



# King of Comic Strips

by Jeff Singh

I think comic strips when done right are the perfect sequential art form. There is elegance in their short 3 to 4 panels in which there has to be a set-up, some drama and something to make people want to go on to read the next one. Like a Haiku, there is beauty in the simplicity that belies the complexity of the construct. There are many books by far more learned, articulate and insightful scholars than I for me to try and explain all the elements of what makes for good story telling and art. I am more of a gut feeling kind of collector although I do often stop and analyze why I have that gut feeling. Some time ago, I dissected out that what often draws me to a particular strip over another example of the same strip is a nice portrait, especially female. Some go for adventure or action while I like lighting and portraits and that revelation has made it much easier for me to pick the art I am interested in and has shaped my collection. Now on to the topic at hand.

Deciding who to talk about was difficult. I am sure my love of Milton Caniff is no secret to anyone who has suffered through my previous articles or my comicartfans gallery descriptions. As much of a genius I think Caniff was in both storytelling and art, there is another comic strip creator who was much more gentle and quiet in his genius and who I'd hold above all others.

Frank King was the greatest comic strip artist of them all. I appreciate Caniff's art and adventure, I love Raymond's artistry and Fosters consistency, Herriman's cartooning, McManus's design but none of them did or could do what Frank King did...created real characters everyone could see themselves in. He aged his characters and we follow them through the adventure that is one's lifetime. Many times it is about the small moments, not the gun fight, castle siege or jumping out of a plane but the quiet spaces that really endear us to characters. Frank King has quietly written the great American novel in his story of Walt, Skeeze and their world.

Although my ***Gasoline Alley*** collection is small, I think I have been lucky to have curated a series of nice examples and I'd like to share those with you and how I discovered the world of ***Gasoline Alley***. I'd also like to use these examples to talk about some of the reoccurring themes in the strip as well as King's approach to some difficult topics. There is a timelessness to the strips in that the stories, events and humors are still relatable today as much as they were when they were first published starting almost 100 years ago(at the time of this issue being published it will be just over 100 years since the strip launched).

I remember for years seeing ***Gasoline Alley*** as one of those long running strips that I had no interest in as the art or story didn't grab me. It was not until Russ Cochrane and the King estate started to auction off their art that I really became aware or interested in what was going on with ***Gasoline Alley***. It was the early Gasoline Alley art that interested me and in early I mean the first three decades.

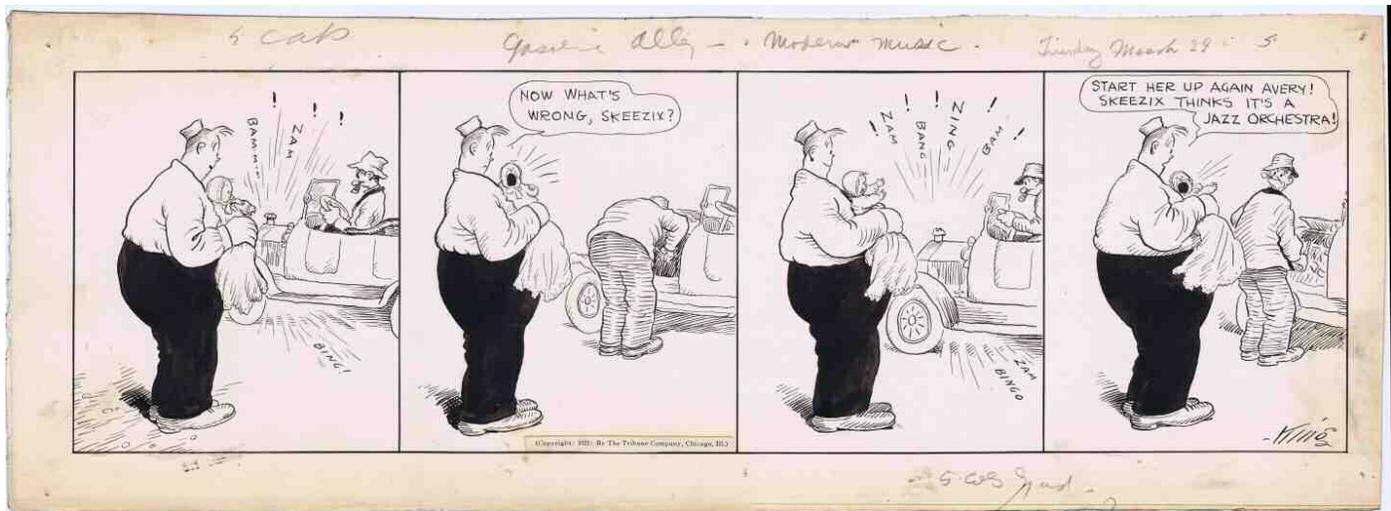
Before I begin on the artwork, I think a brief biography adds insight into origins and natural charm of ***Gasoline Alley***.

Frank King was born in Wisconsin on April 9, 1883. As a son of a mechanic, he shared his childhood with a younger brother. At age 4 they moved from Cashton to Tomah in Wisconsin and the family ran a general store. Drawing at an early age, Frank produced a sign for a local Shoe Shine company that attracted the attention of a travelling salesman who introduced King to a newspaper editor in Minneapolis and so began his professional career as an artist in 1901. In 1905 King attended the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts before going on to work for several Chicago newspapers including the Chicago American, Chicago Examiner and the Chicago Tribune. During these years he drew multiple strips and in January of 1913 King began ***The Rectangle*** in the Tribune which featured gags and the first

introduction to Walter Weatherby Wallet in 1918 fixing cars with his friends in a strip titled **Sunday Morning in Gasoline Alley**. August 24, 1919 saw the official launch of the strip Gasoline Alley and followed the follies of Walt and his automotive buddies Avery, Doc and Bill. This all changed on Valentine's Day 1921 when Walt awakens to find an abandoned baby on his door step and so begins this great tale. Walt marries, Skeezix gets a younger brother, Skeezix grows up, falls in love, joins the army, gets married and has kids of his own and later becomes a grandfather himself. It is the story of coming of age and growth into maturity of not just the characters but also America and the world. The backdrop of the depression, wars and other events add to the story of both the Wallet family and that of America. In his personal life, King got married to Delia Drew at the age of 28 and had a son, Robert Drew King, in 1916. Walt Wallet was fashioned after his brother-in-law Walter White Drew and Skeezix after his own son. King handed over the reins to his long-time assistant Bill Perry in 1951 and retired deservedly very wealthy as Gasoline Alley was very popular and merchandizing had been very successful.

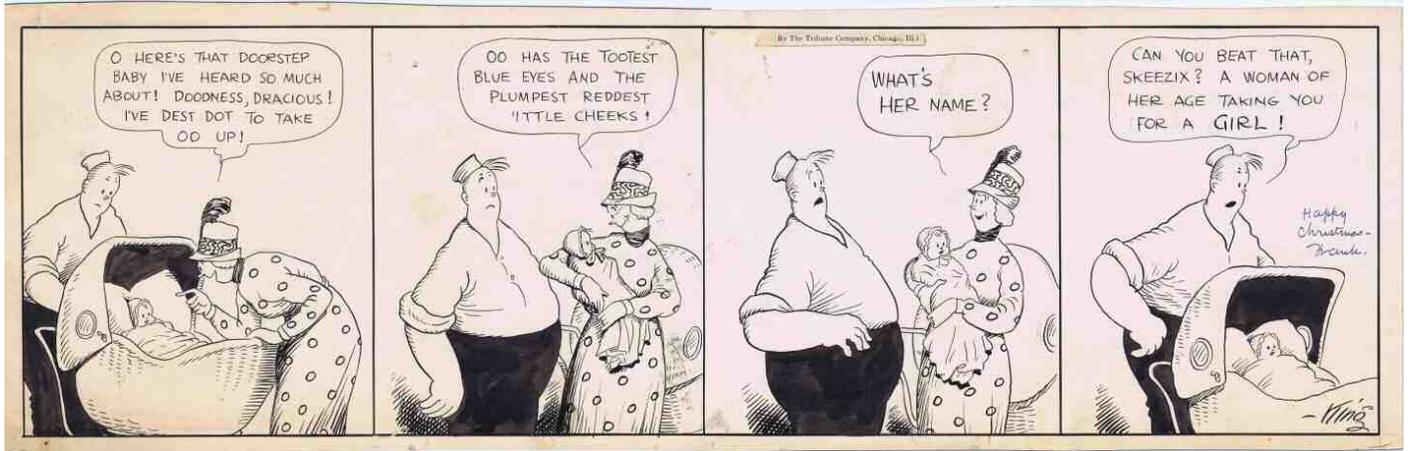
Early **Gasoline Alleys** revolve around Walt and his buddies as they deal and meddle with automobiles and politics of the day. The strips are fun and quite humorous and show King's already mature style but I don't have an example of those in my collection yet and so we start with where Gasoline Alley really became important and the story began. February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Valentine's Day a noise wakes Walt up and on his doorstep is a basket and a baby. After taking care of the baby as he tries to find the child's parents, a bond begins to form. Walt ends up officially adopting the baby and a baby naming contest for the readers ensue. Skeezix was chosen. I have two dailies from the first few months with Skeezix as a new born. I have decided to present my collection in chronological order rather than in the order they joined the collection. Much of the descriptions have been skimmed but altered from those I have up in comcartfans.

### Gasoline Alley March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1921



An early daily from when Skeezix was just 6 weeks old. It is charming for a number of reasons. I think it is a nice transition from the pre-Skeezix era to the new direction King was taking as it deals with an automotive gag and a situation all new parents are familiar with. As a son of a mechanic, King grew up around early automobiles and the auto and travel play an important role as the story unfolds. At this early stage, there it is unlikely King could have envisioned the path cars, Walt and Skeezix would take him on. I have always been enamored with King's use of body language. Walt's posture and expressions say so much that words are almost not needed. The deep paternal caring and nature to protect his child comes through in all of the early Gasoline Alley dailies and just as Walt falls in love which his new charge, so do we as readers as the moments and feelings are universal and innate.

Gasoline Alley April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1921



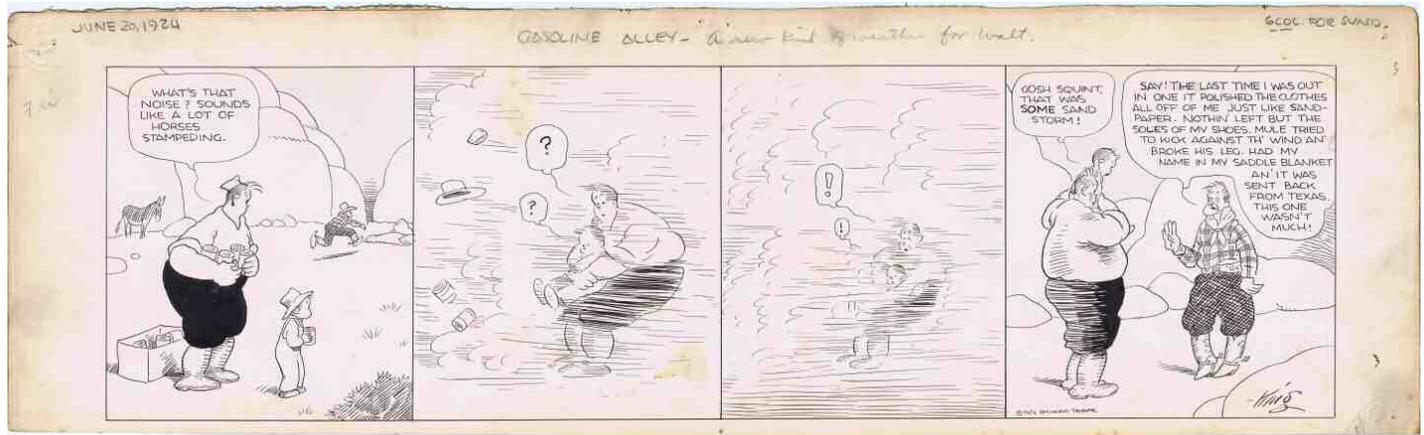
Only 7 weeks into Skeezix life here. The warmth and naive protectiveness of Walt towards Skeezix is the source of the humor in this daily. Walt was like every new father in these early dailies, only without the help of a partner or matriarch. He has become one of my heroes and his gentle, generous and caring nature an inspiration. There was a decision by King to make the strip more domestic. Rumor has it that the publisher told him to introduce a baby but other historian postulate that it was King's intention to make the strip more about family and middle America that was the catalyst for the introduction of Skeezix.

Gasoline Alley August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1922



Nice early daily featuring the ultimate cheapskate Avery. I love the Niagara Falls theme and the fact that Avery missed it all ruminating over the parking. Other than the gag, there are some of the subtle things in King's mastery of landscape and movement that should not be overlooked. The wind that is implied is a good example. Unseen but you can see it pushing clothing. You may not notice it but on some level you are aware of it and it adds to the atmosphere and experience King was trying to give his readers. I have been to the falls many times and it is a much windier place than one might expect. Although this daily doesn't feature any of the main characters, it does include the themes of automobiles and travel. King was an avid traveler and his own personal travels would often mirror those that Walt took Skeezix on.

## Gasoline Alley June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1924



Who has seen the wind? Who can draw the wind? I'd say Frank King did it here. From an early age, Walt took Skeezix on adventures in their car. Camping and visiting sites all over the United States. It was a time and era when it was not so common to travel and so readers got a chance to go on these trips with Walt and Skeezix and see some of the wonders of nature. I enjoy this part of the adventures of Walt and young Skeezix with the old timers telling tall tales. The art is so simple in this but there is a level of mastery that most can only aspire to. The subtle lines and expressive postures, the movement of the wind and the confidence of the work all shine through in this daily. I really like the third panel, so tangible with so few lines. The more of Frank King's work I see the more I am in awe of his mastery.

## Gasoline Alley August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1925



Here is my most prized piece of comic strip art, not just Gasoline Alley. For me it transcends the medium and is all the proof I need to make the claim that Frank King was the best of the best in comic strip artists. Here we have the romance between Walt and Phyllis in full bloom. The lighting created by the sun through the leaves is truly magical and I have never seen it handled better by any artist. People often defer to the more realistic artists as better because their skills are more accessible and understandable but when you see someone one might only think of more as a cartoonist does something like this you realize the choices made in style in no means reflect the capabilities of the artist. King's use of silhouette is also worth mentioning. There is often more said in the gesture, positioning and postures of the characters than could be conveyed in a fully rendered approach. For some, silhouettes might have been a shortcut but not with Gasoline Alley. The wonderful, romantic and heartwarming dialogue is also worthy of note. King was as much a master at his story telling and dialogue as he was with the art and he could capture a moment or an emotion that we can all relate to in a way that can only be described as perfect. I think this strip brings the readers back to a time when they were young and bursting with love.

## Gasoline Alley January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1932



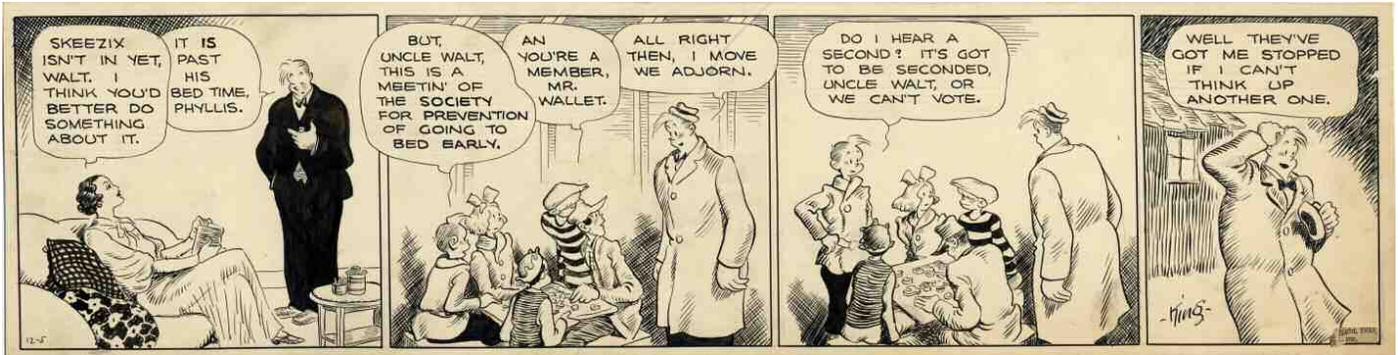
Another masterpiece by Frank King. I looked and looked at this trying to convince myself I didn't need another brilliant King but to no avail. Here it is. Similar to the fall one I have, Frank used shadows and light to define the structures in the central panel. Not a single piece of line work. This central panel stands out as a first class illustration and could be framed on its own and stand next to any contemporary illustration in a gallery. I liked how the two bookend panels both face towards the central panel and also how the lighting comes from the central panel onto the other two panels. It makes the snow that much more blinding and your eyes are forced back again to the middle panel by the last one. I don't think I have seen many others master the lighting and elements in the way King could. Once again, an automobile is featured as is the wind which you can feel the freezing and biting cold contrasted with the warmth of the first panel.

## Gasoline Alley August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1932



As part of Walt's and Skeezix's travel, they would visit important sites in history and to make them more personal Skeezix would get to become part of the historical events. I thought this was a brilliant idea and helped bring history more to life for the readers and the 11 year old Skeezix. I respect King's choice to not romanticize war and the brutality of the battle is not lost on Skeezix who hides from the carnage. The silhouette in the first panel is great and common vehicle used by King. He often used it for romantic moments but also for effect and somber moments in some of the war year dailies. The idea of fantasy and being part of the dream or moment were seen early on in the Sundays as far back as 1922. Prior to *Gasoline Alley*, Frank King worked on *Bobby Make-Believe*, a Sunday strip that was a knock-off version of *Little Nemo* and so these ideas had a birth place that can be traced back to Winsor McCay.

**Gasoline Alley December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1933**



Skeezix and Co. Walt is out done by the democratic process. Themes of parenting and precocious pre-teens featuring a gag that treats kids as smart, resourceful and witty. The humanism and compassion in King's work and expressed through the love and tolerance of Walt speaks to what separates **Gasoline Alley** from other contemporary strips. This would have been during the peak of the depression era and although King rarely approached the subject directly, the poverty and unemployment do invade the strip at times. Although Skeezix is young, he is very aware at an early age he will need to develop skills to work and later develops the kind of work ethic, loyalty and responsibility that defined that generation. It is the nurturing of King's narrative and Walt's love that carries us through these rough years and is part of the story of both the lives of the denizens of Gasoline Alley as much as it is part of tale of America.

**Gasoline Alley February 18, 1936**



Another Frank King masterpiece. I really liked it both artistically and thematically even if it lacks main characters. I thought his rendering was well done and his gestures convey so much, being tired and hard worked. Although he often skirted around the depression the themes were inescapable. The politics of inequity and the empathy and insight of this daily are what really drew me in. There are racist undertones to almost all the strip art and popular culture material of this era but there is compassion here. The travellers on the road are a recurrent theme in **Gasoline Alley** with the trips Walt took and his observations about the travels of others. Rachel, a black maid that helps Walt out in the early days, is also a culturally sensitive portrayal and was handled by King with respect for intellect and caring. She was fashioned after a helper King knew growing up. Despite King's background and affluence, he was never elitist and showed empathy, understanding and compassion in his approach of all peoples.

## Gasoline Alley August 24, 1938



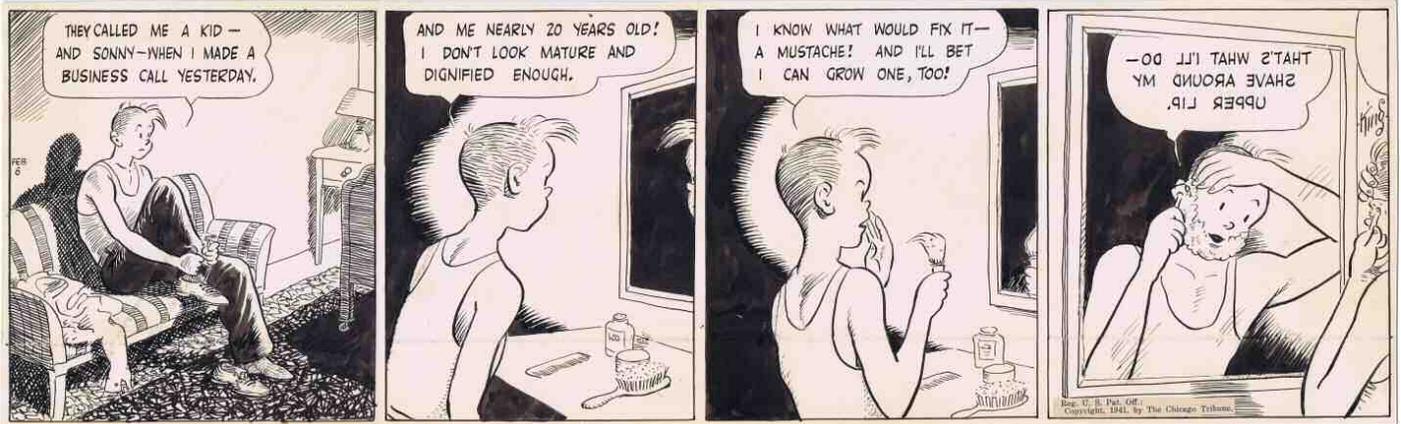
Here is another great depression era daily featuring 17 year old Skee-zix. King captures the zeitgeist of the time with the notion of wanting but getting by with what you can. It is a nice, fun daily with very dark social and political undertones. Skee-zix, like everyone else, had to scrape by and wasn't always sure where his next meal was coming from. His upbringing under Walt's nurturing and his experiences teach Skee-zix the value of hard work and loyalty. I'd be remiss not to mention the themes of travel, adventure and automobiles showcased here as well. Skee-zix was growing up and learning to stand on his own as was America.

## Gasoline Alley May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1940



I think King was one of the most romantic of the cartoonists. He featured relationships of all kinds but had a way of capturing the insecurities and follies of early relationships well. An elegant daily reflecting (pun intended) on what makes true beauty. Nina was always there and despite Skee-zix dating others, there was only one girl for him and only one boy for her and no one else stood a chance with either. The growth of the relationship between Nina and Skee-zix is one of the great relationships of the strip as was the first one between Walt and Skee-zix and then Walt and Phyllis. Having watched Skee-zix grow up made this period that much more endearing to sit in on early dates. The idea of beauty in nature was featured more prominently in King's earlier Sunday pages where the canvas was immense but there is always care in the way King depicts the natural world.

## Gasoline Alley February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941



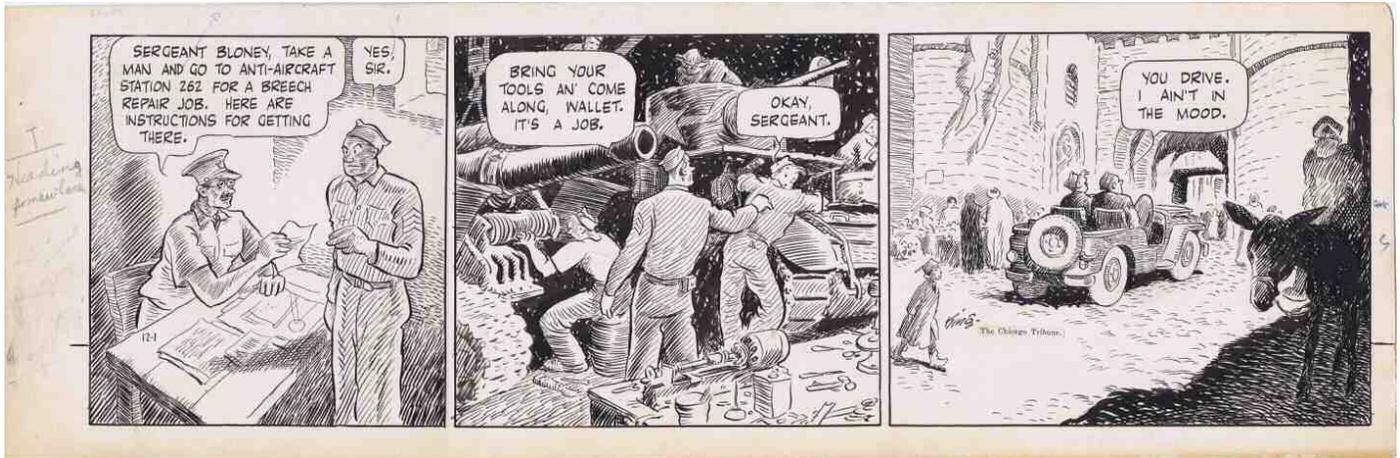
Just a fun coming of age daily that plays with words as much as it does light and shadows. King takes a totally banal scene of Skeezix getting dressed and turns it into a compelling daily with universal themes of angst and insecurity along with Skeezix's boundless enthusiasm of life. I don't recall any one else doing the reverse lettering in the mirror before and just a whimsical bit of genius on King's part. This daily precedes the next by 2 days so this was Skeezix getting ready for a big night with Nina. It wasn't until I put these in chronological order for this article that I realized the proximity of this daily to the next one which still makes me feel like I did when I was 19 and had already met the girl I'd spend the rest of my life with.

## Gasoline Alley February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941



A beautiful and romantic daily with Skeezix and Nina. Happy 20th birthday Skeezix who would be 98 now! I am just starting to read this series from the beginning and I am looking forward to seeing how the lives of the cast of Gasoline Alley unfold. To me there is a dream like quality to this strip, almost surreal. King has captured one of those moments when you are young, in love and you don't see anyone or anything else around you except the one you are with. The third panel is my favorite by far but the whole strip flows perfectly and each panel stands alone as a masterpiece. Another car is the literal vehicle taking the couple to their date and to the next stages of their relationship. This and the 1925 daily are the two *Gasoline Alleys* I have chosen to frame and have on my wall to look at often and they never cease to make me take pause and admire the artistry.

## Gasoline Alley January 12, 194?



Just like America, Skeezi went to war. King would take the route of showing the day to day life of those in the field as well as those left at home. Leaving epic battle scenes for the comic books, King chose a more humanistic look at the people in the war. I really liked the jeep in this daily as it reminded me of a famous Tintin cover with a jeep. The last panel is just beautiful and shows the war as more than just a battlefield but a place where people had to live and carry on a daily life.

**Sundays-** I don't own any Sundays but I do have several books collecting them and no article on **Gasoline Alley** would be complete without some discussion. The Sundays started a few months after the strip started and predate the introduction of Skeezi. Initially done in 2 colors, as the feature gained popularity it moved into the prestigious, select few Sundays that got the full 4 color treatment. The dailies ran in continuity and the Sundays were not part of the storyline for the most part but took place in and around the events of the dailies. In the Sundays, King had a large canvas on which to create and he used panel design and page layout in innovative ways. Often portraying nature or fantasy themes, King took full advantage of the format and color he was afforded. Some of Sundays stand out as among the most important and impressive pieces of comic art ever produced. Below are a few outstanding examples of the Sundays.





## Mailing Comments: CFA-APA 107

A great looking issue. The cover was brilliant, thanks for all the hard work up into that. It was worth it. Thank you to all that contributed, I enjoyed the articles and had a bit more time with this one than the last one before this submission.

Welcome to the new members Satya, Michael and Stuart. I have the good fortune of knowing them all already so very excited to have them join us and look forward to their contributions.

**David Applegate** – I enjoyed reading more about Bob Burden. I have met him a few times but never got to know him. Also, thanks as always for your very important work not only as our editor but as the keeper of records when it comes to those that are no longer with us from the comic world. You do them all justice.

**Wally Harrington** – Hi Wally, I too am an addict. The longest I have gone cold turkey not acquiring art might be 6 weeks. I last acquired 7 days ago (and maybe again in an hour on heritage...fingers crossed). I don't think I have problem. Thanks for your follow up thoughts on what you think you will do with your collection in coming years. I have seen a lot of these Mexican comics around on ebay and have found the covers intriguing although my Spanish is non-existent and although I can appreciate the exploitation genre, it is not truly my cup of tea. That Vesper Lynd daily....sigh...it is time to start up the want list again.

**Ray Cuthbert** – I like your choice of Dave Stevens for the topic at hand. Very inspired. You are a lot braver than I am and the story of Sandy finishing Dave's watercolor piece had me on the edge of my seat. I think it turned out great. I'd have loved to have seen the before picture included. I like the Gary Martin piece and as long as it is credited properly, I actually like to see these kinds of creations.

**R.Gary Land** – Robotman...that was a lot of fun going through the history of the character. I was fully expecting to see a splash from the series in your collection as nothing you own surprises me anymore. That is a great looking Tim Sale. I have not seen him do that quality of a commission often in the past and I have asked.

**Ron Sonenthal** – while many collectors try to downplay the role nostalgia plays in their collecting as they worry it belittles their tastes(which is rarely the case but insecurities abound), it is great to see you embracing it. You are fortunate your nostalgia is for great art and artists and many others share your passions.

**Steve Smith** – Happy belated Birthday. I have yet to make the Windy City con but hope to. I did enjoy your tremendous hospitality the one time I was able to make it to your party. Hopefully it will work out again in the future.

**John Butler** – great report on Monsterpalooza. Your background in art and design shows up in your always impressive layouts and submissions. When I first saw Joe Dragunas art, I also immediately thought of Jeremy Bastian. Joe is good friends with both Jeremy and David Petersen and has learned from them but Joe seems to be growing as artists almost every day now. In the times since I published the article I'd say there have been significant developments in Joe's style and approach. He is always learning and all the years of hard work seem to be coming together with a rapid evolution of his artwork.

**Scott Stewart** – Like many of us, you seemed to struggle with the definitions of "independent artist". I think you picked some of my favorites and I was very happy to see you lead with Mark Crilley and Akiko. They are such fun comics and he is such a nice guy. I met him a few years ago at a Detroit comic con. My daughter loved Akiko and he did a nice little commission featuring her favorites including Totoro and Bone along with Akiko. It is still framed and on her wall.

**Bill Leach** – I think you have the most interesting art collection. I love the things you find and the oddball artists you collect. I have no doubt about your passion and it is great to see it on display for us.

**Bob Kopman** – Chester is as much a myth as he is an icon on the Toronto comic scene. I have met him a few times at TCAF and I do remember when he use to set up at Fan Expo. I am looking forward to working on that Archie



project we are still planning.

**Michael Hranek** – wow! 80 pages. I enjoyed seeing the art you chose to show us from your collection. A very great variety and we have a lot of collecting overlap so for me it was particularly enjoyable knowing I am not the only one that likes some of this stuff.

**Lee Banaka** – Nice reading your conversation with Chip Kidd.

**Michael O’Connell** – I am so happy to finally see your article in print. We have talked about it so much over the years. Well done.

**Benno Rothschild** – I regret not being able to make Dragoncon work this year but dropping off my eldest for his first year of University is a bit of a milestone and one that can’t be missed. Hopefully I can make an Atlanta trip happen at a less busy time. I was lucky to meet Jeremy Bastian early in his career. When I met him Cursed Pirate Girl pages were \$30 and covers were \$75. This is the only story I have that sounds like the good old days I hear about so often. I seemed to miss the good old days by about a decade.

**Alan Dion** – I hope San Diego was good this year. I appreciate hearing about your encounters with Stan. I never met him but saw him a few times at conventions. I’d have paid to meet the Stan Lee of 60’s to 80’s but that is not who was going to conventions. I find the stories about the last years of his life and greed of those around him very saddening. I am glad you had a few good moments with him.

**Stephen Stein** – thanks for the intro to Joseph’s work. He is someone totally new to me but I like the art you showed and the themes he works on so I will check him out.

**Aaron Sultan** – that was quite a comic find you had.

**John Stuart** – I liked Turok as well. The painted Gold Key covers are etched in my brain forever. I enjoyed reading about your childhood memories of comics, movies and television. I think we all have different but similar memories and that might be what lead us here.

**Hal Turner** – I had a JG Jones Fatale piece of art that was used for a T-shirt I believe. Nice to read more about the character.

**George Hagenauer** – When I was growing up, I looked for First Comics whenever I was lucky to make it to the real comic shop every 4 months. American Flagg is still among the most important comics of my youth and it still blows my mind how revolutionary it was at the time.

**Dave Karlen** – that comic art price list is something to behold.

**Chad Kolean** – Nice to hear about some of the conversation at Steve’s place after. The markings on that Jones piece is something I’d have a professional paper restoration expert look at before giving up on it.

**Roger Hill** – I met Greg once. I knew him from many of projects over the years and so had a great deal of respect for him even before we met. It was a bit of an odd interaction but I did leave with a few more of his publications and it was good to put a face and personality to the name.

**Henry Franke** – I was not familiar with Bob Abbett’s work so great to see some and learn a bit about him. I didn’t know about Hescox either. His color choices are vibrant and I can see them getting people’s attention.

**David Applegate** – Chris Ware. This is a perfect segue into a new piece of art I got. I love Chris’s work. I think he works on a level of design and craftsmanship that is unequalled. I remember seeing the many Ware pieces you had framed when you were kind enough to invite a few of us art fiends into your home. They left an impression. I had been looking for a Ware for at least a decade. I have visited Adam Baumgold’s gallery for 2 Ware exhibitions and on several other occasions but never found the right piece. That is until now. It is a page from Oak Park Newspaper and part of the Building Stories saga. It is too big and detailed to be reproduced here, but I will try. Even at full page size, it will be hard to read but if you are so inclined I have put a large image up of it in my comicartfans.com gallery.

To follow up on my comments to Wally, I did end up winning that auction. And now for some new art!



OH NOT REALLY. JUST RUNNING. THAT'S ALL.

YOU LOOK GREAT, TOO!

THESE MOMS ACT NICE, BUT THEY'RE LIKE COILED VELOCIRAPTORS, WAITING TO STRIKE. THEY LOVE IT IF YOU'RE FATTER THAN THEY ARE.



HOLY COW!

OMG, you are the best husband in the world! Thank you! I love you so much!

WORK? PLEASE! CARE? ANYONE?

I WAS SO GRATEFUL... THRILLED... ECSTATIC...

# THOSE WITH CHILDREN WILL UNDERSTAND MY JOY... THOSE WITHOUT... WELL, WE MOMS LOVE OUR WIVES MORE THAN OURSELVES! BUT A DAYS BREAK FROM... DUH... A DAY OF UNINTERRUPTED PEACE AND QUIET, IS THE RAREST OF RARE GIFTS, ESPECIALLY WHEN BESTOWED BY ONE'S SPOUSE (AND ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE HAS TO DO FLOWERS FOR A FUNERAL AND CAN ONLY GET SAID FLOWERS A FEW HOURS BEFORE, LEST THEY BEGIN TO WILT...)



OF COURSE, WITH THIS PROMISE OF FREE TIME COMES A COMPENSATORY SENTIMENTALITY FOR FAMILY TIME IN THE DAYS WHICH LEAD UP TO IT... (CUE MONTAGE MUSIC)

BY THE WAY, CARY MORGAN IS **NOT** GAY... HIS EX-GIRLFRIEND POSTS TO HIS FACEBOOK ALL THE TIME.



YOUR MIND FILLS UP WITH ALL SORTS OF WORST-CASE SCENARIOS... ACCIDENTS... DISASTERS...



I'M SURE YOUR FLOWERS ARE GOING TO BE BEAUTIFUL. TAKE PICTURES! AND GIVE MY BEST TO EVERYONE, OKAY?



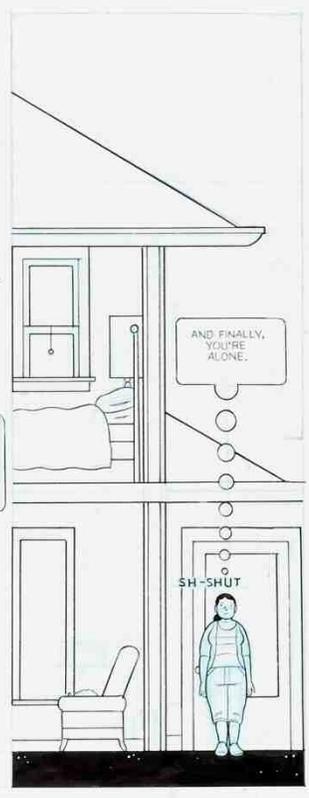
I LOVE YOU!

I LOVE YOU TOO!

WE LOVE YOU, MOM!



AND FINALLY, YOU'RE ALONE.



\* CELLULAR PHONE SERVICE AT PHIL'S PARENTS' LAKE HOME IS ESPECIALLY POOR... :-w-



OR ALMOST ALONE.

OH MISS KITTY...

YOU'RE JUST SKIN AND BONE NOW.

WE'LL HAVE A TUNA DINNER TOMORROW, OKAY? JUST YOU AND ME.

I WAS ABLE TO GET RIGHT TO WORK. PHIL HAD SET UP A TABLE FOR ME AND PICKED UP THE FLOWERS, AS WELL...

GOD, I WAS SO LUCKY TO HAVE HIM. NO OTHER HUSBAND WOULD BE SO NICE...



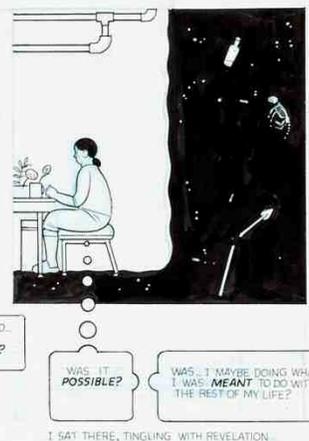
AS I SAT THERE WITH MY COFFEE, LISTENING TO MY FAVORITE SONGS, I THOUGHT ABOUT STEPHANIE, AND HOW I WISHED SHE COULD SEE WHAT WE WERE DOING FOR HER... (MAYBE SHE COULD, ACTUALLY...)

IT'D BECOME A PART OF LIFE.

I WASN'T SO SAD ABOUT HER ANymORE, THOUGH.

HER DEATH WAS A FACT NOW.

WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT I HOPED MY FLOWERS WOULD SAY, TOO. (AND IT SEEMED THEY DID, AS I ARRANGED THEM.) I KNEW JUST WHAT I WANTED: FROM THEM... NO DOUBTS, NO VOICES, I WAS SURE OF MYSELF, I WAS "IN THE MOMENT!"



I SAT THERE, TINGLING WITH REVELATION.

MY GOD... WAS I HAPPY?

WAS IT POSSIBLE?

WAS I MAYBE DOING WHAT I WAS MEANT TO DO WITH THE REST OF MY LIFE?



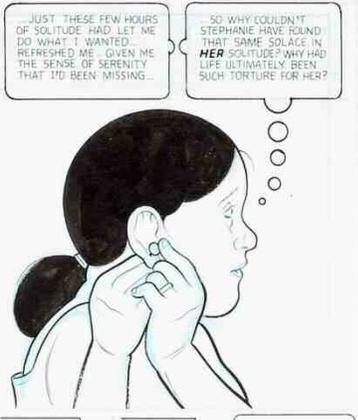
AND BY THE TIME I'D FINISHED THE BARRIED PARTS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS, I'D FIGURED OUT HOW I'D START MY OWN BUSINESS IF PHIL LOST HIS JOB...

GLG GLG GLG



THREE HOURS LATER... I HAD COOKED EVERYTHING DONE, EXCEPT FOR THE BABY'S BREATH, WHICH I'D ADD AT UNITY TEMPLE BECAUSE IT WAS SO FRAGILE...

I DID IT! I CAN BELIEVE I DID IT!



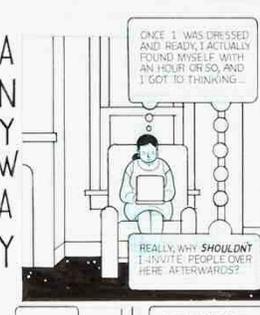
JUST THESE FEW HOURS OF SOLITUDE HAD LET ME DO WHAT I WANTED... REFRESHED ME, GIVEN ME THE SENSE OF SERENITY THAT I'D BEEN MISSING...

SO WHY COULDN'T STEPHANIE HAVE FOUND THAT SAME SOLACE IN HER SOLITUDE? WHY HAD LIFE ULTIMATELY BEEN SUCH TORTURE FOR HER?

GOD, YEAH... WHAT AM I THINKING?

I GUESS I KNOW I HATE PHIL AND LUCY TO RETURN TO... SHE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE PETS.

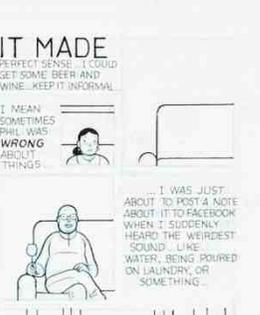
I'D BEEN MISERABLE LIVING ALONE... HOW COULD I FORGET THAT?



ANYWAY...

ONCE I WAS DRESSED AND READY, I ACTUALLY FOUND MYSELF WITH AN HOUR GRSO, AND I GOT TO THINKING...

REALLY, WHY SHOULDNT I WRITE PEOPLE OVER HERE, AFTERWARDS?



IT MADE PERFECT SENSE... I COULD GET SOME BEER AND WINE... KEEP IT INFORMAL.

I MEAN SOMETIMES PHIL WAS WRONG ABOUT THINGS...

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO POST A NOTE ABOUT IT TO FACEBOOK WHEN I SUDDENLY HEARD THE WEIRDEST SOUND... LIKE WATER BEING POURED ON LAUNDRY... OR SOMETHING...

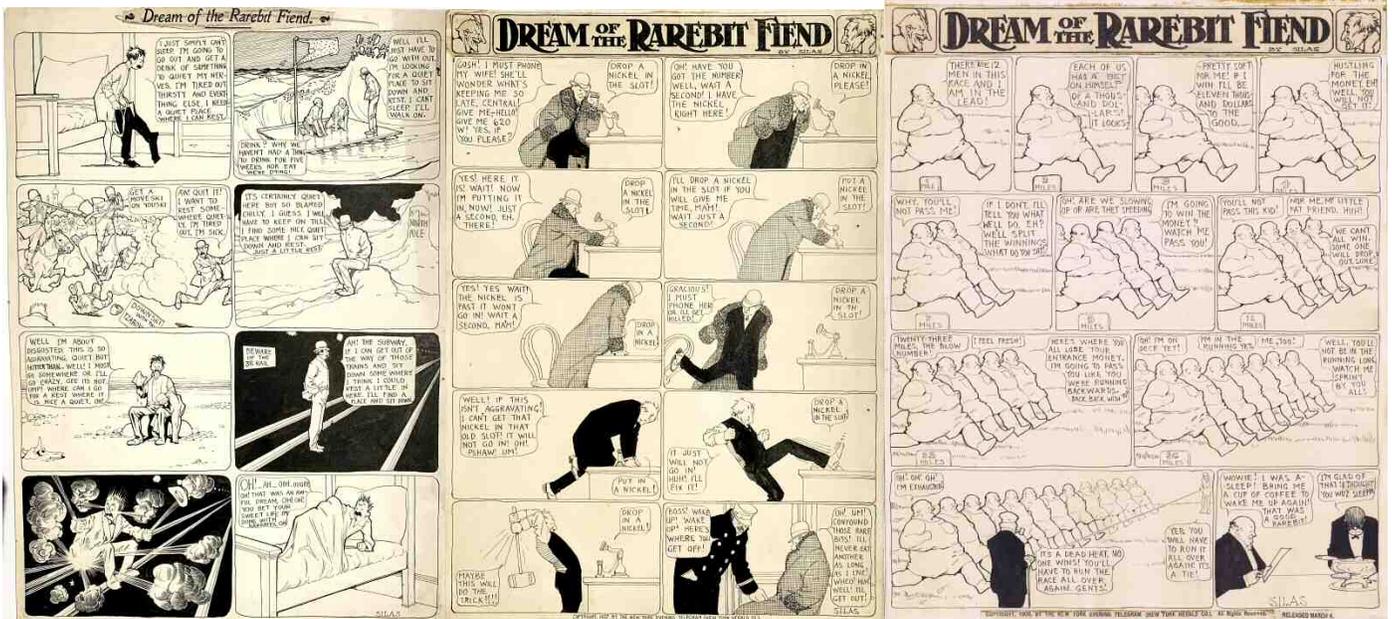


I LOOKED OVER JUST IN TIME TO SEE MISS WITTY REING ALL OVER OUR WILLIAMS SONOMA SUEDE CLUBB CHAIR.



OH NO, MISS KITTY! NO!

No!



It is official. I am now a Rarebit Fiend fiend. What?...I already admitted I was addicted. I started out with the goal of getting one of these and when it rains it pours and sometimes there is a typhoon. These all arrived within a month of each other. They all came from private collections and were buried there for decades. All the connections that made these things happen came from unexpected art adventures and doing good deeds for others in the hobby. Below, a few fun panels from other art and a vintage Mandrake strip from 1938 with a magic trick.



Charles Nicholas from Charlton comic, Alden McWilliams Davy Jones daily and Jim Holdaway doing what he does best.

