

Inside Straight Stew, Spicy Style

Actions have consequences.

Sure, you knew that. Elzie Segar, creator of the "Thimble Theater" comic strip, knew it too. But as he penned words into a character's speech balloon in 1935, he could never have foreseen that those words would fit so uncannily well, half a century later, into the context of our model horse hobby.

"Treat ever'body right," advised Segar's creation, a rough-hewn old veteran of the sea who was utterly honest, had heartfelt morals, and never picked a fight in his life. "But if they steps on ya, lay 'em among the sweet peas."

After several years in the hobby, I've come to adopt Popeye's credo as my own. The majority of the hobbyists are kind, wonderful folks. But there are also unscrupulous sorts out there that will take you if they can, and are more than happy to have fun at your expense.

So how does the philosophy of Segar's spokesman fit in? Make the extra effort to treat other hobbyists as you'd like to be treated. Be willing to cut people some slack and be understanding with them—after all, that's how you'd like people to be towards you. But if anyone tries to take advantage of you and "steps on ya," by all means, have the courage to stand up for your rights! There's no need to be nasty, just firm...and with luck, your actions will make them think twice about taking uncivil liberties with anyone else.

"The Inside Straight" is a result of that philosophy, with a tad more tact added to the interpretation. The column discusses potential trouble areas, examines the possible situations and motivations that lead to them, and leaves it up to you to decide what to do.

In last issue's "Death" of a Showhorse: A Rhyme for the Times, I tried to address the possible motivations of the handful of remakers who are showing horses they have created, but no longer own, in "customizer's shows."

Exposure shortens a model's show life; if both the remaker and the owner are showing the horse, even in distinctly separate competitions, the increased exposure among a fairly finite number of judges will hasten the end of that horse's successful show career. Even more alarming is the fact that many of these remakers don't seem to have the courtesy to ask the model's owners for permission to show their property. An owner, if asked politely, might say "yes." Then again, he or she might say "no." But if the remaker doesn't ask her creations' owners, they can't tell her "no," and the remaker can go on assuring herself that her questionable practices are just fine.

Throughout the two-decade history of the model-showing hobby, all show rights have traditionally belonged to the purchaser—no ifs, ands, or buts. But recently, the self-sanctioned actions of this handful of artists have raised the question, can a remaker help herself to a horse's partial show rights without asking the owner? In closing last issue's column, I posed a question in return to these remakers: "Which did you want more at one time—the money, or the horse?"

Here, printed word-for-word, is the only letter of comment I have received on the subject:

Ardith,

Each issue of *THHN*, I read with great interest your "Inside Straight" column. Naturally, there have been many points I have agreed with and many I didn't agree with, but the latest article/poem simply pissed me off!

Are you suggesting that an artist cannot show a picture of her work to anyone for fear of offending the person who bought the horse? Why the hell should an artist do any work at all if the only thing to show for it is some cash? Contrary to popular belief money is not the only motive behind an artist creating a model. Try doing a model worthy of selling to someone sometime and you might see what I mean. Why should someone create a model for someone else's glory, perhaps to never even be credited for it? I've held shows in the past where several models have caught my eye for whatever reason, so I check the back of the photo for the name of the artist so perhaps

I can buy something from her, but hey, there's no name, no stable name, nothing! Some models that an artist does are never heard from or seen again. Artists find that distressing!

In an earlier column, you suggested that if a customized horse doesn't arrive at your doorstep on time, don't bother crediting the artist. What kind of asinine advice is that? There's more to life than this hobby that can delay the most punctual of artists. If the horse doesn't arrive on time, it doesn't change the person who did the model. If someone asked you in person who did it, are you going to lie to them because it wasn't on time? The artists might as well just quit selling horses and leave people with your mindset in the dust!

Most artists put so much into their work (yes even on models that do not meet most people's perfection standards). Not only pride, pleasure and personal achievement but also time, headaches and actual pain (yes pain, after doing models for 5 or 6 years I have developed carpal tunnel syndrome and I've known other artists to get the same thing or an arthritic condition). I do not do models only for money, and I know there are other artists who feel the same way. Why after all I go through to do a model can't I use it in advertisements and in an enclosed club system where each artist has the chance to show her range of work and not just one or two models? After what an artist goes through, she has no rights except to money? If the hobby comes to that, remakers might as well just stop creating. Where would that leave you, a self-proclaimed "I can't remake a model worth anything" and others like you be? Are you just sore because you can't join the club and must spend money to get a decent remake?

A customizer's show is simply a small, enclosed outlet for artists. It's fun (remember that word?) to see so many beautiful creations by each artist layed out in front of you. Of course these artists are not showing these models outside of designated shows. It is an unwritten rule to follow throughout the hobby and everyone seems to understand this. There are no legalities involved.

My benefit show that I recently held was very successful earning \$30 for the club (on a very low entry fee) and was nationally advertised to introduce the club to everyone. Needless to say, the artists who entered all like the idea and a few of these went on to join the club. I really enjoyed judging it (again that word, enjoy/fun, why does it keep showing up?).

A model's "death" in the showing came from the owners through their own stupid practices such as advertising ("Introducing the sensational Nine Across, soon to be champion of the world even though I only have this one s—ty picture of him") and from showers putting a horse into every class in every show even though he's not suited for most of them! Of course a judge will get sick of the damn horse! The concept of a customizers club will not destroy a horse's career, you are!

By the way, Black Train, Speedy Lucy Luna and Romeona (formerly her name, the grey walking PAM recently bought by Corky) are in the Customizer's Club. The PAM I'm especially fond of an after all the work I put into her, I'm going to show her to whomever I damn well please (within the aforementioned limits). And low and behold, your's and Corky's names are on the backs of the pictures, fancy that, I'm not deceiving anyone into believing that I own these horses. I'm saying I created them and I'm damn proud of it!

If artists decide that they want this type of club and shows (after being around for only 4 months, 19 have joined), there is nothing the buyers can do about it except stop buying the models. The artist can find another buyer, but you will be stuck showing in OF Only shows.

Perhaps since the artist created the horse and not the identity, we could require an I.D. change to help with your problem but really there's a simple solution to the problem of your horse's premature "death"—show him under different judges! New judges! Even so-called qualified judges have sometimes drastically different opinions so what would it hurt to enter shows held by people you've never heard of?

Obviously your article infuriated me but perhaps that was the point. I simply want to scream out Artists have rights too!!!

Sincerely,

Carla Pierce, Triple Fox Studio

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