

President's Message

ISOR (Idaho Society of Reason) is still considering a merger with Humanists of Idaho. The merger would be beneficial to both groups, giving ISOR the ability to fund raise under HOI's 501c3 non profit status, creating a larger membership pool for both, and saving money overall by consolidating calendar and notification tasks. Leadership of the two groups will meet again in April, and hopefully iron out the details satisfactorily for all involved. I will post notices if and when the merger takes place.

Karen Lowe of Simpatico was featured speaker at our March meeting. Simpatico is a community minded business, providing life skills correlated within Emotional Intelligence, key to mental health awareness and understanding. You can contact Simpatico at info@simpaticokjl.com, or visit their website – www.simpaticokjl.com - for more information.

A discussion on Paganism is scheduled for our April meeting. Morgaine O'Hearne, a second level priestess in a contemporary pagan tradition, will answer questions about her practices. More information will be on our meetup page.

Due to changes in policy regarding vendors at Hyde Park Street Fair, HOI will not be putting up the booth at the fair this year. We are, instead, considering the possibility of a booth at Goddessfest in July, and we also plan to once again have a booth at PRIDE. Details will be made public once entries are confirmed.

HOI is still searching for a volunteer to take over the vacant position of program director. The job is pretty simple and straight forward – find a speaker or presenter for each month's meeting, preferably a local non-profit. Anyone interested can contact me directly at CelebrantVan@gmail.com. D G Van Curen, President, Humanists of Idaho

DARWIN'S PERSONAL NOTES AVAILABLE

J Ross from Constance Gustke NYT report

One November night in 2016, in the American Museum of Natural History, a team of fifteen hackers accomplished, in one night, what bemused museum specialists had found daunting—translating Charles Darwin's trove of handwritten notes into a searchable collection available for public scrutiny.

Darwin spent years before and after publication of his Origin of the Species conducting research on his own property, twenty acres with five greenhouses and a vegetable garden. His assistants included at least some of his ten children, who gathered flowers and seeds, even drawing pictures of flowers on the backs of his notes.

Darwin was endlessly curious, studying moths and whatever else might inhabit his estate. He kept his notes organized by topic, in a writing hand that had frustrated previous efforts at translation.

The museum's Hack the Stacks project brought in fifteen computer experts from all over the country, including software engineers from eBay and Google, who spent one 24-hour cycle at a table in a fossil hall, working under the casting of a dinosaur tail. Very inspiring, it was reported.

Hackers organized an estimated 25,000 digitized and transcribed images that Darwin had assembled by cut and paste as part of assembling his text. As historians have noted, Darwin was obliged to break from his obsessive and detailed testing of his theories (he tested vegetable and flower seeds in small glass bottles, in sea water, to test their viability after floating island to island) in order to publish his results, when another naturalist was ready to publish a similar theory. Now we can share the process.

Inclusive Communities – Responses to Hate

Paul Rolig

Recently in several Treasure Valley schools, there have been numerous incidents of bullying, harassment, and hate expressed by some students against other students. A Jewish girl's name was scribbled on a bathroom mirror with the message that she "is a dumb Jew." A Muslim girl's parents have removed her from her junior high, in favor of home schooling, on account of persistent anti-Muslim comments made toward her. Hispanic students have been told to pack their bags for deportation. A Ugandan refugee student was accosted at the grocery store by an adult upset under the mistaken belief that refugees are supported solely by American taxpayers.

Tom Rogers of the Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel (synagogue) Social Action Committee is leading a newly formed group seeking to counteract such incidents. The group has been meeting pretty much weekly since the end of February. Members hail from many diverse groups: Ahavath Beth Israel, Islamic Center, ACLU, Boise School District, LDS, Episcopal, Somali Bantu, Idaho Organizing Project, Interfaith Equality Coalition, and others. Paul Rolig has joined representing Humanists of Idaho and the secular community in general.

Much time has been spent discussing the incidents, the background causes, the difficulty of getting victims to report such incidents, and possible responses to them. Progress so far includes selection of a name for our group, "Inclusive Communities" and a tentative Mission Statement:

With an initial focus on the Treasure Valley, we will catalogue acts of bullying, hate, and discrimination within our communities. We will facilitate legal and community responses through building collaborative relationships and an effective communication network among community groups — including faith and social groups, activist organizations and government agencies. With them, we will sponsor and celebrate activities that promote inclusiveness, acceptance, communication, cooperation and mutual respect.

GROUPS affiliated with Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason

Idaho Society of Reason <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events> 2nd Sunday in Boise, 4th Sundays Nampa at noon.

Objectivists meet last Wed 6pm, varying restaurants. Ask Tim Scharff at scharffdesignworks@icloud.com

On the subject of cataloging such incidents, the following efforts were noted:

- How We Are Documenting Hate – With Your Help: <http://forward.com/news/national/364780/how-we-are-documenting-hate-with-your-help>
- Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC): <https://www.splcenter.org/reporthat>
- ACLU of Idaho: <https://www.acluidaho.org/en/resources/report-civil-liberties-violation>

However, the ACLU of Idaho does not publicize their list; they work with appropriate government agencies to ensure that the law is followed and that rights are protected. We desire to get a certain level of publicity to make sure that problems are recognized and addressed. There is a very delicate balance of what can or should be made public in any given case. There are privacy rights involved, and care must be taken to get the facts straight. The Boise School District takes such reports seriously, does act upon them, but does not publicize them. Victims may or may not want to report a particular instance. Whether or not a school district would welcome an outside volunteer to help in this process remains to be seen.

Many members of the group have an interest in getting people in the community talking and listening. At least a couple area high schools have mentoring programs in which community members volunteer to mentor refugee students.

Next steps will be to establish a web presence using social media, and initiating forums or other means to get people talking and listening. Interesting perspectives on race and other related issues are voiced in a series of interviews conducted by the Seattle Times and posted on their website: <http://projects.seattletimes.com/2016/under-our-skin>. If you are interested in attending future planning meetings (generally held on Sunday, mid to late afternoon), contact Paul Rolig at roligpd@gmail.com or Tom Rogers at socialaction@ahavathbethisrael.org.



Humanists of Idaho, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We meet 3rd Mondays, Jan-Nov, upper room of the Flicks, Boise. Open discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm. On April 17 7:30pm, our guest, answering your questions, is 2nd degree priestess in a pagan tradition, Morgaine O’Hearne.

Gasoline Alley – Complete Sundays Vol. 1 1920-1922”

Frank King with Jeet Herr and Russ Cochran

Review by Wally Keltner

The insecurity and unpredictability of our brand new era lead many of us to seek a vicarious stolen interlude in another land or another time. Perhaps there was a better ecosystem for humans at another when and where - a reprieve - a sanctuary. This reader’s experience was that exposure to Frank King’s depiction of an earlier, calmer America as revealed in perhaps America’s greatest comic strip, is a cheap and effective spiritual recharge. One can then rise to contend with renewed strength and resolve to resist the era of alternate facts, raving demagogues, and strange bedfellows in wrong places. Or, for those temporally or politically challenged, “Gasoline Alley” is still an idyllic foray into a when and where nostalgia really is what it used to be.

In this large format (12” X 16”) book, authors Herr and Cochran provide the reader with a memorial to the work of Chicago Tribune cartoonist Frank King. The few pages of text are just the fare for a curious general reader or for one with a historical curiosity about Sunday comics. The reader is treated to a biography of Frank King, some associated background material on the Chicago Tribune, and the history of the Sunday funnies and their evolution from black-and-white through two colors to the modern four color format.

As a technical triumph over the ravages of time and weaknesses of early publishing technology, Herr and Cochran have done wonders to give readers this book. They recovered the first three years’ worth of Frank King’s Sunday comic strip. Then they enhanced the fading artist’s proofs and ancient newspaper pages, corrected poor color registration and bleeding, and resurrected the comic strip in its finest ever detail, color and visual clarity. The size of the pages recalls an earlier era when the forests and paper mills of America gave readers a newspaper worthy of the name, a hefty cellulose panoply with square yards of content to titillate, entertain and inform a diverse group of readers.

The first memory likely evoked by “Gasoline Alley”, at least for those of the Baby Boomer generation or a bit older, are Sunday afternoons spent on the living room rug with the expanse of colorful funnies spread across the floor. A giant radio console probably dominated the room

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with its multiple knobs and illuminated multi-band dial at the top and a giant green tuning eye eerily glaring out at the bottom. It provided news, music, or an episode of Little Orphan Annie while the youngster learned to read, to interpret life, and to dream of times to come, all because of the Sunday funnies. And if the kid was really lucky, a weekly treat of Gasoline Alley was part of the entertainment within the magical funnies.

Frank King was a pioneer of the funnies; Gasoline Alley was a trailblazer in many ways. First is its cast of characters. The lead character, Walt Wallet, and a few neighbors are only the beginning of the dozens to inhabit the comic strip over the years. And King’s characters age as the strip endured through ensuing decades. Walt begins in 1920 as a robust but portly young man and ages to the wrinkled family patriarch of today. Walt’s step-nephew Skeezix arrives as a newborn, abandoned in a basket on Walt’s doorstep in 1921. He matures, marries beautiful Nina Clock, and begins filling Gasoline Alley and Walt’s family tree with progeny as he too ages in comic strip years – a bit slower than the readers. Walt and his wife produces a verdant family tree through wars, national crises, and the unfurling history. Strangely, a few secondary characters, some of Walt’s neighbors and townsfolk, age very little in contrast to the multitude of the Wallet clan.

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Editor's note:

The American Humanist Association publishes a magazine (available online) and a quarterly newsletter, [Free Thought Today](#). For those of you not members of our parent organization, I will offer my perspective on any of their topics that might be of interest to us.

JR

Nontheist Freedom of Thought Extended

From Kimberly Winston's report in FTT, JRoss summary

The Spring 2017 issue of AHA's [Free Thought Today](#) included news of former President Obama's signature on a strengthening of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act or IFRA in ways that protect humanists and atheists. Reporter Kimberly Winston quotes law professor [Caroline Mala Corbin](#), at the University of Miami, who says the new law "takes an expansive view of religious liberty, saying freedom of religion is not just about the right to practice religion. It is also about the right to have your own views about religion including being agnostic and atheistic."

The original law, passed in 1998, protected religious minorities in Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria and elsewhere. The new law also allows our Department of State to identify and sanction those who target or persecute nontheists, humanists and atheists. Winston observes another essential aspect of the new law: it applies to non-state bodies like Boko Haram, infamous for kidnaping and selling girls enrolled in schools— and it applies to state-crossing armed forces like ISIS.

Winston reminds readers that this remarkable recognition of the human rights of freethinkers came about only after years of effort by both Christian and Humanist leadership. "Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, called the legislation "[a vital step toward protecting conscience freedom for millions of the world's most vulnerable, most oppressed people](#)," while Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, called it "[a significant step toward full acceptance and inclusion for non-religious individuals](#)."

Getting the atheist language into the law was a four-year process, said Maggie Ardiente, communications director

for AHA. In 2012, Ardiente and other atheist advocates met with members of the State Department to raise awareness of the persecution of nonbelievers.

AHA legislative director Matthew Bulger took a seat — the first occupied by a representative from a nontheist organization — on the International Religious Freedom Roundtable, an informal group of religious leaders that consults with the State Department on religious liberty issues.

Those readers here who are members of American Humanist Association, American Atheists or the Center for Inquiry have been alerted to years of attention to international abuses of nontheists. Many of these abuses take place in countries that are officially allies of the United States, and the State Department is understandably reluctant to place pressure in these circumstances.

IRFA does not require government to take action but does provide a basis for citizen action in situations like that in Saudi Arabia, this past September, when one man was sentenced to 2,000 lashes and ten years of prison lashes [for professing his atheism via Twitter](#).

Winston's summary of the improvements in the new law: it "directs the president to sanction individuals who carry out or order religious restrictions. It instructs the U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom to report directly to the U.S. Secretary of State. It requires all forging service officers to be trained in the 'strategic value of international religious freedom.'"

Unpacked, that phrase implies that honoring individual rights to question and discard a traditional religious belief, no matter how important it may be to governors or citizens or non-state militants, is an important part of a peaceful and prosperous world.

President Obama's signing this bill into law is also the fulfillment of something included in his inaugural address, the rights of nonbelievers.

Professor Corbin mentions this and suggests that this law may strengthen the rights of nonbelievers in our country: "the new language in the IRFA could influence how U.S. courts regard atheists at home.

All Americans are protected by the First Amendment, she said, but "there has always been controversy about the degree to which they (atheists) should be protected. This law makes clear they are to be protected to the same extent" as religious believers.

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What We Can Learn from Megachurches

Jeanette's extractions from Patheos

I'm a browsing sort of reader, tromping through weeds for whatever nutrients might be available. In Patheos, Trevor Wilson, a church intern as part of his final year at Claremont School of Theology, shares how growing churches attract their audiences. Herewith I translate.

Megachurches often build upon principles practiced by successful business ventures. They incorporate the latest technology as well as research into human psychology.

There's a push-pull action at work. Contemporary Americans are leaving conventional religious institutions at an increasing rate, falling into Pew Research categories of the 'nones.' But this category includes much more than expression of non-belief. It includes those merely disaffiliated from churches that don't meet their needs. This is the pond into which the megachurches toss their net.

The megas analyze their intended catch. They want to attract men because wives will follow and bring the kids. So megas advertise, as Wilson says, with attractive digital media and social media, investing in "web design, graphic arts, photography and video producing." Like canny advertisers they look for a story to tell, and tell it in short, emotion-driven ways.

But there's work that enters into holding the kids. I attended an evangelical Lutheran church's youth service that illustrates what they offer. The children's classroom had a multi-function, built-in puppet theater, with a performance of a story from scripture. Two adults, with hand puppets and a hidden script acted out the tale of how Hebrew people were led by Providence to take over the fertile countryside where nonbelievers resided. I was silently noting that tale justified disturbance of mideast peace and as well as historical events in a way that is unfortunately being played out in that territory today. Exactly that territory. The short performance was followed by puppeteers stepping out to tell the children this story recognizes how we all are loyal to our favorite team, aren't we? This was immediately followed by a chipper song and dance about how lucky we are to be on the right team.

I left this room for another, to observe the high school students, who were carrying fabulous drinks from the coffee bar to their chairs.

The senior class was more conversational, but those megafrothy drinks were big enough to last the hour., and a ping-pong table next to the still-manned coffee bar invited after-class lingering. Okay, maybe we can't compete with Flicks treats and don't have room for ping-pong, yet. On to more.

Megachurches alternate dire warnings in sermon and email with marketing strategies, promises of divine assistance through uplifting music and a band, don't forget the band, and enormous screens showing the lyrics so your head is already up and you are on your feet to dance to the pop rhythms, just like those evangelical third graders. Plus there are meetings, call them prayer groups if you like but they are themed to provide group counseling on immediate, everyday problems— managing your finances to coping with depression or an opioid habit. Note to self: add free counseling.

The big guys don't neglect other ways of holding on to the adults they have attracted. They have modified leadership research as well. I'm going to quote Trevor Wilson for this. He divides congregations into leaders and doers, which is a positive way to describe followers. And his take of leaders is entirely updated, not the manly autocrat of cliché. He says, "Leaders equip others to fulfill the needs of the church. They allow others to take the spotlight and receive gratitude for their accomplishments. Most leaders spend more time communicating and meeting with people than performing or organizing events."

The real work of the big church is done by the doers who can be given any appropriate size task, one that is as specific and detailed, stepped-out, as needed. Quoting our intern: "Doers.. take personal responsibility to have everything get done the right way. They have difficulty trusting others.. need to fulfill responsibilities on their own. Doers feel needed and are often essential to the church community." Well done, I say, No task is too mundane; the organization needs dependable doers.

"Churches that have pastoral-style leaders [who inspire rather than direct] are healthier and more self-sufficient; if the pastor was to not show up on Sunday, everything could still run smoothly. Their members have a closer connection to the church with more investment and participation."

If volunteers are lacking, "Building a culture of trust and close personal relationships will inspire people to get more involved. People come to church because they want to grow spiritually, relationally and creatively. Volunteerism and leadership training allows people to experience personal growth and builds community among members."

All I can add is, Amen.

Sages Golden Years

Join us for the next meeting of the BUUF Sages, featuring long-time friend and BSU professor emeritus Dr. Charles Lauterbach, speaking on "[The Golden Age of Boise Theatre: 1900-1920.](#)"

His latest book on the history of theater in Idaho is fresh off the press. That and friendly conversation over a no-host breakfast will be at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), Thursday, April 13, at 9:30 am. Contact Tom von Alten, 208 378-1217, or tva@fortboise.org for more information. Newcomers are always welcome.

BUUF Humanists next meet informally for conversation, a chance to make origami flowers and maybe sample Easter bread Sunday April 17, 11:15:am, in the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship library. Or, no apologies needed, celebrate as you wish. Sages meet 2nd and 4th Thursdays 9:30am, April 13 and 27 at the Kopper Kitchen, near the Boise airport..

There is an uneasy division of powers between banshee, puka and priests, made explicit in "The Piper and the Puka," the story I am about to tell you. The fee vary in intent and class as much as the Irish themselves. The Bean Sidhe (now spelled as it is pronounced, banshee) live alone, attached to the lives of the old chieftains and their families. If you neglect them or speak badly of them beware. If you show proper respect, they join you in mourning deaths, alerting the wider country with their wails. Another collect of lone folk serve the Banshee—the Puka, bad-tempered and powerful night powers. The wise finish their chores and are snug by the fire at dark. The third keepers of power began with a former slave, St. Patrick, returned to Ireland and, standing on a high hill afterwards and still known as Croagh Patrick, drove off all Ireland's venomous beasts (excepting the English). Priests since then have been both feared and respected for their special connection to higher powers. They can put in a good word for you where it matters.

Priests have much in common with the solitary fairies, from the Celtic perspective. They live by their own ancient and universal moral code. Solitary fairies—the Puka, Leperchauns and Banshee, in stories collected by William Butler Yeats, are uncontrolled and uncontrollable, with only the slightest interest in individual humans. They are stern stuff, despite those cookie commercials, not as capricious, changeable, passionate or quick to foolish anger as the rest of us— we human folk and fairies. Certainly they are not guarding their gold at the end of rainbows, and can't be trapped by fake gold stories. That's someone else entirely.

The power of a priest is mixed. Yeats quotes an Irish skeptic: "I'll tell ye something more, I don't believe in, the fire of hell;" then, in a low voice, "that's only invented to give the priests and the parsons something to do." This is made and more is made explicit in "The Piper and the Puka."

And no matter how you earn credit with the fee, solitary or not. As one informant reminded William Butler Yeats, "No fairy can't save your soul but can give you a scare that reforms you." Witness the Puka, up next.

Magic is just an excuse.. For a Puka story

Jeanette Ross

Folklorists have traced influences on Celtic lore all the way back to Persian spirit stories (think of the monsters and dark land of the dead in Gilgamesh) that ancestors of the Hebrew people heard and shared with their cousins the Phoenician traders— who sailed as far as Ireland.— and also passed them on to Crusaders. Maybe Persian peris became Celtic fairies. Peri live beneath hills in castles of jewels, amber and gold and have decidedly mixed interactions with humans. The term 'fee' was used by Celts for women believed to be skilled in magical arts. There are no fairies in the oldest Celtic lore but plenty of powerful women whose qualities later fairy queens absorbed. I am implicated: the most likely place to run into a troublesome fairy was below a cliff, the "Rosses." A fairy can't save your soul but can give you a good scare.

In much of the world's lore, helpful gods reside above us and danger below, in caves like those feared by the Basque. The fee, though are both powerful and free, living out our own fantasy of freedom, by land or air, without obligations of work, moral rectitude or the curse of aging. They are most vivid in the world of our imagination. If Irish legend is correct, and the 'gentry' are angels not good enough for heaven, too good for hell, then they are forces stronger, if not wiser than ourselves, able to force us to do better than we'd like. Fear of hell, desire for heaven and a simple desire, however sincere, to do right are not, apparently, enough to reform us. Education, wealth and power don't help, either. "They who travel," says a priest, shaking his head over a skeptic and quoting Thomas a' Kempis, "seldom come holy." Often stories reminds us of how little confidence the Irish have in their priests and, by extension, the god they serve.

THE PIPER AND THE PUKA recorded by DOUGLAS HYDE, this Jeanette's version

In county Galway, lived a fool for music. None of his enthusiasm helped, though, and the only tune he could play on his dead uncle's pipes was the "Black Rogue." It was good enough to serve as his invitation to country parties, and they'd set him up with free drinks and plenty. Young gentlemen would tap each other and laugh after paying him a coin and a pint to play on market day.

One November night when a reasonable man would consider that the pukas were out and loose, the piper was late walking home from a dance. At the bridge by his mother's house, he stopped in the middle and began playing the "Black Rogue." A puka in the shape of a large goat trotted silent behind him. After one low butt and a scoop, the piper found himself on the back of a trotting, glinty-eyed goat. Gripping a long horn with one hand and his pipes with the other, the piper cried out, "Back to the Rosses, you nasty beast, I must be home and you have trotted smart past. I've saved a ten penny piece for my mother, and she wants her snuff."

"Keep your hold," said the puka, speeding up considerably. "I have better work for you. Play up for me the 'Shan Van Vocht'." "Shan Van Vocht--I don't know it," said the piper. Never mind that," said the puka. "I've been looking all over the county for a piper tonight. You have to do. Think of 'Shan Van Vocht' and I'll make you know. There's a feast on the top of Croagh Patric tonight, for the once yearly gathering of the Banshee. I'm bringing you there."

"You'll save me a journey, I hope," said the piper. "Father William put a journey to Croagh Patric on me, because I stole the white gander from him last Martinmas." "You'll get the price of your trouble," said the puka, and then he stopped at the door to a cave and when it opened, he shook the piper off.

The piper stood next to a golden table where hundreds of ancient females sat in high-back chairs, drinking ale that had done nothing to brighten their mood. One who looked to be the oldest of the crones stood and said, "A thousand welcomes to you, winter puka. Did you bring us the best piper in Ireland, as promised?" "Here he is then," said the puka, nudging against the piper to hold him up. With strength that made the piper shudder, the old women struck a blow on the ground with her gnarled cane, and a door opened in the far wall. Out came the servant of the banshee, and it was none other than the white gander that the piper had stolen from Father William.

"I don't understand this, now," the piper whispered to the puka, "myself and my mother ate every taste of that gander, but one wing, that I gave to my Red Mary. She found it boney, and to spite me told the priest I stole his gander." The puka gave no sign he heard, nor did the gander, more than a beady glance as the great bird padded about, balancing a huge silver tray on one wing. Clean as a knife blade, he swept pint cups off the table and on to the tray with his other wing.

"Play up til they fall," ordered the puka. "Start us with 'Shan Van Vocht.'" The piper pulled up his courage and thought of Shan Van Vocht and played for all he had. The old women began whirling around him. Song after song the puka called out and the piper swallowed and thought hard and played without asking for a drink to help him. With dawn, each woman pulled a gold coin out of her stocking and handed it to him. "By the tooth of good Patric," said the piper, "I'm now as rich as a lord." Then the gander strutted out and lay a new set of pipes by the piper.

The ride home fairly flew. In early light the piper could see his mother's house when the puka dropped the piper clutching both his new and, for luck, his old pipes at the center of the little bridge. The puka looked down at the piper. "You have two gifts now you didn't have before, you have more sense and better music."

The piper was thinking of the new pipes and the gold coins in his pocket as he pounded his mother's door, calling out, "Let me in, Mother, I'm the best piper in Ireland." "I say you're drunk," said his mother. "No, indeed," said the piper, "I haven't had a drop for hours." He did seem to be in charge of his senses, and so the door opened. The piper grandly poured half his coins in his mother's hand. "Even the gander forgave me, mother. Wait now and hear me play." The piper buckled on new his pipes, but out came a sound of all the geese of Ireland screeching overhead. The neighbors came running and in desperation the piper put on his old pipes. "Shan Van Vocht," he said to himself and closed his eyes and played from one song to another. When the neighbors stopped clapping he told them of his long night with the Banshee.

When they were alone the piper's mother put her hand in her apron pocket to test her coins. "Idiot!" she shouted, as she threw what had turned into fat round leaves on the floor in front of her son. "It may be time to speak to Father William," said the piper.

"What is it now, you thief," cried the priest, who nearly shut the door when the piper pulled out his new gold pipes. "Now Father, you are well rid of that cursed gander, I tell you. Listen to this that came from him," and the piper played out the screeching. "It's good no harm has come to us. Listen, now, the puka that carried me to the Banshee did pay me well when I made my journey to Croagh Patric." The piper carefully sat his gold pipes on the ground and took his old tattered pipes out of his bag. "Now Father, what would you like to hear?" The piper played "Shan Van Vocht" and "The Shortcut to the Rosses" and anything else that made the priest tap his boot on the floor. When the priest curtly nodded to stop him, the piper ended with a flourish. "Save your coppers for the Sunday plate," said the priest, and turned back to his door.

The piper returned to his mother's cottage, where she hung the gold pipes on her wall for neighbors to admire. The piper found that his wits would not forsake him if he stayed sober and soon he was known as the best piper in Galway.

Gasoline Alley *continued from page 3*

“Gasoline Alley” reflected the times in which it was drawn and published. In this first volume from 1920 through 1922, modern America is still forming. World War I is over; the automobile is halfway between a curiosity and a necessity. Neighborhoods are collections of caring people who visit, baby-sit and do one another other favors. Porches and yards were for meeting, sharing, and interacting. The national park program was still in its formative years. The Great Migration of the southern black population to the north and west has decades before it occurs. The local culture is not racially diverse as it is today. The activities of the characters, the humor of the strip, the daily lifestyles of the characters, the middle class housing, and the behavior of the police all present a softer, kinder America, at least along Gasoline Alley, a neighborhood reminiscent of the greater Chicago area. Most characters are Caucasian, but Frank King does invent a couple of black people. They are presented in drawings too stereotypical to be generally acceptable today, but Frank King gives them realistic personalities, intelligence, acceptance by the community; they figure prominently in their roles within the Sunday strips just as the other characters do. Readers are drawn into three years of Walt Wallet raising the abandoned baby Skeezix. Readers meet neighbors who are maintaining a relatively new novelty—the automobile. They follow the characters on hikes and fishing trips. They meet traffic cops doing things that would draw admonitions from their superiors today (and perhaps the ACLU as well). The episodes are peppered with examples of early post-World War I technology—medicines, home appliances, transportation, radio, gramophones and the telephone. *Continued below*

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Gasoline Alley *conclusion of Wally Keltner's review*

A reader can only lament that we have lost the deep trust, closeness and acceptance that were so common among the citizens of Gasoline Alley. At least Frank King leaves us an artifact of such an era in the first volume of his Sunday funnies. Most will agree that “Gasoline Alley” provides the interlude and spiritual recharge mentioned earlier. Gone for the moment is the divisive, smothering wet blanket of today’s divisive era. Readers briefly live yesterday’s real human experience in an ambience of a single set of facts with no alternative set to muck up the waters of life.

If one closes one’s eyes and relaxes, Walt Wallet may peek over the fence and extend a request for a couple of hours of baby-sitting with Skeezix. Or Doc may offer a look under the hood his car. Rachael will likely offer a bit of homespun wisdom or a passel of kids may ask for repairs to their toys from the adult briefly visiting Gasoline Alley. But the reader must return—the resurrection of a tired soul is complete for a while. But the visitors to Gasoline Alley can soldier on for a bit until Volume Two is available.