

### Ghostwriting Clips by Alan McNair

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It is a generally accepted rule that buildings must stand up straight. Until recently it has been a canon of architectural design that structures should rise up so that their vertical axis is perpendicular to the surface of the earth. There is an implication of virtue in the uprightness of tall buildings with their evidently straightforward relationship with the natural force of gravity. When a structure like the bell tower at Pisa does not follow the rule, one is compelled to ask why is it leaning or tilting or off-kilter or out of alignment? Something is clearly odd with the tower at Pisa and similarly something unique exists in Capital Gate, a tower that seems to contravene the laws of nature and flouts our certainty about how buildings should look.

It is also generally expected that buildings be symmetrical when viewed from at least one position. When looking at the façade of a structure it is anticipated that, in this two-dimensional form, one side will be more or less a mirror image of the other. Most buildings connect with their occupants by having a major or formal surface surrounding the entrance that repeats the bilateral symmetry of the human body. In the case of tall buildings, symmetry around the central vertical axis is accompanied by horizontal symmetry where the top half reflects, in some measure, the form of the lower half.

#### PRECEDENTS

The rule of architectural symmetry has been significantly challenged in a handful of recent skyscrapers. The tallest building in Scandinavia, a tower

## ***Alvin Karpis Public Enemy Number One.***

### **The Kidnapping of William Hamm Jr.**

The second week of June, 1933 was a disaster for the US Bureau of Investigation. It would take three years for the crime fighting arm of the Department of Justice, later renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to regain public confidence. It took even longer for its agents to appear to live up to the Bureau's motto of "Fidelity, Bravery and Integrity."



In 1933, the Bureau's agents were disorganized, followed sloppy investigative procedures and regularly let cornered suspects slip through their dragnets. They were accused of corruption, some of them working hand in glove with felons and others using unscrupulous practices to obtain convictions. In this they were no different from local police in many jurisdictions. The loyalty of the Bureau's agents was to change slowly as the young director, John Edgar Hoover, turned set-backs to his advantage. He hit on the peculiar idea that he could ensure some measure of ethical behavior

if he hired only lawyers and accountants. Of most importance to improving the Bureau was his successful lobbying the government to obtain for his agents the right to make arrests and carry firearms.

The first calamity began with the bold, daylight abduction of William Hamm Jr. right in front of his Swede Hollow brewery in the Phalen Creek Valley of St. Paul, Minnesota. The idea for the kidnapping was the brainchild of an unsavory local named Jack Peifer. For a small cut of the takings, he put his idea to a notorious gang of bank robbers.

William Hamm Jr., the grandson of Theodore Hamm who founded the brewery in 1865, strolled out of his office on June 15 and headed off to his nearby mansion for lunch. He was approached by a grey haired man who looked to be in his 60's. Well dressed in a conservative, expensively tailored business suit and wearing a stylish black homburg, Chuck Fitzgerald smiled as he thrust out his hand to the wealthy businessman.

"I wonder if I might have a word with you on a business matter," he said shaking Hamm's hand firmly.

Without releasing his grip, Fitzgerald gently escorted Hamm to a shiny limousine with a uniformed chauffer standing by the driver's door. Hamm was gently pushed into the back seat and Fitzgerald followed him in. The chauffer climbed behind the wheel and two men loitering nearby ran to the vehicle and jumped in, one in the front seat and the other beside Hamm in the back.

Fitzgerald, politely said to his guest, "I don't like to do this but I'm going to have to ask you to get down on the floor. I hope you don't mind but I don't want you to see where you are going."

The chauffer, who was watching in the rear-view mirror as he started the limousine, later reported that Hamm looked puzzled. Nevertheless, he agreed to the request and kneeled on the floor. After a short drive, the limo stopped next to another car. Two men got out and handed four identical ransom notes to Hamm, who silently read them and without objection signed his name to each.

## *The Pre-Raphaelites*



The literary and pictorial works of the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, formed in 1848, first attracted little attention among English cognoscenti. The acronym P.R.B. which William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti appended to their signatures on the paintings they exhibited in 1849 apparently went unnoticed. This was not the case in the following year when Charles Dickens published a scathing critique in his journal *Household Words* (June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1850). He began his review of the show at the Royal Academy by saying, "You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts, all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations, and to prepare yourselves, as befits such a subject Pre-Raphaelly considered for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting."

Dickens specifically attacked Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* on display at the summer exhibition, saying that the young Christ was "a hideous, wry-necked, blubbing, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown," and the Virgin Mary was, "so horrible in her ugliness, that . . . she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest ginshop in England." He concluded his excoriation of Millais, "whenever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed." A similar sentiment had already been expressed in an anonymous review in the *Builder* of 1 June, 1850. The picture was faulted for its extreme naturalism "without the least degree endeavouring to idealize." It was damned for its "studious vulgarity of portraying the youthful Saviour as a red-haired Jew boy" and the Virgin as a "sore-heeled, ugly, every-day sempstress (seamstress)." These comments on Millais's painting brought the previously ignored Brotherhood to the attention of the public. Their fame spread further in the following year when Dickens, in a letter to *The Times* of May 3, 1851, stated, "We cannot censure at present as amply or as strongly as we desire to do, that strange disorder of the mind or the eyes which continues to rage with unabated absurdity among a class of juvenile artists who style themselves P.R.B." He accused them of having "an absolute contempt for perspective and the known laws of light and shade, an aversion to beauty in every shape, and a singular devotion to the minute accidents of their subjects."