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THE RED-EYED RAVEN GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Author Tim Ritter



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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WELCOME!



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Welcome to the March issue of the Red-Eyed Raven Gazette! Hope you enjoy it!

In case you did not see my Facebook post from last week, I have exciting news: Recently I was the guest on an international podcast, **We Happy Few 506: The Nearly Men**.

This podcast is hosted by two cast members from the 2001 HBO Series "Band of Brothers", the story of Easy Company in the 506th Regiment of the 101st Airborne in World War II. I met these guys last year when my son Corey and I went to Holland for a trip commemorating Operation Market Garden, which was portrayed in the series. During the podcast, I got to plug **Sarah Burning** and tell the story about it, as well as plenty of other topics. The hosts, actors Matt Leitch and Mark Lawrence, like to tease me about my hair, and they gave me a new nickname, "The Lost Bee Gee". It was great fun, and I've already seen an uptick in social media followers, and hope to see an increase in book sales internationally soon, as many listeners are from European countries.

As always, thanks for your encouraging messages sent when these newsletters are released. Your support is very much appreciated.

Sarah and Orville Story

For you *Sarah Burning* fans, here's something extra-special that is exclusive for newsletter subscribers...

This month I wanted to share some info that is not nearly as pleasant as the previous articles but is nonetheless an important part of Orville and Sarah's story. This pertains to Sarah's death in 1971, twelve years after losing her beloved Orville.

Sarah went into the hospital sometime around December 15, 1971, for gall bladder surgery. We don't think much of gall bladder surgery nowadays, as patients most often go home the same day thanks to modern surgical technology. However, 1971 technology was not so advanced, and a gall bladder procedure was still major surgery. No doubt it was believed that by having the surgery in mid-month, she would be fully recovered in time for Christmas.

Based on what I learned while researching for *Sarah Burning*, she got through the surgery just fine but contracted pneumonia shortly afterwards. Her health was not great at that time, and the onset of pneumonia became lethal.

I was a few days from turning seven years old that Christmas. As usual, we had a big Ritter family gathering on Christmas night at Norman's house south of Springfield. The house was packed with relatives, including Orville's brother Dick. I remember seeing him across the room but didn't know who he was. The mood was somber, especially when the aunts began passing out the presents that Sarah had for each grandchild. I received a pillow she had made by hand in the shape of a pig (including a curly tail) and a Hot Wheels car. I still have the car.

On December 27th, the family gathered at St. John's (now Mercy) Hospital in Springfield, the same facility that cared for her and the rest of the victims of the fire in 1959. As a youngster excited about his upcoming birthday, I didn't comprehend the purpose of the vigil that cold December night. I was aware, however, that each pair of aunts and uncles, as well as my parents, were going into Granny's hospital room, which I later realized was the Intensive Care ward. The blue card on the next page was issued to family members during that night of vigil.

I have no recollection of how long each couple was allowed to stay in her room, since I really had no concept of time at that age. However I do recall after waiting for what seemed like hours for Mom and Dad to return, I saw Dad's twin brother Delbert sitting nearby and thought it was Dad. I marched over to him, put my hands on my hips, and said, "Where have you been?" He looked at me and in that deep voice of his said, "How are you?" Suddenly realizing who it was, I turned and ran back to my brother and sister who were sitting in the old wooden phone booths which existed at that time in the waiting room. Eventually Mom and Dad returned and we said our goodbyes to everyone and went home.

Sarah died the next morning.

(Continued next page)

Sarah and Orville Story

CONTINUED

Her funeral was planned for December 30th - - my birthday. Due to my age, I was not allowed to attend the service. The family gathered at the home of one of Sarah's daughters, Wanda, and her husband George "Speedy" Bollinger in Seymour, Missouri. Children who did accompany their parents that far ended up staying at the Bollinger house with Speedy and Wanda's young daughter Donna Sue in charge while the adults attended the funeral in Ava, which was about half an hour's drive from the Bollinger house. Sarah was then buried next to Orville in the Ava City Cemetery.

When I first learned the truth about the gall bladder surgery during my research, Sarah's death certificate had not yet become public. In Missouri there is a 50-year required delay on death certificates becoming public. Sarah's certificate became public in 2022, and I found the data fascinating.

Not only are three causes of death noted, but the approximate date of their diagnosis can be extrapolated. To look at it properly, we have to go in reverse order, looking at the third one first.

Number Three is congestive heart failure, noted to have taken place twelve days before death, meaning December 16th. This is understandable, as her physical condition was not good leading up to her entry into the hospital. She was not known to have suffered from diabetes, although it is possible. Her physical activity was limited, she was overweight, and may have had high blood pressure. Truth be known, she had most likely suffered from congestive heart failure prior to entering the hospital, but it was officially diagnosed on the 16th.

Number Two is pulmonary edema, noted to have been observed ten days before her death, so on the 18th. Caused by excessive fluid in the lungs, this is the indication of the onset of pneumonia.

Number One is acute renal failure. In other words, her kidneys shut down. This is known to develop rapidly, and even in today's advanced medical technology, it can often be fatal for the patient. It most certainly was for her. It is interesting to note, however, that she was diagnosed with it eight days prior to death, meaning December 20th. No doubt with 1971 technology, it was a harbinger of certain death. The only question at that time would be how long a patient would linger with it.

In analyzing all of this, I thought it would be interesting to examine Orville's death certificate for comparison.

Note there are two causes of death noted for him: third degree burns and bronchopneumonia. I find the mentioning of the burns interesting, as it has always been accepted that Sarah was burned far worse than Orville. However, his burns and the fact that he lingered in the house too long before jumping out the window certainly contributed significantly to his death.

Bronchopneumonia was used to describe the fact that Orville had inflammation in the alveoli, the tiny air sacs within the lungs, no doubt from the toxins inhaled as he remained in the burning bedroom that awful night in October 1959.

I find all of this fascinating, and wanted to share this unfortunate but important part of the saga of Sarah's life.

PHOTOS



The car Sarah intended to give me for Christmas in 1971.

SPECIAL PERMISSION DATE 12-27-71

To remain in the Hospital after 8:30 P.M. has been given to:
Family of Mrs Ritter
 who has a relative in ROOM # WICW

SIGNATURE: R Ritter
 Sister Supervisor or Head Nurse

StJ-Spfd 2/67

The card which authorized the family to remain in the hospital after hours during their vigil of December 27, 1971.

1. DECEASED—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST SARAH ELIZABETH RITTER			2. SEX F	3. DATE OF DEATH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) 12-28-71	
4. RACE (WHITE, NEGRO, AMERICAN INDIAN, ETC. (SPECIFY)) white		5. AGE—LAST BIRTHDAY (YEARS) MONTH DAY 71	6. UNDER 1 YEAR UNDER 1 DAY HOURS MIN. 8-26-1900	7. DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) Greene	
8. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION OF DEATH Springfield		9. INSIDE CITY LIMITS (SPECIFY YES OR NO) yes	10. HOSPITAL OR OTHER INSTITUTION—NAME (IF NOT IN EITHER, GIVE STREET AND NUMBER) st. Johns Hospital		
11. STATE OF BIRTH (IF NOT IN U.S.A., NAME COUNTRY) Tenn		12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY USA		13. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (SPECIFY) widowed	
14. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER [REDACTED]		15. USUAL OCCUPATION (GIVE KIND OF WORK DONE DURING MOST OF WORKING LIFE, EVEN IF RETIRED) Housewife		16. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY	
17. RESIDENCE—STATE COUNTY Mo. Greene		18. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION Spfg.		19. INSIDE CITY LIMITS (SPECIFY YES OR NO) yes	
20. FATHER—NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST Rev. C.C. Seal		21. MOTHER—MAIDEN NAME FIRST MIDDLE LAST Lydia M. Spears		22. STREET AND NUMBER Rt 8	
23. INFORMANT—NAME Norman Ritter			24. MARRIAGE ADDRESS (STREET OR R.F.D. NO., CITY OR TOWN, STATE, ZIP) Rt 8 Spfg., Mo		
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY: (ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR (a), (b), AND (c))					
18. IMMEDIATE CAUSE		DUE TO, OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF:		APPROXIMATE INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH	
(a) Acute renal failure				8 days	
(b) Pulmonary edema				10 days	
(c) Congestive heart failure				12 days	
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS, CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO CAUSE GIVEN IN PART I (a)					
19. AUTOPSY (YES OR NO) Yes		20. IF YES WERE FINDINGS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING CAUSE OF DEATH Yes			
21. ACCIDENT, SUICIDE, HOMICIDE, ETC. UNDETERMINED (SPECIFY)		22. DATE OF INJURY (MONTH, DAY, YEAR) HOUR		23. HOW INJURY OCCURRED (ENTER NATURE OF INJURY IN PART I OR PART II, ITEM 18)	

Sarah's death certificate

1. PLACE OF DEATH a. COUNTY Greene		2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: Residence before admission) a. STATE Missouri		b. COUNTY Douglas	
b. CITY (If outside corporate limits, give TOWNSHIP only) OR TOWN Springfield		Length of stay in 1b 4 days		c. CITY OR TOWN Ava	
c. FULL NAME OF (If NOT in hospital, give location) HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION St. Johns		Inside Limits <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		d. STREET ADDRESS (If outside, give location) Route	
3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or print) First Middle Last Orville Ritter			4. DATE OF DEATH Month Day Year October 31, 1959		
5. SEX Male	6. COLOR OR RACE White	7. Married <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Never Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>	8. DATE OF BIRTH 7-28-98	9. AGE (last birthday) IF UNDER 1 YEAR IF UNDER 24 HR 61	
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) Retired Farmer		10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY Own home		11. BIRTHPLACE (City and state or country) Ava, Missouri	
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY USA		13a. FATHER'S NAME Simon Ritter		13b. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME Eliza Jane Lee	
14. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE Sarah E. Ritter		15. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Yes, no, or unknown) (If yes, give war or dates of service) No			
16. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. [REDACTED]		17. INFORMANT Norman Ritter, Springfield, Mo.			
18. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c). PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:					INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a) 3rd degree burns					
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a), stating the underlying cause last. DUE TO (b) Pneumonia					
DUE TO (c) Bronchopneumonia					
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH but not related to the terminal disease condition given in PART I (a)					PART III. If deceased was female was there a pregnancy in last 90 days.

Orville's death certificate



"CHASING THE CHADWICK LINE" UPDATE

Progress continues on the *Chasing the Chadwick Line* book. Much of it is already written, but I have some additional research taking place in the next few weeks. High on the list of important items to research is photographs.

Many photos of the train have been shared on social media by a few local historians, but I am in search of high resolution pics (or at least the highest resolution I can get). One of my sources is a local lady who is a dear friend and the granddaughter of Robert Lyons, the engineer on the train in its final years. She wrote two articles, one about the train itself and one about her grandfather, which will be wonderful sources for the book. The two photos below were included in her writings and will most certainly be included. As of this writing I am waiting to hear back from her to see if she has more that she is willing to share.

Additionally I am going to be working with the archives at the Greene County Library to see what they have. Numerous photos appear on their website, and I plan to cull through their collection.

Since up to this point nothing formal has been published about the train, I am hopeful that the book will appeal to local readers as well as train enthusiasts around the world.



PRESENTATION UPDATE

If you or anyone you know belong to a group needing speakers, please give them my contact info!



Every month in this section I will highlight one of my current presentations. Here's another one:

The Battle of Springfield

Some legendary Civil War battles began as chance encounters, in which the opposing armies happened upon one another. Others took place on a field of one army's choosing. But the Battle of Springfield, fought on January 8, 1863, was a far from random event. The story of the battle and the events leading up to it includes a race through Douglas and Christian Counties between local militia who needed to warn the city and the southerners who wanted to silence the militia, bold and desperate preparations by local Union officials to bolster the defenses of Springfield, and even a few infamous names of Confederates who were engaged in the battle. This presentation is an exciting look at the battle, including animated troop movements overlaying a modern map of the area, to show where the battle took place in comparison with structures of today.

SCHEDULE OF APPEARANCES

April 28, 2023 - 11:30a.m.

**University Heights Baptist Church Senior Education Program
Springfield, MO**

Presentation: *Sifting Through the Ashes (30-minute version)*

July 11, 2023 - Time TBD

**Glenstone Avenue Baptist Church Senior Education Program
Springfield, MO**

Presentation: *Battle of Springfield*

July 22, 2023 - 10:30a.m.

**Scottish Rite Cathedral
Joplin, Missouri**

Presentation: *Keynote Address*

August 3, 2023 - 6:00pm

**Polk County Historical Society
Bolivar, MO**

Presentation: *Wild Bill Hickok and Davis Tutt: A Big Bucket of Ugly*

My regular speaking engagements, twice each month, continue at the three Elfindale senior living facilities in Springfield. I have now begun presenting at The Preston Senior Living Facility, and next month will be at the Elfindale Manor as well.