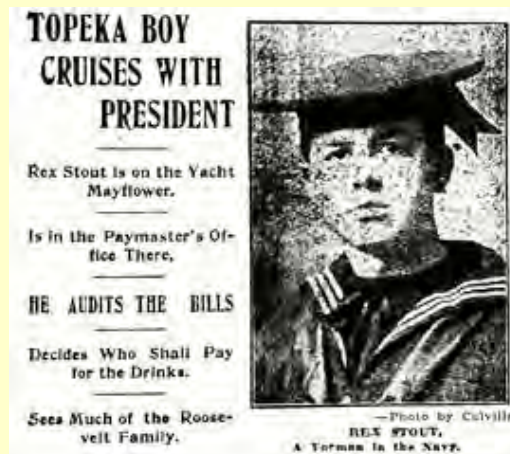


## Rex Stout's First Interview

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Only one Topeka person, so far as is known, has had the pleasure of cruising with President Roosevelt and his family on the Mayflower, the yacht which the government maintains for the President's use. The person referred to is Rex Stout, a Topeka boy, who has been spending the holidays with his family in Topeka. Mr. Stout did not go at the invitation of the President but as a member of the Mayflower's crew. The Mayflower is a part of the U.S. Navy and Mr. Stout has served most of the time since he enlisted in the Navy two years ago on duty on board the President's yacht. He enlisted as yeoman, which is the naval term for clerk or office employee. He is in the paymaster's office on the Mayflower and is known as payclerk. He audits President Roosevelt's bills incurred in giving parties, receptions, and banquets on board the Mayflower and decides whether the government or President shall pay for the champagne the latter drinks on board his yacht. Mr. Stout is the ranking man on board the Mayflower and has jumped over several stages of promotion to his present position. [Editor's note: The look of bulldog determination Rex has on his face in the Biography's photograph, which is, otherwise that of a little boy in a sailor suit, makes this latter claim seem probable.]

The Mayflower is the second ship that Mr. Stout served on since he entered the Navy. As with all new recruits, Mr. Stout had to serve a period of instruction on a training ship to become acclimated to salt water. After serving some time on the training ship the battleship Illinois wanted a yeoman for a short time. Mr. Stout was sent and served a short time on the Indiana [sic], afterwards being returned to the training ship to await further assignment.

On the sleeve of his naval jacket Mr. Stout wears an embroidered gun, the insignia showing that he has qualified in marksmanship as a gunpointer. Mr. Stout had but brief acquaintance with naval ordinance when he went to the Illinois. However, during heavy-gun target practice he employed his friendship with the officer in charge of the practice to get that person to give him a trial. He was allowed to aim one of the six-inch guns and surprised himself by making four hits out of five targets, a percentage of eighty, which entitled him to the rank of gun pointer and to wear the embroidered cannon on his sleeve.

Shortly after returning to the training ship the captain of the vessel received a hurry-up call from the paymaster of the Mayflower for a yeoman. The call arrived when most of the boys on the training ship were on shore to attend some kind of festival, leaving only four of five yeoman on board. The captain lined these men up and marched down the line—not a long march—and asked his orderly to tell him the name of each one. When Stout's name was reached the captain remembered that he was the one who had jumped overboard and rescued the captain's dog when the canine fell overboard. To show his gratitude the captain ordered Stout to pack his bag and be ready to start for the Mayflower, which was in Washington, on the next boat, which left in three hours. Young Stout did so and reported to the paymaster of the Mayflower the same day. The paymaster had got mad at his payclerk the day before and so he made Stout payclerk, which he still is. It is his duty to make out the pay roll for the men and the expense account for the vessel. He audits the bills for champagne, cigars, and other component parts of the dinners, luncheons, etc., given by the President and decides whether the President shall pay for them out of his private purse or whether they shall be charged up to the budget which Congress appropriates each year to keep the Mayflower in commission and pay for the official functions given on it. Mr. Stout decides whether the affair at which the items in the bill were used was private or official and sends the bill to the President or charges it to the fund accordingly.

On the Mayflower Mr. Stout has the opportunity to observe the doings of the Roosevelt family as few have. He knows the peculiarities of each one. He knows whether each one is a good sailor or not. According to him, Archie

Roosevelt is a badly spoiled child and is not liked by the crew of the Mayflower. [John McAleer's Note: Archie Roosevelt's first name was Archibald. Archie Goodwin somewhere insists his name is not Archibald. Small wonder!] Quentin, the youngest boy, is a genuine boy and is loved by everybody on the ship. When the President and his family recently made a trip to Puerto Rico on board the Mayflower Archie was seasick before the vessel was out of the Potomac. Stormy weather was encountered on the trip and waves frequently washed over the decks, while the ship rolled so in the heavy seas that it was almost impossible for a person to walk the deck without holding tight to something. Yet in spite of this Quentin was on deck almost constantly and climbed high into the rigging, where he was whipped back and forth through the air as the ship wallowed in the troughs of the waves. He was not as badly scared as the sailors who discovered him there and were afraid that he would fall from the rigging into the sea.

Mr. Stout says the reason the President made his recent trip to Panama on the Indiana instead of the Mayflower is because he is a poor sailor. The Indiana being a heavy ship [rides the waves better].

The Mayflower is used frequently by President Roosevelt and the members of his family in making sudden trips along the Atlantic coast. Boston, Philadelphia, and New York are frequently visited by the yacht and during its stay at those places the members of the crew have an excellent opportunity to see the towns. Mr. Stout says he much prefers service on the Mayflower to being stationed on one of the vessels of the fleet.

During the football season just passed Mr. Stout was a member of the Mayflower's football team. This team won nine out of thirteen games, most of which were against teams representing other ships of the Navy. Mr. Stout played an end on the team. His picture was run in the Washington Post during the football season as the best end in the Navy.

Every year the crew of the Mayflower gives an elaborate ball in Washington, using the immense ballroom in the Washington Navy Yard. This ball is one of the social events of the season at Washington. Every member of the Congress, the President, heads of departments, foreign ambassadors, etc., are invited. Last year fourteen hundred invitations were issued for the affair. At these balls the President leads the grand march. Mr. Stout will head the receiving line at the Mayflower's crew next ball, which will be held in March.