New Nero Coming

By BOBBY BAY MILLER
and RONALD G. BURNS

BERKELEY, Calif. (UPI) — On a chilly afternoon in mid-November, a lean, amiable, white-haired man of 87 will begin what he's begun every year about that time since 1934: a story about America's portliest detective, Nero Wolfe.

"I never write in the summer," said Wolfe's creator, Rex Stout, in an interview at his home, which straddles the New York-Connecticut border. "I'll start now on November 16th at 4 o'clock. It'll probably be finished the middle of January. Come out in the middle of June, something like that. Provided — I could die, good food, I'm 85 and a half. In fact, if I didn't want more of my share, I'd have died quite a while ago."

Stout, who sports a beard and weighs nearly 300 pounds, was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1906, one of nine children, in Noblesville, Ind. His amiable Archie Goodwin, does his legwork, a chef cooks his meals and another assistant tends to the orchids he keeps in a rooftop greenhouse. The storied Wolfe has been the subject of many books. There is also a Nero Wolfe Cookbook. Stout said he has cooked all the dishes mentioned in the adventures "at least two or three times."

Some students of Nero Wolfe have argued that Wolfe is the illegitimate son of Sherlock Holmes, since he's fat, I don't know. If they think otherwise, they think he's a coincidence. Which of his own books seems to them to be his best work.

"Now, Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin are the creation of John D. Milner, the writer. I claim I created Nero Wolfe after him. Maybe because he's fat, I don't know."

"I honestly know nothing about where he came from. Listen, you know damn well that's what I did for 40 years, but I've slowed down a little."

The fictional Wolfe weights one seventh of a ton and Conan Doyle's mysteries. All characters are of two kinds. They're all either created ones, the writer really has no idea where they came from or anything else. Or the others, they're made up. And the others, they're created ones — the minute one of 'em appears, you can spot him.

As for created characters, they appear at all levels. Tarzan was one, for example. That's the two kinds."

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The fictional Wolfe weighs one seventh of a ton and lives in a four-story brownstone on West 35th Street in New York City. His assistant, Archie Goodwin, does his legwork, a chef cooks his meals and another assistant tends to the orchids he keeps in a rooftop greenhouse. The storied Wolfe has been the subject of many books. There is also a Nero Wolfe Cookbook. Stout said he has cooked all the dishes mentioned in the adventures "at least two or three times."

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Wolfe is nothing like his creator. Wolfe hates exercise and has a hot temper, a trait he shares with his creator. Wolfe likes good food, but won't refuse a hot dog. Stout said he could not explain Wolfe's origins.

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