

# Royal Blush

By Jeff Hinkle

Did Bob Bonyngé have designs on a porn kingdom or was he just looking for fun?

In the shadowy world of big-time pornography, Robert W. Bonyngé is not exactly a shining light. His Broadway Bookstore, housed in a former T-shirt store at Ninth and Hennepin in downtown Minneapolis, has been in operation for a couple of years and is doing enough business to allow the 44-year-old entrepreneur to pay the rent on his Edina home. But Bonyngé is new to the game — hardly a threat to the empire Ferris Alexander has built here during the last 20 years.

Still, Minneapolis police say they may have snuffed out the beginnings of a developing child porn ring last month when they arrested Bonyngé and confiscated his extensive film library, movies they claim involve bestiality and sex acts with minors. "This is very big and it's going to be around for a while," vice officer Bob Goedderz says of the case. "I'm sure they will take this to the Supreme Court."

In June, Goedderz received a tip about hardcore tapes being made available to select customers of Broadway Bookstore. The investigation that followed involved cops from Minneapolis, Edina, Brooklyn Park and the FBI, and consumed most of the summer.

"We didn't know the extent that this was going to go," he says. "We have people involved in some serious crimes. Some are small potatoes. Some just victims. We think there are 25 people involved, but not all are in violation of the law."

The 25 or so names connected to the case are not the kinds of people one might associate with Hennepin Avenue porn shops. Under investigation are seemingly respectable residents of Brooklyn Park and Edina, at least one U of M student and a local attorney.

Goedderz and his team raided Bonyngé's home and his bookstore June 16. According to police reports, officers confiscated 59 videotapes from the bookstore. Except for some titles starring Tracy Lords — a porn star who now admits to being underage during her earlier starring roles and whose movies have been legally removed from the nation's video stores — the tapes taken at the bookstore were standard commercial pornography. Police found the real treasure at Bonyngé's home. There, along with video copies of *Casablanca*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and tapes of his son's school football games, police found such film classics as *Dog and Nikki* and *Hump Brothers Presents Animal Classics, Part 6*. They also confiscated hundreds of other mislabeled or unlabeled videotapes, dozens of 8mm films, hundreds of still photographs and commercial magazines such as *Sweet 15*, containing alleged child porn.

The police began to catalog the materials confiscated and file their reports. Most of the homemade material taken from Bonyngé's home involve either bestiality or explicit sex with unidentified minors, the reports allege, and that many of the tapes



include Bonyngé in a starring role or giving commands from both sides of the camera.

Though his home would be searched twice more during the investigation, Bonyngé has remained calm and cooperative, reportedly providing police with plastic lawn bags so they could carry away the confiscated material more easily. One officer remembers Bonyngé handcuffed, belly down on the floor with his face in the carpet, telling the officer that they ought to go fishing some time.

For a man who has received so much publicity lately, Bonyngé remains quite a mystery.

A native of East Orange, New Jersey, Bonyngé was the product of a "tough" upbringing, according to one acquaintance. Little else is known about his early life, except that Minneapolis police records indicate he has been living in Hennepin County since 1960. Those records reveal a minor criminal record going back to the mid-'60s, when he pleaded guilty to using profanity in public and paid a \$10 fine. In 1971, he was fined \$300 for disturbing the peace (resisting arrest and public drunkenness charges were dismissed). In 1972, he was fined \$100 for simple assault and \$50 for speeding. In 1975 a weapons charge involving a double-barreled shotgun was dismissed.

In 1978 Bonyngé began working for Micro-Tronics Unlimited as a parts procurer for microwave ovens. The company was owned by Mario Fernandez. Fernandez is considered one of the finest wildlife artists in Minnesota, where wildlife art is big business. Bonyngé began to take an interest in this side of Fernandez's business soon after he began working at Micro-Tronics.

"He would do anything I asked him," Fernandez recalls. "He would drive me around, arrange art shows, help set up the shows. Eventually, I introduced him to production of prints and the technical side. It became a full-time thing."

Dennis Watt, CEO of Watt/Peterson Inc., a printing company specializing in wildlife prints, says Bonyngé was attracted to Fer-



Janet Brown copped all the controversy.

Bonyngé: a dead artist,

a bad marriage and

movies in the basement.

andez's high-gloss image — and the money-making potential of the business. "The world of wildlife art is very classy," Watt says. "It's a very classy business and Mario is a very classy guy. The right artist can make a fortune."

By 1982 Bonyngé was beginning to assemble a stable of wildlife artists. The most talented of these was Jim Williams, a respected younger artist known for his paintings of white swans. Bonyngé broke off from Fernandez and formed his own company — White Swan Press. His plan was to acquire original works of wildlife art, produce and sell the prints out of his Edina home.

In 1984 Williams died of leukemia and White Swan Press faltered. "Once Jim Williams died, that was it," Watt says. "The key to this business is having a good artist. After Williams died, Bonyngé didn't have any real strong talent that he was represen-

One officer remembers

Bonyngé handcuffed, belly

down on the floor with his

face in the carpet, telling the

officer they ought to go

fishing some time.

ting. I think that's when his business began to have trouble."

That wasn't the only trouble Bonyngé was having. In September of 1984 Sharon Bonyngé filed for divorce from her husband. She cited "an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage relationship" as the reason.

A year later, Watt/Peterson printing took Bonyngé to court for back payment of more than \$3,000 in printing bills. "Apparently he was having a lot of financial difficulty at the time," says company co-owner Dave Peterson.

About six months later, Bonyngé and a Brooklyn Park man named Dennis Buchanan formed Broadway Visuals, Inc., and set up Broadway Bookstore at 927 Hennepin Avenue. Shortly thereafter, in July 1986, Bonyngé was arrested for soliciting prostitution and disorderly conduct at the store, according to police records. The prostitution charge was dismissed and Bonyngé paid a \$100 fine for the disorderly conduct charge.

"Our source told me that Bonyngé sincerely feels bad for the prostitutes working on Hennepin Avenue," Goedderz says. And, according to a statement filed by one of the girls involved in a Bonyngé-produced film, one way to help them get off the street was to give them a lot of money (\$100-\$500) to come out to his place and make a movie with his dog.

Goedderz's research indicates that Bonyngé first ventured into pornography about three years ago. One girl identified in photos taken from Bonyngé's home told police that she first went to Bonyngé's home for a nude photo session in December of 1985 when she was 16 years old. The photos were shot in front of an orange background in Bonyngé's basement, she said. The photo session allegedly involved her, Bonyngé and Victor Kruglov, a

Porn next page

**Porn** *previous page*

resident of Los Angeles who last week turned himself into Minneapolis police in connection with the case.

Others also have come forward, including a local attorney who was identified by police in a homemade bondage film and a couple of juvenile girls identified in the Bonynge film collection.

Janet Brown has not been nearly as forthcoming. In fact, the 23-year-old University of Minnesota journalism student has generated more interest in the Bonynge case than Bonynge himself.

"If the thing had gone down as planned, we would have come out of it smelling like a rose," says Lt. Jim Hiemerl of the Minneapolis police vice unit. "Instead, Brown didn't cooperate, the press gets it wrong, and we come out looking like an unflushed toilet. Actually it was a very good piece of police work."

According to Brown's attorney, Katherine Flom, that "good piece of police work" included fondling Brown's breasts, letting her sit on their laps and positioning themselves under her while she danced.

Police had identified Brown and two other women connected with Charm Unlimited, a local modeling agency, in the collection of material taken from Bonynge's home. Police then staged a stag party, featuring one of the three women, hoping to nab her in a prostitution sting and thus gather more information about Bonynge's operation. Brown was actually the third choice, but neither of the other women were available. The "stag" took place at the Minneapolis Hilton and Brown was hired to dance. Police allege that she accepted a \$50 tip for "private entertainment" and was busted on a prostitution charge.

"It was supposed to be a standard prostitution arrest," says Goedderz. "We were going to bring her in here, ask her about Bonynge, and hope she would cooperate. She chose not to cooperate."

When the police arrested Brown a second time, this time on her way to her court appearance, it further angered Flom and Hennepin County District Court Judge Isabel Gomez, who presided over the case. The second arrest involved bestiality charges stemming from the Bonynge case.

It appeared to be bad timing on the part of the police, what with the stag party occurring the same week Police Chief Tony Bouza was requesting funds for 75 additional officers. Indeed, Doug Grow, in his September 2 *Star Tribune* column, wondered if it was



**Randall Tigue: The cops were a little too zealous.**

really necessary to have 20 police officers present to arrest one half-naked college girl.

"The press got it all wrong. They made it look like she was some kind of victim," Hiemerl says. "There were 12 guys there including an FBI agent, some police interns, four civilians — one of whom is vice-president at a local bank — and myself. We sat there like 12 doorknobs. There was no interaction with Brown."

Judge Gomez disagreed, ruling Monday that police had acted improperly. Assistant City Attorney Roger Battreall did not challenge Brown's version of the events at the party.

**B**onynge has officially been charged with one felony — the use of a minor in a sexual act — and nine gross misdemeanor charges — stemming from the possession of various pornographic material. His attorney, Randall Tigue, says he intends to challenge these charges in court based primarily on the legality of the search of Bonynge's home, the validity of the search warrant and the wording of the statute concerning sex with a minor.

It would appear from Tigue's actions in court so far that one of his objections was the random search of Bonynge's home that resulted in confiscation of tapes like *Casablanca*.

Police, on the other hand, say that it's common in these situations for pornographers to insert hardcore videos five minutes into a commercial tape in order to camouflage its contents.

Tigue says he and his client may eventually sue the police for unlawful conduct. "But we will cross that bridge when we come to it."

Meanwhile the investigation continues. Goedderz says he hopes to identify another four suspected juveniles who appear on tape. He has circulated over 70 packets of their photos to area schools in hopes of finding them. "If I can find them, we'll be able to make at least three more arrests and have another felony charge on Bonynge," he says. Among those under investigation is a Brooklyn Park man who is believed to have recruited minors for sex through his 15-year-old daughter.

Last week police arrested Andrea Brynstad in connection with the Bonynge case, charging her with bestiality. Kruglov, the Los Angeles resident who surrendered last week, also has been charged. At one time police suspected Kruglov was a West Coast distributor for the films and tapes, but according to Goedderz "that opinion has changed."

In fact, Goedderz says that police have found no evidence to indicate that these tapes and movies were ever designed for general distribution, a fact that cools earlier police rhetoric about porn rings and talk about challenges to new state obscenity laws. What it doesn't do is reveal whether Robert Bonynge was merely helping to rescue prostitutes from the streets, satisfying his own private urges or aspiring to the throne of a local pornography kingdom.

Goedderz suspects it was the latter. "That might've happened if we hadn't have caught Bonynge when we did," he explains. "For now, though, it looks like Bonynge was just a small potato trying to become another Ferris Alexander." ■