

Autumn 1988 / 1989

No. 5



# REX STOUT JOURNAL

**PP** PONTES  
PRESS  
Ashton, Md.

## REX STOUT JOURNAL

Published twice a year for admirers of  
Nero Wolfe, Archie Goodwin, and Rex Stout

Number Five—Autumn 1986/1988

<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
REX STOUT AND JANE AUSTEN by John McAleer	3
THE STOUT FAMILY IN 1914 by Burnett Meyer	13
NERO WOLFE: ORCHID INVENTOR by Mark Levy	16
ARCHIE AND THE TEMPTATIONS OF EVE by Ed Rogers	27
REX STOUT AND THORNTON WILDER	29
WHILE ROME BURNS: COLLECTING NERO WOLFE by Peter Cogan	30
A STOUT BLURB	35
ARCHIE AND WOLFE RETURN by Amnon Kabatchnik	36
NOW, LET'S PICK ON ROBERT GOLDSBOROUGH by Ed Rogers	37
JOHN BALL ON NERO WOLFE by William F. Deeck	40
REX STOUT AND THE MEDIA by John McAleer	41
ORCHID PHOTOS, centerfold, courtesy of Mark Levy	



Editor-in-chief: John McAleer  
Mount Independence  
121 Follen Road  
Lexington, Mass. 02173

Executive editor: Ruth D. McAleer

Associate editors: David R. Anderson  
Linda Toole  
Jackie Geyer  
Frederick G. Gotwald

Art editor: Nick Hobart

Honorary Advisors: Lady Mary Stewart  
Jacques Barzun Robin W. Winks  
June Thomson Susan Kelly  
Peter Dickinson Rick Boyer  
Marian Babson Robert B. Parker  
Gregory McDonald Peter B. Spivak  
Jane Langton Jeremiah Healy  
Peter Lovesey Charlotte MacLeod  
William Tapply Lillian de la Torre

Subscription Price, two issues:  
\$7.50 everywhere [All U. S. Dollars]

Copyright © 1989 by John McAleer

Cover: Rex Stout. (From an etching by  
Vincent Esposito; reproduced by per-  
mission.)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Publisher's Note—

Regarding dating of RSJ issues, we have fallen behind in our editing and publishing schedule, but we are still using covers prepared several years ago (this, however, is the last); therefore this issue No. 5 is dated Autumn 1986/1988. The next issue, No. 6, will be dated Spring 1989, and we shall endeavor to keep up with current dating in the future.

## REX STOUT AND JANE AUSTEN

by John McAleer

To William Dean Howells she was "the divine Jane." He said that when Jane Austen was still a cult figure. As the man who launched Mark Twain, Henry James, and a host of other writers, and, as both novelist and critic himself, is the acknowledged father of realism in American literature, it may seem surprising that Howells should have made a point of deifying an English woman novelist who, when she died at forty-one, in 1817, was so little known her passing went largely unnoticed by those outside her little circle of relatives and friends. But Howells had a way of being ahead of his time. When he died in his eighties, in 1920, he was writing what would have been the first novel on Hollywood. He had a feeling, he said, that Hollywood would be important to the twentieth century. He was right, of course, about Hollywood. He was right also about Jane Austen. At the present time she is more written about than any other English writer, Shakespeare alone excepted. Since her family seat, Stoneleigh Abbey, is just outside Stratford-on-Avon, and Shakespeare and she have blood kin in common, Jane Austen probably would smile enigmatically and invite us to make what we will of the situation.

Rex Stout died on 27 October 1975. Exactly fifty days later the world marked the bicentennial of the birth of Jane Austen. If Rex had survived until then he, too, would have marked the occasion. Indeed, just days before he died he was reading Emma, Jane Austen's masterpiece, which, along with R.W. Chapman,



P. D. James, Mary Stewart, and others, he looked upon as a perfectly clued detective story. He had already read it a dozen times but never tired of it. He told me, also, that Nero Wolfe was rereading it. As a matter of fact that was the last glimpse we had of Wolfe. Small wonder that in Robert Goldsborough's Murder in E Minor, when we pick up with Wolfe again, he is reading Emma.

Before I ever knew Rex Stout I had written a master's thesis on Jane Austen. It was natural, therefore, when I became Rex's authorized biographer, that I should sound him out on the "divine Jane." Imagine my pleasure when he told me, "I used to think that men did everything better than women, but that was before I read Jane Austen. I don't think any man ever wrote better than Jane Austen. She saw, as Justice Holmes put it, that 'Words are the skin of our thoughts.' No finer novelist than she has ever lived." These remarks point to the significance of a conversation I had with Rex on a visit to High Meadow in August 1969. I told him I knew a lady who was sure that he had a secretary who wrote all his books for him. "The name is Jane Austen," Rex replied dryly, "but I haven't the address."

Once Rex told me that if he could spend an evening with just one person out of past ages that that person would be Jane Austen. It was typical, of course, of Rex, that he said Sappho also was in the running. I found myself wondering if he thought he would find Sappho easier to get on with. No one ever got the better of Rex in conversation, but he was in awe of Jane Austen, and it is just conceivable that he thought he might have found himself tongue-tied in her presence. That may have been Mark Twain's problem. Twain went on record as saying that any library

could be improved by removing Jane Austen's books from it. Twain had a tendency to feel compromised when in the presence of people who sprang from a patrician heritage. Usually he fell back on his wit in such situations to hide his discomfiture. He had an added reason, however, for making sport of Jane Austen. Howells was his mentor—indeed, for years, everything he wrote was carefully gone over and bluepenciled by Howells before it saw print. One sure way to rile Howells, he knew, was to carry on about Jane Austen.

Of Jane Austen Rex said to me once when we were discussing his own marvelous word sense, "She chose and handled words without the slightest attempt to assert their importance as 'literature.' She made no pretensions of any kind. She sustained suspense without strain better than any other writer of fiction."

I gathered that Rex was already an established writer when he discovered Jane Austen and suspect that it was the Van Dorens, Mark and his wife, Dorothy, that got him started on the six immortal novels. Dorothy told me that it was not unusual for Rex to pepper her with questions about Jane Austen when he visited the Van Doren home at Falls Village. What did Jane read? he wanted to know. Were the Austens in good circumstances? Did Jane believe in God? After one such session Dorothy did some sleuthing and mailed the results to Rex. Yes, Jane had read Tom Jones and Boswell's Johnson. The Austens had several servants and ate well. And—"At least by the time she died, she certainly believed in God—you old anti-clerical you! A proper English High Church god, and I rather think nothing else had ever occurred to her."



I remember, too, asking Rex if he would like to have been Jane Austen's contemporary. He took off in a surprising direction: "Jane Austen didn't give a goddamn what period she lived in. She paid no attention whatever to anything that happened. Probably, technically, she was the greatest novelist—Jane Austen. Jane Austen had an incredible, instinctive awareness of how to use words, which words to use, how to organize them, how to organize her material, how many pages, how much weight to give to this incident and to that one. She was astonishing."

For the past four years William F. Deeck, of College Park, Maryland, a dedicated Neronian and an avid reader of mysteries—not only current mysteries but everything he can lay his hands on going all the way back to the early days of the genre—has been sending me references to Jane Austen found in a wide variety of mystery writers. Thus far he has not sent me any from June Thomson or P. D. James, though they may be found aplenty in those writers. I guess that means they are not among the writers he's read lately. No matter, I know about them. In fact P. D. James told me that when she finishes writing a book of her own she rereads all six Austen novels before she starts work on her next book. Just recently I discovered that Jane Austen had an ancestor named Dalgliesh. I don't think Phyllis James knows that. One of these days I'll surprise her with the details. She got the name from a teacher she had in kindergarten which just shows you how early writers start gathering material for future use.

Not all the quotations Bill Deeck found are complimentary to Jane Austen. The Twain virus has infiltrated the works of some

writers. But, on the average, four books a year have been written on Jane Austen since 1960, the vast majority of them commending her achievement, so I guess an occasional attempt to souse her in the midden is not going to do her any lasting harm. For my money, anyhow, one word from Rex Stout cancels out a thousand of the other kind.

Now here is Bill Deeck's marvelous sampler:

"He's a writer of licentious books. Or so I hear—I wouldn't think of reading one while there's still Jane Austen."

Francis Bonnamy, Death on a Dude Ranch (1937), p. 64.

"The inn also displays horrors peculiar to the English genius. Smug elegance of architecture, fit home for Jane Austen, overfurnished with period pieces in every style fashionable between Horace Walpole and William Morris."

H. C. Bailey, The Wrong Man (1945), p. 41.

"We talked of Hemingway and Jane Austen and Margery Allingham and the poetry of Miss Emily Dickinson."

Mary Collins, Death Warmed Over (1947), p. 195.

"I have to have seclusion," Timothy Davy confided. "I cannot Do My Work against a stream of household interruptions. I am not, alas, like my distinguished colleague Miss Austen in that respect."

"Such was the policemen's lack of pedantry that, although they had all heard of Jane Austen, and Superintendent Baker had even



read one of her books, they did not recognize her under this address. Miss Austen, they all assumed, would be Timothy Davy's assistant schoolmistress."

Osmington Mills, At One Fell Swoop (1963), p. 47.

"He gave me books. I can show you them. They're in my room. Grammar and stories. Jane Austen and Dickens."

George Bellairs, Corpse at the Carnival (1958), p. 103.

"And the books you intensely disliked?' 'Every deadly line of Jane Austen and George Eliot.'"

John Dickson Carr, The Crooked Hinge (1938), p. 64.

"So this year, instead of tracing the novel through to maturity in the works of Jane Austen, Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot, he had sidestepped recklessly in pursuit of a favorite topic of his own. 'Not the history of the detective story,' he had explained to the assembled Courses Committee, 'I quite see that that would be too narrow altogether.'"

"Mr. Roberts would have abandoned his project then and there and settled for Emma and Vanity Fair as he had done every alternate year for some time past, but he had found an unexpected and, truth to tell, unwanted champion in Mervyn Prothero.

"He has written adequately on some lesser known works of Thomas Love Peacock; he has made interesting contributions on Godwin and that extraordinary woman Mary Wollstonecraft. And he incorporated in his opening

lectures this term some truly fascinating material on the widespread dissemination of horrific romances, translated from the German, in the circulating libraries of Jane Austen's time."

Edward Candy, Words for Murder Perhaps (1971), pp. 6, 7, 82.

"He gave me his arm, like a character out of Jane Austen, and in the best spirit of the allies I hooked a hand through it, just like one of the goody-goody sisters in Louisa Mae [sic] Alcott."

David Galloway, Lamaar Ransom—Private Eye (1979), p. 199.

"He frequently interrupted his artistic activities, however, to urge me to take my clothes off and enjoy myself—this made it very difficult for me to concentrate on Pride and Prejudice. Isn't it curious how intolerant some people are of other people's pleasures? Was I pestering Rupert to put his clothes on and read Jane Austen? No, I wasn't."

Sarah Caudwell, The Shortest Way to Hades (1985), p. 54.

"Well, dear, you shouldn't have your picture published in Eve. That is a bit of vain frippery, isn't it?"

"Zena became defensive. 'It wasn't my idea. The editor insists. She says the readers like to identify the face of someone they're reading regularly.'"

"Yes, I suppose so. But I don't think knowing what Jane Austen looked like increases your appreciation of her novels."

"For heaven's sake, I'm no Jane Austen. To



be truthful, most of what I do is rubbish. But I earn a living out of it."

Donald Lehmkuhl, The Woman in the Moon (1986), p. 51.

"Creative people often have an intensely protective attitude about work in progress. Look at Jane Austen's creaking door...."

"That's a point, sir," he replied. There was no way he was going to let on he knew nothing of Jane Austen's creaking door.

"Murder being once done," Troy.  
'That Jane Austen again is it, sir?' asked the sergeant, zipping through Lamberhurst."

Caroline Graham, The Killings at Badger's Drift (1987), pp. 121, 238.

Perhaps we had better account for that "creaking door" allusion. At Chawton Cottage, whence her six novels were published, Jane Austen had no private place to write. So she wrote in the family parlor when she was likely to have it to herself. In those days writing was still considered something of a shady activity for a lady to engage in. In her lifetime Jane Austen did her best to keep the world from knowing that she wrote books. Her name never appeared on the title page. Even some members of her immediate family were unaware of what she was up to. She used a lap desk and wrote on small sheets of paper which could be slipped under her blotter if someone unexpectedly entered the room where she worked. The hinges on the door to that room squeaked but she would not let anyone oil them because the squeaking warned her that someone was coming in and gave her time to get her work out of sight. At Chawton Cottage today the door with the creaking hinges is still in place.

Bill Deeck says he found, as well, a reference to Jane Austen in Coign of Vantage (1988). I dare say he did since I am the author of Coign of Vantage. I shall put you on your honor to look up that reference on your own.

Perhaps we can close this inventory with a quotation from June Thomson's No Flowers, By Request. June Thomson was working on this novel when I took twenty-three students on a Jane Austen tour in 1985. She met us at Heathrow and made the tour with us. Not surprisingly Jane Austen references are found throughout the book. Incidentally the book is dedicated to Ruth and John. I am John. Ruth is my wife. June Thomson's interest in Jane Austen long predates that tour. Her writing alone will tell you that much. No one gets up from reading an Austen book without feeling more civilized. Every writer writes better for having read Jane Austen. Rex Stout roared laughing when he said Jane Austen wrote his books. That is because he knew that it was, in part, true. Theodore Bernstein, author of The Careful Writer, told me that he found Rex Stout to be "the epitome of the careful writer." With Jane Austen as his ideal, how could he help it?

"Hours after Kate Denby had left, taking with her his copy of the Jane Austen correspondence carefully wrapped up in a clear plastic bag to protect it from the rain, Felix made himself supper and then returned to the study where he stayed for the rest of the evening, reading Emma, although from time to time he raised his head to look up at the gap in the bookshelves opposite him where the edition of Jane Austen's letters had stood. Its absence pleased him. He liked to think of the book in Miss Denby's



possession, and of her pleasure in reading it.

"And eventually, of course, she would bring it back; in person, too. He had taken care to make small overtures in this direction before she left. 'Don't bother to post it,' he had said. 'Drop it at the house any time you're visiting Dodie, although there's no hurry.' That way, he had made sure of seeing her again but not for several weeks. The book itself did not invite hasty reading, rather a slow, indulgent study—and, besides, Felix preferred the pleasure of anticipation. He had never been the type of man to rush his fences."

June Thomson, No Flowers, By Request (1987), p. 66.

What is going on here? Well you may ask. Are Jane Austen's letters Felix's opening gambit in the seduction of Kate Denby? Bad enough that Rupert should want Sarah Caudwell's heroine to strip while she is reading Pride and Prejudice and that someone (the murder victim, we hope), in John Dickson Carr's The Crooked Hinge, should complain about "Every deadly line of Jane Austen...." But, never mind. To find the answer, read the book. From there you will find it an easy step to reading Jane Austen. And, after all, that is the direction I have been pushing you in from the opening sentence of this article.

\* \* \*

A Wolfe mention from the inside front flap of the dust jacket of Walter Sheldon's Rites for Murder (New York, 1984):

"Introducing Bishop Paul Burdock of Washington, D.C.: a remarkable new detective in the splendid tradition of Father Brown and Nero Wolfe...."

William F. Deeck

## THE STOUT FAMILY IN 1914

by Burnett Meyer

[Burnett Meyer, professor of mathematics at the University of Colorado, is the son of Adda Burnett Meyer, Rex Stout's first cousin. He relates: "I have written this account of my mother's stay with the Stout family, in New York City, in 1914, exactly as I remember her telling it (Many times!). I have referred to 'Winona' rather than 'May,' although it may have been that my mother and grandmother were the only ones who called her that." It was while she was visiting Adda and her mother (Alice, nee Todhunter), in Denver, in September 1908, that Winona May, Rex Stout's oldest sister, a doctor of medicine, died suddenly at thirty-two.]

My mother, Adda Marie Burnett Meyer, was born in Denver on 3 May 1893, the only child of Robert Clinton Burnett and Alice Matilda Todhunter Burnett (Rex Stout's maternal aunt). Adda's father died when she was three weeks old, and her grandfather, Amos Todhunter, suffered severe financial reverses when she was three months old, so life was not easy for my widowed grandmother and her child. My grandmother married J. J. Bradley in 1905.

Adda graduated from high school in 1911. There was not enough money to send her to college, but she was fortunate to get a job in the Denver Public Schools teaching manual training (woodworking and art, mostly to seventh- and eighth-grade boys. The understanding was that she was to get a bachelor's degree by taking classes in the evenings, Saturdays, and summers. Such arrangements,



though common in earlier periods, were quite unusual in Denver at this time, but there was a great shortage of manual-training teachers.

In 1914, Adda spent the summer with her cousins the Stouts, while taking courses at Columbia University. I regret that she did not leave a written account of her experiences that summer. I have heard her tell the story many times, however, and I remember most of it.

The Stouts lived then in a five-story brownstone at 364 West 116th Street, west of Eighth Avenue and just half a block from Morningside Park, a short walk from the Columbia campus. At the time of Adda's visit there were six people living in the house: Aunt Lucetta, Uncle John, Rex, Ruth, Mary, and Donald. Winona had died six years previously, in Denver; Rob, Juanita, and Walt were married and living in the suburbs; Betty was nursing and not living at home.

Adda found living in the Stout household very exciting. Every evening they would get together and read aloud from the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Evidently they had been doing this for some time, since they had gotten to the "F's"; she remembered an article about Fleet Street. *[Editor's note: It will be remembered that John Stout was, for several years, on the road as a salesman for the Britannica.]*

Each member of the family was enthusiastic about various hobbies and activities, but did not show too much interest in what the others were doing. Adda went to Quaker meetings with Aunt Lucetta, to various churches with Uncle John to hear famous preachers, to the movies (which at the time were looked down on by many people), with

Mary, to tennis matches with Donald, and to plays and restaurants with Rex and Ruth. New York plays and restaurants must have been more affordable then than they were in a later period, since money was not too plentiful with either Adda or the Stouts.

At this period Rex had no beard: he dressed rather fashionably and formally in contrast to his later casual attire.

Adda was in New York the day World War I broke out in Europe. "Let's have dinner tonight at Lüchow's," said Rex. "There should be a lot of excitement there." (Lüchow's was a famous German restaurant.) And there was! A band was playing and people were marching in the streets. As Adda, Ruth, and Rex walked around the neighborhood, newsboys appeared every few minutes with a new extra. Rex bought the paper, read the headlines, and then threw the paper into the nearest trash can. "This won't last long," he said. "The world is too civilized now!"

Adda found living with a large family and living in New York very stimulating. She kept her bags packed for six months, hoping to return. But it was not to be! Though she traveled a good deal in the next years—to the Middle West, to the West Coast, and to Mexico, she did not return to New York for twenty-five years—in the summer of 1939, just as another World War was ready to break out! It was on that occasion that I met Rex Stout for the only time.

Adda completed work on her bachelor's degree in August, 1918. A month later she married Chandler O. Meyer and quit teaching.

\* \* \* \* \*

Errata, RSJ No. 4:

Page 2, first title, it is 41, not 44

Page 26, second column, it is Trinity



## NERO WOLFE: ORCHID INVENTOR

by Mark Levy

The year 1930 was historically unique for two reasons. As the world knows, that was the year in which Nero Wolfe began his career as a private detective, bought the old brownstone house on West Thirty-fifth Street, and hired Archie Goodwin. A fact considerably less renowned and less notable is that 1930 was also the year in which the United States Plant Patent Act was passed into law. The congressman who introduced it to the House of Representatives considered this bill to be one of the most important of that decade. His view was endorsed by Thomas Edison and by the Commissioner of Patents.

These two events differ in importance from one another by orders of magnitude, but the fact that they occurred in the same year is nothing short of remarkable. The nexus of both events is an intriguing plant: the orchid. It represents one of Wolfe's two passions and, as long as it meets criteria of patentability, it can be, and sometimes is, protected under the Plant Patent Act.

In the late nineteen twenties farmers and plant breeders in America were faced with major economic problems, attributable to low produce prices. This resulted in unprecedented foreclosures, by lending banks, of farms and farm machinery. In turn, bank failures in farm states reached record levels and contributed to the October 1929 stock-market crash. Welcome to the Great Depression.

The plight of the farmers prompted Sen-

ator John G. Townsend, Jr., (Maryland) and Congressman Fred S. Purnell (Indiana) to introduce bills in Congress to help agriculture, specifically the food and timber industries, enjoy the same privileges under the patent system as industry. The bills were intended to remove discrimination between plant developers and industrial inventors and to assist in placing agriculture on a basis of economic equality with industry. As a matter of political trivia, one of the twenty-one members of the House Committee on Patents, in 1930, was Congressman Godfrey G. Goodwin (Minnesota), possibly related to the aforementioned Archie Goodwin. [Editor's note: It is good to relate that Godfrey Goodwin is not among those representatives cited in Rex Stout's The Illustrious Dunderheads, in 1942, as isolationists whose policies had played into the hands of the Axis powers.]

The law, enacted four years after the death of Luther Burbank—the most famous plant originator of his time—now gives plant breeders financial incentive. Any person who invents or discovers a new and distinct variety of plant can obtain an exclusive right in the United States and its Territories to propagate that plant by asexual reproduction (e.g. by grafting, budding, cuttings, layering, division), but not by seeds, for a period of seventeen years—the same period of exclusivity provided by utility, formerly called industrial, patents. And that brings us to orchids.

### Orchids

Orchids—the common abbreviation of the order Orchidaceae—comprise 88 subtribes, over 660 genera, and 25,000 species. They are the subject of millions of hybridizing



attempts. The Royal Horticultural Society of England maintains a registry of over 75,000 hybrids—more named hybrids than any other family of plants.

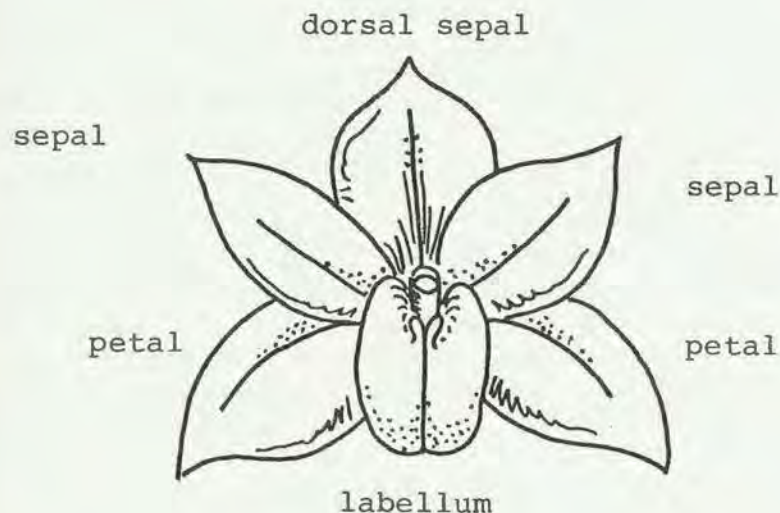
Many botanists consider orchids, because of their distinct characteristics, to be the most interesting order of plants of the entire vegetable kingdom. The variety of species is so great that it is difficult to describe flower characteristics generically. For example, certain orchid flowers blossom for several months each year, while others are in bloom for less than a day. Some require all available sunlight; others require shade. Some are as small as a pinhead while others are over a foot across. One Asian variety weighs more than a ton and supports ten thousand flowers over a five-month blooming season. Another genus has flowers that resemble female wasps, including antennae and eyes. Male wasps are attracted by their odor and attempt to mate with them, spreading pollen from one flower to another.

Tropical orchids of the epiphytal or celestial class grow and thrive best on tree trunks and limbs—often dangling from them in midair—at relatively high, humid elevations. They survive on decaying debris and rainwater. It can take up to ten or fifteen years to raise orchids fit for blooming purposes.

Closely related orchids with similar vegetative features are placed in the same or allied groups. Orchids of the same species usually look like one another, the flowers varying in size or color. They are related to lillies, bananas, palms, and grasses.

Orchids have two lateral sepals radia-

ting from the center hollow ovary, also known as the throat or corolla of the flower. They also have a third, dorsal (upper) sepal, and three petals, one of which, the labellum (lip), is modified. It is generally the largest, most colorful or most visually interesting of the petals and sepals. It is the labellum, usually extending downwardly from the corolla like a cross between a tongue and a landing strip, that attracts insects. Projecting from the center of the flower is a fleshy, club-shaped column, a fusion of the male (staminate) and female (pistillate) reproductive organs. This feature characterizes an orchid. A single orchid capsule or pod may contain a million seeds as fine as face powder.





## Plant Patents

The United States Constitution gave Congress the power to promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for limited times to inventors the exclusive right to their discoveries. In simplest terms, a patent is a contract between the inventor and the government. In exchange for an exclusive right to practice his or her invention for seventeen years (i.e. the right to make, use, and sell the invention), the inventor must disclose the technical details of how the invention is made and how it works. For a utility patent, the invention must be new, useful, and not obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the field of the invention.

This congressional power to bestow exclusive rights on inventors was the basis of the U.S. Patent Law, enacted in 1790. But plants were not included in the law until 23 May 1930. This helps explain why, while over four and a half million utility patents have been granted, less than six thousand are plant patents.

The law states that a person is entitled to a plant patent if he or she invents or discovers and asexually reproduces any distinct and new variety of plant including cultivated sports, seedlings, mutants, and hybrids other than a tuber-propagated plant. In the narrow horticultural sense, tuber means a short, thickened portion of an underground branch. The only plants covered by the term tuber-propagated are the Irish potato and the Jerusalem artichoke, which are excepted from the definition of patentable plants because this group alone, among asexually reproduced plants, is propagated by the same part of the plant that is sold as

food.

The requirement of asexual reproduction is the quintessence of the plant patent system. Asexual reproduction is the only way that a breeder can be sure that a plant is identical in every respect to its parent. A plant patent gives its owner the exclusive right to reproduce the plant asexually. The key to invention in plants is discovery of new traits plus the foresight and appreciation to take the step of asexual reproduction so as to preserve its existence.

The plant must be new. It cannot have existed in nature and have been newly found, such as an exotic plant from a remote part of the earth. It need not be a new species but merely a new variety of plant to be patentable. Similarly, questions of inferiority/superiority as compared to existing plants are immaterial, since the value of a new variety is often impossible to ascertain when it is created.

As for the usefulness requirement of utility patents, distinctiveness is substituted for plants. The new variety may have one or more of these characteristics to distinguish it clearly from other known varieties:

habit

immunity from disease, soil conditions, or weather

flower, leaf, fruit, or stem color

flavor

productivity, including everbearing qualities of fruit

storage qualities



perfume

form

ease of asexual reproduction

The four major plant classification groups in the United States Patent and Trademark Office are flowers, roses, fruits, and plants. Under the plant classification herbaceous flowering plants, including orchids, are subclassified.

The first orchid was not patented until 1965 and in the last twenty years on the average only one orchid has been patented in the United States per year. To date, less than a score of orchids have been patented. They are listed below.

<u>Patent No.</u>	<u>Inventor</u>	<u>Patent Issued</u>
2,583	E. B. Martin	1965
2,658	M. Lecoufle	1966
2,659	M. Lecoufle	1966
2,716	E. McDade	1967
2,777	E. B. Fitzgerald	1967
3,835	M. Lecoufle	1976
3,836	M. Lecoufle	1976
3,932	M. Lecoufle	1976
3,984	E. E. Hetherington	1976
4,058	M. Lecoufle	1977
4,446	D. R. Allen	1979
4,701	E. E. Hetherington	1981
4,702	E. E. Hetherington	1981





P.P. 2,583



P.P. 2,658



P.P. 2,659



P.P. 2,716



P.P. 2,777



P.P. 3,835



P.P. 3,836



P.P. 3,932



P.P. 3,984



P.P. 4,058



P.P. 4,446



P.P. 4,701



P.P. 4,702



P.P. 4,715



P.P. 4,838



P.P. 4,871



P.P. 5,154



P.P. 5,688



Patent No.	Inventor	Patent Issued
4,715	S. L. Guo	1981
4,838	M. Lecoufle	1982
4,871	M. Lecoufle	1982
5,154	E. E. Hetherington	1983
5,688	J. Germaske	1986

Color copies of these plant patents, including photograph and written specification, can be obtained directly from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for \$6.00 apiece by ordering the appropriate plant patent number from:

Box 9

Patent and Trademark Office

Washington, D. C. 20231

Of course, many utility patents describe inventions that the orchid connoisseur can use to grow or display plants and flowers. But two that are specifically intended for use with orchids are patent no. 4,040,208 issued to Fred England for a "Plant Holder and Anchor for Orchid Plants and the Like" and patent no. 3,501,402 issued to Ortha M. Console for a "Process for the Production of Orchid Water." These are also available from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office at the address shown above. The price is only \$1.50 per copy.

#### Nero Wolfe

Nero Wolfe spends four hours a day with Theodore Horstmann and ten thousand orchids



in the plant rooms on his roof. He is considered one of the most respected breeders in the United States. From time to time, Wolfe is known to send or give away orchids as the occasion warrants or the mood—excuse the expression—moves him.

A search of the patentee files of the Patent Office reveals no plant patents issued to Wolfe, Horstmann, or Lewis Hewitt, the Long Island breeder who begrudgingly gave Wolfe three black orchids in 1941.

At first blush, one would question this paradox. Why aren't there any patents issued to Nero Wolfe?

Can it be that none of his efforts resulted in a patentable species of orchid? That would seem most unlikely. His epicurean skills are well recognized and his powers of detection have earned him the title "genius." Arguably, he devotes more time breeding and experimenting with his orchids—over one thousand hours per year—than he does pursuing French sauces or murderers. No, a genius of Wolfe's caliber in two artistic, creative fields would certainly excel in a third. It simply stretches credibility to believe that Wolfe is not inventive in all three fields.

Perhaps the explanation lies with Wolfe's lawyer, Nathaniel Parker. Mr. Parker may not have been willing or even qualified to prepare, file, and prosecute a patent application. This is entirely possible, as patent attorneys, in addition to having a law degree, must first obtain an undergraduate degree in science or engineering and must pass a separate bar examination to allow them to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Less than one percent of all attorneys specialize in intellectual prop-

erty (patents, trademarks, and copyrights).

Indeed, an inquiry to the Patent Office revealed that Nathaniel Parker is not now, nor has he ever been, a registered patent attorney. The closest registrant was a certain N. Davis Parker, registration number 12,844, registered to practice before the Patent Office from about 1935 onward. Further investigation revealed that patent attorney Parker, retired since the late 1970s, worked for the Bendix Corporation in the mid 1930s in South Bend, Indiana, and later relocated to Washington, D.C., to enter into private practice. There is no indication that this near-namesake ever practiced law in New York City. Finally, his first name is not Nathaniel, but Norman.

But the patent law makes provision for an applicant to be his own attorney. This is called acting pro se (by himself). Once again, there is no indication that Nero Wolfe ever did so.

The answer to this mystery of no plant patents issued to Nero Wolfe must relate to the very nature of the patent system itself. Remember, the purpose of the Plant Patent Act of 1930 was to place agriculture on a basis of economic equality with industry. Specifically, plant breeders received financial incentive by granting exclusive rights to inventors.

There you have it. Wolfe has not been granted a patent for new, distinctive species of orchids not because he hasn't invented any, but because he is not in the business of growing them and selling them. All of his considerable income is derived from his work as a detective and a significant percentage of his income is spent on the acquisition and care of his orchids. He



has no need for, nor interest in, commercializing his avocation. He may be called many things, but, at least when it comes to his hobbies, mercenary is not one of them.

Surely it is the loss of nature lovers that Wolfe has not seen fit to apply for patents on his more exemplary inventions. A United States plant patent would make a photograph and description available to all. Not having occasion to see Wolfe's plant rooms, most readers may never have the opportunity to see his creations—a sight that never fails to stop even the usually bustling Archie Goodwin in his tracks.

#### Bibliography

United States Constitution, Art. I, sec. 8, cl. 8.  
William S. Baring-Gould, Nero Wolfe of West Thirty-fifth Street, New York, 1969.  
Ogden Tanner, "Flowers that Drive Us Slightly Mad," Readers Digest, October 1986.  
Floyd S. Shuttleworth, Herbert S. Zim, and Gordon W. Dillon, Orchids, New York, 1970.  
Title 35, United States Code.  
Encyclopedia Americana.  
Robert Starr Allyn, The First Plant Patents. The Plant Patent Act—Bill No. S.4015, 71st Congress.  
John H. Vandermuelen, "Nero Wolfe: Orchidist Extraordinaire," Rex Stout Journal, No. 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 19-33.  
Rex Stout, miscellaneous novels and novella.

Copyright Mark Levy 1987

\* \* \* \* \*

The color plates for this article were printed by Michael McManus, THUNDER PRO-JECTS, INC., Vestal Parkway, Vestal, N. Y. 13850

## ARCHIE AND THE TEMPTATIONS OF EVE

by Ed Rogers

For much of my long life the only porn I ever saw resembled a passage that Archie Goodwin once recalled from an old novel. It described "a lovely young maiden going to her bedroom at night and putting her lovely fingers on the top button of her dress...."

The novel continued: "But now we must leave her. There are some intimacies which you and I, dear reader, must not venture to violate; some girlish secrets which we must not betray to vulgar gaze. Night has drawn its protecting veil; let us draw ours!"

For Archie, that was a marvelously funny "good night" to the reader before putting Nero Wolfe to bed in a Pullman berth (Too Many Cooks, p. 21). For the author, of course, it was a tease—a common device in old fashioned novels. For reasons that I am about to reveal, I suspect that Rex Stout had read a lot of them.

Take this pulse pounder that he put in "Method Three for Murder." For a tête-à-tête with Archie, Mrs. Gilbert Irving wore a "long, flowing, patterned silk number" which she adjusted "to cover a leg better....The leg was safe, no exposure above the ankle, but she adjusted the gown again....She crossed her legs, glanced down to see that nothing was revealed." Then the tête-à-tête ended. "I had yet to get a glimpse of her legs" (pp. 93, 94, 95). Shucks!

Better luck with comely Flora Gallant in "Frame-up for Murder": "She started a hand out to touch my arm, but decided not to ....She was on her feet, putting her palms on my cheeks and giving me an emphatic kiss"



(pp. 76, 84). O wow!

In fact, this gal Flora got downright promiscuous. "She was touching my arm.... She touched my arm again. 'Would you kiss me now?'...She grabbed my arms. I wouldn't have thought her little hands had so much muscle" (pp. 115, 117, 118).

Here the plot thickens. "I felt a touch on my elbow and turned" (p. 121). Flora again? Alas, another toucher—Emmy Thorne! In fact, this volume seemed crowded with touch-teases—and touches. In "Assault on a Brownstone": "She put out a hand and was going to touch me but let it drop....She put her hand out again, and that time touched my arm" (p. 193). See there!

But to heck with touches. What about looking? That really steams. So hold your hats for Amy Denovo in The Father Hunt: "I had seen her only twice, and she was easy to look at, with just enough round places, just round enough, properly spotted on her five-foot-four getup" (p. 2). O wow again!

And so on throughout much of my two-foot row of Nero Wolfe paperbacks. Enough to make you wonder why Archie didn't jump the rails, and how Rex Stout made it plausible that he didn't.

Rex Stout let Nero Wolfe explain it in The Golden Spiders: "He has somewhere concealed in him—possibly in his brain, though I doubt it—a powerful and subtle governor. For instance, the sight of a pretty girl provokes in him an overwhelming reaction of appreciation and approval, and correlatively his acquisitive instinct, but he has never married" (p. 10).

Rex Stout lets Archie explain it himself

in The League of Frightened Men.

"I'm funny about women," Archie says. "I've seen dozen of them I wouldn't mind marrying, but I've never been pulled so hard I lost my balance" (p. 19).

\* \* \* \* \*

#### REX STOUT AND THORNTON WILDER

"An article in the Washington Times-Herald in 1942 noted that [Thornton] Wilder was on the advisory council of the Writers War Board—a board that, the article said, 'functions under the direction of the Office of Civilian Defense, and uses the government's free mailing frank of the "Executive Office of the President," [and] is participating "unofficially" in the campaign of the Communists and other totalitarians.' Furthermore, the article said, 'Rex Stout, writer of murder mystery stories,' who had a record as 'a Communist fellow traveler [and] is one of the prize exhibits of the Dies Committee on un-American Activities,' was chairman of the Writers War Board. This comprehensive smear, which found its way into Wilder's F.B.I. file, misrepresented the Writers War Board—an organization that included many writers [e.g. John Steinbeck, John Marquand, Margaret Pulitzer, Oscar Hammerstein, Dorothy Rodgers, John Hershey, Clifton Fadiman, Robert Sherwood, Russel Crouse, Laura Z. Hobson, and Norman Cousins] who had volunteered their skills to aid the war effort."

The New Yorker, 5 October 1987,  
p. 78.



WHILE ROME BURNS:  
COLLECTING NERO WOLFE

by Peter Cogan

*[On 1 May 1989, Peter Cogan, a student in the Graduate School of Education, Boston University, at a ceremony held in conjunction with the university's sesquicentennial observances, was awarded the Lawrence G. Blackmon Prize for the following essay. It gives us great pleasure to bring it to the notice of our subscribers.]*

"The odds are overwhelming that when historians look at the bright blue late October of 1975 the only thing they will keep about the twenty-seventh is that it was the day Rex Stout died."

Harry Reasoner on the ABC "Evening News,"  
27 October 1975<sup>1</sup>

Someone once said that writing mysteries is like creating an Eiffel Tower out of Popsicle sticks. You may create a tower, but it's still just Popsicle sticks. I haughtily believed this for many years; what could a mere mystery writer offer someone versed in Shakespeare, Dickens, Twain?

I neglected to consider that a mystery writer could be well versed in the classics: could have read the Bible at age four; could have read all of Shakespeare's plays by the time he was twelve, and memorized all the sonnets; could have devoured his father's substantial library—1126 books—as a youth.<sup>2</sup>

In seventy-three stories written from

1933 to 1975, Rex Stout created—created as individuals, not characters—Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin. Stout allows us the opportunity to experience their lives, through the narration of Wolfe's urbane, intelligent legman, Archie Goodwin. Nero, an enormous quarter of a ton, remains firmly entrenched in his brownstone on West Thirty-fifth Street, tending over ten thousand orchids, eating gourmet meals prepared by his Swiss cook, Fritz Brenner, and ingeniously solving mysteries to pay for his habits and his help.

My pleasurable task is to convey why the exploits of such a preposterous duo are not only worth reading, but also relishing—and, of course, collecting.

I still read a Nero Wolfe mystery every other month, anticipating the next book for about seven weeks. Walking into Wolfe's brownstone I enter a familiar and exciting world. It doesn't appear exciting. Wolfe maintains a tight schedule, including four hours each day upstairs in the plant rooms with his orchids. Eating gourmet meals remains his other passion. He satisfies his Doctor's suggestion of more exercise with a grudging game of darts, or perhaps a game of pool.

We experience the outside world through Archie's eyes—intelligent, urbane, amused, and skeptical. He *knows* both the situation and Wolfe himself are slightly absurd, but he also knows he works with—not for, as he maintains—a unique individual.

Their main activity is thinking, and the enjoyment for this reader is watching two very clever individuals share their thoughts in a humorous, symbiotic relationship. We are attracted to them because they are likable.



For all his gruffness, Wolfe remains an extremely personable character. His repertoire of minute gestures, for instance—making, with his index finger, small circles on his custom armchair indicates extreme rage—is only one example of the humanness of Nero.

Stout's relationship with his characters sets him apart. It is customary to talk about how the author creates "living, breathing" characters, or of an author who "cares." Certainly he does and is that. Consider Stout's response to a question concerning a "minor" character. When asked about the possibility of killing off Archie's sometime girlfriend Lily Rowan, Stout responded, "I would tackle a tiger bare-handed to save her from harm."<sup>3</sup> I believe he'd do it.

Solving mysteries is merely an authorial construct, a way for us to meet these two. I never read for plot—which, incidentally, is always ingenious and convincing, never stooping to the common ploys of sex or violence to carry action and maintain interest; I read to eavesdrop and watch Archie and Nero.

As my collection of Nero Wolfe mysteries grew, the mystery of the author increased proportionally. John McAleer's biography, a vital addition to my collection, was dutifully thorough, but somehow lacking in personality. Rex seemed lost amidst the details. However, McAleer's conversations with Stout, collected in Royal Decree, were animated and revealing. No wonder. Stout's voice is as real—maybe even more so—as Nero and Archie. The glint in his eye seems to combine the genius of Nero and the worldiness of Archie. He appears to have both; an IQ of 185 certainly helps.

The success of the saga is confirmed by my unconscious use of Nero and Archie in my own life. I recognize phrases or gestures as theirs. I can appreciate meals in a Neronian fashion, and not just because I own The Nero Wolfe Cookbook. I naturally resurrect Archie in specific situations, usually when attempting to flirt with women. And I would certainly recognize Archie or Nero on the street, although—of course—Nero rarely leaves the house.

And I share Nero with friends. Far from being embarrassed that I read mysteries—the literary equivalent, it seems, of watching "sitcoms"—I promote the works. Scouring my own Neronian notebook, I create occasional quizzes for fellow Nero-philes. I inject conversations with subtle, and not so subtle, references from the oeuvre. It is a living collection.

When I view my entire collection, I always return to Nero and Archie. Certainly, some of the plots remain with me. Who could forget Wolfe's masterful and witty presentation of the world's greatest chefs in Too Many Cooks...or Archie's initial reaction to his job assignment in Too Many Women?

Nevertheless, savoring and anticipating the nuances of Archie and Nero, their conversations with each other and their associates: marveling at Wolfe's pithy word play and philosophy—"I can give you my word, but I know what it's worth and you don't" (Over My Dead Body, p. 61); enjoying the ongoing pleasure of *good writing*: these are the pleasures and artistry of Rex Stout. When Wolfe burns a new dictionary because it threatened "the integrity of the English language" (Gambit, p. 6), his action seemed not only plausible but correct.



A casual reader may choose to see Nero Wolfe as a fat, eccentric detective with a wise-cracking sidekick. Instead, I see Wolfe as a master of rational thought, devoted to the intellectual life. And with a sense of humor. He can burn a dictionary with *feeling*. Archie, just as ardently, is devoted to Wolfe.

I am always on the lookout in bookstores for an elusive hardcover or Pyramid paperback to add to my collection. I always check, whatever state or country I'm in. Nero in Chinese? I certainly looked. Sei Per Uno (The Rubber Band)? I've got it. I remember how much I enjoyed the detective process of finally finding The New Yorker piece. What library could possibly have the original magazine?

And now I enjoy seeing in my own bookcase the NERO WOLFE COLLECTION, proudly occupying its own shelf, well placed among Shakespeare, Thoreau, and the other classics. As occasional villain Arnold Zeck said to Nero in The Second Confession, "It's a more interesting world with you in it" (p. 88). My own response is no longer mine. As Wolfe himself would say: "Indeed."

#### *Assembling the Collection*

"Assembling" is not the proper verb to use for this collection. The word connotes something forced or contrived; it sounds as if I were constructing something from a child's Erector Set.

I carefully *selected* and *crafted* this collection: from a roadside store in Idaho; a dusty, jammed shop in Cambridge, Massachusetts; a landmark bookstore in San Francisco.

And I was offered books. Heavy, worn

hardcovers, pre-dating the paperback explosion. An Italian version, Sei Per Uno, exuberantly handed to me by a relative who shared in the thrill.

The collection was crafted over time, paying attention to publisher, copyright, book cover. It was collected for pleasure, not profit: the simple pleasure of experiencing the book. These books are not, taken singly or collectively, valuable in a monetary sense. The book I value most was rescued from a dumpster.

It was sitting in a cardboard box along with three other mysteries by other authors. I grabbed them all; I read only one, and I was hooked. This was writing. These characters were real. This writer, Rex Stout, had a twinkle in his eye. My collection had begun.

1 John McAleer, Rex Stout: A Biography (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1977), p. 531.

2 Rex Stout: A Biography, pp. 55-56.

3 John McAleer, Royal Decree: Conversations with Rex Stout (Ashton, Md., Pontes Press, 1983), p. 53.

\* \* \* \*

#### A STOUT BLURB

"A great and rare treat—brilliantly conceived, flawlessly plotted, and beautifully written."

Rex Stout

Of John Le Carre's The Spy Who Came in from the Cold (New York, Dell, 1965).



## ARCHIE AND WOLFE RETURN

by Amnon Kabatchnik

In Murder in E Minor (Bantam, 1986), Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin have been resurrected with uncanny accuracy. The book takes up where Rex Stout left off. Once again we find ourselves in Wolfe's spacious brownstone. Threatening notes have been sent to Milan Stevens, celebrated conductor of the New York Symphony. Maria, his pretty niece, asks for help. Archie is astonished when Wolfe agrees to come out of retirement to investigate the case. But Wolfe and Stevens had served together in the Yugoslav resistance and Wolfe owes Stevens his life, a debt that must be paid. Soon Stevens is found dead. Wolfe compiles a list of suspects. Archie provides the customary leg work.

As in past cases, the climax features the inevitable roundup in which all suspects are brought to West Thirty-fifth Street, with Cramer and Stebbins lurking in the background. The Wolfe-Goodwin love-hate repartee is duplicated vividly. Wolfe still detests work, loathes physical activity, abhors all mechanical devices, and seldom leaves home. As usual, all aspects of the work that require travel are handled by Archie. The book dwells on Wolfe's nearly total control of his emotions, his antagonism toward women, and his hostile relations with New York police officials. It captures beautifully Stout's stylistic mannerisms. An affectionate, knowing tribute to the most eccentric, yet human, pair of detectives on the American scene, its success compels us to say that Robert Goldsborough has a clear mandate to continue.

## NOW LET'S PICK ON ROBERT GOLDSBOROUGH

by Ed Rogers

Nero Wolfe fans love Rex Stout's slip-ups. Wolfe was born in Montenegro and was born in New Jersey. Cramer lit his cigar but never lit his cigar. The old brownstone house slides from one address to another on West Thirty-fifth Street, and nobody can draw a coherent floor plan from his description of the rooms.

Why do fans enjoy Rex Stout's slipups or, if you prefer, inconsistencies? It's because they are fans, and are in his thrall. What servant does not relish his master's foibles? And now, we are enthralled by Robert Goldsborough....

I acknowledge the success of Mr. Goldsborough's Nero Wolfe pastiches because he made me forget that Rex Stout was not the author. He's got Wolfe and Archie down pat. Rex Stout constantly invented new ways for Wolfe to be Wolfe and for Archie to be Archie, and so does Mr. Goldsborough.

In Murder in E Minor, the first pastiche, Wolfe says, "I realize I'm trailing the herd...and I must of necessity trample some of the grass it did" (p. 78). When Fritz got a compliment from Wolfe, Archie wrote, "His [Fritz's] smile wrapped all the way around his face" (p. 129). Archie also said, "Tuesday was a Xerox of Monday" (p. 161), and showed off by calling streetwalkers filles de joie (p. 163). All good stuff.

In Mr. Goldsborough's third Nero Wolfe book, The Bloodied Ivy, Archie springs the term "wretches and wretches" on his disgusted boss (p. 59), and, at another point, writes that he "had an inkling," and adds



that "my inkle was right" (p. 144).

Rex Stout constantly invented new ways for Wolfe to flaunt his superiority. So does Mr. Goldsborough. In Death on Deadline, his second pastiche, he has Wolfe say to Archie, "Intuition is the partner of introspection, and you certainly are not blessed with the latter" (p. 50). And a new diatribe on women: "The monumental misadventures of my life, and I'm chagrined to say there have been a number, all have centered on women....I confess my prejudice" (p. 109).

Rex Stout's Wolfe always sprang at least one obscure, but elegant, word on the reader. So does Mr. Goldsborough's Wolfe: "consecution" (E Minor, p. 176), "bavardage" (Deadline, p. 47, and "comedic" (Deadline, p. 65).

But Mr. Goldsborough's most adroit touch was Wolfe's reply when, in E Minor, Lon Cohen asked if he was "going back into active practice again." Wolfe responded: "I'm not sure how you would define active practice. I've always viewed investigative work as an integral part of my existence. And at the present time I have no plans to terminate my existence" (p. 194).

So, now we are enthralled by Mr. Goldsborough. Did he, too, make slipups? He sure did, so why don't we pick on him a little bit?

In the first place, Lon Cohen had to stand out in the hall to watch the finale in Deadline through Wolfe's waterfall peephole (p. 150). What happened to the alcove? In the second place, Mr. Goldsborough has Archie say something about Lily Rowan "after I'd rescued her from a slightly irate bull in a pasture" (E Minor, p. 51). Mr. G.

had better reread Some Buried Caesar.

In Bloodied Ivy, Mr. Goldsborough gives Archie some highbrow words—"vellications" (p. 14), "philosophically simpatico" (p. 41), "equate political views with libido" (p. 41), and "Collegius Americanus" (p. 100). Does this sound like Archie?

Then he has Wolfe, an agile grammarian, utter the following ambiguity: "Milan Stevens was found stabbed to death in his apartment by his niece, Maria Radovich" (p. 174). No, Maria did not stab him, she found him.

Worse still, Mr. G. lets our grammarian say, "Will I need your help to convince him to come?" (E Minor, p. 68). Maria Radovich also says "convince" when she means "persuade" (p. 69), but she can be forgiven. However, no newspaper copy desk would let that error get by it. Yet, in Deadline Mr. G. has Carl Bishop, publisher of the Gazette, saying that Harriet Haverhill believed she could "convince one of them—probably Donna—to sell to the trust" (p. 75). And, for good measure, Elliot Dean, a member of a big law firm, says he "convinced Harriet's chauffeur to carry a pistol" (p. 122). Egad!

Finally, the most jarring note of all came on page 31 in E Minor where Lon Cohen says, "I'd kill to know what you're up to," and again, on page 38, where Lily Rowan says, "Of course, I'd kill to know all about it...."

Now Mr. Goldsborough obviously wants the reader to accept the "kill" line as a bit of real slang that was making the rounds so he can pick up on it later as plot gimmicks. But real slang exists only in indirection, as in hyperbole, irony, or sarcasm. The



"kill" line could be real, albeit inept, slang if used as a sarcasm ("Oh, I'd kill to see that play"—meaning it was lousy). But it cannot be real slang when used with the raw directness that Mr. Goldsborough employs.

It is therefore a false note; yet Mr. G. keeps ringing it—on pages 138, 139, and 147 in E. Minor and on pages 19 and 112 in Deadline. How I wish he had chosen a better note!

Since he has restored Wolfe and Archie to us with a success few could have believed possible, it is a temptation to pass over Mr. Goldsborough's rare solecisms without comment. We are betting, nonetheless, that with even a modicum of vigilance he can approach perfection. On that account we are giving him notice that the standards held to by Rex Stout created a lot of persnickety readers who expect his continuator to be as fastidious as the master.

\* \* \* \*

#### JOHN BALL ON NERO WOLFE

You probably are familiar with this quotation from John Ball's Mark One: The Dummy, but here it is anyway. Mark Day is a fictional spy created by Ed Nesbitt, Mr. Ball's character:

"In our restaurant we have a new little idea: we are creating a series of gourmet sandwiches to be named after celebrated detectives of literature. The most important will be the Sherlock Holmes, after that the Lord Peter Wimsey, the Miss Marple, a very huge one which will be called the Nero Wolfe, the Virgil Tibbs, which is to be dark meat of turkey, and, hopefully [sic], the Mark Day."

— William F. Deeck

#### REX STOUT AND THE MEDIA

by John McAleer

Less than two months before he died, Rex Stout was making preparations to appear on the CBS program "AM America," to promote A Family Affair. He was not looking forward to the stress it would put him under but he was realistic about it. "I've been told it will mean an increase in sales of ten thousand books," he said, "so I don't have much choice." He never made the broadcast, however, a sudden decline in health intervening to make the prospect of soaring sales a matter of indifference to him and to all those who loved him.

Although Rex rarely watched television and, indeed, consented to have a television set in the house only in the last year of his life, when it was no longer possible for him to be physically present at baseball games, he came to concede that watching a televised game was better than not seeing it at all. But he did a lot of radio work during WW II, and was, in fact, for a few years, one of radio's top celebrities. He had less enthusiasm for television probably because he found it difficult to memorize scripts. When he could hold forth on his own, however, he was fine.

Right now several Stout enthusiasts are making an effort to locate videotapes and kinescopes of appearances Rex Stout did make on television. If any of our readers have such materials in their possession we would be happy to hear from them. The Burns Library, at Boston College, where Rex's personal papers and library are housed, would like to add them to the Stout Collection, and to make them accessible to all those who have a legitimate interest in this material.



One correspondent, Bill VandeWater, is looking for two items that would seem to hold great promise. One is a program on which, according to TV Guide, Rex appeared, on CBS-TV, at noon, on Sunday, 5 April 1959. It was a taped program called "Last Word," a panel show. The Guide summed it up in these terms: "Rex Stout, mystery writer, and Russell Lynes, social critic and magazine editor, join regular panelist." If memory serves, Clifton Fadiman was the host and Rex appeared on this program on more than one occasion. Words, their origin, meaning, and usage, was the show's topic, a subject made to order for Rex who often told me that no writer amounted to anything who did not have a strong sense of word choice. Even at eighty-nine he discouraged his secretary from using the dictionary, preferring that she would consult him when she ran into a problem. He wore out more than one copy of Roget's Thesaurus of the English Language in Dictionary Form and, by that time, was himself a walking thesaurus.

A long entry in TV Guide for 3 February 1957 describes a program that Sherlockians as well as Neronians would find collectible. It was an "Odyssey" program, hosted by Charles Collingwood. Its topic? The Baker Street Irregulars. Viewers saw it at 4:00 p.m., on CBS. The Guide relates:

"All of today's show is devoted to Sherlock Holmes. Though most people regard Holmes as a merely fictional detective, the creation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the Baker Street Irregulars look at things differently. It's a dogma of the Irregulars that Holmes was, in fact is, a real person, that furthermore Dr. Watson was his actual chronicler, and that Conan Doyle simply act-

ed as an agent for Watson. Today's 'Odyssey' program opens with a film of the annual meeting of the Irregulars in New York City last month where Holmes's 103rd birthday was toasted.

"The climax of this meeting comes in a speech by mystery writer Rex Stout, creator of Nero Wolfe. Stout 'reveals' his discovery that an affair of the heart actually took Holmes to New York City during the 1890s and that it was in Brooklyn, not in London, that Holmes studied his celebrated case of 'The Red Headed League.' The one-hour program concludes with a full-length live dramatization of this case as it 'actually' took place on this side of the Atlantic.

"Aiding Stout in digging up the facts about Holmes's clandestine visit to our shores are three Irregulars: Dr. Richard Hoffmann, New York psychiatrist; Edgar Smith, retired auto-company executive; and Red Smith, syndicated sports columnist.

"To enhance the 1890s atmosphere there will be films of little-known still photographs of the New York of the day and of the city's police force, to which Holmes gave his help in solving the 'crime.' David Eban wrote today's script. Charles Collingwood is host."

TV Guide concluded the entry with the cast. Holmes was played by Michael Clarke Laurence. Wilson by Donald Marye. Harry Gresham portrayed the remaining member of the three-man cast, Hargreave.

Peter E. Blau announces the discovery of another Stout video appearance which, for the moment at least, appears to be much



more accessible. He writes: "During a recent visit to the Library of Congress, I made a pleasant discovery; their archives include a videotape of the 1956 'Omnibus' program that included an appearance by Rex Stout. I arranged to see the tape on one of their viewing machines. The program is nicely done, and Rex obviously had great fun with the show."

Peter Blau provides this additional information, apparently from the Library of Congress's catalogue:

*"Omnibus: The Fine Art of Murder*

"A 90-minute television series, produced by the Ford Foundation, broadcast by ABC, and presented by Alistair Cooke. On Dec. 9, 1956, the program included a presentation on 'The Fine Art of Murder' (length 40 minutes). According to TV Guide, James Daly narrates and Rex Stout plays himself in a play in which murder occurs and then is solved in different ways by some detective-story writers and their heroes. Script by Sidney Carroll. Cast: James Daly (narrator), Felix Munso (Edgar Allan Poe), Herbert Voland (M. Dupin), Dennis Hoey (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), Robert Eckles (Nero Wolfe), Gene Reynolds (Archie Goodwin), Rex Stout (himself). References (held): The Armchair Detective, winter 1981, p. 23 (John McAleer, quoting Kayleen Sybrandt); Rex Stout Journal, Spring 1985, pp. 15-16.

"Listed by Larry James Gianakos in TELEVISION DRAMA SERIES PROGRAMMING: A COMPREHENSIVE CHRONICLE, 1947-1959 (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1980, p. 332).

"Wesleyan University has a kinescope film of the program."