

Crossing History

Ron Rinaldi became history's answer to *American Idol* last September when he won a contest to play Gen. George Washington in the annual Christmas Day reenactment of the crossing of the Delaware. The crossing, which first took place in the predawn hours on Dec. 25, 1776, led to a Continental Army victory in the Battle of Trenton—considered the turning point of the American Revolution.

"Three men played General Washington for more than 50 years of reenactments before they decided to hold a contest in 1997 to select the next Washington to serve a two-year term," says Rinaldi, BA '84. "We answered a panel's questions about Washington and the Revolution and recited passages from Thomas Paine's *The Crisis*. I entered that first contest, which was won by an actor, but I decided to try again last year to show my 10-year-old son and the people who helped me through the years that you don't give up just because you don't win the first time."

Rinaldi, who lives in Branchburg, N.J.—about a 30-minute drive from Washington Crossing, Pa.—is a former historian who left teaching to pursue a career in law enforcement. A crime scene investigator for the Prosecutor's Office in Middlesex County, he collects evidence on ballistics, blood splatter, and motor vehicle fatalities. He has even been part of a dive team that recovered two bodies.

Rinaldi winning the role of Washington is much like the former batboy who grows up to become an all-star. He took part in his first reenactment at the age of 14 in 1976 when his mother, Ann Rinaldi—a columnist for *The Trentonian* newspaper—was assigned to cover the bicentennial reenactment of the crossing. That started the Rinaldi family on a seven-year stint of reenactments that occupied their weekends. They traveled to Savannah, Ga., Canada, and to parts of the Midwest, performing historic roles.

His mother went on to become a successful author of American history books for young people while Rinaldi headed to GW to study American history and work part time cataloging artifacts at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum. At GW, he won a Gelman Library-sponsored contest for having the best collection of books on the American Revolution. His summers were spent work-

ing as a tour guide at Valley Forge and at the Old Barracks Museum in Trenton. He received his master's degree in military history at Duke University but decided not to pursue his doctorate, sensing, he says, "that a career as a historian would take the fun out of it."

The fun means not missing a single Christmas Day reenactment of the crossing in 32 years. Before becoming Washington, he spent several years in the role of Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, Washington's second in command. "There are about one-hundred reenactors and several thousand spectators who line the banks," Rinaldi says. "Two weeks before the big event, we hold a full dress rehearsal, and just about as many people show up. In five instances, like this past year, the weather was too severe to cross. But I inspected and addressed the troops and conferred with my officers. We loaded the boats and the lead boat went about 30 feet out into the water."

Rinaldi believes Washington's greatest gift was his versatility as a statesman, scholar, farmer, economist, diplomat, businessman, and even director of our military's first spy

network. His den is filled with books on Washington, as well as a thick scrapbook and framed 8-by-10-inch photos of past reenactments. "When Washington made the crossing, he was only 44 years old; I turned 45 in October, so I'm the youngest to play him," he says. "He was an inspiring leader, but not flamboyant—and neither am I."

And like Washington, he cannot tell a lie, confessing that the first Washington reenactor, St. John Terrell—the late, legendary impresario who played the father of our country for 25 years—snuck Rinaldi onto his boat as a 15-year-old.

"For insurance purposes, you have to be at least 18 years old to cross," Rinaldi says. "But no one challenged Terrell at his final reenactment, and I brought my 10-year-old son onto my boat this year."

His son sat in the same spot where Rinaldi was 30 years ago.

—Bill Glovin, BA '77

The author is the senior editor of Rutgers Magazine.



In rain, sleet, or snow, Ron Rinaldi, BA '84, (center) hasn't missed a single Christmas Day reenactment of the crossing of the Delaware in 32 years. This year, he was honored to play the part of Gen. George Washington, with his son accompanying him.

guration of Dr. Brian K. Johnson as the new president of Montgomery College in Montgomery County, Md.

Noblis, a nonprofit science technology and strategy organization, has appointed **Amr ElSawy, MS '81**, as chief executive officer. Noblis is located in Falls Church, Va., and employs 700 people in the state.

Bill Ziegler, BBA '81, assumed the role of board of directors chair of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars at the society's fall meeting. He will serve a two-year term. Ziegler is the global managing director of talent acquisition at UBS Investment Bank.

The American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy and Resources elected **Steven Miano, BS '82**, secretary of its executive committee. Miano is a partner at WolfBlock law firm, where he serves as co-chair of WolfBlock's environmental and land use practice group.

Peter James Roberts, MAT '82, published "Philatelic Materials in Archival Collections: Their Appraisal, Preservation, and Description" in the spring/summer 2007 issue of *American Archivist*. He also was promoted to associate professor in the special collections and archives department of Georgia State University.

Versign Inc. named **Kevin A. Werner, BA '82**, senior vice presi-

dent of corporate development and strategy. Versign is best known for Internet security solutions and domain service names, including .com and .net domain registrations. Werner lives in La Jolla, Calif., with his wife, Robin Emanuel, and their children, Allyson, 16, and Jesse, 13.

Margrit Beran Krewson, MA '83, was awarded the 2007 Distinguished German-American of the Year Award from the German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA. Krewson was the Library of Congress' German-Dutch area expert. She made arrangements for the formal acquisition of the 1507 Waldseemuller map, the oldest known document to name "America." German Chancellor Angela Merkel officially turned over the map to the American people during a ceremony at the Library of Congress on April 30, 2007. Krewson worked on the project for more than 15 years.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission elected Hon. **Adrienne Mandel, MA '84**, as chair of the board of commissioners.

The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis appointed **Robert J. Schenk, BA '84**, senior vice president of the public and community affairs division. Schenk will be responsible for leading staff in community outreach and development, media relations,



and economic and financial education in the St. Louis office as well as at the bank's branches in Louisville, Ky.; Little Rock, Ark.; and Memphis, Tenn.

Leonard L. Gordon, BA '85, JD '88, was appointed assistant regional director for the Federal Trade Commission's Northeast Region. He is based in New York.

Parker Aerospace in Irvine, Calif., named **Ed Feick, MBA '86**, vice president of customer support. He is responsible for all financial and operational aspects of the division that provides worldwide aftermarket support for systems and components manufactured by Parker Aerospace.

Kennedy Covington law firm named **Bill Brian, MA '87**, chair of the firm's land use and zoning practice in Durham, N.C. This section includes 23 attorneys and focuses on zoning, land use and municipal law, real estate litigation, and commercial real estate law.



David Metcalf, MBA '87, MS '91, was hired as transportation regional manager in the Chantilly, Va., office of Burgess & Niple. He is responsible for transportation business development, serving as client liaison and providing technical quality control for municipal and state projects.

Pasquale J. Rocco Jr., BA '87, and his wife, Susan, welcomed their second child, Dominic Alfred, in April 2007. The family lives in Pittsburgh.

Valerie A. Yarashus, BA '87, was elected treasurer of the Massachusetts Bar Association for the 2007-08 year. Yarashus is a principal at Sugarman & Sugarman, where she concentrates on plaintiff's trial practice and a wide variety of other general liability cases.

Ian Waitz, MS '88, was named head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's department of aeronautics and astronautics in February.

Catholic Health East appointed **John Capasso, MHSA '89**, as president and chief executive officer of its new continuing care



management services network. Capasso has been working in health care management for more than 25 years.

Alane Laboda, BA '89, was named Florida marketing chair for the 2008 Defense Research Institute's annual meeting in October 2008. DRI is the national organization of defense trial lawyers and corporate counsel.



'90s

GrayHair Software appointed **Raymond Chin, MA '90**, vice

president of product development and management. Chin is an expert in software development and was director of product management for Group 1's coding solutions.

John David Morris, BA '90, MPA '93, announced his candidacy for the U.S. Congress in central Illinois, the 18th district. To learn more about his campaign, go to www.votejohnmorris.com.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell appointed **Karen Senich, BA '90**, executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. Senich has been acting director of the commission since January 2007.

Vicky Wright Jefferis, MPA '91, retired in October after 30 years of Army civilian employment. She was the first female civilian selected to serve in a senior staff position at U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort McPherson in Georgia, near Atlanta.



As deputy chief of staff G8/comptroller, Jefferis led strategic planning, change management, and program evaluation activities, and directed resource management. Jefferis and her husband, Larry, planned to move to southeast Georgia to be near the Atlantic coast.

The Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse elected **Elizabeth S. Woo, PhD '91**, to its board of directors. Woo is the vice president of sales, biotechnology market, and application specialists program for Thermo Fisher Scientific, where she is responsible for all aspects of sales to the biotechnology/biopharmaceutical market segment.

Angelo Barone, MBA '92, joined Chicago's Lifeline Theater as managing director in August. Barone is responsible for all nonartistic func-




Bill Westenhofer, MS '95, got the chance to share the red carpet with Hollywood's best when he won the 2008 award for Achievement in Visual Effects from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for his work on the film *The Golden Compass*. Westenhofer won the Oscar with colleagues Michael Fink, Ben Morris, and Trevor Wood.

As visual effects supervisor for Rhythm & Hues Studios in Los Angeles, Westenhofer led a crew of 500 on two continents over 18 months to produce nearly 400 shots featured in the film, which stars Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig, and Dakota Blue Richards.

Westenhofer studied computer graphics at GW under James Hahn, chair of the department of computer science, director of the GW Institute for Biomedical Engineering, and professor of engineering and applied science. In 2000, *GW Magazine* featured Hahn and the GW Institute for Computer Graphics along with Westenhofer and other GW graduates involved in major computer animation movies.