

Naughty Narby

Legendary faux Cornellian
crashes '62 Reunion

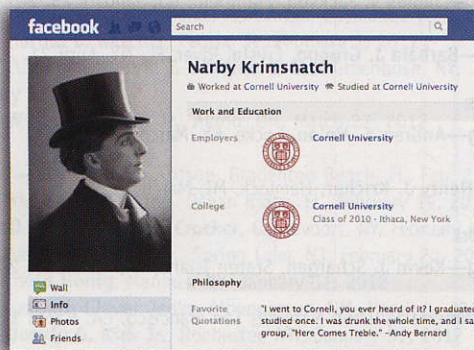
Among the attendees at a Class of '62 50th Reunion event in Kennedy Hall in June was a man whose nametag bore the strange sobriquet of "Narby." Just "Narby."

Nobody questioned the fellow with the odd moniker. After all, it was rather dark in Call Auditorium and many attendees bore languid expressions of reverie, having just viewed a nostalgic video entitled "Remembering Our Days on the Hill." A panel discussion followed—and it was then that the interloper made his move. As the talk wound down and shuttle bus drivers appeared at the exits, Narby donned a pith helmet and sunglasses and rushed the stage.

An uproar ensued—part befuddlement, part wonder. One of the longest-running pranks in Cornell lore still had legs. Narby Krimsnatch—late of Burning Sands Road, Hodeida, Yemen—was back among his ersatz classmates.

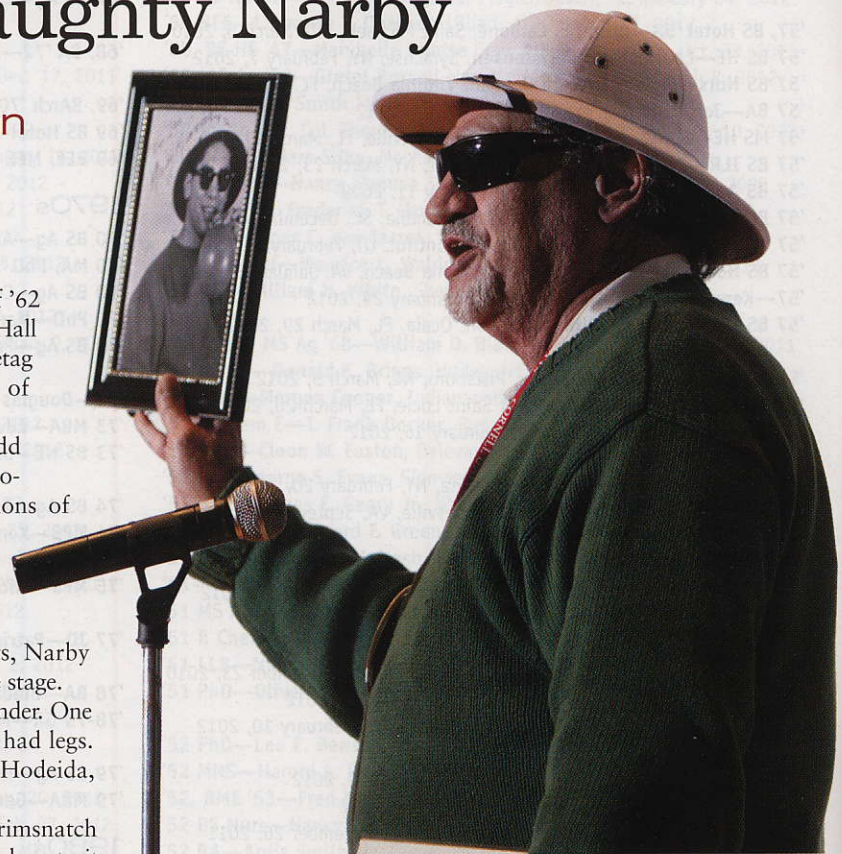
David Kessler '61, BME '62, performed the Krimsnatch cameo. He offered a few comments, waved a framed portrait of Narby, posed for some photos, and fled the scene.

If you're confused, that's okay; Narby likes it that way. Or at least Narby's inventor, Curtis Reis '56, enjoys the sweet bewilderment his prank inspires. Reis has been muddling fact and fiction—and frustrating Cornell class book editors—with Krimsnatch appearances since the Eisenhower era.



Reis created Krimsnatch after finding the name on a student committee application. It was, of course, a phony—but a funny one. "It was too good to pass up," says Reis, who composed a biography for Narby, posed for Krimsnatch's yearbook photo, and even suckered a *Daily Sun* reporter into believing that the fictitious fellow was part of a Ford Foundation project investigating anti-Yemeni discrimination. In his heyday, Narby was affiliated with eighteen student groups (Reis had a way of cajoling friends into playing him) and appeared in the official photo for all but two of them; apparently, not every yearbook editor fell for the gag. However, this entry made it into the 1956 *Cornellian*:

"NARBY KRIMSNATCH Hodeida, Yemen. Phillips Andover



ROBERT BARKER / UP

Academy. Transfer from Univ. of Pennsylvania. Arts and Sciences. Llenroc Lodge. Skulls; Pi Delta Epsilon; Chess Team, Mgr.; Vars. Rugby; Wearer of the 'C'; CIA, Assembly; Model UN; Yemen Delegate; Students for Republican Action; ROTC Band; Andorra National Rugby Award."

After Cornell, Reis enlisted Krimsnatch in the Army while serving as a military records keeper. After a query by a too-inquisitive colonel, Reis had Krimsnatch go AWOL, presumably back to his homeland. (Krimsnatch's father was the 90th Grand Marnier of Yemen with castles in Sana'a and Hodeidah.) As time went on, other Cornellians caught the Narby bug, and Reis gladly lent out his invention. That's how Kessler got into the Narby game for the Class of '62—even though, as the history books show, Krimsnatch is from '56.

Narby has since taken on a life of his own. There's at least one Cornell-affiliated Narby Krimsnatch on Facebook—he claims to "despise roustabouts, cads, and Princeton men"—and a "Gnarby Krimsnatch" with a Cornell-themed Twitter account, which he used to declare his candidacy for the Board of Trustees last spring. In 2009, a note signed by one "Narby Krimsnatch '59" was attached to a fiberglass calf named Cal, mysteriously returned to the Cornell Dairy Store four years after being stolen.

But was the Reunion interloper the genuine Narby? Reis says no—noting that a certain sartorial choice pegged the Kennedy Hall Krimsnatch as an imposter. "Narby," he insisted, "would never wear a pith helmet."

—Franklin Crawford

Infinite jest: Five decades on, the Narby Krimsnatch gag still has its aficionados—at Reunion (top), on Facebook (left), and elsewhere.