

Good Times for the Rock Doc

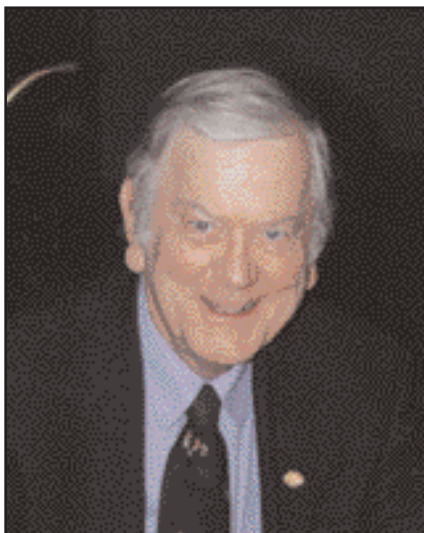


Dr. Richard Greathouse honored in Louisville

by Linda Ayers Turner Knorr

You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometime you just might find, you get what you need

– Mick Jagger



The Rock Doc is all smiles at his celebration banquet.

Semi-reclining in front of a crackling fireplace I am nostalgic. Instead of Christmas carols, the music coming through the surround sound is that of **The Rolling Stones**.

An elected official who investigates suspicious deaths is a coroner. For almost three decades Kentuckians have voted for the dog world's own **Dr. Richard F. Greathouse** to handle the enormous responsibilities their Jefferson County Coroner's job entails.

During an average year Dr. Greathouse's office handled approximately 3800 cases. Many turned out to be natural deaths, but that total includes an average of 77

homicides, 107 suicides and 127 automobile accidents, which resulted in death.

Why would a dashing young pediatrician agree to accept such a gut wrenching position? A recent article written by **Shannon Tangonan** for **The Courier Journal** makes it perfectly clear.

"The handwritten note arrived shortly after Archie and Mary Kay Parsley lost their sixteen year-old daughter, Jamie, last summer in a fiery crash caused by a drunken driver.

It was from the Jefferson County coroner, Dr. Richard Greathouse, who wrote of the loss of his own daughter,

Kathryne Ann, who spent 13 years in a coma after a wreck involving alcohol.

"There's not many people out

there who do know what we were going through, but he was one of them," said Archie Parsley, who keeps Greathouse's



Miss Kathy Greathouse, age 4, shown with three generations of Greathouse Collie champions. Left to right: Ch. Devonshire Dark Cheri, Ch. Jorie's Ginger and Ch. Cherrivales Portrait In Black.



Collie Club of Maryland 1961 – Great memories here... Judge Mrs. William H. "Dorothy" Long, Jr., Bill Trainor handling BOB winner (owned by Evelyn Honig). Shown with Dr. Richard Greathouse presenting trophies – BOS going to George Horn.

letter tucked in a Bible.

Over his 28-year tenure as coroner, Greathouse has penned other letters to grieving families. He has done it quietly.

Compassion has concerned him since his first campaign for coroner in 1973, when he promised that his deputies would be "instructed to always be courteous and humane. . . . Too many cases are handled curtly and rudely without regard to the families' feelings."

But when Greathouse was considering the job, Billy Andrews, then chairman of the pediatrics department at the University of Louisville medical school, told Greathouse he could do a great service as coroner by investigating cases of child abuse and sudden infant death syndrome.

During his tenure, he helped set up or conduct an array of studies, including research on SIDS.

His office orders full forensic studies in possible child-abuse cases. They played a part in the case of Shavonda Charleston, who pleaded guilty in the deaths of her four daughters – one in October 1999 and three in March 2000. Tests found nothing in the bodies of the latter three that would have caused their deaths, leading Greathouse and the state's chief medical examiner to conclude they had been suffocated.

Greathouse also helped develop a booklet to train doctors to recognize evidence of child abuse."

"We are having an alarming and distasteful collection of police shootings of mentally ill and disturbed people – and some of them not mentally ill and disturbed. . . ."

It is Greathouse's passion for speaking out that often thrusts him into the public eye.

He showed up at a recent protest of a police shooting to deliver an autopsy report and speak about the problems caused by drug use and the lack of facilities for the mentally ill. Tests revealed that the dead man,



Clockwise from left: Dr. Richard Greathouse pointing to autographs in his Rolling Stones collection. "The Stones are unquestionably the finest rock 'n' roll band in the world," he says. Doc's imitation of Mick Jagger; Huggie and Doc in his Jefferson County Coroner's office, the outspoken Coroner holds a Press Conference.



February 13, 1961 - Dr. R. F. Greathouse awarding Best In Show to Ch. Chatawae's Sandman, owned by Roy L. Ayers. Mrs. Charles Chancey presenting trophy.

James Taylor, had a history of mental illness and had ingested large amounts of cocaine and alcohol.

Taylor was shot 11 times by Louisville police Detective Mike O'Neil. Police said Taylor, whose hands were handcuffed behind him, had threatened the detective with a box cutter. About a week after Taylor's Dec. 5 death, Greathouse said Taylor would have had to have a foot-long blade for him to reach O'Neil.

Many of the inquests held in recent years involved fatal bullets fired by police. Greathouse said he uses inquests to air information about controversial deaths and conducts them at the request of victims' families.

His last focused on the death of Marshall Marbly, a mentally ill man shot 16 times by Louisville police on Aug. 22 after he pulled out a BB rifle. Police said they thought it was a more powerful weapon. The divided coroner's jury ruled that police were justified in firing.

"My job is serving the public, representing the deceased person, and explaining to the family and the public the method of his death."

After the shootings at the Standard Gravure printing plant in 1989, in which Joseph Wesbecker killed eight people and himself,

Greathouse raised concerns about whether the antidepressant Prozac might have played a role.

Several doctors accused the coroner of needlessly alarming people about Prozac. The president of the Louisville Psychiatric Association described his comments as "uninformed," and a jury in a civil suit later ruled 9-3 that the drug was not responsible for Wesbecker's actions.

Greathouse said his office was merely trying to determine whether Prozac was a factor. "We were not knocking Prozac," he said.

But if Greathouse believes in something, "he'll speak out," said Billy Wilkey, his chief deputy.

For example, Greathouse questioned highway engineers' assurances that curves on Interstate 65 in downtown Louisville were safe. In 1989 a truck had lost its load, killing three motorists. A coroner's jury blamed reckless driving but said poor road design was a factor, too.

In every case "he called it like he saw it," said Dr. Tracey Corey, the state's chief medical examiner, who conducts autopsies for the coroner's office.

Corey cited Greathouse's comment when two teenagers were misidentified after a wreck last summer. The mix-up almost caused a Meade County family to cremate the remains of their son's friend while their son, whom they believed to be dead, lay in critical condition in a Louisville hospital.

Greathouse said he "wouldn't have had any trouble ID'ing this young man if he were my own son."

"After 29 years I've seen just about everything."

Less than a year after taking office, Greathouse handled his first sensational case, the death of the Rev. Leo Lesser, a local civil-rights leader.

Greathouse said he found Lesser lying in his home "with a syringe stuck in his arm." An investigation by police and the coroner's office turned up no prescription. Those close to Lesser expressed shock when Greathouse ruled the death an



St. Louis Collie Club, February 1960 – Early in his judging career Dr. Richard Greathouse awarding a major to finish Ch. Parader's Country Squire. Owned and shown by Steve Fields.

accidental overdose and revealed that Lesser's arms indicated repeated injections, perhaps several times a week.

Greathouse has also dealt with a half-dozen cases of wives poisoning their husbands. "I call them the Lethal Ladies of Louisville," he said.

One of them, Debra Rogers, who was sentenced to 28 years in prison for murder, purchased the chemical colchicine with a bad check just days before her husband's death in 1991. The chemical company reported the check to the prosecutor's office, which raised a red flag.

"We got this guy's tissue and

blood and, sure enough, it was loaded with colchicine," Greathouse said.

The question of poison arose again when he approved the exhumation of the body of **President Zachary Taylor**, to look for evidence of arsenic poisoning. Although Greathouse and state medical examiners couldn't determine the exact cause of Taylor's death, which occurred in 1850, they concluded that he had not been poisoned, ending rumors of assassination.

The "most dreadful case" his office ever handled, Greathouse



Freezing at Mackinac Island – Doc and Linda. “This is the worst day of my life” he said.



Master of ceremonies Clint Harris and your author speaking at the Dinner.

said, was that of Brenda Sue Schaefer, who was slain in September 1988. Not only had Schaefer been tortured and sexually abused, but “justice was thwarted” in that case, Greathouse said.

“Boyfriend Mel Ignatow was acquitted of her murder but later admitted to it after rolls of film, shot during the crime, were found inside a floor duct by the owners of his former home. Ignatow could not be retried for her murder, but he served time in federal prison for lying about his role in Schaefer’s death and is serving a nine-year sentence on a state perjury charge.”

Deciding it was time to retire, Dr. Greathouse did not seek re-election this year and stepped down from his post as Coroner.

For this and many other reasons, his friends in the **Collie Club of Kentucky** decided to honor him in conjunction with their annual Specialty Show. My brother, **Roy Ayers** was invited to judge the show.

Master of Ceremonies Clint Harris presided over the celebration banquet. His relationship with Dr. Greathouse goes back to the time when Harris, the young profes-



Hazel Ayers, Doc Greathouse, Linda Ayers Turner Knorr and Collie Club of Kentucky Specialty Judge Roy Ayers enjoying the festivities.

sional handler, showed Collies owned by the Greathouse family.

Introductions were made by **June Morris** for the Collie Club of Kentucky. Sara Futh, Secretary of The Collie Club of America was joined by her husband Bob in presenting Dr. Greathouse with a *fifty year letter* making him a Lifetime

Honorary Member of the national organization. Joe Riney made remarks on behalf of the Louisville Kennel Club.

Collie Club of Kentucky Club President **Edwina “Cookie” Skeeters** and First Vice President **Beverly Guenther** delighted the honoree by presenting him with a



Doc Greathouse and Roy Ayers.



Siblings.



scrapbook filled with cards and letters from well-wishers around the country.

Known as “**Doc**” to all who love him, the honoree and Clint Harris had a head table sit down interview recounting the life of Dr. Greathouse.

Currently approved to judge all of the Herding, Working, Terrier and Hound groups, assignments have taken Doc to Australia, Spain, New Zealand, Trinidad, South America, Venezuela and Canada and all over

the United States.

One of the most memorable shows was his first time judging of the Herding Group at **Westminster Kennel Club** where he put up **Ch. Corsairs Bojangles** a Belgian Tervuren owned by Steve Sorensen.

He credits old timers such as Alva Rosenberg, Joe Dahl, Ed Pickhardt, Gustave Sigritz and Oren Kem as influencing his early learning experience in dogs.

Although his original breed was Collies, the Greathouse home is now

filled with Pampions and Norwich Terrier Champions. Fifteen-year-old retired **Ch. Chalkhill Grin and Bare It**, better known as “Huggie” is Doc’s favorite. The Norwich won 120 Terrier Groups Firsts and 18 All-Breed Best In Shows.

My closet contains a hot pink sweatshirt with a hand painted portrait of “Huggie” on the front. It is a treasured gift from Doc.

A display of Collie history memories brought in by **Dr. Greathouse** was set up for everyone to enjoy.



unskilled golfer) at Mackinac Island in less than desirable conditions. He was wearing a light silk jacket. I was in summer knit attire. My husband Jim laughed as the wind and freezing rain kept Doc and me huddled under an umbrella. Doc kept repeating the words, "this is the worst day of my life. I wish Roy could see me now." He knew my father would share his sentiments. I presented him with a golf afghan as a reminder of that day.

In 1993 Doc walked into our home in Greenville, South Carolina. The party was a "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" black tie event. My father was delighted when "Doc" presented him with a photo of the two of them made in 1961 of Judge Greathouse awarding Daddy a Best In Show win.

Following my father's automobile accident later that year, our entire family was comforted when Doc flew in for my Dad's funeral with an armful of red roses for my mother.

Rock 'n' Roll and Jeffery Dalhmer's murders were two topics of conversation that have tied my son Todd to Doc.

His personality is for **all generations** and having him for a friend has been a true blessing for each member of our family.

Master of Ceremonies Clint Harris and I also enjoy fond memories of decades ago when profes-



sional handlers judged Junior Showmanship. He was the good-looking handler/judge who would always put me First in Juniors. I still love him for that, so I thought he and Joanie would also enjoy a golf afghan.

I can't get no satisfaction, no satisfaction, no satisfaction.

- The Rolling Stones

A clarinet player himself, Doc's love for music covers a broad spectrum. His hearing suffers from attending years of concerts and listening to his patients the **Rolling Stones** and **Kiss** at 100,000 watts. "They play loud enough to hear a mile away, he says."

Have you ever noticed Dr. Greathouse wearing a multicolored lapel pin, with a fat tongue sliding between thick lips and white teeth. Given to Doc by **Mick Jagger** it represents his allegiance to his favorite band **The Rolling Stones**.

Jeffrey Lee Puckett of **The Courier-Journal** writes...

"A backstage pass for a **Motley Crue** show says it all... **Rock Doc**."

Its only rock 'n' roll . . .

Greathouse was a young man when rock 'n' roll came to be, but his tastes then ran toward the classics. That changed in 1964. He was then



treating children whose fathers were involved in the music business, including the men who ran the Louisville Gardens and executives at **Sunshine Promotions**.

Rockers, because of their notoriously haphazard lifestyles, frequently need a doctor while on the road. Rock 'n' Roll was barely a decade old when Greathouse became the on-call at local shows, and he didn't have any competition for the job.

"**They couldn't get a doctor to go to these shows. They thought it was a horrible, horrible job,**" Greathouse said. "Most of my contemporaries, they wouldn't go to a rock concert if you gave them a ticket."

Greathouse chronicles his rock exploits in a spiral notebook that includes a long list of the people he has treated.

There's **Frank Sinatra, David Lee Roth, Black Oak Arkansas, The Doobie Brothers and Eddie Van Halen**.

Mick Fleetwood, Clarence Clemons, Neil Young, James Taylor, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, Ron Wood, and Sam Kinison.

Toss in **Ozzy Osbourne, KISS, Jimmy Buffet, Billy Joel, ELP, Lionel Ritchie, the Charlie Daniels Band, Humble Pie, Motley Crue, INXS, Jefferson Starship, Chubby Checker,**



Brenda Lee, Ray Charles and, one of his favorites, ZZ Top. “There’s only three of them, but they are good,” he said. “One time they put a bull onstage and a cage full of rattlesnakes. I thought, ‘Oh God, if someone gets bit by a rattlesnake I’ll be in for a lot of work.’”

Young’s backstage collapse in 1983 pressed Greathouse into the role of bad guy: He had to tell the audience that the show was over. A riot promptly broke out. “Neil said, ‘What’s all that noise?’ I said, ‘They’re rioting.’ He said, ‘Doc, I’m never coming back here again,’ and he hasn’t.”

No one compares to the Stones, however.

Greathouse first met – and treated – the Stones in 1975, when the group was touring behind its “Made in the Shade” collection. Greathouse, then 51, forged an unlikely alliance with the Stones, who were still in peak outlaw mode. The band invited Greathouse to a South America run, which he declined, although he met them later in Buffalo, N.Y.

Greathouse treated the Stones in ‘78, ‘81 and for the last time in ‘89. Last February, he saw the band in Los Angeles.

“They’re nice guys, really,” Greathouse said. “And they are unquestionably the finest rock ‘n’ roll band in the world. No question!”



My husband Jim just stoked the fire, added a few more logs and shared his eggnog.

Wild horses couldn't drag me away, wild, wild horse, we'll ride them someday.

- The Rolling Stones

Known around the globe for its horses and the Kentucky Derby, Louisville is also recognized as one of the canine world's most highly regarded dog club cities.

The initial meeting of the Collie Club of Kentucky was held on January 24, 1949.

Incorporation papers were filed and dated October 30, 1956 stating "That we, **R. F. Greathouse, T.J. Gilpin, Fred Lampson, Edward B. Jaenisch and June Morris** do

associate to form a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Kentucky.

June Morris, always a gracious hostess, entertained my mother Hazel, my brother Roy, Doc and me at Café Metro the night before the big Greathouse celebration. Morris and Dr. Greathouse are the only two members of the founding group who remain active today.

According to June, "when Tom and Maurice Gilpin passed away in the early 1990s, they bequeathed the club a substantial amount of money. This was invested and has enabled the club to bring in judges not commonly used in our part of the country, to support all breed shows in our area as well as the Collie Club of America National Specialty shows, and make contri-

butions to worthy causes. The Gilpins were people devoted to the club and strongly supported it during their many years as active members.

The Collie Club of Kentucky has had the honor of hosting the Collie Club of America National Specialty shows five times. These were April 5, 1959, February 26, 1972, February 24-25, 1978, March 14-16, 1990 and April 18-22, 2001." Dr. Greathouse, presently a lifetime honorary member, was President of the Collie Club of Kentucky when the group hosted that first National Specialty show.

Mrs. Harold Thorpe held that post for the Collie Club of America. She was the invited judge for this special show. Doc remembers Steve Fields and Art Alexander two of

Collie history's legends being there.

In 1961 and 1962, Dr. Greathouse was elected President of The Collie Club of America. He has also served as District Director from Kentucky and various other capacities over the years.



It is a great honor for any judge to be invited to their own breed club's National Specialty show. Dr. Greathouse has done so for the Collie Club of America four times. He was invited to judge for a fifth time on the occasion of the 100th show, but he couldn't return in time from an assignment in Australia.

Rock 'n' Roll, children and dogs are the diverse interests that keep pediatrician and hugely popular AKC Judge Dr. Richard Greathouse ever youthful.

Now that he has retired from his truly remarkable post as Coroner, he looks forward to devoting more time to judging dogs shows, visiting his home "Drop Anchor" at Rum Cay beach in the Bahamas and enjoying the *Good Times*

*Whoa la la ta ta
Whoa la la ta ta
La la la all night long
Wanna tell you*

*Whoa la la ta ta
Whoa la la ta ta
La la la all night long*

*C'mon let the good times roll
We're gonna stay here to soothe our soul
It could take all night long*

*The evening sun is sinking low
The clock on the wall says it's time to go
I've got my plans I don't know about you
I tell you exactly what I'm gonna do*

*Get in the groove and let the good times roll
We're gonna stay here to soothe our soul
It could take all night long*

*It might be one o'clock it might be three
Time don't mean that much to me
Ain't felt this good since I don't know when
I might not feel this good again*

*So c'mon let the good time roll
We're gonna stay here to soothe our soul
It could take all night long*

*All night, all night
All night, all night long
Somebody said it might take all night long
All night, all night whoa*

*C'mon let the good times roll
We're gonna stay here to soothe our soul
It could take all night long*

- Rolling Stones