

TARGET:

TARGET COMICS

1st INSTALLMENT -- GARY STARK!

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
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This is the first installment in a series of articles about TARGET COMICS. This first part will concern Gary Stark.

Gary Stark, often cover feature of Target Comics, was a continuing drama in comic form, not totally unlike our soap operas of Television and Radio.

Gary Stark, a sixteen year old boy, was the ward of Bob Carter, an international adventurer. During the second world war, Bob Carter, and Gary's older brother, served on the same ship. While under an attack, Gary's brother was killed in a successful attempt to save Carter. In order to repay this debt to his dead friend, Bob took over as guardian of young Gary Stark. Together, they took part in many adventurous escapades.

Introduced shortly after the war (in Target Comics, vol. 7#3--May 1946) Gary Stark's adventures lasted until

the demise of Target comics in 1950. Actually, Gary Stark, by itself was a rather insignificant strip. The reason it is discussed here in such detail is that we feel it quite typical of the golden age, and in this respect, would be considered important.

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WHEN MAD WAS A COME THE MIGHTY COMICS GROUP!

You hear a lot about the old EC comics group, but nobody bothers to explain what the group itself was.

This now extinct (with the exception of MAD magazine) comics group was the rage in the early '50s, although they were shorter than the other comics of that period, and cost the same, their popularity can be explained by a different breed of entertainment, and superior art and realism.

As far as I can figure, EC put out 20 comics; Weird Fantasy, Weird Science, Tales From the Crypt, House of Fear, Vault of Horror, Shock Suspenstories, Crime Suspenstories, Two Fisted Tales, Frontline Combat, Tales of Terror, Piracy, Impact, Valor, Extra, Aces High, Psychoanalysis, M.D., Weird Science Fantasy, Panic, and MAD.

Weird Science Fantasy #1 marked the beginning of this powerful, yet short-lived group. Later came Mad, Two Fisted Tales, Tales of Terror, and several others. In no time at all MAD became their biggest seller. The riotous stories of Bill Elder, Harvey Kurtzman and others matched wonderfully with the art of Wally Wood, Barney Krigstein, and the rest of them.

By the time MAD #7 was out, EC came out with 3 annuals; Weird Science Fantasy, Two Fisted Tales, and Tales of Terror.

EC had almost reached her summit.

In MAD #16 The EC SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB was introduced, and all all text science fiction hard-covered anthologies were featured; Astounding Cases of Steel, Lights
(continued)

E.C. (con't)

in the sky are stars, Omnibus of Science Fiction, Sands of Mars, and Wild Talent. These were all text and the number of pages ranged between 350 and 585. These books, as they were written in the traditional E.C. style were horribly exciting and blood-curdling.

E.C. had a bad month in the February of 1954, so to make up for it,....or to try to make up for it, E.C. made her first big mistake. They attempted an almost impossible venture and introduced FIVE new comic mags in one month: Impact, Valor, Extra, Aces High, and Psychoanalysis. Although this chance was successful, it marked the beginning of a series of mistakes that eventually bring about the downfall of the mighty group of horror, satire and science fiction.

Issue 23 of Mad comics (Tales Calculated to Drive You MAD) would soon become a collector's item. Opening to the first page, in huge letters were printed; "VERY VERY VERY VERY VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE BACK OF THE BOOK." In turning to the back of the book, thousands of readers found this announcement quite disappointing. It read:

"HERE IS THE VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

"Any you readers see a lost umbrella on the New Haven commuter's train last week? A black umbrella on the New Haven commuter's train last week? We lost a good umbrella on the New Haven commuter's train last week. A man's umbrella with a wooden handle. With a piece of friction tape around the cracked part of the handle. We would appreciate information from whoever saw this umbrella on the New Haven commuters' train last week.

"Seriously, though it may come as a shock (or a pleasant surprise) to you, with this issue, #23, we are discontinuing MAD comic book

"But don't go away.

"We're expanding MAD into a regular, big, 25¢ magazine with pictures, printed lettering, covers and everything, gang. Boy, what exciting plans. A-ah we excited. Mainly since this could put
(continued)

E.C. (con't)

us out of business, we're sick to our stomachs with excitement. Exciting plans are now under way to turn MAD into a regular large-sized adult magazine. For the past two years, MAD has been dulling the senses of the country's youth. Now we get to work on the adults. As yet, we haven't determined our publication date, but the new MAD should be on the stands within 3 months. Now if each of you old-time loyal MAD readers gets your parents to go out and buy 150 copies of the new MAD when it appears, we're bound to be a success. We know you'll do this little favor for us... the loyal readers?

(End of important message)

The Editors of MAD

As well as announcing their first mag, MAD comics #23 also introduced the MAD Reader, MAD's first paperback. Although a big mistake, the idea of paperbacks was anything but that. Since it took work from past issues it required little work and turned out to be a hit.

But as for directing MAD comics, it turned out to be the main cause of E.C.'s downfall. It wasn't long before the group's comics were dropped. The only remains of the E.C. comic group are MAD magazines, paperbacks, anthologies, etc.

As a magazine, MAD does quite well and is still growing even more popular, and the words "E.C. publications" are still printed in the foot-notes on the first page of every issue of MAD Magazine. But the comic world will always miss the horror, suspense, and incomparable science fiction stories of the "extinct" E.C. comics group.

FIN

THE

LITTLE WISE GUYS

from

DAREDEVIL

COMICS

WRITTEN + ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN KELPER

Lay Gleason was lagging, falling way behind in the comic industry. It had only been around a couple of years, and it needed at least one good character to catch up with its many rivals. Sure it had Silver Streak... Captain Battle... Cloud Curtiss. Weren't those good characters? Apparently not. They needed a new fire, and finally, early in 1940, Silver Streak #6 bore such a hero under the New Friday (not success) seal.

This was, of course Daredevil, the hero that dared to be different. He was an immediate smash, and in July 1941, he was given his own magazine, "Daredevil Battles Hitler." Actually, this had been planned as a one-shot, but sales were so high, that there was a second issue, and the name was changed to "Daredevil Comics."

As, but DD still needed some color, and for this purpose The Little Wise Guys were introduced in DD #13.

The members at that time were Scarecrow, Peewee (who was later called singer), Meatball (who was killed, and replaced by Curly), Sniffer (who eventually left the group), and their leader, Jack.

With DD #40, The Wise Guys were played up, more and more (can't next page.)

THE LITTLE WISEGUYS (con't)

(as the art became less realistic), until finally, with issue #71, they finally took over completely.

The art was pretty good for a semi-realistic strip, and it was only the wiseguys themselves who were not drawn realistically. Jack and most of the supporting characters were simply drawn, but with good proportion, etc. as Peewee, and the Little Wiseguys.

There were four main characters (main, being the ones that were found in the most issues).

Scarecrow got his name mainly over the premise that he was tall, thin, and dumb. (meaning unintelligent--not mute) He also grasped, and held his nickname, because of the trousers he always wore. (The reason for this being that he was a farmers hand before he entered The Little Wise Guys).

His real name was Edgar Wellington III (how he got THAT name is for you to find out!).

Slugger (previously called Peewee by his fellow members) joined The Wiseguys after being saved by Jack, from his freindly, neighborhood street bugler...er...bugurgl...crook.

In Daredevil #82 he got into a fight with a member of a rival gang, and beat the heck out of him, even tho' only half his size. For this, He was christened "Slugger." Generosity, on-the-other-hand was big enough to make up for his aggressiveness. In Daredevil #113, he risked his life, 3 times to raise funds for a worthy charity.

Jack came from a wealthy family, and because of his intellectual as well as athletic qualities, lead the Wiseguys through their adventurous escapades.

Curly (why...why...h-he's bald!) is sort of the follower of the group. He will most humbly accept (and respect) the opinions and ideas of all of his fellow members, especially Jack. He, in my mind seemed to be the most serious and meaning full of all the Wiseguys.

Originally a member of the Steamrollers, a rival gang, he joined our freinds as a replacement of Meatball, a member of the Wiseguys who died of Ammonia.

In 1956, Lev Gleason Sales were dropping. Boy comics and all-thriller crime comics, as well as nearly all other LG Pubs, were ~~dropping~~. I'm not sure of the exact issue but somewhere in the early 130's, Daredevil Comics entered that space where good, little comics go, and The Little Wiseguys were no more.

The chances of revival for this group are almost nothing, as they would hardly fit into present comic format. But you can be sure, this group will never be forgotten by those who read and enjoyed, their comical adventures in Daredevil Comics.