

DM: Yeah, because he was thrown out of every high school in Minneapolis.

And everybody had stories. He told me he went to West High School, Southwest, Central. The only high school he didn't go to that he got throw out of was Edison and Marshall.

I said, "Well, what was the thing, Curt?"

And he said, "I just had—I didn't know this but I had an artistic temperament and I was so interested in rather doing art than anything else and I didn't socially fit in. I would go to Southwest High School and they were too hoity-toity. And then I'd go to North High School and they'd be too working class."

It was real interesting when he told me these stories about getting kicked out of all these high schools in Minneapolis.

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BA: When did you meet him?

DM: Must have been in the mid-80s when he was one of the guests at one of the comic book conventions, and we had the mayor of Minnesota [Minneapolis] declare Curt Swan Day. Don Fraser.

BA: When you say "we", who are you talking about?

DM: It was Dan Jurgens, Nick [Dominic Postiglione, a.k.a., Nick Post]¹ and from—I don't know if Nick was involved at the time. But the Minnesota Comic Book Association brought him in as a guest. Back in the 1980s over at the Thunderbird Hotel. They were having a dinner that night. He was wandering the hallway looking for something to do. I bumped into him. At first Curt Swan didn't want to talk to me but then we started talking about the railroad—the Burlington Northern, the Great Northern—all of a sudden he changed his attitude and he became very accessible. Because his father had been a brakeman and he wanted to talk about his childhood. He really wanted to talk about his childhood, of growing up here.

Originally they came from Willmar and changed their name from Swanson to Swan. They moved around. They lived over by the rail yards over by Cedar Avenue. Then they moved over here by 40th and Lyndale. Then he went to all these schools. He went to Jefferson Junior High. Then slowly it got harder for him because he really wanted to draw. That's what he really wanted to do.

When you talk to anybody who's an artist—it gets harder and harder for you to do the normal things. As a teenager, even as an adult. Like getting involved in high school football games or any of that kind of stuff. You don't intentionally do it but you're curiosity's more toward looking at colors and things. You have a passion for that. And it's real hard to get stuck into the—I don't want to say "normal stuff" but it's those everyday

¹ Nick Post, owner of Source Comics in Falcon Heights, MN, and president of Midwest Comic Book Association (MCBA).

reactions.

That's why I compare a lot of artists to van Gogh and some of these people like that. The social thing gets to be really hard and so then you get to have problems. And if you don't have a chance to do your art things get even worse. If you don't have a chance to use your art.

BA: Did you ask him about the railroad because you knew something about his history?

DM: No, no. I had a Great Northern enamel pin on a hat. I used to wear a hat that had 100s of cartoon characters and things on it. He didn't even respond to the cartoon characters. He responded to the Great Northern insignia, the thing that's like from the Korean Flag. You know it's the Tao, the light and dark. And that's the symbol of the Great Northern Railroad.

BA: So his dad worked for James J. Hill's railroad?

DM: Right, that's what he did. A lot of people here are part of the railroad community and stuff.

BA: You talked to Curt about his childhood?

DM: Yeah, we talked about his childhood and stuff and all those things. My thing is that—you know I'm a daycare provider. I work with children. Because I work with children, I also want to know about artists' childhoods. And so therefore that's what happens. I find out how much their childhood in Minnesota fixed them, who they are.

Terry Gilliam is a classic example. Terry Gilliam was born here in Minneapolis, out in Medicine Lake. He lived outside [the metro area]. And one of the things they had, they had an old outhouse that they put up in a tree as a tree house. And they would jump from the outhouse trying to grab these wires, and they were the giant wires of the power company.

If you think about it, it's a great metaphor for Terry Gilliam's thing. That's what he does. He literally is jumping at—and, god, if he catches one he's done. So that insane-type childhood, you can see how that affects him.

The same thing with Robert Crumb. Robert Crumb was born in Philadelphia but he spent a lot of his early childhood years down in Albert Lea. And as a result—

BA: Was it his dad's or his mom's family farm?

DM: His dad. He's like me. He's Polish-German. His father—his grandparents are Polish-German dirt farmers down there. And only now that he's really—Crumb has taken his daughter and his wife [to visit the farm in recent years]—he's really embraced that whole experience of being from that farm. In fact, that farm that celebrated its 150th anniversary of belonging to the Crumb family. And Crumb then, when Crumb's father was a drill instructor in the US Marines and when the war broke out, Crumb's mother took the children down to the family farm, down near Willmar, and that's where they stayed during the war.

BA: And he self-published this?

DM: Yes, in 1972 or so.

BA: [reading] April 1972.

DM: Right. And he loved comics, cartooning. We're talking comic books, cartoons, everything. And he loved it just as much as I did, which was really unusual at the time in the '70s to find that.

BA: You both were working at the nursing home?

DM: No, he wasn't working there. I don't know how I ran into him. But someone said, "Hey, you really should meet this guy. This guy loves comic books and cartooning as much as you do." I said okay.

BA: Finally.

DM: People would tolerate my love for it.

What's really interesting, Peter's brothers all went on to become award-winning people for the duck stamp. And Peter's the only one in the family who didn't win the duck stamp. Instead he became a mystery writer. *Sweet Blood* and *Godless*.

BA: [making connection] He's still in the area. He teaches at the Loft [Literary Center].

DM: Yeah, that's him. And he started out as a cartoonist. His family was—all these visual things. But see, cartooning is like poetry. It's a really different type of thing. What you're doing is you're talking about emotional feeling. But with cartooning you're usually talking about words and visual symbols, which makes it rare for people to understand. People have a hard enough time understanding poetry.

So my god when you start talking about cartooning! You're talking about poetry and visual symbolism. That's why the greatest cartoonists are those who master and create their own visual things. Schulz. Crumb. They create their own visual language. Even though it has a lot of representational art in it, it does it.

Peter was one of the few people I knew in the '70s. I tried to publish a few things too.

I had a thing called *Blasphemy Funnies*. I should find them around here. I did some things.

I don't want to call myself an historian because I ended up—someone else called me that. I ended up wanting to know, who are these people? How did it all come about? Things I kept tripping over. I'd trip over the Disney artist story. Then I would find out that there's somebody—well, you know all the Disney artists. What do you know about...? "David, you know about the Disney artists, don't you?" I'd say, "No."

"Most of them all took a mail order class from Charles Bartholomew through the Federal School of Cartooning and Illustration, Art Instruction."

"I didn't know that."

magazines. So this became a really big place for newspapers because there was all this cheap pulp. There were a lot of openings.

Frank King just graduated from Tomah High School [in Tomah, Wisconsin]. He was selling art materials. The guy who was working as the traveling salesman said, "You know you should really go somewhere."

[King] said, "I'm afraid to go somewhere."

"Well, go to Minneapolis. There are tens of newspapers."

So he came here around 1901 and worked for the *Minneapolis Times*. Started up. He then was befriended by Charles Bartholomew even though he worked at a rival newspaper. But all these people would come and have coffee and stuff.

See this is the thing. What people don't talk about is the synergy of all these people who know each other. What we'll end up doing with the history thing is we'll talk about Charles Schulz's story but then we won't talk about all the people involved in his life.

One of the things that happens: cartoonists are just like everybody else. We become vain and we want people to think we're self-taught and that we don't have any things [formal art schooling]. So people will talk about their influences and very rarely will they talk about all the people who are around and how there's a whole thing taking place.

BA: Mentoring.

DM: Mentoring. So Frank King, he stayed here till 1905 and then he went to Chicago and went to the Chicago Art Institute.

BA: Why was Frank King's Minneapolis stay important?

DM: He went from...he got the confidence to go to art school and then be able to go and put yourself.... There were a lot of people who went to Chicago to become cartoonists. They didn't make it and they ended up...it was a hard thing to become a Chicago cartoonist.

CC Beck went there. It didn't work. He ended up painting lampshades and then coming back here and getting a job with **Fawcett** Publications. Then he went on to become the Captain Marvel creator.

BA: So Frank King got work in Minneapolis.

DM: He got work and experience. He transformed himself.

What happens is people come here and become transformed. Carl Barks came here as a part-time contributor, a cartoonist, for the *Calgary Eye Opener* and a chicken farmer. He works here and he transforms himself into a professional cartoonist and then is able to move on to professionalism.

BA: What was Carl Barks doing here?

DM: He was working part-time out in Oregon for the *Calgary Eye Opener*, which was a Canadian humor magazine like *Captain Billy's Whizbang*. The **Fawcett** people, to crush

competition, they bought up the *Calgary Eye Opener* and moved it here to the Twin Cities. It ended up being a divorce settlement with one of the Fawcett brothers. His wife Annette Fawcett, she got the *Calgary Eye Opener*. She bought it with the money from her divorce. She lived at the Radisson Hotel [Minneapolis] and then she ran it to the ground. We're talking 1931-35. She'd go in and take all the money from the paid cash thing.

Carl Barks ended up becoming the editor because everybody else was a drunk. He was the only one who wasn't a drunk.

Ed Summer was the current editor in 1931. He desperately said, "Give up your farming in Oregon and take the train and come to Minneapolis." And so he [Barks] became a professional cartoonist at that point. He lived at the Drexler Hotel. I have some photographs [of the Drexler]. It's still standing. It's over by the bandbox.

BA: How did you find out Carl Barks lived here?

DM: Uh, that became part of the legend and the narrative. Part of the narrative is he comes here and he goes from Minneapolis. Like all those other artists I was telling you about, they all moved. Everybody moved out of here in '35. All the artists. Even the pulp artists who worked for Fawcett moved out of here in '35.

This was the time our country was becoming centralized like in Europe. The political and economic and social things was to create big centers and get rid of small tiny places.

Chicago was able to hold its own but what happened was there was this incredible shift of publishing all the way up to New York. It just moved. And then at one time, there used to be animation studios everywhere in the United States. Then the shift was—it was this big fight between New York and California and then finally California won the war of animation studios, in about '38-39 when the Fleischer people went under in 1940. You had everything shift.

If you wanted to work in animation you had to go to California. If you wanted to work in publishing of any kind you had to be in New York. Up until then there were these little communities. In 1935 you had this big shift. The whole centralization of our country with everything.

BA: How did that shift alter the Twin Cities?

DM: People had to leave. If you wanted to do something you had to leave because Fawcett took their printing presses, the editorial thing. It all moved to the east coast outside of New York.

BA: So the Twin Cities was not the place to come anymore?

DM: No. Not at all. If you wanted to learn, right, you could go to the schools. The predecessor of MCAD. Up until then, to get a job was really hard. The newspapers became stagnant. The newspapers were down to three or four of them in the Twin Cities. Or ten or so. So that it was hard to get work. You had to follow it. That's what the people did in '35.

I'm guessing between 25-30 people leaving the Twin Cities to go and work in these places.

BA: How does Frank Wing fit in?

DM: He started out for an editorial cartoonist for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

BA: He's St. Paul. These others seem to be from Minneapolis.

DM: There are lots of people in St. Paul. The **Karp** brothers were from St. Paul. The Karp brothers—I have their address on my website. There were three of them: **Shubert**... And they just did...their output, we won't even try to start talking about it.

They went to St. Thomas. They're St. Thomas graduates. And also one of the brothers is a graduate of MCAD. There's a bunch of MCAD people.

That was what was so frustrating, when I'd go to MCAD and try to talk to people and find out. They had no idea who the history things was. Like talking about...I was at this, there were building sculptures, the Linus, *Peanuts* characters. And I just by chance—a woman by the name of **Ken Cope**, whom I was talking to, was making one of these. And next to her was Linus Maurer, who everyone knows was the namesake of Linus van Pelt.

And he was there and I started talking to him and he was telling me these...yeah, my best friend in high school was Wally Wood. I was like what? He was like, "Yeah, we were best friends." He said no one else would talk to him [Wood] because he had come from...their family had moved all over, from Michigan, all this stuff. And one of his years was at West High School.

And because he [Maurer] was also a wanderer, he was from Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, and his family—so the two of them loved art. And they were also not part of the scene in high school. So the two of them became very close friends.

When they graduated, Linus went into the navy and Wally Wood went into the merchant marines. Wood then also after the merchant marines he went into the army as a paratrooper. And in '47-48 he got out and used his GI Bill like Linus did. Linus used his GI Bill to go to MCAD. And that's how they ran into each other again.

Then it turns out, I found out, he [Maurer] said, "You know Charles Schulz went to MCAD." And I go, "What?" He says, "Yeah, he used his GI Bill also. He went at night because he would have less contact with people by going at night."

Schulz had a hard time being with people. He was a very shy person.

BA: You met him.

DM: He was just incredible. He's an enigma. He's like Walt Disney. You get to know then. But he protects himself quite a bit.

Schulz was another...he created a mystique that the only art instruction he had was through Art Instruction, the mail order thing, which turned out wasn't true because he also had the University of Minnesota extension class.

BA: How did you find that out?

DM: David Michaelis, the writer of the Schulz book [biography *Schulz and Peanuts*]—there's a chapter where he talks about him doing that. That was one of the reasons Michaelis got in trouble with the [Schulz] family was because he started debunking all these legends about Schulz that Schulz had told people.

It turns out for a couple of months Schulz was taking night classes at MCAD. That was never part of the legend of Charles Schulz or the myth. You find out all these real interesting things.

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Linus was the only one of the three guys [Maurer, Wood, Schulz] who graduated from MCAD.

BA: That's then why MCAD is aware of Maurer as a grad and not the others?

DM: Well, also he was very proud of it. There's a thing that happens with MCAD.

My roommate, Steve **Fastner**, he also went to MCAD for two years. What happens is all the people who go there, unless you graduate from there, people don't identify you, even though you were in a lot of things. Like Peter Hautman, right? You get this incredible influence. Peter's first thing in publishing was at MCAD.

But this stuff gets forgotten unless you graduate from an institution. That's a sad thing that we don't see that as a connection, as a very important thing. Even if you're there three or four months.

One of the people from MCAD will tell you—one of the earliest ghosts [ghost artists/writers] was *Superman*—is Wayne Boring.

Wayne Boring grew up in **Verdi**, Minnesota, down by Luverne, Minnesota, on the South Dakota border. His father was the post master down there. For some reason they had money. When went to the big art school in Minneapolis. Wayne went to the Minneapolis School of Art; he went to MCAD. What happened was, he'd never been in a big city his entire life. He wrote me a letter in the '70s and then I lost it.

Wayne Boring told me he was this 18-year-old kid who graduated from high school, he's living in the big city. Falls in love with the dancing girls at the Orpheum Theatre. RKO has live shows before the movies and he ends up flunking out of MCAD because he's spending all his time at the Orpheum.

Because, hey, he's like from this little small town. We're talking 1918, about 1922. So then he flunks out of there. He works though. He has enough skills. He's the art

director for the Atlas Lumber Company over in North Minneapolis. He's drawing their brochures. I'll send you the address in North Minneapolis.

He worked at Atlas as a young adult, we're talking 18-19. Same age as Frank King. Nineteen years old. All these nineteen year olds running around Minneapolis and St. Paul changing things.

And then Boring then, after he gets enough, he goes to Cleveland and the Cleveland Art Institute and that's when he runs into Siegel and Shuster. And that's when they find out he's working for Big Chief Wahoo as a ghost and then they hire him as one of the eight ghosts working on *Superman* in the 1930s.

They [Siegel and Shuster] met him during *Superman* [after *Superman* was already being published].

BA: So that's how he got into comics?

DM: Was through that. Yeah. Comic strips and comic books.

BA: How did Siegel and Shuster meet Boring?

DM: Well, they were headhunters. They would run around and find people. That's how they found all these guys like Cassidy and all these incredible people. And then they had an old one-room place where they put all these drawing tables.

The quality of the *Superman* comic books and comic strip would go up and down and people at National—who were publishing *Superman*—were really upset because of the changing quality. How Superman would be very stout and then he'd be tall, skinny.

Well, they go down there. They're knocking on the door and there's eight guys with drawing tables all crammed into one room. And it's not Joe Shuster who's drawing Superman but it's Wayne Boring and seven other guys. And their drawing styles are all different. And Shuster's not even trying to do it.

So they get angry and they demand that they all move to New York. They shut down the little shop they have in Cleveland, Ohio, and they all have to move out there and do that. Pretty soon they found out, you know that? They could be working for us rather than Siegel and Shuster. And that's when the whole thing where they busted up their studio and they hired them.

Wayne Boring went from working for Siegel and Shuster to working for National Periodicals directly.

BA: He still wasn't credited, though.

DM: Well, he was credited when he did the newspaper strip. '60 and '70s. They started giving him credit in the '60s.

We're talking 1939-1967 he did *Superman*. He would do both: comic strips and books.

BA: Did he ever come back to MN?

DM: No. He never did. I guess he was—the way people described him—he wore an ascot. He called himself the hip cat that started it all. He was an abrasive artist type. When the art styles changed in like '67, he was fired. He was told to leave. They didn't want anything to do with him. He went down to Florida.

For a while he was working for Hal Foster doing the backgrounds for *Prince Valiant*. He was competing with Wally Wood for that job. Wally Wood was having a hard time finding work also. Both of them had competed to take over the strip. When Hal Foster retired, he was supposed to turn it over to one of those guys. Instead, **Colin Murphy** or something got it. Because he [Foster] was afraid Wally Wood would get too creative and too imaginative and wouldn't stick with the format, making it look medieval. He had the same fear [with Wayne Boring] that the castles would look too much like Krypton.

These poor guys, their success sabotaged who they were. Wayne Boring ended up working as a bank guard in Florida. That's how he ended his career. He died in the '70s.

BA: How did you get a letter from Wayne Boring?

DM: In one of the comic magazines—he offered to sell his artwork or do sketches and things. I wrote him and asked about living in Minneapolis. So he sent me all these things.

A lot of these people are really good about talking... A lot cartoonists won't have anything to do... There's a *New Yorker* cartoonist by the name of **Dean Vantor** who just died a few years ago and he would not even talk about it. If he found out you were interested in comic books, he wouldn't even talk to you. He'd hang up on the phone and burn up your letters if you did. Because a *New Yorker* cartoonist would be tainted by anybody who was involved with comic books. A horrible thing.

Britt, there's this horrible pecking order in comics. And still the two big top things. The top one is to be a *New Yorker* cartoonist. The second then is to be a syndicated newspaper cartoonist. Then it goes down from there.

For the longest time there were very few people who broke it. Like Dan Jurgens is one of the first people who had a choice to go anywhere. People would ask him, "Why are you working for a newspaper."

"No, I love comic books."

He had the choice to do all these other things but he chose to stay in comic books. This was an incredible thing because up until 1980 the whole idea with comic book artists was to try to figure out a way so that you could become a newspaper cartoonist. Every single comic book artist—Schulz wanted to do comic books but then he got pushed into newspaper things because that was one of the few opportunities.

In fact he did do comic books. He did *Topix*.

One of the first things he ever did. There was another Disney animator. His name as Roman Baltes. Maybe you've heard of him? He worked for Disney in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. He then moved to St. Paul. He was the art editor for the **Catheletic** Guild. They published a thing called *Topix*. It was one of the few local comics things. They published comics that competed with [garbled word] comics. It was one of the few things they allowed in Catholic schools were these comic books.

They did an anti-Communist comic book called *Is This Tomorrow?* Which was about America under Communism. And Charles Schulz lettered all of it.

BA: He was living in MN?

DM: Right. It was the very first thing he got after getting out of service when he returned in 1946 from the US Army. One of the things he did was going back to this incredible shadow Bart has—Bartholomew.

Schulz comes back. He's desperately looking for work. So he goes to Charles Bartholomew's office at the Art Instruction place. One of the things they used to do, they used to have a job service. They used to get you jobs. He says, "Okay, I have a friend named Roman Baltes. He's my pal. He'll go get you a job." So they hired him as a letterer of the comic books that the **Catheletic** Guild was publishing at the time.

BA: When did Bart die?

DM: 1949. It was just before, I think Schulz was working there or about to get a job there as an instructor. Frank Wing was still alive then.

BA: Can you talk about Frank Wing.

DM: I think he may have been born in Iowa. He was about 90 or so when he... [Produces a folder and looks through it.] Yeah, look at this. This is him.

BA: That's Frank Wing?

DM: Yeah. He worked for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* from about 1911 to about '37.

BA: Why is he significant?

DM: Bartholomew liked him a lot. And when he no longer had a career in newspaper publishing, Bartholomew hired him as an instructor at Art Instructor. At the time, all the mail order correspondence went to Frank Wing that Schulz was doing in the '30s—'38 or '37.

And he's the one who told Schulz, "You should concentrate on your drawing of children."

Schulz wanted to be an adventure thing. None of it survives. But he tried to do a whole bunch of adventure like *Terry and the Pirates*-like strip. He even drew an entire issue of *Classics Illustrated* of the book *Beau Geste*. He drew the whole thing

when he was like 18 years old and mailed it to *Classics Illustrated* hoping they'd publish it. He never got a letter back from them.

He really wanted to do adventure strips.

Frank King's the one who said, "Hey, your forte is children. Concentrate on drawing children. Your adult stuff is mediocre, but your children are great." In fact he even gave him a C minus in the course.

BA: You got this from the David Michaelis biography?

DM: No, this was a thing that even Schulz would parade all the time as a badge of honor that all he got was a C minus. He wanted to say that, "Everybody thought I sucked as a cartoonist." But I proved that all wrong.

One of the background stories Sparky would tell—Sparky would talk about how everyone discouraged him as a young artist, which wasn't true. Everybody encouraged him as much as they could. It was the opposite. Everybody really went to bat for him. His mother, his father. His father went into debt paying for the mail order [cartooning class].

This was when he was in high school.

BA: When they were living above O'Gara's [Selby and Snelling in St. Paul]?

DM: Around there. In the 1930s. Two-three hundred dollars. And they'd send the debt people banging on the doors. I mean we're talking 300 dollars during the Depression. That's a heck of a lot of ten-cent haircuts.

BA: His dad was a barber right on that same block.

DM: Right in O'Gara's. He was right there.

[Frank Wing and Charles Schulz] worked together. They had desks right across from each other. They'd talk and everything and even then he kept saying, "Give up on the adventure strips. Don't do an adventure strip. Focus on doing these kid drawings."

Because Frank King himself was also—his strip was children.

BA: Frank King did a single panel cartoon.

DM: Yeah and he also did an editorial cartoon.

BA: Duane Barnhart had a collection of Frank Wing art.

DM: It's called *Yesterdays*. Here it is, right here. Here's the Frank Wing file.

Duane Barnhart and I—why we were going to create an institute was we wanted to have a place where we could get rid of all our cartooning books, donate all our cartooning books.

We would have people like Jerry van Amerongen³--everybody would have these stacks and they had no place to put them.

One of the books I have on Charles Bartholomew was actually in a book sale that the Minnesota Historical Society got rid of in the 1950s. They got rid of all of Charles Bartholomew's cartooning books. So if you would go there, they would have no idea who he is. The only they have is if maybe you go on the microfilm. The same thing with all these people.

BA: [referring to a document in the folder] It looks like Frank Wing went to Chicago after Minnesota.

DM: And then he came back.

BA: He published *Fotygraft Album*. It says here that it sold 100,000 copies.

DM: I have some of them.

BA: And the *Fambly Album*. Was that before his success in St. Paul?

DM: The same time. Parallel.

He was an incredibly well known cartoonist.

BA: No one knows about him now.

DM: No. That's the same thing with Charles Bartholomew. Charles Bartholomew—we're talking a career of 100s of people.

BA: It says here Wing worked for the *St. Paul Dispatch*.

DM: Do you want to talk about Fawcett?

BA: Online there's a mention of a Frank Wing house in St. Paul.

DM: Yes, that's his. That's the one that's in the book about Minneapolis and St. Paul architecture? That one house is Frank Wing's house. They have a photograph of it. You can find that house easily. That's one of the few things left of Frank Wing is the house and then the fact that he was Charles Schulz's mentor.

His artwork alone—his drawing is fantastic. I showed you that self-portrait.

[Hands over a comic] This is the thing [Charles Schulz Communist comic] I was telling you about.

BA: Oh, *Is This Tomorrow?*

DM: He also drew two or three panels of it. This is one of the comic books.

BA: *Topix*. Is he cited in here?

³ Minneapolis cartoonist Jerry van Amerongen, who lives in the Kenwood neighborhood, created the *Ballard Street* comic strip.

DM: No, they give very few [artist] credits.

BA: Where did you get this from?

DM: I used to have 1000s of comics.

BA: This is *Topix Part II, the Life of Christ*. What year is this? September 1947. It's published by the **Catheletic** Guild.

DM: They were huge. They published all kinds of books and magazines. They published the *Catholic Digest*. Father Raymond Gales, of the Minneapolis/St. Paul archdiocese.

And here's more on Roman.

BA: Roman Baltes.

DM: He's another one who mentored Schulz. Schulz had all kinds of mentors. Stories sound better...one of the great myths is Walt Disney. At one point it was the Disney Brothers Animation Studios. But they thought it would sell better as Walt Disney, rather than Roy and Walt Disney, the Disney Brothers.

So you have to create myths and things that make you more sellable.

BA: It says Roman Baltes gave Charles Schulz his first job at the **Catheletic** Guild of St. Paul. And then later on Baltes went to work at the St. Paul Pioneer Press as an artist in their promotion department.

Earlier in his career he worked for Walt Disney as an animator.

DM: He was one of the animators for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Just like all these guys like Barks.

That story alone, how Disney is so dependent on Minnesota cartoonists. We're talking a huge story just there. There's so much going on it's really hard to tell the story. That's why I was so grateful for your book⁴ is that it cut the story down. You started with '84 or so.

We're talking 1889 to 1984, then.

BA: I don't know that anybody else has the exact knowledge that you do.

DM: Before they moved the Art Instruction thing, Duane Barnhart and I went over there and we wanted to talk to their archivist, look at their files. They opened this closet and it's all full of beat-up old newsletters. They used to publish newsletters.

You were asking about the manual that Art Instruction—**Ernie Bushmiller**. *Nancy and Sluggo*, which is considered one of the iconic comic strips. Especially for

⁴ *Superheroes, Strip Artists, & Talking Animals: Minnesota's Contemporary Cartoonists* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2011) written by Britt Aamodt, art from over 20 Minnesota cartoonists.

hipsters. It's the absolute hipster comic is *Nancy and Sluggo*. You're talking about esoteric.

BA: Fawcett Publications...

DM: Fawcett starts out in Robbinsdale, MN.

BA: Why start there?

DM: Cheap. **Wilford Fawcett** was a captain in the US military in World War I. They were actually from Winnipeg, Canada. And the family ended up down here in Minnesota.

Winnipeg, Canada—like Hal Foster. And they all ended up down here.

Robbinsdale had cheap office space. **Wilford**—later he called himself Billy—**Wilford Fawcett**, what he did was, he took joke magazines. They were the Playboy of their time. This really off-color stuff that people in decent society wouldn't be caught dead with a copy of *Captain Billy's Whizbang*. He took these horrible jokes and things and he would sell them in hotel lobbies. He would sell them to VFWs.

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And people would love these jokes. Here, I got you this really bad joke, traveling salesman and his daughter jokes. That's what it was. They would be in there and he would steal them. Pretty soon he was making all this money, so he had to have an office in Robbinsdale. Pretty soon he's not only selling them in the Twin Cities but all over the country, all the veteran's organizations are carrying copies of *Captain Billy's Whizbang*.

This is post World War I. We're talking 1920s. In the 1920s it catches on; they're selling millions of copies. It gets so big they have to move down to Minneapolis to the **Sextant/Sexton** Building. Between '35-38 they moved out [of that building and went to New York]. And they had their printing presses there in the **Sextant/Sexton** Building.

Captain Billy got all these artists and writers from Charles Bartholomew because they had all these people. People would come through town looking for work. One of them was a guy by the name of **Norm Saunders**.

Maybe you haven't heard of **Norm Saunders** but you've heard of *Mars Attacks*. He created the cards. He's a self portrait of him. He's from **Roseau**, MN, way up there on the Canadian border. Warroad? That area. His father was a Presbyterian minister up there and he took the mail order class from Charles Bartholomew. And he was on his way to go to the Chicago Art Institute, Norm Saunders was, so he thought he would stop in at *Captain Billy's Whizbang's* offices in Robbinsdale and make a little money before he got to Chicago. And they go, "Wow, come and do some illustrations." So here's a few drawings.

Okay, guess what? He never leaves. They hire as a full-time illustrator and he starts doing this kind of stuff [hands over a magazine].

BA: *Modern Mechanix*. Fawcett Publications.

DM: These are his pulp covers.

Fawcett Publications, they bought out Signet Paperbacks. They published all this incredible stuff. This is all from here.

Norm stayed here and instead of becoming an art student at the Chicago Institute of Art. He stayed here and did this and hung out with five other pulp artists, guys like **Alan Anderson, Ralph Carlson, Bognere**. All these people that did the classic images for the pulps. We're talking five major pulp artists all from here. All took the mail order class from Charles Bartholomew.

BA: Why did they stay here?

DM: People were desperate. 1929. A lot of people started working there before the Depression. You would just hear about it. People would say, "Wow, gee, Norm, you really draw pretty...Well, on your trip down to Chicago, why don't you stop into this place in Robbinsdale?" They knew **Captain Billy's Whizbang** existed so he said, "Okay, maybe I can sell some drawings."

And at first he just touched up some covers for them. And then they said, "Hey, we want to hire you." And they hired him. He lived down the street here, on 1915 Lagoon Avenue, Norm Saunders did before he moved to New York. All these guys did. Bartholomew lived over here on 2715 Irving Avenue.

BA: How do you know their street addresses?

DM: When I get bored, I go down to the Minneapolis City Library and go through their microfilms of the city directories. And all that information is there. That's where you find where Frank King lived. You know where 24th and Nicollet is? That big insurance company building. Next door, that lot is where Frank King's house was, where Frank King lived.

BA: The *Gasoline Alley* creator.

DM: Of course of all the apartment buildings they tear down, they tear down that one. Some buildings are still around.

BA: So, essentially, **Captain Billy's Whizbang** gave jobs to people.

DM: Yes, and then you have the synergy of Bartholomew and Captain Billy. So then if you didn't get educated through that...some of these pulp artists also went to MCAD too. So you had this synergy that you wouldn't believe.

BA: Who were some of the MCAD grad pulp artists?

DM: **Boutiniere**. He went there. He ended up becoming a Disney artist. He went to MCAD.

When I try to tell the story of MCAD, my head starts...all this stuff starts happening and I can't get a real good narrative. Because I keep thinking about this person, that person...

BA: So many of them came from MCAD?

DM: Yeah, right, and so many of them came back and forth.

Wanda Gag. She did a children's newspaper strip for the *Minneapolis Journal*. In fact I threw it—I had a Xerox of it and I threw it out yesterday. It's in her biography. They have a copy of the strip. But she drew this little newspaper strip of two little kids in Mother Goose Land while she was a student at MCAD.

She went to MCAD and she also went to a school in St. Paul that taught art. I can't think of the name of it offhand.

BA: CC Beck?

DM: He's like Norm Saunders. He's a theological offspring. He's the son of a pastor. He was born in **Zumbrota/Zumbroda**, MN and then they moved up here to Minneapolis, he and his brother. He was a wild guy. I think he went to the University of Minnesota extension class and then he went to the Chicago Art Institute and couldn't find work and ended up back here.

Yeah, a lot of people from Minnesota and a lot of people traveling through here to get to the Chicago Art Institute. You know the story of Hal Foster?

Hal Foster around 1920 or 1922—they were barely making a living, he and his wife and his children up in Winnipeg as an illustrator. He really thought if he polished his skills by going to the Chicago Art Institute, his worth as a sellable artist would increase.

Here they found out they had enough money to either go to tuition [for the art institute] or to take the train. They had to do one or the other.

So what he did was a 3,000-mile bike trip from Winnipeg to the Chicago Art Institute in thirty days through Minnesota. It's in his book, Hal Foster's book. He talks about being beaten up by people, thinking they [Foster and his best friend, his traveling companion] were Boy Scouts and trying to steal everything. In Minnesota. It was really rough. They had to finally take their bikes and throw them on the back of a train to get down here.

BA: He and his wife?

DM: He and his best friend who was also an art student. His wife stayed with the children and then they went down to the Chicago Institute of Art.

That's one of the things I like to talk about is the transformative nature of Minnesota. Even people passing through like Hal Foster it has an effect. It has this weird thing

either good or bad. You talk about people's experiences of MCAD. They're both good or bad but there's a story there.

Everybody has the Wally Wood story.

BA: More on CC Beck?

DM: CC Beck was like a lot of people who couldn't make it as a Chicago cartoonist so he came back here and worked for Fawcett. He worked doing diagrams. He was part of the group that moved [to New York]. He didn't become really big until they moved to New York and they became [a comic book publisher]...they took one of their staff artists.

He had never done comic books in his life. Their comic books had only existed for maybe three or four years and they hooked him up with a writer and the two of them created Captain Marvel together. They wanted to have their own version of Superman like everybody did.

BA: It's a Minnesota story, even if it happened in New York.

DM: Yeah, it is. A lot of people think of Captain Marvel having more of a Lake Wobegon feel to it than a Metropolis feel. The folksiness of Captain Marvel relates more to Garrison Keillor than it does to the New York feel.

BA: Did CC Beck rubs shoulders with the other Minnesota cartoonists?

DM: Yeah, he did. He was friends with Norm Saunders and all these people. The [Sexton/Sextant](#) Building was not that far from the [Drexler Hotel](#). A few blocks away. It's not far from the Art Instruction school, Federal Cartooning.

When you're talking about connecting all these people, there's one living thing here in the Twin Cities that I try to get people...when David Michaelis came here to work on the Schulz book. And I told him, if you want to touch history of all the Minnesota cartoonists who ever came through, you take the streetcar. The Lake Harriet streetcar, which everybody at one time took that. Schulz took that. Wayne Boring did. CC Beck. To go everywhere. The streetcar would take you over to Lake Harriet.

Even Carl Barks talks about taking the streetcar to go over to Lake Harriet. There are photographs of him. He used to go to Lake Harriet and Lake Calhoun on Sundays and row the canoes. And that was a big thing.

You would go to either of two places: you would go to Minnehaha Falls or you'd go to Lake Harriet. That's what people would do in the 1920s and 1930s.

BA: I've heard people went to Lake Minnetonka.

DM: That was until the 1920s and then they tore that big thing down.

One of the most famous black historians—WB Dubois—he worked as a busboy out on Lake Minnetonka at that big thing. And that was one of his things. So he rode that

streetcar that passed through here. So if you want to touch WB Dubois, you get on the Lake Harriet streetcar. Like Ward Kimball.

Did we talk about Ward Kimball?

He became an artist because of the Lake Harriet streetcar. He was a five year old child. He was born in Minneapolis. He had seen the streetcar and he drew this beautiful drawing of the Lake Harriet streetcar. And his grandmother who was a **Walrath**—her husband was one of the people who created Northwestern Hospital. Abbott-Northwestern. Ward Kimball's grandfather's was one of the founders. So they had a little money.

And she said, "Oh, he needs art lessons." So he had personal art lessons with Charles Bartholomew. Charles Bartholomew taught him how to draw because of this drawing of the Lake Harriet streetcar.

And then he became obsessed with trains. You know the trains they have at Disney World? They were all Ward Kimball's trains that he designed for Walt Disney. He's the guy who created **Jiminy Cricket** for Walt Disney.

Ward Kimball was an insane, crazy person. In fact when Walt Disney was suffering from heart attacks in the early-'50s and the doctor said, "Walt, you got to go and relax." And he walked around the hallways in the Disney Studios and the most relaxed person was Ward Kimball. He tried to figure out...Ward was the only one who wasn't suffering from a nervous breakdown, chain smoking, going crazy.

Turned out his hobby were trains. So for two months they left Disney Studios and took trains all over the United States and they ended up in Chicago at the Chicago International Expose of...it was the last collection of steam-driven engines in the 1950s. And they stopped there.

When they came back, they both bought themselves locomotives. Disney bought a scale one he ran in his backyard. Ward Kimball bought an actual...he had three operating locomotives in his backyard in California. It drove his neighbors nuts. He had to buy up all the land.

In fact this year—Kimball's wife just died. And they finally had to break up the trains and give them to...some of the California historical societies took the trains.

When they wanted to do the 100th anniversary of the Golden Spike, they needed to build trains. Ward Kimball was brought in and he designed recreations. And they built actual full models of the two trains where the spike [track] was put together...where the west and the east things together.

Every time you see a train in a Disney movie, that's Ward Kimball. Have you seen the *Great Train [Robbery?]*...that thing? That was Kimball who helped them find a train for it. When you see the animated movie, *The Wind in the Willows*, he went and designed...he did all the work so they would have a real British train and not an American one in *The Wind in the Willows* when Mr. Frog escapes on the train.

So that's being a Minnesotan again. Just being crazy like that. Being a crazy person.

BA: Wally Wood?

DM: [He was like] van Gogh, okay?

Wally Wood grew up in Menahga, Minnesota.

BA: The backwoods.

DM: His father was a lumberjack. But his mother was a schoolteacher. There was this huge war that went on. He was this short little guy. His father kept telling him that he was worthless and half a man. He would take this poor kid, he would take him to the lumberjack camps and make him work with the lumberjacks. And he was a weak [kid] and he'd rather draw.

What his mother would do, and his father hated her for doing it—in fact, they ended up getting divorced over a lot of things. She would take Wood's drawings and saddle stitch them with her sewing machine. In fact there are collections of his drawings.

BA: Where are they at?

DM: His brother has some of them and some are online in different books and things.

And so he really wanted to draw. That's all he wanted to do. He had this horrible thing of trying to be a man and a lumberjack. But he really wanted to be an artist. That's what he was. He was an artist.

He was drawing from the time he was three or four years old. His mother encouraged it; his father discouraged it because it wasn't a manly thing to do.

His father was a lumberjack and it was in the 1920s that the forests started to disappear. There was no work for his father. So they went all this places [looking for work] like Michigan. The family was destitute. And they move all over from Michigan to here. And they ended up back in Menahga and that didn't work.

And then finally they ended up down here in Minneapolis living with his mother's sister. He finished his thing [schooling] going to West High School and that's when he met Linus [Linus Maurer attended Sleepy Eye High School; Maurer and Wood met, according to Maurer, at MCAD].

But he worked for the **Kennedy Mayonnaise Company** being a mayonnaise packer. At one point he was living at the Y downtown. Then he joined the merchant marines hoping that would make him more manly. And he saw just horrible things while he was in the merchant marines.

BA: Was this during World War II?

DM: World War II. He was with the merchant marines and one of the freighters came upon—I won't tell the story. It's too gruesome. It's in the Wally Wood book if you want to read about it.

Anyhow he got back to the Twin Cities after he got out. And he was a paratrooper [after he left the merchant marines], the 1940s. Until 1946. He would draw the inside of those transport things that they had to transport the paratroopers. The inside of the planes. Those are the insides of all his spaceships. All the spaceships he draws are the inside of those things [WWII planes].

He's considered not only one of the greatest science fiction artists but an illustrator. He did a lot of illustrations for science fiction magazines. He was the one who changed the inside of spaceships. He'd make them look like the inside of submarines and things and make them look very practical looking. They weren't the real flunky like *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*, the inside of a spaceship looked like the inside of a bus.

He would take his experience and do that.

And then he comes back [from the war] and he uses his GI Bill to go to MCAD. And the legend of MCAD is that he went there and there was a woman instructor who complained about his women figures being too zaftig and that's why he quit, is that they were too zaftig, too full blown, too womanly. They didn't look like the models they were using. He would make them three times curvier than they were supposed to be. That's the legend. That's the story he would tell people when he'd talk with his friends. Only the Lord knows.

Like I said about Charles Schulz. Cartoonists create narratives to reinforce...

So then Wood went to New York and had the same experience. He also went to an art school. He went out to art school and only lasted three months there. And then he went from place to place looking for a job. Then he got a job as a letterer just like Schulz. Finally he connected with a couple artists and then the two of them finally got into the comic book industry.

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Then he worked as an apprentice to Will Eisner. People complained that his work was so technically superior to Eisner's own drawing. The did this thing where the Spirit goes to the moon and it was just incredible. And all the publishers and editors got upset because "This isn't cartooning."

The person who really complained was the writer Jules Pfeiffer. Jules Pfeiffer complained.

BA: He complained about Wood's work?

DM: Yeah, because...it's like the same thing that happened...you know the strip called *Sally Forth* that's done here? There's an artist named **Craig Macintosh**. **Craig Macintosh** worked with Greg Howard and Greg Howard is a local lawyer, who for the heck of it decided to do this strip. He was a bored lawyer. The strip catches on. And it's real primitive drawing. It's like *Dilbert*.

He starts making lots of money at it. So he hires one of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune staff artists Craig **Macintosh** to take it over. Well Craig is a gifted artist.

Well, people started writing in nasty letters, Britt and Barb [he's addressing the interviewers]. Did you write that? [Write a complaint?]

BS: I didn't write it but I thought about it. I liked the original.

DM: People wrote in and complained. And he had to switch hands and start drawing it with his left hand so he didn't use his good hand and he had to change the artwork back to the Greg Howard style.

And Greg is a lawyer and what he did is, oh God, he created this heresy. He would tell all the guys—Jerry van Amerongen and all that—how to negotiate their contracts with the syndicate. The syndicates got upset. "Where the hell did you people find a goddamn lawyer?" And it turned out it was Greg Howard giving these guys advice on how to do their contracts, King Features and all this stuff.

He lives in Kenwood. He was a lawyer, a corporate lawyer. Who got bored of doing law stuff and starting drawing the strip.

BA: Jerry van Amerongen lives in the Kenwood neighborhood too, doesn't he?

DM: Yes, he does. He's friends with him. These guys would all get together at Lucia's [a restaurant in Uptown] and talk about how to... Jerry was getting screwed by the syndicate because he didn't realize he didn't own the rights to—he did a strip called *The Neighborhood*. He didn't realize that he didn't get any money from the coffee cups, postcards and T-shirts. And they wouldn't give him any money from it.

So, he [Greg] says, "Why don't you just go and leave the syndicate." That's when *Ballard Street* [Van Amerongen's later strip] got created, was so that Jerry could get a piece of the T-shirts. He makes just as much money off...in fact, some of the people make more from the merchandizing than they do the [strips]. Same thing with *Star Wars*. George Lucas made money off the merchandizing than he did the actual movies.

And so that's a real big thing. Greg Howard. So a lot of cartoonists in town would go to Greg for advice and he'd give it free, wouldn't charge anything. He'd tell them, "Hey, this contract, it sucks."

BA: Did Minnesota have an influence on Wally Wood?

DM: Oh God, yes. He's a Finlander. His father is English but his mother is a Finlander. So he has the crazy, insane things of a Finn. The people who take their clothes off and have saunas and roll in the snow. In fact his town, the town where Wally Wood is from, is the town where Saint **Orho/Erho** is from. You know the legend of Saint Orho?

Saint Orho was created by a bunch of Finlanders living up in Minnesota to grate and upset the Irish-Americans. What they did was create a phony saint called Saint

Orho/Erho. The day before Saint Patrick's Day, they claimed that Saint Orho/Erho had chased the grasshoppers out of Finland. Instead of the snakes being chased out of Ireland. And so they had this wonderful holiday the day before St. Patrick's Day and it would upset the Irish.

It was this weird sense of Finnish humor that Wally Wood had. This idea of tweaking people. That comes from being a Finlander and also coming from Minnesota. That's why he was a natural for *MAD Magazine*. That strange, impish, troll-like behavior.

BA: Who was the guy who wrote the Wood biography? Did you know him?

DM: A little bit. He borrowed some material from me. There are two of them. There is Bob Stewart and then there is David [last name?]. One is history and one is an artistic appreciation. They had access to Wood's brother who was still alive.

You should know this. There's an art scholarship for Wally Wood.

Did you know there are five or six scholarships that are done [associated with] Minnesota cartoonists?

Everyone knows there's a Charles Schulz scholarship. There's the Wally Wood one. George **Buzza**, the Buzza Building down the street. He has a \$10,000 a year art scholarship at Cornell University for anybody who wants to do it. Another one is at St. Cloud State University. There was a professor there that used to teach English who then became a cartoonist by the name of Professor Ralph **Hamel/Heimdahl/Heimdal**. He did Bugs Bunny and all this stuff. Here's his folder.

And here's a scholarship at St. Cloud State for people taking art. And then you have Ken Haig who was a sports newspaper cartoonist who did sports cartoons for the *Sports Gazette*. And he left a scholarship in St. Paul for any St. Paul student who wanted to go into art.

BS: And there's a Curt Swan one.

DM: That's what I mean. There's all this stuff. I can't keep track. That's why I partner with Duane Barnhart. Duane Barnhart and I do a lot of things together. And it was Duane who got me classified through the Minnesota Arts Council as an arts council as an art historian, so I did three artist in residencies as an art historian. Duane went and said, "This guy...this guy over here!"

So then the Arts Council went and recognized me as an art historian. So I'm able to do that. So when we do things at the Phipps Center, when we do gallery stuff then they're able to use my credentials.

So like the last one. Duane just did a thing a year ago. Did a thing up in Garrison, a gallery show up there about there.

BA: He did one up in Aitkin.

DM: Yeah, that's the one I'm talking about. At the Jaques Center. Tom Richmond was there.

BA: Linus Maurer and Charles Schulz—want to talk about them? You met Linus?

DM: Like I said I met him at the Linus statue thing [in St. Paul, when the city unveiled its *Peanuts'* Linus statue]. He's a real...he's still kicking around. He's still working. They're still doing gallery shows of him. This is a photo of him I found on the Internet; it blows me away. Isn't that incredible. Geez. I mean he's still...

He grew up in Sleepy Eye. The family moved here. He went to West High School. Then he came back here after he got out of the US Navy to use his GI Bill. While he was at MCAD—down here on 28th and Hennepin there's a mortuary and he lived upstairs on the third floor of the mortuary when he went to MCAD.

And he talked about—when Wally Wood was still here, he paled around with Wally Wood when they were at MCAD. Wally Wood had an apartment on Franklin and Nicollet, around in there.

One time they were drinking at some of the local bars around there and the snow was so bad, Wood had Linus stay overnight. And all night he kept hearing this thump. All night long he kept hearing thump, thump, thump. And finally Linus asked, "Wally, what's going on here? What are you doing?"

"I'm just throwing my boots."

"What do you mean?"

The rats kept coming out and he kept throwing his boots at the rats that kept coming out of the apartment on Franklin Avenue.

Years later. Linus then goes to MCAD. He graduates. One of the first jobs he's offered is to go over to the Art Institute to take over for Charles Schulz, who's getting ready to leave because he's already a successful person. This is '52-53. This is after the success of *Peanuts*.

What they want to do—they bring him over so the two of them...so Schulz can train Linus in. Instead, Schulz finally finds someone who understands cartooning, has as much passion for cartooning as he does. And they start having a good time.

So Schulz starts dragging his departure from Art Instruction. In fact one of the things that happen—it must have been '54, when Dwight Eisenhower...there's a great photograph. Dwight Eisenhower was running for president and came through. There's a photo of them all out there by Dwight Eisenhower's car. He's riding in an open convertible and all the staff from Art Instruction is out there. They're just having a great old time. And finally when Schulz moved he took Linus out to California to work with him, not too far from Santa Rosa.

BA: He took Linus out there to work on Schulz's stuff or Linus's own work?

DM: To do his own thing.

He took three or four people with him to work on strips. A couple of people. There's a sports strip. I can't remember the guy. But there was a guy from Art Instruction who did a sports strip that he and Schulz did together.

Schulz also did a bunch of comic books. Schulz didn't do the comic books. The other guy did the comic books but Schulz did all the newspaper strips.

BA: Did Linus ever visit Wally Wood in New York?

DM: Yes, he did and that's my next story. Linus got his own job doing a syndicated cartoon [*Old Harrigan*].

But anyhow, he goes out there to visit him [Wood]. And he [Wood] wants to get Linus to work for *MAD Magazine*. He's taken around the offices, like 58th, 57th. Linus didn't realize this: if he goes to work for *MAD Magazine* his income is in half. And that these guys are barely getting paid what syndicated cartoonists are getting for doing just a one panel cartoon.

He said it broke his heart telling Wood, "I'm going to have to move to New York? From Santa Rosa, California? And work at half the amount?" It would have been a hardship to work for *MAD Magazine*.

People forget about that. Even though *MAD* was selling millions of things, these guys were not like making...in fact, most of them, like **Mort Drucker and Jack Davis** had to work on album [?] covers for magazines.

One of the few times Wally Wood had money, he did some animation and some advertising art for Alka Seltzer. He drew these crazy little creatures that were inside people's stomachs, causes stomachaches. Wood made all this money off it but he couldn't take the pressure of working with Madison Avenue so he went back to working for *MAD* and working for comic books because the pressure wasn't as bad.

So he [Linus] goes out and stays with Wally Wood in New York in one of his apartments and all night long he's hearing these clunks again but these are mechanical clunks. It's not boots being thrown at rats. Every now and then it's crash, bang, bang; crash, bang, bang.

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And so he says, "Wally, what's going on?"

And he says, "Oh, Linus, c'mere, c'mere." Opens this room. This room is filled with armor. Knight armor. A streetcar comes and knocks the suits of armor and that's the noise he's hearing.

One of the things he'd do, when Wally Wood had money, he'd buy suits of armor, just like Charles **Adaams** of the *Adaams Family* did. They would buy suits of armor and weapons. Wood had all kinds of weapons and armor. If he did something he'd

have to do it authentically. If you drew a rocket ship, it had to look like a rocket ship. It would have to look like a rocket ship that would actually work. That's why science fiction fans went absolutely crazy over his art work, his incredible detail and the believability. Even though it was a fantasy rocket ship, it was believable. It wasn't like this...like Buck Rogers' rockets looked like old boilers, heating boilers. His looked like they could actually work and take people to the moon.

BA: The Linus Maurer strip was *Old Harrigan*.

DM: *Old Harrigan*, yeah.

The sad thing about comic strips is—unless they get a TV show like *The Addams Family* or *Dennis the Menace* they don't appear in every town and every city. You can have a wonderful strip. Your parents may not see your newspaper strip because their town newspaper may not carry it.

So a lot of comic strip [artists] could be really wealthy but they wouldn't be well known because their strip didn't appear in Chicago.

What Schulz had going for him, Schulz became the world's "most well-loved cartoonist" was the fact of the TV special, the Christmas thing, and the merchandizing and the paperbacks. Fox had published those paperbacks. Those paperbacks appeared everywhere.

Same with *MAD Magazine*. *MAD Magazine* had paperback reprints. I swear, every school library had the *MAD* paperbacks, the EC paperbacks and the Schulz paperbacks. So if you were a kid and you went to your school library, there would be the *Peanuts* books. And you'd find them on garage sales. And that's what really kept it...but unless your stuff was reprinted, people wouldn't really know who you are.

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BA: Did Linus keep up his relationship with Schulz?

DM: All the time. He wanted him to...and they were friends right up to Schulz's death.

BA: Wood too?

DM: Wood not so much. Wood became estranged with everybody. Wood because of his mental illness, alcoholism and drug addiction, he became very isolated from everybody, from all his friends.

BA: Wasn't he losing his eyesight?

DM: He had diabetes. He desperately needed a kidney transplant and he was on dialysis twice a day and the pain was so bad he committed suicide. He shot himself because the pain was just so incredible. That was one of the incredibly sad things about him.

That's why I make comparisons between him and van Gogh. Both were suicides but also incredible geniuses in their art forms but at the same time they weren't getting the financial respect. Wood would make some money but never as much as he thought he deserved. He ended up in a shady part of California. He was drawing pornographic books at the end. He had a vision cut so the last ten years of his cartooning work are very flat because he's only drawing with one eye. His stuff all had a flat thing and lost a lot of its luster. He had a hard time accepting that too, that loss of acuity.

BA: Did Linus Maurer making a living as a cartoonist?

DM: Oh yeah. Even now he's doing it. It's incredible.

What he does, he does some editorial cartooning. He sells his paintings. I showed you the thing about his gallery shows.

Yes, he's one of the people who was able to do it and didn't get distracted by becoming a newspaper syndicated cartoonist. You get caught in all of that. And then have the strip fail and your life destroyed.

One of the artists I wanted to talk about, Chet Kozlak. It's Polish. John Chester Kozlak. He took the University of Minnesota cartooning extension class.

He was born in Minneapolis but his father died and the family moved to St. Paul and he graduated from St. Paul.

He graduated from high school and he'd save some money and wanted to visit the New York World's Fair. And the teacher was a guy by the name of Stan **Ashe/Ash**. And Stan Ashe/Ash created *Johnny Thunder* for All-Star Comics, the Justice Society of America.

And he was working for the comic book industry out there. And he was Chet's teacher. So he went out and he was having trouble meeting his deadlines and asked Chet, who'd just graduated from high school, to fill in some artwork. Chet didn't leave until 1948. He stayed from 1939 to 1948 and he started working on the *Flash*, *Hawkman*, all this stuff.

One of the things he's not credited for, he had an incredible inking style. He was a much better inker than an artist. He was the first inker for the comic book industry. What they did was, they would have him ink—this 15-year-old kid by the name of Joe **Kubert**?—they would have him ink his [Kubert's] work or Irwin **Hasin**. They found out Hasin could work faster if Chet inked it.

Sheldon Mayer who was the editor at the time realized they could speed up, make more comic books by doing that, by having someone who is really good at inking draw [over] someone who is really good at pencils. In 1942 that's when that happened.

Then he [Chet] had a bout of alcoholism and the stress of doing all the stuff, he started drinking as a way to deal with stress. He realized he had to quit. He moved to St. Paul. Then in St. Paul he started working, doing stuff for the Golden Rule department stores, doing really incredible stuff. Then finally the Minnesota Historical Society saw the incredible stuff he was doing and asked him then to come and work as a staff artist for the Minnesota History Center.

And then he would create dioramas. In fact a lot of Chet's work is still at Ft. Snelling. He designed the exhibits and did the lettering. He used his work as a comic book artist to do these things [shows off books], he did the Ojibwa... He took his ability as a comic book artist and was able to create, do this stuff.

BA: *Dakota Indian Coloring Book*.

DM: And he worked with the Dakota Indians.

BA: Oh, you got this signed by him.

DM: Yeah. He was an incredible person.

BA: This was published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

DM: It's still in print. If you got to Mt. Rushmore, they sell these things in the gift shop.

He used his stuff as a comic book artist to do this. He kept up for years trying to get them to do a permanent exhibit of Charles Schulz at the History Center. As far back as 1971-72. We tried over and over trying to get them to have a permanent exhibit and permanent archive; and they would never listen to him.

His mentor Stan Ashe/Ash, while he was at the University of Minnesota, he was teaching the extension classes—he did something that caused ripples. To this day the ripples are still happening. He talked to all the people he knew who were professional cartoonists, guys like Ernie **Bushmiller** and Al Capp. He got them to send him original art. He put an exhibit, that lasted two years, at the St. Paul downtown library. It was the first time they had original art, for two years, posted up. They had Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*, Al Capp, all these people. This is 1935.

We're talking about that exhibit, you know the one the Cartoonist Conspiracy did [in 2009? Called "Hot Ink", it was at the Minnesota Museum of Modern Art?? in St. Paul on Kellogg Ave.]?

Well, this was across the street from that. And it has the same ripples. So this is about 1935-36. Stan Ashe/Ash did it. So this young 17-year-old kid comes by, he looks at it, he realizes he's been drawing on typing paper. He rips it all up. He goes to the stationery stores and buys some actual staff art things, he sees exactly what it is. It's Charles Schulz. Charles Schulz realizes he's been drawing on the wrong size and the wrong artwork.

He gets as much out of the Art Instruction class, the cartooning mail order class. Because they never sent original art. They sent printed versions that were all 8 ½ by 11. But it was never the actual size. So he's seeing, Britt, Barb, for the very first time a Hal Foster original. He's seeing the ink strokes. It's like art. It's the difference between seeing a Picasso and seeing a reproduction.

He's the strokes of the pen, the blue pencil, the fact that they've whited out, the fact that they've cut out and that you don't have to redraw the whole thing. That you can cut and paste things on top of it. It changes it. So this is the ripple effect.

I don't know how many other cartoonists, or other people like Jerry Fearing from the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, went there as kids and saw this exhibit. Every time there's an exhibit of artwork, whether cartooning or... One of my favorite artists is this woman called Alice Neal. I go see Alice Neal's paintings over at the Walker Art Center and I'm blown away when I see her actual brush strokes versus photographs of her work.

As a cartoonist when you actually see what these people did, it changes how you... [to Barb] I mean your students are like that?

BS: Yeah.

DM: They're blown away when they see the original artwork. Going like...when you see an original piece of Wally Wood, the artwork's like that too. Wally Wood, his artwork has almost a half an inch to two inches of paper built up. It almost looks like a collage. It's a three dimensional thing. He would cut up his sketchbooks and paste it on things. He would never throw anything away and would use it in his comic strips. He would cut it out and reuse it. Sometimes people would complain because the camera couldn't photograph it [to reproduce in comic books] because the artwork would be so tall from all this pasting, re-gluing, the white out. The white out would start...

BA: The Michaelis biography, how did you get involved?

DM: It was mindboggling. Just when Charles Schulz announced that he was going to retire, people started contacting me. And one of the people who contacted me was *City Pages* and *City Pages* did an article about how are they going to honor him? He didn't die till like two or three weeks later. So they did this like—I'll give you a copy of it.

BA: Didn't you drive around with them?

DM: Yes, I did. We got a car and drove around and we went to all the places that Charles Schulz had done [lived]. It was an incredible experience. We'd go knock on the doors of places and say, "Did you know...?"

Here you go. [Hands out copies of a photographic tour Mruz compiled of known Schulz addresses.]

I need to make a correction. Schulz was actually born in Swedish Hospital.

So we drove around. So *City Pages*, they put me against Norm Coleman's staff member. Norm Coleman's staff member claimed that no one gave a rat's ass about Charles Schulz. And then after Charles Schulz died, Norm Coleman's running around, "Ohhhhhh, Charles Schulz." You know what I mean? And all this crap. He's milking the Charles Schulz family for political contributions.

Two years before, the mayor's office of St. Paul didn't want to have anything to do with Charles Schulz. Minneapolis the same thing. Minneapolis still has done nothing to honor Charles Schulz.

BA: Although he was born in Minneapolis.

DM: At Swedish Hospital. He was here [Minneapolis] until he was like three years old and then he went to Needles, CA, and then from Needles, CA, he went to St. Paul.

So *City Pages* did this thing of me. How are we going to honor Charles Schulz. In St. Paul, they said, "Nobody cares about Charles Schulz. Nobody even knows he came from here so it's a waste of our time." And then what's the woman in charge of popular culture—Anna...the one who wrote the State Fair book? It's **Mayrling**. And she also wrote the book on the architecture of Disneyland. She just retired and moved from the University of Minnesota.

Anyhow, she pooh-poohed the idea. That it was boosterism. That Schulz wasn't really an artist. Of course then [slaps hands together]—who's the guy who wrote *Iron John*? Robert Bly had to get into it. And talk about, "You know the biggest statue in Minnesota is a blown-up balloon of Snoopy at Mall of America." When Mall of America still had Camp Snoopy, he was really upset that the biggest statue in Minnesota was Snoopy. I really laughed my head off on that one.

As a result, people saw this thing in *City Pages* and David Michaelis then saw it. He called me up. It blew my mind. He came over here. We spent over at that table there six hours talking about it. We went over to the streetcar. We rode the streetcar. He got the actual feeling what it was like for Schulz as a little kid riding with his Norwegian grandmother, riding over to the ice arena. And her taking on the streetcar to all these wonderful places.

And then we went over to O'Gara's and Danny O'Gara let us upstairs. The apartment is basically in the same, weird, decrepit state it was fifty years ago. When Schulz came to visit, Schulz went and wrote on the wall and drew a big Snoopy on one of the walls of the apartment.

BA: You and Duane Barnhart met Charles Schulz.

DM: Yeah, what happened was it was the 45th anniversary of the newspaper strip. He decided he would come back. They would do a huge exhibit of his original art at the Mall of America and that was at the time that Camp Snoopy was still there.

Tim O'Gara is the son of Jim O'Gara. And I told you that Jim O'Gara story. Jim O'Gara, who created O'Gara's, was a cartoonist. He was a cartoonist who did Irish cartoons. He was born in Ireland; he came over here. He went to St. Thomas and in order for him to get his tuition for St. Thomas and get a degree in art, he would draw huge oil paintings of the trains. This is back to the Great Northern thing [Railroad]. Of the General and all that. He'd do oil paintings. And he would pay his tuition. He would find out the favorite engine of the railroad presidents and he would do an oil painting and that would be his tuition for the quarter. That's how he got through St. Thomas.

Jim O'Gara's brother in law was this cartoonist by the name of Ding Darling. Ding Darling was the guy who created the duck stamp. He would come and vacation at Battle Lake, Minnesota, Lake **Withrow**, where the Cowles brothers, the guys who own the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, they had a huge gigantic game preserve and they would bring Ding Darling up, who was this incredibly nationally known cartoonist.

And he'd say to Jim, "You know..." He sent him to New York to be a cartoonist, to work for the newspaper syndicates. So Jim left St. Paul, lasted three months, hated the city of New York. He said, "I'd rather sell beer than live in New York and work for those..." Okay, we won't go into it.

He wouldn't work for those guys because they were horrible. He comes back and he buys this place where O'Gara's is and he gets back just in time as World War II is starting. And there are all these people who are building gliders for the invasion of D-Day—they're all working in St. Paul and they're call coming for their lunches over at O'Gara's. And then O'Gara's happens to be...on the corner is a drugstore. It's one of the reasons the Schulz family sells the...gets rid of their house and moves is because Charles Schulz's mother is dying of cancer and needs pain medication every day.

The pharmacist comes to the apartment upstairs and administers painkillers every day so she can get through that. At the same time on the other corner is a barbershop. The barbershop is next to a TV repair place. One of the things that gets going is that Carl Schulz, Charles Schulz's father, doesn't cook. He's a horrible cook. So he trades dinner for haircuts for Jim O'Gara's kids. So Jim O'Gara's kids all get haircuts. That's how Charles Schulz became pals with Tim O'Gara. They would be sitting there, Tim would be waiting to get his haircut, and he'd be reading out of Charles Schulz's comic book collection. Schulz started collecting comic books with *ACTION No. 1*. Schulz's father would bring his comic books and bring them down there and put them in the barbershop for kids. Schulz was so upset. *ACTION 1*, *Superman 1*, *Captain Marvel 1*—all this stuff is being read in the barbershop.

Tim and his brothers, they were good friends with Schulz. Schulz, his father would cut his hair. Sometimes if a paying customer came in, he would grab Sparky—Charles Schulz would be grabbed by his dad and made to sit down and he'd be walking around sometimes with half a [haircut].

[The interview is interrupted when one of Dave Mruz's housemates, Susie, walks in.]

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Anyway, he would be walking around with half a haircut because a paying customer came in. And he'd sit on the bench there and sit there and draw. So Tim and them became really close friends.

So when Schulz came back here, wanted to come back, his 45th anniversary, I think it was '94 or '95. Schulz then called up Tim and asked him, "I don't want to hang out with rich people. I want to hang out with cartoonists." So he asked me and Duane to put the list together of all the cartoonists. At the time we had a group going called the Minnesota Cartoonists League and we had people like Gordon Purcell, Dan Jurgens.

Gordon had appeared in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* as Charlie Brown at the Peppermint Tent over at the University of Minnesota. One of Gordon's degrees is drama. And he'd appeared as Charlie Brown. So Gordon's going, "Ahhhhh!" You know?

So we had this set up. We had like 150 seats. Some of them are people who are friends of Roman Baltes, he's there. All these people are there. Steve Sack from the *Star Tribune*. Jerry Fearing. Everyone you can image. Jerry van Amerongen. Greg Howard. They're all there. Everybody who's a cartoonist is there.

We asked everybody who was a cartoonist if they wanted to come. And then Schulz pulls this thing where he goes, "I want everybody to get up and tell us something about themselves and why you're here."

So Roman got up and said, "I'm the one who gave you your first job."

The woman who had created Determined Productions was there. She was from San Francisco. She created the book *Happiness Is a Warm Puppy*. She was there. There were all these people like you wouldn't believe all showed up somehow. It was just an incredible experience.

BA: Did you get to talk to Schulz?

DM: Just briefly. I've done more of my things by talking to him on the phone and writing him letters. I'd talk to him on the phone and ask him about Central High School. Yeah, he'd do that. Sparky was like that.

Chet Kozlak introduced me to him.

When he was growing up, he read Chet Kozlak's comic books. So Sparky was a big fan of comic books and Kozlak and Ashe/Ash continued to be friends with him. When he [Schulz] had a heart attack and ended up in the hospital, Kozlak got all us cartoonist people together and we did a big get well card and sent it to him in his hotel. And that sort of cemented the friendship.

And then I would send any time there was something happening, I'd send him newspaper clippings, about people he knew. About the Saint Paul Saints or whatever, all that. He would be real interested in all that. If some building he loved was being torn down, I'd send him that.

One of the things he ended up sending me an original piece of art was...I would send him stuff all the time about the streetcar. He loved the streetcar. He made all his children sit down and watch the videos I would send of the streetcar.

[Finds something.] This is the Ward Kimball thing I found. It's Ward Kimball's drawing of the streetcar. I'm trying to get them to post that over there [at the streetcar station].

John Canemaker had that in his book about the nine old men about the Disney animators.

So that's how I get to meet Schulz. He would be excited I'd send him stuff about streetcars. I'd send him stuff about the Rainbow supermarket over here is on top of the place where the ice follies used to be. The ice arena used to be there. There are a couple plaques over there.

We would talk about things and he would just...So David Michaelis, he was really excited I had all this stuff and I let him take everything he wanted about like *Is This Tomorrow?: America Under Communism*. I would call it Charlie Brown commie fighter.

Every time I tried to talk to Schulz about it he would change the subject and refuse to talk about it. It's so terrible, it's so campy. He did it for work. He wanted people to know him just for *Peanuts* and everything else is like it doesn't matter.

He did a bunch of bible cartoons about these teenagers doing bible study. Those didn't get reprinted until after he died. You can see those. Those are real interesting. He didn't like anything that would distract from *Peanuts*. That was his life and he didn't want anything to distract from that.

END INTERVIEW ONE – TRACK ONE

* * *

February 18, 2011

[At beginning of recording, just setting up recorders.]

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DM: [picking up from some unrecorded question] That's right Fergus Falls.

BA: When was he [Cliff Sterrett] born?

DM: December 12, 1883. His father was a pharmacist and he was born on Main Street in Fergus Falls. But his parents died early. So an aunt had to take in him and a younger brother in Alexandria. So he grew up in Alexandria and in Alexandria he got

a scholarship to go to New York. I can't remember which art institute. Part of it had to do with his Scandinavian...

Here's this early thing that said about Cliff Sterrett, "They say you were born in Minnesota." And he says, "Yes, that's home SWEET home. " Emphasis on the sweet part.

You got this whole group of Scandinavian cartoonists. You got Wally Wood, who's a Finlander. Then you've got Curt Swan, who's a Swede, and you've got Charles Schulz, who's Norwegian on his mom's side. His father's side is German-Norwegian.

BA: Why should we care about Cliff Sterrett?

DM: Because of his visual style. He changed...he was doing Cubism before Cubism was created. He brought that style into cartooning. He went one step farther than Winsor McCay did. Winsor McCay came from the school of carnival posters. He started doing posters for carnivals and flea circuses.

His emphasis was on the art, the decorative. A lot of cartoonists it was more of the gag or the humor, gags and jigs. Even though it had a really nice style. Or *Mutt and Jeff*. The emphasis was on the humor. McCay and Sterrett, their emphasis was the beginning of making magnificent art. And a storyline.

They brought in this whole different thing, this incredible thing of having this visual...basically so that people would start having the four color circus in their comic or cartooning. They used so much, them and Frank King.

Frank King was another person who has Midwest roots from Tomah, Wisconsin. He was influenced quite a bit by Sterrett by using these incredible colors. You have Winsor McCay who started it, you have Sterrett that just started going experimental, then you have Frank King who uses the colors as part of the narrative.

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Both with McCay and Sterrett their emphasis was on the visual to the point that it's really hard to read their strips. The visuals are so overwhelming it's hard to concentrate on the narrative or the joke. You are overcome by the visuals.

BA: Do you want to talk about Sterrett's work?

DM: He started when he was 18 and moved to New York. He went to the Chase Art School for two years. On his 20th birthday, he had a position with the *New York Herald* doing beautiful designed borders all around the pages and editorial things. That border thing—the editor decided to let him have a chance doing...he started doing daily newspapers.

One was called the *Ventriloquist Vagabond*, *Man Gets Married*, *Before and After*. He did all the...*For This We Have Daughters*. In 1912 William Randolph Hearst hired him away to do a strip and that's when the strip started out as *Positive Polly*. It was a taken on *Blondie*. It was a flapper woman and her family. Pretty soon it became *Polly*

and Her Pals because the emphasis had shifted away from Polly, the daughter, to the cat. Polly is overshadowed by the cat. And the cat and her father take over the strip. Very much like what happens with *Peanuts* where Snoopy takes over the strip.

BA: Bazooka Joe, you were talking about that. Does that have Mn connections?

DM: No. Except the man who curates it lives in Minnesota. His name is Kurt Taylor. He ended up with the collection of the artist's material. He's a real example of what happens to cartoonists. They become anonymous after a while. Even the best people. It's only recently that *Polly and Her Pals*...for the longest time you couldn't get the material at all. You'd have one or two pages reproduced in a history of comics but you wouldn't have any of the stuff is almost totally accessible. You'd have to go to the library microfilm to have access.

It's only recently has their been a renaissance. A lot of the independent cartoonists, like the people at Drawn & Quarterly, they were some of the people who championed this. Independent are drawn to Sterrett's and that's what brought the renaissance of him right now.

BA: And you can find online.

DM: Online changed everything too. With a lot of cartoonists you can't find.

Linus Maurer, his strips are almost impossible to find. Well, Linus Maurer was born in Sleepy Eye and the family moved up here to Minneapolis and one of his classmates was about two years younger than him—Wally Wood. They were in high school together. Wood had moved all the time.

Linus Maurer because of his interest in cartooning was one of the few people that bonded and was friend with Wood in Minneapolis.

During World War II, Wood was too young to join the Navy so he joined the merchant marines. Linus was two years older and so he was able to join the US Navy. And then they ended up meeting after the war was over and after they finished their services in the military, they took their GI Bill and went to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. They hooked up together; they became really good friends.

One of the things Linus talked about, there was this huge snowstorm one year.

BA: Yeah, you told us that one last time.

DM: After Linus graduated from MCAD, Art Instruction Schools would hire a lot of MCAD grads, and I guess they do that even today. And so when he went here, he was hired, Linus Maurer was hired to replace Charles Schulz. They needed someone to take over grading the papers and being an instructor. They got to be such incredible friends that Schulz dragged and dragged and ended up staying there three or four years longer.

Yeah, he went out to Santa Rosa. He had his own strip [*Old*] *Harrigan*. And he was doing very well in Santa Rosa, had his own house. And at the time, Wally Wood had started working for *MAD Magazine*. Wally had said, "Come on out. Come and stay at my place in Manhattan." Linus went out there and found out he would have had to take a cut in pay to work for *MAD*. They were paying only half what a syndicated cartoonist would make. He would've had to give up his house in Santa Rosa. And live in five story walk-up apartment like Wally Wood was.

BA: How long did he do *Harrigan*?

DM: He did it for about 10 years [Maurer in his interview said it was more like five years].

He did several [strips]. There's no real documentation of his work. He's probably the only one that has...when I did an Internet search I couldn't find anything. There are no examples of his work at all. That's the problem. There are a lot of incredible people and there's no documentation on them so they disappear.

If it weren't for the fact that Linus Maurer is the namesake for the Linus character most people wouldn't even know who he was. Only the people that read the *Harrigan* strip would know him and the people in Santa Rosa but no one around the country. That's how it works with cartooning, about people being remembered and everything.

BA: You said he has art in a gallery?

DM: Recent paintings he does. A lot of cartoonists they paint, they do a lot of things. Duane Barnhart paints. Charles Schulz was frustrated because he couldn't paint. That was one of the things he said I'll stick to being a cartoonist. But you have a lot of people who want to do that medium, painting, watercolor, acrylics, oils. That's what he does.

What did you do when you tried to find information on him [addressed to Barb]? It was frustrating, wasn't it?

BS: It was. But there was a little because the school [MCAD] did an article but it's from Linus.

DM: Barb, that's very typical. That's why some of the cartoonists get very frustrated that mainstream media doesn't follow through. You'll be like Dan Jurgens who sells a million copies of *Superman* for the first five to twenty years and then for some reason his work isn't sensational enough or someone decides the Superman character is passé and they don't talk about his career.

So you have people who contribute enormous things and then they get ignored depending on journalists or which person writes the article.

There's a horrible tendency, like with the Schulz story, cartoonists will reinvent themselves. Schulz reinvented himself; he left out the part that he went on the GI Bill

to MCAD for night school, and that wasn't until David Michaelis wrote his book and did research and found out he spent a couple months at MCAD on the GI Bill during night school. Schulz also took cartooning classes from Stan Ash/Ashe at the University of Minnesota extension program. They had an extension course in cartooning for ten years. Schulz cut that out of his narrative.

Cartoonists will do that and you end up with the Lone Ranger's syndrome where cartoonists will appear to...they'll take maybe about their favorite influences but they won't talk about what surrounds and creates them, the whole environment that makes them who they are. Usually you'll find out that they have a lot of drinking buddies, they go out with other cartoonists. But that gets deleted from the narrative.

One of the things Schulz did—Sunday mornings, Schulz would go golfing with ten-fifteen other cartoonists in the Twin Cities. But that was only briefly mentioned in the biography *Good Grief*. I've been trying to track these guys down, and they would all hang out; these were people either from the art school or other cartoonists from the newspapers and things.

There was never a list [of these people]. You have to find someone alive who says, "My uncle used to golf with Charles Schulz" and those are the leads.

Linus came after—Linus really never knew. That might be one of the questions you might want to ask Linus.

There have been so many groups of cartoonists, they come and go, and there's really no documentation. Like when you talk to Reed Waller, Reed is instrumental because he started several groups of cartoonists. He started out with Minn-StF, Minnesota science fiction society.

And then around 1976 there was a real frustration with cartoonists. In cartooning it was almost impossible to do anything with anthropomorphic animals, known as funny animals. So Reed Waller and Ken Fletcher, another local cartoonist, created an organization called Vootie. And Vootie was this amateur publishing society. Vootie is what the monkey says on Dave Garaway's; Zippy the Chimp goes "Vootie, Vootie." And that was also a joke in *MAD Magazine* that Reed picked up on.

What it was...cartoonists, you would get a magazine and what you'd have to do was...whatever the print run at the time, it was either 30 or 50, you have to run off 50 copies of your fanzine or zine and give it to Reed or Ken and they would collate it and put it in Vootie. So you'd have ten, fifteen cartoonists from all over the United States, all doing this thing. And that's where Reed tried out Omaha the Cat was in Vootie. It was an experiment in there. A lot of people experimented.

I did an experimental thing called "Myra", which started out as two pages and was my comments on cartoons. Then it went from two pages to 32 pages long into a regular publication. I was part of Vootie. Steve [Fastner] was part of Vootie and Tim Fey/Faye.

So out of Vootie came Rabblegrouser, which was one of the first publications about funny animals. Out of Vootie, it starts the whole furry movement.

Furries is a fandom of people who dress up and take on the personas of anthropomorphic animals. Some people might—they took the clue of Omaha the Cat Dancer and people would make costumes and go to conventions and they would take on the personas of their character. All over the United States. It started here [though].

I don't even know if Reed will take responsibility for it but he was one of the first people who started the whole movement in anthropomorphic animals at the time.

At one point, as it got started, there was only Howard the Duck and Donald Duck. That was the only interest in funny animals was the ducks. One of the people who was part of Vootie was a film director named Tim Boxell.

He did an underground comic book called *No Duck* flying over one of those duck blinds and a bunch of mice characters shooting him down with an anti-aircraft thing. The desecration of every kind of duck imaginable. Reed was part of that too. No Ducks.

Later, around 1988 or '89, Reed was one of the founders, of which we were a part, called the Minnesota Cartoonists League. Here. [Distributes printed posters.]

BA: Who created your logo?

DM: About four, five cartoonists. It was put together...Dave Steinlicht put all these people together. He herded the cats. He's a cat herder.

BA: You and Steinlicht used to meet in Loring Park and draw too, didn't you?

DM: That was him. Steinlicht is like Reed Waller. They're both responsible for cartoonists getting together. His family comes from Rochester. His parents ran a motel that took care of people who were visiting the Mayo Clinic. He moved up here around 1979 and that's when I met him. He was hired to be the staff artist for a rock 'n' Roll magazine called *Commies and Cider* or *The Insider*, and that became *Sweet Potato*, and *Sweet Potato* became [*The Reader* and that in turn became] *City Pages*.

Steinlicht's one of the people who created the comic movement. He and Matt Frizzell in the '70s. They were frustrated...he had his regular job designing for newspapers but he wanted to be able to do his own personal things so that's how the minicomics thing started in the '70s. He and Matt Frizzell were like the people behind it.

Steinlicht championed people. He was one of the people who championed Chris Monroe⁵. He got Chris Monroe a lot gigs in the publications she was in. He pushed for that. He pushes all over the place.

BA: He liked Joe McDonnell too. Did you ever meet Joe?

⁵ Chris Monroe is the Duluth cartoonist who draws *Violet Days* for the Star Tribune.

DM: No, I didn't. I've seen him around. He used to do a lot of things for the Whittier newspaper, a lot of cartoons.

Steinlicht, he's behind the scenes in a lot of things. He's the person if you want a logo done everybody in the Twin Cities goes to him. He did the logo for the College of Comic Book Knowledge.

BA: I also heard he created some typography for Ken Avidor⁶.

DM: He's done a lot. He was one of the people—when Ken came he was aloof and didn't connect with the other cartoonists and Steinlicht starting introducing Ken to everybody. Steinlicht is also very involved in the Cartoonist Conspiracy things, anytime there's a jam going on if you look and squint your eyes you'll see Dave Steinlicht. He's involved in everything. It's impossible to even talk about his influence.

BA: He always downplays it.

DM: He's very quiet. He does not like talking about what he does.

We didn't even hit on the other kind of art he's involved in: seed art, the crop art movement. And that was Steinlicht, he started championing the woman who was the grand person...they wrote a book on her. Steinlicht is the one who got cartoonists and started talking people into contributing to the State Fair. That was Steinlicht's thing; he thought it would be a great idea.

He's the one who curates the website for crop art, seed art. Steinlicht, you'll forget about, Oh my goodness, he's involved in crop art, which is a form of cartooning. Caricature with seeds. And he says the only difference is you're not using pen and ink. You're using seeds.

BA: And he has his weekly strip at the *Pioneer Press*.

DM: *The Corner* [called *In This Corner*].

He's like Reed Waller. I met him [Reed] in about 1975. I met him at...Joel Thingvall and I were doing comic book conventions. Well, I met him before I started doing conventions. I think I met him in '72 and '73 through Ken Fletcher and Dick Tatche and Ed Kufeld and they were the people who ran this strange house called the Hobbitat. This is where all the science fiction fans lived over on 38th and Pillsbury.

Reed I think was going to the University of Minnesota. They introduced me to him. Reed was drawing for science fiction things. And we were both interested in animated cartoons. So Reed and I got to be friends and when I started doing the comic book conventions, we would have him as a guest because he was doing drawings. And then when he and Ken Fletcher got ready to do Vootie, they invited

⁶ Minneapolis cartoonist Ken Avidor (ne Weiner in Brooklyn, NY) created the *Roadkill Bill* strip for The Pulse of the Twin Cities.

me to join Vootie because of my love of animated cartoons and I also have a fondness for anthropomorphism.

Vootie became this place for anthropomorphism.

And so when Reed started doing *Omaha the Cat Dancer* then...

BA: Do you remember when that was published?

DM: Oh, yeah, it came out and people were like aghast. Reed talked about that. I wasn't but a lot of the cartoonists were upset that the last time funny animals were having sex was Wally Wood, when Wally Wood did this memorial poster for Walt Disney's death that had all the animals, Disney characters, fornicating. It was published in Paul Kastner's *The Realist*. That was about '68-69.

You go all the way to 1975-76 and Reed is actually having the characters having sex lives. Reed will be able to tell you the story better, how some of the cartoonists in Vootie were upset. Cos it was like why bother? Do some great funny stories. Why focus on sex?

And Reed said, "Sex is funny." And so it was like a whole new thing.

The first story was based on the blue laws, laws in St. Paul in the '70 where they were trying to shut down the strip joints. So this was Reed's political statement about the persecution of the strippers in St. Paul in the '70s. Omaha became...and then Omaha, like a lot of literary characters, took on a life of her own. She just started, you know...

BA: Was there a lot of press around this?

DM: No, he did this out of a vacuum.

BA: Where was he living?

DM: Near Powderhorn Park and then he moved down to New Richland. Then he came back up and he was at Powerhorn Park. Now he's back in New Richland again. He has a voice like Jerry Garcia from the Grateful Dead; it's the same kind of intellectual cadence.

Because Reed is also a musician he thinks like that. He thinks visually and musically. He's a member of MENSA. There are a lot of members of the Minnesota Science Fiction Society who belong to that. He was part of that.

He's a very intense, very opinionated person. He was the first person I met who used the word "suits" in referring to the bureaucracy of corporations. He's very politically aware. He really fights.

One of the reasons he did *Omaha* was to fight for freedom of speech. He and his former partner Kate Worley were big advocates of the fight against censorship. They were part of the organization that was formed to fight the suppression of cartoonists. [Comic Book Legal Defense Fund?]

Kate was also one of the members of Minnesota Cartoonists League. The two of them did the newsletter and did the incredible task of trying to get cartoonists to come. When you talk about differences of personality, you have two people who are incredible. You have Dan Jurgens who creates icons and then you have Reed Waller who smashes icons. He's an iconoclast. So you have this incredible clash.

BA: They were both members of the Minnesota Cartoonists League.

DM: Right. Reed comes from the whole idea of *MAD Magazine*, satire, the whole thing. Then you have Dan where you create icons that represent values and ideas. And the two just...it just clashes.

Both of them, the first word you'd use to describe them is passionate. They're both very passionate about what they do and passionate about how they've chosen to approach cartooning.

[to Barb] Did you talk to Reed yet?

BS: Just on the phone a little.

DM: This is probably one of the first times he's talked about his stuff. I didn't even know he was running a newspaper down in New Richland. I just found out.

BS: Early on with *Omaha* there must have been references to *Fritz the Cat*.

DM: He hated that. I don't know if you saw what Crumb did in *Weirdo*? Crumb did a satire about Omaha. There's Nebraska the Rat Dancer. It was intense. You didn't know if he was doing it in fun or because he was upset.

BA: What was Reed's reaction to that?

DM: He never talked about it. In fact, what's really weird is that Crumb grew up in the Albert Lea area. That's the area where New Richland is. Reed was born at the Albert Lea hospital. There's a strange synergy between Reed and Crumb.

I guess I was wrong [when I said no one had done animal characters after Wood]. Crumb was one of the people, after Wally Wood, who did funny animals having sex. People forgot about it. Crumb's funny animals were for their shock value. Reed's had the political message of about the life of the strippers. Reed also, Omaha was an actual person in terms of the narrative and what went with it. Crumb's things were one-dimensional cartoon characters. They were props. Whereas this was a real character and that's what caught on.

That's why he and Kate had such a following, was the intenseness of the narrative and the things that would happen. The issues they would explore.

BA: What can you tell us about Kate?

DM: That was another why the relationship was really hard was that she was just as intense, passionate and opinionated. For a while she worked as an advocate for nursing home residents. She was hired to do that. She took her passion for that. And

they were...she was willing to do things Reed wasn't willing to do. She worked for the Disney people. She worked on the comic book adaptation of *Roger Rabbit*. She did it for about 15 issues and then she did a lot of other comic book stuff. She wrote issues of *Wonder Woman*. She was willing to go in this and Reed would not work for mainstream media. He would not work for the suits.

Reed is from down in the farmland. He's real grassroots. Really believes in individuality. One of the things he did when he was struggling, he worked as a short order cook. He worked as a musician, doing a lot of music gigs; he had a traveling band. The Police Band was the name of it. He moved out of here to Washington, DC, in '78-79 and then he came back to the Twin Cities.

Both of them have strong roots in science fiction, MNSTFF. You know Shockwave [radio theater]. She wrote that for about 15 years with Jerry Stearns. She was married to Jerry Stearns, that's what the story is.

BA: And then she and Reed married?

DM: I don't know if they ever married. It was kind of iffy.

BS: Jim Vance—

DM: Yeah, that was her [last] husband.

BA: I know Jerry from the science fiction community.

DM: Yeah, and she was part of that. They had this thing called "The Little City in Outer Space." She wrote that and she performed voices on Shockwave. She was very involved with the science fiction people with Minicon.

BA: How did she get involved in *Omaha*?

DM: You'll have to ask Reed. I think Reed would be very excited to talk about these things.

One of the things you'll find is he does not mince words. He just lets everything out. Like some cartoonists they measure everything they say. Reed doesn't measure things. He'll tell you exactly how he feels, what he believes. But then again it has a heavy price.

BA: Talk about your early comic book conventions. The conventions before those held at the Thunderbird Hotel, were those yours?

DM: Yeah. I started back in November 3 of let's see...it was called Microcon.

BA: They still use that name.

DM: Yeah, they do. It was a play on Minicon because we were an offshoot from Minicon. What happened, there was a huge—

BA: It says 1973.

DM: Yeah it was 1973. That was one of the interesting things about how I got to meet Reed. At Minicon, a lot of the people there had the idea that science fiction should be done as a literary form and in the printed form. A lot of the science fiction fans in the early '70s were embarrassed by the pulp covers, that over the top. They thought visual representation of science fiction was an aberration.

So we come in and we're the comic book people. We're into visual science fiction. So it's like with the icons and the eye/I [?] clash. This clash of visual things. The reason I became friends with Reed and Ken Fletcher, we had an appreciation of visual science fiction.

BA: So you were also going to Minicon.

DM: Oh yeah. 1970 at the Andrews Hotel. It's [now] a parking lot is by the Gay '90s in downtown Minneapolis. The first Minicon was at the University of Minnesota at Coffman Union and then they moved over to the Andrews and then the Dykeman and then the Leamington and then to the strip.

We were frustrated; we realized we had to do our own convention. Bob Selvig, Ron Hall. Ron Hall provided all the films for the very first comic book convention.

You had the Minnesota Science Fiction Society and we were the Minnesota Comics and Fantasy Association. Ron Hall. Bob Selvig created Comic City. When we did the very first comic book convention, that then spawned the very first comic book store, Comic City. The College of Comic Book Knowledge.

Like I talked to you about, Peter Hautman was one of the very few people I knew who was involved. I was very excited to meet other people. I met Bob Selvig. So we did this—that's the flyer.

BA: [reads] Sunday, April 29.

DM: 1973.

BA: Steve Kempton.

DM: Yeah, right. We met in the basement here.

BA: Your house?

DM: Yes. We expected maybe 15 people. We ended up with 50. From then on we ended up renting the Metal Sheet Workers Hall over by MCAD. We would get 100, maybe 200 people. And we would work—once a month we would get together. Finally, after doing this from May, we decided let's do a convention. So we did a convention in November of that year. We ended up with 300-500 people at the Metal Sheet Workers Hall. You know where the Simpson's Union Church? 28th and First Avenue. It's now a Middle Eastern market. It's by MCAD, the Black Forest [Restaurant].

We had all these people. Then Bob realized they wanted it more than once a month so he created the comic book store here on Hennepin, same location [as now].

BA: Close to your house.

DM: That was my idea. I didn't want to take the bus. I didn't want to ride over to 38th and Hiawatha. That's where they were going to put it. And I found this really cheap place that was fifty dollars a month. It was an old storefront. It was empty. The only problem was a photographer had been using it who had two German shepherds and the dogs had crapped for two years in the basement. So it took an entire month to dig out all the dog crap.

BA: Did you help?

DM: No. The only thing I did was I painted the walls and the ceilings. That was May of 1974.

BA: That all happened quickly.

DM: Because all of a sudden we realized there were people who wanted to talk about comics. I was frustrated because everybody only wanted to do collecting; I was interested in history. The only reason I was involved was it was the only way I had access to the comics. Collectors had all these materials. So I hung out with the comic book collectors. My heart was more into like Reed, I was in a strange limbo between the cartoonists and the comic book collectors.

The comic books collectors dominated the whole thing. They had done comics as collectibles which was different than science fiction fans. With science fiction fans, if it was a good story it was reprinted. With comics it wasn't the same thing. It was only recently in the 1990s that if there's a really good thing it's reprinted. Up until then it was a periodical and it was meant to be thrown away. All the really great stories you'd have to collect yourself.

Every now and then the publishers would reprint some stories and then those became collectible. So if you wanted to study Carl Barks, you ended up having to do a lot of hustling to find things.

One of the reasons Barks became famous was because Walt Disney's Comics and Stories had print runs of 3 to 7 million copies. Despite the censorship, the polio scares and scarlet fever scares when all these comics were destroyed, you still out of 7 million had a good chance of things surviving.

Barb, what are current print runs?

BS: Today, maybe 150,000 down to 10,000. Today's the day to be collecting; there aren't the numbers.

DM: Lois Lane was canceled in the '70s for dropping down to 300,000 copies.

BA: Can you talk about Greg Ketter?

DM: We started doing comic book conventions. Greg Ketter was this young guy from St. Paul who loved comics. He loved visuals. He loved comics and he loved visual science fiction. He had friends who worked at the local movie theaters and he was able to get the movie posters. He would sell them at the comic book conventions; he wouldn't sell comics; he sold movie posters.

He would go to all the big science fiction and comic book conventions and sell the posters out of the trunk of his car. Eventually he hooked up with Ralph Johnson and a couple other guys and I think they formed Twin Cities Comics and then from Twin Cities Comics I think Ketter and Ralph Johnson formed the Compleat Enchanter which was down over on 7th or 9th and Hennepin.

BA: Did you go there?

DM: Oh God, yes. A part of the whole thing was in the '70s and '80s there were maybe five or six comic book stores in the Midwest. So you would go there and hang out. He was a kindred spirit. He had a real love for it. He was one of the few people, like Reed Waller, he was this intersection where science fiction and comics, movie and fantasy films, [came together]. They're the ones who are maybe indirectly responsible for that convention that takes place over the fourth of July...CONvergence. See CONvergence couldn't even exist if it hadn't been for the things we did and MNSTFF.

What happened was the elements of both science fiction and comic fandom finally merging in the idea that you could have a celebration that had visual fantasy, science fiction, you could be able to do that. I know for a while, a lot of people at Minicon, they had grown to a point where they had maybe 5,000 people attending.

And then they were really happy the other convention came along and people went over there. So many people are into the visual aspect of comics and science fiction.

BA: CONvergence seems to be the convention with an interest in comics, not Minicon, which is more literary.

DM: Literary. And it was always sort of like if you had cartooning it was Reed Waller and Ken Fletcher and they would do cartoons that had to do with fandom.

BA: Is Ken Fletcher still around?

DM: He's one of the clerks at Uncle Hugo's. Ken is one of these really quite people. He moved here as a young boy. His father was the zookeeper in Seattle and his father was hired to bring the Como Park Zoo was falling apart. Ken's father became the zookeeper and Ken's father brought in—he fought the carnies, the carnies that ran the rides at Como Park Zoo. They were giving kickbacks to the some of the councilmembers in St. Paul. Ken Fletcher's father came in and changed things, cleaned up the rides there. He had real interesting animals. There's an exhibit of wild cats that's dedicated to Ken Fletcher's father. And Ken Fletcher was one of these people that was like wow, he has this incredible whimsy.

He worked with the Dungeons & Dragons guy. The people who created Dungeons & Dragons. He just died recently. The board game. It was created here. He was a Muslim. Islam. He ran a computer game thing and Ken worked for them creating things.

Ken was also a secretary for Gordon Dickson, the science fiction author. He did a lot of putting his stuff together for him. Ken is like one of those early—Ken would have been at the first Minicon if he hadn't been in the National Guard and was called up to Ft. Ripley that weekend. But he was there in spirit. Ken did all the program covers and all the cartooning for Minicon.

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BA: How long did Bob Selvig own Comic City?

DM: Up until '78 or '79. Ever hear of Discount Video? Bob also provided all the films when Mystery Science Theater was at channel 41. When they moved to the cable [?] channel Bob refused to give them his social security number and he couldn't sell them films anymore, but all those weird Mexican movies and weird cinema.

Like everyone in the group, he had an incredible love for film and comic book. Like Ron Hall and I, he understood that relationship between cinema and comic books.

BA: You must know Bob DeFlores.

DM: Ron started the Xanadu Film Society. He came here after he graduated from the University of Wisconsin. He got a job building props for the Guthrie Theater. He found another guy, an incredible Sherlock Holmes historian, called Dixon. I can't remember his first name. But he and Dixon they found a basement of an old church over on the University of Minnesota campus and they would show 16mm copies of films that nobody else was doing. Back in 1972, '73, nobody was showing.

Every now and again you had Allen Lotsberg on channel 4 would do some classic films. But they didn't have Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, or Ronald Coleman. They were big fans of Ronald Coleman. Ron Hall and I would talk about the relationship between Will Eisner and *The Third Man*, that film.

Those are the things I got involved in in the 1970s. Bob Selvig was another one loved old films. He loved the whole visual thing of movies and comic books and storytelling. He started in '74. He was a part of that. Then around '78 or '79 he moved to California, worked for the American Comic Book Company.

He had a partner named Julian West; he's another crazy comic book/film/TV fan. This is one of the former owner of Comic City...Julian West wrote that [shows a book].

BA: *What a Card!* This is published by Beaver's Pond Press.

DM: Basically it's the history of—

BA: Clellan Card.

DM: This is the story of children's TV things in the Twin Cities.

BA: There's a DVD too.

DM: Yeah, he put episodes of Axel and his dog.

BA: Wonder if he's part of the Pavek [Museum of Broadcasting in St. Louis Park]?

DM: He's one of the advisors at Pavek.

BA: I'm going to be interviewing them.

DM: Talk about Julian West and they'll light up. Julian's the one who basically organized their archives and all their stuff about children's...when Columbia Heights at the Ritz Theater and they did that big show about children's TV show hosts, Julian was responsible for that.

BA: Julian's also still around.

DM: Oh God, yes. He's also a friend of Bob DeFlores.

BA: Bob Selvig went to California. Julian was then an owner of Comic City. What happened then?

DM: Julian decided to go to the University of Minnesota and get a degree in medieval studies. So he sold the store to Chris Biddle and Ralph Johnson. So he ended up having that. When Ralph decided he wanted to move to San Francisco—Joel Thingvall and Chris Biddel ran Comic City. And then Chris Biddel then also wanted to study ancient medieval...I don't know what it is. It's comic books, it's films and it's medieval studies.

Chris went out to the east coast. So they sold it to Gary Sissala. He's the name—I won't even dare talk about him. There are still too many people looking for Gary. Even Dan Jurgens is looking for Gary.

BA: For money?

DM: Yes. They would do things like sell your comic book convention. It was supposed to be on consignment. Then the money all disappeared. Things happened. Gary disappeared.

BA: Nobody knows what happened to him, even with the Internet?

DM: They can't find him. He was married to a woman physician and everything was under her name. He didn't pay FICA and when the Minnesota Revenue thing was looking for him they couldn't find him. He didn't pay sales tax. He kept the sales tax.

BA: [to Barb] Was that when you were working there?

BS: Yes.

END OF TRACK TWO

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DM: The Minnesota Cartoonists League that started about 1988.

My comic book conventions started in '73 and then by '75 I had a new partner named Joel Thingvall, the person who introduced the collection of original art to the Twin Cities. He worked as one of the clerks at Comic City. They had an extra room on the corner there. He talked Julian West in letting him have the extra storefront and that became Comic Suburb, which had nothing but original art in it. Pages of R. Crumb. Carl Barks paintings. The first place in the Midwest that sold original comic book and cartooning art.

I met Joel Thingvall in 1972 because I thing [ad] in one of the comic book things [publications?] looking to talk to people about the art form. He wrote me this letter incredible letter, telling me that comics would never be an art form; it was merely a form of entertainment.

We got into a dialogue and we've in a dialogue ever since. He's also an actor.

BA: Where is he today?

DM: He has a loft over by the Black Dog.

BA: Lowertown, St. Paul.

DM: The **Riesling** building there. One of the buildings. One of the artist co-ops. For a while he worked for Jim Steranko, the comic book artist, as an intern for Mediazine [?]. Joe—what is *Skyway News* now?

BA: It was *Downtown Journal*, now it's just *The Journal*.

DM: They used to have a film critic...[phone rings]

BA: Richard Larson?

DM: Rich Larson.

BA: Now, is he part of Morpheus?

DM: Yeah. This is Richard Larson...

BA: On the cover of Microcon [a printed program for the event].

DM: Rich is part of the same crown with Bob Selvig, Ron Hall. Rich did all our art work for us during the early days of the comic book...

He's one of those people who showed up that one day in May in 1973 at my house. He was interested in what we were doing. He's been one of my best friends, and Steve. I do all their research.

If they need a flag, I find a flag for them. When they were working for Top Comics, Superman, one of their assignments was to draw Ma Kent drawing [making] Superman's costume for the first time. I had to go find the comic book panels that

showed the first depiction of Superman's costume being made. Using that research then. So if they're doing something like commies from Mars and they need all the visual references, science fiction movies that have to do with Martians, I'll go find copies for them.

BA: What was Rich Larson doing in the '70s?

DM: He was at the University of Minnesota in business. He went to high school with Joel Thingvall and all those guys, they went to Roosevelt High School with James Janos. Also known as Jesse Ventura. The class of 1969. They all graduated '71, '72. He [Ventura] was a skinny swimmer on the swim team and they couldn't believe he bulked up like he did when he started taking steroids. But he was a skinny kid at Roosevelt High School. It's a very small world.

In fact they all live around where Greg Ketter's new DreamHaven is. That's where they grew up. That's where Roosevelt High School is. It's close to the Riverview Theatre, that neck of the woods. Lake Nokomis is their lake.

Rich now is partners, he and Steve Fastner. They do all this stuff—that's them right here.

BA: Oh, *Omaha*. [An Omaha the Cat Dancer tribute book]

DM: Rich does the pencils and Steve does the airbrushing. That's how they work as a team. Like Bob, they got involved with Joel Hodgson. We got involved with the Mystery Science Theater people. Joel would come when I did cartoon shows at comedy cabaret, repertories of old Warner Bros. And Joel Hodgson would sit there with a notebook and take notes and get ideas for gags for his comedy act. He would say, "Oh that would make a great..." He would make it into a gag from things he'd seen in the Warner Bros cartoons. That's how I got to know Joel.

Then Joel became friends with—they needed someone to do storyboards for the Mystery Science Theater movie and they hired Rich. Rich has done a lot of storyboards. Joel Thingvall got him doing stuff for Warren Publications. And he did things for Creepy and Eerie.

Tim Boxell worked for Colossal Pictures and they did storyboards. He and Rich did storyboards for *The Right Stuff*. The movie. Then they did storyboards for *The Golden Child* with Eddie Murphy. They did a bunch of things like that.

Then they were supposed to do—this is why I was talking about Jerry Garcia—they worked for three years on it and nothing happened. Garcia hired Rich and Tim to do the storyboards for a movie Jerry Garcia was going to direct, *Sirens of Titan*, the Kurt Vonnegut. They worked on it for over three years.

They got to draw cars with gigantic rocket fins; those were the spaceships. Old 1950s cars with the fins. Those are the space craft the aliens are flying. He lived in San Francisco for a while; it got to be too much so he moved back here. He became partners with Fastner; they've been partners at least 25-30 years.

Only the audience knows these people [cartoonists et al.]. Outside of it, Nick [Postiglione] at the Source, they didn't even know these guys lived in town and they didn't get to be guests at the comic book conventions until 10 years they'd been doing it.

BS: What does Steve Fastner do?

BA: We met Steve last time. He was here last time [the last time].

BS: Oh, so that's Steve.

BA: They're roommates [housemates].

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DM: This is the thing that was published in Germany with their art. They're basically good girl artists, pinup people. They do a lot of advertising. There's a real connection with the Mystery Science Theater people. Or Best Brain [?].

This is one of their mainstream things.

BS: Rich worked with Charlton Comics. He did *Whisper* in the '80s.

DM: Yeah.

BS: Sounds like he's primarily an illustrator.

DM: Yeah, primarily an illustrator. They do more of that. They're a lot of people. It's really hard to make a living in comics. So Rich at one point was going to move to Darby, Connecticut, where Charlton was. But decided not to.

So they have a little studio above the paint splat thing on University Avenue, it used to be the Sextant Building. We're talking the University of Minnesota campus [the area]. Right next to the blood bank. The guys from the blood bank keep stealing their cars. About once a year their cars disappear and they think it's the guys from the blood bank. After they get their money. They have money to buy gas and they say, "Let's get a car." They hotwire Steve's car and it disappears.

BA: When did the Source comic book store come in?

DM: They came in the 1980s, the 1990s.

BA: The same location?

DM: I don't know. There were two of them for a while and then they all disappeared. And then it was Hot Comics; they had 2-3 stores, too. At one point, there were 19-20 comic book stores in the Twin Cities. I went to a few of them. I went to Hot Comics, Big Brain and all those places.

BA: Big Brain opened in early 2000s?

DM: Yeah, around 1999-2000, that's when they were over there by Let It Be Records.

BA: Around 10th and Marquette.

DM: That was the first place.

BA: By Hell's Kitchen, where it used to be.

DM: What a place where Hell's Kitchen was, that's where the arts and craft building is [Handicraft Guild building]. That was the pottery place for making pottery and that's where Grant Wood came as an 18 year old in the summers to take art classes.

BA: The Minnesota Cartoonists League...

DM: The whole thing was basically put together by Dave Steinlicht. All these cartoonists who were in their own field, Dave Steinlicht gave each one of them...he knew it. So Max Haynes was a children's book illustrator. Also you'll see him in, he has three or four cars in the art car parade. He has an incredible style.

He initiated with Steinlicht, they kind of finished it. That character [on the logo for the League] was Chet Kozlak who used to do the Green Lantern, Flash and Hawkman in the 1940s. And he also did a comic strip type thing. He did the main figure. They got Reed to do Omaha, so they've got Omaha in the middle there [middle of the logo]. And Jerry Fearing, who was the political cartoonist for the *Pioneer Press* at the time, he drew Uncle Sam for the middle. Gordon Purcell did a superhero.

Then Steinlicht did the Minnesota logo. Jackie Urbanovic—

BA: She did the cartoon lettering?

DM: Yeah. She did that. She's a contemporary of Alison Bechdel. They two of them worked on the gay newspapers. Alison did the production and Jackie did all the illustrations and cartooning. She did the Mother Goose, a gay take on Mother Goose.

BA: What publication is this?

DM: I can't remember.

BA: It's not still around.

DM: No, it disappeared. *Lavender* took over the audience.

So Jackie did that and Rich did the "League" part, the part that says "League." Rich Larson. Then Steinlicht put it all together.

BA: What did the League do?

DM: We got together in February 1988, after I'd found out a lot of people—Where Chino Latino is? That used to be Annie's Parlor for a while. One night I walked in there and there was Dan Jurgens and Gordon Purcell sitting at one table. On the other side of the room was Jerry van Amerongen and Greg Howard. Then over there was Richard Larson sitting with a couple other people. They didn't recognize each other. Here you got all these cartoonists drinking, they're all in the same room.

In February 1988, Jerry Fearing, the editorial cartoonist, he let us use the conference room of the *Pioneer Press* to try and get all these cartoonists together and form a group to get together. We talked about having it in a church basement. And Reed Waller was very adamant. "No church basements. I want a place where I can have a beer and burger."

We went to places all over the Twin Cities. Then Ken Fletcher out of the clear blue said, "What do you think of O'Gara's?"

I said, "What do you mean O'Gara's?"

"There's this Irish pub over there. Also it has cartooning connections."

"What do you mean?"

"You know the guy—the father of the place—he used to do cartooning for all the Irish-American publications. Tim O'Gara's father Jim. And you know about the barbershop?"

"What barbershop?"

"Well, you know that the barbershop is where Charles Schulz's father used to have a barbershop."

I'm staring.

"It's where Charles Schulz created the *Peanuts* characters in the kitchen in the apartment above O'Gara's."

BA: After he came back from the war.

DM: Yeah, after he came back in '46.

I said, "No lie?" And so we went over there and talked to Tim. Tim said, "Oh yeah. You can come in and use the place once a month."

We all got together and started hanging out and pretty soon we were up to 150 cartoonists. Kate and Reed were really good at getting people. Dan was bringing Gordon, and all those guys were coming. Jackie came. It was the first time Jackie met other cartoonists. That's how she met Max and then Max was able to get her into children's book publishing. There was a lot of networking taking place.

BA: What did you do when you got together?

DM: There would be jams [drawing jams]. People would be jamming. Steinlicht was there. People would be drinking and talking. There only problem was a lot of guys forgot to pay their tabs. So I ended up having to pay. People would get so excited they'd walk off and forget to pay their bar tab. It was getting expensive. I was putting down one hundred dollars an evening. It got to the point I couldn't afford it anymore. It's one of the reasons I stopped going.

Then those guys started doing it where I was doing it. They used my mailing list and all that.

BA: And you wanted them to do that.

DM: Yeah, I wanted them to do that. I felt the only way that things would happen if there was a nonprofit. People would contribute to it and wouldn't be constantly jealous that somebody was making money off it.

BA: Was that when Brian Wilson [a current member of the Midwest Comic Book Association, and one of the founders?] came to you?

DM: No, it was more like Gordon Purcell and Paul Ewart. They're the ones who did it. Brian was later, he was at the tail end of the creation of it. Gordon and Paul, it was their idea to create a nonprofit. So I gave it to Paul and Gordon.

Dan [Jurgens] was involved in that too. Bob Selvig introduced me to him. I was at Comic City one day and Bob was selling comic books there and Bob says, "Hey, this is Dan Jurgens. He's a student at MCAD. Also, he goes to your comic book conventions."

So I got to meet Dan.

BA: He was a young kid then.

DA: He moved from Ortonville and came here to MCAD.

He bought all his comics at Comic City and then continued when it became Comic Book College. He continues [to go there]. I guess it's common knowledge. Those guys show up every Friday night there. Gordon Purcell, Dan Jurgens. For a while Neil Gaiman when he was in town. They'd all meet there and get their comics and from there they'd go over to Figlio's or Cowboy Slim's. Now I think they go to—what did Gordon tell me? For a while they were going to Amazing Thailand.

No one's supposed to know this. Because they would come in there, all those guys would fight over the comics. Sometimes people wouldn't pre-order their comics in time so there would only be few comics left. The guys would fight over the new and old comics. So they started calling them the Sharks, so that's the name of their group.

BA: Jurgens and Purcell?

DM: Yeah, but nobody's supposed to know this.

BA: Did you ever meet Neil Gaiman?

DM: Never.

BA: Because Greg Ketter knows him really well.

DM: He bought all his comics at DreamHaven. That's how he got to know him.

BA: Did he live in Wisconsin then?

DM: Who knows? There's a story. One of the guys who worked for my fanzine was a guy by the name of Tom Bertino. He was a cartoonist and was a friend of Rich Larson. He lived in San Francisco. This is a shaggy dog story.

When Robert Crumb was having a lot of problems...when he would go to antique or record stores and buy stuff, the owners would jack up the prices two or three times of what it was. So if he wanted a 78 record that was worth ten dollars, the guy would be like, "Oh, you're Crumb. I'm charging you fifty dollars for it."

So Crumb came up with this great idea. He got my friend Tom Bertino and some other people who were about his size and weight, he went in his closet and gave those guys his clothes and his hat and they all grew their mustache to look like Crumb's mustache. So Crumb would send them into the antique stores with this want list, so pretty soon no one knew what Crumb looked like because there were three Crumb impersonators running around.

After two years of doing this, Crumb was able to go back in there and do things because people—they paid him cash, so people didn't know who Crumb was anymore.

One of the things Neil Gaiman did was he started rumors of the phantom art studio that was in Minneapolis somewhere. Then supposedly he and his family had a house in St. Louis Park. But this was all created so people wouldn't go to Wisconsin looking for that place. You've heard that story?

BS: Yeah.

DM: So that's one of the things people end up doing.

We were talking about notoriety. One of the hard things about meeting Charles Schulz was back in the early '80s or so, one night Charles Schulz's daughter was driving down to the family home and noticed this strange station wagon that was parked with no lights on.

So she immediately told her father and the family moved out of the house. They called the sheriff's department. It turned out they were a group of people, six of them, with automatic weapons. They were going to kidnap the Schulz family and hold them hostage to the United Artist Syndicate. This guy he produces one billion dollars—

BA: In merchandizing.

DM: His cut was \$175 million. The family now gets \$75 million a year. They were going to kidnap.

So for the longest time up until that dinner we had for him here, up until 1993-94, the only time he would do interviews...they would bring a satellite hookup and they would put it in his home. But he would not travel anymore. For three years he

refused to leave the compound because he was frightened of the family being kidnapped.

What they ended up doing, every quarter the Schulz family meets and decides what's going to happen with the \$75 million. They decide which charity or which thing. If it's going to be the dogs, the guide dogs. They have helper dogs they do. Or are they going to give it to the Bowling Green. Which cartooning historian magazine are they going to give it to?

BA: Is it Barb Schulz who's his wife?

DM: Jean.

BA: Oh, that's you [to Barb Schulz in the room].

DM: Jean Schulz.

BA: Jean Schulz—that was she was buying up his original art.

DM: I haven't heard that.

BA: Duane Barnhart was telling me.

DM: They're trying to get it all back. Because she runs that Schulz Museum. They want it back in the archives.

BA: Dan Jurgens, do you remember when *The Death of Superman* hit?

DM: Yeah. They actually did a book signing at the Comic Book College and it was insane because people had no idea. Up until then, *Superman* was selling even with John Byrne bringing it back, they were selling like maybe 600,000 copies. This is ten years earlier. I can't remember if it was 1968 or 69 when they were selling like 2 or 3 million.

So between '69 and '79—we won't go into the whole comic book industry thing—but it got down to—Byrne got it up to 500,000-600,000 copies. That's with a lot of re-doing.

When they did *The Death of Superman*, for the first time in ten years, they sold a million copies. It was unbelievable. They kept up it for about 4 or 5 months, they kept it up to a million.

Dan was also involved with Superman marrying Lois Lane. What they would do, the editors and writers of *Superman* would get together once a year, maybe at Disneyworld or one of those places, and they would plan out the story art. And they would come up with ideas.

And Dan Jurgens said, "Isn't it about time we had...this is ridiculous, this Lois Lane thing. Why doesn't he propose to her?"

Then they got married and the whole thing.

Then the other thing Jurgens proposed was, "What would the world be like if Superman dropped dead? What would happen? What would the world be like? How would all the superheroes function? What would his funeral be like?"

They all got together and Dan was given the things because it was his idea. The entire superhero thing and in that universe what would happen? What would the effects be? Would people be trying to steal his body? Who would replace him? Would all the space aliens then come out of the woodwork and invade the earth?

These were all his concepts that jump started the whole thing.

BA: Did you see him during all this?

DM: Afterwards. He got to be a major player. He started driving a Lexus. What can I say? He was doing pretty good. He and his wife are both designers. He worked for Honeywell for the longest time.

When he got out of MCAD, he went to work of Honeywell, doing design work. That's why his comics have what Curt Swan does. That real smooth realistic style. Dan's one of the few people who can actually draw a car or draw things. People would cheat. People, for the longest time, wouldn't try to draw realistic cities. They set all the stories in space so they could fake it.

In Marvel Comics you had it all the time where they were battling big monsters and spaceships so they didn't have to draw realistic things. Jurgens could draw realistically.

Later, because of the stuff with Death of Superman, he became more of a writer.

When Barb asked me the question, "What would I ask him?" What I want to know is which superhero he hasn't drawn? He's drawn either the series or the other superheroes as part of the background. He's drawn the *Justice League*. I don't know if he did the *X-Men*. He drew *Spider-Man* for a while. He had all the Marvel superheroes at one time.

He wrote *Thor*. He did pencils for *Thor*.

He's drawn basically every superhero that was done in DC. Then he did the things for Valiant Comics: *Dr. Solar* and *Magnus the Robot Fighter*.

He's the one who started up *Laura Croft: Tomb Raider*. He did that. He's done tons of stuff.

BA: Unlike Schulz, Jurgens stayed in Minnesota.

DM: By choice. They could have moved to Boston where he wife is from. But they decided to stay here. He's had all kinds of opportunities to do things. But he's chosen to do comic books. He could design games, video games, work in the movie industry. But he's chosen to stay doing superhero comics, which is an incredible choice.

BA: And he's a mentor.

DM: For everybody. He's the one who helped Gordon Purcell do a portfolio. How to present themselves. A lot people go to him. He's invited to a lot of schools, grade schools, to talk about comics. He's done a lot of mentoring.

He does what a master cartoonist does. A master cartoonist is a practitioner, an historian and a mentor. You have to have all three of those elements in order to be a master. Charles Schulz, Wally Wood, Clifford Sterrett—they all were really great practitioners of their craft. But they understood where their craft came from. They understood the history of it. And Dan really understands the whole history of superhero comics; he knows it backwards and forwards. The whole history of Marvel heroes. He understands what makes a superhero.

He's the icon maker. He preserves icons. That's one of the reasons that with *Superman* he was able to bring new life and interest into the characters.

BA: What about Greg Howard?

DM: The only thing I know is that he started doing cartooning because he was bored. He was a corporate lawyer. For some reason, somebody at the *Star Tribune* saw his things and said, "Do it." At the time the *Star Tribune* had its own syndicate, which they got rid of. I think it was Media Center [?].

So he did it for the longest time. But then he got bored and brought in Craig Macintosh to draw it. He's also from Minnesota. He's a US marine. He served in Vietnam, I think, twice. He was an editorial cartoonist for the *Star Tribune*.

Then later he became a staff artist. He and Stack Sack do a newspaper strip together. *Professor Doodles*. They do that. Greg went and said, "I'm getting tired of doing this." And he asked him to do it. Then he got so tired of it he sold it to the syndicate. They did keep Macintosh on doing the strip. There's a different person who writes it now.

BA: Did you ever meet Steve Sack?

DM: Yeah, he's an interesting guy. He's one of the people who started off as an editorial cartoonist for the *Minnesota Daily*. There's a bunch of them. Duane Barnhart, Ken Fletcher, they all worked at the *Daily* drawing cartoons. Jim Schumeister. Just tons of people.

Sack was able to move over. Scott Long was an editorial cartoonist for the *Minneapolis Tribune* and Sack took over for him. Scott Long was one of the creators of the National Editorial Cartoonists Society, whatever they call it.

Sometime around 2000, they had their national convention here. One of the things they did was invite Charlton Heston to come as one of the guests. Charlton Heston came in with his PowerPoint and started castigating, just really how inferior all the editorial cartoonists were. He would put up editorial cartoons and say, "This is really unfair about gun things..."

Then he went on and said, "You cartoonists are nothing more than naughty kids that sit in the back of the room in high school and draw horrible pictures." So in the back of the room here is Steve Sack and them drawing pictures of Charlton Heston.

BA: Is that why they brought him in?

DM: No, no. But that's what they ended up doing because he was pontificating. He was thin skinned. He used this as his opportunity. Then they had Walter Mondale. He was really pleasant. He talked about his experience with editorial cartoonists. He mentioned how unfair they were. But he didn't say they were naughty little kids in the back of the room. He said, "You guys were really hard on me. You made my life hell." That was pretty funny. That was Steve Sack's idea to bring these people in. He's really involved.

He also has a studio. He does a lot of painting. He's another one who tried to experiment. He took a lot of his editorial cartoons and animated them online.

One of his classic ones is Jesse Ventura wearing his boa, walking through downtown Minneapolis like Godzilla, knocking down the Foshay Tower. It's really funny.

Boa. His wrestler's thing. He has the sunglasses on with the stars. And he's walking through downtown Minneapolis, just knocking buildings over. Completely unaware he's trashing the city.

BS: Do you know anything about [first name?] Gideon?

DM: Yes, he was from Minneapolis. He started out at the University of Minnesota campus. He did some things for the *Daily*. He was friends with Garrison Keillor. He had a coffee shop on the campus. He would draw funny cartoons of beatniks and put them on the walls. Somebody from the *Star Tribune* hired him to do these iconic—they were icons but iconoclastic at the same time.

He did this classic one of the Minnesota State Legislature where they were little boys wearing gigantic leisure suits three times bigger than they were trying to pass laws about the state of Minnesota.

He got tired for some reason and moved to Michigan and then did the same thing, created iconic cartoons about life in Michigan. For the longest time he would draw—his cartoons really symbolize Minnesota. He got the whole Minnesota thing down. Kind of like what Chris Monroe does.

BA: Different sense of humor, though.

DM: Well, same kind of vein but he would do it in one panel. When he got a newspaper strip, he created the long panel. His newspaper strip became one long panel. And it was supposed to be four, five panels. In fact, Charles Schulz used that for years, the idea of having all the action take place in one panel. So it's like five or six people sitting down and having a dialogue in one long panel. Gideon pioneered that and Schulz picked that up.

BS: What was the name of the strip?

DM: It was called *Gideon*.

There's another guy, Kevin Lenagh—he did these things called *Domino Chance*.

BS: Oh, I love these.

DM: He's an MCAD graduate.

He lives in North Dakota right now. One of the last things he did—he was hired to do a daily strip about the adventures of our great governor Jesse Ventura. He was doing it at the same time that Kirk Anderson was doing his.

BA: Kirk Anderson over at the *Pioneer Press*.

DM: In fact that's where the strip was done, over at the *Pioneer Press*. Kevin was doing that and Kirk was doing it at the same time.

BS: He's an MCAD grad?

DM: He went there the same time Steve Fastner did.

BS: I don't know where I first saw one of these [*Domino Chance*]. Probably a client [?] catalog.

DM: Oh really?

BS: Or something and I would go out of my way to order *Domino Chance*.

DM: He and his wife Sandy, they're friends with Emma Bull and William Shetterly. In fact Emma Bull—they were inspired by what Sandy and Kevin were doing; they created Steel Dragon Press as a result of seeing of what Kevin and Sandy were doing.

BA: Emma and Will are well known in the fantasy and science fiction world.

DM: Steel Dragon did a comic book called *Captain Confederacy*. William is from the south. He's really into the south. He wanted to do what would happen if the south won the Civil War. Instead of Captain America it was Captain Confederacy.

BA: They're in California now.

DM: Arizona. They have a ranch down there.

He ran for governor with the grassroots party for the legalization of marijuana. Another one like Pete Wagner.

They did an issue of Steel Dragon—Reed Waller did the cover for it. It has a teddy bear in a toy box with a ray gun. That's pre-*Omaha the Cat Dancer*.

Domino Chance was coming out about the same time that *Omaha* was being done at Kitchen Sink Press. Everybody was all doing this stuff around '84-85. Paul Ewart and Alan Payne trying to do *Ebon Tree* or the comic book stuff. They created *Tales from the Heart*.

BA: How about Gordon Purcell?

DM: He was an actor. One of his degrees is drama, theater, University of Minnesota. He played the role of Charlie Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

BA: You said was there when Schulz came.

DM: He got a warm glow.

You can ask Dan Jurgens about Charles Schulz because he was there. They got into a really funny conversation about editors.

BA: Dan and who else?

DM: Charles Schulz. Dan asked Charles Schulz about editors and he said he hated all of them. He's never liked any of his editors. And Dan's whole thing is working with editors, have a good relationship. So he was really shocked at what Schulz said. Schulz never used the word "pain in the ass" but that's what they conveyed, that all the editors at the syndicate were nothing but troublesome. They were the ones who told him he didn't have any talent. They were the ones who were trying to do the strip.

BA: Changed the name of it.

DM: Yeah.

BA: To *Peanuts*, which he never liked.

DM: And they also tried to take the strip away from him. He was putting his foot down on the marketing of his stuff. They were doing things like razor blades in Germany with the *Peanuts* characters on them. He had an absolute fit about it. So he was demanding...so what they did was they hired a guy named Al Plastino, who is a notorious ghost. He ghosted for *Superman*. He ghosted for all these strips. He had this talent to duplicate anyone's style.

They had him do three months' worth of *Peanuts* strips. When Schulz started getting too big for his britches, they pulled this out. They said, "You don't own the *Peanuts* characters. You don't own the strip. We can get rid of you." And they pulled out Al Plastino's stuff and they showed him, "Look, you can be replaced."

It was like holy... It hurt him quite a bit. So Schulz agreed. He did get some things out of it. He continued doing the strip. He didn't make so much noise about the merchandizing of the stuff. He didn't like it. He really didn't. They were making a billion dollars a year off the strip, the cartoons, all the toys, the theme parks. There were two theme parks.

BA: The cartoons were big.

DM: He was responsible for over a billion dollars a year coming out of that empire. Hallmark Cards, they make \$300-400 million a year off those.

BA: I have *Peanuts* Band-Aids.

DM: Right, so you know what I'm talking about. So they made an agreement. They agreed also that when he retired that no one would take over the strip. That they would reprint the things. They wouldn't do like *Blondie*. They guy who does *Zippy the Pinhead*, Bill Griffith, he calls them the zombie strips. Because the creators are dead and the characters are all, "Arrrrrrr!" All the creators are dead. *Mark Trail*, *Orphan Annie*, *Dick Tracy*. That's all zombie's. That's what Griffith calls them.

BA: Did you ever meet Terry Beatty?

DM: Only briefly.

BA: He knew Chester Gould. Or was it Max Alan Collins?

DM: I think it was Max Alan Collins. I met him [Chester Gould] at the Chicago Comic Con of 1978. He was an incredible character. He sat there with a lighted cigar all the time. All they did was set up a table in the middle of a hotel and you went up and said hello to them and they moved you.

BA: When Charles Schulz came here, did you have an opportunity to sit down with him?

DM: Yeah, right. Well, we got to talking in the parking lot.

BA: Did he have minders with him?

DM: Well, what we did was, all 100 people got to ask him a question.

BA: Was that at the Mega Mall.

DM: They brought him to the Mega Mall but we had a dinner for him at O'Gara's. It was \$25 per person and the money was raised for helping dogs. There was a Minneapolis police officer who was suffering from MS and the money was used to buy him a dog, a helper dog. They wear the yellow things on. We got to talk to him a little bit. He came here as part of Camp Snoopy.

BA: So there were other people who controlled his time?

DM: Yeah, right, but we got him for the dinner. Then I got a chance to talk to him at the Depot, the train station in St. Paul. Union Depot. They had a huge dinner there for him.

BA: Another one?

DM: This was to raise money for what—I don't know.

BA: The same trip.

DM: Yeah. They did a lot of things with him. It was the first time he'd been back since he left. He didn't even come back when they buried his father here. Or when his stepmother died, he didn't come back for that either. After they moved to California, this was the first trip he made back here.

BA: Why didn't he come back?

DM: It was too hard on him. He talked about it. There was too much emotion and too much stuff. He didn't think he could handle it.

BA: He was heartbroken by his mother's death.

DM: He was heartbroken by everything basically.

BA: Central High School in St. Paul [an alleged incident when the high school yearbook rejected his student comics].

DM: We don't know if that's real or not. We don't know if, him being pushed out of the yearbook, what happened. Why his cartoons didn't go in the yearbook. But he held that as a grudge for a long time.

BA: Is that true?

DM: What? Yeah, they didn't publish—he had created 15 original cartoons for his high school yearbook and none of them appeared. He never bothered to ask what happened to them.

BA: Is that the high school that's on—it's not Selby.

DM: Down farther. Central High School. The same high school Amelia Earhart went to.

BA: They rebuilt it though.

DM: They kept the structure. They kept the steel girders. So they built it over it. They can claim they still have it.

BA: I didn't know Amelia Earhart went to school here.

DM: Her father was the night clerk at the St. Paul Hotel and they lived here for two years. She went to Central High School for a year and a half.

BA: Any cartooning history at the St. Paul Hotel, or is that just gangsters?

DM: Just gangsters and crooked judges and politicians.

BA: And the Lowry Hotel.

DM: And the Commodore. I wish the Commodore was open to the public.

BA: [F. Scott] Fitzgerald used to stay there.

DM: It used to be...up until the 1980s you could go in there and get cocktails. They used to be open to the public. And now the only way you can get in—

BA: Are they condos?

DM: Yeah. It's condos, so they have a community room. But they don't have the bar open or anything like that.

BA: You can't get in there?

DM: You can't get in there. It's part of their community room. But it was just incredible. Oh my God.

I went in there. Back in 1977, there was a thing called Changing Channels on channel 2. It was their first attempt to have people do video. Anybody could make a five-minute documentary. A woman by the name of Holly Johnson wanted to make a five-minute documentary on editorial cartooning. So she got me in and that's how I got to meet Jerry Fearing.

BA: He was a big presence.

DM: Oh God, yes. He's another that did editorial. His stuff is incredible. He corresponded quite a bit with Charles Schulz. Charles Schulz would send him letters; he'd send letters back.

BA: Did Duane Barnhart know Jerry?

DM: Oh, yeah, we knew Jerry really well. We'd hang out with him quite a bit.

BA: Where did he live?

DM: Scandia. That's where he lives. He was born in St. Paul. But then moved out there. That's where he raised his family.

There should be Richard Larson story in that [*Morpheus*].

BA: Yeah, *Morpheus*, how many issues of that came out?

DM: Two. It was our attempt to do our own stuff.

BA: Is that the 'zine you said you had?

DM: Actually, mine was *Mind Rot*. When I was in seminary school, I got caught reading comic books and watching cartoons and I was told that if I didn't stop it would rot my mind.

BA: Seminary school. You never told us about that.

DM: Nazareth Hall.

You know where Western Bible College is now? On Lake Johanna? That's where it is. It was a preparatory school for seminary students. One of the people I went to school with—the guy who wrote *Eagle's Wings*. Jan...I can't remember. But he wrote this incredible song.

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The magazine I did called *Mind Rot*, it started out in Vootie and then it became an animated cartoon. I even edited Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck in my magazine.

BA: Leonard Maltin.

DM: Yeah. He's reconciled now. He's now changed his whole attitude. In fact the place where it is is only 20 miles from where Reed Waller lives.

BS: That's not far.

DM: Not far from New Richland at all. The nursing home is in New Richland, the hospital in Albert Lea.

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