

Meeting Minutes

Notorious Canary-Trainers

Date: Sep. 2025 Location: Fitchburg Library Facilitator: Dave

Story: *The Adventure of the Red Circle (1911)* Note Taker: Max M.

Number Attending: 10+1 Start/Stop Time: 3:00 pm / 4:30 pm Weather: 87°F & Breezy

Attendees

Guest: Detective Dan Nale

Dave

Diane

Tom & Cherry Smith (from Kenosha)

Jim & Vicki

Kent

Glen

John H.

Max

Guest Speaker

Captain of Investigative Services

Detective Dan Nale

5 years next month - Captain of Investigative Services

Discussing the reorganization of the Madison detectives - previously just had one precinct and some detective units

We added an experimental precinct - turned into South District

Decentralizing into Community Precincts

In contrast, most big-city departments are housed in one location, but not Madison.

When the South, North, West, opened, detectives were pocketed into those

They developed the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) first then from there, Violent Crime/Burglary Crime Unit

Violent Crime Unit & Special Victims Units came a little later

We've been in that system since then—Those three special units and district detectives

There was not a lot of room for employee growth as detectives with the precinct, other than to join the Violent Crime Unit

We were in a position where we needed to ask how we can handle more calls for service without additional budget to add more police units (officers)?

We have gone all-in on specialty units

Person crime units

Dan - I am a fan of Sherlock Holmes

Loved the BBC Series, read a lot of the stories many years ago

When he graduated to Detective, his sister got him a Pipe and a Deerstalker cap

Things have evolved quite a bit since Sherlock Holmes was in action

First of all, everything's changed since then. Starting with: Cell Phones

They're mini-Computers

They've changed our lives personally, but also from a modern law-enforcement detective, it's changed the game too.

Every time we use our phone, we're creating GPS data, use the internet, metadata on photographs. There are ways to turn those things off—but I don't know how to do it. For those who play on the wrong side of the tracks, that can be very helpful for us.

It used to be, computers used to be the big thing, but now there are a lot of folks who live off of their phones and their iPads.

The courts have recognized that, and therefore you need a search warrant whenever you want to use that, unless somebody gives you permission.

Dane County will sometimes allow only certain date ranges - this is difficult because forensic tools can't be told "only download certain dates" but the investigator has to be careful to remove the data that isn't covered by the warrant.

128 GB data on one phone...flash drives, external harddrives, etc. It was actually *me* who had to buy all that stuff. Now, everything is in the cloud—our photos are in the cloud, etc. I wasn't initially aware of this, but a flash drive has a shelf-life. If you put evidence on a CD, for example, there's a good chance it won't be readable in 20 years if you need that.

Typically there's one person who has to spend all their time dealing with the warrant returns on that data.

Next, DNA -

[First case, I believe, was in 1986.](#)

I grew up in North Carolina and in 1992 I had a classmate who was murdered and it was the first case that was successfully investigated using DNA.

DNA soup (lots of different contributors) but you can say "Max is included" in that sample. 2009/2010 we had a batch of cases that were linking together - Murder of Brittany Zimmerman (2023 conviction), one in New York that didn't make any sense. Some even linked to Florida armed robberies. There was a worker in China who is now wanted for quite a few crimes right now...

We found that you need swabs that aren't just sterile, but DNA-free. I mentioned Brittany Zimmerman, and there were several different sources. We excluded the contaminating sample, but although the suspect was included in the contributors, there wasn't enough to make a conviction. There's a lab that is doing probabilistic genotyping. "At the end of the day, I'm just a cop." They determined the probability that it wasn't the suspect was like 1 in 6 million.

DNA on expended cartridges, and DNA samples from even misdemeanor offenders now.

Next thing: Security Cameras

We used to use those looping recorders to VHS and the quality was really bad back then. Now with digital recordings. Sometimes we can remote into those, but we may need to get Metro to remote into those. The City doesn't have automatic license plate readers. There's a surveillance ordinance that prevents Madison from doing that.

Question about cameras on every other corner in Europe.

Madison's anti-surveillance ordinance prevents anything that wasn't already in place. Motorcycle squad has those because they had them before the ordinance.

Big thoughts:

Body Cams - Can't use them (I even be under an NDA, so I can't discuss it much), but that's We don't currently use AI for anything—there are programs that will transcribe the audio from a body-worn camera but we aren't using anything like that.

Not just in Madison, no city in the state(?) may use A.I.. In California there's a lawsuit that is potentially going to require disclosure whenever AI is used.

An ongoing problem is deepfakes, that particularly are an Internet Crimes Against Children issue

[National Ballistics Info Network \(NIBIN\)](#) - it uses AI to generate a shell casing fingerprint and can identify casings fired/ejected from the same gun.

It can link cases from all over the region together. We can identify cases in Milwaukee, Chicago, but not national, so we have to have a special agreement in place with Minneapolis, for example.

The court still requires an expert in tool-marks to verify the results and confirm.

Some things about Sherlock Holmes that still apply: Interrogation and Interviewing

The art of talking to people. Plain old gumshoeing, canvassing, knocking on doors, trying to find witnesses who saw some things. That hasn't changed at all.

Some things we've found to be very successful is putting new people (new eyes) on cases that have been going on for a long time.

Question: Can you say more about the city ordinance?

It's a thing that the City restricts what additional surveillance can be added—the reason license plate readers are not allowed

Question: Is there access to DNA records like Ancestry or those other ones?

Short answer: No, we don't, but the FBI can. So we if we run into a brick wall, depending on the type of case, we can submit some of our samples to their databases.

Question: Classic gumshoeing thing that happens—seems like it can be frustrating because people don't want to talk to you, not answering doors and all. What's that like on the side of the person that is trying to get the information?

You hit it right on the head, it can be extremely frustrating. But on the flip side, not everybody feels that way—they don't want to be *seen* cooperating with the police investigation, but they're willing to call or send an email privately.

Question: The CSI effect - have you developed some scripted introduction that you tell folks who think you need to have DNA to prove a suspect did a crime when the other evidence is pointing to them?

Not really, that's more on the prosecutor to make the case there.

Question: Related, when you watch those shows, how do you feel about the realism?

Those shows sometimes drive me nuts, my wife watches NCIS and some of them are so unrealistic.

I'll tell you, I loved the Wire. It was one of the best and most realistic—particularly in terms of having worked in drug units.

There is a tough learning curve when you get promoted to Detective-Seargent they can get tossed right into violent crimes.

Question: County/City is that just the city boundaries?

Yeah, basically.

Question: Speaking of that, Madison is weird, because of the overlapping jurisdictions (county, city, University, etc.)

It is weird. Usually, you only run into that where somebody is the closest responder and they're on the scene first, but we don't have many problems related to that.

Announcements

Jim is cleaning house - "I have a [large amount] of Sherlock Holmes stuff, this is the last stop before the Little Free Libraries"

Story Discussion:

Dave - we have to be relatively brief. There wasn't a whole lot there, but it had its moments. Definitely some good *Sherlock and Watson walking around together* bits.

Diane - I would put it somewhere in the middle—not one of the great ones. Thumbs up for me, the exotic background

Tom - I liked it, but I'm a Sherlock Slut. I like everything. One of the things I like is that Doyle is able to pick you up in 100 words and just DROP you into the thing. "...the gloom of a London winter evening had thickened into one gray curtain, a dead monotone of colour, broken only by the sharp yellow squares of the windows and the blurred haloes of the gas-lamps. As we peered from the darkened sitting-room of the lodging-house, one more dim light glimmered high up through the obscurity." Dark and Stormy night, but in London -John. You're elbow deep. That's really good writing. Tom did some calculations that the guy paid twice as much as he should have for rent. £5 a week vs 50s (£2.5)

(Glen says there were five or six paragraphs that he circled.)

Cherry - Basically, what Tom and Glen had said, and when Emilia was talking, I thought I was was reading a bodice-ripper. Seeing the Jeremy Brett, there's so much added to it, I immediately forgot the story.

Vicki - I liked the story overall, I liked the detective work and the way the mystery was revealed. It wasn't the greatest, but I liked it okay. For the last several stories, I've been picking out very descriptive sentences and I picked the same one as Tom! There's one peculiar part—I'm pretty good at interpreting words into visuals, but I couldn't figure out the part with the closet and the dinner tray.

Jim - I liked it very much, there's some objections to making it a Two-Parter, but I thought this one worked really well where the present vs. the past-tense scenes. The two-part element worked really well in this story. I thought Emilia was too fluent in the story.

Kent - I liked it a lot, Gregson, the guy from Pinkertons shows up, and the passage you both mentioned, I had picked out as really eloquent. Also had to file away the "James Bond" effect, as I call it, the mirror and the door. As the guy in About 60 mentioned, if you had to wait for those magazines a month apart, that was really sharp. I thought that was a good story.

Glen - I liked it but I'll use my guide to read the first paragraph I highlighted—"In the middle of the floor of the empty room was huddled the figure of an enormous man, his clean-shaven, swarthy face grotesquely horrible in its contortion and his head encircled by a ghastly crimson halo of blood, lying in a broad wet circle upon the white woodwork. His knees were drawn up, his hands thrown out in agony, and from the centre of his broad, brown, upturned throat there projected the white haft of a knife driven blade deep into his body." I just thought he had some *real* writing in this. And of course, (nobody mentioned it), but I love the quote about Education. My question is how did the lady become the landlord? Once again, Doyle says that the Italians are evil.

John - I would put this somewhere in the middle, it has some nice points. As far as the two parts...I don't think the story needed to be in two parts, but it was probably just a bit longer than would've fit. I don't think it added suspense or anything. Holmes stories are often at their best when it gets physical. Who was beating up whom, and whatnot. That mirror thing is very goofy. It does—what Glen was getting it—when he has these background stories, they're all over the place. It flows, when the background information actually added something, and it didn't just stereotype.

Max - Maybe liked the story less than the rest of the group, but I still enjoyed reading it. I've been reading a lot of Derleth recently and I gotta say, it's very hard to make a well-constructed mystery that is also enjoyable to read. Didn't think that there was much of a crime there—that a landlady thinks there's something suspicious about her tenant doesn't deserve Holmes' attention, and they just sort of back into the crime: the murder doesn't happen until Holmes has already solved the case.

Jim mentioned that this was another story with the stereotype of the hot-blooded Italian. John told a story about real life where something happened that proved that there *are* hot-blooded Italians. Max also mentioned that part of it in living in a big city squashed up to your

neighbors can make you hot blooded too! But the big Italian personality/culture can feed into that.

Addressing Backing into the crime - renting of the room was plausible, and that there was a background of Italian Mafia was a bit of a Deus Ex Mafia <- I'm not sure if Jim said that, but that's hilariously how it was recorded in my notes.

Question: Possible charges for Gennero - he may claim self-defense or may not be caught at all. It's a little weird that they didn't talk about the resolution of the tale—perhaps that was in the lost Part 3.

Next month's story: The Bruce-Partington Plans (1908)

Next month's discussion leader: Who knows!?