ROY THOMAS' ELECTRIFYING COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

THE GALVANIC GLORY OF LEE HARRIS

GOLDEN AGE ARTIST OF...

TWOMORROWS

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Al Plastino
& Larry Ivie

Contents

On Our Cover: Harris Levey, *who drew comics for several years under the name* **Lee Harris**, *was the original artist who brought the imaginative super-hero Air Wave (not to mention his aphorism-spouting parrot Static) to life in the pages of National/DC's* Detective Comics, *in the long shadow cast by Batman and Robin. He may also have been the first cartoonist ever to draw his own caricature in a comic book (see p. 5). A later self-portrait of Levey/Harris, from* Detective *#70 (Dec. 1942), adorns the cover of this issue of* Alter Ego, *along with images from several other "Air Wave" splash pages, with thanks to Doug Martin & Dale Roberts—and to layout man Christopher Day, who put them all together. The 1940s scripters and colorists, alas, are unidentified. [© DC Comics.]*

Above: *The "Air Wave" splash page by* **Lee Harris/Harris Levey** *for* Detective Comics *#129 (Nov. 1947) is reproduced from a tearsheet kept by the artist and scanned for us by his son Jonathan Levey. We could have sent out a call for a copy in better shape—but we liked the idea of using a page torn from an old comic book by the guy who drew it. Scripter unknown. [© DC Comics.]*

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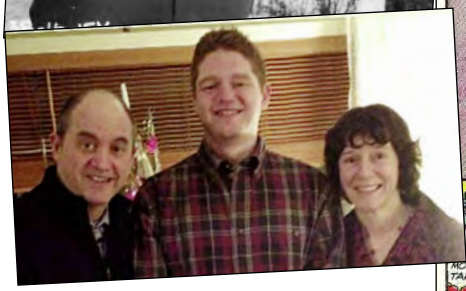
FIRST PRINTING.

The (Air) Wave Of The Future!

JONATHAN LEVEY Remembers His Father HARRIS LEVEY, AKA Golden Age Artist LEE HARRIS

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Richard J. Arndt



A Family Takes To The "Air Waves"

Golden Age comics artist Lee Harris (real name for most of his life = Harris Levey) in a photo self-portrait taken in 1945 at age 24 (top left)—and his son, Jonathan Levey, seen with his family (wife Monique and son Samuel), from their 2013 Christmas card—flanking the former's "Air Wave" splash page done for *Detective Comics* #68 (Oct. 1942). Thanks to Jonathan Levey and Doug Martin, respectively. [Page © DC Comics.]

INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION: *Golden Age artist Harris Levey (1921-1984) assumed the name "Lee Harris" when he began his career in the Eisner & Iger comics shop circa 1938-39. In 1940, through that studio, he worked for publisher Victor Fox at Fox Comics, doing spot illustrations and drawing "Super Sleuth" and "The Flame." Later that year, he moved to MLJ Comics (later to become Archie Comics), where he drew "The Green Falcon." From there he moved to DC Comics, where in 1941 he co-created, with editor Mort Weisinger, the super-hero feature "Air Wave," drew that character's adventures till 1943 along with at least one adventure of "Lando, Man of Magic," and may have provided inking on both "Batman" and "The Star-Spangled Kid." After military service during World War II, Levey/Harris returned to DC and "Air Wave" from 1946-1948, following which he ended his comics career. This interview was conducted on Feb. 4 & 19, 2012, with his son Jonathan Levey.*

"A Lot of Early Comics Professionals… Graduated From DeWitt Clinton"

RICHARD ARNDT: *Jonathan, can you tell us a little about your father's background?*

JONATHAN LEVEY: My dad's father was Joseph Levey. Joseph worked in the garment industry in Manhattan, primarily for a hat manufacturer. Dad's mom was Nan Rifkin. He had a sister, Dorothy, who was a few years his senior. I never knew his mom or dad. Dad married my mom, Elinor Seidl, in 1955 and they had two sons, myself in 1956 and Theodore in 1960.

Dad was born August 13, 1921, and grew up in the Bronx. He attended DeWitt Clinton High School there. DeWitt Clinton turned out some students that would later be very famous. Leonard Stern, who was a TV producer, and many other famous people, but probably the biggest in the comics world was Stan Lee. He and Dad were a year apart, from what I understand. Dad was the older of the two. Both of them worked on the school newspaper, as far as I know. The newspaper was called *The Clinton News*, but there was also some kind of school literary publication called *The Magpie*. My dad did illustrations for both magazines. After graduation, Dad went to live in, I think, Lake George to do sketching, caricatures as a summer job.

Dad was very close with his mom, and she died when he was in his teens. During her illness, when she was in the hospital, he went to live with his aunt and uncle in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. I

remember going on a tour with my dad to see his old childhood haunts and seeing the high school in Wilkes-Barre that he attended. He did theatre work there, and somewhere there's a photo of him playing a prince of some sort. He was stretched out, playing dead. My dad had a comic side to him, a theatrical side. He also told me that during that time he drew pictures of boxing matches for the local papers. That was another way he earned money as a youth.

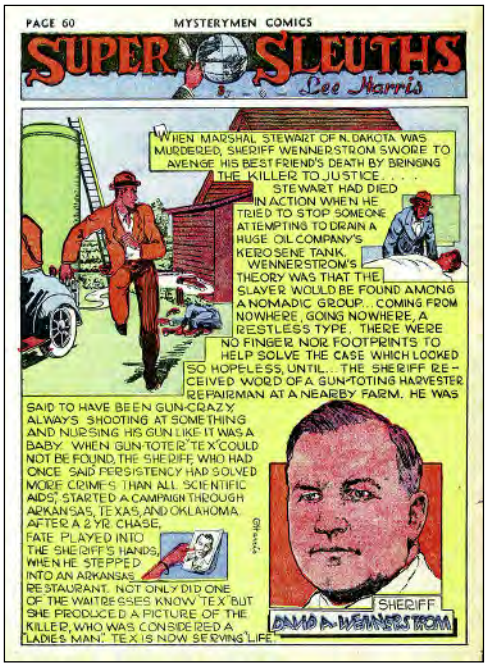
He eventually went back to the Bronx, although I don't know if his mom was still alive at the time or not, but if she was, she died soon after. It seems that at the end of his junior year he went back and finished up his schooling at DeWitt. Because of all this moving about, he actually graduated a year *after* Stan Lee, in 1940, although Dad was a year older. There were a lot of early comics professionals that graduated from DeWitt Clinton—Bob Kane, Bill Finger, Irwin Hasen, and Will Eisner were also alumni. And there were a lot more in the entertainment field.

Shortly after that, Dad left home and went to work as an assistant to a magician named Dante, who did a traveling magic show called "The Sim Sala Bim." He was a double, on stage, during the show. Dante was one of the most famous magicians of the time. As I recall, Dad's participation in the show was that either he, or his double, would get raised up in a basket over the audience. It was a locked-up sort of cage, suspended over their heads, and then somehow, in a flash of light, my Dad or the double would end up on the stage. One of his other jobs was to feed the lion, who was also part of the act. He apparently did the show for about a year. It's interesting to me, because I've done magic all my life. In fact, on weekends I perform magic shows as a sideline.

School Days, School Daze

This photo shows Harris Levey "as an 18-year-old, sitting with artwork at a table located in DeWitt Clinton High School. Seems he was drawing a poster for an upcoming (Jan. 1940) Class Nite dance party." Thanks to Jonathan Levey.

I think Dad started in comics at a studio run by Jerry Iger. Jerry Bails reported some information about this for his [1970s print] *Who's Who of American Comics*. According to Bails' research, Dad also worked for Victor Fox and Fox Comics on something called "Famous Detectives" and then at Archie [then still MLJ] before he worked for DC. At Archie, he worked on "The Green Falcon." Sometime in 1941 he went to work for DC. I know he worked on something called "Star-Spangled…"



Famous Fuzz

The earliest feature done by "Lee Harris," probably while working for Jerry Iger's comic shop, consisted of the "Famous Detectives"/"Super Sleuths" one-pagers seen above. "Famous Detectives" started out in Fiction House's *Jumbo Comics* #1 (Sept. 1938)—and its sketch of Harris interviewing the detective (blown up in insert) means he was one of the earliest cartoonists to depict himself in a comic book. The feature then jumped to Fox's *Mystery Men*, where it soon changed its name. The *Jumbo* page is reproduced from Blackthorne's 1985 black-&-white reprinting of issue #1; the other pair of pages are from *Mystery Men* #3 & #4 (Oct. & Nov. 1939). Chances are that Harris/Levey also scripted these. Thanks to Jonathan Levey. [© the respective copyright holders.]

"Green Falcon, Green Falcon, Riding Through The Glen..."

(Above:) "The Green Falcon" (scripter unknown) was an odd strip, in which the Falcon seems to be standing in for Robin Hood, fighting the evil Prince John, romancing "Maid Marion" [sic], and carousing with comrades like Jolly Roundfellow and Tuck, obvious stand-ins for Friar Tuck and Little John, respectively. Seen here are the first and last of its six pages from MLJ's *Blue Ribbon Comics* #8 (Dec. 1940), with thanks to Jim Kealy. Scripter unknown. [© the respective copyright holders.]

"I Just Want To Start A *Flame* In Your Heart"

(Above:) During this period, Lee Harris also drew this story for Victor Fox's *The Flame* #1 (Summer 1940), doing a pretty fair job of emulating the establishing work of Lou Fine on that hero in *Wonderworld Comics*. Harris/Levey may also have done some "Flame" stories in the latter title after Fine departed. Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [© the respective copyright holders.]

"That Tarantula Drawing Of Dad's Is A Mystery"

RA: Star Spangled Comics *was a DC title that featured The Star-Spangled Kid and his adult sidekick, Stripesy.*

LEVEY: Yes, that's it. Though he wasn't the penciler there, he did inking on "The Star-Spangled Kid."

I sent Roy a sketch Dad did of Tarantula, a character Dad told me he created or helped create. Dad's sketch is dated April 24, 1941. There's even a copyright sign on the drawing. There's a bit of a mystery surrounding it, I guess. I can't be certain that Dad actually worked on the "Tarantula" strip [that saw print], but one of the reasons I'm doing this interview is to see if anybody out there has more information on the sketch and to what extent my Dad was actually involved in the creation of Tarantula.

RA: *When I was doing some of the research for this article, I noticed that some of the gimmicks, the gadgets that the published version of "Tarantula" had, were similar to the gadgets that Air Wave used.*

LEVEY: I didn't notice that relationship.

RA: *Both of them could walk up the side of buildings, somewhat like the later Spider-Man. The Tarantula used suction boots. Air Wave used some kind of magnetic current that allowed him to walk up drainpipes.*

LEVEY: Well, Roy pointed out to me that this sketch features a full-masked character, while the DC version, which first appeared in Oct. 1941, doesn't wear [a full mask]. The Tarantula that my Dad drew seems to suggest some of the origin of how Tarantula came to be, but I don't know if Dad's version matches the published "Tarantula." So that Tarantula drawing of Dad's is a mystery I hope someday to solve.

I have vague memories of Dad telling me he worked with Stan Lee, although I don't think extensively. I'm also not sure if he was referring to his high school days on the news staff or if it was something later, in the professional comics. It came up in a conversation we had because I'd seen Stan Lee at my college. It's interesting that they went to the same school at the same time.

Dad also mentioned that he worked on "Batman." I thought he might have done some drawings of Batman, but apparently it was inking that he did prior to the war, maybe even after, I just don't know.

Star-Spangled Banter

(Above:) Hal Sherman was the artist of the "Star-Spangled Kid" strip that led off the unhyphenated *Star Spangled Comics* beginning with the first issue (Oct. 1941). Jonathan recalls his father telling him that he had inked the feature at some time. The writer was Jerry Siegel, co-creator of "Superman." Thanks to Doug Martin. [© DC Comics.]

Action Comics In *Detective Comics*

(Above:) Harris/Levey's second and third "Air Wave" splash pages, from *Detective Comics* #61 & 62 (March & April 1942), repro'd from the artist's tearsheets, and an action page from the latter. The Grand Comics Database credits later major "Batman" inker Charles Paris with the inking of these stories—and wonders if DC editor Murray Boltinoff may have written them. Thanks to Jonathan Levey & Bob Bailey. [© DC Comics.]

Harris Returns To The Air Waves

Harris began drawing "Air Wave" again with *Detective Comics* #113 (July 1946). Scripter unknown. Thanks to Jonathan Levey. [© DC Comics.]

Palace of Justice Hall in Washington, D.C., and he's listening to a trial—but he's not just listening to the trial, he's projecting the words that will win the case to the lawyer! It's amazing because that technology exists today!

RA: *I noticed that, after Air Wave ended his run, DC modified some of his powers for other characters. Air Wave used to travel along the phone lines using the electricity from the phone calls to power his skates. The 1960s Atom traveled along the phone lines as well, only he used to shrink down and actually hitch a ride on the electricity flow inside the phone cables.*

LEVEY: Airwave used skates, though… collapsible skates.

RA: *Yes, sort of like the skates that kids use today. Skates hidden inside their tennis shoes.*

LEVEY: I'm not saying my Dad had any inkling about how the Internet would come about or anything. But to the end of his life he was always interested in the new forms of communication and the technology that was being developed to transmit it. I think that interest shows up strongly in "Air Wave." He had a bit of a vision in that way. He liked to get creative in his artwork, in the studio, when he was coming up with ideas. Dad was very much a creative force during what today would be called the "Mad Men" age.

"Who Rubbed Out The Editor?"

RA: *One of the things I noticed when I was doing research for an article on the Comics Code was that early super-heroes, those of the 1930s/early 1940s, were considered by conservative elements to be extremely liberal. Many of those heroes were members of law enforcement or the legal system who became super-heroes to get around the laws that seemed to them to protect or be insufficient to deal with the criminals. Today, ironically, that exact process or mindset would be considered extremely conservative! Things change over the years in odd ways. Jack Kirby's Guardian [in DC's "Newsboy Legion"] was, in his everyday life, a beat cop. Then, after work, he'd don his super-hero togs and go out to battle crime, not bothering with pesky search warrants or anything like that. Your dad's creation, Air Wave, was a clerk for a district attorney, at least when he started out, and became an actual D.A. later in his run.*

LEVEY: Yes, Air Wave became a full-fledged D.A. when his boss got rubbed out by the mob. I really wasn't aware of that aspect of super-heroes, though.

There is something, though, that I'd like to make sure comes up in this interview. Dad worked, late in his run on "Air Wave," on a story called "The City of Glass" [*Detective Comics* #136, June 1948]. He only did one more story after that, at least, according to the Grand Comics Database.

Anyway, the "City of Glass" story was cited or, at least referred to, as being very futuristic in the architectural lines of the buildings; and, of course, glass buildings were just beginning to be seen or talked about back then. It was, I think, an exciting thing to see in print. The stories, and it wasn't just "Air Wave" but a lot of comic stories, featured robots long before they became a reality.

Another story I'd like to see mentioned is one where Dad drew himself into the story. It was *Detective Comics* #70 (Dec. 1942) and

Rocketeering

Harris' "Air Wave" splash from *Detective Comics* #118 (Dec. 1946). Thanks to Doug Martin. [© DC Comics.]

Maybe All Those Characters Were Featured In *Defective* Comics?

This oddest of "Air Wave" yarns, "Who Rubbed Out the Editor?," appeared in *Detective Comics* #70 (Dec. 1942), and involved the murders of the editors of "Keen Arrow," "Sunburned Kid," and "Showerman" from magazines published by Kolossal Komics. Harris/Levey drew himself on the splash page, but it's probable that the editors in the story are also caricatures. Thanks to Doug Martin & Dale Roberts for these pages. [© DC Comics.]

was called "Who Rubbed Out the Editor?" The splash page shows my Dad's portrait of himself, sitting at his DC art table, and Air Wave is popping out of the page he's working on. I'm not sure if this concept was used prior to this, although I gather it's been done a number of times since.

RA: *Yes, you sent me a copy of that page. That's your dad at the art table?*

LEVEY: Yes, although someone else wrote about that story and said it was a different artist, which wasn't the case. You can look at it and see the similarities with my Dad.

RA: *I'm sure if he was drawing the strip and the script called for the artist of the strip to be present, he would have drawn himself.*

LEVEY: Exactly. I do like the way Air Wave is popping off the comic's page. I think that is kind of interesting. Woody Allen did something similar to this in his movie *Purple Rose of Cairo*. I suspect other people did this sort of thing before my Dad, if not in comics then maybe comic strips. I really have no idea. It's a nice splash page, though, and another glimpse of my Dad.

RA: *Even Woody Allen wasn't the first in movies to do that. Buster Keaton featured that notion in his* Sherlock, Jr. *movie in 1924. The notion wasn't new, but it wasn't all that common, either. I don't know if*

Seal Of Approval: The History Of The Comics Code

Chapter 2 Of Our Serializing Of The 1998 Work On Comic Book Censorship

by Amy Kiste Nyberg

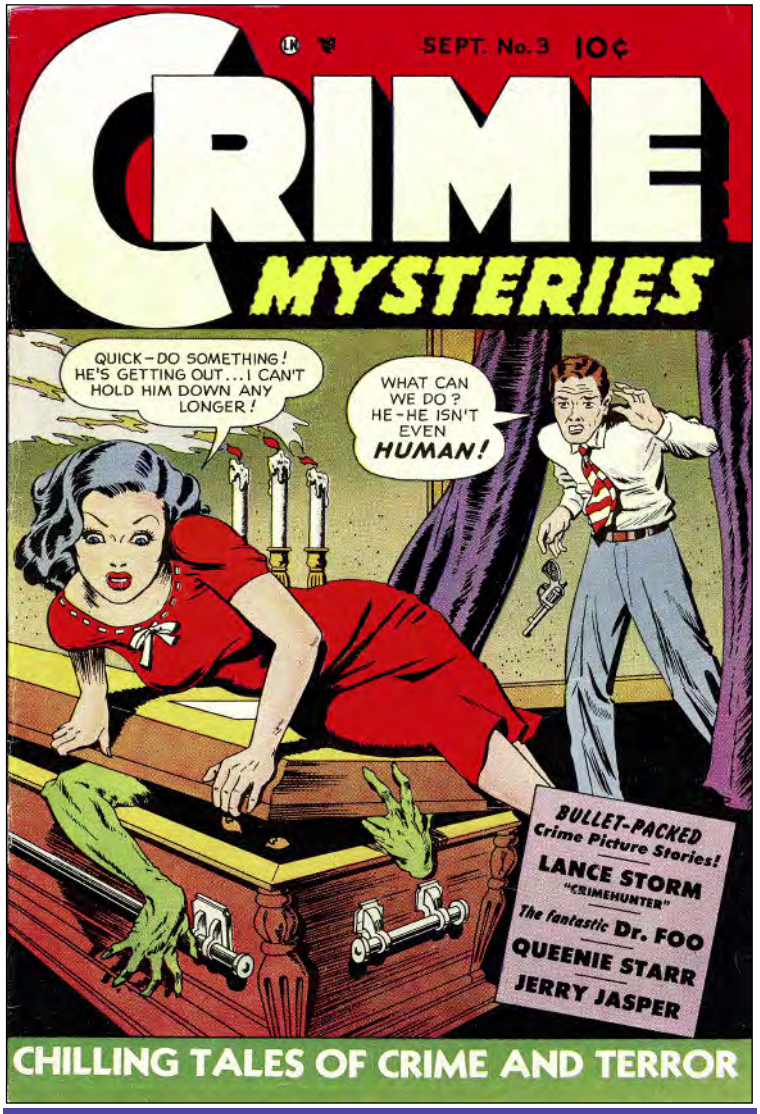
A/E

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *For the past two issues, we have been reprinting the above-named book, by kind permission of the original publisher, University Press of Mississippi, with thanks to William Biggins and Vijah Shah, acquisitions editors, and with special thanks to Dr. M. Thomas Inge, under whose general editorship the volume was originally published in 1998 as part of its Studies in Popular Culture series. The original print edition can still be obtained from the University Press of Mississippi at* **www.upress.state.ms.us**. *It is our aim to print the text of Dr. Nyberg's book with the addition of photos and illustrations not in the original. Dr. Amy Kiste Nyberg is Associate Professor of Communications in the Department of Communication and the Arts at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey.*

Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code, *being an academic work on comic book censorship, is extensively footnoted, though in the ALS style which lists book or article or author name, plus page numbers, between parentheses in the actual text: e.g. "(Hart 154-156)" refers to pp. 154-156 of whichever work by an author or editor named Hart is listed in the bibliography—which will appear at the conclusion of our serialization, several issues from now. When the parentheses contain only page numbers, that's because the name of the author, editor, and/or work is printed in the main text almost immediately preceding the note. (In addition, there are a couple of footnotes that are treated as footnotes in the more traditional sense.)*

We have retained such spellings as "superhero," etc., and the non-capitalization of "comics code" as they appear in the published book, even though our A/E *"house style" would render those as "super-hero" and "Comics Code." The book prints "E.C." for one company, "DC," without periods, for another; no big deal. We do, however, revert to our own style in captions, which are written by Ye Editor; naturally, neither Dr. Nyberg nor the University Press of Mississippi is responsible for any error or opinion in said captions. In the very rare instances in which Ye Ed felt a need to correct or at least quibble with a judgment or statement of fact in the main text, that is done—and clearly labeled, we hope—in captions, as well. Oh, and another thank-you to Brian K. Morris for re-typing the entire book specifically for* Alter Ego.

Last issue we re-presented Chapter 1, "Comics, Critics, and Children's Culture," which featured an overview of attempts at censorship of such predecessors of comic books such as dime novels, newspaper comic strips, and motion pictures. The call for censorship of comic books began with literary critic and author Sterling North in 1940, and helped lead to the major companies creating "advisory boards" made up of psychologists, children's book experts, celebrities, and the like. Partly as a result of this early debate, comic books became definitely considered by the general public as intended for and primarily read by children. No serious headway on censoring them was made, however, until after the end of World War II, when publicity about the alleged rise in juvenile delinquency came to the fore….

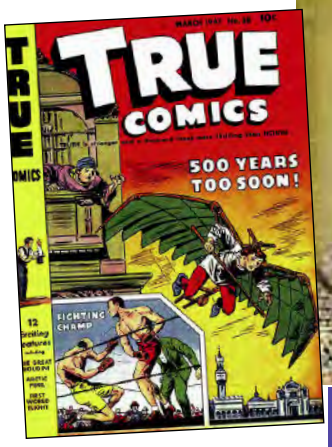


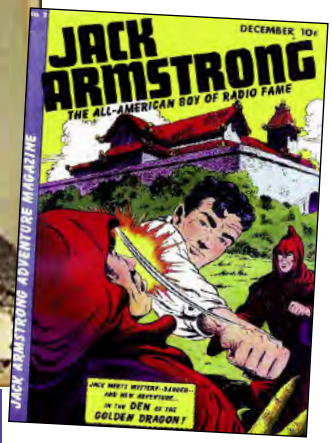
A Coffin Fit

(Clockwise from top left:) Dr. Amy K. Nyberg—the Comics Code Seal adopted in 1954-55—and the cover of Ribage Publications' ***Crime Mysteries*** **#3 (Sept. 1952), a title from an obscure publisher that displayed all three types of subject matter that had the "public" up in arms at the time: a sexy woman, a criminal with a gun, and elements of horror. Artist unknown. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database for most cover art that accompanies this chapter of Nyberg's book. [© the respective copyright holders.]**

Chapter 2
Censorship Strategies

Comic book crusaders fought their battle on two fronts. Critics undertook community decency crusades, often ignited by a Sunday sermon against the evils of comics, suggested by a local librarian who was the guest speaker at a women's club luncheon, or triggered by an article appearing in a popular national magazine or local newspaper. Then, as community crusades gained attention, legislators responded by launching investigations of comic books and proposing legislation to control or stop their distribution. The decency crusaders, although they occasionally invoked city ordinances dealing with obscene material, did not have the force of the law behind their demands. Instead, they relied on negative publicity and its resulting economic consequences as the primary tools in achieving their objectives. Legislators, on the other hand, sought legal remedies by drafting ordinances and statutes that outlawed the sale of certain types of comic books to minors. Such laws could be enforced by police and the courts and violators punished with fines, time in jail, or both.





The Heirs A-*Parents'*

Parents' Magazine **(see cover of 1947 issue), which publicized the post-World War II work of the Committee on the Evaluation of Comic Books, had a few comic mags of its own that received passing marks, including *True Comics* #58 (March '47) and *Jack Armstrong* #2 (Dec. '47). The latter was a popular radio show; its hero was invariably identified as "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy." Artists unknown. [© Parents' Magazine or its successors in interest.]**

The decency crusade has a long history, and one of the earliest crusaders was Anthony Comstock. As a result of his lobbying, Congress passed the first comprehensive obscenity law in 1873, known as the Comstock Act. That fall, Comstock formed the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, an outgrowth of his work for the YMCA begun in 1872. While Comstock was empowered by the state to make arrests under the charter granted to the society, he found the threat of legal action was sufficient in most cases (Boyer 10). His crusade against the dime novels popular in that period can be compared to the campaign against comics some 60 years later (Mark West 43). Like comics, the dime novels really could not be prosecuted under existing statutes, since they were not obscene, so Comstock resorted to economic pressure, urging parents: "Let your newsdealer feel that, in just proportion as he prunes his stock of that which is vicious, your interest in his welfare increases and your patronage becomes more constant" (Comstock 42). These tactics would prove just as effective against comics as they had been against dime novels.

The efforts in the postwar period against comics, however, were much more organized. Crusaders took to the streets in teams, armed with lists of objectionable comic books, visiting local newsstand dealers and urging them to remove the "bad" comics from their stands. These community decency campaigns occurred nationwide and were organized by church groups, women's clubs, parent-teacher associations, and others who heeded the alarm raised about comic books and juvenile delinquency. In most cases, the campaigns were highly successful; retailers visited by such teams agreed to remove whatever titles the crusaders identified as objectionable. The decency campaigns operated in relative isolation, and there was no national effort to organize or coordinate a campaign against comics. But decency campaigns were able to draw upon the work of two groups that reviewed comic books and provided the lists used to purge local newsstands of bad comics. One was the National Office of Decent Literature (later known as the National Organization for Decent Literature), a Catholic Church organization. The other was the Committee on the Evaluation of Comic Books in Cincinnati, whose work was publicized by *Parents' Magazine*.

The Catholic Church's success with the Legion of Decency, which pressured the film industry into enforcing a self-regulatory code and also established a rating system that provided Catholic filmgoers with a list of approved films, led to the establishment of the National Office of Decent Literature in December 1938. NODL was the only pressure group formed to direct attention against literature at the national level (Blanchard 186). In the beginning, NODL was concerned only with magazines and published a list of those it found objectionable, titled "Publications Disapproved for Youth." The organization was concerned with materials available to youth, and it did not pass judgment on adult reading material. The introduction of paperback books and comic books broadened the range of publications available to children and youth at newsstands, and NODL responded by expanding its activities in 1947 to evaluate these publications. The stated goals of the NODL program were to remove objectionable comic books and other publications from the places of distribution accessible to youth, to encourage publishing and distribution of good literature, and to promote plans to develop worthwhile reading habits during formative years (Gardiner 110).

It is interesting to note that the NODL goals incorporated both the "elite" criticism against comics, discussed in the previous chapter, with the criticism of the content of comics. The idea that comics were bad literature and encouraged children to develop undesirable reading habits was still an underlying force in such campaigns. It demonstrates that earlier criticism of comics, instead of being abandoned when the content of comics came under scrutiny, was incorporated into the later campaigns against comics. This helped to forge links between the various groups who objected to comics on different grounds. Although teachers and librarians had an agenda different from that of the morality crusaders from various religious organizations, each saw the campaign as a means to an end. In much the same way, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham would strike an alliance with conservative religious groups, whose objections to comics extended far beyond

the concern with violence to their "moral" content, in order to try to get legislation passed to ban the sale of comics to minors.

The concern with "morality" as well as violent content is reflected in the criteria used by NODL in its reviews of comics. Publications rated as objectionable by NODL exhibited one or more of the following characteristics:

1. glorified crime or the criminal
2. described in detail ways to commit criminal acts
3. held lawful authority in disrespect
4. exploited horror, cruelty, or violence
5. portrayed sex facts offensively
6. featured indecent, lewd or suggestive photographs or illustrations
7. carried advertising which was offensive in content or advertised products which may lead to physical or moral harm
8. used blasphemous, profane or obscene speech indiscriminately and repeatedly
9. held up to ridicule any national, religious or racial group. (Gardiner 110)

Under the NODL procedure, magazine titles were reviewed twice a year. One individual read the magazine, wrote an opinion, and returned it to the national office. Five others reviewed the initial opinion, and if all rated the magazine objectionable, it was placed on the "objectionable" list. The procedure for reviewing books was somewhat more elaborate, and NODL selected reviewers who appreciated "literary values" (Gardiner 111). The organization confined its activity to material available at newsstands and did not investigate libraries or book stores (117). Comic book titles also were evaluated every six months. A committee of 150 mothers, divided into groups of five, received a specified number of comics. Each group member read and rated the comics as either acceptable, borderline, or objectionable. If all five found the comic book acceptable, it was set aside for six months. If, after six months, another group of reviewers also rated the title acceptable, it was placed on the list distributed by NODL of "acceptable" comics (111). NODL published a separate "White List" of acceptable comics, listing unacceptable comics with other "condemned" publications. One typical NODL monthly list contained thirty-five condemned comic books, along with the titles of 440 unacceptable paperbacks and magazines (Blanchard 187).

The NODL lists were made available to the general public; individual parishes were urged not to post the list, however, since the office did not want the list in the hands of adolescents who might be enticed to search out material that the church had condemned. Catholics were urged to use the lists in local decency campaigns. The NODL literature outlined specific procedures for conducting such campaigns. Every two weeks, members of the local committee were to visit each establishment selling magazines, comics, and paperback books. Members were urged to work in teams of two or three, with each team assigned to visit three dealers.

On the first contact, teams were encouraged to explain the purpose of the decency crusade, emphasizing that the goal was to protect "the ideals and morality" of youth. The team gave the dealer a NODL list and got permission to examine his racks at two-week intervals. This inspection, the literature advised, was to be offered as a voluntary "service" to the dealer, with members explaining that they understood that many proprietors simply did not have the time to check their racks. When the team found something objectionable, they were to report it to the manager. If the manager refused to take action, the decency crusade team was to leave the establishment silently, rather than confront the manager, and report the refusal to their pastor. Lists of stores that cooperated with the local decency crusades were announced in church and printed in parish publications (Gardiner 112). In some cases, cooperative store owners were issued certificates of compliance, but the national office discouraged that practice, pointing out that the dealer could continue to display the certificate while restocking his shelves with objectionable material (117).

NODL promoted the lists as tools for the busy retailer, noting ideally, sellers should exercise their own moral responsibility rather than abdicate to any group or list, but that it was unrealistic to expect the retailer to read everything on his racks (122). The decency crusades targeted retailers rather than publishers because, according to NODL literature, "most of the filthy books and magazines are put out deliberately by publishers who know that they will sell. They are not interested in their effect on youth, and cannot be reasoned with" (115).

To get widespread support for conducting decency crusades, NODL urged Catholics to form citizens' committees made up of members of educational, social/fraternal, and religious organizations. At the initial meeting of the committee, examples of the types of literature of concern to the community were shown. The help of non-Catholic groups was then enlisted to clean up literature made available to juveniles in the community (112).

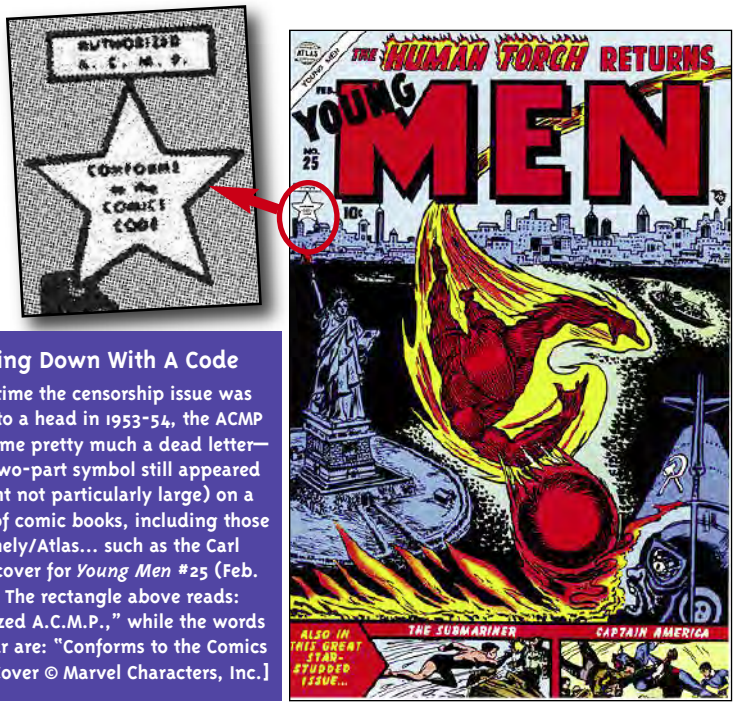
Running With Scissors

(Left:) "A cartoon stand-in for Bishop John Francis Noll, founder of the National Organization for Decent Literature, sweeps the newsstands clean." So read the note accompanying this cartoon by artist "Barney" when it was reprinted in David Hajdu's excellent 2008 study *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*.

(Above:) The anonymous cover of Fox Comics' *Crimes by Women* #12 (April 1950) must violate at least two or three of the nine characteristics that would have earned a comic book an "objectionable" rating by the NODL. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Commented the legislators: "With their prestige and position, these major publishers could bring about industry-wide reform for their own preservation and future well-being as well as that of their minor competitors" (17).

The committee recommended passage of six laws targeting the comic book industry, noting that the industry had given them no other choice (18). Two of the proposals submitted for consideration in 1952 to the legislature were similar to earlier attempts at comic book regulation that had failed to win legislative approval or had been vetoed by the governor. The first was an amendment to the state statute that had been invalidated in the *Winters* decision. The proposed amendment would prohibit publication of material "principally made up of pictures, whether or not accompanied by any written or printed matter, of fictional deeds of crime, bloodshed, lust or heinous acts, which tend to incite minors to violent or depraved or immoral acts." It differed from earlier legislation in that it was intended to cover only fictional accounts, and it was worded in such a way that the intent of the law was to protect minors (19). The second bill proposed was for the creation of a comic book division in the New York Department of Education. The mechanisms for prepublication review and the issuing of permits was identical to those proposed in the earlier Feinberg-Fitzpatrick bill (19-21). The rest of the legislation recommended by the committee gave various New York courts jurisdiction to try cases that arose from the violation of the proposed state statute forbidding the publication of fictional accounts of crime, bloodshed, lust, or heinous acts (21-24).



Coming Down With A Code

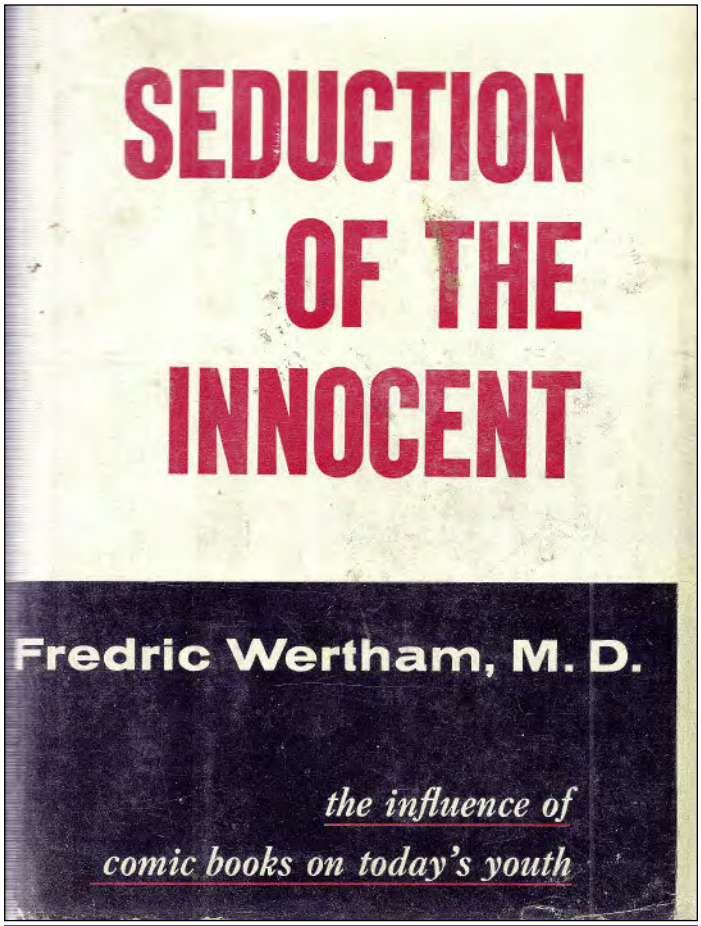
By the time the censorship issue was coming to a head in 1953-54, the ACMP had become pretty much a dead letter—but its two-part symbol still appeared (thought not particularly large) on a number of comic books, including those of Timely/Atlas... such as the Carl Burgos cover for *Young Men* #25 (Feb. 1954). The rectangle above reads: "Authorized A.C.M.P.," while the words in the star are: "Conforms to the Comics Code." [Cover © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

The legislation was formally introduced on February 20, 1952. *The New York Times* reported the industry was expected to put up a "fierce battle" against the legislation. The New York Assembly passed the amended state statute March 13 on a 141-4 vote, and the Senate approved it the following day. But the proposal for prepublication review by the Education Department was killed in committee in both the assembly and the senate. The amended state statute was vetoed April 14, 1952, by Governor Dewey on constitutional grounds, since the minor changes in the law did not cure the basic deficiency of the earlier law.

Opponents of comic books in New York were no closer to seeing laws against comics enacted than they had been when the legislature began its investigation four years ago. Although the committee continued its work, the failure to pass any of the legislation proposed in 1952 destroyed any credibility the committee had. New York was not alone in its inability to pass legislation against comic books. While more than one-third of the states investigated amendments or proposals relating to the distribution and sale of comic books and other literature, most of these proposals were either defeated in committee or never gained sufficient support to pass both houses of the state's legislature (Feder 23). Edward Feder, in summarizing the attempts to draft such legislation, wrote, "It has proved to be a difficult task to write effective legislation of this kind which does not infringe upon constitutional provisions guaranteeing due process and freedom of the press" (Feder 20).

Once the initial threat had passed, the trade association formed by the comic book publishers, the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, became inactive, largely due to lack of support from most of the major publishers. The association no longer provided any prepublication review of comics under the six-point code adopted by the association in 1948. Instead, the few remaining members adopted a provision by which they agreed to do their own censoring and put the seal on the cover of those comics that in their judgment conformed to the code (Senate Hearing 72).

The work of the New York Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics highlights the difficulties faced by state



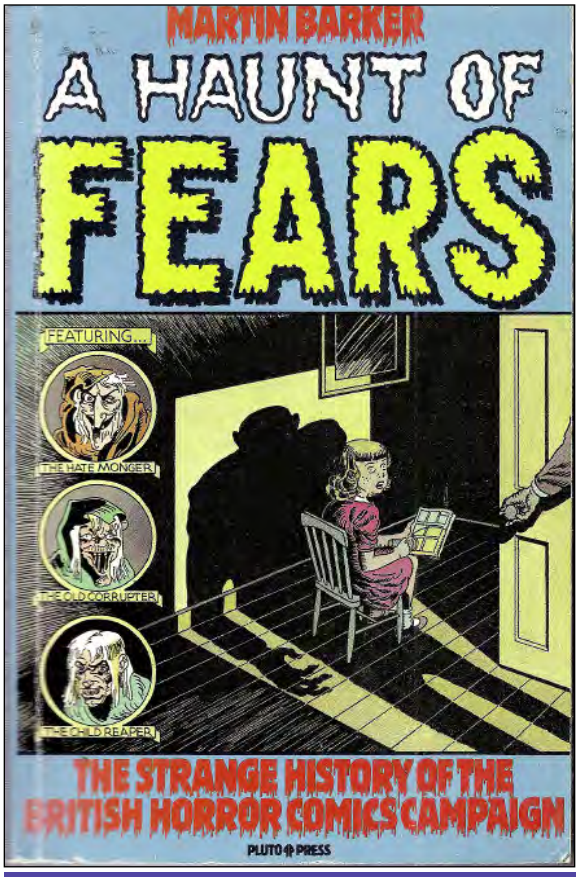
***Innocent's* Abroad!**

The cover of the 1954 edition of Dr. Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*. [© Rinehart & Co. or successors in interest.]

legislatures around the country wrestling with the idea of passing laws against comics. One problem was the lack of legal precedent for outlawing violent content. While the courts had clearly established that obscenity and pornography did not enjoy First Amendment protection, the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Winters* case struck down laws denying such protection to publications with violent content. Another difficulty was in the legal definition of comic books. Lawmakers were never able to describe comic books in such a way that laws intended to restrict them didn't also apply to magazines and other illustrated material.

The failure of the industry to police itself, however, left publishers vulnerable to further attacks. The impetus for the next wave of criticism was provided by psychiatrist Fredric Wertham. Perhaps as a result of the failure of lawmakers to take action, Wertham again turned to the popular press as a forum for his views about comic books. He collected his articles and lectures describing his research on the effects of mass media violence into a book-length study and Rinehart and Company agreed to publish it. The book originally bore the title *All Our Innocents*, but Wertham's editors changed it to the more evocative *Seduction of the Innocent* (Reibman 17). The book was not published until spring 1954, but excerpts were printed in the November 1953 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* in an article titled "What Parents Don't Know about Comic Books." Those excerpts were drawn primarily from three chapters of Seduction of the Innocent: "What Are Crime Comic Books," "The Effects of Comic Books on the Child," and "The Struggle against the Comic-Book Industry."

Historian Martin Barker, who examined the campaign against American comic books in Britain, noted that Wertham's book was the most famous and influential investigation of comics ever published. It became the "primer of the American campaign" and has been cited since in almost every study of comics (Barker 57). The book summarized the case against comics, drawing on case studies of children Wertham had dealt with over the years, and it was intended for a popular audience. It was considered for inclusion as an alternate selection for the Book-of-the-Month Club. Wertham maintained later that the Book-of-the-Month Club withdrew its offer and refused to distribute the book because of pressure from the comic book publishers (Wertham, "Curse of the Comic Book" 403). In addition, the bibliographic notes at the end of the book were removed by the publisher after the book was published, which Wertham felt also demonstrated the power of the comic book publishers (Reibman 8).



A-*Haunting* We Will Go!

Martin Barker's 1984 book *A Haunt of Fears* dealt with "the campaign against American comic books in Britain." Its cover was designed to look like an issue of EC's *Shock SuspenStories*—complete to an imitation of editor Al Feldstein's drawing style! [© 1984Pluto Press or successors in interest.]

With his book, Wertham clearly hoped to rekindle interest in the type of legislation for which he had lobbied at the federal and state levels; the book was written primarily to alert parents and others that crime and horror comics existed and were read by children. Wertham believed that most adults had no idea of the content of comic books. Parents assumed that comic books were mostly of the "funny animal" variety. Those who were aware of the existence of crime comics were complacent because of a mistaken belief that such comics were sold to and read by adults, or they thought that by forbidding their children to read such comics they were providing adequate protection. Wertham also provided graphic descriptions of the sex and violence to be found in comic book pages, complete with illustrations.

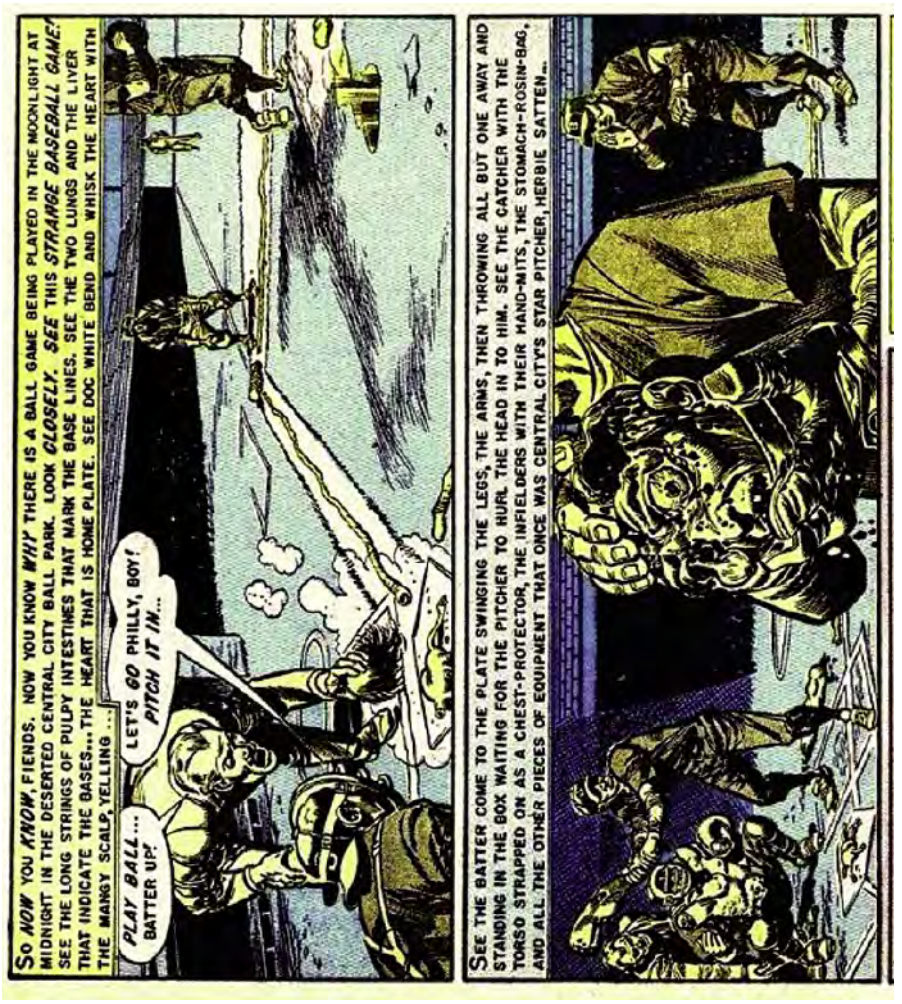
The illustrations Wertham chose were single panels presented out of context. But they were powerful images nonetheless. One book reviewer described them this way:

> It is a shocking gallery, including a landscape in which the phallic symbolism could scarcely escape an observant six-year-old; a baseball game played with a corpse's head for the ball and with entrails for the base paths; pictures showing men and women being hanged, dragged face down and alive behind cars, branded, having their eyeballs pierced with needles (a favorite motif), and their blood sucked by beautiful female vampires; representations of nudes in all shapes and conditions (this is apparently known in the trade as "headlight" art), usually being bound or beaten, or both; and helpful diagrams illustrating the latest methods of breaking into a house or fracturing an Adam's apple with the edge of the hand. These examples appear in black-and-white, but it is explained that they were considerably more effective in the three-color [sic] originals. (Gibbs 134-41)

[*Continued on p. 52*]

***A/E* EDITOR'S NOTE: We interrupt this fanzine to bring you, beginning on the facing page, the 16 pages of artistic "evidence" printed in the middle of Fredric Wertham's 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*. The accompanying new captions beneath the reproduced pages will give additional information about some of the art, retrieved from several sources... most particularly the website *SeductionOfTheInnocent.org*. (The magazines and, in some cases, the artists have been identified by diligent researchers over the decades—but except in the case of EC and DC, no writers have been identified.) Once we had that in hand, it suddenly occurred to us that it would be fun to reprint the images from those pages of Dr. Wertham's book *in color*—which is surely the way he and the publisher would have preferred it at the time.**

Thus, where we've been able to locate them, we've superimposed *color images* from the original comics over the black-&-white ones that were printed in *Seduction* (or *SOTI*, as it's often referred to for short on websites). Of course, in order to get two pages of *SOTI* onto one page of *A/E* and still make them as big as possible, we've had to print them *sideways*. But you've probably noticed that already....



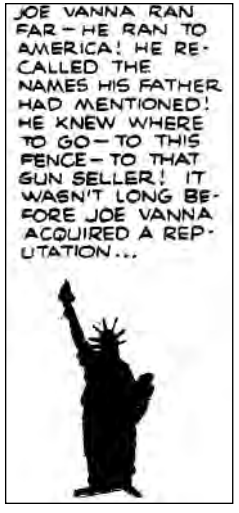
A comic-book baseball game. Notice the chest protector and other details in the text and pictures.

Cover of a children's comic book.

(P. 1) The infamous baseball game from EC's *The Haunt of Fear* #19 (May-June 1953). Art by Jack Davis; story by Al Feldstein (from a plot by William M. Gaines). Thanks to Jim Kealy and Glenn MacKay.

(P. 2) This page's "exhibit" was Johnny Craig's cover for EC's *Crime SuspenStories* #20 (Dec. 1953-Jan. 1954), minus the logo. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database. [Images on pp. 1-2 © William M. Gaines, Agent, Inc.]

Pity was the keynote when Homer described a dead body dragged beneath a war chariot. Dragging living people to death is described without pity in children's comics.



What comic-book America stands for.

A sample of the injury-to-the-eye motif.

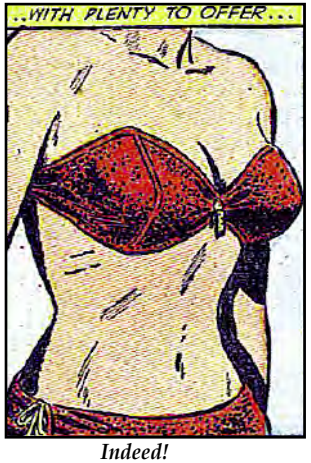
(P. 3) The top and bottom right panels are from different stories in Magazine Village's *True Crime Comics* #2 (May 1947)—while the Statue of Liberty caption/panel, by an unidentified artist, is from Lev Gleason's *Crime and Punishment* #59 (Feb. 1953). In *TCC* #2, the artist of "Boston's Bloody Gang War" is uncertain; but the infamous "injury to the eye motif" panel is from "Murder, Morphine, and Me," drawn by "Plastic Man" creator Jack Cole. Thanks to Jim Kealy, Frank Motler, and Michael T. Gilbert. [© the respective copyright holders.]

An invitation to learning.

Giving children an image of American womanhood.

(P. 4) The top panel (drawn by Walter T. Johnson) is from St. John's *Authentic Police Cases* #6 (Nov. 1948); the bottom panel, by an unidentified artist, is from Fox Comics' *Women Outlaws* #1 (July 1948). Thanks to Tony Rose, Jim Ludwig, Jim Kealy, & Glenn MacKay. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Erotic spanking in a Western comic book.



Indeed!

Sex and blood.

(P. 5) One panel from the story "Tangled Love" in Avon Periodicals' *Frontier Romance* #1 (Nov.-Dec. 1949), drawn by Walter T. Johnson... and two from Key/Gilmore Publications' *Weird Mysteries* #7 (Oct.-Nov. 1953), with art by Tony Mortellaro and Vince Fodara, respectively. Thanks to Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., and Bart Bush for the former scan, and to Jim Ludwig & Tony Rose for the latter. [© the respective copyright holders.]

The title of this comic book is First Love.

Children are first shocked and then desensitized by all this brutality.

The wish to hurt or kill couples in Lovers' Lanes is a not uncommon perversion

Stomping on the face is a form of brutality which modern children learn early.

(P. 6) The two panels on the left are from Harvey Comics' *First Love Illustrated* #35 (Nov. 1953, art by Bill Draut) & Essankay's *Law against Crime* #3 (Aug. 1948), for which we have no artist info. The two (now colored) panels on the right are from Trojan's *Beware* #6 (Nov. 1953) and Charlton's *The Thing!* #9 (July 1953), respectively. The *Beware* artist is unidentified; the Charlton story was drawn by John Belfi. Thanks to Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., Jim Kealy, & Jim Ludwig, respectively, for the color scans. [© the respective copyright holders.]

HI FANS! *MICHAEL T.* HERE...OR AT LEAST THE LATE-'70S MODEL! 1975 WAS THE YEAR I GOT MY FIRST *PAYING* COMICS WORK...A STRIP FOR THE VENERABLE COUNTER-CULTURE NEWSPAPER, *THE BERKELEY BARB*. MY STRIP, INSPIRED BY HARVEY KURTZMAN'S BRILLIANT *HEY LOOK!* SERIES, STARRED...WELL, MYSELF! HEY, WHAT CAN I SAY? I WAS TAUGHT "WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW!" AND THE NAME OF MY STRIP WAS...

INKSPOTS!

Right: The first two of Michael's *Inkspots!* strips, drawn for *The Berkeley Barb*. These strips appeared on May 16, 1975 and June 13, 1975. [©2014 Michael T. Gilbert.]

Inkspots!

Inkspots! – Part 1

by Michael T. Gilbert

In the early '70s, I made a few unsuccessful attempts to break into mainstream comics. Failing that, I even hawked copies of my own self-published underground, *New Paltz Comix*, on campus during my final year in college. Finally, in 1975, I said "so long" to New York and "hello!" to San Francisco, where I'd hoped to join the underground comix movement.

Unfortunately, my timing couldn't have been worse. Comix sales had plummeted, and new titles were few and far between—though I did eventually sell stories to *Slow Death*, *Dope Comix*, and *Bizarre Sex*. In time I also cracked the "groundlevel" comics market, with stories in *Quack!*, *Star*Reach*, and *Imagine*. Then it was on to Pacific Comics, where I drew my first color series, *Elric of Melniboné*, in collaboration with Craig Russell, with scripts by our own Roy Thomas.

But my first real sale had occurred earlier, to the notorious counterculture newspaper *The Berkeley Barb*. *The Barb* was your usual mixture of rock, radical politics, and "dope-is-swell" articles.

"I Was There. I Remember."

Part 2 Of Bill Schelly's Chat with STEVE PERRIN, Co-Creator Of "The Black Phantom," The African-American Crimefighter Published In Mid-1960s Fanzines!

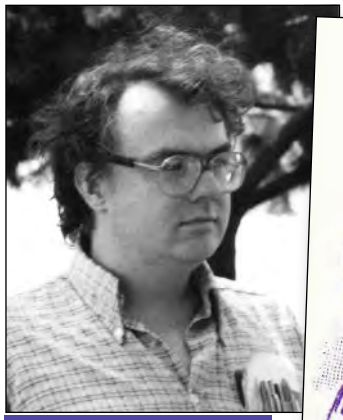
Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

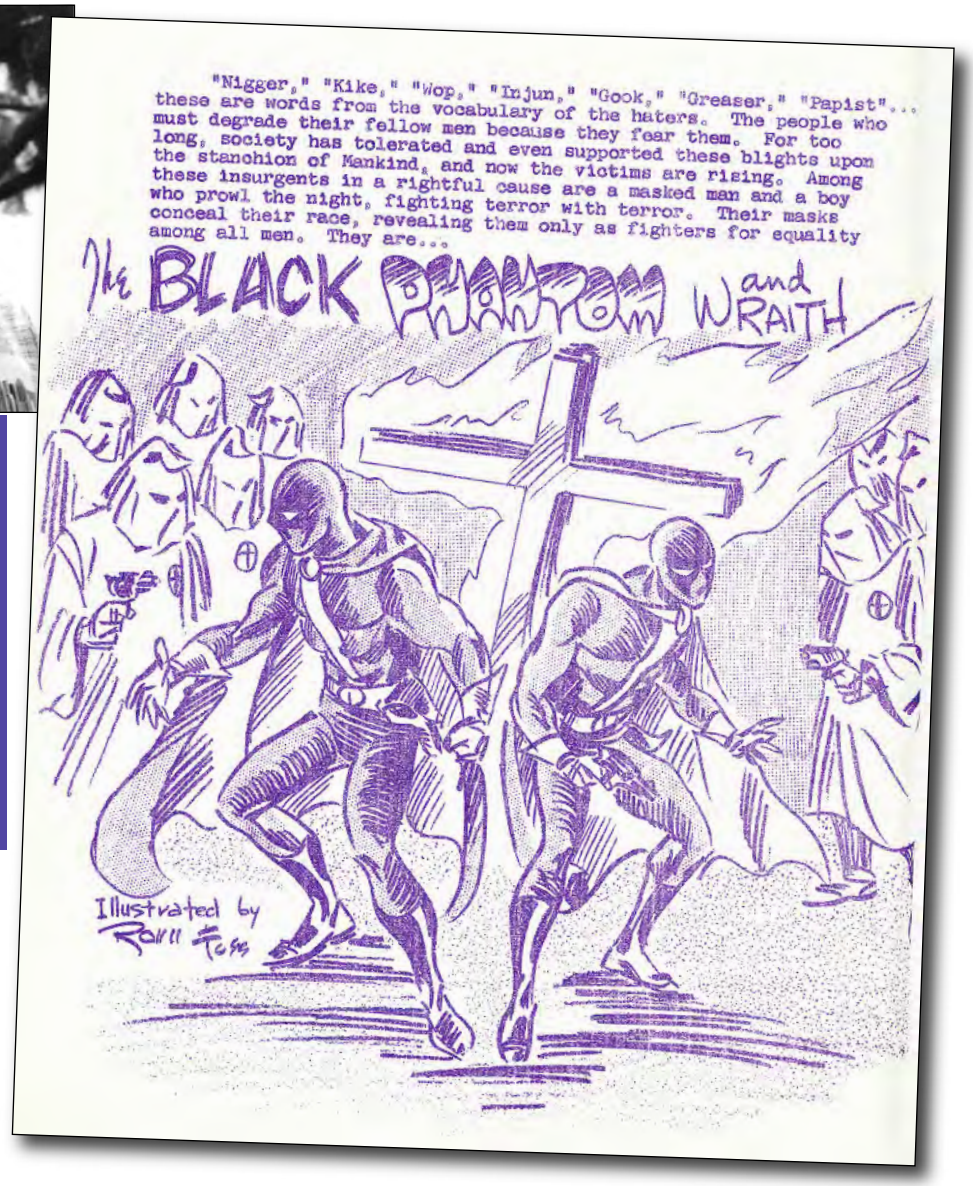
CFA

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *In Part 1, Steve talked about how he got involved in comic fandom in 1961, contributed to numerous fanzines (including* Spotlite *and* Yancy Street Journal*), and began his "collaboration" with Margaret Gemignani on* Mask and Cape. *In a way, this was all a prelude to the discussion of his costumed hero Black Phantom, his stellar achievement in early fandom. But that's not all, as Steve also discusses his involvement in the Society of Creative Anachronism, writing pro comics and role-playing games, and much more in the second part of our phone conversation of December 4, 2011.* **—Bill Schelly.**

BILL SCHELLY: *In a way, all your fanzine writing seemed to lead up to your contributions to Bill Spicer's* Fantasy Illustrated. *In* FI *#4, you wrote scripts for two strips. There was "Who Is the Mystery Patriot?" with art by Buddy Saunders, and "Dreamsman and Lucky" with art by Bill DuBay. Then in* FI *#6, there was "The Black Phantom," with art by Ronn Foss. How did your association with Spicer come about?*

STEVE PERRIN: As it happened, Bill lived a couple of houses down from my grandmother. So we would visit my grandmother, and then I would go visit Bill. I saw him about three times that way, and somewhere along the line he said he was doing a super-hero issue of *Fantasy Illustrated*. I sent him the manuscripts, and he decided he liked all three.





Perrin & Prejudice

Steve Perrin, sometime in the 1970s—and Ronn Foss' splash page for Steve's "Black Phantom" text story in the Perrin fanzine *Mask and Cape* #4 (1964). Foss was skilled at producing nice work in the ditto medium—and Perrin wrote some of the best and hardest-hitting ama-strips [=amateur strips] in fanzines of the mid-1960s. [Page © Steve Perrin & Estate of Ronn Foss.]

BS: *How did Ronn Foss end up handling the art for "The Black Phantom"?*

PERRIN: I was in college, and we collaborated on "Black Phantom" after both Grass Green and Bill DuBay turned it down. Grass felt it was too rabble-rousing, and Bill's father forbade him from working on it. Bill was still in high school. But Ronn wanted to do it.... If memory serves, we worked out that he would do spot illos for the "Black Phantom" text story in *Mask and Cape* #4, and then do the full strip for *Fantasy Illustrated*.

BS: *In 1964, there weren't any African-American costumed heroes in comics or fanzines. How did you get the idea for "The Black Phantom"?*

PERRIN: I was going to San Francisco State, right across the bay from Berkeley, and the whole Civil Rights thing was very big at that point in time. So this was in the back of my mind. I did a lot of

Fantasies—Illustrated

Two of the three features on the cover of Bill Spicer's *Fantasy Illustrated* #4 (1965) were Perrin creations. "Who is the Mystery Patriot?" was illustrated by Buddy Saunders—while "Dreamsman and Lucky" was drawn by Bill DuBay. The bottom-left illustration on the cover is by Jeffrey Jones, from the "Ku! Primordial" story reprinted in Hamster Press' *Fandom's Finest Comics* [Vol. 1], 1997. [Art © the respective artists.]

Buddy Saunders, late 1960s.

Bill DuBay, 1964.

costume drawing of new character ideas, using outlines drawn by other people because I can't draw. And I think I came up with the costume before I came up with the character. I drew a guy with a full face-mask, and thought, "Wait a minute, a full face mask would work great with a costumed hero who was actually a black man. Great!" It went on from there. "Freedom Riders, busses.... Okay, yeah. That's cool."

BS: *The story didn't pull any punches. Right there on page one, the first word is the N-word.*

PERRIN: Yep!

BS: *Was the "burning cross" page layout your idea or Ronn's?*

PERRIN: It may have been Bill's. He always had a good graphics sense and had no problems acting like an editor. He added some dialogue, particularly where the local sheriff was calling Lafe a "spade," which is jazz slang and wouldn't have been used by a Southern sheriff. Don and Maggie Thompson pointed that out in their letter of comment in the next issue of *FI*.

BS: *It was just very hard-hitting. Of course, it also had a positive message in that Black Phantom's sidekick, Wraith, was a white teenager, and they worked together.*

PERRIN: Well, I had several theoretical teachers, and I still feel pretty strongly about a lot of what's in there. So yeah, I was trying for the hard-hitting "let's bring comics into the modern day" kind of idea there. It got noticed....

BS: Castle of Frankenstein *ran a page from it in one of their issues.*

PERRIN: Yeah, one of those things I never knew about at the time.

BS: *You did three strips for Spicer. What about the other two?*

PERRIN: Yeah... Bill's the one who arranged for Buddy Saunders to draw the "Mystery Patriot." Bill DuBay did "Dreamsman" as a sort of a compensation for not having done "Black Phantom."

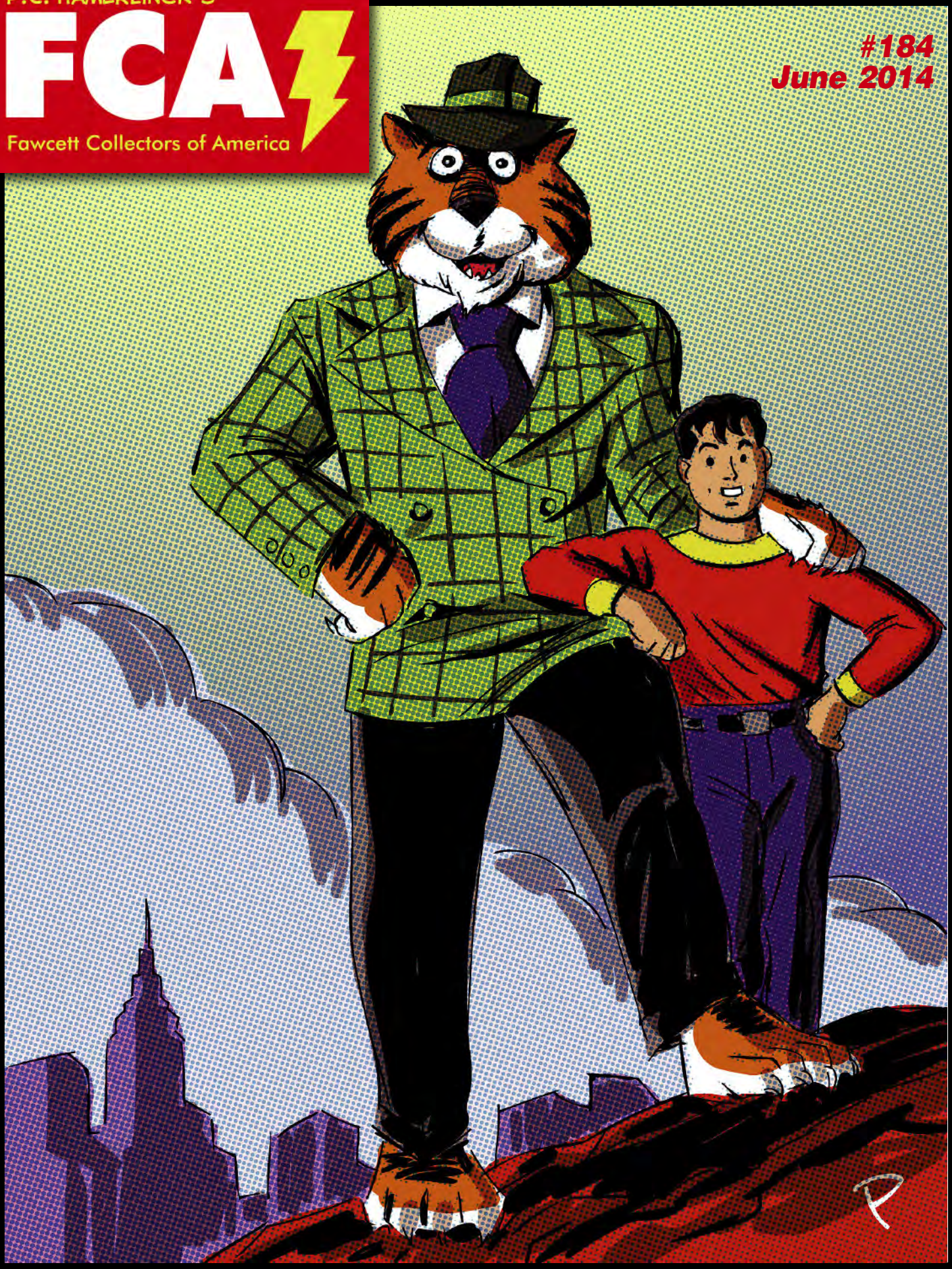
BS: *Those were some of the better amateur costumed-hero strips from that era. Another one you scripted was "The Case of the Curious Crusader," which appeared in* Intrigue, *a spin-off of Rich Buckler's* Super Hero *zine. That was 1967 or so. It featured your characters Doc Darkness and Capt. Liberty.*

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

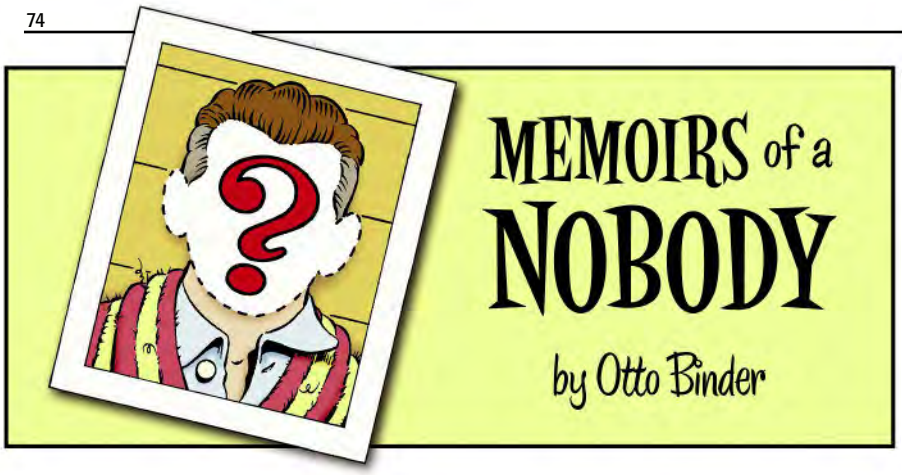
FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#184
June 2014



Art & colors by Jay Piscopo. Billy Batson & Mr. Tawny TM & © DC Comics.



Part VI

Abridged & Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

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

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

In this sixth excerpt, Otto imagines a futuristic scenario, and also reveals his sanctuary to escape to while in The Big Apple. **—P.C. Hamerlinck.**

Beauty And The—(Not Our Cap!)

Sex in "Captain Marvel" comics? Never. Our hero was far too bashful for such shenanigans. Panel from the Otto Binder-scripted "The Beauty in Black," *Captain Marvel Adventures* #142 (March 1953); art by C.C. Beck. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]

Nonsense And Naughtiness

All prudes and Puritans beware! This may burn your ears off.

Join me in a little excursion into the future. Just for the sake of round numbers, let's go to One Million A.D.

You are a man, or a woman, walking down the street on a hot summer day. If you're a man, you're wearing perhaps a short loose tunic and a pair of sandals. That's all. If you're a woman, you are bedecked quite simply in a bra and G-string.

You, the man, pass this woman, and your eye runs appreciatively over her figure. You, the woman, also return the gaze in like manner, running your eyes appreciatively over his figure. The man goes up to the woman, smiles in a friendly fashion, gives his name, and then allows as how he would consider it a great honor and delight to indulge in sexual intercourse with her.

Now, they are total strangers, mind you. But the woman doesn't slap his face, scratch his eyes out, and yell for a gendarme. She smiles prettily, and having an hour to spare, she accepts the kind offer. It being a beautiful day, they simply repair to the nearest park, taking care not to disturb other couples on the grass but yet not turning their eyes away in embarrassment. The park is quite full of couples who have made their assignations as above on the spur of the moment, and are now consummating their mutual desires.

And you do the same, right out there in the open, with the green grass for a couch, and the blue sky for a roof. An hour later, you bid each other a pleasant farewell. Chances are you will never meet again.

Fantastic? Maybe so. Maybe not. Who can say how society will someday solve its ever-present, ever-pressing, and perfectly normal sex-urges?

I'm not pulling any punches. Nor am I trying to be merely lascivious. I'm just toying with the speculation of what the future does about sex. No law against it.

To expand the picture a bit, perhaps the people of One Million A.D. will wear little badges if they are sexually available at the moment, as they fare through the city. A man seeking sex, just as at other times he seeks a restaurant for food, then can take his pick of females passing him, who wear badges, showing they are ready to accommodate. And since, in this far future world, it has finally been agreed upon that women have sex desire quite as strongly as men, a female may also look over all males wearing badges, and choose as she desires when the urge strikes her. Then a tap on the shoulder, a smile, and it is arranged. There is no money involved in this transaction at all. Superb, isn't it?

On the other hand, any man or woman not wearing a badge is left strictly alone. No man would insult a badge-less woman by accosting her. And vice versa. Thus, those who are surfeited, or not in the mood, or otherwise not having any, are fully protected from unwanted attentions.

The Secret Life Of Mr. Tawny

Captain Marvel Adventures #102 & James Thurber's Walter Mitty

by Brian Cremins

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

James Thurber's 1939 "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the simple tale of a middle-aged man's shopping trip with his wife and the daydreams he has along the way, remains one of the most popular American short stories of the 20th century. In December 2013, Hollywood released Ben Stiller's big-budget version of Thurber's beloved, if often misunderstood, classic. Even *Her*, the recent Spike Jonze film, echoes Walter Mitty's struggle to find the balance between his waking life and his fantasies. We might trace the origin of Thurber's story to narratives like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, in which the hero inhabits a world of the imagination to escape from the mundane, often harsh realities and disappointments of his life. In dreams, anyone can be a hero, even a world-weary but charming talking tiger like Captain Marvel's friend, Mr. Tawny.

Did Otto Binder and C.C. Beck read Thurber's story? Or did they have the 1947 film version starring Danny Kaye in mind when they created "Captain Marvel and the Adventure within an Adventure," published in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #102 (dated Nov. 1949)? Like Ben Stiller's 2013 version, the 1947 film bears little resemblance to Thurber's story. Danny Kaye's Walter Mitty, however, makes better use of his imagin
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Otto Binder's "The Adventure within an Adventure" (*Captain Marvel Adventures* #102, Nov. 1949) suggests a link between James Thurber's 1939 short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and Mr. Tawny's adventures. Art by C.C. Beck. (Top right:) Photo of James Thurber. [Shazam hero & Mr. Tawny TM & © DC Comics.]

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Companion, "was one of the most real characters ever to appear in comic books." Like Don Quixote and Walter Mitty, Mr. Tawny is a fantastic character who just happens to be obsessed with fantasy.

Since its first publication at the close of the 1930s, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" has remained popular with readers, teachers, and literary scholars. In his 2008 essay on Thurber's story, Terry W. Thompson summarizes decades of other critical responses to Walter Mitty and his troubles, and then turns our attention to the character's fascination with and fear of technology. "Simply put," Thompson writes, "'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' addresses the angst of a small and unimportant man who is threatened, diminished, by the complicated technology of twentieth century progress."

While I would agree that Mitty's daydreams reflect Thurber's own discomfort with modern forms of technology—a comical