

THIS IS A SPECIAL EXTRACTED EDITION OF

ARCHIVE QUARTERLY OMPA SUPPLEMENT

for Autumn 1958

Archie Mercer
434/4 Newark Road
North Hykeham
LINCOLN, Eng.
(Perpetrator)

MERCED & WURST

"MERCED" which does not mean the same thing in Spanish, "WURST" which means a sausage in German.

CAUGHT IN THE RYE Finding to my surprise that the much-vaunted "Catcher in the Rye" was on sale as a Penguin book, I bought it, carried it home, and (after taking it to Belgium and back on the grounds that I thought I'd probably have time to read it, which proved to be not so), finally got it finished.

I hadn't really imagined I'd actually LIKE it - I was merely curious to find out what lay behind Brandon's parody in INNUENDO (the things I do for fandom!) And, as it happened, I didn't like it - there's no story to it, for one thing, it's simply down-to-earth true-to-life stuff as it might have actually happened, and mainly entirely without interest in itself.

However, one thing I did appreciate about it - I dig the narrator, that's for sure. He has more than a little in common with me.

Not that we're complete soul-mates, by a long sight. But I was caught out in several instances where the two of us go hand-in-hand. For instance, his "phonies". Anybody whose way of life, or ideals, are far removed from his own, and with whom he has no sympathy, he terms a "phony". And how right he is. Though I'd never got around to coining a name for them, people with whom I'm out of sympathy ARE phony - I just can't believe in their real existence, they don't ring true to life as

I know it so to speak. I'm not "with" them. They're phony - or, as I now recollect Salinger spells it, "phoney".

Another trait I share in common with Salinger's narrator is the habit of transferring dislikes from the person to the mannerism. In case you're wondering - I DO dislike some people. Not fans, but some of the non-fannish types whom I've met in my time I can easily get to loathe. And loathing the person, I loathe all about him - the way he raps his fingers rhythmically on the table at odd moments, for instance. "I just HATE people who rap their fingers on the table at odd moments", I think to myself or words to that effect. Then, some time later, I catch myself rapping my fingers rhythmically on the table at an odd moment. So it can't be the mannerism I find so objectionable - and sure enough, it turns out to be the person behind it. (Not ME, stoopid - the other one).

So anyway, Salinger's gone and created a really live and understandable character, sharing quite a lot in common with me. Now all he wants to do is to think up a STORY to put him in.

A REAL LIVE FANNISH MYSTERY On and off, one hears frequent mention of the notorious "Shaver Mystery" that created such a storm before I ever came on the fannish scene. To my mind, the only mystery about this particular angle is how it ever came to be dubbed "mystery" in the first instance. But now at last fandom has a real mystery on its hands, and has had for a year or so now. I refer, of course, to the violent feud raging around the dead-or-alive body of one David A. Kyle, originator of the prohibition against Sitting There and (I think I'm correct in saying) one of the ones mainly responsible for obtaining the '57 Worldcon for Britain.

Anyway, every week or two now, I seem to receive somebody's fanzine in which he's either bitterly attacked or else his attackers are - sometimes both. These are great fun to read, but extremely bewildering withal. And still the battle rages fierce.

Is Kyle a scoundrel, or a fool, or an innocent victim of circumstances beyond his control? Is the Dietz/Raybin faction a band of altruistic crusaders, or a pack of mischievous troublemakers? Whatever you do, don't fail to read next week's fanzine-writeup of the subject - from whatever source it may come. It'll give you the answer all right. The one the week after that is equally sure to give the opposite answer, of course - but that's by the way. It's got to the stage now where the various authorities flatly contradict each other (so what's a poor interested bystander to do?), and many of the arguments presented by either party are bloody ridiculous.

It's fun to read - after a fashion - but it's also extremely awkward and unfortunate, with repercussions far beyond those most intimately involved. I rather think that the only way in which the truth could be clearly demonstrated for all time would be for the dispute to become the subject of a full-scale impartial judicial inquiry, such as the recent "Bank Rate leak" tribunal, or the Lynskey "corruption" tribunal of a few years back. Short of that, the sooner it does the better now I

think.

One thing, though, seems to be pretty straightforward - whoever is responsible for the brilliant piece of planning whereby a man is given the job of collecting for his own wedding-present, wants kicking up the behind. Hard. Or worse.

HI-YO, The Kyle feud, though, is by no means the only trouble that
GOLDEN has beset fandom lately. Hard on each other's heels we've
RULE had the TAFF trouble, the Carr/Willis business in FAPA (which has gone far beyond FAPA's boundaries, I'm not a FAPAN for instance), the Bentcliffe/Sanderson affair, and other lesser or greater feuds and frustrations of like nature. They all make for interesting reading - but I think that on the whole fandom'd be better off without them. I've thought quite a lot about it as a matter of fact, and with very little hope that anybody will take the slightest notice fans being what they are, I hereby present my

THREE-AND-A-HALF GOLDEN RULES FOR FANDOM

- Rule 1. Communicate, communicate, always communicate.
- Rule 2. A fan is always sincere, and entitled to be treated as such.
- Rule 2a. If a fan makes an ambiguous remark that can be taken more than one way, always assume he means the nicer way.
- Rule 3. Never challenge a fan's integrity unless you have cast-iron proof to back your accusations.

These need elaborating on. Take the first rule - communicate. One of fandom's most besetting sins, that seems to have been largely instrumental in causing the situations enumerated above, is the reluctance of fan A to let fan B know what he's doing, if anything. Fanac, like justice, does not need merely to be done - it has to be SEEN to be done, or it becomes anything up to and including 100% useless.

Take the case at its lowest denomination - Able is a neofan living in Aberystwyth. Baker is a BNF living in Bristol. Able sees somewhere an advertisement for Baker's subzine, so sends in a five bob sub. Now Baker doesn't have any back numbers left - his is a very popular fanzine - and he has no immediate plans for the next issue. So he records Able's sub, puts him on the list, and gets on with his snogging, housepainting, cross-country running, or whatever he happens to be on with at the moment.

The months go by, and Able sits chewing his nails. Not a word from Baker. Other subzines come out - some with reviews of Baker's latest (sold-out) issue, others with letters in from Baker, etc. Able gets a bit of encouragement from other sources though, and about a year later, just when Baker's seriously buckling down to his next issue, comes out with a fanzine of his own. And comes right out in print calling Baker a slob, an embezzler of sub moneys, and the rest of it.

Baker's conscience is clear - he fully intended honouring the sub, these people can't expect one to acknowledge EVERYTHING that comes in by return of post. So he, in turn, decides that Able's a slob.

That, as I say, is the situation at about its lowest denomination.

But the equivalent happens at all levels, far too frequently. And it HURTS.

Now - the "Sincerity" rule. Several years' experience of fans via fanzines, personal correspondence, and in the flesh, has convinced me that whatever else they may lack, it's certainly not sincerity. They positively ooze sincerity - real, 100% honest sincerity, I emphasise here that I am NOT being sarcastic. Even if a fan is insincere, it's for a sincere reason - for the good of the fan at the other end, or of fandom as a whole.

Fans are often obstinate. Frequently they're stupid. On occasions they're downright incompetent. These are faults, and need to be put right.

But never, never accuse a fan of insincerity. He's at least as sincere as you are. And it, too, HURTS.

Re Rule 3a, about the ambiguous remark: it's possible that it was actually meant to be taken the nasty way. Nevertheless, always assume that the nice way was intended - even if you're wrong, the perpetrator may yet have cause in the end to thank you for making the assumption you did.

Finally, integrity. This does not affect the basic sincerity that underlies all fans - but it is within the bounds of conceivability that some fan somewhere may succumb to an overpowering temptation to do something fannishly dishonest. As a matter of principle, he oughtn't to be allowed to get away with it, maybe. Nevertheless, unless you have absolutely iron-bound evidence of his malefaction, you should sit tight and breathe not a word.

If you do, not only will all his friends immediately rally to his defence, but he'll suddenly find himself with a whole host of new friends (this being one of the finer characteristics of fandom). If he is in the wrong, he doesn't deserve them. And if perchance you're in error and he is blameless, then you've simply smeared his character to no good purpose. And that HURTS.

Right, then - On with the feuding! I didn't THINK I'd be able to stop it. But you can't say I haven't tried.

Which about winds up the issue. Eight pages per AQOS, I decided on way back last year some time, same as ABM used to be. And now look at it!

Before I leave, I'd like to thank Bobbie for letting her name go forward as OE. Once again the mailings are in safe hands. And just think - perhaps she'll even be able to make the Bulmers help wrap up the parcels. Pity if Ken's had to shave his beard off - that means she'll have to buy some string.