



**Pleased
To Meet You...**



Every Day's On The Right Track With Spud In Charge

A cup of tea, an early call — nothing is too good for the passengers who travel from Spud Murphy's little station, because he believes caring for people is the essence of life.



A welcome "cuppa" from Spud.

It didn't matter in the slightest that rain was tumbling down out of sullen, grey skies over the pretty Kentish village of East Farleigh, because Spud was in the ticket office at the little railway station as usual — and he had the kettle on.

He had also written a cheery message on the blackboard propped

up against the fence to greet passengers as they walked on to the platform.

So everything was as London bank worker Hans Pelz expected it to be as he arrived to catch the 7.12, collected his newspaper from Spud — and had a cup of tea.

There was nothing out of the ordinary, either, as far as John

Johnson was concerned. A worker in London with Post Office Telecommunications, he too was in good time for the 7.12 — and collected his newspaper and a cup of tea from Spud.

And there were no surprises at all for Roy Stone, an architect with an office in Tottenham Court Road, and the rest of the 7.12 "regulars."

Spud — as usual — was doing his best to get their working day off to a bright and happy start, rain or no rain.

But there's much more to John Joseph Murphy — "Spud" to everyone for almost as long as he can remember — than cheery messages on blackboards and welcome cuppas.

I discovered that for myself when I went to East Farleigh to meet him. For in the 12 years he has worked there he has built up a remarkable bond with his passengers that may well be unique in the history of the railway here — or anywhere.

Always on hand at the tiny station for emergency use, for example, are aspirin, shoe polish and brushes, needle and cotton, wash and brush-up and shaving facilities — and neck-ties for any man who is forgetful enough to dash out of the house without one.

And if getting up on time in the morning presents something of a problem, then Spud will gladly ring through with an alarm call.

He brings in produce from his garden and gives it away — and in the summer presents buttonholes to the men.

He makes sure that birthdays of members of the East Farleigh Travellers' Club — which he formed — are remembered with birthday cards. And anyone celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary also receives his or her ticket as a gift — paid for by Spud. There are usually free tickets, too, for small children making their first-ever rail journey — and for newly-weds.

He's only too pleased to take passengers' shoes to the village cobbler for repair — and to pick them up again when they're ready for collection.

And he takes a particular interest in the local school, organising an Easter Parade and such like, and encouraging the children to decorate the station's small waiting-room with their projects — short essays and drawings, for example — concerning the village and the history in which it is steeped.

"He honestly cares about his passengers," John Johnson told me before he caught the 7.12. "He's always friendly and has a smile and a joke, and is willing to help you — and that's something you can't come across too often."

I was told much the same by

other passengers as they arrived to catch their trains.

When the morning's commuters were well on their way to work, I was able to chat to Spud himself in the waiting-room.

EAST FARLEIGH is in hop-growing country, and from the waiting-room window you look out not only on two oast-houses and their kilns but also on the River Medway flowing beneath a splendid, centuries-old, five-arched bridge.

From the children's handiwork adorning the walls of the waiting-room, I learned that the bridge was the scene of a historic battle between the Cavaliers and Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads, led by General Thomas Fairfax. And that the village church was built before 800 A.D.

"I've always tried to get the children interested in the station as well," Spud told me, "and on one occasion they built a big model of it and we had it on display here."

"At Christmas, they usually decorate the station with holly and put a Nativity scene in the waiting-room. Then there's one little girl of eleven who has been collecting fossils for years and we're going to put those on show here one day."

On closer examination of the waiting-room decorations, I discovered that it's not only the children who have contributed. Several cartoons are there, drawn by one of the passengers.

There's one showing the East Farleigh commuters standing in open trucks which an engine has pulled into the station.

"I say, Spud, old chap," reads the caption, "I know you said you'd fight for cheaper rail travel, but this is rather overdoing it!"

"It's a laugh, isn't it?" Spud said. "That's what this is really all about, you know. I like to send people off to work with a laugh and a wave. If I can get them into a good humour here, then they get on the train and put everyone else in a good humour."

"If I come into work in the morning and perhaps feel a bit down, it's not long before I'm happy, because — without knowing how I feel — the passengers immediately start pulling my leg."

"Mind you, I never mention anything that might upset people — I never talk politics, for example."

"All sorts of people travel from here — architects, surveyors, stockbrokers, journalists, bankers, and so on. Later this morning the housewives will be going into Maidstone to do their shopping."

"There's no need for me to put on airs and graces with any of the passengers. They know I'm old Spud Murphy, and that's it!"

"I think the answer is that I love people. To me, that's the essence

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SPUD MURPHY

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of life — what it's really all about.

"I haven't got anything, I'm never going to have anything — and I'm perfectly happy. I've always wanted to be this way. It's a lovely philosophy — and it works!

"I never had a proper education, because I left school when I was thirteen and went to work as a gardener's boy.

"But I've written twenty-eight books altogether — including lots of poems — and this gives me a lot of pleasure.

"The way I look at it is this — all you can do is what you can do, and nothing else. So what you can't do, don't worry about."

SPUDD was born of Irish parents in Portsmouth in May 1925. He and his wife, Mollie — they have six children and six grandchildren — live at Paddock Wood, a few miles from East Farleigh.

After wartime service in the Royal Navy he went to work as a gardener in Luton — and then became a monk.

"Why a monk?" I asked him.

"It always appealed to me," he explained. "I spent a year — working in the garden mostly — at Aylesford Monastery, which is about ten miles from here.

"I was Brother Joseph, but after a while I was known to everyone there as Brother Blimey! I was always saying 'Blimey,' you see.

"Later on, I wrote a book about my time at the monastery and I called it 'Brother Blimey.' I paid for it to be published, and I gave three hundred and fifty or more copies to local people.

"I joined the railway in January 1953, working first of all as a porter and then moving to the shunting yard at Paddock Wood. I left the shunting yard to do relief work, taking over at various stations in the area when someone was sick or on holiday.

"I did this for fifteen years, and it was during this time I noticed the little things they were doing for passengers at other stations — so that when I came here twelve years ago all I did was to put all the ideas together.

"For example, I did relief at one station where they got newspapers for the passengers — and at another they made cups of tea for them.

"And there was one chap who had a fantastic array of pills at the ready — aspirin for headaches, halibut oil capsules for colds,

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SPUD MURPHY

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something else for flu and so on. "All the pills and potions came from a chemist, and he paid for them himself."

I SUGGESTED to Spud that with the tickets he gave away on birthdays and wedding anniversaries, and the other gifts he presented to his passengers, he must sometimes have found himself badly out of pocket.

"Oh, people are obsessed by money!" he exclaimed. "You are a funny lot!"

"What you don't realise is that I don't spend anything on myself. I give my wife practically all my wages, and the money I've got in my pocket is the money people give me for the papers I buy for them.

"They always give me the money for the morning phone calls I make to them — and often something on top, too.

"I get things in return, that's what is so wonderful about it.

"The ladies bring me sweets, cakes and trifles. If they've cooked a special dish, they'll bring some of it here for me.

"The children bring me things they've made at cookery class. They say, 'Let's try it out on Spud, and if he doesn't pass out then it's all right for Mum and Dad!'

"And you should have seen it here on my birthday. The table was full of bottles, flowers, three birthday cakes, and all the cards.

"I don't think there's anything remarkable about what I'm doing here. I love doing it.

"I don't worry about myself, you see. I always say I live, but I live only because I'm here.

"And anything I'm able to do for other people I get back in return kindness.

"My kids meet me off the train from work every day, and they have always looked after me. It's funny, but when each of my children was born I used to laugh and say, 'That's another one to help bring up Dad!'

"I love my job — and I love people. They're a constant source of wonder to me. On one occasion, a lady came in here and said, 'Spud, I know you've had lots of children,' and I said, 'Yes, what's the problem?'

"I think I'm going to be a mother," she said.

"Well, love, I said, 'you go home on this lovely summer's day, lay the tablecloth out on the grass, have tea ready for your husband when he comes home, and break the news to him — I'm sure he'll be delighted!'

You don't get to know people as well as Spud does without learning to be a diplomat, too. □

MACHINE KNIT

An All-Weather Winner

The ever-popular tie-belt jacket is a favourite for all seasons. Here we bring you the machine-knit instructions.

For all Knitmaster machines.

Materials Required. — Of Robin Landscape Double Knitting, 22 (24, 27, 29, 32) x 25 gram balls.

For best results it is essential to use the recommended yarn. If you have difficulty in obtaining the yarn, write direct, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, to the following address for stockists: Customer Service Department, Robin Woods, Robin Mills, Idle, Bradford, Yorkshire BD10 9TE.

Measurements. — To fit bust sizes — 91 (96, 101.5, 107, 112) cm, 36 (38, 40, 42, 44) inches; completed length from top of shoulder — 61 (62, 63, 64, 65) cm, 24 (24½, 25, 25¼, 25½) inches; completed sleeve seam — 39.5 cm, 15½ inches.

Tension. — 25 sts. and 34 rows to 10 cm, 4 inches, measured over stockinet. Tension dial at approximately 9.

Abbreviations. — Carr. — carriage; cm — centimetres; n.(s) — needle(s); st.(s) — stitch(es); tog. — together.

N.B. Figures in brackets refer to the larger sizes; where only one figure is given, this applies to all sizes.

Back.

Cast on 126 (132, 138, 144, 150) sts. by hand. Row counter 000. Tension dial at 9. Knit 9 rows. Tension dial at 10, knit 1 row. Carr. at right. Row counter 000. Tension dial at 9, knit 20 rows. Decrease 1 st. at both ends of next and every following 7th row 7 times in all. [112 (118, 124, 130, 136) sts.]

Knit 13 rows. Increase 1 st. at both ends of next and every following 10th row 5 times in all. [122 (128, 134, 140, 146) sts.] Knit 15 rows. Row counter 132. Carr. at right.

Shape Armholes.

Cast off 6 sts. at beginning of next 2 rows and 2 sts. at begin-

ning of next 4 rows. Decrease 1 st. at both ends of next and every following alternate row (4, 4, 5, 5) times in all, knit 5 rows.

Decrease 1 st. at both ends of next and following 4th row, knit 5 rows.

Decrease 1 st. at both ends of next row. [90 (94, 100, 104, 110) sts.] Knit 43 (45, 47, 49, 53) rows.

Row counter 200 (204, 206, 210, 214). Carr. at right.

Shape Shoulders And Back Neck.

Cast off 6 (6, 6, 7, 7) sts. at beginning of next 2 rows. Using a length of yarn, cast off centre 28 (30, 32, 34, 36) sts. Push 2 (26, 28, 28, 30) ns. at left to 1 position.

Knit right part as follows:

Cast off 6 (6, 6, 6, 7) sts. at beginning of next row, 2 sts. at beginning of next row, 5 (6, 6, 6, 7) sts. at beginning of next row 2 sts. at beginning of next row and 5 (5, 6, 6, 6) sts. at beginning of next row, knit 1 row.

Cast off remaining 5 (5, 6, 6, 6) sts. Take carr. to left. Push ns. from D position back to C position. Now knit left part as for right part.

Pocket Lining (2 Alike).

Using waste yarn, cast on 2 sts. and knit several rows ending with carr. at left. Row counter 000. Tension dial at 9. Knit 3 rows. Tension dial at 7, knit 1 row.

Tension dial at 9, knit 36 rows. Using waste yarn, knit several rows and release from machine.

Right Front.

Cast on 56 (59, 62, 65, 68) sts. by hand. Row counter 000. Tension dial at 9, knit 9 rows (knit 1 row extra for Left Front). Tension dial at 10, knit 1 row. Carr. at right. Row counter 000. Tension dial at 9. Knit 20 rows. Decrease 1 st. at right edge on next and every