

2002 Liars Contest

Flying squirrels, flying pirates, and frying fish were the order of the day during the 2002 West Virginia State Liars Contest, held during the Vandalia Gathering last year. With so much bull flying in the Cultural Center Theater, our intrepid judges had their hands full. They sorted it all out, however, and gave the following awards:

First place — Rich Knoblich of Wheeling

Second place — Mark Howes of French Creek

Third place — Nancy Feather of Aurora

A special Youth Award was presented to Justin Wood of Charleston. Congratulations and thanks to all of the contestants. Here are last year's top three winning lies.



First-place winner Rich Knoblich. Photograph by Michael Keller.

People ask me, "Hey, Rich, does it ever get boring up on the old homestead up on the mountain?"

No, man. I got neighbors. I got this one, he's a retired pirate captain. Now this pirate captain, he's the fella who figured out that your sails, you could just stretch them from the fore mast to the middle mast to the aft mast, and you'd have this huge canopy. Then you just catch the updraft, and it would lift your ship right up into the air. It would glide just like the hawks do on the air currents. Then you could sail the air currents just like you do the ocean currents.

First Place

**Rich
Knoblich**

Wheeling

Well, one day he took his ship — he called it the Golden Opportunity. He decided he needed some livestock for his farm, and he sailed it on over towards the Eastern Panhandle, and settled that ship right onto an open field. He then jumped ship and went on down into the town of Franklin to get himself some livestock.

Now, while he was gone, a caravan of trucks from one of the local churches — the Church of the High Holy Hikers of the Heavenly Foot Massage — were going through the countryside looking to save souls, and they came across this pirate ship. Well, they got out and they pondered it, and they turned to their minister Aunt Marian. She looked at it, and she declared, "The Lord helps them who help themselves." So, they helped themselves to all that canvas off of the ship and threw it into the back of their pickup truck. They then went on down into the valley where the old logging camp was located. There, with needles as sharp as their tongues and fingers as quick as their wits, they fashioned themselves a revival tent and began revivin' souls.

Meanwhile, the captain, he comes back to his ship, and it was quite obvious that marauding buccaneers had somehow taken away all of his sails. Well, he had bought himself three sheep. So, he got them back up onto the deck, and he corralled them at the one end. The sheep, they're baaing and they're bleating and they're making all kinds of noise, so he fed them the only thing he had. That was some refried bean burritos. Well, that kept them quiet, and that's when he got his idea what he was going to use for sails.

He went over to his sea chest and kicked it open, and he pulled out three pair of those extra-large old boxer shorts. The kind that his crew had given him at Christmas. You know those Christmas gag gifts? They show a picture of mistletoe over the back end of them. You give 'em to your boss. So, he took those, and he stretched that elastic across those spars from one mast to the next mast to the next mast, and he had himself some sails.

Well, right about then, the gastrointestinal tracts of those sheep had been working on those refried bean burritos, and a breeze, shall we say, started to kick up. And that sailing ship, it lifted itself up. But the captain realized quickly that with the added weight of those sheep, he wouldn't have enough lift to get over the top of Cheat Mountain. So, he kicked open the hatch of the hole, grabbed a shovel, and started shoveling his Spanish gold doubloons over the side. Well, once he lost enough ballast, that ship, the Golden Opportunity, it just rose high into the air. Well, the captain, he grabbed the tiller with one hand, and he grabbed a bottle of fine Jamaican rum with the other, and he started steering a course for home.

Meanwhile, down in the valley, Aunt Marian at the revival tent had just finished her sermon titled "Money Doesn't Grow on Trees." Showering down out of the sky come gold coins onto that tent, falling all around them. Aunt Marian looked at it, and she thought to herself, "Damn, I'm good."

The very next morning, I came out onto my front porch. And there in my front yard was that pirate ship. Now, the sheep, they were no longer passing gas. The captain, he was passed out and completely gassed. So the moral of my story — if you ever come out into your yard and there's a pirate ship, and the captain is three sheets to the wind, and it's rigged with three shorts for the wind, and it's powered by three sheep breaking wind, what you got there in front of you, folks, is the golden opportunity for a story.



Second-place winner Mark Howes. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Second Place

Mark Howes

French Creek

Got a neighbor named Frog Wilson. They named him Frog not because of the way he talks, but the way he walks. Well anyway, me and Frog, we decided we'd build us one of them hot-air balloons. So, we got a cast-iron bathtub and some hickory sticks. We sold our ginseng that we had dried and bought us some skins – beaver skins, muskrat skins – and we built ourselves a hot-air balloon. We took one of them 500-gallon propane tanks and strapped to it.

It was a good-looking outfit we had there, and everything was going fine. It was flying and everything. The anchor we got, we imported it. It was a five-ton boat anchor, but it worked pretty good.

Well, we was getting ready to go to the Woodchuck Dance at Helvetia, and we was all dressed up in our blaze orange. Frog come over, and Frog said, "The wind's comin' up. You reckon we ought to lash that hot-air balloon down a little better, make sure it don't go nowhere?"

I said, "Sure."

So, we hops in it. Well, lo and behold, you know what a gale is? That's a strong, powerful wind that comes right before the hail. Well, we took off in that hot-air balloon in the gale.

We furrowed our garden, furrowed the neighbor's garden, went on up, come across the holler, found one of the largest sycamore trees I'd ever seen in my life. It was hollow. We hid in that sycamore tree, came out of that sycamore tree, went over, went through a hail storm. That hail tore holes all over our balloon. Froggy's got a tub full of hail settin' there with him, and he's a-shaking. I had been catapulted up inside that balloon. Not only that, but there was a whole bunch of flying squirrels inside there, too.

We was fallin' so fast, I knew we was going to crash. I thought to myself, the only way I can fix this situation is to plug all these holes with flying squirrels. So, I whipped out my leatherman tool, and I thumbed through it till it come to "Mark Howes' Fix-It Tent." I didn't think the Humane Society would like it too well if I patched my tent up with live flying squirrels. So, I imagined the best thing for me to do was to just tie their legs and stretch them out over the holes.

It worked perfect. Once in a while, they'd flap up and let us come down slowly. So, me, Frog, and the flying squirrels, we was makin' pretty good time a-comin' into Helvetia, back into that country where I knew where we was at. Well, we landed in Helvetia. I walked over and took my pocketknife, and I freed every one of them flying squirrels and put them in a feed sack. Took them back across the hill, turned them back into that sycamore tree, came back, and danced the first woodchuck dance with my lovely lady. And that's the truth.

Third Place

Nancy Feather

Aurora

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