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## Bet You Missed It-What do the Monkees and Superman have in common?

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# Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (The Citadel)

**Editor's Note:** Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

## BILLBOARD POP KING by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Okay, aging Boomers, trivia quiz. Author (not singer) of "Be My Baby," "Baby, I Love You," "Chapel of Love," "Leader of the Pack," "River Deep, Mountain High?" Of course you give up. **Jeff Barry** (née Barry Adelberg) had 17 hits on Billboard's pop chart in 1964 alone.

A college drop-out (aren't all the Great Ones?), he pitched "Tell Laura I Love Her" to **RCA**. Originally about a guy gored by a bull, **Barry** changed it to a car wreck. It became a top 10 hit of 1960. He teamed with **Leiber** and **Stoller** and churned out hits for the great girl groups: the **Crystals**, the **Ronettes**, the **Shangri-Las**. In 1964, his "Chapel of Love" knocked the **Beatles'** "Love Me Do" out of the top spot.

He couldn't read music and never wrote down lyrics. But he did not stop, going on to write singles for the **Monkees** and **Neil Diamond** and TV themes for "One Day at a Time," "The Jeffersons," and "Family Ties."

See — **Marc Myers**, "Girl Groups' Go-to-Guy," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 2013, p. D4.

## 90-LB. WEAKLINGS BIRTH THE MAN OF STEEL by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** were two high school nebbishes who longed to make big bucks as syndicated cartoonists. They wore eyeglasses, were bullied, terrified of girls. **Siegel** had a high-pitched voice, wrote love poems to a girl named **Lois** who snubbed him.

After graduation, they worked demeaning jobs and drew and drew for five long years. Eventually they put together a combo of Samson and Doc Savage, Man of Bronze. Superman was born. In 1938, they got a nibble from *Detective Comics* — later *National Comics* and later *DC*. Ten dollars a page for the two to split. And they signed away all rights to the character.



During the war, Superman was so popular that the Navy included the comics in ration kits. But the corporate louts were always critical, always reminding them how easily they could be replaced. And replaced they were as soon as the war ended.

It was all downhill for the dynamic duo then. **Siegel** worked as a mail clerk, **Shuster** drew for pornographic comics, naked Lois Lanes flogging bound Clark Kents and Jimmy Olsens.

In 1975, when the first Superman movie went into production, **Siegel** sent a mass mailing to news outlets cursing the enterprise. *DC* paid the pair a small pension to end the bad publicity.

See — **Deborah Friedell**, "Kryptonomics," *The New Yorker*, June 24, 2013, p.80 (a review of Brad Ricca's *Superboys*, St. Martin's).

## JOYCE IN CHINA by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**James Joyce's** wife **Nora** called *Finnegan's Wake* chop suey and told him to write something people could read. But he persevered with ten different words for thunder 100 letters long and all the mish-mash of puns, layered meanings and multiple languages.

And speaking of languages, it's now been translated into Chinese by the beyond-belief industrious **Dai Congrong**. And it's a big hit where some give up after 30 pages and others consider it an IQ test.

To translate the first sentence, **Ms. Dai** provides two definitions, five footnotes and seven small-print asides explaining the arcane allusions.

See — **Lilian Lin** and **Carlos Tejada**, "'Finnegan's Wake' Is Greek to Many; Now Imagine It in Chinese," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 1, 2013, pA1.

## LET'S READ ABOUT FILM DIRECTORS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**William Friedkin** is a good one to pick these. He's an academy award-winning director. And he's got his own book out: *The Friedkin Connection*.

So here goes. (1) **Elia Kazan**, *Elia Kazan: A Life* (1988) (I had no idea he did *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and hated it. Called it "poverty cleaned up."); (2) **François Truffaut**, *Hitchcock* (1967) (Conversations between the two. **Hitchcock's** Jesuit education had given him a fear of "being involved in anything evil."); (3) **Orson Wells** and **Peter Bogdanovich**, *This is Orson Welles* (1992); (4) **Sidney Lumet**, *Making Movies* (1996); (5) **Joseph McBride**, *Searching for John Ford* (2001).

See — **William Friedkin**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 11-12, 2013, p. C12.

## LET'S READ ABOUT UNSOLVED MURDERS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

(1) **Charles Raw**, *The Money Changers* (1992) (swindler Roberto Calvi hung from Blackfriars Bridge in London); (2) **John Marquis**, *Blood and Fire* (2005) (the murder of Harry Oakes in the Bahamas when the Duke of Windsor was gov); (3) **Jan Bondeson**, *Blood on the Snow* (2005) (murder of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme); (4) **James Fox**, *White Mischief* (1982) (Kenya in the Happy Valley Days); (5) **Paul Begg** and **John Bennett**, *Jack the Ripper – CSI: Whitechapel*, (2012).

See — **Edward Jay Epstein**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 1-2, 2013, p.C10.

## LET'S READ ABOUT UNUSUAL JOURNEYS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

(1) **Amitav Ghosh**, *In an Antique Land* (1992) (Indian travels in Egypt); (2) **Franz Kafka**, *Amerika* (1927) (surreal **Kafka** as he gets caught in a maze of clerks and corridors in NY); (3) **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**, *The Little Prince* (1943); (4) **Ruth Harris**, *Lourdes* (1999); (5) **Theodor Fontane**, *Walks Through the Mark Brandenburg* (1862-89).

See — **Christopher Clark**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 22-23, 2013, p.C10.

## Future Dates for Charleston Conferences



	Preconferences and Vendor Showcase	Main Conference
2014 Conference	5 November	6-8 November
2015 Conference	4 November	5-7 November
2016 Conference	2 November	3-5 November
2017 Conference	8 November	9-11 November