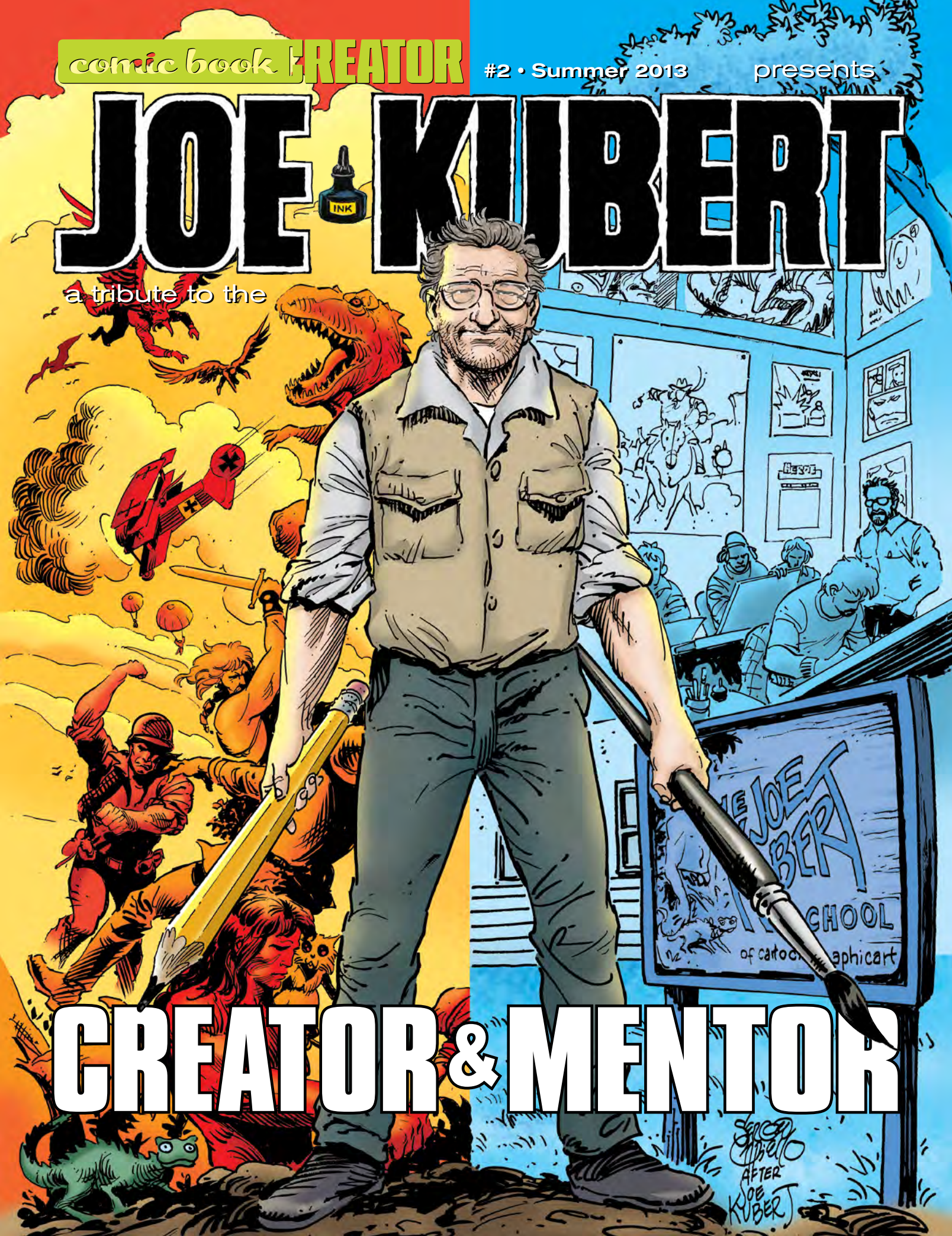
comic book CREATOR
#2 • Summer 2013

presents

JOE KUBERT

a tribute to the

CREATOR & MENTOR



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ABOUT OUR COVER: Sergio Cariello, himself a comic book professional who graduated the Kubert School, expertly delineates a pastiche of Joe Kubert's iconic *Our Army at War* #220 [June 1970] cover, no doubt itself a sly homage by Joe to his beloved caveman creation, Tor. Colors by Tom Ziuko, who recaptured the startling orange/blue color motif! Thanks to Sergio and Tom.

Making His Mark: A Visit with Joe Kubert

Christopher Irving interviews the comic book creator on a life well lived

by CHRISTOPHER IRVING *CBC* Contributing Editor

Inset right: *Courtesy of Bill Schelly and the Kubert family, a detail of Joe dressed in top hat and tails for his bar mitzvah party. Yes, by the time he was 13, Joe was a professional comic book artist*

Joe Kubert stood up from the art table in his office at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, a warm and bright room with a long table in the center, and framed artwork of Joe's on the far wall. On the wall alongside the door, and to the left, is a flat file, and Joe's art table. Wearing a long-sleeved gray polo shirt and blue jeans, Joe Kubert's youthfulness belied his age of 82.

This was an early Spring day in 2009 and I arrived to finally interview Kubert in person, unlike the several times I'd chatted with him through a telephone receiver over the years. The man had a presence. And not just physical, but authoritative, yet kindly.

It was a presence on par with the authority and power of his work, work that started at 12 years of age in 1938 that went from awkward to masterful. The older Joe Kubert got, the better his work became: something rare in even old comics masters, and still on display in his final work done for DC Comics, published posthumously in *Joe Kubert Presents* and, to a point, his inks on the *Before Watchmen: Nite Owl* comics drawn with his son Andy.

This profile takes my essay from that recent spring day and merges with past talks with Joe to give a glimpse at the man and artist.

Joe Kubert's parents and sister tried to flee Poland in 1926, but his mother, pregnant with Joe, was denied passage. Only after Joe's birth were they able to board and steam for the American shore, thus avoiding the rise of the Third Reich. Settling in the Lower East Side of Brooklyn, Joe's father became a local butcher, while Joe and his sister grew up during the Great Depression in one of New York's toughest neighborhoods.

"I think that people now have a difficulty understanding what was going on at that time, compared to today," Joe explained. "It was a simpler time, money was more difficult to come by, values were quite different, there were less people around, but competition was heavier… It's like trying to describe what's going on on Mars. It was a different world."

The world of *Jew Gangster,* Kubert's 2005 graphic novel based on that otherworldly childhood environment, follows the initiation of a teenager into the world of organized crime, eager to make something of himself to provide for his family… no matter the cost to his conscience or soul. Kubert admitted the family in the book was "closely aligned" to his own, and a departure point for the more dangerous childhood that he might have had.

"In fact, in the neighborhood where I grew up, it was not unusual to see who would be considered a crime figure today, walking around and looked at in terms of being a kind of hero," Kubert reflected. "Here was somebody who, through his own endeavors and efforts (what was described by other civilians) had the guts to go ahead and do what it was he felt he had to do in order to make a buck. Everybody else would have loved to do the same thing to make that kind of an income, but were never willing to overstep the bounds for whatever reason."

I asked him if he was ever tempted to overstep those bounds, and there was an awkward pause. For a fleeting second, I reminded myself that even in his octogenarian years, Joe Kubert could probably still kick my 32-year-old butt.

"Not really," he answered, breaking the silence. "But the question is a provocative one, and I'm not sure if you really expect me to answer that honestly."

The tense moment gave way to a laugh, and he went into a story that has stayed with him since he was a kid:

"But what it provokes right now is that I think of the reasons a lot of us stayed straight. Some of my friends ran into a lot of problems, in terms of the law and so forth, and it wasn't a difficult thing to do. I was lucky in the fact that my parents were strict when it came to stuff like that, I recall, when I was six- or seven-years-old.

"When people bought newspapers, they'd put the pennies on the newsstand, take the newspaper, and just walk away. One time, I took the pennies off the newsstand and put them in my pocket. I was with my kid sister, who was three years younger than I, and the moment we walked into my father's store (my father owned a butcher store at the time), she told my father I took the pennies off of the stand. She immediately reported it to my father. My father, who was quite a disciplinarian, instead of making a big to-do about it, took me by the hand and walked me back to the newsstand, and made me give the pennies to the owner. I was mortified. That was quite a lesson to me, but that was the kind of thing that happened, and one of the things that kept me straight. It was not because I wasn't tempted, but because that's how it worked out.

"Another thing was that I was occupied,

This piece, our opening article for this special Joe Kubert tribute, is by Ye Ed's friend and confidante, Christopher Irving, and it appeared in slightly different form in the Irving/Seth Kushner tome, Leaping Tall Buildings: The Origins of American Comics. *The title was selected by yours truly and it refers to Joe's introduction to his masterpiece,* Yossel: April 19, 1943, *where he wrote, "I started to draw as soon as I was old enough to hold anything that would make a mark."*

Top: *The appeal of Joe Kubert's vibrant art and engaging storytelling in "Hawkman" is obvious in this* Flash Comics *#104 [Feb. 1949] spread.*
Above: *Hawkman figure from the cover of that same issue, the last of that '40s title.*
Next page: *Contributor Bill Schelly and Ye Ed are not quite sure where this Hawkman and Hawkgirl image originally appeared, but there's a consensus that it was likely drawn by Joe Kubert in the late 1970s and appeared as a poster, possibly for the European market.*

an opportunity to show that I did improve over the years," speculated Joe. "For some weird reason, as a kid, the fact that you don't know anything… gives you the courage to do things that, if you really realized how bad you were, you would have thought twice about it.

"It did give me an opportunity, the second time around, to feel freer and more sure of myself."

When "Sgt. Rock" debuted in *Our Army at War,* in 1959, written by Robert Kanigher, the visuals were quickly taken over by Joe, and the two made him their signature character. Kanigher's writing reflected his love of haiku writing, as captions were broken over several panels to create a narrative tempo that accompanied the visual one engineered by Kubert: it was alchemy in comics, created by the team-up of a visual genius with a literary one. Kubert's art took on a grit that reminded us, practically every story, that war was not to be glorified. There could be acts of valor and heroism, and Sgt. Rock reminded us that they always came at a price.

"My attitude in my job is that the person that I tried to please was not the audience, and not the editor I worked for: the person I tried to please was myself," Kubert admitted. "I love to draw, and I love to do this kind of work as a comic book artist. Being a comic book artist is not the means for me to become a fine artist, or to become an illustrator or anything else, but to be a cartoonist. That's what I love doing.

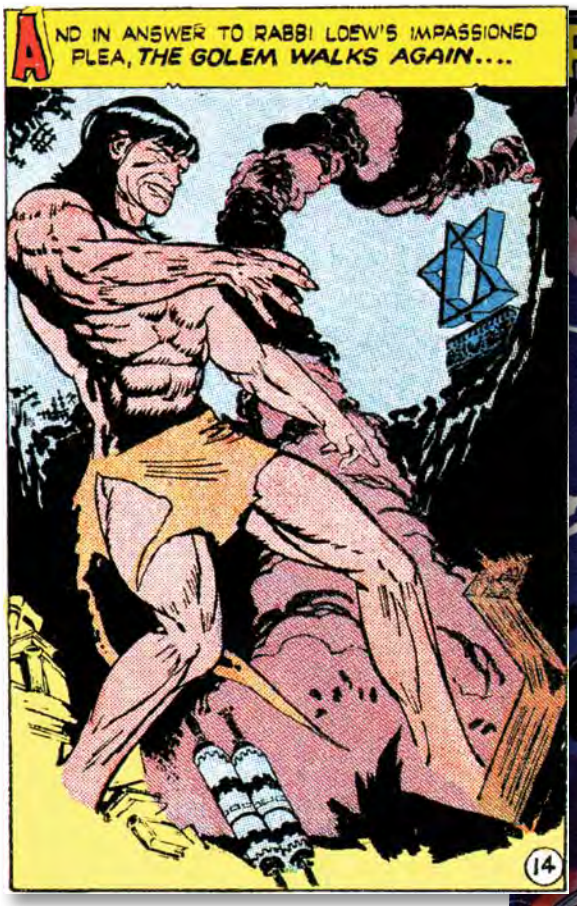
"If the stuff that I do gratifies me, it'll be nice if it sells more books. I try to put together stuff that interests me, as far as the ideas and the thoughts that I have, and I try to put them down in a graphic form, hoping that people who look at my stuff get the same kind of kick looking at what I put down in graphics, that I enjoyed mentally and emotionally."

In the late '60s, artist Carmine Infantino rose to editorial power at DC Comics, and he recruited Kubert as one of his "artist-as-editors," a move designed to keep DC visually on par with Marvel. For Joe, it was as much a training ground as his early days working for Shelly Mayer.

"I made a lot of mistakes, sure," Joe admitted. "I know that I benefited by learning things, but they weren't things I set out to learn. It was just a job, and I did it, that's all. I think that time has separated and clarified this business of being a professional, instead of just doing the work. The guys that I worked with were my friends, and people that I worked with all of the time. Very often that became a problem, simply

Bill Schelly's Top Ten Joe Kubert Comics

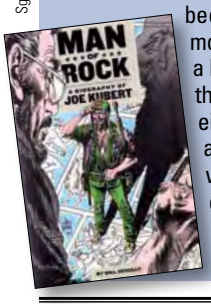
The Masterful Artist's Boswell Picks the Best of the Best in Chronological Order

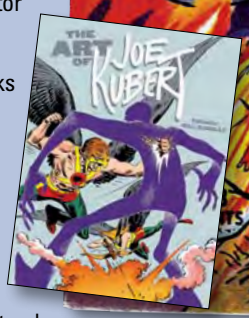


"The Golem" appears in *Weird Horrors & Daring Adventures: The Joe Kubert Archives Vol. 1*, edited by Bill Schelly.

#1 "The Golem" [*The Challenger* #3, 1946] was Joe Kubert's first important comics story, and presaged Jewish themes in his later, mature work. **1946**

BILL SCHELLY, of course, is a notable early member of comics fandom, prominent historian of the fan scene, and is currently an associate editor of our sister magazine, Roy Thomas' *Alter Ego.* Ye Ed points out Bill, naturally, because our pal is also the author of two superb books on the life and work of Joe Kubert, both published by Fantagraphics Books — 2008's *Man of Rock: A Biography of Joe Kubert* and *The Art of Joe Kubert* [2011] — *and* because my friend was enormously generous in sharing a bounty of Kubert material that did not make it into either tome. While he understandably begged off contributing to the issue in a substantial way — claiming utter fatigue with the subject — he *did* cotton to a suggestion to list his Top Ten Kubert works. Bill, Kubert lovers everywhere are very grateful for your tremendous contributions! Buy his books, peeps!





Sgt. Rock, Hawkman TM & © DC Comics.

#2 The volcano cover to *Tor* Vol. 1 #3 [May 1954] is one of the most striking, brilliantly colored covers on any comic book from any era. **1954**

Keepers of the Flame: Adam and

Talking with Joe's comic-book creator sons

Conducted by JON B. COOKE & CHRISTOPHER L. KNOWLES

[*The following interview took place in Andy Kubert's studio on a sunny Saturday morning — March 9, 2013 — at The Kubert School, in Dover, New Jersey. About seven months had come and gone since their father had died, but the pain of his passing was still very near the surface for the brothers, the youngest sons of Joe Kubert. Ye Ed was joined by friend and former* Comic Book Artist *associate editor, Christopher L. Knowles, who himself was a graduate of The Kubert School.* CBC *is grateful to the Kubert men for taking time on a beautiful weekend and for being supportive of this tribute issue from its inception. This interview was transcribed by Brian K. Morris and was copy-edited for accuracy and clarification by Adam and Andy.* — **JBC**]

Comic Book Creator: *We're at the Kubert School with Adam and Andy Kubert. It's 11:24 and here we go. So, how's it going, guys?*
Andy Kubert: It's going as well as can be expected. It's going okay.
Chris Knowles: *What's on the plate?*
Adam Kubert: Well, today, I woke up at five, [*laughter*] I got my daughter off me, put her back in her bed — and my daughter's three. What's on my plate? I'm currently working on an issue of *Uncanny Avengers*. And then, after that, Marvel has a big project lined up for me that I can't talk about yet. It's a secret project. I just re-signed with Marvel for another three years.
Chris: *Exclusive?*
Adam: Exclusive. And as far as what's on my plate, drawing-wise, that's it. Oh yeah, I'm also doing six covers of one of Marvel's events. Just the covers. Besides that, the things that are going on at the school….
Andy: You want to know what's on my plate besides school stuff? What am I doing up at DC? I just wrapped an issue of *Batman* that's coming out this week, #18. Scott Snyder's writing it. There was a project I started in 2008, a project I wrote and drew, that I had to put down to work on various assignments: I did two issues of *Batman* with Neil Gaiman and then *Flashpoint* with Geoff Johns, and a whole bunch of other things. But I'm picking up that project again. It's my first writing assignment. It's a project that we are looking at putting out sometime this year. I think it'll catch a lot of people's attention. Hopefully they'll like it!
Chris: *Cool. Who's inking?*
Andy: I am. I'm writing, penciling and inking it. I'm not lettering or coloring it. [*laughter*]
CBC: *Obviously, it's a long time in the planning. Is this the culmination of an idea you had?*
Andy: It is from an idea I had and it's a character that I really love. DC actually encouraged me to do it — "Why don't you start writing? Why don't you give it a shot?" And I always wanted to write, and this is an opportunity to do it.
CBC: *And how's the experience of writing?*
Andy: At first, it was daunting. [*laughs*] I had to come up with the idea and present the idea to the editors to get it approved. There's a couple of phases you have to

Above: *Adam (left) and Andy Kubert pose for Ye Ed in Andy's studio at The Kubert School, during their interview at the Dover, N.J. art institution this past March.*

Andy Kubert on Facing the Future

on lessons learned and shared responsibility to ensure their father's dream endures

go through, including re-writes, that kind of thing. And it was all-new to me, but it was all interesting and I really enjoyed it. But I think that the toughest part for me is going to be the dialogue. That's an art unto itself and I don't have the experience, so I've got to work on that a bit. [*chuckles*] But I'll figure it out.

CBC: *Who's the editor in that?*

Andy: Mike Marts, and he was a big help in assisting me to put it together. It was great working with him on it. But, besides that, what else do I have going on? [*mutual chuckling*] I drew the cover to this year's *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. I also just did a whole bunch of covers, *Batman* covers, just a whole lot of covers. Things like that.

One other thing that I do is, once a week, I go up to the DC offices and serve as a consultant on art, storytelling… anything they need.

Chris: *Now what do you do there? What does that include?*

Andy: I meet with the editors. If there's any problems, if they see something that doesn't work, storytelling-wise; something they have a problem with — anything — I go over it with them. We have meetings, literally all day, on that.

CBC: *About your work?*

Andy: It could be about mine or about whatever else they're working on at that time.

CBC: *Are you a creative liaison or do you just make suggestions?*

Andy: I just make suggestions. It's a consulting thing. Whatever they ask for help with. I like very much going up there and I like the people there. I get along great with them and there's a nice camaraderie. I enjoy it a lot.

CBC: *Do you see an editorial capacity in the future for you, like your father?*

Andy: I have no idea where it's going. It's one day a week, right now, so it's good for me. Besides that, I have the school and then I have my drawing work. I'm busy seven days a week, literally. Maybe eight days a week. [*chuckling*]

CBC: *Was your father's passing as sudden to you both as it was to the comics community?*

Adam: Yes, it was. It was very sudden. He had been feeling tired for three days… well, he was going to an already-scheduled doctor's appointment.

Andy: Dad wasn't feeling well, but he already had a doctor's appointment, and if he hadn't had that appointment, I was going to bring him, because he was feeling tired and wasn't himself. He was usually a very energetic and outgoing guy, so we all noticed a slowdown. He never complained about anything. You had to ask, "Hey, you okay? Are you all right?" And he'd say, "I'll be fine. I'm fine. Don't worry about me."

Anyway, we got him to the doctor and the doctor said, "Joe, we're going to send you to the hospital emergency room." So I went with him. We took him to Morristown Memorial. His doctor's office is right across the street. He was in there for… [*to Adam*] how many weeks…?

Adam: Three weeks. Between the time he was admitted and the time he passed away, it was a total of three weeks. When he went in there, they found things wrong with him. It started with him being very, very tired because of renal failure. Renal failure caused by multiple myeloma.

Andy: That's what the doctors eventually found out. Initially they couldn't figure out what it was.

Adam: Yeah, they didn't know, at first. But his renal failure… this is how strong a guy he was: he had only one working kidney and it was functioning at five percent when he was admitted.

Chris: *Was this a tumor?*

Adam: No, it wasn't a tumor; it was blood cancer. Myeloma is basically blood cancer.

Andy: It affects kidneys.

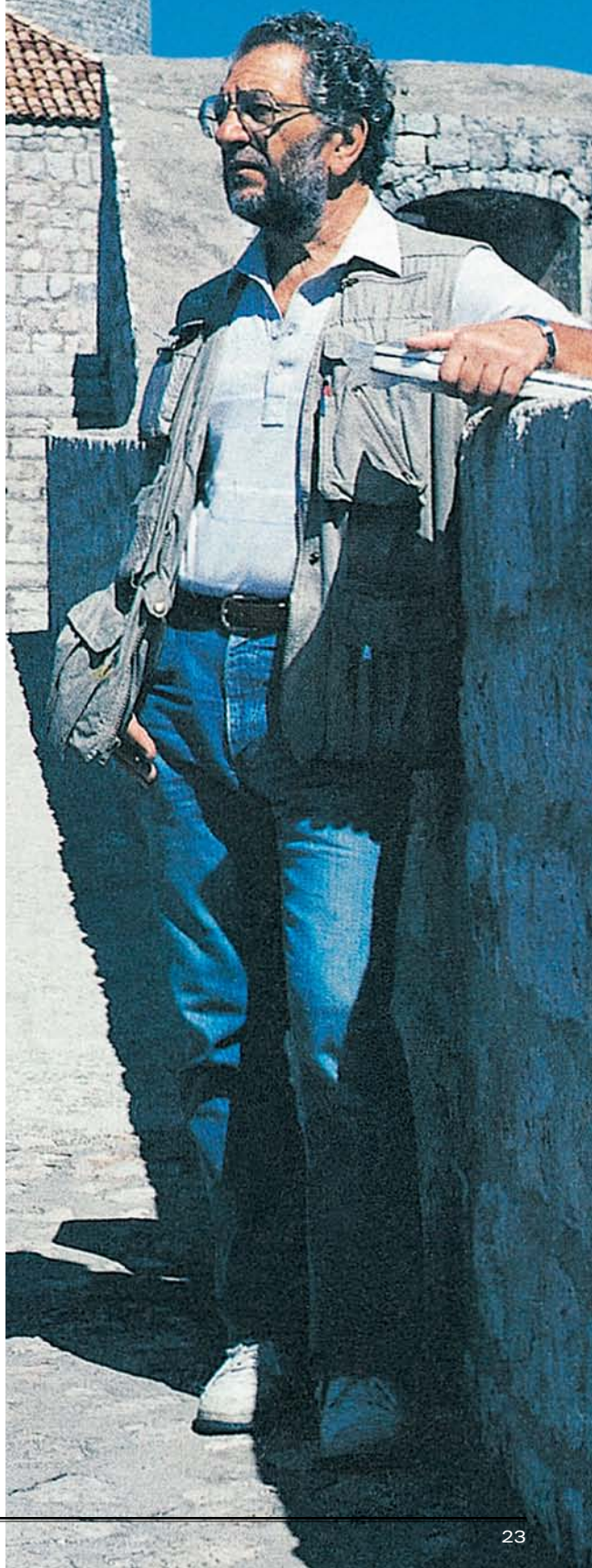
Adam: It affected his kidneys and, through that three week process and test after test, he went on to dialysis, did chemotherapy, and he had some heart issues. Prior to that, he had high-blood pressure.

Andy: Right.

Adam: So there were some heart issues with being in dialysis.

Andy: He had the blood pressure under control, though.

Adam: He couldn't make it through a whole session of dialysis. It was difficult for him. It



Right: *Courtesy of Ervin Rustemagic and his Strip Art Features (SAF), this photo of Joe Kubert was snapped during Joe and Muriel's visit to Sarajevo, Bosnia, in 1990. It was here, in the walled city of Dubrovnik — the "Jewel of the Adriatic" — where Joe and Ervin conceive of their first publishing collaboration, the three-volume* Abraham Stone. *Ervin, of course, was the subject of Joe's 1996 graphic novel* Fax From Sarajevo.

Above: Ouch! *That's gotta hurt, Logan! Adam Kubert's mind-blowing* Wolverine *#300 [Jan. 2012] cover (minus the logo, of course). Colors by Laura Martin.*

pretty much the whole office setup.
Chris: *How is the economic downturn been for the school?*
Adam: You know, we had some enrollment issues five or six years ago.
Andy: And that kind of hit up at the same time as when our building was getting redone. We had to move the school out of this building and we had to find temporary housing for a year.
CBC: *Oh, yeah?*
Chris: *Where was that? What did you guys do for that?*
Andy: Well, they moved the entire school and they built inside a warehouse, which was over on Route 10 in Randolph.
Adam: About a mile away.
Andy: They built up walls and classrooms inside this huge warehouse.
Chris: *Did you have buses for the kids?*
Andy: Yes, they did have taxi buses from here.
Adam: We did have a shuttle bus from here, but it just aligns itself with the economic downturn, but really, I don't think the economic downturn had anything to do with the decreased enrollment. I think the move to the other building — it took a lot of time, it took a lot of energy, trying to set things up. And some students weren't happy with this, that, and the other thing.
Chris: *It affected morale.*
Adam: Right, it affected morale.
Andy: It *did* affect morale. The building and classroom didn't have the charm that this place has.
Adam: It wasn't optimal.
Andy: Right.
Adam: People were complaining it was cold, it was noisy, it was this or it was that.
Andy: There was a big echo in there.
Adam: Right.
Andy: But this place [*referring to the renovations at the permanent school*] has a nice charm. It's warm and has a comforting feel to it.
Chris: *Oh, it's great. I'm just so impressed. It looks amazing.*
Adam: By the time we moved back in here three years ago, enrollment has been going up ever since.
Andy: There's renewed interest now. Enrollment's really picking up. It's picking up well.
CBC: *Did you have to cap enrollment?*
Andy: We have only so much space. So, yes, we do have to cap it.
Chris: *Do you guys do student interviews?*
Adam: Mike Chen does that.
Andy: Mike Chen does all the interviews.
Chris: *Because your father did that, of course, 30 years ago.*
Andy: Way, way back when, he did.
Adam: Though the last bunch of years, I don't think he did it anymore. Mike's been doing them forever so he knows exactly what to look for and who to let in.
CBC: *So, besides instructing, what are your specific responsibilities with the school?*
Andy: Running it; the day-to-day big decisions; whatever comes up.
Adam: Whatever comes up, right.
Andy: Whether you deal with student or teacher issues —
Adam: Curriculum.
Andy: Curriculum, advertising, financial stuff.
Chris: *So you guys are like the executives, basically. Like in a movie, you'd be the executive producer. You're the boss.*
Adam: We're steering the ship.
Andy: Basically, that's us.
CBC: *And did you learn how to do it?*
Andy: We're learning as we go. [*laughter*] It is basically on-the-job training. But I've got to tell you, too, we couldn't do it without the people who work here and the teachers. Everybody who works here is integral to this place and without any one of them. I think we'd sink. They're all so important.
CBC: *Can you specifically name some of the people?*
Andy: Sure. Carol Thomas, who's absolutely invaluable. She's awesome. Mike Chen, invaluable; Dorothy Morley, invaluable; Louise Gentile, invaluable.
Adam: Mike Chechetti. [*chuckles*]
Andy: Mike Chechetti, he's also invaluable. He does all the maintenance, takes care of all the buildings. Anything that happens: if there's a leak on the roof, he's up there. He takes care of the snow, everything. What would I do without the guy? [*laughter*]
Adam: You walk into this place or you go over to the mansion, you walk around there, and I mean these places require a *lot* of maintenance, a *lot* of looking after.
Chris: *Yeah, the mansion's old.*
Andy: Yeah, it is *old*. [*laughs*]
Adam: It's an old place, it's a dormitory and it gets a lot of abuse, you know? But it's still standing, it's clean, and —
Andy: It's functional.
Adam: It's functional.
Chris: *How many dormitories do you now –? Do you still have the Carriage House?*
Adam: Yes.

The Making of a Master of Sequential Art

Ye Ed's 2006 interview with Joe Kubert for the Will Eisner film documentary

Above: *In mid-summer 2006, Ye Ed and his brother Andrew D. Cooke, soundman/editor Kris Schackman, and cameraman Ben Tudhope visited The Kubert School to interview Joe for their full-length feature film documentary,* Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist. *Here's a screenshot of Joe in the movie. A transcript of that talk follows.*

Below: *Will Eisner's "Shop Talk" segment featuring his 1982 chat with his one-time employee Joe Kubert was published in* Will Eisner's Spirit Magazine *#40 [Apr. '83] and the actual audio recording of the talk is featured as an extra — along with* all *of Will's "Shop Talk" interviews with fellow professionals — on Ye Ed and Andy's* WE:POASA *DVD and Blu-ray.*

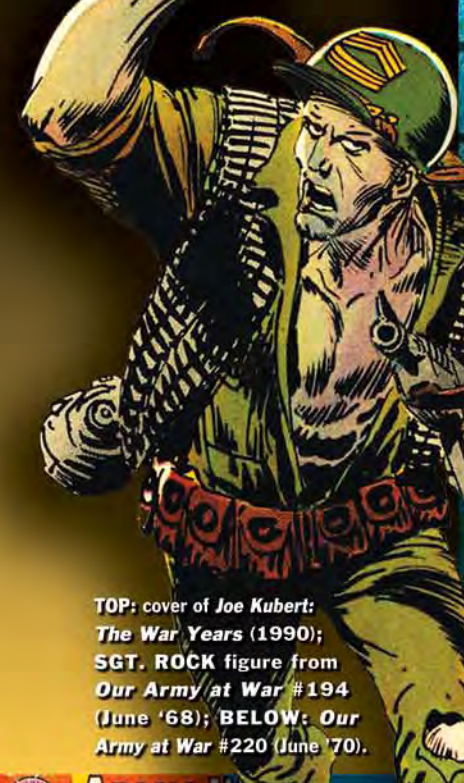
Conducted by JON B. COOKE *CBC* Editor

Between 2002 and '07, Ye Ed and his brother Andrew D. Cooke compiled — with an able team of filmmakers — a full-length feature film documentary on the life of one of the greatest comic book creators of them all, Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist, *which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2007. On August 19, 2006, a most brilliant, clear and sunny Saturday morning, Joe Kubert consented to a filmed interview at The Kubert School to discuss his upbringing, graphic novels, Jews in comics, and his friend and colleague Will Eisner in particular. What follows is a transcription of that talk, obtained with the tremendous help of the movie's editor and executive producer Kris Schackman and transcribed in record time by Steven "Flash" Thompson, Andrew added his own questions to the discussion.*

Comic Book Creator: *Where were you born, Joe?*
Joe Kubert: Poland.
CBC: *Whereabouts?*
Joe: Southeastern section of Poland. A town called Yzeran.
CBC: *When did you move to the United States?*
Joe: I was brought to the United States when I was two months old. In fact, my mother and father had come to Southampton, in England, in preparation to be coming to the United States. However she was pregnant at the time, with me. They would *not* permit her to come on the boat. She had to go back home, to the small town in Poland, give birth to me, and then came to the United States.
CBC: *A true bundle of joy.*
Joe: A bundle of… whatever. [*laughs*]
CBC: *Where did you grow up?*
Joe: I grew up in East New York, in Brooklyn, and the reason was, of course, that my mother's family were residents there. They met us. They met my mother, my father, my older sister and myself at the boat and brought us home. Their home was in East New York. In Brooklyn.
CBC: *How would you characterize the neighborhood where you grew up?*
Joe: Well, the neighborhood at that time in East New York was, I guess, great as far as I'm concerned. As far as I was concerned as a young kid, it was fine. I had a bunch of friends that I hung with, used to play a lot of ball… Things were good. It was during the Depression, the early days of the Depression. I don't ever remember being hungry. I don't ever remember being poor. It was fine.
CBC: *What was the ethnic makeup of that area?*
Joe: The ethnic makeup of that area was essentially Jewish. I think that there was a tendency for most people who came to any of the areas to move in with those people with whom they felt the most comfortable. So there were Italian neighborhoods, there were Jewish neighborhoods, there were black neighborhoods, and so on.
CBC: *What was the economic situation in your family during the mid-'30s?*
Joe: Well, the economic situation, in retrospect, was not too hot. In the late '20s and the early '30s, it was very, very difficult to make a buck. I guess that's probably where I was *most* fortunate because, despite the fact that a primary purpose in all families to make sure that the kids would be able to make a living was to get them an education where they could become a doctor or a lawyer or a mechanic or a carpenter or anything that you could make a buck at. But to draw pictures? [*laughs*] That's *nuts!* 'Cause you'll never be able to make a living drawing crazy pictures. Yet my father, and what I mean when I say I was lucky, both my father and mother recognized the fact that I loved to draw from the time I was a kid! They always encouraged me. They always helped me and did everything that they *could* to make sure that I *did* that which they recognized I loved the most.
CBC: *Specifically, what did you want to do for a living, for a career as a youngster?*
Joe: Well, the idea of making money at what I was doing was probably as far removed from my conscious as I can imagine. I started drawing when I was two years old. I used to draw with chalk in the gutters. It was macadam, smooth macadam, and it took chalk beautifully. It's been my experience that *anybody* who can draw is looked upon almost as a magician so that, when a young kid of three or four was drawing pictures, all the neighbors would come out and look at the stuff that was being done, buy more penny chalk with which to draw! But the idea of making a livelihood at it was completely and totally remote. It was only later on when I

OF ALL FIVE OF JOE KUBERT'S DEFINITIVE COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS, PERHAPS NONE CASTS AS LONG A SHADOW AS HIS AND WRITER BOB KANIGHER'S WORLD WAR II SERGEANT, ROCK OF EASY CO! BUT TO OTHERS...

...KUBERT IS FIRST AND FOREMOST THE DEFINITIVE TARZAN ARTIST, IN A COMIC ART PANTHEON THAT INCLUDES LEGENDS LIKE FOSTER, HOGARTH, FRAZETTA, BUSCEMA & ADAMS.



The Comic Book Price Guide #5 (1975).

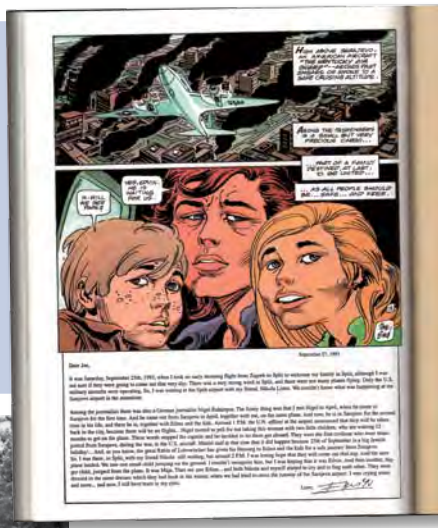
TOP: cover of *Joe Kubert: The War Years* (1990); SGT. ROCK figure from *Our Army at War* #194 (June '68); BELOW: *Our Army at War* #220 (June '70).

...BECAUSE NEVER BEFORE HAS AN ARTIST'S STYLE--THE SAVAGE BRUSH STROKES AND SINEWY PEN LINES THAT ONLY KUBERT EVER MADE--BEEN SO PERFECTLY MATCHED TO A CHARACTER AND THAT CHARACTER'S MILIEU--JUNGLES AS SAVAGE AND BLOOD-SCARRED AS ANY OF SGT. ROCK'S BATTLE SCENES!

Postscript to *Fax from Sarajevo*

Ervin Rustemagic, the real-life protagonist of Kubert's book, talks of life since the war

Editor's note: *Fax from Sarajevo*, Joe Kubert's ground-breaking 1996 book, is less a graphic novel and more a journalistic long-form comic book story depicting real-life events of the early 1990s: the struggle of Ervin Rustemagic and his family during the Bosnian War. Winner of the Eisner and Harvey awards for best graphic novel/album, the 207-page tome follows Ervin — Joe's European art agent, business partner and friend — as he fights to stay alive in the hell-hole that was the Siege of Sarajevo and to reconnect with his family: Wife Edina, daughter Maja (pronounced mah-yah) and son Edvin. The story ends, now almost 20 years ago, with mother and children flying out of Sarajevo, bound to reunite with father. Ervin, who was exceedingly generous with *CBC* in sharing Joe Kubert material from the archives of his company, Strip Art Features, graciously offered to tell, in words and photos, what's happened since to the Rustemagic family and about visits by Joe & Muriel Kubert…



Bottom left: *From left, Muriel Kubert, Ervin Rustemagic and Joe Kubert during the couples visit to the Rustemagics in Slovenia in Spring 1994.* **Bottom right:** *Joe drawing for Maja, while Edvin patiently waits his turn.*

After the U.S. military aircraft *The Kentucky Air Guard* has flown them from the siege of Sarajevo to Split, in Croatia, on Sept. 25, 1993, the Rustemagic family settled in Slovenia. On Dec. 24 of that year, they moved into a house they bought in Celje. The photo [above right] was taken in their house's garden in early spring 1994. Maja was 11 years old and Edvin was 6. Edina, who is a professor of philosophy couldn't work in Slovenia in her profession due to the language barrier, but she had to devote most of her time in raising Maja and Edvin and helping them come over the stress and trauma which they were experiencing for 18 months in the Bosnian war.

Joe and Muriel Kubert were among the first friends who visited them in Slovenia. It was only then Joe told Ervin about plans to do *Fax from Sarajevo*.

The Wizard Remembers Joe

Artist Frank "Red Sonja" Thorne reminisces about his beloved old friend and editor

[*If us comic book fans didn't know better, we'd think that artist Frank Thorne was a prodigy of Joe Kubert, blessed as he is with a gritty, organic art style that seemed cut from the same cloth as Joe's. But the Rahway, New Jersey-borne artist had a bit of comic book experience prior to joining Joe's stable of freelancers in 1969 — think Gold Key's* Mighty Samson *— and Frank also spent time as comic strip artist and worked as a commercial artist in the 1950s and '60s. But Frank did start coming very much into his own under the guidance of Joe, who edited much of his DC work, and Frank has always expressed gratitude for the friendship and support he received from his former editor. Ye Ed spoke with the artist on April 6 and the interview was transcribed by Steven "Flash" Thompson. —* **JBC.**]

Frank Thorne: I read the obituary of Carmine Infantino this morning. These are guys of my generation.
Comic Book Creator: *I know…*
Frank: Those two good *great* ones: Infantino… but Joe… What can I tell ya? *What can I tell ya?!* [*laughs*] What would you like to know?
CBC: *When you were going to… what was it called? The Art Career School?*
Frank: Yes. That was at 23rd Street and Fifth Avenue. The Flatiron Building. It was the *penthouse* of the Flatiron Building.
CBC: *And what was your experience there? Were you focusing on cartooning?*
Frank: Down the street was the Cartoonist and Illustrator's School, where the School of Visual Arts originated and morphed into its present sprawling… I think it's the biggest art school in the world or something at this point! But our career school was more nuts and bolts. The people who guided me there felt that — and I agreed — that if I had a basic commercial art training if I didn't make it in the comics, I could always turn to commercial art. Personally, I didn't have to do that. And so it was a pleasant experience.
CBC: *Were you a comics fan as a kid?*
Frank: Yes, indeed. "The Atom" was one of my favorites. Wasn't too much for the super-heroes. *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, and the ladies running around in their minimal outfits appealed to me.
CBC: *[*Chuckles*] We can see that.*
Frank: I really had never been that interested in comic books. I just wanted to draw and write, and that seemed to be the place to start.
CBC: *So, was it more comic* strips *that you wanted to do?*
Frank: Yes. *Flash Gordon.* Al Williamson, Hal Foster — they were the heroes of those days. So I started copying Alex Raymond and left that style — still struggling to find something. [*laughter*]
CBC: *When were you first cognizant of Joe Kubert?*
Frank: Oh, early on. After you get a trained eye, a couple of years at it, you can pick out the really super-talents and early on I could see that. I didn't *meet* him until much later. I think it was in the '70s. He was the editor for the war books — he and Kanigher — and they had "Enemy Ace" and "Sgt. Rock," and a whole roster… "Hawkman"! Fantastic! His "Hawkman" was unbelievable! [*laughs*]
CBC: *Do you remember the early work you saw of Joe's before you met him? Was it his* Tor?

Painting ©2013 Frank Thorne. Sgt. Rock TM & © DC Comics.

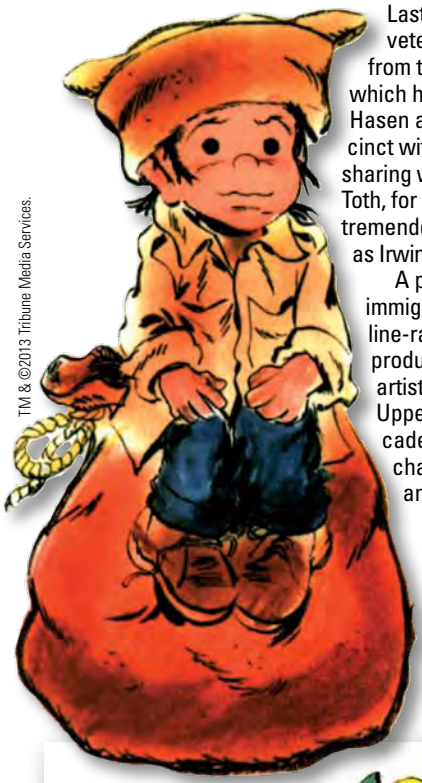
Above: *Exclusively for this Kubert tribute issue, Frank Thorne contributed this oil painting of Joe's signature character, Sgt. Rock. Despite failing eyesight, Frank has re-invented himself as a painter in his octogenarian years.* CBC *is very grateful for Mr. Thorne's enthusiastic support.*

Frank: I'd seen *Tor*, yes. I'd seen the 3-D comic he and Norman Maurer worked on. Norman Maurer was his good buddy and they set out as young men to start a whole new thing in 3-D comics. Which [*chuckles*] didn't work out. Norman Maurer was the son-in-law of one of the Three Stooges and that always provided a humorous note. [*chuckles*] And Joe said that Norman was better than *him!* But Norman left to oversee the Three Stooges, and produce their movies and work with them. And Joe drifted towards the school. He was talking about starting a school way back when! So did John Buscema. That's what he wanted to do, a mail order art school. I don't know. Did that ever happen do you suppose?
CBC: *With Buscema? No, I don't believe it did. But Joe* did *start a correspondence course about 12 years ago. Did you, early on, get the* Perry Mason *syndicated strip?*
Frank: Yes, I was like 21 years old. And they handed me the daily and the Sunday. Sylvan Byck at King Features — then it was in Manhattan, across from the *Daily News* building —

Irwin Hasen: The All-American Cartoonist

Michael Aushenker looks in on the beloved Golden Age artist and *Dondi* cartoonist

by MICHAEL AUSHENKER *CBC* Associate Editor



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Last fall, when *Comic Book Creator* caught up with veteran cartoonist Irwin Hasen, he had just emerged from the hospital a few days prior. Despite some setbacks, which had included a bout with pneumonia, the resilient Hasen at 94, retained a twinkle in his eye and a quick, succinct wit. Of course, Irwin was a good friend of Joe Kubert, sharing with his late compadre — and the legendary Alex Toth, for that matter — the distinction of having the same tremendously influential mentor during the 1940s (as well as Irwin being a Kubert School instructor in its earliest days).

A product of American comics' Golden Age, when immigrants and children of same filled the assembly line-ranks of the fast-emerging company specializing in producing a new product called comic books, the Jewish artist, now under the watchful eye of a nurse at his Upper East Side apartment, reflected back on his decades-long career, particularly his two most memorable characters: an over-the-hill, wash up-*cu*m-super-hero and a young, fresh-faced Italian kid.

Hasen admitted that running the latter, *Dondi*, a daily syndicated comic strip saga in the tradition of *Little Orphan Annie*, was a much smoother ship to steer than his '40s comic-book assignments.

"With *Dondi*, it was easier," Hasen explained. "I knew it was all about. I knew the kid." With impish, staccato bursts of conversation often punctuated by a chuckle, Hasen recounted his tale.

Born on July 8, 1918, Hasen entered a nascent comic book industry in 1940 with barrels blazing, contributing to *The Green Hornet* and "The Fox." A year later, the artist began working under aforementioned mentor, the seminal editor Sheldon Mayer, drawing features including "Green Lantern" and "The Flash," and other super-hero features All-American Comics (sister imprint of DC Comics) raced to pump out in the wake of the massive success of DC's *Action Comics* and *Detective Comics*. At DC, Bill Finger, co-creator of *Detective*'s breakout feature, "Batman," had a hand in the inception of Hasen's other trademark character.

"[Finger] created Wildcat with [Mayer]," Hasen explained. "Sheldon was my best friend. He knew me before I got into comics. I worked in the fight business for a magazine called *Bang* magazine. I worked for him. After *Bang* magazine, I did gag cartoons and the painted covers."

Mayer designated Hasen to become the first artist to interpret Wildcat, a grizzled pugilist in a catsuit; a sort of prototype of Marvel's Wolverine. With Hasen on pencils, Wildcat first appeared in *Sensation Comics* #1 [Jan. 1942] as Ted Grant, a boxer entangled in the underworld who dons a costumed alias to go clear his name after he is framed. The character would go on to became a member of the venerated Justice Society of America, the Golden Age super-hero group Hasen would also render in the pages of *All-Star Comics*, another Mayer title.

"It was a good character," Hasen said blithely of the feline crimefighter. "It was my milieu. I was raised in the fight business when I was a young kid."

Art ©2013 Irwin Hasen. Characters TM & © DC Comics.

Comic books were not a bad way to earn some income. "It was a living at that time," Hasen said, but the job didn't last into the new decade. Yet, by 1955, the artist's fortunes improved — dramatically.

Hasen's marquee climbed to great heights as one-half (the other fraction being writer Gus Edson) of the team that crafted the long-running syndicated newspaper strip *Dondi*.

"Comic strips were eventually where I was going in my life," Hasen said. "When I was six, I saw the greatest strip ever made: Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs*. My parents came home with the newspaper, the *World Telegraph*. I loved the simplicity."

Hasen admitted that drawing *Dondi* was much more facile than his comic book assignments.

Russ Heath: That *Other* Man of Rock

Rich Arndt's chat with the brilliant artist on his work with — and for — Joe Kubert

by RICHARD ARNDT

[*Russ Heath is a genuine legend in the comics field, beginning his career as a teenager doing stories during summer vacation for Holyoke Comics. He joined the Timely bullpen in 1948, drawing Western characters like Kid Colt and the Two-Gun Kid for several years. By the mid-'50s, he was working for E.C., St. John and DC Comics as well, drawing some of the best war, horror, Western and adventure stories of the day. In the '60s, he worked on* Sea Devils, *"The Haunted Tank," "The War That Time Forgot," and many other features, including a memorable stint on "Little Annie Fanny" for* Playboy. *In the late '60s, with Joe Kubert as his editor, Russ began a six-year run on "Sgt. Rock," and followed that with work for Marvel, Atlas and a notable stint at Warren. By the 1980s he was the artist on* The Lone Ranger *newspaper strip and since then has made occasional forays on characters like the Punisher and Jonah Hex. This interview was conducted by phone on April 24, 2013. — **R.A.***]

©2013 Lori Matsumoto.

Above: *Russ Heath as photographed by Lori Matsumoto. Our Man Heath, by the by, will be the subject of our sixth issue, complete with a career-spanning interview by Ye Ed and supplemented by* CBC *amigo Rich Arndt, a lifesaver in nabbing this interview at the last minute — and transcribing literally overnight! — for this issue! Lori, by the way, shares that this pic was taken on Jan. 13, 2011, at Norm's Restaurant, in Van Nuys, California.*

Richard Arndt: *Do you remember when you first met Joe Kubert?*

Russ Heath: Yes, it was during a time when comics work was sparse — everybody was trying to find work again. It was sort of between seasons for steady work, so to speak. I was hunting work and I went up to St. John and met a fellow named Norman Maurer. He and Joe Kubert were doing 3-D books together. Norman was interviewing me and I was about to break out my samples, and Joe walked in and said to Norman, "You don't have to see his samples. He's okay." I thought that was quite a compliment.

Rich: *You did work for his caveman book,* Tor, *is that right?*

Russ: Yes, I did a couple of pin-up or information pages on dinosaurs, plus a bunch of backgrounds. It wasn't all that many pages, but those were 3-D pages, so there was a lot of work involved. It was done on clear cels with a special ink that would adhere to the slippery cel. There were two cels for every panel because of the shifting of one color to another. It was a laborious process.

Rich: *That would have been in 1954. After that, of course, you were doing a lot of work for DC's war comics, as was Kubert, but then in 1967, you took over the art chores for Kubert on one of his most notable co-creations — Sgt. Rock. He wasn't the editor of the book at that time. In fact, I think he told me that he'd had to give up a lot of his DC work because he was very busy drawing the newspaper strip* Tales of the Green Berets. *It was only for seven or eight months that you drawing "Rock" and then Kubert came back to do the strip for about a year before he became the editor of all the war books.*

Russ: Yeah, that sounds right. When I started the second set of "Sgt. Rock" stories, I didn't get the feeling that I was the permanent artist, but it did seem to go on and on for a while.

Rich: *You did work on "Rock" pretty steady from mid-1969 to mid-'75, a good six years.*

Russ: I was also drawing "The Haunted Tank" at the same time, at least for a while, a good chunk of time. I think I drew "The Haunted Tank" for longer than some guys' careers.

Rich: *That period of time, the early '70s, was the time period I was reading "Sgt. Rock" as a steady book. Your artwork was much more prominent in my memory than even Kubert's, although he certainly did all the covers and was a big part of that as well. The stories also improved so much during those years from the stories that had been appearing in the '60s, even though the writer was the same guy — Bob Kanigher.*

Russ: That was probably Joe's influence, or maybe it was just the times. Joe and I had a different way of working. I'd always wanted to be an illustrator, so everything on my pages was fully finished, even during the penciling, while Joe's approach was more sketching and then inking over the

TM & ©2013 DC Comics.

Right inset: *Joe Kubert's first issue as editor of* G.I. Combat [#130, June-July 1968] *sported this humdinger of a Russ Heath cover featuring the Heath-drawn perennial series "The Haunted Tank."*

Day In & Day Out: Working with Joe Kubert

Joe's right-hand man Peter Carlsson talks about his friend and employer

Above: *Joe Kubert (left) and his trusty Kubert School/Tell-A-Graphics associate Peter Carlsson, in a photo taken at P.C.'s wedding on July 25, 2009. Courtesy of Peter.*

Conducted by JON B. COOKE *CBC* Editor

[*This special Kubert tribute issue was, it likely goes without saying, a pretty extensive undertaking. Ye Ed had to coordinate any number of aspects, particularly the testimonial section, where yours truly wrangled contributors to meet deadlines, etc., all the while maintaining his full-time job in advertising. It's had its moments! But one uplifting constant was the pleasurable collaboration with our next interview subject, Peter Carlsson, who runs Tell-A-Graphics, the art production outfit in the basement of the Kubert School, which provides employment for students and alumni by producing the comics and illustrations of* P*S *magazine, among other jobs. Peter is also curator of the Joe Kubert art archives and was a friend of the late creator. He is also a die hard Kubert fan, as excited by Joe's work now as when he was a funnybook reader back in the day. This interview was conducted by phone on Mar. 19, 2013, and was transcribed by Steven "Flash" Thompson. Peter copy-edited for clarity and accuracy.*]

Below: *The* Our Army at War *cover by Joe Kubert that terrified — and yet compelled — young Pete Carlsson, #270 [July '74], his first memory of seeing his future friend's work.*

Comic Book Creator: *What's your general background, Peter?*

Peter Carlsson: I came to New Jersey in 1993 to go to the Kubert School. I went through all three years, graduated in '96. After school, I worked part-time at the art store and part-time at Tell-A-Graphics. Then part-time in New York City at Mada Design, a graphic design company run by Stan Madaloni, a guy who went to the school, and his wife, Angela. I worked there for a year.

I don't remember exactly *how* all this happened. I had met Adam while in school and ended up organizing his art files the summer after graduation and that, I think in part, led to Joe offering me a full-time job working in part at Tell-A-Graphics and also organizing the artwork he had in his office at the School and the artwork he had in his studio at the house. There were just piles upon piles of envelopes full of artwork. It had been organized at one time, but by the time I started much of it was in disarray. I spent a couple years going up there once or twice a week, organizing things, and getting a sense of what he had and putting together an inventory of his artwork.

CBC: *Joe was known for keeping all of his work?*

Peter: Yes, he was, but my understanding is that he didn't begin keeping the art until DC started returning it, which I think was in the early '70s. Joe really didn't have much from the '40s, '50s, and '60s, just an occasional piece, a cover or an interior page. But, starting in the early to mid-'70s, when DC started the policy of returning artwork, then he had most of that stuff. I wouldn't say it was complete because he'd sold stuff and things sometimes disappeared, I guess. But he retained the vast majority of the art he did from the '70s on. He lived in the same house that he built in the '50s. The house had been there for almost 50 years, and he kept his studio in the house. He told me not moving is the reason he had cover sketches going all the way back to the 1950s. These were sketches he did and then he would write "completed" and the date on the paper when he drew the actual cover. That's one of my favorites: finding all these envelopes full of old sketches.

CBC: *Were there other surprises that you found in the archives? Rarities? Unique material you had never seen?*

Peter: Oh, *yeah!* All the *Redeemer* material that finally saw print in *Joe Kubert Presents*. Three issues penciled, inked, and lettered. Just sitting on a cupboard shelf! Pencils, very loose pencils, for a few pages from the fourth issue. A lot of notes and part of a cover painting he was gonna use, things like that. An issue of something called *Centipede,* which was based on an Atari game! You probably remember that video game.

CBC: *Yeah.*

Peter: DC published an *Atari Force* comic back in the mid-'80s — I think there might have been one or two other things that came out but for some reason… maybe sales, I don't know — Joe's *Centipede* story never saw print. He had all the originals.

CBC: *Wow. How big is the* Centipede *story? A full issue?*

Peter: I think it was between 17 and 20 pages.

CBC: *Wow.*

Peter: Yeah. No one's seen it! Do you remember, in the '80s, he did that Superman and the Demon story in *DC Comics Presents?*

CBC: *Oh, good heavens, that's a* beautiful *issue!*

Peter: [*Laughs*] Well, I found the pencils to that! He redrew it! So there's a whole issue of finished pencils, but then Joe decided, for whatever reason, he wasn't gonna ink them. He actually redrew and inked the whole thing!

CBC: *Wow!*

Peter: Yeah, just weird stuff, stuff that I think you and I — and everybody reading this probably — would be interested in, but I don't know who else would be.

CBC: *[*Laughs*] Who cares? [*laughter*] Obviously, you're* there. *You're mesmerized with the work. You've been there since... You're going on 20 years now?*

Peter: No. Twenty years in New Jersey but I started working for Joe full-time in '97.

CBC: *Ninety-seven. All right, that's* still *a few years, Pete. Joe was one of those rare artists who just always getting better. Always innovative, always pushing himself…*

Peter: Right.

CBC: *It's just astonishing to see the arc of his work from the '40s in these leaps and bounds of the evolution within his style up to the very end! I mean, he* always *held me rapt, you know?*

Rick Veitch: My Journey with Joe Kubert

The Year-One "Kubie" grad on his life's sojourn accompanying a teacher and friend

by RICK VEITCH

Since Joe Kubert passed away in August of 2012, I've been doing a lot of thinking about the times we shared and the profound influence he had on my life.

My journey with Joe began with my very first comic, purchased with my own money at the ripe age of eight. It was an early issue of *Our Army at War* and the lead story was "The Rock and the Wall!" In it, a sergeant named Rock and an infantryman named Wall engaged in a combat competition to prove which was toughest: a rock or a wall? It was the kind of story that made perfect sense to a little kid.

But I was hypnotized by the art. That particular story was where Joe caught what would become the iconic look of the character: knotted brow, hawklike nose, penetrating eyes, and craggy unshaven jowls. Everyone and everything in the story was sculpted with lively, spontaneous pen lines, while lurking in every grimy shadow was an oozing abstract of pooled blacks; as evocative as any in Rorschach's famous inkblots.

I began laboriously copying Joe's panels into my own homemade comics. Things can get confusing when growing up, but I had one constant: in my secret heart of hearts I knew with deep certainty that I was a comic book artist. What I could never imagine is the important role the man who signed his name "Joe Kubert" would play in my attaining it professionally.

I was 25 when I met him. It was 1976 and I was interviewing for Joe's soon-to-open cartooning school. Knowing he was a Golden Age artist, I guess I expected an older gentleman, but Joe was in his early 50s and looked like he was 35. He welcomed me warmly and spoke passionately about his hopes and plans for the school. He explained how fortunate he had been to come up under a studio system where older cartoonists had made time to teach him the tricks of the trade. His goal was to give back by keeping that tradition alive.

I was terrified that my portfolio wouldn't make the grade, but when he saw the printed copy of *Two-Fisted Zombies*, he responded with grinning amazement. I tried to explain it was a couple years old and not my best stuff, and the content was a little — **kofkof** — undergroundy.

But he didn't care. He carefully went through my other samples, taking a lot of interest in my early attempts at airbrushed comics.

He showed me French magazines with Drulliet and Moebius. Finally, he looked me in the eye and said, "You are just the kind of guy we want at this school."

Joe was seeking out young artists for whom comic books were a "calling," and I think he recognized that quality in me in this first meeting. I didn't have a pot to piss in, much less the money for tuition. But Joe's wife, Muriel, told me about a new government job training program called CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act]. That summer, I talked my way up the Vermont CETA hierarchy, showing my art samples and trying to convince them to pay for cartooning college. They were skeptical and couldn't provide a decision before school went into session. Downhearted, I called Joe to let him know I wouldn't be able to attend. He asked me a couple of pointed questions about the CETA approval process and then said, "Come down anyway. I've spoken with Muriel about you and we'll make it work somehow."

I arrived with a beat-up ten-speed, a box of groceries and $30 to live on. Joe and Muriel carried me for a couple months until the CETA grant was approved. It was an extraordinary act of generosity towards a kid they hardly knew, and by extending it they handed me the first key to the kingdom.

That opening semester at Kubert School in 1976 was a complete buzz. Not just for the 22 students, but also for Joe and Muriel and the brace of professional artists they'd brought in to teach us. The curriculum was surprisingly well developed for a first-year school. The facility, an old brick mansion set on private park-like grounds, was gorgeous and utilitarian. At the center of it was Joe, the human dynamo.

Joe was teaching four days a week, editing books for DC Comics on the fifth day, and knocking out covers and stories evenings and weekends. He would often work at a board

Above: *Inspired by the* Métal Hurlant *work coming from Europe, Joe Kubert experimented with different formats, including the short-lived but spectacular* Sojourn *tabloid. Veitch calls #2's cover [1977] "stranger and scarier" than anything previously done by Joe.*

Rick Veitch *is the writer/artist of the acclaimed 1991 graphic novel* Enemy Ace/War Idyll *(covers below). We extend our gratitude to George for his multitudinous contributions to this book.*

Giving Back: Teaching at the Kubert School

Bryan D. Stroud talks to a notable gang of instructors of The Kubert School

by BRYAN D. STROUD

I had a germ of an idea not long ago, partially spawned by the routine comments I've received conducting some interviews. It's one thing to be a comic book artist of renown — a perennial fan favorite, in fact — and to have been at it for many, many years; but to also earn the respect of peers almost without exception, and to be a successful editor, *and* to have made other significant contributions to the field, on top of it all, is just tremendous, if not unprecedented. Who else could I be describing but Joe Kubert?

Here's a smattering of quotes about the creator and mentor culled from those interviews over the years:

I would have to say the all-around best comic book artist who ever drew breath is Joe Kubert.
— **Clem Robins**

Kubert once said something very nice to his classes at his art school. He was talking about getting photographic reference to do stuff to get it right. "The one exception to that is that you can use Russ Heath's artwork. It is right." [chuckles]
— **Russ Heath**

Joe Kubert was terrific. — **Carmine Infantino**

…[P]erhaps they ought to go to some of the best artists that were left in comic books and among which were Joe Kubert, who was the perfect guy for the [Green Berets] *strip.*
— **Neal Adams**

And Joe Kubert is one of my closest friends. He's a gem. He's a gentleman. He's exactly what the character is: Rock. That's Joe.
— **Jack Adler**

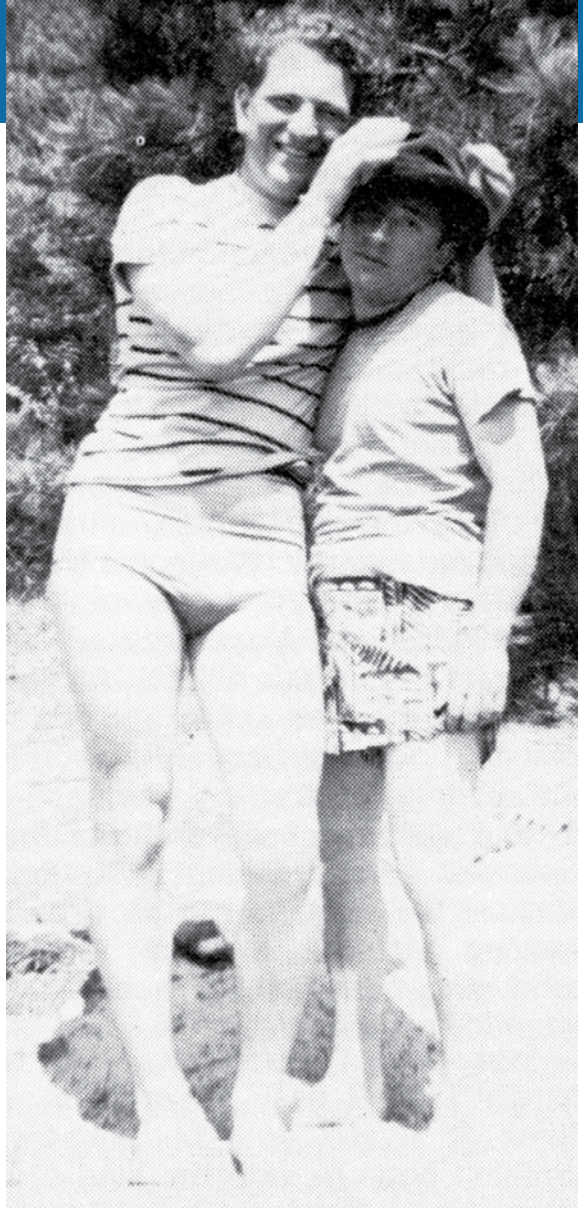
Below: *Courtesy of Tom Foxmarnick, a photo of Dick Ayers at the Joe Kubert School in the 1970s.*

In addition to comments like these, I was also inspired by a book. I recently treated myself to a copy of *Man of Rock*, Bill Schelly's biography of Joe, and it is simply a masterwork. Bill beautifully chronicles the amazing and continuing career of this giant in the field and I was particularly intrigued with the discussion of the founding of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in 1976. It's been going strong ever since and has created viable professionals for the cartooning industry. I thought it might be fascinating to hear a little from some of the instructors from the earliest days of the school, so I contacted a few for their remembrances, beginning with Dick Ayers:

Bryan D. Stroud: *What initially led you to the Kubert School, Mr. Ayers?*
Dick Ayers: My friend Henry Boltinoff, the cartoonist, he was teaching there and it was coming toward the end of summer, so he said Joe Kubert was looking for somebody. "Why don't you ask him?" So I asked Joe, and he said, "Okay, come on out to indoctrination day, and we'll introduce you to the students." So I went out and we met the students and as we left we met some of the other teachers and I said to Joe, "Gee, you never introduced anyone as teaching anatomy." He said, "Well, you're doing that." So I ended up teaching anatomy.
Bryan: [Chuckles] *You didn't even know what you were interviewing for, huh?*
Dick: No. It was two classes I did and it was the same group because it was a two-year course, and I was pretty proud of the fact that the students asked Joe to have me carry right on with the second year, so I had the whole two years. When it came to the end of the second year, and I had them in front of me for about the last time, I said, "Now you guys are all my competitors." I quit teaching.
Bryan: [Laughs] *So it was just the two years that you spent teaching?*
Dick: Just about that, yes. 1976 and '77, I believe. I liked the class very much. I liked teaching them. In fact, there was Jan Duursema, Tom Mandrake, the fellow who does *Archie* now [Fernando Ruiz].
Bryan: *How did you come up with your curriculum?*
Dick: Usually by being a day ahead of them. [*chuckles*] If it was something I didn't know on the day I was there, I'd say, "We'll talk about that tomorrow." I taught on Fridays, come to think of it. Just Fridays.
Bryan: *Not a whole lot of commuting to do, then. Now, you did most of your work at Marvel, so had you met Joe before?*
Dick: No. Only one time or another when I was looking for work. I never did anything for DC until later on, when I did know Joe from the school and somehow I just made my way over to DC and got on *Jonah Hex* and *Kamandi*.
Bryan: *Were you inking after Jack again on* Kamandi?
Dick: No. When I got over there I was penciling layouts and somebody else would do the inking….
Bryan: *Any other significant memories?*
Dick: I remember Henry Boltinoff telling me that Joe will never ask you to work for him, you've got to ask to work for Joe.

I'd enjoyed a nice interview with Irwin Hasen awhile back, but we didn't talk much about his time at the Kubert School. Irwin was a long-timer, only retiring in the recent past after a 30+ year run.

Bryan: *How did you happen to start at the school, Mr. Hasen?*
Irwin Hasen: Well, I've known Joe Kubert since we were both about 19 years old. That goes back about 70 years ago. So that's a long time to know somebody. And we became friends and then he went on his way and I went on my way doing my strip [*Dondi*] and everything, and one day he said, "I'm opening up a school." This is 30 years ago. He said, "Would you like to come and teach?" I said, "Yeah. Once a



Inset left: *Joe Kubert and Irwin Hasen clowning around at the beach in a late 1940s pic, which appeared in* The Amazing World of DC Comics *# 5 [Mar. '75], in a feature celebrating the great editor Sheldon Mayer, who shepherded both cartoonists in comics legend.*

week would be fine." That's the way it worked out.
Bryan: *Terrific. I've seen that famous photo of you and Joe on the beach in California back in the day.*
Irwin: That's right.
Bryan: *When I talked to Joe he thought most people who came to teach at the school did it mostly out of a sense of giving something back.*
Irwin: Well, it wasn't for the money, that's for sure. [*laughter*] All I wanted to do was get the hell out of the house in the morning once a week.
Bryan: *I can't blame you a bit. I'm sure being a freelancer like that you'd start climbing the walls.*
Irwin: Yeah, that's right. So this is a good chance for me to have a nice day; a full day and also I was interested in those kids.
Bryan: *Good for you. What was your specialty?*
Irwin: My specialty was how to draw. Not how to draw a comic strip, but just how to draw for comic books mostly.
Bryan: *So, sequential art then.*
Irwin: Yeah.
Bryan: *Were there any students that really stand out in your mind?*
Irwin: Oh yes, quite a few, but the names are not coming to mind right now. Steve Bissette was one of them, who is now a top guy in the business. There were some people who left that school in very good shape.
Bryan: *Oh, yes. Joe said one of his goals was to create an environment that would make them viable candidates to go into the industry.*
Irwin: That's right.
Bryan: *Apparently it's been very successful.*
Irwin: Very much so.
Bryan: *Did you find it rewarding to be a teacher?*
Irwin: Oh, yes. That's why I did it. I wouldn't have done it if I got bored. There have been a few top guys in the business who come there to teach and inside of two months they leave. It's the nature of the beast. An instructor or teacher really has to put his heart into it.
Bryan: *I'm sure it's a labor of love.*
Irwin: Absolutely.
Bryan: *You were at it for over 30 years?*
Irwin: Thirty years. I can't believe it. While I was doing my strip, *Dondi*, I was teaching once a week. Why, I don't know. [*Bryan chuckles*] I have no idea what drove me to do this.
Bryan: *Several factors, I'm sure, not the least of which enjoying what you were doing.*
Irwin: Yes, I wouldn't have done it if I didn't.
Bryan: *How did you come up with your curriculum?*
Irwin: I just went home one day before I started and worked out a curriculum that I thought would be advantageous to the students that would cover what they'd encounter when they got out of school.
Bryan: *Kind of a practical guide then.*
Irwin: Absolutely.
Bryan: *Since you were there so long you must have run across some other good teachers.*
Irwin: Oh, yes. Hy Eisman, who does *Popeye* and *The Katzenjammer Kids*. He does a syndicated strip and he was the first instructor, by the way, before me. The Hildebrandt Brothers did wonderful poster work. They were illustrators and they came for a couple of years. There was a wide spread of different artists who felt they wanted to teach. Very few of them lasted as long as Hy and myself. Some I never saw because we all taught on different days.
Bryan: *Did either Adam or Andy [Kubert] come back to teach?*
Irwin: I believe so but, of course, they're busy working for DC.
Bryan: *They're definitely in demand.*
Irwin: Oh, yes. Very talented. I taught them everything they knew. [*laughter*]

Dick Ayers mentioned that he used to car pool to the school with Ric Estrada. Even though Ric had been enduring chemotherapy treatments for awhile, he very graciously gave me a good chunk of his time to talk about his experiences teaching at the school for a two year period, which I believe was the School's first two years:

Ric Estrada: My memories of the two years I taught at the Kubert School alongside men like Dick Ayers and Dick Giordano and there were others, but those are the two that come to mind right away. As you may or may not know Joe

Below: *The late cartoonist Ric Estrada in a photo by Garrett Wesley Gibbons. Ric's son Seth continues to work on a film documentary about his lovely father.* Dibujantes [Draftsmen] *is tauted as a "documentary about Cuban American artist and world traveler Ric Estrada." For info, please visit* dibujantesblog.savant-studios.com. *Photo courtesy of Seth.*

Timothy Truman: Joe Kubert's Heart & Fire

The artist/writer of *Scout* and *Grimjack* fame talks about his beloved teacher

Interview conducted by JON B. COOKE *CBC* Editor

[*Timothy Truman is a renowned comic book artist and writer, as well as a musician, who is regarded for* Grimjack *(with John Ostrander),* Scout, Hawkworld*, scripting Dark Horse's* Conan *for the last seven years, illustrating Grateful Dead collateral, adaptations of* The Spider *and* Tarzan*, and a re-visioning of* Jonah Hex *(with writer Joe R. Lansdale), among many other projects. In other words, Timothy — who produced the back cover to this book and is a kind and gracious West Virginian — is a tremendously gifted talent. He got his start at — you guessed it — the Kubert School, which he joined in its third year. The following interview was conducted by phone on April 11, 2013, and the transcript — transcribed by Steve "Flash " Thompson — was edited for accuracy and clarity by Timothy. —* **JBC.**]

TM & © DC Comics.

Inset right: *Timothy Truman believes this might be the very first Kubert comic book he laid eyes on as a first grader in the early '60s.* Our Fighting Forces *#70 [Aug. '62].*

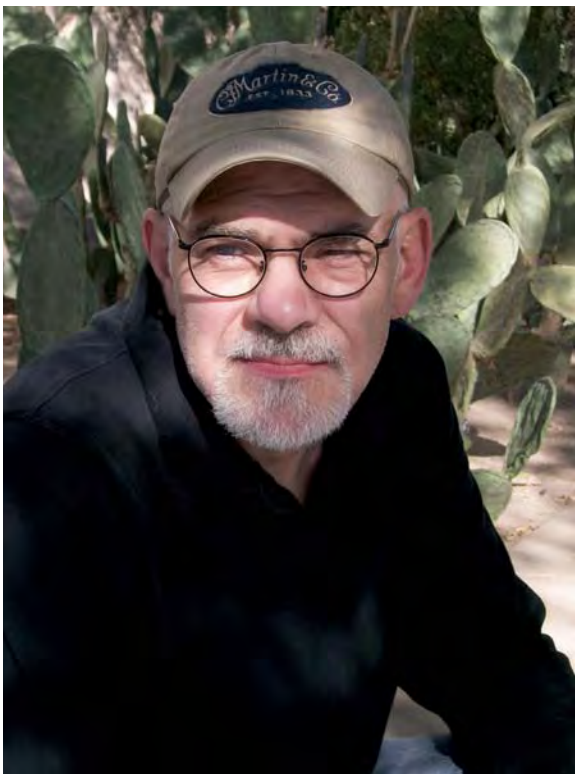
Comic Book Creator: *When did you first become cognizant of Joe Kubert's work?*

Timothy Truman: Well, he was one of the first artists that I started recognizing back when I was in grade school. Unlike most artists at the time, Joe usually signed his work, so I immediately started noticing the name. He was my favorite artist when I was young. If you would have asked me, even before I attended the Kubert School, I would've immediately said Joe Kubert was my favorite. I was just really very attached to and profoundly influenced by his work growing up.

CBC: *So you were reading the war comics as a little kid?*

Timothy: Sure. I grew up in Dunbar, West Virginia, and they didn't have kindergarten for six-year-olds in our area, so when we first started school, we went right to first grade.

Below: *Timothy Truman in a recent photograph.*



I loved being at home when I was little so, on my very first day of first grade, I was absolutely terrified. My dad was walking me to school and we passed by this barber-shop. In the window was a copy of *Our Fighting Forces*. I immediately stopped crying, stopped dead in my tracks and looked at that comic. Dad took me to school and I just had a horrible day, but when I came back, Dad was home from work and he had purchased that *Our Fighting Forces* comic from the barber. And, you know, there was a Joe Kubert story in there, so I started out enjoying Joe's work at a really early age.

CBC: *Was that the first comic book you owned?*

Timothy: Yes! That was the first comic I owned. I was a really hyperactive kid. My cousins had big comic collections and when we'd visit their houses they brought out the comic books. I would sit in my cousin's room or in the den for two or three hours reading them and looking at the cool pictures they wouldn't have to worry about me getting into trouble. [*laughs*]

CBC: *Did you read Kubert's* Tarzan *when it came out? Was that an exciting time?*

Timothy: Oh, absolutely, yeah. I was born in '56 and *Tarzan* was in the early '70s, right? So I was real aware of that. I was anxiously awaiting that.

CBC: *Were you aware of Joe's "Hawkman?"*

Timothy: Yeah, sure was. Yeah, I'd grown up with all that stuff — "Sgt. Rock," "Hawkman," *Tarzan*, "Viking Prince," "Haunted Tank," you name it. "Enemy Ace" and "Firehair" were my favorites, though, and I thought that Joe did some of his most innovative, under-recognized work, compositionally and story-telling-wise, with those issues of "Unknown Soldier" that he did [*Star-Spangled War Stories* #151-160, 1970-72].

CBC: *What was appealing about his art?*

Timothy: Well, Joe's characters always seemed like they were… He didn't do *clean* characters! His characters always looked like they had lived. Sgt. Rock always had that chin stubble, rumpled uniform, and looked covered in dust, y'know? He looked like he'd been through it. He had these Gregory Peck good looks but he was so craggy beyond that. So he looked like a "lived-in" Gregory Peck. [*Jon laughs*] There's just something heroic about those characters, but also something very realistic. I could believe 'em.

Paul Levitz: Joe Takes Care of Business

Friend and former DC Publisher on the common sense of a guy named Joe

Interview conducted by JON B. COOKE *CBC* Editor

[*Paul Levitz began his comics career as a fanzine editor, skulking about publisher offices in search of scoops for* Etcetera *and* The Comic Reader*, and would join DC Comics to move up the company ladder as (respectively) assistant editor, scripter, editor, business manager, and eventually the top rung of DC publisher and president, a position he held from 2002–09. Today, Paul is contributing editor and overall consultant with the company now called DC Entertainment, Inc. He has returned to writing his beloved* Legion of Super-Heroes *and is currently at work on a biography of Will Eisner. He was interviewed on April 5 and 11, 2013, and the following transcription (transcribed by Steve Thompson) was corrected and edited for clarity by Paul.* — **JBC.**]

Comic Book Creator: *When did you first become aware of Joe's work?*
Paul Levitz: As a byline, probably around the *DC Special* [#5] about him. That was at the age when I was just beginning to understand that people did things and I had probably seen a couple of his early/mid-'60s super-hero covers — there's a couple of *Batman* and *Justice League* he did for [editor] Julie [Schwartz] — and been curious about sort of a different style and line. But I don't know that I was aware of him as a distinct person in our history prior to that. The *DC Special* did a pretty good job of introducing him.
CBC: *Did you have any exposure to the war comics?*
Paul: I must've read a couple of them over the years, in some other kid's stack, but I don't recall buying one. I guess I probably bought, by that point, maybe the *Showcase* issues. There's one *Showcase* "Sgt. Rock" and then there's a *Showcase* or two of "G.I. Joe," and it was like, "Oh, I've gotta have these just to fill in the set" kind of thing.
CBC: *Right. "Enemy Ace."*
Paul: Guess so.
CBC: *Obviously, as publisher of DC Comics you were privy to, I would reckon, some of the demographics. Was the makeup of the reader picking up the war books remarkably different that of the reader picking up the super-hero books?*
Paul: If anybody did any studies of those at the time, they didn't survive for me to be aware of. I suspect they weren't separately researched because they weren't separately sold as an ad group, so there wasn't any particular reason to do it by the logic of the time.
CBC: *I also mean to the very end of the war genre run at DC, when you were in the offices.*
Paul: By the time I was in management, the war genre was such a small part of the line, there really wouldn't have been any reason to do that kind of research.
CBC: *So, was it really* Tarzan *that made you cognizant of Kubert's work?*
Paul: *Tarzan* was the first thing I really delighted in that contained his work. I was working on a fanzine — it was then called *Etcetera* at that point and it was about to shift to being *The Comic Reader*. I was gonna have the big scoop that *Tarzan* was coming to DC [jumping from Gold Key], which was pretty well impressive as there were only a couple of occasions when a license had moved to DC from another publishing company, the last of those probably a decade or more before. So everybody at the company thought this was exciting. It had been a very successful title for Gold Key. Joe was extraordinarily excited. He thought, this was an *artist's* book! He could do some work to out his name up there with [Burne] Hogarth and [Hal] Foster, and the other greats who had touched it. So there certainly was a lot more focus at that point.
CBC: *How did you get the scoop?*
Paul: Dunno. I was 14. I was hanging around the offices. Somebody told me. It may have been Joe [Orlando], it may have been Marv [Wolfman], it may have been Carmine [Infantino].
CBC: *So what was Joe like to a 14-year-old kid who was hanging around the offices?*
Paul: Remarkably benevolent. I mean *all* the team at DC and Marvel, were *so* kind. When I look back, in retrospect, it baffles me that they put up with me. I think a lot of it was that there were really *no* other news 'zines trying to identify who the writers and artists were when the books were coming out. A lot of the freelancers liked knowing that information so they could make sure they got their extra copies, even if they had to buy them themselves. But it amazes me that I got away with it — that nobody called my mom and sent me home.
CBC: *Well, you had a good fanzine, Paul. I mean, come on. [*laughs*]*
Paul: It grew into being a decent fanzine but *still*… a 14-year-old kid around a business office. [*Jon laughs*] Comic book companies are not your most formal environments in business, but this was a Manhattan skyscraper office, a New York Stock Exchange public company, a fair number of guys in suits wandering around and I'm bouncing around the place as a 14-year-old kid!
CBC: *We'll mark you down as grateful.*
Paul: Grateful and baffled!
CBC: *[*Laughs*] Well, I'm glad it happened. Now in retrospect, did you look back at the war books at all and note that there was a graphic change, for instance, with Joe taking over as editor?*

Inset left: *Portrait of Paul Levitz by Seth Kushner.*

Below: *Paul Levitz's earliest involvement with the comics industry was as a fanzine editor skulking about publishing offices in search of a scoop. Here's a copy of* Etcetera & The Comic Reader *#82 [Feb '72] with Alan Kupperberg Tarzan cover.*

This page: *"Firehair," the saga of a red-headed teenager, born of European stock but raised as a Blackfoot Indian —and rejected by both worlds — on the Great American Plains of the 1800s, was a daring and different concept that tapped into the prevailing alienation in late '60s culture. Joe was creator, writer and artist of the innovative series, which saw light in* Showcase *[#85-87] and as back-up in* Tomahawk *[132, 134 & 136].*

Paul: Oh, absolutely! When I began working at the company, my responsibilities included serving as assistant editor on some of the war titles and ultimately as editor on several of them. I don't know if the one that I presided over the creation of was the last of DC's war books, but one of the last of the old-school ones, *Men of War.* I had immersed myself pretty deeply in the war line by that time. I gained a great deal of respect for Kanigher's storytelling style, his taste in artists. He assembled an extraordinary team of artists working on those books. And then, when Bob had his health issues and had to step down, Joe really kicked it up yet another notch when he took over as editor.

CBC: *Do you know the timing of that? Was that coinciding with Carmine Infantino's ascension as editorial director?*

Paul: My sense is that both of those events pretty much happened in '67. It's hard to tell exactly when Carmine's job morphed through its different incarnations. As I can speak to from personal experience, one's different job designations don't necessarily represent the different phases of one's work. Sometimes a responsibility gets added, the job title catches up. Sometimes the job title means one thing one day and another day another. Carmine seemed to carry the titles art director, editorial director, publisher and then president, but there's not really a bright line of demarcation of exactly what authority he had in each position each day. At least, not as far as I've ever been able to tell.

CBC: *When we talked earlier, you had a very interesting word to use about Carmine's tenure: "fearless."*

Paul: Carmine presided over an astounding burst of creativity at DC, when you look at what was launched in that '67–'69 period. By the standards of *any* of the comic book companies of the last decade before that, it's an extraordinary range of experimentation. Most of the comic book houses through most of their lives were searching for what the trend was, if the trend was working you did more of *that* trend. DC certainly did a fair amount of that, the mystery books being an example, the proliferation of sticking the word, "weird" on all sorts of different genres to try and get a little rub-off from it. But not withstanding

Tributes in Memory of Joe Kubert

Words and pictures from friends, peers, students and fans about the comics master

Comic Book Creator *did our best to get word out that we were looking for testimonials and art honoring the late Joe Kubert, especially contacting "XQBs" — former students of The Kubert School — but, alas, we couldn't reach everyone and many were too busy to participate. To those who would have liked to have been included in the print edition, our apologies. To those who* did *contribute but were crowded out of the 160-page print edition, our* deepest *apologies. Rest assured, at least, the digital PDF edition includes all remembrances. Much as Ye Ed wished to extend the printed issue, publishing logistics keep us on a severe regimen. Do note that we plan to expand the tributes in an ongoing and perpetual tribute section at* www.cbcmag.net, *so get in touch with Ye Ed to be a part of that continuing memorial.*

Next page: *Neal Adams showcases perhaps Joe Kubert's greatest legacy, the alumni from his renowned art school. Names correspond (roughly) to chin level.*

Karen Berger

There are certain people in your life who really make a difference. Joe Kubert was one of those people for me. He was a constant, caring presence during my 30-plus year career at DC Comics. He really felt like part of my family. So much, that when he became ill before he passed away, I asked Joe and his family if my brother, who's a physician, could consult with Joe's doctors to make sure he was receiving the proper medical treatment.

I started working at DC Comics fresh out of college. I wasn't a comics fan, so outside of the popular super-heroes, I knew nothing about so many of the other characters, and I certainly didn't know anything about the writers and artists. The unique storytelling magic of comics certainly made an impression on me and I ended up staying at DC for a very long time! But, if the people creating the comics weren't so nice and interesting, I wouldn't have remained, especially in those early impulsive years.

The industry was still fairly self-contained in the early 1980s. The majority of talent lived in the tri-state area so they delivered their work in person, which was how I got to know Joe over the years. While there were so many incredibly talented artists, Joe's natural line, fluidity of form and emotional resonance took my breath away. There was something special about his talent. But there was also something special about the man himself. And no one gave you a better handshake or hug than he did!

I thought a lot about Joe after he passed away — I still do. My father died when I was very young, and Joe became very much a father figure to me. When he died in August of last year, I wrote a column for DC's blog, which was also printed in the Vertigo books and appears below. It was written over many tears, but it made me feel good to be able to share with so many people my love and respect for this wonderful man.

Joe Kubert had a special kind of life-force. Certainly, he was a gifted artist and master storyteller, but it was his integrity, passion, kindness, and strong sense of conviction that I'll remember most. He was like family.

Joe was one of our medium's true pioneers. Drawing since he was old enough to hold a piece of chalk, he started professionally illustrating at age 12 and never stopped. Over seven decades, he had drawn scores of memorable characters for many companies, but primarily for DC: most notably Hawkman, Tarzan, Enemy Ace, Batman, The Flash; he was also co-creator of Sgt. Rock, Ragman, and creator of Tor. In addition, Joe became an exceptional editor in 1968 at DC, and after leaving staff in 1976, he founded the cartooning school that bears his name with his wife, Muriel. The Kubert School is the only full-time accredited college devoted to comics, and has graduated many of our industry's finest artists including two of Joe's sons, Adam and Andy. Most special to me were those first few graduating classes, with Steve Bissette, John Totleben, Rick Veitch, and Tom Yeates, amazing creative talents and longtime friends of mine.

While Joe was expanding the Kubert School and teaching full-time, he was still drawing full-time. And in the years to come, he created his most personal works: *Abraham Stone; Fax from Sarajevo; Jew Gangster; Dong Xoai, Vietnam 1965;* and, for me, his masterpiece, *Yossel: April 19, 1943.* Joe's family emigrated from Poland when he was a baby and Yossel is the tragic, inspiring and all-too-real story of what might have been if they had never left. Reproduced entirely from Joe's pencil art, the emotion and vitality of Joe's work has never been as effective, enduring and heart-stopping.

When Joe suddenly got ill a few weeks ago, I spent a lot of time thinking about him. I remembered that in 1980, the first cover I commissioned as an editor was from him for *House of Mystery* #292. During the next several years, while Joe was still editing *Sgt. Rock*, he would come into the offices at 75 Rock once a week to handle business and to meet with writer Bob Kanigher, his longtime collaborator. The two of them couldn't have been more different. But they were both storytelling masters who loved to challenge each other. I always remember hearing loud voices coming from Joe's office and seeing that gleam in his eye as he and Bob would go at it.

Joe was a man of unerring principle and conviction. And though he respected a lot of what Vertigo published, he would often tell me that he was worried that some of it was too strong, and he didn't want me to get into trouble. Still, I think he was proud of me, and that's what matters the most. And although most of his books weren't published under Vertigo, it meant the world to me that he insisted that all of his most personal work be handled under my purview along with fellow Vertigo editor, Will Dennis.

Joe was up in the office just a couple of months ago and he looked as great as ever. Who would've thought that this almost 86-year-old man who lived life to its fullest would be leaving us so soon. Artist, writer, teacher, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friends to many, Joe Kubert always claimed that he was a lucky man to have such a wonderful family and such a wonderful life. For those of us who were fortunate to have known this one-of-a-kind and genuine soul, we were also the lucky ones. What a talent, what a legacy, what a man.

Rest in peace, dearest Joe.

Stephen R. Bissette

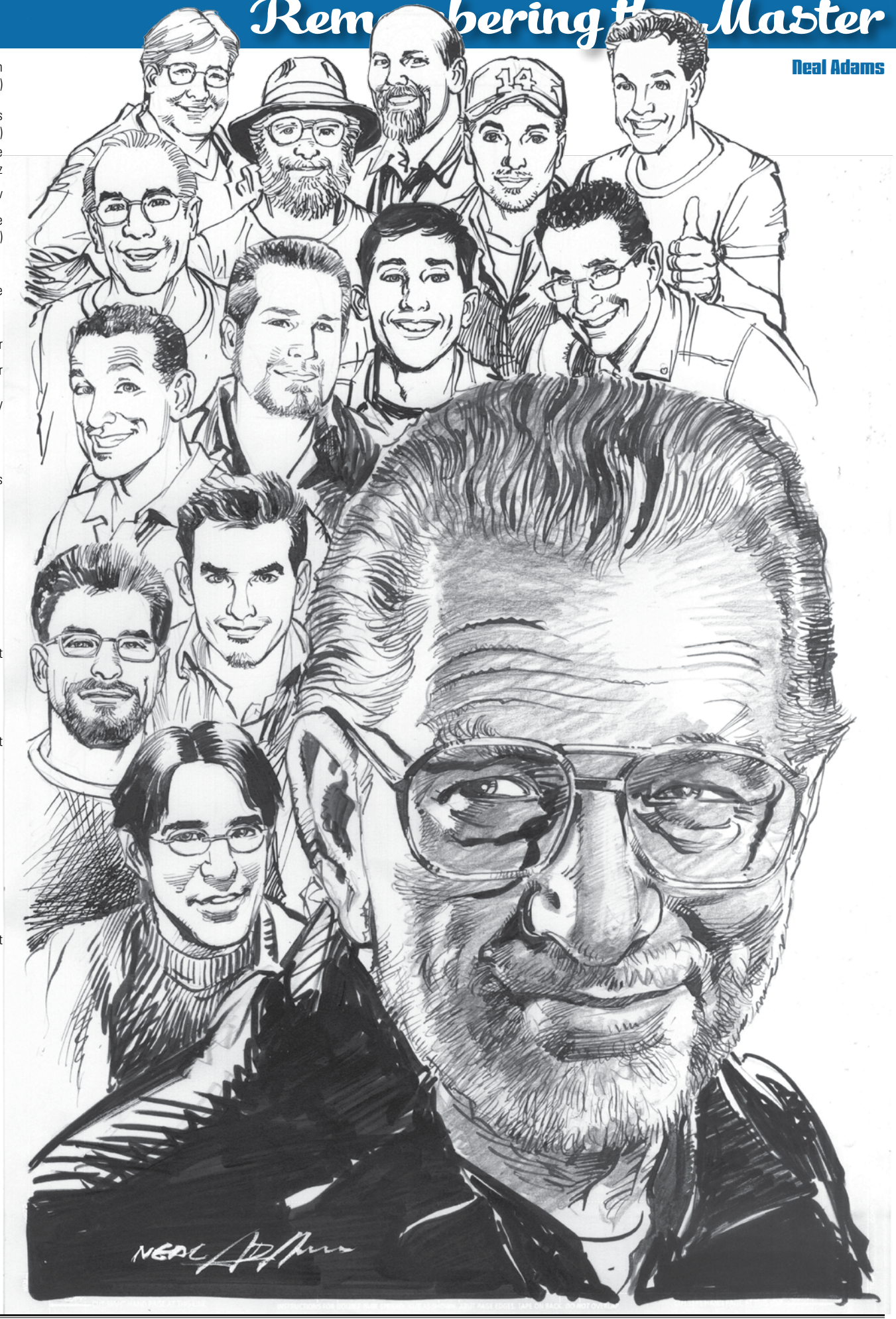
Like most comic book readers of my generation, I "met" Joe as a lad, long distance, through Joe's energetic, distinctive comics creations and co-creations: collaborative work with diverse peers on the likes of "The Flash" (Joe inked the seminal Silver Age Flash rebirth in *Showcase*), "Hawkman," "Cave Carson," and "The War That Time Forgot"; his fruitful collaborations with writer/editor Bob Kanigher on series like "Sgt. Rock," "Enemy Ace," and so many more; his solo efforts as writer/editor on *Tor* and "Firehair," and his adaptations of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* novels, and more.

To my eyes, Joe's comics seemed forever alive and vital, bursting with vigor and life, and yet soaked in shadows and the threat of mortality, inked with dinosaur blood and oil.

In the summer of 1976, I met Joe in the flesh — at my interview at the Baker Mansion in Dover, New Jersey, in hopes of making the cut to be part of the first-ever class at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc. — and first met his eye and felt his knuckle-cruncher handshake. My life changed the second I met Joe; and a second later, when my father met Joe, life got even better.

Remembering the Master

Neal Adams



Ivan Snyder's Wonderful World of Heroes

Remembering the toy stores and merchandise catalogs of Superhero Enterprises

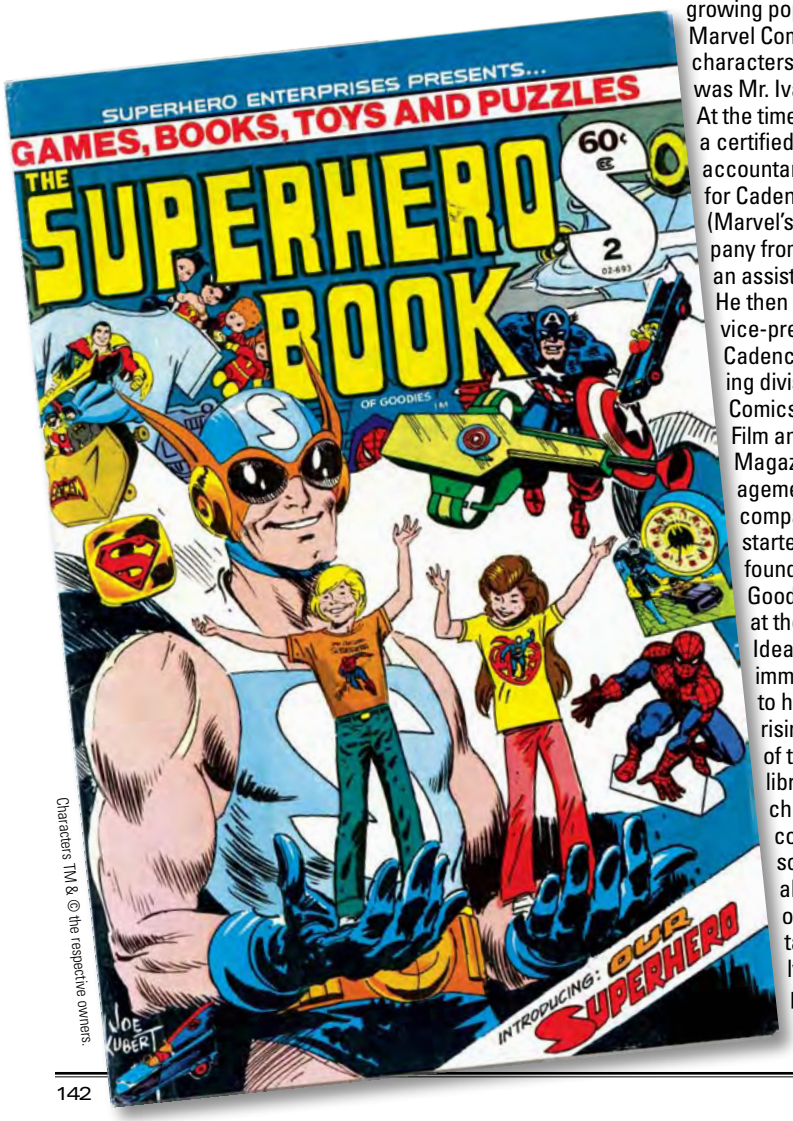
Next page: *At top is the catalog page introducing the winning name of the catalog super-hero mascot, Snyderman. The* King Kong*-inspired illustration is drawn by Joe Kubert. Note the school ad footing that page. Kubert School student Rick Veitch drew this illo, bottom, of the Heroes World mural window display. Courtesy of Rick.*

Below: *One of numerous catalog covers drawn by Joe Kubert. While the entire catalog was, for a spell, worked on by much of the student body, Joe's distinctive style is obvious through much of the comic-sized catalogs.*

by JORGE "GEORGE" KHOURY *CBC* Contributing Editor

Remember how much you just loved super-heroes as a kid? How, when you would run into any drug or department store, your eager eyes always wandered towards all the colorful licensed toys, wonderful school supplies, and charming knick-knacks bearing those joyful faces of beloved favorite heroes? And ultimately how, to the chagrin of your poor mom, you'd cry and pout and basically coerce her into buying these aforementioned goods for you? Yeah, though in the 1970s and early '80s, such kid-friendly products were not as prevalent as they are in today's marketplace, children of yesteryear knew a good thing when they saw it. Perhaps living vicariously, these were youngsters who proudly showed off their favorite heroic acquisitions and colors for all to see at the schoolyard. For many who couldn't find these goods locally, possessing these type of nostalgia items would not have been possible without Ivan Snyder and his Heroes World mail-order business and chain of stores.

Back in early '70s, one man understood that there was an audience starved for toys and merchandise based on the growing popularity of Marvel Comics and their characters. That man was Mr. Ivan Snyder. At the time, Snyder, a certified public accountant, worked for Cadence Industries (Marvel's parent company from 1968–86) as an assistant treasurer. He then became vice-president for Cadence's publishing division, Marvel Comics and Perfect Film and Chemical's Magazine Management, another company originally started by Marvel's founder, Martin Goodman. Once at the House of Ideas, it was imminently clear to him that the rising popularity of the company's library of characters could lead to some profitable licensing opportunities if taken seriously. He alone pretty much initiated the avalanche of toys and products that followed for Marvel in the '70s.



"When I went to work for the publishing division," Snyder explained, "we basically counted up 20 pages of story in a 32-page comic — [leaving] 12 pages of advertising — and advertising at that time was not selling for a great amount and there was no avenue of licensing. DC Comics always had the advantage because of Licensing Corporation of America, which was a part of them. Marvel had nothing. So I started a licensing division and had retained someone to sell in that regard, but there was nothing within the confines of the comics, so we started by devoting one page a month to selling Marvel-related product."

The novel notion of Marvel advertising these goods, month in month out, in the comics themselves, not only produced extra revenue for the company, but it easily hooked up the intended target market — the faithful readership — with all the Marvel products that their hearts could desire. Changes in the publishing outfit's management ended this memorable practice. Snyder said, "Well, we were dealing with Al Landau, president of Marvel, and he left and they brought in Jim Galton, and Jim and I never really saw eye-to-eye on a lot of business matters, so he said to me, 'Why do we have a mail order company? We're publishers. Let's get rid of it. So I bought it.'"

Having kept the Marvel advertisements rolling for his mail order business, Snyder built a large client list and launched Superhero Enterprises, Inc., by producing the comic-sized *Superhero Merchandise Catalog,* based out of Dover, New Jersey; the initial pages produced by Marvel Bullpenners and showcasing primarily Marvel products in 1975. By the Bicentennial year, now including DC-related and other genre products, the pamphlet had also reinvented itself into *The Superhero Book*, with editor Joe Kubert at the helm, and students from the then-newly opened Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc., providing artwork, lettering, and coloring duties. From 1976–80, these booklets would represent some of the earliest printed work of many prominent Kubert alumni from the institution's fledgling years. The catalogs, sent to Snyder's extensive mailing list of fans, proved popular enough to actually be sold on newsstands and in early comic book specialty shops. Kubert and his pupils also illustrated the company's memorable monthly ads appearing in Marvel and DC titles. And Joe himself created Snyderman, the "Stereosonic Superhero" and official company mascot (who was given his name by contest winner David Stebbins).

"I had known Joe before," recalled Snyder. "The industry was not that large and I had met him on several occasions and we lived near each other. And actually two of his children worked for me, and they both found their spouses working for me. David, his son, managed one of my stores, and he met his wife, who worked for our mail-order division, and his daughter came to work in our mail-order division and she met her [future] husband there."

Snyder got the idea to incorporate Kubert's new enterprise because, he explained, "Joe was doing the ads for me in DC Comics. The School was then just starting out, so when I got the idea of the catalog, the comic-book catalog of my line, I went to Joe and spoke to him about it. So, basically, a lot of the work within the catalog was done by the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art."

Instead of using photographs to showcase the prod-

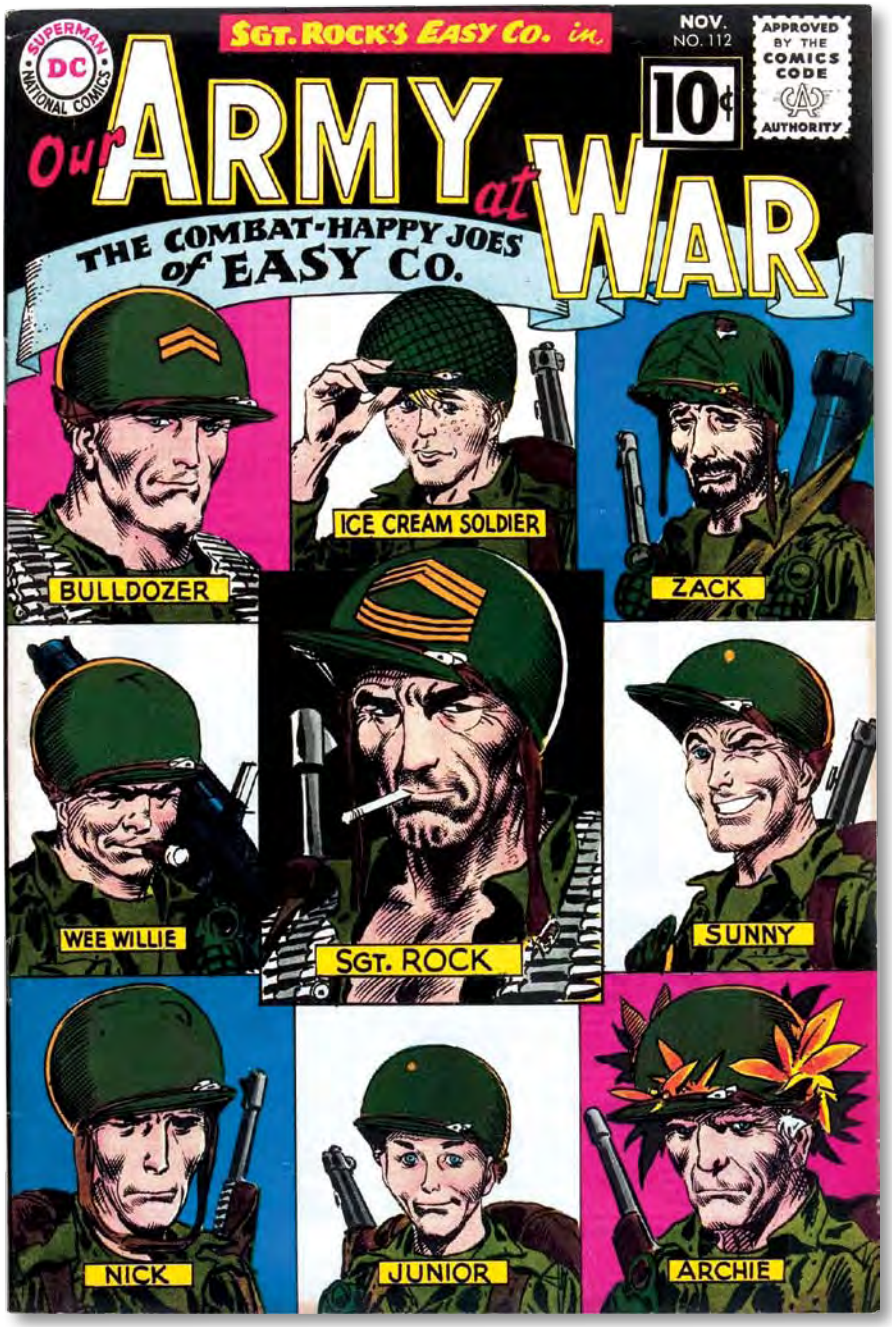
Joe Kubert: The Anti-War War Artist

The creator's fine line: telling the war from the warrior, drawing (on) the past

by HARRY BROD

Below: *The "Combat-Happy Joes of Easy Co.," led by the "Man Called Rock," fightin' Ratzis with wits and fists in the Big One: dub-ya, dub-ya two. The global war seemed so innocent on this cover of* Our Army at War *#112 [Nov. '61] by Joe Kubert, huh?*

Joe Kubert is often hailed as the greatest artist of war comics. Rightly so, as long as we understand we're talking about his subject, not his attitude. In the meaning of his work he was really an anti-war artist, showing us the warrior at war in a way that drew a line between the two, heralding the heroism of the warrior while criticizing war itself. His approach was deeply influenced by his own heritage as a Jew born in Poland and raised in the U.S.



His greatest work here is the character of Sgt. Rock of "Sgt. Rock and Easy Company," who appeared in *Our Army at War*, a DC comic of World War II stories, from 1959 to 1988, and sporadically thereafter. The character was so popular that *Our Army at War* at times outsold DC's superhero titles, and its title was eventually changed to *Sgt. Rock*. The overwhelming majority of the stories were written by Robert Kanigher and illustrated by Kubert.

These were stories of men in combat, but the great power of the stories of "Sgt. Rock and Easy Company" was that they were about the men much more than the combat. They were character-driven, and the strengths of the soldiers of Easy Company, especially Frank Rock himself, were those of ordinary men trying to survive under extraordinary difficulties. The cover of *Our Army at War* #112 [Nov. 1961] is a portrait gallery of Rock and the other "Combat-Happy Joes of Easy Co.": brawny Bulldozer, steadfast Ice Cream Soldier, sad Zack, winking Sunny, stolid Nick, cigar smoking Wee Willie, Archie, looking older than the rest, and Junior, looking younger. The stories didn't feature super abilities or great feats. Sure, there were some tales of astounding marksmanship or strength or speed, but the core of the stories was clear in the name itself, Rock. They praised the endurance, steadfastness, stubbornness, and persistent courage required to stand one's ground displayed by what we have now come to call the greatest generation.

Kubert's art etched the weariness of the war-weary into Rock's face: a triangular face looking haggard and suggesting gauntness without quite getting there that narrowed down from his helmet, its strap undone and flapping, to a jutting jaw with a permanent stubble of beard and, most striking of all, the dark shadows of his recessed eyes. In the bend of the shoulders and the slight buckle of the legs one felt the weight of what Rock carried: the grenades and ammunition belt that always hung on him, the rifle in his hands, and the responsibility for the lives of the men under his command. It was the powerful humanity of Sgt. Rock, the way that you could see the resonance with his men's pain and peril registering on his own face, that accounts for his popularity even at the height of the opposition to the Vietnam War. When Kubert became editor of DC's war and other comics during this period he started an unusual practice for a war comic. At the end of each story appeared the slogan "Make War No More." "I wanted to make it clear that, despite the fact that I was editing war books, we were not glorifying war," Kubert explained.[1]

That attitude came across clearly and had a strong impact. I know it affected me personally. During the Iraq war, I was one of the speakers at a "teach-in" held at my university while we were still under the Bush administration. The university has an ROTC program, and during the discussion two young men from the program passionately delivered their opinion that the professors on the panel were fools and stormed out, clearly feeling demeaned if not outright insulted by the criticisms of the war being made. Before the moderator moved on to other questions I interjected to say that I regretted that they had left, that I honored their service, and that those of us who were sharply critical of U.S. policy, as I was, had an obligation to bend over backwards to make clear that in our criticisms we separated the war from the