

ROY THOMAS' IN-DEPTH
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego

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**3-D COMICS
OF THE 1950s!**



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No. 115

March
2013

ALL IN 3-D FOR A QUARTER (in 1953)!

**SIMON & KIRBY
KUBERT & MAURER
MESKIN • POWELL
NOSTRAND • WOOD
FELDSTEIN & MORE!!**

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THRU TIME
and into
the
THIRD
DIMENSION

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SPECIAL 3-D NOTICE:

This issue of *A/E* has been polybagged to include a pair of 3-D glasses at no increase in price. But *hang on to them*—'cause we'll be featuring *additional* 3-D images in future issues—including a second 3-D edition in 2014—and next time, we probably won't be able to throw in free 3-D specs!

Digital Readers: For a pair of 3-D viewers, send a *stamped, self-addressed envelope* to:
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—John Morrow, Ray Zone,
& Roy Thomas.



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On Our Cover: *Depicting the only 1950s super-hero created specifically to be printed in three dimensions, this drawing by Jack Kirby demonstrates the dynamics that would one day earn him his Marvel nickname as "The King." Produced during his partnership with fellow great Joe Simon, who may or may not have contributed directly to it, this illustration—used as both the cover and lead splash artwork in Harvey Comics' Captain 3-D #1 (Dec. 1953)—was most likely inked by yet a third artistic titan: Mort Meskin. Our cavorting co-publisher, John Morrow, combined the 2-D cover figure with the 3-D background of the interior splash to generate TwoMorrows' first-ever 3-D cover! Read more—lots more—about Captain 3-D in this issue!*

Above: *Ye Editor suggested, at one point, the direct opposite of our peerless publisher's approach—namely, a three-dimensional figure of Captain 3-D against a flat, colored background. So we figured you might as well see what this issue's cover could have looked like! John Morrow prepared this version, too. [©2013 Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby; Captain 3-D is a trademark of the Estate of Joe Simon.]*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Glenn Lord & Bill Crouch
—and of **Joe Kubert,**
Norman & Leonard Maurer,
and **Archer St. John,**
the men who brought the dream
of 3-D comics to life—
and of **Ray Zone,**
who kept the dream alive



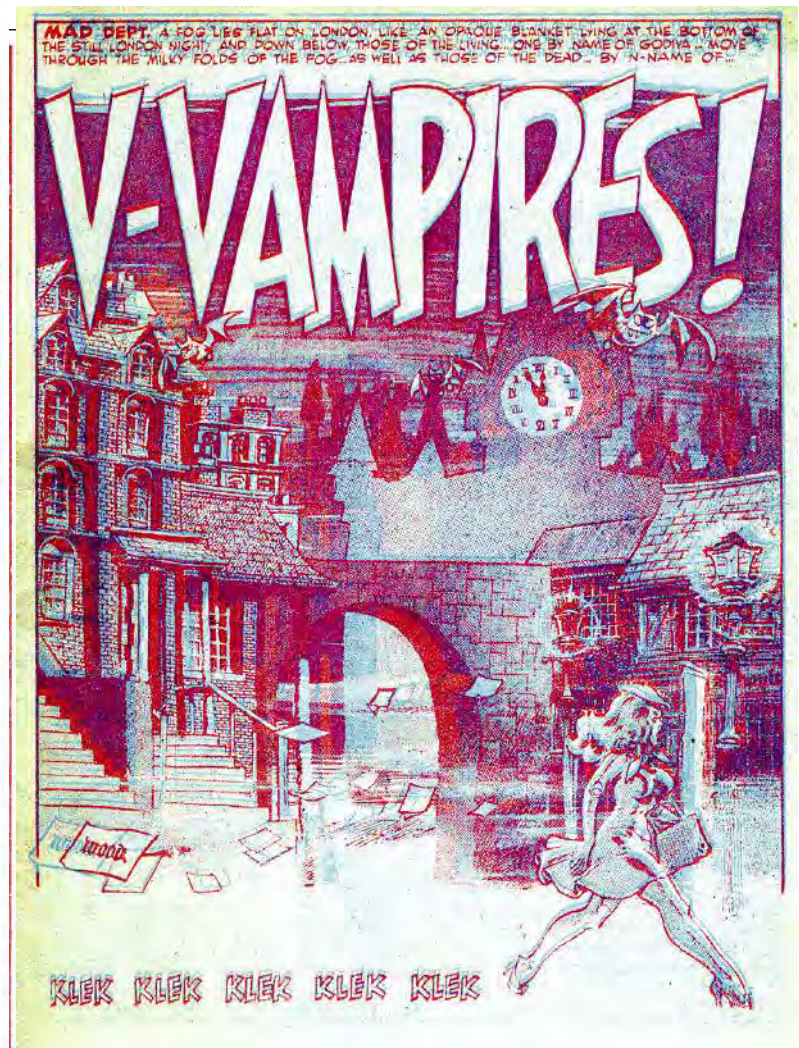
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FIRST PRINTING.

the 3-D-T'S

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE 1950s 3-D COMIC BOOKS

by Ray Zone



Alpha And Omega—in 3-D!

These two splash pages bookend the fleeting mid-1950s era of 3-D comic books: the first in St. John Publishing's *Three Dimension Comics* #1 (Sept. 1953)—and that of writer/layout artist Harvey Kurtzman & artist Wally Wood's "V-Vampires!," a story redrawn and expanded from *Mad* #3 (Feb.-March 1953) for *Three Dimensional EC Classics* #1 (Spring 1954). EC's *Three Dimensional Tales from the Crypt of Terror* #1—and-only had the same date as the latter. (Curiously, in most '50s 3-D comics, the red lens covered the left eye; in EC's, it covered the right one. Set your 3-D Zone/TwoMorrrows viewers accordingly!) Thanks to Ray Zone and Rod Beck, respectively, for the scans. [Pages ©2013 the respective copyright holders & E.C. Publications, Inc.]

The "Mighty Mouse" scripter may be Paul S. Newman, the comics series' regular writer. The artist is unknown; the 1970s *Who's Who of American Comic Books* credits Norman Maurer and Joe Kubert, but they "merely" added 3-D effects to a pre-existing story.

Amazingly, by author Ray Zone's tally, the entire original 3-D period lasted only nine months, from slam-bang start to dead-end finish!

I. Overview In Three Dimensions

When Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer produced *Three Dimension Comics #1* through St. John Publishing Company in the summer of 1953, it was something new under the sun.

There had been stereo drawings, of course, beginning with Charles Wheatstone in 1838. And the Tru-Vue company put out 3-D cartoons as stereo pairs on 35mm film strips with popular comic strip characters in the 1930s. In 1937 the Keystone Company had even published a set of optometrical “Eye Comfort Training” stereo test cards for children which featured 3-D conversions of cartoon art. And, of course, the View-Master Company had been involved in the production of stereo cartoon reels since 1947.

But Joe Kubert was not aware of any of that when he proposed the concept of a 3-D comic book to his partner Norman Maurer. Both of them had a co-publishing arrangement with publisher Archer St. John whereby they were paid royalties on sales for the comic book titles they produced.

Norman contacted his brother Leonard, who had a background in printing technology. Working one full day, Kubert and the Maurer brothers assembled samples to test the 3-D process. Kubert worked up an image of his covean character Tor, and Maurer created a Three Stooges sample. Archer St. John loved them.

St. John was a licensee for Terry-Toons’ *Mighty Mouse*, and it was decided that a 3-D comic book featuring that character was to be rushed into production. When *Three Dimension Comics #1* was published, it sold out a million and a quarter copies virtually overnight. It was immediately reprinted and proceeded to sell over two and a half million copies total.

Joe and Norman filed a patent for their 3-D conversion process, which they termed “3-D Illustereo,” with the intention of licensing their technique to other comic book publishers. Archer St. John intended to convert his entire line of comic books to 3-D. So he rented out two



Call Me *Bwana Devil*

A theatrical poster for *Bwana Devil* (1952), the first feature length 3-D movie—and the cardboard 3-D “glasses” provided for it. The latter sported polarized (not red and green) “lenses.” Producer Arch Oboler had been one of the most celebrated writers in the Golden Age of Radio. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

SIDEBAR #1:

3-D Comics Prehistory—Expanded

A. Before—And During—The 1950s 3-D Movies

One hundred years before Kubert and Maurer invented 3-D comics, Charles Wheatstone, the discoverer of 3-D, drew geometric pairs of images by hand to prove his discovery. Wheatstone used a complex mirror device to view the pairs of images in 3-D. In 1891 in France, Ducos du Hauron invented the anaglyph, the red/blue process that eventually was used to print 3-D comics.

In the early 20th century optometrists used 3-D cartoons to test children’s ability to see 3-D. The Tru-Vue Company of Rock Island, Illinois, in 1933 sold 3-D cartoons viewable on a strip of 35mm flexible film. Among the popular comic strip characters that were available as Tru-Vue 3-D cartoons were Hal Foster’s *Prince Valiant*, E.C. Segar’s *Popeye*, and Chester Gould’s *Dick Tracy*.

In 1939, the View-Master system with its circular disks of seven 3-D pictures and viewing device invented by William Gruber was acquired by Sawyers Photo Processing of Portland, Oregon. After World War II, the View-Master system was distributed widely and featured many cartoon reels with such characters as Superman, Batman, Flash Gordon, and, by the 1970s, Marvel characters such as Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four. 3-D effects for these comic-book reels were produced by drawing two separate left- and right-eye images so that full volumetric roundness was visible. View-Master 3-D cartoon reels were still being produced in 2012.

B. 3-D At The Movies In The 1950s

By the fall of 1953, when *Three Dimension Comics* was released, 3-D movies were playing strong in theatres all over the United States. *Bwana Devil*, the film that had launched the 1950s 3-D movie boom, had been released on November 26, 1952.

The wave of interest in all things 3-D had actually commenced in 1947 when the David White Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, released the Stereo-Realist camera that had been designed and built by Seton Rochwite. Initially, a handheld “red button” viewer with internal illumination was also released for viewing the stereo slide transparencies produced by the Stereo-Realist camera. Then, stereo projectors appeared on the market, and this led to formation of a number of 3-D clubs where members gathered to view projected stereo slides as a group. Some of these clubs are still running strong today, like the LA 3D Club (LA3Dclub.com), with members producing 3-D images using digital cameras, and sharing their work in numerous programs and competitive exhibitions.

By 1953, the wave had gathered full force, as anaglyphic 3-D began appearing in publications of various kinds, from 3-D *Movie* magazine with Marilyn Monroe on the cover to anaglyphic inserts in *Popular Mechanics* and full-page ads in newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times*. The 3-D comic books made their appearance in the midst of this worldwide wave of interest in stereoscopic photography and motion pictures.



additional floors of a building on Third Avenue for an assembly line.

Production of the St. John 3-D comics was done with the use of four to five clear acetate cels over a Craftint board. The different levels of depth were made as line drawings on the individual cels and then opaqued on the back with white. When the acetate cels were shifted left and right on top of each other over the Craftint board, the separate left- and right-eye views were produced and subsequently shot with negative printing film. The acetate cels were punched for accurate pin-registration in the same manner as that used for cartoon animation. It was a laborious process that produced a 3-D effect having as many as six levels of apparent depth on a comic book page.

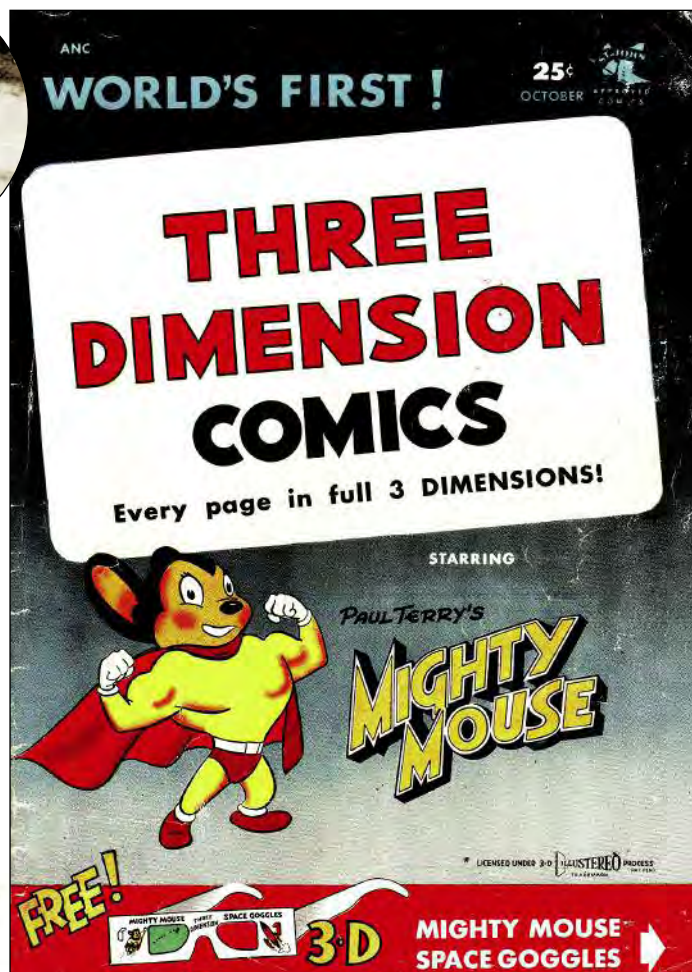
Kubert and Maurer subsequently published three-dimensional issues of *Tor*, *The Three Stooges*, *Little Eva*, *House of Terror*, and *Whack*, a satirical comic book along the lines of *Mad*. One of the stories included in *Whack* #1 was titled "The 3-D-T's, A Look behind the Scenes of America's Screwiest Industry," and ridiculed the frenetic 3-D comics stampede, with Norman and Joe featured as characters. Archer St. John, with the *nom de comic* "St. Peter," was also caricatured in a second, 2-D installment of this series.

As soon as *Three Dimension Comics* #1 had appeared on the newsstands in the summer of 1953, all the comic publishers had taken notice. For the March 1987 issue of *Starlog* magazine, David Hutchison interviewed DC production manager Jack Adler about DC Comics' entry into the 3-D comic book market.



Of Mighty Mice And Men

Publisher Archer St. John, from a 1950s photo courtesy of Fred Robinson & Matt D. Baker... and the 2-D cover of *Three Dimension Comics* #1, with thanks to Rod Beck. Artist unknown. [Cover ©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



ILLUSTRATED #1
3/16/53
REG. PAT. PEND.



JOE KUBERT
NORMAN MAURER
LEN MAURER



They Were Nobody's Stooges!

(Left-to-right images from the dawn of 3-D comics:)

Artists Joe Kubert (seated) and Norman Maurer in the oft-reprinted photo from the inside front covers of St. John's *Three Stooges* #1 and *One Million Years Ago* #1, both cover-dated Sept. 1953. The first 3-D issues of both series (#2 of each) were dated Oct. 1953.

One of the experimental "Three Stooges" panels that Norm prepared overnight and showed to publisher Archer St. John to demonstrate the viability of 3-D comics. This art, like the photo of Moe and the Maurers at right, saw print in Craig Yoe's highly recommended 2011 hardcover *Amazing 3-D Comics!* (See p. 50.) There was reportedly a Kubert "Tor" sample 3-D page, as well. [©2013 Joan Howard Maurer.]

Moe Howard (head of the "reel-life" Three Stooges, minus his fright-wig)... comics artist/writer/editor Norman Maurer (who was married to Moe's daughter Joan)... and Norm's brother, the technologically inclined Leonard Maurer. Thanks to Craig Yoe & Clizia Gussoni.

To the extent possible, in this issue we've refrained from repeating images that appear in Yoe's book, which reprinted a number of complete stories. Your comics library should contain both it and *A/E* #115—as well as Hal Morgan & Dan Symmes' 1982 tome *Amazing 3-D*, which covers the whole '50s phenomenon and contains an excellent section on the comics.

"I was working at DC, which was then known as National Periodicals, doing color separations for them," Adler recalled. "There were rumors in the industry that someone was toying with the idea of 3-D for comics. [Production chief] Sol Harrison came over to me and asked if I had ever heard of such a thing and could I do it? I said, yes, it could be done. And he said, 'Do it.' It was just as simple as that.

"My interests lay in the area of optics and photography. In the natural course of exploring optics, I learned about 3-D photography, how and why it worked. The very day Sol Harrison asked me about 3-D comics, I took apart a panel and reassembled it on cels to show how it could be done. I took a panel out of one of our books—I think it was of two mice chasing each other.

"I worked out a formula that would allow you to create the illusion of correct relative size and distance. In other words, you could create the effect of something being 10 inches or 10 feet in front of you. Eventually, I applied for a patent for my method of creating 3-D drawings, but I was turned down on the premise that I used materials and methods from other things."

Jack Adler's figuring out the cel acetate 3-D conversion process swiftly led to publication of *Superman* "in Startling 3-D Life-Like Action" in November 1953 and *Batman* "Adventures in Amazing 3-D Action" in December.

To the great dismay of Maurer and Kubert, other publishers, too, quickly began to issue 3-D comics without acquiring a license for "3-D Illustereo." In fact, the only company besides St.

Getting The "3-Disease"

The first page of "The 3-D-T's," the "behind-the-scenes" story of 3-D comics from *Whack* #1 (Oct. 1953).

Art and story by Norman Maurer (who's caricatured at right), probably with input from co-editor Joe Kubert (center). Thanks to Ray Zone. [©2013 Estates of Joe Kubert & Norman Maurer.]



SIDEBAR #2: The Cel Method

Using clear acetate overlays with two different sets of registration punch marks on the cels, true 3-D effects were achieved from primarily "flat" source material for both 3-D comic books and the 3-D animated cartoons of the early 1950s. With a US Patent (No. 2,776,594) for a "Method of and Means for Producing Stereoscopic Animated Cartoons," William F. Garity illustrated and described a method of "preparing cels, bearing representations of objects at different distances from an observer, for the production of animated cartoon films for stereoscopic projection."

Garity's patent was applied for on August 18, 1953, just two months before Freeman H. Owens' 1936 patent (see p. 34) was due to expire. Garity's patent was eventually granted on January 8, 1957, and had been assigned by Garity to Walter Lantz

Productions, which had used it to produce *Hypnotic Hick*, a seven-minute 3-D cartoon featuring Lantz's popular Woody Woodpecker and released to movie theatres on August 26, 1953.

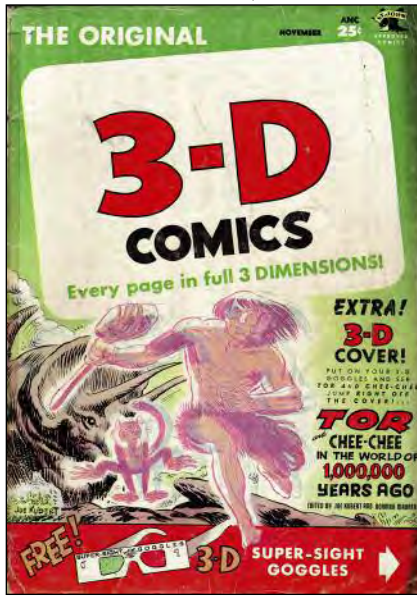
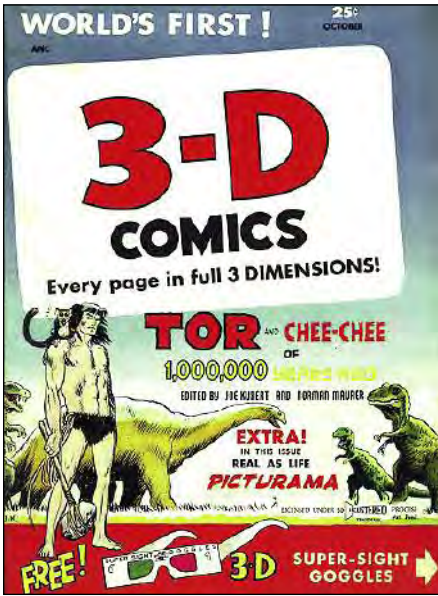
Observing *Hypnotic Hick* closely in 3-D, as well as some of the other animated cartoons of 1953 like *Boo Moon* (featuring Casper the Friendly Ghost) and *Ace of Space* (with Popeye), instances of true stereoscopic drawing are occasionally present with actual elements drawn as discrete right- and left-eye stereo pairs. This was also the case with some of the Harvey 3-D comics that were published at the same time. Most of the 1950s 3-D comic books and cartoons, however, exhibited a world of stereoscopic visual space consisting of four or five planar or "flat" levels going back into the page or screen.



THRILL-PACKED 3-D SECTION

A STEREOSCOPIC & INCOMPLETE
BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF 1950s 3-D COMICS,
COMPANY BY COMPANY

St. John Publishing Co.



Tor De Force

Joe Kubert's celebrated "Tor" series was launched in the full-color *One Million Years Ago* (Sept. 1953)—but after that, things got confusing. The second issue, whose cover is seen at far left, was officially titled *3-D Comics* #2 (Oct. 1953). The very next month saw the third "Tor"-starring mag—which was also titled *3-D Comics* #2, though with a publication date of Nov. '53! The latter's cover, seen at near left, spotlighted 3-D figures of Kubert's cavorting caveman and his pet proto-monkey Chee-Chee.

Also depicted, from scans sent by Ray Zone: Kubert's two-page "Panelrama" spread from the first *3-D Comics* #2. In the early 2000s, DC reprinted all "Tor" and related prehistoric St. John material in beautiful hardcover editions, but in color and not in 3-D; in the 1980s Ray Zone had overseen the collecting of much of Kubert's 3-D "Tor" in comics format. Craig Yoe's recent *Amazing 3-D Comics!* volume reprints one entire "Tor" story in 3-D. And we'll have more 3-D "Tor" in next issue's Kubert tribute. [©2013 Estate of Joe Kubert.]





A Captain Courageous

This third and final Kirby (& Meskin?) splash page from *Captain 3-D* #1, like the other two, illustrates a point that The King made to fan/writer/editor Martin L. Greim, as recorded in *AC Comics' Golden-Age Men of Mystery* #15: "Kirby pointed out to me once that a lot of other 3-D books were done wrong. The 3-D effect showed objects flying *into* the panels instead of leaping *out* of them." Certainly Simon & Kirby didn't make that mistake! [All comics material on this page ©2013 Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby.]



W.M.D.'s, Simon & Kirby Style

(Right:) This Kirby/Meskin page, reproduced from the original art, which depicts the weapons of mass destruction wielded against each other by the warring denizens of the World of D—juxtaposed with a key panel from the 3-D version, which displays an impressive degree of depth. Thanks to Dominic Bongo for retrieving the art at right for us from the Heritage Comics Archives.



BLUE

HARVEY PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Captain 3-D #2!

Amazingly, it's been learned in the past decade-plus that most of the interior pages of *Captain 3-D #2* still exist—or at the very least, photocopies of the pencils do. Jack Kirby wasn't directly involved in that art; but much of the penciling is by the great *Mort Meskin*, who (besides inking much of #1) had done stellar artwork in the 1940s on "Johnny Quick," "Vigilante," "The Black Terror," "The Fighting Yank," et al.! Seen below is Meskin's splash page from one story intended for #2; it's reproduced here, for the first time ever, courtesy of Ethan Roberts, owner of the original art. Thanks a 3-D million, Ethan! [Art ©2013 Estates of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby.]



(Above:) Mort Meskin. Photo sent courtesy of sons Peter and Phil for A/E #24.



IN NEW YORK'S TIMES SQUARE THE CAR SUIT FOR A SUPER LIGHT TO CHANGE. IT DOES—AND DANIEL DAUBS AND CAPTAIN 3-D BEGIN A NEW AND DEADLY ADVENTURE!

THEY BEAT US ON THE COTTAQUIN! CABBY, TWENTY BUCKS IF YOU BEAT THAT OTHER CAB TO THE NEXT RED LIGHT!

TWENTY BUCKS, MISTER YOU'VE GOT A DEAL!

THE 3-D CONDO CAB TAKES UP SPACE, CREDS THE FIRST TOWARDS THE CURB—



MIND-NUMBING NOTE: Want to see more of the never-published *Captain 3-D #2*? Just turn the page!

[Continued from p. 8]

After a strong start, sales on 3-D comic books plummeted rapidly. From (cover dates) September 1953 to June 1954, a total of 51 different 3-D comic books were published by a variety of publishers.

Dismal sales of 3-D comics by December of 1953 undermined Archer St. John. Another blow to Joe and Norm's "3-D Illustereo" came in the fall of 1953, when they were sued for patent infringement by William Gaines, publisher of the EC Comics line. Unknowingly, Joe and Norm had infringed on a 1936 patent that had been granted to inventor Freeman H. Owens for a "Method of Drawing and Photographing Stereoscopic Pictures in Relief" (US Patent No. 2,057,051).

Though the patent was due to expire on October 13, 1953, Gaines licensed it from Owens and proceeded to sue Kubert, the Maurer brothers, and St. John for infringement. At the same time, Gaines proceeded with plans to publish two 3-D comic titles, *Three Dimensional EC Classics* and *Three Dimensional Tales from the Crypt of Terror*, which eventually saw print in the spring of 1954. The books featured excellent art and 3-D effects by the stable of EC artists which included Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Bernard Krigstein, and Graham Ingels.

Joe Kubert went on to produce thousands of pages of comic book art and to found The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey. Norman Maurer migrated back to Hollywood to produce motion pictures. Archer St. John exited the comic book business.

Three Dimension Comics #1 had been an artistic and cultural anomaly, an economic quirk in the comic book publishing landscape. It had been the first time that cartoon line art had been published in anaglyphic form in a comic book, and children everywhere in America had responded with eager eyes and hands to this unprecedented visual innovation.

II. JOE KUBERT & NORMAN MAURER Discuss The Origin Of 3-D Comic Books

Following are excerpts from a conversation that was videotaped by the author at the 1986 San Diego Comic Convention for a panel discussion between Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer about the 3-D comics of the 1950s. It was the first meeting of the two artists after an interim of many years, and there was great humor and affection evident between the two longtime friends during an in-depth discussion of their early years as comic artists.

Kubert and Maurer were among the first artists in the comic book industry to negotiate for and secure "creators' rights" with participation in profits for individual titles that they launched and produced. Three Dimension Comics #1 (Sept. 1953), featuring "Mighty Mouse" and published by St. John Publishing Co., was among several titles in which Kubert and Maurer had profit participation.

JOE KUBERT: What happened was, I had just come out of the



Two For The 3-Saw

Two men whose work with 3-D would profoundly affect Kubert & Maurer—and even more so, Archer St. John: (Left:) Inventor Freeman H. Owens, seen in 1924 with a home movie projector. This photo was retrieved from the Freeman H. Owens Photo Page website by Ken Quattro; Ken is conducting his own research into 3-D comics, which will appear in a 2014 issue of *A/E*.

(Right:) William M. Gaines, publisher of EC Comics. Photo put on the Internet by daughter Wendy Gaines Bucci; provided to us by Michael Feldstein.

service in 1952. And I had been stationed in Germany. Norm was out in California with his wife and his family. When I got out of the Army, the first thing I did was to take a vacation with my wife.

And when I got back to New York I contacted Archer St. John, who had seen my work and was interested in doing something with some of the ideas that I had shown. At that point I contacted Norm and Joan and said, "Look, I think we have some sort of a deal that looks viable. Come out here and see what we can set up." So Norm and Joan did come out, and we started publishing with St. John and we were co-publishers. And we participated in the profits of any of the publishing ventures that we were into.

NORMAN MAURER: Right, and that deal was on "flat" comics.

KUBERT: That's right. And so, anyhow, we started putting out these comics; that was *Tor*, *Three Stooges*, and *Whack* and several others. And at that time Norm and I talked about doing something different. We said, "Let's see if we can do something different. Something that's just a little bit off the beaten track." And I remembered, when I was in Europe, where I was stationed, I had seen some magazines with three-dimensional photographs. And they included the red and green lenses with which you saw the photographs.

MAURER: And 3-D movies were going big at that time. *Bwana Devil* was a big hit.

KUBERT: So I asked Norm, I said, "What do think about the idea of transposing what we do with illustration, technically, and putting out a 3-D comic book? We will make the drawings and turn them into 3-D." Norm's first reaction was "Naaahhhh...!" That's always his first reaction. He was always testing you. As if to say, "If you don't really feel strongly about what you're doing... forget about it!" Which is great. And so Norm contacted his brother Len, who had some background in techniques of printing.

MAURER: Yeah, Len was a graduate engineer of Georgia Tech. He had more brains than we do when it came to this technical stuff.

KUBERT: So we all got together. We put together the samples of the thing and...

MAURER: No, wait a minute... We worked it out in one day, and toward evening we thought we had it licked and put it all together. My brother worked for Supreme Knitting Needles, now owned by Singer Sewing Machine, way out in the valley, and they had a little print shop there. And he went driving all the way back to Long Island, opened up the factory, went into the print shop, and in the wee hours of the morning he came back with this stuff printed in red and blue. And we had no glasses.

KUBERT: I remember that. Yes, yes...

MAURER: So we were out looking for red and green cellophane at 9 o'clock in the morning in 1953 in New York City.

KUBERT: We couldn't tell if the stuff worked or not! We couldn't see the 3-D...

MAURER: Well, we all remembered one thing...that they used to sell lollipops that were wrapped up in different colors of cellophane. And we went and bought some. By morning we had the glasses and we almost fainted because it worked!

KUBERT: It actually worked!

MAURER: I'll never forget that meeting with St. John when Joe—and Joe was more of a convincer then because he had set up the original deal.

KUBERT: You had stage fright...

MAURER: No, no stage fright... and he just about had St. John almost convinced, and then he showed him the stuff. And I remember St. John sitting in front of that fifth-floor window and when he looked at the stuff he leaned back in his chair and I thought he was going to fall out the window....

KUBERT: Yeah, he looked at the stuff and I thought, "Oh my God!"

MAURER: And we made the deal like that, just like that.

KUBERT: Well, I must tell you a little about St. John. Archer St. John was his actual name and he was the publisher of St. John comics...

MAURER: A saint he wasn't...

KUBERT: Don't speak ill of the dead. But he was a tall guy and he used to be an executive with the Lionel Train Company. After that he put together his publishing company and he was very conservative, an ultra-conservative type. And that was the person that two nuts were working with, putting out these crazy comic books and ultimately the 3-D magazines. And we had an arrangement with him that we were partners, co-publishers, when it came to any of the material that we produced.

MAURER: When that first 3-D book was proposed, everybody thought that he and Joe and I were crazy. You used to be able to buy then 64 pages in full color for a dime. And here we were putting out 32 pages in black-&-white for a quarter. And everybody figured this can't go. Well, it sold out overnight. We sold two and half million copies.

KUBERT: Our first run was a million and a quarter copies. And we went back to press.

MAURER: It was written up in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as the biggest-selling comic magazine of that year, bettering *Superman* and all the rest.

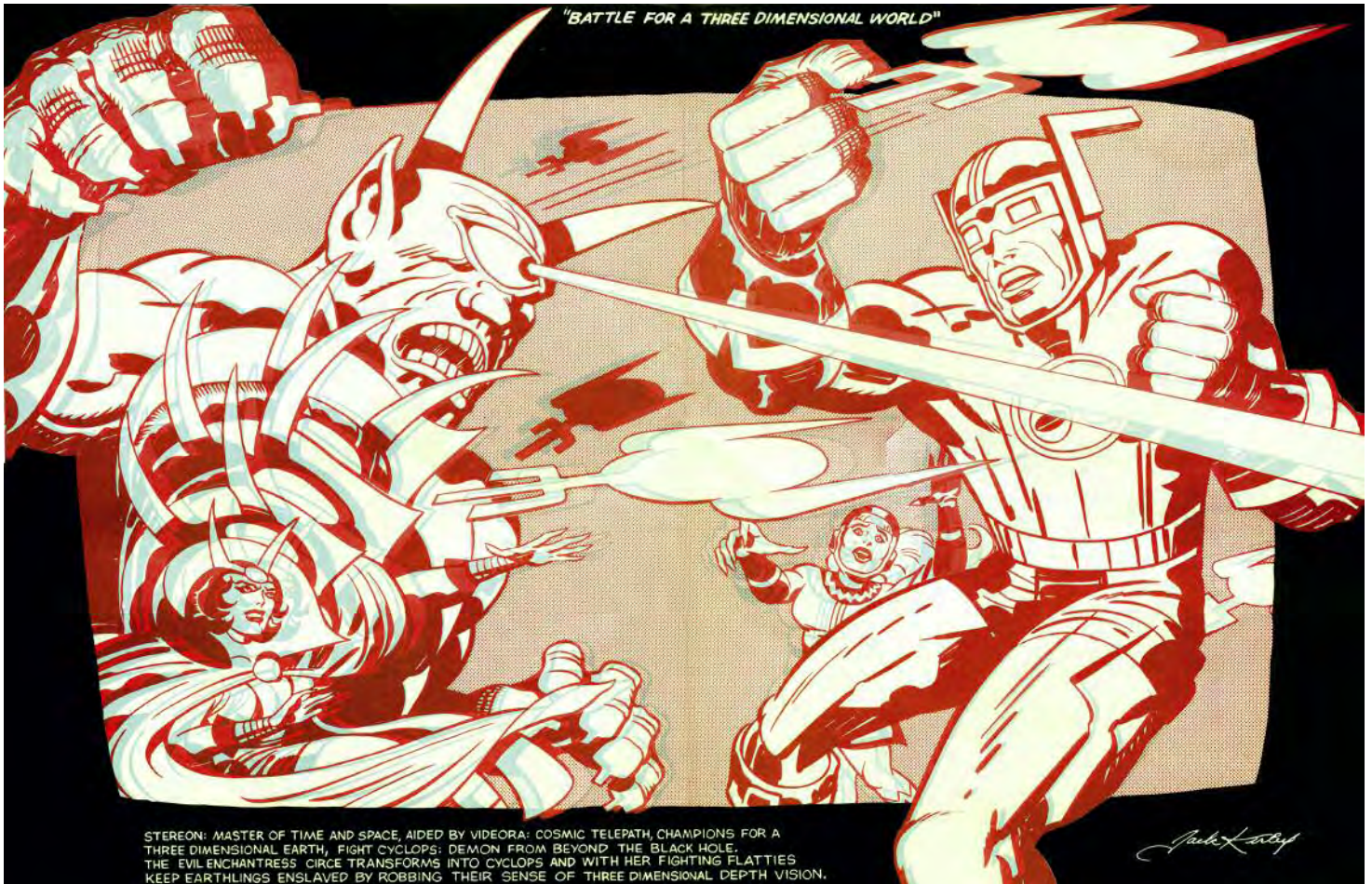
Now, St. John was a strange man, very difficult to pin down. He was a bloody dynamo when he had an exciting project. And the minute he finished it, he would disappear. You couldn't find him.

KUBERT: He ordered champagne after that first 3-D book... a lot of bottles.



Giving It A Whack

This one's definitely worth putting on your 3-D glasses for! The caricatured Norman Maurer (on left) and Joe Kubert are forced to draw all the St. John 3-D comics themselves after their overworked staff rebels, in "The 3-D-T's" story from *Whack* #1; art and perhaps script by Maurer. A photo of the boys was seen back on p. 5. Thanks to Rod Beck. [©2013 Estates of Norman Maurer & Joe Kubert.]



Kirby & 3-D—Together Again!

(Left:) This Jack Kirby 3-D image was part of 1982's *Battle for a Three Dimensional World*. It depicts the hero, Stereon, battling a Cyclops—surely the perfect foil for a 3-D hero! (Below:) Kirby color 3-D: Stereochrome for an ad in *Battle*. Script & 3-D on both images by Ray Zone. [©2013 3-D Video Corporation.]

Publications and elicit the secret of the 3-D process from Joe. "I got it! Straight from the horse's mouth!" G-2 reports back to his boss. "All you do is draw with one eye shut—and then do the same drawing with the other eye shut!" Soon St. Peter is besieged in his office by litigants serving him cease-and-desist orders. He eventually collapses, succumbing to a case of the 3-D-T's, with one eye turning red and the other green.

It was only after Kubert and Maurer produced this second "3-D-T's" story that they experienced their day in court with Bill Gaines. In the months afterward, St. Peter's delirious wish therein for a return to "the good old days of publishing *flat books*" would become a reality. 3-D comics and "3-D effect" books would trickle out for the next six months. But it was obvious that 3-D comics had become a short-lived "blip" on the comic book horizon.

Epilogue: JACK KIRBY Returns To 3-D Comics

In 1982, nearly thirty years after co-creating *Captain 3-D* for Harvey Comics, Jack Kirby returned to the world of 3-D comics by drawing the art for *Battle for a Three-Dimensional World*, a sixteen-page 3-D "cosmic book" published by 3D Video Corporation of North Hollywood, California.

Written by Ray Zone, *Battle for a Three-Dimensional World* was a combined history of 3-D technology and a promotional tool for 3D Video Corporation, which at the time was licensing anaglyph

versions of 1950s 3-D films for syndicated television broadcasts in the United States. And they were selling millions of anaglyph glasses through convenience stores to view the programs.

Subsequently, Kirby produced the art for three 3-D "Sports Action Posters" featuring The Honeycomb Kid that were available along with 3-D glasses as a premium in boxes of Honeycomb Cereal, from the Post Company.

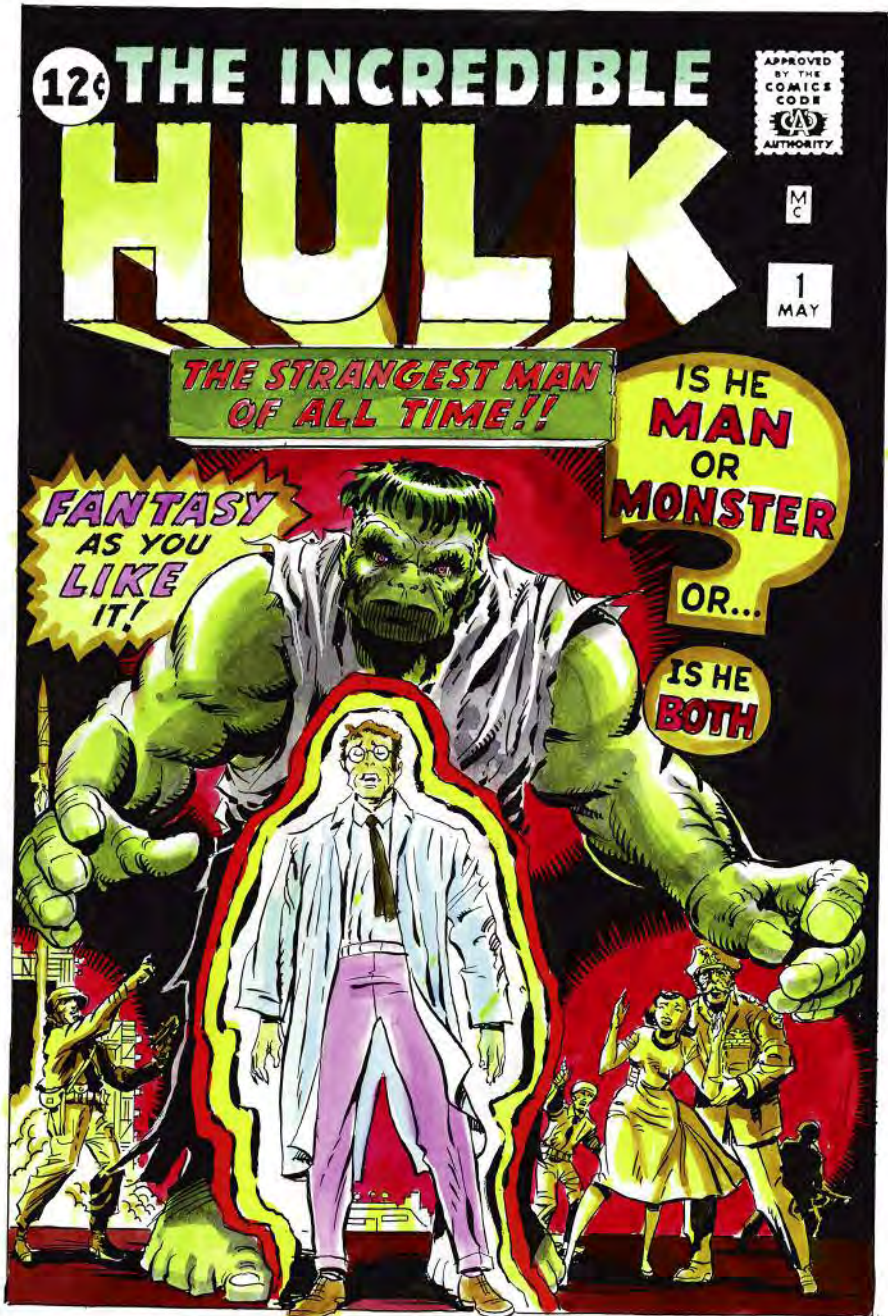
These were converted to 3-D by Ray Zone. A second issue of *Captain 3-D* planned by Harvey Comics was never published. Kirby's 1953 art for the cover for *Captain 3-D* #2 was re-linked





ALTER EGO #110 FEATURED A PORTFOLIO OF IMITATION *MARVEL* COVERS DRAWN BY MY BOSS, MICHAEL T. BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE SPACE FOR HIS *HULK* #1 REDO. HERE GILBERT IMAGINES WHAT THAT CLASSIC COVER MIGHT HAVE LOOKED LIKE HAD IT BEEN INKED IN A MORE SPOOKY STYLE BY STURDY STEVE DITKO (WHO REPLACED JACK KIRBY INKER PAUL REINMAN THE FOLLOWING ISSUE). EXPECT EVEN MORE SURPRISES IN OUR LATEST, GREATEST...

COMIC CRYPT UPDATE!



The cover to *The Incredible Hulk* #1 (May 1962), probably inked by Paul Reinman, and a panel from issue #2's "The Terror of the Toad Men" (July 1962) inked by Steve Ditko. [©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Comic Crypt Updates!

by Michael T. Gilbert

Abe Kanegson!

Last year we ran a Comic Crypt series devoted to the mighty Abe Kanegson, Will Eisner's brilliant *Spirit* letterer (*A/E* #101-103, 105-106). On May 24, 2012, Abe's niece Ruth Levine sent an e-mail accompanied by two of her uncle's unpublished drawings:

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

My name is Ruth Kanegson Levine. Abe Kanegson was my uncle. My father, Mack, was his oldest brother.

Last weekend I spent a few days with my aunt, Rita Perlin, in New York at her home. I had been hearing about your interviews with some family members for a year regarding Abe and his years as a letterer. I was so excited to finally read all of your articles in *Alter Ego* that I finished them all in one sitting.

Abe was 22 years older than me. Most of that time he was ill, so he was an enigma to me, even though I lived in the same two-family house as he in the Bronx. My fondest memories are of his calling square dances and singing at my grandparents' bungalow colony in Mountandale on many Saturday nights.



I occasionally see his wife, Elizabeth (Betty), and his sons, Ben and Andras. Unfortunately, I do not see them as often as I would like, being that I live in Minnesota and they in three different states.

I plan to share the issues of *Alter Ego* with my children and grandchildren. This is so much a part of our family history, of which I knew little.

Thank you so much for your perseverance. It is truly appreciated.

Best wishes,

Ruth Levine

I thanked Ruth and received this reply a few days later:

Dear Michael:

Thanks so much for your response. I am in my sixties now, and was 21 and pregnant with my first daughter when Abe died (we got married young in those days). I knew he had worked on some comic books, but that was about it. It was before my time. Besides listening to him sing, I loved watching him sketch and was in awe of his talent. I am attaching two drawings of his that my parents had.

Two by Kanegson!

The two rare undated Abe Kanegson paintings on this page and the next come to us courtesy of Ruth and Jerry Levine.

[Art ©2013 Abe Kanegson Estate.]

We also have examples of Kanegson's brilliant lettering for Will Eisner's "The Christmas Spirit," the story which appeared in *The Spirit Section* for Dec. 24, 1950. [©2013 Will Eisner Studios, Inc.]





Of Graphic Stories & Wonderworlds

A Conversation With Writer, Publisher, & Bookstore Owner

RICHARD KYLE

Wherein He Tells Of Buying *Action Comics* #1 Off The Stands, & Other Thrills Of Reading Comics In Their Golden Age

(The 7th installment of our 9-part series devoted to Fandom's 50th Birthday Bash, held at Comic-Con International 2011 in San Diego. Richard Kyle was a Guest of Honor at that event.)

by Bill Schelly

A major highlight of the Comic-Con International 2011's 50th Anniversary of Comics Fandom events was the opportunity to meet guest of honor Richard Kyle. When I think about all the writers for the fan publications of the 1960s and early 1970s, Richard Kyle looms large in my memory and personal estimation. At a time when all of us wanted folks to understand that comic art could and should be taken seriously, and wasn't just for kids, Richard came along to establish a tone of discourse that was intelligent, well-considered, yet down-to-Earth and relatable.

One of the problems was that the name of the field itself—"the comics"—seemed to misrepresent the types of stories that were among the most popular in the medium. There was nothing "comic" about adventure, crime, horror, Western, war, or, yes, even super-hero stories. We needed a new term for the art form that captivated us, and Richard Kyle gave us a couple of very useful ones: "graphic story" and "graphic novel." Not perfect terms that satisfied everyone, to be sure, but a step in the right direction, and they are still in use today.

Those terms, of course, were invented by Kyle as part of his intelligent essays on various aspects of the form, which included articles for such fan publications as *Xero*, *Alter Ego*—and *Fantasy Illustrated*, which changed its title to *Graphic Story Magazine* with its 8th issue. Therefore, as my excitement was building for Comic-Con 2011, I was thrilled to finally have a nice, long chat by phone with Richard about his life, his writings, his own fanzine (*Graphic*

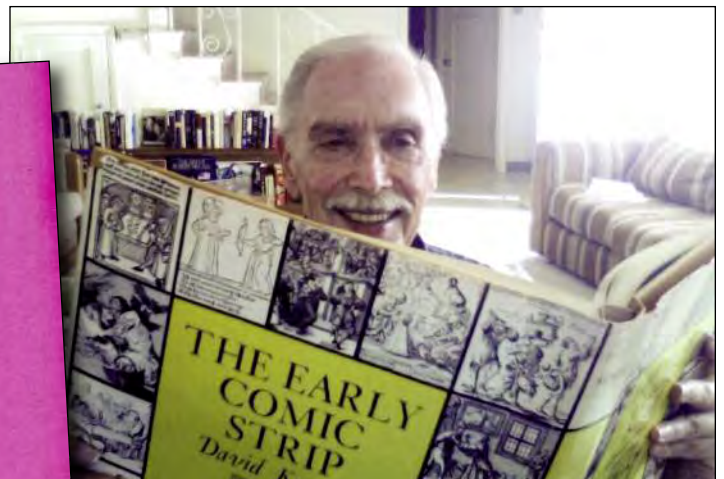
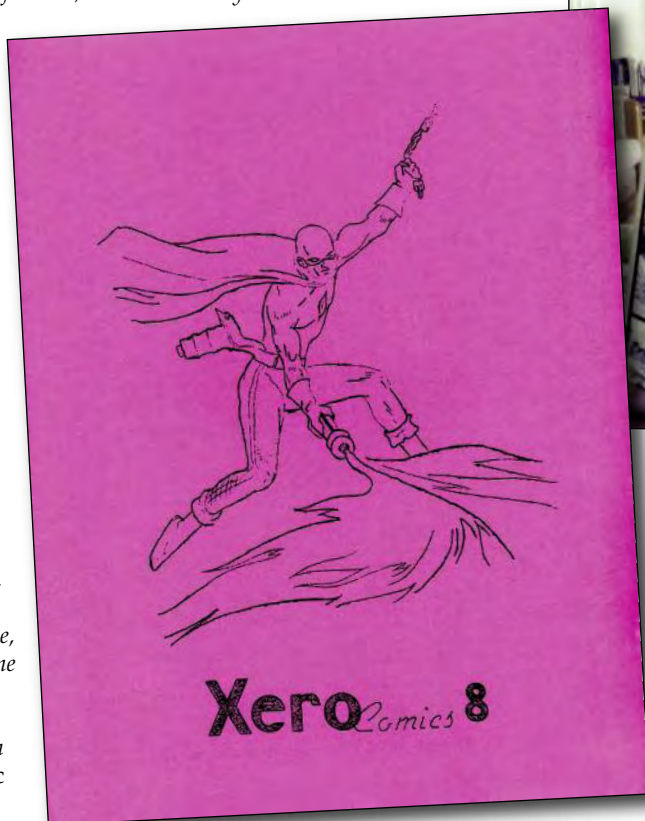
Story World / *Wonderworld*), and his bookstore. *Alter Ego* is proud to present what we believe is the first in-depth interview with Richard, as part of our coverage of the 50th Anniversary of Comics Fandom.

This conversation took place on February 27, 2011, when the Comic-Con special events were in the planning stages, and was transcribed by our very own Brian K. Morris.

BILL SCHELLY: Let's start with the obvious beginning... when and where were you born?

RICHARD KYLE: I was born in Oakland, California, in April of 1929. We left Oakland and traveled all over southern California and the Southwest, when I was just a baby. And then when I was 11, why, we moved back to Oakland and I grew up there.

BS: What did your dad do?



Keep The Flame Burning!

Richard Kyle at home in Long Beach, California, with some esteemed reading matter—plus the back cover of Dick & Pat Lupoff's 1961 mimeographed fanzine *Xero* #8, which featured Kyle's groundbreaking article "The Education of Victor Fox."

As "Jim Moriarty," Kyle even rendered an artistic approximation of Lou Fine's version of *The Flame*.

At top right of this page is the ID badge from the 2011 San Diego Comic-Con, which was designed by Gary Sassaman.

[©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

KYLE: My father was in the Navy, in the submarine service. This was in the early '20s, when submarines had to use batteries to run underwater. There was a serious accident, the submarine shipped sea water into the batteries, and the combination created chlorine gas—I'm told—and severely damaged his lungs. Soon he discovered he had TB. In those days it was commonly fatal. He died a young man, when I was just four.

BS: *So you were brought up by your mom.... What did she do?*

KYLE: My mother was a nurse. She'd taken her training in San Diego at Mercy Hospital.

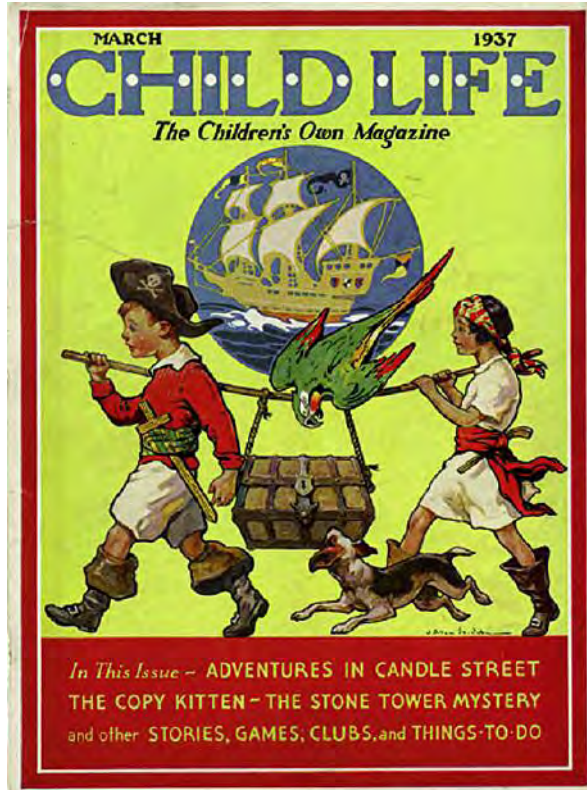
BS: *What was around when you started becoming aware of reading material as a child?*

KYLE: There was, oddly enough, a magazine called *Child Life*, which I loved. But that must have been a bit later. I discovered comics when I saw what was probably the first issue of the first comic book, *Famous Funnies*. It could have been an even earlier trial issue, I'm not dead sure. But I can remember going with my stepfather into what would now be called a mom-and-pop grocery store and seeing piles of these comic books there. They were extraordinarily colorful, and there were all these wonderful pictures and there was everything and I couldn't read. Or I could kind of read but I couldn't read up to the level of comic books, so I knew not to ask. It was the Depression and comics cost a dime, nothing today, but the equivalent of \$2 or more then. You didn't idly spend the price of a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk on a kid's whim. Anyway, I started reading comic books fairly soon after that, a few months, maybe six months, somewhere in there. By late 1934 and particularly 1935, I was reading any comic book I could find.

BS: *Plus the comic strips in the newspaper, I would think.*

KYLE: Yeah. I loved *Mickey Mouse*. And *Big Sister*. And *Popeye*. And *Mr. Dinglehoffer and His Dog*. And so many good ones. Characters like Alley Oop and Tarzan. Professor Watasnozzle and the planet Reverso, that probably gave birth to Bizarro. *Little Orphan Annie*. *Buck Rogers*. But still, there was something about the comic book format that really drew me. Somehow when they repackaged the strips into comic books they became something new. *Roy Powers*, *Eagle Scout*, which ran in *Famous Funnies*, and AP's *Scorchy Smith*, were transformed. I never saw *Roy Powers* in a newspaper, but it couldn't have looked better in one. *Roy Powers* was drawn by Frank Godwin, who also did *Connie*, about a model, I think, who ended up travelling to the moon. Godwin was a brilliant pen-and-ink artist, and his work showed up extraordinarily well in reproduction. At some point, United Features started reprinting their own comic strips. Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson began *New Comics* and *Fun Comics*, and so on. I don't remember buying the first issue of any of them, but I clearly read them because I've remembered them for years.

BS: *When Action Comics #1 came along, you were certainly old enough*



Next Stop—Boy's Life?

One of young Richard Kyle's favorite magazines was Rand-McNally's *Child Life*. Depicted is the cover of the March 1937 issue. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

to read that very well.

KYLE: You know, I almost passed up buying *Action* #1. I read it at the drugstore soda fountain and discovered it was a continued story, and I wasn't sure about spending my money on it, even though I liked the story. I thought the artwork was terrific. I'd seen Shuster's work on his other strips, and I was a great fan. But I'd have to wait a month. That same day, a black-&-white reprint of Lee Falk's *Phantom* had come out and I loved it. I thought it was terrific. So my stepfather, in a flash of generosity beyond imagining for him, [chuckles] bought both of them for me.

BS: *So you were right there, having purchased a copy of Action #1 off the stands, thanks to your stepdad.*

KYLE: Well, yeah, although I hate to give him credit. He was everything that the evil stepfather should be, except that he wasn't physically abusive.

BS: *Oh, okay. Well, we won't give him—*

KYLE: And he had many admirable characteristics, but he displayed none of them to us.

BS: *I suppose you were trying to get comics for a nickel or trading with friends and so on.*

KYLE: Yeah, but you know, there were comparatively few at the time. It's hard for me to imagine there were more than a dozen or so comic books.... Of course, most of them were terrible. But in school, kids traded them around.

BS: *What was your experience in World War II like?*

KYLE: It was the most interesting experience of my life. My mother had divorced my stepfather.... There was no immediate discomfort. We lived in Oakland. The town was an embarkation point for the military and it ran 24 hours a day. I grew up during the war, and when I was thirteen, because we really needed the money, I left school. I could see that I was not going to have enough money to get a college education unless something extraordinary happened. So I left school to go to work and I was independent of my mother, essentially, kind of living my own life.

BS: *What kind of work were you able to get at that age?*

KYLE: I had my full height—maybe I was an inch shorter—and so I was like five-ten to five-eleven. I looked mature for my age and I dressed in grownup clothes. I got a job for Safeway, the large grocery chain which is still in existence, and I worked with them for a while, and I worked for a typewriter repair service for a while. Later, toward the end of the war, I worked in a concrete block manufacturing company and had several other jobs. However, I was regarded as a truant by the Department of Education. They threatened to put me in some farm for delinquent kids and I wasn't delinquent. I was a little wild, but not a delinquent. So I managed to flee to Stockton and worked in a chocolate factory up there for a few months. The school authorities lost

interest in me, and then I came back to Oakland. By the time the war was over, I could pass myself off as 21. I used to drink in bars and all the rest of it, without any problem at all. And they didn't care too much in those days, but still, if you really looked young...

BS: Right, and you were what? Seventeen? Sixteen?

KYLE: Yeah, yeah. So anyway, I worked up in Stockton for a while.... I can't remember the name of the chocolate factory now. They made chocolates for sort of upscale places then, handmade chocolates.

BS: What kind of reading material did you read during the war in terms of comics and then non-comics?

KYLE: I read science-fiction pulps and comic books and I read *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow* and all the trash that is supposed to destroy the human mind that they could think of at that time. [Bill chuckles] Naturally I was really worried about my brain, so during the Korean War I took equivalency tests for the first year of college and I scored in the 93rd percentile.

BS: My goodness. And when were you in the Army?

KYLE: During the Korean War. I was drafted in January of '51, and discharged in December of '52. I served in Japan, where I took CBR training—Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Warfare training—in case the Russians dropped an atomic bomb on us and I had to defend my unit. And after Korea, where I served as a combat infantryman, while I was waiting around to be discharged—our transport had arrived home a week early—they tried to talk me into the National Guard. But I was wise. Anyway, as I said, I scored in the 93rd percentile and I thought to myself, "Boy, you're really one hell of a smart guy." [Bill laughs]

And then I realized something that I don't believe the educational authorities of the day had ever considered. That is, you can teach children anything, but unless it entertains them they won't

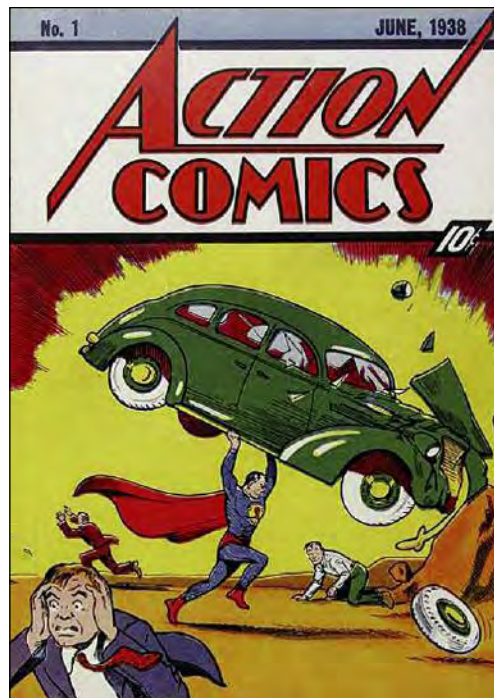
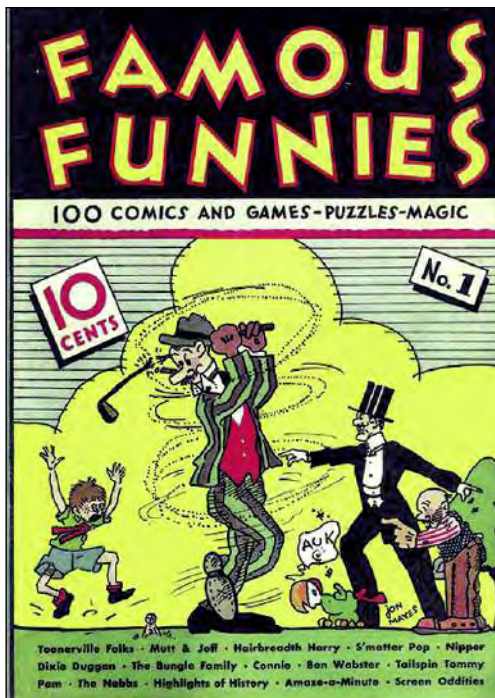
remember it. The minute they no longer have to know it for school, it's gone. I never read for anything other than entertainment. What I read interested me, and I remembered it. What most kids learned in school in those days were things they had no interest in and no remembrance of ten minutes after the test was over. And so the upshot of it was that we were probably all equally intelligent, but I had an active interest in what I was reading and they had none whatever.

BS: What about writing? Did you ever do any writing when you were very young?

KYLE: Well, I used to write essays in school. They weren't notably popular. [mutual chuckling] When it came to writing stories, I always had a problem. I could never bring them to a satisfactory close unless I resorted to clichés or something outrageous. And I opted for outrageous. But independent of school, I was interested in comics, and like a lot of kids then, I was trying to draw my own. I started when I was around thirteen and I drew—or started to draw—seven or eight pages of my first one. I realized quick enough that it was terrible. But I tried again, and the next strip was one of the great bad concepts of all time. I had read that there was space between molecules and atoms, so my character—in his special suit, of course—could kind of vibrate through these interstices and walk through walls. When bad guys would shoot at him, the bullets would pass on harmlessly through his body, and so on. And so his name was "Vibroman," [laughs] which is just terrible. [Bill chuckles] But you know, somewhere recently I saw a reference to a character in today's comic books called "Vibroman." Who would pick that for a name unless you were thirteen years old? I still remember the legend for it.

BS: Okay, let's hear it.

KYLE: "In the year nineteen hundred and forty-three, a man arose from the depths of humanity to fight the crime that overrode the Earth, destroying its foundations." Isn't that terrific?



BS: Well, everything was upward from there. [mutual laughter]

KYLE: A year later, I came up with a strip called "Mister X." It was kind of like *The Spirit*. but unfortunately it wasn't funny.... Mister X was very long-lived, the oldest living thing on Earth. The legend on that one was, "Long before the dawn of man, the creatures walked across the sand. Among them walked one neither god nor man—Korlu." [laughs]. Finally, when I was around fourteen, maybe fifteen, I did "Adam Wary." A few panels of that survive. No legend. The dialogue is lame, but the artwork isn't bad at all for a kid that age.

BS: The "Superman" feature was modeled after Shuster's style through the war, wasn't it?

KYLE: It wasn't just the art. Some of the first stories that Jerry [Siegel] wrote were social protest stories. There were a lot of mine cave-ins during the '30s, for example, and there's such a story in, I think,

Early Daze

How many *Alter Ego* readers can claim that they read both *Famous Funnies* #1 (July 1934) and *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938) hot off Depression newsstands? [Famous Funnies cover ©2013 the respective copyright holders; Action #1 cover ©2013 DC Comics.]

DEATH-DEFYING DANGER...
AWE-INSPIRING THRILLS...

AWAIT THE COURAGE AND GENIUS OF
CAPTAIN VIDEO AND HIS VIDEO RANGER!

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA 
Fawcett Collectors of America

Part II of
"The **INDESTRUCTIBLE**
ANTAGONIST!"

#174
March 2013

Last time, we reprinted pages 1-7 of this George Evans-penciled classic from Fawcett's TV-licensed comic *Captain Video* #3 (June 1951); the inker was Martin Thall, while the scripter is sadly unidentified. Besides being an excellent science-fictional adventure—superior in both story and art to the average comics fare of the day—its antagonist Makino served as my initial inspiration for Ultron, the “robot” super-villain that artist John Buscema and I would introduce at Marvel in 1968 over the course of *The Avengers* #54-55 & #57-58. More about that last time and in *A/E* #117, though. This round, we've just got room, with thanks to P.C. Hamerlinck & Rod Beck for the scans, to re-present the middle section of this 19-page spectacular—right after Makino, having murdered his creator Prof. Seminik and vowed to prove his own superiority to mankind, has flown off at the controls of the hero's Whirlojet, leaving Video and the young Ranger behind—amid a treacherous marshland.

—Roy Thomas, Guest FCA Co-Editor.

CAPTAIN VIDEO

THE WORLD'S GUARDIAN AND HIS AIDE MAKE ALL POSSIBLE HASTE ACROSS THE TREACHEROUS BOGS AND MUDDIED MARSHLANDS, TO WARD OFF ANOTHER THREAT TO HUMANITY! THEN!!!



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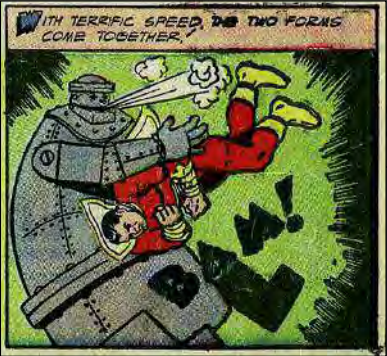
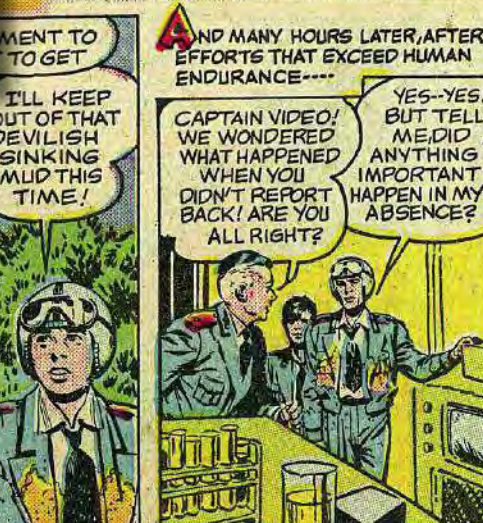


ALTER EGO #115

3-D COMICS OF THE 1950S! In-depth feature by RAY (3-D ZONE, actual red and green 1950s 3-D art (get out those glasses!) by SIMON & KIRBY, KUBERT, MESKIN, POWELL, MAURER, NOSTRAND, SWAN, BORING, SCHWARTZ, MOONEY, SHORES, TUSKA and many others! Plus FCA, Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt, BILL SCHELLY, and more! Cover by JOE SIMON and JACK KIRBY!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95 (Digital Edition) \$3.95

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The quicksand sequence above is simply a throwaway bit of danger for the heroes, though admirably rendered by George Evans and Martin Thall. In the insert panel: Marc Swayze wrote and drew the earlier killer robot Klang in Fawcett's *Captain Marvel Adventures* #15 (Sept. 1942). [Shazam hero TM & ©2013 DC Comics.]