

ROY THOMAS'
GO-WITH-THE-FLO
COMICS FANTINE

Alter Ego™

No. 153
July 2018

REMEMBERING
FABULOUS

FLO STEINBERG

AND THE MARVEL AGE
OF COMICS (& BEYOND)!



\$9.95
In the USA



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FLO'S SENSATIONAL SUCCESSOR

ROBIN GREEN

& HER 1971 MARVEL ESSAY FOR *ROLLING STONE*!™



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This issue is dedicated to the memory of
**Flo Steinberg
& Carolyn Kelly**



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P.C. Hamerlinck presents Part III of Mike Tiefenbacher's "Captain Marvel ©copyright ©crisis!"

On Our Cover: *We were pondering what would make the best cover for this issue when longtime reader and benefactor Jim Kealy e-mailed us a scan, from the infinite Internet, of a fine pencil drawing by Craig Wolden that filled the bill perfectly! It depicted the late and much-missed Flo Steinberg in the dual role of Marvel "corresponding secretary"—and of The Invisible Girl, as per 1978's What If? #11. Through Jim, Bob Bailey, and Sharon Karibian, we contacted Craig, who is art director at a production company in Bloomington, Illinois. Happily, he was amenable to our using his illo. We combined it with some artwork Flo knew well: the framing hero-figures that, for much of the 1960s, graced Marvel's official stationery, featuring art by Al Hartley (Patsy Walker & Hedy Wolfe), Stan Goldberg (Millie the Model), and Jack Kirby (just about everything else). The result, we hope you'll agree, is a fitting tribute to a remarkable and beloved professional. [Main illo © 2018 Craig Wolden; Marvel artwork TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Above: As artist/writer Larry Hama points out on p. 48, legendary comics illustrator Wally Wood used Flo as the model for the character Madame Toy in his comics feature Cannon. See the aforementioned page for more about that long-running series. [TM & © Estate of Wally Wood.]



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FIRST PRINTING.



“FABULOUS FLO” & The First New York Comicons

by Bill Schelly

[Abridged & edited from his “Sense of Wonder” column #8 for Comics Source #8 (Jan. 1996), published by Warren Ventures Corp., edited by Jon R. Warren.]

When one remembers the glory days of comic fandom in the 1960s, it’s impossible to overlook the fact that many fans’ interest in comics was a result of the meteoric rise of Marvel Comics. Would the fledgling comic fan movement have gotten off the ground had National/DC entirely dominated the scene? I don’t think so.

After *Fantastic Four* #1 debuted in August 1961, it soon became apparent that readers loved Stan Lee’s bickering, realistic protagonists. To his surprise, Lee had begun receiving unusually intelligent letters, enough to institute the Fantastic Four Fan Page in *FF* #3. By the time *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 appeared, Stan could no longer handle the mail himself.

Enter: Flo Steinberg, whose perky, vivacious personality earned her the sobriquet for which she will always be remembered: “Fabulous Flo.”

In a recent conversation with Flo, she described how she got the job as Stan Lee’s assistant in March 1963. “I grew up in Boston, got a Liberal Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts, and [at age 23] came to New York to look for a job.” An employment agency sent her to interview for an office job (“gal Friday”) at a publishing house called Magazine Management. Flo had no idea she was about to become a part of the comics industry: “Although I’d always liked comics as a kid, I wasn’t looking for comics work, per se. Magazine Management was a very large company. So I dressed up in my pearls and gloves, and nervously entered the building. I was interviewed by Stan himself. There was no one else! Marvel had just one little cubby hole on the floor.”

“He was so nice,” Flo recalled of Stan. He described the job: answering the phone, opening the mail, keeping tabs on the artists, sending material to the Comics Code Authority and then to the engraver in Connecticut. He offered Steinberg a job then and there. “He said, ‘Well, if you’d like to start’ ... and I did! It was that simple. I think the job paid \$60 a week, which was the going rate in 1963.” At the time, there were no other comics staffers at Marvel, though Sol Brodsky would come in once a week to prepare the house ads. All the artists worked at home.

The sudden influx of letters impressed and heartened Stan and Flo. Increasing sales figures told one story, but the letters revealed that the Marvel super-heroes were appealing to a different breed of reader. “It was a shock to us, a real surprise, when we noticed the readership getting older,” Flo said. “We would get letters from college students, and servicemen ... or even [laughs] the occasional girl!”

Just as their readers took the comics seriously, Stan and Flo



“Fabulous” Flo Steinberg & Stan “The Man” Lee
The only two Marvel staffers in March 1963!
The photo of Stan was taken in fall of '65 for the inside front cover of *Fantastic Masterpieces* #1 (Feb. '66)... the pic of Flo in December '64. In *Comics Interview* #17, where the latter first saw print, she said of it, “A bit of cheesecake.... I was so embarrassed to have my slip showing! Nylons and heels were de rigueur at the time.” Stan seems to be projecting a Sinatra-style image, à la the film *Pal Joey* and various album covers. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the Stan photo scan. [Stan pic © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

“It Was My First Job In The City!”

The Early Days Of The Marvel Age, As Remembered By FLO STEINBERG—Corresponding Secretary To STAN LEE

Conducted by Dwight Jon Zimmerman & Jim Salicrup, 1984

AIE

EDITOR'S INTRO: This is one of the first and longest true interviews ever conducted with Marvel's beloved “corresponding secretary.”

It appeared, under the title “Fabulous Flo Steinberg,” in Comics Interview magazine #17 (Nov. 1984), published by David Anthony Kraft and © 1984 by Fictioneer Books, Ltd. Reprinted by permission. A few of the photos and illustrations included in this edition appeared with that first printing; many others have been added. Accompanying the interview was a full transcription of the original Merry Marvel Marching Society recording from 1965, which has been omitted here. Thanks to Art Lortie and Brian K. Morris for their help in obtaining an editable e-file of the manuscript....

1984 INTRO BY DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN: I met Flo Steinberg while working on the Sol Brodsky biography for Marvel Age, and during the course of her interview discovered a warm, thoughtful woman who, though she has been away from the comicbook business for many years, still keeps in contact with many of her friends. And, because Flo recalled more events about the early days of Marvel than could be included in Sol's biography, I arranged to interview her later for the express purpose of finding out what the early years of Marvel were like and what she is doing now. Several short weeks later, Jim Salicrup and I were sitting in Flo's memorabilia-laden apartment discussing the subject warm to us all—the early years at Marvel....

JIM SALICRUP: I'll sit back and relax and Dwight will ask the questions...

DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN: ...and Jim will provide the Howard Cosell commentary.



Dwight Jon Zimmerman & Jim Salicrup

Conductors of the 1984 interview. Since then, Zimmerman has gone on to author various books, including in conjunction with former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly, while Salicrup had a long career as a comics editor at Marvel and Topps, and currently heads Papercutz, which publishes a revived *Tales from the Crypt*, et al. Thanks to Comic Vine for the Salicrup photo.

FLO STEINBERG: You'll laugh when I say something funny, right?

JS: I'll say “laughter,” and they'll write that in the magazine. Then people will really think we were laughing.

DJZ: Okay! We are in the memento-strewn apartment of Flo Steinberg with her illustrations from Trina Robbins, photos of John Verpoorten, drawings by Herb Trimpe.



“Fabulous Flo”

in artist Herb Trimpe's biplane—plus panels penciled and scripted by Jack “King” Kirby in *What If?* #11 (Oct. 1978); inks by Mike Royer & Bill Wray. In the comic, Flo comes back to sound a warning to Stan and Jack, in the offbeat story “What If The Fantastic Four Were the Original Marvel Bullpen?” When he conceived the notion and gave it to Kirby to write and draw, editor Roy Thomas specified that Flo should become The Invisible Girl. The above photo appeared on the first page of this interview when it was printed in *Comics Interview* #17, so we decided to start out with a color version! [What If? page TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

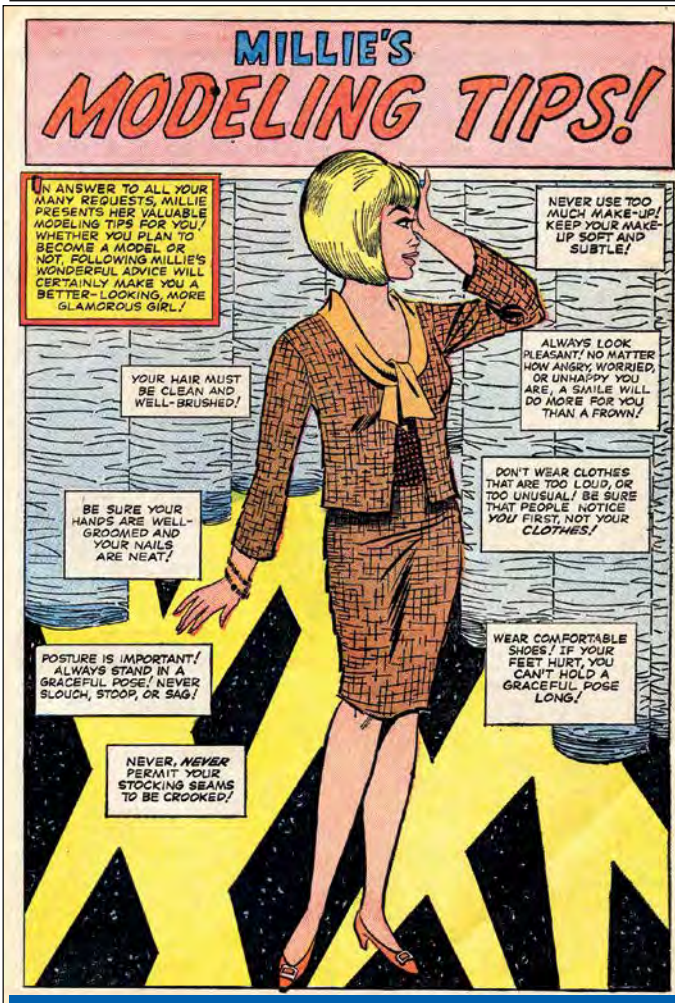
JS: This is the part you're supposed to write in the introduction, Dwight!

DJZ: I don't like writing that section—I prefer to just talk about it. By the way, Flo, Jack Abel says “Hi.”

STEINBERG: Oh, thank you!

DJZ: Flo, we'd like to start the interview with when and how you were hired by Marvel.

STEINBERG: Well, it was March of '63. I had just come to New York from Boston where I was born and raised and schooled. I had come to New York City and moved into one of the “Y's” [YWCA's]



Jack Kirby used to. And the girls' comics like *Millie the Model* and *Patsy Walker*. *The Fantastic Four* was probably starting then. But, the atmosphere was really low-key. [A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Flo's memory tends to be a bit hazy re when this or that comic started—e.g., *F.F.* had been going since summer of 1961—but this doesn't affect the basic narrative.]

DJZ: Stan was low-key?

STEINBERG: Oh, no! Stan always had this high energy level. It's just that the office was very small. There was just a small amount of comics to get out. And Stan wrote them

all. And as I remember, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, or Don Heck, or Dick Ayers—a small group—drew them. Sol Brodsky would come in to do production work.

DJZ: So everybody except you and Stan was freelancing—there was no production staff.

STEINBERG: Yes, that's right, it was just the two of us. There really wasn't much work in my job. There wasn't much fan mail coming in at the time. The most fan mail that came in was for the girls' books—the little outfits pages that appeared in the comics would feature clothing designs suggested by the readers. And I wrote all the little captions for those. Stan Goldberg or Al Hartley would draw the actual designs and then we'd have these letters from people who sent designs. And if someone sent in a design for a dress, we'd match it with the drawing of a dress, a bathing suit suggestion with a bathing suit drawing, etc. And then I'd write the caption saying "darling dress by—" and put that person's name in. So the kids got their names in the comic. The drawings bore no relation to the designs the kids sent in, of course.

Trina Robbins is doing a teenage book now for Marvel. It's not on the schedule yet, from what I hear, but it'll have fashion pages and stuff like that in it. In fact, I think her character's aunt will be Millie the Model.

As for how the comics were produced back then, Stan would write the synopsis and the artist would go home and draw the story. He'd bring the art into the office, and then Stan would write the final story. Artie Simek and Sam Rosen were the only letterers. And they'd come in to pick up and drop off work. But it was not that hectic. There'd always be time to sit around and chat. Artie, he's dead now, but he used to play the spoons and the harmonica.

Sam never came in. His brother Joe would always be the one picking up and delivering the work. Stan Goldberg would come in for the coloring. And... well, I don't remember being very busy in the very beginning. Stan and I used to argue over who would address the envelopes that would go over to the Comics Code.

The people over at Magazine Management would make fun of us. It was a big organization back then. The only time the different departments ever really came together was when we heard that President Kennedy had been killed. Everybody sort of dropped

Millie The Marvel

(Left to right:) No pearls or gloves, but this Stan Goldberg "Modeling Tips" pin-up page from *Millie the Model* #136 (April 1966) roughly dovetails with what Flo said about the kind of outfit she needed to wear to job interviews in the mid-1960s. Thanks to Barry Pearl. Next to it is a story-panel from that issue; "Stan G." co-plotted and drew, with a Roy Thomas script—but the fashion note at bottom was written by Flo Steinberg. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Below:) Two talented artists Flo worked with in the 1960s: Stan Goldberg (on left) and Joe Sinnott.



and I started job-hunting. It was all through agencies in those days. I went on different interviews, stuff like that, in my traditional interview outfit of a black dress and pearls and gloves. It was a different time, back then. [laughter]

One was a secretarial assistant at this magazine company. And I went up and talked to this man, Stan Lee. And the interview was

in this teeny little cubbyhole of an office. Well, let's see, the offices were always on Madison Avenue. This might have been the farthest one uptown... 650, no—625 Madison Avenue—after 60th Street, anyway. And the whole Magazine Management company was on one big floor with partitions set up. And Marvel Comics was the teeniest little office on the floor. There was Stan and his desk, then another small desk. At that time, as I remember, it was mostly bimonthly comics. The monster comics like what Steve Ditko and



“You Belong, You Belong, You Belong, You Belong...”

The 1964 Merry Marvel Marching Society Kit, including the membership button and the “Voices of Marvel” record in its sleeve. There was also a welcoming letter, of course. In those earliest days, as this image sent by J. Ballmann shows, the membership cards the new members received were hand-autographed by “Ben J. Grimm”! The “M.M.M.S.” initials were first seen in Marvel issues dated Nov. 1964; the first full-fledged ad for the fan club appeared in very late ‘64, in issues dated Feb. ‘65.
[TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

with the interview. It was cute, y’know? Everyone had their little piece to say. I remember Steve Ditko didn’t want to be on it, and I think Marie or Sol did up the artwork for it and the membership button. And we decided to sell the membership kit for a buck. It’d cover expenses; that’s all. Well, after the first ad went out, we got these huge bags of mail—the response was so out of line with what everyone expected! And everyone kept saying that they wouldn’t open up the mail! And it wasn’t just kids wanting to join the MMMS, there were college students and adults sending in their dollars, too! This was really new for us! People who could write—and spell! Marvel wound up having fan clubs in colleges. There was one in Stanford, I remember, that was very active. They would send us their newsletters, letting us know what they were doing. No one could figure it out—why this was happening.

When “Dr. Strange” started up, we got all these letters saying, “Boy! You guys must be into drugs! These stories are so far-out! And in the Village—wow!” And the people at Marvel then were all just the straightest people you could imagine! We really didn’t know what anyone was talking about in these letters. And the first reaction about these letters about “Dr. Strange” and drugs, was “Oh, drugs! Maybe we should change the stories!” We really couldn’t figure out how those people were getting such ideas. And also at this time the cowboy comics were still going on, and *Sgt. Fury*, which I was quite fond of.

JS: *When did you find yourself paying more attention to the comics?*

STEINBERG: Well, I always loved them. I was just shocked that there were so many people out there who wanted to be a part of the whole thing. Rather than



just buy the comics, read them and enjoy them, they wanted to be actively involved with this... Marvelness.

DJZ: *Did you see the Bullpen’s attitude start to change, as the fan response grew?*

STEINBERG: Everyone got a kick out of it. But at that time the fans did not have that much influence about what actually went into the story. It was always interesting to hear what they said, but decisions were not made based on fan interest. It was business judgments, because if a comicbook was not selling and even though all the fans loved it, Martin Goodman, the publisher, would cancel it. People didn’t take themselves so seriously—they didn’t think that they were the stars. They did their work, and if the work was received well, that was very gratifying. But they didn’t start thinking that they were the artwork—you know what I mean? It was not a star system then. I don’t know if this was perhaps because people were older then.

JS: *Well, I think that part of it was started by Stan himself.*

STEINBERG: When he started doing the credits. That was a real first in comics.

DJZ: *And Stan, Jack, and Steve were the people who really got Marvel going.*

STEINBERG: Absolutely.

JS: *When did Stan start calling you “Fabulous Flo”?*

STEINBERG: Oh! Stan started making up names for everybody. This must have been in the mid-’60s. In one of the annuals, he put in pictures of everyone in the office at the time, and Stan started giving everyone names. Everyone enjoyed it. Stan was giving credit to people who were relative unknowns—especially people like letterers and colorists.

JS: *Actually, it was Roy, when he became editor-in-chief, who first gave the colorists credit listings.*

STEINBERG: Yes, Roy was also very good about giving people credit. It was a wonderful thing giving credit to the people who



Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

(Above:) We ran this entire page in *A/E* #136, but we had to run again what may be Flo’s sole credit in an actual Marvel story, on the Gene Colan/Jack Abel “Iron Man” splash page for *Tales of Suspense* #93 (Jan. 1966). Stan plotted with Gene, then had Roy T. script as his first Marvel super-hero assignment. But after Stan edited/rewrote roughly half of Roy’s dialogue, he opted against any hard credits on the yarn, instead mentioning all the “Bullpen buddies [who] had a hand in this one,” including Colan (as “Adam Austin”), Abel (as “Gary Michaels”), Sol Brodsky (production manager), Flo (corresponding secretary), and Marie Severin (colorist). Thanks to Barry Pearl.
[TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Left:) Flo at the 1965 NYC comics convention; sadly, the two fans with her are unidentified.



JS: What happened with Big Apple?

STEINBERG: Oh, right, we got off the track a little there. I finally got the piece from Neal. And Marie Severin and Stu Schwartzberg and Herb and I started getting the thing ready for the printer.

JS: What made you decide to become a publisher?

STEINBERG: I'm not an artist or a writer. And I was so impressed with the spirit in San Francisco—it really was so alive out there. I wanted to do something that was my own contribution to this. At that time, it worked. I could ask these people to contribute and they had the time to do it. *Big Apple* took about two years to finally get everything together. Archie Goodwin did something, and John Verpoorten helped me a lot on the production end. Then I got it printed. And just looking at 20,000 copies of *Big Apple* was really something! I had them all delivered to Warren because he let me use his storage space, instead of bringing them up here to my tiny apartment. That was very nice of him. And then came the part of sending out samples and filling orders and dragging all those boxes to the post office and hounding people who hadn't paid their bills. Even though it was a lot of work, I liked that part, too. *Big Apple* was mine.

JS: How many copies do you have left?

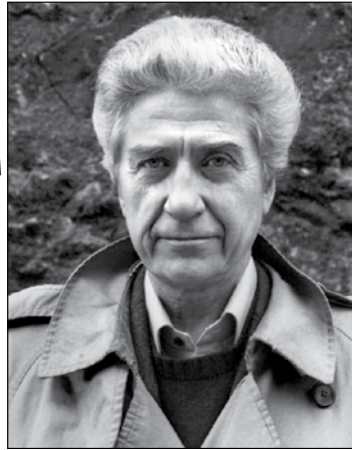
STEINBERG: I just have about 50 or 100 left. After it was all over—and I did make my expenses and a little besides—Peter Wolf from *Cheri* magazine reprinted a couple of the stories, Woody's and Larry, Ralph, and Neal's. And, in France, *L'Echo* reprinted them as well. And I gave all the money to the creators.

JS: You were their favorite publisher then. [laughter]

STEINBERG: Believe me, they couldn't even buy themselves a good dinner off that money. It's easy to be honest when only pennies are involved. I thought about doing a second issue. People were enthusiastic, but I knew I couldn't ask for another favor the second time around. By this time, I had also started working at *Arts*

Cinema Verities

Two directors who were eager to meet Stan Lee when they came to New York were Federico Fellini, at the time of the late-1965 U.S. premiere of his ill-fated film *Juliet of the Spirits*—and Alain Resnais, “New Wave” director of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. [Posters © the respective copyright holder]



Alain Resnais

It would seem that Resnais (who also directed the film *Last Year at Marienbad*) first met Stan while Flo was his secretary. In the early 1970s, the French director moved to New York for some time to work with Stan on a screenplay, which resulted in Stan having to relinquish the reins of *Fantastic Four* and *Amazing Spider-Man* for four issues.



Federico Fellini

His breakout film was the classic *La Strada* [*The Road*]. Despite Jim Salicrup's reading that in 1965 Fellini was more interested in meeting the crew at Magazine Management's “men's sweat” titles than he was Stan, that's definitely *not* the impression Stan or new assistant editor Roy T. got at the time the flamboyant Italian director and his entourage swept into Marvel! From childhood, Fellini had been enamored of the comics, beginning with *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *Mandrake the Magician*, *The Phantom*, et al.

Magazine, and that was a full-time job.

JS: What do you do at Arts Magazine?

STEINBERG: Well, I'm the managing editor.

JS: Get any fan mail from the college students?

STEINBERG: No ...

JS: Any fan club? [laughter]

STEINBERG: No, no, there I don't take the calls or go out and greet the people like I did at Marvel. It's completely changed.

DJZ: No Merry Arts Magazine Marching Society?

STEINBERG: No, no, no. I liked going to the galleries before I started working for the magazine. But it's now turned into a business, and on my own time, I want to do something else. It's funny to think of that now. But that's what happened. Richard Martin, our editor, is a big *Uncle Scrooge* fan.

DJZ: How about your duties as managing editor?

STEINBERG: I copyedit the manuscripts. And I deal a lot with the printers. I work with the typesetter and designers. Fortunately, there is a very nice staff there who will deal with the writers and the artists. Great egos abound in the art world, so you have to spend a lot of time with them when

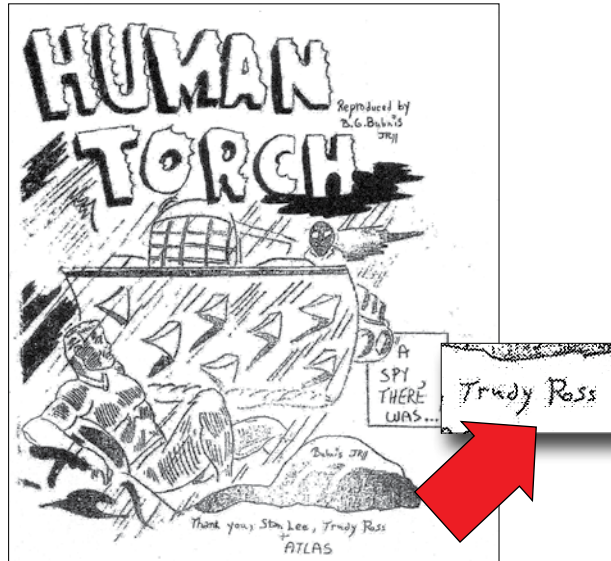
From Comic Art To Fine Art

The cover of the Summer 1968 issue of *Arts Magazine*. Flo didn't go to work for the periodical until several years after she left Marvel, but this is the latest cover we could find on the Internet! [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright owners.]



The Flow Before Flo...

After the '57-'58 high-collapse of Martin Goodman's magazine empire, editor Stan Lee abruptly found himself without a secretary for several years. In 1962, however, as the 1961-spawned *Fantastic Four* garnered increasing sales and fan-mail, he seems to have employed, probably in serial order (whether full-time or part-time), at least *three* secretaries/assistants, whose existence is almost solely known through their contacts with an emerging comics fandom.



FANDOM'S NEWSLETTER

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Have I got the scoop on the yearning hearts fans of science fiction or fantasy fans in the audience? Well, if there are get in touch with DAVE KEIL, 38 Sloocum Crescent, Forest Hills, 75, New York. Man, has he got a great club going for him. Forry Ackerman and Larry Byrd are even members. Join the Garden Gouls, today. Their club paper has some of the best art, columns and articles I have ever seen. et in touch with DAVE, today for more info.

Until we return,
 Bernie Bubnis Jr., Micky Glacier, Cathy Higgins, Mike Manners,
 Clay Marloue, Scottie Sabour and St. J., Guardian of CHR.

Comic Heroes Revisited #1 (Spring 1962)

(Left & above:) This fanzine published by young Bernie Bubnis in March and April (according to postmarks he's seen on old copies of it) mentions Stan's secretary *Trudy Ross* in both a news item—and on a splash page he himself traced from a 1950s *Timely/Atlas* comic drawn by Dick Ayers. Bernie says: "My only communication with her was over the phone [at] the end of February/beginning of March. When I called the Marvel offices to get permission to 're-draw' a *Human Torch* story for my fanzine... Trudy Ross spoke to me... and told me it would be OK to re-draw. Our conversation led to [her mentioning Steve Ditko], and she was sure he was in the phonebook. Duh... wasn't everyone in 1962? Well, he sure was, and before he hung up on me, he told me to drop by his studio in NYC." Which is another story. Thanks to Bernie Bubnis, J. Ballmann, & Mike Tuohey. [Human Torch TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

INFO CORNER

HUMAN TORCH, CAPT. AMERICA, and SUB-MARINER, were brought back for the second time around, by ATLAS, and made their return debut in the Dec.-Jan., 1953-54, issue of YOUNG MEN, issue number 24, which featured them as they originally appeared, with retellings of each of their origins.

Judy Walsh, secretary of the FANTASTIC FOUR magazine, graciously informed me, that the inker for the superbly done FANTASTIC FOUR #5 was Joe Sinnott.

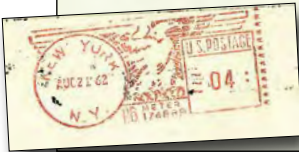
I'm sure that all readers join me in thanking Mr. Stan Lee, Mr. Jack Kirby, Mr. Dick Ayers, Mr. Art Simek, Miss Helena Sher, Miss Judy Walsh, Miss Trudy Ross, Mr. Joe Sinnott, and all the other proof-readers, color artists, pencil break-downers, office boys, and little gremlins that help put out the, truly, WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE...the Fabulous...FANTASTIC FOUR !!

Super Hero #1 (Oct.-Nov. 1962)

Mike Tuohey, a Detroit fan who helped *Alter Ego* founder Jerry Bails with several of his fan-publications, soon published his own fanzine. On a news page (above), he writes particularly of *Judy Walsh*, who that autumn sent him the two letters printed at the top of the following page... but he also mentions *Helena Sher* and *Trudy Ross*. Was it getting crowded up there at Magazine Management's comics department—or, more likely, were interim secretaries going in and out the revolving door so fast it seemed like they were all there at once?

When asked about his shout-out to Ms. Ross, Mike responded: "I have nothing to document Trudy Ross other than her being mentioned in *CHR* #1 and in *S-H* #1." Which led *A/E*'s editor to wonder if perhaps Bernie Bubnis had actually spoken to *Judy Walsh* and accidentally misheard her name as "Trudy Ross." Bernie, however, distinctly remembers asking her to *spell out* her name for him, so he'd get it right on that redrawn "Torch" splash—so that settles that!

DEAR MIKE:
 MANY THANKS FOR YOUR INTERESTING LETTER. YOU WILL PROBABLY FIND THE INFORMATION YOU REQUESTED APPEARING IN A FUTURE ISSUE OF OUR MAGAZINE. HOPING TO MAINTAIN YOUR CONTINUED INTEREST, WE REMAIN,
 CORDIALLY YOURS,
 HELENA SHER
 EDITORIAL ASST
 FANTASTIC FOUR



August 21, 1962

The above pre-printed postcard to fan Mike Tuohey has a typed-in "signature" for *Helena Sher*, "Editorial Ass[istan]t" of *Fantastic Four*—since there was no "Marvel Comics" yet. The postmark date was on the other side, as per inset. Was Ms. Sher perhaps an interim employee between *Trudy Ross* and a successor? Seems unlikely Stan would've had a real "editorial assistant" at that time, as opposed to a secretary—while Stan Goldberg and Sol Brodsky were handling production work on a freelance basis. Thanks to Mike Tuohey.

25 Facts That Made Flo “Fabulous”

A Tribute To—Who Else!—Fabulous FLO STEINBERG

by J. Ballmann

AIE

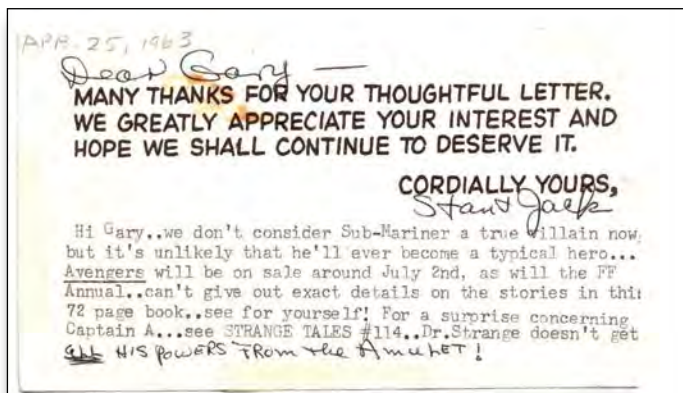
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *J. Ballmann is a researcher of the early days of comic fandom, and the author of The 1964 New York Comicon: The*

True Story behind the World's First Comic Convention (Totalmojo Productions, 2016). Here he has compiled a list of 25 fascinating factoids about Flo Steinberg—though he stresses that, except for following a certain chronological logic, the two-dozen-plus-one accomplishments are presented in no particular order.

1. Flo figured out her job all on her own when she began working at Marvel in March 1963. Nobody trained her or gave her a manual or “showed her the ropes.” Flo never knew her predecessor—or even her predecessor’s name—but the fact is that she had replaced Stan Lee’s previous secretary, Miss Judy Walsh. Early 1960s fanzines such as *Super-Hero* and *Comic Heroes Revisited* document the secretaries in the office in 1962: Judy Walsh, Trudy Ross, and Helena Sher. Yet, when Flo arrived on her job the first day, none of these three was anywhere to be found. Stan welcomed her, and Sol Brodsky answered all her questions as she took on the work of three previous secretaries, so there was lots of work to do, and Flo hit the ground running. And for five years she never stopped.

2. Flo read *all* the Marvel comics. That is, she read them all once she started working at Marvel. In her words, “I had to, so I could answer all those questions when fans wrote or called.” She said her favorite Marvel comic was *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*.

3. Flo sold back issues for Marvel as early as 1963. When



Postcards From The Ledge

This postcard dated April 25, 1963 (by the recipient on this side, on the date he received it—it’s postmarked a couple of days earlier on the other), was sent by Flo to fan Gary Acord, and was signed by Flo as “Stan + Jack,” with a handwritten final line. The “plus” sign in the signature is her telltale mark, J. Ballmann notes. Flo confirmed later to him that this was indeed her handwriting.



“Fabulous Flo”

Hard at work at Marvel Comics, sometime in the latter half of the 1960s.
[© Marvel Characters, Inc.]

someone picked up a Marvel comic and became instantly hooked during that “Marvel Age of Comics,” that reader would instinctively write to Marvel to seek out earlier issues. Flo was in charge of the back-issue stock and even mailed out the latest price lists—typed up by her—of back issues to prospective buyers, making her one of the earliest back-issue comic-sellers ever.

4. Flo screened Stan’s mail. In *Fantastic Four* #24, Stan announced, “[W]e get HUNDREDS of letters every week,” and he requested, two issues later, in #26, “Keep your letters brief...” Even if it were a fraction of the number stated, it would have been overwhelming for one person. But Flo read through the letters and sorted them into ones that could potentially be printed on the letters pages and those that would not. The better letters, of course—a manageable handful of them—would be passed on to Stan, who would make the final decision about which letters would be printed in the letter columns. Stan gave Flo very specific instructions about the letters. Certainly he would look at any intelligent letters or ones that stood out, but letters from college students, members of the armed services, and professionals such as doctors and teachers—and, yes, females—were almost certain to be picked out and passed on to Stan for his consideration. For it was Stan’s never-ending quest to dispel popular perceptions about his comics and to present Marvel’s readership as something more than the much-dreaded demographic of pre-adolescent boys and adults in various stages of “arrested development.” Letters from college students were additionally forwarded to Debby Ackerman, Marvel’s college liaison, who was in charge of college campus surveys. Without Flo’s help with this initial sorting, Stan would never have had time to write any comics, much less edit them—or to stand on his desk to famously act out plotlines for his artists. One point of monumental

BACK ISSUES NO LONGER AVAILABLE:

AMAZING SPIDER MAN	#1 through #22
DAREDEVIL	#1 " #6
JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY	#1 " #114
KID GOLF OUTLAW	#1 " #119
MILLIE THE MODEL	#1 " #120
MODELING WITH MILLIE	#1 " #36
PATSY & HEDY	#1 " #93
PATSY WALKER	#1 " #117
HAWKIDE KID	#1 " #43
Sgt. PURY	#1 " #16
STRANGE TALES	#1 " #130
TALES OF SUSPENSE	#1 " #64
TALES TO ASTONISH	#1 " #65
THE AVENGERS	#1 " #13
THE FANTASTIC FOUR	#1 " #37
THE X MEN	#1 " #9
TWO GUN KID	#1 " #72

MILLIE THE MODEL ANNUAL #1 and #2
 STRANGE TALES ANNUAL #1 and #2
 THE FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #1

When available Back Issues are 20¢ each, Annuals are 35¢ each.
 FOREIGN RATE " " " 35¢ " " 50¢ "

Please allow at least three to four weeks for delivery.
 Be sure to give issue number when ordering.

*Sorry we're not
 as early as
 in stock,
 Wayne!*

What Price Marvels?
 One of Flo's back-issue price lists, mailed out to those who inquired. Notice the personal touch: a handwritten note, addressing the fan by name. Thanks to J. Ballmann.

interest is that the first published writing—ever—of *Game of Thrones* creator George R.R. Martin was a letter to the *Fantastic Four* comic. If Flo had not chosen to pass that letter on to Stan for his consideration, who knows but that that young kid from Bayonne, New Jersey, might have become discouraged and never have pursued his now world-famous career as a writer?

5. Flo typed the letter columns. For the most part, she did not write the answers to the letters—Stan did—but at times she did interject herself into them and was mentioned in them occasionally. Stan also dictated his answers to Flo, so the answers contained a mix of Stan's and Flo's word choices in their final form. In the end, no one will ever know exactly who said what and in which

responses in those old letter pages, but one thing is for certain: that unmistakable, ever-ubiquitous voice—and spirit—of Stan Lee does pervade and dominate them all.

6. Flo sent out the little response postcards to letter writers. She wrote two versions of these postcards. One was to inform a reader that his or her (mostly his) letter would be published in such-and-such an issue. The other version of the postcard thanked

Dear Stan and Jack,
 We at Stanford University are very fond of your merry Marvel comic books. Every month, one of us goes to the store and judiciously buys all of your wonderful masterworks. We read them with glee. We know that each issue will be more filled with marvelous surprises than the last. Reading about the M.M.M.S. we naturally decided we had to join. So enclosed is payment for six of our memberships. If it is possible, we would like to be known as the official Stanford chapter of the M.M.M.S. Rush our kits to us, please! Keep up the good work turning out the best comic mags on the stands!
 Jack Marchese, 22 Larkin House
 Stanford University, Stanford, Cal.

We hereby dub thee Stanford U's official Marvel Chapter! Howzat, Jackie boy? But, how come only six of you applied? Stanford's got more students than that! C'mon, son, start talkin' us up—we don't want the six of you to be lonely out there! (NOTE: From *Fabulous Flo*, our recording secretary: We're only kidding! Stanford U has dozens of Merry Marvel Marchers by now, as does almost every campus in the country! How about that!)

Keep Those Letters And Postcards Comin' In!
 (Above:) One of various letters-page call-outs by Flo, quite possibly actually written by her while typing the material for *Fantastic Four* #39... not that Stan would've been above putting words into his corresponding secretary's typing fingers. (Below:) A personalized 1963 postcard response from Flo (her handwriting is "unmistakable," writes J. Ballmann) shows that she was keeping up with what was going on in Marvel's comics! [© Marvel Characters, Inc.]

APR. 25, 1963
 Dear Gary —
 MANY THANKS FOR YOUR THOUGHTFUL LETTER. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST AND HOPE WE SHALL CONTINUE TO DESERVE IT.
 CORDIALLY YOURS,
 Stan & Jack

Hi Gary..we don't consider Sub-Mariner a true villain now, but it's unlikely that he'll ever become a typical hero... Avengers will be on sale around July 2nd, as will the FF Annual..can't give out exact details on the stories in this 72 page book..see for yourself! For a surprise concerning Captain A...see STRANGE TALES #114..Dr.Strange doesn't get ALL HIS POWERS FROM THE AMALHET!

And now, we present our ever-lovin' glamor department...

		
Fabulous FLO STEINBERG Corresponding Secy. Gal Friday	Nifty NANCY MURPHY Subscriptions Overseas Mailings	Dazzling DEBBY ACKERMAN Campus Rep. Student Surveys

"Meet The Gang In The Merry Marvel Bullpen!"
Marvel Tales Annual #1 (1964) featured two pages of photos of early Marvel staffers and freelancers. Across the bottom of the second page were Flo, subscription maven Nancy Murphy, and college rep Debby Ackerman. Incidentally, as Barry Pearl reminded Ye Editor, this was the first place where Flo was referred to by the sobriquet "Fabulous Flo"; the second was on the first MMS record a few months later. [© Marvel Characters, Inc.]

“Wait A Minute! FLO STEINBERG???”

by Dr. Michael Vassallo

[This piece originally appeared at <http://timely-atlas-comics.blogspot.com/2017/07/fabulous-flo-steinberg-1939-2017.html>, and was retyped for *Alter Ego* by Brian K. Morris. It has been edited slightly for this printing in *Alter Ego*.]

This one is tough.

I was out west this year once again at the San Diego Con with a large family contingent. The trip went as one might imagine ... incredible crowd sizes, frenetic, hectic craziness... but a lot of fun. My middle younger brother Nicholas flew out from Minneapolis, and it was the first time we attended a con together since the days of Phil Seuling in the 1970s, when Harvey Kurtzman once saw him (my brother) fall off a chair during a panel, inquiring from the dais, “Are you OK back there?”

Contrary to complaints that the show isn’t about comicbooks any longer, there were many, many dealers at the bottom of the arena, and I was able to purchase a nice handful of Timely teen issues of the *Cindy Comics* and *Lana Comics* variety, as well as about 20 issues of *Mad* magazine from the 1960s.



“This Gal, This Darlin’!”

Flo in a great shot against a Manhattan skyline, some years back—and Marie Severin’s *faux* cover for *Fabulous Flo!* comics, which first appeared in *Jon B. Cooke’s Comic Book Artist #18* (2002). Do yourself a favor and get hold of this great back issue! Thanks to Michael Mikulovsky for the latter scan; thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo for most other art and photos accompanying this article.
[Art © Marie Severin.]



Maggie’s Marvels

(Left:) The photo snapped by Doc V.’s wife, Maggie, at the time of her brief encounter with Stan Lee at the San Diego Comic-Con, 2017.

(Right:) Maggie and a Robert Downey, Jr., lookalike in an Iron Man costume, probably at the same con. Photo by Dr. Michael J. Vassallo. Both photos courtesy of Maggie Vassallo.

I caught up with friends from fandom—Batton Lash, Jackie Estrada, Nicky Wheeler-Nicholson, Craig Yoe, Ger Apeldoorn, Alex Grand, even my pal Bill Cole—missed seeing a ton of others (I could not find Danny Fingeroth), took a lot of photos and video, attended several Jack Kirby panels celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth, and there even was a meeting with Stan Lee himself. Well, my wife Maggie had the meeting with Stan. An accidental one. On Saturday of the con, as we always do, my family splits up upon arrival. I go immediately to the comic dealers section and she heads for the craziness of the rest. My children go off on a third route, I have no idea where. At some point in the afternoon, we all get a group text message and a close-up photo of Stan Lee. Now, I should have really been more in tune with convention guests, and I think I’d heard Stan was a scheduled guest somewhere, but the recent passing of his wife Joan made me feel Stan might not attend.

Well, I was wrong. My wife ended up, completely by accident, somewhere in the middle of all the con craziness, standing *right next* to Stan Lee. She extended her hand and introduced herself as Michael Vassallo’s wife. Stan, to his credit, immediately replied, “Mike Vassallo! I know him! Nice to finally meet you!” And



Have You Ever Seen Them Together?

Betty Brant, Peter Parker's first girlfriend, just happened to be the "gal Friday" of J. Jonah Jameson, while Flo performed the same duties for Stan Lee. This Betty Brant/Flo Steinberg image comparison is from <http://sauropennacchioli.blogspot.it/2015/11/linattuale-steve-ditko-e-luomo-ragno.html?spref=fb&zx=9711068a1d73a7e>. Betcha can't say that three times fast—in Italian or English! The Brant art, of course, is by Steve Ditko. [Betty Brant art TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

freelance artists who came through the door adored her. She had nothing but nice things to say about all of them. Literally! Asked about some of them, her replies were spoken in that wonderful, warm and distinctive voice with a partially Bostonian, partially something else I-quite-can't-put-my-finger-on accent/inflection...

"What was Jack Kirby like, Flo?" "Jack was nice!"

"What was Steve Ditko like, Flo?" "Steve was nice!"

"What was Wally Wood like, Flo?" "Wally was nice!"

"What was Stan Lee like, Flo?" "Stan was nice!"

"What was Sol Brodsky like, Flo?" "Sol was nice!"

"What was Federico Fellini like, Flo?" "He was nice!"

And take a good look at Jonah Jameson's secretary Betty Brant, as drawn by Steve Ditko starting in 1964... She's Flo!

Flo occasionally simultaneously modeled for Magazine Management's other magazines, specifically, for example, in *Screen Stars Album #4* (1964), an annual spin-off of sorts of the long-running *Screen Stars* magazine (the flagship film magazine in Goodman's stable, and a publication hailing back to April 1944, when it was edited by Bessie Little).

In this sham article, young, pretty "Florence White" from a small Massachusetts high school gets her wish to work with Hollywood stars fulfilled! Before Photoshop, there was cut and paste by the Magazine Management production department to insert Flo into photos with a bevy of Hollywood's top stars....

In 1965 Flo was showcased on the initial M.M.M.S. record "The Voices of Marvel," along with all the rest of the Marvel bullpen staff (short Steve Ditko). Flo makes her appearance at the 40-second mark.

Flo often expressed her dismay in leaving Marvel in 1968 when she couldn't get a raise from Martin Goodman, calling him a cheapskate. A stunningly beautiful young woman, Flo was pursued by men who visited the office. One in particular that Flo mentioned to me was Forry Ackerman, frequently up to see Magazine Management and who was frustrated by his lack of success in getting a date.

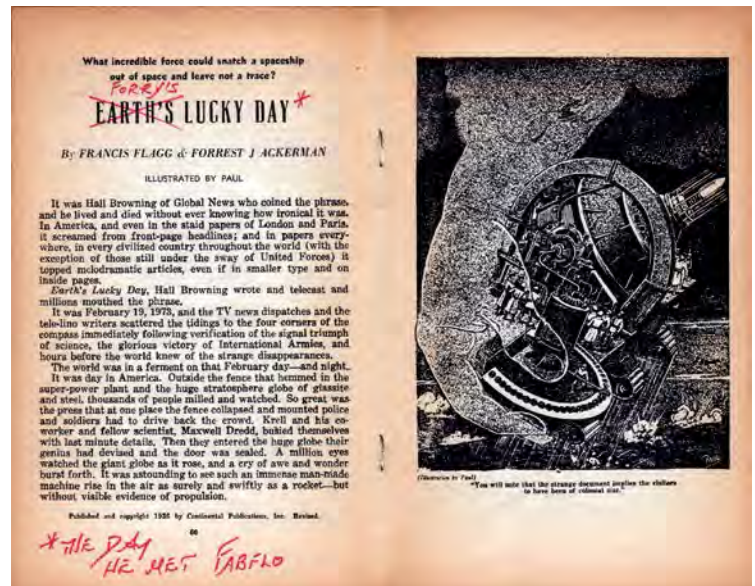
Flo's post-Marvel years were a swirling dive into the early underground comix scene, taking her to San Francisco and Oregon before she returned to work for Jim Warren. In 1975 she published *Big Apple Comix*, which became one of the very first independent comics, as opposed to an actual "underground." A "who's who" of top talent, both indie/underground and mainstream, lent their skills to Flo's baby (see pp. 17-20).

Skip ahead to the '90s: Flo was finally back working for Marvel—as a proofreader—and she loved the fact that many of the young folks there didn't even know who she was. She always had wonderful things to say about all the editors there, and one of her favorites was Marvel Masterworks editor Cory Sedlmeier, who adored Flo.

In 2002, TwoMorrows Publications and editor Jon B. Cooke devoted an entire half issue of the magazine *Comic Book Artist* #18 (March '02) to a "*Fabulous Flo Steinberg Celebration*." A labor of love, four different articles were published over the course of 46 pages, including a great in-depth interview with Flo. Marie Severin rendered a beautiful homage to Jack Kirby's iconic cover for *Fantastic Four* #51, complete with Kirby Krackle. Flo provided tons of old photos of herself from the early days of Marvel.

When she was invited back to attend the "50th Anniversary of the Original New York Comicon" panel at the 2014 New York Comicon (she had attended that first, one-day convention back in 1964), she was initially reluctant to go. We spoke about the event, and I wasn't the only one to gently nudge her to accept. She ended up having a wonderful time and was glad she attended. She did say it was going to be the last time, though.

A private person, Flo never felt comfortable with all the attention fandom focused on her. Over the years, in this century's Golden Age of Comics history research and book publication, every time someone wrote a book on some aspect of Marvel's Silver Age



Only You Can Prevent Forrest J. Ackerman!

(Sorry—the heading above is an edited version of an old *Laugh-In* joke about Forrest Tucker that Ye Editor couldn't resist recycling!) Anyhow: Above is a later gift to Flo from Forry, the fabled science-fiction agent and editor of Warren's *Famous Monsters of Filmland*: the June 1969 issue of the SF digest *Spaceway*, hand-inscribed in red pen by Ackerman, opposite a Frank R. Paul illustration for a story reprinted from the 1930s. Ironically, Paul had also been the cover artist of *Marvel Comics* #1 in 1939! Thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Tributes, Si! Tears, No!



Flo Steinberg

at the 2014 anniversary-panel of the 1964 con.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael J. Vassallo.

A/E EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: By the above title, of course, I mean that this section is intended as a celebration of Flo Steinberg's life, not a mournful sobbing about her death—the last thing she would have appreciated. If we'd wanted to—and believe us, a part of us did want to—we could've filled this entire issue with reminiscences of Flo by those who knew and loved her... plus those who merely encountered her once or twice when they were very young. But these few memories that precede and follow must represent all of the many who will simply read them, nod their heads, and say, "Yeah, that was Flo, all right!"



Four-Color Flo

Invisible Flo & the Sub-Mariner in *What If?* #11 (Oct. 1978). Pencils & script by Jack Kirby; inks by Mike Royer & Bill Wray. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

"Flo Steinberg Was The Real Face Of Marvel Comics In The 1960s"

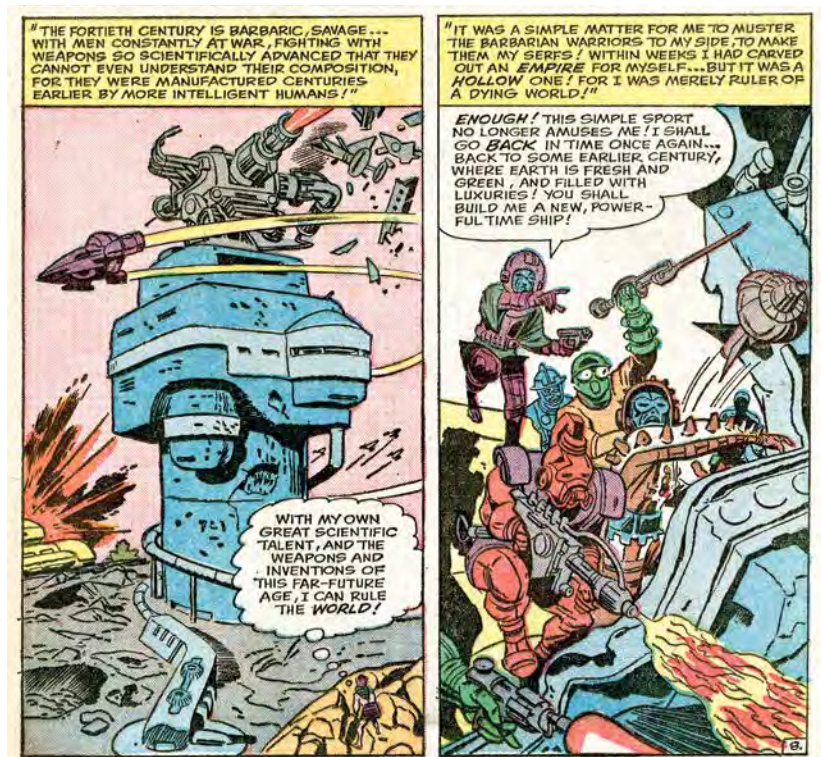
by Bernie Bubnis

We early comic book fans who lived in the New York City vicinity were a privileged bunch. Just open up a suburb's phonebook and speak with your favorite pro. Maybe even visit them at their house or office. Imagine, a beer with Mike Sekowsky, a ham sandwich with Jack Kirby, cookies with Joe Giella and his kids. Just imagine, a day in New York City and a visit with Joe Kubert at the DC offices. We sure were a lucky bunch.

Then there were the Marvel offices. *If* there was a "Bullpen," it was hidden away. No "tours" of the workplace, like at DC. The only person to greet us was Flo Steinberg. No Stan Lee, no Don Heck, no Artie Simek, no professional artist or writer in sight. Wow, were we *ever* a lucky bunch! Flo was really the *only* person we wanted to visit. More beautiful than any teacher from school you ever fell in love with, and she knew more about the business of comicbooks than any of us. No doubt about it, Flo Steinberg was the real face of Marvel Comics in the 1960s, and we loved her.

Her job at Marvel was often to act as the buffer between fans and Stan Lee. Before her, various office help such as Trudy Ross would answer calls from fans who wanted to speak with Stan. One of those fans was me. I wanted to re-draw a "Human Torch" story from the 1950s for my fanzine *Comic Heroes Revisited*. Only Trudy spoke with me, even over the phone. As Marvel's sales increased, so did the interest from fandom. Stan was going to need a better sentry at that front door. Enter Ms. Flo.

I have absolutely no memory of Trudy's voice, but I will never forget the sweet sound of Flo's



"This Means War!"

(Left:) Bernie Bubnis, circa 1964. Would you let this guy wander around your office? (Just kidding, Bernie!)

(Above:) Hard to imagine what "ancient war" Stan Lee dispatched Flo to find a book about, since The Man has often said he's never done research in his entire life! He and his kookie crew were much more adept at imagining *future* combat, as per these Kang the Conqueror panels penciled by Jack Kirby and inked by Dick Ayers for *The Avengers* #8 (Sept. 1964); script by Stan, of course. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

A Few Minutes With ROBIN GREEN

For This Ambitious & Talented Lady,
Marvel Comics Was Barely
The Beginning!

Interview Conducted by Richard J. Arndt



Ravishin' Robin Green

That's how Stan referred to his first post-Fabulous-Flo "corresponding secretary," in the only Marvel Comics reference to her that we've found to date: namely, on the Bullpen Bulletins page in the month that such mags as *Fantastic Four* #84 (March 1969) went on sale, with its Kirby/Sinnott cover. But, oddly, that brief item served mostly to proclaim that Robin's successor would be Jean Thomas, Roy's bride of only a few months! Recent Robin photo courtesy of RS.

Robin, for her part, moved on to *Rolling Stone* magazine, and eventually to writing scripts for such top TV fare as *The Sopranos*. Seen below is a scene from the 3rd season's memorable Green-co-scripted episode "Employee of the Month," in which Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) comforts Dr. Jennifer Melfi (Lorraine Bracco)—as first aired by HBO on March 18, 2001. [Cover TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; *Sopranos* pic TM & © HBO or successors in interest.]

INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION: Robin Green succeeded Flo Steinberg as Stan Lee's "Girl Friday" and editorial assistant for several months in 1968. She later became a journalist, working for *Rolling Stone* and other publications. From that field, she segued to being a television writer, earning one Emmy for her work on *Northern Exposure* and two more for her scripts for *The Sopranos*. She's also won three Golden Globes and two Peabody Awards. In addition to those two series, she's also written scripts for *A Year in the Life*, *Almost Grown*, and the Showtime movie *Critical Choices*. She was a showrunner for Southend and created, with her husband Mitchell Burgess, the television show *Blue Bloods*. Her new book *The Only Girl: My Life and Times on the Masthead of Rolling*

Stone Magazine is due to be published on August 21 by Little, Brown & Co. This interview was conducted by phone on February 8, 2017.

RICHARD ARNDT: Let's begin with your early history, before you worked for Stan.

ROBIN GREEN: Okay. I was the first generation of my family to go to college. I studied with my grandparents. I got a scholarship to Pembroke University in 1963. My parents thought I should go to an Ivy League school if I was going to college. They felt that would be good for me in the long run and it was. [chuckles] So I graduated with a degree in American Literature, but I was determined that I was going to be a writer.

There was a lot of other stuff, though, first. I went to Martha's Vineyard and was a waitress. I went to Boston and worked briefly, four weeks, for Houghton Mifflin. Then I moved to New York in the winter of 1968 and went to an employment agency. At that point, I wanted to be in the editorial system in publishing. They sent me on three interviews for either secretarial or editorial assistant positions. It was just labeled



a secretarial job back then, but it's more correctly called an editorial assistant today. Two of the interviews were with advertising agencies and the third was at Marvel Comics.

One of the ad agencies didn't want me, and the other might have, but when I went to Marvel Comics the work there was just closer to what I really wanted to do. I guess mostly in terms of atmosphere. I wasn't a comics fan. I think I was drawn to the friendliness and the liveliness of the place. It just seemed brighter in atmosphere from the other two and so I took the job. I don't think I was thrilled, because it really wasn't what I was aiming for. I wanted to be at a publishing house or a magazine. Something like that. But it turned out to be a great decision in the long run, because it ended up getting me my job with *Rolling Stone*.

RA: You also mentioned that it was closer to where you were living at the time, and that that was a factor as well.

GREEN: I lived in Greenwich Village and Marvel was in mid-town Manhattan, so I took the subway to work. They didn't have pick-up-after-your-dog laws in those days, so you'd have to just step nicely along the sidewalk. *[laughs]* So I went to work uptown.

It was kind of lonely at first, because I was new to New York, but I got into a kind of routine. Gradually I became friends with some of the people in the office, such as Herb Trimpe and Linda Fite. The office was fun.

RA: *If you were the editorial assistant, what was Linda Fite doing there at the time?*

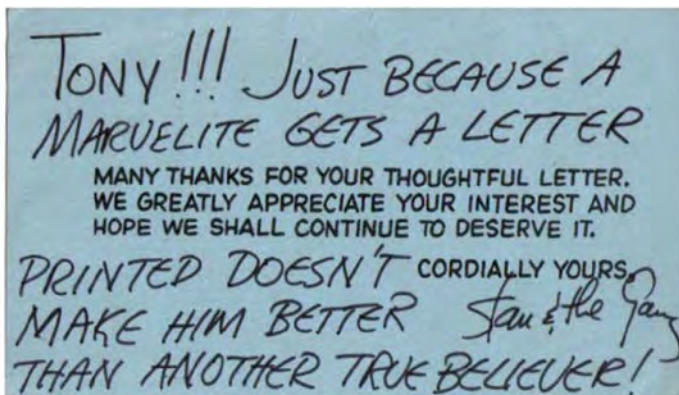
GREEN: Linda was working up front. She was the receptionist. She was in the front of the office and was greeting people. We had the occasional visitor, but I don't remember anyone getting a tour at that time. That might just be my memory, though. Linda would probably know better about that than I.

I took over from Flo Steinberg, all of her old duties. I read a lot of the fan mail. I sent out a lot of those—what were they called?—oh, No-Prizes! It was just an empty envelope! I guess you got a membership card as well, maybe? *[laughs]* Stan loved that! He just loved the idea that there were no prizes for stumping the Marvel writers. *[laughs]* I don't know whose idea that was, but it was certainly a cost-effective way of rewarding somebody.

I sat at the desk on one side of the office, and there was a small hallway separating myself from Stan's office. I could see him, in case he wanted me to call somebody or contact him when I was on the phone. There was no window, just an open door. My desk was placed so I could see through the door. Stan always had an open door. I don't think he ever shut that door. We didn't shut our doors, either. The offices were just down that small corridor, about five feet or so from the bullpen. On one side was Stan's door and on the other side was my office. It really was an office. It wasn't a cubicle, like in the bullpen. Roy Thomas' office was right behind me. He was back there at a window. He had a window table. I seem to recall a drawing board. Would that have been possible? He wasn't an artist. You might ask him about that. I just don't remember him at a desk.

RA: *Maybe they were being cheap and wouldn't give him a desk.*

GREEN: *[loud laughter]* Maybe! You're going to have to ask him



The [Human?] Torch Is Passed...

As per J. Ballman, who provided it, the address side of this postcard is dated in "April 1968," a month after Flo [Steinberg] resigned in March. "This card (the handwriting is obviously different; no plus sign is used in the signature) was written by Robin Green, who carried on the correspondence traditions Flo and Stan established..."

Sidebar

by Roy Thomas



Roy Thomas

From the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*

remember two things in particular about Rockin' Robin Green from her days at Marvel—when, admittedly, I was pretty much engrossed in my associate editor job.

First, I recall Robin telling me, while she worked there, that she'd brought with her to Manhattan a letter of introduction to someone of import at a daytime-TV soap opera. She told me that that person had asked her to write a sample script (or maybe just sample pages) for the series; but, because of quickly landing a 9-to-5 job, that work took her longer to finish than she'd have liked. When she took the material in to her contact, he/she admonished Robin that TV soaps were a 5-days-a-week proposition, and that she should have got the samples back to her more quickly. Not too fair, perhaps—but Robin has the last laugh, since now she can look at those Emmys, Golden Globes, and Peabody Awards on her shelf, right?



The Young And The Restless

was one of a number of TV daytime soap operas being broadcast five times a week from New York City in 1968-69, as per this publicity shot from that era. It *wasn't* necessarily the series at which Robin Green had a contact, though. [TM & © CBS.]

Also: One of her tasks at Marvel was to check over the vouchers submitted by freelancers and staff (since staffers like myself generally did our writing or drawing as "freelance," outside the office). One morning I was working away when Robin, who'd been going over some vouchers of mine, suddenly announced

to me: "You know, I've been adding these things up—and you're kind of a catch!" I don't recall quite what my reaction to her quip was... but, however it was intended, I've remembered it with amusement for the past five decades. (Coincidentally, this wasn't long before I eloped with my first wife Jean.)

As for Robin's description on the preceding page of my 1968-69 work station: After I graduated from my original corrugated-metal table near the door of the small production office—and let's not forget that Magazine Management *moved* at least once between 1965 and the end of the decade, so we *might* even be talking about two different rooms—I did indeed have a drawing board, at a 45° angle, which faced the streetside wall and served for proofreading and the like. (I'd gotten that idea from Stan, though the one in his office was raised, so that he was always *standing* when he was at it.) When I turned from the drawing board toward the office doorway, to my right of which sat Robin, I'm pretty sure I also had a desk for more mundane tasks. Though she recalls my area as an "office," it was really just the un-walled-off corner of the room we both shared with production manager Sol Brodsky; it wasn't even a real *cubicle*. I never had a separate office until I became editor-in-chief in 1972. Curiously, Robin seems to have largely forgotten Sol—even though much of the work she did, assuming she performed basically the same tasks Flo had, involved phoning printers and engravers, etc., on Sol's behalf. But then, it *was* fifty years ago, people!



about that. I'd love to know.

On my desk I'd have the mail. I'd also have all of the current covers. I guess it was part of my job to change them if they needed that before publication. Things like the date or something like that. I always had the stack of covers. There seemed to be a lot of titles, over twenty at least.

Stan was the boss of everybody.

RA: Did you ever meet Martin Goodman?

GREEN: No, was he the actual boss of everybody?

RA: Well, he owned Marvel Comics, although at the time we're discussing he may already have sold it to Cadence but was still running the company behind the scenes.

GREEN: Well, you know what—I wasn't even aware that Stan had a boss. Stan was the boss of the office, for sure. He was the editor of Marvel Comics, the guy behind everything. Everything went through him.

I remember I got the nickname "Legs" when I was working there. Someone in the bullpen gave it to me. I wore these short mini-skirts. They weren't that short, but they were short! [chuckles] I don't really remember who gave the name to me, but I recall that whoever did drew a little caricature of me and labeled it "Legs."

RA: Might that have been Stu Schwartzberg, who worked there at the time?

GREEN: I honestly don't remember. It was a line drawing, very angular. It wasn't really much of a drawing, more of a doodle. I've kept it all these years. It's in my storage on the mainland. [NOTE: Robin was in the Caribbean when we spoke.] It meant something to me. When someone draws a picture of you, that's a good deal. Even now I wear short skirts and tights. I don't look bad for an old lady. [laughs]

RA: I'd like to name off some of the people who worked at Marvel at the time and, if you remember them, just tell an anecdote or memory that you might have of them.

GREEN: Oh, please say Herb Trimpe first!

RA: [laughs] Okay, Herb Trimpe first.

GREEN: Herb I remember better because he was closer to my age. Herb had a little apartment in the city, a very little apartment, and I remember that I went there one day. On the walls he had either toy trains or little airplanes...



"Legs"

was, as she says, the nickname by which Robin was admirably known by some of the office guys. The cartoon above was drawn by Stu Schwartzberg, who operated Marvel's Photostat machine but also contributed amazingly funny artwork and script to *Spoof* and *Crazy Magazine*.

At right is a photo Robin sent us from that era, wearing "the same short skirt." Both courtesy of Robin Green. [Cartoon © 2018 Stu Schwartzberg.]

RA: Might it have been World War I biplanes? I know he had a collection of them.

GREEN: Yeah, I would have considered them toys at the time, but now I realize he was likely a collector of these model planes. They might not have been all that tiny. I just thought that it was a new experience for me to be in someone's apartment who had such a collection. Nowadays, you see that sort of thing all the time, but back then, it was an unusual experience. I'd never seen anything like that before.

RA: You know, the first character that he actually created for Marvel was a costumed World War I pilot called *The Phantom Eagle*.

GREEN: Well, there you go. He was kind of a tortured person in a way, although maybe I'm just imagining that. It was a long time ago. He had these large, almost black, eyes. He [later] wrote something in *The New York Times* about education, I remember that. We have a mutual friend in Peaksville, who let me know when he



Stu Schwartzberg
From the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*

Face Front!!! You're On The Winning Team!

by Robin Green

[First published in *Rolling Stone*, Sept. 16, 1971.
©2018 Robin Green]

It was three years ago that I went to work at Marvel Comics. I replaced Flo, whose place I really couldn't take. Fabulous Flo Steinberg, as she was known to her public, was as much an institution in Marvel's Second Golden Age as Editor Stan (the Man) Lee himself. She joined Marvel just after Stan had revolutionized the comic industry by giving his characters dimension, character, and personality, and just as Marvel was catching on big.

Now there's a sign on the door of the office which says "SORRY, NO VISITORS" to those who manage to find Marvel's hidden location. But in Flo's days the office was located at 625 Madison Avenue, just as it says in the comic books. There was a reception room and Flo would go out to meet the fans.



She was the only one they ever saw. They called her "Miss Flo" because "Flo" was too personal for them. Most of them were nice, the little ones were really sweet. But sometimes there'd be older ones, 12 and 13, who would try to get past her. She'd put her foot out and trip them, and say, "I'm sorry, are you all right? Poor thing."

And sometimes they'd come convinced that Spider-Man himself

Robin Green

with an old friend, in a pic taken on the day she interviewed the Marvel Bullpen, in the summer of 1970. This photo did not appear with the *Rolling Stone* article. [Photo © 2018 Estate of David E. Leach; used by permission of Jean Caccicedo.]



"...When You Get Your Picture On The Cover Of The Rolling Stone..." — Take 2!

Herb Trimpe's classic cover for the *Rolling Stone* issue dated Sept. 16, 1971—roughly half a year after ex-Marvel staffer Robin Green had written this Marvel piece. [Incredible Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; *Rolling Stone* logo, et al., TM & © Wenner Media or successors in interest.]

was right there behind the door. She'd say, "Oh, I'm sorry, he's out covering a robbery." Because she didn't feel it was her place to destroy fantasies.

Hundreds of letters came in every week from fans, and Flo was the one who opened them. One time there was a letter addressed to Sergeant Fury from a man in Texas, a real rightwinger, who said, "I notice in *Sgt. Fury* that you're anti-Nazi. Well, if you're anti-Nazi, that must mean you're pro-Commie, and you're all a bunch of no-good dirty kikey commie pinko people, and I have a gun and I'm going to come to New York and shoot you." It was addressed to Stan Lee and the Marvel Comics Group.

Flo passed the letter around the office, and everyone got hysterical because this guy was going to come and machine-gun everybody. Flo didn't know what they were hysterical about, because she was the one who went out to meet the people. Flo was loyal, but for a hundred bucks a week you don't get shot. So they called the FBI and a man came down. He said, "Wilkins, FBI," and Flo said, "Steinberg, Marvel."

But Wilkins was very serious and he handled the letter with a handkerchief. Of course they had already put their hands all over it. He said he'd forward it to the anonymous letters file in Washington, and see what could be done. They gave him a whole bunch of comics (their usual tactic, cover them with comics). And for days everyone avoided the reception room and sneaked out early.



Blitzkrieg—Marvel Style

(Above:) The photo of Fabulous Flo Steinberg that appeared in the 1971 *Rolling Stone* issue. [© Estate of David E. Leach; used by permission of Jean Caccicedo.]

(Right:) One of many “anti-Nazi” panels from *Sgt. Fury* that might’ve upset the anonymous proto-troll who sent Marvel Comics’ staff a death threat in the mid-1960s—whether he meant it or not. From issue #20 (July 1965); script by Stan Lee, pencils by Dick Ayers, inks by Frank Giacoia (as “Frank Ray”). When Stan or Roy scripted that title, Dick claimed the Howling Commandos could’ve talked Adolf’s goosesteppers to death! [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



and name on it, and a record with Stan and the rest of the Marvel Group saying lines from a script Stan wrote. Corny jokes, in-jokes. But most important, the voices of the people who make Marvel Comics.

“OK, out there in Marvel land—face front! This is Stan Lee speaking. You’ve probably never heard a record like this before, because no one would be nutty enough to make one with a bunch of offbeat artists. So anything is liable to happen.”

“Hey! Who made you a disc jockey, Lee?”

“Well, well—Jolly Jack Kirby! Say a few words to the fans.”

“A few words.”

“Look, pal, I’ll take care of the humor around here.”

“You? You’ve been using the same gags over and over for years.”

“Well, you can’t accuse me of being fickle, can you? By the way, Jack, the readers have been complaining about Sue’s hairdo again.”

“What am I supposed to do, be a hairdresser? Next time I’ll draw her baldheaded!”

“Boy, I’m glad we caught you when you were in a good mood.”

I visited Flo at her apartment in New York. She’s changed her style. Her hair is long, she looks good. She’s thinking of moving to California. She still hangs out with comic book people—underground comics people. We got stoned and drank some wine, and she talked about the fans and their letters. Flo laughs a high-pitched laugh that sounds like electronic music. And when she smiles her eyes close to crescent shapes. She smiles so hard that she can’t keep her eyes open at the same time.

“Yeah, the f***ing mail. Remember how awful it was? I felt every little creature should get some sort of an answer. I really took it seriously, each little letter. One thing that’s awful, when I go to the Comic Convention they have in July at the Hilton all these tall thin fellows come up to me and say [deep voice], ‘Hello, how are you?’ and I’ll say, ‘Who are you?’ and it’ll turn out they’re these kids who used to come up and see me in the reception room. That was eight years ago. And now they’re young men with girlfriends, who go to school and work. I can’t believe it. It’s sort of depressing.

“When the kids heard I was leaving Marvel, they sent me really nice letters. They felt bad.” She showed me some of the letters, and some pictures that they’d sent of themselves and Flo in the reception room, pictures taken by their mothers. They signed everything with their numbers, their Merry Marvel Marching Society membership card number. Like Larry Schwartz, MMMS #18756.

The Merry Marvel Marching Society is the club that Stan made up for Marvel fans to join. You send in your money and you get a membership card, with your very own membership number

Marvel Mixed-Message Screw-up

This full-page ad for MMMS membership ran in many Marvel mags, including *Fantastic Four* #36 (March 1965). However, despite what the top blurb says, that ad hadn’t run in either of the two preceding issues of *FF*. Thanks to Barry Pearl & Nick Caputo. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

The Merry Marvel Marching Society

WHO SAYS OPPORTUNITY ONLY KNOCKS ONCE OUT OF THE KINDNESS OF OUR GREEDY LITTLE HEARTS, WE'RE REWRITING THE DOORABLE AD WE RAN LAST ISSUE! SO IF YOU MISSED US LAST TIME AROUND, HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL GET WHEN YOU JOIN THE FAN CLUB TO END ALL FAN CLUBS... YOU MIGHT AS WELL JOIN AND GET IT OVER WITH! IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP US FROM RUNNING THE SAME AD ALL THE TIME!

I BELONG
THE MERRY MARVEL MARCHING SOCIETY

A GIANT-SIZE MEMBERSHIP BUTTON IN DECORATIVE COLORS... JUST THE THING TO COVER GRAY STAINS ON YOUR SUPER-HERO CAPES AND DESIGNED TO LOOK GREAT WHEN WORN NEXT TO YOUR PHI BETA KAPPA KEY!

A WHOLE MESS OF ABSOLUTELY USE-LESS M.M.M.S. STICKERS WHICH YOU CAN PASTE ONTO YOUR BOOK COVERS, ATTACHE CASES, OR YOUR STUN-RAY! (AND FOR THE INDICATES WHO DON'T APPRECIATE THAT READ 'OUT THE STAMP OUT THE M.M.M.S.')

WHEN OUR BULLPEN GANG DESIGNS A MEMBERSHIP CARD, WE DON'T KID AROUND! OUR 'PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO MARVEL', WHICH YOU'LL FIND ON THE BACK, IS PROBABLY THE FUNNIEST SINCE THOR'S LAST CREW-CUT! IT'S A GREAT STATUS SYMBOL, TOO! JUST WAVE IT AROUND NEXT TIME YOU'RE INVITED TO THE PENTAGON, AND WATCH THE TOP BRAGS FLIP! (YOU MAY DISCOVER THAT THEY'RE MERRY MARCHERS, TOO!)

FOR THOSE OF YOU LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE FIVE FRANTIC FRIENDS, WE'RE GONNA BREAK OUR HEARTS AND OFFER A REAL BARGAIN! ALL SIX OF YOU CAN JOIN FOR ONLY FIVE DOLLARS! AND, BESIDES ALL THE JAZZ MENTIONED ABOVE, WE'LL DESIGNATE THE SIX OF YOU AS AN OFFICIAL M.M.M.S. LOCAL CHAPTER AND SEND YOU THIS PRACTICALLY PRICELESS MARVEL CAPTIVITY! (IT'S FIVE TIMES THE SIZE YOU SEE HERE!) YOU CAN HANG IT ON YOUR CLUBHOUSE WALL, OR PUT IT SOMEWHERE TOO HIGH TO READ AND TELL EVERYBODY IT'S YOUR OWN! (AWA FROM OXFORD!) AND SMILING STAN LEE WILL PERSONALLY AUTOGRAPH EACH AND EVERY CERTIFICATE... JUST TO PROVE HE CAN WRITE!

HERE'S THE GREATEST SURPRISE OF ALL!
YOU'RE GONNA RECEIVE A FRANKLY FABULOUS 3 3/8 R.P.M. RECORD WITH THE ACTUAL VOICES OF THE BULLPEN GANG CLOWNING AROUND AND WELCOMING YOU TO THE GOOD OL' M.M.M.S. TALK ABOUT COLLECTOR'S ITEMS... YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO PART WITH IT!

MAKE OUT CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO: MARVEL COMICS GROUP! M.M.M.S. MARVEL COMICS GROUP 625 MADISON AVE. NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. 10022

WRITE NICE AND NEAT! WE'LL AWARD A SPECIAL DE LUXE NO-PRIZE FOR THE BEST COUPON WE GET!

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ AGE _____
SCHOOL, COLLEGE _____
OR OCCUPATION _____

IF F-36

AND WE DON'T FORGET YOU MERRY MARCHERS! IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOW THERE'LL BE MORE SURPRISES TO COME!



IN OCTOBER 1967, DAN ADKINS BEGAN DRAWING MARVEL'S "DR. STRANGE." HE WAS REPLACING MARIE SEVERIN, WHO HAD FOLLOWED BILL EVERETT, ON THE SERIES. BUT THE REAL GENIUS BEHIND THE GOOD DOCTOR -- THE ONE WHO CREATED STRANGE'S VISUAL TEMPLATE -- WAS DR. STRANGE'S CO-CREATOR, STEVE DITKO. IN 1966 STEVE HAD LEFT THE SERIES OVER A DISPUTE WITH MARVEL. WHEN ADKINS TOOK OVER THE ART, EDITOR STAN LEE REPORTEDLY INSTRUCTED THE YOUNG ARTIST TO "MAKE IT LOOK LIKE DITKO!"

AND INDEED DAN DID! IN FACT, A TAD TOO WELL! SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRST STORIES APPEARED, A FANZINE ARTICLE ACCUSED DAN OF BALDLY SWIPING STEVE DITKO. A SECOND ARTICLE FOLLOWED, AND A HEATED DISCUSSION ENSUED. STAN LEE EVENTUALLY WEIGHED IN, REMOVING DAN FROM PENCILING, AND ASSIGNING HIM THE LESS PRESTIGIOUS INKING CHORES. BUT WAS DAN ACTING UNETHICALLY, OR JUST FOLLOWING HIS EDITOR'S ORDERS? A CONTROVERSIAL FANZINE ARTICLE BY FUTURE ART EXPERT JIM VADEBONCOEUR, JR., LED TO A SPIRITED DEBATE. WE'LL EXAMINE THAT DISCUSSION IN...

"Dan Adkins and the Incredible Tracing Machine!" Revisited.



Is It Live Or Memorex?

(Above left:) Dan Adkins from *Strange Tales* #162 (Nov. 1968).
 (Above right:) Steve Ditko from *Strange Tales* #120 (May 1964).
 [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Right:) Adkins from *Strange Tales* #161 (Oct. 1967) and (far right) Ditko from *Strange Tales* #135 (Aug. 1965).
 [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



(Left:) Adkins from *Strange Tales* #161 (Oct. 1967).
 (Inset:) Ditko from *Strange Tales* #132 (May 1965).
 [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

"Dan Adkins & The Incredible Tracing Machine!" Revisited (Part 1)

by Michael T. Gilbert

Recently, I was going through a collection of '60s-era letters Peter Morisi sent to his friend Glen Johnson. (Those of you who picked up copies of *Alter Ego* #148-150 know all about that.) One 1968 note made reference to a fanzine article that accused comicbook artist Dan Adkins of swiping art. Morisi, who wrote and drew stories for Charlton, freely admitted to swiping himself on occasion. What follows are his comments on the subject.

Pete Morisi (7/30/1968):

"I can't agree with the *Superzine* attack on Dan Adkins—I don't know Dan—but this kind of write-up can cost him his job with Stan Lee, and that's bad. He's certainly contributed enough to 'comics' by now to be above this kind of attack. Let's face it, every artist swipes (or has swiped) from other artists:

Tuska swiped from Raymond and Caniff.

Hogarth swiped from Foster.

Barry swiped from Hogarth, Raymond, Raboy, Foster.

Raymond swiped from Foster.

Williamson swiped from Raymond.

Prentice swiped from Raymond.

Andriola swiped from Caniff.

PAM swiped from Tuska and others.

And I could go on, and on, and on, and on. So, why pick on Adkins, and have him labeled a 'swipe artist' from here on in. It's not fair, it's sensational 'reporting,' and can only result in hurting Adkins, and possibly closing the door of communication between the 'zines' and the various publisher. After all, no publisher is going to feel kindly toward a 'zine' that's going to turn around and 'blast' them every so often. Constructive criticism is one thing—but endangering a guy's job is another. I've had artists swipe my stuff, and it doesn't bother me, so what's the big deal? Oops, I got carried away—sorry for the speech."



Pete Morisi
in 1974. Thanks to Val Morisi.

Ironically, a few days later, I found another article on the subject, this one from 1970, buried in my fanzine collection.

The main article in the fanzine *MCR* #4 [*Modern Collector's Review*] was a series of heated responses to an article in *MCR* #3 written by 23-year-old **Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.** In it, Jim stated his disappointment with Adkins' extensive use of swipes. He then backed up his statement with a fairly comprehensive checklist



Dan Adkins
from the 1975
Marvel Con
program book.



Fall Guy?

Artist Dan Adkins borrowed the baddie's figure in *Tales to Astonish* #93 (July 1967) from the cover of Simon & Kirby's *Fighting American* #2 (June 1954). [© Marvel Characters, Inc., & Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby, respectively.]

detailing dozens of Adkins copies, and what originals were used, and where they first appeared.

It was an ambitious undertaking, but poor Jim had no idea what kind of hornet's nest he was stirring! Responses came in fast and furious, many from young pros like Bernie Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Jeff Jones, Jan Strand, and Richard Corben—either agreeing with Jim, or defending Dan. It made for a spirited debate about the ethics of swiping. As Jim said in a recent e-mail:

"The article *made MCR*, by the way. If you've ever seen *MCR* 1 & 2, you'd understand what I mean. I'm not positive, but I *think* that #3 was side-stapled. It was only the infamous article that generated enough interest for him to do a saddle-stitched #4 with 'Big Name Pro' letters."

The magazine itself is a fun read, with articles by longtime fan Dwight Decker, then a 16-year-old, art by Robert Kline and Jim Pinkoski, as well as articles by editor John McLaughlin. But the pro letters are the main point of interest.

Almost 50 years later, the letters responding to Jim's article remain relevant—so much so that we thought their comments on the subject were worth revisiting. Of course, one should keep in mind that some of the writers may or may not have different opinions on the subject in 2018 than they did in 1969, when Jim Vadeboncoeur's first article appeared.

At the time, Jim was a young man working as a quality control manager at a scientific firm. In the years since, Jim's eagle eye has made him one of the leading experts at spotting comic art styles. In the process, he's contributed to *Alter Ego* and other publications. He's also published well-respected magazines and books devoted to the great illustrators of the past.

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#212
July 2018



ENGEL

Art by Jim Engel [https://www.facebook.com/jim.engel.376/media_selfset=101385213209149_3296_100000130138364&type=3]
Shazam hero™ & © DC Comics, Marvelman™ & © Marvel Characters, Inc., other art ©2018 Jim Engel.

**IN THIS ISSUE! CHAPTER 3 OF
"CAPTAIN MARVEL and the ©OPYRIGHT©RISIS"**

**MIKE TIEFENBACHER'S
EPIC ARTICLE ON COMIC COPYRIGHTS, AND
THE NO MAN'S LAND OF PUBLIC DOMAIN!**

Captain Marvel & The ©opyright ©risis – Part III

Fawcett Was Far From The Only Company Confused By U.S. Copyright Law!

by Mike Tiefenbacher

FCA EDITOR'S INTRO: *In our preceding two issues, Mike T. launched his attempt to clarify copyright complexities and trademark tribulations concerning Fawcett Publications, dealing with the disposal and dispersal of both that company's Marvel Family-related concepts and its non-Shazamic properties circa 1953, from Ibis the Invincible to Hopalong Cassidy. Along the way, he's traveled the road from Myron Fass' 1967 android Captain Marvel comic to Marvel Comics' acquisition of that hero-name—DC's late-1950s acquisition of the assets of Quality Comics and its early-'70s licensing of the original Captain Marvel and the beginnings of its Shazam! series—how that dovetails (or doesn't) with Fawcett's renewing (or not renewing) its various copyrights related to its 1950-53 comicbook issues—and, because his researches led him there, to other companies' attitudes toward the renewing of its copyrighted comics material.*

Normal copyrights usually cover a particular work—a book, a story, a song, a work of art. Where it gets complicated is in the serial aspects of comicbooks.

The difference between a serial and a book is obvious: a book is considered a whole—story, dialogue, characters. A comic with continuing characters? The particular story of an issue or installment of a comic (or a radio or TV series episode) is one copyright, but the situation and the characters in it are another, i.e., the intellectual property copyright. Often, these differences are ignored, and even judges have come to bizarre and contradictory conclusions which have tended to blur them.

The difficulty arises when speaking of precedents of copyright, because the recent ruling regarding the status of the Sherlock Holmes franchise differs in many ways from any of the situations outlined in our preceding chapter, despite the fact that many people online would like to see it as a parallel to the Captain Marvel situation.

The Holmes case involved the copyright law prior to 1923 (as with Tarzan and John Carter, two other characters who preceded the change in the copyright laws, as mentioned in a previous installment)—a very different circumstance from that of Captain Marvel, who made his debut in the latter part of 1939. There is no question of the public-domain status of most of the original canon of Sherlock Holmes stories, as they were created under an earlier version of the Copyright Act, which didn't feature a renewal period.

What the estate of Arthur Conan Doyle was contending in the lawsuit was that the author's stories written and published after 1923, properly copyrighted and maintained by Conan Doyle and then by his estate, contributed enough in their content and

**More Stars Than
There Are In Cement
At The TCL Chinese
Theatre!**

By the time of its giant-size 1941 *Xmas Comics* #1 with its Mac Raboy cover, Fawcett Publications had a stellar lineup of valuable characters, including Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, Minute Man, Mr. Scarlet, and Bulletman—plus Ibis the Invincible, Golden Arrow, et al.—with Captain Marvel Jr., Mary Marvel, and even the Marvel Bunny soon to come! Thanks to the Grand Comics Database. [Shazam hero & other characters TM & © DC Comics.]

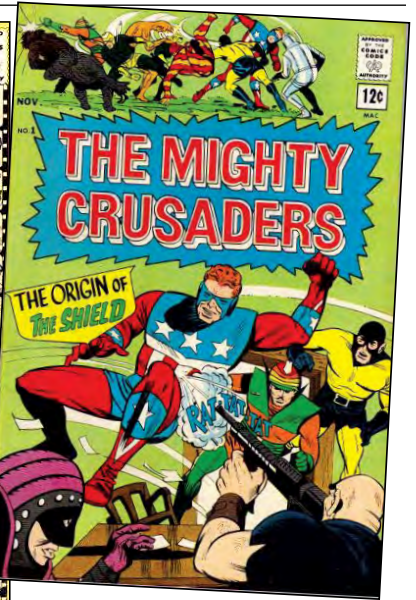


refinement of the Holmes character to affect the entire intellectual property copyright. They maintained that their status as the licensee of the Sherlock Holmes character and *oeuvre* had been violated by a packager who had originally paid for reprinting rights, then had published a collection of unauthorized *new* Holmes stories for which he had *not*. The judge ultimately ruled in the defendant's favor, declaring that the public-domain status of the earlier Holmes stories had not been changed by any subsequent laws, and that the Conan Doyle estate was not due any payment by the packager. As far as I can tell, this has not in any way diminished the estate's licenses for its movies or TV series (*Elementary* in the U.S.; *Sherlock* in the UK; the two Robert Downey, Jr., films), with the credits of each still carrying the estate's notice of authorization. There is still value in the "Estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" name. (In 1975 and 1976, DC and Marvel each published comics starring Sherlock Holmes, both companies believing the character to be in the public domain; each prospective series was shut down when the Conan Doyle estate objected, something that had happened earlier to Charlton concerning its two-issue run in 1955.)

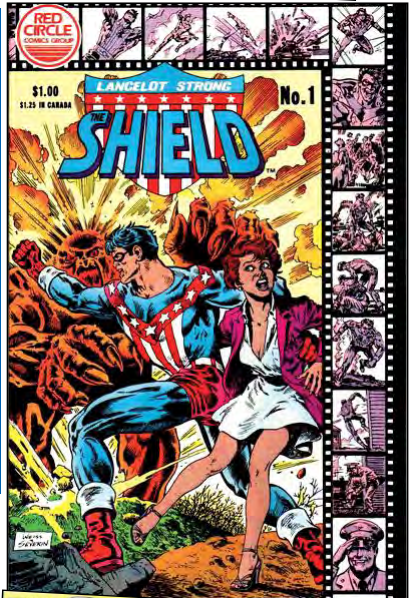
Where this differs from comicbooks, other than the then-current copyright law under which they were created, is that Conan Doyle himself was the copyright owner. The creation and writing of the stories were not done as work for hire, as most comicbooks were. As can be seen by the differences in how the current copyright law treats the two classes (e.g., the term of copyright is for the life of the author plus 70 years, rather than a flat 95 years for a work-for-hire copyright), this could alter the

On the other hand, Captain Atom made his Charlton debut in *Space Adventures* #33 (1960) and appeared in #33-40 & 42. Reprints of some of those stories were featured in *Strange Suspense Stories* in 1965, followed by new stories; then the title was renamed *Captain Atom* in 1966, with a costume change in 1967. That revamped version of the character was the inspiration for the DC version which has appeared ever since.

Those *Space Adventures* "Captain Atom" stories, though, fall into the unprotected category. Oddly enough, from its inception in the 1940s through 1959, every Charlton indicia listed the standard "© Charlton Comics Group" with the date. From 1959 through 1967 (just in time to include all of the Charlton



"The Shield Of The Mighty Is Vilely Cast Away"
 Among the many incarnations of The Shield have been (ready, set, go—clockwise):
 The first, in MLJ's *Pep Comics* #1 (Jan. 1940), drawn by Irv Novick—a year before the Timely debut of *Captain America Comics*. [TM & © Archie Comic Publications.]
 Simon & Kirby's *The Double Life of Private Strong* #1 (June 1959) didn't even call him The Shield on the cover, and Simon negotiated his own copyright on the material. Since then, there've occasionally been two versions of The Shield in the MLJ-cum-Archie universe. [TM & © Estate of Joe Simon; The Shield is a trademark of Archie Comic Publications.]
 Archie's *The Mighty Crusaders* #1 (Nov. 1965) starred The Shield. Cover by Paul Reinman. [Remainder of covers TM & © Archie Comic Publications.]
Lancelot Strong, The Shield #1 (June 1983) sported a cover by Alan Weiss & John Severin.
Legend of The Shield #1 (July 1991), with cover by Grant Miehm, was one result of DC's "Impact" imprint to handle the MLJ/Archie heroes.
The Shield #2 (April 2016), with a Dave Williams cover, was part of Archie's attempt to reimagine the first patriotically garbed super-hero as a woman.



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have often been the subject rchie Comic Publications and then again twenty

years later) DC Comics, would also fall into the public-domain category. Despite multiple revivals over the past 55 years, Archie Comics didn't begin renewing old issues until 1978 (for issues published in