

Getting to know Dave Price Charter Member “Grimpen Meyer”

Editor Hawkins says that some members might enjoy hearing more about my long and varied life, so here goes. If you find it interesting, fine; if not, blame ole Jim.



FIGURE 1 MARY JANE & DAVE IN PARIS

I have had many jobs in life and traveled far and wide, mostly with circuses and magic shows. By the time I was twenty-three I had played all the lower forty-eight. Have played all the Canadian provinces save British Columbia and Newfoundland.

I had two magic shows; then my wife and I had our own small magic show, mostly playing schools in the South. Have been a newspaper reporter, director of a workshop for mentally challenged young adults, assistant superintendent of a state reformatory, and principal of a rural elementary school for five years. Also washed a lot of pots and pans and pushed wheelchairs and stretchers. And oh yeah, I ran a rodeo for three years.

From Dave Price’s Sherlockian biography. The first Sherlock Holmes story I ever read was “The Adventure of the Red-Headed League.” I also read a scholarly work titled *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* by William S. Baring-Gould. My canonical nom is Grimpen Meyer.

I attended my first Nashville Scholars meeting in 1979. Like many others I read Ken Beck's piece in the January 4, 1979 *Tennessean*, and I called John Shanks about joining. He told me Hap Cavett (who lived near me) had also expressed an interest and suggested we come together. We missed the first meeting but made the second one at the Showboat Lounge in Madison.

I was born in Nashville's old Protestant Hospital for a cost of seventy dollars total—including delivery and seven nights’ stay. I remember when Nashville had street cars. I am almost as old as Dick Renfro, and that's saying a lot. When I was a kid Basil Rathbone was Sherlock—in black and white. I would see him at the Fifth Avenue, the Princess, or the Knickerbocker, all gone the way of the hoop skirt.

At some point Shanks moved away, and the group had petered out by the mid-eighties. It wasn't until Gael brought it back to life that my wife Mary Jane started coming with me. We were active through the nineties when we fell by the wayside. Mary Jane died in 2011, and I just recently got back into Sherlockiana.



My life has been a varied one. I worked for seven different circuses, starting in 1959 as an advance man. I was running the Texas Prison Rodeo when I met Mary Jane, and in 1971 we took out a magic show playing schools in the South for three years; we then settled down, and I went back to school for a master’s degree and taught school for eight years, five of which I was a rural school principal (elementary, my dear).

Mary Jane worked in hospitals most of her life and retired from Vanderbilt as Administrative Assistant of Surgical Research. I finished up my working life as a probation officer for the state. We have one son, John (now fifty), who lives with me and helps me since I spend most of the time in a wheelchair. (Note: Dave’s son John passed away in 2021.)