

# Censorship of Comic Books Up to Dealers Here

### Characters Bleeding Less Amid Drive To Cut Out Gore.

A self-imposed censorship by newsstands is helping to stem the flow of an estimated 100,000 horror comic books into Washington each month.

One distributor alone estimates his business handles 65,000 copies a month.

The strident voice of reform is sounding here and over the Nation to drown out the horrified shrieks and death gurgles of the weird characters in the fantastic plots. Some authorities say the books inspire juvenile crime.

Readership is by and large confined to juveniles. But the Associated Press reports on one case of a 3-year-old girl who toddled into a Chicago newsstand, bought a magazine featuring a scantily clad, seductive woman on its cover. The little girl's father, ashamed to buy the publication himself, had sent her in to get it for him. It can happen here.

### Stocks Censored.

All agencies agree that any news dealer can reject any comic book he feels is objectionable and many are actively censoring their stocks.

Reactions of the dealers are mixed, however. A survey by The Star last week produced these answers:

One Connecticut avenue drug-gist said the young comic book readers used to gather every day in his store to read—not buy—the books.

"If they didn't rip and soil them, they would put them under their coats and walk out."

Another also stopped selling them because they "invariably started fights. I guess those kids were practicing what they read," he said.

A Georgia avenue variety store manager was asked to read one of the books off his own shelf. "I didn't know they had crazy things like this in them," he said after reading an account of an old man cutting the heart out of a teen-ager.

The same dealer admitted he wouldn't allow his 7-year-old son to read them, but he hadn't thought much about having them on the stand.

### Dealer Censorship.

On Wisconsin avenue another dealer censors his rack daily of sex and horror publications. "I don't know what's in them, but the covers just aren't nice. We don't carry those creepy things. They aren't any good for children."

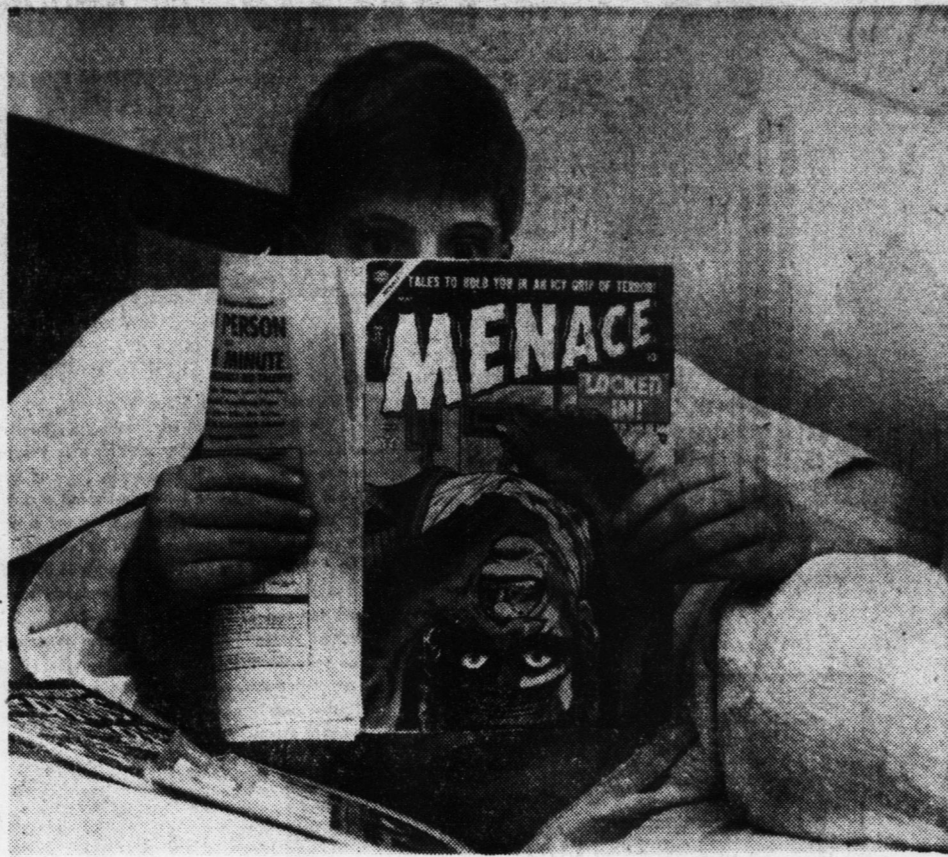
One who firmly agrees with this is Police Chief Robert V. Murray, who says police do all they can to keep objectionable material off the stands. District law, however, permits the sale of many comic books he considers injurious to juveniles.

"Some," he says, "do have a definite detrimental effect on youngsters." But he added that many he considers harmful are not necessarily violations of the law.

Chief Murray proposes some form of censorship, such as a censorship committee. United States Attorney Leo A. Rover opposes this, suggesting that legal enforcement of existing laws banning indecent literature would be more desirable.

But there again is Chief Murray's contention that he considers many of the books harmful, yet still not illegal under that law.

He says his department is doing the best it can "under the present law. More stringent laws



NO SLEEPYHEAD HE—This boy's expressive eyes reflect the "bedtime" story from one of the horror comic books being assailed in Washington and over the Nation.

should be considered," he has urged. He reasons:

"First, there is a definite question as to just how far police departments should engage in crime prevention activities which usurp the functions of such other agencies as recreation, social and welfare, to mention a few. This problem must be decided by the individual departments on a local basis depending upon whether such facilities are lacking and whether responsible agencies are fulfilling the demands made upon them.

"Second, that juvenile delinquency is partially a police problem but mainly a problem for the entire community, including home, school, church, welfare agencies, recreation agencies and a multitude of others.

"Third, the character and morals of our youth are being deteriorated by the immoral and pornographic literature being made commonplace through the medium of television, radio, motion pictures, novels, magazines and so-called comic books.

Capt. John F. Ryan, head of the police juvenile squad, says he cannot recall in almost seven years as head of the unit, a case in which a boy has blamed comic books for his problems.

But he does believe that from his conversations with parents, ministers and other officials that comic books have influenced some children unfavorably.

Inspector Roy Blick, head of the police morals squad, says he does not favor a censorship board, but he urges a revision of the law, making more specific just what material should be banned.

### Co-operation Good.

He says he has made arrangements with many distributors in Washington under which they do not accept certain books considered objectionable. The general co-operation, he says, has been good.

The District's law on the subject reads: Whoever sells, or offers to sell,

or give away, in the District, or has in his possession with intent to sell or give away or to exhibit to another any obscene, lewd or indecent book, pamphlet, drawing, engraving, picture, photograph, instrument, or article of indecent or immoral use or advertises the same for sale, or writes or prints any letter, circular, handbill, book, pamphlet or notice of any kind stating by what means any such articles may be obtained or advertised any drug, nostrum or instrument intended to produce abortion, or gives or participates in, or by bill, poster or otherwise advertises, any public exhibition, show, performance or play containing obscene, indecent or lascivious language, postures, or suggestions or otherwise offending public decency shall be fined not less than \$50 nor more than \$500, or imprisoned not more than 1 year or both.

The voice of protest being heard over the land is having its effect. William Gaines, 32, publisher of Entertaining Comics Group says "our sales have dropped off a third since the campaigns started. I'm discontinuing three of my horror books and two suspense books."

### Publisher Surrenders.

By way of announcing it to what he felt would be a heartbroken readership, he told his readers in one of the magazines "we still believe that the charges against horror comics are utter nonsense. We are forced to capitulate. We give up. We've had it."

But at the same time he announced substitute publications, which he gleefully said, will be "announced in Mad, Panic, Weird Science-Fantasy, Piracy and Two Fisted Tales."

Mr. Gaines was the man who startled a Senate committee investigating the influence of crime comics on juvenile delinquency with his standards of taste.

During hearings, Tennessee's Estes Kefauver held up one of Gaines' comics. The cover showed a man with a knife in

one hand and the head of a woman in the other.

"Is this in good taste?" the Senator asked.

"Yes, for comic books," Mr. Gaines replied.

"What would make it in bad taste?" Senator Kefauver wanted to know.

"If the head were held higher so you could see the blood dripping from the neck," the publisher replied.

### Comic Books Blamed.

Dr. Frederic Wertham, senior psychiatrist in New York's department of hospitals, tells of a boy of 11 who had killed a woman in a holdup, was arrested at his home, surrounded by heaps of crime comics. "If you want to know the cause of this," his 20-year-old mother said, "here it is—these rotten comic books."

Cleanup moves are under way by individual publishers, alarmed at the turn in public sentiment. The industry as a whole has set up the Comics Magazine Association of America for self-policing and hired New York Magistrate Charles P. Murphy as a "czar" to administer a code of ethics.

A vigorous campaigner against juvenile delinquency, he admits that during his tenure on the bench, he never had a case of juvenile delinquency that could be blamed on reading comic books.

Only this week the General Federation of Women's Clubs adopted a "wait and see" attitude in its campaign to drive sex, horror and crime comics off the stands.

"But I think the publishers of comic books should know that we are not going to relax our vigilance," said Mrs. Walter V. Nagee, youth conservation chairman of the federation.

### Forum Speaker Named

Mrs. Ruth Fox Hume will speak on "Catholics and the Arts: Fighting the Cult of Mediocrity" at 8:30 p.m. tomorrow at an open forum at the St. Peter Claver Center, 814 Seventh street S.W.

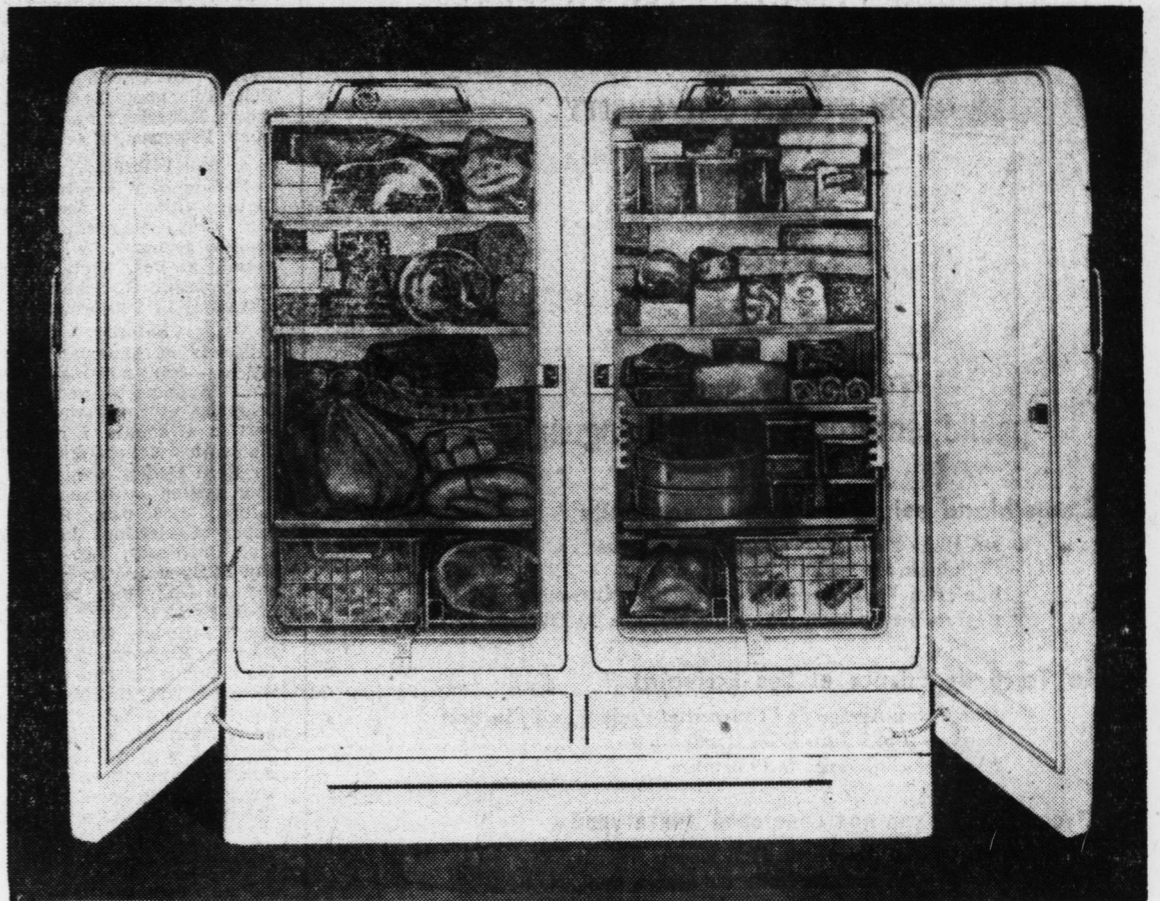


FROM D. C. NEWSSTANDS—Here are the covers of some typical horror comic books picked up at random in a canvass of newsstands, drug stores and even delicatessens in Washington.

SUN RADIO comes up with a price chilling buy in a BIG, BIG . . .

# NORGE

## 19.5 CUBIC FOOT UPRIGHT FREEZER

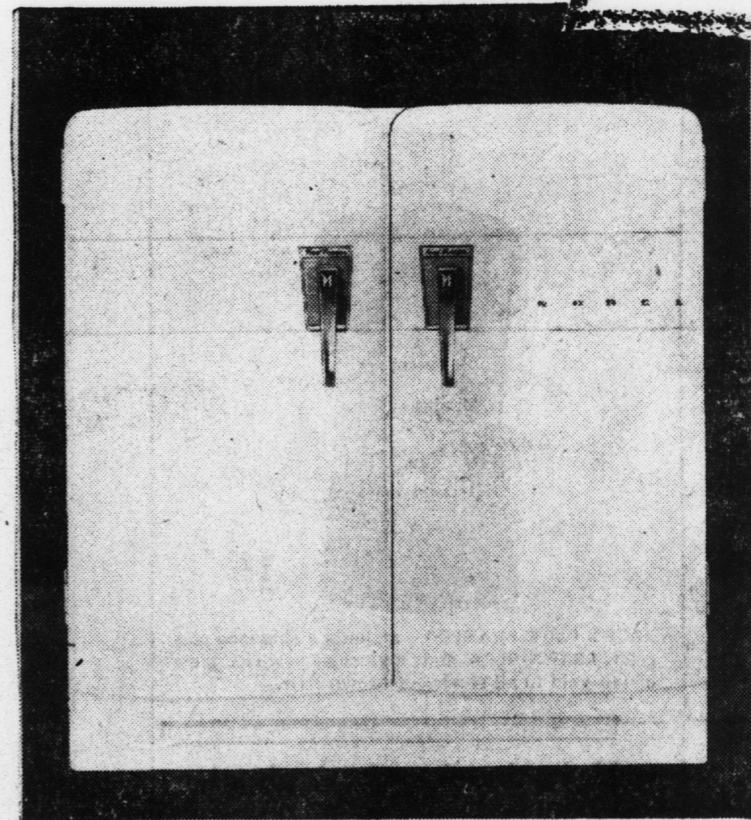


# \$310 OFF

... AND SUN GUARANTEES THAT THIS IS THE BIGGEST SAVINGS ON THIS TREMENDOUS FREEZER . . .

**GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE**

If you can get it for less within 5 days, Sun will refund the difference in cash!



~~699<sup>95</sup>~~

**389<sup>95</sup>**

It isn't every day that you can save a whopping \$310! But look also at what this big, big freezer does for you. It's ideal for the big family . . . 19.2 cubic feet. And it stores 670 pounds of food. That means less shopping . . . more economical "in-season" shopping. And for convenience, you can't beat this new Norge with its roll-out baskets and adjustable jet-freeze shelves. If you want the biggest buy in one of the biggest freezers you've ever seen—scoot to Sun bright and early tomorrow!

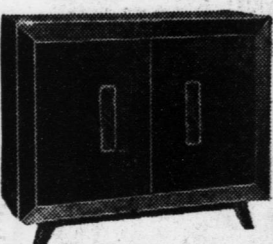
EVEN WITH THESE SAVINGS, USE SUN'S **TINY TERMS** No Money Down on Approved Credit



**SUN RADIO** EVERYTHING ELECTRICAL UNDER THE SUN 938 F ST. N.W. - 11th & E STS. N.W.

Radio-Phonographs, Phonographs and Radios

**"High Fidelity Hall"** at Kitt's has the Nationally Famous Instruments



MAGNAVOX PHILCO RCA VICTOR STROMBERG-CARLSON and others

Consoles Combinations Table Models Portables

Modernization of older Magnavox, Capehart, Scott and other instruments

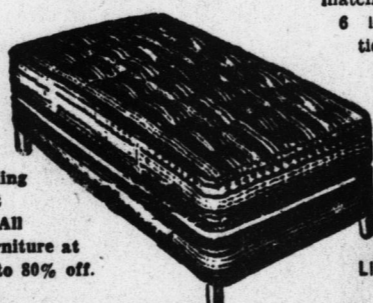
"Everything in High Fidelity"

**Kitt's**

1330 G Street N.W. RRepublic 7-6212

SALE MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY SAVE \$33 ON THIS

Nationally Advertised **Hollywood Bed Outfit**



Selling Out of All Furniture at 20 to 30% off.

**\$36.95** Regularly \$69.95

LIMITED QUANTITY



Corner of Emerson St. 4900 Georgia Ave. N.W. Taylor 9-3838 HOURS, 10 A.M.-9 P.M. DAILY