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FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF IRVING SCHILD



visit two years earlier and had spent three leisurely hours chatting with the editors of Krokodil, the Soviet humor magazine. He told them about MAD and its success and how he had occasionally been labeled a Communist.

"But, of course, I'm not a Communist," he explained.

"With your circulation, I wouldn't think you would be," one of the Krokodil editors said.

At one point, the conversation turned to the modes of living of MAD people versus Krokodil people. "I mentioned that I lived in a twelve-room apartment in Manhattan and that I paid a monthly rent of twelve hundred and seventy dollars," Gaines recalls. "This, I will admit, is an outrageous amount to pay for rent, especially since, at the time, I was living there alone, hav-

MAD photographer Irving Schild staged this impromptu "Schild Family Reunion" photo during the 1970 MAD trip to Japan.

ing been separated from Nancy. The Krokodil editors found it hard to believe."

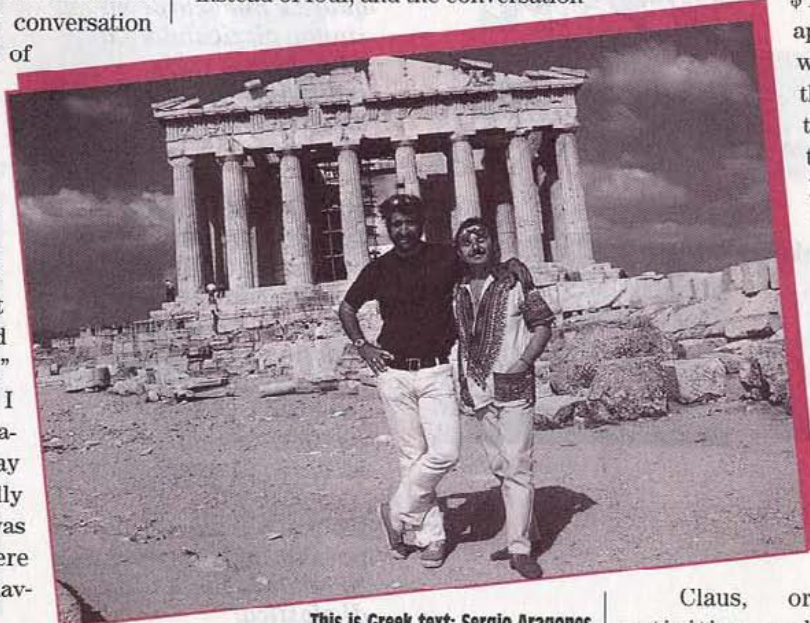
On the MAD trip, Gaines reappeared at Krokodil, this time with his entourage. The reception was more restrained. There were three Krokodil editors in attendance, instead of four, and the conversation

was polite and boring. Gaines believes that the Russians weren't prepared for the MAD group, didn't want to be prepared for the MAD group, or pretended not to be prepared for the MAD group. In any case, it was pretty much of a pointless visit, except for one moment of nostalgia. That was when the Krokodil editors recalled Gaines's previous visit and the chat about his

\$1,270-a-month apartment. That was the one item that had stuck in their minds, and they admitted they had talked about it for months.

Intourist kept close tabs on the MAD group, something that Gaines long ago gave up on. During the early trips, he was a combination field general and Santa

Claus, organizing group activities and handing out spending money. In San Juan, we noticed a non-MAD



This is Greek text: Sergio Aragones and Irving Schild in Greece during a 1969 MAD trip that started in Africa. (The reference to Greek text is a printer's term that had our art department in stitches.)

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guest who bore a striking resemblance to MAD's Larry Siegal. On hearing this, DeBartolo remarked, "Gaines saw him this morning and automatically gave him eighty dollars in spending money." No longer. Gaines now pays only for plane fares and for hotels, usually on the American Plan, and makes little attempt to regulate the group's spare time. Today, checking into a hotel of a cosmopolitan city is the signal for the MADmen to throw their bags into their rooms and break loose.

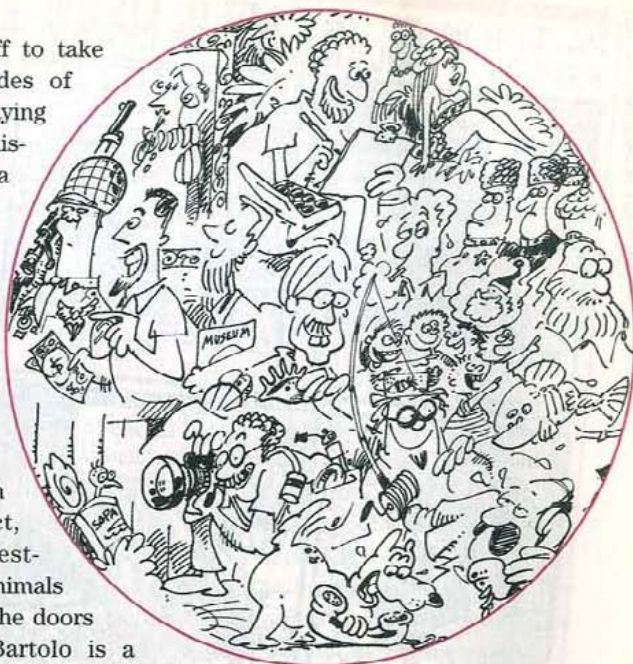
George Woodbridge, army buff and war nut, speeds off to military outposts where he bargains for, say, a World War I lance corporal's stripes or a cartridge casing used in the Boer War. John Putnam scours shops for additions to his prized collection of sea shells. Photographer Irving Schild takes busmen's holi-

days and wanders off to take vast numbers of slides of street lamps and decaying wharves. Paul Coker disappears for hours at a time and almost literally loses himself in obscure art galleries and museums.

DeBartolo is a wildlife conservation zealot. During our last day in Nairobi, a Sunday, he roamed through the business district, placing leaflets protesting the slaughter of animals for their skins under the doors of shopkeepers. DeBartolo is a bachelor and probably more of a loner than any of his colleagues, but even he occasionally gets homesick for his companions in New York. In

Rome, he shelled out twenty-seven dollars for a trans-Atlantic call in order to speak with his two dogs, Wags and Brandy, being cared for in his absence by a woman in his apartment house. It cheered him to learn that they recognized his voice. "They barked and ran around like crazy," he recalls fondly.

The most gregarious of the MADmen is Aragonés, whose curiosity and spirit of adventure seldom flag. After the third day in Kenya, he had mastered enough Swahili to be able to converse, albeit in halting phrases, with our drivers in their



native tongue. In Italy, he took over the microphone from the guide on the bus and gave an impromptu, thoroughly inaccurate description of Ravenna.

Aragones appears to live in his own theatre of the absurd. He is especially fond of infiltrating tours of Japanese or East Indians who are having their group picture taken. As a result, the beaming face of Aragonés is today a permanent, towering presence in the vacation scrapbooks of several hundred puzzled Asiatics.

The passion of Meglin is sketching, a pursuit which caused some uneasy moments in a bush village in the Surinam interior. Meglin had just finished a portrait of a rather imposing native chief. "Mine," said the chief, pointing to the drawing. "No, mine," said Meglin. At which point the tour guide suggested that it might be a good idea for Meglin to relinquish the sketch. Noticing that the chief was giving him menacing glances, Meglin quickly handed over the sketch, then did



Ship of Fools? MADmen (clockwise from left) Frank Jacobs, Paul Coker, Bill Gaines, Dave Berg, Sid Gwirtzman, Al Jaffee, and Bob Clarke on a 1975 Mexican boat ride.

BILL... THANKS FOR A GREAT TRIP.... ONE FINE DAY IN MADRID



another one for himself. Says he, "I did what any other red-blooded American would have done who was scared out of his wits."

Toward the end of each junket, the MAD group resembles a traveling souvenir stand. Thanks to the yearly excursions, most of our homes are now cluttered with mahogany masks from Haiti, Masai spears and carved elephants from Kenya, woodblocks and silks from Japan and Hong Kong, jade from Bangkok, and ermine and samovars from Russia.

Perhaps it is this willingness to explore, buy, and collect that distinguishes the MAD traveler. I recall walking into a small curio shop the first day in Haiti. The proprietor welcomed me with the words, "You must be from MAD." "That's right," I said, "but

how did you know we were here?" The proprietor smiled and answered mysteriously, "All Haiti knows you are here." Even then they knew.

The effects of the trips can be far-reaching. One MADman found Paris so romantic that it inspired him to get divorced when he returned home. From Nairobi, I brought back a carved fertility god, placed it

on the mantelpiece, and a year later became a father.

In Tokyo, Gaines met two Japanese schoolchildren, and now corresponds with them, faithfully taking each letter to a waiter in a New York Japanese restaurant for translation. Jack Davis learned that humor is an unpredictable thing when he did some black-board sketches for a class of fifth-graders in Surinam. The kids showed little response when he drew Donald Duck. They broke up when he caricatured their teacher.

Most of the MAD travelers rate the Africa and Surinam trips at the top of their list. This is probably because these were locales that most effectively took us away from the everyday. In 1969, after nine days in the bush of Kenya and Tanzania, we returned to Nairobi, where we found that during our absence Ilo Chi Minh, Drew Pearson, and Rocky Marciano had died and that the Mets were only one game out of first place. This feeling of isolation was equaled only in Russia, where I learned, by a chance meeting with a Moscow journalist, that Nikita Khrushchev had died two days earlier, while we were there. If not for that meeting, I doubt that we would have heard the news until we had reached our next stop, Amsterdam.

Looking back on the trips, it is difficult to select a high point. For some it might be the initial impact of the splendorous spaciousness of St. Mark's Square in Venice. Others might choose the cruise up the Marowijne in Surinam. Or the first



Some samples from the MAD trip books presented to Bill by the Usual Gang of Idiots as a token of their appreciation after each MAD trip. Some pages, like Don Martin's Spanish food gag (upper left) wound up being redrawn and printed in MAD.

glimpse of elephant that night at Treetops. Or the Kremlin at night, its lights casting long shadows on the somber streets of Moscow.

One of my favorite moments occurred on the Surinam trip. Six of us had crossed the Marowijne into the town of Saint Laurent in French Guiana. Ever since my boyhood I'd been fascinated with the place: French Guiana, remote, forbidding, with its Devil's Island and sweaty mystery, source of melodramas of escape, adventure, and desperate men engaged in dark struggles.

It was mid-afternoon, stifling hot without a trace of breeze, and the inhabitants of the town, unlike mad dogs and MAD travelers, were indoors. We trudged up the main street, passing white-washed shops and buildings a hundred years old, in varying states of decay and ugliness. Wilted and thirsty, we entered a dimly-lit bistro. An aging four-bladed fan hung from the ceiling, circulating what little air there was. Seated around a circular table in a corner, drinking cognac and, I am sure, discussing matters of shadowy intrigue, were five vintage colonial types — policeman, baker, merchant, seafarer, bistro owner. They looked up at us and glowered. For a brief moment I was cut off from time and reality and fully expected Sydney Greenstreet to emerge, white-suited, from an unseen door and offer me the mask of Demetrios in return for a passage to Marseilles.

Gaines, who seems to have been born to travel, lives for the MAD trips. I suspect, however, that his favorite moments occur a few months after they are over. Each year the MADmen treat him to a dinner, usually at Little Charlie's, and present him with The Book. The Book is a leather bound volume containing commemorative contributions from all of the travelers. None

of the contributions is serious and most of them are at the expense of Gaines.

The books are Gaines's most prized possessions. "Each is a jewel in itself," he says, "A one-of-a-kind collection of incredible talent. Absolutely priceless."

As of this writing, Gaines is planning a trip to Spain and Morocco in 1972. And after that, whither MAD? Gaines answers:

"I'm thinking about a trip to Tahiti and the South Seas, ending up in New Guinea. I hope one day we'll be able to go to red China. We haven't been to India yet or to Australia. Then there's Tristan da Cunha and places like that. Say, I wonder what the sauces are like in the Galapagos?"

CHAPTER 17

ONE LAST LOOK

Nineteen seventy-two was a vintage year for Gaines.

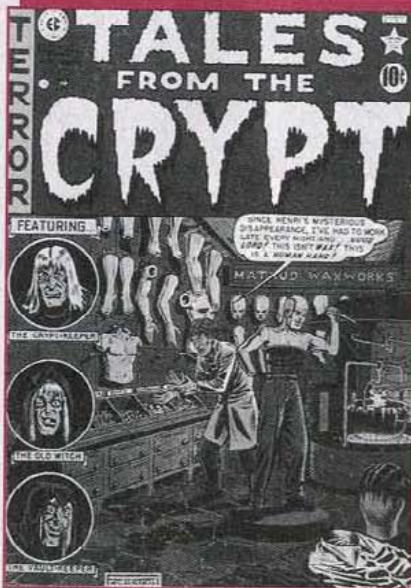
For starters, there was the premiere of *Tales From The Crypt*, a film dovetailing five of his horror tales and starring, among others, Sir Ralph Richardson, Joan Collins, and

Nigel Patrick. The reviews were mixed. Gaines thought the screenplay could have been a lot better, but was delighted with the acting and, especially, the photography, which illuminated the stories in appropriate bloody crimsons and cadaverous grays.

Then came the EC Fan Addict Convention, which drew horror buffs from throughout the country. Gaines and his editors and artists of the horror days were lionized as folkheroes, hailed as the men who ushered in the The New Age of Comics. One room at the conclave held a display of original art from the old magazines. A guard stood at the door, the drawings were encased in glass, and hundreds of conventioners passed through, viewing in hushed admiration the hallowed panels showing men being devoured by giant mice and wives chopping their husbands into small bits.

About the same time, the men of MAD were guests of honor at the National Cartoonists Society. Milton Caniff, the creator of *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steven Canyon*, extolled MAD and wondered how it maintained its quality year after year. Gaines answered, "The same way you keep doing it — talent."

Gaines has been rich for several years. Today, despite his startling beard, hair, and general appearance, he is discovering that he has also become respectable. Once pilloried as the enfant terrible of the comics, he is now one of the industry's elder statesmen. Recently, twenty-three of his horror and suspense stories were reprinted in a gorgeous, giant-size volume by Nostalgia Press. The book has proved a splendid seller at \$19.95, which is an indication of the stature the gory tales have achieved. Gaines is understandably proud to see his once-



damned comics now recognized as classics. But he feels the ultimate vindication has come with the letters that have poured in from his readers of twenty years ago.

One fan, Mike Coman, of Landover, Maryland, wrote:

I am an EC oldtimer [who] grew up when the horror comics were in full bloom. When I read the [Nostalgia Press] book and once again enjoyed the beautiful artwork and well-planned stories with the snap endings, memories of my childhood came flooding back to me. The comics were banned at my house at that time, which, of course, made reading them all the more exciting and even a little dangerous. What I'm trying to say is thank you for making my childhood a little more exciting. When [your] comics died, there was really nothing that ever came close to taking their place.

Yes, two decades later, horror is everlasting, and Gaines stands redeemed. When National Periodical Publications, the company that wanted Gaines's scalp in the fifties, found recently that it required a business advisor, who did National call on? Why, Gaines, naturally, who now serves one day a week as an unpaid consul-

tant to the comic-book house, currently headed by his friend of many years, Carmine Infantino.

There are some who believe that if Gaines doesn't watch his step, he will find himself reigning high in the corporate structure. I doubt this. As long as MAD exists, Gaines will continue to nurture, to guide, and to protect it. As I said at the beginning, Gaines and MAD, like a boy and his frog, are inseparable.

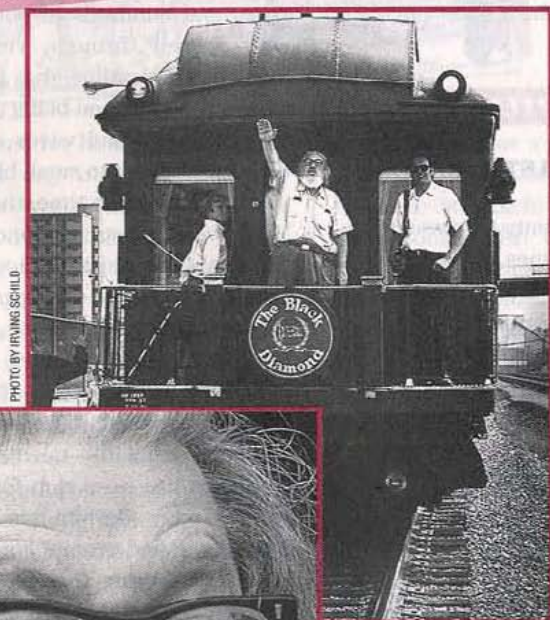
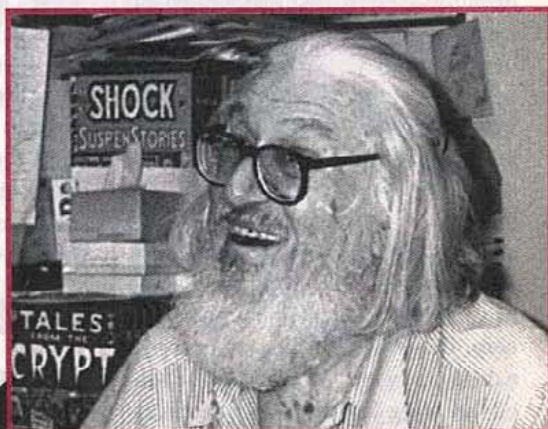
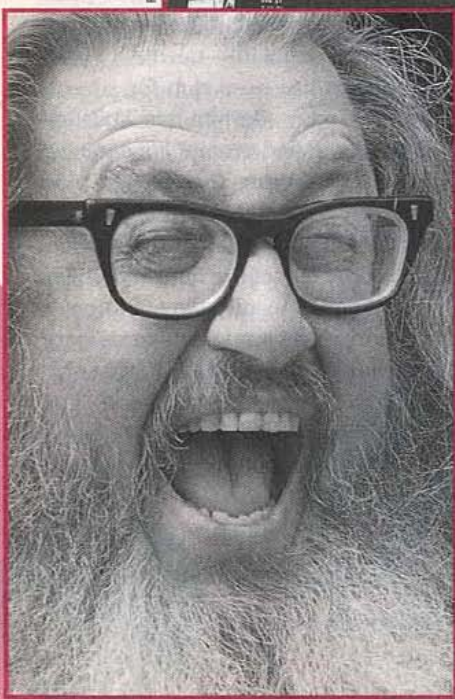


PHOTO BY IRVING SCHILD



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNIE GAINES

This concludes our serialization of *The MAD World of William M. Gaines*, but watch for all-new bonus features starting in MAD XL #7! Like what? Like MAD Marginals XL, classic Sergio Aragones marginal cartoons presented in their original, nearsighted-friendly full-size form for the first time! Like Best of the Web, original bits from madmag.com presented in print for the first time! Also, expanded Idiot of the Issue Profiles, more movie outtakes and other Certifiable MADness! So check out MAD XL#7 on sale 12/19! Fa fa fa!



(Clockwise from lower left) When Gaines let loose, his bellowing laugh could be heard throughout the MAD offices, though it was sometimes mistaken for the plaintive wail of a dog run over by a steamroller. In the mid-1980s, Gaines rented a vintage railway dining car and transported the entire MAD staff on a surprise trip to Boston. Gaines in a familiar pose at his desk at 485 MADison Ave. Frank Jacobs, author of *The MAD World of William M. Gaines* with his favorite subject.

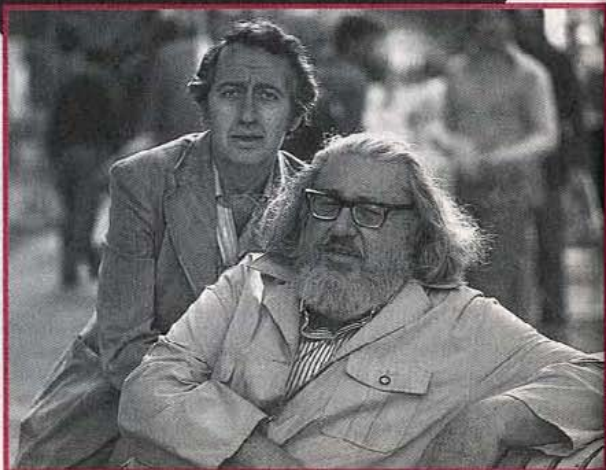


PHOTO BY IRVING SCHILD