



ROY THOMAS' EVER-ASSEMBLING COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

CELEBRATING THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 50-YEAR HISTORY OF THE AVENGERS™

with LEE • KIRBY • HECK THE BROTHERS BUSCEMA THOMAS • TUSKA • ADAMS WINDSOR-SMITH • COLAN BUCKLER • ENGLEHART, et al.!



\$8.95 In the USA 118 July 2013

Art ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.



BONUS! FOCUS ON ARTIST E.C. STONER!



Editor
Roy Thomas
Associate Editors
Bill Schelly
Jim Amash
Design & Layout
Christopher Day
Consulting Editor
John Morrow
FCA Editor
P.C. Hamerlinck

Comic Crypt Editor
Michael T. Gilbert
Editorial Honor Roll
Jerry G. Bails (founder)
Ronn Foss, Biljo White
Mike Friedrich

Proofreaders
Rob Smentek
William J. Dowlding

Cover Artist
Don Heck

Cover Colorist
Tom Ziuko

With Special Thanks to:

Heidi Amash	Henry Kujawa
Sal Amendola	R. Gary Land
David Bachman	Mark Lewis
Bob Bailey	Alan Light
Blake Bell	Michael Maikowsky
Jerry K. Boyd	Michel Maillot
Tom Brevoort	Jim McLaughlin
Bernie Bubnis	Mike Mikulovsky
Rich Buckler	Kurt Mitchell
Brian Buniak	Stephen Mitchell
David Burd	Will Murray
Mike Burkey	Michael Netzer
Nick Caputo	Owen O'Leary
Mike Catron	Jake Oster
Shaun Clancy	Barry Pearl
Ernie Colón	Ken Quattro
Leonardo de Sa	Lisa Ray
Mark Evanier	Ethan Roberts
Wendy Everett	Francis A. Rodriguez
Justin Fairfax	Rich Rubinfeld
Bill Field	Joe Rubinstein
Danny Fingeroth	Randy Sargent
Michael Finn	Arlen Schumer
Shane Foley	Ronn Sutton
Janet Gilbert	Ty Templeton
Grand Comics Database (website)	John D. Trawick
Golden Age Comic Book Stories (website)	Dann Thomas
Hero Initiative	Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.
Jennifer Hamerlinck	Dr. Michael J. Vassallo
Heritage Comics Archives	Hames Ware
Allan Holtz	Len Wein
Sean Howe	Robert Wiener
Tony Isabella	Barry Windsor-Smith
Samuel Joyner	Pat Yanchus
Lou Kanegson	Marv Wolfman
Roz Kirby Estate	Everson "Bud" Zell



Contents

Writer/Editorial: Of Peaks and Panthers 2

Daredevil Vs. The Avengers 3
Will Murray explores the likelihood that the Man without Fear was due to come out *first!*

Assembling The Avengers. 11
Kurt Mitchell takes a look at the first decade of Marvel's *real* answer to the Justice League.

The Origin Of Jack Kirby's Black Panther 36
An art-essay by Arlen Schumer on Marvel's (and the U.S. comics industry's) first black super-hero.

E.C. Stoner – The Forgotten Trailblazer. 42
Ken Quattro surveys the career of an early African-American comic book artist.

Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt! Evil Twins Two 55
Michael T. Gilbert points out the doppelgängers of Gabby Hayes & Casper the Friendly Ghost.

Comic Fandom Archive: "I Started To Remember..." 61
Bill Schelly invites Bernie Bubnis to tell us about the first comics convention—& Steve Ditko.

re: [correspondence, criticism, & corrections] 69

FCA [Fawcett Collectors Of America] #177 73
P.C. Hamerlinck presents the last comics story ever drawn by Marc Swayze.

On Our Cover: We thought it'd be cool to utilize the cover art that Don Heck penciled and inked for The Avengers #37 (Dec. 1966)—but which was not used at that time—as the cover of this issue that celebrates 50 years, and especially the first ten of those, of the super-hero group that was created specifically to incorporate several of Marvel's greatest solo stars. But what to do about the somewhat narrower proportions of a comic book cover from that of Alter Ego? One answer, we decided, was to keep the Avengers art at its natural proportions—but to photograph an actual hand holding it. (That hand, by the way, belongs to TwoMorrows co-publisher John Morrow.) And so Dashin' Don's art was finally used as a color cover—47 years after it was originally drawn, with brand new coloring by veteran Tom Ziuko. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Above: Because we wanted to toss you some Avengers art that hasn't been reprinted in Marvel Masterworks hardcovers, Essentials softcovers, and/or myriad comic books, we latched onto this cover for the 1976 Avengers Annual (#1), published in Great Britain by World Distributors. Because it's composed of figures that look to us like the work of Jack Kirby, John Buscema, and quite possibly one or two other U.S. artists, pasted up into a reasonably coherent whole, we thought it might be a good representation of the team's first decade. But where's the ever-Incredible Hulk? Thanks to the Grand Comics Database. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
E.C. Stoner



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

FIRST PRINTING.

DAREDEVIL THE AVENGERS

VS.

And The Winner Was—The Marvel Readers!

An Historical View by Will Murray

The Man Without Fear— Or Even A Boomerang

One of Marvel's mightiest adventure titles came about through a misadventure.

The Avengers debuted in the summer of 1963—on the very same day as *The X-Men*. (It was a big summer for super-hero teams. Over at DC, the first of the annual JLA-JSA team-ups was launched, as well.) Marvelites have long wondered why Stan Lee would make poor Jack Kirby, already burdened with *Fantastic Four*, *Sgt. Fury*, and other features, draw two additional team books.

Actually, as comics and TV writer Mark Evanier learned long ago from Kirby and from Marvel production head Sol Brodsky, that was not the original plan.

Seeing the *FF* and *Amazing Spider-Man* racking up solid sales, publisher Martin Goodman wanted editor Lee to replicate those successes. Goodman himself had an idea for the Spider-Man clone. The old Lev Gleason/Charles Biro character called Daredevil had fallen out of trademark. He had been one of the top sellers of the Golden Age of Comics. Goodman instructed Lee to revive him—lock, stock, and boomerang.

When I asked Lee about this by phone in 2003, at the time of the release of the *Daredevil* movie, he remembered Goodman's edict and his response to it.

"So my first thought would be," Lee explained, "'Well, let's do the character again.' But I didn't want to steal somebody else's character. So I figured I'd use the name, but I'll dream up something different for him. I didn't want to use the same costume. I thought it

was a great name. And if the name was free, that was terrific. So I just tried to come up with another character." (Some of the Stan Lee quotations in this section of the article appeared in my piece "Daredevil Origins" in the April 2003 issue of the magazine *Wiz-Bang*, others in my survey "The Untold Origin of Daredevil," in *The Official Overstreet Price Guide*, Vol. 37, from Overstreet Publishing.)

Since Goodman was looking for another Spider-Man, Lee turned to the artist who had been so crucial to making Spider-Man a success: Steve Ditko.

Ditko turned him down flat. The artist's reasons are not known, but apparently he had no interest in the revival. Or perhaps he didn't want to do a character who was calculated to be another Spider-Man. He was already *doing* Spider-Man!

"I was sorry," Lee admitted in 2003. "Steve would have been great. But I was lucky to get Everett."



[*Daredevil* #1 art by Bill Everett & *The Avengers* #1 art by Jack Kirby & Dick Ayers ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.; *Daredevil* & *Avengers* logos TM & ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.; text adaptation by Chris Day]

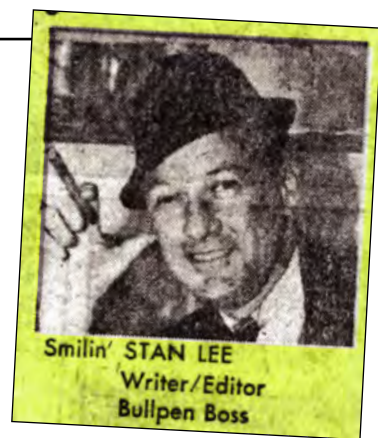


For Stan Lee's second choice was Sub-Mariner creator Bill Everett, then drifting back into comics after a sabbatical. But all did not go swimmingly there, either.

"I know [Stan] had this idea for Daredevil," Everett told Roy Thomas in the early 1970s, in an interview published in 1978 in *Alter Ego* [Vol. 1] #11. "He thought he had an idea. And we tried to talk it over the phone, and it just... wouldn't work. With a long distance phone call, it just wasn't coming out right, so I said, 'All right... I'll take a day off and come down to New York.'"

Conceptually, they reimagined a modern Daredevil. The character soon diverged from the Golden Age incarnation until all resemblances were gone.

"Originally, I wanted him to be a great gymnast," Lee recalled. "So I thought maybe I'd make him a circus acrobat. But I somehow decided that was a little unoriginal."



Jack Kirby told Mark Evanier that he was brought in in an advisory capacity, which was confirmed by Sol Brodsky. "Kirby had a lot of input into all the looks of all these things," Lee explained. "If I wasn't satisfied with something and Kirby was around, I would have said, 'Hey Jack, what do you think of this? How would you do it?'"

While the circus background was eventually dropped, DD's original yellow-and-red costume design, clearly modeled after a traditional circus acrobat's outfit, survived as the new hero's basic look.

Daredevil Vs. Daredevil: The Prequel

Martin Goodman (on left) and Stan Lee (on right) eye, from quite different perspectives, the cover of Lev Gleason Publications' *Daredevil Comics* #9 (April 1940), whose art is attributed to editor Charles Biro. The original Daredevil's battle with an imitator foreshadows Goodman's desire for a Marvel takeover of that character, while Lee would move increasingly toward creating a new hero simply sporting the same name. Still, by common consensus, the Golden Age DD had one of the coolest costumes ever; it was designed by his first artist, Jack Binder! [Daredevil cover ©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Incidentally, although the 1940s DD had a sometime secret identity (Bart Hill), the chances are that, even if his costume and boomerang had been retained, the Marvel incarnation would've had a different alter ego, since it was only the "Daredevil" trademark that had been abandoned by 1963, not necessarily every existing copyright, which would cover story materials. At least, that's how the Marvel version of another earlier hero would be handled in 1966-67, when Magazine Enterprises' *Ghost Rider* concept and even costume were appropriated by Marvel, but Rex Fury, roving U.S. marshal, became Carter Slade, schoolteacher.

The photos of Goodman and Lee are from *Marvel Tales Annual* #1 (1964); with thanks to Justin Fairfax & Bob Bailey. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Soon enough, Lee and his artists worked up a conception Goodman approved. Matt Murdock would be a blind lawyer with a radar sense similar to Spider-Man's spider sense. The original Daredevil's trademark boomerang became a fighting billy club.

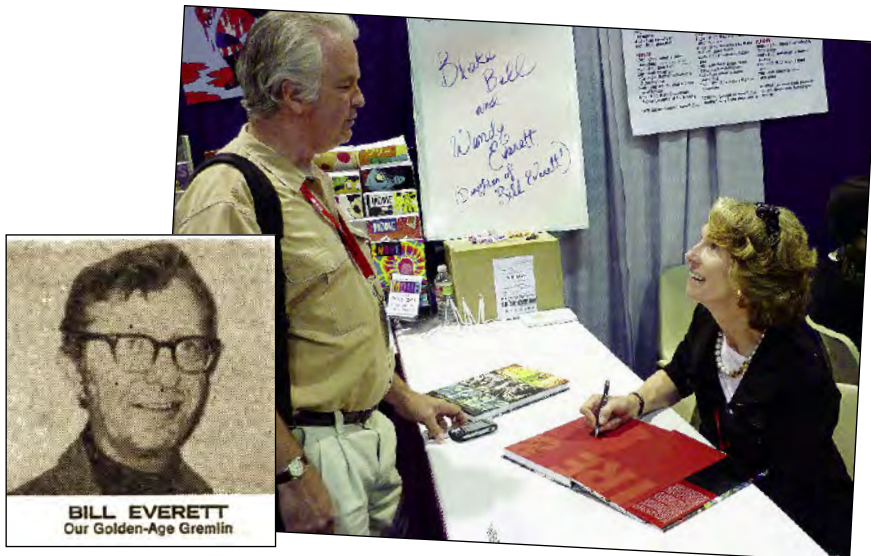
The latter was one of Kirby's contributions.

Mount Everett

(Near right:) Bill Everett, in a photo that first appeared in 1969's *Fantastic Four Annual* #7. Thanks to Fairfax & Bailey. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Far Right:) Wendy Everett signs copies of Blake Bell's 2010 biography of her father, titled *Fire & Water: Bill Everett, The Sub-Mariner, and the Birth of Marvel Comics*, from Fantagraphics Books. We dunno who wrote Wendy's name on that signboard, but note that the "E" in her last name—and even the "W," turned sideways—echo Bill's famous signature. Photo by Blake Bell.

Not mentioned in Will Murray's account, because it isn't germane to the *Daredevil/Avengers* matter, is Wendy's recorded statement that, since she has been legally (though not totally) blind since childhood, it was her father's idea that the Marvel DD be sightless. While it's also quite possible that the blindness and compensating radar sense were Stan Lee's concept quite separately, it's not unlikely that Bill could've tossed that idea into the mix when the two men were discussing ways to differentiate the new hero from the old one.



Assembling The Avengers

A Look Back At The Formative Years of "Some Of Earth's Mightiest Heroes"

by Kurt Mitchell

AUTHOR'S INTRO: *As a fan since the day the six-year-old me first read a tattered, coverless copy of The Avengers #4, I was jazzed when assigned the task of writing a brief history of the team's first decade for this special issue of Alter Ego commemorating the 50th anniversary of the comic book's premiere. To keep this article's length and complexity within reason, I've assumed the average A/E reader has a nodding familiarity with the Marvel Comics super-heroes. And now, without further ado: Avengers assemble! (I've always wanted to say that!)*

—Kurt.

"The Coming Of The Avengers!"

Loki, Norse god of mischief, frames the misunderstood monster called the Hulk for a train disaster as a ploy in his ongoing war with the mighty Thor. Hulk's teenage pal, Rick Jones, radios the Fantastic Four for help. Loki diverts the signal so that Thor, in his mortal guise of lame physician Don Blake, receives it instead. Rick's message also reaches millionaire industrialist Anthony Stark, secretly the armored Iron Man, as well as biochemist Henry Pym and heiress Janet Van Dyne, better known as the size-changing Ant-Man and the Wasp. Loki will come to regret that colossal (and convenient!) coincidence, for it heralds the birth of a team of superhuman champions destined to frustrate not only his insidious schemes but those of scores of other evildoers: the mighty Avengers!

All that lies ahead. Here and now—the summer of 1963—*The Avengers* #1 (cover-dated Sept. 1963) has just hit the stands, the latest in a line of innovative super-hero comics by the creative team of editor/scripster Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby. Not content to simply mimic DC's *Justice League of America*, which also features characters who have their own solo series, Stan and Jack use the opportunity to explore, explode, and expand the possibilities of the super-team concept.

The new strip's quirkiness owes much to the shallow pool of Marvel heroes available for duty. The stars of *Fantastic Four* and the debuting *X-Men* already belong to teams. The loner heroes drawn by Steve Ditko, *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Strange Tales'* Doctor Strange, aren't joiners. That leaves just five: Thor, from *Journey into Mystery*; Iron Man, from *Tales of Suspense*; Ant-Man and the Wasp, from *Tales to Astonish*; and the surly green-skinned star of the recently canceled *The Incredible Hulk*. Three powerhouses and a couple of human insects wouldn't seem to make for a well-balanced team, and any time the brutish alter ego of nuclear physicist Bruce Banner is on hand... well, Hulk's previous encounter with super-heroes (*Fantastic Four* #12) was no lovefest. Therein lies the genius of Lee and Kirby: they take the awkward fit of the founding Avengers and run with it.

Avengers #2 (Nov. '63) begins with a "big" change in the



The First 115 Issues Are The Hardest!

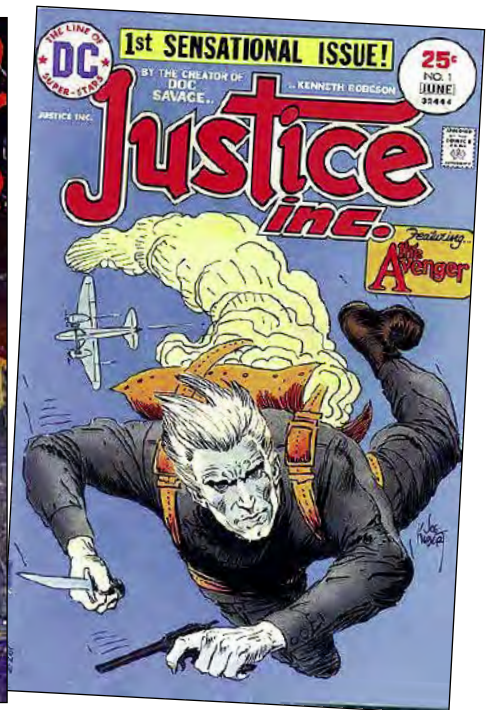
The bodacious bookends to *The Avengers'* first decade: the Jack Kirby/Dick Ayers cover of issue #1 (Sept. 1963), with coloring by Stan Goldberg—and that of #115 (Sept. 1973) by John Romita & Mike Esposito. Of course, there were a few *Annals* and the like during that decade, as well. Great things were yet to come, and still are—but these were the ones that set the pace, the work of only three listed writers (Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, and Steve Englehart—plus a pair of synopses by Harlan Ellison and a bit of ghost-plotting by Len Wein and Chris Claremont) and fewer than a dozen pencils. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the scans. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



'Nuff Said!

We could argue all day about who did what and who was more responsible for this and that and the other, but let's just keep it simple: Writer/editor Stan Lee (left) and artist/co-plotter Jack Kirby (right) were one of the most influential teams in the history of comics—even if they were never really a "team" in the sense of Siegel & Shuster (or even of Simon & Kirby), because Stan, as editor, had the final say in all creative matters. Subject to "Merry Marty" Goodman, of course. Thanks to Danny Fingeroth for retrieving the Lee photo from the Stan Lee Archives at the University of Wyoming in Laramie; the Kirby pic is courtesy of the Roz Kirby Estate.

newborn team's status quo. Teeny-weeny Ant-Man is now the 12-foot Giant-Man (cf. *Astonish* #49). Infiltrating their first formal meeting, the shapeshifting Space Phantom tricks The Avengers into fighting each other. "I never suspected how much each of you hate me, deep down," the Hulk tells his teammates in the battle's aftermath. "I could tell by the way you fought me... by the remarks you made!" Just like that, they are down a member. The green goliath makes common cause with Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, that twosome's showdown with The Avengers ended only by



With (Clockwise) Liberty And Justice For All!

Whether Lee and Kirby had it in mind or not, *The Avengers* was as much a response to the early-'60s success of *Justice League of America* as *Fantastic Four* #1 had been. The JLA had debuted in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (Feb.-March 1960), starring National/DC's most celebrated super-heroes, though office politics decreed that Superman and Batman, the most famous of them all, be downplayed to the point of not even being depicted on most early covers. *The Avengers* started out with a similar all-star cast of what its first splash page termed "Some of Earth's Mightiest Heroes"—minus only Spider-Man, the FF, Dr. Strange, and the equally new X-Men; but by issue #16 Thor, Iron Man, Giant-Man, and The Wasp, who appeared in solo features elsewhere, had been banished from the pages of *The Avengers* in favor of a trio of lesser lights led by Captain America. Art by Mike Sekowsky & Murphy Anderson; with thanks to the Grand Comics Database. [©2013 DC Comics.]

The ultimate inspiration for the name of the 1963 Marvel assemblage was, as Lee has cheerfully admitted, *The Avenger*, a Street & Smith pulp magazine launched with a Sept. 1939 cover date (above center) and featuring a chalk-faced hero who headed a group known as Justice, Inc. Is the cover artist H.W. Scott, noted pulp-master who did paint some later *Avenger* covers? [©2013 Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. d/b/a Condé Nast.]

When DC, decades later, decided to adapt the pulp *Avenger* in comics form, it had to title the mag—you guessed it—*Justice, Inc.* The cover of issue #1 (May-June 1975) was drawn by Joe Kubert; with #2 the interior pencils for the remaining three issues were done by none other than Jack Kirby!

[©2013 DC Comics or successors in interest.]



"Let the Game Begin!"

From a sleek new cover logo to the innovative layouts and sinuous figure work of interim artist Gene Colan, *Avengers* #63-65 proclaims a new era for the title. Hank Pym abandons his Goliath identity for that of insect-sized Yellowjacket. The Black Widow, back in costume and on assignment for S.H.I.E.L.D., is captured by the criminal scientist Egghead and his partners, the Mad Thinker and The Puppet Master (their roles in this conspiracy playing out in *Sub-Mariner* #14 and *Captain Marvel* #14). While the others pursue a false lead, Hawkeye impulsively downs Pym's improved growth serum and, donning a new Wasp-designed Goliath costume, rescues Natasha (#63). Egghead's scheme to seize absolute power via his undetectable orbiting death ray is foiled, not by The Avengers, but by notorious gangster Barney Barton, to whom Egghead trustingly told his space station's coordinates. Accompanying the good guys on their raid of the station, Barton is mortally wounded, dying in the arms of his estranged kid brother, Clint—Hawkeye's hitherto hidden true identity (#64). The new Goliath brings Egghead to justice in the following issue, finally besting his former mentor, The Swordsman, for good measure (#65).

Barry Smith, still in the Kirby-influenced infancy of his career, handles the pencils for #66-67, the start and middle of a three-part battle between The Avengers and Ultron-6, resurrected via a post-hypnotic command in The Vision's programming. Much of the plot turns on the introduction of Adamantium, the indestructible metal alloy out of which the reconstructed Ultron is built. The concluding chapter features the debut of Sal Buscema, John's talented younger brother, at the drawing board (#68), aided by the polished inking of Sam Grainger. Looser stylistically than his sibling, Sal brings a solid sense of pacing and an unpretentious clarity to his storytelling.



Barry B.C. (Before Conan)

Barry Windsor-Smith, seen in a photo taken at Phil Seuling's 1976 New York Comic Art Convention, is surrounded by ghosts of his past, when he was a talented young artist learning his trade in the late 1960s. This pic is courtesy of the Great American Comic Book Stories website.

(Top left:) A Giant-Man pinup drawn by Barry (or so we're told) for a Marvel reprint comic in his native England, either before he first journeyed to America circa 1968 or after his return to London circa '69. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Top right:) Of similar vintage is this half-inked illo Barry drew of the villainous Grim Reaper, probably during the period when he and Roy were prepping a super-group series they hoped to launch starring Rick Jones, Red Raven, Quicksilver, and a couple of other minor Marvel heroes. (Pages from that never-realized project were seen years ago in Jon B. Cooke's *TwoMorrrows* mag *Comic Book Artist*.) The Grim Reaper was introduced by Roy and John Buscema in *The Avengers* #52 (May 1968). When the new Thomas/Smith team mag proved a non-starter—maybe partly because Barry was soon penciling important titles like *The Avengers* and would ere long hit his stride with *Conan the Barbarian*—the young Brit generously gave Roy the drawing. Roy's had it framed on his wall for years as a memento, but it's never before been published; our thanks to Barry for his permission to do so. As we all know full well, he got lots and lots better—but there was dynamism in his work from the very beginning. [Grim Reaper TM & ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]


For actual published *Avengers* pages drawn by Barry—well, they've all been reprinted in *Marvel Masterworks* and *Essentials* volumes. (Besides, see p. 32!)

"I CAME UP WITH
THE BLACK PANTHER
BECAUSE I SUDDENLY
DISCOVERED THAT
I HAD A LOT OF
BLACK READERS,
AND HERE I AM, A
LEADING CARTOONIST,
AND I WASN'T
DOING A BLACK..."

—JACK KIRBY, FROM A 1989 INTERVIEW

THE ORIGIN OF JACK KIRBY'S BLACK PANTHER

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY ARLEN SCHUMER



Jack Kirby

THOUGH **STAN LEE** CLAIMS HE CREATED **THE BLACK PANTHER** FIRST, BEFORE JACK KIRBY, THIS **COLOR STUDY** OF A BLACK SUPER-HERO DONE BY **KIRBY...**

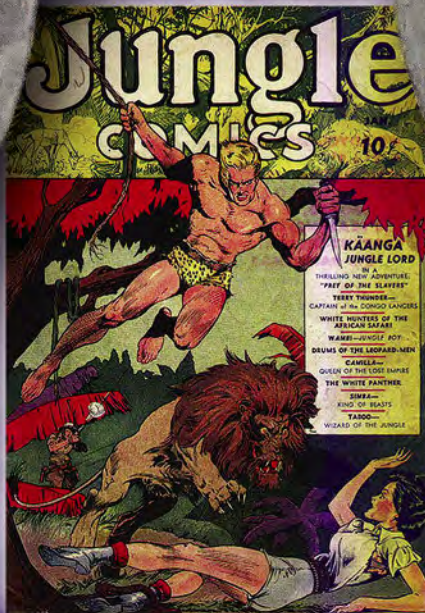
...NAMED **COAL TIGER**, PREDATING THE **PANTHER**, IS NEVER MENTIONED BY **LEE**, THUS SUPPORTING **KIRBY'S** CLAIM OF **PRIMARY** CREATORSHIP; WHOEVER CAME UP WITH THE NAME "**BLACK PANTHER**" IS IN **DISPUTE**, AS ARE THE **EXACT** REASONS WHY THIS **ORIGINAL** COVER OF **FF#52** (JULY 1966)--HIS DEBUT WITH ONLY **HALF-MASK**--WAS **REJECTED!**

Coal Tiger art (c) 2013 Estate of Jack Kirby. Marvel art on next three pages (c) 2013 Marvel Characters, Inc. Jungle Comics art (c) 2013 the respective copyright holders.



WAS IT BECAUSE **SOUTHERN** DISTRIBUTORS WOULDN'T **SHIP**, AND RETAILERS WOULDN'T **SELL**, A COMIC WITH A **BLACK MAN--** A **SUPER-BLACK MAN--** ON THE **COVER?**

BELOW: cover and first panel of super-speedster White Panther, in *Jungle Comics* #1 (Jan. '40), the same month DC's Flash appeared.



E.C. STONER – The Forgotten Trailblazer

A Rare Look At An Early African-American Comic Book Artist

by Ken Quattro

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION: *This is a piece long in development and long overdue. I couldn't have completed it without the help of many fine people. I'd like to express my thanks to: Dr. Michael Vassallo, Will Murray, Allan Holtz, Samuel Joyner, Hames Ware, and the late Jerry Bails.*

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

—Ralph Ellison, prologue to his novel *Invisible Man*.

Pens & Peanuts

If you think Matt Baker was the first African-American to work in comic books, you are wrong. Elmer Cecil Stoner had him beat by the better part of a decade.

He was the son of a church sexton from the Pennsylvania coal-mining town of Wilkes-Barre. Born October 20, 1897, Elmer was the eldest of three children and part of the small portion of the town's mainly immigrant population that was black. Or, as the census-takers would describe them, "mulatto"—the vague term used for light-skinned blacks.

Beyond those scraps of information there is little known about Elmer's early years except for a story long associated with him that bears some scrutiny. According to several respected sources, Stoner was the creator of the "Mr. Peanut" character for the Planter Peanuts Company. (Hames Ware has confirmed that Stoner's widow, Henriette, had that among his accomplishments when she filled out the questionnaire for the *Who's Who of American Comic Books* database.)

Founded in 1906, the Planters company was indeed from Wilkes-Barre, where Stoner was living at the time. In 1916, it sponsored a contest to find a company logo. As the story is recounted



Art On The Walls—Art In The Halls

E.C. Stoner at home—and his cover for Fox's *Blue Beetle* #31 (June 1944). All art and photos accompanying this article, unless otherwise noted, were provided by author Ken Quattro. The photo was sent to him by Samuel Joyner, from an unidentified 1940s magazine piece. *Blue Beetle* is now a trademark of DC Comics. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

in the official history on the company's website:

Introduced in 1916, the debonair marketing image of Mr. Peanut derived from a crude drawing by a Virginia schoolboy. Prompted by a nation-wide logo contest sponsored by the Planters Company, (14-year-old) schoolboy Antonio Gentile won \$5 for his design submission of Mr. Peanut. Then, a professional illustrator enhanced the youngster's drawing, adding the top hat, monocle, and cane.

While it's entirely possible that Stoner was employed as a professional illustrator in 1916 (he would have been 18 or 19 years old), there are facts that cast some doubt. I've located his draft registration card, which is dated September 12, 1918. In the section of the card that notes his occupation, Stoner has written "porter" and his employer as "F. W. Woolworth Co." Although this is some two years after the creation of the Planters logo, it seems unlikely that Stoner would have gone from being an illus-

trator to a porter. Perhaps he was employed by the Planters company as an in-house artist at the time, maybe as a temporary worker. However, since it is still a possibility—and a great story—let it stand with a question mark in parentheses.

There is also significance in Stoner's employment by the F.W. Woolworth Company. At one time, the seemingly ubiquitous five-and-dime store was in nearly every town. One of the partners in Woolworth's was a man named Fred Morgan Kirby. Kirby was originally a competitor of Woolworth; in 1911 their two companies were combined into one. Kirby's original store in Wilkes-Barre location became a regional headquarters.

Reading between the lines, it is a fair assumption that Kirby was aware of Stoner and his talent. Fred Kirby was a philanthropist, particularly dedicated to the early 20th-century version of civil rights. Among his charitable gifts was the establishment of the Chair of Civil Rights at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. As Stoner was known to have attended the Wilkes-Barre Academy, it is possible he did so with the help of Kirby, through a gift or a

scholarship. When he did attend, exactly, is harder to determine.

Harlem Days

The 1920 census reveals that Elmer was still living at home with his parents in that year. He would have been 22 at the time the census was taken. By 1922, though, Stoner was living in New York. It appears, then, that Elmer attended college sometime between the January 1920 census-taking and his showing at an art exhibit in August 1922.

This exhibition of "Negro" artists was held at the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library. Among the high points hailed by head librarian Ernestine Rose were "the charcoal illustrations of Elmer C. Stoner," which, she noted, "were splendidly planned and executed." [The Southern Workman, pp. 542-543.] Note that Stoner's immersion into the New York art world corresponds with the advent of the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance was the period of African-American intellectual and artistic flowering straddling the 1920s that centered around that New York community. This re-discovery and awakening of black culture nurtured such talents as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Duke Ellington. It's no wonder that Stoner was drawn there:

[I]t was a pretty nifty place to live. Crime, dope, and poverty were scarcely visible, protest and militancy were polite, the streets were clean, and, above all, bourgeois aspiration prevailed. [New York Times, "Harlem's History through a Camera," Oct. 16, 1971.]

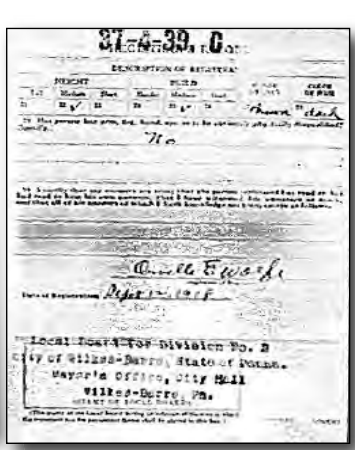
Elmer Stoner was newly married when he and his wife Vivienne befriended another couple, Nella Larsen and her husband, Dr. Elmer Imes.

Larsen was a writer—with time, one of the most important to emerge from the era. It's probable that Larsen met Stoner when she was an assistant librarian in the same 135th Street branch where Elmer had exhibited his artwork.

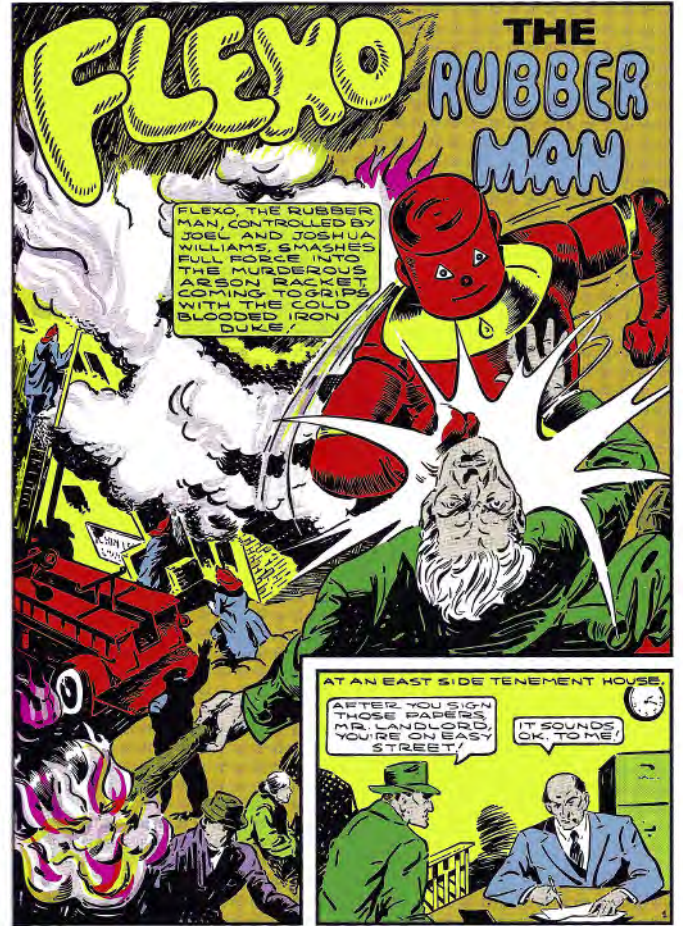
According to Larsen's biography, *In Search of Nella Larsen* by George Hutchinson, the Stoners had moved from their home in Harlem in 1924 to Greenwich Village, where "Vi" opened a gift shop on Christopher Street. The two couples often played bridge and were part of a tight-knit circle of African-Americans who lived in The Village.



They Call Me Mister Peanut!
A July 24, 1917, advertisement introducing Mr. Peanut. Whether or not Elmer Stoner was involved as a youngster in the character's creation is a matter of controversy and conjecture. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



You're Standing In A Draft
Stoner's draft registration, dated Sept. 12, 1918. He would have been approximately 20 years old at this time.



In A Timely Fashion

(Above left:) This black-&-white image of the "Breeze Barton" splash from *Daring Mystery Comics* #3 (April 1940) was provided to Ken Q. by Dr. Michael J. Vassallo. Pencils by Jack Binder; inks by E.C. Stoner. To view this page in color, pick up a copy of *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Daring Mystery, Vol. 1*. (Somehow, Marvel left the word "Comics" out of the hardcover's title.) Stoner is also credited by that book's art-identifiers as inking Binder's "Breeze" tale in *DMC* #5, but not in #4; those are the only three issues in which that hero appeared. Chances are that, when this story was produced, Great Britain and France had only recently declared war on Nazi Germany; note that, presciently, the unknown scripter has the war still going on in 1945.

(Above right:) Stoner is credited with inking Binder's pencils on "Flexo the Rubber Man" in the first two issues of *Timely's Mystic Comics*; and with #3 (June 1940), seen here, he seems to have penciled that feature and left the inking to other Binder shop hands. Repro'd from *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Mystic Comics, Vol. 1*, not from the original mag. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

direction of designer Paul Perhune, Stoner was probably one of the artists involved with the creation of the huge (160' x 40') diorama in the "Railroads at Work" exhibit. During this time, he also illustrated a children's book for young Fair-goers entitled *Seeing the World's Fair*.

The time required for these projects likely accounts for the gap between Stoner's first comic work and his starting his comic career in earnest when he emerges as a member of the Harry "A" Chesler

Here Comes The Sun, Man!

(Left:) "Ajax the Sun Man," drawn by Stoner, appeared in issues of *Street & Smith's Doc Savage Comics* between 1940 and 1943. Jack Binder is credited with art on some "Ajax" stories; his brother Otto, just then becoming a top "Captain Marvel" scribe at Fawcett after years of writing pulp science-fiction, reportedly scripted "Ajax" in 1941-42. This splash page is from *Doc Savage Comics* #3 (Feb. 1941).. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]





A Fawcett Publication

Gabby Hayes Western

SEPTEMBER NO. 10



A Trio of Twins!
 Gabby Hayes Western #10 (Sept. 1949) with its photo cover... Gunmaster #2 (Nov 1964—art by Bill Fraccio and Dick Giordano)... and Red Mask #45 (Dec. 1954—art by Frank Bolle). [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



Evil Twins Two!

by Michael T. Gilbert

Last issue we spotlighted super-heroes and their deadly doppelgängers. Turns out the Wild West was crawlin' with 'em, too! Cowboy heroes like Red Mask and Gunmaster both faced their own Evil Twins. And over at Fawcett, even crabby Gabby Hayes came face to face with himself. *Ugh!* The Lone Ranger battled his own mirror image in a super-special, er, "Disguise Issue." Disguise or not, the phony didn't stand a chance against the real McCoy!

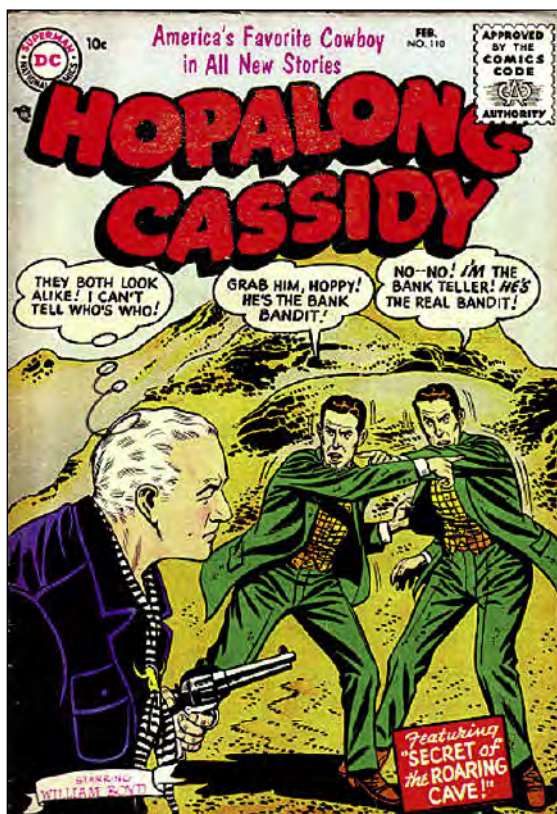
But the most famous cowboy twins weren't even evil. "The Trigger Twins" began in the premier issue of DC's *All-Star Western* (#58, continuing the numbering from the cancelled *All-Star Comics*). Writer Bob Kanigher and artist Carmine Infantino came up with a clever origin story starring identical twins Walt and Wayne Trigger. Walt became a rootin' tootin' gun-totin' sheriff, but was lousy at his job. His more-skilled twin Wayne was a lowly storekeeper, who sometimes pretended to be Walt in a pinch to help out his numbskull brother. And that's how the West was won. Or should I say—two?

The series lasted from May 1951 until December 1960. *All-Star Western* #116 was the Twins' last appearance in the original run. A new feature, "Super-Chief," replaced the dynamic duo for the title's remaining three issues. The Twins reappeared in *Showcase* #72 in 1968 (the "Top Gun" issue) and rated their own one-shot reprint in 1973. They occasionally appeared in DC mags thereafter.



The Not So Lone Ranger!

Lone Ranger #124 (Oct. 1958). [©2013 Lone Ranger Television, Inc., or successors in interest.]



Banking On Twins!

Hopalong Cassidy #110 (Feb 1956). Art by Gene Colan & Joe Giella. [©2013 DC Comics.]



Pulling The Trigger!

Trigger Twins #1 (March 1973). Art by Gil Kane and Joe Giella. [©2013 DC Comics.]

“I Started To Remember...”

Memories Of The 1964 New York Comicon— A Very Brief Visit With Steve Ditko, & More, From **BERNIE BUBNIS**

Introduction To Special Guest Edition

One of the great pleasures of writing *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* and other books about the history of fandom has been getting to know many of the people I was writing about, but had only known “in the old days” as names on a dittoed or mimeographed page. One such fan is Bernie Bubnis.

In our profile/interview with Bernie back in A/E #100, we talked about the 1964 New York Comicon he had organized with the help of a handful of friends—and which may be considered the first comic book convention—and about his exit from fandom not too long afterward. In the weeks and months after our interview, Bernie turned out to be a voluble raconteur in e-mails to yours truly, Roy Thomas, and doubtless others. Roy and I quickly realized that Bernie had just a bit (!) more to say about that 1964 con, and we invited him to write a guest column for A/E. And so, *voilà!* —**Bill Schelly.**

It was 1995. The ever-changing economy was looking upward. After some tough times in the early '90s, my business was booming. My business model was simple. Three New York City area showrooms that displayed windows and doors. Hell, everyone wanted to ride the upscale trolley and improve homes. The beginning of the bubble.

Long days and nightly commutes to the Long Island suburbs put me home after dark. Nothing disturbs the home fires like a telephone ringing. Before caller ID, I just stared at that ringing piece of plastic. Who calls at this time? This has *got* to be a problem. What happened next scared me. This was an unexpected call.

The guy on the other end is asking me questions about things that happened over 30 years ago! Things I hardly ever thought about anymore. In those days, you couldn't punch into Google and pull up a man's life. He knew what I was doing (and thinking) in 1961. I was 13 years old. I didn't know what I was doing in 1961. This was going to be a very uneasy conversation. This guy had to be a detective of some kind, and I was dead-on in his gun sights.

I read too many Mickey Spillane novels. The guy on the other end of the phone line was (Detective) Bill Schelly, comic fandom historian. Huh? Who has this much time on his hands? He was writing a book about the very early days of comic book fandom and had tracked me down, like a trapped rat. To me, those days were long gone, and I never really wanted to relive a few of those memories. Like a scene in a horror movie, I started to remember...

If I read a story out loud, maybe that would drown out the yelling and screaming. I hid in my room. With my comic books and science-fiction magazines. If I concentrated enough, I could transport myself out of this house. Maybe tonight my parents



Bernie Times Three—Plus One
A clockwise Bubnis triptych: Bernie around the time of the '64 con—a bit later, in leather with motorcycle helmet—and Bernie today, with his granddaughter Lauren. Photos courtesy of BB, of course.



won't throw things. This was surely the night I would go to Dogpatch, maybe the Fortress of Solitude; maybe I can stop crying.

I hid with my books. Comics led to magazines like *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. Science-fiction fandom was alive and well. Letter columns and fanzines were the blogs of the '60s.

My father passed away, and a part of me started to breathe again. It was time to stop hiding. I boarded a Long Island Railroad train to New York City. From there, a subway ride to the Greyhound Bus Terminal, and a short time later—Newark, New Jersey. That is where the Eastern Science Fiction Society met every month and I started to realize I was not alone. Newark almost played a role in Bill Schelly's history book, but more on that a little later. It was time I started to choose my *own* family.

One of my favorite fanzines was *Yandro*, edited and published by Buck Coulson and his wife Juanita. Most times it just rambled about this and that, but always centered on science-fiction fandom. It was a very popular fanzine at the time and (in spite of its popularity) chose to actually publish my earliest cartoons and fiction. That spotlight felt warm and comfy. I just had to start my own fanzine.

Buck's fanzine reviews introduced me to *Comic Art* (Don and Maggie Thompson) and *Xero* (Dick and Pat Lupoff). Something fishy, here. Both these pubs talked about comic books and comic strips and super-heroes and they took it all seriously. I wasn't dancing by myself anymore. Of course it did not hurt that my three favorite fanzines were all family affairs. Fate was tapping my shoulder. Then I discovered *Alter-Ego*. Holy crap! The *whole thing* was about comic books!

I had found my family. My love affair with comic book fandom was about to begin.

I bought everything at the newsstand. Mostly comic books, but also some magazines like *Mad*, and of course the sf pubs like *Astounding* and *If* and even *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. *FM* was kid/hog heaven. Loads of monster photos and articles about production and special effects. All put together by the WORLD'S LEADING AUTHORITY ON JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING. I knew that because Forrest J. Ackerman told me so every month.

My 13-year-old eyes saw Ackerman standing about 70 feet tall. Maybe 80. I was fascinated by him. If I was FJA, what would I do? Put together a fanzine ABOUT FJA, of course! I sketched out a cover idea and named it *The Acker-Zine* (he even had us talking like him). No idea what the contents would look like, but I knew it would be great. Sent the sketch and a letter to Forry, with my plan that I had no plan but anything about Ackerman would be sensational. I hope 13-year-old kids today are still as innocent and ignorant as I was in 1961.

A few weeks later, two large cardboard boxes arrive and they are filled with fanzines dating from the 1940s and FJA was involved in every one. A short note: "Start here and thanks for your letter. Forry." Forry in uniform, Forry feuding with other fans, Forry, Forry, Forry. Good God, I'm not a speed reader but I plunged into the piles of paper and tried to sift enough fan-oriented topics into 30-something ditto pages.

Not my proudest moment, but I was able to print about 100 copies. Sent a few to *FM* and received a plug in the

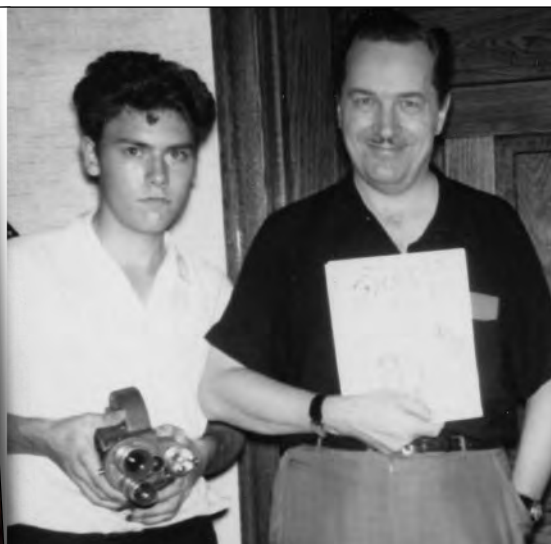
letter column. Only about 40 were sold, and Ackerman was kind enough to purchase the remaining copies. Never got another mention, but he did send me another large cardboard box, this time filled with horror and science-fiction movie posters. He encouraged me to contact the poster services stamped on each and start collecting on my own. I did collect but I used these services to purchase and re-sell movie material and became an early dealer in movie memorabilia. Ackerman saved my life, which was crumbling beneath a pile of debt left behind by my father. He also helped finance the first comicon in 1964, but more on that later.

Among the fanzines that Forry had sent me originally was a booklet titled *Official Souvenir Journal of the First World Science Fiction Convention* held July 2nd-4th, 1939, in New York City. It measured only 6"x9" with twenty pages, but its shiny gold cover made it look much larger. Of course, Ackerman's name was listed inside along with those of Julius Schwartz, Otto Binder, Robert Heinlein, and Ray Bradbury. The interior schedule of panels listed for instance "Science Fiction and the New Fandom" and "Men of Science Fiction" by Mort Weisinger. The last event for July 4th weekend was to be "Independence Day Fireworks at New York World's Fair." I just had to be at the first *Comic Convention*!

In 1961, I responded to a letter-writer in the DC comic *Mystery in Space* by the name of G.B. Love. In those early days, I signed my stuff as B.G. Bubnis. You just knew the two of us were separated at birth. Joined the Science Fiction and Comic Association (the S.F.C.A.) along with two other kids named Buddy Saunders and Rick Weingroff, soon to become fandom's most prolific artist and writer. The first few issues were just carbon copies and severely lacked content. Hence my short story was printed in the first issue, and somehow Gordon's baby survived for many more editions. Gordon suffered from cerebral palsy but not from the lack of stamina or guts. The *Rocket's Blast* fanzine was his passion and an early pillar of fandom. He was/is an inspiration. Proud to have been on board.

Thanks to fanzine collector and archivist Aaron Caplan, I recently got a chance to see the first ten issues of *Rocket's Blast* for the first time in fifty years. Great fun to read early work by Saunders and Weingroff; their styles got better with each issue. *RB* #2 printed a letter from me with an interesting couple of lines: "Now this may sound far-fetched, but why don't the few members we have now meet in a chosen spot once a year. Now I know it sounds impossible but who knows it might work." I guess the convention planning was starting even earlier than I remembered.

I printed a few early ditto pages for the *RB* on my own machine and sent them off for inclusion. I remember doing sketches of John McGeehan, Buddy, Rick, and G.B. so that we would all get some visuals



Famous Monsters—And Famous Forry
 (Left:) *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #6 (Feb. 1960)—an early issue of the groundbreaking Warren magazine that inspired Bubnis to publish his own, amateur publication, called *Acker-Zine*. King Kong cover artist unknown.
 (Right:) *FMF*'s Forrest J. Ackerman in 1962 with another acolyte, one Don Glut (future comics writer and filmmaker).
 [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



Love That Rocket's Blast!

Gordon ("G.B.") Love, editor of *The Rocket's Blast*, published some of Bernie's earliest fan letters and articles. Seen here are his masthead (and a few lead-off lines) from *RB* #2 (Jan. 1962)—as well as Bernie's letter (and the publisher/editor's response) from that same issue. *Rocket's Blast* was in its infancy when Bernie joined the S.F.C.A. and began appearing in its pages. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Shown below right is a page done for *RB* #8 as a tribute to two co-creations of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby, as Bernie printed them on the spirit duplicator he'd purchased from Jerry Bails after it had been used to run off the first two issues of *Alter-Ego* (Vol. 1). The Cap figure, though, is based on a 1954 John Romita splash.

Thanks to Bernie for the photocopy.

[Captain America TM & ©2013 Marvel Characters, inc.; Fighting American TM & ©2013 Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby.]

a simple time. The only folks missing from the membership were Spanky and Alfalfa.

Around this time—1962—I started my own fanzine, *Comic Heroes Revisited*. I met some fellow Long Island fans, Len Wein and Ron Fradkin. We traveled to each other's houses to talk/trade/live comic books. I remember we once went to New York City and found a back-issue magazine shop on 42nd St. and 6th Ave. Some out-of-touch dealers still considered comics as junk, so we found a pile of junk priced at a quarter each. I think Len got *Shadow* #1 and I got *Zip* #1 (which featured Steel Sterling, and I used the cover as my page for the *Super Hero Calendar* in 1963). Len edited and published a fanzine called *Aurora* and I was happy to contribute some artwork. Even illustrated a full story based on one of his creations.

Happy, happy campers. Good friends, Len and Ron. Two strong egos would soon clash and destroy a friendship. I'm a jerk.

It is time to stop depending on my memory for this story. Let us now get some historical reference points. Following are excerpts from two issues of a fan newsletter named *Dateline: Comicdom* from editor Ronn Foss:

December 1963, issue #5, letter from Ron Fradkin: "Personally, we're not making much progress. Most of the committee members just sit around and trade comics, original art, etc., and not much is done about a Con."

THE ROCKET'S BLAST

Issue No. 2 January Editor = G.B. Love
Price 35¢ 8 issues \$2.00 = 4 issues \$1.25

THE FEATURE

This month our feature is about Rusty Clapsadle. Rusty lives in Ann Arbor, Mich. and goes to the Slauson School. He is 14 years old and goes and is in the 8th grade. Rusty likes water pants like his father. He is a member of our club. I can't promise to publish every letter I receive but I would like to hear from all of you from time to time. Send your letters to the SFCA.

"Letters To The Editor"

To The Editor,
I feel that G.B.'s method is best. I would like to converse with other members old and new about the development of science fiction since 1926, the first year "Amazing Stories" appeared. Now this may sound far fetched, but why don't the few members we have now meet in a chosen spot once a year. Now I know it sounds impossible but who knows it might work. If we pick a convenient spot for the greater part of the member to meet at it might work. Why don't some of the other members offer suggestions. Although I have a medium collection of comics(2,000) I specialize in old pulp mags and modern day s.f. digests. Anyone else possessing the same will please contact me if they wish to trade remarks on the book world.

Bernie Bubnis Jr.

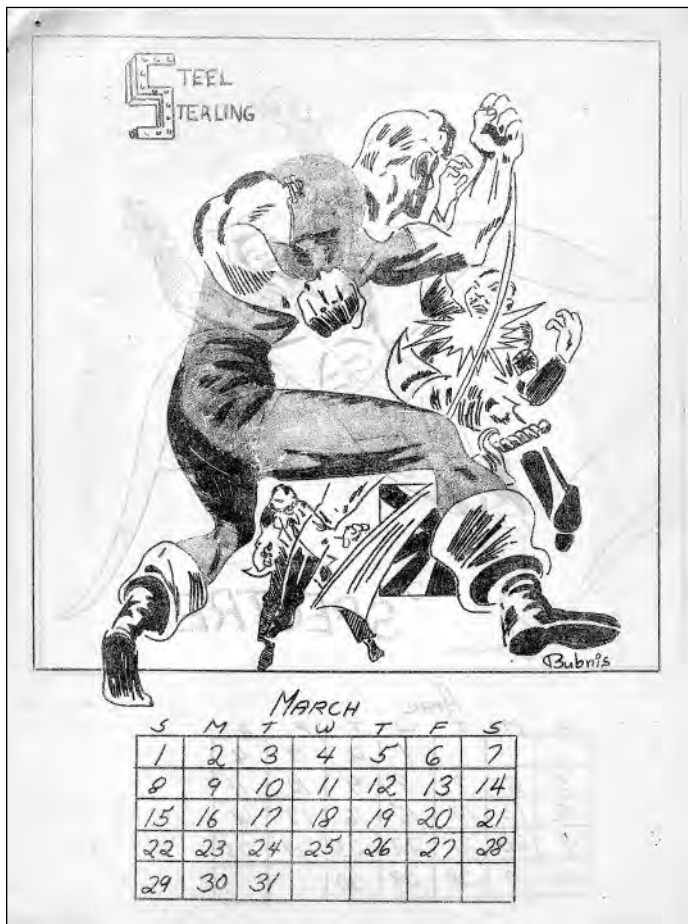
ED: I guess Bernie's idea about us all getting together is a good one, of course a deal like that could be rather expensive. I know because about 4 months ago I flew to Atlanta for a week to visit a couple of old buddies. That little excursion set me back close to \$90.00. But what ever the members want to do is alright with me.

on our membership. We never even considered being able to feature actual photos. I believe the first sketch page appeared in *RB* #14.

Welcome, my friends, to



January 1964, issue #6, letter from Andrew Fraknoi: "Ron Fradkin is right. The Committee is not getting anywhere. The trouble is that the members live too far apart to permit the frequent meetings necessary for organizing a complex event like a convention. However, at the last meet George [Pacinda] was quite optimistic and we're far from giving up."



A Sterling Accomplishment

The 1964 Super Hero Calendar was Bernie's first claim to fame in fandom, and included his tracing of Steel Sterling for the month of March.
[Steel Sterling TM & ©2013 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

Ron and Len were involved with this arm of Jerry Bails' Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors' attempt to stage a comic convention on the East Coast. I was asked to attend these early meetings but resisted because I felt those long Midwestern arms around our New York throats. I planned to sit this one out.

Early in 1964, Len was adamant that I start lending a hand to this floundering convention committee. Well, I will be there if this time the meeting is held in New York. Past meetings were in New Jersey. The closest spot was, of all places, the gigantic waiting area of Grand Central Station. I don't know if you could do such a thing today, but 48 years ago no one paid us any attention. At least eight or nine kids (George wore a white shirt and tie so we would know he was in charge) with comic books spread all over the floor and benches. It was a great little fan meet, but the convention plans were drifting further and further away. They were headed back to New Jersey on the next train.

Damn it, I didn't want to wait. I've been waiting. Ever since I opened that *Journal* from 1939. There is gonna be a party in July 1964 and it may be 25 years later but this is going to be *our* party. At least I was determined, if not completely dense, about what I would do next.



Man Of The Hour

Ethan Roberts' high school graduation picture. He arranged the venue for the '64 con, thus making it possible.

Little did I know at the time that I was planning my own "going-away" party.

Step one was to contact fans and alert them to some committee changes. My co-chairs were Ron and Len, we were the new sheriffs in town, we would pull this convention up from its committee-plagued grave and it would be held in a YMCA in Newark, New Jersey. Yeah, you read correctly. Newark. Newark?? Holy cow, why was I in charge of anything?

Remember, the Eastern Science Fiction guys met there every month. The New York football Giants play in New Jersey (years later); and, of course, the original convention committee lives there. No doubt, I almost got this part wrong. Time to start praying.

This part of the story still confuses me, but *Alter Ego* [Vol. 3] #7 ran a very good article by Ethan Roberts, explaining how he contacted me and offered to help obtaining the Workman's Circle location in New York City. He phoned me from a candy store and kept running out of money during the call. Our conversation suddenly ended, and the guy organizing this convention still was not sure where it would be held. I suddenly wanted to borrow

George Pacinda's white shirt and tie, because even I wasn't sure who was in charge.



Fradkin Forever

Ron Fradkin (wearing tie) in 1967, excerpted from a photo of the NYC-area fan-group The Illegitimate Sons Of Superman. Thanks to Rich Rubinfeld.

Another letter from convention committee member Andrew Fraknoi: *Dateline: Comicon* (March 1964) #8: "[T]he Con committee under Pacinda was getting nowhere months after our first meeting except perhaps our grandiose and impractical suggestions. It seems Bubnis, Wein, and Fradkin have succeeded in accomplishing what the committee could not do."

Thank you, Andrew. Well said. I wonder what contortion Andrew's face became when he read another letter in the *very same* issue. This piece of evidence will be known as the Bernie

Bubnis "MAN OVERBOARD" letter:

"...But what good is a hall without sufficient number of fans to make it look like a convention? As it stands now, I am the only guy working... though Len Wein and Ron Fradkin hold down the titles of co-chairman. At this writing, we have 4 paid members..."

That letter caused a stir between Len, Ron, and myself. Len was convinced that this whole convention plan was about to fizzle away. We were going to look like idiots. This thing might become our *Titanic*, but I was not about to give up. Just like any idiot would do. Ron was a good soldier and promised to get more involved, but Len and I were on two different pages. More trouble coming.

Another fan accused Len of stealing one of his comics. Who knows who did what to whom, and I chose to believe the fan and not Len. I let it be known that Len was no longer representing any convention business. I handled this like a mindless dictator, but I



Weined Away From Fandom

Len Wein at the 1967 Kalercon, just as he was working his way into the comics field as a pro. Photo by Pat Yanchus.

was happy to have a “reason” to reduce my co-chairs. My steam-roller personality just rumbled forward. Too late now. I’m glad he has had a good career.

Just one more piano left to fall on my head, and here it comes. Here is the *first* sentence of a letter printed in *Dateline: Comicdom* (June 1964), issue #11 :

“Comcon 64 has been aborted....”

The letter was written by Jerry Bails. The rest of it made no other mention of the convention. The guy who had helped start it all was commenting on the Academy’s aborted convention, but his timing could not have been worse. Those feared hands not ours, at my throat were very real at that moment. This would definitely confuse some people, and I was one of them.

Just one problem, Jerry—no one told *me*, and my new best friend Ethan has the hall for July 27th, NEXT MONTH!

Next month? Wow, we better get to work! Art Tripp had just been discharged from the Army, and he had a vision. My house was becoming “crash central,” and every comic fan had free entry. Art just appeared one day and volunteered his help. Welcome aboard. Art’s vision was a pin—a button commemorating the convention which could be given to everyone attending. I really did not like the idea. It seemed a little childish and it would cost me more money.

I was starting to run up a bill. Ads for the convention in fanzines. Mailing out notices about the convention location and such. No one was sending any money, so I was picking up the tab for most of the attendees. The convention booklet had to be printed and postage applied. Was the hall free? Thank goodness, F.J. Ackerman’s picture still hung on my wall, to remind me that he had put me in the movie memorabilia business. A steady stream of capital continued to come in from that enterprise. But the “button” thing made me cringe.

Art was correct, even though it took me fifty years to agree. Years later, I looked at one of those buttons which read “Comicon 1964” and felt like I was holding history. We originally planned to put “New York Comic Tri-Con 1964” on it, but the wording took



Punchin’ Julie

Julius Schwartz, legendary DC editor of the Silver Age *The Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Justice League of America*, *The Atom*, *Hawkman*, *Batman*, et al. In this photo, courtesy of Jean Bails, Julie is seen proofing penciled art featuring Zatanna—probably a Mike Sekowsky page for an issue of *Justice League of America*.

up too much room. The button-maker, Art, and I decided the year was a definite and that “Comic Convention” should headline. Art shrunk it down to Comicon and was smart enough to give me a piece of history to hold fifty years later.

Time to get the pros involved. Ron had good relations with Marvel, so he was off to see the Bullpen. I would handle DC and Gold Key. How could they say no? Actually, pretty damn easy.

Bill Harris was the Gold Key editor and had treated me very well when I had profiled him for *RBCC*. Attending the convention was not going to be possible, but he helped me interest *Lone Ranger* artist Tom Gill in making an appearance. Tom was so excited about being with fans that he offered to present an art demonstration. He also brought along original artwork to distribute at the convention. His attendance and cooperation were always overlooked by pundits’ later essays about the convention. At least someone was taking us seriously.

The DC offices were easier to navigate than the Marvel offices. It always seemed we could just show up at DC and find a pro to annoy. Marvel kept a tighter guard on their front door, but Ron knew whom to bother first. Flo Steinberg was Stan Lee’s secretary, and he begged her to take our story to Stan and ask him to make an appearance at the con. No go, but he would send over an intern, Dave Twedt, who at least knew the difference between the Hulk and the Thing. At least he “worked” at Marvel and ranked higher than a janitor. I think they *sort of* took us seriously.

I profiled Steve Ditko for another issue of *RBCC* and he was very friendly. I would make my plea directly to him. Please, Please, Please, come to our convention. No, No, No, I will not come to your convention. All looked bleak until the door opened and Steve walked into Workman’s Circle. Time stopped. No one could believe their eyes. He appeared during Dave Twedt’s question-and-answer session. At that very moment, it officially became the First Comic Convention. Thank you, Mr. Ditko.

This next story is tough to relate, because it involves one of my heroes, Julius Schwartz. Along with those early fanzine editors and writers, no one deserves more credit for the birth of comic fandom. Those early Schwartz-edited letter columns unified the masses and started to glue us together. I wanted him at this first convention. I was sure he wanted to be there, also.

I remember being in his office a week before the convention date. Ron and I had already floated the convention idea in front of just about everybody at DC. I don’t think they took us seriously, but this time would be different. I wanted the King to attend and I wasn’t leaving till he agreed. I should have sent Fradkin here, also.

He was ready for me. He knew what he wanted to do and I walked right into his trap. I’m begging him and he suddenly opens his desk drawer, produces a small booklet and *throws* it at me. It was the same 1939 *SciFi Con Journal* that Ackerman had given me, and if Julie thought I would be surprised, he was wrong. He says, “This was a real convention!” Hey, what does that have to do with you attending? I do remember saying, “I don’t care what you did a hundred years ago.”



Button, Button... Who’s Got The Button?

Art Tripp-designed 1964 Comicon button which Bernie donated to Bill Schelly’s Comic Fandom Archive a few years ago.



The Fandom Menace

(Clockwise from above left:)

Bernie on left, with friends Jack Douglas and Kenny Eye. BB says this particular photo is the true dividing line between my fan life and my street life. "No photo of [me as] a 15-year-old fan with any other fan exists, but the one with these characters does exist. On the other side of the room are cabinets filled with comic books. These guys would never have understood my fanboy life. It is the way I looked at that first convention."

Prolific fan writer Rick Weingroff attended that first New York con at Workman's Circle; this photo was taken one year later, at the first NYC con organized by Dave Kaler.

(Right:) Rare photo of Margaret Gemignani, one of the very few female members of early fandom, here garbed as Timely's Miss America at a 1970s comics convention masquerade.



How many people was I going to run over for this stupid convention? I did not really mean to say that, but it was too late for apologies. He was livid. Told me to get out and never come back. I think he actually

pushed me out of his office. I left the building and walked to Penn Station for my trip back to Long Island. I was alone and I needed time to think.

A forgotten hero. I'm talking about Ron Fradkin, of course. Feet on the ground, always a great attitude and a good soldier. There were really only four of us at this point. Ethan saved our necks. Art invented that iconic button. Ron helped me with everything else and I trusted him. When I told him the Schwartz story, he said simply, "We did everything we can, see you Monday."

That Monday was like an oven in New York City. It was July 27th and Ron and I decided to stop at the DC offices and at least get some original art to distribute at the convention. Ron did most of the work and Julie and Murray Boltinoff were kind enough to cooperate. Schwartz looked at me with a cold stare but still told Ron to take what was needed. Carrying pages of original art, we headed to the subway. When fellow fans Paul Vizcarrondo and his friends landed on the same subway car, we just knew this day was going to turn out OK. Sort of.

We arrived late, the air-conditioning went off, people had trouble finding the place and... and... and I was in FAN HEAVEN.

I'm meeting people who were just names on envelopes and letters. Rick Weingroff from Maryland, who had contributed an early article to my fanzine, was flesh and blood. Margaret Gemignani (a girl, a freakin' girl) who loved comics. Don Foote, Len Berman, Dave Bibby, the gang was all here. The dealers sure

found the place: Phil Seuling brought soda, Claude Held and Howard Rogofsky and Bill Thailing from OHIO (he found the place!) and all the way from California was Malcolm Willits with a copy of *Action* #1!

Wow, even the eternal fan, Larry Ivie, found his way to Workman's Circle. He was an early inspiration for me, and when he did not like the Tom Gill original art he was given, I made sure he got another page of "Atomic Knights" by Murphy Anderson. Maybe I should have given him a different page, because his article in *Comic Art* #5 was a pretty blistering description of this convention. Good thing that just about everyone in fandom read *CA* in those days. He even spelled my name correctly.

Bill Schelly's fandom history books and especially issue #7 (2001) of *Alter Ego* give the minutes of the meeting much better than I can. I was just enjoying the party. I thought I had a good time until I read the reviews. I went to work on the Souvenir Booklet, asked Weingroff to write a review (he also spelled my name correctly), got some help from pro and fan artists, and printed my last fan project.

Dave Kaler also attended, and in 1965 put together the next convention. I ignored a few very kind invitations to be involved. That convention was great. It absolutely was. No one mentioned the 1964 convention for quite some time. More conventions followed and they kept getting better. Phil Seuling took this bull by the horns and made his conventions even better (new word invented especially for Phil). Those Seuling conventions were very



Along Came A Spider...

Bernie's 1964, New York Comicon booklet with its Steve Ditko cover as traced by Bernie onto a spirit-duplicator master. We've run this piece before—but how could we leave it out? [Spider-Man TM & ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

York in 1964, and if anyone wants to say, 'Well, my friend came over to see me in 1938 and that was the first convention,' ... Right. Sure it was. The first convention called a convention, the first one planned as a convention, the first one run in an organized manner was ... in New York, 1964."

Thanks for the memories, Phil. I'm glad we were both there.

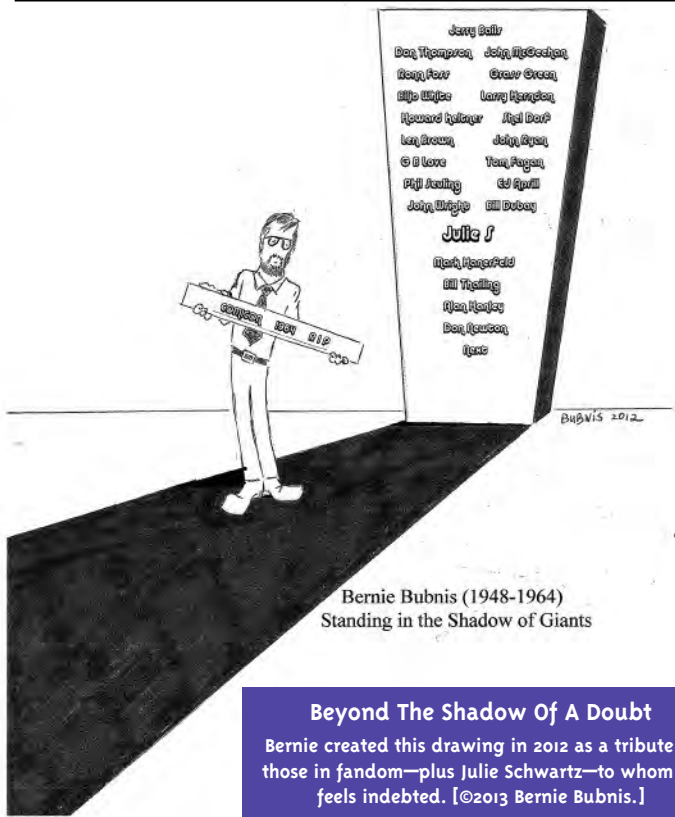
EDITOR'S NOTE: *That's the end of Bernie's reminiscences, but we thought you'd enjoy an excerpt from a subsequent e-mail, as Bernie related a meeting with Steve Ditko:*

The mystery surrounding Steve Ditko is about as thick as some of the fog he conjures up in his artwork. (Good thing I never planned on writing professionally. Surely I would have been arrested.) Ditko is the most interesting person I have ever met. I just have to share this memory.

I did a series of "meet the pros" articles for *RBCC*. I made an appointment to meet with Steve Ditko at his NY office and I was scared stiff! He was very cordial but "all business" during our meeting. He was not easy to approach. The meeting was over and I was just about to leave. I turned to him and naively said, "Every other artist I have met with gave me some original art as a token of my visit." Before I could finish my thought, he said, "I don't want to give you anything."

BANG!!!

SHORT PAUSE, then I laughed so hard my glasses fell off my face. He started laughing and we both laughed some more. It wasn't meant to be a joke, but the "matter of fact" delivery was priceless. He never gave me any artwork that day, but I called on him again and this time I wasn't scared at all.



Bernie Bubnis (1948-1964)
Standing in the Shadow of Giants

Beyond The Shadow Of A Doubt
Bernie created this drawing in 2012 as a tribute to those in fandom—plus Julie Schwartz—to whom he feels indebted. [©2013 Bernie Bubnis.]

successful, and Phil helped put the exclamation point on that 1964 party in 1972's *Fantastic Fanzine Special #2* (edited by Gary Groth):

"Well, those buttons were beautiful and they're really from the first comic convention. And there's the proof of it... nobody can say there was a convention before.... The first convention was in New

START YOUR KUBERT LIBRARY HERE!

MAN OF ROCK: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOE KUBERT
By Bill Schelly
\$19.99 Paperback
This full-bodied biography provides a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the career of one of the most distinctive, dynamic artists in the history of comics.

WEIRD HORRORS & DARING ADVENTURES: THE JOE KUBERT ARCHIVES Vol. 1
Edited by Bill Schelly
\$39.99 Hardcover
For the first time, 33 of the best stories from Kubert's early career, collected in one full-color volume, in a glorious variety of genres with an emphasis on horror and crime. Meticulously restored, with historical notes.

THE ART OF JOE KUBERT
Edited by Bill Schelly
\$39.99 Hardcover
A deluxe, full-color coffee table book that honors this legendary creator with beautifully reproduced artwork from every phase of his career, spanning the history of comics.



Available from
FANTAGRAPHICS.COM
or wherever good comics are sold.



[Art & logo ©2013 Marc Swayze; Shazam hero © & TM 2013 DC Comics]

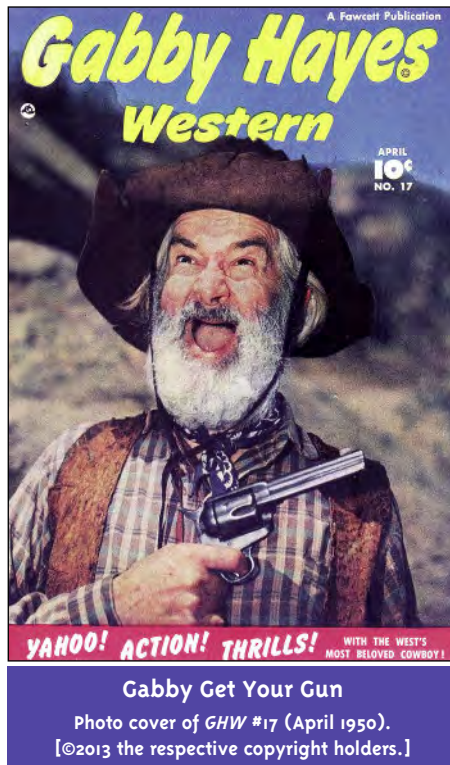
Special Edition by P.C. Hamerlinck

[Marcus B. Swayze, Fawcett comics artist and writer during the 1940s and early '50s and a contributor to FCA since the first issue of *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3, in 1999, passed away on October 14, 2012, at the age of 99. The next issue of A/E (and its extra-length FCA section) will be a celebration of Marc's 100th birthday, which was already in preparation when he left us. We felt it fitting that this special number of FCA feature the last comics story Marc ever drew—in a 1956 issue of *Gabby Hayes*, after that Western title had moved from Fawcett to Charlton Comics. I am honored to introduce it. —P.C. Hamerlinck.]

During the peak of the late-'40s/early-'50s cowboy genre-comics bang, Fawcett Publications believed that three B-Western-movie side-splittin' six-shooter cinematic sidekicks were laudable and laughable enough to prosper with their own comic book titles. *Smiley Burnette Western*, with art generally by Stan Aschmeier (former artist of "Johnny Thunder," "Dr. Mid-Nite," et al.), hit the dirt in 1950 before biting the dust after four forgettable issues, featuring the chubby comedy relief of many a Gene Autry and Durgano Kid movie. *Andy Devine Western*, distinctively drawn by Dick (Frankenstein) Briefer, appeared that same year; but although Devine played deputy Jingles with Guy Madison in radio and TV's *The Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok*, that comic vamoosed from the stands after only a couple of issues.

Fortunately for Fawcett, while the on-screen clowning of the above pair of sidekicks did not transfer successfully into comic books, such was not the case with its third entry in that arena: *Gabby Hayes Western*.

George "Gabby" Hayes was the popular comedic cowboy crank who at one time or another rode devotedly alongside such rugged screen stars as John Wayne, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Wild Bill Elliott, Randolph



Scott, Hopalong Cassidy, Bob Steele, et al. Before Gabby's film career finally rode off into the sunset, he even starred in his own television series, *The Gabby Hayes Show* (NBC 1950-54, ABC 1956); in addition, Fawcett's *Gabby Hayes Western* comic book enjoyed a remarkable 50-issue run.

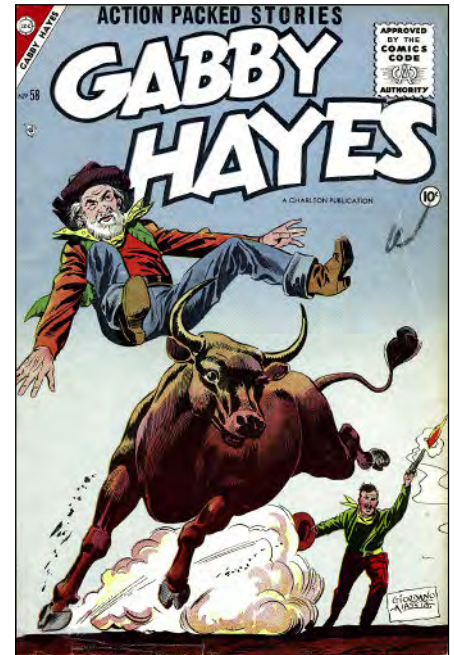
Furthermore, there were a stack of 61 *Gabby Hayes* British black-&-white comics (Fawcett reprints) published by L. Miller & Sons from 1951-55... five different Quaker Oats GH giveaway mini-comics in '51... and a '53 Toby Press one-shot, before Charlton gave the eccentric sidekick one last flicker of limelight in the Western sky by using up old/unused Fawcett inventory, coupled with their own new material, for nine more issues after Fawcett dismantled their comics line at the end of 1953.

Gabby Hayes Western debuted with a November 1948 cover date and ran until the 50th issue, dated January 1953. Fawcett, who touted Gabby as "The most garrulous galoot ever to straddle a saddle" and "The rage of the purple sage," utilized movie-style photo covers on all their issues; "Gabby Hayes" also appeared as a back-up feature for 50 issues of *Monte Hale Western* (even though Hayes had never appeared in a movie with Hale), and got up to numerous shenanigans in Fawcett's anthology title *Real Western Hero* (a.k.a. *Western Hero*, beginning with #70).

Gabby's madcap misadventures at Fawcett were scripted by Otto Binder, Rod Reed, John Eric Messman, and Irwin Schoffman; artwork was by Leonard Frank as well as Jack Binder, Clem Weisbecker, Carl Pfeufer, Bob Laughlin, and Maurice Whitman.

When Charlton continued the series (along with several other former Fawcett titles), the word "Western" was dropped and the publication became simply *Gabby Hayes*. Charlton's nine-issue run, from #51 (Dec. '54) through #59 (Jan. '57), was sporadically published over a span of 4½ years. The new material added to the Fawcett leftovers consisted of illustrated covers by Dick Giordano, and a story or two drawn by our very own Marc Swayze.

Over the course of 1954-55, Swayze edited, wrote, and illustrated various features for Charlton—at first on staff, later as a freelancer, before leaving the comics industry for good. The following story, from *Gabby Hayes* #58 (June 1956), which he drew and may have even scripted, is the artist's last published comic book work.



That's No Bull!

Dick Giordano & Vince Alascia drew the cover of *Gabby Hayes* #54. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]