Rider hosts lecture on infamous lawyer Darrow

By Laura Sass
Executive Editor

How does one begin to explain this paradox, this sophisticated country lawyer, this hedonistic defender of the poor and downtrodden, this honest, devious man, Clarence Seward Darrow? These words, taken from a website centered on Darrow, hovered behind Dr. James Castagnera, the associate provost of Rider University, when he offered a presentation entitled, “The Celebrated Trials of Clarence Darrow” to a packed house in the Student Center Theater on Sept. 16.

“Darrow struggled his whole life to get out of law,” said Castagnera. “But certain causes kept pulling him back in.”

He then spoke briefly of Darrow’s childhood. At a young age Darrow quit school, only to go back as a teacher at the age of 17. Darrow soon built up a reputation and was offered the position of City Solicitor. He made $3,000 a year in that position of City Solicitor. He brought this case to the Ohio Supreme court. Soon after this case Darrow moved to Chicago. He opened a private practice which made only $300 in its first year. Fortunately for him, Darrow soon built up a reputation and was offered the position of City Solicitor. He made $3,000 a year in that job. Darrow went on to the very profitable position of General Attorney of the railroad company.

This becomes evident when one considers that Darrow was a national figure, his story permeated the pages of the newspapers of the day. Newspaper reports and articles on cases such as Haywood and his companions were guilty, at the time it was believed that they were being framed by the opponents of the labor movement. Darrow defended him, quitting his lucrative position with the railroad to do so. Darrow was so esteemed by the railroad, however, that he was kept on retainer.

“Although he lost the case, he became the darling of the labor movement from that point on,” said Castagnera. He then went on to discuss the Big Bill Haywood case, which was the one that really launched Darrow to national recognition. Bill Haywood and two of his companions were labor leaders who had been accused of devising a plan that cultivated in the form of a fatal bomb in a former governor of Idaho’s mailbox. Although most historians believe that Haywood and his companions were guilty, at the time it was believed that they were being framed by the opponents of the labor movement. Darrow got them all acquitted, in separate trials.

“By the end of the trial, Darrow was a national figure, either loved or hated by every-

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