

Have You Met Her?



Her name is Erma Fiste . . . she is a clerical in the Personnel Office . . . a member of the Arkay News Staff as a feature writer on the human side of just every day humdrums that make you laugh at yourself in spite of any old situation. Now a sophomore at the University of Dayton, she is a graduate of Dayton Co-op at which time she alternated at the Journal-Herald. Erma has been at Rike's since February of this year. Now . . . keep right on reading . . .

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Erma Fiste

I don't like to be a confirmed griper, but well, there's just something I've got to get off my mind. Maybe I shouldn't even mention it . . . it's such a trivial matter, but then . . . yes, I guess I'll tell you about it just for my own satisfaction, not to mention to the satisfaction of my editor who is standing over me with a branding iron while screaming for copy.

You see, I had promised to meet my friend Ruthie—a lovely girl I might add, graduated the same year as "Licky" Gopherstand. He's a fullback this year at . . . Excuse me, I'm afraid I've become side-tracked. Anyway, I told Ruthie, I'd meet her on the Main Floor for a coke in three minutes flat. That was an understatement. After I stepped off the elevator, I was not only flat, I was almost extinct.

In the "Welcome to Rike's" booklet, there's a little clause that reads, "Always permit customers to enter the cars before you." Well, I waited on the Seventh Floor only a matter of minutes before I heard the familiar, "Down Car." But just a moment . . . what about that clause in the booklet . . . I bowed from the waist as 37 people entered the elevator, while I looked at them with the glass door between us. Another car carried the down signal. I didn't want to seem eager, but I suppose I did look a little obvious in my track shoes and heavy sweat shirt panting down the aisle. Time passed . . . I whisked out a Reader's Digest,

read it through, and looked around me miserably. I glanced at my watch, but I wouldn't give up. I was through 245 pages of the "Encyclopedia Britannica" when I concocted an idea. If customers were given precedence on elevators, then I would be a customer. I slipped back to the office and got my hat.

"Down Car" said the elevator attendant. Behind me 47 people cried in unison, "Charge!" It was a tackle that would have put Knute Rockney to shame. But I was in the elevator at last. Had I been allowed to breathe, I would have uttered thanks, but it was an impossibility. "If that wrinkle were out of your dress, I think perhaps I could shut the door," the operator politely asserted. I inhaled and wondered how I'd look with a blue complexion. We stopped on the Fifth Floor. As soon as the door opened, I reacted very much the same as a ping pong ball submerged in water by force and then released. I picked myself up off a stack of carpets and again obtained entrance into the elevator. But the two that had gotten off were replaced by a mother and her two children. The little boy made like the Bat Man, twisting and squirming for his denied freedom, and the little girl would nudge me and then stick her tongue out about six inches, making a loud raspberry. To my embarrassment, the mother suffered from a temporary case of stone deafness. I had visions of the little urchin by my side throwing a poison dart into my skull the minute we hit the Main Floor.

The painful silence of the elevator was interrupted only by an occasional moan from the passengers. "I'm glad my husband has Blue Cross Hospitalization . . . Junior, there isn't room to put up a badminton set in here . . . Wish I had an oxygen tent instead of this umbrella . . . these operators have their ups and downs if I may make a pun . . . But dear, don't be so hasty about seeing the bridal secretary, you know father won't raise my allowance until I'm a Senior . . ."

At last, "This is the Main Floor. Take the cars in the back of the store to the basement please." I stepped off the elevator, breathed, and again felt the blood surge through my veins. I rummaged in my purse and discovered my old tenderfoot girl scout badge. I toyed with it a moment, and then walking up to the operator I pinned the badge on her blouse, "In lieu of the Purple Heart," I said with a throb in my voice. With a snappy salute, I left her.

Half way down the aisle, I met my friend, Ruthie. You know Ruthie, a lovely girl to be sure . . . graduated in the . . . Oh, you know Ruthie. "Well, and where do you think you're going," she stormed, while she loaded her .22. "But Ruthie, you said we'd have a coke, and I thought . . ." "But you've been 25 minutes getting here," she boomed. With an anguished cry I started back toward the elevators, inhaled deeply and shouted, "Charge!"