



## "Hi, I'm Archie Andrews.

Perhaps you remember me as the onetime star of comics, popular music, and television, in "Archie," the Archies, and "Archie," respectively. Maybe you even saw my controversial 1981 documentary exposing the dark underbelly of my home town, "Riverdale: Suburban Oasis or Abode of the Damned?" before it was yanked from local release. Can't go into much detail, though, as lawsuits are still pending!"

"Anyway, a few months ago I had the opportunity to attend my high-school reunion. I'd like to share my experience with you, in the hopes that it will inspire you to attend *your* upcoming reunion and communal 50th birthday party on Saturday, July 17, 2004."

"... No sooner did I pass through the metal detector at Riverdale High (a gift from the still-recovering class of 2001) than I ran into one of the ol' gang: Veronica Lodge. Boy, I'm still carrying the torch for her. Except for a blonde dye job, Ronnie looked exactly the same. She *should*, having undergone dozens of cosmetic surgeries over the years. In fact, enough flesh and bone has been extracted from Veronica's face and body that her surgeon was able to construct from it a 2/3-scale model of her, which she had mechanized. The mini-Veronica, christened Veron I-95, accompanies her everywhere, holding her Prada bag and matching Pekinese pup, Sir Elton. Veron I-95 also answers all hard questions for Ronnie, like the names of her three children, currently installed at prestigious boarding schools somewhere in Germany, Austria, Monaco — who can remember?"

"By the way, Veronica is a countess now and has the crown to prove it! It seems that hubby No. 3, long since ditched, was a ne'er-do-well Eurotrash aristocrat named Count Tüten und Openyerize. Although Veronica still refused to date me, her pint-sized robotic alter ego seemed mildly interested!"



Veron I-95



"... Thank goodness for Betty, who's the same sweetheart she always was. Should've married her when I had the chance! After a string of codependent relationships with one loser after another, Betty moved to a tiny cottage in rural Vermont and adopted nine pairs of identical twins. Half live on one side of the house; the other half, on the other side. That way, she reasons, she saves money on mirrors! Betty's arteries may be hardening, but not her heart. As she got out of her car at the reunion, Mia Farrow ran up, thrust two infants at her, and fled, sobbing. Betty adopted them on the spot. Gosh, were they hungry, with the pinker of the two guzzling down my whisky sour in a minute flat!"



"... Moose was there too. He got booted out of the National Football League midway through his rookie season for using hormones. Nothing illegal, like steroids. It's just that Moose, having the IQ of a cinder block, was unknowingly taking *estrogen*. Ruined his career, but on the plus side, he doesn't have to shave anymore!

"Moose has done all right for himself, though, as a security guard to the stars: Cher, A Flock of Seagulls, J.Lo. "Jus' reg'lar folk," he likes to say while cutting up their food for them or folding their toilet tissue into wondrous origami-like creations. One time he took a bullet for Don Knotts, whose ardent fans, apparently, will stop at nothing to get at their beloved Knottster ...

"He showed up with a newly divorced Sharon Stone on his arm (gone all Hollywood, Moose has, with his hair slicked back and black tux; fancies himself a James Bond type now, packing at least three handguns). Ms. Stone got loaded and proceeded to fall asleep in a chair while unwittingly affecting her famous pose from the movie *Basic Instinct*. It was highly undignified. But riveting!"



"... Sadly, my best friend, Jughead, wasn't able to make it, as he's been incarcerated in a Colombian maximum-security mountaintop prison for the past seven years. Ol' Jughead thought he could smuggle several kilos of heroin and high-powered weaponry into Bogota by stashing them under that stupid hat of his. Just as he approached customs, a brisk breeze blew and — well, you can guess the rest. He doesn't get out until the year 2059 (conveniently, our 95<sup>th</sup> high school reunion!), although Jughead is praying fervently for a military coup to install a more humane regime. I guess only time will tell."

"... Miss Grundy and Mr. Weatherbee were the only faculty members to join us. Who knew that they'd been shacking up together since the Nixon Administration (!), currently in a retirement community in Trail's End, Florida.

"Miss Grundy looked the same; Principal Weatherbee too, except for a hairpiece that appeared to be some road kill that had crawled up onto his shiny dome with its dying breath and expired there. No one really got to talk to them, as they spent most of the reunion canoodling in a corner, barely coming up for air. Thankfully, that nightmarish image has finally begun to fade, and I can sleep through the night again!"

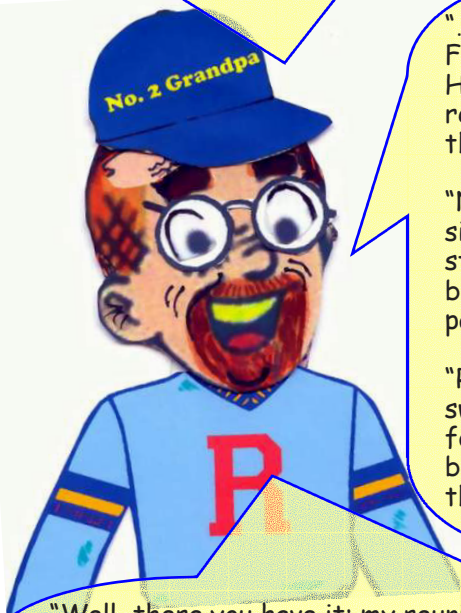




"I had my eye on the door and was about to split early when I ran into Reggie Mantle. Now, you may recall that Reggie and I always had a — shall we say — *complicated* relationship. Sorta like a love-hate thing, but without the love.

"Reggie has weathered his share of hard times. In the early '70s he lived the cartoon rock-star life to the hilt: big spread in Marin County, Porsches, pills, pool boys. Briefly married to Britt Eklund, post-Peter Sellers, pre-Rod Stewart. But then, who wasn't? After the Archies' record royalties dried up, Reg went into a tailspin. I can remember him hammering back his fifteenth Jack Daniels of the night, grumbling, 'What am I gonna do, try to get into another comic, like %\$#! "Marmaduke"?! The role of Freddie on "Scooby Doo" has my \*@#\$! name written all over it, but that young blond hunky %\$#!\* with the %\$\*#! ascot's got a lock on it for all eternity!

"In the late '70s an addiction to the TV show 'One Day at a Time' cost Reg his home and family. First he got hooked on Valerie Bertinelli. Fair enough. But when his obsession progressed to star Bonnie Franklin, it was clear to all that he'd hit bottom ..."



"... Fortunately, in 1984 an intervention arranged by Fleegle of the Banana Splits got Reggie into Betty Ford. He later attended the former First Lady's Palm Springs rehab facility as well, and, until our reunion, had been on the straight and narrow ever since.

"Not that it's been easy. He belongs to an 11-Step TV-sitcom-addiction group. 'I ain't ready for that twelfth step yet,' he explained tensely at the reunion. I tried my best to be supportive. 'Well, you know what they say, old pal: One day at a time!'

"Reggie got a strange look on his face and started sweating profusely. 'Thanks a lot!' he snarled. I later found out that my innocent remark had sent him backsliding to a three-syndicated-episodes-a-day habit that shows no signs of slowing down. Silly me!"

"Well, there you have it: my reunion experience. It *stunk. Big-time.* So why am I so insistent that you attend yours? Simple! The boys and girls you went to school with have grown up to be truly nice, interesting adults. Fun at parties, too. The JHS class of 1972's 30-year reunion led to one marriage and many, many rekindled and brand new friendships. Perhaps you feel you didn't share much in common with many of your classmates all those years ago. Well, you do now, as 50-year veterans of life who also share a similar past. I know that you'll feel warmly welcomed and will leave with a smile on your face.

"*Don't come,* and maybe you'll end up like Jughead, confined to a windowless prison cell with only cockroaches for company. Have I made my point? I think so."