

Brandt Rydell

All right, Guys. Our last speaker of the night is going to be our newly elected -- recently elected mayor, Mr. Brandt Rydell. I'm going to go ahead and leave that as the main introduction. The reason why is because I find it very funny that the mayor is going to read this story for us and it's going to be *The Unmercifully Whipped, a Story of School Corporal Punishment in 1887*, Taylor.

Come on up.

I figured we'd end this on an up note, you know. We started off with Catholic nuns. We're ending with corporal punishment in schools, but...

Again, I want to thank the Moody for hosting this event. It's wonderful. I've really enjoyed listening to all the stories.

For those of you who don't know, I'm Brandt Rydell. It's my honor and privilege to serve as the mayor of the city of Taylor. I'm in my second year now as mayor, but I also serve as vice president of the Taylor Conservation and Heritage Society. And it's in that capacity that -- oh, about three and a half years ago a few members of the group started talking to me about different things we could do as a society to have more of an

outreach in the community, more engaging, and a way to bring in some revenue for the society and they mentioned it would be great if Taylor had a ghost tour.

And a couple of these folks were kind of new to Taylor and asked me if I knew any ghost stories. I knew a lot of ghost stories in Taylor, but -- there's haunted houses, including the one I live in, and -- but that wasn't very conducive to a tour. You had to drive people all around town.

So we needed to focus on something very concentrated like a walking tour of downtown, and I just didn't have any ghost stories from downtown. And I didn't really have any, kind of, bloody murderous kind of stories, which would be good for a ghost tour, but I committed to researching to see what I could come up with.

And considering Taylor was an old railroad town from 1876, I shouldn't have worried about bloody and murderous stories in Taylor, because we have it in spades. I can assure you. You know, I was concerned that I wasn't going to be able to fill out an hour and a half long walking tour of downtown Taylor. I'd say conservatively I have about six or seven hours of stories of downtown -- downtown Taylor.

And, you know, I would have used this as a pitch because the -- we've been doing the tour now for three years and we hold them over consecutive weekends in October. So that will be next Saturday night and the following Saturday night. We do

two tours a night. And I would be here to try to sell some tickets, but this thing has been so successful that we sell out within a week of the tickets going -- going up.

And so this past year -- right here within the last month when we put the dates up, we sold half the tickets within a few days and then we're completely sold out within two weeks. So we're looking forward to the tour this year.

Now, I mentioned that there's a lot of material to work with from downtown Taylor with its history. And to give you a hint -- or indication of what Taylor was like back then -- if you haven't already kind of gleaned that from some of the comments earlier -- I have a quote on the back of this shirt from our haunted Taylor tour, and it's from N.C. Schlemmer, who was the Taylor stationmaster from 1878 to 1880. And years later as he was reflecting on his life and writing his memoirs he wrote of his time in Taylor, that Taylor was a regular El Dorado of toughs and a hellhole of saloons and gambling houses. So that's our heritage.

So in researching the history of Taylor, you know, I was really focusing on things that happened in downtown, but I'd run across some great stories that didn't have any real connection to downtown Taylor but were just -- and maybe, you know, didn't involve murder or anything like that, but were just so striking to me that I'd say, "Man, I've got to find a way to

tell some of these stories." Well, this is an opportunity to tell one of those.

So -- and since the theme was Women in Taylor History -- I'm kind of stretching this, but there's a couple of women involved in this story.

So the time is May of 1887 and there's a guy named James Trim, T-r-i-m, and he lives just south of Taylor. And it's his wife and children live out there. And he sends his children to school here in Taylor and one of his boys comes home from school one day and he's very upset, crying, because he had been disciplined in school and his teacher had whipped him, and he was very upset.

So this angered James Trim, which is kind of surprising to me from, you know, 1887. I thought that was a matter of course, you just went to school and got beat. That was kind of what happened and you got home and then your parents find out and they'd beat you again. But, no -- but Mr. Trim got very upset about this and he wrote a very angry letter to his teacher, a female teacher in Taylor, and he told her that she was a horrible teacher and a horrible person and that if she were a man he'd come to the school and whip her himself to teach her a lesson.

So anyway, the note went to school. A night or two later Mr. Trim and his wife and kids had retired to bed and during the night there's a knock on the door. Mr. Trim opens

the door to find seven armed men on his doorstep and they order him to come out to the yard because they need to talk to him.

So he goes outside and they say that they were aware of the letter that he sent to this female teacher, the very threatening letter, and that they were going to show him what a whipping was. And at this time Mr. Trim's wife came out onto the porch to try to intervene and she had a pistol put in her face and she was ordered back in the house.

So Mr. Trim is hauled down the street, down the road, and is gone for about 30 minutes. When he's returned to the house he's dumped on the front porch and he's got bruises and lacerations all over him. And one of the men of the party, of the vigilantes, hands Mrs. Trim a set of rail tickets and he tells her that she and her husband and kids need to be on the next train out of Taylor and not come back.

So they do that. They leave down, but they come back a few weeks later because they were able to successfully identify many of the people in the party and were able to cooperate with local law enforcement to get warrants out for the arrests of these vigilantes.

Anyway, that was 1887 in Taylor and the story of James Trim and his issues with the local education. So anyway, the feel-good story.

And I wish -- I wish that we had more availability on our ghost tours, because I would invite any and all of you to

come out. And we're going to see about trying to make this a more regular occurrence, because there's just so many stories to share about Taylor. And, you know, they're -- and I've found some of the most interesting stories.

You know, they're not the ones that the Chamber of Commerce, you know, would necessarily, you know, promote. You know. You know. Again, touching on a theme that's kind of pervaded some of this. You know, we've got -- we've got murdered hookers, murderous hookers. We've got -- we've got beheadings. We've got floggings. We have people being blown up. I mean, it's a -- it's a laugh a minute, you know, on this -- on this ghost tour.

But, anyway, that's one of the things that -- you know, I grew up here in Taylor. My family goes back a few generations here. That's one of the things that I really love about this community, is the rich history it has and it's not all the sanitized whitewashed stuff. It's kind of -- Taylor's been a gritty town. Its early days were certainly rough and tumble and it's got a lot of character to it and a lot of characters in its history and we love telling the stories at the Taylor Conservation Heritage Society.

So thank you all again for having me. And thanks to the Moody for putting this on.

Thank you, Mayor. I'll tell you what, it's been an exciting one tonight, huh? And guess what, we're going to have a lot more of these. So stay tuned to your local newspaper and we'll keep you informed on the next ones that we have, probably at three- or four-month intervals, I would think.

Anyway, I want to thank the Texas Beer Company, the Taylor Press and, of course, the city of Taylor. This is a city museum. All the volunteers that helped us set all this up. Ben Sands on the guitar. Thank you for being here tonight, Ben. (???) Jay Ward, our MC, and of course Jessie for all of the work and ideas that you put into this. We really appreciate it. Thank you for attending to night. Please drive safely. We don't want any more horrible tales. You all have a good evening. Thank you.

We do accept donations, but -- and by the way, there's still goodies out there and a keg on the front porch, but... Thank you.