

ROY THOMAS' BUYER-GUIDING
COMICS FANZINE



Alter Ego™

No.122

January
2014

\$8.95

In the USA

**A TRIP
THROUGH
COMICS
FANDOM
HISTORY
WITH:**

**ALAN
LIGHT**

**MURRAY
BISHOFF**

**MAGGIE
& DON
THOMPSON**

**BRENT
FRANKEN-
HOFF**

**MARK
EVANIER**

**PETER
DAVID**

**TONY
ISABELLA**

**& DOZENS
OF OTHER
TBG/CBG
ALUMNI!**



**COMICS
BUYER'S
GUIDE
Remembered!**



Editor
Roy Thomas

Associate Editors
Bill Schelly
Jim Amash

Design & Layout
Christopher Day

Consulting Editor
John Morrow

FCA Editor
P.C. Hamerlinck

Comic Crypt Editor
Michael T. Gilbert

Editorial Honor Roll
Jerry G. Bails (founder)
Ronn Foss, Biljo White
Mike Friedrich

Proofreaders
Rob Smentek
William J. Dowlding

Cover Artists
John Fantucchio

Cover Colorist
Tom Ziuko

With Special Thanks to:

Heidi Amash	Tony Isabella
Bob Bailey	Batton Lash
Ward Batty	Mark Lewis
Terry Beatty	Alan Light
Cliff Biggers	Johnny Lowe
Murray Bishoff	John Lustig
Aaron Caplan	Russ Maheras
Nick Caputo	Doug Martin
Robert Carter	Mark Martin
Peter David	Jim McPherson
Jim Engel	John Jackson Miller
Mark Evanier	Michelle Nolan
John Fantucchio	Jerry Ordway
Chuck Fiala	Neil Ottenstein
Shane Foley	Barry Pearl
Brent Frankenhoff	John G. Pierce
Stephan Friedt	Charles R. Rutledge
Janet Gilbert	Steve Sansweet
Jennifer Go	Randy Sargent
Larry Guidry	Mitchell Senft
George Hagenauer	Craig Shutt
R.C. Harvey	Andrew Smith
Fred Hembeck	Dann Thomas
Bob Ingersoll	Maggie Thompson



Contents

Editorial: A Hitchhiker's Guide To The Buyer's Guide(s) 2

Comic Fandom Archive: Fandom Before TBG 3
Bill Schelly's brief overview of comics adzines prior to the dawn's early Alan Light.

TBG/CBG: A Pocket History 6
An overview of the *Buyer's Guide*, 1971-2013, by Brent Frankenhoff & John Jackson Miller.

The Buyer's Guide For Comics Fandom 19
Alan Light on how he created, built, and eventually sold fandom's most successful adzine.

Remembering The Buyer's Guide 26
Murray Bishoff illuminates his time as Alan Light's go-to guy on *TBG*.

"Beautiful Balloons," Volume 3, #1 30
Maggie Thompson recalls her and Don's days as co-editors of *CBG*—and way before!

Bountiful If Brief Reminisces of TBG & CBG 34
15 short memoirs by Brent Frankenhoff, Terry Beatty, Stephan Friedt, Russ Maheras, Fred Hembeck, John Lustig, Bob Ingersoll, Batton Lash, Mark Evanier, Cliff Biggers, Ward Batty, Andrew ("Captain Comics") Smith, Charles R. Rutledge, R.C. Harvey, & Johnny Lowe.

Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt Buyer's Guide Scrapbook. 55
Michael T. Gilbert relates his own sojourn with both incarnations of the long-lived adzine.

Four Easy Pieces Created for CBG #1700 61
Regular columnists Tony Isabella, Michelle Nolan, Craig ("Mr. Silver Age") Shutt, & Peter David present material that would've been in *CBG* #1700—if they'd had the chance!

FCA [Fawcett Collectors Of America] #173 73
P.C. Hamerlinck presents tributes to—and a hilarious story by—*TBG*'s Alan Jim Hanley.

On Our Cover: One of the most popular fan-artists of the 1970s was **John Fantucchio** (b. 1938). While he furnished his ornate and idiosyncratic drawings, with their distinctive signature and singular qualities, to fanzines like *TBG*, *RBCC*, et al., for only a few years—moonlighting from his job as an illustrator for the CIA, of all things—we could think of no art more fitting for this issue's cover than his for the very first issue of *TBG* in 1971, which spotlighted Golden Age heroes Major Victory, U.S. Jones, Uncle Sam, Man of War, Captain Freedom, and The Fighting Yank, and which has never before been seen in color. (James Montgomery Flagg, of course, did the large Uncle Sam in the background). John himself prefers to see his artwork reproduced in black-&-white, and you can see it that way, though considerably smaller, on p. 7. Thanks for your blessing, John. [Heroes TM & © the respective copyright holders; other art © John Fantucchio.]

Above: We had so many reminiscences about the *TBG* & *CBG* this issue that they crowded out even a truncated "re:" letters section—but not the terrific homage to John Fantucchio's work drawn by **Shane Foley** and colored by **Randy Sargent**, utilizing our miraculous "maskots." Thanks, guys! We weren't gonna let all that work go to waste! [Alter Ego hero TM & © Roy & Dann Thomas – costumed designed by Ron Harris; Captain Ego TM & © Roy Thomas & Bill Schelly – created by Biljo White.]



This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Don Thompson



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@tinet.com. Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices. Eight-issue subscriptions: \$60 US, \$85 Canada, \$107 elsewhere. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. *Alter Ego* is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in China. ISSN: 1932-6890

FIRST PRINTING.

Fandom Before TBG

A Quick Look At "The Way We Were" Before Alan Light Launched *The Buyer's Guide For Comics Fandom*

by Bill Schelly

Comicdom was established long before *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* began arriving with clockwork regularity in our mailboxes. Indeed, TBG's debut in spring of 1971 occurred almost exactly ten years after the spring 1961 debuts of *Alter-Ego* #1 and *Comic Art* #1. Thus, the beginning of fandom's second scintillating decade was marked by the appearance of Alan Light's phenomenal new publication.

How did comics fans get along pre-TBG, without a weekly or bi-weekly advertising vehicle? Since fandom developed not by any organized plan, but organically to fill the needs of aficionados and collectors of comic books and strips, it's worth reviewing our history to see how that growth led to TBG (which, of course, eventually became CBG)....

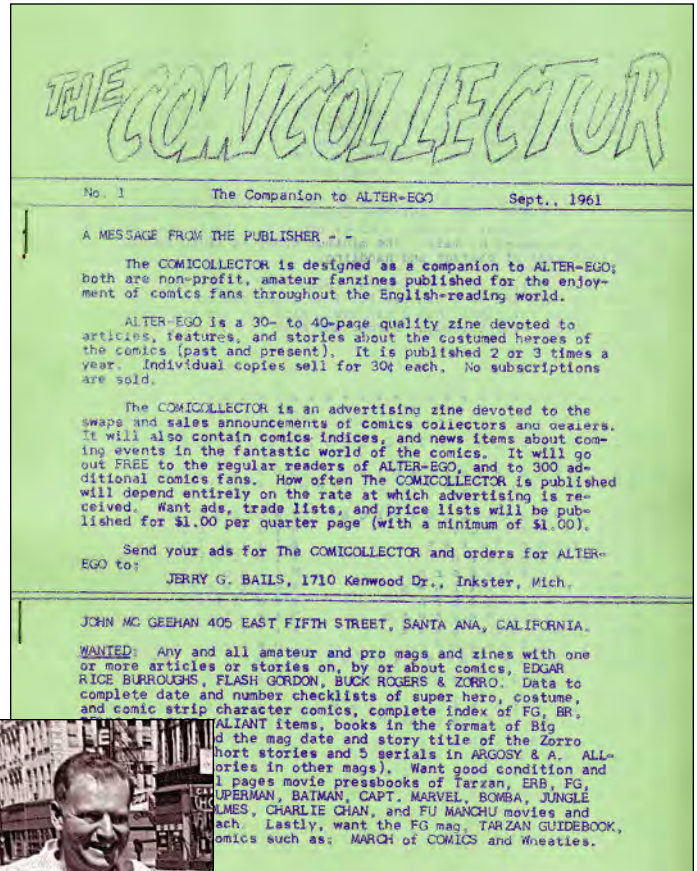
The most basic force that fueled the formation of comic (or comics) fandom in 1960 and 1961 was fans' desire to read and collect old comic books.

That, in turn, fueled the craving for information about comics of the past, because collectors needed to know the titles, dates, key issues, and contents of those sought-after, elusive issues.

Thus, when Jerry Bails (with a certain rascally co-editor) published the first, then-hyphenated issue of *Alter-Ego* on March 28, 1961, he was met not only with letters from fans hungry for more articles and data—but also with requests from fans to run their want lists and "for sale" lists in the next issue. And so, in *A-E* #2 in June, there appeared an ad for old comics sent in by Claude Held, who had been dealing funny-books for several years from his base in Buffalo, New York. Other advertisers were Frank H. Nuessel of Chicago, Red's Book Shop of Dayton, Ohio, and Charles Crum of Jacksonville, Florida.

Indeed, Jerry was overwhelmed by the number of incoming advertisements of one type or another, and in August 1961 (with a Sept. cover date) he launched a spin-off called *The Comiccollector*. This first adzine to originate in comicdom provided that much-needed marketplace, on a more frequent publishing schedule than *Alter-Ego* could offer.

A slightly different progression occurred for the editor of *The Rocket's Blast*, which debuted in December 1961. Initially conceived as a newsletter (as *A-E* itself had originally been) and gradually inundated by incoming advertisements, G.B. Love didn't start a new zine just to solicit ads. He simply bowed to popular demand and made room for them, using those revenues to keep his fanzine going. Before long, the number of pages with ads outnumbered those with editorial matter. While Love's early issues were relatively crude, they appeared frequently. As fans realized this, it enhanced *Rocket's Blast's* value as a reliable advertising vehicle. Love's circulation increased gradually over the 1962-63 period,



Comic Collectors, Meet *The Comiccollector*—And Comics Dealers!

Comiccollector #1 (September 1961), published by *Alter-Ego* founder Jerry Bails (early-1960s photo on far left), was the first comics adzine—while fan John McGeehan, by virtue of having his want list on page 1 of that issue, was its first advertiser. Claude Held (seen at near left in mid-1960s photo), who had been dealing in old comic books and strips through the 1950s, advertised even earlier, in *A/E* V1 #2. [Page © Estate of Jerry Bails.]

until it became a worthy rival to *The Comiccollector*.

In contrast to G.B. Love's

steadiness at the editorial helm, the editorship of *The Comiccollector* bounced from editor to editor. After its first year, Ronn Foss took over as editor and publisher (handling #7 through #12), then passed it on to Biljo White. But the task of typing up page after page of number-laden advertisements was no fun, especially for artistic types like Foss and White. So when Love offered to merge the two fanzines into one and fulfill the subscription obligations of the former publication, the *Rocket's Blast-Comiccollector* was born. The first issue under that title was *RBCC* #29, dated April of 1964.

Once fandom only had one major adzine, it becomes easy to trace the growing need for such a publication, because Gordon

TBG/CBG: A Pocket History

An Awesome Overview of *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom & Comics Buyer's Guide*

by Brent Frankenhoff & John Jackson Miller

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Before we plunge into the individual reminiscences of and articles and art by the all-star lineup of TBG/CBG editors, columnists, and cartoonists, we're fortunate that Brent Frankenhoff, who co-edited CBG with Maggie Thompson in its later years, has teamed up with CBG historian par excellence John Jackson Miller to give us a fascinating look at the entire panorama of the publication(s), from beginning to end.

Comics Buyer's Guide began life in the basement of a comics fan in 1971 and, for many years, was the largest marketplace for comics sales by mail, also serving as the leading news source for many fans during the weekly era of its run.

Much about the history of comics, both as a hobby and as an entertainment medium, can be seen in the pages of its 42-year history. It was a history that was filled with highs, lows, and many changes. Some changes were the result of external events; others, of moves by its owners.

The Alan Light Years (1971-1983)

Comics Buyer's Guide began life when Alan Light, then 17, launched his own newspaper, *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom*, in February 1971. Fandom was in full swing then, with Robert Overstreet's first *Comic Book Price Guide* having just been published. Fanzines were providing most of the mail-order connections for comics collectors, and Light's addition was crafted as a so-called "adzine," charging \$30 for its full-page ads. The initial circulation for the broadsheet newspaper was 3,600 copies, and subscriptions were available free to requesting readers. (Ads in that first 20-page issue included two different copies of *The Amazing Spider-Man* #1—for \$11 and \$4, respectively!)

"The TBG"—as people referred to it, despite the article already being in the acronym—shifted from bimonthly to monthly with its second issue. Editorial content was scarce in the early issues (although later regular Mark Evanier had a one-shot column in the fourth issue). With artists including Klaus Janson and P. Craig Russell providing some of the earliest covers, circulation topped 4,000 by early 1972. With issue #18 (Aug. 1, 1972), it went biweekly. That issue included the publication's first convention photo feature: on the 1972 New York Comic Art Convention.

As TBG grew, Murray Bishoff joined Light as an assistant, and the magazine brought in the couple who would later become synonymous with it: Don and Maggie Thompson. Sometimes



(Above:) Co-authors John Jackson Miller (on left) and Brent Frankenhoff in the CBG offices a few years back.



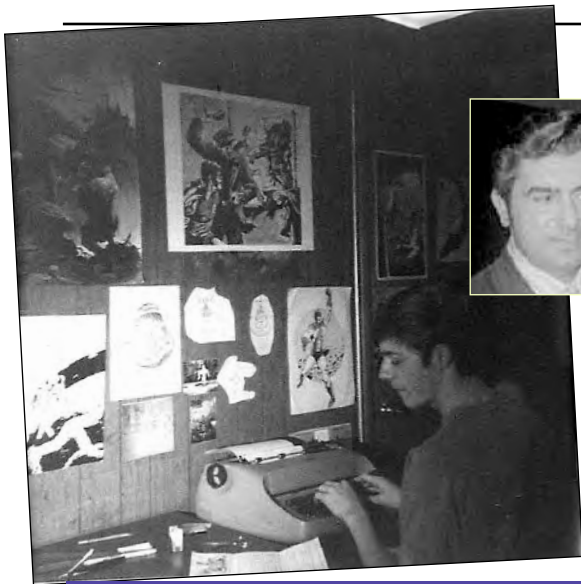
Going Gentle Into That Good Night?

(Above:) The cover of what became, unexpectedly to most of its readers and contributors, the final issue of Krause Publications' long-running *Comics Buyer's Guide*, dated March 2013. Thanks to Brent Frankenhoff. [characters TM & © the respective copyright holders; other content ©2012 Krause Publications, a division of F+W Media, Inc.]

called the "George and Martha Washington of comics fandom," Don and Maggie had produced the first general-interest comics fanzine (*Comic Art*) in spring of 1961 and had produced a comics fan newsletter (*Newfangles*) from March 1967 through December 1971. The Thompsons had first appeared in TBG #14 to continue the fan awards they'd started in *Newfangles*—and Light brought them in as columnists in #19 (Aug. 15, 1972). Their "Beautiful Balloons" column then ran in alternating issues.

There's a reason alternating issues were often the only place to find editorial content in the early TBGs. It was only there at all because, with the Dec. 1, 1972, issue (#26), TBG stopped being free and became a paid-subscription publication—\$2 for 23 issues. When it changed from a

requestor publication to one circulated under Second Class Mail rates, the Postal Service required that advertising could fill no more than 75% of the magazine's pages in every second issue. So #26 included regular news sections, including "Now What?" by Bishoff.



And the newspaper had long provided a venue through which smaller publishers could reach readers. Underground publishers Rip Off Press and Last Gasp began advertising in 1973, and many more alternative publishers followed. *Jack Katz's First Kingdom* was featured in 1977, one of many indie spotlights. People advertised to sell and find all sorts of things—including subscriber Walter Koenig of *Star Trek*, who was trying to expand his comics-character pinback-button collection. The 1970s TBG also covered collectors' issues, including the price spikes on such early "hot comics" as *Conan the Barbarian* #1, *Howard the Duck* #1, and *Red Sonja* #1. It also warned of the publication of the first counterfeit comic book: a copy of Warren's *Eerie* #1, in 1976. (CBG would also later warn of the *Cerebus* #1 counterfeit, among others.)

The Guide-ing Light

TBG founder Alan Light in 1971, working away in the DynaPubs office (aka his parents' basement)... and the cover of *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* #1, featuring art by fan favorite John Fantucchio (1970s photo at center). Although TBG #1 had no official cover date, Alan writes: "I always thought of it as February, 1971, because there was a two-month interval between #1 and #2, and the second issue's ad deadline was April 1, 1971." Photos courtesy of Alan Light. [Art © John Fantucchio.]

As the 1980s began, TBG had grown into its role as a focal point. Cat Yronwode had taken over Bishoff's news column with TBG #329 (March 7, 1980), naming her feature "Fit to Print," and many players in what would be the modern Direct Market were in place. But, after publishing 481 issues comprising 33,000 pages, Alan Light (then just 29) decided to sell his creation to Krause Publications of Iola, Wisconsin.

And there was a lot of content. Such Golden Age creators as Bill Everett were eulogized. Marvel's expansion in the early 1970s was covered. Articles on attempts to censor comics appeared as early as 1973, with an article on the arrest of Direct Market pioneer Phil Seuling for selling underground comix. Coverage expanded when the publication went weekly with #87 (July 18, 1975) and added media topics. A movie called *The Star Wars* [sic] was announced as a Christmas 1976 release in TBG #97 (Sept. 26, 1975). San Diego Comic-Con co-founder Shel Dorf later provided TBG readers with one of fandom's only interviews with Harrison Ford. Big news stories appeared throughout the 1970s. Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel spoke out in fandom for the first time in a piece that ran in TBG #105 (Nov. 21, 1975): "The Victimization of Superman's Creators." The magazine aggressively covered the drive to get pensions for him and Joe Shuster and was able to announce their settlement in #113, two months later.

The advertising base continued to grow—from the longest-running continuous advertiser Bill Cole (who started his run in TBG #31) to Steve Geppi, today of Diamond Comic Distributors, whose testimonial ad for TBG ran in #71 (Mar. 1, 1975). As a result, the newspaper continued to expand—some issues had as many as four sections—with the Thompsons' column expanding to take up nine full pages of the newspaper by 1976. (The largest issue of TBG was #190, the July 8, 1977, issue. It ran 148 pages, including a 52-page catalog from Mile High Comics.) And pure entertainment features were added, with Fred Hembeck launching his *Dateline* cartoon.

The industry was changing, with editorial upheaval at Marvel, runaway cover-price inflation, and troubles in the newsstand market filling many discussions. News of layoffs at Charlton reached readers in 1976. TBG #257 (Oct. 20, 1978) reported the publication of *Cancelled Comics Cavalcade*, a consequence of the "DC Implosion." But, with its circulation topping 10,000 copies in 1977, TBG was also reporting on the nascent comics-shop market, its ads connecting start-up distributors to start-up retailers. Seuling's first ad introducing Sea Gate Distributors appeared on the back of TBG #207, the Nov. 4, 1977, issue.



Fifth Column? That's For Pikers!

This montage of the mastheads of a number of regular TBG columns was compiled by longtime reader/researcher Russ Maheras. [© the respective copyright holders.]

The Buyer's Guide For Comics Fandom

The Birth & Thriving & Eventual Sale Of Fandom's Most Successful Adzine

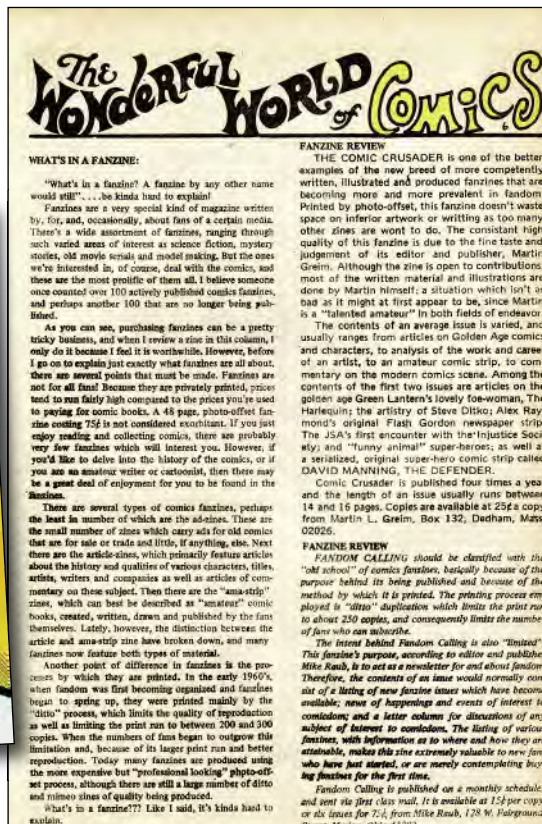
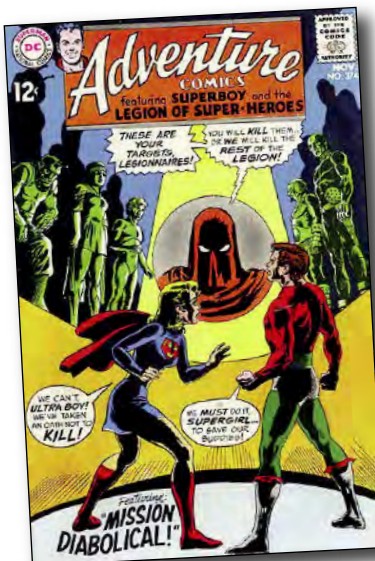
by Alan Light

A/E EDITOR'S INTRO: *We are privileged to have the founder of The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom, the 1971-1983 predecessor to Comics Buyer's Guide, on hand to relate to us firsthand the backstory of the original magazine—and how and why it metamorphosed into the juggernaut that it became. So we'll just get out of his way and let him do it....*

Back in 1968 there was a 15-year-old boy I used to know whose dad and uncle owned the neighborhood tavern in small-town Rapids City, Illinois. On weekends the boy would help out his dad by mopping and buffing the floor and carrying heavy cases up from the basement to re-stock merchandise. He sorted empty smelly beer bottles that had been sent down a chute to the basement. For working three hours every Saturday and again on Sunday, his dad paid him \$12.00.

That's how he could afford to buy his comic books. He bought them mostly at the Ben Franklin five-and-dime store in East Moline, Illinois. At that time, he bought only DC comics (never Marvel) for the cover price of 12 cents. Once in a while the store would have a shopping cart piled high with all sorts of comics that had the titles mysteriously sliced off—and they cost only a nickel!

(The kid didn't know that what the store was doing

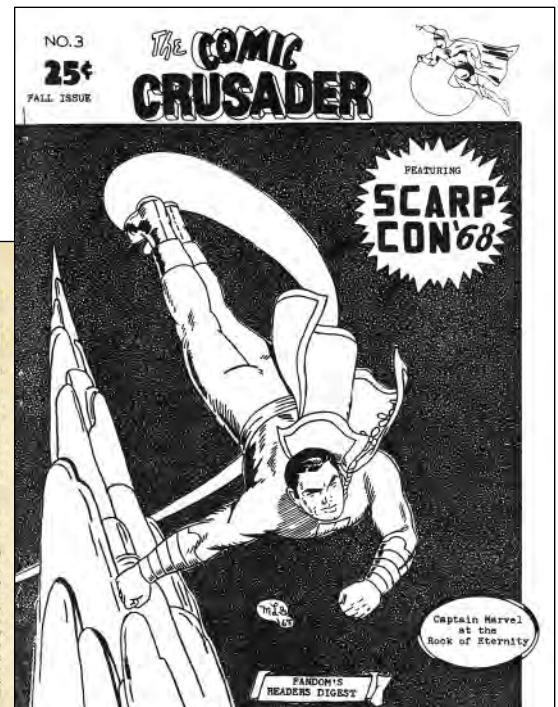


In The Beginning...

A teenage Alan Light holds up the original John Fantucchio art for the cover of *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* #1, which debuted in early 1971. Photo courtesy of Alan.

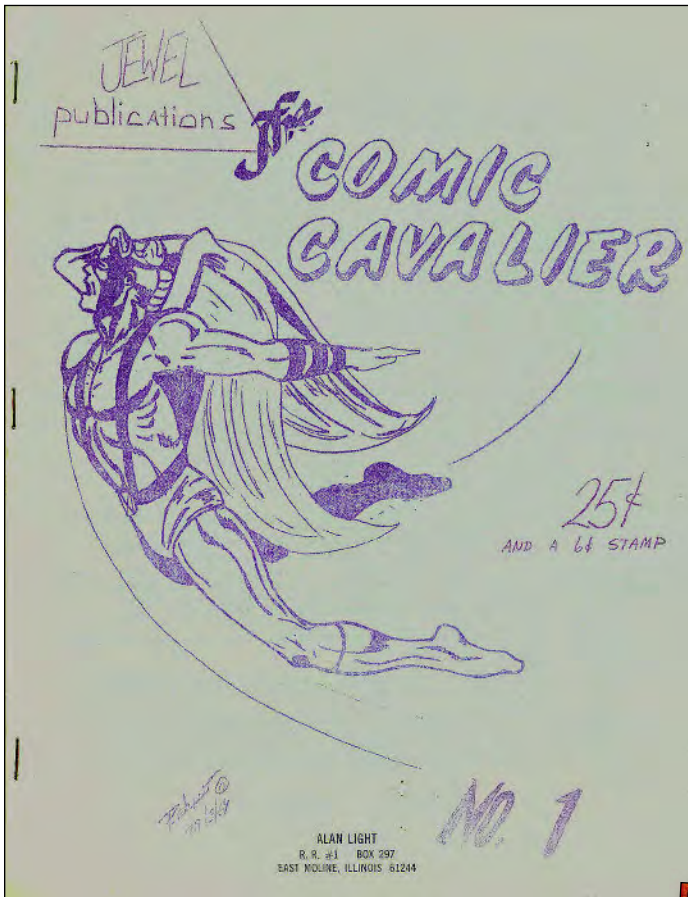
was illegal, tearing off and returning the top third of a cover to get a full refund on unsold copies from the distributor and then selling the comics, which were supposed to have been destroyed.)

One day in September of 1968 he spent the full 12 cents for the latest issue of *Adventure Comics*, #374. Inside was an article headlined "The Wonderful World of Comics" that told about something called comics fandom and explained that "fanzines" were amateur fan magazines about comics. The article recommended a fanzine by the name of *Comic Crusader*, for 25 cents. When it arrived in his mail box, the kid was hooked, and his life was forever changed.



...And Before The Beginning

This is where it all started for Alan: an article about comics fandom in *Adventure Comics* #374 (Nov. 1968), and the copy of Martin L. Greim's fanzine *Comic Crusader* #3 (Fall 1968) to which it pointed him. *Adventure* cover art by Curt Swan & Mike Esposito; CC cover by Greim. Thanks to Bob Bailey for the comics text page, and to Aaron Caplan for the CC scan. [Adventure cover © DC Comics; Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics; other CC art © Martin L. Greim.]



A Cavalier Attitude

The cover of Alan's very first fanzine, *The Comic Cavalier* #1, printed in 1969 on a spirit duplicator. Art by Kevin Richert. Thanks to Alan for the scan, and to Aaron Caplan for the artist ID. [Angel TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Of course, you know that the boy is, or was, me. Looking back 45 years ago, it just *seems* like another person, another lifetime ago. I still have that copy of *Adventure Comics* #374 and that issue of *Comic Crusader*, #3, in a single musty old box of souvenirs from my 15 years in comics fandom.

Soon after learning that fanzines existed, it occurred to me, "I could do that!" I wanted to join in. My first attempts, *Comic Cavalier* and then *All Dynamic* (the "All" came from my initials, Alan Lloyd Light), are laughably crude when looked at now. But they were necessary steps that led to a publication that endured a very long time, indeed—*Comics Buyer's Guide*.

After losing about \$100, which was a lot of money to a kid working hard to earn \$12 a week, I decided to try going for a wider audience and maybe even the chance to break even or make a profit. A profit on a fanzine was unheard of in those days and was in fact considered anti-fan. It was very much frowned on.

The idea I had was to publish a tabloid-format newspaper for comic book fans. It might have a little advertising, but it would be mainly news. In what would turn out later to be an interesting coincidence, the people I contacted back in 1970 to help me with my new idea were Don and Maggie Thompson.

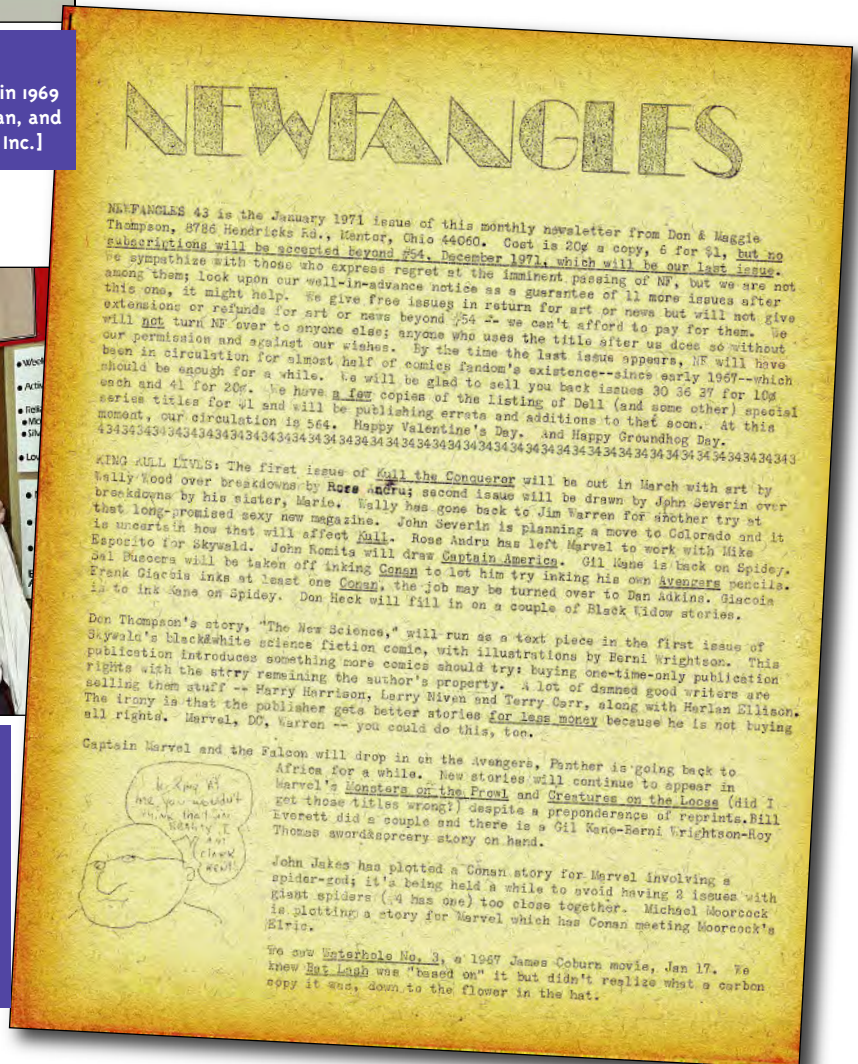
Why the Thompsons? They were celebrities in comics fandom. They both went way back to the earliest days, and were "connected." They knew everyone who was important in comics. Don and Maggie had been publishing a mimeographed fanzine called *Newfangles*, which contained the latest news about comics gathered straight from their comics-famous friends.



A Newfangled Notion

(Right:) Don & Maggie Thompson announced a year in advance that they were discontinuing *Newfangles*, as per the first page of issue #43 (Jan. 1971)—which led, in a roundabout way, to *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*—which in turn would furnish not just Alan Light but later the Thompsons themselves with an income for several decades. Thanks to Aaron Caplan. [© Maggie Thompson.]

(Above:) An all-smiles reunion—Alan Light and the Thompsons at the 1990 San Diego Comic-Con. Photo courtesy of AL.



Remembering *The Buyer's Guide*

by Murray Bishoff

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *If there is one name firmly and forever identified with Alan Light's original Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom, it's that of Murray Bishoff, now a Mid-Western newspaper editor. We'll let him tell you why that is....*

I was a junior in high school and remember quite vividly the day Alan Light handed me the first issue of *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* in the spring of 1971. I had known Alan for about a year. He was a year older than me. It wasn't until my junior year that Alan and I could cross paths on a regular basis. I had little idea what this new publication would mean to me. Alan had not talked about this idea at all.

I had been collecting comics for about seven years. I'd read and re-read every reference book on comic books and strips I could find and had one of the larger collections in the area. I had subscribed to G.B. Love's *Rocket's Blast-Comiccollector* for three years by then. Alan must have advertised his *All Dynamic* fanzine there, and I called him up once I knew there was another collector in town.

Those active in comics fandom seem to come in three varieties: collectors, writers/artists/storytellers, and those who want to make publications. I was still expanding my collections at the time and getting my footing as a writer. Alan seemed to love the comics art form, but wasn't much of a collector. He wanted to publish. As a writer, and someone who loved to talk about comics of all kinds, I was drawn to the venue Alan offered. I wrote a piece on The Shadow for his fourth issue of *All Dynamic*. Initially I probably saw *TBG* only as a way to buy more stuff. As my collecting patterns changed, it became much more to me.

I offered to help Alan any way I could. I was never a business partner or shared any investment in the company. My assistance came through my knowledge of the art and offering an extra hand. Initially I tried to do some office work. My real contribution came as business picked up. With issue #11 (Feb. 1972) I started addressing the issues, a job I kept until *TBG* became a weekly. The job doubled quickly after #16 (June 1972), which was so big (60 pages) that Alan switched to a twice-a-month schedule. The extra income enabled me to buy more, complete my collections, and immerse myself further in the comics form.

Alan came from a very nice middle-class family with a large comfortable ranch-style home on the shore of the Mississippi River. His mom and dad and his slightly younger sister were wonderfully pleasant people. They welcomed me into their household like one of the family. Twice a month I would spend a Saturday at their house, running mountains of *TBGs* through



Addressing The Issues Of The Day

Murray Bishoff addresses outbound copies of *TBG* in the DynaPub offices, 1972. Photo courtesy of Alan Light.

the addressograph, then bundling them, packing them in mail bags, and hauling them to the East Moline, Illinois, Post Office. In time, the job got too big for one day and would take Sunday morning to finish.

Alan's mom became his office manager. A well-organized retired executive secretary, she kept the operation running smoothly. Alan seemed largely free to promote, think up new projects, and try to keep up with the engine that *TBG* had become.

Initially, Alan started running columns to give readers something to look at between all the ads. In 1974, he got a second-class postage permit, which required a specific amount of non-ad material per issue. Then *TBG* started to get really interesting. Columns tended to run in the odd-numbered issues.

Looking back, the success of *TBG* is breathtaking. By issue #77 (March 1, 1975), the issue was 100 pages with over 7,000 subscribers. By issue #87 (July 18, 1975) the issues were so big Alan had to go weekly, and even so the first issue was 72 pages. By issue #200 (9-16-77), circulation topped 10,000 subscribers, and even a weekly issue was 80 pages.

Alan used all kinds of filler to meet his quota. Terrific Alan Hanley original strips of "Goodguy," printer's proofs of never-printed-in-the-U.S. 1940s "Captain Marvel" stories, other 1940s Fawcett super-hero stories we found in proof form at conventions, lots of historic photos of cartoonists all appeared, many in full-page size in the tabloid format. Every issue was a feast for fans.

If you count the ads in any mid-1970s issue and figure what it would take to convert all that to a format for Internet display, it seems unlikely that dealers and fans could have experienced the



"Shazam! Eh?"

The first page of a black-&-white "Captain Marvel" story produced by and for a Canadian comics company during World War II and reprinted in *TBG* #77 (March 1, 1975). Thanks to Russ Maheras. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]



STAN LEE



WILL EISNER



BATMAN CREATOR BOB KANE

Pros & Cons

Photos of a handful of the pros in attendance over the July 4th weekend at Phil Seuling's 1974 New York Comic Art Convention, as printed in *TBG* #65 (Sept. 1, 1974). [Photos © the respective copyright holders.]



GIL KANE



BARRY SMITH



PHIL SEULING & ROY THOMAS

sense of community in any other format. You felt compelled to read everything in an issue because it was all in your lap. If you had to keep clicking to see more, you'd get tired and quit. With *TBG*, the glory of the printed page is setting it down and coming back for more later. The variety of material was staggering. On the cover of issue #83 (6-1-75), Alan proclaimed: "Reaching all serious comic collectors." It was a claim that was hard to dispute.

Don and Maggie Thompson provided the first regular column, "Beautiful Balloons." Marty Greim's "Crusader Comments" followed. Initially Alan simply wanted more non-ad reading material, so he asked me to be his in-house columnist/reporter. My first column appeared in #26 (Dec. 1972). My column was called "Now What?" The name, though not as classy as the Thompsons,' said "news."

I wrote 20 columns in the first year, compared to a monthly routine for the Thompsons and Marty Greim. For several years, our pieces were really very similar in content. My columns were mostly news, obituaries (Walt Kelly, Merian C. Cooper, Lex Barker, Chic Young in the first year alone), promos for DynaPubs' other publications, and a lot of commentary. Most of the verbiage was forgettable, though my review of Ralph Bakshi's animated film *Heavy Traffic* in #44 (Sept. 15, 1973) showed depth and a bit of promise.

Once the second-class permit came through, Alan started spacing the columns out to a monthly routine and inflating their length. I went to a page or more. The Thompsons jumped to three and four pages. I continued my column for seven years, producing special reports as needed, particularly during convention season.

It took time, but I developed a style and focus. As the Thompsons moved into more reviews and letters, I concentrated on monthly developments, especially the economic side of the industry, watching retail price changes and the reasons behind them, as well as creative developments.

I was the first, and maybe the only, reviewer to go through Bob Overstreet's *Comic Book Price Guide* page by page, reporting where he changed prices from year to year, and by how much. There were distinct blocks, such as numbered runs of the *Fantastic Four*, that would jump by 20% in a year's time. I pointed out the patterns, which Overstreet never chose to explain. It seemed rather clear there was something more than market activity going on.

In 1973 I started going to conventions with Alan. He provided a venue for photo-journalism and ran photo spreads from different shows. In 1974 I provided photos, summaries of panel presentations, and market reports. This push into covering real news, and being able to publish it quickly, made *TBG* into a real newspaper. We could put the reader right where we had been, and once *TBG*

“Beautiful Balloons,” Volume Three, #1

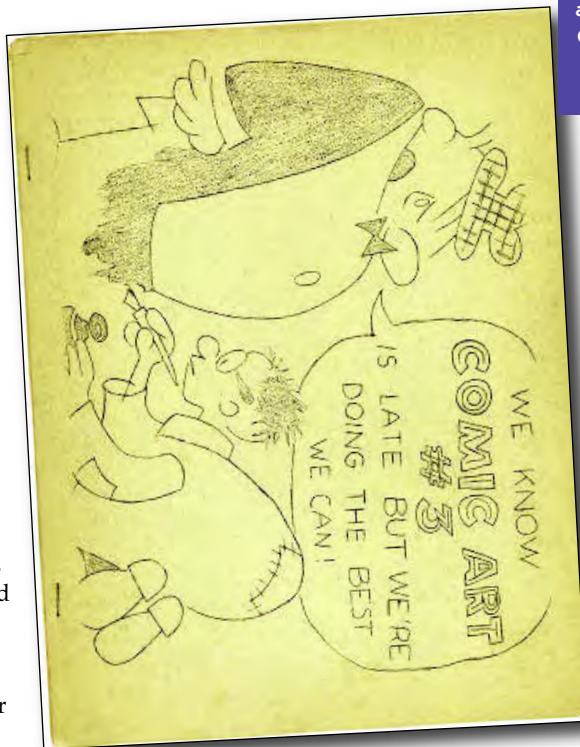
by Maggie Thompson

As a long-time comics collector, I should note at the outset that I loathe keeping track of series that count themselves by volume and then number. Just how many were in Volume One? In Volume Two? For some reason, that information can be hard to come by—and sometimes even the originators don’t know. (*Air Fighters Comics* messed up their own count, for goodness’ sake.) But “Beautiful Balloons”—the column that Don and I began with *The Buyer’s Guide for Comic Fandom* #19—well, yes, it has had three separate identities over the years. And, no, I have no idea how many releases there were in each volume (although, as noted elsewhere in this issue of *Alter Ego*, John and Brent say there were 147 in Volume One).

Before Volume One

Don and I met in 1957 at a picnic, in the course of which we talked about an incredible variety of popular culture in an ongoing geekfest (this at a time in which the terms “popular culture” and “geekfest” were yet to be coined). Fanzines were an integral part of the world of science-fiction fandom, and Don was already involved with *Ballast*, a science-fiction fanzine published by students at Penn State. We (separately) attended the World Science Fiction Convention in Pittsburgh in 1960, and (though we didn’t realize it then), it was clearly Comics Time. Dick and Pat Lupoff circulated the first issue of *Xero* there, and it included a nostalgic article on Captain Marvel less than eight years after the last issue of *Whiz Comics*. At the con banquet, Don and I decided to do a fanzine devoted to all aspects of comics: comic books, comic strips, animated cartoons, magazine cartoons, and the like. The following spring saw publication of *Comic Art* #1. We announced at the beginning that it would be published on a determinedly irregular schedule, and we kept that pledge.

Comic Art brought us a wealth of contacts and insights. Comics creators who had received little adult attention until then were generous in their



Don & Maggie Before They Were “The Thompsons”

(Above:) Don Thompson and Maggie Curtis a few weeks before their wedding—and, if we’re not mistaken, the tandem launching of their groundbreaking fanzine *Comic Art*. With thanks to Bill Schelly, from his aptly named seminal book *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*.

(Below left:) The cover of *Comic Art* #3 borrowed a panel from the wonderful late and lamented comic strip *Sam’s Strip* by Jerry Dumas (and, anonymously, *Beetle Bailey* creator Mort Walker) to illustrate the point that *CA* was published on what was actually a stubbornly irregular “schedule.” In fact, though this issue came out sometime in the early 1960s, there’s no date on it at all! [*Sam’s Strip* art © Mort Walker & Jerry Dumas.]

responses to a couple of curious admirers. We reveled in every bit of information we—and our contributors—uncovered. We also continued our unfocused focus, while many other comics fanzines proliferated (led by *Alter-Ego*), almost all of them concentrated on costumed and/or super-powered heroes.

Then, as now, I lazily enjoy letting others do the work; if someone is already releasing a product I like, I’m happy to buy it. On the other hand, I tend to obsess on providing for myself something I can’t easily find elsewhere. So it was that Don and I eventually saw a need for *another* sort of comics fanzine: a newsletter to connect comics fans who cared about the activities of other fans. So, a decade after we met, we began to produce such a newszine on a *regular* schedule: *Newfangles* was born in 1967.

How did the Thompson & Thompson Team work? Often, in the early days, Don did the writing and I did the art. Eventually, though, I simply wrote when Don didn’t; it literally reached the point at which one of us could begin a sentence and the other finish it. Material was composed on

Turning A Fan Into A Pro

by Brent Frankenhoff

So how does a guy born and raised on a dairy farm in southwestern Wisconsin become the editor of *Comics Buyer's Guide*? It's an interesting journey. (Well, at least to me.)

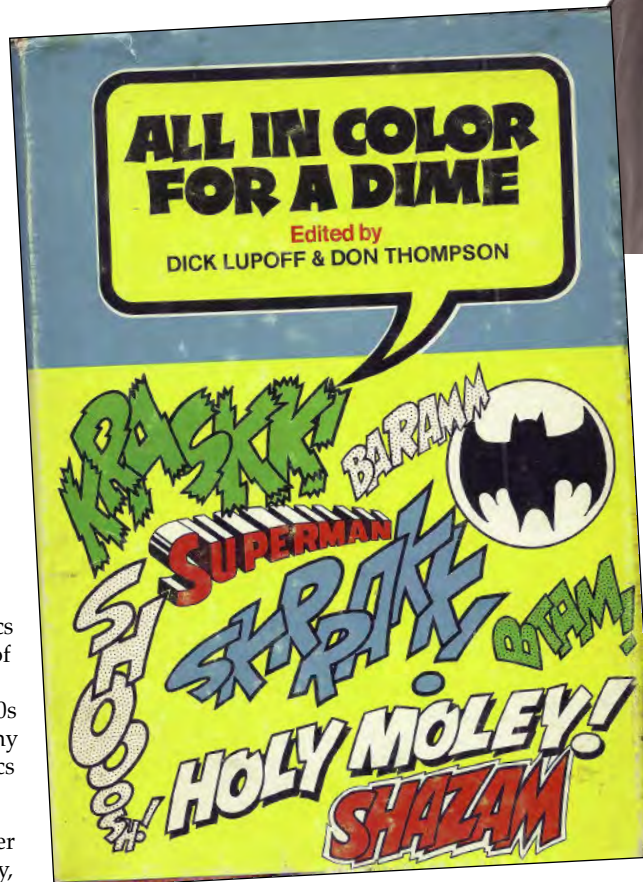
I've always been a reader and always been interested in comics. The first comics I remember looking at, before I was four years old, were *Amazing Spider-Man* #80 (Jan. 70), *Action Comics* #381 (Oct. 69), and *X-Men* #63 (Dec. 69). (And, yes, I still have all three in my collection.)

Between doting parents and grandparents who would pick up comics for me (plus a great pharmacist who would send home a comic book with whatever prescription my parents were picking up for me), I had a sizable stack of comics early on. With no siblings to fight over them, I was able to hang onto all my comics from the start. As a sort of bonus, neither of my parents had brothers or sisters, so I inherited all their comics from the late 1940s and early 1950s. I wasn't Supersnipe, by any means, but I had a great sampling of comics across the years.

When I went to kindergarten, my mother tells me, I came home upset on the first day, because they hadn't yet taught me to read. Once I did learn how, I haunted the school library, the town library, and any other outlet for books I could find. My parents discovered that the most effective punishment for me was cutting off my library visits.

I bought and read comics into my high school years, only stopping for a brief time (and then, not completely) when other pursuits caught my interest. When I went to college, I made a beeline for the grocery-store comics rack and was a regular there every Tuesday, when the new comics were stocked. I also discovered comics shops in Madison, Wisconsin, and Dubuque, Iowa.

In my junior year of college, a friend showed me *Comics Buyer's Guide*. I had seen the fan-awards ballot in comics but hadn't seen the paper itself until then. It was a revelation. Between the comics news, the interviews, the previews, and the historical features, this was heaven. I had read all the comics-history books (*All in Color for a Dime*, *The Comic-Book Book*, Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, *Origins of Marvel Comics*, *Son of Origins*, etc.), but this was fresh material delivered every week. My friend let me read his subscription copy while we were in college, and I resolved that, once I had a full-time job, the first thing I would do would be to get my own subscription.



All In Hardcover—But Not For A Dime!

Brent Frankenhoff, in a recent photo—and the cover of the original Arlington House edition of *All in Color for a Dime*, the 1970 hardcover edited by Dick Lupoff & Don Thompson. That volume, the first book to deal with Golden Age comic books after Jules Feiffer's 1965 *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, consisted mostly of articles (some of them rewritten) from the iconic, eponymous series in Dick & Pat Lupoff's 1960s fanzine *Xero*. This was one of the works of comics history that made an early impression on Brent. [Superman & Batman logos © DC Comics; rest of cover © 1970 Arlington House.]

I did just that in 1990, when I was working for a small-market radio station in

Prairie du Chien, Wis. There, I met another comics collector; he was also a writer and artist. John Mundt and I quickly formed a friendship that endures, and he was the impetus that got me to a Chicago Comicon in 1991, where I met Don and Maggie Thompson—as well as Tony Isabella, Bob Ingersoll, and others—for the first time.

In late 1991, I saw an ad in *Comics Buyer's Guide* for an editor for a new comics-related publication. I applied but didn't hear a word. It wasn't long before *CBG* carried the news of the launch of *Comics Retailer* and the hiring of K.C. Carlson as editor. Within a few months, K.C. left to take an editorial job at DC, and his position at *Comics Retailer* became available. I applied again and this time had a phone interview, although the position was eventually filled internally by Don Butler.

My résumé and application were still on file that summer of 1992, when Don and Maggie were in need of editorial assistance with the growth of the weekly publication. I came to Iola for the first interview in early August, toured the company, rewrote material for Don and Maggie (those news bits appeared uncredited in *CBG* #988, Oct. 23, 1992), went to lunch with them, and then returned home. They told me that it would be a while before I heard anything, since they had to attend a convention later that month.



My Adventures With TBG

by Terry Beatty

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *Terry Beatty is a professional artist and writer, known for his series Ms. Tree (though not known only for that). But, back in the day, he was an early and important contributing artist to Alan Light's TBG, as we'll now let him tell you....*

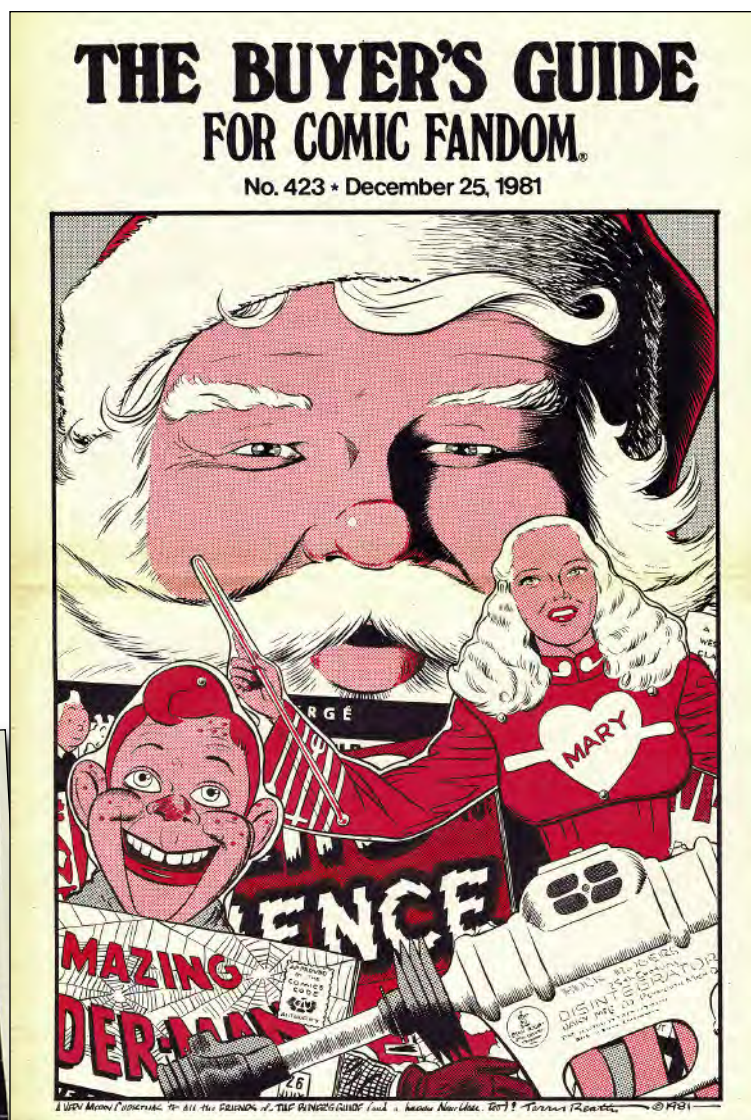
My first cover illustration for Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* was cover-dated February 29, 1980—a retro-styled Batman image, drawn long before I had any professional association with the character. I had submitted a Master of Kung Fu drawing to TBG years earlier, around '75 or '76, while I was still a high school student. Alan had the good sense to reject that early effort (the original no longer exists), and I didn't try again until I had started being published professionally. I was concerned about being typed as a "fan artist," and in fact, after starting to contribute to TBG, had to ask one comics journalist to please not label me as such.

I connected with Alan Light, thanks to our mutual friend, Max Allan Collins. Max and I were both born and raised in the Iowa river town of Muscatine. My father had been his junior high school English teacher, and Max made his first attempts at writing crime novels in Dad's class. Though there is a ten-year difference in our ages, we were the two "comic book guys" in town, so it was inevitable that we cross paths. Eventually we began working together on comics projects, starting in 1979 with an attempt at a self-syndicated weekly comic strip feature. With that running, I felt I could do a little "fan art" on the side and still maintain my professional status.

TBG was published out of East Moline, Illinois—less than an hour's drive from Muscatine—and it was a common thing for us

"small town folks" to make the trek to the "Quad Cities" area for movies, dining, and shopping. When Muscatine's newsstand closed, a weekly run to the "QCs" became essential for picking up the latest comic books and magazines. Dropping in on Alan was sometimes part of those visits. What I recall most was that Alan was one of the first people I knew who owned a home video recorder—a "U-Matic." I'd have no doubt been recording different shows than he did (I recall he had every episode of *The Waltons* saved on tape), but it was still a pretty cool thing.

TBG, which featured fan-contributed art on its covers, with a pro illo thrown in once in a while, had gone weekly—and Alan was running out of art to print—sometimes repeating a cover. I don't recall who suggested it—but because of the weekly schedule,



Terry And The Page-Rates

(Left, from l. to r.): Don and Maggie Thompson and Terry Beatty in Krause Publications' office in Iola, Wisconsin, around the time Krause and the Thompsons inherited *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*. Photo taken by Alan Light.

(Above:) For some reason, Terry chose *not* to supply us with the very first cover he ever drew for TBG—so here is the earliest of those he did send: for Christmas 1981, a visual suggestion to have a Merry Memorabilia Christmas! Terry stresses that he was *paid* for the covers, which made him something of an anomaly at TBG. Thanks to Terry and Stephan Friedt for the scans of the three TBG covers that accompany this article. [Art © Terry Beatty.]

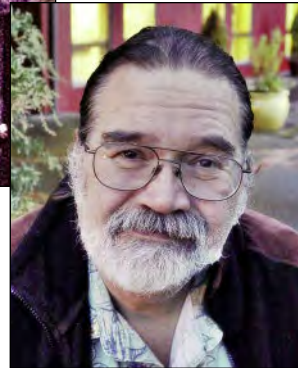
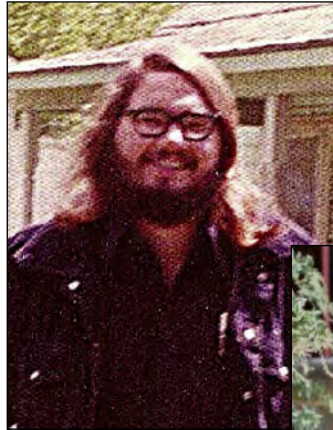


How Does One Become A Fanzine Columnist?

by Stephan Friedt

First, you have to love comics. Not just like them, but really, really love the medium. You have to buy and read and collect everything you can get your hands on. You have to aspire to one day be a comic book creator... or at least a comic store owner. You have to read fanzines... and go to comic cons... and write fan letters... and seek out any professionals that might live in your area.

In my case, I loved comics. I had since I was a youngster in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I saved my allowance and spent at least part of it on comic books every week. Gathered pop bottles for their deposit... mowed the neighbor's lawns... anything I could manage that garnered me a few cents. Back then, twelve cents was all you needed... twenty-five if it was really "special."



Spy Vs. Smasher

Photos of Stephan Friedt in 1976 and today (well, okay, the day before yesterday) flank the cover of *TBG* #117 (Feb. 13, '76). The illustrations of the Republic movie-serial version of the 1940s Fawcett hero *Spy Smasher*, as portrayed by Kane Richmond, are by Bob Murphy. [Spy Smasher TM & © DC Comics; other elements © the respective copyright holders.]

If Mom or Dad asked if I wanted anything from the store, I said, "A comic book!" It didn't matter which one or two they brought home; all that mattered was that it was a comic book.

I spent almost two decades gathering a collection together. I ordered catalogs and fanzines from the ad pages in the comic books. One of the fanzines was a weekly advertising newspaper called *The Buyer's Guide to Comics Fandom*. I couldn't believe my eyes when the first issue arrived.

Tabloid size... page after page of people all across the country with the same addiction I had... and plenty of issues to fill that craving. A subscription was immediately ordered with a money order... and fanzines and comics were bought from advertisers. Things like *Rocket's Blast-Comiccollector...* *Squa Tront...* and *Comic World*.

The *TBG* publisher, Alan Light, also offered some Golden Age comic reprints called *Flashback*. Those were ordered, and when they arrived, I immediately sent him a letter asking if they could be purchased in quantity at a discount. What great material for trading! What great table fillers for the little weekend comic cons that were springing up at hotel chains around the state! Then in one issue Alan mentioned he had room for more "columnists." I sent him my idea for a "review" column... something to help the fans separate the wheat from the chaff. That would have been about the end of 1974, or early 1975.

Alan looked at my first column... with my self-illustrated header... and "The Reviewer" was born. He didn't care that its appearance was sporadic. If I had one available, he found room to publish it. If it wasn't ready, he found something to fill in its place. What mattered to Alan was that it was "fan-generated."

People started sending letters of comment on my reviews. And things started showing up in the mail unrequested. Copies of fanzines showed up for me to review... Jerry Ordway's *Okay Comics*... Jim Starlin's *Doctor Weird*... and many others... all material for my column. Seven columns appeared over a little more than a year. All of them lovingly assembled from purchased comics and volunteered fanzines. My last column appeared in *TBG* #117, dated Feb 13, 1976.

The column ended that spring; I scored a job in a coin shop that

THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMIC FANDOM.

No. 117-February 13



“It’s Here!”

An Ode To Art On The Outside Of The Mailing Envelope

by Russ Maheras

During the 1970s, *The Buyer’s Guide for Comics Fandom* (later known as *Comics Buyer’s Guide*) was the premier showcase for aspiring comic book fan-artists. Other contemporary fan-art outlets, such as *Rocket’s Blast-Comicollector (RBCC)* and *The Comic Reader* had slicker, more professional formats, but for sheer numbers of comics fans and professionals reached on a regular basis, *TBG* could not be beat. The fan-artist “sweet spot” in any issue of *TBG* was, of course, the cover, but to be published anywhere in it was always a big thrill.

When *TBG* roared onto the fan scene in 1971, there were only a handful of comic book stores around the country. Thus, one of the only places a collector or dealer could easily buy or sell comics, fanzines, posters, original art, or other comic book-related material was through the pages of *TBG*. This made its arrival in the mail every week a pretty big event for many.

It was against this backdrop that a unique, wonderfully drawn, and unfortunately short-lived cartoon series by Chicago artist Jim Engel was born in the address box of *TBG*.

The catalyst for Engel’s series of cartoons was a crudely drawn precursor cartoon that had appeared in the address box of *TBG* #98 (Oct. 3, 1975), several months earlier. It appeared only once, and according to then-*TBG* publisher Alan Light, its creator is unknown. But it proved to be the inspiration Engel needed to start doing his own take on the “It’s Here” theme.

Reflecting on the series of cartoons he drew 37 years ago, Engel said that when he saw the “It’s Here!” cartoon the first time in *TBG* #98, he thought to himself, “I can do better than this.” He then drew up some sample cartoons and sent them to Light.

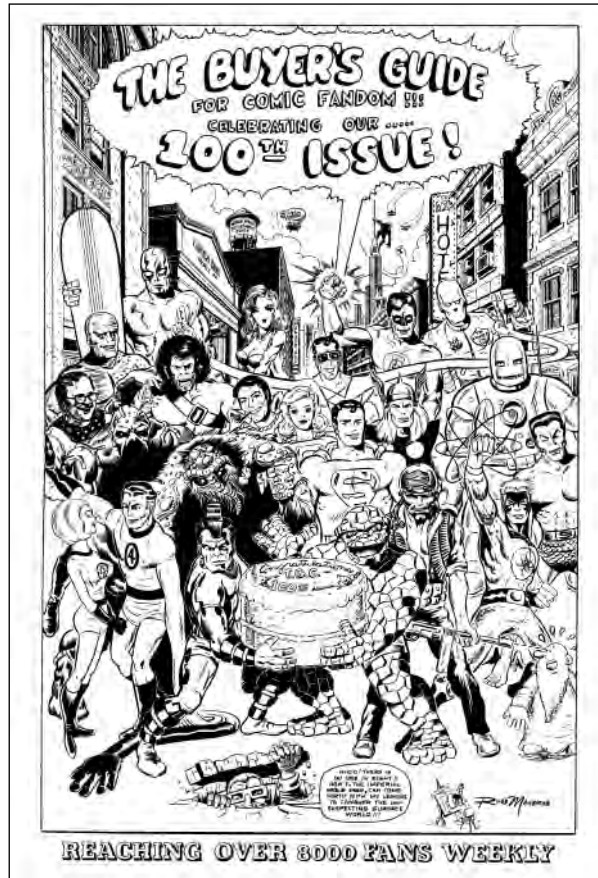
Light liked what he saw and gave Engel the green light to make it a regular feature. Engel said the format was perfect for him at the time, because he was too busy to commit to the longer comic strip



The Russ Belt

(Above:) A photo, which appeared in an issue of *The Buyer’s Guide for Comics Fandom*, of four fans in 1974 at “one of the monthly YMCA minicons in downtown Chicago.” Left to right, seated, are George Rackett, William Garnett, and Roy Kinnard. Standing is this article’s amiable author (and this issue’s great benefactor) Russ Maheras. Thanks to Russ for this and the following. [© the respective copyright holders.]

(Left:) Russ’ celebratory cover for *TBG* #100 (Oct. 17, 1975). Russ writes: “During the 1970s, I was working on a career in comics, but in 1978 I decided that I didn’t like the realities of life as a freelancer, so I changed course, quit my union warehouse worker ‘day job,’ and joined the Air Force to learn electronics. Since I still had the drawing skills in my back pocket, I continued to keep one foot in comics, doing fan or pro work whenever I had the time or interest.” [Characters TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



formats that were then regular fare in *TBG*. And, because his cartoons appeared in the address box, it was the first thing *TBG* subscribers would see when they pulled the issue out of the mailbox. “It gave my work maximum exposure with minimum effort,” said Engel.

Light also gave him total artistic freedom to draw whatever he wanted, Engel said. Among the characters he drew during his run of “It’s Here!” were several friends, including a number of Chicago-area fans and dealers. “I liked surprising the people I knew, or drawing

characters I liked,” he said.

His favorite “It’s Here!” cartoon in the series? “The best one was my Two-Face cartoon (a Batman villain), where he said “It’s here! No it’s not!”

“I was just learning to draw,” said Engel. “[Alan J.] Hanley was my idol at drawing cartoony versions of existing characters, and this was the first opportunity I had to do just that.”

A friend and mentor to Engel and other Chicago-area fan artists, Hanley was *TBG*’s most prolific cover and comic strip artist until his tragic and untimely death in 1980. [A/E EDITOR’S NOTE: See this issue’s FCA section for more on cartoonist Alan Hanley.]

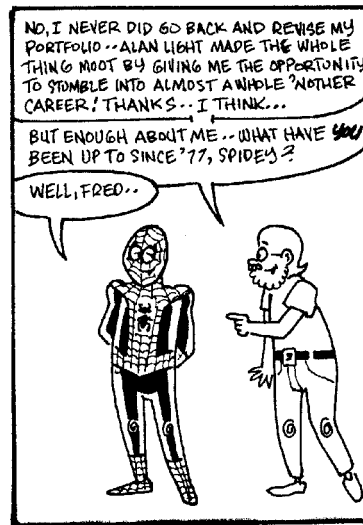
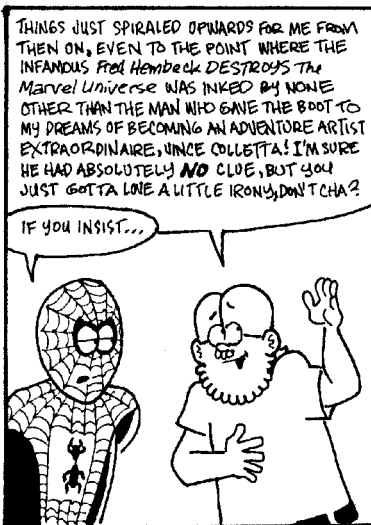
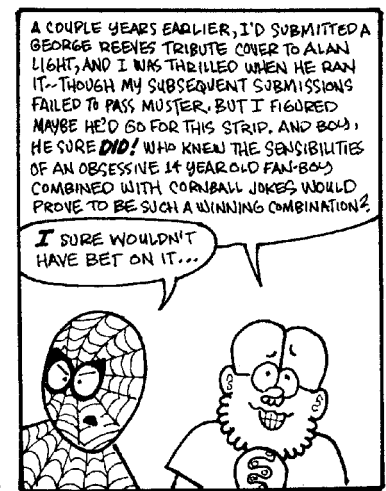
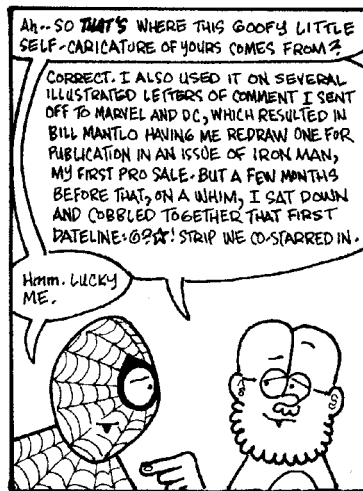
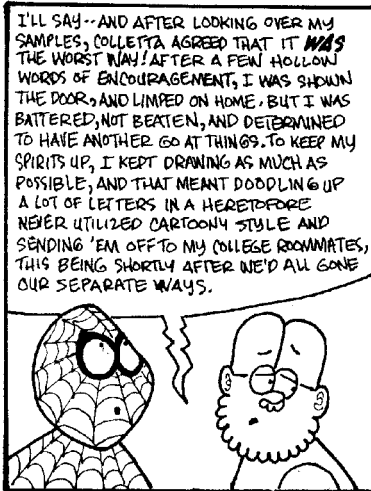
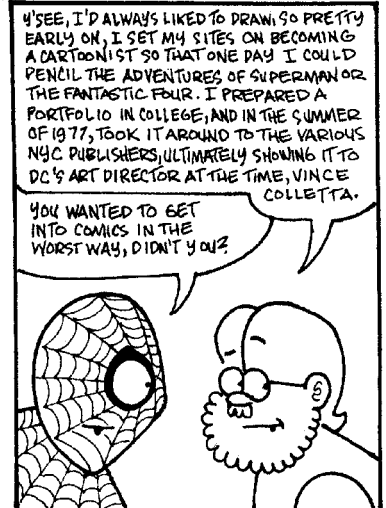
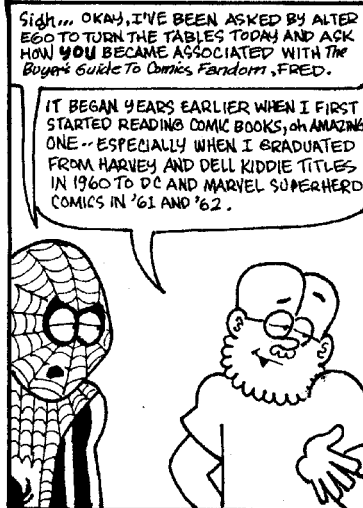
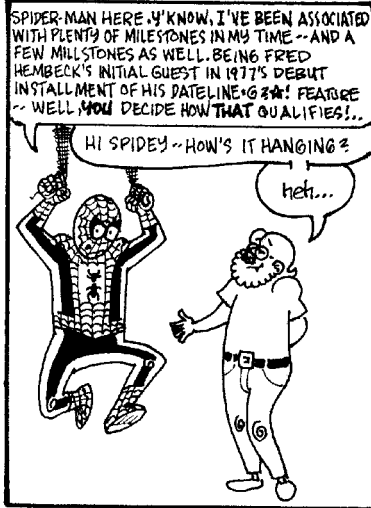
Engel’s nearly non-stop run of “It’s Here!” cartoons first appeared in the address box of *TBG* #115 (Jan. 30, 1976), and last appeared in *TBG* #144 (Aug. 20, 1976). The only issue missing a

FRED HEMBECK Conquers The Buyer's Guide

Fred Hembeck started reading comic books at age six and, a couple of decades later, began lovingly mocking them in a series of cartoon strips commencing in *TBG* in 1977 and continuing right up through the end of *CBG*.

For this special issue of *Alter Ego* commemorating *TBG* and *CBG*, Fred prepared the strip at right, which revisits (or is re-visited by) the subject of the very first entry. He adds that, if you're looking for him online, Google "Hembeck"; sometimes having an unusual name can be an advantage! [Spider-Man TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; other art ©2013 Fred Hembeck.]

DATELINE: ©☆! by FRED HEMBECK 2013



If you're viewing a Digital Edition of this publication, PLEASE READ THIS:

This is copyrighted material, NOT intended for downloading anywhere except our website. If you downloaded it from another website or torrent, go ahead and read it, and if you decide to keep it, DO THE RIGHT THING and buy a legal download, or a printed copy (which entitles you to the free Digital Edition) at our website or your local comic book shop. Otherwise, DELETE IT FROM YOUR COMPUTER and DO NOT SHARE IT WITH FRIENDS OR POST IT ANYWHERE. If you enjoy our publications enough to download them, please pay for them so we can keep producing ones like this. Our digital editions should ONLY be downloaded at www.twomorrow.com



CBG Falls Off The Edge

by R.C. Harvey

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: R.C. Harvey was, for some years, a reviewer/critic for *CBG*—and drew the occasional cartoon for the publication, as well. He shared his thoughts on its cancellation last winter on his blog, and on my request sent me a copy of those remarks. They were far too extended for full inclusion in this issue of *A/E*, especially since they were partly a history of *TBG* & *CBG*, but with his permission a bit of his commentary has been excerpted below....

Can't say we didn't see the scrawl on the wall for this. The shrinking page count over the last couple of years was ample indication of the venerable fanzine's growing financial embarrassment. And in 2012, *CBG*, for the first time in my memory, didn't have a booth at the San Diego Comic-Con. It was, I thought, only a matter of time. Then, on January 9, *CBG* editor Brent Frankenhoff posted the bad news for Krause Publications, the magazine's publisher: after 42 years, *CBG* would cease with the March 2013 issue, #1699. When *CBG* reached #600 in May 1985, Don and Maggie Thompson, the editors at the time, took note: "In the comic-book field, there isn't another publication that has made it to 600 issues." Too bad, now, that Krause (or the private-equity firm that owns *CBG* and Krause; no, not Bain) couldn't have held off just one more issue to establish the publication's record in a nicely rounded number, 1700.

But the decision to kill the longest-running magazine in comics fandom was made after No.1699 had gone to press, thus foreclosing on the possibility of *CBG* giving itself a dignified funeral: the issue contains no sentimental farewells by staff members, no round-ups of achievement to marvel at. Nothing. It was kaput, and that was that. No more discussion. It's done.

Cause of death? In the realm of print, it's the same old story: diminishing advertising revenues due to the Web and its free content made *CBG* increasingly irrelevant and financially unrewarding for the publisher. Said David Blansfield, president of the parent company: "We continuously evaluate our portfolio and analyze our content strategy to determine how well we are meeting consumer and Company goals. We take into consideration the marketplace we serve and the opportunities available for each of our magazine titles. After much analysis and deliberation, we have determined to cease publication of *Comics Buyer's Guide*."

Translation: "We're not making the kind of money we used to make, and we want to make even more money than we used to." That's how you keep a private-equity firm at bay: make more money.

Current subscribers to the magazine will receive a one-for-one conversion to *CBG* sister publication *Antique Trader*, a biweekly that has served the antiques and collectibles community since 1957. Right: we're all going to give up collecting comics and start collecting antiques.

Bidding *TBG/CBG* A Fond Adieu

I saw my first copy of *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* in about 1972. I must've sent off for a sample copy. I'd run across a few issues of the *Menomonee Falls Gazette*, the memorable weekly newspaper reprinting adventure comic strips published by Mike Tiefenbacher and Jerry Sinkovec, in a bookstore in the scruffier

section of Hennipen Avenue in Minneapolis in the spring of 1972, and MFG led me, as I recall (however shakily), to *TBG*, as the publication's title was abbreviated and then abstracted in the common fan parlance of the day.

TBG had been functioning for only little more than a year. It had been launched by a 17-year-old kid in East Moline, Illinois.

Like almost all fan publications of the day, *TBG* was typewritten, not typeset. But it was printed, not mimeographed. Light solicited ads, which arrived on 8½ x11-inch sheets of paper; old and new comic books were listed for sale, the lists handwritten or typed. Light took these sheets as he got them and pasted four together to form *TBG*'s pages. The printed result was an unholy hodge-podge of cramped handwritten and typo-laden typewriter type "quarter-page" ads, sometimes painfully difficult to read. One advertiser as late as spring of 1976 headlined his ad: "Squint and Save!"

The interior was a mess, visually speaking, but handsome cover artwork was supplied by accomplished fan artists, even pros. Whatever its faults, *TBG* became the most successful fan publication of the era.

Light started *TBG* in an auspicious year. In 1971, the comic book industry was having growing pains. The reviled Comics Code was modified for the first time since its adoption in 1954 to reflect changing mores and fashions; more daring stories (and pictures) resulted, attracting and holding older readers. Marvel and DC had raised cover prices and increased page counts. More comic for your money. Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC in 1970, but it wasn't until 1971 that his *New Gods* and *Forever People* titles started, creating an entirely new kind of fiction for comics. DC changed publishers in 1971, installing an artist in the job—Carmino Infantino, whose influence brought new talent into the company and inaugurated much experimentation.

Fandom was in full swing. Shel Dorf and a cadre of young friends had launched the San Diego Comic-Con in 1970, and Robert Overstreet published his first *Comic Book Price Guide* in 1971, which had that codified pricing—and selling.

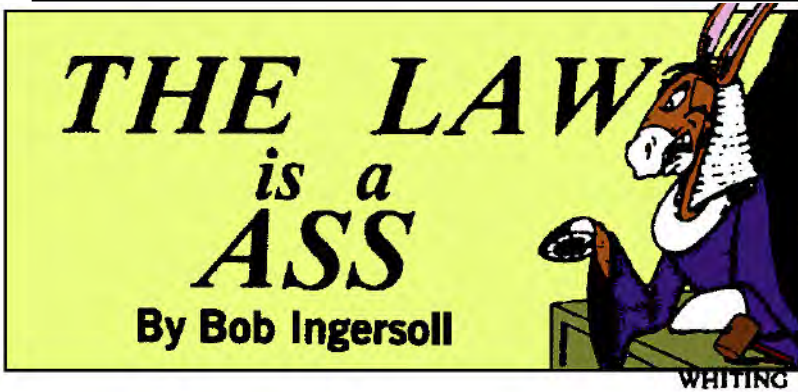
As the new adzine on the block, *TBG* walked right into an enormously lucrative opportunity—a burgeoning marketplace for selling old and new funnybooks. *TBG* circulation passed 4,000 in early 1972, and that summer, Light went from monthly to bi-weekly with #18, August 1, 1972. Three years later, *TBG* started weekly publication with #87, July 18, 1975. Circulation would hit 10,000 in 1977.

Then, in 1983, Light sold *TBG* to Krause Publications of Iola, Wisconsin, for enough money, doubtless, to commence living a life



R.C. Harvey.

Photo supplied by author.



You can blame Tony Isabella for this. I know *I* do.

Or, if you're one of those comic book readers who are only happy with a full rogues' gallery, then make it Roy Thinnes, a bottle of Bayer aspirin, a doctors' study on aspirin substitutes. Oh, and Tony Isabella. We mustn't forget that *nuhdz* Tony Isabella.

My name, for those of you who don't believe in reading bylines, is Bob Ingersoll. About 36 years ago, I was much younger; much, much lighter; and casting about trying to decide what to do with my life. What I had considered my best option—stay at home and live off my parents—was unexpectedly taken from me, when my father said, "Get out!" Suddenly I needed a new plan for my life. It was during this time of uncertainty that fate interposed in my life in the form of a Bayer aspirin commercial.

The commercial featured Roy Thinnes, an actor who had starred in two TV series back in the mid-'60s, *The Long, Hot Summer* and *The Invaders*, but who by the mid-'70s was finding work primarily in made-for-TV movies and commercials. I don't think I was watching a made-for-TV movie on that fateful night back in 1977, but whatever I was watching, I was watching it with my father. And it had the aforementioned commercial for Bayer Aspirin which starred Roy Thinnes.

The commercial started with Thinnes walking out on camera while carrying some thick, important-looking document. Then he looked directly at the camera so that it would appear that he was talking directly to us and fixed his face into that honest-looking expression that actors who had starred in two TV series in the mid-'60s but by the mid-'70s were finding work primarily in made-for-TV movies and commercials had all learned. That's when he told us about the results of a recent doctors' study.

That doctors' study, Mr. Thinnes assured us with a solemnity that was used almost exclusively by funeral directors and actors who had starred in two TV series in the mid-'60s but by the mid-'70s were finding work primarily in made-for-TV movies and commercials, found no proof to the claim that aspirin substitute was safer to take than aspirin. Then, after Mr. Thinnes huckstered the virtues of Bayer Aspirin for the next 25 seconds, he concluded by saying, "Remember, aspirin substitute is not safer than aspirin."

I looked at the TV and then, as is my habit despite the fact that I know



"The Invaders"? Then Where's Captain America?

Actor Roy Thinnes in a scene from *The Invaders* on 1960s TV. [© the respective copyright holders.]

the people on TV can't actually hear me, I spoke to the TV. "That's not what the study said."

My father, who always preferred a good conversation to

watching a commercial, even a conversation about a commercial, turned to me and said, "What?"

"The study he quoted said that doctors couldn't find any proof that aspirin substitute was safer than aspirin," I said. Then I continued with, "That doesn't mean aspirin substitute isn't safer than aspirin; it only means they can't prove whether it is yet."

And that's when my father spoke the words that changed my life forever—that is, the life-changing words he said sometime after he spoke his *first* life-changing words, "Get out!" That's when my father said, "You like that nit-picking stuff. That's why I think you'd make a good lawyer."

I couldn't argue. My father hadn't told me anything that my friends didn't already know; I liked picking a good nit. As for becoming a lawyer, well, I wasn't sure. Until I realized that going to law school would mean I could stay at home and live off my parents for another three years and quickly agreed.

Three years later, I graduated from law school and became a public defender in Cleveland, Ohio. It was a job I held for 28 years, until I retired in 2009. Not every client is happy to see he or she is getting a public defender, because they're not paying for your services. These clients, who think you can't get something for nothing, would tell me, "I don't want a public defender, I want a *real* lawyer." Now, to be fair to these clients, the county that employed me apparently thought it *could* get something—here, my services—for nothing, so it gave me a paycheck that also seemed to be telling me that I wasn't a real lawyer. But I assure you, a public defender *is* a real lawyer. Honest. Check my diploma. It doesn't say Placebo State University on it.

I rest my case.

There, I just said, "I rest my case," more proof that I'm a lawyer.

Anyway, that's the aspirin part. Because of aspirin, I became a lawyer. And I'm still trying to figure out how I can sue the Bayer people over that one.

When I was growing up, I never wanted to be a lawyer. What kid does? After I grew up and became a lawyer, I wanted to be a lawyer even less. No, what I wanted to be was a comic book writer.

I'd even had some success at the writing game. In the three



Bob Ingersoll (in photo) and the logo, sporting art by Whiting (first name unknown) that appeared on installments of the column. The logo was colored for A/E by Larry Guidry. Photo taken by Neil Ottenstein. [Art © the respective copyright holders.]

A Wolff At The CBG Door

by Batton Lash

Wolff & Byrd, *Counselors of the Macabre* first appeared in 1979 as a self-syndicated weekly comic strip in a local New York publication, *The Brooklyn Paper*. Before long, the strip was picked up by *The National Law Journal*. By the time the first collection of Wolff & Byrd strips was published, I had been doing the feature for eight years, but was virtually unknown in the comic book community. I certainly owe a great deal to *Comics Buyer's Guide*, thanks to editors and long-time comics aficionados Don and Maggie Thompson, for increasing Wolff & Byrd's awareness among comics fans, with their reviews and recommendations.

One of the great thrills in my professional career was when I received the June 28, 1991, issue of *CBG* in the mail. I was surprised by the headline that the must-read newspaper of the comics industry was introducing strips by Will Eisner... and me! My friend and attorney at the time, Mitch Berger, unbeknownst to me, had sent my self-syndication package to *CBG*. Without missing a beat, Don and Maggie added Wolff & Byrd to their roster of strips. Even though the *CBG* strips had already run in *The National Law Journal*, they were new to the comics audience... and market! That presence in *CBG* led to forming Exhibit A Press with my wife, Jackie Estrada, where we would debut Wolff & Byrd in their own comic book title, later titled *Supernatural Law* (Don and Maggie also added a line along the bottom of the *W&B* strip that ran the week Jackie and I got married, acknowledging our tying the knot. Unexpected, but very thoughtful! Don and Maggie were always fun-loving and good-natured!)

I'm just one of many cartoonists Don and Maggie have championed, giving us some much-needed visibility for readers to notice on a very crowded comics radar. I'll never forget Don and Maggie's generosity and will always appreciate the opportunity *CBG* gave me and my characters!

Batton Lash is the creator of the humor/horror series *Supernatural Law* (aka Wolff & Byrd, *Counselors of the Macabre*). He has also written for *Archie Comics* and *Bongo Comics*. His latest projects are *Gory Lori*, a new comic book he penciled for creator/writer Nick Blodgett, and *The First Gentleman* of the Apocalypse, a brand-new series Lash created for the online comics anthology *Aces Weekly*. More on Batton Lash can be found at www.exhibitapress.com

Fin



**Beginning this issue:
Comic strips by Will
Eisner, Batton Lash**

#019 June 28, 1991
\$2.50 United States \$3.00 Overseas

'Armageddon: Alien Agenda'
DC mini-series follows fast-selling 'Armageddon 2001'

By Maggie Thompson
The first installment of the four-part DC mini-series *Armageddon: Alien Agenda* will ship Oct. 1. The mini-series will be an epilogue to the cross-over mini-series *Armageddon 2001*.
A:AA will be written by Jonathan Peterson,

who is editor of *New Titans*, *Deathstroke*, and *The Terminator*, and each of the four installments of A:AA will have a different art team.
Issue #1 will be pencilled by Dan Jurgens and inked by Art Thibert.
Inkers have not been announced for the (ARMAGEDDON, Page 24)

Batman meets Judge Dredd

Batman is scheduled to really get around this year, including a trip to Mega-City One, where he will encounter Judge Dredd in *Judgement on Gotham*, a 64-page, Prestige Format one-shot.
The story will be written by John Wagner (creator of Judge Dredd and writer of many Batman stories) and Alan Grant (who also has written stories about both characters). The art is by Simon Bisley. (BATMAN, Page 24)

Retailer: No platinum? Don't call

Mar of Spe Lou Ba vel ha

A Triptych Of (Top-to-Bottom) Terror

The top-of-the-front-page plug for new strips by Will Eisner—and Batton Lash! Imagine the thrill of being in that twosome! [© Krause Publications, Inc.]

A recent photo of the writer/artist, enjoying a quiet moment in between excursions into horror. Courtesy of BL.

The first *CBG* strip of Batton Lash's Wolff & Byrd, *Counselors of the Macabre*. [© Batton Lash.]





CBG's Last Kiss

by John Lustig



John Lustig. See A/E #114, for the origins of the Last Kiss artwork. [Last Kiss logo TM & © John Lustig.]

Last Kiss began at the 1995 San Diego Comic-Con when I approached Maggie (at the urging of my friend Joe Torcivia) with the idea of taking some old romance comics and re-dialoguing the covers for laughs. Amazingly, she liked the idea. Last Kiss was launched in 1996 and appeared in occasional issues until 1998, when I decided to quit before I ran out of jokes.

But, at the 1999 SDCC, I surprised John Jackson Miller (and myself) by suggesting that I bring Last Kiss back for the 2000 Valentine's issue. To my surprise, that was a hit and Brent Frankenhoff suggested I do a two-panel Last Kiss comic as a

regular feature. This time, I stuck around a lot longer—in fact, until the final issue of CBG. By then, I'd created a small Last Kiss empire. I had almost complete creative freedom at CBG. That's a gift every writer craves and all too rarely gets. And for that, I gratefully blame (I mean thank) Maggie, Brent, and John.



LASTKISSINC.COM JOHN LUSTIG



LASTKISSINC.COM JOHN LUSTIG

For many years, we've heard tales of Marvel Zombies! These super fans will buy every comic Marvel publishes! But there are plenty of other "zombies" out there who must have copies of everything published by their favorite companies! DC Zombies! Image Zombies! And even...(Gasp!)...CBG Zombies! Pencils by Charles Nicholas Color by Allen Freeman

And now for few words from a woman who has dedicated her life to comics! A woman whose wisdom and knowledge are legendary! A woman who needs no introduction...and, uh, therefore...this whole caption is pointless! Dam!



We can't get married now! I've got back issues to buy!



*The part of Ms. Thompson is played by actress Ima Fann!

Art: Charles Nicholas & Vince Alascia



**Brent Frankenhoff is still trying to digest a slice of 1997 convention pizza!

Color: Allen Freeman

Crises High And Lowe

by Johnny Lowe

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Johnny Lowe is a freelance copy editor (for University Press of Mississippi). He is also a cartoonist who, over the years, submitted more than 20 cartoons to Don and Maggie Thompson's CBG. "While most were done under the title Comments and Stories," he says, "I did a 'seven-part' series of strips that were a riff on DC's Crisis on Infinite Earths." [Basic art & script © Johnny Lowe; the characters homaged are TM & © their respective trademark & copyright holders.]



FINAL CRISIS CROSS-OVER Part 7 of 7



COMMENTS & STORIES





MICHAEL T. HERE! WHEN ROY TOLD ME ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S THEME, I BEGAN RUMMAGING THROUGH A BOX OF *BUYER'S GUIDE* CLIPPINGS I'D SAVED SINCE FIRST SUBSCRIBING IN 1971! I'D BOXED THEM UP BEFORE MOVING TO OREGON AND HADN'T LOOKED INSIDE IN OVER 25 YEARS. NATURALLY THERE WERE A FEW **SURPRISES**.

MOST SURPRISING WAS HOW OFTEN *TBG*'S HISTORY REFLECTED MY OWN COMIC BOOK CAREER.

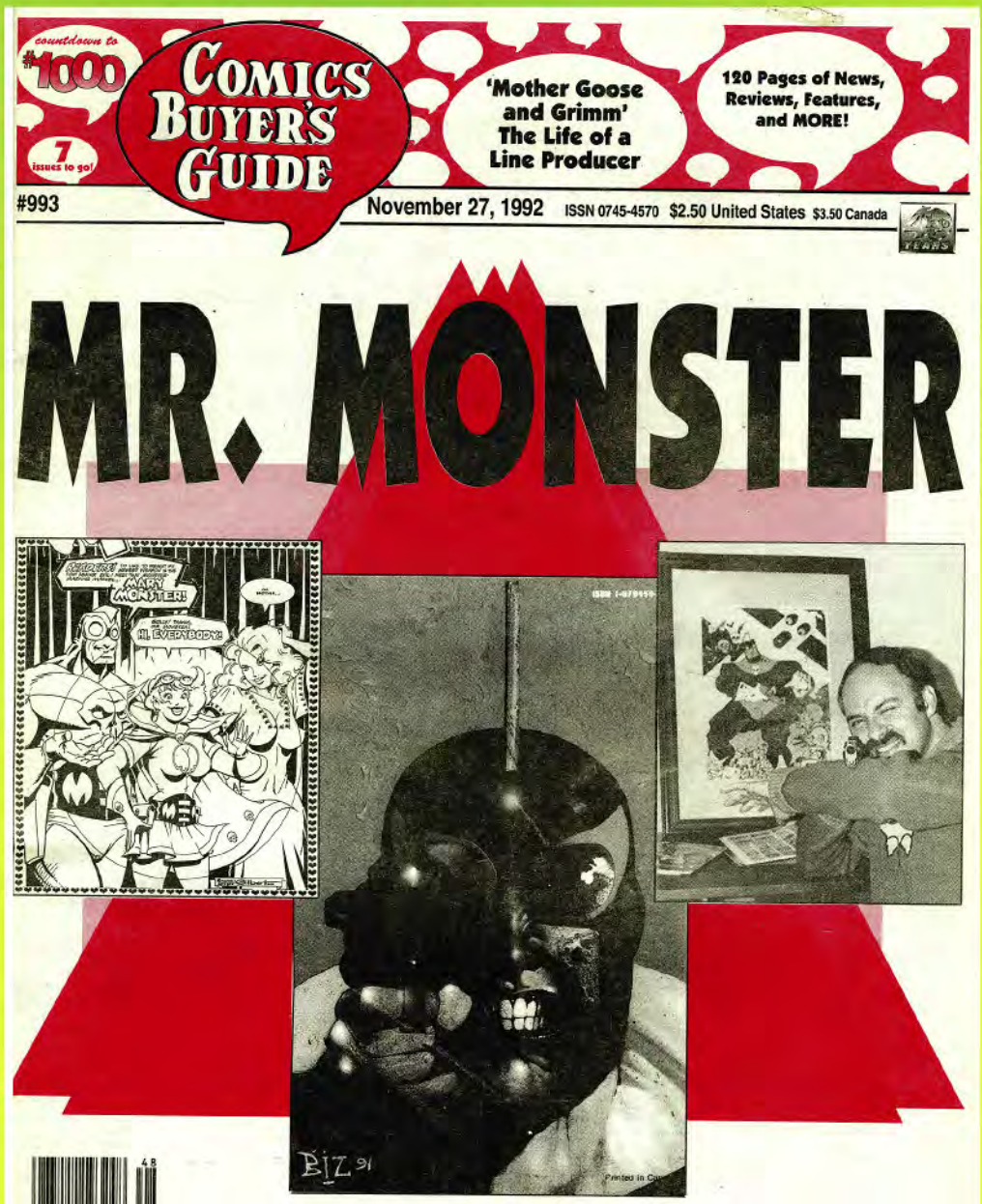
SO I DECIDED TO MAKE THIS TRIBUTE A **PERSONAL** ONE. I CALL IT MY...

**Buyer's
Guide
Scrapo-
book!**

Famous Mr. Monsters Of Fanland

(Right:) Mr. Monster was cover-featured in this Nov. 27, 1992, issue of *Comics Buyer's Guide*.

Art by Michael T. Gilbert, Simon Bisley, & Jeff Bonivert. [Mr. Monster TM & © Michael T. Gilbert; other elements ©1992 Krause Publications, Inc.]



Buyer's Guide Scrapbook!

By Michael T. Gilbert

Me and the *Buyer's Guide* go back. Way back.

Our relation? Well, it's... *complicated*. Kinda like my memories of my college girlfriend. We were sweeties who even lived together for a time. Then we drifted apart, broke up, moved away from each other, and got together again.

But just as friends.

Oh, we'd keep in touch. But months, even years, would go by without contact. Regardless, the good memories never faded. That's how I feel about *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*, forerunner of the recently canceled *CBG*.

The Guide and I hooked up at a 1971 New York SeulingCon. I was nineteen and ready for some serious four-color sensory overload. In the convention hall, a skinny blond kid called me over to his table, gave me a copy of his new adzine, and made me an offer I couldn't refuse. "Sign up now and get a free subscription for life!" The paper looked fairly slapdash. Beautiful it wasn't. Badly hand-lettered ads were mixed in with typeset ones. But did I mention it was free? So I signed up (this was around issue five).

Alan Light was the skinny blond kid, assisted by his henchman, Murray Bishoff. Light was even younger than me, maybe 17 or so. I didn't take the offer too seriously. Why would anyone mail me a free newspaper? But sure as shootin', the paper showed up monthly in my mailbox. Then every two weeks. By 1975 *TBG* was published weekly. Son of a gun!

Free For Life?

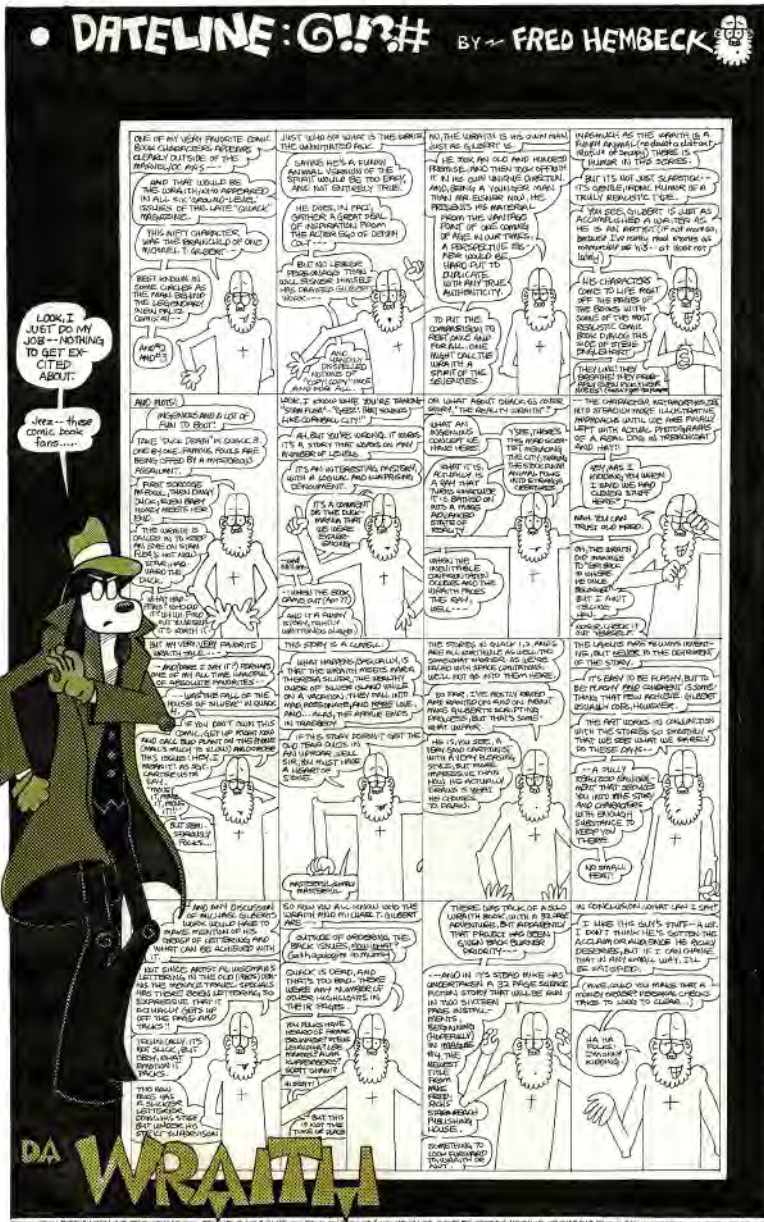
My suspicions weren't entirely unfounded, though. Within a year, "free for life" morphed into "subscription only," setting me back a cool \$2 for 23 issues. *EEK!* But by then I was hooked.

My sub started while I was still living with my parents in Commack, Long Island, and commuting to nearby Suffolk Community College. I transferred to SUNY New Paltz in upstate New York in 1972, eventually graduating with a BA in Art Education. But teaching was just a pretense to keep my parents happy. All I really wanted to do was draw comics.

It wasn't always easy being a collector in New Paltz. Not in 1972. A couple of years later Peter Maresca would open the town's first comic shop, The Crystal Cave. But back then all we had was a hippie bookstore that sold undergrounds, and two small drugstores.

Sometimes they only ordered one or two copies of the latest Barry Smith *Conan* or Wrightson *Swamp Thing*, so you had to grab fast! My pal Harvey Sobel at nearby SUNY Albany would mail "care packages" stuffed with comics I couldn't get locally. As you can imagine, reading my *Buyer's Guide* filled in the gaps.

I'd check out the latest ish and drool over rare comics and original art. The prices seem ridiculously cheap today, but I was working my way through school and most of those goodies were way out of my reach. Still, I did find the occasional deal. When I did, I'd dutifully send cash or a money order, and then I'd wait.



THE WRAITH: A CHARACTER CREATED BY FRED HEMBECK FOR THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMICS FANDOM. THE WRAITH IS A MASCOT FOR THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMICS FANDOM. THE WRAITH IS A MASCOT FOR THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMICS FANDOM.

Doggone Nice Of Him!
This Fred Hembeck *TBG* column was devoted to Gilbert's "The Wraith."
This page was scanned from the original art. [The Wraith TM & © Michael T. Gilbert; Hembeck character, art, & text © Fred Hembeck.]

And wait. And *WAIT!* If I were lucky, I'd get my precious comics. If not, I'd get a refund. *Arggh!*

In these days of instant gratification, anyone with the cash can buy almost any comic with the click of a mouse. But back then, conventions aside, *TBG* was the only game in town. Well, there was also the adzine *Rocket's Blast-Comiccollector*, an early forerunner to *TBG*. But it was more expensive and published less frequently.

The Guide helped me score a few great comics, including a batch of four mint EC Picto-Fictions for \$12 total, part of a great warehouse find. Another *Buyer's Guide* ad got me in touch with a collector selling the very first *Haunt of Fear*. It was too pricey for this college kid, but we arranged a trade for some early Marvels I'd bought off the stands years earlier. I still remember the glorious moment it arrived in my mailbox, chock full of early Wood, Kurtzman, Feldstein, and Craig. Thank you, *Buyer's Guide!*

Tony Isabella's "Final Tips"

by Tony Isabella

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *Tony became a Marvel Comics staffer and writer in the early 1970s, after a several-year stint as a columnist in fandom. His "Tony's Tips" and "Tony's Back Page" (and his sometime comic strip Everett True) were regular features of CBG from very early on through issue #1699... and he had prepared the following edition for issue #1700 before he discovered that the magazine had been abruptly cancelled. Not being wasteful, he immediately ran the piece as part of his online blog, which he has quirkily titled "Tony Isabella's Bloggy Thing" — but, happily, he didn't object to our publishing that material in this commemorative issue of Alter Ego, as well. Before he expostulates on CBG's sudden demise, as a bonus he'll tell you all about G-8 and His Battle Aces....*

Tony's Tips!

[published in "Tony Isabella's Bloggy Thing" for Monday, 01-14-13]

"Flying is learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss."

—Douglas Adams.

CBG reaches an impressive milestone this month with the publication of its 1700th issue. My own association with this sturdy journal goes back almost as far. Someone with a better memory than mine would be able to tell you exactly how far back, but I have to work with whatever brain cells I have.

I do recall I was excited when Alan Light sent me the first issue of what was then called *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*. Since becoming Clark Kent was my fall-back plan if I couldn't work in the comics industry, I was thrilled by *TBG's* newspaper-like format and its frequent publication. I immediately volunteered my services as a columnist.

I was writing for a lot of zines in those days. A copy assistant at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, I only wrote the occasional bit for the paper and only put my name on one of those. It was a full-page article on the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* "drug issues," and it worked out pretty good. However, when I submitted a like article on the groundbreaking debut of *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire*, my editors couldn't understand why they should run a second comic book piece so soon—about a year—after the first one.

But I digress.

For *TBG*, I wrote three installments of something called "The Odd Collectors." The title came from *The Odd Couple*, my favorite Neil Simon play and movie. The column was a mix of news, views, reviews, and

assorted silliness, not unlike the "Tony's Tips" columns I've been writing here for more years than I can remember. No, really, I can't remember how many years. I hope this issue of *CBG* has some sort of timeline, because I'd like to know.

My current editors sometimes credit me as "CBG's First Columnist" and I believe them because they never lie to me. It's one of the many reasons I love them dearly. But, as I don't have any copies of those early *TBGs*, including the ones with my work in them, I'm unable to confirm it for myself. If anyone out there has the issues and would be willing to photocopy those three early columns, I'd be most appreciative. We're talking an autographed copy of my *1000 Comic Books You Must Read* at the minimum.

But I digress. Again.

My friend and fellow fan Dwight Decker wrote some stuff for the first column. I can't recall if we were planning to collaborate on a regular basis or if the concept was that I would collaborate with a different fandom friend every issue. I can't remember if there were any collaborators on the other two installments of that short-lived feature. Once those brain cells go....

I do remember why I had to stop writing the column. I landed a job at Marvel Comics, assisting Stan Lee and Sol Brodsky with the new weeklies the company was producing for the British market. I quite correctly realized that a new job in a new city wouldn't leave me much time for fanzine writing.

I also recall recommending replacements to Alan. I suggested that he contact Don and Maggie Thompson, who were among the founders of modern-day comics fandom. I wonder how that worked out.

CBG is the world's longest-running magazine about comics. I have many good memories from my association with the publication. The best and frequently recurring one is whenever someone thanks me for recommending something in this column and the subsequent enjoyment they derive from that something. You're welcome.



Tony Isabella in a recent photo.



Your Favorite Comic Book Was Probably
#1001!

The cover of Tony's hot-selling 2009 tome *1000 Comic Books You Must Read*, from Krause Publications. [Art © the respective publishers; other elements ©2009 Krause Publications, Inc.]



Craig Shutt.

The "Mr. Silver Age" logo has been colored for *A/E* by Craig Shutt. [© the respective copyright holders.]

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: One popular feature of the later *CBG* was the "Ask Mr. Silver Age" column presided over (i.e., written) by Craig Shutt. The following installment contains a few early paragraphs which have been added to insert what he calls "some history about my *CBG* work," but otherwise the main text below is just as he wrote it for *CBG* #1700....

Celebrating Super-Naughts!

Comics' Myriad Approaches To Acknowledging Special "Anniversaries"

Dear Mr. Silver Age,
I like when comics celebrate reaching double-0 special issues! I have two questions about them: Have comics always done that? Did they always celebrate the same way?

Harvey D., Gotham City

Mr. Silver Age says: Double-naught issues were eagerly anticipated by fans growing up in the Silver Age and later, Harv. These comics often included special stories, text pieces, or artwork to commemorate this achievement. But that wasn't always the case, and the ways they celebrated varied considerably. We can see that just by looking at all of the Superman-Family books from the Silver Age, a time when this acknowledgement really gained momentum. And what better time to check out those issues than in *CBG* #1700?

Sadly, *CBG* #1699 ended up being the last issue, and we—editors, columnists, and fans alike—couldn't celebrate the history that its double-naught number represented. Oh, bother. It wouldn't have been my first double-naught rodeo with *CBG*, of course. I began writing for the periodical back in 1992, with #955 (March 6, 1992).

My articles appeared in the magazine's regular "Powerhouse Paper" department, a huge section devoted to older comics that led off the second section. Those thick newspaper-sized issues could hold a lot of copy (and ads), but so much on one topic could strain readers' interest. So I wrote lengthy quizzes—nearly 6,000 words!—covering a wide range of key stories and events throughout the Marvel and DC Silver Age universes.

After a little over a year of occasional articles, editors Don and Maggie Thompson found they had more small holes and fewer big holes, making it harder to fit in my contributions. So I split up the quiz I was working on into individual questions. To explain why these queries arose, I created the "Ask Mr. Silver Age" concept, with comics characters allegedly asking about that topic.

Those columns began running with a look at the Blackhawks as the "Junk-Heap Heroes" in #1020 (June 4, 1993). There could be no finer topic to show exactly what the column was going to be. The editors created a basic column header in #1209 (Jan. 17, 1997), and I

persuaded a friend, graphics artist Joe Bowlby, to design the Go-Go-Checked logo that started running in #1315 (Feb. 28, 1997).

My first naught-y *CBG* celebration came with the triple-naught #1000, for which I wrote a quiz about DC super-heroes' celebrations of their double-naught issues. That it didn't appear until #1028 gives some idea of how highly my contributions were regarded. But I'm not bitter.

I continued appearing irregularly, and *CBG* received letters asking for more. The column moved up the charts in *CBG*'s annual Fan Poll, which asked readers to name their favorite features as well as comics and creators.

Maggie ultimately put this fan response to the test by cover-features my column in #1360 (Dec. 10, 1999), by which time the magazine had become a weekly tabloid-sized magazine. They gave me six pages. I broke it into three articles: a one-pager on the re-use of the cover concept in *The Flash* #159 and #161; three pages devoted to the first (of what became annual) Mopee Awards, "honoring" three DC and Marvel comics apiece for their over-the-top goofiness; and two pages in which I delineated when the Silver Age began (*Showcase* #4 [Sep-Oct. 56]) and ended (*Fantastic Four* #102 [Sept. '70]).

That final topic received significant fan response, especially when I subsequently laid out when the Bronze Age began (*Giant-Sized X-Men* #1 [Summer 1975]) and ended (*Legends of the Dark Knight* #1 [Nov. 89]). In all, I wrote 10 columns on this topic, responding to letters and further fleshing out the concept. I think I've even convinced a few fans of my logic.

By then, I had begun to appear (gulp) weekly. My appearances had become more regular through the early double-naught 2000s, including a second cover-features, three-column special for the second annual Mopee Awards in #1410 (Nov. 24, 2000). With #1476 (March 1, 2002), I began appearing in every issue until (sob) #1699.

A final noteworthy moment came in late December 2003, when a collection of my early columns, titled *Baby Boomer Comics*, was published by Krause in a magnificent oversized, full-color trade paperback. It was a beautiful thing—but the Powers That Be



The Last Column

by Peter David

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Peter David, who generally referred to himself modestly at the end of his "But I Digress" columns as a "writer of stuff," is one of the most accomplished scripters in comic books' recent decades, with acclaimed runs on *The Incredible Hulk* and various other series. I suppose this isn't technically a column done for *Comics Buyer's Guide* #1700... but it could well have been. We very much appreciate Peter, who is recovering nicely from a stroke (we ran into him walking around the San Diego Comic-Con, which is a trial to the fittest), taking the time to write this piece for the many fans of his long-running column....

was thinking of quitting.

Seriously. I was planning to retire "But I Digress."

It had already gone on far longer than I had ever expected it to. After all, it first launched in July of 1990 and, like most projects in my life that wound up running years, I figured that it would last six months. Tops. And yet here we were, twenty-three years later, and I was still going.

The column used to be weekly, of course. Then again, so was *Comics Buyer's Guide*, so naturally I had to remain consistent with the publication frequency. Then, in 2004, the frequency of the magazine was cut back to monthly and the publication was reformatted into an actual magazine rather than a newspaper. The change was made to try and help the publication survive, and since it lasted another nine years, I suppose it's a qualified success in that regard.

The new format also meant changes for "BID." I was no longer allowed to write about anything political. Or movies or television. Everything was supposed to be comic book related. It wasn't as if I had an aversion to comics, but "BID" was always extremely free-ranging. I would talk about whatever the hell was on my mind at the time, regardless of the topic. I'd like to think that's part of what helped the column's longevity: You never knew what you were going to get when you flipped to the back page.

There was also a fairly steady word limit

attached. Before, I could write however much I felt like, producing thousands of words about whatever. The new "BID" generally was not supposed to wander much above seven hundred words. This tended to be somewhat frustrating.

But my progressive disenchantment with the format was only part of the problem. The main thing that nagged at me was the increasing feeling that, as far as the world was concerned, it had simply become unimportant.

Why? Because no one was talking about it.

I don't know. The simplest explanation is that after a quarter of a century writing a weekly/monthly opinion column, I simply didn't have anything interesting to

say anymore.

Personally, I think the more likely is the way the venue of opinion columns and fan feedback had changed during the intervening years.

Once upon a time, *CBG* was a hotbed of constant controversy. Interviews, columns, letters from both pros and fans generated incessant disputes. Once upon a time, refusing to sign one's name to one's opinions generated a mass of hostile response; now it's pretty much standard procedure as anonymous fans spout off about whatever's bothering them.

Furthermore, no one has to wait a week, or two weeks, or longer to see their responses made public. Once upon a time, disputes in the pages of *CBG* could take weeks to play out. Now it happens in days, sometimes hours.

It used to be that I would write columns and it would prompt responses from just about everyone. Todd McFarlane felt compelled to challenge me to a debate over it. One column about the need for a pro-oriented convention called "Pro/Con" resulted in the convention actually



Peter David & Friend

A photo of Peter at a recent San Diego Comic-Con... and a milestone in his (and comics') life, the cover of *The Incredible Hulk* #331 (May 1987), the first issue written by Peter, who took Ol' Greenskin in a wild new direction starting with turning him gray again! Pencils by Steve Geiger, inks by Jim Sanders III. The logo above was colored for *A/E* by Larry Guidry. [Cover © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



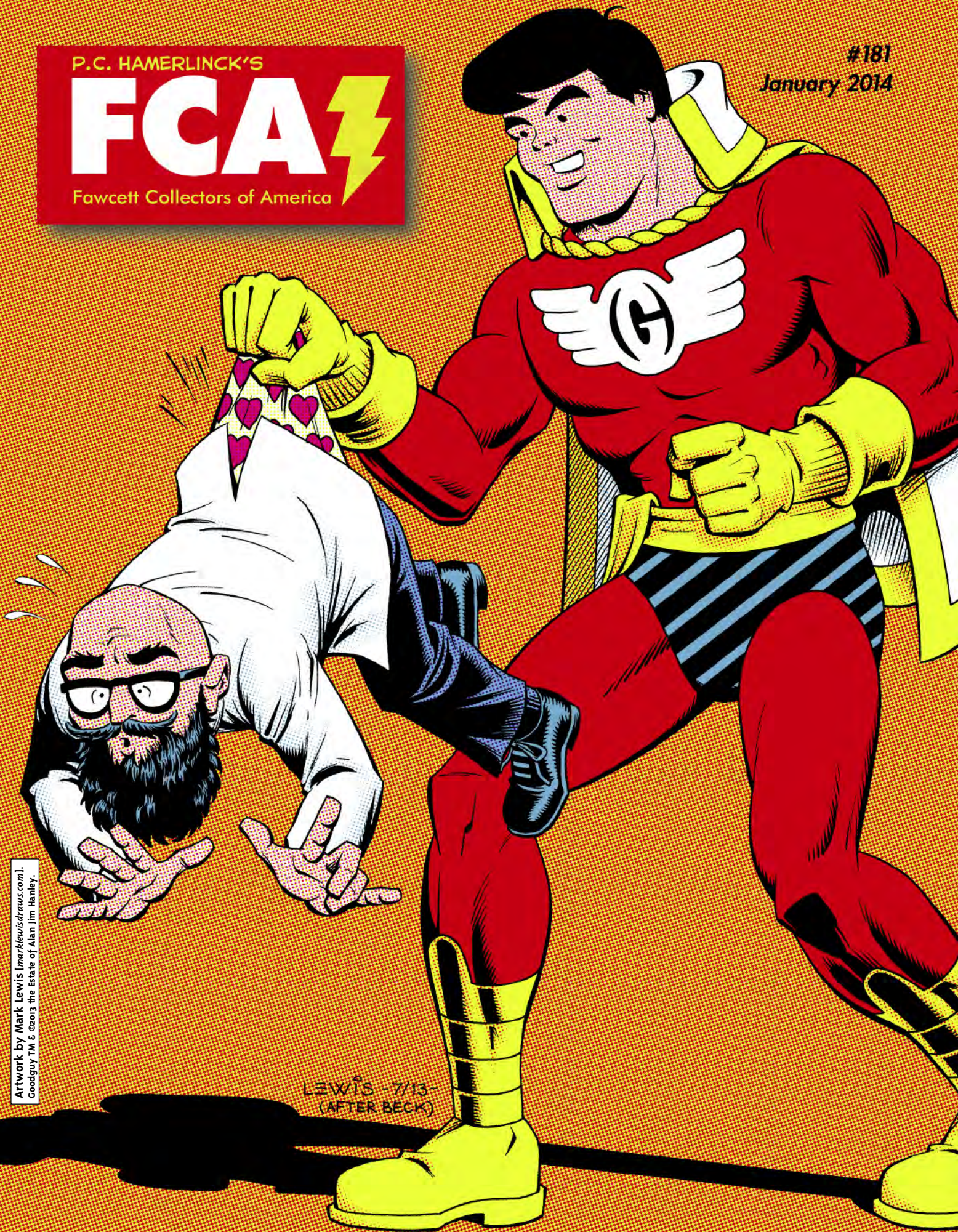
P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#181

January 2014



Artwork by Mark Lewis (marklewisdraws.com).
Goodguy TM & ©2013 the Estate of Alan Jim Hanley.

LEWIS - 7/13 -
(AFTER BECK)

“Good Garbage!”

“Goodguy” Artist ALAN JIM HANLEY & “The Limbo League Crimes”

Alan Jim Hanley's personality and ardent affection for the Golden Age of Comics (and for Captain Marvel, in particular) was unashamedly translucent within his mirthful, good-natured comic strips produced for numerous '60s-'70s fanzines—predominantly found inside the pages of *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* and his own magnificent self-published *Comic Book*.

I enjoyed an all-too brief correspondence with Hanley before meeting him at a 1979 convention in Minneapolis. The affable and amiable artist—with his omnipresent pipe and array of drawing utensils bulging from his shirt pocket—was as open and gracious as his Captain Marvel-like creation, Goodguy.

(Notably, another important individual from the Chicago comic fan contingent, Bernie McCarty, met with Hanley one early-'70s Sunday afternoon to figure out a way to revive the old Captain Marvel Club of their youth—a meeting which eventually materialized into the creation of... FCA!)

An article on Hanley by John G. Pierce was featured back in A/E #48 (May 2005). In this issue—before re-presenting for the first time in full color a complete “Goodguy” adventure (reprinted from Chuck Fiala's FVP #5, 1972)—we honor the man and his talents with these earnest declarations from a handful of Hanley devotees. —P.C. Hamerlinck

My most vivid personal memory of Jim Hanley is watching him eat his first lobster at age 40. The year was 1979 and he had driven down to the TBG offices in his VW van to visit me for the first and only time. I took him to an upscale restaurant to treat him and to thank him. When he saw lobster listed on the menu, he mentioned he had never tasted it. I convinced him to order it, and I still remember his almost childlike delight when it arrived.

Jim was the most prolific TBG artist. His first contribution was the cover of issue #21 (Sept. 15, 1972), and for the next eight years I was pleased and honored to be in a position to pay him and distribute his material to a wide fan audience. Jim was a positive, upbeat, and generous man, which comes through in his work. He took great pleasure creating his universe. —Alan Light

Jim always encouraged me in my fanzine-creation endeavors, supplying original comics and information about reliable local printers. For many of us, Jim Hanley was the local expert on drawing comics and cartoons. In the nomenclature to that era's fandom in the Windy City, Jim was a “big-name.” —Chuck Fiala

I first met Alan “Jim” Hanley circa 1970 while buying comics out of Joe Sarno's basement on the north side of Chicago. Hanley was a talented, prolific artist whom all of us younger cartoonist wannabes in the area looked up to. Hanley mentored me and other Chicago-area artists in the art of self-publishing, and his fanzine-publishing enthusiasm was conta-

gious—both in person and through his great fanzine *Comic Book*. It's no wonder then that I dedicated the first issue of my fanzine *Maelstrom* (published in 1974) to Hanley. —Russ Maheras

In a just world, A.J. Hanley would have had the opportunity to both write and draw Captain Marvel. Certainly, with his tales of Goodguy, Hanley showed that he understood the essence of Captain Marvel, while not being totally tied to the past; his earlier stories, at least, and with a little tweaking, could have been right at home as part of the CM canon. Alas, ours is a world in which our favorite features are corporately owned... a world which is inimical to the type of personal vision that was enjoyed and employed by Hanley. Fortunately, he found his niche in the world of fanzines where, in his own world (what today might be called the “Hanleyverse”), both nostalgia and social consciousness sprang forth in pleasant guises. —John G. Pierce

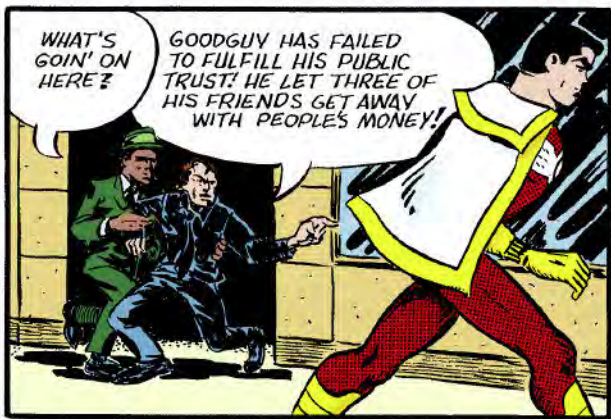
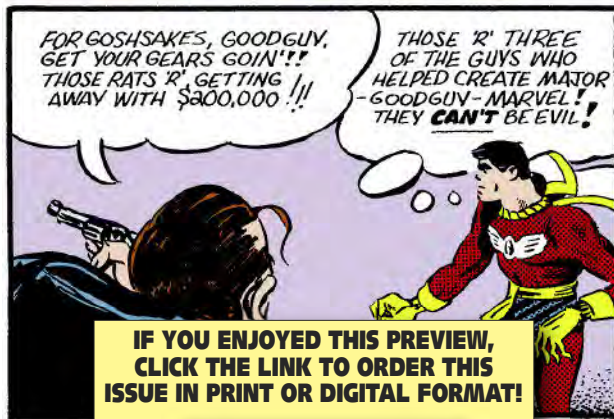
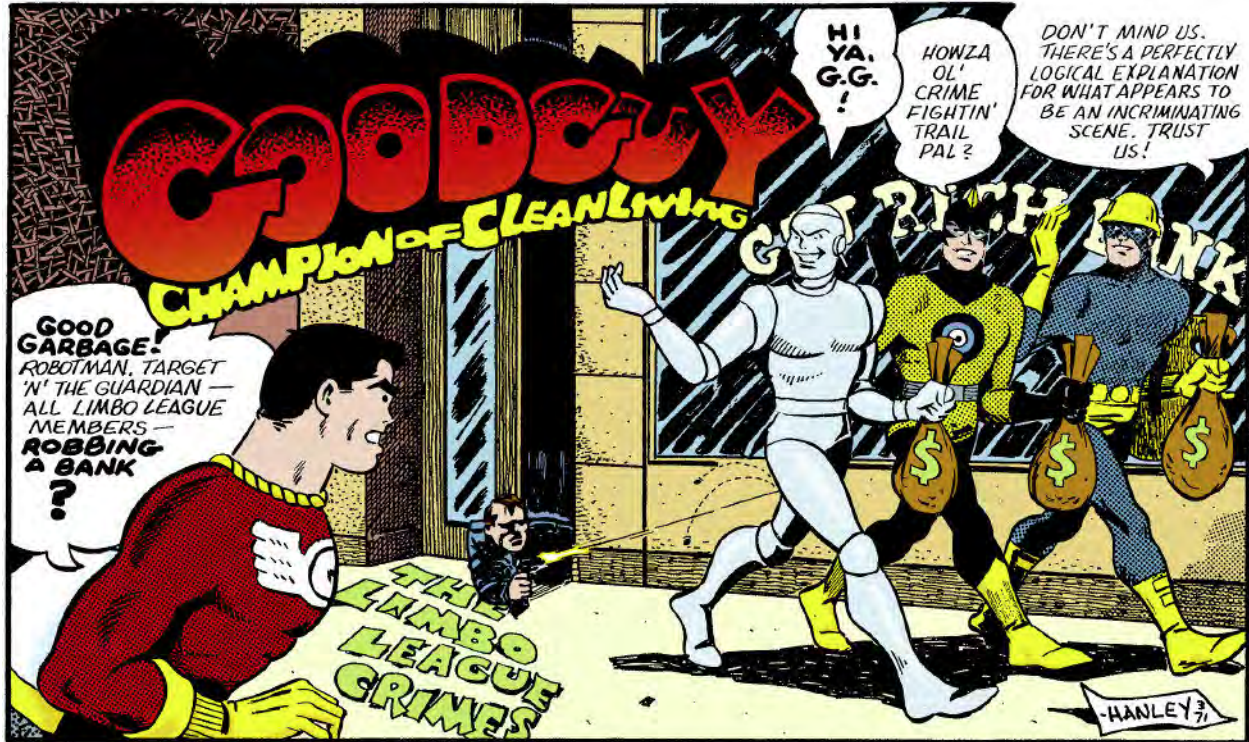
When I was about 15 years old, I was already an Alan James Hanley fan by the time I first met him. I loved everything about Hanley's characters, stories, and artwork; every issue of his fanzine *Comic Book* was an absolute treasure. For a '60s kid eager to know anything he could know about the Golden Age of Comics, Hanley's characters were especially appealing because they were based on many yet-to-be revived Golden Age heroes. His stories weren't completely straight, nor were they totally humorous: they were a wonderful combination of both, usually with a timely moral, commentary, or poignancy.

As a person, Jim Hanley *was* Goodguy... a warm-hearted, very accessible human being, with a strong moral character, and a great sense of humor. I still miss him, and I still regard his body of fanzine work as classics—every bit as important to me as anything that ever appeared in “real” comics. Maybe more so. —Jim Engel



Must Be “Bring Your Daughter To Work Day”

Alan Jim Hanley at the drawing board with his daughter Kim in Chicago, 1974. Also seen is his cover for *TBG* #71 (12-1-74). Photo & cover provided by Russ Maheras. [Art © Estate of AJH.]



IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW, CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!



ALTER EGO #122

Farewell salute to the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE! TBG/CBG history and remembrances from ALAN LIGHT, MURRAY BISHOFF, MAGGIE THOMPSON, BRENT FRANKENHOFF, "final" CBG columns by MARK EVANIER, TONY ISABELLA, PETER DAVID, FRED HEMBECK, JOHN LUSTIG, classic art by DON NEWTON, MIKE VOISBURG, JACK KIRBY, MIKE NASSER, plus FCA, Mr. Monster, and more!

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

http://twomorrow.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=1117



Mark Lewis, color for the first time. "They're Robotman & the Guardian." [Robotman & Guardian TM & © DC Comics; other art & story © Estate of Alan...

...edition of FCA, rendered this Hanley story, "The Limbo League Crimes," into a color format to identify the three Golden Age heroes featured in the splash panel on this page: Robotman, the Guardian." [Robotman & Guardian TM & © DC Comics; other art & story © Estate of Alan...