CARMINE INFANTINO
Portrait by **KEN MEYER, JR.**
©2026 Ken Meyer, Jr.

About Our Cover

Pencils by
CARMINE INFANTINO
Inks by
JOE GIELLA & MURPHY ANDERSON
Kanigher caricature by
ERNIE COLÓN
Colors by
GLENN WHITMORE

The Flash, Adam Strange TM & © DC Comics

Above: We cheated a wee bit in the top portion, which originally depicted Reverse Flash in *The Flash* #147 [Sept. '64], but we had Glenn Whitmore color Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella's art as the Barry Allen version. (Thanks to Marc Svensson!) Bottom is detail from *Mystery in Space* #81 [Feb. '63], Infantino pencils, Murphy Anderson inks. (Thanks to Dave Armstrong!)

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Ulp!: *A coupla issues back, we ran a half-page devoted to Ken Meyer, Jr., our esteemed color portrait artist, and, under his pic, we ran a caption that was in error. Ken hails from Santa Ana, California, okay? That was my bad, Ken. Oh, and I egregiously misspelled the great Gil Kane's name on Tom Ziuko's page in* CBC *#41. Good lord!*

Right: *Detail from Carmine Infantino's cover of* DC Special *#1 [Dec. '68] featuring Batman and Rouge Enfant!*

Please note: *Some images in this issue were enhanced by digital software.*

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What, Me Sorry?

An unapologetic declaration from sorrowful Ye Crusading Editor

I needn't detail my transformation between the end of *Comic Book Artist* magazine and this here mag, but suffice to say I ain't that same old guy (though I *am* old, having turned 67… 6-7! I've been told only kids under the age of 12 know why those two numbers said together have any significance!).

Back in the day, I was admittingly less reliable, prone to a lack of attention regarding often important matters and I'd say, "I'm sorry," a lot. Lotsa times, it was to apologize for not including stuff in the issues as announced, and sometimes I was rightfully accused of being less than sincere given I didn't make a concerted enough effort to stop over-promising. But, like I said, I'm a different guy now.

Still, I'd been sensitive to being depicted as a chronic apologist – boy, was I steamed when **Pete Von Sholly** skewered me in *Comic Book Nerd!* In that 2006 TwoMorrows one-shot, he expertly lampooned almost a dozen comics-related periodicals, ribbing my old mag, *CBA,* with the "Y.E.Ed" editorial headline, "What Can I Tell Ya? I'm Sorry About Everything, Now Let's Move On!" – so much so that, in subsequent years, I studiously avoided uttering that "S"-word in print! But now, I'm not sorry to say, I'm done with avoiding the non-apologias. Not that I'm gonna fall back to faux contrite behavior, but just to… *sheesh!* Relax already!

Carmine Infantino by Ronn Sutton

The sorry reason this has come to mind is, while I had – particularly since diving into a bi-monthly schedule – originally intended to have front matter contents be a fair balance of straight Q+As alongside narrative articles, last issue's "Comics Chatter" section had four Q+As as opposed to a mere two narratives, and I momentarily fretted about that unequal ratio. But, unless you readers protest about *CBC* sometimes having a majority of up-front features composed of verbatim interviews, I've decided to otherwise not loss sleep about it, okay?

All that said, Pete X and I are good pals today and I can now chuckle at his unerringly keen wit pointing out my then-deplorable habit of being late with my release dates. But that was then and this is now. My on-time frequency has been pretty consistent and, while I can't promise to never be tardy again, I'm confident that *CBC* will be continue to come your way pretty darn steadily.

I'm also pretty chill about complaints regarding my use of the sobriquet, "Ye Ed." I've received some adamant criticism about my use – and *over*-use – of my self-imposed nickname, but I'm not going to sweat about it. I've used that nom de plume abbreviation – "Ye Crusading Editor," in full – since my fanzine days, after lifting it from maybe Stan Lee, science-fiction 'zines, or Cthulhu knows where. (Anybody have *any* idea from whence the appellation originated?) So tough toenails if ya don't like it!

About the **Carmine Infantino** section herein, I gotta be honest and say I had hoped to write an in-depth essay on the man's tenure as editorial director and then publisher of DC Comics between 1967–76, but I recognize the subject is just too big to condense into this issue alongside the "Nuff Said" interview. Anyway, I do intend to write an actual *book* on his reign – I've been accumulating material on it since, well, the Spring of 1998 with the publication of *Comic Book Artist* V1 #1! – so there will eventually be more to come, I promise.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the features that did make it into this issue, especially the "Spotlight on the Pros" article by **Bernie Bubnis**, which collects his enormously entertaining multi-part vignettes on visiting mainstream comics folk and publishers back in the mid-1960s, which he wrote for fanzines of that era.

Gotta go! I'm putting finishing touches on my Last Gasp history, *Mind Candy.* Then *Treasure Chest*…ciao!

– Ye Crusading Editor
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The Dreams of Joe Hill

In the first of Glen Cadigan's three-part interview, the writer shares the key to his success

Conducted by GLEN CADIGAN

[*To the world at large, Joe Hill is a #1* New York Times *best-selling author of books that include* Heart-Shaped Box, NOS4A2, *and the recently released* King Sorrow. *His short story, "The Black Phone," was adapted to film (where it also spawned a sequel), and is but one of many Hill-penned tales that have found their way from page to screen. That list includes his seven-volume comic book series,* Locke & Key, *which ran for three seasons on Netflix, and for which he received the Eisner Award for "Best Writer," in 2011.*

[*As this interview will show, Hill was less a novelist dabbling in comics and more a struggling comic book writer who made it big in the world of books. It was conducted via Zoom on September 12, 2024, and thanks go to* L&K *editor (and former IDW bigwig) Chris Ryall for setting it all up.* – **G.C.**]

Glen Cadigan: *Let's start with the secret origin of Joe Hill. What are some of your earliest comic book memories?*

Joe Hill: The first book that I really connected with emotionally was a comic book that was actually a trade paperback: *Bring on the Bad Guys* ['76]. The cover said, "by Stan Lee," because Stan had a tendency to forget about his collaborators, but I loved and obsessed over that book. Then later, I also got *Son of Origins* [*of Marvel Comics,* '75] in the same format. I liked the heroes, but I loved the bad guys. The Abomination fascinated me, and I even liked that word, the way it felt in my mouth. So I connected with comic books in a fairly intense way at a pretty young age. That would have been five or six or something, and I remained, basically, a comic-book guy. I became a comic-book guy with a comic-book imagination.

I was the kind of guy who started bagging his comics at 13, 14-years-old. My brother and I have 14 boxes of comics up in Bangor, Maine. That's our shared collection and it's kind of stuck there. He lives in New York now and I live in New Hampshire, and we have this collection that's in our parents' house. We've never really known what to do with it because to split it up would mean arguing about who bought what and who collected what. We both have different memories about who led the way on this series or that. I know that I bought *The X-Men*. Not to monologue at you, but when I was in high school, I fell pretty hard for the *X-Men* run [by] Claremont, right through "The Dark Phoenix Saga," and so that was sort of my grail, collecting that whole series.

Glen: *So you didn't read it as it came out?*

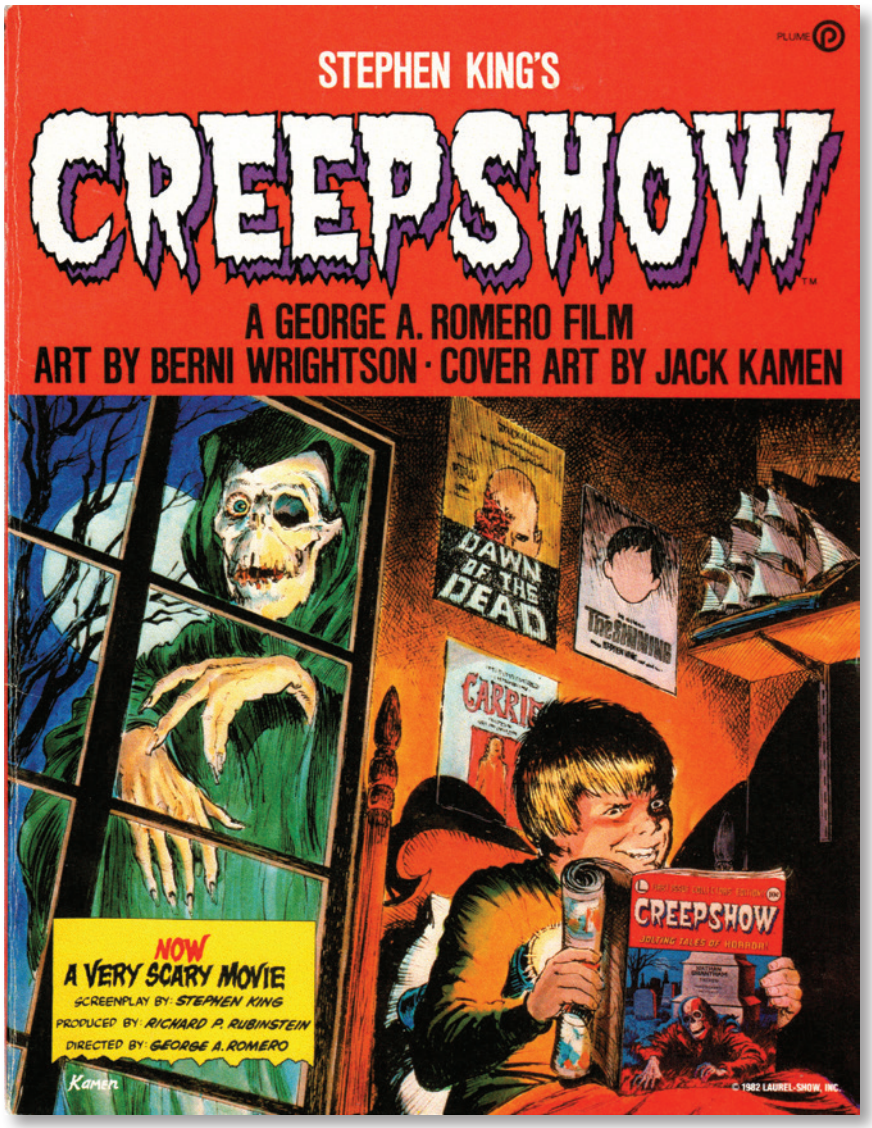
Joe: I didn't. It was already over by the time I started collecting it.

Glen: *You mentioned* Bring on the Bad Guys. *As an author, do you find the villains more interesting than the heroes?*

Joe: In my own work, I try not to let them be more interesting than the heroes. Someone – I can't remember who; maybe it was C.S. Lewis, might've been G.K. Chesterton – said that fictional evil is romantic and thrilling, and fictional good is boring and predictable. And, in real life, evil is banal and sickening, and good is thrilling and surprising. I've always tried to have the work reflect how I feel about the real world, which is that, in the real world, good is thrilling and often unexpected and evil is tawdry and pathetic, and sort of stomach-turning. Nevertheless, a lot of times it can be really fun to write the bad guys. It wasn't in a comic book, but I knew

Above: *Young Joseph Hillström King suited up for a Maine winter. Determined to forge a path by his own merits, 13-year-old Joe adopted the pen name, Joe Hill.* **Inset left:** *The cover of* Locke & Key *#1 [Feb. '08] by Gabriel Rodriguez.* **Below:** *Portrait of the writer snapped by Maggie Levin for* The Black Phone *publicity.*

Locke & Key TM & © Joe Hill and IDW Publishing. Photos courtesy of Joe Hill. Bottom photo by Maggie Levin.



This page: *Clockwise from above is Jack Kamen's cover art for the* Creepshow *comics adaptation ['82], featuring the likeness of the future Joe Hill; the lad appearing in the movie; and Joe with his father, novelist Stephen King.*

when I was working on my third novel, *NOS4A2*, that I had a tiger by the tail. I knew that because Charlie Manx was such a fascinating bad guy; it was so much fun to listen to what he had to say.

Glen: *It was so much fun that you gave him his own comic book mini-series.*

Joe: I did, with C.P. Wilson III, whose vision of Christmasland, and of Charlie Manx, was so grotesque and so delightful. It's a little bit like if Bill Watterson decided to draw a horror comic. I actually did a couple issues of *Wraith* that I think are maybe some of my best work as a comic book writer. One tells Charlie Manx's origin story, and then one tells the story of a con man who sold Charlie his Wraith. I think those two stories work as a really interesting pair of bookends. The final story in the collection is more like an illustrated story than a traditional comic book; it has big blocks of text in it, and I think that works pretty well.

Glen: *How old were you when you discovered EC Comics?*

Joe: Pretty young, which sounds strange, since the heyday of EC was in the 1950s and I was born in 1972. I started with *Bring on the Bad Guys*, but, in some ways, *Tales from the Crypt* was my gateway drug. I started reading those, I want to say when I was about ten years old.

The backstory on how I wound up reading *Tales from the Crypt* requires some explaining: my dad loved the EC horror comics of the 1950s. *Tales from the Crypt, Vault of Horror*… he loved those books. And so did George Romero, the director of *Dawn of the Dead* and *Night of the Living Dead*. And George Romero and my father were friends, and had wanted to do a movie together for a while. They decided to do a movie that would be a tribute to the horror comics of their childhood.

So my dad wrote it, George Romero directed it – my dad acted in it, as well. *Creepshow*, which came out in 1982 when I would have been ten, was filmed in '81. And for some silly reason, they stuck me in the film. So I'm the little boy named Billy at the beginning of the movie, and the end of the movie, who is obsessed with horror comics, and his father throws out his comics. Billy takes his revenge on dear old dad with a voodoo doll that he ordered from the back page of one of these comic books. The eight days I spent on the set of *Creepshow* was a pretty formative experience for me.

Creepshow is a movie about being in love with comic books, and specifically about being in love with horror comics. There was a hardcover reprint of the entire run of EC Comics, not just *Tales from the Crypt* and *Vault of Horror*, but *Two-Fisted Tales,* their war comics, their science fiction comics… there was even one slim hardcover that was *Tales of Psychotherapy,* which, boy, there's a comic book that I'm just sure reeled in a huge fan base. And my dad went out and bought the whole box set. It would make sense if my father bought them before he wrote the movie – if he picked them up for research – but I actually feel like he bought them after *Creepshow* came out.

So he had all those books on the shelf of his office, and, not long after *Creepshow*, I began reading them. My parents, who were children of the '60s, they seemed to feel like if you wanted to read something, you must be old enough to read it. And they were the same way about films. I mean, I watched a lot of stuff when I was ten or 11 that, later when I became a parent myself, I would not have wanted my ten- or 11-year-old to watch, but my parents were of the mind that

Creepshow TM & © Taurua Entertainment. Photo courtesy of Joe Hill.

if you're interested in this thing, you should explore it.

So I read all the *Tales from the Crypt* stuff. And that taught me what a good horror story should look like, right or wrong. Maybe you could argue there are better models – Henry James, or something – but I think, even now, when I write short stories, after I get about 6,000 words in, I start to think, "Where's my *Tales from the Crypt* stinger?" These stories have to have their stinger at the end. Every short story is a wasp with a stinger stuck at the tail. What's that going to be? And I learned that from reading *Tales from the Crypt* obsessively.

Glen: *Did you have any favorite creators of the EC stable of artists?*

Joe: I'm going to embarrass myself by not being able to pull up the names. When I think about *Tales from the Crypt,* what I think about is the art. The craftsmanship was so astonishing, the only modern artist who really could draw like that was Bernie Wrightson. The costuming, the expressiveness of the characters, the detail work was so sophisticated in the *Tales from the Crypt* comics, in *Vault of Horror*. Jack Kamen was one of the artists, and I remember he was very good. Wally Wood, right? Wally Wood was incredible. But the whole stable, top to bottom, was working at such a high level, I just think later iterations of artists – maybe because they had to work faster, maybe because they didn't have the same kind of training, I don't know – [weren't able to work at that level].

The best artist in the history of comics was Hal Foster. No one ever drew better than Hal Foster. Every comic creator has been living in the shadow of *Prince Valiant*. That stuff was the early 1940s, the late 1930s, and a hundred years later, no one has ever matched his level of craftsmanship, of artistic capability. But the guys who drew for EC came pretty close. They were of the Hal Foster school in terms of their ability to create vivid, detailed, realistic scenes. Later generations of artists I think were all looking for crumbs under the tables of the masters – I feel the same way about myself, by the way. Very few artists have been able to reach those peaks, maybe because they're driven too hard, maybe because the deadlines, I don't know why. I think that John and Sal Buscema could reach that level. Bernie Wrightson could reach that level. I've been lucky to work with the brilliant Gabriel Rodriguez for 15 years now… longer, almost. Really, we're going on almost a 20-year relationship now, and I think Gabe can reach that level.

Locke & Key TM & © Joe Hill and IDW Publishing. *Wraith* story © Joe Hill; art © IDW.

Above: *Joe Hill felt that the variant cover of* Locke & Key: Alpha *#2 [Oct. '13] by Bernie Wrightson was a circle closing given the Swamp Thing co-creator had drawn the interior art of the Creepshow film adaptation released in 1982 (and featuring the writer's likeness as a ten-year-old therein.* **Inset left & below:** *Teamed with talented artist Charles Paul Wilson III (a grad of the Joe Kubert School), writer Joe Hill counts* Wraith *as perhaps his best comic book scribing. Hill describes the series as, "It's a little bit like if Bill Watterson [of Calvin & Hobbes fame] decided to draw a horror comic. Below is the cover for #3 [Dec. '13] and inset is an interior page from the series.*

Glen: *Two names you threw out there were Jack Kamen and Bernie Wrightson, which is interesting because Bernie did the adaptation of the* Creepshow *movie, and Jack drew you on the cover.*

Joe: That was one of the reasons I was able to remember their names, because of a personal connection there, right? Bernie Wrightson drew a cover for the last issue of *Locke & Key,* which I have. I have some original art, and that is one of the treasures. It was so amazing. It felt like a circle closing, for Bernie Wrightson to have drawn *Creepshow* when I was a child, and then have the cover of *Locke & Key* as *Locke & Key* was ending. Sometimes life does work out like a Dickens novel. Sometimes a character you meet in chapter two comes back in chapter 32 for a little bit of unfinished business, to polish something off, and I do love when that happens.

Glen: *When you were a kid, did you make your own comic books?*

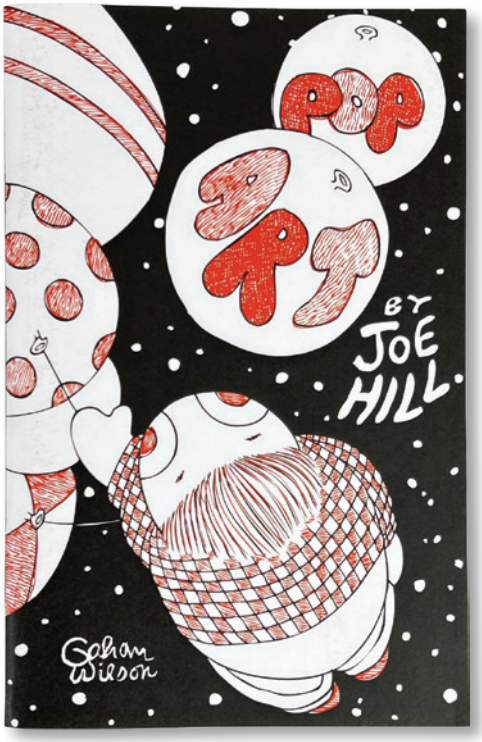
Joe: Oh, yeah. Didn't everyone who loves comics do that? I'd draw and write, and I'd staple it all together, yeah. My sister and I had an actual little hand-rolled printing press, and you could make stuff on your printing press. It was like a kit. I don't want to pretend this was some kind of 19th century equipment; it was a child's toy, but I remember you could turn a crank and it would print stuff up. Everything was purple. I remember we could do our own little newspapers on it, and that we could do our own little comic books. So I remember me and my older sister did that, but we're talking about the 1970s here.

Glen: *Were you one of those kids when you read comics, you thought one day you would write comics?*

Joe: Yes. So 1982, *Creepshow* comes out. Probably around 1984 or '85 – you could look it up and find out for sure [*'83*

Above: Hill confesses that, when he read, back to back, Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* ['00], and the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* collection of 2000, by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neil, he was thunderstruck with the realization he was destined to pursue a career as a professional comic book writer.

Below: Beloved *Playboy/National Lampoon* cartoonist Gahan Wilson provided the cover art and interior illustrations for Hill's chapbook featuring his short story, "Pop Art" ['07], a limited edition of 150.



– **Ye Ed.**] – Marvel published something called *The Marvel Try-Out Book,* an enormous book, and every page was the size of an actual page that comic book artists worked on. Jim Shooter had written part of a Spider-Man story, and then John Romita, Jr. had drawn part of [it], and if you were an artist, you had some blank pages to draw. If you were a writer, you were given an opportunity to write the script for the rest of the story. So, when I was 12 years old, I finished that story from *The Marvel Try-Out Book.* I wrote the script to finish it up, I sent my submission in. That was my first professional submission as a writer.

I got back a form rejection, but the form rejection had a handwritten message from Jim Shooter on the bottom. His handwriting was absolutely indecipherable. I have no idea what he actually said. I could read his name, but I couldn't read the rest of it. I prefer to think he was saying, "Kid, you got a bright future in comics. Just keep writing." But it's also possible he said, "This thing was absolute dog dirt. Give it up." I have no idea, but I've always been an optimist, so I figured it was a compliment.

I'm skipping ahead a little bit, but my first sale to comics was to *Spider-Man Unlimited* # 8 [May '05], and when they sent me the check, the check had Spider-Man on it. When I got paid, I got this incredible looking check with Spider-Man on it. I deposited the check, and later I'm like, "Why did I give up the check?" I should have had them stamp it paid, or void, or something. I shoulda got the check back so I could frame it, but I didn't. I haven't been good about keeping that kind of professional ephemera.

Glen: *Did you ever go through a phase where you outgrew comics?*

Joe: Yep. When I got to college, I was determined to meet girls and find out what it was like to date a girl, and I thought probably my interest in comics and role-playing games were holding me back. I looked too much like a dork, and wasn't gonna be able to date, so in college I gave up comics and role-playing games, but I actually only gave up comics for about two years. I loved them too much to stay away.

Role-playing games, I did, actually, [quit]. I did role-playing games all through high school, but in college, I gave it up, and took that creative impulse to create stories for people to play as games and shifted my efforts to creating stories of mystery and suspense and horror and the supernatural. I thought that was a better outlet for my creative impulses. I had been writing in high school as well, but I was dividing my time between inventing stuff for stories and inventing stuff for games, and then, in college, I just thought, "Don't give it away. Don't give this stuff away in a game. Put it into a story. It's better if you put it into a story."

I have a 21-year-old who loves [Call of Cthulhu], loves to DM; he's a great writer. I've read some of his short stories that I thought were spectacular, and it sometimes makes me a little crazy that he's got such a feverish imagination, and then he pours it all into the role-playing games instead of putting it into stories. So now I know how my parents felt about my role-playing game habit. There's a little part of you that's like, "Do it as a story. Put it on the page. You'll be able to reach a wider audience, more people will be able to enjoy it." But you also have to make room for people to enjoy the things they enjoy.

Glen: *So when you were sending stories out to magazines, were you also trying to break into comics as a writer?*

Joe: I started writing and submitting stories when I was in college – very late in college – not until I was a senior. But, when I was a senior, I had a novel called *Paper Angels,* and I submitted *Paper Angels* to contests, and on the strength of *Paper Angels,* I won an honorable mention in the Ernest Hemingway First Novel Contest. And on the strength of that, I was able to secure an agent, Mickey Choate, with The Choate Agency. He read the book; he didn't think that it was quite good enough to submit to publishers, but he liked my writing, and hoped I would send him more work, that we could find a project that he could represent. So that's how Mickey became my agent.

We have to go back to go forward. My dad is the novelist Stephen King, a tremendously famous American novelist and pop culture figure. I knew at an early age that I also wanted to write stories, but I also felt that I didn't want to ride on coattails, and when I was in college, I began to think, "If I write under the name Joseph King and people know who my dad is, an unscrupulous publisher might publish me before I'm ready." You might get published once because you have a famous dad, but if readers read your stuff and it's garbage, you won't get published again, and I wanted this to be my profession. By the time I was 13, I knew I wanted to be a professional writer. So that's why I started writing under the pen name Joe Hill, Hill being my middle name, which also solved the problems of cashing checks, 'cause I thought, "If I write as Joe Hill, that's my name, and I can still endorse the backs of the checks, and they'll have to take them."

The other thing is, as I got out of college, I thought I should probably avoid writing scary stuff because it's too much like the kind of stuff my dad has done. And so, for several years, I was submitting short stories and work that was along the lines of what we think of as *New Yorker* fiction. You know, stories about divorce, stories about raising difficult children, stories about unhappy people having personal epiphanies.

And I think that those stories had some technical promise. I had worked pretty hard at my craft, and there was always a fair degree of technical know-how there, but they were dead on the page. There wasn't much excitement to them, and the reason for that is they didn't excite me. I

never really read that kind of fiction. It wasn't the kind of thing I liked. I grew up on *Tales from the Crypt*. In the '80s, I was reading all the splatterpunk writers. I was reading Clive Barker, I was reading David Schow and [John] Skipp and [Craig] Spector, and I was reading Stephen King novels and Peter Straub. I was a guy who read every issue of *Fangoria* magazine, cover to cover.

I loved comic books. I wasn't going out every weekend to buy back issues of *The New Yorker*; I was going out every weekend to hit Million Year Picnic in Cambridge and buy back issues of *The X-Men* or *Swamp Thing*. I loved *Swamp Thing*. I was absolutely crazy for the Alan Moore run on *Swamp Thing*. And, at a certain point, I started to think, "Hey, you're writing as Joe Hill. If you were Joseph King, you couldn't write horror fiction because it would look too much like you were cashing in, but Joe Hill is Joe Schmo. No one knows anything about him. And if you want to write stories of the weird and the fantastic, you can, the pen name gives you permission."

When I did give myself permission to start writing stories of the weird and the fantastic, everything changed. Instantly, there was a new energy in the stories. Everyone who looked at the stories could just feel, "Oh, wow, this is fun." And, not coincidentally, those stories started to sell almost right away. I wrote a story called "Pop Art" about the friendship between a juvenile delinquent and an inflatable boy, Arthur Roth, who's 12 ounces and made of plastic and filled with air, and, if he sat on a sharpened pencil, it would kill him. And somehow, Art is sentient.

That story sold to the first place I sent it. This would have been around the year 2000, the year 2001. And then, right around then, I read *The* [*Amazing*] *Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Volume One*, back-to-back. And, at that point, I was a failed novelist. I was a guy who had written a couple of novels that I couldn't sell. They'd been turned down by every publisher who looked at them. And I read *Kavalier and Clay,* and I read *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,* and those books went off like two sticks of TNT. It had an explosive effect on me. I finished those books and I thought, "Damn, I want to write for comics. I think I could do this."

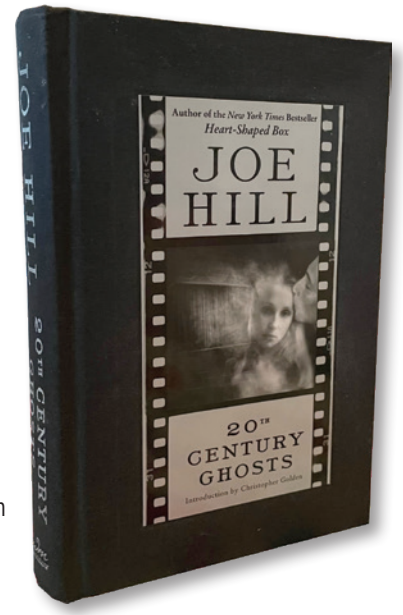
I had still been reading comics – there were a lot of comics I enjoyed – but, after that, I threw myself into comic books, and started binging comic books in a way I hadn't done since I was 14. I was buying everything on the racks, and it was also a little bit cold-blooded. I was very much looking at, "What is DC publishing? What is Marvel publishing? What are the indies doing?"

In the course of my research, I discovered that Marvel had two secret try-out titles: *X-Men Unlimited* and *Spider-Man Unlimited*. I wrote the editor at the time, Teresa Focarile, who was running these try-out titles for Marvel. I sent her one of my short stories, "20th Century Ghosts," which had been published in *The High Plains Literary Review*. It had just been published and, on the strength of that story and my letter, she said she'd read some pitches. I sent her some pitches, which she never looked at because she left the company. But almost on her last day with the company, she handed those pitches to Tom Brevoort, who was the operating managing editor on *X-Men Unlimited* and *Spider-Man Unlimited*. And Tom said, "Sure, we'll do one of your stories." And so then there was a back and forth that lasted almost half a year that involved me developing one of these stories for Tom, which became my first published comic. It was called "Fanboyz" [*Spider-Man Unlimited* #8]. It was a riff on the TV show, *Jackass*.

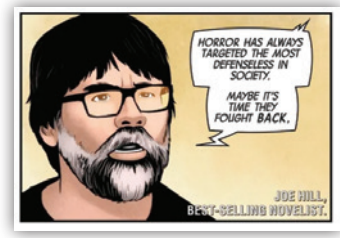
The idea was, there were these three bros who had a TV show where they try to recreate the deeds of super-heroes, but without super-powers, and would clownishly injure themselves. They're filming one episode where they're trying to recreate Spider-Man's abilities, and they create havoc, and Spider-Man swoops in to save the day. It's actually a pretty mediocre piece of work. The pitch was good. I think the first script had a kind of Sergio Aragonés humor to it. It was not a realistic Spider-Man story, in the sense that any Spider-Man story is realistic. Comics have different modes and different moods, and I was going for something much closer to *Groo* than to a realistic *Spider-Man* title.

What I didn't really understand was that Tom Brevoort wanted mainstream meat-and-potatoes Spider-Man stories, of the sort the fans want and look for. And so gradually, between Tom and I, my script became more and more that sort of thing. But the upshot is that it drifted away from the weird humor that made the original pitch interesting. It became something much flatter, I think, as a piece of writing. And that's nothing against Tom – it was me not really understanding the brief because I was too inexperienced.

The comic book, however, was saved because Tom wound up going out to an artist named Seth Fisher, who did an astonishing eleven pages. Seth Fisher was such



Above: *Hill's first book-length effort was a collection of short stories first released in the U.K.,* 20th Century Ghosts *['05], which was published the following year in the United States.*

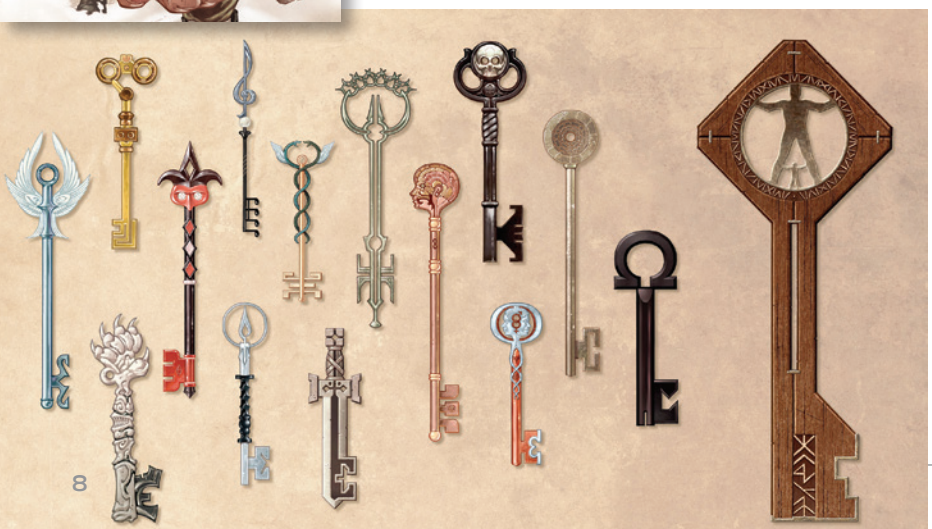


Above: *Joe Hill had a cameo in last year's* Uncanny X-Men *#17 [Sept. '25], with art by Luciano Vecchio.* **Inset left & below:** *Wonderfully humorous artist Seth Fisher was selected to delineate Hill's very first professional comic-book story, "Fanboyz," which appeared in* Spider-Man Unlimited *#8 [May 2005 – cover by Shinkiro is below. (Tragically, Fisher died in 2006 from a seven-story fall he suffered while celebrating the completion of a Marvel comic series.)*

Above: Gabriel Rodriguez's double-page spread from *Locke & Key: Head Games* #1 [Jan. '09]. **Opposite page:** Netflix series poster. **Below:** Rodriguez cover art for *Locke & Key: Clockworks* #1 [June '11]. **Bottom:** Depiction of various keys used in the *Locke & Key* IDW comic book series.

a remarkable artist who could work at such a high level, and had such a subversive sense of humor, and that really came through. So he made all my jokes funnier. He made everything that was flat on the page into something much more colorful and three-dimensional. "Fanboyz" ultimately turned out to be a pretty good story, but not because of anything I did, because Seth was firing on all cylinders, and really over-delivered.

So that was my first comic; that was how I broke in. And even though I knew that the final script wasn't all that great, I thought to myself, "This is what I want to do; I want to write comics." And by the time "Fanboyz" was in the publishing pipeline, I had, at that point, written four novels that I couldn't sell. So, when I first started thinking about getting into comics, I was two novels into failure; by the time *Spider-Man Unlimited* #8 was on its way to the press, I was four novels into failure. I'd written four novels that I couldn't sell and, at that point, I pretty much gave up the idea that I was ever going to be a novelist. I thought, I took my hacks. I took my swings, and it turns out it's not in the cards. I love my dad, and his body of work means the world to me, and I always hoped that I could be a novelist like him. I gave it my best, and it turns out I don't have that in me. It sounds weird to say it, but I was okay with that. I thought, it could be worse.



I thought, at least I know how to write a short story. I've written some really good short stories. Some of these short stories had won prizes, or been in best-of collections. On the strength of one of those stories, I got the gig to write *Spider-Man*, and I felt that a good stand-alone comic has the values of a well-crafted short story. Although comic books do things that prose short stories can't do, and prose short stories also have things in them that comic books can't do. They are different mediums, but I did feel that the skills of writing a short story could be transferred to writing a good comic.

Do you remember the Alan Moore story ["Ghost Dance"]? It's in *Swamp Thing* [#45, Feb. '86], and it's about the Winchester house, which was built on gun money. Alan Moore wrote this one, brilliant stand-alone horror story about the Winchester house, and how the woman who built [it] believed as long as the house was always under construction, she'd never die. So the house was just endlessly remodeled and added to. If you ever visit it, it's crazy. There are staircases that go nowhere. There are doors that open into walls. There are corridors that lead nowhere. It's a maze, and Alan Moore wrote a perfect horror short story in that tale, and he did that very, very frequently in *Swamp Thing*. But I remember ["Ghost Dance"] as a particularly good example of what was possible if you were trying to do a short story in the comic book form. I didn't know if I could do it that well, but I felt like I could do something like that. And so, I remember thinking, "Well, maybe I didn't have a novel in me, but that doesn't mean I couldn't wind up writing *Ghost Rider,* or picking up *Swamp Thing*, or something. That could be pretty great. I'd love that; that would feel like success to me."

So I really turned my attention to, I've had one comic book; how can I get more gigs? How can I work more steadily in this business? And I worked up a whole bunch of pitches for Marvel Comics. One that I've talked about is "Baby Hulk," 'cause, at the time I had a two-year-old, and I was astonished by how angry two-year-olds can get. A two-year-old would get frustrated, and just scream and pick up a big plastic truck and throw it across a room. And I remember thinking, "What if he was strong enough to pick up a real truck? What would it be like to look after a two-year-old who had the strength of the Hulk?" So one of the pitches I wrote was this "Hulk Baby" comic. The comic book in my imagination would have been humorous at first, but build to tragedy, because when you think about the scenario, it's obviously tragic.

I sent Marvel a bunch of pitches. One of the pitches I sent them was an extremely early version of *Locke & Key*. It's a very, very different version of *Locke & Key*. They passed on all my pitches. But I didn't pass on all my pitches. I had these three or four pitches, and the one I had sent in for *Locke & Key* stuck with me. At the time, I was a young father, and we were always running out of something – diapers, wipes, something. There was always something to go out for at nine in the evening, so I'd be out in the car, and I'd be driving to Walgreens, and I'd be thinking about Keyhouse. I'd come up with another key.

Early on, I had the concept of a house with a hundred supernatural keys in it. Every key would unlock a different door and activate a different supernatural power. I'd come

up with a new idea about some door in the house, and storylines began to suggest themselves to me. And so over the next year, I would occasionally return to the pitch and modify it and add to it, do a little more work on it, and then try another comic book publisher. I can't remember everyone who turned it down. I know I sent it to DC, but no one even really looked at it. I sent it to Dark Horse, I think, and they passed largely because I was too inexperienced. I'm not sure; It's all kind of vague now. This is a long time ago.

I did not send it to IDW Comics. What happened with IDW [was], I had a book of short stories. After years of failure, I had managed to sell a collection of short stories to a small press in England – PS Publishing – and that was my first book: *20th Century Ghosts*. And the collection won some prizes, and some of the stories in it won some prizes. Ted Adams was the guy who started IDW as a company; he was the head publisher there, and they were starting a horror anthology comic. It was black-&-white, and I think Ashley Wood did a lot of the art for it. It might have been called *Doomed*. [*It was!* – **Y.E.**] In any event, they had this magazine format, black-&-white horror comic that they were doing, and they were going out to various published writers to see if they wanted to do a story, or just get the rights to adapt a story.

I think they were adapting Robert Bloch and possibly Harlan Ellison, but they wanted some new blood, and I know that's why they went to Cory [Doctorow]. They had heard about, or read some of the stories from *20th Century Ghosts,* and so on that basis they reached out to me and said, "Would you have any interest in letting us adapt a story or two of yours?" And I turned around and went back to their editor, Chris Ryall. I said, "I actually have an idea for something even better. Never mind adapting one of my short stories. I'm a comic book writer myself, and I have this idea for a horror comic," and I told him this astonishing lie, although I didn't know it was a lie: I told him I could tell the whole story of *Locke & Key* in six issues.

I was still really inexperienced at that point. I had written three 11-page comics: I'd written *Spider-Man,* and I'd written two other 11-page horror comics for *Cemetery Dance,* and actually, those comics weren't even published for years. I had written them, they'd been illustrated, but because *Cemetery Dance* is very slow to bring stuff to press, I don't even think those comics came out until I was up to the second arc of *Locke & Key*. But I didn't have enough experience to know what I could manage in six issues. As I started telling the story and the first issue, I had been thinking about *Locke & Key* for years. So the first issue was already finished in my head; I already knew everything about it. I already knew that the first page would be a door, and that the last page would be a door, and so it was almost like you're opening the door when you turn the right-hand page to begin the comic, and when you get to the last page and you close it, you're looking at the door as it's closing. That was my format, my style, for that issue.

I knew it would hop back and forth in time. I think *Y the Last Man* was coming out then, and I loved the way Brian Vaughn would cut back and forth between then and now. You'd turn the page, and it'd say, "Then," and you'd go back five years. You'd get a four-page story, and then you'd turn the page and it would say, "Now," and the next panel, even though it takes place five years later, there would be a magic transition between whatever was happening then and whatever is happening now.

But that "Then" and "Now" format… of course, it had been done before. Brian Vaughn didn't invent flashbacks, but that structure of "Then" and "Now" seeded throughout an episode is actually very common in prestige television now. Anyway, I was seeing it as a lot of "Then" and "Now." I was seeing the home invasion as what's happening then, and then it would transition back and forth between the Locke family arriving at Keyhouse, their new home. I saw how I could tie "Then" and "Now" together throughout the issue.

So I had a very strong idea for the first issue. What I didn't have was any idea at all about what was going to happen after the first issue. I had a perfect first issue in mind, and had never really thought about how to write the second one. I just figured it would come to me.

Writing that second issue is the hardest I've ever worked at writing a comic book, and I did 17 drafts. It's also the only time I've ever been tense as a comic book writer. No, that's not quite true. Usually, I love writing comics and feel that I'm working from strength, and I'm fairly relaxed about the whole experience. I feel good about it. As creative experiences go, I always feel like writing comics is the best. You can't have more fun as a writer. It's easier and more fun than writing novels or short stories or screenplays. But there have been a few times when it's been difficult, and I've wrestled with anxiety, and asked myself if I could pull it off, if I was going to be okay. That happened with the second issue of *Locke & Key,* for sure.

But maybe that's getting ahead of us. I was just going to say, when I started, I did genuinely believe, somehow, that I could tell the whole story in six issues. And, by the time I got to issue three, I realized by the time I finished the whole first six issues, I was going to be barely more than 10% of the way through the story, that I wasn't coming even close to telling the whole story. I think I thought, "If it's successful enough, they'll want me to keep doing it and I'll be okay. But if it's not successful, I have to have a plan to bring the curtain down fast." And I did have a plan. If they were only willing to give me six more issues, I did have a plan to finish the story in 12 issues, and I knew it wouldn't be very good, but I thought it wouldn't be a complete disaster. You would have a beginning, middle, and an end.

Fortunately, the first issue was a big hit. The series got off and running hard. Readers went for it. They bought it, and we sold a lot of copies of that first issue. They had to go back to press after one day on the first issue. There was a feeling it was a runaway hit, and Chris and Ted were excited to have me keep going. I had this idea that I could do six issues, take three months off, and then come back and do another six issues, and at first I think everyone was a little bit like, "Is this gonna work commercially? Can we actually just stop the comic for three or four months, and then come back?"

I think a lot of comic books do that now. *Saga*, a lot of times they'll do six issues and then take a few months off, and *Criminal*… I think it's a pretty normal way to work now. I think there was still a little bit of, "Is this the right way to do things?" And the other thing is, it was never presented as an ongoing comic. It was always presented as, "Here's a mini-series of six issues. Here's the next mini-series of six issues." And, in some ways, I almost wish that if we could do it over, [that] we had just gone straight through.

TO BE CONTINUED

The Many Lives of Jack Katz

Ted Jalbert shares his interview with the pioneering comic book artist and graphic novelist

Above: *Cover for the first printing of* The First Kingdom *#1 [July '74], which sported Larry Todd's paints over Jack Katz's line art. Todd's work was replaced for the 1975 reprint.* **Inset right:** *Katz and first wife Gloria in 1951.* **Below:** *Splash page for Katz's first professional job as comic book artist, "Commandos of the Devil Dogs,"* Captain Aero Comics *V4 #2 [Aug. '44]. Inks are by no less than this issue's spotlighted creator, Carmine Infantino!*

Conducted by TED JALBERT

[**Introduction:** *I first discovered Jack Katz's work in 1977, when I saw his* First Kingdom *books advertised in various comic magazines of the time. The full-page illustrations were amazing, and showed a real obsessive talent. This work really stood out from all the super-hero comics I was reading. I was shocked to later learn that Jack was actually an "old guy" who had been working in comics since the 1940s. After I moved to California in 1996, I noticed the artist was a regular guest at local comic book conventions in the San Francisco area. When I first met Jack in 2016 at the S.F. Comic Con, he showed photos of his oil paintings he had done, paintings very different from his comic book work, yet they also had a consistent and unique style. I interviewed Jack at his home in California in June 2019, which led to a second Q&A, and we quickly developed a friendship as he saw my appreciation for his work and history.*

[*Jack was a very fortunate artist in that he benefited from the support of local friends in California, Brian Miller, Deanna Hovarth, and Cindy Mosca, who were checking in on him every week, helping with his grocery shopping, and taking him to the movies and comic conventions. In October 2020, these friends of Jack helped organized a one-man exhibit of his work in Berkeley, California.*

[*The comics creator was also fortunate to have the support of third wife Caroline Gold, who enabled him to complete his magnum opus,* The First Kingdom. *Caroline supported Jack through their 28 years of marriage, and continued to support him even after the marriage ended. She gave Jack space to draw, paint, teach, and explore his singular ideas. In February 2025, Caroline gifted* The First Kingdom *original art to Rice University, in Houston, Texas.*

[*This interview was conducted over several sessions, from June 2019 to February 2021. We are featuring this interview as a follow-up to the interview we featured with Jack's son, Ivan Katz, in the last issue of* CBC. – **T.J.**]

EARLY DAYS

Ted Jalbert: *Jack, can you tell us about the beginning. Where were you born?*

Jack Katz: I was born in 1927, in Borough Park, Brooklyn. My father was extremely handsome; he looked almost identical to Ronald Coleman. He later worked as a messenger in New York. He was very thorough. He was insane about education and words. He always had his nose in a book and he was always writing these notes, he was addicted to words… it meant something to him.

I've been drawing since I was almost two years old and, for the most part, it was on the walls… and, because of that, we had to move twice, because I couldn't stop drawing. And I drew figures at that time – don't ask me how, don't ask me why – it's either a gift or a curse. It either comes from an imagination or an abomination. However, that's what it is.

As you know, I lived in the reference department [of the library], and I saw for the first time these friezes, and here was the Battle of Hastings on this long scale, and it showed a horse on its side… and the soldiers with the crosses and stuff like that, and I said "Gee, this an extended way of doing this." And I went nuts, because everything I was trying to realize, Hal Foster was doing… I said, "My god, this is a genius!" I still consider him the best of all of us. There's something about what he did, he was… in music, you would call it Beethoven or something like that. He did something that was unusual… And he brought to life the animals…

One day, my father brings home some fish, and wrapped around the fish is the Sunday [comics] supplement, and

The First Kingdom TM & © the estate of Jack Katz. Photo courtesy of Ivan Katz.

guess what…? There it is! Hal Foster's *Tarzan*! And it shows all these boxes and stuff and I said "My god, this is the way to do it!" Everything I tried to realize, Hal was able to do. And I remember that first page: it shows this woman pilot who took a magnifying glass and started a fire…

After *Flash Gordon* came out in 1936, I went nuts and I said, "Somehow, someway, I have got to find a way to bring this unbelievable idea"… three Earth people on another planet, an alien world. Alex Raymond started *Flash Gordon.* I liked it but the drawing was not quite up to the power of *Tarzan*. In fact, nobody's been able to outdo Hal Foster.

Ted: *You were influenced by Hal Foster. Did you copy Hal Foster at home when you were young?*

Jack: I never copied. I can't do that on another person's work, but I let them inspire me. And the way he managed to negotiate his drawings… sometimes I would see the pencils underneath, and I would change it to support the very super-quintessence of what he was trying to do. So, okay, this was good. And I had in the background Fernand Cormon, Pierre Auguste Cot… Dean Cornwell was also was a very important influence to me; he was such a good artist. Early Anton Otto Fischer, Dan Smith, Mead Schaffer, Norman Rockwell… When I went to the museums, there were three artists that I was so paralyzed with, so far as their ability. It's unlike any of the artists that people talk about. One of them was Fernand Cormon, the other is Jules Bastien-Lepage, and an artist who did an incredible painting "The Storm," His name is Pierre Auguste Cot.

Ted: *How did living in Brooklyn influence you?*

Jack: Brooklyn was an amazing place during the time I lived there, because it had opportunities that I never really took advantage of. Nevertheless, there was the Brooklyn Museum. I also went through a lot of hell there. One of the schools I was put in was extremely tough. It was a very rough school. They wouldn't bother me too much because I was a good drawer. I was a tough kid, and you had to be. You had to join gangs… I was in some pretty bad fights. Yet I, whenever I could… [on] whatever bags my father brought with food in, I would go on the floor and draw. It's replication.

Why brag about things…? It does no good. And I'll never write about it, going into detail, because you're only honoring kids that became brutes.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BROOKLYN

My junior high school, that so-called prison camp, it was the toughest school I'd ever seen. The kids there… look, two guys ended up in the electric chair! I mean it was tough! I also went through a lot of hell there. One of the schools I was put in was extremely tough. It was a very rough school. They wouldn't bother me too much… I was a tough kid and you had to be. You had to join gangs…

Somewhere in Brooklyn, somewhere in a nightmare…. There was one kid, Vincent Isgro, he was very dangerous, but he was one of the best artists I had ever seen, so we used to hang around together. He had a very limited vocabulary and he had a hatred of teachers. I mean, I don't know what it was… So, when the teacher would be talking, he'd take a look, you know, and the teacher would say "Excuse me?" And he says, "It's amazin'!" In other words, you're amazing! And the teacher says, "I don't understand." And then he goes to the class, "It's amazin' !" So the teacher says "You might have to go to the principal." And so, he said, "You take me there and I'll meet you after school!" And he meant it! And I said to him, "If you hit him, you're gonna hurt your art hand." He says "Yeah, I know…"

So, meanwhile, they sent us to a special school for children who had abilities to draw, and there was one girl, and she did a portrait of me, and it was so good. They were so good, those kids, they were artists. Well, two of them ended up as lawyers, too, and one I think became a judge, so it was a grab bag.

Above: *The artist posted this on his Jack Katz-Artist Facebook page in Dec. 2014. Note the circus theme of his painting, a subject which, he explained to Ted Jalbert, he utilized to focus on human anatomy.*

SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL ARTS

Ted: *You went to the School of Industrial Arts in Manhattan, and began drawing comics in 1942…?*

Jack: I spent very few days there. I was rather sickly still. I was either sick or I was at the museum. My lunch was white bread with jelly. Once in a while, if I got paid, I would go to the automat, and then I would have cherry pie à la mode. I wasn't motivated to go to any school because, by that time, I had my own little dictionary [and] I was already writing into journals.

Ted: *How did you do at the School of Industrial Arts?*

Jack: I got 30s and 20s [percentages] in all the classes, except for my painting class. That teacher's name was Howard Simon. He was an extremely gentle painter, and he gave me something nobody else ever gave me. He gave me a 95% in Art. The most he ever gave anybody was a 65. He said, "This kid really is going to be one of the greatest!" He introduced me to Edwin Dickinson at the Art Students League. And that's what helped to carry me over and get a diploma, which I know I didn't deserve (and I didn't even want.) I didn't want to go to these schools of lower learning and repeat the same thing over and over again.

Ted: *Who were some of your classmates at SIA?*

Jack: Alex Toth, Pete Morisi, Carmine Infantino… and Alfonso Green, he worked at Quality at that time. Quality Comics was located on the top floor, right next to the Chrysler building, and Fred Guardineer was there. Oh, there were so many of the better artists… Lou Fine was there.

Below: *Prince Valiant by Hal Foster, an artist (and comic strip) Katz held in tremendous esteem.*

Above: *We haven't been able to ascertain exactly what "Bulletman" strips Katz drew, but we did uncover this print starring the Fawcett super-hero he penciled – with inks by Joe Rubinstein – which Katz drew for the MEARS Pop Culture Museum, in 2017.* **Opposite page:** *The Katz family in a photo taken in New Jersey, in 1960.* **Below:** *In his* Jack Kirby *['20] graphic biography, Tom Scioli depicts Jack Katz's brief stint working in the Simon & Kirby shop.*

We were all getting jobs in the comics industry. Slave labor! Nobody was jealous of anybody else, we were just glad to get the work! And I know that we were horribly underpaid. And then one day, somebody said "Did you know Lou Fine is getting $16 a page?" "Sixteen dollars a page?? And I don't have to go to university to get a degree? Screw you!" [*laughs*] We went nuts. And that was the greatest motivator in the world. At that time, gold was everything.

And then I went over to meet Lou Fine. By then, he had gotten out of the business, and he was doing advertising. He had a bum leg and he was married. He was a very diminutive gentleman, but he had a kind heart… and his wife, too. I would go there, she would make me a hot soup or something like that… So the people I got to know, Mort Meskin, Lou Fine, Alex Raymond, Hal Foster…

Ted: *Do you feel you learned a lot at SIA?*

Jack: No, but I had a lot of good supplies! [*laughs*]

Ted: *You took the subway to SIA every day from Brooklyn?*

Jack: Yes, and you don't know what it was like in those winters… We had snows, and we used to have an elevated place from where we came from and, when they'd come in, the whole damn station would rock. The station would shake… it was an elevated line. I used to get up early in the morning; those were very cold winters. I used to get up on the station, there was snow, and the train would come in. And, by the time I got into Manhattan, I had to take a shuttle across town.

The school was on 79th Street, it was across from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and, in those days, you didn't have to pay a penny. And I saw, for the first time Sebastian LePage's "Joan of Arc" painting. Daniel Chester French, Rembrandt, Rubens, for heaven's sake… it's insane. I'm gonna go to school when I have this godsend across the street? So yes!

Ted: *Why did you get into drawing comics professionally so early?*

Jack: I wanted to learn how to draw. I was trying realize what I saw in Hal Foster and everybody like that… I never copied them. But, you know, when I was 13, I was such a good artist that my father brought me to Iger & Eisner [comics packaging shop]. And they looked at the stuff. Lou Fine said "My god, this kid is great!" And then, Mort Meskin got up there and he said, "You can't do that! Child labor! Child labor!" So I didn't get a chance to work for Eisner and Iger at the age of 13. God, I could have kept the whole family going! At about $4 a page, which is what I was being paid eventually for Bulletman, Bulletdog, and Bulletgirl!

Ted: *You drew some published comic stories while you still in school, "Bulletman" and Archie comics.*

Jack: I drew "Bulletman," $4 a page, which was good money then. I did maybe two stories for "Bulletman." My mother was not impressed, because she said "It would be better if you became a messenger. Even the garbage men, they make very good money…"

Then I went to Iger Studios. Reed Crandall had been working with them as well. Matt Baker was there and I took a look at his stuff, and I said "Matt, what are you doing in this cesspool of a place?" I said, "My heaven's sake! Your stuff is magnificent!" Well, Matt took me to heart, you know, and Jerry Iger found out about it and, of course, he fired me, 'cause I was telling Matt to leave. He was one of their mainstays. A number of good artists were working there.

At the School of Industrial Art, I met Peter Morisi. He became "PAM" in the comics, and Al Toth, and I was extremely sickly. I had to work after class, because I worked for the store there called Garber's. It was interesting. I met a lot of people there. Very good people, young kids, but basically, by that time, I was involved in doing my comics. I had to make a living, you know! And then King Features Syndicate, and that's where I met Joe Musial and, by the way, it was wonderful because the minute I went there I was hired, right then, the same day. He took a look at my work, he realized, you know… It was a beautiful time! It was something you can't explain… it was a childhood in which I met the greats… you know: Norman Rockwell, Dean Cornwell… you had to be there! Yeah, we were all there. I was a so-called "correction man." I worked for five years, from 1946 to '51.

By the time I was 15, I got a chance doing Archie, believe it or not! And Bulletman, and BulletDog, and BulletGirl!… [*chuckles*] You know, I should have stayed with BulletDog! Lemme see… I got a job at King Features Syndicate…. I had done a daily [strip]… I was doing a daily just try to get into the business, and I met C.C. Beck, I got to meet Alex Raymond when I was 13 years old, and I had a 104° fever, but I just had to meet him…! My goodness, *Flash Gordon,* about three people on another planet, my goodness!! What's going on here?! Of course, the person I was most admiring, to this day, there was nothing like Hal Foster. *Prince Valiant*… But *Tarzan* was something else. And the one who kept pushing him was Burroughs himself. He said, "It had to be alive! The drawing had to be alive!" And that's what it's all about: putting life into a black-&-white drawing. The imagery has to reflect that. To put in the super-quintessence of every action, if you can make the drawing live! And that's what it's all about… Breathing life into black-&-white drawing.

Ted: *You also attended drawing classes at the Art Students*

League of New York.

Jack: I had this teacher there, Edwin Dickinson. He wanted me to take over his class and teach it. Even at that early age, he went nuts over my art! I did a few paintings that he liked. He said, "This is the kind of artwork that everybody is jealous about." He really meant it! I was 17 at the time. It was a night class, and everybody paid to be there, but Dickinson didn't let me pay a penny. And we used to go out looking for wood. When we found wood, he had a way of cutting the wood down and taking it to make canvas stretchers. He was a master of that! I used to marvel at the speed at which he did this. He'd say "This is a nice size. What do you think about that for a portrait?" So everybody I met was as much a screwball as I was. I'm the last of the screwballs! [*laughs*]

Ted: *Did you meet any famous artists at Art Students League?*

Jack: Oh, they all went there. Alex Raymond went there. There was a slew of people. When George Bridgman was teaching anatomy there, he would paint on the models' bodies with red paint. He was not normal… I was in my element!

BREAKING INTO COMICS BOOKS

Ted: *What did you do after graduating from SIA, in 1945?*

Jack: By that time, I had already been working for some of the comic book companies. I had met Jerry Iger and they hired me there, at S.M. Iger Studios. That's when I met Matt Baker.

Ted: *What did you work on at Iger Studios?*

Jack: Here's the deal: all of them were late with the stories, and Iger would say to me, "Here: these panels, these are the last pages." I said, "Which one is the hero?" He said, "This one." So I made a hero face. [*laughs*] Whatever it was they wanted. And this was when I saw, for the first time, Marvin Stein. I was at Iger's studio until they fired me.

Ted: *You also worked for Quality Comics Group.*

Jack: And then I went to Quality Comics. By that time, I met up again with Alex Toth, who was also working there. And so we both had been getting stories and stuff like that. Basically, I could have stayed in the business easily. There was a jobber who said "I can get you the work, only at $10 a page." That means penciling and inking. And I said, "I can't do that." I worked on *Doll Man*. I did a few little things there… Everybody was ghosting.

Yeah, I did some pencils and stuff like that, but it never really… Did you know Quality Comics was amazing? It was right next to the Chrysler Building. Lou Fine was there…I remember when Lou Fine got $16 a page! I was making $4 a page, for god's sakes! I said, "This is manna from heaven!"

Ted: *So where did you go after Quality?*

Jack: I got picked up by King Features in 1946. I got a call from Joe Musial, who ran the comic division at King Features Syndicate. Joe Musial was my boss. Stan Musial, the baseball player, was his cousin. And every time the St. Louis Cardinals came into town, they'd all congregate at Danny's Hideaway, on 45th Street. And I said "For god's sake, they have Hal Foster doing *Prince Valiant*, and Alex Raymond had just started doing *Rip Kirby*." And I really enjoyed that time, and whenever the St. Louis Cardinals came in to play the Dodgers, Joe would give me a package for his cousin, Stan Musial, and I would go there and sometimes they'd give me a steak. I met so many actors and actresses there, such as Robert Mitchum.

Photo courtesy of Ivan Katz.

Ted: *Why did you leave King Features in 1951?*

Jack: Because I tried to talk to everybody, "Don't you realize, we have extraordinary ability to create our own little graphic novels [through comic strips]!" And someone said "Jack, you don't know what you're talking about! We're not going buy any more continuity stuff! Nobody cares, nobody's going to wait for the next day to find out happened to this one and that one." I said "You're still carrying *Rip Kirby*." He says "Yeah, Alex has been with us a long, long time."

I found that it was becoming too constrictive for me and I know that I was married at that time, and I know that I took the greatest gamble in the world, and I decided that I was going to do my own graphic novel. I did war comics, horror comics, Westerns, everything you can imagine.

Ted: *How was it working for Eisner and Iger?*

Jack: Oh my god, Eisner and Iger!…. there was a group for you! Jerry was the strangest…! I'm gonna talk about one thing. Lou Trakis and I, we had to move [Iger's] place. So, one day, Jerry Iger says, "Whatever you do, don't open up any of my drawers from my bureaus." So Lou Trakis, he opens the thing, and out comes about 10,000 condoms! [*laughs*] And yet, Will Eisner and he had this business together. Lou Fine was part of that thing. I think they were doing *Jumbo Comics* and things like that. There was another factory! But it was looser. Much looser, it just was more like… confetti.

And I did meet one of the best artists that I ever met, and we really bonded, but he was a young man, he was Black: Matt Baker. And my heavens, Matt and I, we really got along. And it's so hard to even describe this guy. He was a poem of a human being. There was something about him, he had a gentleness. And sometimes we would go to eat at a place where the cockroaches would walk over the hamburger. But yet Matt, I could see he had a difficult time breathing. And I can't believe somebody so young and so beautiful could be taken from us.

Ted: *You married your first wife Gloria Safro, in 1951. You had two children and moved to a new apartment complex in Coney Island. Were you a stay-at-home dad, taking care of your kids?*

Jack: Yeah, I did. Painting at night… we were living in an apartment complex near Coney Island and I was terribly unhappy. I was completely unhappy. There's no way I could describe this inner conflict I had about my desire to eventually do my own thing. It was always on my mind. But there were no means to do this.

Ted: *How did Gloria feel about your career as a cartoonist?*

Jack: I wasn't making enough to keep us going. I was working for Atlas at the time. They paid a little bit better than DC. I did the work in the house. It's all a blur. I just felt strangled by everything. I don't know if we're meant to be with one person forever. Finally, I found the best friend that I ever had and that's myself. And, if it's egocentric, yes, then it's egocentric! But, in the long run, those people just can't live with themselves and not feel that the Sword of Damocles is coming down, forget it! Sorry!

This page: *A pair of Jack Katz's splash pages produced for Atlas Comics. Above is from* War Comics *#31 [Jan. '55] and, below, from* Wild Western *#30 [Oct. '53].*

LIVING THE FREELANCE LIFE: 1952–54

Ted: *After you left King Features, you worked for Standard Comics from 1952–54. How was it working for Standard?*

Jack: That was an interesting company. These people were also involved with some of the state's people in Washington, D.C. The comics books were a side business, an ancillary. So they didn't take it too seriously. I worked from home. I didn't want to work in the bullpen, because these guys… there was a lot of drinking going on.

Ted: *Drinking after work?*

Jack: Drinking during work… I don't know… you had to be there!

Ted: *Did you ever socialize with the other artists at Standard? Alex Toth, Mort Meskin…?*

Jack: Mort was always telling me how the women were taking advantage of him. When Mort went over to Jack Kirby, he was so angry at this woman who kind of played him for a sucker, that he bought these plastic breasts. And Jack happened to have a shower at this place. So, one day, he hears Mort singing in the bathroom, and he hears the water splashing, this sound. He's stepping on the breasts and cursing this woman! [*laughs*] So, you must understand, they were very intellectually astute people here… Most of the comic book writers thought they were gonna be Shakespeare. But they never… forget it!

Ted: *You also worked with Simon and Kirby…?*

Jack: Yes, but you'd never know that. They went over my pencils with a steamroller! As long as they saw something on the panel, you see… And, after a while, they said "Don't go into detail, we can't stand anatomy… forget it!"

To get into the business, you have to do almost everything. Anyhow… I have to explain how this worked. This is factory work! I started in the business when I was 15 years old. Basically, I was what is known as a "production man." I had to keep turning this stuff out! When I was working for Jack Kirby, he says "Here, take these six pages. This guy's the hero, take this..." I say, "Who's doing the story?" He'd say, "It doesn't matter. You just put 'em in." And so [*laughs*] it is unlike anything you can imagine! It's factory work! It's to make money… and I'll never forget, when I was working for Jack Kirby, on 59th Street, and I was doing the penciling, Jack sees that I'm putting in anatomy underneath the figures to see how the wrinkles would go. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I wanna make sure they look real." He says, " For god's sakes! Forget it!" So, when Mort Meskin had a chance to ink my stuff, he took a look at it, and he said, "I wanna ink; I don't wanna think!"

Ted: *What was it like drawing comics in the 1950s?*

Jack: I kept turning out these things… When I worked for Jack Kirby, on 59th Street, he says, "Here's three pages. You can finish this"… And then he gave me four pages. We were doing piecework! And then, every night, Marvin Stein would come in, he's say "What time is it? " I said, "It's a quarter to 10." He said, "Why's it so dark?" And I said, "It's a quarter to 10 at night." He said "Oh." He was a machine! I'd never met a human being like that in my life. And Mort Meskin says, "Shhhh… Watch this."

Marvin said, "What did Jack leave me?" Jack left him three covers to do, with fire escapes and the police are shooting up and down with police cars and stuff like that. And also, he left him three ten-page stories. He said, "Is that all he left me?" I said, "Yeah". He never picked up a pencil. He knew exactly where the boxes were, see, and leaving room for the dialogue. And he finished it by the morning. He left again. Jack says "What did he leave me?" I said, "These three…" He says, "Oh, damn, there should have been an extra police car…" But he helped me to believe you could just keep working, and it wouldn't hurt you at all. He knew no anatomy. He eventually did *Casper, the Friendly Ghost,* and he was paid very well for it.

ATLAS COMICS DAYS: 1952–56

[*From 1953–56, Jack drew 38 stories for Atlas Comics, 180 pages in total. –* **T.J.**]

Ted: *Why did you leave Standard and go to work for Stan Lee at Atlas comics?*

Jack: I heard that they paid more. And the minute that I went there with my samples, he said "You're in! Whatever you want to do!" They saw my stuff was pretty classic. And so, I got a job doing historical stuff. You know, or hysterical stuff.

And I did a story called "Guinea Pig" [*Strange Tales* #26, Mar. '54] and "Killers Are Made" [*Wild Western* #30, Oct. '53]. I was working at home. I became very frightened about the murders on the subway and, at that time, there were a lot of bad things happening in New York City and so, my first wife, Gloria, used to come and pick up my stuff. And then, finally, I used to go into town and speak to Stan.

And I have a photographic memory, evidently, and so I did Helen of Troy ["Troy," *War Comics* #31, Jan. '55]… you just name it! And so, it was between me and Joe Maneely, and occasionally I would sit in on that, and they knew that my head was not with them, you know. And I became very, very discouraged about everything. I even had my wife come in to pick up the scripts… I just didn't want to be part of it. Because I wasn't… I was out to try to describe what I had been living with all my life. I can shut my eyes now and I can see that amorphous, phantasmagorical convolutions… I mean it never leaves me…

Ted: *I noticed that your time at Atlas was one of your most prolific periods. You drew a lot of pages for Atlas.*

Jack: At Atlas, I drew mostly historicals…

Ted: *Those must have been very challenging with all the details!*

Jack: Oh my god, have you seen some of this stuff here? That story on "Manila" [*Battle* #38, Mar. '55] and the sinking of the Panay… "Down to the Sea" [*Journey into Unknown Worlds* #36, Aug. '55] was a beautiful story and I never gave it the kind of wherewithal it deserved…

Ted: *You left Atlas comics in 1956.*

Jack: What happened was things were getting very bad. I wasn't getting anywhere… And Stan Lee and I were always in conflict. He said to me, "The children always have to feel in jeopardy… and they need a super-hero that can't die." And I said to him, "If the superhero can't die, what good is he?" And I wasn't getting as much work as I should. And so I lost the money from one check, $70. It was bad! I had already started thinking about one thing: which direction should comics go? And I thought about maturing the field.

EXPLORATIONS IN PAINTING:

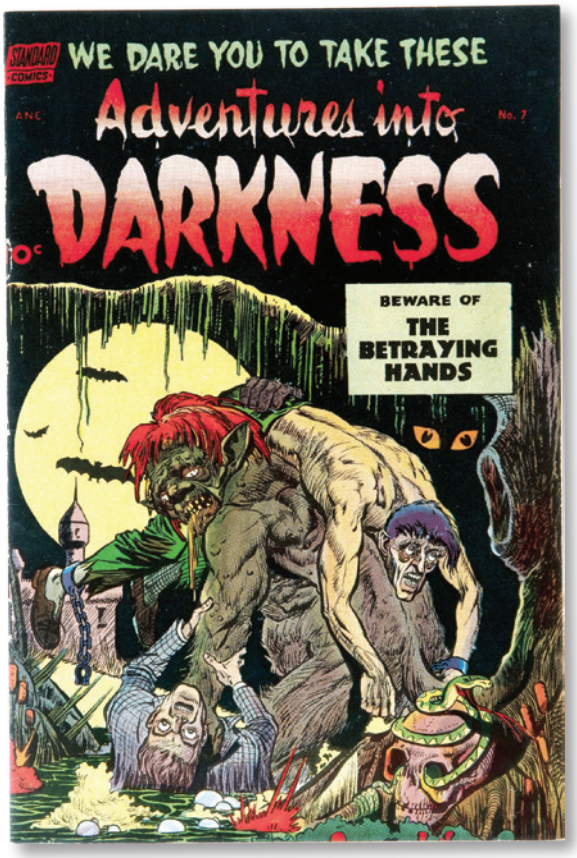
Ted: *So you quit drawing comics in 1956 and went into painting full-time.*

Jack: I enjoyed painting and I wanted to tell a story in a painting. And if you look at my paintings, each one of them tells a story. They're not just ordinary paintings. In fact, there's one painting that I did, and I thought that people would be able to understand, and it was "First Love," and it's just the beginning and, in the background, you're looking through the window and see the skeleton of a building being put up. It's like the same thing and I wanted the symbolism in the painting, but in the super-quintessence, and on top of that put in the implications and the meanings and the potentials of what the painting can bring out. I became absorbed with painting, and under-painting, especially. I tried to study the old masters, and I thought that maybe with one painting I could tell a story, that would take a number of pages… Whether or not I'm right or wrong is highly problematical, because one word is equal to a thousand billion paintings!

Ted: *You taught at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.*

Jack: I was teaching off and on, sporadically, at the Brooklyn Museum, and there was also a high school… Yes, by some weird situation, they saw my work, and it was sort of a drop-in class. The guy who ran it was named Peck. Occasionally I did teach there once in a while. And then I started to teach privately, with people who really needed a lot of help. And some of them came from extremely wealthy families. (Yes, there were a lot of wealthy people around there.) One connected with another. It was like stepping stones. Word of mouth, without advertisement. And there were a lot of men and women who wanted tutelage. And I used to help them do things, but if you don't have the wherewithal, then I cannot give you that. You can't buy talent. And I told them, "The only thing I can do is I can tell you how use certain things, but if you don't have it inside, it's not gonna work." I was very honest, unfortunately. I lost of lot of students because I said, "This is not done by

Above: *Page from* Strange Tales *#26 [Mar. '54] with art by Jack Katz.*
Below: *A sketch of the artist's son, Ivan, drawn by Katz in the late '50s.*



Above: Adventures into Darkness *#7 [Dec. '52] cover by Katz produced for Standard Publications.*

committee. You can't manufacture it, you can't [get it at] the best schools in the world. Nobody can explain creativity. The tide of creativity which is in the person… If it's not there, it's not there.

Ted: *You had a one-man show, in 1962, at the Panora's Gallery, in Manhattan.*

Jack: Oh, yes! The critic from *Art* magazine was there for three hours, maybe more. She wrote copious notes about this painting and that painting. And she said it's going to come out on this and this date. So [the gallery owner] was overjoyed. He says "Jack, you're gonna help me with my gallery!" So the magazine comes out… not a word! And he calls them and he said, "What happened?" She says "Why didn't you pay the $500 under the table?" And he said "But for Jack Katz?" Unfortunately, he had paid for other guys, but he figured, "I don't have to put a penny in." Well, live and learn!

One of the most important paintings I did was "Six Couples," that was sold. And then I did one called "The Children of Paradise," and it was a circle of children looking up at the sky, and they were arm in arm. It was a very difficult composition, and their mouths were open almost as if they were trying to explain the fact that they know there were engendered onto this planet. Why? It's the biggest "WHY" I ever painted.

In one painting, you can put in the super-quintessence of the action and the life expression of the moment. If you can do it properly, and make it a construction of that square. In comics, you can build a number of panels until you get to the same point.

A painting is a special place, and a special space. It's unique unto itself. It's like a singular mind, a unique product. But comics is unlike anything because you do have the opportunity to try to make them move like a motion picture. It's an art form, where one word could equal a billion paintings like "BELIEF" or "SPIRITUAL", "UNDERSTANDINGS," "FEAR" or "YEARNING," or something like that. On the other hand, a picture can go just so far within the content of the material… So now, I just draw nude people, because this is the only thing worth doing. They can't afford clothes anyways.

Ted: *What kind of satisfaction do you get between painting and drawing?*

Jack: It's not a question of satisfaction; it's a question of executing an idea, a vision, that's within my head. I don't take credit, I don't have an egocentric perspective on this. It's something that I'm compelled to do. I don't know who the author is that has me became self-activated and motivated into these things, but these visuals are there constantly. And sometimes they telescope into each other. All of the artwork becomes part of a convolution of gases, liquids, and solids in which they are churning into a maelstrom and occasionally that fog releases itself – much like the hydrologists talked about with the split in the firmament – and I see a light unlike anything, except it has been revealed with people who have near-death experiences, and they come back to life. That is God to me.

Ted: *Who are your influences in painting?*

Jack: Fernand Cormon, Jules Bastien-LePage, Pierre Auguste Cot, George Bellows, Reginald Marsh, Edward Hopper…… Leon Bonnat did "Christ on a Cross," which the anatomy is still to me the most astounding bit of knowledge ever. There's nothing like it.

Ted: *Some writers have said your art is similar to the Ashcan School.*

Jack: Yes, because I'm an American artist. And I loved Robert Henri and John Sloane… these people depicted America through the Depression which I lived through. They depicted the desire… they tried to make an American school. They glorified the slums.

Ted: *Why do you do so many paintings of circus performers ?*

Jack: Because I can utilize anatomy.

Ted: *And you also like to paint these groups of people.*

Jack: Yes, I do… And I have all these couples in the street, there's a conviviality between them, and an understanding between them that they belong to each other. There's nothing incestuous about it, there's nothing of a social trade between each other…

[*Jack left his first wife in 1962 and married Eleanor Schick, who later became a children's book author and artist.*– **T.J.**]

Ted: *What was it like being with Eleanor?*

Jack: Well, the same thing was happening. We had a couple kids, but finally we split up. It just didn't work! You can't explain it. It's just: marriage and me are water and oil. I hated the idea of breaking up the thing, it's terrible, and I knew there were children, and sometimes it just doesn't work… Eleanor also did many children books: Eleanor worked on over 30 books from 1964–2002. I saw her talent and we brought her up to Harper & Row, and she started to do children's books. Unfortunately, the distribution was not very good, but she did get some kind of accreditation. And I thought she would stick to that.

Ted: *Did you do any side jobs, in addition to the painting you were doing in the early '60s?*

Jack: I did little specialty things. There was a guy with a needle company. Whatever it was… it was illustration. I don't even remember half of what I did, but I did all these extra jobs.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Below: *In 1962, Katz put on a one-man art exhibition at Manhattan's Panora's Gallery. This is a newspaper advertisement promoting that show.*

Coming Next Ish

Contributor Ted Jalbert finishes his two-part interview with the legendary Golden Age artist and graphic novelist, which covers his graphic novel in the making, First Kingdom*!*

The Letter Pages & Me

Flash reveals the secret identity of Starblazer and extends apologies to Ms. Irene Vartanoff

by STEVEN THOMPSON

When I first began collecting comic books, back in 1966, one of the things about them that most intrigued little me was the letters page. All comic books were required by postal regulation to have text pages in order to qualify for second-class mailing privileges, which was a bigger deal than you might suspect. For years, these were often devoted to short stories that most fans usually skipped. Authors such as Mickey Spillane were later revealed to be writing some of those. A few companies, including E.C. Comics and Lev Gleason, decided to save money by soliciting letters, thus having the fans essentially write those text pages.

By the mid-'60s, Marvel usually had two pages together, with panels from previous issues illustrating them. Generally addressed, "Dear Stan and Jack," or "Dear Stan and Don," and the like, the letters tended to be lengthy and written in an informal tone.

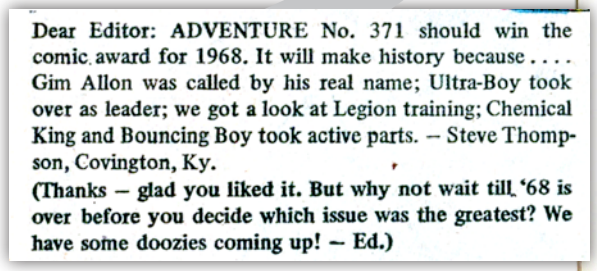
Meanwhile, over at their Distinguished Competition, the letters pages were usually just one page, sometimes with an "extra" one elsewhere in the issue. "Dear Editor" was how every single letter opened, making me suspect even then that no matter how the letters were actually addressed, they were adjusted to say, "Dear Editor."

Some DC editors, like Mort Weisinger, liked to shorten letters so they could squeeze more onto the page, while Julius Schwartz tended to run really long, thoughtful letters, sometimes with just one missive taking up the entire page.

DC books also tended to have more repeat letter writers, so much so, in fact, that the letter hacks themselves became sort of demi-stars. There was Guy H. Lillian III (referred to as "DC's favorite guy"), Irene Vartanoff, Bob Rodi, Peter Sanderson, and later T. M. Maple and James T. McCoy, from Valley Station, Kentucky. Originally, I presumed that Irene Vartanoff was not a real person, but rather a "mascot" figure akin to Marvel's Irving Forbush. I mean, after all, an issue of *Metal Men* had Tin talking about her by name! How could she be real? Years later, I apologized to Irene for my early disbelief in her existence and we became friends on Facebook. Peter Sanderson and I are also connected on social media.

Over at Marvel, they were getting a lot of letters from an older crowd – college-age or soldiers. One name that stands out from early Marvel letters pages is that of Mark Evanier, later the perpetual panel host of Comic-Con, Jack Kirby's assistant, and himself an estimable writer of comics, books, and television episodes. Steve Gerber, Don McGregor, and Frank Miller also turned up a lot in Marvel's letters pages before turning pro.

The late David Anthony Kraft, however, admitted to me that, by the mid-'70s, if a book wasn't getting mail, he would make up letters to fill the page.



Dear Editor: ADVENTURE No. 371 should win the comic award for 1968. It will make history because . . . . Gim Allon was called by his real name; Ultra-Boy took over as leader; we got a look at Legion training; Chemical King and Bouncing Boy took active parts. — Steve Thompson, Covington, Ky.

(Thanks — glad you liked it. But why not wait till '68 is over before you decide which issue was the greatest? We have some doozies coming up! — Ed.)

In 1966, when I was seven and could barely write at all, I dictated a letter to my mother, who had lovely penmanship, and she mailed it for me to *Green Lantern*. I have no memory of what I said, other than that I really liked *Green Lantern*. I got back a fun, double-sided FAQ sheet from DC and watched the next few issues, but my letter was never published.

That didn't deter me, though. If anything, it made me try harder. Finally, in late 1968, at the ripe old age of nine, DC published my very first letter in *Adventure Comics* #374 [Nov. '68]. Whatever I had written was distilled down to just a few lines of praise (see above).

Still, I fired off a LOC (Letter of Comment) every time I bought new comics after that, in hopes that lightning would strike again. That wouldn't happen until three years later, in an issue of *Lois Lane,* which was also severely truncated.

From there, I decided I would pen my letters under a pseudonym – Starblazer! The first was to *Vampirella*, which surprisingly published it more or less intact. After that, though, no more were published.

At least I thought that was my last one. A few years ago, I ran across a letter in a 1990s *Batman* comic book from a Steven Thompson, in Covington, KY. I have no memory at all of writing it, but it certainly reads like my writing style.

That letter would have been published several years after my first published article on comics, in *Amazing Heroes.* Since then, I've pretty much stuck to offering my opinions on comics in blog posts, magazine articles, and columns, including, of course, this one.

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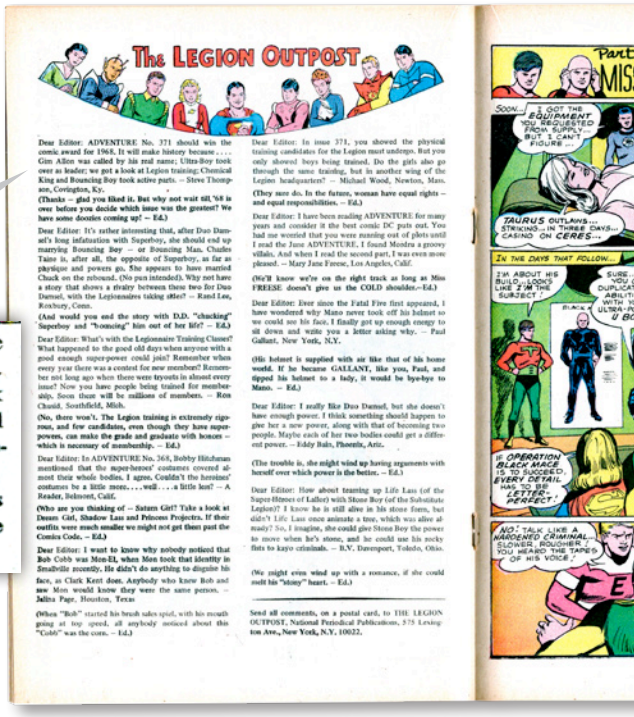


This page: *"Flash" Thompson reveals that his first letter of comment was printed in* Adventure Comics *#374 [Nov. '68], an issue written by Jim Shooter, edited by Mort Weisinger, and starring The Legion of Super-Heroes. Here's a repro of that "Legion Outpost" page along with an enlarged detail. Note that young master Thompson was the opening missive, quite an auspicious debut! Below, cover by Curt Swan and Mike Esposito.*

Adventure Comics, Legion of Super-Heroes TM & © DC Comics.

David Mack, Magic Man

In 2007, the multi-talented comics creator shared about Kabuki *and turning garbage into gold*

Above: *Portrait of David Mack, photographed by Linda Costa.* **Opposite page:** *At top is Darrick Patrick and his interview subject, David Mack, in a photo snapped by no less than Bill Sienkiewicz! Below that pic is Ye Ed's fave Mack* Daredevil *cover, #17 [June '01]. Bottom is detail from Mack's DD print.* **Below:** *Mack's cover art for* The Complete Kabuki: 30th Anniversary Edition *['25].*

by DARRICK PATRICK

[*For this issue, I'm shooting back into the past almost 20 years ago to share my first interview with a comic book creator. Instead of updating the introduction, I'm going to let this one stand as it did back in 2007: David Mack is a professional artist/writer who has done work for titles such as* Daredevil, Alias, Se7en, Avengers, Swamp Thing, White Tiger, Jinx, Grendel, Transmetropolitan, Red Sonja, NYC Mech, *and many others. He may be most well-known for his work on his personal title called* Kabuki. *David has released his first children's book, called* The Shy Creatures, *and has plans to continue with this medium. A film documenting the most in-depth interview ever conducted with David Mack, called* The Alchemy of Art, *was made available by Hero Video Productions and has recently won multiple awards*

Mack has also illustrated and designed jazz and rock albums for both American and Japanese labels (including work for Paul McCartney), painted Tori Amos for her RAINN benefit calendars, designed toys and packaging for companies in Hong Kong, animation art for MTV, ad campaigns for SAKURA art materials, written and designed video games for film director John Woo and Electronic Arts, and contributed the artwork for Dr. Arun Ghandi's essay on the "Culture of Non-Violence." David released a series of art books, as well, called Reflections, *that include sketches, figure drawings, step by step art processes, paintings, and much more.* – **D.P.**]

Darrick Patrick: *What was the path that led you to being a professional artist and writer?*

David Mack: I've just made things all my life in a variety of media. My mother probably had the biggest impact on that, as she was encouraging of the things I did as a youngster. She always had a variety of media around for me to make things out of. She was a first-grade teacher, so there was no shortage of scissors, markers, crayons, clay, tape, and staplers for me to make things with and construct things out of empty boxes.

I suppose I began working three-dimensionally at first. With Play-Doh and clay, and building things out of wooden blocks and empty boxes. I'd make castles and vehicles and robots. I began drawing and painting details on them and also drawing little people to interact with my constructs. All my life, I had made things: stories, sculptures, paintings, drawings. And I had a great passion for learning and doing. As a child, I even made puppets and put on puppet shows. I fancied myself as a magician and did magic shows with my homemade top hat, cape, and wand. I loved everything and wasn't really interested in specializing.

At a certain point of high school, teachers like you to fit your interests and passions into a box that you can at least major in, but I wasn't comfortable with the idea of only doing one thing to the exclusion of others. When I was 16, I was applying for a university scholarship for art. A teacher suggested that I put together a portfolio showing ten different forms of media that I worked on.

I had photography, sculpture, oil painting, watercolor, charcoal, etc. For the tenth piece, I decided that I really wanted to do something that dealt with the nature of time and sequence. I loved film and I loved books, and the personal nature of books, and I also loved to read comic books. So I decided that for the tenth example of my work that I would make a comic. And I did.

I wrote, illustrated, and lettered a 55-page book for my scholarship submission. In the process of doing that, I realized that the medium of comic books are a format that I could integrate all other mediums into. I realized that comics were the medium I could work in because they had no limitations, and they included and encompassed aspects of every other medium.

Darrick: *Who were some of your major influences as you were growing up?*

David: My mother was my biggest artistic inspiration. The skills that she taught me as an infant are skills that I use each and every day of my life – in work and out of work. Also, some of my closest friends: Brian Michael Bendis, Andy Lee, and Mike Oeming, who are artists that I grew up with in the last 15 years. We worked together quite closely in our very formative years and learned much from each other. They are friends that I learned quite a lot from about art and storytelling very early on. They have been quite inspirational to me over the years as artists, writers, and friends. Frank Miller, Will Eisner, and Alan Moore are creators that I learned from when newly discovering comics as a medium.

Darrick: *You might just be most known for your work on* Kabuki. *For those who are unfamiliar with this continual project, how would you describe the book to possible new readers?*

David: The first volume, *Kabuki: Circle of Blood*, is kind of a crime/espionage story. It was me doing a kind of updated version of a George Orwell *1984* type of story where the media has become a mouthpiece for corporations and

government to influence the culture. The (multi-national) corporation supersedes the nation state as the real power in the world and used the media and what we used to call the news to maintain it's true interest – making money and keeping control by exerting a state of fear and constant war about something.

I wrote it in 1993 and began publishing it in 1994. I thought I would take some of what was beginning to happen in the media then, turn up the volume of it, and exaggerate it to make a point. It doesn't feel as exaggerated when I read it now.

In the story, there is a kind of interdependence between the organized crime, corporations, government, and media. And there is a government agency that polices that interdependence. It is an agency called the Noh. The Noh also has its own television channel called Noh TV in which it exerts its influence by soft power or cultural power with characters clothed in nationalistic iconography and cultural masks. The general populace believe these characters to be kind of media idol talking heads about the daily propaganda. But there are also rumors that the masked animations on the news are also operatives of the media that keep the scales balanced between the organized crime corporations and the political pundits if they go too far in either direction.

Kabuki is one of these media icons of channel Noh. At a certain point, her personal family obligations supersede the nationalistic propaganda that she grew up believing and she embarks on a path that puts her against the powers that she formerly served.

The current volume, *Kabuki: The Alchemy,* from Marvel's Icon line, follows the same main character, but it is after she has left her former line of work and has decided to start a new career. It kind of starts in that place people can sometimes find themselves after graduating high school or college, or switching jobs, where you ask what am I really here to do? How do I figure that out? And after figuring that out, how do I make it happen?

It is about practical applications of making that happen, and about the nature of ideas and creativity in general (about practical applications for turning those ideas and dreams into reality). And specifically, how to turn the problems of your past into something useful and practical for your future. How to turn your garbage into gold.

Each of the volumes has a different theme to it and uses a different storytelling style. *DavidMackGuide.com* has preview pages for each and every issue, so you can see how each one has it's own approach.

Darrick: *What would you say to younger individuals looking to make a career as an artist?*

David: Just do it. Nothing makes you a good artist or storyteller more than actually creating the art and telling the stories. You just do it. The more you do it, the more skill you cultivate. You don't become a better storyteller just by thinking about it, dreaming about it, reading about it, or talking about it. All of that may be helpful, but you also have to really do it. You have to start it, finish it, and then you have to show it to people or get it to your readers. And you have to make that a regular and rhythmic part of your life.

Darrick: *Outside of creating your personal art, what are your other interests?*

David: I like my friends. I like horsing around and being physically active, playing soccer, or wrestling. I'm always reading a variety of books. I'm interested in everything. And you see much of that varied subject matter make it's way into my stories. From *Kabuki* to *Daredevil* to *Echo*. You'll see my interests in history and language, and physics and philosophy. Politics, media, religion, and the meaning of life.

Darrick: *Who are a few of the people you would like to collaborate with on a project that haven't yet had a chance to do so with?*

David: I've been very lucky to be able to collaborate with some of the major talents of the medium: like writing *Daredevil* with Joe Quesada drawing, and currently I'm working on a new *Daredevil* series, co-writing with Brian Michael Bendis, with art by Bill Sienkiewicz, Klaus Janson, and Alex Maleev. And Leif Jones did the amazing art for my issue of the *Se7en* comic book series that is out right now.

I'd love to work on a project with Alan Moore or Frank Miller. They are creators that inspired me in some of my earliest formative years. I'd enjoy working with Chuck Palahniuk. And there are a wealth of talented artists that I'd be happy to write stories for.

Darrick: *What would you like people to remember most about you?*

David: I've never thought about that. I guess you could remember moments from my stories if that is what you know me from. From my comic books or children's books. If you are a friend of mine, remember the amazing mayhem of our moments together!

Darrick: *If you had super-powers for a day, what would they be?*

David: Well, if you had the powers of Superman for one day, you could probably do quite a bit in terms of separating various fighting factions from fighting and killing the surrounding civilians, and getting food to the hungry, and water to the thirsty.

Maybe your super cold breath could finesse global warming? You could probably give some leaders a stern talking to about f*cking up the world, but that would probably only work if you had the powers for longer than a day.

Darrick: *What is some of the music that finds its way into your CD player?*

David: I'm listening to the new M.I.A. right now. The Thom Yorke *The Eraser* CD. Also, enjoying Dan Deacon's *Spiderman of the Rings* CD. Pure genius. The new Miho Hattori. I also love Beck and Blackalicious.

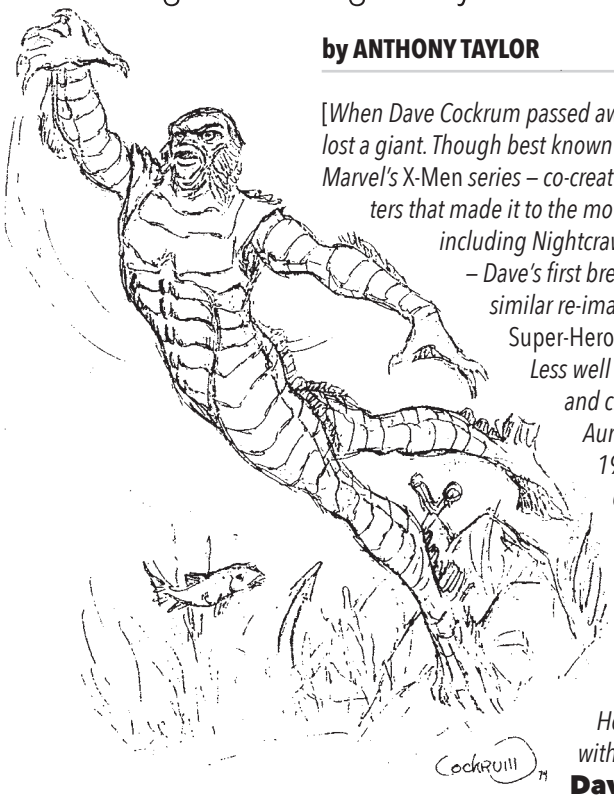
Darrick: *Tell us something most people don't know about you.*

David: I used to raise mice and rats and won a science fair award for my studies in mouse genetics. Also, my mother was a religious survivalist preparing for the End Times. Sort of like Linda Hamilton in *Terminator 2.*

Visit David Mack on Instagram *@davidmackkabuki*

Designing a Better Monster

Chatting with the legendary comic book artist, Dave Cockrum, about his Aurora Model Kit art



by ANTHONY TAYLOR

[*When Dave Cockrum passed away in 2006, the comic world lost a giant. Though best known for his work revamping Marvel's* X-Men *series – co-creating many of the characters that made it to the movie screen in the X-films, including Nightcrawler, Storm, and Mystique – Dave's first breakthrough in comics was a similar re-imagining for DC's* Legion of Super-Heroes *book in the early '70s. Less well known is that Dave designed and created box art for many Aurora model kits in the mid-1970s, including many of the creatures from the company's "Monsters of the Movies" line. I originally spoke with Dave about his Aurora work in 1995.*– **A.T.**]

Anthony Taylor: *How did you get started with Aurora?*

Dave Cockrum: A friend of mine was a good friend of Andy Yanchus, who was a project manager at Aurora. The three of us all turned up at one of Phil Seuling's big comic cons in New York, in 1972, when I was penciling *The Legion of Super-Heroes* for DC. Andy had a table selling old Aurora kits (for scandalously low prices) and my friend introduced us. He liked my work and we started talking and, after a while, he asked if I would be interested in designing model kits. I was, as I had built models all my life. He invited me to come out to Long Island and meet with the people at Aurora. They had just decided to add a Tyrannosaurus Rex to their "Prehistoric Scenes," so I went home and did a three-view drawing of a T-Rex. They looked at it; they bought it.

Anthony: *Was that the only kit you designed for the prehistoric line?*

Dave: No, I also did a Stegosaurus in the same scale and it was humongous. It was the first dinosaur in the line that wasn't a straight-ahead static pose, it was reacting to a danger off of its rear right quarter, its head was turning back around and the tail was swinging. The pattern was actually made, but the kit was never produced. The pattern disappeared before Aurora sold out to Monogram; somebody stole a whole bunch of patterns from the vault. I was supposed to get a few as gifts, the Creature and Rodan, but they were taken before I got them.

Anthony: *What did you work on after the dinosaurs?*

Dave: I did a set of science fiction characters and a time machine that would link them to the "Prehistoric Scenes" line. It never got off the paper, but they liked it. It might have been a little too ambitious for them, at the time. I got involved with the Comic Scenes line and it turned out to be all re-issues, although I had concepted several new figures. I did a Phantom kit, and Dick Giordano designed a Flash Gordon and Ming kit. It was really a beautiful sculpture; the two of them were dueling with swords and Ming was stepping back and off balance. It was wonderful. I did the box art for the *Superboy* model, and instructions for five or six of the kits. In a way, I was involved in all of the kits; some friends and I had formed a company called Graphic Features, and we were producing all the art for the Comic Scenes kits. We hired Dick Giordano, Neal Adams, Gil Kane, and others to illustrate the boxes and instructions. Unfortunately, we couldn't agree on projects and the company folded.

Anthony: *Tell me about the "Monsters of the Movies" designs you did for Aurora.*

Dave: The concept was that they were going to give you alternate heads for all those monsters. You could have the actor's head sticking out of the suit, and the monster heads would be a separate piece. That didn't last long, because no one thought that anyone would build the kit with the alternate pieces. So I designed the last Frankenstein they did, the one running from off-camera villagers, and the swimming Creature from the Black Lagoon. I also did Rodan and Ghidrah, the last two kits produced for the line, but there was a mess of other ones that got to the pattern stage. There was the Metaluna Mutant [from *This Island Earth*], and Gort [from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*]. Gort was standing on the saucer's ramp, with a clear red plastic beam melting a rifle in the hands of a kneeling soldier. I did Godzilla attacking the Tokyo Tower, and that pattern was made.

Anthony: *Who sculpted the kits that you designed for Aurora?*

Dave: It was one of two guys, Bill Lemon (who passed away in 1994) or Ray Meyers. Those were Aurora's two primary sculptors. Bill Lemon, in my opinion, was the best. If

Above: *Dave Cockrum's design for the mid-'70s Creature from the Black Lagoon model kit produced by Aurora.* **Inset right:** *Packaging artwork.* **Below:** *A gorgeous example of a finished model kit*

The Creature from the Black Lagoon TM & © Universal Studios, Inc.

Bill Lemon did you a pretty girl, she was pretty. If Ray Meyers did you a pretty girl, she wasn't. Other than that, Ray was fine.

Anthony: *What other "Monsters of the Movies" kits did you design?*

Dave: I did the swimming Creature from the Black Lagoon. That was fun. Andy Yanchus called me late one night and asked if I could be there at 8:00 in the morning with a design for the Creature. I said, "Hell, yes, I can!" Bill Lemon was on retainer and they needed a project to keep him busy. Of the kits that were never released, there was a new Phantom of the Opera, for which the pattern was made. He was threatening the girl who had unmasked him. Ray Meyers sculpted her and she was a little long in the face. Fay Wray was finished, we were going to do a King Kong in 1:12 scale, big enough to fight the T-Rex I designed for "Prehistoric Scenes," but that was squelched by the Dino De Laurentis *Kong* movie. Aurora backed off because the rights to *Kong* were in question and they couldn't figure out who to deal with. There was a new Mummy. Aurora was getting a little more ambitious with the "Monsters of the Movies" kits. The Mummy was lurching against a statue of Anubis, which was starting to tilt. I don't know whether The Fly got to the pattern stage or not, but I designed him. He was smashing equipment in his laboratory. In 1975, for the "Science Fiction Scenes" line (which was never produced), we were going to do a *War of the Worlds* scene with three Martian war machines coming down a wrecked street. Also, Andy Yanchus had gone to California and measured and photographed Robby the Robot [from *Forbidden Planet*] and they were going to do that. Ray Harryhausen's Ymir [from *20 Million Miles to Earth*] was planned but the pattern was never made. They tried to get the rights to Burroughs' John Carter of Mars and had me drawing up Martian people in costumes and Martian animals.

Anthony: *Andy Yanchus has said that he tried very hard to get the company to do a Jupiter 2 kit from* Lost in Space, *in 1975, when Aurora re-issued the Flying Sub, Seaview, and Spindrift, but it didn't happen. Did you do any drawings for that?*

Dave: No, but I know the Jupiter 2 was the most requested kit; fans wrote in constantly asking for it. The company brass thought it was a boring design. They were obviously not reading the letters. Nabisco's [owners of Aurora in the '70s] management was pretty incompetent, and they didn't understand the market they were in.

Anthony: *How long did you work for Aurora?*

Dave: About four years, until 1976. The last thing I did for them was a toy called KaaaRate Man. It was two big bald goons that would beat the heck out of each other. It was kind of like Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots, except it was punch 'em chop 'em baldies.

Anthony: *Did you design any kits for other companies?*

Dave: I did a few things for MPC because Mike Myers (of Aurora) went over there. The only thing they produced was the Hulk kit which was kind of a dumb model. He was in a pose with his hands directly over his head and they gave you two sets of hands; fists and open palmed. The idea was that some kid could throw his baseball glove or his radio up there, but I thought it was stupid.

Anthony: *Did you pitch any model ideas to Aurora?*

Dave: Oh, yes. None of them ever got produced, but I tried. I suggested that they market a generic super-hero called Captain Aurora, that would have a few capes and different heads and gloves so kids could customize their own kit. Andy thought it would be too expensive with all the extra parts.

Anthony: *Dave, Thanks for taking time to talk with me.*

Dave: My pleasure.

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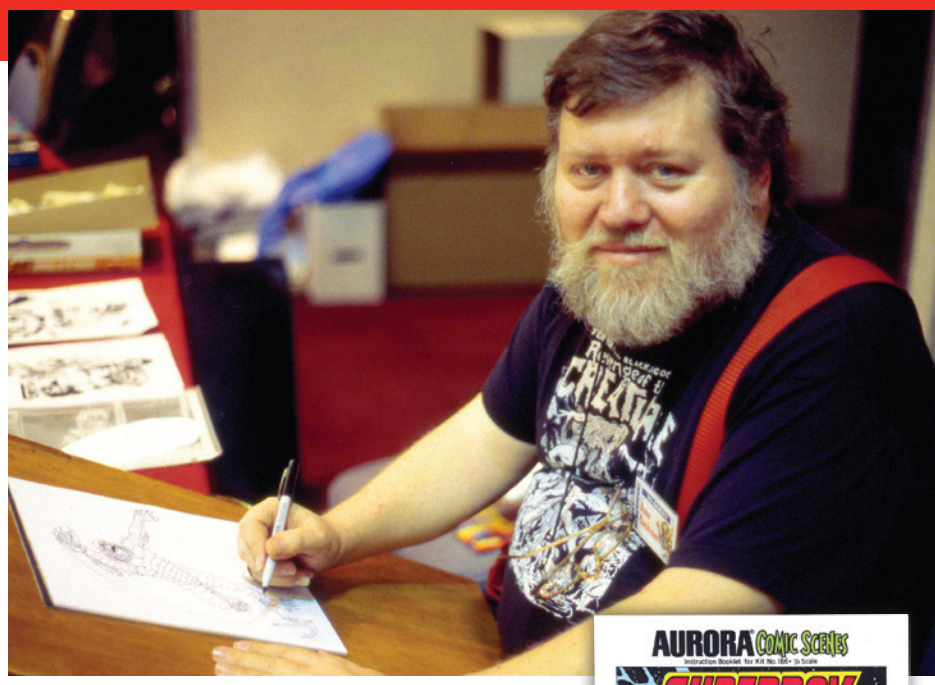
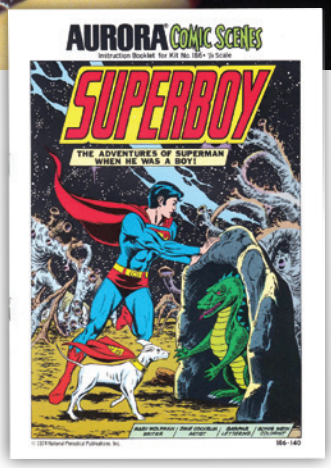
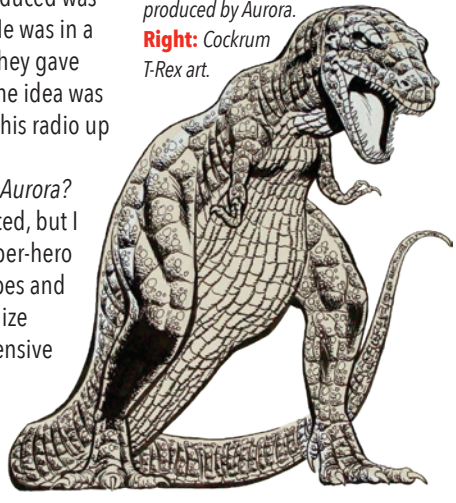




Top: *Cockrum at 1995 Wonderfest in pic by Anthony Taylor. Note he's working on a similar drawing seen on the opposite page here.* **Above:** *The artist was not only producing concepts for Aurora, but Cockrum also drew the Superboy Comic Scenes insert in 1974.* **Inset left:** *Cockrum painted Metaluna Mutant, the monster from* This Island Earth *['55], for packaging, but the model would never be produced by Aurora.* **Right:** *Cockrum T-Rex art.*



‘Fascist’? ’Ems Fightin’ Woids!

A reader is outraged because Jack Kirby’s work was called “fascist” and Ye Ed. seeks the facts

Above: *The Catechetical Guild published a booklet,* The Case Against Comics *[’44], decrying the form’s “gestapo method,” with its “pernicious totalitarian doctrine,” and even equating The Boy Commandos and other kid gangs as strongly resembling Hitler Youth. Ach, du lieber Himmel!*

[*We almost went without a letters column this time out, but an email from Ben Gross arrived just in time to delve into an issue that arose in* CBC. *Ben, take it away…* **Ye Ed.**]

Ben Gross

In reading the Rick Veitch interview [*CBC* #38], I was somewhat amazed/appalled to read that Art Spiegelman and Will Eisner have accused Jack Kirby of being a “fascist artist”? I have never read or heard this before, so can you tell me when or where such a ludicrous accusation was made? On what basis was Kirby “fascist”? Can you fill in the details?

On this topic in general, I do know that, back in the 1940s, perhaps as early as 1940, Superman was attacked as a “fascist” character and the primary attacker was one Gershon Legman. Superman was fascist because he used physical force and power to settle disputes or to right wrongs. I hate getting into politics, but in this case it is unavoidable. Legman apparently was a prominent leftist, so-called “intellectual,” and likely much preferred the weapon of the lawsuit to bankrupt and destroy people he disagreed with, rather than a punch in the nose. Superman’s physical prowess apparently was an affront to his Ivory Tower Idealism and Newspeak word games. Superman would clearly cause the kiddies to become mindless, violent street thugs rather than practicing ACLU lawyers with an unlimited appetite for lawsuits, the only civilized way to destroy another person.

The fact that Superman’s creators and publisher were all Jewish seems to be unknown to the progressive anti-comics Intellectuals, or, most likely, they just did not care.

Inset right: *Scrapper and his fellow Newsboy Legionnaires beat the crap out of Nazi goons! Kirby sketched this in the ’70s.*

After all, Siegel and Shuster were just two low-end, working-class schmucks from Cleveland, not college boys, and their publisher a greedy capitalist (guess that part actually is partly true…!). So an accusation of “fascism” against a physically superior, brave, nearly perfect strong male character is not exactly new.

I don’t recall all of the places I have read this history, but I do recall an extensive multi-part series in *Alter Ego* several years back, which outlined the history of the anti-comics hysteria and its malevolent cheerleaders, of which the loathsome Wertham was only the loudest, and later the creation of the Comics Code.

So why is Kirby a “fascist artist”? Without knowing more, my guess is that Kirby’s characters, especially his male characters, like Captain America and Thor, embody physical strength, masculine beauty, confidence, vitality and an ability to push through all obstacles through force of will.

Does this make them fascist, or make them heroes who can stand up to the real fascists, who, by the way, never play fair and are always willing to use deadly physical force. It is certainly true that the Nazis also promoted physical strength, vitality, and confidence, etc., etc., in their quest for the perfect “Aryan” fighting man, but the big difference is that the Nazis used these traits to conquer, kill, and destroy, not to protect those innocent folk who need protecting. A difference that I suspect is largely lost on the very dogmatic, left-leaning Intellectual.

Jack Kirby was, by all measures, a wonderful man. Flawed certainly, and not without some of his own biases, as are all of us, but almost always kind, helpful, encouraging, hard-working, loyal, and brave. He hated a bully. Fought bullies his whole life, not always successfully. So to call him a fascist seems the greatest of slurs and a real stain on a man who is one of the greatest creative minds in Western popular culture. I don’t know all that much about Art Spiegelman, but I have seen him interviewed and opining on many things, and he appears to me to be (and I am not knocking him as a person; he may be a nice guy personally) a rather doctrinaire, alarmist left-progressive. And what I mean by that is, nearly anyone or anything that disagrees with his world view, is called, in a knee-jerk fashion, fascist, Nazi, or a “threat to Democracy.” The great problem with this is that to compare people who have some/many ideas with which you disagree with, maybe even vehemently, to one of history’s cruelest and most prolific killing machines is woefully dishonest and surely not backed up by any objective reality. It is an insult to the memory of the many millions of innocents who died at the hands of Nazi barbarism.

Can you please clarify this for me, as I see it as a really serious issue.

[*Well, gee whiz, Ben, I gotta say you stopped me dead in my tracks while finishing this issue to find evidence of Jack Kirby somehow being linked with fascism. And, while reference to Will Eisner ever saying anything of the sort has been so far elusive,* but I do recall there was a kerfuffle back in the day regarding Art Spiegelman's interview in* The Comics Journal *#181* [*Oct. '95*]*. Therein, he expressed finding merit in Kirby's "Street Code" autobiographical story, appreciated the King's influence upon* RAW *contributor Gary Panter, and found Kirby's romance work more interesting than the super-hero stuff, Spiegelman also expressed a preference for Roy Crane's* Wash Tubbs/Captain Easy *comic strips over Kirby.*

[*Responding to interviewer Gary Groth's comment that Kirby's work lacks levity in comparison, Spiegelman responded, "Yeah, I suppose that's a lot of it. There's some kind of ironic distance that's totally lacking in Kirby." Groth replies, "Kirby's seriousness is slightly fatuous." Spiegelman pauses and then adds, "Yeah, I was actually thinking of the word fascist, even though he was a great defender of Democracy… the triumph of the will, the celebration of the physicality of the human body at the expense of the intellect is very much an impulse in fascist art. It has a lot to do with the motor for Kirby's work, even though I understand that his work is filled with characters who fought the fascists. The stuff in Rockefeller Center is fascist art as well. Those kinds of art deco statues. It's an international fascist style that's true in official communist art as fully as in Nazi German art. I associate it maybe with things I find threatening. Maybe it's as simple as that."*

[*I do recall any number of Kirby fans were outraged at the suggestion that Kirby, a self-professed patriot said to have literally* killed *a Nazi soldier in a hand-to-hand struggle during the Battle of the Bulge and creator whose magnum opus, the Fourth World, was a cosmic allegory about the horrors of fascism and cults of personality composed on an epic scale, could produce work worthy of admiration by Nazis… oh, my. And spoken by a fellow Jewish comic book genius, to boot!*

[*Since the genre's infancy, super-heroes have been called fascist, equating Nietzsche's "Übermensch" (as distorted by Hitler) with the orphan from Krypton, whether by Catholic Jesuits, Fredric Wertham, or Gershon Legman, so dragging the greatest super-hero cartoonist into the debate would seem be a natural progression, as distressing as that can be for some (including you, Ben, and myself). Professor Craig Fisher authored a study in* The International Journal of Comic Art [*V5 #1, Spr. '03*] *on this subject, "Fantastic Fascism? Jack Kirby, Nazi Aesthetics, and Klaus Thewelit's Male Fantasies," and he summed up his examination thusly:*

[*"In conclusion, I find myself circling back to the links between physicality and fascism. Spiegelman sees in Kirby's work the physical, overwhelming the intellectual. Just as* [*Susan*] *Sontag sees in* [*Leni*] *Riefensthal's films and photographs, the fascistic emphasis on physical perfection and struggle, I think that there are dangers in defining excessive physicality as inherently fascistic. Consider how Sergei Eisenstein, a gay Communist populated* Battleship Potemkin *['25] with shirtless hunky sailors, and note how pre-and-early-Stalinist Communism also created a cult of physical exuberance… And what should we think about the Joe Weider ads in our yellowing comic books? Yet, in Kirby's comics, appearance is often deceiving and strength of character and intellect determines a person's worth In* The Eternals *#8, Kirby introduced the Reject, a ravishingly handsome character – as beautiful as Victor von Doom before his accident – who is an outcast even in a city of demons. Why is he an outsider? As Charles Hatfield points out, the Reject is 'a savage killer, ignorant of all tender feelings about civilized nuances despite his handsome, even* human *continence.' In the exact opposite situation is one of Kirby's most memorable creations. The Fantastic Four's Ben Grimm, the Thing, grotesque in ways Fellini could only dream of, the Thing, overcomes his monstrous physical nature and uses both his amazing strength and skills (especially his talents as a pilot) to become a hero. And, as revealed in a recent issue of the* Fantastic Four, *Ben Grimm – like Kirby himself – is Jewish."*

[*I reckon there's lots more to be said on the subject, especially in this era, with the disturbing rise in neo-fascism and antisemitism, here and abroad, and I could tussle with you a bit about your characterizations of leftist/progressives being intolerant, alarmist, and knee-jerk, but this ain't the place for that. And at least we can agree, Ben, that we both love Kirby.*

[*That said, I've known Spiegelman for some time now – he was a narrator in the Cooke brothers' Eisner documentary, for one! – and I've a vague remembrance of his telling Andy and I he was not without some regret over disparaging Kirby, but maybe that's a wishful false memory. Nonetheless, the brilliant (Pulitzer Prize-winning) cartoonist has earned his place alongside Kirby in the pantheon of American comic greats. After all, Spiegelman's masterpiece,* Maus, *was a graphic novel entirely devoted to the plight of "the many millions of innocents who died at the hands of Nazi barbarism."*

[*We'll just have to hold our tongue about Artie saying in that* TCJ *interview Lee and Kirby were among the best collaborators in comics – "on a stupid level" – and equating their partnership as akin to the insanity shared by killers of the Clutter family as recounted in Truman Capote's* In Cold Blood. *Now,* that's *just crazy talk, mister! –* **Y.E.**]

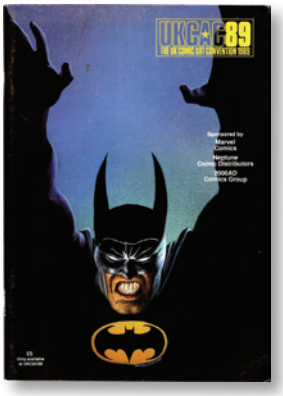
Above: *And, oh, didn't I mention Kirby co-created the most blatantly anti-fascist character in comics history? Here's Cap showing what for to the world's most notorious fascist!*

Below: *Kirby in May, 1945, around V-E Day.*

* Asked the provenance of his Eisner reference, Rick Veitch softened his comment. "I don't think [Eisner] called it fascist, but challenged the politics of it, likened it to propaganda art. Way back in a 'Shop Talk' [column], I think." Ye Ed checked transcripts for all of the "Shop Talk" interviews, which originally appeared in *The Spirit* and *Will Eisner's Quarterly* between 1981–84, but came up with zilch. Order my Will Eisner documentary DVD/Blu-ray and review the audio yourself, as we include all the "Shop Talk" recordings as extras! End shameless plug.

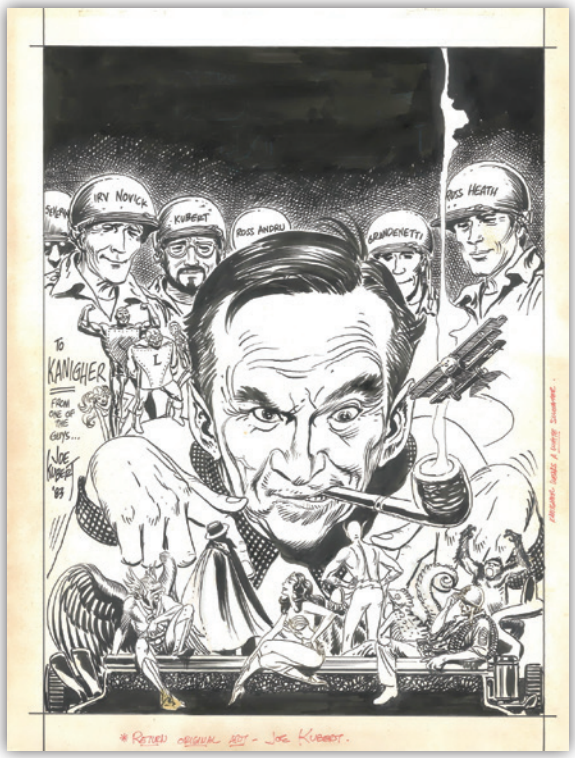
The Visceral Mr. Kanigher

A rare conversation with the prestigious (and sometimes wildly eccentric) comic book scribe



Above: *The souvenir book of the 1989 U.K. Comic Art Convention featured a cover by John Bolton. UKCAC was the annual show, held in London, which Robert Kanigher attended during his yearly holiday in the British capital. From the late '80s to the early '90s UKCAC shows, U.K. comics fan Tim Bateman would engage in on-stage repartee with the legendary editor/writer.*

Below: *Joe Kubert's lively portrait of his longtime collaborator was used as cover art for* The Comics Journal *#85 [Oct. '83].*



Conducted by STEVE WHITAKER & TIM BATEMAN

[**Editor's Note:** *The following interview with veteran DC Comics editor and writer Robert Kanigher [1915–2002] was conducted on October 16, 1989, the first of two sessions (see note at interview's end), while Mr. K was vacationing in England. Asking the questions were two longtime British comic book fans, colorist Steve Whitaker [1955–2008] and writer Tim Bateman [1961–2018]. Frank Plowright shared a wee bit o' background: "Robert Kanigher used to come along to the UK Comic Art Convention every year. He told us it coincided with his annual September holiday in London, although I suspect that may have been true the first time, but he arranged the dates thereafter. He delighted in embarrassing 1990s' DC by being entirely off-message. Tim was similarly prodigiously intelligent and eccentric, and their annual [UKCAC] stage interviews were delightful sparring matches." The transcript begins amid Kanigher discussing Operation Tidal Wave, a flawed Allied bombing mission against the Nazis over Romania during World War II. –* **Y.E.**]

Robert Kanigher: As I say, I hate to research because I can invent much more reasonably, but I researched [the debacle]… I knew the names of every crewman. I knew the names of their ships, their planes. I knew that the secret mission, the surprise strike, which started in North Africa, but known by the Germans. I knew that the intelligence was at fault. It was at fault because there was a previous flight over the [Ploieşti] oil fields, which was never touched. Why? Because they didn't *bomb* the goddamn thing! And there were only a couple of planes. So they thought it was likely guarded, and it was the most heavily guarded place in the world, more heavily guarded than Berlin. So I knew the names of the captain called Tyler, the gunners, engineers navigators, the nicknames of their ships, their wives' names.

I knew who would immediately crash into the sea. I knew what was waiting for them. The heaviest concentration of flak, flak on railroad trains… squadrons of German fighters, Bulgarian fighters, all along the way, was a gauntlet. There were more [Distinguished Service Crosses] handed out there [on one day] than any other. There was one pilot, another pilot, another ship watching [Tyler], who described his plane as a mile-long acetylene torch, completely aflame, streaming flames for one mile long and it kept on. Dropped his bombs and crashed. I knew the names, I knew how they would die, where they would die on their way there, over the target, on their way back when they thought they were safe. I was so sick when I was finished, I would never write a story like that again. I had *too much* knowledge… too much. I could do *nothing*. I was writing it, but I was *watching* it.

Tim Bateman: *It was out there instead of in here.*

Robert: And every goddamn plane, when I write a story, my underwear is wet because I'm writing with… I'm a visceral writer, I'm an instinctual writer. Of course, I've learned a lot, but essentially I'm a writer. This is the real end of [Sgt.] Rock, which either I'll do it…

Tim: *Then we'll turn this off…* [Pauses recorder.]

Robert: I'll write it. I have directed… I probably won't be allowed to direct, but I will have as much input as is possible for a writer to have. There is one writer, who wrote the one where Cher won the Oscar [*Moonstruck*, 1987], and [screenwriter John Patrick Shanley] writes finished scripts, and you either take it without changing a word or you don't, and he takes the chance of it being rejected. He doesn't get an advance or anything like that.

Steve Whitaker: *It's a bit of a rarity in Hollywood, I would imagine.*

Robert: Yes, and he does good stuff.

Steve: *A bit like Ayn Rand [writing the script] on* The Fountainhead *[film, '49]. It's a strange film as a result.*

Robert: The script that DC bought, called "The Last Dog Tag," is *an* ending of Rock and Easy, and yet it is left up in the air, too. But the ending that I've always known would happen is this, and now you can turn [the recorder] off. [*Recorder is paused.*]

Tim: *You are talking to* [Fantasy Advertiser *contributor*] *Graeme Bassett now, aren't you?*

Robert: Doesn't he know what "bovine" means?*

Steve: *I think he does. Yeah, Graeme does know what bovine means.*

Robert: How can he call Rock "cow-like"?

Steve: [Whispers] *I don't know.*

Robert: Like how can anyone called Rock be called "cow-like"? How can anyone who existed [at DC] there 28 years be called bovine? Why bovine? That's *ridiculous!* It's like –

Steve: *I think it's rather odd not to actually make it obvious why, but I remember being puzzled by it.*

Robert: It was ridiculous. And I am in *The World Encyclopedia of Comics* ['76], so it's half-a-column on one page,

* What R.K. is referring to here regarding "bovine" remains a mystery.

half on the other page. So my name right on top, it's very impressive. [*laughter*]

Steve: [Encyclopedia *editor*] *Maurice Horn… a rather questionable book…*

Robert: There are many, many, many errors. He left out the Metal Men completely. But what he *completely* failed to understand was that he called the Enemy Ace, "a good guy on the wrong side," completely misunderstanding that I was telling it from the German side, that the Americans, the British, and the French were the enemy. He *was* on the right side, not the *wrong* side!

Steve: *It was about the ethics of war almost, wasn't it? The emotional ethics.*

Robert: It was about a German. It was as if I was a German…

Steve: *Who else could he be fighting for?*

Robert: But he said he was a good guy on the wrong side, completely failing the whole point. Just as Bassett completely failed to understand. I'm going to write… eventually, because it intrigues me to write. [*shuffles papers*] This is "Rosebud." [*Evidently presenting Graeme Bassett's "Creator Overview" article in* Fantasy Advertiser *#107, Oct. '88.*] The best thing about the article – and *very* clever – is the title [*"Looking for Robert's Rosebud"*]. That's what drew me to it. Let's see… Oh, he thinks that this story about drunk driving, *Steel Sterling* [#4, Jan. '84]… First of all, the *Daily News* gave it this – *The Sunday News*, which is a very powerful paper – this was in the Sunday edition. [*Evidently shows a* Daily News *clipping headlined, "A sterling crusade against drunks."*] Second, it was lauded by Washington, D.C., not by a little mother's company [Mothers Against Drunk Driving?]. Thirdly, he *almost* – but didn't get – what I was driving at. First of all, this was also, a whole page was done in the Westchester paper. [Archie Comics executives Richard] Goldwater and [Michael] Silberkleit were in there. No one knew what I was doing. I don't even know whether [*Sterling Steel* editor] Robin [Snyder] knew about it. Maybe he did, but that's all he knew. I also designed the covers, the cover that I designed, the cover that you see here –

Tim: *Which is a super-hero type cover.*

Robert: – is *not* my cover. Can you see it?

Steve: *Yeah, I know. I've read the book and know the cover.*

Robert: Can you see it?

Steve: *We're both familiar with that issue.*

Robert: The cover that I designed, the car is smashed up against the pole or a tree. The driver is slumped forward, dead. The teenage girl sitting next to him is halfway through the windshield, decapitated. Her head is still on, but she has been decapitated. That was my cover. The first thing, Goldwater or Silberkleit, whichever one of the two publishers, who claimed it was their idea to do such an important story… They knew about it because of the cover. They got hysterical. [taps cover] And this is *their* cover, not my cover. Now, Graeme, he said all the faults and all the pluses… He didn't know what he was talking about… He was attracted because I had one of the teenagers who accompanied Steel on this journey throughout America, drank too much beer and ran a chicken race – that is, two cars, side by side, running down [the road] – and killed a young boy, a teenager like himself. And [Bassett] ends there. He says that was the only novel thing. That wasn't it at all. The driver appeared before the judge. The judge's sentence was that he was to take the place, in the home of the parents of the dead boy, to do everything that the dead boy would've done… to live in his room, to sleep in his bed, to endure the accusations, silent or aloud.

Steve: *That's a Greek judgment, isn't it?*

Tim: *Sisyphus…*

Steve: *Well, I dunno about Sisyphus…*

Robert: The tears, the loss… *That* is the sentence! And *that's* what he completely missed. That is what was unique, I think, for me. There is… Years ago, it was my idea, which no one acted on, that teenagers who were getting into trouble (inspired by [actors James] Cagney and [Edward G.] Robinson and the rest) were to be taken to Sing-Sing [Penitentiary] to watch an actual electrocution. They were to see that the show doesn't start out all over again – with the electrocuted man alive and getting up from the chair, in perfect condition, and starting his crime career again – but that he was well and truly scorched, but no one listened.

Steve: *It's rather like… what's that [movie]…* Double Indemnity [*'44*]*…?*

Above: *Robert Kanigher appeared on the television game show,* To Tell the Truth, *appearing as the* Wonder Woman *editor/writer on episode #1414, taped on Nov. 21, 1972. (Spoiler: R.K. was correctly identified by the panelists.)*

Below: *In this interview, Kanigher is responding to British fan Graeme Bassett's one-pager in* Fantasy Advertiser *#107 [Oct. '88], though where he found Bassett's "bovine" comment is unknown to us.*

CREATOR OVERVIEW

LOOKING FOR ROBERT'S ROSEBUD

by Graeme Bassett

Sgt. Rock TM & © DC Comics.

6 You

KIDS

A sterling crusade against drunks

By CLARENCE SHEPPARD

ONE OF America's most dangerous villains, the drunken driver, has a superhero on his trail.

The man of action is Steel Sterling, a regular comic-book crusader in the Red Circle Comics Group adventure series.

Steel tackles the not-so-funny issue of vehicular homicide in the new comic book entitled "License to Kill," on newsstands for $1.

Steel Sterling's spells out the problem on the cover: "Drunk drivers are turning the streets of America into battlefields filled with innocent victims."

Inside Steel confronts the bodies of two teenagers

Most teenage deaths are caused by auto accidents, and more than half are alcohol-related

killed in automobile accidents. In both cases the drivers had been drinking. Steel is too late to prevent the deadly fates; he arrives only in time to comfort the victims' families.

The message is clear: It is up to the kids themselves to put a stop to drunken drivers—to avoid drinking if they will be driving and vice versa. No superhero can swoop in and snatch the young victims from its destructive path.

At the end of the comic, readers sit in on a fictitious chapter meeting of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers), a leading group in the battle against drunken driving. The statistics are frightening: every year 55,000 people die in traffic accidents, 26,000 as a result of drunken drivers; auto accidents are the leading cause of teenage deaths, and more than half of them are alcohol related.

Sterling was assigned this subject because "he is realistic," says Victor Gorelick, managing editor of Archie Comic Publications, the Red Circle parent company.

Drunken driving "can't be treated too lightly. People have to see how bad it really is," says Gorelick. "We have received letters of praise from the White House and the Department of Transportation," he adds.

Daily News, Sunday, February 5, 1984

STEEL STERLING

LICENSE TO KILL

BY ROBERT KANIGHER & LUIS EDUARDO BARRETO

Steel Sterling tackles drunken driving in "License to Kill."

COMING IN OCTOBER!

SHIELD STEEL STERLING

"LICENSE TO KILL!"

ASK FOR IT!

AN ELECTRIFYING TALE TORN FROM THIS AFTERNOON'S HEADLINES!

Above and right: *All the way to Merry olde England, Robert K. carried a clipping of the* Daily News *article of Feb. 5, 1984, which reported on an anti-drunk driving story R.K. wrote for Archie Publications. "License to Kill," drawn by the late, great Eduardo Barreto, appeared in* Steel Sterling *#4 [Jan. '84], though that ish (originally intended for* Shield – Steel Sterling*) initially sported a cover by Alan Weiss (pencils) and Rudy Nebres (inks), seen here in color. R.K. explains that the Archie publishers balked at publishing the cover, replacing it instead with interior art, as seen above.* **Inset right:** *Splash from* The Brave and the Bold *#16 [Mar. '58], with art by the incomparable Joe Kubert.*

When they were putting the film Double Indemnity *together, the original ending that they wrote for it was Fred MacMurray being put in a gas chamber and gassed and you see him* die! *And they changed it. They sort of took a soft option, so that they could have a performance from Edward G. Robinson and MacMurray at the end of the thing.*

Tim: *He gets shot.*

Steve: *That's what I mean. They have this thing with…"Why did you do it?" "I did it because…uhh." Then a flat ending instead of the whole thing where they actually had the gas chamber built and they filmed it all and everything and then didn't use it…*

Robert: But I think it would've been an anticlimax because… execution… Cagney, first of all, already did it. When Patrick O'Brien pleaded with him, because he was going to go in very jauntily, very cockily, and he would be an inspiration to the Dead End Kids. And he wanted him to start with…

Tim: *What film is it?*

Robert: I think it's *Angels with Dirty Wings,* but I'm not sure…

Steve: Angels with Dirty Faces ['38].

Robert: And so he started to scream, he turned chicken for the boys… The fact that MacMurray, he couldn't make it, that was enough. You didn't have to see [the execution] because you knew what happened.

[*Conversation sidetracks discussing novelists Raymon Chandler and James M. Cain.*]

Steve: *That's quite a good lead into something. I was going to say earlier on about, you were talking about "Enemy Ace" and working with Joe Kubert and stuff like that. And you also said earlier on how Kubert's women are these idealized sort of…*

Robert: They are! Because he doesn't know how to draw women!

Steve: *Well, something I've noticed in the way that perhaps the way you work, perhaps the way you write for Kubert, I don't know, is that…particularly in "Enemy Ace," which is a very sort of grand romance, if you like…*

Robert: It's poetic.

Steve: *Yeah, the women in it. But people like the Hangman's sister, the harpy… I can't remember what her name is…. You have situations with her, you have situations where any woman he comes near, you have the same sort of situation where they're these sort of… goddesses almost. There's a similar situation with Sgt. Rock and the Iron Major's….*

Robert: What about the nurse? The nurse wasn't…

Steve: *There's another situation where he skied down a mountain side and a grateful German girl says, "But you're Rittmeister von Hammer, aren't you? Germany needs you. We all support you." And he just skis off and says, "Oh, thank you very much." It was very sort of chaste, strange situation.*

Robert: No, it's not *that*; it's the way he would act. Actually, I made it…

Steve: *These women are very idealized and they sort of seem to have a very almost goddess-like function. They're very sort of unreal, in a way. And perhaps you are actually backing up what you've already said about Kubert's women. You actually… when you write them for him, you write these unreal women…*

Robert: But he does it with *all* women.

Steve: *Yeah, but how many women are there in* Sgt. Rock*?*

Robert: No, no. He does other stuff. *Look* at his other stuff. They don't know… they *still* don't know… that I write a sto–… I dunno, maybe 10 years ago, I wrote a story of incest and they were unaware of it. The entire field was unaware of it. Why? Because I wrote it as grand opera. It's all there except I didn't put them in the electric chair. But all you have to do is *read* it. The emotions expressed are *not* normal.

Steve: *This is the Viking Prince thing, isn't it?*

Robert: You're *very* good.

Steve: *Jon and his sister, who you sort of conveniently invented for that series, in fact…* [chuckles]

Robert: Yes. But, see, you're making a mistake and it's a

the VIKING PRINCE

"The VIKING AND THE MERMAID!"

JON, THE VIKING PRINCE, SCANS THE RAIN-STREAKED FACE OF HIS VOICELESS COMPANION... AND ASKS...

WHY... WHY DO THE GODS TORMENT ME?

BUT--YOU CANNOT SPEAK, MUTE BARD! YOUR TONGUE HAS BEEN REMOVED!

I...I CANNOT LOSE THE STRANGE VISION THAT PURSUES ME! I SEE...AS IF IN A DREAM...A BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN... LYING IN A TREASURE CHEST! BELOW THE SURFACE...ON THE OCEAN'S BED!

FROM: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #16 (FEB.-MAR., 1958).

quite natural mistake, as if I knew that he had a sister when I first created Jon.

Steve: *Well, this is what you'd have us believe about some of your stuff, isn't it? It's all there.*

Robert: No, the story is…

Steve: *Rock's got a sister and she's mentally defective and another sister…*

Robert: Who's a nun, right.

Steve: *And we've never seen them… or maybe we have, I don't know… I don't think I've seen them.*

Tim: *Whey were especially invented for* The Comics Journal *interview, weren't they?*

Steve: *Well, they're also on the letters page a lot. I'm fascinated.* [*Brief talking over one another.*] *I'm interrupting.*

Robert: No, no, that's all right. That's all right. That's all right. You must understand that, to me, continuity means only one thing: continuity of characterization. Bassett was very clever when he said sometimes I write in a dimension in which only the emotions is the thing, not the background. I think that's it. It's a dimension of emotion. There's a planet of emotion. It's a being. (He didn't put that in; I'm putting that in.)

Steve: *It's a left-handed compliment, really, isn't it?*

Robert: No, I think it's a *right-handed* compliment.

Tim: *I was about to say right-handed…*

Robert: I think it's a compliment. He may not even be *aware* that he's written.

Steve: *Maybe that's what I meant.*

Robert: I am more… I don't give a damn about the continuity-minded fans who don't realize they've been seduced into buying huge numbers of magazines in order to have the continuity of the magazines. #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Bernice Kanigher: Are you all still alive? It's six o'clock. Do you know that?

Steve: *Did you watch the sun go down?* [chuckles]

Robert: I'm not aware of time. [Bassett] was very intuitively – or I would say subconsciously – he hit upon something *very* important. And that is emotion is all that matters to me. *I* didn't know. I completely forgot. There's another thing when it comes to continuity: I wrote a story and Rock's father toppled into a steel cauldron, molten lava, in the steel mill. But I [also] had Rock's father lying buried in the World War I military cemetery in France. A reader supplied the answer! Rock's mother remarried! Never occurred to me. I had completely forgotten about the first father.

Steve: *Mind you, that's pandering to the whole fan thing of, "Oh, why don't you write in and tell us how we can sort this problem out?" "Well, it's quite obvious: Rock has a twin brother who looks just like him."* [laughs]

Robert: Rock has a brother, alright, but he was a Marine in Corregidor.

Steve: *That's right.*

Robert: But the truth is: Rock has two fathers simply because I forgot about the first father. [*laughter*] No other reason!

Tim: *That's the way to solve the continuity, I think.*

Robert: When I created Rose and Thorn, the father was an explorer. They were in the Amazon, Rose was bitten by an insect, and she actually became the first schizoid, the first schizophrenic character, in comics. And, for all I know, she still is.

Steve: *Except that…*

Robert: Is there another one?

Steve: *Surely you know her father was… I think we talked about the old* [*Golden Age*] *Rose and Thorn…*

Robert: You only heard the first part of what I said.

Steve: *I don't think I know of any other utilization of schizophrenia like that. I like the way that, in the good interpretations of your script, the Thorn always looks completely driven, staring, and terrifying. I think Gray Morrow did a* beautiful *job, just in that one episode. I wish he could have done more…*

Tim: *Particularly seeing who we got on the others.*

Robert: That was the origin. Scientist father, she's bitten by an insect, and what she had was an acid trip, in a sense, and became schizoid. The other half of her was like Olivia de Havilland in *The Dark Mirror* ['46]. She had a twin sister who was a murderess. I had the Thorn as a villainess, and it is Rose, in her other self… not *scientifically*, but simply a schizoid. As a schizoid, she is a villainess. Now, a number of years later, I revived Rose and Thorn. I *completely* forgot the origin. I created a new origin. Her father was a police detective. He was killed by an organization I called The 100, which gave me a hundred stories to write. [*Steve chuckles*] And the shock that traumatized her and made her a vengeful schizoid was when she saw her father's car being craned up from the river, water dripping from it, then himself slumped over. Now, the reason for the second one was because I simply forgot the first one. No other reason! I didn't have a secretary. I didn't need a secretary and I didn't care about continuity. And Giordano told me, "They know about that. They know how you feel, how you don't care about continuity." And why is it then, in a room full of people, everyone agreeing, you're the only one who disagrees. I say I'm the first one who will change my mind if anyone, at all, convinces me that I'm wrong about my feeling. I'll do it instantly and I've done it *immediately*. But I am *not* going to agree because everyone else agrees. I will *not* do it. I'm not being perverse. I just…

Steve: *Doesn't sound perverse.*

Robert: *He* thinks so.

Steve: *Who? Graeme Bassett…?*

Tim: *Giordano.*

Robert: No, Dick Giordano. I'm told that I was badmouthed. This is the first I've ever heard of it. Badmouthed by whom? The *only* thing I can think of is: someone told me that the writers who came in said, "How many stories is Kanigher writing this week?" He's running… "The more he writes, the less there is for us. Is that bad mouthing? If so, then that's bad mouthing. I have… *no one* has ever said anything to me. No one.

Tim: *Sounds like more politics.*

Robert: No one! Good people, I encourage – I *more* than encouraged – and I was grateful, and I *am* grateful, for quality. I kiss the ass of quality. I'm grateful because what it does for *me*. Mediocrity, I hate; it's the mortal enemy.

Above: *Tender moment with Mal and Lilith in* Teen Titans *#26 [Apr. '70]. Art by Nick Cardy.* **Inset right:** *Unpubbed* Savage World *cover by Joe Kubert.* **Previous page:** Lois Lane *#111 panel [July '71]. Art by Gray Morrow.* **Below:** *Kubert cover for unpubbed* Sextet.

Tim: *You'll kick the ass.* [giggles]

Robert: I don't kick the ass. I will point out what's wrong and I'll tell them *exactly* how to make it better. Because it's not a Kanigher story; it is *their* story. Their name is on the first page, not mine. My name hasn't been on a splash page for at least the first 12 years I was writing and Stan Lee's was, all the time.

Tim: *He was the editor.*

Steve: *He was also the nephew of the publisher.*

Robert: Nephew? I thought he was a son-in-law.

Steve: *But I could be wrong,*

Tim: *Whichever. He was Martin Goodman's nephew.*

Robert: As far as I'm concerned, people treated me very well. First of all, the only thing I can honestly say is I really didn't pay too much attention to the people. I was only interested in the work. A man comes, he was a Black and he was a homosexual, which I knew immediately. He showed me his work. It was infantile. I didn't say it was infantile. I told him where it was wrong and how it could be improved. He flew into a *rage!* As far as he was concerned, I was anti-homosexual. Am I going to say the two of my best friends were homosexuals? I didn't even know one of them was homosexual for one year! Then I realized he translated every pronoun. Whenever he said "he," he meant "she," whenever he said "him," he meant "her." I learned that a year later, but that's not the point. If anyone comes to me with work, when I'm an editor, I don't look at the person. I don't want to know that the person has 10 children or is a distant relative of mine, or one of three people I've fired or paints with his toes. This is all I care about. What's here. That's all. And what I say about this is not personal. It's not addressed to the person. Otherwise, why don't we just put the person under a printer's press on a page?

So this badmouthing, I know *nothing* about. I knew nothing. About years later, Giordano told me I had the first mixed racial kiss. I didn't think of it as a mixed racial kiss. I did a *Teen Titans* story. This young Black boy was going off on a one-way journey on a mission, a rocket. He would never come back.

Tim: *It was a* Teen Titans *story. I remember this.*

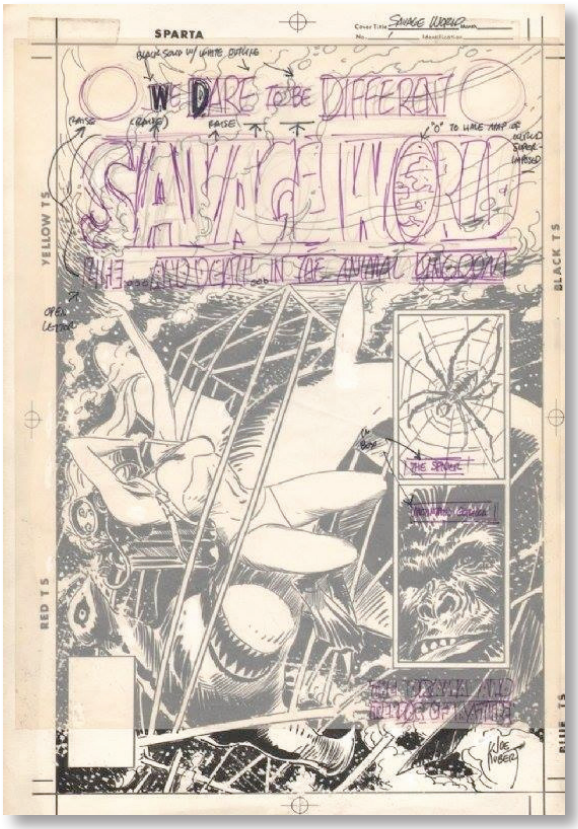
Robert: The girl was awake, she saw him, and she embraced him.

Steve: *Well, Lilith was your creation, wasn't she?*

Robert: Yes.

Steve: *She was the element that you introduced into the Titans to stir them up.*

Robert: I also created a billionaire. Jenette [Kahn] doesn't even know about it, who was behind *The Sextet*. All I told Carmine was, "I've got an idea for a book called *Sextet*,



but it's not about sex." He said, "Okay, do it." So I told Joe [Kubert] and I said, "Joe, all the editors are claiming credit as co-creators for stuff that's coming out. Why don't you be co-creator for *Sextet*? And I thought he would laugh. He said, "Why not?" And I was hoisted on my own petard! So he became my co-editor, my co co-creator. He knew nothing about *Sextet*. I did several issues of *Sextet*, which never saw light. Jenette killed it.

We did *Savage World,* three stories told from the animal's point of view. I did research on that you wouldn't believe! I wanted everything accurate. I did one from a shark's point of view. Everyone's [biting] pressure is measured by the pound; the shark's is measured by the *ton!* And I got that into the story. I went on about a spider going back to the origin of the spinner and [mythological character] Arachne and the goddess [Minerva] who was jealous.

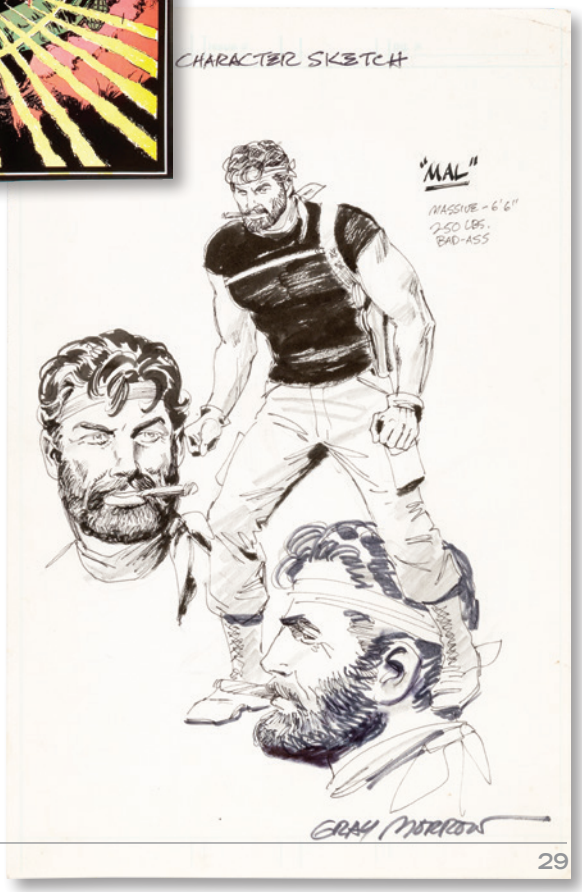
Steve: *Oh, Athena and Arachne. That's a great legend.*

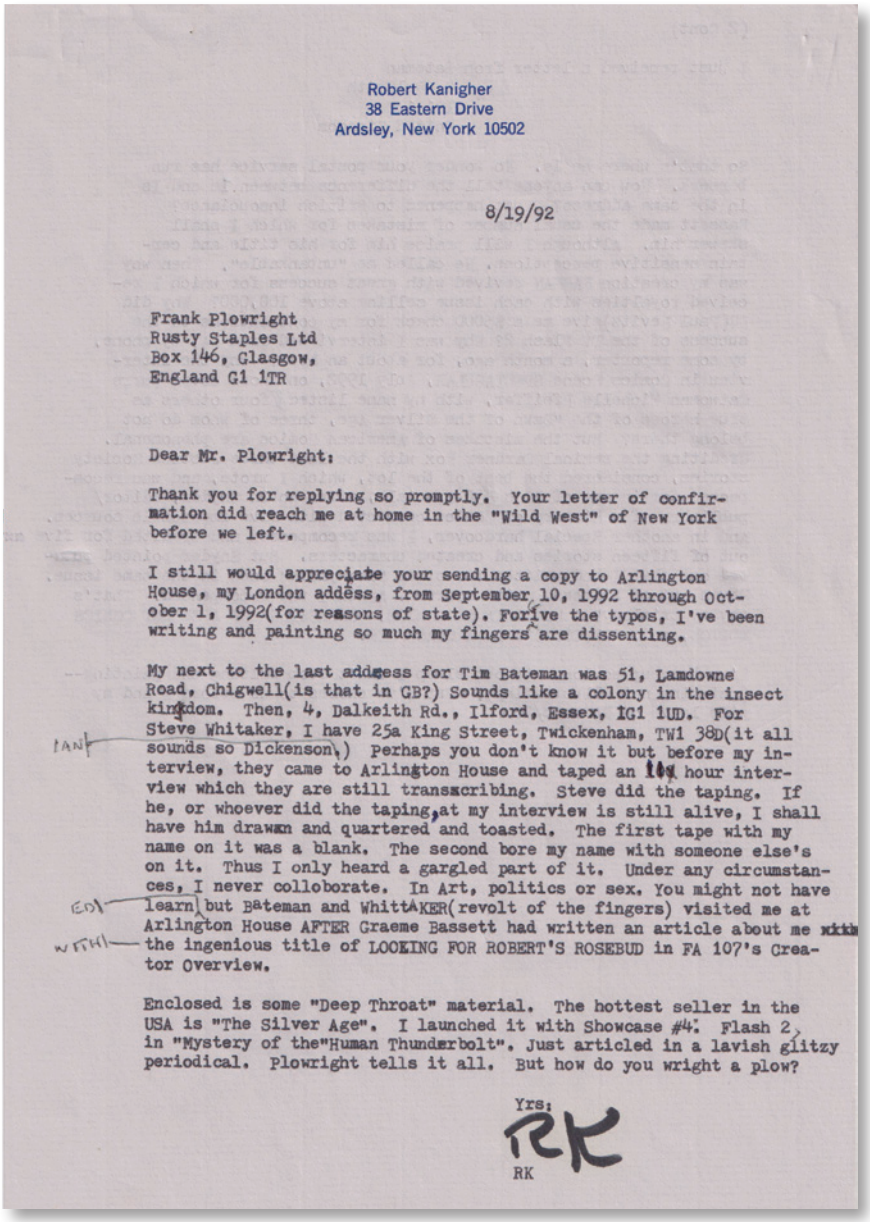
Robert: *That* never saw the light. Why?

Steve: *I know the nature of the picture that Arachne portrayed. Perhaps that's what it was about.* [chuckles].
Robert: No. Jenette's… I presented the idea and what I knew what she liked, that an older man, he was the head archeologist of the Museum of Natural History, went on expeditions with a younger beautiful assistant. Joe insisted on keeping them out. That's number one. She married a man with white hair later on, I don't know whether *that* had anything to do with it, but I knew that was one thing that was gone, the human element to introduce the story. Second thing was she expected to be consulted before each issue, and I did three before she could turn around.
Tim: *You're too quick though, or she's too slow for you.*
Steve: *So it never saw the light of day? You did a treatment for three issues and it never saw the light of day?*
Robert: Not a *treatment!* Finished! Finished. I did a [three-parter] of Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and the Flash, and maybe one other thing besides that Ploieşti thing, which could have been a masterpiece. With Marvel, I did eight mercenary stories and the only thing that saw the light of day… You see, I didn't *know…* it was volume five. By that time, the book was doomed.
Steve: *Volume five of what?*
Robert: *Savage Tales.* The first of my eight *Savage Tales* stories was the fifth issue. [*Actually, #7, Oct. '86.* – **Y.E.**]
Steve: *"Death is a Dutchman," isn't it?*
Robert: That was the end.
Steve: *Didn't they publish one more, surely?*
Robert: I don't know. I didn't see…
Tim: *That's the only one you had [material] published in there that I'm aware of.*
Steve: *There's so many Severin stories in* [Savage Tales], *it's easy to…*
Robert: *Savage Tales* was killed immediately afterwards.
Tim: *So there's still stories kicking around that you wrote for somewhere in the Marvel offices.*
Robert: Yes.
Steve: *Wasn't there talk that you were going to write one of their regular war titles?*
Robert: I was coming to that. Their only Black editor, who was the best dressed man there, very well spoken, too, called me, "The Man."
Steve: *That was Jim Owsley* [*Christopher Priest*]*?*
Robert: Right.
Steve: *Who's now writing* The Unknown Soldier *for DC.* [chuckles]
Robert: He knew I was visiting there and he asked me would I be interested in [*Mark Hazzard: Merc*]. [*Talk focuses on determining the title Robert was offered.*]
Robert: Well, I wrote, he ordered, and paid for three or four finished scripts. In one of them, I was interested in the origin. He did go to West Point, so I went to West Point, and I found out about Hell Week. I opened up with him walking 146 steps for punishment, this way and that way, and this way and that way, and I went into this story. And I also [wondered] why did he stay in the Army that long? Why was he divorced? The first girl he married, he got pregnant. He had to marry her. Anyway, those stories never saw the light.
Steve: *That book was really very unpopular, I remember that.*
Robert: I thought it was a contest to get the book. That's why I was interested in it, really. But four issues had already been done. And I took a look at the first issue and I told Owsley what was wrong with it. Of course, Owsley gave you a list of commandments, which you were not to violate. And the writer who wrote this first *Merc* violated every single one of Owsley's commandments on the first page. He told instead of he showed, among other things, God knows. It was dull, it was everything. The book was… The thing was, Shooter wanted me to work there. I was supposed to do a graphic novel. And he asked me would I develop it for a screenplay instead. And, of course, I said yes. He said, "Would you be satisfied with the development [fee]? I think he said $20,000 or something like that just for the development, because they were being bought by a [movie] company.

Steve: *That's right… New World. And you won't own it.*
Robert: And had I been allowed to develop that and had that been put on, *The Midnight Executioner*, they wouldn't have lost their shirts and had to sell the goddamn company. It was good and still is good. And I'm not going to do it as graphic novel. Of course, it's a movie. It could be done as a novel. The opening alone… it's midnight, the clock is tolling on the church [with] heavy, massive doors, slightly ajar. You look

Above: *John Severin rendered this exquisite splash page for Robert Kanigher's one and only scripting job to be published in Marvel's* Savage Tales *[#7, Oct. '86].* **Inset left and below:** *R.K. scored a gig writing for* Mark Hazzard: Merc, *published by Marvel, work that went unpublished.* Merc *#1 [Nov. '86] cover by Mark Beachum and Joe Rubenstein. Below is Gray Morrow character design for* Merc's Mal.





Robert Kanigher
38 Eastern Drive
Ardsley, New York 10502

8/19/92

Frank Plowright
Rusty Staples Ltd
Box 146, Glasgow,
England G1 1TR

Dear Mr. Plowright;

Thank you for replying so promptly. Your letter of confirmation did reach me at home in the "Wild West" of New York before we left.

I still would appreciate your sending a copy to Arlington House, my London address, from September 10, 1992 through October 1, 1992(for reasons of state). Forive the typos, I've been writing and painting so much my fingers are dissenting.

My next to the last address for Tim Bateman was 51, Lamdowne Road, Chigwell(is that in GB?) Sounds like a colony in the insect kingdom. Then, 4, Dalkeith Rd., Ilford, Essex, IG1 1UD. For Steve Whitaker, I have 25a King Street, Twickenham, TW1 38D(it all sounds so Dickenson.) Perhaps you don't know it but before my interview, they came to Arlington House and taped an 11 hour interview which they are still transcribing. Steve did the taping. If he, or whoever did the taping, at my interview is still alive, I shall have him drawn and quartered and toasted. The first tape with my name on it was a blank. The second bore my name with someone else's on it. Thus I only heard a gargled part of it. Under any circumstances, I never colloborate. In Art, politics or sex. You might not have learn but Bateman and WhittAKER(revolt of the fingers) visited me at Arlington House AFTER Graeme Bassett had written an article about me xkkk the ingenious title of LOOKING FOR ROBERT'S ROSEBUD in FA 107's Creator Overview.

Enclosed is some "Deep Throat" material. The hottest seller in the USA is "The Silver Age". I launched it with Showcase #4. Flash 2, in "Mystery of the"Human Thunderbolt". Just articled in a lavish glitzy periodical. Plowright tells it all. But how do you wright a plow?

Yrs;
RK
RK

Above: *Courtesy of Frank Plowright, note this '92 missive from Kanigher mentions a "11-hour" interview with Whitaker and Bateman.* **Below:** *The second interview by the U.K. duo was transcribed by* **TIM BARNES** *and is available at the FA comizine website. Tim has been a massive help to Ye Ed for many years and he provided the audio for this chat.*

through and the other end of the aisle is a confessional booth, and above the confessional booth is a five-story high stained glass window image of Christ. And on the left hand side of the closed booth is, "Father, forgive me for what I'm about to do." Just the voice on the right-hand side, "But you haven't done it yet. It's only in your mind. It's an intention. We can discuss it. We can stop it."

The other side, "Too late," a shot, father falls through [the booth], bringing down the curtain… there's the blood. Just a little one, not a flood, flows from him. Black shoes step out from the other side of confessional booth. The camera moves up and it's a nun with a smoking revolver. That's the opening. Nun looks behind and a five-story stained glass image of Christ shatters into huge fragments, hurtling toward her. And in terror, she runs out and she runs out of the door. We look back and we see the priest lying and the stained glass intact. That was my opening. And it does not have to do with sex. That is, there was no sexual relationship between the nun, the young nun, beautiful young nun and the priest. That was one of the things.

Steve: *There's a movie called something like either* Miss .45 *or* Madame .45, *or something like that, which is…*

Robert: There's a crazy nun running around…?
Steve: *A crazy nun running around with a gun…*
Robert: Oh no, that's done by a young woman who got into trouble; she was supposed to do a story of mine and couldn't do it, and they had to give it…
Steve: *Interesting. Is this a coincidence or not?* [laughs]
Robert: No. Well, she got that crazy… Then he was interested in a Doctor [Doom]. You must understand, I don't like anyone else, I found Shooter to be a quick, intelligent, decisive, courteous, friendly, imaginative professional. Unfortunately, he was also about eight feet, 10 inches tall. I think that might've been against him.

I was in his office and he was, patiently and courteously, trying to tell a female editor how to do a certain thing, which had gone wrong. And she was highly enraged. And I'm sure she was one of those who complained about it. He okayed a Doctor [Doom]. My idea with Doctor [Doom] was [he's] abhorred because of the way he looked. And Captain America was adored because he looked like a hero. People automatically took it for granted that he would be good. And Doctor [Doom] would be bad. So I said, "What would happen if a heroes changed places with a villain and the villain changed places with a hero? What would happen if they inhabited each other's bodies? Continue acting like a hero? The villain continue acting like a villain, even though people assume that the villain was a hero?"
[*Interviewers correct Robert's misidentifying Doctor Doom.*]
Robert: I don't know anything about comics! [*laughter*] Doctor Doom, he's the ruler of an empire out of Bulgaria. Well, Jim liked it very much. He said… "You went further than [Stan]. It reminded him of a story, but Stan only went halfway. That is a villain inhabiting a hero and a hero inhabiting a villain.
Steve: *That happened to Daredevil once. So it had been done.*
Robert: But you went *all* the way. You had the *two* of them changed. So he liked that and he says, "Look, start writing." He says, "We won't fix the length. Write a chunk and then we'll decide on the length." So there was this screen[play] thing and there was this Doctor Doom thing, and there was something else. [*pauses*] Oh yeah! The rate of suicide among teenagers is… I dunno about this country…
Steve: *It's very high.*
Robert: In America, it's very high.
Steve: *It's rising, too.*
Robert: It's unbelievable. Thousands have killed themselves every year. I mean, they've got them… I found out – this is one where I had to do research – I got a hold of the crisis numbers to call anytime of the day or night. And my idea was anyone who calls a crisis number is to be taken to a mortuary to be shown that when you kill yourself, when a person's dead, that's the end of it. You do not rise again. And, by sheer coincidence, I read in the newspaper that is what either a teacher or priest was taking.
[*Tape ends.*]

Editor's note: Yours truly made a command decision to feature just the first half of Steve and Tim's Oct. 16, '89, interview here and to conclude the conversation in a future issue. But don't get mad! Recorded a week later, the Brits' second session transcript is online at *https://comiczine-fa.com/interviews/interview-robert-kanigher*.

Letter courtesy of Frank Plowright.

Bubnis Visits the Legends

Brash young Bernie Bubnis meets the comic-book professionals and survives to tell all!

by BERNIE BUBNIS

[**Editor' note:** *Way back in the '00s – or was it late '90s…? – Mike Friedrich was enormously generous to send me his incredible and valuable collection of 1960s fanzines for my research. And, in the pages of various early issues of* Rocket's Blast/Comicollector *(sort-of the* Comics Buyers Guide *of that decade), amid the copious ad pages, I found a short series of articles titled, "Spotlight on the Pros," by Bernie Bubnis. Back then, I made a copy of his entertaining account visiting editor Bill Harris at Gold Key and, upon encountering it again last year, I asked for Bernie's email from my brother editor, Roy Thomas, and struck an acquaintance with the ever-friendly, self-effacing Mr. Bubnis, who gave his permission for me to run the entire series in this ish, as well as kindly add his own insightful commentary. Thank you, B.B.* – **Ye Ed.**]

IT STARTED WITH THE KING

We 1960s New York kids had gold in our pockets. Not only were the major comic book publishers located in New York City, but some of their employees lived in the suburbs of Long Island. Eager fans like me, who also lived in their neighborhoods, found the comic book industry was an easy target for us to pester and annoy. Hence, my series titled, "Spotlight on the Pros," was born.

It is difficult to pinpoint exact dates of creation. I know an early effort was a question-and-answer with Jack Kirby, conducted at his home studio, on Long Island. I wasn't happy with the results because it seemed surrounded by barbed wire. I wanted to paint a better picture that wasn't restricted by only Q-&-A. We had talked about his DC series, *Challengers of the Unknown*, and how many times I reread each of these comics. He seemed surprised that I could enjoy a "team" story. Well, coupled with his "jump-off-the-page" artwork (with Wallace Wood inks) and the non-stop action sequences, they never really resembled other DC features. He also gave me a few of his *Sky Masters* newspaper strip originals and took me to lunch. I promised myself to start giving more background to future efforts. After its completion, I was disappointed and just shelved it. I later requested some art from Biljo White, who was then the editor of *Comicollector*. This Kirby piece wound up in that fanzine [#14, Feb. '64].*

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK KIRBY
(Bernie Bubnis, E. Farmingdale, N.Y.)

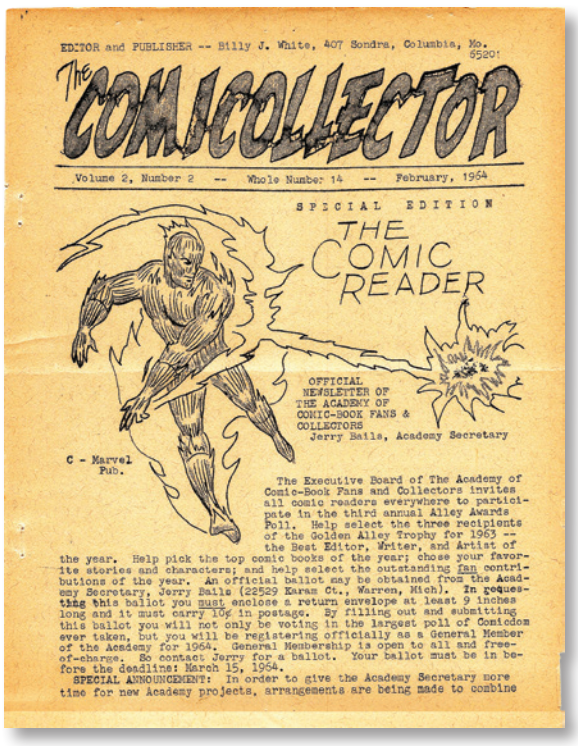
For years, I've collected the old Simon-Kirby comic books, just to see what new positions Jack would stretch his heroes into next. After a short time, my admiration for him turned to outright hero worship. Anyone who could express action in such a stupendous style *must* be a giant.

Well, one day this year, my lifelong ambition to visit and talk with Mr. Kirby was finally realized. Contrary to all the different images I had previously etched in my mind of what Jack would look like, I found a short little man puffing cigar smoke in my face with a consistency of a blast furnace. But let me state here that Jack displayed such an honest attitude and general niceness to me that I *still* look upon the great Jack Kirby as a giant, an even bigger one.

We conversed for quite some time and the following are some random comments I managed to jot down while talking:

Q. *What was the first comics feature you worked on?*
A. Well, that would be "Diary of Doctor Haywood," in *Wow!* comics put out by Iger and Eisner – about '38 or '39.
Q. *Who gave you your first start in comics*?
A. Everybody! [*And then a short chuckle*]
Q. *Which hero did you most enjoy working on?*
A. Captain America, of course. I like experimenting with stresses of motion on the human anatomy.
Q. *What art institution did you attend and how old were you when you entered the business?*
A. I never took lessons. I agonizingly self-taught. I was 18 when I got my start in comics.
Q. *How did the idea of Captain America first develop?*
A. Ideas can never be traced to any one source. They are tossed back and forth between people until the decision-makers step in and choose what they think is a success formula.
Q. *What do you think of the current upswing in comic book fandom?*
A. If the influence of comic fandom proves beneficial to the comics – I'm a rooter. Fans keep the prose on their toes and that surely can't hurt the comic magazines.
Q. *Would you be willing to attend a comic book fan convention if the proposed one is carried through in '64?*
A. If I got past the sergeant-at-arms without being thrown out, I'd be happy to attend. [*I told that to George Pacinda himself would carry him up to the*

Above: *Young Bernie Bubnis in his teenage years, when he scribed the "Spotlight on the Pros" series.*
Below: Comicollector *#14 [Feb. '64], which included Bernie's circa 1962 interview with Jack Kirby, a Q-&-A that helped launch his "Spotlight on the Pros" series.*



EDITOR and PUBLISHER -- Billy J. White, 407 Sondra, Columbia, Mo. 65201

THE COMICOLLECTOR

Volume 2, Number 2 -- Whole Number 14 -- February, 1964

SPECIAL EDITION

THE COMIC READER

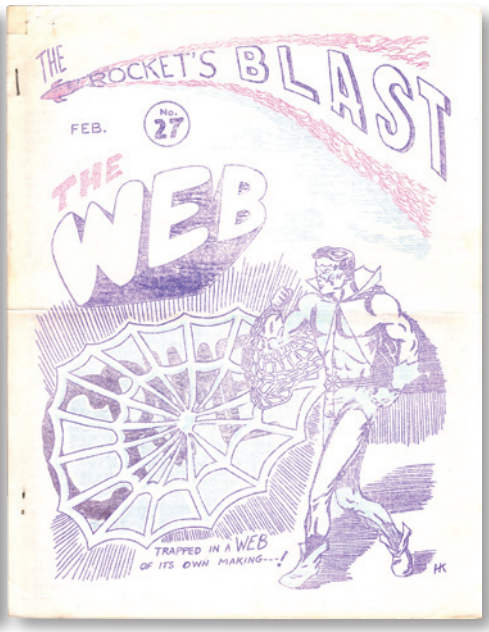
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ACADEMY OF COMIC-BOOK FANS & COLLECTORS
Jerry Bails, Academy Secretary

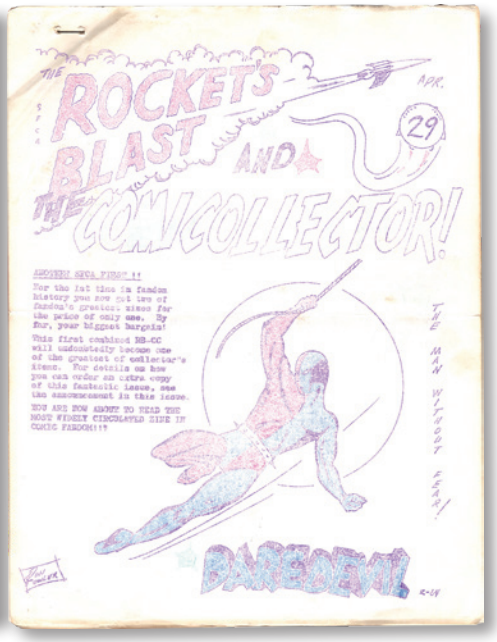
C - Marvel Pub.

The Executive Board of The Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors invites all comic readers everywhere to participate in the third annual Alley Awards Poll. Help select the three recipients of the Golden Alley Trophy for 1963 -- the Best Editor, Writer, and Artist of the year. Help pick the top comic books of the year; chose your favorite stories and characters; and help select the outstanding fan contributions of the year. An official ballot may be obtained from the Academy Secretary, Jerry Bails (22529 Karam Ct., Warren, Mich). In requesting this ballot you must enclose a return envelope at least 9 inches long and it must carry 10¢ in postage. By filling out and submitting this ballot you will not only be voting in the largest poll of Comicdom ever taken, but you will be registering officially as a General Member of the Academy for 1964. General Membership is open to all and free-of-charge. So contact Jerry for a ballot. Your ballot must be in before the deadline: March 15, 1964.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: In order to give the Academy Secretary more time for new Academy projects, arrangements are being made to combine

* Bernie believes the interview was actually conducted in 1962.





Top, this and next page: *The covers of* Rocket's Blast *and* Rocket's Blast – Comicollector *(the fanzines merged with* RB *#29 [Apr. '64]) that featured installments of Bernie's "Spotlight on the Pros" column.* **Below:** *We wonder if the reference to "religious magazines in the southwest," might actually pertain to Joe Giella's gig drawing comics pages for* Picture Stories of Favorite Hymns *['65], though the publishing company was actually located in Cincinnati, Ohio.* **Bottom:** *Undated pic of Joe Giella presenting a* Batman *comic strip.*

head table if he attended.]

To wind up a perfectly amazing talk with Jack, he took me completely by surprise and took me out for lunch. I left his house knowing that I had just visited the greatest super-hero of all time – Jack Kirby.

THE NICEST JOE

My visits to these comic book professionals were almost always by appointments made in advance. For some reason, I was in Joe Giella's neighborhood on Long Island and (I guess) took a big chance. I was not even sure he would make a good subject for an article. No one answering my knocks on his front door should have been reason enough to just drive away. Thanks to his kids, they found him next door, and I was prepared to have him too angry with me to sit for an interview. But he never questioned my awkward timing and we had a pleasant talk. You would think I was an important visitor and not some kid asking questions about his career. Well, #1 was soon in the bag, with the series officially starting with *Rocket's Blast* #24 [Nov. '63]:

Spotlight on the Pros – This Month: Joe Giella

I entered a neighborhood which seemed free from excess litter or trash cluttered about, and what appeared to be a fairly new housing development on Long Island. On the porch, I was greeted by what, at the time, appeared to be six or seven kids. I knocked on this door, but no answer greeted me from within. Suddenly, one of the children ran around to the side of the house, and informed his mother that someone was here to see "Daddy." They searched the house, but he wasn't about. So did they send me away? Nah, the kid ran across the street and dragged his father from a neighbor's yard.

At first, I thought Joe was going to frown upon the whole incident, but with his personality was completely different. It's almost impossible to put on paper exactly how nice he was about me invading his privacy. He wore a big smile and clothes that were right in the style with the latest fads. He's a young guy and rather nice-looking. He invited me up to his studio so we could talk a while.

His studio was spotless and the atmosphere clean and undisturbed by noise. He showed me the latest thing from *The Flash* he had set about to ink. When I asked if he wouldn't mind penciling a few stories, he replied he would never be satisfied with what appeared in comics. He referred to Infantino as one of the "speed merchants." He [Joe] could never do pencils because it would take him too long. He would never be satisfied with the plain old job – it had to be perfect.

He then went over to a drawer and came back with some examples of his own work he had done for some religious magazines in the southwest. He pointed out how one page utilized a child and his son's teacher posing for some panels. He considered this work onto the order of being illustrations and that it would never be done in comics unless more time was provided. He then went over to another drawer and he took out some original panels for the *Flash Gordon* daily comic strip he used to ink. He showed me one panel that had been drawn by four different men and then told me to compare it with what I saw in comics. The comic strip looked great with every little detailed included. I saw exactly what he meant.

I asked him where he got his start. Believe it or not, ol' Stan Lee gave it to him. Joe was only 16 at the time and he had beat his head against the door of just about every editor in the business. Finally, he came to Lee and failed again, hearing the same old line: you're too young; you've got no experience." So he lashed out at Stan with a, "How the hell do you expect me to get experience if no one gives me a job?" Late, Stan called back and gave him the job. He mentioned one of his earliest strips was Mighty Mouse.

While talking about Lee, he said Stan drifted along with the tides. (He had nothing but the highest regard for Lee.) If a certain issue sold better than the rest, he'd use the idea again. Joe thought Jack Kirby was the greatest. In the old days, he couldn't be beat, but now he was just coasting. But, he added, he's still the greatest.

He commented on so many other things. I guess two articles can be written about him. But quite a few of the opinions were off the record, so that stops me cold in my tracks.

So I shook his hand and said farewell. Just before I left, the neighborhood was aware that Joe was back out and they all started to come over. One lady with her two children stopped in to say hello to "Uncle Joe" and the neighbor from across the street came over to join in.

A nice guy? Yeah, I guess you could call him that. Better yet, *the* nicest guy.

A BEER WITH THE MAD RUSSIAN

If "Spotlight" #1 was like a trip to Andy Griffith's Mayberry, #2 was more like a trip to *The Twilight Zone.* I hated Mike Sekowsky's art. Why did I decide to write about him? Because he drew the *Justice League of America* and poorly fast-drew every member of the DC super-hero universe. I wasn't going to hold back and called his art "chicken scratchings" and Sekowsky "junk," all in one article. Then I asked him if his inker is the one who ruins his work. This interview should have been over before it started. Instead, he said, "You want a beer?" No kidding, absolutely true story. Could Rod Serling be in the next room?

I guess I waited a while before I started taking shots at Mike. In my finished article I wrote that the house lacked a "woman's touch" meaning (to a teenaged idiot) everything was dusty including the magazines. We were both born in coal mining areas of Pennsylvania and lived about 30-minutes apart. The offer of beer came early in the meeting . You'll have to read #2 to see how I handled this, but we did end the meeting on a high note that was not written about. I would help Mike sell his original art. Original art that DC had already paid him to create. Now this second market intrigued Mike. Mike seemed pleased to have someone to generate a second art payment for his originals. Mike never questioned me about my artistic opinions because he knew I was just a teenaged idiot… and still am. "Show me the money!"… Here's that second installment, from *Rocket's Blast Comicollector* #27 [Feb. '64]:

Spotlight on the Pros No. 2 – This Issue: Mike Sekowsky

Did you ever feel you were walking into a trap from which there was no escape? Well, this is the sensation that tingled all over my body as I proceeded to visit an artist I knew was not appreciated by the majority of comic book fen. "Chicken scratchings" is what they call his style. How do you try avoiding this term when referring to his work, when you yourself feel the same way about it? Well, there is the prologue to which I was certain would be my death at the hands of a dirty fighting pro.

He greeted me at the door sporting a ragged T-shirt and a frown that aptly matched my disposition. He escorted me through the living room where I noticed that the woman's touch had left its mark of fashion magazines and my curious mind began to wonder where his wife was. From some source, I learned he had a wife and had two kids, but they never were around when any fan visited Mike.

I entered his studio to be greeted by the typical "FM-Jazz" and a cool air conditioner. He explained that he was in the middle of a *JLA* story and would have to work while we talked. Here is where I found the gruff exterior Mike presented was something that was merely in my imagination. He eventually turned out to be a freewheeling guy that would answer anything that was presented to him if he had the references.

The conversation seemed to draw closer to that ever threatening question, which I popped after sneaking a look at his originals before Bernie Sachs got a hold of them. They were much better than the usual Sekowsky junk and that is what led me to ask, "Do you think Sachs is the one who ruins your work?" He explained that Sachs had helped him out of a many a tight spot by sometimes redoing complete panels where Mike had not found adequate time to complete the

Below: *During his visit with the artist nicknamed "The Mad Russian," Bernie believed he may have seen a cover design for Justice League of America #25 [Feb. '64] in Mike Sekowsky's studio. Bottom: A photo by Jackie Estrada of the great Sekowsky, snapped when he attended the 1983 San Diego Comic-Con. (Cropped from the photo was his pal, Scott Shaw!)*

Above: *Looks like the great "Silver Age" editor at DC Comics, Julius Schwartz, chucked a copy of the first World Science Fiction Convention souvenir book at Bernie, bellowing to the young comic book fan that the historic three-day 1939 gathering was a "real" convention. Schwartz was protesting the (equally historic) one-day afternoon affair to which Bernie had extended an invitation to him, with J.S. saying it would be a waste of time for the editor to attend. This digest-sized effort certainly trumped the 1964 mimeographed takeaway in production value with its gold-foiled cover stock and interior offset printing.* **Inset right:** *Bernie, "The Bubs," was selling his original art collection, as seen in this* RBCC *#68 ['70] ad. Dig the crazy prices, man!*
Below: *Here's a photo of the great one mugging with the1962 Alley Award he received as "Best Editor of a Comics Group," the first recipient ever for that category. (This photo looks to have been taken in late '69/early '70 given* The Flash *#196 [Apr. '70] cover tacked up on the cork board behind him.)*

story. He was happy to have Sachs doing the inking job because it gave him additional time to illo for other companies. Which brings about my next observation. He appears to be out of money and money alone when it comes to illustrating. He explained that his one big ambition was to crack the newspaper syndicates with a lovelorn strip, like the one of *Juliet Jones*. He showed the other work he had done for outside houses and still wanted to make more money. He is completely justified in his aims, but he goes a little overboard.

He told me that he was originally working on the love mags at DC when Schwartz came into the department and asked him to work on the *JLA*. This was reported to have caused some friction between the two editors.

When I asked about the covers, he said that Julie was now offering original art to fans who sent in good ideas for *JLA* covers. He went on to say that the group can become a little bogged down for the loss of a good idea. He then pulled out a sketch of what appeared to be somebody pulling a figure into or out of another dimension. (I think this is the sketch that eventually appears as the cover for *JLA* #25.) He seemed very pleased that he could help in some creative way with the covers because they take a little bit longer and the price the artist is paid is considerably less (just what he meant by sticking that part of the statement there escaped me.) Anderson is one of the few DC artists that work there at the office. Seems he has three screaming children at home in New Jersey.

I dragged the conversation around to Joe Kubert and Hawkman (this was the time his fate was higher in the air than he ever will be). Mike explained that Schwartz didn't like Kubert's work because it was too sloppy and preferred to have another artist take over the helm. It seems that, while the pros themselves like Kubert's work, no one else seems to. This is the point a huge smile made it slow path across his face and he exclaimed in joy, "Speaking of Kubert, how would you like some original art by Joe? Traded off with Gil Kane for some other stuff I had." I leaped in joy and he handed me a stack of it and I spurted out, "I can get $20 apiece from some fans for this stuff." At this point, his eyes leveled off and he muttered. "If I knew that, I would have kept them for myself."

At that interlude, I bid farewell to Mike, fearing I'd have to wrestle him over the original art. All kidding aside, Mike Sekowsky was a very friendly type of fellow, who was willing to help fandom out in any way he can. At first, he appeared to be grouchy, but that being only his exterior self, I found that by digging into the real Sekowsky was a heart bigger than comic fandom or the comic industry will ever know.

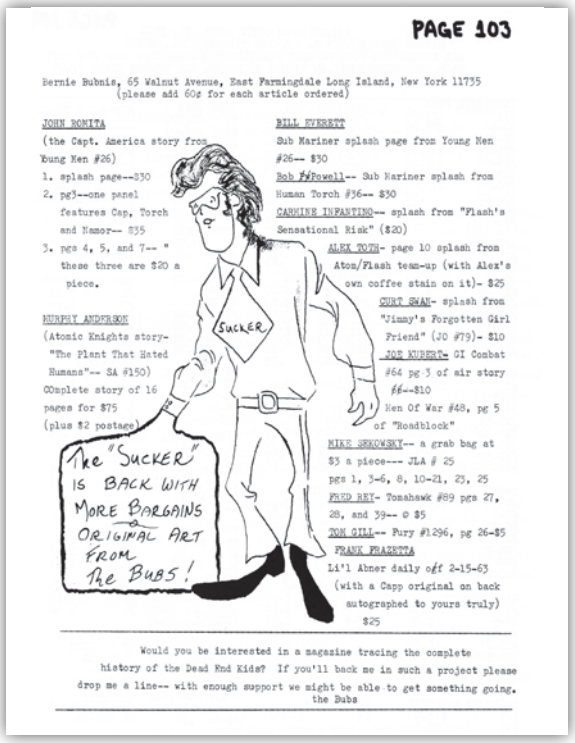
MY LOVE-HATE AFFAIR WITH JULIE

I'm not sure a love-hate relationship is a 50-50 package. Julius Schwartz and I had a love-hate association, but I think it was 10% love and 90% vile hate. It started simple enough:

I won a monthly "best" letter contest in a 1962 or '63 *Flash* comic book edited by Mr. Schwartz. I was 14 or 15 years old, and I never did the "best" of anything. I wasn't going to argue. The reward was a page of Carmine Infantino original art. I took it with me to the DC offices so I could say, "Thank you". in person.

"WHY ARE YOU THANKING ME?? I DIDN'T DRAW IT!!" My very first introduction to Julius Schwartz.

You couldn't discourage me in those days and I planned more trips to the DC offices. A friend gave me his old large briefcase he used to transport X-ray negatives to his hospital job. I added a tie to my shirt and this youthful image of a working artist would always allow me a welcoming smile at the DC offices. Except from Mr. Schwartz, who would always ask me if I had an appointment. I had to lie, but I got good at it because this place was a treasure-trove of original art. Stacks and stacks of it just waiting to be given away to anyone visiting. You could be in a full body cast and someone would find a way to stuff art into a mouth or eye socket opening. Later they thought this was a bad idea and had interns cutting it all up into tiny pieces. DC never saw the future. We fans did enjoy it while it lasted. Some collected and I just resold them to buy old comic books.


PAGE 103

Bernie Bubnis, 65 Walnut Avenue, East Farmingdale Long Island, New York 11735
(please add 60¢ for each article ordered)

JOHN ROMITA
(the Capt. America story from Yung Men #26)
1. splash page--$30
2. pg3--one panel features Cap, Torch and Namor-- $35
3. pgs 4, 5, and 7-- " these three are $20 a piece.

MURPHY ANDERSON
(Atomic Knights story- "The Plant That Hated Humans"-- SA #150) Complete story of 16 pages for $75 (plus $2 postage)

BILL EVERETT
Sub Mariner splash page from Young Men #26-- $30
Bob Powell-- Sub Mariner splash from Human Torch #36-- $30
CARMINE INFANTINO-- splash from "Flash's Sensational Risk" ($20)
ALEX TOTH- page 10 splash from Aton/Flash team-up (with Alex's own coffee stain on it)- $25
CURT SWAN- splash from "Jimmy's Forgotten Girl Friend" (JO #79)- $10
JOE KUBERT- GI Combat #64 pg 3 of air story ##--$10
Men Of War #48, pg 5 of "Roadblock"
MIKE SEKOWSKY-- a grab bag at $3 a piece--- JLA # 25 pgs 1, 3-6, 8, 10-21, 23, 25
FRED REY- Tomahawk #89 pgs 27, 28, and 39-- @ $5
TOM GILL-- Fury #1296, pg 26-$5
FRANK FRAZETTA
Li'l Abner daily of 2-15-63 (with a Capp original on back autographed to yours truly) $25

Would you be interested in a magazine tracing the complete history of the Dead End Kids? If you'll back me in such a project please drop me a line-- with enough support we might be able to get something going.
the Bubs

My final face to face confrontation with Schwartz happened in July 1964. I just knew he would want to attend the first Comicon my committee was planning. He started to lecture me that it's planned one-day afternoon schedule was not long enough and we were "wasting our time." The first science fiction convention in 1939 he attended was three days long. I tried to explain that no one had even come close to putting on a comic book convention and I was paying for most of it out of my own pocket. He opened his desk drawer, pulled out a digest-sized booklet from that first SF con and threw it at my head, *"THIS WAS A REAL CONVENTION!"*

RBCC ad page courtesy of Aaron Caplan.

(I have to interrupt myself – I shoulda never said what I said next… but I did.) *"I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DID 100 YEARS AGO!"* At this point, he grabbed me and pushed me out of his office. Years later, I listed it for sale in one of my *RBCC* ads and called it a "fanzine," instead of a "book." Julie called me on my listed phone number and yelled at me that it *WAS NOT* a fanzine. He asked where I got it from and I told him that he once threw it at my head. Stunned for a moment… then he demanded it returned (at no charge). He gave me his daughter's address and I followed his order – the last straw of our love/hate relationship. And now "Spotlight" #3, published in *RBCC* #29 [Apr. '64], which was written before I was banned from not only the DC offices, but also their entire street:

Spotlight on the Pros – In This Issue: The DC Group

Up until this time, my travels to the domains of pro-dom had been confined to just visiting them at their homes, but Len Wein confronted me with a new type of adventure – a visit to the offices of Julius Schwartz. The legend of Mr. Schwartz had always intrigued me, so I made up my mind on the spot and we were underway the following day.

Wein utilized common fan strategy and came up with the following plan: he reasoned that, if guided tours were held on a Wednesday, they were not given on any other day. I always marvel at the way Len's mind works, but what he really meant was that we could hope to get a personal interview with Schwartz if we called for an appointment on another day.

Now that all the preliminaries were ended, we arrived in one piece and took up a seat in the outer office. A few minutes passed before Schwartz made a low grunting sound to someone or another, and we were ordered to enter his office. It wasn't as large as you would expect it to be, quite a compact little hole in the wall. To one side was a huge bookcase housing what I gathered were old comics and, which Wein later confirmed, to be just that. Atop this was a pile of new comics, some that weren't put on the stands yet. Hanging on the walls were a few original art pieces, plus a box full of correspondence from hundreds of fans who wanted to get their hands on original art.

In a split second, it took me to notice all this. I found myself sitting in a chair facing a menacing look, which Schwartz was a glow with. His stern features had been somewhat degraded by Sid Green's caricatures of him. Suddenly, he spurted out, "Why do you still read comics? You're too old for them." I was a little taken back by this sort of question, but I had already devised about 10 wise-cracking answers to throw back at him. My mouth began to form the first syllable, but my mind quickly started to work on amazing feat and I decided against it. Instead, I let Wein answer while I watched the door open and allowed a small-figured man to enter. He quickly made his way over to Schwartz's desk. Immediately I recognized him as being Jerry Siegel, creator of Superman and most probably Julie Schwartz's job. He timidly mumbled. "I've got an idea for Batman, but somebody is sitting at my desk." Schwartz ordered him out of the room under the pretense of sending him for a cup of coffee. But, in the short expanse of time, it was quite clear to me what had taken place. We had just witnessed a small, humble, timid man, who could easily be compared to Clark Kent, walk out of another office because someone was sitting at his desk. A deep sense of regret gripped me as I wondered how easily one's idol could be torn down, but I consoled myself with the thought that he was actually going into a store room and would quickly emerge again as the savior of mankind – Superman.

Next, it was our turn to surprise Mr. Schwartz. Len's beady eyes picked up a set of shining teeth, making their way to Julie's desk. He arose with the ease of a tiger stalking its prey and screamed, "Hey, Joe. How ya doing?" Giella talked for a few minutes about his family and Len asked him if he wanted any more help with his lawn. At this point, Schwartz lifted his huge hand and made a waving gesture to Giella, who took the cue very well and ran from the office.

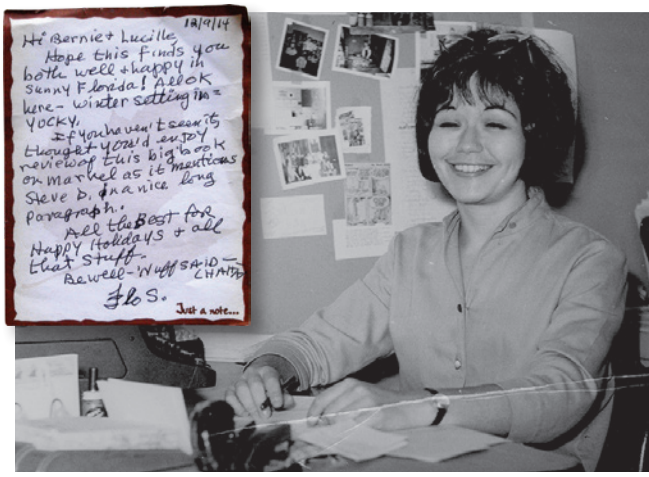
The rest of the conversation cannot be quoted here for it as being used in another article concentrating only on Mr. Schwartz's life. After we had quite exhausted our list of questions, Mr. Schwartz ordered Wein to tell him his favorite artists. He commenced that they were Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson. I said, "Mine were Russ Manning and Hal Foster," and Schwartz took a pill and sneered at me. He wrapped his arm around Len's shoulders and dragged him over to a pile of original artwork. From this, he produced a full book-length *Atom* story and handed it to Len, who was crying at the time. He looked at me, took another pill and sneered. At this point, we waved the farewell and I carried a sobbing Len Wein from Schwartz's office.

Although many of the points of this article are stretched humorously, I want to state now that the bit about Siegel is real as are most of the things mentioned herein. I only satirized Len and you can take everything else for truth. Julie Schwartz was actually a pleasing fellow with a rather gruff exterior that knew no way of showing its niceness, but you know it is in there, although, if you do meet him, I think you will also find him to be every bit as intellectual and kind as many of his letter columns reveal him to be. He was nice enough to extend his office facilities to us and waste a good hour of his time "chewing the fat" with two fans. Here's hoping no one is ever going to sit at his desk.

MARVEL & GOLD KEY: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Time to reflect on the differences between DC and the Marvel offices. DC had a lot of creative writers, artists and editors who were all within easy reach of a fan visitor. Some worked there, others worked from home but did drop in for a variety of work reasons. Never a wasted moment for a tie wearing young fan carrying a retired X-Ray negatives transport bag. Marvel was a bit different. Stan Lee's secretary (minus only battle fatigues and an M-14 rifle) Flo Steinberg stood guard at the gates and the Marvel Bullpen was perhaps on another planet. It did not really matter

Above: *Bernie recognized the writer/co-creator of Superman coming into Julie Schwartz's office during his visit, becoming witness to humiliating treatment as the editor ordered Jerry Siegel to go get him a cup of coffee. This Alan Light photo of the legendary scribe was taken at the 1976 San Diego Comic-Con.* **Below:** *"Fabulous" Flo Steinberg in an undated photo, inset with a note the onetime "Marvel ambassador" wrote to her friends, Bernie and Lucille Bubnis.* [*Like others lucky enough to call her friend, I sure do miss that wonderfully musical, high-pitched, Boston-accented voice asking heartfelt questions of me when she or I randomly called…* **Y.E.**]



Jerry Siegel photo by and courtesy of Alan Light. Flo Steinberg note courtesy of Bernie Bubnis.

Above: *That's Gold Key/King Comics editor Bill Harris, sandwiched between Bobby Van (left) and Mark Hanerfeld, at the 1965 Academy Con, held in New York City.* **Opposite page:** *Steve Ditko contributed cover art to the first 1964 New York Comicon souvenir book.* **Below:** *Bernie's visit to Gold Key proved to be far more friendly than his sojourns to DC Comics and Marvel, due to the friendly, welcoming nature of editor Bill Harris, who himself was a comics fan. During the appointment, Bernie left with copies of two of GK's finest titles,* Magnus, Robot Fighter *#1 [Feb. '63] and* The Phantom *#1 [Nov. '62].*

because Stan and his Pen supported us in another way. All it took was a phone call from Ron Fradkin to Stan's home (during his lunch he later told us) to get some incredible help from Marvel in our quest to put on the very first Comicon in July 1964. He sent over an intern editor Dave Twedt, Flo and Steve Ditko on their own time. With all those pros around DC, no one could find the time to attend.

Hey, let's not forget Gold Key. Editor Bill Harris was to be our Keynote speaker at its original planned location of Newark, N.J. (don't ask). The con's newest date in N.Y.C. caught Bill on his vacation. He did put us in contact with *Lone Ranger* artist Tom Gill and he made a perfect guest. Steve Ditko once asked Flo out for a lunch date, but she politely declined because as she later said, "Those days, employees did not date other employees." They did sit together at the Comicon and made a cute couple. Sort of a real life episode of Spider-Man Here's "Spotlight on the Pros" #4, from *RBCC* #30 [June '64]:

Spotlight on the Pros No. 4 – This Issue: Marvel and Gold Key

I met my constant ally in exploring pro-dom, Ron Fradkin, at 655 Madison Avenue. It proved to be a non-existent theory to even try to arrange an interview with Stan Lee. So we executed the next best step – make an appointment with Flo Steinberg, Lee's personal secretary. We told the receptionist in the outer office of our mission and she motioned to a sofa and offered us both seats. We sat for about five minutes, but no Marvel artists or writers could be spotted. Only a constant stream of girls strolling in and out of the office. That occurred to me that Stan *must* do his writing at home – who could possibly concentrate with all these young girls swaying in and out? And Flo was surely no exception. She was decked out in a snug-fitting red dress with her glasses limply resting upon the top of her puffed up hairdo.

Up until this point, I was getting quite accustomed to conversing with the pros on an intelligent basis. Usually the atmosphere was free and the answers to my questions were off the shoulders. But ,for every good thing, there most surely will be a detour along the way. Well, Marvel was *that* detour.

Ron and I continually shot question after question at Flo, but each time the answer seemed to be a mere juggling of the statement she made to the previous question. After a few minutes, we both knew we had run into trouble. We had come to find out what was coming up from Marvel, but instead the subject of coming attractions was slowly being buried in the dark past.

I guess we should have expected this type of situation to arise when the talk to a pros secretary and not to the top man himself. Flo was smiling all the way through the conversation, trying her hardest not to laugh in our faces. Can't say as I blame her – only a pro was equipped to put up with our mundane questioning period.

At this point, Ron tried to run from the office to the elevator, but Flo tripped him and explained that we still had to meet Debbie. From his position on the floor, Ron quickly pieced together his glasses and watched Flo sway from the office. Debbie pranced in and produced a ledger for us to sign. The purpose of this was never fully explained, but seeing that it entitled us to two pin-ups of the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man, who were we to argue with such a generous offer?

True, Marvel treated us a little like kids, but remember, this is the Marvel Age of Comics, so they have to act different.

Next on our list was Bill Harris, chief editor over at Gold Key. Ron had talked at great lengths with him before, so we were assured in advance that we would be accepted by Mr. Harris. Well, as a fitting preface to this section, let me state here that Bill Harris is definitely the *fan's* editor. The other editors may take a fleeting interest in fandom, but Bill truly feels it is a necessary part of comic books and is willing to

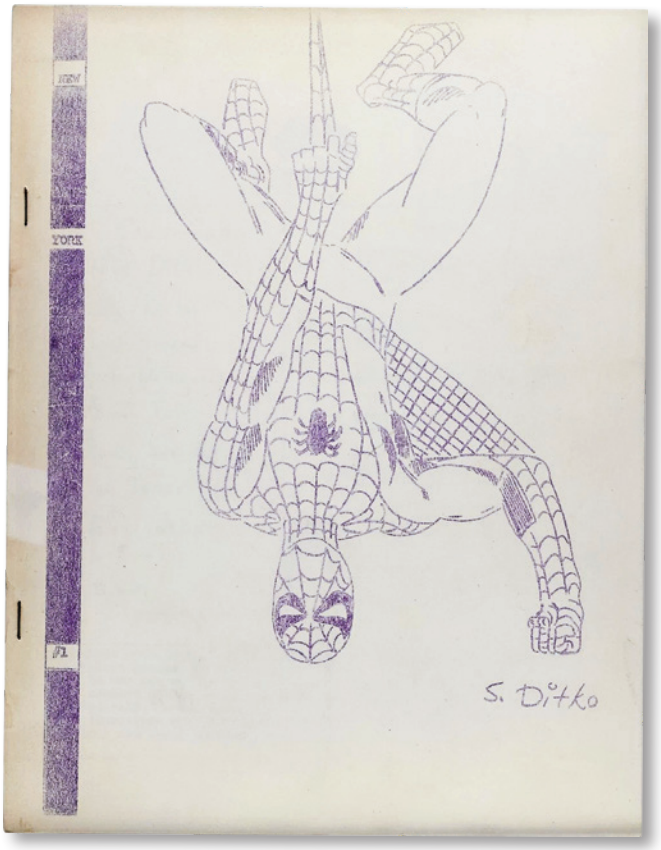
throw all his weight behind it.

To our right, as we entered the office was a stand of comics, from *Phantom* #1 to the as yet not released *Magnus*. These were offered on a "take all you want" basis to everyone who entered the office.

The first plight of our conversation tended to revolve around *Dr. Solar.* He confessed that Solar was the hardest character to write for. As proof to this, he offered a script he had to rewrite to fit the *Solar* magazine. He also disliked the Solar vs. the Alien-type story and was a little disappointed in the most recent of them.

It seems he visits Lee Falk every few weeks to pick up the photo stats of the *Phantom* strip, so he can hand out the assignments to his writers. The Phantom Club certification hung over his head and about 20 Phantom Club buttons were spread over his desk.

He personally didn't think too highly of the *John Carter of Mars* comic and revealed that it also didn't sell too well. By the time this article appears, it will probably be reality, but Bill tells us that a *Buck Rogers* comic is now up at the plants. He thinks quite highly of it, so Gold Key might have another hit on its hands. In connection with space comics, he goes on to say that the *Steve Zodiac* stint was pretty much of a bomb.



My eyes caught a glimpse of a copy of *Shield and Wizard*, which immediately spurred me on to tossing a few more questions in front of him. He smiled and explained that an eager fan took it upon himself to educate Bill in the fine art of enjoying a decaying "golden age" comic book. Bill also pointed out the action displayed by the artist on the cover and speculated that this is what Gold Key is trying to inject into its own covers.

Our talk gradually shifted over to a growing force plaguing most comic editors today – fandom. When the subject sprang up, his eyes opened wide with the vitality of excitement as he leaped across his desk to a small file cabinet. From it, he produced a small folder and proudly announced it as his entire fanzine collection. It seems he saves all the zines he gets and would definitely like to see many more of them. He pointed out *Alter Ego* #5 as the best of the lot, but never stated that it was best in anything more than appearance.

In regards to the Comic Convention (which will almost definitely go on as planned), he expressed great interest in attending and will probably write a guest editorial to go along with the Steve Ditko illustration in the first issue of the Con's Progress Reports.

Bill used to pick up everything he could get pertaining to his competitor's products, but his present location doesn't afford him the same opportunities to find comic books on the stands. No, he has never met either Schwartz or Lee.

Our time was quickly running out, so we had to yield to its demands and say goodbye to Mr. Harris. Amazingly enough, he invited us back – even after Ron and I completely grabbed every free comic he had lying around. Harris is definitely the most "in" of the comic book editors. Here's hoping that he will remain at Gold Keys helm for long as there is a real need for *good* comics.

Sure, I slighted Marvel a little, but they deserve it when they give people the second class treatment like they gave Ron and I. We did not appreciate being treated like 10 year olds.

A FRIENDSHIP WITH STEVE DITKO

In 1962, I had met Steve Ditko in his East Side N.Y.C. studio and (like the Kirby piece) planned to do only a Q-&-A article. He was not an easy participant and sometimes ignored my questions and other times just ignored me. My speech reflected a Lithuanian background and years of speaking two languages so I could communicate with my immigrant grandparents. I think he enjoyed that part of *my* background and was always asking questions about the little town in Pennsylvania where I was born. We had reversed roles and I became the subject of the interview. It would take some time and future visits to get more facts about him. He knew I planned to write some kind of article about his career and he seemed okay with that. Although he had a few ground rules for me to follow: *Never* mention the person (Eric Stanton) who shared the studio with him and he *must* review anything that will get printed. Well, I had no idea of the artistic and writing background Stanton shared with him. I thought he was an assistant. Only later did I glimpse some art that surely was not used in a Marvel comic book. This studio was not Jack Kirby's basement. A Q-&-A with Ditko would be boring. I knew I wanted to paint a much larger picture of Steve Ditko's studio.

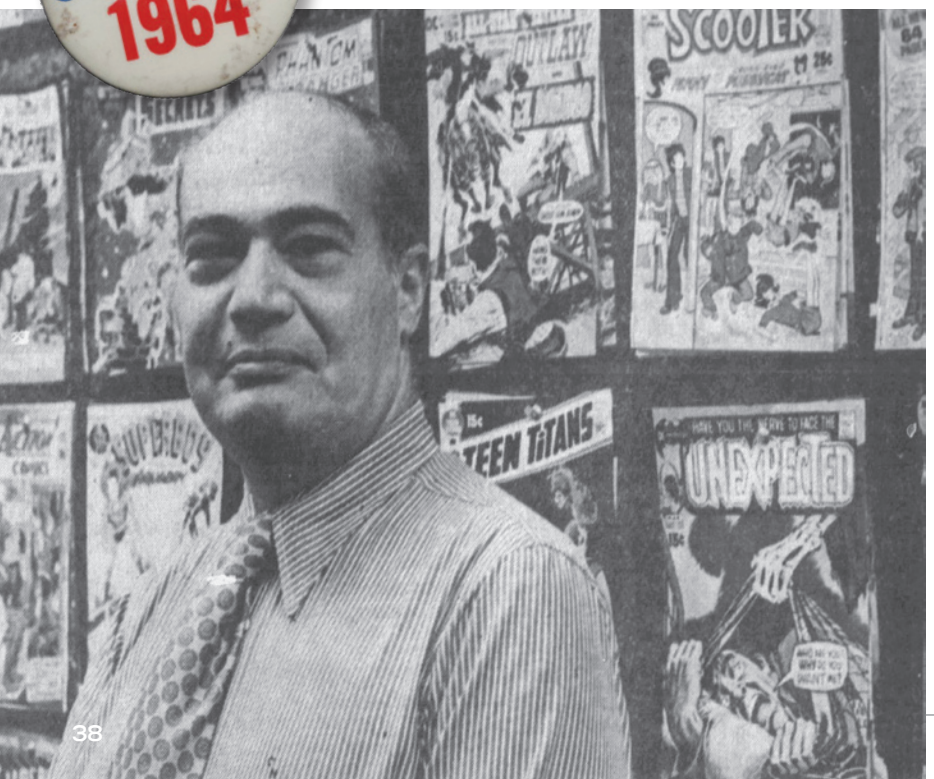
Fate gave me a few chances to see sides of Steve I could never guess existed. My father died in 1963 and left my mother and I sorting out all his unpaid bills. I was given the monthly mortgage bill and asked to pay it. An after-school "full" time job and the sales of old movie posters and original art satisfied that bill. I decided to not attend his funeral and instead visit N.Y.C. and see Steve.

Months before, Steve was thrown into my home life when I appeared at his office with a blackened eye. My father was in a bad mood that morning. When Ditko saw it he bounced out of his chair and demanded I give him my father's work address, so he could confront him. I just left with no explanation or address. So when I told him I was not attending my father's funeral, he already knew why I chose to hide. He glared at me from his drawing table and I knew he was angry with me. My eyes teared up and I fell back against the wall and slid to the floor. He talked to me about my responsibilities to my mother and myself. He told me to not let the past control the future. We spoke for over a half-hour. This was not some stupid "Spotlight on the Pros" article or comic book. This was a moment that changed my life. It is why "Spotlight on the Pros" # 5,or #2, or #3 or whatever number it really was, is my favorite memory of this series. They didn't always run in the order I wrote them. The Ditko one, which follows and initially appeared in *RBCC*#31 [July '64], delayed by a misunderstanding with the *RBCC* editor Gordon Love:

Spotlight on the Pros: Number 5 – This Issue: Steve Ditko

The mystery surrounding Steve Ditko is about as thick as some of the fog he conjures up in his stories. At least this was my observation of him

Above: *Bernie Bubnis in a recent pic.* **Below:** *1964 Comicon button.* **Bottom:** *In the Nov. 23, '70, issue of* Newsweek, *Carmine Infantino, editorial director (and soon to be promoted to publisher), was interviewed about relevancy in comics. The story was picked up by wire services, appearing in many papers, sometimes accompanied by this pic.*



before I managed to snag an appointment with him. Steve arose from obscurity to [become] the artist of Marvel's best bread-winner, Spider-Man.

As I entered his private studio, I first noticed a maze of shelves all over the walls to the right. A book on spiders caught my eye, so I promptly questioned him as to if this was any help in his present assignments. He chuckled and said, "H___, no!" It seems the shelves were filled to the brim with a complete collection of Steve's past efforts in the art field. The complexity of his studio, with the erasure shavings spread around, made me wonder as to the time element in the artist's life. He told me he works, "From 9:00 in the morning until I get tired."

Let's go back to the beginning. In 1950, Steve left his home in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, chiefly to enter the comic book field. He enrolled at the Cartoonist and Illustrators School and was greatly influenced in his work by instructor Jerry Robinson.

As most new artists do, Ditko trekked back and forth from one company to another, trying to land a job. Finally, in 1953, the big chance came. He pinpoints "Stretching Things," in *Fantastic Fears* (V.1, #5) as his very first stint in comics.

He confesses, however, that it was the Charlton people who gave him his first real chance. I speculated on the fannish idea that maybe Charlton would soon fold, but Steve shot back a startling rebuttal. "Why, with their own presses, they can produce a comic book for almost nothing and still make money. They've got it made…"

Up until now, everyone had been under the impression that there was only one copy of the Kirby 3-Der, *Captain 3-D.* Steve offers a new beam of light on this for all the Kirby completists in the audience. He definitely did the inking on the first three *Captain 3-D*s (along with about six other artists, including Mort Meskin). I quickly pointed out that there was only one copy issued. Steve refers to the fact that the 3-D fad came and went in a flash, so the last two issues might have been docked before they were released.

Bringing up Marvelmania, I learned that he disliked doing the old five-pagers for Lee's pre-super-hero monster comics. Although I was pre-assured of the answers, I asked him if he would want to work for another company. He grinned sternly and said merely, "No, never…"

The topic shifted to the lessening quality of Kirby's artwork. Ditko pointed out that Jack was a real master of speed, and he needed it to keep up with the assignments Lee was throwing at him. "It stands to reason that Jack's works tends to look hurried because it *is!* Anyone who is that buried under work will surely not take the extra time necessary to make it perfect. Jack's a *real* genius. [(*RBCC*) Editor's note: anyone who thinks Kirby can't be great when he wants to should take a closer look at the "Tales of Asgard" series in *Journey into Mystery.* This is one of the best, if not the best, drawn and most underrated strips that appears in any comic book being published today.)

I happen to think that artists are heroes of their [own], so with this in mind, I asked Steve who his favorite artist is, one that has been working for another company. He replied to my surprise that it was Mort Meskin. At this point, I noticed a fanzine dangling limply from one of his folders. He says he enjoys all fanzines, but enjoys the articles on old super-heroes the most. The fanzine in question was a copy of Bronson's zine, *Bullseye*, with a marker at the Johnny Quick article.

Steve Ditko provided me with the information for about 10 other articles on him, but I prefer to release these as the urge to revive the Ditko fad strikes me.

Steve is comparatively recent to the field and he went way out of his way to help me get all the facts I needed for this article. I try to end all my spotlight articles with a clever saying of some sort to show that the particular pro I'm writing about is a nice guy. Well, no fancy sayings this time, only the bare facts. Steve Ditko *is* a nice guy. Thank the Lord he's one of us.

A VISIT WITH CARMINE AND HIS MOM

Gosh, Carmine Infantino was such a nice guy. He greeted me in a white undershirt and I think I eventually took off my tie. Honestly, I don't remember anything too special about my visit. We talked some sports and, when he got a phone call, his mom told me how she makes her gravy.

I was amazed at how many different characters he drew for DC. Other fans warned me that this would be a difficult interview. He was going to be arrogant and short-tempered. Must be two Carmines because this was a walk-in-the-park interview. I would ask one question and he would answer two. I do remember that he told me about editors he enjoyed working with and others that told him exactly how they wanted him to draw something. He thought his way was the better choice. He never told me not to use a name of someone but at the time I did not think that was my job to report. I was wrong but I did not want to write about office politics that could hurt him in print. The innocence of the 1960s would soon be tested by assassinations, politics and war. This would be my last "Spotlight on the Pros" (appearing in *RBCC* #34 ['64]), and I chose a real nice guy as my swan-song hero.

Bubnis photo courtesy of Bernie Bubnis. Button photo by Joe Azzatto.

Spotlight on the Pros No. 6 – This Issue: Carmine Infantino

While swaying back and forth on the New York subway system, I began to wonder what the stature of Infantino really was in fandom. He continues to grab top-artist honors each year in the Alley Awards and he, more than any other artist, has his original artwork spread around in more homes. I tended to feel I was about to embark on a new venture for which there would be no sizable comparison, meeting with the *fan's* artist.

Fighting my way out from behind a huge drum marked "Go, Mets, Go!" I managed to get one foot out of the subway door. Unfortunately, the rest of me wasn't willing to follow suit and the door closed with a thunderous bang. My dreams were realized at the next stop though, as I made a hasty retreat from the subterranean menace to humans.

As I neared the domain of Infantino, I gathered my wits together and rang the apartment bell. I was greeted by a sweet old lady who was revealed to me later as Carmine's mother.

Carmine himself was very welcoming and apologized for the fact that he'd have to talk to me during his meal. I told him it would be perfectly alright, as I wiped the gravy stains off my tie.

I wondered first where such a great artist got his preliminary training. He confessed that it was with the School of Industrial Art. He further commented that it was by the grace and good wishes of a lot of pros that he received that extra push to concentrate even more so on his artwork. From there, he went on to draw "Jack Frost." From behind a meatball he stuffed in his mouth, he mumbled that the first feature he did for the DC group was "The Ghost Patrol." Closely following this were "Black Canary" and "Johnny Thunder." At this point, he was assured he would be around DC for a long time to come.

Gazing around the room, I saw the entrance to his studio with the striking figure of a drawing board protruding into my line of vision. I also noticed that the room was full of stacks of comics, all of which contained something or another he has done in the art field.

Continuing with his rundown of his art career, he revealed that he did very few old *Flash*es. Then he joined up with Joe Giella and turned out the "King Farraday" series. Adding to his famous list of inkers, Carmine throws Joe Kubert's name into the pile. It seems Joe inked Infantino's pencils of *Jesse James.* This was followed by other Western stuff, such as "The Trigger Twins," "Super Chief," and "Pow-Wow Smith." Then he sank to his lowest ebb and turned to love comics to offer him refuge.

At this point, I began to wonder who *his* favorite artists were. He told me, in the competition, he has always admired Jack Kirby. This is rather strange because Kirby told me that when the Alleys come along with each year, he prays that Carmine doesn't walk off with the coveted award of "Best Artist." He complained that he won it too much and "another artist should get a chance." Carmine also mentioned that Mort Meskin was his favorite artist at the DC stable.

Now, parting from the spotlight for a minute, how is it that both Infantino and Ditko admire Meskin's style and we fans are still retching over his "Mark Merlin" farces. Could it be that having such a tremendous amount of talent temporarily warps one's mind to admire Meskin or has ol' Mort got them off in a trance? Oh, well, enough Weingroffism* and back to the facts.

Prowling through his studio, I tripped over a huge machine which, when tipped, lit up like the sun. He told me it was an enlarging machine he used to amuse himself by projecting some of his sketches.

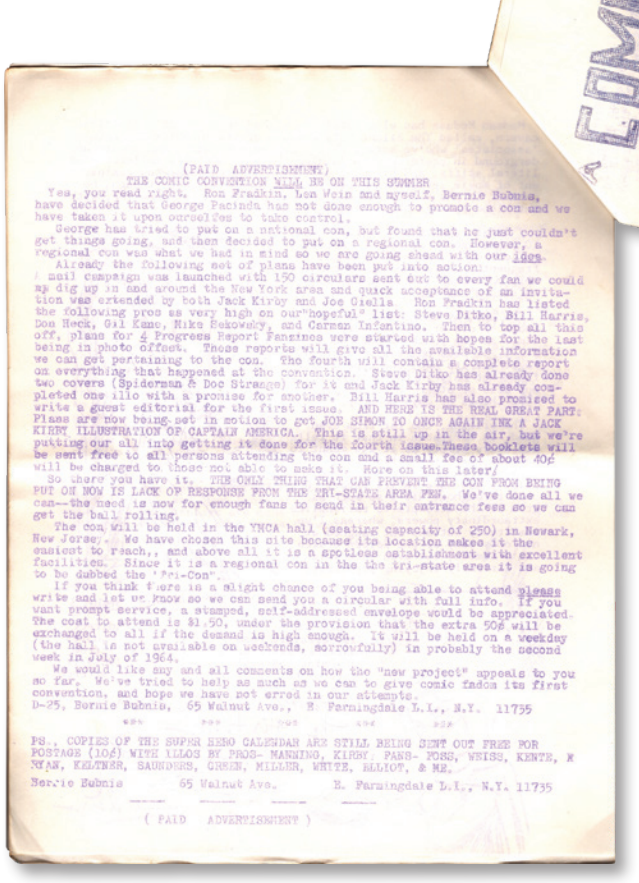
When questioned about his favorite comic characters, he slowly stroked his chin and mused of the various possibilities he was presented with. He finally emerged from the trance to scream Captain America and The Shadow. Bearing in mind that both comics were being revived, I asked if he could buy either of them. No pondering this time, just a quick, "Are you kidding?"

It seemed to me that his daily schedule was so cluttered that he didn't have too much time for outside activities. Unfortunately, my crystal ball gazing turned out to be misinterpreted and he said that his hobbies were swimming and traveling.

Noticing I had imposed quite a bit already on Carmine, I decided to make a quick exit. The rumors are that he doesn't appreciate being bothered by fans too much, but I can attest to the fact that I couldn't have been treated any nicer. The warm hospitality extended to me more than made up for the fact that I wasn't offered anything to eat.

fin

Thus ends Bernie's remarkable series. Life circumstances had Bernie depart comics fandom for a long spell, though he, in recent years, has enjoyed recognition as an organizer of the world's very first comic convention. Thanks, B.B.! – **Y.E.**



(PAID ADVERTISEMENT)

THE COMIC CONVENTION WILL BE ON THIS SUMMER

Yes, you read right. Ron Fradkin, Len Wein and myself, Bernie Bubnis, have decided that George Pacinda has not done enough to promote a con and we have taken it upon ourselves to take control.

George has tried to put on a national con, but found that he just couldn't get things going, and then decided to put on a regional con. However, a regional con was what we had in mind so we are going ahead with our ideas.

Already the following set of plans have been put into motion:

A mail campaign was launched with 150 recruiters sent out to every fan we could dig up in and around the New York area and quick acceptance of an invitation was extended by both Jack Kirby and Joe Giella. Ron Fradkin has listed the following pros as very high on our "hopeful" list: Steve Ditko, Bill Harris, Don Heck, Gil Kane, Mike Sekowsky, and Carmen Infantino. Then to top all this off, plans for a Progress Report Fanzines were started with hopes for the last being in photo offset. These reports will give all the available information we can get pertaining to the con. The fourth will contain a complete report on everything that happened at the convention. Steve Ditko has already done two covers (Spiderman & Doc Strange) for it and Jack Kirby has already completed one illo with a promise for another. Bill Harris has also promised to write a guest editorial for the first issue. AND HERE IS THE REAL GREAT PART: Plans are now being put in motion to get JOE SIMON TO ONCE AGAIN INK A JACK KIRBY ILLUSTRATION OF CAPTAIN AMERICA. This is still up in the air, but we're putting our all into getting it done for the fourth issue. These booklets will be sent free to all persons attending the con and a small fee of about 40¢ will be charged to those not able to make it. More on this later.

So there you have it. THE ONLY THING THAT CAN PREVENT THE CON FROM BEING PUT ON NOW IS LACK OF RESPONSE FROM THE TRI-STATE AREA FEN. We've done all we can--the need is now for enough fans to send in their entrance fees so we can get the ball rolling.

The con will be held in the YMCA hall (seating capacity of 250) in Newark, New Jersey. We have chosen this site because its location makes it the easiest to reach,, and above all it is a spotless establishment with excellent facilities. Since it is a regional con in the the tri-state area it is going to be dubbed the "Pre-Con".

If you think there is a slight chance of you being able to attend please write and let us know so we can send you a circular with full info. If you want prompt service, a stamped, self-addressed envelope would be appreciated. The cost to attend is $1.50, under the provision that the extra 50¢ will be exchanged to all if the demand is high enough. It will be held on a weekday (the hall is not available on weekends, sorrowfully) in probably the second week in July of 1964.

We would like any and all comments on how the "new project" appeals to you so far. We've tried to help as much as we can to give comic fandom its first convention, and hope we have not erred in our attempts.

D-25, Bernie Bubnis, 65 Walnut Ave., E. Farmingdale L.I., N.Y. 11735

PS., COPIES OF THE SUPER HERO CALENDAR ARE STILL BEING SENT OUT FREE FOR POSTAGE (10¢) WITH ILLOS BY PROS- MANNING, KIRBY, PANS- JONS, WEISS, KENTE, NOVAK, KELTNER, SAUNDERS, GREEN, MILLER, WHITE, ELLIOT, & ME.

Bernie Bubnis 65 Walnut Ave. E. Farmingdale L.I., N.Y. 11735

(PAID ADVERTISEMENT)

Above: *In* RBCC *#29 [Apr. '64], Bernie Bubnis took out an ad to declare that the very first comic book convention was going to be held in New York City, which did transpire on Monday, July 24, 1964. The one-day afternoon affair was attended by Flo Steinberg and Steve Ditko, the latter's only appearance at a comic con, ever!* **Below:** *From left to right, the "Survivors of the First Comicon" panel participants, at the 2014 New York Comic Con, Bernie Bubnis, Art Tripp, Len Wein (seated), Rick Bierman, and Ethan Roberts. It is estimated that 100 comic book fans attended the historic event.*

Photo by Lucille Bubnis. Used with permission.

Eternaut's Heroic Collective

A look at the 1957–59 Argentine comic series that inspired the hit Netflix show, The Eternaut

by PABLO STADELMAN

[*My South American pal is nothing if not tenacious and I confess it's a remarkable persistence that earned him a column in the mag – that's after I read his fascinating submissions and recognized his talent, of course! And he's excited about covering the Argentine scene in this regular feature, but I have to admit it was my suggestion that he cover the subject this time out, as I saw the Netflix series based on the comic series,* The Eternaut, *originated in his native land! Thanks very much, Pablo!* – **Y.E.**]

The Eternaut is one of the most internationally renowned science fiction series, not only for its story but also for the way it portrays the interaction of its characters and the narrative itself. Created in 1957 for the magazine *Hora Cero Semanal*, published by Frontera, it was written by Héctor Germán Oesterheld (who also managed the publishing house), with art by Francisco Solano López. This story meticulously depicts an alien invasion of Buenos Aires, beginning with a snowfall that initially seems harmless but later proves deadly for the protagonists. Unlike other contemporary writers of the time who portrayed their characters as lone heroes (Robin Wood's character Nippur being a prime example), Oesterheld champions the collective hero in *The Eternaut*, where the hero needs the help of his companions to save the day.

Serialized in chapters, *The Eternaut* told the story of a diverse group of characters, led by Juan Salvo, fighting against an extraterrestrial invasion led by the Manos and the Gurbos. Between 1957–59, Oesterheld crafted a basic story familiar to avid science fiction readers, who consumed comics from the United States, but spiced it up with local elements that immediately captivated them.

The story introduces Juan Salvo and a group of friends playing truco (a card game typical of Argentina) when an unexpected snowfall surprises them. They gradually begin to realize that something unusual is happening, that there's more to the story than meets the eye. They quickly discover that the snowfall is deadly, killing anyone who comes into contact with it. Favalli, a physics professor present at the gathering, designs an insulating suit that allows the characters to venture out and investigate.

From this point, the story recounts the advance of the invaders and the organization of the global population, all seen from the perspective of a group of survivors in Buenos Aires. With a diverse cast of characters, each contributing their experience throughout the narrative, *The Eternaut* became a landmark of revolution and resistance for future generations. The characters are a distinctive collective: Favalli (who was in charge of resolving practical problems), Elena and Marta Salvo (Juan's wife and daughter, responsible for keeping the group together by providing them with food and rest), Ruperto Mosca (the journalist tasked with documenting everything that happens during the invasion), and Alberto Franco (who meets Juan during the resistance and is one of the most spirited and courageous characters in the face of the invaders).

The invasion makes it clear that, to survive, one must set aside their differences in order to face the various and often deadly threats of the invaders, such as the Robot Men (humans kidnapped and controlled by the Manos – in English, the Hands), the Cascarudos (giant beetle-like insects manipulated by the Hands), the Gurbos (giant quadrupeds with

Below: The Eternaut *TV series, recently approved for a second season (of eight episodes) by Netflix, scored a 95% approval rating on the Rotten Tomatoes website and was called "the best post-apocalyptic TV show in years," by the Tom's Guide website.*

Inset right: *Collected English language edition of* The Eternauts, *published by Fantagraphics, reprinting a serial based in part, premised the writer, Héctor Germán Oesterheld, on what if his own family was suddenly alone in the world.* **Below:** Hora Cero [*Nov. 20, '57], with El Eternauta on the cover. Art by Francisco Solano López.*

dense, black shells possessing immense strength), and the Ellos (invisible beings with imperialistic tendencies seeking to conquer planets). For 106 episodes, Argentine readers eagerly awaited each chapter of the adventure to learn the fate of each character.

The Eternaut generated enormous interest among comic book readers, successfully becoming a cult classic and cultural icon that has been published over the years in various formats and sizes, and translated into dozens of languages. Its impact on fans was so great that *The Eternaut* spawned several sequels by different writers and artists.

Frontera was an Argentine comic book publisher founded by Héctor and Jorge Oesterheld in 1956, which operated until 1961, becoming one of the leading publications in Argentine comics. The publisher was known for presenting stories that resonated with its readers, using language characteristic of the era, along with high-quality artwork, showcasing diverse plots ranging from historical fiction and crime to fantasy and science fiction. Among these stories were *Ernie Pike* (written by Oesterheld and illustrated by Hugo Pratt) and *Sherlock Time* (also written by Oesterheld and illustrated by the legendary Alberto Breccia). The success of their *Hora Cero* led to a run of 116 issues, and a new title called *Hora Cero Extra* was added, along with the already extant magazine *Frontera* and *Frontera Extra*. Oesterheld wrote most of the stories, aided by his experience and recognition from previous titles such as *Bull Rocket* and *Sargento Kirk*.

The publisher boasted an exceptional roster of American and Italian artists, including Carlos Roume, Alberto Breccia, Ivo Pavone, Hugo Pratt, Daniel Haupt, Jorge Moliterni, Arturo del Castillo, and Néstor Olivera, among others.

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Wrinkle, Heidi, Anne, & Gorgo

From his library to yours, here's four excellent graphic novel recommendations from RJA

by RICHARD J. ARNDT

Last year's summer had me discovering a major number of classics novels being transformed into graphic novels. First is Madeleine L'Engle's Newbury award-winning 1962 novel, *A Wrinkle in Time*. The adaptation and art is by Hope Larson. Apparently, this version was originally published in 2012, but I never saw it at that time.

I was a little leery about the artwork, mostly because ii is largely in black-&-white, with blue shading throughout the book, which didn't look to me to be particularly attractive. Also, because I'd had read this source novel as a young boy and had loved it, but I remembered that the tesseract explanation in the original novel almost had me shutting down the rest of the book. It was so complicated and hard to wrap my mind around. If Ms. L'Engle had just said teleporting from planet to planet by use of the mind, I would have understood what she was talking about right off the bat.

Anyway, the story concerns out heroine, Meg Murray, her genius little brother, Charles Wallace, and their new friend, Calvin O'Keefe. The Murray father has been doing top secret work for the government and has gone missing. The trio meets three very odd old women named Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, who are aliens willing to help the three children rescue Meg and Charles' father from a dark galactical threat that wants conformity in all the worlds it conquers. The story was top-notch to begin with and Larson's art choices grew on me as I read the adaptation. This novel was one of the first SF novels for kids to treat the storyline as being both much deeper and more thoughtful than the average kid SF books of the 1950s–60s. This is a really nice adaptation.

Next is a stunning 2025 take on Johanna Spyri's 1880–81 novel, *Heidi*, which deals with the titular five-year-old orphan girl, who has been dumped on her very grumpy hermit grandfather's Swiss Alps doorstep by a rather greedy and mean-spirited aunt. Over the next few years, Heidi and her grandfather grow to love each other, even as life's complications threaten to pull them apart. The book is beautifully adapted by Mariah Marsden and illustrated by one-name Euro artist Ofride.

Every panel that Ofride draws tells you something about the world that Heidi is growing up in. Spyri's original novel made nearly every reader fall in love with both the Swiss Alps and the resourceful Heidi. And that doesn't stop with this excellent adaptation. Ofride's warm artwork, along with Marsden's faithfulness to the original text made this reader adore the locale and the characters all over again. I loved the original book so much as a boy that I named my youngest daughter, Heidi Johanna, after the book and the author, so seeing such a nice (in the best sense of the word) adaptation is a sheer delight.

The book itself was very innovative in its day, although you may not notice reading it now. Some of its plot points have become cliches, although they weren't quite so commonplace in the late 19th century. Children's books in 1880 were often saturated in sanctimonious preaching, heavy-handed morality, and strict, overbearing religious content that often seemed focused on trying to convert readers to whatever religion the writer was raised in. Or, the books went the exact opposite direction and were incredibly violent – think the Brothers Grimm bloody little tales. That said, I loved this adaptation and can't recommend it enough.

Our third selection is such a no-brainer that one wonders why it took until 2017 to make this one happen. Mariah Marsden, who also adapted *Heidi*, does an equally skillful job adapting Lucy Maud Montgomery's great Canadian children's novel, *Anne of Green Gables*. The artist is Brenna Thummler (whom, you'll recall, I rightfully praised for her stellar graphic novel trilogy, Sheets, over the last two columns), who does some things differently here as Anne (with an E)'s world is nestled in the early 20th century world of Canadian province Prince Edward Island. Some of the panels she uses here are elongated, containing no copy, but remind a reader of both Grant Wood's famous painting, American Gothic, and Picasso's early work, in which he used the elongated effect to present a somewhat off-kilter view of the world. Every page and panel in each set scene that Thummler illustrates does exactly what she would later do so incredibly well in the *Sheets* trilogy: create a world so clearly real and quietly beautiful that it sneaks up and takes your breath away.

Marsden's script develops and preserves the original story here as artfully as she did with *Heidi*. It's a great delight to have someone who knows exactly how to illuminate an older story without bringing in unwanted modern tropes into a storyline that doesn't need them.

Our fourth book is yet another entry from the excellent "Ditko at Charlton" series, this time entitled *The Return of Gorgo* and focused on the year 1961. The book collects all of Ditko's Charlton stories from that year, as the artist begins to transition from working largely for the Derby, Connecticut, publisher to working largely for Marvel. As you might surmise from the title, most of his Charlton work for the year revolved around the giant monsters that the publisher had licensed from some B-movies of the day. Gorgo was a giant lizard, while Konga was a giant ape. Were they minor league film rip-offs of Godzilla and King Kong? Of course! They were also a lot of innocent, jolly fun to read.

There are also one-off stories from a batch of Charlton "mystery" titles, including the b-&-w title *Mad Monsters* and from five four-colored titles. The original "Caption Atom" has eight stories in this book alone. These volumes all look better than the original presentations and most of the reprinted work collecting the Charlton material. Worth your money.

HEY! A HEMBECK EFFECT!

...WHICH IS KINDA LIKE "HEY! A STERANKO EFFECT!", ONLY PLUS KNEE SQUIGGLES, BUT MINUS THE NIFTY NEAL ADAMS IMAGERY. IT'S MY LOVING HOMAGE TO MY ALL-TIME FAVE MARVEL COVER (AN ISSUE WHICH ALSO INCLUDES THE MOST STUNNING DOUBLE-PAGE TITLE SEQUENCE I'VE ***EVER*** SEEN!). CLEARLY, STERANKO HAD QUITE AN EFFECT ON ***ME!***

Dateline: @?#!! by Fred Hembeck

Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. Dateline Hembeck TM & © Fred Hembeck. **COLORS BY: GLENN WHITMORE**

CARMINE INFANTINO:

An Outsider's Perspective

Essay by Jon B. Cooke

My passion for the age of the "Daring and Different" is boundless, and I recognize that a good part of that is due to the fact those years of Carmine Infantino's tenure as editorial director/publisher at DC Comics included my becoming a comics fan. So, sure, nostalgia plays some part, but I'm convinced that period — 1967–1976 — had among the best, most innovative titles to be published by a mainstream comic book company, particularly in the first half of "Rouge Enfant's" reign as boss. That was the period during which he ushered in the era of "Artist as Editor," when brilliant creators such as Joe Kubert, Dick Giordano, Mike Sekowsky, Joe Orlando, and Jack "The King" Kirby, who had previously all been better known as pencilers, were given the editorial reins that resulted in a run of truly magnificent comic books.

The advent of that creatively rich period (importantly, a time when Infantino's mentor, Sheldon Mayer, one of the greatest artist/editors, had his protege's ear) was the result of the man's instincts, which surmised that a visual medium should be guided by visual people.

The results? Kirby's Fourth World, Kubert's Tarzan, Sekowsky's Wonder Woman, Orlando and company's Swamp Thing, the revival of Captain Marvel, Kaluta's The Shadow, Giordano's recruitment of Steve Ditko, Jim Aparo, and Denny O'Neil from Charlton...

Infantino had a spectacular start as the big kahuna, but the realities of commerce — and attending pressure from the new corporate owners — would result in his undoing.

CONTINUED ON PG. 48.

"Nuff Said" Interview with Ken Gale & Ed Menja

MAN OF TWO WORLDS

[Editor's note: *Carmine Infantino was interviewed for the* Nuff Said *radio show with Ken Gale and Ed Menja over a four-hour period (broadcast in portions on Aug. 1, 8, and 15, 2000) combined here into a single, edited transcript. The artist is joined by David Spurlock, his agent and publisher of* The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino *(an autobiography which yours truly designed and did some editorial consulting). Thanks to David Donovan, Ken Gale, and Edina Menja. –* **Ye Ed.**]

Ken Gale: *Anybody who's read comics in the last, say, 50 years, there's a good chance you read some comics by Carmine Infantino, whether you look at the credits or not.* [To Carmine] *I guess most well-known for* The Flash, *in the '60s, right…?*

Carmine Infantino: Pretty much.

Ken: *Boy, we could just spend the next 50 minutes to* [*recite*] *a list of what you've done…* [laughs] *We see* Batman, *from '64 to about… what? '68?*

Carmine: To '68. Then I stopped drawing entirely and became editor, then publisher, then president, and then gone…

Ken: *Let's see… "The Human Torch" for Timely, which became Marvel.*

Carmine: Oh yeah, that's right. I did that many years ago, "The Human Torch."

Ken: Spy Smasher *for Fawcett, the folks who did* Captain Marvel.

Carmine: Yeah, and the very first thing I think I ever did was a thing called "Jack Frost." That was for Timely.

Ken: *And did Frank Giacoia create Jack Frost?*

Carmine: No, no, no. That was a script. Joe Simon was the editor at that time, and Frank and I did it. Only I was the inker and Frank was the penciler,

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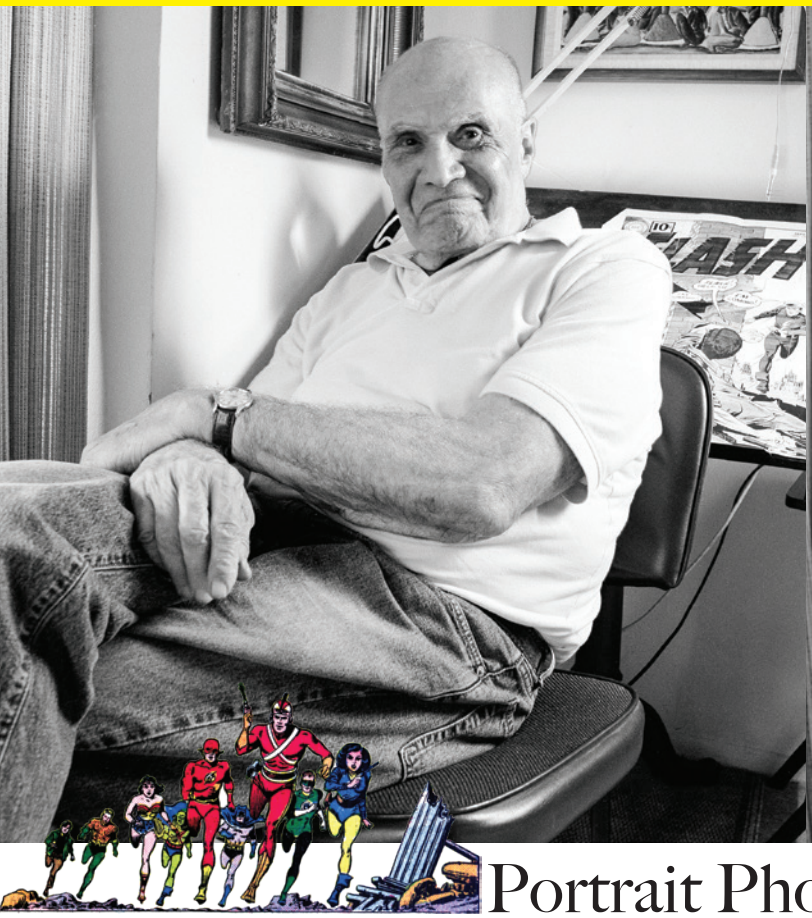


Portrait Photography by Greg Preston

 CONTINUED FROM PG. 46.

I've entitled this "Main Event" section, "Carmine Infantino: Man of Two Worlds," because there was virtually no overlap between his two distinct careers – that of a freelance artist and of a publishing executive – though the transition from in-house cover designer to editorial director was a little of both. His artistry, of course, was remarkable to behold, probably best seen in his work for editor Julius Schwartz, whether *The Flash*, "Adam Strange," "Space Museum," and "Strange Sports Stories," and especially – as Neal Adams would often opine – in those too infrequent occasions when he inked his own work, such as in "The Elongated Man" and "Detective Chimp."

There's been no better artist to draw the adventures of The Flash because no one could denote speed as well as he did, and no one can touch his renditions of the romantic, exotic adventures of Adam Strange and Alanna he so beautifully depicted in the pages of *Mystery in Space*. (And the sensuous inks of Murphy Anderson only made the yarns all the more compelling.)

I think it was Joe Kubert who first told me that Infantino had sold all of his drawing material, including art table and swipe files, after becoming the boss at DC, an act which has eternally baffled me. How could so accomplished and visionary an artist simply leave that all behind, opting to devote himself utterly and completely to his new career as company executive? It was, of course, an indication he believed his status at DC Comics was assured, but he was so bloody good as a comic book artist…! (Of course he did continue designing covers and render the odd promotional piece – as well as co-create "The Human Target" in *Action Comics,* so he wasn't totally out of the game.)

But he was, as were many of his peers, a product of the Great Depression, where poverty prevented Infantino from pursuing a career as an architect and among the few avenues open for a talented, New York City-based artist was the burgeoning realm of comic books. As luck would have it, not only was he among a generation of fabulously talented peers, which included Kubert and Alex Toth, but he blossomed (along with those two mentioned) under the tutelage of one of comics' greatest talents, Sheldon Mayer, then creatively directing Max Gaines' All-American Comics.

While I don't believe I ever asked Infantino directly, I've always mused over the possibility Mayer (who actively consulted with the company during Infantino's managerial years) was an influence on the editorial director's gathering of artists to become editors during that glorious epoch. According to Dick Giordano, it was Mayer who first pegged him, then an editor at Charlton Comics, as a solid candidate to join Infantino's stable – in my humble opinion a brilliant suggestion that yielded truly creative riches.

During the first years of his tenure, Infantino – tasked with staving off Marvel Comics' onslaught to dominate the market – infused the line with wonderfully enthusiastic books. *Bat Lash, Anthro, Stanley and His Monster,* "Firehair," *Witching Hour, Hot Wheels, House of Mystery, Beware the Creeper, Aquaman,* "Deadman," the respective revampings of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, and much more, were glorious achievements, testaments to his initial instinct to put artists in charge of the DC line-up.

I've never actually attempted a precise accounting, but I reckon that "daring and different" period produced more concepts and characters for DC than any other comparable timespan in the company's history. (I'm still of a mind that the the silver screen potential of Kirby's Fourth World hasn't even been scratched as of yet, ever ripe for adapting into the greatest comic book-inspired movie franchise of all time. Just sayin'…) And all of this was under the encouragement and direction of Carmine Infantino.

But, as with any endeavor, there were personality clashes, axes that apparently needed grinding, and debilitating shortcomings plaguing some within the ambitious undertaking, and Infantino, a Brooklyn-born, street-smart Italian bachelor, was certainly responsible for a fair share of tension in the office. And mainstream comics were, after all, a business that demanded profits and DC was not only losing ground to the "House of Ideas," but also suffering a dwindling readership and ever-vanishing newsstands.

Somewhere along the way, something happened during Infantino's time as editorial director/publisher. Books were not given an adequate chance (in my estimation) to find a readership, often cancelled after a few issues, never mind deteriorating relations with some top creators. A sense of paranoia seemed to take hold, no doubt in part because Marvel had became top-seller under his watch. Pressure to generate profits by Steve Ross & Co. upstairs had to be intense.

But, man, in any number of ways, Infantino sure did try. Ever ready to take a reporter's questions, he pushed *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* and the infusion of relevancy in comics. He promoted the return of Captain Marvel, helped midwife the *Superman* movie, and recruited young talent. And he pioneered new formats for comics – palm-sized digests and tabloid-size treasuries, mass-market paperbacks and hardcover collections… But all this valiant effort just wasn't enough.

In a 1989 interview – part of which is printed in this issue – DC editor/writer Robert Kanigher said he saw the writing on the wall early on regarding the publisher's relations with Warner executives. "When Carmine had a conference and he ordered 'sangwiches,' [spelled] S-A-N-G, I knew that, when he met the higher-ups, he had to go," the former DC editor told Steve Whitaker and Tim Bateman. "You can't order 'sangwiches' and be publisher and president of the company." Kanigher later added, "And he came down on Friday and was told to clear out by the end of the day, clear out his desk. That's how much warning he was getting. He never showed his face at DC again. He continued working, but he sent his work in by messenger." Indeed, Infantino never set foot into DC again.

There might be something to the notion that the man, lacking a MBA or country club membership, didn't fit in with corporate culture of '70s' America despite wanting so very hard to remain a part of it. In the late '90s, when I sat in his Manhattan East Side apartment, in a pristine bachelor's pad that seemed frozen in tasteful early '60s modern decor, he expressed immense pride in this achievements as publisher, as well as tremendous resentment at the circumstances of his dismissal and defensiveness regarding some decisions he made. As tough as he projected to be on the surface, I saw a sensitive artist perpetually within, an observation I've never forgotten.

Page 46: *The vignette of Adam Strange, rendered by Carmine Infantino (pencils) and Murphy Anderson (inks) was taken from the classic* Mystery in Space *#82 [Mar. '63].* **Previous page:** The Flash *#170 [May '67] detail is penciled by Infantino and inked by Anderson, who also both rendered the tiny detail from* Mystery in Space *#75 [May '62], which guest-starred the Justice League of America. (For whatever reason, Ye Ed.'s young mind was blown with the cross-over, when it was reprinted in* Strange Adventures *#235 [Apr. '72]. Good stuff!*

 CONTINUED FROM PG. 47.

at the very beginning, and then things reversed somehow along the way. He was a *tremendous* inker, by the way. He was one of my favorite inkers. He did a *lot* of my stuff at DC, most of it, in fact. And then of course, he went over to [Marvel] and he [inked] a lot of Jack Kirby's work and so on and so forth.

David Spurlock: They were both in high school, at that time.

Ken: *Let's see… there was "The Heap" and there's* Air Boy *and there's "Adam Strange," and there's* Spider-Woman…

Carmine: I wrote "The Heap: and I wrote many *Air Boy*s too. I wrote and drew "The Heap," thanks to [Hillman editor] Ed Cronin. He pushed me. He was the one that made me write. He insisted I write, and thankfully I did learn to write under his supervision.

Ken: *Sheldon Mayer, who was, I think, one of the most important people in the entire history of comics…*

Carmine: I think so too. I agree with you.

Ken: *I really have elaborated on that several times… when somebody asked him, of all his accomplishments, which are quite a few, what was his proudest accomplishment, his answer was Carmine Infantino.*

Carmine: I appreciate that. He was a genius. I thought he was genius, and he was my mentor, he really was. There was a story… Can I tell the story…?

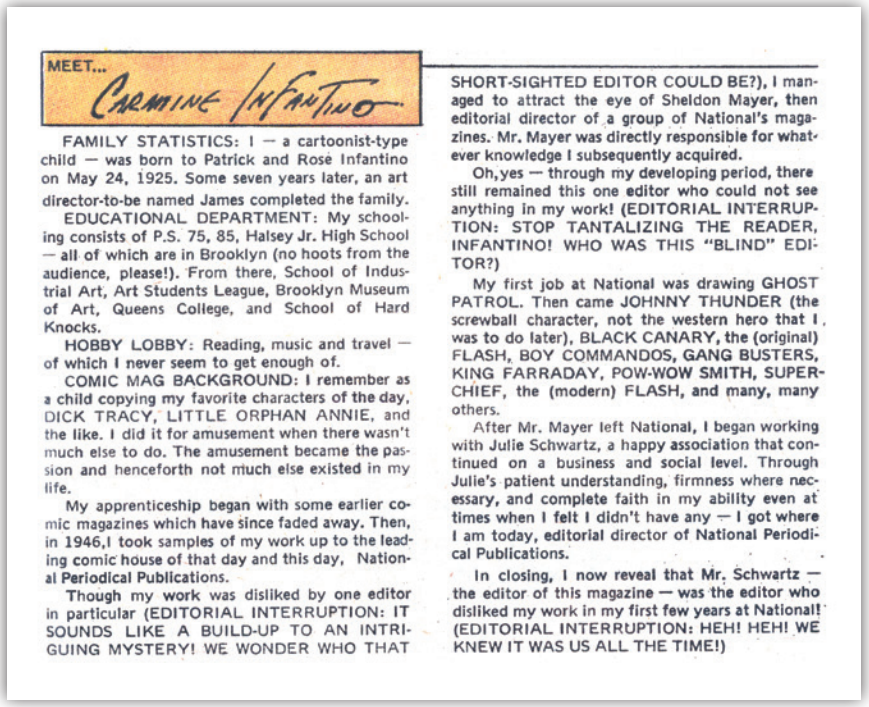
Ken: *Oh, absolutely!*

Carmine: I think it's a beaut. The first time Frank Giacoia and I went up to see him, we went to DC Comics and a guy named Eddie Eisenberg said, "We can't use you here, because we just produce Superman and Batman. Go down the hall. There's All-American Comics there. There's a guy named Sheldon Mayer. Let him look at your work." And we did. We went down there and we were ushered into Shelly's office, and we sat there and he's looking at our work and looking at our work, not saying a word, and all of a sudden the door opens behind us and we hear,"En garde!" And we look around, there's little Irwin Hasen with a T-square in his hand. Shelly drops our artwork, picks up his T-square, and they start dueling around the room, up back and forth, over the desk, over chairs. Shelly stabs him in the heart. They stop, they kiss. Irwin walks out of the room. Shelly goes back to looking at the artwork, and we thought they were a bunch of nuts. And, all of a sudden, that was my introduction to Shelly… and Irwin, actually.

Ken: *And what did he say to you?*

Carmine: He looked at our artwork and he said to us both, he said, "I could hire you now, but I think you should go back to school for a year or so."

Ken: *He also asked you if your fathers were working?*



MEET... CARMINE INFANTINO

FAMILY STATISTICS: I — a cartoonist-type child — was born to Patrick and Rose Infantino on May 24, 1925. Some seven years later, an art director-to-be named James completed the family.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT: My schooling consists of P.S. 75, 85, Halsey Jr. High School — all of which are in Brooklyn (no hoots from the audience, please!). From there, School of Industrial Art, Art Students League, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Queens College, and School of Hard Knocks.

HOBBY LOBBY: Reading, music and travel — of which I never seem to get enough of.

COMIC MAG BACKGROUND: I remember as a child copying my favorite characters of the day, DICK TRACY, LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE, and the like. I did it for amusement when there wasn't much else to do. The amusement became the passion and henceforth not much else existed in my life.

My apprenticeship began with some earlier comic magazines which have since faded away. Then, in 1946,I took samples of my work up to the leading comic house of that day and this day, National Periodical Publications.

Though my work was disliked by one editor in particular (EDITORIAL INTERRUPTION: IT SOUNDS LIKE A BUILD-UP TO AN INTRIGUING MYSTERY! WE WONDER WHO THAT SHORT-SIGHTED EDITOR COULD BE?), I managed to attract the eye of Sheldon Mayer, then editorial director of a group of National's magazines. Mr. Mayer was directly responsible for whatever knowledge I subsequently acquired.

Oh, yes — through my developing period, there still remained this one editor who could not see anything in my work! (EDITORIAL INTERRUPTION: STOP TANTALIZING THE READER, INFANTINO! WHO WAS THIS "BLIND" EDITOR?)

My first job at National was drawing GHOST PATROL. Then came JOHNNY THUNDER (the screwball character, not the western hero that I was to do later), BLACK CANARY, the (original) FLASH, BOY COMMANDOS, GANG BUSTERS, KING FARRADAY, POW-WOW SMITH, SUPER-CHIEF, the (modern) FLASH, and many, many others.

After Mr. Mayer left National, I began working with Julie Schwartz, a happy association that continued on a business and social level. Through Julie's patient understanding, firmness where necessary, and complete faith in my ability even at times when I felt I didn't have any — I got where I am today, editorial director of National Periodical Publications.

In closing, I now reveal that Mr. Schwartz — the editor of this magazine — was the editor who disliked my work in my first few years at National! (EDITORIAL INTERRUPTION: HEH! HEH! WE KNEW IT WAS US ALL THE TIME!)

Carmine: Yes, and I said, my father was working, but it was the Depression. He wasn't making that kind of money. My father was a plumber and, in those days, the work was very sporadic, here and there. So it was difficult.

Ken: *Was this during the war?*

Carmine: It was before the war. And Sheldon said, "I still think you should go back to learn, study. Come back in a year and I promise I'll give you a job." Frank didn't take him up on it. Frank went over to Timely and began working over there, and I took the year off and I came back and, to the day I went up – and he had it marked in his calendar – it was unbelievable. He says, "Yeah, I remember. He says, "Here, it's marked. You got it. You start working for me." And I did.

Ken: *And he said, "If you were to go to another company and take work, they'll give you work as an inker, but you guys are both going to be top-notch pencilers." He said, "Both of you were better than I was at your age."*

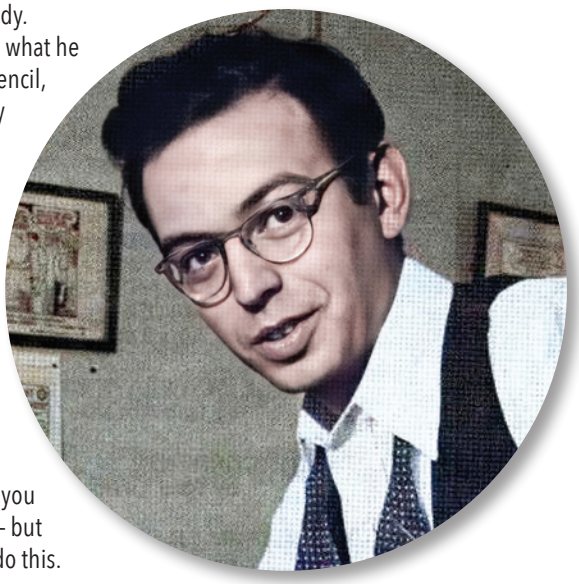
Carmine: You would know more about my life than I do, I think.

Ken: *Well, I mean, I talked to Shelly about you… well, I talked to Shelly about* everybody.

Carmine: That's true. That's what he did say. But he wanted me to pencil, and somehow, Frank did mostly inking then.

Ken: *Well, he said that, if you were to start working right away at your age, at that level of quality, you wouldn't improve to the level that you would if you studied for a year and started penciling.*

Carmine: Yeah, we would've been clones. That's what we have become. So he said, "I'd really prefer it. I know you need the money – I know that – but I'm asking you to go back and do this.



Above: *This biographical sketch was included in* DC Special *#1, a debut number entirely dedicated to the art of Carmine Infantino, then the newly installed editorial director. The uppercase editorial commentary was by Julius Schwartz.* **Opposite page:** *Infantino – who could boast two nicknames, "Rouge Enfant" and "CINFA" – penciled and inked the cover of aforementioned* DC Special *#1 [Dec. '68]. The ish contained a "choice collection" of stories illustrated by the man, each which feature an introductory sentence or two written by the artist.* **Inset left:** *Ken Gale (left) and Ed Menja, hosts of the "Nuff Said" radio show.* **Below:** *The great Sheldon Mayer.*

Above: *Ye Ed. had the honor of designing and adding material to* The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino *['01], and this scan of a 14-year-old Carmine was found in the archives.* **Inset right:** *An early Infantino gig penciled for All-American Comics editor Sheldon Mayer was illustrating the "Johnny Thunder" strip. This splash from* Flash Comics *#86 [Aug. '47] was inked by Joe Giella.* **Below:** Sparkling Stars *#4 [Sept. '44] featured "Hell's Angels," penciled by Infantino and inked by Milt Cohen. Note "Carmilt" on the splash panel.*

Suffer a little bit." And I did.

Ken: *He thought you should finish school.*

Carmine: And my father *especially*, he said I *have* to finish school. In fact, I had gotten an offer from Al Capp, at one point, and I was 16, I believe. He wanted me to come up to Boston and do help working on *Li'l Abner,* and I think it was $400 a week, *enormous* money in those days. And my father said, "No way!" And he needed the money! He said, "No way, you're going to finish school… If you're that good, the job will be there when you graduate. " And he was right.

Ken: [Chuckles] *And that's true. I know Shelly was proud of the fact that you followed his advice and you were even better than he thought you were going to be.*

Carmine: Yeah, he was very happy when I came back, but he started me very slowly. Thank god, in those days, they had 64-page books and they could put you on a back feature where you could grow and learn. And it was I, [Joe] Kubert, Alex [Toth], and Frank, of course. We all went there at the same time and we're all working there. He began giving us all work. I think I began a thing. [*To David*] What was it, Dave, "The Ghost Patrol"? Do you remember?

David: Yeah, I think it was "The Ghost Patrol."

Carmine: Yeah, that was it, that's what I started with. And from there, I believe I did "Johnny Thunder," but not the "Johnny Thunder" that became a Western later.

Ken: *The one with a genie.*

Carmine: *That's* the one. And Black Canary began in that strip, actually. I only know that because, just recently, we were putting out a new book on Black Canary at DC, and I did the prologue for them on that, so I saw all the copies of it. After "The Black Canary," I believe it was the old Flash, the Jay Garrick Flash, and then that I did for a number of years. Lee Elias did it, too, for *quite* a while. Lee was there, and there was a number of other people that did it, I believe.

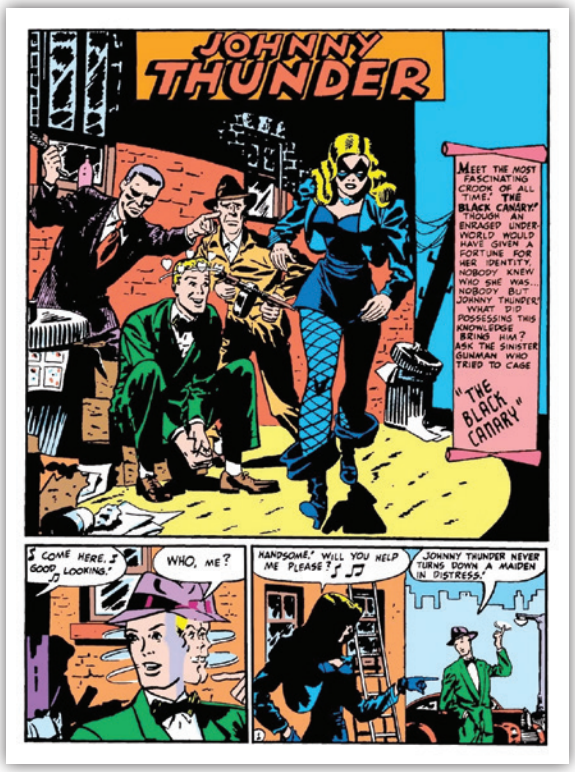
David: You also did some of the Golden Age "Green Lantern."

Carmine: Yes, and some of those, right. And then the comics kind of die. I think that was when the Kefauver [anti-comics movement] began, the problems with all the comics.

Ken: *Well,* Green Lantern *was cancelled in, I think, 1949 and Kefauver started up in the early '50s.*

Carmine: Well, he really started in on [William] Gaines.

Ken: *But Wertham had already gotten started in '48.*



Carmine: Yeah. He started on Gaines though. And there were, of course, the crime comics with Biro and Wood. You remember those? And that kind of could put the kibosh on the whole industry, and they were murdered for a long time. In fact…

Ken: *Were you worried about your career?*

Carmine: Oh, sure! There was a point when DC called us all in and said they were going to have to give page [rate] cuts. It's either that or close down the place. So I believe they took $3 a page off our page rates and were able to continue. We still didn't know how long, because then they tried science fiction, romance. What else did they try every day…?

Ken: *Westerns, war comics…*

Carmine: Right, war comics… And nothing worked, absolutely nothing worked. The sales were there… the only thing holding the company together was *Superman* and *Batman*, at that time. *Superman* especially; that was selling fairly well. And even that, that slipped quite a bit. It would gone from the million down to about a half-a-million.

David: Well, *Superman, Batman,* and *Wonder Woman* were the only super-hero titles that still had their own books.

Carmine: That's true. And then I got a call one day from Julie [Schwartz] to come in. "We're going to try something else." And I went in. I didn't know what the heck it was. Bob Kanigher had written a script called "The Flash," and I said, "Oh, god, we're going to do *this* thing again…?" And he said it wasn't the old Flash. "It's a new Flash that we're creating." And he told me to go home and create the costume from him, but [Kanigher designed] the cover, the first cover of "The Flash" [*Showcase* #4, Oct. '56]. I know the story's gone around that I did. It was not me, it was Bob who laid out the cover and I created the uniform. We did issue one in *Showcase*. Am I right, Dave?

David: But you did the drawing [on the cover]. He came up with the idea to use the film strip [as background motif].

Carmine: But we did issue one, and I think we did issue two [*Showcase* #8, June '57]. Then they stopped it.
David: *Well, it started in #4.*
Ken: Showcase *#4, then* Showcase *#8.*
Carmine: See, you know more than I do about it. So you continue then. [*chuckles*]
Ken: *Then it was #12 [Apr. '58] and #13 [June '58].*
Carmine: Yeah, and then the numbers came in. They were a little shocked with the numbers. They couldn't believe them.
David: They *literally* did not believe the numbers.
Carmine: Yeah, because, I mean, for comic book to sell 60 and 70%, something was wrong. So what they did, they said, "Let's try…"
Ken: *Sales were done at percentages in those days?*
Carmine: Everything was percentages then.
David: They thought it was a mistake. They literally thought the numbers they got back from the distributors were a mistake. And that's why it took 'em a couple issues to follow up.
Carmine: Usually, in those days, what happens is you get your first report in 30 days. That was an estimate you got, and your finals come in about nine months later. So you waited nine months before things happened. But with "The Flash," they saw the first numbers really boom, and they couldn't believe it. They tried a second issue, and it went even further up. Then, what they did, they said the final test, they printed 400,000, I believe, which was an astronomical number. And sure as hell, the numbers climbed again, and they knew they had a thing on their hands. And then it's history…
David: By Carmine's design, the red Flash that everybody knows, the television series, all that: that's Carmine's design.
Ken: *Yeah. Though the TV series [credited] costume design by Dave Stevens, but actually it was your design.*
Carmine: It was my design, yes.
David: In one episode, they had a theater, wasn't it? A theater named Carmine's?
Carmine: Yes, on the show. It was the Infantino Theatre or something. But I didn't think the show would work, and it didn't work.
Ken: *It was the Infantino Hotel.*
Carmine: But what they did, I think that the trouble with that was they made it a *Batman* show, and they shouldn't have. The Flash wasn't the Batman. It was a whole different character.
Ken: *You're listening to Nuff Said, on WBAI FM 99.5, in New York City. Do you remember your first meeting with Julie Schwartz?*
Carmine: Yeah. [*chuckles*] It wasn't very pleasant. [*laughter*] When Shelly hired me, he took me in to Schwartz, and he said, "You'll be working with…" No, Shelly was leaving the company, actually. I didn't deal with Julie at the beginning. I only dealt with Shelly. Shelly would get the scripts, he'd sit with me, and he'd tell me what he wanted and how he wanted it, and I'd go home. But I would see Julie and Bob in the other office sitting there writing away constantly. So then, when suddenly Shelly left (which was like cutting off our arms; he was our lifeblood), he said we had to deal with Schwartz and Kanigher. And he took me and introduced me to Schwartz and said, "Julie, you're going to be working with this guy from now on." He says, "That's nice." That was it, that was the most I got out of Schwartz in 10 years.
Ken: *Well, what's interesting is I reread a lot of things written about you, and a constant theme is that Julius Schwartz didn't like your art in those days.*
Carmine: He didn't like my *inking*. He *definitely* did not like the inking. He didn't want me to do much inking.
Ken: *What did he not like about your inking?*
Carmine: He said it was too scratchy. They had a house style. It was a very slick, smooth look. But, every once in a while, they'd pacify me. They'd let me do a story here and there, like "Detective Chimp" or "The Elongated Man." What else, Dave…? Do you remember?
David: "The Space Museum"…
Carmine: "The Space Museum," but that's all. Other than that, no way. He would never let me touch a main feature.
David: The interesting thing is, in his new book, we've got quotes from Neal Adams, from Bill Sienkiewicz, all

Above: *J. David Spurlock, photographed in 2015 at the East Coast Comicon.* **Below:** Showcase *#4 [Oct. '56]. Penciled by Infantino and inked by Joe Kubert.*

Above: *Between issues #104 and #161,* Strange Adventures *featured "Space Museum" stories, almost entirely drawn by Infantino for the 20-episode run. SA #106 splash (Bernie Sachs, inks).* **Inset right:** *As mentioned, your humble editor was wild about "The Planet That Came to a Standstill" yarn originally appearing in* Mystery in Space *#75 [May '62]. Infantino pencils by and Murphy Anderson inks.*

Below: *That same art team drew this romantic panel of Adam and Alanna from* MIS *#91 [May '64].*

these people raving about Carmine's inking, saying that no one else should have inked it.

Ken: *Well, what does an editor know, anyway?* [laughs]

Carmine: But he really didn't know. He didn't care about it. He looked at the final product. Julie was a *writer's* editor, he wasn't an artist's editor. And when I took over the company… Well, that's a little later on…

Ken: *Well, you brought a lot of artists in…*

Carmine: Well, that was the key. I kept Julie, Murray [Boltinoff], then I brought Joe Orlando, Joe Kubert, and Dick Giordano. I wanted a mix of artists. I wanted artists as editors.

Ken: *Well, Dick Giordano had already been an editor at Charlton.*

Carmine: Yeah. Well, he was more a production man, I think, because Shelly… When I used to go over to Shelly once in a while and call him, get advice, and he'd say to me, "Carmine, Dick is a production man; he is not an editor. You're making a mistake." But I said, "Shelly, he's got some key people I want over here. That was Denny O'Neill, Steve Skeates. What are those artists…?

David: Steve Ditko, Jim Aparo…

Carmine: Yeah. And I want to bring some new blood in the company. So I wanted the whole package. And when I called Dick, I said, "I want you, but I want the whole package. I want the group with you."* And he brought them along. That was an important facet for me.

Ken: *Well, things changed a* lot *in those days…*

Carmine: Oh, it was *radical*. We made some radical changes…

Ken: *Because nobody new had come into comics for years [beforehand]…*

Carmine: Right. We had our doors wide open. But the nice part, we got some great talent. Bernie Wrightson came in, Kaluta came in, all kinds of young writers…

David: Howard Chaykin came in…

Carmine: It was a world of people coming in. And what I had done, I opened a room up at DC's offices just for the artists and writers, the young ones. They could use it anytime they wanted. They could hang out there, talk, and look at artwork. I would keep away from that room because the minute I went in, it was a problem. I suddenly was management.

*In an interview with me for *Comic Book Artist* #1, Giordano said, at the suggestion of Mayer (who had "bird-dogged" him), it was Donenfeld who hired him, not Infantino, and there was no "package deal," but rather his own decision, D.G. said, to recruit his Charlton freelancers.

Ken: [Strident] *"The boss came in!"*

Carmine: Yeah, that's right.

Ken: *You had that room when you were a kid at DC, right?*

Carmine: That's right! So I figured same for them and it worked! They'd go there, they'd hang out, they'd have coffee there, and sometimes [production manager Sol] Harrison would come over and complain like hell, "They're dirtying up the room! What are they doing here?" I tell 'im, "Mind your business, leave 'em…"

David: "These long-haired kids!"

Carmine: Yeah, "long-haired kids."

Ken: *That's right! They're all long-haired kids, every one of them!*

David: Well, we're talking '68, '69, around…

Carmine: I said, "Sol, mind your business, leave 'em alone." And it paid off! Because they brought in more kids and people started… and talk was going on, and kids were growing, and I think it helped the company tremendously.

Ken: *But, also, you were losing a lot of the veterans, at the same time.*

Carmine: We didn't lose many. Irv Novick was still with me. Kubert, of course…

Ken: *Actually, Irv Novick had just kind of joined…*

Carmine: No, no. Irv was there a while. He was working with Bob Kanigher for quite a while. But Bob had him on just war stories, and I put him on Batman. I want him on Batman. Of course, Neal [Adams] was working in the bullpen, doing *Jerry Lewis* at the time… And *that* was a big joke! We took him off that immediately and put him on *Batman* and you know the history of that one. And of course, my favorite: Nick Cardy. Nick was there. And the story…

Ken: *Go ahead! Tell the story.*

Carmine: I became editor, and on that very day, Nicky comes into me and says, "Carmine, congratulations. Good-

bye." I said, "What the hell did I do? What's wrong?" He says, "That guy's been picking on me for years" – Harrison, he meant – "He says, 'There's not enough fishes in *Aquaman*. There's not enough fishes here, not enough fishes there…" He was doing *Aquaman* at the time. I says, "Well, Nicky, I *just* got here. Give me a chance. If it doesn't work out, then leave." So he says, "All right, I'll hang around awhile." And, of course, you know the history of him: *Bat Lash*, the great covers… To me, that's genius. That man is sheer genius.

David: Carmine casually says he became editor. He became editorial *director*, which is his DC's version of editor-in-chief, the same position that Stan had over a Marvel.

Carmine: And publisher.

Ken: *They kept changing the title or something. I mean, did they change the title or did they change your job?*

Carmine: No, they just changed the title. Because I kept doing the same job. I did that, and I never let go, I always kept creating the covers. I wouldn't let go of [designing] the covers. I insisted on that.

David: When he got a promotion, he never gave up the previous position. He went from art director to editorial director, but he didn't give up art director. He went from editorial director to publisher, but he didn't give up editorial director or art director…

Carmine: Then president.

David: And then he went to president. He didn't give up any of the other [jobs].

Carmine: But, by then, I was working on it from 7:00 in the morning to midnight, 1:00, the next morning.

Ken: *Now, I read a quote from you that you said you "dreaded" covers.*

Carmine: I "dreaded" covers…?

Ken: *Yes, you "dreaded" covers. You said that in one of your interviews in* Amazing World of DC Comics. *You said you dreaded covers; you liked doing the insides better. You dreaded the covers, and then, here you are, controlling and doing every cover at DC.*

Carmine: Yeah, but see the cover with the key. I knew that. That was the important part of the book. You sucked them in with the cover, and you held them with the insides. So I thought it was that important a facet, I had to get involved, whether I liked it or not, but I had great talent to work with. I had guys like Kubert, Neal [Adams], Orlando, Nick, all great people. How could you go wrong with people like that?

Ken: *Neal Adams referred to himself, he said, "I'm not an artist, I'm a storyteller."*

Carmine: I don't think he is a storyteller; I think he's an artist. His storytelling wasn't that good. He "wrote" – *Hah!* I don't care [*laughter*] – He wrote some "Deadman." We'd fight all the time! And I think the "Deadman" he wrote, died and that killed the book, frankly. I wrote three of them. Arnold Drake began the book. He created the book. Arnold did two issues. I plotted three of them. I used a fellow named Jack Miller, and I'd give him the plot. He'd write it up and do it, and then I couldn't because I was writing *Wonder Woman, Bat Lash,* and a couple other things at the same time. I just couldn't keep going that way – and doing covers. So Neal says, "Give me a shot at this." I said, "Okay," and I did. And, within two or three issues, it died. Now he alleges it was because of the distributors stealing books, and etc., etc. I don't buy that theory. I think it's his storytelling…

David: One of the great stories is, when they were going to cancel *Batman*, they called you and Julie in.

Carmine: Yeah, that's an interesting story… I got a call from Julie one day. I was working at home. We're doing *The Flash.* It was doing well, and I just come back from overseas and I was doing "Adam Strange," too, and I got a call. I believe it was on a Wednesday, and Schwartz says, "Come in today." I said, "Julie, I'm working." I usually come in once a week or once every two weeks. He says, "No, [DC editorial director] Irwin Donenfeld wants to see you today." This is about 10:00 in the morning. "Well, can't wait until –"

Ken: *This was about what year?*

David: 'Sixty-four.

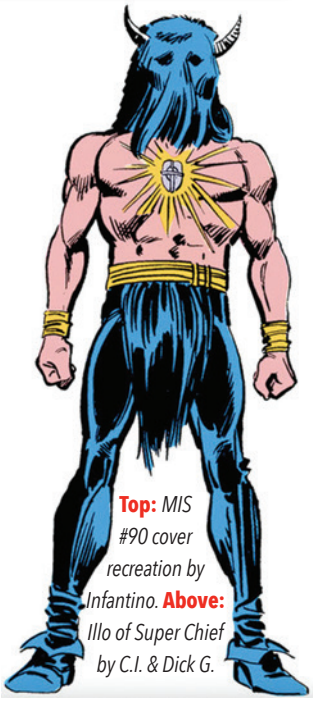
Carmine: Thanks, Dave. I don't remember that at all.

Ken: *That's why Dave is here!*

David: *This is before the* Batman *TV show.*

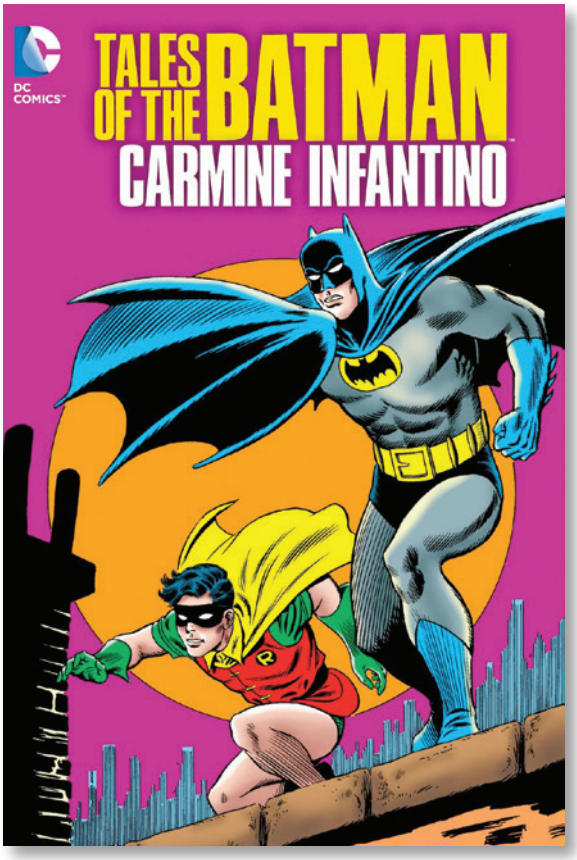
Ed Menja: And you're listening to "Nuff Said," on WBAI, New York, 99.5 FM…

Carmine: I said, "Well, can I wait until the end of the



Top: *MIS #90 cover recreation by Infantino.* **Above:** *Illo of Super Chief by C.I. & Dick G.*

Mystery in Space, Super Chief TM & © DC Comics. (Latter image from *Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe* #22 [Dec. '86].



Above: *Penciler Infantino and inker Murphy Anderson's pinup of the Dynamic Duo was used for* The Tales of the Batman *['14] volume entirely dedicated to the Batman stories drawn by CINFA.* **Inset right:** *Infantino's* Batman *#194 [Aug. '67] cover took liberties with the title's logo! Inks by Anderson.*

Below: *Sketch by C.I. of his co-creation.*

week?" He says, "Nope. Today, he wants to see you." So I came in and we both went in Irwin's office and he said, "The Batman [titles are] dying. I give you and Julie six months to turn it around. If you don't do it, it's over. The book is dead." And we started and I took the character… Now, I did the covers, *Detective Comics* and *Batman*. [Bob] Kane was still doing the *Batman* insides. He wasn't doing [the art], [Sheldon] Moldoff was doing this stuff for him, you know that. And I did the *Detective Comics,* but the *Detective Comics* seemed to spurt ahead like crazy. And the *Batman* was moving up, too. There was no question about it. I think we had bringing it up from about a 30% sale to, if I'm not mistaken, 45, 46%. But the real shot was when the thing hit TV, and then the thing went crazy. So we were only in the beginning of something. We didn't create the real hullabaloo. But that's the story about that.

Ken: *Now, were you the one who put the circle around* [*the chest bat symbol on Batman's costume*]*?*

Carmine: That was Julie's idea, not mine. I heard

David: It was Julie's idea, but Carmine did it. But Carmine changed the cowl a bit.

Ken: *Well,* every *artist changed the cowl.* Nobody *left that cowl alone!*

Carmine: They sharpened up the ears and the nose.

David: He redesigned the Batmobile. It was *his* version of the Batmobile that they used as the model for the TV show.

Carmine: That's true. That's true.

David: And then they called Julie and said, "We need a new female character for the TV show." Because they couldn't have… Catwoman was so popular, but they couldn't have her in every episode. And so Julie calls Carmine and they came up with Batgirl.

Carmine: Spurlock knows more about me than I do, frankly.

Ken: *Well, yeah, that's why we're here. For you, it was all those years ago. For us, it's sort of more recent, in a strange sort of way. Well, of all the different things you did, what was your favorite genre to draw?*

Carmine: "Detective Chimp." That was my favorite. We discussed that. I think [writer] John was an important part of that thing. That was the reason. John was a wonderful writer – I think a *great* writer – and, as I told you, he *bled* over every word, but the quality showed, and he was terrific in that. Didn't he do "Space Museum," too? He'd write some of those. I thought so. And "Elongated Man."

David: Man. Julie's the ultimate decision on that. He's still got logs of who wrote and who drew everything.

Carmine: But didn't he do Elongated Man too?

Ken: *John Broome wrote "Elongated Man" in* The Flash*, but Gardner Fox wrote him in* Detective Comics*.*

Carmine: So you know more about him than I did. But John's scripts were beautiful, very simple and right to the point. Julie rarely touched his writing, but with Gardner Fox, he did heavy editing, very heavy editing, but they had some kind of relationship going. It worked for many years. Julie was a tough editor, a *very* tough editor. I told you I had worked with him for, I believe, at that point, almost 20 years. And one day I went in with a story I was really proud of, I worked my heart out on it. I said, "What do you think? Do you like it?" [*chuckles*] He looked at me and said, "Did you get paid?" "Yeah." He said, "Well, that's enough." And I never asked him again.

Ken: *Julie Schwartz is never one to compliment somebody to their face. Behind their back… Oh, boy, would he compliment people, but never to their face.*

Carmine: But he was very fair to work with. *Very* fair. I enjoyed it.

Ken: *What makes a good editor?*

Carmine: A good story… Creating good visuals for you. A guy who can do that… And the script that works…

Ken: *What's the editor's role in that?*

Carmine: Oh, he sits with the writer and he develops… Well, we worked a very unusual fashion. I would create the covers first, all the *Flash* covers, and he creates stories around them, and we found it worked very easily that way. Instead of the usual way, which was do a story and then try to pull a cover out of it somehow. So he and I tried to reverse. I'd create a group of covers, *Flash Batman,* "Adam

Strange," and then he'd create stories around 'em, and it worked beautifully.

Ken: *Well, Julie came from science fiction* [*pulps*]*, and they did 'em that way. They would get a cover, they would buy artwork, and then…*

Carmine: This I do know: we did it that way, he and I worked that way. I know the other editors didn't work that way. I know Boltinoff didn't work that way.

David: Julie never did that at DC until he did it with Carmine, because they found out that anytime Carmine would do a cover, the book would sell better. So Julie started this idea of Carmine coming up with cover ideas and then building the story, the inside story, around Carmine's idea.

Ken: *Well, I guess most of… especially the early '40s, the covers and inside stories never had anything to do with each other…*

Carmine: No relationship whatsoever…

Ken: *Absolutely nothing.*

Carmine: And they were dull, you remember? They're very dull.

Ken: *But they were usually poses.*

Carmine: Poses, yeah. They're very much like the pulps. Remember how the pulps were? They put character with a heroic pose on it and that'd be it.

Ken: *Well,* [*comics were the*] *immediate descendant from the pulps, so I guess it makes sense.*

Carmine: I tried using cliffhangers to arrest the eye and it worked. We always did well with the covers. That's how I got the job as art director, because of my covers. And then went from there.

Ken: *Now, who's the one who decided to make you the art director?*

Carmine: It was Irwin Donenfeld. Donenfeld spoke to [DC owner Jack] Liebowitz. What happened was…

David: The two of them were the owners of DC, Donenfeld and Liebowitz.*

Carmine: I asked for a raise, because that was during the Batman craze. I believe I was getting $18,000 a year. I was the top man up there and [*chuckles*] I asked for some more money. They said, "No, we can't afford it." They were making tons of money.

David: He was doing the advertising art, and they were paying him comic book rates for all the advertising art.

Carmine: You remember all those great posters? I did those for [regular] page rates. And so I said, "To hell with that," and I called Stan [Lee] up. Stan and I were friends for years. We've been friends. I said, "Stan, can you make me an offer?" He said, "Absolutely. I'll give you $5,000 more right away." So I said, "I think I'll go." And I told Donenfeld, "I'm going."

David: This was about '66.

Carmine: Yeah, and I went home. I don't think I finished the story even. Schwartz and… who's the inker?… [The inker] had to come up and pick up the story. I didn't want to do it, even finish the story from him. I'm so angry with him.

* When the company went public in 1961, Irwin's father, Harry, became majority shareholder, though he became incapacitated and subsequently died in 1965, leaving Liebowitz as majority shareholder. That said, it is inaccurate to call Irwin a co-owner before his 1968 ouster by the incoming corporate regime.

And I got a call then from Liebowitz. I didn't know Irwin had spoken to him. And he called me up and he said, "I want to have lunch with you before you go." Because I had left the office. So I went and met him for lunch and a lot of small talk went on and he says, "Irwin tells me he needs an art director. Do you want the job?" [*chuckles*] I said, "Not particularly." He says, "The company's in big trouble here." DC was getting killed by Marvel at the time…

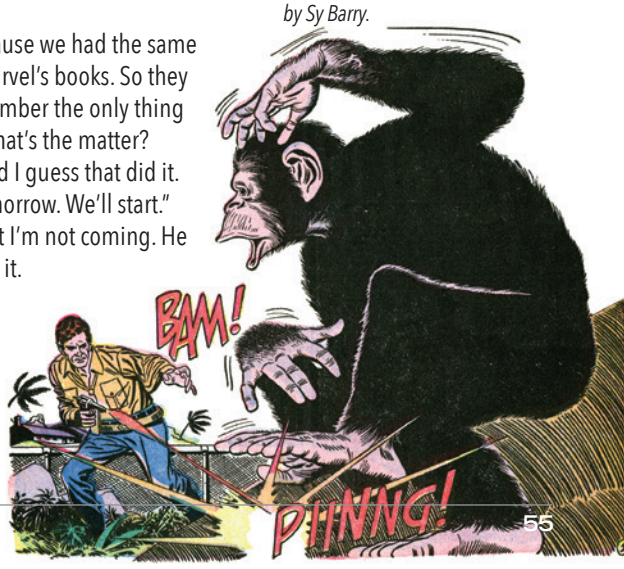
David: With the exception of Batman. Batman was the top-selling book. But other than that, this would be late '66. Other than that, the Marvel books were really coming on strong.

Carmine: And we knew because we had the same distributor that was handling Marvel's books. So they were getting creamed. So I remember the only thing I remember him saying was, "What's the matter? You're afraid of a challenge?" And I guess that did it. [*Kan laughs*] I said, "I'll be in tomorrow. We'll start." So I called Stan and told him that I'm not coming. He said he understood and that was it.

David: But one of his main duties when they made him art director was basically to design *all* the covers. About 85–90%.

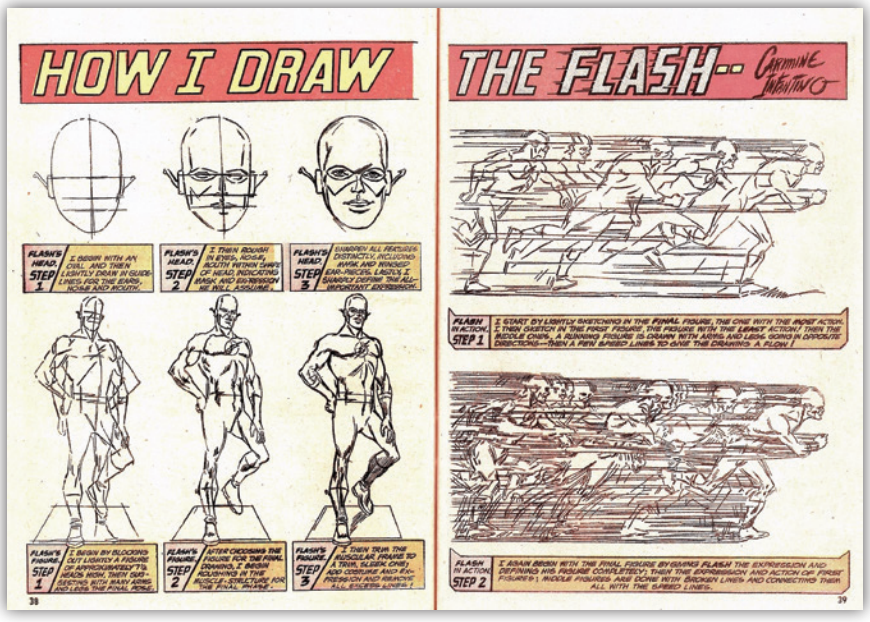
Carmine: Irwin said, "You're going to do all the

This page: *Many fans of the artist prefer Infantino's inks over his own pencils to that of other inkers, particularly on his two features "Elongated Man" and "Detective Chimp." That said, neither of these illos feature his own inks! Above is from* Who's Who in the DC Universe *#7 [Feb. '91], inks by Bart Sears. Below is a detail from* Rex the Wonder Dog *#4 [Aug. '52], inks by Sy Barry.*



Above: *Akin to the* Batman *cover on previous spread, Infantino sometimes toyed with cover design by temporarily modifying its logo, such as on this* Flash *#174 [Nov. '67] cover. Inks by Anderson.*

Below: *As a bonus for* The Flash Annual *#1 [Summer '63], Infantino provided this double-page spread, titled "How I Draw the Flash," which revealed the artist's clever way of depicting the Scarlet Speedster's super-fast motion.*



covers from hereon out. You're going to start as [designing] every cover going to be done.

Ken: *But that's, what I think, is good and bad, because that means every cover has the vision of one person.*

Carmine: But it worked.

Ken: *So, I mean, if it's a talented person, you get a version of talent, but at the same time, it is going to give a sameness to the line, isn't it?*

Carmine: Not really. If you look at them, we didn't have a sameness…

Ken: *Well, how do you do that? How do you keep…*

Carmine: You try to think differently on each one for each character.

David: He was doing concepts and layouts, whereas they would have Joe Kubert do the finished art, or we would have Neal Adams do finished art or Nick Cardy. But he was coming up with the concepts that he thought would best sell the books.

Ken: *How do you make yourself think differently?*

Carmine: How do you make yourself think differently? I dunno how I did it. [*chuckles*] I'd worry every day I came in… An editor would come in with, who needed a cover for a book. And more often than not, I would do them before the things were written. So I designed three or four covers for Julie…

Ken: *Even for Mort Weisinger's books, the Superman series?*

Carmine: No, I had trouble with Mort because he was very close with Liebowitz, at the time, and Mort had to go his own way. He wouldn't have any part of it. So I let him go. I couldn't have cared less. And then, of course, when Liebowitz left the company, Mort threatened to quit. And then he said to me, "Well, I think I changed my mind." I said, "Too late. It's over. You're gone." And I replaced him with Julie and Murray.

David: You told me this story where, if Mort wanted an artist, that artist now became *Mort's* artist and the other editors didn't get him. Well, Mort wanted Carmine because he found that Carmine's covers were selling better than the other artists. And then Carmine says, "I don't have time for your books." And so then he went to Donenfeld, who told him the same thing: "He's only got two hands."

Carmine: It was a big problem. But it was all right. He was a good editor, by the way. He kept Superman [going]. He did some wonderful stories. Of course, I've heard stories how he got some of those scripts, but that's a whole different ballgame. [*chuckles*]

Ken: *Yeah, that's a long story that we've covered on other shows. You drew on the back of the page to loosen up?*

Carmine: That's an old tale… David, in the book, he's got a couple of those drawings. What I would do every morning before I actually did the page, I turn it over and just kind of draw… I think [on] three or four of the pages, I would do it. So I did two pages a day, and I would do it on the first page. I scribbled away on the back. That's like a ballplayer warming up. It's pretty much the same thing. So the one page every day. I usually did that, but you'll find most of my stories had artwork always all over the backs. But it was my way of warming up.

Ken: *What would you do to warm up?*

Carmine: Anything. Any kind of thing I could think of. I'd do figures. I'd do cars, buildings, women, nude women, nude men, living room scenes, cars…

David: Haven't seen any nude men on the back of his page. [*laughter*]

Ken: *You've been outed!*

Carmine: I've been outed!…

Ken: *Now, what were the different writers like you worked with? I mean, if you were handed a script, if you didn't know who wrote it, could you tell?*

Carmine: Yeah. I could tell Gardner, because he was very heavily edited.

Ken: *Was a lot of blue pencil on it…?*

Carmine: Well, Julie worked with a regular pencil. He would scribble out whatever Gardner wrote and write it in pencil. Sometimes very difficult to understand, his writing, very tiny. John's stuff would be very lightly edited.

Ken: *How about Kanigher?*

Carmine: He didn't fool with Kanigher's work, either. No, Kanigher, he left alone, too. But they didn't work well together, apparently. Of course, Kanigher did the first "Flash." Did he do anymore?

Ken: *He did one story in each* Showcase *"Flash." He did four "Flash" stories. John Broome did the other stories.*

Carmine: He did four of them?

David: And then Broome did when he got to his own series, Bob,

Ken: *Because Bob Kanigher had written the Golden Age*

Flash, so it was pretty natural… Well, both Bob and John had written it, so it was natural for them to do the Silver Age Flash.

Carmine: But then, for some reason, I asked him one day why he stopped and he said Julie just stopped using him, period. Whatever reason, I don't know.

David: Well, working on the book, we had to nail down who created the new Flash. And basically, between talking to Julie, Kanigher, and Carmine, it's all three of them. Those three guys created The Flash as we know him in the red costume.

Carmine: But nobody knew it was an instant hit. There was no such thing. We couldn't tell until, I think, the third or fourth issue that the thing worked.

Ken: *Yeah. Well, we can sit here in the year 2000…*

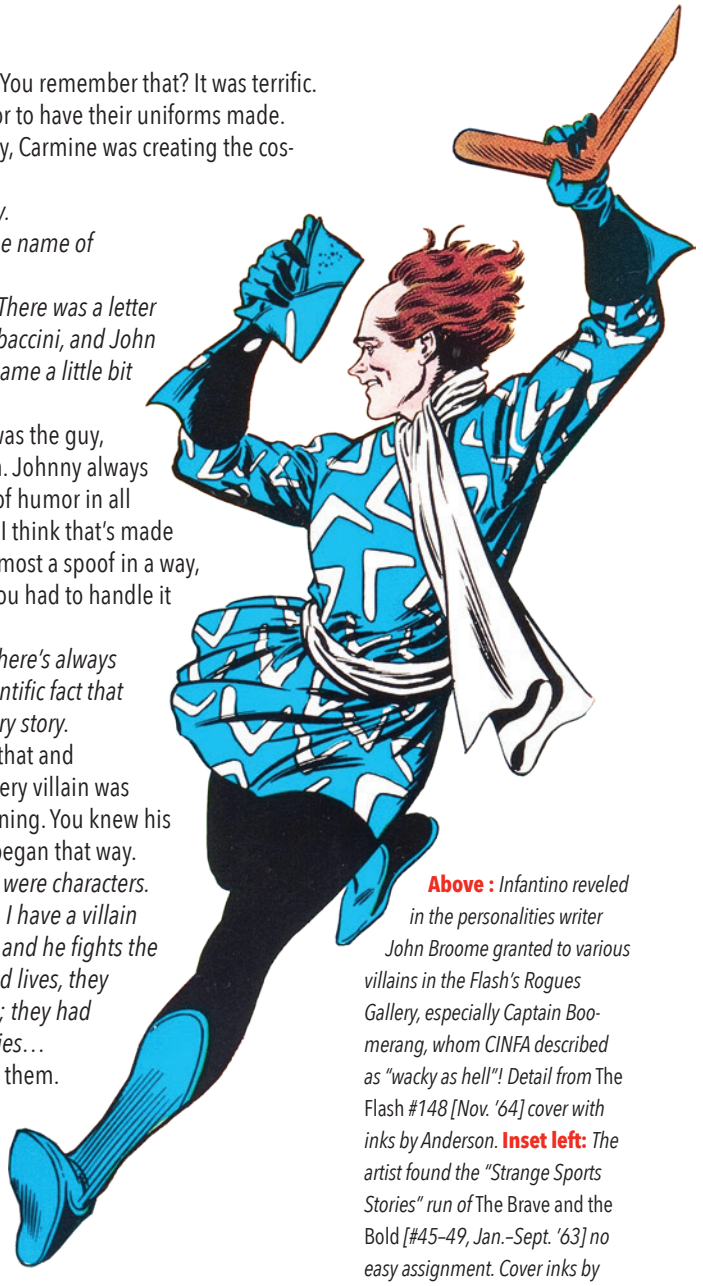
Ed: *You didn't know you were kicking off an entire age of comics!*

Ken: *Yeah! And that's the whole point: we sit here in year 2000 and say* Showcase *#4 was the first comic book of the Silver Age. But how could you know in 1956 that you were beginning a new age?*

Carmine: It was just another script, as far as I was concerned, another job. And I was bringing it in, delivering it, and that's all it was to me. I didn't get excited over it. I didn't think we hit something great there. It was just another script, period.

Ken: *I think also another reason that John Broome got almost every* Flash *story for the first several years, one is that Julie said he was the best writer he had. Another is the array of villains that John created.*

Carmine: They were beautiful characters, every one. The one was terrific, because one day Julie said to me very simply, he says, who's making the costumes for those guys? I thought, I don't know. And then John went and created a tailor for all the villains. You remember that? It was terrific. They'd all go to this tailor to have their uniforms made.



Above : *Infantino reveled in the personalities writer John Broome granted to various villains in the Flash's Rogues Gallery, especially Captain Boomerang, whom CINFA described as "wacky as hell"! Detail from* The Flash *#148 [Nov. '64] cover with inks by Anderson.* **Inset left:** *The artist found the "Strange Sports Stories" run of* The Brave and the Bold *[#45–49, Jan.–Sept. '63] no easy assignment. Cover inks by Anderson.* **Below:** *He also well recalled villains tailor Paul Gambi. This panel, inked by Joe Giella, is from* The Flash *#141 [Dec. '63].*

Carmine: You knew them. You met them. My favorite, of course, was Boomerang. He was a wacky one, wacky as hell. I think he's falling in love all the time and…

Ken: *Talking to himself and pissing off the other crooks.*

Carmine: Right. I love that one.

Ed: *Well, I think, too, graphically, the way you did the speed of The Flash, the way you interpreted those things was very, very interesting.*

Carmine: It was a novel approach, but you *had* to do that. You had to create speed. Years ago, when we did the old Flash, we just [drew] him with a lot of speed lines, and it was years later…

Ken: *All the speed characters basically were one figure and a bunch of speed lines. And you were really sort of introduced after images, which John then used in the stories.*

Carmine: Yes, John picked up on it right away and then it worked out beautifully. And there was a book we did much later on, "Strange Sports Stories." Did you remember that one? That was one of the toughest books I ever done.

Ken: *Why "tough"?*

Carmine: Sports are vicious. Also, I used the gimmick in there…

Ken: *Oh, wait. What is so difficult about drawing sports?*

Carmine: Because the action of a sport… a baseball

This page: *Clockwise from above, Deadman, detail from* Strange Adventures *#205 [Oct. '67] cover. Inks by George Roussos. Example of Infantino's clever caption embellishments, this from* Mystery in Space *#81 [Feb. '63]. Inks by Anderson. Animal Man, detail from* SA *#190 [July '66] cover. Inks by Anderson. Caricature of Infantino as comic book maven by his goombah, Joe Orlando.*

player taking a swing at a ball… take a look at them on the TV, how the body swings completely around while the legs are stable. Or a football player throwing a ball, getting hit with a blocker… I used silhouettes to perpetuate an action.

Ken: *Is it because you have to use real-life anatomy rather than comic book anatomy?*

Carmine: No, I still use comic book anatomy. But it's how you use the action. That's what's important about it. You got to be careful with it.

Ken: *So a football player throwing a ball doesn't have the same action as a super-hero throwing a punch?*

Carmine: Completely different. Because it *had* to be more realistic. But the only difference would be, in the caption, I'd have his arm back in the silhouette than in the actual drawing, [which depicted] the arm was forward, and you see the ball moving, so you got a feeling of flow, and that was the important thing to get the point [across].

Ken: *That's one thing: you messed with the captions. Most artists, the lettering of the caption is separate from everything, it is just a block. Whereas, in* The Flash, *you had little hands sticking out, you had little arrows sticking out, you had…*

Carmine: Everything sticking out!

Ken: *You had silhouettes inside the caption. You always messing around with the captions!*

Carmine: But there was a reason for it. When I was a kid, I remember opening a comic book and that big block of copy, I'd never read. I don't think *anybody* ever read it. [*Ken laughs*] So I took upon myself as, "What if I broke it down, the small little section, with the hands? You'd read it then." And people read them, so it worked…

Ken: *Well, also because John* [*Broome*] *wasn't heavy on captions.*

Carmine: No, no, not at all.

Ken: *Gardner Fox, however…*

Carmine: Huge, huge. And even there, Julie would cut it *way* down and there'd still be a ton of words to use. But he was good. I liked him. I liked his work. It was a little colder than John's…

Ken: *Well, Gardner Fox wrote all those "Adam Strange" stories that you're also famous for.*

Carmine: But I didn't create that character. Mike Sekowsky did. I think I was in Korea at the time when he did that. But he was told that, when I came back, I was getting the book and, when I got back, Julie said, "You're doing it." And I said, "What's happened to Mike?" He said, "Well, he knew." I said, "Lemme talk to Mike first before I take it on." And Mike said, "Oh, yeah, no, I knew right away it was yours. I was just beginning the thing." So then I took it. That was fun.

Ken: *Was it yours because they figured your style fit the character best?*

Carmine: It was Julie's idea. Why he wanted me on the thing, I'll never know, but I guess he felt I was the best one for it. And I did most of his main [titles]…

Ken: *Of course, he put Mike on* Justice League. *So Mike had plenty of work.*

Carmine: Yeah, he was terrific on *Justice League*. And I think Mike enjoyed that more. He was very fast, by the way. He was a speed demon. I was two pages a day at the most. I never did more than that, penciling wise.

Ken: *Well, nowadays,* that's *a speed demon. I mean,* nobody *does two pages a day now.*

Carmine: My day started at 10:00 in the morning and would end then at 2:00 in the morning. So that's a [long] day.

Ken: *Is it true you would really rip up pages and redo them?*

Carmine: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

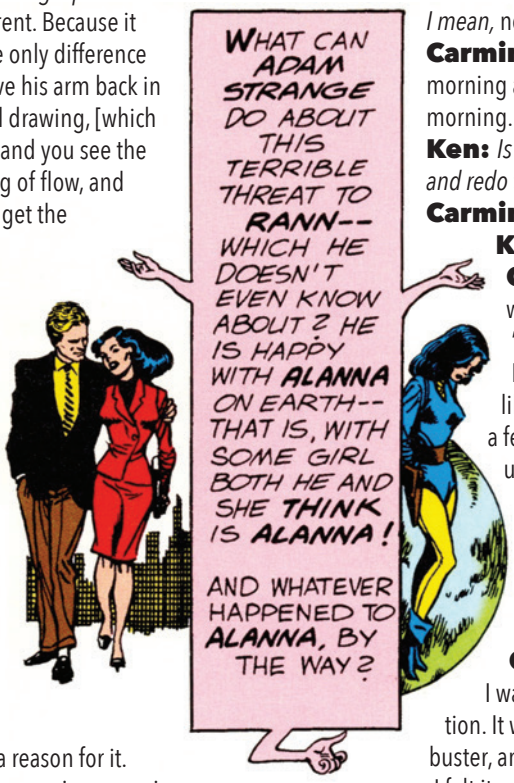
Ken: *How often did that happen?*

Carmine: Once I did a whole… what was it? *Flash* story…? No, a "Batman" story in *Detective Comics*. I did about five pages. I just didn't like the way it was going. I didn't get a feel for it and I stopped, I tore them up, and I did the whole thing all over again, but it was to my benefit. I wasn't happy; I just wasn't happy with it.

Ken: *With the storytelling, with your anatomy…?*

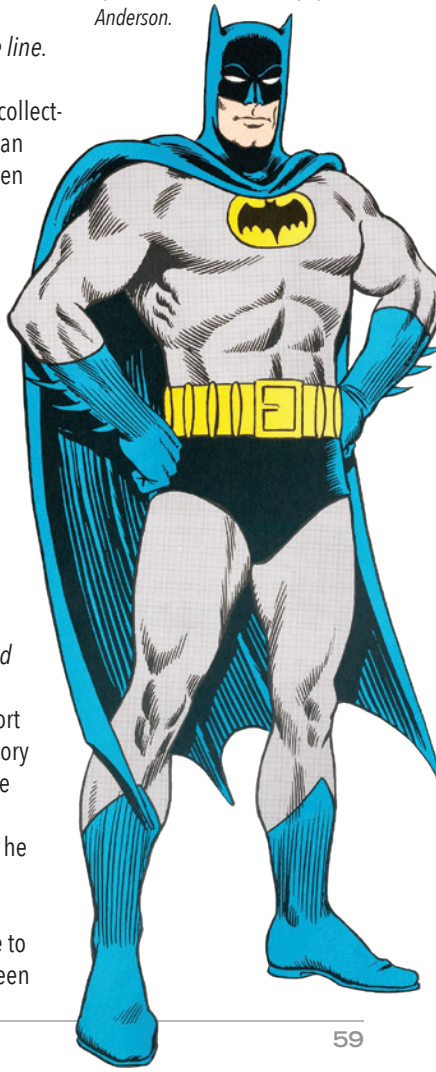
Carmine: With my storytelling. I wasn't getting across the characterization. It was a character called the Blockbuster, and I just wasn't getting the character across. I felt it wasn't big enough or strong enough or menacing enough. And I figured, "Lemme go back and redo it." In fact, the cover, we did that cover where he's breaking the lettering. You remember that?… They gave a hard time with that cover. You know they used to strip the top [portion of covers]. [The logo] wasn't at the top, so there was nothing to strip there. So we had a hard time from them, but they took it and went by. [Irwin] Donenfeld called me in and said, "What the hell are we going to do with this thing now?" Take a chance, it's done, so what are you going to do? And it's still sold.

Ken: *Yeah. Well, I should explain when the distributors would not sell a comic book, they would cut the logo off and then send the logo back to the companies to get credit for not selling it.*



Carmine: That's right. That's true. That's what they would do in those days. And we understand.
Ed: *Then I used to go pick up those books for a penny!*
Ken: *I used to have to pay 3¢!* [laughter]
Carmine: The books with the torn logo? Somebody would be buying up those things.
David: That was illegal.
Ken: *That's right, it was illegal.*
Carmine: Allegedly.
Ed: *It was, but I got to read a lot of stories! I couldn't afford more of them then!*
Carmine: They used to pack them in bags too. Sometimes you have them with the strip covers, but I think three for a quarter or something. You remember that?
Ken: *I remember the bags, but I don't remember the logos being cut off.*
Carmine: Oh, yeah, on those too. Yeah, I remember those.
Ken: *I should remember buying them in Woodbridge, New Jersey. Eight for 25¢*. [laughs]
Carmine: Wow! Wholesale? From where?
Ken: *From some dealer at one of those little auction house buildings.*
Carmine: Well, some guy claimed that, during the days that I was editor and publisher there, books like *Green Arrow/Green Lantern*, millions were stolen. And the Kirby book, millions were stolen. That's not true. I know.
David: They weren't printing that many. [*laughs*]
Carmine: He told me that one of Kirby's books, 500,000 were stolen. I said, "That's interesting, since we only printed 300,000. Explain that one to me." But these wild stories developed.
David: I mean, there were *some* books being stolen.
Carmine: Oh, there's no question.
David: And people would go down, they would find out where…
Ken: *I happen to know some dealers – still in business today – who started their business with stolen comics.*
Carmine: But how much? How many?
Ken: *I don't know… a warehouse full, but that's a warehouse full of…*
Carmine: A "warehouse" is what…?
Ken: *But I mean, we're talking about not just one title. Of course, they're stealing months and months worth of lots and lots and lots of titles.*
Carmine: But they're talking about the *millions* of each title. That there was a million printed, so it was a whole maligning…
David: The concept there was that the ones that were popular, the artists especially, that were popular with fans like Kirby and Neal Adams, that those were the titles people most wanted to get their hands on. And so they weren't being reported as sales because they were stolen. And so the books were really doing better than what the distributor [accounting] would come back to Carmine and tell him. So that's the concept. And there was some of that going on, but not to the degree of this guy saying, "Oh, there was 500,000 stolen," when there's only 300,000 printed.
Carmine: That makes sense. Now, with Neal, I know he claimed, too, that that happened. But remember, Neal was constantly late with his books, constantly late. And I think that had a lot to do with the sales getting hurt, because a book's usually got a week on the stands and the book come in late, you got two days on the stands, maybe one day, and that would hurt your sales, too.
Ken: *And, also, didn't the printer fine the companies* [*for late books*]*?*
Carmine: Oh, sure. Right. And if a book was a marginal book, he usually killed the book in the long run.
Ken: *Except Marvel didn't get fined because* [*World Color Press*] *liked* [*Marvel production manager*] *John Verpoorten, so they wouldn't fine him.*
Carmine: Oh, I didn't know that. That's probably true. I didn't know… He was a big fella. Frank Giacoia used to call him the Jolly Giant… I met him one time and Frank said, "Why don't you hire him?" This was while I was running DC. I said, "I got a house full here. I can't use any more people"…
Ken: *We should take one call… Okay, you're on the line. How you doing?*
Caller One: I'm fine… I got to tell you, I started collecting these things in the '70s and I was a big, big Batman fan. And the idea that it wouldn't have been there when I started is just chilling.
David: You have Carmine to thank.
Ken: *Or Julie or John Broome or whoever… the team.*
Caller One: I thought it was a great idea to keep him, and now he's one of the most popular titles out there.
Carmine: Probably *the* most, I guess.
Ken: *Well, it's also curious that if Donenfeld had not given it to Julie, John, and Carmine to redo it, would there have been a* Batman *TV show? Because it would've been canceled two years before the show came out.*
Caller One: That's true.
Ken: *They licensed Batman in late '64, early '65. And that was a year after Carmine redid it.*
Carmine: I heard he picked up a copy in the airport one day… The producer of the show. And that's the story he told anyway. And he picked it up. He liked it and he called up in one the licenses. The rest is history.
Caller One: Batman's really different today than he was 30 years ago.
Carmine: Oh, very much so.
David: Well, one thing is the darkness factor. I like to describe Carmine's stint on Batman as a bridge between

Above: *Autographed publicity shot of actors Adam West and Yvonne Craig costumed as their trademark characters. Infantino was, of course, a co-creator of Batgirl. Below: Licensing artwork by Infantino and inker Murphy Anderson.*



Above: *This great "Pow Wow Smith" page, from* Western Comics *#80 [Apr. '60], penciled and inked by Infantino, appeared as back cover for the 1970 Comic Art Convention souvenir book (next page).*

Below: *"Heap" page from* Airboy *V5 #5 [June '48], pencils and inks (and maybe words) by Infantino.*

the kind of Golden Age, '50s kind of hokey, campy Batman and the later version where Neal Adams took him into a more believable, realistic form. Carmine's work was kind of half in between there.

Caller One: Somebody had to bridge the gap to keep the character going.

Ken: *Okay, let's take some more calls.* [*Caller Two is crank call.*] *You're on the air.*

Caller Three: Hi. I wanted to first say that I've enjoyed Carmine's art for at least 30 years and, anything he's done, I've liked. But I wanted to ask why… with those great Infantino Anderson covers, why didn't they work together on any "Batman" stories?…

Carmine: Julie made the decision on the inkers, but I think …Joe Giella did most of the inking. Also, Murphy did most of the "Adam Strange," if I'm not mistaken… I had no say on that matter, by the way…

[*The hosts and guests switch to a different studio to record the remainder of the interview.*]

Ken: *We're doing an overview of your career and, this week, let's go into some finer details bit by bit. We sort of left it last week talking about inkers, and, of course, Julie didn't like your inking because it was too scratchy. What is an inker's role? What are they supposed to be doing?*

Carmine: He's supposed to embellish the penciling.

Ken: *What does that mean?*

Carmine: Make him look better or pretty much give it a style, give it a particular style. Use the blacks properly and give it a look. Get it ready for the engraving. Most inkers… I disagree with some of the inking that we got, but Julie loved it and he paid the checks, so he got what he wanted. He was a fan of Murphy's, Julie really was, *and* Joe Giella, and I was a fan of Frank Giacoia, but Frank did some…

Ken: *Both you and Frank were high school buddies.*

Carmine: Yeah, we went way back…

Ken: [Chuckles] *So you're not objective.*

Carmine: No, no, we were 15 years old when we met, and Frankie was my favorite, but he didn't stay that long. He was very slow, Frank, and he didn't like to work that hard.

Ken: *But what did you like about Frank's inking?*

Carmine: He kept the character of the penciling. He knew how to keep the character of penciling. Murphy would take my penciling and change it. I would remove the anatomy in my work and Murphy would put it back in and he would go to Julie and say he needs more money because he was "fixing it." I said, "But I didn't *want* him to fix it!" So it was a constant war. He did a nice job. I can't complain about what he did. That was his look; it just wasn't mine.

Ken: *Well, I know having talked to quite a few inkers who inked your pencils over the years, and they would mention that they always had a choice of lines on what to ink. There was more than one line to [choose].*

Carmine: [*Chuckles*] I've heard that too. Maybe it's good… you pick your own line!

Ken: *Well, it's funny because some inkers hated that. They said, "Draw what you want inked. Because what happens is that they'll choose one line when you would wanted them to choose the other line. And they're, like, "Well, if you wanted me to choose that line, why did you draw the other line?" Other people* liked *the fact that they could choose the line.*

Carmine: I had a very loose style, extremely loose. If you saw how I ink, it's pretty much the same as I pencil. And there was a lot of lines there in the inking, too. That was my way of doing it. So I put a lot of lines, but I wanted the lines in, too! And I wanted it that way.

David: What I find interesting is that he leaves room for an inker to embellish and the inker can put some of his own style in there… In fact, Joe Kubert commented that everything you need to know, Carmine puts into his pencils, but there's room for the inker to embellish. When he did his work for Warren, the inkers had amazingly different styles that worked on his pages… Alex Niño, Bernie Wrightson, and all kinds of people inked him when he was doing the Warren magazine work – *Creepy, Eerie,* and *Vampirella*. And it was amazing, the variety you would get.

Ken: *I think Jim Warren was having fun, just having different styles.*

Carmine: Yeah, we had a good time there. But Joe inked, me too. He did the first [Silver Age] "Flash," too. You remember that?… But Joe was the one who inked that book, and I asked him how he got to do that. I think no one else was available at the, it's the only reason he inked it… There's another story about Kubert and I: about two, three years before [*Showcase* #4]… Avon asked us to do a book called Jesse James. He called Joe up and he called me. I said, "Joey, I'll bet you I can pencil [the story] in one day." And he says, "You pencil it in one day, I can ink it in one day." And, sure as hell, we both did… I think there was 20-some odd pages. Now Joe tells a different story.

Dave: I've kind of researched this… I think the one-day job was *one* of the three stories in the book. So that would be about eight pages. And that particular story… there are no panel boarders. That was one trick that Joe Kubert did to save time. He left out the panel borders.

Carmine: And I would have the gun in the left hand in one panel, in the right hand in the other panel, different hats on the same guy. And then nobody knew a difference…

Kubert saved the book…

Ken: *That's what I like about you guys giving each other credit all the time… Now, you wrote for Joe…?*

Carmine: Yeah, I wrote *Tor* for him, he was going to try a newspaper version of Tor and I wrote two or three weeks of it. I dunno what he did with them, but I did that for him.

Ken: *Was that your first writing?*

Carmine: No, I wrote "The Heap" for [editor] Ed Cronin many years ago at Hillman. I wrote *Air Boy* over there.

Ken: *Now The Heap was sort of like the first Swamp Thing, pretty much.*

Carmine: Basically. In fact, when we were doing *Swamp Thing,* I got a note from Marvel, from Stan, that they were going to sue us for copying their character. I said, "You better read 'The Heap' before you sue anybody." That was the last I heard of them… What they did sue us on was the Captain Marvel thing. And that's the reason we used *Shazam!* instead of *Captain Marvel*. Right.

Ken: *[The title] said* Shazam! The Original Captain Marvel *on the first like eight issues and then that disappeared.*

Carmine: Right? Well, I researched it with the lawyers and I said,"What's our problem here?" And we had one jerk upstairs who says, "Fine, no problem, go ahead with it." And, of course, it was a problem. And, later on, when we found out, another attorney said, "All you had to say was 'The Original Captain Marvel,' and they couldn't have touched you, but no one told me this.

Ken: *And we're really jumping around. Let's go into the '40s. The first thing you did was "Jack Frost" for Timely.*

Carmine: Right. I inked and Frank Giacoia penciled.

Ken: *How did you end up with that job?*

Carmine: Frank and I used to go around tapping all the houses, looking for work. We were two kids, still in high school at the School of Industrial Art, which is now the School of Art and Design. And we went to DC and we couldn't get in. Then we went to Timely and nothing happened. We went to Fawcett, we went all over the place. And, one day, Frank said to me, "Let's go back and see Joe Simon over at the Timely Comics"… and Simon called us in, he says, "Okay, I'll give you a script." And he did. It was called "Jack Frost." But the reverse happened. Frank was the penciler. They liked his penciling and they got me to ink it. And that's what happened with "Jack Frost." We only did one issue and that was the end of it. We couldn't get any more work. In fact, my very first job in comics was for Fox.

Ken: *Did you get paid for it?* [laughs]

Carmine: No. What happened was, I did the job, I brought it in, and they looked at it and said, "This is terrible. We're not going to pay you." They gave me the pages back and sent me home. So being a kid though, you bounce back, y'know?

Ken: *Did you find those pages anyway?*

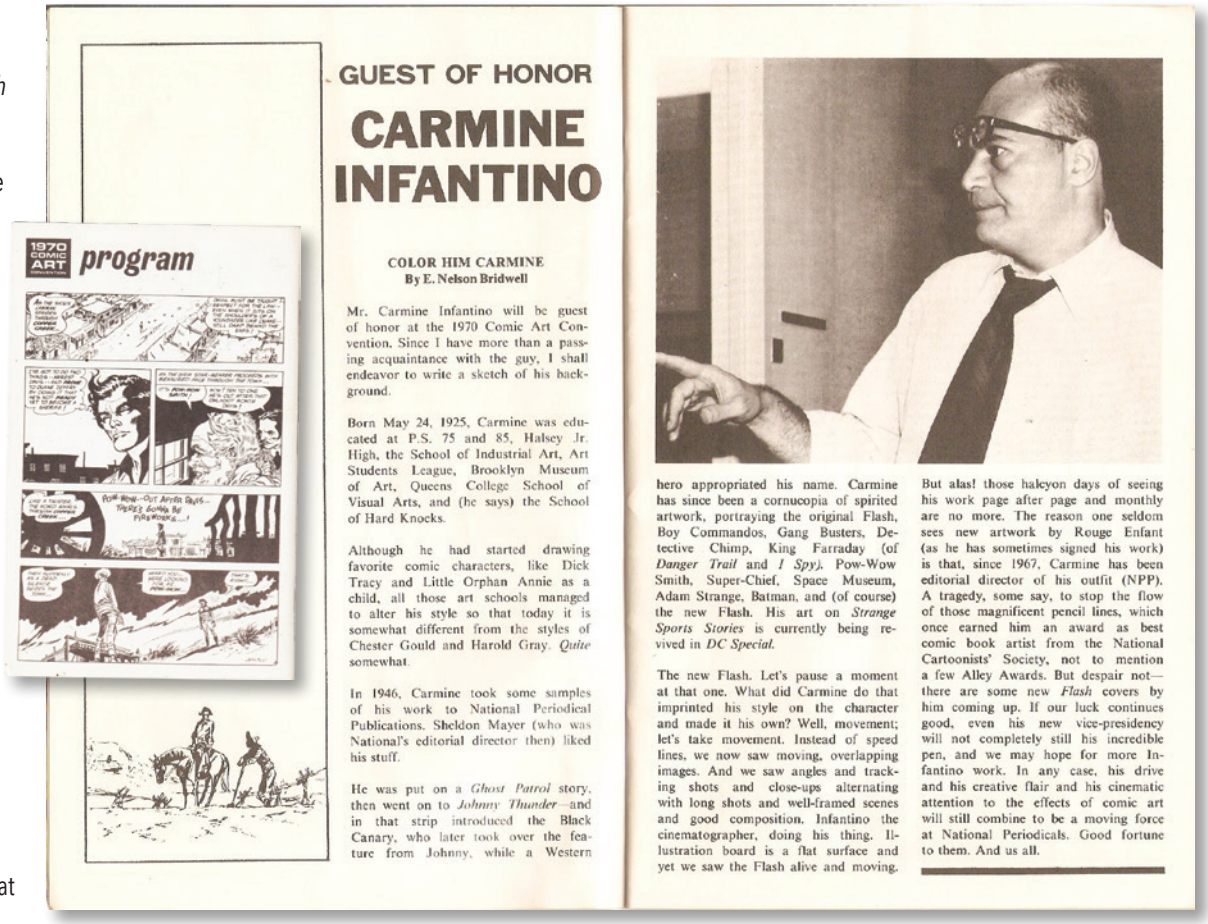
Carmine: No.

Ken: *You worked for Timely after Sheldon Mayer said, "Don't do comics, work on your work for a year"…?*

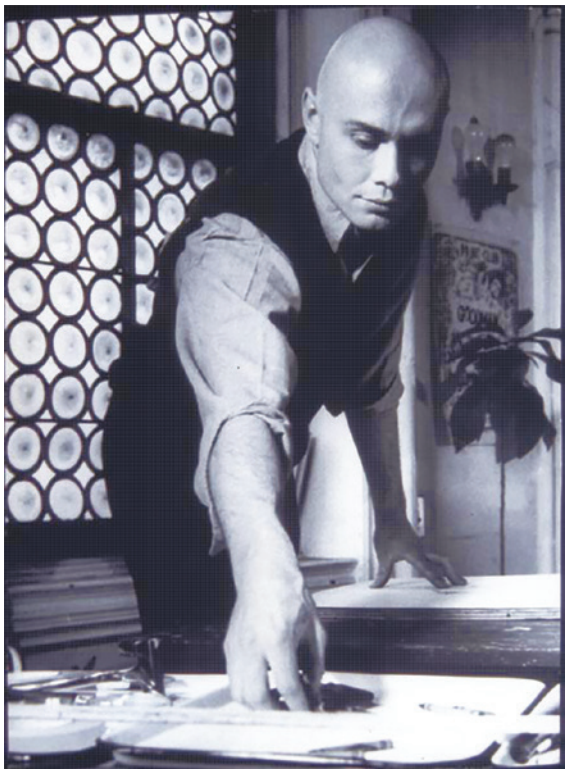
Carmine: No, I didn't work for Timely…

Ken: *Oh, okay. Because Frank Giacoia went over there.*

Carmine: Frank went over there… He became an inker over there immediately. And I didn't. I went back to school. I went to the Art Students League, at that point, and a guy named Jim McNulty, he taught me composition. He taught me what to look for and how to use negative space. He was a brilliant man, and I learned an awful lot from McNulty, and that carried me through to… about '62. Jack [Potter] taught me design and opened me up completely. And, from then, I went on [to Edgar] Degas,

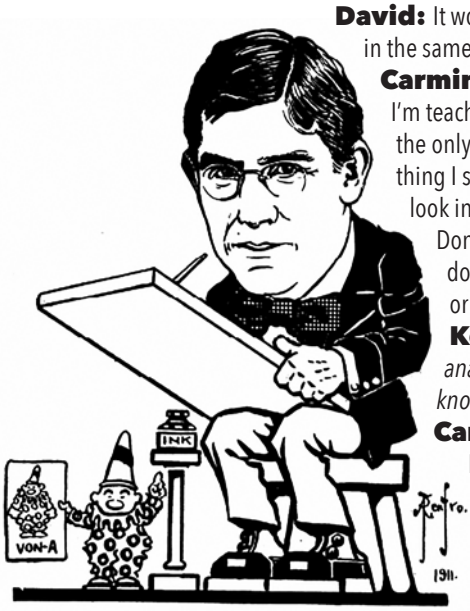


Above: *Carmine Infantino bio essay, from the 1970 Comic Art Convention souvenir book.* **Below:** *Frank Giacoia.* **Bottom:** *Panel from* U.S.A. Comics *#3 [Jan. '42]. Pencils by Giacoia, inks by Infantino.*



Above: *Infantino always had the utmost respect and appreciation for the lessons he learned from School of Visual Arts instructor Jack Potter, seen here in an undated photo. Potter's fundemental philosophy? Throw out everthing you think you know and start all over again!*

Below: *A caricature of William Charles McNulty, drawn by Alfred T. Renfro, in 1911. McNulty studied at the Art Students League, in New York City, where, many years later, he would instruct Infantino on figure drawing and composition. Throughout his life, Infantino would go back to school to refresh.*



the impressionist, and that's where I really ended up [developing] my style. Really, if you look at it carefully, most of the thinking I had in the later work was strictly from Degas.

Ken: *Well, that's also interesting: here we have a man, Carmine Infantino, a professional artist for 15 years, and you're going to school.*

Carmine: Oh yeah. It's like a bank: you put money in the bank, you can take it out. There's nothing there. I reached the point where I felt I wasn't learning anything anymore… I felt I had to pick up something. And that's when I went back to school. I did that three times. I went to the Brooklyn Museum of Art at one point and took figure drawing again. Then later I went to the Art Students League, as I told you, and I took figure drawing and composition with McNulty. And still later on – this was just before the *Batman* craze – I went to Jack Potter's class, and that was a mindbender because, with Jackie, you threw out everything you knew and you start over again. It's a way of dropping anatomy and designing figures instead. It's a whole revolution, but it worked for me. Some people got lost completely in that class, but it worked for me.

Ken: *I dunno if it is possible to sum it up in a few sentences but, what do you mean, by dropping anatomy and drawing figures?*

Carmine: You did an *impression* of a figure. Really, if you look at my work, you could take it apart and it wouldn't work physically. The anatomy wasn't correct and it worked though.

David: It works for comics. Jack Kirby kind of works in the same way.

Carmine: But Jack had more anatomy than I did… I'm teaching now with the School of Visual Arts, and the only thing I stress is to be individual, the only thing I stress, because everybody has an individual look in them, a style in them and to bring that forth. Don't be a clone of anyone else. It doesn't pay. It doesn't help you, and it doesn't help anything or anyone…

Ken: *Now, I would think that to not use anatomy, as you're saying, you'd have to* [*first*] *know anatomy.*

Carmine: How first you got to know it. Picasso, remember his blue period? He drew beautifully, but he threw it all away, too, at one point. Just threw it away completely. He became a designer, too, with much of his work. You've got to draw first. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. You've got to learn how to draw before you can throw it away and start over again.

Ken: *You told me that you wanted to be an architect.*

Carmine: *Oh, desperately. But I was brought up during the Depression. My folks couldn't afford to send me to* [*architecture*] *school, so I took the next best thing: being a cartoonist and my architecture comes out in the comics…*

Ken: *You designed buildings for fictional cities, fictional planets, fictional dimensions, different worlds.* [laughter] *You couldn't do that if you went to architecture school.*

Carmine: No, no. In fact, I know some architects now [who] go to the gym abd work out there now, and we discuss it and he said, "It's best. You're doing what you do and you don't belong in my field." [*chuckles*]

David: He didn't have to worry about things like gravity…

Carmine: At one time, I built a city in layers, on platforms… I think it was "Adam Strange," if I'm not mistaken.

Ken: *Yes, I remember you talking about that.*

Carmine: Yeah, I did the whole thing in layers. One whole six blocks in one layer. Then on the left side, I did another layer then right side another way, and kept building it up that way. It kept going all the way up about 20 stories that way. It was a different way to build a city.

Ken: *Well, it was another planet, and I think that gave it that otherworldly* [*sense*]*… So you worked on* Spy Smasher, *didn't you?*

Carmine: I did that for a while. Yes, I did. I met Mac Raboy, from Captain Marvel Jr. I was enamored of his work… And I worked for Eddie Herron over at Fawcett Comics for a touch. I did *Spy Smasher*…

Ken: *That was the early '40s?*

Carmine: Very early. I did some work, not very much though. Just very little actually.

Ken: *Were these full pencils?*

Carmine: I think backgrounds only, actually. Just backgrounds. We were able to do that in those days. They used you wherever they could find you to put some work in. I even worked on a *Lone Ranger* newspaper strip for Charlie Flanders. He was did the strip for years, and I met him in his office one day – I'd go and visit him often – and he let me work on the backgrounds of his strip, which was fun. I even did *Flash Gordon*.

Ken: *This was a learning experience…?*

Carmine: Yeah. I even did Dan Barry's *Flash Gordon*. I laid out about three weeks of that for Dan. Dan was falling behind at one point… Dan got so upset that I did it so quickly that he wouldn't use me again. It disturbed him. [*chuckles*]… Then I worked for Holyoke. I did some work for them, but it was some nun.

David: Who was the inker you worked with?

Carmine: Milt Cohen was the gentleman's name. He was trying to sell a strip Lou Fine did called *The Cisco Kid* and he never could sell it. It was just beautifully done, and I don't know what happened. Milt could not sell it and Lou went on to do advertising work. You know the great Lou Fine…?

David: At that time, Carmine's work was very influenced by Milton Caniff. And then, when he worked with Simon and Kirby, he picked up a lot of influence by Kirby and Mort Meskin.

Carmine: Mort was a stronger influence. Also, Herbert Morton Stoops was a bigger influence. You remember *The Shadow* from the pulp magazines? [*Shadow* illustrator] Edd Cartier was the one that Mort and Jack both got their style from. If you look at that Cartier's old work, you'll see a lot of Kirby and Meskin in there. They both told me about him, and then I began studying him.

Ken: *Were you working with Meskin at Simon* [*& Kirby*]*?*

Carmine: Yes. I knew Mort well.

Ken: *Was that right after him working out of the hospital?*

Carmine: Yeah, and he was a wonderful guy, lovely guy. He was very caustic, but he didn't mean much by it.

Ken: *Did you work in the bullpen at Joe Simon's studio?*

Carmine: Yes, that's why I insisted on working there. I took less money. I was at DC at the time, and Joe called me to work for him doing *Charlie Chan*. He began Crestwood studios at that time, and I think he had created the romance books there. And would I come over to do *Chan* and the pay was half what I was getting at DC but I went, because I want to study with Jack. I wanted to get as much as I could from Jack and it paid off, I thought. I did it for about a year because I did their work during the day and I went home and did the DC comics at night and I couldn't do it anymore. Finally, I said, "Joey, I can't handle it anymore." He understood. We've been good friends forever.

Ken: *Now, was it true that Mort Meskin couldn't face an empty page and somebody had to draw on the page before he would* [*start*]*?*

Carmine: Yeah, that's very true. He'd sit there for hours and stare and stare, and I think Jack, many times, started the page for him. He asked me to do it at one time. But he said, I don't like this and he threw it away! [*laughs*]… It didn't matter [what was drawn] – something – it was a beginning for him. He couldn't stand an empty page. He just stared at for hours and he was *such* a talent… Poor guy. He went to advertising finally. That's where he ended up. I met him many years later. He was in the bullpen of [ad agency] Young & Rubicam, if I'm not mistaken. That's where his final days were…

Ken: *Do you remember some of the titles* [*at Crestwood*]*?*

Carmine: Mostly Charlie Chan and Jack [Kirby] was *marvelous*. He taught me so much about storytelling at that stage. That was a year so worthwhile for me.

Ken: *What's some of the advice he gave you?*

Carmine: One in particular I remember always stood out in my mind. There was a panel with two villains. One was beating an old lady over the head and the other guy was watching it, and I had drawn it just as I described it. And Jack says, "No, no, no!" He said,"Just have the guy sit on the couch and the shadow [behind] him on the wall showed the [other] guy beating the old lady." He said the imagination takes over. It becomes a lot worse that way and it's true! It worked beautifully. I never forgot that.

Ken: *So he taught you to draw by not drawing?*

Carmine: That's right! He was brilliant. Jack was terrific. We were close friends 'til the day he died and he worked for me, then he left me, and we were still friends.

Ken: *Now, when you went to Sheldon Mayer back in high school and he told you to wait a year, what's some of the advice he gave you?*

Carmine: Study, study, learn to draw, and he told me to get a notebook and just, back and forth on the subway, wherever I went with a pen, to draw everything and anything I saw. He said, "Do that constantly and fill up as many notebooks as you can." And I think I'd fill up about 200 of them in that year. It was really hard, but I learned to draw. But I also went to school at the same time… Every time I felt the well went dry, I went back to school.

Ken: *I've often wondered about artists who… some people just lose it. They simply lose it.*

Carmine: I don't think they lose it. As I described earlier, it's like a bank. It's what you put in. It's what you can take out. And finally, when the bank is empty and you're drawing on empty, there's nothing coming out.

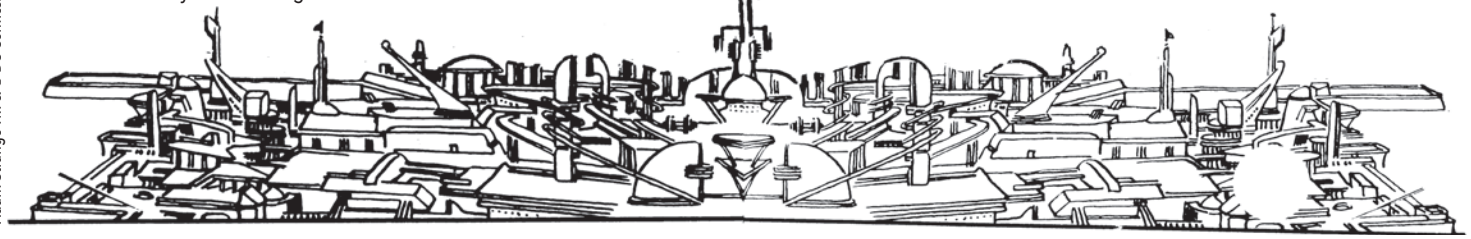
Ken: *As Gil Kane said, you always should learn for your entire life. And, of course, he did.*

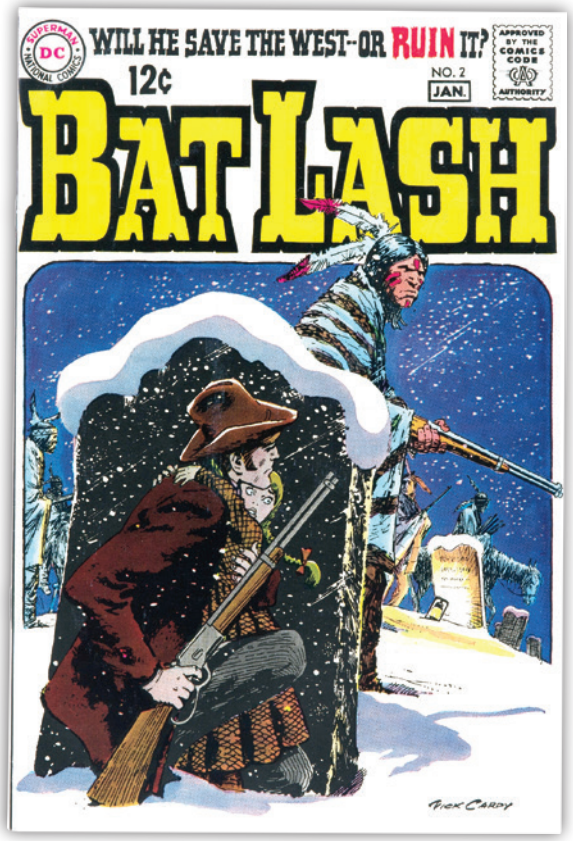
Carmine: I had to go back to school. Gil was lucky. I don't think he did come back to school… We weren't that close, he and I… We knew each other as youngsters. He lived in Brownsville and I lived in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, and he

Top: *Infantino's youthful dreams of becoming an architect, while never realized, served him well in his comic book work, as he rendered the incredible city vistas for his DC Comics work. Note the 101,961 A.D. view of New York City Adam Strange beholds in this page from* Mystery in Space *#72 [Dec. '61]. Art by penciler Infantino and inker Anderson.*

Above: *The architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright was an obvious influence on the artist's rendering of buildings envisioned from imagination. This is the fabled architect's Oak Park, Illinois, home, built in 1889.*

Below: *Infantino depicts an amazing city on the planet Rann in this panel detail the "Adam Strange" series in* Mystery in Space. *Inks by Anderson.*





Above: *Infantino raves about this* Bat Lash *#2 [Jan. '69] cover by Nick Cardy.* **Opposite page:** *Clockwise from top right is Alex Toth's cover for* Limited Collectors' Edition *#C-41 [Jan. '76], featuring* Super Friends*, an animated show first conceived by Infantino, along with DC editors Julius Schwartz and E. Nelson Bridwell; Christopher Reeve as Superman in a publicity shot promoting the 1978 movie, for which Infantino consulted; and a poster for the hit film.* **Below:** *Panel reproduced from the original art by penciler Bob Oksner and inker Wally Wood for* Angel and the Ape *#4 [June '69]. Pardon the racial stereotyping – but dig the amazing combo of Oksner and Wood!*

was Eli Katz in those days, and we knew each other for a short time, and then we just grew apart. I think he was a big fan of [Burne] Hogarth. I think that comes out in his work. So that was his influence.

Ken: *Maybe you're a good person to ask a question like this (because you're both an artist and you're also an editor and a publisher)": comic books are commercial art. How much is commercial? How much is art?*

Carmine: [*Sighs*] It's an interesting question. I got a call from a writer one day who chided me for dropping a book called, what the hell was that… About a gorilla…? [*Likely Carmine was describing* Angel and the Ape – **Ye Ed.**]… But the book didn't sell and I dropped it, and he took me to task because I dropped the book for not selling. Well, while it was art, it still has to be commercial. If it doesn't sell, goodbye, art. That's how it worked.

David: Is that why you didn't hire Alex Toth as an editor?

Carmine: Yeah. Alex was a *brilliant* artist, but *not* as an editor. [*chuckles*] I don't get along in that respect, but he's a genius. He's a genius artist. But as an editor? Nuh-uh.

Ken: *Which comes first: the art or the commercial?*

Carmine: [*Pauses*] That's a tough one. I think it'd go together. I think they go together. You need both. Lemme give you an example: Nick Cardy could do both. He was an artist and his work was commercial. I thought Alex's work was brilliant, but I don't think he was as commercial as Nick. That's the best example I can give you. Alex was an artist's artist, understand?

Ken: *Oh yeah, that's for sure.*

Carmine: But Nick, *everyone* responded to his artwork. You *had* to. You couldn't help yourself. To me, Nick was the epitome of being an artist.

Ken: *So you look at Nick's art and you respond, and therefore you pick up a book with Alex's art, you go, "Wow, what a great technique." And then you go to something you respond to…?*

Carmine: It was a little cold. But he was an inventor. He always inventing, always inventing. Nick had a *warmth* to his work. He did a wonderful cover on *Bat Lash* [#2, Jan. '69]. We were talking about it last week down at the convention. This cover had Bat Lash behind a tombstone. Do you remember that? And, in the background, some Indians walking in the snow in the moonlight. It was a gorgeous thing. It was like a painting. This guy could paint, he could do anything… Nicky's line was never smooth. His work was not smooth, but it printed beautifully. He could do anything. I'm a fan. I'm his biggest fan, I guess.

Ken: *So he's your favorite artist of everybody?*

Carmine: Yes, absolutely. He and Kubert.

Ken: *And did you learn from him?*

Carmine: You couldn't learn Nick. [*Ken laughs*] He was too good. I couldn't learn Nick. He was much too good. He could do things I couldn't even think of doing.

Ken: *Of course. What would his response if he heard you say that?*

Carmine: Well, he kidded me a lot, but he stayed working with me. He didn't leave me. He stayed me for a number of years. Then, when he did leave, he went out to doing posters, movie posters, and I couldn't stop him… He's a very close friend. It's a very tight community, the comic book group. It's either you love or hate people in it. [*Ken laughs*] That's the way it is…

Ken: *Now, why is it that you haven't done conventions for 25 years and you're doing them now?*

Carmine: [*Extended exhale*] The book is one reason, but I did it before the book, I think… I went to last year's San Diego Convention… An Italian publisher came over and he asked would I come to Lucca the following year. And I said, "That'd be very nice." And that opened the door, I think.

Ken: *How could you say no to the most prestigious, unbelievable comic convention in the world?*

Carmine: But the amazing part about Lucca was, when I went there, they gave me this wonderful plaque, and cartoonists from all over the continent came down that day in this huge old castle in Italy. And there must have been about 200 of them, from Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Italy, France. And it was really a touching affair. It was very lovely. One of them asked me, "Why did you stop drawing?" And (as I said to you earlier) I said, "The reason I stopped was because I felt I had nothing more to say." And I thanked them all and took my dish and went home.

David: That's kind of a mindset. At the same time, he's been working all along, although he stayed out of the public eye, the spotlight, and he wasn't doing public appearances. He really has been working all along.

Carmine: Well, I did the Captain Action boxes [art]…

David: Just recently, and then also, in the early '90s, he returned to the *Batman* newspaper strip and he returned to *The Flash* in the '80s, did over 50 issues. That's a helluva run.

Carmine: Until they killed him off. I did it until the very end.

David: Joe Orlando talked him into coming back.

Ken: *How did Joe manage to get you back on* The Flash*?*

Carmine: Joe and I were all friends. I hired Joe originally to come to DC and then [after Infantino left DC in '76] he used to beg me every week, call up [to say], "You belong over here. You belong with me." Going on and on and on. And finally I went back. I enjoyed it. I had a good time with Joe.

Ken: *So Joe charmed you back to the drawing table?*

Carmine: Yeah. He was a sweetheart. With Joe, I did an awful lot of special-project advertising work. So that I did mostly…

Ken: *But what made you not go to conventions all those years?*

Carmine: I just dropped out of comics, totally. My mother got very sick. My mother had gotten a stroke, and then my father died.

Ken: *But you never lost your interest in comics?*

Carmine: Well, I did for that period.

Ken: *Well, I'll tell you a story you may not even remember.*

Carmine: What's that?

Ken: *In 1978, I ran a convention called Fireball, and I got your number from somebody, and I called you up to ask you to come to the convention,*

Carmine: I probably said no.

Ken: *You said no. You almost said yes. You came really close to it. You gave me this whole thing about nobody would remember you and you finally stopped giving me that line. But one of the things you wanted to know, while you had me on the phone, was what had been going on in comics since you left DC.*

Carmine: That's funny.

Ken: *You wanted to know what was going on at DC, at Marvel. You wanted to know about fanzines, wanted know about conventions. You were asking me so many in-depth questions that I couldn't imagine why you wanted to stay away.*

Carmine: I guess it was in my blood. I didn't realize at the time, but it's probably true what happened. I don't know why…

Ken: *You sounded sad, you sounded bitter, but you sounded so curious.*

Carmine: Yeah, I was curious. But, as I said, my folks, my father died and I was left with my mother, taking care of her, and I really had no interest in anything else, but I was curious. That's true.

David: He did get into animation and was working with Hanna-Barbera.

Carmine: I worked with Hanna-Barbera for a long time. And then I worked for Marvel Animation, too, for a period.

Ken: *This was before you were drawing their books?*

Carmine: After I believe, I don't remember that.

David: After he left DC, the first publisher that called him was Jim Warren, and Warren begged him to come over. He did some excellent work for Warren and it was actually a return to art, I think. But then Hanna-Barbera called him and he actually moved out to California. But, at the same time, Marvel then wanted him to do work for them. And I

Above: *Of the sparse amount of artwork Infantino executed while top DC Comics executive, he did produce an occasional job directed toward retailers and distributors, including this single page (apparently inked by Vince Colletta) that encouraged appealing newsstand displays.* **Inset right:** *DC was at the forefront of comics publishers offering an array of different formats in the early '70s, including a line of* 100-Page Super Spectaculars, *including #6 [July '71],* World's Greatest Super-Heroes, *featuring a glorious wraparound cover by penciler Neal Adams and inker DickGiordano.* **Below:** *Cover bug used on DC Comics when it offered "Bigger & Better" titles.*

think he was focused more on the Hollywood work than the work he was doing at Marvel. So, really, some of the best art you're going to get after he left DC was the Warren material.

Carmine: But the [Joe] Barbera thing, I went out there and he really wanted me to stay on. Joe was very nice to me. And then my mother, as I said, got very sick and I had to come back to New York, but I was intending to remain [in California] and probably stay in animation. So I had to come back.

Ken: *What did you animate?*

Carmine: The *Super Friends.*

Ken: *Alex Toth was working on that, too.*

Carmine: Yeah, Alex was there, too, at the same time as I was. And so was Russ Heath. It was a whole group of people working there at the time.

David: Originally you had met [Joe Barbera], you were supervising *Super Friends* when you were president of DC.

Carmine: I created *Super Friends* for Barbera when I was over at DC.

David: He would fly back and forth and supervise. And then… you should tell 'em about the *Superman* movie.

Carmine: Well, then we had the *Superman* movie. Mario Puzo wrote the thing and he did a script. It was awful for this thing. It was some gangsters trying to kill the Pope. "This isn't a *Superman* [movie]!" So I rejected the script and the guys upstairs, they knew nothing about *Superman*. They said, "We think it's terrific." I said, "This is a mess." I went out, I met with Mario and the producers…

Ken: *Well, how can you, a comic book person, get away with telling a Hollywood person that their movie stinks?*

Carmine: Very simple! We were in charge of the damn thing! [*chuckles*]

Ken: *Marvel does that and the Hollywood person goes, "You don't know anything about movies."*

David: Carmine negotiated the deal.

Carmine: I negotiated the whole deal for the *Superman* movie, and I was president of the company at the time. So I had a lot to say, and the guys upstairs left me alone. When I said, "This is no good," they said, "Well, then go do something about it." And I sat in the Beverly Hills hotel with Mario and the two producers, and we sat for three or four days, and *Superman I* and *II* came out of that.

Ken: *Alfred Bester was involved, wasn't he?*

Carmine: No, when they originally came to us and wanted to do it, they said, "Do you have a writer for us?" And Murray [Boltinoff] said to me, "Carmine, get Al Bester. He's the greatest." So Bester came in, he did a script. But these guys, these particular people – the producers – they worked on the premise that they had to get big names, because they can get money to work off of big names. So poor Al did something, they didn't use it, but I made them pay him. And what they did, they went out and got Puzo because Puzo was big money, money in the bank

Ken: *Just off of* The Godfather…

Carmine: Then they got Brando to play [Jor-el] and so on. And so this is the game they played: they got big names and then they sold the big names. That's how they got their money to make films. But they wanted to get Clint Eastwood to play Superman! And I said, "Oh, come on, please!" And he turned them down anyway… And the other guy was… Steve McQueen… they tried to get him and he didn't want it. And I said to them, if this thing is a hit, you're going to have trouble. Get an unknown and then surround him with stars. And that's what they did. So that's what worked. But then I was out of the company at that point.

David: But he had negotiated a sweetheart deal.

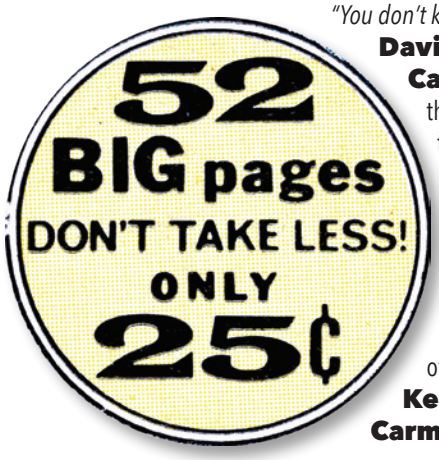
Carmine: Scary! Seven-and-a-half percent off the top of gross worldwide. Now my name was supposed to be on the film and, of course, when they got rid of me at DC, they took my name off the thing. I said, "Good luck." I couldn't have cared less.

Ken: *So what happened when they got rid of you?*

Carmine: I took a couple months off.

Ken: *What's your side of the whole story?*

Carmine: It's very simple. The year before I left, Marvel… many years ago… Donenfeld told me how DC knocked Dell [Comics] off the stands. They started flooding



the stands with DC books, and they literally pushed them off the stands. In '75, Marvel began to do the same to us. They began flooding. They produced I think 100 some odd titles. They were out to push us off the stands. So I wasn't going to let that happen. I didn't want to lose my space, so I matched them book for book. Everybody took a beating with that one. So when the time came, crunch-time from upstairs, they wondered, "How come you lost so much money?" I told them why. I said, "I had to protect my space." Well, they didn't agree with me. I did it and I would do it again. They weren't happy with that answer, but I think that would've been the right thing to do. I thought it was at the time… The year before, though, we had made close to a million dollars just in publishing. We had done so well. But, of course, [Marvel] tried to knock us off and that's the only way you could combat it…

Ken: *In '74, I think that's when DC went up to 52 pages…?*

Carmine: Yeah, we put out 100-page books, too, at that point. That's another interesting thing. We put that book out with no ads. We figured this has got to work for 50¢. And we put it out and all of a sudden numbers came in, they were terrible and we couldn't figure it. What the hell went wrong? And then when the finals come in, there were 10 points up

and it was still late at that point. So there was a big hit,

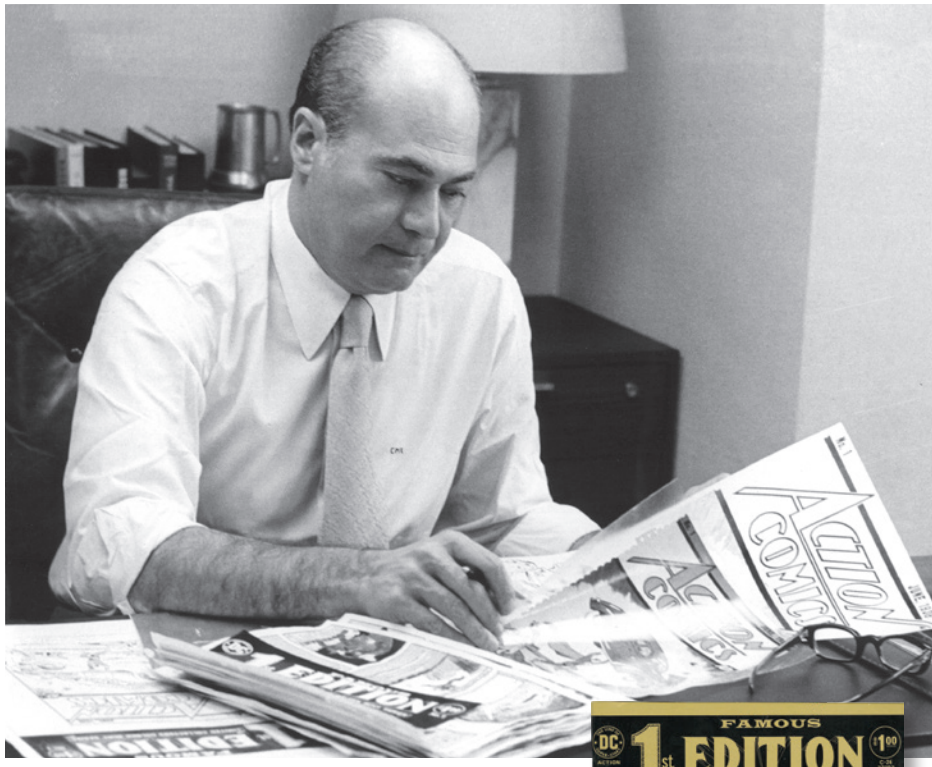
David: So it was a big hit, but it was a sleeper hit. It caught on kind of slowly. But you had to schedule a year's worth of publishing in advance.

Carmine: You schedule everything a year ahead.

David: So when they got the early figures, they looked so bad, they dropped the titles and, by the time they had the final figures, it was too late to pick 'em back up.

Ken: *So all those 100-page reprint books, that's what happened to 'em?*

David: Yeah, they were actually big hits, but that's why they didn't continue it. It was kind of a clerical era in the



distribution.

Ken: *Well, I also know that* [*Marvel publisher*] *Martin Goodman raised the percentage he gave to the distributor while lowering the price.*

Carmine: He dropped the price at 20¢ and he gave them 50% off. He *creamed* us with that one.

David: It was a dirty trick.

Ken: *Well, it's a dirty trick…*

Carmine: It was business.

Ken: *But it also has hurt the industry ever since.*

Carmine: That's right.

Ken: *Because that 10% that he gave away, which was 4¢, a lot of money is quite a bit more than 4¢ now…*

Carmine: We were selling a 20¢, 25¢ book with 40% off. They were really making more money on ours. But that 50% thing is really what [the retailers] wanted. And they threw out books right off the racks.

Ken: *They had been making 10¢ on yours and 8¢ on theirs, and then he gave them 50%, and now they're making 10¢ on 20¢ book. And* [*the distributors are*] *going, "Well, we'll go with that." So that forced you to cut all the extra pages.*

Carmine: We were getting killed. So we had to. He really hurt the business. He was great at that. He was a businessman. You got to give him credit for that… I think the comic business now has got to go through some evolutionary period to survive. And whether it does or not, I don't know. But if it doesn't, I think we've seen the end of it. I honestly believe that.

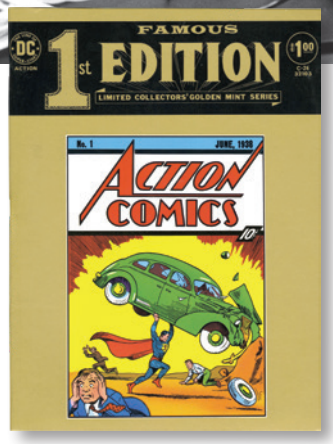
Ken: *What kind of evolution?*

Carmine: It's got to grow into something else. It's got to *become* something else. It's just got to change. It's like…

Ken: *What? I mean, what does it have to change to?*

David: We don't know. That's what we have to find out.

Ken: *I mean, does it have to not be publishing? Is the internet the secret?*



This page: *Clockwise from top is Infantino looking over production material for* Famous First Edition *#1 [May '74]; "Human Target" panel,* Action Comics *#419 [Dec. '72], inks by Giordano; and* Amazing World of DC Comics *#8 [Oct. '75], cover pencils and inks by CINFA.*

Carmine: I think publishing is going to be the back end of the horse. I
Ed: *The next* Showcase *#4 hasn't come out yet.*
Carmine: It's not publishing. It's got to move away from publishing.
David: That's exactly right. Back then, they had no idea what was coming next and they *never* imagined it would be super-heroes again, and it revitalized itself.
Carmine: I don't think it's publishing though. I think it's got to go another direction… There's lots of changes coming with the computer now. If you seen what they can do out in California, you wouldn't believe it. When I was out there, Barbera asked me to draw a figure and I drew the figure and they took that figure. They made it turn, walk, move back and forth, go around… Scared the living hell out of me! But that's the kind of changes that are coming. You got live action…
David: But there is something wonderful about holding a book in your hand.
Carmine: I don't see it… I think once you got movement like you see in *Tarzan*, the [1999] animated film. Incredible movement, the movement they did in that thing, it's just incredible. And once you got that, you can't go back to this anymore. Not for a youngster. Anyway, I think they lost that whole audience. The youngsters now grow up on video games and, from video games, they go to the internet or to TV. And they're certainly not buying books. That's a personal opinion.

Years ago, kids began with Walt Disney. You remember that? And from Walt Disney, they went to Archie and from Archie, then they went to Superman. Yeah, I
Ed: *I started out with Harveys, and then I started reading* Batman *and* Superman*, and then, when Marvel came out, I started reading those, too.*
Carmine: There's no way for a kid to start now. Nowhere. So I think that's going to be the death knell. I hope I'm wrong.
Ken: *Well, I hope so too, because, when I was a kid, if comics die, prose books are going to die with it because they don't move at all…* [*Conversation continues for a spell regarding the state of the business in 2000.*]
Carmine: I think the attention span of the audience is very limited. I asked somebody who's in broadcasting, about the great shows on TV – Studio One, Playhouse 90 – "What happened to them? Why don't they ever bring 'em back?" He said, "You can't hold the audience with them anymore. That's out. That's why these little sitcoms, the only things that sell." It's a shame. Those are great shows.
Ken: *Well, if people want to sit for an hour-and-a-half, they'll go to a movie.*
Carmine: They don't want to think. Nobody wants to think…
Ken: *We haven't even talked about your newspaper strip stuff, right?*
Carmine: Dave knows more about them than I did.
Ken: *Well, you did the Batman strip…*
Carmine: I did that.
Ken: *…in the '60s and in the '80s, right?*
Carmine: I did both, yes, I did them. But the one in the '60s, I did it for a few weeks and then Donenfeld said, "No, no, no, he can't do those anymore. He's got to do covers. We can't waste him on the newspaper strip."
David: He was doing all the Batman, all the covers. He was overworked. And, in fact, you told him something had to go. And then he made the decision.
Carmine: I went to him. It was the strip. I just can't keep it going. And he said, "Well, it's the strip." I said, "I want to do the strip." He says, "No, you don't." And that was the end of that.
David: He had always wanted to be a newspaper strip artist.
Ken: *That was the cliche of the '40s, everybody who did comics wanted to do the strips.*
Carmine: My buddy, Irwin Hasen, he had his strip, *Dondi*.
Ken: *Which you helped him on…?*
Carmine: Yeah, I did a little help on the first couple of weeks of that thing. And he had *Dondi*. I didn't have a strip, I couldn't get a strip. I tried many times. I tried.
David: Carmine was very active with the National Cartoonist Society, and he said he thought they only allowed the comic book artists in there to take their dues money. **Carmine:** That's true.
David: It was really for the newspapers strip guys. Although they did start giving awards for comic book artists, and he won it many years ago, in 1958. I think Wally Wood won the year before.
Ken: *So why'd you go back to* Batman *in the '80s, in the newspapers?*
Carmine: They asked me. DC asked me, Joe asked me would I do the strip again for them, because it was hot again after the film come out, remember? So I said, "Sure, I'll do it." It was a terribly written strip. Awful, awful. And it lasted, I think a year or two.
Ken: *And what's the difference between drawing a strip versus drawing a comic book?*
Carmine: A strip usually breaks down to about six pages of artwork a week, about six pages of comic book pages. So it's a lot easier to do, I felt, a week than doing regular pages. So, in about three days, I was done with the week's work.
Ken: *Now with three panels a day, how does that come to six pages?*
Carmine: Three times six is 18, right? And then, on Sunday, you did 10 to 12 panels. Figure it out. You got about six pages, maybe five pages. Depends how many you want to put on the page. [*chuckles*]
Ken: *So what kind of discipline do you have to bring to comic strips?*
Carmine: You need discipline for any comic strips or comic books. The discipline is be able to sit there for 10 to 12 hours a day to do your work. That's the real discipline. And when no one's sitting over you, that's really tough when you think about it. It could be a nice sunny day, but you're in the dark room working by yourself. I would work all night long sometimes, because it'd be easier because I knew everyone was sleeping and they couldn't be out there enjoying themselves. So it was okay to work. But my hours were from 10:00 in the morning 'til about 2:00 the next morning. And for that, I did two pages a day. Never more than that. I would stop at 2:00.
David: Now, earlier on, before the big *Batman* boom in '66 – you were

doing "Batman" in '64 through about '67 – but, back then, you limited the amount of hours you'd work in a day. You were quite the man about town, weren't you?

Carmine: [*Modestly*] Well, in those days… yeah.

Ken: *Go ahead, David. You take this question!*

David: Well, I never asked you about this, but…

Carmine: And I don't know if you're going to get an answer either. [*laughter*]

David: How many hours would you work back then?

Carmine: I really would work about six to seven months a year. And I would take off. I go around the world. I couldn't even last…

Ken: *You and John Broome, traveling all over.*

Carmine: And Julie would have a hard time finding me or John. But I had to take off. I'd just go. But I worked seven months…

Ken: *Unlike John, you came back.*

Carmine: I came back. I always came back. I ran out of money and I come back. But it was nice; it was fun. But I reached a point where I just couldn't do it and how to go. And I'd go.

David: And those were some of the trips. He would go with the National Cartoonist Society and he would go entertain troops in foreign countries…

Carmine: Actually, they were Army bases and went up [on stage to draw]just silly drawings and kept the guys happy… We went to Korea, Japan, Germany, France… North Africa. I remember a wonderful story [involving] Jerry Robinson. Jerry doesn't remember it, but I remember it vividly. We were in North Africa and somebody suggested in the group, there was six of us, they wanted to go to a bordello. They wanted to go to North Africa. So this guy spoke up, "Well, Lucky Luciano has one in the middle of the desert out in the Sahara. " He said, "Want to go out there?" We said, "What the hell, why not?" And we take this drive and we go for hours. And, on the way out, now we're getting very nervous because all you see is sand dunes and sand dunes.… And we see this mud hut almost out in the middle of the desert. And there was a bordello that Lucky Luciano had run, and the girls were there, but nobody wanted any part. We didn't want to sleep with him. We were having a good time… But then Jerry was doing imitations of Charlie Chaplin at the bar. He was very good at that. And the girls were laughing, they were playing the piano, and were singing all night long. Nobody slept with anybody, but we left the next day. It was great trip. And I keep reminding Jerry and he says, "I don't remember it." I think he's a liar. [*laughter*] He doesn't want to remember it. It was a great time we had… Have you interviewed Jerry?


Oakland Tribune **people** Mon., Jan. 12, 1976 11

Did Superman Sell Out?

When times are bad, 'superheroes' like Superman and the Amazing Spiderman (seen in mortal combat at left) are big again. So says Carmine Infantino, publisher of DC Comics, which owns Superman. He (Carmine) is the fellow in the middle of the picture at right, checking the action on his new, big, super-special comic book at DeLauer's newsstand. Local readers are Ken Lindahl (left) and Epigmenio Hernandez (right)

By BOB MacKENZIE

Great Scott, it's mortifying!

Superman, in his humble guise as Clark Kent, isn't a newspaperman any more.

He's a TV anchorman.

That's a revoltin' development if ever there was one. Most of us went into this racket because we wanted to be ace reporters on a big paper like the Daily Planet, and have a cigar-puffing editor like Perry White chew us out, then we could send Jimmy Olsen out for coffee and...

Anyway, it doesn't seem right.

I discovered Superman had sold out to the TV boys when I looked at a copy of "The Battle of the Century: Superman Vs. the Amazing Spider-Man." This is a big special comic book that sells for two dollars.

Two dollars! Jumpin' Jehosaphat!

Well, you have to remember that dime comic books sell for 30 cents now. And they're only 32 pages counting the cover. Remember when every comic book promised "A Full 52 Pages"?

"The Battle of the Century" is one of the special issue comics that run 11 by 14 inches and go to 96 pages. Older comic fans, it is figured, can afford two bucks for a book. Comic book readers come in all ages, but they clump in certain groups. Ages 6 to 11 make up the largest group, then there's a gap while kids concentrate on puberty, then readership picks up again in high school. And there is a new, very strong college-age contingent.

I learned all this from Carmine Infantino, who is the publisher of DC Comics. DC owns Superman, who according to Infantino is bigger than ever. He thinks it has something to do with the economy.

"It seems whenever we have a depression, [illegible] replace him with Dan Rather. Lois Lane has her own show, giving the woman's viewpoint on the news. Otherwise their relationship hasn't changed much. In the

Ken: *I even worked for Jerry for a little while.*

Carmine: I didn't know that. He's a hell of a nice guy.

Ken: *And the first interview I ever did was Jerry Robinson for* The Amazing World of DC Comics. *So you were my first publisher!*

Carmine: That's funny. And Jerry and I remember once in Venice, we met [bandleader Xavier] Cugat and he was then married to Abbe Lane. I think it was in Venice, sitting at one of the coffee tables. They had just gotten married… [*Conversation delves into Jerry Robinson tribute dinner at San Diego Comic-Con and the antics of Irwin Hasen. –* **Y.E.**]

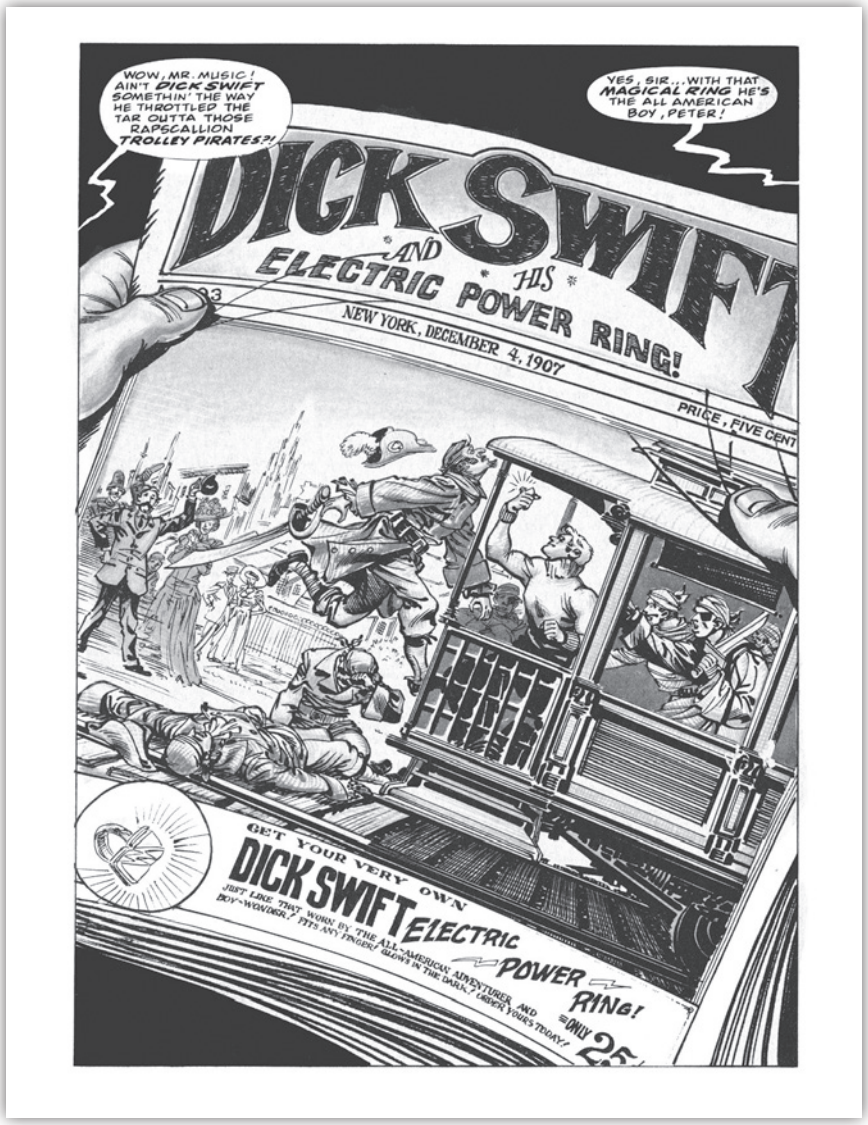
Ken: *We haven't talked about Star Wars. You did Star Wars for a while…*

Carmine: How many issues, David?

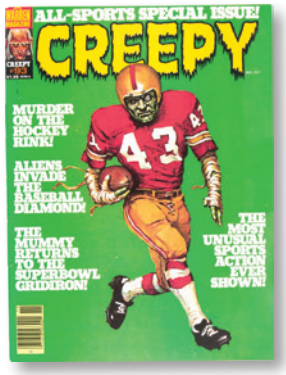
David: At least 20.

Carmine: They called me at Marvel and I was doing

This page: *Mere days before he was ejected from DC Comics by its corporate owners, Infantino posed for this* Oakland Tribune *newspaper (dated Jan. 12, '76) pic touting* Superman vs. the Amazing Spider-Man *[Apr. '76], a DC/Marvel production. Above is the cover by Ross Andru (pencils) and Giordano (inks).* **Previous page:** *Produced during DC's "Go-Go Check" days, an Infantino promotional image.*



Above: *After his unceremonious dismissal from DC Comics, Infantino found refuge at Warren Publications, where publisher Jim Warren offered working space and innumerable drawing assignments for the line's horror books. Of course, a murderer's row of comics pros lined up for a chance to ink the legend's pencils, including Bernie Wrightson on this* Creepy *#86 [Feb. '77] page.* **Below:** Creepy *#93 [Nov. '77] featured "strange sports stories" drawn by C.I.*



stuff for Jim Warren at the time, and I was doing stuff for California, and they asked if I would consider doing the *Star War* series. I hadn't seen the film, by the way. I said, "Sure, I'll try it." I didn't know what I was getting myself into! But Archie Goodwin was writing those things and they were just beautiful scripts. And I enjoyed that tremendously. But Archie was the key to the thing. Brilliant stuff, just brilliant.

David: That was a lot of work, a lot of research.

Carmine: *Very* hard. That was one of the toughest things to do. Because it was… that ship was an awful thing to draw. And that R2D2…? God almighty!

Ken: *Well, it was also interesting in that you sort of drew the strip between movies. The story content was between movies, but also the popularity was between movies. The person who did it before you did it at its height and the person did after you did it at its height and you sort of…*

Carmine: I did it in-between, but I think it was still selling. I don't know how *well* it was selling, but it was selling. They wanted me to continue but, at that point, Orlando had called me and he finally persuaded me to come back to DC and I said okay. And I dropped the *Star Wars* and went back. That's why I went back…

Ken: *Jim Warren, of course, was quite tickled. "I've got the former publisher of DC Comics as one of my pencilers"…*

Carmine: Jimmy was very sweet. When I left DC…

Ken: [Laughs] *You're one of the few people who calls him sweet!*

Carmine: Well, I got along with him. I had no problems… Jim lived across the street from me, on Second Avenue, at the time. He had an apartment across the street and he called me, he said, "You want to come down and spend some time [freelancing] with me?" I said, "Jim, I hadn't thought about it." He said, "Well, give it a shot. Try it for a while." And I did. I went down and I did a year or two or so. At least a year. But in between, I was doing stuff out on the coast. I come back, do more, go back and forth.

Ken: *When DC let you go, did you ever expect to draw again?*

Carmine: No, no, no.

Ken: *You sold your reference and your…*

Carmine: Pretty much. Of course, I sold everything to Kubert – my drawing board, my reference material – everything.

Ken: *How much reference material?*

Carmine: I think it was one file cabinet filled, but four-drawer. I'm pretty sure that's what it was. And there was a bookcase of artwork.

Ken: *"Reference" meaning machines and fashion…?*

Carmine: Pictures of everything in creation. I had movie stills in there, I had *National Geographic*s going back to 1929. I had everything in creation. In fact, when I went back to drawing and I spoke to Kubert, he said, "Don't even ask for that back, because you won't get it. It's over. It's mine." And I can't blame him. It was well worth it. I put a lot of time into that.

Ken: *Well, because, when you draw comic books, you draw everything.*

Carmine: You need them. You need a file cabinet. I can't say what you could do. You go to the public library, but that's a time waster and you haven't got that kind of time. So I think the best thing is have your own filing system. It works. For me, it did. But a lot of things I created [from imagination].

Ken: *Did you have big file of gorillas?*

Carmine: [*Laughs*] No! No, no. That was something else…

Ken: *You didn't need to have a file on gorillas! What is it about Carmine Infantino and gorillas?*

Carmine: We tried to think a couple of covers and they went through the roof with the gorillas on them, and that was it. Then then Julie created Gorilla Grodd. Do you remember the Gorilla City? And then there was "Detective Chimp." Yeah, you're right! [*chuckles*] I did do a lot of gorillas! Maybe it goes back to my ancestors, I don't know. Something's reflected there.

Ken: *You said "Detective Chimp" was one of your favorite things to draw…*

Carmine: Oh, I loved it! But it was very humorous. And, of course, John wrote it, and that was the beauty of it. But it was a charming strip. And I think there's a kind of a cult out there.

Ken: *That's part of the commercial part of commercial art: gorillas sell, draw them.*

David: But they were also fun to draw.

Carmine: Yeah, I thought so. They were easy. I think

gorillas were easy to draw.

Ken: *Why are they easy to draw?*

Carmine: Of course, it's a lot different than a figure. It's bulky and the movement is there. It's a lot of fun with a gorilla. It's a lot easier.

Ken: *I mean, you did a whole baseball team of gorillas!*

Carmine: That was done in "Strange Sports Stories." We did that, the gorilla baseball team. [*chuckles*] Then we had space basketball. Do you remember that one? Where they're floating around in space playing basketball…? That was Julie's idea. That was a beaut, too. And the football game, I think there was empty helmets or something… They were very tough, though. I was glad when that series ended, because that was draining the hell out of me.

Ken: *It was only five issues.*

Carmine: I know, but five was enough!

Ken: *And all Gardner Fox stories.*

Carmine: I think Gardner wrote every one of those. John [Broome] had been in Japan then. I think he was teaching over there. He did very little… he did *no* work for us then.

Ken: *Well, they came out in '65, so John was…*

Carmine: I think John stopped working for Julie, at that time. I'm fairly certain. You should know better.

Ken: *John was writing while he was living* [*overseas*]. *Well, I think, in '66 is when he moved to Paris.*

Carmine: Yeah, from Paris, he wrote…

Ken: *And then he moved to Japan.*

Carmine: We got some work, now and again, from him. And then, when he moved to Japan, it stopped completely. Now I remember.

Ken: *He was busy teaching.*

Carmine: Yeah, he was busy teaching. But that was the last we heard of John… I didn't, but Julie, I think, kept in touch with him, didn't he?

Ken: *Julie did, yes.*

Carmine: Because they were very close, I know that… He was a *delightful* guy, really… His scripts used words sparingly. And so did John. He said only what he had to, never more, never less. But delightful… he reminded me of Gary Cooper, for some reason. He was tall, angular, very slim. A beautiful man.

Ken: *You also drew Bill Fingers stories.*

Carmine: Yeah, I loved Bill. Bill, I knew quite well. He got such a raw deal on that Batman thing. He created so much of that stuff. And he was promised worlds and he got nothing. Poor guy. I think he ended up… Well, his [ex-]wife would throw him in jail every three weeks. He couldn't make his payments to her. But he was a nice man, a very talented man.

Ken: *Now, did he send a lot of reference along with the scripts you got?*

Carmine: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Bill was very precise with things like that. If whatever you were drawing, he'd send you the copy himself. He made sure it had to be accurate. He was a fine writer. I loved him.

Ken: *Now what did you draw that he wrote besides Batman?*

Carmine: He did a couple of things for [editor] Jack Schiff, a couple of science fiction things. I can't remember them off hand, but I enjoyed those.

Ken: *Did he send reference for those, too?*

Carmine: Always, always.

Ken: *So, no matter what it was, whether it was Batman or not…*

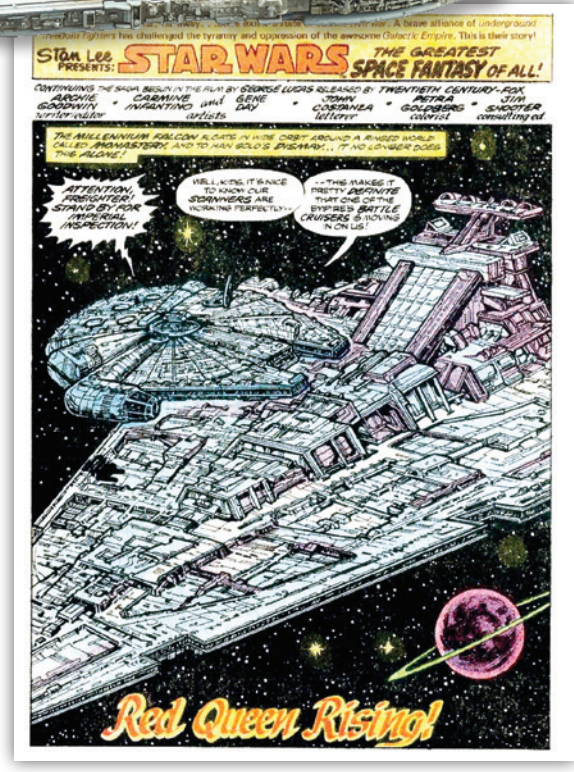
Carmine: It doesn't matter. I didn't do his Batman for Jack Schiff… [Bob] Kane had a contract and he had to do it. No one else could do it. And, of course, he was farming this stuff out to Sheldon Moldoff.

Ken: *So you didn't get to any of Bill Finger's* Batman *stories?…* [*There's a brief and mild disagreement whether Finger wrote for Schwartz.* – **Y.E.**]

Carmine: But Billy was a wonderful, wonderful writer

Ken: *And a self-made intellectual. He didn't go to school to know all that stuff. He just learned all that stuff on his own.*

Carmine: He was just so bright. He was a very bright guy. And there was a school of them. Eddie Herron was another brilliant guy… Eddie was the editor of *Stars and Stripes,* in World War II. He had people like Igor Cassini – [N.Y. society columnist pseudonym] Cholly



Above: *Infantino at the 1973 San Diego Comic-Con.* **Inset right:** *Unused cover design by Jack Kirby for* Kamandi, the Last Boy on Earth *#1 [Nov. '72].* **Previous page:** *Another post-executive gig for the artist was* Star Wars *at Marvel. At top is #14 [Aug. '78], inks by Terry Austin. Bottom is his splash of #36 [June '80] (with inks by Gene Day), a prime example of the complex ship designs the art team had to replicate. In center is a model of the* Millennium Falcon *space ship.* **Below:** *As noted, Ye Ed. had the privilege to go to town designing the autobiography,* The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino *['01], which the artist and publisher David Spurlock were promoting during the* Nuff Said *radio interview.*

Knickerbocker – who had a column in the *New York Journal of American*, he worked for Eddie. He had a number of famous people working for him, and then he came back to comics. He was the editor of *Captain Marvel*. And he did that work before he got drafted. Just a great talent and he died in the Veteran's Hospital here, on 23rd Street. And it's a very sad story, but a lot of these people ended up badly.

Ken: *Talk about some of the decisions you made when you were editorial director.*

Carmine: Bringing Jack Kirby over to DC was a decision I made.

Ken: *How did you get Jack to leave? He was "King Kirby"! Marvel was identified with him and he was identified with Marvel.*

Carmine: Jack and I were friends. So was Joe [Simon] and I. We were friends for years and we'd speak to each other often… And then I was going out to California, I believe, for a *Super Friends* thing. And Jack called me. We were talking. I says, Jack, I'm going to be out there. You want to have a drink when I'm out there? I hadn't seen him in about a year or two. He said, "Terrific!" So I got there and he came to my hotel to meet me, and he had this package under his arm. And he said, "I want to show you something." And he did. It was Forever People, Mister Miracle, and New Gods… I said, "These are great! When are you putting them out?" He said, "I'm not. I want to do 'em for you." It was that simple… He said, "I want a three-year contract." I gave it to him. We did it all right then and there. And he came and worked for me. And that was it.

David: And he wasn't happy at Marvel.

Carmine: Apparently he wasn't happy over there. Something was wrong with he and Stan. I didn't get involved with that, I didn't want to. That wasn't my concern. And I was happy to have him. I had a problem over at DC getting him, because there was some bad blood between him and [Jack] Schiff about a newspaper strip [*Sky Masters of Space Force*]. I think Schiff sold it originally and Jack took it away. I don't know what the details were.

Ken: *Well, also, Jack Kirby felt that Jack Schiff held a grudge about it. And he did.*

Carmine: He did!

David: Kirby was blacklisted at DC.

Ken: *I understand that Jack Schiff was not as angry at Kirby as Kirby thought he was.*

Carmine: No, that's not true. They were quite angry because, when I went back and talked to them about I'm bringing him back, I got a lot of resistance.

David: It wasn't just Schiff.

Carmine: It was the whole organization… The politics were terrible.

David: And Carmine really went to bat to bring Jack in.

Carmine: I said to them, "I gave him a contract, he's coming, that's it." And that was the end of it.

Ken: *I know there was one fan who actually managed to get somebody to bet with him that Jack Kirby was going to leave Marvel and he's going to draw* Jimmy Olsen, *which of course, how would anybody believe that? Such a preposterous story!* [laughs]

Carmine: He asked for *Jimmy Olsen.*

Ken: *He asked for it.*

Carmine: Yeah. He asked to do it. Now, I'll tell you something strange about that. With his beautiful artwork and his writing, the book died, and we went back to the original artist, who was a terrible artist, and the simple writing – that was for little kids, that book, and it wasn't really for anybody bright – and there were book went right back up and sales went right back up again. So I took him off *Jimmy Olsen* and put on a number of things.

Ken: *That's about when* Kamandi *came out.*

Carmine: *Kamandi* came out after *The New Gods* and

Infantino photo by Alan Light. Kamandi TM & © DC Comics. *Amazing World of Carmine Infantino* © Vanguard Productions.

Forever People…

Ken: *I think right around the time you took him off* Jimmy Olsen, *isn't that when* Kamandi *came out…?* [*Discussion regarding timing of Kirby titles after the Fourth World.* – **Y.E.**]

Carmine: The whole [Fourth World] group was losing money… we stayed with 'em as long as we could.

Ken: *So the first six issues, it was making money?*

Carmine: No, no. The first issue made money. I started out at 350,000 printing on that. Now, in those days, a book had to sell more than 49% to make money. It had to. And that 350,000, this first book come in at 52%, which wasn't great, but I thought it was pretty good as far as making some money and the subsequent issues died. They went down to 47%, 44%, and at 41%, the distributor came in and said to me, "That's it, kiddo. Those books are gone." So I had no choice. I had to drop them. They really controlled our titles and distribution, y'know. They would tell us what books could last, what books couldn't. So all of Jack's books died.

David: Carmine is 75 and I think it's just fantastic the way he can remember how many copies they printed, the sell-through percentage… That was very important.

Carmine: Then I put Jack on *Kamandi*. I saw *The Planet of the Apes* at that time. I called him up. I said, "Jack…"

Ed: *"Gorillas sell!"* [laughter]

Carmine: But he didn't use the gorillas, actually! He said, "I got a kid I want to use." I said, "Do what you want, but think about that *Planet of the Apes*." And that did well, that book. It did quite well for a while… But then, at one point, Joe Simon came to work for me and he tried a few books that bombed, one after another. There was *Prez*…

David: *Brother Power the Geek…*

Ken: Brother Power the Geek *was the late '60s.*

Carmine: That did well! Do you know who killed that book? Mort Weisinger. He had a lot of influence with Liebowitz at the time and he hated the book, but the book started to do very well.

Ken: *But* Geek *only had two issues.*

Carmine: But the second issue went way up, *way* up in sales. And the old man called me in and said, "Carmine, get rid of it." I said, "Why? It was beginning to connect." "No, I don't like it." I said, "You mean Mort didn't like it?" Mort was a big influence on him. So, when Mort wanted to quit, I was happy to get rid of him and we did.

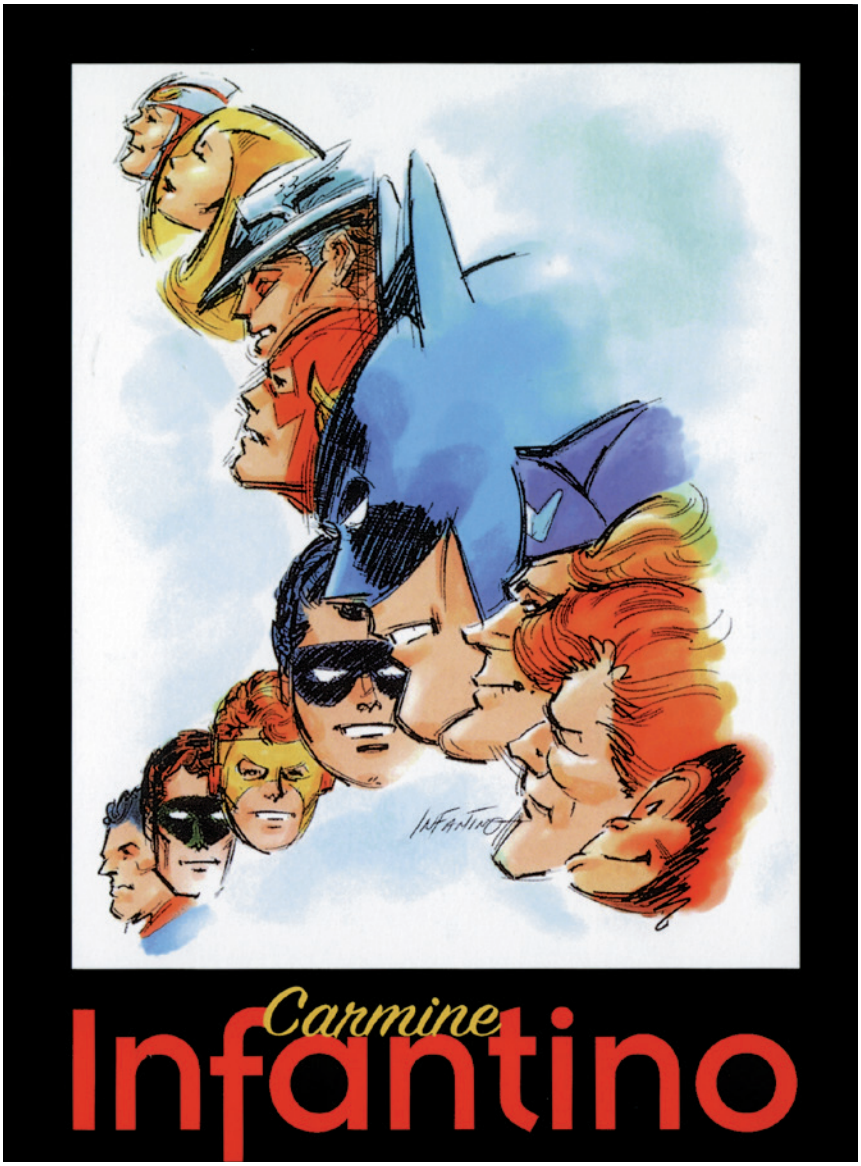
But I asked Jack… at that point, I ran out of books for him. Would he do a book with Joe? Joe was more than willing and we did Sandman. They did it and the damn thing went through the roof. The sales literally went through the roof. I think we got a 68% sale when everything else was doing about 45 and 48%. First I called Joe. I said, "Would you work with Jack again?" He said, "Sure, anytime." And Jack wouldn't do it. And then Joe even was willing to leave his name off it, and Jack just wouldn't do it. I said, "Alright." Then I gave him some other things to do. I think a book called *In the Days of the Mob*. I told him, write a crime book.

And then, one day, he came in, he said, "Carmine, I can't take it. I'm leaving. I'm going back to Marvel." I said, "Okay, so be it." I couldn't hold him and that was the end of that. But it was a short…

Above: *Ye Ed. was so enamored with Infantino's reign at DC that he devoted the first issue of his magazine,* Comic Book Artist *[May '98], to those "Daring & Different" books. Cover art by Neal Adams.*

Inset left: *CINFA reveals it was editor Mort Weisinger who urged the cancellation of Joe Simon's Brother Power the Geek before sales figures came in. Cover of #1 [Oct. '68] by Simon.* **Below:** The Sandman *#1 [Winter '74], cover art by Jack Kirby and Frank Giacoia.*

Batman, *Brother Power the Geek*, *The Sandman* TM & © DC Comics. *Comic Book Artist* TM & © Jon B. Cooke.



Above: *Rouge Enfant produced sketches for a series of lithograph prints published for the Warner Bros. Studio Stores featuring his signature DC Comics characters. Store signings were arranged with this invitation printed by Warner Bros. to promote his signing appearances.* **Below:** *Self-caricature from the table of contents page in* DC Special *#1 [Dec. '68].*

Ken: *So he wasn't enjoying his time at DC?*

Carmine: He was very upset because I wanted him to work with a writer. That really got him upset. I wanted him to work with Joe Simon again.

Ken: *His whole point [of leaving Marvel] was he wanted to be his own writer.*

Carmine: He wanted to be Kirby. I can understand that.

David: He was tired of playing second fiddle to Simon and Stan Lee.

Carmine: He did it with Simon, he did it with Stan Lee. He wanted to be himself! So, good, bad, or indifferent, he wanted [to be writer], and he left me. He went back to Marvel. But we had no bad blood. We were friends. We left as friends and he went back and we kept in touch.

Ken: *Well, if* Sandman *sold so well, how come it only lasted four issues?*

David: The first issue, with the Simon/Kirby reunion, sold. Then, after that, it was Kirby without Simon, and it didn't do as well as the Simon/Kirby reunion issue.

Carmine: And he didn't believe it. Jack didn't believe the numbers sometimes. I said, "Jack, why should I lie to you?" And I offered him everything possible just to keep him, but he wouldn't stay.

Ken: *Well, what was interesting is that Jack seems to convinced just pretty much everybody that what he said the numbers were the real numbers.*

Carmine: There's a story… this whole myth… a story that – listen to this – that I had created two sets of numbers… There was two sets of numbers and Kirby's books were selling magnificently, and I purposely create a whole set of numbers that they didn't sell well, at all. Well, first of all, I don't create the numbers. I get them from the distributor who gives 'em to the accountant, and the accountant comes to me and shows me the numbers. But… the whole comic world [was convinced] that this is what happened. It never happened that way.

Ken: *There's also the story that* New Gods *and* Forever People *were selling and you canceled them. You had some personal thing with Jack.*

Carmine: Why would I hire Jack then? I mean, he came over here. First of all, Jack came over and my reputation was on the line, because I insisted on bringing him over and they were going to hang me with Jack if nothing worked. So why would I want to kill a book if it was doing well?

David: He had to fight to get Jack back to DC.

Carmine: It was crazy!… It was a mess… But why would I kill the book that's making money? First of all, do you think they would let me do that? The people above me…? Come on. Books were killed. Look at *Bat Lash*, my favorite. I had to kill it. It didn't make money. I had to kill it.

David: When Carmine ran DC, it was amazing how much power he had. But, at the same time, there were always other people watching the numbers, watching the figures. He couldn't have done things like that.

Carmine: I had some boss over me, and they would go over the numbers monthly.

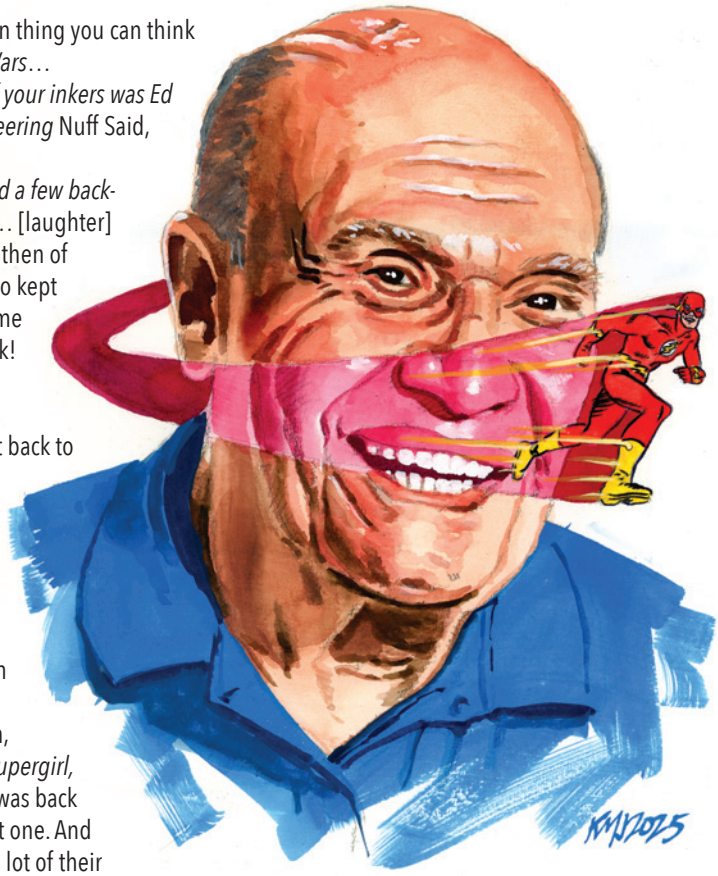
Ken: *Well, you were there when DC went from being a family-owned business by the Donenfelds to being owned by Time-Warner, right?*

Carmine: Well, it wasn't Warner; it was Kinney National, at that time. They were an undertaker parlor and then they bought Warner Bros. And it became a whole conglomerate.

Ken: *How did that change things?*

Carmine: Well, I'll tell you: at one point, we were 909 Third Avenue. We were paying about $5 a [square] foot for rent, and suddenly we had to move to Rockefeller Center and pay $37 a foot for rent. Had to come out of something. They didn't care how you did it, you had to do it, y'know. And they would come down to look at your numbers and if something didn't sell, it had to go. They don't want to know from nothing. So, monthly, they'd come down and look at the numbers, see what you were doing, why, what for, and so on. They even wanted to put time clocks in and, geez, I won't allow that! I said, "You're talking to creative people! What are you, crazy?" It was a lot of fighting constantly. It was a tough sell there… They were never fond of comics.The guy who was in charge, he's gone now, Steve Ross. One time somebody asked us, they had an open window at 75 Rock, and would you want to put some of your books in the window? And we did. And when he came by with his chauffeur, he screamed, "Get that crap out of my windows!" And, years later, he's walking around giving Batman pins away when the movie came out. [*Ken laughs*] So go figure.

Ken: *Because it wasn't a comic book; it was a movie.*
Carmine: That's right.
Ken: *So Kirby came to DC because he wanted to, and he left because he wanted to. And you just sort of were there.*
Carmine: He left because he thought the books were doing well. He wanted to keep writing, too. And I just couldn't do it. I said, "Jack, I'll send you the numbers." He didn't believe the numbers. I said, "Jack, I got to live with these numbers. You don't, but I have to." But I offered him different books. I said, let's do different things. Try anything…
Ken: *And it wasn't that long after Kirby left that you left…*
Carmine: Within a year. But I tell you, I had gotten DC neck and neck with Marvel just before I left. We were neck and neck. And we had done great, and we had won all kinds of awards at that point.
David: And congratulations from the Warner Bros. executives.
Carmine: Yeah. And we made a ton of money there… then, of course, the year that Marvel tried that [flooding the stands] and we had to match book for book, the guys upstairs, I'm sorry, wouldn't understand that. They couldn't understand that.
Ken: *So then you were forced out.*
Carmine: Well, they said, "Would you do any different?" "No," I said. "Okay, thank you." [*chuckles*] That was it.
Ken: *They didn't understand. And it was right around the time of the DC Convention. So there was a very strange sort of underlying scuttlebutt about the DC Convention that they'd just gotten rid of Carmine Infantino and they're bringing in this person that nobody's ever heard of… Okay, so now DC has gotten rid of you because you wouldn't do what they wanted. Or rather, you wouldn't do what Warner wanted.*
Carmine: Right.
Ken: *And then you think you're never get a joy again. You sell all your art stuff to Joe Kubert from your joints?*
Carmine: No, I had sold that before. Because I had moved from my apartment I had on 46th Street at the time, and I was moving to 48th Street. So I had a one-room apartment there with my drawing board and things, and I wasn't using it anymore. So Joe bought it then. But it was two years after that when I left, and that was all gone already.
Ken: *Okay, and then, of course, Jim Warren hired you.*
Carmine: Right. I went down there to work.
Ken: *And then Marvel hired you.*
Carmine: You, then Marvel hired me. Hanna -Barbera hired me, and I moved all around the place.
Ken: *Now were you doing full-script at Marvel or did you do Marvel style?*
Carmine: Marvel style. I don't like to work that way. I didn't enjoy it at all.
Ken: *So you had to draw the things without knowing what the dialogue was.*
Carmine: We did it on Bat Lash, though, but I only wrote it; I didn't draw it. But when I actually drew it though, I didn't enjoy it. It wasn't my way, but I did it. I was able to do it. It was not a new thing; that's been done for years.
Ken: *And so you did* Spiderwoman…
Carmine: *Spiderwoman, Nova, Captain America, Ms. Marvel,* every damn thing you can think of… a lot of *Star Wars*…
Ken: *And one of your inkers was Ed Menja, now engineering* Nuff Said, *on WBAI-FM!*
Ed: *Well, I just did a few backgrounds, that's all…* [laughter]
Carmine: And then of course, Joe Orlando kept bugging me to come back… "Come back! Come back!" And finally I went back.
David: He went back to DC and, besides taking over *The Flash* and breathing life into that for close to 60 issues, he also did quite a run on *Supergirl*.
Carmine: Yeah, that's right. I did *Supergirl,* too, at that time. I was back with Julie with that one. And then I did an awful lot of their advertising work. And then I went back to Barbera.
David: And teaching at SVA.
Carmine: At SVA… I do the teaching only a day-and-a-half a week. I won't do more than that. I am doing an awful lot of stuff for the Warner Stores, an awful lot. I do a lot of lithos for them. And I'm also doing a style guide on the Batman of the '50s for them; it's about 100 pages. It's a big, tough project… I just did the roughs. I'll be beginning next week on the finishes on that.
David: He just did a new *Flash* cover for DC.
Carmine: Yeah, I did them a favor on that one… I did that.
Ken: *Do you feel that you're sort of retreading old ground doing* The Flash *again?*
Carmine: Well, The Flash, what I'm really doing on that stuff… With the lithos, I doing just a couple of sketches and they use the old drawings and they [use a] mix… [*Discussion of lithography details.* – **Y.E.**]
David: And that's got us up to date!
Carmine: And, pretty much, we're up to today. But, as of today, I don't buy green bananas. [*David plugs the autobiography, a Warner Bros. Studio Store signing, and an upcoming convention appearance.* – **Y.E.**] Other than that, we're not doing a thing. [*laughter*]
Ed: *Other than that, he's taking it easy!* [Carmine laughs]
Ken: *In other words, Carmine's back!* [laughs]
David: With a vengeance!



Above: *Ken Meyer, Jr.'s portrait of Carmine Infantino.* **Below:** *The passing of the legend happened on April 4, 2013. The next day,* The New York Times *honored him with an obituary. This screenshot is of the paper's online article.*

Carmine Infantino, Reviver of Batman and Flash, Dies at 87

Share full article

Carmine Infantino in 1958. Bill Crawford from The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino

By Margalit Fox
April 5, 2013

Carmine Infantino — the man who SAVED BATMAN! — died on Thursday at his home in Manhattan. Mr. Infantino, a celebrated comic-book artist who also drew the Flash, was 87.

His agent, J. David Spurlock, confirmed the death.

Mr. Infantino's dynamic, avant-garde aesthetic helped usher in the "silver age" of comic books, which held sway from the mid-1950s to about 1970. He was known in particular for his long association with DC Comics, where he began as an artist, became an editor and was later the publisher.

Sleek and streamlined, Mr. Infantino's work married comic-book art — formerly busier and baggier — to midcentury modernism. He was considered one of the industry's finest pencilers, as the artist who first gives a story visual form is known. (An inker follows behind, filling in the penciler's lines.)

As a cover artist Mr. Infantino was a master of motion, and on each

TwoMorrows Ad

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Doppelgängers

Sometimes spotting creators at the con has you seeing double…

At San Diego Comic-Con 2014, writer/producer/actor Felicia Day wonders, "Who is this woman, and why is she so much taller than me?"

Amy Chu, writer and proprietor of Alpha Girl Comics, introduces our photographer to her cardboard twin at Fan Expo Philadelphia 2022.

Mirror Image

Science fiction authors the Winner Twins – Brittany and Brianna – at San Diego Comic-Con 2016.

Brothers Fábio Moon (left) and Gabriel Bá (right) at New York Comic Con 2015.

The Fraim brothers: penciler Brendon (left) and inker Brian (right) at Baltimore Comic-Con 2025.

Photography by Kendall Whitehouse

COMIC BOOK CREATOR NEXT ISH

coming attractions: cbc #45 falls in september

Gene Colan: The Painter with Pencils!

Daredevil, Stilt-Man TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Gentleman **GENE COLAN**, artist of so many classic comics, including *Tomb of Dracula* and *Daredevil*, is celebrated with a transcript of his 75th surprise birthday panel at the 2001 San Diego Comic-Con, guest-starring a powerhouse line-up: **MARK EVANIER**, **JOHN ROMITA**, **DON MCGREGOR**, **MARIE SEVERIN**, **MARV WOLFMAN**, and **JOHN BUSCEMA**! Plus Colan biographer **TOM FIELD** shares a heartfelt essay, "I Dream of Gene," about his late friend. In addition, we chat with **CAROL LAY**, the cartoonist you *have* to learn more about, with her career traversing Gold Key, Marvel, DC, Bongo, Last Gasp, Kitchen Sink, Star*Reach, Eclipse, and lots of other publishers! Ye Ed. also recalls a visit to Florida's now long-gone, all-in-one comics imprint, **CROSSGEN**. Plus, the final portion of **TED JALBERT**'s chat with **JACK KATZ** is included, along with part two of **JOE HILL**'s interview conducted by **GLEN CADIGAN**. And researcher **SHAUN CLANCY** reveals some fascinating details regarding **HILLMAN PERIODICALS** and, aided by an interview with **MARK WHEATLEY**, your humble editor finds the skinny regarding madman **MYRON FASS**'s *Heavy Metal* wannabe, **GASM**! There's also the usual gang of contributors, including the awesome **HEMBECK**!

Full-color, 84 pages, $10.95

a picture is worth a thousand words

I have a long and storied history with the Girl of Steel – my very first published coloring was a "Supergirl" story. Back when I began my career in 1981, DC Comics would teach rookie colorists the storytelling basics by re-coloring stories being reprinted in digest editions.

After coloring reprints down in the minors, colorists would graduate to back-up features – seven-page stories printed in the backend of the comics, and so my first original coloring was one of these stories – featuring Supergirl.

I then moved up to full-length, upfront books and series – and the pinnacle – coloring covers. And, again, my first full-length series and cover coloring was the cousin from Krypton.

And, to top it all off, here I was getting to collaborate with one of my lifelong artistic idols and inspirations – Carmine Infantino. With inks by Bob Oksner no less! I recall being a young preteen, traveling to a Boy Scout convention off in the hinterland, running across a small mom and pop store out in the woods with a comic-book spinner rack, and finding a *Flash Annual,* with Carmine's feature, "How I Draw The Flash"… which helped to spark the dream that I, too, could someday become a comic book creator – and now, here I was, getting to work with him.

Presented here are his pencils from our 1980s *Supergirl* run – page one, issue #1.

I hope you enjoy seeing it half as much as I do…! – **TZ**

from the archives of Tom Ziuko