ROY THOMAS' SUPERERogatory COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

TWOMORROWS

$8.95 In the USA

No.112 August 2012

WOW! THIS ISSUE'S COVER STORY IS ALL ABOUT MY MORT WEISINGER ERA, CALLED...

"I SUSTAIN the WINGS!"*

*THE TITLE OF THE ONLY SUPERMAN STORY EVER WRITTEN BY WEISINGER HIMSELF (SUPERMAN #25, DEC. '43)!

Featuring

Exclusive! Secrets of Siegel & Shuster

NEMBO KID LA FIERA DI KRYPTON

Italy's Superman!

ILLUSTRATION BASED ON THE COVER OF ACTION COMICS #380, SEPT. '69, BY MURPHY ANDERSON

Paul CASSIDY: ALMOST MISSED!

The 2nd (or 3rd?) Superman ARTIST!

The WIT, WHIMSY, & WISDOM of WEISINGER!

Vol. 3, No. 112 / August 2012

Alter Ego™

Contents

On Our Cover: *Artist/designer* **Arlen Schumer** *did such a great job combining Superman images by* **Joe Shuster, Paul Cassidy, Wayne Boring,** *and especially* **Murphy Anderson** *for the "splash" of his 16-page "Weisinger Comics" section that begins on p. 3 that we decided to use virtually the selfsame art for the cover of this Superman-centered issue. [Art © 2012 DC Comics; design © 2012 Arlen Schumer.]*

Above: *In a Bob Newhart routine from the 1960s, Clark Kent asked Lois, "Do you wanna see my Big Red 'S'?" Well, in Italy during the 1950s and much of the '60s,* nobody *saw it, because the publisher had eliminated it, both on reprints and on homegrown stories of—"The Nembo Kid"! Read all about it (and see the entirety of this page drawn by* **Lino Jeva***) in Alberto Becattini's intriguing article that begins on p. 29. [© 2012 DC Comics.]*

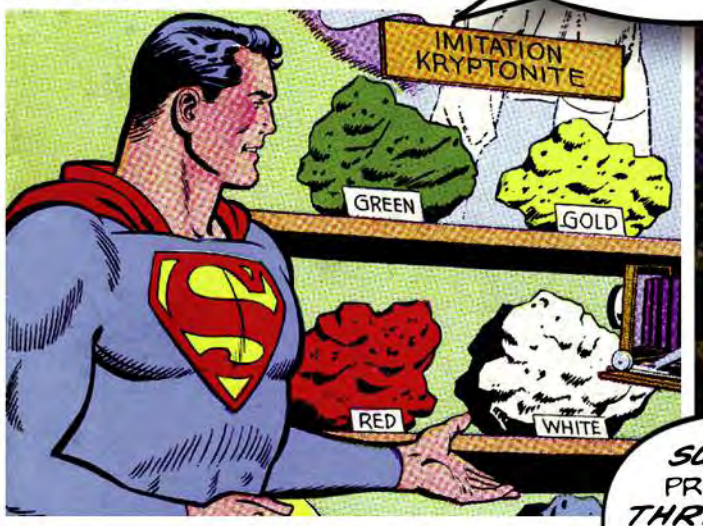
Alter Ego™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. *Alter Ego* Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. ***Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices.*** Eight-issue subscriptions: $60 US, $85 Canada, $107 elsewhere. Printed in China. ISSN: 1932-6890

FIRST PRINTING.

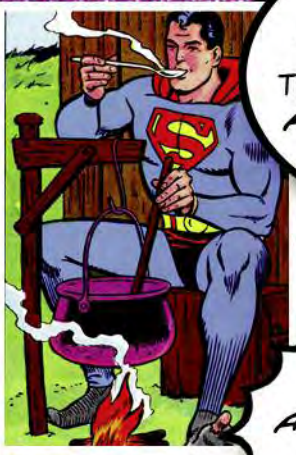
I ENJOYED *SURPRISING* THE *READERS*...

I WOULD BRING OUT A *NEW ELEMENT* EVERY *SIX MONTHS*...

...TO KEEP THE *ENRAPTURED KIDS* WHO WERE OUR AUDIENCE *INVOLVED!*

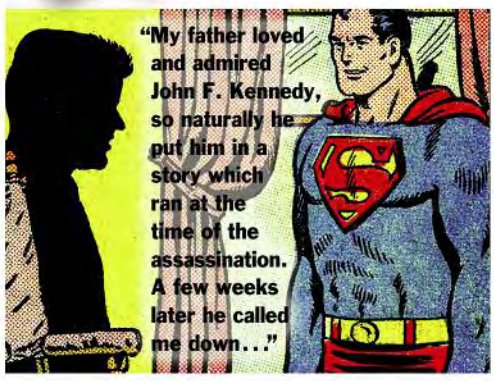


SUPERMAN PROVED THAT *THRILLS* CAN BE COMBINED WITH *EDUCATION*...

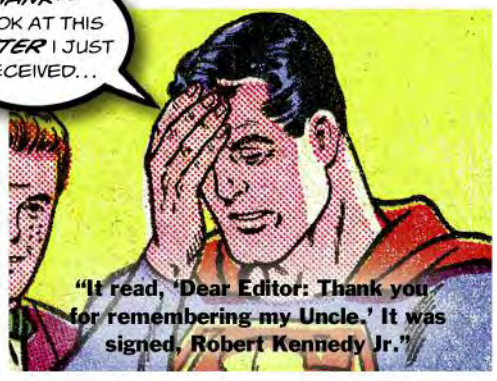


...THE *SAME* TECHNIQUE THAT *HORATIO ALGER* ONCE USED...

...TO *INSTILL* IN YOUNGSTERS AN *APPEALING* CONCEPT OF THE *AMERICAN WAY* OF *LIFE!*



HANK-- LOOK AT THIS *LETTER* I JUST RECEIVED...




I CALLED THE WHITE HOUSE TO MAKE SURE IT WAS AUTHENTIC, AND IF IT WAS, TO SEE IF I COULD PUBLISH IT! I WAS TOLD, "OF COURSE! JFK WAS A GREAT SUPERMAN FAN," WHICH IS WHY SUPERMAN WAS JFK'S SPOKESMAN FOR PHYSICAL FITNESS!
...AND OTHER DOWN-TO-EARTH VILLAINS OF MODERN SOCIETY!
LANET
LUTHOR ESCAPES AGAIN
UNSOLVED SUPER-PROBLEMS
1. RESTORE KANDOR TO NORMAL SIZE
2. FIND ANTIDOTE TO GREEN KRYPTONITE
3. WIPE OUT CRIME AND EVIL
SUPERMAN WAGED INCESSANT WAR...
...AGAINST INJUSTICE, INTOLERANCE, BIGOTRY...
GAINST
HE'S IMMORTAL--HE'S INVULNERABLE--
EVEN BAD SCRIPTS CAN'T HURT HIM!

PAUL CASSIDY— Superman's First Ghost?

Starring *Two* Men Of Steel—And Cousin Hopalong, Too!

by Mel Higgins

A Superman For All Seasons

Super-early Shuster assistant Paul Cassidy in 1927, more than a decade before he went to work for Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster—flanked by the *Superman* daily strip for April 11, 1939, and two panels from the "Superman" story in *Action Comics* #22 (March 1940). Cassidy probably contributed to both; see article for details. Among other things, he is generally held to be the person who added the "S" triangle on the hero's cape, to match the one on his chest. Photo courtesy of Dick and Larry Cassidy, via Mel Higgins; the *Superman* strip is taken from *Superman: The Dailies – 1939-1942*, the 1998 hardcover published by DC Comics & Kitchen Sink Press; comic book panels reproduced from DC's *Superman: The Action Comics Archives*, Vol. 2. [Comics material © 2012 DC Comics.]

The year was 1938, with the nation still in the clutches of the Great Depression, when a 28-year-old graphic arts teacher from Milwaukee answered an advertisement in the newspaper with hopes of supplementing his income. Paul Cassidy traveled from Milwaukee to Cleveland to interview with Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster about help they needed drawing comics. Cassidy returned to Milwaukee with a part-time job and became probably the first artist to assist Joe Shuster with the production of comic art. This was the beginning of what would later be known as the Shuster Shop, home of the first, and greatest, super-hero ever created, Superman.

Life Before *Superman*

Paul Henry Cassidy was born on June 11, 1910, in Cherry Valley, Illinois. He was the son of Henry Thomas Cassidy and Stella Jane (Buck) Cassidy. Henry Cassidy wore many hats, including those of farmer, veterinarian, barber, horse trader, game warden, and even milk deliveryman, and was remembered for being able to swear a blue streak. Stella Cassidy was a very outgoing, tough, crusty woman. She hated the Democrats, especially Joe Kennedy. With Stella, you knew exactly where she stood on matters. When Henry Cassidy passed away in 1933, Stella lived by herself until she was 75, at which time she moved to Los Angeles to be with her older sister, Lyda.

To quote Paul Cassidy's son, Dick Cassidy, Stella would "fry an egg, one egg, hard as linoleum, every day, and have one warm beer and a cake of brewer's yeast, every day. But she was clear it was only one beer!" Stella Cassidy passed away in 1984 at the age of 104. Other members of Paul's nuclear family included older brother Clayton Graham Cassidy (born 1905), and brother Thomas Cassidy, who died either at birth or shortly thereafter.

The Cassidy family moved to Rockford, Illinois, in 1917, when Paul was 7 years of age. It is from Rockford that Paul Cassidy would graduate high school in 1928. Paul did very well in school and was in the National Honor Society. Upon graduation from high school, Paul attended the University of Wisconsin/Madison between the years of 1928 through 1934. Paul Cassidy was drawing as early on as anyone could remember, and it was this interest that he pursued at University. It was there that he earned a bachelor's degree in applied arts and a master's degree in art education. While at the University, Paul was an accomplished runner. His thin frame (Paul was about 5' 7" and weighed 132 pounds at university) helped him become an excellent half-miler. He even competed at the Penn Relays as a sophomore. Paul was also the staff artist/

According to Bob Hughes' "Who Drew Superman?" website, Paul Cassidy "supplied a more fluid line to Joe's style, with a bolder, darker line that filled in details like Superman's "S" symbol." As seen in *Action Comics* #6, Paul brought back the five-cornered shield design. He also made notable changes to Superman's cape. He was the first artist to add an "S" to the cape, made the cape more dynamic by giving it folds, and allowed the cape to fly every which way, even allowing it to cover Superman's face! Where Shuster would draw the cape attached at two points and loosely hanging from the shoulders, Cassidy securely and closely attached the cape to the front of Superman's jersey, having it bunch up at the back of the collar area. Again quoting from Hughes' "Who Drew Superman?" website:

> Cassidy had a totally different sense of layout and design than Joe did. He often drew Superman with *both* legs tucked under him and his arms outstretched sideways, rather than forwards or above his head…. Cassidy loved back views, cape tricks, and reclining figures and was clearly a superior draftsman to Shuster…. Cassidy twists and turns Superman's body and delights in back bends, flips and other acrobatic displays.

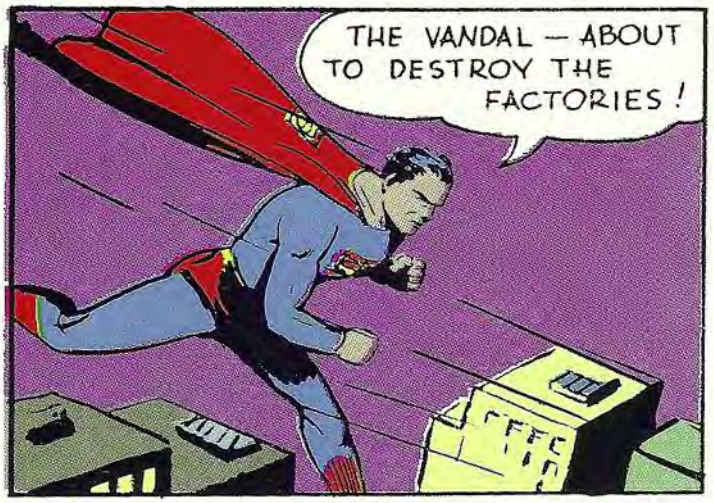
Another identifiable trait of Cassidy's was a knack for drawing heads turning past the point of what would normally be thought possible. Bob Hughes writes on "The K-Metal from Krypton" website about "the twisted necks…. [T]hose are Cassidy trademarks."

Unfortunately, by 1940, Cassidy could no longer afford to continue on as an artist in the Shuster Shop. He had a family to support, and it was about to become bigger. First child Lawrence Michael Cassidy was born on April 27, 1937, and his second child was only months away from coming into this world. So, at the end of August 1940, Paul Cassidy left Cleveland to return to Milwaukee. His son Larry notes that these two years in Cleveland were not the best ones for Paul and Inez. They had come from out of town, knew no one, and felt a bit isolated. Paul was not making much money, either, which stressed the situation.

Even after his return to Milwaukee, Paul would continue to work for the Shuster Shop on a part-time basis, through the mail, into 1942. In the end, his contribution to the Shuster Shop included "173 daily *Superman* strips and eight Sunday pages, plus 630 comics pages and seven covers—by [Paul's] estimate, 'about 8,800 pictures or panels'" in all, according to James Vance in *Superman: The Dailies, 1939-1942.*

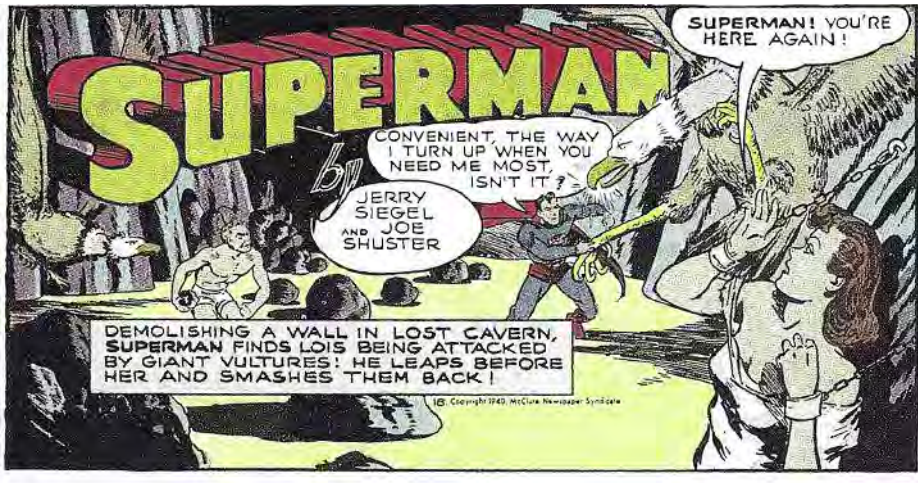
"S" Marks The Spot

If, as Bob Hughes suspects, Paul Cassidy ghosted both pencils and inks on one story in *Superman* #4 (Spring 1940)—except for Shuster's drawing the faces—it's most likely this third entry in the issue, which has a subtly different look from its fellows. Bob notes that, in the earliest "Superman" stories, "any panel that shows an 'S' on Superman's cape has some Cassidy input," since PC apparently added that symbol to it even when he merely inked. In that issue, *all four* tales have that trait. Repro'd from the hardcover *Superman Archives, Vol. 1.* [© 2012 DC Comics.]



As if to save the best for last, the final assignment that Cassidy penciled while in Cleveland working at the Shuster Shop would become one of the greatest "Superman" tales never told—the infamous "K-Metal Story." This story has become a cult classic for many reasons, most notably because in it Clark Kent reveals to Lois Lane that he is Superman, and they agree to a partnership. It also includes the first use of kryptonite (called "K-Metal" therein). It would be three years later, in 1943, that kryptonite would be introduced to the public in *The Adventures of Superman* radio program. And, as if this wasn't enough, it is in this tale that the hero realizes he comes from another planet. On a minor note, it is also in this tale that Clark Kent's editor is first called by the name Perry White. Before this, the editor's name had been George Taylor.

This story was completely penciled, inked, and lettered. Unfortunately, the DC editors decided that these events—especially the secret identity revelation and the existence of deadly fragments of the exploded planet Krypton—were too dramatic to be introduced into the "Superman" storyline. The



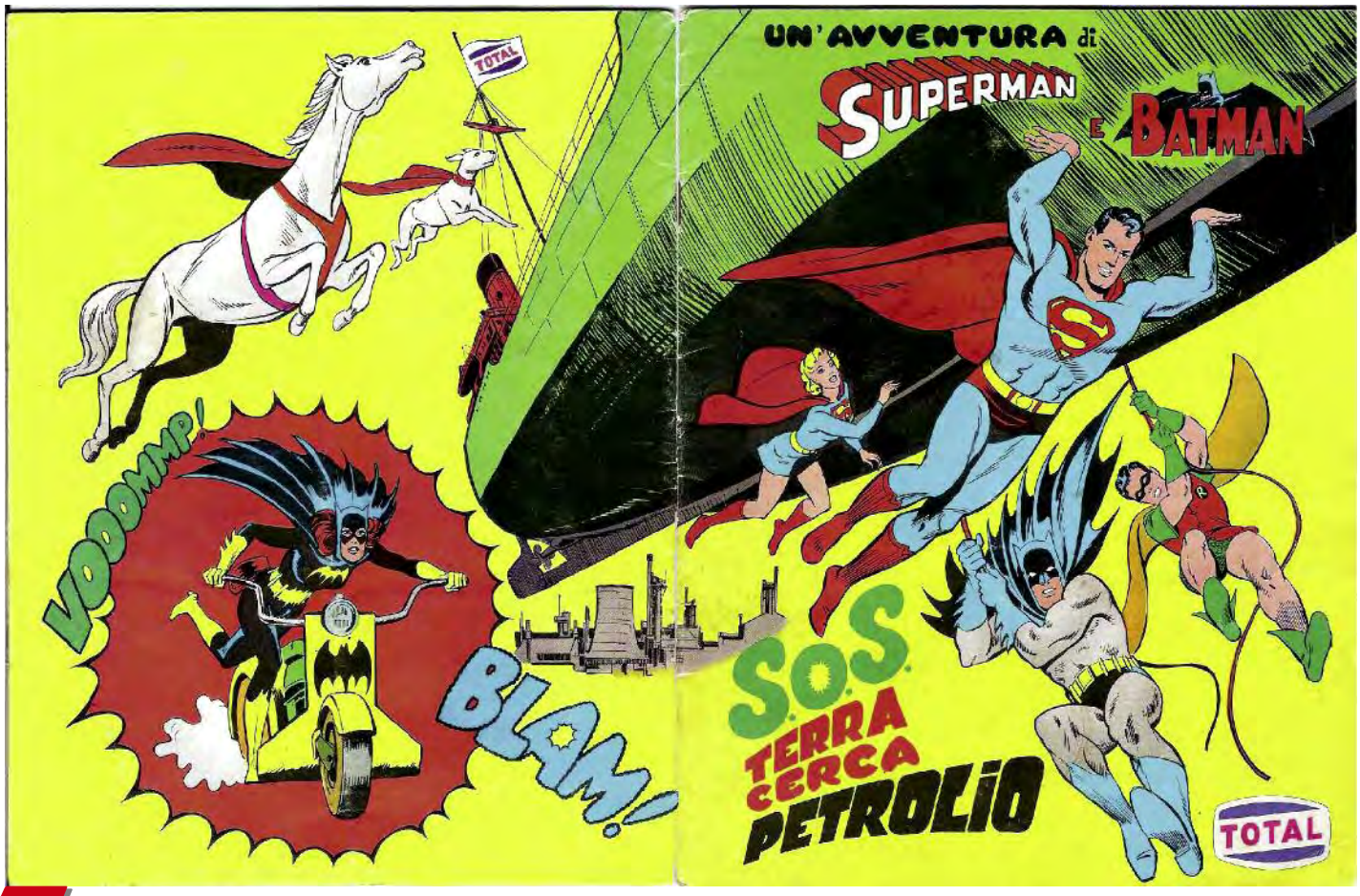
Sundays In The Park With *Superman*

Wayne Boring (the *other* candidate for the "second Superman artist")—and the lead panel from the 18th *Superman* Sunday strip, published in newspapers in 1940. Boring probably did most of it, though most likely with Joe Shuster doing at least the faces. Repro'd from 1998's DC/Kitchen Sink hardcover *Superman: The Sunday Classics, 1939-1943*. During the 1950s, Boring's version of the Man of Steel became the gold standard. [Sunday © 2012 DC Comics.]

"Spaghetti" Superman, a.k.a. The Nembo Kid—And Batman, Too!

The Italian Man Of Steel & Dark Knight in the 1960s

by Alberto Becattini



Hail, Hail, The Gang's All—In *Italy!*

The wraparound cover, by Italian artists Piero and Paolo Montecchi, for the giveaway "sticker-story" album *S.O.S. – Earth Looking for Oil* (1968), co-starring Superman, Batman, Robin, Supergirl, and Batgirl, plus Krypto and Comet. See details on p. 32 & 37 about this comic that was created especially for the Italian company Total Gasoline. All art and photos accompanying this piece were provided by Alberto Becattini. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

There was a time when numerous "Superman" and "Batman" stories were produced in Milan, Italy, in the offices of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore.

One of Italy's greatest publishers, Mondadori had entered the comics field in 1935, buying out the weekly tabloid *Topolino* (the Italian name of *Mickey Mouse*) from Mario Nerbini of Florence. The sole Italian Disney comics publisher from 1935-88, in April of 1949 Mondadori decided to turn *Topolino* into a monthly digest. The reason for such a change was merely practical. Now the Disney comic had exactly the same format as *Selezione dal Reader's Digest* (the Italian edition of *Reader's Digest*), which Mondadori had been publishing since October 1948. To print the monthly *Selezione* at his huge plant in Verona, Mondadori had bought an expensive new printing press; and to keep it working between one issue of *Selezione* and another, it was decided to use it for printing *Topolino*, too, whose sales had been dwindling for quite a while.

Much to Mondadori's surprise, the format change was a success, and *Topolino*'s sales skyrocketed. Profiting by this unexpected success, the far-sighted Mondadori decided to acquire the rights to publish DC/National Comics' super-heroes in Italy. Which he did, in a digest-sized bi-weekly comic named *Albi del Falco – Nembo Kid*, whose first issue was cover-dated May 16, 1954. "Nembo Kid" was the Italian name that Mondadori had chosen for Superman, reportedly because the publisher thought that a literal translation of Superman, "Superuomo," could suggest a connection with Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical doctrine of the *Übermensch*–also translated into Italian as "Superuomo." Whatever the reason, for about thirteen years every single "S" on Superman's chest and on the back of his cloak would be deleted by a staff artist in each and every panel of every single story published in Italy until April 1967.

Clark Be Nembo, Clark Be Quick

The cover of the first issue of *Albi del Falco – Nembo Kid* (1954). Alberto Becattini tells us that "*Albi del Falco*" translates roughly into English as "*Comics of the Hawk*." "I don't really know why Mondadori chose that name," he adds, "but at the same time he started a new series which featured Disney characters, calling it *Albi della Rosa* (*Comics of the Rose*). I guess the name for the series devoted to DC super-heroes was supposed to be more 'aggressive.'" By the way, the word "nembo" is Italian for "nimbus"—i.e., a rain cloud or storm cloud. Apparently, the English slang meaning of "kid" by then was well enough known in Italy for it to be used instead of the Italian for "man." [© 2012 DC Comics.]

From 1954-61, all of the DC Comics super-hero stories published by Mondadori were American originals. But things changed in 1962, when Italian-made "Nembo Kid" adventures started appearing. The reason for producing them was probably the same that had given a start to a domestic production of Disney stories years before. At a certain point, the materials sent by DC were no longer sufficient to fill the 48 weekly pages of *Albi del Falco–Nembo Kid* (whose first weekly issue was #103, dated April 6, 1958), as well as the 64 monthly pages of *Superalbo Nembo Kid* (a comic-book-sized title started in June 1960, which turned into the fortnightly *Batman-Nembo Kid* in August 1965, ceasing publication a year later).

Thus the editor, Mario Gentilini, decided to set up a small team of writers and artists to regularly produce supplementary "Superman" stories, with the first one appearing in *Albi del Falco–Nembo Kid* #317 (May 13, 1962). For about a year, these adventures were produced by freelancers who had previously worked, or were still working, for Mondadori. These were writer Piero Arnaldo (Pier) Carpi and artists Leone (Leo) Cimpellin and Enzo Dufflocq Magni (better known to Italian readers as "Ingam" from when he had drawn the adventures of the sensual jungle heroine *Blonde Panther* in 1948-50). Until 1963, Cimpellin and Magni drew a total of 18 stories, plus several covers. In 1962, one story was even drawn by comics veteran Carlo Cossio (this would be one of his very last works, as he died two years later). Whereas the writers did their best to work in the wake of such American master storymen as Jerry Siegel, Otto Binder, and Edmond Hamilton, the artists did not seem too familiar with the styles of Wayne Boring, Curt Swan, or even Al Plastino, and simply drew Superman/Clark Kent, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Perry White, Lex Luthor and all the others in their own styles. The Italian stories showed a nice variety of themes and situations. Naturally, most of them were set in outer space or concerned alien threats, but there was also a bit of time travel and treasure-hunting, for a change.

Sole "Superman"

Carlo Cossio's splash page from his only "Nembo Kid" story: "The Liberating Quiz" (1962). Living from 1907-1964, he was a prolific comic artist and animator from the late 1920s until the early '60s. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

A Carlo Cossio page.

In 1963, 21-year-old Marco Rota, who had been on staff at Mondadori for less than a year, was entrusted with Superman covers and interior art, continuing to draw these stories until 1966. (Rota would later become, and still is, one of the best Disney comic writers/artists in the world.) Rota has recently revealed that his three-year "Nembo Kid" tenure began with the redrawn version of an American story, which Gentilini gave him "to get the hang of the character. Perhaps he wanted me to get acquainted with the American artist's style, so that it would then come easier to draw the Man of Steel." The story was a 20-pager entitled "Silent Language," and it appeared in *Albi del Falco – Nembo Kid* #409 (Feb. 16, 1964). So far it has been impossible to determine which U.S. story it was a remake of, yet one suspects it was a Curt Swan story, as Rota evidently fashioned his style after Swan's.

Anyway, it was Rota who later illustrated the "most Italian amongst Superman's Italian stories," that is "The Legend of Perseus," which appeared in *Batman – Nembo Kid* #67 (Sept., 1965). In fact, this adventure, written by Pier Carpi, was partly set in Italy. Having to find a way to fight an alien menace on a faraway planet, Superman/Nembo Kid thought back to a holiday his alter ego, Clark Kent, and Lois Lane (actually it was *Luisa* Lane in Italy) had spent in Florence, where they had admired Benvenuto Cellini's bronze statue of Prometheus holding Medusa's severed head. Rota profited by this flashback to visualize some typical views of the Tuscan city (where, incidentally, the present writer was born and lives).

With issue #527 of *Albi del Falco – Nembo Kid* (May 22, 1966), the editorial chores were taken over by Enrico Bagnoli, an expert artist who had a deep knowledge of American comics, having drawn several stories for U.S. comic books published by Fiction House, St. John, and even DC/National from 1948-54. Bagnoli considerably updated the looks of the weekly comic,

"Cartoonists Are Good Guys"

Part III Of Our Career-Spanning Interview With Artist/Writer LEONARD STARR

Interview Conducted by Jim Amash Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

Who Ya Gonna Call? "Ghost-Breaker"!

Leonard Starr (photo) drew the "Ghost-Breaker" feature in two different periods, nearly two decades apart.

(Left:) The series was called simply "Ghost-Breaker" (both with and without a hyphen) when he first illustrated it in such mags as *Star Spangled Comics* #127 (April 1952), although the hero's name was already Dr. Thirteen. No matter; the mag would be cancelled with #130. Scripter unknown. Starr's cover for *SSC* #127 was seen in *A/E* #110. Thanks to Jim Kealy.

(Right:) With a May-June 1969 cover date, DC later revived the series as "Dr. 13 the Ghost-Breaker" in a resuscitated *Phantom Stranger* series. This time, Doc narrated the adventures; his name was spelled out in the stories themselves. Script by France "Ed" Herron. Thanks to Stephan Friedt. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

The photo of Starr is from *Cartoonist PROfiles* magazine #10 (June 1971); taken by Chet Hopper.

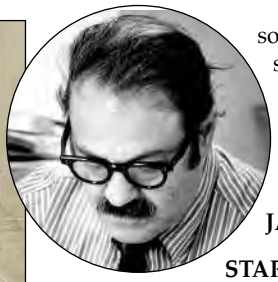
As related over the past two issues, artist Leonard Starr started out as a background artist at Funnies, Inc., quickly becoming an inker and then a penciler/inker. During the 1940s and '50s, his work appeared in comic books published by McCombs, Orbit, Parents Magazine Press, ACG, Avon, DC, Timely/Marvel, and St. John Publications, among others. He left comic books in 1957 to do the widely acclaimed On Stage *newspaper strip which he had created; later he drew the venerable and eternally young* Little Orphan Annie, *as* Annie. *This issue, he discusses his attention-getting work for DC Comics and his time in advertising in the 1950s. Thanks to our mutual friend Tom Sawyer (whom I interviewed in* A/E *# 77) for giving me Leonard's contact info.*

—Jim.

"I Brought Samples Up [To DC], And They Hired Me"

JA: *Do you remember how you started at DC Comics?*

STARR: I brought samples up, and they hired me. It was probably Murray Boltinoff or Jack Schiff who hired me. Jack and Murray worked in the same cubicle, and they had their desks in front of a window. I think Jack Schiff handled the scripts, and Murray handled the artists. I liked both Murray and Jack a lot. Jack was very highly educated. He was a specialist on Virgil, if you can believe it. But he didn't lay it on you with a trowel. Jack was not a show-off.



DC Come, DC Go

(Above:) This late-1951 photo, which originally appeared in *A/E* #98, depicts the DC editors with whom Starr had the most dealings, plus one. (Left to right:) George Kashdan, Murray Boltinoff, Jack Schiff, & Mort Weisinger. Thanks to Joe Desris.

(Right:) This 1970s pic of DC production guru Jack Adler was seen in full when he was interviewed by Jim Amash for *A/E* #56. Sadly, Jack passed away in September of 2011.

Mort Weisinger was there, too, but I didn't have to deal with him. His office was separate from Jack and Murray's. Mort was something! A writer would pitch a story to him, and Mort would say, "Oh, that's always good!" [*laughter*] So you can see he was a favorite of mine.

JA: *I take it you dealt with Boltinoff more than Schiff.*

STARR: Yes. Jack was lively, more so than Murray. Jack was very mobile, walking around a lot. Every now and again, Murray would feel that he had to do some editing, so he'd say, "Look at that drawing. Look at how fat that leg is." First, I would argue with him, then finally, I thought, "I'll just go in the back room and correct it," and I'd put white on the outside of the line, not change a thing, and bring it back to him. He'd say, "See?" "Right, you're right, Murray." [*Jim laughs*] We all did that kind of thing. And that back room was quite something. That's where Sol Harrison reigned [in Production]. Those guys were doing color separations and, to this day, I don't know what the hell they were all doing there. But they kept busy.

Jack Adler was another favorite of mine. Since you know him, see if he remembers this: it was summer, and all of the guys had sent their wives to the country, so they'd have some freedom. But Jack didn't send his wife away. The guys in Production were mad at Jack for not doing that, for *getting away* with not doing it. [*chuckles*] And they razzed him about it. "Boy, there's Jack's wife, just slaving for him all the year long, and he won't even give her a little summer vacation." We were all joking about it, and in the meantime, Jack kept his head down listening to all of this, continuing to do color separations. Finally, he said, "Well, I just thought, for that kind of money, I'd keep her home and **** her myself." [*uproarious laughter*] The room went absolutely dead silent. I thought, "This is my kind of guy." [**NOTE:** *Jack, who passed away after this interview was conducted, did confirm the story.* **—Jim.**]

Once, I was doing a cover for some book. It was a period piece with Hessian soldiers. They wore those Pope-like helmets, and Sol Harrison walked over. I was making some corrections or something, and he says, "Hessians, huh?" And I said, "Yeah." He says, "I always hated those guys." [*mutual laughter*] He was, of course, the first Hessian-hater I've ever run into. I'm sure there had to be many others, but none of them declared it.

JA: *So they were lively back there.*

STARR: Yes. When you get a bunch of guys who are there all the time, either it's deadly silent and everybody's suffering, or everybody's going crazy. [*chuckles*]

JA: *Mort Drucker worked back there for a while. Did you ever see Mort?*

STARR: I know I met him, and he worked for DC there for a while. I liked his stuff a lot. His later celebrity didn't surprise me.

JA: *Murray's been described to me as a guy who was hard to get to know. What did you think?*

STARR: I don't know, we got along fine. The whole thing was deadlines. You brought it in on time. I remember once, he got me in trouble. Somebody else had come in very late, and I was standing there. I'd just delivered a job, and I was talking to Jack Schiff, and Murray said to the guy who was late, "What is this

Indian Giver

Some of Starr's earliest work for DC consisted of back-up features in the new *Tomahawk* comic. This splash from #3 (Jan.-Feb. 1951) was provided by Stephan Friedt. Writer unknown. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

Double Play

A pair of DC splashes, with scripters unknown but art by Leonard Starr.

(Left:) "Manhunters around the World" from *Star Spangled Comics* #112 (Jan. 1951). Thanks to Jim Kealy.

(Right:) *House of Mystery* #16 (June 1953), with inks that sender Stephan Friedt feels may be by Sheldon Moldoff. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

crap? Listen, Leonard Starr does terrific work. He always brings it in on time. What's the problem?" Whoever it was gave me a dirty look, and I didn't really want to be a model for deadlines.

That's all Murray wanted. He just wanted to make sure his desk was clean, your work was acceptable, you didn't screw it up, and that was that. Aside from that, he was a very nice guy. Most of my work there was with Murray and Jack. It was very pleasant, and I think later on I inked a job, much much later, just because they were stuck, and I did it as sort of a tribute to Jack and Murray. My association with them was so pleasant that I was happy to help out. It was a "Superman" story.

JA: *I have you down as doing that in 1988.*

STARR: '88, that seems a little recent. It could be. My memory isn't what it used to be.

JA: *Did you ever work for Julie Schwartz?*

STARR: I did one job for Julie Schwartz. He had his own stable, and I was in Jack and Murray's stable. I don't think he liked what I gave him, and I found him not easy to work with. Julie was mean to people—made sure they knew he was the boss. I was just as happy that it didn't work out.

JA: *You never did work for Weisinger, did you?*

STARR: No, I didn't. I heard the stories about him. I avoided him.

JA: *I want to run down some of the features that you did and see if anything sparks a memory. One of the characters was "Captain Compass"… "Casebook Mystery"… "Congo Bill"… and some work in* Dale Evans Comics.

STARR: [*laughs*] No, I think you're wrong there. I would have remembered that last one. The others are very likely. I vaguely remember "Captain Compass."

JA: *Well, you might have done some back-up stories there. "Davy Crockett" was a feature in* Frontier Fighters *that is attributed to you.*

STARR: It's possible I did that.

JA: *"Dr. 13, the Ghost-Breaker."*

STARR: I remember the character.

JA: *You also had work in* Gang Busters, *which was based on the radio show. I have you doing miscellaneous* House of Mystery *stories, "Manhunters Around the World," and* My Greatest Adventure, *which was also a genre mystery kind of book. You also drew "Mysto, Magician Detective."*

STARR: All of that runs together now, but it's possible I did all of that.

JA: *"Nighthawk," which was a Western character.*

STARR: DC had some sort of anniversary book of characters, and I did a Nighthawk page for them, but I barely remembered having done it in the '50s. I remember they sent me some reference, so I knew what his costume looked like.

JA: *That drawing was for the* Who's Who in the DC Universe *books. I also have you drawing some "Phantom Stranger."*

STARR: "Phantom Stranger," maybe.

JA: *And "Pow-Wow Smith, Indian Lawman," from '51 to '53.*

STARR: I remember that one, but no details really come to mind. The stories weren't that special. You have to remember how many pages left our drawing boards. Once I finished a job, it pretty much left my mind. You've experienced the same thing working in comics.

JA: *Yes, I have. Did DC pay the best of any company?*

STARR: At that time, DC was paying me something like eighteen bucks a page, which was considered a pretty good page rate. When Ziff-Davis started their line, they were paying twenty, 21 dollars a page and *wow*, did we rush over there! But I don't think they were really ever seriously into it. I don't know how long their comic book line lasted, but it wasn't long.

JA: *About four years. They published stuff like* Bill Stern's Sports Comics, Red Grange Football Thrills, Bob Feller Baseball Comics, *among so much other stuff.*

STARR: True, but they weren't primarily a comics publisher. They were only into comics to make money, and I don't think they made

that much at it. They hired Jerry Siegel to be the editor, and he wasn't cut out for the job. Jerry wasn't tough enough to be an editor, and the whole thing started collapsing. But really, Jerry only had one idea, and that was "Superman."

JA: *Did you consider DC to be the top company when you freelanced there?*

STARR: Yes, I did. They were ahead of Marvel at that time.

JA: *Did you ever deal with Robert Kanigher?*

STARR: Kanigher, yeah. I didn't like him. He was not pleasant, and most of the guys were pleasant.

JA: *Jack and Murray were very politically minded people. Did you ever talk politics with them?*

STARR: Nope! Never. Not a word that I can recall. Whoever was in political office, they may have said lousy things about them or complimentary things, depending on which side of the spectrum they were, but everybody did that. If you didn't like the President, you said it.

JA: *They had an assistant editor named George Kashdan.*

STARR: I remember George; he was a young guy then. All I remember is that he was there. I don't know what, specifically, he did.

"What I Wanted To Learn Was Anatomy"

JA: *He was an assistant script editor for them, and then he later edited his own books. I'd like to change the subject away from comics for a bit. You told me you had studied under Frank Riley at the Art Students League. When did you do that?*

STARR: I was about 27, 28. This is after I'd been a working professional for years. Dean Cornwell advised it. I was already a member of The Society of Illustrators, and he gave a talk. He'd been looking

The Greeks Had A Picture For It!

Frank Riley, mentioned by Starr in the interview, was another celebrated illustrator, whose work was utilized in this 1953 art for a Shell Oil advertisement. He also became a noted teacher of art. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

The Dean Of Illustrators

This painting by Dean Cornwell, who is considered one of the classic American illustrators of the 20th century, was done for an edition of the novel *Never the Twain Shall Meet,* by Peter B. Kyne. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

at the stuff that Frank Riley's kids were doing, and it was very good, so I spoke to him about it. He says, "Oh, yeah, you really ought to take classes [at the Art Students League]." It was a good idea, but it was too late for me. I was already too busy working, and I think he died shortly after that, too. It was a strain to make the deadlines and also go to school. But the worst thing that ever happened to my career was to not go to the Art Students League, and study with Riley when I got out of high school. I went to Pratt. The High School of Art was a very good idea, but the art teachers were not teachers. You would draw one of the other students. And the teacher would come around and say, "Well, that hand needs a little work, and that arm is too long." No instruction at all, just that kind of thing, and what you got out of it was two periods of art a day where you drew all the time, and so the kids improved.

At Pratt, it was pretty much the same thing. They were more into service art. What I wanted to learn was anatomy, because I was very concerned about making a living, and there was none of that at all. The school had been given over to designers. There were classes on two-dimensional design and three-dimensional design, and I didn't care about any of that. What I wanted to know was how to draw as well as I possibly could so I could turn it into bucks, and I wasn't getting that. That's when I saw the ad for Funnies, Inc., on the bulletin board, and you know where that led.

But I felt guilty about it, and there was a guy—I forget his name, Forrester, maybe—who was reputed to be a good anatomy teacher, and he was teaching at night. So I went to night school. It was the same thing: he would come in, set up the class, and leave, maybe come in at the end of the class. God knows what else he was doing the rest of the time. It was just as desultory as my daytime work had been, so I quit going. Pretty much everything I did, I learned on my own.

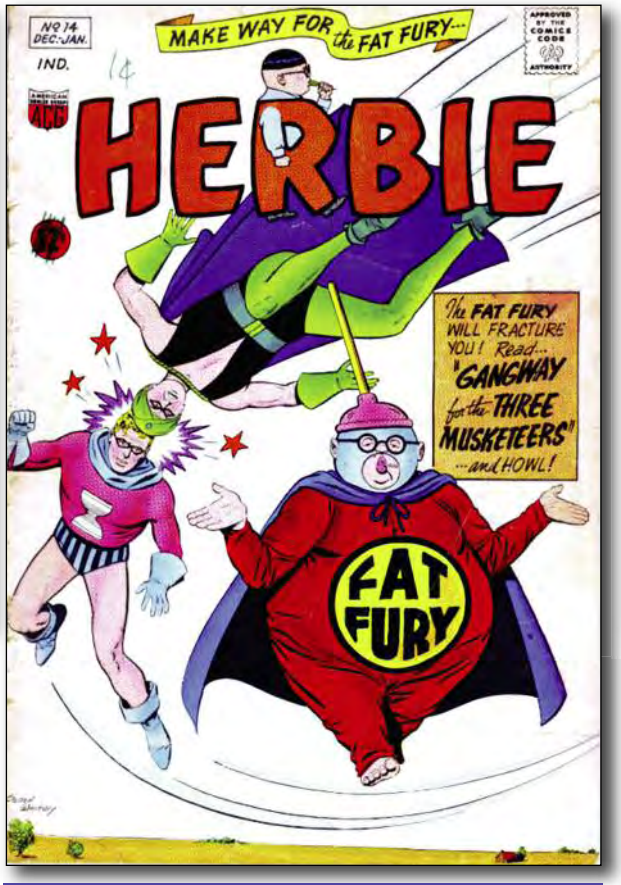
JA: *What was Frank Riley like as a teacher?*

STARR: Let me tell you the way he ran a class. First of all, he said, "There are only about ten mistakes that every student makes, but he makes them over and over so it looks like a hundred. So if you correct one mistake, you've corrected ten." He would correct one student's work a session, and everybody had to watch. So you saw

"Something...?"

A Study Of Comics Pioneer RICHARD E. HUGHES

by Michael Vance
Utilizing the Collection of Joseph Eacobacci



Hughes, Herbie, & Hughes

A newly discovered, undated color photo of comics editor & writer Richard E. Hughes and a 1937 photo of his wife Annabel, flanking the cover of the ACG comic *Herbie* #22 (Dec. 1965-Jan. 1966), wherein the costumed Fat Fury encounters Nemesis and Magicman, a pair of more standard super-heroes. Art by Ogden Whitney. All three heroes were co-created by Hughes. All art accompanying this article was scanned by Michael Vance, from the collection of Joseph Eacobacci, unless otherwise noted. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

A/E EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *In 2006, in issues #61-62,* Alter Ego *serialized Michael Vance's 1996 book* Forbidden Adventures: The History of the American Comics Group—*"the most comprehensive history of one comic book publisher," as the author phrased it in his preface. ACG was formally founded in the years after World War II, but Vance's book also dealt with the Sangor Comics Shop, which was formed in 1940 to produce comics material for several publishers, including Ned Pines' company, which was also known at various times as Thrilling, Nedor, Better, or Standard. Prominent at both the Sangor Shop and the later ACG was Richard E. Hughes. The intention of this piece is to utilize a recently discovered mass of REH materials to further explore the life and career of this comics-historically important figure.*

Mystery Man

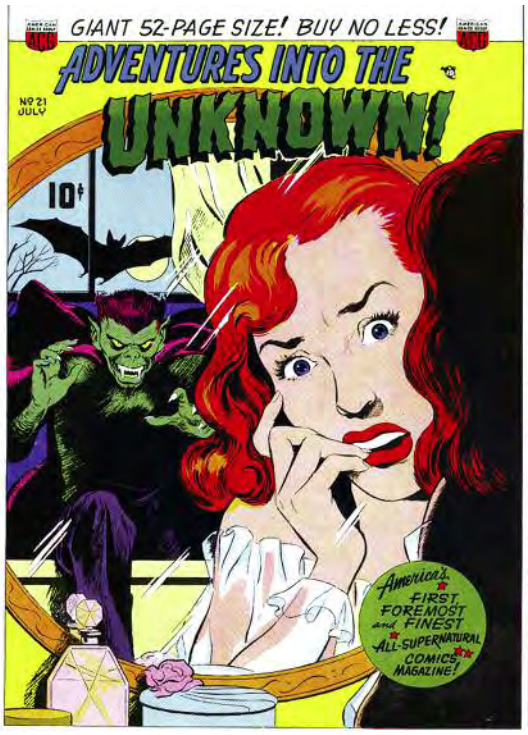
Comic book writer and editor Richard E. Hughes was a Mystery Man in the truest sense of that early term used to describe super-heroes. But a recent, unexpected, and exciting package received at the offices of *Alter Ego* has shed new light on several aspects of his career.

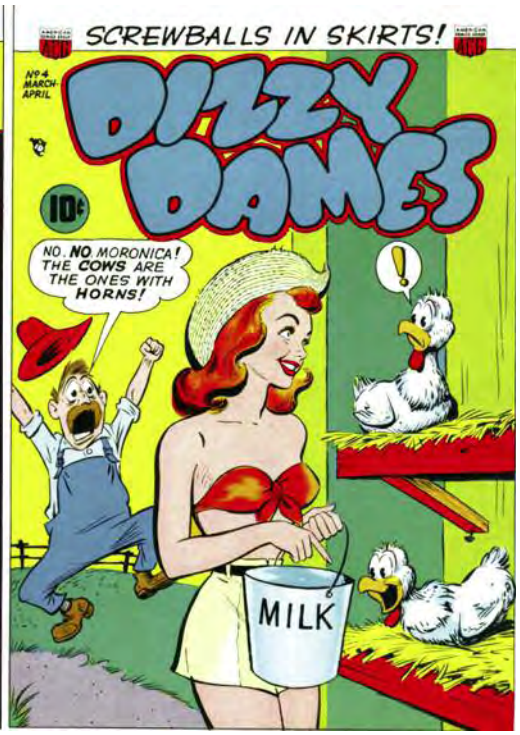
Some of the mystery is due to the use of pseudonyms by artists, writers, and editors in the early days of the art form, because the general population thought comic books were "kid stuff." In addition, many considered them just another passing fad in an industry where new magazines appeared and disappeared frequently. Therefore, bylines on stories were usually non-existent, sporadic, or even misleading.

Richard E. Hughes is infamous for using false names in the titles produced by the Sangor Comics Shop for several different comics companies beginning in 1940 with Pines/Thrilling, and by the American Comics Group (ACG) from 1943 to 1967. Not only did this policy include his editorial use of pen names for his own writers and artists; even "Richard E. Hughes" was a pseudonym! His true name was Leo Rosenbaum.

Additionally, Hughes' credit as a writer on specific ACG stories is still most often a mystery, because few records were kept of the creative or business activity in the young industry, and Hughes was no exception, which has added to the enigma surrounding his own body of work.

However, it is known that Richard E. Hughes—or at least Leo Rosenbaum—was born on November 5, 1909, and lived until





The Bad And The Beautiful

Two of the American Comics Group's cornucopia of titles were the trailblazing *Adventures into the Unknown* and the definitely non-PC *Dizzy Dames*. Michael Vance scanned these two printer's proofs from the Eacobacci collection together, and we felt they well represented the gamut run by the company under Hughes. *AITU* #21 is cover-dated July 1951; *Dizzy Dames* #4, March-April 1953. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

Incidentally, the complete run of *Adventures into the Unknown*, as well as its fellow ACG horror title *Forbidden Worlds*, is currently being reprinted by the English publisher PS Artbooks in a quality hardcover package. Full disclosure: PS Artbooks recently named *A/E*'s editor its "series consultant" for future comics reprints, including three volumes of the complete Golden Age adventures of *The Heap*, on sale in September. See ad on p. 71.

January 15, 1974, when he died at the age of 65 of myeloribrosis, a rare blood disease. It was the observation of his wife and of the artists and writers with whom he worked that Hughes was always impeccably and fashionably dressed, was almost never found without his pipe in his mouth, enjoyed parties, loved to laugh (often at his own beloved puns), and was among the kindest, most considerate and professional editors in the business of comic books. It is also clear that Hughes and his wife Annabel were married on January 19, 1935—he was then 26 years old—and that their nearly forty years of marriage produced only one famous offspring: the American Comics Group. Hughes worked there until 1967.

It is now also known that, in 1942, when Hughes was 32 and his wife was 30 years old, they lived at 120 West 183rd Street in the Bronx, that he stood 5' 8" tall, weighed 170 lbs., and listed his occupation as "editor." Annabel was 5' 4" in height, weighed 119 lbs., and listed no occupation. This personal information comes from their WWII ration books, part of a large package of Annabel's personal possessions now owned by a Yonkers, New York, resident, Joseph Eacobacci.

Eacobacci recently purchased this amazing cache of materials from a former boyfriend of Annabel's after her death and generously mailed this collection on loan to *Alter Ego* editor Roy Thomas for review and for identification. Roy in turn sent it on to me, with Joseph's permission, because of my 1996 book *Forbidden Worlds: The History of the American Comics Group* (reprinted in *A/E* #61-62). When my original study was written, however, relatively little was known about the elusive Richard Hughes.

The unique Eacobacci collection holds some surprises, answers many questions—and creates new intriguing enigmas. Its more than forty items include mostly black-&-white photographs from the 1930s of Annabel (and her possible friends or relatives, most of them unfortunately unidentified) and one later snapshot of Richard Hughes, the only known color photo of the comics pioneer—plus manuscripts, mostly typed on cheap newsprint, which were intended for radio and television, as well as a comic strip proposal, multiple copies of two novels, a short story, original greeting card verse, some comic book proofs—and several never-published comic scripts.

Cache As Cache Can

Among the surprises are four photos of particular interest. One is of an architect's drawing of the home of ACG owner (and earlier comics shop proprietor) B.W. Sangor, two are of the completed home, and one is of Sangor and two unknown men.

The latter is the only known photograph of B.W. Sangor!

The cache also includes more than a dozen printer's proofs of ACG covers, and two black-&-white advertisements designed for publication in an undesignated trade magazine. The proofs are all of covers of American Comics Group titles from the early 1950s. Printer's proofs utilize a very high quality of paper, and are given to an editor by a printer for final approval before a title "goes to press." The Eacobacci materials include proofs of: *The Hooded Horseman* #21, *Cookie* #32, *Spy Hunters* #12, *Funny Films* #16, *Kilroys* #33, *Soldiers of Fortune* #3, *Lovelorn* #13, *Giggle* #82, *Ha Ha Comics* #80, *Operation Peril* #5, *Skeleton Hand* #1, *Romantic Adventures* #23, *Adventures into the Unknown* #21, *Dizzy Dames* #4, *Forbidden Worlds* #15, and *Out of the Night* #1.

Accompanying the above proofs are three complete comic book stories: "Oakie O'Connor" in "One-Turtle Brain Trust" (7 pages, published in a funny animal title, art by Carl Wessler), "Natch in 'It's Love, Love, Love'" (8 pages, teenage comedy, published in *The Kilroys*), and "The Story of Tolerance" (11 pages, most likely a product of a division of ACG called Custom Comics, with art by Robert Oksner [1916-2007]).

In the "Oakie O'Connor" tale, a young boy earns notoriety as a "whiz kid" (i.e., a genius) until it is discovered that his talking turtle, Oakie, is the true mental giant. But the reptile's new fame likewise fades, leaving him unfulfilled until he returns to his owner and learns that friendship is the real treasure of life. It was drawn by Fleischer Studios animator Carl Wessler (1913-1989), who continued to earn substantial credits as a comic book *writer* for multiple publishers, including horror stories for EC Comics. The back of each page of these "Oakie" proof sheets is stamped

A Few Sticks of *TNT*

The cover of the tabloid-size magazine *TNT*, which Hughes edited and wrote, with cover art by someone signing himself "Francois." [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

page of "The Story of Tolerance," perhaps because it was a very serious, condensed history of intolerance and tolerance. Its emphasis is on religious bigotry throughout history, and it is an essay in comics format on America's triumph of tolerance. There is no copyright on the piece, and, at this time, the person or group that commissioned this booklet or when it may have been published and distributed all remain a mystery.

Hughes was a pioneer in the comic book industry and during his lifetime was one of its most prolific and influential editors and writers. "Dick" created dozens of memorable characters, edited thousands of comic book stories, and most likely wrote well over a thousand of them in his career. Yet, when describing himself in his last résumé, prepared sometime after he left ACG in 1967, he wrote simply: "An experienced and competent editor . . . a writer who knows how to employ the right words. Public relations oriented. Expert in visual writing. Able to wed words and illustrations with maximum effectiveness."

Hughes' career during the Great Depression of the 1930s is ignored in his résumé. Only his graduation in 1930 at age 21 from New York University with a Bachelor of Arts degree (English major, Economics minor) is recorded. His résumé lists no occupation before 1940 (when he was 31 years old). Thereafter, for one year, he worked as a sales correspondent for Standard Mirror and Metal Products of New York City. He was involved in catalog production, including writing product copy. He left this position "to secure higher wages" at Syndicated Features Corporation in 1941.

TNT And *Cinema Comics Herald*

That same year, Hughes edited and wrote a magazine of satire and comedy for publisher B.W. Sangor (1889-c.-1955) entitled *TNT*. Until now, almost nothing was known of this publication. It was a tabloid-sized magazine which listed Eric Godal (1899-1969) as its art editor. Godal was a German painter, political cartoonist, and illustrator who also drew covers for such magazines as *Collier's*. Under the Cinema Comics imprint, *TNT* sold for a dime, featured "cartoons on current issues and American and world politics, as well as burlesques of popular personalities, and was dedicated to debunking sacred cows." These icons included "the snobs, the agents of oppression, the disseminators of political poisons." Exposé magazines were parodied, as well. At 32 pages, it was not a comic book, according to *American Humor Magazines and Comic Periodicals* (Greenwood Press, 1987; David E. Sloane, editor), and it failed. No cover art has ever been found… until now.

Eacobacci's collection includes pencil sketches for a "*T.N.T.*" logo, complete with periods (featuring an October date, a 10¢ price, and a "*Comics*" under-hang)—and a wrap-around cover on colored paper that must have held a copy of the first or second issue of *T.N.T.* and which was used to promote the publication of the second. It displays the cover of the second issue, and it is intriguingly possible though not probable that a limited printing of a second issue was produced for this promotional piece.

It is not certain that the *T.N.T.* logo was meant for use for the actual magazine, although it seems probable that it was a new logo meant for the second issue. That wrap-around cover features, beneath the art for the second, likely-unpublished cover, the following sales pitch at the bottom of the pages:

> July TNT went off sale with a newsstand circulation of better than 100,000 copies. We know this is not the peak! But it does give TNT that permanent reader following so necessary to a new magazine. And, 100,000 circulation is a good start for a bigger sale on a better October issue, charged with the best in modern humor and satire.
>
> TNT is not just another spicy, girly magazine. TNT's 100,000 copies were sold on the basis of a dozen good clean laughs on every page. From cover to cover… it's the modern type magazine, modern people are looking for—that's how it's designed to sell!
>
> TNT is another of our big 6¢ publications that gives you an extra 1/2¢ on every copy sold. That's 50% more than on the majority of 10¢ magazines which you distribute, and it means "profitable profits" for you! TNT with proper display… given a good distribution and a thorough recovery job will work for you in extra sales—extra profits!
>
> Our publisher has given us a magazine in October TNT which contains the type of real humor people want. We pass it along to you tagged with the kind of profits which pays you the kind of dividends that warrants your getting behind it.

Also in 1941, B.W. Sangor began publishing what remains a puzzling magazine that may well have led to his entering the comic book field. A rare copy of *Cinema Comics Herald* produced by the Sangor Shop is part of the Eacobacci package. It is not certain whether Hughes wrote or merely edited these advertising comic books.

Cinema Comics Herald was a tiny promotional comic book used at first to advertise Max Fleischer's animated film *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* at movie theatres. This publication may have initiated the productive relationship with several moonlighting Fleischer animators who would soon supply Sangor with artwork and stories for several comic book publishers, establishing Sangor's comics shop as part of his overall company.

Cinema Comics Herald was a movie theatre giveaway, 7½" x 9¼", that used line art and photographs to advertise movies produced by Paramount, Universal, RKO, 20th Century-Fox, and Republic. The movies advertised included *Mr. Bug, Lady for a Night* (starring John Wayne and Joan Blondell), and *Reap the Wild Wind*. Nine issues of these 4-page paper movie "trailers" were published under Sangor's Cinema Comics imprint through 1943. The additional titles included *Bedtime Story, Thunder Birds, They All Kissed the Bride, Arabian Nights, Bombardier,* and *Crash Dive*.

HEY, KIDS!

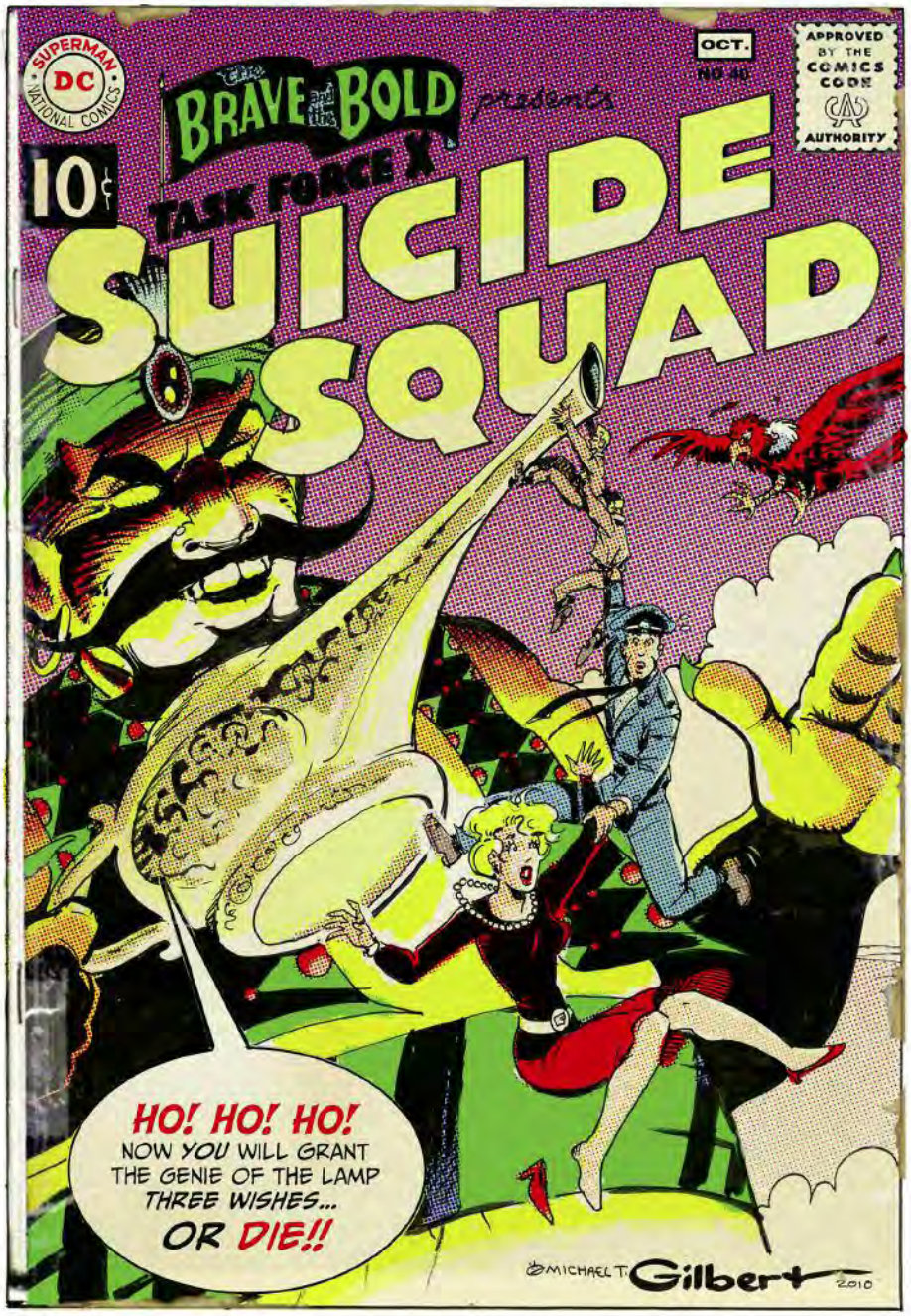
REMEMBER THE *SUICIDE SQUAD*--THE ORIGINAL LATE-'50S *MONSTER-FIGHTIN'* FOURSOME? THE ONE WRITTEN BY *BOB KANIGHER* AND DRAWN WITH GUSTO BY *ROSS ANDRU* AND *MIKE ESPOSITO?* SURE YOU DO!

THE TEAM--ALSO KNOWN AS *TASK FORCE X*--LASTED A MERE SIX ISSUES IN THEIR ORIGINAL INCARNATION. NONETHELESS, A GENERATION OF KIDS FONDLY REMEMBER THEIR BIZARRE ADVENTURES BATTLING GIANT *SNAKES,* GIANT *CATERPILLARS,* GIANT *DINOSAURS,* AND EVEN GIANT *EYEBALLS! IKK!*

BUT THE SQUAD'S *#1 FAN* HAS TO BE ART COLLECTOR-SUPREME *BILL COX,* WHO GOT DOZENS OF TOP ARTISTS TO CREATE NEW *IMAGINARY* COVERS FEATURING THE TEAM!

WE'VE GATHERED SOME OF THE *BEST* FOR THIS SPECIAL *CRYPT* EPISODE. BUT *BEWARE!* FOR HERE THERE BE . . .

MONSTERS!!!!



I Dream Of Genie

(Right:) The Crypt's own Michael T. Gilbert takes a crack at the Team Supreme! [Suicide Squad TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

Suicide Squad: Task Force X!

by Michael T. Gilbert

Most kids love reading *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Green Lantern* comic books. But if you're like me, you also loved comics that were a little out of the mainstream. Many fans have their own off-brand favorites, be it Dell's *Brain Boy*, AGG's *Herbie*, or Marvel's *Millie the Model*.

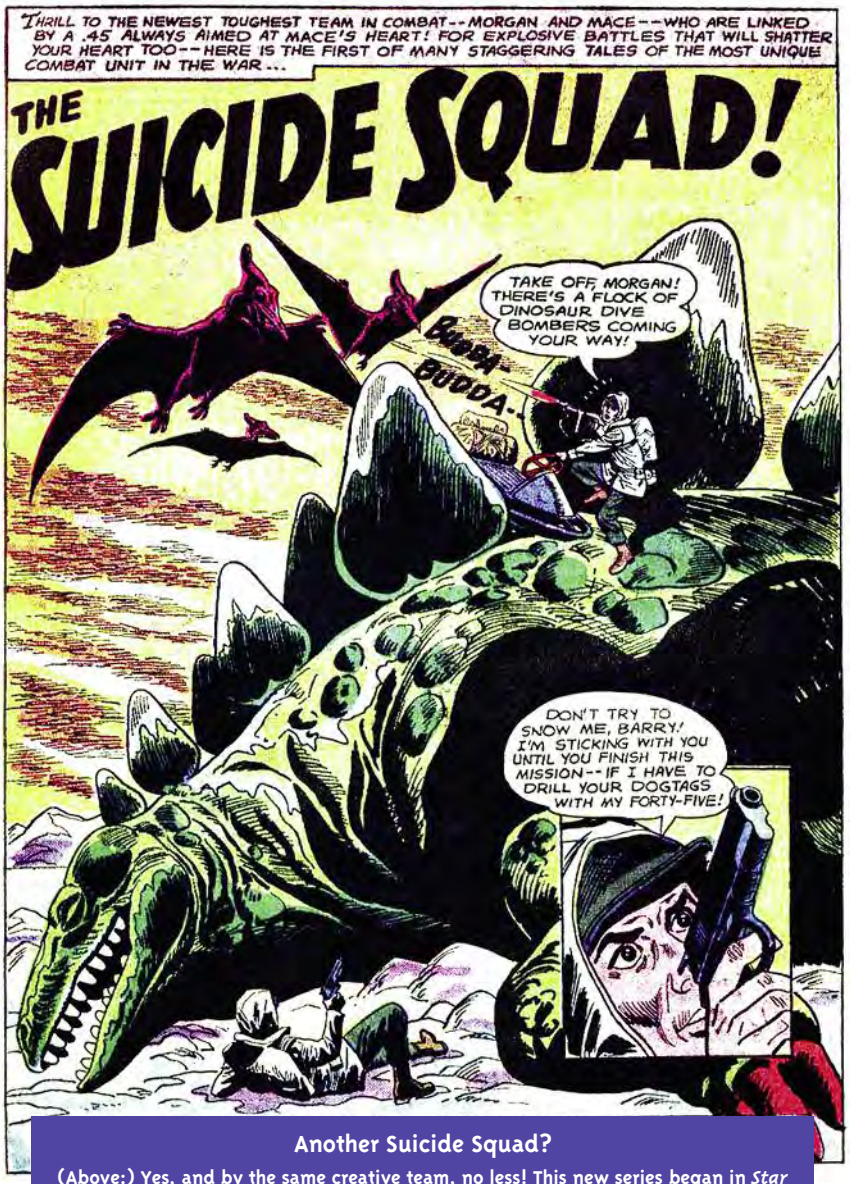
Bill Cox loved DC's *Suicide Squad*—the Rodney Dangerfield of team comics.

Suicide Squad never got much "respect" because it never sold many copies. Task Force X (the team's official name) lacked the staying power of DC's *Justice League*, *Teen Titans*, *Challengers of the Unknown*, or *The Doom Patrol*. "The Suicide Squad" first appeared in *The Brave and the Bold* #25 (Aug. 1959), courtesy of writer/editor Bob Kanigher, with dynamic art by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. Despite starring in six issues of DC's *Brave and Bold* tryout book, the Squad never sold enough to get its own continuing series.

The team consisted of three men—Col. Rick Flag, Dr. Hugh Evans, and Jess Bright—and one woman—Nurse Karin Grace. The four engaged in secret military missions, which usually meant fighting giant monsters! Before accepting each assignment, the members were warned about their slim-to-none chances of surviving the mission, hence their fatalistic nickname. I'm guessing the Squad's government contract provided no retirement benefits. Why waste the ink? But despite the Squad's name, no one in the original book ever actually died. Another classic DC Comics "bait and switch"!

But this nine-year-old didn't care. So what if the heroes had no costumes and survived every

[*Continued on p. 59*]

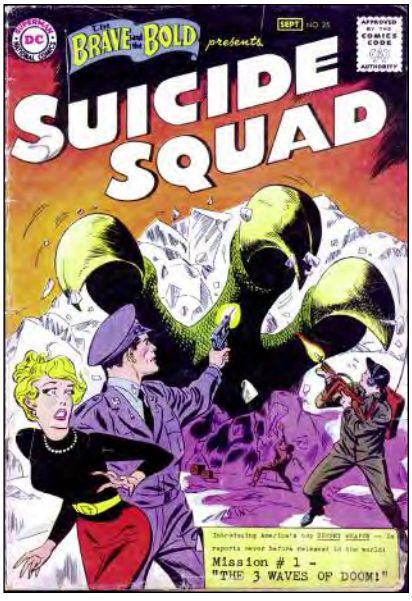


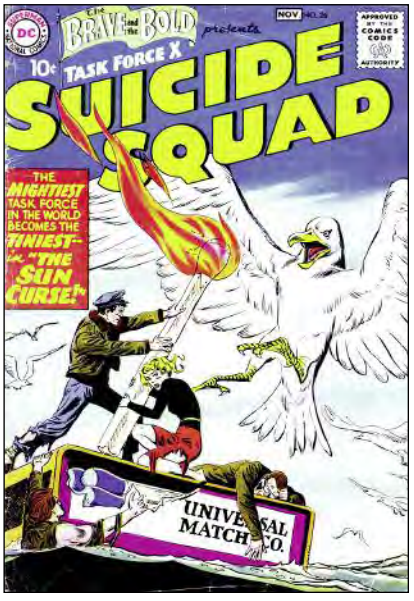
Another Suicide Squad?

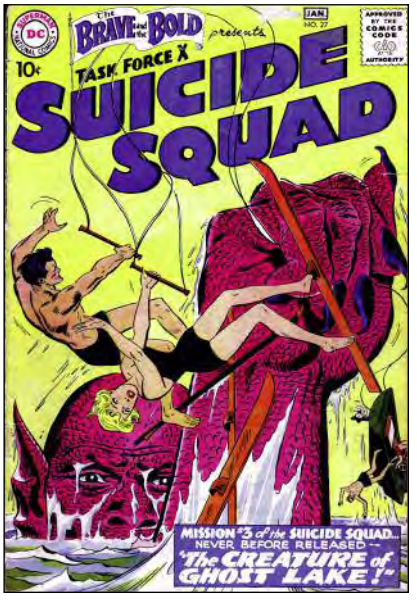
(Above:) Yes, and by the same creative team, no less! This new series began in *Star Spangled War Stories* #116 (Aug. 1964). Different team members, but the same old giant monsters, courtesy of Kanigher, Andru, & Esposito. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

We've Got You Covered!

(On this & facing page:) All six of the original Andru & Esposito *Suicide Squad* covers. Left to right: *The Brave and the Bold* #25 (Aug.-Sept. 1959), #26 (Oct.-Nov. 1959), #27 (Dec.1959-Jan. 1960), #37 (Aug.-Sept. 1961), #38 (Oct.-Nov. 1961) and #39 (Dec. 1961-Jan. 1962). [© 2012 DC Comics.]







The "50 Years Of Comic Book Fandom" Panel

(Comic-Con International 2011: San Diego)

Introduction

We are proud to present a transcript of this panel, which occurred on July 23rd, 2011, earlier on the same day as the Fandom Reunion Party that we highlighted in A/E #108 & 109 to begin our several-issue coverage of the "50th Anniversary of Fandom" events at Comic-Con last year. (This is installment #5, if you're keeping track.)

Panel moderator Mark Evanier welcomed the convention's Guests of Honor: Jean Bails, Roy Thomas, Maggie Thompson, Richard Kyle, Dick Lupoff, Pat Lupoff, and myself. This is Part One of Two. It was transcribed by Brian K. Morris, and has been edited slightly for length, and because some parts of the proceedings were indistinct on the tape. These are often covered by ellipses.

—Bill Schelly.

MARK EVANIER: *I'll begin by praising the audience turnout here. You people have class and taste for coming to this panel.* [audience laughter and applause] *You're not like those people waiting in line in Hall H to find out what's on ABC next week.* [laughter] *It's frightening that we have a panel called "50 Years of Comic Fandom." It's frightening comic fandom has that much history. It's frightening that comic fandom, which I always interpreted to be done by teenagers in their basements, is done by people with gray hair or no hair or by people who've enjoyed it so long.*

Let me introduce the dais to you. These people made a vital contribution, and we'll go through what those are. This is Miss Maggie Thompson, ladies and gentleman. [applause] *This is Dick and Pat Lupoff.* [applause] *Mr. Richard Kyle.* [applause] *Bill Schelly.* [applause] *Roy Thomas.* [applause] *And Jean Bails.* [applause] *Before I ask questions, I would like to introduce you to one of the people who's responsible for this convention, a gentleman in charge of all the printed publications.... This is Mr. Gary Sassaman.* [applause, as Sassaman steps up to an adjacent podium]

GARY SASSAMAN: Thank you, Mark. Comic-Con is incredibly proud and pleased to be able to gather these founders of comics fandom to celebrate this anniversary. Over the years, we've picked out epochs of some of our many special guests. A few people that have kind of slipped away from us. I don't think the Lupoffs have been with us for many, many years, so we want to rectify the fact that we've never given them an Inkpot Award. And so, for achievements in fandom services, I'd like to present the Inkpot to Dick and Pat Lupoff. [*audience gives a standing ovation*]

Yeah, they've been remodeled over the last few years. [**NOTE:** *Gary S. is referring to the design of the award statuette.* —**Bill.**] One other person I'd like to acknowledge today is a very important part of putting this whole thing together this year, and also a man who literally wrote the book about comics fandom and Golden Age comics fandom, Mr. Bill Schelly. [*audience rises and gives another standing ovation*]

BILL SCHELLY: Thank you.

EVANIER: [referring to the audience] *And because you people were smart enough to show up here, we have an Inkpot for every one of you!* [audience laughs] *You guys, think about the budget. You know, the Inkpot Awards were started out almost as a joke, and it became a very important part of this convention.*

I want to tell a real fast story here, because, to me, if I had but one incident to [mention from] the entirety of these conventions that tells what comics fandom was about, it was this. A few years—I don't know, this had been ten, fifteen years ago—I was talking on the phone with Dave Siegel, who is sitting out there [in the audience] now. And ... we were talking about comic book artists who had disappeared and had never been to a convention, had never been honored, and didn't know they had any fans. One of us mentioned Fred Guardineer. A lot of people in this

Splash Panel

On the dais (left to right): Mark Evanier (moderator), Maggie Thompson, Pat Lupoff, Dick Lupoff, Richard Kyle, Bill Schelly, and Roy Thomas. Not seen at right: Jean Bails. Photo by Aaron Caplan.

NOTE: *This is the fifth installment of our extended, multi-issue coverage of the "50th Anniversary of Comics Fandom" events at Comic-Con International 2011 (San Diego).*

It's An Honor

(Above:) The Inkpot is Comic-Con International's official award. In recent years, it was re-designed; this is how it looks now. (Gary Sassaman designed the badge seen on the preceeding page.)

room know who Fred Guardineer is. If you don't, he did "Zatara the Magician." This is a guy who had work in Action Comics *#1. It doesn't get any more Golden Age than that. Dave is brilliant at tracking people down. He's a finder of lost artists and found Fred, who was in a nursing home in northern California?*

DAVE SIEGEL: [*from audience*] Well, actually not a nursing home. I found him at home. [*At this point, David made a few brief comments about finding Fred Guardineer. Unfortunately, David wasn't near a microphone, so it's not possible to transcribe his exact words. He said he had first brought Guardineer together with colleagues from the Golden Age on May 19th, 1992.* **—Bill.**]

EVANIER: *I'm going to tell the Fred Guardineer part of the story. Fred was in a wheelchair, and he was on the Golden Age panel [at Comic-Con], and I think we had Joe Simon on the panel and we had... Shelly Moldoff, I think, was on it that year. Anyway, an Inkpot was handed to me to present, so I presented the Inkpot Award in a room about this size, I would guess, to Fred Guardineer. Now Fred was in a wheelchair to my right, and there's a podium to either side of me. People were applauding and Fred starts to get up. I said, "You don't have to stand up for this," and he said, "Yes, I do. This is the first award I ever got in my life." And he stood up—Dave can attest to this—I'm holding the back of his pants. He made the most touching speech. I looked out at his family—his kids and his grandkids were in the audience—and they were crying. It was the first time, maybe the only time, that Fred Guardineer ever got any real recognition for what he had done.*

And that, to me, has been probably the essence of comic fandom, that intersection of the people who made the comics and people who loved the comics. And you know a lot of these guys didn't get paid very well. In a lot of cases, we were their pension. They [fans] were coming up at the conventions and buying their art prints or buying commissions or original art. We financed the retirements of a lot of these people. There are comic book artists whose work we loved who would not have been able to afford their health care in their later senior years if not for comic book fandom. Or who would have thought their work was disposable. And we—us in this room, those of us who had come up with fandom—obviously, we've all done a lot of the things for our own pleasure and ambition and the fun of putting out fanzines and the fun of researching this stuff and writing articles. But that [story about] Fred Guardineer—it's not the only one. If you came the year we had John Broome here, same type of thing, almost the exact, same type story. [It was] the only time he ever in his life realized how much his work impacted people.

A Fandom Volunteer

Rick Norwood of Manuscript Press (publisher of *Comics Revue*) arrived early for the "50 Years of Comic Fandom" panel. After all, he had traveled all the way from Tennessee to attend the West Coast event, and wanted a good seat close to the action! Photo by Aaron Caplan.

Now I would like to ask each person on the dais to tell us briefly where they were in their lives when the event occurred which you feel was your entré to comic book fandom. What were you doing for a living? What did you want to do for a living? Where were you living? If you want to talk about how old you were, that's not mandatory. And then, when you started getting involved in it, what was the event when you went, "Okay, now I'm part of this little, strange group here of strangers all over the country." Maggie?

The Way They Were

The late artist Fred Guardineer was in attendance at the 1998 San Diego Comic-Con—and at the banquet of the American Association of Comic Collectors held in conjunction with it. Above is a detail from a posed photo of sixteen Golden and Silver Age professionals. Standing, left to right, are: Joe Simon of Simon & Kirby ("Captain America," "Boy Commandos"), Shelly Moldoff ("Hawkman," "Batman"), and Murphy Anderson (*Buck Rogers,* "Hawkman"). Seated, l. to r., are Vin Sullivan (who as DC's editor had a hand in launching both "Superman" and "Batman" in the late 1930s) and Fred Guardineer, artist/creator of "Zatara the Master Magician" in *Action Comics* #1. Guardineer later drew "The Durango Kid" for Sullivan's company Magazine Enterprises. For the entire panoramic pic, see *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3, #10. [Photo © 2012 Bruce Edwards; from the website of the American Association of Comic Collectors.]

MAGGIE THOMPSON: It started when I was 4½ years old and I had a dime. I went up to the newsstand on the corner and I bought a comic book. My mom... read to me from that comic book for the next week 'til I had another dime and bought another comic book. On the seventh night, she found that she liked the story and the writing, so... my mom wrote a fan letter to the editorial offices at Dell. It was a fan letter to Walt Kelly. And he responded, and there began a collection, because it was the Kelly Collection, and she put little notes in the front of it. They had to be kept separate from the other comic books. So at 4½, that was the start.

EVANIER: *Maggie, tell us about the first moment you started corresponding with and intersecting with people, with strangers, who were interested in comics.*

THOMPSON: Well, my mother was a science-fiction writer you've never heard of. Her name was Betsy Curtis. We went to science-fiction conventions when we could. Dad was a college professor, so he didn't have any money. But the concept of mimeographing a publication for your friends began with her. I put the front page of the first issue of [her fanzine] on my website **maggiethompson.com.** She was discussing what I was reading in comic books at that age. My first convention with a comic book connection was Worldcon in 1955 in Cleveland. There was a dealer there named Howard DeVore, and he had an *Animal Comics* I didn't have. I went up to him

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S
FCA
Fawcett Collectors of America

No. 171 August 2012

Special Swayze Section

This month, we're devoting *FCA*'s full eight pages to the work of Marc Swayze, who for more than a decade and a half has written his "We Didn't Know… It Was the Golden Age!" column for these pages. Our cover illo is a Swayze sketch of Mary Marvel, a super-heroine he visually created for Fawcett Publications in 1941-42; it was drawn in 2006 for Belgian fan/collector Dominique Leonard. Thanks to Dominique for sharing it with us—and to Randy Sargent for coloring it especially for this issue. [Shazam girl TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

The remainder of this edition of *FCA* is devoted to a 7-page story Marc illustrated in 1955 for Charlton Comics—but for a comic book title which had originated at Fawcett—about which we'll tell you more as we move along, page by page….

—P.C. Hamerlinck, *FCA* Editor.

[Art by Marc Swayze. Shazam heroine TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

Though it's unsigned, Marc Swayze has identified this story from Charlton's *This Is Suspense* #26 (August 1955) as being his art; its scripter is, alas, unknown. In fact, at present, the online Grand Comics Database doesn't identify Marc's role in things, either… but that'll probably change, now that we've "outed" him.