

ROY THOMAS' NOT-SO-INNOCENT  
COMICS FANTAZINE

# Alter Ego™



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**SEDUCING THE INNOCENT with  
DR. FREDRIC  
WERTHAM!**  
by Carol L. Tilley



ALSO: MORE OF AMY K. NYBERG'S  
**HISTORY OF  
THE COMICS  
CODE!**



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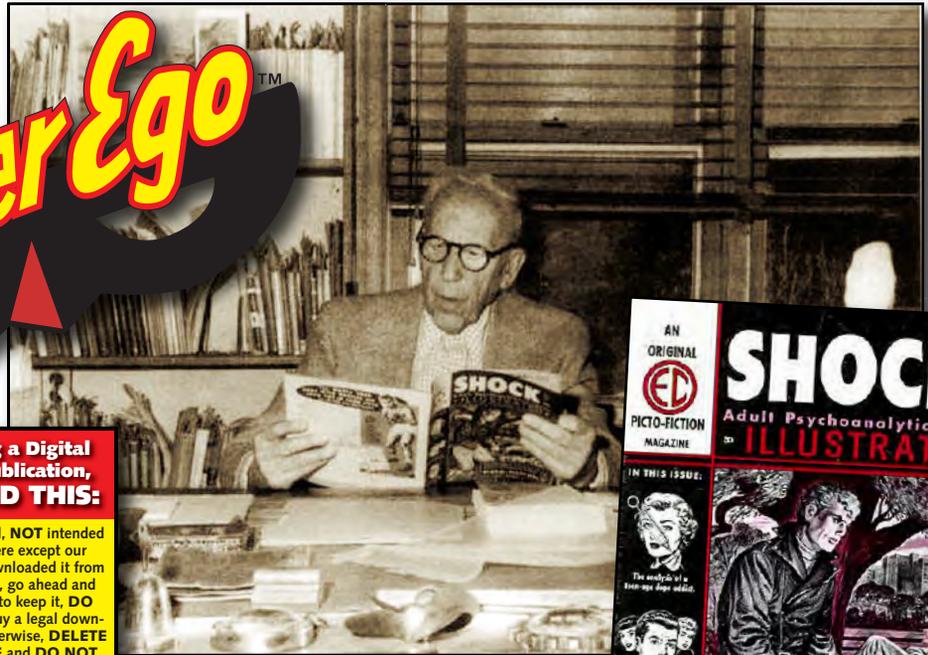
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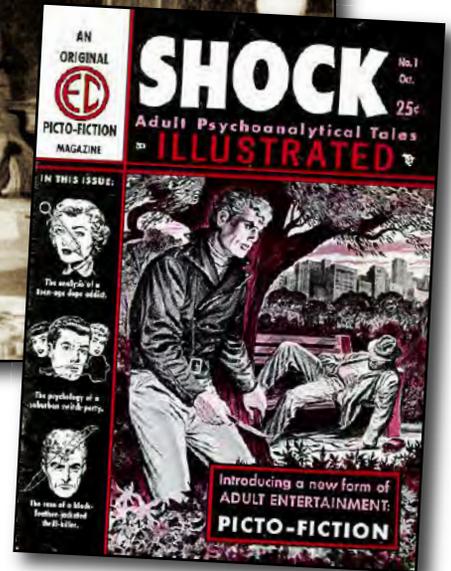
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**On Our Cover:** For the second issue in a row, artists **Jason Paulos and Daniel James Cox** knocked themselves out, coming up with several different designs for our first (and perhaps last) cover ever to spotlight Dr. Fredric Wertham, "the scourge of comic books," before they settled on this superlative rendition. For earlier potential versions of this cover, see p. 25. [Superman, Batman, Robin, & Wonder Woman TM & © DC Comics; other art © 2014 Jason Paulos & Daniel James Cox.]

**Above:** Just this once, we're putting a photo as well as an illustration atop our contents page—an oft-reproduced pic of **Dr. Fredric Wertham** perusing an issue of EC's black-&-white semi-comics magazine *Shock Illustrated* #1 (Oct.-Nov. 1955); cover by **Jack Kamen**. This was **Bill Gaines'** short-lived, non-Code successor to its color comic *Shock SuspenStories*, crossed with Psychoanalysis. Any bets as to what the Doc thought of it? [*Shock Illustrated* cover © William M. Gaines Agent, Inc.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**Bhub Stewart**



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FIRST PRINTING.

# SEDUCING THE INNOCENT

**Fredric Wertham**  
*and the falsifications  
that helped condemn comics*

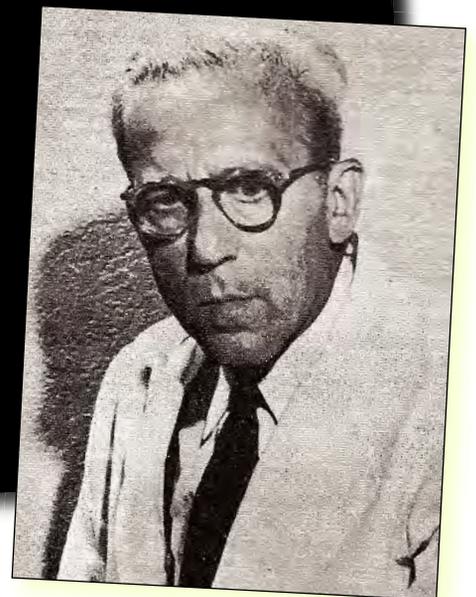
**by Carol L. Tilley**



#### And In This Corner...

(Left:) Author Carol L. Tilley posing with vintage comic books at a recent exposition—and (on right) Dr. Fredric Wertham, the subject of her researches. Photo of Tilley by L. Brian Stauffer; photo of Wertham from Alan Light's *All-Dynamic* #4, (circa 1970), provided by Doug Martin.

[First published as the article "Seducing the Innocent: Fredric Wertham and the Falsifications That Helped Condemn Comics," by Carol L. Tilley, in *Information & Culture*, Volume 47, Issue 4, pp. 383-413. Copyright © 2012 by the University of Texas Press. All rights reserved.]



# A/E

**EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:** Our cup runneth over! Just after we had finally arranged to serialize a reprinting of Amy Kiste Nyberg's book *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code* (see p. 30), we were suddenly made aware—first by longtime fan John Benson, but soon afterward by various other folks—of a brand new article that had made quite a splash in the scholarly magazine *Information & Culture* (see more precise information on the previous page). Written by Carol L. Tilley, assistant professor at the University of Illinois' Graduate School of Library and Information Science, it postulated that Dr. Fredric Wertham, the scientist who led the attack against comic books in the late 1940s and early 1950s, had—in the words of David Itzoff of *The New York Times*—“misrepresented his research and falsified his results.”

Carol Tilley, as she will detail below (and again quoting from the *Times*' description), “reviewed Wertham's papers, housed in the Library

of Congress, starting at the end of 2010, shortly after they were made available to the public.” I contacted Ms. Tilley, who acted as liaison between myself and the very helpful Rebecca Frazier-Smith, Journals Rights & Permissions Editor of University of Texas Press, Journals Division, the publisher of *Information & Culture*, to arrange for Alter Ego to present the article to an audience that otherwise might not have had a chance to read it.

We have naturally made no changes of any substance in the text of the piece, keeping such spellings as “superhero,” etc. The captions which accompany the artwork and photos added for this reprinting, which are scribed by Ye Editor in A/E's usual style, are naturally not to be considered as necessarily the opinion of Carol Tilley or her publishers. In the journal, footnote numbers were given in parentheses rather than as tiny raised digits. Thanks to Brian K. Morris for retyping the article onto a Word document for Ye Ed.

## Abstract

**P**sychoanalyst Fredric Wertham and his 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent* serve as historical and cultural touchstones of the anticomics movement in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Although there have been persistent concerns about the clinical evidence Wertham used as the basis for *Seduction*, his sources were made widely available only in 2010. This article documents specific examples of how Wertham manipulated, overstated, compromised, and fabricated evidence—especially that evidence he attributed to personal clinical research with young people—for rhetorical gain.

Books do not have their impact upon the mass mind but upon the minds of those who mould the mass mind—upon leaders of thought and formulators of public opinion. The impact of a book may last six months or several decades. Books are the most enduring propaganda of all.

—Memo from the United States Office of War Information, 1941 (1)

For anyone interested in twentieth-century print culture—especially comics and similar forms of child-selected media—Fredric Wertham and his book *Seduction of the Innocent* serve as historical and cultural touchstones. *Seduction*, a rousing call for limitations on the sale of comics to children based on the author's clinical evidence of the format's detrimental links to juvenile delin-

quency and general children's welfare, captured the American public's imagination when it was published in April 1954. Sociologist C. Wright Mills, writing in the *New York Times*, called it “a most commendable use of the professional mind in the service of the public.” Margaret Martignoni, director of children's work at the Brooklyn Public Library, writing in a letter that was excerpted for the book's advertising campaign, called *Seduction* “‘must’ reading for thoughtful parents, teachers, librarians, social workers and all other adults concerned with children's reading and with child development.” An advertisement for the book in the *New York Times* carried esteemed children's book editor May Masee's exclamation, “Thanks to you for publishing Dr. Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*. It is certainly well named... [f]rightening... [c]onvincing... overpowering.” Joy Elmer Morgan, editor of the National Education Association's *NEA Journal*, selected it as the book of the year, recommending it to parents, teachers, and librarians. Although he faulted Wertham's rhetorical strategies, child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim praised the book's “irrefutable evidence” in a review in *Library Quarterly*. Literary critic Sterling North deemed it “the most important book of the year,” and fellow intellectual Clifton Fadiman wrote privately to Wertham that he knew “the book will do a lot of good.” (2) Within six months, the book had sold more than sixteen thousand copies in the United States, a figure Wertham's literary agent believed would have been greater had the book not been discussed so extensively in various



### Praise From The Masters

(Left to right:) Some of the influential people who praised Dr. Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* upon its publication in 1954:

C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), eminent professor of sociology at Columbia College, NYC, from 1946 until his death.

May Masee (1881-1966), founding head of the juvenile books departments of Doubleday and Viking.

Joy Elmer Morgan (1889-1986), American educator and author of *Horace Mann: His Ideas and Ideals*.

Bruno Bettelheim (1903-1990), esteemed child psychologist, noted as the author of *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*.

Sterling North (1906-1974), writer, author of *Rascal* (about a pet raccoon), and one of the earliest severe critics of comic books.

Clifton Fadiman (1904-1999), author and radio/TV personality, famous from such programs as *Information, Please!*; *This Is Show Business*; and *What's My Line?*

Unfortunately, no images were available for Margaret Martignoni, the author of *The Illustrated Treasury of Children's Literature* (1955)... but we suspect there were no comic book stories included in the latter.

### Flags On The Play!

Poet Stanley Kunitz (1905-2006) lived long enough to be twice appointed Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. Wikipedia refers to him as “an outspoken critic of censorship,” but apparently he made an exception for comic books. Super-hero mags like Standard’s *America’s Best Comics*, Vol. 4, #1 (a.k.a. #10, July 1944), were considered as having “violent and Fascist elements”—but the combination of their unabashed patriotism (some would term it jingoism) and the fact that the American public had other things to worry about from 1941-45 blunted his and others’ objections. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Incidentally, the flag being held by Pyroman on the cover by Golden Age great Alex Schomburg is that of Chiang Kai-Shek’s China, at a time when the U.S., Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and China were often referred to as the “Big Four” powers; thanks to Jean-Marc Lofficier for that ID.

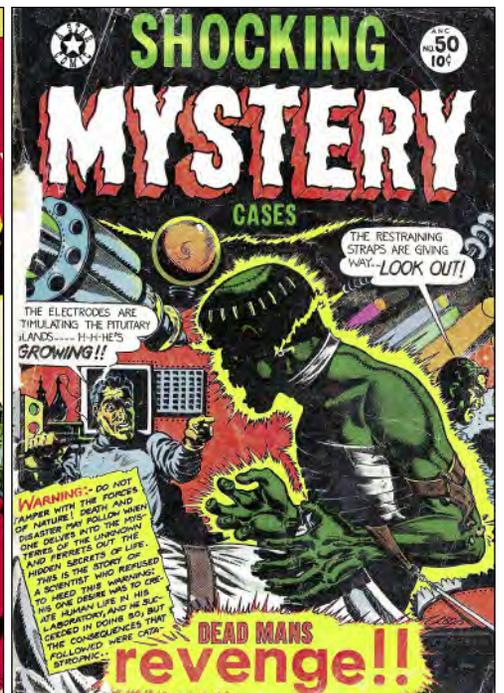
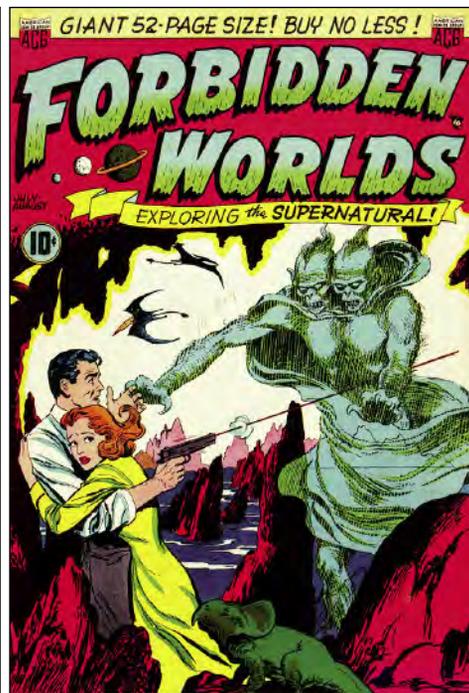
forums, including televised hearings of the United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. (3)

After the conclusion of World War II, widespread public concern arose about the changing landscape of comics publishing. In the early 1940s, superhero titles dominated comics publishing. Some literary and cultural critics such as Sterling North and Stanley Kunitz objected to superhero themes because of their perceived violent and Fascist elements, but as many superheroes contributed to the war effort through their story lines, and because most adult Americans were preoccupied with the ongoing conflict, these objections never attained a critical mass. Superhero titles continued to be published following the end of the war, but publishers introduced new genres such as romance, jungle, horror, and true crime, which flourished. In part, publishers intended these new genres to capture the reading interests of more mature readers, especially veterans and other young adults who grew up on superhero comics but now wanted more substantive reading matter. That publishers intended these newer genres for a nonchild audience failed to keep young readers from devouring titles with deliciously provocative titles such as *Untamed Love*, *Forbidden Worlds*, and *Shocking Mystery*. One consequence of this young readership was that, throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, cities and other municipalities promulgated legislation that attempted to restrict



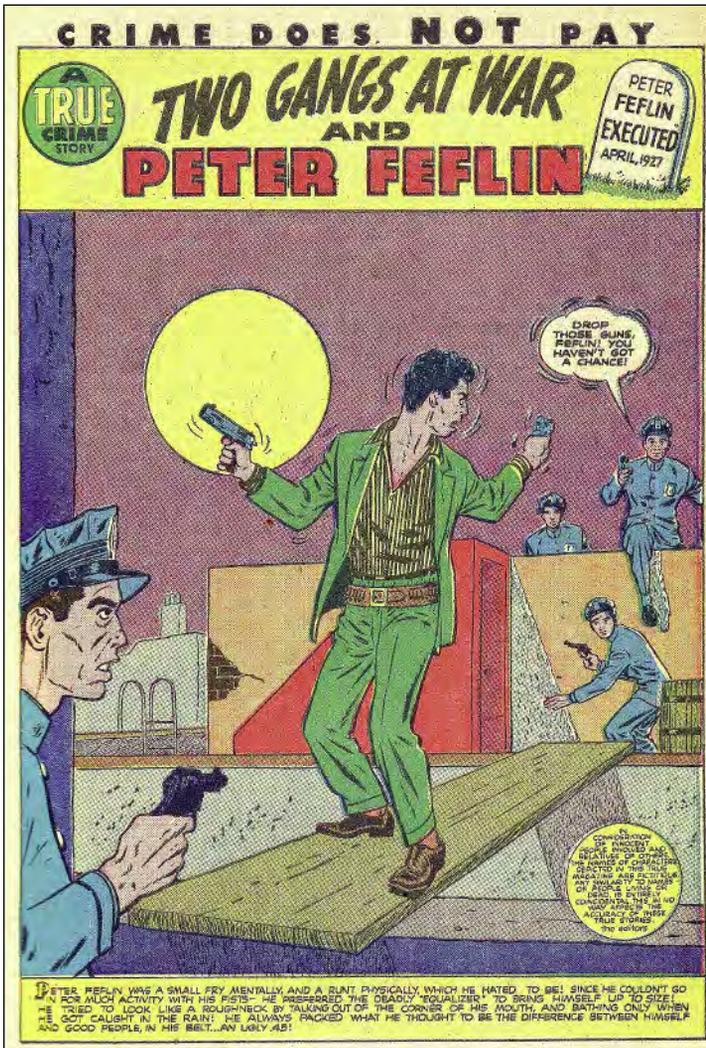
the sale of certain comics to adults only, while a variety of civic, professional, and similar organizations such as the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the American Legion, and the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges articulated their concerns about the purported deleterious effects that comics had on younger readers.

Wertham’s book and his earlier anticomics work were part of this landscape of concern. So although Wertham’s anticomics work was not the only factor that led to the 1954 creation of the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) and its restrictive



### Untamed, Forbidden, & Shocking!

The early-1950s comics that Carol Tilley refers to as having “provocative titles” featured covers not much less so... as witness the photo cover—and cover copy!—of Quality’s *Untamed Love* #3 (May 1950), ACG’s Ken Bald art for *Forbidden Worlds* #1 (July-Aug. 1951), and Star’s *Shocking Mystery Cases* #50 (Sept. 1952—actually the first issue), fronted by the incomparable L.B. Cole. Thanks to Bruce Mason for the latter cover. [© the respective copyright holders.]



### You May Also Like...

One 13-year-old delinquent who liked Batman and Robin also read *Crime Does Not Pay* and *Superman*. Seen here are a George Tuska splash page from *CDNP* #73 (March 1949) and the Wayne Boring/Stan Kaye cover of *Superman* #62 (Jan.-Feb. 1950), which guest-starred none other than Orson Welles, who in 1938 had "panicked a nation" (well, a number of people, anyway) with his "Invasion from Mars" radio broadcast. Thanks to Jim Amash for the former art, and to Rod Beck for the latter. [*CDNP* cover © the respective copyright holders; *Superman* cover © DC Comics.]

## The Not-So-Headless Captain Marvel, Kafka for Kiddies, and Love Comics

Richard, an eleven-year-old Caucasian boy, was brought to Lafargue by his mother, who claimed the boy had "wild imaginations" and engaged in rough play with neighborhood children. (54) In *Seduction*, Wertham painted a picture, colored with copious quotations from the boy, of a life debased by comics: he delighted in depictions of bondage, mock-threatened playmates with eye gouging and hanging, and scratched a child in the face. All of these actions, Wertham proposed, could not be explained adequately in existing books on child psychiatry or guidance; instead, comics were "a new kind of bacillus" for which psychiatrists could provide a prophylaxis. (55) In the case notes, Richard himself supported the idea that comics promote problematic behaviors: "I think something else about story and adventure comics. I think they shouldn't have them on the stands, it is bad for children. When they buy the comic books they start thinking all sorts of things, playing games. I played such games because I got them from the comic books. That's why I think children shouldn't have them." (56)

That Richard engaged in the activities Wertham described or even that he spoke many of the words Wertham attributed to him is not in dispute, but a careful comparison of his case as presented in *Seduction of the Innocent* with the archival notes demonstrates how Wertham manipulated evidence to persuade readers of the ill effects of comic book reading on children's behavior. For instance, in the book Richard says, "If I had a



[Continued from p. 11]

violent anti-men (therefore homosexual) fantasies.... Sheena and the other comic book women such as Wonder Woman are very bad ideals for them." Yet Wertham omits from *Seduction*—and seemingly from his analysis—a revealing story about Dorothy's everyday reality. In the case notes, she related an incident in which her aunt was accosted by gang members, taken to a rooftop, and robbed of less than one dollar. Wertham also declined to mention in *Seduction* that Dorothy—in addition to being habitually truant—was a runaway and a gang member, was sexually active, and had both a reading disability and low normal intelligence. On the final page of Dorothy's case notes, Wertham instead wrote: "She would be good and non-aggressive if society would let her—Comic Books are part of society." (53) Most telling of all, however, is a key fact Wertham omitted from *Seduction*: Dorothy was Dr. Mosse's patient, not his, and as she was hospitalized at Kings County Hospital, where he did not practice, he would have never spoken with or observed her.



Dr. Hilde Mosse.  
Thanks to Danny  
Fingerth.

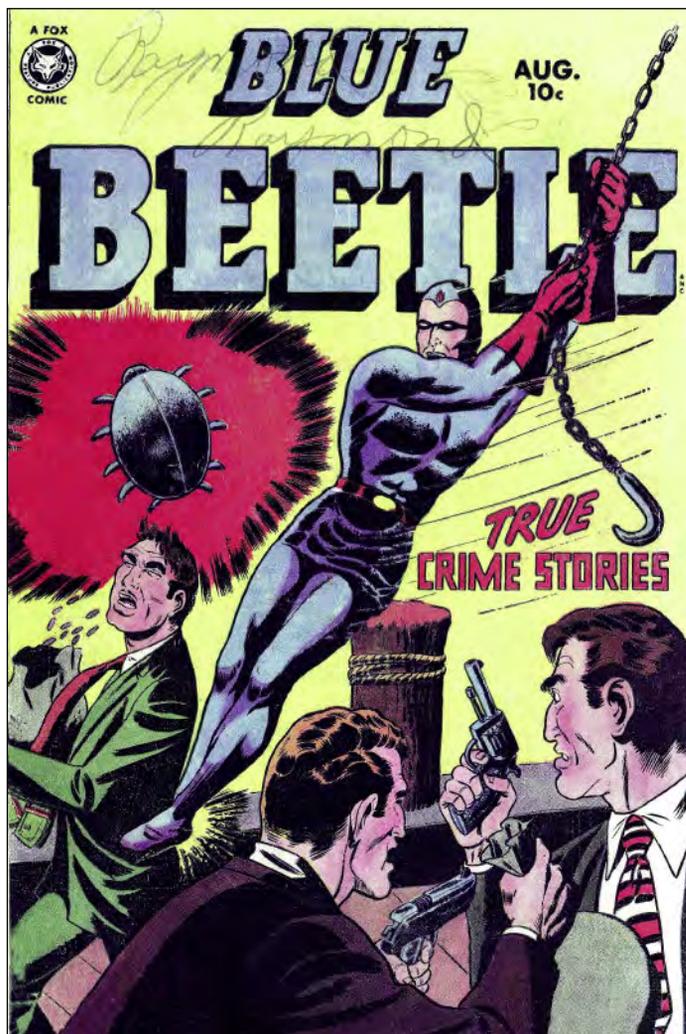
younger brother... I wouldn't want *him* to read the horror comic books like *Weird Science*, because he might get scared. I don't think they should read *Captain Marvel*. Look at this one with all the pictures of the man without his head!" In the case notes, however, Richard referred not to "horror comic books" but to "fiction comic books," and *Captain Marvel* is not mentioned until a later session. Although Richard did remark about a headless man, he indicated only a page in *Captain Marvel* #101 (October 1949); the case notes include Wertham's comments that "there are 5

pictures like this on one page." Readers of *Seduction* are free to use their own "wild imaginations" in visualizing what could be a potentially gory decapitated man. In reality, though, it is simply Captain Marvel himself; he has been splashed in the face with an invisibility potion. Finally, nowhere in *Seduction* did the psychiatrist provide the richer context for Richard that he professed to believe was key to understanding the etiology of a patient's disease. Consequently, readers are not privy to knowing that Richard's mother is actually his stepmother, that she is also a patient at Lafargue, that he has stolen from her, that he often cries,



### Losing Face

Pretty scary, huh, kids? The "headless man" referred to by one juvenile in his interview with Dr. Wertham was merely Captain Marvel with his head rendered invisible by the crook Ali Shamm. From "The Invisibility Trap," written by Otto Binder and drawn by C.C. Beck & Pete Costanza, from Fawcett Publications' *Captain Marvel Adventures* #101 (Oct. 1949). Thanks to P.C. Hamerlinck. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]

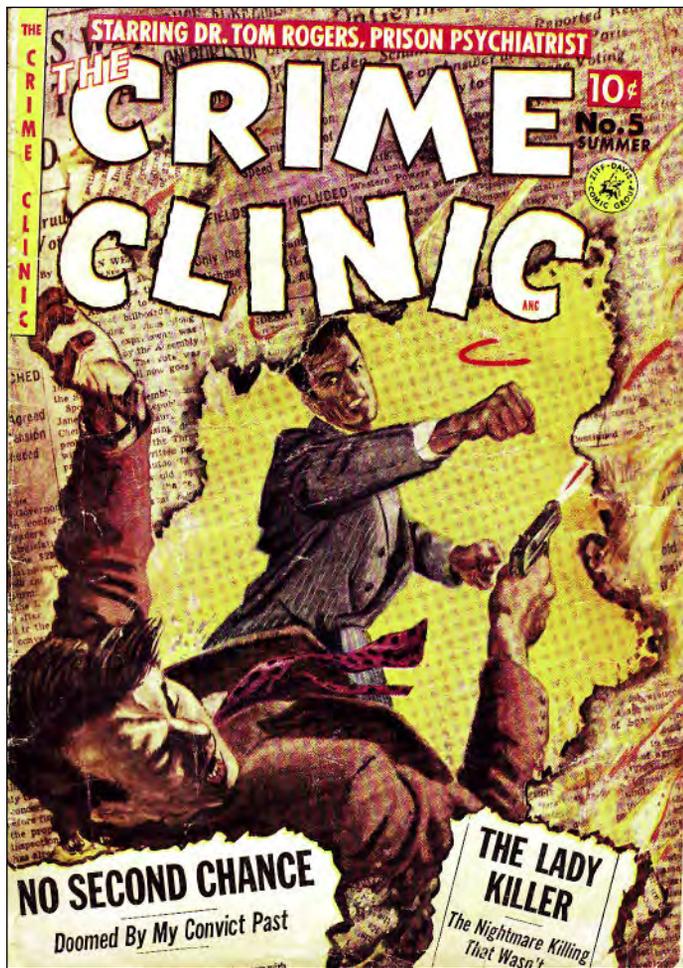


### Beetlemania

The last Golden Age issue of *Blue Beetle*, published by Fox Features, was #60 (Aug. 1950). Not a Kafkaesque "Metamorphosis" of man into bug in sight, either on the anonymous cover or inside—just a flashing insect-shaped signal—though *Blue Beetle* was indeed a crime comic and advertised itself as such. Thanks to Rod Beck. [Blue Beetle now TM DC Comics.]

that he has a scar on his cheek from a fight, or that his paternal grandmother had once attempted suicide. Although any of these issues may have been worth investigating in relation to the boy's behavior, Wertham's file for his case—at least as preserved in the archival record—demonstrates that comics were the principal focus for the therapeutic sessions, even remarking that the boy was "anxious to explain comic books." (57)

In another passage from *Seduction*, Wertham described a seven-year-old boy, Edward, who had been having nightmares induced by reading *Blue Beetle* comics. The boy described the Blue Beetle as "like Superman. He is a beetle, but he changes into Superman and afterwards he changes into a beetle again." (58) Commenting in the text, Wertham wrote, "It is not difficult to understand that a child stimulated to fantasies about violent and sadistic adventures and about a man who changes into an insect gets frightened. Kafka for the kiddies!" (59) Although Wertham described *Blue Beetle* as a "very violent crime comic book," he could not have studied it closely: the Blue Beetle is a man, not an insect. (60) Moreover, Edward neither fantasized about the Blue Beetle nor had nightmares about him. The case notes, which depart significantly from



### Clinically Speaking

Maybe Dr. Wertham (seen above right) saw himself in the vein of two-fisted prison psychiatrist Dr. Tom Rogers, the hero of Ziff-Davis' comic book *Crime Clinic*, who sometimes used, er, unorthodox methods in dealing with criminals and societal problems. The cover of issue #5 (Summer 1952) was painted by major pulp-mag artist Norman Saunders. Thanks to Rod Beck. [© the respective copyright holders.]

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Jack Greenberg, the NAACP's attorney and the person who had sought Wertham's help, recalled the psychiatrist as "temperamental and imperious, and 'everything had to be precisely as he wanted it.'" (94) Wertham's irascibility was evident in the transcript of a 1955 meeting of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics at which he repeatedly evaded requests to answer questions directly. (95)

So what of the distortions, falsifications, and misrepresentations that pervade Wertham's case against comics? The publisher's note that opened *Seduction of the Innocent* framed the book as "the result of seven years of scientific investigation" and deemed Wertham as possessing an "expert opinion... based on facts, facts that can be demonstrated and proved." (96) For much of its history and despite scattered efforts such as the experimental psychology of Wilhelm Wundt, psychiatry cannot be considered an exact science with standards of evidence that resemble other biological and medical sciences. Only since the 1950s, with the introduction of clinical drug trials, can psychiatric evidence be more widely viewed as systematic and rigorous; even then, the emphasis is on therapeutic intervention rather than on etiology. Of course, Kraepelin and others such as Meyer helped systematize psychiatric information gathering and record keeping, while other psychia-

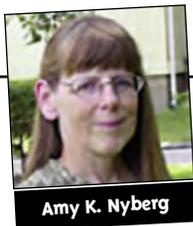


trists, including Wertham, helped establish the physiological dimensions of the field. But assembling all of the pieces of information to arrive at a fuller understanding of a patient's condition and its potential causality relied on the expertise and discretion of individual psychiatrists. (97) Even had Wertham provided others with access to his "evidence," it was still in many ways his professional prerogative to tell the stories he wanted to tell.

Yet, in light of the source evidence now available for independent verification, Wertham's book appears clearly to be an attempt at cultural correction rather than an honest report of scientific inquiry, whether from a psychiatric or a social sciences perspective—a conclusion that has long been the source of speculation. (98) Although his work contains no overt references to Frankfurt School theorists such as Theodor Adorno, Wertham's rhetoric advances a similar argument. For him, mass culture and capitalism, as embodied by the coarse world of comics, was not perhaps a triumph of Fascism over true art and culture but a real threat to a healthy society. Wertham was not a cultural conservative, but he did equate comics and comics reading with a broader social and cultural failure. (99) As he wrote in *Seduction*:

Is it possible to take a child's mind "too seriously"? Is anything to be gained by the current cheap generalization that healthy normal children are not affected by bad things and that for unhealthy abnormal children bad things do not make much difference either, because the children are bad anyhow? It is my growing conviction that this view is a wonderful excuse for adults to do whatever they choose. They can conceal their disregard for social responsibility behind a scientific-sounding abstraction which is not even true and can proceed either to exploit children's immaturity or permit it to be exploited by whole industries. (100)

Although its possible relationship to the Frankfurt School bears exploration, Wertham's argument and even its construction seem indebted to his mentor Kraepelin. Medical historian Eric Engstrom proposes that Kraepelin's later stance—which Wertham would have likely encountered personally during his apprenticeship in Munich—was increasingly focused on social and cultural explanations for mental disease. As Engstrom writes, for Kraepelin, "high culture and 'life-experiences' threatened not only to countermand Darwinian laws of natural selections by shielding human beings from their environment, but also to impinge directly on the development of germ cells. Kraepelin viewed the effects of culture as contributing to a deterioration, indeed to the degeneration of the individual and the 'race.'" (101) In Wertham's view, comic books threatened both social and cultural integrity. Additionally, Engstrom notes that Kraepelin marshaled a vast system of informants to provide him with psychiatric material for his research, and "he appears to have few qualms about drawing on the observations of officials not trained in psychiatry. This use of information could never have satisfied his own critical standards of clinical observation." (102) Again, Wertham—perhaps quite unconsciously—adopted the practices of his mentor, collating the reports of a network of observers to advance his rhetoric. Meyer's influence is not wholly absent in Wertham's logic. In fact, Meyer's admonition that "if the facts [of the case] do not constitute a diagnosis we must nevertheless act on the facts" could be seen as a spur to Wertham's desire to incite action on comics, because even if



Amy K. Nyberg



# Seal Of Approval: The Latest Installment Of Our Serialization Of The 1998 Book On Comics Censorship

by Amy Kiste Nyberg

**A/E** EDITOR'S NOTE: In the past two issues, Dr. Nyberg's groundbreaking work on comic book censorship has taken us first through the spring 1954 hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency as it zeroed in on crime comics (and maybe a few headlines along the way), afterwards taking an extended look at the life and career of comics' greatest critic, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, author of numerous articles and finally of the 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*. These factors between them caused the formation by the comic book publishers later that year of the Comics Magazine Association of America and the implementation of a Comics Code Authority to which they would all submit their work for its "seal of approval," thereby hopefully staving off the wrath of Senators and psychiatrists and the general public.

Once again, we mention up front that Seal of Approval is extensively "footnoted" in the MLA (Modern Language Association) style, which lists book, article, or author/editor name, plus page numbers, between parentheses in the main text rather than at the foot of a page. E.g., "(Hart 154-156)" refers to pp. 154-156 of whichever work by an author or editor named Hart appears in the bibliography, which will be printed a couple of issues from now. When said parentheses contain only page numbers, it is because the other relevant information is printed in the main text almost immediately preceding the note. In addition, the book contains a bare handful of footnotes treated in the



## The Comics Code Gives Comics A Facelift!

(Above:) Back in *A/E* #105's "Tales from the Code" coverage, we printed this same combination of photo and comic book splash page—but this time we can display the latter in color! Judge Charles F. Murphy, first administrator of the Comics Code Authority (some newspapers referred to him as "the comic book czar"), is seen circa late 1954, displaying "before" and "after" versions of art from the story "Sarah" done for *Timely/Atlas' Uncanny Tales* #29 (March 1955), the first issue to bear the seal of approval. The yarn was originally drawn by Joe Sinnott, but we've no idea if he drew the altered version of Sarah; the scripter, too, is unidentified. The printed splash is courtesy of Dr. Michael J. Vassallo; sadly, Sinnott's original version probably no longer exists in any form. In case you want to check out the story as published, MJV reminds us that it was reprinted in *Dead of Night* #6 (Oct. 1974). [Page © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

more traditional sense; these can be found at the bottom of the relevant page.

We have retained such usages and spellings from the book as "superhero," an un-capitalized "comics code," "E.C. and DC," et al. In the captions we have added, however, we have reverted to our customary style. Naturally, said captions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Dr. Nyberg or of the University Press of Mississippi, the original publisher of the book—the original print edition of which can still be obtained from UPM at [www.upress.sate.ms.us](http://www.upress.sate.ms.us). Our thanks to Dr. M. Thomas Inge, under whose general editorship the volume was originally published in



1998, as part of UPM's *Studies in Popular Culture* series, for his help in obtaining permission to reprint the book in full... to Williams Biggins and Vijah Shah, past and present acquisitions editors at the U. Press of Mississippi, for their cooperation and encouragement... and to Brian K. Morris for retyping the text in a Word document for Ye Editor. [Text ©1998 University Press of Mississippi.]

Now, it's back to 1954 once again... well, after a brief stop in 1948...

## Chapter 5 Creation And Implementation Of The Comics Code

**T**he idea of a self-regulatory code was nothing new for the comic book industry. The publishers had already made one attempt, through the trade association known as the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, to police themselves following Wertham's first assault on the industry in the late 1940s. In addition, a number of the companies had their own editorial codes, often formulated with the help of child guidance experts. But such measures were not enforced strictly enough to satisfy comic book critics, and under the threat of government action (whether real or imagined) the industry once again set out to appease public opinion with a self-regulatory code. Not all publishers cooperated. William Gaines, publisher of the controversial E.C. comics, proved to be a thorn in the side of the new association, and Dell Comics refused to have anything to do with the association or the code. But by and large, the industry strategy was successful in convincing the public that the "comic book problem" was solved.

As noted in chapter 2, the impetus for the adoption of the comic industry's first code in 1948 came from Fredric Wertham's attack on comic books published in *Collier's* and in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in the spring of 1948. The comic book industry responded by announcing on July 1, 1948, that it had adopted a regulatory code, similar to that of the film industry, to be enforced by the ACMP. While it may have been modeled on the film code, the ACMP code was nearly identical to an in-house code adopted by Fawcett several years earlier. The six points of the code dealt with sex, crime, torture, language, divorce, and ridicule of religious and racial groups (see "The ACMP Code"). [NOTE: See A/E #125.]

When the code was announced, the comics trade association launched a membership drive and also distributed copies of the code to local societies, civic groups, and comics distributors (Senate Hearings 70). The code was the work of Henry Schultz, the attorney for the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, whose credentials included membership on the New York City Board of Higher Education and chairmanship of the board of trustees of Queens College. In its coverage of the code, *The New York Times* noted in an article December 6, 1948, that an advisory committee was selected to assist Schultz. It included Dr. Charles F. Gosnell, New York state librarian, John E. Wade, retired superintendent of schools of New York City, and Ordway Tead, chairman of the Board of Higher Education of New York City. The committee warned against the dangers of censorship and released the following statement: "Censorship would be a dangerous and an illegal method of dealing with the situation... As in any of the other media, the way forward is the strengthening of the process of self-regulation within the industry" ("Librarian Named" 37).

Initially, the association hired office staff to review the comics "in the boards" (the phrase used to describe the original pages

submitted before being reproduced for publication), and while the association originally considered appointing a commissioner to oversee the code, that task fell to Schultz. The money for the reviewers was raised by a "screening fee" charged by the association for each title submitted by a publisher. For titles with a circulation of 500,000 or more, the publisher paid one hundred dollars; for titles with a circulation of 250,000 to 500,000, the publisher paid fifty dollars; there was no fee for screening titles with a circulation under 250,000. One large publisher, Dell Comics, noted that under the proposed fee schedule, it would cost them three thousand dollars a month to participate in the screening system (Senate Hearings 70-71).

As in the later association, membership was open to publishers, distributors, printers, and engravers. Initially about a third of the publishers joined. These included: Premium Service Company, Famous Funnies, Hillman Periodicals, Parents' Institute, Lev Gleason Publications, McCombs Publications, The Golden Willow Press, Avon Periodicals, Ace Magazines, Orbit Publications, Superior Comics, and Consolidated Magazines (Senate Hearings



### A Slave To Love

Around the time Avon Periodicals joined the Association of Comic Magazine Publishers at the end of 1948, its *Slave Girl Comics* #1 (cover-dated Feb. 1949) was hitting the nation's newsstands. We don't know if its Howard Larsen-drawn cover would've have passed muster with the ACMP's "comics code" (printed in A/E #125)—but is it just a coincidence that there was only one more issue (dated April '49?) starring Malu the Slave Girl? Scriptor unknown. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database for the artist ID and to Bruce Mason for the art. [© the respective copyright holders.]

## CODE OF THE COMICS MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC.

[Adapted on October 26, 1954]

### CODE FOR EDITORIAL MATTER

#### General Standards Part A

- 1) Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal, to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals.
- 2) No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime.
- 3) Policemen, judges, government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.
- 4) If crime is depicted it shall be as a sordid and unpleasant activity.
- 5) Criminals shall not be presented so as to be rendered glamorous or to occupy a position which creates a desire for emulation.
- 6) In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal be punished for his misdeeds.
- 7) Scenes of excessive violence shall be prohibited. Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife and gun play, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated.
- 8) No unique or unusual methods of concealing weapons shall be shown.
- 9) Instances of law enforcement officers dying as a result of a criminal's activities should be discouraged.
- 10) The crime of kidnapping shall never be portrayed in any detail, nor shall any profit accrue to the abductor or kidnapper. The criminal or the kidnapper must be punished in every case.
- 11) The letters of the word "crime" on a comics magazine cover shall never be appreciably greater in dimension than the other words contained in the title. The word "crime" shall never appear alone on a cover.
- 12) Restraint in the use of the word "crime" in titles or sub-titles shall be exercised.

#### General Standards Part B

- 1) No comic magazine shall use the word horror or terror in its title.
- 2) All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism

shall not be permitted.

- 3) All lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated.
- 4) Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly nor so as to injure the sensibilities of the reader.
- 5) Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism and werewolfism are prohibited.

#### General Standards Part C

All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited.

#### Dialogue

- 1) Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols which have acquired undesirable meanings are forbidden.
- 2) Special precautions to avoid references to physical afflictions or deformities shall be taken.
- 3) Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and wherever possible good grammar shall be employed.

#### Religion

- 1) Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial groups is never permissible.

#### Costume

- 1) Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure.
- 2) Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable.
- 3) All characters shall be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society.
- 4) Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities.

NOTE: It should be recognized that all prohibitions dealing with costume, dialogue or artwork apply as specifically to the cover of a comic magazine as they do to the contents.

#### Marriage and Sex

- 1) Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable.
- 2) Illicit sex relations are neither to be hinted at nor portrayed. Violent love scenes as well as sexual abnormalities are unacceptable.
- 3) Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. A sympathetic understanding of the problems of love is not a license for morbid distortion.
- 4) The treatment of love-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage.
- 5) Passion or romantic interest shall never be treated in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions.
- 6) Seduction and rape shall never be shown or suggested.
- 7) Sex perversion or any inference to same is strictly forbidden.

### CODE FOR ADVERTISING MATTER

These regulations are applicable to all magazines published by members of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. Good taste shall be the guiding principle in the acceptance of advertising.

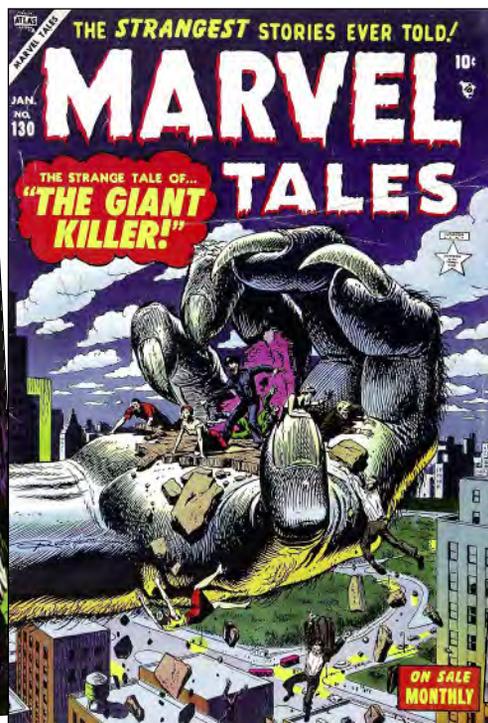
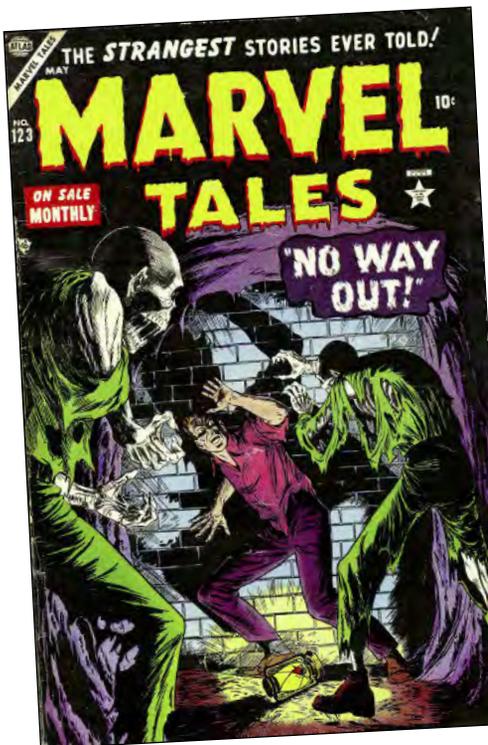
- 1) Liquor and tobacco advertising is not acceptable.
- 2) Advertisements of sex or sex instruction books are unacceptable.
- 3) The sale of picture postcards, "pin-ups," "art studies," or any other reproduction of nude or semi-nude figures is prohibited.
- 4) Advertising for the sale of knives, concealable weapons, or realistic gun facsimiles is prohibited.
- 5) Advertising for the sale of fireworks is prohibited.
- 6) Advertising dealing with the sale of gambling equipment or printed matter dealing with gambling shall not be accepted.
- 7) Nudity with meretricious purpose and salacious postures shall not be permitted in the advertising of any product; clothed figures shall never be presented in such a way as to be offensive or contrary to good taste or morals.
- 8) To the best of his ability, each publisher shall ascertain that all statements made in advertisements conform to fact and avoid misrepresentation.
- 9) Advertisements of medical, health, or toiletry products of questionable nature are to be rejected. Advertisements for medical, health or toiletry products endorsed by the American Medical Association, or the American Dental Association, shall be deemed acceptable if they conform with all other conditions of the Advertising Code.



### The Way Of The Outlaw

(Left side of page:) The entire text of the 1954 Comics Code, as re-typed and reprinted back in *Alter Ego*, Vol. 1, #10, circa 1970. [© the respective copyright holders.]

(Above:) Because Avon Periodicals reprinted tales from *Jesse James* #8 (Aug. 1952) less than three years later, in *Jesse James* #22 (April-May 1955), it's possible to judge the effects of the early Comics Code on these two versions of the same panel. The reprint's anonymous script and Everett Raymond Kinstler art were severely altered, forcing the mag's editors to white out part of the black plate, and print one panel totally in black-&-white, though they mostly re-used the original color plates for printing. In fact, all dialogue in that panel was eliminated. But then, we've always been surprised that the Comics Code ever allowed outlaws Jesse James and Billy the Kid to headline comics in the first place! Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [© the respective copyright holders.]



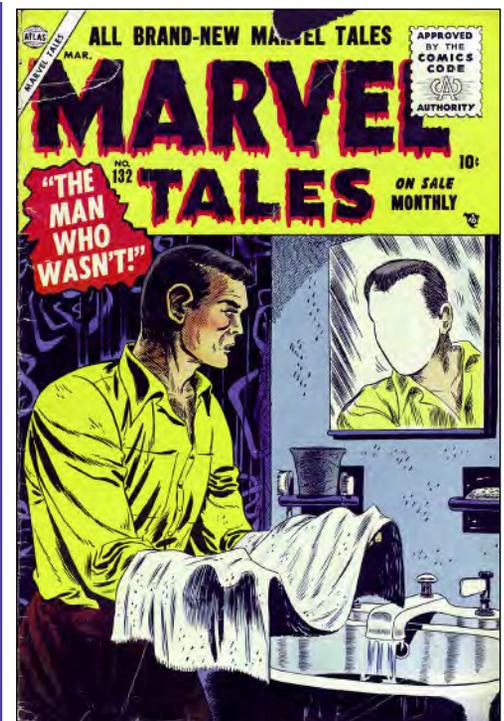
and Finn. The firm's name appears across the bottom of the galley proofs of the code sent to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. In creating a public relations campaign for the new trade association, David Finn wrote later: "The purpose of such efforts is not to create an atmosphere in which the reforms demanded by critics will be made; it is to find a way to make the smallest possible concessions necessary to end the controversy" (Finn 174). As an avid reader of comic books in his own childhood, Finn sided with his clients' view that Wertham's position "was psychologically, sociologically and legally unsound" (175). Finn worked closely with Schultz, whom he called "an outstanding figure in the field of civil liberties," and together they stressed in their public relations campaign the "evils of censorship" implicit in any proposed legislation. The industry's new program of self-regulation, designed around its refurbished code of ethics, was the only practical solution (175).

Elliot Caplin, one of the members of the special organizational committee that drafted the first code, recalled that he relied heavily on the Hays film code in formulating the comics code (Caplin interview). A side-by-side comparison of the film code and the comics code shows that the comics code was organized along the same lines as the film code, and much of the language of the film code was incorporated into the comics code. In addition, the ACMP code and the in-house codes drawn up by individual publishers clearly influenced the 1954 comics code.

The comics code consisted of forty-one specific regulations that CMAA President John Goldwater, one of the publishers of Archie Comics, labeled as "problem areas" in comic books. He added: "Taken together these provisions constitute the most severe set of principles for any communications media in use today, restricting the use of many types of material permitted by the motion picture code and the codes for the television and radio industries" (Goldwater, *Americana* 24).

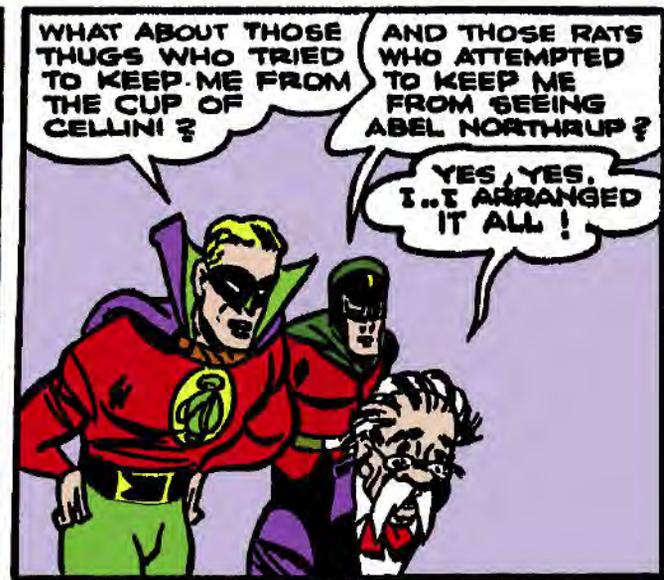
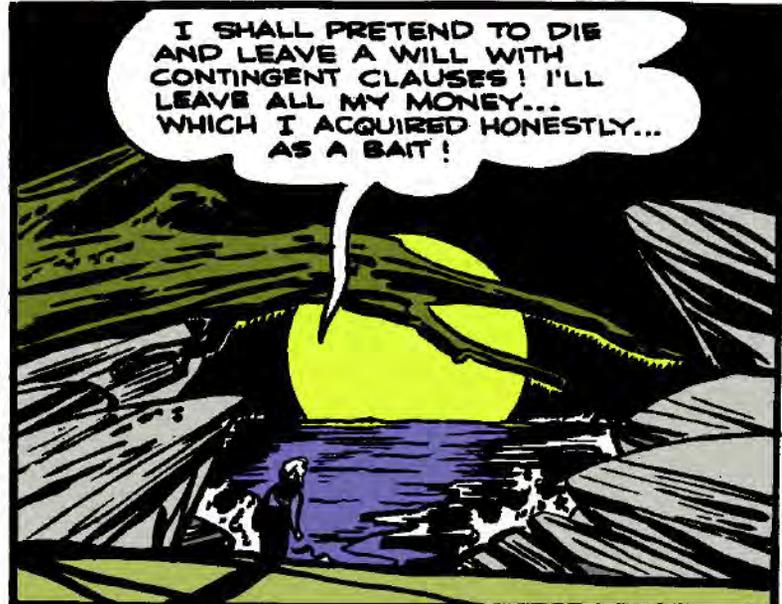
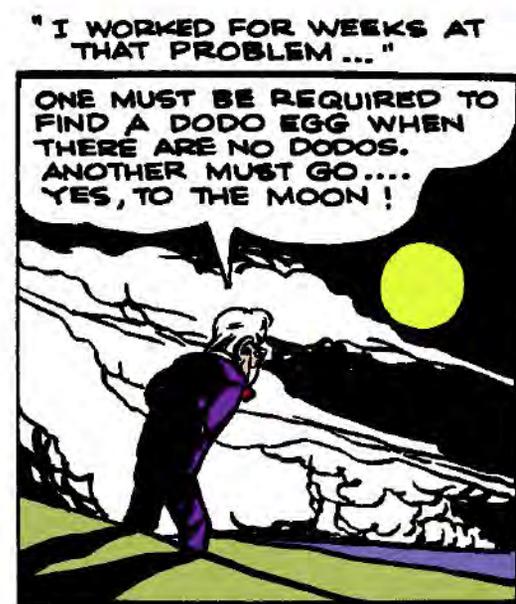
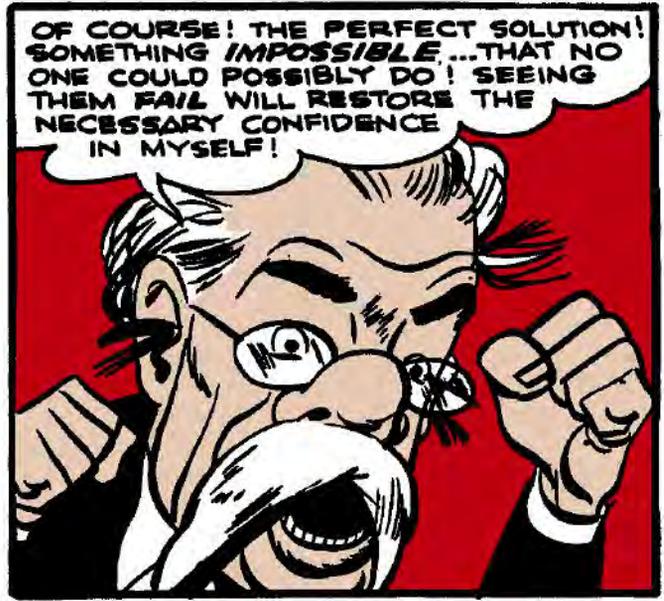
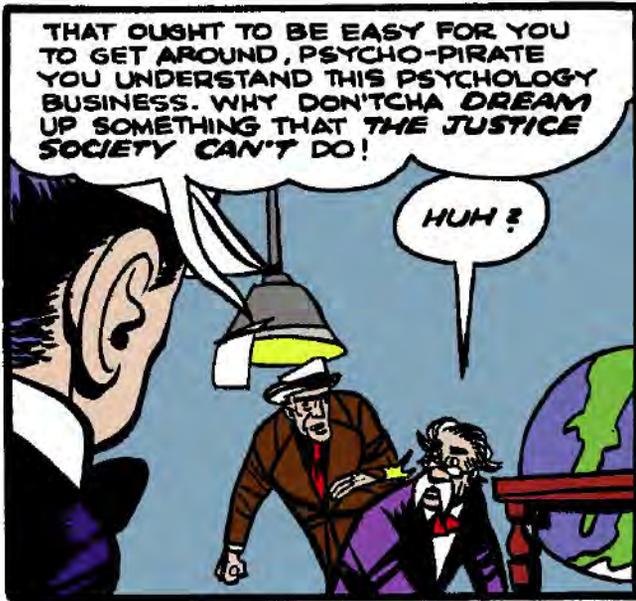
#### The Code Wind Will Blow...

(Clockwise from top left:) Ten months before the Comics Code went into effect, Timely/Atlas' *Marvel Tales* #123 (May 1954) could still portray skeletal walking-dead on a fairly horrific cover drawn by Harry Anderson. However, around the time of the founding of the CMAA, publisher Martin Goodman obviously saw the claw-writing on the wall and had editor Stan Lee tone things down: we suspect that Russ Heath's giant-taloned-hand cover for *MT* #130 (Jan. '55) might've been too strong for the Code's taste... but the "Five Fingers!" cover of #131 (Feb. '55) might well have gotten through the Code Authority... and the "Man Who Wasn't!" cover on #132 (March '55) clearly sailed through with little or no problem. The artists of the latter two covers are unidentified. Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert & Bob Bailey for the cover scans. [© Marvel Characters, Inc.]



It is not surprising that the bulk of the comics code dealt with the two topics which had brought the ire of the public down around the heads of the publishers: crime and horror. Part A of the code was devoted to regulating the content of crime stories and Part B was aimed at horror comics (see CMAA Code 1954). Crime comics could continue to be published under the guidelines drawn up by the comic book trade association, but all such titles had to adhere to strict rules concerning the presentation of such stories. Without ever admitting that depiction of crime led young readers to become juvenile delinquents, the code nonetheless placed an emphasis on portraying crime in a negative light, on creating respect for established authority, on depicting commission of crime in such a way that young readers would not be tempted to imitate

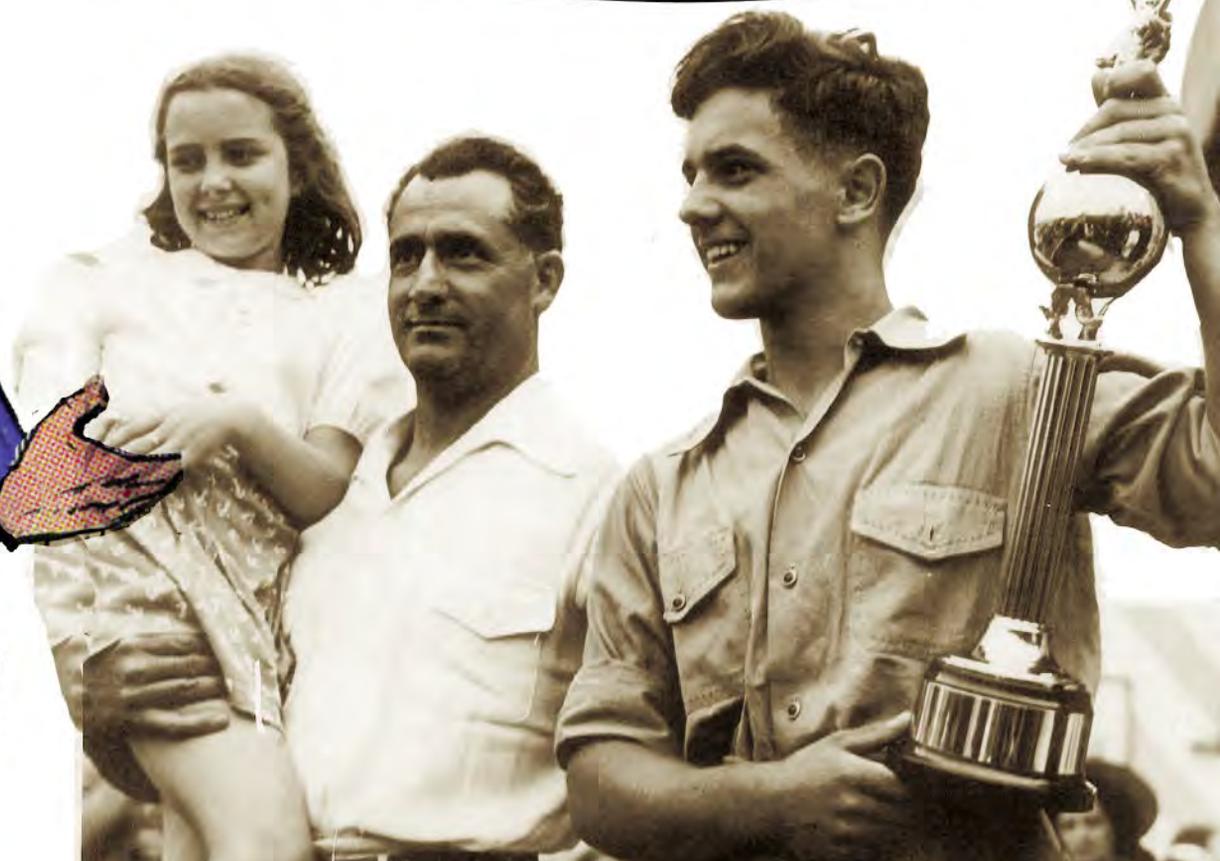
These final two pages ("Y" & "Z") of the never-published 1943-45 "Justice Society of America" tale "The Will of William Wilson" would have met Fredric Wertham's definition of a "crime comic"—but surely The Psycho-Pirate's rationale for his plot to defeat the JSA belongs more in the category of EC Comics' Psychoanalysis. [Continued on next page]





READERS, I'D LIKE  
YOU TO MEET MY OLD FRIENDS  
CHARLES ATLAS, MAUREEN REYNOLDS, AND  
BILL ARONIS! IT'S SUPERMAN DAY AT THE 1940 WORLD'S  
FAIR, AND BILL AND MAUREEN HAVE JUST BEEN CROWNED THE  
WORLD'S FIRST SUPERBOY AND SUPERGIRL! AND NOW  
I'LL LET BILL ANSWER THE QUESTION . . .

**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE BOY  
OF TOMORROW?**



Fred Guardineer ("Zatara" and often cover artist for early issues of *Action Comics* drew the Superman figure at left, which we swiped from *Action Comics* #15 (Aug. 1939). [© DC Comics.]

# Whatever Happened To The Boy Of Tomorrow?

by Michael T. Gilbert

**T**hough Superboy (sans costume) made a brief appearance in *Superman* #1 (June 1939), he didn't rate his own feature until *More Fun Comics* #101 in January 1945. However, years earlier, on July 3, 1940, thousands of New Yorkers had been introduced to a flesh-and-blood Boy of Steel.

Three judges (including iconic strong man Charles Atlas!) were tapped to pick a real live Superboy and Supergirl in a Superman Day contest at the New York World's Fair which had opened in Queens the previous year.

Dozens of children and teens participated, and two lucky contestants were chosen. 11-year-old Maureen Reynolds was named the official Supergirl of the event, while Bill Aronis, age 15, was crowned the world's first Superboy.

Bill Aronis, now in his late 80s, contacted the *Superman through the Ages* website in 2006, introducing himself as the winner of the Superboy contest.

Comic historian Shaun Clancy recently contacted Bill and taped some of Mr. Aronis' memories of that day—including a visit to the DC offices in 1940, as well as getting the ol' hard-sell from comic book pitchman Charles Atlas. We think you'll find it fascinating. Take it away, Shaun!

## William Aronis Interview (11/11/13)

Interview Conducted by Shaun Clancy

Transcription by Steven Thompson

**VOICE:** Hello?

**SHAUN CLANCY:** Hi, is William Aronis there?

**VOICE:** Yeah, hold on. [pause]

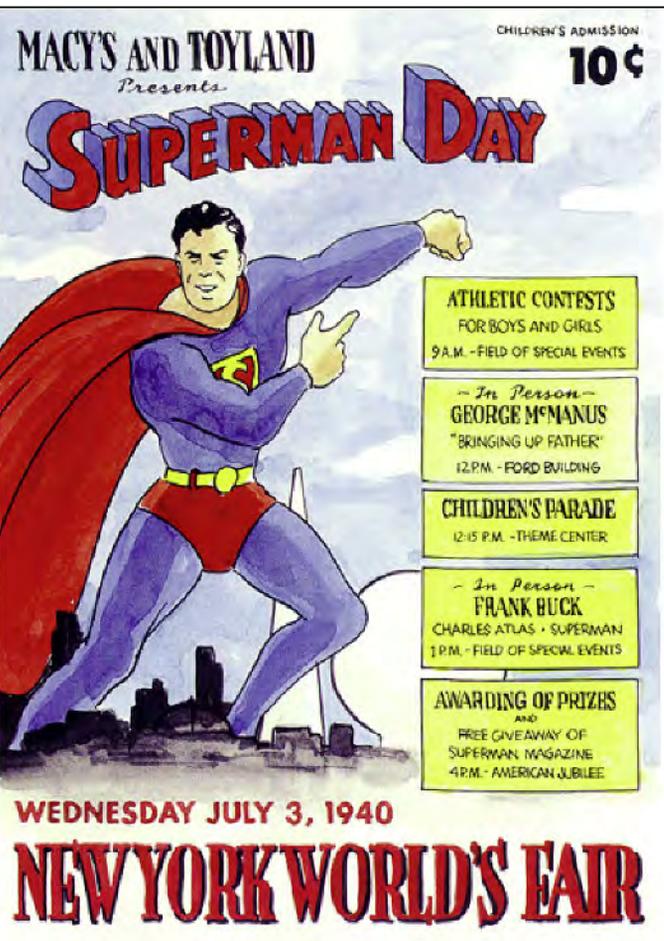
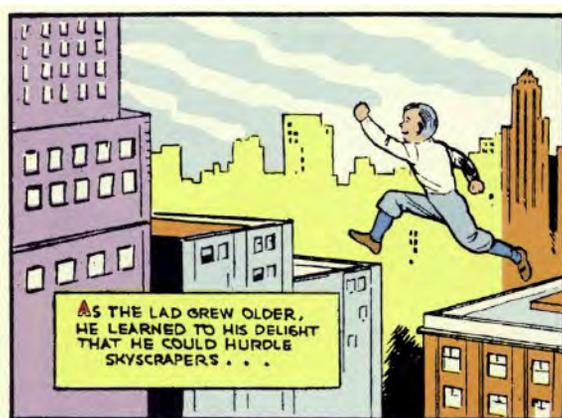
**WILLIAM**

**ARONIS:** I am—Hello?

**SC:** Hi, William?

**ARONIS:** Yeah.

**SC:** Hi, this is Shaun Clancy in Seattle. I was reading a *Family Circle* magazine from 1940, and there's a William Aronis in it on winning a trophy at the Superman Day at the New York World...



Simply Super!

(Above:) Lou Zimmerman drew this nifty 1940 Superman Day poster. [Superman TM & © DC Comics.]

**ARONIS:** That's me.

**SC:** Hi! Have you seen that article I just mentioned?

**ARONIS:** Where did you see this article?

**SC:** I have an October 25th, 1940, *Family Circle* magazine...

**ARONIS:** No, I didn't, but a year ago, somebody else called me from California, and he saw something about me, also.

Leapin' Lizards!

(Left:) Superboy makes his (sort of) debut in *Superman* #1 (June 1939), courtesy of Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel. [© 2014 DC Comics.] (Right:) A "Legion of Super-Heroes"? Photo of a gaggle of would-be Super-Boys from the 1940 contest.

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

**FCA** 

Fawcett Collectors of America

#187

September 2014

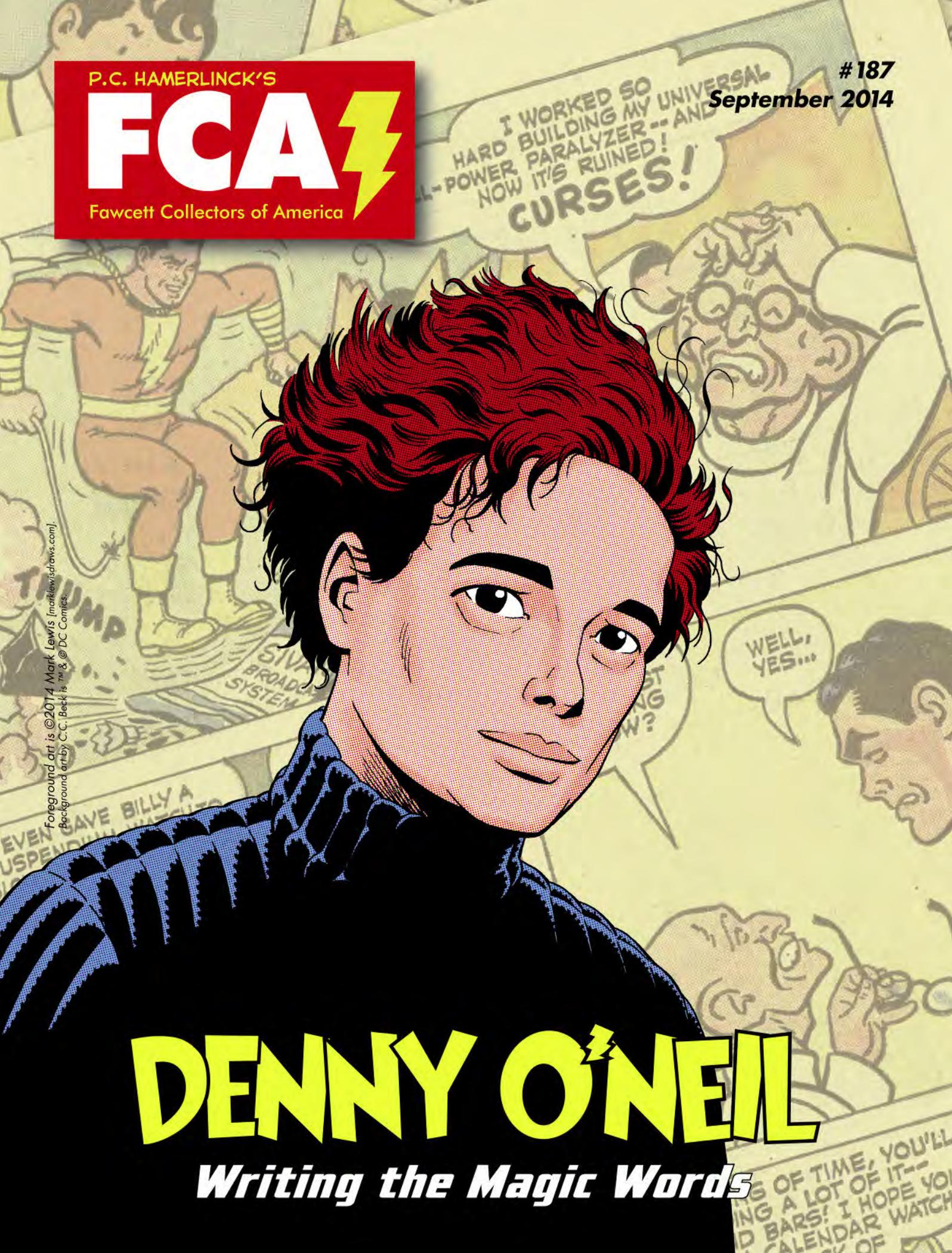
I WORKED SO HARD BUILDING MY UNIVERSAL L-POWER PARALYZER -- AND NOW IT'S RUINED! CURSES!

WELL, YES...

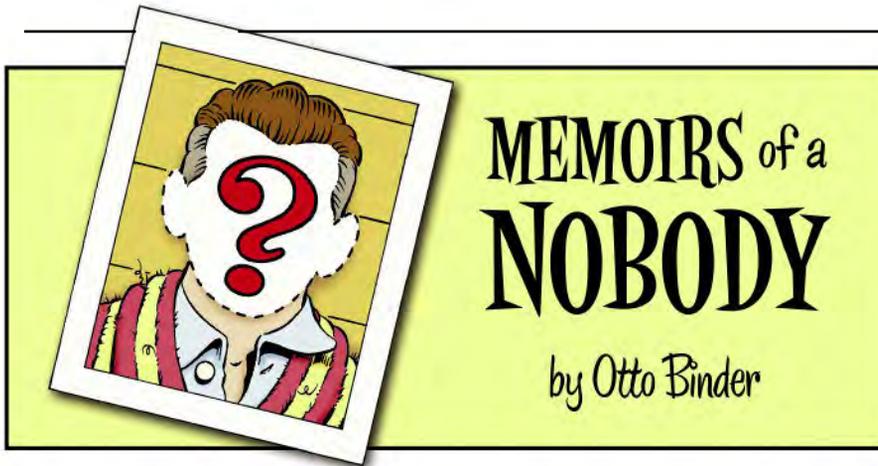
# DENNY O'NEIL

*Writing the Magic Words*

Foreground art is ©2014 Mark Lewis [marklewisdraws.com].  
Background art by C.C. Beck is TM & © DC Comics.



ING OF TIME, YOU'LL  
ING A LOT OF IT--  
ID BARS! I HOPE YOU  
CALENDAR WATCH  
OF



## Part IX

Abridged & Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

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

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

In this 9th excerpt, Otto calls to mind a beloved family member and speaks of his home state in a chapter he entitled, "Introducing... You!"

—P.C. Hamerlinck.

**C**ome to think of it, it's about time you had a say. Yes you, dear patient reader. I've been a selfish hog. I've been pouring out all my own thoughts and fancies and opinions to the point of utter boredom. So step forward. This is your cue. Come on, out with it. This is your chance to speak your mind. This is your show. I'll just sit mum and listen. You say you want to tell me something about your Aunt Mildred who... ?

Speaking of aunts, my Aunt Sophy is a card. She's my aunt through my father's brother's cousin's side of the family... the half-sister branch. She's forty, I guess. Maybe fifty, I don't know. How can you tell when she had burned her birth certificate and refers to events in

her youth as a couple of years ago? My Aunt Sophy had five husbands and there is some snide talk that they were not one after another. Somebody charged her with having three husbands at once, and warned her to shed one instantly, but Aunt Sophy was horrified. That would be gamy. She knew the law.

Anyway, Aunt Sophy somehow accumulated money as well as men, and she kept giving it to charity and everyone praised her to the skies, till it was discovered the charity she donated to was run by herself, and that nobody seemed to be aided by that charity at all. An income-tax agent was sent to see if there was collusion and fraud but nothing came of it. He was husband number three, I think.

My Aunt Sophy smoked cigars in public but privately hated the things, and never touched them at home. She just liked to blow smoke rings in the faces of indignant women. As for drinking, my aunt could take a case of Scotch and pour it down the drain faster than anybody I knew. Never touched a drop in her life. Just kept pouring it down the drain or kitchen sink. Friends never dared let her find a bottle or she'd instantly heave it out the window. Well, I could go on forever about my Aunt Sophy, but



### The Tea Party

In this issue Otto talks about his adorable Aunt Sophy... and in "The Marvel Family and Aunty Anti-Marvel" (*The Marvel Family* #2, June 1946) he wrote about Aunt Minny Marvel (who was actually a dressed-in-drag Dr. Sivana). Binder's story was the first to feature all official Marvel Family members. Art by C.C. Beck and Pete Costanza. [Shazam heroes TM & © DC Comics.]

# Writing The Magic Words

## DENNY O'NEIL On Revivifying The Original Captain Marvel In The 1970s *Shazam!*

Interview Conducted by Richard J. Arndt

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

**E** DITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *Alter Ego* #123 featured Richard J. Arndt's lengthy interview with Dennis O'Neil on the renowned writer/editor's first decade in comics. Mostly omitted from that detailed dialogue was O'Neil's historic undertaking of reviving the original Captain Marvel (and family and foes) after an 18-plus-year publishing exile, an event which garnered a great deal of fanfare. The following supplemental interview took place by phone on March 8th, 2014.

**RICHARD ARNDT:** Denny, you helped bring the original Captain Marvel back into comics in the early 1970s via DC Comics' *Shazam!* How did you find yourself involved in re-establishing the Big Red Cheese to modern readers?

**DENNIS O'NEIL:** Julie Schwartz asked me to. It was nothing more complicated than that.

**RA:** How familiar were you with the character before you started working on it?

**O'NEIL:** I knew a little bit. I read *Captain Marvel Adventures* as a kid, at the age of six or seven. I had paid some attention when I was learning about comics—trying to acquaint myself with everything that I hadn't known before writing them. I thought it had been a kind of charming strip, and it would be an interesting thing to try and

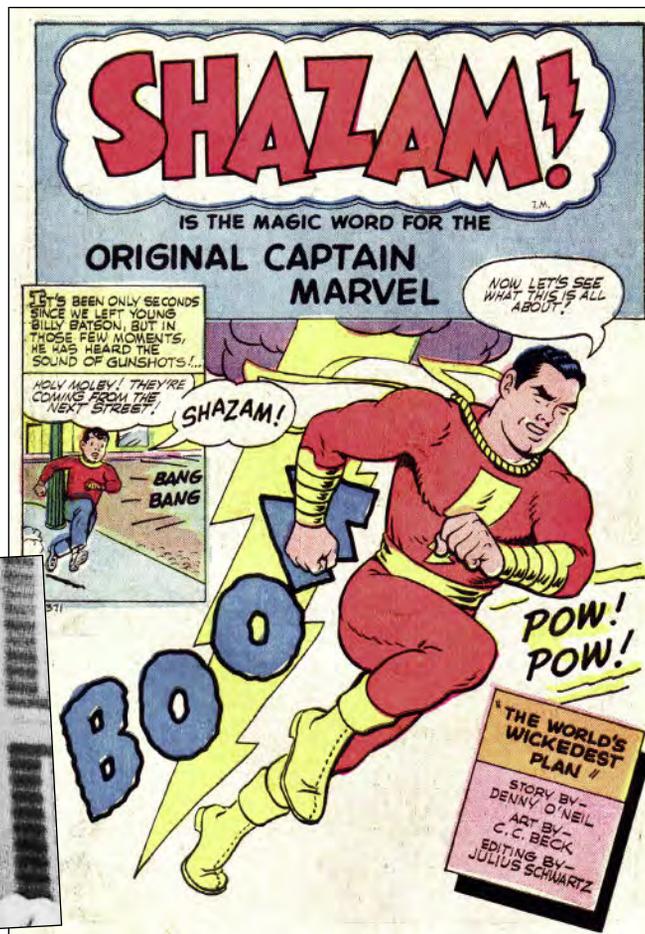
bring back. It was certainly different from what we were doing in comics at the time, in terms of it being light and cheerful. I didn't have any deep acquaintance with the character.

**RA:** You wrote some of the earliest stories for the Captain's arrival at DC, including the setup origin story in *Shazam!* #1. What did you do, if anything, that was different from the original origin story back in 1940? Was there an effort to fully fit him into the DC Universe?

**O'NEIL:** According to the artist, I must have done a lot of things different, but I wasn't aware of doing things differently. I think that what I did that was wrong was that I tried to duplicate the old stuff. What I've learned in the years since is that, when you go and

revisit old characters, you *have* to reinvent them for a contemporary audience. *Captain Marvel Adventures* was hugely popular in the 1940s. I think he sold two million copies a month at one point. A high figure, anyways. That didn't mean that the approach used in the 1940s was going to be popular in the 1970s. I tried to write the kind of stories that Otto Binder might have written in 1945.

**RA:** Am I right in thinking that you were the one responsible for putting a cameo of Otto Binder in that first lead-off story in *Shazam!* #1?



With One Magic Issue...

(Left:) Denny O'Neil in the early 1970s—in the photo used by Neal Adams as the basis for the oft-reproduced portrait which also became a part of the cover of *Alter Ego* #123.

(Center:) Captain Marvel and associates' long absence from the world is explained in O'Neil's "The World's Wickedest Plan," the second tale from the highly hyped and anticipated *Shazam!* #1 (Feb. 1973); art by C.C. Beck. (We showcased the first splash in *A/E* #123.) The premier issue of *Shazam!* roared in with a mighty 600,000-plus press run... but ultimately the comic's initial trumpet blast had dwindled to a muted, scarcely decipherable drone. [© DC Comics.]

(Right:) Captain Marvel's original artist & co-creator Charles Clarence Beck with an award from a Phoenix (Arizona) convention, 1972, around the time he and Denny O'Neil were working "together." Thanks to Alex Jay.



#### Binder—Rhymes With “Tinder”

(Above:) Otto Binder wonders why, after all these years, boy broadcaster Billy Batson hasn't grown any more than the gourds in his garden. These fan-pleasing scenes took place in O'Neil's *Shazam!* #1 lead-off tale "...In The Beginning...", which featured a re-telling of Captain Marvel's origin. Art by Beck. [© DC Comics.]

(Right:) Otto Binder at Dave Kaler's New York comics convention in 1965 with Carole and Phil Seuling, who masqueraded as a couple of characters with which he was vaguely familiar. Thanks to Bill Schelly.

**O'NEIL:** I wouldn't put it past me, but I don't think I've read that story since it came out. My involvement with the book, thinking back, was not long. I don't know why. I don't normally re-read published material unless there is a reason to... if I need to re-acquaint myself with the continuity or something like that. Captain Marvel was no exception.

**RA:** Within a two-year time span, you wrote a total of eleven "Shazam!" stories—eight of which were illustrated by C.C. Beck. I know that Beck was on record for a long, long time about how much he disliked DC's version of Captain Marvel....

**O'NEIL:** Yes, I'm aware of that. When I spoke to him—I interviewed him for a book on the history of comics that I wrote—he was very gracious, but he had problems with my scripts and I don't know what the problems were.

**RA:** I've read his complaints here and there over the years, but I honestly have never quite completely understood what he was objecting to, either. That he didn't like the book was clear, but exactly why was less so... except that it wasn't written by Otto Binder, Bill Woolfolk, Rod Reed, or possibly himself.

**O'NEIL:** Yeah, later that became a problem for us comic book guys. If you were really centered on a certain version of a character or a certain time period, then anything that's not that seems to be

wrong. Beck was not attempting to do formal academic criticism. I don't want to be too tough on him. But the type of criticism that he made was really not very useful. It amounted to "I don't like this." Well, I once knew a comic book editor, who didn't last long in the business, whose approach to that sort of thing was to say, "You keep doing this until I like it," which is about the least fair thing you can do to a freelancer.

**RA:** True, because they're not getting paid any more money for re-writing it than they were for writing it in the first place.

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. If you've spent any time on the freelancer's side of the desk, then you know that time is money. My policy when I was an editor, and I was one for 23 years, was if I can't give you exact criticism so that you know exactly what I think the problem is, then you have the option of convincing me that I'm wrong or letting me suggest a solution to the problem or solving it yourself. But the worst thing that an editor can do is say "I don't like this. Fix it." That's just about the worst kind of editor there is. The same goes for criticism. I don't know what C.C. Beck's problems with my scripts were. I might be interested now, but I wasn't really interested then. I might have been very defensive. But now I would like to know—what exactly was I doing wrong?

**RA:** He had the same problems with Elliott S. Maggin's and E. Nelson Bridwell's scripts, I believe. I don't recall him singing out yours.

**O'NEIL:** Yeah, I think that was true. As you said, anything that was not by his favored writers was not going to be right. Personally, I had no problems with him ever. Any problems he had



with the scripts that I was giving him did not show up on the printed page. I've had lots more trouble with other artists who decided they didn't like or want to draw the pictures that I indicated or the way I thought they should be drawn. I don't remember any of that with Beck. Whatever personal reservations he may have had, he was professional about putting the stuff on the page.

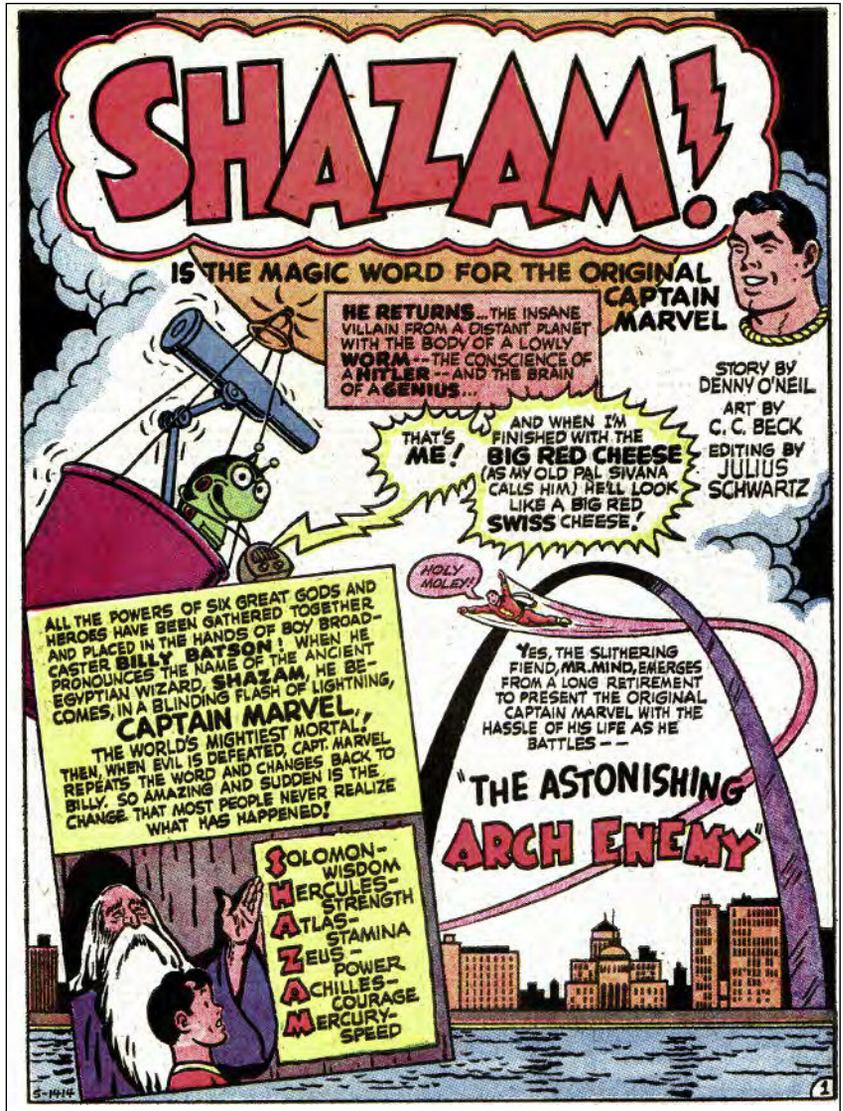
RA: *The artwork looked pretty good.*

O'NEIL: He was delivering exactly what I wanted. This book was not going to be a serious, deeply tormented, relevant strip. This was going to be fun. I think his art style perfectly caught that.

RA: *I always considered the book at that time to be a cross between humor books like Leave It to Binky or Angel and the Ape and any regular super-hero.*

O'NEIL: It was cartoon art rather than illustration, certainly. It came from that school—which was, when they were doing "Captain Marvel" in the 1940s, based on the style of the first artist (Beck) who worked on the book. The first artist set the style for the series. If you're the director of the first episode of a TV series, you are considered a minor creative leader, because you set the initial visual tone of that series, and you can get residuals if you're lucky.

It was the same way with comics back then. It was a loosey-goosey business when I got into it in 1965, and I've a hunch [it was] back in the 1940s [when] it was a brand new form. A few people knew how to write and draw [comics], but I think a lot of the creative people, particularly the writers, were refugees from the pulps, and they may not have realized that, while the content of the stories was similar to pulp stories, the technique of telling them was not. So people whom I did respect enormously, like Jerry Robinson who used to ghost "Batman," was one of the early guys who may have had to make some changes in the script because writers may



**It's Only A Paper Cup Floating Over A Cardboard River...**  
 Denny O'Neil wasted no time bringing the wicked worm Mr. Mind back into the fold ("The Astonishing Arch Enemy," *Shazam!* #2, April 1973). Having survived his 1945 execution, the malevolent Mind's infamous "Monster Society" is referenced (including an appearance of a former Society member, alligator man Herkimer). With the tale's action involving the World's Mightiest Mortal using the St. Louis Arch as a tuning fork, O'Neil, a former native of that city, also evoked Captain Marvel's Golden Age city-visiting adventures.  
 Artist C.C Beck had already begun making minor revisions to the scripts with Editor Julie Schwartz's consent... an arrangement that would not last very long. O'Neil's original script for the above story called for Mr. Mind to be shown riding in a giant helicopter and firing a giant gun; Beck changed it to Mr. Mind riding in a paper cup suspended beneath a toy balloon and firing a tiny gun made from an old shell casing. [© DC Comics.]

versus how many words you feel like writing. There has to be a right balance. If something has to go, it's usually the words. As a writer it absolutely freezes me to admit that, but the action narrative should be carried by the pictures.

RA: *When Beck left Shazam! of his own volition, he was replaced by two different artists: Bob Oksner and Kurt Schaffenberger.*

O'NEIL: Oksner makes sense because he had a cartooning style.

RA: *He seemed to have been a utility player. He could draw humor material like Adventures of Jerry Lewis and Welcome Back, Kotter... but he also inked Curt Swan on "Superman" and drew straight super-hero strips like "Supergirl" and Lois Lane in addition to a hybrid title*

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