

come to take the stand-out quality of the state almost for granted. They know Hoosiers are on top of so many heaps . . . that to say, for instance, that an Indiana Pacer scored with a [basketball] shot 92 feet from the basket is considered stating the obvious" (p. xi).

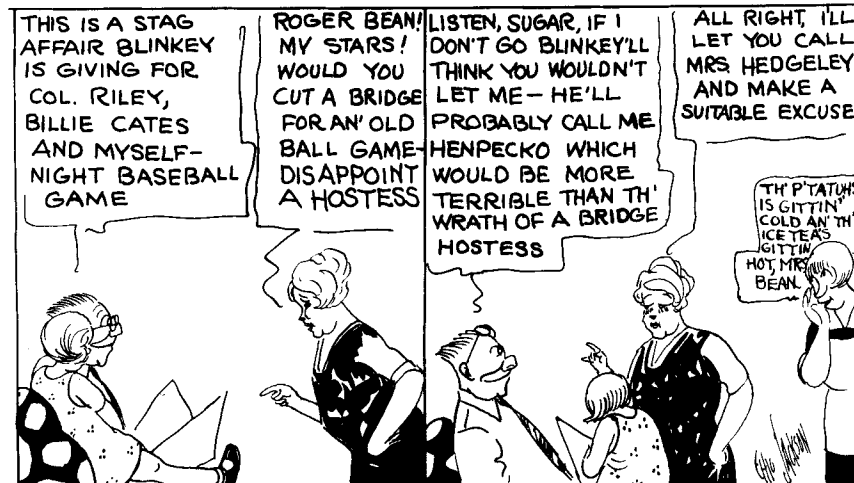
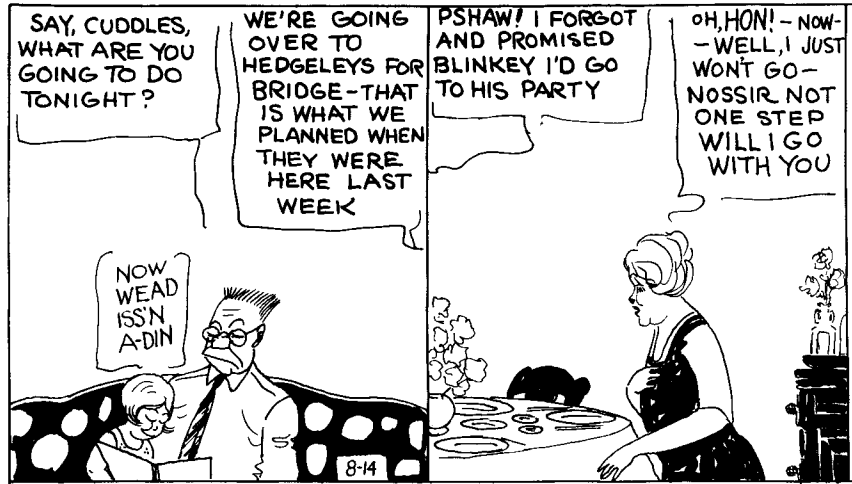
The book recalls "The Year Without a Summer" (1816, coincidentally the year of Indiana statehood) and the "Lake Manitou Monster," which Cavinder pairs with artist George Winter's drawing. Also interesting is the author's statement that a Hoosier from Terre Haute—not Horace Greeley—first said, "Go west, young man!" The Civil War and skirmish-filled Hoosier political battlegrounds provide more rich source material; *i.e.*, Boggstown's secession from the Union. Cavinder also points out that there were five Civil War generals from Crawfordsville and that the state once had four governors in 105 days. Sports enthusiasts, too, will find plenty to cheer, such as the weird tale of a 190-yard touchdown run in a high school football game in Lafayette. There is a detailed explanation of that tourist-drawing Decatur County courthouse in Greensburg where a series of trees have sprouted from the dome since 1865–1866. The United States surgeon general several years ago warned that smoking could be hazardous to one's health, but the Indiana General Assembly said the same thing in a little-remembered no-smoking law imposed on Hoosiers between 1905 and 1909. Even the familiar Coca-Cola bottle, so closely connected with a company based in Atlanta, Georgia, has Hoosier origins.

The only trouble with Cavinder's work is that these Hoosier believe-it-or-not kernels, like popcorn, are habit-forming. The book leaves you wanting more.

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Indiana's Laughmakers. By Ray Banta. (Indianapolis: Penn-Ultimate Press, 1990. Pp. [176]. Illustrations, bibliographies. Paperbound, \$12.95.)

This is a fascinating reference for both the fan of Indiana humor and the comedy scholar in general. So many Hoosier "laughmakers" are of national significance, from Kin Hubbard (creator of Abe Martin) and Kurt Vonnegut to Red Skelton and David Letterman. The book's subheading bears quoting, moreover, since it suggests the breadth of Banta's work—"The Story of Over 400 Hoosiers: ACTORS, CARTOONISTS, WRITERS and OTHERS." Thus, there are 400-plus capsule biographies of seemingly every Hoosier with a comedy connection, from the circus clown to the university academic. Entries are detailed and boast modest bibliographies, with the accent fittingly on Indiana publication sources. Such references are in line with the ever-increasing push among



“UNCERTAIN WHO’S TO BAT AND WHO’S ON DECK”
 ROGER BEAN OF CHARLES BACON
 “CHIC” JACKSON’S “THE BEAN FAMILY”

Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

today's historians to rediscover underutilized state and local references.

Banta's ability to pack a biographical sketch with so much insightful information yet do it entertainingly is most impressive. For instance, one of my favorite humorists is Auburn-born Will Cuppy (1884–1949), author of such inspired comedy volumes as *How to Be a Hermit* (1934), *How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes* (1931), and *How to Become Extinct* (1941). A sadly neglected talent, Cuppy has very little biographical material available. Consequently, Banta's citation on the humorist was not only a pleasant surprise but also provided a new slant on Cuppy's demented professorial style (comic footnotes, mock reference subjects, etc.). Banta's brief aside about Cuppy's fascination with university classes reveals volumes about the humorist's best work.

Although the book focuses on the capsule biographies, the opening thirty pages are devoted to numerous short historical overviews on subjects such as Hoosier cartoonists, Indiana stage and screen successes, and prominent state authors and special features such as "Crawfordsville's 'Sugar Creek School of Art'" or "Nappanee, Northern Indiana Cartoon Center." (On a personal note, I would put in a plug for a "Muncie Cartoon Center," since the city's successes include Jim Davis's "Garfield," Tom K. Ryan's "Tumbleweeds," and such cartoon pioneers as Chic Jackson's "Roger Bean," which ran from 1913 to 1934.) Moreover, these opening pages are *comically* enriched by the reproduction of numerous classic cartoons and some Hoosier crackerbarrel stories.

Students of comedy and Hoosier humor fans have no reason to be without this book.

WES GEHRING is professor of film, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. He is the author of seven books on American film comedy. His essays and poems have appeared in numerous journals, and his humor column, "Comedy Corner," appears regularly in the *Muncie Star*.

Indiana Books by Indiana Authors: A Guide to Children's Literature. By Ruth Jeannette Gillis. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. Pp. xvii, 122. Illustration, reference bibliography, index. \$20.00.)

As indicated on the dust jacket, "*Indiana Books by Indiana Authors: A Guide to Children's Literature* is a comprehensive annotated bibliography of writing for children and young adults on Hoosier subjects written by Indiana authors." The book is divided into ten categories: fiction (80), folklore (7), science (22), art (8), music (15), sports (19), literature (15), history (30), American Indians (12), and biography (33). (The figure in parentheses indicates the number of books in each category.) An introductory essay for each section "cites authoritative sources in the field, pinpoints the