

It is Sunday, the 5th of February, 2023, and the Executive Committee of the RPI Players were blamed for a reporter on The Poly seeing the destruction and posting it to their Instagram. We were instructed to not tell anyone about what had happened to the building, no details were to be published. We could only say it was out of commission due to flooding.

For two years that is the story people were told, being told empty promises of repairs completing by next semester. Always waiting for next semester.

I am tired of waiting. It is long past time the record of what happened that day be published.

Friday, the 3rd of February. The overnight temperature averaged -12°F outside. It is well after people went home from the final Evening of Performance work party. The stage has long been struck of CASA's Lunar New Year and is ready for *Shakespeare Fight Club*. First thing in the morning, as the Executive Committee opened the building, we discovered the hot water main for the building was frozen. In fact, the boiler for that line had not been turned on. Further, the sinks in the men's bathroom had frozen, unable to drain at all. A space heater was moved into that bathroom and Public Safety was notified.

It is Saturday, 9:30 am, -7°F outside. The building didn't feel much warmer inside than it was outside. Regardless, we press onwards. We hold a cue to cue as the duelists and the fight choreographer arrive.

It is Saturday, 10:00 am, -6°F outside. The rest of the cast arrives and people get into hair, makeup, and are mic'd up. A fight call is held.

It is Saturday, 10:30 am, -4°F outside. The water fountain stops working and a loud bang is heard from that area soon after. We never determined the source of that sound.

It is Saturday, 11:15 am, 0°F outside. Mic checks were finished and we continued business as usual. The building was frigid. We had all of the thermostats on high heat, yet we could not get warm. We were working in our outdoor winter jackets.

It is Saturday, 11:45 am, 1°F outside. We run *Shakespeare Fight Club* in its entirety.

It is Saturday, 12:45 pm, 4°F outside. Notes are given to actors and tech for five minutes. We break for an hour lunch.

It is Saturday, 2:00 pm, 7°F outside. All cast and crew have returned for mic'ing, hair and make up, and costumes. This is immediately followed by a fight call.

It is Saturday, 2:21 pm, 6°F outside. The water fountain suddenly starts leaking. It is a constant spew of water that was contained with paper towels and rags from costumes. Public Safety was immediately called. Shortly after, leaks were discovered in the basement and the water main for the building was promptly shut off.

It is Saturday, 3:40 pm, 8°F outside. We announced to the cast and crew about there being no water in the building. The second run begins. Soon after, it was noticed that the sprinklers above the bathrooms had fallen down from their holes in the ceiling by about a foot. Public Safety was notified once again, and at long last sent over a single person from FIXX. During the second run, he looked at the water fountain and said "yeah that valve there hasn't been turned in 20 years." He turned the water main back on, said "yeah i have nothing to say about that" about the frozen sinks and semi-fallen sprinklers, and left. The Executive Committee determined the area to be unsafe and roped it off.

It is Saturday, 4:20 pm, 8°F outside. The run of the show is finished, actors get out of costume and are de-mic'd. Ten minutes later notes are given. People are in their full winter wear. Fifteen minutes after that the cast is released. By 5:30 pm, the building is empty and locked up for the evening.

It is Saturday, 5:58 pm, 9°F outside. Someone in the RPI Players discord server sends a video showcasing the building's entire fire suppression system going off. Lights flashing, bells ringing, alarms blaring. Trucks are rolling up, Public Safety is parking on the concourse, people are making their way into the building.

Upon seeing this I asked my roommate to drive me to the building, arriving by Saturday, 6:00 pm. I am in my pajamas and report to the Officers that no one is

inside the building. They tell me the pipes burst and the ceiling collapsed. Charlie arrives shortly after.

It is Saturday, 6:11 pm, 9°F outside. Charlie and I are calling the rest of the Executive Committee, updating them on everything we knew so far. Water poured out the front door of the building, quickly freezing and creating a sheet of ice on the front steps. It even froze inside, as it soaked into the carpet and flowed across the floor. More water poured out from between the siding and the foundation on the concourse-side wall. The water was so loud, the gush of it sounding clear despite the blaring alarms and ringing bells.

It is Saturday, 6:20 pm, 9°F outside. Kyle arrives at the building. He was escorted inside by Public Safety to see if Sound's UPS and Rio could be saved. Almost as if by a miracle, the machines were on a small island of dry land as water froze around them. Neither of the sound or lighting systems were damaged that evening.

It is Saturday, 6:43 pm, 10°F outside. Charlie was escorted inside to save the posters, noticing that the water stopped at the office. The office was dry. They photograph the damage on their way out. We left soon after, as there was nothing more we could do.

That is what happened two years ago. Despite all of our efforts, all of the warning signs, our cries fell on deaf ears. To the community, no one was to blame. It was an accident. To the Union, we were to blame. We should have done something, and were told as such the morning after the flood.

I am not here to influence your opinion. I am simply here as a historian. I am here to state a record of the facts for the people, lest we stay silent and forget our history. If you take anything away from this speech, let it be this. Never forget what happened on that cold weekend in February of 2023.