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## LOST HISTORY



Submitted photos

This Feb. 9, 1976, Tribune Chronicle photo shows a plaque honoring John K. Mahaney of Warren after it was placed outside the Trumbull County Law Library. The plaque honored Mahaney as the first Trumbull County Juvenile Court referee from 1973 to 1975. Shown to the

right of the plaque are from left, Mary Mahaney, his wife; Brian Mahaney, his grandson; Commissioner Walter Pestrak; Mary Claire Mahaney; Commissioner Lyle Williams; and John K. Mahaney Jr. At left is Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court Judge John DePietro.

## How K of C got its name

John K. Mahaney, state deputy, was common man with vision

By Ed RUNYAN  
Staff writer

**CHAMPION** — Because this year is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the John K. Mahaney Council of the Knights of Columbus at St. William Church, its leadership began a quest to learn more about him.

About all its members knew about Mahaney is that he was a Warren attorney who served as state deputy — the top position in the state K of C.

Fortunately, Grand Knight Brian McCue made contact with two of Mahaney's children, George Mahaney of Cary, N.C., and Mary Claire Mahaney of McLean, Va.

Both shared their memories, copies of newspaper clippings and photographs to provide windows into the life of a man so interested in helping children that he was a volunteer coach of youth basketball 24 years and so involved in his community that the father of four once ran for Warren mayor.

He died suddenly of a heart attack Sept. 30, 1975, at 65, while serving as part-time Trumbull County Juvenile Court referee,



This is a photo of John K. Mahaney in a K of C cap while smoking a pipe, which he did regularly. K of C Council 7491 in Champion is named for him.

leading to a plaque being installed in February 1976 in front of the building near the county jail now known as the Trumbull County Law Library. It honored Mahaney as the county's first juvenile court referee,

a position similar to a magistrate.

### NAMESAKE

Neither George nor Mary Claire knew that the K of C Council at St. William Church had named

itself after their father until many years after the council's founding in 1980, but both provided ample evidence of their father's commitment and service to the K of C and the community throughout his life.

If Mary Claire were to guess, she said, her father was selected as the council's namesake because "he was personable and they liked him."

To George, his father's "most amazing characteristic" was "his ability to relate to everyone with equal ease."

Mahaney had a 32-year career as Warren attorney, having served as juvenile court referee from 1973 until his death and assistant county prosecutor 14 years.

He also was a member of the Knights of Columbus for 32 years — at councils 620 and 4484 in Warren. He was state K of C deputy two years starting in 1969. In that role, he supervised 300 Ohio K of C councils with 63,000 members.

He was only the second Warren K of C member to have held the position as state deputy at the time. He

See **K of C**, B2

## Collector buys costume that does not exist

WMMS had buttons, hats and more, but never a live mascot

By ANDY GRAY  
Staff writer

**NILES** — Brian Orfin is a hunter, and his prey is memorabilia, whether it's rare Mahoning Valley Scrappers items or pop culture collectibles.

Last weekend he bagged a Buzzard. Or did he? Orfin, who lives in Cortland and owns Nowhere Toys, 416 Robbins Ave., has a vivid memory while growing up of seeing a black-and-white photo of a costumed version of the WMMS Buzzard mascot riding on a parade float.

He's talked to other northeast Ohio residents who remember seeing the costumed character during the Cleveland FM radio station's heyday in the 1970s and '80s. "When you lived here, that's what you listened to," he said.

Orfin, 46, has wanted to own that costume since he first saw it and has tried repeatedly over the years to find it.

Through someone who knows someone who knows someone, he finally tracked it down. Early on July 18, he drove to a Cleveland suburb, paid "a lot" of money and brought the Buzzard home.

"I saw the feet and the head, and I was so excited," Orfin said. "There it was, the holy grail I've been searching for 20 years."

There's only one problem — John Gorman says WMMS never had a costumed mascot.

Gorman would know. He ran the album-oriented rock station from 1973 until 1986 (and again from 1994 to '96). He and DJ Denny Sanders commissioned the now-iconic bird logo from David Helton, an artist for American Greetings who came to their attention after he sent the station a complaint letter in the form of a cartoon.

### BUZZARD BOOK

In his 2007 book "The Buzzard," Gorman (with co-writer Tom Feran) says a costumed mascot was suggested, but he was opposed and, "I won that one."

He confirmed the story in an interview Thursday. "I wanted there to be a mystique (about the Buzzard)," he said. "I didn't want to turn it into a Slider (the Cleveland Indians costume mascot). Then you have to create a personality for that character."

The Buzzard adorned T-shirts, hats, buttons and other merchandise. There were Buzzard figurines and a giant inflatable Buzzard, but Gorman said he preferred having on-air personalities make personal appearances rather than a costumed mascot.

In the book, Gorman says someone once showed up at the station in a homemade Buzzard costume, hoping to land a job as a mascot. Gorman told him he better take the costume off or he would be hearing from copyright lawyers.

"I never saw the costume again," he said in the book.

After being emailed a photo of the costume Orfin purchased, Gorman wrote back, "This is the first time I have seen this costume ... Given that I was at WMMS from the Buzzard's inception to 1986 — and again from 1994 to 1996 — and lived in Cleveland in all of those years in between, I would have known about this costume."

"It's creative. Perhaps it was used as a Halloween costume. But it was never used at a sanctioned WMMS event."

Orfin didn't quite know how to react when told about what Gorman said. His memory of that old photo is strong

See **Buzzard**, B3



Staff photo / Andy Gray

Here's a closeup of the head of The Buzzard costume now owned by Brian Orfin of Cortland.

## The annual car show must go on

By SEAN BARRON  
Correspondent

**WARREN** — Thanks to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, what ordinarily would have been a popular traditional car show had to be rebuilt and reinvented — as was Ron and Nancy Ritz's vintage vehicle.

"It wasn't a beauty when I bought it. I bought it in 2012 from a guy in Champion," the Warren man said, referring to his winter mint-green 1931 Ford Model A Coupe that was originally fire-engine red.

Ritz worked hard to get his Ford Coupe the way he wanted it to look. The sporty, eye-catching car was among the estimated 80 vintage Corvettes, Packards, trucks and motorcycles that made up Saturday's vintage car caravan fundraiser that began at the W.D.

Caravan travels around Courthouse Square, park to raise funds for the Packard Museum

Packard Music Hall, 1703 Mahoning Ave. NW.

Proceeds are to go toward the National Packard Museum's operational expenses. The funds are needed largely because overhead costs are more than \$4,500 per month for the 30-year-old, 23,000-square-foot museum, which had been closed for months because of the health crisis, noted Mary Ann Porinchak, executive director.

"Every penny counts," she said. "Our goal is to raise money we wouldn't have had otherwise."

The traditional car show during which spectators typically walk around theirs and others' vehicles and mingle with one another was nearly scrapped, but the 58-year-

old Mahoning Valley Corvette Club came up with the idea of reinventing and modifying the event by converting it to a caravan. The primary focus was to adhere to Gov. Mike DeWine's guidelines to keep people safe while preventing the spread of the coronavirus, Porinchak explained.

To that end, participants were asked to stay in their vehicles as much as possible, wear masks, practice social distancing and refrain from congregating.

During the time he's had his 1931 Ford Coupe vehicle, Ritz has removed the original frame, performed extensive steel body work, added exotic African hardwood to the doors and repainted it, all while



Correspondent photo / Sean Barron

Ron and Nancy Ritz of Warren stand next to their rebuilt 1931 Ford Model A Coupe during a vintage car caravan fundraiser Saturday in Warren. Money raised is to benefit the W. D. Packard Museum.

keeping the original Chevrolet 350-horsepower engine, he explained.

"It took me eight years to rebuild it," said Ritz, who added that Saturday's gathering was his first time in public with the car. The caravan of colorful and fancy vehicles traveled about 2 1/2 hours. See **Show**, B3



# Mystery surrounds teenage girl found dead

99 years ago in 1921

Chief of Police Rounds and his entire force of officers, County Detective Gillen and Prosecutor Burgess had arrived at no conclusion in the case of the deep mystery surrounding the discovery of Mollie Verbias, a 14-year-old girl of 602 Belmont St.

Every foot of ground in the pasture field and the woods adjoining had been tramped over and no place could be discovered where there was an indication of struggle or violence.

Coroner Hanshaw and the police officers were waiting on the results of analysis of the contents of the girl's stomach, which had been in the hands of a pathologist.

Chief Rounds had stated he had no information to give out in connection with the case of the girl who had been found lying face upward by a man who went to Mason's Woods to pick berries.

80 years ago in 1940

A novel feature of the Trum-

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

bull County Fair to begin Aug. 6 would be a radio amateur's exhibit dating back to the earliest days of radio broadcasting. A special antenna was directed at the fairgrounds for the purpose of making broadcasts both in speech and code on various wavelengths.

C.W. Morrow, president of WARA, revealed the program included the sending of a limited number of radiograms to any part of the United States. Two high-powered transmitters were included in the exhibit. Government licensed operators were to be in charge at all times.

Morrow explained this was the first time an exhibit of this nature was planned for the Trumbull County Fair. Local amateurs felt certain the public would find the display most interesting.

25 years ago in 1995

An attorney for a Warren man

said he would appeal a conviction handed down by a Warren Municipal Court jury, which heard nearly two days of testimony centering on a scuffle between bar patrons and off-duty police outside a bar.

Judge Lynn B. Griffith Jr. sentenced the man to 30 days in jail, the maximum penalty for a fourth-degree misdemeanor of disorderly conduct with a specific claim that the man failed to heed a warning.

The sentence was stayed by the judge, while the man's attorney, James Saker, pondered an appeal over the testimony given by the arresting officer to the jury.

Saker contended jurors, even though they asked the judge, must rely on their own memories of the testimony.

The confrontation and fight that broke out in the parking lot of Fiesta at the Waterworks on

Mahoning Avenue NW involved off-duty patrolmen.

Officer Massaro testified about ordering people away from the scene to defuse the situation and at least three jurors reported the precise wording of "failure to desist after warning," which prompted the four men and four women of the jury to find the man guilty.

10 years ago in 2010

Expanding the National Packard Museum was more than honoring history.

"This is about our future and our past," U.S. Rep. Timothy J. Ryan told a crowd attending the dedication ceremonies for the museum's 10,000-square-foot addition that more than doubled its exhibition space.

The local families who founded the Packard Motor Co. were among the defining giants of the nation, the congressman said. He said he hoped the kids growing up in this area would realize that

they live in a community of entrepreneurs.

People in the Mahoning Valley had forgotten that for awhile, Ryan noted.

But grassroots efforts like the creation and expansion of the museum were rekindling that spirit, he said.

"You can make it, and you can make it in a very big way. This isn't something new for us. It's building our heritage," the congressman added.

Mayor Michael O'Brien pointed out the theme of the 21st annual National Packard Car Show staged by the museum was "Glory Days," synonymous with excellence.

"You can feel the energy here today," the mayor said, calling it the energy that would help the Mahoning Valley build a brighter future.

— Compiled from the archives of the Tribune Chronicle by Emily Earnhart

## K of C

From Page B1

also was active in K of C youth programs, organizing the Boy Scout troop at Warren's Council 620 and was recipient of the St. George Medal in 1974, the highest Catholic award in Scouting.

He was a member of the executive committee of the Lake To River Girl Scout Council, Western Reserve Council of Boy Scouts of America and Diocesan chairman of the Catholic Committee on Scouting.

He sought the Democratic Party nomination for Warren mayor in May 1971 and completed an unexpired term on Warren City Council in 1965. At the time of his death, he had begun plans to run for the county juvenile court judgeship that was created the following year.

### STRONG VOICE

Msgr. James R. Kolp, who served as pastor at St. James Church in Warren for six years, served as state K of C chaplain during Mahaney's two years as state deputy, was a close friend and gave the homily at Mahaney's funeral.

"He was a very strong voice. He was not afraid to stand up and speak his piece," Kolp, 95, said by telephone from his residence in the Diocesan Priests Retirement Home in Louisville, Ohio.

"He was just great. We had a wonderful time together. He was just a very, very interesting person," Kolp said.

Remarkably, Kolp still had a copy of the homily he gave for his friend's funeral in October 1975.

"It has been said that to lead a successful life, a person needs three bones — a backbone, a wishbone and a funny bone. I am firmly convinced that John Mahaney had these bones," Father Kolp said that day.

"He had a backbone. When he felt that something was right and should be done, he pursued it with real determination. He also had a wishbone. He dreamed dreams of things that he felt should be. He was always planning for some worthwhile project for the future. He also had a funny bone. John Mahaney loved to make people laugh. Whatever the undertaking, he could interject humor into the situation and relax the tension and secure real interest."

Kolp said he was aware that a K of C council was named for his friend, but he never heard how that came about.

"He deserved to have (a council) named after him because he was so active," Kolp said.

Anthony Rossi Sr., a partner in the local law firm Guarnieri & Secrest, said he knew Mahaney as a lawyer and because of Mahaney's coaching at St. Mary's school.

Rossi said he doesn't know the reason the K of C council named the council after Mahaney, but said, "At the time that it was started, he would have been by far the only individual in this

*"It has been said that to lead a successful life, a person needs three bones — a backbone, a wishbone and a funny bone. I am firmly convinced that John Mahaney had these bones."*

— Msgr. James R. Kolp

area you would think of naming it after because he was so active in the organization for years, and he was so active in the Catholic community."

He added, he was "a very, very fine man."

### RECOLLECTIONS

One of Mahaney's children, Mary Claire Mahaney, who turned 21 just after her father died Sept. 30, 1975, said she did not know that a Knights of Columbus council named itself after her father until 2002 when she found mention of it on the internet. She doesn't know the origin of his selection for the honor.

Mary Claire, who is a lawyer and a writer, was a teenager when her father was state deputy, so she accompanied her parents on trips related to those duties.

"He was very busy for those two years. He was running his law practice. He was involved with the local councils of Knights of Columbus. He was also a juvenile referee part time for Trumbull County. He loved working with kids," she said.

Mary Claire said she wanted to be like her father in many ways.

"I wanted to have a practice like his. And when I think about his practice, it's something that makes me so proud to be his daughter. He served everyone. No one was too small or too poor for him to give legal advice to or represent."

"I remember going with my mother to a store where the client was not able to pay him except in goods. So my mother would pick out spaghetti and olives and spaghetti sauce to represent the amount that was owed my father."

He did not handle divorces, but he still tried to help couples having marital difficulties, his son, George remembers.

"If a couple came to him talking divorce, he would first counsel them and try to figure out a plan that would lead to reconciliation. If that were not possible, he would then direct them to see

other lawyers," George said.

He loved his role in handling adoptions, Mary Claire remembers. "The reason was because everybody was happy. I think he found joy in other people's happiness. He found joy in people being treated fairly."

Mary Claire provided a photo showing the dedication ceremony held Feb. 9, 1976, at the building that is now the county's law library showing county officials and several Mahaney family members, including Mary Claire and her mother, Mary.

The plaque, along with an oar connected to her father's time as coxswain on the University of Pennsylvania rowing team while he was in college, are now at her home.

### PASSIONS

George shared stories of his father's passion for athletics and coaching.

"My brother and I both played on his teams," George said. "His final season was the winter of 1964. He loved to take his teams on trips to play other competition. He took my brother's ninth-grade team to Philadelphia. My eighth-grade team went to Washington, D.C., and played on the varsity floor of the Catholic University of America."

"When he first started coaching at St. Mary's, there was no gym at the school, so the team played their games at the armory on High Street. There is a story that was told to me many times that he taught some of his players to shoot through the rafters with the intention of destroying the morale of the opponents as they saw the ball disappear above and then reappear going through the hoop."

"He attended all St. Mary's varsity basketball and football games. He had season tickets to Harding football games. He was a great supporter of the baseball leagues in Warren," George said.

Because of his volunteer work in Warren, John K. Mahaney was recognized May 3, 1998, by the Warren Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the Heroes Corner.

George Mahaney believes the most incredible characteristic of his father was his ability to relate to everyone with equal ease. He was highly educated and comfortable leading a large organization such as the state K of C, George said.

"He met with mayors, governors, senators, bishops and even the Pope. However, his best friends and those he socialized with most often were a K of C insurance agent, a butcher, a gas-station owner and two steel-mill workers."

"The Knights of Columbus was perfect for him because it brings together members from all backgrounds. I think very few people can thrive in all these different environments without putting on an act, and if you were lucky to know him, you know he was never acting."

runyan@tribtoday.com

## Services Are Friday

# Atty. John Mahaney, Court Official, Dies

John K. Mahaney, 65, 1540 Genesee NE, well known and respected lawyer and court official here, was pronounced dead on arrival at Trumbull Memorial Hospital at 2:15 p.m. Tuesday. Death was due to a heart attack.

Atty. Mahaney, who was serving as referee of the Trumbull County Juvenile Court, was former assistant county prosecutor, one-time Warren mayor candidate, and Knights of Columbus state deputy.

### Services Friday

Funeral services will be held Friday at 11 a.m. in St. James' Church. Burial will be in All Souls Cemetery.

Friends may call at the Staton-Gillen-Larkins Funeral Home, North Rd., from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday. The Knights of Columbus will conduct prayer services at 7 p.m.

Atty. Mahaney had practiced law in the Warren area for 32 years. He graduated from Sharpville (Pa.) High School and received his bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Pennsylvania and his law degree from Western Reserve University.

He had served as an assistant Trumbull County prosecutor for former Prosecutor David M. Griffith and present Prosecutor J. Walter Dragelevich.

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JOHN K. MAHANEY

Submitted photo

## Radio WHHH

NO. (1-1-10)

This is a copy of the Warren Tribune Chronicle obituary for John K. Mahaney published Oct. 1, 1975.



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