Pretty in Ink

NORTH AMERICAN WOMEN CARTOONISTS
1896-2013

By Trina Robbins

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North American Women Cartoonists 1896-2013

By Trina Robbins
(Chapter 8 with Kristy Valenti)

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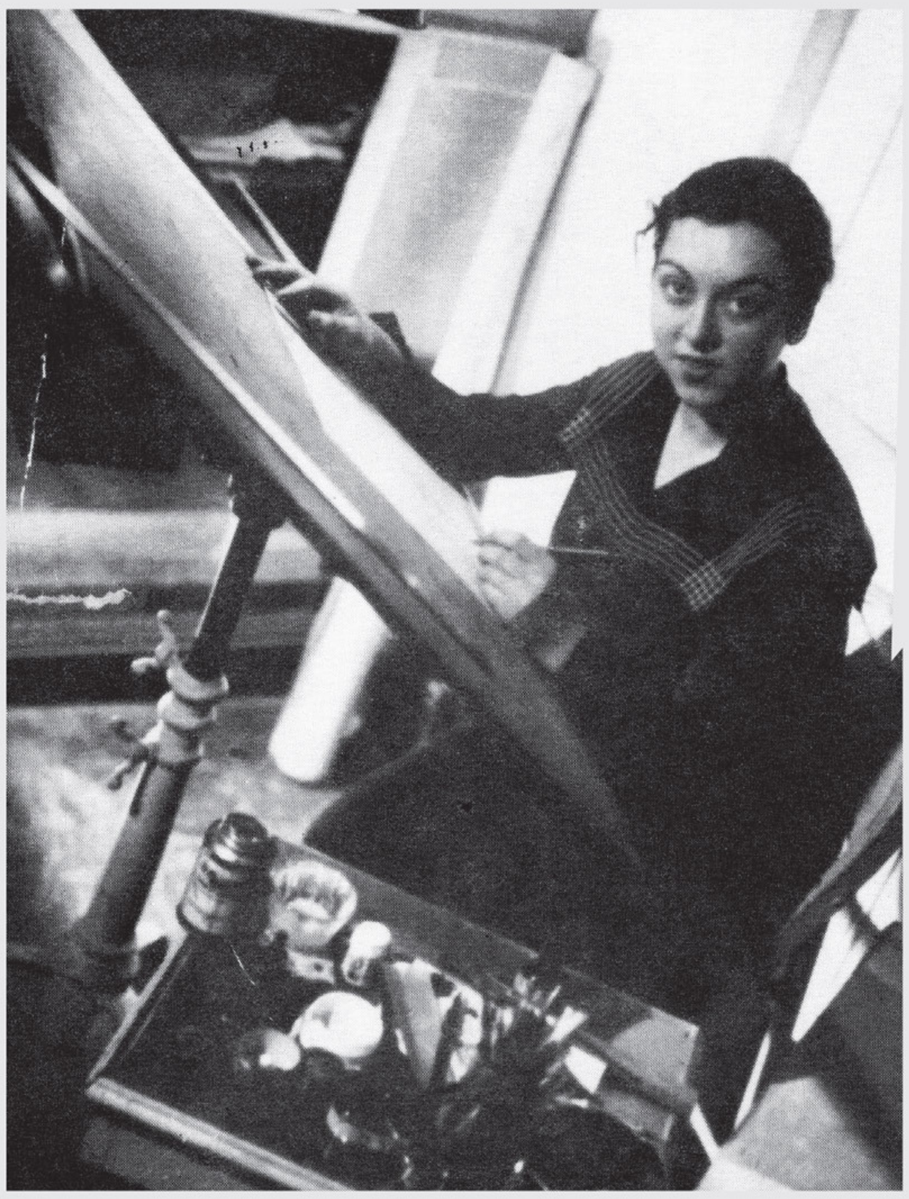


HILDA TERRY

LILY RENÉE

DALE MESSICK

Contents

1 The Queens of Cute
page 7

2 The Pursuit of Flappiness
page 29

3 Depression Babies and Babes
page 49

4 Blonde Bombers and Girl Commandos
page 61

5 Back to the Kitchen
page 91

6 Chicks and Womyn
page 123

7 See You in the Funny Pages
page 139

8 Postscript: 21st-Century Foxes
page 155

EXPLANATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

As the title of this book suggests, it is about women who draw comics, and only women who draw comics (referred to as "cartoonists"). Women writers are only mentioned when they either both write and draw, or have worked with a woman artist. If my dear friends who are writers can understand and forgive, so can my readers.

Also, this book is a history of women cartoonists. History, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "A written narrative constituting a continuous chronological record of important or public events (esp. in a particular place) or of a particular trend, institution, or person's life." While many contemporary women cartoonists are included in this book, there are now so many women drawing comics that it is impossible to include them all. Their works are available in comic shops and bookstores; I urge you to read them.

In order to keep this book from becoming a lifetime task (which it is, anyway), it is necessary to limit it to women who drew comics, and to define comics as differing from, say, single-panel cartoons (although I do include some single-panel cartoons when they are drawn by women who also drew comics). In my definition, it's a comic if it includes even one of the following: two or more panels, continuity, or speech balloons inside the panel. In the case of some early comics, the speech was not yet enclosed in balloons, but simply took the form of a line going from the words to the character speaking. In these cases, I stretched my definition a little.

This book is about North American cartoonists, which unfortunately will leave many wonderful women cartoonists out of the discussion (although I do note the impact of manga on the North American comics industry). Finally, I am limiting myself to comics printed on paper, although I do mention women webcartoonists whose work has been collected in books, like newspaper strips. Comics on the Internet deserve a whole book unto themselves.

1

The Queens of Cute

THE OLD SUBSCRIBER CALLS.

1. "Are you the editor of the Scathing Blade?"

TRUTH

2. "Well, I'm the gent you writ about and—"

TOP: Rose O'Neill's "The Old Subscriber Calls" (1896), from *Truth Magazine*, is the earliest known comic by an American woman.

BOTTOM: Photograph of Fanny Y. Cory c. 1900.

In 1895, a young artist named Rose O'Neill was living with the Sisters of St. Regis at their New York convent, selling illustrations to a host of books and magazines, and, accompanied by a nun, visiting editors. Seven years earlier, she had won an art contest sponsored by an Omaha newspaper with a drawing titled "Temptation Leading to an Abyss." When the judges saw that a 13-year-old girl had won the prize, they made her sit down and produce a drawing on the spot, to prove she was the artist. Two years later, she sold her first illustration to *Truth Magazine* and, at 15, began a career that would span half a century and bring her world-wide fame.

Truth Magazine seems to have specialized in hiring beginners. At the same time Rose O'Neill was living in a convent, 18-year-old Grace Gebbie sold that magazine her second professional work, a cover drawing of a girl and her cat. The previous year, she had drawn place cards featuring cupids and pretty women, selling them for $2.50 per dozen.

Meanwhile, an 18-year-old Montanan named Fanny Y. Cory was attending the Metropolitan School of Fine Arts in New York City, while living with her brother, his wife, and her invalid sister. When Cory was 10, her mother had died of tuberculosis. Money was tight, and though Cory was a top student, she didn't stay in school long. Wanting to contribute to her family's income, the young art student took portfolio in hand and approached *Harper's Magazine*.

3. "I jest thought I'd drop in and learn ye–"

"4. Gee, but I wuz scared there for a minute! I thought that fellow was going to stop his subscription.'

In her memoir, handwritten on small sheets of lined paper almost three-quarters of a century later, the artist recalled:

> *I was walking fast through the Bowery — (a downtown district in New York that had a rather bad reputation) I had my portfolio of pictures under my arm, determined to attempt selling some to* Harper's, *which was the last of the big publishing houses left down there, the others having gone uptown some years before — I reached the old building — gloomy looking and forbidding — entering I found no elevator so started up the iron stairs so old the steps were worn down the middle.*
>
> *I trudged up and up — could look down over the railway into the entrance room below — people coming and going — at last on the third floor I found the "art editors" room — pushed open the door — a young man at the desk greeted me condescendingly. I said I would like to sell some pictures — he took them and dealt them out like a pack of cards giving them scant attention — asked a question or two — then bundled them back together and handing them back said — "We seldom take beginners' work. If you work hard you may in time hope to place your work here — I advise you to come again when that reputation is made" — I left, mad as hops.*

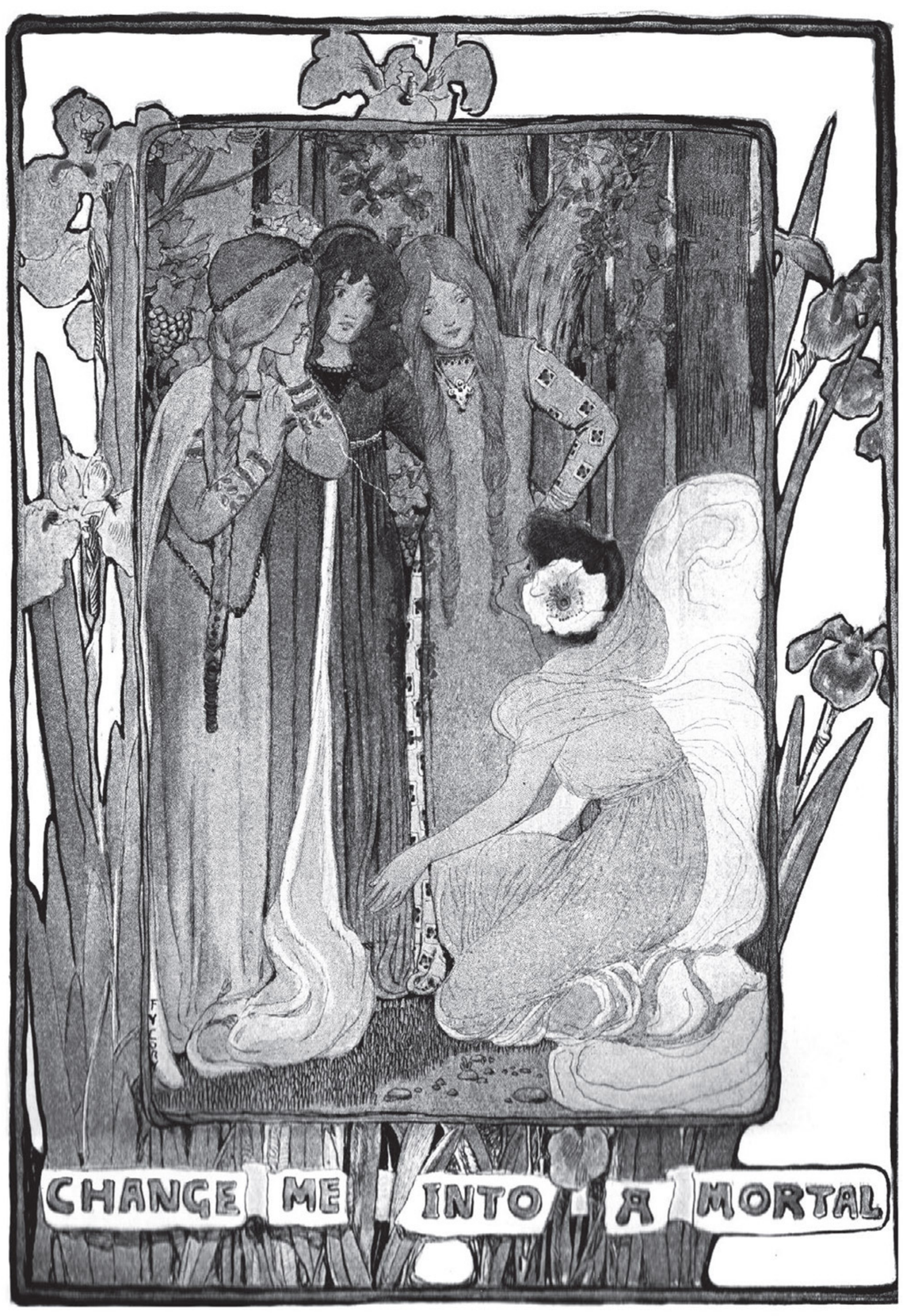
By 1902, Fanny Y. Cory, then a successful illustrator with a number of books to her credit, including an edition of *Alice in Wonderland* and a book by Oz creator L. Frank Baum, had moved back to Montana. Two years later, she married childhood friend Fred Cooney and settled at his ranch near the tiny community of Canyon Ferry. Living in what was still the Wild West, she continued to work, illustrating six books between 1905 and 1913. Cooney would take her packaged art on horseback to the post office. Gradually, however, Cory's career became secondary to raising a family, and it wasn't until the 1920s that she returned to her art, this time in the form of comics.

In 1895, if any of these three young artists had opened up Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* newspaper, they would have seen a full-page color cartoon called *Down in Hogan's Alley*, starring a peculiar bald kid in a blue nightshirt. Seven months later, printers experimenting with a new, quick-drying yellow ink arbitrarily decided to color the boy's covering bright yellow. Thus was born what is generally regarded as the first comic strip: R.F. Outcault's *The Yellow Kid*.

A year after the birth of *The Yellow Kid*, Rose O'Neill had a comic strip published in the September issue of *Truth*. The previous month, her contribution had been a single-panel cartoon. It is possible that O'Neill's September 1896 comic strip was the first published comic produced by a woman.

LEFT: Fanny Y. Cory illustration for *The Enchanted Island of Yew* (1903) by L. Frank Baum.

RIGHT: Fanny Y. Cory's "Trials of a First Baby" (1905) from *Harper's Bazaar*.



Drawn by F. Y. CORY.

All golden in a golden day

Enter—the Kewpies

THESE delightful little people, created by Rose Cecil O'Neill, bid fair to rival the popularity of Palmer Cox's Brownies. They will introduce themselves to the children in the September WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION—two pages of them, in color, with a fascinating story of their doings told in swinging verse. But the Kewpies occupy but two of the one hundred pages of this great number. Read

THE NEW DEPARTMENT ON HOME DECORATION and handicraft, covering the planning of a home, the arrangement of rooms, how to furnish them, how to buy, how to use what you have—in short, everything that makes a home attractive and livable,

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSEHOLD NEWS—full of vital domestic hints, ranging from an ice chest suggestion to a lawn party invitation,

THE DEPARTMENT FOR YOUNG HOUSEKEEPERS, the doctor's page, the home page, by Mrs. Sangster,

THE PICTURE STORY of the making of the Recamier Coiffure—the smartest coiffure of the hour,

THE FIVE FASCINATING SHORT STORIES, and finally

the thirty pages of authoritative fashion information, every page practical, interesting, and every description made clear with accurate pictures—many in color. This department, with its wealth of details of correct costuming, answers every possible question as to the Autumn wardrobe. Such, in part, is the offering of the

Advance Fashion Number

WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION

MADISON SQUARE, NEW YORK

On all News-stands

The Kewpies are Coming!

The jolliest little band of good-cheerers ever imagined come in June for a long, long stay. The woman who makes them wrote this letter to tell you to get ready to greet them. May 29th is the date

Children dear of all ages, from one to one hundred; Also, Kind Grandmas and Parents and quaintly inclined Aunts, and Uncles and Grandpas who love to read fairy tales to children, at evening, and don't stop when the little snores begin:

This is to say that the Kewpies are coming. Does any one inquire what is a "Kewpie?" Well, the word Kewpie is short for Cupid—as Kewpies are short for Cupids. See? They are not in the same business, though. Cupids are always getting people into trouble. Kewpies are always getting them out.

This Kind Good Housekeeping Magazine has invited the Kewps to move in and help Keep House—and I am busy washing their faces and twisting them "turnip-tops," getting them ready to come. They're extremely "wigglesome," and disposed to hop out on the balcony to play with the birds:—customers in my Bird Café. That's where they found the Kewpie Bird and got him to join the band.—all because of his tum. Perfectly round, like their own, you see.

And apropos of that, do you mind my repeating that old quatrain from the Kewpie Archives? I do it nearly every time I have the chance. (because I like it.)

The Kewpie wights stay up at nights,
All gayly singing, rumty-tum:
Like puddings, they are pleasant sights,
Well rounded at the tumty-tum.

They'll all be here,-bright and early next month
Saying which, my darling Children and
dear, quaintly disposed Aunts Uncles,
Grandpas, etcetera I commend my
little fairies to your liking

With the Kewpish good wishes of

Rose O'Neill

(C), 1914, ROSE O'NEILL WILSON

By the time *The Yellow Kid* was six years old, comic strips by women had begun to appear on the Sunday pages of America's newspapers. In 1901, Louise Quarles' *Bun's Puns* and Grace Kasson's *Tin Tan Tales for Children* were appearing in the *New York Herald,* and Agnes Repplier III's *The PhilaBusters* ran in the *Philadelphia Press*.

By then, Rose O'Neill had divorced her first husband, Gray Latham. A year later, she would marry again, this time to writer Harry Leon Wilson. Their marriage proved productive, with O'Neill illustrating her husband's books and writing her own first novel, *The Loves of Edwy*, in 1903.

However, by 1908, the couple had parted company. The following year saw the birth of what was to give O'Neill immortality: the Kewpies.

TOP LEFT: Rose O'Neill illustration from *The Loves of Edwy* (1904).

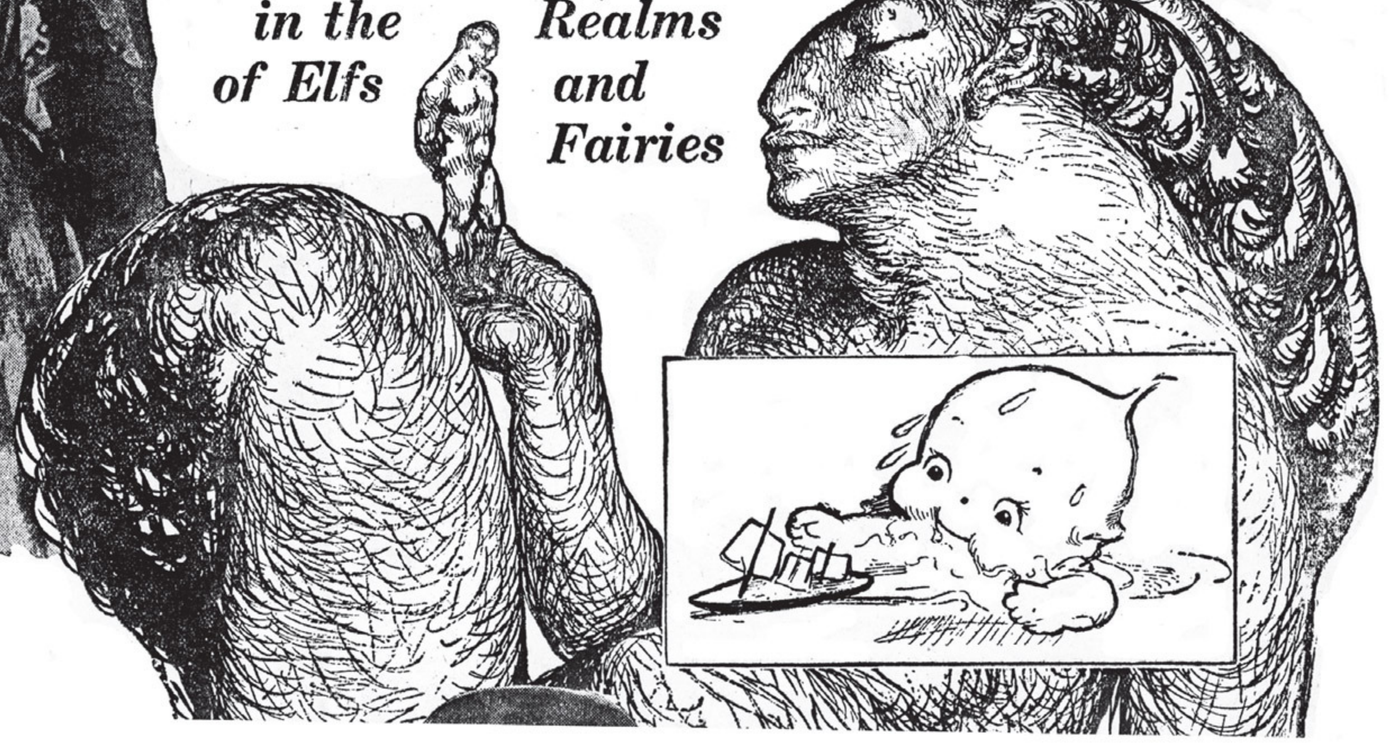
BOTTOM LEFT: Rose O'Neill announces the arrival of the Kewpies to *Woman's Home Companion* (1910).

RIGHT: Rose O'Neill announces that the Kewpies are coming to *Good Housekeeping* magazine (1906).

How Cupid Brought the Kewpies Their Ideal Stepfather

Rose O'Neil and One of Her Most Popular Kewpie Models.

The Fair, Spirited Genius Who Created the Famous Kewpies, Again a Bride, Is Now Honeymooning in the Realms of Elfs and Fairies



The Wide-Open, Childlike Eyes and Nose and Determined Chin of the American Woman, Drawn by Rose O'Neill, and the Long-Nosed, Sophisticated Face of the Typical European Woman

Rose O'Neill, the Distinguished Artist, Who Has Rediscovered America. Photo by Jessie Tarbox Beals.

vehemence they demand information. They are the eyes of the intelligent pupil in school hours. They turn upon the world such a look as the one of awe as the under-class pupil for the student in a higher class. How often have I seen that look on American faces in Europe.

Dominant by its weakness, to use a paradox, is the American woman's nose. An Italian friend remarked to me that "the aquiline races are continually amused and delighted by the little noses of American women." And indeed, returning after a long stay among the Gauls and Italians, I did not find myself astonished by the number of our prettiest women wearing these quaintly diminutive members. Said the Italian:

"Men will always have what they like. That is the law of the world. American men like in women what the little nose represents—playfulness, innocence, amiability, the childlike qualities."

Charles Dana Gibson has recognized this truth and in his drawings has combined the small aristocratic nose, and the projecting, emphatic chin in a marked degree. To my mind the childlike, undeveloped nose in a conjunction with the marked and advanced American chin, symbolizes youth, energy, aspiration.

The chin of the European has a languor. It slightly recedes. In union with and counter-

need to look to see. A sidewise glance, a second glance, a second flash, and that is all. The European has seen. The American will keep her playful little nose. And the smile will keep its little joke, its generosity, its innocence.

I see a greater kindness in the eyes of women for women. The woman's movement has caused this. The gentle look they cast upon each other, though strangers and passing in the street or crushing each other unavoidably in the subway, says "You are a woman. So am I. We have the same problem. We are of one sisterhood. Let us help each other."

The American character seems to me artless as I become reacquainted with it. I see none of the artful, money-seeking quality in it. It is naive, jocular, amiable, philosophical, though half ashamed of its philosophy and benevolent. I amuse myself by with the idea that my kewpies are a symbol of the American spirit. I have tried to put into the little fellows, and make them show forth, the national naivette, jocularity, amiability, adventure, philosophy and benevolence.

The cities in the mass impress me by their pastoral quality. Their noise. I am not conscious of it. If our lives are busy and absorbed and happy, the distant roar is to us an under-

According to O'Neill, these cupid-like creatures came to her in a dream. Beginning in 1909, Kewpies appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion,* and *Good Housekeeping*, in the form of one- to three-page stories usually accompanied by verse, a form many of the early comics used. (Today, almost a century later, original O'Neill Kewpies art sells to collectors for hundreds of dollars, and there still exists an organized Kewpie fandom; they meet yearly at "Kewpiestas.")

In her personal and professional life, Rose O'Neill often seemed to be two different people. She dressed and looked like a pre-Raphaelite heroine, marched with her sister, Callista, for the right to vote, and was divorced twice in an age when divorce was regarded as a domestic heresy second only to adultery. She inspired the song "Rose of Washington Square" and, with Callista, held salons attended by most of New York's bohemian crowd at her studio in Greenwich Village. O'Neill was also the creator of a series of drawings which she referred to as "my secret play." This was serious, experimental work that she kept private: powerful images conjured from dreams and mythology. In 1921 she took this art to Paris for a one-woman show and was hailed as a reincarnation of Gustave Doré. Along with other souvenirs of the visit, she appears to have brought back a French lover, World War I army officer Jean Gallenne. Journalist Virginia Lynch Maxwell, covering O'Neill's return for the Hearst papers, assumed the couple was married. In the piece entitled "How Cupid Brought the Kewpies Their Ideal Stepfather," Maxwell refused to take seriously O'Neill's somewhat flustered denial:

> *When the news of her third marriage leaked out, Miss O'Neill denied it with a pretty shake of her curly head. "It isn't so," she laughed, "I'm still Miss O'Neill." Which, of course, proved nothing, since all feminine artists of the Village cling to the tradition of their code and flatly refuse to use the prefix "Mrs." preferring to retain their maiden names.*

O'Neill spent five years in Paris. Upon her return to America, the *Los Angeles Examiner* published an article headlined "Americans are Funny Children and New York is Pastoral, says Rose Cecil O'Neill." In the article, O'Neill, who was called "The Famous American Woman Artist and Novelist," opined: "I amuse myself with the idea that my Kewpies are a symbol of the

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: From the *Los Angeles Examiner* (1921).

BOTTOM: More from the *Los Angeles Examiner* (1921).

BELOW: Rose O'Neill and her sister, Callista, campaigning for women's suffrage.

FOLLOWING SPREAD: Rose O'Neill's The Kewpies and Duckie Daddles from *Good Housekeeping* (1907).

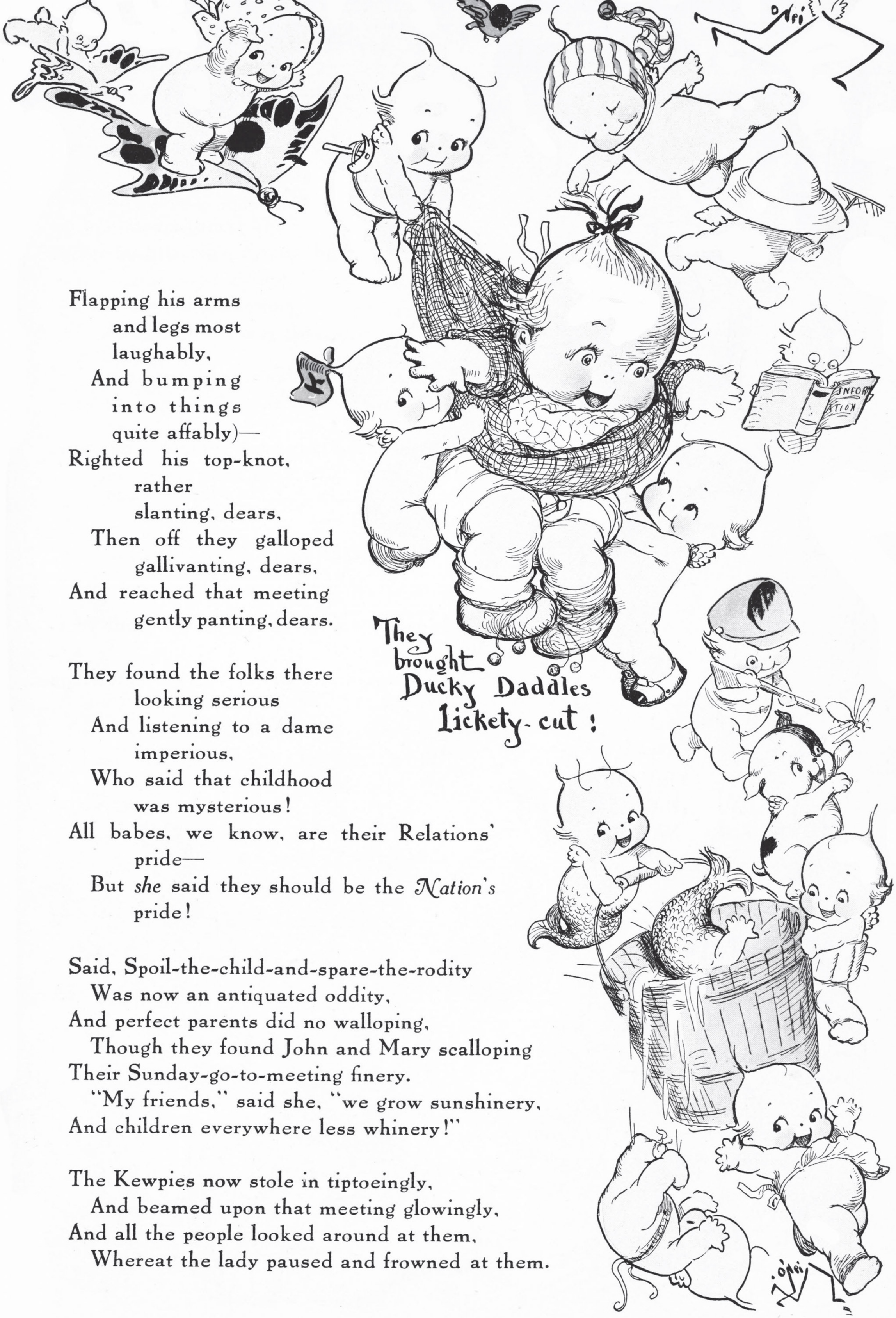
THE KEWPIES *and* DUCKY DADDLES

Verse
and
Pictures

By Rose O'Neill

"Heigno!" said Wag, in tones hilarious,
"All parents ought to be gregarious—
Yet here we Kewps are, gaily blathering,
When goodness knows that yonder gathering
Of sisters, aunts, and anxious mothers, too,
Is meant for us as well as others, too!
See, other babes are not prevented there.
Our orphan should be represented there."

They caught up Ducky Daddles huggily
To help him—('cause he flies June-buggily,



Flapping his arms
and legs most
laughably,
And bumping
into things
quite affably)—
Righted his top-knot,
rather
slanting, dears,
Then off they galloped
gallivanting, dears,
And reached that meeting
gently panting, dears.

They found the folks there
looking serious
And listening to a dame
imperious,
Who said that childhood
was mysterious!
All babes, we know, are their Relations'
pride—
But *she* said they should be the *Nation's*
pride!

Said, Spoil-the-child-and-spare-the-rodity
Was now an antiquated oddity,
And perfect parents did no walloping,
Though they found John and Mary scalloping
Their Sunday-go-to-meeting finery.
"My friends," said she, "we grow sunshinery,
And children everywhere less whinery!"

The Kewpies now stole in tiptoeingly,
And beamed upon that meeting glowingly,
And all the people looked around at them,
Whereat the lady paused and frowned at them.

Naughty Toodles!

What Happens to Little Folks Who Insist on Having Their Own Way.

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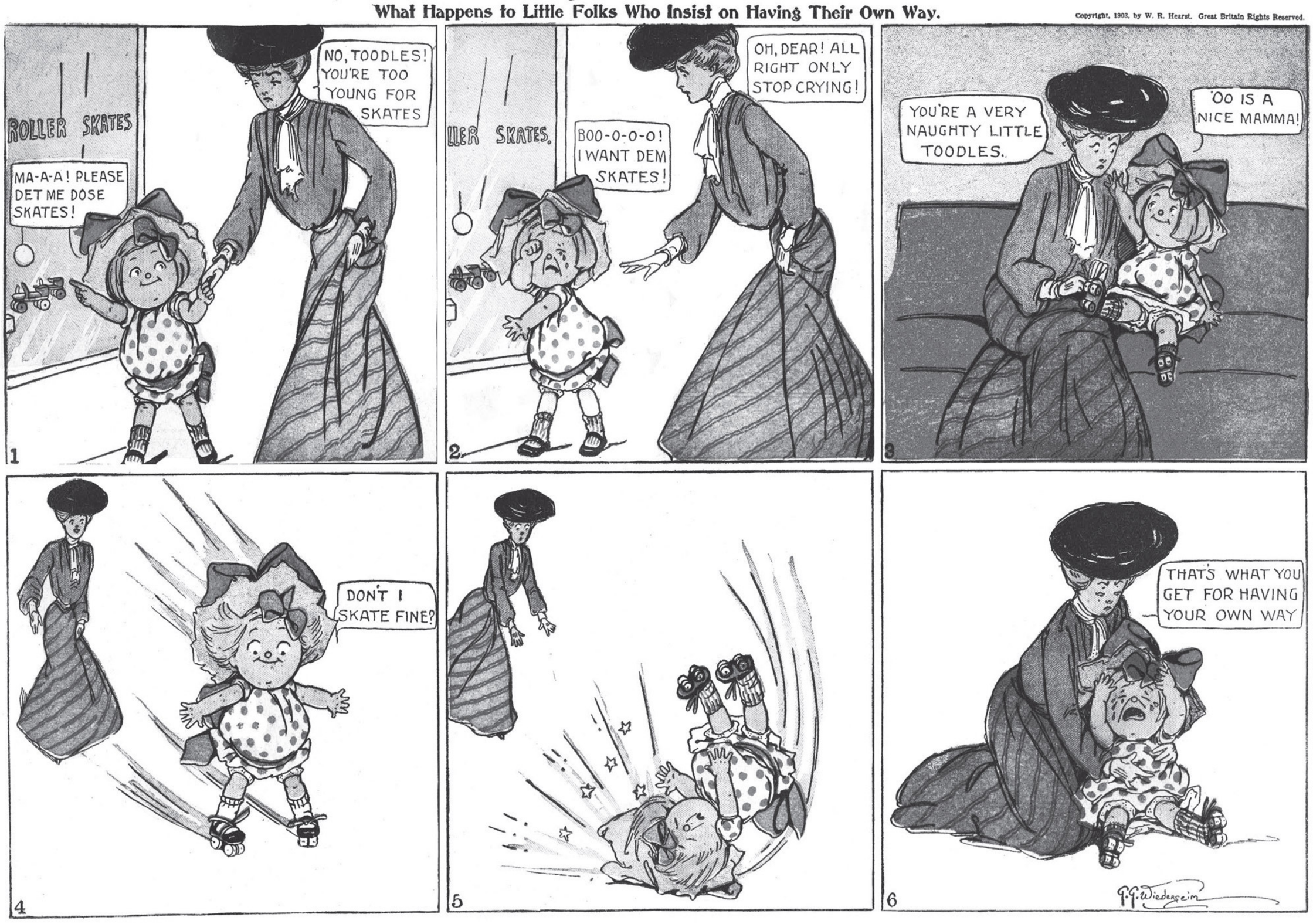

Isn't Dotty Dimple Cute!

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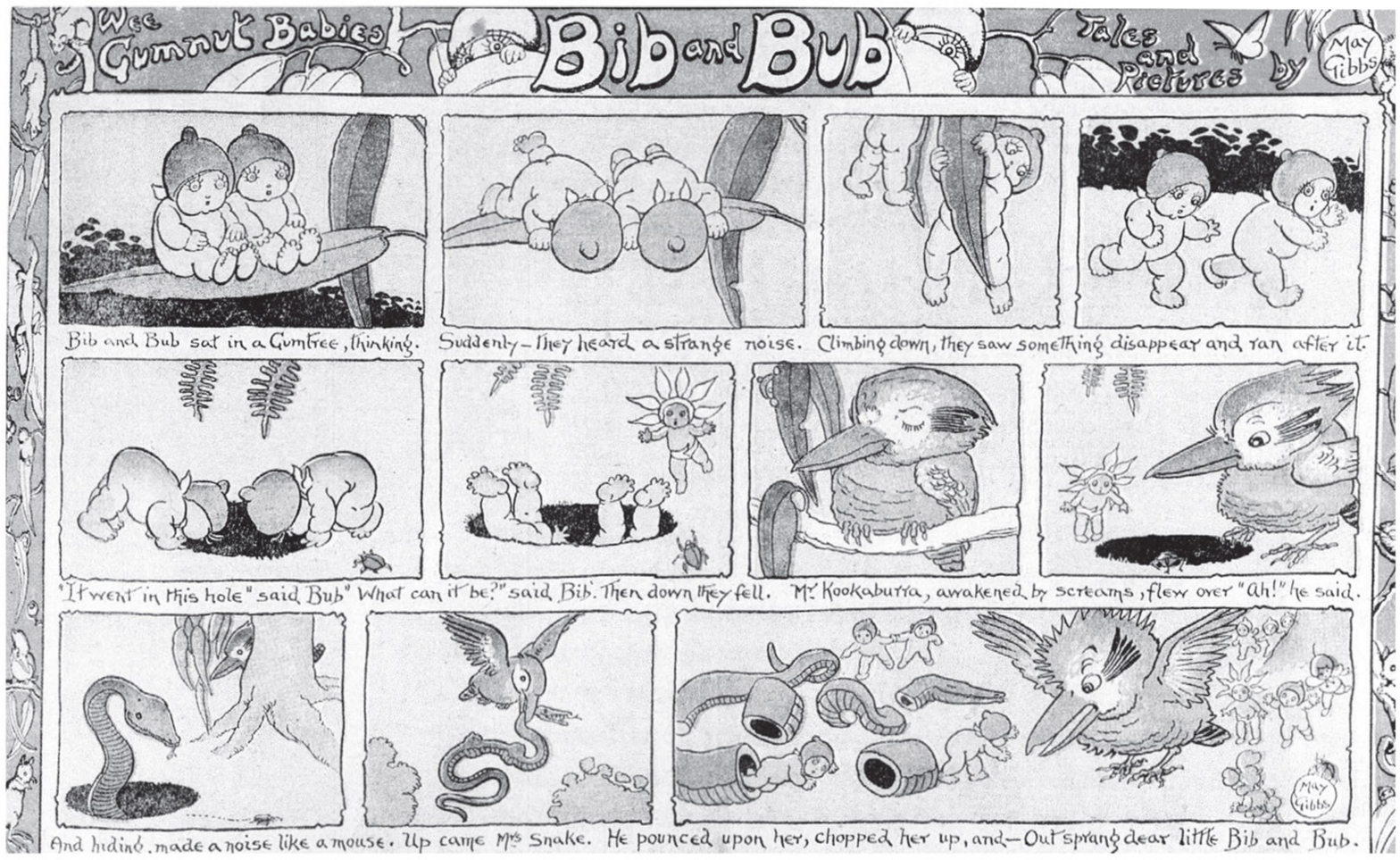
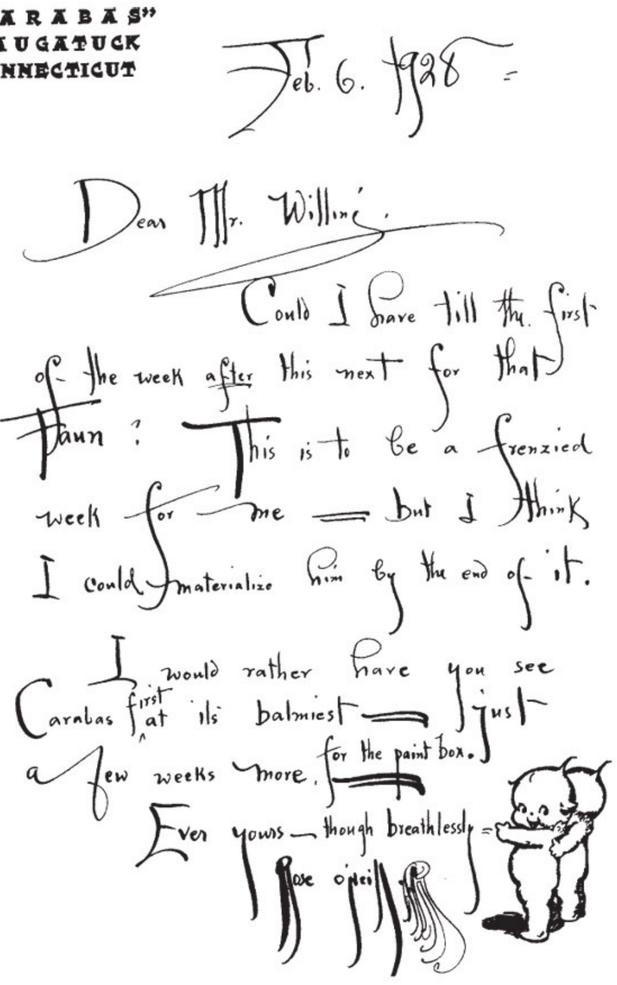




American spirit. I have tried to put into the little fellows, and make them show forth, the national naïveté, jocularity, amiability, adventure, philosophy, and benevolence."

On the other hand, even before the Kewpies, O'Neill had specialized in producing an artistic combination of adorable children and sentimental verse. Tiny drawings of Kewpies can be found scattered through her personal letters, and her habit of speaking in baby talk is said to have so annoyed her second husband that it contributed to their divorce.

Meanwhile, Grace Gebbie, under her married name of Grace Weiderseim, was producing *Naughty Toodles*, her first strip. It set the style for more than 30 years of comics by the artist who, after her second marriage, became known as Grace Drayton. Though the names of the comic strips changed through the years, essentially the same cherubic, apple-cheeked children run through her comic pages under such titles as *The Strange Adventures of Pussy Pumpkin and her Chum Toddles*, *Dolly Drake and Bobby Blake*, *The Turr'ble Tales of Kaptin Kiddo*, *Dolly Dingle, Dolly Dimples,* and *Dottie Darling.*

Regarding the last three characters (which also ran as paper doll pages in various magazines), it should be noted that there was a plethora of Dollies, Dotties, Dimples, and Darlings in print at the beginning of the 20th century. O'Neill was producing a page for the *Woman's Home Companion* called *Dottie Darling*, and in 1913, a male cartoonist named Van Beekman was producing yet another Dolly Dimple strip, this one featuring a little girl with a suffragette doll. (To add to the confusion, in the 1920s there was a comic called *Dashing Dot*, drawn by Marge Henderson Buell, who later created *Little Lulu*.)

Lest the reader think comics about cherubic children and pixie-like Kewpies were a purely American phenomenon, it's interesting to note that Australian magazine and children's book illustrator May Gibbs created her own little Kewpie-esque critters, the Gumnut Babies, four years after the birth of O'Neill's Kewpies. After producing eight children's books starring the Gumnuts, Gibbs turned them into newspaper strips. The Gumnut Babies strip ran in Australian and New Zealand newspapers until Gibbs retired in 1967, at the age of 90. Sadly, the strip was never published in American newspapers.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Grace Weiderseim's *Naughty Toodles* (1903): One of the earliest comics by the artist who would become Grace Drayton.
BOTTOM: Grace Weiderseim, *Dolly Dimple* (1910).

THIS PAGE:
LEFT: May Gibbs' Gumnut Babies star in her comic strip *Bib and Bub*.
RIGHT: A letter from Rose O'Neill decorated with Kewpie sketches (1928).

Grace Drayton was one of five sisters (there was also one brother) and in 1905, still working under the name Weiderseim, she drew a strip written by her sister, Margaret Gebbie Hays: *The Adventures of Dolly Drake and Bobby Blake in Storyland*. She would work with her sister again in 1909, with Margaret writing and Grace drawing *The Turr'ble Tales of Kaptin Kiddo*. The sisters also collaborated for publications such as *Youth's Companion*, where Grace would illustrate short poems by Margaret. In the same year, between the numerous comics, magazine illustrations, paper dolls, and children's books she was turning out, Grace Drayton managed to create the Campbell Kids. The Campbell Soup Co. could not have asked for a better image, since every cherubic child drawn by Drayton looked like the Campbell Kids. (Neither O'Neill nor Cory is likely to have resented Drayton's prize

TOP LEFT: Grace Drayton drew more than just roly-poly kids. This provocative sketch is undated, but was drawn after she changed her name to Drayton.

BOTTOM LEFT: Grace Drayton and her sister Janet in 1911.

RIGHT: Announcing the debut of *Kaptin Kiddo* (1909), by Grace Weiderseim and Margaret G. Hays.

OPPOSITE: *The Turr'ble Tales of Kaptin Kiddo* by Margaret G. Hays and Grace Weiderseim (Drayton),

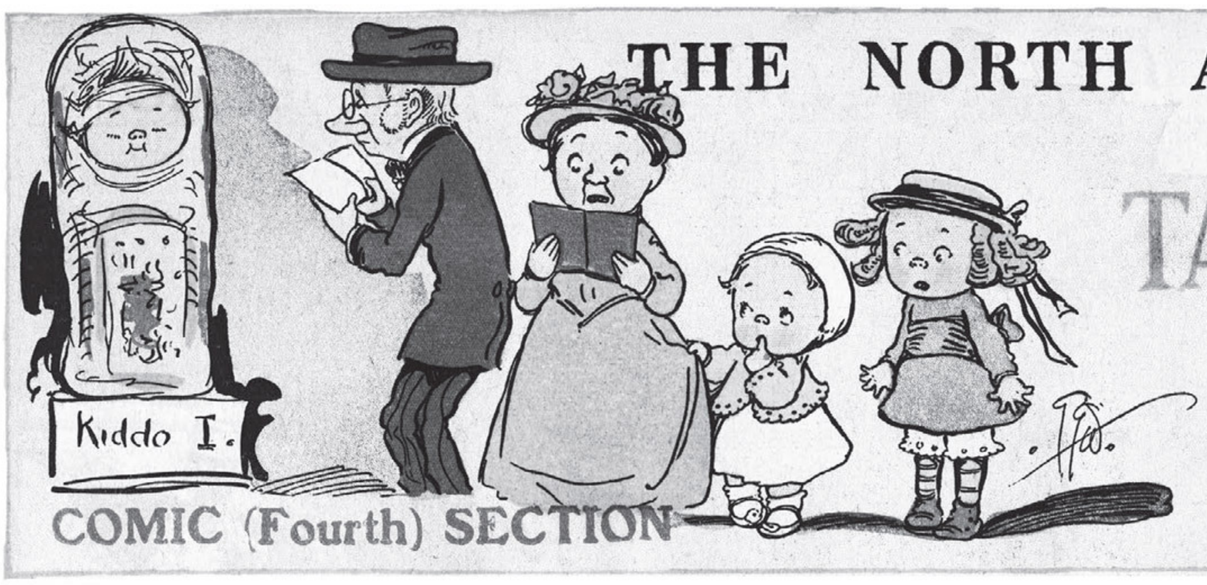
I'M KAPTIN KIDDO!

The Turr'ble Tales of my doin's will be drew by GRACE G. WIEDERSEIM and wrote by MARGARET G. HAYS in the Sunday North American, beginning August 29.

Copyright, 1909, by The North American Company.

WHAT-CHE-KNOW-'BOUT-THAT

THE NORTH AMERICAN



The TURR'BLE TALES of KAPTIN KIDDO

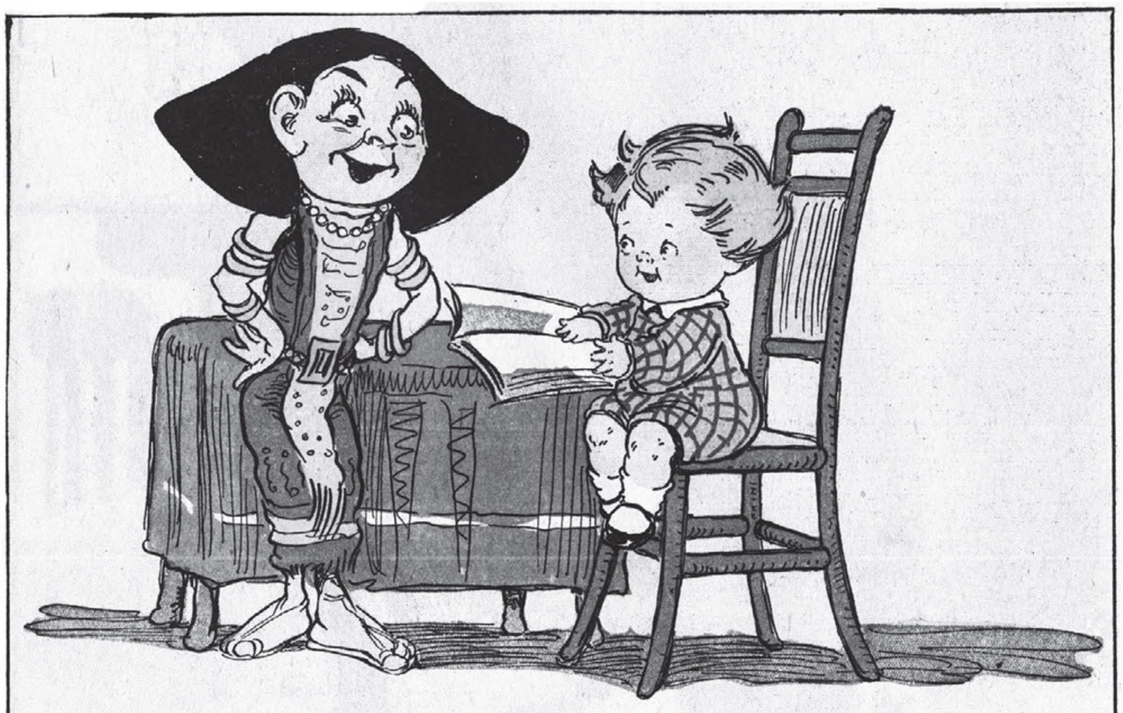
Written by MARGARET G. HAYS
Pictured by GRACE G. WIEDERSEIM

COMIC (Fourth) SECTION

PHILADELPHIA, SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 1910.

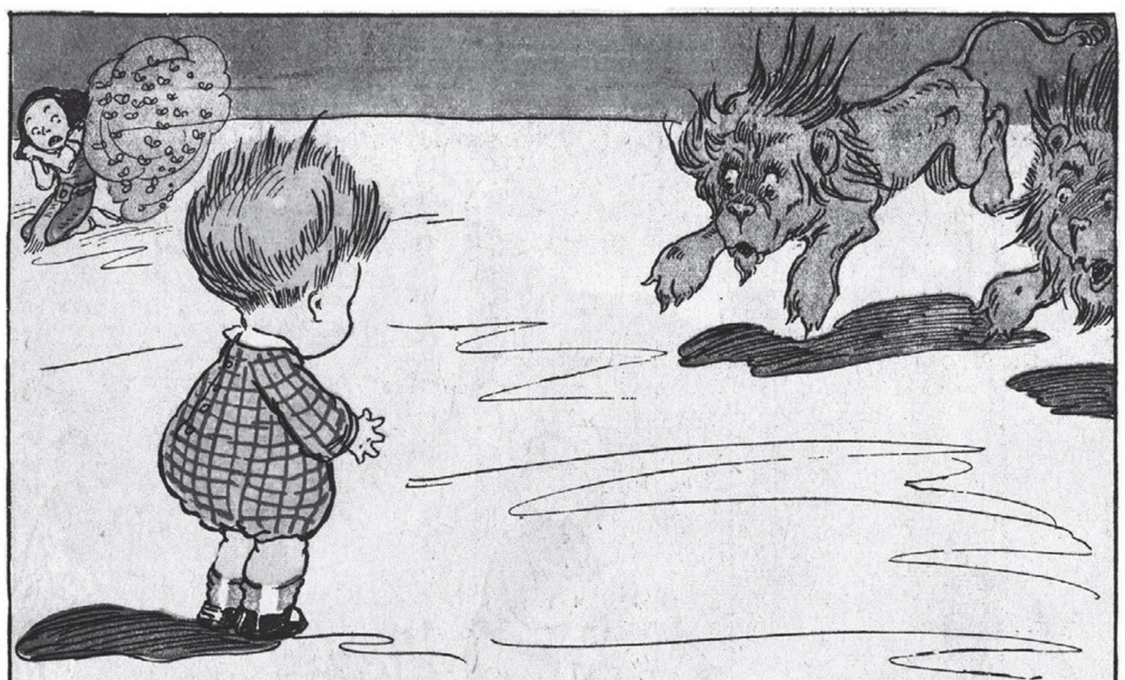
(Copyright, 1910, by The North American Co.)

139th Year



One day me an' Bridgie, the cook, was lookin' at a picksher book, an' ther' was a sort o' a mounting wif lady's head sticked on to it. An' I sed, "What's 'at, Bridgie dear?" An' she sed, "Lemme see. What's 'at? 'At's one o' those ther' Spinkses. 'At's what it is." An' jus' 'en the doorbell ringed an' Bridgie goed to see who it was, an'—"What-che-know-'bout 'at," the Spinks Lady comed right out o' the book.

An' she sed, "Hello, Kiddo!" An' I sed, "Hello, Misses Spinks!" An' we wented to a n'ormous desert, an she sed, "It's S'egypt." An' there was lot o' lovelies' little Kitty Pusses, all runnin' 'roun' ther' an' eatin' "Cat-cuss" plants. An' all o' 'em sed, "Hello, Kaptin Kiddo!" An' they wanted me to eat some o' those Catcusses, but 'ey was too prickly. (Sounded like swears, I fink, Cat-cuss, don't you?)



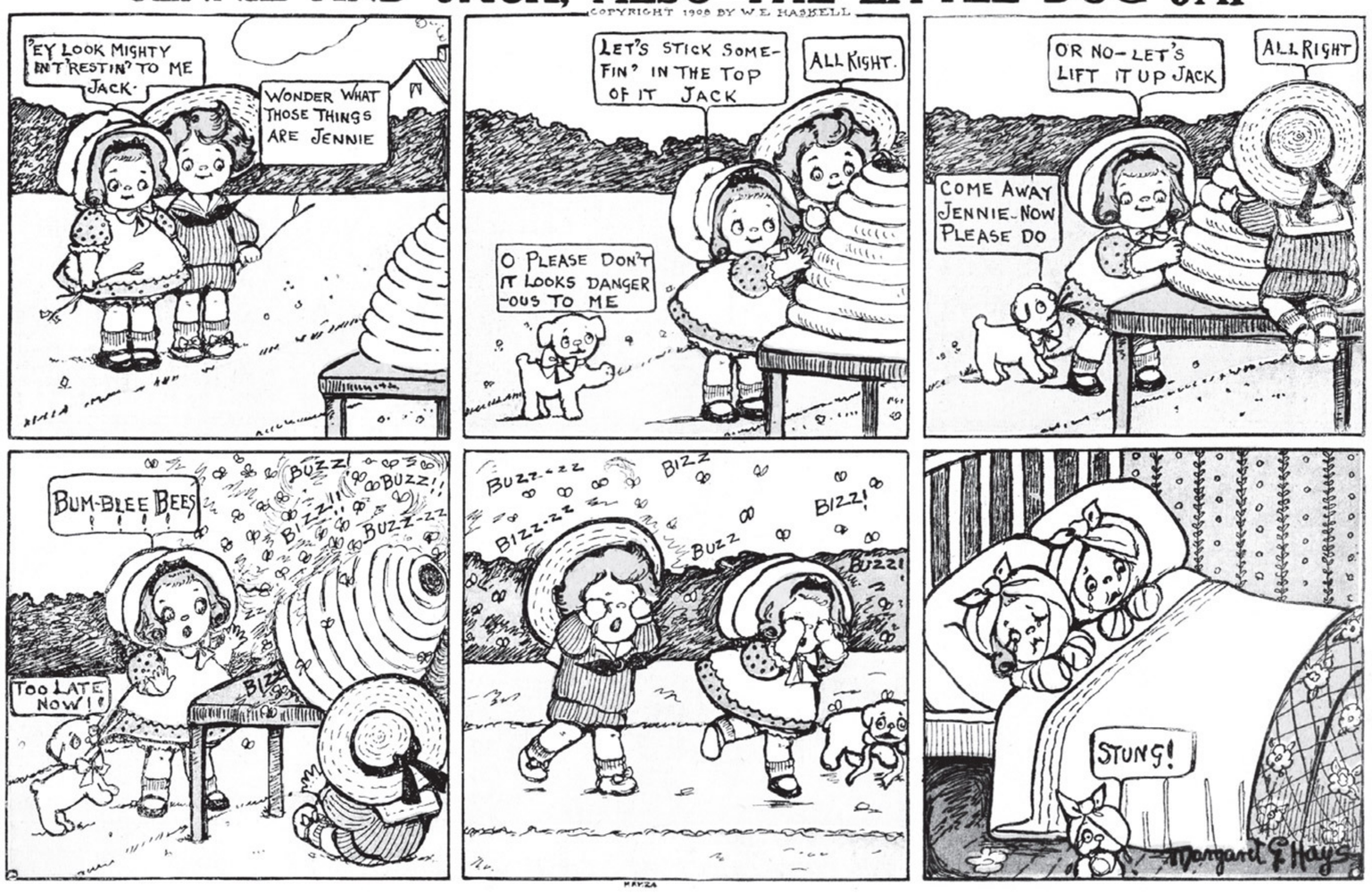
'N'en we was havin' a tea party wif strawberry ice cream, the kitty pusses an' us, an' suddently somefin sed, "Gr-r-owl," jus' like 'at. An' the kitty pusses all runned orf an' hided 'hind the catcusses. An' the Spinks Lady looked orful scared an' she hided behin' a—er—a swarm o' muskeeters, an' she sed, "Oh! here comes a N'African lion. Hellup! Hellup!"

'N'en I sed, "Keep still, I'm not 'fraid!" An' it was a whole lot o'—o'—o' savageriferous lions, an' 'ey comed runnin', an'—an' gashin' ther' toofs, an' I—well I—er—I tooked my Granny Ma's scissors what I had in mine pocket, an' I cutted ther' heads orf each one comed along. An' the Spinks Lady thinked I was a n'orful smart little boy. An' we sed, "Come, Kitty! Kitty! Kitty!"

'En all the Kitty Pusses comed back to the tea-party, an' ever'buddy gived me the bestes' cakes an'—an' ever'fing, an' suddently a gr-r-eat big cloud o' dust comed 'long, an' 'ey was all scared, an' the Spinks Lady sed, "Oh! milk and sourkraut! Here comes a tiefoon!" An' I sed, "Don'-che-be-scared, Ladies." An' I putted up some parasols what I—er—I had in mine pocket.

(Copyright, 1910, by The North American Company.)

An' (What-che-know-'bout 'at) all o' us was saved, an' the Spinks Lady gived me packs o' bracelets an' n'earrings, an' the Kitty Pusses sed, "Fank you, brave hero!" An' 'ey all wanted me to stay ther', an'—an' be a n'emporer, but I sed I was too busy today, much 'bliged, an' 'ey wanted me to be a mummy, too, but I wouldn't 'En I wented home an' 'ey sed, "Good-bye, Oh you Kiddo!"



They call it *broth*,
But Mon alive!
'Tis hearty *soup*
On which to thrive!

Highland Fling of Good Eating!

— a hearty soup of meat and vegetables

Who says that you have to fix and fuss, and get the whole kitchen heated up to produce a main dish all the family will be sure to like? Maybe that person hasn't heard about Campbell's Scotch Broth. Have you?

Flavorful, nourishing meat stock, brimming with garden vegetables, good barley and tender pieces of mutton—that's Campbell's Scotch Broth! It has the homey taste to win you instantly—and the heartiness to let you know the going will be good till the next meal. Plan to build lots of summer lunches and suppers around this delicious, satisfying soup.

Campbell's SCOTCH BROTH

Look for the Red-and-White Label

I printed each of the company's names on a card and tied a piece of pussy willow on with a yellow bow. These were "place-cards"—that means they showed everybody where they should sit.

Well, pretty soon the company came. And after all our dollies were introduced we played some games. They are in this book. And I showed them all how I do my Daily Exercises.

Then we had re-fresh-ments, and I served the Neapolitan Jell-O.

The company went home and I cuddled up in daddy's big chair.

Pretty soon I saw a big, lonesome wood, dark, for the sun was going to bed there were shadows under the trees and beside the tree stumps.

Under my feet was the softest grass—and moss—and I scuffled my feet in it to get a fairy to come to take me home.

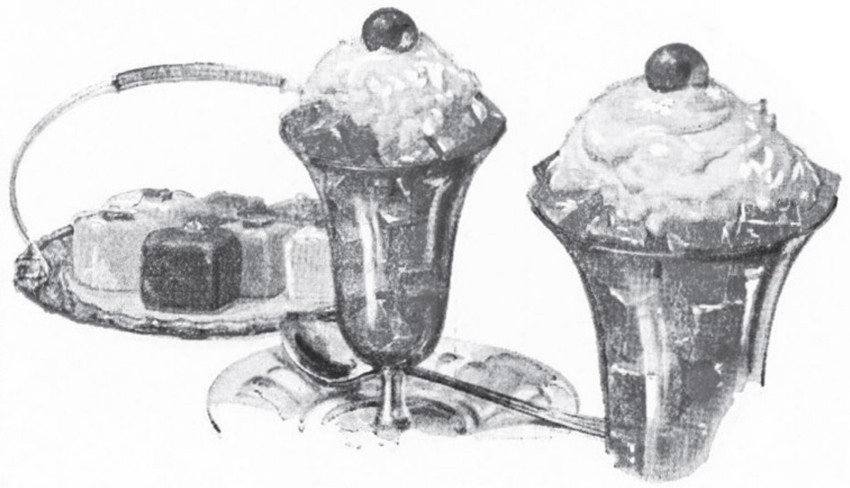
[8]

Asparagus Salad

Prepare pint of Lemon Jell-O with two tablespoonfuls of vinegar and half a teaspoonful of salt included. Arrange well drained bundles of asparagus tips in mold as shown in illustration. Cover with cold Jell-O and harden. Serve with mayonnaise.

Lemon and Orange Cubes

Dissolve package Lemon Jell-O and one of Orange Jell-O each in pint of boiling water. Pour each into a separate shallow pan to cool and harden. Cut in small cubes with knife which has been dipped in hot water. Serve in glasses with whipped cream and garnish with cherries.



[9]

account, since O'Neill was, at that time, drawing all the Jell-O ads, and Cory was working for Ivory Soap.)

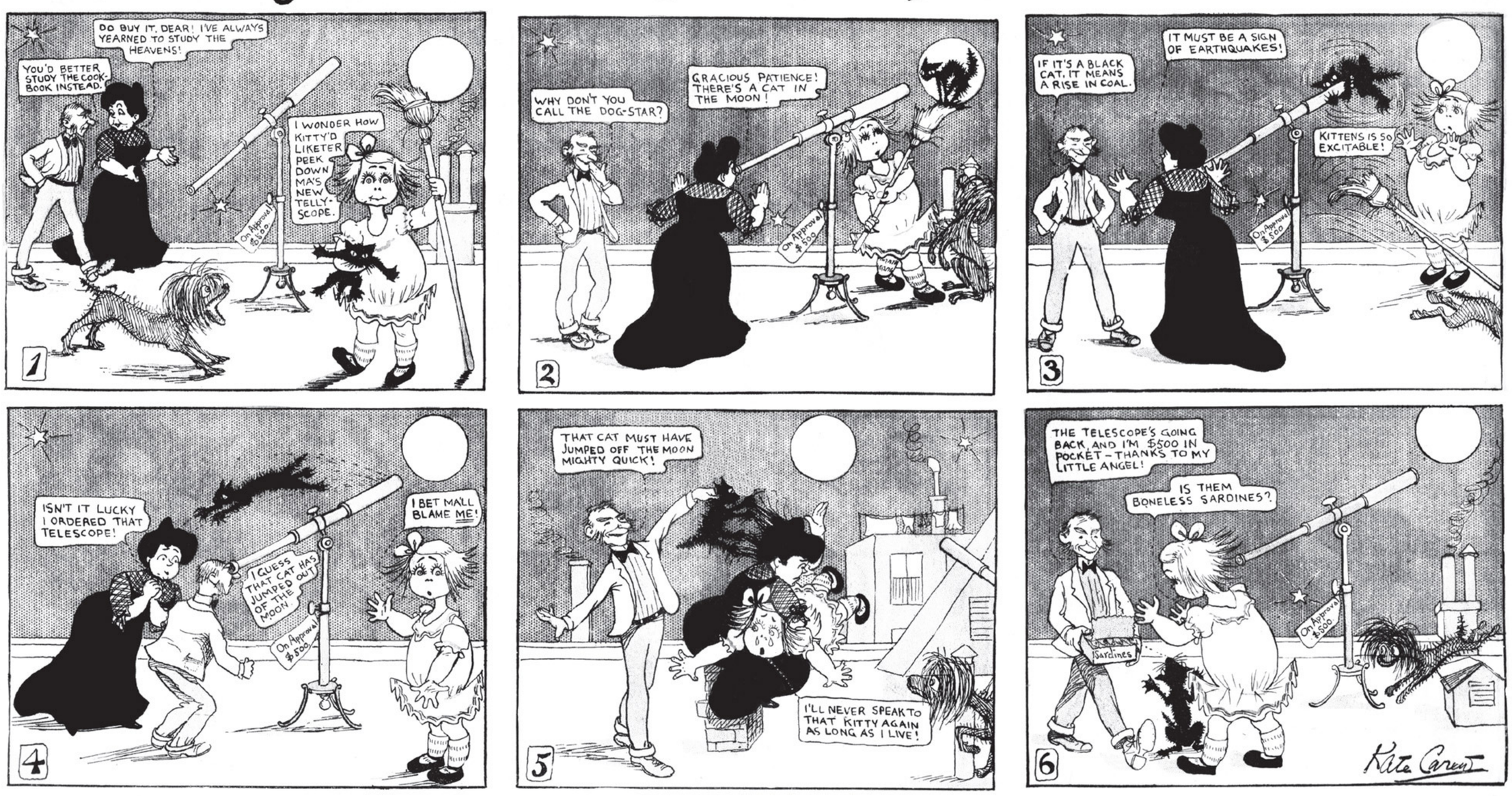
Margaret Gebbie Hays attempted a strip of her own in 1908, both writing and drawing *Jennie and Jack, Also the Little Dog Jap*. The influence of her sister's style is evident. Although *Jennie and Jack* is no worse than many of the mediocre strips that ran at the time, it's obvious that Margaret did not possess her sister's level of artistic talent.

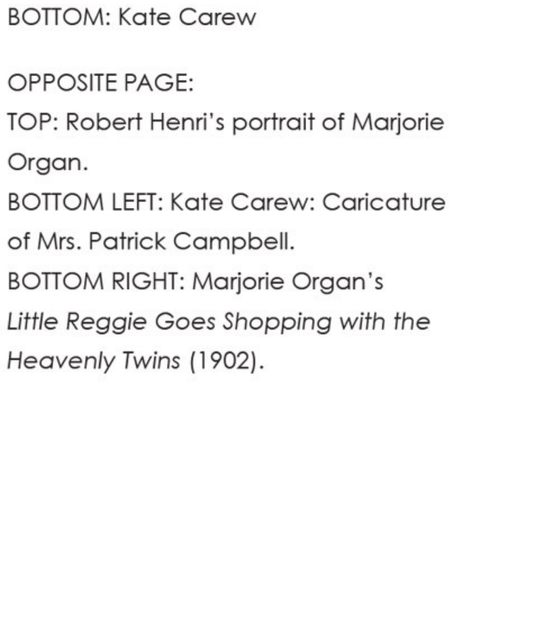
Drayton did not merely inspire an entire industry of cute kiddy comics; she also had blatant copyists. Cupples & Leon, a New York-based publishing company, produced the *Kiddyland* series of children's books, retellings of such fairy tales as "Puss in Boots" and "Cinderella," which were illustrated by various artists who completely copied Grace Drayton's style. Apparently there was nothing Drayton could do about it, as you can't copyright a drawing style.

Kate Carew's *The Angel Child* made its debut in 1902. (This strip is not to be confused with *Momma's Angel Child*, 1908-1920, by Penny Ross who, despite the name, was a man.) Kate Carew was the pseudonym of Mary Williams Chambers Reed, the older sister of *New Yorker* cartoonist Gluyas Williams. In 1889, at the age of 20, Carew had started working

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Margaret G. Hays, *Jennie and Jack* (1908).
TOP RIGHT: A Grace Drayton Campbell Kid from 1945.
BOTTOM: Rose O'Neill art for Jell-O (1905).

THIS PAGE:
LEFT: Margaret Gebbie Hays
RIGHT: Not Grace Drayton: *Puss in Boots* drawn by Eugenie Richards.





THIS PAGE:
TOP: Kate Carew's *The Angel Child* (1902).
BOTTOM: Kate Carew

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Robert Henri's portrait of Marjorie Organ.
BOTTOM LEFT: Kate Carew: Caricature of Mrs. Patrick Campbell.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Marjorie Organ's *Little Reggie Goes Shopping with the Heavenly Twins* (1902).

for the San Francisco *Examiner* as one of 17 staff illustrators. By 1900, she had married journalist Harrie Kellet Chambers and was living in New York's Greenwich Village. That fall, she started interviewing and drawing caricatures of famous personalities, from Sarah Bernhardt to Mark Twain, for the *New York World*. She was billed as "The Only Woman Caricaturist." Carew drew perfect caricature portraits of the people she interviewed; but when it came to self-portraits, she drew herself as naïve and innocent, with wide eyes behind huge, round, owl-like glasses. But Carew was no innocent. She lived a bohemian lifestyle, traveled extensively throughout Europe, and lived in England for many years. She was married three times, and her husbands included a playwright and a British lord.

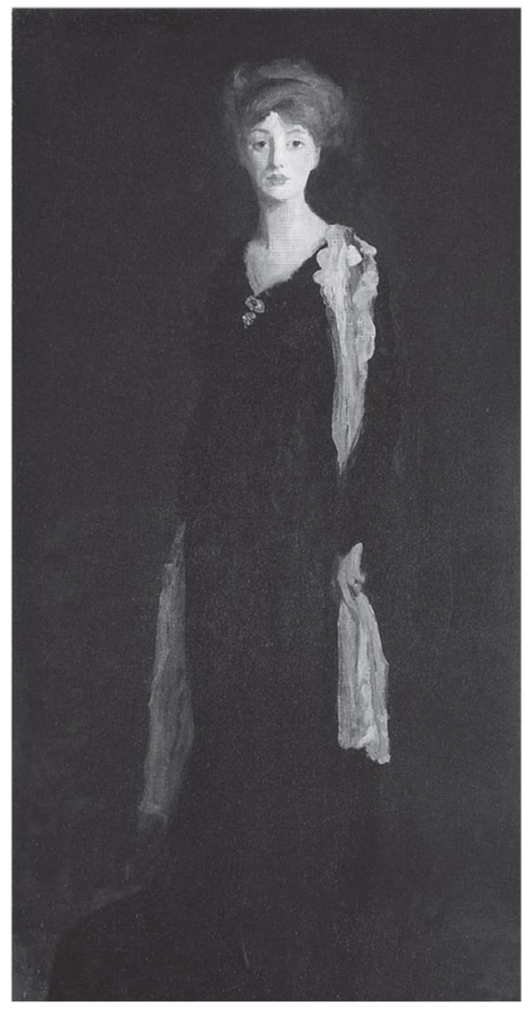
The Angel Child detailed the adventures of the ubiquitous baby-talking little girl in Mary Janes who gets into fresh trouble each day. In 1902, when the strip made its debut, there were so few women drawing comics that *The Bookman*, a magazine of the period, can be forgiven for writing about her, "Strangely enough, among all the artists and cartoonists, Kate Carew is the only exponent of the funny side of life."

By 1911, Carew was writing and illustrating a page of political commentary and satire for the *New York American*. One of her pages, "The Sacred Right of Franchise for Women = Rubbish!," pokes gentle fun at the anti-suffrage movement, telling of a fictitious interview with "Mrs. Gilbert E. Jones," the society lady leader of an anti-suffrage league. She wrote: "[…] the point is that so long as no woman is allowed to vote there is no danger of Mrs. Gilbert E. Jones's being compelled to vote against her will — she being a woman, although a lady. The league embraces the cream of the ladies who desire not to vote and the cream of the gentlemen who desire not to let them vote, so it's a very harmonious affair."

By the late 1920s, Carew's health and eyesight were failing, and she retired to the artists' community of Monterey, California, where she produced fine art paintings until her death at the age of 91.

In 1902, at the age of 16, Marjorie Organ became the only woman on the art staff of the *New York Journal,* for which she created a number of strips, including *Reggie and the Heavenly Twins* and *Strange What a Difference a Mere Man Makes*. Poor short Reggie, the protagonist of the former strip, was forever trying to win the affections of the two beautiful sisters in the title, only to have them stolen away in the last panel by two equally divine-looking men.

The Irish-born Organ caused a scandal when, in 1908, she married the painter Robert Henri, who was twice her age. They had met at a New Orleans masquerade ball, and on August 2, 1908, the *New Orleans Item* printed this about their meeting:



"Pardon me, do you pose?" he inquired, his eyes still fixed on the glory of her red hair.

"No. In fact, I pose others, a little. I am an artist but a humble one. I have been doing a little work for the newspapers for two years. I want to get into the magazines."

[…] *To one of his disciples, he said eagerly, "The girl with the red hair and beautiful complexion. Who is she?"*

"That? Oh, that is Marjorie Organ, an illustrator on one of the downtown papers."

THE FLOWER GIRL (Mrs. PATRICK CAMPBELL before her phonetic regeneration.

LITTLE REGGIE GOES SHOPPING WITH THE HEAVENLY TWINS

1. THE HEAVENLY TWINS—Now Reggie, you may wait here and hold our parcels while we go inside and buy some more things. We wont be gone long.

2. THE CHUMS—Hello, Reggie! What are you doing here?
REGGIE—Waiting for the girls. They're inside shopping.
THE CHUMS—Ah! We'll just go in and tell them you're waiting.

3. PORTER (two hours later)—What are you waiting for, young feller? There's nobody inside. It's six o'clock and we're closing up.
REGGIE—I wonder what became of the girls. I'll just carry these parcels to their house and see if they've reached home.

4. REGGIE (to maid)—Here are some parcels I brought home for the girls.
THE HEAVENLY TWINS—Why, Reggie! Where were you? We looked everywhere for you, and we would have had to go home alone if your chums hadn't happened along.

A different version of the story said that they had met on a ship bound for Spain. *The New York Times,* which reported their marriage, wrote that they had departed on a ship for Spain on their honeymoon, so this could be the cause of the confusion. Henri's portrait of Organ, *O in Black With a Scarf*, hangs in the San Francisco deYoung Museum of Art, where it is admired by visitors who have no idea who she was.

Another cartoonist who drew beautiful-but-zany women was Katherine Patterson Rice. In 1898, at the age of 20, she was already contributing sketches to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and, by 1910, she was drawing fashion illustrations for the covers of newspaper supplements. Her comic strip, *Flora Flirt*, made its debut in 1913. Flora was, well, a flirt. She wore transparent dresses and daring hobble skirts, and she was a tad too liberal with her kisses. Ten years later, in the flapper strips of the '20s, her behavior would not seem particularly shocking, but in keeping with the then-current morality of the proper Edwardian years, Flora's adventures always ended in disaster.

In addition to Kate Carew, many other early women cartoonists were feminists. Rose O'Neill produced posters and postcards for the suffrage movement in America and England. One of her postcards, titled "Give Mother the Vote: We Need It," depicts a parade of Kewpie-esque toddlers bearing signs reading "Votes for Our Mothers." The verse running beneath the picture reads:

Isn't it a funny thing
That Father cannot see
Why Mother ought to have a vote
On how these things should be?

Edwina Dumm, who would later produce the long-running strip *Cap Stubbs and Tippie*, drew pro-suffrage cartoons for the *Columbus Daily Monitor* during the 1910s, and Nell Brinkley, superstar cartoonist of the 1910s and 1920s, returned over and over again in her syndicated daily newspaper panels to the subject of women working and getting the vote.

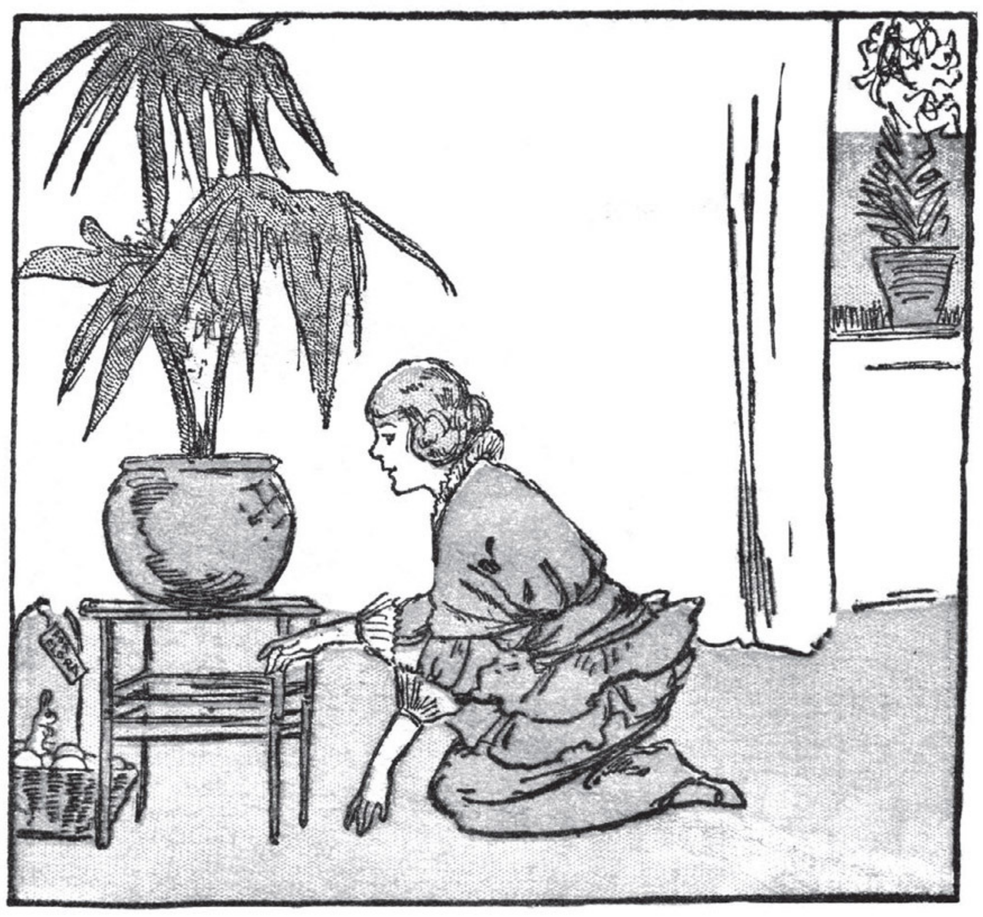
In 1916, America would not be entering World War I for another year, but Brinkley was already drawing patriotic cartoons to which she added a feminist element. One of these drawings depicted three of the typically beautiful women for which Brinkley was famous, one dressed as the goddess Liberty, one in uniform, and the third wrapped in a banner that said "Suffrage." The copy running beneath the picture read, "Any man who loves and reveres his mother and his country should idolize, if he worships at all, the three graces, Suffrage, Preparedness, and Americanism."

As a 16-year-old student, Nell Brinkley showed her portfolio to the editor of *The Denver Post*, and was hired as an illustrator for $7 a week. "Little Nell" was not quite ready for prime time, and her earliest efforts at the newspaper earned her the unfortunate nickname of "Little Smearo" and an eventual dismissal, but within a year she had improved enough to move to *The Denver Times*. Four years later she came to New York to work for Hearst at his *Evening Journal*. In 1907, she was illustrating the Harry K. Thaw murder trial. Thaw stood accused of killing famed architect Stanford White over the affections of beautiful Evelyn Nesbitt, Thaw's wife and White's ex-lover. Nesbitt, who had modeled for

OPPOSITE: *Flora Flirt* (1913) by Katherine P. Rice.

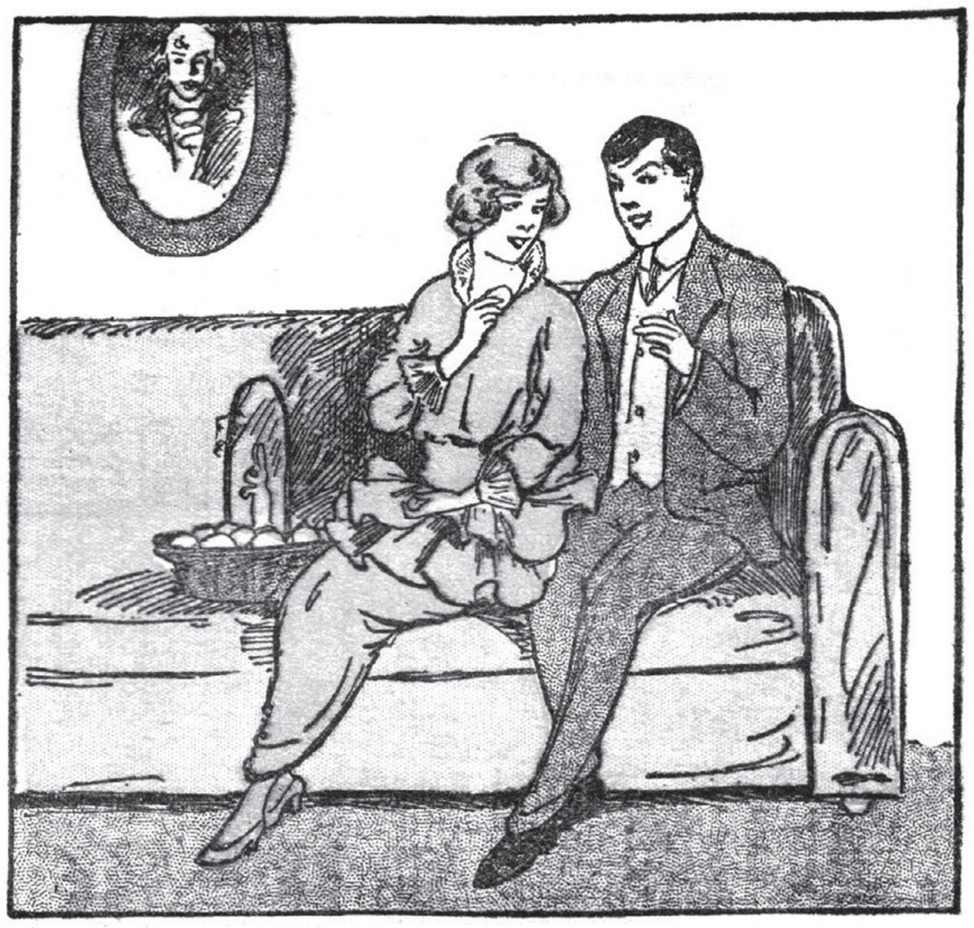
FLORA FLIRT GETS AN EASTER-EGG LESSON

Flora Flirt, spring's gown adorning
Her slim form, greets Easter morning

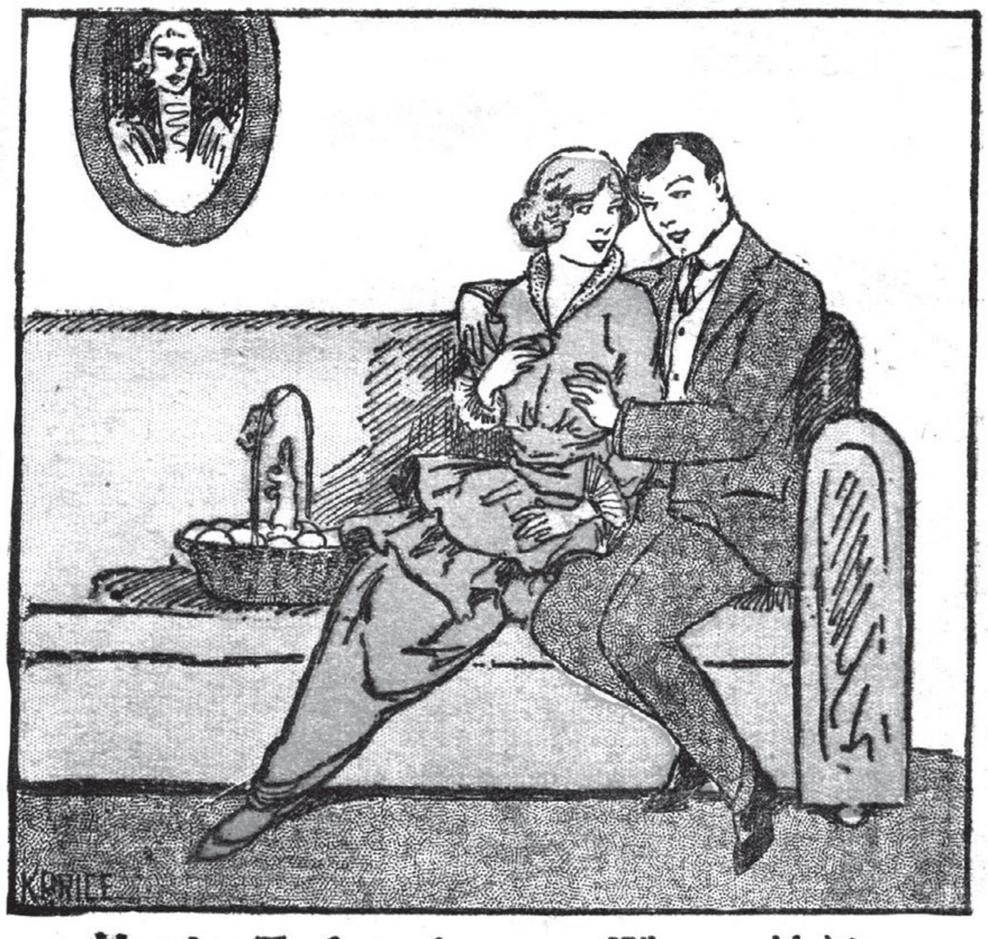


With an eager, joyous zest,
Hunting for her rabbit nest.

No sooner has she found it than
A caller comes—her new young man.



"I'm just in time!" he cries. He's slick—
"I'll kiss you every time we pick!"



He takes Flo first, of course. Who wouldn't?
When, Bang!—an egg acts as it shouldn't

As they collapse and tilt the nest,
That egg proves no worse than the rest.
The Moral—No girl should egg love on its road. Her
Eagerness will bring bad odor.

TOP: Nell Brinkley

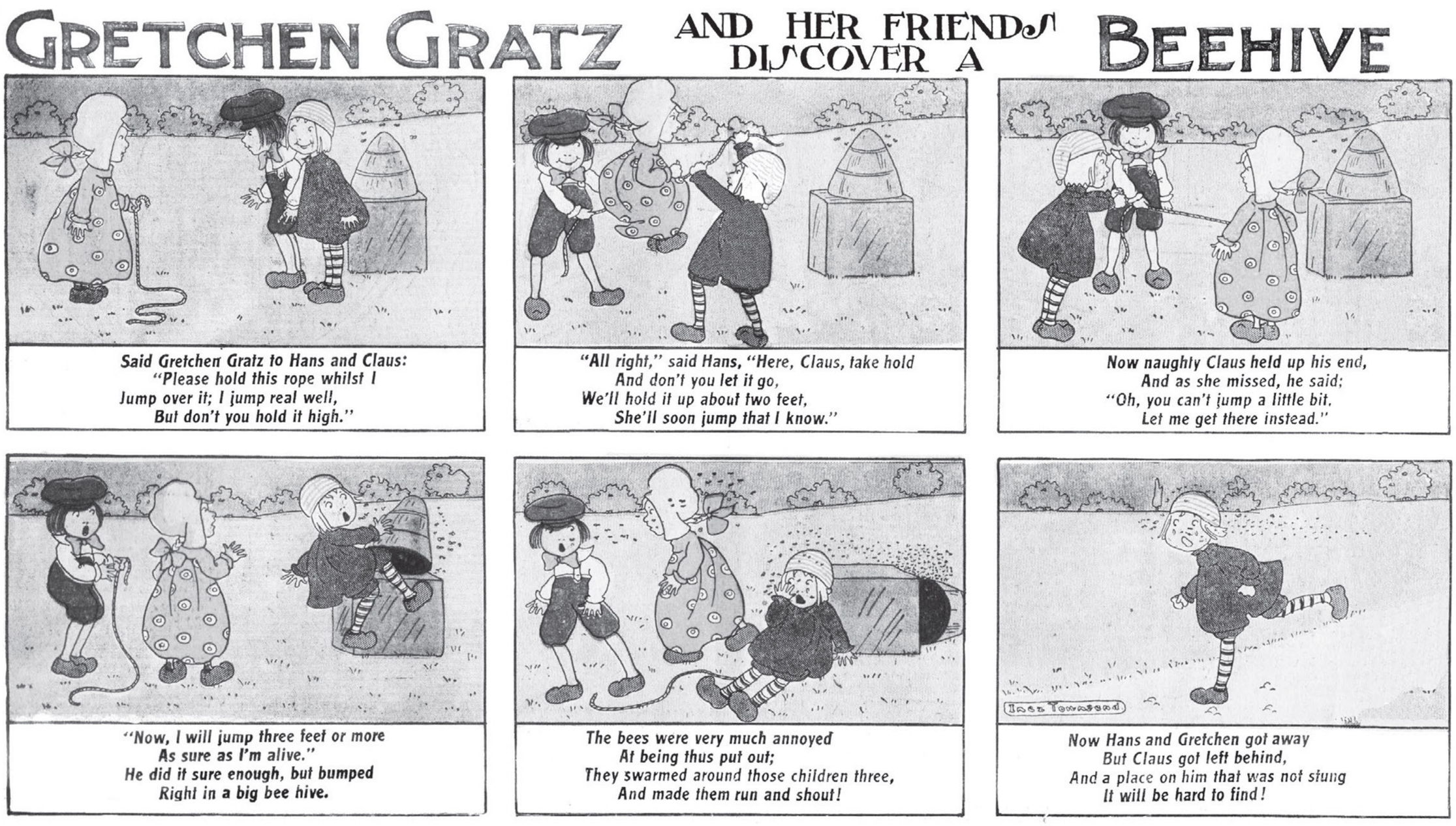
BOTTOM: Inez Townsend's *Gretchen Gratz* (1904).

OPPOSITE: Inez Tribit's *Snooks and Snicks* (1913).

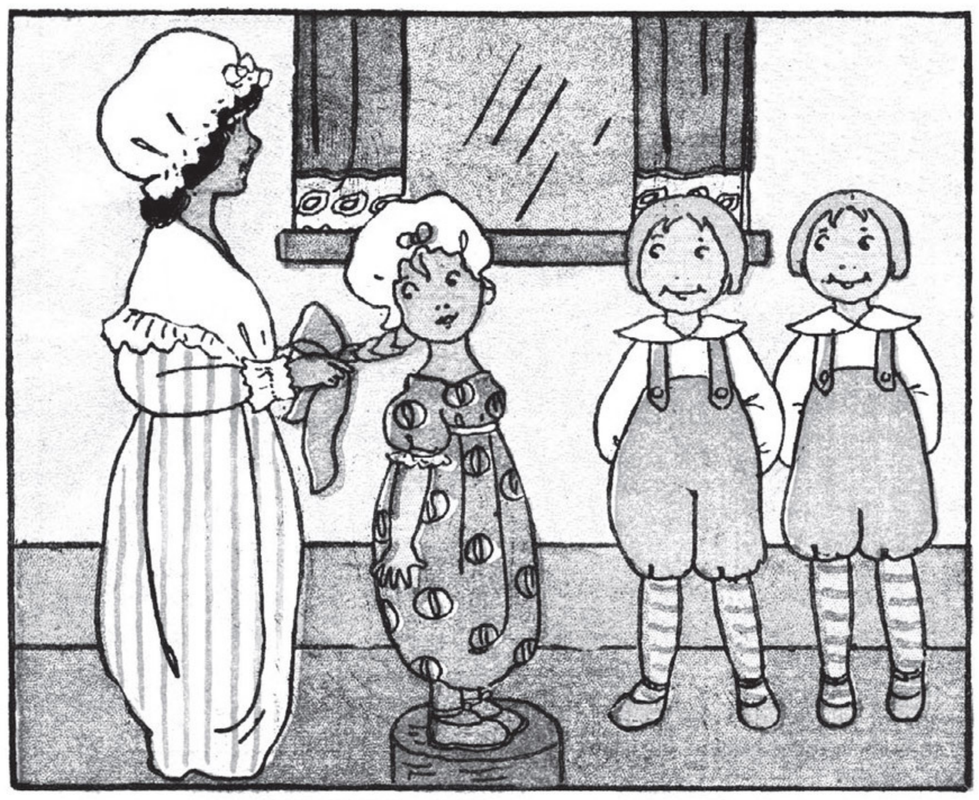
Charles Dana Gibson, was a perfect candidate for Brinkley's pen, and the artist drew her over and over again, even interviewing her. The glamorous "Brinkley Girls," with their floating masses of curls, ruffles, and laces, thrilled a generation of women throughout the 1920s and inspired future cartoonists such as Phyllis Muchow, Valerie Barclay, Hilda Terry, Marty Links, Selby Kelly, and especially Dale Messick, who created *Brenda Starr* in 1941.

A popular convention was drawing children in the fashions of the previous century: illustrations of this sort can be found in old Mother Goose books and children's books by Johnny Gruelle and others. Inez Townsend used the style when she drew *Gretchen Gratz* in 1904 and 1905, and later in 1913 when, now signing her work Inez Tribit, she produced *Snooks and Snicks, the Mischievous Twins*. The stories follow a familiar pattern: adorable children get into trouble. Indeed, another convention seems to have been kids mixing it up with beehives: there are examples of it in *Gretchen Gratz* and Margaret Hays' *Jennie and Jack*.

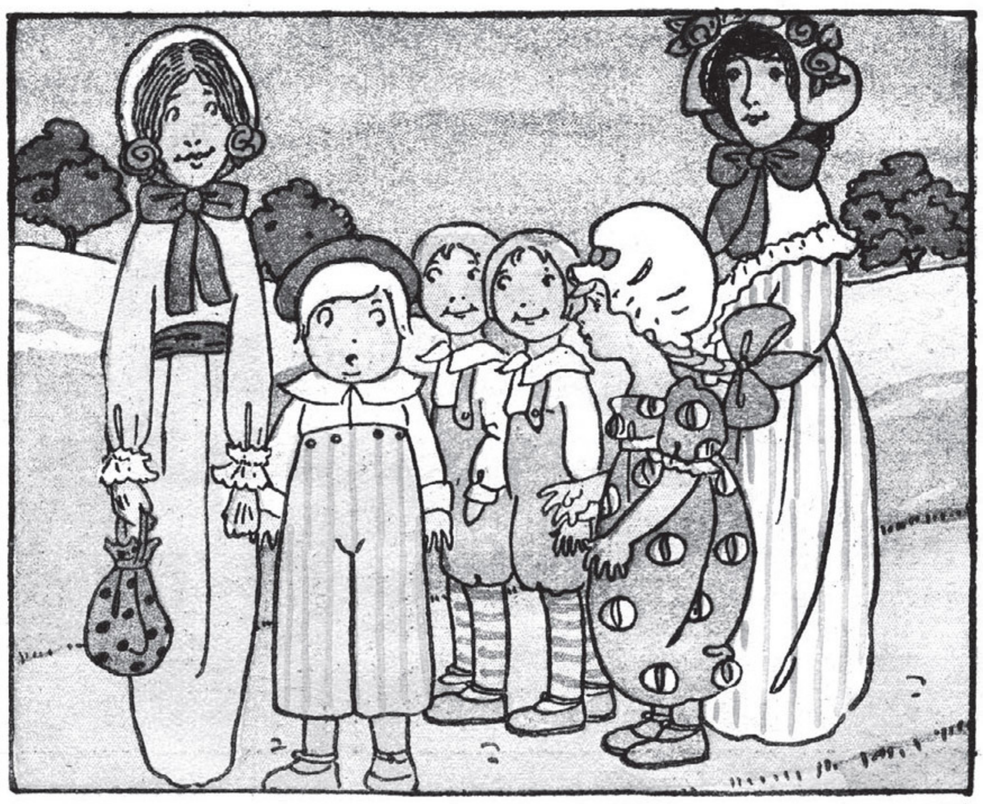
Another strip that featured old-fashioned children was Mary A. Hays' *Kate and Karl, the Cranford Kids*, from 1911 and 1912. The use of the name Cranford is an in-joke. Fred Crane, editor of the Philadelphia North American comic syndicate, published Mary Hays as well as Inez Tribit, Grace Drayton, and Katherine P. Rice. Crane, who probably printed more women cartoonists than anyone else, came from Cranford, New Jersey, a town founded in colonial days by his ancestors.



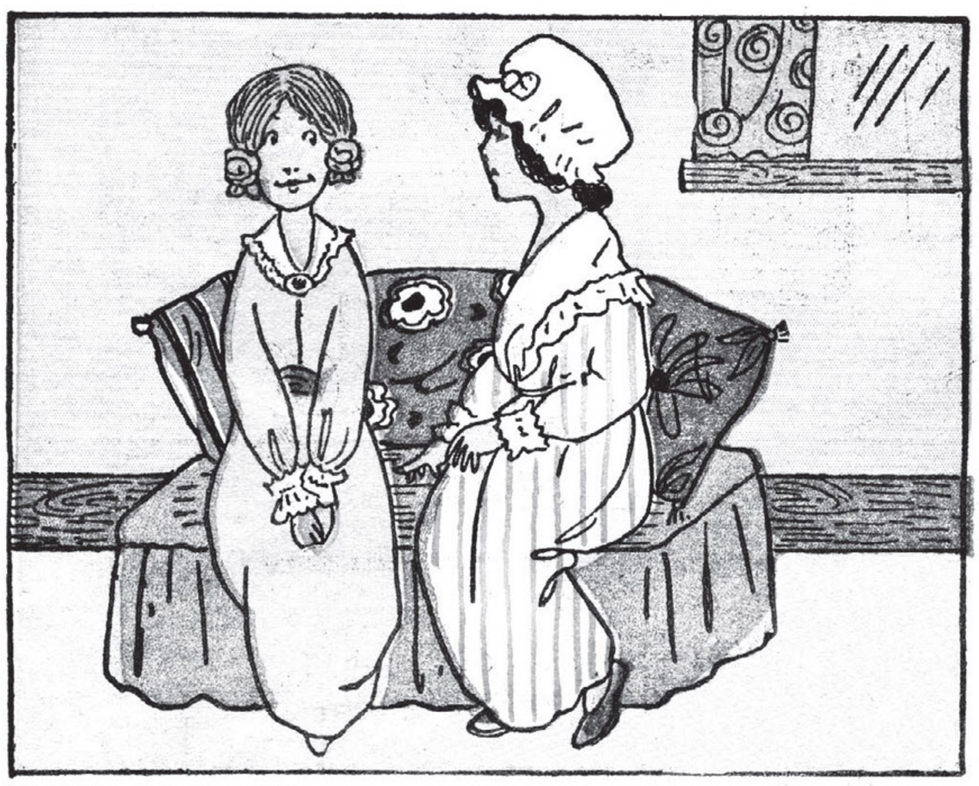
SNOOKS AND SNICKS WELCOME COUSIN CLARENCE



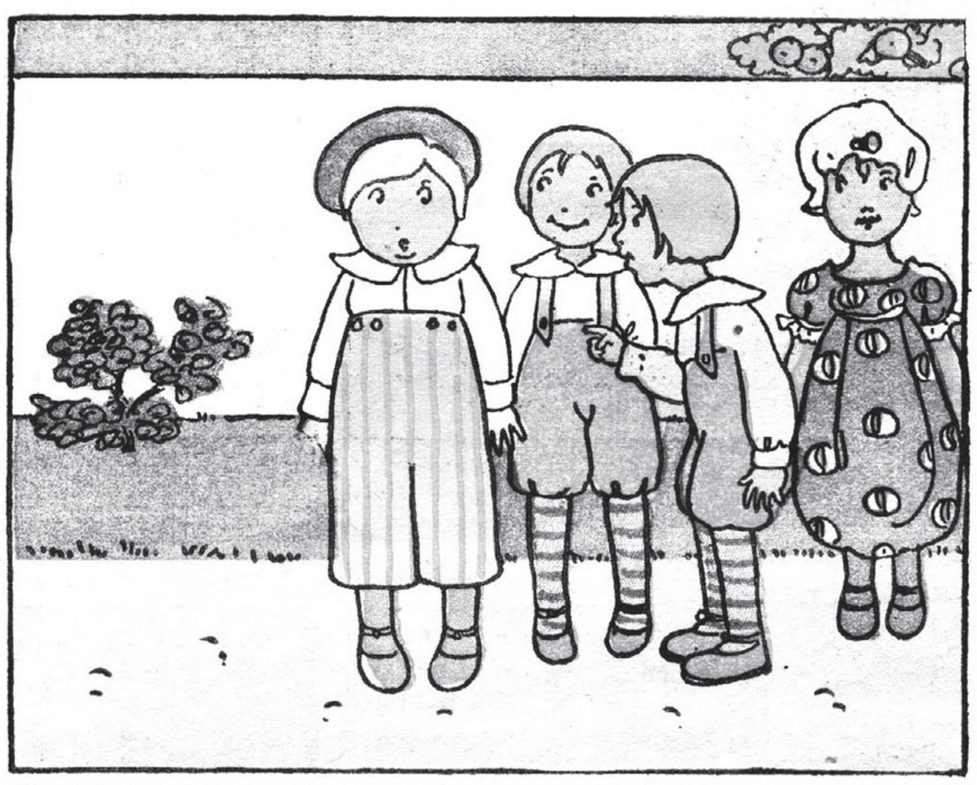
"Now, children," said their mother, "try
To all be nice and good,
For Cousin Clarence comes today
Behave just as you should."



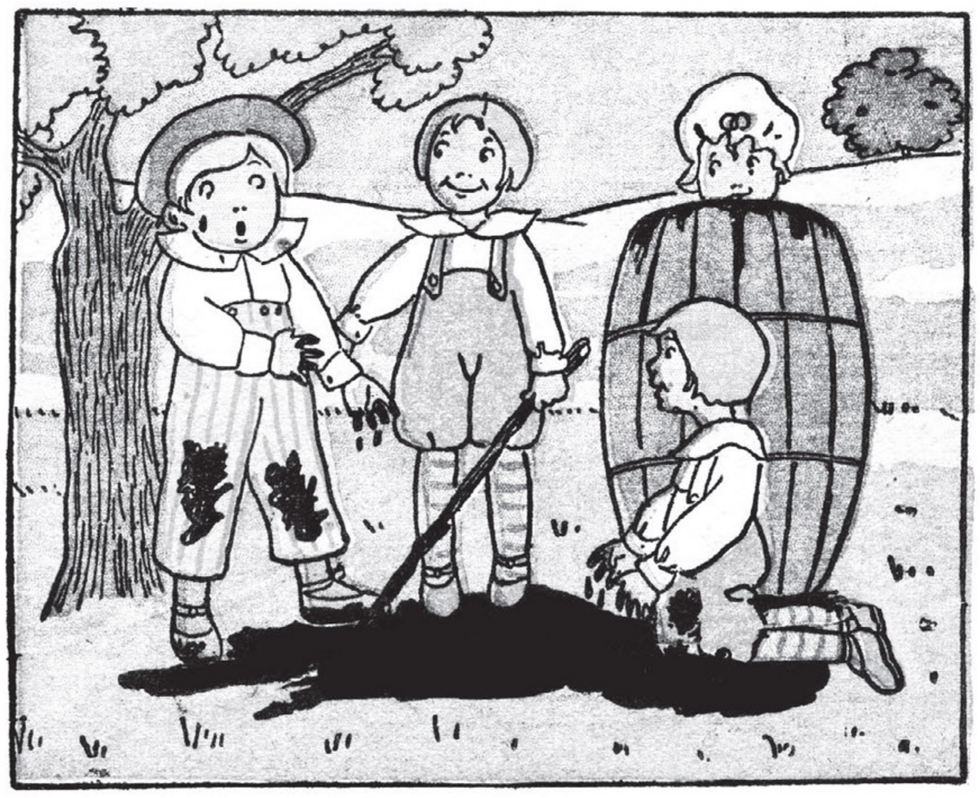
With smiling faces off they went
To meet their cousin dear.
But when they saw him, they all cried,
"Oh, look what we have here!"



The two proud mothers each began
To tell about her boys.
"My Clarence is an angel child,
And never makes a noise."



"Well, Snicks and Snooks are full of fun
And noise," their mother said.
She little knew the mischief that
Had entered each small head.



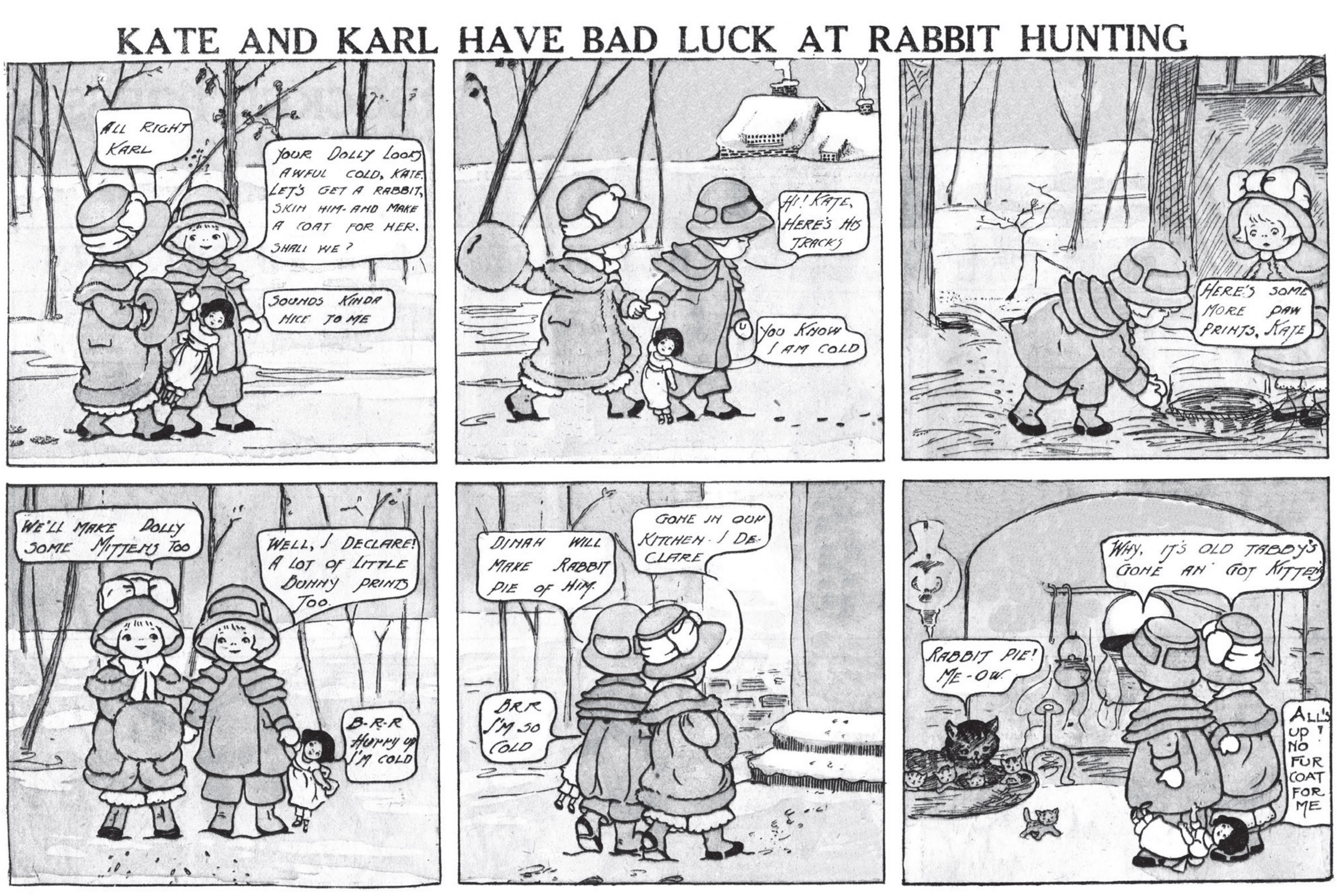
They took their Cousin Clarence where
A barrelful of tar
Had spilt around upon the ground.
Said Snicks, "How neat you are!"

And then they spread that tar on him.
"Now you look better far!"
Then off they ran, while he rushed home
To tell his dear mamma!

When looking at Mary A. Hays' comics, one is struck by the art's resemblance to Grace Drayton's style, a resemblance that provoked at least one collector to speculate that Mary A. Hays and Margaret Gebbie Hays were the same person. The answer is simpler than that: Mary was Margaret Gebbie Hays' daughter. Grace Gebbie Drayton, Margaret Gebbie Hays, and Mary A. Hays represent two generations of woman cartoonists — a case of sisterhood being powerful.

TOP: Grace Drayton (center) with her nieces Marjorie (left) and Mary A. Hays (right).

BOTTOM: Mary A. Hays' *Kate and Karl* (1911).



The Pursuit of Flappiness

Youth and Age

DEC. 12 Copyright, 1913, International News Service.

By NELL BRINKLEY

YOUTH is thankful that it has YOUTH; thankful for the faery things that go with it; for the dreams that are; for the things that are to be; for the daring that swells its heart and takes Old Time by the beard; for the stir and the strife of life; for red blood and love; for the colors and flowers and gems that go with this decorating-time of life; for the mighty joy of TODAY and most of all for the high, delicate hopes of what IS TO COME! Age is thankful that its feet and body are warm—that a soft chair closes it round; thankful for the things that it has known; for the dreams that came true and that it can forget those that never did; thankful for the wisdom that keeps its heart from hurting and loving too deeply; for the peace that it has found; for the youth that sometimes surrounds it; for a fine old book and the crackling hearth—and, most of all, for the end of strife—for the warm, even heart-beat that finds pleasure in meditation and feels no more the tormenting, bitter-sweet flame that distracts the heart of youth. Youth and old age; wild birds and dozing pussies—each thankful for so widely different things!

Nell Brinkley's December 12, 1913 *Youth and Age*.

At the 1992 opening of a women cartoonists show at the San Francisco Cartoon Art Museum, attendees watched in awe as guest of honor Dale Messick, creator of *Brenda Starr*, strolled through the exhibit. The 86-year-old dean of women cartoonists paused before a page by Nell Brinkley, and her eyes shone like the starry orbs of her creation as she studied the delicate pen work on the ruffles, lace, and windblown hair of the elegantly drawn "Brinkley Girl." Brinkley had been Messick's greatest influence.

If one person can be said to have set the style for the majority of women cartoonists during the 1920s, that person was Nell Brinkley. As early as 1908, the glamorous creatures she created were inspiring controversy and fan mail. After a critical letter asking, "Is there any good reason why a woman's head should be portrayed as weather-beaten moss instead of human hair?," the *Los Angeles Examiner* felt compelled to defend their young star artist by stating that Brinkley herself possessed the kind of hair she drew: "Miss Brinkley pictures chiefly hair, which a reader sacrilegiously calls 'moss', and Miss Brinkley, curiously enough, at the first superficial glance, is chiefly hair — certainly she wears not less than a bushel of the very lightest, curliest kind." The article went on to compare her art to Raphael, Michelangelo, Boucher, Titian, Botticelli, and Da Vinci.

Another issue of the *Examiner* printed tributes to the Brinkley Girl from readers, some of whom were moved to verse. W.L. Lamed wrote:

The sweetest, neatest, fleetest maid — the leader in her class,
Give me the stylish, smilish, wilish, dashing Brinkley Lass.

LEFT: *The San Francisco Call & Post* dated August 31, 1915 reported Nell Brinkley's visit.

RIGHT: Nell Brinkley's February 13, 1927 *The Fortunes of Flossie* Sunday page.

PRETTY GIRLS? S. F. FULL OF THEM, SAYS NELL BRINKLEY, HERE

Nell Brinkley, creator of The Call and Post's "Brinkley Girl," who is in San Francisco marveling at the beauty of San Francisco girls.

PHOTO BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE

THE AMERICAN WEEKLY
Greatest Circulation in the World
Magazine Section of the Baltimore American
Sunday Feb. 13, 1927

The Fortunes of Flossie
Verses By Carolyn Wells
Drawings By Nell Brinkley

1
A REAL live poet came to town; Flossie and all the girls
Fell for his large, dark, dreamy eyes, his Hyacinthine curls.
He talked at teas—they listened, rapt. They petted him to death,
While all the young men stood around and swore beneath their breath.

2
THE poet's heartstrings, he averred, thrilled to one master call;
He voiced the eternal cry, "Originality is all!"
A masked ball was impending. Said Flossie, "He'll be there.
Let's get Isis, the Mystic, to tell us what to wear."

3
THEN Pat Van Zandt said she would have the meeting at her house.
Pat was as sly as any fox, as quiet as any mouse.
Isis came. With each girl alone she went into her trance
To Flossie she said, "Queen of Hearts **you** must wear at the dance."

4
SO Flossie kept it secret, and ordered the costume.
Her maid went off in raptures as, up in Flossie's room,
Behind locked doors they tried it on, and Flossie cried in glee,
"I think the poet will call **this** originality!"

5
FLOSSIE went to the party. As she gained the dancing floor,
She saw a dozen Queens of Heart! And then she saw some more!
That rascal, Pat, bribed Isis to tell each girl the same,
And Pat herself, in garb unique, won the poet's acclaim!
(To Be Continued)

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THIS PAGE:
LEFT: 1924 advertisement for Nell Brinkley Bob Curlers.
RIGHT: In the April 21, 1918 installment of Nell Brinkley's "*Golden Eyes" and Her Hero, "Bill,*" Golden Eyes discovers a German spy in the bottom of her garden.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Stella Flores, *Love's Safest Retreat* (1915).
BOTTOM: More Brinkley Clones — Dorothy Flack, Eleanor Hope, and Marge Geyer.

Another poet who signed herself "A Young Woman Who Admires Her Work," wrote:

You are spritely and you're tinkley,
You seem just on the Brink-ley
Of putting fill the others in the shade;
So blessing on you, girlie,
With the pen so whirley-twirley,
May your newspaper shadow never fade!

Florenz Ziegfeld, the showman who made his fortune "glorifying the American girl" on stage, featured in his Follies various Brinkley Girls, one of whom was the future silent film star Mae Murray. Mae West also claimed that she had begun her career as a Brinkley Girl. And by the '20s, female Brinkley fans that aspired to the clouds of curls worn by the heroines of such strips as *The Fortunes of Flossie*, *Romances of Gloriette*, or *The Adventures of Prudence Prim* could choose between Nell Brinkley Hair Wavers or The New Nell Brinkley Bob Curler, at 10¢ per card.

Despite the romanticism of her work, Brinkley herself was a feminist. Although she is chiefly remembered and probably most loved for her art nouveau depictions of beautiful women, handsome men, and more cherubs than you could find in the Vatican, her daily panels provided commentary on women of her times. For about every drawing of

Love's Safest Retreat

Copyright, 1915, International News Service.

By Stella Flores

WHEN Love has played all day in the sunlight and flowers, or finished walking on a dangerously fine thread stretched tightly between two flaming hearts, when perhaps he has had a sere tumble and bumped his little self black and blue, then he longs for a safe haven where he can lay his curly head against a true heart and sleep with never a quiver of fear.

Without a second's hesitation he wings his way past all the joyous young couples, until he reaches the fireside of an old pair whose hair has turned white. With a little sigh of content and a yawn he tucks his curly head in the woman's soft lap and falls asleep.

No roses are sweeter than those that blossom in the land of memory and dreams, and their thorns have ceased to hurt. There the bent figures of the old couple grow straight once more — both are young again, living over the exquisite days of their courtship. And little Love never brings more happiness to any hearts than to those that have grown old together.—*Stella Flores.*

Ancient Rivals

DRAWN BY
ELEANOR HOPE

CONTRASTS

DRAWN BY
MADGE GEYER

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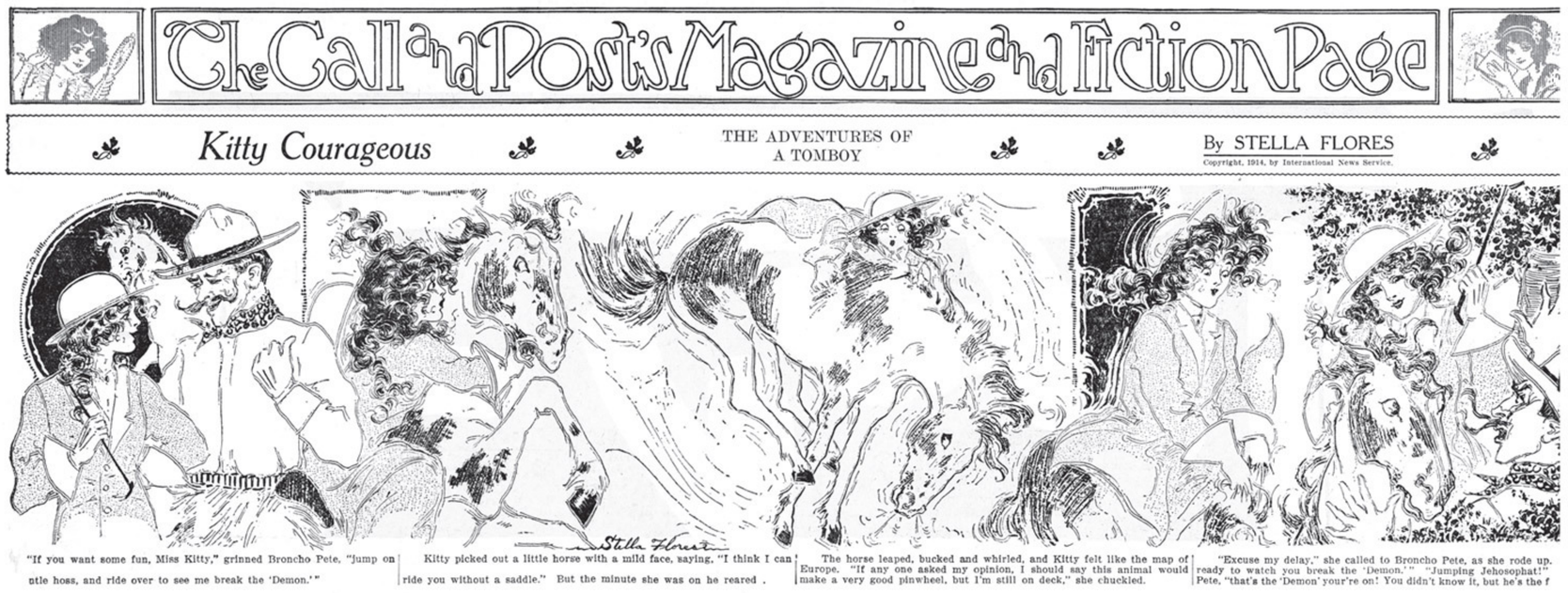


TOP: Stella Flores' *Kitty Courageous* (1914).

BOTTOM: Eleanor Schorer's *Bessie's Vacation* (1913).

long-lashed, curly-headed Brinkley Girls, the artist would manage to squeeze in one important comment on working women, suffrage, and — her favorite subject — women in sports.

In contrast, Brinkley herself appears to have lived conservatively. Unlike Rose O'Neill or Grace Drayton, she had only one husband, although her marriage ended in divorce in 1935. She continued working well into the 1930s, and although her later style became more simplified, it never lost the characteristic elegance that personified the Brinkley Girl. She retired her syndicated daily strip in 1937, at age 51, although she continued to illustrate books and occasionally draw for magazines.

Coincidentally, both Rose O'Neill and Nell Brinkley died in 1944. An obituary commented on Brinkley's great influence and compared her to O'Neill: "The late Nell Brinkley attracted more amateur copyists than did Charles Dana Gibson. Like Rose O'Neill, who came before her, she was quite an eyeful herself, and was past master as a cheesecake artist."

It was not only amateur copyists that Brinkley inspired. Not long after Brinkley made her debut, most newspapers were featuring at least one illustrator, usually — but not always — female, who produced sentimental panels illustrated in the delicate pen style popularized by Brinkley. Some of them, like Stella Flores and Eleanor Schorer, went on to produce comic strips. By the end of the 1920s and well into the 1930s, a score of talented women, following in Brinkley's satin-shod footsteps, were turning out both single panels and comics featuring chic and clever flappers. Probably the most famous of these was the multi-talented Ethel Hays, creator of comics, single-panel cartoons, paper doll books, children's book

illustrations, and full-color Sunday pages. Her Sunday pages, while similar to and obviously inspired by those of Brinkley, were done in her own cleaner, more art deco style. In a newspaper interview from 1927, Hays admitted she was strongly influenced by John Held Jr. "I adore John Held Jr. [...] when I was battling with my first drawings in the newspaper office I had to keep his drawings out of sight; his influence was so strong that I was prone to imitate."

Her favorite woman artist, she said, was Brinkley: "Her work is exquisite."

Ethel Hays' *High School Problems* (1930).

ABOVE: Ethel Hays gave drawing lessons to veterans (1918).

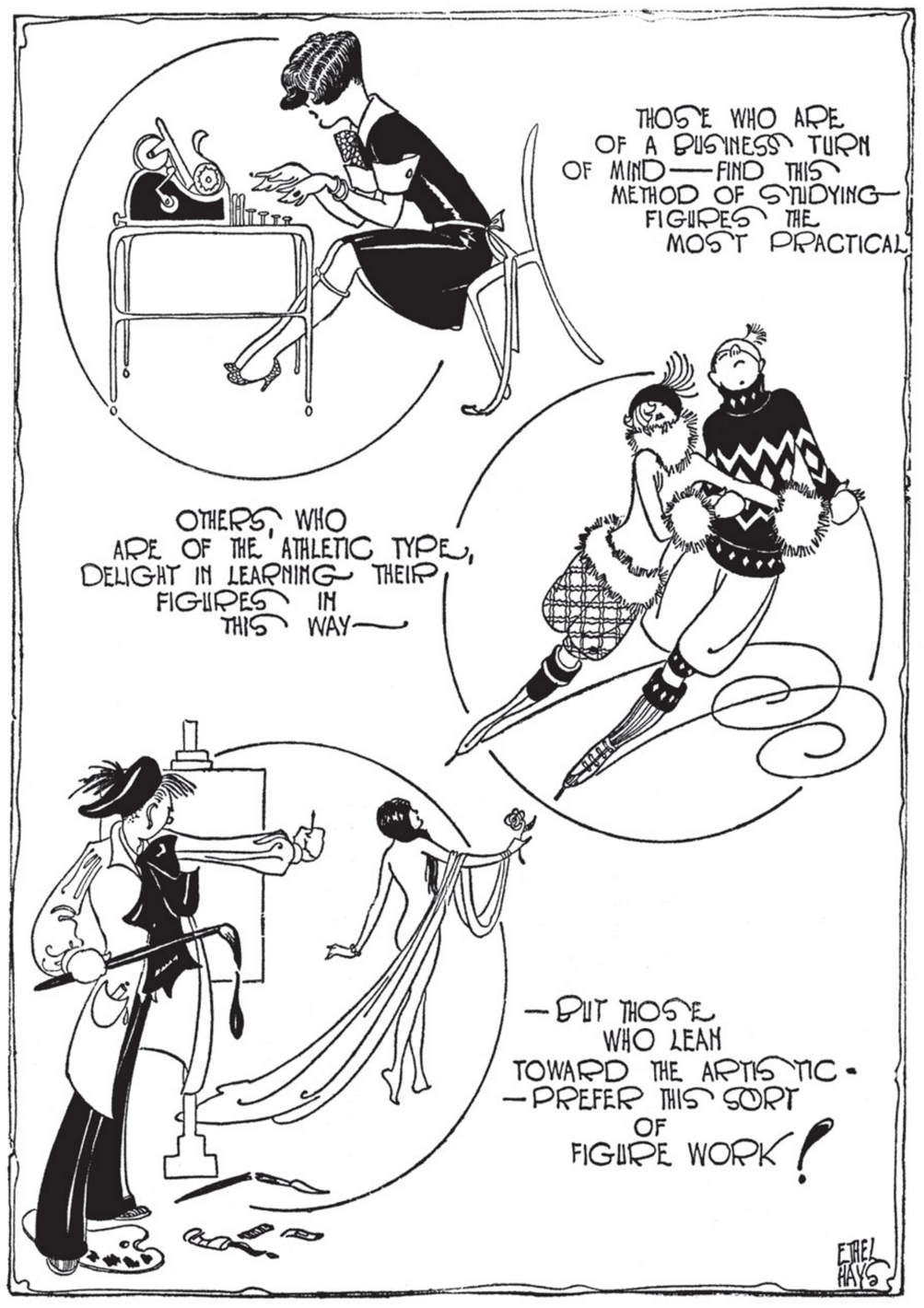
OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Ethel Hays' *Ethel* c. 1920s
TOP RIGHT: *Flapper Fanny* panels by Ethel Hays.
BOTTOM: Ethel Hays' *Did You Know?* (1932).

Brought up in Billings, Montana, Ethel Hays studied art at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design and the Art Students League of New York. After the United States entered World War I, she taught art to disabled soldiers at government hospitals in Washington, Colorado, Tennessee, and Ohio, while taking a correspondence course in drawing. The director of her school showed her work to the editor of the *Cleveland Press*, who immediately called Hays and hired her. A 1928 newspaper article described the artist's work on *Vic and Ethel*, the feature she drew: "She and a girl reporter did a picture feature stunt every day […]. They climbed church steeples and went down in diving suits. They rode speed boats and broke ice in the lake in order to go in swimming. Ethel's girl drawings were a city fixture." The article went on to describe her as "a real feather in the feminist's cap […]."

Within a year Hays had become a nationally syndicated cartoonist. Her first syndicated strip, aptly named *Ethel*, consisted of satire and social commentary. *Flapper Fanny*, a single-panel cartoon, followed soon after, and by 1928 she was producing Sunday pages.

Hays had gotten married in 1924 and soon after started a family. By the time she gave birth to her second daughter, the artist's workload had simply become too heavy. Rather than give up her lavishly illustrated Sunday color pages, Hays passed *Flapper Fanny* on to Gladys

ETHEL

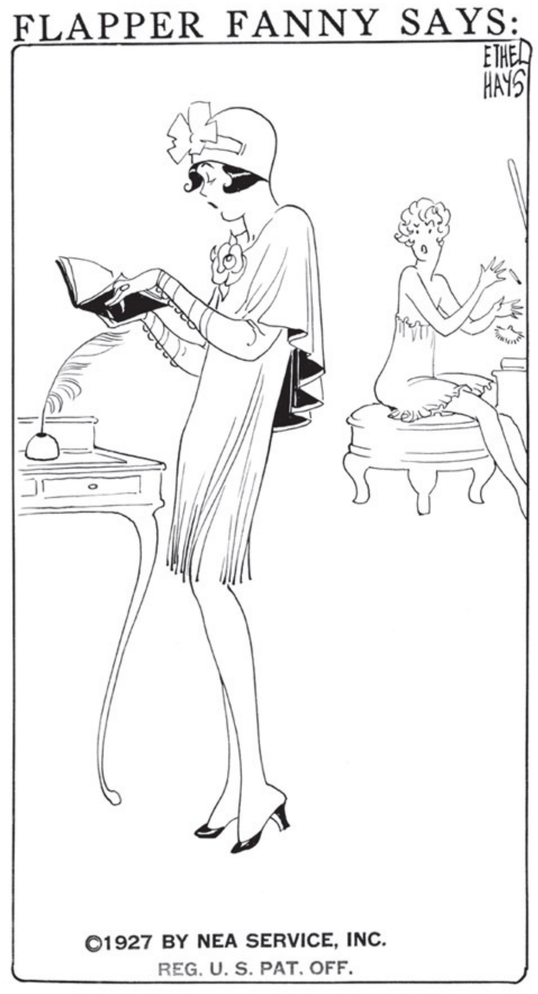


Figures

FLAPPER FANNY SAYS:

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.
©1927 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.

FLAPPER FANNY SAYS:



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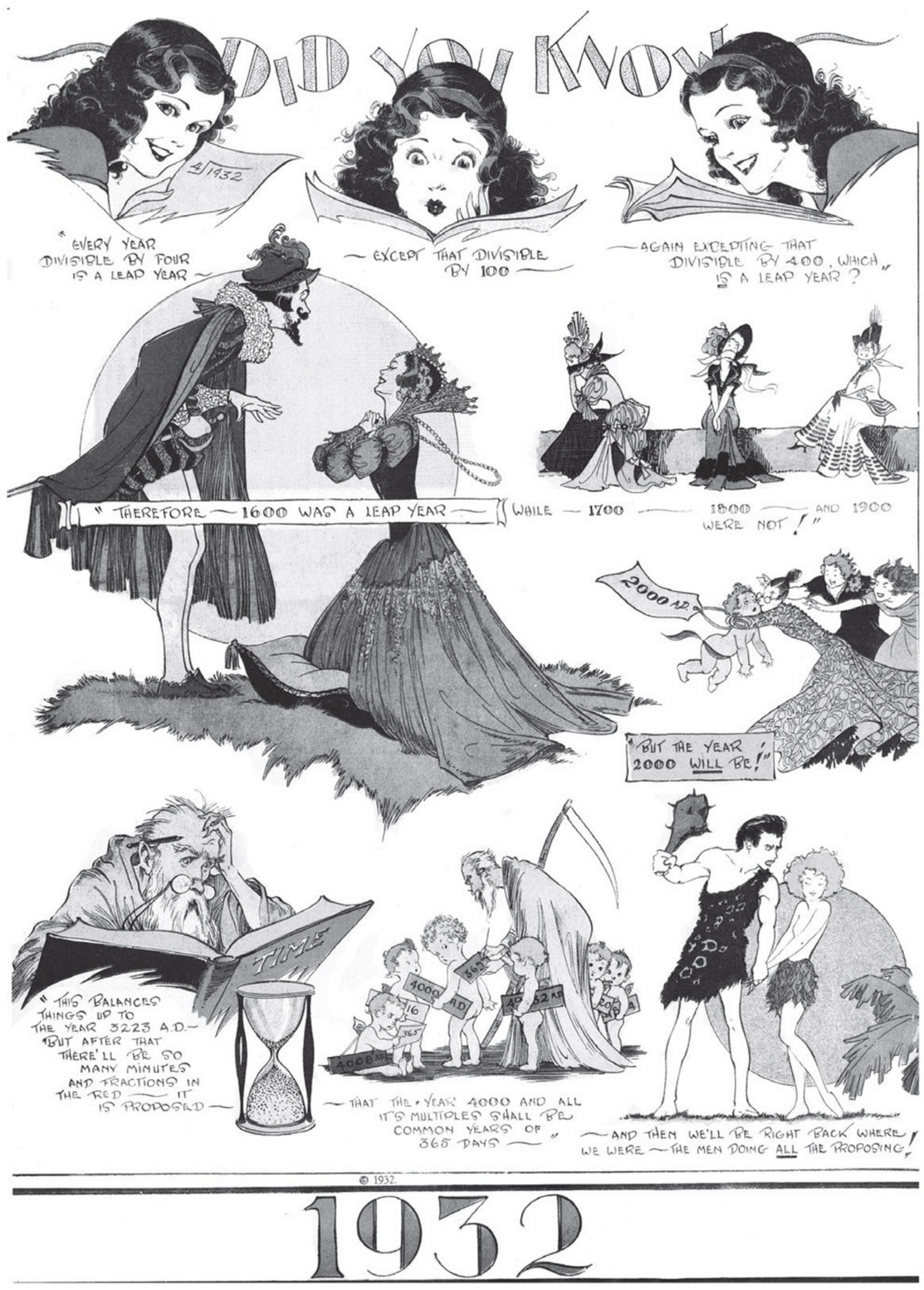
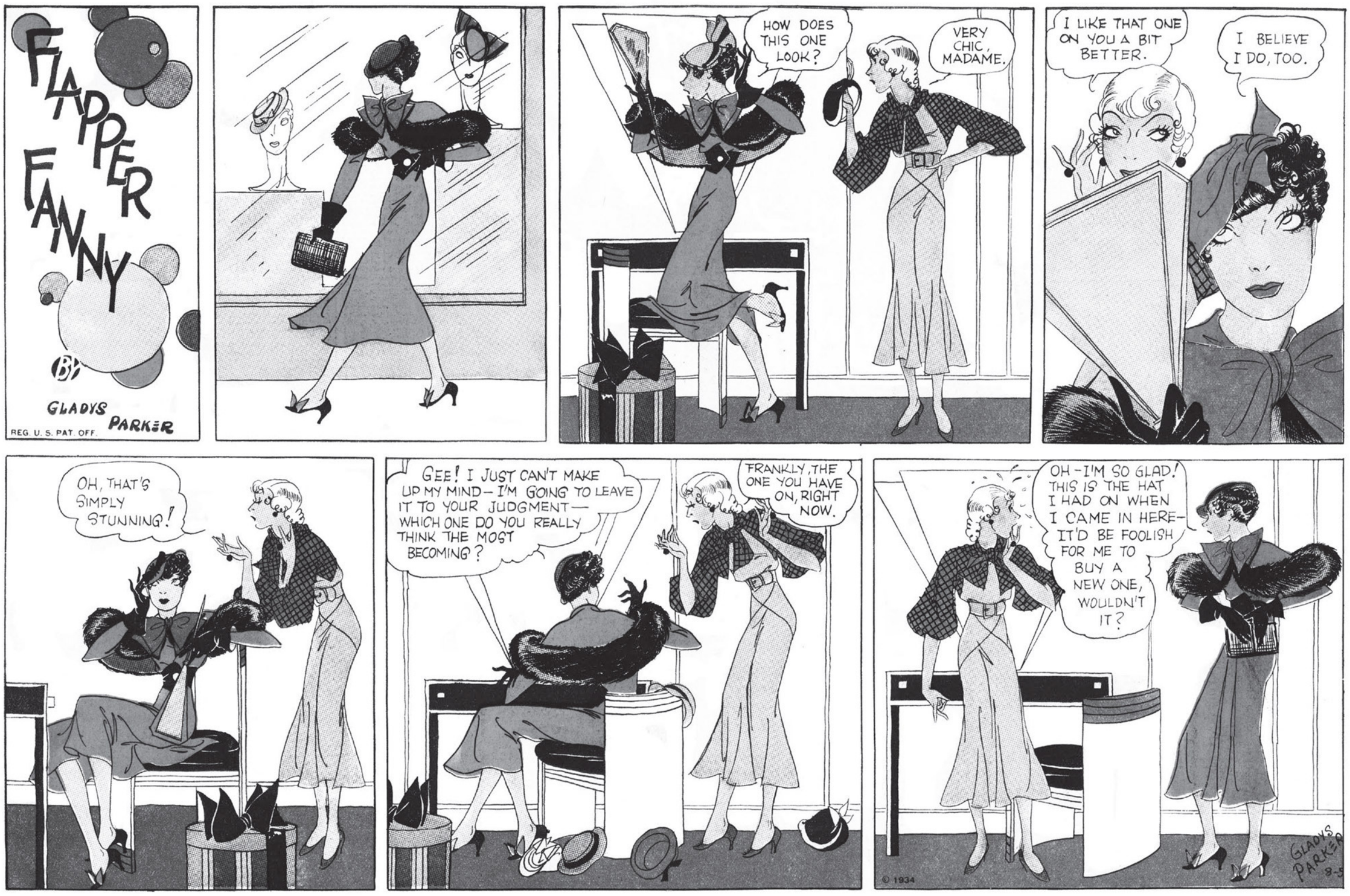
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

Parker, who had previously drawn a sophisticated flapper strip called *Gay and Her Gang*. The dry wit in *Gay and Her Gang* is often reminiscent of another Parker, the famed writer and wit, Dorothy, of the Algonquin Round Table, the illustrious group of well-known writers and artists who met at New York's Algonquin Hotel during the 1920s.

When a character talks about her rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of flappiness," she seems to speak for all the strips of that decade that featured stylish, wise-cracking young women.

Gladys Parker added a kid sister to the list of characters, and *Flapper Fanny*'s protagonist grew to closely resemble her artist, one of several cases where a woman drew herself as the heroine of her own strip. During this time, Parker was also drawing a series of comic strip ads for Lux soap.

Parker had a second job. She was a well-known and successful fashion designer, who had opened her own dress shop in Tonawanda, New York, at the age of 14. By the early 1930s, she had her own line of clothing that bore a label with a drawing of the artist (looking like Flapper Fanny) on it. A 1933 ad for the high-end department store Best & Co., which ran in *The New York Times*, reads:



Gladys Parker

One of America's Youngest and Cleverest Dress Designers

Sitting Tailor-Wise in her smart New York dress shop, Gladys Parker carefully bastes a garment. Unlike many designers she draws, sews, cuts, fits and in a busy season helps with the machine work, although she has a large crew of seamstresses. One of the youngest—only 30—she is considered one of America's cleverest dress designers. But she is an old hand at the business, having opened her own dress shop at 14 in Tonawanda, N. Y. She went to New York 10 years ago, designed night club and strip tease costumes, saved enough to finance her own shop. She created the cartoon characters "Flapper Fanny" and "Mopsie." Recognized as a leading designer of slacks, she has a complete wardrobe of them. Her creations are distinctively youthful. Each has some tricky touch like this heart-shaped sleeve pocket.

Page 36—Look—Jan. 31, 1939

TOP: *Flapper Fanny* by Gladys Parker (1934).

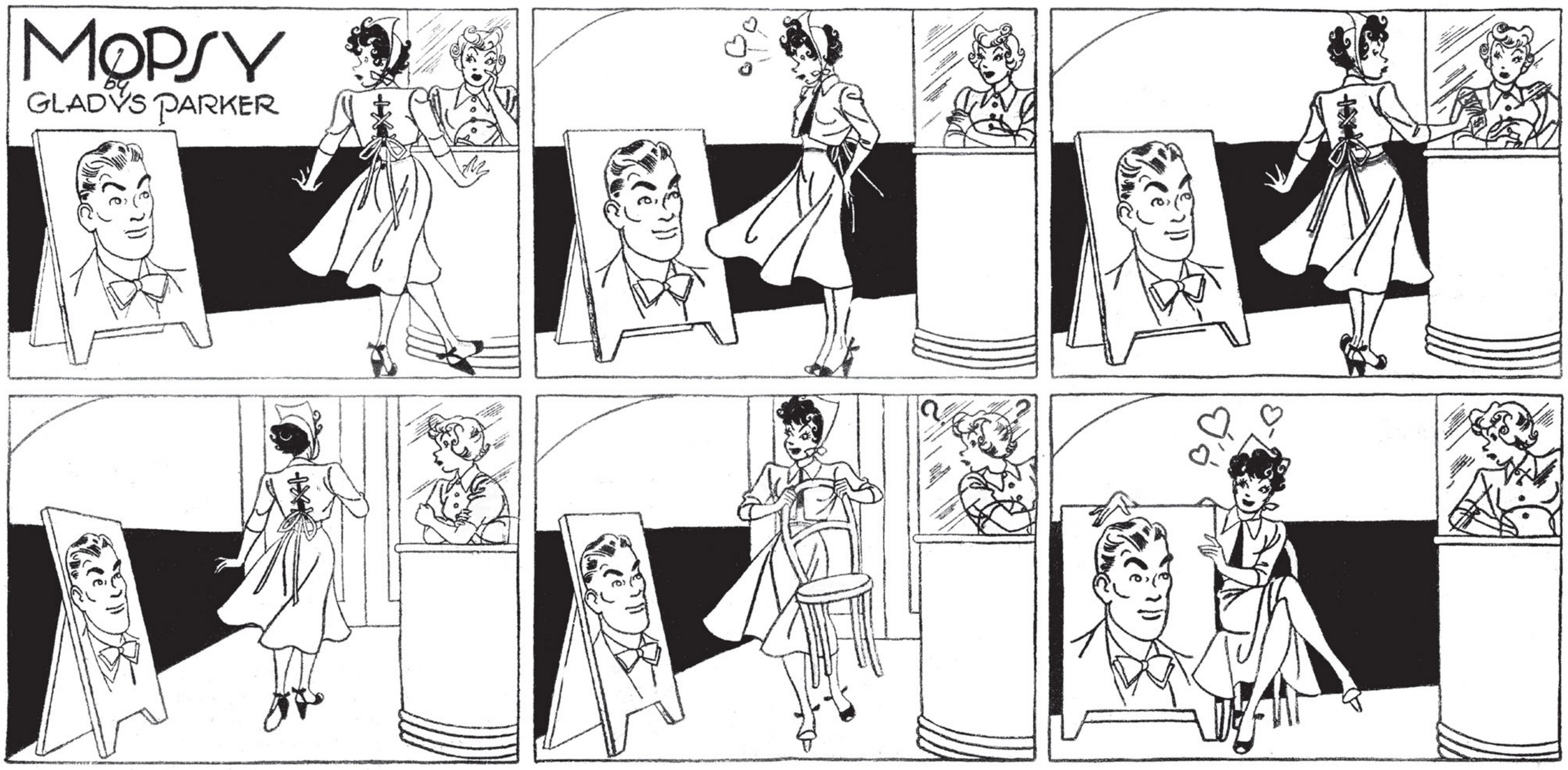
BOTTOM: Gladys Parker in the January 31, 1939 *Look* magazine.

GLADYS PARKER designs for youth and only for youth.

Gladys Parker is the perfect sub-deb — young, slim as a reed, and with a saucy independence of spirit typical of our younger generation. As a cartoonist she has achieved national recognition, for "Flapper Fanny" is one of the best beloved characters in the comic strips. As a designer (Not entirely a new role for her, for she has always made her own charming clothes) she brings her own gay sense of humor and her own delightful brand of sophistication to the sub-deb's rescue, and has created as sparkling a collection of fashions for youth it has ever been our privilege to see.

By the late 1930s, Parker had moved to a better-paying syndicate, where she created the long-lasting character Mopsy. *Flapper Fanny* was taken over by Sylvia Sneidman, who signed the strip with her first name, Sylvia. Sylvia continued the strip into the 1940s. Meanwhile, Ethel Hays, who obviously couldn't stop, drew one last flapper strip in 1936: *Marianne*. Virginia Krausmann drew the strip after Hays left, copying Hays' style at first, but soon giving it a more detailed, though still stylishly deco, look. Hays went on to a long career illustrating children's books and paper dolls, both of which presumably paid more than her comics.

Another remarkably talented and prolific creator was Virginia Huget, who during the 1920s and early '30s seemed to produce a new strip every year. Born Virginia



Clark in Dallas, Texas, in 1900, she married her childhood sweetheart, Coon Williams Hudzietz, and moved to Chicago, where she attended the Art Institute. The name Hudzietz was pronounced *Huget*, so in 1926, when the artist sold her first strip, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, to the Bell syndicate, it was natural that she signed it not with a

TOP: Gladys Parker's *Mopsy* (1950).

BOTTOM LEFT: Gladys Parker's Lux soap advertisement.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Sylvia Sneidman's *Flapper Fanny*.

THIS PAGE:
TOP: Ethel Hays' *Marianne*.
CENTER: Virginia Krausmann's *Marianne*.
BOTTOM: Virginia Krausmann in the flesh.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Virginia Huget in the mid-1920s, looking every bit like the flappers she drew, with her husband, Coon Hudzietz.
TOP RIGHT: Virginia Huget's *Babs in Society* (1927).
BOTTOM LEFT: Virginia Huget's *Campus Capers*, May 11, 1930.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Virginia Huget's *Campus Capers*, May 18, 1930.

suspiciously "foreign" name that was difficult to pronounce, but with the more glamorous "French-sounding" Huget.

By 1927, Huget was drawing *Babs In Society*, a full-page Sunday color strip that chronicled the adventures of a spunky little flapper working in a department store, who inherits a fortune from her long-lost uncle Ebenezer. She went on to produce more color pages, including *Flora's Fling*, *Campus Caper*, *Babs*, and *Miss Aladdin*, all in a sprightly and very art deco style.

Huget also produced a series of black-and-white daily strips, including *Molly the Manicure Girl* and *Campus Capers*. The latter was completely different from her Sunday color page of the same name. She seems to have done a series of these strips — all interchangeable — featuring two pretty flappers: a blonde and a Louise Brooks-lookalike brunette.

Like Gladys Parker, Huget somehow found the time to draw Lux soap ads, which won a first prize from the Art Directors League of New York. The ads, *Dixie in Hollywood* and *Peggy Lux*, are in comic serial form and relate the continuing adventures of the heroines. In one ad, Peggy Lux runs for president on the platform "Cut down stocking runs with Lux."

Huget seemed to possess the ability to change her style as needed, and was so proficient at mimicking other styles that she sometimes substituted for other artists. In 1937, during a time when Percy Crosby, creator of the popular strip *Skippy*, went through a period of alcoholism so severe that he could not meet his deadlines, she carried it on under his name. Her imitation of Crosby's style is flawless. By 1944, under her maiden name of Virginia Clark, she had taken over *Oh, Diana* from artist Don Flowers, rendering it beautifully in his style, and by the late 1940s she was contributing the occasional short strip to romance comic books.

Dot Cochran was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1901. Her father, Negley Cochran, was editor and publisher of the *Toledo Bee*, one brother was a cartoonist, and her sister and other

BABS IN SOCIETY • LOOKING THINGS OVER

By Virginia Huget

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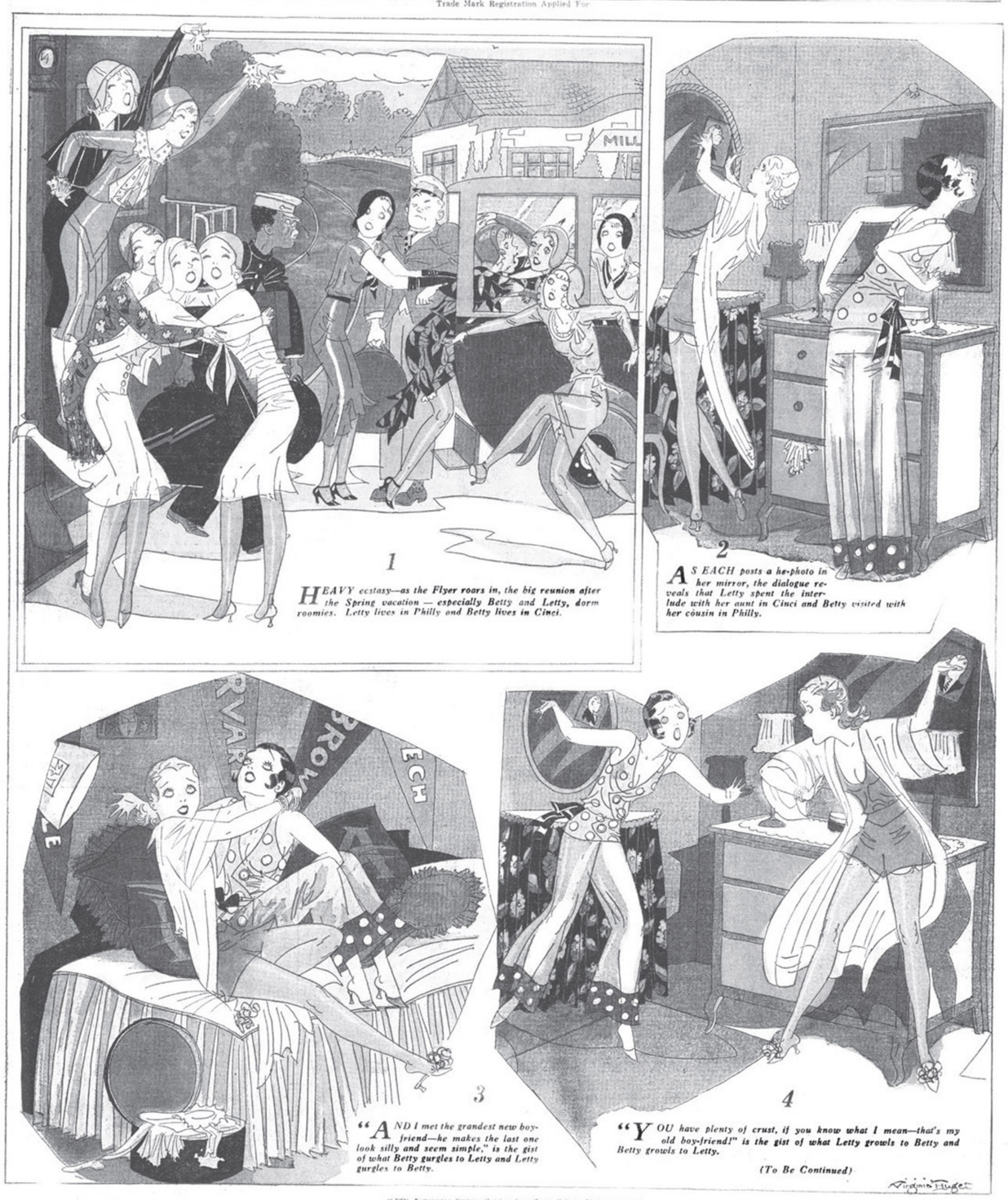
CAMPUS CAPERS

By Virginia Huget

The Montana Standard

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1930

Trade Mark Registration Applied For

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CAMPUS CAPERS

By Virginia Huget

A Blind Date to Open Your Eyes

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1930

Trade Mark Registration Applied For

The Wrong Girl in The Right Seat

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The Boy Friend

By MARJORIE HENDERSON

He says: "Some of these movie actresses must have discovered the secret of perpetual emotion!"

TOP: Virginia Huget's *Peggy Lux*.

BOTTOM: Marge Henderson's *The Boyfriend*.

brothers were journalists. Her niece Martha Blanchard's single-panel cartoons appeared in such magazines as *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*; her brother-in-law Frederick Opper was the creator of *Alphonse and Gaston* and *Happy Hooligan*. With a family like that, it seems natural she sold her first feature, *Dot and Dodo*, while she was still in her early 20s. As with Hays' *Vic and Ethel*, the young Cochran illustrated the adventures of herself and Dodo, the writer. When Cochran sold her charming flapper strip, *Me and My Boyfriend*, she chose the Hearst chain's King Features Syndicate, rather than the *Bee*'s Scripps-Howard Syndicate, so no one could accuse her of using her father's influence. *Me and My Boyfriend* only lasted until 1927, when Cochran married and moved to England, where she illustrated several books.

Another boyfriend strip was *The Boyfriend*, a single-panel cartoon drawn in 1927 by 23-year-old Marjorie Henderson. During the 1910s, young Marjorie Henderson was a regular contributor to the letters column of *For Boys and Girls*, the children's page of the Sunday Philadelphia *Public Ledger*. In the July 30, 1916 issue, Ruth Plumly Thompson, editor and author of the latter Oz series books, wrote: "'Tell Mr. Bookmarker I am going to be an artist,' writes Marjorie Henderson, and if she keeps trying, I am sure she will succeed."

Two years after *The Boyfriend*, Henderson wrote and drew a full-page comic, *Dashing Dot*. She would gain fame in 1934 as the creator of the immortal *Little Lulu*, and her familiar *Little Lulu* style is recognizable in this flapper strip, combined with the obvious influence of John Held Jr. The strip is signed, simply, Marge, the same way she later signed her *Saturday Evening Post* cartoons.

DODO AND DOT ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON

Find the Avenue Differs From Main Street Only in Width

By DODO

"WELL, if this ain't the canary's coat-tails!" wails Dot above the racket our trusty fliv is letting out. "Another tank town!"

You see, we've been coaxing the Henry east from Emporia, Kans., and we don't know which is the worst for wear—us or it. And now here we roll into a street that's like Main-st back home, only wider, and looks like it's never going to end from where we are.

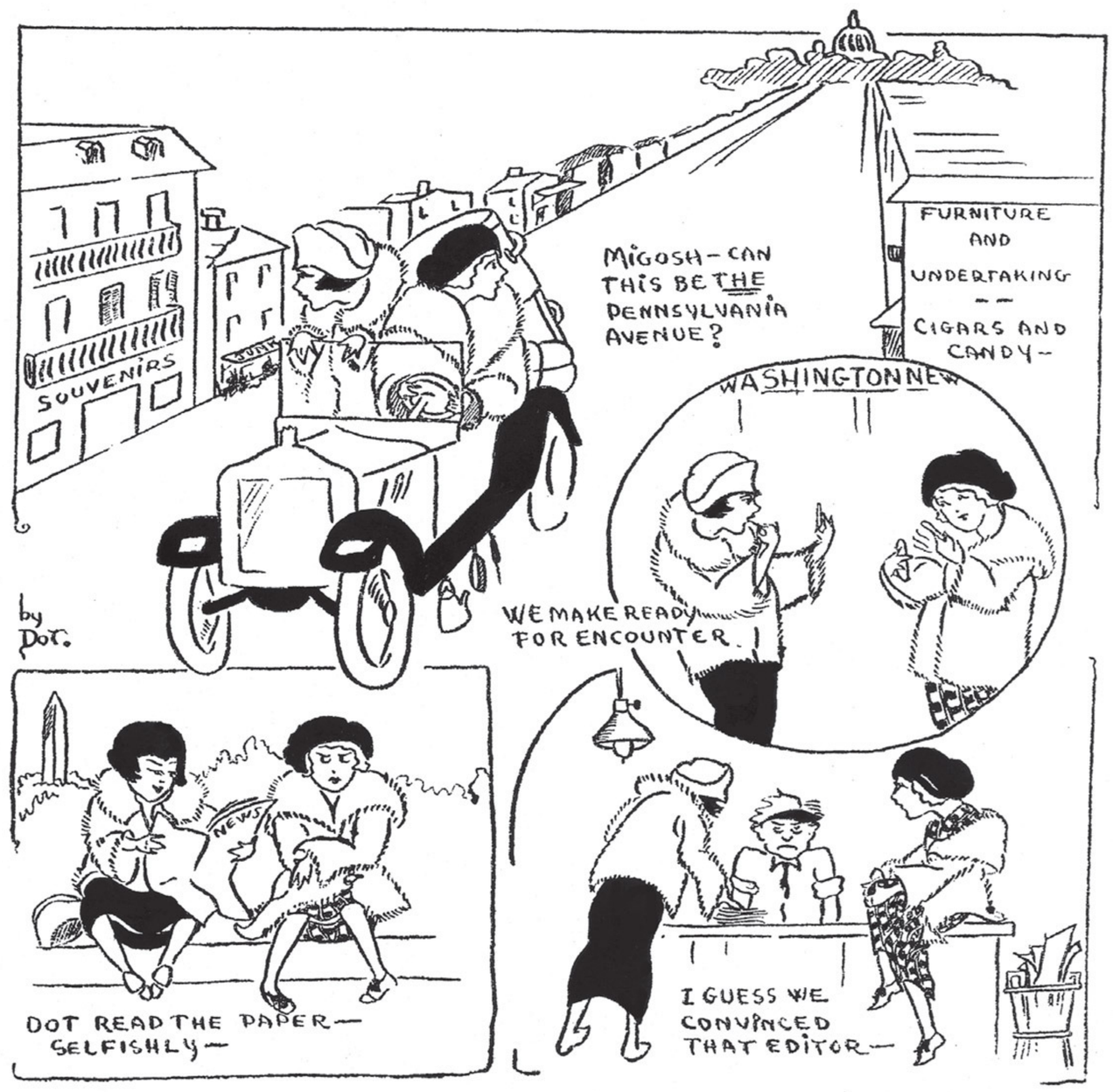
Henry coughs and dies on us. We take a look to the rear.

Rising out of a clump of trees at the far end is a white dome, which we recognize from geography books. But we can't get a clear view on account of having to look thru the skeleton of an electric gum ad.

Then all around the place, clear up to where we are stalled, is a crowd of junk shops and Jap bazars. Talk about your tumble-down shacks in Athlone!

"Pennsylvania-av" reads Dot from a lamppost and starts plowing around in her guide to American cities.

"Sure—you know," says I, showing my good middle-west training; "here's where they hold the parades and the President marches down to [illegible] every Fourth of [illegible] it special is getting [illegible] grabs for the hatbox



that's falling off, and we roll on.

Smash! Lizzie piles up on a sort of dock in the middle of the street like she's hit the Rock of Prudential. There's a cop with a walrus mustache running up to us, so I yells at him:

"What's this in the middle of the road?"

"That's a safety island, ma'am," he grins.

"Safety me eye," Dot gets in. "If that thing's safe, frying hand grenades in a red hot skillet is a parlor sport."

He helps us shove off and we go boiling along.

Then Dot gets one of her brilliant ideas. "Let's buy a paper," she says.

We pull the fliv over to the curb and sit down. A kid comes along with a handful and we buys the cheapest—1 cent limit.

"I like this 'News'," says Dot, reading it herself selfishly.

"Why not get a job there?" yawns I.

"Come on," says Dot, and we nose our way over to The News office on New York-av. We find the editor on an island entirely surrounded by waste paper, paste-pots and young, hopeful men in green eye-shades, smoking Sweet Caps.

"We're from Kansas," say Dot and sneezes, "and we're here [illegible] job."

Kansas must of convinced him, because here we are—me hunting and pecking on a typewriter which is a crime and Dot getting all mussed up in ink, especially her face—to give Washington a good hard look at itself.

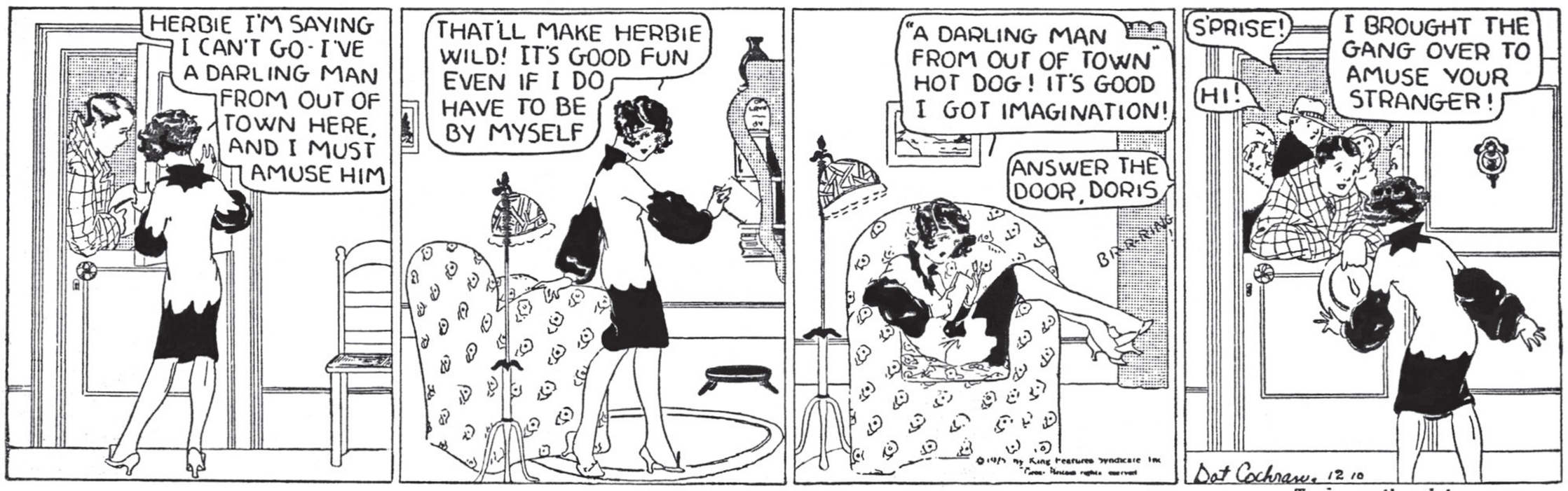
The unvarnished truth, says the editor.

Unvarnished, that's us.

(Tomorrow Dodo and Dot meet with Washington's socially elect Peacock Alley at the Willard.)

ME AND MY BOY FRIEND

An Embarrassing Moment

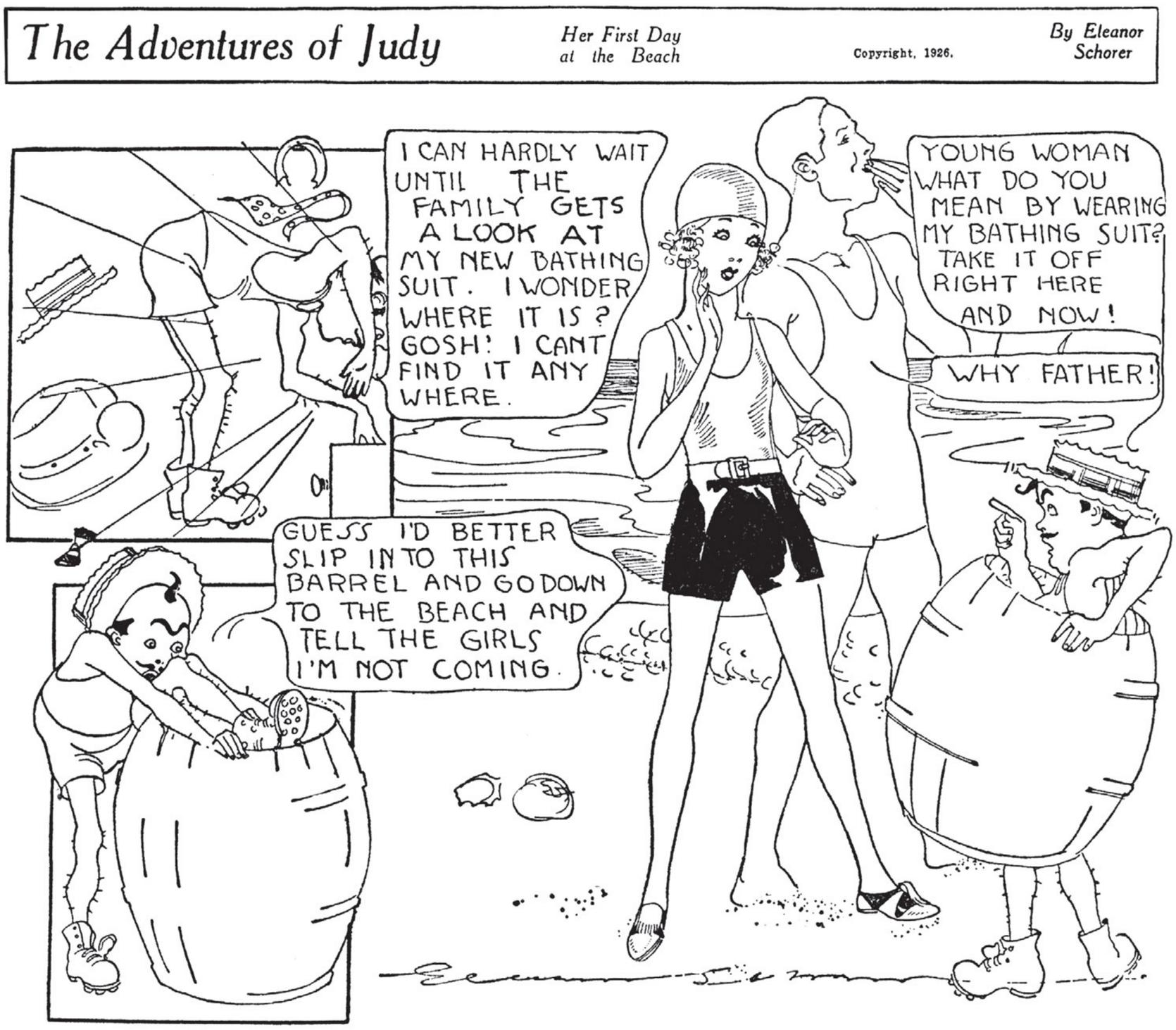


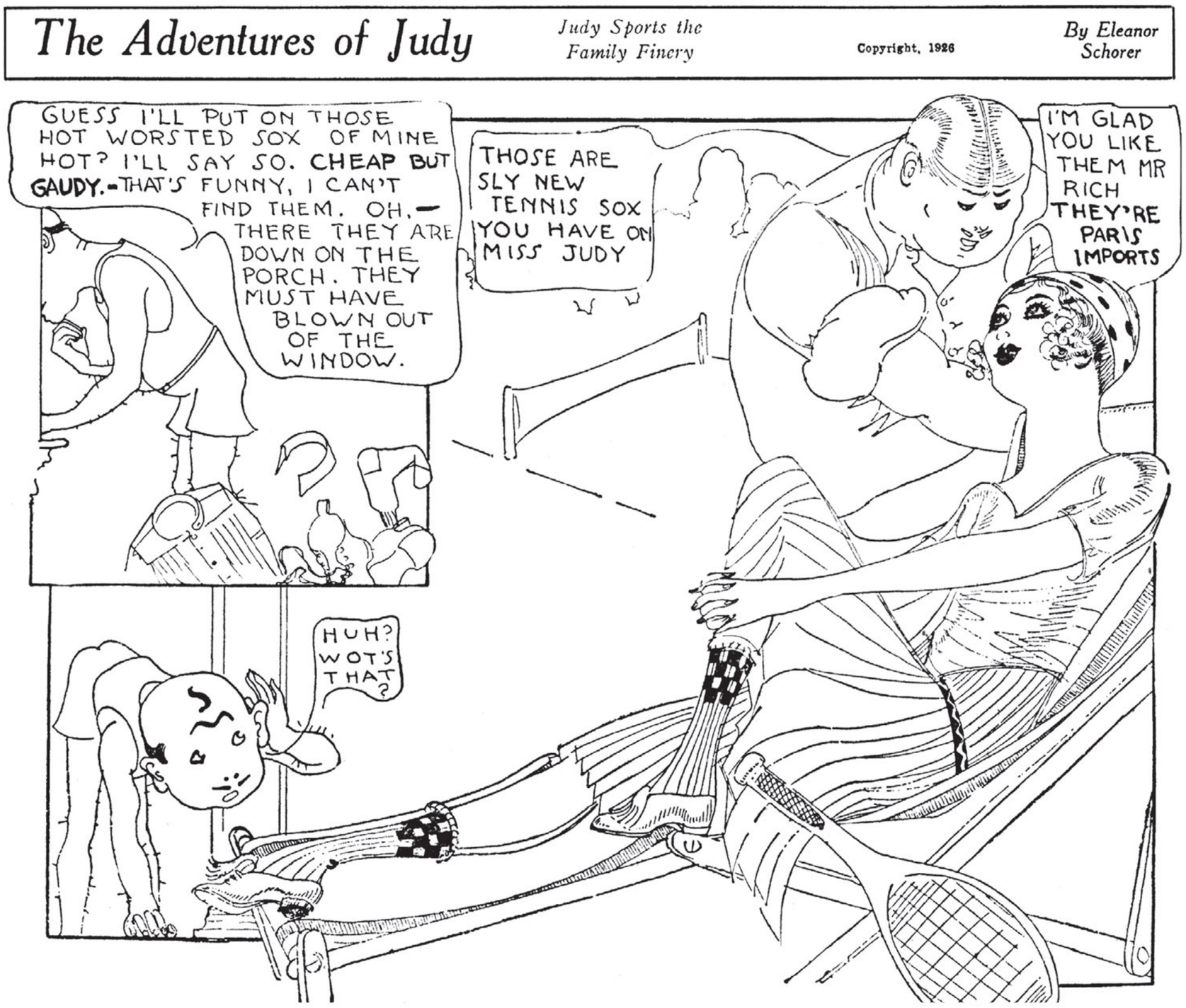
To be continued tomorrow.

At the height of the roaring '20s, Eleanor Schorer, who in the teens had been one of an army of Nell Brinkley imitators with her romantic single-panel cartoon, *Bessie's Vacation*, graduated to comic strips. She drew a bouncy little comic called *The Adventures of Judy*, about a madcap flapper with a habit of "borrowing" her father's clothing, much to his consternation. Because of the fashion revolution of the 1920s — women tossed out their corsets, cropped their hair, and adopted sportswear — it was probably th e first, but not the last, time that young women raided their big brothers', their fathers', or their boyfriends' wardrobes.

TOP: Dot Cochran's *Dot and Dodo Arrive in Washington*.

BOTTOM: Dot Cochran's December 10, 1925 *Me and My Boy Friend*.





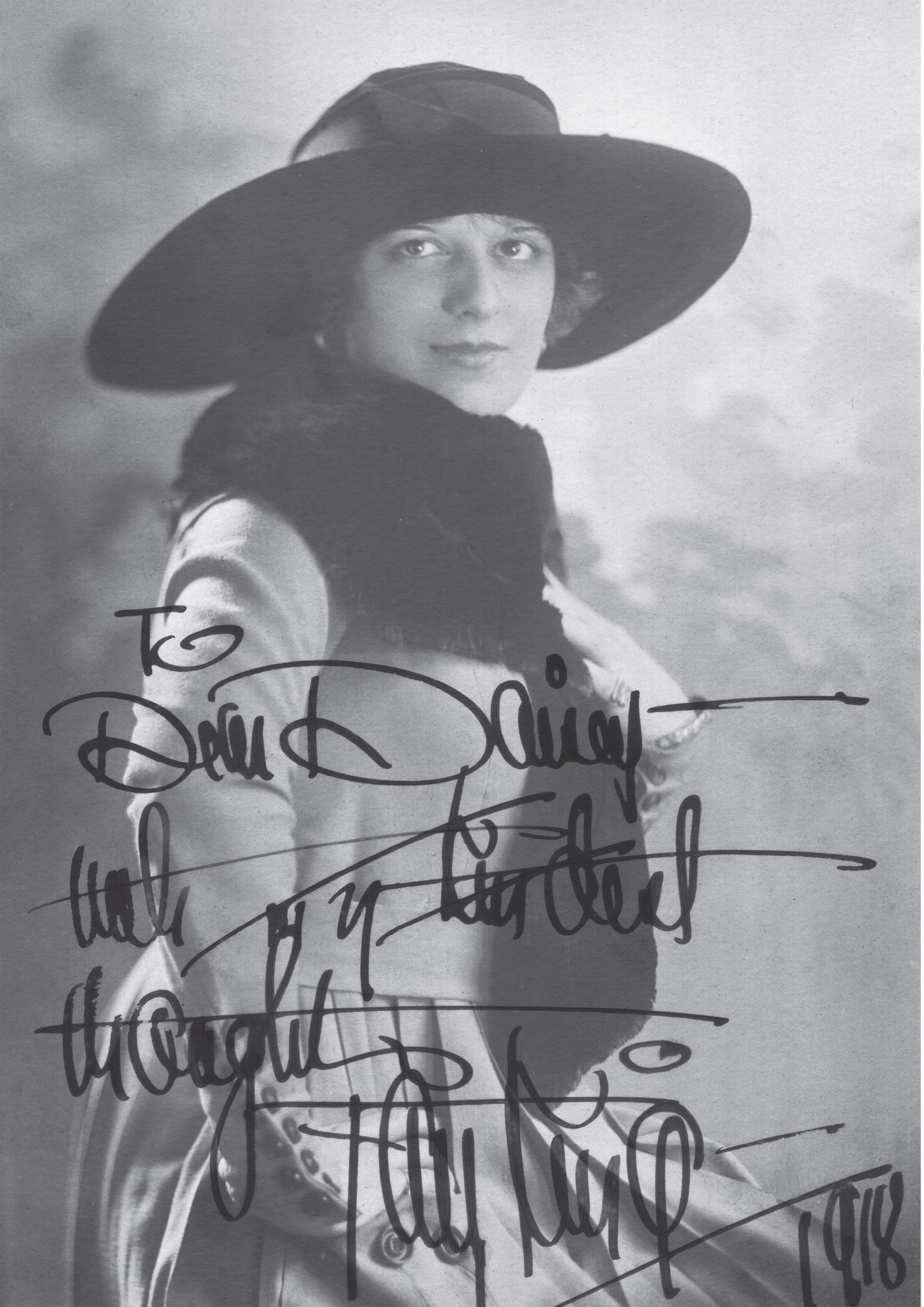
Eleanor Schorer's *The Adventures of Judy* (1926).

Joining the flapper party in 1933 was the strip *Annibelle,* drawn by Dorothy Urfer and taken over in 1936 by Virginia Krausmann, who seemed to specialize in inheriting other women's strips.

Chuck Thorndike referred to Fay King, a top cartoonist for over two decades, in his 1939 book, *The Business of Cartooning*, as one of the top five women cartoonists in America. Her work was an exception to the pretty-girl flapper strips drawn by women in the '20s and '30s. While drawing other characters in a breezy, stylish manner, King put herself into the strips and drew herself as looking like Olive Oyl. With herself as the main character, King's strips consisted of personal opinions and included her personal life. Newspapers covered her marriage to world lightweight boxing champion Oscar Matthew "Battling" Nelson in 1913, and also covered their colorful divorce. A 1916 article reports:

TOP: Dorothy Urfer's *Annibelle* (1931).

BOTTOM: Virginia Krausmann's July 5, 1931 *Annibelle*.


To
Dear Dorothy
With my kindest
regards
Fatty Arbuckle
1918

"The 'Durable Dane,' as Nelson is known professionally, charges that Mrs. Nelson never loved him, but regarded him merely as a 'li'l pal' […] letters by Mrs. Nelson, […] referring to the ex-champion as a 'Dear little woolly lamb,' admitted she never loved him, but was 'very grateful — that's all.'"

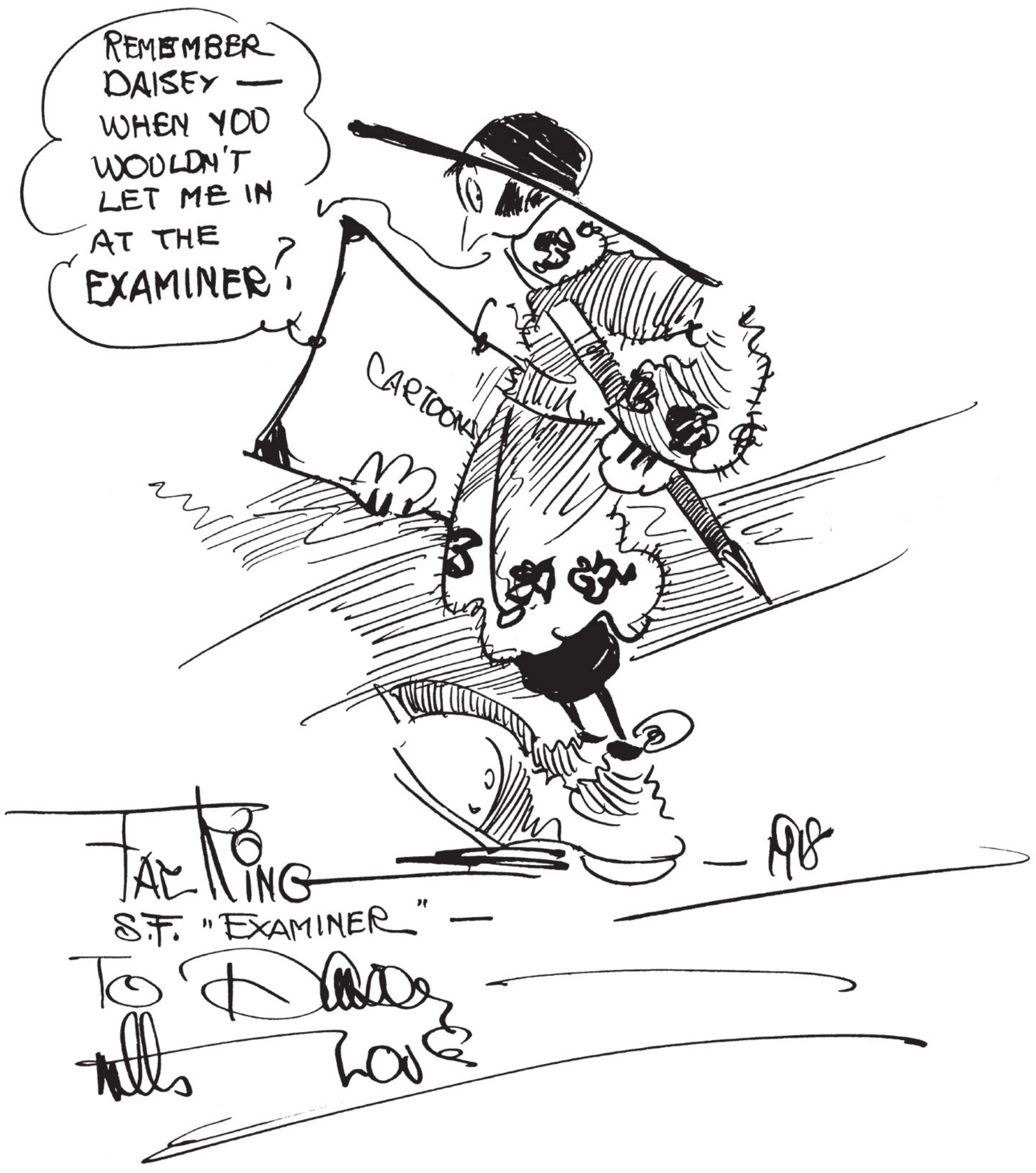
In a 1918 cartoon King draws a man, labeled "My 'Fay'-vorite Pest," saying to her, "You married Battling Nelson, didn't you! He sure waz a great little scrapper […]," while the scrawny, big-footed Fay caricature replies, "SAY — I'm tryin' to live that down!"

The Battling Nelson episode was the occasion for King to meet journalist Gene Fowler, sent to interview her for his newspaper. The two became friends, and his memoir gives us an excellent description of the artist: "I was unprepared to come upon so much vitality in such a small package […] I observed that she was dark-complexioned with very large dark eyes, and that she wore numerous pieces of jewelry which chimed like bells […] There were gold hoops in her ears, and on one forefinger she wore a heavy gold band to which was affixed a cartoon effigy of herself […] she liked gay colors also and when she had assembled her various scarves and sashes, she reminded me of the mountain flowers of August."

OPPOSITE: Fay King.

BELOW: Fay King's self-portrait (1918).

NEXT PAGE: By Fay King.



FAY KING POINTS OUT OBJECTION IN COMMON PRACTICE OF CHANGING NAMES

By FAY KING

That a shorter, prettier name than one's own, may be better for a career we grant, but it seems there ought to be some regulation regarding the change.

The name ought to be made up out of one's own, or be the name of some family connection.

To simply appropriate a name that is well known, and that rightfully belongs to another, seems a liberty that should be curtailed.

Trade names are protected and fought for, and certainly a well known family cannot approve the adoption of their name by some total stranger for professional use.

It must be annoying to see one's own name blazoned in the distasteful publicity of another who merely adopted it.

One must give good reasons for changing one's name legally.

USE CAUTION, GOOD SENSE IN SUMMER FLIRTATIONS, FAY KING SAYS

By FAY KING

Many a nice friendship, romance and marriage has begun in a summer flirtation. When young and pretty girls find young and handsome men attractive, smiles and words are bound to be exchanged, and that seems quite a natural, nice way of meeting, when all prove worthy.

But some caution and good sense must be used in the matter, and unless you are a good judge of character, or know with whom you are flirting, it is better not to flirt.

The safest flirtations are those between young persons who know each other by sight, but have no way of meeting formally.

The wholesome, sincere admiration that brings worthy young people together, must never be confused with the unworthy motives that prompt "pick-up" acquaintances.

Promiscuous flirtation often brings regret.

FLASHING CROCHET AND KNITTING NEEDLES FASCINATE FAY KING

By FAY KING

Crocheting and knitting needles seem to me to be real magic wands. Nothing fascinates me more than to watch women reach out into space with these needles and bring back lace or sweaters before my eyes.

My nearest approach to such magic was long ago when I was a little girl. Then we had empty spools with pins at the top. With another pin we lifted windings of floss over those pins. Results, a wonderful chain came out of the other end of the spool.

But now, oh, joy, I have become a Penelope. With a wee loom I am weaving squares. Many of these little squares sewed together can become almost anything.

ButI'll be content if my squares are only patches!

Depression Babies and Babes

Apple Mary

by Martha Orr

1-29-'39

HERE'S ANOTHER DIME MISTER.

DENNIE, HERE'S A DIME.. GO GET SOME CANDY FOR YOURSELF AN' SUNNY.

THANKS, BILL.

WHOOPEE!

DIME F'CUPPA COFFEE ANNA HAM SAN'WICH--

?

GEE WHIZ- MAYBE HE'S STARVIN'.

BLESS YOU, MY LITTLE MAN, BLESS YOU.

AW, THAT'S O.K., MISTER.

SEE, SUNNY, IT WAS LIKE THIS ... THE POOR MAN WAS STARVIN' AN' I GAVE HIM OUR MONEY T'GIT SOMETHIN' T'EAT.

WOW! BILL GAVE US ANOTHER DIME.

DIME F'CUPPA COFFEE ANNA HAM--

?

DIME FERRA 'CUPP COF' BLESS YOU SIR!

..SEVEN EIGHT ..NINE

HEY, DENNIE, WOT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

IS THAT SO? NINE, EH? HUH? .. SAY ... THATSA GOOD IDEA.

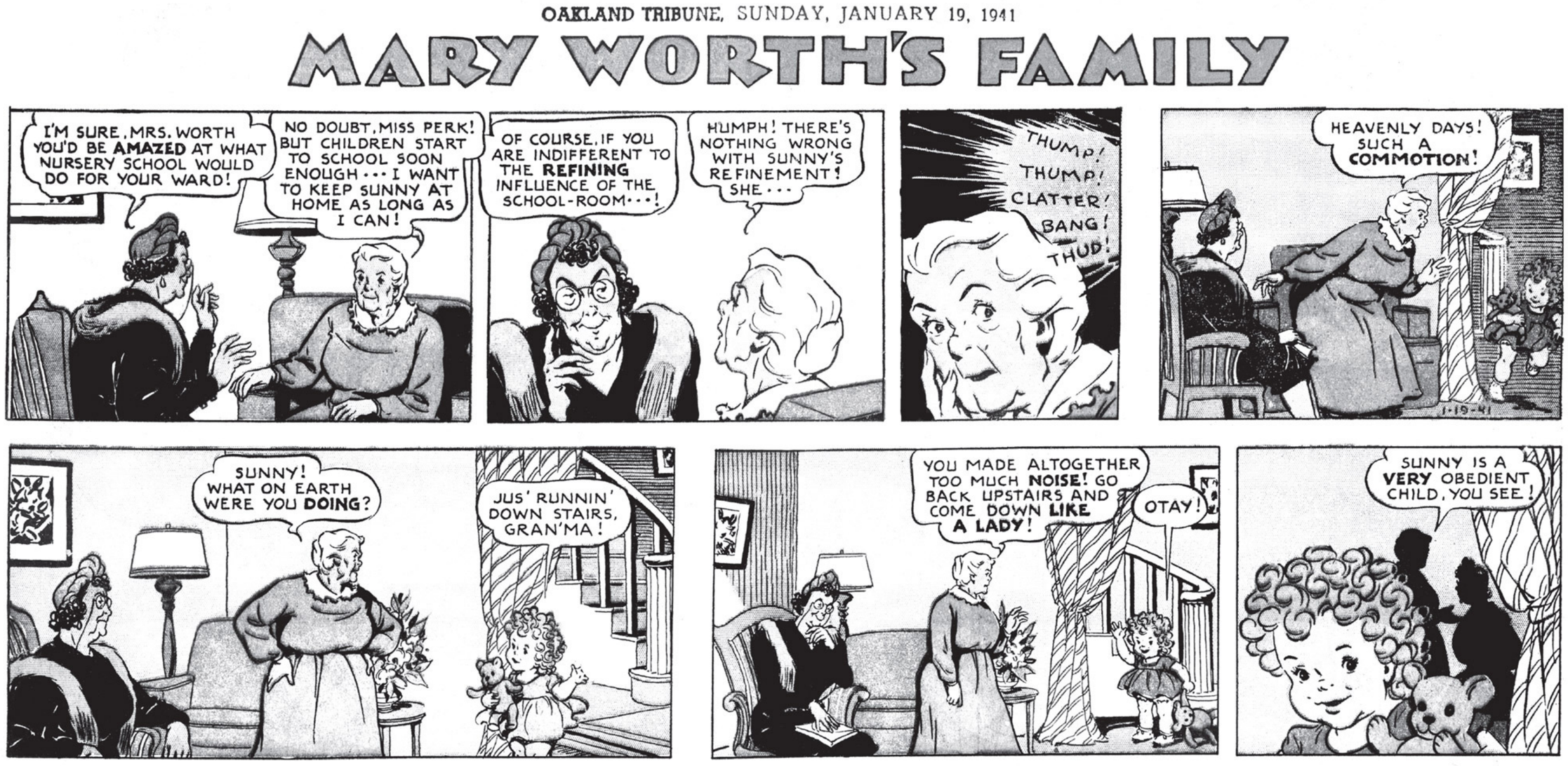
NINE CUPS OF COFFEE, AN' NINE HAM-ON-RYE FOR THE GENTLEMAN.

DENNIE, GET "HIS LORDSHIP" ANOTHER JAR OF MUSTARD FOR HIS SANDWICHES! SERVICE PLEASE!!

GULP!

YES, SIR, COMIN' RIGHT UP, SIR.

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.; Copyright, 1939, by Publishers Syndicate



The frenetic party that was the Roaring '20s crashed to a close in 1929, bringing with it the slow fade of the flapper strip, although some of them hung on through the '30s. The average heroine of these strips had been a pretty girl, often a co-ed, with nothing on her mind but boys. But now America, plunged into the Great Depression, tossed aside the frivolity of the '20s in favor of a new kind of comic: the Depression strip.

Echoing the new mood of the times, this type of strip featured unglamorous protagonists dealing with real problems: poor-but-happy American households; upbeat, unflappable orphans; plucky working girls out to earn a living rather than merely have a good time. Martha Orr's *Apple Mary* can be considered the quintessential Depression strip. The stories revolved around Mary, who sold apples on a street corner, and her friends and family, all of them as bighearted as they were poor. After drawing Mary for seven years, Orr, who had gotten married, retired to raise a family, and the strip was taken over by her talented assistant, Dale Conner. She changed the name to *Mary Worth's Family* and signed it simply "Dale." Soon Conner acquired a writer, Allen Saunders, at which time she started signing the strip with a combination of their two names, Dale Allen. Unhappy with the direction her strip was taking under Saunders, Conner eventually left it to team up with her husband, also a comics writer. Unfortunately, none of their projects panned out. Saunders found Ken Ernst to draw the art, and *Mary Worth*, in its changed form, survives today (although under other hands).

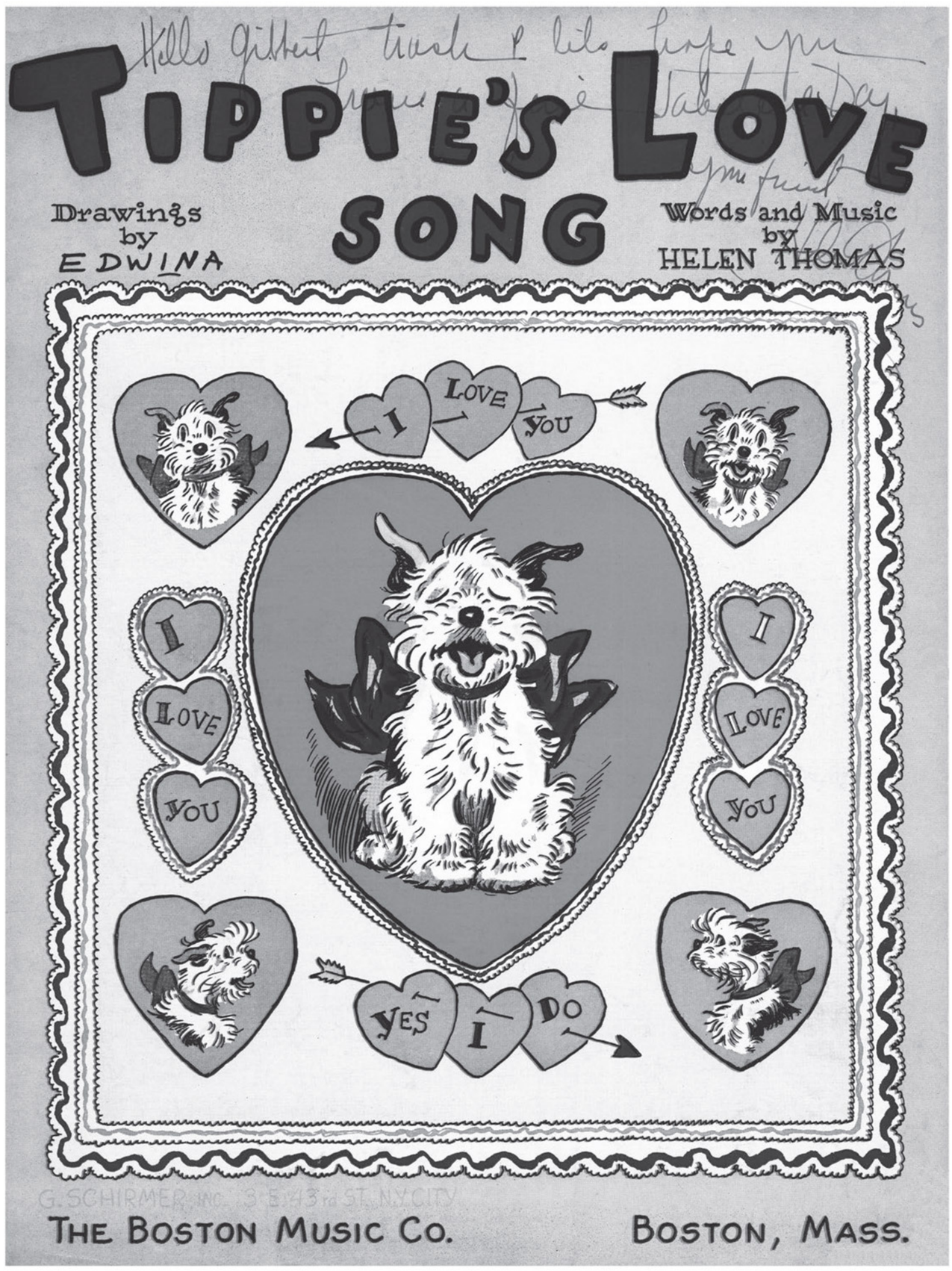
OPPOSITE: Martha Orr's *Apple Mary* (January 29, 1939).

ABOVE: One of Dale Conner's *Mary Worth's Family* Sundays (January 19, 1941).

TOP: Edwina Dumm's March 5, 1945 *Tippie*.

BOTTOM: Edwina in her studio. Photo credit: Martin Sheridan, Feature Fotos.

Another homey little American household consisted of a boy, his dog, and his granny. Edwina Dumm's *Cap Stubbs and Tippie* was at its peak of popularity during the Depression, although it had been running since 1918. In 1916, Edwina Dumm started her career in the *Columbus Daily Monitor*, as possibly America's first female political cartoonist, drawing — among other subjects — pro-suffrage cartoons. By the following year she was drawing a humor page, *Spotlight Sketches*. The page consisted mostly of single-panel cartoons and had a strip running on the bottom entitled *The Meanderings of Minnie*, always subtitled "passed by the board of censors," starring a little girl and her fluffy dog. Minnie must have been the most popular item on the page, because soon it was running on its own. When Dumm became nationally syndicated in 1918, Minnie underwent a sex change, the dog became a shorthair, and the artist began signing her work with just her first name, Edwina, a practice she continued for the run of the strip. In the early 1930s, Dumm was given a little longhaired dog, and Tippie became a longhair again, and stayed that way for the next 30 years. The fluffy little guy proved more popular than his boy owner or his plump granny, and even became the subject of songs written by the artist's longtime friend, musician and songwriter Helen Thomas.

Dumm was a dog artist par excellence, possibly the best in the 20th century. When she wasn't drawing *Cap Stubbs and Tippie*, she was producing a series about a little dog named Sinbad, which ran in the old humor magazine *Life* and was collected into two books. She also drew a daily newspaper panel about another dog, named *Alec the Great*, illustrating short verses by her brother, Robert Dennis. *Alec* was also collected into book form. All three dogs — Tippie, Sinbad, and Alec — looked exactly alike. Dumm also illustrated

Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!

books by other writers with her great dog art. *Cap Stubbs and Tippie* ran until 1960, and Edwina Dumm herself lived to be 95 years old, owning a succession of cute little long-haired dogs.

While comics historians consider *Tippie* the first continuity strip by a woman and *Apple Mary* the first dramatic continuity strip by a woman, the award for first action continuity must go to a now-forgotten artist named Caroline M. Sexton. In 1934, signing her work "C.M. Sexton," she produced *Luke and Duke,* a strip that took place during the

TOP LEFT: Edwina Dumm illustrated the sheet music for "Tippie's Love Song."

TOP RIGHT: Edwina and one of her many Tippie-type dogs. Photo credit: Martin Sheridan, Feature Fotos.

BOTTOM: Carolyn Sexton's October 29, 1934 *Luke and Duke*.

THE KEWPIES BY Rose O'Neill

KEWPIE CASTLE

KEWPIEVILLE

GAITY

OH, UNCLE HOB, YOU WERE **SUCH** A CUTE LITTLE GOBLIN!

YOU'RE WELL NAMED, SCOOTLES! YOU'RE ALWAYS SCOOTING OFF SOMEWHERE! YOU'RE A HARD-BOILED BABY TOURIST! DO YOU THINK I WENT GADDING ABOUT THE COUNTRY WHEN I WAS A BABY? LOOK AT THAT PICTURE!

HOBBY

WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT, YOU PESKY LITTLE GLOBE-TROTTER? A BABY'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME! AREN'T YOU ASHAMED?...

AW, LET UP, UNCLE HOB!

SCOOTLES TOURIST

BUT I'M KEWPIEVILLE'S FAVORITE TOURIST!

YOU'RE A REGULAR HOBO! YOU NEVER DO ANY GOOD TO YOUR FELLOW MAN! **BAH!**

BOO-HOO!

DON'T CRY, SCOOTLES!

HE'S SCOLDED HIMSELF TO SLEEP! HE MUST BE TIRED OUT WITH YELLING SO! OH, JOHNNY KEWP, LET'S DO SOME GOOD TO OUR FELLOW MAN! LET'S CARRY HIM HOME AND PUT HIM TO BED.

OKAY!

Z-Z-Z-Z

HE'S SO SOUND ASLEEP. HE'S GETTING HEAVIER AND HEAVIER!

YOU BET I AM! Z-Z-Z-Z

I'LL TAKE HIM NOW, SCOOTLES.

WE'VE LOST OUR WAY, JOHNNY!

HE ISN'T SO **VERY** HEAVY, SCOOTLES.

OH, YEAH! Z-Z-Z-Z

OH, I BETTER CARRY HIM, JOHNNY!

N-Z-Z-Z

PLOP!

PUFF-PUFF! POOR LITTLE DEAR! WE'LL SOON HAVE HIM SAFE IN BED.

MAYBE! Z-Z-Z-Z

O-O-OH!

SPLOP!

DID YOU DROP IN FOR JUMPING LESSONS, UNCLE HOB? NOT A BAD START!

FRISKY FREDDY JUMPING INSTRUCTION TEN BUGS A LESSON

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4-6

O'Neill

First World War. The adventures of two American doughboys and Yvonne, the beautiful Belgian orphan they somehow acquire, are drawn in a style reminiscent of Belgian cartoonist Hergé's comic, *Tintin*, and also at times seems like a precursor to Bill Mauldin's World War II cartoon, *Up Front*. It's understandable why Sexton would use her initials rather than her full name for this charming, but definitely male-oriented, strip.

Meanwhile, the major women cartoonists from the beginning of the century had by no means retired. Rose O'Neill's Kewpie strips were running in newspapers across the nation. She would continue to draw Kewpies until her death in 1944.

O'Neill's contemporary, Fanny Y. Cory, who, like too many other women of the time, had put aside her career to raise a family on the Montana ranch where she and her husband lived, had not been drawing professionally since 1913. In her unpublished memoir, Cory recalls an incident from that period — an incident that sounds like something from a John Wayne movie:

OPPOSITE: Rose O'Neill's April 6, 1935 *The Kewpies*.

ABOVE: Fanny Y. Cory self-portrait, with all her characters.

> *Fred, my husband, had gone for the mail (seven miles away) taking our daughter (Sayre) and the girl who had recently come to work for us with him for the ride — I knew her very nice mother quite well, and her drunken father by hearsay — our small son (Robert) was asleep in the bedroom.*
>
> *A thundering knock at the door, door bursting open, very drunk gentleman in the doorway —"Where is my girl, ha? Come on. Where is she, no use hiding out ya know, I demand my daughter! Dede, where are ya? Lookye here, you're Fred Cooney's woman as thinks to make a hired girl of my daughter, are ya? Do ya see these here scars on my face? Do ya see this 'ere gun? I know how t'use it, ma'am — now where's my daughter?"*
>
> *To all of this I managed to turn a cold eye and indifferent aspect. "You had better go away from here as fast as you can or when husband comes in he will no doubt beat the life out of you" (and more to this effect). He seemed to think there might be something in what I said and began to lurch out, still loudly asserting his demands for his daughter. He had a horse outside and managing to climb on, rode away — I began to shake all over and to cry, not so brave after all.*

In 1916, Fanny Y. Cory briefly produced a single-panel cartoon called *Ben Bolt* (parodying the old song "Do You Remember Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?"), but by 1925, the need to put her eldest child through college prompted her to return to her art permanently, this time in the form of first a single-panel cartoon, and finally, a comic strip. Her first panel was the hilarious *Other People's Children*, although the almost-too-precious *Sonny Sayings*, from 1926, remained the artist's favorite. By 1935 Cory was producing another classic Depression strip, *Little Miss Muffet*. As mentioned earlier, cheerful little orphan girls were very big during the Depression. *Little Orphan Annie* and *Little Annie Rooney* (and their respective dogs) had huge followings. Cory's heroine, Milly Muffet, had a dog too, and

The family wit gets a lot of kick out of this. He is always on hand when there are visitors.

LEFT: Fanny Y. Cory's March 9, 1925 *Other People's Children*.

RIGHT: As with many other newspaper strips, Fanny Y. Cory's *Little Miss Muffet* strips were collected and reprinted in comic book form. This one is cover-dated May 1949.

OPPOSITE: Grace Drayton's *Dolly Dimples and Bobby Bounce* (1931).

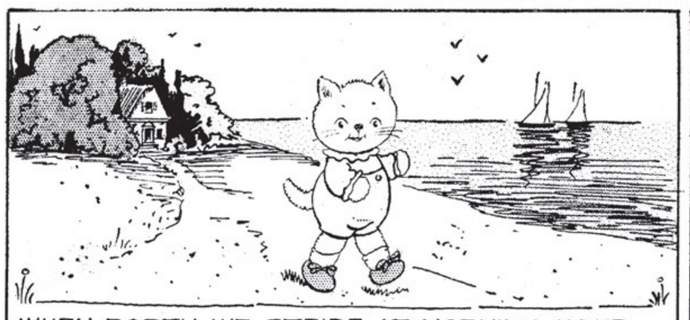
was a dead ringer for Shirley Temple. The little darling smiled through her tears for 21 years, finally retiring when 76-year-old Cory's failing eyesight forced her to stop drawing in 1956. The artist moved to Camano Island, Washington, where despite her poor sight, she continued to paint. At the age of 90, she wrote:

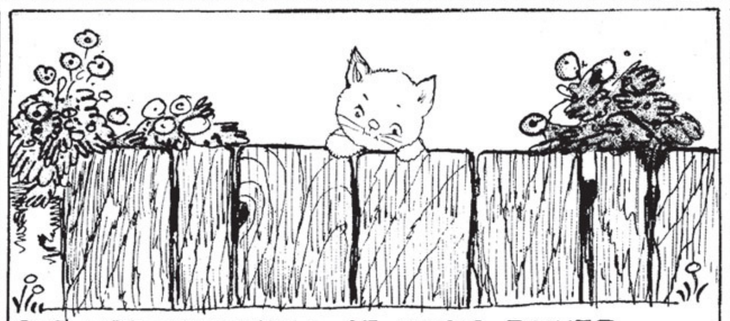
> *I live alone in a two-room cottage on the edge of an 80-foot bank above Puget Sound. The broad sweep of water before me — then Mercer Island and behind that, the peaks of the Olympic mountains snowtopped at most times. Mt. Olympus directly across — then to my right if I face the Sound — the wood, lovely tall straight cedar pine and fir — thick underbrush — no attempt at cultivation. My road* [...] *is winding and full of potholes for the rain to collect* [...] *My place is a painful contrast to my neighbors — Upon which not even a leaf is allowed to be. No underbrush there* [...] *How they must shudder at such a neighbor — and yet they are, I'm sure, fond of me and always willing to lend a hand should I need help* [...]

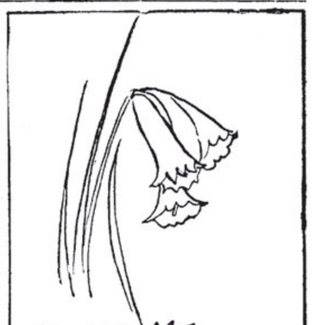
Fanny Y. Cory died in 1972 at the age of 95.

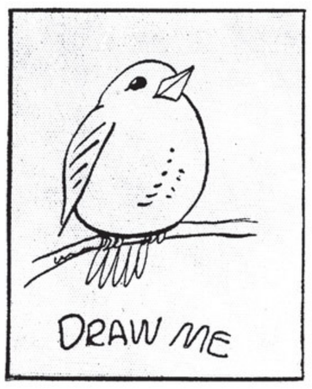
Meanwhile Grace Drayton, the other contemporary of O'Neill and Cory, had fallen upon hard times. Like the carefree flappers, Drayton's Dimples and Dingles, with their nannies and nursies, seemed out of place in Depression America. Her Sunday comic page, *Dolly Dimples and Bobby Bounce*, had been canceled in 1932 and, the following year, when

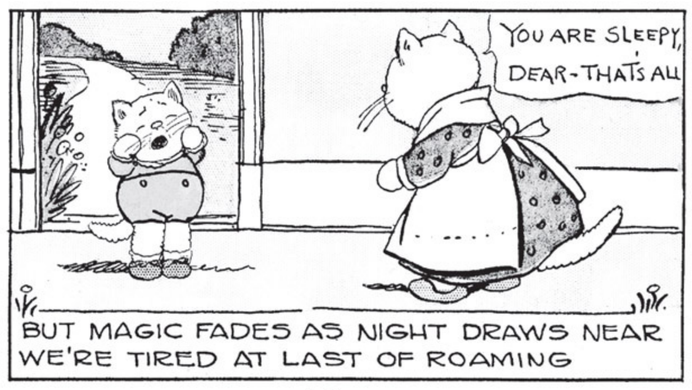
"KITTENS"
by
G.G. DRAYTON
Registered U. S. Patent Office.

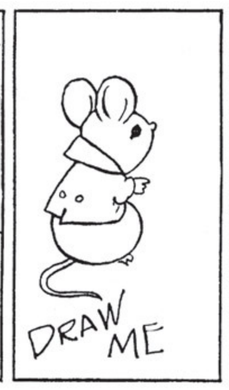


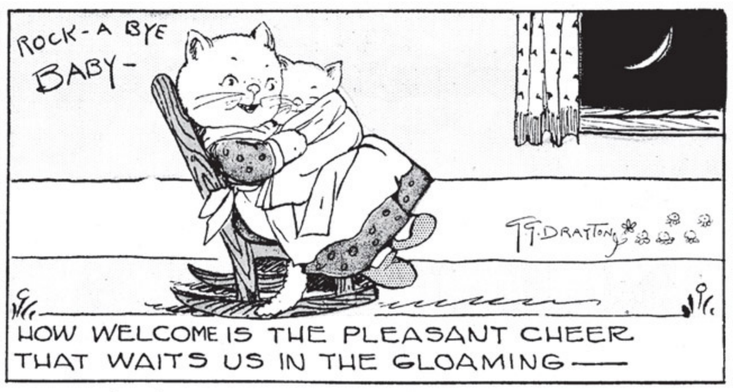




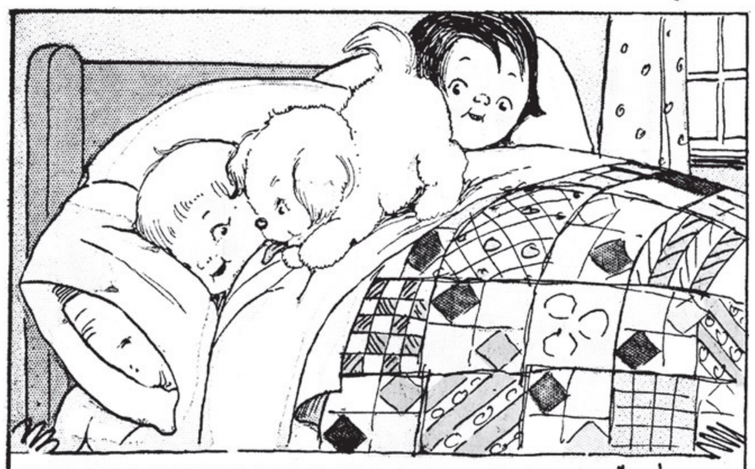


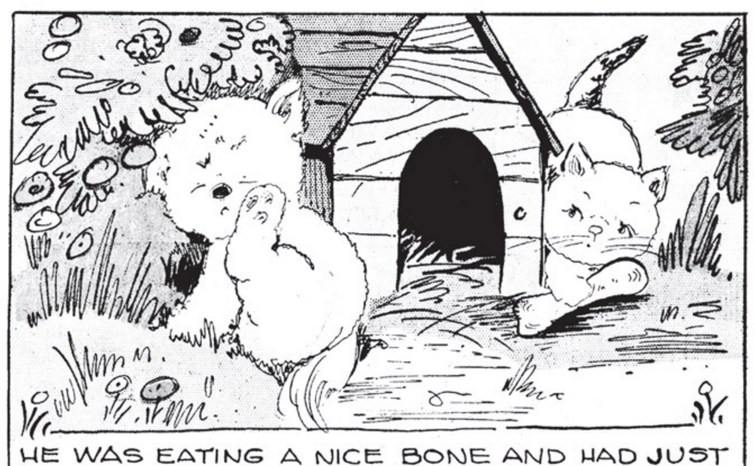


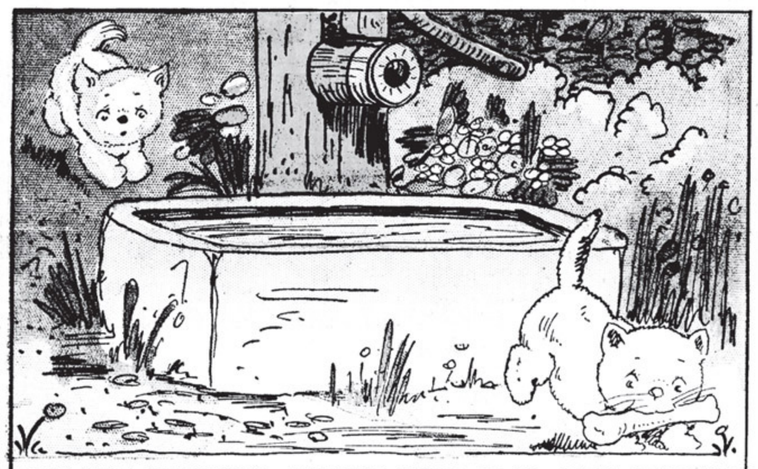


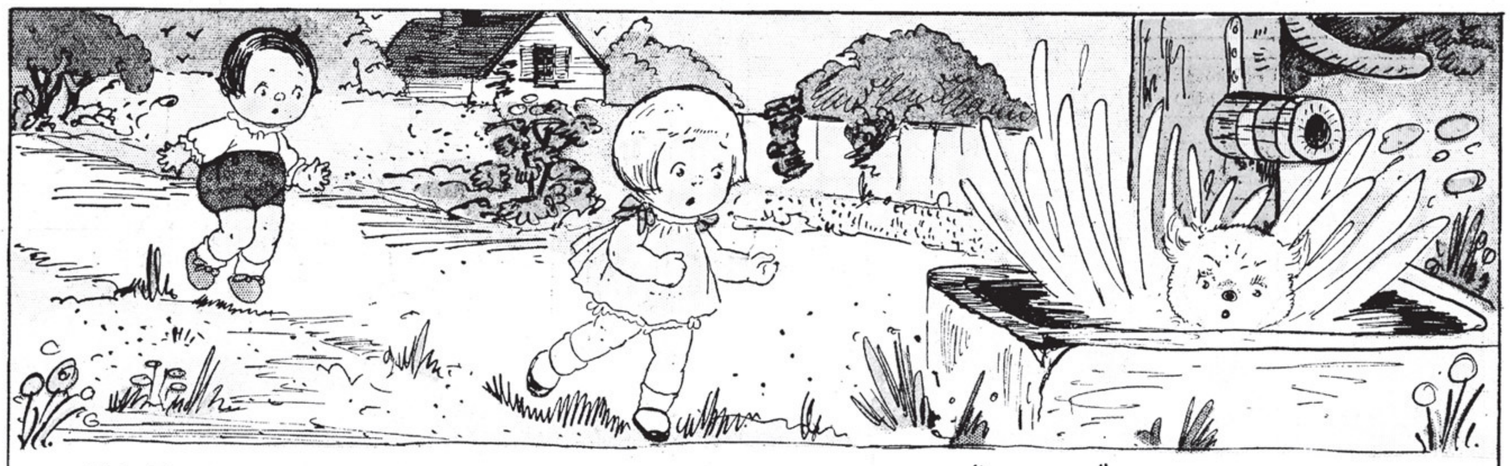


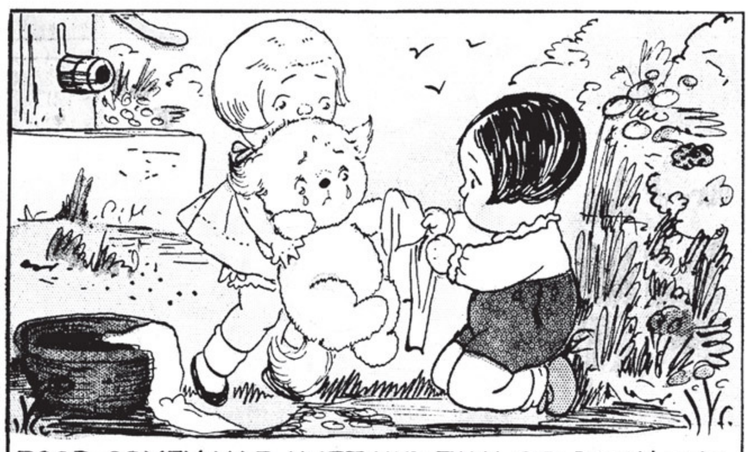
Dolly Dimples and Bobby Bounce

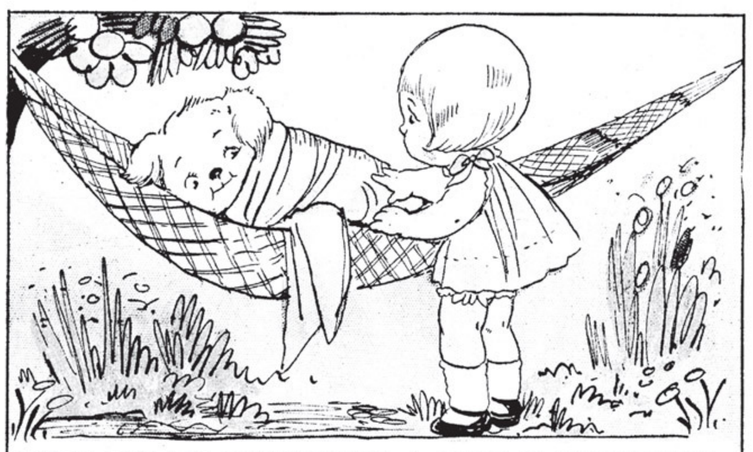


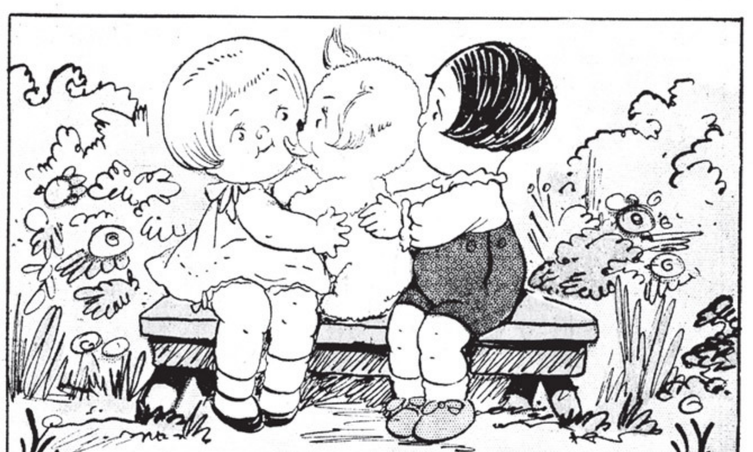


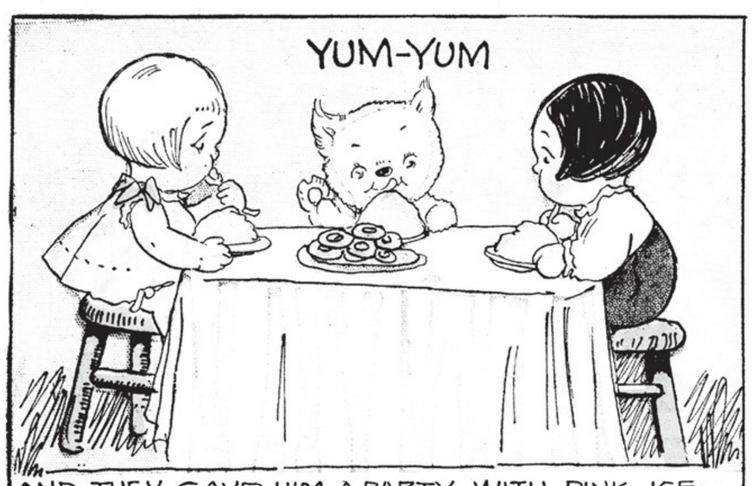


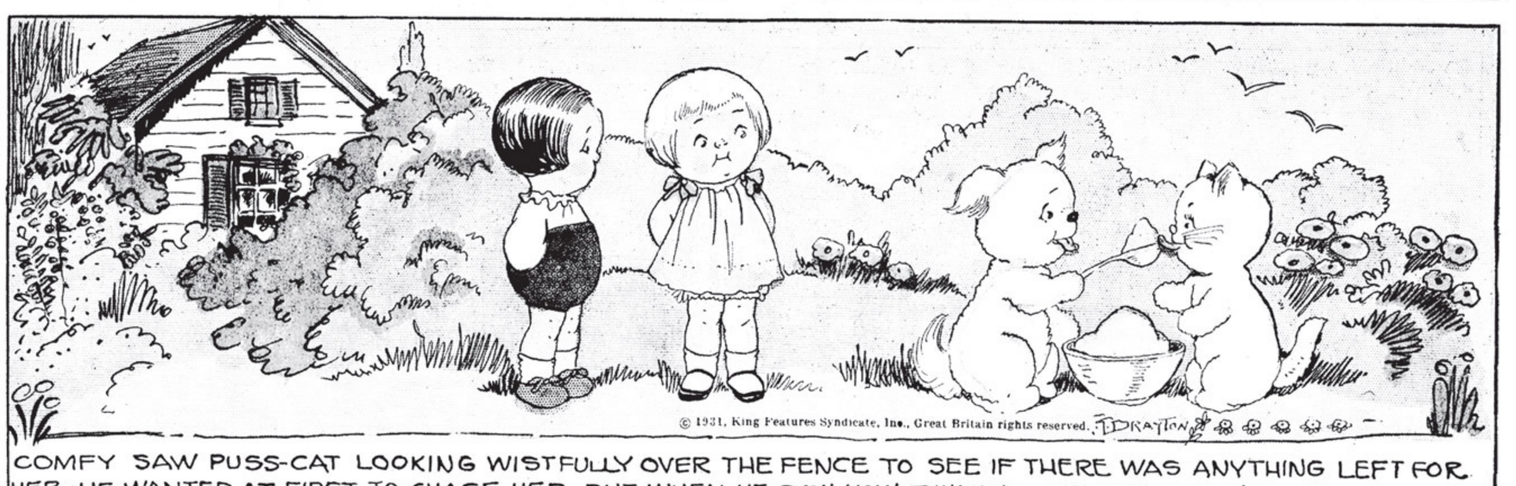


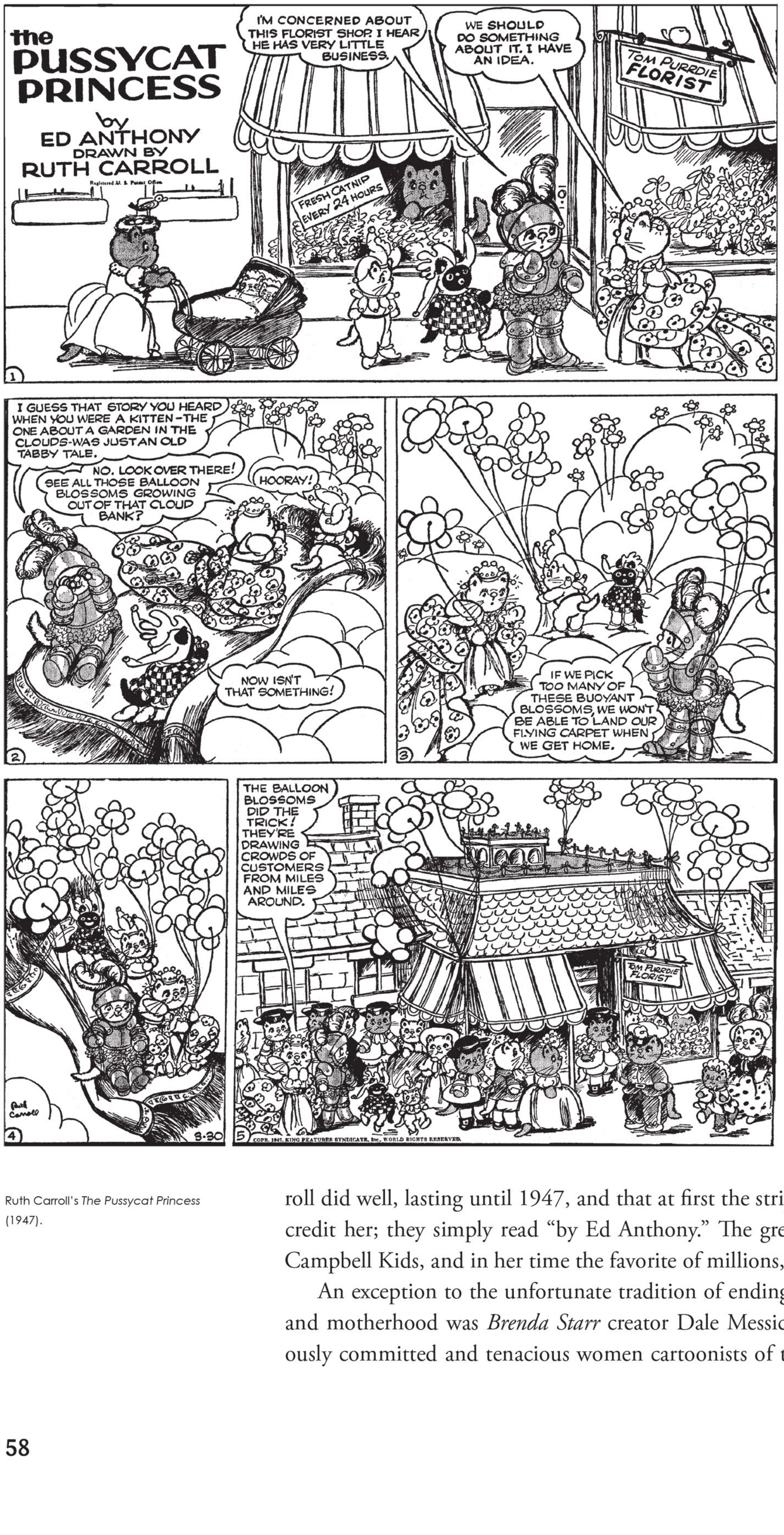












Ruth Carroll's *The Pussycat Princess* (1947).

her assistant, Bernard Wagner, wrote asking for work, she sent him this reply: "I have no work and am almost down and out. I have tried everything. You may rest assured I shall send for you if I get another 'job.' I feel so sad whenever I look at our empty studio. To add to my agony, I lost my only dearly beloved sister a few weeks ago. So I am now all alone and poverty stricken in heart as well as in pocket."

But Drayton did rally one last time to successfully sell *The Pussycat Princess* in 1935. Her collaborator on the strip, writer Ed Anthony, gallantly writes that after Drayton's untimely death from a heart attack one year later, "[…] nearly all the big papers cancelled, which gave me a pretty good notion as to why it had been accepted in the first place." Ruth Carroll, children's book writer and illustrator, took over the strip, but, writes Anthony, "we lacked the promotion value of the Drayton name […] and we were unable to regain the big papers we had lost."

Anthony was being kind. The truth is that *The Pussycat Princess* drawn by Ruth Carroll did well, lasting until 1947, and that at first the strips done with Drayton didn't even credit her; they simply read "by Ed Anthony." The great Grace Drayton, creator of the Campbell Kids, and in her time the favorite of millions, had become passé.

An exception to the unfortunate tradition of ending one's career in favor of marriage and motherhood was *Brenda Starr* creator Dale Messick, probably one of the most seriously committed and tenacious women cartoonists of the century. In a 1973 newspaper

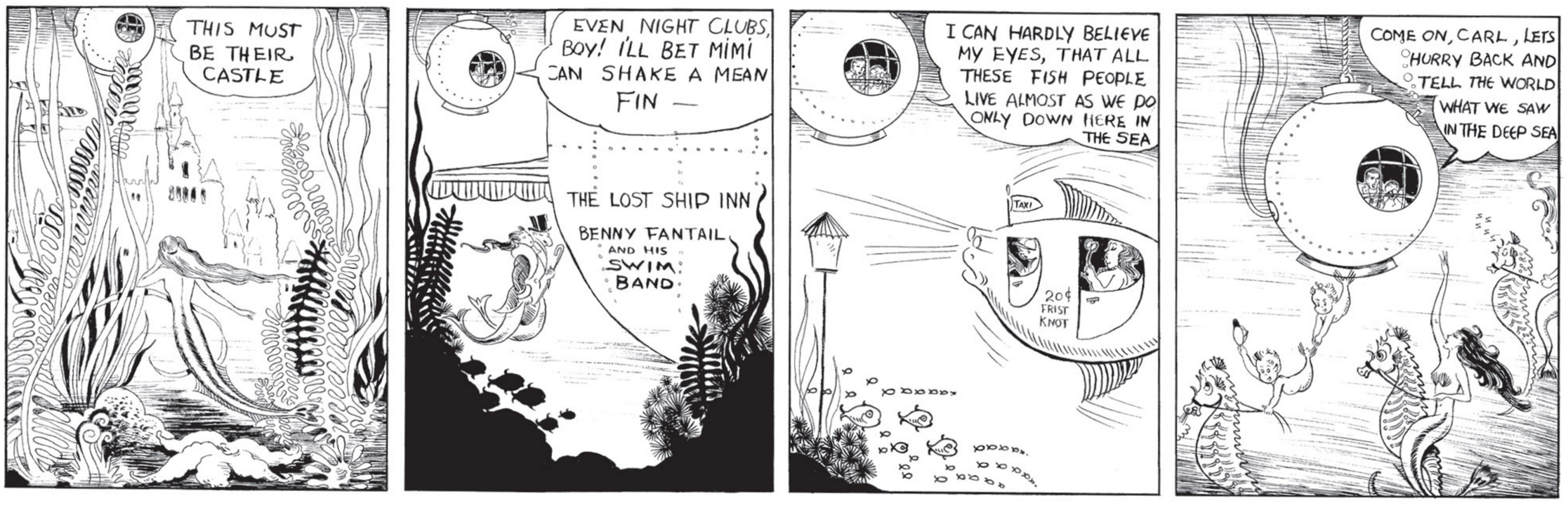
interview, she describes her pregnancy: "It was throw up, draw *Brenda*, throw up, draw *Brenda*." Before she sold the long-lasting strip that was to make her the *grande dame* of comics, Messick attempted to sell at least four others. Born Dalia Messick, the artist liked to relate that she changed her name to the more sexually ambiguous "Dale," because editors would reject her strip and then put the make on her. The way she finally sold *Brenda*, she says in all interviews, was to become Dale and mail the strips in. However, only the first of her unsold strips, *Weegee*, drawn probably when the artist was just out of high school in the mid-1920s, is signed Dalia. The other three, all drawn during the '30s, are already credited to her new name, Dale. So there must be another reason why they were rejected. It's certainly not the art; even Messick's first strip is at least as well drawn as some of the flapper strips from that period. What makes *Weegee* different from those strips is the subject matter. As previously stated, the heroines of the flapper strips never had a care in the world; only Virginia Huget's characters even held a job, and they had a way of inheriting money from rich relatives. Weegee is a Depression-strip heroine born ahead of her time: a poor little country girl who came to the big city to earn a living.

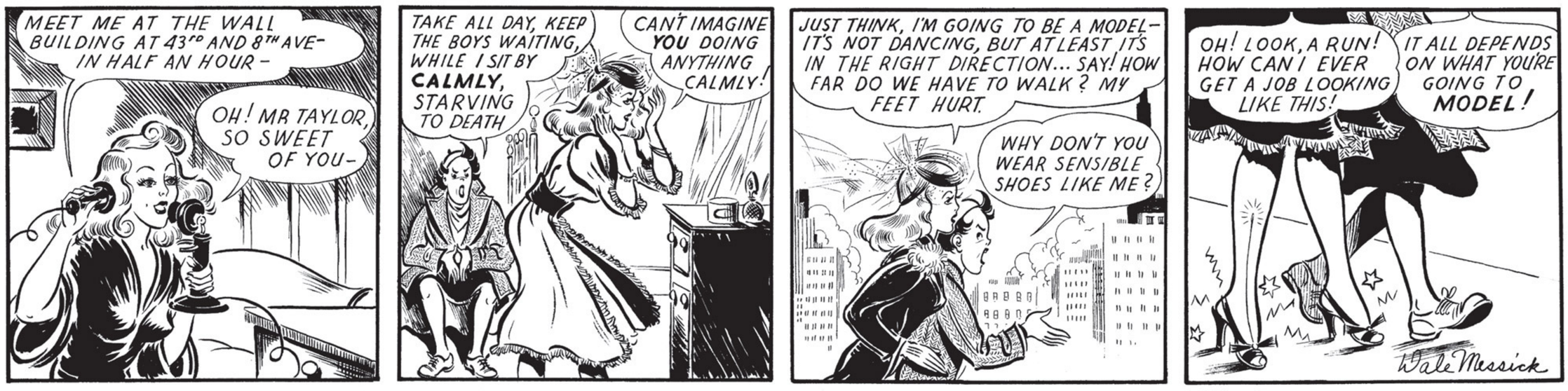
By the time she was drawing and attempting to sell *Mimi the Mermaid*, Messick's drawing style had improved immensely, but editors must have found her subject matter simply too weird. Not until 1990, with Walt Disney's *The Little Mermaid* comic, had there ever been a successful U.S. comic book or newspaper series starring a mermaid. Now Messick was roughly 60 years ahead of her time.

With the creation of *Peg and Pudy, the Struglettes*, it looked like Messick was catching up with the times — or vice versa. *The Struglettes* metamorphosed into

TOP: Publicity photo of Dale Messick (1939).

BOTTOM: Dale Messick's unpublished strip *Minnie the Mermaid*, c. early 1930s.





Dale Messick's unpublished strip *Streamline Babies*, c. late 1930s.

Streamline Babies, with the same characters and the same situations — two girls attempting to make it in the Big City. At last it looked like the persistent artist had finally hit it; the McNaught Syndicate showed an interest in her strip. But after Messick had completed three Sunday pages, the syndicate decided to go instead with an Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy strip. Comics editors appear to have always been a conservative lot, and even today will always buy a strip starring a licensed character rather than take a chance on an unknown. Messick remembers trying to be brave when she was told the news, but finally, unable to control herself, with tears running down her cheeks, she told the editor that a comic about a wooden dummy would never last.

She was right — the strip folded in a month. But by that time, Dale Messick was busily at work creating the right strip for the right time.

Blonde Bombers and Girl Commandos

11

COUNT KRAFT VON BOLANDER PLEASE!

12

THE COMTE VON BOLANDER LEFT THIS MORNING, MONSIEUR - WE HAVE NO FORWARDING ADDRESS!

EXCITED BY ELSA'S NEWS, STEWART TELEPHONES THE HOTEL CLARIDGE.

AND SO - CUSHING, THATS THE DOPE ON VON BOLANDER - HELL NEVER PUT FOOT IN SWEDEN!

13

DISQUIETED, HE CALLS HIS FRIEND CUSHING.

14

THANKS STEWART - WE'LL CHECK ALL ALONG THE LINE!

15

AND WHILE I'M IN CHINA I INTEND TO FIND THOSE SAPPHIRES! WHEN I DO -- WE CAN BE MARRIED?

YES!

THAT EVENING HE TELLS ELSA THAT HE EXPECTS TO BE SENT TO PEKING TO BE IN THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

16

REPORT AT ONCE TO MILITARY ATTACHÉ - AMERICAN LEGATION - PEKING -

OCEAN (U) CABLE

FOUR DAYS PASS - AT LAST A CABLEGRAM FROM WASHINGTON!

ELSA! I MUST LEAVE FOR MARSEILLES IN LESS THAN AN HOUR!

OH! COME FOR ME IN TWENTY MINUTES - I'LL GO TO THE STATION WITH YOU!

17

HE CALLS ELSA.

America in 1940 was a country teetering on the brink of war. Although it was not to enter World War II for another year, the majority of its citizens sympathized with the Allies, and since the mid-'30s, Americans had volunteered to fight Fascism overseas. Movies, pulp fiction, and the new medium of comic books: All echoed the action-oriented theme of war and preparing for war.

Almost from the beginning, comic book companies were employing women. In the June 1937 issue of *Adventure Comics*, Cecilia Paddock Munson, signing her work "Pad," illustrated "The Monastery of the Blue God," a spy story involving stolen Swedish military secrets, Bolsheviki, and the beauteous Baroness Elsa Von Saxenberg. Two years later, Tarpe Mills, who in 1942 was to produce one of the best action strips of the century, was drawing *Daredevil Barry Finn* for *Amazing Mystery Funnies*. The comic's villain, Doctor Zaroff, tries to sell Hitler and Mussolini an infernal invention that "can prevent the United States from interfering with your plans for war!!" Finn foils their fiendish plot with help from his friend Joan Hart, a young woman who looks exactly like Mills' later costumed heroine, Miss Fury.

America was ready for a strong, action-oriented heroine, and Dale Messick was at last in the right place at the right time with Brenda Starr, her red-haired, starry-eyed girl reporter. Messick submitted her sample strip to Captain Joseph Patterson, publisher of the New York *Daily News* and chief of the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate, who rejected it. The reason given, according to a 1960 article in *The Saturday Evening Post*, was that "He had tried a woman cartoonist once […] and wanted no more of them." Mollie Slott, then Patterson's "Girl Friday" and later president and manager of the syndicate, found the discarded samples and recognized the potential in them. Together she and Messick worked out a new submission. The heroine, named after glamorous debutante Brenda Frazier, had initially been a "girl bandit." Heeding Slott's advice, the artist turned her into a reporter.

Patterson grudgingly agreed to carry *Brenda Starr* in his syndicate, but refused to run it in the *Daily News.* Indeed, the *Daily News* did not carry *Brenda Starr* until two years after Patterson's death in 1946.

Patterson was not the only male to have it in for Messick's creation. Although the strip inspired a huge female following from the beginning (when the *Tucson Daily Citizen* dropped the strip in 1973, the editors received hundreds of angry letters and phone calls, the majority of which were from women), the artist never felt fully accepted by her male colleagues and she resisted joining the National Cartoonists Society.

OPPOSITE: Cecilia Paddock Munson's "The Monastery of the Blue God" (1937).

BELOW: Brenda Starr goes daily in 1945: an announcement in *Editor and Publisher* magazine.

As *The Saturday Evening Post* article delicately put it when writing about the male cartoonists' attitudes, "There are differences of opinion about her artistic talents." In a 1973 newspaper interview, Messick wryly gave her opinion of the mostly male organization. "I see where they're honoring Jack Dempsey. They never honored me for anything, but they honor Jack Dempsey."

Even the writer of the 1960 *Post* article felt compelled to belittle Messick by stressing her "wacky dame" aspect. Here is a description of a typical day in the artist's studio: "The hi-fi is on full blast. Miss Messick sings along lustily. If the music is appropriate, she jumps up and does a rumba. In meditative periods she chews gum with popping sound effects."

Messick's heroine, whose looks were based on film star Rita Hayworth, parachuted from planes, joined girl gangs, escaped from kidnappers, almost froze to death on snow-covered slopes, and got marooned on desert islands. Meanwhile, a strip created by Patterson, *The Gumps*, which moved as slowly as molasses and must be called boring by the kindest critic, had been carried by the same syndicate since 1919.

Messick's drawing style, strongly influenced by Nell Brinkley's, is romantic and feminine. Yet she drew action scenes excellently and offered the reader a memorable cast of supporting characters:

Flip Decker, teenage leader of an all-blonde girl gang;
The Nameless Doll, a pouf-haired Robin Hood;
Palava, the albino Polynesian princess;
and of course, the handsome, one-eyed Mystery Man.

Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*, again carried by the same syndicate, boasted of equally, if not more, bizarre supporting characters. But of his art, James Steranko had this to say in his 1970 book, *The Steranko History of Comics*: "His drawings had about as much depth as a card board cut-out. As a technician, he would be out-distanced by miles. If Gould had any knowledge of perspective he kept it to himself."

Why then, this negativity aimed against Messick's creation on the part of men in the industry? As demonstrated, there had been plenty of women drawing comics for the past 40 years, and there is no record of men strongly criticizing their work. However, all the previous comics by women had been comparatively light — cute animals and kids, pretty girls without a care in the world, rotund grandmas spouting homespun philosophy. These comics might be considered "girl stuff" — a genre the men didn't care to work in or take seriously. But with *Brenda Starr*, Dale Messick was trespassing on male territory.

Messick paved the way for over a decade of action heroines in comics. A year later, Wonder Woman, the creation of psychologist William Moulton Marston and artist Harry G. Peter, hit the newsstands in the December 1941 issue of *All Star Comics*. The immortal amazon was the first major costumed action heroine in comic books, but it would be 45 years before a woman drew her professionally.

Beating Wonder Woman for the title of first costumed major action heroine in any form of comics was Tarpe Mills' Miss Fury, which made its debut as a newspaper strip

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: The first *Brenda Starr* strips (1940) were published in this format; readers cut them out and formed their own small comic book.

BOTTOM: The interior comic (1940).

CUT HERE

CHICAGO SUNDAY TRIBUNE—JULY 7, 1940

COMIC BOOK MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK WITH THE CHICAGO SUNDAY TRIBUNE

BRENDA STARR REPORTER

ALSO

DILL AND DAFFY • GERTIE O'GRADY
HY SCORE • SPOOKY • TEXAS SLIM
THEM DAYS • BUCKS McKALE • LOVEY DOVEY
BOBBY MAKE-BELIEVE • MORT GREEN AND WIFE

BRENDA STARR ★ REPORTER By Dale Messick

IT WONT DO YA NO GOOD CAUSE I AIN'T TALKIN. SEE?

YES, I KNOW - YOU'RE TOO SMART FOR THAT, BUT IT PUTS ME IN A TOUGH SPOT.

MY BOSS WANTS YOUR STORY BY MIDNIGHT AND IF I FAIL HIM, IT'S CURTAINS FOR ME - I'M FIRED

— AND I SURE NEEDED THAT JOB. WELL, SO LONG, SILKY, YOU AND I JUST DON'T GET THE BREAKS, I GUESS

MMM! SOME LOOKER. I COULD GO FOR THAT DAME. MAYBE I'LL DROP THIS CLAM ACT AND TALK TO HER

WELL, I GUESS I'M ALL WASHED UP.

BACK IN THE CITY ROOM

IN THE EDITOR'S OFFICE

MUGGS, I FAILED. GUESS YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE ME MY WALKING PAPERS, HUH?

FORGET IT, STARR, STICK TO YOUR POST 'N YOU CAN STAY ON AS LONG AS THE GLOBE CIRCULATES

RING RING

WHAT'S THAT, WARDEN? SILKY WANTS TO SPILL STORY EXCLUSIVE FOR BRENDA STARR?

WOW!

LEFT: Tarpe Mills' work on *The Purple Zombie* feature in *Amazing Mystery Funnies* (1939).

RIGHT: Chicago Sun Syndicate publicity for *Miss Fury*.

in April 1941, eight months before the birth of Moulton's creation. Since 1938, Mills had been contributing to comic books with such characters as The Purple Zombie, Devil's Dust, The Cat Man, and Daredevil Barry Finn, the last named after a relative of the artist. Born June Mills, like Dale Messick, she changed her name to a sexually ambiguous one, taking her mother's maiden name, Tarpe, upon entering the comics field. In a newspaper interview from the 1940s, she said, "It would have been a major letdown to the kids if they found out that the author of such virile and awesome characters was a gal."

Mills' gender did not stay secret for long. As her strip gained in popularity, newspapers carried articles about it, always including photos of its creator, who bore a startling resemblance to her protagonist, Maria Drake, the socialite who becomes Miss Fury upon donning a form-fitting panther skin.

Messick had identified with her creation to the point of dying her own hair red and naming her daughter Starr; Mills put not only herself, but also her cat into her strip. Both the artist and the protagonist had white Persian cats named Peri-Purr.

In 1945, the *Miami Daily News* ran a story titled "Cartoon Strip Cat Goes Off To War," relating that Mills had donated her cat to the war effort. Subtitled "It's Sir Admiral Purr Now," the article related how Mills' Persian had become the mascot of an allied warship and "[…] set out for distant places and unknown dangers, sound asleep in the commander's bunk." The article goes on to make it clear that the famous cat had the attitude of all

cats through history: "'I'd be happier if he'd show a little emotion,' [Mills] said, before parting with the newly made admiral."

Tarpe Mills' years at New York's Pratt Institute, during which she modeled to pay her way through school, along with her early years in comics, stood her in good stead. From its first episode, *Miss Fury* was beautifully drawn. Like Messick, Mills filled her panels with glamour; both artists liked to depict their women characters in frilly lingerie or taking bubble baths. Mills' strip was at times considered too racy. One episode, in which a character wore the equivalent of a bikini, so shocked the editors of 37 newspapers that they canceled the strip that day.

At a time when the average male cartoonist dressed his heroines in plain red dresses, the women cartoonists were paying attention to clothes.

Both Tarpe Mills and Hilda Terry, who drew the teenage strip *Teena*, had worked in fashion illustration, and *Mopsy* creator Gladys Parker's high-end clothing line was sold in major department stores. The continuities of *Miss Fury* and *Brenda Starr* can double as textbooks on fashions of the 1940s. Mills' strips, reminiscent of film noir, take the reader from the chic penthouses and nightclubs of wartime New York to underground Nazi

In this November 10, 1946 strip, Tarpe Mills proves herself queen of the catfights.

MISS FURY

MISS FURY

BY SUZANNE TARPÉ MILLS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.) Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Office

OOO

!

IT'S DR. SARAF!

IF YOU MAKE ONE SOUND OR MOVE TOWARD ME, I'LL---

---I'LL HURL THIS BASIN AT THAT GLASS VAT!

HMPH! CAN IT BE SHE KNOWS THAT VAT CONTAINS THE CHEMICAL THAT INSTANTLY BURNS AWAY FLESH AND BONE? SHE'S CLOSER TO IT THAN I—AND IF THAT GLASS SHOULD BREAK...

HE'S MOVING BACK AND MEASURING THE DISTANCE FROM ME TO THE VAT! ONLY ONE CHANCE TO GET OUT ALIVE WITH THE BABY AND THAT IS TO CATCH SARAF OFF GUARD! BUT, WAIT— IS HE REACHING FOR SOMETHING?

A LUCKY HIT! HE'S UNCONSCIOUS! NOW TO GET UP TO THE ROOF BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE COMES IN!

GOLLY! THE WAY THIS TILTS AND SWAYS...

...IF I SHOULD SLIP, WE'LL LAND DIRECTLY IN THE CHEMICAL VAT BELOW!

WHA--? SO! THAT'S HOW YOU GOT IN HERE! WELL, YOU WON'T GET OUT!

GREAT HEAVENS! HE WAS NOT UNCONSCIOUS— ONLY STUNNED! MUST CLIMB FAST AND KEEP THESE CHAINS SWINGING!

MISSED! BUT YOU'LL SWING INTO RANGE AGAIN... IT'S A LONG WAY TO THE TOP!

EEEE! I CAN'T CLIMB FAST ENOUGH! HE'S LIABLE TO HIT EITHER ME OR THE LITTLE ONE IN ANOTHER SECOND— AND YET, IF I SLIDE DOWN---

COLONEL WOLFRAM PRUSSIA

THE BARONESS

COLONEL WOLFRAM PRUSSIA

BRUNO

MISS FURY

DR. DIMAN SARAF

installations and anti-Nazi guerrilla camps in Brazil. Along the way the reader meets some of the most unforgettable characters in the history of comics: Baroness Erica Von Kampf, the platinum blonde adventuress with a swastika branded on her forehead; Albino Jo, the Harvard-educated albino Indian; Brazilian bombshell and Carmen Miranda-lookalike Era; and the one-armed General Bruno.

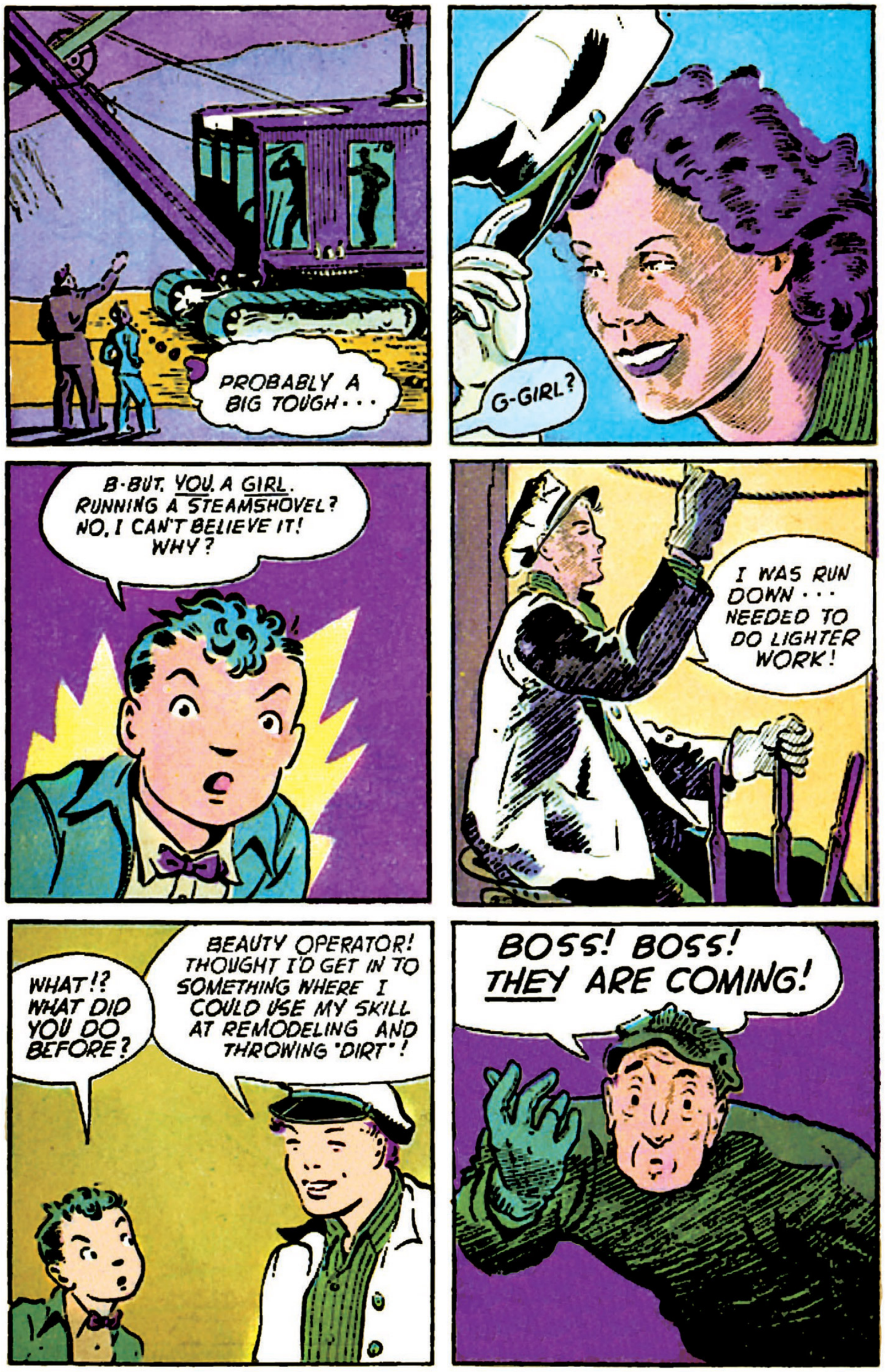
Because of this last character, *Miss Fury* got attention in the January 4, 1943 issue of *Time* magazine. An article, "Comic Strip generals," likened "One-armed, egg-bald 'General Bruno' [who] is frustrated by Brazilian guerillas in his campaign to open the way for an Axis invasion" to "his counterpart […] mysterious General Gunther Neidenfuhr […] military attaché in Brazil."

Miss Fury lasted until 1951, but Tarpe Mills was not finished with comics. In 1971 she returned briefly to illustrate a seven-page romance in Marvel comics' *Our Love Story*. Unfortunately, her attempt to update her noir styling into something mod resulted in the equivalent of a vintage Joan Crawford dress that has been cut down into a mini. From 1979 until her death in 1988, the artist attempted unsuccessfully to sell a graphic novel based on her wartime hero Albino Jo. Sample pages demonstrate that Mills never lost her touch, but editors of the 1980s were not receptive to the nostalgic look of her art.

There is a widely held belief that women cartoonists adopted male pseudonyms in order to sell their comic strips. This is only partially true. Rose O'Neill, Grace Drayton, Ethel Hays, Nell Brinkley, and their contemporaries had no trouble getting published under their own feminine names. However, a male pseudonym seemed to be required for action strips, starting with Caroline Sexton

OPPOSITE: Miss Fury, in her panther-skin costume, saves a child from a mad scientist. She will later adopt the boy, becoming the first superheroine who is also a mother (1946).

BOTTOM: Unpublished Tarpe Mills comic (1979).



Odin Burvik's *Dickie Dare* (1944).

who, in 1934, signed "C.M. Sexton," to *Luke and Duke*. From Cecilia Paddock Munson, who often signed her work either "Pad" or "Paddock Munson," to Ramona "Pat" Patenaude, to Dale Messick and Tarpe Mills, the women of the 1940s seemed to believe that their success depended at least in part upon having a male name.

Another woman who took a masculine name was Mabel Burvik; at the start of her career, she changed her name to Odin Burvik. Originally hired as an assistant to cartoonist Coulton Waugh, by 1944 she had not only taken over his strip *Dickie Dare*, but also married him. In the tradition of Marjorie Henderson ("Marge") and Edwina Dumm ("Edwina"), the artist signed her strip with her first name, "Odin."

Messick and Mills had changed their names to disguise their gender. Neysa McMein, born Marjorie, changed hers because she was advised to do so by a numerologist. A popular illustrator and portrait artist, McMein painted every cover of *McCall's* magazine from 1923 through 1938, and designed Gold Medal Flour's trademark character, Betty Crocker, in 1936.

McMein had always been avant-garde in her lifestyle. In the teens, she had marched in pro-suffrage demonstrations, and in the '20s, she was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, which included such luminaries as Dorothy Parker, Harpo Marx, and Alexander Woollcott.

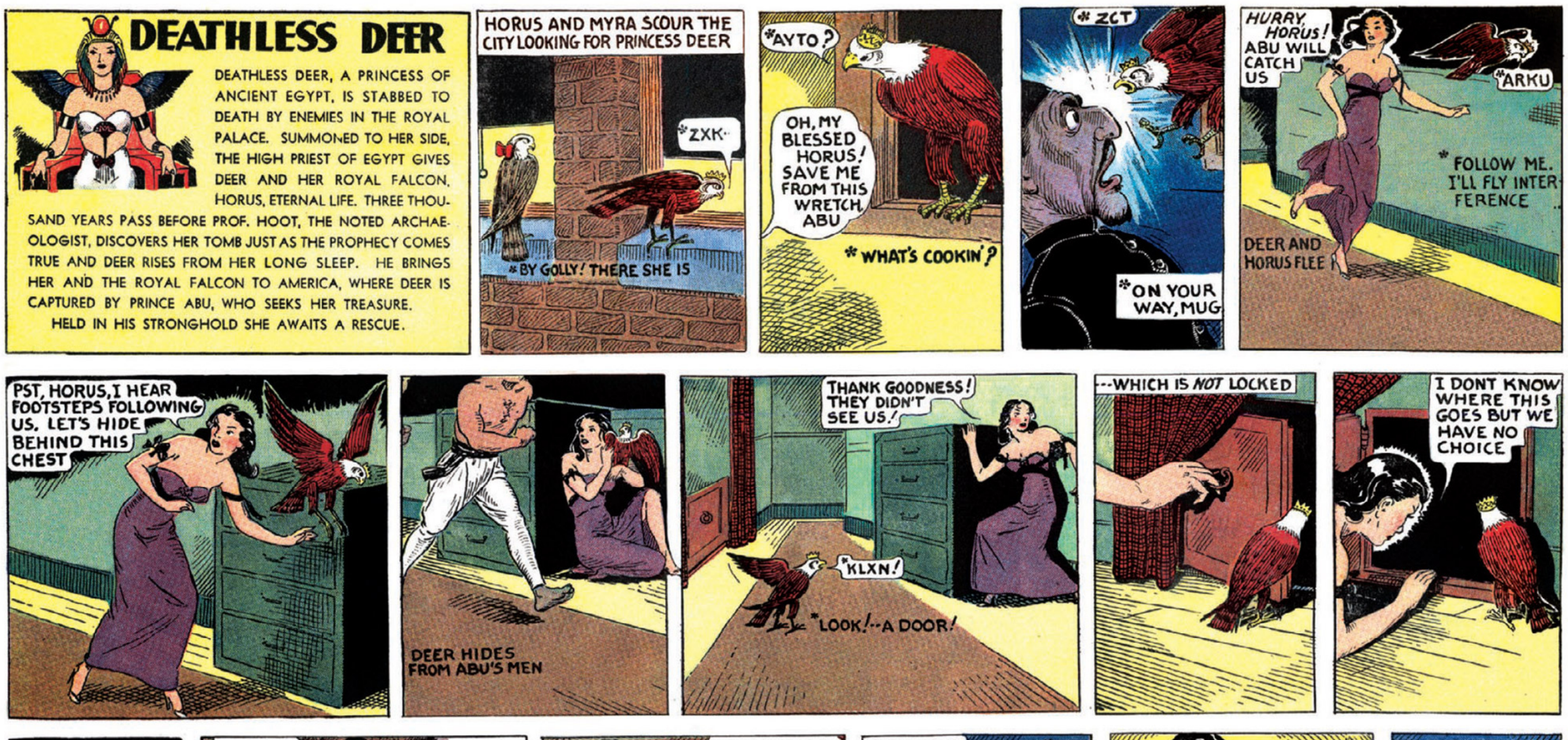
LEFT: A Neysa McMein *McCall's* magazine cover (1938).

RIGHT: Edwina Dumm illustrated *Verdun Belle* by Alexander Woollcott (1928).

Woollcott described McMein in a 1933 *McCall's* article. He mentions a play called *The Joy of Living* and continues: "I never knew what the phrase meant until I met Neysa McMein. And of the girls she draws for you, one and all, dark and fair, grave or gay, you know this one thing — that, like herself, they are enormously pleased with the privilege of being alive."

If that sounds like the author may have been a little in love with his subject, the supposition is correct. In 1923, when he learned that McMein was on a ship about to depart for Europe, Woollcott boarded it, intending to propose to her. It was then that he learned that she had just married John Baragwanath, a mining engineer, and that the two of them were headed for separate honeymoons — she to Europe, and he to an expedition in Quebec. (Thanks to McMein's many journalist friends, her unusual honeymoon prompted a flurry of newspaper and magazine articles with headlines like "A New Groom Sleeps Clean.") In 1928, Woollcott published a collection of dog stories, *Verdun Belle and Some Others*, illustrated by the great dog artist Edwina Dumm, and dedicated to McMein:

> *To Neysa Moran McMein, who was a warm personal friend of most of the characters in this book, it is respectfully dedicated by The Author.*



Neysa McMein's *Deathless Deer* (1942).

Eventually this successful and unconventional woman tried her hand at a comic strip. *Deathless Deer*, drawn by McMein and written by newspaper publisher Alicia Patterson, made its newspaper debut in November 1942. Alicia Patterson, the daughter of Joseph Patterson, had also figured in the Dale Messick saga. When her father refused to carry *Brenda Starr*, she carried it in her Long Island-based newspaper, *Newsday.* After Joseph Patterson died and the editors of the *Daily News* wanted to carry the strip, they tried to convince Alicia Patterson to drop it, because major newspapers prefer not to share their strips with smaller newspapers in surrounding neighborhoods. She refused to part with *Brenda Starr*, so the strip appeared in both papers at the same time, an almost unheard-of occurrence.

An advertisement for *Deathless Deer* in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on November 1, 1942, describes it perfectly:

Princess Deer, beautiful, imperious, dangerous, occupied the throne of the Egyptian kings 3,000 years ago.

Her word was law, her wealth boundless, her beauty drove men mad. But she had enemies.

One tried to slay her for her treasure — but was foiled by the high priest who gave Princess Deer a potion which caused her to sleep 3,000 years.

Then she awakes in the present day world — and meets Bruce, a handsome young engineer … and thus is off to adventure, romance, love.

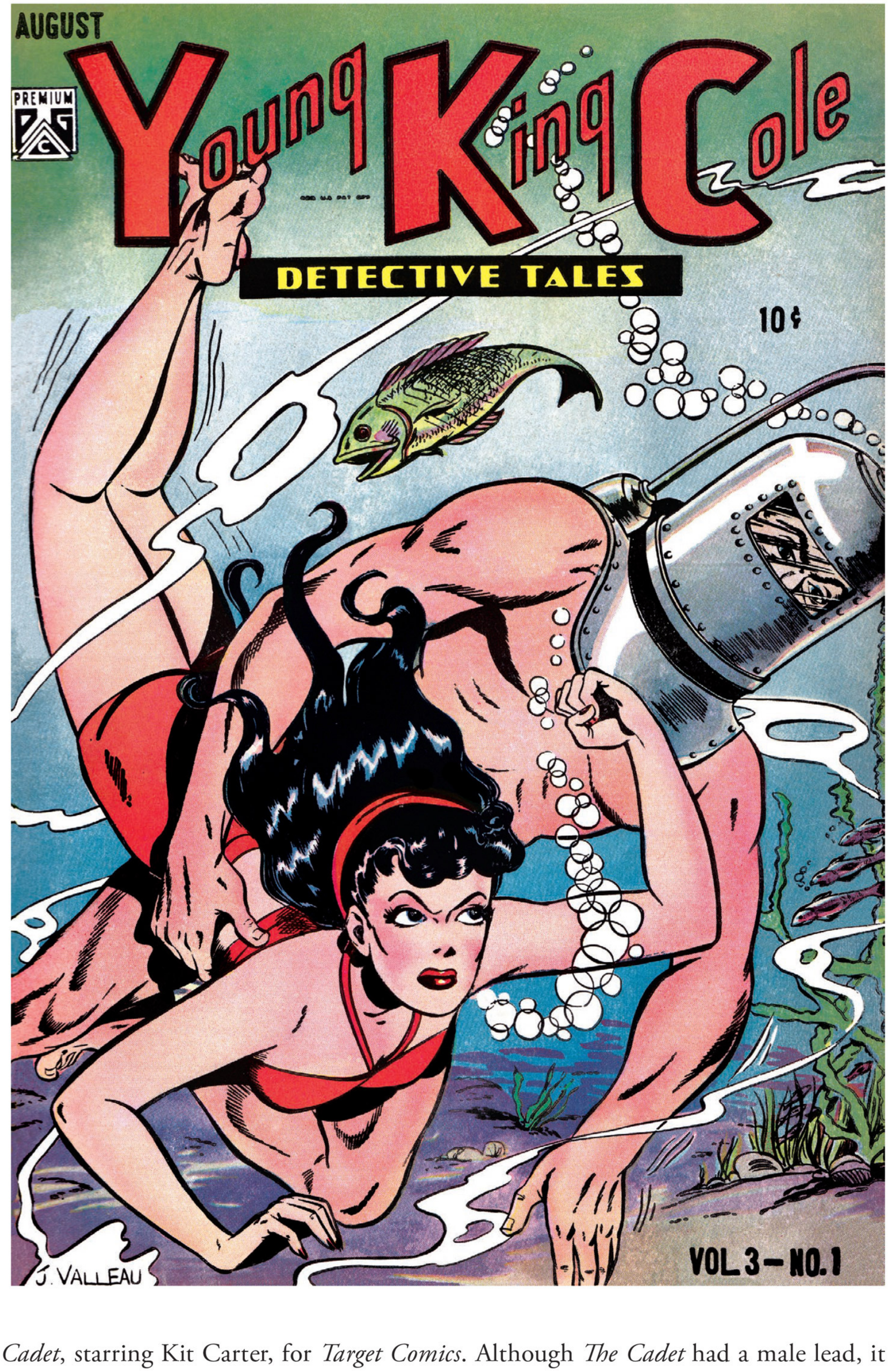
Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate publicity for *Deathless Deer* (1942).

Today, *Deathless Deer* has fallen into total obscurity. One male collector has suggested that the strip was forgotten because the concept was so implausible. However, the story of a mummy coming back to life thousands of years later, done successfully in the mummy movies of the '30s, and more recently by novelist Anne Rice, is no more ridiculous than the idea of a baby from outer space landing on Earth and growing up to be Superman.

By 1942, America had gone to war. Most of the men drawing for comic books at that time were of draft age, and like men in all other industries in the country, they either volunteered or were drafted into the military. And, as in every other industry, women took their places. That year, the number of women working for comic books tripled, and their numbers stayed high until the end of the '40s.

Few women drew the costumed heroes that had become so popular since the birth of Superman in 1938. Some exceptions were Ramona ("Pat") Patenaude, who drew *Blue Beetle*, *V-Man*, *The Green Falcon*, *Dr. Fung*, and *The Vision* during the early 1940s, and Peggy Zangerle, who drew *Doc Savage* and *Red Dragon* in 1948.

The women artists excelled in drawing female characters, and that is what most of them did. In 1946 and 1947, Janice Valleau drew Toni Gayle, a glamorous fashion model/detective, for *Young King Cole* comics, and in 1947, Nina Albright drew *The*



ABOVE: Janice Valleau drew this Toni Gayle *Young King Cole* cover, dated August 1947.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Odin Burvick, Tarpe Mills, Dale Messick.
MIDDLE LEFT: Hilda Terry, Dale Messick, Tarpe Mills.
MIDDLE RIGHT: Virginia Clark (Huget).
BOTTOM LEFT: Hilda Terry, center.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Edwina Dumm.

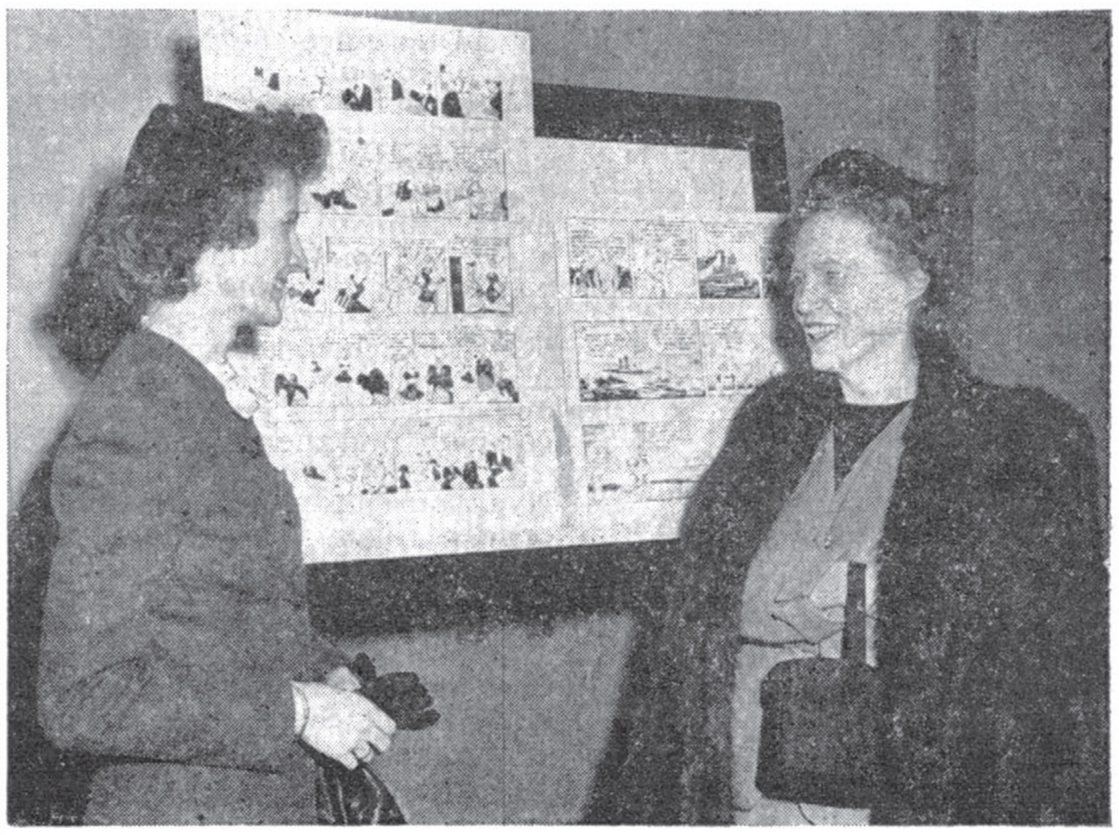
Cadet, starring Kit Carter, for *Target Comics*. Although *The Cadet* had a male lead, it included strong female characters in response to letters sent in by mostly female readers asking for "special girl characters." The comic book printed a letter from Virginia Warsachi of Omaha, Nebraska, who wrote: "Don't you think it would be a good idea to have a heroine in *Target* for a change?" Sally Foos, of Warren, Ohio, wrote: "I think

ODIN (Mrs. Coulton Waugh) is never without sketch pad. If she hadn't inherited "Dickie Dare," she would prefer a funny strip. Hubby does "Hank."

E & P Gives Party For Women Artists

IF ALL THE WOMEN of the world got together, says Tarpe (Miss Fury) Mills, at left, there wouldn't be any more wars. And, adds Dale (Brenda Starr) Messick, at right, the clinging vine type of woman has gone out. . . . "She hasn't any vine to cling to."

GIVE US CURVES, their readers demand. Hilda (Teena) Terry, left, and Dale Messick see what Tarpe Mills means when she says: "We'd lose our public if we didn't put in the curves."



IN THE FAMILY is where Virginia Clark, at right, gets material for "Oh, Diana," which she has been turning out for three years. Betty Feezel, at left, of E & P hears about the family doings.

I ALWAYS DRAW a schedule, says Hilda Terry, center, but "I don't see how I have time to do all I have to do, so I tear up the schedule." At right is Helen Staunton, left is Ruth Ridings, of E & P. An aside by Dale Messick: "Men artists usually don't get wise to new fashions until they're on the way out."

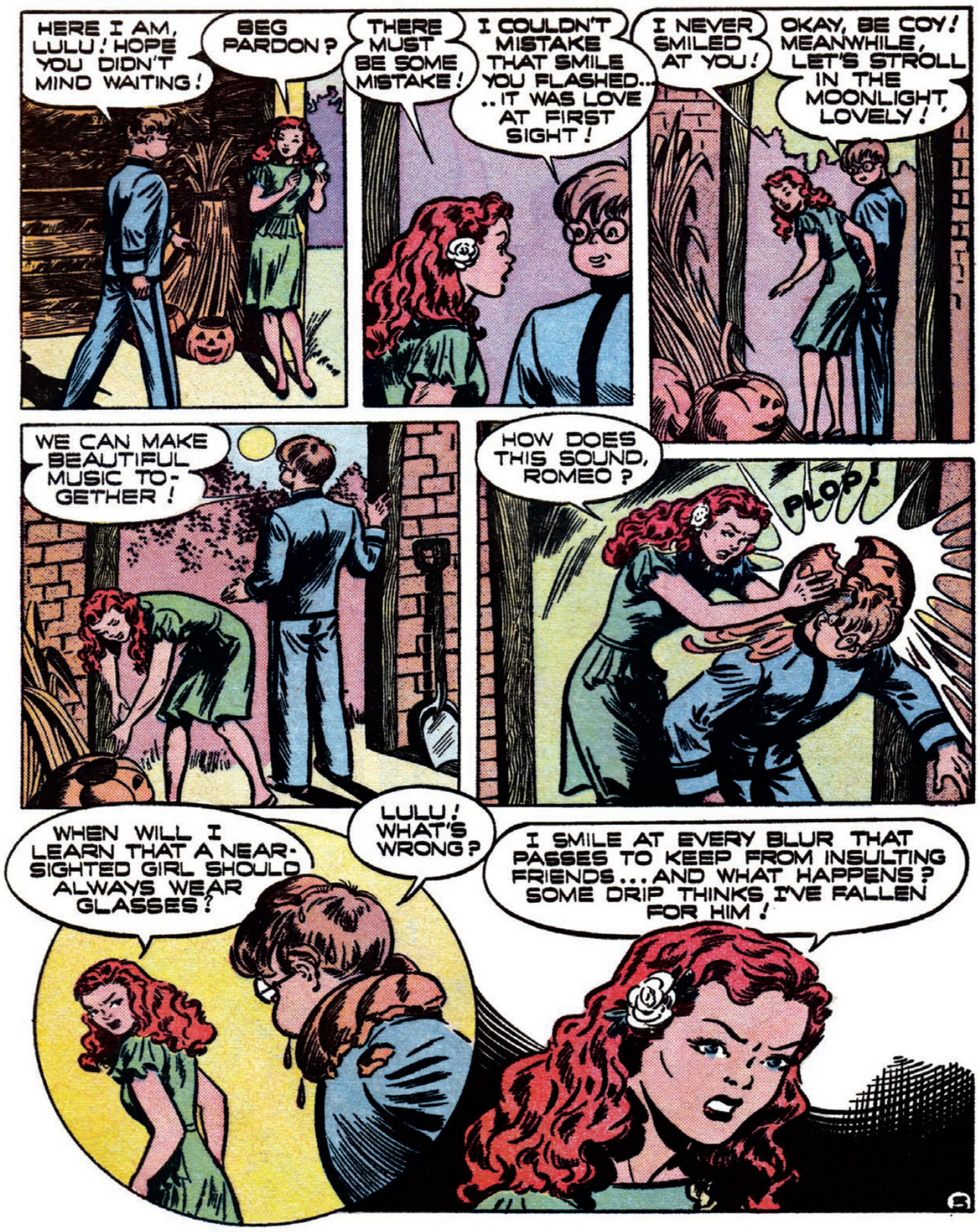
(Photos by Doris Miller, INP.) (See page 76)

EDWINA Dumm has been doing a successful strip for 14 years — "Tippie." Present model is Tippie No. 3.

it would be very nice if there were some girls as it would make the comic more exciting."

Typical wartime heroine titles were *Yankee Girl*, drawn by Ann Brewster, or *Blonde Bomber* and *Girl Commandos,* drawn by Jill Elgin from 1942-1945 and by Barbara Hall from 1941-1943. Barbara Hall, now Barbara Calhoun, was showing her portfolio to science fiction magazines in hopes of obtaining some illustration work in 1941, when one of the editors suggested she try Harvey Comics. She was immediately hired to draw Black Cat, the first comic book superheroine, and she went on to *Girl Commandos,* a strip featuring an international team of women all fighting Nazis. She left comics when her husband-to-be persuaded her to give up cartooning and become an oil painter, a gain for the world of fine art but a loss for comics.

Gladys Parker's *Mopsy* got into the act, and for the duration of the war could be



TOP: Nina Albright worked on *The Cadet* feature for *Target Comics* (1947).

LEFT: Jill Elgin's *Girl Commandos*.

RIGHT: Barbara Hall's *Girl Commandos*.

OPPOSITE: Barbara Hall's *Black Cat*.

RICK AND THE BLACK CAT ARRIVE AT THE STUDIO AND DODGE THE WATCHMAN ---

HEY --WAIT FOR ME --

THEY INVADE THE CUTTING ROOM AND GET TO WORK

HERE'S ANOTHER SCENE-- CUT IT OFF !

GARBOIL WILL BE MAD AS A HORNET WHEN HE DISCOVERS HIS SCHEME IS GOING TO FIZZLE !

NOW--LET'S CEMENT THEM TOGETHER SO THEY RUN A SMOOTH STORY--- WITHOUT THE CODE SCENES --

SUDDENLY

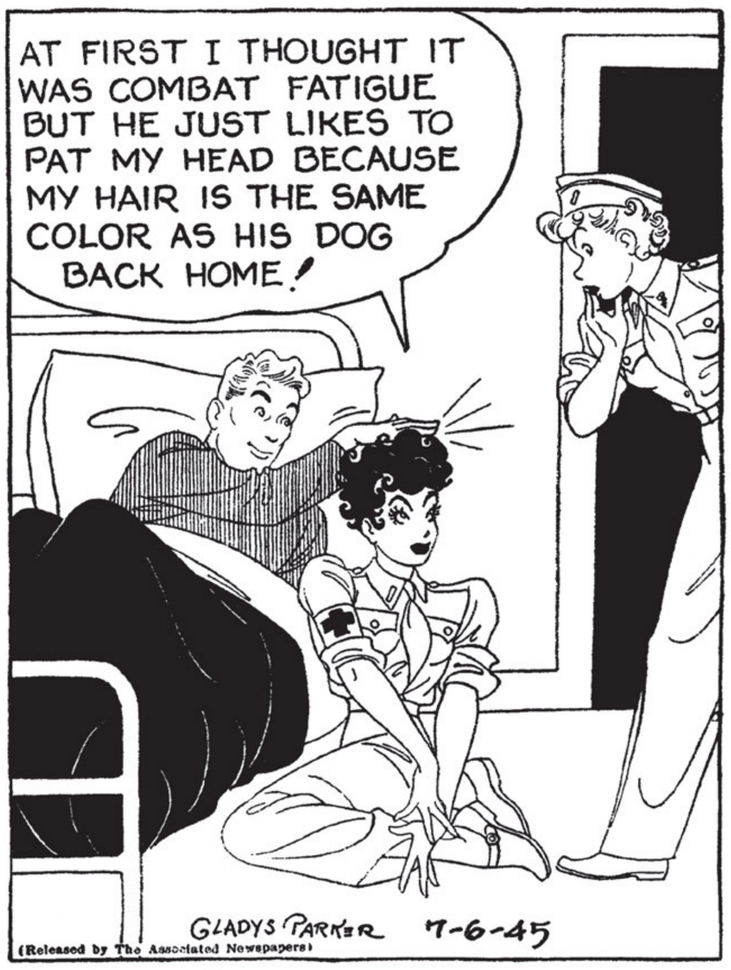
GARBOIL !

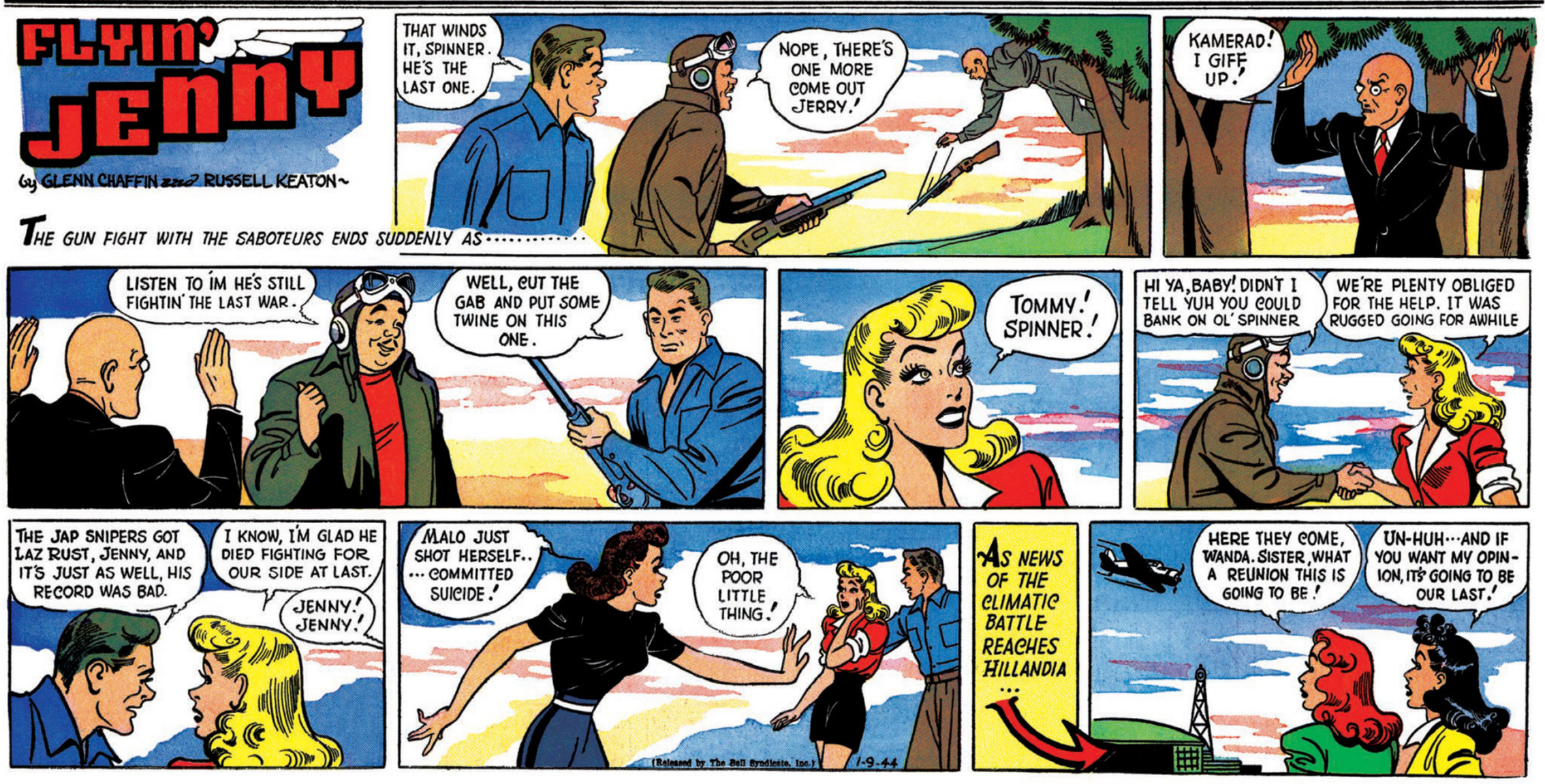
SCHWEINHUND ! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE ?

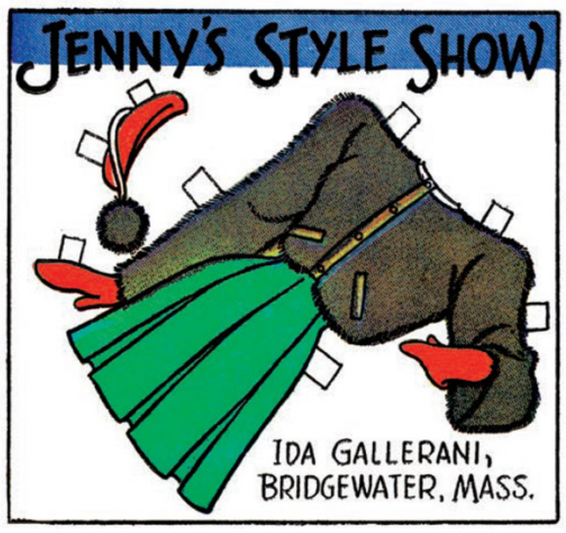
WAITING TO PLASTER YOUR CUTE LITTLE MAP --

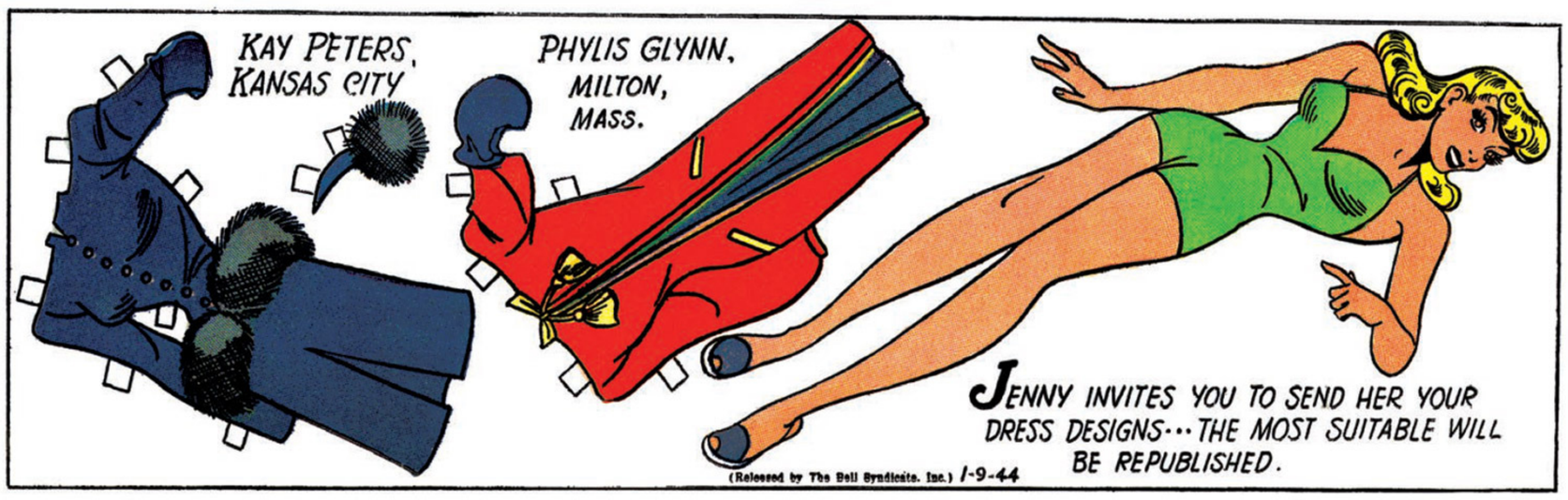
BUT THE CAPTAIN CAN MARRY US!
5-24-45
GLADYS PARKER
(Released by The Associated Newspapers)

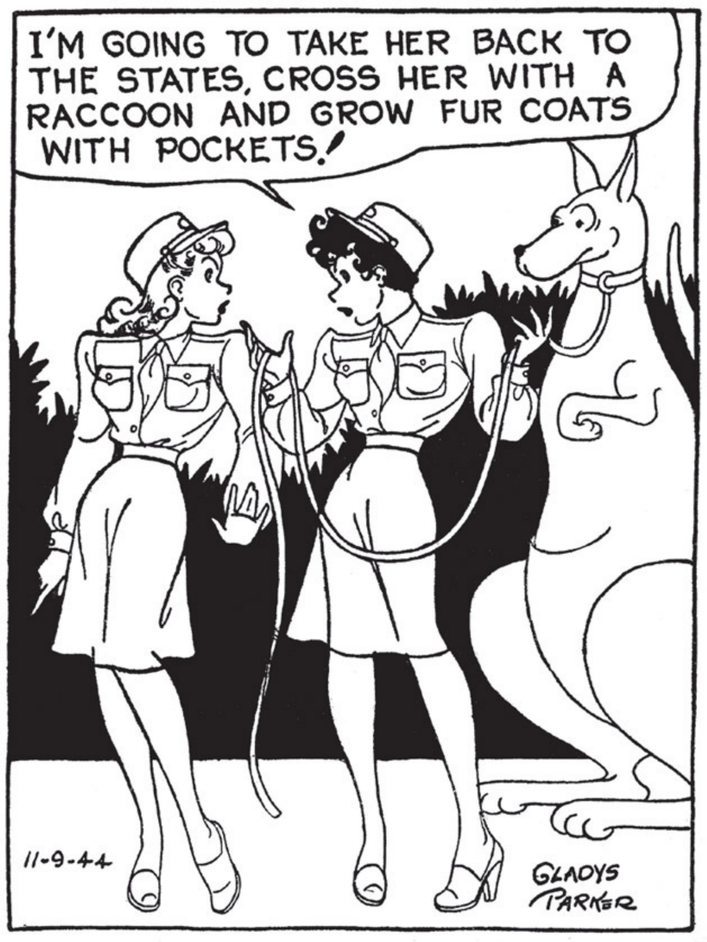
SHE GOT THE NEWS OF HER PROMOTION WHILE SHE WAS WEARING HER HELMET AND NOW SHE CAN'T GET IT OFF!
7-12-44
GLADYS PARKER


AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS COMBAT FATIGUE BUT HE JUST LIKES TO PAT MY HEAD BECAUSE MY HAIR IS THE SAME COLOR AS HIS DOG BACK HOME!
GLADYS PARKER 7-6-45
(Released by The Associated Newspapers)


FLYIN' JENNY
by GLENN CHAFFIN and RUSSELL KEATON
THE GUN FIGHT WITH THE SABOTEURS ENDS SUDDENLY AS.....
THAT WINDS IT, SPINNER. HE'S THE LAST ONE.
NOPE, THERE'S ONE MORE COME OUT JERRY!
KAMERAD! I GIFF UP!
LISTEN TO 'IM HE'S STILL FIGHTIN' THE LAST WAR.
WELL, CUT THE GAB AND PUT SOME TWINE ON THIS ONE.
TOMMY! SPINNER!
HI YA, BABY! DIDN'T I TELL YUH YOU COULD BANK ON OL' SPINNER
WE'RE PLENTY OBLIGED FOR THE HELP. IT WAS RUGGED GOING FOR AWHILE
THE JAP SNIPERS GOT LAZ RUST, JENNY, AND IT'S JUST AS WELL, HIS RECORD WAS BAD.
I KNOW, I'M GLAD HE DIED FIGHTING FOR OUR SIDE AT LAST.
JENNY! JENNY!
MALO JUST SHOT HERSELF.. ... COMMITTED SUICIDE!
OH, THE POOR LITTLE THING!
(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.) 1-9-44
AS NEWS OF THE CLIMATIC BATTLE REACHES HILLANDIA ...
HERE THEY COME, WANDA. SISTER, WHAT A REUNION THIS IS GOING TO BE!
UN-HUH···AND IF YOU WANT MY OPINION, IT'S GOING TO BE OUR LAST!


JENNY'S STYLE SHOW
IDA GALLERANI, BRIDGEWATER, MASS.


KAY PETERS, KANSAS CITY
PHYLIS GLYNN, MILTON, MASS.
JENNY INVITES YOU TO SEND HER YOUR DRESS DESIGNS···THE MOST SUITABLE WILL BE REPUBLISHED.
(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.) 1-9-44



WHAT THE WELL-BOMBED WOMAN WILL WEAR

By GLADYS PARKER

THINGS being what they are I have designed this bomb shelter slack suit, made of soldier blue gabardine and trimmed with silver military buttons. The jacket has a shirred front, full sleeves and a collar that may be closed or open to show the white silk sport blouse that is worn with it. The outfit was designed for practicability as well as style. Sewn inside the jacket are pockets for comb, flashlight, wallet, chocolate bar and cosmetics. The suit is modeled by winsome Nancy Gates, 16-year-old RKO player, who will soon make her first screen appearance in "The Tuttles of Tahiti."

NANCY GATES IS GOING TO BE CHIC IN HER SHELTER, WHICH COSTS $585 INSTALLED AND IS AIR-CONDITIONED

Nancy won't forget her make-up if a raid occurs. A girl should maintain her morale and appearance regardless.

The jacket is so cleverly devised that the essentials are carried in its pockets without making the wearer bulgy.

The slack suit need not be kept in the closet until raiders appear. It makes a nice lounging outfit any time.

seen in her comics in the uniform of a WAC, a WAVE, an Army nurse, a defense worker, and a member of the Motor Corps. Parker also took over the newspaper strip *Flyin' Jenny* when its regular artist, Russell Keaton, went into the service in 1943. Jenny was a blonde aviatrix who, like many wartime heroines, battled Nazis.

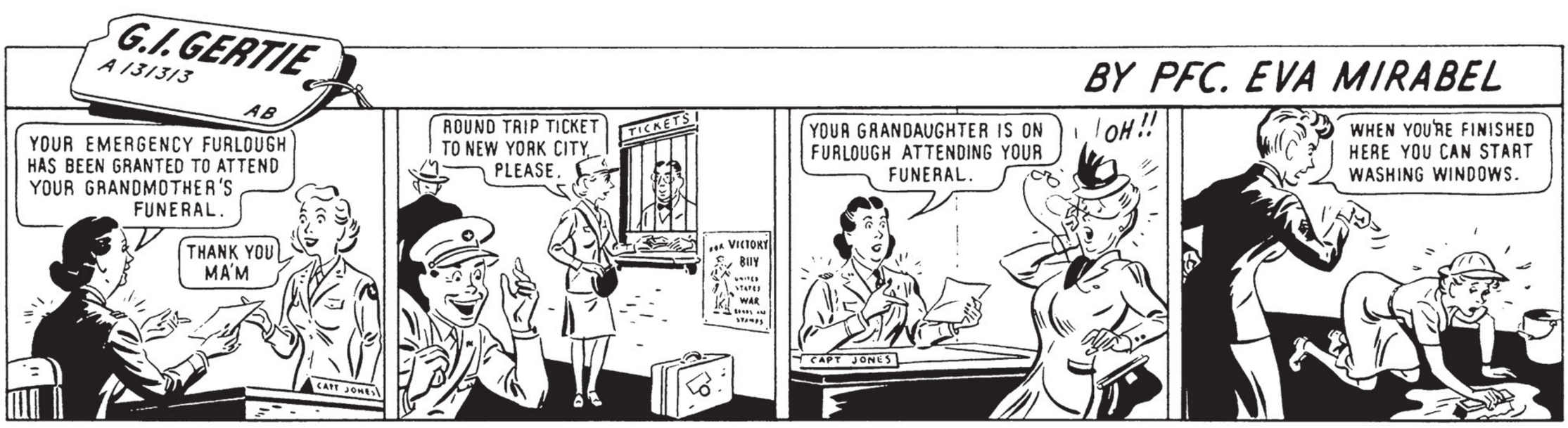
Meanwhile, in her persona as fashion designer, Parker was designing clothing for movie stars and writing a regular feature for *Spot* magazine, in which she displayed her wartime designs, such as a pantsuit to wear into bomb shelters.

Eva Mirabal, who was a real-life WAC, was probably the only professional Native American woman cartoonist at that time. Born in New Mexico, Mirabal studied art at the Taos Valley Art School and enlisted in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1942. She was stationed at Wright Field in Ohio, where she drew a continuing strip, *G.I. Gertie*, for The *WAC's Works*, the camp newspaper. The newspaper featured articles on life in the WAC and bits of advice like this one, titled "Solving Tie Problem": "If your tie looks like a kinky

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP ROW AND THIS PAGE LEFT: Gladys Parker's Mopsy joined the war.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Gladys Parker's *Flyin' Jenny* (1944).

RIGHT: Gladys Parker designs fashions for your bomb shelter: from *Spot* magazine.



TOP: Eva Mirabal's *G.I. Gertie*.

BOTTOM LEFT: A 1942 war bond poster by Eva Mirabal: signed with her Native American name, Ea-Ha-Wa.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Ruth Atkinson.

OPPOSITE: Marcia Synder worked on the *Camilla* feature in *Jungle Comics* #163 (Summer 1954).

piece of rope after you wash it: Remove the stitches and substitute three or four snaps. This will enable you to iron the washed tie, then snap together and iron the creases."

G.I. Gertie, a breezy comic starring a, well, wacky WAC, was signed PFC. Eva Mirabel. (The misspelling of her name was a mistake on the part of the newspaper staff, but she kept it.) By 1944 she had been promoted and was signing the strips CPL. Eva Mirabel. And by the time she was mustered out in 1946, Mirabal was a Staff Sergeant.

After the war, Mirabal served as Artist in Residence at Southern Illinois University from 1946-1947, after which she became a muralist. Her murals could be seen at the Santa Fe Indian School, the world headquarters of the Air Service Command, Buhl Planetarium in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Veteran's Hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Of all the comic book companies in the 1940s, one publisher hired more women cartoonists than any of the others. That was Fiction House, a company started in 1936 by Jerry Iger and Will Eisner, artist/creator of *The Spirit* comic strip. The six Fiction House comic book titles — *Jumbo*, *Jungle*, *Fight*, *Wings*, *Rangers*, and *Planet* — specialized in luridly sensationalistic stories with strong and beautiful female protagonists. Unlike comics from some of the other publishers, where the female characters seemed to exist only as foils for the hero to rescue, these women were in charge. Depending on the comic, they could be jungle girls, pilots, "girl detectives," or outer space heroines. Dressed in two-piece leopard skin bathing suits or ripped Army nurse uniforms, they leaped across the page in a graphic role-reversal, guns blazing or knife in hand, to rescue some man. And they were likely to be drawn by women, among them Jean Levander, Fran Hopper, Ann Brewster, Lily Renée, and Marcia Snyder. Ruth Atkinson,

CAMILLA

THE PYGMY TRIBE HAD BEEN BETRAYED — THEIR JUJU STOLEN... CAMILLA VOWED TO HELP THEM-MATCH HER NAKED BLADE AGAINST RENEGADE LEAD.

MARCIA

T'ALI, WHY DO YOU SIT ALONE BY AN EMPTY FIRE?

NOT LONG WILL IT BE EMPTY, CAMILLA. MY MATE, CHIEF B'GUNTI, SOON BRING FISH.

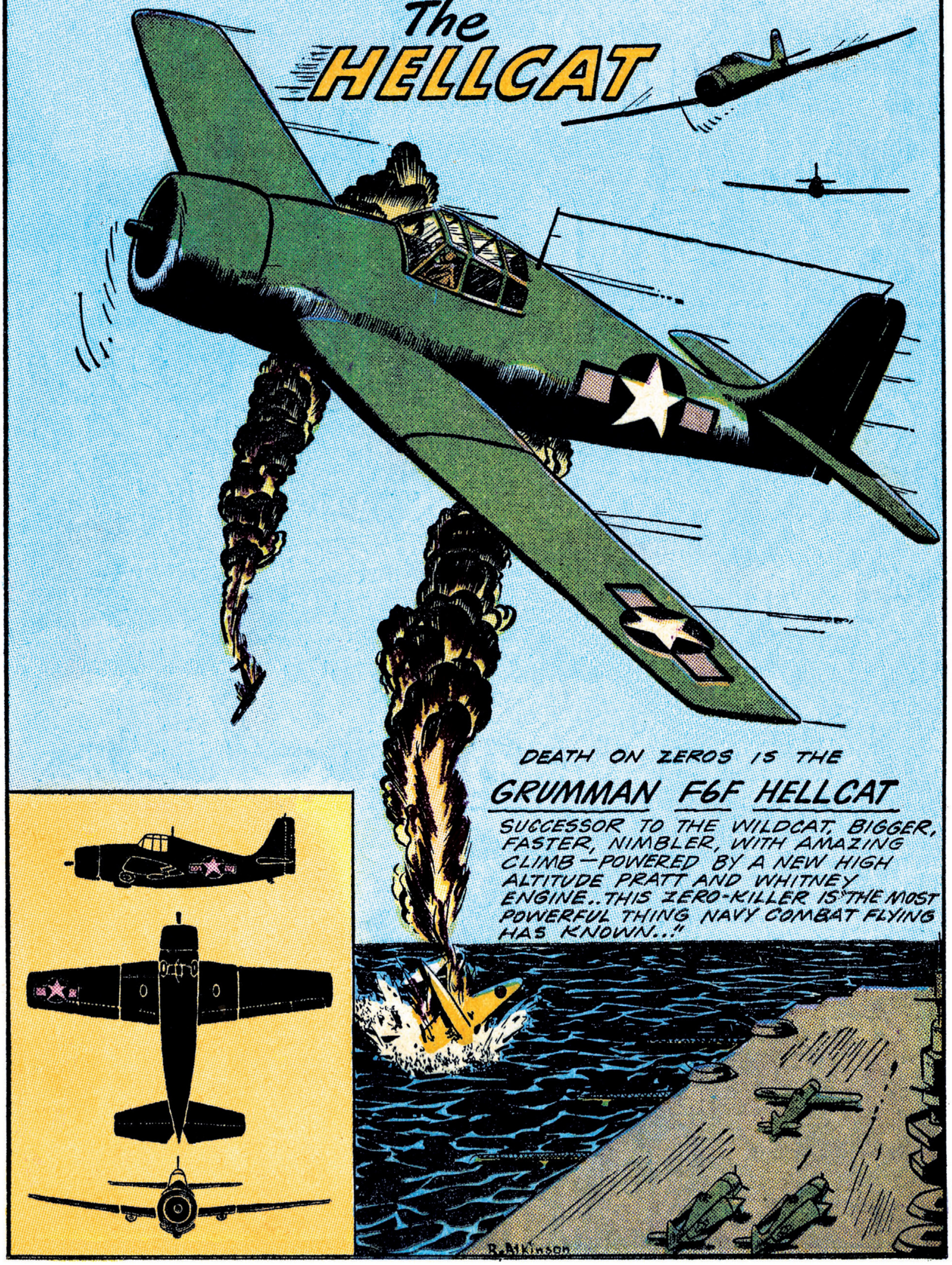
NEARBY..

IF YOU TELL US WHERE GREAT JUJU JEWEL IS HIDDEN, WE'LL GIVE YOU THIS GUN.

THEN WOULD I BE GREATEST WITCH DOCTOR IN ALL JUNGLE! BUT ONLY CHIEF B'GUNTI KNOWS HIDING PLACE - I TAKE YOU TO HIM.

WING TIPS

The HELLCAT

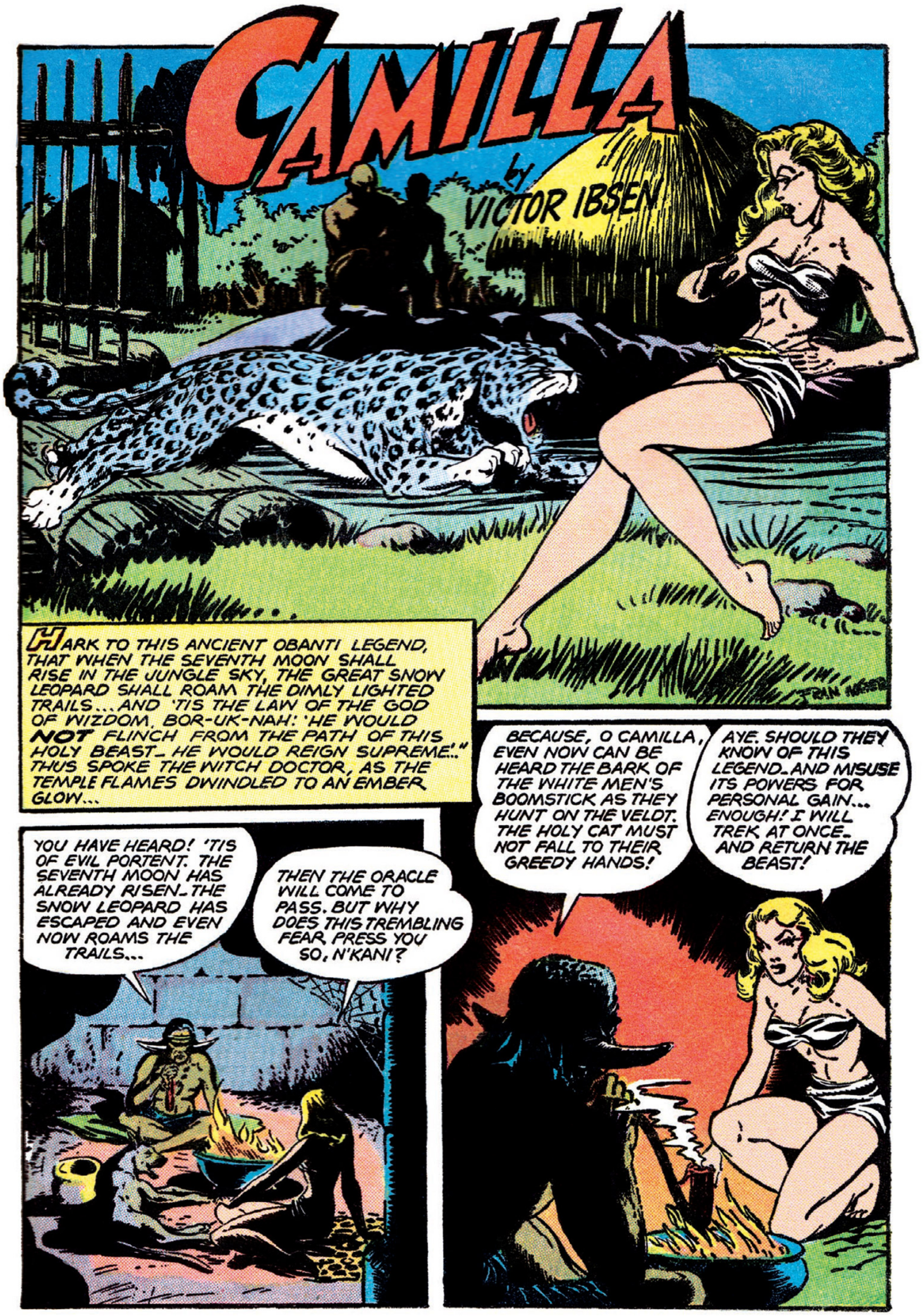


DEATH ON ZEROS IS THE

GRUMMAN F6F HELLCAT

SUCCESSOR TO THE WILDCAT, BIGGER, FASTER, NIMBLER, WITH AMAZING CLIMB—POWERED BY A NEW HIGH ALTITUDE PRATT AND WHITNEY ENGINE..THIS ZERO-KILLER IS "THE MOST POWERFUL THING NAVY COMBAT FLYING HAS KNOWN.."

R. Atkinson



OPPOSITE: Ruth Atkinson's *Wing Tips*.

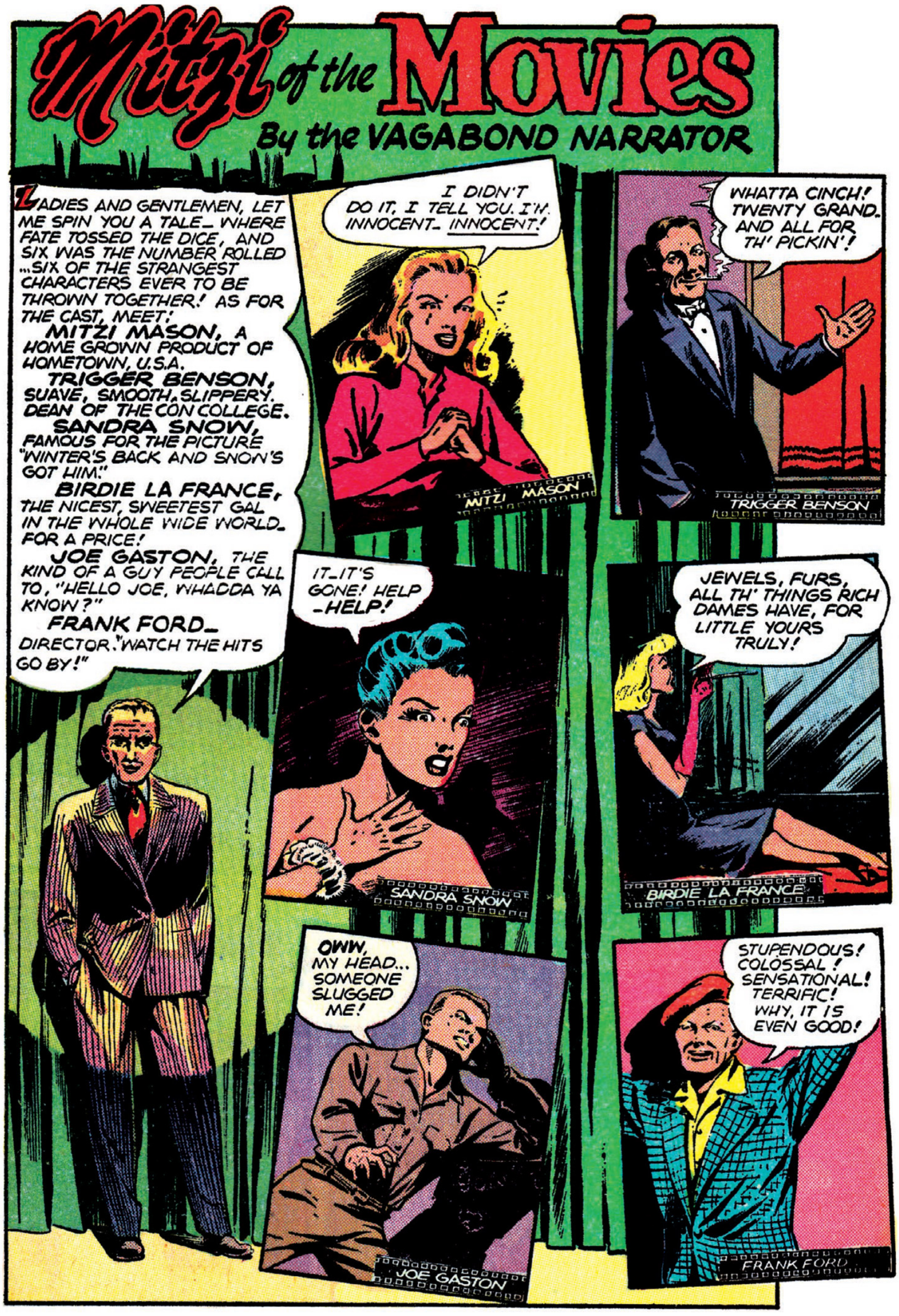
LEFT: A sample of Fran Hopper's work on the *Camilla* feature (1947).

ABOVE: Fran Hopper and her husband, Dr. John B. Hopper.

who was also the company's art director, was an exception to the rule of pretty-girl heroines, drawing the all-male *Skull Squad* and *Wing Tips*, a series of single pages about planes.

Fran Hopper had been attending Pratt Institute for two years when she saw a newspaper ad for artists to work at Fiction House. In June 1942, she started working at Fiction House, thinking of it as just a summer job, but she stayed, never returning to Pratt. Sitting at a desk next to artist George Tuska, she was put to work erasing other

artist's pencil marks, fixing mistakes, and adding backgrounds, before she graduated to her first strip about the jungle heroine Camilla. She gave a breezy, stylish look to her comics, which starred, respectively, girl detective Glory Forbes and Jane Martin, a war nurse-turned-aviatrix. For Fiction House's science fiction book, *Planet Comics*, the prolific Hopper drew *Gale Allen and Her All Girl Squadron* and *Mysta of the Moon*. While Mysta was a sort of goddess who lived on our satellite, the All Girl Squadron were more like WACs of the future, battling evil on other planets. Like many female artists, Hopper drew women beautifully, and these stories, with mostly female characters, suited her



RIGHT: Fran Hopper's *Mitzie of the Movies* (1946).

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Fran Hopper's *Glory Forbes*.
TOP RIGHT: Fran Hopper's *Mysta of the Moon* (1945).
BOTTOM LEFT: Fran Hopper's work on the *Gale Allen* feature (1945).
BOTTOM RIGHT: Fran Hopper's work on the *Jane Martin* feature (1946).

Glory Forbes

by BOB HICKOK

HOMO SAPIENS MEANS MAN_GNATHOSTOMATA MEANS FISH. ORDINARY THINGS, YOU MIGHT SAY, AND WHO COULD DISAGREE? BUT THEN, YOU'RE NOT GLORY FORBES, WHO MET THE ABOVE CHARACTERS ON THE END OF HER NOW BENDING ROD_AND THE ONLY HITCH WAS THAT SHE MET THEM BOTH AT THE SAME TIME_IN THE **SAME** BODY!

FRAN HOPPER

GIVE HIM MORE LINE!

GET THE GAFF!

NO, GIVE 'IM **LESS** LINE!

GOSH, I'VE GOT A WHALE_AT LEAST!

...I'LL HOOK HIM, I'LL...HUH? IT_IT'S A MAN_NO_IT'S A FISH...IT'S A MERMAN!

HELLO!

EEK!

SEA KING

MYSTA

OF THE MOON

ROSS GALLEY

TRAINED FROM INFANCY BY SCIENCE, ALL KNOWLEDGE WAS HERS. YET, **WAS** IT ENOUGH TO COMBAT THE SLIMY HORDE THREATENING TO ENVELOP THE UNIVERSE_THOSE CREATURES OF NOTHING_YET EVERYTHING?

FINE TIME FOR A ROBOT TO BREAK DOWN_JUST WHEN I NEED YOU TO CRATE MY KNOWLEDGE DISCS FOR THE PROFESSORS!

MY DISCS RECORD ALL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE IN THE UNIVERSE...THE PROFESSORS CAN SPREAD LEARNING ALL OVER_OH...MY NEO-SCREEN BUZZER!

PROFESSOR KAR_DOCTOR LARK_YOU'RE LEAVING NOW? TAKE THE SATURN-JUPITER SHORT CUT.

WE WILL, MYSTA.

Fran Hopper

Gale Allen

THERE WERE THREE SURVIVORS...GALE ALLEN, A LAWBREAKER AND A SOFT-TONGUED SCIENTIST. AND TWO MUST PERISH THAT THE OTHER MIGHT LIVE !!

IN THE REAR COMPARTMENT OF A SPEEDING SPACE SHIP.

GLAD WE COULD ACCOMMODATE YOU, PROFESSOR...THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM IN THESE PATROL SHIPS.

THANKS...IF YOU HADN'T GIVEN ME A LIFT, I'D STILL BE STRANDED ON JUPITER. WHO'S YOUR PRISONER?

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT HIM LATER. WE'RE PASSING THROUGH THE METEOR BELT. I'M GOING TO TRY TO SNAP A PICTURE OF ONE.

778 C... POLITICAL OFFENDER, EH....

CAMERA ALL SET... WE'RE DIRECTLY OVER PLANETOID ZCP... HEAVENS!

METEOR!_RUSHING STRAIGHT FOR US.

Fran Hopper

Jane Martin

by BOB HICKOK

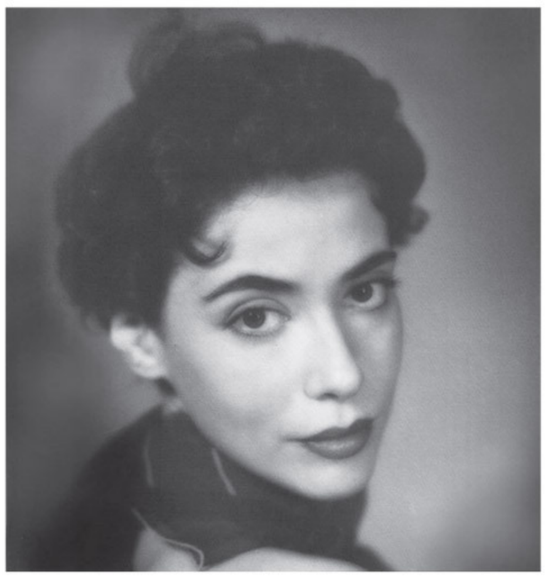
LIFE IS SURE DULL FOR JANE. NOTHING EVER HAPPENS ANY MORE...NOTHING EXCEPT A DEATH CHASE_A WRECKED BRIDGE_SCREAMING SLUGS, SHATTERING GLASS, AND A FEW BROKEN SKULLS ...YES, LIFE SURE IS DULL FOR JANE!

OKAY, MARTIN, TAKE THE CAR PLANE UP TO BILL AIRES' JOINT AND SELL IT TO HIM.

REMEMBER, THIS JOB IS ANATURAL FOR A BIG RANCHER, AND I WANT RESULTS, UNDERSTAND?

YES SIR, CERTAINLY SIR, RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

FRAN HOPPER

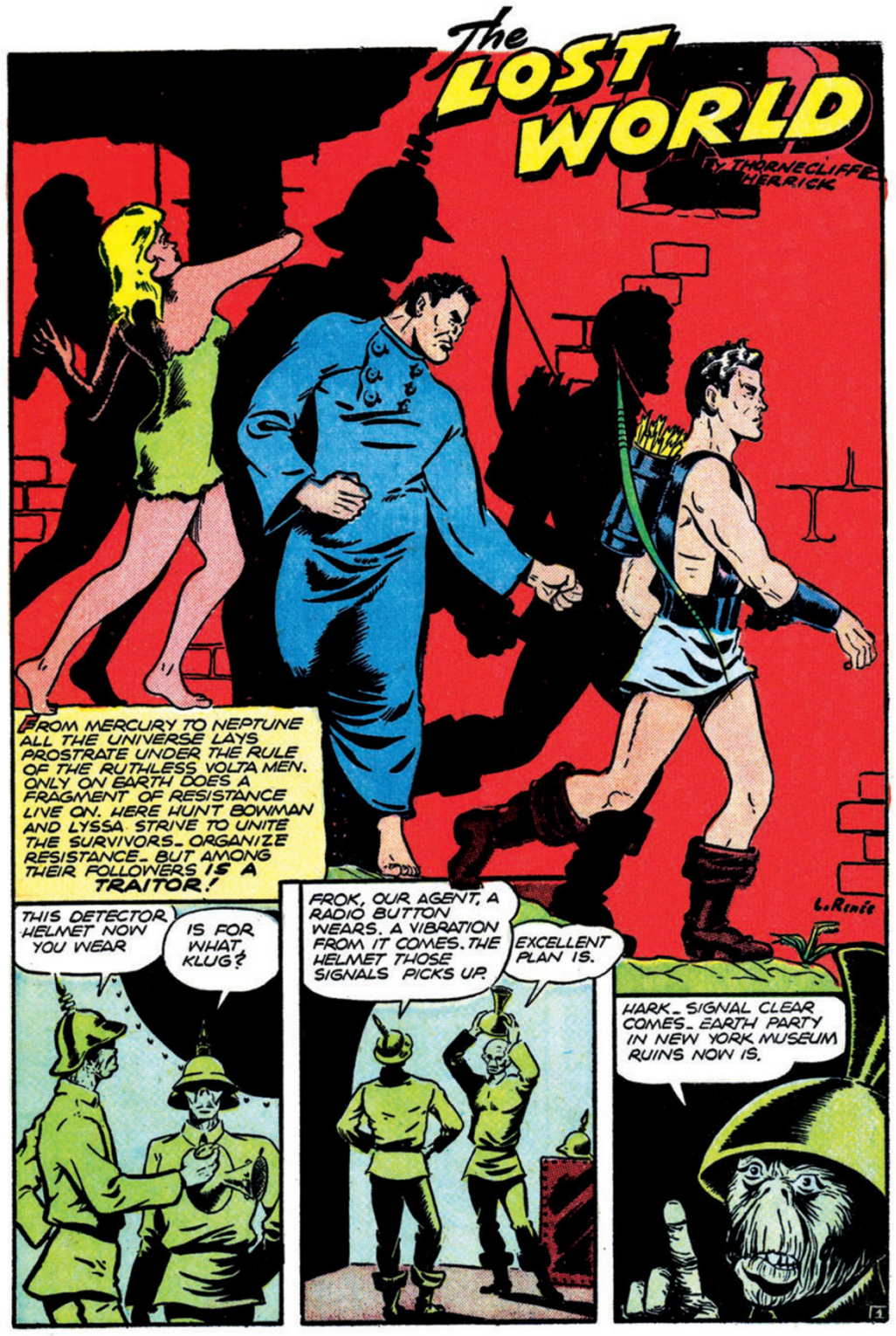


TOP LEFT: Lily Renée.

BOTTOM LEFT: Lily Renée at Fiction House.

RIGHT: Lily Renée's *Planet Comics* cover, dated November 1945.

perfectly. From 1945 on, Hopper was also freelancing for Timely Comics under editor Stan Lee, drawing *Patsy Walker* and other titles. She left Fiction House in 1947 to give birth to the first of her three children, but continued to freelance for Timely Comics until 1950.



LEFT: Lily Renée's *The Lost World* (1946).

RIGHT: Lily Renée's *Senorita Rio* (1947).

Lily Renée was the only woman to draw covers for Fiction House. Lily Renée Wilheim Philips was a Jewish refugee who, as a talented teenager in 1939, had escaped Nazi-occupied Austria by way of Kindertransport, a British rescue mission on a grand scale, which brought thousands of Jewish refugee children to England from Nazi-occupied countries. Shortly after her arrival in England, Britain declared war on Germany, and Renée lost all contact with her parents. Not knowing if they were dead or alive, she found work as a nurse's assistant at the Leeds Maternity Hospital, ferrying newborns down to the bomb shelters during the Blitz. Eventually Renée reunited with her parents, who had escaped to America. The family was penniless, living in an apartment house populated with other refugees, when Renée's mother saw a newspaper ad for cartoonists. Renée, an artist, had never even read a comic. She bought a couple of comics at a newsstand, drew a couple of sample panels, and was hired. From 1943 through 1948, her elegant art, often seemingly inspired by *Jugendstil* (which translates to "Youth Style," and is essentially the Austrian version of art nouveau), graced the pages of Fiction House comics. Although she contributed some light and "cartoony" filler pages, such as *Tess Taxi*, her best work could be seen in *The Lost World, Senorita Rio*, and *Werewolf Hunters*. *The Lost World*, the lead story in *Planet Comics*, took place in a post-apocalyptic future. Amid the ruins of New York City a plucky group of survivors, led by Hunt Bowman and his fetchingly ragged companion, Lyssa, battled the Voltamen, their green-skinned and Nazi-like alien conquerors. Senorita Rio, who starred in *Fight Comics*, was a Brazilian

Jane Martin

by F. E. LINCOLN

NO AMERICAN GIRL HAS EVER RUN SUCH A STRANGE GAMUT OF THRILLS AND MYSTERY AS JANE MARTIN. AVIATRIX AND FORMER NURSE, SHE WORKS SECRETLY FOR THE ALLIED HIGH COMMAND. NOW JANE THROWS CAUTION TO THE FOUR WINDS AS SHE PLUNGES INTO A MAZE OF ORIENTAL INTRIGUE.

A COSSACK CAVALRYMAN ESCORTS JANE BEHIND THE LINES OF A RUSSIAN SPEARHEAD ATTACK.

THE RED ARMY WILL SOON DRIVE HITLER'S LEGIONS ACROSS THE FRONTIER.

DON'T BE TOO OPTIMISTIC, IVAN. THE NAZIS STILL FIGHT WITH THE FURY OF CORNERED RATS!

L. RENEE

nightclub entertainer who fought Nazis in her spare time. It was fitting that Renée, persecuted by the Nazis when she was a helpless teenager, was symbolically able to fight back on paper. Senorita Rio bore a strong resemblance to Tarpe Mills' Brazilian anti-Nazi guerilla leader, Era. *Werewolf Hunters*, a horror/fantasy strip, inspired some of Renée's most decorative and imaginative art, with stories that often involved some mystic or supernatural woman character. Renée signed her pages "L. Renée," and as a result received fan mail addressed to "Mr. L. Renée."

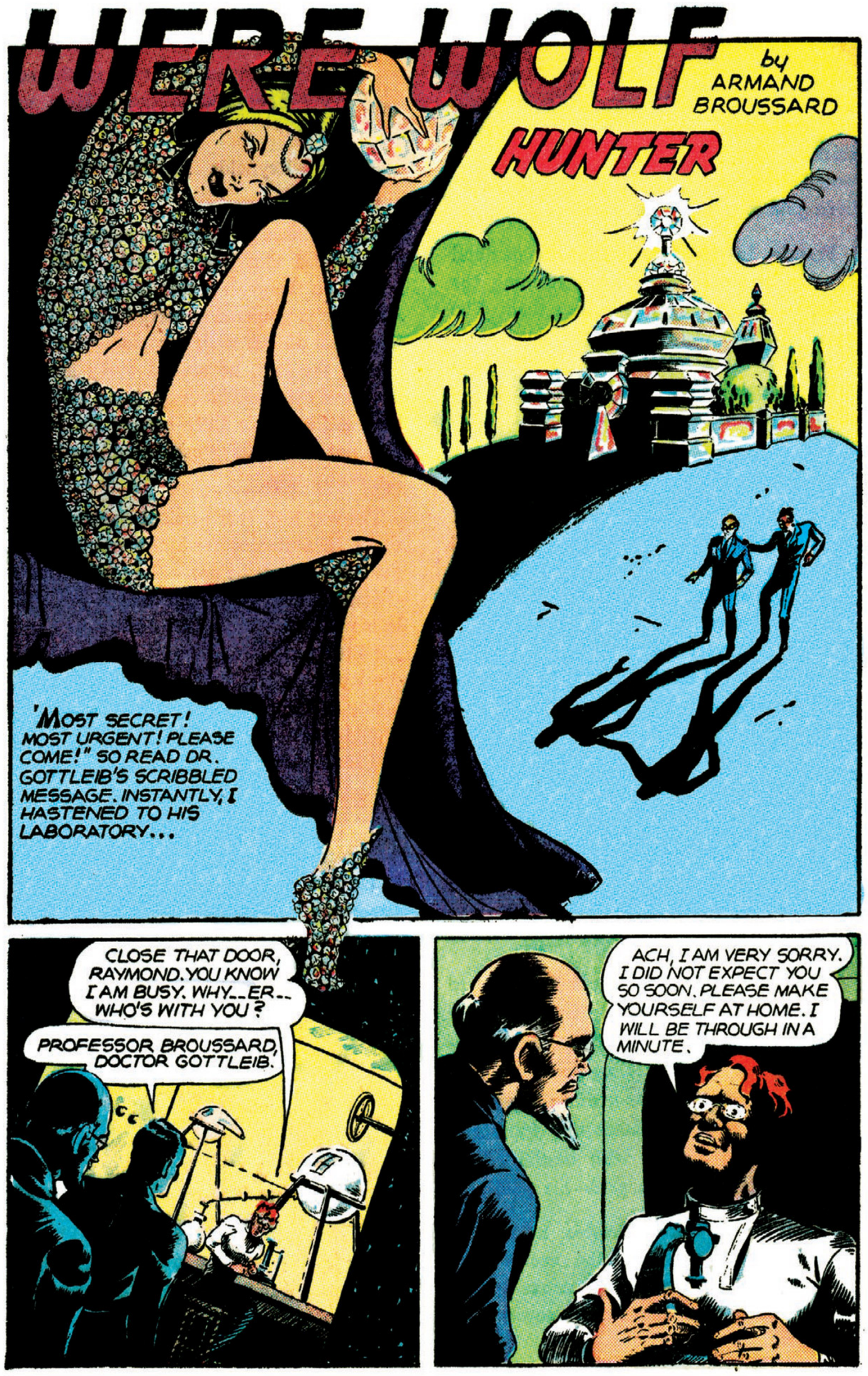
While newspaper strips had usually been written and drawn by the same person, the comic book industry was less personal, and none of the women cartoonists wrote the strips they drew. In the case of Fiction House, a woman often wrote the stories, too. From 1940, when she was only 20 years old, until 1961, Ruth Roche, sometimes using the male pseudonym "Rod Roche," was first the company's major writer, and later editor. Although women writers worked for both Fiction House and other comic book companies, Roche probably wrote more comics during the '40s than any other woman who was not also drawing her own strip.

When the war ended, women in every industry were encouraged to vacate their jobs in favor of the returning men. In a reflection of real life, Mopsy lost her defense job and had to go looking for work.

OPPOSITE: Lily Renée's *Jane Martin* (1943).

LEFT: Mopsy loses her war job.

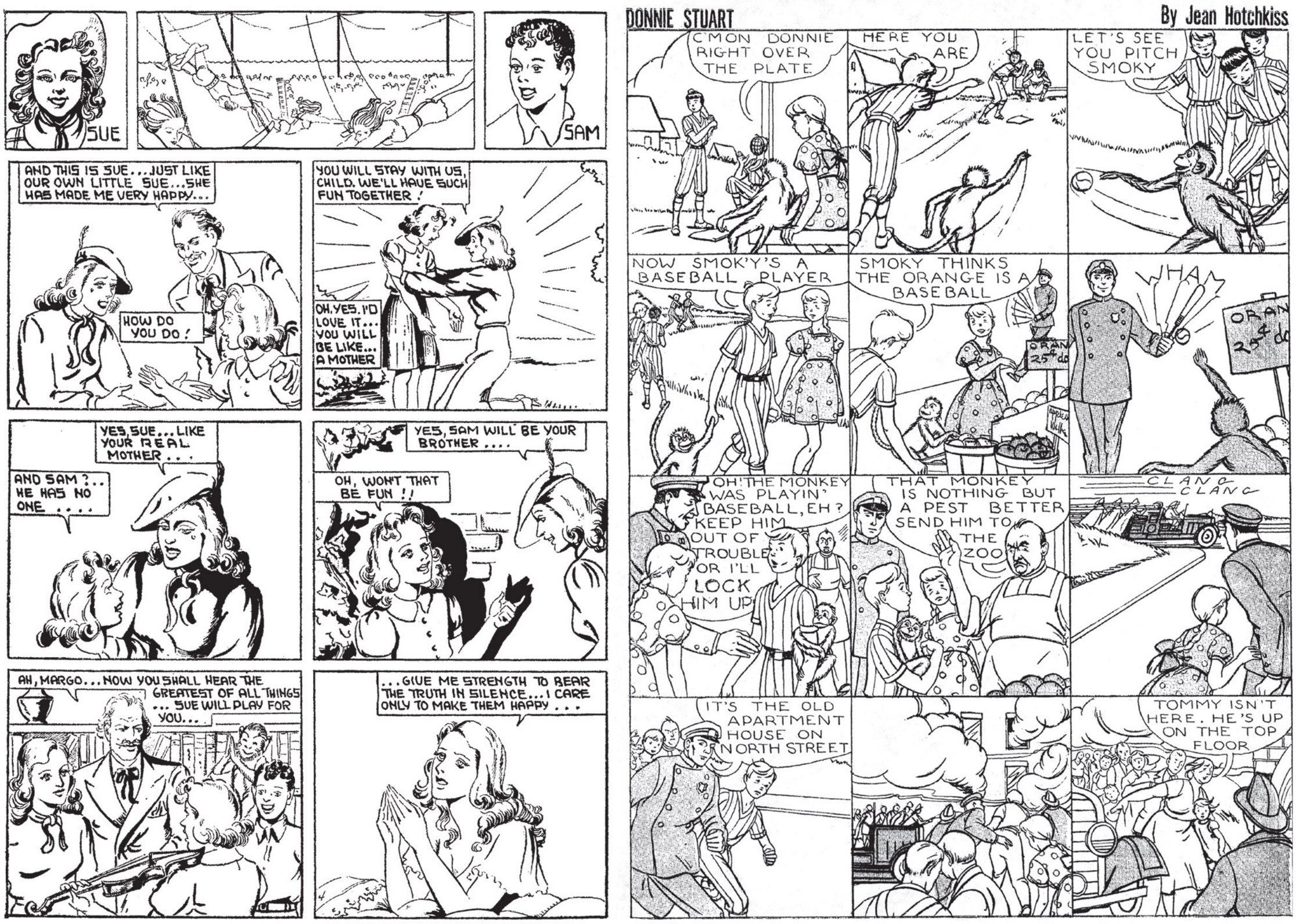
RIGHT: Lily Renée's *Werewolf Hunter* (1946).



Ruth Atkinson, back in the kitchen.

In the world of comics, where women had been working since 1901, the back-to-the-kitchen movement took a different form. Although women continued to draw lighter strips through the 1950s, the men took back their action comics. By 1951, when *Miss Fury* ended, *Brenda Starr* was the only adventure strip that starred a woman and was drawn by a woman. Women had stopped drawing action strips.

Back to the Kitchen



LEFT: Claire S. Moe's *The Circus and Sue* from *Funny Pages* (1948).

RIGHT: Jean Hotchkiss's *Donnie Stuart* from *Globe's Circus* (1948).

OPPOSITE: Olive Bailey cover for *Land of the Lost* #5 (Summer 1947).

All during the 1940s, of course, women were still drawing comics about children, as they had been doing since the beginning of the century. Now, with the advent of action-oriented comic books, came action strips featuring children. As early as 1948, Claire S. Moe drew a series of children's adventure strips with circus-related themes for Centaur's *Funny Pages*. *The Circus and Sue, Circus Days*, and *Little Mary of the Circus* were all exciting serials, reminiscent of films from the period featuring Shirley Temple.

That same year, Corinne Boyd Dillon produced a strip called *Jigger*, and Jean Hotchkiss drew one called *Donnie Stuart*, both for *Globe's Circus, the Comic Riot*. Despite the book's title, these comics were not about the circus; both strips told the story of a young boy, one with his dog, and one with his sister.

In 1946 and 1947, the team of writer Isabel Manning Hewson and artist Olive Bailey adapted the popular radio program *Land of the Lost* into comic book form. The strip chronicled the adventures of two children, Isabel and Billy, in an undersea fantasy kingdom, pitting them against such villains as Spondo, leader of the notorious devilfish, and Uriah Slug.

And throughout the '40s, Vee Quintal Pearson illustrated a series of strips for Catholic comic books such as *Heroes All* and *Treasure Chest*. These comics, distributed free at parochial schools and churches, featured stories of saints and other role models for Catholic children.

NO. 5

Land of the Lost

COMICS

AN EDUCATIONAL EC COMIC

ALL PAGES IN FULL COLOR 10¢

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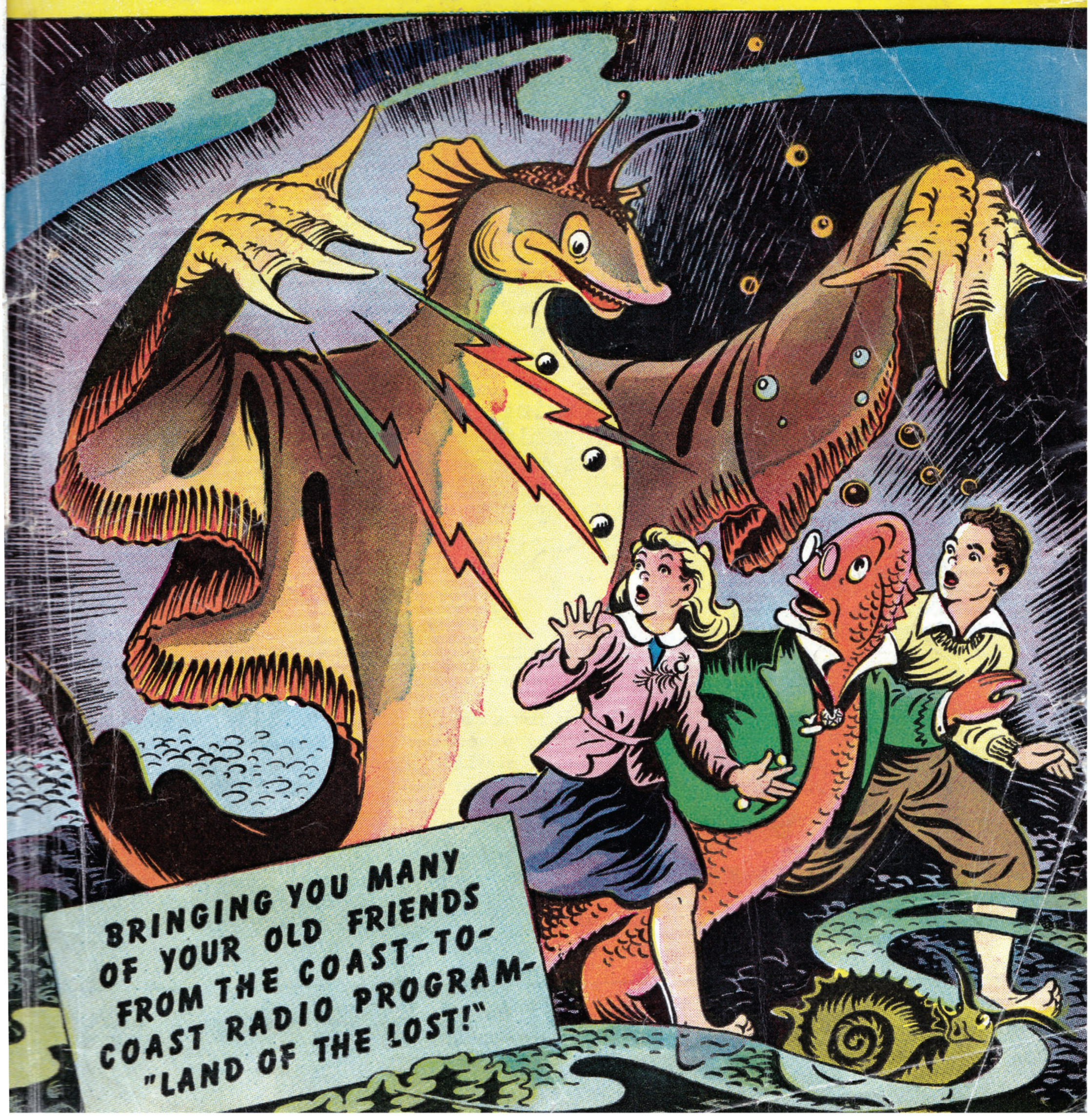


ABOVE: Hilda Terry.

OPPOSITE: Hilda Terry's *Teena* (1955).

Meanwhile, on the Sunday pages of the newspapers, it seemed as though all the cute kids from the early years of the century had finally grown into teenagers. The new teens of the '40s differed from the carefree co-eds of the '20s and the sincere, hardworking Depression kids. Clad in rolled-up dungarees and big shirts, they lounged around in rag doll positions, talking interminably on the phone. The girls moped about boys, and the boys, perpetually skinny, raided the refrigerators of their girlfriends' parents.

December 7, 1941 was not a day in which people were likely to spare much time for the funny pages of their local newspaper, so many Americans missed the debut of Hilda Terry's *Teena*, the first of many teen girl strips to be drawn by women throughout the next 20-odd years. Terry's adorable bobby soxer (a creation of the '40s, a "bobby soxer" is a teenage girl named after the socks she rolled down when she danced to swing music) survived the war and, in fact, lasted until 1966.

Teena had been running successfully for eight years when, in 1949, Hilda Terry sent the following letter to the then all-male National Cartoonists Society (NCS):

Gentlemen:

While we are, individually, in complete sympathy with your wish to convene unhampered by the presence of women, and while we would, individually, like to continue, as far as we are concerned, the indulgence of your masculine whim, we find that the cost of your stag privilege is stagnation for us, professionally. Therefore, we appeal to you, in all fairness, to consider that:

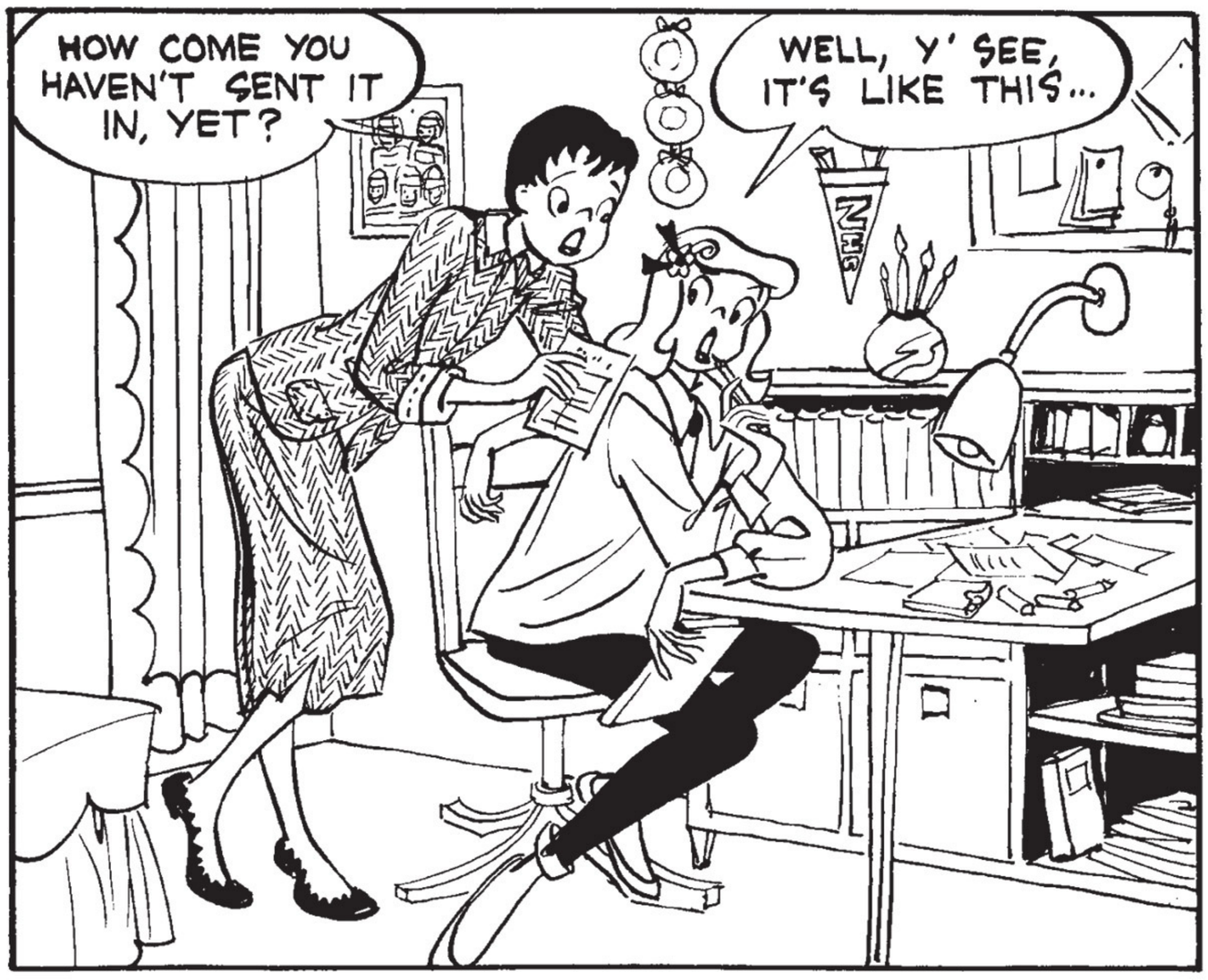
WHEREAS there is no information in the title to denote that this is exclusively a men's organization, and WHEREAS a professional organization that excludes women in this day and age is unheard of and unthought of, and WHEREAS the public is therefore left to assume, where they are interested in any cartoonist of the female sex, that said cartoonist must be excluded from your exhibitions for other reasons damaging to the cartoonist's professional prestige, we must humbly request that you either alter your title to the National Men Cartoonists Society, or confine your activities to social or private functions, or discontinue, in effect, whatever rule or practice you have which bars otherwise qualified women cartoonists to membership for purely sexual reasons.

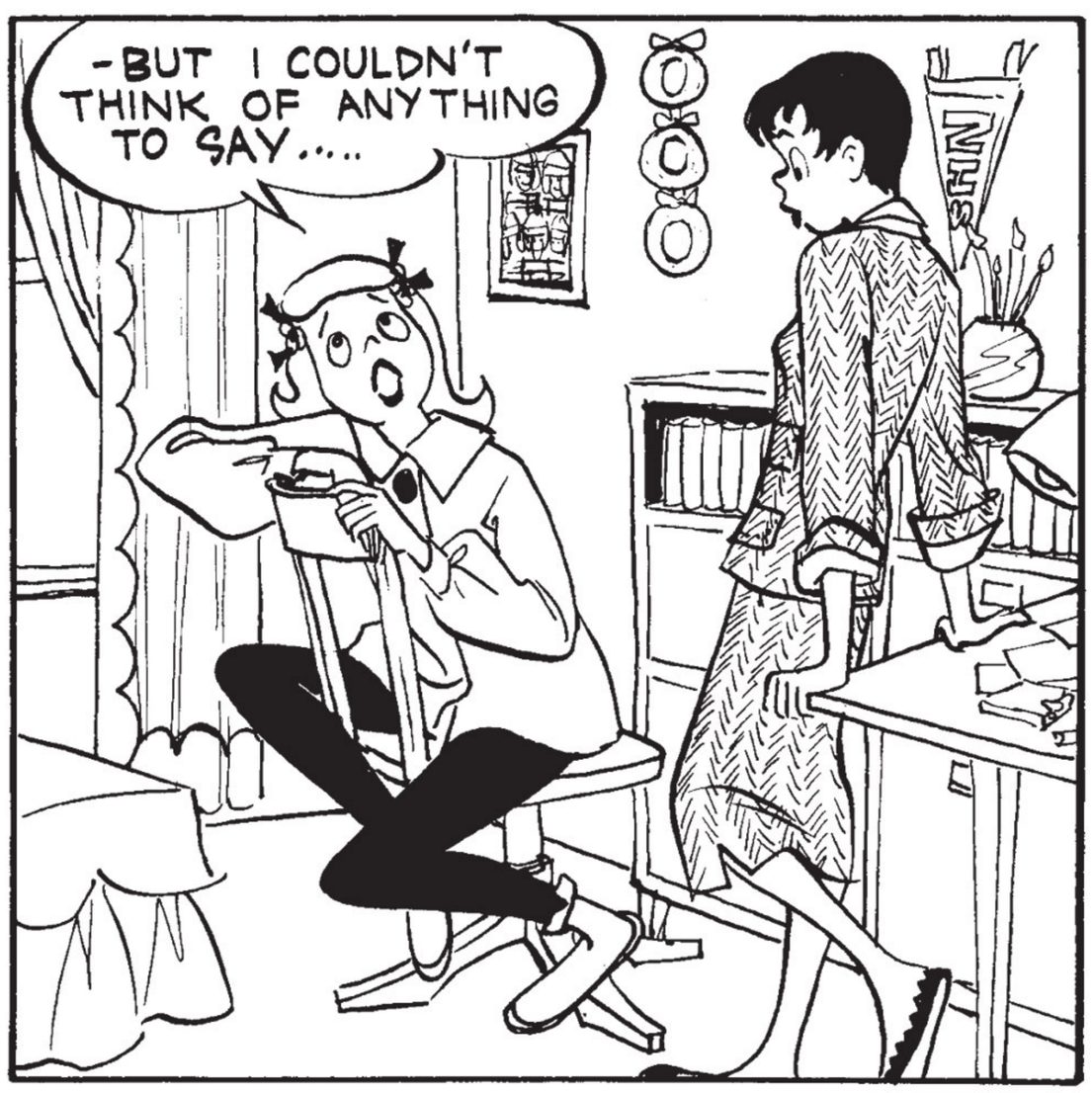
Sincerely,

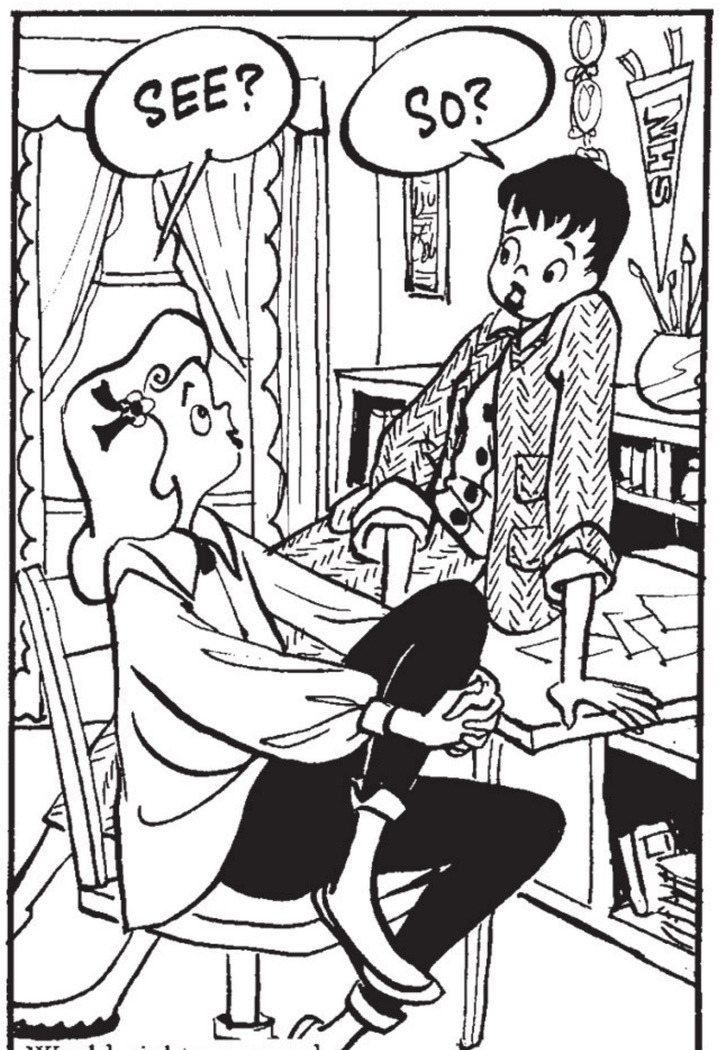
The Committee for Women Cartoonists
Hilda Terry, temporary Chairwoman

TEENA®

BY Hilda Terry







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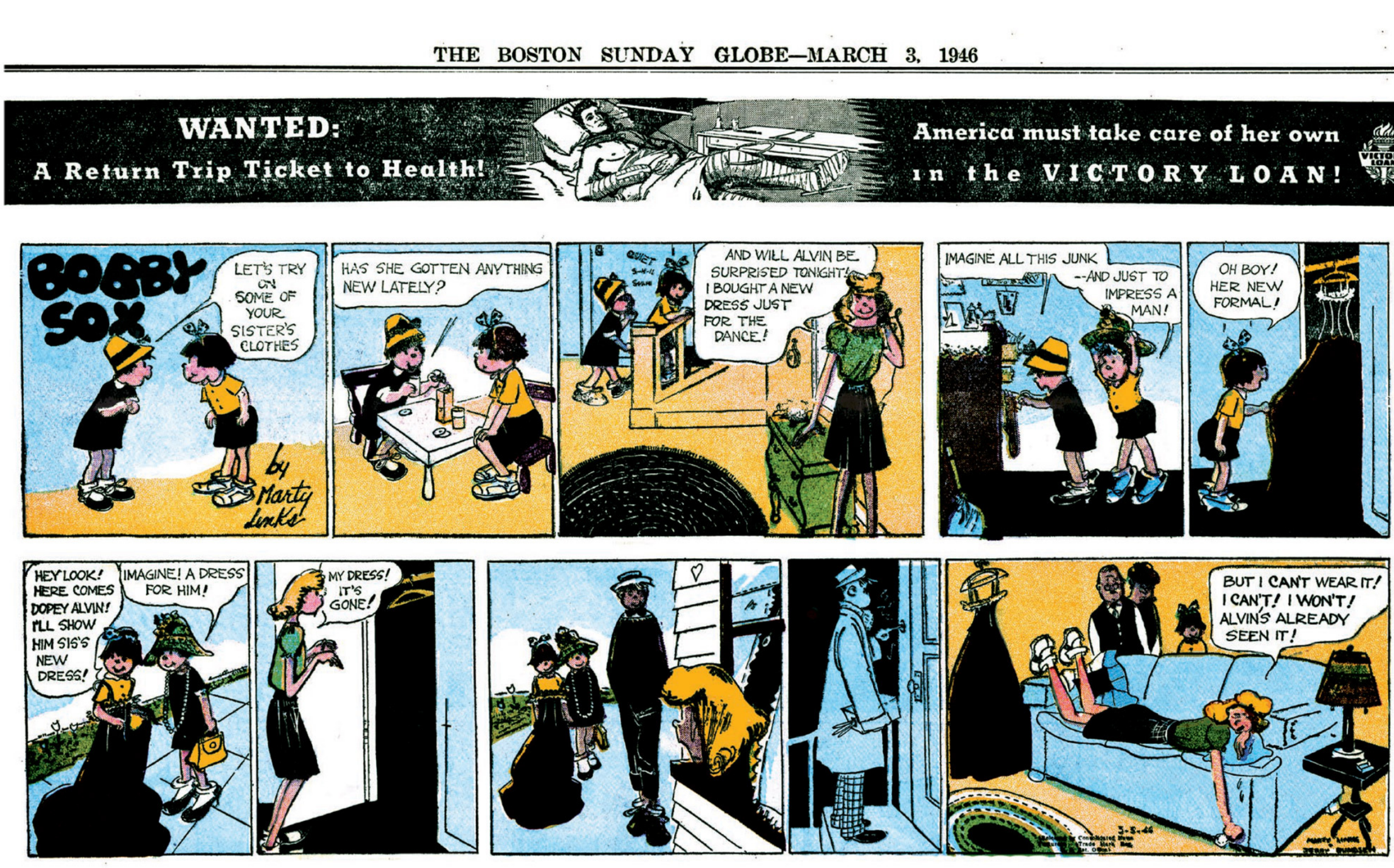
Despite 50 years of women cartoonists, the NCS, founded in 1946, gave as their reason for excluding women that if women were present at meetings of the prestigious group, the men would not be able to curse. Terry's husband, magazine cartoonist Gregory D'Alessio, nominated Terry and woman cartoonist Barbara Shermund for NCS membership. However, when their membership came up for a vote in 1950, despite the recommendation from *Flash Gordon* artist Alex Raymond who said, "I believe that we should admit people for professional ability alone," Terry and Shermund were blackballed. One joker actually quipped that they should admit women into their organization "for purely sexual reasons." This vote prompted a major conflict within the group; several cartoonists objected to it vigorously and vociferously — among them Milton Caniff and Al Capp. The result was a second vote, and this time the two women were allowed into the organization. As soon as Terry became a member, she submitted the names of Gladys Parker and her other women cartoonist friends, thus breaking the gender barrier of the NCS.

Teena lasted until 1966. After the demise of her strip, Terry went on to pioneer in yet another field, computer animation. Going from city to city, she animated caricatures of Major League baseball stars for sports stadium scoreboards around the country. Terry, who had wanted to be a sports cartoonist before doing *Teena*, finally attained her goal. And in 1979, she was given an award for best animation cartoonist from the same organization that had blackballed her almost 30 years before: the National Cartoonists Society.

The bobby soxer had by 1944 also become the name of a new teen strip by Marty Links, *Bobby Sox*. Links joined the National Cartoonists Society shortly after Hilda Terry and found that even after she had sent the NCS an announcement of the birth of her first child,

Marty Links' March 3, 1946 *Bobby Sox* strip.



all the correspondence she received from them was still addressed to "Mr. Links." She admitted to being annoyed enough to briefly consider mailing them her bust measurements.

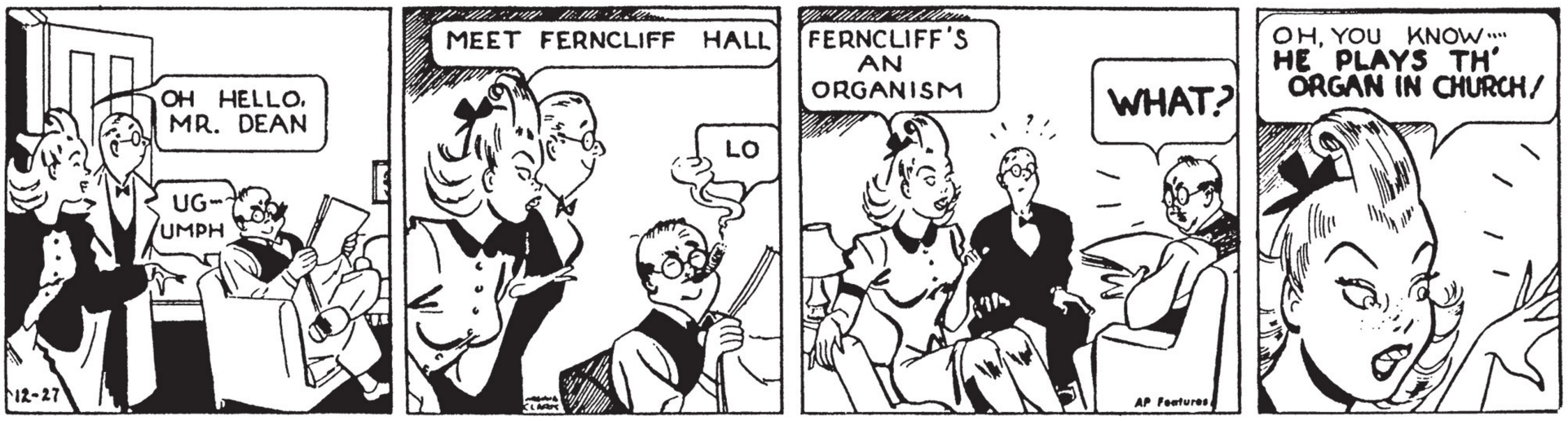
While Hilda Terry, who had no children, got her inspiration from volunteer work with various girl groups — Bluebirds, Campfire Girls, and American Youth Hostels — Marty Links had to look no further than her own home. When she needed to draw the classically messy bedroom of her character, Emmy Lou, she would just peer into the bedroom of her own teenage daughter. Links retired *Bobby Sox* in 1979, saying that she felt the strip no longer represented the teens of the day. After that, she drew greeting cards for Hallmark.

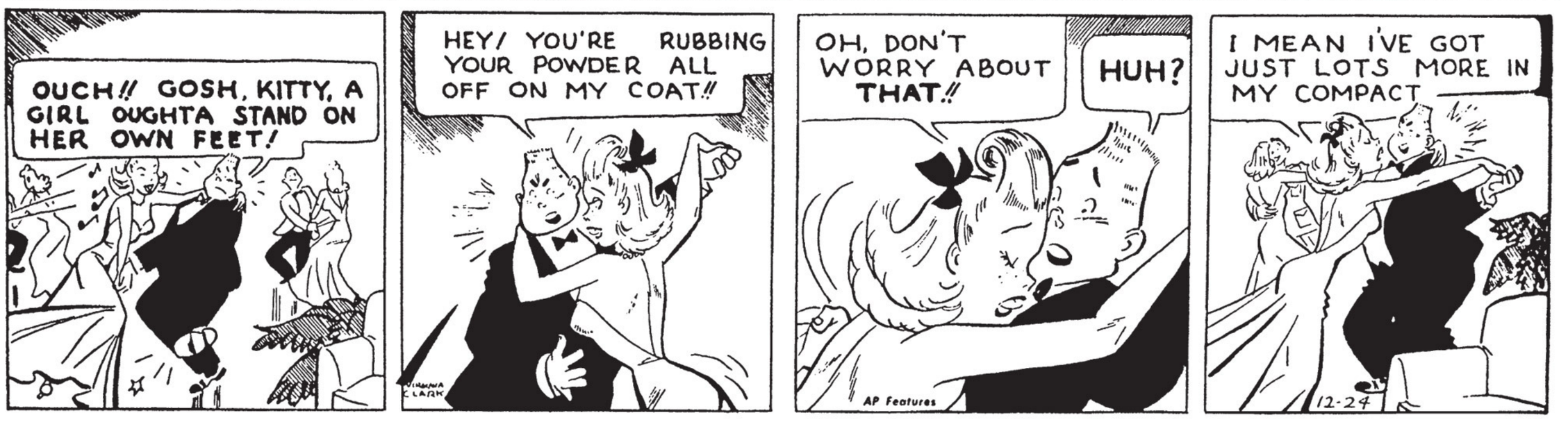
A third comic, similar in style and equal in quality to *Teena* and *Bobby Sox*, was *Susie Q Smith*, drawn by Linda Walter and written by her husband, Jerry Walter. *Susie Q Smith* was syndicated to newspapers by King Features and also had its own comic book, published by Dell.

The same year *Bobby Sox* started in newspapers, Virginia Clark, who had drawn so many beautiful flapper strips during the '20s and '30s under the name Virginia Huget, took over the strip *Oh, Diana* from cartoonist Don Flowers. Flowers, best known for his strip *Modest Maidens*, drew women in a uniquely pinup style. A promotional article from AP Features, the syndicate that distributed *Oh, Diana*, describes it as an adventure strip when Flowers drew it. However, when Virginia Clark took it over she turned it into another teen strip, "[…] to fit the trend," said the article, "toward pleasing youth." The amazingly

LEFT: Marty Links.

RIGHT: Linda Walter's *Suzy Q. Smith*.





from

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

THE FOURTH ESTATE

"Oh, Diana"

HEP to the jive and in step with the times, "Oh, Diana," teen-age gag cartoon strip by Virginia Clark, hit the cartoon pages served by AP FEATURES with its own collegiate poll about the time that Presidential vote polls were on the front pages.

One of the very few daily strips by a woman artist (the GEORGE MATHEW ADAMS "Tippie and Cap Stubbs" by Edwina is the only other that comes to mind at the moment), "Oh, Diana" features the doings and slanguage of the group that includes neither youngsters nor adults and that can describe, if coherent, just how Sinatra rolls his eyes.

Virginia Clark (Mrs. Hudzietz) is a young-looking mother and gets many of her ideas from the youthful gangs which troop in and out of the house with her daughter Mickey, 16, nephew and adopted son John, 15, and Suzy, "Little Sis," 10.

"I don't know how I find time to draw the strip," she told us. But she's been meeting her deadlines for two and a half years—except when the syndicate asked her for some special work.

Like most cartoonists she hates to get down to work, turns on the radio, gets comfortable, does her thinking and penciling at home, spends three days a week at her studio finishing, but does a week's penciling between 9 and 4 on one day. She likes to do pretty faces and clothes, watches the newspapers for new fashions.

"I think any artist is an act of God!" she exclaimed.

The Southern-born artist started to work first on the *New Orleans Item*. She was a cousin of the managing editor. "It was probably the only reason I got the job," she laughed, adding that she was 16 and did fashion and advertising sketches. Next she sketched for the Maison Blanche.

At 17 she was society editor of the *Dallas Journal* and from her wise vantage wrote a lonely hearts column. After attending the Chicago Art Institute and flirting with the stage, she "became completely contented" with free lance sketching, for four years did the Peggy Lux drawings which in 1937 won a national advertising award. For a while she was with NEA Service, writing and sketching.

When she took over the Diana strip from Don "Modest Maidens" Flowers, it was an adventure comic, but she changed it to a humorous strip to fit the trend toward pleasing youth.

For Rates and Samples write—

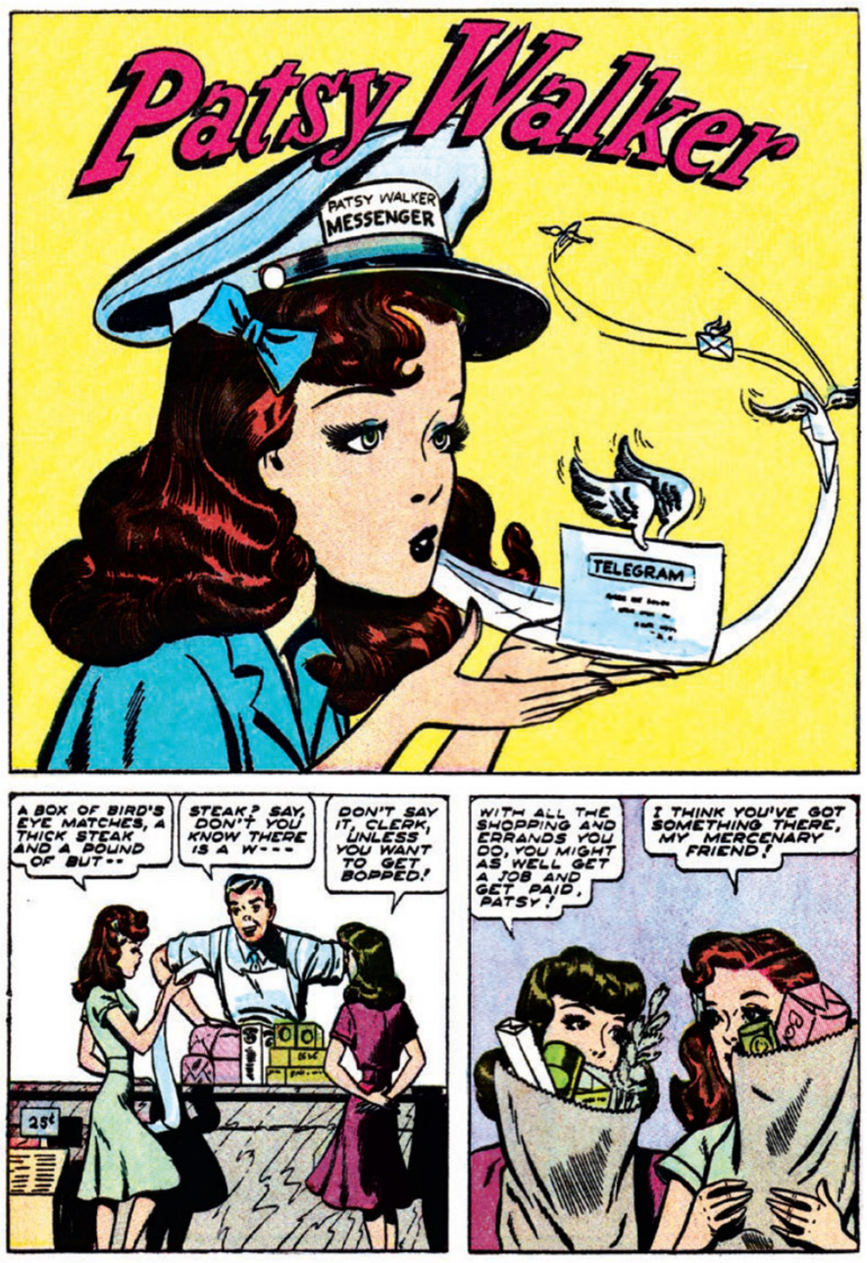
AP NEWSFEATURES 50 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK 20, N. Y.

You've Got a Date

WITH **OH, DIANA**

No wonder readers fall for "Oh, Diana!" An eye-appealing, personable junior college gal . . . a host of lively collegiate characters . . . a lovable mother and dad . . . the little "perfect brat" sister . . . and a daily complete-in-itself gag continuity are all part of this delightful comic strip.

Artist Virginia Clark injects a fresh style into her sketches and light humor into her continuity lines to make "Oh, Diana!" a pleasure highspot of the comics page for fans of all ages. Besides — Diana's authentic, smartly-styled clothes have added appeal for women readers. If you are one of the hundreds of editors who agree that a well-balanced comic lineup is essential, then you'll want to write for more samples and details after looking over the preview that follows.



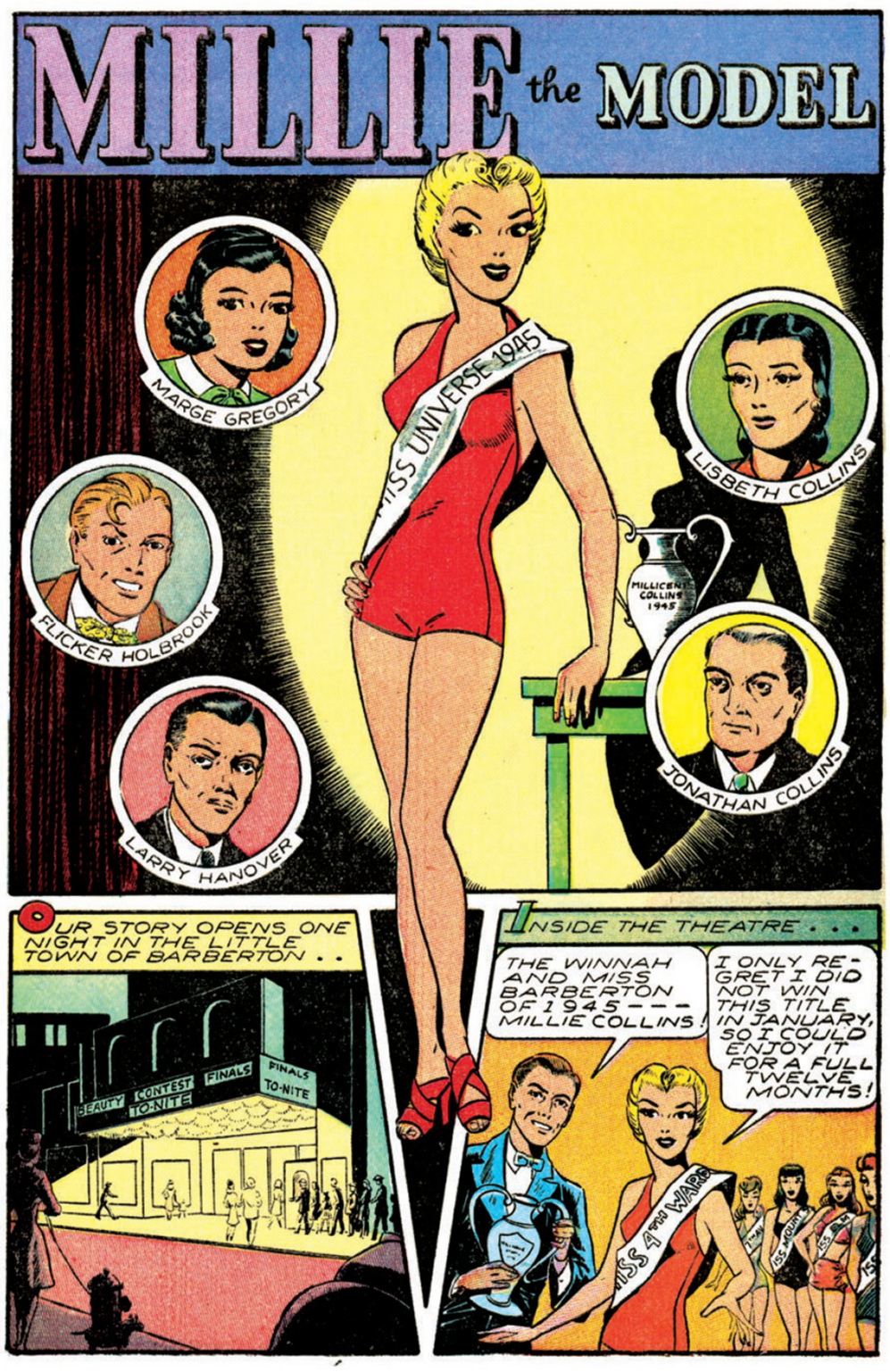
OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Virginia (Huget) Clark's *Oh, Diana* strips.
BOTTOM: AP Features syndicate advertisements for *Oh, Diana*, from *Editor and Publisher* magazine.

THIS PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Ruth Atkinson's *Patsy Walker* #1 (1945).
TOP RIGHT: Fran Hopper's *Patsy Walker* #5 (June 1946).
BELOW: Ruth Atkinson's *Millie the Model* #1 (1945).

versatile Clark, who 10 years earlier had been able to perfectly mimic Percy Crosby's style, now changed her drawing to imitate Don Flowers.

It should be no surprise that a trait held in common by all these artists of teen strips was an acute awareness of fashion. Aside from dress designer Gladys Parker, Linda Walter; Hilda Terry; and Marty Links had all worked in the fashion field before going on to comics, and another promotional article about Virginia Clark's *Oh, Diana* reads, "Diana's authentic, smartly-styled clothes have added appeal for women readers."

It didn't take comic books long to catch up with newspaper strips. In 1945, Sergeant Stan Lee, newly mustered out of the Armed Forces, resumed his prewar position as editor and art director at a line of comic books published by his uncle, Martin Goodman. These books, bearing many different names, would eventually become Marvel Comics, the largest comic book publisher in America today. They put out superhero titles and comics with a teen theme, aimed primarily at young girls. That same year, Ruth Atkinson, one of the many women who drew for Fiction House, had been promoted to art director. Unhappy with her new position, which left her unable to draw, she quit Fiction House and

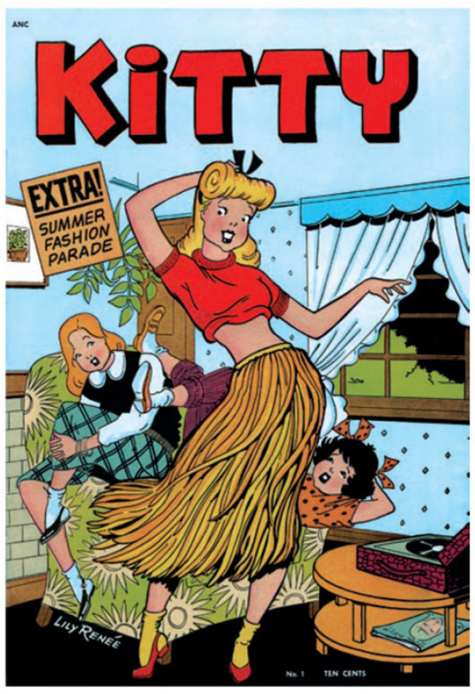


TOP: Lily Renée's *Kitty*.

BOTTOM LEFT: Ruth Atkinson's *Angela, from Club 16* (1948).

BOTTOM RIGHT: Lily Renée's *Abbott and Costello* (1949).

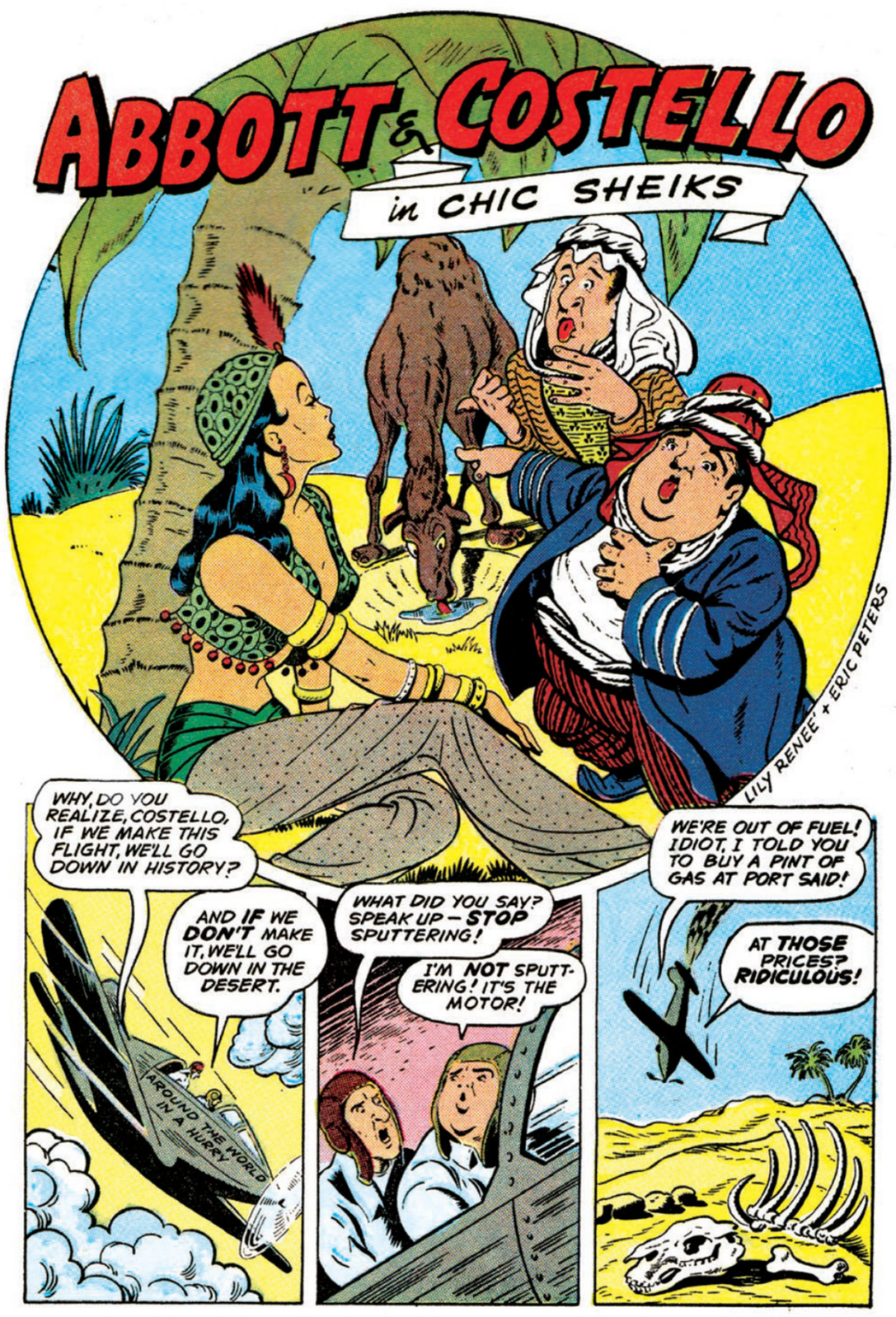
OPPOSITE: Pauline Loth's *Miss America* (1945).



became a freelancer. Two of her first jobs were for the comic books edited by Lee and consisted of drawing the first issues of both *Millie the Model* and *Patsy Walker*. Of all the teen comics edited by Lee for the next 20 years, those two titles became the most successful and longest-lasting. Although Atkinson only drew the first issue of *Millie the Model*, she stayed with *Patsy Walker* for the comic's first two years, sharing the books with Fran Hopper. By 1948, Atkinson had moved on to draw yet another teen comic book called *Club 16*, for which she drew yet another teenage girl, Angela.

Meanwhile, Lily Renée, who had been Atkinson's roommate when they had both worked for Fiction House, had married Eric Peters and moved to St. John Publications, where she drew a teen strip called *Kitty*, now signing with her full name, Lily Renée. For the same publisher, she and Eric Peters drew *Abbott and Costello* comics.

Martin Goodman also published a magazine called *Miss America*, subtitled *Teen Life*, which featured *Patsy Walker* and other comics. In 1946, it printed *Taffy*, a two-page advice-for-teens column done in comic strip form by Phyllis Muchow, who had also drawn for *Coronet* and *Esquire* magazines. When drawing for *Esquire*, she was not allowed to sign her full name, and had to sign her cartoons "P. Muchow." By 1947, the magazine had switched to *Rusty*, a similar strip drawn by a woman who signed her work only with her first name, "Dottie."



Abbott and Costello—Universal-International stars. See them in their latest U-I picture, "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein".

Miss AMERICA

WHO IS THE SOFT SPOKEN, ICY-NERVED YOUTH WHO DESTROYS WITH A CHERUBIC SMILE? WHAT DIABOLIC PURPOSE LAY BENEATH THIS BOASTING SUSPECT'S, TAUNTING OF THE BAFFLED POLICE? WHY DID HE LEAVE HIS PORTRAIT AT THE SCENE OF EACH CRIME? **MISS AMERICA** IN SEARCH OF THE ANSWERS, COMES TO GRIP WITH---

"THE CHERUB"

IN THE LIBRARY OF A WEALTHY AND PROMINENT BANKER--

GREAT CAESAR! YOU'RE THE CHERUB! I'VE SEEN YOUR PICTURE IN THE PAPERS!

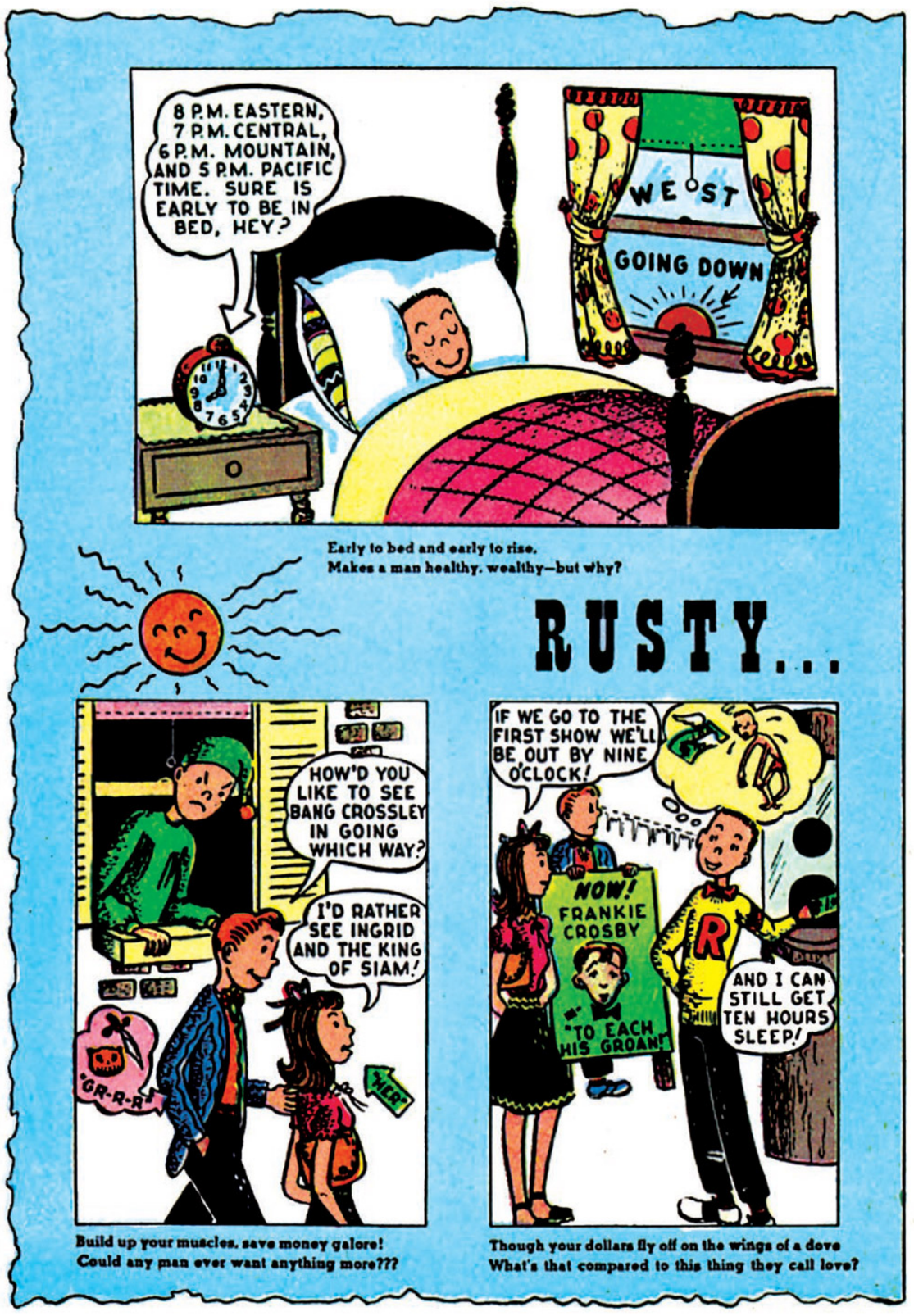
CORRECT! (SIGH) AND NOW, THE SAFE, IF YOU PLEASE!

NO! SPARE ME! YOU CAN HAVE THE MONEY AND JEWELS! WHY KILL ME?

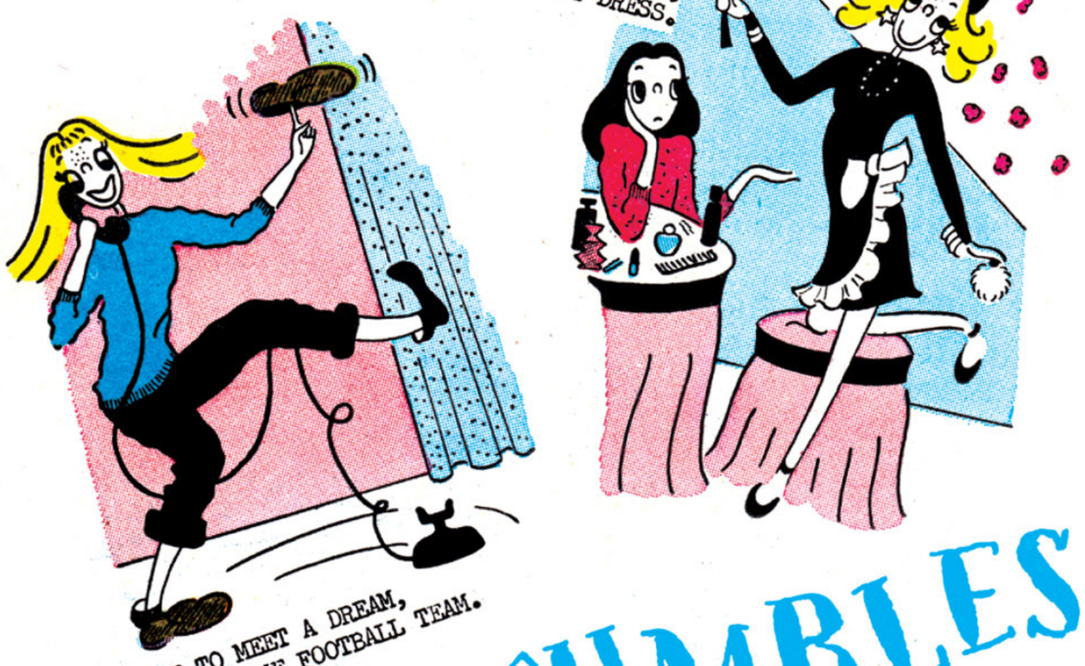
MY VICTIMS MUST ALL DIE!

Patsy Walker

WELL, THERE ARE ONLY A FEW SHOP-PING WEEKS LEFT UNTIL YOU — KNOW-WHAT— — — SO — —



SNUBBING GOOD ADVICE FROM TESS, SHE RIGS UP IN HER PARTY DRESS.



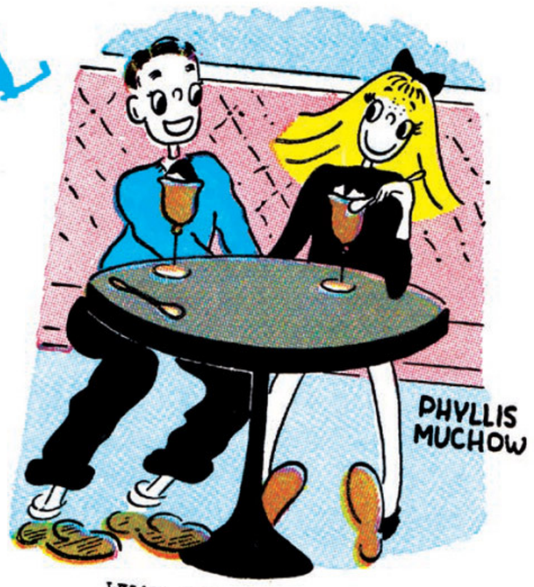
TAFFY'S OFF TO MEET A DREAM, THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM.

TAFFY FUMBLES

THE GAME SHOULD BE THE MAJOR MATTER, BUT TAFFY'S TEETH ARE ALL A-CHATTER.

GALLANT BUSTER SHOWS ALARM, BUT TAFFY WON'T CONCEAL HER CHARM.

THE BALL



WHAT A HORRID REVELATION! BUT BUSTER IS A CONSOLATION...

THE MOMENT COMES—THE FATEFUL MEETING AND TAFFY GETS THIS THRILLING GREETING.

The comic book industry, concerned with turning out comics quickly and cheaply, had evolved an assembly line process in which one person wrote the scripts, another illustrated them in pencil, another artist inked over the penciled art, and a fourth did the lettering. Oddly, despite the long history of women writers and artists in the field, women inkers remain a rarity to this day. I have no idea why this particular part of the comic book process remains the last bastion of maleness.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Pauline Loth's *Patsy Walker* from *Miss America* magazine (1945).
TOP RIGHT: *Rusty* from *Miss America* magazine (1947) signed by "Dottie."
BOTTOM: Phyllis Muchow's *Taffy* from *Miss America* magazine (1946).

BELOW: Phyllis Muchow at Coney Island with a copy of *Esquire*, to which she had contributed under a man's name.

BELOW: "Violet Barclay, Glamorous Girl Inker," from *Stan Lee's Secrets Behind the Comics* (1947).

RIGHT: Valerie (Violet) Barclay.

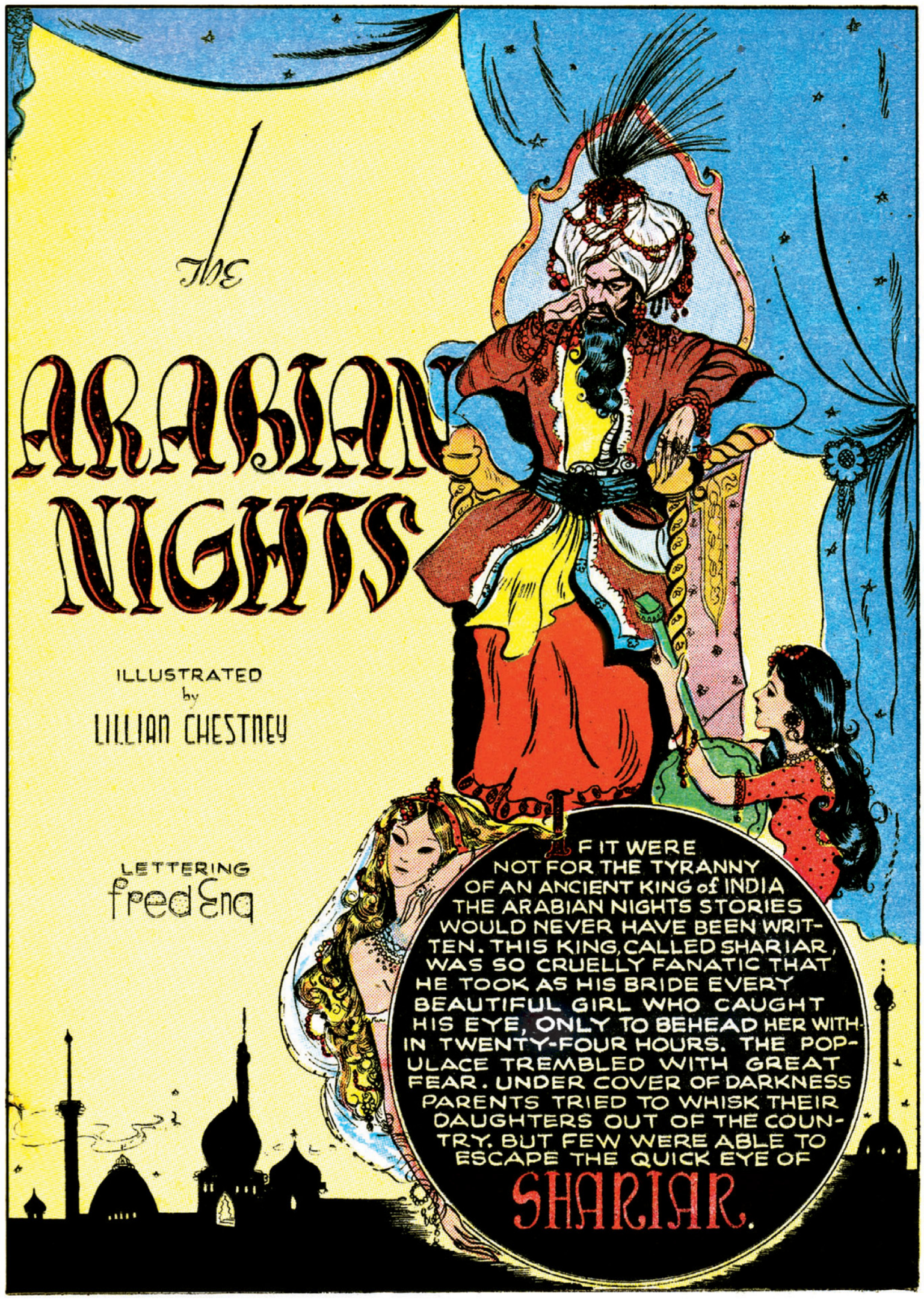
There are and have been exceptions. In Lee's 1947 book, *Secrets Behind the Comics*, he refers to "Violet Barclay, glamorous girl inker of 'Rusty' and many other strips." Barclay, who later changed her first name to Valerie, was another woman who was heavily influenced by Nell Brinkley as a child. She never really liked working on the more cartoony comics of the Stan Lee-Martin Goodman teen line, preferring romance comic books, for which she could draw beautiful women. In an interview, she remembered that Stan Lee used to give his artists two-hour breaks, during which they would drink coffee and go through magazines, cutting out illustrations by "pretty girl" artists like Al Parker and Jon Whitcomb, which they would add to their swipe file for copying later in their love comics. After comics, Barclay went into fashion illustration and commercial art and, fittingly, she also drew a number of "pop art" ads in her old romance comics style. For her own enjoyment, she painted portraits in the style of her favorite artist, John Singer Sargent, always carefully signing them with her own name, lest she be accused of forgery.

Ann Brewster inked over the pencils of Robert H. Webb for the Classics Illustrated adaptation of *Frankenstein* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, as well as drawing for Classics Illustrated herself. Another woman who drew for Classics was Lillian Chestney. With a style much more closely related to fairy-tale illustration than to comics, she was perfectly suited to adapt *Gulliver's Travels* and *Arabian Nights* into comic form. Back in 1937, Merna Gamble had adapted *A Tale of Two Cities* into comic book form, not for Classics, but for the company that would later become DC Comics.

Editors who seemed to reject the idea of women drawing action strips obviously found no fault with these artists drawing teenage comics, and women were also welcome in the new love comics. It is

BELOW: Lillian Chestney's *Arabian Nights* from *Classics Illustrated* (1943).

NEXT SPREAD: Virginia (Huget) Clark's "Love Problems" from *Intimate Love* (1951).



LOVE PROBLEMS

ANOTHER DULL EVENING! TOM WANTED ME TO GO SQUARE DANCING-- *IMAGINE* ANYTHING SO... SO SIMPLE! I'D RATHER WATCH TELEVISION! MAYBE I'LL SEE A NEW HAIRDO I LIKE...

I was a fool! That's being painfully frank, isn't it? Well, I *was* a dumb-bunny... I was so blind, I never saw the real, wonderful things all around me-- until they almost passed me by...

R-263

The world I lived in was a make-believe glamorland. I was the most gorgeous girl alive; scads of men adored me... I could hardly wait until I finished school to leave town and have my foolish dreams come true. This everyday dullness was killing me!

OH--TOM! YOU AGAIN?

MORNING, CHICK! HEY, CRACK A SMILE... AND GIVE ME THOSE BOOKS!

GOOD OLD TOM! PLAIN AS AN OLD SHOE... AND JUST AS EXCITING! HE CERTAINLY WASN'T MY DREAM MAN! AND THEN, ON A MORNING I SHALL NEVER FORGET.

HUH? WHAT'S UP?

SOMETHING'S POSTED ON THE BULLETIN BOARD...

OH... HOW WONDERFUL! A HOLLYWOOD COMPANY MAKING A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON AMERICAN TEENAGERS IS HERE... LOOKING FOR TALENT! IT'S MY *CHANCE*! THEY'RE TESTING AFTER CLASS IN THE GYM...!

CUT CLASSES AND RUSHED HOME. I DRESSED IN MY BEST... EVEN TO FALSE EYELASHES. AND THEN...

HMMM... PRETTY GIRL... IF I COULD SEE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE! GO WASH THAT PAINT OFF, HONEY, AND THEN COME BACK!

I-I... OH! HOW *DARE* YOU!

COULDN'T STAND THE HUMILIATION. I THINK I CRIED FOR HOURS, UNTIL MOM CAME HOME--ALL EXCITED.

DEB! DID YOU HEAR? TOM'S BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE BIG PART!

Tom? Impossible! First of all, he couldn't act. Then, who'd pay to see his homely, freckled face in the movies? Well--I paid. I bought my own ticket and went to see Tom Ames in "High School Days" six months later...

...AND... AND WHEN HE DOES COME HOME, HE WON'T KNOW ME... AND I DON'T BLAME HIM!

The months went by... until the whole town turned out for "Tom Ames" day...

J-JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES AND I'LL SEE HIM! OH, DEAR... IT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT TOM'S BEING A STAR AND ME JUST A NOBODY, I C-COULD CRY!

AND THEN TOM WAS THERE! I FELT MY HEART TURN TOPSY-TURVY AT THE SIGHT OF HIS BOYISH GRIN...

H-HE SEES ME! OH, TOM! B-BUT WHY SHOULD HE EVEN TALK TO ME, AFTER THE WAY I SNOOTED HIM? I-I'VE LOST HIM FOREVER...

BUT... DEB! DEB!

C'MON, COOKIE! I WROTE POP TO PARK THE OLD JALOPPY HERE FOR ME! THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION WILL HAVE TO WAIT A BIT!

BUT TOM...!

TOM JUST GRINNED AT ME. IN A FEW MINUTES WE WERE IN THE PARK...

TOM... YOU'VE NOT CHANGED AT ALL!

DID YOU THINK I WOULD? CHICK, THAT GLAMOUR GLITTER IS NOT FOR ME! I LIKE BEING THE WAY I AM... 'CAUSE YOU'RE MY GIRL, TO COME HOME TO! AREN'T YOU, DEB?

Am I? What a question! I'll only have to live forever, to tell Tom how much I love him... how much more wonderful his arms are around me, than all the shimmering tinsel, the artificial, glittering phoniness of my daydreams!

THE END

THIS PAGE:
LEFT: Ruth Atkinson drew "My Dearest Passenger" for *Lovers' Lane* #4 (April 1949).
RIGHT: Valerie (Violet) Barclay drew "Spurned!" for *Complete Love Magazine* #179 (September 1954).

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT: Anne Brewster was an excellent artist, but she seemed to have a habit of drawing the same woman over and over. Here is "The Brewster Girl" in "Flashy Blonde," "Jealous," and "The Things They Whispered."
BOTTOM RIGHT: Lily Renée's "Too Young for Love."

no coincidence that the romance comics genre made its debut right after the war, in 1947, with Jack Kirby and Joe Simon's *Young Romance*. In step with the postwar times, the not-so-subtle message in all of the love comics was that no matter who she was, no matter what she did, a young woman could only find true happiness by meeting the right man, marrying, and raising a family. With some exceptions, the stories in these books were hackneyed and clichéd, but the art was often stylish and elegant, allowing women artists to draw what they seemed to prefer drawing: graceful close-ups of women's faces. Ann Brewster, Ruth Atkinson, Lily Renée, Virginia (Huget) Clark, and Valerie Barclay all found their niche in books with such titles as *Love Romances, Lover's Lane, Young Love*, and *Complete Love*.

If women cartoonists were still accepted in the more traditional teen and romance comics, one would expect to also find them in funny-animal comics. However, research has uncovered few women working in that field. Dotty Keller drew funny-animal strips for Timely Comics briefly during the war, and Etta Parks drew *Red Rabbit,* a funny-animal parody of cowboy comic hero *Red Ryder*, from 1949-1951. Later, working under her married name of Etta Hulme, she drew editorial cartoons for the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*. In an interview, Hulme, who had worked in this field for 20 years, confessed to being at least "mildly offended" upon reading in a book about editorial cartooning, *The Ungentlemanly Art,* that there are no women editorial cartoonists.

Flashy Blonde

FOR THE FIRST MORNING OF MY NEW JOB, I DECIDED TO BE A NEW PERSONALITY, MORE GLAMOROUS THAN I HAD EVER BEEN! I DECIDED THAT ***THIS*** WAS THE WAY TO DO IT...MAKE-UP TO THE HILT, FREE MY BLONDE HAIR, AND MAKE MY PRESENCE FELT WITH A SLINKY DRESS!

THIS OUGHT TO MAKE THE MEN SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE!

Ann Brewster

LIKE BEES AROUND A HIVE, THE MEN IN THE OFFICE HUMMED AT MY DESK AT COFFEE-BREAK TIME...

YOU'RE QUITE AN ADDITION TO THIS FIRM, PENNY!

YEAH! THE SHINIEST THING WE'VE HAD HERE SINCE THEY INSTALLED THE COFFEE URN!

HEY, PENNY, I'D LIKE TO TAKE YOU DANCING SATURDAY NIGHT! IS IT A DATE?

ALL RIGHT, GARY! I'LL WRITE DOWN MY ADDRESS AND I'LL BE READY AT EIGHT!

JEALOUS!

HAPPY, DARLING?

UMMM, YES! HOLD ME TIGHTER, CLARK!

WHEN I FELT CLARK'S STRONG ARMS AROUND ME AS WE DANCED, I COULD ALMOST FORGET MY FOOLISH FEARS! MOST OF THE TIME, I WAS CONSUMED WITH JEALOUSY BECAUSE CLARK WORKED SO OFTEN WITH WOMEN! WOMEN PLAYED A BIG PART IN CLARK'S LIFE AS AN INTERIOR DECORATOR!

I BEG YOUR PARDON... I'M SORRY WE...

WHY, MR. OLIVER! HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

CLARK'S SMILE WAS A MAGNET TO WOMEN! I WAS SURE THERE WAS MORE TO THIS CASUAL HELLO THAN JUST ANOTHER CLIENT...

WHO WAS THAT?

MISS GRANT...A CLIENT! I'VE ONLY DONE SMALL JOBS FOR HER, BUT SOMEDAY I HOPE TO DO HER COUNTRY ESTATE! I'M GLAD WE BUMPED INTO HER!

1

The Things They Whispered

Ann Brewster

AS MY HUSBAND AND I SAT DOWN AT OUR TABLE I COULD HEAR THE LOW BUZZ OF VOICES ALL AROUND ME! HOW OFTEN I HAD HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, AND SO IT WAS NO SECRET TO ME... ***"THE THINGS THEY WHISPERED!"***

M56

DAVE WASN'T A HANDSOME MAN, I KNEW THAT! ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A TIME, AND NOT TOO LONG AGO, WHEN A MAN'S LOOKS MATTERED A GREAT DEAL...

IT'S FUNNY HOW A PERSON CAN CHANGE! ONLY A YEAR AGO *I* WAS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PERSON!

1

What pitfalls lie in the path of a girl who falls madly in love with her first date? I had to learn the hard way because nobody could tell me that love-at-first-sight is blind -- terribly blind, and those who pursue it are doomed to mocking disappointment and despair!

Was I too young for LOVE?

HOP IN, EILEEN! WE'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

YOU WOULD! JUST WHEN I WAS GOING TO TELL TED TO GET OUT AND LEAVE US ALONE!

Lily Renée

"ALTHOUGH I WAS IN MY SENIOR YEAR, I'D NEVER TAKEN BOYS SERIOUSLY -- UNTIL THE AFTERNOON I MET TED BURTON...

EILEEN -- I WANT YOU TO MEET TED. TED, THIS IS EILEEN HOOPER.

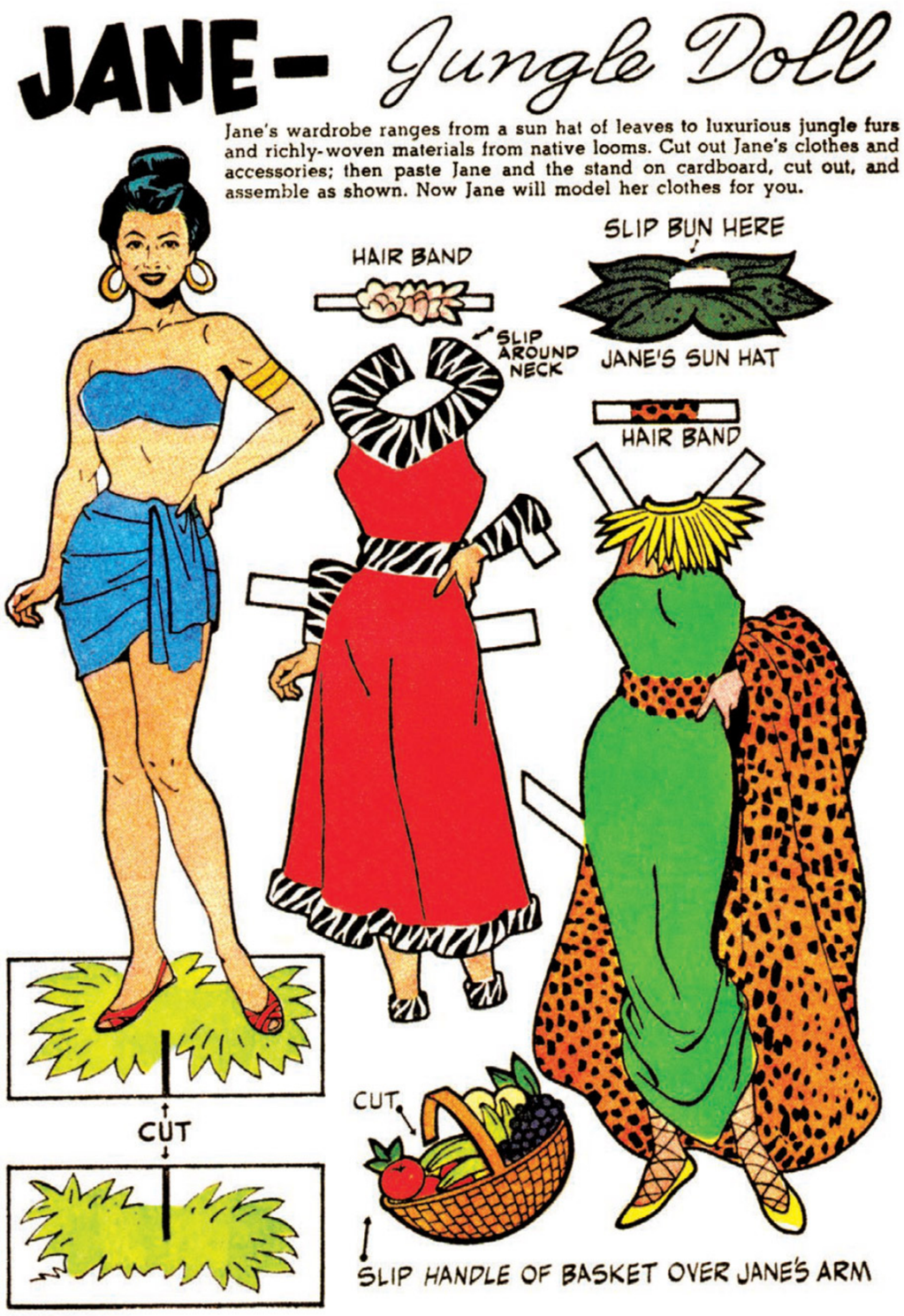
HELLO!

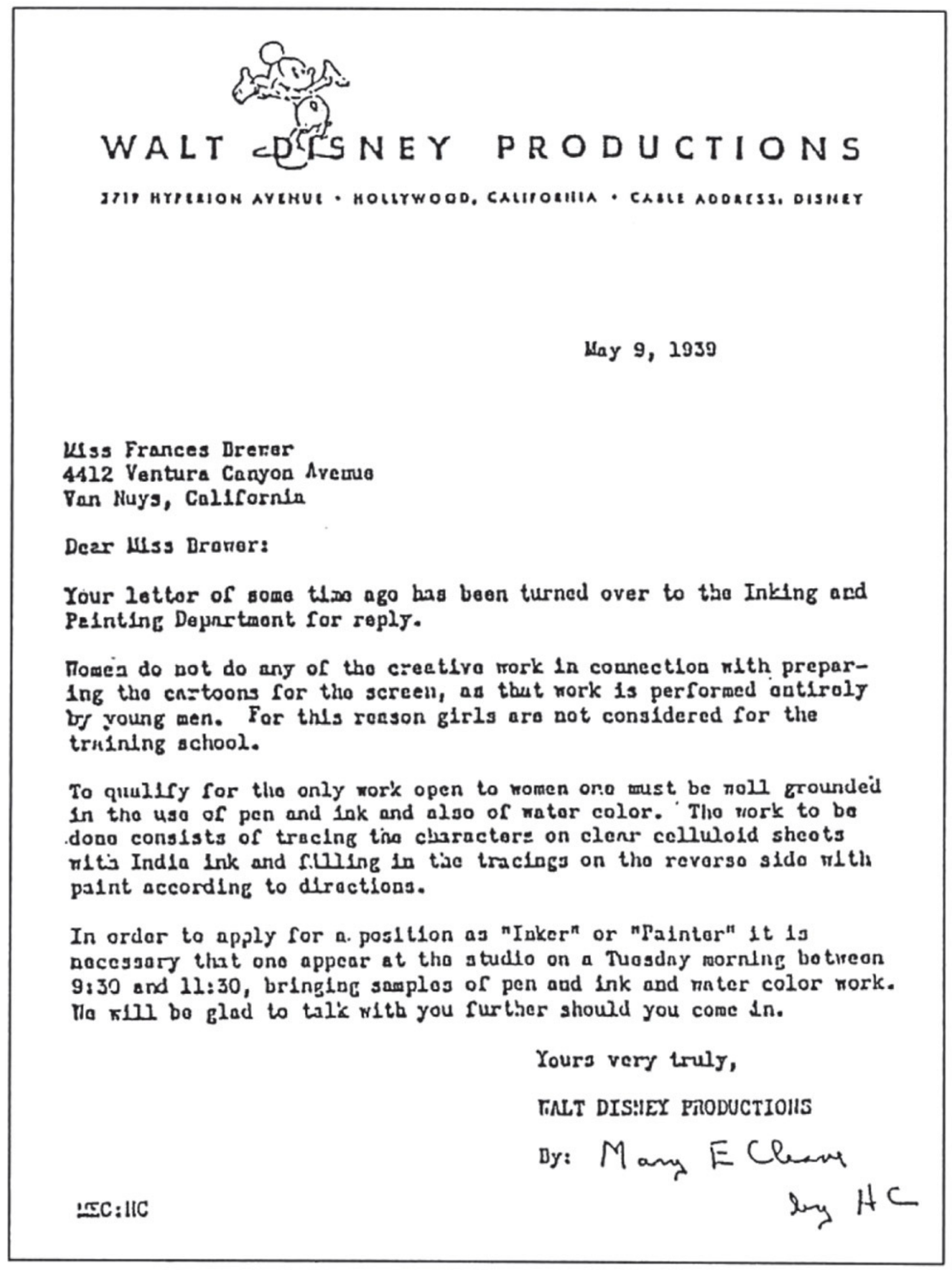
GOSH! I'VE BEEN MISSING SOMETHING!

"BUT I WAS SHY AT FIRST. IT SEEMED STRANGE FOR A BOY TO HAVE HIS ARM AROUND ME. I TRIED TO OVERCOME MY TIMIDITY...

THEY DIDN'T COME HALF AS SWEET AS YOU WHEN I WENT TO SCHOOL, KITTEN!

GRADUATED ALREADY? I WAS SURE I'D NEVER SEEN YOU IN CLASSES.





WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

3719 HYPERION AVENUE • HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA • CABLE ADDRESS: DISNEY

May 9, 1939

Miss Frances Drewer
4412 Ventura Canyon Avenue
Van Nuys, California

Dear Miss Drewer:

Your letter of some time ago has been turned over to the Inking and Painting Department for reply.

Women do not do any of the creative work in connection with preparing the cartoons for the screen, as that work is performed entirely by young men. For this reason girls are not considered for the training school.

To qualify for the only work open to women one must be well grounded in the use of pen and ink and also of water color. The work to be done consists of tracing the characters on clear celluloid sheets with India ink and filling in the tracings on the reverse side with paint according to directions.

In order to apply for a position as "Inker" or "Painter" it is necessary that one appear at the studio on a Tuesday morning between 9:30 and 11:30, bringing samples of pen and ink and water color work. We will be glad to talk with you further should you come in.

Yours very truly,

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

By: Mary E Clearw

by H C

MEC:HC

LEFT: Christine Lyttle's Jane paper dolls.

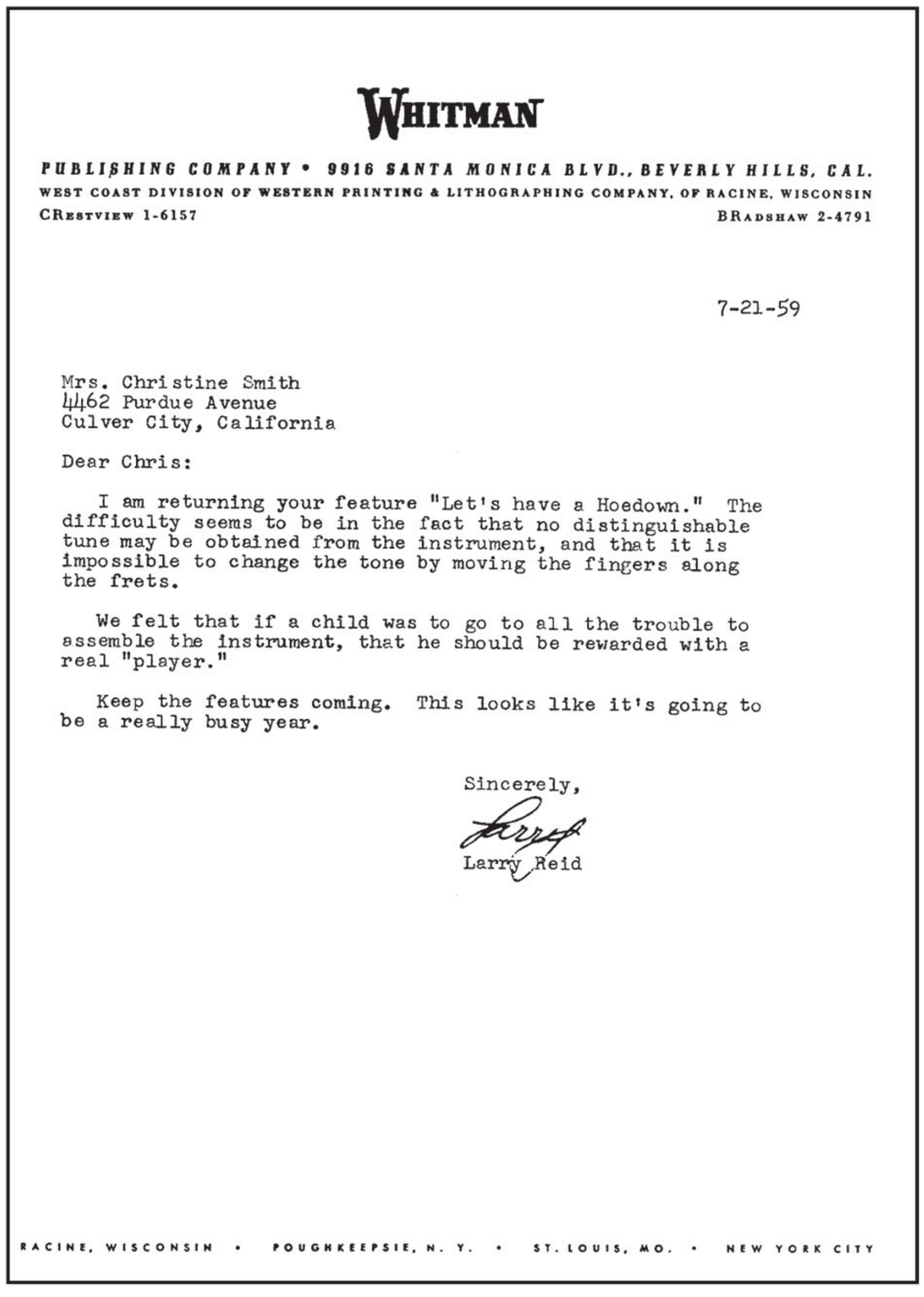
RIGHT: "Women Do Not Animate": the infamous Disney rejection letter.

In the mid-'50s, Christine Lyttle, then using her married name Christine Smith, applied for work at Western Printing and Lithography, the company that produced comics for both the Dell and Whitman publishing companies. After being told that Western didn't "hire girls," the company took her on to do erasures and corrections for six weeks before reluctantly allowing her to draw. During her years with Western, Lyttle wrote and drew novelty pages, comic pages, and inside front and back covers for various comic books, including *Roy Rogers*, *Little Lulu*, *Tarzan*, and such Walt Disney books as *Mickey Mouse Almanac*, *Silly Symphonies*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*. During all these years, the only artistic credit she was ever given in print was in an *I Love Lucy* coloring book, which she drew in 1959. After she left comics, Lyttle became a painter and a courtroom artist covering, among other trials, that of serial killer Ted Bundy.

Marie Severin, possibly this country's most respected woman superhero artist, has a similar recollection. During the same years Lyttle worked for Western, Severin's employer, EC Comics, was experiencing difficulties, and she knew it was time to look for other work. Severin had heard that Walt Disney Productions had offices in New York City, so she looked them up. At the front desk, a small man with a Disney moustache did not bother to look at her portfolio. Instead he informed her that Disney didn't hire women. "No women? Not at all?" stammered the artist, who had been used to more egalitarian treatment at EC. The little man replied, "Follow me. I'll show you." He led her to a huge room with orderly

rows of desks. At each desk was a lamp, and under each lamp sat a man in a white shirt, drawing. "See?" said the little man. Severin realized that she wouldn't want to work at a place like that, anyway.

It goes without saying that all those white-shirted men working for Disney were white, white-shirted men. If, after the war, action-oriented comics became a male-only domain, all nationally syndicated comics were and had been a white-only domain. Only three African-American cartoonists had managed to break the color barrier in comics during the entire first half of the century, and they had all been men. It is safe, then, to assume that it never occurred to Jackie Ormes, an African-American woman, to attempt selling her comic strip, *Torchy Brown*, to any white-owned newspaper or syndicate. So, in 1937, *Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem* made its debut in the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier*, and was syndicated to 14 other black newspapers around the country. The start of the strip found its young heroine leaving her farm in the South to find work in New York's famous Cotton Club. As the story proceeded, she encountered romance and danger in Harlem. In 1940, Ormes' strip went on a 10-year hiatus, during which time Ormes drew two single-panel cartoons — *Candy*, about a black maid, and *Patty Jo 'n' Ginger*. Patty Jo, her little-girl heroine, was manufactured as a doll in the late '40s and early '50s and is believed to be America's first black character doll. Then, in 1950, Torchy returned to the comics page of the *Courier* in *Torchy Brown's Heartbeats*. In the style of her popular white sister, *Brenda Starr*, the beautiful black heroine found herself lost in the jungles of Brazil, caught in the clutches of a boa



WHITMAN

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WEST COAST DIVISION OF WESTERN PRINTING & LITHOGRAPHING COMPANY, OF RACINE, WISCONSIN
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7-21-59

Mrs. Christine Smith
4462 Purdue Avenue
Culver City, California

Dear Chris:

I am returning your feature "Let's have a Hoedown." The difficulty seems to be in the fact that no distinguishable tune may be obtained from the instrument, and that it is impossible to change the tone by moving the fingers along the frets.

We felt that if a child was to go to all the trouble to assemble the instrument, that he should be rewarded with a real "player."

Keep the features coming. This looks like it's going to be a really busy year.

Sincerely,

Larry Reid

RACINE, WISCONSIN • POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y. • ST. LOUIS, MO. • NEW YORK CITY

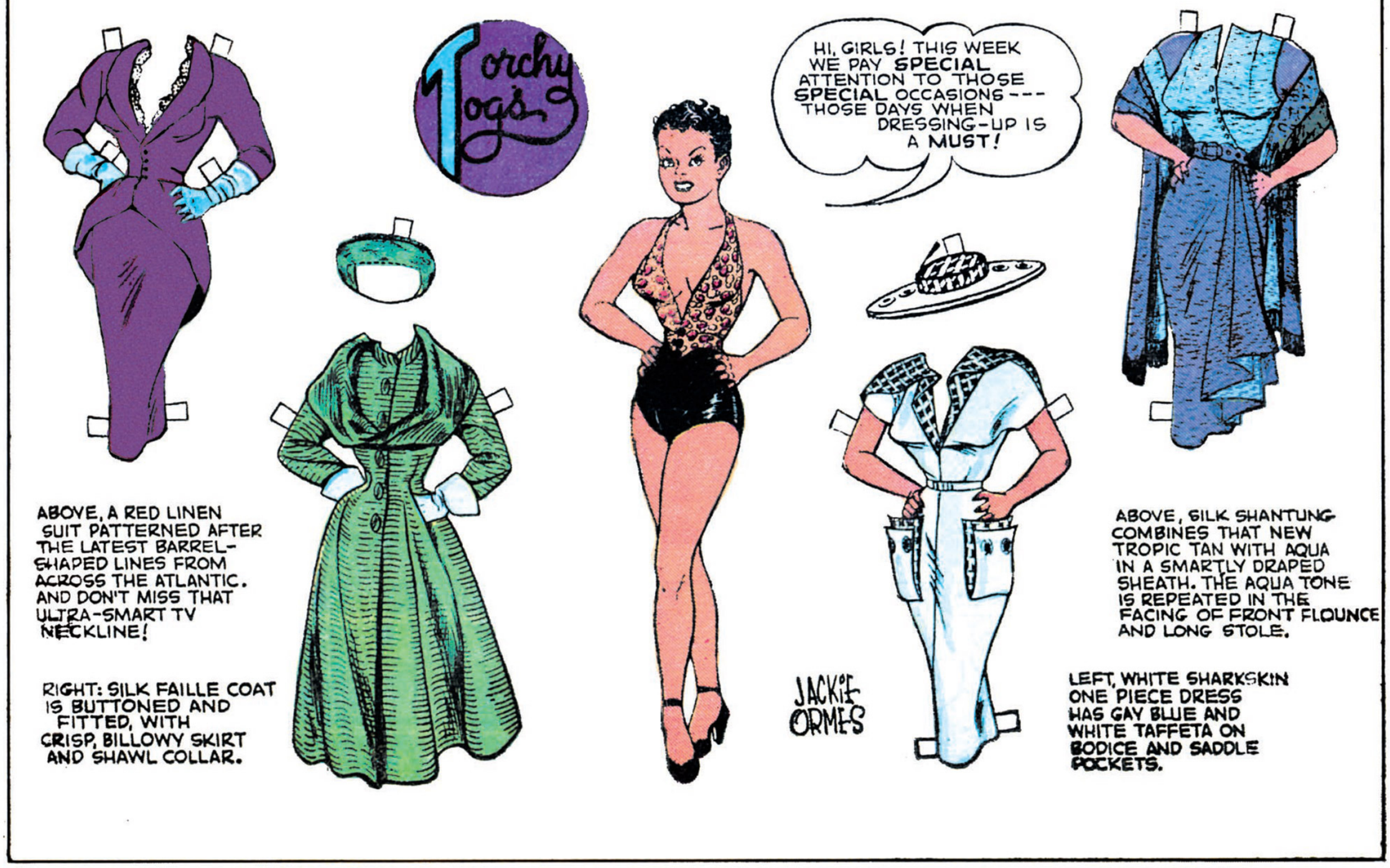
Christine Lyttle's "Put that Hoe Down and Let's Have a Hoedown" sketch for a comic page, and a rejection letter (1959).

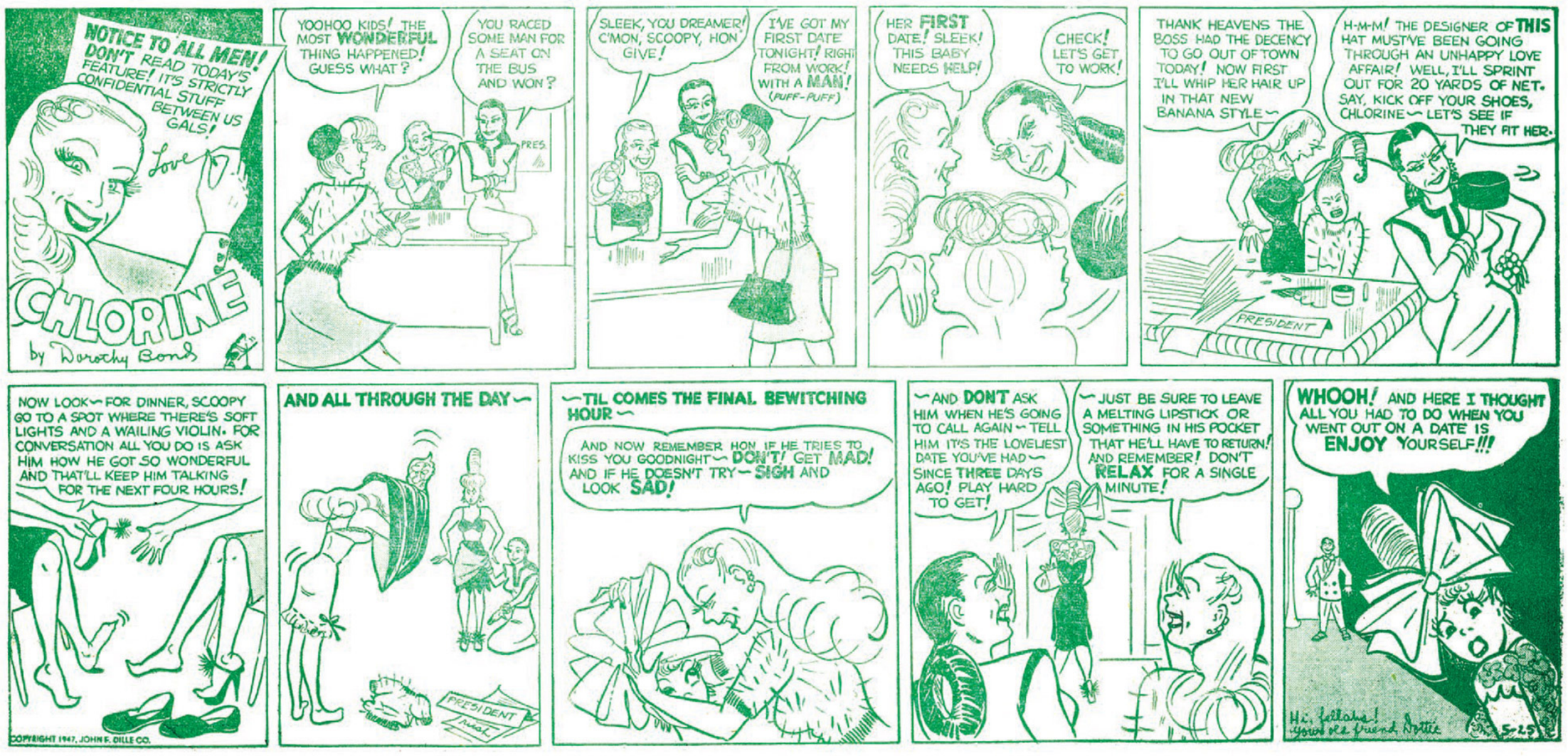
constrictor, or on a tramp steamer, fighting off the advances of a villainous First Mate in the middle of a hurricane. Always, she moved from love interest to love interest. Like so many other women cartoonists before her, Ormes included paper dolls on the Sunday page, "Torchy's Togs." But instead of a Mystery Man, Torchy Brown was more likely to fall in love with a jazz musician or a young black doctor struggling to keep his clinic together in the rural South. What kept Torchy Brown from being a black soap opera was Ormes' treatment of segregation, bigotry, and, in an age when ecology was a virtually unknown word, environmental pollution.

Jackie Ormes is believed to be the first (and until recently, the only) black woman to have her own syndicated comic strip, but at least one other black woman cartoonist has been found. During the 1950s, Doris McClarly drew the jive-talking *Fireball Freddy* for *Hep*, a black humor magazine based in Texas and published by Sepia.

If the heroines of women-drawn strips could no longer be detectives, counterspies, or aviatrixes, the more traditional jobs were still open to them. During the late '40s, Dorothy Bond syndicated a strip dedicated especially to secretaries: *Chlorine*. Bond's strip is so sarcastic that one can almost hear the lines of her long-suffering office worker read by the wisecracking dames of film noir like Rosalind Russell or Eve Arden. *Chlorine* had a gimmick; a real woman posed for the title character. She was Dee Mulvey, Bond's secretary, just out of business college. In an interview, Mulvey described her years with Dorothy Bond:

Jackie Ormes' *Torchy's Togs*.





Dorothy Bond's May 25, 1947 Chlorine.

I walked into an ancient and fading office building in Chicago's Loop, where the cage elevator took me up, up, until soon I knocked on the door with the letters in bold print "Dorothy Bond — Cartoonist."

She was very blonde and her over-permed hair was pulled back behind her ears, quite slender, and her movements were quick and spontaneous […] *and her eyes sparkled and wrinkled when her smile filled her face. She was standing in her slip and very high heels. She could have been in her late 30s, early 40s* […] *I never knew, but she welcomed me, and with very few preliminary questions I was hired.*

The office was something from a Mickey Spillane movie. Two darkly cluttered rooms – the inner room being her work area where light showered through large windows, when available through the towering forest of commerce that pulsated outside. My outer office was an old wood desk with files and a coffee pot. She had many adoring fans, as shown by the stacks of letters that had been backing up, and my duties were to reply to each one and enclose a small cartoon booklet. She had quite a few newspapers from coast to coast and was supplying daily and Sunday cartoons to her publisher. Her feature cartoon was called The Ladies, *and it was the cartoon that spawned* Chlorine, Champion of the Working Girl. *We grew very close as we worked together. I loved it when after struggling for hours for an idea, lightning would strike and an enormous "HAH" would erupt from her office, nearly sending me to the floor.*

Dorothy liked a little "nip" but was cautious not to let it interfere with her work. Her bottle of Cointreau was kept in my bottom desk drawer, out of her immediate reach when she was frustrated for ideas (going through a "dry spell"). She made a deal with God that she would never take a drink in the office, and when the ideas were totally vacant, she would storm into my office and grab the bottle and rush out into the hall in her slip and high heels, with, I assume, a

clear conscience. Never was the absence of clothing fully explained, but it seemed so compatible with her free spirit that it became acceptable to myself and to the various and curious that worked in the offices around us.

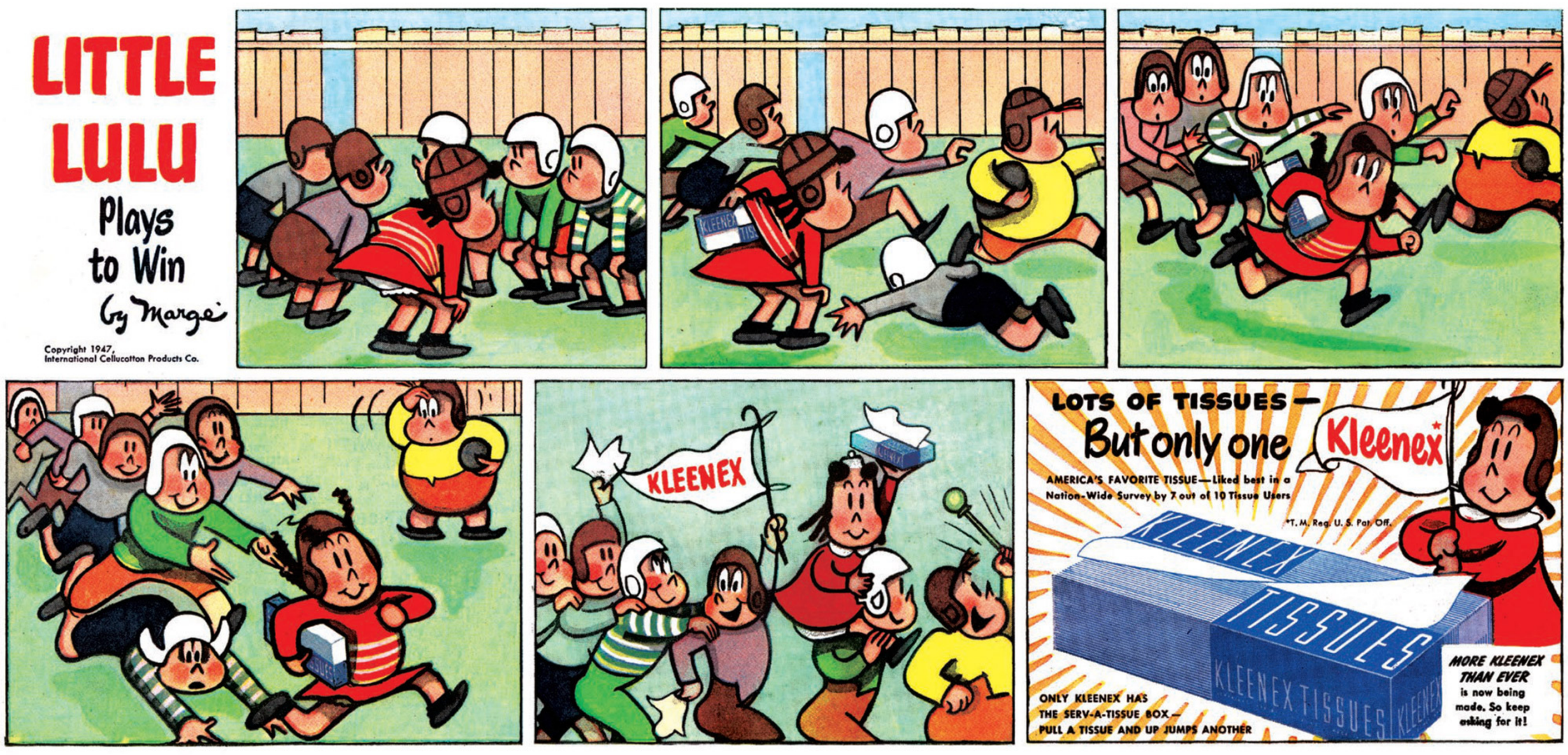
I believe it was one of the "dry" periods when Dorothy was using my (then) slender figure as a model while drawing Chlorine in a sassy pose. "Why not make Chlorine into a real live girl? YOU will be Chlorine!!!!!"

The publishers loved it and Dorothy came alive with ideas. There were interviews, pictures, and now I was receiving fan mail.

By the 1950s, comics were no longer limited to the funny pages of newspapers or to the garishly colored pages of comic books. Fashion is a field that has always been open to women, and in the '50s, Edna Kaula drew *Sally*, a strip that ran in the trade publication *Fabrics*. *Fabrics* had realized the potential of messages sent out in strip form, and comics had long been used to sell products from soap to soup. Throughout the '40s and '50s,

TOP: Edna Kaula's *Sally* (1955).

BOTTOM: Marge Henderson's Little Lulu sells Kleenex (1947).



Amelia Opdyke Jones (Oppy) for *The Subway Sun*.

Marge Henderson's Little Lulu, moonlighting from her monthly panel in *The Saturday Evening Post*, sold Kleenex in the Sunday comics section of national newspapers. Unlike the *Little Lulu* comic books, Marge drew these comics by herself.

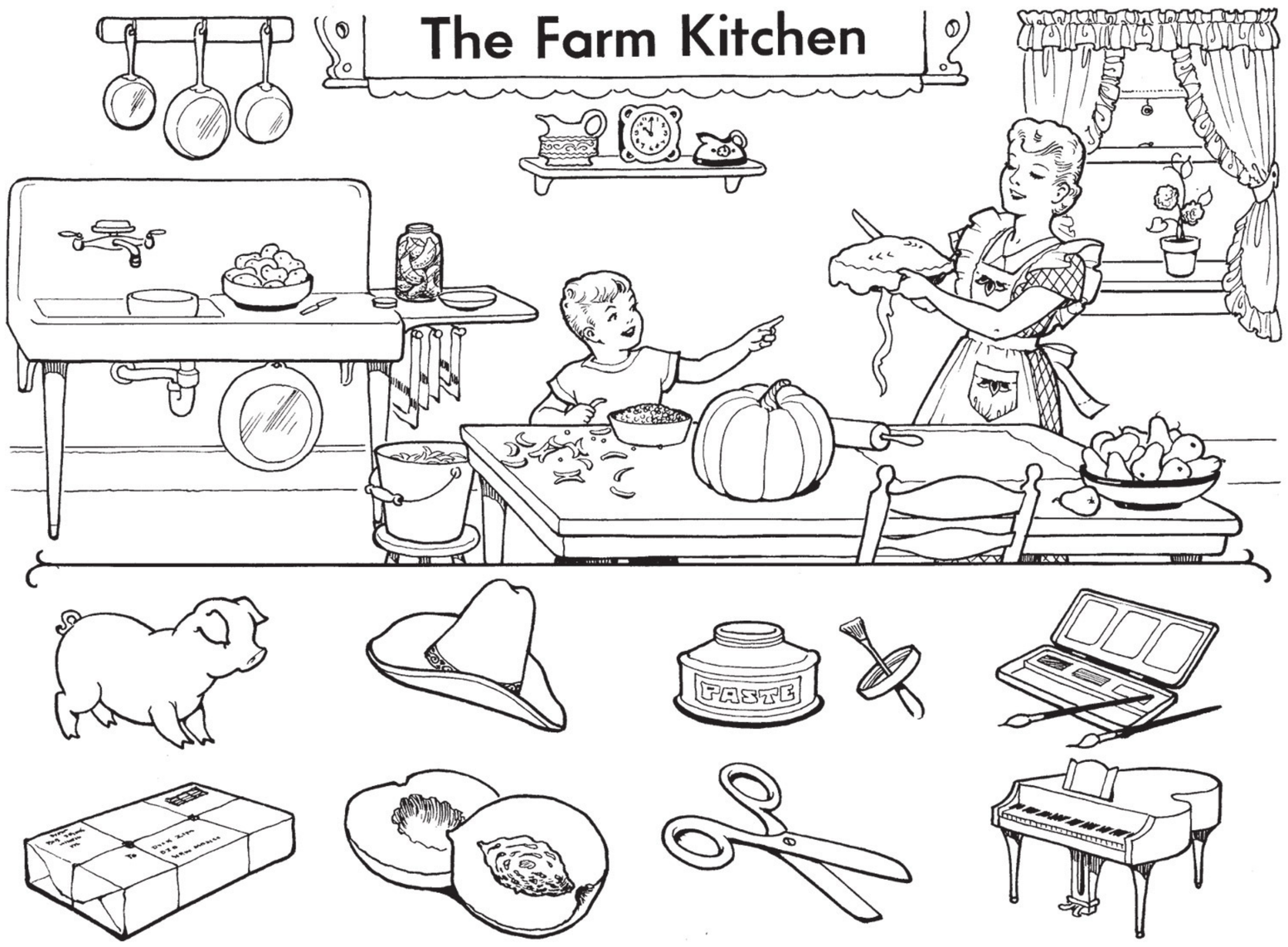
But surely one of the most unusual uses of comics was *The Subway Sun*, which took the form of a single-sheet subway car poster, appearing in New York City's subways from 1935 to 1966. Originally drawn by Fred Cooper, the strip, which stressed good subway manners in comic form to millions of straphangers, was taken over in 1946 by his assistant, Amelia Opdyke Jones, who signed her work "Oppy." Opdyke Jones, who also created Reddy Kilowatt, is credited with introducing the word "litterbug." Her first *Subway Sun* poster in 1946 was headlined "Nobody loves a litterbug." In a newspaper article from the 1960s she said, "Jitterbug was a popular expression at the time. I just changed the letter as part of a cleanup campaign."

As is often the case when women cartoonists do not use obviously feminine names, most assumed Oppy to be a man. The newspaper article says, "Irate women would want to know who was this Mr. Oppy who depicted women inadvertently jabbing strangers with their umbrellas or clunking heads with hand-bags."

Teen comics and romance comics continued to employ women throughout the 1950s, but slowly the number of women in the field dropped. Some women, like Ruth Atkinson, left the industry for the traditional role of wife and mother, an action that was expected of young wives at the time. Jill Elgin, who had drawn *Girl Commandos*,

TOP: Amelia Opdyke Jones (Oppy) with some of her fans: From a 1979 newspaper article.

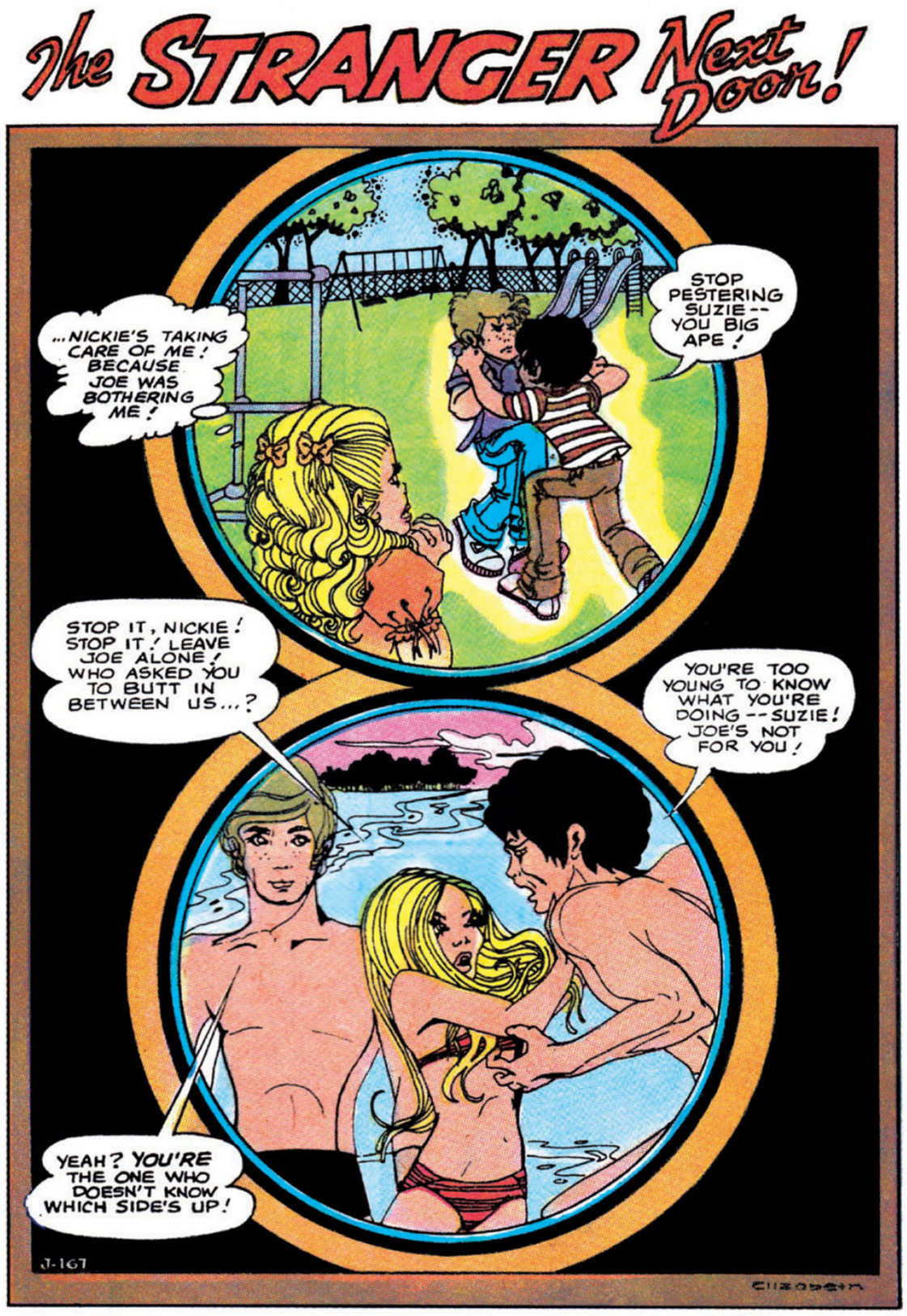
BOTTOM: Ethel Hays' "The Farm Kitchen," an illustration for a school textbook (1952).

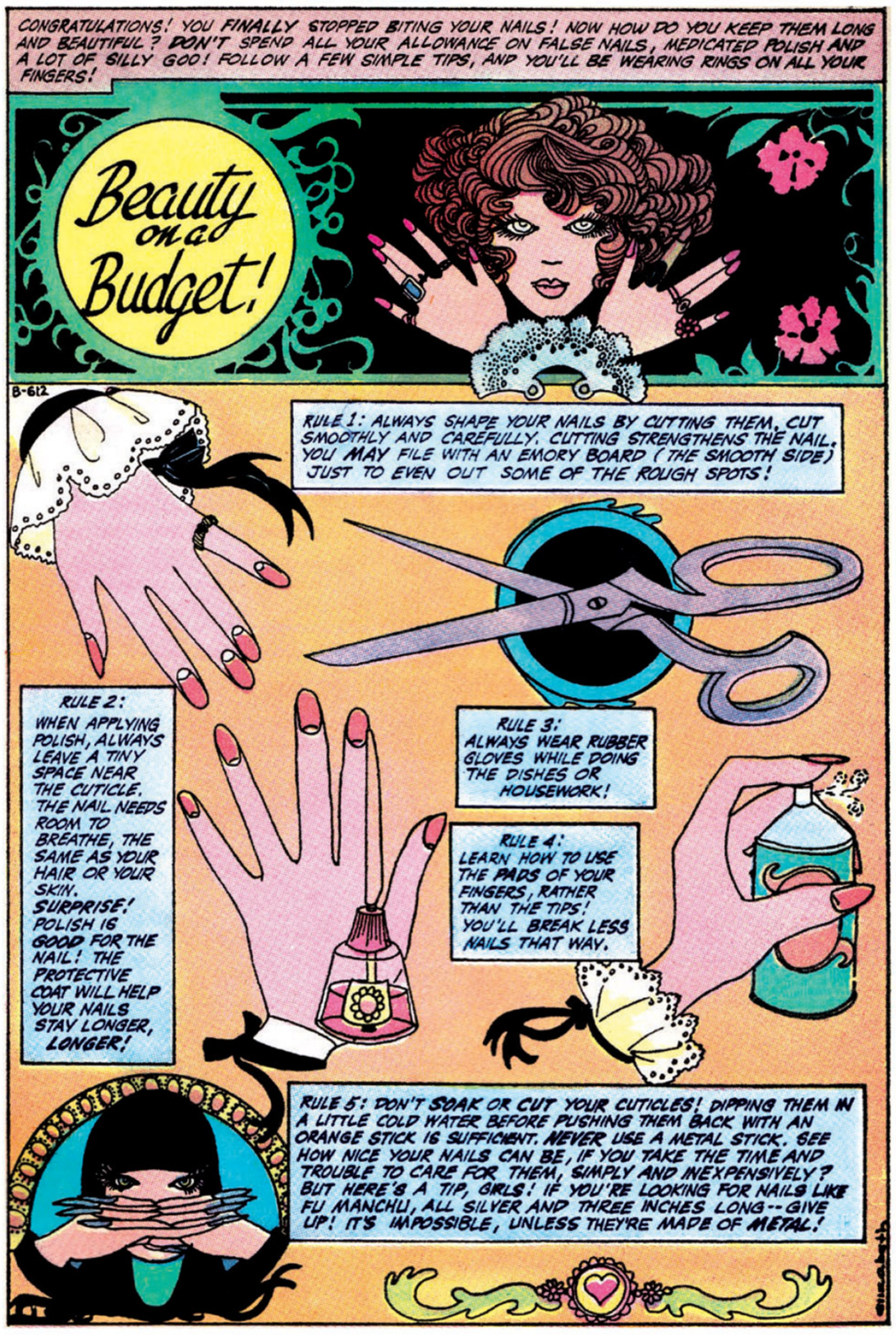


had by then moved on to illustrating children's books. By the early 1950s, quintessential flapper cartoonist Ethel Hays was illustrating educational children's books. For others, like Valerie Barclay, "the bottom just dropped out." There was a recession in the comics market during the late '50s, due in part to *Seduction of the Innocent*, a book written by

Dr. Fredric Wertham in that decade claiming that comics were responsible for juvenile delinquency. Although today his book is considered little more than a curiosity, he proved his point enough for the 1950s mentality. *Seduction of the Innocent* figured into Senate hearings on juvenile crime and comics, the formation of a self-regulating Comics Code, and, eventually, the failure of most of the comic book publishing companies. As with any industry slump, many artists and writers were let go, and as with any industry, the first fired were women.

Jill Elgin illustrated *Little Women* (1955).





LEFT: Elizabeth Berube's "The Stranger Next Door" from *Girls' Love Stories* #148 (January 1970).

RIGHT: Elizabeth Berube's "Beauty on a Budget" for *Girls' Romances* (1970).

Patsy Walker comics died in 1967. *Millie the Model*, Stan Lee's favorite book in the teen line, hung on until 1974: by this time, neither book had been drawn by a woman for over 20 years. Two of the major comic book publishers that had survived the comics depression of the mid- to late 1950s were Marvel and DC, and both companies had, since the mid-'60s, been gearing themselves toward superheroes and the young male market. Female-oriented comic books were slowly being phased out.

The last woman to illustrate a romance comic was Elizabeth Berube, for DC's *Girl's Love* and *Girl's Romances*, in the early 1970s. Berube had previously drawn, in her distinctive and decorative style, a syndicated strip called *Karen*, which ran in 40 newspapers. For the DC romance line she produced two love stories and many decorative single-page fillers, such as horoscope pages. Her career with them lasted until the company ended their romance line in 1974.

At that time, there were exactly two women artists left working for mainstream comic book publishers.

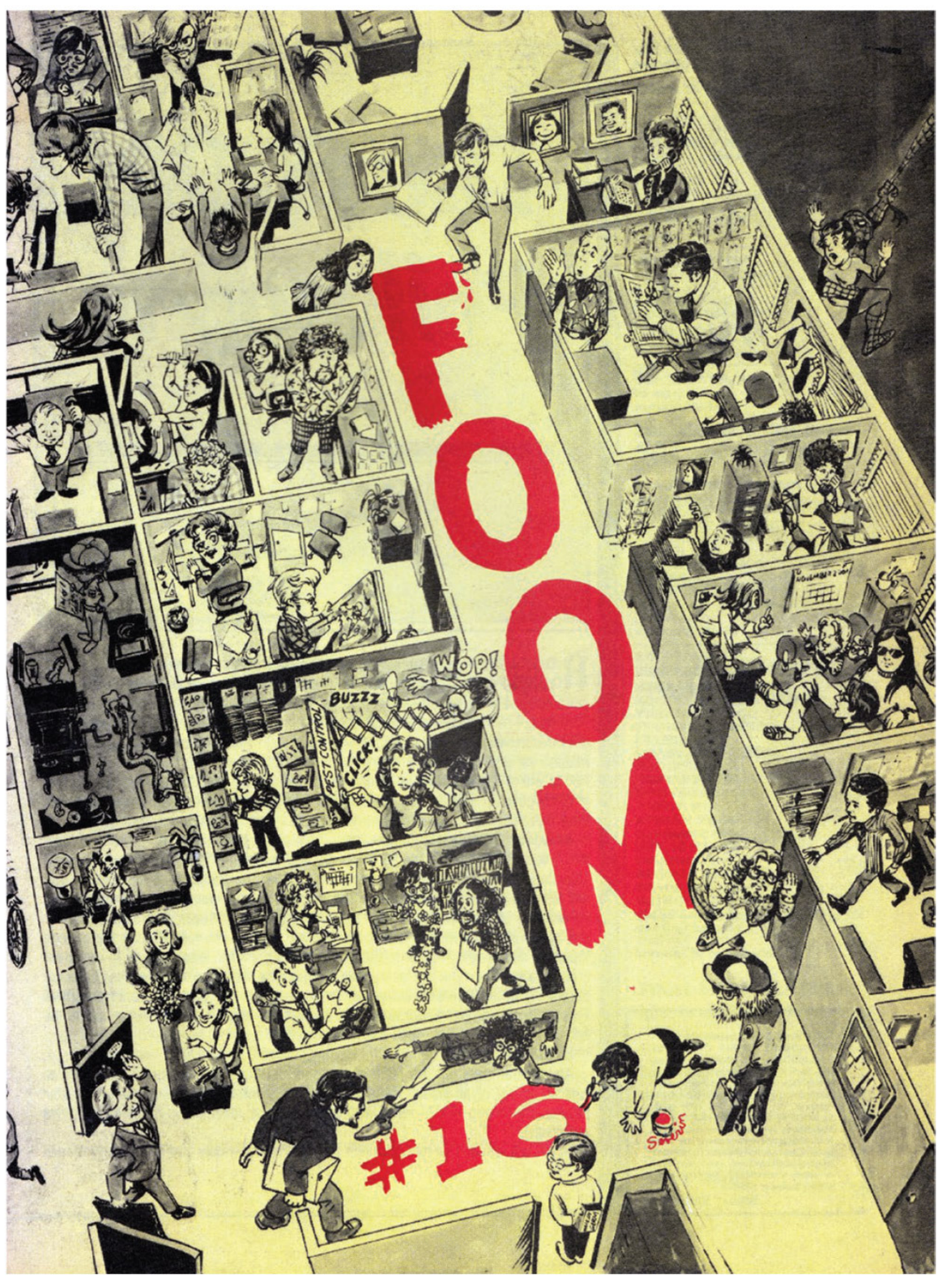
In 1953, EC Comics cartoonist John Severin got his kid sister Marie a job with the company. In a 1988 interview with Steve Ringgenberg, published in Russ Cochran's reprint of *Psychoanalysis* magazine (an EC title), Marie Severin described the work she was hired to

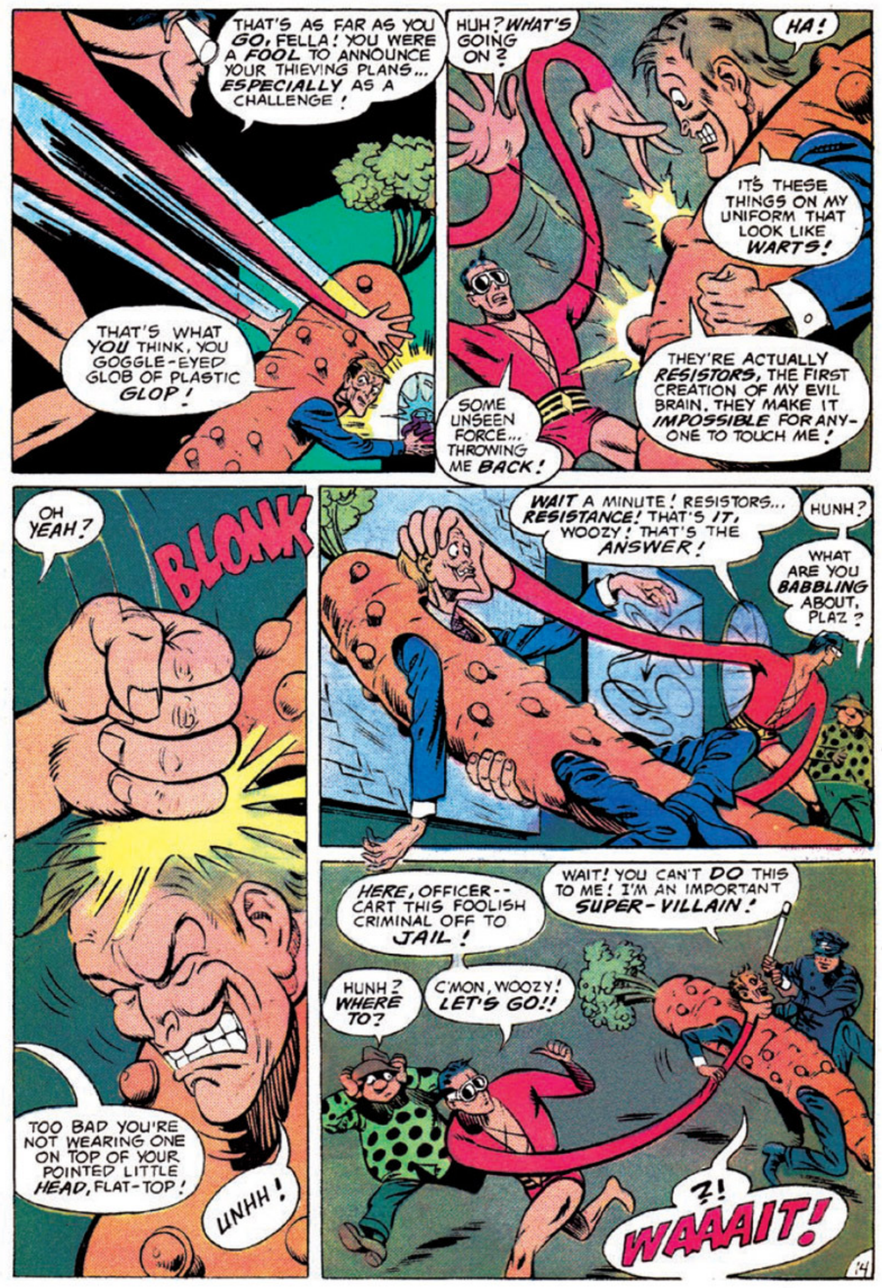
do: "[…] they needed a colorist, sort of like a girl Friday, and I did stuff like that. Mostly I was the colorist there and did some odd jobs." Marie Severin had come from a family in which literally everyone drew, and, as she said in the interview, "I just took it for granted that's what one did in this house, so I did." She was not to find work actually drawing comics, however, for another thirteen years. In 1955, when EC cut back its line, partially as a result of public and industry reaction to Dr. Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*, she went to work for the Stan Lee-edited Timely/Atlas comics line, doing the same kind of work she had done at EC. A year and a half later, Timely also cut back its line, a victim of the recession that affected the entire industry. Severin freelanced as a commercial artist until 1964, when she returned to work for Lee at what had now become Marvel Comics.

For two more years Marie Severin continued to do production work at Marvel. By 1966, the company, with its contemporary-superhero concept, was enjoying a new popularity among college students. Characters like the angst-ridden Spider-Man or the psychedelic Doctor Strange had become pop art, and Marvel was suddenly "in" enough for *Esquire* magazine to feature it. None of Marvel's artists felt that the article was important enough to take time out from their regular work to illustrate, so the job of providing five pages of art went by default to Severin. In a 1988 interview, she related how this finally resulted in her getting work as an artist: "When Mr. [Martin] Goodman [the Marvel publisher] saw my stuff in *Esquire*, he said, 'Why is she in production? You have a drawer.'

LEFT: Marie Severin drew "When Umar Walked the Earth" for *Strange Tales* #156 (May 1967).

RIGHT: A Marie Severin *FOOM* ("Friends of Ol' Marvel" — the Marvel comics in-house fanzine) cover (1976): Severin has caricatured all the Marvel employees. The artist herself is depicted on her hands and knees, painting in the number 16.





So Stan says, 'Would you like to draw? I need you, Steve Ditko left.' So, okay."

Starting with *Doctor Strange*, Severin became the regular penciler on such titles as *King Kull, Sub-Mariner*, and *The Cat*, also penciling innumerable covers, as well as inking and coloring other artists' stories. In later years, most of her work has appeared in Marvel's lighter books, such as *Muppet Babies* and *Fraggle Rock*, which she has said she enjoyed more than the action/superhero books. Possibly Severin's most delightful work has been done for the company's parody titles, *Crazy* and *Not Brand Ecch*.

In contrast to Severin, Ramona Fradon, fresh out of art school in 1950, got the first comics illustration job she applied for. For almost 10 years she drew Aquaman for DC Comics, going on to co-create the character Metamorpho for the company. She worked on such titles as *Superman, Batman*, and *Plastic Man* until leaving in 1980 to take over Dale Messick's *Brenda Starr* strip, upon the creator's retirement.

Fradon had never been totally enthusiastic about working in the male-directed superhero genre. In a 1988 interview with Andy Mangels in *Amazing Heroes* magazine, she describes her feelings: "I always felt rather strange, like a fish out of water or something. Here I was in a totally male-dominated field. I had a lot of trouble with the subject matter as well. I was really not interested in drawing superheroes — male fantasies, you know? People hitting each other or scheming to take over the world […] Something that has always jarred my eyes is to see

TOP LEFT: Ramona Fradon drew "Aquaman's Undersea Partner" for *Adventure Comics* #229 (October 1956).

TOP RIGHT: Ramona Fradon drew "The Bogus-Men Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out!" in *Plastic Man* Vol. 4 #12 (May 1976).

BOTTOM: Marie Severin and Ramona Fradon in 1999. Photo by Trina Robbins.

OPPOSITE: Dale Messick sent her scripts to Ramona Fradon in the form of pencil roughs (1982).

Brenda Starr Reporter

THE ONLY THING THAT HAS ME UP TIGHT - RIGHT NOW IS —

HAVING DINNER WITH A "PHAY BOY" LIKE CABIT SILLS AT HIS PRIVATE CLUB, YET!!

11-28-82

HOW CAN I KEEP BASIL FROM FINDING OUT??? IVE HAD DINNER WITH CABIT SILLS A REAL HOME WRECKER —

EVERY GOSSIP COLUMIST AND TV NEWS HOUND WILL BE —

MOMMY YOU LOOK SO PRETTY WHERE ARE YOU AND DADDY GOING —?

OH NO — NOW I AM IN TROUBLE — I FORGOT ABOUT STARZY —

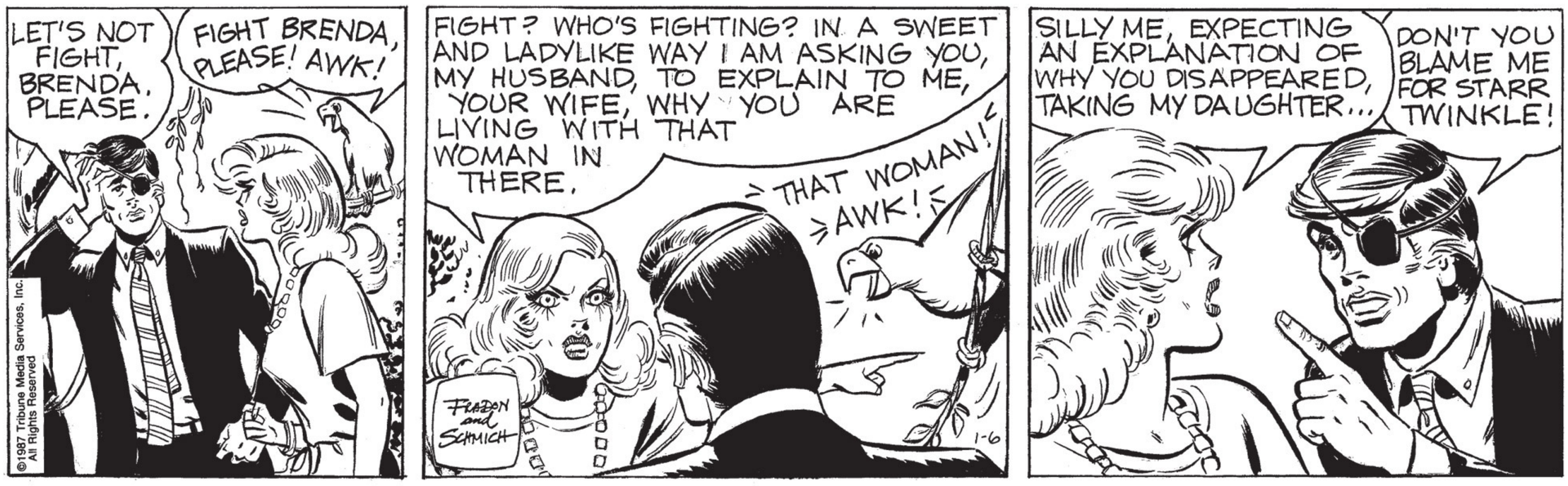
BUT, WHAT ELSE CAN I DO — IF THIS WILL SAVE THE FLASH

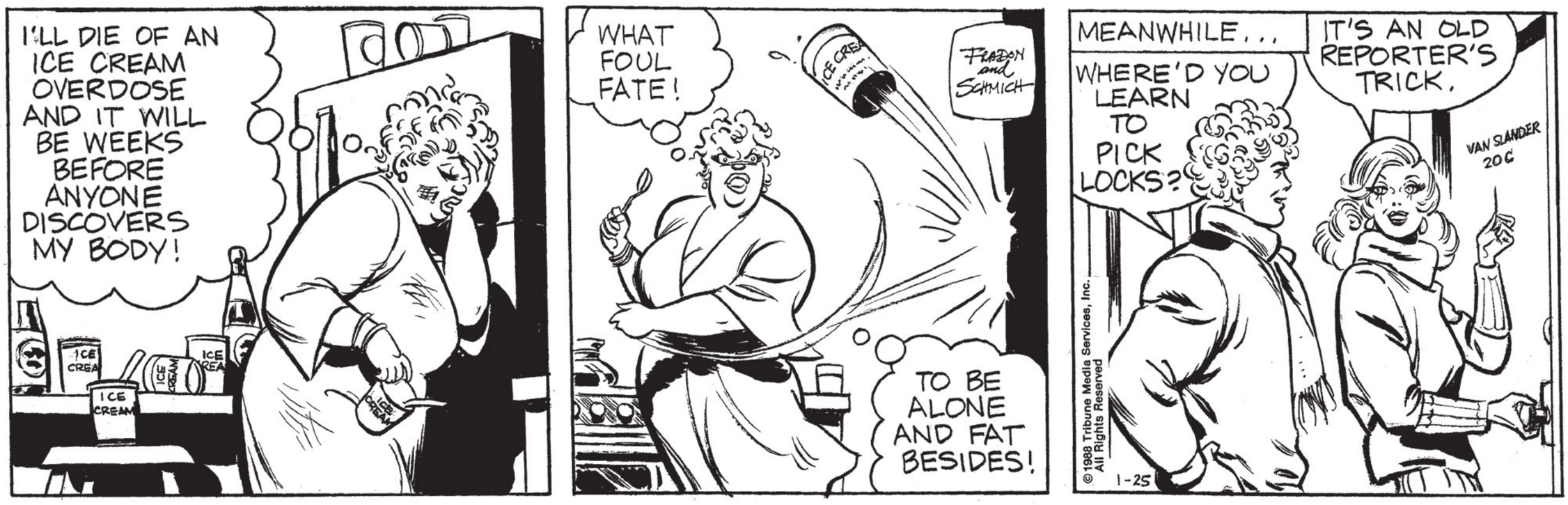
RING RING RING

Wade Hassiche Ramona Fradon

BRENDA STARR — A DEVISTATING FIRE HAS COMSUMED MY LARGIST HOLDINGS — I'M LEAVING — AT ONCE FOR — AUSTRAIHA — THE FLASH IS ALL YOURS —

TALK ABOUT FATE STEPPING IN —!





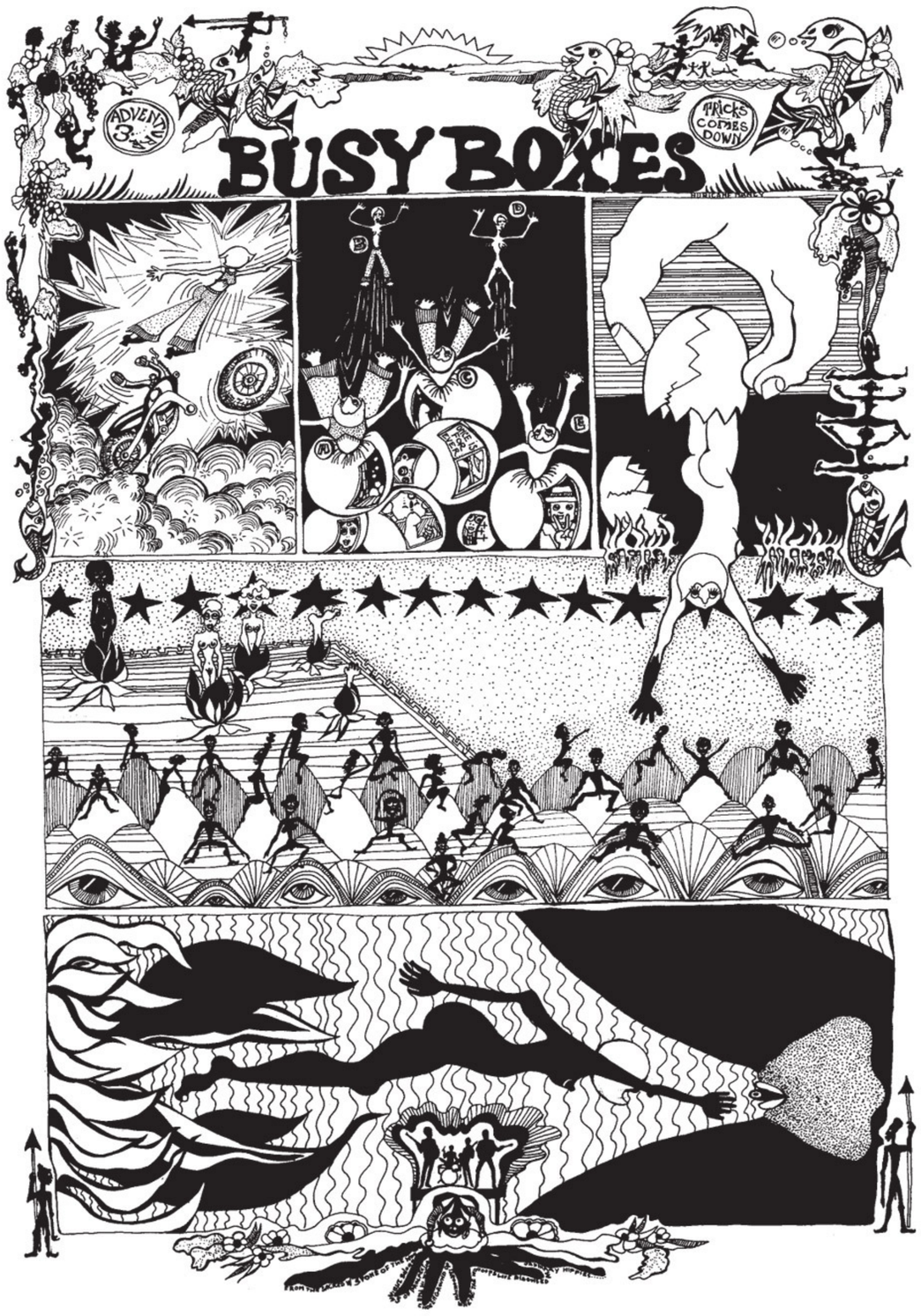
Ramona Fradon's *Brenda Starr* (1987).

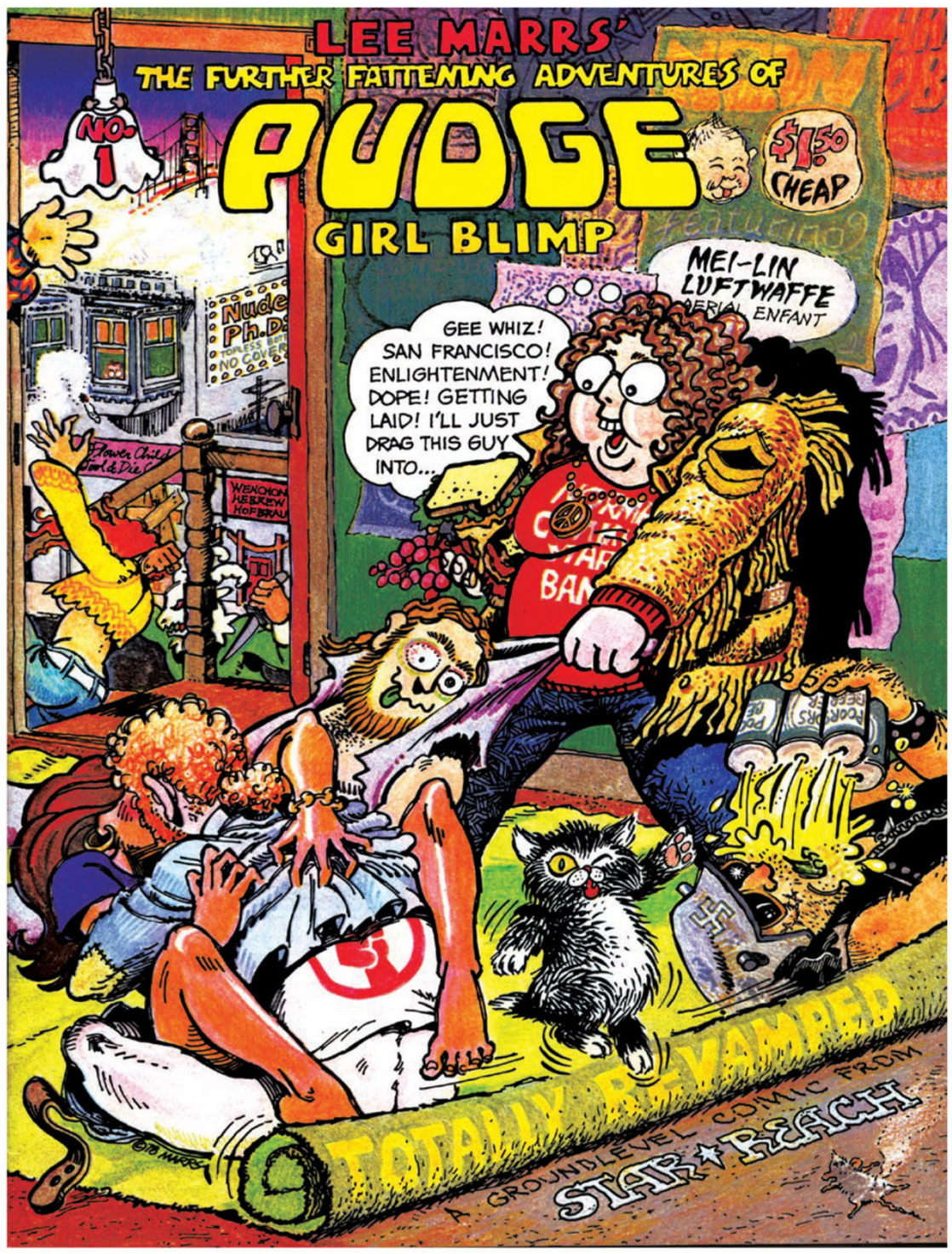
the kind of heaviness and ugliness about most [male] comic art. There's not much sweetness to it. It's the tradition [...] the look. That always troubled me."

Despite the fact that they were rare examples of women drawing superhero comics (maybe the only examples) at that time, and possibly because they worked for rival publishers, Severin and Fradon did not actually meet face to face until a 1996 comic convention in upstate New York.

With the exception of Fradon and Severin, comics was no longer an industry that welcomed women. Luckily, women didn't care because by then, young, aspiring women cartoonists in America were turning their attention to a new kind of comic, one that seemed to hold more promise for their way of thinking, writing, and drawing: the underground.

Chicks and Womyn





LEFT: Nancy "Panzika" Kalish's "Busy Boxes" from *Gothic Blimp Works* (1969).

RIGHT: Lee Marrs' *Pudge, Girl Blimp* (1973).

Marie Severin and Ramona Fradon possessed the aptitude to draw superheroes and action, even though they didn't necessarily like what they were drawing. But what of the majority of women cartoonists in a field that had converted almost entirely to the superhero genre? Luckily for many aspiring women cartoonists, at the same time that the kind of comics that most women wanted to draw had all but vanished, a new kind of comic appeared on the cultural horizon. In 1965, I saw my first underground newspaper, *The East Village Other* (*EVO*), a counterculture tabloid from New York City. One of the pages was filled with a strange conglomeration of drawings, almost abstractly connected in loose panel form. It was not yet called by the name it would later earn from appearing in underground newspapers — underground comics (or "comix," as they were often called to distinguish them from mass market "mainstream" comics). The comic in *The East Village Other*, signed "Panzika," was called *Gentle's Tripout*, and was the first of its kind that I ever saw. I did not know at the time that "Panzika" was a woman, Nancy Kalish. I was inspired to produce some of my own strips, and by 1966, I too was being published sporadically in *EVO*. Two years later, Willy Mendes joined Kalish and me on the pages of *Gothic Blimp Works*, a comic tabloid published by *EVO*. At the same time, in Berkeley, the fanciful work of Kay Rudin, who had left a job drawing greeting cards in Ohio, was being published in another comic tabloid, *Yellow Dog*.

The comics we drew were as different from the comics being published by Marvel or DC as a tie-dyed T-shirt was from a business suit. The word that best describes early

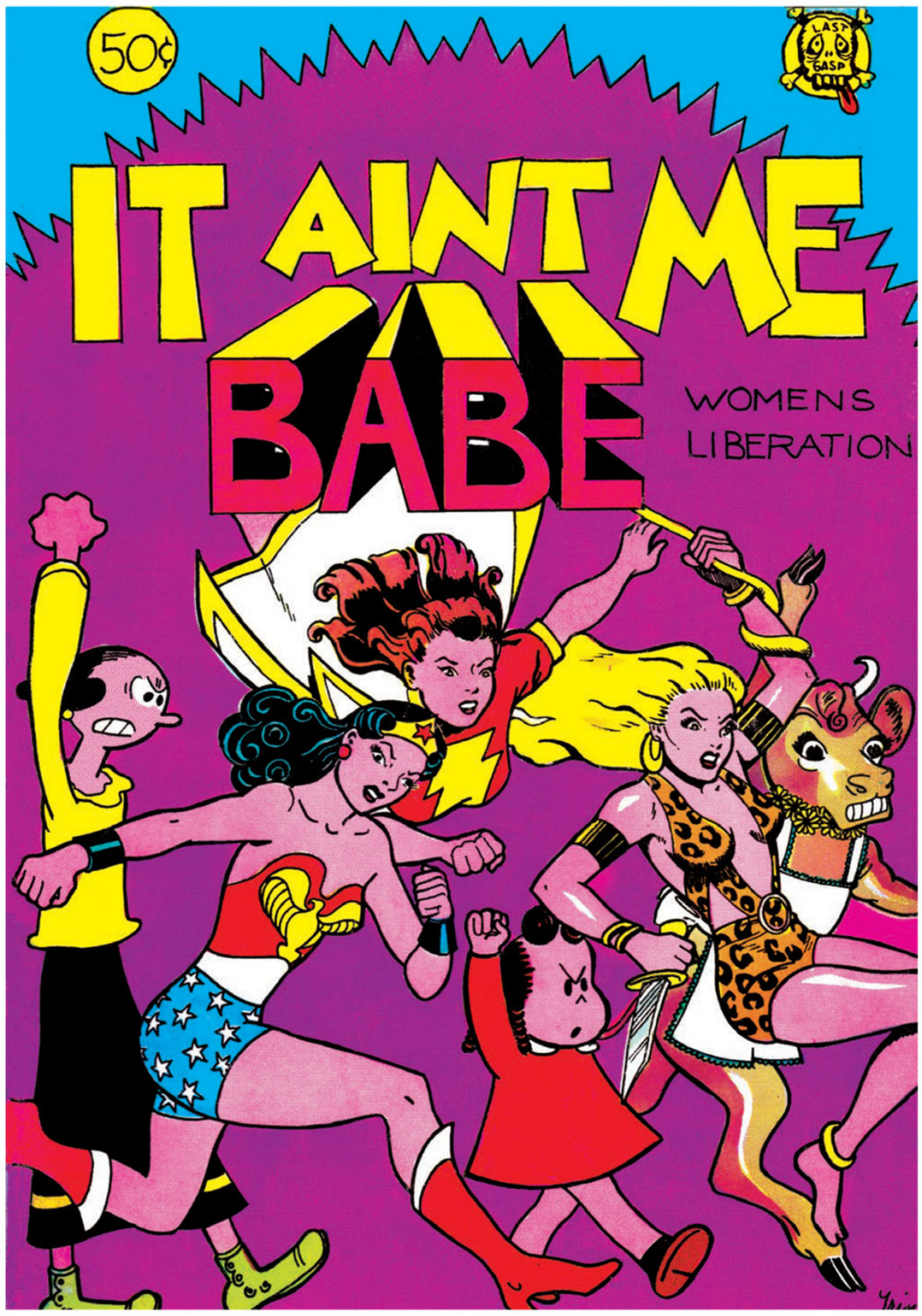
The contributors to *It Ain't Me, Babe*. Sitting, left to right: Trina Robbins, Lisa Lyons. Standing, left to right: Carole (last name lost), Peggy White, Michelle Brand, Willy Mendes. On either side: Left, Meredith Kurtzman; right, Nancy Kalish ("Hurricane Nancy," "Panzika").

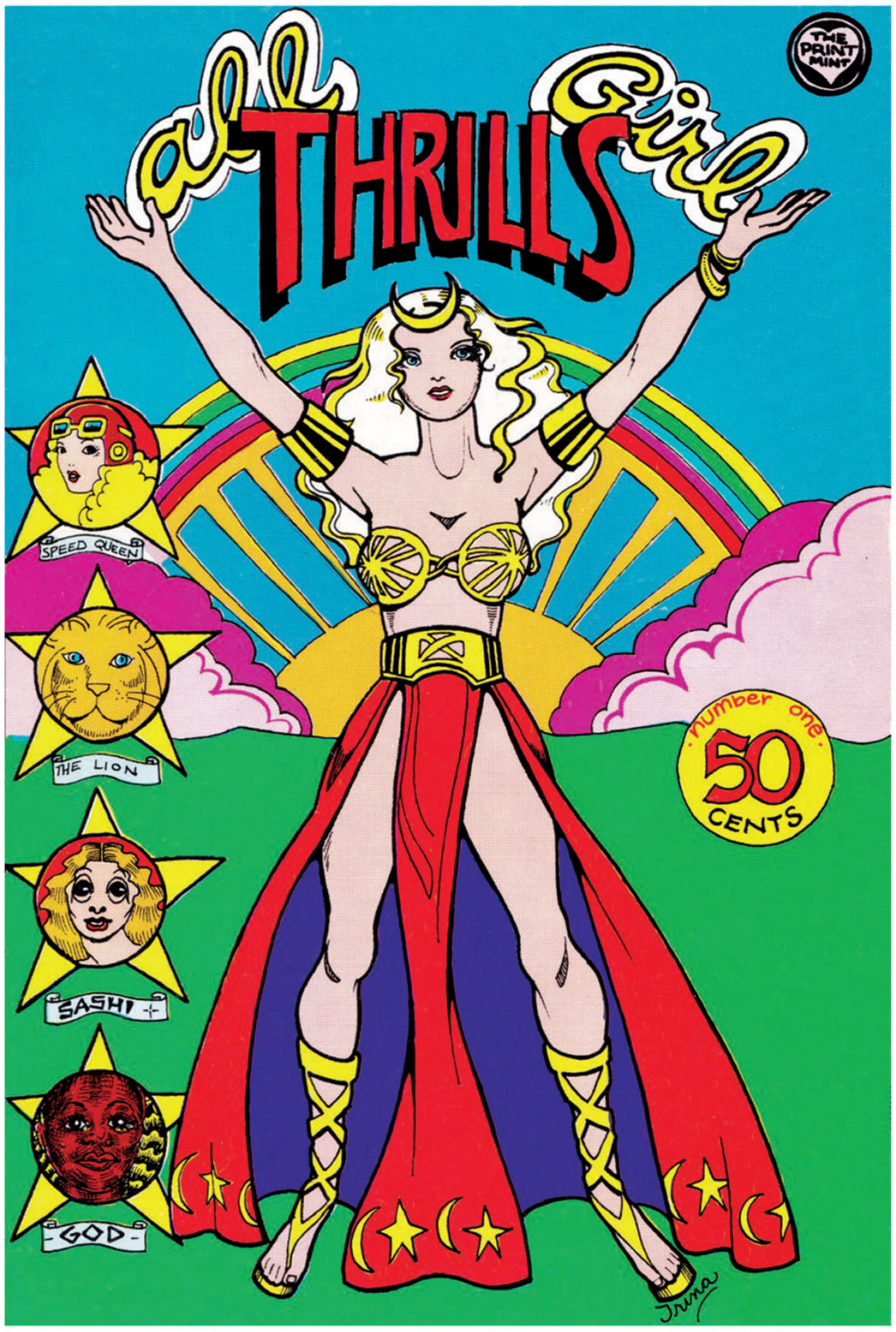
underground comix is psychedelic. Plot was not considered important. One got the impression that if the reader got stoned enough on controlled substances, he or she would understand the comic — or at least think he or she did. The underground artist, more concerned with design than content, simply put felt-tipped pen to paper and let it flow, man.

During the years that we were doing our own thing, college student Lee Marrs was working part time as assistant to *Little Orphan Annie* cartoonist Tex Blaisdell and contributing gags to the syndicated strip *Hi & Lois*. By late 1969, Marrs, Mendes, and I converged in San Francisco, and Marrs discovered the underground. "I didn't know they existed until I moved [to San Francisco]," she said when I interviewed her. "The things that were being done were so much more exciting and interesting [than what was being done at Marvel and DC]."

In 1971, along with John Berger and Mal Warwick, Marrs formed the Alternative Features Service (AFS), which distributed news, features, and comics, mainly to college and underground newspapers. The women cartoonists distributed by the syndicate during its six-plus-years' existence included Marrs, Shelby Sampson, Bulbul, Suzanna Lasker (who signed her name "Suzu"), and myself.

When it came to comic books, however, Marrs "ran into another version of the closed system […] in the Underground […] It was kind of like a boy's club […] a closed club […] There was no way a beginning artist could break in, no place for it. All the underground comics consisted of friends printing friends. They were all buddies; they didn't even let us in."





LEFT: Trina Robbins' *It Ain't Me, Babe* cover (1970).

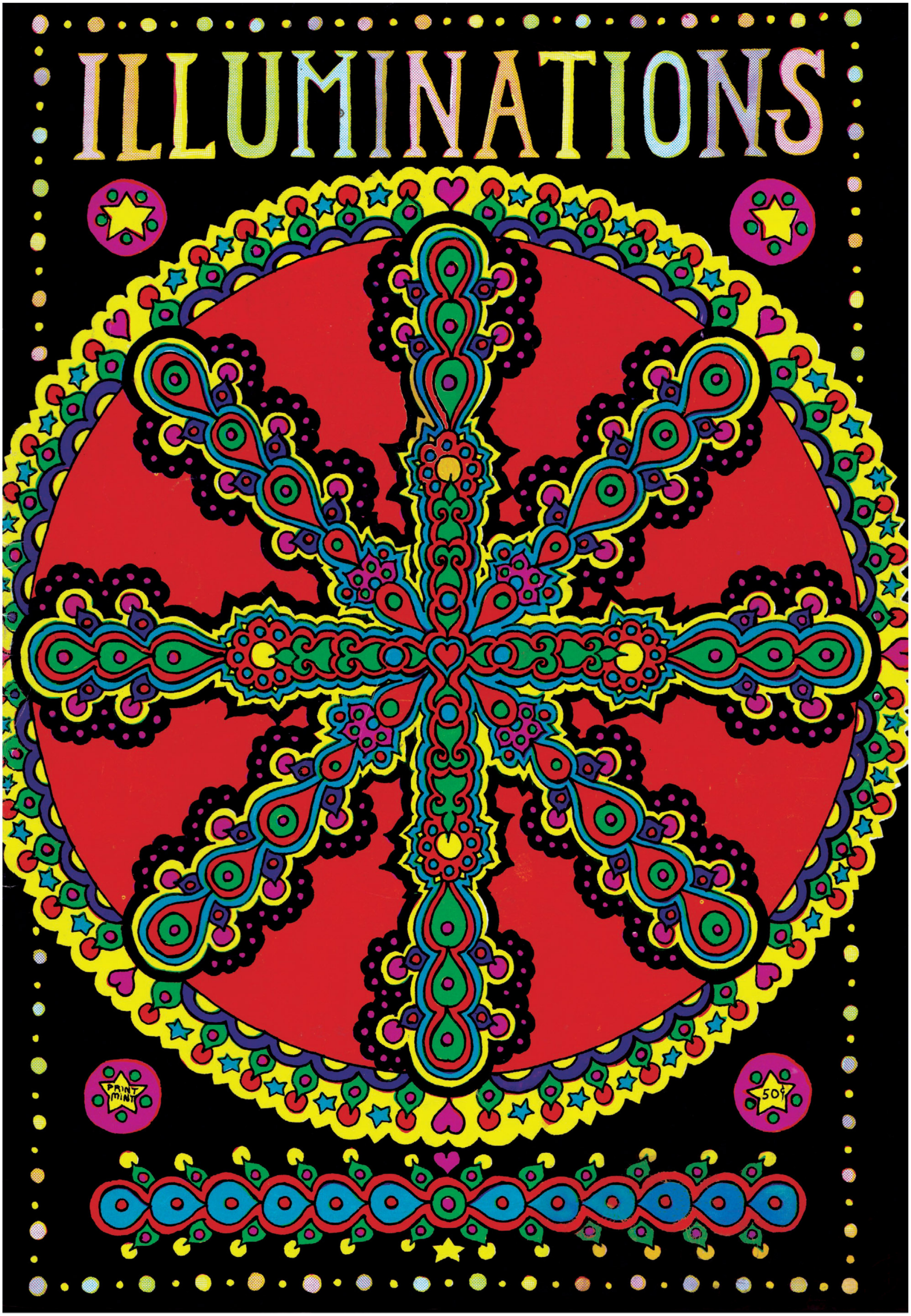
RIGHT: Trina Robbins' *All Girl Thrills* cover (1971).

OPPOSITE: Willy Mendes' *Illuminations* cover (1971).

Willy Mendes and I had made the same discovery, and we reacted to our exclusion by producing our own comic books. In 1970, I had joined the staff of *It Ain't Me, Babe*, the nation's first feminist underground newspaper, and with the moral support of the paper's staff, I produced *It Ain't Me, Babe* comics, the first-ever North American feminist, all-woman comic book anthology. Later in 1971, I put together *All Girl Thrills*, which included the work of Mendes and Julie Wood, who signed herself "Jewelie Goodvibes." 1971 saw the publication of Mendes' *Illuminations*, which featured psychedelic comic pages by Nan Pettit, as well as by Goodvibes and me.

In 1972, Sharon Rudahl, fresh from Madison, Wisconsin, where she had been drawing political comics for the local underground paper, *Takeover*, was living at the San Francisco Good Times commune and working on their underground paper. Terre Richards, who had come to San Francisco in 1969 from Pennsylvania, was working for *It Ain't Me, Babe* comic book publisher Ron Turner. Lee Marrs, who had found out about *It Ain't Me, Babe* too late to be included in the book, was working on her own comic, *Pudge, Girl Blimp*, which would not see print for two more years. *It Ain't Me, Babe* had sold well enough for Turner to decide to put out an ongoing women's comic book. In a 1979 interview in *Cultural Correspondence* magazine, Richards told about the formation of this new book:

ILLUMINATIONS



NUMBER 1

ADULTS ONLY

75¢

WIMMEN'S COMIX

WORKERS-UNITED-CARTOON-

ECO-FUNNIES LAST-GASP-

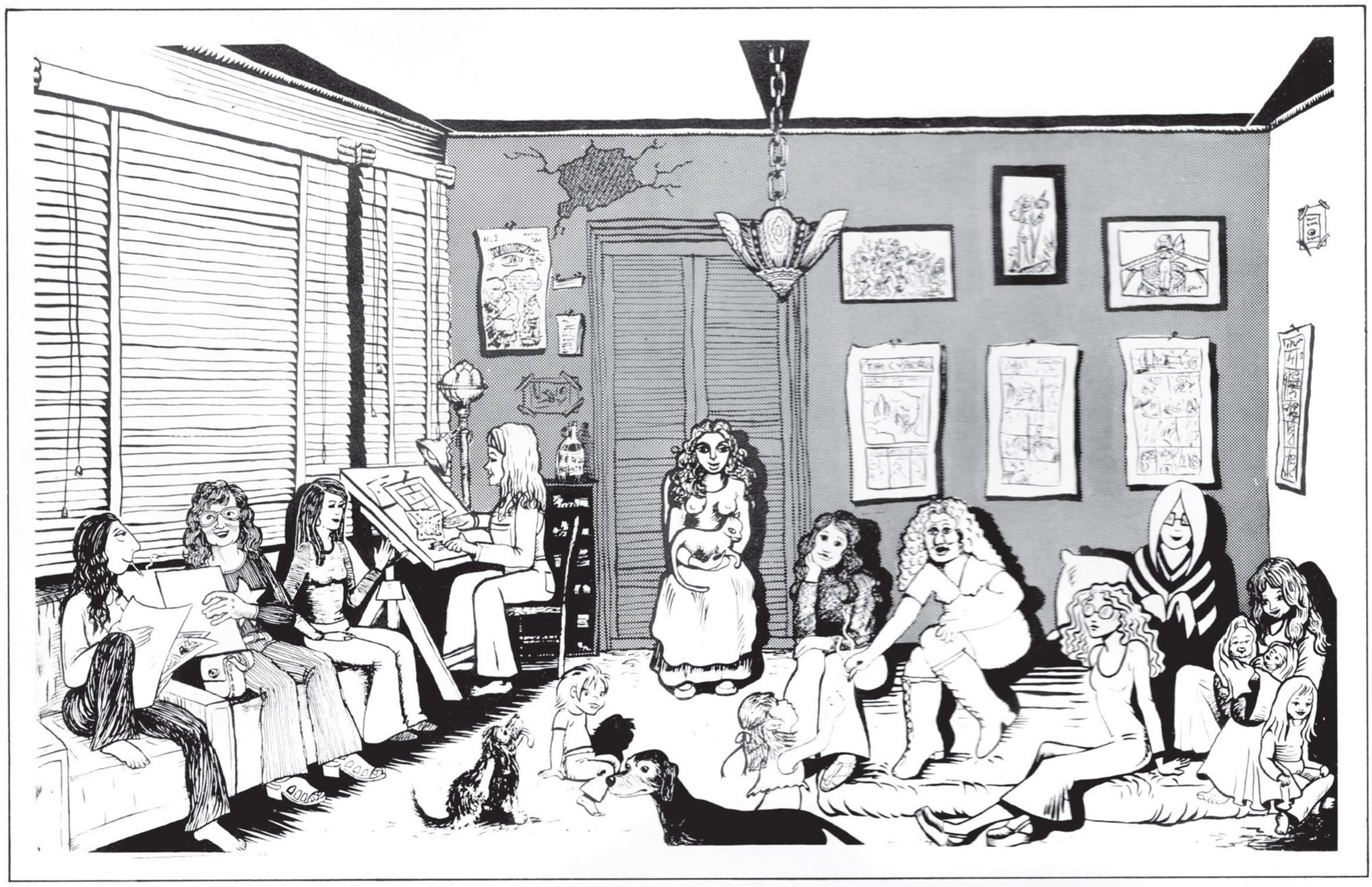
EXCEPT FOR BEING FAT, UGLY, PIMPLE FACED, BAD-TEMPERED AND SELFISH, YOU'LD THINK HE'D SEE I'M A MUCH BETTER CHOICE!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SEX, REVELATION, PSYCHOTIC ADVENTURE

AND MORE...

MOODIAN



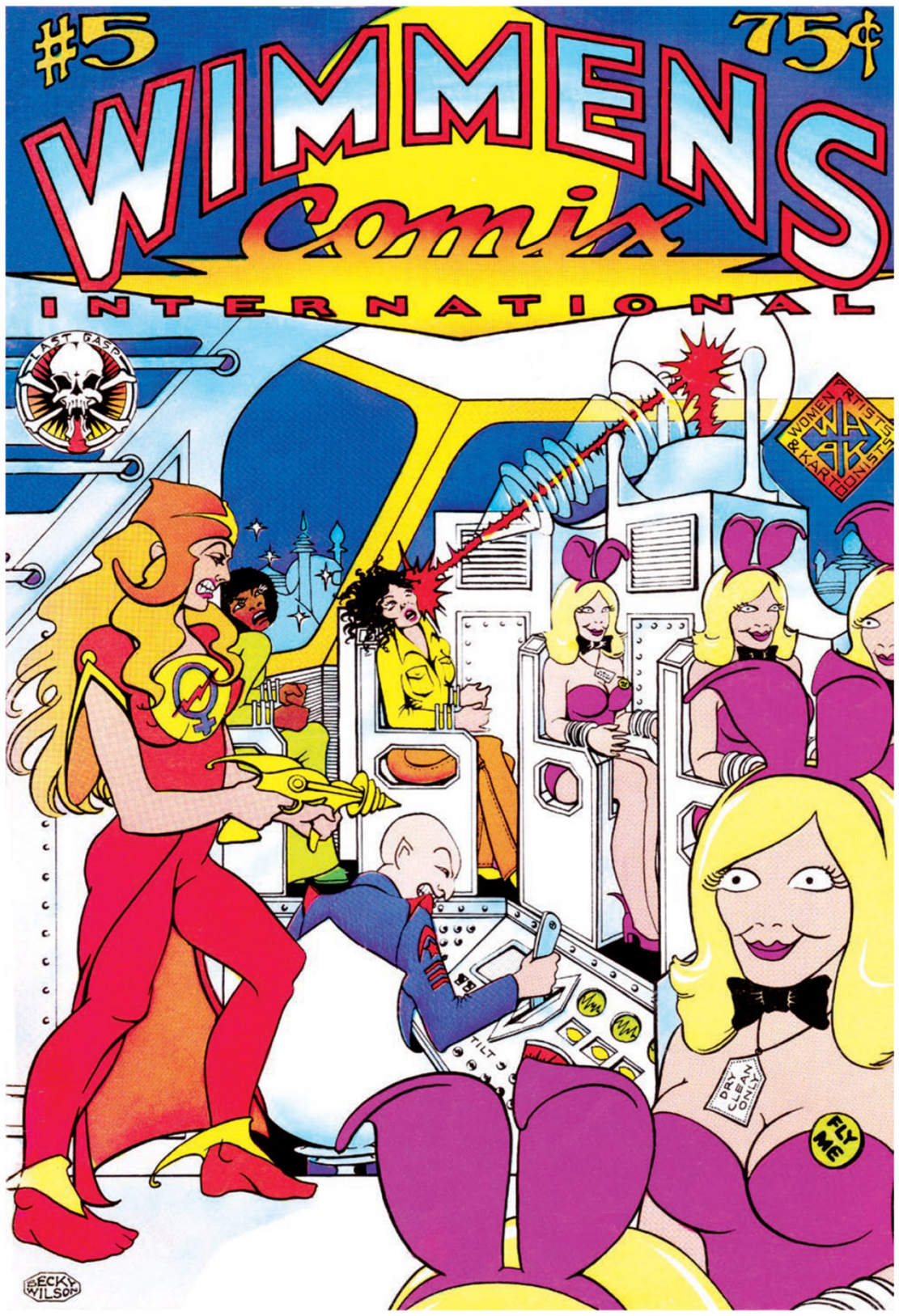
> […] *I was looking for a more creative outlet, one that would incorporate a growing interest in writing and animation* […] *As a result of the Women's Movement there was a growing awareness of women in all areas of the arts as well as a newly developing market for women's work in publishing, so the time was right for an all-woman's comic, and when I heard from my boss* […] *that Pat Moodian was editing a women's comic and they were looking for contributors, I jumped at the chance* […] *Thus,* Wimmen's Comix *was born.*

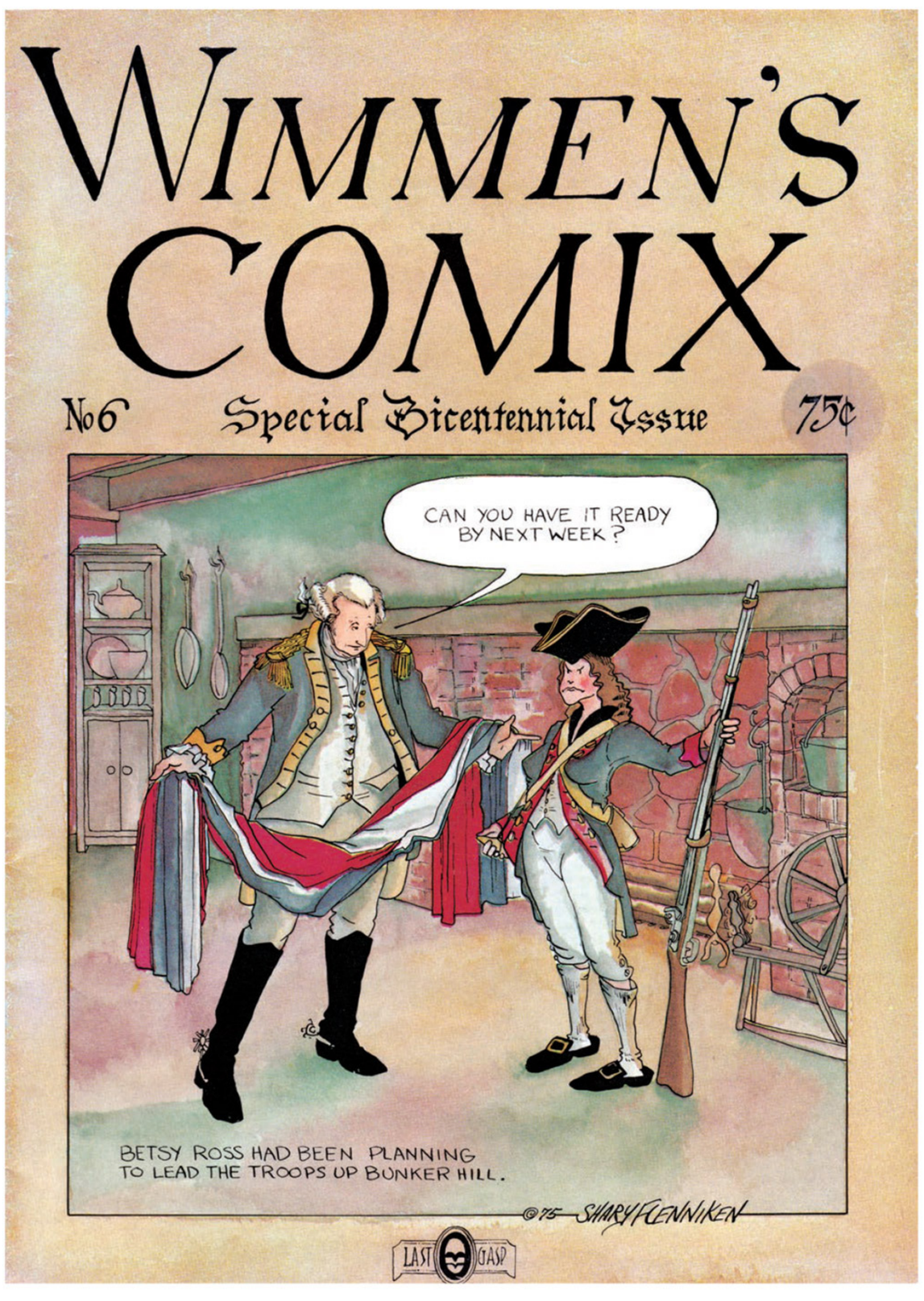
OPPOSITE: Patti Moodian's *Wimmen's Comix* #1 cover (1972).

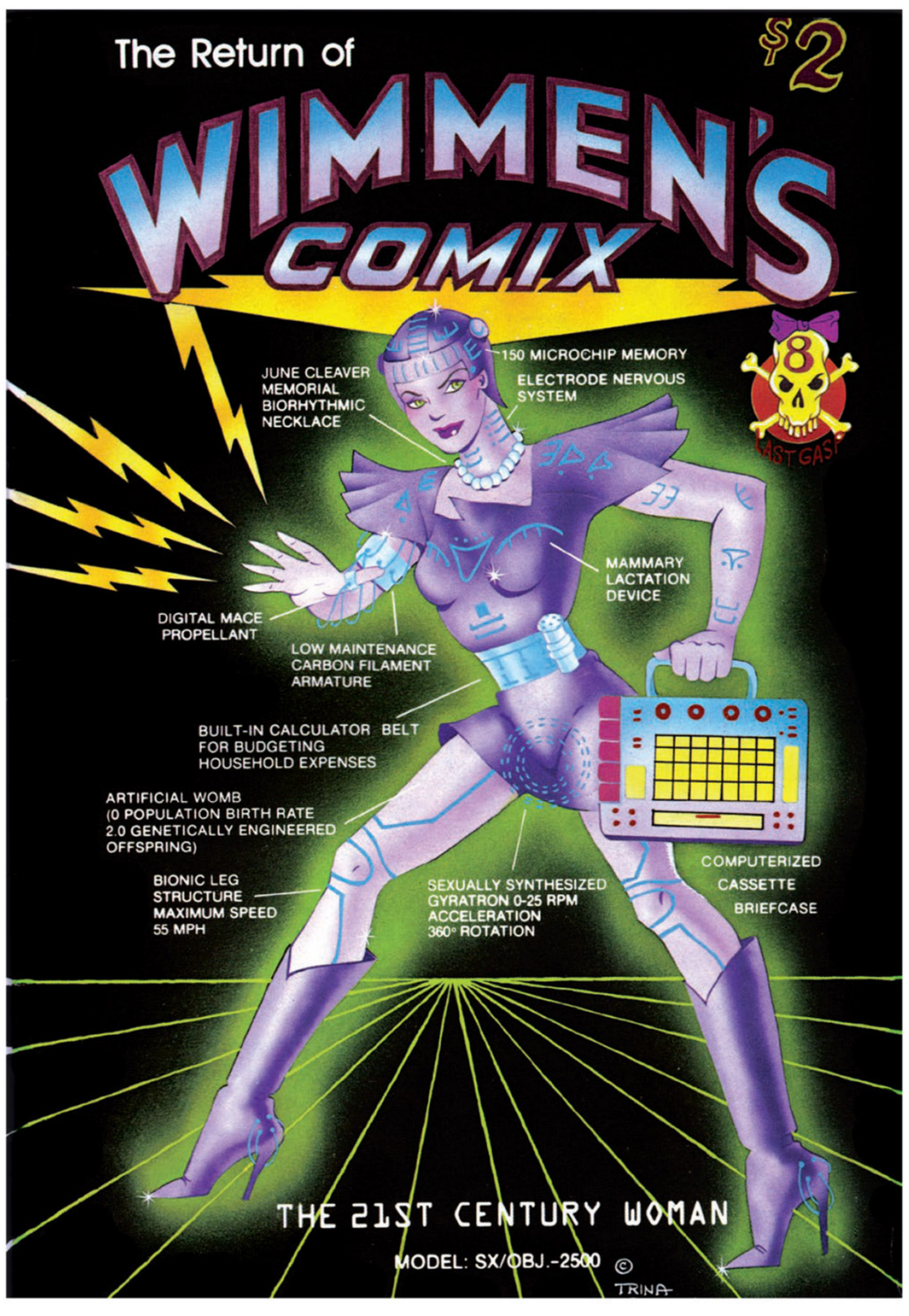
ABOVE: The founding mothers of the *Wimmen's Comix* collective meet at Patti Moodian's house (1972). Left to right: Michelle Brand, Lee Marrs, Lora Fountain, Patti Moodian, Sharon Rudahl, Shelby Sampson, Aline Kominsky, Trina Robbins, Karen Marie Haskell, Janet Wolf Stanley. Self-portraits by the various artists.

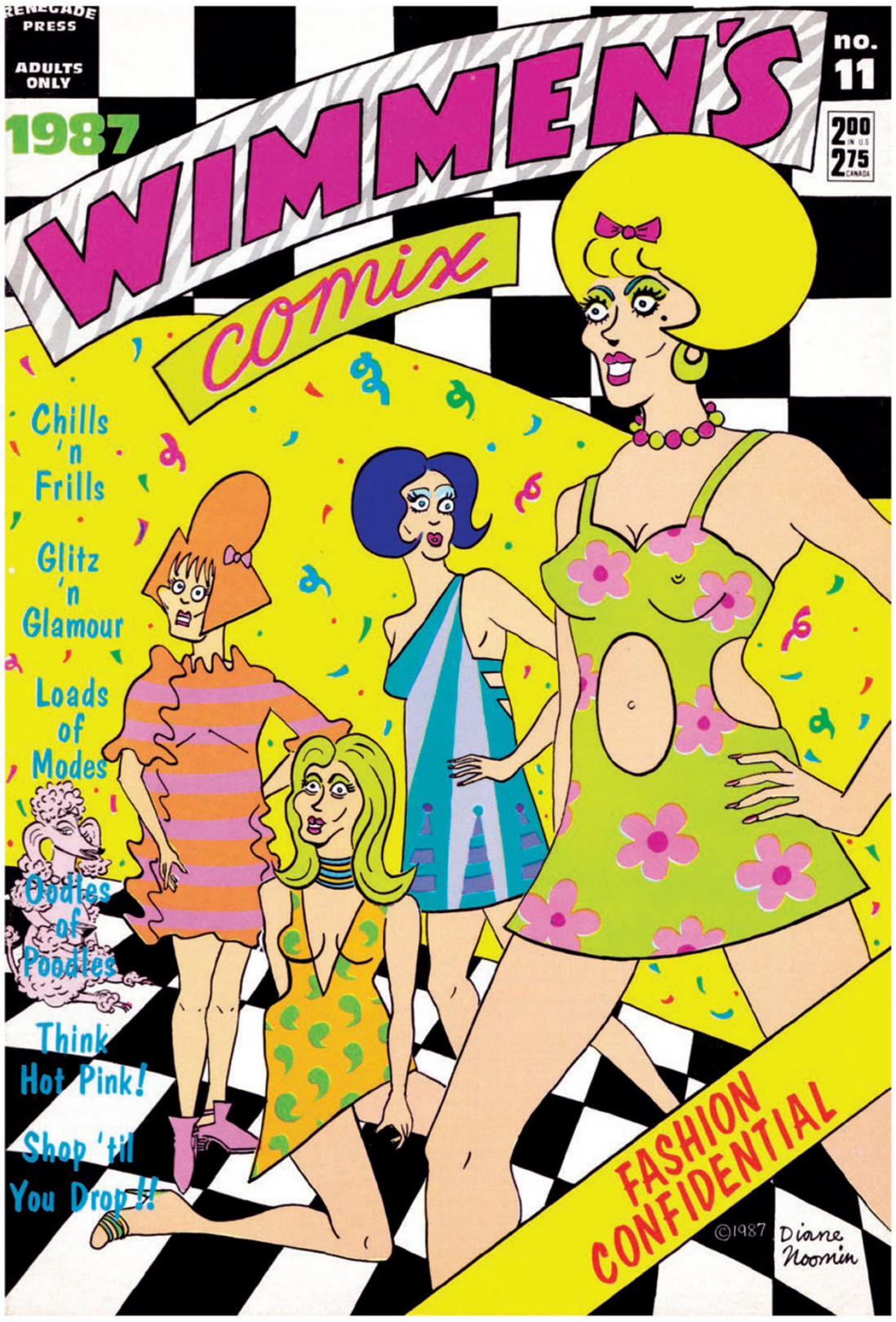
Moodian, Richards, Rudahl, Marrs, and I joined with Michelle Brand, Lora Fountain, Shelby Sampson, Aline Kominsky, Karen Marie Haskell, and Janet Wolfe Stanley to produce the first ongoing all-woman comic book, which survived for 20 years. *Wimmen's* started out, and remained, a collective. No one person ever had the power to dominate the book (influenced by the political consciousness of the early '70s, in which many underground newspapers were being manufactured collectively). In fact, by 1982, the rotating editorship became a double editorship, with two co-editors working together on each issue. Richards, from the same interview: "We […] decided that […] we would produce an ongoing title of comics by women and that we would function as a collective, a term used rather loosely in those days to mean there would be no leader or editor, but instead a rotating editorship, with everyone contributing their energy to the paperwork and general supportiveness of the group."

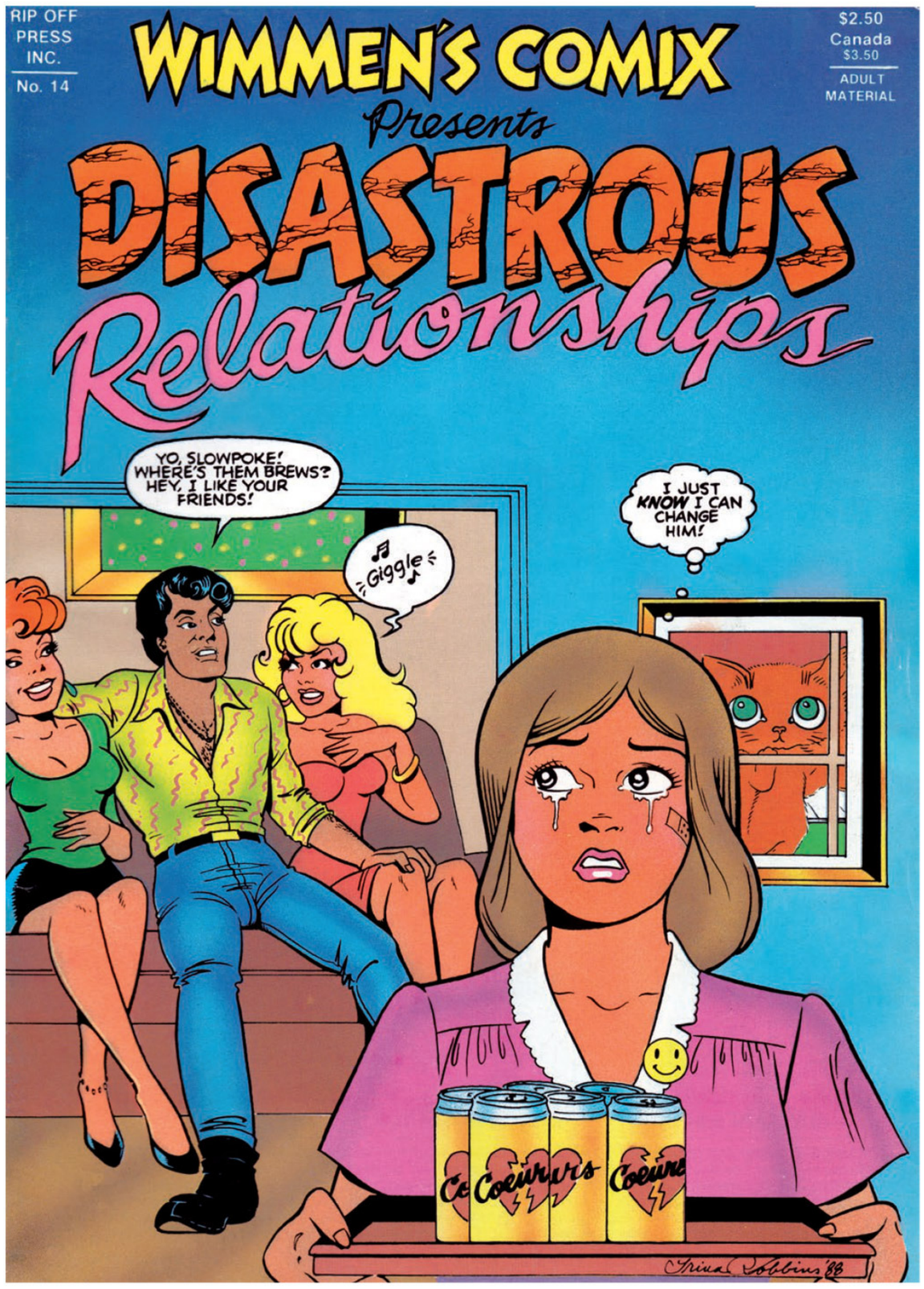
WAAC
UCWOA
WIMMEN'S COMIX 4
LAST GASP
75¢
ADULTS ONLY
FROGGIE FOODS
Princess Brand
KISS ME!
CAN'T SEE TURNING A PERFECTLY GOOD FROG INTO A PRINCE!

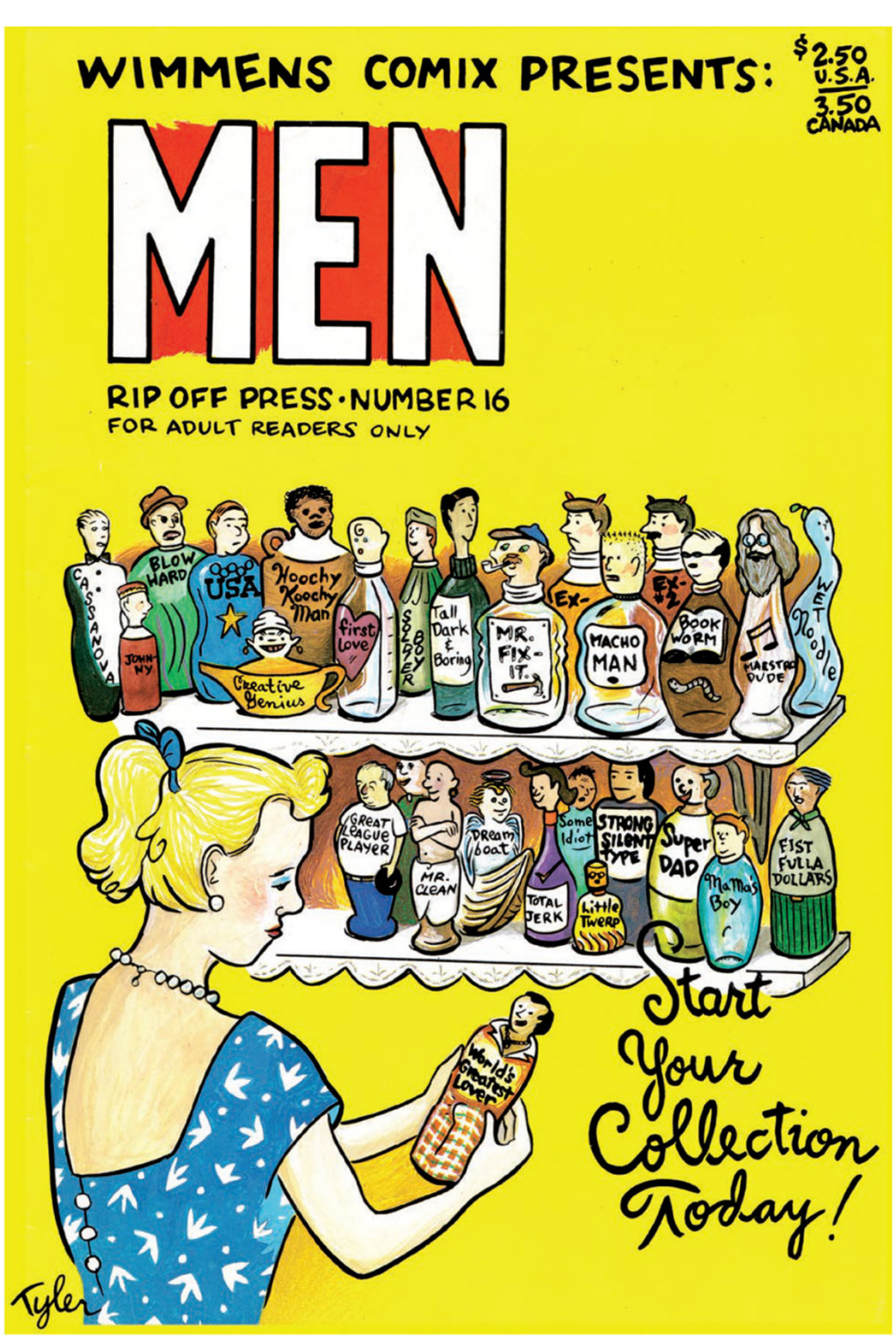

#5
75¢
WIMMEN'S Comix
INTERNATIONAL
LAST GASP
WOMEN ARTISTS & KARTOONISTS
WAK
DRY CLEAN ONLY
FLY ME
TILT
BECKY WILSON


WIMMEN'S COMIX
No6 Special Bicentennial Issue 75¢
CAN YOU HAVE IT READY BY NEXT WEEK?
BETSY ROSS HAD BEEN PLANNING TO LEAD THE TROOPS UP BUNKER HILL.
©75 SHARY FLENNIKEN
LAST GASP


The Return of
$2
WIMMEN'S COMIX
LAST GASP
JUNE CLEAVER MEMORIAL BIORHYTHMIC NECKLACE
150 MICROCHIP MEMORY
ELECTRODE NERVOUS SYSTEM
MAMMARY LACTATION DEVICE
DIGITAL MACE PROPELLANT
LOW MAINTENANCE CARBON FILAMENT ARMATURE
BUILT-IN CALCULATOR BELT FOR BUDGETING HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES
ARTIFICIAL WOMB (0 POPULATION BIRTH RATE 2.0 GENETICALLY ENGINEERED OFFSPRING)
BIONIC LEG STRUCTURE MAXIMUM SPEED 55 MPH
SEXUALLY SYNTHESIZED GYRATRON 0-25 RPM ACCELERATION 360° ROTATION
COMPUTERIZED CASSETTE BRIEFCASE
THE 21ST CENTURY WOMAN
MODEL: SX/OBJ.-2500 © TRINA



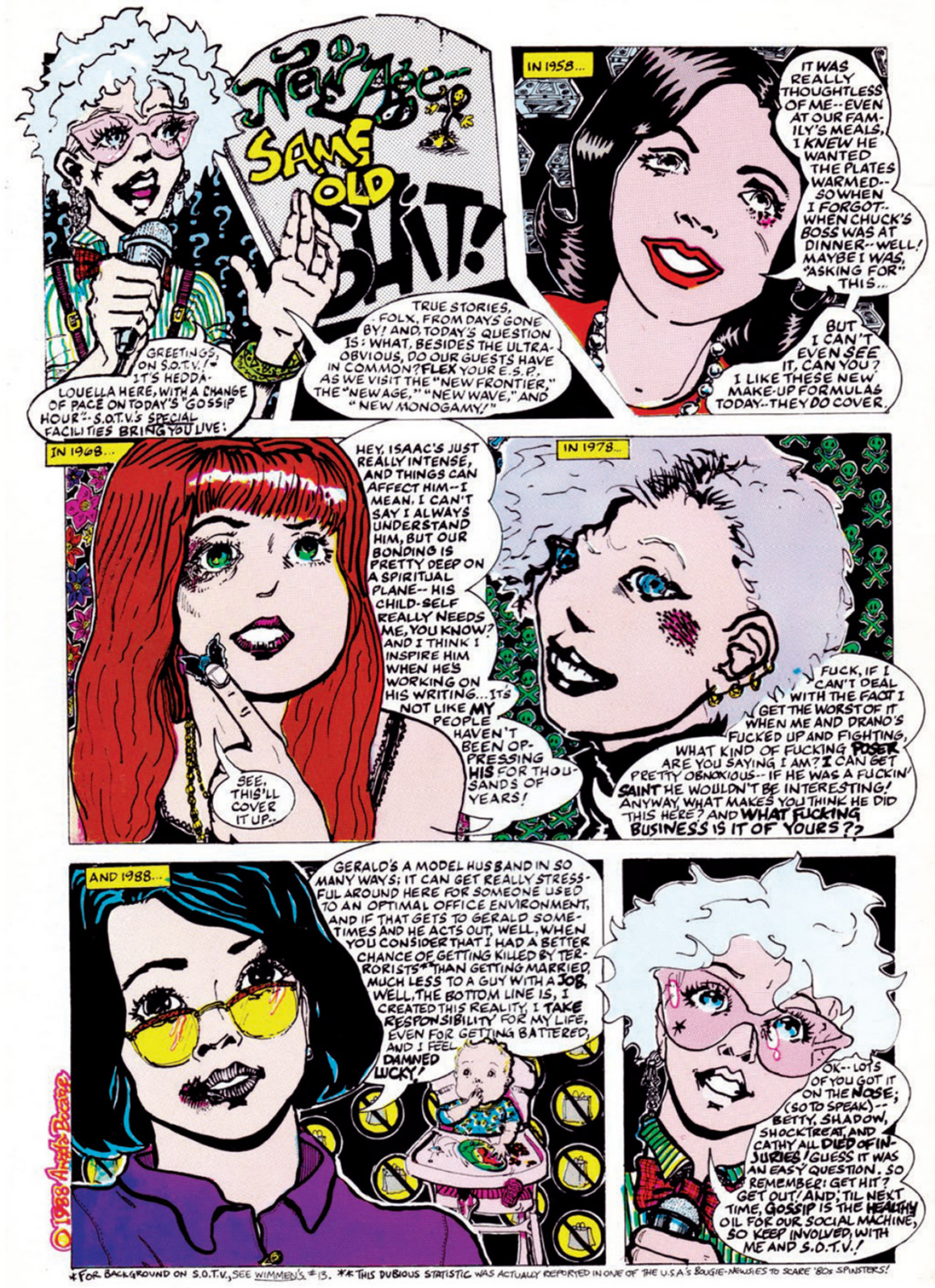




OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Shelby Sampson (1974)
TOP RIGHT: Becky Wilson (1975)
BOTTOM LEFT: Shary Flenniken (1978)
BOTTOM RIGHT: Trina Robbins (1983)

THIS PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Diane Noomin (1987)
TOP RIGHT: Trina Robbins (1989)
BOTTOM: Carol Tyler (1990)

GIMME THE BRUSH!
I JUST DID!
YOU DON'T MESS WITH REAL STYLE WARRIORS KID!
ROLLERETTES AGAINST CHANGE!
MACHO BLOOD IN SISSY GUTTER


New Age- SAME OLD SHIT!
GREETINGS ON S.O.T.V.! IT'S HEDDA-LOUELLA HERE, WITH A CHANGE OF PACE ON TODAY'S "GOSSIP HOUR"-- S.O.T.V.'S SPECIAL FACILITIES BRING YOU LIVE:
TRUE STORIES, FOLX, FROM DAYS GONE BY! AND TODAY'S QUESTION IS: WHAT, BESIDES THE ULTRA-OBVIOUS, DO OUR GUESTS HAVE IN COMMON? FLEX YOUR E.S.P. AS WE VISIT THE "NEW FRONTIER," THE "NEW AGE," "NEW WAVE," AND "NEW MONOGAMY."
IN 1958...
IT WAS REALLY THOUGHTLESS OF ME-- EVEN AT OUR FAMILY'S MEALS, I KNEW HE WANTED THE PLATES WARMED-- SO WHEN I FORGOT-- WHEN CHUCK'S BOSS WAS AT DINNER-- WELL! MAYBE I WAS, "ASKING FOR" THIS...
BUT I CAN'T EVEN SEE IT, CAN YOU? I LIKE THESE NEW MAKE-UP FORMULAS TODAY-- THEY DO COVER.
IN 1968...
HEY, ISAAC'S JUST REALLY INTENSE, AND THINGS CAN AFFECT HIM-- I MEAN, I CAN'T SAY I ALWAYS UNDERSTAND HIM, BUT OUR BONDING IS PRETTY DEEP ON A SPIRITUAL PLANE-- HIS CHILD-SELF REALLY NEEDS ME, YOU KNOW? AND I THINK I INSPIRE HIM WHEN HE'S WORKING ON HIS WRITING... IT'S NOT LIKE MY PEOPLE HAVEN'T BEEN OPPRESSING HIS FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS!
SEE, THIS'LL COVER IT UP...
IN 1978...
FUCK, IF I CAN'T DEAL WITH THE FACT I GET THE WORST OF IT WHEN ME AND DRANO'S FUCKED UP AND FIGHTING, WHAT KIND OF FUCKING POSER ARE YOU SAYING I AM? I CAN GET PRETTY OBNOXIOUS-- IF HE WAS A FUCKIN' SAINT HE WOULDN'T BE INTERESTING! ANYWAY, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK HE DID THIS HERE? AND WHAT FUCKING BUSINESS IS IT OF YOURS??
AND 1988...
GERALD'S A MODEL HUSBAND IN SO MANY WAYS; IT CAN GET REALLY STRESSFUL AROUND HERE FOR SOMEONE USED TO AN OPTIMAL OFFICE ENVIRONMENT, AND IF THAT GETS TO GERALD SOMETIMES AND HE ACTS OUT, WELL, WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT I HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF GETTING KILLED BY TERRORISTS* THAN GETTING MARRIED, MUCH LESS TO A GUY WITH A JOB, WELL, THE BOTTOM LINE IS, I CREATED THIS REALITY, I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY LIFE, EVEN FOR GETTING BATTERED, AND I FEEL DAMNED LUCKY!
OK-- LOTS OF YOU GOT IT ON THE NOSE; (SO TO SPEAK)-- BETTY, SHADOW, SHOCKTREAT, AND CATHY ALL DIED OF INJURIES! GUESS IT WAS AN EASY QUESTION. SO REMEMBER! GET HIT? GET OUT! AND; TIL NEXT TIME, GOSSIP IS THE HEALTHY OIL FOR OUR SOCIAL MACHINE, SO KEEP INVOLVED, WITH ME AND S.O.T.V.!
©1988 Aline Kominsky
*FOR BACKGROUND ON S.O.T.V., SEE WIMMEN'S #13. **THIS DUBIOUS STATISTIC WAS ACTUALLY REPORTED IN ONE OF THE U.S.A.'S BOUGIE-NEWSIES TO SCARE '80s SPINSTERS!

PARTY TIME
LEE BINSWANGER
SO-- WHAT ARE YOU WEARING TO JAN'S PARTY?
GEE, I DON'T KNOW-- HOW ABOUT THESE PANTS?
NAH-H, THEY'RE TOO PLAID.
OH HO!
IS THIS A WINNER OR NOT?
OMIGOD
WHOEVER DESIGNED THAT SHOULD BE SHOT!
!?
HOW ABOUT THESE TOGETHER?
WELL....
IT'S OKAY! IT'S OKAY! WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
YOU REALLY THINK SO?
OF COURSE-WOULD I LIE TO YOU? (ARE YOU GOING TO LET ME SLEEP?)
BIG NIGHT TONIGHT! KEN'LL BE HERE AND BOB AND NICK AND RANDY AND...
BZZT
HI!
OH HI NORA- COME ON IN.
WHAT AN INTERESTING OUTFIT YOU'VE GOT THERE!
DID YOUR DOG DRESS YOU TONIGHT?

COMIX

In 1973, struggling fine artist Melinda Gebbie discovered *Wimmen's Comix*. In my 1980 interview with her, she talked about her experience:

> […] *I went to the Hall of Flowers, in Golden Gate Park. It was a publisher's fair. Lee Marrs was sitting at a booth and I got very interested in hearing about* Wimmen's Comix *so she told me to come to the next meeting. They put out two issues and I ended up being in issue number three* […] *And they told me I could do what I wanted, so when I went home I thought, "Now what am I gonna do?" I'd never drawn anything in windows [panels] before, and the only thing that I could think of, to draw with any kind of sincerity, since I'd never been into fuzzy animals or jokes, that I'd draw something about my sexual confusion* […] *it was mostly the fact that I was a woman that* […] *made my story valid.*

In 1974, *Wimmen's* introduced Roberta Gregory, its first lesbian cartoonist. In *Cultural Correspondence* she says: "The thing that got my first story in print was seeing the virtually straight *Wimmen's Comix* #l […] and I thought, hey, what's going on? So I wrote a lesbian story […] it didn't turn out quite like I wanted it to, but at least it was a valid place to be coming from."

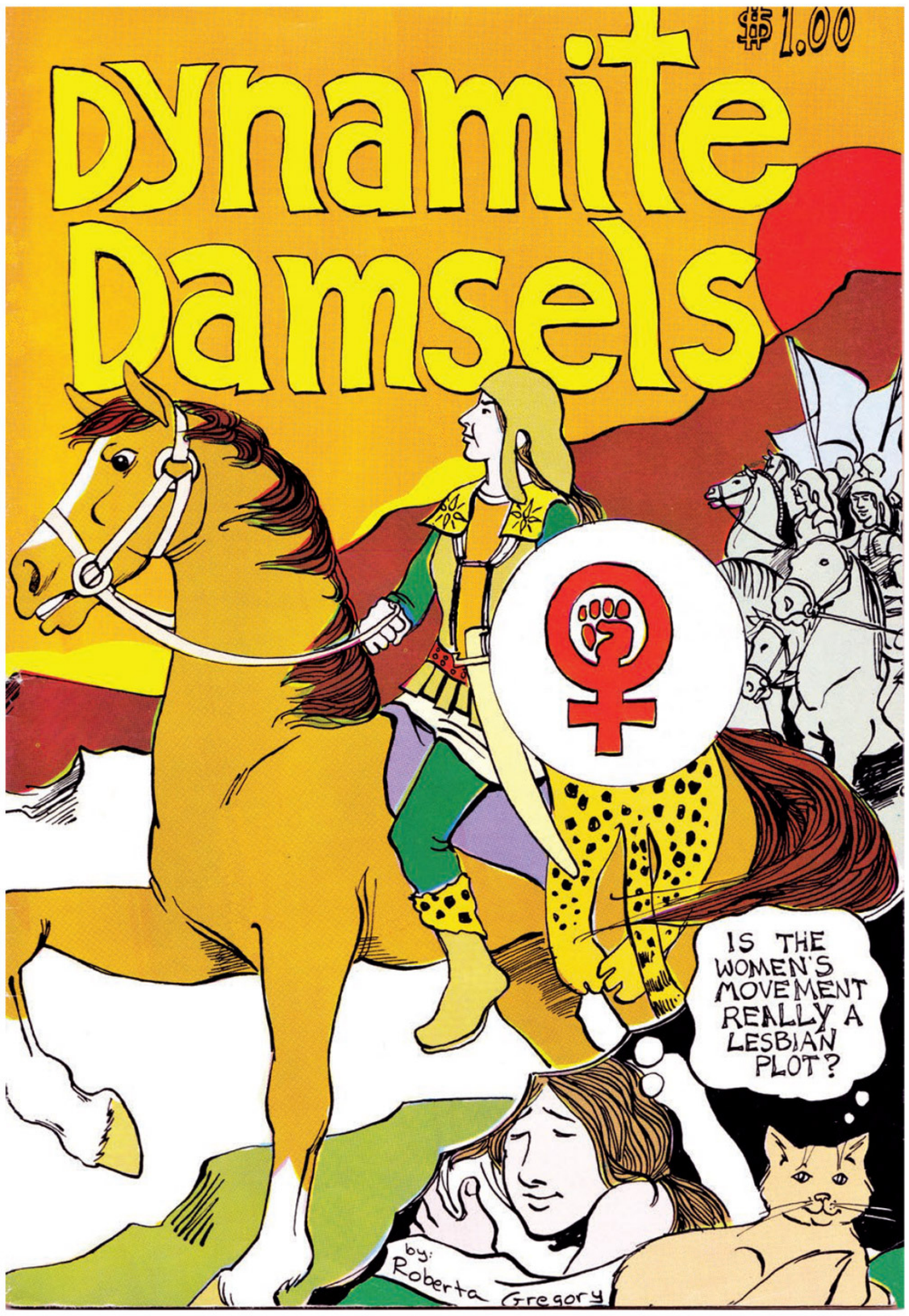
But Gregory was not the first out lesbian woman cartoonist. In 1972, ceramics major Mary Wings read the first issue of *Wimmen's* and objected to my story "Sandy Comes Out," about my lesbian ex-roommate, Sandy Crumb Pahls. In the 2012 LGBTQ anthology *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics*, editor Justin Hall quotes her as saying: "In those days of identity politics, only a lesbian could really tell the story of coming out, so I hastened to do a rejoinder to Trina's story. It was as if Sandy came out, went to the bar, took karate lessons, and that was it. There was an emotional and spiritual side to coming out that wasn't there."

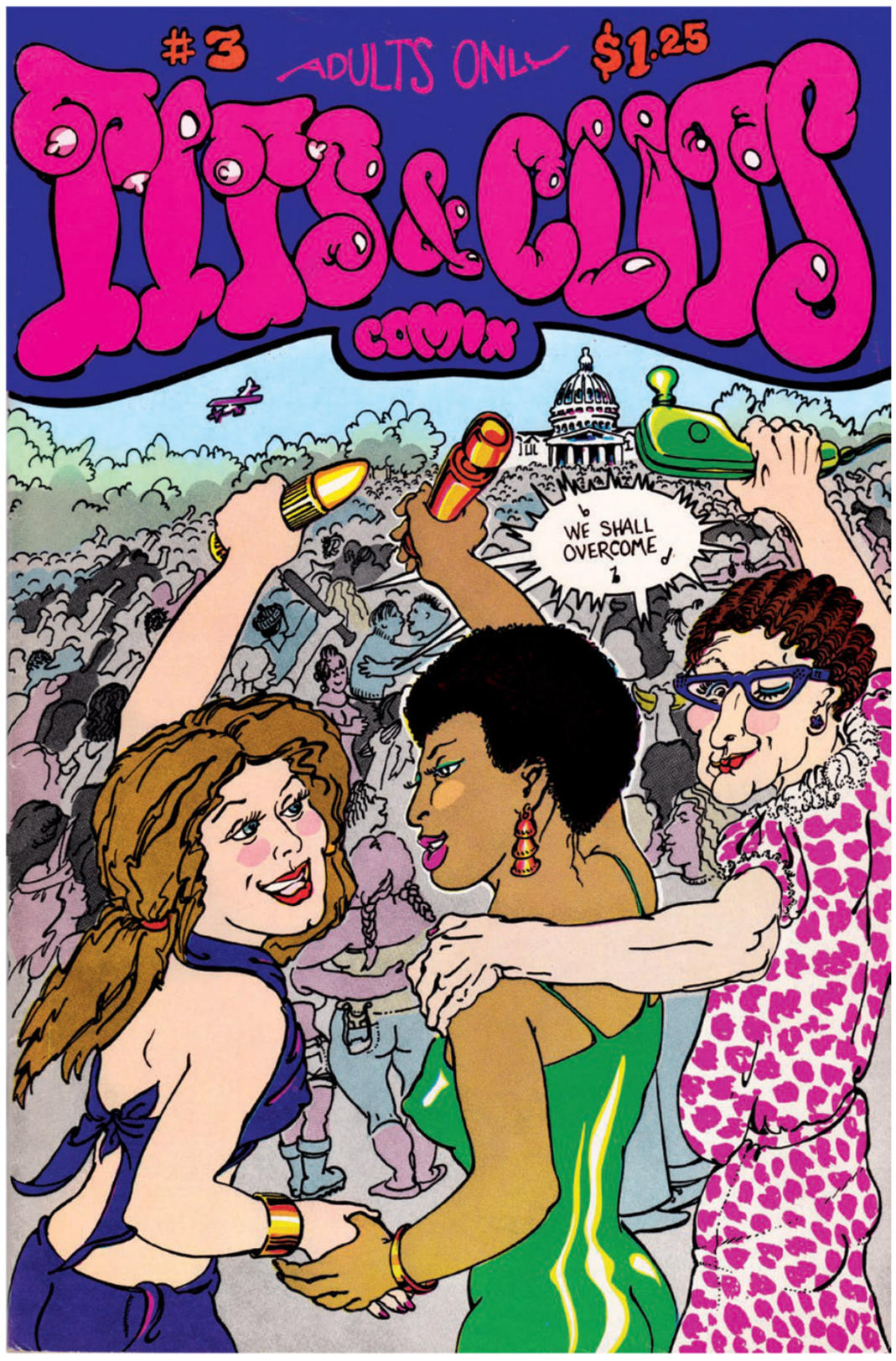
In 1973, Wings was inspired to produce her own self-published work: the first lesbian comic book, *Come Out Comix.* It was reprinted in 1977, and was followed in 1978 by *Dyke Shorts*. Meanwhile, Gregory put out her own lesbian comic book, *Dynamite Damsels,* in 1976.

Another title beat *Wimmen's Comix* to stores by two months. *Tits & Clits* was the work of two Southern California women, Joyce Farmer and Lyn Chevely (under the pseudonym

And some back covers:
OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Melinda Gebbie #8 (March 1983).
TOP RIGHT: Lee Binswanger #11 (April 1987)
BOTTOM LEFT: Angela Bocage #14 (1989).
BOTTOM RIGHT: Wimmen just like to have fun. The wimmen at the opening of a Wimmen's Comix exhibit (1975). Standing, left to right: Becky Wilson, Trina Robbins, publisher Ron Turner, Shelby Sampson, Barb Brown, Dot Bucher. Seated: Melinda Gebbie, Lee Marrs.

THIS PAGE: Mary Wings' *Come Out Comix* (1977), a reprint of the original 1973 edition.





LEFT: Roberta Gregory's *Dynamite Damsels* (1976).

RIGHT: Joyce Farmer's *Tits & Clits* (1975).

"Chin Lyvely"), who had formed their own publishing company, Nannygoat Productions, as a reaction to the sexism they were seeing in male-produced underground comics. Interviewed in *Cultural Correspondence*, Chevely talked about the creation of the title, which always dealt with sex from a woman's point of view:

> *The decision to be vulgar rather than high class arose out of sheer ignorance. Neither of us was much of a comics fan, but at the time we started I owned a bookstore, sold Ugs* [undergrounds]*, and was impressed by their honesty but loathed their macho depiction of sex. Our work, originally, was a reaction to the glut of testosterone in comics* [...] *As most of us know, sex is a very political business. All we want to do is equalize that by telling our side* [...] *Our original commitment was to concentrate on female sexuality, and our titles indicate that.*

Each issue of *Wimmen's* and *Tits & Clits* added more and more new women comics creators to their pages. Not all of them remained with the books. By 1972, Willy Mendes, one of the earliest and most enthusiastic of the women underground cartoonists, had moved to Southern California, where today she is a respected painter, still working in the rambunctious and psychedelic style of her early comics. More women

were finding in underground comics an opportunity which no longer existed in the superhero-oriented mainstream comics industry. Lee Marrs speaks for the majority of women cartoonists in the '70s: "It was really the *Wimmen's Comix* group, since that was a place to get encouragement and stuff, that kept me going."

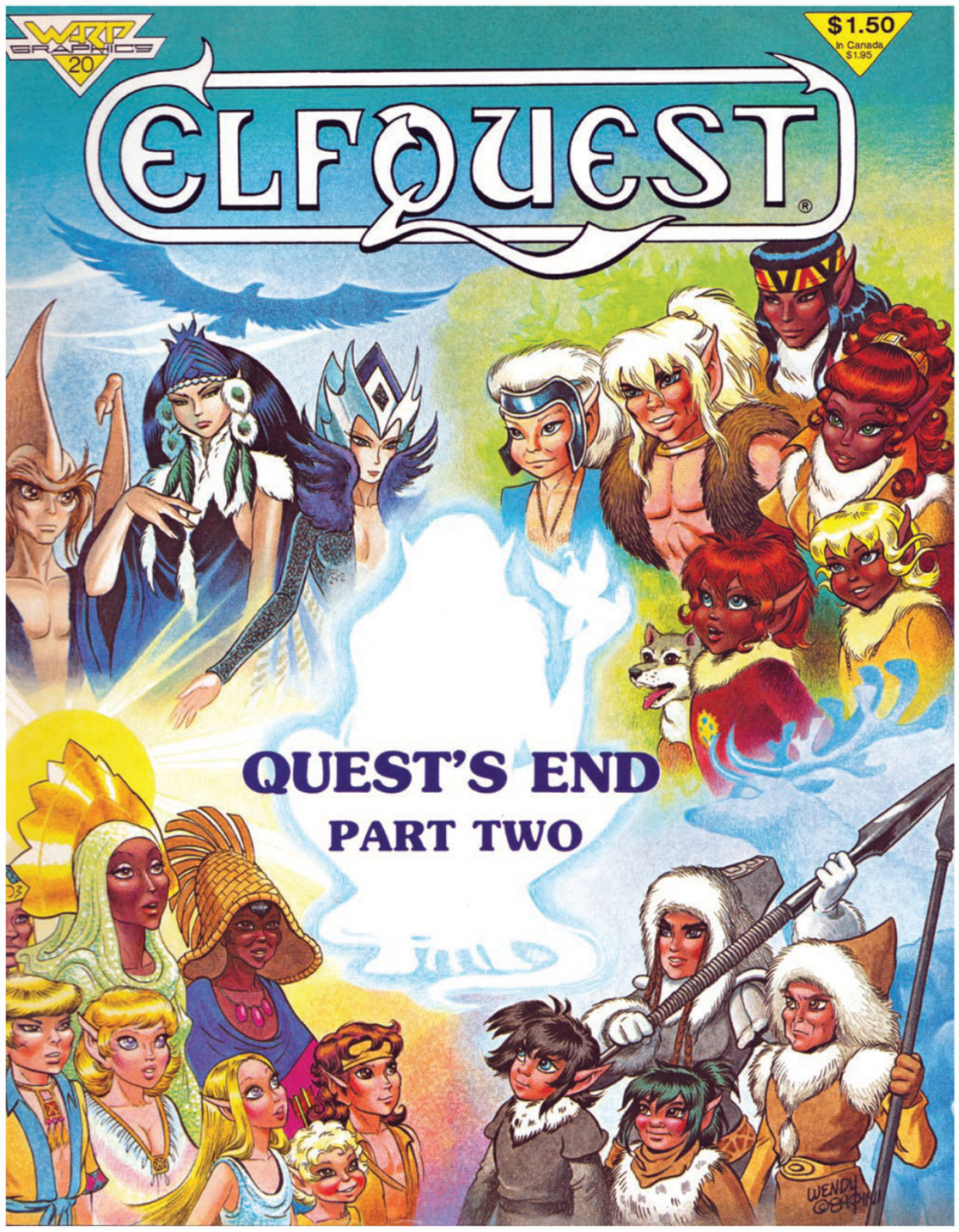
By the end of the 1980s, many of the regular contributors had produced at least one comic book of their own.

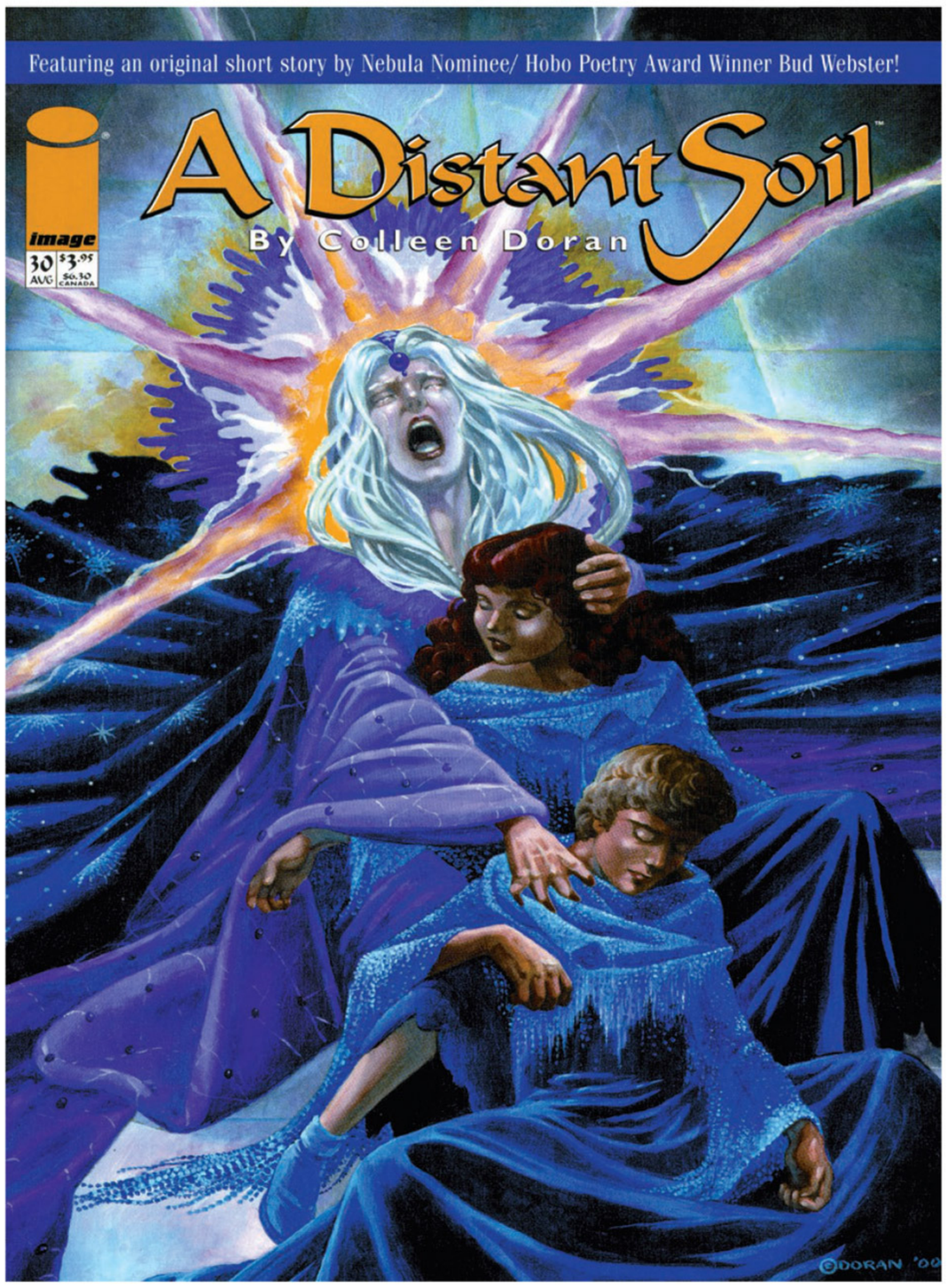
In the 1960s and '70s, other than through the mail, there were only two ways to buy comic books: from newsstands, which were notoriously unreliable at carrying runs of series, and head shops, where the undergrounds flourished (and suffered as these stores began to close down in the face of legal rulings designed to put them out of business, among other factors). Inspired by the underground, the late 1970s saw the beginning of a boom in self-published and small press black-and-white comics, since people such as Gary Arlington in San Francisco had begun to open comic book specialty stores. Suddenly, customers lucky enough to have such a store nearby could find all genres of comics — from superheroes to fantasy to science fiction to comics that reflected "alternative" subcultures — and comic books that creators wrote, drew, and published themselves could be found on the shelves.

One of the biggest self-publishing success stories is that of Richard and Wendy Pini's *Elfquest* (1978). After the Pinis tried unsuccessfully to sell *Elfquest*, written by Richard and

LEFT: One of the more unusual underground comics to emerge in the 1970s, *Far Out West*, by "Even Eve" (Eve Furchgott), was published by a commune called The Storefront Classroom.

RIGHT: Wendy Pini's *Elfquest* #1 (1978)





LEFT: Wendy Pini's *Elfquest* #20 (October 1984).

RIGHT: Colleen Doran's *A Distant Soil*.

drawn by Wendy, to every major publisher, they formed WaRP Graphics to publish what became one of the most successful black-and-white comics of the late '70s, and one of the most popular with female readers. By the mid-'80s, Marvel Comics, which had originally rejected *Elfquest*, was reprinting it in color under the Marvel logo as part of its Epic imprint and, in the 2000s, DC repackaged it as well.

WaRP Graphics expanded and published work by other writers and artists, including Colleen Doran. Doran created *A Distant Soil* (1983) when she was only 12 years old and, like *Elfquest*, it became very successful, with a large female fan following. After leaving WaRP, Doran self-published *A Distant Soil* until Image Comics picked it up, where it was published until the series went on hiatus in 2006. According to Doran, *A Distant Soil* has sold 700,000 copies via comic book editions, trade paperbacks, reprints, and foreign editions. She's also illustrated hundreds of comics and graphic novels (including *Gone to Amerikay* in 2012).

Wimmen's Comix showcased women cartoonists for 20 years. Among the most well known women cartoonists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s, and early '90s, and who contributed to the series at least once during that time, were Phoebe Gloeckner, Carol Tyler, Lynda Barry, Mary Fleener, and *National Lampoon* cartoonists Shary Flenniken and M.K. Brown.

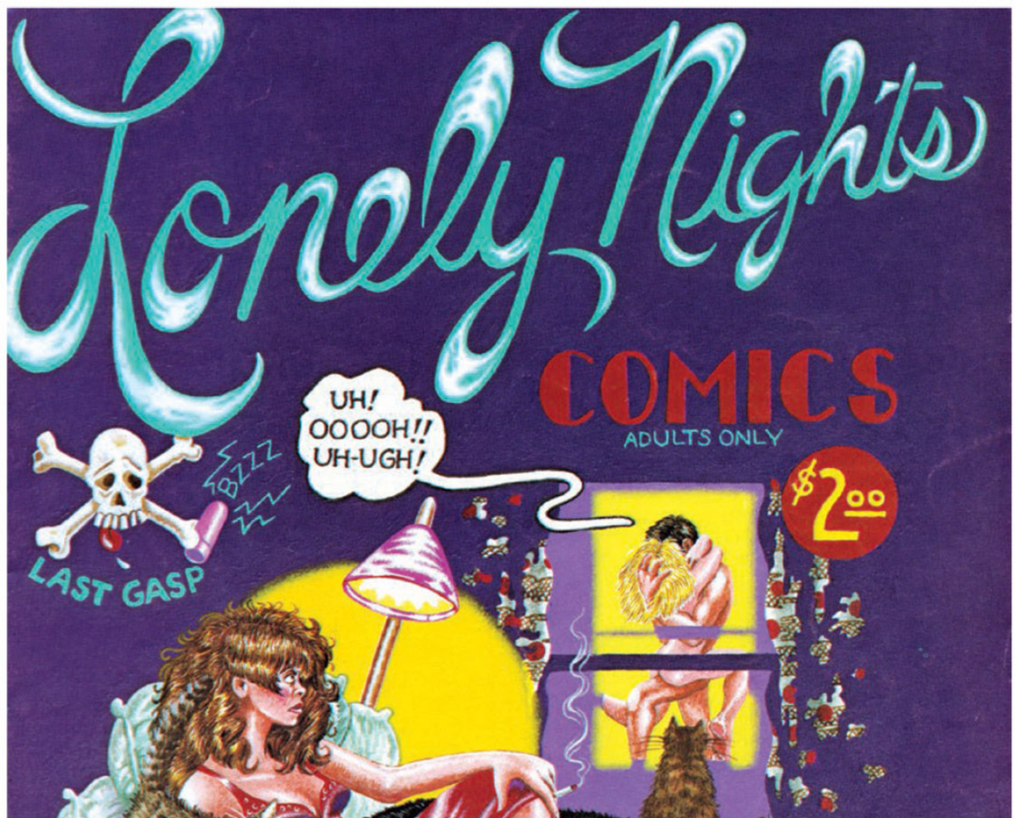
One cartoonist who would no doubt be very well known today if she had survived was Dori Seda. Because of her chronic insomnia, she worked for Last Gasp publisher

Ron Turner in the 80's, keeping the company's books after working hours (earning the nickname of "vampire bookkeeper"). Turner himself was one of the many characters that populated Seda's hilarious semi-autobiographical comics, but the main character was the artist herself, gap-toothed and goofy, along with her mangy dog, Tona. Seda fell victim to her own chain-smoking lifestyle and died of emphysema in 1988, at the age of 36. She can be seen in Les Blanc's film *Gap-Toothed Women*, for which she drew the poster. Last Gasp collected her comics in *Dori Stories*; secondhand copies can easily be

Dori Seda foreshadows her own death in *Lonely Nights*. She died two years later.

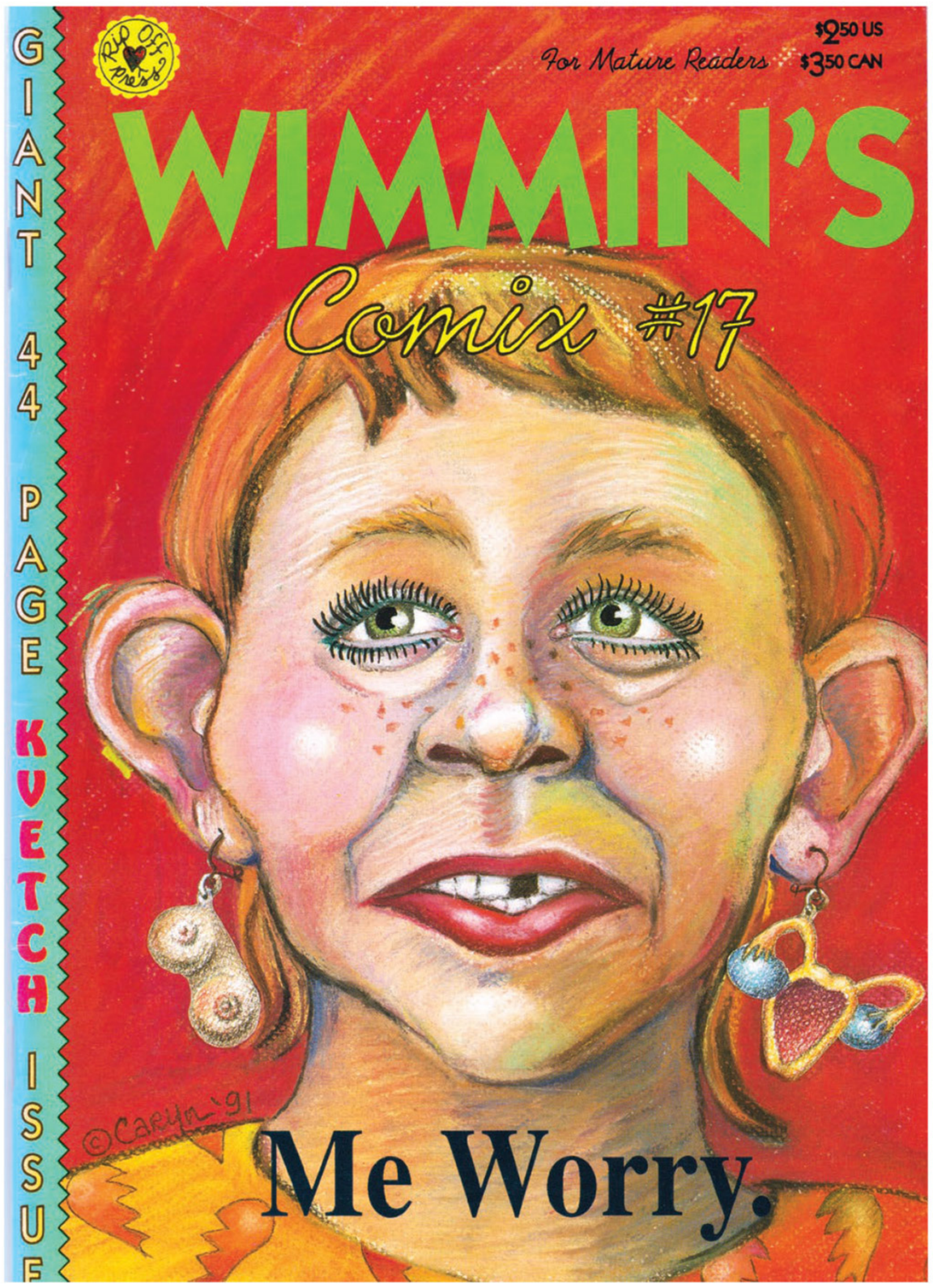
found. Today Seda is remembered as an underground comics cult figure, but she could have been so much more.

By the time *Wimmen's Comix* ended its 20-year run, the number of out lesbian cartoonists had vastly grown. Some of the most successful, such as Jennifer Camper, Diane diMassa, Alison Bechdel, and Paige Braddock, emerged in the 1980s and went on to produce their own books. With issue #17, *Wimmen's Comix* officially removed the word "men" from its name and became *Wimmin's Comix*. Too bad it was also their last issue. Caryn Leschen summed up the situation in her editorial: "This comic has been printed on cheap paper which will turn yellow in a few years. The print run was too small and all the stores, as usual, will sell out, but they won't reorder because 'women don't buy comics.' Bullshit. How did they sell out in the first place?"

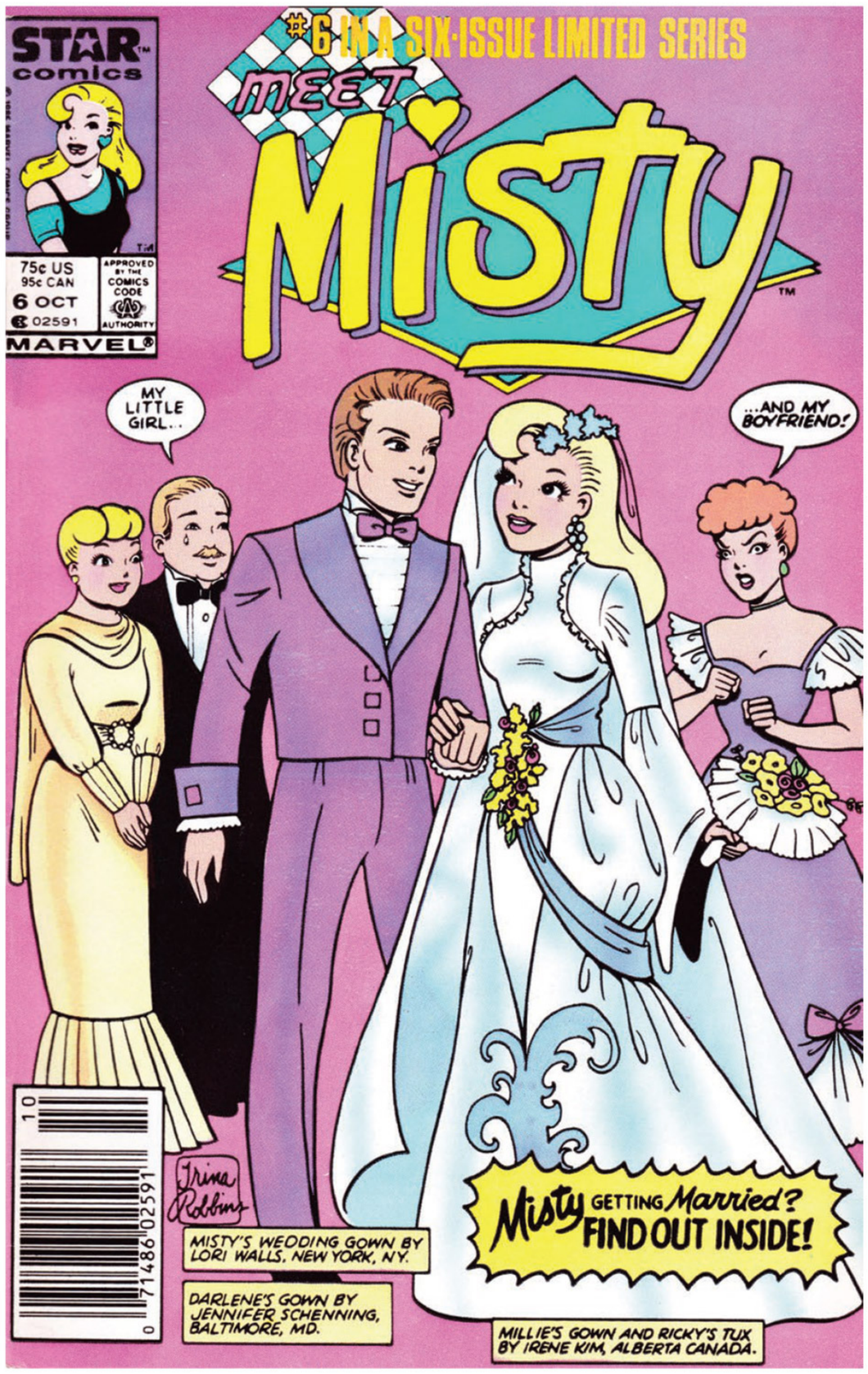


ABOVE: Dori Seda's *Lonely Nights* (1986).

RIGHT: Caryn Leschen's cover for the last *Wimmin's Comix* (1992). The collective changed the spelling for the last issue, eliminating the "men" from Wimmen's.



See You in the Funny Pages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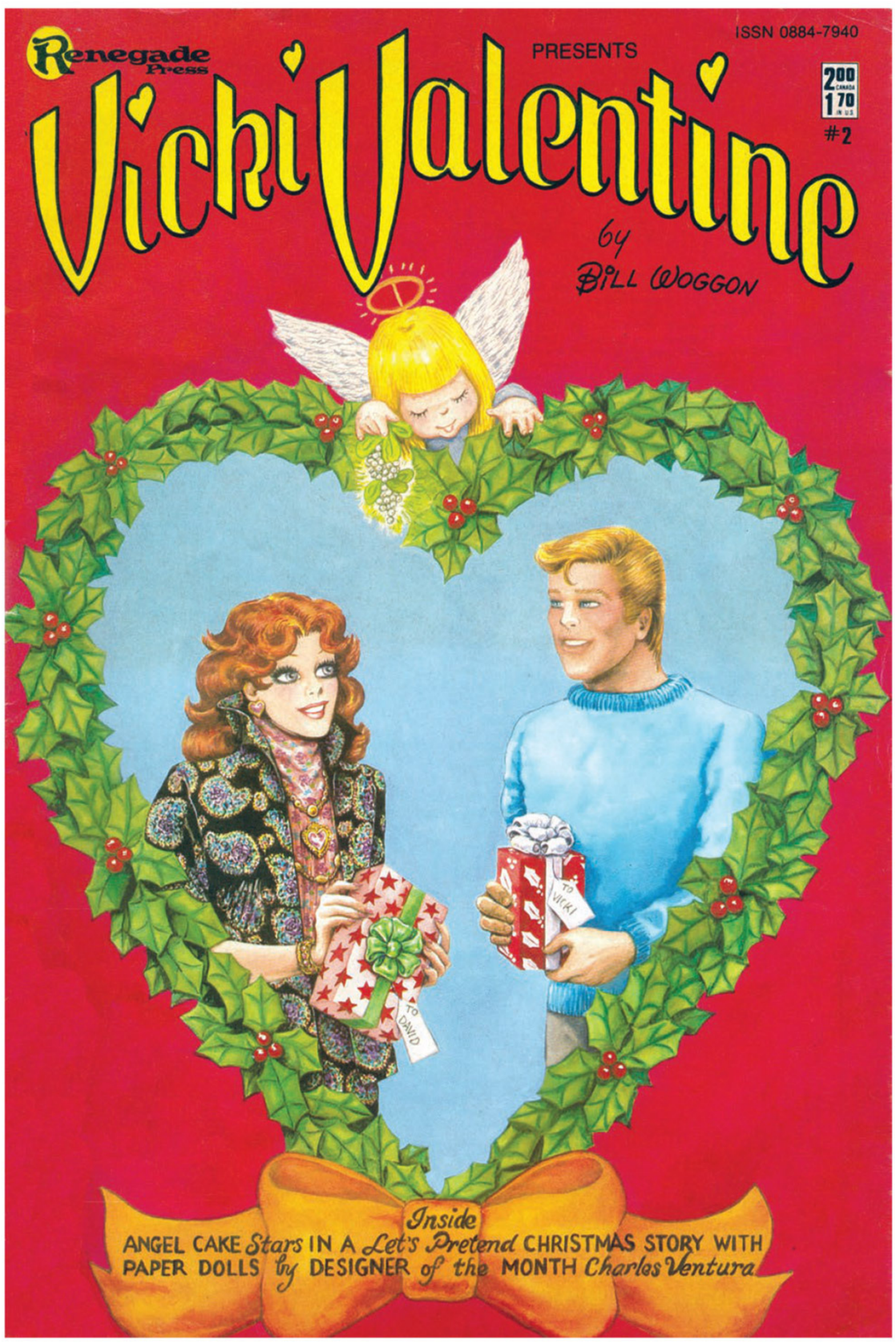
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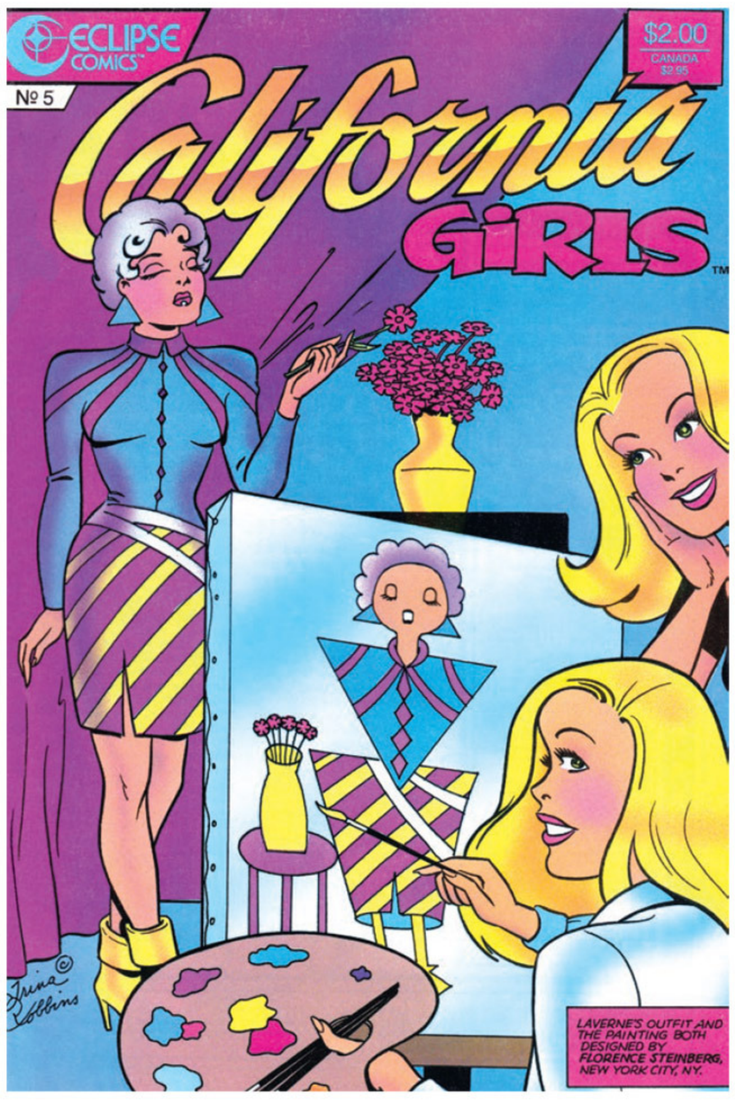
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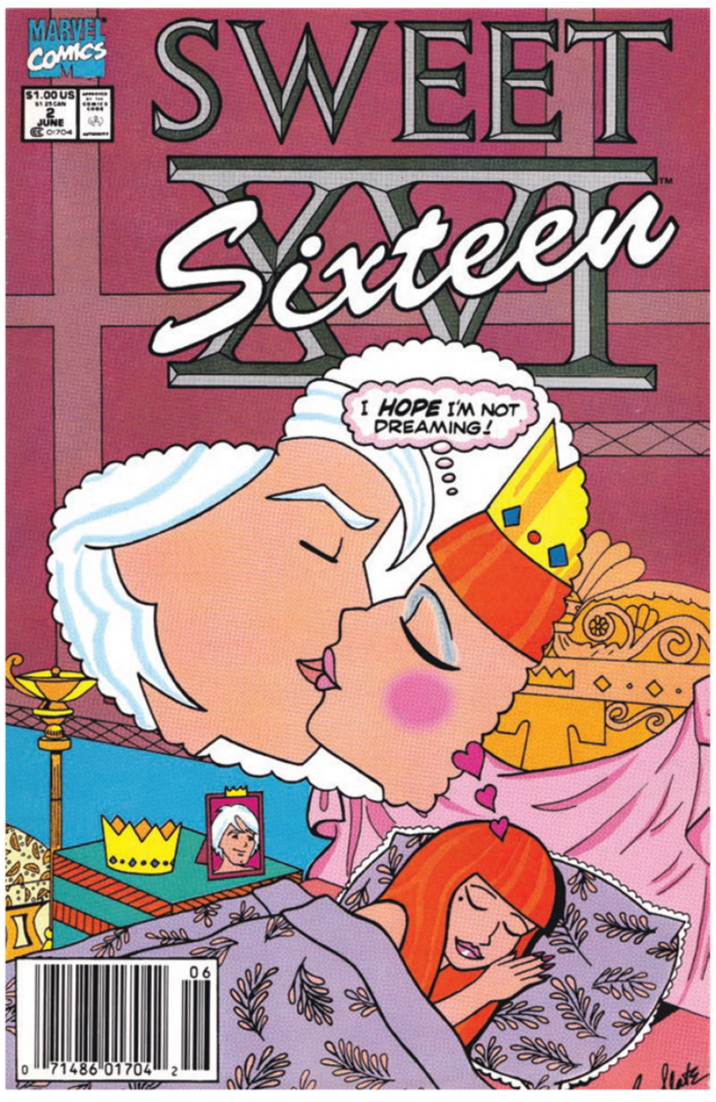
by Barbara Slate


MARVEL COMICS
SWEET Sixteen
I HOPE I'M NOT DREAMING!

By the 1980s and 1990s, superhero publishers Marvel and DC had flooded the comic book market in most shops, crowding other titles off the shelves. Gimmicks geared largely toward collectors — who were mostly men — such as "crossover events," where a reader would have to buy multiple titles to get the whole story, variant covers, etc. became increasingly common. This created a Catch-22 situation, where the retailers that grudgingly displayed a few post-underground or experimental comics, many of which included women among their contributors, became even more grudging about stocking the minuscule number of comic books that specifically appealed to women or young girls, rightfully reasoning that girls and women didn't come into comic book stores. Due to a variety of factors, comic shops had gained a reputation as "no girls allowed" clubhouses, despite a few breakout female-friendly titles, such as Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series and the Hernandez brothers' *Love and Rockets*.

Or, to put it another way:

Imagine walking into a bookstore, hoping to find a good mystery or historical novel, and discovering that the store carries nothing but Westerns. Upon inquiry, a clerk points out that they do actually carry some mysteries, but those few he shows you, crowded on a

OPPOSITE PAGE: Attempts during the 1980s and '90s to revive girls' comics.
TOP LEFT: Trina Robbins' *Meet Misty* (1986).
TOP RIGHT: Barb Rausch's *Vickie Valentine* (1985).
BOTTOM LEFT: Trina Robbins' *California Girls* (1987).
BOTTOM CENTER: Barbara Slate's *Angel Love* (1986).
BOTTOM RIGHT: Barbara Slate's *Sweet XVI* (1991).

BELOW: A meta moment in a May 1994 *Barbie* comics story, written by Barbara Slate, penciled by Mary Wilshire, and inked by Trina Robbins. In "April Fools," real-life editor Hildy Mesnik (center) phones everyone who worked on the comic to announce that the book is canceled. Clockwise, starting at midnight: Barb Rausch, John Lucas, Mary Wilshire, Janice Chiang, Mike Worley, Anna-Maria Cool, Mort Todd, Trina Robbins.

bottom shelf together with the other non-Western titles, are printed on cheap paper without color covers. The bookstore is out of the particular mystery you want, the clerk informs you. They only ordered two copies of it, he adds, because, as everyone knows, mystery book readers don't go into bookstores. Of course, logic tells you, mystery book readers won't go into bookstores that carry only Westerns.

During the 1980s and '90s, attempts at producing comics for women and girls were scattered and mostly all failed — even *Barbie Comics*! — because comic book stores either didn't carry them or, as Leschen wrote in her *Wimmin's Comix* editorial, ordered too few and did not reorder when the few copies sold out. These comics were not readily available in places where women and girls could buy them, like the comic book rack at grocery stores.

Revolutions only happen when things have gotten so bad that there's nothing to do but take drastic steps. In comics, one form of revolution was an organization named Friends of Lulu. By 1993, the situation for women in comics was dismal. Women cartoonists were practically invisible in the professional field. In an e-mail to me, editor and blogger Heidi MacDonald described the circumstances around the founding of Friends of Lulu:

Jannie Ho's cover for *Broad Appeal*, a 2003 Friends of Lulu anthology.

Friends of Lulu began as an idea around 1992 or '93. It was right after the Image Explosion [Image is a comics company founded by artists who had left Marvel to create their own, often hyper-sexualized and violent, comics] *and comics seemed to be going places and getting attention, but once again it seemed as if women were being left out of the party.* [...]

I had brunch with Trina Robbins and Lee Binswanger and as we often did, we complained about the overt sexism we saw around us. And Trina's idea of an organization for women in comics — based on Sisters in Crime, the women's mystery writers organization — came up again.

This idea kept getting kicked around and I kept thinking about it. I came up with the name "Friends of Lulu" because it wasn't overtly "feminist," but it got the idea across in a funny way. Little Lulu was of course created by a female cartoonist (Marge) but the character had her greatest comic book moments written by a man, John Stanley, but he was a writer of rare insights. Lulu was always triumphing against the stupid things that boys did, but in an egalitarian way that didn't demean the boys as characters — just mocked their dumb actions. It really symbolized the way I felt that sexism should be treated, by mockery and not defensiveness.

I believe it was at San Diego 1993 that I circulated a flyer to the women at the show to have a meeting on the Sunday of the Con at the Lulu Cafe, located just

Left, Hilda Terry, who broke the National Cartoonists Society's gender barrier in 1949, was the guest of honor at the 1998 LuluCon. Facing her are writer Rachel Pollack, Lulu Board of Directors member Naomi Bassner, and cartoonist Leslie Sternbergh.

across the tracks. A lot of women in comics must have been feeling the way I did, because the turnout was amazing. There were somewhere around 30 women who showed up. At the start of the meeting we just went around the room and discussed our feelings about being in the industry.

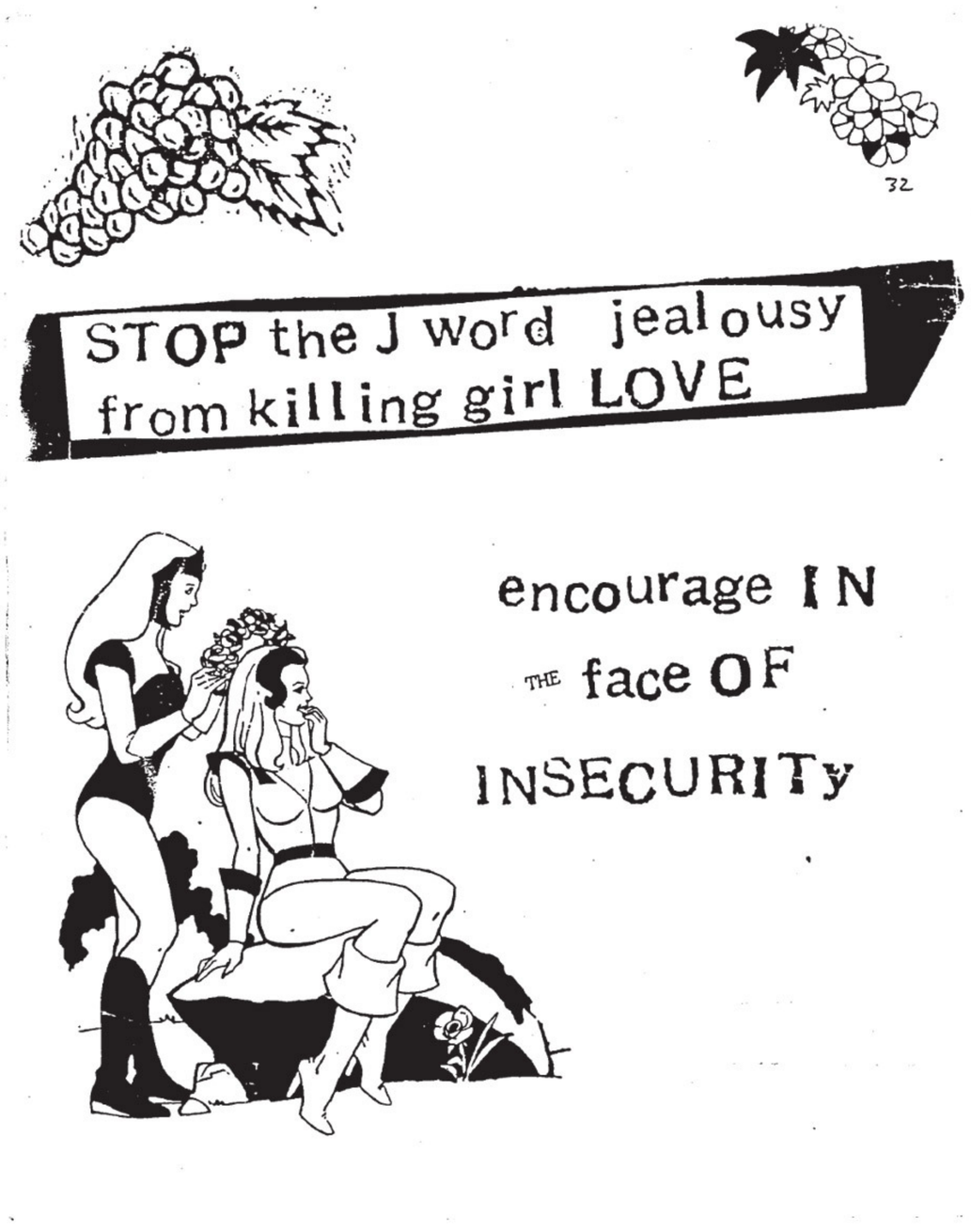
The thing I heard over and over was that these women creators couldn't get a lot of paying work because their work was considered to be aimed at women […] *and women didn't read comics. Or so everyone in the industry kept telling us.*

As everyone kept talking it flashed into my mind that the only way this was going to work was if Friends of Lulu became a group that was also trying to get more women to read comics. That was the only way for women creators to get equality in the industry. […]

A lot of the stuff Lulu did in the beginning was really progressive — a reader survey to see what comics women liked, a handbook for retailers to make their stores more open minded, and the Lulu Awards.

(Friends of Lulu officially dissolved in 2011.)

The Friends of Lulu organization reflected a larger cultural force that was inspiring women to create and distribute their own media. In 1991, two all-women bands, Bratmobile and Bikini Kill, both from Olympia, Washington, got together in Washington, D.C. and helped to form the "Riot Grrrl" movement, which combined "third wave" feminism with just-pick-up-the-instrument-and-play, Do-It-Yourself (DIY), punk attitude. Ironically, in the '60s and '70s, the women of "second wave" feminism had rejected the word "girl," preferring to use woman or even "womyn," thus even removing the word "men" in the first term. The new third wave feminists reclaimed the word by adding a growl to it.



Bikini Kill zine art is courtesy of ZAPP (the Zine Archive and Publishing Project).

Within a year, two of Bratmobile's members, Allison Wolfe and Molly Neuman, produced the first riot grrrl zine, and the movement took off. That year saw the first riot grrrl convention in D.C., and the movement spread all over the country. Zines, short for "fanzines," had been around since the first mimeographed science fiction fan magazine of the 1930s, and the later comics fanzines of the 1950s and 1960s, but the advent of photocopiers and the rise of affordable computers and printers in the '90s made putting out a zine possible for just about anybody. To a certain degree, the new zines were an extension of the women's underground comics of the 1970s. In the *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 35, Autumn 2009, journalist Elke Zobl defines grrrlzines and DIY:

> *Do-it-yourself is the central motto of zine publishing. There are no guidelines or rules on how to make a zine. Emphasis is put on DIY, process-oriented, nonhierarchical action and on the plurality of feminist expressions. Most zines are black-and-white, photocopied, cut-and-paste efforts, while a few have been transformed into printed, full-color, professionally produced magazines. A growing number of zinesters in the United States have turned their long-term zine efforts into books. Zine makers lay open and document their firsthand experiences, thoughts, and concerns, and cover just about anything that concerns them in their daily lives — from personal issues to political discussions, including music, pop culture, politics, sexuality, and women's rights. The concerns of many zinesters are fear and experiences of sexism, rape, violence, homophobia, racism, machismo, human rights abuses, and religious pressure.*

Many of the early zines were crude, often on purpose, reacting against slick commercial publications. Often they included comics, and soon young women were producing zines that were *all* comics — dubbed "minicomics" — that were listed in periodicals such as *Factsheet 5* and distributed through the mail and independent book and music stores. Among the women cartoonists producing their own comic zines in the '90s (some of them now quite well known) were Diane diMassa (*Hothead Paisan*), Mary Fleener (*Slutburger*), Ariel Bordeaux (*Deep Girl*), Ariel Schrag (*Awkward*, *Definition*, *Potential*, *Likewise*), Lorna Miller (*Witch*), Megan Kelso (*Girlhero*), Jessica Abel (*Artbabe*), and Sarah Dyer (*Action Girl*). According to their respective *Comics Journal* interviews, some of these women, like Seattle, Washington native Megan Kelso, hadn't had much exposure to comic books before they took up their pens, while others were sparked by them; though she's best known for her reportage and slice-of-life comics, Chicago-based Jessica Abel grew up reading the *Ms. Magazine* Wonder Woman comics collection. Sarah Dyer's Action Girl, who headlined an eponymous comics anthology series, is like a superheroine version of Little Lulu; she rejects the "no girls allowed" message the comics industry was sending out at the time. She even had her own paper doll, complete with a sensible superhero costume.

But, although there were more women drawing comics than ever before, the majority of women cartoonists did not earn a living drawing comics. Self-publishers considered

LEFT: "Tit Chat" (1995) is collected in *The Complete Deep Girl* by Ariel Bordeaux (2013).

RIGHT: *Girlhero* #1 by Megan Kelso (1993).

I WAS BACK IN FRANCE, 1943. MUFFIN CLUB. AND SHE WAS THERE.

IT WAS A DREAM.

$50? $100?

$200.

INJECT ME, BABY.

A NIGHTMARE.

$125.?

FUCK OFF.

PLEASE...

SHE'S ALL I EVER WANTED. I LOVE HER.

SHE'S MY HEROIN(E). SOB

THE VERY FIRST APPEARANCE OF...

ACTION GIRL

CUT and COLOR ACTIVITY PAGE
get your crayons!
get your scissors!

The "growing-out" hairstyle. Color various shades of purple. where's a comb?!

Cheap headbands made from cut-up t-shirts. Color any color!!

On TV: Picket Fences or an old movie.

ACTION GIRL STAYS HOME

$10 "sports bra" — comfortable, supportive, and never comes undone. Color black.

Huge, comfy and optional (weather-depending) t-shirt. All cotton, well used but not washed enough. Color well-worn and faded.

I ♡ Totoro.

ACTION GIRL!!

don't forget the most important Coca Cola!!

Boy's 3-a-pack boxers — cheap and comfy!! Color faded pastels.

ACTION GIRL GOES TO MOM'S

Baggy shorts made from old men's pants cut off below the knee and rolled up. Multi-colored.

♫ baggy trousers ♫

Vintage day dress. Mom likes it, so does Action Girl. Any color! Go Nuts!

Hi Mom, let's talk about our boyfriends!! Aren't guys jerks!!

Thick black stockings — (tights and pantyhose aggravate those "feminine" problems.)

Action boots! $9 from thrift shop — go with all action outfits and outlast Docs.

100% cotton boot socks. No blisters!! Color purple

dirty socks from never wearing shoes in the house

ACTION GIRL GOES SKA!

ACTION GIRL FIGHTS EVIL!

OH NO!! ACTION GIRL WAS DRAWN BY A GUY!!

save her now!!

"help!"

"help!"

Button- put your favorite band here.

Action Girl hates evil

AG's official heroine jacket. Dashing, yet warm and comfy.

Like anyone has this body. Do these guys ever have dates? Have they seen a woman's body?

INSTRUCTIONS: Cut out, then rip up over a trash can while laughing gleefully!! hahahahahahaha

Like you can do anything in this cape.

Crisp white shirt stolen from a boy.

Short full skirt means freedom of movement!

Ties should only come in black

Evilstomping boots give Action Girl extra powers.

Stomp out all bad!!

Kicky pleated skirt — dark or a nice plaid.

Where do these boots come from? Special stores for super-gals and hookers?

♫ ska ska ska ♫

♫ do the Ska ♫

Rudie hat! Cut on dotted line, color black and slip over Action Girl's head.

DESIGN A COLOR SCHEME FOR ACTION GIRLS' BATTLES AGAINST EVIL!!

yeah, right!!

so pathetic.

by and © sarah d. 1993

Renée French's

GRIT Bath

$2.50 • $2.95 Canada
MATURE READERS

#2

OW, OW, OW, OW.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

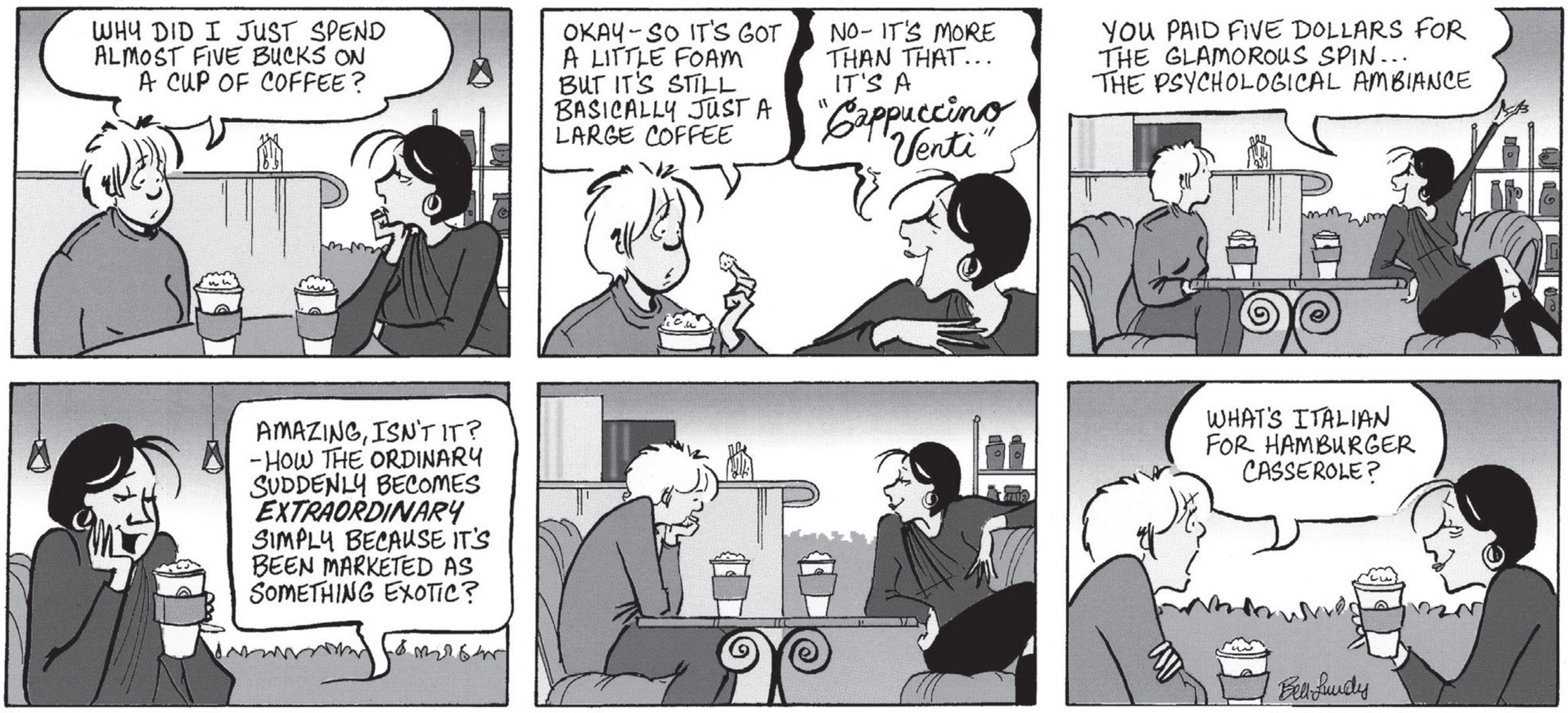
themselves lucky if they broke even; many of the independent ("indy") publishers that were cropping up often rarely paid, or paid very little. Still, some women were garnering solo series: Renée French's moody pencils and disturbing themes found a home in *Grit Bath*, and Dame Darcy's ongoing series *Meat Cake*, drawn in a style reminiscent of Victorian pen-and-ink illustration, chronicles the batty, witchy adventures of characters like Friend the Girl and Effluvia the Mermaid. Underground comics veteran Roberta Gregory's Bitchy Bitch character found her way into comic books and graphic novels. Julie Doucet's *Dirty Plotte* (a slang term for female genitalia) is one of the quintessential '90s comics with its combination of memoir, make believe, and raw humor. Carla Speed McNeil has adapted her sci-fi/fantasy epic *Finder* into several different formats.

By the end of the 1990s, collecting comic stories from disparate and often out-of-print sources into books would become a common practice in North America, but there were a few fits and starts along the way. One influential project was the *Twisted Sisters* anthologies, edited by Diane Noomin and Aline Kominsky, featuring *Tits & Clits* and *Wimmin's Comix* alumni such as Phoebe Gloeckner, Penny Moran Van Horn, and Carol Lay, as well as then-newcomers Krystine Kryttre, Leslie Sternbergh, and Debbie Drechsler.

Compared to comic books, the world of newspaper strips is another planet. One self-syndicated woman cartoonist defines comic books as "comics," and newspaper strips as "cartoons," thereby separating the worlds in her mind. Having already decided on my own definition in the introduction to this book, I will continue to call both formats "comics." The benefit of newspaper strips for women cartoonists is obvious: traditionally, newspaper cartoonists made more money than comic book artists, and women and girls read newspapers. (Julie Doucet said, in an interview in the June 22, 2006 edition of the *Montreal Mirror*, "I went to a newspaper to propose a comic strip because I only had to draw a small page and it would be out the next week. For once it was regular pay and good money.") Also, for a long time, newspaper strips were more likely to be collected into books and find their way into stores and libraries. There are also drawbacks: It is difficult to get accepted by the large syndicates, which often have their own

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: This is from Jessica Abel's "The Junkie" in *Art Babe* #1 (1992).
BOTTOM LEFT: "The Very First Appearance of... Action Girl" (1993) in *Action Girl Comics* #2 (January 18, 1995) by Sarah Dyer.
BOTTOM RIGHT: *Grit Bath* #2 cover (1994) by Renée French.

BELOW: From *The Madame Paul Affair* by Julie Doucet, which collects her 1999-2000 comic strip.



A sampling of contemporary comic strips:

ABOVE: Sandra Bell Lundy's *Between Friends.*

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP: Terri Libenson's *Pajama Diaries.*
CENTER: Rina Piccolo's *Tina's Groove*
BOTTOM: Hilary Price's *Rhymes with Orange.*

prejudices against or for certain styles. Once accepted, the artist must usually sign away the rights to her creation. She is at the mercy of the syndicate, which can tell the artist what or what not to say or draw, and can fire her and hire someone else to take over the strip that she had originally created. As a result, the majority of syndicated comic strips by women tend to consist of safe, mildly humorous gags revolving around families and/or working mothers.

In the '80s and '90s, one option that was a good deal for women cartoonists was self-syndication. By the mid-'70s, the underground papers of the 1960s had evolved into alternative weeklies: free tabloids usually paid for by ads from local merchants. Most large American cities and college towns have at least one weekly newspaper. These papers are often given away in local bookstores and coffee houses, attracting a more bohemian or intellectual readership than the average daily. These readers demand comic strips that are more challenging than those found in the dailies. Among the many cartoonists who met that demand are Lynda Barry with *Ernie Pook's Comeek*, Nicole Hollander with *Sylvia*, and Deb Aoki with *Bento Box*.

Another alternative that didn't exist in the underground newspaper days of the 1960s was LGBTQ newspapers. Alison Bechdel and Jennifer Camper are among the lesbian cartoonists who got their start in the 1980s by being published in weeklies like *WomaNews* and the *San Francisco Bay Times*. Bechdel's groundbreaking (and hilarious) strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For,* and Camper's often-rude *Rude Girls and Dangerous Women* have both been collected in trade paperback form. Editor Justin Hall's 2012 anthology, *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics*, includes lesser-known women creators whose work first appeared in these weeklies, such as Andrea Natalie. Joan Hilty's strip, *Bitter Girl*, made its debut as a full-page strip in *FocusPoint* in 1998 and can still be found on her blog. Sadly, the alternative newspaper market has shrunk.

the Pajama Diaries

by TERRI LIBENSON

Crumb Grabber

WORKING MOM YOGA POSES:

Multitasking Monkey

Laptop Lunge

Deadline Warrior

The Texting Tree

Zombie Carpool Driver

Screaming Soccer Banshee

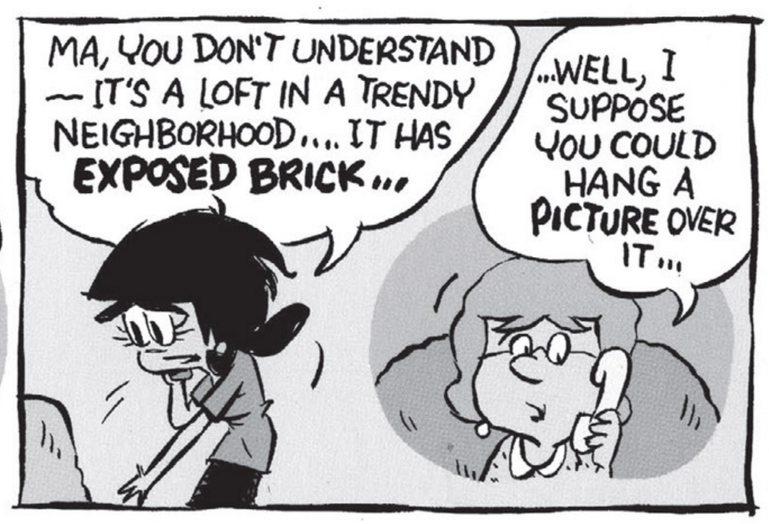
Late-Arrival Skulking Duck

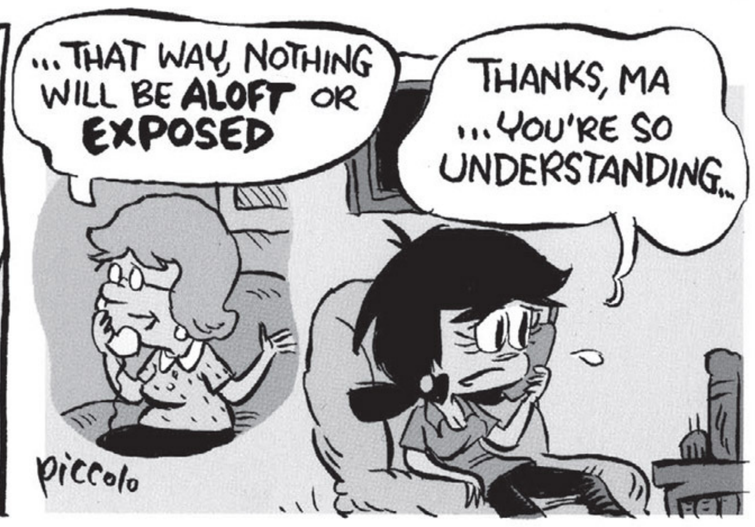
Downward Crashing Dog

8/29 © 2010 Terri Libenson, Dist. By King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Libenson

www.pajamadiaries.com





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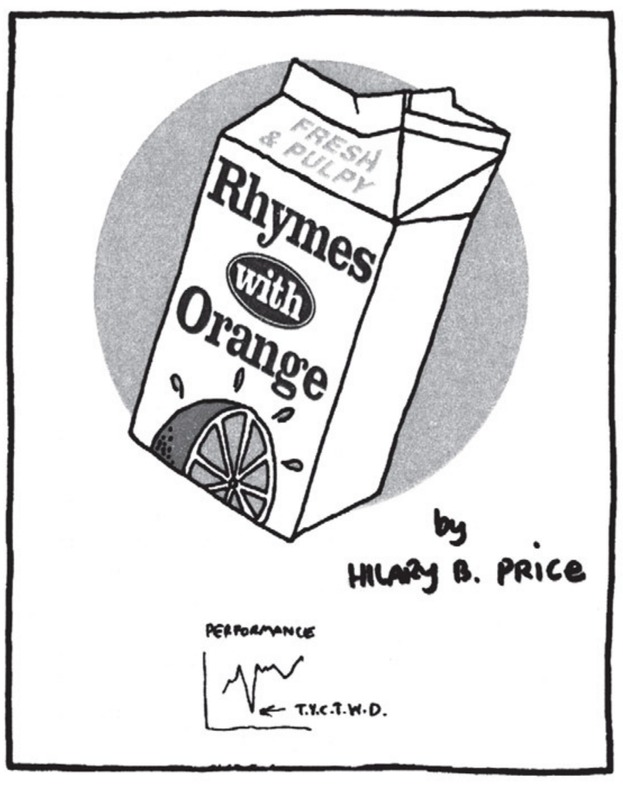
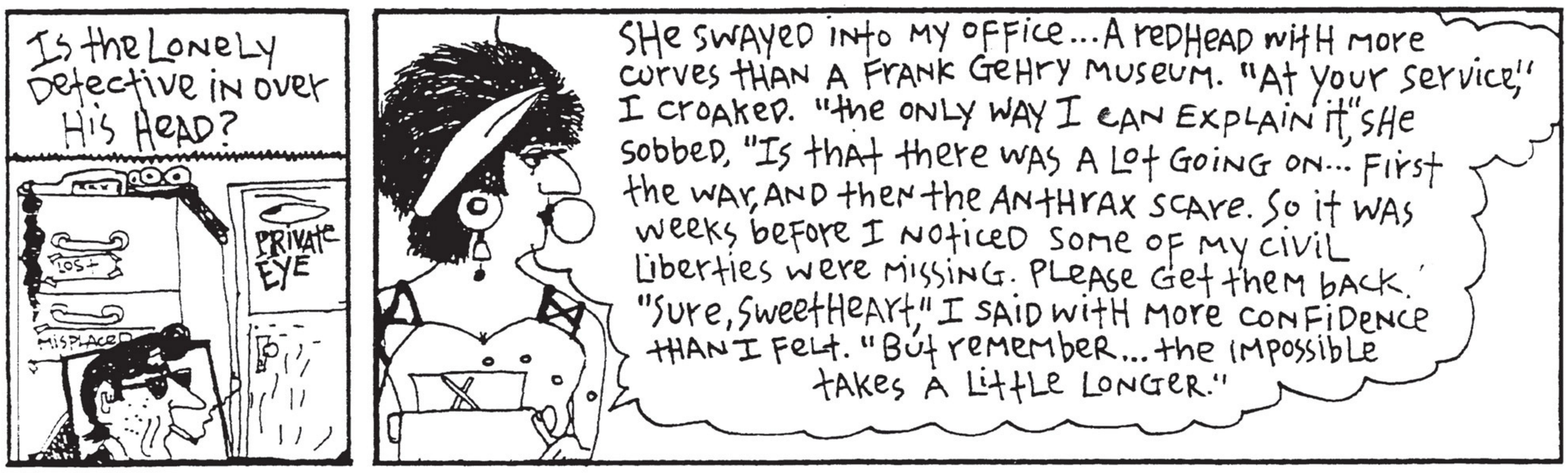
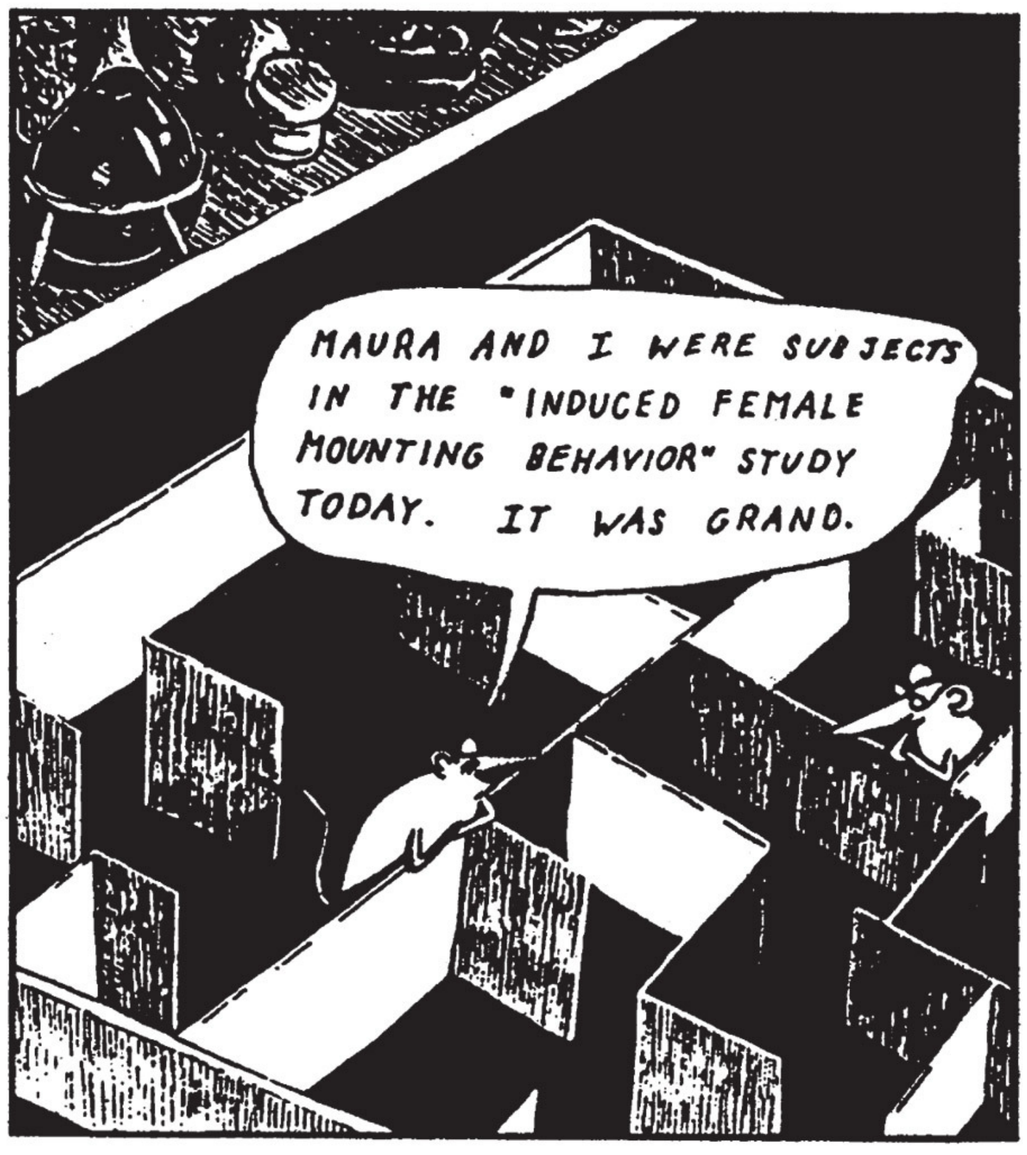


TO TRINA! All best, HILARY B. PRICE NOV 2010



ERNIE POOK'S COMEEK

BY LYNDA BARRY



TOP: Nicole Hollander's "The Lonely Detective": Hollander picked this as her favorite strip. She writes: "I am a fan of Raymond Chandler. I am a fan of the idea of the Lonely Detective who spends his life in a crummy office, sleeping on a pullout couch, drinking week-old coffee: the guy who fights to protect the innocent losers who fall afoul of the law and are ground under the heel of powerful men. He's always getting beat up, seeing stars ... yet he goes on."

BOTTOM LEFT: Lynda Barry, *Ernie Pook's Comeek*.

BOTTOM RIGHT:"Stonewall Riots," by Andrea Natalie is in *No Straight Lines*.

Lynda Barry retired her strip in 2008, and Hollander retired her strip in April 2012, telling me via e-mail:

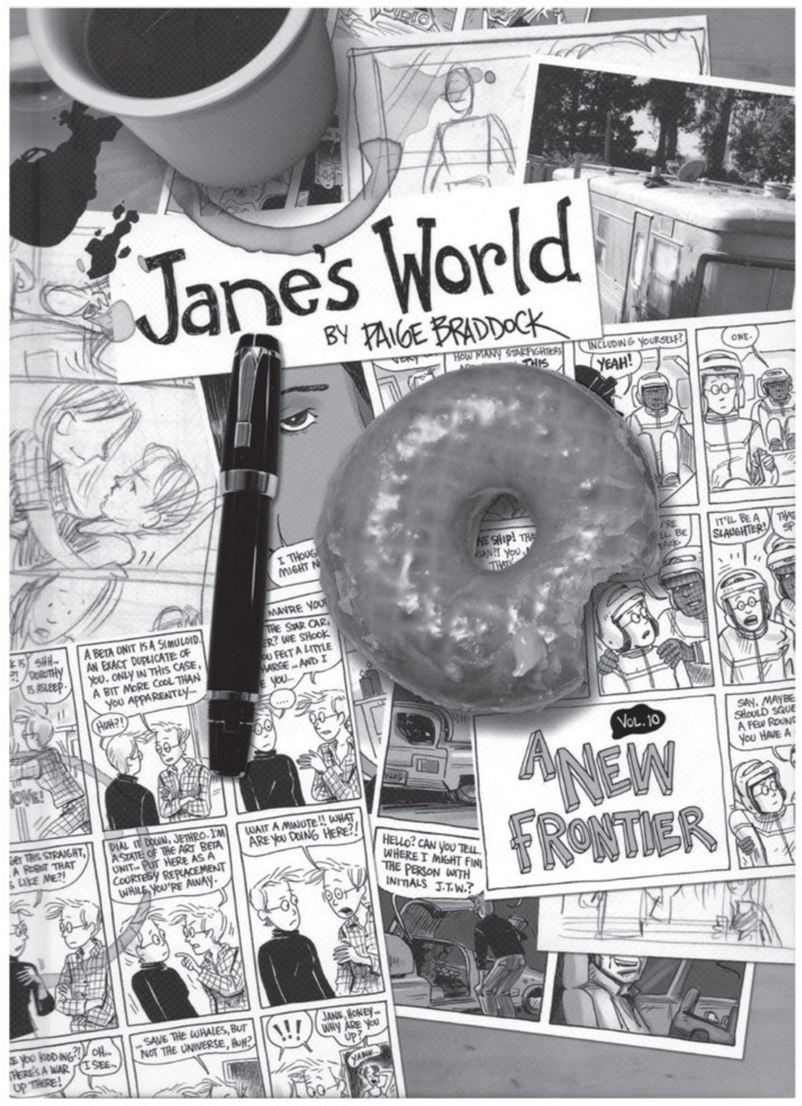
> *I took a real look at how many papers I was in and acknowledged that* [*Sylvia*] *was not reaching many fans through print.*

Cartoonist Paige Braddock wrote in an e-mail to me:

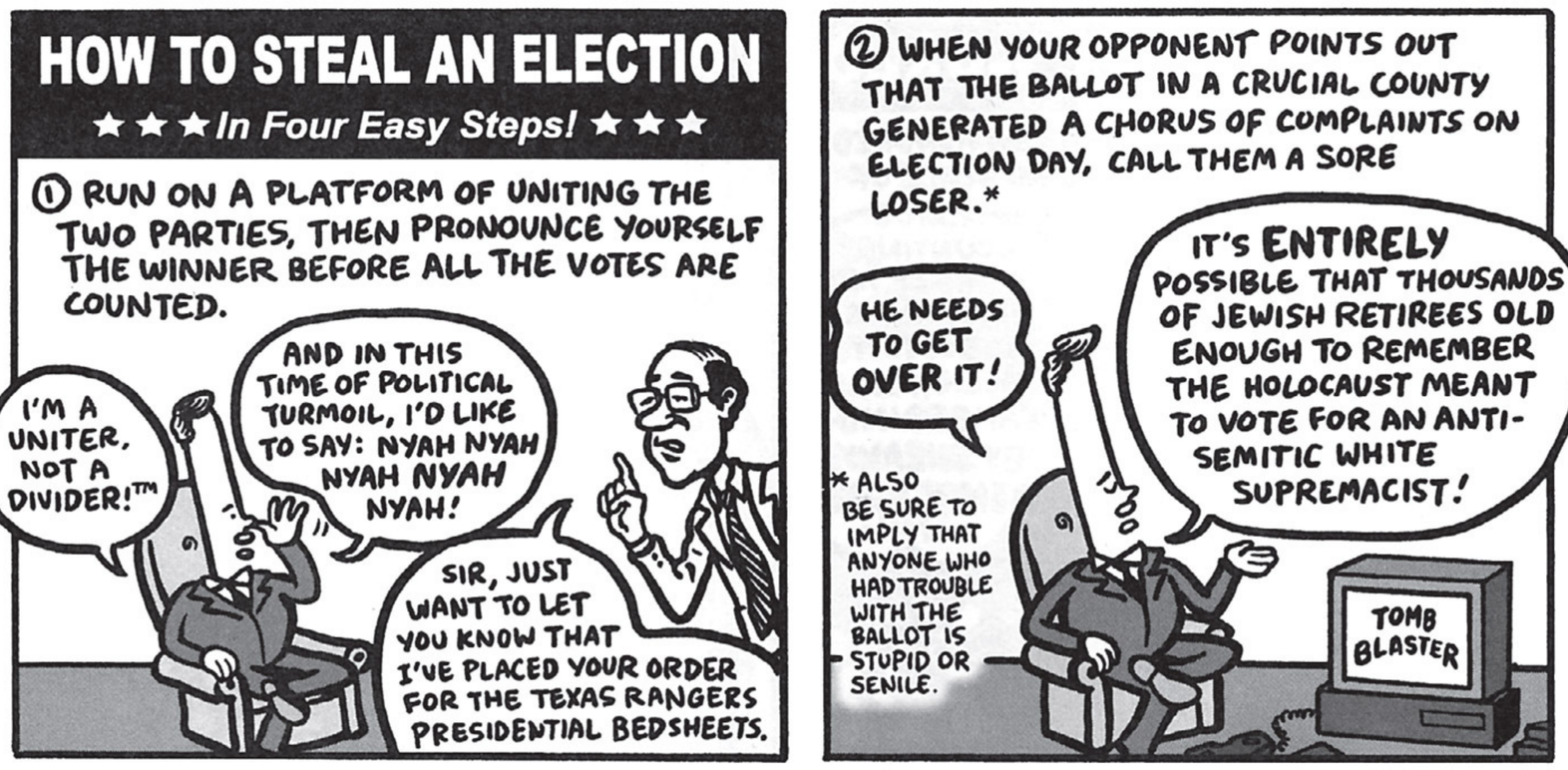
> *Like the traditional Paper market, alternative papers have really shrunk in the last 5 years.*

Most of the best women cartoonists, like Joan Hilty, Hollander, and Braddock, have moved on to the Internet and/or collect their strips in books.

Finally, although most editorial cartoons consist of single panels, if you are lucky enough, your local newspaper might carry the incisive and hilarious political comics of Jen



SLOWPOKE



TOP LEFT: Deb Aoki's *Bento Box*.

TOP RIGHT: Paige Braddock's *Jane's World*.

BOTTOM: This strip is collected in *Slowpoke: Café Pompous* by Jen Sorensen

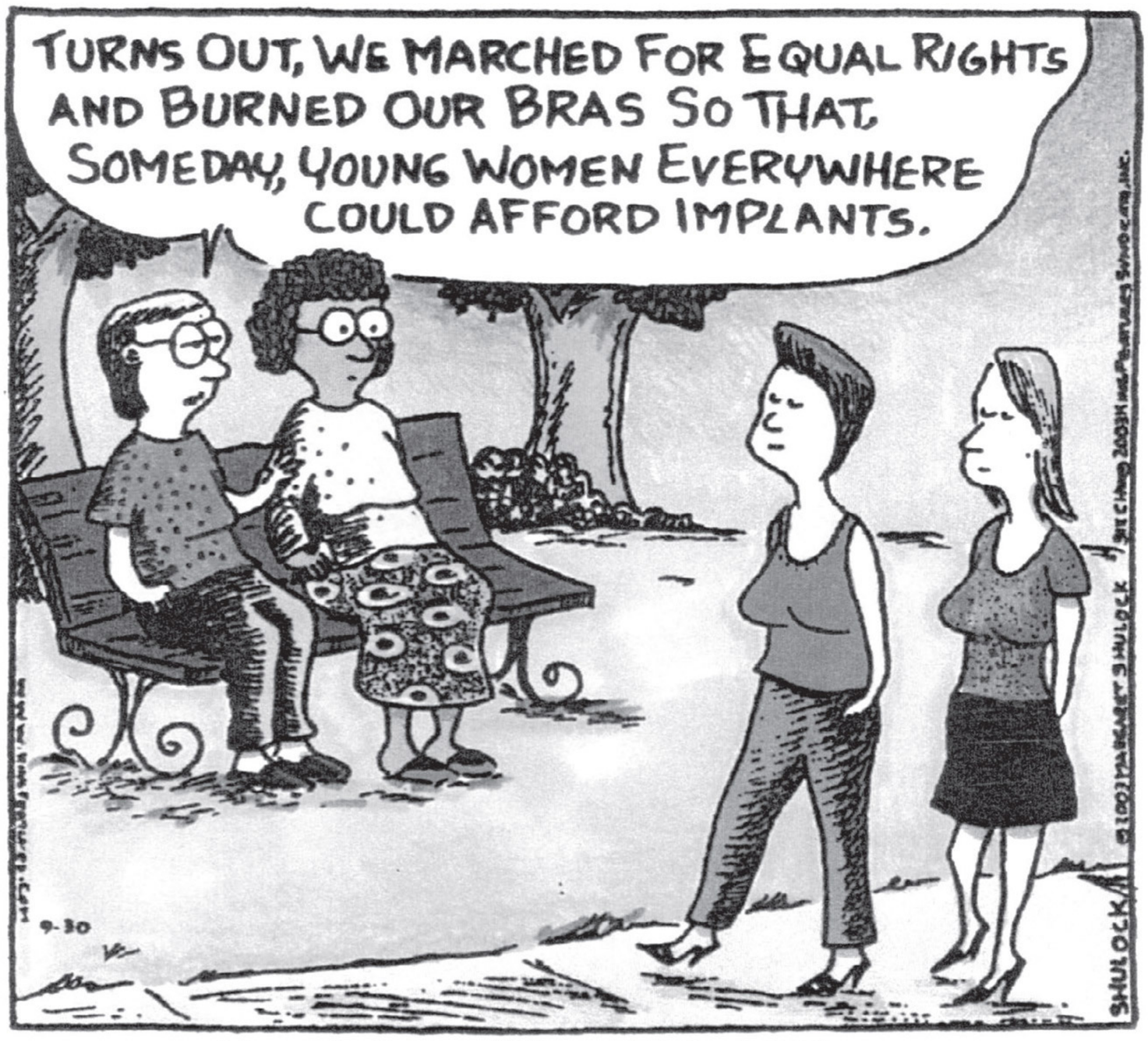
TOP: Dale Messick at a San Diego Comic-Con in the late 1980s.

BOTTOM: The last *Brenda Starr* strip, drawn by June Brigman, appeared on January 2, 2011. In the third panel, Brigman has drawn everyone who worked on the strip. Left to right: Roy Richardson (inker), June Brigman, Mary Schmich, Brenda, Ramona Fradon, Dale Messick.

Sorenson. In the early 1990s, Sorenson contributed comics to anthologies like *Action Girl*, and put out her own comic book, *Slowpoke*, but in 1998 she started producing a weekly editorial comic which has collected awards throughout the years, including seven from the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies.

Also, the number of nationally syndicated women cartoonists steadily grew in the 1980s and 1990s: the 1989 *Editor & Publisher Syndicate Directory* listed nine women out of 220 syndicated cartoonists. By 1999, the directory listed 16 women cartoonists out of 240 (according to table 10-A: Comic Strips) — still not much of an improvement, but an improvement, nevertheless. Very recently, the longest-running syndicated comic strips drawn by women have been discontinued. June Brigman, who had taken over *Brenda Starr* from Ramona Fradon in 1995, retired the strip on January 2, 2011. Cathy Guisewite ended her long-running strip, *Cathy*, in 2010, the same year that Lynn Johnston retired — though she later "rebooted" the strip by re-drawing and re-running it — *For Better or Worse*. Many more strips by women have taken their places so that the number finally exceeds the 1940s, a time when there had been more women in the daily newspapers than ever before. One of the most creative syndicated strips at press time is *Six Chix*. Six different women cartoonists — Isabella Bannerman (Monday), Margaret Shulock (Tuesday), Rina Piccolo (Wednesday), Anne Gibbons (Thursday), Benita

Epstein (Friday), and Stephanie Piro (Saturday) — divvy up the same space on the comics page. In a comic strip version of job sharing, each cartoonist's strip appears one day a week, and they take turns on Sunday.



Feminism: The Third Wave

The Six Chix

THIS PAGE:
TOP: Isabella Bannerman (Monday).
BOTTOM: Margaret Shulock (Tuesday).

NEXT PAGE:
TOP ROW: Rina Piccolo (Wednesday).
2ND ROW: Anne Gibbins (Thursday).
3RD ROW: Benita Epstein (Friday).
BOTTOM ROW: Stephanie Piro (Saturday).

SIX CHIX ***BY ISABELLA BANNERMAN***

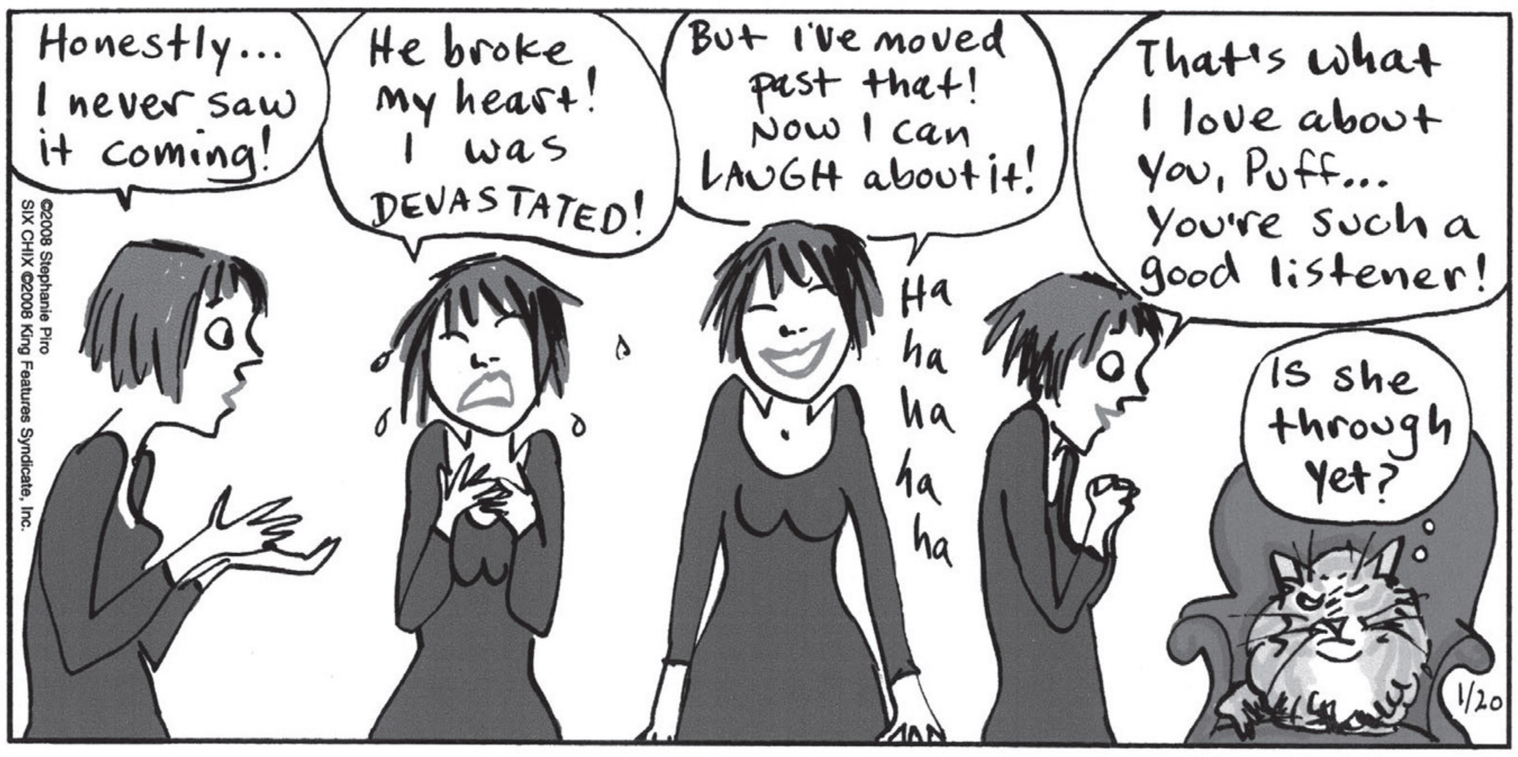
SIX CHIX
by RINA PICCOLO
RESUME
CAREER PLANNING CENTER
CAREER PLANNING
WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?
I DON'T KNOW— THE T.V GUIDE ONLY GOES TO THE END OF THE WEEK.
piccolo

MONSANTOMATOES
MONSANTATOES
MONSANTOCADOS
NIGHTMARE ON AISLE 3
©2012 Anne Gibbons
SIX CHIX ©2012 King Features Syndicate
Anne Gibbons 1·15
WWW.THESIXCHIX.COM

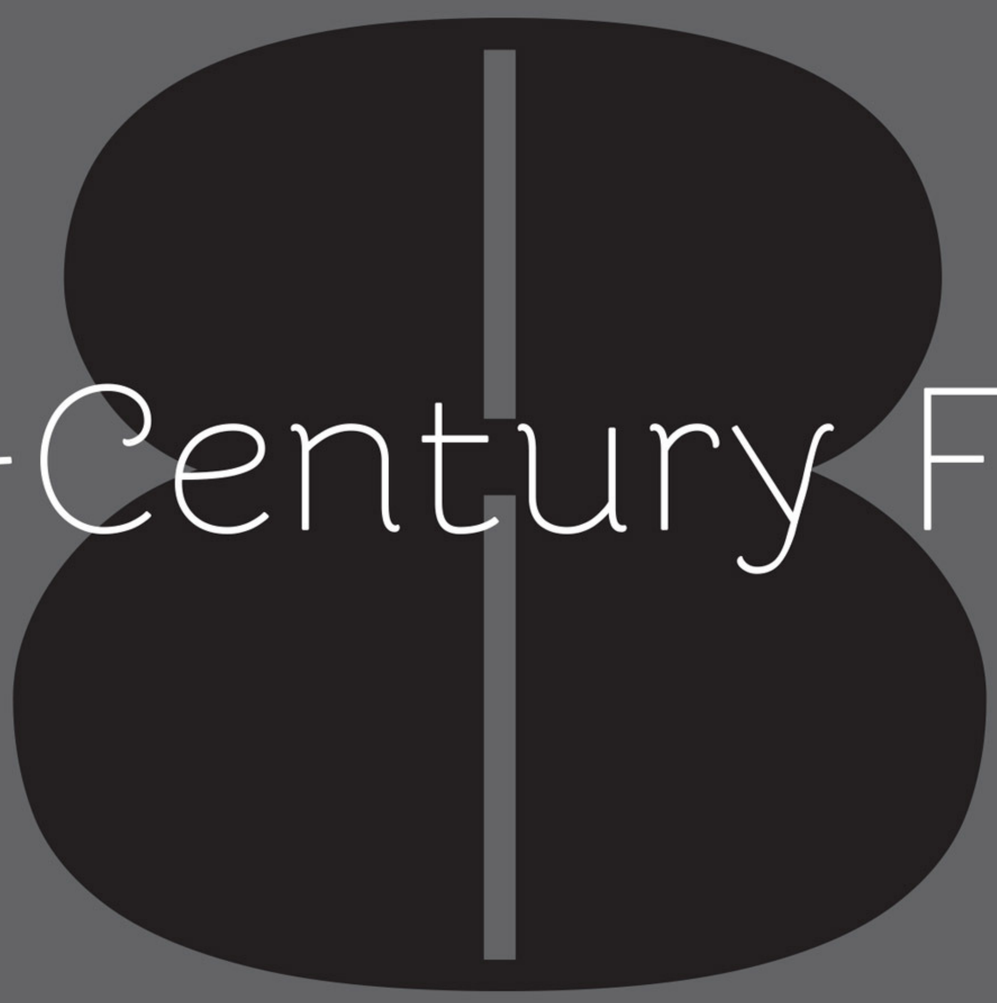
SIX CHIX

www.thesixchix.com
© 2011 Benita Epstein
DIDN'T YOU HAVE AN INKLING...
...I'D TURN INTO MY MOTHER?
9/18
Six Chix © 2011 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
B.EPSTEIN

SIX CHIX
by Stephanie
Ah! Time for a nap!


Honestly... I never saw it coming!
He broke my heart! I was DEVASTATED!
But I've moved past that! Now I can LAUGH about it!
Ha ha ha ha ha
That's what I love about you, Puff... You're such a good listener!
Is she through yet?
©2008 Stephanie Piro
SIX CHIX ©2008 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
1/20

21st-Century Foxes



LEFT: Amanda Conner's *Silk Spectre*. By 2012, after the smoke cleared, DC had four women drawing covers, series, and miniseries.

RIGHT: G. Willow Wilson and Cafu's *Vixen: Return of the Lion* #4 (March 2009). Wilson, who wrote a *Vixen* miniseries for DC, "made her way in" through the Vertigo imprint, which publishes more women and has more women readers than their traditional superhero line. DC's non-superhero Vertigo line was not involved in the New 52.

The first two decades of the 21st century have proved disappointing in some ways, revolutionary in others. To begin with the disappointments: we still don't have jet packs, and comics publishers Marvel and DC have made little or no progress as far as women creators are concerned. In September 2011, DC comics revamped and relaunched all its superhero titles, dubbing the new line The New 52. Immediately something was very clear: 12% of the creators of DC's now-canceled superhero line were women, but in The New 52, exactly 1% of the creators were women. At a July panel previewing the new line, held at Comic-Con International: San Diego, America's largest comic and pop culture convention, a woman fan asked DC co-publisher Dan DiDio why DC's female creators had dropped from 12% to 1%. DiDio, who had obviously worn his cranky pants that day, was defensive and arrogant. "What do these numbers mean to you?" He barked, "What do they mean to you? Who should we be hiring? Tell me right now. Who should we be hiring right now? Tell me."

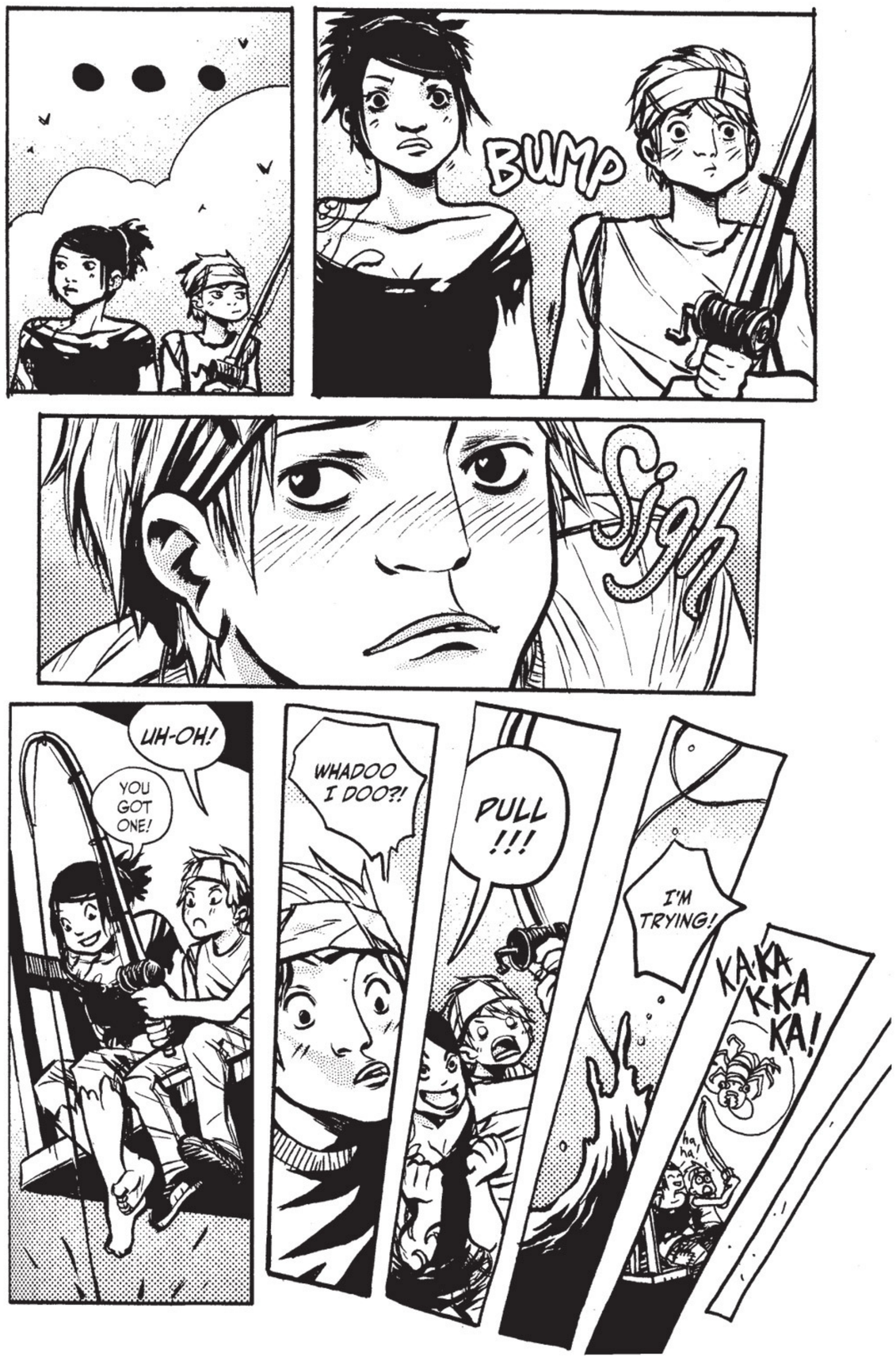
Fans who asked this same question at the other New 52 preview panels were met by the same kind of reply. At one, panelist Grant Morrison asked, "Do women want to write for DC comics?" When several women in the audience shouted, "Yes!" he replied, "Then send in your stuff."

His answer was misleading. DC doesn't accept unsolicited manuscripts. (G. Willow Wilson, who wrote *Air* and V*ixen* for DC, told interviewer Ian Burns: "You know what, I've written for *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and I have to tell you, that that was easier by far than breaking into comics. It is by far easier to write for *The New York Times* than it is to write for DC Comics.") As bad as the panelists' flippant answers were, worse were the hostile reactions from the male-heavy rooms. Fans shouted for the questioners to shut up and sit down.

Perhaps one reason the Marvel and DC comics are not more female-friendly is because their mostly male fan base doesn't want them to be. In 2010, when Marvel Comics editor Jeanine Shaefer produced *Girl Comics*, a three-issue collection of short strips by all-female creators (All told, 58 women were involved in all aspects of the book: scripts, art, pencils, inks, colors, covers, letters, edits, production, design, and proofreading), the collection was met with criticism on the Internet. Fans accused the collection of ghettoizing women creators. Yet many of the women in the collection had not been published by Marvel in years; others were rarely published by Marvel. If they had not been "ghettoized," they might not be published at all. *Girl Comics* was their chance to show off their talents.

Women who *are* successfully working on DC and Marvel superhero comics despite all odds include writer Gail Simone (best known for her work on *Birds of Prey*, which featured an all-woman superhero team, and *Wonder Woman*), artist Amanda Conner (at press time working on the female superhero Captain Marvel), Fiona Staples (considered one of the best superhero artists in the business, she did a run on DC's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*) and Eisner Award-winning *Y: The Last Man* artist Pia Guerra. (Of the latter, Brian K. Vaughan, who wrote *Y: The Last*

Amanda Conner and Laura Martin did the cover for the collected *Girl Comics*, published by Marvel.

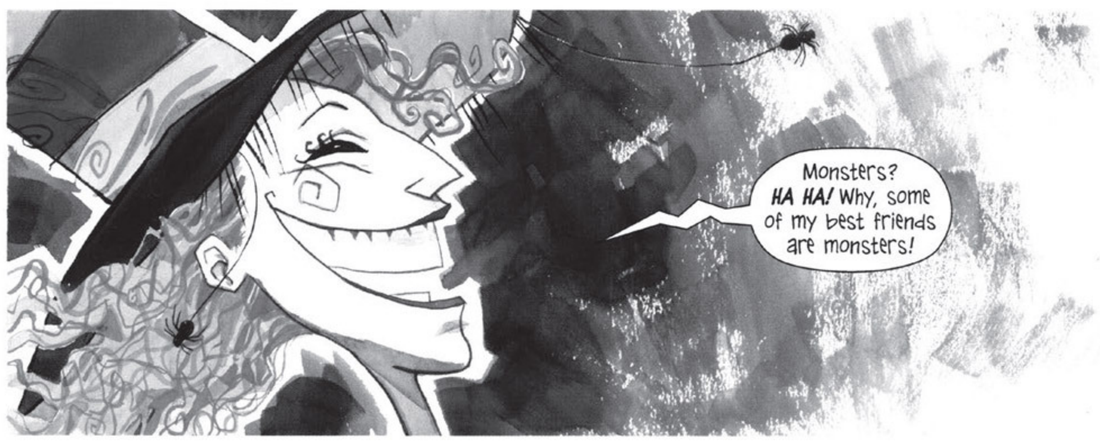


LEFT: This page from 2005's "Ring of Truth" in *Y: The Last Man* Book 5 was written by Brian K. Vaughan, penciled by Pia Guerra, and inked by José Marzán.

RIGHT: From *East Coast Rising* Vol. 1 (2006) by Rebecca Cloonan.

Man, said rather charmingly in a *Comics Journal* interview, conducted by Sean T. Collins: "I think, if anything, I was sort of the stereotypical woman of the relationship and she was the stereotypical man, in that I'm very happy to write about characters sitting around [...] and Pia really loves to draw motorcycles smashing through windows and machine-gun fights.")

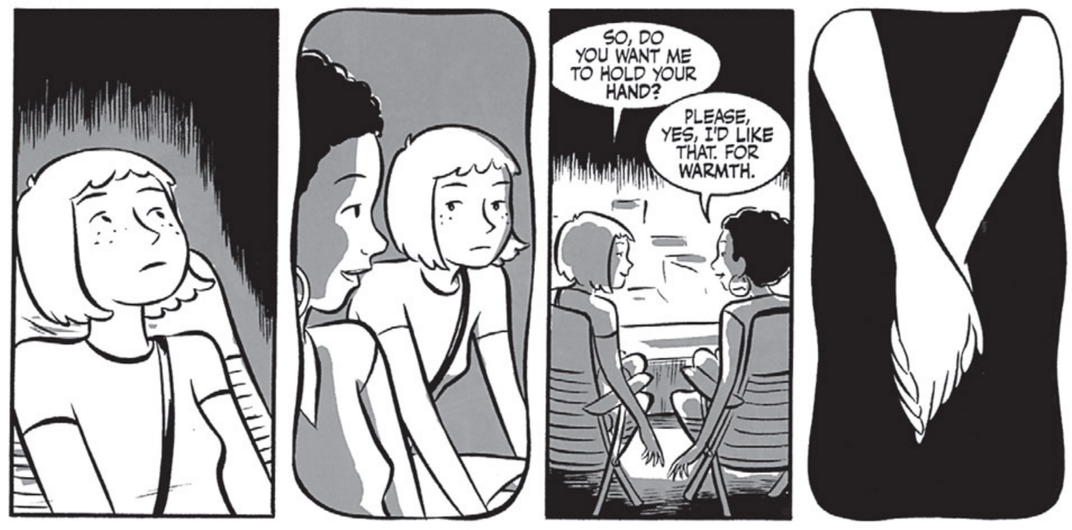
Of that number, even fewer are able to transition smoothly between work-for-hire and personal projects. Three such artists are Becky Cloonan, Jill Thompson, and Colleen Coover. Becky Cloonan worked with writer Brian Wood on DC/Vertigo titles before Tokyopop released her pirate graphic novel *East Coast Rising* (2006). In 2012, she drew the main *Batman* series — the first woman to do so. In 2013, Cloonan was Eisner-Award nominated for her work drawing the epitome of bare-chested masculinity, Conan, and won for her self-published *The Mire*. Jill Thompson drew Neil Gaiman's female-friendly *The Sandman* series in the 1990s, among other DC titles, and worked with Evan Dorkin on *Beasts of Burden* (2009) for Dark Horse. Her charming *Scary Godmother* children's book and comic series, which she writes and draws, has been running off and on since the late 1990s, and has been adapted into films. Colleen Coover has had perhaps the most eclectic comics career. She created the adorable *Small Favors* graphic



With a big laugh and a great smile, Hannah's Scary Godmother flapped her little bat wings and whisked them up the attic stairs to the top of the house!

novels in the 1990s when she realized there wasn't really any sex-positive porn in comics form for women. *Banana Sunday* (2006), about a trio of talking monkeys (a miniseries aimed at children) followed, and then she did cheeky short comics for Marvel's *X-Men: First Class*. In the 2010s, she's releasing comics digitally, such as *Gingerbread Girl* and the Eisner-Award-winning *Bandette*, which have been, or will be, collected into print.

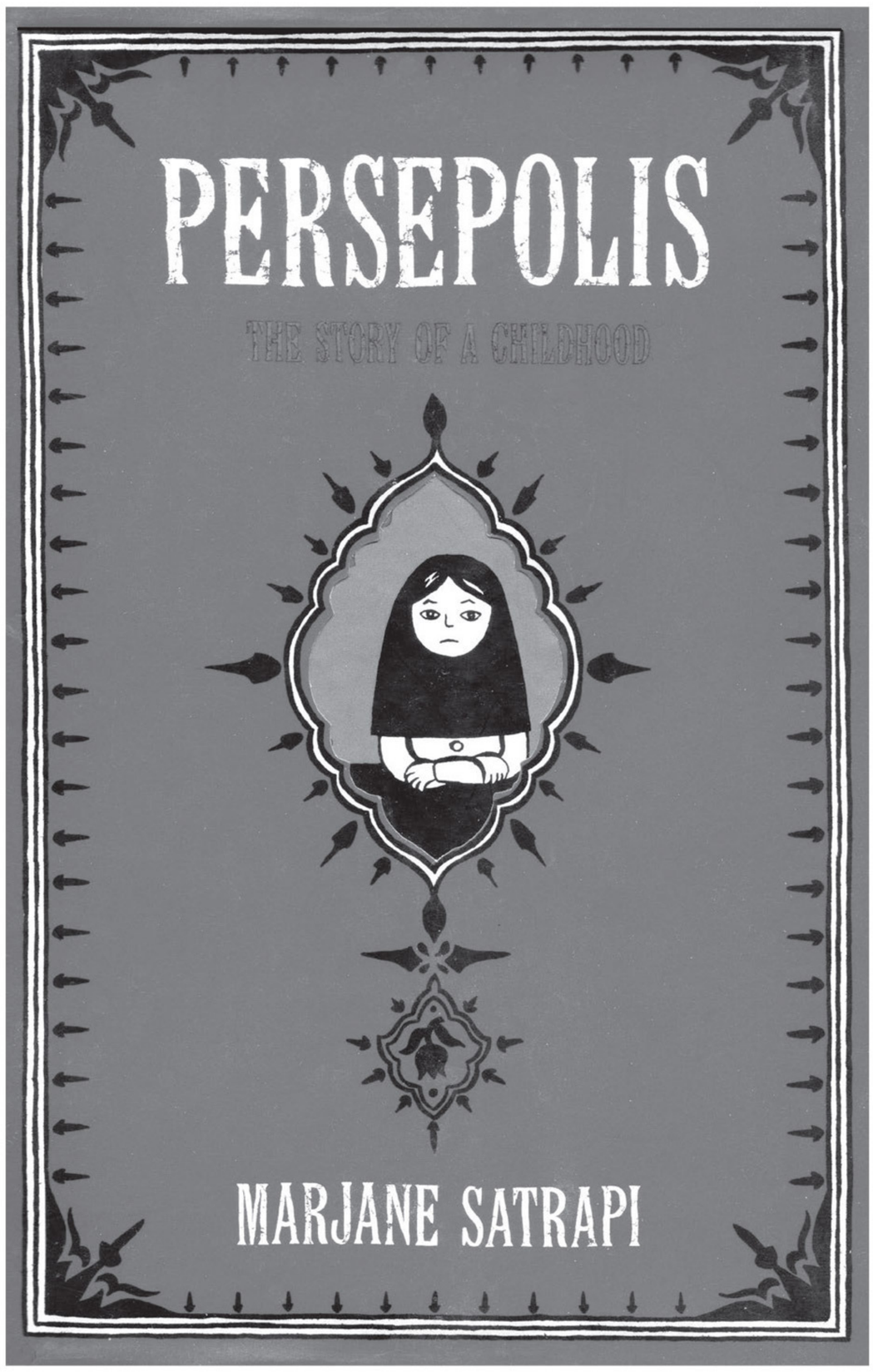
But on to the revolution, which started in the late 20th century. Art Spiegelman's groundbreaking graphic novel *Maus* had been awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, opening the minds of Americans to the possibility that there could be more to comics than adolescent power fantasies. Graphic novels were nothing new; some people date the graphic novel back to the 1929 publication of Lynd Ward's "novel in woodcuts," *God's Man*, while others consider Will Eisner's *A Contract With God* to be the first graphic novel, but it was *Maus* that really publicized the format and opened up so many possibilities for comics creators, male and female, who wished to produce something other than superhero comics. With the "graphic novel" (which has become a catchall term for fiction and non-fiction comics in book format) it was at last possible to find a venue for a graphic

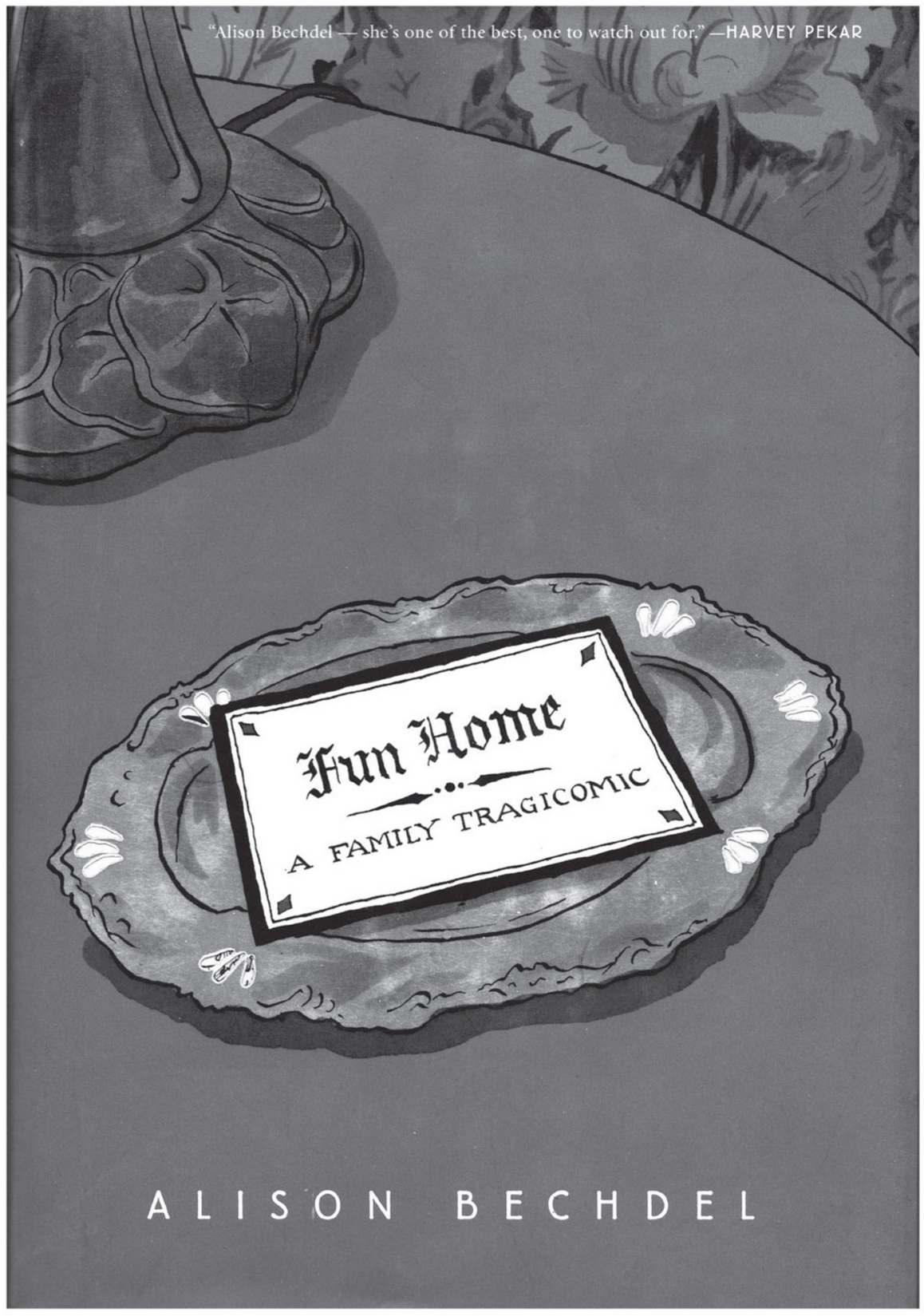


LEFT: *Scary Godmother*: In the tradition of Gladys Parker and Tarpe Mills, Jill Thompson draws herself as the title character.

TOP RIGHT: Paul Tobin and Colleen Coover, *Gingerbread Girl* (2011)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Lynd Ward, *Gods' Man* (1929) collected in *Lynd Ward* (2010) by Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., is historically one of the first "graphic novels."





LEFT: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2003).

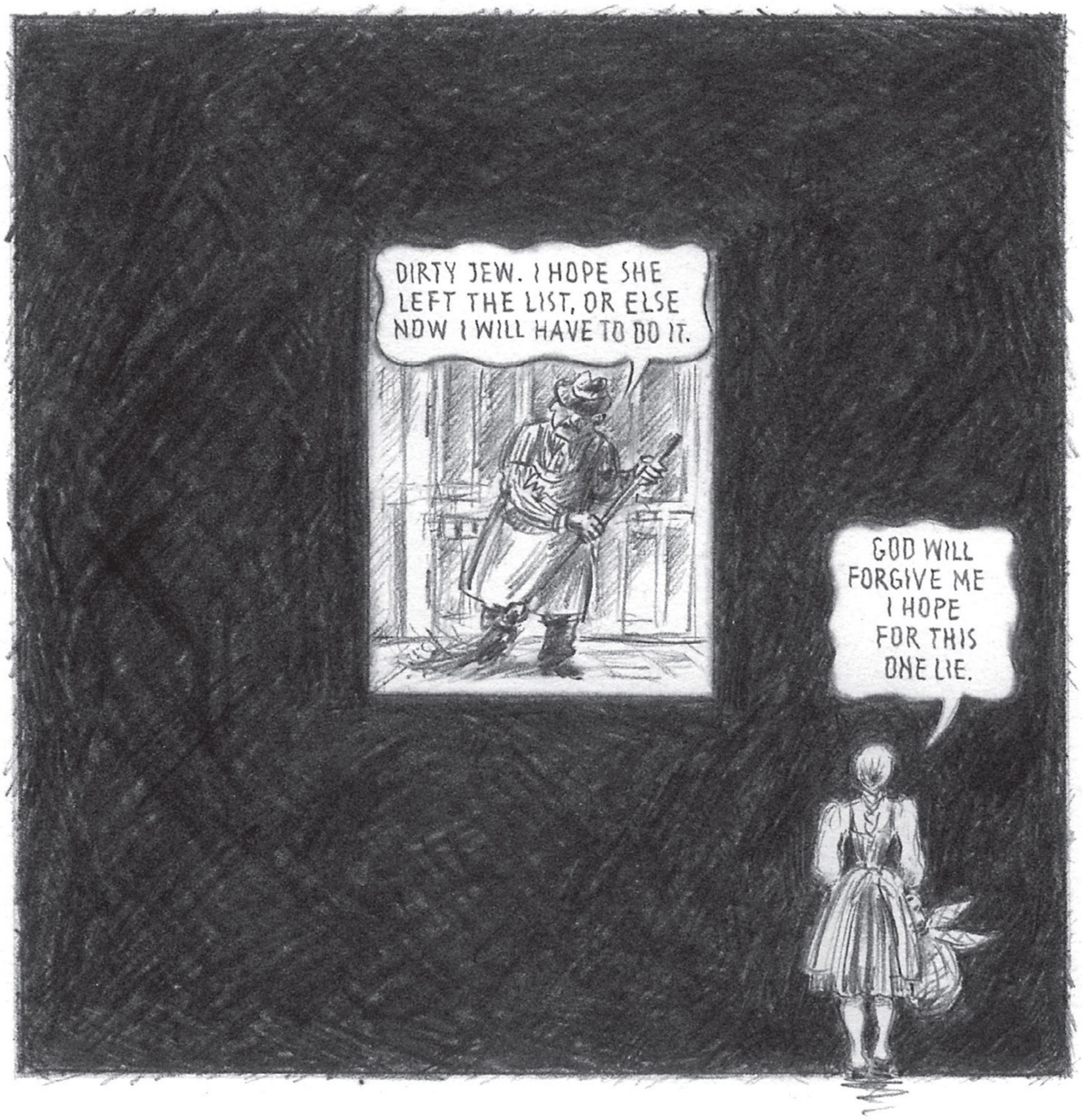
RIGHT: Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006).

story that did not involve overly muscular guys in tights, and to get it into bookstores and public libraries, bypassing the dread comic book store.

Bookstores themselves were undergoing a transformation in the late 1990s-2000s: mall bookstores like B. Dalton and Waldenbooks, which rarely, if ever, stocked graphic novels, gave way to "Big Chain Bookstores" Barnes and Noble and Borders. Though Big Chain Bookstores, and later the online book retailer Amazon, were and are a decidedly mixed blessing, they did stock and make available to the general public books that previously had only been available in specialty stores, especially in suburban, exurban, and rural areas. More public libraries began to buy graphic novels, too, thanks to reader demand.

Getting comics into bookstores was key in gaining access to women readers. According to an Associated Press-Ipsos poll on reading and books conducted August 6-8, 2007, women are more likely to buy books for themselves and others, and read nearly twice as many as men. Apparently, this audience was eager to read about women's experiences.

In the 1960s and '70s, feminists had rallied to "the personal is political," a slogan that can well be applied to women cartoonists who have found success via graphic memoir. Iranian cartoonist Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2003), which showed the effect of the Iranian Revolution on her childhood, opened the floodgates. In 2006, comic strip veteran Alison

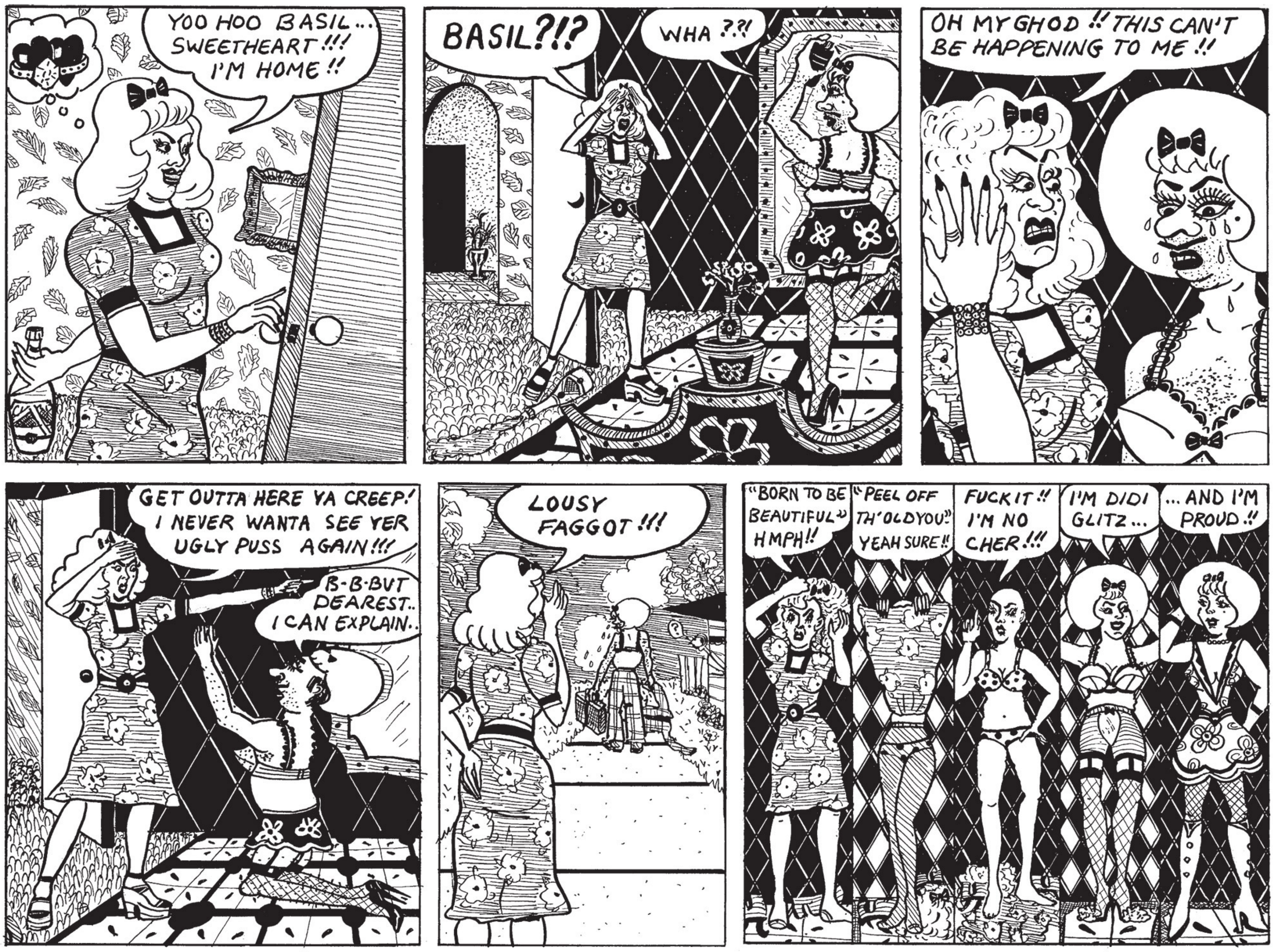


LEFT: Miriam Katin's *We Are On Our Own* (2006).

ABOVE: Miss Lasko-Gross' *A Mess of Everything* (2009).

Bechdel released *Fun Home*, a graphic memoir in which she examined her relationship with her closeted father. It was named one of the books of the year, prose or otherwise, by *Time* magazine. (*The New York Times* Best Seller list added a Graphic Books category in 2009.) Also in 2006, Drawn & Quarterly released Miriam Katin's comics autobiography about how she and her mother survived the Holocaust, *We Are on Our Own*. American Sarah Glidden took advantage of a Jewish Birthright trip in order to grapple with the Israeli-Palestine conflict in *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less* (2010). Miss Lasko-Gross' *Escape from "Special"* (2006) and *A Mess of Everything* (2009) are about how a bright child copes with being placed in special education classes. *A Game for Swallows* (2012) by Zeina Abirached is about her childhood in Beirut. Ellen Forney (whose non-fiction comics, drawn with a brush, appear in magazines and comic books) told the story of her struggle to maintain balance despite bipolar disorder in *Marbles* (2012). There are countless others, too numerous to be listed here.

Not only were underground women's comics collected into books — like Carol Lay's *Goodnight Irene* (2007), and Diane Noomin's *Glitz-2-Go* (2012) — but women were releasing all-new autobiographical and semi-autobiographical work in book form, too. In 2010, Joyce Famer called for health and elderly care reform with *Special Exits*. Finely



ABOVE: Diane Noomin's *Glitz-2-Go* (2011).

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Joyce Farmer's *Special Exits* (2010),
TOP RIGHT: Carol Tyler's *You'll Never Know* Book One (2009).
BOTTOM LEFT: Phoebe Gloeckner's *Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2002).
BOTTOM RIGHT: Cartoonist MariNaomi adapted her interview with graphic novelist Alison Bechdel into comics form.

rendered in pen, *Special Exits* details the decline of the protagonist's aging parents, whose ailments leave them unable to care for themselves. Carol Tyler explores the mark World War II has left on her father and her family in the trilogy *You'll Never Know* (2009-2012). Phoebe Gloeckner's *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2000) tells the disturbing and rather depressing story of "Minnie," a nascent cartoonist growing up in a San Francisco filled with predatory men and women.

Not all graphic memoirs by women are about such weighty subject matter. Lucy Knisley's *French Milk* (2008) and *Relish* (2013) are about food and relationships, while Vanessa Davis has had her warm, brightly colored diary comics (many created for the Jewish magazine *Tablet*) collected in *Spaniel Rage* (2005) and *Make Me a Woman* (2010). Gabrielle Bell's *Lucky* and *The Voyeurs* diary comics could be seen as little sisters to Julie Doucet's *My New York Diary*; both share an observational and whimsical sensibility. Julie Wertz' *Drinking at the Movies* is almost like the comics equivalent of a standup routine: she alternates comedy with pathos. MariNaomi's confessional comics about her tumultuous adolescence and sexual experimentation are collected in *Kiss & Tell* (2011). In *Eye of the Majestic Creature*, Leslie Stein blends autobiography, surrealism, and anthropomorphism. *Getting Married and Other Mistakes* (2012) by Barbara Slate is a humorous look

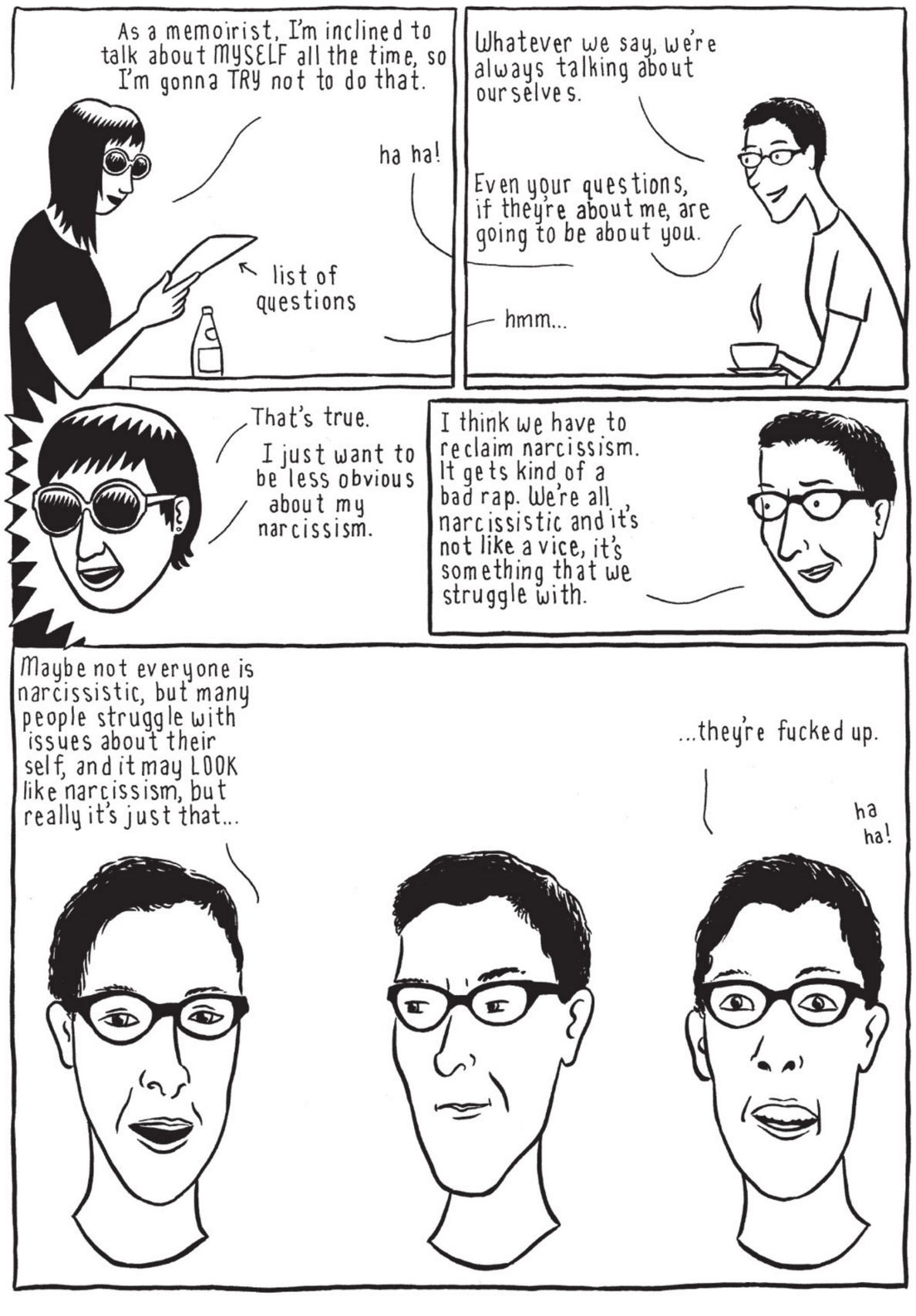
SPECIAL

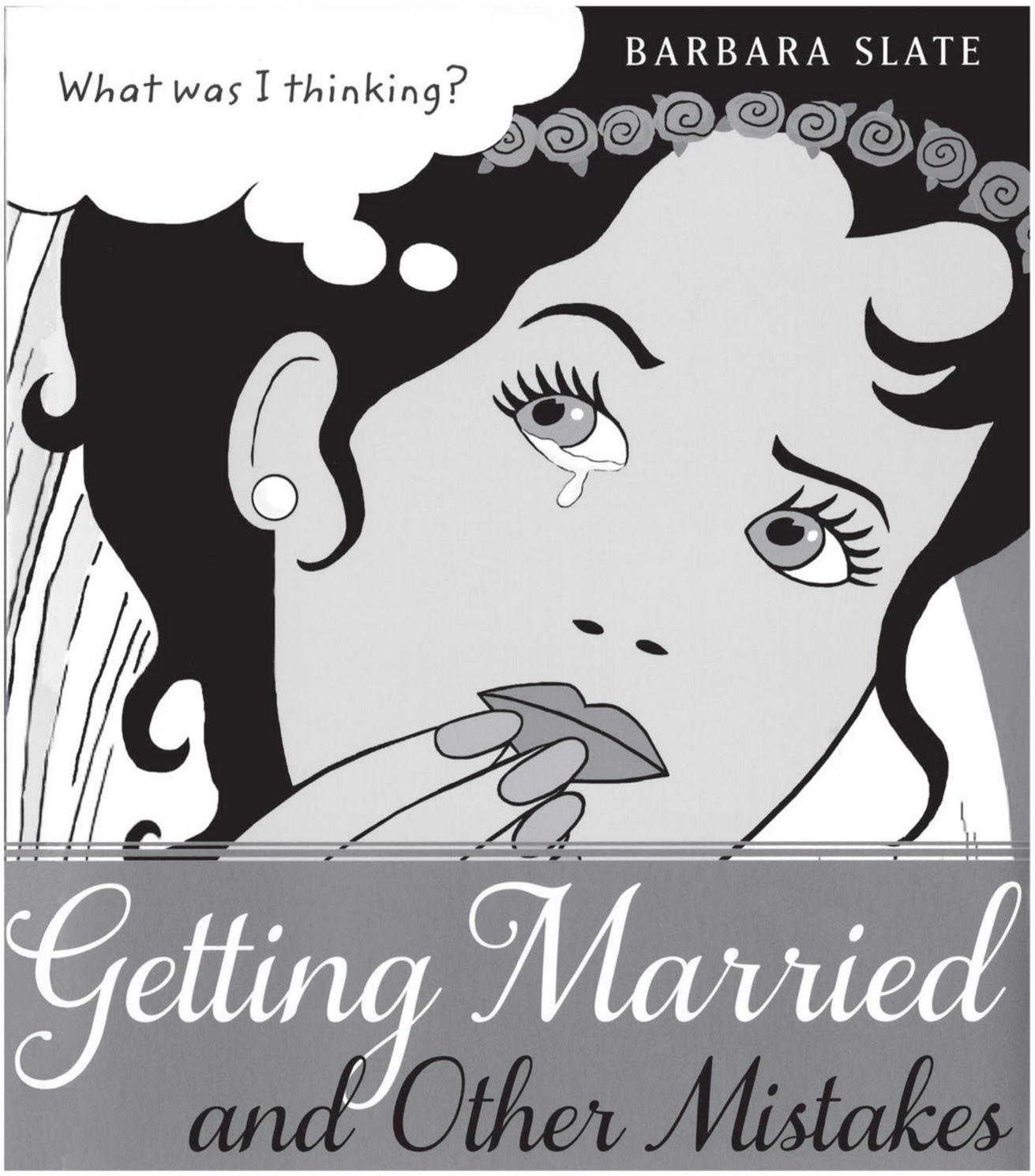
A Graphic Memoir

JOYCE FARMER

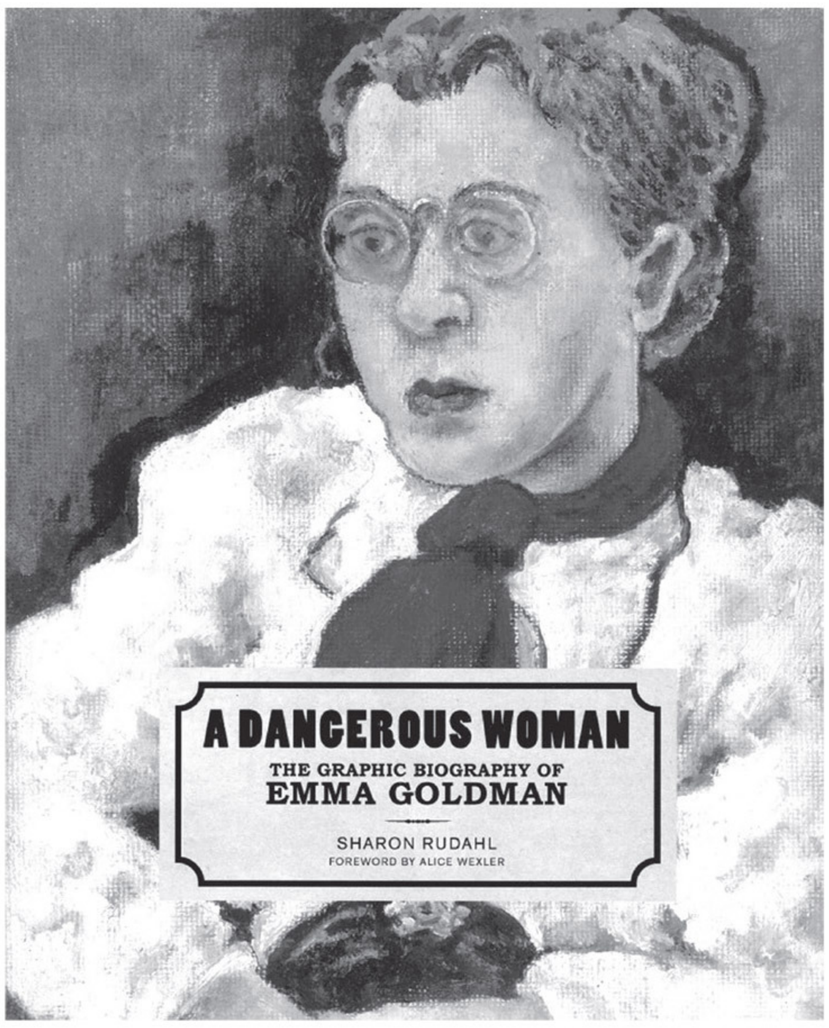
"One of the best long-narrative comics I've ever read, right up there with *Maus*... I actually found myself moved to tears." — R. CRUMB

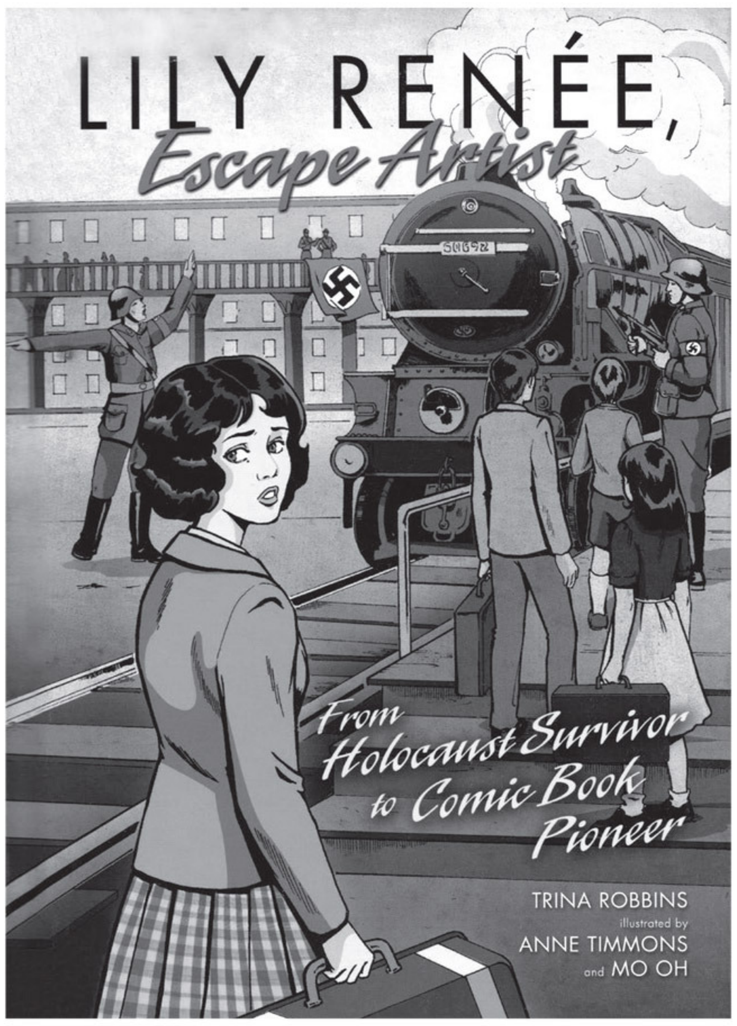
EXITS

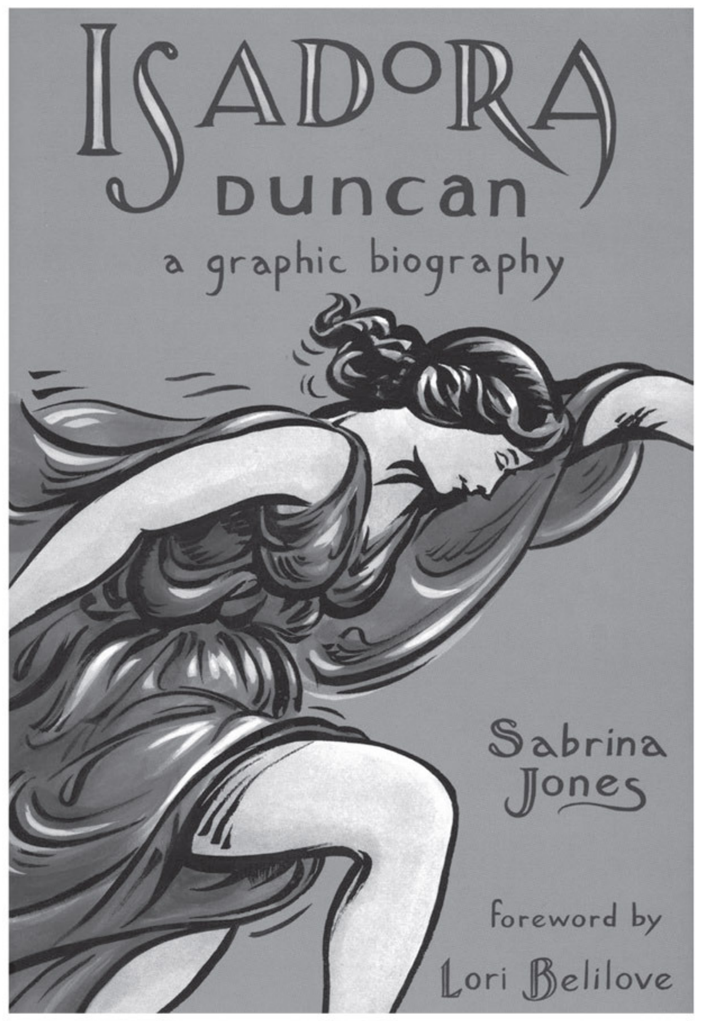



What was I thinking?
BARBARA SLATE
Getting Married
and Other Mistakes

CHAPTER ONE
SMILE!!
FLASH!
GOOD! LET'S GET YOU SET UP IN A CHAIR, AND THE ORTHODONTIST WILL LOOK AT YOUR TEETH IN A FEW MINUTES.
HI, RAINA! I'M DR. DRAGONI.
HI...
SO, YOU'RE IN SIXTH GRADE? WHERE DO YOU GO TO SCHOOL?
HJKMP TSS...


A DANGEROUS WOMAN
THE GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY OF
EMMA GOLDMAN
SHARON RUDAHL
FOREWORD BY ALICE WEXLER


LILY RENÉE,
Escape Artist
From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer
TRINA ROBBINS
illustrated by
ANNE TIMMONS
and MO OH


ISADORA
duncan
a graphic biography
Sabrina Jones
foreword by
Lori Belilove

at life post-divorce. International adoption is the subject of Marian Henley's *The Shiniest Jewel*. In 2005, autobio cartoonist Liz Prince asked, *Will You Still Love Me If I Wet the Bed?* Raina Telgemeier's graphic novel adaptations of Ann M. Martin's wildly popular '80-'90s *Baby-Sitters Club* series smartly appealed to children and their parents, who had grown up reading the books. Scholastic, which, via school book fairs and catalogs, is able to directly market to its intended audience, published Telgemeier's graphic memoir *Smile*, aimed at the younger set.

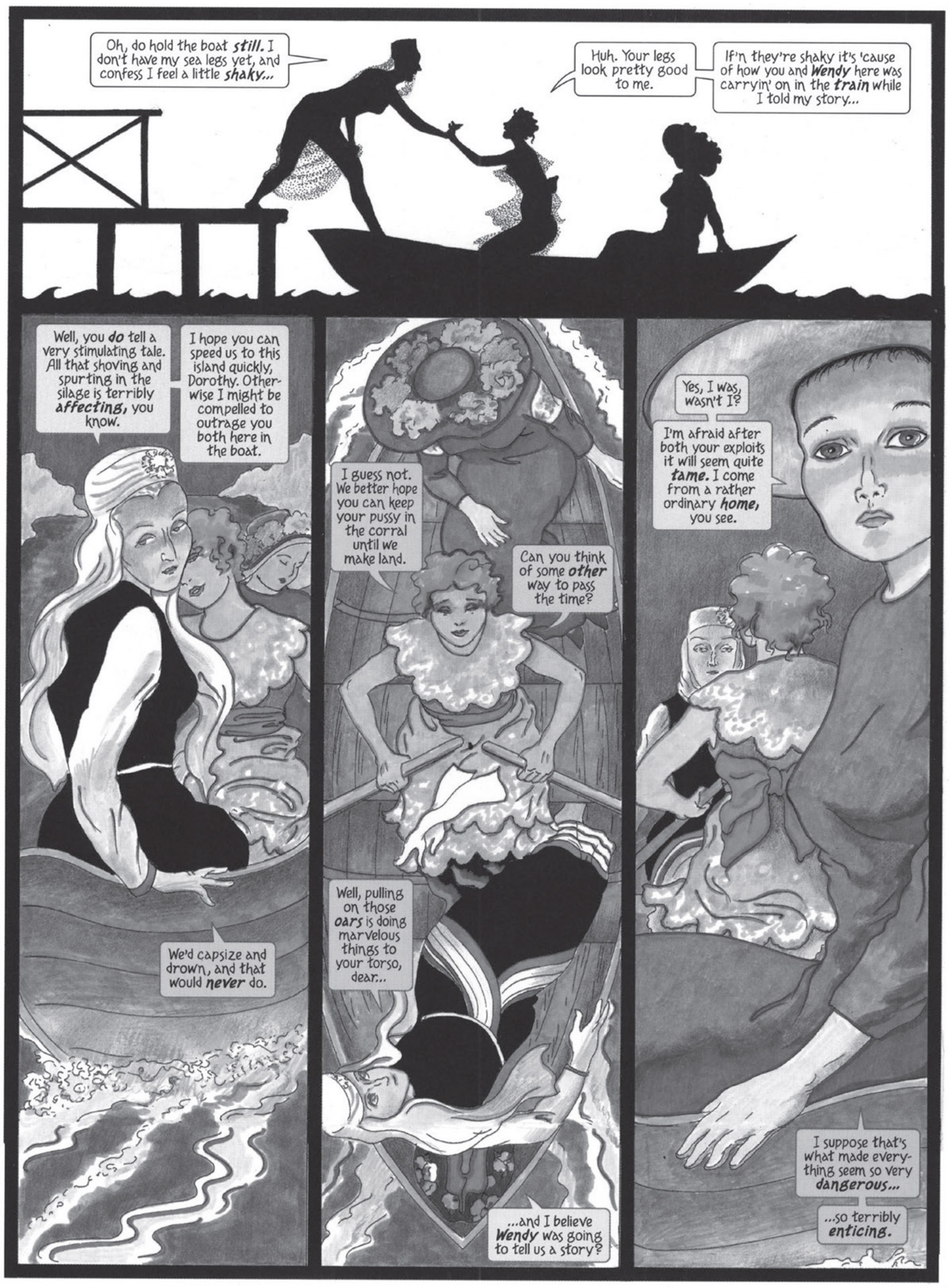
As comics in book form became more and more accepted in schools and libraries as an educational tool, graphic biographies by and about women began to appear, too, such as Sharon Rudahl's *A Dangerous Woman* (about Emma Goldman), and Sabrina Jones' *Isadora* (about Isadora Duncan).

Genres popular with women in bookstores crossed over to graphic novels. Linda Medley's fractured fairy tale *Castle Waiting*, which began its life as self-published comics in the 1990s, appeals to fantasy fans. *Lost Girls*, an erotic retelling of children's literature staples *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Peter Pan*, was drawn in vibrant color by underground cartoonist Melinda Gebbie.

After collecting comics short stories in *Squirrel Mother* (2006) and serializing *Watergate Sue* in *The New York Times* "Funny Pages," Megan Kelso released a sweeping fantasy epic, *Artichoke Tales* (2010), that had its origins in her zine *Girlhero*. Lilli Carré's 2008 graphic novel, *The Lagoon*, is an experiment in long-form erotic horror. *Skim* (2010) is a sexual-awakening, coming-of-age story by cousins Mariko and Jillian Tamaki, drawn in brushwork reminiscent of 16th- and 17th-century *ukiyo-e* Japanese prints and paintings. From the back pages of riot grrrl zine-turned-magazine *Bust* comes Esther Pearl Watson's comedic *Unlovable*, drawn in a deliberately juvenile style and based on a 1980s diary she found in a gas station bathroom. It's been collected in two volumes. Finally, there is the rare adult "graphic novel" that really *is* a novel, like Cathy Malkasian's *Temperance*, about a man with amnesia. Another excellent example is Leela Corman's *Unterzakhn*. Corman combines words and pictures to tell a story of Jewish twins growing up in New York's Lower East Side. Real stories are what comics are made for!

OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP LEFT: Barbara Slate, *Getting Married and Other Mistakes* (2012).
TOP RIGHT: Raina Telgemeier, *Smile* (2010).
BOTTOM LEFT: Sharon Rudahl's *Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman* (2007).
BOTTOM CENTER: Drawn by Anne Timmons and Mo Oh, with a script by Trina Robbins, *Lily Renée, The Escape Artist*, is a biography of the Golden Age cartoonist.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Sabrina Jones' *Isadora Duncan: A Graphic Biography* (2008).

BELOW: Melinda Gebbie drew *Lost Girls*. *Not* for young readers: it's about children's book heroines Dorothy, Wendy, and Alice. Gebbie collaborated with Alan Moore to produce this three-part erotic *tour de force*, drawn in about a dozen different styles, including Aubrey Beardsley's and Egon Schiele's.



LEFT: Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki's *Skim* (2008).

TOP RIGHT: Leela Corman's *Unterzakhn* (2012).

BOTTOM RIGHT: Naoko Takeuchi: Italian edition of *Sailor Moon*. I bought this in Italy in 1995, before *Sailor Moon* had reached America, because I could read at least a little Italian, but couldn't read any Japanese.

Articles about comics used to start "Zap! Pow! Comics are not for kids anymore!" But that was the trouble. In the Bad Old Days of the late 20th century, when almost all that was available in the way of comics was superheroes, younger readers, especially younger female readers, were starved for anything in the way of graphic storytelling. But today, graphic novels provide yet another feast for teens and tweens. While American superhero mainstream publishers were reluctant to take a chance on comics for girls, a few far-thinking publishers realized that there were thousands of comics for girls being published in Japan, and if thousands of Japanese girls devoured these comics, so would thousands of American girls. In 1997, *Sailor Moon*, translated into English and published by Mixx (later Tokyopop), was the first *shoujo* manga (which translates to "girls' comics") to successfully cross over to America's shores, thanks to its availability in bookstores and libraries and the beloved animated series. The trickle of *shoujo* manga that followed *Sailor Moon* soon became

a tsunami of girls' comics that proved to editors and publishers that of course girls would read comics, when there are comics that girls like to read. Suddenly, hundreds of thousands of girls were reading and passing around comics meant for them, drawn by women. Girls everywhere started drawing their own comics: today, "artists alleys" at manga and anime conventions are predominantly female. Chynna Clugston, who, in a *Comics Journal* interview conducted by Kristy Valenti, explained that she counts *InuYasha* and *Ranma ½* cartoonist Rumiko Takahashi among her influences, has managed to blend visual tropes associated with *shoujo* manga, such as big eyes and small noses, with her own style in *Queen Bee*. Del Rio wrote and drew the Archie Comics character Sabrina the Teenage Witch as a "magical girl," a type of character commonly found in *shoujo* manga. Elizabeth Watasin's manga-inspired book *Charm School* (2002) is about a high school for witches who just happen to be lesbians.

Another example of Marvel and DC Just Not Getting It and publishing very little of interest to girls is DC's failed Minx imprint (2006-2008). DC partnered with book packager Alloy Entertainment, responsible for best-selling Young Adult (YA) fiction series like *Gossip Girl*, and created a line of graphic novels aimed at that audience (primarily 12- to 18-year-old girls, although often read by other age groups and genders). Despite a large advertising budget — according to an article in *The New York Times,* $250,000 — the line failed for a variety of reasons, including distribution, but it probably didn't help that its initial seven books only had one and a half female creators (*Plain Janes* is by YA prose writer Cecil Castellucci; one book was co-written by the author's daughter), and it lacked a cohesive vision. (Minx was often defined by what it wasn't, rather than what it was.)

LEFT: Chynna Clugston's *Queen Bee* (2005).

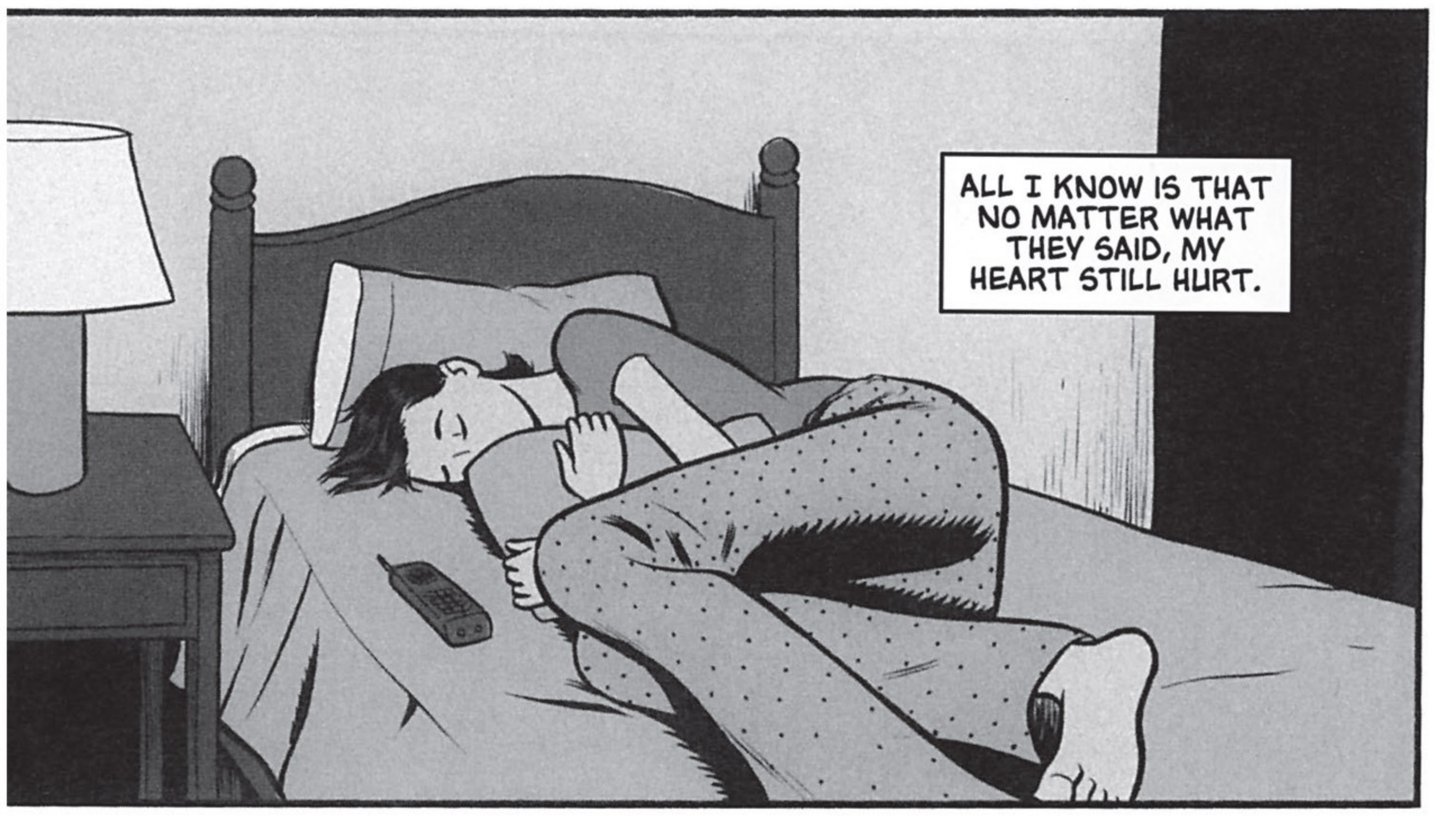
RIGHT: Tania Del Rio wrote and penciled, and Jim Amash inked *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* Vol. 2, #69 (October 2005).

TOP: Cecil Castellucci and Jim Rugg's *The Plain Janes* (2007).

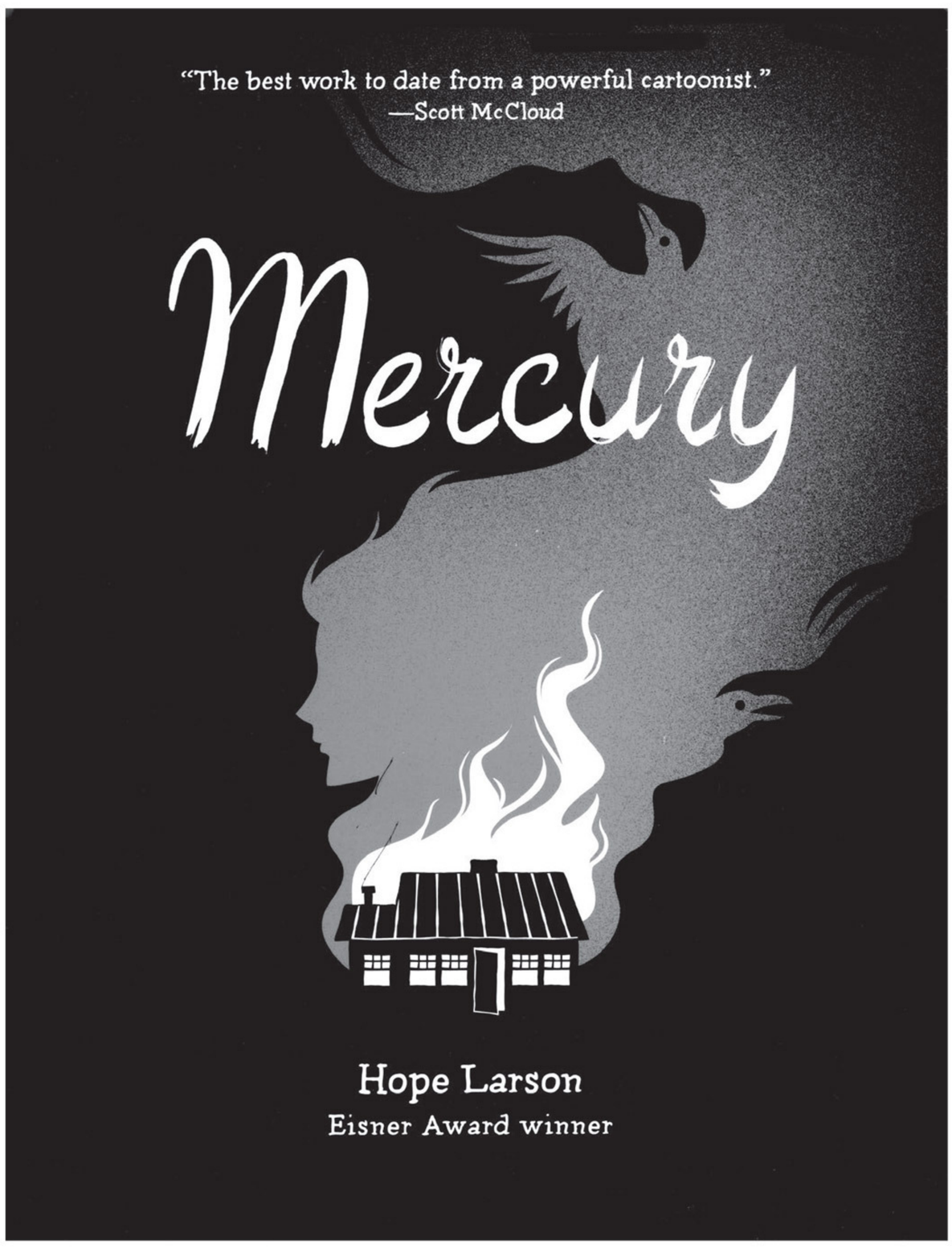
BOTTOM LEFT: Hope Larson's *Mercury* (2010).

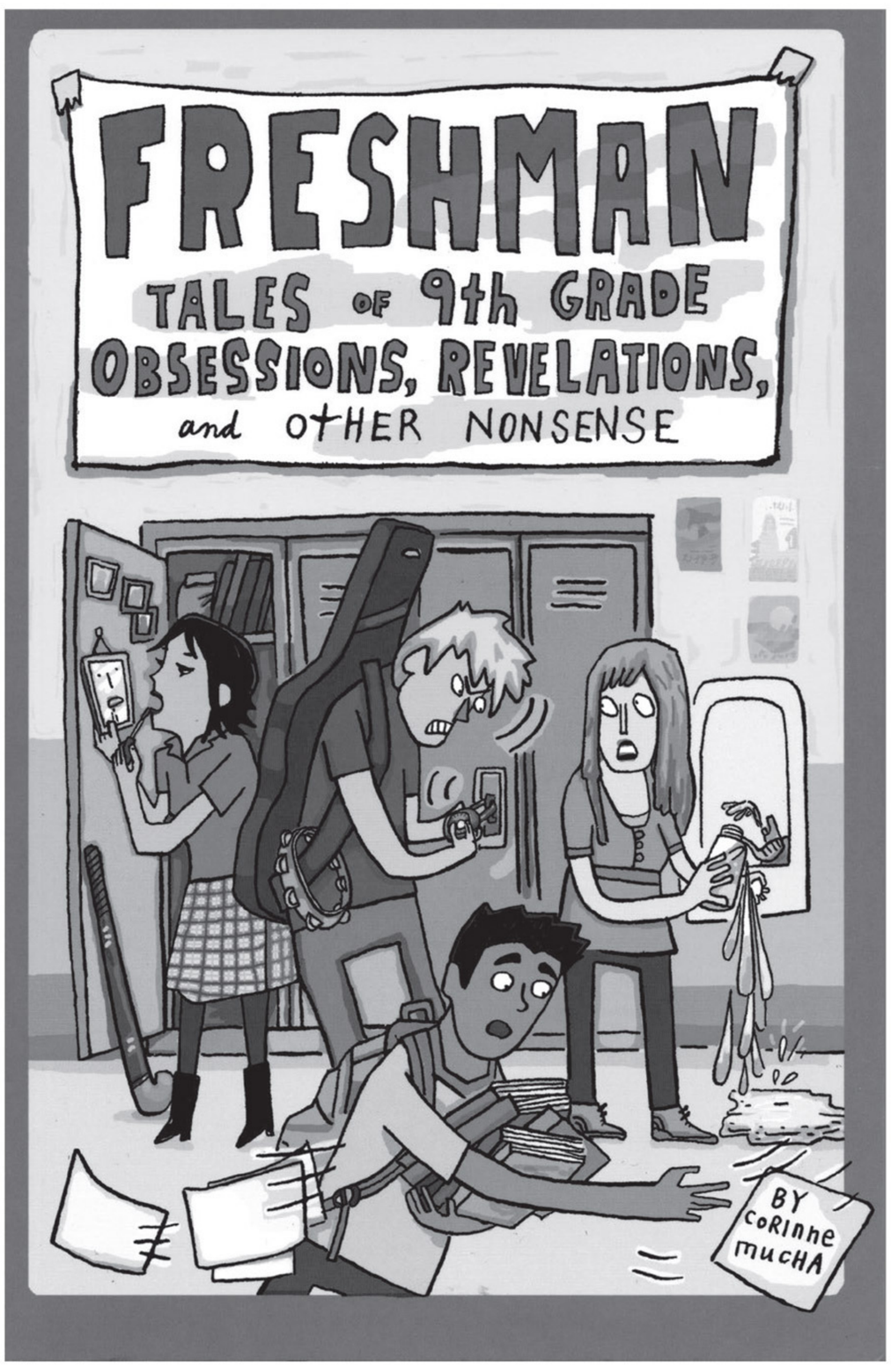
BOTTOM RIGHT: Corrine Mucha's *Freshman Tales of 9th Grade Obsessions, Revelations, and Other Nonsense* (2011).

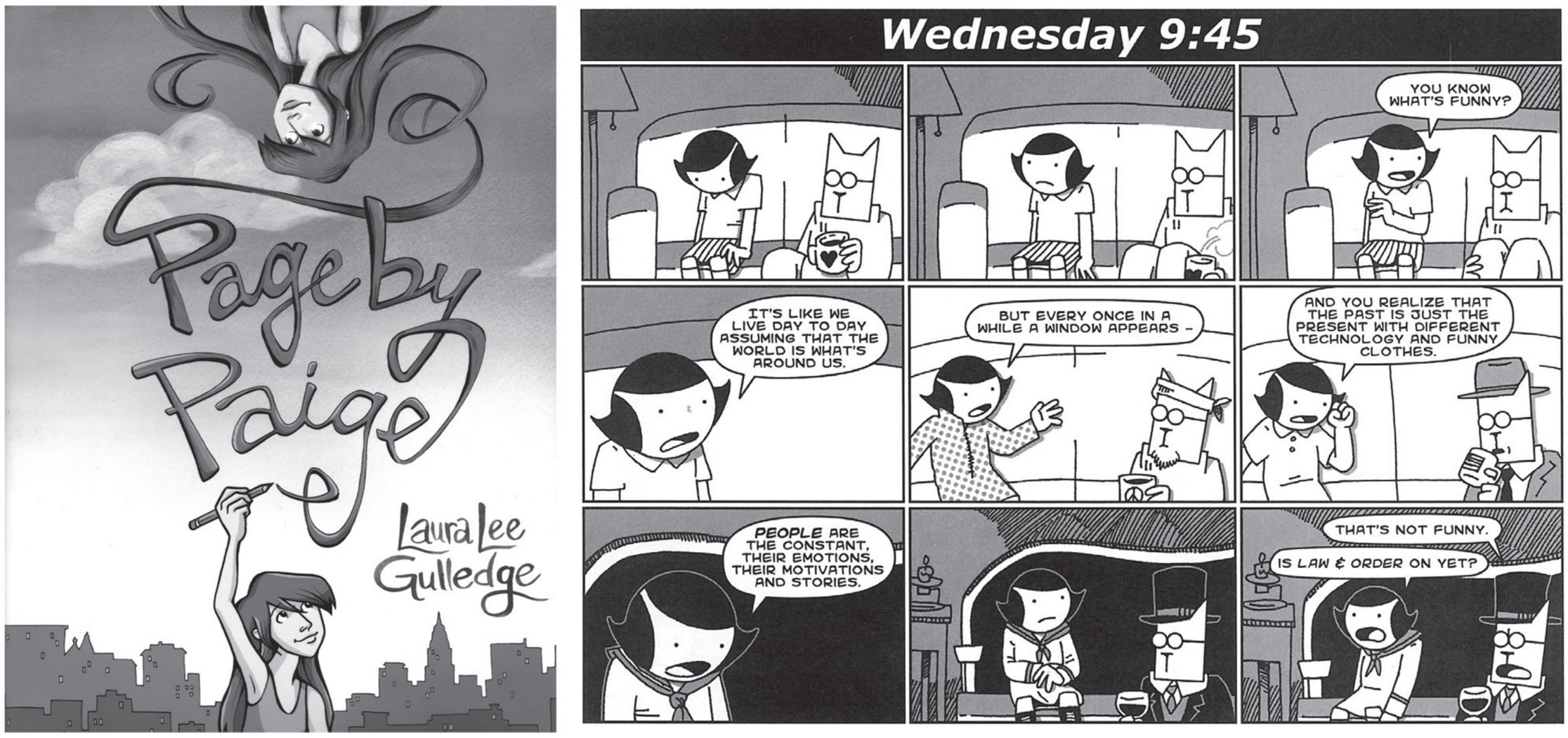
YA books and series such as *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* are some of the best-selling and popular books today. Unlike all those memoirs for adults, most of the graphic novels for young readers are fiction. Many women cartoonists have thrived in this genre: Sarah Varon's *Robot Dreams* (2011), Vera Brosgol's *Anya's Ghost* (2011), Hope Larson's *Mercury* (2010), Corinne Mucha's *Freshman Tales of 9th Grade Obsessions, Revelations, and Other Nonsense* (2011), Faith Erin Hicks' *Friends With Boys* (2012), Laura Lee Gulledge's *Page by Paige* (2011), and my own *Go Girl* (2003) with Anne Timmons, really are graphic *novels*, drawn and written beautifully, enjoyed by readers of all ages.



In the 21st century, another path opened up for women cartoonists to get their comics directly to readers: webcomics. The most popular webcomics are usually very similar to newspaper strips in both form and how often they "run" (daily, weekly, etc.). Then, like







LEFT: Laura Lee Gulledge's *Page by Paige* (2011).

RIGHT: Dorothy Gambrell's *Cat and Girl* (2006).

newspaper strips, they are often collected into books and sold (they are often self-published). Unlike many newspaper strips, however, most webcomics are creator-owned. Some women webcartoonists have been able to make a living via a combination of selling book collections, merchandising, advertising, and reader donations. In an interview with the GuerillaGeek.com, Danielle Corsetto, creator of the webcomic *Girls with Slingshots* (2004-) explains:

> *Most comic books are aimed at boys, are serious, and have a focus on superpowers. Most popular webcomics are character-driven and have to do with the characters' lifestyles, or observations about science or philosophy, and almost all of them could be clumped into the broad category of "humor." While I know plenty of women who genuinely love to read about superheroes, I think that, generally, most women prefer to read (and write) about how characters interact with one another, and not how they're gonna pulverize each other.*
>
> *Traditional comic strips, on the other hand, are just old, and therefore male-dominated. I'm lucky that I was born into a generation of women who believe themselves capable of almost anything. I think that, if newspapers were booming and syndicates were introducing new strips all the time, we would see a much higher percentage of female cartoonists in the newspapers, as well. It's just that we don't see many new comic strips outside of the web, period.*

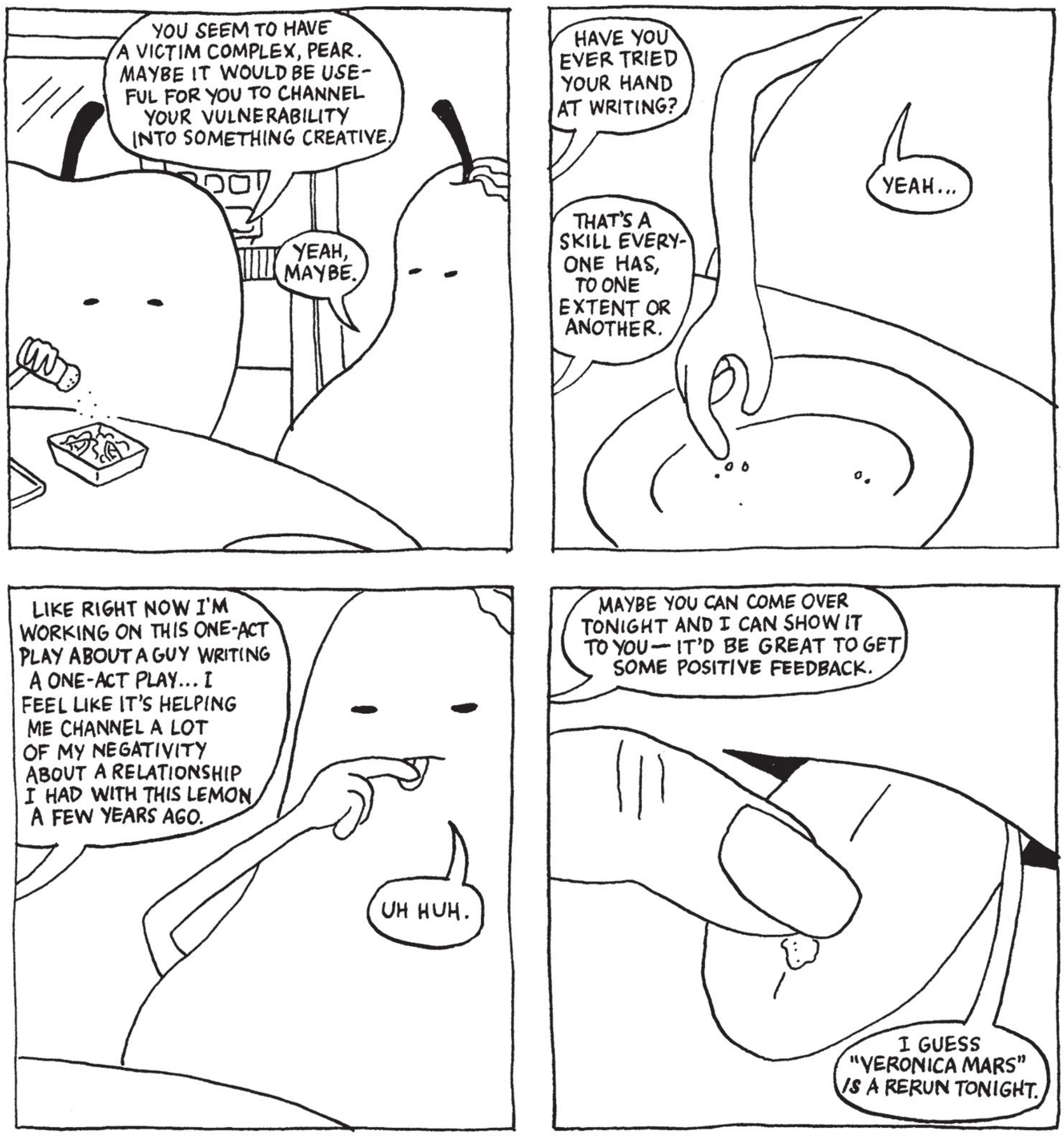
As Corsetto articulated, from early on, webcomics were friendly to women. In 2003, a webcomics subscription site, Girlamatic.com, was launched, with Lea Hernandez as its editor. One of its contributors was Shaenon K. Garrity. In a 2006 interview with Tom Spurgeon at ComicsReporter.com, she said, "I went to Vassar, where I majored in English and took writing classes wherein it was assumed that we'd all end up sipping dry wine in the New York literary publishing world. Sometimes I wonder what my life would have

been like if I'd ended up doing Real Writing Without Pictures." Garrity is probably best known for *Narbonic* (2000-2006), a strip about a mad scientist and her lab. Currently, she is putting out a six-days-a-week webcomic called *Skin Horse*, co-written by Jeffrey Wells, about a black ops team that specializes in cases involving non-humans.

Another early woman webcartoonist is Dorothy Gambrell. Her webcomic *Cat and Girl*, in which the titular characters comically comment on postmodern society, has been ongoing since 1999. Of particular interest is *Donation Derby*, also on her site, in which she draws comics about how she spent the money readers have donated. In 2005, Charlie

TOP: Shaenon K. Garrity and Jeffrey C. Wells's *Skin Horse* Vol. 1 (2009).

BOTTOM: Spike photo courtesy of Stephanie Rivers.



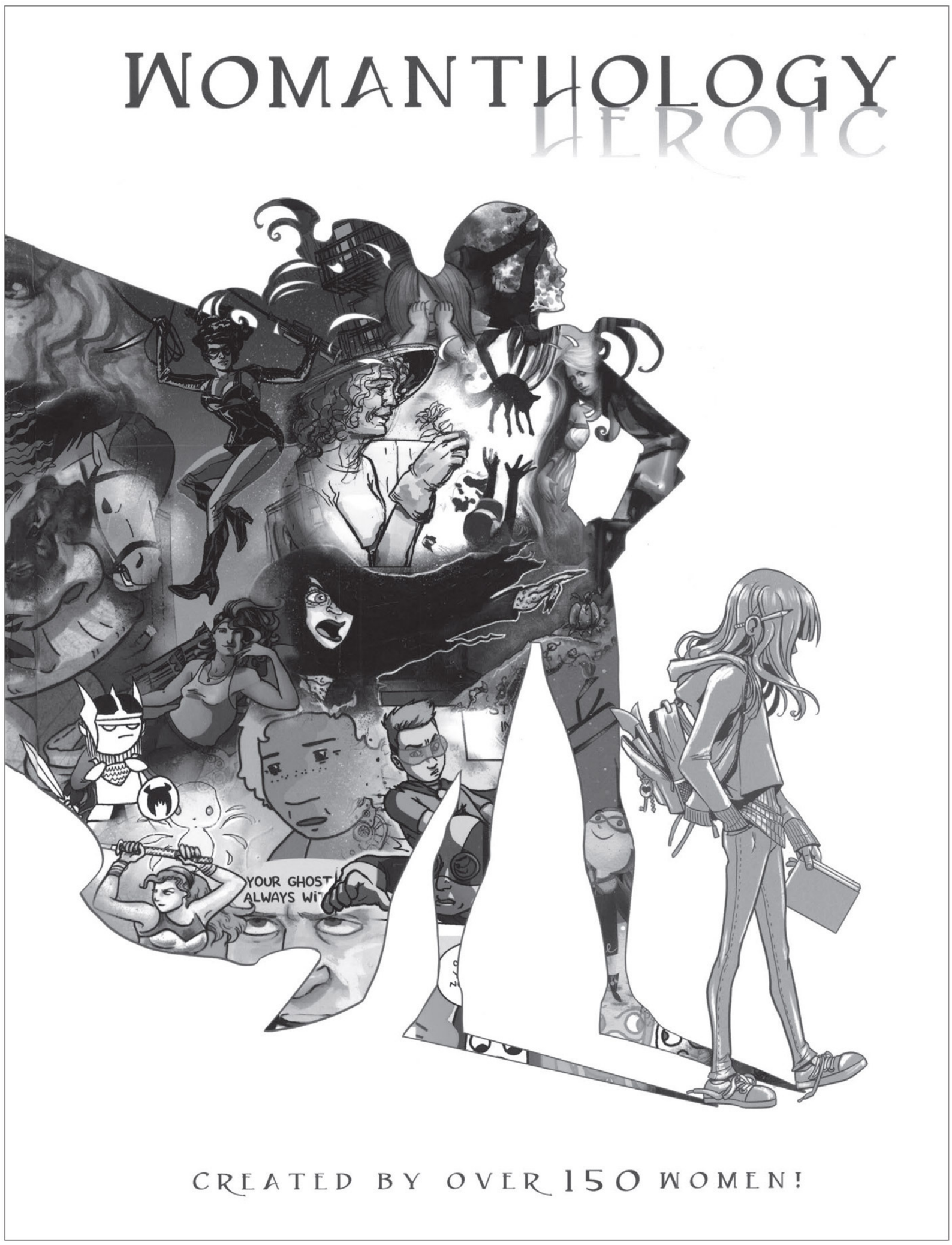
LEFT: Melanie "Minty" Lewis' *P.S. Comics* (2009).

ABOVE: Kate Beaton's *Hark! A Vagrant* (2011).

"Spike" Trotman, a black woman who lives in Chicago, started *Templar, Arizona*, an "alternate history" webcomic about a *very* strange town. She's able to support herself from it — collections are available on Amazon. *Octopus Pie* (2007-), by Meredith Gran, is about two women who live in Brooklyn. Jessica Fink's webcomic *Chester 5000-XYV* (collected by Top Shelf in 2011) is a sexy steampunk adventure.

Kate Beaton's *Hark! A Vagrant* is probably the best-known webcomic by a woman. In 2007, Beaton, a Canadian with a degree in history, began uploading comics that mashed up historical and literary figures and events with contemporary pop culture and slang. In 2011, Drawn & Quarterly released a collection, which made it onto *The New York Times* Best Seller list. The strip is now sporadic, as Beaton is pursuing other projects, including cartooning for the *New Yorker*.

1994 marked the genesis of Small Press Expo (SPX) and Alternative Press Expo (A.P.E.), and since then small press convention circuits have developed, places where women cartoonists can network. Visitors will see young women on both sides of the tables, buying and selling self-produced comics and graphic novels. In place of miles of superhero comics,



TOP: Lark Pien's *Long Tail Kitty (*2009).

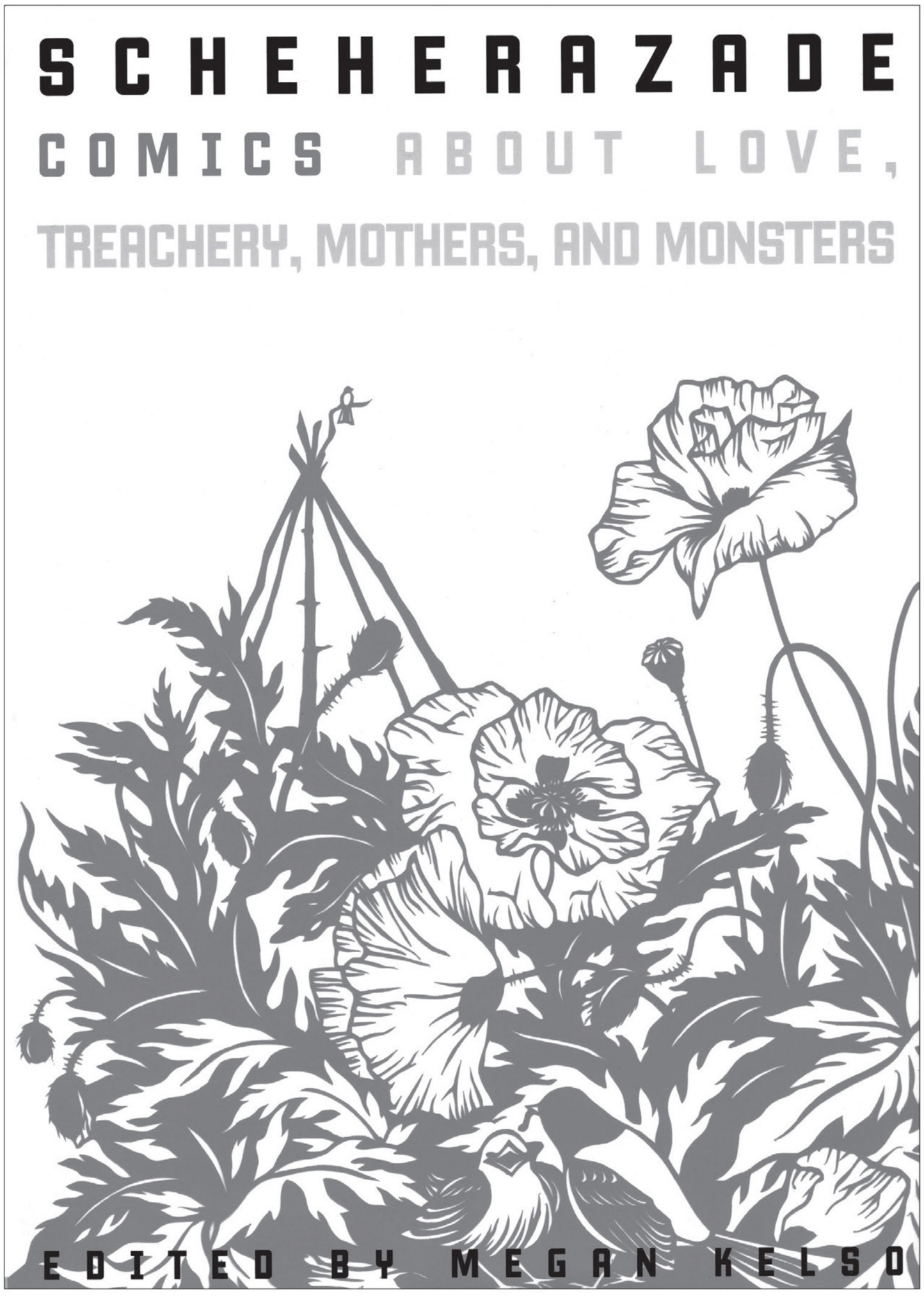
BOTTOM: *Womanthology* (2012). Renae De Liz was the project manager.

young men in Spider-Man costumes, and "booth babes," women hired to wear skimpy outfits to attract men to the comics tables, the visitor will find some of the most innovative and well-drawn comic art being produced today.

Lisa Hanawalt creates minicomics such as *Sell Your Boobs*. Her movie reviews in comics form and more have been collected in *My Dirty Dumb Eyes* (2013). Laura Park has been widely anthologized. After her minicomic *Do Not Disturb My Waking Dream*, in which she drew recipes and singing cats, she collaborated with James Patterson on *Middle School: The Worst Days of My Life*. Minty Lewis is preoccupied with dogs and fruit in her *PS Comics*. Minicomics veteran Lauren Weinstein (*Inside Vineyland*) released the autobiographical *Girl Stories* (2006) through Henry Holt; she followed up in 2008 with a fantasy, *Goddess of War*, from PictureBox. Lark Pien (*Long Tail Kitty*, 2009), Rina Ayuyang (*Whirlwind Wonderland*, 2009), and Hellen Jo (*Jin & Jam* #1, 2008) are minicomics convention mainstays.

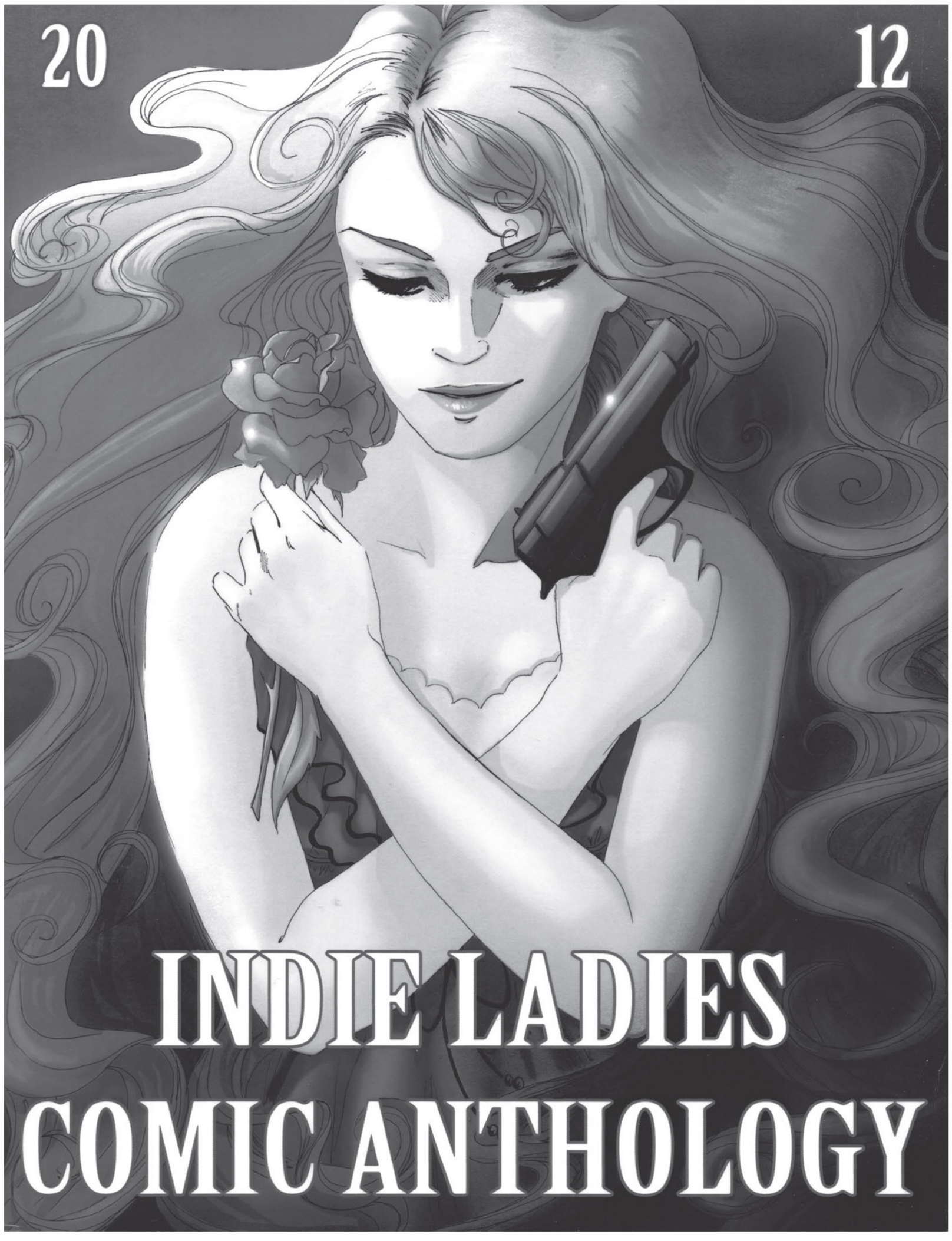
Anthologies of comics by women are of course also nothing new — the first one was *It Ain't Me, Babe*, in 1970 — but women's comic anthologies in the age of the graphic novel no longer take the form of a floppy pamphlet. And, like graphic novels, anthologies and collections in trade paperback form find their way into bookstores and libraries. One of the most impressive collections, *Womanthology*, put together by comic artist Renae De Liz, went up on Kickstarter, one of the largest funding websites for creative projects, to meet their goal of $25,000 to cover production costs. By the end of their campaign, *Womantholgy* had raised $109,301, far exceeding their goal. The anthology consisted of 319 full-color pages of comics and related articles by 187 women artists, writers, colorists, and letterers. Also thanks to Kickstarter, *Gay Genius*, edited by Annie Murphy, contains some comics by and about people who identify as women, such as Kubb E. Bear and Clio Reese Sady. Twenty-three women contributed to *Scheherazade: Stories of Love, Treachery, Mothers, and Monsters* (2004), edited by Megan Kelso. Longtime Dark Horse editor Diana Schutz put together *Sexy Chix* (2006), and in

Megan Kelso edited *Scheherezade*: cover art by Nikki McClure (2004).



2012 the *Indie Ladies* anthology made its debut at the Columbus, Ohio Small Press and Alternative Comics Expo (S.P.A.C.E.). A second issue came out in 2013 and editor Crystal Ash hopes to publish a new issue yearly.

An "apprenticeship" system, with successful professionals passing down their craft to up-and-comers, has often manifested itself in comics. In the 2010s, women have taken their duty to mentor future cartoonists seriously. Lynda Barry, who's been teaching comics for many years to all ages, put out *What It Is* in 2008, a series of exercises and lessons, told in comics form, that are meant to help readers in their creative endeavors. Jessica Abel collaborated with her husband, Matt Madden, on a series of books much like 20th-century mail order "cartoonist courses": so far they've put out *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures* (2008) and *Mastering Comics* (2012).



Erin Ash drew the cover for the *Indie Ladies Comic Anthology*.

Not only are women such as Lauren Weinstein teaching comics courses at established art schools like the School of Visual Arts (SVA), but "comics colleges," with classes that are often half female, such as The Center for Cartoon Studies, located in White River Junction, Vermont, co-founded by Michelle Ollie and James Sturm in 2004, are forming. In Gainesville, Florida, Leela Corman is on the faculty of The Sequential Artists Workshop (SAW), founded by her husband, Tom Hart.

Today, although as a whole, the industry is still male-dominated, more women are drawing comics than ever before, and there are more venues for them to see their work in print. In the 1950s, when the comics industry hit an all-time low, there was no place for women to go. Today, because of graphic novels, there's no place for aspiring women cartoonists to go but forward.

FURTHER READING

Yes, it's true that I have produced most of the collections of art by women cartoonists, but other writers are finally stepping up to the plate. Several women have recently written superlative books about women cartoonists. They are invaluable, and I urge you to read them.

Brewster, Linda.

Rose O'Neill, the Girl Who Loved to Draw,

Boxing Day Books, 2009.

Goldstein, Nancy.

Jackie Ormes: The First African American Woman Cartoonist,

University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Kirtley, Susan E.

Lynda Barry: Girlhood Through the Looking Glass.

University Press of Mississippi, 2012.

Thomas, Lynne M. & Ellis, Sigrid, ed.

Chicks Dig Comics: A Celebration of Comics by the Women Who Love Them.

Mad Norwegian Press, 2012.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

Lily Renée, Escape Artist: From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer

(with Anne Timmons and Mo Oh), Graphic Universe, 2011.

Tarpe Mills & Miss Fury

IDW, 2011.

The Brinkley Girls

Fantagraphics, 2009.

Index

A

Abel, Jessica 145, 147, 174
Action Girl 145, 147, 152. *See* Dyer, Sarah
Adventure Comics 63, 120
Adventures of Judy, The 43-44. *See* Schorer, Eleanor
Albright, Nina 73, 76
Alec the Great 52. *See* Dumm, Edwina
All Girl Thrills 126
All Star Comics 64
Alternative Features Service (AFS) 125
Amazing Mystery Funnies 63, 66
Angel Child, The 21-22. *See* Carew, Kate
Annibelle 45
Anthony, Ed 58
Aoki, Deb 148, 151
A.P.E. (Alternative Press Expo) 171
AP Features 97, 99
Apple Mary. See Mary Worth
Aquaman 120
Archie Comics 167
Arlington, Gary 135
Artbabe 145. *See* Abel, Jessica
Art Directors League of New York 40
art nouveau 32, 87
Art Students League of New York 36
Ash, Crystal 174
Ash, Erin 174
Association of Alternative Newsweeklies 152
Atkinson, Ruth 80, 83, 90, 99-100, 108, 115
Atlantic Monthly, The 157
Atlas. *See* Marvel Comics
Awkward 145
Ayuyang, Rina 173

B

Babs in Society 40. *See* Huget, Virginia
Bailey, Olive 92
Bannerman, Isabella 152-153
Barbie Comics 141-142
Barclay, Valerie "Violet" 26, 104-105, 108, 116
Barry, Lynda 136, 148, 150, 174-175
Batman 120, 158
Bear, Kubb E. 173
Beaton, Kate 171
Bechdel, Alison 138, 148, 160-162
Bell, Gabrielle 162
Ben Bolt 55. *See* Cory, Fanny Y.
Bento Box 148, 151. *See* Aoki, Deb
Berger, John 125
Berube, Elizabeth 118
Bessie's Vacation 34, 43
Bikini Kill 143-144
Binswanger, Lee 133, 142
Birds of Prey 156-157
Bitchy Bitch 147. *See* Gregory, Roberta
Bitter Girl 148. *See* Hilty, Joan
Blaisdell, Tex 125
Blanchard, Martha 42
Blonde Bomber 76
Bobby Sox 96-97. *See* Links, Marty
Bocage, Angela 133
Bond, Dorothy 112-113
Bordeaux, Ariel 145
Boyfriend, The 42
Braddock, Paige 138, 150-151
Brand, Michelle 125, 129
Bratmobile 143-144
Brenda Starr 26, 30, 58, 63-64, 67, 72, 90, 111, 120-122, 152. *See* Messick, Dale
Brewster, Ann 76, 80, 105, 108
Brigman, June 152
Brinkley Girls 26, 32, 34, 175
Brinkley, Nell 24, 26, 30-32, 34-35, 43, 64, 69, 105, 175
Brosgol, Vera 168
Brown, M.K. 136
Buell, Marge Henderson. *See* Marge
Bulbul 125
Bun's Puns 11. *See* Quarles, Louise
Burvik, Mabel "Odin" 70

C

Cadet, The 73-74, 76
Campbell Kids 21. *See* Drayton, Grace
Camper, Jennifer 138, 148
Campus Capers 40. *See* Huget, Virginia
Candy 111. *See* Ormes, Jackie
Caniff, Milton 96
Capp, Al 96
Cap Stubbs and Tippie 24, 52-53. *See* Dumm, Edwina
Captain Marvel 157
Carew, Kate 21-22, 24
Carroll, Ruth 58
Cartoon Art Museum 30
Castellucci, Cecil 167-168
Castle Waiting 165. *See* Medley, Linda
Cat and Girl 169-170. *See* Gambrell, Dorothy
Cathy 152, 165. *See* Guisewite, Cathy
Centaur 92
Center for Cartoon Studies (CCS) 174
Chester 5000-XYV 171. *See* Fink, Jessica
Chestney, Lillian 105
Chevely, Lyn ("Chin Lyvely") 134
Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate 63, 73
Chlorine 112-114. *See* Bond, Dorothy
Clark, Virginia. *See* Huget, Virginia
Classics Illustrated 105
Cloonan, Becky 158
Club 16 100
Clugston, Chynna 167
Cochran, Dot 40, 43
Collier's 42
Come Out Comix 133. *See* Wings, Mary
Comic-Con International: San Diego 142, 152, 156
Comics Code 117
Committee for Women Cartoonists, The 94
Complete Love 108
Conner, Amanda 156-157
Conner, Dale (Also Allen, Dale) 51
Cooper, Fred 115
Coover, Colleen 158-159
Corman, Leela 165-166, 174
Corsetto, Danielle 169
Cory, Fanny Y. 8, 10, 18, 21, 55-56
Crane, Fred 26
Crazy 120
Crosby, Percy 40, 99
Crumb Pahls, Sandy 133
Cultural Correspondence 126, 133-134

D

D'Alessio, Gregory 96
Dame Darcy 147
Daredevil Barry Finn 63, 66
Dashing Dot 17, 42
Davis, Vanessa 162
DC Comics 105, 120, 157
Deathless Deer 72-73. *See* McMein, Marjorie "Neysa"
Deep Girl 145. *See* Bordeaux, Ariel
Definition 145
De Liz, Renae 172-173
Dell 97
Del Rio, Tania 167
deYoung Museum of Art 24
Dickie Dare 70
DiDio, Dan 156
Dillon, Corinne Boyd 92
diMassa, Diane 138, 145
Dirty Plotte 147. *See* Doucet, Julie
Disney Company 59, 110
Distant Soil, A 136. *See* Doran, Colleen
Ditko, Steve 120
Dixie in Hollywood 40

DIY (Do-It-Yourself) 143-144
Doctor Strange 119-120
Donnie Stuart 92. *See* Hotchkiss, Jean
Doran, Colleen 136
Dori Stories 138. *See* Seda, Dori
Dot and Dodo 42-43. *See* Cochran, Dot
Doucet, Julie 147, 162
Drawn & Quarterly 161, 171
Drayton, Grace 8, 17-18, 21, 26, 28, 34, 56, 58, 69
Drechsler, Debbie 147
Dumm, Edwina 24, 52-53, 70-71, 74
Dyer, Sarah 145, 147
Dyke Shorts 133
Dykes to Watch Out For 148. *See* Bechdel, Alison
Dynamite Damsels 133-134

E

East Village Other, The (*EVO*) 124
Editor & Publisher 110, 118, 152
Edwina. *See* Dumm, Edwina
Eisner Award 157
Eisner, Will 80, 159, 180
Elfquest 135-136. *See* Pini, Wendy
Elgin, Jill 76, 115, 117
Epic (Marvel imprint) 136
Epstein, Benita 153
Ernie Pook's Comeek 148, 150. *See* Barry, Lynda
Esquire 100, 103, 119
Ethel 36, 148. *See* Hays, Ethel

F

Fabrics 114
Factsheet 5 145
Farmer, Joyce 134, 162
Fiction House 80, 83-84, 86-87, 89, 99-100
Fight Comics 87
Finder 147. *See* McNeil, Carla Speed
Fink, Jessica 171
Fireball Freddy 112. *See* McClarly, Doris
Flapper Fanny 36-39. *See* Hays, Ethel
Flash Gordon 96
Fleener, Mary 136, 145
Flenniken, Shary 131, 136
Flora Flirt 24. *See* Patterson Rice, Katherine
Flowers, Don 40, 97, 99
Flyin' Jenny 79
FocusPoint 148
For Better or Worse 152. *See* Johnston, Lynn
Fountain, Lora 129
Fradon, Ramona 120, 122, 124, 152
Frazier, Brenda 63
French, Renée 13, 40, 147, 162
Friends of Lulu 142
Fun Home 160-161. *See* Bechdel, Alison
Furchgott, Eve "Even Eve" 135

G

Gale Allen and Her All Girl Squadron 84
Gamble, Merna 105
Gambrell, Dorothy 169-170
Garrity, Shaenon K. 169-170
Gay and Her Gang 37. *See* Parker, Gladys
Gay Genius 173
Gebbie, Grace. *See* Drayton, Grace
Gebbie, Melinda 133, 165
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes 39
Gentle's Tripout 124. *See* Kalish, Nancy "Panzika"
Gibbons, Ann 152
Gibbs, May 17
G.I. Gertie 79-80. *See* Mirabal, Eva
Girlamatic.com 169
Girl Comics 147, 157
Girl Commandos 5, 61, 76, 115
Girlhero 145, 165. *See* Kelso, Megan
Girl's Love 118
Girl's Romances 118
Girls with Slingshots 169. *See* Corsetto, Danielle
Globe's Circus 92
Gloeckner, Phoebe 136, 147, 162
Gone to Amerikay 136
Good Housekeeping 11, 13
Goodman, Martin 99-100, 105, 119
Goodvibes, Jewlie (Also Wood, Julie) 126
Gothic Blimp Works 124
Gould, Chester 64
Gran, Meredith 171
Gregory, Roberta 133-134, 147
Gretchen Gratz 26
Grit Bath 147. *See* French, Renée
Guerra, Pia 157-158
Guisewite, Cathy 152
Gulledge, Laura Lee 168-169
Gumnut Babies 17. *See* Gibbs, May

H

Hall, Barbara (Also Calhoun, Barbara) 76
Hall, Justin 133, 148
Hanawalt, Lisa 173
Hark! A Vagrant 171. *See* Beaton, Kate
Harper's Bazaar 10
Harper's Magazine 8
Hart, Tom 174
Harvey Comics 76
Haskell, Karen Marie 129
Hays, Ethel 34-36, 38, 42, 69, 116
Hays, Margaret Gebbie 18
Hays, Mary A. 26, 28
Held Jr., John 35, 42
Henri, Robert 22-24
Hernandez, Lea 141, 169
Heroes All 92
Hewson, Isabel Manning 92
Hicks, Faith Erin 168
Hilty, Joan 148, 150
Hollander, Nicole 148, 150
Hopper, Fran 80, 83-84, 99-100
Hotchkiss, Jean 92
Hothead Paisan 145. *See* diMassa, Diane
Hudzietz, Virginia. *See* Huget, Virginia
Huget, Virginia (Also Clark, Virginia and Hudzietz, Virginia) 38-40, 42, 59, 74, 97, 99, 105, 108
Hulme, Etta (Also Parks, Etta) 108

I

Iger, Jerry 80
Image Comics 136
Indie Ladies 174
It Ain't Me, Babe 125-126, 173, 180

J

Jane's World 151. *See* Braddock, Paige
Jennie and Jack Also the Little Dog Jap 21
Jigger 92. *See* Dillon, Corinne Boyd
Jo, Hellen 173
Johnston, Lynn 152
Jones, Sabrina 165
jugendstil 87

K

Kalish, Nancy "Panzika" 124-125
Karen 118-129. *See* Berube, Elizabeth
Kasson, Grace 11
Kate and Karl, the Cranford Kids 26. *See* Hays, Mary A.
Kaula, Edna 114
Keaton, Russell 79
Keller, Dotty 108
Kelly, Selby 26
Kelso, Megan 145, 165, 173
Kewpies 11, 13, 17, 55. *See* O'Neill, Rose
Kickstarter 173
Kiddyland 21. *See* Drayton, Grace
King, Fay 45, 47
King Features Syndicate 42
Kirby, Jack 108
Kit Carter 74
Kitty 100. *See* Renée, Lily
Knisley, Lucy 162
Kominsky, Aline 129, 147
Krausmann, Virginia 38
Kryttre, Krystine 147

L

Ladies' Home Journal 13
Ladies, The 113. *See* Bond, Dorothy
Land of the Lost 92
Larson, Hope 168
Lasker, Suzanna "Suzu" 125
Lasko-Gross, Miss 161
Last Gasp 137-138
Lay, Carol 147, 161
Lee, Stan 86, 99, 104-105, 118-119
Leschen, Caryn 138, 142
Levander, Jean 80
Libenson, Terri 148
Life 52, 100, 173
Likewise 145
Links, Marty 26, 96-97, 99
Little Annie Rooney 55
Little Lulu 17, 42, 110, 114-115, 142, 145. *See* Marge
Little Miss Muffet 55-56. *See* Cory, Fanny Y.
Little Orphan Annie 55, 125
Look magazine 38
Los Angeles Examiner 13, 31
Los Angeles School of Art and Design 36
Lost Girls 165. *See* Gebbie, Melinda
Loth, Pauline 100, 103
Love Romances 108
Lover's Lane 108
Luke and Duke 53, 70. *See* Sexton, Caroline M.
Lundy, Sandra Bell 148
Lyttle, Christine 110-111

M

MacDonald, Heidi 142
Marge 17, 42, 70, 114-115, 142
Marianne 38, 40. *See* Hays, Ethel
MariNaomi 162
Marrs, Lee 124-126, 129, 133, 135
Marston, William Moulton 64
Martin, Laura 157
Marvel Comics (Also Atlas, Also Timely) 69, 86, 99, 108, 118-120, 124-125, 136, 141-142, 156-157, 159, 167
Mary Worth 51. *See* Orr, Martha
Also *Mary Worth's Family*
Also *Apple Mary* 51
McCall's 70-71
McClarly, Doris 112
McMein, Marjorie "Neysa" 70-72
McNaught Syndicate 60
McNeil, Carla Speed 147
Meanderings of Minnie, The 52. *See* Dumm, Edwina
Me and My Boyfriend 42. *See* Cochran, Dot
Meat Cake 147. *See* Dame Darcy
Medley, Linda 165
Mendes, Willy 124-126, 134
Messick, Dale (Also Messick, Dalia) 26, 30, 58-60, 63-64, 66-67, 70, 72, 74, 120, 152
Metamorpho 120
Metropolitan School of Fine Arts 8
Miller, Lorna 145
Millie the Model 99-100, 118
Mills, Tarpe (Also Mills, June) 63-64, 66-67, 69-70, 74, 89, 159, 175, 180
minicomics 145, 173
Minx 167
Mirabal, Eva (Also Ea-Ha-Wa) 79-80
Miss America 100, 103
Miss Fury 63-64, 66-67, 69, 90, 175. *See* Mills, Tarpe
Moe, Claire S. 92
Molly Neuman 144
Montreal Mirror 147
Moodian, Pat 129
Mopsy 38-39, 67, 76, 79, 89. *See* Parker, Gladys
Ms. Magazine 145
Mucha, Corinne 168
Muchow, Phyllis 26, 100, 103
Mulvey, Dee 112
Munson, Cecilia Paddock "Pad" 63, 70
Murphy, Annie 173
Mysta of the Moon 84

N

Nannygoat Productions 134
Narbonic. See Garrity, Shaennon K.
Natalie, Andrea 148, 150
National Cartoonists Society (NCS) 63, 94, 96, 143
National Comics. *See* DC Comics
National Lampoon 136
Naughty Toodles 17. *See* Drayton, Grace
Neuman, Molly 144
New 52, The 156
New Yorker 21, 171
New York Times, The 24, 37, 157, 161, 165, 167, 171
Noomin, Diane 131, 147, 161-162
North American Comic Syndicate 26
No Straight Lines 133, 148, 150
Not Brand Ecch 120

O

Octopus Pie 171. *See* Gran, Meredith
Oh, Diana 40, 97, 99
O in Black With a Scarf 24
Ollie, Michelle 174
O'Neill, Rose 8, 10-11, 13, 17-18, 21, 24, 34, 55-56, 69, 175
Opdyke Jones, Amelia "Oppy" 115-116
Oppy. *See* Opdyke Jones, Amelia
Organ, Marjorie 22-24
Ormes, Jackie 111-112, 175
Orr, Martha 51
Other People's Children 55-56. *See* Cory, Fanny Y.
Our Love Story 69
Outcault, R.F. 10

P

Parker, Gladys 36-40, 67, 76, 79, 96, 99, 159
Park, Laura 173
Patenaude, Ramona "Pat" 70
Patsy Walker 86
Patterson, Alicia 72
Patterson, Joseph 63, 72
Patterson Rice, Katherine 24
Patty Jo 'n' Ginger 111. *See* Ormes, Jackie
Pearson, Vee Quintal 92
Peggy Lux 40, 42
Persepolis 160. *See* Satrapi, Marjane
Pettit, Nan 126
PhilaBusters, The 11. *See* Repplier, Agnes, III
Piccolo, Rina 148, 152-153
PictureBox 173
Pien, Lark 172-173
Pini, Wendy 135-136
Piro, Stephanie 153
Pittsburgh Courier 111
Planet Comics 84, 86-87
Plastic Man 120
pop art 105, 119
Potential 145
Pratt Institute 67, 83
Price, Hilary 148
Pudge, Girl Blimp 124, 126. *See* Marrs, Lee
Pussycat Princess, The. See Drayton, Grace

Q

Quarles, Louise 11

R

Rausch, Barb 141
Raymond, Alex 96
Red Rabbit 108
Reggie and the Heavenly Twins 23. *See* Organ, Marjorie
Renée, Lily 80, 86-87, 89, 100, 108, 165, 175, 180
Repplier, Agnes, III 11
Richards, Terre 21, 126, 129
riot grrrl 144, 165

Robbins, Trina 3-4, 120, 125-126, 129, 131, 133, 141-142, 165, 180
Roche, Ruth "Rod Roche" 89
Rudahl, Sharon 126, 129, 165
Rude Girls and Dangerous Women 148. *See* Camper, Jennifer
Rudin, Kay 124
Rusty 100, 103, 105

S

Sabrina the Teenage Witch 167
Sady, Clio Reese 173
Sailor Moon 166. *See* Takeuchi, Naoko
Sally 114. *See* Kaula, Edna
Sampson, Shelby 125, 129, 131, 133
San Diego Comic-Con. *See* Comic-Con International: San Diego
Sandman 141, 158
San Francisco Bay Times 148
Satrapi, Marjane 160
Saturday Evening Post, The 42, 63-64, 115
Scheherazade 173
Schmich, Mary 152
School of Visual Arts (SVA) 174
Schrag, Ariel 145
Schutz, Diana 173
Scripps-Howard Syndicate 42
second wave feminism 143
Secrets Behind the Comics 104-105
Seda, Dori 137-138
Seduction of the Innocent 116-117, 119. *See* Wertham, Fredric
Sequential Artists Workshop (SAW) 174
Severin, Marie 110-111, 118-120, 122, 124
Sexton, Caroline M. 53, 55, 69, 70
Sexy Chix 173
Shaefer, Jeanine 157
Shermund, Barbara 96
Schorer, Eleanor 34, 43-44
shoujo manga 166-167
Shulock, Margaret 152-153
Silk Spectre 156
Simone, Gail 157
Simon, Joe 108
Six Chix 152-153
Skin Horse 170
Skippy 40
Skull Squad 83
Slate, Barbara 141, 162, 165
Slott, Mollie 63
Slowpoke 151-152. *See* Sorensen, Jen
Slutburger 145. *See* Fleener, Mary
Sneidman, Sylvia 38-39
S*nooks and Snicks, the Mischievous Twins*. 26. *See* Townsend, Inez
Sonny Sayings 55. *See* Cory, Fanny Y.
Sorensen, Jen 151
S.P.A.C.E. (Small Press and Alternative Comics Expo) 174
Spider-Man 119, 173
Spike. *See* Trotman, Charlie
SPX (Small Press Expo) 171
Stanley, John 142
Staples, Fiona 157
Stein, Leslie 162
Steranko, James 64
Sternbergh, Leslie 143, 147
St. John Publications 100
Strange What a Difference a Mere Man Makes 23
Sturm, James 174. *See* Center for Cartoon Studies
Subway Sun, The 115
suffrage (women's) 13, 22, 24, 34, 52, 70
Superman 73, 120
Susie Q Smith 97. *See* Walter, Linda
Sylvia 150. *See* Hollander, Nicole
Synder, Marcia 80

T

Taffy 100, 103. *See* Muchow, Phyllis
Takahashi, Rumiko 167
Takeover 126
Takeuchi, Naoko 166
Target Comics 74, 76
Teena 67, 94, 96-97. *See* Terry, Hilda
Telgemeier, Raina 165
*Templar, Arizon*a 171. *See* Trotman, Charlie "Spike"
Terry, Hilda 26, 67, 74, 94, 96-97, 99, 143
The Boyfriend. *See* Marge
third wave feminism 143
Thompson, Jill 158-159
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents 157
Timely. *See* Marvel Comics
Time magazine 69, 161
Timmons, Anne 165, 168, 175
Tin Tan Tales for Children 11. *See* Kasson, Grace
Tits & Clits 134, 147
Tokyopop 158, 166
Torchy Brown 111-112. *See* Ormes, Jackie
Townsend, Inez (Also Tribet, Inez) 26
Treasure Chest 92
Trotman, Charlie "Spike" 171
Truth Magazine 8
Turner, Ron 126, 133, 137
Twisted Sisters 147
Tyler, Carol 131, 136, 162

U

underground comix 67, 122, 124-126, 129, 134-135, 138, 141, 144, 148, 161, 165
Urfer, Dorothy 45

V

Valleau, Janice 73-74
Van Horn, Penny Moran 147
Varon, Sarah 168
Vaughan, Brian K. 157-158
Verdun Belle and Some Others 71
Vertigo (DC imprint) 156, 158
Vic and Ethel 36, 42 *See* Hays, Ethel
Vixen 156-157

W

WAC (Women's Army Corps) 79-80
Walter, Linda 97, 99
WaRP Graphics 136
Warwick, Mal 125
Waugh, Coulton 70
webcomics 169-171
Weiderseim, Grace. *See* Drayton, Grace
Weinstein, Lauren 173-174
Wertham, Fredric 117, 119
Western 110, 142
Whitman 110
Wilson, Willow G. 156-157
Wimmen's Comix (*Wimmin's Comix*) 129, 133-136, 138, 180
Wings, Mary 133
Wing Tips 83
Wolfe, Allison 144
Wolfe Stanley, Janet 129
WomaNews 148
Woman's Home Companion 11, 13, 17
Womanthology 172-173
Wonder Woman 64, 145, 157
Wood, Julie. *See* Goodvibes, Jewlie
Woollcott, Alexander 70-71
World War I 13, 24, 36, 55
World War II 55, 63, 162

Y

Yankee Girl 76
Yellow Dog 124
Yellow Kid, The 10-11
Young King Cole 73-74
Young Love 108
Young Romance 108
Youth's Companion 18
Y: The Last Man 157-158. *See* Guerra, Pia

Z

Zangerle, Peggy 73
Ziegfeld, Florenz 32
zine 144, 165
Zobl, Elke 144

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