

2003 Liars Contest

Shovels, violin making, and magic makeup & spackling were the order of the day during the 2003 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 — Justin Wood of Kanawha County

Second place — Rich Knoblich of Wheeling

Third place — Adam Booth of Huntington

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

Justin Wood

Kanawha County

First-place liar Justin Wood of Kanawha County, with a big smile and two Golden Shovel awards — the small one for winning the youth award and the large one for capturing the overall title of "Biggest Liar."

Photograph by Michael Keller.

I'm not here to tell a story to win as much as I am to do it as a public service to those who might win this year. See, last year, I won this shovel for the youth contest — this beautiful Golden Shovel — and I was so happy at the time. But soon after, it became too much. The fame became too much. I mean, you don't know

what it's like to be famous until you've won a liars contest. All the interviews, all the press always there, the paparazzi. The drugs got [to be] too much — the lie enhancing drugs — they were everywhere for me. And the groupies, it was awful. I want whoever's gonna win next year to know what I went through.

It was sometime in between shooting a public service announcement with Roady the Roadkill Racoon and signing my deal with Nike for the new Air-Liars that I met this girl. This girl, I mean, she had one of those smiles that could stop traffic. Actually, there wasn't a lot about her that you would take home to your mother, but she seemed to really like me. She seemed to want to know me, Justin — the real Justin — not the liar. But I should have known. She was always asking if she could see the shovel. And when we would go out, [she asked] if I could carry the shovel around. But I was young. I was stupid. How was I supposed to know that she really didn't like me?

Well, soon I found out it wasn't only the shovel she was after. She was Canadian, too. I didn't catch on. She was always saying "ehh," but it just never stuck in my mind. She was part of a Canadian terrorist group, which in Canada isn't really as much a terrorist group, but more of a bunch of mean people from Canada. They apparently had been kicked out of Canada for littering or maybe cursing or something. But they wanted to take over the Chemical Valley here. And they wanted to use me to spread their lies, to say what they wanted to do, to give their agenda a face.

They took me to their compound, and they told me all these things. She just kept on smiling at me, and I thought it was good. Maybe Canadians are alright. I had no idea how bad they really were. Then they unveiled their costumes, what they were gonna rule with — these Mountie uniforms that were in blue and gold — and I just couldn't take it. John Denver started singing in the back of my head, and I realized something. By God, I'm a West Virginian, and I'm not going to let Canadians take over. I took my Golden Shovel, and I beat my way out of there. They were throwing mayonnaise. They had caribou guarding me, but I took them out, and I battled my way.

The very next day, I came back with an army of fiddlers and banjos and lap dulcimers, and we chased them. We chased them all the way back to the cold, cold north.

And that's the kind of hardship that you have to go through being a winner of this kind of contest. I want you guys to know that I wouldn't mind taking it again, because [of what] I've already gone through. Some of them, they might not be able to handle it. I've already been through it, so don't feel like you're giving me a burden. I will do that. That's the kind of person I am.

But that's my story. I just want whoever gets this godforsaken Golden Shovel to know what they're getting into.



Rich Knoblich of Wheeling, second-place winner. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Second Place

Rich Knoblich

Wheeling

Well, I'd like to tell you a little bit about Taylor Lewis. You see, the Lewis dairy farm, it sits right up against the old homestead up on the mountain.

One night, Taylor was sitting there watching a PBS documentary titled "Beauty Secrets of Phyllis Diller." Well, she got so motivated by that show that, as soon as it was over, she called up the sponsor — the Monongalia and Monongahela Magic Makeup & Spackling Compound Company. You may have heard their slogan — "Crack a smile or a wall, we smooth out life's wrinkles." Well, she ordered the 12-week, home-schooling, beauty cosmetic course.

When the 52 cases arrived, she stored it out in the paint shed. It was at that point that she realized she had a problem. You see, she didn't have any sisters that she could practice on. Then she had a brainstorm. She went in and talked it over with Mom, and Mom gave her approval. Each day, [Taylor] would go down to the paint shed, and she would load up that wheelbarrow with a variety of cosmetics and Dad's painting equipment. She'd then trundle the whole load on out to the pasture to where the cows were.

Each day, those docile animals would allow her to pluck their eyebrows and curl their lashes. She'd open a one-gallon can of blue eye shadow, dip in a four-inch house brush, and slather it across their eyelids. She'd take the roller and put it back and forth in that pan, and she'd smear blush all over their jowls. Then she'd take a tube of lipstick and toss it into a caulking gun and ratchet it up, come up to those big cow lips, and smear gaudy red lipstick all over them.

Well, you can imagine how they looked. It looked like Pablo Picasso painting these cows. Picture, if you will, an entire herd of cows looking like Tammy Faye Bakker on Halloween.

Well, you see, she analyzed what was wrong. And ladies, you can understand. You see, some of those cows had an autumn-colored complexion. Others were a late-spring complexion. Well, once she balanced that out with the proper foundation, let me tell you, those cows were looking beautiful. They looked like Hollywood stars of yesteryear. From their long, lush lashes to their soft pouty lips, those cows were the essence of bovine beauty.

Now, you are probably wondering if her dad had anything to say. No. Truth of the matter is, Dad thought he was the cause of this transformation. You see, the same show that Taylor had been watching, he was over there in his easy chair reading his favorite cattleman's periodical — Golden Veal magazine. He heard that narrator on that show talk about that little beauty secret where they take a little dab of Preparation H, put it on a wrinkle, tighten up the skin, and give you that smooth porcelin complexion. He thought to himself, "You know, if I mixed that in with my cows' bag balm, I'd have the finest looking udders in the state for my cows."

So, he sent away to one of those Mexican "no questions asked" pharmacies, got himself a whole truckload of that ointment, mixed it in, applied it to his cows, and wouldn't you know, week by week, he saw the transformation. Those cows started looking beautiful. Why, he nicknamed this one particular cow "Moorlyn Monroe." Then he got this idea. He looked over at that bull, and he thought, "Yeah, I wonder if I applied it to that bull if he'd start looking like 'Fred Asteer.'"

Well, time came for the county fair, and Dad, he entered "Moorlyn." Mom, she made one of her specialties — one of those delightful cream pies. And to celebrate her daughter's work with cosmetics, she decorated that pie so it looked just like one of those cows. Then Mom added her own touch — she added a couple of little angel wings on it, because her pies tasted so heavenly. Well, Mom was running late. She called to Taylor to take the pie on in.

Taylor picked up the wicker basket and went on down to the festivities. When she got there, she had time to cut through the agricultural building to see how the judging went. Well, she was standing there by the cow, and here comes the judge — an elderly lady respected in the community named Granny Gertrude. Well Granny Gertrude, she came on down, and she stood there, and she stopped. First at Taylor, then at the cow, back at Taylor, back at the cow. It seems beauty and the beast were both wearing identical makeup.

Well Granny, she kinda got that sly grin on her face. She reached down and picked up a red ribbon, and she reached over and clipped it on Taylor's dress. Then she laughed and turned and walked away. Taylor, she looked down at that red ribbon, and she got mad. She'd never gotten a red ribbon before. She figured if you're going to tag a ribbon on me, it oughta be "best of show." She reached into that wicker basket, and she pulled out that pie her mom had so beautifully decorated, and she screamed out, "Hey Granny, you forgot something!" Then she winged that pie like Nolan Ryan working on a no-hitter. Well Granny, she heard her name being called out and whirled around and saw that pie coming, and she ducked down just in time.

This is where I come into the story. I hear this commotion going on back behind me, and I turned around. And friends, all I remember seeing was this angel — big as a cow — coming at me at 90 miles an hour, gaudy red lips all puckered up ready to deliver the kiss of death. I barely had time to scream out "holy cow" before it hit.

Well, wouldn't you know there was a photographer for the Intermountain Echo Daily News, and he took my picture. It ran the next day — front page, above the fold. But I figured I was safe. I had all that cream goop on my face. Nobody could sit there and recognize me and ridicule me. It's like the good book says, "Pride goeth before you read the caption," and the caption said, "Alleged storyteller and known BS'er Rich Knoblich is shown getting a cow pie in the face."

Well, I tell you friends, they all just teased me unmercifully about my cow-pie facial after that. But I'll tell you one thing, I believe I came out ahead of Taylor's dad. Because when all those bills came in for those ointments and cosmetics, you might say he got left holding the bag.



Third-place finisher Adam Booth of Huntington.

Photograph by Michael Keller.

Third Place

Adam Booth

Huntington

I've come here today to tell you the story of Cabell County — the founding of it — and the great treasure that it brought to our great state. [A story] that many people don't know, as passed down through my family for years.

Travel with me, if you will, back to the days of Europe several hundred years ago, to when Antonio Stradavari was living — the greatest violin maker in the world. Well, that tradition of violin making was passed down throughout his family up until the days of his great-grandson, Huntingio Stradavari. As many great-grandchildren are, he was quite a bohemian in his thinking. Up until that day, the violins were made with flat bellies, but he wanted a curved belly.

So, he was making curved-bellied violins, and the family said, "This is terrible. You cannot do this with our family tradition. You're out of the family." He thought it was a terrible disgrace, but he was determined to make these curved-bellied violins, so he thinks, "America! I can go there and make my violins just as I want." So, he got on the next boat across the ocean and took with him his good friend, a great woodworker by the name of Giuseppe Cabelli.

They headed across the ocean. It takes quite awhile to go across, so they met everyone else on the boat. As good fortune would have it, they ran into three great men on that boat. The first one being a Frenchman by the name of Pierre Giverny, who was the Duc de Guyan — a region of France — or, as we would say, the Duke of Guyan. He was a wealthy banker. That area was known for banking.

The other two men that he met were both Englishmen. The first one being Douglas the Barber. He was a haircutter by trade. Stradavari thought this was wonderful because he could cut horsetails for violin bows and catgut for strings.

The other Englishman that he met had the name of Milton the Harper. He was trained as a harper and knew the ancient ways of tuning strings. It was wonderful fortune. They had all the men needed for a new violin company.

The boat lands in America. All the immediate areas had already been inhabited, so they traveled further in. They came to the mountains, and that was not a desirable place for Huntingio because the high altitude gave him nosebleeds — he was from the lower area of Italy. So, they kept going, and several weeks later, they came across the wonderful Ohio Valley.

It had no high mountains. There were no raging rivers. There was the nice steady Ohio River right there, which was great to turn the wheels that would grind the rosin for the violins. There were no coal mines, which was wonderful because the dust that came from the coal would make the strings hard to play. So it was very, very desirable. The best thing was, floating down the Ohio River at that time, were hundreds upon hundreds of logs. As many people don't know, at that time up in New Martinsville, up on the Ohio River, there was a great fig orchard. All the families would pick the figs at harvest time and put them in their buckets. [They would then] take off the branches and put them as saplings in the ground, and the trunks they would just throw into the Ohio River. They didn't need them, and they would travel down the river to this part of the Ohio River Valley where Stradavari and his group of men were.

They thought it was wonderful because there was all this wood to be used for violins. It was soft, it could be warped easily into the curved-belly violin that he liked. It was wonderfully desirable. So, they each set up their shop.

There was Douglas the Barber that set his shop, and his town became known as Barboursville. There was Milton the Harper who set up his tuning areas, and that came to be known as Milton. Huntingio Stradavari set up his violin body-making area — his shops — and that came to be known as Huntingio Town, or Huntington, as we like to call it. The Duc de Guyan set up his banking in what came to be known as Guyandotte.

So, everyone up and down the hills now had wonderful violins. Everyone was playing the violin. Along came the surveyor to draw up the county lines. He said, "Well, gentlemen, what would you like to call this area?" They said, "Well, we've got individual town names, but we don't know what to name what you're going to call our county." So he said, "Well, I understand you're a great violin builder. Why don't you have a violin playing contest, and the winner will have the county named after him." They said that was a wonderful idea.

So, the next day, out of the mountains came all the violin players. They came and they played and played, and they had a competition and were judged. It was down to the final two: Huntingio Stradavari and Giuseppe Cabelli. So the judges said, "To make this a little interesting, why don't we look toward the best violin players around here — the crickets. If you can play your violins like the crickets, then you'll be the best violin player." So the men said, "That's fair."

Cabelli straightens up and goes, "Tweddle deedle dee, chirp chirp chirp." Stradavari, who was an old man by then, picked up his violin and says, "Tweedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle dee." Cabelli answers with, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Stradavari takes it on and says, "I'll take you, tweedle deedle deedle deedle dee." And they start playing their violins, and there is great music everywhere, and they're playing and stomping their feet, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee, tweedle deedle deedle deedle dee, chirp, tweedle dee," and all the birds start singing, and they start playing like the bird calls. Everyone is having a wonderful time. All the people are clapping and having a good time. Stradavari is over here, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and his string breaks. He's left with three. He's okay — he's a good violin player — he can keep going, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Cabelli's over here, playing just fine, doesn't lose his cool. Stradavari, "Deedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and another string breaks. He's down to two, but the men — it's all about the music at this point — they don't care about the naming of the county. They just keep playing, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle deedle dee." Stradavari's third string breaks — it's a tough competition — but they keep going. Cabelli, just playing as if nothing is happening. Stradavari, "Tweedle deedle deedle deedle dee," and his fourth string breaks. By default, he's out of the competition. He takes his bow and throws it, and he says, "Aw, fiddle!"

The surveyor turns to Cabelli and says, "Well, you've won. We'll name this Cabelli County," which later came to be shortened as Cabell County — home of the violin makers that brought violins to all of the hills of West Virginia and the style of playing known as fiddling.