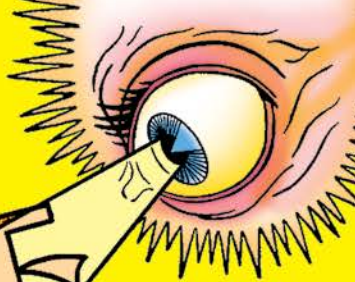


Roy Thomas' Wise Old
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

THE THEY SEES



The OWL

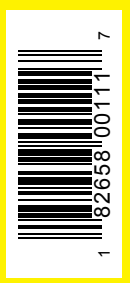


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March
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& GOLDEN AGE GREAT FRANK THOMAS

by Michael T. Gilbert

PLUS: The Golden & Silver Age
Super-Heroes of DELL & GOLD KEY
by Stuart Fischer



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P.C. Hamerlinck presents Mike Tiefenbacher on the Captain Marvel ©copyright ©Orisis.

On Our Cover: “The Eye Sees” and “The Owl” were the two major comicbook accomplishments of Golden Age artist (and writer) **Frank Thomas**—the first for the nearly forgotten Centaur group, the other for Dell/Western in its near-infancy... so we combined the artist and his two major four-color brainchildren (plus Billy & Bonny Bee) on our calamitous cover. See the story of the cover's evolution on p. 83. [Art © the respective copyright holders; photo © 2018 Nancy Bardeen.]

Above: Never heard of “Phantasma, Master of the World”? Never saw a comicbook Captain Midnight in brown aviator gear before? Then you haven't seen the early-1940s issues of Dell/Western's *The Funnies*, which for a time featured both those heroes. Learn all about them in Stuart Fischer's article on Dell, Gold Key—and then Dell again! Cover of *The Funnies* #57 (July 1941)—depicted by a woefully forgotten artist. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
**Len Wein, Rich Buckler,
John Calnan, & Doug Fratz**



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FRANK THOMAS WORKED PRIMARILY FOR CENTAUR AND DELL AT THE DAWN OF THE GOLDEN AGE. THOMAS, BEST KNOWN FOR DRAWING *THE EYE* AND *THE OWL*, WAS ONE OF COMICS' EARLY PIONEERS. BUT UNTIL NOW, LITTLE WAS KNOWN ABOUT HIS PERSONAL LIFE. THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE, THANKS TO HIS DAUGHTER NANCY BARDEEN AND HER . . .

FRANK THOMAS CARTOON SCRAPBOOK!



(Left:) Frank Thomas in the 1930s. (Above:) An eerie Thomas Eye cover for Centaur's *Keen Detective Funnies* #20 (May 1940). [Photo © 2018 Nancy Bardeen; art © the respective copyright holders.]

Frank Thomas: The Early Years

by Michael T. Gilbert

Introduction #1

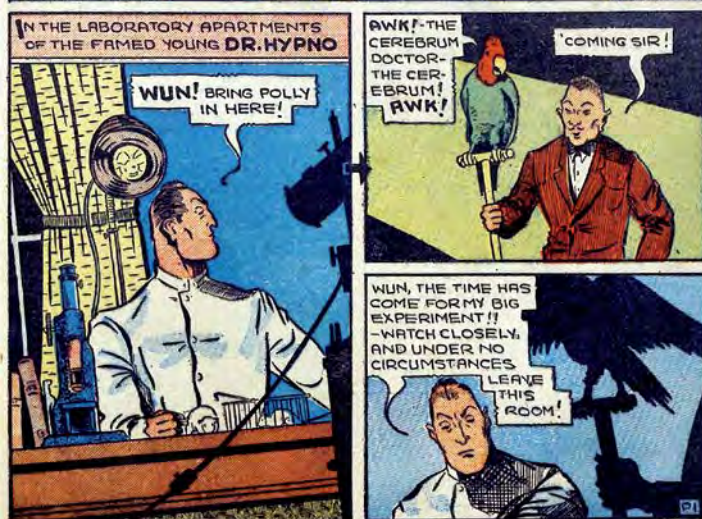
In the nearly twenty years I've produced *Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt*, I'm particularly proud of having spotlighted some terrific, sadly neglected cartoonists. Fred Kelly, Abe Kanegson, Bob Powell, Pete Morisi, and Al Walker are a few of those whose personal lives were shared in these pages. These cartoonists are long gone, but their friends, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters provided rare insights, art, and photos.

Today we continue that tradition with a delightful, personal scrapbook celebrating the life and career of Frank Thomas, courtesy of Frank's daughter, Nancy Bardeen. Our thanks to the great detective work of Chris Beneke, Rod Beck, and Yocitrus for bringing Nancy to our attention.

For the uninitiated, Mr. Thomas was one of comics' earliest pioneers, having begun his comicbook career in 1939 for the Centaur Comics group. Thomas had a delightfully understated cartoony style that was quite engaging. He was also a solid writer, with a clever sense of humor.

One of his most famous creations (and certainly his most bizarre!) was "The Eye." The Eye was literally a floating eyeball that wreaked swift vengeance on various evildoers. Thomas also drew "Solarman," "Dr. Hypno," and "Chuck Hardy" for Centaur.

Undoubtedly, the most famous of Thomas' signature features was "The Owl," drawn for Dell's comicbook line back in the very early 1940s. According to author/historian Ron Goulart, cartoonist Bill Baltz first drew the avian hero, who debuted in Dell's



Paging Dr. Hypno!

(Above:) Another bizarre Frank Thomas hero—this one from Centaur/Comic Corporation of America's *Amazing-Man Comics* #14 (July 1940). It's quite likely that Thomas wrote all (or nearly all) of the super-hero work that he illustrated during the Golden Age, though that fact is not ultimately provable. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Crackajack Funnies #25 (July 1940), before moving to the company's *Popular Comics*. Frank Thomas took over the strip with the second episode in *Crackajack* #26, drawing and (presumably) writing every subsequent Golden Age story.

At Dell, Thomas also drew "Billy and Bonny Bee," beginning with a Sept. 1942 issue, as well as the "Buddies" and "Don Bugaboo" series and a single story featuring "The Beetle in the Battle of the Bug Battalion." He also provided scripts and layouts for such popular features as "Little Lulu," "Andy Panda," and "Woody Woodpecker."

Thomas left comicbooks in the early '50s, feeling increasingly uncomfortable with the unsavory reputation with which the industry was becoming saddled.

He subsequently made a career in commercial art, editorial cartooning, and syndicated strips. His newspaper strips included *Going West* (later renamed *Hossface Hank*) and *Francis the Talking Mule* (which he didn't create). Earlier strips included his unsold *Dinky*. In the '50s Thomas began ghosting the popular *Ferdinand* and *There Oughta Be a Law* series.



Frank Thomas

at his drawing board! [Photo © 2018 Nancy Bardeen.]

Frank Thomas passed away in 1968 at age 54, a victim of esophageal cancer.

That's enough preamble. Now let's see what Frank's daughter has to say about her dad. We begin with an e-mail from Nancy, sent to me shortly after I contacted her, asking about her father.

Nancy Bardeen Remembers

Dear Michael,

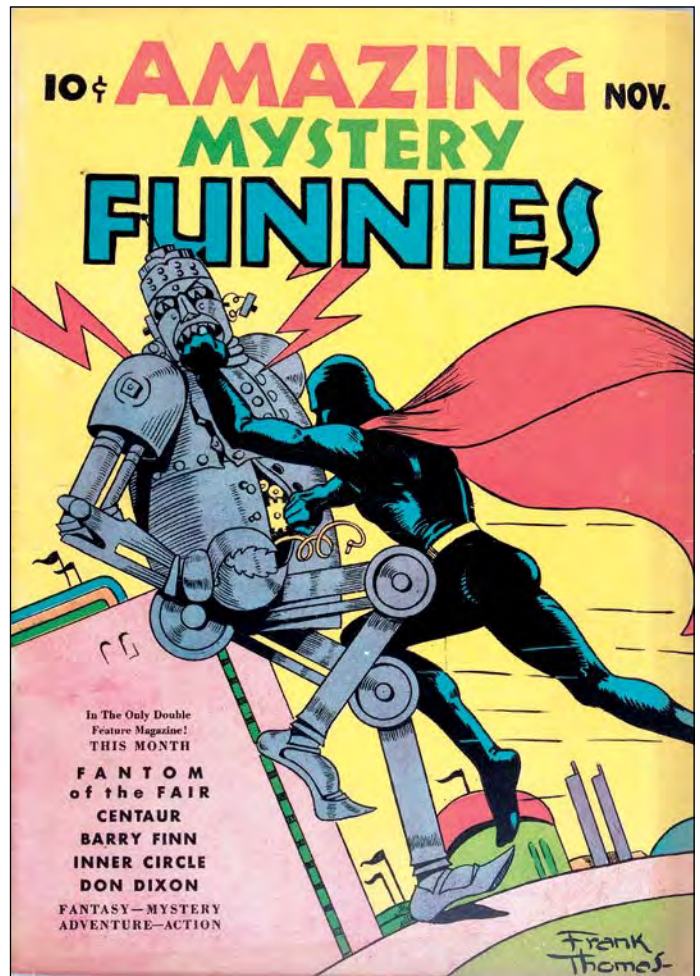
I remember my father very well. I was born a month after Pearl Harbor, and have only a couple of memories of the war. My father's Golden Age Comics period was over with the war. He commuted to the city from our rented house a block and a half from the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn. He had Top Secret clearance and worked as a draftsman, drawing planes for (I think) the Air Force.

He was a wonderful father. Every payday he stopped by a Woolworth's and bought some little piece of furniture for my shoebox doll house. I'd be jumping up and down, of course, as soon as he came through the front door, and he'd start searching through all his pockets for what he'd bought for me. Couldn't find it. Oh NO! He'd LOST IT! I was going crazy. One pocket after another. (He wore suits and vests and a hat those days—lots of pockets.) FINALLY, he'd produce the item. Whew!



Oh My! The Eye!

How many teenage boys dreamed of peeking into a sexy lady's boudoir as *The Eye* does here? From *Keen Detective Funnies* #18 (March 1940); the official name of the Frank Thomas-created feature was always "The Eye Sees." The Grand Comics Database attributes the script as well as art to Thomas, though the former part of the equation must be mostly an educated guess. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em Robots!

(Above:) Frank illustrated this striking cover featuring Centaur's Phantom of the Fair—his only work on the character—for Centaur Publications' *Amazing Mystery Funnies*, Vol. 2, #11 (Nov. 1939). The masked hero (whose other identity was never revealed) lived beneath the 1939-40 New York World's Fair grounds. After the end of 1940, Centaur continued business as the Comic Corporation of America—but for convenience's sake, we'll mostly refer to the company as "Centaur." [© the respective copyright holders.]

After he hung up the hat, etc., he settled down in his chair to read the *Telegram* newspaper, with me in his lap to keep me out of my mother's hair while she cooked dinner. That is how I learned to read before I went to school. (Good thing—the schools were very bad in that neighborhood at that time.) I distinctly remember the eureka moment I had when I got the idea that the "a" on the page was when you said the "a" in "a table." He'd point to words suitable for sounding out, and so I learned to read from the *World-Telegram*. On bad schools...

When I started first grade there, I was getting picked on, big-time, so he tried to teach me to box. How you tuck your thumb inside your fist so it doesn't get injured when you jab, how to hold your arms, look for an opening.... I can still hear my mother's reproachful voice from the kitchen doorway, "Frank, she's a GIRL!"

Dad had graduated from a very tough high school in Erie, PA. He wasn't the place's standard issue of big and tough, and he had an artist's hands, and worst of all he liked to draw.

Digression: Dell Comics

by Michael T. Gilbert

Before we return to Nancy's narrative, I'd like to say a few words about Dell's super-hero comics. Dell got into the comicbook biz early on, producing its first comicbook, *The Funnies*, in 1929. By the late '30s the company, in conjunction with Western Publishing, had a line of comics that included *Crackajack Funnies*, *Popular Comics*, *New Funnies*, *Super Comics*, and its *Four-Color* anthology comics, mostly reprinting newspaper comics strips.

In the wake of Superman's incredible popularity in the late '30s, Dell decided to dip their toes into the super-hero waters. Soon second-string heroes like Martan the Marvel Man, The Owl, Owl Girl, Captain Midnight, The Voice, Professor Supermind and Son, and Phantasma began to dot Dell's four-color landscape. These features were added to the reprint mix.

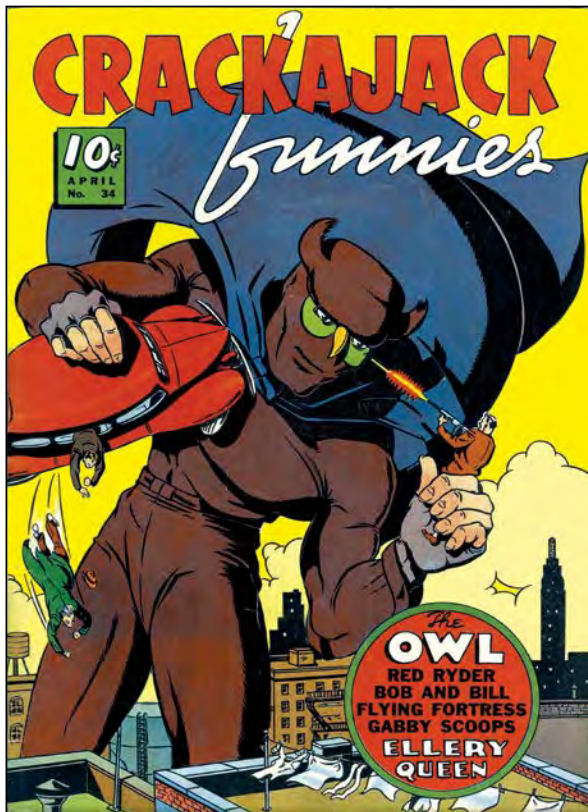


Not Bad!

Frank did the self-portrait at right as a gift to his wife, "Jerry" (aka Gerry). Michael T. added the word balloon and depicted him admiring his cover to *Crackajack Funnies* #33 (March 1941), seen above, which features Owl Girl and one version of their Owlplane. [Caricature © Nancy Bardeen; cover © the respective copyright holders.]

Before long, though, its super-heroes fell out of favor and Dell concentrated on other genres. They were particularly successful with *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories*, *Mickey Mouse*,

Pogo, *Bugs Bunny*, and similar funny-animal comics.



Birds Of A Feather

Two terrific Frank Thomas Owl covers. (Left to right:) *Crackajack Funnies* #34 (April 1941) and #36 (June 1941). [© the respective copyright holders.]

Crackajack ended with issue #43 (Jan. 1942), after which *The Owl* moved to Dell's *Popular Comics*, starting with issue #72 (Feb. 1942). Frank Thomas continued to draw "The Owl" until *Popular Comics* #85 (March 1943), when he traded heroes for humor. He replaced his "Owl" stories with "Buddies," beginning in *Popular* #87, followed by the funny-animal strips "Don Bugaboo" and "Fatcho," plus "The Beetle Battle" in the same title. He also drew the long-running "Billy and Bonny Bee" for Dell's *New Funnies*.

[Continued on. p. 18]

[Continued from p. 15]

Additionally, Thomas provided scripts for "Howdy Doody," "Andy Panda," "Little Lulu," "Oswald the Rabbit," and "Woody Woodpecker" in the '40s and '50s. Ron Goulart discussed the Dell titles in his *Great History of Comic Books*:

"Andy Panda, a product of the Walter Lantz animation studios, showed up in #61 (October 1941) of *The Funnies* while the magazine was still playing it straight, and his co-workers were Captain Midnight, Phantasma, and Philo Vance. With the 65th issue (July 1942) the title became *New Funnies*, mixing Lantz characters with comedy and fantasy characters from other sources. Lantz was represented by Andy, Oswald the Rabbit, Woody Woodpecker, and Li'l Eightball. From the estate of Johnny Gruelle came both Raggedy Ann and Mr. Twee Deedle. For good measure there were reprints of *Felix the Cat* and the *Peter Rabbit* Sunday page, plus 'Billy and Bonny Bee' by Frank Thomas and an updated version of the venerable Brownies." [Book excerpt ©1986 Ron Goulart; used by permission.]

"Billy and Bonny Bee" ran from Dell's *New Funnies* #80 (Oct. 1943) until issue #100 (June 1945), when the comics page count dropped. Nancy notes: "Dad was very interested in the Natural World. And an avid fresh water fisherman and bird watcher. Also, insects and their designs and functions fascinated him. He was not a formally religious person but saw the face of God in the beauty and function of the Natural World."



Hey! Why Does This Cover Look So Familiar?
 (Above:) Frank's Owl cover for *Crackajack Funnies* #40 (Oct. 1941). [© the respective copyright holders.]



Keep On Truckin'!
 (Left:) Panels from Thomas' first "Owl" yarn, in *Crackajack Funnies* #26. Note the "Clinton Co." sign, a tip of the hat to Frank's brother Clinton, one of the artist's biggest fans. Frank's daughter notes: "When Dad was doing characters that needed a name, he used the names of real people we knew. People got a kick out of that, and it also proved he'd done the work even when his name wasn't on it." [© the respective copyright holders.]

Dell Comics & Gold Key Comics

Answering An Incessantly Asked Question About Their Relationship

by Mark Evanier



Mark Evanier

Photo used on his always informative website www.newsfromme.com. Mark has been a TV and comics writer for several decades.

What was the relationship between Dell Comics and Gold Key Comics?

In order to understand all this, you have to accept a slightly different concept of a publisher's function than the norm. Ordinarily, there are three aspects to what a comicbook publisher must deal with:

1. **FINANCE:** The decision of what to publish and the financial arrangements and investments to do so.
2. **EDITORIAL:** The creation and/or purchase of the material to be printed in those comics. This often involves buying the rights to characters owned by others.
3. **PRINTING:** The physical mass-reproduction of the comicbook.

(There's actually another step—**DISTRIBUTION**—but it can only confuse that explanation to drag that into it.)

An outfit like DC, Marvel, or Dark Horse does #1 and #2; then they hire some outside company to do #3. In the case of Dell Comics from 1938 through 1962, it was different: The Dell company did #1 and a firm called Western Printing and Lithography did #2 and #3.

All of the writers who did those comics worked for Western, not for Dell. A lot of folks see Carl Barks' work appearing all those years in comics that say "Dell" in the upper left-hand corner and they think, "Oh, Barks worked for Dell." He did not, ever. He worked for Western, a completely separate company.

And a lot of people see that all those Disney comics were printed with "Dell" in the upper left and they think, "Dell had the comicbook rights to the Disney characters." Again, not so. Western had those rights... and the rights to the Warner Bros. characters (Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck) and the Walter Lantz characters and so many others.

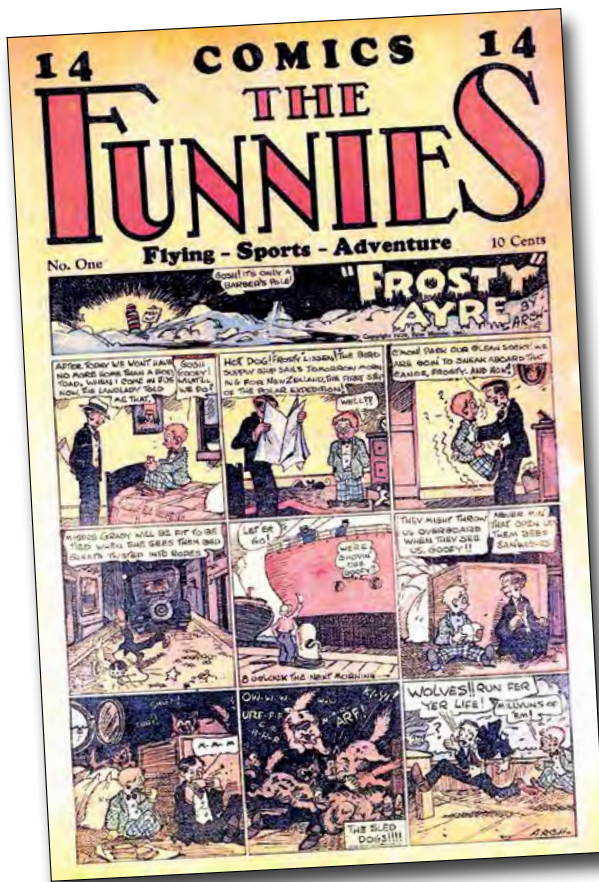
Western was a printing company with the editorial capacity to create the content of the comicbooks. Dell was a publishing company that did many kinds of magazines and books. They bought their comicbook line from Western.

Once or twice a year, Western's reps would go to the Dell people will mock-ups and samples for new, proposed comics. Someone at Dell—usually their president, Helen Meyer—would "order" more comics from Western. She might say, "Okay, let's go another twelve issues of *Looney Tunes* next year, six of *Andy Panda*... let's try two issues of that new *Rocky and His Friends* thing you brought in...." And so on.

Western's folks would scurry back to their offices (in New York and Los Angeles) and get writers and artists busy on creating the insides of those books. Later, they would print them. Dell would pay all the costs, including printing and profit for Western, and handle distribution and financing of the books. In the meantime, other divisions of Western would be using the same licenses to do projects in which Dell had no involvement—coloring books of Donald Duck, Little Golden Books of Woody Woodpecker, jigsaw puzzles of Huckleberry Hound, and so on. Comics were just a small part of what Western did.

Funnies Stuff

The cover of *The Funnies* #1 (Jan. 16, 1929), by Joe Archibald. This can be considered the very first comicbook, put out by Dell Publishing nearly a decade before it hooked up with Western Publishing. It consisted of all-new, all-original material in tabloid form; it resembled a 16-page, 10.5" x 15.5" color Sunday newspaper comics section more than a modern comicbook, though it was sold on newsstands for 36 weekly issues, till Oct. 16, 1930. With #3 the cover price rose from 10¢ to 30¢—and dropped to 5¢ from #22 to the end. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Those Unforgettable Super-Heroes Of DELL & GOLD KEY

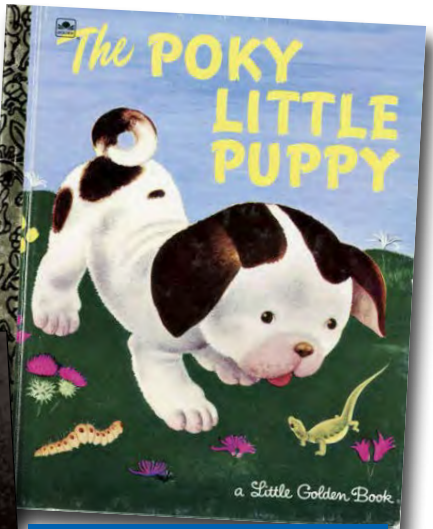
An Overview

by Stuart Fischer

Dell Comics and Gold Key's parent corporation, Western Publishing and Lithographing Company, were partners, at least until they made the decision in 1962 to go their separate ways. It was a collaboration between two very successful companies that had begun in 1938. Let's take a look at both companies, and at who and what they were before their collaboration began.

Western Publishing and Lithographing Company was founded in 1907. One thing that helped make Western successful was its Little Golden Books series, which featured illustrated simple stories for children. In the 1930s, Western decided to get into the comicbook business and did so by striking up a partnership with Dell Comics, a unit of Dell Publishing Company.

Dell Publishing was launched in 1921 by George T. Delacorte, Jr., to publish pulp magazines, paperback books, even hardcover books. Dell became enthusiastic about the new medium of comicbooks and was involved with them from 1929 to 1974. Dell enjoyed its greatest success in the comicbook business while teamed with Western Publishing from 1938 to 1962. Western produced



The Puppy & The Publisher

(Above:) One of the most famous of Western Publishing's Little Golden Books for children is *The Poky Little Puppy*, first issued in 1942 and virtually never out of print since.

[TM & © Western Publishing or successors in interest.]

(Left:) George T. Delacorte, Jr., founder (and quasi-namesake) of Dell Publishing.

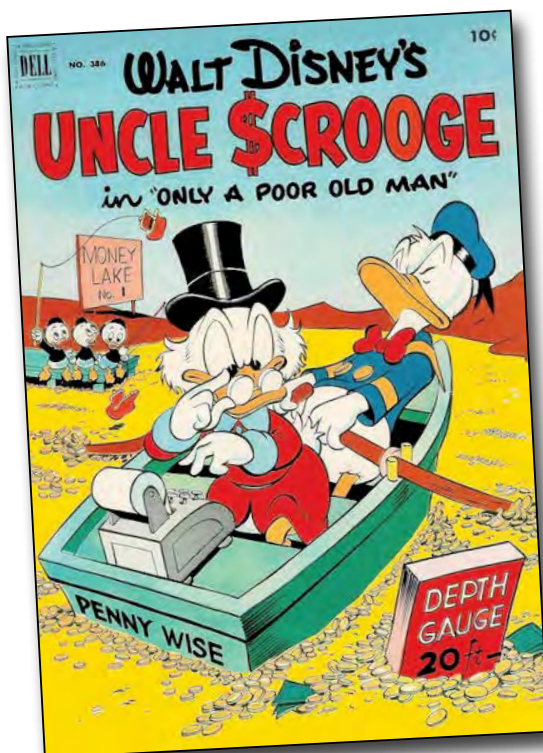
the comics that Dell would finance and distribute. It was a beautiful and innovative collaboration, because both companies were very good at what they did, and the teaming lasted a quarter of a century.

Western was heavily into licensed product. It forged important and lasting relationships with many of the Hollywood studios, ranging from Walt Disney to Universal to Hanna-Barbera, producing comicbooks based on the studios' television series and motion pictures. That company also had close relationships with newspaper comic strip syndicates such as King Features, United Features, and the Tribune Company, and reprinted in comicbook form such strips as *Dick Tracy* and *Tarzan*, among numerous others.

Dell and Western really were the eyes of America; they knew what America was seeing at the movies and on television and in newspapers. Any TV series or film that they believed could be profitably adapted into comicbooks, they would arrange with the rights-owner for them to translate into the comics magazines they published. The Dell/Western comics, and later those from Gold Key, were extremely faithful to the original incarnations upon which they were based.

After the Dell/Western Publishing relationship ended in 1962, both companies remained in the comicbook business, only as separate entities.

Dell continued to produce comics on its own until the early 1970s but did not fare as well as they had hoped and eventually opted to get out of the business. The company was still very prosperous with its book



Say Uncle!

Probably the most famous hero created specifically for Dell/Western is Uncle Scrooge McDuck, who was originally developed as a supporting character for "Donald Duck" stories by writer/artist (and ex-Disney animator) Carl Barks. Scrooge made the jump to his own series with *Four Color* #386 (March 1952), aka *Uncle Scrooge in Only a Poor Old Man*, and only began to appear in animated Disney shorts some decades later. All of the Barks *Scrooge* material, and a considerable amount by Barks' successors, has been reprinted over the past few decades. [TM & © Disney.]

Doctor Solar, Man Of The Atom

Gold Key Comics - #1-27 (Oct. 1962-April 1969); Whitman - #28-31 (April 1981-March 1982)

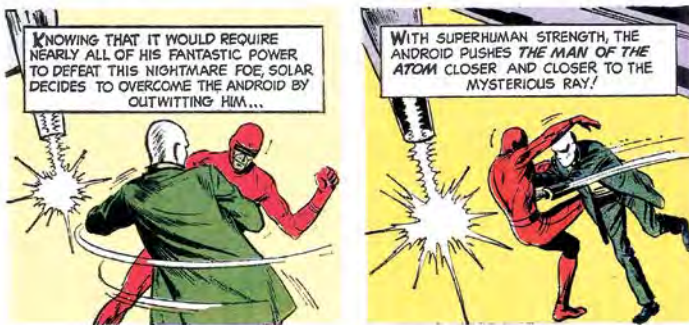
Doctor Solar, Man of The Atom, was one of Gold Key's most beloved action heroes. The subject matter of the comicbook actually was a little more complex than one might expect. How Dr. Phillip Solar came to be The Man of The Atom is both a story and a lesson in science.

While working on an experiment, Dr. Solar became exposed to radiation when he tried to save his associate, Dr. Bentley. The latter was trying to stop an imminent meltdown of a plant that had been sabotaged by Dr. Rasp, an agent of an evil organization. Though Bentley tried to undo the damage done to this nuclear plant, he died in the process.

Solar, however, survived, and soon discovered he'd gained the ability to convert his human form into energy; he was also able to fly and fire bolts of energy. Realizing he'd become a human powerhouse, he decided to hunt down the man or men behind the death of Dr. Bentley and the attack on the nuclear laboratory that killed him.

The villain in the piece was one Nuro, who would become Dr. Solar's arch-nemesis. A very clever and determined criminal, Nuro once devised a robot double of himself, called Orun; later, he even transferred his own mind into the robot, which he then christened "King Cybernoid."

Dr. Solar did not receive his costume until a few issues after the series began; but when he did, he looked radiant, pardon the pun. In this gear, his alter ego was "The Man of the Atom." His garb was designed to shield others from the radiation that made Dr. Solar such a powerful being. When he became The Man of the Atom, Solar's skin turned green, further separating the man from the super-hero; no one would ever suspect that Dr. Solar, genius scientist, was The Man of the Atom.



This Is The Android You Want!
Doc battles a murderous android in issue, #6 (Nov. 1963), with new artist Frank Bolle. [TM & © Random House, Inc.]



Solar Power
Dr. Solar in his snappy new mask and costume, all decked out for the second story in *Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom* #5 (Sept. 1963)—courtesy of writer Paul S. Newman and artist Bob Fujitani. Reprod'd from the first volume of Dark Horse Comics' hardcover reprinting. [TM & © Random House, Inc.]



Bob Fujitani

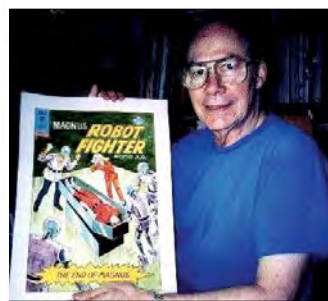
This Gold Key series ran for 27 issues (1962-1969). In the early 1980s, Western Publishing revived *Dr. Solar* with issue #28; it ran for a few issues before fading once again.

Since the early 1990s, *Dr. Solar* (sometime without the *Dr.* part of the title) has been revived first by Valiant Comics—then by the video-game manufacturer Acclaim (which renamed Valiant as "Acclaim Comics"). After Acclaim's bankruptcy, *Dr. Solar* and other former Gold Key properties were purchased by Random House, which licensed Dark Horse Comics to reprint the original Gold Key *Doctor Solar* and other Gold Key hero-series in hardcover. There have been other comics licenses since.

Paul S. Newman (1924-1999), the writer/creator of "Dr. Solar," rarely received in-print credit for the work he did, but was active for fifty years as a writer of comicbooks, comic strips, etc. According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, he is the world's most prolific comicbook writer, having written more than 4,100 published stories,

or almost 36,000 pages... huge numbers by any stretch of the imagination, with most of his professional work being for Dell and Gold Key, though he worked for numerous other comicbook publishers as well.

The original artist of the series was **Bob Fujitani**. The later issues were drawn by **Frank Bolle** and **Jose Delbo**. Both were veterans who had begun their careers in the 1940s.



Frank Bolle
Photo from the Comic Art Fans site. Frank didn't just draw *Doctor Solar*, you know!

Dracula

Dell Comics - #1-4, 6-8 (Nov. 1966-March 1967); last 3 reprint #2-4; no #5

Dracula was an attempt by Dell Comics, after its separation from Western, to take advantage of the popularity of the “Dracula” movies produced by Universal Pictures and to turn the lord of vampires into a contemporary super-hero, despite his having been portrayed since his 1897 creation as a merciless villain.

The mid-1960s was a time when super-heroes and monsters had briefly taken over television, both on prime-time and on the kidvid Saturday morning schedules, with everything ranging from *Superman* and *Batman* to *Frankenstein, Jr.* Someone at Dell decided the “legend” of Dracula was flexible enough to be molded into something entirely different and aimed at kids. Dell’s *Dracula* had almost nothing in common with the original character, except for the name.

After an unrelated “issue #1” devoted to re-telling the original Bram Stoker novel, Dell (starting with #2) introduces a brand new character, who has no connection to either book or films. Dell’s *Dracula* actually looks like a kid’s version of “Batman.”

This 20th-century heroic Dracula is a descendant of the original Count. He’s a medical-research expert, who, while working on a scientific experiment in the castle that had belonged to the Dracula family, accidentally gains super-powers that turn him into a bat-like being, with heightened hearing and vision powers. Unlike his ancestor, this Dracula uses his newly acquired powers to fight evil, clad in a purple costume with a bat-shaped gold belt buckle.

He moves to America, takes on a secret identity (“Al U. Card”), and leads a double life just like any worthwhile super-hero. (“Alucard,” which is “Dracula” spelled backward, was first used as a pseudonym by Dracula himself in the 1943 Universal film *Son of Dracula*.)

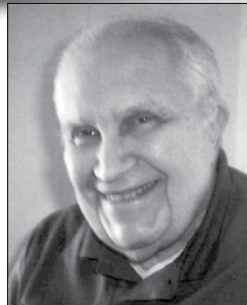
This Dracula actually becomes personable enough to attract the attentions of a young woman to whom he takes a liking; he enlists her aid in his battle to right wrongs done to others, especially those done by his own family.

It was an interesting attempt by Dell to appeal to the 1960s youth market by turning



Drac Is Back!

Cover of Dell’s *Dracula* #2 (Nov. 1966)—and the final panel of issue #4 (March ’67), featuring his new partner Fleeta. Script by D.J. Arneson, pencils by Bill Fracchio, inks by Tony Tallarico. Photos of the writer and the inker can be seen on p. 46. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



Bill Fracchio

well-known monster into a super-hero. Dell did the same thing at the same time with *Frankenstein* and *Werewolf* (see separate entries), but none of the three series met with success. *Frankenstein* was discontinued after #4. A few years later, the three super-hero issues were reprinted, but numbered from #6-#8. There never was a #5.

The series was written by D.J. Arneson (whose connection with it had not been known till recent years), penciled by Bill Fracchio, and inked by Tony Tallarico. The same two artists had been responsible for the mid-’60s Charlton super-hero series *Blue Beetle* and *Son of Vulcan*, and in 1966 for the blockbuster success *The Great Society Comic Book*.

In 2017 the Dell-conceived Dracula, *Frankenstein*, and *Werewolf* were teamed up as “The Weird Warriors” in *The All-New Popular Comics* #1 (July ’17), published by Indellible Comics. (“InDELLible,” get it?)

Dell Is Indellible—And Still Popular!

Steven Butler’s cover for Indellible Comics’ *All New Popular Comics* #1 (2017), produced by A/E benefactor Jim Ludwig and others. The comic features the Dracula/*Frankenstein*/*Werewolf* trio, Phantasma, and other public-domain heroes from the pages of the original Dell comics. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



Magic Morro

Dell Comics – *Super Comics* #21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 38, 56-58 (between Feb. 1940-July 1943); *Little Orphan Annie* (two unnumbered issues in 1941)

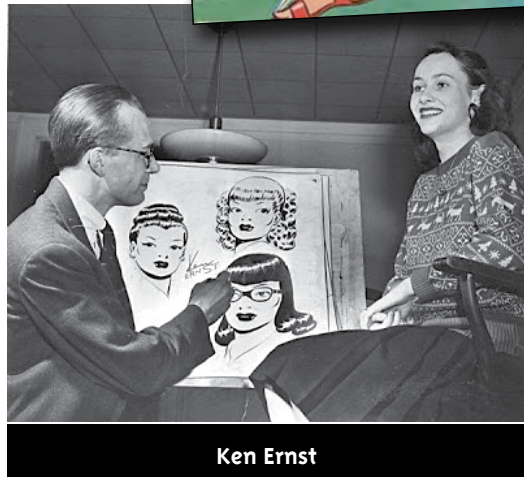
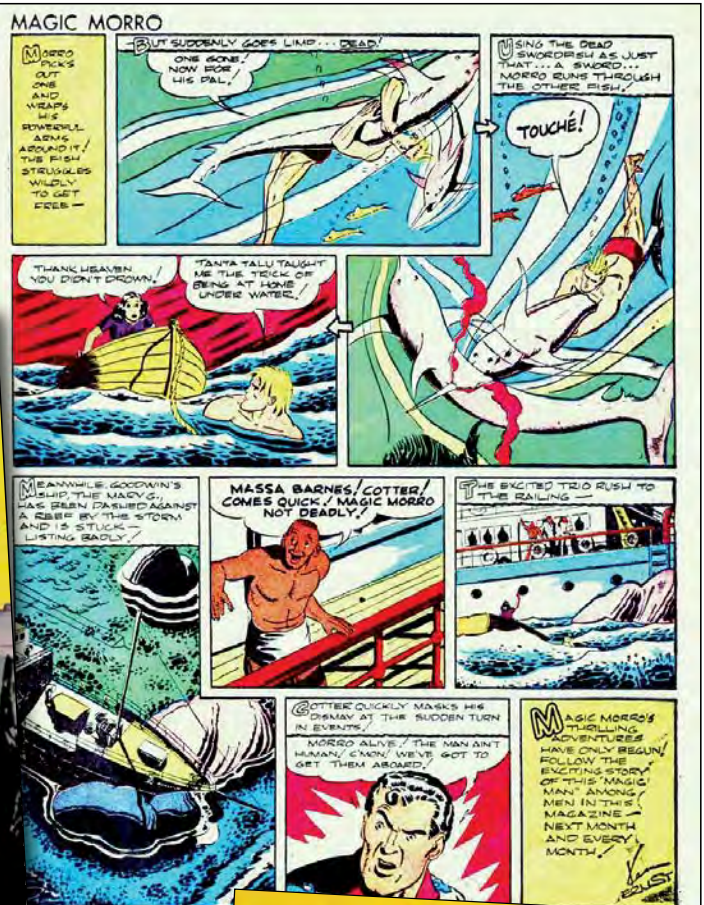
Magic Morro, whose real name was Jack Morrow, was a magician. He had true magic powers and lived a very isolated life, only coming into contact with his fellow man when he rushed to the aid of someone in trouble.

He lived on a secluded jungle island. These jungles, though generally quiet, had their range of problems, from wild animals to tribes that were aggressively territorial—to those men who would come to the island, either on purpose to see what it contained, or by accident because of poor navigation or adverse weather conditions. His principal companions were Oomla, a native of the island, and Hector, a lion.

The feature was drawn by Ken Ernst, who would soon move on to greater heights as the artist of the popular comic strip *Mary Worth*. The scripter is unknown, as is the case with so many Golden Age stories.

"Magic Morro" appeared in nine non-consecutive issues of Dell's popular *Super Comics*, which was a beautiful 64-page comicbook that primarily featured reprints of comic strips such as *Dick Tracy* and others. Even though there are few people who have ever heard of Magic Morro, his first appearance will cost a collector at least \$450. His stories were also included in two unnumbered 1941 issues of Dell's *Little Orphan Annie*.

Magic Morro was basically a combination of Lee Falk's two seminal comic strip creations, *Mandrake the Magician* and *The Phantom*.



Ken Ernst

...Till It Be Morro
 "Magic Morro" began life as a Tarzanic/super-heroic feature, as per the cover and action page from *Super Comics* #25 (June 1940). Later, after he embraced the way of civilization, he wore more clothes, as on the cover of *Super* #34 (March 1941). Art by Ken Ernst; scripter unknown. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



Magnus, Robot Fighter

Gold Key Comics - #1-46 (Feb. 1963-Jan. 1977); also appeared as back-up feature in *Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom* #29-31 (1981-1982)

Magnus is the creation of **Russ Manning**, a popular and respected artist and writer.

The first issue was cover-dated February 1963, and is one of Gold Key's first original super-hero characters. In the year 4000 A.D., Magnus is a valiant human warrior in the usual futuristic setting, whose primary mission is to battle rogue and evil robots. He also encounters hostile pirates and aliens in his battle to protect humanity from its enemies.

The standard plot in "Magnus" stories involved the hero fighting for a world he never made, in an era when the human race depended on robots. Manning's theme was that human beings should not rely on any other living creature or machine but on themselves and their fellow humankind. Robots had been created to be men's servants, but by a quirk of fate had become man's deadliest enemy.

The setting is the radiation-ravaged fictional city of North Am, an urban area roughly the size of the North American continent. The villainous police chief has imposed a totalitarian regime on citizens, enforced by the robots that he and his underlings control.

Magnus was raised by a robot named 1A—whose very name implies he might be the first (or best) robot in a manufactured line. Surprisingly, 1A has emotions and is capable of caring for those outside his own kind. He has taken Magnus under his wing.

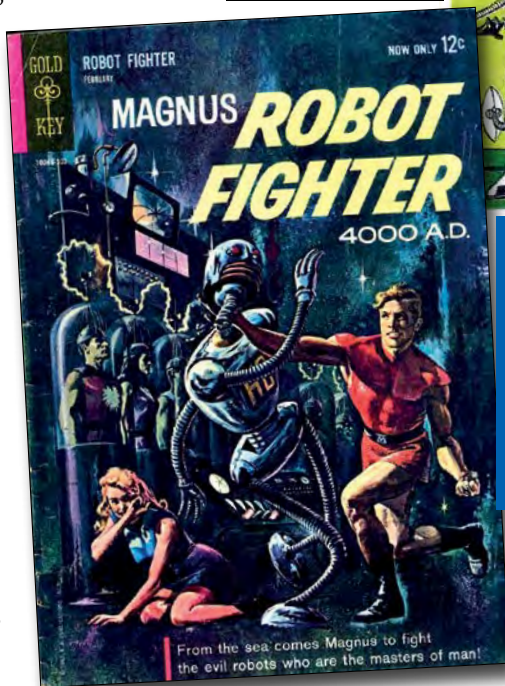
Another major character in the series is Leeja Clane, the pristine love interest. Her and Magnus' relationship underlines what it means to be truly human.

The emphasis in the comic is less on action (though there is plenty of that) than the theme of man against robot. Magnus, because of his special training from 1A, is able to defeat his robot foes by out-fighting and/or out-thinking them.

Russ Manning was influenced by Tarzan, and the story of Magnus does offer certain parallels to Edgar Rice Burroughs' primeval hero. Magnus was not raised by his human parents, but by a robot, just as Tarzan was raised by apes. Magnus, too, lives in a world other than the one that he was born into. After drawing (and briefly writing) *Magnus*, Manning (1929-1981) went on to draw the *Tarzan* comics for Gold Key. Other *Magnus* writers include **Robert**



Russ Manning



Wasn't The Future Wonderful?

Cover painter George Wilson worked from a sketch by interior artist Russ Manning to complete the cover of *Magnus, Robot Fighter* #1 (Feb. 1963). Seen above is an action page in that first issue, in which Magnus rescues Leeja Clane from menacing "polrobs" (police robots). The cover is repro'd from the GCD, the page from Dark Horse's hardcover *Russ Manning's Magnus, Robot Fighter, Vol. 1*. To date, Dark Horse has produced three beautiful volumes of these archives, but it is to be hoped that it will eventually reprint the later, non-Manning issues as well.
[TM & © Random House, Inc.]

Schaefer, Eric Freiwald, Don Christiansen, and Herb Castle. Later pencillers of the hero included **Dan Spiegle**, **Paul Norris**, and **Frank Bolle**. **Mike Royer** inked some of the later issues.

Magnus was reasonably popular from 1963 to 1977, though some of the series consisted of reprints. Manning drew only about one-third to one-half of the stories. Eventually, due to falling sales, Gold Key canceled the comic. Gold Key brought "Magnus" back in the early 1980s as a back-up feature in *Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom*, but it lasted only for three issues there.

In the 1990s, *Magnus, Robot Fighter* was re-introduced to the comics world by Valiant Comics (later, Acclaim Comics) and featured the character in a more contemporary manner for a new generation of readers, and others have continued that revival. Dark Horse Comics has reprinted the original Gold Key stories in three hardcover volumes.

Mandrake The Magician

Dell Comics - *Four Color* #752 (Nov. 1956)

Created by **Lee Falk** (also the man behind *The Phantom*), *Mandrake the Magician* is one of the earliest adventure comic strips appearing in newspapers.

Prior to his appearance in *Four Color* #752 in 1956, in stories scripted by **Paul S. Newman & Robert McClintock** (from a plot reportedly written by and drawn by Falk) and illustrated by **Stan Campbell**, Mandrake had appeared in comicbook form in *Magic Comics* (David McKay Publications) and in *Big Little Books* (Western Publishing) in the 1930s and '40s.

Always very well-dressed, usually in a black suit and black top hat, Mandrake is both a gentleman and a good judge of character and certainly knows how to get out of a squeeze. Originally he was a real magician, but before long that aspect of his character was altered, and instead he was merely a super-hypnotist, who "gestured hypnotically" and made people see what he wanted them to see. He was accompanied and helped by his powerful aide, the brown-skinned Lothar.

Writer/creator Lee Falk (April 28, 1911 – March 13, 1999) worked on the strip from the beginning almost to his death.

Phil Davis, the strip's artist, was on board almost from the beginning and stayed with it until he died in 1964.

King Comics, the comicbook publishing arm of King Features Syndicate during part of the 1960s, put out a *Mandrake the Magician*



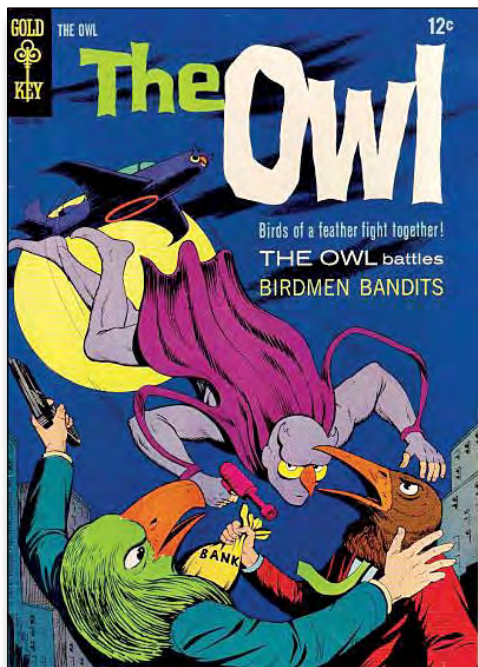
Lee Falk & Phil Davis
(left to right)—the creator/writer and original comic strip artist of *Mandrake the Magician*.

comicbook at that time. Years later, Marvel put out a limited comicbook series, updating the character somewhat. There have been a number of movie and television adaptations over the years.

But the character's biggest success was in the newspapers; over the years, he became something of a household word, because people love magic and Lee Falk created a magician who held the public's interest, with magic being used not only for entertainment but also to help those in need.



Take It Like A Mandrake!
The cover of *Four Color* #752 (1956), painted by George Wilson—and an interior page of Mandrake "gesturing hypnotically" by writer Paul S. Newman and artist Stan Campbell. Thanks to Alberto Becattini & Gene Reed.
[TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc.]



Owl Be Seeing You!

(Above:) You saw *beaucoup* "Owl" art by Frank Thomas earlier this issue, so here's Tom Gill's cover for Gold Key's *The Owl* #1 (April 1967).

(Right:) Splash page from Gold Key's *The Owl* #2 (1968), scripted by Jerry Siegel and drawn by Tom Gill. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

The Owl

Dell Comics – *Crackajack Funnies* #25-43 (July 1940-Jan. 1942); *Popular Comics* #72-85 (Feb. 1942-March 1943); Gold Key Comics #1-2 (April 1967 & April 1968).

The Owl and his partner Owl Girl were covered in considerable detail in the first article in this issue of *Alter Ego*, which deals with their main artist/writer, **Frank Thomas**. They enjoyed a three-year career, in two different Dell titles, in the first half of the 1940s.

In the 1960s, Gold Key Comics revived them in a two-issue run, portraying them in a style that was almost a parody of The Owl's Golden Age incarnation, in an effort to cash in on the camp craze of inaugurated by the 1966+ prime-time *Batman* television series—and on the resurgent popularity of the DC and Marvel super-heroes.

In the 1970s, The Owl made a minor comeback, but only as a supporting character/guest star in issue #22 of Gold Key's *The Occult Files of Dr. Spector*.

In 1999 his adventures were reprinted in black-&-white in *Men of Mystery Comics*, published by AC Comics—and new tales were related in 2008 in *Project Superpowers*, from Dynamite Entertainment.

The Owl is actually quite similar to Batman in several ways, only not as deadly serious as the Dark Knight has become in recent years. His real identity is Nick Terry, a police detective. He decided to become The Owl so he could protect his hometown of Yorktown from those who would destroy it, without the usual legal red tape that often gets in the way in the pursuit of criminals.



Jerry Siegel

In the 1930s, of course, he'd been the writer/co-creator of "Superman."



Tom Gill



The Owl has no super-powers, another similarity he shares with Batman; instead, he has superior fighting skills and a very good understanding of sophisticated gadgets that enable him to fight crime effectively.

He has his Owlmobile, which he uses to get around in style and in haste, and which also has the power to fly like the bird after which it's named. He also possesses a cape that gives him the ability to glide gracefully through the air; when in flight, he does look like a human owl. He also has a hand-held device he refers to as a "black light," which casts a beam of darkness.

The Owl is aided by his friend and sidekick, Owl Girl, who is secretly Belle Wayne (no relationship to Bruce Wayne), a newspaper reporter who formally becomes his partner after she discovered his secret.

"The Owl" is an original Dell Comics creation with a rather erratic publishing history, but it has never been completely forgotten.

Frank Thomas, principal 1940s artist of "The Owl," worked on Dell's numerous licensed titles, including *Andy Panda*, *Little Lulu*, and *Woody Woodpecker*. He also drew for Centaur Publications, where he created the series "The Eye" and "Solarman" (not to be confused with the character with the same name created by David Oliphant and later published by Marvel). Thomas also worked in the field of comics strips in the 1940s and 1950s.

My Life In Little Pieces – Part III

Continuing The “Offbeat Autbio” Of Golden/Silver Age Writer JOHN BROOME

A/E EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *In Alter Ego #149-150 we commenced our serialization of this 1998 memoir by Irving Bernard (John) Broome, noted for his Golden Age comicbook scripting but even more so for his writing of DC's Silver Age Flash and Green Lantern. He was the original co-creating scribe of the latter, under his friend and editor Julius Schwartz. Our thanks to John's daughter, Ricky Terry Brisacque, for permission to reprint her father's short book; thanks to Brian K. Morris for retyping it for us. Here, following his previous remarks concerning his wife Peggy, some of the peculiarities of living in Japan (where he taught English for the last two decades of his life), and his love of the English language, Broome takes time to reminisce about his feelings about Man's Best Friend....*

A Prayer

A dog for walking
A friend for talking
A child for laughter
And God hereafter

I once met a man on the street and stopped to admire his dog. “Yes,” said the man, looking down at his pet, “he’s a nice dog. He’s a good dog.” Then raising his eyes to meet mine, he said evenly, “He’s a pest.”

Dogs Like People

Dogs like people are different the world over. Not only so but in national characteristics, dogs take after their masters to a marked degree. The dogs of Ireland are very good-natured. They will walk up to an utter stranger, wagging their tails. Almost, they seem to be asking you to step in and have a drink with them, or to come sit down in the parlor for a nice chat.

I once had an Irish Kerry Blue Terrier. Bunk was his name (after Bunk Johnson, the early jazz trumpeter). These dogs are bred for pit-fighting in Ireland and Bunk, you might say, was well-bred. He was a big black dog with a chest like John L. Sullivan's. He loved people, slobbered over them. But he was sheer misery on other



dogs. At that time, we were living in a sparsely populated country area in New York State. On the two-mile walk to the village, every dog along the way had to retreat to kennel or house as we went by. If they persisted in sticking their nose outdoors, Bunk charged them and drove them inside. He would clean up each place carefully, sometimes including chickens, before proceeding on to the next house that might be on that road a distance away. I don't believe Bunk hated those fellow creatures he attacked: it was just that, considering his extraction, he thought that fighting was the best way of showing strong mutual respect.



Twin Team-Ups

(Left:) John Broome (on our left) with 1980s DC writer and editor Mike W. Barr, at the 1998 San Diego Comic-Con. Courtesy of MWB.

(Above:) The Flash guest-starred in *Green Lantern* #13 (June 1962)—script by Broome, pencils by Gil Kane, inks by Joe Giella. Broome, of course, was the major Silver Age scripter of both heroes, though Robert Kanigher had scripted the origin of the second Flash. Thanks to Doug Martin. [TM & © DC Comics.]

TED WHITE On Comics – Part 5

In Which The SF Editor & Writer Talks About Editing *Heavy Metal*, & More!

Introduction

by Bill Schelly

Born in 1938, Ted White was a central figure in science-fiction fandom and fanzine publishing since he was a teenager, ultimately winning a Hugo Award for Best Fan Writer in 1968. Beginning in the 1960s, he wrote or co-wrote over a dozen SF novels, such as *The Jewels of Elsewhen* (1967), *No Time like Tomorrow* (1969), and *Trouble on Project Ceres* (1971).

In Part 1, Ted filled us in on his boyhood as a comicbook fan and collector. In Part 2, he told of meeting noted EC fans Fred von Bernewitz, Bhub Stewart, and Larry Stark. In Part 3, he discussed visiting the EC offices and writing his chapter for the “All in Color for a Dime” series in the fanzine *Xero*. In Part 4, he reminisced about interviewing Stan Lee and writing the paperback novel *Captain America: The Great American Gold Steal*.

In this, the final segment of my long interview with Ted, he relates how he became editor of *Heavy Metal* magazine, and the story



of his successful year at the helm of the popular publication. The interview took place by telephone in November 2014. This portion was transcribed by Sean Dulaney and Yours Truly. Special thanks to John Workman for the scans from *Heavy Metal*. (He worked as art director of the magazine from 1977 to 1984.)

BS: Did your move from New York in 1970 end a lot of your comics involvement for the time being, until you got back into it with *Heavy Metal*?

WHITE: When I moved from New York, I was editing *Amazing* and *Fantastic* [SF magazines], which I continued to edit from '68 to '78. It really didn't matter where I lived in order to do that. But I lost a lot of the social contacts that I'd had in New York. Not that I didn't keep some of them up by phone and by mail, but it wasn't the same.

BS: You moved back to Falls Church, right?

WHITE: Yeah. My first child was born on August 28th of 1970. I didn't want my daughter growing up in New York City.

BS: What's her name?

WHITE: Officially, it's Ariel, but we always called her "Kit."

BS: Okay. Let's skip ahead to *Heavy Metal*. How did you get involved with *Heavy Metal*? What was that experience like for you?

WHITE: Weird. Actually, it was the best job I've ever had, the job for which I, myself personally, am most suited... most talented for. On that level, it was utterly great. But there was all the politics behind the scenes, which was a whole lot less than great.

BS: What aspects were you most suited for?

WHITE: Let me build up to that. The way I got the job was kind of weird. One day in 1979, the phone rang. On the other end of the phone was a man named Len Mogel, who started talking to me about, possibly, a position at *Heavy Metal* as one of its editors. I got



White Space

Ted White at PulpFest 2016 in Columbus, Ohio, at which he was Guest of Honor—and the cover of the first issue he edited of the color comics magazine *Heavy Metal*: Vol. 3, #8 (Dec. 1979). Cover art by Richard Lon Cohen & John Townley. Photograph by William Lampkin. Special thanks to Mike Chomko of PulpFest. [Cover TM & © respective trademark & copyright holders.]

very excited about this. He told me that I had been recommended for this by somebody that I knew quite well, an editor at Pocket Books, Dave Hartwell. I'd known Dave since the '60s as a science-fiction fan. He was a close friend of another friend of mine, a guy named Paul Williams, who is now deceased. Paul was big in music and published a number of books. In any event, I guess Len knew Dave because Pocket Books, or Simon & Schuster who owned Pocket Books, was doing the *Heavy Metal* books—which are what we would call graphic albums, I guess. So he asked Dave for a recommendation for what he was looking for with the magazine and Dave recommended me.

Subsequently, they asked me to send them my résumé and anything like that. As it happened, I had been writing a column for a semi-pro zine called *Thrust*. One installment of that column was all about the new *Heavy Metal* magazine, which was a year old or so when I wrote the column. So I clipped a copy of that column and sent it along with my résumé to them. Then I went up to New York City and met with Len and Julian Weber, who was the president of the company. We had a very amicable meeting and I was effectively hired then, but what I found out was that they weren't just hiring me to be a text editor or somebody who would edit some subsection of the magazine, but they were hiring me to be the editor in charge of the magazine, which I felt much better about.

BS: *Did you have to move back to New York?*

WHITE: Yes and no. I lived in New York Monday through Friday, and I lived down here in Virginia on my weekends. I commuted by Metroliner or Amtrak. I initially sort of sublet part of a friend's apartment, but that got old very quickly. Around the beginning of 1980—I moved there in August of 1979—so around 1980 I got an apartment of my own. A little studio apartment on 72nd Street. I was there for the rest of the time I was [at *Heavy Metal*].

I might say that *Animal House* really revived Matty Simmons' [the owner of *Heavy Metal* and *National Lampoon*] fortunes. Here's another little sidebar. When the creators of *National Lampoon* set out to do the magazine, they had previously, of course, done an issue of the *Harvard Lampoon*; once a year, *Harvard Lampoon* would

publish a newsstand issue, and they had had Matty Simmons—who was not a major publisher at that time, but was a publisher—they had him do their *Harvard Lampoon*. So they knew him, and for that reason, they did not want to go to him to do the magazine, but they couldn't find anybody else that wanted to publish it. So eventually they settled on Matty. And they had a contract with Matty that said, after five years Matty would buy them out. The five-year period came and Matty bought them all out, and at that point, *National Lampoon* changed fairly drastically. Until then, they had never run any real advertisements. They were all fake ads. But at that point, Matty started selling real ads and they started losing circulation. That magazine had sold over a million copies an issue, but by the time I came on the scene in '79, it had been down to below 250,000. And when *Animal House* came out, it went back up to about 750,000. So *Animal House* was really important for Simmons.

John Workman and I were a very solid working team. John's a great guy, an excellent art director, and a pleasure to work with. I'd never met him before I began working there, but we became friends very quickly, because he had a really good attitude. One of the first things that I did was to re-design the magazine, and I re-designed it with John. I said, "Here's the basic concept," and laid it out for him, and then I said, "Once we get the basic concept down to where we're happy with it, then we start to play with it. We start to work the variations on it." All of this was just, like, candy for John. This is just what he wanted to hear. This gave him something creative to do.

BS: *Because he was doing the production work.*

WHITE: Yeah, he was the art director, and putting the magazine physically together, and doing a great job of it. Him and his brother. At that time, John lived out on Staten Island. I used to go out there once in a while to have dinner with him. But at any rate, John and I were very solid. We worked together as a very good team.

BS: *Overall, how would you characterize the experience of putting the magazine together?*

WHITE: It was great. It was absolutely great. See, there are certain things that I am good at. One of them is, I am good at creating magazines. After my first issues started coming out, people like, say, Robert Sheckley, who was an editor at *Omni*, and Robin Snelson, who was editing *Future Life*—people like that were coming up to me and telling me what a huge improvement I had done to the magazine, because now it didn't feel like a scrapbook anymore. It felt like a coherent magazine. There are a whole lot of challenges involved in putting an actual issue together. They're on all kinds of different levels, and you have to reconcile them all.

One level is that you have black-&-white signatures, and you have color signatures, so certain pages can only use black-&-white strips, or text. That was another thing. When they originally hired me, they were thinking of having a text section in the magazine. They wanted to have more text. They thought that would make it more of a magazine. I didn't want to have a separate text section, although that's what they went to when I left. I wanted to integrate the text with the comics, and if you look at my issues, that's how it was done. Okay, so we had the black-&-white versus color considerations, and they're very specific. The signatures are inflexible.

Cast Party

During Ted White's tenure as editor of *Heavy Metal*, John Workman (on left) was art director. The only photo we could find of White and Workman together from this time is from the Japanese magazine *Young Jump*, c. 1980. An unidentified Japanese fan was visiting the *HM* offices. Courtesy of John Workman, whose only copy was a Xerox made from the magazine. [© the respective copyright holders.]



P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

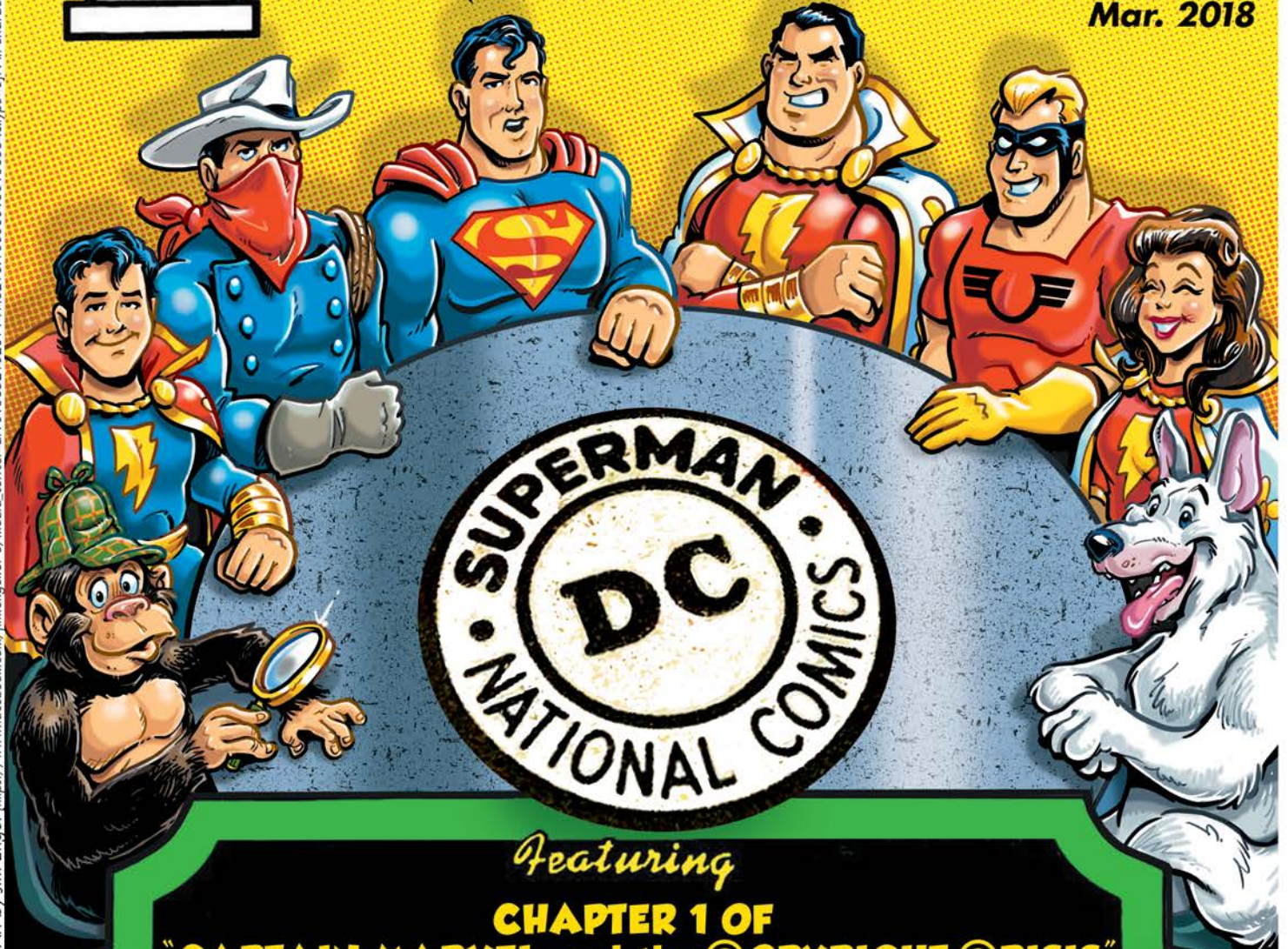
Fawcett Collectors of America

ALL DOGS Comics?

#210
Mar. 2018

10¢

HOLY MOLEY!



Featuring

**CHAPTER 1 OF
"CAPTAIN MARVEL and the ©OPYRIGHT ©RISIS"**

**MIKE TIEFENBACHER'S
EXPLORATION OF COMIC COPYRIGHTS,
PUBLIC DOMAIN,
AND THE DC THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN!**

ENGEL

Art by Jim Engel <https://www.facebook.com/jim.engel.376/> /media_set=ca.101385213209149.3296.1000001301389364&type=3] All characters ™ & © DC Comics.

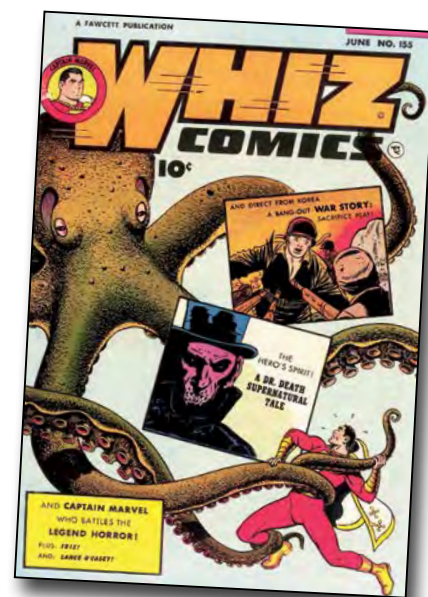


Captain Marvel & The ©opyright ©risis!



Fawcett Publications & Its Complicated Legal Legacy – Part I

by Mike Tiefenbacher



FCA EDITOR'S NOTE: *They have saved the world a hundred times over... but an even greater challenge for super-heroes has been facing often-dubious copyright and trademark plights ever since the birth of the comicbook industry in the 1930s. Notably, any discourse attempting to comprehend the original Captain Marvel's complicated copyright complexities, in particular, usually concludes in a convoluted clutter of confusion and uncertainty. In this first installment of a three-part presentation, comics historian Mike Tiefenbacher courageously steps forward to investigate and, God willing, bring clarity to these ponderous legalities surrounding the World's Mightiest Mortal and many other characters caught in similar mucky predicaments battled not by the heroes themselves, but by politicians, judges, and attorneys. —P.C. Hamerlinck*

It would have been so much easier all around if they hadn't waited twenty years to do it.

Sometime in 1953, Fawcett Publications executives looked at their

sales—felt considerable consternation at the slow boil of contempt comicbooks were receiving from parents concerning violent and sexual content in what was perceived as a children's medium, at the contentious Senate hearings led by Estes Kefauver, and perhaps most tellingly, at the amount of money they were paying lawyers to litigate the lawsuit National/DC had filed against their flagship title fourteen years earlier—and decided Fawcett Publications didn't need to be in the comicbook business anymore.

By the point at which it ceased, the Fawcett line had, in the space of one year, shrunk from 26 titles (in issues dated March 1953, released in January) to 22 in March, 12 in May, 11 in July, eight in September, and just five in November.

Its horror, crime, and romance lines, for reasons probably having to do with a desire not to tarnish the main line with the censorship controversies surrounding those genres, not only were never listed in the masthead

Slow Death Funnies

The death of Fawcett Publications' Marvel Family was so gradual that it was almost like organ failure. First to go was *Master Comics* (#133, April 1953; cover art by Kurt Schaffenberger), then *Captain Marvel Jr.* (#119, June, 1953; art by Bud Thompson), followed by *Whiz Comics* (#155, June 1953; main art by Schaffenberger), *Captain Marvel Adventures* (#150, Nov. 1953; art by C.C. Beck) and finally, the entire *Marvel Family* (#89, Jan. 1954; art by Schaffenberger). The covers of *CMJr* #119 and *Marvel Family* #89 have always seemed so perfect as "last-issue covers" that they seem almost to have been designed specifically for that purpose... but they probably weren't. [Shazam heroes TM & © DC Comics.]



Summer Re-runs

You'd think that long-established non-Shazam-endowed Fawcett stars would've populated Charlton's comics, after that company bought them... but such sightings turned out to be rare birds, indeed. *Whiz Comics* refugee Ibis the Invincible made one cover appearance (*Danger and Adventure* #22, Feb. 1955), as did Lance O'Casey (*D&A* #23, April 1955). *Master Comics* and solo comic star Nyoka had a respectable Charlton run of 15 issues (debuting with *Zoo Funnies* #8, Oct.-Nov. 1954), but she was licensed from Republic Pictures. More prevalent were reprints of non-series fare such as *Negro Romance* (#4, May 1955), really just a second printing of Fawcett's #2 from August 1950 with a new cover when the Charlton plant in Derby, Connecticut, was flooded. Nyoka TM & © Bill Black

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ALTER EGO #151

Golden Age artist FRANK THOMAS (The Owl! The Eye! Dr. Hypno!) celebrated by Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt's MICHAEL T. GILBERT! Plus the scintillating (and often offbeat) Golden & Silver Age super-heroes of Western Publishing's DELL & GOLD KEY comics! Art by MANNING, DITKO, KANE, MARSH, GILL, SPIEGLE, SPRINGER, NORRIS, SANTOS, THORNE, et al.! Plus FCA, BILL SCHELLY, and more!

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printed in every Fawcett comic, or in the group's house ads, this time, were not even labeled "A Fawcett Publication" on covers. The Marvel family of titles, likely still the sales leader, had died off incrementally during the year: *Master Comics* ended in February with #133, *Captain Marvel Jr.* in April with #155, *Whiz Comics* likewise in April with #155, *Captain Marvel Adventure* in September with #150, and *The Marvel Family* in November #89. Aside from the last-named title, the only other Fawcett titles to reach November were three Westerns (*Lash LaRue Western*, *Lane Western*, and *Tex Ritter Western*) and *Funny Animals* (which resident, Hoppy, had ceased being "The Marvel Bunny" at the end of 1950). This precipitous fall in the space of one year was probably attributable to Fawcett using up completed inventory after he decided to end the line, rather than being cancellation decisions based on sales.

But Fawcett undoubtedly knew the value of their trademark titles, and their second-class mailing permits. The family-owned company's decision to cease publishing comics must have been made early enough that, when they did end it all, two other publishers could step in to continue some of its still-commercial titles without a long absence from the stands. One of them was just down the road from their Greenwich headquarters, a mere 35 miles to the northeast in Derby: fellow Connecticut-based resident Charlton Comics.

Charlton was a shoestring operation with sales which were undoubtedly a fraction of Fawcett's, and product that even Charlton must've known was inferior to theirs. It was so eager to take advantage of the Fawcett connection that, in addition to picking up ongoing 1953 titles *Funny Animals*, *Gabby Hayes Western*, *Lash LaRue Western*, *Monte Hale Western*, *Nyoka the Jungle Girl*, *Rocky Lane Western*, *Romantic Secrets*, *Romantic Story*, *Six-Gun Heroes*, *Strange Suspense Stories*, *Sweetheart Diary*, *Sweethearts*, *Tex Ritter Western*, and *This Magazine is Haunted*, it also brought back *Cowboy Western*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *I Love You*, *Negro Romance*, and *Young Eagle* (and adopted the Fawcett-style masthead listing on page 1 of their 1954 issues as well).

What is also true is the fact that, with the exception of *Young Eagle*, none of these titles were ever reprinted. There were several Fawcett-owned titles that moved up to Charlton, albeit in other titles: *Golden Arrow* of "Ozzie and Babs" reprints... *Lance O'Casey* reprints were reprinted, and Lance also showed up in *Golden Arrow*, and *TV Teens*... "Golden Arrow" reprints continued in print and in new stories in *Cowboy Western* (the successor to "Spy Smasher") and *Crime and Justice*. Reprints of *Nyoka* appeared in *Zoo Funnies* before the title was changed to *Nyoka the*

characters appeared in *Davy Crockett*, *Tex Ritter Western*, *Texas Rangers in Action*... while *Golden Arrow* (done after the reprints (some of which were "Magic Bunny") had ceased. Some of the other companies' stories ceased in '55 as well. [Ibis TM & © DC Comics;

reprints also included some miscellaneous Western, crime, and science-fiction/horror stuff (*Down with Crime* reprints in *Crime and Justice*, and the movie adaptation of *Destination Moon* in *Space Adventures*, which was reprinted twice in two years!). Even the use of Dr. Death, the narrator of *This Magazine is Haunted*, was a temp job, replaced by Dr. Haunt when the Comics Code was instituted in 1955.

By mid-1958, though, no further reprints of Fawcett stories appeared, and no Fawcett-owned characters were appearing—with a single exception, which may have been due to an oversight. Fawcett's *Hot Rod Comics* was too close in title to Charlton's own ongoing title, *Hot Rods and Racing Cars*, which had been launched the same month, for them to continue that title. Charlton apparently coveted Fawcett's ongoing series "Clint Curtis" from *Hot Rod Comics* enough to add it to their own *Hot Rods* title. But, after a