ROY THOMAS' MARVEL COMICS FANZINE

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STILL MORE TIMELY/MARVEL TITANS!

DON RICO— ALLEN BELLMAN— & MARTIN GOODMAN!

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$8.95 In the USA

No.114 Dec. 2012

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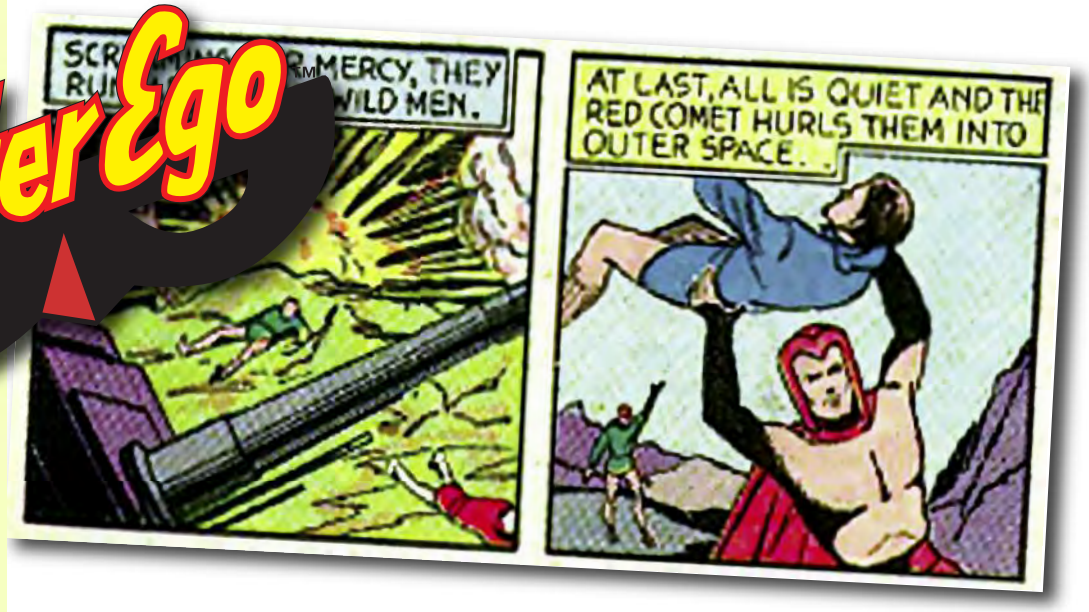
Vol. 3, No. 114 / December 2012



Contents

On Our Cover: *1940s-50s comic artist* **Allen Bellman** *and a current rising young star,* **Mitch Breitweiser**, *teamed up to produce their own dramatic entry in the proud line of illustrations that depict Captain America getting physical with Adolf Hitler. Coloring by Mitch's wife* **Elizabeth Breitweiser**. [Captain America TM & ©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.; other art ©2012 Allen Bellman & Mitch Breitweiser.]

Above: *"Red Comet" panels drawn (and perhaps written) by* **Don Rico** *for* Planet Comics *#5. There'll be other art from that May 1940 Fiction House tale later in this issue. Thanks to Jim Kealy.* [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

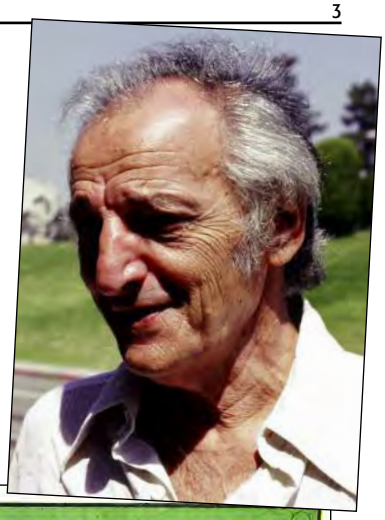
This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Don Rico, John Celardo, Tony DeZuniga, & Ernie Chan

Alter Ego™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. *Alter Ego* Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. ***Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices.*** Eight-issue subscriptions: $60 US, $85 Canada, $107 elsewhere. Printed in China. ISSN: 1932-6890
FIRST PRINTING.

The Once And Future DON RICO

A 1970s Interview With A 1940s-70s Timely/Marvel Artist, Writer, & Editor

by Robert Levitt Lanyi



A/E

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *I first learned of this interview with my erstwhile L.A. colleague Don Rico from reader Mitch Lee, who sent me a copy of it several years ago. It had appeared in the magazine* The Journal of Popular Culture, *Vol. XIII, No. 1 (Summer 1979), and had been conducted by Dr. Ronald Levitt, under the reasonably transparent pen name "Robert Levitt Lanyi." Dr. Levitt is currently an adjunct associate professor in the English department of Pasadena City College, Pasadena, California. While the 1977 conversation between the two men is light on the specific details of Don's comics career, and I wish someone had also talked to him in depth about such matters, we have the interview that we have—and it's a very good one. Between it and Dewey Cassell's talk with Don's widow Michele Hart, which follows on p. 21, this issue presents, I think, a reasonably well-rounded picture of a talented man who contributed materially to three (actually* four*) decades of comics history—as well as to numerous other fields.*

On a related front: Acquiring the rights to reprint this interview was a tricky procedure, and several times it looked as if it simply wasn't going to happen. Rights to material published in The Journal of Popular Culture *are currently controlled by Wiley-Blackwell—an international scientific, technical, medical, and scholarly publishing concern owned by John Wiley & Sons—and may be viewed for a fee at their website. They do lease reprint rights, as well, but for rather more than* Alter Ego*'s limited budget would allow. However, after several back-and-forth e-mails and particularly through the good offices of Elizabeth Boyle, Editorial Assistant/SSH Journals, she and her colleagues at Wiley-Blackwell volunteered to waive their fees—declining even to accept the sums I* could *offer, or proffered ad space in this issue. I can only presume that this decision came, pretty much out of the blue, because they realized that Don was a friend of mine—never a really close friend, to my eternal regret, but an esteemed comrade nonetheless—and that my desire to preserve the interview in the pages of* A/E *was as much in the*

Double-Dare(devil)

Don Rico, looking down on samples of his work as both artist and writer, in a circa-1970s photo courtesy of Mark Evanier.

(Left:) His cover for New Friday's *Silver Streak Comics* #12 (July 1941), showcasing the original Daredevil. Circa 1970, Rico seems to have told *Who's Who* researcher Jerry Bails that he scripted the first "Daredevil" story, which was drawn by Jack Binder, for *Silver Streak* #6 (Sept. 1940), although the pseudonymous script byline there reads "Captain Cook." There *is* a criminal "Ricco Gang" in that first story... but that name could just as likely have come from the 1930s Warners gangster movie *Little Caesar*, starring Edward G. Robinson ("Mother of Mercy, is this the end of Ricco?"). Rico was credited in the 1970s print edition of *The Who's Who of American Comic Books* with working on that very first story, so the accreditation is probably based on correspondence with him. Thanks to Jim Ludwig. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

(Above:) Splash page from *Spellbound* #4 (June 1952) of a story scripted by Rico and drawn by Dick Ayers. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

nature of a personal tribute as of an historical mission. I sincerely thank Ms. Boyle and her associates—and I'll repay the favor anytime they give me the chance.

Except for the subtitle on p. 3 and this introduction, nothing has been added to the text as it first appeared a third of a century ago. However, neither its original print version nor its current online incarnation was accompanied by photos or art—and, thanks to Don's wife and son and a number of helpful comics researchers and collectors, the specimens of those artifacts, abetted by accompanying captions scribbled by Ye Editor, will hopefully underscore the points being made in the interview itself.

Don Rico is not a name as familiar to comics (or even Timely/Marvel) fans as are those of Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Bill Everett, or Carl Burgos—or even perhaps the likes of Syd Shores, Joe Maneely, and several other one-time Bullpenners. Still, Don played an important role in the history of Timely Comics—and indeed, in the field of comics itself, beginning in 1939-40—and I'm overjoyed to be able to give him just a little bit of his due in these pages. **—Roy Thomas.**

INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION (1979): *Don Rico was one of the better and most active comic book writer-artists of the Golden Age, which extended from the late '30s through most of the '40s. Born Donato Francisco Rico in Rochester, New York, in 1918, he created for such publishing houses as Fawcett, Fiction House, Fox, Gleason, Holyoke, Marvel, MLJ, Novelty, Pines, Quality, and Rural Home, none of which, except for Marvel, produce comic books anymore. He drew and/or wrote the exploits of such characters as Apache Kid, Black Hood, Blast Bennett, Blue Beetle, Bulletman, Captain America, Captain Battle, Captain Marvel, Cat-Man, Claw, Daredevil, Dr. Strange, Flip Falcon, Gary Stark, Golden Archer, Grey Mask, Human Torch, Jann of the Jungle, Kid Terrific, Leatherface, Oran of the Jungle, Silver Streak, Sergeant Spook, Sorceress of Zoom, and Stevie Starlight. Although he has not been an active creator in comics since the mid-'50s, he is currently preparing the eagerly awaited* Cloven Hoof, *one of the earliest American works in a new international genre, the novel-length comic, or, as he terms it, "the novel in graphics." For the last four years, Don's involvement in comics has included two classes he teaches through UCLA's extension program: a*

"Zoom!" Went The Strings Of His Heart

According to an article by Lynn Simross that appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* and in the June 10, 1976, edition of *The Newark Advocate* (of New Jersey), Rico had spotted the following classified ad in *The New York Times*, sometime in the summer of 1939: "*WANTED: Artist to draw comic books in the style of Flip Falcon, Blast Bennett, The Sorceress of Zoom. Fox Publications.*"

The article continues: "Donato Rico II, a starving—well, not quite, but almost—18-year-old artist, borrowed 50 cents from a friend, took the subway downtown from the Bronx to Lexington Avenue and applied for the job." He soon wound up drawing brief runs of all the Victor Fox features mentioned in the ad, including reportedly the "Sorceress of Zoom" page reprinted above left from *Weird Comics* #3 (June 1940). Since *Weird* was a monthly during its brief 1940 life, though, it's hard to see how "Sorceress" could've already acquired much of a "style" for a young illustrator to follow. Thanks to Stan Taylor for the scan, and to Barry Pearl for the 1976 newspaper article.

(Above right:) Also attributed to Don—though with even less certainty—is the "Blue Beetle" story in Fox's *Mystery Men Comics* #13 (Aug. 1940). Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert.

RL: *Why a villain?*

RICO: Well, a story has to have some kind of an action, motivation, to keep it going. There was always a little bit of by-play about the frustrations of the hero and the villain—not mine, but theirs, you see. Because they were so outlandishly constructed and uniformed that all they had to do was just battle each other constantly. And what I tried to do was bring it a sort of tongue-in-cheek attitude, rather than violence or action for its own sake.

RL: *There have always been a pretty considerable number of Italian-American artists in comics: yourself, Carmine Infantino, Frank Frazetta, John Giunta, Vince Colletta, Nick Cardy, Joe Cavallo, Joe Orlando—*

RICO: Don't forget Dick Giordano.

RL: *Pete and John Costanza, Sal and John Buscema, John Romita Sr. and Jr., Pete Morisi, Frank—*

Captain's Courageous

While the extent to which he worked on "Captain America" art or script during the 1940s is unclear, Rico told his 1970s colleague Roy Thomas and others that he had been involved with that hero's Golden Age exploits. For his part, Marvel writer/editor RT happily assigned Don to pencil and ink the "Captain America" chapter of *The Invaders Annual* #1 (1977), as seen above. Regrettably, it was the only time the two worked together. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the scan. The story was reprinted, among other places, in the trade paperback *Invaders Classic, Vol. 2* (2008).

That same year, at the San Diego Comic-Con, Rico penciled the Cap head at right for dealer/historian Robert Beerbohm, who generously shared it with us. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

RICO: Don't forget Frank Giacoia, Vince Alascia, a whole slew of guys.

RL: *Is there any particular reason for that, or why currently on the international scene some of the most sophisticated comic art is being done in Italy?*

RICO: I consider Europe—France, Italy, other parts that publish comics—much more sophisticated than the American comic artists are. I don't know if it's the artists, the editors, or the publishers. Whatever it is, there's a great deal more freedom to explore other areas and do things other than the super-heroes battling the villains all the time, or the villains always saying, "I must conquer the world." There are stories of the West that the French artists are doing; there's stories of American history that they delve into. And there's a great deal of character and characterization in the work they do. They are quite sophisticated. Their stories are written more in the nature of a novel rather than action for action's sake or violence for violence's sake. I admire them tremendously, and I wish there were more of it in this country.

RL: *Well, why are there so many Italians in this country's comics? Next to Jews, they must be the largest ethnic group in the business.*

RICO: I don't know; I don't know. I don't know if there are. You know, I never went around questioning who's what and who's the other thing. I don't know. You know, Italians love to draw. We're artists and singers and all that sort of thing. We're storytellers. We like to amuse people. Which brings back another subject: I consider myself a storyteller. Whatever I'm doing, I'm telling a story. And whether Italian or Jewish or Polish or whatever you are, you're a storyteller. And you tell it. Whether there's any ethnic reason for it, God, I don't know.

RL: *In illustrating the exploits of heroes who preserved the American way, including its myth of an equal chance for all, were you ever bothered by your not being permitted to depict an Italian-American as the recipient of that equal chance, not to mention as the hero?*

RICO: No, I was never bothered by it. I was bothered by other things. What bothered me was the showing of a black person in the old days with huge liver lips. I was bothered by the showing of the Chinese as villains, Japanese as villains. I was bothered by the injustice toward people, toward… toward minorities, toward any group as a stereotype.

RL: *What about white ethnics?*

RICO: What about them?

RL: *You're talking about Chinese, blacks, and so on, but not the white ethnics.*

RICO: A lot of things bothered me. The type of story that we had to do bothered me. The ethnic situation as far as whites are concerned didn't

RL: *The price of these comic book novels would render them inaccessible to most adolescents. Is there enough of an adult audience willing to buy such a product?*

RICO: If a novel is creative, so that it is a work of integrity, so that it's a work where the artist-novelist has something to say, either in terms of our present, our past, our future or in terms of pictorial embellishment of something, the subject, I don't see any reason why there shouldn't be. I mean, my God, Dore's *Inferno* is still selling; his *Bible* is still selling. And as far as the kids are concerned, kids will buy books at almost any price. They will save for them because they want them. They are true, devoted fans. I think they brought back comics to what it is through the conventions and through the real interest in the writers and artists. I've known kids who saved their money the entire year to fly to San Diego for the convention. And they come there well-equipped to buy a lot of things. They don't come there broke, see? And if a series of novels like these are interesting, they'll buy those as well as anything else. My God, I know in Europe the work by the artists is not only sold to adults; kids buy them. And they're not cheap. They're pretty expensive. I would rather buy those than 25- or 30-cent comics.

RL: *You're saying, among other things, that adults will buy the comic book novel if it has something new to tell them. I wonder if you'd comment then on something Burne Hogarth has said about comic art: "In its exercise of danger it is too reckless of reason, too void of feeling to be profound; and in its pursuit of the genial and the jocular it is possessed of a frenzy that is too bitter a remedy for the relief of pain. In short it neither elicits the heights of the human dream nor probes the depths of the human soul nor promotes the catharsis of light-hearted laughter."*[4]

RICO: Talk about statements! I love it! I think there's a lot of something there, and exactly what it is I can't say. Look, Somerset Maugham said, "I am a teller of tales," huh? I don't know whether I want to plumb the depths or the heights. If I do I'm very happy that someone has noticed. "Hey, there's something here!" And I look at it and say, "There is?" My own work! I don't know it's there. I think we are basically storytellers, and whether we tell tragedies or comedies or just a story for its own sake, it's worthwhile. Reading is entertaining. Whether you're reading *The Golden Bough* by Frazer of the latest novel by Harold Robbins, you're being entertained. If you're not being entertained, you can't follow word after word, you lose interest. Our business is in capturing the attention of the reader and then sustaining it. Opera does that; great plays do that. Shakespeare's whole impetus was to entertain the people who came into his theatre.

RL: *Do you feel that depths can be reached, that ambiguities, complexities, tensions, ironies can be developed?*

RICO: Yes, if we get away from what is now the main current of comics, then an artist can go into it quite seriously if he wants to.

Mister *Terrific*

Examples from the Rico website of his Golden Age work for the company called both Et-Es-Go and Continental (which the *Who's Who* lists under the Holyoke umbrella): the full art on the cover of *Terrific Comics* #1 (Jan. 1944) and the penciling of the "Kid Terrific" story therein. Don also wrote, drew, and signed a second story in that issue. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

There is nothing that an artist can't tell. What separates the artist from the novelist, really? Nothing, except the medium. You can do anything you want to do. The difference is that the artist must think in terms of words and pictures. You're not just illustrating a novel. No, I think there is nothing, nothing in the world which is restricted to any artist or any writer. And I think I'm very lucky, as well as the artists around me now, to be at the very beginning of this medium, the novel told in graphics. Gil Kane has done it, Corben has done it, other guys have gone into it because they want to have something more definite to say.

RL: *The genre really, though, is only a few years old. As you say, Rich Corben and Gil Kane have done it, and Burne Hogarth in* Tarzan of the Apes *and* Jungle Tales of Tarzan *and Jim Steranko in* Red Tide *have done it. But the conventions of this new genre haven't yet been established. It's not yet clear how to do the comic book novel. Are there any graphic or narrative innovations that you've created in doing* The Cloven Hoof*?*

RICO: Well, they're very personal approaches that we all take. Each one—Kane, Steranko, and the rest of them—are all taking very individual approaches to it. I see it so far, in what I've worked on so much now—for instance, *The Cloven Hoof* was a play I wrote, optioned for Broadway, unfortunately never produced. And I got restless with it. I felt I had to tell the story one way or the other. So I decided to try it as a novel in graphics. And what I did, I saw it as a series of progressive shots through the eye of a camera that try to

"We Had A Great Life Together"

MICHELE HART Talks About Her Time With Husband DON RICO—And Her Own Colorful Career

Conducted by Dewey Cassell

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: *Don Rico found in Michele Hart his soul mate, and vice versa, and they married in 1962. Whatever difference there was in age paled in comparison to what they had in common, including an interest and aptitude in the arts. Together, they shared 22 wonderful years and raised a son. Here, then, is a delightful interview with Michele Hart, who sheds light on the later life and career of Don Rico, a true Renaissance man. This interview was conducted June 24, 2012, and was later copy-edited by Michele Hart.* **—Dewey.**

On, Comet...

Some of Don's earliest comic book artwork—after the brief experience with Victor Fox—was done for Fiction House. This "Red Comet" yarn appeared in *Planet Comics* #5 (May 1940); with thanks to Jim Kealy. The whole story will be seen in PS Artbooks' forthcoming hardcover *Roy Thomas Presents Planet Comics, Vol. 2*. Meanwhile, grab up *Vol. 1*! [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

Michele Hart—And Loved Ones

(Left:) Michele with Don and their son Buz at the latter's 6th-grade graduation at the Garner Street School, West Hollywood, California. Don and Michele were married on Sept. 28, 1962, two days after Don's 50th birthday. Michele reports that Don was definitely born in 1912, not 1918 as is generally recorded.

(Right:) Michele's current head shot from her acting portfolio. The photo was taken by Larry Buckstead. Both pics provided by Michele Hart.

"You'll Never Make Any Money As An Artist"… "Yes, I Will!"

DEWEY CASSELL: *In reading about Don, I learned that you are an actress.*

MICHELE HART: I am.

DC: *Are you the actress that was in* General Hospital*?*

HART: Yes. My God, did you watch that?

DC: [laughs] *I did. When I was in college, I used to come home from school and watch* General Hospital. *It was the only soap that I watched.*

HART: [*laughs*] I am an actress and a dancer; I have done extensive ballet and jazz dance, both. And I acted as much as I danced, or danced as much as acted. And yes, that's me.

DC: *I read about the dancing, too. You were a principal dancer in the ballet?*

HART: I was principal in two small ballet companies in Los Angeles which did what ballet companies in Los Angeles do, which is to go out of business because they can't get backing. Lord

only knows, I mean, San Francisco's had a ballet company for a hundred years, and we don't have one here—well, we sort of have one now, but it's been very hard to get those things going. And there's actually kind of an odd parallel between what I did and why I did it and what Don did and why he did it. And if you'd like, I'll try to tie that together.

DC: *That would be great.*

HART: Don began as a wood engraver. That is not a wood-carver, nor is it a person who makes wood cuts. Wood engraving is a different thing. He had three one-man shows in New York before he was twenty-five, which is pretty extraordinary. But nobody was buying stuff, and he wasn't making any money at it. A friend of his said, "You'll never make any money as an artist." And he said, "Yes, I will! Watch this," and got involved with comics. I had a similar kind of thing of "You can't make any money doing ballet from here," and I really did not have the commitment to go to New York and try to get into one of the big companies. It was a case of, I'm not going to make any money doing ballet, so I got a job dancing in Reno in a hotel casino. And, by the way, dancing is not being a showgirl. Two different things.

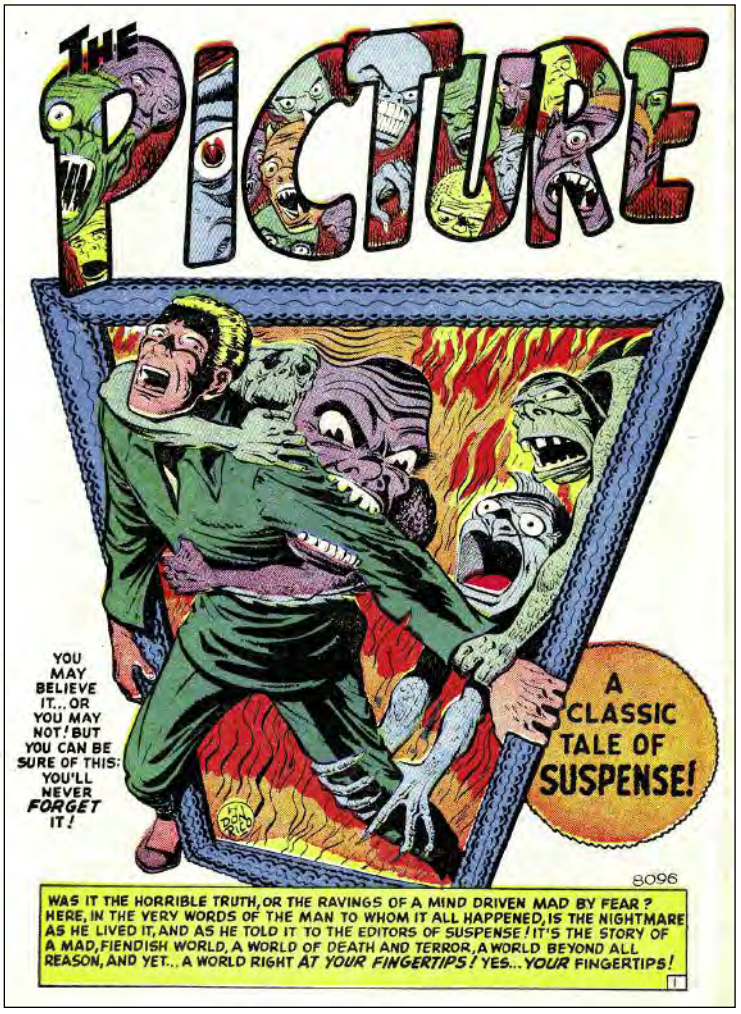
The first one of which is you have to be six feet tall, and I don't qualify. But dancers dance; showgirls just kind of walk around. So I backed off of the ballet thing, and then I later went back to it, because a man that I knew who had a studio founded a small company called Dancers Studio Ensemble, and we did two years of some small performances and got nice notices, but it never really went anyplace. I think you need to have a grant-writer and a fund-raiser and all that sort of thing, and we didn't. So anyway, that's that story.

DC: *Was that after you were in* General Hospital*?*

HART: Yeah.

DC: *I noticed you also did acting in the late '70s and early '80s in* The Rockford Files *and* Tenspeed and Brownshoe*, which had Ben Vereen in it… so you continued to do some acting later as well?*

HART: Yeah. I still do when there's work around. It's just that, once you're over forty, you have to be Meryl Streep or you don't get much work, you know? There are very few roles for older women, and there's tons of research on it, and producers keep saying, "Well, we will have to do better," and then it doesn't happen. I'm still doing the occasional stage play, and there are films being made by graduate students at UCLA, USC, The American Film Institute, and they are permitted to use members of Screen Actors Guild because otherwise, they would only be using



All The Horrors Aren't In The Comic Books!

Back when Don Rico drew—and probably also wrote—these horror stories for *Suspense* #7 & 8 (March & May 1951), things were going great for Don at Martin Goodman's Timely Comics. But between Dr. Wertham and the comics censors in the mid-1950s, and then the "Atlas Implosion" of 1957-58, he soon found himself trolling for a whole new career! Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

BELLMAN, Book, And Candle

A 4½-Part Look At The Life And Timely/Marvel Times Of Golden Age Artist ALLEN BELLMAN

A/E

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *In this year of 2012, Allen Bellman celebrated the 70th anniversary of the day in 1942 when he joined the staff of Timely Comics, under its editor, Stan Lee. (I suppose that's the day he lit the symbolic "candle" of my whimsical overall title above.) While Dr. Michael J. Vassallo's interview with Allen was published in* Alter Ego *#32 in 2004—an issue now out of print primarily because Allen himself bought up so many back issues in order to give them out at comics conventions over the past decade!—we felt we should use the occasion for a somewhat briefer revisiting eight years later of this artist, perhaps the "last man standing" among those who drew super-hero adventure comics for Timely during the 1940s.*

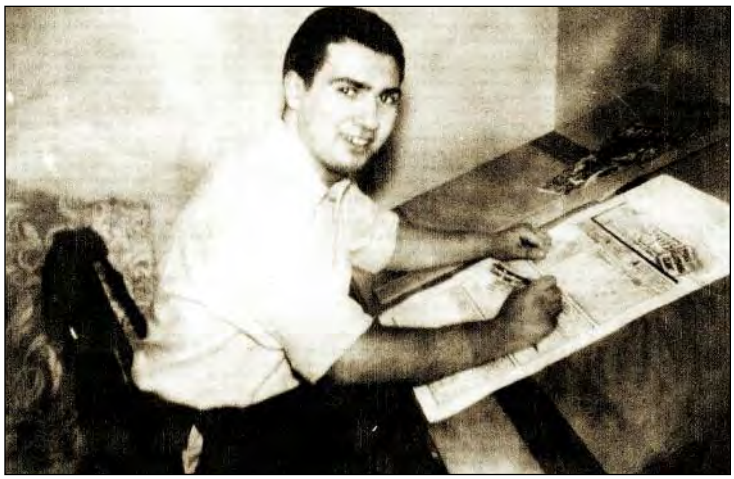
This special coverage is divided into four parts:

A short overview of Allen's career by his friend, Joyce Moed…

Salutes by two other buddies, Michael Uslan and Dr. Michael J. Vassallo…

…and a few words from Allen himself to round things out.

And now, since time (and the page count) are a-wasting…!



"Patriot" Games

Seems like only yesterday to Allen Bellman (seen above in 1945, at age 21) that he was drawing things such as the "Patriot" splash page (pictured at left) for *Marvel Mystery Comics* #62 (March '45)—and, next thing he knows, it's several decades later and he's posing for a photo at a comics convention with his old boss Stan Lee (below)! Though Allen mentions to Joyce Moed that Stan's "real name is Stanley Lieber," actually Stan changed it legally years ago. Thanks to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo for the art scan; this rare, identifiable Bellman-drawn splash originally appeared with his interview back in *A/E* #32—but this time we can show it in *color!* Only thing we can't do is tell you who *scripted* the story. [Page ©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Part I

ALLEN BELLMAN - "One Of The Early Pioneer Artists"

by Joyce Moed

To say that Allen Bellman is a comic book legend is an understatement.

In 1942, when he was just a teenager, Bellman drew the backgrounds for Syd Shores' "Captain America." Later he worked on features, including "The Patriot," "The Destroyer," "The Human Torch," "Jap-Buster Johnson," "Jet Dixon of the Space Squadron," and others. His work appeared in such Golden Age titles as *All Winners Comics*, *Marvel Mystery Comics*, *Sub-Mariner*, and *Young Allies*.

"My self-created backup crime feature was called 'Let's Play Detective,'" Bellman remembers. "I also contributed to pre-Code horror, crime, war, and Western tales for Atlas. I worked in the comics field until the early 1950s."

He still recalls his first day at Timely Comics, now known as Marvel Comics: "Monday could not come fast enough, and when it arrived, Don Rico [an artist at Timely/Marvel] was introducing me to the staff. Rico introduced me to Syd Shores and Vince Alascia. Syd was penciling 'Captain America,' and Vince was his inker."

Bellman was given some of Shores' finished pages, and instructed to ink the backgrounds: "I did this for a while, and they soon decided to allow me to do complete scripts—pencil and ink. I believe the first one I did was 'The Patriot.' My art was somewhat crude, and yet looking back at very early Kirby work and his much later art, you could see the great strides made in his artwork."

At this time, Bellman had still never seen Stan Lee, or knew anything about his boss.

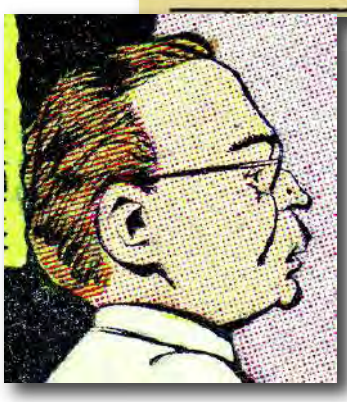
"Later on, I began seeing Stan walking behind a gentleman by the name of Robby Solomon, who I later learned was publisher Martin Goodman's brother-in-law. I also heard that Stan was Solomon's nephew. Till today, it was never confirmed, but Robby Solomon was an authority figure, though no one ever knew what his title was. To me, he acted as if he was an art director breaking Stan in."

Bellman soon learned that the reason he had not seen Lee previously was because he had been in the Army, and had just been released and come back to his job as the company's editor. [***A/E* EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The wartime editor was cartoonist Vince Fago.*]

"This is all hearsay, but having Robby Solomon as an acting art director was not always good. Robby would come into our room and speak to all of us, telling us to draw like Lou Fine or Mac Raboy—very fine artists working for another company. In spite of this, Goodman's comic books were outselling all of the competition, including DC Comics," Bellman says. "Good art didn't sell comic books; story matter and characters sold. Let's take 'Superman,' for example. Joe Shuster's art was crude, but it had style and it was a million-dollar idea. *Dick Tracy* was badly drawn, but it had character, and a drawing style everyone took to. Robby decided to get on my back, and because of this I worked harder. So in a way he did me a service. Robby died as a young man, and it was then Stan Lee really took charge."

COMIC MAGAZINE INKERS WANTED

Brush, no pen; must be familiar with technique of adventure comic magazines; suggest see Captain America Magazine for style before answering; salary or free lance basis. Bring samples to Room 1010, 330 West 42d St., New York City.



Signs Of The *Times*

(Above:) This classified ad for prospective *Captain America* inkers from the Sept. 9, 1942, edition of *The New York Times*, say Allen and his buddy Doc V., may be the very one that the 18-year-old aspiring artist answered 70 years ago to land his job with Timely Comics! Thanks to Allen & to Dr. Michael J. Vassallo. Sean Howe sent us scans of similar ads in the *Times* from July 7 & 19 and Sept. 6. Goodman must've been getting desperate! [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

(Left:) We've never seen any photos of Rob Solomon—whom Allen mentions as a general "authority figure" around the offices and whom some early-'40s Timely mags listed under the catch-all title "consulting associate"—but wartime bullpenner Dave Gantz said that this caricature, done by an unknown artist for an in-joke story in *Krazy Komics* #12 (Nov. 1943), might well be of Solomon. Or it might *not*, say Doc V., Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., and Hames Ware, who provided this detail. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

About a year and a half older than Bellman, Lee was known as a young man with a purpose, the artist notes. "His real name is Stanley Lieber. As young guys, we always liked to take a pen name with hopes for a good future. I at one time called myself Allen Bell, but it didn't stick."

Bellman noted that working for Lee was "clear sailing," but there came a time when the "bullpen" was disbanded.

"I went to Lev Gleason and got a staff job immediately. Dates and time escape me, but I worked for Bob Wood and Charlie Biro. Bob was a great guy to work for. Lev Gleason's staff was disbanded, and comics were making a comeback, so I soon was doing freelance for Stan. Stan kept me busy, giving me a new script upon bringing in a finished story. I can remember getting a romance story to do for DC and gave it back because Stan was keeping me busy. I was always assured of getting work from Stan, and if I took a leave of absence to do a story for DC, I might break the chain that I could always count on."

At the time, Bellman's home life with his first wife, whom he had married when he was just 20 years old, was getting worse: "But I still kept punching and even went up to the Associated Press bringing my samples to the art director of the syndicate." They liked his work and wanted him to take over the comic strip *Scorchy Smith*.

"Every comic book artist always would dream of doing a newspaper comic strip," Bellman recalls. "All they wanted was one week of strips, and with conditions as they were at home, I never followed through. There was no one at home I could work with on this, and once you sign a contract you must deliver—no ifs or buts. I'm not a quitter, but sometimes in life you have to make a decision, good, bad, or indifferent. There was a separation followed by a divorce. I was depressed, once having a family, now alone, when she took our two children to live in Florida."

Bellman then lost all desire to draw: "After my first wife and I split, I found myself homeless—no money, but I was privileged to have a car, not exactly a new one, but my driving backrest was my pillow at night."

Soon after, he went to live with his sister and her family, in Brooklyn. He was still friends with Mel Blum, who was the art director for Goodman's other magazines.

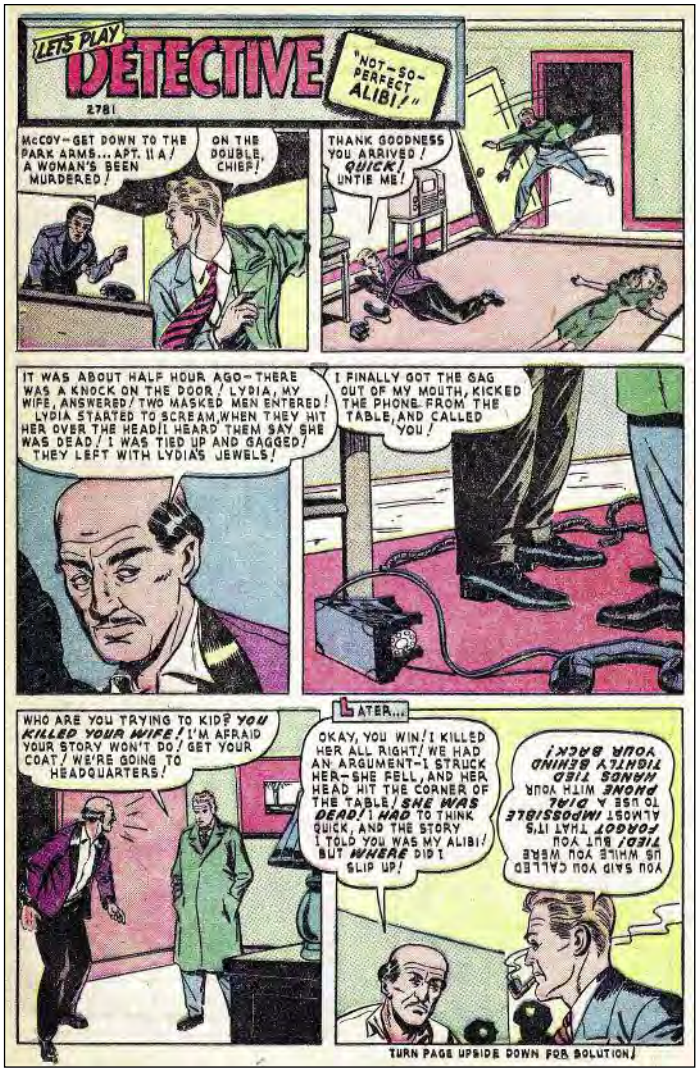
"He helped me get a job with Pyramid Books on Madison Avenue," Bellman says. "It wasn't a comic book house, but there I learned layout, and they used my art very often. In fact, I illustrated a paperback book called *Impossible Greeting Cards*, cover and all."

It was a job that afforded him to get a place of his own. In the meantime, Mel Blum left Goodman and began publishing his own magazines. He kept Bellman busy drawing spot cartoons.

"Things in reality weren't good," Bellman recalls. "I left Pyramid Books after they told me to work overtime on a Friday when I had a hot date waiting for me at Radio City Music Hall. I was a member of Parents without Partners, an organization of people who once were married, and they would meet once a week at a bowling alley in Brooklyn. I really did not like bowling, but this one evening, feeling a bit lonely, I wandered off to be with people in my own boat. As I walked toward the back of the alley, I saw a young blonde woman speaking to one of the male PWP members, and little did I know he was telling her that I was one of the best artists in New York, and little did he know that I was unemployed, doing freelance jobs here and there and having perhaps enough money in my pocket to pay for my bowling game."

An introduction followed, and this was Bellman's first meeting with Roz, whom he married shortly after. This was the turning point, when things started to look up for him.

"I went into business, which afforded me to travel around the world, buy expensive cameras, and enjoy life," he says. "I had a new lease on life. I also did small freelance art jobs."



Marvel Mystery Comments

(Left:) Because during the 1940s diverse hands often worked on the same Timely story—hey, even on the same *panel*—it's often hard to ID who did what on which tale. This "Captain America" adventure from *Marvel Mystery Comics* #86 (June 1948), for instance, is credited by the Grand Comics Database to Al Avison—but it's quite likely that others, including possibly Allen Bellman, worked on it, as well. Scripter unknown.

(Right:) In that selfsame issue, though, we do know that Allen wrote and drew the one-page "Let's Play Detective" crime feature—'cause he often gave himself a byline, though not in this instance. Thanks to Doc Vassallo for the scan. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Addendum:

Hooray For Hollywood! Walking The Red, White, And Blue Carpet

by Allen Bellman

The invitation came. It was from the office of Kevin Feige, the producer and president of Marvel Films. It was our invitation to the premier showing of the *Captain America: The First Avenger* film. Jeez... never did I think, when I joined the bullpen of Timely/Marvel Comics in 1942, that this would ever happen to me.

Arrangements had to be made for the hotel and for air flights to Los Angeles. We had a night flight, non-stop to LA, and had a beautiful suite at the Roosevelt Hotel just across the street from the El Capitan Theatre where the movie was to be shown. We met Syd Shores' daughter Nancy and her family, who were among those who received an invitation. Syd Shores took over "Captain America" when Simon and Kirby left Timely to work for DC Comics. *Wow!* Here we were on Hollywood Boulevard, having lunch at Mel's Diner. We arrived one day before and had the opportunity to walk the street of the stars. Later on, while Roz was enjoying the pool at the hotel, I walked around the pool's edge. There were four young people sitting on a lounge. I "jokingly" asked if they had room for this ol' guy to sit down. All four got up and I shook my head and said I was not serious. But four, two males and two females, perhaps in their twenties, gave me the feeling that, somehow, they were here for the movie, and I was right. They were Emily, Michael, Jedd, and Julian, the grandchildren of Joe Simon. They were there representing Joe, who would pass away some months later.

Just Follow The Red, White, And Blue Road!

A triptych of images of Allen Bellman at the premiere of the 2011 movie mega-hit *Captain America: The First Avenger*. Our thanks to Steven Freivogel for all three photos. (Counterclockwise from right:)

Allen on the "Red, White, and Blue Carpet."

Allen with Syd Shores' daughter Nancy Shores Karlebach and Kevin Feige, president of Marvel Films and one of the movie's producers. Allen and Nancy felt that they and Joe Simon's grandchildren were standing in for *all* the artists and writers who had created the "Captain America" stories of the 1940s.

Allen with actors Derek Luke ("Gabe Jones" in the movie's version of the Howling Commandos) and Neil McDonough ("Dum Dum Dugan").

Then it was showtime, and Roz and I took the short walk to the El Capitan Theatre, where there were crowds on both sides of the closed street. Security guards were all over in their black suits, looking like funeral directors. Getting past the guards was no easy task even with our invitation in hand, but we were escorted in by a vice president of Marvel Comics whose name escapes me. We then walked the Red, White and Blue Carpet. Roz had to check her small Canon camera, and we were escorted to our seats. We had box seats in back of the theatre. We had the privilege of meeting the vice president of Paramount Pictures, a beautiful young lady who told us her grandfather was the English actor Reginald Denny from the 1930s and '40s. An organist onstage entertained the guests as they made their way to their seats. A gentleman came over to me and said he was the grandfather of Chris Evans (who plays Captain America in the film), and how did I get to sit in a very special seat? Without thinking I said,"That's because I'm a very important person." This is not me, and I would have liked to apologize to the gentleman.

After the movie, it was party time at the Supper Club for invited guests of the movie. We then had the opportunity to meet Kevin Feige, the producer, to whom I mentioned that the Red Skull in the movie was too slick-looking, sporting a beautiful set of teeth and eyes, not what the usual decent skull should look like. I posed with people in the cast, and it was a night to remember.

Dedicated by Allen to the memory of two good friends: Syd Shores & Gene Colan.

Fin

Martin Goodman, A.K.A. The Angel

Timely/Marvel's Peerless Publisher's Unlikely Career In Show Business

by Ger Apeldoorn

Introduction

According to the Internet Broadway Database, Marvel publisher Martin Goodman twice in his career tried his hand at producing something other than comics and pulp magazines.

In June 1944 he was the "angel" (financial backer) behind the Broadway play *Love on Leave*, written by A. B. Shiffrin and produced by Charles Stewart, whose credits include several productions for The Ballet Theatre in 1941 and a revival of *Porgy and Bess* in 1942.

And in October 1955 a "Martin Goodman" is reported to have backed Leonard Lee's *Deadfall*, directed by the blacklisted Michael Gordon, who in 1959 would return to the movies as the director of *Pillow Talk* (the first of several ultra-successful Rock Hudson/Doris Day romantic-comedy vehicles).

Both times, the producers must have hoped for a big success and a nice profit, but neither of the above productions lasted longer than a couple of weeks. *Love on Leave* came to a halt after four days and seven performances. *Deadfall* lasted 20 performances.

These facts came to our attention when Golden Age Timely/Marvel artist Allen Bellman mentioned in *Alter Ego* #32 that he and the rest of the Timely staff were invited to the premiere of *Love on Leave*. No one was invited to the premiere of *Deadfall*, so Goodman must have learned at least that much from his earlier failure.

The plays themselves must have been eminently forgettable. But thanks to the wonders of the Internet, at least some information could be found concerning them....

If I Had The Wings (Or Even The Cape) Of An Angel...

(Top of page:) Timely/Marvel publisher Martin Goodman is seen in 1941 perusing cover proofs of *Captain America Comics* #11 (Feb. 1942)—hovering above images of both of his company's heroes called "The Angel." (Oh, and thanks to Nikki Frakes for the photo scan.)

(Above:) Goodman apparently believed his company's comic-book costumed detective called The Angel was going to be as popular as his inspiration, Leslie Charteris' prose hero The Saint—so he had the guys at the Funnies, Inc., comics shop stick him on the cover of *Marvel Mystery Comics* #2 (Dec. 1939), and again on that of #3, though in both cases he was shown minus his moustache. That's probably because the covers were drawn not by the character's artist/co-creator Paul Gustavson but by Charles J. Mazoujian. In 1941 there was even a single issue of *The Angel Detective* pulp magazine—but minus mustache *and* costume!

(Left:) The later mutant called The Angel had actual wings—and they worked! This detail from the splash page of *The X-Men* #1 (Sept. 1963), like the rest of the issue, was scripted by Stan Lee, penciled by Jack Kirby, and inked by Paul Reinman. Repro'd from Ye Editor's personal bound volumes. [Both pages ©2009 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Love On Leave—And Martin Goodman AWOL

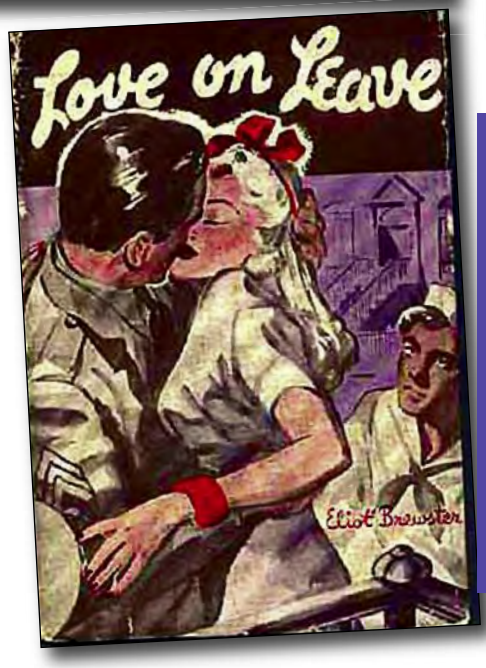
Love on Leave was staged in mid-1944 by Eugene S. Bryden and starred Millard Mitchell and Mary Sargent. Mitchell was a stage and radio actor in 1930s New York. His initial cinema appearances were in industrial short features, filmed in New York; his first Hollywood role was in *Mr. and Mrs. North* (1941). After World War II, he acted in a number of movies, often cast as sardonic, stolid characters. In February 1944 this anecdote about him appeared in the *San Mateo Times*: "Millard Mitchell, who closed recently in Maxwell Anderson's *Storm Operation*, is receiving attractive film offers. Mitchell is a good, dependable actor. But once, in *Boy Meets Girl*, where he played the role of a movie producer resting on a couch, Mitchell played it too realistically and fell asleep. The other actors onstage delivered his cue line: 'What do you say? You ought to know.' Mitchell still slumbered. They nudged him and repeated the cue. Mitchell stirred, opened his eyes, and said: 'Make mine another beer, Charlie'—which was his line from another play in which he had appeared, *Three Men on a Horse*." Clearly, the company had picked a winner. Mary Sargent was a stage actress, who doesn't seem to have done any movie work.

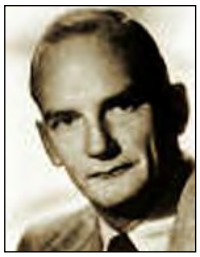
The play itself was reviewed for the *San Mateo Times* by Broadway columnist Jack Carver. The following gives us some insight into the story and possible flaws:

NEW YORK, July 11

The problem of the straying junior miss comes in for some more attention in *Love on Leave*, but this time the author has chosen to handle it with a comedy touch. But, since it is one of those comedies in which anything for a laugh is the rule, the result is not happy. A.B. Shiffrin wrote the play, and it was produced by Charles Stewart and Martin Goodman. In the cast are such experienced people as Millard Mitchell and Mary Sargent and some young people who do very well. Among these are June Wilson, Rosemary Rice, James Dobson, Joann Dolan, Bert Freed, and John Conway. Shiffrin has written about an Astoria, Long Island, family that consists of father, mother, and two daughters, one grown up and the other only 15. Father is a writer of child psychology articles for magazines, a believer in modern child-raising methods. The younger girl, who aspires to be an actress, sneaks out of the house one night to go with an older and more experienced girl to Times Square to see what life is like in that service men's playground. They are picked tip by a lively sailor, who takes them to his hotel, where he is stopping with his buddy. Fortunately for the younger girl, this buddy is a right guy who suspects her real age, wipes off her makeup, and takes her home against her screaming protests. Meanwhile, word has gotten around that the girl was seen going into the hotel and there is the devil to pay, especially since the child insists after they have reached home that the sailor did her wrong. A little medical investigation disproves this and everything ends happily, with the good sailor becoming a suitor to the older sister. Some people will be offended at treating this subject with a comedy, almost farcical touch. But the chief trouble is that the comedy is uninspired—and the people and their motives are not believable. The author might have been better off had he gone completely overboard and written the play as an out-and-out farce.

go on sale today at the box-office. . . . "Love on Leave," the A. B. Shiffrin comedy which Charles Stewart and Martin Goodman plan to present on Broadway during the week of June 19, will have its world première tonight at the Shubert Theatre, New Haven. . . . "The Doughgirls" reached its 600th

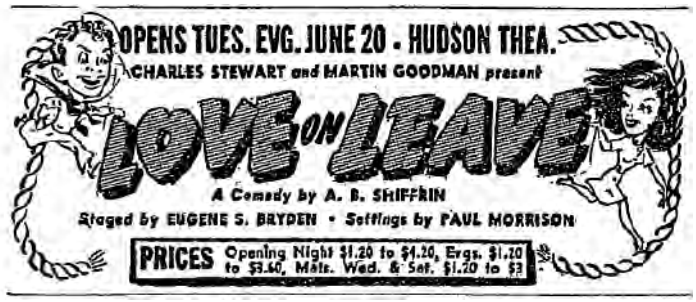




...Also Featured In...

Character actor Millard Mitchell, who starred in the short run of *Love on Leave*, would later have prominent roles in such film classics as *A Foreign Affair* (1948), *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949), and as a movie mogul in the musical-comedy masterpiece *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). *Love on Leave*, however, would add little to the luster of his résumé. [©2009 the respective copyright holders.]

It seems the play was a humorous little thing about the girl who yelled "rape." Not a pleasant subject even in those days. What is interesting to collectors of Martin Goodman's more successful line of comic books is the mention of a "junior miss." *Junior Miss* was a successful Broadway comedy which ran from Nov. 18, 1941, to July 24, 1943. It was turned into a radio show for CBS and a movie, and the title was even used for a comic book series from Goodman's Timely company. It would interesting to know if any of the play's



Maybe The Book Was Better?

(Above left:) This squib from a Broadway-related column in the June 1, 1944, edition of *The New York Times* reveals that *Love on Leave* was to open on tryouts in New Haven, Connecticut, that very night. How it was received there is not known. Thanks to Sean Howe for this scan and the next.

(Above:) This small ad from the 6-18-44 *Times* was framed by ones for the competition that *Love on Leave* was up against on wartime Broadway—from the popular hit *Life with Father* (based on a book; together they would spawn a film and even a TV series) through a late rendition of the legendary *Ziegfield Follies*. [These two scans ©2012 New York Times or its successor in interest.]

(Left:) *Love on Leave* may have boasted a somewhat sordid plotline for a comedy, but maybe that's because it was based on a 1942 novel of that name, written by one Eliot Brewster. Or *was* it? There's no way we can prove one way or the other, since there's no mention of Brewster or his book in anything we've seen to date on the subject of the Broadway play. Even so, thanks to Michael Feldman for the scan of the cover, which doesn't look especially comedic. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

The INVADERS Issue That Nearly Was!

WARREN REECE & The *Almost-Was* Secret Origin Of The Human Torch

INTRODUCTION BY ROY THOMAS: *It's well-known nowadays that, in 1971, while penciling the classic* The Avengers *#93 issue that launched the full-scale Kree-Skrull War, artist/co-plotter Neal Adams suggested to me, as his co-plotter, scripter, and de facto editor that, while rummaging around at minuscule size inside the comatose form of The Vision, Henry Pym, a.k.a. Ant-Man, would "see something" which would later turn out to be proof that the android Avenger's physical body had originally been the equally non-human form and material of the 1939 Human Torch. This concept was followed through in later* Avengers *issues by writer Steve Englehart.*

Now add to that another retro Torch item: Sometime circa 1977, while I was editing and usually (but not always) scripting The Invaders, *the retroactive-continuity title I'd developed featuring the exploits of the Torch, Captain America, and Sub-Mariner during the Second World War, I received a written synopsis for a proposed "Invaders" story from Warren Storob, a young collector who was briefly a Marvel staffer. (Now answering to the name Warren Reece, that worthy will be familiar to readers of this magazine as the author of the lengthy and offbeat article "With the Fathers of Our Heroes" in* A/E *#108.) As Warren related there, sometime in the mid-1970s, through the good offices of our mutual friend Gary Friedrich, he submitted to me "a plot for an untold portion of the origin of the Golden Age Human Torch," which I expressed an interest in potentially utilizing as the basis of a future issue of* The Invaders. *When Warren dug out a copy of that vintage synopsis and mailed it to me a few years back, it jogged my memory and I recalled the essence of it—though not what precise alterations I might have intended to make to it, if I'd gotten around to using it before* Invaders *was canceled in 1979 with issue #41.*

Still, Warren's story—which expands creatively upon the oft-related events of 1939's Marvel Comics#1—could *well have served as the springboard for some issue from #42 on, if I'd gone back to writing the comic myself instead of farming out the scripting, as I increasingly did near the end. Thus, he and I agreed that perhaps, after roughly 3½ decades, it was high time to shine a spotlight on his presentation, precisely as I first read it circa 1977…*

Carrying A Torch

(Left:) Synopsis-writer Warren Reece holds up his personal copy of the Oct. 1939 edition of *Marvel Comics* #1, with its Frank Paul-drawn cover that was the world's introduction to The Human Torch. This 1980s photo taken by Anastasia Walsh for a South Florida newspaper was also seen in *A/E* #108. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

(Above:) Don Rico—a name you read a lot earlier this issue—drew and colored his personal take on the Torch at some undetermined date several decades ago for a friend or collector. This image was retrieved by Dominic Bongo from the Heritage Comics Archives. As in the sketch which Torch-creator Carl Burgos drew in late 1939 for a "new Human Torch" (again, see *A/E* #108), this Torch's facial features are clearly visible, as they rarely were in printed Golden Age comics. [Human Torch TM & ©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

"The Torch of Remembrance"

(A synopsis to explain important unanswered questions about the original Torch)

by Warren Reece (as W.R. Storob)

As many of us know, the *original* Human Torch was an android robot, who debuted in *Marvel Comics* #1, October, 1939. One of the questions that may have crossed the minds of many readers is, "How did the newly-created Torch know our language?" Moreover, how did he have this seemingly innate knowledge of what a racketeer was, or feel a "natural" hate of being used for selfish gain or crime? This is what I hope to explain.

It is the year 1937, and Professor Phineas Horton, fortyish and white-haired, is a bio-chemist doing advanced research on synthetic organic compounds. He is touching on the development of a synthetic organic material capable (theoretically) of being electro-chemically differentiated into various related materials. Seeing a great parallel between his discoveries and the differentiation of somatic cells to form the organs and tissues of people and animals, he proposes a project for creating artificial men.

However, the government looks upon this as the effect of too many Boris Karloff Frankenstein movies over the previous six years. They refuse to fund such a seemingly preposterous project.

At the same approximate time, a colleague of Horton's, Gordon Stark, is on the verge of a breakthrough in cybernetics, at a time when computer science was still in its infancy. With the aid of a jointly developed synthetic, electrochemical brain, and a computerized electromagnetic programming helmet of Stark's own design, they propose to leave their government jobs, seek personal financing, and construct an artificial human being for that most all-American of reasons: making a fortune.

However, the pair soon discover that banks and other conventional loan institutions are just as reluctant to invest in such a far out project. The out-of-work pair are in a spot until…

Word gets around about their proposed work, and they are approached by a representative of a syndicate boss. Foolishly, perhaps, they agree to give a large share of profit and control of their humanoid project (if successful), in return for financing.

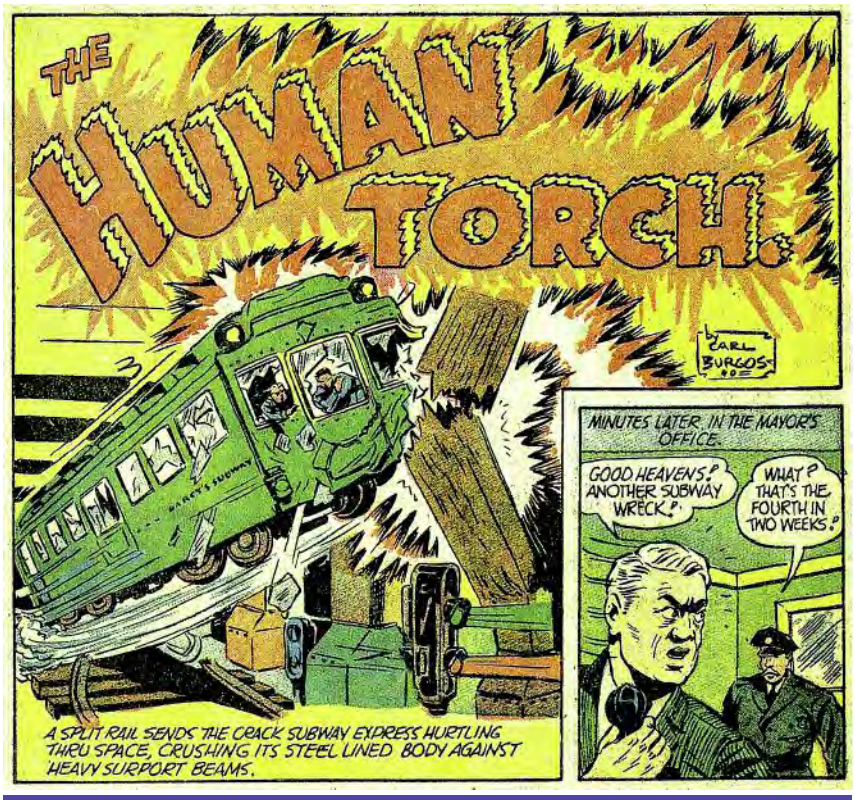
The project slowly gets underway, with Horton on construction development, and Stark working on the cybernetic programming devices. Overseeing their progress, via frequent visits, are some of the mob gun-toughs. The one checking on Horton is an early-thirtyish guy named Jim Hammond.

Over the successive months, Hammond, who is essentially a James ("Rocky Sullivan") Cagney-type of hood, grows to respect and admire the peaceable but hard-working Horton. He asks all kinds of questions about the android project. In the process, Horton is able to get to know Hammond.

Hammond is, perhaps stereotypically, a child of the East Side slums. His father had lived around the docks and old el [**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *elevated train*] of Coentis Slip, in lower Manhattan, until the turn of the century. Mom had passed on when Hammond was three. His dad died while working for starvation wages on the tunnels for the city's growing subways, a victim of company negligence, in or around 1923, leaving 16-year-old Jim to look after his 14-year-old brother Mickey, as well as to ponder secretly whether it was sheer railroad boss negligence, or his depressed dad's drinking also, that led to Hammond Sr.'s demise.

Jim goes after odd jobs, trying to scrounge up money for the bare essentials, while kid brother scavenges the New York streets for scrap wood, as so many children did for unheated apartments. They swipe from fruit stands, etc. *Anything* to get by.

Of course, they have a few good times too… a little bubble gum, tag games through alleys, across railroad yards, and over roofs, and with some of the local "Yancy Street Gang" types. As was typical, unfortunately, in the early part of this century, the unheated slum flats and rampant influenza take a mighty toll on many. Again, tragedy strikes Jim, when Mickey is stricken in the epidemic. Jim tries his best for Mickey, but lack of sufficient visiting by the doctor, coupled with the aforementioned problems, takes its toll after eleven lingering days.



"The People Ride In A Hole In The Ground…"

Another instance of "retroactive continuity"? Perhaps the fact that Jim Hammond's father had "died while working for starvation wages on the tunnels for the city's growing subways" is reflected in Carl Burgos' splash panel for *Marvel Mystery Comics* #13 (Nov. 1940) and its visual antipathy shown toward New York's subway system. Warren's personal copy of that issue was scanned for this art spot. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

The death of his brother has a dual effect on Jim: he vows never to be one of "the poor suckers with no bread," and he gets his personal revenge on the negligent landlord by taking up the offer of a "job" with a local mobster who hears about Hammond through the grapevine. The mobster is after the territory of a rival: Hammond's slumlord, in fact. It is with the strong-arm work of Jim Hammond that the takeover is accomplished, and Hammond's landlord (the rival syndicate man), one of the few survivors of a gun confrontation in which Jim is instrumental, is ironically forced out by a monster of his own inadvertent creation.

Over the decade following his brother's death in 1928, Hammond bangs out a career in the treacherous shadows of the underworld, somehow hardening his heart with the thought that "the swells" didn't give a damn about him or his family, and that (typically) the thing that counts is "doin' what's best for number one," even if it happens to help the mob. But, along the way, he tries to keep off the little guys, the poor working joes, and his influence with the mob keeps them off the little guys… sometimes.

Back now to 1939. The project has been moving slowly, and Hammond's bosses are getting

DOC STEARN...

MR. MONSTER'S COMIC CRYPT!

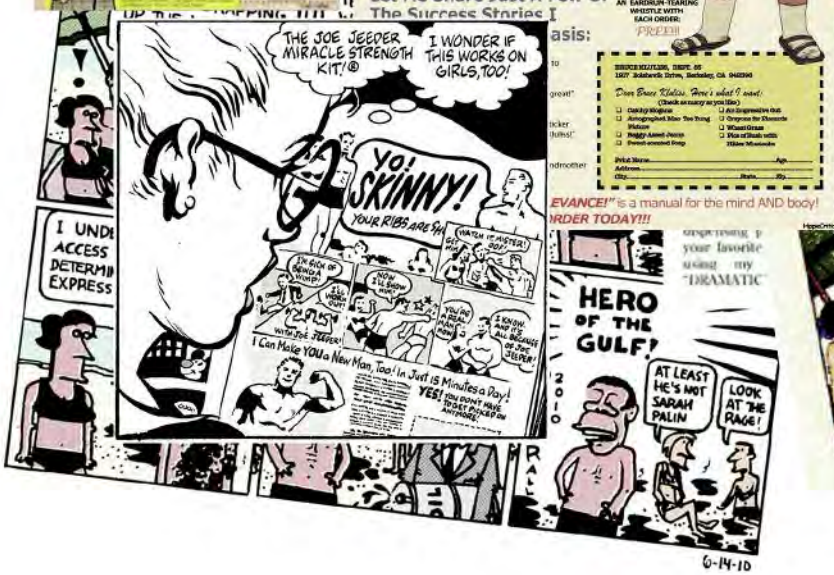
BY MICHAEL T. GILBERT

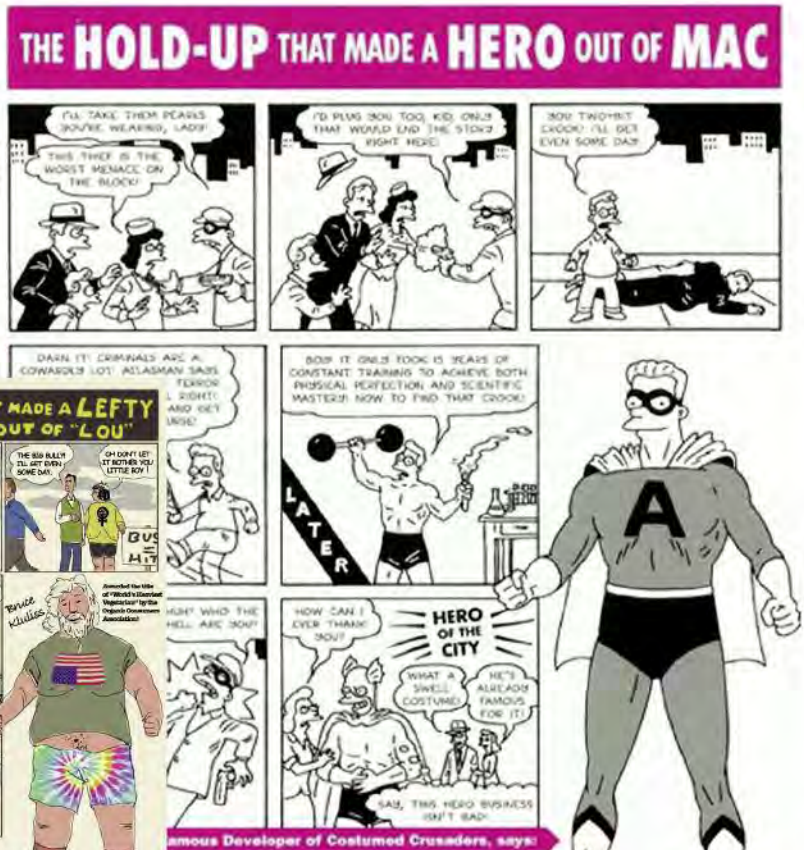
EVERYBODY LOVES POKING FUN AT *CHARLES ATLAS* ADS--AND NO WONDER! THE ATLAS FORMULA IS *SIMPLE:*

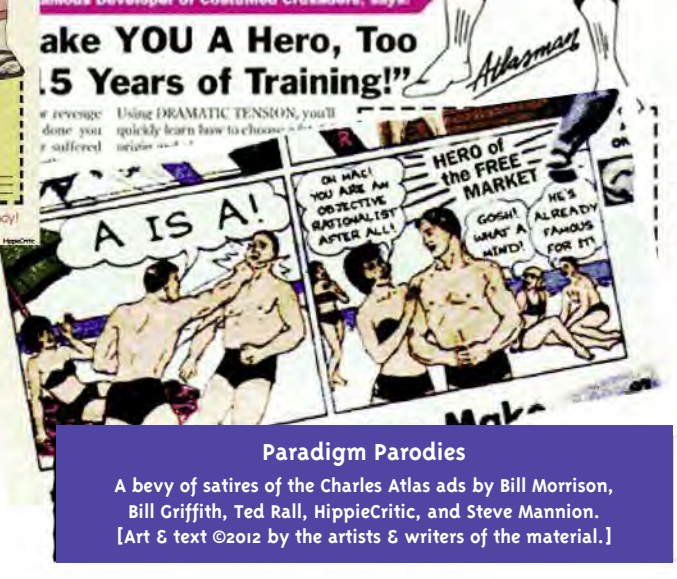
1. *BULLY* PICKS ON A *WIMP.*
2. *WIMP* COUGHS UP 30 BUCKS AND ORDERS THE *CHARLES ATLAS* COURSE.
3. AFTER 12 E-Z LESSONS, *WIMP* BECOMES A MUSCLE-BOUND *BULLY* HIMSELF!

FUN, HUH? NOW GET READY FOR CHARLES ATLAS *HIPPIES, ZIPPIES,* AND MORE IN . . .

CHARLES ATLAS (PART 3!)







Paradigm Parodies

A bevy of satires of the Charles Atlas ads by Bill Morrison, Bill Griffith, Ted Rall, HippieCritic, and Steve Mannion.

Charles Atlas – Part 3!

by Michael T. Gilbert

In *Alter Ego* #108 & 109 we delivered the inside dope on muscleman Charles Atlas. This time, we're back with *parodies* of his classic comic book ads—plus a sampling of four-color heroes inspired by the original Greek god himself!

Sons of Atlas...

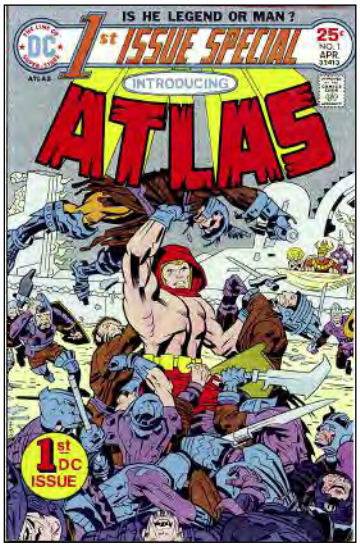
First up is Atlas the Mighty, from Great Comics Publications' *Choice Comics* #1. His origin was revealed in the opening caption:

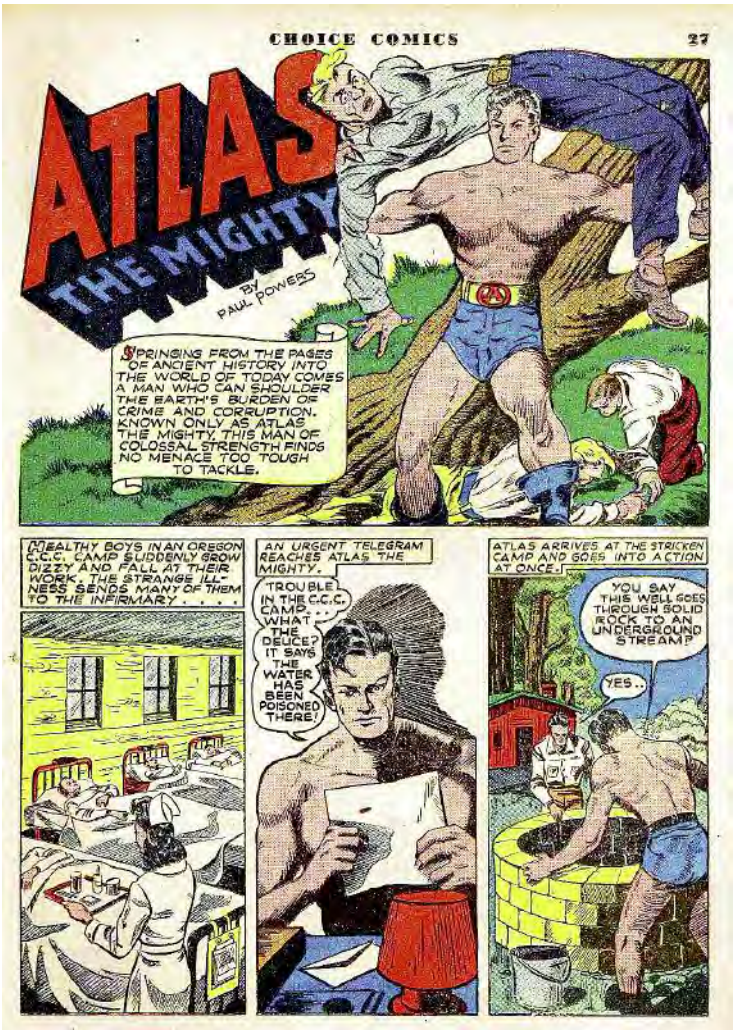
"Springing from the pages of ancient history into the world of today comes a man who can shoulder the Earth's burden of crime and corruption. Known as Atlas the Mighty, this man of colossal strength finds no menace too tough to tackle."

Maybe so, but Mr. Mighty folded early, lasting only one issue.

Superman also tangled with the Greek god at various times. Once he even fought the unlikely team of Atlas, Samson, and Hercules. But the terrible trio was doomed to defeat. Everyone knows you can't beat Superman in his own book!

Jack Kirby also tackled the legend in DC's *1st Issue Special* #1. It featured "Atlas," a.k.a. Atlas the Untamed, Atlas the Avenger, Atlas the Great, and probably Atlas the Plumber. But, great as he was, he couldn't sustain his own title for more than one issue. Are we seeing a trend here?

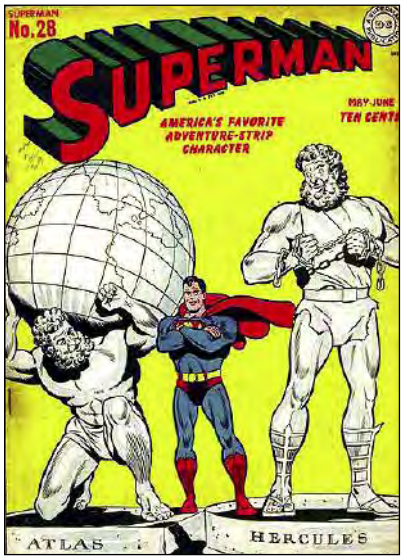


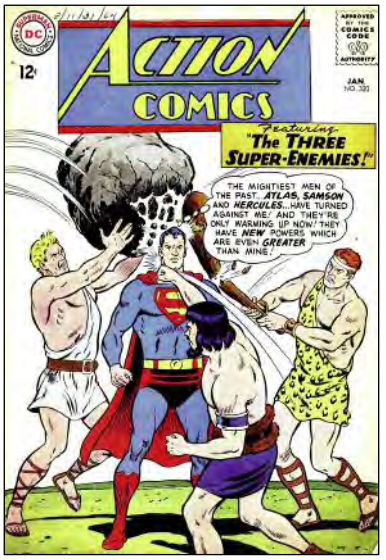


Heavy Lifting!

(Above:) "Atlas the Mighty" from *Choice Comics* #1 (Dec. 1941). Atlas shared the issue with, er, Kangaroo Man! Art by Paul Powers. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

(Left:) Jack Kirby's cover to *DC First Issue Special* #1 (April 1975) also starred a guy called Atlas. Inks probably by D. Bruce Berry. [©2012 DC Comics.]





Super, Man!

Superman and Atlas have had a long history together, though rarely a friendly one! Cover art by Wayne Boring & Stan Kaye for *Superman* #28 (May-June 1944) & *Action Comics* #121 (June 1948) and by Curt Swan & George Klein for *Action Comics* #320 (January 1965). [©2012 DC Comics.]

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S
FCA
Fawcett Collectors of America
#173
December 2012

Illustration by Eric Jansen.

"Vini, Video, Vinci!"

The Full, Unfettered Story Of How CAPTAIN VIDEO's Greatest Foe Inspired The Ultimate Enemy Of Marvel's AVENGERS!

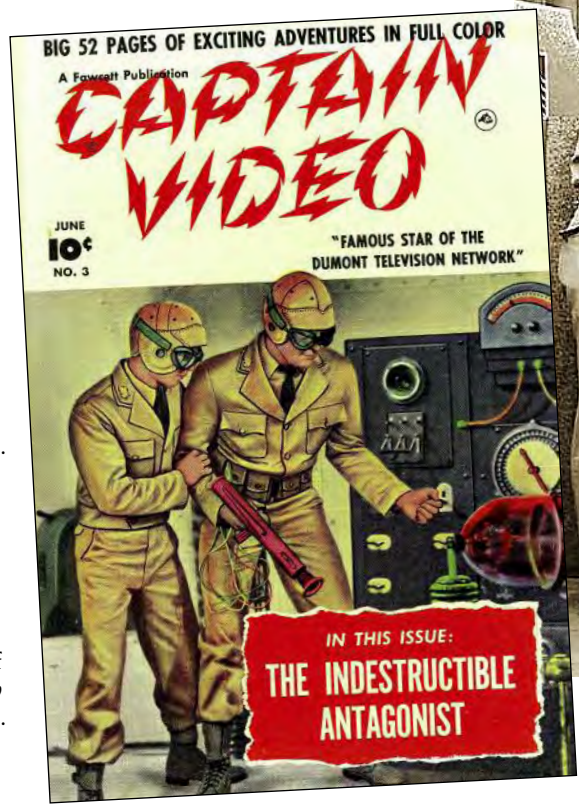
by Roy Thomas

Ultron.

Easily the most popular villain amongst the relative handful of that species that I co-created for Marvel Comics during the 1960s and '70s. Ahead of The Grim Reaper—Tiger Shark—Arkon—Sauron—Man-Ape—Thundra—not to mention The Banshee and Sunfire (a pair of mutants who started out as villains in *The X-Men* but later cleaned up their act). Naturally, that doesn't count Wolverine.

Of course, all comic-book villains have antecedents of one kind or another. The Red Skull's name was apparently lifted from the title of a *Doc Savage* pulp novel. Dr. Doom was Alexandre Dumas' *Man in the Iron Mask* given added armor and turned into an arch-fiend.

And the ultimate inspiration behind Ultron was a living robot called Makino, in the third issue of Fawcett Publications' *Captain Video* comic book, cover-dated June 1951.



Two Types of *Video* Recorder

(Above:) Al Hodge (on the right, as the good Captain) and Don Hastings as the Video Ranger in a publicity still from the *Captain Video* TV series, courtesy of a Wikipedia entry.

(Left:) The photo-cover of Fawcett's *Captain Video* #3 (June 1951). Thanks to P.C. Hamerlinck. [©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

Maybe *FCA* editor P.C. Hamerlinck and I are doing things backward, but we've scheduled an overview of the 6-issue *Captain Video* comics series for *A/E* #117, three issues from now, *after* the aforementioned Makino story has been fully reprinted. All the same, you need to know these minimal facts about that series up front:

Captain Video was, first and foremost, a very early children's program on the DuMont Television Network, which aired from 1949 to 1955. To quote the first paragraph-plus of the rather good Wikipedia coverage:

"Set in the distant future, the series followed the adventures of a group of fighters for truth and justice, the Video Rangers, led by Captain Video. The Rangers operated from a secret base on a mountain top. Their uniforms resembled U.S. Army surplus with lightning belts sewed on. The Captain had a teenage companion who was known only as the Video Ranger. Captain Video received his orders from the Commissioner of Public Safety, whose responsibilities took in the entire solar system as well as human colonies on planets around other stars."

When Fawcett's licensed *Captain Video* comic made its debut (#1, Feb. 1951), it strayed in several key ways from the TV series. For one thing, although the uniforms of the Captain and the Ranger were light brown on the covers (all six of which utilized photos—either color ones or else black-&-white ones which had been "colorized"), they were blue in all interior stories. Moreover, the comics were set in the present day (i.e., early 1950s), not in some far-flung future where space travel is a given; in fact, I haven't been able to ascertain that Video's comic book Whirlojet—which can fly only as high up as the stratosphere, not into outer space—was the precise equivalent of any of the vehicles he used on the TV show. Also, there were slightly more Video Rangers in evidence in the comic, apparently, than on the small screen. Still, Dr. Pauli, the Captain's arch-foe on the TV series, did make an appearance or two in the four-color version.

Klang, Klang, Klang Went The Robot

Marc Swayze, who celebrated his 99th birthday this past July 17, has been an important part of each and every issue of *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3, beginning with its very first issue in 1999. Marc wrote and drew this tale starring a far earlier Fawcett evil robot for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #15 (Sept. 1942). [Shazam hero TM & ©2012 DC Comics.]

As a kid of ten, I loved the *Captain Video* comic. Only problem was: during this tail-end of Fawcett's first foray into the comics field, the company's titles were rarely on sale in the two drugstores which were the major comic book outlets in Jackson, Missouri, and which were the places where I purchased DC, Timely, Dell, and most other comics firms' product. For the last year or so before Fawcett threw in the towel (it essentially quit publishing comics in late 1953), its titles could be found only at a small five-and-dime, called Cox's, which carried no other companies' comics. Separate but unequal treatment.

What made *Captain Video* worth seeking out during its 1951 run were the art and story. Though the tales bore no credits, the detailed, realistic pencils of all "Captain Video" tales were by George Evans, whose name I'd later come to know through EC Comics; the inking was mostly by Martin Thall (see his interview in *A/E* #52), with some of the embellishment being by Evans himself and even, according to Evans, by a very young Al Williamson. The scripts, like the art, were more adult than the usual kiddie comics fare—probably much more so than the TV show.

And no "Captain Video" story made a stronger impression on me than the lead tale in issue #3.

Because I've always wanted to do so even before *Alter Ego* went to full color a few issues, back, *FCA* editor P.C. Hamerlinck has indulged me and named me a sort of "guest associate editor" for a trio of issues—and so *FCA* will serialize the 19 pages of that story over *A/E* #114-116—annotating it in this introduction and at the bottom of each reprinted comics page. We'll be show-and-telling how the Makino episode influenced not only the creation and emergence of Ultron over the course of *The Avengers* #54-55 & #57-58, but also his *second* story arc in #66-68.

And now, with art scans courtesy of collector Rod Beck and P.C. Hamerlinck:

Long before artist John Buscema and I designed Ultron-5… even longer before I coined the name "Adamantium" for the hardest material imaginable in the second Ultron outing… there was…

Makino—*"The Indestructible Antagonist!"*…

Showing His True Metal

(Left:) Ultron had a somewhat convoluted debut. When first seen in *The Avengers* #54 (July 1968), he seemed merely a robot stand-in for the mysterious criminal known as The Crimson Cowl—while in that issue's final panel (not reprinted here) it appeared the true Cowl was none other than The Avengers' very own butler, Jarvis! Script by Roy Thomas, pencils by John Buscema, inks by George Tuska.

(Center:) In *Avengers* #55 (Aug. '68), however, it was revealed that it was Ultron—or Ultron-5, as he first identified himself, being the fifth version of a robot prototype—who was the real criminal mastermind all along. That's poor Jarvis he's pummeling, by the way. Script by RT, pencils by JB, inks by George Klein. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the scan.

(Right:) By the final panel of *Avengers* #57 (Oct. '68), Ultron-5, who had created the android known as The Vision in an attempt to destroy the assembled super-heroes, had apparently been destroyed "forever," with his head being booted around a vacant lot by a kid playing kick-the-can to the tune of Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias." The origin of Ultrons 1 through 4 in the lab of Dr. Henry Pym would be revealed via flashbacks in #58. [©2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Penciler George Evans, from the "EC Artist of the Issue" feature in *Frontline Combat* #13 (July-Aug. 1953), as reprinted in the hardcover *Frontline Combat, Vol. 3* (1982), published by Russ Cochran. [©2013 William M. Gaines Agent, Inc.]

[*Captain Video* #3 art & story on following 7 pages ©2012 the respective copyright holders.]

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YOU ARE A MISGUIDED FOOL, CAPTAIN VIDEO! NEITHER THIS FIRE NOR ANY FURY CONCEIVED BY THE MIND OF MAN-- CAN DESTROY ME!

HE'S STILL ALIVE! THERE IS SOMETHING WEIRD AND UNCANNY ABOUT MAKINO!

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IN A NIGHT SHROUDED MARSHLAND AREA, DESOLATE AND FOGGY, CAPTAIN VIDEO'S FAMED WHIRLOJET SETTLES TO A QUIET LANDING!

GOSH, CAPTAIN-I HOPE OUR LANDING GEAR DOESN'T SINK INTO A QUAGMIRE!

NO WORRY ABOUT THAT, RANGER! OUR ULTRA-SONIC LANDING BEAM WILL PICK A SOLID SPOT!

CAPTAIN VIDEO, June, 1951, Vol. 1, No. 3, is published bi-monthly by Fawcett Pub
applied for at the post office, Greenwich, Conn., with additional entry applied for at
mark of Fawcett Publications, Inc. Editorial and advertising offices, 67 W. 44th St.,
tions, change of address, etc., to Circulation Dept., Fawcett Pl., Greenwich, Conn. S
Foreign, $1.70 in international money order, U. S. funds. Printed in U. S. A.

The splash panel, which illustrates an upcoming scene from the story, gives little [illegible] his apparent invulnerability. Editor Barbara ("B.J.") Heyman, P.C. informs us, was a Fawcett editor from 1950-52 who was fondly remembered by artist Evans in a 1999 essay for *FCA*. Executive editor Will Lieberson and art editor Al Jetter are better known. In fact, Al's wife Charlotte, a letterer, worked on staff at Marvel in the early 1970s when Roy T. was editor-in-chief; but, alas, he never realized her connection to the man once also listed as art editor of *Captain Marvel Adventures*!