

ROY THOMAS' STANDARD
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

OKAY, AXIS—HERE COME
THE GOLDEN AGE
NEDOR HEROES!



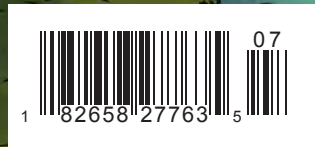
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Foley
after
ROBBINS
&
ROMITA
1975



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P.C. Hamerlinck and some noted friends salute the 70th birthday of Mary Marvel!

On Our Cover: The cover of the very first Golden Age super-hero-starring comic that A/E’s editor ever wrote was Marvel’s Giant-Size Invaders #1 in 1975; it was a monumental piece of work in more ways than one—penciled by Frank Robbins and inked by John Romita. Thus, we invited Shane Foley, who draws each issue’s “maskot” illustration, to use that iconic cover as the inspiration for this homage featuring The Black Terror, The Fighting Yank, Miss Masque, Pyroman, Captain Future, and The Grim Reaper—six of Nedor’s greatest super-heroes. Great job, Shane—and colorist Tom Ziuko! [Art © 2012 Shane Foley.]

Above: Although several stellar talents drew “The Black Terror” during his last year or two in Golden Age comics, the work of the team composed of Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin stands out. Above is their splash panel for a story from Black Terror #25 (Dec. 1948). Thanks to Eric Schumacher. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



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FIRST PRINTING.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of:
Jerry Robinson

Nedor Comic Index

The 1968 Guide To The Thrilling/Better/Standard Super-Heroes

by Mike Nolan

New 2012 Introduction:

Solving The Mystery Of Nedor Comics—Issue By Issue!

by Michelle Nolan

Over the past 44 years, many comic collectors and historians have asked me why I chose once-obscure Nedor Comics as the subject of fandom's first issue-by-issue Golden Age index. The answer is a bit convoluted, especially since Nedor Comics were nowhere nearly as well-known during the dawn of modern comics fandom in the 1960s as were DC, Timely, Dell, MLJ, Quality, Fiction House, and several other publishers of 1940s comics.

Part of this answer will involve memories earlier revealed in Roy Thomas' handsome reprints of my *Timely Comics Index* (in *Alter Ego* #57) and my *MLJ Comic Index* (A/E #82), both originally published in 1969. But since the Nedor story is significantly different, and came first, being published in 1968, I'm trying to avoid repeating too much of what I said in the two earlier issues of this magazine. Although I began reading and collecting comics in 1956, when I was 8 years old, I never ran across so much as a single 1940s Nedor super-hero issue over a nine-year period, even though I spent part of most weekends foraging through the back-issue comic piles of three large used-book stores, before attending the Saturday matinees. Likewise, Timely and MLJ also fascinated me in the late 1960s because I also had not seen them as a budding comics historian.

Standard Comics, Nedor's real publisher, was still in business in 1956, having struck financial gold with the *Dennis the Menace* franchise and other humor titles such as *Super Mouse*. But the last of Nedor's human costume heroes had vanished in 1949. Perhaps they once sold well in other parts of the country, but on the West Coast, where I spent my childhood in California's Bay Area and in Northwest Washington, Nedor comics had simply disappeared, if indeed they were ever well distributed there.

I found hundreds of old comics, mostly from the post-World War II period, but nary so much as a single Nedor—until I met an older collector in January 1965 on one of my final used-book store

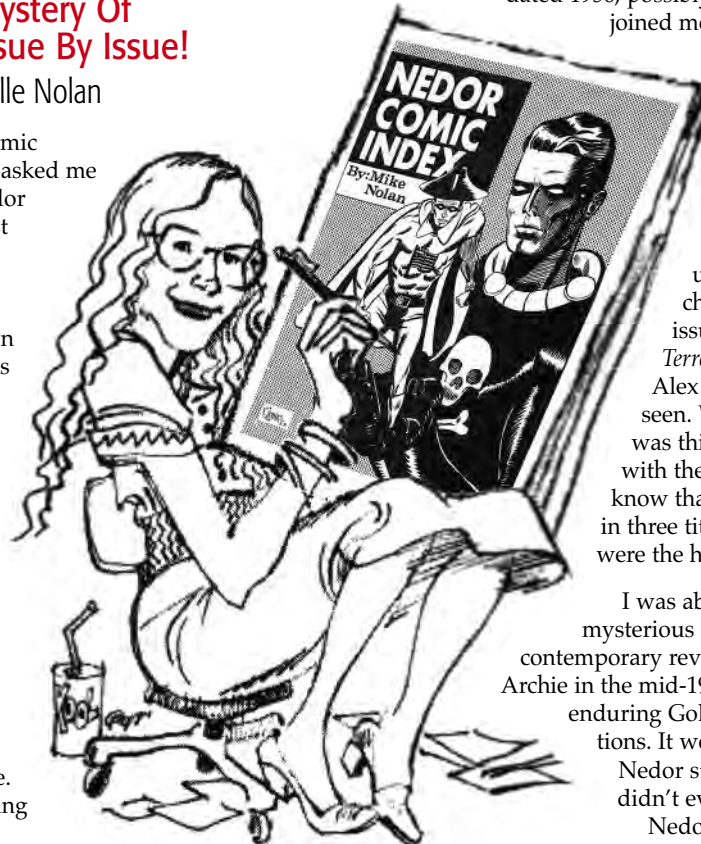
hunts. (Two of the used-book stores had gone out of business by then and the remaining store offered few comics that predated 1956, possibly because other collectors had joined me in the search.) This friendly fellow was headed for the Air Force and, wonder of wonders, he was willing to sell me a few dozen 1940s comics at the then unthinkable prices of 25¢ to \$1 each. (Second-hand comics were six for a quarter at the used-book stores on my childhood hunts.) I bought every issue I could, including *Black Terror* #16 (Oct. 1946) with the first Alex Schomburg cover I had ever seen. Who in the world, I wondered, was this nearly 20-year-old character with the cool costume? Little did I know that *Black Terror*'s 174 adventures in three titles between 1941 and 1949 were the high for any Nedor character.

I was absolutely enchanted with this mysterious comic; I still have it. Unlike contemporary revivals from DC, Marvel, and Archie in the mid-1960s, Nedor then had no enduring Golden Age publishing connections. It would be many years before a Nedor story would be reprinted. I didn't even know *Black Terror* #16 was a

Nedor comic. There was no publisher's logo on the cover—I could not understand that, since every comic I had ever seen had a logo—and the indicia listed Visual Editions as the publisher. But this issue had one tantalizing and frustrating house ad: a full page on

the inside front cover, listing 14 titles but no publisher! There they were: *Thrilling*, *Startling*, *Exciting*, *Wonder*, *Mystery* (which I later learned had not been published for about two years!), *America's Best*, *Black Terror*—and *Fighting Yank*, who was the only other identifiable hero in that house ad, since he had his own title. There were also six non-hero titles.

What, I wondered, could these generically named titles be? How could an entire line of Golden Age comics have eluded me for nine years? After all, I was a most serious comic book detective! I can remember people at the used-book stores saying, "I never saw anyone who loves comics so much!" The Nedor mystery made me wonder for a full year, until that fateful weekend in January 1966 when I attended a one-day comics gathering at the home of famed fan-artist and fanzine editor Rudi Franke. My comic book-collecting dentist, Dr. Wayne Pearce, provided the transportation

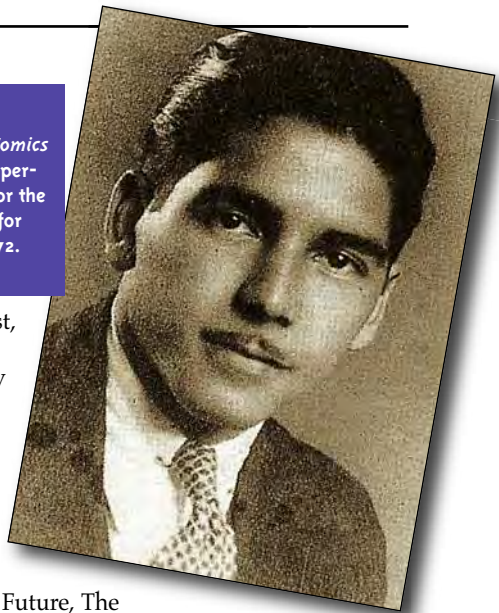


Cover Me!

Michelle Nolan displays Rudi Franke's cover for the 1968 *Nedor Comic Index*, which spotlights *The Black Terror* and *The Fighting Yank*. (You saw it bigger in A/E #102.) The caricature of her was drawn by the late Creig Flessel. [Art © Rudi Franke & Estate of Creig Flessel, respectively.]



Terror Firma
 Alex Schomburg (photo) rings the bell with his cover for *Black Terror Comics* #16 (Oct. 1946), the first glimpse the Index's author ever had of the superhero co-created by writer Richard Hughes and artist Dave Gabrielson for the Sangor Shop (see A/E #61-62) that produced finished comics pages for Nedor/Better. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database; see info on p. 72. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



and further drilled a love of old comics into me. Rudi Franke—who was later to beautifully render the covers for the *Nedor*, *Timely*, and *MLJ Indexes*—played host to an affable gathering of two or three dozen collectors talking, swapping, buying, and selling comics at his home in Oakland.

was mostly mediocre at best, except for those incredible Schomburg covers, but they simply screamed “exotic old comic book” in a captivating way that most other comics did not. And those characters! Not just *The Black Terror* and *The Fighting Yank*, but *Doc Strange*, *Pyroman*, *Captain Future*, *The American Eagle*, *Miss Masque*, *The Grim Reaper*, *Wonderman*, *The American Crusader*, *The Liberator*, and more.

Among the show organizer’s friends was the late Barry Bauman, a mercurial, entrepreneurial, thoroughly outgoing huckster sort who was my own age. This guy, I discovered, loved comics more than I did and could talk about them endlessly, and with plenty of knowledge. I soon discovered that he and his friends had been producing fine fanzines for several years. He invited some of us to his home nearby in Oakland and I discovered, to my utter amazement, an absolutely breath-taking trove of Golden Age comics in his attic. There were thousands of them, or at least it seemed that way. The minimum price was a buck a book, though they weren’t all for sale. But—he had copies of all eight of those mysterious Nedor titles! At last, I had found a source for Nedors. I was agog and immediately snatched up about two dozen issues.

I soon realized they were published by the same publishing empire that produced the pulp magazines *The Phantom Detective*, *The Masked Rider*, and other characters who were also in some of the Nedor comics, including a different version of the Captain Future character I had become familiar with in second-hand 1940s pulps from Better/Thrilling Publications. Indeed, that pulp, comics, and paperback empire was founded and operated by one of the most prolific of all publishers, Ned Pines. Some years later, I learned the name Nedor came from Ned and his wife Dora.

Little did I know this was the mother lode of Nedors. Barry explained to me that he and his fanzine-publisher friends had discovered thousands of Golden Age comics in a stash at the Liberty Book Store in Sacramento (I still have many issues with the store’s sticker on the covers). If I remember right, he said they paid something like 40¢ (or less) per issue and hauled them away. Their Nedor stock was nothing less than unbelievable, so I had the opportunity to purchase dozens from Barry for a buck a book on several trips to that magical attic. I think he thought I was crazy to be buying comics nobody else cared about; in 1966, everyone wanted old *Batman*, *Superman*, *All-Star*, *Uncle Scrooge*, *EC*—anything but Nedor! I was immediately motivated to get my driver’s license and buy a car. I returned often, taking along friends like Bud Plant, and received endless razzing for buying “all that Nedor junk.”

These were such strange comics, all dated between 1940 and 1949. I had never heard of the characters. The art

I noticed that late-1940s Nedor issues ran the same little Standard Comics logo that appeared on issues of *Dennis the Menace* I purchased in the late 1950s, until Standard left comics and Fawcett began publishing *Dennis* in 1959. I also noticed some indicias listed these Nedors as Better Publications, some as Nedor, some as Visual Editions, etc. In 1966, I didn’t know anything about tax complications; I only knew that Marvel had done the same indicia thing in the 1950s.



Yanking Our Chain
 Since our indexer subscribed to G.B. Love’s popular 1960s fanzine *Rocket’s Blast-Comicollector*, chances are one of the issues that arrived in the ol’ mailbox was #44, which sported a drawing of *The Fighting Yank* by fan-artist John Fantucchio. Thanks to Aaron Caplan. [Main figure art © 2012 John Fantucchio; Nedor art in background © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

At about the same time I discovered this treasure trove of Nedors, four key events occurred. I subscribed to the *Rocket’s Blast-Comicollector* fanzine and began to buy comics through the mail, including Nedor issues. I started corresponding with most of the contributors and advertisers in the *RB-CC*. I obtained a copy of *The Authoritative Index to DC Comics* by Howard Keltner and Jerry Bails (1963), which was the first genuine index of Golden Age super-hero comics. And I discovered *The Complete EC Checklist* (1955) by Fred von Bernewitz, who was the first fan to index comics on an issue-by-issue basis.

Why not, I thought in 1966, combine the concept of both of these groundbreaking indexes? I would combine the idea of an index to the long runs of one publisher’s comics, the way Keltner



Cowboys And Aliens—Nedor Style

Alex Schomburg drew (and in one case painted) the final two covers each of *Startling Comics* (#53, Sept. 1948) and *Thrilling Comics* (#80, April 1951). The first showcases Lance Lewis, Space Detective—the other, cowboy Buck Ranger, obviously Lone’s long-lost brother. Covers from the GCD. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

and Bails did it out of necessity for DC, with an issue-by-issue listing à la von Bernewitz. Nedor’s modest output was similar to EC’s, unlike the thousands of issues DC had produced by 1963.

By the end of 1966, when I was a freshman at San Jose State University—and beginning my career as a newspaper

feature writer while working my way through school—I had become fully involved in fandom, along with Bud Plant and other collector friends. We had discovered the utterly astounding Cherokee Book Shop in Hollywood, where I found many Nedors (and received more razzing) and a whole lot else. I began to realize that I might, indeed, be able to produce actual issue-by-issue Golden Age indexes, with the help of the most fabulous of all Golden Age collectors, the late Rick Durell, plus the crucial information about first and last issues provided by Bill Spicer’s historic listing of Golden Age titles in his ground-breaking *Guidebook to Comics Fandom* (1965). By writing to the most enthusiastic and friendly fans like Raymond Miller, to whom I dedicated the *Nedor Comic Index*, along with the knowledgeable likes of dealers Phil Seuling and Bill Thailing, I received vital encouragement and information.

On my first extended cross-country comic-book-hunting trip in the summer of 1967, I visited dozens of fans and dealers, seeking both issues and information over a six-week period (traveling by Greyhound!). By the time I returned, I had most of the information I needed to produce the *Nedor Index*, plus the inspiration and information to begin indexing Timely and MLJ as well. If memory serves, I must have written hundreds of letters seeking information. I was getting comics-related mail almost every day. At the time, nobody had all the information, but by the middle of 1968 I had acquired all the Nedor issue dates and characters (thanks to Howard Keltner, who filled in the final few) plus story page counts and story titles for all but a few issues. (Keltner’s magnificent *Golden Age Index* in 1998 provided all the story page counts for every issue from every company.)

I typed the *Nedor Index* on an ancient portable typewriter and had 500 copies printed in the summer of 1968, shortly before I took off on my second collecting venture around America (also by Greyhound; I started driving in 1969 after I acquired a fondly remembered 1964 Chevy). I figured 500 copies were the most I could sell. I priced the index at 75¢ (I have no idea why I didn’t make it \$1). Now I’m thrilled to see Rascally Roy reprint the *Index*, especially since this may now put the kibosh on the unethical activities of people who have sold unauthorized reprints at ridiculous prices. (I have no problem with originals selling on eBay

and so forth, even though I would never have imagined today’s collector prices in 1968!)

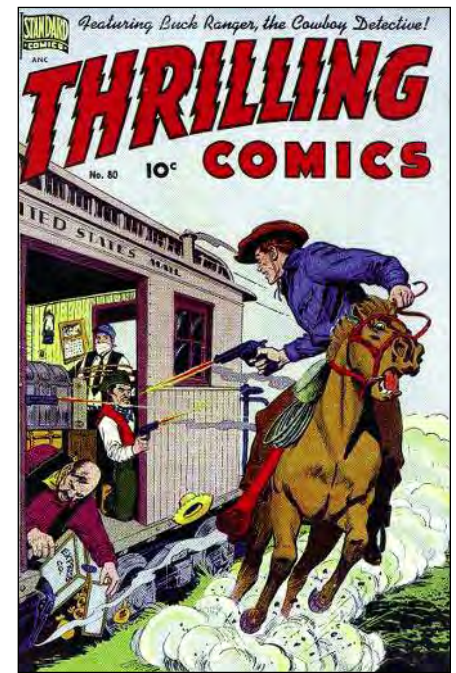
Why did I not list credits for artists? Why did I not list Schomburg covers? Why did I not include artwork other than Rudi Franke’s fabulous cover? As incredible as it seems today, in 1968 I not only couldn’t figure out who did any of the unsigned interior art, but I didn’t care. I really didn’t care. To this day, though I now appreciate many artists, I collect primarily for the fun of the stories. In my *Nedor Index*, I wanted only to let people know what was in these mysterious comics and what characters were on their covers, since there was no other single source of that information. I also made the serious mistake of not listing *Startling Comics* #49-53 and *Thrilling Comics* #65-80, since they did not contain characters I really cared about. [A/E EDITOR’S NOTE: Brian K. Morris, who retyped the *Nedor Comic Index* onto a Word document for *Ye Editor* to, well, edit, reports that, for the benefit of today’s A/E reader, he added on his own initiative a few more issues of *Thrilling Comics* than were originally indexed, listing some of the Western features but omitting the humor and text material. Thanks, Brian!]

In 1968, I also had no idea that, a year later, I would meet a friendly fellow named Bob Overstreet, an indefatigable researcher who told me he intended to produce something called a “price guide”... which would also evolve into a then-inconceivable (except, I guess, by Bob) list of all mainstream comics. I gave him my Nedor, Timely, and MLJ data for his first edition in 1970.

The days of Nedors for a buck are long gone. Now you’re lucky to find one in sweet shape for \$50 or \$100! Indeed, the oldest costume-hero Nedors were 28 years old when I produced the index 44 years ago—but in the Paleolithic comic collecting years 1965-1968, they seemed positively ancient, relics of a vanished and mysterious era. Little did I realize I would see these comics not only grow in popularity and price among collectors, but also in availability at hundreds of comic book conventions and through a miraculous invention I could never have imagined called the Internet.

I can’t help but be proud of producing the first three issue-by-issue Golden Age comic book indexes, but I’m even more honored that one of my favorite comic book people, Roy Thomas, would feel they have been worth reprinting. Thanks to you, Roy, and to your wife Dann, for preserving more comic book history in more than 100 issues of *Alter Ego* than I (or anyone else) could have imagined when I discovered that *Black Terror* #16.

Now all I need to do is find another 1964 Chevy!



[A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Because it is largely duplicative of or superseded by what is written in the new 2012 introduction that precedes this section, we have eliminated the brief preface to the 1968 edition, except for these two paragraphs which we felt should be included:]

No project such as this could ever see print without the cooperation of many wonderful fans. I have written hundreds of letters and traveled all over the country in search of data and information on Golden Age comics, and am deeply grateful to the many fans who have helped in my search, and also for those whose friendly hospitality has made many a day on the road brighter. At the risk of leaving someone out, I would like to thank the following people for their cooperation, encouragement, and help:

Rudi Franke, Howard Keltner, Tom Fisher, Rick Durell, Dick

Hoffman, Jim Buser, John Barrett, Joe Stoner, Dale Manesis, Tom Tallmon, Phil Seuling, Bud Plant, Barry Bauman, Pres Birenbaum, Joe Goggin, Len Brown & Collectors' Book Store, Bill Thailing, Jerry Bails, Dave Kaler, Pat Iacovone, Bert Blum & Cherokee Books, Frank Scadena, Howard Rogofsky, Claude Held, Howard Bayliss, Ken Mitchell, Wayne Pearce, John Baldwin, A. Kovers, Drury Moroz, M.C. Goodwin, Frank Nuessel, John Dahlquist, Al Davoren, Clay Kimball, Bill Zimmerman, Russ Cochran, Charles Reinsel, the Library of Congress, and last but by no means least, I would like to personally thank most of all Raymond Miller, my longtime friend who has been of such great help. It is to Raymond that I dedicate this index, and through the years I have become convinced that there is no finer group of people than comic fandom in any hobby.

The Nedor Comic Index (1968)

I. Nedor Features—Title By Title

Note: *Startling* #'s 50–53 and *Thrilling* #65–80 were published without any super-heroes and are not included in this index. However, strips which continued into one or more of these issues are marked with double asterisks. [A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: As mentioned above, Brian K. Morris did add those issues and their key features. Also, some "convenience" story titles have been added from GCD listings.]

America's Best Comics

#1 (Feb. 1942) – #31 (July 1949)

- The Black Terror #1–31
- Doc Strange #1–23, 27
- Captain Future #1–3, 5, 22
- The Liberator #3–5, 8
- The Woman in Red #1–2
- Don Davis, Espionage Ace #1–2
- American Eagle #2, 6–7, 10–12, 14
- Pyroman #3–8, 10, 12–13, 17–22, 24, 28–29
- Jimmy Cole #4
- The Lone Eagle #5
- The American Crusader #6
- Thunderhoof #7
- Lucky Lawrence, Leatherneck #8
- The Fighting Yank #9, 11, 13–25
- The Ghost #9
- Miss Masque #23–31
- The Sea Eagle #25
- The Silver Knight #26
- The Phantom Detective #26
- The Commando Cubs #27–28
- Jefferson Jones #29
- Terry Moore #29
- Bart Bradley #30–31

Buck Ranger #31

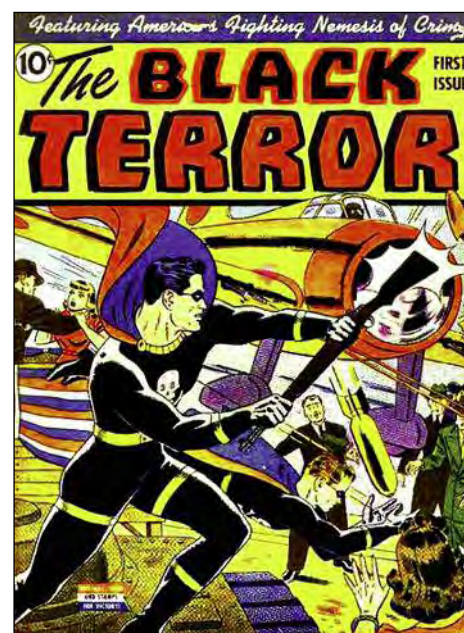
Cover Features

- The Black Terror #1–31
- Doc Strange #1–22
- Captain Future #1–3, 5, 22
- The Liberator #1, 3–5
- The Woman in Red #1–2
- The American Eagle #2, 6–8, 10–12, 14
- Pyroman #3–8, 10, 12–13, 17, 22



Nedor's Most Self-Aggrandizing Comics

The artist of the cover of *America's Best Comics* #1 (Feb. 1942) is uncertain. This was Nedor's equivalent of DC's *World's Finest Comics* and Fawcett's *America's Greatest Comics*. And the companies were all so modest, too! Nedor's biggest heroes in late '41 were clearly The Black Terror and Doc Strange. The Fighting Yank had only recently debuted, but his rise to parity with the Terror would be swift, perhaps bolstered by World War II jingoism. Thanks to the GCD. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



A Date That Will Live In Terror

The indicia date of *Black Terror* #1 was simply "1942"—no month given. Maybe they weren't sure there'd be a second issue? Art by Alex Schomburg. Thanks to the GCD. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

- The American Crusader #6
- The Fighting Yank #9, 11, 13–21, 23–25
- Miss Masque #23–31

The Black Terror

#1 (1942) – #27 (June 1949)

- The Black Terror #1–27
- Crime Crushers #1–4, 6, 13, 16–19, 24
- Thunderhoof #5, 9, 14–15
- The Ghost #7
- Hale of the Herald #8
- Jimmy Cole #8
- The Scarab #20



Mars Needs Press Agents!

The "Major Mars" cover of *Exciting Comics* #1 is credited to "L. North"—which is curious, since *Exciting* soon sported a hero-feature titled "Larry North"! The Major must not have been a hit even around the Nedor offices, though—for by #2 he was gone, long before the readers could have cast their votes with their bright shiny dimes. Thanks to the GCD. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

Miss Masque #21
The Crime Professor #22
Space Speedsters #23
Spectro, the Mind Reader #25

Cover Feature

The Black Terror #1–27

Exciting Comics

#1 (April 1940) – #69 (Sept. 1949)

Sgt. Bill King #1–21, 23–27, 29–39, 42–43, 48–50
The Mask #1–20
Jim Hatfield, Texas Ranger #1–16, 18–19, 21
Dan Williams, Private Investigator #1–14
Major Mars #1
Gunner Thompson #1
Hy Hardy, Ace Newsreel Cameraman #1
Ted Crane #2–22
The Sphinx #2–14
Space Rovers #2–9
Son of the Gods #2–8
The Black Terror #9–69
Larry North, U.S.N. #10–15, 17, 19–22, 24–28, 33–35

The Liberator #15–30, 34–35
Crash Carter, Air Cadet #16–21, 23, 25–28, 31–39, 48–53
Pepper Swift #21–25
Crime Crushers #28–32, 36–41, 50–59
Kara, Jungle Princess #39–49
The Scarab #42–48
Roger Dodger #51–67
Miss Masque #51–54
Strut Simmons #54–61
Judy of the Jungle #55–69
Rick Howard, the Mystery Rider #60–67
Johnny Dale, Secret Agent #62–67
Billy West #68–69

Cover Features

Major Mars #1
Ted Crane #2, 8
Space Rovers #3–7
The Black Terror #9–21, 23–52, 54–55
The American Eagle #22
Miss Masque #53
Judy of the Jungle #56–66
Rick Howard #67
Billy West #68–69

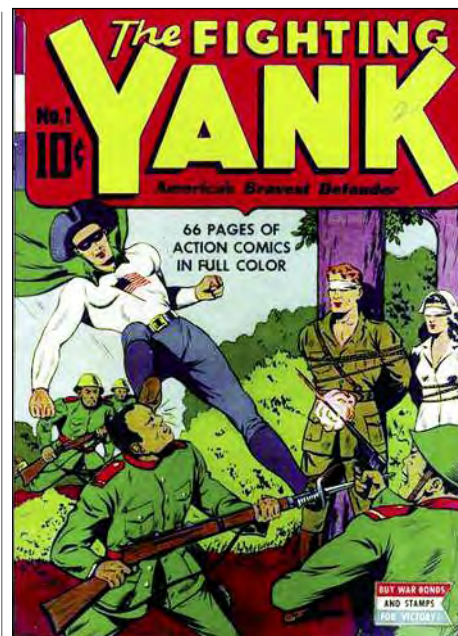
The Fighting Yank Comics

#1 (Sept. 1942) – #29 (Aug. 1949)

The Fighting Yank #1–29
Mystico, The Wonder Man #1
The Rio Kid #1
Larry North, U.S.N. #3
Jimmy Cole, #3, 4
Hale of the Herald #3, 10
Jill Trent #6, 9
The Grim Reaper #7
Don Davis #8, 15
The Oracle #11
The Supersleuths #12, 16–17, 19–20
Parish: The Pacific #13
American Eagle #18
Kara, Jungle Princess #21
Miss Masque #22, 24
Tex Marlin, Stuntman #23
The Cavalier #25
Sandy of the Circus #26
Front Page Peggy #27
Fighting Yank's Ancestor #29

Cover Features

The Fighting Yank #1–29



Fighting For Survival

The cover artist of *Fighting Yank Comics* #1 may be unknown, but the hero himself somehow managed between 1942 and 1949 to solo-star in two more issues of his own title than did The Black Terror. Thanks to the GCD. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

Miss Masque #22

Mystery Comics

#1 (1944) – #4 (1944)

Wonderman #1–4
Dick Devens [King of Futuria] #1–4
Zudo, The Jungle Boy, #1–4
The Magnet #1–4
The Silver Knight #1
Jack Manning #2
Lance Lewis, Space Detective #3–4

Cover Feature

Wonderman #1–4

Startling Comics

#1 (June 1940) – #49 (Jan. 1948)

Captain Future #1–40
The Masked Rider #1–17
Mystico, The Wonder Man #1–9, 11–17
G-Man Dalton #1–10, 14–15
Detective Sgt. Burke #1–3, 5–13
Scoop Langton #1–3
Mysterious Dr. X #1, 4
Don Davis, Secret Agent #2–9, 11–21, 25–28, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39–40, 48

The Birth Of The Black Terror

[Exciting Comics #9 scans from Jim Ludwig; script attributed to Richard Hughes, art to David Gabrielson; © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



Clearly, chemist Bob Benton wasn't making much headway on his energy tonic, till young Tim Roland came along...

...and accidentally tossed some formic acid into the mix!



Tim even came up with costume materials for his boss...

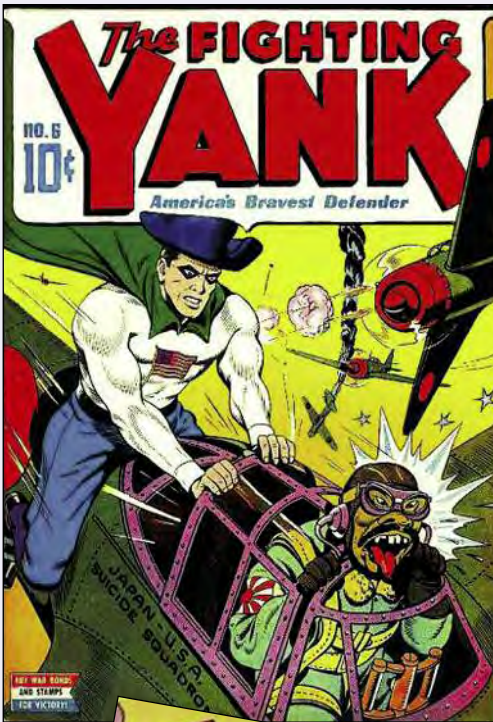


...who promptly became the Black Terror, scourge of evil-doers!

Not that Tim intended to be left out of the super-strength sweepstakes!



The *Fighting Yank* At War



Schomburg's wartime covers, surely at editorial direction, depicted the Japanese more often than the Germans—and, reflecting U.S. government propaganda, indulged in racial caricature.

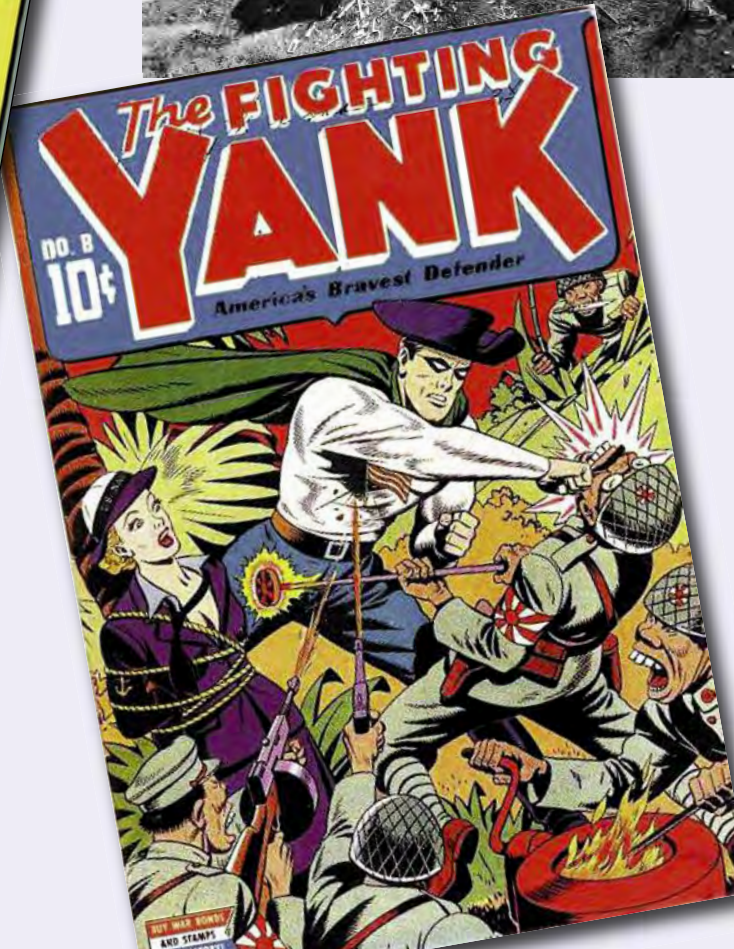
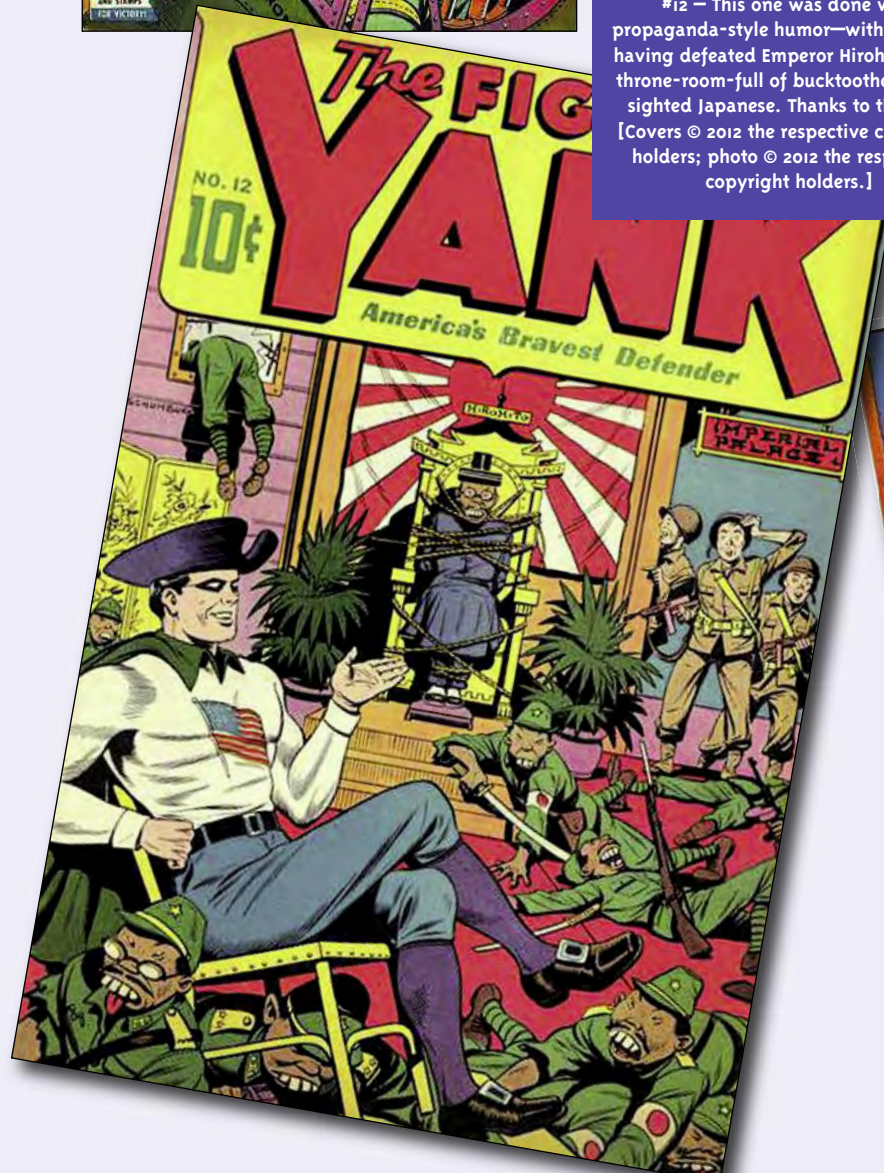
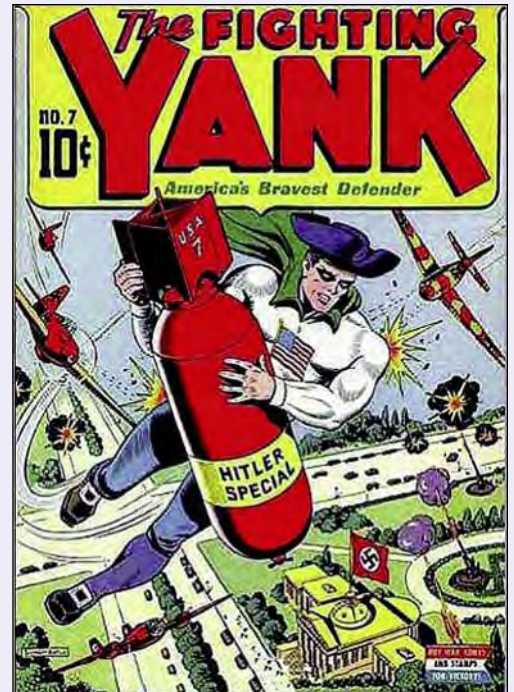
(Clockwise from left:)

#6 — The Yank takes on the Japanese air force—one stereotype at a time.

#7 — Like several Timely covers by Schomburg, this one involved an assault on Hitler's lofty retreat at Berchtesgaden, Germany. (The contrasting photo, from "In Focus with Alan Taylor" at the www.theatlantic.com website, shows Berchtesgaden on May 26, 1945, just after World War II ended in Europe, as a P-47 Thunderbolt flies low over the heavily cratered area and ruined structure—the result of Allied bombs, not vengeful super-heroes. Thanks to Alan Waite.)

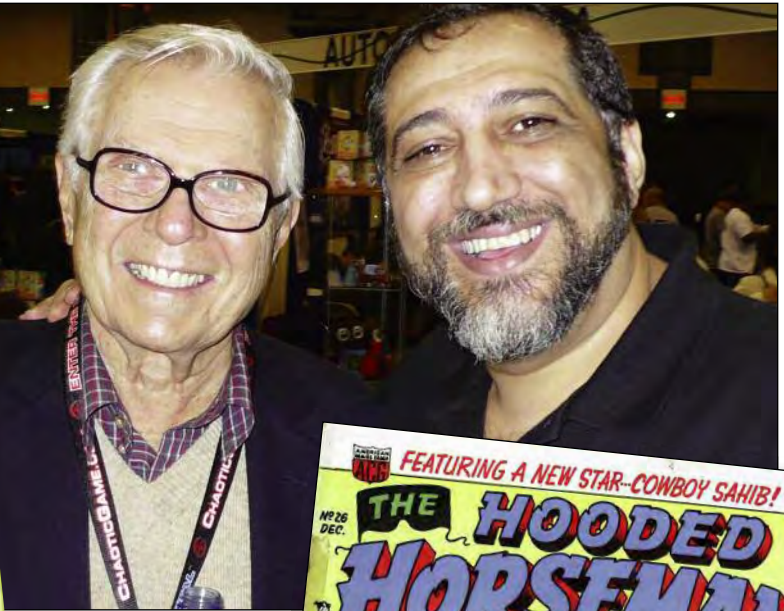
#8 — Back to the Japanese, with the torturing of females added to the unsavory mix. Well, there *was* a war on—a big one.

#12 — This one was done with propaganda-style humor—with the Yank having defeated Emperor Hirohito and a throne-room-full of bucktoothed, near-sighted Japanese. Thanks to the GCD. [Covers © 2012 the respective copyright holders; photo © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

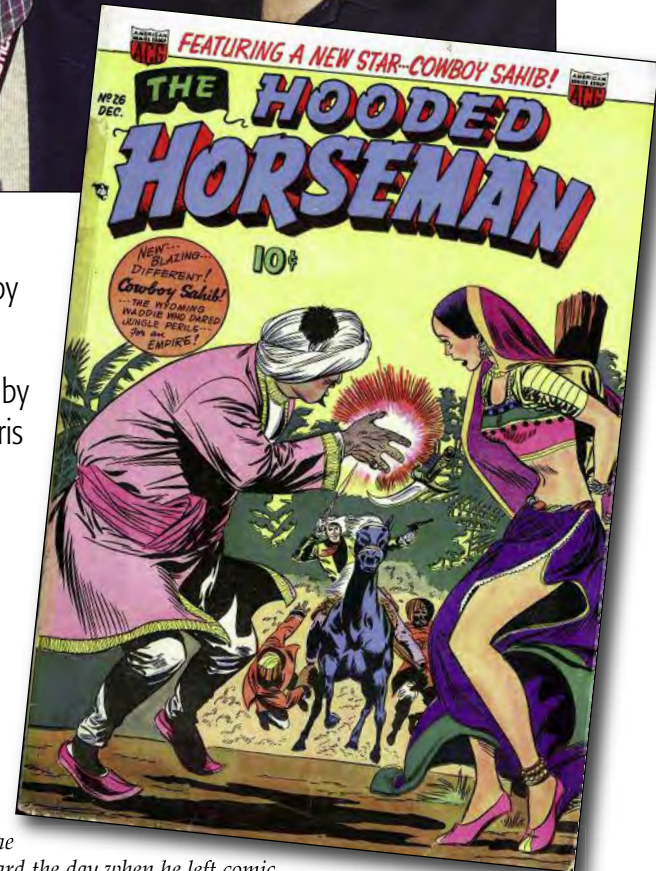


“None Of Us Were Working For The Ages”

Part II Of An In-Depth Interview
With Celebrated Comics Artist LEONARD STARR



Interview
Conducted by
Jim Amash
Transcribed by
Brian K. Morris

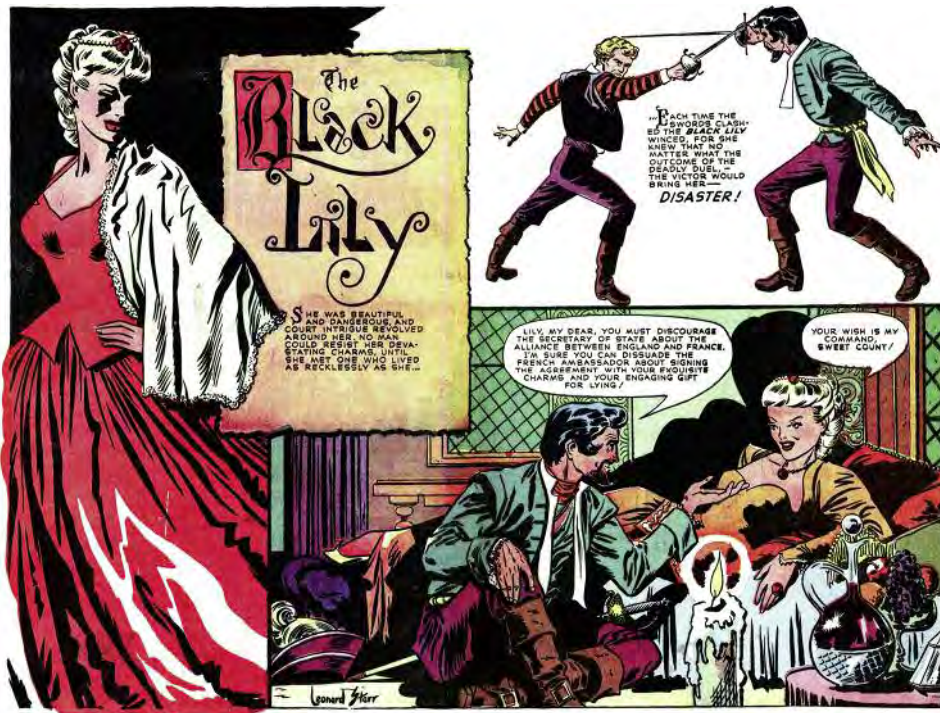


Starring Leonard Starr

Artist Leonard Starr (on left) and interviewer Jim Amash smile for the camera at the big New York Comics Convention held in February 2008—between images of Starr’s work from two companies discussed in the previous segment and for which he drew: an historical adventure from Hillman Periodicals’ *Airboy Comics*, Vol. 5, #9 (Oct. 1948); scripter unknown—and the cover of American Comics Group’s *The Hooded Horseman* #25 (Nov.-Dec. 1952). The photo was snapped by Charles Pelto, whose Classic Comics Press has published the nine volumes to date of *Leonard Starr’s Mary Perkins On Stage*, collecting the artist’s landmark newspaper comic strip—which will be a focal point in later installments. [Pages © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

INTERVIEWER’S INTRODUCTION: Leonard Starr started out as a background artist at Funnies, Inc., quickly becoming an inker and then penciler/inker on such features as *Timely Comics’ “Sub-Mariner.”* During the 1940s and ‘50s, his work was published by numerous companies, including McCombs, Orbit, Parents Magazine Press, ACG, Avon, DC, Timely/Marvel, and St. John Publications. We covered several of those sojourns last issue; this time we follow his career

further as he moves toward the day when he left comic books in 1957 to do the widely acclaimed *On Stage* newspaper strip which he created, and later *Annie*, the renamed *Little Orphan Annie*. Special thanks to our mutual friend Tom Sawyer (whom I interviewed in A/E # 77) for giving me Leonard’s contact info. —Jim.



doesn't register to me now.

JA: Then you began working for St. John Publications.

STARR: Yes. Warren King and I had put out a couple of books for St. John. We were inspired by Simon & Kirby. They put out the romance books, and they did well. Ours was a romance book called *Adventures in Romance*. They were adventures with a lot of girls, and a lot of heavy breathing. [NOTE: See art spots at left. —Jim.]

JA: When you and Warren did them, what was the division of labor?

STARR: I did some of the stories, and he did some of the stories. I wrote my own stories. Those were among the first stories that I wrote. I don't know who wrote Warren's stories. The people we dealt with at St. John were Nadine King and Richard Decker. Archer St. John wasn't involved in the creative end, or at least not that I saw. Comics were really a side part of his company. He was a magazine publisher.

I didn't see much of him. What I remember about St. John was that he was an alcoholic. One time, a group of us went out to The Brass Rail, and while we were drinking, he decided to join in and have a martini. Ten minutes later, he was drunk. He hated hotels, so he stayed at the New York Athletic Club. I think he was a troubled man. His face was deep-lined, maybe from drinking, and maybe from the kind of life he led. I think he felt inferior to his brother Robert, who was a well-known journalist.

Archer felt he never lived up to his brother.

[NOTE: See A/E #77 for an in-depth study of St. John Publications by Ken Quattro. —Jim.]



Adventures In Time
Starr and his pal Warren King (photo) worked on both issues of the St. John Publishing Co. comic officially titled *Adventures* in its indicia, but which was heralded on its covers first as *Adventures in Romance* (#1, Nov. 1949), then as *Spectacular Adventures* (#2, Feb. 1950). Starr wrote and drew the period love story at top for the former, while King illustrated the slave-girl fantasy seen directly above for the latter; its scripter isn't known. Thanks to Rod Beck for both art scans, and to John Benson for providing the pic of Warren King, which is courtesy of Nadine King. [Art © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

"We Were Inspired By Simon & Kirby"
JIM AMASH: You drew some romance stories for Fawcett Publications in 1950—and I have you working at Fiction House, doing "Star Pirate," in 1949. Does that sound familiar?

LEONARD STARR: It's certainly possible that I did that work. It



I remember one Christmas he gave one of his editors, Marion McDermott, a bowl of goldfish. She made him take it back because "It makes too much noise." [mutual laughter]

"I Was A Great Admirer Of [Mort Meskin's] Work"
JA: Tell me about working for Simon & Kirby.
STARR: Nice guys; I liked them. I worked for them for some time,

off and on [NOTE: From 1949-53. —Jim].

JA: You drew crime and romance stories. Black Magic was one of the books you had work in. When you went to work for them, who hired you?

STARR: I don't know how I started for them. I guess I got there when some other company was holding inventory. But that was kind of interesting, because Mort Meskin was working there, and I was a great admirer of his work. I was very, very impressed to see him there, and very flattered that he knew my work. "Oh, yeah," he said, "You do very nice work, but let me give you a little pointer." I said, "Sure." He said, "Make sure you get a room at the sunny side of the hospital." [mutual chuckling] He was commuting to some sort of mental institution.

JA: I know he'd had some nervous breakdowns.

STARR: Yes, and what a shame it was. When I was going to Pratt—I guess this would be like '43 or something—I went up to DC with a bunch of samples, and the editors were out to lunch. On Mort's drawing board was a whole sheet full of sketches of The Vigilante. These were all over the place, and I thought, "Nope, I'm not ready yet." [mutual laughter] Really! I took my stuff and left. So you can imagine what meeting Mort meant, and how sad I was that he was having these mental problems.

We did meet, later on when [artist] Johnny Prentice and I had a better studio, and Mort asked if he could work there. "You sure can!" Oh, it was painful, watching him. He would try various ways to draw a page. He would work with charcoal, so he didn't have to erase. He'd brush it off after he did the inking. You can imagine how sloppy that was. Or he would pencil with a brush with pale blue for the same sort of reason. Some guys worked with blue pencil, and that was okay because it wouldn't photograph when printed. He would draw something and it would look terrific, and he'd erase the whole thing. It was just awful. Johnny and I were just crazy about him, but we just didn't know how to help him.

Mort was always very sweet. There was a niceness about him, and he would converse, but he would be so absorbed in trying to get something down. He just couldn't bring anything to fruition.

JA: What was holding him back?

STARR: [pauses] Let's see, how can I explain it? It had to do with



Just The Real Facts, Ma'am!

Artist Mort Meskin was seen on p. 17. Here are his cover and splash page for *Real Fact Comics* #10 (Sept.-Oct. 1947), which reputed to reveal the skinny behind the brand new *Vigilante* movie serial. The comic script is credited to three DC editors: Jack Schiff, Mort Weisinger, and Bernie Breslauer. Apparently, Columbia Pictures went ga-ga for any feature that appeared in *Action Comics*, since in 1948 it released *Superman* (starring Kirk Alyn) and *Congo Bill*, then *Atom Man vs. Superman* in 1950. Must've been a package deal, with the Man of Steel as the main prize. Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert for the splash. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

visualization and making his point, or maybe making it as quickly as he used to, because those figures on his drawing board couldn't have taken him more than 20 minutes, and they were probably doodles, and just so sensational. You look at his early "Vigilante" stuff—it's just terrific. He's one of the guys who comes stomping out of his mother's womb, holding a pencil. [Jim laughs] No kidding, there are those guys. Alex Toth was another one, and a third one was Bob Lubbers, although he got sort of careless at times. But the speed of that guy [Meskin] was just phenomenal.

JA: I interviewed his sons a few years back [Alter Ego #24], so I'm familiar with some of Mort's problems. Like he had that terrible stutter, for instance.

STARR: Not when I knew him.

JA: Did he seem meek and mild?

STARR: Yes. He was always like a supplicant. He was apologetic—"Oh, gee, I'm sorry, fellas." He would come in and he'd have to leave. He'd feel like he was disturbing us... it was very painful. We'd tell Mort, "You can't do anything wrong. Everything you do is great and everything you do is great with us." He lost his confidence, and I wonder how he could have. It wasn't that we were doing such great stuff, either. [mutual laughter]

JA: How much about his emotional problems were you aware of? You obviously knew he was in a sanitarium.

STARR: We knew that, but we didn't know how profound his problems were. We could see that it was crippling, and it was very

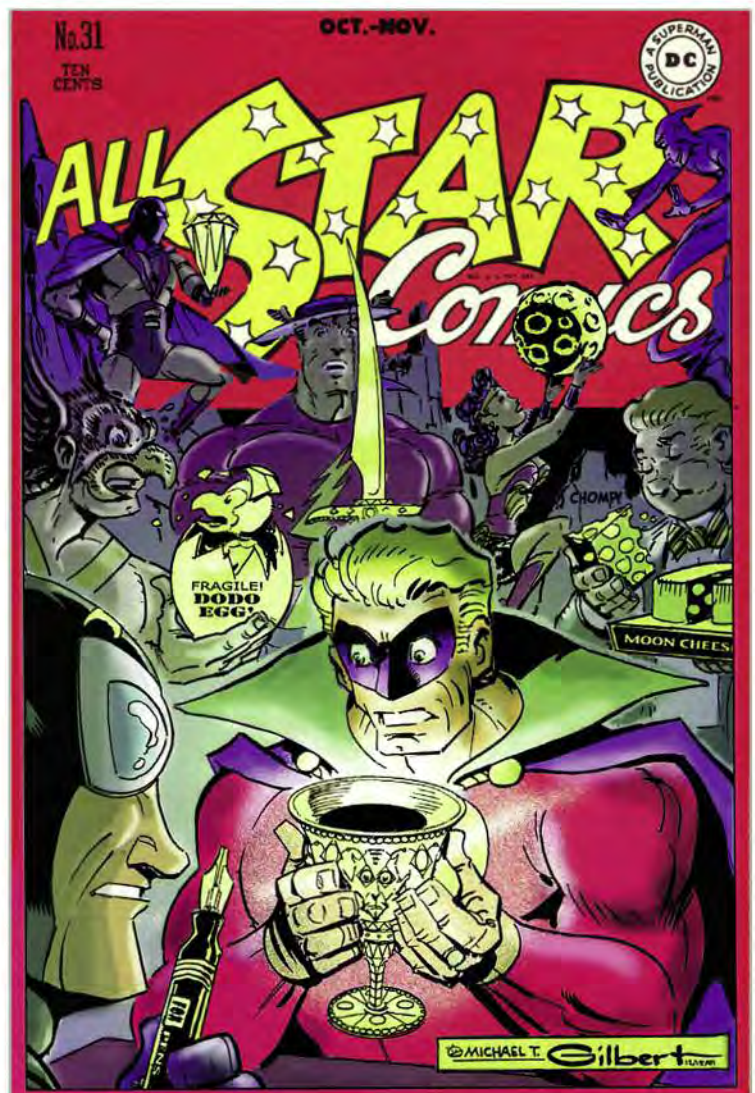
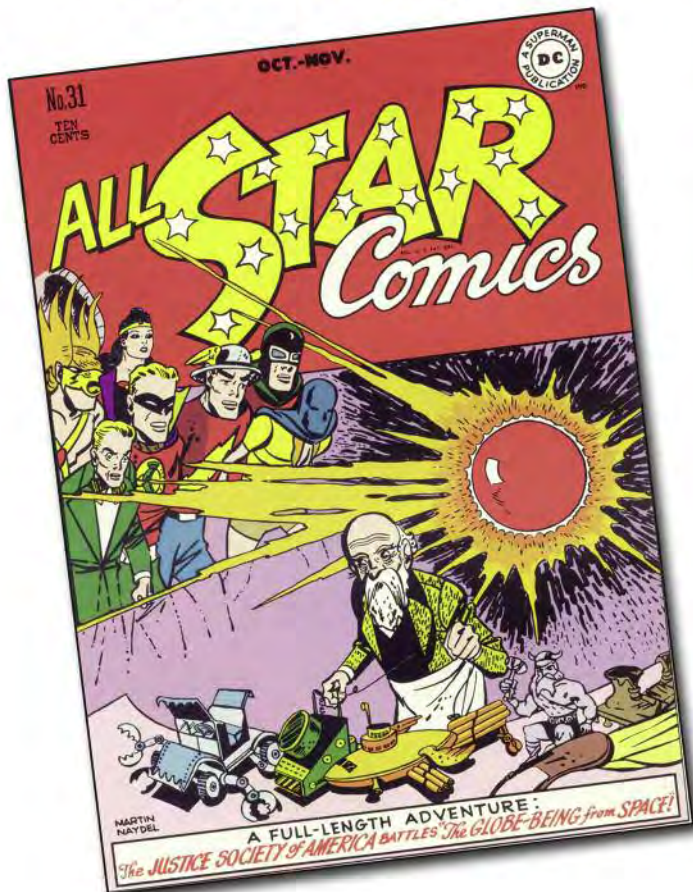


HEY KIDS! MR. MONSTER HERE!

LAST ISSUE WE PRINTED SOME PHONY EARLY-'40S MARVEL COVERS DRAWN BY MY BOSS, MICHAEL T!

THIS ISSUE WE'LL HOP INTO OUR GOLDEN AGE WAY-BACK MACHINE TO VISIT DC-LAND! SO BUCKLE UP AND GET READY FOR SOME...

Twice-Told DC Covers!



Where's The Hen's Teeth?

(Left:) Martin Naydel's original cover to *All-Star Comics* #31 (Oct. 1946). (Above:) Michael T. Gilbert's re-do, from *Alter Ego* #14—actually illustrating the “lost” *All-Star* #31, “The Will of William Wilson.” The original *All-Star* logo has been added for this printing. [©2012 DC Comics.]

Twice-Told DC Covers!

by Michael T. Gilbert

Last issue I shared some of my Twice-Told Timely covers, illustrated in the style of the early-'40s Marvel Comics. Since we at *Alter Ego* never play favorites, here's a second Gilbert Golden Age Art Gallery—of imaginary DC covers!

My first faux Golden Age cover (which featured Mr. Monster and the Justice Society) appeared in *A/E* v2 #4 (Spring 1999), back when *Alter Ego* was still a backup feature in Jon B. Cooke's *Comic Book Artist*. That cover, a take-off on Mike Sekowsky's *Justice League of America* #29 cover, was a simple cut-and-paste job.

My first original illustrated cover was for "The Will of William Wilson," an unpublished Golden Age Justice Society of America script that was discussed in *Alter Ego* #14 (April 2002).

Since then, a number of art collectors have asked me to create Golden Age covers for them, many starring the Justice Society. That was the case when one loyal JSA fan wanted me to re-imagine Frank Harry's classic *All-Star* #18 cover.

Buggin'!

(Below & top right:) Frank Harry's cover for *All-Star Comics* #18 (Fall 1943), and the 2011 Gilbert version! Thanks to Greg McKee. [© 2012 DC Comics.]



Altered Ego!

(Right:) The cover of *A/E* v2 #4 (Spring 1999), the flip cover of *Comic Book Artist* #4, featured a Gilbert/ Mr. Monster illo juxtaposed with Al Dellings' re-creation of the Mike Sekowsky/ Murphy Anderson cover for *Justice League of America* #29 (Aug. 1964) — which itself had been a re-do of sorts of *All-Star Comics* #8 (Dec. 1941-Jan. 1942). Talk about degrees of separation! [Mr. Monster™ & © 2012 Michael T. Gilbert; JSA art ©2012 DC Comics.]





Fandom Reunion 2011: The Golden Age of Fanzines Panel

From The 50th-Anniversary of Fandom Celebration
At Comic-Con International 2011, San Diego—Part 2



Eight Is (More Than) Enough

Seven prominent early fanzine editors—and the spouse of an eighth. (Left to right:) Bill Schelly (*Sense of Wonder*), Jean Bails and Roy Thomas (*Alter-Ego*), Richard Kyle (*Graphic Story World*), Paul Levitz (*The Comic Reader*), Pat and Dick Lupoff (*Xero*), and Maggie Thompson (*Comic Art*). Photo by Jeff Gelb.

Introduction

Last issue, we presented Part 1 of the lively discussion of the early-1960s fanzines *Xero*, *Alter-Ego*, *Comic Art*, *The Comic Reader*, and *Graphic Story World* by their editors and publishers Richard and Pat Lupoff, Roy Thomas and Jean Bails (Jerry's widow), Maggie Thompson, Paul Levitz, and Richard Kyle—a truly historical aggregation of legendary comics fans together on one panel, of an hour and a half's duration. This time, we're pleased to offer the rest of that panel discussion, which was held on July 22, 2011, as transcribed by Brian K. Morris.

—Bill Schelly.

BILL SCHELLY: Let's talk about the feature of your fanzine that most exemplified it. What do you think was the thing about *Alter-Ego* that was most central to its appeal or its mission?

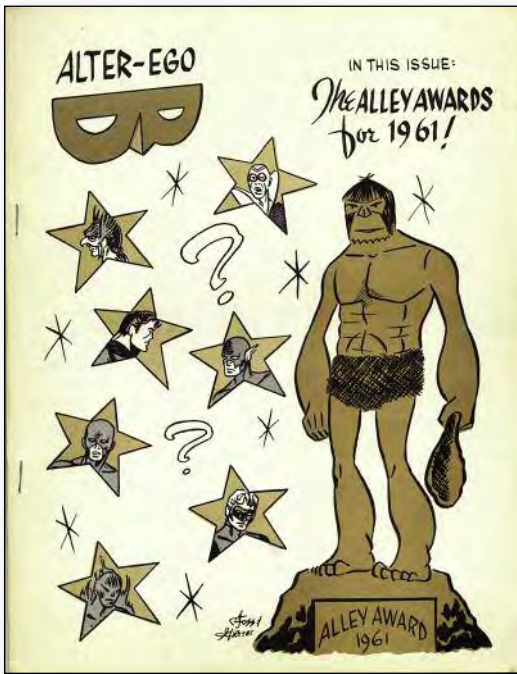
ROY THOMAS: I think the thing that was of the most interest was the articles about old comic books. [The comics publishers] weren't reprinting many of them then—maybe a couple of "Batmans" or "Supermans." This started with Dick Lupoff's "The Big Red Cheese," and then the others as they came out. Don Thompson had written his article on Timely Comics which had its title the phrase "OK Axis, Here We Come!" I think that I borrowed that for somewhere later on. [audience chuckles] The great thing for me was the idea of covering a whole comic company, however it was done,

whether it was Richard Kyle's Fox analysis, or just recounting the stories with a certain amount of cleverness like Dick, or Jim Harmon on the Justice Society, Ted White, people like that, just doing a nice job of that.

That was the sort of thing I was interested in. When I started off, okay, I drew the "Bestest League" and I wrote a "Spectre" thing, but what I was really interested in were the articles about the old comics. I was interested in the Justice Society, so I decided to write an article about [Timely's] All Winners Squad, but all I had was one of the two comics, and it was missing the last two pages of one chapter. I had to sort of say, "Well, I don't know how Sub-Mariner got rid of the tidal wave." And Jerry, typing it, spelled it "tital wave." [audience chuckles] It took me like five or ten years before I got a copy of that book. So that was the thing that I liked the most about the articles.

We were always trying to get up to the standards of the articles that were in *Comic Art* and *Xero*. When I took over as editor and publisher with #7, I wrote the article "One Man's Family," taking the title from an old radio show. I couldn't do a piece just about Captain Marvel, because Dick Lupoff had done that. So I said, I'll write about the family and cover the whole group, and that was my approach. I drove over to visit Biljo White in Columbia, Missouri, who had this little block house with complete runs of *Batman*, *Superman*, *Captain Marvel*, all that stuff. I made a lot of

NOTE: This is the fourth installment of our extended, multi-issue coverage of the "50th Anniversary of Comics Fandom" events at Comic-Con International 2011 (San Diego).



Jerry's Last Alter-Ego—And Roy's First Alter Ego

(Left:) The first photo-offset issue of *Alter-Ego* (#4, 1962), edited by Jerry Bails as had been #1-3, featured a cover by Richard "Grass" Green and Ronn Foss, and rare gold ink. Jean Bails, seen in the preceding photo, joined the panel to represent Jerry, who passed away in 2006. For closeups of her and/or Roy, afraid you'll have to look back at our previous issue. [Hawkman, Superman, Flash, Atom, Green Lantern TM & © 2012 DC Comics; The Fly TM & © 2012 Estate of Joe Simon; Human Torch TM & © 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.; Alley Oop TM & © 2012 UFB, Inc.]

(Right:) Roy Thomas' article about Fawcett's Marvel Family, accompanied by illustrations by Biljo White—including acknowledged swipes from the great C.C. Beck—was cover-featured on RT's first issue (#7, Fall 1964) as publisher/editor of the now-unhyphenated *Alter Ego*. [Shazam heroes & Black Adam TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

notes on mostly the *Marvel Family* comics and so forth, and wrote the article. Nowadays, you read these articles and they don't amount to that much, because, you know, you could go and read the comic or the many reprints. But at that time, that was kind of the essence: let people know what was actually in these comics.

The one thing we didn't have nearly enough of, but that Jerry wanted from the very beginning, I know, was to cover the professionals. At the very beginning, during that meeting with Julie Schwartz in February of '61 when Jerry was visiting DC, one of the first things he was doing was trying to press Bill Finger, who I guess he ran into there, to write.... He got a promise of an autobiography—which of course Bill never delivered, as he used to not deliver many things that he was going to do. But the idea was to try to give some credit to these anonymous people working behind the scenes and to get people to know who Gardner Fox was and who Bill Finger was and so forth. Those were the things that we were always wanting to stress.

By the way, if you want to read about *Xero*, Bill Schelly and I put together a whole 30- or 40-page section about it in *Alter Ego* #18. I want to get a couple of pennies out of this so I'm not just hopelessly shilling. I'm proud to say that we reprinted both postcards from Art Castillo [that Dick Lupoff mentioned earlier], because I, too, thought that those two postcards—first one, and then after [Dick and Pat] printed it in the magazine, I guess he got upset because you weren't taking him seriously, so he sent in another one, [audience chuckles] which says a whole world is fomenting and so forth, and "You people sit on your ass and discuss comic books!" [audience laughs] I just thought that was the funniest thing.

BS: Well, you know Jerry's life mission ended up being about giving recognition to the creators of comics with his Who's Who, and so it's obvious that was very high-priority, even from the beginning. Now, Richard, when you did *Graphic Story World*, the first issue had a manifesto about the coming of the graphic novel and the graphic story. Was that your mission with *Graphic Story World* and *Wonderworld*?

KYLE: You know, I really don't have a very clear idea of why I became so intensely interested in comics, but apparently, it was the times. Maggie talked about it being "comics time," and I was part of comics time. And the comics didn't grow up the way I had. You know, I was twelve years old and I was a natural comic book reader. Then I became thirteen and they were suspicious of me in the publishing houses, and by the time I was fifteen or sixteen, I was a nut. [audience chuckles] They didn't want me buying their magazines. You know, only an idiot would read this stuff if you were grown up.

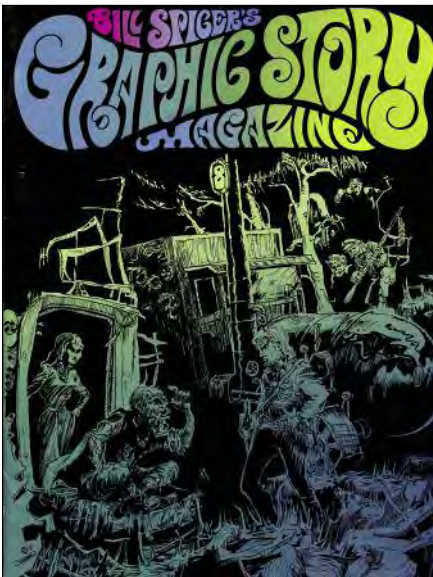
My argument was that, if you do a magazine for five-year-olds, you get five-year-old readers. And if you do a magazine for 82-year-olds—I'm 82—you may get an 82-year-old

reader. Comic book people didn't recognize ordinary economic fact. That maddened me. [chuckles] They simply wouldn't do something that any other ordinary business would normally do. If you go out and sell a car that's one design that sells real well, well, then, you design another one also and see how it sells. But the comic book industry never did it. They were the single most blind industry in a supposedly capitalistic society that I could imagine. I was convinced that, "Come on, you can do stuff for me. You can do stuff for people my age." And I kind of overdid it in my fanzine articles and so on. Reading some of that stuff now is a little embarrassing. [audience chuckles] But I thought that way at the time. I was being sincere, even if I didn't express it all that well.

BS: And you were right. [audience chuckles] Paul, what was the mission of *The Comic Reader*? Tell us about that, please.

LEVITZ: I think *The Comic Reader*, from its beginnings, had been news-focused, news and gossip. At first it had very little information about what was going on in the business. I think Mark Hanerfeld, during his tenure [NOTE: 1968 —Bill.], was the first editor to manage to talk one of the comic book companies into announcing the release dates of upcoming issues in the fanzines. He got that out of DC; I don't think he was able to get any of that out of Marvel at that time.

Over the three years that I did the fanzine, we managed to get to the point where, thanks to Roy and some of the other former fans who were working at Marvel, Nelson Bridwell, and some of the other former fans, Marv Wolfman, Mark Hanerfeld, who were around DC; we had pretty much the full release schedule for everybody who was publishing comics, at least of the comics that as a 14-, 15-, 16-year-old kid, I thought, counted, a fairly narrow



definition at that stage. Some stuff on the Gold Key material and the Western material, but I was fairly ignorant of Carl Barks' work and the importance of it in those years because I'd "outgrown" all that stuff: "It's not as serious."

Probably 90% of the people working in comics lived within about 30 or 40 miles of New York City, a very small group of people in America, maybe 200 people perhaps. The publishers were still just beginning to recover from what Richard mentioned about the blandization of the Comics Code. But it was more than the blandization, it was also the trauma; the publishers didn't, in most cases, credit the writers and artists.

Marvel was ahead of the pack at that time. Stan had started the idea of branding the books more regularly, picked up on some stuff that EC had done before but took it up to the next natural



The Monthly Reader

(Above:) Panelist Paul Levitz, shown here in a photo from the Fandom Reunion Party on Saturday night, with the late, much-missed Richard Alf in the background. Photo by Aaron Caplan.

(Right:) Two superlative covers from Levitz's tenure as publisher of *The Comic Reader*: #91 (Nov. 1972), drawn by Don Rosa, and #99 (July 1973), featuring a Walt Simonson Manhunter. A tip of the CFA helmet to stalwart Aaron Caplan for providing these scans, as well. [Demon & Manhunter TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]



Let's Get Graphic!

(Above:) Richard Kyle, the man who in 1964 coined the terms "graphic novel" and "graphic story" and later ran the bookstores *Wonderworld* and *Richard Kyle Books* in Long Beach for many years. Photo by Aaron Caplan.

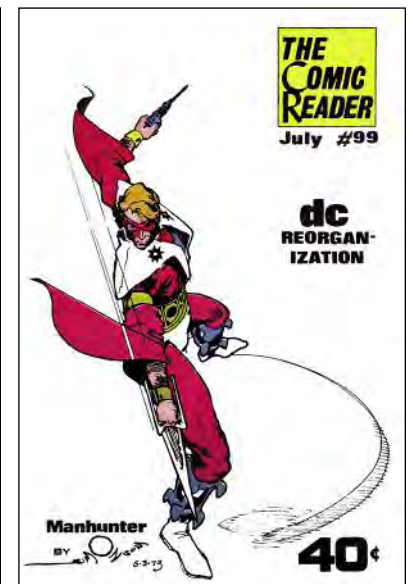
(Left:) Kyle's "Graphic Story Review" column ran in Bill Spicer's *Graphic Story Magazine*. Depicted is George Metzger's cover to issue #8 (Fall 1967), showing the influence of psychedelic art in its logo and coloring. [Art © 2012 George Metzger.]

(Right:) *Wonderworld* #10 (Nov. 1973). Editor/publisher Kyle changed the name of his *Graphic Story World* to be shorter, snappier, and perhaps more inclusive. Watch for Bill Schelly's upcoming Comic Fandom Archive interview with Richard, slated for publication soon after our extended coverage of the Comic-Con International 2011 festivities. [Jon Fury TM & © 2012 Estate of Alex Toth.]



level. DC didn't have credits on probably 2/3 of the line, Western had them on almost nothing. They didn't even tell people when their work was coming out or give them copies. The editors at DC, for example, would get 15 copies of each new issue, even of an anthology comic that might perhaps have eight or nine creators, and usually didn't even bother mailing any to the creators because the assumption was, why the hell would you actually want a file copy of something you'd written for a comic book? You're embarrassed by it anyway. [audience chuckles]

And *The Comic Reader* became the first place where even the creators in the business knew where their work was coming out so they could go run over to Ed Summer's *Supersnipe*, one of the first comic shops in New York, and reserve copies of their own books. The rank-and-file fan could find out what was coming out [in *TCR*] because it was still somewhat random. For most of the people, there was just no information in fandom about the present. Until



P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

Fawcett Publications of America

#170
July 2012



Art by Colleen Coover
[colleencoover.net]
Shazam heroine™ & © 2012 DC Comics.

COOVER

Mary Marvel: 70 Years Young!

Quotations & Comments To Commemorate The Shazam Girl's 70th Birthday

Edited by Paul Hamerlinck

The Birth Of Mary Marvel

Whey, Marc, there is a new lead character in the works. She'll be the twin sister of Billy Batson and, upon speaking the magic word, will become a member of the Marvel Family. She'll remain the same age, however. We want you to give us some quick sketches of her as herself and as Mary Marvel."

Who said that to me? I've been thinking that it was Rod Reed. But Rod says it was Eddie Herron.

Whoever, I laid aside the "Captain Marvel" story I was working on in the Captain Marvel production line and whipped up some sketches as requested. There was only one character to create, inasmuch as she was to remain the same with only a costume change.

I didn't work up a variety of poses and expressions, as I was certain that my first drawings were going to come back, time and time again for revisions before final approval "upstairs."

"Holy Moley," as Billy would have said, the drawings were accepted without a single change or even any suggestions! I was given the script for the first Mary Marvel story and went to work on it. It was the story in which Billy Batson meets the twin sister he didn't know he had and where, when she innocently says the word "Shazam," Mary Bromfield becomes Mary Marvel for the first time.

I did the art for the first two "Mary Marvel" stories but was then told that the "Captain Marvel" stories were too important for me to leave the team working on Fawcett's top character. I did the covers featuring Mary Marvel on *Captain Marvel Adventure* #19 and on *Wow Comics* #9 and 10 (1943) and possibly others. Then I was called into the armed forces and had other things to worry about for a long time.

—Marc Swayze
(1981)



Marc's Amazingly Mod Mary

The first Mary Marvel designs had come from the drawing table of Marc Swayze, who also illustrated her earliest cover appearances and Otto Binder-written adventures. Rod Reed, Fawcett Publications' executive comics editor at the time of Mary's creation, noted in his 1974 *FCA* interview that he still found the Shazam Girl's original attire "amazingly mod" and recalled that Swayze hoped to draw the entire Mary series himself; but Reed added that "it was my distasteful job to convince him that he couldn't be spared from the Captain Marvel team." Consequently, the assignment was doled out to the Jack Binder shop.

At far left is a Swayze-drawn Mary Marvel sketch from the past decade, recently colored by frequent *FCA* cover contributor Mark Lewis... at left, a mid-'50s snapshot of Marc taken shortly before his departure from the comics industry... and below, selected panels from Mary Marvel's origin in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Dec. 1942) by Otto Binder and Marc Swayze. [Shazam heroine TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]



Selena's Grace

Selena represents the first letter in Mary's "Shazam," right? Well ... the original was Sappho. I killed her. I was not then enlightened about the healthful effects of homosexuality and lesbianism. In a small way, I was the Anita Bryant of my time. But I said ol' Sappho must go, and that's how Selena got in. Roger Fawcett may never have forgiven me for our loss of circulation among dykes. —Rod Reed (1981)

My Pride And Joy

We wanted the "Mary Marvel" feature distinctive from the other two [Marvels] ... less heroics and more human interest. Mary was my pride and joy, an idea which originated from "upstairs" ... I suppose [my brother] Jack [Binder] and I had disagreements at

times regarding Mary Marvel, but none that I can recall, so they couldn't have been too important. —Otto Binder (1974)

Minerva's Wisdom

"Old comics? Some were good, some weren't." —Jack Binder (1980)

Busting Out

Perhaps Mary's mature change had something to do with her new editor. For a long time, "Mary Marvel" was edited by Mercy Shull, who could have fitted easily into a 32A bra. When Mercy left ... she was replaced by Kay Woods who would barely have fit into a 38C cup, and consequently, Mary's shape began to blossom. —Will Lieberson (1975)



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Otto Binder wrote 69 of the 98 "Mary Marvel" stories. The entire saga of the World's Mightiest Girl is available in the new hardcover edition, "The World's Mightiest Girl: The Complete Shazam! Series." Otto's older brother, Jack, was already in Austria in 1902 Jack came to the U.S. to study at the Chicago's Art Institute, he relocated to New York, where he developed a friendship with Harry Chesler and started his own comic packaging "shops." Binder also worked for Lev Gleason. By late 1941, having gained years of "shop" experience, Binder decided to become a freelancer and set up his own headquarters in Englewood, NJ. His "shop"—a renovated barn next to his house—produced work primarily for Fawcett Publications, with over 40 artists under his supervision. The Binder shop closed its doors in 1945, and Jack relocated to upstate New York, where he continued to work as a freelancer, principally for Fawcett Publications, and continued on as the main "Mary Marvel" artist, generally working in unison with brother Otto.

At top is a previously-printed photo of a party from 1942 at Jack Binder's home in Englewood, with several of Jack's "shop" employees in attendance, many of whom had a hand in producing the earliest adventures: (Left to right, back:) Samuel Hamilton Brooks; Dick Ryland; Binder's sister-in-law; Binder's nephew, Otto Binder. (L. to r., center:) Ken Bald; Bob Boyajian; Bob Butts; Vic Dowd; Jack Binder. (L. to r., front:) Al Duca; Kurt Schaffenberger (who went on to draw "Marvel Family" stories for both Fawcett and DC); and John Westlake. Photo provided by the late Nat Champlin, who worked in Binder's shop from 1941-42. Also shown are Jack's cover for *Mary Marvel* #2 (June 1946) and the artist's preliminary sketch for same (scan by James Van Hise). Photo courtesy of its new owner, Shaun Clancy. [Shazam heroine TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

...er 50% of the ... Family. ... den Age. Born ... er attending ... veloped a ... line-styled ... redevil in 1940