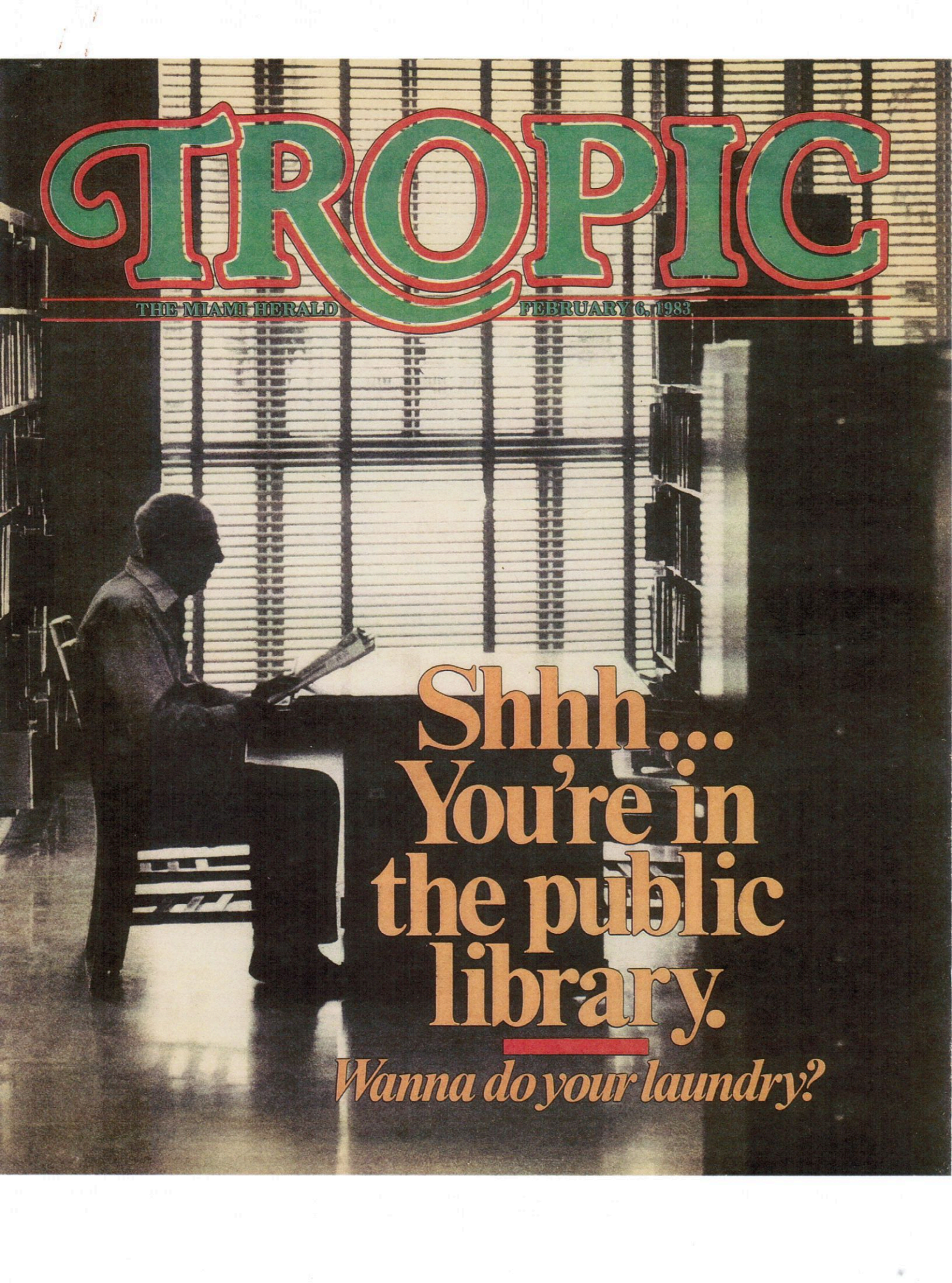


TROPIC

THE MIAMI HERALD

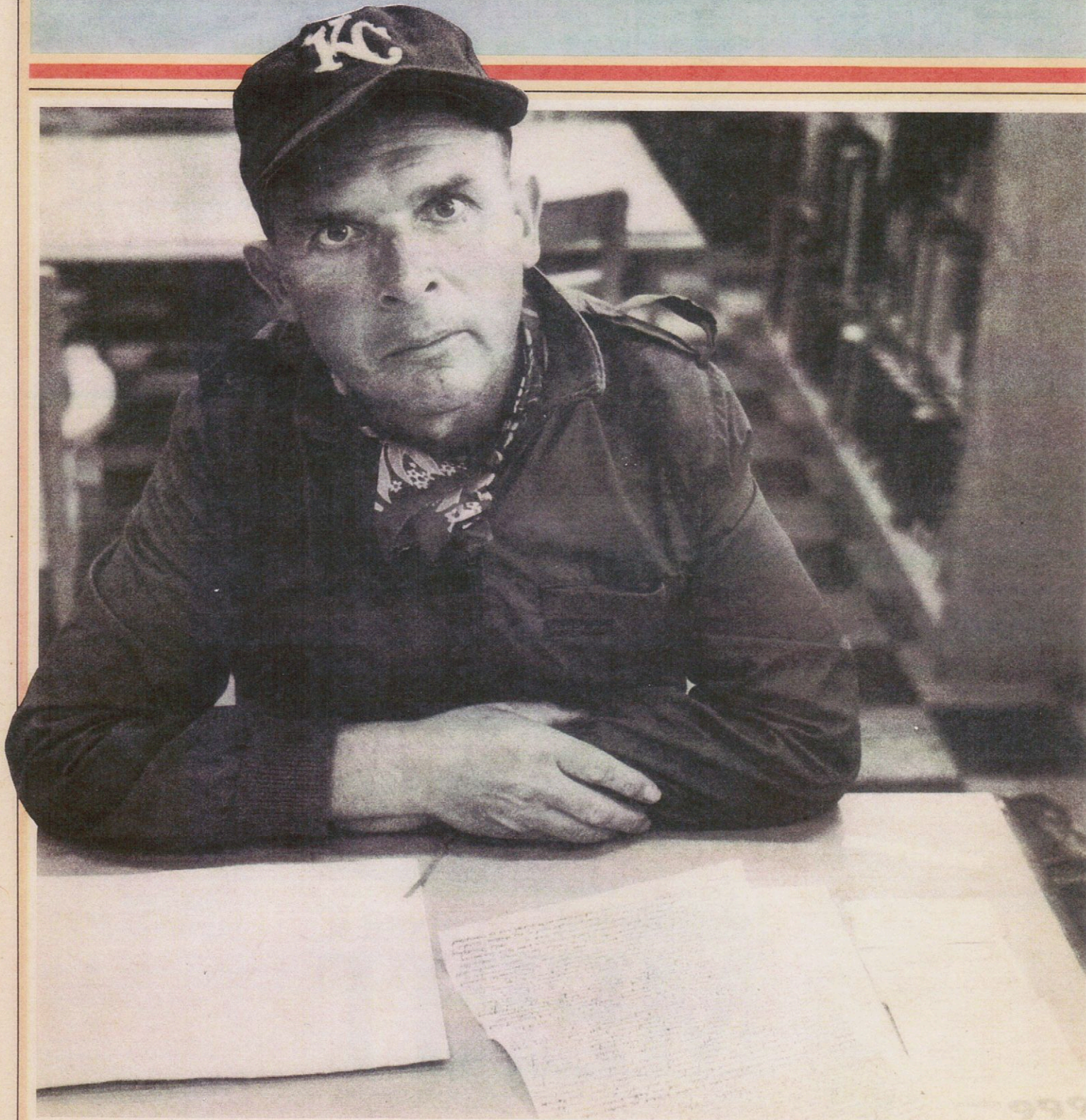
FEBRUARY 6, 1983



Shhh...
You're in
the public
library.

Wanna do your laundry?

BY MICHAEL BROWNING PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL CARLEBACH



HORST JOHN HENRY HEINDR, 50, SUSPECTS THAT A JEWISH CONSPIRACY IS KEEPING HIM FROM HIS FAMILY AND MAKING HIM GO BALD. HE COMES TO THE LIBRARY EVERY DAY TO RESEARCH WAYS OF PREVENTING NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST. "IT IS," HE SAYS, "A VERY LONELY LIFE."

THE COLLECTION

When they close the Downtown Public Library this year, it won't be just books that will have to go...

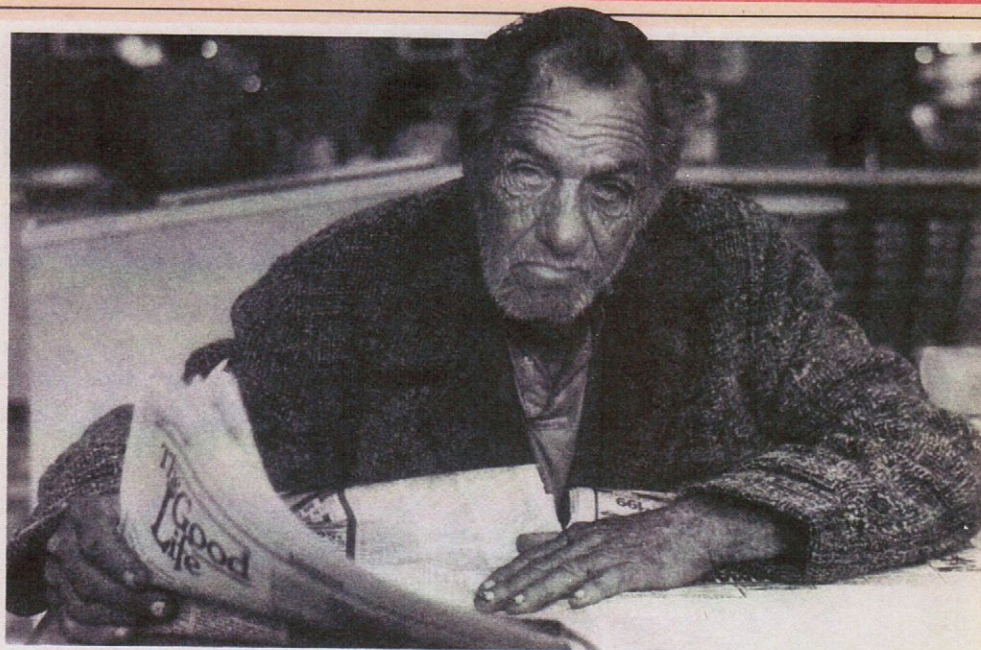
They worried that a hurricane would sweep it away, it was so near the water, so unprotected. One day the whirlwind would come howling over the bay and scatter the books' pages like a million, million leaves caught in some awful autumn, white against a dark sky. But in the end it was the murder mysteries, as much as anything else, that did the place in.

The mysteries! Nobody could get enough of them. The library bought and bought and the people read and read. Rex Stout, Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, John Dickson Carr, Georges Simenon, John MacDonald, there were never enough. Windows were blocked off. New shelves were added. Aisles shrank.

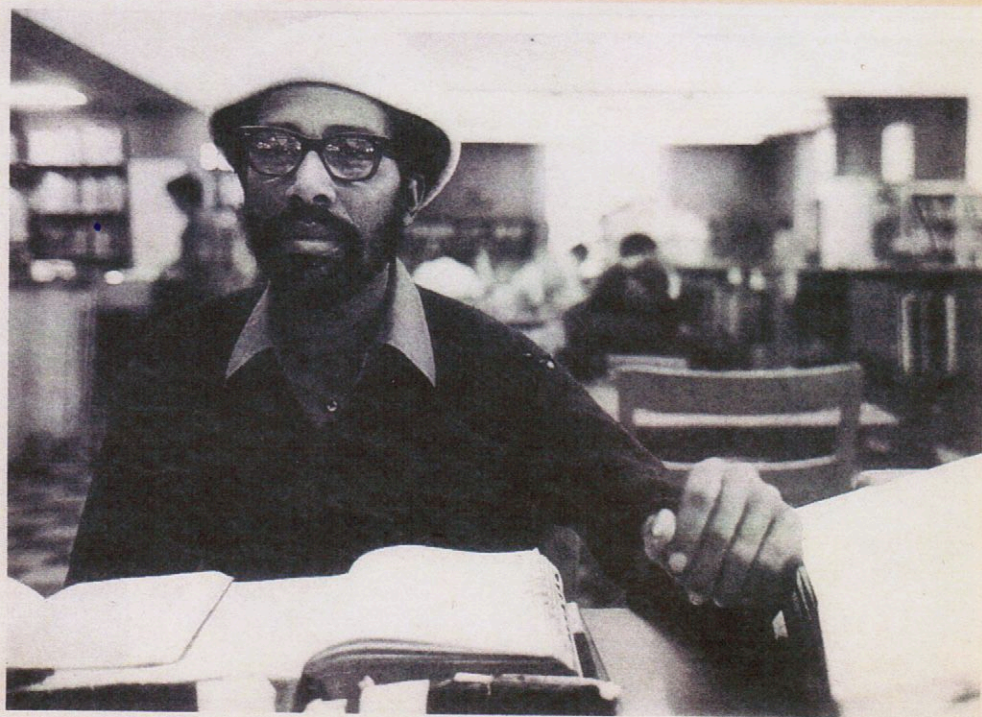
Every once in a while, the librarians would find bodies lying back amid the whodunits, smelling like they'd been there for quite some time. No need to call in Monsieur Poirot: Just tap them on the shoulder and they would stir.

For they were only drunks, the most faithful patrons the downtown library has ever had,

MICHAEL BROWNING is a Herald staff writer.



JOHN T. MARSHALL, 68, READS WESTERNS AND DETECTIVE STORIES BETWEEN NAPS. HE HAS NO POLITICS THAT HE WILL DISCUSS. OPINIONS, LIKE RAZOR BLADES, ARE A LUXURY HE CANNOT AFFORD.



CLARENCE TAYLOR, 42, SPENDS FOUR HOURS A DAY STUDYING THE BIBLE. THE MORE HE STUDIES, THE MORE MELANCHOLY HE BECOMES. "AS GOD GIVES ME MORE AND MORE UNDERSTANDING, THE WORLD SEEMS SADDER AND SADDER," HE SAYS.



THE SLEEPERS: SOME HIDE BEHIND MIRRORED GLASSES AND AN INSCRUTABLE POSE; SOME SEEK OUT THE FATTEST PILLOW AND TRY TO LOOK CONTEMPLATIVE; SOME JUST HIT THE STACKS, THEN HIT THE SACK.

a woebegone crew who used the place as a daytime dormitory and a shelter from the rain. They're a gentle, whiskery bunch, quite harmless really, the kind of people who have mastered the art of reading Westerns with their eyes closed, just one page each day.

Such a generous place: Nobody is refused admittance and you practically have to fall out of your hardwood chair to be asked to leave. The derelicts seem to huddle rather obligingly around the reference desk, as though they were trying to take up as little space as possible. The two old Royal typewriters in the lobby are free. The Xerox machine is 15 cents a copy, up a nickel but still cheap. There is an optical enlarger for readers who can't see very well. The business collection is a godsend for small entrepreneurs. The 5,000-volume genealogy room is the most complete south of Atlanta. The whole place is a sweet-natured omnibus: art gallery, water fountain, Parnassus, pissoir, playpen, hammock, church, stock ticker and umbrella.

GLEAMING MARBLE STRUCTURE NESTLES LIKE HUGE JEWEL AT EASTERN END OF MIAMI'S MAIN BUSINESS STREET.

That was the headline in *The Miami News* the day the library opened in June 1951. It is about the nicest thing anyone has ever said about the place, and it is nonsense.

The Miami Memorial Public Library isn't what you would call gem-like, and it is hard to think of a two-story structure that has 282 tons of steel, 56,500 concrete blocks and more than 19,500 square feet of marble from Georgia and Tennessee in it as nestling anywhere. In fact, the library sits ponderously athwart a thick concrete slab that is set on pilings driven 40 feet down through an artificial landfill into the oolite beneath Biscayne Bay. It was intended as a memorial to the nation's war dead. It looks very like a tomb.

It cost \$1,067,434.95, took nearly two years to build and, for its looks as well as for its location, is probably the most widely deplored public building in Miami. Sticking it plunk in the middle of Bayfront Park roused people to paroxysms of anger in 1949. It was "evil." It was "an outrage." It was a "desecration" of the park's "sacred sod."

Now, just 31 years after it was put up, the library is coming down. An \$18 million project designed by Japanese architect Isamu Noguchi to beautify Bayfront Park would sweep the old — well, not that old — building away and reopen the view to the bay.

With the library goes Dr. Horst John Henry



THE COLLECTION

Heindr, with his shaved forearms and his highly original theories about food poisoning and the International Jewish Conspiracy. With it, goes the kindly, forgiving Clarence Taylor, who studies the Bible four hours a day and who says the Scriptures contain the answers to all questions. With it, goes John T. Marshall, the destitute ex-steelworker with the gimpy foot and the greasy trousers, who reads science fiction, nodding off gently every few minutes. With it, goes alert, gentle-spoken George Klingmeyer, a retired broker who spends all day Saturday poring over a slew of financial weeklies, to keep tabs on his investments. With it goes conscientious library attendant Fernando Prados, who circles the reading room now and then like a pesky horsefly, tapping shoulders, waking sleepers, breaking in on drunkards' dreams.

He has no quarrel with the well-behaved library patrons. It's the derelicts that nettle Prados. "All they do is sleep," says Prados. "They start to read. Boom! Head goes down. They sleep. Anytime I see them: Out! That's it! They smell. Whew!"

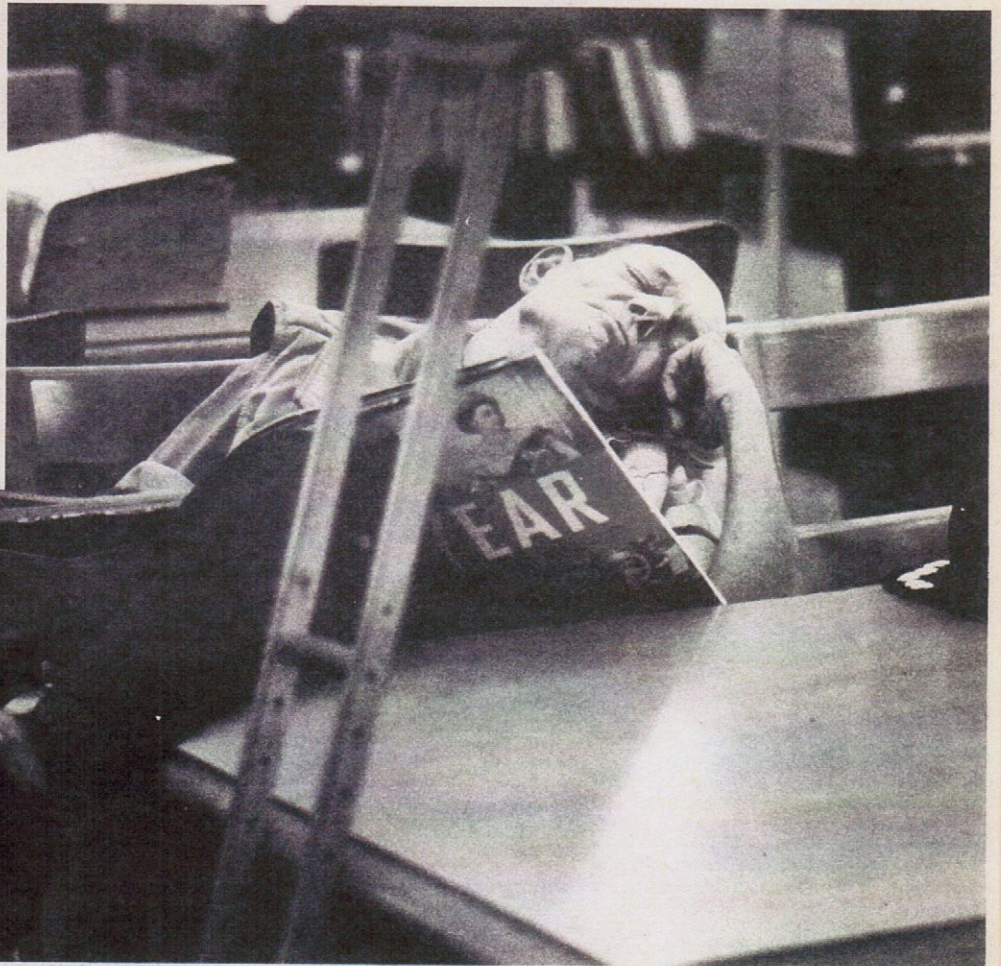
Micki Carden, the library's community relations coordinator, takes a more tolerant view. "Of course we're watering and wetting station," she says. "Every public building is. But librarians respect people, individual people. We believe in access for everybody. That's what a public library is all about."

All the regulars swear that, after the old library dies, they'll meet again in a better, finer place — in short, the new library at 100 W. Flagler St. in the \$23 million Downtown Cultural Center, behind the federal courthouse. The task of crating up the nearly half a million volumes in the downtown branch's collection (30 years ago there were only 60,000 books) has already begun.

But some things can't be boxed. Here are a few oddities and commonplaces that may have to be left behind:

- The library stands a few feet north of the spot where, on Feb. 15, 1933, Giuseppe Zangara tried to kill President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt with an \$8 hammerless pistol he bought from a pawnshop. He missed FDR and fatally wounded Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak instead. "Capitalism kill me! My stomach hurt all the time!" the skinny little man shrieked. Zangara was arrested, tried, convicted and electrocuted within 34 days. An autopsy revealed he had a diseased gallbladder.

RETIRED STOCKBROKER GEORGE KLINGMEYER STILL PUTS IN A 9-HOUR DAY, JUST KEEPING UP WITH HIS INVESTMENTS. "I'LL MISS THE OLD PLACE," HE SAYS, LOOKING AROUND. "I GOT A LOT OF AID AND COMFORT OUT OF THIS LIBRARY."



THE COLLECTION

• The goofiest question ever asked the reference desk, according to an informal poll, was: "What was the name of Dudley Do-Right's horse?" Do-Right was a character on the "Bullwinkle" cartoon show. This question so piqued one librarian's interest that he sat down and watched the show for an entire week. The answer? "Horse."

• Gore Vidal researched his best-selling novel, *Burr*, at the downtown branch. Another, more sinister researcher was kidnaper Gary Krist. In 1968 he ransacked the library's extensive Florida Collection for information on wealthy locals. Krist finally settled on the family of young Barbara Jane Mackle, went to Atlanta, snatched her from a motel, immured her in a coffin-like box with an battery-powered air pump and buried her alive for 83 hours. Krist is serving a life prison sentence for his crime. His autobiography, *Life*, was written in jail and is on file today in the Florida Collection.

• It is next to impossible to hold on to a picture of Marilyn Monroe. Patrons ferret out photos of the dead actress whether they appear in books or periodicals, and steal them. They normally use ball point pens to perforate the pages before ripping them out.

• The library windows are sealed to prevent thieves from tossing the books out. This cuts off the air, so the air conditioning has to run year 'round, and the air conditioning system is an extraordinarily powerful juggernaut. It is up on the second floor and it shakes one whole room so much that the librarians look just a little blurred behind their desks. The whole building can be amazingly, piercingly cold in the Miami midsummer.

• The public restrooms, which are filthy, are located in the rear of the building on the first floor and are painted dark blue. This doesn't mask a welter of graffiti, most of which is pretty raw. One printable one reads: UNITED STATES WILL DESTROY IRAN AS WELL AS ISLAMIC NATIONS BECAUSE THEY ARE MURDEROUS FANATICS.

At 4:30 every day the maintenance man goes in and tries to spruce up the latrines a bit. This is the signal for smart patrons to leg it for the loo; it is the one time of day when the toilets are relatively usable. Library staffers use separate facilities, and so do the Miami police that patrol Bayfront Park on horseback. They tie their horses to a palm tree just beyond the monument to Argentina's General Jose San Martin. Once, a drunk tried to ride off on a police department horse. The would-be rustler was quickly apprehended. Police call the derelicts "rickets," short for "rickety people." The rickets are rarely arrested; it isn't worth the effort, police say. They are usually back on the street within two hours.

• Nobody knows why, but some winos like to file their empty flasks on the shelves. The flat bottles look a little like books and are sometimes overlooked by librarians. The preferred vintage is Richard's Wild Irish Rose.

• The names of people who owe \$1 or more in fines to the library are filed on cards in wooden drawers near the entrance. There are 144 drawersful of names.

Other fixtures at the library will no doubt make the move to the new building with ease — especially certain patrons. Here are four long-time library-goers who say they can't do without the place: a political fanatic, a man of God, a drifter and a retired stockbroker from Ohio.

• Dr. Horst John Henry Heindr, 50, German-born and with a thick accent, sits at the same table each day and fills up page after page with neat, regular, fountain-penned entries. He carries his possessions in a large, zippered blue bag and wears cracked leather combat boots. Heindr shaves his forearms and keeps his hair short in order to remain clean. He lives alone. A Jewish conspiracy, he says, alienated him from his family: something to do with food poisoning.

The evidence to clear his name, he says darkly, is someplace in Switzerland. Heindr is going bald. He suspects food poisoning may be to blame for this too.

"I am working on the Jewish problem and on how to solve the nuclear holocaust danger," Heindr says earnestly. "The Jews have capitalism on their side ever since Roosevelt was president. Rommel was a Jew. I love all nations and wish all nations to live together in peace. In the next nuclear war 135 million Americans will die."

Heindr has no job, as a matter of principle. He believes Jews own so much of America, through banks and insurance companies, that he might unwittingly be an employe of a Jew, no matter what work he did. To Heindr, this is unthinkable.

He is working on a new version of the Bible, an "action Bible," he calls it, which he hopes soldiers will read.

"It is a very lonely life," he says with a little smile. "The library is my true home."

• Just two tables away from Heindr sits Clarence Taylor, 42, who comes to the library four hours each day to read and study the Bible. Every so often he and Heindr chat, even though they are poles apart.

"We are not close, because of his racial attitudes," says Taylor, who is black. "But generally he is a good spirit."

Taylor is the sort of fellow who can see the good in anyone, or anything. He deplores the recent violence in Overtown. He insists that the root of all injustice is "spiritual deprivation." His study area is remarkably neat, with all the books at perfect right angles to the table's edges.

"I knew the world wasn't the way it should be," says Taylor. "I studied psychology and things like that. Then I started studying the Bible and things started falling into place. Now my whole life is centered on the Word. The truth is in the Scriptures."

The more he studies, the more melancholy he becomes. "As God gives me more understanding, the world seems sadder and sadder. Sometimes it makes me want to cry," Taylor remarks.

The library "just grew on me," he says. "I've gotten into the habit of coming here. People ask me questions and I get a chance to witness, to testify. It has been like a sanctuary for me."

• John T. Marshall, 68, was sleeping bolt upright in his chair when we first passed by and it seemed politer not to bother him. Half an hour later he awoke, refreshed, and consented to an interview. He limped out to the lobby. His foot hurts him, he doesn't know why.

"I wasn't asleep," he maintained. "I never sleep in the library. I read. I go mostly for science fiction and the more spectacular detectives. I've read all my life. I love to read."

Marshall, an ex-steelworker and carpenter from Pittsburgh, has been living in Florida for the past 17 years. He is now homeless and divides his daylight hours between the library and his brother's apartment, where he goes sometimes for lunch. He has no politics that he will discuss, nothing bad to say about anyone. Opinions, like razor blades, are a luxury he cannot afford.

The imminent destruction of the old library does not trouble him.

"They're supposed to have a new one ready, aren't they, when this one goes?" Marshall says, smiling serenely.

• George Klingmeyer, who'll be 79 this month, arrives like clockwork every Saturday at 9 a.m. from Miami Beach and stays until noon. After an hour for lunch, he returns and reads until 6 p.m. A methodical, clear-eyed man with a thoughtful air about him and a ball point pen in his shirt pocket for note-taking, Klingmeyer likes to keep up with his investments by reading the latest news from Wall Street.

"What do I read? Let me see, there are so many

things: Moneyline, The Wall Street Transcript, The Wall Street Journal, Indicator Digest, Financial World, Insider's Letter, Standard & Poor's Letter, Babson's Letter, Moody's Bond Survey . . . I'm sure there are more, but I can't think of them offhand."

Klingmeyer lauds the library's business collection. "It's very complete," he says, and he should know. He was a stockbroker in Cleveland, Ohio, for 20 years. Retired, divorced, alone, Klingmeyer looks forward to his weekly bus trip to the library. He finds the derelicts downstairs amusing.

"You know, they go into the bathrooms and wash their clothes there at the sink. Sometimes you find whole outfits, rags, on the floor. But this library is no different from the one up in Cleveland. The street bums used to come in there a lot too."

Klingmeyer has been coming to the library for nearly 30 years now, practically since the day it opened. Of all the people interviewed, staffers and patrons, he was the saddest to see the old place closing down.

"I worry about the neighborhood around that new library," he confided. "Although I guess it will be superior from the standpoint of sanitary facilities."

He looked around the crammed, gray metal bookshelves. "I'll miss the old place," he said. "I got a lot of aid and comfort out of this library."

On any weekday at 5:45 p.m., before the sun is out of the sky, two attendants start clearing the place out, walking from department to department, one on each floor.

"The library is closing," they announce.

The sleepers wake. The drunks are the first to the door; they can't afford to overstay their welcome. Down the stairs, between the chairs and tables, the patrons wend their ways out the glass front doors into Bayfront Park, with its banyans and gumbo limbo trees.

"The library is closing," the attendants say again. This time they flicker the lights for emphasis.

Finally everyone is gone. Upstairs in the children's reading room, Professor Peter and Professor Paul, two gerbils in a glass cage, kick up clouds of sawdust, lively to the last.

