



WABASH COLLEGE

Class Agents Letter

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Dear Classmates,

A Short Letter

This issue is short, but we wanted to get this to you now, given the recent events on campus and the approaching 125th Monon Bell game.

Classmate News

As per usual, we begin with this topic. We received this very nice note from **Larry Landis**:

Earl & Duane,

Just for the record, classmate **Steve Claffey** has given leadership, time and more to the Crooked Creek pantry over time, not just on Wabash Day(s). Most recently he led a mini-fundraiser to buy a much-needed large panel van for the pantry to assist in transporting an astonishing variety of donated and purchased commodities. Rumor has it that Steve has had more fun driving the van than at any time since getting his driver's license!

Great message! Many thanks to **Steve** for his contributions and to **Larry** for sharing this information.

Senior Bench

Here is a link to an [article](#) on the Senior Bench we received from the Alumni Office. I must admit that I never did understand, during my four years on campus, the protocol for painting the bench, but it was always interesting to see the latest decoration. I hope you enjoy the article and that it brings back wonderful memories.

D3football Article on Wabash

As many of you know, this fall has been a challenging one for the entire Wabash community. Here is a link (<http://d3football.com/columns/around-the-nation/2018/wabash-fighting-through>) to a compassionate article, entitled *Wabash fighting through*, written by Adam Turer on November 1 and featured on the d3football site.

I encourage you to read it, and, remember **WAF!!!** And, most importantly, the “fight” always goes beyond an athletic contest.

125th Monon Bell

BELL’S LURE, SYMBOLISM RING TRUE by John Kerezy ‘77
CRAWFORDSVILLE, Ind. — October 21, 2018



Schuyler Nehrig (left) and Brendan McCoy beneath the Monon Bell at Wabash College's Allen Center.

"Where's Hillary?" Those were the first words a Greencastle police officer asked of the four Wabash students who were apprehended while attempting to steal the Monon Bell from DePauw University overnight on October 18-19, 2017.

The foursome thought they had planned the perfect heist of the trophy for one of football's oldest rivalries, first by hiding out for six hours in DePauw's Lilly Center until past closing time. Next, they disguised themselves by wearing lab coats and donning Halloween masks of presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

"We knew there were security cameras," recalls Brendan McCoy, a junior Classics major and getaway driver. "So the guys going in took precautions." What the four hadn't counted on was a pressure-sensitive silent alarm, triggered to alert DePauw security if the 300-pound bell was removed from its spot. Busted!

AN ALLURE THAT ENDURES

More than 85 years have passed since the now-defunct Monon Railroad donated the bell as a prize for the victor of the annual Wabash-DePauw game. Can college students in an era of instant connectivity, with a world of sports at their fingertips, still get excited about a relic from a long-bygone era? Absolutely!

Professors in Wabash's Rhetoric Department understand what the Bell represents, and why it appeals to students nearly 130 years after DePauw and Wabash first met on the football field and rode the Monon Railroad to get from town to town.



Professor Jennifer Abbott (Wabash College photo)

"We associate bells and their sound with positive things. We get 'saved by the bell;' our memories become clear when something 'rings a bell;' and the sound of

bells typically accompanies an important message, such as when church bells announce a marriage,” explains Dr. Jennifer Abbott, associate professor of rhetoric.

“Because the bell originally traveled to Crawfordsville and Greencastle on locomotives, it also symbolizes a shared line or connection between Wabash College and DePauw University,” she adds. “And perhaps it is this symbolic combination — of a shared historical *connection* on the one hand, and of the announcement of a *division*, on the other hand, between a winner and loser — that makes the Monon Bell such a desired trophy.”

This allure lives strongly at DePauw, at Wabash, and wherever alumni and friends of the two institutions gather. DePauw students tried, without success, to steal the Bell from the Pioneer Chapel in 2012. Freshmen on guard that night from the Sigma Chi and Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternities stopped them, but the Bell lost its handle in the tussle. There was no attempt to prosecute the would-be thieves.

“It’s like our symbol,” McCoy says. “It represents our seniors working for that one last moment of glory.”



Monon Bell (Source: Wikipedia)

For some, the Bell’s meaning is even greater. “It is part of a huge tradition, and it’s one of the great things we have here,” says Schuyler Nehrig, junior German major, placekicker on the Little Giant football team, and another of the would-be heisters. “The whole campus was deflated after we lost the Bell in the 2016 game. It means more to us than to them (DePauw). When we have the Bell, we

put it in a place of honor at the Allen Center. When DePauw has the Bell, they put it down on the ground.”

Over the decades, there have been major “incidents” between students at the two institutions around the rivalry. For example, DePauw students caused thousands of dollars in damages when they smashed windows at the Humanities Center on a raid to Wabash in 1981. There have been successful and unsuccessful attempts to steal the Bell, and students at one other college (Rose-Hulman) also once absconded with the Bell.

Deans and other administrators from both colleges strive to discourage any illegal activity with respect to the rivalry. At times in the past, there have been threats that one side or the other would cancel the game if violence persisted. Fortunately, for McCoy, Nehrig, and the other two Kappa Sigma fraternity brothers who were “in” on the heist attempt, they stayed true to their plan. No damage was done to the Bell when McCoy and his fraternity brothers made their heist attempt. They had not defaced DePauw’s buildings in any way, or caused any property damage on campus.

“Just a few scratches,” is how Putnam County Prosecutor Timothy Bookwalter described what the four Wabash students did. He accepted the would-be heisters pleading guilty to a Class A misdemeanor for criminal trespass, and the punishment was probation and community service.



Professor Jeff Drury (Wabash College photo)

The attempt, which received global publicity when the media published surveillance videos, served to further unify “us versus them” in Crawfordsville. Dr. Jeff Drury, an associate professor who’s teaching a class in the Fall 2018 semester on Rhetoric and Identity, connects the Bell to the personality types the Wabash community has for itself and for its rival.

Having a common enemy can often be a powerful uniting factor,” Dr. Drury says. “Wabash students come to experience their identity as ‘Wallies,’ in part, by their joint opposition to the ‘Dannies’ of DePauw. The Bell is a physical symbol of that identity and reaffirms that the struggle is both real and worth fighting.”

VICTORY IN THE AFTERMATH

Sometimes bitter lessons learned can result in positive outcomes. DePauw exploited Nehrig’s involvement in an attempt to affect the outcome of the 2017 Monon Bell game, by suggesting more severe charges might be filed against him.

McCoy saw this unfold in the days after the attempt. “It soon became obvious to us that DePauw was trying to get inside Schuyler’s head,” he recalls. “There was a comment about ‘all of you or none of you get to go to the game’ made along the way. They really wanted him (Nehrig) off the field that day.”

Jon Pactor ’71, an Indianapolis attorney who’s also witnessed 50 Monon Bell games going back to the 7-0 Wabash “Mud Bowl” victory of 1967, denounced the effort.

“Many Wabash alumni will always remember the ungentlemanly conduct of DePauw for dangling the threat of serious criminal punishment over the kicker from a harmless college prank,” he says. “As a result of DePauw manipulating a player in such a fashion, Wabash resorted to practicing and preparing the fake field goals for the game.”

Of course the attempt backfired, and it was the Little Giants who claimed the Monon Bell with the 22-21 victory. ***(A story on the 124th Monon Bell classic will appear here on this blog in the not-too-distant future.)*** Nehrig was 2-for-2 on PATs, and also played a key role in a fake field goal play.

Part of the foursome’s community service sentence was cleaning up Blackstock Stadium afterward. They had a lot of help.

“All the freshman on the football team assisted us,” McCoy says. “And about 10-15 other people pitched in too. It was mixture of parents, students and President and First Lady Lora Hess too.”

“Wabash had our backs, and would go to war for us,” says Nehrig, recalling how he felt as he picked up and discarded trash after the game. “WAF had an even greater meaning. I love this place.”

One old and heavy train bell still holds a mystic appeal in the “oldest continuous college rivalry West of the Alleghenies.” What happened in 2017 only added to its lore and tradition.

Communicate

PLEASE send us your news. I know from conversations with and messages from classmates that many of you are leading interesting lives in our “mature years”. So share your experiences with us. Maybe others would like to hear about your climbing Mt. Everest.

All the best to each and every one.

Duane