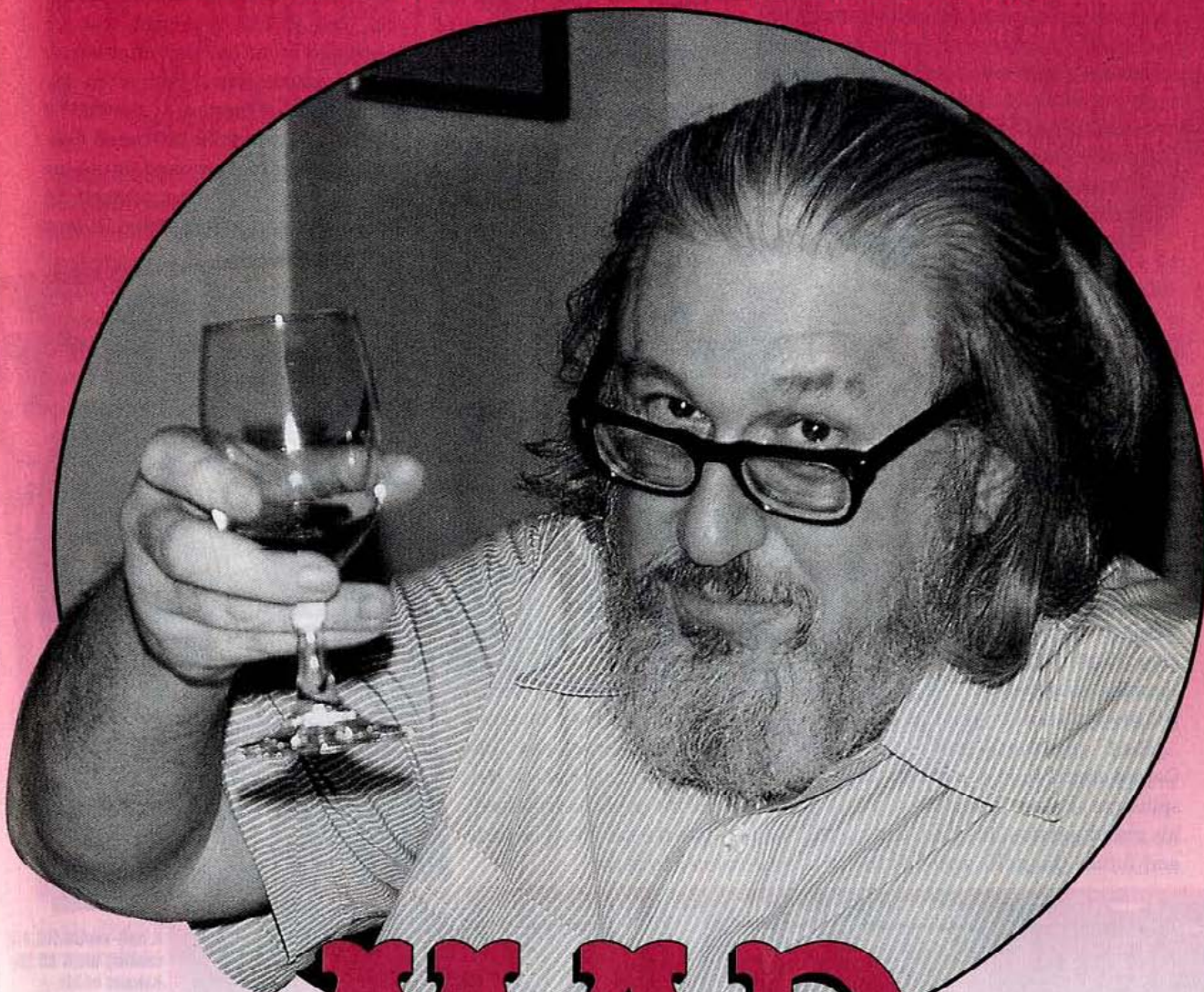


Many of our readers consider Frank Jacobs' *The Mad World of William M. Gaines* to be the definitive narrative of Bill Gaines' life and his E.C. empire. Scarce and long out of print, the book chronicles the Gaines era through 1972.

To help launch the new MAD XL series, we are serializing this book over six consecutive XL issues.



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNIE GAINES

THE **MAD** WORLD
OF
WILLIAM M. GAINES Part IV
BY FRANK JACOBS

The MAD World of William M. Gaines By Frank Jacobs. Copyright © 1972 by Frank Jacobs Library of Congress Card No. 72-91781. Portions of Chapters 10,16, and 17 appeared originally in *The New York Times* © 1971 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission. Selections from *The Mad Morality*, by Dr. Vernard Eller, reprinted by permission of Abingdon Press. Comment by Larry Stark in Chapter 7 appeared originally in *Hooah*, published by Ronald Parker. All excerpts from MAD copyright © 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, and 1972 by F.C. Publications Inc. Excerpt from *Shock Susanna Striae* copyright © 1952 by William M. Gaines.

THE STORY SO FAR

Gaines horror comics have fallen victim to the repression of the McCarthy era. Nearly bankrupt, E.C. has rebounded, owing to the success of Harvey Kurtzman's comic-book MAD. After Kurtzman's controversial departure, Al Feldstein has taken over the new, slick MAD, and we've been introduced to the magazine's artists and writers, aka The Usual Gang of Idiots.

CHAPTER 10

GAINES THE INSATIABLE

My grandfather, who never had more than a few dollars to his name, always managed to eat well. He explained this freedom from want through a special expression: "My stomach will never know I am a poor man." With William M. Gaines, the situation is reversed: His stomach will always know he is a rich man.

Half gourmet, half glutton, Gaines courts food as a gigolo stalks spinsters. Eating is his life schtick, his grand passion, his past, present, and future thing. He belongs to six

wine and food societies and could, if he wished, attend three dinners or tastings a week. Lamentably — and this is the fly in the melba sauce — he can't because of his weight problem. His poundage fluctuates like an east Indian oil stock, ranging from a low of 185 to a high of 285.

Every year or so, he goes on a diet, the effect of which depends mostly on his willpower. Gaines has tried at least a dozen diets, among them the Stillman (high protein, low fat, low carbohydrate), the Rockefeller (no starch), the Pill (dexedrine), the Drinking Man's (low carbohydrate, high protein, high fat, high alcohol), and various combinations of the above. Recently, he tried the Rice (one bowl of boiled rice three times a day). He began it at 7:15 on a Friday evening and ended it five minutes later, at which point he went on the Gaines (eat whatever you want to eat until the next night).

The only diet that has been completely effective is the Metrecal (Metrecal). Embarking on it, he prepared a chart which predicted he would lose one hundred pounds in twenty-eight weeks. His prediction came true both to the pound and the day, which pleased him despite the sacrifices he had been forced to make.

"Each time I hit the Metrecal trail," he says, "it means giving up any kind of a social life for months. My social life is food. I can't go anywhere, I can't do anything, because the only thing I know how to do is eat."

Gaines wound up his first Metrecal diet at 185, a weight that he remained at for one day, after which he rewarded himself with a ten-day eating tour of France. At the end of the tour, in which he devoured delicacies in a dozen two and three-star restaurants, he found himself in Paris, still not quite fulfilled. It was



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNIE GAINES



▲ A well-ventilated Bill cooking meat on the balcony of his Manhattan apartment. We understand people from as far away as Cresco, PA complained about the view.

◀ Fabulous MAD bibs: On the 1970 trip to Japan, the local cuisine is sampled by (l-r) Jack Albert, Al Jaffee, George Woodbridge, Bill Gaines, Dick DeBartolo and Don Martin.



his last day in France and he had not sampled *choucroute*, and Alsatian version of pork and sauerkraut. That morning he roamed the city until he found a restaurant that served the dish. He ate a portion. Down the street he found another restaurant serving *choucroute*. He ate a portion. Farther down the street he found a third restaurant that served *choucroute*. He ate a portion. He then returned to his hotel, packed and went to the airport, where he had a lunch of Spaghetti Bolognese, then boarded his plane and ate dinner. During the trip, he put back on fifteen of the one hundred pounds he had lost; in the next two years he would regain the other eighty-five.

From the beginning of Gaines's life there was a kind of gastronomic destiny. A few days after he was born, doctors discovered that he was unable to absorb any nourishment because the opening between his stomach and intestine was too small. An emergency operation was performed and the opening was enlarged — cynics may say it was overly enlarged — and baby Bill was off and eating.

We don't want to say Bill Gaines was husky, BUT... fabulous MAD babes Marla Wyche and Amy Vozeolas can simultaneously fit into a pair of his old pajamas. Sorry, these pajamas are not for sale.

Gaines remembers nothing about his nursery years except for a nightmare he had when he was two or three. In the dream he was being chased downstairs by a giant Heinz pickle. Whether precognitive or not, the dream showed where his mind was. As a boy



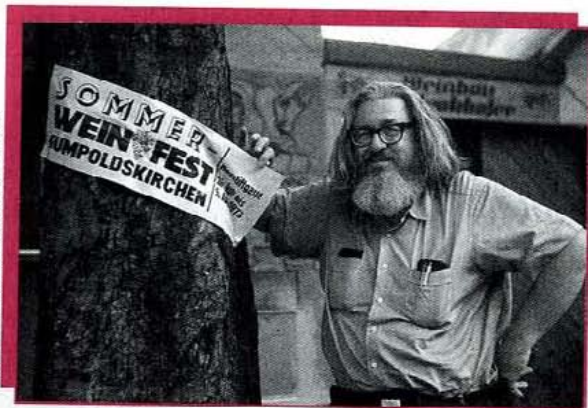
PHOTO BY IRVING SPONHOLD

his unit of wealth was the five-cent hot dog. Young Bill figured everything in terms of hot dogs. When he thought about going to a movie for a dime, he would ask himself: "Is this worth two hot dogs?" Later he would use the same system to decide whether he should buy, say, a bicycle horn or a camera lens. Today, in his post-marriage years, he has discarded the hot dog as his unit of wealth and replaced it with caviar. Before spending fifty dollars on a date he will stop and think, "With fifty dollars I could buy five-eighths of a pound of fresh Beluga." He will then decide if the girl is worth it. Sometimes she isn't.

Gaines remembers himself as a fat kid. He wasn't, but his enormous appetite and his hatred of exercise created the myth in his mind that he was. The only sport young Bill liked was swimming. One summer, when he was twelve, his father tried to persuade him to swim across a lake, about a mile in distance. Bill refused. His father countered with an offer he was certain Bill could not refuse. "If you swim the lake," the elder Gaines said, "I'll let you eat a Welsh rabbit." Bill had never tasted Welsh rabbit; he wasn't even sure what it was. But the anticipatory tingling in his taste buds overcame his dislike of physical exertion. He swam the mile and reaped his reward, which he found well worth the ordeal.

Except for the family's lean years, which occurred when Bill was very young, he was fed by his mother with loving abundance. Occasionally, she would prepare two com-





An ecstatic Bill at a 1975 Austrian wine festival.

plete Chef Boy-ar-dee spaghetti dinners, which, if one scanned the label, were enough to feed six people. In this case they were enough to feed two, namely Bill and his friend, Walter Kast, who together would eat the whole thing, with Bill generally taking two-thirds.

The kitchen in the Gaines house in Brooklyn was always open, making it a popular meeting place for Bill and his friends. "I'd go to other people's houses," he recalls, "and nobody fed me. I'd always thought that all mothers fed everybody."

Gaines is one of the fastest eaters in the world. Through his late teens and early twenties he and one of his friends would go to a restaurant and order three entrees. "Don't worry," Bill would tell the waiter when he brought the food, "the other guy will be here soon." Once the waiter departed, Bill would furiously down the extra portion, then switch plates and dig into his own meal. Invariably, the waiter would return, notice the cleaned plate in front of the vacant chair, and wonder how he had missed the "other guy."

cooks had hidden away in the back of the refrigerator. It should be mentioned that he fried the filets to a crisp. This was done because Gaines has never been able to stand the sight of blood. Until recently he would request a steak "super overdone." Lyle Stuart recalls Gaines sending back steak as many as four times until it arrived in the desired blackened condition. Today, Gaines eats his steaks medium but is never quite comfortable doing so. "Deep down inside I am a vegetarian," he admits, "but I like meat. I prefer hamburger to steak because hamburger does not resemble flesh. When I cut a piece of steak I'm cutting flesh, and it disturbs me."

Gaines did not develop a weight problem until after his first marriage, when he moved in with his mother. More and more,

During the first year in the Army, Gaines was given his choice of garbage detail or night KP. Naturally he chose KP because "that's where the food was." He spent a delightful five months devouring the delicious filet mignons that the

food became a symbol of security. He could not go to sleep at night unless he knew there was bread in the bread box and milk in the refrigerator. Even after he began dieting, his fear of empty shelves continued, except that the bread and milk were replaced by low-calorie soft drinks.

After his first two years in the business, his weight climbed to 240. It didn't help that the office was a block away from Patrissy's, an Italian restaurant that served excellent pasta and delicious homemade bread. Gaines dined there daily, taking members of his staff with him. Al Feldstein remembers weighing 141 when he went to work for Gaines, 180 after a year of lunches at Patrissy's.

But although Gaines's weight zoomed, there was a lack of direction to his eating. Put simply, it lacked class. He was a meat and potatoes man who knew what he liked and liked what he knew. Then, within a two-year period, two events took place which would completely change his outlook on the world of food and wine.

The first was his second marriage, in 1955. Nancy entered Gaines's life a good cook and left it a chef de cuisine, taking with her more than six hundred cookbooks, almost all of which she acquired during the marriage. Food was, probably, the couple's most dedicated area of togetherness. By 1960, a dinner at the Gaines apartment meant a lavish meal, superbly prepared and sumptuously served. A wise guest was one who had fasted the entire day.

George Dougherty remembers a dinner that included twelve courses, five wines, and cham-

Poetry in motion:
Bill enjoys champagne during a luxury train trip from Chicago to Washington, D.C.



pagne. It began at eight. Five hours later, after a final cordial, he rose from his chair, having eaten more than he ever thought possible, and struggled out to the Gaines's penthouse terrace to take in a gasp of fresh air.

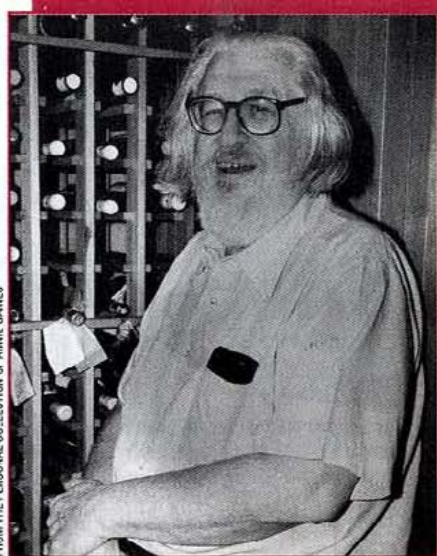
"They were eating orgies," says Nick Meglin, a veteran of several of the feasts. Meglin's wife, Lucille, once became sick between courses. She excused herself, came back ten minutes later and finished the meal. "Who could pass it up?" she says. Nancy's cooking was better than the cooking in any restaurant I've ever been in."

Arnie Kogen was especially impressed by the total hospitality extended by the Gaineses to their visitors. After one banquet he looked out a window and saw a fire raging through a building several blocks away. Kogen turned to his wife, Sue, and said, "Bill will do anything to entertain his guests."

The second event that changed Gaines's outlook on dining was a trip

he took to Haiti with Joe Orlando in 1957. The first night Gaines and Orlando were dining at the Picardie Restaurant. The subject of wine came up. Gaines said that he didn't want "any of that sour stuff," that he wanted "a sweet wine like Manischewitz." Orlando, who had been drinking Italian table wine since he was a youngster, got sick to his stomach, but agreed to let Gaines select the wine. Gaines could not find Manischewitz on the wine list — it is not a Haitian staple — so he picked a sweet vermouth to accompany their dinner of flaming lobster. Orlando got even more sick to his stomach.

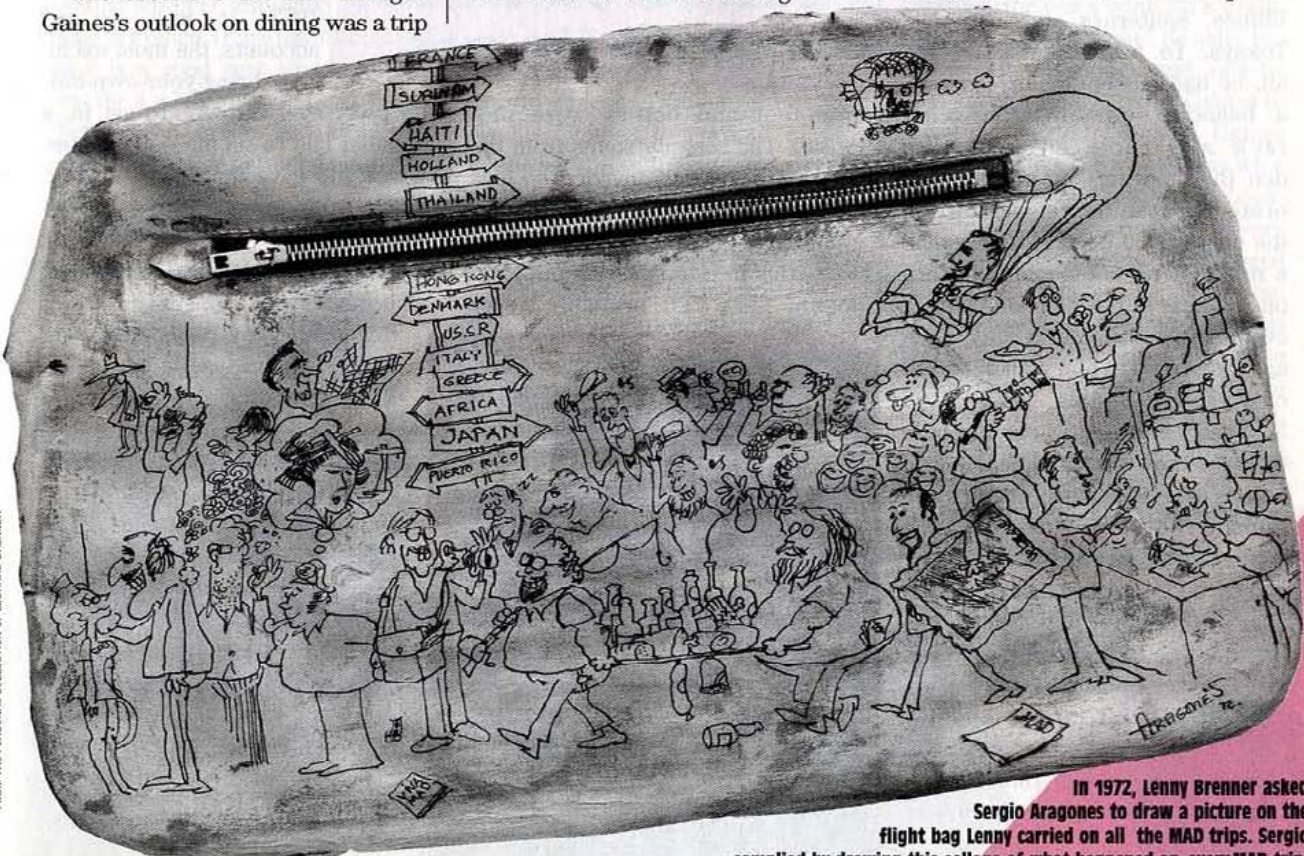
The next night it was Orlando's turn and he selected a Beaujolais. Gaines tasted it. "It's bitter," he said. "Eat and keep drinking it," Orlando said. Gaines did and at the end of the meal was enjoying his Beaujolais very much. "You're right, Joe, and I'm wrong," he said, and with these words his life took on a new meaning.



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF ANNIE GAINES

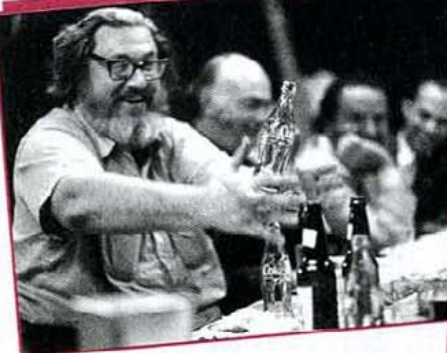
Bill worried that the wine vault he had installed in his New York apartment was so heavy it would crash into the apartment below — that's why he drank the wine as fast as he could.

Returning to New York, Gaines became a wine freak. He bought books by Frank Schoonmaker and William Masseie and read them cover to cover. He took a three-month course in winemanship. He



FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF LEONARD BRENNER

In 1972, Lenny Brenner asked Sergio Aragones to draw a picture on the flight bag Lenny carried on all the MAD trips. Sergio complied by drawing this collage of what happened on every MAD trip.



At another MAD dinner, Bill performs the balancing Coke bottle trick, then celebrates with lots and lots of food.



learned vintages and regions and found there was a world of difference between a Chambertin and a Gevry-Chambertin. New words seeped into his vocabulary — words like “houquet” and “corky” and “over the hill” and “it needs to breathe.”

And he bought wine. God, how he bought it. Burgundies and Bordeaux, Rhones and Rhines, Sauternes and Tokays. To hold them all, he had custom-built a beautiful combination wine rack and room divider for his den. But the wine started to deteriorate because the temperature in the den was 80 degrees. Gaines set a rule that no one could ever turn on the heat in the den. One winter evening his daughter Cathy, then age four, came to him with her teeth chattering. Gaines was torn between his daughter turning blue from the cold and his three hundred bottles of wine aging in the rack. He thought he solved the dilemma when he moved his bottles to the master bedroom and turned off the heat in there, but now Nancy was turning blue from the cold. Finally,

he deposited the wine in a hall closet and installed an air conditioner that is kept running every day

of the year, keeping his bottles at a constant, convivial 60 degrees.

His most costly bottle is a Trockenbeereenauslese, for which he paid ninety dollars. Probably his most prized bottle is a Burgundy, a Romanee Conti '45, of which only about

open the bottle,” Gaines says. “The bottle with the wine in it is the object of such romance, such unbelievable dreams to the average wino, that it’s worth having just so another wino can come and look at it.”

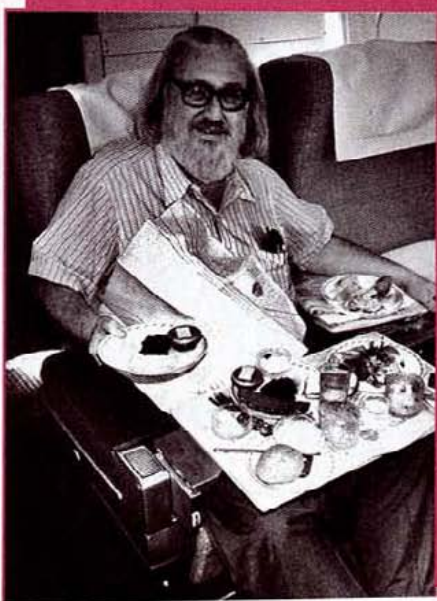
Gaines knew that he had arrived as a wine buff when he made the now-historic dinner that the New York Wine and Food Society held at Le Pavillon in 1972. It was, to all accounts, the most exclusive bring-your-own-bottle party ever thrown. To get in, a member had to submit one or more wines and have them judged to be among the great rarities of the world. Only twenty-five members passed the test, among them Gaines, who shared with his peers three bottles of Musigny Blanc Comte de Vogue, the rarest of the white Burgundies.

Gaines’s favorite story about wine is “Taste,” a brilliant, often terrifying tale by Roald Dahl. For years, Gaines was intrigued by the story, which deals with a wine connoisseur who makes a spectacular bet that he can identify, through taste only, the vineyard and vintage of an obscure Bordeaux. After reading the story, Gaines determined to lay his hands

A jumbo meal on a jumbo jet: Bill enjoys caviar on a first-class flight to somewhere.

Gaines was torn between his daughter turning blue from the cold and his 300 bottles of wine aging in the rack.

one thousand bottles were produced. The scarcity stems from the refusal of the Nazi invaders to give the vineyard the chemicals it required to get rid of a breed of plant louse that infested the rare pre-phylloxera vine. “I’ll probably never



MAD in Africa: On a 1969 MAD trip, the Usual Gang and some locals pose at the Equator.

on a bottle of the wine, which was a Branaire-Ducru '34. After scouting wine auctions and browsing through countless shops, he finally found not one, but two, in a shop in Paris. He brought the wine home and wrote Dahl, who lives in England, that he wished to present him with one of the bottles. Dahl, who

turned out to be a MAD subscriber, wrote back thanking Gaines and adding: "You may rest assured that nobody has ever offered me one of them before — not even the proprietors of the vineyard itself, although the story has been translated and published in France. I have never tasted it, but it is a good year, and it should keep for a while longer. I don't know when I shall be in New York again, but it must be sooner or later, and then I will call you and we can drink it together."



One day Gaines and Dahl will uncork their bottles of Branaire-Decru '34. You can be sure that Gaines will save the label, as he has saved all of the labels from his most prized wines, pressing it between the pages of a book, not unlike a schoolgirl preserving a precious flower.

Gaines maintains a strong loyalty toward wine, and whenever he travels he samples the output of the country. The ultimate experience perhaps took place in Tanzania at the Ngorongoro Lodge during one of the MAD trips. Seated with three staffers, Gaines noticed a

local red wine on the lodge's list. He ordered a bottle and filled his companions' glasses. To the man they agreed the wine was terrible. Gaines refused to abandon it. Here, after all, was a wine — not a good wine, perhaps, but nevertheless a wine. "It's drinkable, I've tasted worse," he said. His companions disagreed and, one by one, left the table, leaving Gaines to finish the bottle by himself. Gaines sighed, poured the last of the wine into his glass, and drained it. Looking down, he discovered a very large, maroon-stained, wine-logged bug lying motionless at the bottom of the glass. Gaines almost lost his lunch. He pushed the glass aside and departed swiftly. His loyalty to the wine of the country had been severely shaken. However, in the midst of his emotional agony he thought of the bug and had one

(Continued on page 38)

Bill Gaines (bottom) finds relaxing nearly impossible during a MAD trip.

