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## The master storyteller and the Master Wrecker

by Joseph Cowles

**Carl Barks fans who are old enough** to have watched the original Mickey Mouse Club TV series may recall the Club's official cartoonist, "Mooseketeer" Roy Williams. Roy was the Disney Studio artist who conceived the "mouse ears" worn by the show's actors and purchased by millions of Disney fans over the years.

At the time I met and became friends with Carl and Garé Barks, I was a teenager working as a popcorn boy at Disneyland. Roy Williams visited the Park from time to time and would sometimes stop by my wagon to chat a while and enjoy a serving of fresh popcorn.

One day Roy and I were talking about cartooning and I happened to mention my being a fan of the person who did many of the Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge stories. Like so many other comic book readers, I had no idea who the cartoonist was, but could easily identify his drawing style.

It turned out that Roy knew of the

artist—"the best gag man in the business," he called him—but for privacy reasons didn't feel right about disclosing his name to me. "Next time you're in Los

Angeles," Roy suggested, "stop in at Western Publishing and tell them you're a big fan. They may be willing to give you his name and mailing address."



PHOTO BY JOSEPH COWLES

Signpost of the *Swift's Chicken Plantation* at Disneyland, summer 1955. In the background, on *The Rivers of America*, are *Tom Sawyer's Island* and the *Indian Village*. *Swift's Chicken Plantation* was razed in the early 1960's to provide space for a new Frontierland attraction—incidentally offering inspiration for a new Carl Barks story.

A couple of weeks later I did just that. Learning that the name of the "good artist" was Carl Barks, I managed to persuade an editor to give me Carl's post office box number in San Jacinto, California. Then I went home and wrote my letter. The rest is, as they say, history.

**One winter day**, I was peddling my popcorn from a wagon in Frontierland, near the dock of the Mark Twain Riverboat. Looking south, to where the river made a big curve and flowed past Tom Sawyer's Island, I could see some construction in

progress. Or to be more exact, I was watching *destruction* take place. A large crane with a wrecking ball was tearing apart *Swift's Chicken Plantation*, a restaurant that had been quite popular during the first years of the Park's operation, but was now being demolished to make room for a new attraction.

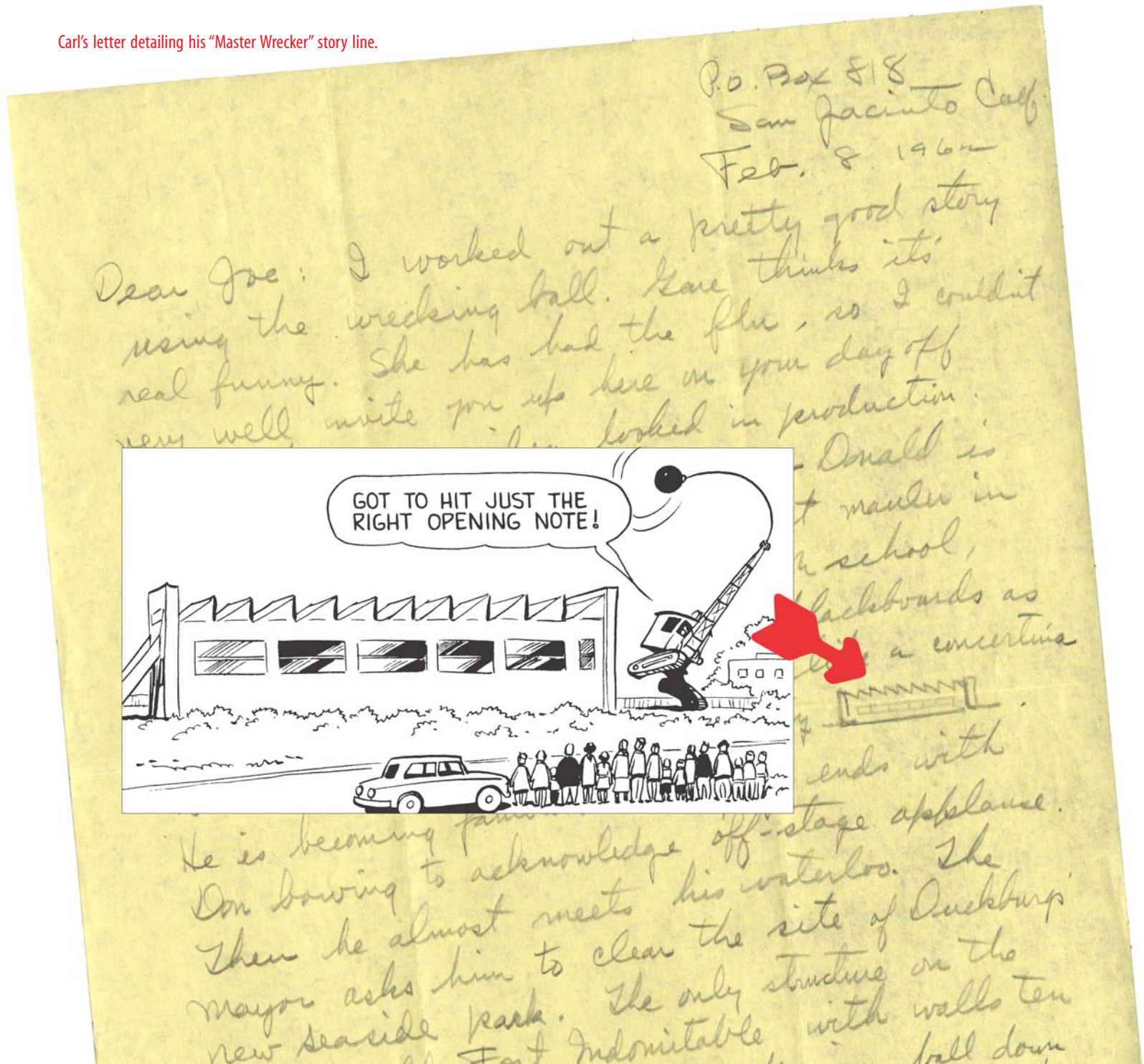
The demolition lasted several days and I watched as much of the work as I could, fascinated by the skill of the man operating the wrecking ball. He seemed to know just where to strike in order to

do the most damage without making a huge mess for the cleanup crew.

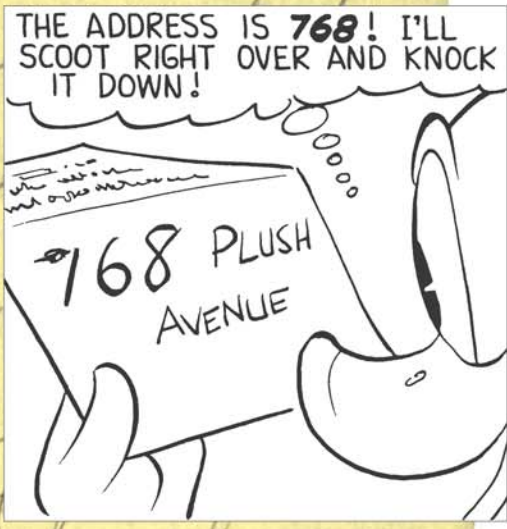
I jotted down some quick notes about the action and mailed them to Carl, who was always on the lookout for material. He thought the idea had possibilities and decided to see if he could develop it into a ten-page Donald Duck yarn for an upcoming issue of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*.

**In early February**, I received a letter from Carl describing what he'd been able to do with the idea. "Dear Joe: I worked out

Carl's letter detailing his "Master Wrecker" story line.



...t of Duckburg. He gets a ticker  
 maidens strewing his path with  
 he's so popular he can't have an  
 ed. But he does have an  
 gnat whose home was destroyed  
 Indomitable slid into the sea.  
 next order to w  
 on a close-up  
 which looks like 768  
 d wrecks the plush  
 ave. It houses the  
 s are the mayor in  
 g wall. A cabinet  
 de art, etc. The club members  
 lar a moment before Don knocks

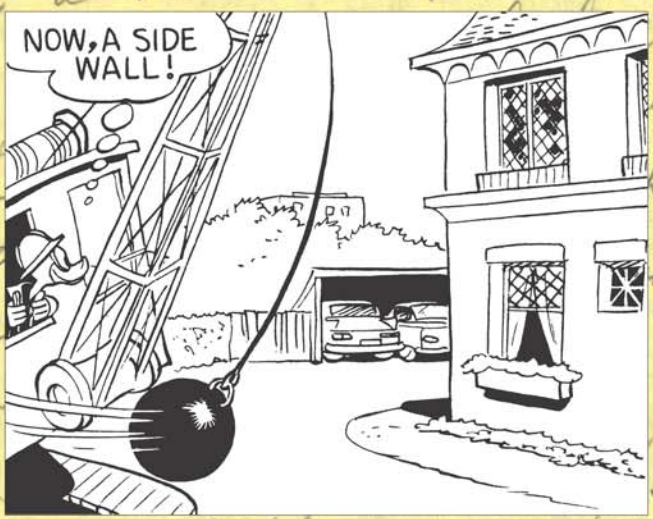


a pretty good story using the wrecking ball. Garé thinks it's real funny. She has had the flu, so I couldn't very well invite you up here on your day off to see how your idea looked in production.

"The main points of the story are— Donald is an expert wrecker. The mightiest mauler in Duckburg. He wrecks an old high school, deftly stacking the glass and blackboards as in your gag. Then he makes like a concertina with an accordian-shaped factory. He is becoming famous. Each gag ends with Don bowing to acknowledge offstage applause.

"Then he almost meets his Waterloo. The mayor asks him to clear the site of Duckburg's new Seaside Park. The only structure on the site is Old Fort Indomitable with walls ten feet thick. Donald wears his iron ball down to the size of a pea. But his pounding has loosened an earth fault under the fort. At the proper spot, Don blows the remains of his iron ball through a pea shooter and knocks the huge fort sliding, cliff and all, into the sea.

"Don is now the toast of Duckburg. He gets a ticker tape parade with maidens strewing his path with roses. It seems he's so popular he can't have an enemy in the



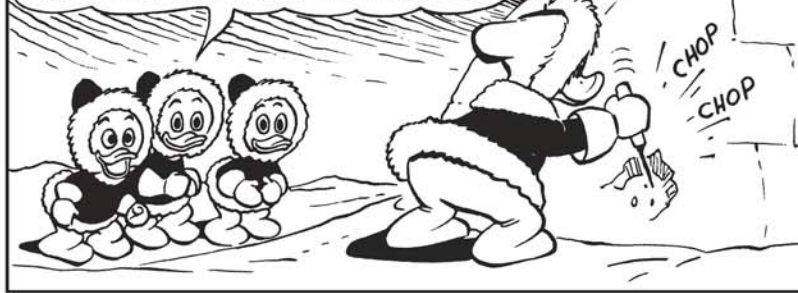
en igloo with an ice pick,  
 ppliance of an audience of penguins.  
 h for the suggestion of the iron ball,  
 from some such germ of inspiration Shakespeare  
 Yours sincerely Mc Barker

world. But he does have an enemy—a tiny gnat whose home was destroyed when Old Fort Indomitable slid into the sea.

"Don receives his next order to wreck a shack on Plush Ave. In a close-up he reads the address which looks like 768. Anyway, he goes there and wrecks the

SO, THE MIGHTIEST CITIZEN OF DUCKBURG IS HUMBLLED BY THE FEEBLEST— A TINY GNAT!

NEVER MIND, UNCA DONALD! YOU CAN MAKE A NEW START HERE IN **LITTLE AMERICA!**



ALL YOU NEED TO WRECK BUILDINGS HERE IS AN ICE PICK!



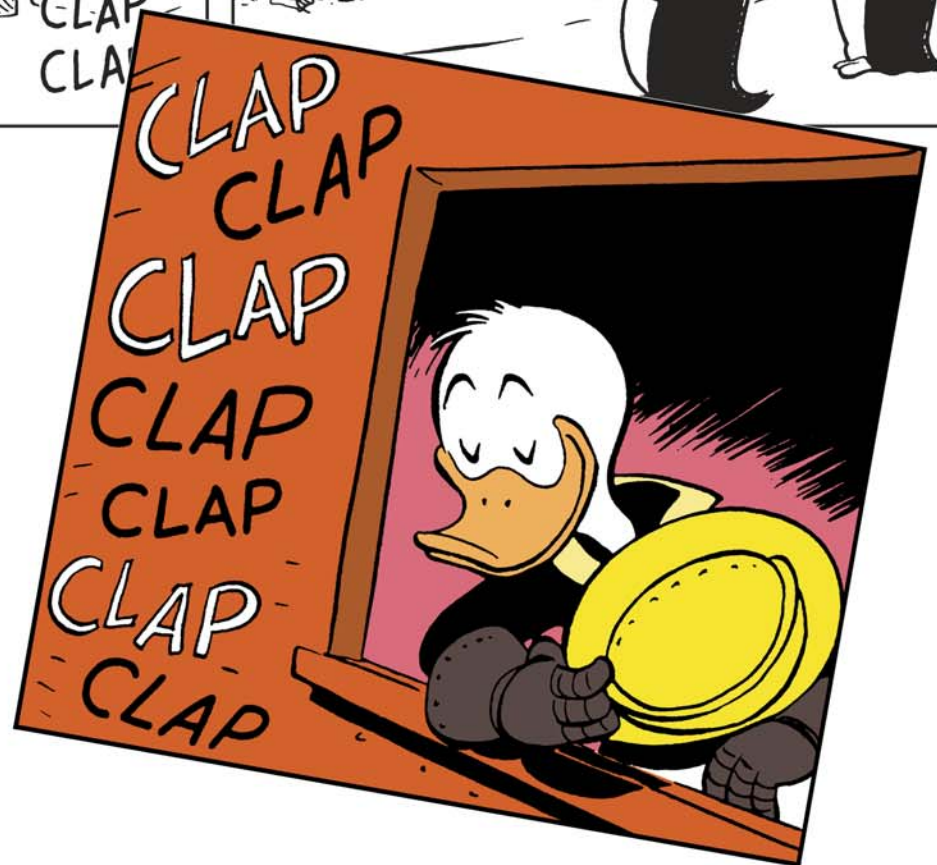
plush-looking building at 768 Plush Ave. It houses the 'Top Brass Club.' Among the gags are the mayor in the bathroom inside a cracking wall. A cabinet full of Etruscan objects de art, etc. The club members flee to the cellar a moment before Don knocks the building into a stack of used lumber.

"Then he sees the glowering men in the cellar. He checks the address on his order sheet just as the gnat flies off the paper, leaving the figure now reading 168 instead of 768.

"End on Donald and kids in Little America where Don wrecks an igloo with an ice pick, then bows to the applause of an audience of penguins.

"Thank you very much for the suggestion of the iron ball, Joe. Perhaps from some such germ of inspiration Shakespeare wrote MacBeth.

"Yours sincerely, McBarks"



In the years before he retired from comic bookery to try his hand at oil painting, Carl Barks often complained he was running out of ideas, that coming up with new stories was the hard part of his craft. But it seldom took more than the slightest glimmer for his creativity to take over, and he was able to turn even the simplest ideas into successful adventures for Donald and Uncle Scrooge and all the Duckburgians. Carl, we applaud you!