

We, the Stock Clerk Saves the Clerkeny



Arthur Hoppe

IT WAS Justice of the Peace Sam Blueberry who first noticed the odd change in Henry Murke, the long-time Municipal Stock Clerk of Pocono Corners (Pop. 1746).

Physicians later attributed Murke's personality disorder to his having become a television addict. For weeks he devoted every spare minute to watching history in the making as his nation's leaders made speeches, held press conferences and appeared before Senate hearings.

Blueberry was nevertheless somewhat surprised last Friday when he called Murke up. "Hi, there, Henry," he began, "how are you?"

"We are, to the best of our recollection at this point in time, fine," said Murke, "at this point in time."

"We?" asked Blueberry. "Who's in there with you, Henry?"

"We are your Stock Clerk, Sam," said Murke. "And the Stock Room says we are feeling fine, too."

"The Stock Room's talking to you, Henry?"

"The Stock Room speaks for all the people of Pocono Corners, Sam," replied Murke with dignity.

"SURE, SURE, Henry, if you say so. But what I was calling about was that gross of Scotch Tapes I ordered from you last week. My cousin's danged dog chewed in half the documents in old Mrs. Twitwhine's ill-run wheelchair case and I need those tapes to put all the evidence together. And while I'm at it, did you ever issue a purchase order for my new typewriter cover?"

"Let us, the Stock Clerk, repeat," said Murke, "that we issued no orders, nor did we encourage anyone in the Stock Room in any way to assist in any attempt to cover up your typewriter. It was not until March 17, as we said on April 30 and May 22, that we learned of these cover-up efforts and we, the Stock Clerk, immediate-

ly launched a vigorous investigation of us, the Stock Clerk."

"Never mind the typewriter cover," said Blueberry testily. "What about the tapes I need? Do you have them or don't you?"

"We feel that question violates the confidentiality of the Office of the Stock Clerkeny," said Murke.

"Well, if you have any will you send them over?" said Blueberry, a desperate note in his voice.

"It would be easy for us, the Stock Clerk, to turn those tapes over to you," said Murke firmly. "However, not only would it destroy the neat arrangement we have here, but being out of tapes would inhibit future Stock Clerks from candidly and openly granting requests from others seeking tapes. So we must uphold the Constitution."

"The what?"

"You are the judiciary. We, the Stock Clerk, are a member of the executive branch. Under the doctrine of separation of powers, it is our, the Stock Clerk's, sworn duty to exercise executive privilege, as the Stock Room has been saying for months, in order to keep inviolate the Stock Clerkeny."

"I'm sorry to say so, Henry," said Blueberry with a sigh, "but I think all of you are nuts."

SO IT WAS with a sad heart that Justice Blueberry signed the papers committing Murke to The Happy Days Senility Farm. But on his manic days, Murke's happy there.

"We are fine at this point in time," he tells visitors. "And the Farm says that any statements to the contrary are not only inoperative but a bunch of outright separate reporting procedures."

It's when he's depressed that he gets somewhat bitter. "They wouldn't have done this to us," he says gloomily, "if we were President of the United States."