

ROY THOMAS' ALL-STAR-STRUCK  
COMICS FANZINE



# Alter Ego™

SEE? WE TOLD YOU  
THERE'D BE ANOTHER  
ISSUE STARRING THE

**\$8.95**  
In the USA

## JUSTICE SOCIETY™ OF AMERICA

**No. 121**  
November  
2013



**JOHN B. WENTWORTH!**  
WRITER/CO-CREATOR OF JOHNNY THUNDER!  
**LEN SANSONE!**  
INKER/CO-CREATOR OF THE ATOM!  
**BERNARD SACHS!**  
INKER OF 1948-1951 JUSTICE SOCIETY!



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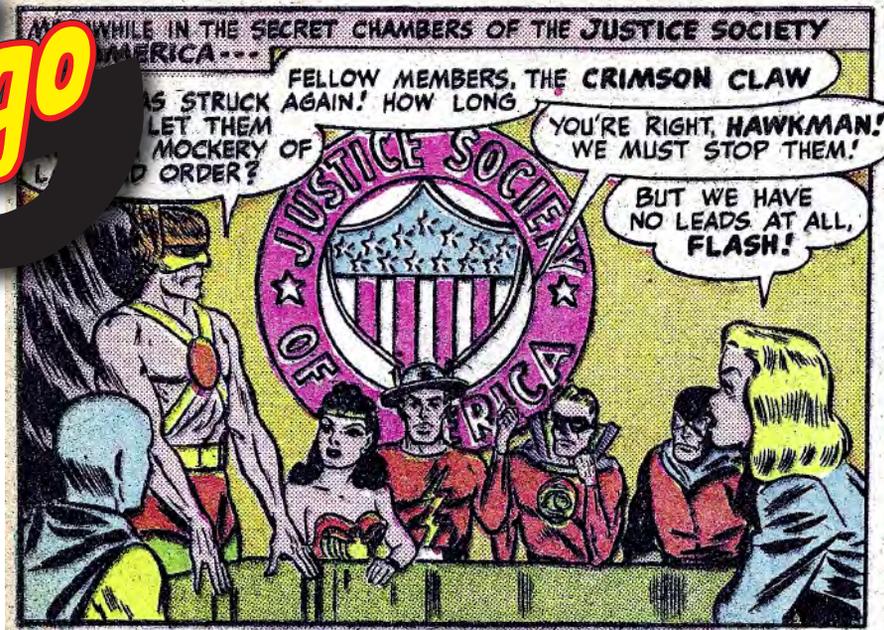
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**On Our Cover:** Irwin Hasen's cover for All-Star Comics #43 (Oct.-Nov. 1948) was, in addition to its own considerable merits, the inspiration for the second "Justice League of America" cover, for The Brave and the Bold #29 (April-May 1960)—no big surprise, since chances are that both were commissioned by editor Julius Schwartz. For Alter Ego #76's printing of Bob Rozakis' fantasy history of a takeover of National/DC by sister company All-American Comics, **Shane Foley** adapted the Golden Age cover to what it might've looked like had honorary JSAs Superman and Batman, who had guest-starred in All-Star #36, stuck around in place of less stellar members Johnny Thunder and The Atom... and Ye Editor has always wanted to see that artful homage in color, so our thanks to **Tom Ziuko**. Coincidentally, the co-creators of the two latter-named heroes are honored in this issue of A/E... hence the vintage cameo heads by **Stan Aschmeier** (Johnny Thunder) and **Ben Flinton, Leonard Sansone, & maybe Bill O'Connor** (The Atom). [JSA heroes TM & © DC Comics.]

**Above:** The first work by the longtime team of penciler **Arthur Peddy** and inker **Bernard Sachs** on the "Justice Society of America" feature was the lead chapter of the story "The Plight of a Nation" in All-Star Comics #40 (April-May 1948)—except for the splash page, which was a Photostat of that issue's cover by Carmine Infantino & Frank Giacoia. Seen above is the very first panel Peddy & Sachs ever drew of the JSA—in that first issue in which Black Canary replaced Johnny Thunder, even though she didn't officially become a member till #41. Reproduced from Ye Editor's bound volumes. [© DC Comics.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**John B. Wentworth,  
Leonard Sansone,  
& Bernard Sachs**



Alter Ego™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. Alter Ego Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. Send subscription funds to TwoMorrrows, NOT to the editorial offices. Eight-issue subscriptions: \$60 US, \$85 Canada, \$107 elsewhere. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. Alter Ego is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in China. ISSN: 1932-6890

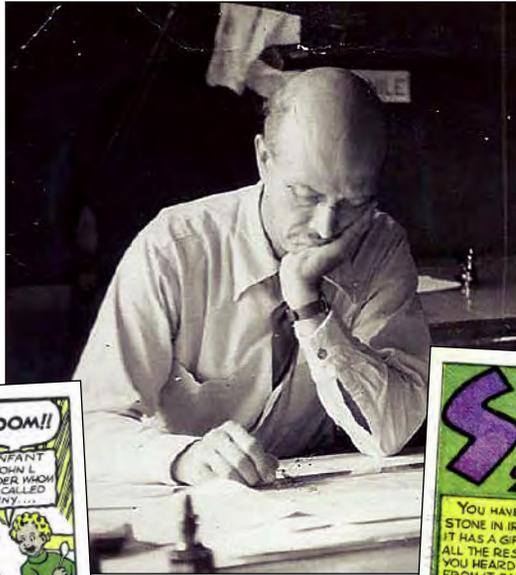
FIRST PRINTING.

# JOHN B. WENTWORTH All-American Thunderbolt

## Daughter REBECCA WENTWORTH Tells Us About The Man Who Created "Johnny Thunder" & "Sargon The Sorcerer"

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Richard J. Arndt

**INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION:** John B. Wentworth was born in 1908 and died in 1997. During his long life, he was an actor, a light opera singer, an information officer dealing with foreign diplomats, and, most important to Alter Ego readers, a comic book writer. All of his work in the latter field was done for All-American Comics (from 1939-45 the sister company to DC Comics) and for DC itself after AA founder M.C. Gaines sold his interest to the larger company in '45. Wentworth co-created "Johnny Thunder" (a feature originally called "Johnny



John B. Wentworth

Thunderbolt") with artist Stan Aschmeier (aka "Stan Josephs"), co-created "Sargon the Sorcerer" with artist Howard Purcell and "The Whip" with George Storm, and also wrote such AA/DC strips as "Red, White and Blue" and "The Ghost Patrol." In fact, with rare exceptions, Wentworth worked only on series characters for his entire comics career. This interview with John B.'s daughter, Rebecca Wentworth, was conducted by phone in December of 2011.



### No Flash In The Pan

Writer John B. Wentworth at work—surrounded by the first-ever splash pages of three DC heroes he co-created: "Johnny Thunderbolt" and "The Whip" from *Flash Comics* #1 (Jan. 1940) and "Sargon the Sorcerer" from *All-American Comics* #26 (May 1941). The respective artists are Stan Aschmeier, George Storm, and Howard Purcell. Note that Wentworth originally received a byline only on "The Whip." With thanks respectively to the hardcover *JSA All Stars Archives, Vol. 1*, Jim Kealy, and Gene Reed—and to Rebecca Wentworth for the photo. The "Whip" page is probably ultimately from the 1970s tabloid-size reprinting of *Flash Comics* #1. [Page © DC Comics.]





#### A Family Portrait In Four Parts (Clockwise From Above:)

The Wentworth family circa the early 1950s. (L. to r.: John B., Rebecca, Hazel (Mrs. John B.), Karen. Rebecca writes: "There are [virtually] no family pictures of us together. Dad was the photographer, and he was into candid shots." Incidentally, both Rebecca and Karen have kept their original surnames. "Mom," Rebecca says, "also stayed Hazel Wentworth."

A 1938 letter from John B. to Hazel. The "watermelon" bit refers to their as-yet-unborn first child, Karen.

This clearly much-read copy of *Flash Comics* #77 (Nov. 1946) is the only comic book containing one of her father's stories that Rebecca can recall having while growing up. It came out in the year she was born. For scenes from its rather atypical "Johnny Thunder" entry, see p. 11. The Hawkman cover is by Chester Kozlak. [© DC Comics.]

Wentworth in the woods at Tenants Harbor, Maine... sometime between 1942 and 1947-48. Thanks to Rebecca Wentworth for the photos, *Flash Comics* scan, and letter.



### "He Referred To His Work In Comics As 'For The Pulp'"

**RICHARD ARNDT:** *We're chatting with Rebecca Wentworth, about her father, John. Can you tell us what you know of your dad's early life?*

**REBECCA WENTWORTH:** Dad went to the Chicago University High School. That school was run by a guy named John Dewey. Dewey was the progressive education guru for Americans at that time. He was an advocate of pragmatism, which supported classes like home economics and practical, skill-based learning, as well as the Latin or liberal arts classes. Although he was never a formal

BunnyB - I'm sorry I haven't written. I've been occupied with a number of conferences with myself, so don't be mad. And I've spent some time on 14th St buying things for Watermelon.

Today came some registrar stuff from Boston. It seems to call for your signature, so I'll wait till you can do it here.

Gonna airmail special an' everything this.

Packages supposed to come here today so I've got to stick pretty close t' home. Got considerable to do, so it's OK.

Letters and stuff around - including one from Vic O'Connor. You din't tell me about him.

Duppy says she'd like to be at station with a band or some such doings, and various other dames keep asking me what 31 looks like and then I say the latest report on her looks is that you call her a watermelon, and they say Oh I am just joking. Also it seems from a letter you wrote Duppy that 31 hollers a lot more than you told me on the phone! Nurfy nurfy! We fix.

Lemme know when you'll get here, r' goodness sake.

See y' tomorrow!!!!!!!

Love  
John



teacher, Dad was very much an educator in his own way. My mother was a special-needs teacher back then. She was a remedial reading teacher, and she taught speech therapy and stuff.

Dad studied opera and theatre and writing privately while he was in college. He married Mom—well, I don't actually know the year. I know he graduated with a Liberal Arts degree from Williams College in Massachusetts in 1929, the same year his dad died, and, of course, the year of the great stock market crash. The year the Great Depression started. For the first few years of their marriage they were in New York, and then they ended up in Colorado for five years. Dad did theatre work for the WPA [Works Progress Administration] in Silver City, near Denver, until the government stopped supporting theatre.

**RA:** *That may have been when Orson Welles ticked off the right-wing members of Congress with The Cradle Will Rock, in 1937 or so.*

**WENTWORTH:** That's close, so that could have been it. They moved back to New York in 1938, and I'm pretty sure Dad started writing for comics—or the *pulps*—that's what he called them. My sister was born in 1938, and he started working for the pulps in 1939. I was born in 1946, so I don't know all the titles of the pulps he wrote for.

**RA:** *There were a lot of [actual] pulps back then. Mostly, "pulp" refers to a particular short story [magazine] market, not comics. Do you know if he wrote prose stories for that type of genre pulps?*

**WENTWORTH:** No, I just know the comics. He referred to his work in comics as "for the pulps."

**RA:** *A lot of writers back then wrote for one market, say, comics, using one name and an entirely different name for detective pulps. Would your father have used a pen name?*

**WENTWORTH:** No, as far as I know, he used his real name, John Wentworth. In 1939, he became rather desperately ill, both he and my sister; and the family ended up moving to Maine in the early 1940s, I think 1942. My mother's family is from there. They lived in Maine for five years. That's where he wrote most of his comics from.

**RA:** *Really? Most of the comics industry was in New York City at the time, and I've usually heard that a writer or artist had to live in the city pretty much full-time to get steady work. Did he have to commute down, or did he send the scripts in by mail?*

**WENTWORTH:** I don't really know, but I would assume he mailed them in. In those days it took six hours to drive from our house in Maine just to get to Boston, and it was another ten hours after that to get to New York. It was because you had to go and wait for ferries. They didn't have the bridges they have today. There were two ferries you had to take. The roads were very curvy, and there was no Route 95, only Route 1. No freeways, only two-lane roads most of the way. It was a long trip.

**RA:** *Have you read a lot of your dad's comics?*

**WENTWORTH:** Well, when I was a kid, we had one copy of one of his comics. It was a "Johnny Thunder" comic and I read it a lot. I seem to recall him telling me when I was young that he wrote the first *Lone Ranger* comic book. I think I saw that one as well. All that memorabilia was lost over the years. **[INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: I was unable to find any credits for John Wentworth on Dell's Lone Ranger, though it is entirely possible that he did script early issues or stories. Although "The Lone Ranger" appeared in comics from 1937 on, his first full issue in his own title was in 1945, two years before Wentworth left comics.]**

## "[Johnny Thunder] Was His Character"

**RA:** *I wasn't aware of his work on "The Lone Ranger." I know he wrote the first episode of "Johnny Thunder."*

**WENTWORTH:** He created Johnny Thunder. That was his character. He was originally called "Johnny Thunderbolt." Peachy Pet, who was a little girl who appeared in "Johnny Thunder," might have been based on my sister. The relationship between Peachy Pet and Johnny Thunder was like that of my Dad and my sister. Peachy Pet was probably a nickname for the character, not her actual name. Dad used to give us all nicknames.

**RA:** *You mentioned that your dad was an opera singer, and Roy Thomas, Alter Ego's editor, notes that there are some similarities between Richard Wagner's Ring opera cycle and "Johnny Thunder" in that the son was sent away to be raised by others, like Siegfried in the Ring Cycle and, for that matter, Superman.*

**WENTWORTH:** That wouldn't surprise me. It makes sense. Dad had a subtle sense of humor. He was strictly a light opera singer, though, not the dramatic stuff or operettas.

**RA:** *You mentioned earlier that he studied opera and theatre. Did he have any career in opera?*

**WENTWORTH:** Yes. In Colorado, during his time with the WPA, he worked with theatre projects and sang in light opera productions. There's a long history of my family working or associated with the theatrical world. My grandparents met singing Gilbert & Sullivan, so there's quite a lot of singing and performing in my family. One of the reasons he came to New York in 1938 was to try his hand at a singing career, but his illness cut that short. Mom taught school in Manhattan, but they lived in Hoboken. She used to take the ferry to work. I remember her telling me that. This is all pre-me, though. What I can tell you is all family myth and things I was told more than things I remember. My sister Karen would probably know more than me.

**RA:** *He also co-created "Sargon the Sorcerer" with artist Howard Purcell. Did you know any of the people he worked with in comics?*

**WENTWORTH:** Hmm, no, not really. I was only a year old when he left the



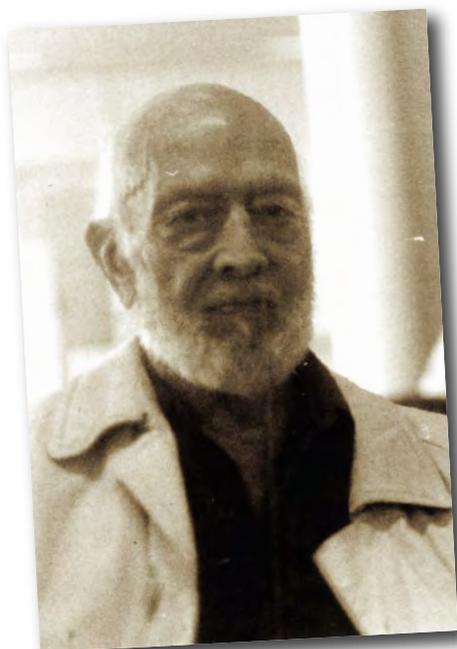
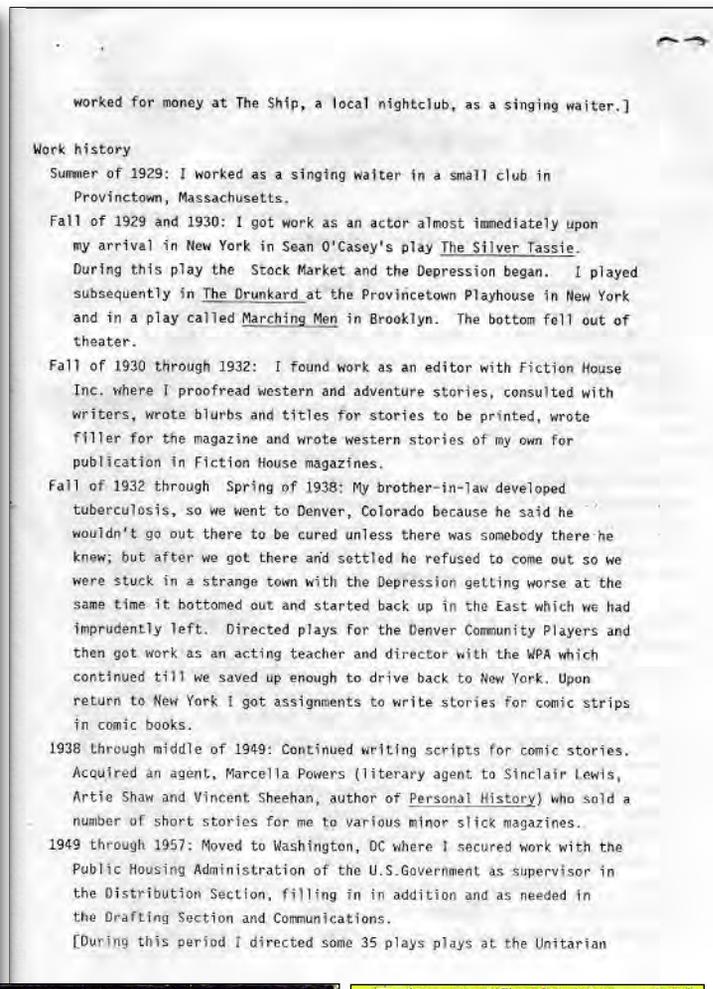
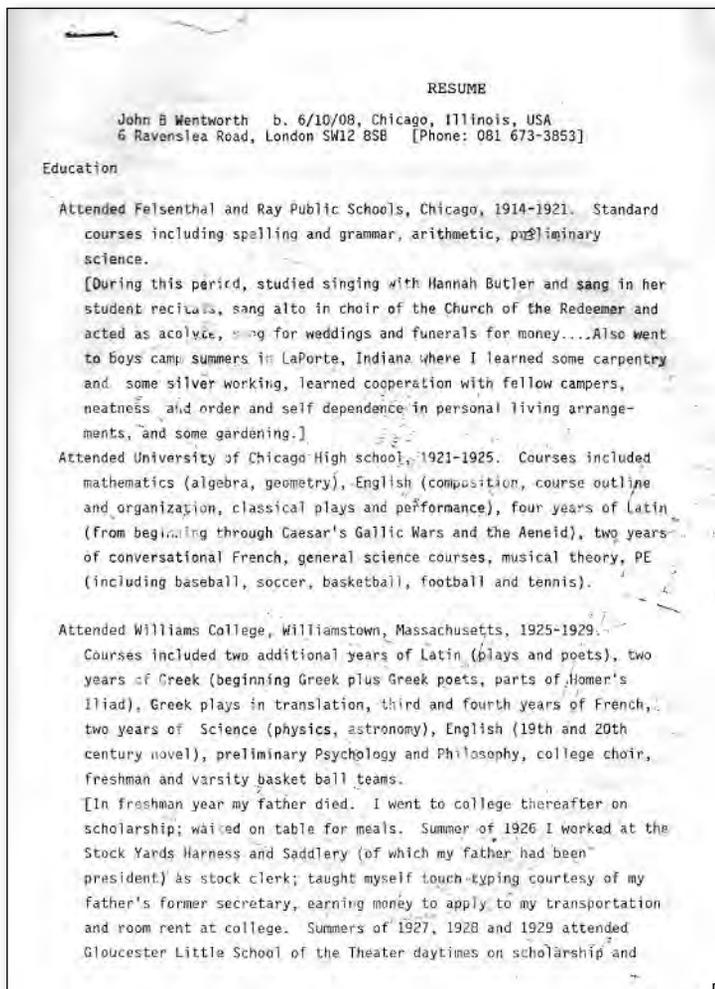
### Home On The Grange

A recent photo of Rebecca Wentworth—"at the farmer's market, peddling memberships for the Grange." Pic taken by Heather Rowe.

## Addendum:

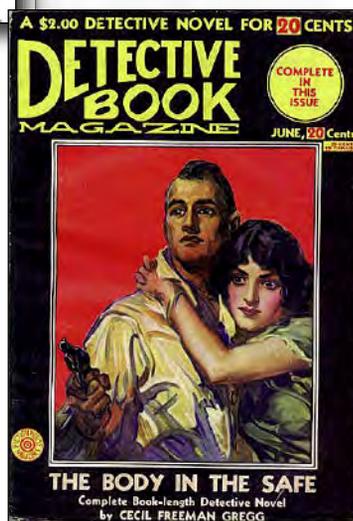
## The Life And Times of JOHN B. WENTWORTH

Of the four sheets by JBW that appear on this and the following page, Rebecca W. writes: "I found a résumé [my father] wrote when he was in his 80s and living in London with my sister. It about sums up what he thought about the important things he had done. Knowing him, he was applying for a job somewhere." Because this is so thorough a document in some ways, and was written by Wentworth himself, *Alter Ego* has elected to print it in full. [©2013 Estate of John B. Wentworth.]



"Oh, To Be In England..."

This photo of Wentworth was taken when he was leaving for London circa 1986. Rebecca notes that it was the last time she saw her father, who died in 1993.



## Stranger Than Fiction

Between 1930 and 1932, years before there was a National/DC, let alone the first issues of *Detective Comics* or *Action Comics*, the future creator of "Johnny Thunder" and "The Whip" worked as an editor at Fiction House. T.T. Scott's pulp-magazine company would enter the comic book field in 1938—the same year John B. says he began writing for National, probably under editor Vin Sullivan. [© the respective copyright holders.]

# Splitting The Atom— Three Ways!

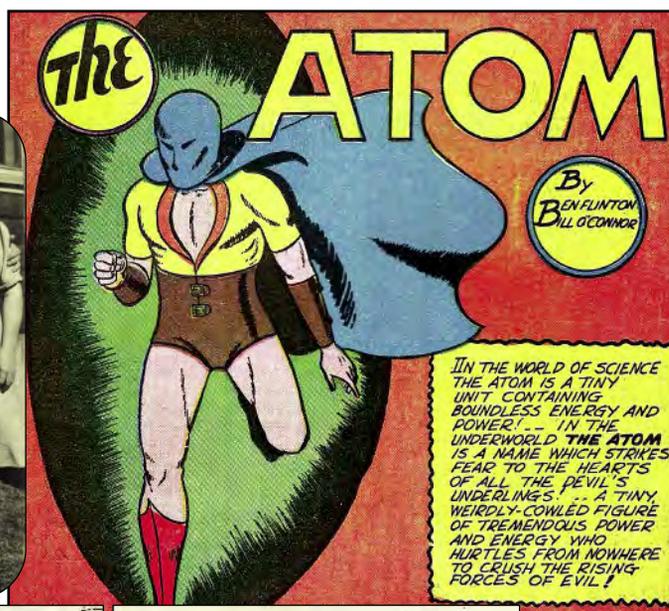
## MRS. EMILY SOKOLOFF On Her Artist Husband LEONARD SANSONE—From Mighty Mite To *Wolf* To *Willie*

Interview Conducted 7-24-12 by Shaun Clancy

Transcribed by Steven Thompson

**A/E** EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Although it's no secret that I'm one of the greatest fans still standing of the Golden Age

"Justice Society of America," I must admit that, until a few years ago, the name "Leonard Sansone" was as unknown to me as that of, say, Ernest Schroeder, artist of the 1948-50s "Airboy" and "The Heap." Apparently, though, diligent researchers like A/E/Who's Who founder Jerry G. Bails and Craig Delich (author of the 1977 All-Star Comics Revue) have been aware for much longer that Sansone was a bosom buddy of Ben Flinton and Bill O'Connor, whose names graced all the early stories of "The Atom" in National/DC's All-American Comics. Boy, was I surprised to find out that the cartoonist who had done the celebrated *Wolf* cartoons for U.S.



### The Strength Of Sansone

(Photo:) Leonard Sansone in 1944, on leave in Norwood, Massachusetts, with his wife Emily and his mother—framed by the two most noted comics features with which he was associated:

(Top right:) "The Atom," from *All-American Comics* #37 (April 1942), bylined "Ben Flinton & Bill O'Connor" as usual—although, according to researchers, virtually all of that pair's "Atom" stories, at least in that title, had artistic input (mostly inking) from Sansone—and either Flinton or O'Connor told Jerry Bails, for the 1970s *Who's Who* print volumes, that O'Connor was the writer, not a penciler. Doug Martin, who sent this scan, says the GCD specifically credits the inking of this page to Sansone. [© DC Comics.]

(Above:) *The Wolf*—aka *G.I. Wolf* or *Pvt. Wolf*—Len's own creation, published while he was an enlisted man during World War II. This cartoon, one of a number reprinted in the July 31, 1944, issue of *Life* magazine, was supplied by the artist/writer's daughter, Maggie Sansone. [© Estate of Leonard Sansone.]



BERNARD FLINTON

Also having eaten one of Ma's weirdly reported breakfasts or maybe something that he brewed himself, Ben was one of those who sometimes told us how they ate for one week on a buck. But he seemed to have the strength to paint black striking paintings, for biting etchings, and for entertaining certain ladies.



LEONARD SANSONE

"Lennie" coming down the corridor with a "who-me?" look and his hair in his eyes,—does pretty good "stuff," too,—even we admit it,—and think he'll make a real commercial artist. "That two weeks' problem?" he said. "I'll dash it off tonight and write my thesis in the morning." And he almost did.



WILLIAM O'CONNOR

Like a small lively bottle of good spirits or a buoyant cork, Oaky soberly engineered large canvases in concentrated effort, but was always ready when rest periods came to chin or dance or wrestle; if he had worries, and we suspect he must have, he never let us know it.

### School Daze

Three Massachusetts School of Art buddies who would soon use their surname initials to make up the comic book byline "FOS"—Bernard (Ben) Flinton, William (Oak) O'Connor, and Leonard (Lennie) Sansone—plus a drawing by Sansone from the same 1939 yearbook in which these photos and captions appeared. Thanks to Shaun Clancy. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Army camp newspapers during World War II—with which I was familiar—had also worked on "The Atom" from the very beginning, even though he never took a credit on it. Turns out he had a considerable solo career in comics for a couple of years, as well, until Uncle Sam called on him to help settle a little thing called the Second World War.

A year or two ago, Maggie Sansone, the artist's daughter, posted a bit of material about her father online, which led the ever-researching Shaun Clancy to get in touch with her—and through her, with her mother (and Leonard Sansone's widow), Mrs. Emily Sokoloff. What follows is basically Shaun's interview with Mrs. Sokoloff, but with several informative interpolations from the ever-helpful Maggie. Between the four of us—and Craig Delich—we're determined that Leonard Sansone gets some belated but very due credit...! —Roy.

## "Everybody Wanted To Go To New York"

**SHAUN CLANCY:** I'm doing research for a comic book history magazine called *Alter Ego*. It specializes in people who worked in comic books in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s.

**EMILY SOKOLOFF:** Oh, that's Lenny.

**SC:** There are a few other classmates of yours who are credited for comic book work, also... Bill O'Connor and Bernard Flinton. He's down as "Bernard" in the Massachusetts School of Art 1939 yearbook, which I have. Was his name Bernard or Ben?

**SOKOLOFF:** I think it was Ben; I don't remember a Bernard.

**SC:** Yeah, everybody else says Ben, too. "Ben" was apparently his nickname. Do you remember Bill O'Connor?

**SOKOLOFF:** Yes.

**SC:** Bill O'Connor and Leonard and Ben all went to work in New York in comic books in the 1940 to 1942 time period. You met Leonard in school?

**SOKOLOFF:** In school, yes. It was a four-year college. Now it's very, very posh, a very fine college.

**SC:** I see you took up costume design. I have the 1939 yearbook, which was given to me by Beatrice Holmes [who was in the same class as you]; she was in the art department. Did you know her—or a Richard Case? He was a couple of years behind you. I was just curious, because he was also in comics.

**SOKOLOFF:** No [I don't remember either of them].

**SC:** What year did you marry Leonard?

**SOKOLOFF:** January 1st, 1942, in Boston. We had three nights, three days. Then Lenny went back to where he was stationed, and I went to Dorchester. We were staying with my parents... until Lenny was transferred to CNS, in New York City. [NOTE FROM DAUGHTER MAGGIE SANSONE: CNS ["Camp Newspaper Service"] was a division of *Yank* magazine, where [my father] worked as art director and cartoonist for the duration of the war. His famous and wonderfully funny Wolf cartoons appeared in over 3000 camp newspapers. During this period at CNS, his colleagues were artists, cartoonists, and writers such as Sgt. George Baker [creator of *The Sad Sack*, originally a G.I. character], Bill Mauldin [creator of the cartoon G.I.s "Willie and Joe"], Marion Hargrove [author of the wartime bestselling humor novel *See Here, Private Hargrove*], Milton Caniff [creator of the comic strips *Terry and the Pirates* and *Male Call*], and Walter Farley [author of numerous popular children's books about horses].]

**SC:** That means you'd stayed in touch with him after you graduated.

**SOKOLOFF:** Yes, we stayed in New York City for about a couple of years. I lived in a nearby apartment with a girlfriend until the guys were drafted.

**SC:** Did Bill O'Connor and Ben come around a lot?

**SOKOLOFF:** No. When the war started, they all went into the Army. When they came out, they all dispersed in different areas. Some probably went back to Boston.

### "When My Eyes Visualize A Family, I See Emily..."

Emily Stone in 1939... the future Mrs. Emily Sansone, later Mrs. Emily Sokoloff. With thanks to Maggie Sansone & Shaun Clancy.





**Up 'n' "Atom"—Clockwise!**  
 The closing panel/caption of the "Adventures into the Unknown" feature in *All-American Comics* #18 (Sept. 1940)—no relation to the 1948+ horror comic from ACG. This story was the final chapter of a serial scripted by popular juvenile author Carl H. Claudy and drawn by Stan Aschmeier; its end-caption served as a tease for the next issue's "The Mighty Atom," as the series was originally called. Most likely Flinton and/or O'Connor drew The Atom here; but the colorist clearly had no clue what the hero's color scheme would be. Thanks to Bob Hughes.

The first five "Atom" stories, from *All-American Comics* #19-23, have been reprinted in the DC hardcover *The JSA All Stars Archives, Vol. 1...* so here's the splash page from *AA* #26 (March 1941) by Flinton, O'Connor, and (reportedly) Sansone. No one has ever proven with any degree of certainty which of these young artists wrote the yarns (O'Connor is usually credited)—or even which of them penciled and which inked, except that Sansone apparently did at least some of the inking. Still, we're following the lead of DC Comics in crediting Sansone as a probable "co-creator" of "The Atom." Thanks to Bob Rivard.

The Flinton/O'Connor/Sansone splash from *All-American* #32 (Nov. 1941)—a tale that owed a debt to Wilkie Collins' classic mystery novel *The Moonstone*. But then, many a comic book and pulp yarn did, in that era! Thanks to Dan Stevenson. We kinda wonder if the name "Al Pratt" was an homage to the Pratt Institute, which educated many young artists... and if Al's alma mater "Calvin College" referred to the actual college of that name, or rather was a takeoff on the moniker of one-time U.S. President Calvin Coolidge! [© DC Comics.]



SC: Let's go back to college. After you graduated from college, what made you decide to go to New York?

SOKOLOFF: Everybody wanted to go to New York. We all considered it sophisticated and ahead of things. We were going to get ahead if we went to New York City. Everybody would be more impressed, that's what we felt. I got a job in New York City. I wrote advertising. I went to Macy's for an interview... and I became a copywriter for the department stores.

SC: Do you recall what Leonard was first working at in New York? It wasn't in comics, was it?

SOKOLOFF: He always worked by himself and took things in to show people. I don't think he ever had a boss. He was a freelancer. He worked at home in an apartment with a bunch of guys before they went into the Army. There were so many people, so many young men [working in comics]. Everybody was sending in [work], because everybody was buying them!

SC: It was definitely a very productive time period for comic books. Lenny was actually working for four or five different companies at once. Do you remember anybody else from the comic book industry?

SOKOLOFF: No.

**"[Lenny] Didn't Want To Have A Boss. He Wanted To Be The Boss"**

SC: Did Leonard always want to get into the daily strips, as he did after the war?

SOKOLOFF: He just wanted to draw. He was very, very good and wanted to be his own man. He didn't want to have a boss. He wanted to be the boss.



## Sidebar:

# Excerpts From An Interview With ED MALSBERG

Conducted 7-24-12 by Shaun Clancy

**A/E EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Once Mrs. Emily Sansone mentioned to Shaun Clancy that he should get in touch with Ed Malsberg, who had known her husband and his friends Ben Flinton and Bill O'Connor at college, Shaun was determined to track him down. Though never a comic book artist, Malsberg, who was 93 at the time of this telephone interview, had quite a career of his own. Quoting from the bio on his website:*

*"I graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art in 1940; a Fine Arts major. I studied printmaking at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. During World War II, I served overseas in a topography unit and on the staff of Stars and Stripes [U.S. Armed Forces newspaper] as an artist. After the war I began a lengthy career as a freelance illustrator in New York in advertising and publishing. My clients included major advertising agencies and book publishers, and the subject matter ranged from humorous, decorative illustration to science, natural history, biology, physiology, children's books, and textbooks. I won an award from the American Institute of Graphic Arts in 1968 for book illustration. I am presently engaged in my lifelong passion for landscape painting in my favorite mediums, watercolor and pastel."*

**SHAUN CLANCY:** *Emily Sansone felt you might be able to help me with my research on a few of your classmates. Ben Flinton, Bill O'Connor, and Lenny Sansone were all working in comic books in 1940-42.*

**ED MALSBERG:** I remember [Bill O'Connor], but not as well as Benny Flinton. I remember [O'Connor] was a nice little guy—and when I say he was little, I mean he was very little. He was a nice guy and a year ahead of me.

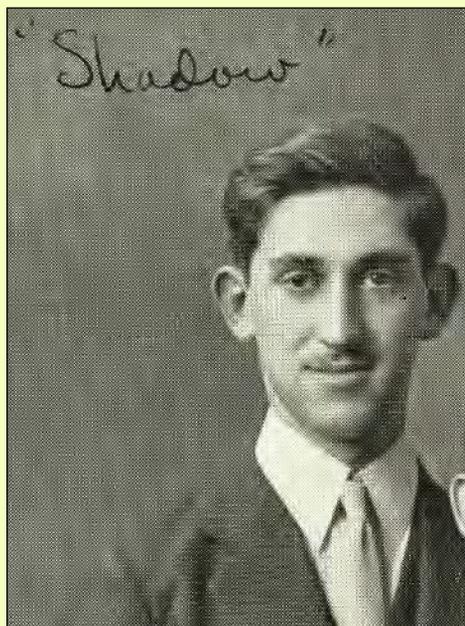
**SC:** *Did you go to New York with them?*

**MALSBERG:** No. I followed them after. I visited Benny Flinton before the war, when he had moved to New York. I knew he worked in comic books, but I didn't know what he was doing. He was working, and that was the important thing and a big deal. He died a long time ago. I'm the sole survivor of that class and probably of several classes.

**SC:** *I know Lenny was from Norwood [MA], but was Benny?*

**MALSBERG:** No, he was from Leominster.

**SC:** *Did Ben, Lenny, or Bill share an apartment?*



**MALSBERG:** Oh, yes. Lenny, Benny, and a guy name Johnny Dorozynski... there were four guys sharing an apartment in Boston... Back Bay... while they were in school. In New York it was Lenny and Benny, and I think that was all that were sharing that apartment on 58th Street.

**SC:** *Did you ever help Lenny or Ben with any of the artwork they were doing before the war?*

**MALSBERG:** No. I graduated in 1940 and I was drafted actually before the war [i.e., before the U.S. entered the war in December 1941]. I was rejected and recalled in 1942 and went into the Army. First I was in an engineering division doing topography, mapping the invasion, and eventually got onto *Stars and Stripes* as an artist.

**SC:** *While you were at the art school, did any famous artists stop by to teach?*

**MALSBERG:** No, but I did meet Al Capp when I was looking for a job; but he wouldn't hire me because I wasn't very good. I just did not have that comic book style. He was a very nice man. He lived in a suburb of Boston. I did not work in art before the war. After the war I gathered a bunch of friends together at my house in Boston, and we went to New York together and we found two tenements in Hell's Kitchen, one above the other.... Across the hall from me was Charlton Heston, a struggling actor. He got his first acting job on my phone, because he didn't have a phone. [mutual laughter]

**SC:** *While you were living there, were you keeping in touch with Lenny and Ben?*

**MALSBERG:** Lenny, yes, but not Benny. Ben moved to Westport, Connecticut. We met occasionally but not often. He married a Belgian woman overseas when he was in the war, and she died young. I believe he remarried.



### The "Shadow" Knows!

(Left:) Ed Malsberg ("Shadow" to his friends) from the 1938 Massachusetts School of Art yearbook. Thanks to Shaun Clancy & Mrs. Emily Sokoloff.

(Above:) We're told that the folks in this circa 1940-41 photo taken on a New York City rooftop are, from left to right: a young woman (unidentified), Ben Flinton, Ed Malsberg, and Leonard Sansone. Maybe Bill O'Connor snapped the pic? Thanks to Maggie S. for the photo—and to Ed for the IDs.

# “The Life Of A Freelancer... Is Always Feast Or Famine”

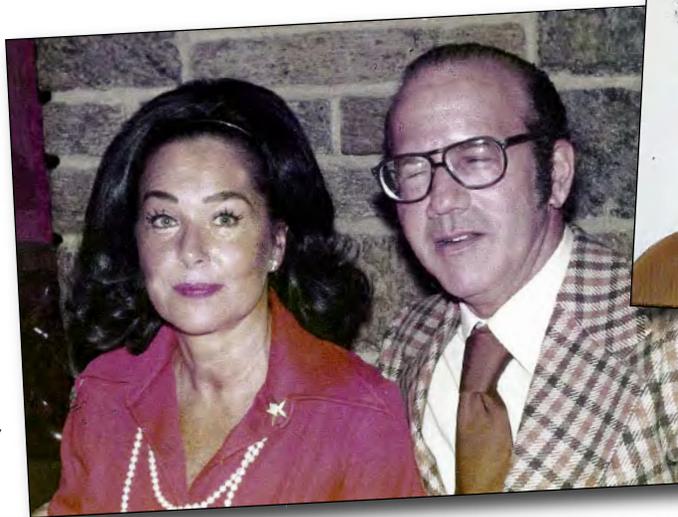
## An Interview with BERNICE SACHS-SMOLLET About Her Late Husband—Comics Artist BERNARD SACHS

Conducted by Richard J. Arndt

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION:** *Bernie Sachs (1918?-1998—birth name, Bernie Sachslate) was best known as a Golden and Silver Age inker. He began his comics career by doing a quantity of art for Quality Comics and Hillman Periodicals in 1943-1944. Much of his early work was as the inker of the pencils of Arthur Peddy. Following World War II military service, Sachs resumed work at Hillman.*

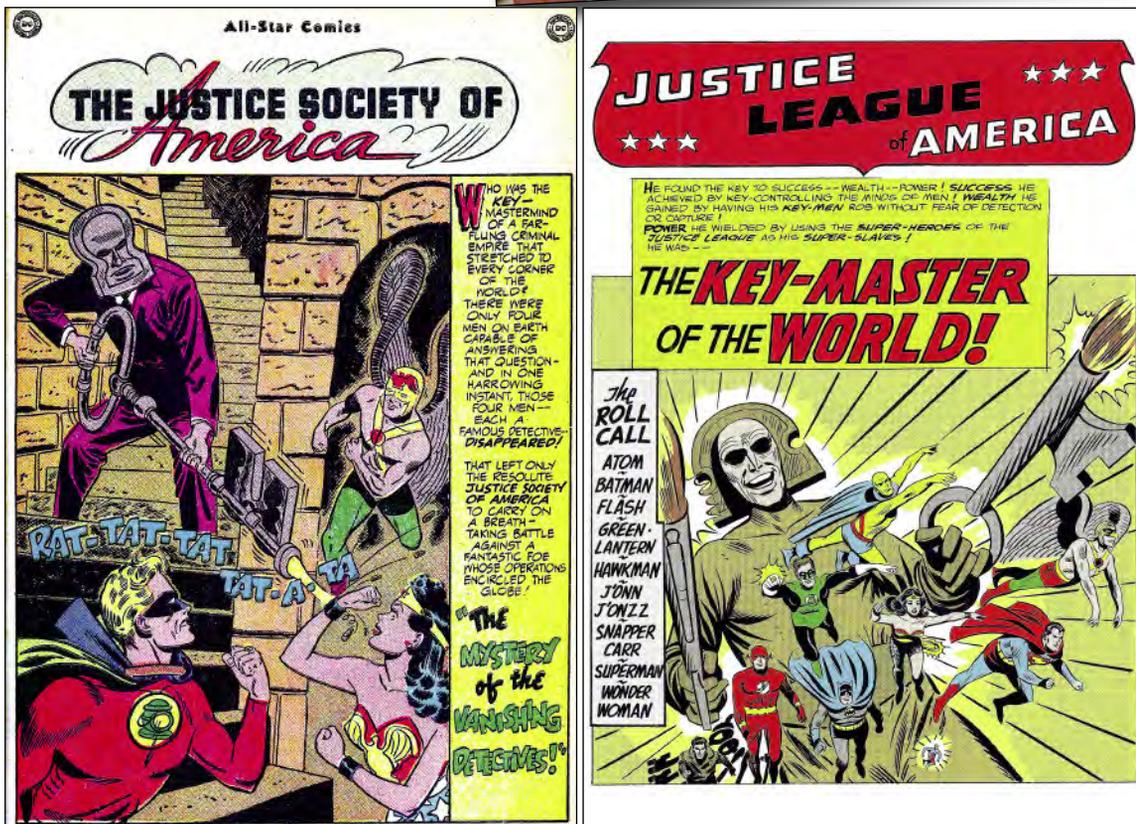
*From 1947 on, however, the majority of his comics output was done for National/DC Comics. There, he worked on “The Flash,” “Dr. Mid-Nite,” “Wildcat,” “Ghost Patrol,” “Black Canary,” and, notably, a lengthy period on “The Justice Society of America” in All-Star Comics. Later, he moved to Westerns such as Jimmy Wakely and All-Star Western, adventure titles like Danger Trail, and the science-fiction field with Mystery in Space*

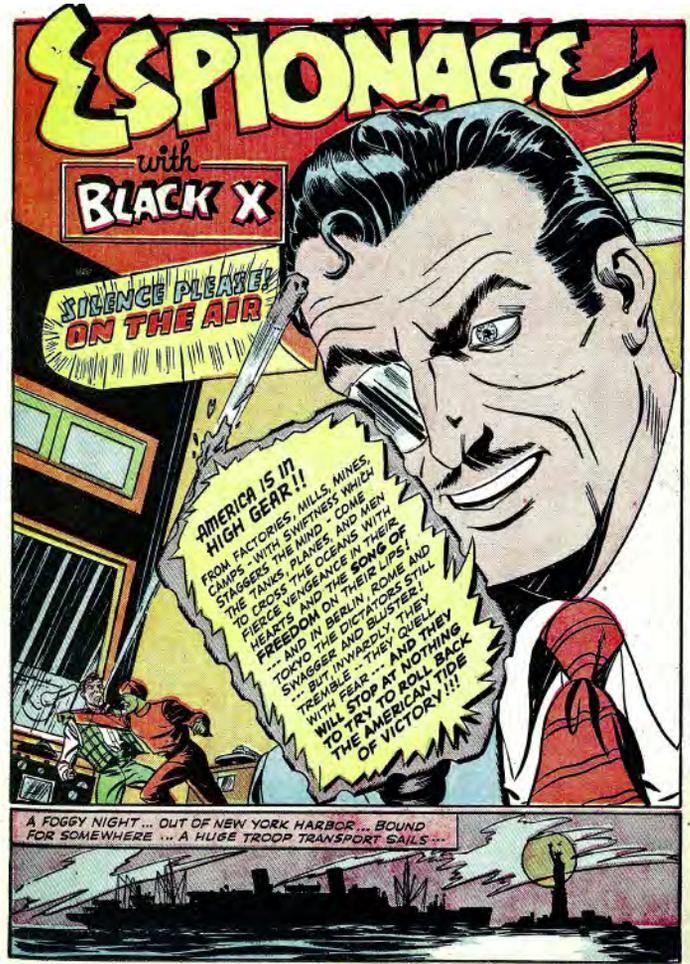


### A Key Artist

(Counterclockwise from above:) Interviewee Bernice Sachs-Smollet in 2008—Bernice and artist/husband Bernard Sachs at her parents' 50th wedding anniversary a few decades back—the splash of *All-Star Comics* #57 (Feb.-March 1951), inked by Sachs over pencils by longtime partner Arthur Peddy for that landmark title's final Golden Age issue—and the splash page of *Justice League of America* #41 (Dec. 1965), with Peddy inking Mike Sekowsky only two issues before their 46-issue tandem run on that series would finally end. The 1951 Key didn't actually wear key-shaped headgear; the 1965 story turned that symbolic drawing into a super-villain's costume; the former script is by John Broome; the latter by Gardner F. Fox.

Curiously, the rest of the art on the first chapter of the “JSA” story in *All-Star* #57 is credited entirely to Frank Giacoia, though Peddy & Sachs did draw the middle chapter and that issue's cover. All *All-Star* images accompanying this interview are repro'd from Ye Editor's bound volumes, not from the DC Archives reprints—but the *JLA* #41 image is indeed taken from the hardcover *Justice League of America Archives*, Vol. 6. With thanks to Bernice Sachs-Smollet for the photos. [Art © DC Comics.]





### X-Spionage

Bernard Sachs was doing both penciling and inking when he drew these two "Espionage, with Black X" thrillers for the Quality group's *Smash Comics* #42 & 44 (April & June 1943). Perhaps his earliest work in comics, since a story drawn earlier (and bylined "Bernie") for Lev Gleason's *Silver Streak Comics* #11 is actually the work of Bernard Klein. Scripter unknown. Thanks to Jim Kealy and Bruce Mason, respectively. [© the respective copyright holders.]

According to the Grand Comics Database's up-to-date "Indexer Notes" re the story in *Smash* #42: "Originally credited 'Don Rico?,' but the art is identical to Sachs' signed story in #49. Note the typical ears with flat top and angled lines compared with Rico's more rounded like a C. Also the more masculine face of Black X by Sachs.... [H]e has signed at least two stories with identical art to this one. Sachs is mostly known as inker, and with clear and sharp inclines as here."

and Strange Adventures. He also began what would be a major aspect of his career by contributing to romance comics, initially for Fawcett and St. John; he soon became a mainstay on DC's romance titles, as well. In addition, he worked on early war stories for Our Army at War and dabbled in the supernatural field with inking on The Phantom Stranger.

He branched out at times from DC, providing art in the early 1950s to Ziff-Davis and Fiction House as well as Fawcett and St. John, doing more SF, adventure, and romance strips. By the late 1950s, however, the majority of his work was appearing in DC's war, romance, and SF titles. He also had a lengthy stint on The Adventures of Rex the Wonder Dog. There was also work on give-away comics for the Big Boy restaurant chain.

Sachs began work on his most celebrated comics contribution with the first appearance of the "Justice League of America" in The Brave and the Bold #28 (Feb.-Mar. 1960), and for much of the 1960s his main inking jobs were "Justice League" tales and DC romance stories. In the late 1960s he made the decision to go full-time into television advertising, where he worked for the remainder of his professional career. Our interview with his widow, Bernice, took place in October 2011.

### "Bernie Made It Very Clear To His Family That He Wanted To Be An Artist"

**RICHARD ARNDT:** Thank you for agreeing to this interview. What can you tell us about Bernie's early life?

**BERNICE SACHS-SMOLLET:** Bernie was the eldest of three sons. His father had a small-time wholesale drug business, and the father stayed in that business his whole life, but Bernie hated it! He didn't want any part of it. I met Bernie when I was eighteen, so I was practically a member of the family right away. Bernie made it very clear to his family that he wanted to be an artist. He wasn't the type of person who went for book-learning too much. He didn't like to study. His youngest brother was very, very bright and became a pharmacist. That made Bernie's father very happy, because it was the youngest brother who eventually took over the drug business.

I don't think his parents ever really appreciated Bernie. They had three wonderful sons, but, in many ways, they made slaves out of them.

Bernie went from one art school to another. He went to one that

was in the Flatiron Building in Manhattan, and that was where he began meeting a lot of the people who would become his lifetime friends. Bernie's career really got its start there. He had a quiet charm. He wasn't one of these flashy big-mouth guys. He was quiet, more conservative. Joe Kubert would come walking into a party, you know, wearing boots up to his knees! Stuff like that. Bernie always looked like a doctor or a dentist. Very trim but quiet. We always used to tease him that he was so conservative-looking. One of the artists that became his life-time friend was Arthur Peddy.



### "[Arthur Peddy] And Bernie Were Very, Very Close Friends"

**RA:** I was going to ask you about him. Bernie did almost all of his early inking over Peddy's pencils.

**SACHS-SMOLLET:** You know what Arthur worked on? He did all those cards, those bubble-gum cards, of the baseball players. Arthur did hundreds of them. He and Bernie were very, very close friends. Ultimately, when they were at the height of their productivity, I guess you'd call it, they took an office together on 57th Street, right across from Bergdorf-Goodman. I loved to go there! My trips down to their office cost Bernie a fortune! [laughs]

There was also a restaurant at 37 West 57th Street. Jack Abel was a good friend of Bernie and Arthur and they'd meet up for lunch at that restaurant—it was called Chef in the Window. They all got obese eating at that place! Arthur and Bernie must have each gained 35-50 pounds in two or three years. Adele Abel and I said, "Enough of that! You've got to stop all this fancy eating. Too much spaghetti!" We put a stop to it.

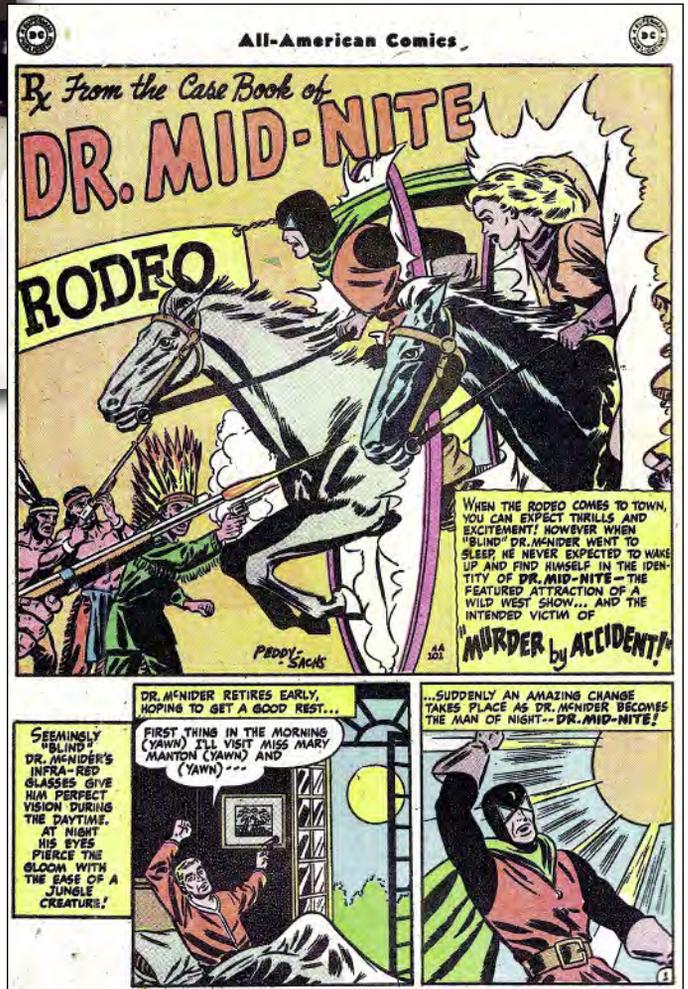
At the time, Jack was working for some studio where one artist did the characters and another did the backgrounds and someone else would ink buildings and so on....

**RA:** It sounds like the [Jerry] Iger Shop.

**SACHS-SMOLLET:** No, not his shop, but one like it. Later, in the 1950s, they had an assistant, some Swedish guy—what was his name. Oh, Carl Anderson. Carl later went out west and worked for the movies. He was nominated for a couple of Academy Awards. He became quite well-known.

Like Bernie, Arthur was very conservative. I think that in the early years they were each other's security blanket. Neither was very flashy. Arthur was very talented, but I always felt he was insecure about himself. He didn't need to be. Arthur was married to Lillian, who was a powerhouse of a woman. Lillian passed on way too early. She was only 60. Who dies at 60 anymore? I'm 87 and I'm the vice president of a ladies' organization with 500 members. Some of them are 105 years old and still have all their marbles!

I also collect money for various charities. You know what they



#### Doctor Feelgood

(Above:) The Peddy & Sachs team co-illustrated a number of "Dr. Mid-Nite" yarns in the latter '40s, though this splash page from *All-American Comics* #94 (March 1948) is one of the few on which they received a byline. Why such off-and-on credits? Since Peddy & Sachs occasionally drew two (or even three) of the adventure stories in the same issue, editors Shelly Mayer and Julius Schwartz may have preferred to obscure that fact. The scripter is unknown. Reppo'd from Ye Editor's collection. [© DC Comics.]

(Top left:) Bernard Sachs took this undated photo at a party in Norwalk, Connecticut. (Left to right:) An unidentified friend—Arthur Peddy's second wife Joanne—Bernice Sachs—and Arthur Peddy. With thanks to Bernice S. Incidentally, we're delighted to announce that Michael Posner, Arthur Peddy's step-son, is writing a remembrance of that artist for a future issue of *Alter Ego!*

call me? "Blood from the Stone" Sachs. [laughs] I was never mean but smiled and was pleasant. You've got to have things to do when you get older. Otherwise you get old and don't know what to do with yourself.

After Lillian died, I introduced Arthur to one of my dearest friends, Joanne, and he married her at age 72! Joanne was a smashing dresser and very wealthy. That wasn't why Arthur married her, though. He wasn't that kind of guy. He just wanted to have a home life, and Joanne was a wonderful cook. We used to have a lot of parties there.

Bernie was also branching out. He was going to art classes in the Brooklyn Museum. His teachers were three brothers, fairly famous and very talented. The Soyer brothers. Their father was a big-time writer, but they were painters. They were all teachers, and Bernie studied under two or three of them. He also studied under Sidney Dickinson.

# BERNARD SACHS Checklist

[The following Checklist, like the others in this issue, is adapted from information found in the online edition of The Who's Who of American Comic Books 1928-1999, established by Jerry G. Bails. Names of features which appeared both in comics of that name and in other magazines are generally not italicized. **Key:** (a) = full art; (p) = pencils only; (i) = inks only; (S) = Sunday newspaper comic strip; (d) = daily newspaper comics strip, generally Monday through Saturday.]

**Name:** Bernard J. Sachs [b. 1918(?), d. 1998] artist

**Animation Work:** Grey Advertising (storyboarder & layout artist) 1965-86

**Comics Studio/Shop:** Peddy & Sachs Studio, late 1940s to early 1950s [NOTE: also shared studio in late 1950s with Ross Andru, Mike Esposito, Arthur Peddy, and Jack Abel]

## COMIC BOOK CREDITS (U.S. Mainstream Publications):

**Ace Periodicals:** *Revealing Romances* (i) 1949; romance (i) 1949, 1952

**Avon Comics:** Cicero and Timmy (a) 1953; horror (i) 1953; Merry Mouse (a) 1954; Paddy Pig (a) 1954; science-fantasy (i) 1952

**Better/Standard/Nedor Publications:** crime (i) 1953; *New Romances* (i) 1952; *Today's Romance* (i) 1952

**Consolidated Books:** *Tops* (i) 1949

**DC/National:** Adam Strange (i) 1958-60; *All-American Men of War* (i) 1952-56; *All-American Western* (i) 1949; The Atom (first version) (i) 1949 (also story printed from inventory, 1972); backup feature in *World's Finest Comics* (i) 1951; backup feature in *The Adventures of Rex the Wonder Dog* (i) 1952; backup feature in *The Phantom Stranger* (i) 1953; backup feature in *Blackhawk* (i) 1968; *Big Town* (i) 1951-53; Black Canary (i) 1948-49 (also stories printed from inventory in 1969-70); Black Pirate (i) 1947-48 (also stories printed from inventory in 1960s); Captain Comet (i) 1951-52, 1954; Charlie Chan (i) 1958; covers (i) 1947-67; *Danger Trail* (i) 1950-51; Darwin Jones (i) 1950, 1956-57; Detective Chimp (i) 1953-54; Don Caballero (i) 1951-52; Dr. Mid-Nite (i) 1947-48; *Falling in Love* (i)(some p) 1956-70; filler (i) 1949; The Flash (i) 1948-49 (also stories printed from inventory, 1971-72); Foley of the Fighting Fifth (i) 1953-54; The Ghost Patrol (i) 1947-49; *Girls' Love Stories* (i) (some p) 1949-71; *Girls' Romances* (i) 1958; Green Lantern (i) 1972 (story from 1940s inventory); Hawkman (i) 1948; *Heart Throbs* (i)(some p) 1966-69; Hop Harrigan (i) 1948; *Hopalong Cassidy* (i) 1954, 1958-59; *Jimmy Wakely* (i) 1959-52; Johnny Law (i) 1952; Johnny Thunder (i) 1947; Justice League of America (i) 1960-66; Justice Society of America (i) 1948-51; Kit Colby, Girl Sheriff (i) 1950, 1952; Lady Danger (i) 1949; Manhunters around the World (i) 1950; Minstrel Maverick (i) 1959-52; *My Greatest Adventure* (i) 1957; *Mystery in Space* (i) (some p) 1951-61; Nighthawk (i) 1954, 1956-59; *Our Army at War* (i) 1952-55, 1969; Overland Coach (i) 1959-52; The Phantom Stranger (i) 1952-53; Rex the Wonder Dog (i) 1953-59; Rodeo Rick (i) 1957; Romance, Inc. (i) 1951-52; Roving Ranger (i) 1951-52; *Secret Hearts* (i) 1952-71 (possibly some p); *Sensation Mystery* (i) 1952-53; Space Cabbie (i)(some p) 1955-58; Space Museum (i) 1959-61; Star Hawkins (i) 1960-64; *Star Spangled War Stories* (i) 1951-64; *Strange Adventures* (i) 1951-64; The Trigger Twins (i) 1952-54, 1959-60; *Who's Who in Star*



## I Love A Mystery In Space

One fan-favorite DC series to which Sachs often contributed inking was "Adam Strange" in *Mystery in Space*, edited (again) by Julie Schwartz. Pencils by Carmine Infantino; script by Gardner F. Fox. Thanks to Doug Martin. [© DC Comics.]

**Trek entries** (i) 1987; *Who's Who in the DC Universe* (i) 1986-87 entries; Wildcat (i) 1948-49 (also 1971 from 1940s inventory); Wonder Woman (i) 1948-52, 1967; Wonder Women of History (i) 1949, 1970; *Young Love* (i)(some p) 1963-66, 1969; *Young Romance* (i)(some p) 1963-71

**D.S. Publishing:** *Pay-Off* (i) 1948

**Fawcett Publications:** romance (i) 1950-51

**Feature Comics:** crime (i) 1949; romance (i) 1949, 1953-54

# Two Flashes Meet The Purple Slagheap

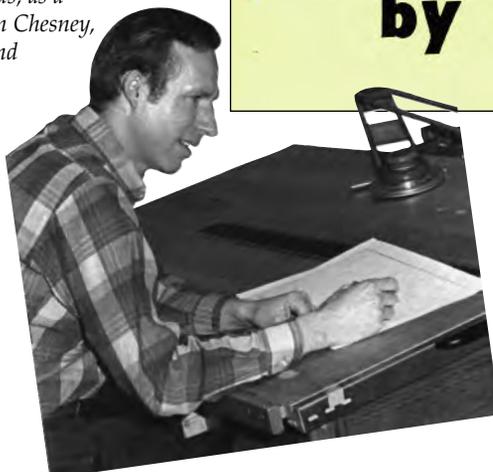
*Xero-ing In On A Fandom (Color) Classic*  
By Landon Chesney

Introduction by Bill Schelly

**J**ust as the impetus for the fanzine *Alter Ego* was the Silver Age return of the Justice Society heroes, so did editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox's 1961 concept of "Earth-Two" inspire an early original comic strip by one of fandom's most talented writer-artists, the great (and sadly, late) Landon Chesney (1938-2001).

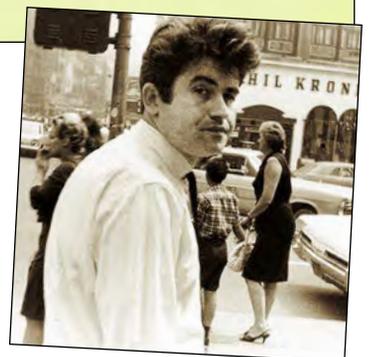
In A/E #22 (March 2003), the *Comic Fandom Archive* ran a tribute to Chesney to commemorate his life and work, including an interview with his nephew Jason Gillespie and a remembrance by Bill Spicer, his friend and publisher, of his exceptional contributions to such popular fanzines as *Fantasy Illustrated*, *Voice of Comictim*, and *Star-Studded Comics*.

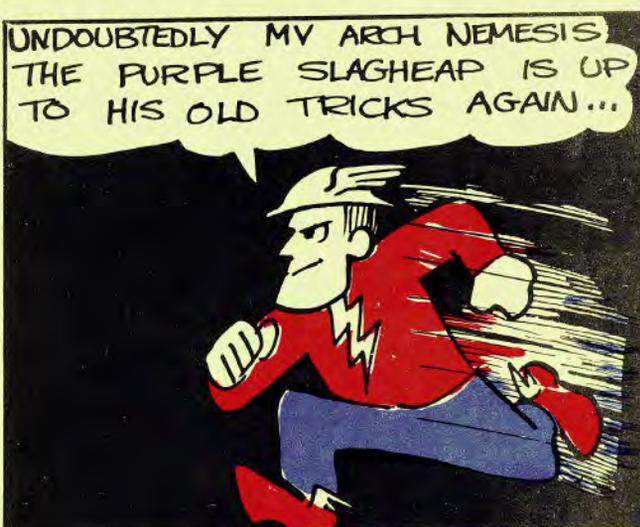
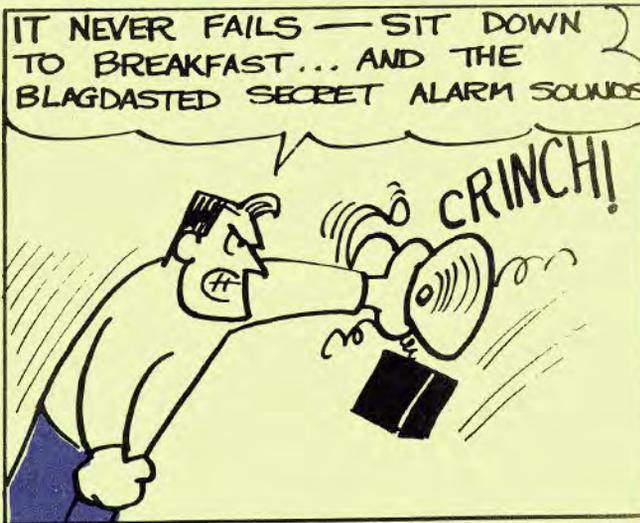
But, even before those achievements, Landon Chesney had an auspicious "coming-out party" in the pages of nothing less than Dick and Pat Lupoff's science-fiction/comics/popular culture fanzine *Xero*, founded in 1960. The Lupoffs' seminal zine had a way of launching fan "careers"—e.g., its publishing, in issue #8, of Richard Kyle's "All in Color For a Dime" entry "The Education of Victor Fox" put Kyle on the fandom map. *Xero* did the same with Chesney when it featured his "Two Flashes Meet the Purple Slagheap" in *Xero* #10 (Spring 1963)—and in nearly full color! It was, of course, the *Tennessean's* take on "Flash of Two Worlds!" from *The Flash* #123 (Sept. 1961) and subsequent usage of "Earth-Two" heroes. Thus, as a further tribute to Landon Chesney, and the strip's letterer and colorist Bhub Stewart....



#### Two Talents Meet The Purple Mimeo-Master

Landon Chesney's intro page for "Two Flashes Meet the Purple Slagheap" from *Xero* #10—flanked by vintage photos of writer/artist Landon Chesney (left) and colorist (and *Xero* art director) Bhub Stewart. [Page © Landon Chesney.]







YOU THINK YOU'RE  
OBSESSED WITH  
COMICS? HA!

FORGET IT! YOU'RE  
A PIKER COMPARED  
TO THESE NUTTY ACE  
COMICS COLLECTORS!

THEY'LL FIGHT OVER A  
DIME TO GET THEIR FIX--  
OR TURN INTO A LION WHEN  
BULLIES SWIPE THEIR COPY  
OF SURE-FIRE COMICS!  
ALL I CAN SAY IS...

**NOW THAT'S A FAN!**



(Above & left:) "The Fight For Fun," which appeared in *Sure-Fire* #3 (Sept. 1940), plus the covers of *Sure-Fire* #1 (June 1940), *Super-Mystery* #2 (Aug. 1940), *Super-Mystery* #4 (Nov. 1940).

## Now THAT'S A Fan!

by Michael T. Gilbert

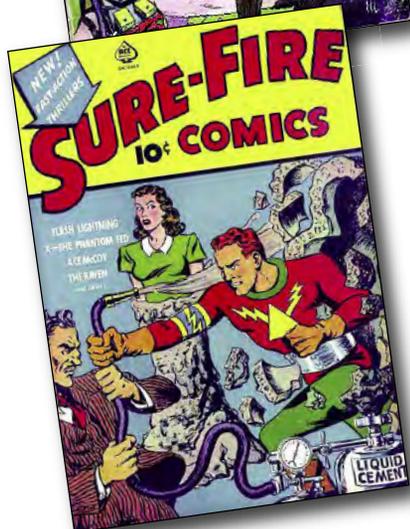
**R**emember when you were a kid and would do *anything* to score some comics? You'd whine and wheedle and beg your parents for a dime—or maybe even a quarter, when those giant *Superman Annuals* came out.

And when you were old enough to earn a few bucks, you'd bike to two or three drugstores to find all the comics you absolutely needed (distribution sucked in the '60s!). Being a comics nut wasn't

easy. But, as you'll see on the following pages, that's nothing compared to what *Ace Comics fans* went through!

Now, most Golden Age aficionados rank Ace comics slightly below turnips on their "gotta-have-it" scale. Timely/Marvel was blessed with Simon & Kirby's Captain America, Carl Burgos' Human Torch, and Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner. DC's roster included Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and the Justice Society heroes. And how could you go wrong with Fawcett's marvelous Marvel Family?

But Ace? Their big guns included **Magno and Davy** (Yawn!), interplanetary adventurer **Flash Lightning** (quickly renamed "**Lash**" Lightning, presumably after receiving a "cease and desist"



### "The Worm Turns"

(Above:) A true fan from *Super-Mystery*, Vol. 1, #4 (Nov. 1940). Art unsigned. On the left are some sure-fire covers of *Sure-Fire Comics*, the mag in which the ad appeared. (Left, top to bottom:) Covers to *Sure-Fire Comics*, Vol. 1 #3-B (Oct. 1940), *Sure-Fire* Vol. 1, #2 (Aug. 1940), and *Sure-Fire* Vol. 1, #3-A (Sept. 1940). NOTE: *Sure-Fire Comics* became *Lightning Comics* with issue #4—but not before Ace accidentally published two different issues of *Sure-Fire* #3! [© Ace Comics.]

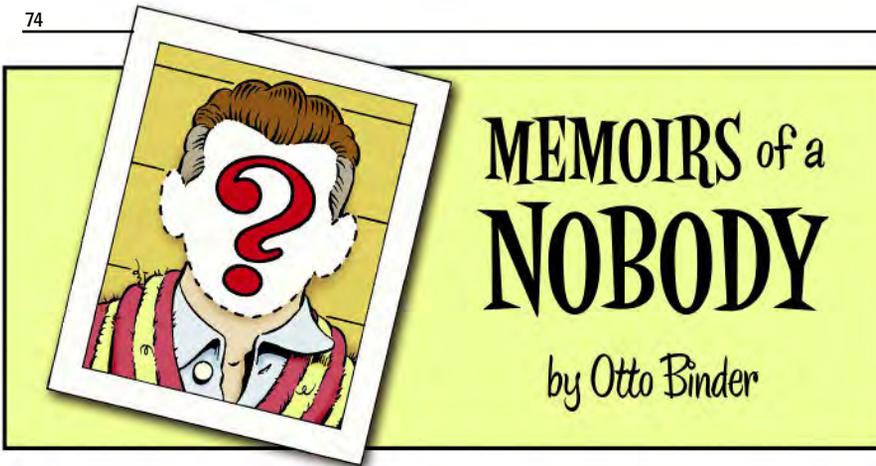
P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

# FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#172  
October 2012





# MEMOIRS of a NOBODY

by Otto Binder

## Part III

Abridged & Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

**INTRODUCTORY NOTE:** *Otto Oscar Binder (1911-1974), the prolific science-fiction and comic book writer renowned for authoring over half of the Marvel Family saga for Fawcett Publications, wrote *Memoirs of a Nobody* in 1948 at the age of 37, during what was arguably the most imaginative period within the repertoire of "Captain Marvel" stories.*

*Aside from intermittent details about himself, Binder's capricious chronicle resembles very little in the way of anything that is indeed autobiographical. Unearthed several years ago from Binder's file materials at Texas A&M University, *Memoirs* is self-described by its author as "ramblings through the untracked wilderness of my mind." Binder's potpourri of stray philosophical beliefs, pet peeves, theories, and anecdotes was written in freewheeling fashion and devoid of any charted course—other than allowing his mind to flow with no restricting parameters. The abridged manuscript—serialized here within the pages of FCA—will nonetheless provide glimpses into the idiosyncratic and fanciful mind of Otto O. Binder.*

*In our second excerpt, presented last issue, Otto had begun to delve into the pages of comic books in a chapter entitled "The Modern Pied Piper"—a section which is continued with this installment. —P.C. Hamerlinck.*

Well, perhaps I'd better give you some meaty facts or insights into the production of comics.

First, the writer has to think of an idea. That, brother, is work. I estimate that some 250,000 or more comics stories have already been written, since their inception. Each basic plot or story idea has been used over and over, ad infinitum. Perhaps ad nauseum. How can you think of a new idea?

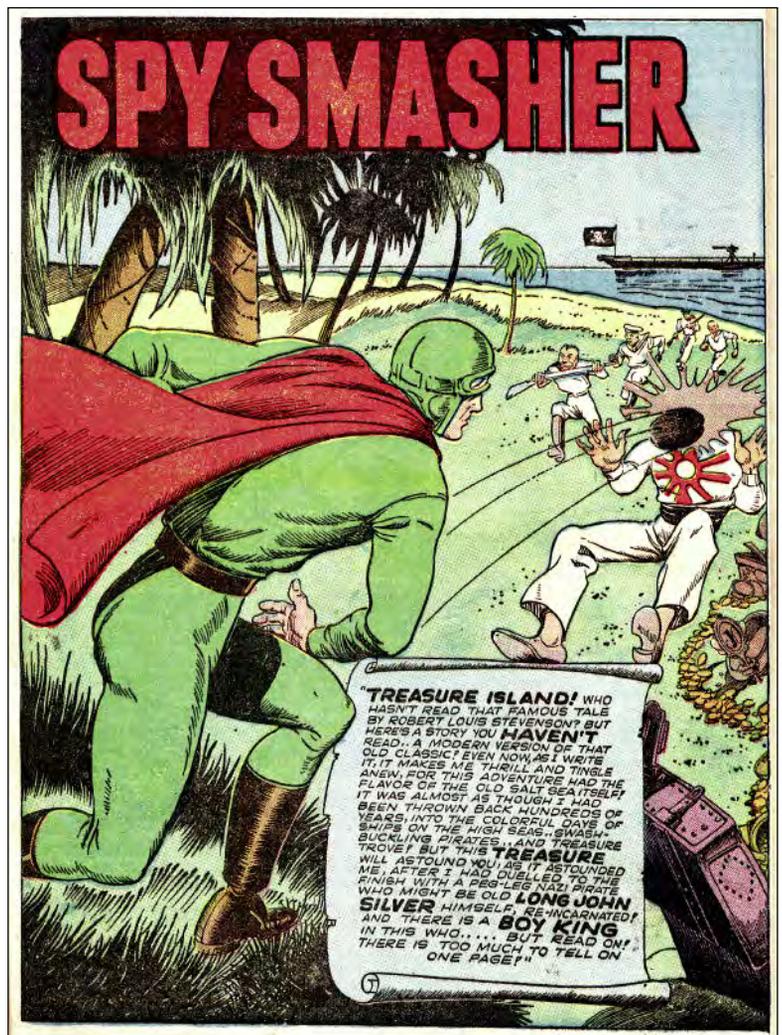
The answer is: you can't. There is no such thing as a "new" idea, unsullied, untouched, virginal. What is done is to take an old idea and dress it up in new form. And there, thank Heaven, the writer faces infinity. There can be no end to the variations which can be written around a basic theme. A change in scene, of characters, of crimes, and of motivations, and you have a brand new story. And life itself keeps changing. Civilization and social balances change. So each new generation of readers faces a new world, and is ready to absorb all the old plots but re-adorned with the symbols and values they know.

It's like jokes. Each joke, through the ages, is told over and over, after it is brought up to date.

And here you thought a writer was a sensitive genius who sat proudly in solitude and fished bright golden ideas out of thin air.

Having his idea ready, the writer either writes a short synopsis of it, or phones the editor. In either case, the idea is kicked around between them, the rough edges smoothed out, the climax made more exciting, etc. The plot is okayed. It's ready to go.

The writer then plods his lonely way home, or perhaps to his studio, and sits before his typewriter with a shudder. Now he must take the evanescent idea and dress it up with dialogue and captions are gems of literature, but they must have some semblance to real life and real people. An illusion must be built up that this could really happen, even though the hero is somebody who says a magic word and thereby becomes impregnable so that he can stop bullets, bust down doors, and fly.



### A Spy In The Face

Not that the inventive imagination of Otto Binder needed much help, but when he needed speedy inspiration for a story idea, he turned to the classics—as he did for "Spy Smasher Discovers the Streamlined Treasure Island!" in *Whiz Comics* #43 (June 1943), where the goggled wartime hero defeated a small island in the Atlantic from Japanese and Nazi forces. Artwork by Alex Blum. [Spy Smasher TM & © DC Comics.]

# “Join The Parade To Victory!”

## Captain Marvel and The Army War Show – June 1942

by Brian Cremins

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

In June 1942, Billy Batson tried to join the United States Army. Rejected for being too small, he called on the help of his bigger, stronger alter ego—and, just a few pages later, Captain Marvel began basic training.

That same month, my maternal grandfather, Nunzio Stango, began his military service as a member of the Army War Show, a group of soldiers who toured major cities in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South to educate the public on life in the Army. In the summer of 1942, however, my grandfather and the editors, writers, and artists at Fawcett Publications had no idea what shape



### Marc Swayze For The War Effort

Marc Swayze's cover for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #12 (June 1942), with the World's Mightiest Mortal leading soldiers wearing not "modern lids" but World War I helmets across the battlefield... and Marc (far right), on guitar, performing in a jazz quintet at an Army officer's club while he was stationed at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, during World War II. Swayze wrote several "Captain Marvel" stories while he was in the Army; after "lights out" in the barracks, he reported, he would quietly get up and go to work in his "office": the latrine! Photo courtesy of daughter Judy Swayze Blackman. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]



the war would take. How would it look? How would soldiers dress and what weapons would they carry? The Army War Show and "Captain Marvel Joins the Army" set out to answer some of these questions.

The cover of *Captain Marvel Adventures* #12, as its artist Marc Swayze pointed out in his *FCA* #157 column, includes a few historical anachronisms. Why is Captain Marvel leading a group of soldiers who are dressed as if they stepped right out of the trenches of World War I? In the December 2010 issue of *Alter Ego*, Swayze briefly explained: that early in World War II, he wasn't quite sure how the soldiers would be dressed. "I was assigned a wartime cover so early on that the U.S. infantrymen Captain Marvel was leading over a battlefield wore World War I helmets!" Those "modern lids" the soldiers would wear in World War II, Swayze writes, "were issued about the time the book," dated June 26, 1942, first "hit the newsstands." Swayze also described his continued affection for the dynamic cover, in which Captain Marvel, a bullet ricocheting from his chest, provides a burst of red, yellow, and white against the steel-blue, olive, and battlefield grey horizon. He remained "proud of having done that cover art, although it seems never to have ceased to be a source of amusement. In recent years, a publisher stated that it was 'the finest drawing of Captain Marvel C. C. Beck ever rendered.' Oh well...."

When *CMA* #12 appeared on the newsstands in late June, my grandfather, who would go on to earn a bronze star on his ribbon bar for his service in Tunisia in 1943, and other members of the Coast Artillery Battery were at Franklin Field in Philadelphia. It was the second stop of the War Show itinerary, which had begun at



**A Wide-Screen War**

(Above:) A double-page panoramic opening scene featured a reconfiguration of a Marc Swayze illustration, inspired by his *CMA* #12 cover, that was concurrently published (in black-&-white) in Fawcett's *On The Spot* magazine... but artwork for the rest of the story "Captain Marvel Joins the Army" was handled by C.C. Beck's staff of artists. As the tale opened, Billy and pal Whitey Murphy volunteer for military service; the recruiting officer rejects too-young-and-small Billy—until he speaks the magic word! [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]

Municipal Stadium in Baltimore on June 12.

The Army War Show served two purposes: first, ticket sales would benefit the Army Emergency Relief Fund for soldiers and their families; second, the performance, an immersive experience designed to reassure and entertain audiences, offered a glimpse of Army life, including a series of mock battles. The Show's souvenir program book declares, "Here's YOUR Army!" and explains, "The War Department wants YOU to see a serious, well regulated and disciplined cross section of that growing giant which is YOUR ARMY!"

The Show, however, was no circus, although, as amateur historian Gary Banas has pointed out, the Army called on Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey for advice and assistance to plan the logistics of the tour. The soldiers featured in the show, the program book explained, are men who have gone through months and years of training in the camps and maneuver areas in the United States. "They have been gathered from the North, the South, the East, and the West to present to you not a circus—not a light-hearted display of touring troupers—but a glimpse here, and picture there, of the battle-bound millions of American youth."

Just like the lead story in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #12, the Army War Show gave Americans the opportunity to imagine the

war—what it would look like, how it would feel, how long it might last.

Although, in July 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as historian Rick Atkinson points out, declared that "it is of the highest importance that U.S. ground troops be brought into action against the enemy," Operation TORCH, the joint American and British invasion of North Africa, would not begin until November. "More than half a year after Pearl Harbor," Atkinson writes, "restive Americans wanted to know why the country had yet to counterpunch against the Axis" in Europe as the war continued in the Pacific. As Americans waited for the United States to begin combat operations in North Africa and Europe, stories like "Captain Marvel Joins the Army" were essential in providing anxious readers, young and old, with a measure of comfort. America would soon engage the enemy, whose defeat, as the wizard Shazam tells Billy at the end of the story, is really only a matter of time, for the forces of evil must, he explains, eventually surrender to the forces of good. What's difficult even for Billy to imagine is what shape the world will take once those forces have been defeated.

First, a brief summary of "Captain Marvel Joins the Army":  
Billy Batson and his pal Whitey Murphy decide to volunteer.



The recruiting officer rejects Billy, who is too young and too small—until he speaks his magic word. As Captain Marvel, he returns to the Army recruiting office and introduces himself as M.R. Vell. The sergeant, dressed in a tan uniform, makes no remark about Vell's flamboyant costume. No one other than Whitey seems to notice the super-heroic Fred MacMurray look-a-like in a cape and a skin-tight red suit.

More unusual than his costume are Captain Marvel's skills as a mathematician on display in panel 4 of page 6. The Army doctors in panel 3 have already examined the hero's unusual but impressive body: "—Eyesight perfect! Hearing... perfect! Heart and lung action—perfect!" But M.R. Vell's intelligence and imagination make him the ideal candidate for the officer corps. Not only, as one soldier remarks, has this recruit provided an impressive explanation of how to square a circle, but he also "knows all languages, modern and classic! And everything else, too!"

This single, simple panel is one of my favorite images from Captain Marvel's Golden Age adventures. We already know from the story's cover that our hero is a physical marvel; the enemy's bullets fail to pierce his skin or to scorch the yellow lightning bolt on his chest. But if I'd had a magic word when I was in middle school, I'm sure I'd have used it for math class.

Most of the time, as Otto Binder himself argued in Vol. 2 of *Steranko's History of Comics*, Billy Batson is a lot smarter than his alter ego. "I'd hate to add up how many times Billy saved him with his wits," Binder explained in his description of the relationship between Billy and the Captain. Our hero is lovable but a little too slow, too innocent. In this panel, however, he is a brawny Albert Einstein with a Classics degree. The officers recommend M.R. Vell for a staff job, but the hero refuses: "Nix! No desk job for me! Send me to training camp as a common soldier!" In the final panel of the page, Captain Marvel and Whitey begin their training at Camp Downton, where they slowly uncover a plot by "enemy aliens" to, as one of the villains puts it, "slow up the



### Let's Go On With The Show!

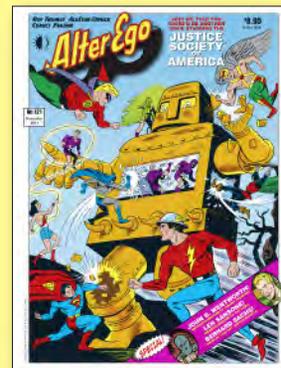
(Clockwise from far left:) A newspaper photo of author Brian Cremins' maternal grandfather, Nunzio Stango, during his service in the Army War Show, 1942... an image from Stango's copy of an Army War Show yearbook ... and a ticket for the Army War Show performances at Chicago's Soldier Field, Sept. 1942. Courtesy of Brian Cremins. [© the respective copyright holders.]

American war effort!" The Axis wants to crush the will and the confidence of these newly recruited soldiers. On page 8, Camp Downton's drill sergeant reveals his plan: "I am busy convincing the men they cannot become good soldiers! For instance, today I made fools of two privates—Vell and Murphy!"

The sergeant's scheme, however, runs into problems when Billy Batson presents a rousing speech to the young soldiers. The saboteurs then kidnap the boy and brainwash him into serving the Axis. Billy speaks his magic word and returns to his normal self. A full-page panel on page 15. A portion of the page reads: "Against all odds, only one man—the clobbering them, Captain Marvel returns to his normal self. The soldiers who, on page 18, are in uniform as the figures on the cover of the book for Private M.R. Vell?"

In the last two pages of the story, Billy returns and is sitting behind a desk at the recruiting office. Captain Marvel returns to his normal self. Shazam explains that he has "transfer to special service—over my head. Why isn't Captain Marvel a fellow soldier? Shazam reassures Billy that he can extend even beyond the United States! He'll see more action than any other soldier. The story ends with a horizontal panel showing a legion of soldiers and sailors t

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