

Sturbridge author's essays, fiction in new 'Nero Wolfe' mystery anthology

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STURBRIDGE — Baseball, orchids, and murder are the diverse subjects investigated by the late Charles E. Burns of Sturbridge in the recently published *Nero Wolfe: The Archie Goodwin Files*, the second volume of a two-part anthology edited by Marvin Kaye. The collection honors and analyzes author Rex Stout and his immortal detectives Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin, who appeared in 72 novels and short stories, and recently for two seasons on the A&E Network. Among other contributors are Isaac Asimov, Jacques Barzun, and John McAleer. All articles originally appeared in *The Gazette*: *The Journal of the Wolfe Pack*.

Burns, who died in 2004 and whose "Rex Stout: Minister of Propaganda" appeared in the anthology's initial volume, *The Nero Wolfe Files*, contributes three pieces to the new book. One

essay, "Archie Goodwin and the Great American Pastime", chronicles how baseball, the New York Giants, Yankees, Mets, Brooklyn Dodgers, and even the Boston Red Sox weave in and out of what is called the "Wolfean Corpus". In another article, "A Profusion of Orchids", Burns provides a lay reader's guide to the flowers which were the great detective's passion.

The new volume also contains the highly-praised "Firecrackers", a novella in which Mr. Burns performs for Archie Goodwin the same service Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did for Dr. John H. Watson. In "editing" an account "as told by" Wolfe's able assistant, Burns brings to light the heretofore unknown tale of how Stout's two characters first met and formed their long-lasting partnership. At the time of its initial three-part

serial publication in *The Gazette* in the 1991, the adventure was acclaimed as a "great tale", bearing the "full Goodwin imprimatur".

In this collection, editor Marvin Kaye allows that the story of that first meeting is the only one he himself ever wanted to attempt. However, he writes, "there is no need for me or anyone else to attempt it., because, in 'Firecrackers', Charles E. Burns accomplished the task splendidly." The story was also the Sturbridge "editor's" favorite.

Burns wrote and reviewed for many publications, including *The Southbridge Evening News*, where, as "Miles Archer", he reviewed mysteries for many years until the newspaper discontinued its book pages.

Nero Wolfe: The Archie Goodwin Files is available at the Joshua Hyde Library and for purchase at www.amazon.com and www.nerowolfe.org.