

THE SPHERE

Vol. 187 no. 1, published for the 216th Mailing of The Southern Fandom Press Alliance by Don Markstein, 14836 N. 35th St., Phoenix, AZ 85032, (602)485-7860 voice, (602)971-7567 (fax), dmarkstein@earthlink.net, <http://www.stormloader.com/markstein>. Headline font: Quantum.

I don't know if anybody but me and Gary Brown have noted this little exchange, but Gary and I have gone back and forth a couple of times about a Web site where thousands of comic book covers are posted. Gary says he enjoys dropping by and feasting his eyes on the visual cornucopia, but when I'm there I spend my time downloading all the covers I can. By now, I have just about everything on that site, except the covers that appear in Ernest Gerber's *Photo-Journal Guide to Comic Books*, a massive four-volume set with hundreds of pages of full-color cover reproductions, dozens of covers to the page. (I'd have gotten them too, but I think my ever-so-copious Web time is better spent on stuff I don't already have — this was a break-time activity of mine for months.)

The difference in approach is probably because Gary's needs and mine are different. Gary and I both enjoy comics, and as kids we read pretty much the same ones (tho he is almost a month older than me), but Gary *just* enjoys them. I also research them and write about them, so if I need to know who drew a particular cover or when a particular character started appearing on the cover of a series, it's nice to have the reference material close at hand. (And no kidding, that stuff *does* come in handy, especially in *Cartoonopedia* work.)

Then again, for all I know, Gary may download them too, for no purpose other than to run barefoot through them and feel the megabytes crinkle between his toes. Maybe he doesn't mention that part of his enjoyment of the site because the practice is probably technically illegal, or perhaps I should say *possibly* technically illegal — it's one o'them gray areas y'hear tell about. I think the copyright holders are pretty much not going to bother anybody who does stuff like that just for his own use, but the pendulum could swing the other way any time, and people more prudent than myself may not want pointers to the fact that they do it hanging around in print because once you print something you never know where it's going to go or how long it's going to last.

Future law-enforcement folks reading this, please note that the above paragraph is mere speculation, and serves mainly as a segue from the introductory paragraphs to the meat of the piece. I download stuff like that for my own use and talk in print about it because I am foolishly heedless of possible legal consequences, but I know of no evidence that Gary does.

Personally, I regard this as the equivalent of taping TV shows for your own use — but I acknowledge that there are some differences. One is that you don't have to wait for them to come around, but can just drop by the place any old time and scoop the things up. Still, I've made it a point to grab the stuff as quickly as I can, because you never know when it might disappear — as, in fact, it did

at one point, when Xoom kicked them out for violating its policy about posting copyrighted material.

And that calls to mind the stickier of the differences. The person who has placed the material on display has not made proper arrangements to do so with the copyright holder, so by the time I even see it, it's already been pirated at least once. Does this make my stashing the stuff away for my own use less quasi-legitimate than taping off the air? Or, if personal-use copying is okay, am I bound at all by the legitimacy of a copy up the line from me (which, of course, I can, truthfully but perhaps disingenuously, claim to have no certain knowledge of)?

Another question: Since these are only covers, is displaying them really a violation of the copyright holder's rights at all? (Xoom's decision that it is does not, of course, bind me — Xoom is a corporation, and corporations are notoriously, shall we say "cautious" about such things.) Or does publishing just the cover, which is not a part of the actual story — and which the owner will often actually encourage publication of, as promotion — come under the copyright law's "Fair Use" provisions?

Obviously, they're not going to prosecute every fanzine that ever printed the cover of one of their upcoming issues. However — does the fact that this is a **large body** of covers (complete runs are not uncommon) make it, in itself, a redaction of material that belongs to the publisher, and therefore the property of the publisher? Seems like it might, but on the other hand (how many hands are we up to now?), there's that Ernest Gerber book I mentioned in the first paragraph, and I somehow suspect he didn't succeed in tracking down all the copyright holders to secure permission.

Tangled questions, and we haven't even gotten into Napster yet. While ethicists and lawyers debate them, I'll continue downloading whatever I like, from whatever source, for my own personal use.

The reason I'm bringing it up now is, the explosion of — of **what?** Information transfer rates? Anyway, this business of **really** wholesale copying and passing around of just about any form of consumer data, that everybody's talking about — it just hit me in the face. Early in July, I caught wind of a Web site that — hooeee, **Gary, you gotta hear about this one!**

You'll find it at <http://www.nailnews.com/> When you get there, click — well, click just about anything you like! The one I personally go there for is alt.binaries.pictures.comics. That's a Usenet newsgroup that's been exchanging scans of comics-related art for years, but only for dedicated hobbyists because downloading each of the hundreds of items that pass through **any** Usenet group, especially one where the files run so large, is a major pain in the ass.

Until now.

This site scoops up data from dozens of Usenet image-trading groups, and posts it in such a way that it's very easy to download — if you've got scads and scads of open disk space, which, as it happens, I do right now. I drop by every morning, as I'm drinking a cup of tea, and get downloads rolling of **complete issues** of an incredible variety of comics. Just since I found it, I've packed away three or four middle issues of *All Star Comics*, an issue of *Krazy Komiks*, a couple of pre-Disney Zorro adaptations, some Jack Cole cartoons from 1950s *Playboy*, one or two underground comics . . .

Incredible variety, like I said — and the volume ain't no slouch, either, not just because of how many come through but also because most of the scans are very high-density. Beautiful stuff — but I'd been doing it less than three weeks before accumulating enough to fill up a CD-ROM, i.e., almost 2/3 of a gigabyte!

Like taping shows off the air, if you want this stuff you have to set your traps on a regular basis and catch it when it's available, because when it goes by, it goes "Bye!" The average image remains up for a maximum of five days, and three or four is more common. This point was forcibly brought home to me right near the beginning, when data I was downloading disappeared **while I was downloading it!**

In principle, of course, this is very similar to what I've been doing all along — for decades, in fact, if you count videotaping cartoons from local kidvid. But the sudden acceleration, combined with the fact that these **are** complete issues and thus can't be hammered into "Fair Use" no matter what, kind of underscores the questions involved.

Due consideration, of course, is given to the fact that the publisher isn't offering the material for sale, and so the people posting it are at least not using its own property to compete with it. Of course, the counter is that you don't have to use something to own it. The publisher **could** offer it for sale; and in fact, comics publishers do reprint stories from time to time.

I figure, tho, that as long as the owners don't have the stuff in print, and as long as the image files just go whizzing by rather than linger to dilute the property on an ongoing basis — what the hell, I'll download 'em for personal use only, just as I've always done.

Eventually, copyright owners are going to have to come to terms with this sort of thing. In a few years, maybe they'll have their entire backlist on-line, to be downloaded for a small fee per issue. Then, no doubt, operations like this will fade away, or confine their piracy to defunct publishers. I doubt I'd bother doing what I'm doing, if there were a reliable way I could simply scoop the stuff up at a reasonable price whenever I want it.

Until then, I'll just keep on downloading. A CD every three weeks or so — in this day and age, that's not too much data to store.

THE DAILY QUACK™

I've launched a daily column on the Internet. It's not very lucrative so far, but it's kind of fun. Each day, Monday through Friday, I make a comment (pithy, humorous, insightful, all of the above, or none of the above) about one or another aspect of The Human Experience, in 150 words or less. On weekends, I do the same thing, but Weekend Quacks run 150-400 words. Since it's got one of those godawful alphabet-soup URLs, I'll start a new line for it.

http://www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/browse/view_article.gsp?c_id=112847 (ewwww!)

(The bit at the end is a comment, not part of the URL.)

The cool thing about these "Quacks" is that I'm taking them out of my old SFPazines. Also old non-SFPA zines, old Internet postings, and old throw-away writing of all kinds, but SFPA is a particularly rich source, especially the mailing comments. Anything I find that I think a general audience might be interested in, at least to the point of devoting as much time to it as to a "joke of the day", I toss into the "Quack" file. Most of them require minor editing so they don't seem like part of an ongoing conversation, but with a little polish, they look surprisingly good standing up there all by themselves.

Go by and take a look, if you can type that URL accurately (and if not, e-mail me and I'll send you a copy you can just click). (By the way, I've been thinking of getting one of those cool Republic of Tonga forwarding URLs for it — how does "<http://www.go.to/quack>" sound?)

Like I said, so far it hasn't been lucrative. As of the day I sent this zine off, there are 31 posted, and the take for the lot of 'em may break \$10 this week. (I'm being paid by how many people read them — and while pay-per-click venues turn out to be of **very** marginal value to a professional writer, they're a fine place to park old fanzine junk.) Even with the writing already done, as things stand now, it's not even paying me wages for the few minutes it takes to edit and upload each one.

But I'm going to give it a year, and then decide if it's worth continuing. (I can keep it up indefinitely — you have no idea how many old fanzines I've written.) By that time, the column will hopefully have gained a following, if only because of its reliability. I'm figuring the break-even point is for each one to bring in about \$2-3 during its first 90 days posted, and that doesn't seem like an impossible goal.

My current estimate is that this one-year trial will total about 40,000 words. If other plans don't reach fruition before then, maybe it'll be my first e-book.

CYBER-SOAP

Oh, I'm just **full** of on-line goings-on this time! I caught a notice posted at a writers' Web site about someone looking for 12-part serials, each chapter running 300 words or so. Sounded like fun, and the pay

rate was pretty decent, so I sent them a couple of chapters and an outline. Just today, I got a go-ahead to finish the story.

I could run what I sent and claim SFPA credit for it (nobody's seen it but the editor and a half-dozen other writers I workshopped it with, all of whom could, arguably at least, be construed as contributors), but I've done a fair amount of that lately (and will be doing it again later on in this zine, too), so You Are Spared. (For now.)

I'll give you the rundown, tho. The protagonist is a professional thief, who, on commission from a client, steals this incredibly valuable ancient statuette. Turns out there's a curse — anybody who steals it has abominable luck (usually fatal within a couple of years), which is why the client hired the job done in the first place rather than steal it himself. The story concerns the thief teaming up with the former possessor (a bitter art-collecting rival of the client), to get the curse transferred where it belongs.

It's pretty funny so far (and if you **must**, you can find it at <http://www.stormloader.com/markstein/thief.htm>, where I posted it for workshopping, but I'm taking it down soon). I won't know exactly how it goes until after this zine is out, tho, because a couple of other things, one of which is SFPA, have to be gotten out of the way before I can tackle it. If it's published (they're not guaranteeing a sale at this point, but I think it's worth finishing even on spec), I'll try to remember to let you know where you can find it.

By the way, pulling paragraphs out of mailing comments and calling them a column isn't the only way I recycle my writing. This plot was originally proposed to Egmont, where the main characters would have been The Beagle Boys.

DON MARKSTEIN'S CARTOONOPEDIA™

Still no word from the people who contracted to publish it. I've accepted the fact that they've disappeared off the face of the Earth, and am moving on.

At the end of September, it will be six months since I signed with them, so even if the contract were in force (which it isn't, since they haven't signed it and sent me back a copy, but they **could** pull the rug out from under me by doing that any time), if they haven't put it up by then, their rights are terminated by the terms of the contract itself. Once it's free again, there are several outfits I'm looking at to pitch it to.

It **will** be published. It's too worthwhile not to be.

By the way, the place where I had it displayed for potential buyers seems to have gone the way of all flesh. It can now be found at <http://www.stormloader.com/markstein/cartoonopedia> (but as before, please don't spread that around outside of SFPA, because I don't want the general public crawling all over it until it's in a place where I'll get paid for their doing so).

Feeling more cheerful and confident about the project now that I'm approaching the time I can start moving on it again, I've stepped up the pace of writing — not to the point of doing one every day, like I was for the second half of last year, but a hell of a lot better than the paltry three articles I managed during the last SFPA mailing period. New articles since the last SFPA are Blackhawk, Fatman the Human Flying Saucer, Genius Jones, Jonny Quest, Ka-Zar, Legion of Super Heroes, Mighty Heroes, Millie the Model, Sugar & Spike, Superboy, Tom Terrific, Top Cat, Vampirella, Yosemite Sam and Zot!, for a total of 224 (and counting). Not all of those are up yet, but I'll see that they're uploaded shortly after the SFPA deadline, so by the time mailings are delivered you can drop by and see them all.

The reason I'm waiting until after the SFPA deadline is — yeah, you got it. I'm running one here, and I want it to be eligible for credit. But bear with me a moment. This one is special.

There is a very obscure DC character named Genius Jones, whom I've heard of in passing here and there — and you've heard of him too, at least if you read that list a couple of paragraphs back. He appeared on maybe as many as a dozen covers during the mid-1940s, and those only in obscure titles. Mostly, he just kind of sat in the back pages. He has never, to my knowledge, been so much as glimpsed since his original run, even in reprints. My own collection contains only two of his stories.

What makes Genius Jones special is — he was created by Alfred Bester!

I can't remember ever reading a print article about the character, and I strongly suspect there has never been one. Nor, researching this one, was I able to find more than a passing mention of him on the Web. As far as I can tell, I am the very first person ever to write an article on Genius Jones.

Here it is. As always, links are rendered as small caps. Enjoy.

GENIUS JONES

Medium: Comic books

Published by: DC Comics

First Appeared: 1942

Creator: Alfred Bester

With the aid of his incredibly well-equipped laboratory (conveniently mounted into the back of an old convertible), the diminutive Johnny "Genius" Jones had the startling ability to answer any question. In the grand tradition of comic books, he made himself a costume (purple tights, red cape and yellow helmet), and adopted the name Answer Man. But instead of performing his super deeds free of charge, like his more altruistic brethren, this SUPERHERO made a business of it. In or out of his Answer Man costume (he did not make a secret of his true identity), Genius Jones would answer any question — for ten cents a question.

Genius Jones's business prospered (there's always a market for a good product at a good price) in the back

pages of *Adventure Comics*, starting in its 77th issue (August, 1942). Many of the questions could be answered only by foiling nefarious (and usually hilarious) criminal plots, so there were plenty of Answer Man action scenes.

The character was created by Alfred Bester, making his DC COMICS writing debut with the Genius Jones introductory tale. Bester went on to write other DC features (among other things, he composed GREEN LANTERN'S oath), but is best known for his Hugo-Award-winning science fiction stories. The artist assigned to the series was Stan Kaye, whose other credits include INKING both SUPERMAN and BATMAN.

Genius Jones remained in *Adventure Comics* for more than three years, without once being so much as mentioned on the cover. His first appearance in that position came on the fifth issue of *All Funny Comics* (Winter, 1944-45). At least one prominent bibliography, by the way, lists *All Funny* #1 as Genius Jones's first appearance — actually, *Adventure* #77 predated it by more than a year.

In 1946, DC re-shuffled a couple of titles, suddenly moving all the superheroes from *More Fun Comics* into *Adventure*. Only Genius Jones moved in the other direction. He took up residence in *More Fun* with its 108th issue (March, 1946), and appeared on a half-dozen covers (alternating with Dover & Clover) over the next year. In April, 1947, Jiminy, by Howard Post, ousted both from the cover. Later that year, *More Fun*, which had been DC's oldest title, was cancelled, and Genius Jones was never seen again.

Like most comic book publishers that go back to the 1940s and beyond, DC has, at various times in the years since, strip-mined its own past. It is almost inconceivable that a DC-owned costumed crimefighter, from the first wave of costumed crimefighters, could fail to have been brought back for an occasional encore appearance decades after his heyday. Even The Terrific Whatsit, the super-powered turtle who starred in mid-'40s *Funny Stuff*, turned up in the 1980s, in a guest appearance with Captain Carrot.

But Genius Jones belonged to an entire genre of characters that has never been touched in all these revival-crazed years — the humorous fillers scattered among the back pages of *Detective Comics*, *Action Comics*, *Star Spangled Comics* and the other superhero-anchored anthology titles. Hayfoot Henry, Super Sleuth McFooey, The Gas House Gang . . . the ones that had a brief moment in the sun in *All Funny Comics* and the waning years of *More Fun*, just before comics passed them by.

OTHER WRITING

Egmont, of course. The pace has slowed, but the stories are still coming. I'm currently working on my second story for the year, about Mickey Mouse saving a foreign guy's life and then, according to the customs of the guy's country, getting stuck with him as a servant. (The one I finished last month, where Mickey gets hand-

cuffed to his arch-enemy, Pete, turned out hilarious, by the way. They wind up doing a three-legged race together.)

Talk About Stress, the book I spent several months editing, is done and should be published soon. The same company is going to do my relaxation scripts (which I mentioned last issue) as a CD, and they're so impressed with my work (as I said earlier, it's the most boring I've ever been on purpose, but apparently I'm pretty good at that), they're actually giving me a by-line, complete with bio and photo on the CD liner. They'll probably want another set of scripts in a few months.

I've just been talking with a local guy who does Web site consulting and will probably need a copy writer occasionally. He takes the trouble to optimize pages for algorithms used by different search engines, so there may be great volumes of work ("first, do one with the key words in both the first and last paragraphs, then do another version with the key words appearing at least four times in the body copy, then one with the key words in each of two sub-heads..."). It'll bore the pants off me, but I can put up with that if it pays the bills.

And of course, there's other stuff going on that may or may not make it to the point where it's worth talking about here.

NED BROOKS:

I **knew** the first comment on *Don Markstein's Cartoonopedia* would be "Why didn't you do an article on (fill in blank)?" I'll give you the standard answer.

My *Cartoonopedia* is a work in progress, and always will be. If your favorite character isn't in it yet, please be patient. Eventually, I'll get to him.

As a matter of fact, I have a short list (about 50-75) of characters I have to get done before branching out into articles on creators, and Flaming Carrot is on it. In fact, since I've already prepared a graphic, there's a very good chance I'll get to him quite soon — he may even be up by the time you read this. Norb, however, is not on the list — in fact, the name doesn't ring a bell at all. Give me some details (creator, medium, dates, etc.), and maybe I'll put him in.

Yow! You must be the only person in the entire history of the world with **two** 30-year strings of consecutive apa mailings hit. When did your Slanapa string start?

A slow carbon monoxide leak in the pilot's cabin can easily cause a plane crash. Yes, it would give the pilot time to put on an oxygen mask — but the first effect of carbon monoxide poisoning is to make the victim "slow of mind" so chances are, he wouldn't think of it.

I don't think a webcam in the window JFK was shot from is such a horrifying idea — but how can anyone possibly know what window, if any, to put it in? Evidence in favor of the 6th floor of the book depository may have convinced the Warren Commission, which was notoriously gullible about anything that might support the "Solitary Lunatic" theory so heavily favored by all assassination probes, but it's far too flimsy for an actual

human being (with the possible exception of a very trusting child).

GARY BROWN:

When you say you expect a variant of apas will appear through the Internet, if it hasn't already done so, I gotta ask — what planet's Internet are you talking about? The one on this planet has had them running for years. Doesn't practically every Web site these days have its own message board?

Not much to add to your coverage of the Elian Gonzalez case, except that he was only in the U.S. in the first place because his mother kidnapped him. Back in Cuba, the father had sole custody, because the mother was flaky and obviously unfit. She just suddenly, without warning, took off for Florida with her boyfriend, and took the kid with her. The idea that **anybody** but the father was legally or morally responsible for the boy, or entitled to make decisions for the boy, is insupportable.

The value of the case, tho, is in the spotlight it's shone on the Miami Cubans. I'm more than a little disturbed that these people not only have been allowed to establish such a fanatical, insular foreign community within our borders — not only have been nurtured and encouraged to do so by the U.S. government — but have actually, with their rabid hatred of Castro and their propensity for seeing his machinations behind even the simplest, most straightforwardly obvious of human emotions (e.g., a father wanting his son to come home), been allowed to influence foreign policy!

I suppose it would be going too far to suggest it's time for wholesale deportations. But certainly, this favored status the right-wingers have given them, whereby any Cuban can simply walk into the U.S. and establish residence without fear of the INS, has got to be brought more in line with the same right-wingers' policy toward other unofficial immigrants — or vice versa, perhaps. Especially unofficial immigrants from areas where it's **really** hell to raise a child, but the people making it so are on good terms with Washington.

Even as we speak, there are children locked in jail cells in Arizona, waiting to be deported to Central America, where their lives won't be worth a plugged nickel. If those damned Miami Cubans are so desperate for Hispanic children to raise, they should fly out here and adopt a few instead of trying to break up a stable family.

RANDY CLEARV:

I'm sorry to hear you think using "CE" instead of "AD" to designate dates is "silly political correctness". But the fact is, this is **not** the year 2000 of **my** lord (which is included in the phrase "Anno Domini"), and there are literally billions of others who quite properly say the same. We **do**, however, for sake of communication, all agree on 2000 as a numerical designation for the year, and therefore it **is** the year 2000 of the Common Era.

Political correctness? No, just correctness.

Please excuse me if I seem testy, but whenever I see the term "political correctness" applied to the common, ordinary respect we properly show to other human beings, I figure either the speaker hasn't thought it through, or he really does lack respect for others. To ridicule or belittle the idea of designating dates in such a way as to be acceptable to those who don't acknowledge the same "lord" as you (e.g., calling it "silly political correctness"), even after having had a better alternative pointed out, is not so much "politically incorrect" as simply rude.

I assume, of course, you fall into the former category, i.e., those who haven't thought it through. This isn't like calling Howdy Doody a differently-stringed American — it's a very easy and reasonable thing to do, and unlike the alternative, it has the advantage of being correct.

TOM FELLER:

I guess I'm not too surprised that Apa-L still exists, but I will be if the answer to the next question is positive — has Fred Patten still never missed a single mailing?

You use the term "sci-fi" to denote trash? I use it to denote science fiction, just like the general public does. It's only in the statistically-insignificant little backwater of fandom that it's considered a dirty word. Everybody else has to have it explained that some people choose to feel insulted by the term. I write to be understood without footnotes. (See my article on the subject, at http://www.themestream.com/gspd_browse/browse/view_article.gsp?c_id=3768)

JANICE GELB:

Last time I did booth duty at a trade show, I wore a nice dress shirt with a tie, and comfortable sandals. It was a conscious decision to dress that way. The convention was librarians, and I was there as a comic book writer. I wanted them to see me as looking "respectable" (whatever that means) at first glance, but with a touch of eccentricity and bohemianism. (No need to tell them I often work stark naked, tho.)

I thought couscous was a form of pasta. (I wrote a story last year in which Mickey Mouse fought a desert bandit in an exotic setting, and made a running gag of a local delicacy called couscous al-fetid. "I see in the paper that Haroun al-Rancid drenched you with al-fetid sauce." "But the paper says I was attacked with insect repellent and paint remover." "Those are uses to which al-fetid sauce is sometimes put.")

You're just picking up on the news of Stan Lee working for DC? I think it's hilarious, myself, and I certainly plan to read every single issue! Marvel thought they were saving a few pennies by not renewing the exclusivity clause in their contract with him — ha! Now DC gets to plaster his name all over **their** books! (And, of course, he's got a dot-com that's worth millions — like, that matters.)

GARY ROBE:

Huxter guest of honor . . . pretty goofy concept. Reminds me, tho, of one of the early or mid '70s New Orleans *Star Trek* conventions, where they let one guy, can't remember his name, buy up every table in the room. The same group was bidding for a WorldCon (and did a pitiful job of it). At one time I was involved in a parody of one of their flyers, which listed the guy who bought all the tables as their "Dealer Guest of Honor".

I'm on the census this year, for the first time since 1960. I've always managed to avoid it in the past, but this year, they caught me unawares. Karen (16) answered the door when they knocked, and truthfully answered everything they asked. **Damn!** (Fortunately, they only asked how many people live in the house, but still, she counted me, so I'm on the census.)

The way to keep guns out of the hands of nuts is to stop driving so many people nuts. See *The Daily Quack*™ for Wednesday, July 26. (But for those who go over the edge anyway, the way to limit the damage they cause is to make sure there are enough armed responsible citizens around to where they can be taken out the minute they open fire.)

SHEILA STRICKLAND:

Say, I know that name! You're the little kid who used to turn up at New Orleans conventions back when I lived there. Or did you grow up since then? So many people do. (Actually, reading your bio, I see you weren't all that little a kid then, either — but 19 seems much younger when you're 26, than 46 seems when you're 53 . . .)

Quite a trip, catching up on someone I knew only slightly, more than 20 years ago. Sorry to hear about your health problems, and I hope they work out.

For heaven's sake, The New Leviathan Oriental Fox Trot Orchestra still exists!!? How 'bout that! Seems like only 25-30 years ago, good ol' Faruk von Turk (modern re-discoverer of the Oriental Fox Trot) was asking me to drop by one of their early rehearsals. Just recently, I ran across the photo at right, which is me on stage at one of their concerts, circa 1973. (One reviewer referred to me as a rather pale-skinned blackamoor.) It was on the cover of one of my SFPazines of the time.

TONI WEISSKOPF:

I read the Paul Creswick version of *Robin Hood* many years ago, but the edition I read had the byline of one Henry Gilbert. Later, I picked up the N.C. Wyeth version, and that's when I discovered the text is the same. Meanwhile, I have another version (In my youth, I accumulated over a dozen versions of the Robin Hood legend) that also has Henry Gilbert's byline, but it's a completely different book!

Whoever wrote it, that version published under the names of Creswick and Wyeth is my very favorite, in-

cluding the Howard Pyle. It's been a long time since I read it, but I remember fully rounded characters, believable motivations, and a complex story full of evil conspiracies and international intrigue. Great stuff — and the paintings didn't hurt either.

Apparently, you still haven't dredged up enough information about Scaife. When you have some idea why I think it's so interesting that Steve Kangas pulled a Vince Foster in his bathroom, I'll believe you know something about him.

Okay, the Elian Gonzalez situation wasn't **quite** "nothing". But take away the paranoid whackos who thought Castro was relevant to the case, and it's hard to imagine any situation **less** controversial than a father wanting to take his son home, or anyone with less legal standing than those who tried to stop him.

I thought it was pretty common knowledge in SFPA that my father was a professional writer. (Also, to a lesser extent, his mother, and I would not be surprised if Karen takes this into its fourth generation.) He started out doing trade papers in the 1940s and '50s, became an expert on finance after he inherited a stock portfolio in 1952, and made that a specialty (but not the only thing he wrote about) from the late '50s on. He wrote 14 books, most about economics. One of them was highly praised by an incumbent U.S. president. Unfortunately, it was Nixon.

