. In keeping with RR&R tradition, the tie was settled with an arm-wrestling match, which in this case went on for a painfully long time. Sivek held out against the younger Green for the win.



Winning email from Jeroen Douglas, graduate of the e. e. cummings school of orthography.

PENNSYLVANIA RACONTEUR UNEARTHED

James C. Humes Root of 2024 Mass Challenge

A riotous book by the youngest man elected to the Pennsylvania state house may be the origin of the 2024 Mass Challenge. More than a decade ago, I bought a copy of *How to Get Invited to the White House and Over One Hundred Impressive Gambits, Foxy Face-Savers and Clever Maneuvers* by James C. Humes. Published in 1976, this book is a treasure trove of avuncular counsel about how to get more out of life and have a good time doing it.

In 106 mini-chapters Humes draws on his own outrageous experiences and gives sage advice on how to “Crash an Exclusive Reception,” “Form Your Own Society,” and “Get Cheap or Free Hotel Rooms for Lunchtime Trysts.”

The chapter that likely led to this year’s Challenge is titled “Correspond with Famous Authors.” I read this section – but not the whole book – years ago and it led to my habit of writing to authors after I’ve read one of their works.

But Humes’ book sat on my shelf for years, only partly read. On August 16, 2021 (yes, I keep records of this kind of thing), I donated the volume to the Upper Moreland Public Library book sale, thinking I would never get around to finishing it. A few months ago, I spotted the book at Baldwin’s Book Barn in West Chester, Pa., and recalled this was the book that led me to my practice of writing to authors. I paid \$5.00 and went to my back porch with the book and three cigars. There I read it cover to cover.

And I wish I had done that years ago!

Humes was born in Williamsport, Pa., in 1934, the son of a judge. He attended boarding school in England on a scholarship and met Sir Winston

Churchill, who told him gravely, “Young man, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft.”

Back home, Humes went to Williams College and at 21 was elect to the Pennsylvania State House, the youngest member ever. He studied law at George Washington University and became a speechwriter for President Eisenhower while still in school. He would go on to write for Nixon, Ford, and the elder Bush.



James C. Humes, looking like Winston Churchill, from the dust jacket of *How to Get Invited to the White House*.

His larkish adventures included both hitchhiking across the United States and correcting the Duke of Edinburgh (to his face!) on his English usage.

Humes died in 2020 but I felt obliged to write to his family and tell them how much I appreciated the man and enjoyed his book. From an obituary, I was able to track down his granddaughter and shot her an email. Next day, I received a courteous reply from her mother, Humes’s daughter, from London.

Mary Quillen was soon to

visit Philadelphia, so she stopped by my office in Huntingdon Valley. A few weeks later, her son, James, also honored me with a visit.

In two leisurely and meandering conversations, Humes’s daughter and grandson proved that the charm of the man was passed on to succeeding generations and the family continues to value his idiosyncratic genius.

So here's the upshot: *How to Get Invited to the White House* should be required reading for all Rascals. Buy it, study it, and learn from the master!

– Daniel Paul Morrison



Ur-Rascal **Scott Clarke** visited Philly in October and had dinner at **Dan Morrison's** house. **Clarke**, of Eugene, Ore., attended the first Rascals meeting in February 1989 at Harvey's Chelsea Restaurant in Manhattan. **Morrison** and **Clarke** were roommates at Marlboro College in the 1980s.



Dan Morrison, left, and Scott Clarke at Morrison's house, Oct. 21, 2024. Clarke attended the first Rascal meeting in 1989.

Timons Esaias is still a satirist, writer, and poet in Pittsburgh. His works have been published in 22 tongues. He lived in a museum for eight years, collects elephants and chess sets, and has visited many coastal fortifications, most recently in Turkey.



George Hindley with a Packard 1940 Super Eight 160 convertible sedan at America's Packard Museum, Dayton, Ohio, Oct. 9, 2024. Hindley's grandfather owned this precise make and model.

Charles George visited Lake George, N.Y., in August. We are not aware of any link between the name of the Adirondack lake and the name of Charles's family. He reports that pierogi-shaped Christmas tree ornaments are popular this year in Pittsburgh.

In August, **George Green** moved from South Philly to Malvern, Pa. In November, he proposed marriage to Lauren Boyce. She accepted that proposal and the couple are planning a May 2025 wedding. Recently, George attended a

bourbon stewardship class (a bourbon steward is like a wine sommelier) in Blakeslee, Pa., his hometown.

George Hindley, the non-Rascal who has attended the most Rascal meetings (more than 20), visited two Packard museums and the home of President Warren G. Harding,

all in the Buckeye State. He solved a long-standing family mystery: the model and year of his grandfather's Packard. **Dan Morrison** joined Hindley on the Ohio Packard Presidential tour.

Things are looking up for **Ray Hull III**. In October he began working for Stryker Corp. as a packaging engineer. In November he was back in his house in Asbury, N.J., with his three kids. Once things get settled, he hopes to host the Rascals in Asbury.





Lauren Boyce, right, sports the ring given to her by George Green. The couple are planning a May 2025 wedding.

In November **Sean McVan** hit his third anniversary with Gilmore & Associates, a civil engineering firm. Aside from work, his main occupations are martial arts and the gym.

Calvin Morrison is an operations manager for Kissinger Associates in West Lawn, Pa. He does something called ERP, or enterprise resource planning. He also sewed a new shift boot for one of his five Saabs.

Dan Morrison appeared in print a fourth time with Stark House Press which in 2024 issued a reprint of E. Phillips

Oppenheim’s 1908 novel *Ghosts of Society*. Tucked in the back is Morrison’s “A Collector’s Catalog of Oppenheim Works.” Morrison’s previous Stark House appearances – all Oppenheim projects – were in 2004, 2009, and 2014.

Leon Moscherosch was in Pennsylvania for Thanksgiving but has returned to Germany which is now his home.

Michael Moscherosch is restoring a French VéloSoleX moped from the 1960s. He has the motor working and is now tackling the wheels and frame.

Harry Plantinga doesn’t know former Anglican Bishop N. T. Wright, but he knows people who know him. That’s according to **Calvin Morrison**.

Hugh Riches is the newest and first trans-Atlantic member of Lair No. 3, having been duly elected at the Dec. meeting.

Jeff Sivek recently visited the Basilian Spirituality Center at Manor College, in Elkins Park, Pa.

Lee Wolfson and wife **Tamara** recently visited the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh and enjoyed having **Brian Holly** as their tour docent. “The Hall of Architecture contains a half dozen Rascal Challenges by



Michael Moscherosch with the motor of his French VéloSoleX moped.

itself,” Wolfson observed. Wolfson is semi-retired but keeps busy with a few private clients and lots of old-guy league basketball.



Brian Holly, right, with docent pal Carla Cords, in front of a painting by Joan Mitchell, September 2024.

The Megaphone
“Mostly True ... Since 1994.”

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RESEARCH REPORTS 2024: Longwinded Presentations and Bad Booze Mar Annual Event

As has become the custom, Lair No. 3 gathered for its Research Reports meeting at its third quarter conclave. Gathering on September 15, 2024, in the loft of the newly-renovated Ungerman Barn at Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church, fourteen men were present in the flesh with two online.

lighthearted and optimistic about the then-ongoing American presidential campaign.

Philadelphia men's clubs were the impetus of **Dan Morrison's** presentation titled "The Great Cloud of Rascalness." He talked about the Five O'Clock Club and the United Bowman and went on



Jim Barr, standing, discusses Tennessee whiskey history at the September 15, 2024 meeting of Lair No. 3. Seated in front of him, from left to right, are Michael Moscherosch, Jeff Sivek, Sean McVan, and Michael Landis.

Jim Barr spoke about Nathan "Nearest" Green, an African American distiller they say taught Jack Daniel how to make firewater. Barr's presentation culminated in a taste test pitting Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, a new concoction named in honor of the once-enslaved distiller, against Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 Brand. Both are produced in Lynchburg, Tenn., one by a venerable 150-year-old company that sells more whiskey than anyone, and the other by an upstart boutique distillery cashing in on the Uncle Nearest story. The result of the taste test was clear: Uncle Nearest has a great story, but the booze bearing his name is terrible.

Sean McVan, our resident Republican politico and Irish-American dual national, reviewed "The Troubles" in Ireland. His gloomy and sanguinary tale of sectarian hatred and violence between Catholics and Protestants made us all feel more

to discuss Blood's Despatch, a nineteenth century letter carrier. Implicated in the tale were **Dave Hamalian** and his friend **Prof. Dr. Hannah Wakefield** of the University of Tennessee. Added to the mix were the boxer William Rocab, a carriage house by Frank Furness, and the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The result was a mess. Once again, in his enthusiasm, **Morrison** made a hash of things by saying a bit too much.

Jordan Goretti discussed Art Deco style and uranium glass, which was popular in that period. For some reason, the idea of

tableware and household items being made with uranium struck the collective funny bone of the meeting, and chaos ensued. Goretti graciously conceded the field amid hoots and howls.

Michael Landis, who has taught humanities at Manor College for the past 30 years, held forth on the Solutrean hypothesis, which suggests that the Americas initially were populated by people who migrated from Europe rather than from Asia, as is proposed in the more widely-held theory. While Landis has done legitimate archeological fieldwork in central Pennsylvania, he has an undergraduate degree in English literature from Muhlenberg College and a graduate degree from Yale Divinity School. The Solutrean hypothesis seems to rest on similarities in the flake patterns of arrowheads from France and the Americas.

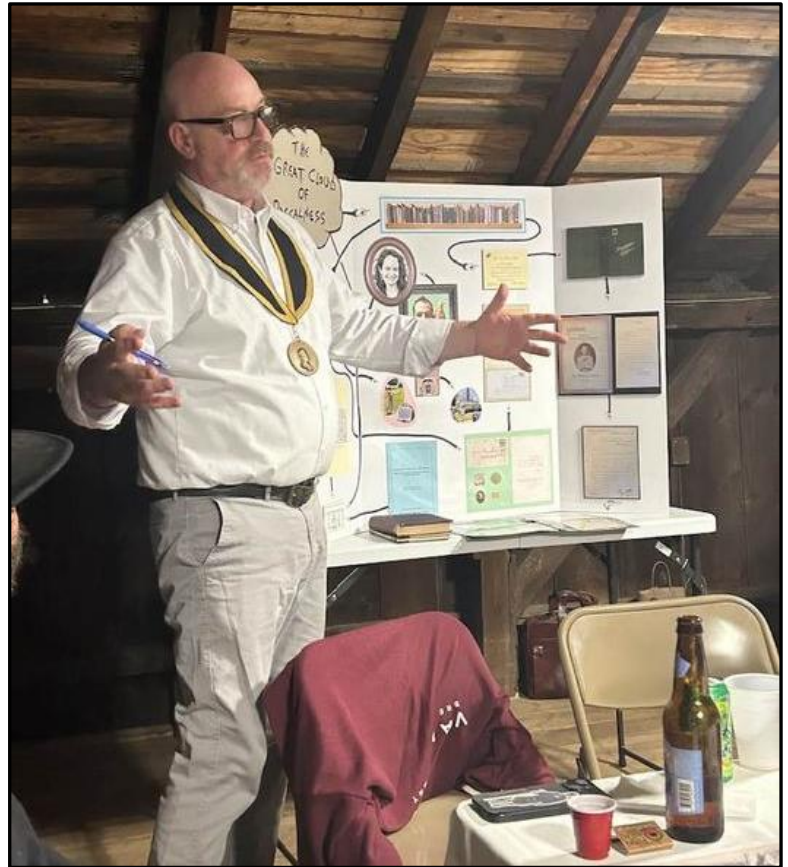
Ben Franklin's Junto, or Leather Apron Club, was the topic discussed by **Jeff Sivek**, a Lair No. 1 alumnus who moved to eastern Pennsylvania following his retirement. In 1727, the 21-year-old Franklin organized the Junto as a kind of mutual improvement society for tradesmen. One of the questions asked of prospective members was, "Do you love truth for truth's sake, and will you endeavor impartially to find and receive it yourself, and communicate it to others?" Sivek's meditation on the Junto did raise the nettlesome questions of the standards of Rascal membership and whether or not the group can take credit for improving anyone in the past 35 years.

George Green gave us an update on his beer brewing experiments. No samples were offered. **Green** also let drop that he has exchanged bachelor life in Center City for monogamous cohabitation in the suburbs. We hope to hear the results of that romantic experiment at the next RR&R meeting.

Michael Moscherosch, who retired in 2023 after 28 years with Johnson & Johnson, discussed his ongoing volunteer work with African youth entrepreneurs. Building on relationships formed while at J&J, Moscherosch works with the Social Innovation Academy (SINA) in Uganda to help young people living in refugee settlements learn how to develop their own businesses in Africa.

Dave Hamalian was the most cross-linked man at the meeting. He was mentioned, *en passant*, in **Dan Morrison's** rambling discourse on Philadelphia men's clubs. Hamalian's own topic was salons, of the French and talking variety, in particular the one organized in the eighteenth century at Graeme Park in Horsham, Pa., by Elizabeth Graeme. Per **Hamalian**, Graeme's salon may have directly descended from Franklin's Junto, which was the subject addressed by **Jeff Sivek**.

Bruno Sousa, attending his first RR&R meeting, spoke warmly about his favorite Brazilian soccer club, Vasco da Gama. Sousa, the assistant pastor at Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church, arrived from Brazil three years ago. In Brazil, he was the Executive Director of the Kuyper Institute.



Dan Morrison, wearing the James Buchanan Medal, explains what he calls "the great cloud of Rascalness" at the 2024 Research Reports meeting. In spite of his illustrated board, his thesis remained nebulous.

While we mention them last, the evening's presentations were kicked off by our two Lone Star members, zooming in from Hayes Lewis's new digs in Benbrook, Texas.

First up was **Jason Enelow** who discussed spices and cake recipes known to medieval Europe. His talk ended with a quiz about popular spices of the era. We in Pennsylvania were stumped, but that may have been due to our poor connection.

Hayes Lewis talked about Chindōgu, or the art of useless Japanese inventions. As with Enelow, Lewis's presentation suffered because of our poor zoom connection. A true friend of the Rascals will step up to solve this connectivity problem.

Also attending in person, but not presenting, were: **Alex Aimette, George Hindley, Mark McDowell, and Calvin Morrison.**



ON TANGENTS

Intellectual Curiosity and the Spirit of Rascaldom

In the fall of 1980, I had the dumb luck of being assigned as Dan Morrison's roommate at Marlboro College in Vermont. I came from Nevada a naïve 17-year-old, eager for distance from the familiar. Dan's midwestern sensibilities, flavored with more recent Philadelphia experiences, were different enough from mine to spark mutual fascination. From our dingy dorm room, we developed a friendship lasting to this day.

Academic expectations at Marlboro were challenging. I embraced them, and accepted that the work required undivided attention. Intent on learning, Dan and I got right into things, and his limitless hunger to know became clear. As weeks passed, I noticed, with fascination, a peculiar and recurring pattern: he became suddenly and inexplicably obsessed with some topic or another. Commonality between topics was limited to a lack of any apparent relevance or connection to each other, his academic life, or previous interests. So, one week it might be his quest to contact J.D. Salinger (unfruitful), the next it was a fascination with water-powered grist mills (resulting in a large wooden model of a mill's structural system). When Dan found a Morris Minor rotting in the woods near campus, he decided that its engine must be retrieved and dissected in his dorm room. We went into the woods to see this find. There was some discussion about how to move the engine from one location to another. I don't remember how this was accomplished, only that it was. With concern and admiration in equal measure, this last episode caused me to seek a name for Dan's peculiar habit, and thus the *tangent* was born.



Tangentialist and Ur-Rascal Scott Clarke, outside Tangent, Oregon.

I stayed at Marlboro for two years. Dan and I have since remained 3,000 miles apart, and have managed meeting only a few times. But I remain in eager anticipation of the next tangent, confident that neither of us can anticipate what that may be. Each new quest is as surprising as the last.

Lust is the impulse leading to procreation. Curiosity is the impulse leading to learning. These two share qualities. They are adaptive traits and primal, essential components of our species' survival and growth. Lust gets a bad rap, and curiosity is perhaps not given the recognition it deserves. A tangent is a pure expression of the curiosity impulse.

Primal impulses are not in the domain of rational thought. The tangent makes this clear. But have Dan's obsessions been random or are there underlying connections? I prefer to think these topics are not random, but spring from intuition. Their charm is that they affect a highly rational person, sending him on unpredictable trajectories. The tangentialist is a passenger, subject to intuition. Their journeys provide new information and opportunities to marry unconnected ideas in new and useful ways. These marriages are the cornerstone of human creativity.

The business of the Rascals, Rogues, and Rapscallions, as best I can tell, is the celebration of curiosity. Tangents are primary mechanisms for this celebration. Long may you wander down unanticipated, weedy, and unavoidably interesting paths.

– Scott Clarke