

**The Spirit of Eureka College: The Social Life**  
**Early Morning Crisis at the Tally Ho**  
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**The following is a stroll down Memory Lane, celebrating a place that was dear to my heart during my student days at Eureka College. The place is the Tally Ho, an all-night diner in the area that served as a welcome refuge for a wide variety of people, especially college students. I recall that Les O'Neal, John McCracken, and I spent not a few hours studying at the diner for Dr. Jane Wilde's brutal history exams. Then, years later, my oldest daughter Lori Ann told me that she and her friends would frequent the Tally Ho for late night snacks and libations. Sadly, the Tally Ho no longer exists, but it will always have a special place in my memory and in my writing.**

It was about 5:30 on Saturday morning, and young Dr. Wanton Slaughter stopped off at the Tally Ho for breakfast before going to the Big Sleazy River for a day of fishing. He needed a nutritious breakfast that would provide enough energy to last all day because he didn't plan to stop for lunch. This was his free day, and he was determined to enjoy it as fully as he could.

He noticed several vehicles, among them three police cars, in the Tally Ho's parking lot, and he wondered why so many people were up so early. "Something must be amiss, and maybe my services as a physician are needed," he muttered to himself as he opened the door of the Tally Ho.

When Dr. Slaughter entered the diner, he saw a group of men gathered around Paige Turner, the English major from Heliotrope University who worked as the night waitress, and Grubby Crocker, the night cook. There were two city policemen, a state policeman, a deputy sheriff, a campus policeman, Boone Fowler, Grant Clements, and Xavier Bunz, the ER physician. Wanton Slaughter heard someone say that Archie Duffy, the owner of the diner, had been summoned and was on the way.

Expecting to see a corpse or two, Wanton then asked, "What's the trouble?"

His question was met with voices of everyone speaking at once, like on TV when a group of people is featured on a panel and everyone wants to talk at the same time and will not let the others talk.

"Hold on, one at a time. I can't understand a word you guys are saying. Grant, you tell me what is wrong," Wanton pleaded.

Grant Clements, a respected local attorney who had recently been named Man of the Year by *Oops! The Journal of Medical Malpractice*, shook his head sadly, went tsk, tsk, tsk, and answered, "The portrait of Ronald Reagan that always hangs on the wall behind the cash register has been taken sometime during the night. Along about 4:00 Paige noticed it was gone and called the police to report the theft."

"Is Paige sure that the portrait was taken this night? Maybe it was stolen some other time," Dr. Slaughter suggested.

At this point Paige entered the conversation. "I know it was taken sometime during this very night."

Grant looked at Paige sternly and asked, "How can you be so sure of it?"

“Because the first thing I always do when I come to work is flirt with the portrait. It's a picture of young Ronald Reagan during his college days. He is in his swimming trunks and gazing heavenward while a child, draped with a towel, sits at his feet, looking at him with eyes filled with gratitude. He has just saved the child from drowning in the treacherous currents of the Rock River. My, he was a handsome devil back in the day, and when I look at that portrait, I wish I had a time machine to go back and win his heart.”

“Yes, I'm sure Ronald Reagan broke many a young girl's heart back in the day,” Boone Fowler opined.

Grant then asked a logical question, “Do you have any idea who took the portrait?”

Paige did not hesitate even for a moment, “Yes, I know, but I can't prove it. The men of Beta Alpha Delta fraternity took it. But I was so distracted I didn't actually see them do it.”

Grant turned to Grubby Crocker, “Grubby, did you see the BAD men purloin the portrait of Reagan?”

Grubby flibbered his lips, scratched his head, squinted his eyes, and said, “Did I see the BAD men do **what?**”

“Purloin, purloin, take, filch, pilfer, steal,” Grant said, losing his patience.

Ruefully, Grubby said, “No, I was taking a wee nip of Old Radiator Flusher and perusing the photos in *Décolletage on the Campus*; hence, I did not witness the purloining of the portrait.”

Grant turned to Paige and said, “Please explain and leave out no detail no matter how trivial it seems.”

Paige nodded and began, “It was about 2:30 and a group of Beta Alpha Delta men came in to put a top on the evening.”

Grant exclaimed, “They came in to do **what?**”

Here, Boone interrupted on Paige's behalf. “To put a top on the evening. It's an expression that means to find an exciting way to end the day, to celebrate in a special and exciting way because we only go around once in life and we should grab for all the gusto we can. To put a top on the evening means to end the day with gusto, elation, exuberance, joyful glee.”

“Thank you, Mr. Fowler,” Paige said gratefully. “Now I will continue. The men of BAD came up to me, all smiling, and Rip Johnson, the president of BAD, told me I had been chosen Sweetheart of the Year for Beta Alpha Delta. Roscoe Goodson handed me a rose, and the men knelt around me while Hamilton Beech looked into my eyes and sang ‘My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose.’”

“My heart melted because ever since I was a little girl, I have dreamed that a handsome prince on a white horse would come riding up to me and sing that song. I was completely carried away. I suspect that a couple of BAD pledges sneaked in and took the portrait of Ronald Reagan while I was on Cloud Nine. I was so distracted I did not see them.”

At that moment, the door of the Tally Ho was flung open, and an enraged Archie Duffy swept into the room like a mighty wind. He pointed at the spot where the Reagan portrait had hung. “It was a

keepsake from my dear old father, God rest his soul, who suggested I display it here. If I ever find the guy who stole it, he's gonna be meat on the street; I'm gonna spread him across this floor like a thin coat of wax. He's gonna ...."

"Easy, Archie, we'll get your Ronald Reagan portrait back. Calm down or you'll have a heart attack." Wanton Slaughter said, hoping to keep Archie from going totally ballistic.

Grant Clements then saved the day. Like Bill Clinton's feeling someone's pain, Grant looked into Archie's eyes and said, "Archie, I will personally take charge of this matter. I will not rest until I find and restore the Reagan portrait to you. I have certain advantages that will serve me well as I search for the culprits who have done this dastardly deed. You are marginalized by this theft, but my legal training will empower me to solve this crime, especially since we know who the guilty parties are."

Without meaning to, Grubby Crocker threw some cold water on Grant's attempt to save the day when he said, "Just remember that people are innocent until proved guilty."

Grant threw a saltshaker at Grubby and shouted, "Take that, you Mickey Mouse de Sade! You vapid and irreflective guffin! Get back in the kitchen where you belong!"

Archie Duffy was normally one of the most easy-going men in the community, a man with a big heart. He was moved by Grant's gesture of friendship, so he said, "Grant, I will leave this matter in your capable hands." Then he turned to Paige and said, "Please believe me when I say that I in no way hold you responsible for this ignominious act." Then, brushing a tear from his eye, Archie left the Tally Ho to be alone with his grief.

Later that day, Grant Clements persuaded a judge to issue a warrant to search the Beta Alpha Delta fraternity house. Unannounced and accompanied by five policemen and a crime dog named Snitch, Grant went to the fraternity house, which was located south of the Bide A Wee Memory Gardens. There, the party confronted a frightened pledge to tell him that the house would be searched from top to bottom. Grant was certain the portrait would be found on the premises.

He was wrong! But the search did result in interesting discoveries. For example, behind the false ceiling in the chapter room, Grant found that the space had been jammed full of empty Blotto Beer cans, so much so that not another can could be secreted there. Then, he found a complete set of final exams given by Professor Archibald Musty. In a time capsule he found a 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle rookie card in mint condition. The last Grant knew that card was worth \$35,000.

Grant also found in the capsule a newspaper with the headlines "Albert Einstein Refuses Presidency of Israel." Then a Mr. Potato Head, the first issue of Mad Magazine, an "I Like Ike" pin, a photo of a nude stripper named Norma Vincent Peel wearing a DeKalb seed cap and waving an American flag. Then there was a copy of Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*, a partial deck of porno playing cards, a fan letter from the Beta Alpha Delta chapter to Debbie Reynolds, and another newspaper with a picture of Richard Nixon with the headlines "Nixon Explains Secret Fund." Then Grant found a rum cake wrapped in foil marked "Class of 1952."

Grant did not know where else to look. The portrait could be hidden anywhere. The culprits were keeping quiet because none of Grant's spies on campus heard a word about the deed. He even planted listening devices in the BAD fraternity house, but the subject of the Ronald Reagan portrait never came up. No one was talking, not even the girlfriends of BAD members.

Two months went by and Grant Clements had not recovered the portrait. The big news was that he was chosen to receive the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters at Heliotrope University. He was also invited to give the commencement speech, and he accepted the invitation gracefully. In truth, Grant was an outstanding speaker, certainly on a par with Ronald Reagan. Grant could charm an ape out of a tree, convince a turtle to give up its shell, and turn the worst and most foul profanity into beautiful poetry. In addition, he could sing “That Lucky Old Sun” and “The Cry of the Wild Goose” to perfection.

Grant’s speech was full of eloquent hoopla, razzmatazz, and bombast, and he concluded by lifting the young grads to the mountain top and inspiring them to pursue the horizon on silvery wings, to sail the seven seas, travel to the four corners of the world and do battle with formidable adversaries. It was the kind of speech that moves people to go on quests to seek the fountain of youth, the philosopher’s stone, and the Holy Grail.

It is customary at graduation ceremonies at Heliotrope University for the speaker to shake the hand of each graduate after he or she receives the diploma. Grant was cheerfully congratulating the grads when Rip Johnson came by. When Grant extended his hand, Rip slipped a scrap of paper to him and whispered, “Be sure to read this later.”

Grant nodded and reached for the hand of the next graduate. When the last degree had been conferred and the benediction given, and tearful goodbyes had been said, then Grant opened Rip’s note, which was typed but unsigned. Grant was shocked to read the words “My conscience got the better of me. The item you seek is in a house of ill repute in Peoria—for safekeeping. When I am home and far away from here, I will send you the address and the phone number of the place.”