



The Pink 'Un



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I Find It Recorded in My Notebook . . .

In spite of some wet weather, thirty-three people attended the February 28 meeting of the Hansom Wheels: **Charlie Cook; Harry and Joyce Crout; Jimmy and Judy Haynes; Tootsie Dennis Kline; Kevin and Becky Lewis; George and Sarah Linder; Tish Lowe; Bernard Manning; Jamie McCulloch; Pat and Allison McNeely; Manuel Mesa; Kathy Newman; Joe Pinner; Myrtle, Tim, and Arthur Robinson; Wayne Scott; Julie Smoak; Hannah Timmons; Nancy Washington; Jim and Ceille Welch; David and Loretta Winburn; John and Barbara Wrisley; Mary Snead Dematteis (Mrs. Tantalus); and me (the Tantalus).**

After dinner, I tooted the Gold Kazoo (I had lost the blue one) and declared the game afoot. We toasted *the* woman, Irene Adler, and **Tish Lowe** led us in the Musgrave Ritual. (This was **Tish's** first meeting; I had originally asked a longtime member to lead the Ritual, but she—who shall remain nameless—told me that **Tish** was “just dying” to do it. A trick had been played: **Tish** had never even heard of the Musgrave Ritual. But she bravely agreed to take on the task and did a fine job of it, too!)

Next up were the Happy Hour Posers, where the challenge is to ferret out the titles of Adventures from convoluted clues: 1. Jack Horner grew up to drive locomotives, but he still got fruit out of pies the same way he had as a kid = “The Engineer’s Thumb.” 2. Scarlett’s kids said they wanted corn flakes for breakfast. She shook her finger at them and said, “Oh, no! Good Southerners _____, _____” = must crave grits, y’all = “The Musgrave Ritual,” the assigned story for the evening. 3. The blueprints for Basil Rathbone’s sidekick’s new home in a Manchester suburb = “The Bruce-Partington Plans” (Nigel Bruce played Watson in the old movies; Partington is a suburb of Manchester). 4. Nero Wolfe enjoying a seven-course meal = the dining detective = “The Dying Detective.”

We took a few minutes to remember our beloved and faithful member **Al McNeely**, who had died on February 23rd and whose widow, **Pat**, and daughter, **Allison**, were honoring us with their presence that evening. **John**

Wrisley recalled appearing with **Al** in many Town Theatre productions over the years—including playing Holmes (**John**) and Watson (**Al**) and characters based on them, Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering (see page 2); **Jim Welch** and I talked about what a privilege it was to have known **Al** and about his contributions to the Hansom Wheels as a speaker and especially as an actor in, and director of, our annual Christmas plays.



Kathy Newman, Tootsie Dennis Kline, George Linder, Ceille Welch, Joe Pinner, Wayne Scott, your Editor, and Jim Welch accepting applause after performing *The Musgrave Ritual*

The Featured Presentation was a live “radio” play, *The Musgrave Ritual*, adapted by **Ceille Welch** from Holmes’s account of one of his early cases as told to Dr. Watson. Former TV weatherman and kids’ show host **Joe Pinner** was Holmes; **your Editor** played Watson; **Wayne Scott** was Reginald Musgrave; **George Linder** portrayed Richard Brunton; and Miss South Carolina 1960 **Tootsie Dennis Kline** played Rachel Howells. **Jim Welch** was the announcer, and he and **Kathy Newman** provided the sound effects using various pieces of junk such as old shoes, cups, and a bucket. **Ceille Welch** performed musical “stingers” to indicate scene transitions and to heighten suspense on a keyboard that she and **Jim** lugged down from their home near Tryon, N.C.

John Wrisley read the Sacred Sonnet, “221B,” and, like the little pig in the GEICO commercial, we went “Wee, wee, wee!” all the way home.

For April: *The Women!*

The Hansom Wheels will meet at **7:00 p.m., Thursday, April 18**, at **The Palmetto Club, 1231 Sumter Street**. The price will be **\$27.00 per person**. **Tom Elmore** will perform a thought experiment: he will imagine an alternate universe from the one we live in—a universe in which the Sherlock Holmes stories are *not* true accounts but are works of fiction written by a retired ophthalmologist—and will talk about women who might have been the “real-life” inspiration for Irene Adler. He’ll show pictures, too; but since it was the nineteenth century, there will be no bikini shots. The Assigned Story will

(obviously) be “A Scandal in Bohemia.” Please make **reservations** at **(803) 787-2219**; by email at hansomwheels@aol.com; or click “**Reply**” on the email to which this newsletter is attached **as soon as possible** but **no later than Monday, April 15**. See you there!

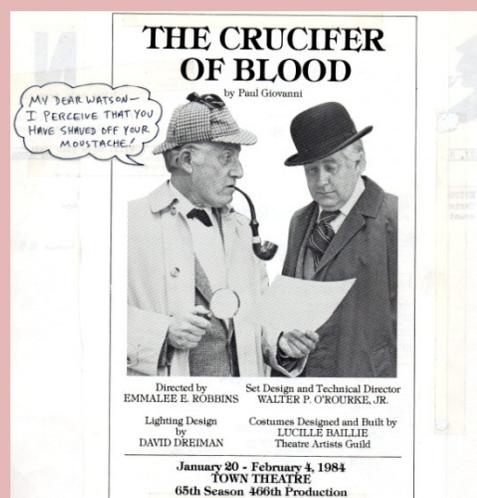
Note: If you make a reservation and then find that you can’t attend, *please* call or email and **cancel** as soon as possible. The Palmetto Club charges us for uncanceled reservations! Thank you!

Happy Hour Posers (Name the Adventures)!

1. A timepiece owned by Jan Hus (before he was burned at the stake).
2. Chris Hemsworth is having trouble with his denture.
3. A coalition of cheetahs!
4. Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, or Maggie Simpson.



MY KIND OF TOWN ~ AL MCNEELY



“My love/love relationship with Town Theatre goes way back to the dark ages: 1964. That’s when my wife Pat and an old high school girlfriend joined forces to force me to a tryout. I hadn’t been on the stage for seven years, but shockingly got the part, the lead and later the laughs. I was totally hooked. Now, 54 years later, my total is 28 productions. They cover everything from heavy drama to second tenor in a Sha Na Na line (twice!). From warbling an Irish lullaby solo in *Guys and Dolls* to a not-too-bad W.C. Fields impersonation. From opening one play by falling over dead, and two others that co-starred a 6-foot invisible rabbit.

It has been a wondrous ride. Six decades of laughter and hard work.

Learning all those lines. I even wrote scenes for two plays. Offstage, there were two terms on the Board of Governors, one term as president of the Players Club, and countless hours spent in such committees as play reading. I loved it all. Rehearsals were a kick. With each new production I made new friends, and as the years rolled by, they became old friends. Other McNeelys wound up on stage and we sometimes did shows together.

It all culminated in seeing my daughter Allison morph from a kid who once crawled around under the conference table upstairs to become the theatre’s Resident Director. As such, she has directed me in three shows so far, neatly turning our relationship upside down and proving that she has forgotten more stagecraft than I ever knew.

Today, at the precarious age of 83, it’s the people I remember more than the shows, people like my good friend John Wrisley. John and I played Holmes and Watson twice and did essentially the same two characters for *My Fair Lady*. At one time or another, my talented niece Leah, my comedy-improv son Alan, and of course my awesome daughter Allison were in shows. Many of our rehearsals were more like parties and some of the cast parties were held at our house. Occasionally, even today, someone in a restaurant or grocery store will call out “How’s Harvey?” and I have been “made” as Elwood P. Dowd, the angelic friend of Harvey the Rabbit. I played Elwood twice, 15 years apart, and a portrait of Harvey and myself, paw on shoulder, hangs on our bedroom wall. I can still use lines from that play anywhere I need to kill some time. Only the remnants of other lines from other plays are still in my feeble memory bank today, remarkable when you consider the sweat and tears once necessary to pound them in.

There were other plays that came under the “Heavy Lifting” category. Doing *Sleuth* with Bill Arvey as a two-actor grind wore us down to the nub every night. I thought about walking away from my TT hobby/habit. But new plays came along with roles I liked, so I was still moderately hooked. In 1999 Allison tricked me into doing a very long role in *Over My Dead Body*. It proved to be my swan song for retentive memory. I did two more walk-ons and am sneakily searching for another. Three years ago, at age 80, I played the one-scene one-laugh cop in *Singin’ in the Rain*. By all the evidence I can conscientiously collect, that makes me the oldest actor ever to appear in a TT show. I’m proud of that.

I was lucky enough to do shows in both the 50th and the 75th anniversary seasons. So if anybody desperately needs a walk-on for the 100th, I’m your man.

Or the rabbit.”