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Avon author signs books at Lorain Palace Theater



David P. Miraldi leafs through a file on the Casper Bennett murder trial on March 3, 2018, at the Lorain Palace Theater, 617 Broadway Avenue in Lorain, which he found in his mother's closet decades after the case was closed. Miraldi's father was one of two defense attorneys in the case that is at the center of Miraldi's book of historical fiction, "The Edge of Innocence: The Trial of Casper Bennett." Keith Reynolds — The Morning Journal

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Keith Reynolds — The Morning Journal

Murder was the topic of choice at the Lorain Palace Theater on March 3 as residents and fans gathered to meet local author David P. Miraldi.

Miraldi, of Avon, was at the [historic theater](#) at [617 Broadway Ave.](#) in Lorain, to speak about and sign his book, [“The Edge of Innocence: The Trial of Casper Bennett.”](#)

The book is a fictionalized account of a 1964 murder trial of Casper Bennett, a Lorain man accused of drowning his wife in a bathtub full of scalding hot water.

Miraldi’s father, former Lorain Prosecutor Ray Miraldi, was hired as one of two attorneys tasked with defending the accused man.

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About 30 fans were treated to light refreshments, insight into the writing of the book and discussion about the case.

Miraldi, who is the brother of Lorain County Common Pleas Judge James L. Miraldi, said the genesis of the book lies right at the beginning of the case, when he and his brother were home alone one night in December 1963.

“The phone rang, and I thought our parents were checking on us because they were out for the evening, but as it turns out on the other end it was a very gruff and impatient voice, a person who didn’t identify himself, but said he was calling from jail and asked for my father,” Miraldi told the assembled. “When I told him (my father) wasn’t there, he hung up the phone.”

Miraldi is now fairly sure the gruff, impatient voice on the phone was Casper Bennett seeking his father's representation before he was officially charged with first degree murder for his wife's death.

Decades later, Miraldi found a file on the case while moving his mother into assisted living and after reading his father's closing arguments.

"I was able to read it and I could actually hear my father giving the closing argument," he said. "After I had read that I was really captivated by the case and decided that I wanted to write about it."

The book attempts to capture the flavor of Lorain in the 1960s, which Miraldi describes as the golden age for the city.

Cyndi Kramer, of Lorain, who declined to give her age, believes Miraldi did capture the spirit of the area at the time.

"I enjoyed the book in itself, with all the twists and turns and all of the information like the attorneys and judges and everything, it was also a pleasure to read about downtown Lorain during that era because I was a teenager growing up in that era," she said. "You could get the memory and reminisce about the different things and the people."

Miraldi said since the book has been published he's received letters and spoken to people who remember the time of the trial and some gave insight which Miraldi said he wish he'd had while writing it.

He shared an anecdote from one of the letters which came from a retired policeman who frequented Bennett's bar, the B & M Grill. The retired officer said Bennett would match people their quarters for the jukebox. A quarter would give three songs, and when this officer would match quarters Bennett would only ask for one song of his choice out of the six he played.

"The song Bennett always requested was a polka with a verse that went like this: 'I wish I was single again, my pockets would jingle again,'" Miraldi read.