

(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."