ROY THOMAS' CODE-APPROVED COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

TALES FROM THE CODE!

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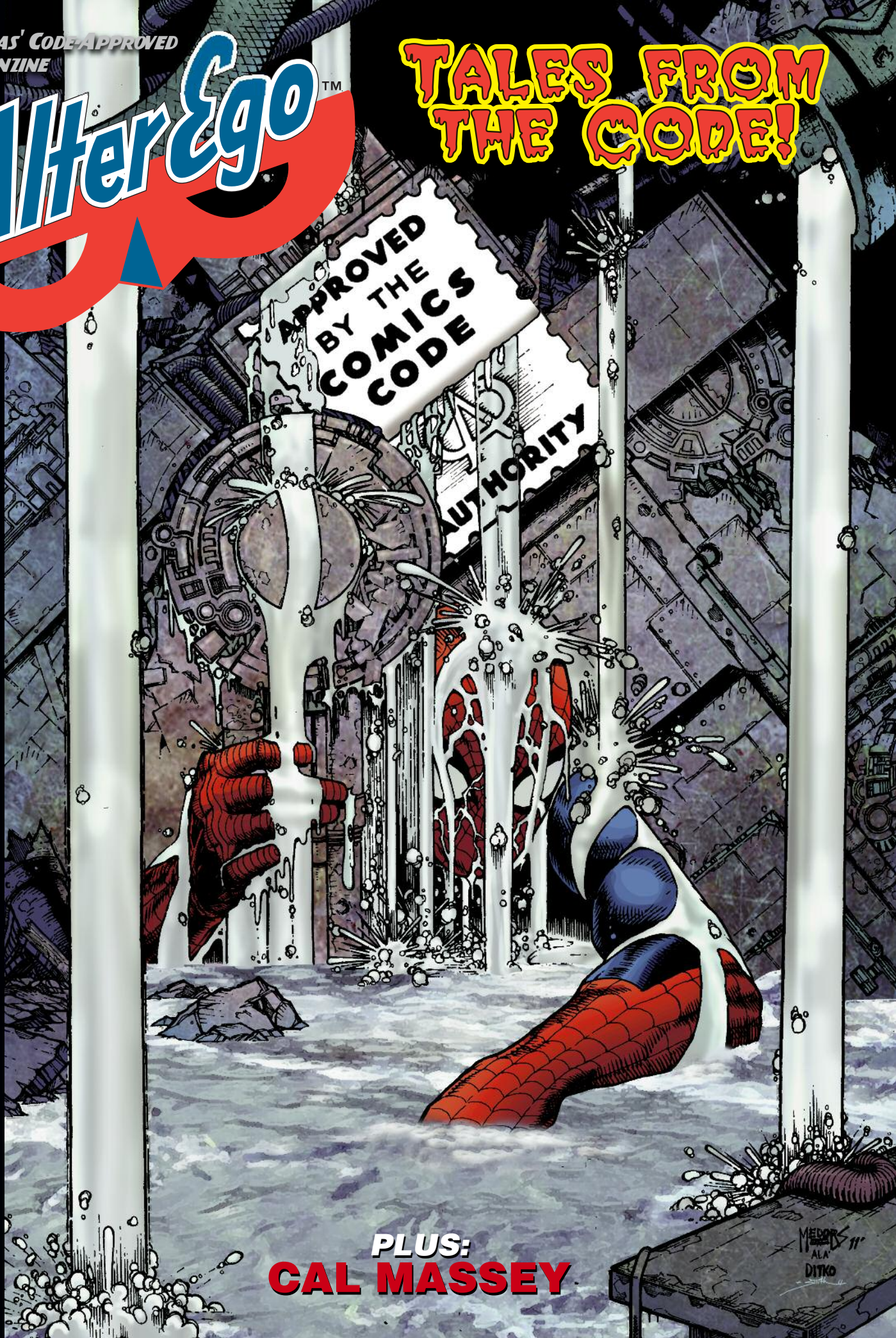
TWOMORROWS



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Alter Ego™

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Contents

On Our Cover: *See the whole story of artist* **Josh Medors***' fabulous homage to an iconic* **Steve Ditko** *cover on p. 30.* [Spider-Man TM & © 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Above: *German cartoonist* **Andreas Gottschlich***, whose "maskot" drawings have appeared in a number of past* A/E *issues, drew this one for our "Code-disapproved" issue last Halloween, but it got crowded out there—so we were determined to fit it in this time—even if we don't have a letters section! We like to think that Doc Wertham and Judge Murphy wouldn't have condoned* this *one in a 1950s comic, either!* [*Alter Ego* hero TM & *© 2011 Roy & Dann Thomas; costume designed by Ron Harris; other art © 2011 Andreas Gottschlich.*]

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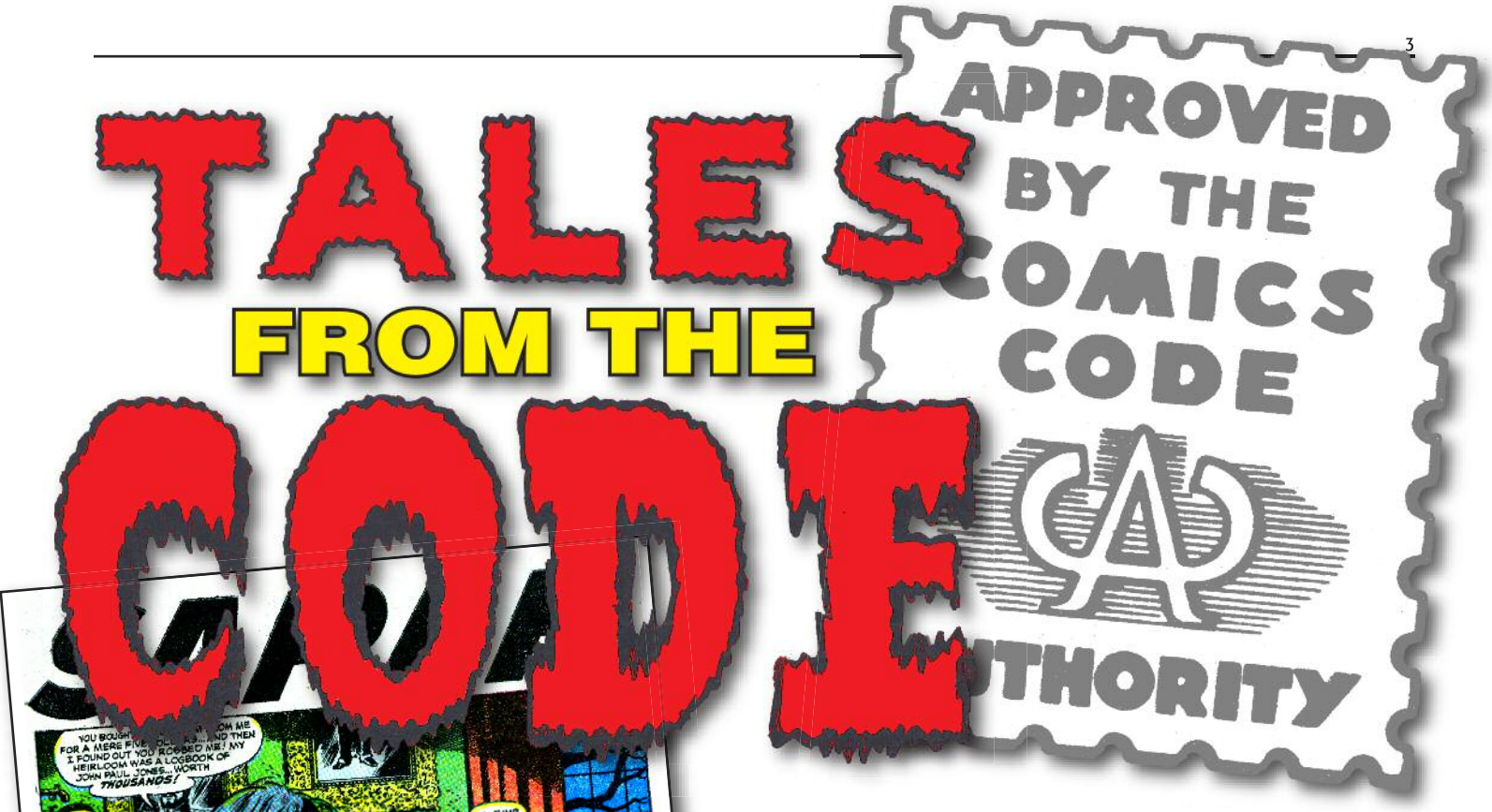
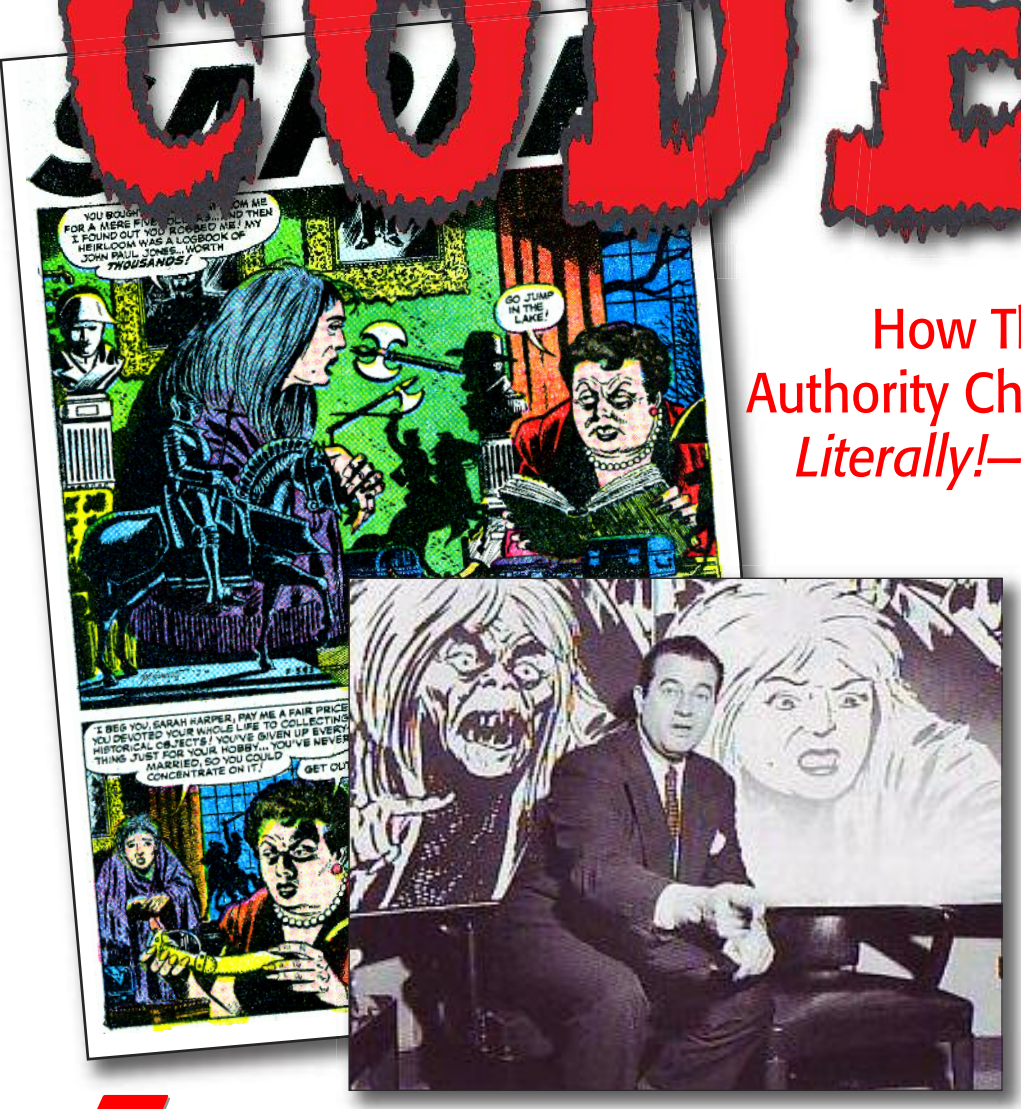
FIRST PRINTING.

TALES FROM THE CODE



How The Comics Code Authority Changed Comic Books—*Literally!*—From 1954 To 2011

by Richard J. Arndt



The Comics Code Authority—Protecting Young Minds Since 1954!

(Above:) The CCA seal of approval—and the title logo designed especially for this article by Al Dellinges, as touched up by *A/E* layout wizard Jon B. Cooke.

(Left:) Because Photostats or photocopies of artwork changed at the behest of the CCA were seldom preserved in their original form, we rarely have the opportunity to examine both the "before" and "after" versions of altered material, but only the page that was actually printed. Fortunately, however, a number of examples of "before" art do exist. Near left, Judge Charles F. Murphy, the CCA's first administrator, poses in front of blow-ups of both renditions of the old woman (whom the Code folks insisted be prettified) in the Joe Sinnott-drawn story "Sarah," from Timely/Atlas' *Uncanny Tales* #29 (March 1955). Scripter unknown. This was surely one of the Code's earliest forays in defense of American childhood. Far left is the tale's splash page as printed, courtesy of Dr. Michael J. Vassallo; incidentally, Doc reminds us that Marvel reprinted the Code-approved version in *Dead of Night* #6 (Oct. 1974).
[Page © 2011 Marvel Characters, inc.]

The anti-comics crusade that forced the Comics Code on comic book publishers, writers, and artists in 1954 didn't come from nowhere. It wasn't even the *first* anti-comics crusade. It was actually the *third*.

The First Crusade

The first arrived on May 8, 1940, in the pages of the *Chicago Daily News*. A book review of "Superman" by children's author Sterling North—nowadays best known for his young adult novel *Rascal*—was prompted by his dismay at seeing how much time his sons were spending reading comics [see *The Ten-Cent Plague* by David Hajdu, pp. 39-45, and "The Effects of the Censorship of the 1950s on Comic Books," Anne Seddelmeyer, p. 1; a full bibliography of this article follows it on p. 54]. North's article

described a wasteland of crudely drawn, badly printed, and brightly colored garbage that he felt was destroying children's interest in reading books. Particularly, one suspects, *his* books.

He also seemed to be very angry about the amount of money that comics were bringing in. In 1940, most children's novels (or, as we call them today, "young adult novels") sold primarily to school or public libraries, not to the general public. That limited the sales for many books to around 5,000 copies, although North claimed sales of 30,000 for at least one of his books. The notion that comics were selling hundreds of thousands of copies a month, were generating income four times greater than the entire intake of traditional children's literature, and were being sold, for the most part, directly to children instead of to schools, libraries, and parents seemed to infuriate him.

Who *Was* That Masked Mammal?

Author (and comic book critic) Sterling North and friend. North's most famous work, *Rascal*, was about a boy and his pet raccoon. He didn't care so much for masked entities in *comics*, though.

The comic book field was only five years old when North wrote his newspaper piece, but the dislikes he touched on would become very familiar complaints in years to come. He felt parents were not watching their children's reading habits closely enough. He remarked on the extreme violence he found in comics and on the possibility that it could make children more violent. He disliked the political stance of comics, which he perceived to be left-leaning. His complaints got noticed, although not at this time by the government. This first run of anti-comics editorializing came not from parents or national, state, or local authorities, but from academia.

Teachers, librarians, and writers expressed their concerns about the new phenomenon of comic books, a form of communication that many simply did not understand. Some of this concern, particularly on the part of librarians, came from an educational belief popular in the 1920s and early 1930s that an excessive amount of fantasy, whether found in books, movies, or what-have-you, was not good for children, since it failed (according to the theory) to prepare the child for actual life. If you as a parent wanted your children to become responsible, productive adults, their indulging in fantasy stories or fairy tales past a very early age was a waste of valuable learning time. Comic books, both by their very nature and by their extreme popularity with children, were considered to be both childish and a major deterrence to reading "good" literature.

Adults were also confused by the fact that comic books, in and of themselves, were largely a new medium and were not the same thing as the widely popular newspaper comic strips, which tended to be more adult-oriented and usually better drawn. Comic books were brash, enthusiastic, and, most important for the child, they were cool— long before the word "cool" was cool. Cool in the sense that there was something special happening in comic books that adults didn't get but kids did. The tinge of badness, the smell of forbidden fruit, wafted up from every dust particle created by turning the page. Nowadays, this phenomenon is not unusual. Video games, music, some books and book series, new applications for iPods and smart phones are media-based products aimed directly at a teenage market and are designed to have that cool factor. Adults are used to knowing, from their own experience when young, that there are things their kids are crazy about that they will never get (and, as far as the kids are concerned, *shouldn't* get). But in 1940, this was not the case. Most items, particularly in media, were not marketed for a child to purchase but for parents to buy *for* their children. This gave parents a chance to keep a close eye on and control over what the child was getting, especially regarding reading material. But comic books largely bypassed that parental control, since they could be purchased by any kid with a grubby dime.

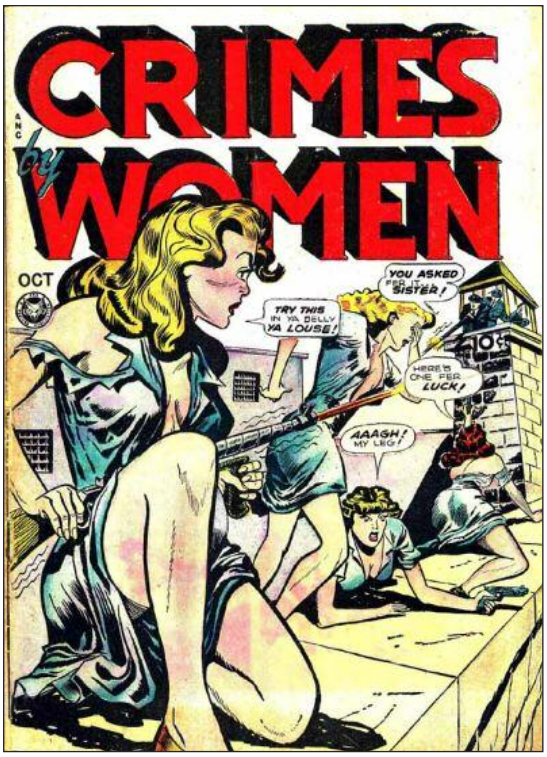
Studies were done examining whether reading comic books caused children to read fewer "real" books than before. The conclusion, which surprised many, was that comics seemed to have no adverse effect on readers at all. Kids who read a large number of books before comics came into existence still read a lot of books. They just read a lot of comics in addition to the books. Kids who weren't major readers of books still weren't major readers of books, but they, too, often read a great many comics. Comics didn't seem to affect the reading of traditional books at all, although they certainly seemed to promote reading of a sort.

That fact seemed to perplex even the researchers who conducted the studies. More than one appeared to doubt the results of their own studies. It seemed to be a case of "comic books don't hurt reading and, in fact, even seem to increase reading, but kids like them, so they must be wrong in some way, right?" Plus, they were in color. It seemed that every adult who wrote about comics had a problem with the fact that, unlike the daily strips, they were in color. That color was always described as garish, although to my eyes the color in comic books of that era and the color in the Sunday comic strips seem to be either much the same, or else was actually a little duller in the poorly printed comic books.

Make Mine *Marvel Mystery*

During World War II, as per this newsstand photo dated July 1, 1942, super-hero titles predominated. Thanks to Richard Pryor.

Regardless, the advent of World War II ended the first anti-comics campaign. With a horrific war taking place, parents, librarians, and teachers had a lot more to worry about than the effects of a comic book on children. It was after the war ended that the second



Give 'Em Hellions!

(Above:) In *A/E* #101's coverage of Fox Comics, writer Richard Kyle described the lurid cover of *Crimes by Women* #3 (Oct. 1948). This is as good a place as any to actually show it to you. Artist unknown. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database; see GCD info on p. 66. [© 2011 the respective copyright holders.]

(Right:) An overstuffed (and, untypically, roughly *alphabetized*) comic book rack in 1948. Even *Crimes by Women* might be lurking in there someplace! By now, crime comics were fighting it out with an ever-diminishing number of super-heroes (which were *also* crime comics, in their way) for space on the stands—but so were Westerns (likewise crime comics!) and funny animals and Archie-style teenagers and romance comics. Thanks to Richard Arndt.

anti-comics crusade began—and this one produced some characters who would have a dramatic impact on the third.

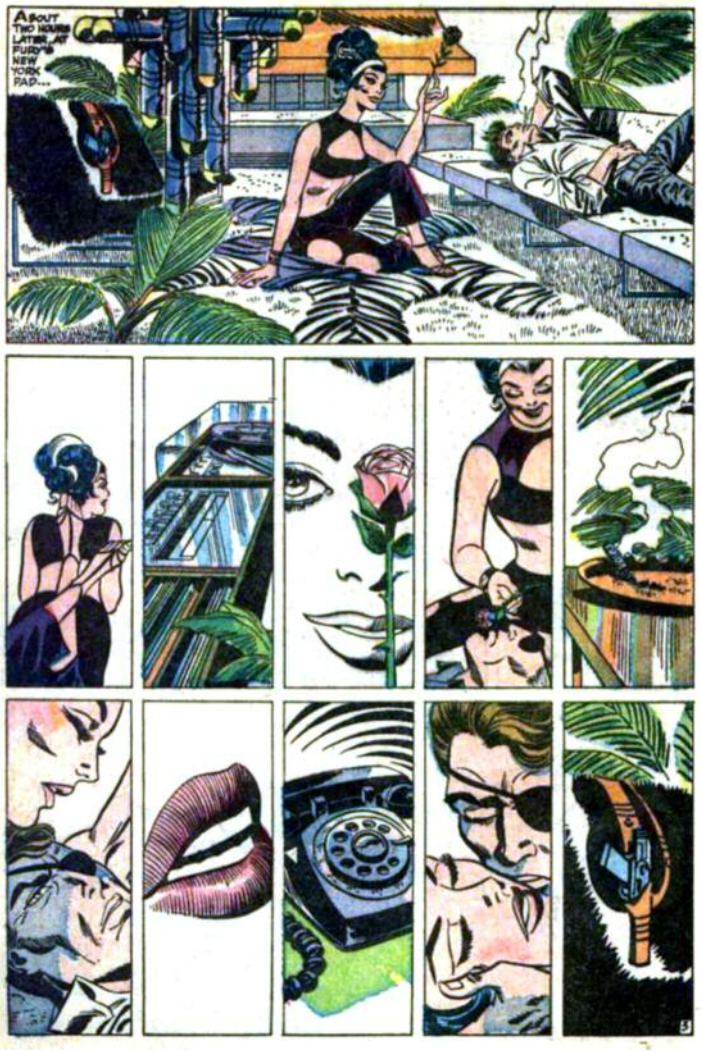
The Second Crusade

In 1947-1948 comic books, particularly crime comics, were linked by some religious leaders and by psychiatrist Fredric Wertham to juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency had begun attracting attention during the war, when such films as Val Lewton's *Youth Runs Wild* had begun focusing on teenagers and their use and abuse of an increasing amount of free time. This free time came about for various reasons, including an exploding teen population (even before the postwar baby boom, one quarter of the U.S. population was between the ages of one and eighteen), a lack of parental oversight (fathers were in the military and mothers were working in the war factories), and the population move from rural areas, where chores and work for teens were commonplace, to urban centers where teens often had far less family work to do and far more money in hand. After the war, this concern with teen lawlessness only grew, as laws enacted to tighten social controls on teenagers caused crime statistics on them to soar [*TCP*, p. 84]. Parents, courts, and law enforcement searched for both explanations and easy fixes for this new problem. Comics were an easy target.

First, almost every kid read them, while most educated adults did not. The wartime restrictions on paper were being eliminated, so new comic titles were proliferating and crowding the newsstands. In addition, though super-hero titles were beginning to wane in popularity, the crime genre, which Lev Gleason and Charles Biro had pioneered in 1942 with *Crime Does Not Pay*, rapidly increased in popularity. Partly this was because the stories themselves were quite exciting and, at times, very well done, and partly, I suspect, because their creators, many of them newly returned from the war, found that real life and the more grown-up stories available in the crime genre were more interesting for them to write and draw then the banal silliness in which many super-hero comics had been mired during the postwar years.

However, crime comics had a hoop to jump through that other genres of comic book did not. Many states, particularly New York where almost the entire comics industry was based, had laws on the books prohibiting exploitive true-fact crime magazines, largely due to fears that such magazines encouraged rather than deterred crime. When reports of children either killing others or committing suicide were linked to comics, it wasn't a big leap for authorities to attempt to transfer and to enforce onto comics the pre-existing laws that dealt with real-life crime magazines. Crime comics could even be considered especially vulnerable to these laws, because they often claimed to be based on actual crimes (although this claim was usually wildly inaccurate).

By 1948 a grassroots campaign led by religious leaders, newspaper editors, teachers, and children themselves had led to a comic book burning campaign in which school children were urged to go from house to house in their communities, collect all the comics, crime or otherwise, that they could find, and incinerate them in public bonfires. Soon national attention was directed at the supposed crime comics/juvenile delinquency problem that comics supposedly fanned, and for a time, a strong anti-comics hysteria seemed to be building. But then studies began coming out that seemed to indicate that reading comics and breaking laws weren't that closely aligned. The public comic burnings began to get some bad press when people started to be reminded of the Nazi book-burnings of the 1930s, which had also started with children stationed front and center to do the



Sam Glanzman did a funny end run around the Code's aversion to bondage scenes in Charlton's *Hercules* #5 (July 1968). In the story the Queen of the Amazons is torturing one of her young subjects, who has dared to aid Hercules. Since the Code forbade showing women being tied up, let alone tortured, Glanzman drew the young girl standing on an iron ring that was suspended above a fire. There are chains holding the ring in place, but the girl is neither chained nor tied to the apparatus. All the elements are there for a bondage/torture scene, but the girl could jump to freedom at any time. It looked a little silly, but it got the point across without apparently violating the Code.

Don't Yield—Back S.H.I.E.L.D!

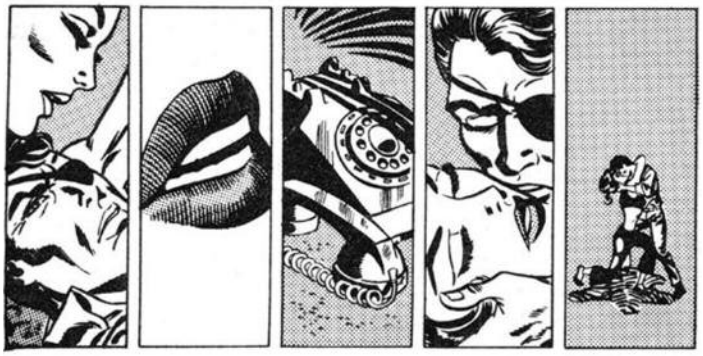
Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. #2 (July 1968) contained a nearly wordless page illustrated by writer-penciler Jim Steranko that showed Fury and his gal pal/fellow agent Valentina having a romantic evening. The Code office had three objections to the page, the first being Val's cleavage in the first panel, the second being a panel showing the phone off the hook, and the third being the final panel, which featured the two S.H.I.E.L.D. agents in an amorous clinch. The first two were art-corrected by John Romita to erase the cleavage and put the phone back on the hook (but still ringing unanswered—which amounted to basically the same thing)… but the final panel didn't need just art corrections but an entirely new image. But there wasn't time to send the page back to Jim Steranko (who lived in Pennsylvania) and have him redo it. The book was due at the printers.

Bringing Up The Rear

Richard mentions the Steranko-drawn Madame Hydra's whip being changed into a rope, while her skin-tight outfit was left untouched (at least by the Code). Earlier, though, in *Strange Tales* #168 (May '68), as seen at near right, agent Val's shapely derriere was blacked in to produce the less offensive panel at far right. As Roy T. recalls it, Jim was not happy with the change. Thanks again to Stephen Friedt, the CSBG Archive, and Brian Cronin.

A Clash Of Symbols

This most famous of Code-censored Marvel pages was written and drawn by Jim Steranko for *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* #2 (July 1968). Along with a bit of whited-out cleavage in panel 1, the altered panels in the printed version at left are 9 & 11: a phone ringing unanswered was apparently deemed less suggestive than a phone off the hook—and a gun in a holster (Photostatted from panel 1) was favored over a passionate clinch. The page's original bottom row is seen below. See accompanying text for a fuller appreciation of such symbolic subtleties. Thanks for the scans both to Stephen Friedt and to the website CSBG Archive — "Comic Book Legends #291," with Brian Cronin's analysis of the page.



It was associate editor Roy Thomas (as he confirmed in an e-mail to the present author) who, with the deadline looming, noticed the holstered gun in the first panel on the page and suggested Photostatting that image and turning it into the final panel. It wasn't until Steranko called him up to congratulate him on his cleverness in getting around the Code's objection by replacing the clinch scene with a post-coital holstered gun that Thomas thought consciously about the sexual symbolism of a romantic interlude ending with a gun in a holster. According to Thomas, his panel replacement was just "an instinctual reaction to a desperate need. Still, I think in retrospect, as do many others, that the fix worked even better (both graphically and storywise) than the original panel."

SPECIAL *ALTER EGO* COLOR SECTION

Color-Coded!

16 Pages of "Before" & "After" Goodies Submitted To The Comics Code Authority Over The Decades

Notes by Roy Thomas (with a bit of help from his friends)

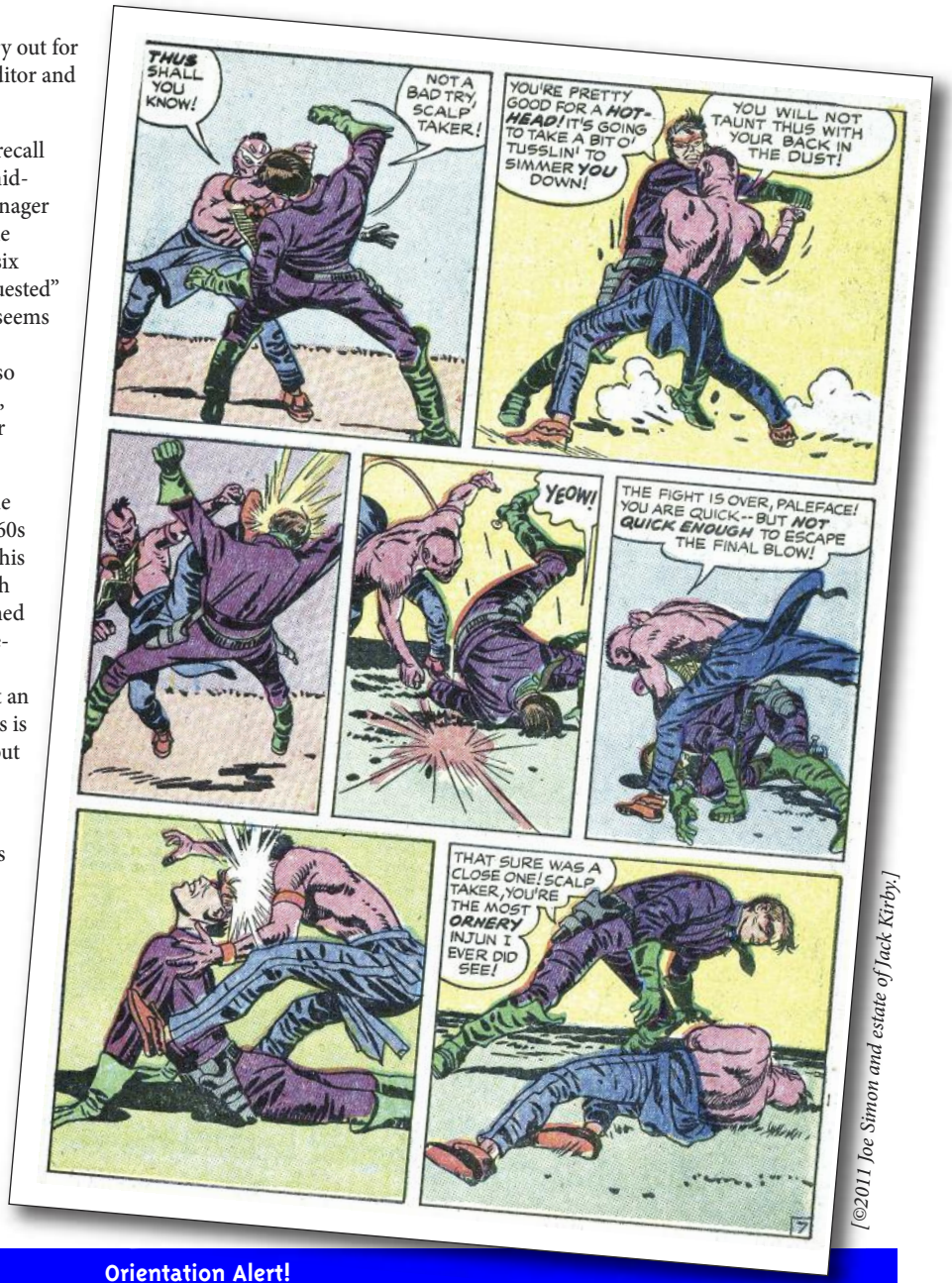
This issue's "before-and-after" theme seemed to cry out for a special color section, so here it is—annotated by Ye Editor and several other pros and students of the form.

One of the first Comics Code-related anecdotes I recall hearing at Marvel after I went to work for Stan Lee in mid-1965—either from Stan himself or from production manager Sol Brodsky, and quite possibly from both—was that one reason for the cancellation of *The Incredible Hulk* after six issues in 1962-63 was the sheer number of changes "requested" in the stories and art by the Comics Code Authority. It seems hard to imagine nowadays that the mere spectacle of a snarling green-skinned Frankenstein/Mr. Hyde hybrid so aroused the Code's wrath, but apparently it did. Even so, lagging sales were no doubt the main factor in publisher Martin Goodman's decision to discontinue the title.

And I recall a lunch in Manhattan—probably at the well-known Schrafft's restaurant—on one of the latter-'60s days when artist Jack Kirby ventured into the city from his Long Island home. I'm not sure if Stan was there, though Sol Brodsky and John Romita surely were. The talk turned at one point to Code censorship, and Jack remarked ruefully about his and partner Joe Simon's fabled *Bulls-Eye*, starring the bow-wielding Western hero on whose chest an enemy had long ago branded a target. Jack said (and this is virtually verbatim): "They kept taking the tomahawks out of the Indians' hands, and leaving me with a bunch of smiling Indians!"

The page at right, from *Bulls-Eye* #6 (June 1955), is undoubtedly one of the instances he was talking about. Prepared for Joe & Jack's doomed Mainline company, it wound up being published by Charlton. Personally, I wonder how the name "Scalp Taker" slipped by the Code! Thanks to Scott Rowland for the scan; thanks also to Jim Van Dore. [© 2011 Joe Simon and estate of Jack Kirby.]

Oddly, reader Jim Ludwig tells us that *Bulls-Eye* #7 (Aug. 1955), the second S&K Charlton issue, "is pretty violent, with lots of tomahawks present."



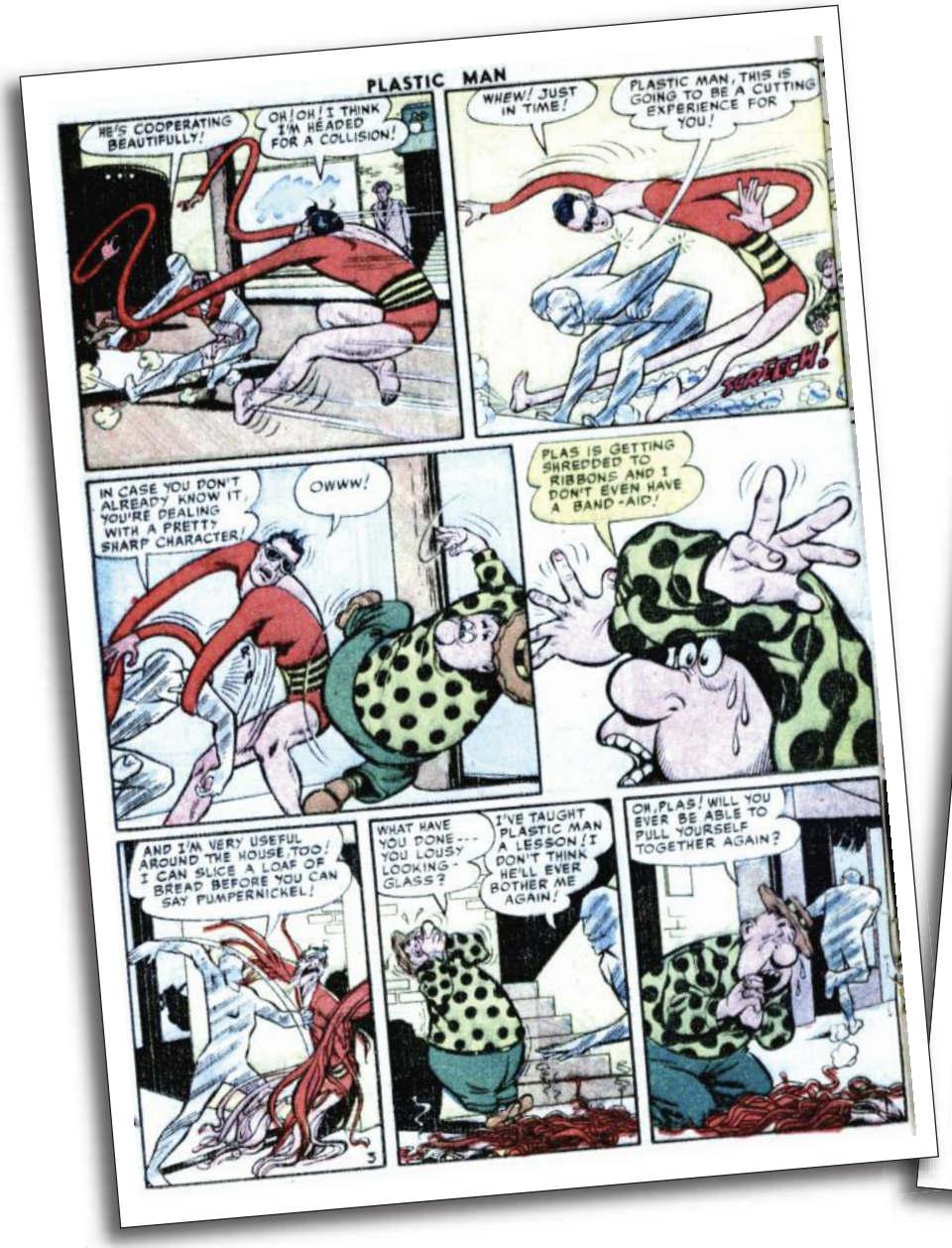
[©2011 Joe Simon and estate of Jack Kirby.]

Orientation Alert!

Because so many of the "Color-Coded" examples require comparing one page or set of panels with another, we've deemed it best to print the remaining 15 pages of this segment sideways. You have been warned!

Mirror, Mirror…

The pre- and post-Code versions of the third page of the story of "Reflecto the Astonishing Mirror Man," reportedly penciled by Andre LeBlanc and inked by Alex Kotzky—first as originally seen in *Plastic Man* #46 (May 1954) from the Quality Comics Group, then as reprinted in toned-down form for its *PM* #63 (July 1956). Scripter unknown. See the aftermath of this battle—both pre-Code and Code versions—on pg. 18. [Plastic Man TM & © 2011 DC Comics.]



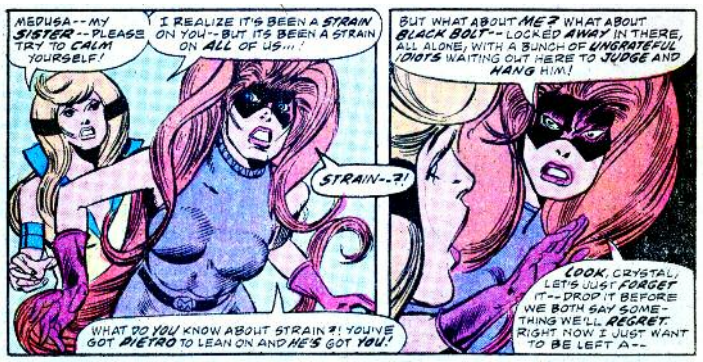
Article continued from pg. 32

The End Of The Comics Code

After *Swamp Thing* dropped the Code and continued to be a success, the Code and its approval became more and more irrelevant to the industry, even though comics and comic publishers continued to be threatened or at least believed themselves threatened with outside censorship. By the early to mid-1980s, with only Marvel, Archie, and DC still publishing new material (Charlton was all reprint at this point, Gold Key dropped newsstand distribution in 1981, and Harvey ceased publication in 1984), new "independent" publishers such as Pacific, Eclipse, First, Comico, and others cropped up. Most of them sold their product through distributors that moved their titles directly to the rapidly expanding comic shops, bypassing the newsstands and, thus, not requiring (or even wanting) the Code seal displayed on their titles. The contents of their comics were often considerably more adult in nature than what the mainstream publishers were used to dealing with. Plus, they sold comics, a lot of them. To compete with the new publishers, Marvel and DC had to loosen up their internal guidelines and produce titles that didn't rely on newsstand distribution or Code restrictions, either.

That's not to say that the lessening of the Code's impact on mainstream comics or the huge market for non-Code-approved books caused threats of censorship to lessen. Even without the Code, comic sellers proved to be squeamish about such things as "women problems" (as they were referred to in my household). Non-Code approved books such as *Swamp Thing* #40 (Sept. 1985) by Alan Moore, Steve Bissette, and John Totleben and a "Morrigan Tales" backup story by Charles Vess from *Sabre* #1 (Aug. 1982) caused problems because they dealt with or mentioned menstruation, a topic that apparently caused a lot of men a lot of distress. Most of the women I knew at the time thought the I-don't-want-to-know-about-that-sort-of-thing reaction was more than a little on the silly side. *Sabre* #7 (Dec. 1983) by Don McGregor & Billy Graham and *Miracleman* #9 (June 1986) by Alan Moore and Rick Veitch each devoted an entire issue to childbirth, which also caused heated debate, even though both artists had relied on the famous photos from the 1940s "Miracle of Birth" issue of the relatively conservative *Life* magazine for their reference guides.

The non-Code *Swamp Thing* continued to be the lightning rod of controversy throughout the decade, however, as DC pulled an entire issue (#88) after it had been approved, written, penciled, and lettered, and for which inking had been begun by Tom Sutton when someone in editorial got nervous over the plotline involving Swamp Thing,



15 March 76

Len Darvin
Comics Code Authority
41 East 42nd Street
New York, NY

Dear Len:

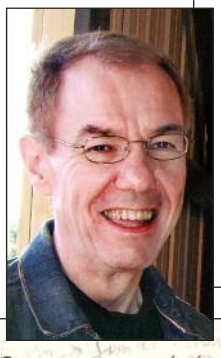
This is to introduce myself as Editor of Marvel Comics, and to open formal communications between us. I look forward to a profitable relationship, in keeping with the relationship Marvel and the Code have maintained in the past.

With reference to a recent code correction on THE INHUMANS, issue #6...you are, of course, perfectly justified in your criticism of possible innuendoes, but I believe personally that this particular interpretation of "Hang him by his..." is rather obscure. For myself, there is no innuendo. Of course, we'll change it according to your specifications--but I believe we're stretching a bit in reading this line as profane.

Later, you comment about use of "son of a--" and in this, I'm not quite sure what you mean. On numerous occassions in the past, Marvel and other companies have used the phrase "son of a gun" without objection from the code, and certainly this is a clearer euphemism than "son of a--". We've also used "son of a--" several times, without objection. Has there been a new ruling about this phrase, or is this something you meant to correct before, but did not? Honestly, I'm not clear about this. It's been my impression that the phrase "son of a" or "sonuva" is totally innocuous.

I'd appreciate hearing your thoughts about this at your earliest convenience, to avoid future confusion.

Cordially,
Gerry Conway
Editor, Marvel Comics



Inhumans — PUBLICATION; 32 — NO. PAGES; #6 — ISSUE; VOL. NO.
Marvel Comics — ASSOCIATION MEMBER; PUBLISHER; 575 Madison Ave. — ADDRESS

COVERS	FORM	RECD	CKD	REVISE	OK'D	PHOT.	REMARKS
FRONT							
2ND							
3RD							
BACK							

Pgs	FEATURES*						
1-32		1/2					CORRECTION: Page 14, Panel 2; "..TO JUDGE AND HANG HIM BY HIS.." This is a possible profane innuendo. Please stop at "HANG HIM," Period, or extend to "BY HIS NECK". NOTE: Similar innuendoes in the past, such as "MOTHER---" and "SON OF A----" have brought criticism. Please avoid them!

The Inhuman Condition

Writer Gerry Conway (photo) served as Marvel's editor-in-chief for only a few weeks in 1976, but it was long enough for the above exchange of letters/notes with Code head Len Darvin over phraseology in *The Inhumans* #6 (Aug. '76). Interesting that by now the Code was willing to accept the wording "hang him by his neck," as well as the "hang him!" that actually got printed (see top of page)—but not an interrupted harangue that would've left unspecified the precise part of Black Bolt's anatomy by which he might be hanged. Script by Doug Moench, art by Gil Kane & Frank Chiaramonte. Thanks to Barry Pearl & the generous soul who sent us the note exchange; we regret we misplaced your name. [Marvel art © 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

who was undergoing a journey through time and meeting many of the historical DC characters, becoming the wood for the cross of Jesus Christ. There is speculation that the conservative Christian response to the then-current film *The Last Temptation of Christ* was a factor. DC pulled the entire issue, even though by this time they'd already published equally graphic (if not more so) material dealing with violent murder and rape in *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, the infamous beating/crucifixion scene of Black Canary in *Green Arrow: The Longbow Hunters*, the rest-stop mass murder scene in the first *Sandman* arc, and more.

As publishers took two giant steps forward and then one back in the quest for what was appropriate in the moral climate of the day, the Code came to be seen as more and more irrelevant, as each publisher searched for consistent ways to police its own titles, whether Code-approved or not. Still, the Comic Code Seal of Approval continued to appear on most newsstand comics throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

The Code was revised for a third and last time in 1989. Oddly enough, the initial opportunity to make further revisions in the Code was prompted by the knowledge that the printed copies of the 1971 revision were running out. The publishers were requested to consider any changes to the Code that they might want to make before reprinting the Code regulations [Nyberg, *SOA*, p. 146]. By this time most of the independent publishers were bypassing Code approval. Both DC and Marvel published titles that were non-Code-approved. The 1989 version of the Code placed much less emphasis on crime and horror comics, which had been the main focus of the 1954 and 1971 versions. The concern in the late 1980s and early 1990s was extreme violence and sex, possibly brought on by the wave of "dark" mainstream comics that cropped up in the wake of Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*. The initial Code revision was rejected, however, since some publishers considered it too liberal and others disliked the fact that it was still specifically banning certain topics. A second version was completed that offered guidelines but did not include lists of specific things that could or could not appear in comics. Apparently, a second section of the guidelines was intended for the eyes of the publishers only and was not included in the new booklet. In that section the publishers were reminded that comics displaying the Code seal were intended to be the equivalent of the motion picture industry's "G" rating and that publishers should take care on which titles they intended to have the Code Seal appear [Nyberg, *SOA*, pg. 150-151].

Marvel dropped the Code in 2001 over strong objections from the other remaining members of the Comics Magazine Association of America. Nothing earthshaking happened, either to Marvel or in public opinion. Although the seal continued to appear on covers, the practice of submitting pages to the Code office for approval appears to have stopped sometime in 2008 or 2009. DC and Archie, the last two publishers who were still subscribing to the Code and displaying its seal on their covers, dropped it in favor of their own internal self-policing systems in 2011. A few of DC's February 2011 and Archie's April 2011 titles were apparently the last to display the Code seal.

An Art Style To Make You Turn Green

One of artist Kevin O'Neill's pages for *Green Lantern Corps Annual* #2 (1986)—a comics story that had been rejected months earlier because of its allegedly "unsuitable" art style; see p. 32 text. Script by Alan Moore. Thanks to Richard Arndt. [© 2011 DC Comics.]

Some Lasting Effects

The Comics Code was probably necessary and likely saved the comics industry at a time of extreme political and social pressure in the mid-1950s. However, that act of salvation came at extreme cost. The most mature and adult leaning publisher, EC, soon stopped publishing four-color comics. Atlas/Marvel, although not immediately affected in terms of quantity, saw its more mature titles dropped, including the excellent *Menace*, which was a title that combined social commentary with horror and shock stories in the EC vein; the stories written by Stan Lee, in particular, were nearly as strong and hard-hitting as EC's celebrated tales. The crime genre vanished completely. So did most of the horror genre, although the Code still allowed the much tamer "mystery" stories to appear.

The Western genre became even more childish than it might have originally seemed, at exactly the same time as both film and TV Westerns started seriously reaching for more mature themes, spelling the genre's eventual doom. The romance genre was gutted. Nothing that resembled anything a real teenager might experience was allowed anymore. Even though the lovers in the stories looked like full-grown adults, most of these characters seemed to have no clue whatsoever on how to deal with an actual relationship. No comics that tried to show real problems and possible solutions to them were allowed under the Code, and although the genre stumbled along until the mid-1970s, it eventually withered and died.

As for real horror, the genuine article that EC, Atlas, Harvey, Fawcett, Charlton, Standard, and a dozen or so other publishers delivered before the Code, it vanished from comics for a decade. Oh, it popped up here and there. As mentioned earlier, John Stanley wrote two excellent 1962 horror comics—*Ghost Stories* #1 and the 80-page *Tales from the Tomb* #1—through Dell, which didn't adhere to the Code. Most of the artwork is terrible, but Stanley's stories still stand up and at least one tale—"The Monster of Dread End"—is a genuine classic of the genre. However, when *Ghost Stories* #2 came out, Stanley was gone and the stories considerably neutered. Atlas/Marvel published some fun monster stories by the likes of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, and Don Heck, but they weren't really scary, with the exception of some of the Lee/Ditko tales, and that more because of Ditko's eerie, moody drawings, rather than the actual story. "Mystery" tales appeared from both Code (DC, Charlton, ACG) and non-Code publishers (Dell and Gold Key), but they were usually tame to the point of boredom. It wasn't until 1964, when James Warren bypassed the Comics Code Authority by publishing the black-&-white magazine *Creepy*, that horror returned

"You Have To Earn Your Talent Through Discipline"

Artist CAL MASSEY Talks Candidly About His Comics Career

Conducted by Jim Amash Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

INTERVIEWER'S INTRO: *Cal Massey's comic book career, like many others of the 1950s, was cut short by the decline of the medium. He worked for Cross Publications, Lev Gleason, St. John, and Timely before moving on to the advertising world and book illustration. He was also the first medal designer for the Franklin Mint, and eventually settled into a career in fine arts. His paintings have been widely exhibited in many galleries. Still active as a painter, Cal Massey reaches out to his audience with thought and power during these difficult times, his message as potent as ever.* **—Jim.**

"You Probably Have Heard Of Him —Joe Maneely "

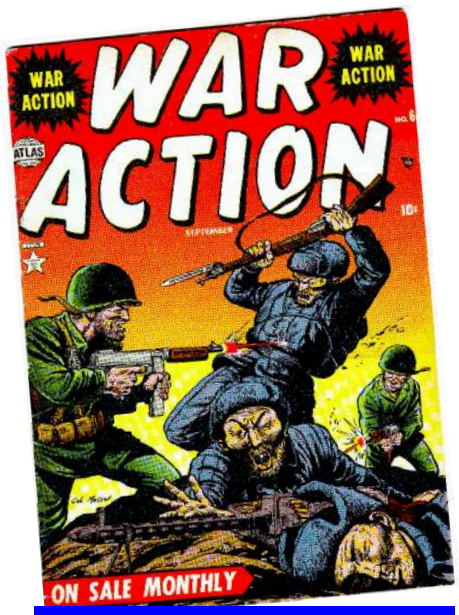
JIM AMASH: *Well, I'll start with the easy question, which is when and where were you born?*

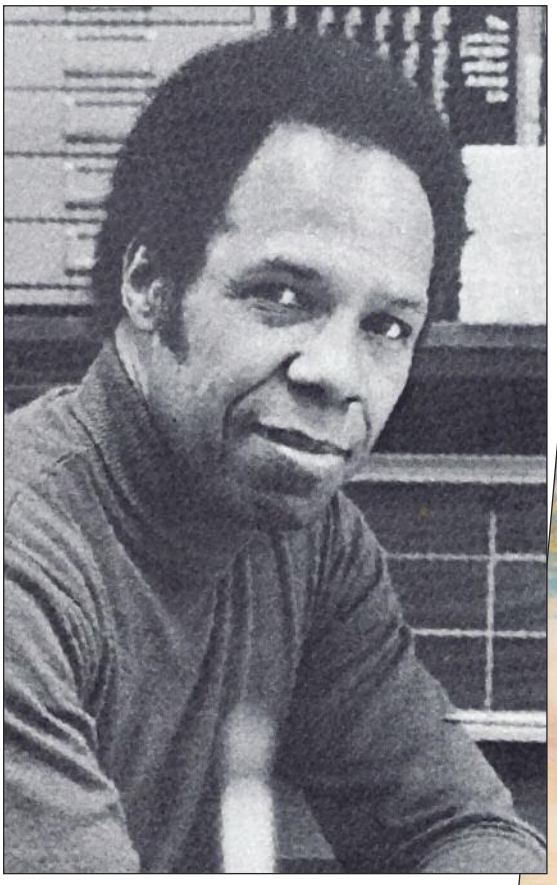
CAL MASSEY: I was born February 1926 in Morton, Pennsylvania, which is a small town outside of Philadelphia. When I was four years old, I discovered the Sunday newspaper comics. My mother told me they were drawn, so I took the Sunday comics, put them up in the window, and let the sun come through pages so I could trace them. [*chuckles*] Of course, I got all the images from both sides of the paper, and it was a mess. So my mother said, "You stupid fool, you have to earn your talent through discipline." And that's how I got interested in drawing.

The next step was just trying to learn to draw. While I was in high school, I met these two incredible twins who could draw with both hands. They were ambidextrous. I wanted to be as good as them. Then I found out that they were idiot savants. After graduating from high school in 1944, I went into the Air Force during World War II for two years; I was a pre-flight mechanic and radio mechanic . Then I came out of the service, and I met a guy named—well, you probably have heard of him—Joe Maneely, whom I met at the Hussion School of Art.

JA: *When you went to art school, did you have a goal in mind of what kind of artist you wanted to be?*

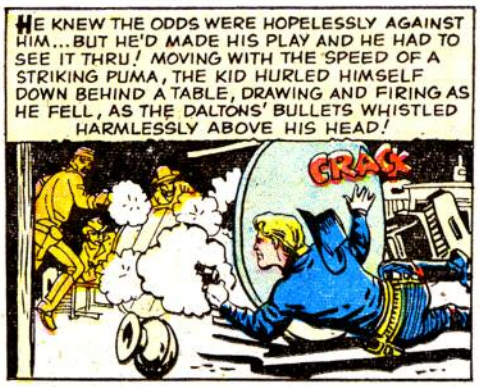
MASSEY: I knew I needed to go to art school; I had to learn how to draw. My goal was to be a comic book illustrator, and I met a wonderful teacher, Leonard Nelson. He separated me from the rest of the students and gave me split-hair criticism. It got to a point where I was kind of sick of it, you





Cal Massey In War And Peace

The artist—flanked by his cover for Timely/Atlas' *War Action* #6 (Sept. 1952) and one of his later paintings, this one depicting an angel. Scans of the photo and painting were provided by Cal; thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo for the cover. [Cover © 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.; photo & painting © 2011 the respective copyright holders.]



Go West, Young Maneely

Joe Maneely as a young Navy artist in the mid-1940s, a year or three before his first comic book work in 1948—and panels from a "Kid Colt" story provided by Dr. Michael J. Vassallo. Before his untimely death in 1958, Maneely produced a decade's worth of skilled and oft-spectacular comic art. Thanks to daughter Nancy Maneely and Doc V. for the photo, and to Doc for the art scan. [Panels © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

know? I asked him why he stayed on me, and not anybody else. Mr. Nelson said, "You've got a rare gift. So rare, I don't want to see you lose it." And then I understood [why he was tough on me]. I knew he was what I was looking for. He would clip out the best comic strip features, like Alex Raymond's *Rip Kirby* and Will Eisner's *Spirit*, among others. He told me, "These guys can draw, but all your answers are in my class. You can't draw a shoe unless you know what the foot looks like." The average student would get one day of life drawing. I got three days of life drawing, one day of composition, and one day of illustration. Mr. Nelson and another teacher, Mr. Hussion (who owned the school), designed a course for me. Instead of getting all the other things like lettering and layout, they gave me the course structure I previously mentioned.

"Maneely… Suggested I Go Visit St. John"

JA: *Tell me about Joe Maneely.*

MASSEY: Oh, he was really suave. Joe Maneely also had a studio in the same building that the art school was in, and he was an incredible artist. Joe was working for Magazine Management, which owned Marvel [then known as Timely]. He was on the G.I. Bill, like most of the rest of us were. He'd come to work in a white shirt and a tie, while the rest of us wore t-shirts. He'd go into the life drawing classes with his sketch pad and do the most beautiful drawings . He had total recall. He could draw a .45 without reference. My contact with him was limited. We talked off and on about the comic book business, and it was Joe who recommended that I talk to Stan Lee at Timely. Many of the students were very jealous of him, because he not only drew so well, but he was already making a living in the comic book business. He was the star! I remember talking to him when I was turning work in at Timely, and we'd talk shop, we'd talk about World War II and current events. I was shocked when I heard the news of his death.

Each year, one student won an award for best draftsmanship. I won it in 1948, '49, and '50. I graduated from the school in 1950, but in '49, I started

A Cross To Bear

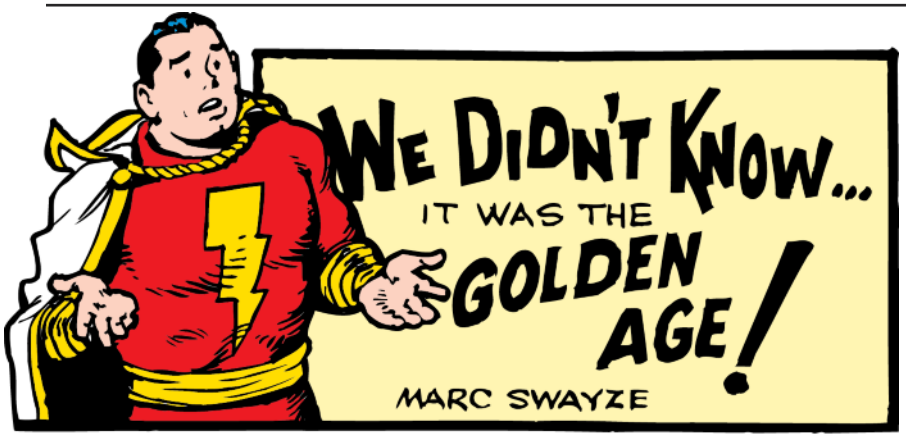
Massey's first comics work seems to have appeared in Cross Publishing's *The Perfect Crime*, for which he drew both generic cops-and-robbers yarns and the series "Steve Duncan." Above are splashes from issues #3 (June 1950) and #27 (Aug. '52). Thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo & Jim Ludwig, respectively. [© 2011 the respective copyright holders.]

ABE KANEGSON'S REMARKABLE LETTERING ON WILL EISNER'S *SPIRIT* ELEVATED THE ART FORM TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL. ABE, A VICTIM OF *LEUKEMIA*, PASSED AWAY IN 1965 AT AGE 44, LEAVING BEHIND A WIFE, *ELIZABETH*, AND TWO SONS, *BEN AND ANDRAS*.

UNTIL RECENTLY, LITTLE WAS KNOWN ABOUT THIS *TALENTED* ARTIST. BUT WE'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT LOTS MORE! JOIN US AS WE TALK WITH ABE'S SON, *BEN*, AND *RITA PERLIN*, ABE'S SISTER!

ABE KANEGSON "THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING LETTERER!" (PT. 4)

PROFESSIONAL PHOTO OF ABE TAKEN WHILE HE WAS IN HIS 30S. © 2011 RITA PERLIN



[Art & logo ©2011 Marc Swayze; Captain Marvel © & TM 2011 DC Comics]

[***FCA* EDITORS NOTE:** *From 1941-53, Marcus D. Swayze was a top artist for Fawcett Publications. The very first Mary Marvel character sketches came from Marc's drawing table, and he illustrated her earliest adventures, including the classic origin story, "Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel (*Captain Marvel Adventures *No. 18, Dec. '42); but he was primarily hired by Fawcett Publications to illustrate Captain Marvel stories and covers for* Whiz Comics *and* Captain Marvel Adventures. *He also wrote many Captain Marvel scripts, and continued to do so while in the military. After leaving the service in 1944, he made an arrangement with Fawcett to produce art and stories for them on a freelance basis out of his Louisiana home. There he created both art and stories for The Phantom Eagle in* Wow Comics, *in addition to drawing the* Flyin' Jenny *newspaper strip for Bell Syndicate (created by his friend and mentor Russell Keaton). After the cancellation of* Wow, *Swayze produced artwork for Fawcett's top-selling line of romance comics, including* Sweethearts *and* Life Story. *After the company ceased publishing comics, Marc moved over to Charlton Publications, where he ended his comics career in the mid-'50s. Marc's ongoing professional memoirs have been a vital part of* FCA *since his first column appeared in* FCA *#54 (1996). Last time we concluded the final installment of John G. Pierce's discussion with Marc from* Comics Interview *#122 (1993). This time around, I talked with Marc about my all-time, unparalleled favorite Swayze illustration.*
—P.C. Hamerlinck.]

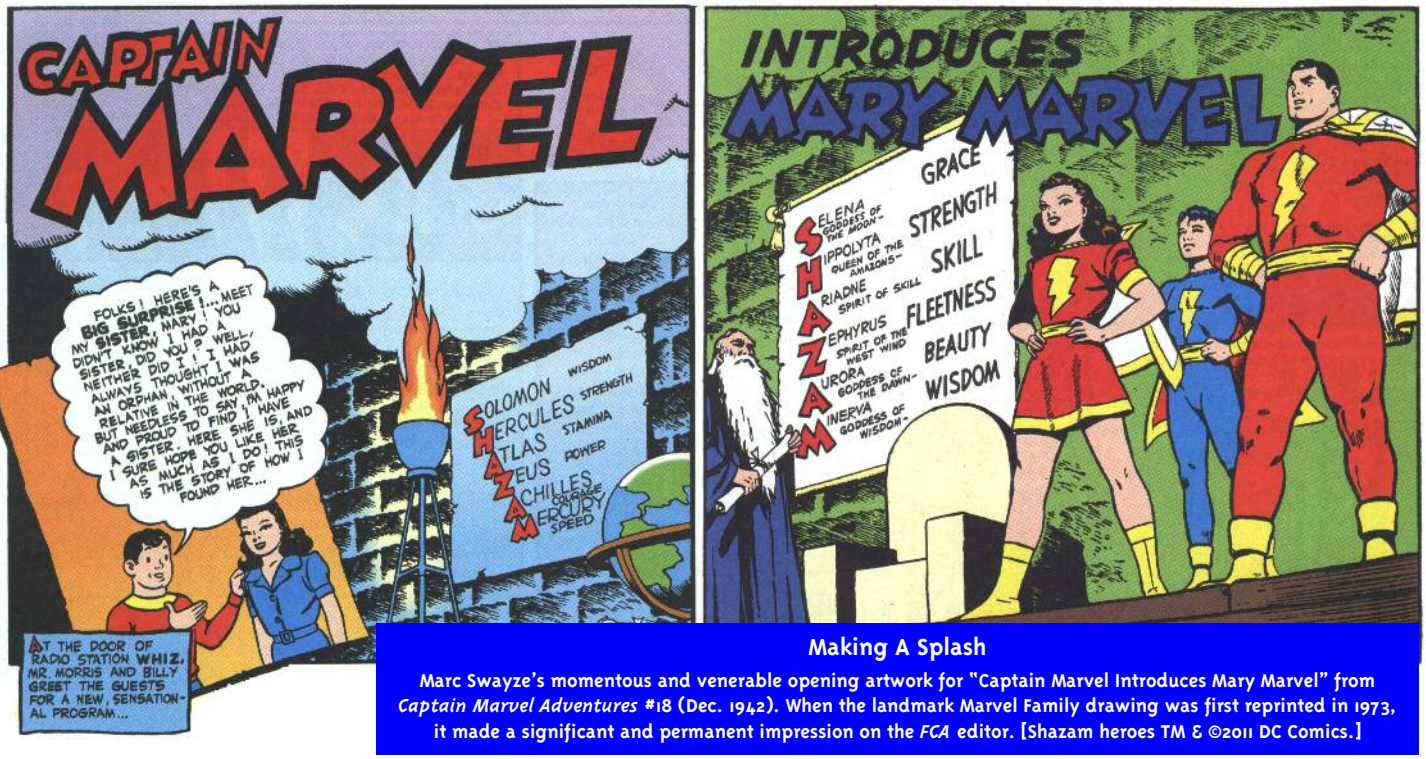
Introduction by P.C. Hamerlinck

Inside a torch-illuminated, stone-blocked underground dwelling, an elderly, Biblical-looking figure, holding an ancient scroll confidently gazed upon the three prodigious mortals positioned boldly before him. The majestic scene—the first ever interior panel to depict all three members of the Marvel Family together—was captured with profound solemnity, epic brilliance, and applied with cinematographic artistry… and, to this day, perseveres its emotive power as much as it did when I first fixed my eyes on it at eleven years of age.

Twenty years before I owned my well-read copy of *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Dec. '42), I had first assimilated its lead story—"Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel"—judiciously reprinted within the pages of *Shazam!* #8 (Dec. 1973). As an overwhelming majority of our readers are already familiar with that memorable origin tale, I won't go into specifics; I will say that—super-heroics notwithstanding—Billy Batson's pivotal reunion with his long-lost twin sister remains one of the more poignant and moving moments in the rich Shazam mythology. After further cogitating this compelling chronicle, there was another equally extraordinary aspect about it… its illustrations… and that mesmerizing aforesaid opening panel! Whose drawing board did it spring from?

I was a perceptive-enough kid in '73 to know that, with some similarities aside, it wasn't the work of C.C. Beck. I would soon immerse myself in initial interviews in *Steranko's History of Comics* (as well as in an early *FCA*) of a man who later referred to himself as "the most forgotten of the unknowns, or the most unknown of the forgottens." I had found my mystery artist!

Flash-forward to August, 1994. After tucking in my 10-month-old son, I dash a letter off to Mr. Marc Swayze. Would he join forces with me in my mad mission to resurrect *FCA*? A lot of correspondence (and "We Didn't Know…" memoirs) have taken place since, with the artist appreciative of my "patience" in continuing to write to "the worst correspondent ever to pick up a pen, as Rod Reed said, and Wendell Crowley concurred."



Making A Splash

Marc Swayze's momentous and venerable opening artwork for "Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Dec. 1942). When the landmark Marvel Family drawing was first reprinted in 1973, it made a significant and permanent impression on the *FCA* editor. [Shazam heroes TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]