

THE BEST AMERICAN COMICS

INTRO

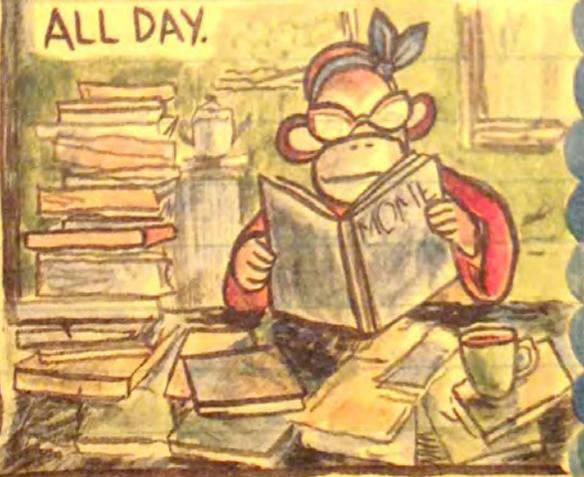
*North
happened to be in*



Q: WHAT WAS THE BEST JOB YOU EVER HAD?



MINE WAS READING COMICS ALL DAY.



INTRODUCTION

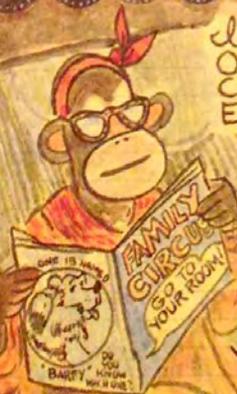
IT WAS MY UNFAIR AND ARBITRARY DECISION TO LEAVE OUT DAILY STRIPS AND EDITORIAL CARTOONS WHEN I WAS CHOOSING COMICS FOR THIS COLLECTION

by LYNDA BARRY

AND ALTHOUGH THE NEW YORKER CARTOONISTS ARE AMONG MY FAVORITES, I LEFT THEM OUT TOO

*BATMAN IS THE ONLY SUPERHERO I INCLUDED, THE REST ARE MISSING ALONG WITH MOST OF THE BEST KNOWN ART-COMIC CARTOONISTS, AND MANY OF MY FRIENDS.

I REALIZE SOME OF OUR GREATEST CARTOONISTS ARE EXCLUDED BY THESE HAPHAZARD LIMITS INCLUDING ONE OF THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME, BIL KEANE, WHOSE WORK I'VE BEEN ATTACHED TO NEARLY ALL OF MY LIFE.

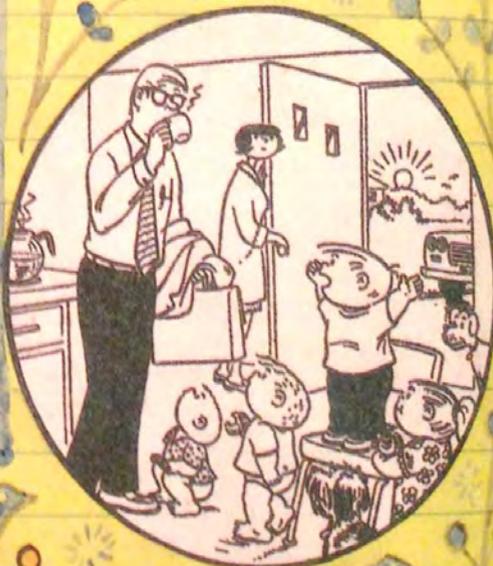


I DON'T THINK ANYONE CHOOSES A COMIC TO BECOME ATTACHED TO...

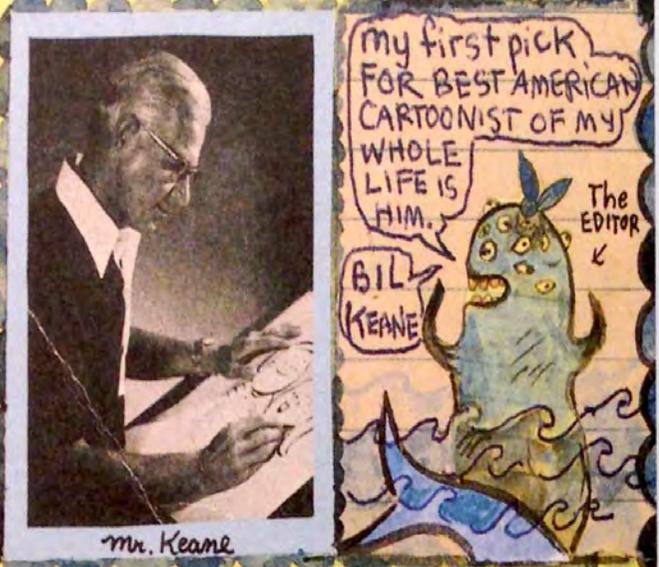
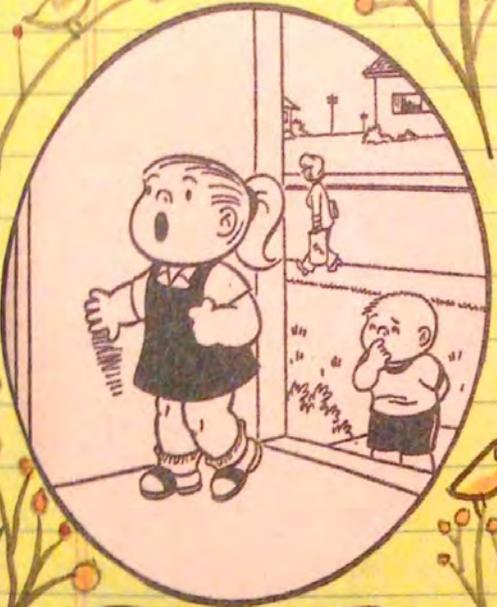
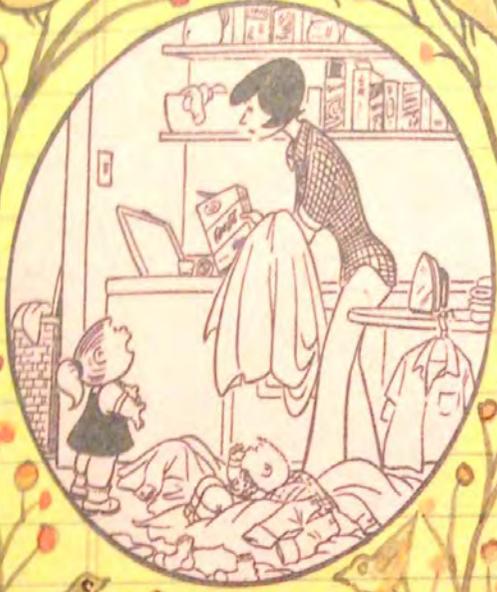
BY THE TIME
WE NOTICE OUR
ATTACHMENT,
IT'S ALREADY
HAPPENED.



I DIDN'T LOVE THE FAMILY
CIRCUS BECAUSE IT WAS
FUNNY. I DON'T THINK I NOTICED
OR CARED ABOUT THAT PART
AT ALL. I LOVED THE VERY
WORLD OF IT, A WORLD THAT
I COULD WATCH THROUGH A
PORTAL EDGED IN INK
EVERY DAY WHEN I
OPENED THE NEWSPAPER.
IT WAS A CIRCLE I WANTED
TO CLIMB THROUGH.



FOR ME, A COMIC STRIP IS A PLACE THAT SEEMS TO BE ONGOING. IF YOU LOOK THROUGH THESE CIRCLES, YOU'LL SEE A PLACE THAT BROUGHT A LOT OF COMFORT TO ME AS A KID



IF YOU LOOK INTO THEM WITHOUT READING A CAPTION YOU MAY SEE A PLACE A KID IN A BAD SITUATION MIGHT WANT TO GET TO. I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH FOR 'PEANUTS.' NOT THEN. FOR KIDS IN TROUBLE, COMICS ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN JOKES AND GAGS

COMICS ARE A PLACE TO GO. THEY GAVE ME A 'MEANWHILE' AND AN 'ELSEWHERE'. THEY ARE A FORM OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE SHUT-IN KIDS WHO NEED TO SEE LIFE IN OTHER WORLDS.



KIDS WILL ALWAYS FIND COMICS AND READ THEM. IT IS VERY HARD TO HIDE COMICS FROM CHILDREN.



IF THIS BOOK HAD BEEN IN MY HOUSE WHEN I WAS A KID,



I WOULD HAVE FOUND A WAY TO READ IT IN SECRET



I WOULD HAVE STARTED BY FLIPPING THROUGH IT FOR SWEAR WORDS OR CRAZY PICTURES



THEN I'D START READING FROM THERE.



I WOULDN'T READ IT IN ORDER AND I WOULDN'T READ IT ALL AT ONCE, BUT I'D KEEP SNEAKING IT OUT.



THAT APPROACH WILL STILL WORK VERY WELL WITH THIS BOOK AND I RECOMMEND IT.



BUT I DON'T RECOMMEND GIVING THIS BOOK TO KIDS. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN STOP THEM FROM FINDING IT, THOUGH.



NO MATTER HOW CAREFULLY A COMIC STRIP IS CONSTRUCTED, THE READER'S EXPERIENCE OF IT CANNOT BE PREDICTED



COMICS ARE A CONTAINER-



THEY CAN HOLD EVERY SORT OF



EXPERIENCE, -- INCLUDING VERY DISTURBING ONES.



THERE WERE COMIC CHARACTERS THAT SCARED ME.



THE EXCITED GRANNY WITH THE CRAZY POSES -



HER SUDDEN JUMPING OUT OF CORNERS WITH HER DANGLERS OUT--



HERS WAS A WORLD.



I WANTED TO STAY OUT OF.



PLAYBOY MAGAZINE



HAD A LOT OF COMICS---



THAT I UNDERSTOOD IN MY OWN WAY--



AND EVEN IF IT WASN'T WHAT THE CARTOONIST INTENDED, A STORY HAPPENED EVEN IF I DIDN'T GET THE ACTUAL JOKE.



THERE ARE AS MANY VERSIONS OF EACH COMIC STRIP AS THERE ARE READERS.

Where is a comic strip located?



READING A COMIC STRIP
 MORE THAN ONCE SEEMS
 TO CHANGE IT AS WELL, BUT
 OF COURSE IT'S NOT THE
 COMIC STRIP

YET MORE WORDS FROM MISS KNOW IT ALL



THAT IS DOING THE CHANGING.

WHEN WE NOTICE NEW THINGS IN A STORY, SOMETHING IS BEING FORGOTTEN THAT WE DON'T NOTICE.

SOMETIMES NOT GETTING THE STORY THE WAY IT WAS INTENDED CAN BE THE VERY THING THAT MAKES IT USABLE

FOR BEST RESULTS IT IS GOOD TO READ SOMETHING TWICE SO YOU CAN MISUNDERSTAND IT AT LEAST ONCE.

NOWHERE IN THE CARTOONS OF THE WILD GRANDMA IS ANY HINT OF HER ESCAPING FROM A MENTAL INSTITUTION,

BUT AT THE TIME IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I COULD EXPLAIN IT TO MYSELF.

I COULDN'T ASK ANYONE.

I KNEW I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING AT THAT MAGAZINE.

JUST LIKE I KNEW I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO GET OUT OF THE CAR-

CIGARETTE! YA GOT A CIGARETTE?

WHEN WE VISITED A RELATIVE -

WHO WAS IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION.

STAY IN THE CAR WITH THE DOORS LOCKED.

MOM WILL BE RIGHT BACK. DON'T OPEN THE CAR DOOR FOR ANYONE

HEY!

HEY!



WHERE DOES STORY POWER COME FROM?



NOW IF I LOOK AT THE EXCITED GRAN-NY COMIC--



I GET THE JOKE, BUT THE STORY POWER HAS VANISHED. WHY?



SEX AND MENTAL ILLNESS WERE TWO THINGS I COULDN'T TALK ABOUT TO ANYONE THEN.



BUT THEY WERE TWO THINGS THAT TROUBLED ME A LOT. STORY POWER SEEMS TO BE CONNECTED TO THIS.



I WANTED TO HAVE A FAMILY CIRCUS MIND--



BUT THE MIND I HAD WOULD NOT BE GOOD.



STORY POWER SEEMS TO COME FROM A NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THING WE CAN'T THINK OUT LOUD.



IT COMES IN THE FORM OF AN EXPERIENCE,



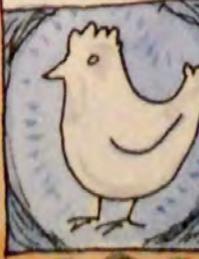
EVEN ONE WE DON'T WANT IN REAL LIFE.



BOTH GOOD COMICS AND BAD COMICS HELPED ME.



THAT'S ONE THING THAT HAS NOT CHANGED.



DEAR DIARY, THERE ARE PILES OF COMICS EVERYWHERE.

I HAVE READ SOME VERY CRAZY *@# AND I HAVE READ SOME OF IT TWICE



I NEVER KNOW WHICH STORIES WILL--

COME BACK TO ME BUT I PAY ATTENTION WHEN IT HAPPENS.

WHAT MAKES A STORY COME BACK TO US?

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

WHEN A STORY COMES BACK TO US-

WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?

HOW DOES IT TRAVEL? WHY?

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AN INTRO TO A COLLECTION OF THIS SORT-



No one sees electricity as it

USUALLY CONTAINS SOME WORDS ABOUT THE CONTENTS



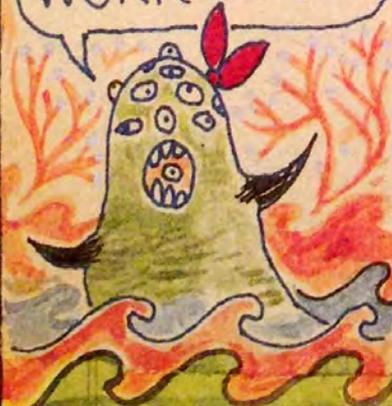
goes out from the powerhouse

I ONLY HAVE ONE WORD: 'GOOD'



How does electricity get in?

I'M NOT SURE THAT KNOWING WHAT I THINK ABOUT THIS WORK BEYOND



THAT EXCELLENT WORD, GOOD, IS HELPFUL FOR ARTIST OR READER



Written by
Pictures by

AN INTERNAL COMPASS IS A SENSITIVE THING AND EASILY THROWN OFF BY INTERFERENCE.



WHEN A COMIC STRIP COMES BACK TO MIND, WHAT CALLS IT UP? WHAT HAPPENS TO A STORY AFTER IT IS READ?



YOUR NAME HERE

do we control which comic strip stories we will remember while day dreaming? What does something is going on?

invisible they will. That I shall not discuss, and perhaps cannot account for; but certainly they are a proof of the converse of spirits, and a secret communication between those embodied and those unembodied, and

doing or going anything, way or that way, I never failed to obey the secret though I knew no other reason for it than that such a pressure, or such a hint, hung upon my mind.

wires take electric power to your town. Wires go along the streets of your town. Electricity does not stay

They may go under the street. If you could see inside the wire, you could not see electricity there.

HOW DOES IT MOVE THROUGH TIME?

MIRIAM

wish you were here where are you?

HYPochondria OR INTUITION?



Where is a cartoonist located?
 Miriam ENGELBERG'S book called, "CANCER MADE ME A SHALLOWER PERSON" was one I wanted to excerpt here. Her work came back to me a lot.

BREAST CANCER AS A HOBBY

it's the saddest kind of funny -



with the most GO-FOR-IT drawing style that can't be faked -



on the day I found out her book was published a few months too early to qualify for this collection



it also learned she was gone



SPACE SHIP

OUR WORLD

YOUR NAME HERE

BITTERNESS AND ENVY
 NO I'VE BEEN NEW

AND WHAT IF YOUR CANCER GOES METASTATIC... CAN YOU STILL USE THE TERM SURVIVOR?



she was gone but I met her anyway. and that is. another thing comics can do, and I'm glad

MIRIAM ENGELBERG



it's GOOD.

NOW I NEEDED TO FIGURE OUT THE ETIQUETTE OF CANCER ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE.

Miriam Engelberg cordially invites you to join her in reacting to her new CANCER diagnosis. Please - No Gifts.

I WASN'T THE SMALL GROUP TYPE, SO I DECIDED TO JUST SEND OUT AN E-MAIL.

TO: ALL STAFF
 FROM: MIRIAM
 SUBJECT: I HAVE BREAST CANCER

ALSO, THE NEW INTRO TO EXCEL MANUAL IS FINISHED.

PSYCHOPATHS AND DOCTORS

THE DISPOSITION OF DOCTORS

WAITING



WHERE GONE



IN THE EARLY 1940'S A GIRL MADE THIS PICTURE OF A TREE. → I FOUND IT IN A TRASH PILE FROM A HOUSE WHERE A GRADE SCHOOL TEACHER LIVED IT SPENT 60 YEARS IN A DAMP BASEMENT. IT WENT INTO A GARBAGE BAG. IT CAME BACK OUT.

NOW IT'S IN A BOOK. AND IT HAS A LOT OF COMPANY

WHERE GONE



WHERE IS THE GIRL WHO DREW THESE LINES AND SHAPES? WHERE IS THE TEACHER WHO KEPT IT? AND WHERE IS THE TIME-TRAVELER TREE

RIGHT NOW? HOW LONG WILL IT STAY? MADE BY HAND ON PAPER AND UNSEEN FOR 60 YEARS IT RETURNS WITH ALIVENESS INTACT AND TRANSMITTING. TO THIS I ADD MY OWN TIME-TRAVEL MARKS AND PASS THE 'ACTIVATE' OPTION TO YOU.

