



Plugs & Dottles

Official Newsletter of the Nashville Scholars
of the Three Pipe Problem
1st Quarter JAN-FEB-MAR 2019
Jim Hawkins & Dean Richardson, Co-Editors

- Established 1979
- Meetings on third Saturday of every month (except Dec.)
- Website:
nashvillescholars.net
- [Facebook page](#)
- Send comments:
seniorhawk@gmail.com or to
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Celebrating 40 years since our founding in February 1979, this issue is dedicated to three charter members: **Ken Beck, Gael Stahl, and Richard Renfro.**



An image used in Nashville Kroger stores in 1979.

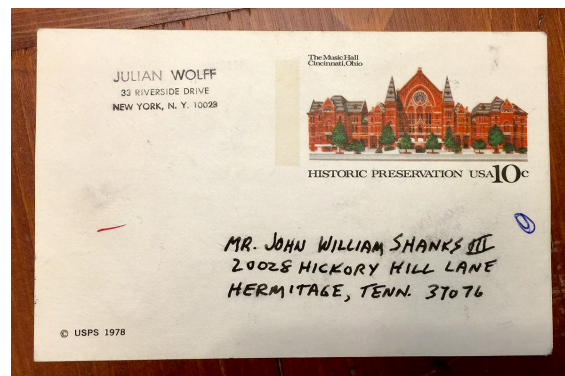
A Nashville research historian and scholar of Holmes, John William Shanks, of 2028 Hickory Hill Lane in Hermitage, is trying to begin a scion society here. Shanks has already proposed a name for the society as The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem. Interested Sherlockian scholars can reach him by phone at 883-3194.

The news item inviting interested Sherlockians to contact John Shanks.
Written by Ken Beck.

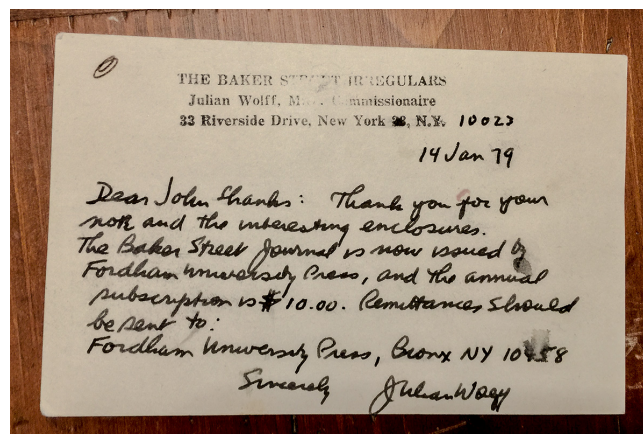
Nashville Scholars 40th Anniversary -- 19 FEB 2019

“The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem was born a mere 40 years ago on Feb. 19, 1979 and took off quickly due to the enthusiasm of our founder, John Shanks. On Jan. 4, an article with Sherlockian art work by Bob Turner appeared in the *Nashville Tennessean* noting that things were happening all across the nation that week, starting with New York, to celebrate the 125th birthday of Sherlock Holmes on January the sixth.

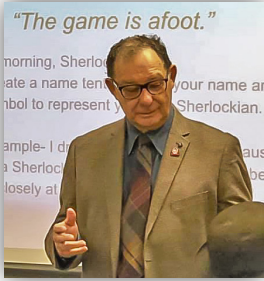
“At the first meeting on Feb. 19, twenty-six Sherlockians gathered among the pewter and leather of the Cumberland Club and its Old London atmosphere. They had been drawn by a three-inch announcement in the same newspaper. We put our preferred noms (canonical names) and addresses on the register, paid our dues, and received the first newsletter in March.” [Read the full article ([on our website](#)) by charter member, Gael Stahl.]



A note to John Shanks from Julian Wolff, January 1979.



Notes of Congratulations from our members.

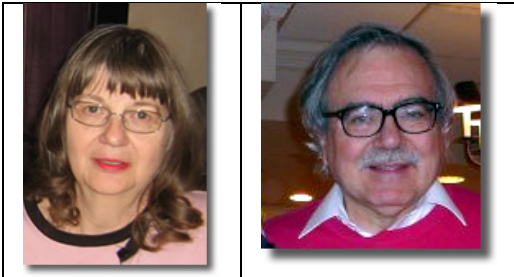


Congratulations to the Nashville Scholars on their 40th Anniversary. A milestone that stemmed from our Charter Members of 1979 and has grown as a body in both knowledge and spirit. We celebrate our accomplishments but remember those members who have passed and were a significant part of our growth as a scion. *(Dr. Marino Alvarez BSI, joined in 1989)*



Congratulations to our members on our 40th anniversary. What brings a group such as ours together, sustaining long-standing bonds and our ability to reach out to members that are near and those that are representing different international regions and countries? Yes, Sherlock Holmes is at the heart of our discussions with the realization that we are ever learning about and finding amazement of the world of Sherlock! But our coming together is also rooted in our respect for each other - different values, perspectives, talents, and scholarly pursuits enrich all of us! We embrace our differences while finding multiple ways to connect and enrich each other! May we all be proud of our sense of belonging and may that spirit continue to enrich us. *(Dr. Victoria Risko, joined 2012)*

Each member of the Nashville Scholars receives an investiture with a name chosen from the canon (a nom), and in a ceremony drawn from the traditions of the Baker Street Irregulars, they also receive an “irregular shilling.” Tom and Anita Feller were invested as Scholars in 2006:



Consider the Cubitts... Hilton and Elsie. The couple, truly star-crossed lovers, came to our attention when the Master accepted the case of “the Dancing Men.” Hilton, a “tall, ruddy, clean shaven gentleman, whose clear eyes and florid cheeks told of a life led far from the fogs of Baker Street”, was a loving husband who held to his affection for Elsie even though she told him of her previous “disagreeable association.”

Elsie, a native of Chicago, feverously attempted to push aside her love for Hilton in order to protect him. Despite her early warnings of potential problems arising from her life in America, their marriage was a remarkably happy one. At least there was happiness until a letter arrived from the States and soon the strange, curious stick figures began to appear...the Dancing Men.

Almost as soon as Hilton turned to the Master for advice, he was struck down leaving his beloved Elsie behind...the end to a love which would have surely endured.

Happily, in Nashville, we have a couple who share the same kind of love and affection as the Cubitts shared. They are seemingly inseparable and share a great love for Holmes as well as a love for a strange genre of literature...science fiction.

Today, we ask Tom and Anita Feller to join the ranks of the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem as: “the Cubitts...Hilton and Elsie” with a special hope for their continued love for each other and a love for “the game.” *(Written and administered by Billy Fields)*

Honoring three Charter Members who were there at the beginning



Ken Beck

Richard Renfro

Gael Stahl

Ken was an award-winning reporter for Nashville newspapers.

Richard "Dick" was a college professor, and Gael was a reporter with a local political newspaper called the *Tennessee Town and City*.

(From an article Ken Beck published in 2017 about Gael Stahl and the beginnings of the Nashville Scholars.)

A native of Plainville, Kansas, and a former Catholic priest who served as a chaplain at Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State University, Stahl discovered Holmes at a B. Dalton Bookstore in Knoxville one day in 1977.

"They had come out with a book with all the Sidney Paget artwork, who did the artwork for most of the Holmes stories and two of the novels," said Stahl of the artist, whose illustrations in "The Strand Magazine," beginning in the early 1890s, helped make icons of Holmes and his sidekick Dr. Watson. "I bought that book and took it home and read one of the stories. I told my wife, 'You know, this detective story is kind of good, and the next time it started raining, I said, 'Sit down, I'm gonna read to you,' and we began reading the stories to one another."

Two years later, Stahl spotted an announcement in "The Tennessean" inviting people to a meeting of those with a common interest in Holmes.

Stahl took his wife and two friends and met about 30 others who were to become the charter members of the **Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**.

Not long afterward, Gael and Susan left to spend two years in Europe and California. When they returned to Tennessee, they learned the club had about fallen apart as the organizer had moved. Gael tracked down Vickie Overstreet and Patricia Blocker, two charter members who had continued to publish a newsletter. (The club's quarterly newsletter, "**Plugs & Dottles**," today is produced online by Jim Hawkins and Dean Richardson.)

"I got a hold of them and said, 'Let's get the group going again.' We met at the Donelson Library and got it going again. Then we met at different libraries and in people's homes, and now we mostly go to nice restaurants and have our meetings," said Stahl, retired after 30 years as editor of the Tennessee Municipal League's newspaper, "*Tennessee Town and City*."

The Nashville Scholars have convened every month since Stahl returned to the Music City area in April 1982. Typically, they gather the third Saturday of the month at Corky's BBQ in Brentwood and at McNamara's Pub in Nashville for a Christmas dinner. They met for many years at the former **Sherlock Holmes Pub** in Music City.

As for what drew Stahl into the casebooks of the master detective, he said, "The foggy Victorian atmosphere for one thing. Doyle's a masterful storyteller. He knows how to get all your attention. He was born a good storyteller. I've read a lot of his books but none as good as his Sherlock Holmes books."

"I think a part of it is because he started something new. He had a medical professor at Edinburgh, Joseph Bell, who was a medical detective. People would come to him, and he would pretty well diagnose them before they opened their mouth. Doyle was quite impressed by that and a few years later thought about writing a detective story. He brought Joe Bell as Sherlock Holmes, and he was the only one doing that type of thing. He figured it out by detecting it from the beginning, and that proved to be popular with readers."



A milestone for the Nashville Scholars was the investiture of three of our members into the Baker Street Irregulars, Marino Alvarez and Bill Mason in 2015 and Shannon Carlisle in 2018. Gael Stahl had this to say about the event. (Note: Stahl sent the note to Marino and Bill in 2015)

"I write you because for many decades in the future you'll be seen as a most admirable pair in the history of our scion. I thought I'd never see the day that more than a handful of Southerners would ever make it into the BSI despite the legendary role John Bennett Shaw played while living in Oklahoma and New Mexico. And we had a member in Memphis a few years back who wrote *Holmes on the Range*. But you are among a very small group.

Thank the stars you both broke through to gain that highest honor of earning your shillings as members of the Baker Street Irregulars and did it by being the most scholarly members of a so-so scholarly group of Nashville Sherlockians. You have worked hard and with a broad generous brush to paint a picture of the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem that would have made our founder and first members swell with pride. This is our finest moment since January 1979 when a fervent bunch of 30 or so Sherlock Holmes lovers met in the top floor party room of the then new First American Bank and promptly published the best newsletters in our history. Our founder was in immediate contact with the head of the BSI and Peter Blau but soon moved to Knoxville to attend and work at the University of Tennessee. As promptly as it arose, the scion dwindled and quit meeting.

Yours truly began a two-year holiday in France in March of 1979. three months after our founding. I was mailed the early newsletters and when I returned in April 1981, I called the former editor and three or four of us rekindled the scion by meeting at the Donelson Library, and before we knew we had about 30 members again and about 10 of us went to William and Mary University in Virginia for John Bennett Shaw's last symposium in 1987.

Many of our current members remember how it went from there. Jim Hawkins hit town and got us our second full page scion feature printed in the *Banner* before he even knew we had a scion here and we invested about 20 members in January 1988 in my year as scion Chief Investigator. Billy was elected to succeed me and made the one-year appointment a lifetime position. Ten years later Jim Hawkins started the WelcomeHolmes blog and Billy starred at the Gaslight Galas in New York City. Then you two came along and rose to the heights.

I've never been so happy and speak for the 200 or so members we've had over the years in thanking you for putting in the effort, really hard and creative work you've done so that Wiggins Whelan has finally decided it should be rewarded. You earned it and the Baker Street Irregulars are lucky to have your fresh blood.

Keep it up as long as you can. Having true scholars in the Nashville Scholars is a proven reality and we thank you and puff out our chests with full and joyous satisfaction." ~Gael Stahl



David Hayes, a member since 2001, shared this information about his Sherlock Holmes hobby. Like many wives in our group, Judi comes now and then, but doesn't fully share David's enthusiasm for Holmes.

Canonical Name: Inspector Baynes

1. I had enjoyed the Basil Rathbone movies for some time when I learned that there were not only a whole lot of movies but stories on which they were based. Dean Richardson introduced me to the canon and to the Scholars.
2. My favorite story is The Musgrave Ritual.
3. I like Mycroft Holmes, particularly in The Bruce-Partington Plans.
4. The sense of fellowship, particularly when there is a sharing of insight into that meeting's story.
5. I was born in Havre de Grace, Maryland, and found my way to Nashville courtesy of the US Air Force. I am a graduate of West Nottingham Academy, Colora, MD, and the University of Tennessee-Nashville (BA, MBA). I am a Certified Financial Planner and an Enrolled Agent.

Billy Fields

1987 - Horace Harker (SIXN) Nashville
(A message on our 40th Anniversary)

As one of the senior partners in the history of the Nashville Scholars, I happily can reflect on more than 30 years of its amazing Sherlockian journey. As 40 years of efforts focused on "Keeping Green the Memory" envelopes us, I am so very proud of the scholastic and gregarious history of this scion. I am equally proud to have been able to play a walk-on role since 1987.



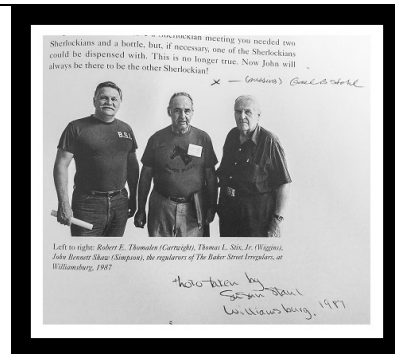
Billy Fields joined soon after I did, in 1987. He has been indispensable in our scion, keeping the meetings on schedule, composing and administering the investitures, sending out inventive notices about our schedule, and being general spokesman for the group. Fields was a journalism major at Austin Peay University and has put those skills to good use for the Nashville Scholars. He has also represented Nashville well in New York City at the annual Gaslight Gala during the BSI Weekends. Everybody loves Billy Fields; it's true!

A Sherlockian who has always supported The Nashville Scholars with his artwork is **Philip Cornell from Sydney, Australia**




This is undoubtedly the cleverest cartoon (illustration) ever sent to our group. And Phil sends notes and cards all during the year, especially at Halloween and Christmas. He is a regular contributor to the **Sydney Passengers**, the [top scion in Australia](#). Thank you, Phil, for years of great friendship and fabulous art.

It wouldn't be a complete anniversary issue of Plugs and Dottles if we didn't remember the story of the 1987 William and Mary **John Bennett Shaw Symposium**. Gael got 10 of us together, and off we went to Williamsburg, VA. He even got our governor to write a proclamation honoring the 100th birthday of Sherlock Holmes. And we had John Shaw read it during the weekend. Several important Sherlockians from the Baker Street Irregulars were present for this audacious occasion. So Gael decides we must have a photo shoot for our local newspaper, *The Tennessean* (or was it the *Banner*?). In what looks like a photo-bomb, Gael stands behind Bob Tomalen, Robert Stix Jr., and John Bennett Shaw. It's a nice photo. But when the University of Minnesota dedicated the John Bennett Shaw Library in Anderson Library at UMN in 1995, that photo was used in the book, *but with Mr. Stahl out of the picture!* We've laughed about that many times. It's part of the lore surrounding The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem. And guess what? Gael Stahl has the canonical nom of "The Final Problem."



We've highlighted some of our long-time members in this issue, but the future belongs to those joining our ranks more recently. Here are some of them.

	
<p>Derek Martin, our Movie Fanatic</p>	<p>Ryan and Kathy Peck</p>
	
<p>Sam House, our Sir Henry Baskerville</p>	<p>Drew Thomas</p>
	
<p>Thomas Vickstrom</p>	<p>David Marcum, from East Tennessee</p>

	
<p>Dean Richardson, Co-editor</p>	<p>Jim Hawkins, Co-editor</p>

Please visit our [website](#) and our [Facebook](#) page for more about all our members.