AMERICAN

COMIC BOOK

CHRONICLES

THE 1960s

1960–1964

by JOHN WELLS

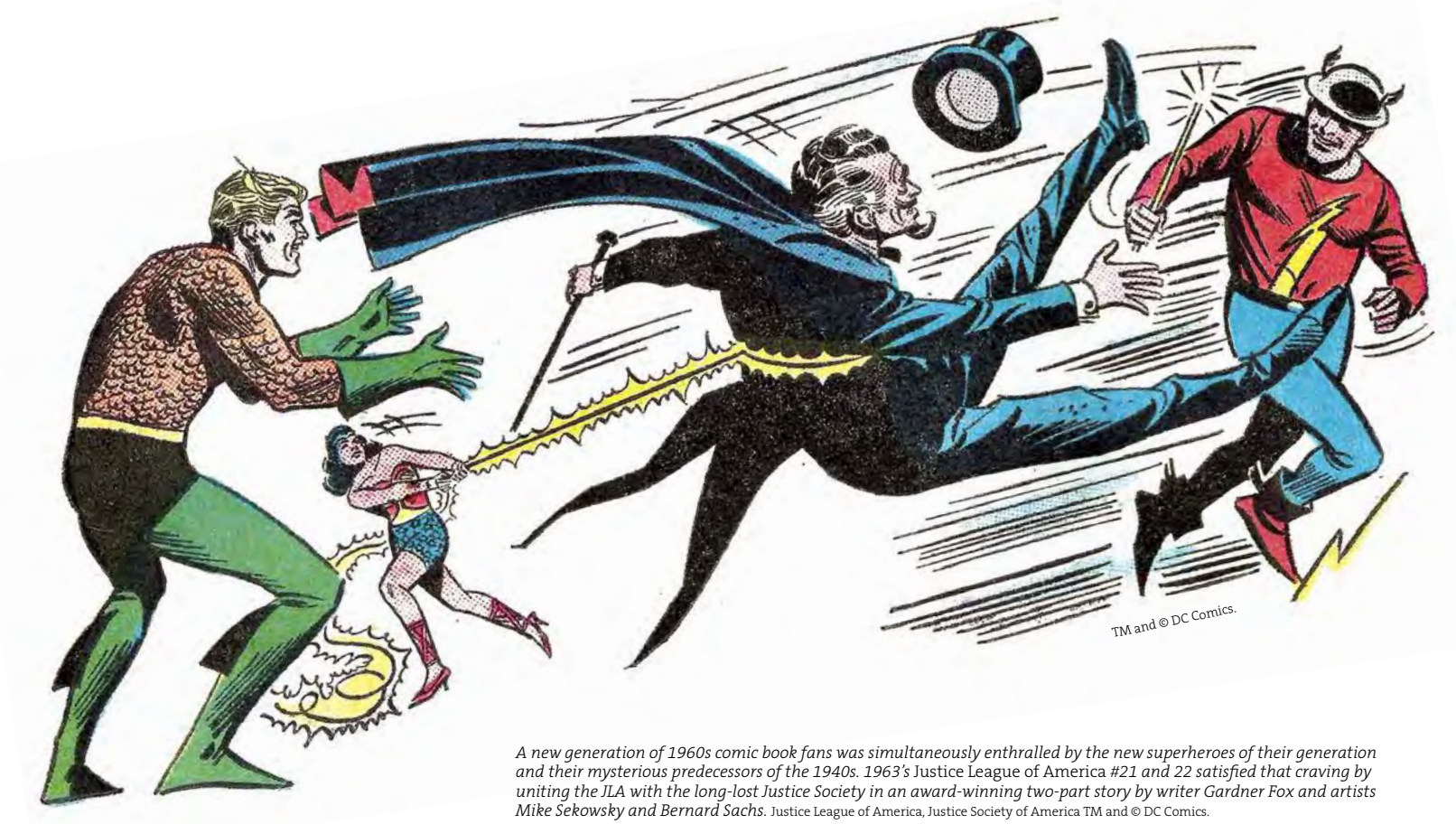
Table of Contents

Introductory Note about the Chronological Structure of American Comic Book Chronicles

The monthly date that appears on a comic book cover doesn't usually indicate the exact month the comic book arrived at the newsstand or at the comic book store. Since their inception, American periodical publishers—including but not limited to comic book publishers—postdated their issues in order to let vendors know when they should remove unsold copies from their stores. In the 1930s, the discrepancy between a comic book's cover date and the actual month it reached the newsstand was one month. For instance, *Action Comics* #1 is cover dated June 1938 but actually went on sale in May 1938. Starting in 1940, comic book publishers hoped to increase each issue's shelf life by widening the discrepancy between cover date and release date to two months. In 1973, the discrepancy was widened again to three months. The expansion of the Direct Market in the 1980s though turned the cover date system on its head as most Direct Market-exclusive publishers chose not to put cover dates on their comic books while some put cover dates that matched the issue's release date.

This all creates a perplexing challenge for comic book historians as they consider whether to chronologize comic book history via cover date or release date. The predominant comic book history tradition has been to chronologize via cover date, and *American Comic Book Chronicles* is following that tradition. This means though that some comic books that were released in the final months of one year won't be dealt with until the chapter about the following year. Each chapter, however, will include a yearly timeline that uses a comic book's release date to position it appropriately among other significant historical, cultural and political events of that year.

By Keith Dallas



A new generation of 1960s comic book fans was simultaneously enthralled by the new superheroes of their generation and their mysterious predecessors of the 1940s. 1963's Justice League of America *#21 and 22 satisfied that craving by uniting the JLA with the long-lost Justice Society in an award-winning two-part story by writer Gardner Fox and artists Mike Sekowsky and Bernard Sachs.* Justice League of America, Justice Society of America TM and © DC Comics.

Note on Comic Book Sales and Circulation Data

Determining the *exact* number of copies a comic book title sold on the newsstand is problematic. The best that one can hope to learn is a close approximation of a comic book's total sales. This is because the methods used to report sales figures were (and still are) fundamentally flawed.

During the 1960s, most comic books sold on the newsstand would print an annual "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation" in one of their issues as was required by the United States Post Office for all periodicals. These statements divulged—among other information—a comic book title's average print run, average paid circulation, and average returns from the newsstand. The data in these statements were as accurate as the publishers could provide. The publishers certainly knew how many copies they printed, but they relied on the distributors to inform them of how many copies were sold on the newsstand and how many unsold copies were being "returned" for a refund. Most distributors actually didn't return unsold copies—or even stripped covers of the unsold copies—back to the publishers; instead they sent to the publishers notarized affidavits of the number of unsold copies they destroyed. In essence, an "honor system" was in place that relied on the newsstand distributors to be truthful about the number of copies bought by consumers and the number of unsold copies being destroyed.

"I wouldn't take the Publisher's Statement numbers to church," former Charlton and DC Comics editor Dick Giordano advised in *Comic Book Artist* #1 (Spring 1998). "I'm not sure where they came from but I'll tell you one thing I know for sure—because I can't get in trouble. At Charlton, they just made them up." While that publisher is an extreme example, Giordano's caution is well-advised.

American Comic Book Chronicles then recognizes the flawed nature of newsstand circulation data but is resigned to the fact that it is also the only data available and will consider it a close approximation of a comic book's total sales numbers.

Pride and Prejudice

In 1960, comics were unavoidable. Outside of snobby holdouts like the *New York Times*, every newspaper worth its salt had a healthy representation of what parents liked to call "the funnies." A handful of recent comic strips like *Pogo, Peanuts*, *Dennis the Menace*, and *Marmaduke* were even showing up in paperback collections on book racks. Kids magazines might feature a comics story at any time and *Boy's Life* had maintained a clutch of recurring features like "Scouts In Action" and Dik Browne's Tracy Twins. Older readers might gravitate to the automotive-themed *CARtoons* or the subversive black-and-white comics magazines like *Mad* and its recent rival *Cracked*.

Will Eisner, the innovative genius who produced the weekly *Spirit* comic book section for newspapers between 1940 and 1952, now headed up the American Visuals Corporation. Built around the fact that comics were a powerful educational and commercial tool, the company counted the United States Army as its best-known client. In the pages of a monthly magazine titled *PS, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*, Eisner was charged with conveying technical information to soldiers about the upkeep of their weaponry, vehicles, et al.

Even some members of the clergy seemed to give the form its conditional blessing. David C. Cook's *Sunday Pix* featured a serialized adaptation of the Bible amidst other recurring features in a weekly Sunday School pamphlet while the biweekly *Treasure Chest of Fun and Fact* comic book was distributed at Catholic parochial schools. Evangelist Oral Roberts' organization was producing a subscription-only monthly comic book of their own titled *Junior Partners*.

And certainly, the traditional four-color comic book was readily available at every newsstand, grocer, drugstore, and candy shop. Many California-based fans—among them writer/historian Mark Evanier—speak of buying their comics at liquor stores. However, as much those might have sounded like dens of iniquity, the 1960 model was actually more of a small convenience store.

The price was certainly right. The typical 32-page color comic book still retailed for 10-cents, the same price that an issue had been in the 1930s. Significantly, though, those bygone comics had generally boasted 64 pages. Two decades of inflation had necessitated that most magazines raise prices but comics had held firm, cutting back the page count to hold the line at a dime. By 1960, most comics carried around 25 pages of actual story content with the rest given over to advertising. Dell Comics was a notable exception in mostly eschewing advertising, but the price-tags on their covers had ominously read "Still 10-cents" since 1958 (following regional test-marketing of a 15-cent price-point).

As ubiquitous as comics were, there was a line of demarcation between two of the primary formats, one even made by psychiatrist Fredric Wertham in his notorious 1954 tome *Seduction of the Innocent*. For a quarter-century, color comic books had been looked upon as the ugly stepchild of newspaper comic strips—at best, a simple-minded coun-

terpart; at worst, an active threat to a child's mental development. Ah, but it was adults who bought the newspapers that carried comic strips and, regardless of the content of an individual feature, the daily funnies had a built-in level of respect which their lowly sibling could never aspire. Comic book artist Carmine Infantino had experienced that first hand when he joined the comic strip-centric National Cartoonists Society:

> "Even there, the newspaper strip artists commanded the most respect. I think the advertising cartoonists and comic book artists were only allowed in because the club needed the dues money. Especially during and after the Congressional hearings, we were actually ashamed to tell people what we did for a living. Joe Orlando used to tell people he drew children's books." (Infantino 44-45)

Ask any comic book artist of the era and chances are that they'd tried to sell at least one comic strip concept into syndication. A successful strip and placement in key metropolitan newspapers could mean a small fortune in profits, far more than any of them were eking out in comic books. To cite one example, 1940s/1950s comic book artist Irwin Hasen had successfully transitioned into newspapers with his *Dondi* strip in 1955.

There was no guarantee, of course, particularly for the adventure and science fiction comic strips that were giving way to an up and coming breed of contemporary humor strips like Charles Schulz's *Peanuts*, Mort Walker's *Beetle Bailey*, Johnny Hart's *B.C.* or Mell Lazarus' *Miss Peach*. Murphy Anderson spent 11 months on the struggling *Buck Rogers* comic strip in 1958 and 1959 before deciding that the headaches weren't worth the money. Meanwhile, artist Jack Kirby found himself in a legal nightmare over royalties on the *Sky Masters* strip he'd created with writers Dick and Dave Wood that obligated him to take better-paying jobs from comic book publishers Archie and Marvel while he continued to draw the strip.

Even Stan Lee, the Marvel Comics company man who'd hired Kirby back, wanted nothing more than to create his own comic strip. Throughout the 1950s, he'd managed to sell two strips—*My Friend Irma* (with artists Jack Seidel and Dan DeCarlo) and *Mrs. Lyon's Cubs* (with the late Joe Maneely)—but both ended quickly. In December of 1959, Lee and DeCarlo launched a humor strip starring young mailman *Willie Lumpkin* in the hope that the third time would be the charm.

Although signed by Charles Schulz, the Peanuts comic book was produced by Dale Hale. Peanuts is TM and © Peanuts Worldwide LLC.

Many artists—among them Fawcett Comics' Marc Swayze, E.C.'s Johnny Craig, and Green Lantern creator Mart Nodell—had long since opted to abandon comics in any traditional form for a more lucrative career in advertising. On the other hand, when artist Pete Morisi became a New York police officer in 1956, he maintained his comic book work as a secondary source of income. Aware that the NYPD would frown on moonlighting, Morisi opted to use only his initials (first PM and later PAM) if he signed his stories at all.

The comic book industry was becoming, if not an old-man's game, at least a middle-aged man's one. [Women, notably DC Comics' Aquaman artist Ramona Fradon and Dell Comics President Helen Meyer, were rare exceptions.] With only ten active color comic book publishers in the eastern U.S., there was a finite amount of work to go around and it went to people already within the industry. Even Murphy Anderson's year-long absence on *Buck Rogers* put him at risk

Original Sunday page for August 21, 1960. Courtesy Heritage Auctions. Willie Lumpkin TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

1960 TIMELINE

A compilation of the year's notable comic book industry events alongside some of the year's most significant popular cultural and historical events.

January 22: Aboard the bathyscaphe Trieste, Swiss oceanographer Jacques Piccard and U.S. Navy lieutenant Don Walsh set a world record when they descend 10, 911 meters (35,797 feet) into the Mariana Trench, the lowest point on Earth. The event is referenced later in the year in *Superman* #139.

February 29: *The Family Circus*, by Bil Keane, debuts as a daily newspaper cartoon with a distinctive circular format.

March 6: The United States' involvement in the Vietnam War begins to escalate with the announcement that another 3,500 troops will be deployed to the region.

April 1: The final episode of the *Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour* airs on CBS, bringing an end to the groundbreaking comedy that began in 1951 as *I Love Lucy*. A month earlier, star Lucille Ball had filed for divorce from Desi Arnaz.

April 22: *Dick Tracy* creator Chester Gould receives the Reuben Award for 1959's cartoonist of the year at the National Cartoonists Society 14th annual ceremony in New York City. Other winners include Wally Wood (comic book category, *Mad*), Dik Browne (newspaper strips, *Hi and Lois*), and Jimmy Hatlo (newspaper panels, *They'll Do It Every Time*).

May 11: Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, now using an alias and working as a foreman at a Mercedes-Benz facility in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is captured by agents of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet.

May 24: Following a successful tryout in the *Showcase* comic book, DC's *Green Lantern* #1 goes on sale.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

February 1: A quartet of black students stage a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's department store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The incident inspires further peaceful demonstrations elsewhere in the Southern United States.

February 18: The Winter Olympic Games begin in California's Squaw Valley Ski Resort, the first time the sporting event has taken place in North America since 1932. Airing on CBS, the Olympics' opening and closing ceremonies are produced by Walt Disney.

MARCH

March 28: Writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby revive the *Rawhide Kid* comic book with #17, recreating the character's look and background. It's the first time that the collaborators will work together on an ongoing character.

APRIL

MAY

May 1: An American Lockheed U-2 spy plane is shot down by the Soviets, leading to the capture of its pilot (and CIA operative) Francis Gary Powers. A summit meeting in Paris later in May collapses in part over President Eisenhower's refusal to apologize for the incident. In August, Powers is convicted of espionage against the Soviet Union and sentenced to a prison near Moscow.

JUNE

June 23: DC's *Superman Annual* reprint collection inaugurates a long-running string of 80-Page giants.

May 1: *Psycho,* an Alfred Hitchcock film adaptation of Robert Bloch's 1959 novel, makes its theatrical premiere. An artfully staged sequence in which actor Anthony Perkins' character Norman Bates stabs Janet Leigh's Marion Crane becomes the best-remembered part of the movie, which will become the top-grossing picture of the year.

when he tried to return to National Comics (better known as DC) and found every assignment filled. "For nearly two or three months," he recalled, "I was nearly workless" (Anderson 60).

If things were tough for established creators, they were impossible for newcomers. Fresh out of college, Neal Adams arrived at DC's offices in 1959 with sample pages of a war story and their Adam Strange feature and high hopes of a place in the company. As he tells it, things didn't play out as he expected:

> "I couldn't get past the front door. They sent a nice man out named Bill Perry, and it was as if my old school had given him a tape recording of what to say, 'You're wasting your time, you're a very talented young man, you should do something else, blah, blah, blah...' He wasn't even allowed to take the samples in to the editors. Then, strangely, he quietly apologized." (Schumer 20)

It's a Mad World

Only five years had passed since the content of comic books had come under scrutiny by a Senate subcommittee. The establishment of a Comics Code Authority—whose standards expressly banished most of the grisly excesses of all crime and horror comics—also nearly wiped out the entire EC Comics line of titles aimed at a more adult audience. Serendipitously, publisher **William M. Gaines** had assented to editor Harvey Kurtzman's desire to convert their 10-cent satire/parody comic ***Mad*** to a 25-cent black and white magazine format in 1955, a move that instantly bought the title more respect and success (and incidentally freed it from Comics Code scrutiny). A grinning, big-eared mascot named Alfred E. Neuman (his credo: "What? Me Worry?") quickly became the public face of the magazine on its covers.

Following Kurtzman's 1956 departure, Al Feldstein became the magazine's new editor, and the next few years saw regular material by cartoonists Don Martin and Dave Berg, along with work by writers Gary Belkin, Frank Jacobs, Al Jaffee, Tom Koch, Paul Krassner, Sy Reit and artists Bob Clarke, Mort Drucker, Joe Orlando, Wally Wood, and George Woodbridge.

By 1960, *Mad* was the best-selling comic book in the United States, with its yearly average of 1,048,550 per issue even slightly surpassing Dell's four-color *Uncle Scrooge* and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* as well as DC's *Superman* (Miller).

The magazine's anti-establishment attitude and skewering of everything from TV shows to politics had made it a household name. Fred Astaire donned an Alfred E. Neuman costume for a dance number on November 4, 1959 TV

July 11: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's classic story of race relations in the 1930s American South, is published. It is subsequently awarded the Pulitzer Prize for 1960's best American novel.

July 11: "Alley Oop," a novelty song by the Hollywood Argyles inspired by the V.T. Hamlin comic strip about a time-traveling caveman, is the number one song on the Billboard Top 100 chart. The tune, originally performed by Dallas Frazier in 1957, is also covered by both the Dyno-Sores and Dante & the Evergreens during 1960.

August 1: The Beatles (consisting of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Stu Sutcliffe, and Pete Best) first perform in Hamburg, Germany.

August 25: *Justice League of America* #1 arrives at newsstands and becomes the first successful superhero team comic book since *All Star Comics* dropped the Justice Society and became *All Star Western* in 1951.

September 5: At the Summer Olympic Games in Rome, Italy, the gold medal in light-heavyweight boxing is awarded to Cassius Clay of the United States.

September 25: John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon appear in the first live televised Presidential debate. Not yet cognizant of how his physical appearance would translate on film, Nixon refuses to wear make-up and seems sickly and ill-at-ease to many TV viewers, even as radio listeners believe the Vice-President has won the debate.

OCTOBER 13: For the first time, a home run determines the winner of baseball's World Series. Thanks to Bill Mazeroski, the Pittsburgh Pirates defeat the New York Yankees 10-9.

NOVEMBER 8: John F. Kennedy is elected President of the United States in a narrow victory over Richard Nixon. The 43-year-old Kennedy is the youngest man ever to be elected to the office and the second youngest (after Theodore Roosevelt) to serve there.

DECEMBER 5: In its Boynton v. Virginia ruling, the Supreme Court declares any segregation on public transportation in the United States to be illegal.

DECEMBER 10: Disney's live-action *Swiss Family Robinson* (starring John Mills, Dorothy McGuire, James Arthur, and Tommy Kirk) premieres and eventually becomes the second-highest-grossing film of 1960.

DECEMBER 10: In the *Brave and the Bold* #34, writer Gardner Fox and artist Joe Kubert reintroduce Hawkman, the third 1940s hero to be modernized.

JULY | **AUGUST** | **SEPTEMBER** | **OCTOBER** | **NOVEMBER** | **DECEMBER**

July 25-28: Sitting Vice-President Richard M. Nixon is nominated for President at the Republican National Convention in Chicago. Henry Cabot Lodge is tapped to run as Nixon's Vice-President.

July 13: At the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, U.S. Senator John F. Kennedy is nominated for President of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he talks of the challenges of the "new frontier" that are ahead for all Americans.

September 19: "The Twist," the Chubby Checker song that also inspired a dance craze, is the number one song on the Billboard Top 100 chart.

September 14: OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) is formed by the nations of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

October 3: *The Andy Griffith Show* premieres on CBS, quickly making stars of its title character as Mayberry sheriff Andy Taylor, Don Knotts as bumbling deputy Barney Fife, and Ronnie Howard as Andy's son Opie.

October 2: *The Bugs Bunny Show*, a compilation of Warner Bros. theatrical short cartoons, begins on ABC as a weekly primetime series.

September 30: *The Flintstones*, a prime-time animated cartoon from Hanna-Barbera, debuts on ABC. The series overlays the personalities of the cast of Jackie Gleason's *Honeymooners* characters with those of two families living during the Stone Age.

NOVEMBER 26: Disney launches the first of its annual Christmas newspaper comic strips, short stories that conclude each December 24. The initial tale ("Peter Pan's Christmas Story") is written by Frank Reilly and drawn by Manuel Gonzales.

NOVEMBER 24: Long-standing DC back-up character Aquaman becomes a leading man for the first time in *Showcase* #30, the first of a four-issue run.

special and Tony Randall reenacted several of Mad cartoonist Don Martin's gags for NBC's *Four For Tonight* broadcast on February 24, 1960. Superstar comedian Sid Caesar (*Your Show of Shows*) had even written four pieces for *Mad*, culminating with "The Jackie Talented Story" in #55 (June 1960), and penned the introduction to 1960's hardback *Golden Trashery of Mad*.

Gaines was more than capable of generating press coverage on his own, as in September of 1960 when he gathered many of his staffers for an impromptu trip to Haiti—where he'd discovered that *Mad* had exactly one subscriber. Arriving at his door, Gaines and company begged him to re-subscribe (Jacobs, 250-251).

Mad had also found a valuable means of keeping the best of its earlier comics in print by reformatting them for paperback collections. "The Organization Mad" and "Like, Mad" became the eighth and ninth additions to the series in 1960. That same year, Alfred E. Neuman costumes were available for the first time at Halloween.

While the latest pocket books were reprinting material from 1956 and 1957, the magazine was up to the minute. TV series *77 Sunset Strip* (starring teen heartthrob Edd "Kookie" Byrnes), *The Rifleman*, and *Lassie* came in for mockery in *Mad* #52, #53, and #59 respectively, as did folk music (#52), beatniks (#53, #57), monster movies (#53), violence on TV (#58), and the Summer Olympics in Rome (#56). Elizabeth Taylor's fourth marriage—this time to Eddie Fisher—earned her a personalized comic valentine in a feature in issue #53, also featuring Cuba's Fidel Castro, F.B.I. chief J. Edgar Hoover, and labor union leader Jimmy Hoffa. Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev appeared on the back cover in a Kelly Freas-painted Kodak film ad parody that showed the pictures of top secret facilities he'd snapped during his 1959 visit to the United States.

The ubiquitous advertisements being churned out for print and television were fertile territory for the *Mad* men, and ad parodies were a staple on the magazine, both on Freas' color back covers and the black and white interiors. Issue #54's "My Fair Ad-Man" (written by Nick Meglin and drawn by Mort Drucker) not only tackled the advertising geniuses of Madison Avenue but presented the story in song (all based on tunes from Broadway play "My Fair Lady"). It was the first musical parody in *Mad*'s history. Another musical sequence ("Mad Comic Opera") appeared in #56, featuring scores of comic strip characters—including Dick Tracy, Tarzan, Dagwood Bumstead, and a voluptuous adult Little Orphan Annie—realistically rendered by Wally Wood.

Alfred E. Neuman entered the 1960 U.S. Presidential campaign in issue #55, where a (real) ad offered a kit (including a button, poster, hat, et al.) for one dollar to support his candidacy. Elsewhere in the issue, a magazine

take-off took jabs at the political scene while issue #56's spotlighted the Democratic and Republican summer conventions with every major Presidential candidate and others stumping for Neuman. Issue #60, prepared before the November election was decided, was released as a flip book with a different cover on each side. "Mad congratulates John Kennedy upon his election as President," one side declared. "We were with you all the way, Jack!" On the other side, the same message was delivered to Richard Nixon.

As with any successful series, there were imitators and *Mad* was no exception. Major Magazines' *Cracked*—introduced in 1958—was the most enduring. Edited by Sol Brodsky, the magazine offered janitor Sylvester P. Smythe as its answer to Alfred E. Neuman. John Severin, a versatile artist best known for his textured realistic work on western and war comics for EC and Atlas, was a natural fit for the caricatures that movie and TV parodies required and became the magazine's most prominent creator.

Writer Frank Jacobs and artist Wally Wood conceived a "Comic Opera" for Mad *#56 while painter Bob Clark hedged his bets on 1960's Presidential election winner in* Mad *#60.* Mad TM and © DC Comics.

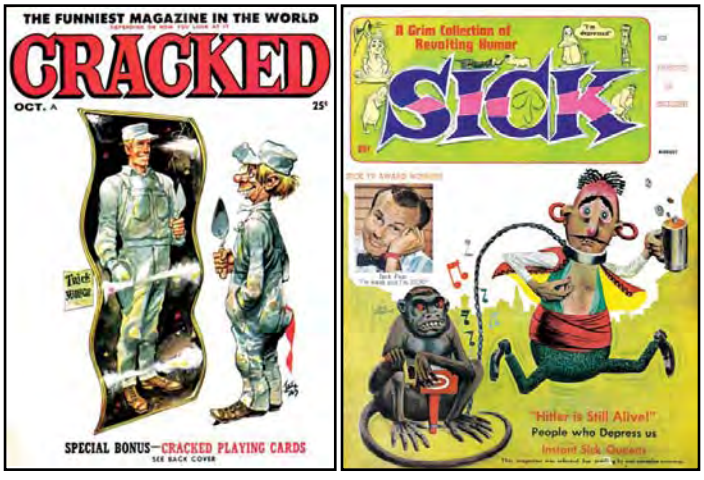
Where *Cracked* was content as a mimic, *Sick* took its title as a mission statement. Published by Crestwood Publications (whose color comics imprint was Prize Comics), issue #1 (September 1960) declared itself "a grim collection of revolting humor." Financed by Teddy Epstein and packaged by industry legend Joe Simon, the magazine was built on the more tasteless, politically incorrect humor dispensed by stand-up comics like the controversial Lenny Bruce. The comedian is said to have bought 100 copies of any issue of *Sick* featuring excerpts on his routines that he then mailed to prospective clients (Simon 177). Discussing *Sick* #1, Simon wrote:

> "I found a humor writer named Dee Caruso who had been writing comedy routines and one-liners for some of the leading theatrical comic personalities. Dee got some of his collaborators together and they wrote the entire book as if it were a routine for a stand-up comedian such as Don Adams or Joey Bishop, both of whom had bought Dee's material. Transforming these 'wordy' routines to eye-catching graphics was a problem but our artists got into the spirit and did well." (Simon 175)

The magazine was initially distributed by the Hearst Distribution Company to great success, as Simon explained:

> "The sales of the first issue were spectacular. We were very happy with our product and with the Heart distribution. Teddy stayed with Hearst for three very profitable issues and then switched to PDC (Publishers Distributing Corp.). PDC offered a much bigger advance payment. The sales under the new distribution dropped. Even so, *Sick* maintained a profit for over a decade until we sold the title." (Simon 178)

Elsewhere, *Mad* creator Harvey Kurtzman was also trying to create a slick humor magazine with a unique voice. His previous post-*Mad* efforts *Trump* (1957) and *Humbug* (1957-1958) had been critical successes but financially unsustainable. *Help!* #1 (August 1960, from Warren Publishing) proved more enduring than its predecessors



Mad's *foremost competitors featured cover artists like Jack Davis and Joe Simon.* Cracked TM and © Demand Media, Inc., Sick, TM and © respective copyright holder.

but resembled a comic book the least. Recalling the magazine to Gary Groth, Kurtzman said:

> "We did *Help!* with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of naiveté, and I had some great people working with me. Harold Hayes sent me Gloria Steinem—yes, *the* Gloria Steinem—who'd come fresh from India where she was working on some sort of deal for the government. Gloria was this incredible person, bigger than life. She would get all these movie stars to pose for *Help!*—for the covers. She'd get 'freebies' galore. The thing I learned from Warren is how to fill your pages with freebies. You know—or you should know—those inexpensive ways of filling up space. We'd fill our magazine with stock shots which we'd get for nothing from the movie publicity departments, and then we'd do tricks with them, print captions on them, print them out of context, touch them up funny. So our total budget was $2 and we put out a magazine." (Groth 93)

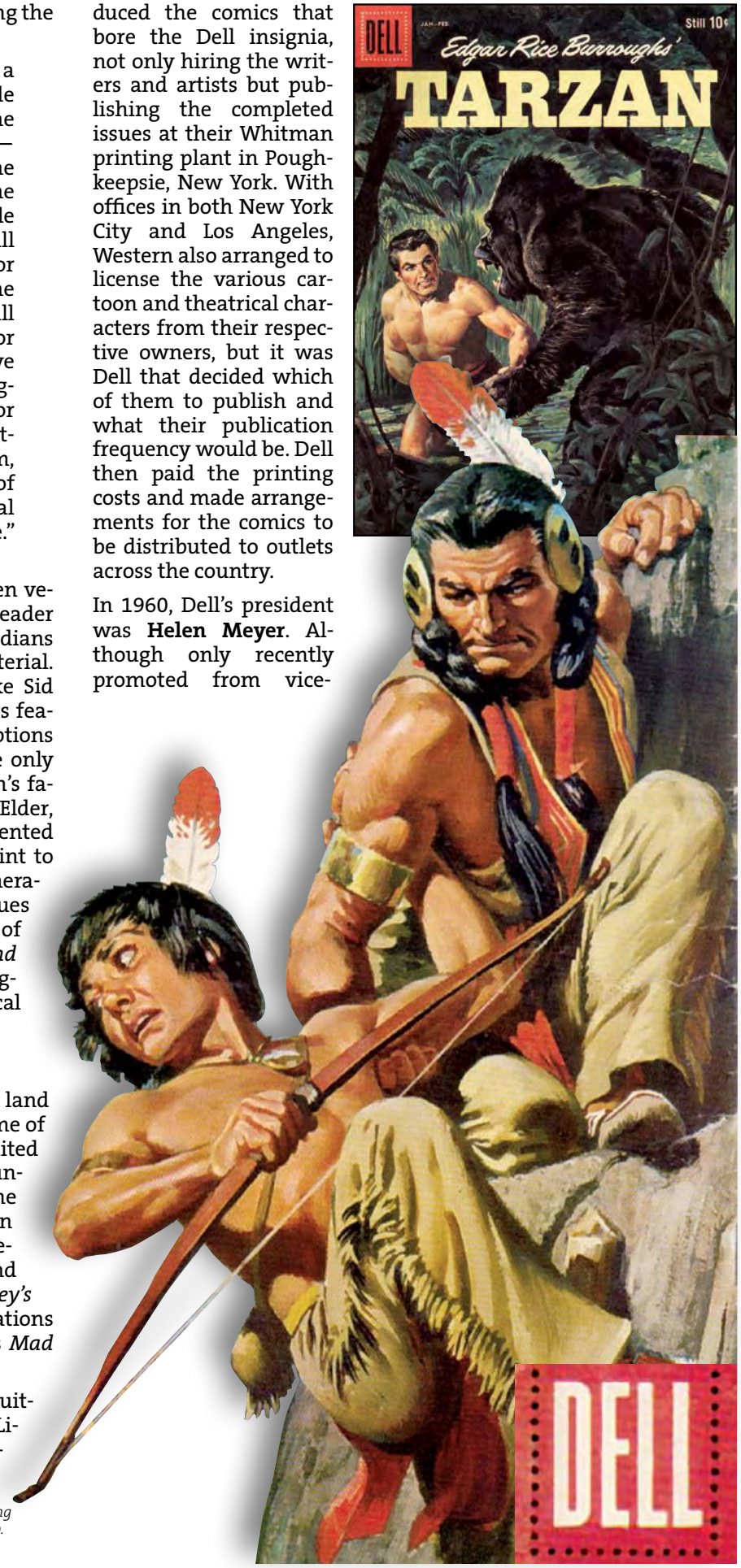
Help! was more of a hybrid, a celebrity-driven vehicle that hoped to draw in an older, hipper reader who responded to the up-and-coming comedians of the day and appreciated more risqué material. With photo covers featuring comedians like Sid Caesar (#1) and Jerry Lewis (#3) and interiors featuring fumetti (photos doctored with captions or words and articles), actual comics were only part of the equation. Nonetheless, Kurtzman's favored artistic collaborators Jack Davis, Will Elder, Al Jaffee, and John Severin were well-represented in the magazine. Kurtzman also made a point to reprint samples of artistic brilliance from generations past, whether cartoons from 1920s issues of the humor magazine *Punch* or episodes of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo In Slumberland* from the early 1900s. As time passed, the magazine would also become a vehicle for a radical new generation of cartoonists.

Dell Comics Are Good Comics

The foremost comic book publisher in the land was **Dell Comics**, whose line-up included some of the most recognizable properties in the United States: Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tom and Jerry, Little Lulu, the Lone Ranger, Tarzan, Zorro, and many more. In 1960, they published 377 separate comics (Stevenson), more than any other company, and two of its titles—*Uncle Scrooge* and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*—charted average circulations over one million copies per issue. Only EC's *Mad* surpassed them (Miller).

Part of Dell's success stemmed from a long fruitful partnership with Western Printing and Lithography. It was Western that actually produced the comics that bore the Dell insignia, not only hiring the writers and artists but publishing the completed issues at their Whitman printing plant in Poughkeepsie, New York. With offices in both New York City and Los Angeles, Western also arranged to license the various cartoon and theatrical characters from their respective owners, but it was Dell that decided which of them to publish and what their publication frequency would be. Dell then paid the printing costs and made arrangements for the comics to be distributed to outlets across the country.

In 1960, Dell's president was **Helen Meyer**. Although only recently promoted from vice-



A trademark of Dell's adventure comics were their often stunning painted covers by artists such as George Wilson and Mo Gollub.

Grandly headlined house ads like these fanned the flames of DC's superhero revival. Justice League of America and Green Lantern TM and © DC Comics.

higher issue number. A first issue, he believed, would be viewed as a gamble that some might not wish to take. (There was also, it seemed, not a particular amount of sentimentality over anniversaries. The 100th issues of *House of Mystery* and *Our Army At War* each passed without comment in 1960.)

The return of the Flash had come out of nowhere, his first appearances slipping by many who might have been interested in the new/old hero. On the heels of Green Lantern's debut, the house ads for *The Brave and the Bold* #28 brought something new: anticipation. For a generation too young to remember *All Star Comics*, the concept of a comic bringing together characters who normally worked alone was mind-blowing. *Justice League of America* would prove to be influential in ways the Justice Society never was. It didn't merely create the model for scores of superhero teams in the decades to come or even, ultimately, lead to character crossovers becoming mainstream rather than a novelty. It would, quite unwittingly, be the catalyst for both an entirely new kind of comic book and the organization of comic book fans into a force to be reckoned with.

New Blood

The success of Green Lantern and the Justice League of America was the strongest evidence yet for DC that costumed heroes were once again a growth industry. Still feeling their way in this new frontier, the company's editors and writers struggled with what other elements of the first superhero explosion to bring back. In 1959, a resurgence in teen sidekicks and counterparts, culminated with Kid Flash (*The Flash* #110: December 1959-January 1960) and Aquaman's new partner Aqualad (*Adventure Comics* #269: February 1960). Next, two DC editors would ask the question of whether comic relief—a staple of many successful 1940s hero strips—still had a place in 1960. The answer was a resounding no!

Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls had been college students/adventurers who were a fixture of the *Wonder Woman* series from 1942 to 1950 before new writer/editor **Robert Kanigher** dropped them from the series. In *WW* #117 (October 1960), he decided to bring them back, albeit as little more than an audience for the Amazing Amazon's exploits. A pair of follow-up stories in 1961 were much the same and Kanigher promptly sent them back to limbo.

Elsewhere, Julius Schwartz decided to try a revival of the Three Dimwits, a thinly-disguised version of film's Three Stooges who'd aggravated the original Flash during writer Gardner Fox's tenure on the series. Fox, who'd had no involvement in the present-day Flash series to this point, was invited to pen a story in *Flash* #117 (December 1960) starring a new version of the trio. Reaction in the subsequent letter column was almost entirely negative. However much pseudo-science was involved, Schwartz's series had a serious, sometimes scholarly tone further augmented by generally more realistic art. Slapstick had no place in that world and readers were quick to declare that comics were no laughing matter. The lone dissenter in that letter column, incidentally, was a young man named Roy Thomas who'd originally suggested the revival.

Schwartz had greater success when he played things straight. In *Green Lantern* #2 (September-October 1960), writer John Broome and artist Gil Kane established aircraft mechanic Thomas Kalmaku as the only person privy to the fact that test pilot Hal Jordan was secretly Green Lantern. In this pre-political correctness era, Hal obliviously dubbed his Alaskan pal "Pieface" (as in Eskimo Pie), a nickname that endured into the 1970s. That detail aside, Kalmaku functioned as an admirable confidant throughout the decade, eventually marrying and starting a family while Hal futilely pursued Carol Ferris.

Elsewhere, Schwartz, Broome, and artist Carmine Infantino reevaluated a character they'd first envisioned as a villain. In the course of working up "the Mystery of the Elongated Man" (*Flash* #112: April-May 1960), the team realized that red-haired Ralph Dibny had greater potential as a hero and set him up as a recurring guest who returned for the first time in #115 (September 1960).

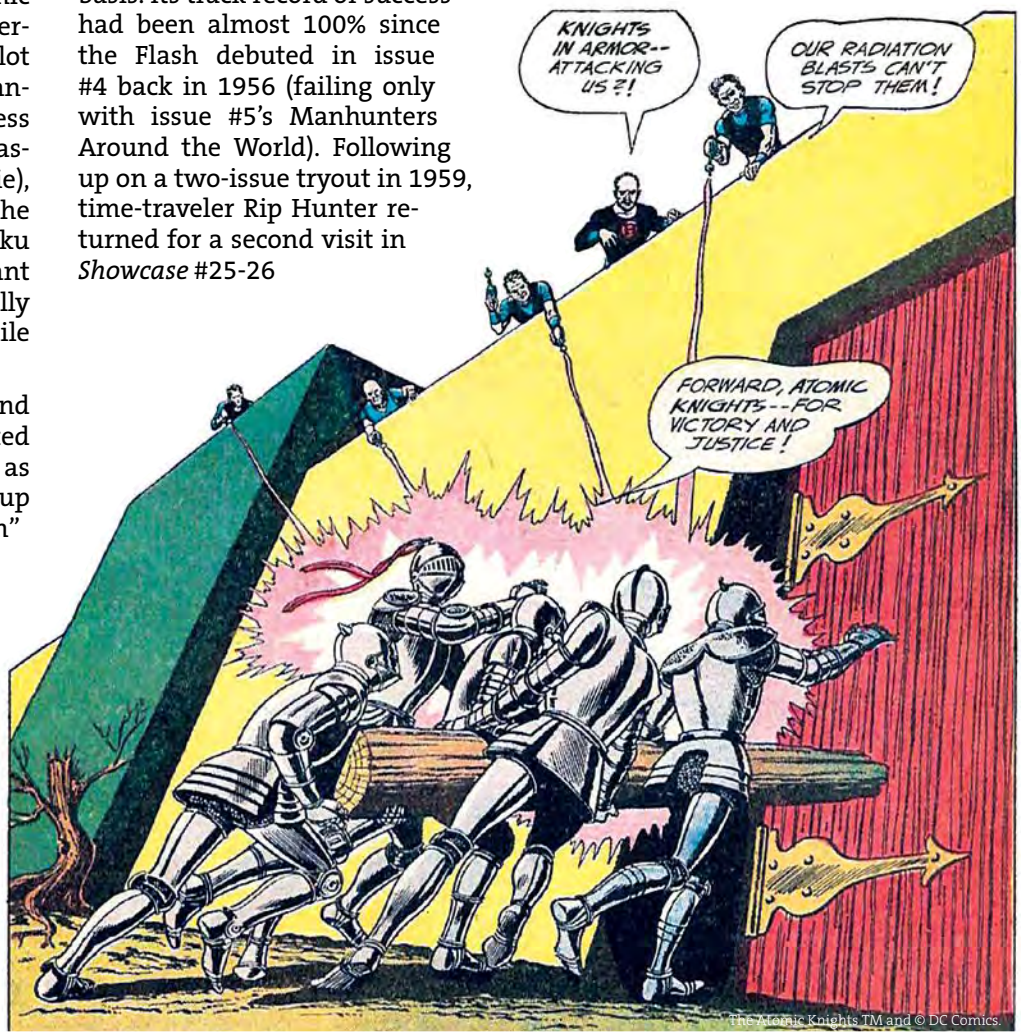
What was intriguing about the Elongated Man was the fact that he could stretch himself to incredible lengths like both Quality Comics' fabled old character Plastic Man and Elastic Lad, a recurring alter ego of Jimmy

Olsen that Mort Weisinger had introduced in 1958. When Quality went out of business in 1956, DC had begun licensing its most successful titles—notably *Blackhawk*, *G.I. Combat*, *Heart Throbs*, and *Robin Hood Tales*—but passed on poor Plas, which had been all-reprint since 1955. Licensing the character for recurring guest appearances—even if it had occurred to Schwartz or Weisinger—would surely have been judged a waste of money.

When DC gambled, it preferred to do so cautiously. The *Showcase* tryout title had been a remarkable tool for determining whether a prospective series might sell on an ongoing basis. Its track record of success had been almost 100% since the Flash debuted in issue #4 back in 1956 (failing only with issue #5's Manhunters Around the World). Following up on a two-issue tryout in 1959, time-traveler Rip Hunter returned for a second visit in *Showcase* #25-26

before making way for a team of divers called the Sea Devils in #27-29. Tonally, the strips were worlds apart, although both coincidentally starred quartets composed of two men, a woman, and her kid brother. Each series was awarded an ongoing title in 1961. The news wasn't as good for spelunker Cave Carson and his two partners, whose "Adventures Inside Earth" failed to click in *The Brave and the Bold* #31-33.

None of the teams had the timeliness of the Atomic Knights, however. Created by writer John Broome and artist Murphy Anderson for Julius Schwartz's *Strange Adventures* #117, the series began in distant 1986 and posited the aftermath of a nuclear war. Crawling from the wreckage, soldier Gardner Grayle gathered a group of like-minded citizens (including the requisite woman) to help him maintain order amidst looters, profiteers, and other threats. Discovering that ancient suits of armor were



Archie Adventures

Archie Comics was the first to pick up on the fact that superheroes might be making a comeback. In 1959, they'd contracted with Joe Simon (briefly joined by his former partner Jack Kirby) to produce two new titles for them, ***The Adventures of the Fly*** and ***The Double Life of Private Strong***. Conceptually, both concepts were derivative. The Fly—a boy transformed into an adult hero—echoed 1940s hero Captain Marvel, while Private Strong (a.k.a. the Shield) recalled Simon and Kirby's Captain America. According to Simon, DC didn't see the latter that way. From their perspective, the Shield was obviously a copy of Superman and they sent Archie a "cease and desist" letter. So *Private Strong* ended with issue #2 (Simon 200).

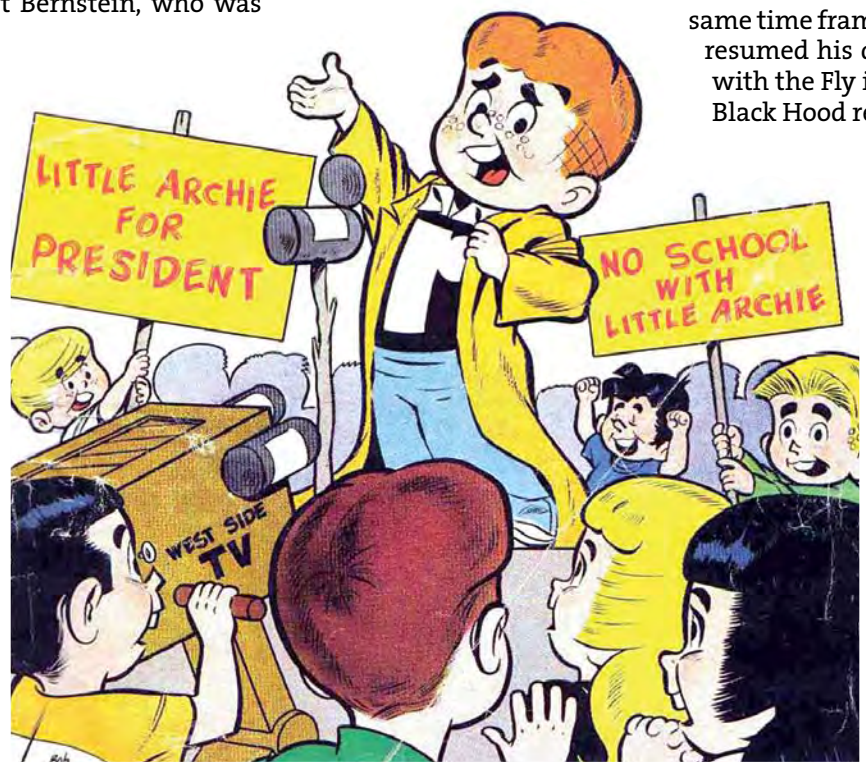
The Fly, however, continued well beyond Simon's four-issue commitment, albeit with less dynamic art from Bill Vigoda (#5). The artist, by then more accustomed to the Archie humor style, was succeeded by John Giunta with #6-10. Ironically, the character was immediately transformed into a superhero far more like Superman than Private Strong had ever been. Clad in yellow and green rather than red and blue, the Fly completely escaped the notice of DC's lawyers.

Between issues #4 and #5 (January and March 1960), youngster Tommy Troy became adult lawyer Thomas Troy but still possessed a magic ring that could transform him into the Fly at a moment's notice. Each issue contained three tightly-plotted stories built around a tantalizing hook (such as Thomas Troy defending a man in court while the Fly was trying to convict him) with a gradual accruement of a mythology that included a Lois Lane-type girlfriend/secretary named Donna Morse and the use of chlordane (a real-life pesticide component) as the hero's personal kryptonite. The parallels to the Superman formula were no coincidence. The un-credited stories in *The Fly* were being written by Robert Bernstein, who was simultaneously selling stories to DC's Mort Weisinger.

Bernstein was less successful in conveying the sense of wonder and importance that gave impact to the best of Weisinger's Superman stories. In the middle of *The Fly* #7, the hero shared a case with the Black Hood, a policeman turned costumed hero. From a historical point of view, the story was a milestone, one that brought back a character unseen since 1947 when Archie was still known as MLJ. In the script itself, the team-up was almost matter-of-fact, the Black Hood simply acknowledged as a hero from another town rather than one who was being revived. Still, Bernstein had ventured into virgin territory and had no idea how much readers would be fascinated by the thought of bringing back a character created before they were born.

John Giunta drew the revival of the Black Hood in Adventures of the Fly *#7.*
The Black Hood TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc. The Fly TM © Joe Simon.

If the intention was to emulate the popularity of the Superman-Batman team-ups in *World's Finest Comics*, the stories in *Fly* #8 and #9 were more on the mark, at least in terms of heroes created in the same time frame. Private Strong quietly resumed his double life to join forces with the Fly in both issues before the Black Hood returned in issue #10.



The personal voice that Bob Bolling gave to Little Archie *made the title a critical hit.*
Little Archie TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

While a modest hit, *Adventures of the Fly* was ultimately just Archie's effort to keep a toehold in the superhero genre should it actually take off again. Taking stock of its other niche titles, the company decided to end the 16-year-old superhero/funny animal title *Super Duck* with #94 (December 1960) and closed the book on the Dennis the Menace-styled *Adventures of Pipsqueak* (formerly *Pat the Brat*) with #39 (July 1960).

Archie's real focus was on what they did best: the teen humor titles that were referenced in its very company name. The core of the line remained *Archie*, *Archie's Girls, Betty and Veronica*, and *Archie's Pal, Jughead* while satellite titles like the surreal *Archie's Madhouse* (which began in 1959) pushed the boundaries. Bob Bolling's *Little Archie*, launched in 1956 and featuring the cast as younger kids, was arguably the most critically successful.

A new title called *Life With Archie* had been tested in 1958 and 1959 but didn't acquire a distinct point of view until it was promoted to an ongoing series with issue #3 (July 1960). Published under the "Archie Adventure Series" imprint like *The Fly*, the book placed the Archie cast in longer, more serious action stories with scripts by veteran writer Sy Reit and art by Bob White. The adventure premise sustained the title for over thirty years before it was finally cancelled.

On the flipside was *Jughead's Fantasy*, another Reit-scripted addition to the adventure line that imagined Archie's pal as a knight in shining armor or a hardboiled private eye. It made it to issue #3 (December 1960) before the plug was pulled.

There was no small amount of irony in the fact the Archie Adventure Series imprint arose at the same time that **Neal Adams** was trying to get a job in the comic book industry. Unable to get a shot at DC, the artist later to be known for his dynamic realistic style looked to Archie about the possibility of working on *Adventures of the Fly*. Approaching Joe Simon, Adams was informed by the veteran cartoonist that getting into comic books was a waste of time. But the artist persevered:

> "I started to do samples for Archie and I left my Fly samples there. A couple weeks later when I came in to show my Archie samples, I noticed that the pages were still there, but the bottom panel was cut off of one of my pages. I said, 'What happened?' They said, 'One of the artists did this transition where Tommy Troy turns into the Fly and it's not very good. You did this real nice piece so we'll use that, if it's OK.' I said, 'That's great. That's terrific.'" (Offenberger)

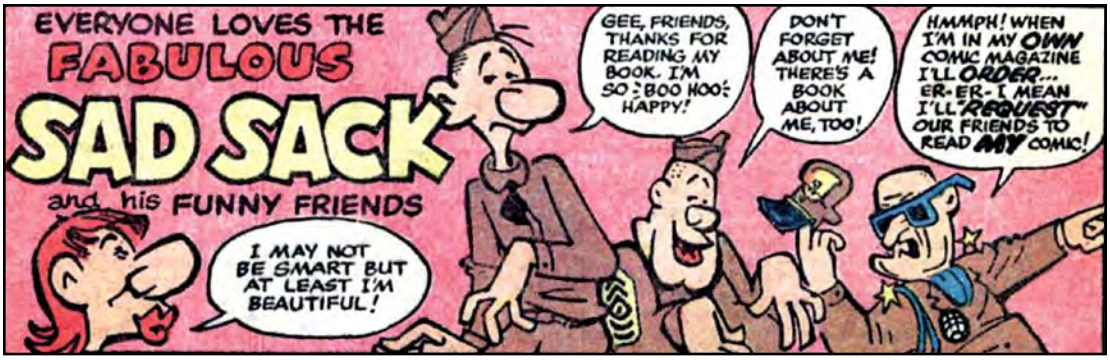
That panel ran in *Fly* #4 but all of Adams' subsequent work for Archie consisted of half-page filler gags that ran in *Archie's Joke Book* and *Pep Comics*. Although the artist appreciated the work, he was not being used to his full potential. Leaving Archie, he went into the commercial art field.

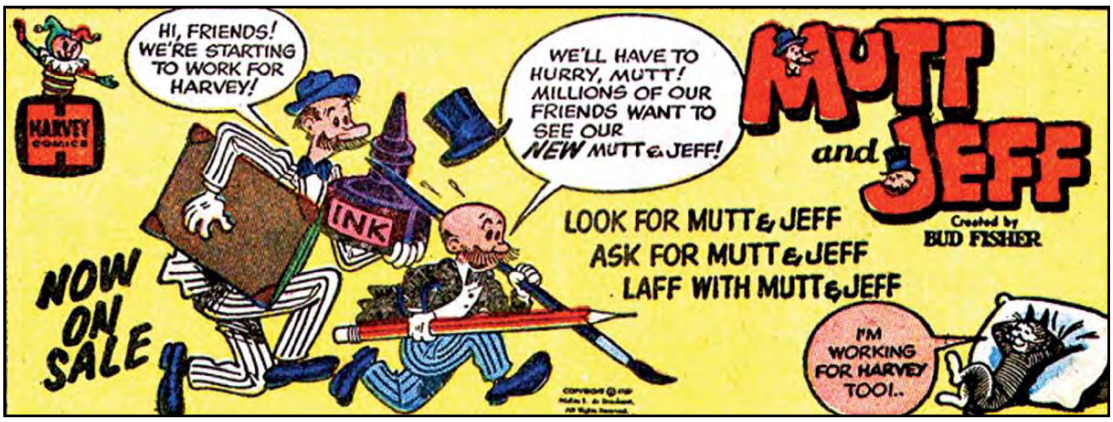
Keeping the Presses Running

In terms of sheer output (if not sales), **Charlton Comics** ranked third behind Dell and DC with 280 issues of its various titles published during 1960 (Stevenson). Where the two major companies split the various publication aspects among separate cities, Charlton both printed and distributed its comics from its Derby, Connecticut base while paying its editors, writers, and artists some of the lowest wages in the industry. Indeed, the voluminous comics line existed in part simply to keep the presses running non-stop when they weren't printing magazines featuring song lyrics. **Dick Giordano**, a Charlton artist and editor from 1952 to 1967, viewed it as a missed opportunity:

> "If they wanted to go head-to-head with DC Comics, quality of the artwork, quality of the stories, quality of the printing and distribution, they probably could have done it at two-thirds of the cost that DC was paying. And if they had done that, they really could have turned the comic book publishing business on its ear. But they chose to be junk dealers, they really did. I mean that in a literal sense: They thought they were producing junk, they thought of all of it as junk, they didn't think there was any

Better known for his yellow and orange costume, Captain Atom started out in blue.
Captain Atom TM and © DC Comics.





The Harvey line included more than just its trademark kid comics.
Sad Sack TM and © Sad Sack, Inc. Mutt and Jeff TM and © AEdita S. de Beaumont.

after his son Richard. Along with the company's other key personnel—including editor Sid Jacobson, writers Lennie Herman and Jim Miele, and artists Sid Couchey, Howard Post, and Ken Selig—Kremer worked in complete anonymity. In 1985, by which point the writer-artist was working for Marvel's Star Comics line, Kremer reflected to interviewer John Benson on the belated fan recognition of his earlier work:

> "I never knew any of that when I was at Harvey. We always did the best we could; we always put out what we thought were good stories, and good artwork. And it's paid off. I find out now from my peers and from kids that write letters and all, now that they know I'm at Marvel. God, the stuff that they say, it's unbelievable, the years that they loved Richie and they loved Casper. I never knew it. Had no way of knowing it. Because first of all they didn't know who drew it and they didn't know who to write to, so if they wrote a letter it was just to the Harvey company, and half the time you never saw them." (Benson 48-49)

Another Harvey success story had been *Hot Stuff, the Little Devil*, a comic book that premiered in 1957 and starred a pint-size crimson demon in a diaper who wasn't quite as bad as he'd like everyone to think. Launched cold without so much as a back-up feature or *Harvey Hits* tryout, the series caught on quickly and was promoted from bi-monthly to monthly frequency in 1959. With demand for the character still high, *Hot Stuff Sizzlers* #1 (August 1960) became the first spin-off series for the character. Published as a 25-cent giant, the book began on a quarterly schedule and continued through the end of 1973.

Although Hot Stuff and Wendy became two of Harvey's best-known characters and Richie Rich, virtually a cornerstone of the company, no single figure seemed to be more successful in 1960 than **Sad Sack**. Originally the star of a comic strip created by Sgt. George Baker, the comically down-on-his-luck soldier had premiered as a Harvey comic book character in 1949. By 1960, *Sad Sack Comics* had spawned three ongoing spin-off series—*Sad Sack and the Sarge*, *Sad Sack Laugh Special*, and *Sad Sack's Funny Friends*—along with periodic issues of *Harvey Hits* featuring "Sad Sack's Army Life." Writer-artists Fred Rhoads and Jack O'Brien contributed the bulk of the Sad Sack stories while George Baker himself was still on hand to draw covers.

Compared to other publishers, Harvey still had a creditable selection of titles based on newspaper comic strips. Adventure titles *Dick Tracy*, *Joe Palooka*, and (in the occasional issue of *Harvey Hits*) the Phantom were struggling, but the humorous *Blondie Comics* and its *Dagwood* spin-off (based on Chic Young's famous feature) were still going strong. Consequently, when Dell dropped the license for the *Mutt and Jeff* comic book (having previously picked it up from DC), Harvey leapt in to continue the series with #116 (February 1960). Later in the year, they enthusiastically added a spin-off *Mutt and Jeff Jokes* series as a 25-cent giant series only to cancel it after three issues. Unlike *Blondie*, whose gags about work and family had adapted to the times and remained relevant, *Mutt and Jeff* (created in 1907) seemed a bit dated in 1960, more appealing to the people publishing Harvey Comics than those reading them. That said, the primary *Mutt and Jeff* comic book survived for nearly six years before being cancelled for good with #148 (November 1965).

Elsewhere On the Newsstand

The remaining publishers of four-color comics in 1960 were a modest bunch, generating as few as twelve issues in the case of Oral Roberts (its *Junior Partners* title) or Hallden (whose various Dennis the Menace titles featured the critically-praised work of writer Fred Toole and artist Al Wiseman along with reprints of Hank Ketcham's daily panels). Prize's twenty comics included the long-running *Black Magic* suspense title but were otherwise devoted to the love genre with *Young Love*, *Young Romance*, and the short-lived *Going Steady* that began and ended in 1960. Gilberton's more literary 27 titles included *Classics Illustrated*, *Classics Illustrated*

Junior, and *The World Around Us* (Stevenson).

As prolific as they were, even Charlton's Joe Gill or Marvel's Stan Lee or Dell's Gaylord DuBois and Paul S. Newman couldn't write everything their respective companies published. At ACG (short for the American Comics Group), its writer/editor **Richard Hughes** likely came closer than any of them, percentage-wise. In 1960, ACG released 34 issues divided between five titles (Stevenson). *My Romantic Adventures* was the token love comic, its companion *Confessions of the Lovelorn* cancelled with #114 (June-July 1960) and replaced on the schedule by *Unknown Worlds* #1 (August 1960). The latter joined *Adventures Into the Unknown* and *Forbidden Worlds* as a purveyor of lightweight, twisty suspense, fantasy, or science fiction tales.

Hughes wrote a considerable chunk of them, disguising that fact with a variety of colorful pseudonyms like Shane O'Shea or Zev Zimmer. Noted for his sense of humor, the editor took the gag of a large writing staff a step further by actually devising biographies for many of his aliases in letter columns. The mere presence of credits at all was unusual for the era but Hughes consistently provided them. The names of the ACG artists were, of course, genuine and included Pete Costanza, John Forte, Paul Reinman, John Rosenberger, Kurt Schaffenberger, Ogden Whitney, and Al Williamson. Hughes even had them include caricatures of themselves and the (mostly) fictional writers for the splash pages of each story in *Unknown Worlds*.

Kurt Schaffenberger was a prolific cover artist for ACG.
Unknown Worlds is © respective copyright holder.

The ACG titles were never the most successful in the industry but they had a charm and craft about them that many readers found endearing. Moreover, Richard Hughes maintained letter columns in his titles for a decade, building a relationship between ACG and fans that editors at other companies were only beginning to appreciate.

The Rise of Fandom

A small but important element of DC's best-selling superhero comics was reader engagement. Mort Weisinger had instituted letter columns in all of his books in 1958 with Jack Schiff following suit in *Batman* during 1959. During a panel at the 1965 New York Comicon, Weisinger made no secret of their impact:

> "I think letters are the heart and blood, the lifeline of, DC Comics, as I see it. You have, in television and radio, your various Trendexes, your Nielsen ratings. I think we can tell long before we get our circulation reports as to how a story or an issue or a cover has gone over from the letters. There's a pattern. You find something that's gone over or something that's been a big bomb."

"[...] Some of the stories I'm most proud of have been suggested by fans. Covers have come in over the transom, by fans who've sent in a little sketch, and I said, 'Why don't we have a story based on that?' We make it our business to encourage the ones that have a flair, and we think can reach us sometimes but, every so often, we get an exact bulls-eye. Here is a great idea or a great cover, a great springboard for an imaginary story." ("Ghost Writers In the Sky," 28-29)

In 1960, Robert Kanigher and Julius Schwartz introduced their own letter columns, the former introducing "Wonder Woman's Clubhouse" in *WW* #115 and the latter adding "JLA Mailroom" to the final Justice League tryout issue of *the Brave and the Bold*, "Flash-Grams" starting in *the Flash* #112, and "Green Lantern's Mail Chute" in *GL* #1.

Unlike the short inquisitive missives in his fellow editors' books (some of them faked to promote upcoming stories), Schwartz favored thoughtful, more articulate letters from older readers who were clearly teenagers or young adults. In 1961, he even began awarding the original story art to the best letter writers in a given column. Recalling his days as a young science fiction fan with Mort Weisinger, Schwartz hoped to foster that same sense of community among comics fans by printing their full addresses so that they could contact each other.

Even before his letter columns had begun, Schwartz had encouraged the budding new generation of fans. Acting as a middleman, the editor put Gardner Fox in touch with a passionate Justice Society fan named Jerry Bails in 1959, which resulted in the writer selling the young man his bound collections of *All Star Comics*. And in the fall of 1960, when a 19-year-old Missouri college student named Roy Thomas inquired about buying issues of *All Star* himself, Schwarz directed him to Bails. In doing so, the editor had created a monster, albeit a benevolent one. Kindred spirits Bails and Thomas resolved not only to do everything in their power to make the new Justice League of America comic book a success (up to and including sending pseudonymous notes of praise to the letter column) but to lobby for revivals of further 1940s heroes.

Over fifteen years later, by which point a good percentage of comics writers were actually former fans, Schwartz downplayed the influence of such lobbying:

The Shape of Things To Come

In 1961, now moving an average of 1,209,918 copies per issue, *Mad* broke the previous year's virtual tie with *Uncle Scrooge* to become the best-selling comic book in the United States and never looked back (Miller). Much like baseball player Roger Maris, who broke Babe Ruth's home run record the same year, it was an achievement that would be acknowledged only grudgingly. The Babe, critics argued, had made his record in a 154 game season. Maris did it in a 162 game season. Likewise, some would say, a *real* comic book was in color and packaged in a rectangular format. *Mad*, on the other hand, was a black and white *magazine*.

No matter. William Gaines' team continued to skewer television, politics, advertising, and more, laughing all the way to the bank as they fiddled with the issue-to-issue features. Dave Berg's "The Lighter Side," a series tackling a different subject each issue, began in *Mad* #66 (October 1961) while a pantomime feature dubbed "Spy Vs. Spy" debuted in #60 (January 1961). Focusing on a pair of beak-nosed spies, one dressed in black and the other in white, the feature had a distinctive look and, as the first installment revealed, a creator who'd endured considerable peril before drawing them.

Antonio Prohías had gained equal parts fame and infamy in his native Cuba for his anti-Castro cartoons. Fleeing the country on May 1, 1960, the cartoonist eventually made his way to New York City. On July 12, 1960, he showed up at the *Mad* offices. Observing that anyone who didn't support Fidel Castro was automatically classified by the Cuban leader as a conspirator, the cartoonist had begun to play with the whole spy concept. Speaking to a *Miami Herald* reporter in 1983, by which point "Spy Vs. Spy" had been running in *Mad* for more than two decades, Prohías declared that "the sweetest revenge has been turning Fidel's accusation of me as a spy into a money-making venture" (Prohías, 14).

The world was becoming a scary place in 1961. On multiple fronts, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was heating up. Russia had won the race to put the first man in outer space. Communist-controlled East Germany began erecting the Berlin Wall to prevent further defections to the west. In October, the Soviets created the largest explosion in recorded history when they detonated a 58-megaton hydrogen bomb. And the ongoing war between North Vietnam's communist forces and South Vietnam was a dark cloud on the horizon.

Closer to home, a C.I.A.-sponsored attempt at removing Castro backfired in spectacular fashion. The botched Bay of Pigs invasion not only helped the Cuban leader silence insurgents but pushed the country directly into an alliance with the Soviet Union.

Within the continental U.S., the struggle of black Americans to turn back the entrenched racism of much of the southern states had turned violent. In the wake of a recent Supreme Court ruling that banned the segregation of blacks and whites on interstate buses, groups of black men and women dubbed Freedom Riders organized a series of bus trips to defiant states like Alabama and Mississippi. Inevitably, the activists met opposition from forces that included the hooded white supremacists known as the Ku Klux Klan, who firebombed one bus and attacked other riders with baseball bats and chains.

Certainly, the news wasn't all bad for the United States. President Kennedy's ambitious Peace Corps initiative was conceived as a means of improving America's image on the world stage. The program would send volunteers throughout the world to help beleaguered communities and hopefully cultivate a better understanding between cultures in the process.

And if Russia had put the first man in outer space, the U.S. could at least boast having the second and third men to do so. Moreover, President Kennedy vowed that the United States would put the first man on the moon by the end of the decade.

Original art for Antonio Prohias' first Spy Vs. Spy page. Courtesy Heritage Auctions. Spy Vs. Spy TM and © DC Comics.

For all that, most Americans went on with their day-to-day lives, preferring not to dwell on things that didn't affect them or which they couldn't change. From the perspective of new Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minow, too many people were already taking refuge from such issues by flopping down in front of the TV. In a speech on May 9, he delivered a sharp rebuke to the commercial television industry that he characterized as overrun with mindless, often violent content:

> "When television is good, nothing—not the theater, not the magazines or newspapers—nothing is better. But when television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite each of you to sit down in front of your own television set when your station goes on the air and stay there, for a day, without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper, without a profit and loss sheet or a rating book to distract you. Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that what you will observe is a vast wasteland" (Chase 360).

A month later, James V. Bennett, director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, added his voice to the crusade for programming in the public interest. Much as comic books had been targeted a decade earlier, violent television shows were now blamed by Bennett for an upswing in juvenile delinquency. In the short term, the rest of the year saw a surge in political documentaries on TV and, thanks to nervous producers, "the 1961-1962 season got under way with the largest number of one-year contracts in TV history." (Chase, 360) In the midst of the debate, *Pogo* cartoonist Walt Kelly was commissioned by the government's Children's

1961 TIMELINE

A compilation of the year's notable comic book industry events alongside some of the year's most significant popular cultural and historical events.

January 3: The United States severs diplomatic ties with Cuba, the latest in the U.S.'s responses to the small country's nationalization of American businesses within its borders.

January 20: John F. Kennedy is sworn in as the 35th President of the United States.

January 25: *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, Disney's animated adaptation of Dodie Smith's 1956 children's book, arrives in theaters and eventually becomes 1961's top-grossing picture.

February 12: Motown Records celebrates its first million-selling single, the Miracles' 1960 hit "Shop Around."

February 23: *Batman* #139 features the debut of Robin's teen counterpart Bat-Girl while *Justice League of America* #4 belatedly adds Green Arrow to the series.

February 5: Animation sensation *Yogi Bear* is the star of a new comic strip overseen by Gene Hazelton.

March 1: President Kennedy establishes the Peace Corps, whose volunteers would travel abroad to assist disadvantaged communities and promote cultural understanding between themselves and those they helped.

March 11: At the American International Toy Fair, Ken is introduced as the boyfriend for Mattel's two-year-old Barbie doll.

April 12: After his spacecraft completes an orbit of Earth, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin is recognized as the first human being to travel to outer space.

April 17-19: A Cuban invasion primarily launched from southern Cuba's Bay of Pigs and meant to oust Fidel Castro ends with the defeat of rebels trained by the C.I.A. and supported by President Kennedy. In the aftermath, hundreds of people who acted against the government–both Cuban and American–are executed and Castro moves towards an alliance with the Soviet Union.

April 21: The commemoration of the centennial of the United States' Civil War begins with a series of reenactments throughout the country, scenarios reflected in comic books such as *Life With Archie* #10 and *Superboy* #91 as well as a few short-lived newspaper strips like Jack Davis' *Beauregard* (which began April 3).

April 25: Illustrator Ronald Searle accepts the Reuben Award for 1960's cartoonist of the year during the National Cartoonists Society's annual gala. Other winners include Bob Oksner (comic book category, *Adventures of Jerry Lewis*), Dik Browne (humor newspaper strips, *Hi and Lois*), Leonard Starr (story newspaper strips, *On Stage)*, and George Lichty (newspaper panels, *Grin and Bear It*).

May 4: Challenging segregation in the American south, Civil rights activists known as the Freedom Riders begin a series of interstate bus expeditions.

May 5: During the Freedom 7 mission, Mercury astronaut Alan Shepard becomes the second man in outer space and the first American. His colleague Gus Grissom becomes the third man in space on July 21.

May 8: *Apartment 3-G,* an Alex Kotzky-illustrated comic strip centering on three young women, makes it debut and becomes the third successful newspaper "soap opera" created by psychiatrist Nicholas P. Dallis (following his earlier *Rex Morgan, M.D.* and *Judge Parker*).

May 25: President Kennedy announces his intent that the United States put a man on the moon by the end of the decade.

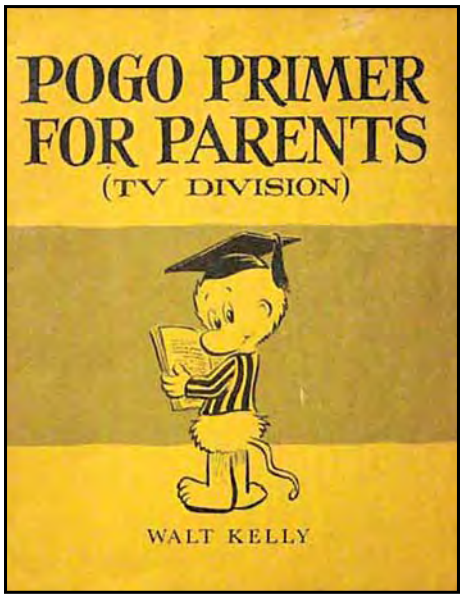
June 16: During a European tour, renowned Russian ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev defects to France.

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE

Bureau to produce *the Pogo Primer For Parents (TV Division)*, a 24-page pamphlet essentially advocating that parents pay attention to what their children were watching and not use television as a babysitter.

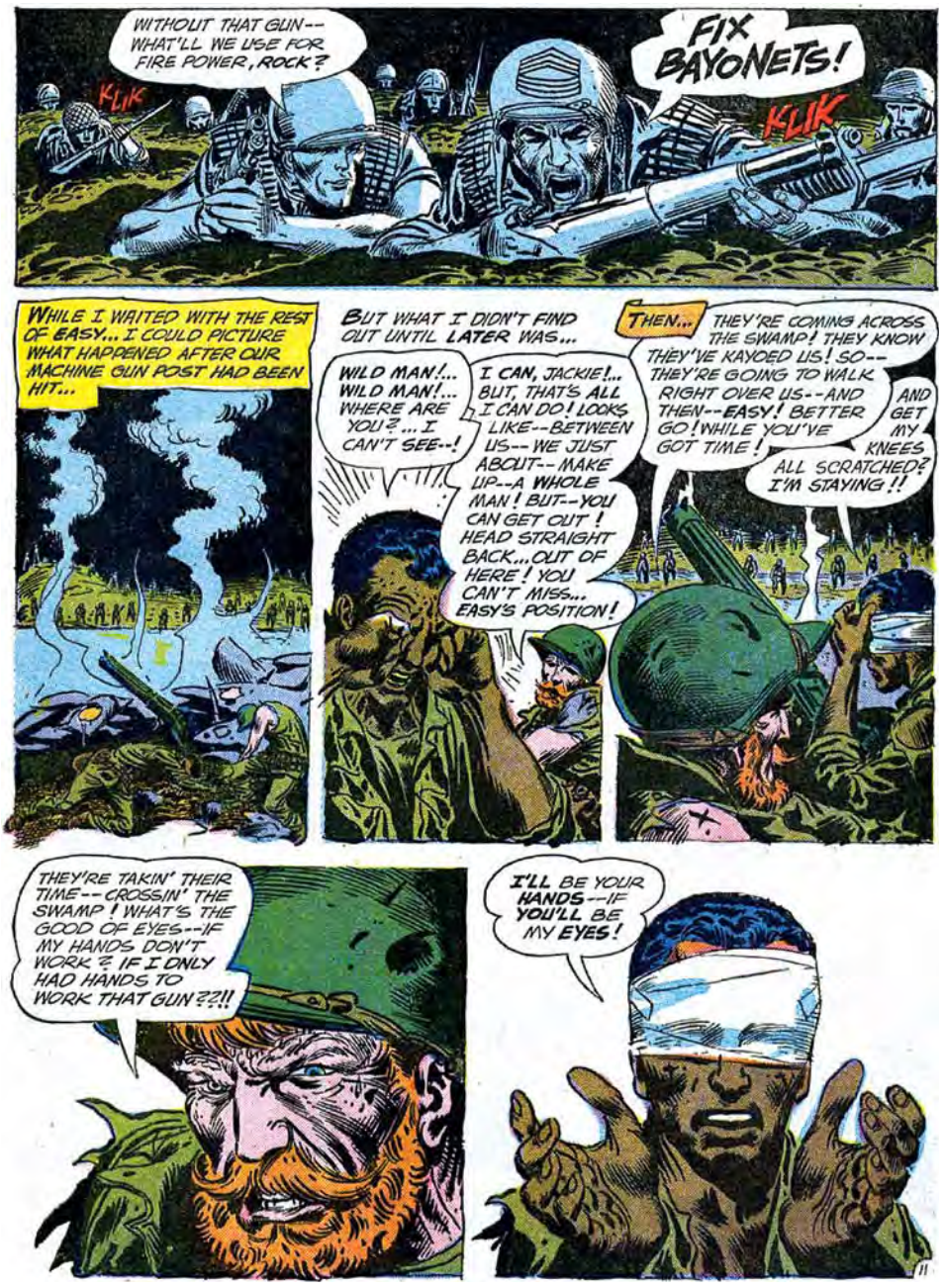
Newspapers feared television less for its content than for being a direct competitor. Recalling the October 1961 launch of the *Flintstones* comic strip, animator and cartoonist Gene Hazelton noted that "editors were hesitant to run a *Flintstones* comic strip. They [the characters] were from television; TV was hurting newspapers and they were worried about competition." Despite those qualms, Hazelton continued, "the strip really took off" and was even "voted one of the top five comic strips in the country" at one point (Province, 87).

The line between entertainment and politics had begun to blur during the 1960 Presidential campaign. The image of the President of the United States as a grandfatherly figure had been replaced by the young husband next door, complete with a pretty wife and adorable daughter. The youth of John, Jacqueline, and Caroline Kennedy made the First Family accessible to the American public in a way that hadn't existed before. Three-year-old Caroline was a weapon that no one could withstand, whether a reporter in the White House press corps or Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.



In 1961, Walt Kelly's famed Pogo *comic strip was syndicated to around 600 newspapers.*
Pogo TM and © Okefenokee Glee & Perloo Inc.

A testament to the public's fascination with the toddler can be found in the fact that Charlton Comics actually published a *Caroline Kennedy* comic book in 1961. Moreover, the respectful barrier that had traditionally (if not exclusively) existed in the portrayal of sitting American presidents in children's comic books had begun to break down. As recently as 1960, President Eisenhower had appeared in episodes of Charlton's Captain Atom series and DC's *Superman* #134 with his features judiciously shadowed or obscured. It was startling, then, to see President



Our Army At War *#113's understated message of racial harmony was reinforced by a public service page in the same issue.*
Sgt. Rock TM and © DC Comics.

service pages appearing in DC's comic books. The installment appearing in December 1961-dated issues ("People Are People") flatly dismissed prejudice, declaring that "no one race is superior to another."

The January 19 and February 2 issues of *Treasure Chest of Fun and Fact* (the bi-weekly comic book distributed to Catholic parochial schools) advocated racial harmony. The two-part "Saint For Racial Integration" (written by Sister Mary Amatora, O.S.F.) recounted the story of Benedict the Moor, a black holy man of the 16th Century whose healing power had earned him sainthood. The final caption noted, "Since 1954, the Third Order of Franciscans in the United States has been working to obtain Christlike relations among the races under the patronage of St. Benedict the Moor" and urged its young readers to promote "interracial charity."

Since the 1950s, Harvey Comics' *Little Audrey* comic book had quietly featured a black boy named Tiny among the humor series' cast, even featuring him in regular stories of his own. In the context of the stories, his skin color was irrelevant. It was a vision of the world as it ought to be rather than as it was.

Curiously, a Sgt. Rock Rock war story in DC's *Our Army At War* #113 (December 1961) took the same approach. Cut off from the rest of Easy Company, soldier Jackie Johnson had been blinded while the hands of his companion Wildman were burned. Faced with oncoming German soldiers, the two men worked together, Wildman directing Jackie's gunfire until they were safe. The remarkable detail of the 13-page tale (by writer-editor Bob Kanigher and artist Joe Kubert) was this: Wildman was white and Jackie was black. It was a remarkably understated example of racial harmony (one that also ignored the fact that the Army was segregated during World War Two) but also something that wouldn't be repeated in the series anytime soon. Jackie eventually returned as a series regular in 1965, subsequently appearing in a few more pointed pieces on racism.

The military comics from every comics publisher were still principally focused on World War Two though other conflicts showed up frequently. By contrast, the military-based newspaper strips were nestled deep in the present-day Cold War culture. *Terry and the Pirates* devoted its final 1961 continuity to a sequence involving a Russian ballerina that was likely inspired by ballet star Rudolf Nureyev's earlier defection. The recent Sino-Soviet split that saw Russia at odds with the communist government of Red China figured into a *Steve Canyon* sequence. And in *Buz Sawyer*, following an adventure in which the Naval hero fought Red Chinese agents in Hong Kong, took the action directly to South Vietnam. In the midst of a small besieged village,

Birth of a Universe

At a glance, ***Fantastic Four* #1** (dated November 1961 and on sale in August) seemed to feature the latest of Marvel Comics' monster stories, what with a giant green creature rising out of the earth while a lumpy orange creature called the Thing barreled toward him from the corner. But there were more players on the cover than monsters. An "Invisible Girl" was held aloft by the green monster while a stretching man called Mister Fantastic wiggled free of ropes. And flying into the fray was the flaming Human Torch, sporting the same name as the hero who'd been one of the company's stars in the 1940s.

An opening eight-page sequence introduced each of the principals, allowing them moments to demonstrate their respective abilities in colorful fashion before a five-page flashback explained how they came to be. Hoping to send an experimental rocket into outer space, gray-templed scientist Reed Richards had already persuaded his girlfriend Susan Storm and her teenage brother Johnny to join him on the maiden voyage. Only burly Ben Grimm—whom Reed wanted to pilot the craft—was balking. Insisting that they didn't "want the Commies to beat us to it," Sue called Ben a coward and goaded him into taking the job.

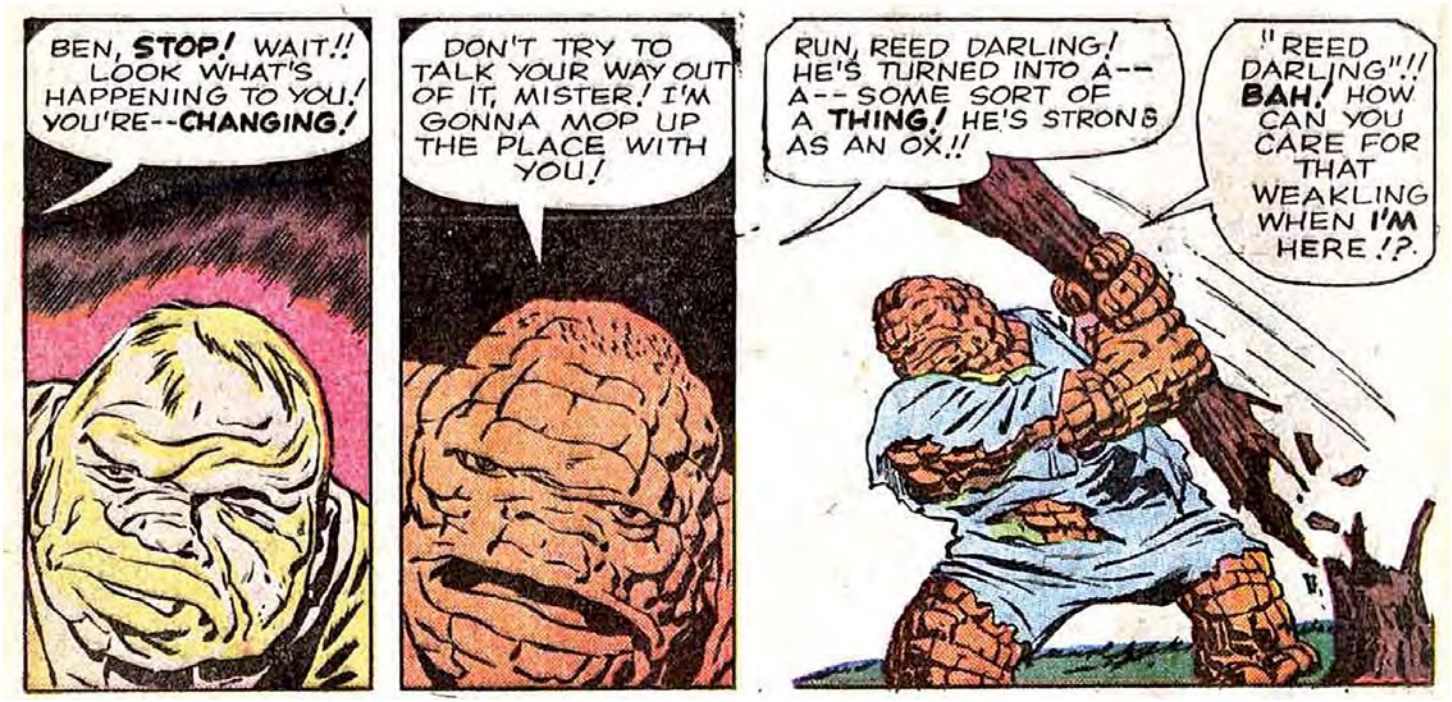
As the pilot feared, the rocket was hammered with cosmic rays as they left Earth's atmosphere and the quartet narrowly survived a crash landing. In short order, the effects of the cosmic rays were clear. Sue turned invisible, Reed gained elastic powers, and Johnny turned to flame with no harm to himself. Their powers had an on/off switch but Ben's did not. Transformed into a freakish orange rock-creature, Grimm—the only person who'd questioned the mission—was dealt the harshest blow. He was permanently trapped in the form of a monster.

Making a pact to use their new abilities for the good of humanity, each of the group placed his or her hand atop the others' and cemented the formation of the Fantastic Four. In the dozen pages that remained of the story, the novice team defeated the Mole Man, leader of a group of monsters from deep inside the planet (and who'd have been right at home in *Journey Into Mystery* or *Tales To Astonish*).

For the book's creative team of **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**, the year had been discouraging up to that point. Each had dreamed of escaping the comic book ghetto for the lucrative world of newspaper comic strips and those dreams were independently dashed in 1961. Kirby's *Sky Masters* daily strip—launched in 1958—was cancelled with the February 25 episode, ending a feature that had previously embroiled the artist in a bitter legal battle with DC Comics editor Jack Schiff. Lee's own *Willie Lumpkin* (drawn by Dan DeCarlo) concluded its own 18-month newspaper run on May 6.

In later years, Lee would often talk of the epiphany he had at this point. Lamenting his lack of success in breaking away from comic books, the writer-editor's wife suggested that he was looking at the problem from the wrong angle:

Jack Kirby's iconic cover layout for Fantastic Four *#1 has been recreated by dozens of artists since 1961.*



Fantastic Four TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

> "Joan was commenting about the fact that after 20 years of producing comics I was still writing television material, advertising copy and newspaper features in my spare time. She wondered why I didn't put as much effort and creativity into the comics as I seemed to be putting into my other freelance endeavors. The fact is, I had always thought of my comic-book work as a temporary job—even after all those years—and her little dissertation made me suddenly realize that it was time to start concentrating on what I was doing—to carve a real career for myself in the nowhere world of comic books." (Lee 16)

Lee's course of self-improvement did not take place overnight but Marvel publisher (and Lee's cousin by marriage) **Martin Goodman** serendipitously provided him with the vehicle where it could take place. Always on the lookout for a new trend that his company could capitalize on, Goodman had paid attention when an industry insider at a golf game confided that DC's *Justice League of America* title was proving to be a big success. The fateful golf player was sometimes recalled as DC executives Irwin Donenfeld or Jack Liebowitz but filmmaker-historian Michael Uslan later asserted (via an account from DC executive Sol Harrison) that the person in question was actually part of the Independent News distribution group.

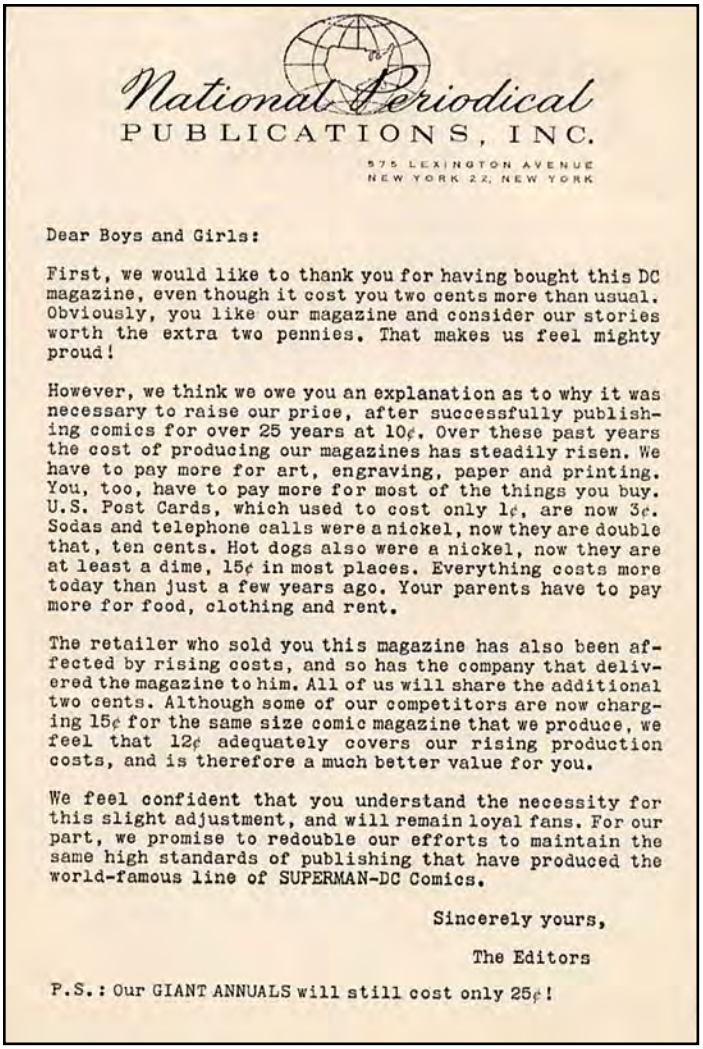
> "As the distributor of DC comics, the man certainly knew all the sales figures and was in the best position to tell this tidbit to Goodman. Now, why would Goodman be playing golf with the head of Independent News? I.N. was distributing 'Marvel' then, as well as DC, under a 'take it or leave it' arrangement that severely limited the number of comics Goodman could publish monthly. Of course, Goodman would want to be playing golf with this fellow and be in his good graces. It would absolutely be in the best interests of his business. In addition, I understand that I.N. was well-known for its golf outings back then." (Uslan 42-43)

Returning to his office, Goodman ordered Stan Lee to create their own version of *Justice League of America*. Lee, of course, grasped the problem that his publisher did not: the JLA was composed of characters that DC already published in individual series. But Marvel was currently publishing no superheroes and their 1954-1955 revival of 1940s stars Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner had been a bust. Consequently, Lee decided to fake it: On the cover of *FF* #1, the copy screamed the names of the Thing, Mr. Fantastic, Human Torch, and Invisible Girl and declared they were "together for the first time in one mighty magazine." If readers inferred from this that the quartet had previously appeared elsewhere, so much the better.

Working from Lee's two-page plot, Jack Kirby broke down the story into a 25-page adventure. The origin sequence—including the vivid page where the would-be astronauts were peppered with cosmic rays—was, in some respects, a larger-than-life version of Kirby's 1956 co-creation for DC's *Showcase* #6: the Challengers of the Unknown. Like the FF, the soon-to-be Challs had also survived a crash (albeit of a plane) and united as a group of specialized adventurers.

The Challs were eventually followed at DC by other specialty quartets like the Suicide Squad, the Sea Devils, and Rip Hunter's group of time-travelers. Each of them tweaked the formula for added reader identification by including a female member among the four, with the latter two teams also adding a teenage brother for kid appeal. Whether or not they were aware of these later groups, Lee and Kirby adhered to the formula with their own Susan and Johnny Storm.

Likewise, perhaps unknowingly, the duo followed the lead of DC editor Julius Schwartz in taking the name and concept of a 1940s character and recreating him with a new history. The Human Torch had originally been an android



National Periodical
PUBLICATIONS, INC.
575 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK 22, NEW YORK

Dear Boys and Girls:

First, we would like to thank you for having bought this DC magazine, even though it cost you two cents more than usual. Obviously, you like our magazine and consider our stories worth the extra two pennies. That makes us feel mighty proud!

However, we think we owe you an explanation as to why it was necessary to raise our price, after successfully publishing comics for over 25 years at 10¢. Over these past years the cost of producing our magazines has steadily risen. We have to pay more for art, engraving, paper and printing. You, too, have to pay more for most of the things you buy. U.S. Post Cards, which used to cost only 1¢, are now 3¢. Sodas and telephone calls were a nickel, now they are double that, ten cents. Hot dogs also were a nickel, now they are at least a dime, 15¢ in most places. Everything costs more today than just a few years ago. Your parents have to pay more for food, clothing and rent.

The retailer who sold you this magazine has also been affected by rising costs, and so has the company that delivered the magazine to him. All of us will share the additional two cents. Although some of our competitors are now charging 15¢ for the same size comic magazine that we produce, we feel that 12¢ adequately covers our rising production costs, and is therefore a much better value for you.

We feel confident that you understand the necessity for this slight adjustment, and will remain loyal fans. For our part, we promise to redouble our efforts to maintain the same high standards of publishing that have produced the world-famous line of SUPERMAN-DC Comics.

Sincerely yours,

The Editors

P.S.: Our GIANT ANNUALS will still cost only 25¢!

When DC was finally forced to raise prices, it was obligated to run an unprecedented letter of explanation to readers.

price-points in select locations during 1961 with grim results. "In some of the house ads for DC books," Gafford continued, "the price box was blank (an indication that perhaps there was some debate as to which month to start the price hike)" (Gafford).

Effective with their December-dated issues (mostly on sale in October), DC, Archie, and ACG finally raised their prices... but only to 12-cents. Harvey and Marvel followed suit with their January 1962 issues, Prize with its February comics, and finally Charlton with its April editions. Hallden, whose lone ongoing title was *Dennis the Menace*, placed a large "Still 10 Cents" banner over the Thanksgiving image on issue #55 (dated January 1962). With issue #56 (March 1962), the series was 12-cents like all the rest, a state of affairs explained in the interior "Memo from [publisher] Harry Slater."

"DC's distributor Independent News (part owned by DC owner Jack Liebowitz) carried the clout to get most of the industry to conform," Carl Gafford wrote. He further speculated on the precise timing of the price hike:

> "The companies had to file Annual Statements of Ownership with the Post Office to continue their second-class postage privileges for subscriptions with the deadline for those statements being *Sept. 30th*, and those statements also showed the sales for the issues *closest* to the filing date. Anticipating a sudden drop-off in sales after the price increase, IND set the price change for the first month *after* the deadline so as not to broadcast to advertisers the huge drop-off in sales." (Gafford)

DC, as noted, had included their own letter of explanation to readers and took the opportunity to take an oblique swipe at Dell: "Although some of our competitors are now charging 15¢ for the same size comic magazine that we produce, we feel that 12¢ adequately covers our rising production costs, and is therefore a better value for you."

Carl Gafford observed that "it's impossible nowadays...to describe how devastating that two-penny increase was for readers. It hit home fast: my 50¢ allowance that could buy five 10¢ comics could now only buy four 12¢ comics, so my purchasing power was cut by 20%!" Dell's 15-cent price was even worse, he continued, "and this was on comics that appealed to a younger audience (Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Warner Bros. cartoons) who were the *least* able to afford such an increase!" (Gafford).

The decision to go to 15-cents was almost certainly a factor in another development that would end Dell's dominance as a comics publisher just as surely as its price tag. Western Publishing was increasingly at odds with Dell over such profit matters and the possibility of severing all ties was not out of the question. Such a move would be devastating on two fronts: Western held the comics licenses to every major cartoon property they packaged for Dell. And they printed them in high quality fashion on their presses at the Whitman plant in Poughkeepsie, New York. In order to survive, Dell would have to create new properties, hire creators to produce them (a responsibility formerly held by Western), and find a new printer.

Bracing for the worst, Dell began developing a strategy for surviving the possible split. Licensed comics later unofficially characterized as "New Dell" began to surface as early as issues dated September 1961, mingling on comics racks with the Western-produced Dells for another year.

Operating with a smaller budget than they had with Western, the "New Dell" comics lacked the sharp printing they'd had with Whitman. Forced to go with a less powerful distributor, they were also harder to find. And where the Western TV and film adaptations had sported color photos, Dell's version of the same were mostly hand-colored black and white shots.

They also provided a welcome venue for comics creators who weren't getting work from other publishers. Ken Fitch, whose credits dated back to DC's *New Fun* #1 in 1935, wrote scripts for the licensed *Mike Shayne, Private Eye* #1 (November-January 1961/1962) as well as adaptations of movies like *Thief of Baghdad* (*Four Color* #1229), *Tammy Tell Me True* (*FC* #1233), and *Lad: A Dog* (*FC* #1303). Other soon-to-be Dell mainstays included Edd Ashe (initially on *Mike Shayne*), Luis Dominguez (beginning with *Four Color* #1255's *World of Aladdin* movie adaptation), Jack Lehti (*FC* #1234's *Phantom Planet*) Gerald McCann (*Four Color* #1227's *Morgan the Pirate*), and Tony Tallarico (starting with *FC* #1231's *Danger Man*, based on the United Kingdom TV series). Sam Glanzman, a mainstay of Charlton's war

comics, was hired to draw Dell's new *Combat* title.

For the most part, the strongest creators in the old Dell's line-up—men like Carl Barks, Gaylord DuBois, Carl Fallberg, Russ Manning, Paul Murry, and Dan Spiegle—were lost since they actually worked for Western. The prolific Paul S. Newman managed to work for both, writing for some of Dell's new series while continuing to script others like *Turok, Son of Stone* for Western.

Most happily for Dell was the decision of John Stanley—renowned for his writing on *Little Lulu* and *Nancy and Sluggo*—to remain with them. He immediately began developing new series in the hope that some of them would click with the post-Western audience. One of his first was *Linda Lark, Student Nurse* #1 (October-December 1961), a melodrama that marked a departure from his usual humor work. Illustrated by John Tartaglione, the series sported painted covers that suggested a romance novel more than a comic book.

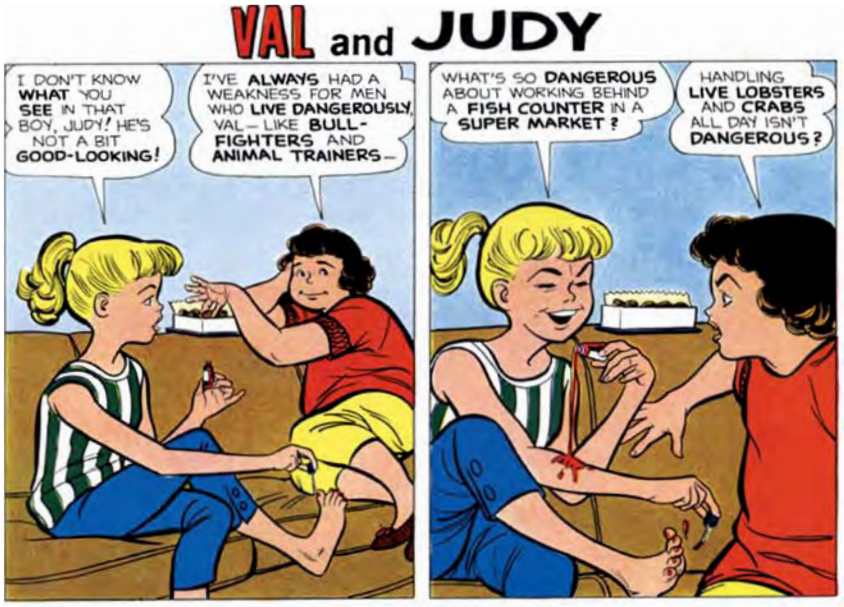
Around the Block With Dunc and Loo (illustrated by Bill Williams) and *Thirteen Going On Eighteen* (drawn by Tony Tallarico and later Stanley himself) represented both genders of the teen humor genre with handsome (Dunc) or pretty (Val) kids paired up with more normal pals (sloppy Loo and chubby Judy). Each series also opened itself up to kid humor with stories in each issue focusing (in *Dunc and Loo*) on Li'l Petey or (in *Thirteen*) the younger Judy (as Judy Junior, who terrorized boy-next-door Jimmy Fuzzi). Like most of Stanley's work, each series earned considerable critical accolades. Commercially, however, they faced the joint hurdles of being unknown quantities in comic books priced higher than the market norm.

None of Stanley's later series for Dell inspired as much devotion as *Thirteen*. Surviving through 1967, the book was briefly revived for three reprint issues in 1969 and 1970. Discussing the feature's appeal in a 2009 collection of *Thirteen*'s first nine issues, cartoonist Seth declared that "unlike every other comic book trying to cash in on the *Archie* craze, Stanley seems to have made a point of not copying their formula." He noted that Val and Judy had a genuine friendship rather than a Betty and Veronica-style rivalry. Nor was there the large cast of supporting players like those in Archie's world. "Typically," Seth continued, "Stanley has set up a very small world where he can play to his great strengths as a writer: setting up stock situations and wringing variations out of them" (Seth 11).

Despite the ongoing feud, Dell's Western-packaged titles were still a going concern in 1961. **Carl Barks** continued to write and draw the lead Donald Duck story in every issue of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* as well as the bulk of the material in *Uncle Scrooge*. Still in the midst of a dry spell (by his standards), the "good duck artist" looked to the past for inspiration in a few instances, rewriting a Donald Duck story from 1943's *Four Color* #29 for *Uncle Scrooge* #34's "Chugwagon Derby" (June 1961) and reworking a 15-year-old rejected Christmas story for a non-seasonal tale in *WDC&S* #248 (May 1961).

Barks scholar Geoffrey Blum also observed that the growing fandom surrounding the artist was having an effect:

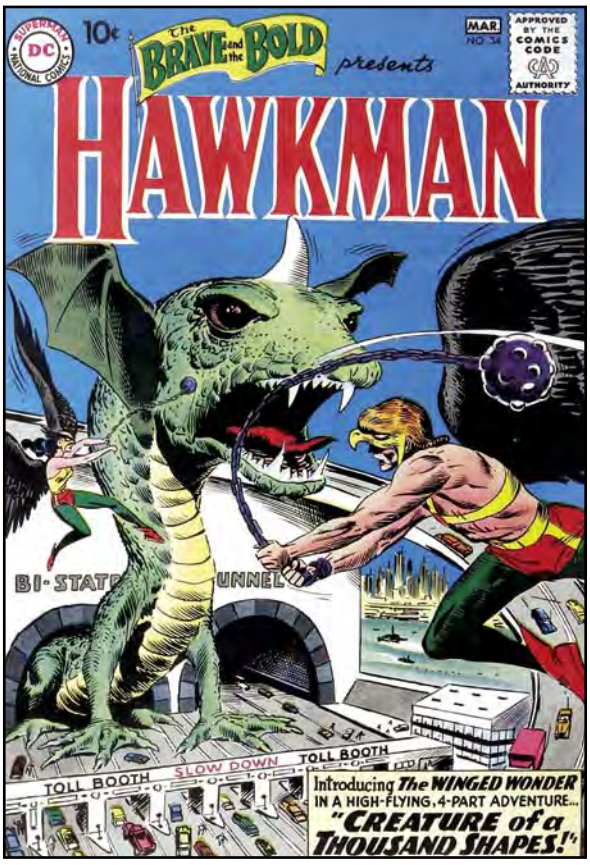
> "A sense of community began to evolve from this flurry of correspondence. Barks found that he was interested in the nosings and burrowings of his fans and helped consolidate them into a network. It was not just that their attention flattered him; the possibilities for research intrigued him. Previously he had worked in a vacuum, never stopping to analyze the cartooning process, never making an effort to complete a file of his own publications. Suddenly both matters seemed important. He began making checklists of stories and putting one



Original artist Tony Tallarico drew the first two issues of Thirteen *before series creator John Stanley succeeded him.*

Heroes High and Low

Julius Schwartz, DC's other hit-making editor, entered 1961 with the expectation that his ongoing modernizations of 1940s superheroes would continue to soar. His next subject would be **Hawkman**, a hero with wings strapped to his back who'd starred in 104 issues of *Flash Comics* from 1940 to 1948, appearing on the cover of every other issue (alternating with the Flash). Surviving as a member of the Justice Society in *All Star Comics* for a few more years, the character had been gone for a decade when Schwartz decided to revive him.



The New York/New Jersey Lincoln Tunnel inspired Joe Kubert's backdrop on the first Hawkman cover.
Hawkman TM and © DC Comics.

The original Hawkman had origins rooted in the distant past, established in his first story as having been the reincarnation of an Egyptian prince. With memories of his earlier life revived, antiquities collector Carter Hall had adopted weapons of the past like crossbows and quarterstaffs to use in his fight against 20th Century evil as Hawkman. He was joined by Shiera Sanders, herself the reincarnation of the prince's lover and soon to become his crime fighting partner Hawkgirl.

For his revival, Schwartz dismissed the musty reincarnation aspect and, as he'd done with Green Lantern, placed the character squarely in the space age. Tapping Hawkman creator **Gardner Fox** to write the modern version, he joined him in working out the details.

The new heroes would be Katar Hol and Shayera, police officers from the distant planet Thanagar whose hawk-themed outfits (included anti-gravity belts) were law enforcement uniforms. Arriving on Earth in a spacecraft that would subsequently orbit the planet, the duo was in pursuit of a shape-changing fugitive named Byth. Through the efforts of their newfound human confidant (Police Commissioner George Emmett), the duo established cover identities as Carter and Shiera Hall, curators of the Midway City Museum (giving them access to ancient weapons they could use in tandem with their advanced scientific devices). With their mission completed, Hawkman and Hawkgirl received permission to remain on Earth and study its own criminology methods.

The couple was quietly trailblazing in one respect. In the various superhero features that Gardner Fox had written during the 1940s, he'd bypassed the secret identity game typified by the Clark Kent-Lois Lane-Superman triangle. In Fox's strips, the girlfriends knew all about their heroes' secret lives, even if they weren't full partners as Hawkgirl was. It seemed entirely natural, then, that the new Hawkman and Hawkgirl should be husband and wife when the new series opened. They were, in an unheralded milestone, the first married superheroes in comic book history.

Visually, Katar Hol had black hair (as opposed to Carter Hall's blond hair) and his headgear once again resembled the head of a hawk, complete with beak. (In the final days of the original series, that look had been replaced with a simple cowl.) Meanwhile, Hawkgirl (formerly a brunette) was given red hair, a tribute to the editor's wife Jean.

When Schwartz revived the Flash in 1956, he'd assigned the art to Carmine Infantino, the man who'd last illustrated his solo series. He did the same with Hawkman, selecting the feature's final illustrator **Joe Kubert** for the revival. In the intervening years, Kubert had blossomed into an extraordinary artist with a lush, impressionistic style that would eventually win him acclaim among fans. Much of Kubert's work at DC since the mid-1950s had been on Robert Kanigher's various combat series, however, and he would soon find himself typecast as a "war artist" in the eyes of some readers.

The unsuspecting Schwartz prepared a three-issue tryout for Hawkman that ran in *The Brave and the Bold* #34-36 (February-March to June-July 1961) with new villains Matter Master and Shadow-Thief introduced in the latter two editions. Historically, it would be the first Schwartz series to list writer and artist credits on the first page of every story, something carried over to the Atom feature than followed later in the year. Emboldened by the burgeoning comic book fandom movement, the editor also took the unprecedented step of sending photocopies of *B&B* #34's origin story to select fans (Jerry Bails, Ronnie Graham, Ron

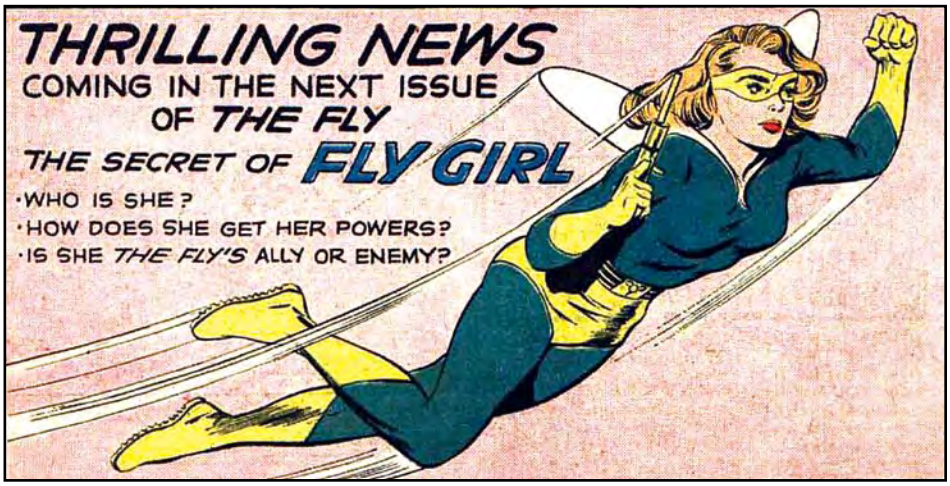
Hawkman and Hawkgirl were comics' first married superheroes.
Hawkman TM and © DC Comics.

The Julius Schwartz-edited revivals of Hawkman and the Atom (each written by Gardner Fox) are a study in contrasts (seen here in pages from The Brave and the Bold *#34 and* Showcase *#36, respectively). As illustrated by Joe Kubert, the former was impressionistic and shadowy with a darker look for superheroes that was ahead of its time. Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson's Atom, with its upscale polish, was very much of its time and exemplified the DC era's traditional house style. Original art scans courtesy Heritage Auctions.*

Much like the Fly, the Jaguar engaged in adventures that evoked the style of DC's Superman stories. The Jaguar TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

millions of fireflies" and melting the villain—carefully described as "non-human"—into a puddle.

Both books cross-promoted each other with one-page teaser ads, even sharing a villain when Cat Girl (first seen in *Fly* #9) returned in *Jaguar* #4. Hoping that the character would be exposed to the widest possible audience, the company even arranged for Jaguar short stories to appear in *Laugh Comics* #127 and *Pep Comics* #150 (both October 1961), titles that otherwise exclusively starred Archie and his satellite characters. Six-page superhero solo stories, variously starring the Jaguar, Fly, or Fly-Girl, became a staple in the two humor comics from that point forward.



The Archie Adventure imprint was aggressively promoted through specialty house ads.
Fly-Girl TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

Archie had not yet given up on a non-superhero title for its Archie Adventure Series and turned to the still vigorous monster craze for inspiration. Arriving on newsstands more than a month before Halloween, *Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats* #1 (November 1961) was a send-up of horror icons written by George Gladir and drawn by Orlando Busino. Hosted by Igor and his pet bat Frederick, the book featured stories like that of a werewolf who had his hair removed only to be revealed as a runt who got beaten up on the beach.

The entire Archie humor line embraced monsters as fall rolled in, with staples like Frankenstein and Dracula popping up in multiple cover gags almost as often as beings from outer space. Even the Creature From the Black Lagoon made two appearances (*Jughead* #79 and *Laugh* #130). Effec-

ket that other publishers were eyeing. In fact, it was very much in the mold of the other light supernatural/suspense/science fiction titles that writer-editor **Richard Hughes** was producing and proved short-lived, ending with issue #7. In the letter column of *Midnight Mystery* #6, reader Jerry Smith remarked, "The type of stories I like are those where, by a twist of fate, people turn into monsters, such as werewolves, Draculas, and Frankensteins. Do you think you might print such stories as these?"

Midnight Mystery *wasn't the horror comic book that its title suggested and it lasted a scant ten months.*
Midnight Mystery TM and © respective copyright holder.

It was the sort of question that Hughes addressed periodically in his freewheeling letter columns and his answer, as always, was an emphatic no. There was a bit of shame in that, rooted in the fact that he'd created the first ongoing horror comic book—*Adventures Into the Unknown*—in 1948 and inspired scores of far grislier imitators from other publishers. Having inadvertently set into motion the circumstances that led to comic books coming under attack in the 1950s, Hughes' responses—like this one from *Forbidden Worlds* #98 (September 1961)—were understandable:

> "As editors, the thing we're most interested in is story. We admire a good and carefully-constructed plot, particularly if it's fresh and original. How was this ever possible in the days of senseless horror? The criterion of quality in a story at that time was whether it looked awful enough. Werewolves, vampires, and zombies had certain time-honored attributes which telegraphed in advance exactly what each story was going to be about. As to the harm done, the least was an offense against good taste. [...] Now we can't lean on the crutch of silly horror—we've got to come up with plots that are challenging, tense, and actionful in themselves. So—nuts to the 'good old days!'"

Hughes preferred lighter fare, as in the two sequels that appeared in February and March-dated issues. A year earlier, Hughes (with artist Ogden Whitney) had told the story of Eugene "Knuckles" Markham, a teen gang leader who was accidentally rocketed into outer space, fell in love on the alien world of Karonia, and turned over a new leaf when he came home (*Adventures Into the Unknown* #114). The "Delinquent In Outer Space" returned in *Adventures* #122 when he discovered that no less than Nikita Khrushchev was planning to nuke Karonia in a show of Soviet superiority. Leaping into action, Markham managed to save the planet and win his lost Karonian love in the bargain.

More significant was the story in *Forbidden Worlds* #94 (also by Hughes and Whitney), featuring the return of a "little fat nothing" named Herbie Popnecker (first seen in #73 in 1958). With a bowl-shaped haircut, thick glasses, a round torso, and a ubiquitous lollipop in his mouth, Herbie was as unlikely a leading man as could be imagined. That was part of the joke. Through means never entirely explained but partly attributed to magical lollipops, Herbie was the world's most infallible superhero, adept at thwarting any threat thrown in his path even as his oblivious father dismissed him as a pathetic failure. The kid was no more capable of being defeated than he was of cracking a smile.

When Richard Hughes (a.k.a. Shane O'Shea) did use horror icons, he did so strictly for laughs.
Herbie Popnecker TM and © Roger Broughton.

Harvey Comics continued its show of faith in the strong-performing kids humor characters that had become the company's signature features. The summer saw the first spin-off series of three of its characters, each of them in the 64-page giant format priced at 25-cents: *Richie Rich Millions* #1, *Spooky Spooktown* #1, and *Little Dot's Uncles and Aunts* #1, the last of which followed tryouts in *Harvey Hits*. Published in the midst

Gains and Losses

Color comic book publishers went into 1962 braced for falling sales. The price hike from 10¢ to 12¢ (with Dell issues still at 15¢) was a virtual guarantee that kids were going to be buying fewer comics. Before the year was over, industry leader Dell fractured, splitting into two less dominant publishers. One researcher speculated that DC Comics' cumulative 1962 sales may have been $678,237 less than those in 1961 (Tolworthy). Gilberton, known for its literary comics, ceased publishing new material effective with *Classics Illustrated Junior* #576 ("The Princess Who Saw Everything") and *Classics Illustrated* #167 ("Faust").

A 1962 *New York Times* article by Peter Bart tossed out discouraging statistics, noting that the industry was selling an estimated 350,000,000 comic books versus 800,000,000 a decade earlier. "The comics industry, once a major advertising medium for reaching the teen-age and younger market, today has lost much of its revenue to rival media," Bart continued. "Even National Periodical, Superman's publisher, presently derives only about $176,000 a year from advertising compared with nearly $1,000,000 a decade or so ago" ("Superman Faces New Hurdles" 166).

The magazine industry in general was struggling, with the Curtis Publishing Company—whose periodicals included *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*—reporting losses in excess of $15,000,000 for the first nine months of 1962. The news that Congress had passed a bill increasing postage costs (to begin January 7, 1963) was also greeted with concern. "The bill was milder than one originally considered," Peter Bart wrote, "but it would still increase distribution costs by many millions of dollars" ("Publishing" 426).

For other comic book publishers, there's little doubt that tales of woe were also being told in the offices of Charlton, Harvey, Archie, ACG, Prize, and Hallden. In every office, that is, but Martin Goodman's. The publisher of "MC," the company restricted to publishing a handful of titles and tentatively grasping for a new corporate identity, came out of 1962 smiling. His sales were up.

The World's Greatest Comic Magazine

Much of the credit could be laid at the feet of writer-editor **Stan Lee** and penciler **Jack Kirby**, the dream team that had created ***Fantastic Four*** in 1961. Although inspired by DC's *Justice League of America*, the FF had departed from convention in then-radical ways with its characters clad in street clothes and not bothering with secret identities. Readers immediately began to write in to insist that the Fantastic Four be changed into something more familiar.

Effective with *Fantastic Four* #3 (featuring the comic book's first letter column), Lee and Kirby assented. The FF received matching blue costumes (with the monstrous Thing's outfit soon scaled back to shorts), an official headquarters atop a skyscraper (identified as the Baxter Building in issue #6), and an aerial Fantasticar (soon nicknamed "the flying bathtub"). Rejecting a previously-commissioned cover that spotlighted the issue's monster menace, Lee had Kirby draw a new cover that loudly touted the changes. On the same issue, a less-than-humble tagline—"The Greatest Comic Magazine in the World"—was added, revised to "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" on the cover of issue #4 and every issue thereafter. Lee's desire to please readers was not always the wisest narrative step but, at this early juncture, it helped forge the personal bond between the writer and his readers.

In 1990, historian Greg Theakston published rare original art and artifacts related to *FF* #3 that revealed that the team originally sported an overlapping "FF" on their shirts. Doodling alternate logos, Lee devised a three-dimensional "4" that became the team's official symbol. The team's costumes had initially included masks, a detail that was revised before the story was published. Since the quartet's identities were already public knowledge, the masks were unnecessary and, as Theakston noted, impractical:

> "It must have occurred to Stan that the Torch didn't need a mask, and that Ben couldn't hide under any mask, and the Invisible Girl needed a mask least of all. That left Reed, and if the other three didn't need masks, neither did he. Stan plays with the idea when he has the Thing tear off his new outfit halfway through the third issue. After all, he was far more interesting to look at than any uniform." (Theakston 32)

If the Fantastic Four wanted to star in the World's Greatest Comic Magazine, they needed to dress accordingly. Fantastic Four TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

The color scheme of the FF's outfits was chosen by Stan Goldberg. "I decided that I couldn't really put two or three colors on those costumes. It had to be one color. Since the Thing was orange and the Human Torch burst into flames, we had enough color there and didn't have to worry about the dull, blue color of the costumes" (Amash 21).

Adding superhero trappings was really only a modest concession. The suggestion of reader Bill Sarill (in *FF* #3's letter column) that "the Thing ought to revert to human form at will as his teammates do" was something else. Lee and Kirby not only rejected the idea but played up the situation's tragedy by including scenes like those in *FF* #2 and #4 where Ben Grimm regressed to his human persona and had only moments to tearfully rejoice before involuntarily becoming the Thing again. Elements like these and the friction between the four heroes were soon prompting responses like this one from Len Blake in *FF* #4:

Scenes like this one from Fantastic Four *#2 accentuated the inherent heartbreak at the core of the Thing.* Fantastic Four TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

ville were just pretending they didn't know Johnny's secret as a show of respect.

Although the feature introduced characters who'd later be folded into Fantastic Four itself like the villainous Wizard (*Strange Tales* #102) and Paste-Pot Pete (#104), the Human Torch series was clearly of secondary concern. Stan Lee only plotted the series while his brother Larry Lieber scripted it. And after penciling the first five stories, Jack Kirby handed the series off to his inker Dick Ayers, now assigned full art chores. (Ayers had also become Kirby's regular inker on *Fantastic Four* with issue #6.)

Since the Human Torch had been a headliner in the 1940s, there was an assumption that he would be again in the 1960s. Lee had not yet quite grasped the fact that it was the Thing—not the Torch—who was the breakout star of *Fantastic Four*. Building on the character's inherent tragedy, he and Kirby gave Ben Grimm a blind girl friend named Alicia (daughter of the evil Puppet Master) in *FF* #8. Unbothered by his rocky exterior, she saw the true man inside the Thing. The insecure Ben constantly feared that if Alicia *could* see him, she'd drop him in a heartbeat. Balancing the melodrama, a reflexive sense of humor was also endowed on the Thing, extending to his brotherly brawls with the Torch and the taunts he received from the unseen Yancy Street Gang.

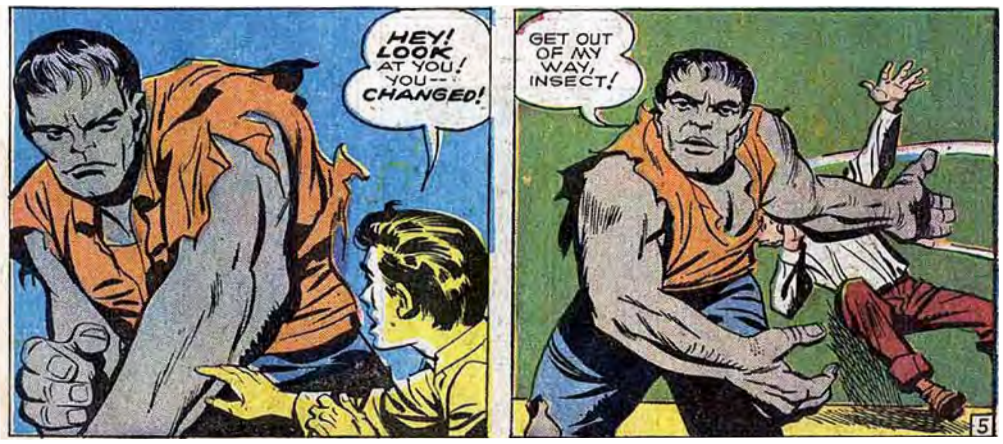
Doctor Banner and Mister Hulk

Fantastic Four was only part of a very fertile year for Lee and Kirby. Buoyed by early reader reaction to their new title, the duo conceived another series which spun off the monsters that had been driving sales. Effective with its 86th issue (March, 1962), *Teen-Age Romance* was dropped from the schedule and replaced with *the Incredible Hulk* #1 (May, 1962).

Just as the FF had first plunged into space to beat "the Commies" to the moon, the principals in *Hulk* #1 hoped to create a g-bomb ("g" as in gamma radiation) that would give the United States an edge in the arms race. The bomb's creator was mild-mannered bespectacled Bruce Banner, whose insistence on caution in testing quickly earned him the enmity of the blustering General "Thunderbolt" Ross. Coming in between the two of them was the requisite love interest Betty Ross, who was obviously sweet on the quiet scientist even if her father hadn't yet caught on.

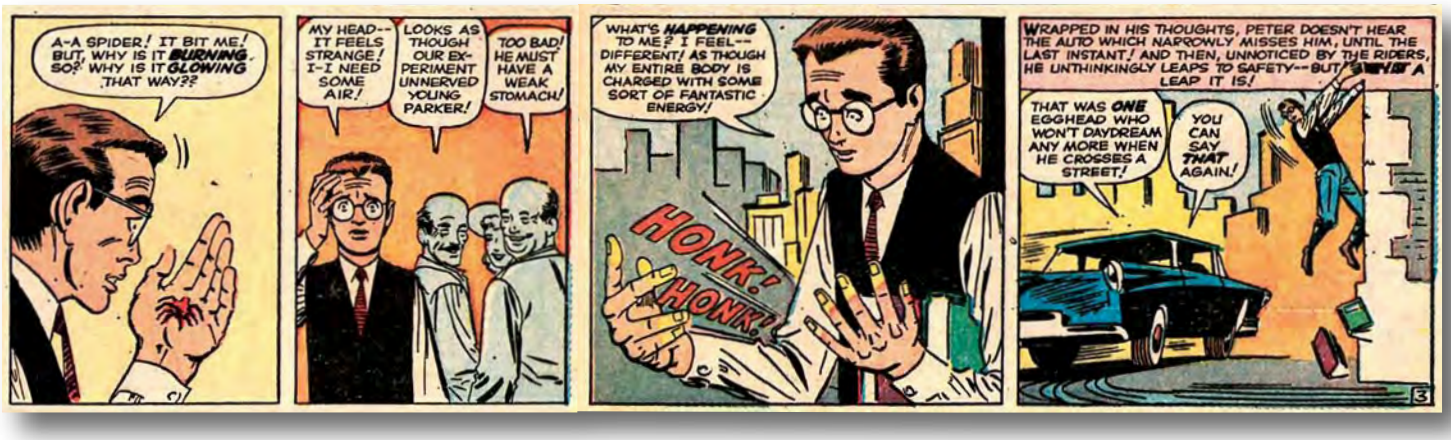
When a teenager named Rick Jones drove onto the desert test site on a dare, a hysterical Banner rushed out to shove him into a protective trench. Unfortunately, Banner's scheming assistant Igor opted not to delay the countdown and his boss—though miles away from ground zero—was bathed in radiation when the gamma bomb detonated. The two men were held in isolation, thus leaving Rick Jones to be the lone witness when the moon rose and Doctor Banner changed into a monstrous creature whom soldiers soon dubbed **the Hulk**.

Wracked with guilt, the teenager resolved to stay by the side of both Banner and the Hulk, making excuses when need be to ensure that no one learn their secret. Super-strong and prone to angry outbursts, the Hulk had no idea that he was Banner and regarded his alter ego as a weakling. It fell to Rick to guide the so-called monster as they came into contact with a succession of strange threats, molding the Hulk into something of a superhero while Thunderbolt Ross and the Army saw only a rampaging creature who left trails of destruction everywhere he went.



The Hulk was shadowed by the guilt-ridden Rick Jones who'd unwittingly initiated his transformation.

With his squared skull and grim expression on the cover and splash page, Kirby's Hulk was unmistakably derived from Boris Karloff's portrayal of the Frankenstein monster in the 1931 Universal Pictures movie. The Aurora Plastics Corporation, tapping into the present-day monster craze, had released a model kit based on Karloff's Frankenstein in 1961. The reception undoubtedly exceeded their expectations with demand reportedly compelling



Bitten by a radioactive spider, young Peter Parker accidentally discovered that he could stick to and climb walls. Spider-Man TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Days passed and the incident was forgotten. Returning home one night, Peter was greeted at the curb by a policeman with the horrifying news that his Uncle Ben had surprised a burglar in their home and was fatally shot. In a state of shock, the teenager pulled on his costume, tracked the assailant to a warehouse, and pummeled him into unconsciousness. And only then realized that he was holding the same man that he'd allowed to escape at the TV studio a week earlier.

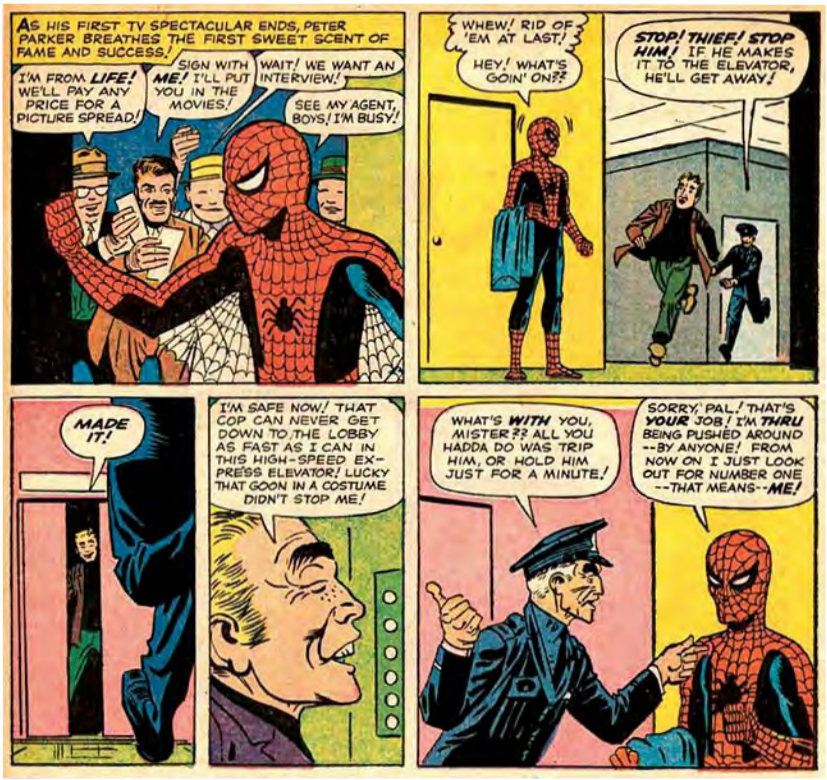
Leaving the killer webbed up for the police, Spider-Man staggered away in a daze, overwhelmed that his uncle had died because of his earlier apathy. "And a lean, silent figure fades into the gathering darkness," the final caption read, "aware at last that in this world, with great power there must also come—great responsibility."

Written by Stan Lee and illustrated by **Steve Ditko**, the 11-page story packed a punch and struck a chord with teenagers across the country. Years of honing their skills on short morality plays had culminated in one of the great moments in comic book history. The path leading up to its publication, Lee wrote, had been a complicated one:

> "For quite a while I'd been toying with the idea of doing a strip that would violate all the conventions—break all the rules. A strip that would actually feature a teenager as the star, instead of making him an (ugh!) adult hero's sidekick. A strip in which the main character would lose out as often as he'd win—in fact, more often. A strip in which nothing would progress according to formula—the situations, the cast of characters, and their relationship to each other would all be unusual and unexpected." (Lee 133)

Casting about for a name, the writer recalled a favorite pulp magazine hero of the 1930s—the Spider, Master of Men. Deciding to call his own hero Spider-Man, Lee immediately went to his favored superhero collaborator Jack Kirby and explained his idea:

"I told Jack that I wanted to try something different. I didn't want [Spider-Man] to be overly heroic-looking. I wanted him to be just an ordinary guy who happens to have a super power. He was to be not too handsome, not too glamorous, not too graceful, not too muscular—in other words, sort of the way I might be if I had a super power." (Lee 135)



Spider-Man's failure to take action against a fleeing thief changed the course of his life.
Spider-Man TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

In 1953, another Spiderman had been conceived by Joe Simon and his brother-in-law Jack Oleck as a possible series for Harvey Comics. As developed with artist C.C. Beck, the feature was renamed Silver Scarab and dealt with a boy named Tommy Troy who could be magically transformed into an adult hero. Harvey passed on the proposal as too derivative of Fawcett's Captain Marvel but Simon wasn't one to let a good idea die. In 1959, he decided to pitch the series to Archie Comics but changed its hero to the Fly. Reuniting with former partner Jack Kirby, Simon showed him the earlier Spiderman/Silver Scarab and asked

Heavy Metal

Curiously, Marvel's burst of new creations coincided with the first year in recent memory in which DC did not—with one notable exception—generate a clutch of their own prospective stars. Star-making editors **Julius Schwartz** and **Mort Weisinger** built on pre-established situations and characters within their own groups of titles, pushing them to greater heights. On the whole, though, there was a sense that DC might have run dry on new concepts. Tryout title *The Brave and the Bold* actually returned to older characters Cave Carson (*B&B* #40-41) and Hawkman (*B&B* #42-44) whose previous test runs had been encouraging...but not quite enough to earn them ongoing titles.

Robert Kanigher had just concluded a reprise of his own Suicide Squad in *B&B* #37-39 when DC's Executive Vice President approached the writer-editor about a new series for the company's other tryout title. In a 1982 interview, Kanigher recounted what would become an industry legend:

> "Late Friday, Irwin Donenfeld said that it wasn't my turn to do *Showcase*, but did I have an idea for one. I said: Metal Men. Robots with human characteristics, but still retaining their metallic properties. Irwin said: Do it. I regret that I'm not versed in science. I gave myself a crash course in Chemistry from a battered book that Julie Schwartz had on his desk. [*Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*.] The next morning I drove my daughter Jan to Julliard's School of Music, where she was taking an advance course in ballet for children. It was winter. I parked on a deserted street facing the Hudson River and warmed myself by writing in a spiral notebook with ruled pages. When Jan was finished I drove home with her. I continued writing. I finished the 25 pages the next day and my wife Bern stoically typed the script. On Monday I called Ross Andru in to do the breakdowns." (Snyder 77)

Rather than have Andru fully pencil the pages, Kanigher had him sketch out rough layouts for each page on typing paper and noted any revisions as the artist turned them in. By the end of that Monday, the layouts for the entire story had been approved and Andru went home to begin penciling them. "I saved the length of time it would have taken Ross to do an entire book of pencils, come back, show them to me, have me edit them, send them to the letterer, and back to Mike [Esposito] to do the inking, and back to me," Kanigher explained. The entire process took ten days (Snyder 78).

As related in *Showcase* #37 (March-April 1962), the **Metal Men** began with Will "Doc" Magnus, "the man who makes science-fiction ideas practical." It was Magnus who the U.S. government came to when they were seeking a means of defeating a giant radioactive flying manta that was terrorizing the east coast. The scientist had already created a life-sized robot woman made of platinum (dubbed "Tina") who was animated with human characteristics by a microscopic device later referred to as a responsometer. With the government's encouragement and funded by the millions of dollars his patents had earned him, Doc created five male siblings for Tina: Gold, Iron, Lead, Mercury, and Tin.

Each of them had distinct personalities. Kanigher knew that he wanted a female in the group and portrayed Tina as hopelessly infatuated with her creator, much to Doc's exasperation. Kanigher later discussed the process of creating the other Metal Men:

> "Gold was the most difficult. From the viewpoint of the character, he's a noble metal. How can you handle nobility without making him Mister Clean? Lead was easy. I made him like William Bendix, the actor, except not as intelligent as Bendix. [...] Iron was the strong man of metals. Mercury the most ill-tempered. Tin, the lowliest, who knew it, hence his inferiority complex and stammer." (Snyder 77)

A detail of this Metal Men image appeared in the September 23, 1962 New York Times *alongside a drawing of standard-bearer Superman.* Metal Men TM and © DC Comics.

The Metal Men were extraordinarily pliable, capable of stretching and reshaping themselves if not melding with each other to blend their strength. As drawn by Andru and Esposito, the sextet had a cartoony, expressive look that fit perfectly with Kanigher's characterization. The team had a charm and unique perspective that set it apart from every other comic book on the market. There was even an element of tragic heroism in the

Gold Key quickly abandoned a series of comics that used photos and word balloons to adapt movies and TV shows. Three Stooges TM and © Norman Maurer Productions, Inc.

experimented with in its 1961 *Golden Picture Story Book* series. Seeking to bring the comics in line with its storybooks and coloring books, they asked that the borders be removed from every story panel and the traditionally rounded word balloons be replaced with rectangular ones. Carl Barks drew exactly one tale in the new format (*Uncle Scrooge* #40) but disliked it so intently that he was allowed to return to the old style even as the rest of line moved on. Coinciding with this change, Western also asked its artists to begin drawing their original artwork at twice the size of a printed page rather than 2 ½ times larger as they'd done to that point. In a 1962 letter to Malcolm Willits, Barks groused about the reduced drawing size:

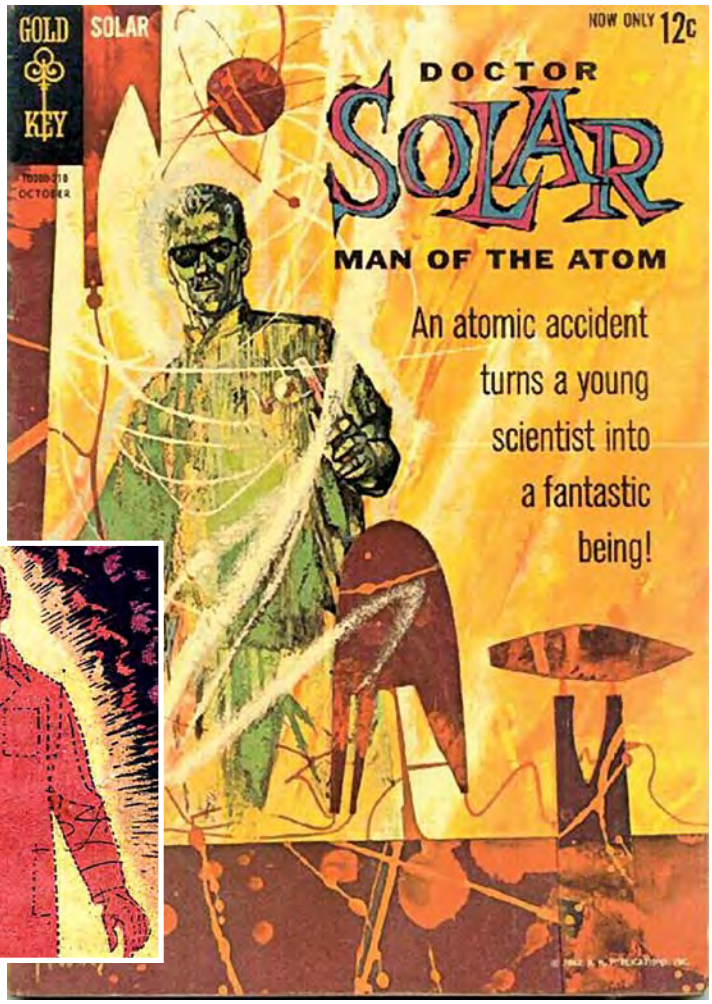
> "It is a painful one for us artists, as the old size of 2 ½ times up gave us room to operate with big pens or brushes when advantageous. Now the size is 2 times up. This wouldn't be a calamity, except that some bright boy in the East thought the pages would look 'different' if the dialogue balloons were inset a minimum of ¼ inch from the top or sides of the panels, Naturally, this compresses the drawing area." (Blum 5)

The ¼-inch "frame" that Barks described was added to the Gold Key stories with an eye toward future reprinting in different formats. If the artwork needed to be cut down to fit, the irrelevant borders could be removed. Whitman Publishing, another division of Western, explored one such experimental book series in that regard during 1962. Eight 136-page hardbacks about the size of Big Little Books were devoted to various licensed cartoon characters, with the Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck editions reprinting stories from 1957-1958 Dell comics. The remaining six editions featured a variety of Hanna-Barbera characters in brief two-to-four page episodes that were originally produced by U.S. artists for weekly British tabloid series. Sold in non-traditional comics outlets, the books failed to generate much interest and no further volumes were produced (Ward 54).

One of Gold Key's innovations never made it past 1962. Matt Murphy envisioned using fumetti—film stills with word balloons—in thick 25-cent comic books based on TV shows and movies. Dated November 1962, *Ben Casey Film Story* #1 and *The Three Stooges In Orbit* #1 (based on the current film) marked the beginning and end of the format. *Gunsmoke Film Story* was advertised as part of the initial Gold Key issues but never published.

Murphy had greater success with ***Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom*** #1 (October 1962), Gold Key's first entrance into the superhero movement. "I created it out of whole cloth," he declared in *The Comics!* (Vol. 16) #5 (May 2005), "and verbally described it to [scripter] Paul S. Newman." The script was illustrated by Bob Fujitani, who remained on the series through issue #5.

Superficially, the character's origin shared elements not only with Charlton's Captain Atom but also Marvel's Hulk. Like Bruce Banner, Doctor Solar had been transformed into a powerful green figure by a nuclear accident engineered by a spy. Where the Hulk was a rampaging brute whose power was essentially his strength, Doctor Solar could transform himself into pure energy and fly, among other attributes, while in complete control of his great intellect.



The irradiated Doctor Solar became Gold Key's first superhero, illustrated by Bob Fujitani with cover paintings by Richard Powers. Doctor Solar TM and © Random House, Inc.

after singer Della Reese), the young heroine was also assisted by her familiar, a cat named Salem. "At the time, I believed I was naming Sabrina after a woman I recalled from my teen days as having a name with a New England ring to it. Only many years later did I recall that her name was Sabra" (Gladir 38).

Editor Richard Goldwater assigned Dan DeCarlo to pencil the five-page episode that appeared in *Archie's Madhouse* #22 (October 1962). In a nod to the play and film "Bell, Book and Candle," the pilot asserted that witches could not cry and would lose their powers should they fall in love. Once Sabrina became a recurring character, such rules were forgotten.

Despite the affection that Gladir had for Sabrina, she was anything but a breakout star. The teen-age witch didn't return until *Madhouse* #28 (September 1963) and appeared in only an issue or two a year through 1969, when television exposure magically elevated the character to stardom.

In the meantime, *Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats* was cancelled with #7 (November 1962), its final issue replacing the humorous monster-themed vignettes with mild horror and science fiction tales drawn in the Archie style. Hilda the Witch survived the cancellation, however, having moved to *Archie's Madhouse* with #19 (June 1962) and ultimately being folded into the Sabrina continuity with #37 (December 1964) as the younger witch's aunt.

Bats' cancellation reduced the Archie Adventure Series line by one but *Life With Archie* and Robert Bernstein and John Rosenberger's two superhero titles forged onward in mostly episodic routine. Bernstein's DC Comics colleague (and Batman co-creator) Bill Finger briefly did some moonlighting at Archie in 1962, writing a pair of Fly adventures in *Laugh* #132 and *Pep* #154 along with a Fly/Black Hood team-up in *Laugh* #134.

Adventures of the Jaguar was enlivened with the addition of recurring nemesis Cat Girl, whose priorities shifted over the course of the year from enslaving mankind (issue #4) to winning the Jaguar's heart (issue #6). Attempting to build a group of female romantic rivals like those in DC's Superman titles, Bernstein even penned an episode in which Cat-Girl, the undersea temptress Kree-Nal, and Ralph Hardy's secretary Jill Ross put their differences aside when the Jaguar disappeared (issue #7).

Adventures of the Fly #21 (September 1962) revisited the concept of a large-scale team of super-criminals, unseen in a superhero series since the 1940s' Injustice Society (*All Star Comics* #37, #41) and Villainy, Inc. (*Wonder Woman* #28). Composed of eight separate villains (seven of whom had appeared in previous issues), the Anti-Fly League targeted the Fly and Fly-Girl for three consecutive issues.

Fly #23's "Ice Giant From Pluto" was very much in the mold of a typical Mort Weisinger-edited Superman story of the era, one that employed both a puzzling mystery and charming sentiment. Discovering that the Fly had been replaced by an imposter, Fly-Girl ultimately discovered that he was really the Jaguar. He'd been covering for the genuine hero until the Fly could return with a magical pendant intended for Fly-Girl on her first anniversary as a super-heroine.

Fans longed to see the Archie heroes united as a team but had to settle for the Fly's enemies gathering against him.
The Fly TM and © Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

Letter columns were introduced in the July 1962-dated *Fly* #20 and *Jaguar* #7. By issue #8 of the latter, fan Paul Seydor had suggested uniting all the Archie heroes (Black Hood, Fly, Fly-Girl, Jaguar, the Shield) as the Anti-Crime Squad and even enclosed a cover

Triumph and Tragedy

Very few parents hope their children grow up to become professional cartoonists. The parents of Mexican artist **Sergio Aragonés** were no exception. Despite demonstrating a passion and skill for drawing from an early age, Aragonés knew his mother and father regarded his craft as merely a hobby on the way to a real job. "When I left for the United States at 24," he recalled, "unable to speak English and with no money, to pursue a career in cartooning, they were devastated" (Meglin 11).

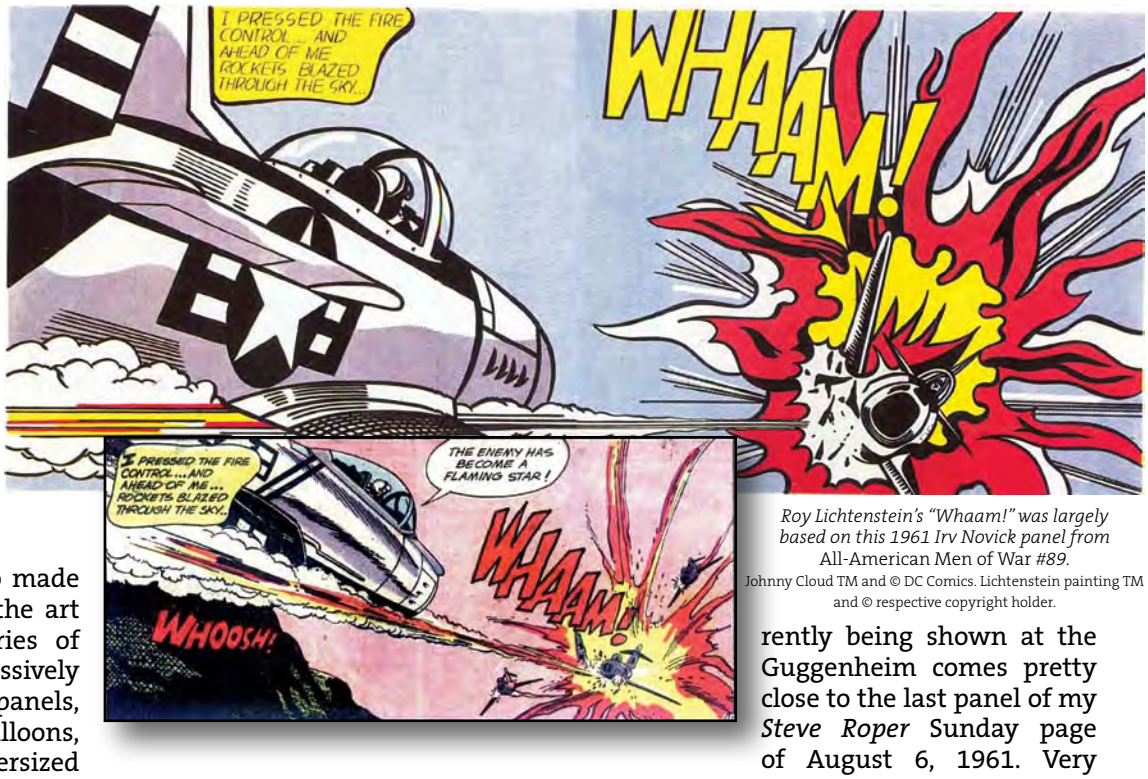
In New York City, Aragonés had minor successes but was unable to get that big break. A fan of ***Mad*** since he saw his first copy in 1955, the young man resisted approaching them. "It was a satire magazine that poked fun at American life," he explained, "and [included] not one pantomime gag" which he specialized in (Meglin 10). Inevitably, though, he gave *Mad* a try.

Aragonés' instincts were correct. The magazine's editors didn't think his sight gags were right for them. Associate editor Jerry DeFuccio saw something in the cartoonist, though, and recalled how they had been able to integrate Antonio Prohias into *Mad*. So editor Nick Meglin took another look. "I came across a series of astronaut gags," he remembered. "Each one delivered a laugh visually, without relying on a caption or dialogue balloon. I quickly roughed out a spread of the strongest panels and brought them to the Art Department." After further tightening of the layout by *Mad*'s art director John Putnam, the two-page spread was approved by editor Al Feldstein, and Sergio Aragonés was on the magazine's payroll (Meglin 9).

"A Mad Look at the U.S. Space Effort" (*Mad* #76: January 1963) began a half-century relationship between Aragonés and the magazine. Tiny sight gags by the cartoonist also peppered the edges of many pages in the issue, thus introducing cartoons eventually dubbed "Marginals" that would become a *Mad* staple. "After my appearance in *Mad*," the cartoonist recalled, "my father mentioned it to his colleagues at the movie studio. Their reaction must have been positive because he called me afterwards and I could hear the pride and tears in his voice" (Meglin 11).

It was not easy being a comic book writer or artist in the early 1960s. The pay was low. The product they produced was looked on by most adults as juvenile at best and subliterate pornography at worst. Despite it all, most of them brought a sense of professionalism to their jobs and the best imbued their work with a personal touch that they could take pride in. But if anyone had forgotten what the general public thought of comic books, Roy Lichtenstein was there in 1963 to remind them.

He was part of the Pop Art movement that began in the late 1950s characterized by incorporating common objects and cultural images into paintings, sculptures, et al. Perhaps the best known example of Pop Art may have been Andy Warhol's 1962 painting *Campbell's Soup Cans*, which was simply a portrait of each of the 32 varieties of soup offered by the company at the time.



Roy Lichtenstein's "Whaam!" was largely based on this 1961 Irv Novick panel from All-American Men of War *#89.*
Johnny Cloud TM and © DC Comics. Lichtenstein painting TM and © respective copyright holder.

It was Lichtenstein who made a name for himself in the art community with a series of paintings that were massively enlarged comic book panels, complete with word balloons, sound effects, and oversized orbs of color that simulated the tiny Ben-Day dots used on the comics page. To artists like William Overgard, the images were also familiar. Noting the painter's remarks in the May 3, 1963 issue of *Time* that he used real comics panels as his inspiration, Overgard felt obliged to send a letter to the magazine that appeared in its May 17 issue:

> "As a cartoonist I was interested in Roy Lichtenstein's comments on comic strips in your article on Pop Art. Though he may not, as he says, copy them exactly, Lichtenstein in his painting currently being shown at the Guggenheim comes pretty close to the last panel of my *Steve Roper* Sunday page of August 6, 1961. Very flattering...I think ?"

Overgard was far from the only artist whose work had been transferred to canvas without credit. Among Lichtenstein's 1963 works were "Drowning Girl" (based in part on the Tony Abruzzo splash page from 1962's *Secret Hearts* #83), "Whaam!" (recreating panels by Irv Novick and Russ Heath from *All-American Men of War* #89), and "Image Duplicator" (inspired by Jack Kirby art in *X-Men* #1).

To the artists affected, the paintings were insulting on many levels. The recreations were crude and primitive, suggesting that the original better-drawn artwork was the same. In the eyes of many in the art community, the paintings were meaningful and ironic, a statement on the comparatively irrelevant comic books. And the paintings were selling for increasingly large sums of money.

"[London's] Tate Gallery bought Lichtenstein's "Whaam!" for £7,000," cartoonist Lee Elias raged in a December 1970 interview. "If it wasn't so stiff, I'd recommend that they roll it up and sell it as toilet paper" (Penman 12). John Romita, one of the DC romance artists whose work had been appropriated, recalled the furor:

> "A lot of the guys—Bernie Sachs and a few others—wanted to get together and file a class action suit against Lichtenstein and some of the other artists. I was not too interested. I said first of all, I don't want to contribute money to lawyers. I didn't want to get involved in it. I even foolishly told them that I was somehow flattered by the fact that they would consider these panels so good that they felt it was worthy of a painting. And, of course, they thought I was crazy. 'Flattered?! They're ripping you off!' I never felt ripped off. I felt like it was a different art form. I

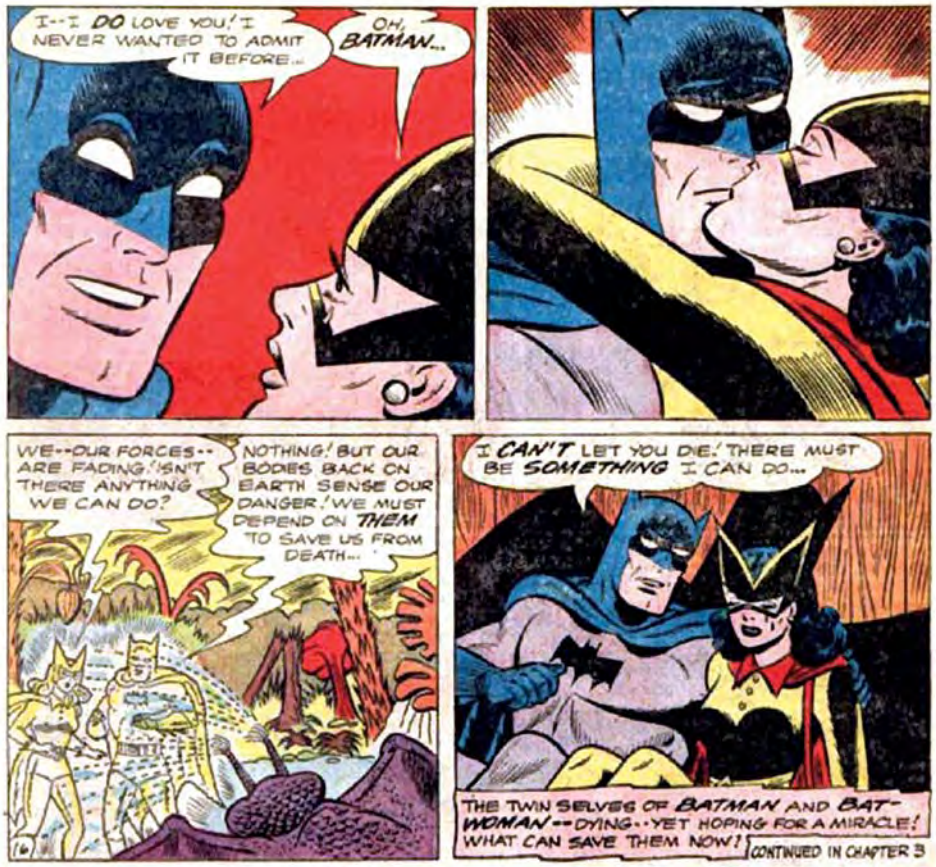
Lichtenstein also used a Russ Heath image from All-American Men of War *#89 as the basis for a painting.*
All-American Men of War TM and © DC Comics. Lichtenstein painting TM and © respective copyright holder.

of a damsel in distress. That would change when she returned as a series regular with issue #13. To a general audience that still held the average girl and a growing number of teenage boys, a pretty heroine in a green jumpsuit was far more appealing than a magical imp named Quisp (who was quietly dropped from *Aquaman* in the same issue that Mera debuted).

Editor **Jack Schiff** still had faith in comical helpmates, whether Bat-Mite or (in the Manhunter From Mars series) Zook, but he also appreciated the appeal of costumed heroines. In the space of seven years, Batwoman had become a fixture of the **Batman** series and even her protégée Bat-Girl seemed to be sticking around as a periodic foil for Robin. *Batman* #153's "Prisoners of Three Worlds" (by **Bill Finger** and **Sheldon Moldoff**) developed the relationships of the heroic quartet to a greater degree than ever before.

Filled with extraterrestrials and science fiction elements, the plot was exactly the sort of thing that many fans later contended was the antithesis of a Batman story. But it was more than that. At 25 pages, the "3-part novel" was the longest single adventure in Batman's 24-year history and allowed an unusual degree of character development,

An unprecedented full-length story tapped the romantic tension between Batman and Batwoman as well as their junior partners.
Batman, Batwoman TM and © DC Comics.



In short, the heroes were attacked by an alien thief who tried to teleport them to his home dimension. A mishap resulted in only Robin and Bat-Girl being shunted away while Batman and Batwoman's life forces were torn from their bodies and sent elsewhere. From there, the plot split into three directions and played with the same emotional scenarios that Mort Weisinger was having success with. Fighting back feelings of despair and hopelessness, each pair of heroes opened up to each other. On Earth, too weak to even stand, Batman confessed to Batwoman that he loved her before they used their last reserves of strength to restore their life forces and partners.

The red-haired Mera, beautifully rendered by artist Nick Cardy, quickly won the heart of Aquaman.
Aquaman TM and © DC Comics.

The impact of the story was blunted a bit by the final panels' restoration of the platonic status quo—Batman claimed his confession was only meant to make Batwoman's "last moments happy ones"—but readers at least got to see Robin and Bat-Girl walk off hand-in-hand. Still, the story was an important concession on Schiff's part that comic book storytelling was changing.

In issue #153's letter column, reader Robert O'Neill advocated fewer issues with the traditional three short stories in favor of two longer ones or a full-length adventure. Elsewhere on the page, Jerry Johnson complimented the improvement of *Detective Comics*' Manhunter From Mars feature since its own page count had increased. Bowing to popular demand, Schiff switched to two stories per issue with *Batman* #155 and *World's Finest Comics* #134 (forcing the Aquaman and Green Arrow features to appear in alternating issues in the latter title).

Schiff never precisely edited another full-length Batman story but he came close in issue #157 (June 1963), also by Finger and Moldoff. The opening eight-page tale recounted Robin's encounter with a tiny villain named Ant-Man—and if Marvel Comics noticed that the name of their year-old hero was being used, there's no record of it—while expressly stating that Batman was away on a secret mission.

That mission—its after-effects, really—were the subject of the two-part "Robin Dies At Dawn" that filled out the remainder of the issue. The Caped Crusader had participated in a days-long

test simulation to determine the psychological effects of astronauts on long-term space missions. In the course of his hallucination, Batman had seen Robin killed by an alien creature at dawn on a strange world. That horrifying image lingered in his mind long after the experiment was over. Repeatedly succumbing to blackouts and flashbacks in the days that followed, Batman reluctantly took a break from crime-fighting. After criminals kidnapped Robin and vowed to kill him at dawn, the troubled hero fought past his psychosis and broke its hold by saving his partner's life.

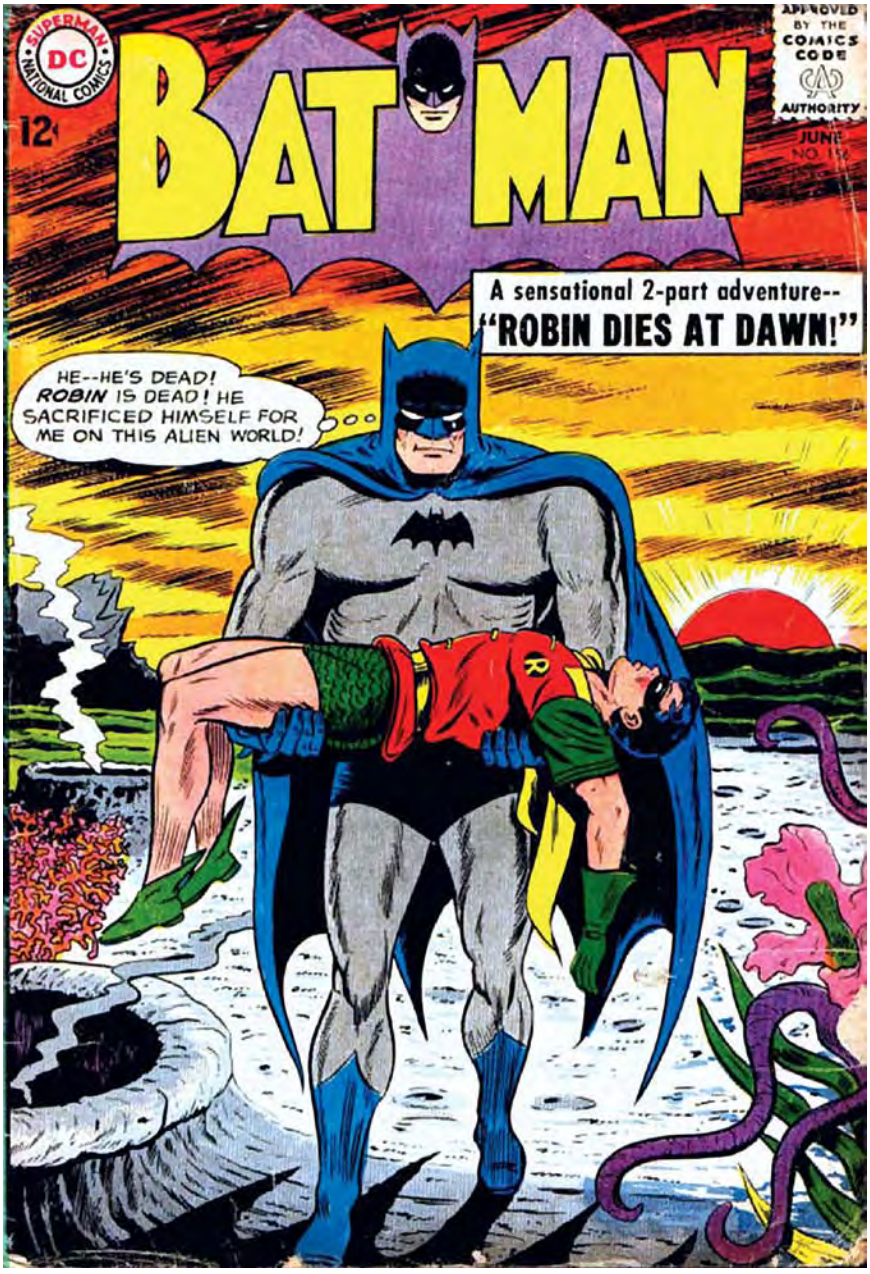
At turns harrowing and poignant, the adventure has been celebrated even by fans who detested the science fiction trappings that had overtaken the series. In 2008, writer Grant Morrison used "Robin Dies At Dawn" for key details in his mammoth "Batman R.I.P." storyline, also briefly referencing "Prisoner of Three Worlds" along the way. Discussing the story's enduring appeal, Mike W. Barr wrote:

> "The science fiction elements existed only in Batman's mind, yet the scenes of Batman's hallucinations were vivid enough that the story is recalled as both a science fiction story and one of the best Batman stories of the 1960s—largely, one assumes, because of the script's emphasis on Batman's indomitable spirit and on the warm relationship between Batman and Robin. (136)

Such acclaim notwithstanding, sales on Schiff's Batman titles had slipped badly. According to DC's annual Statement of Ownership reports, the average issue of *Batman* sold 410,000 copies in 1962 versus 502,000 in 1960. Though still outselling many lesser-known DC titles, the drop was cause for grave concern and Schiff searched for a solution. Noting the continued strong sales on the *Batman Annuals* that reprinted older material, the editor paid special interest to reader reaction to *Annual* #3's spotlight on classic villains in 1962.

In 1963, he worked with Bill Finger in reviving many of the costumed criminals, specifically the Penguin (*Batman* #155, after a seven-year absence), Doctor Double-X (*Detective* #316), Mirror-Man (*Batman* #157), and the Terrible Trio (*Detective* #321). Perennial favorite the Joker also appeared, feuding with newcomer Clayface in *Batman* #159. Wary of reviving Catwoman because of feared Comics Code Authority objections, Finger and artist Jim Mooney instead created the Cat-*Man*, a thrill-seeking villain who was the subject of an eventual trilogy that began in *Detective Comics* #311 (January 1963). The second installment (issue #318) even had Batwoman adopt the Catwoman persona for part of the story.

"The sales went up with the villains featured," Schiff insisted in an interview in the early 1980s (Schiff A-67), but it would not be enough. *The Comic Reader* #20 (October 8, 1963)—in an announcement described as "the most



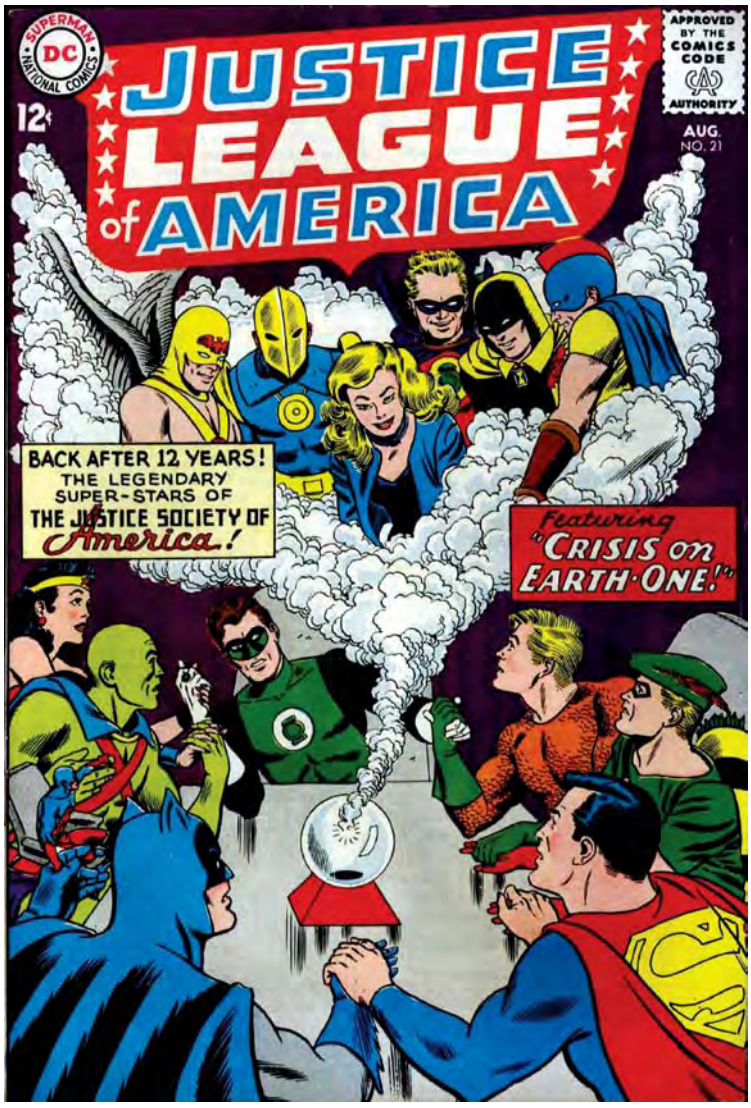
The psychological turmoil at the heart of "Robin Dies At Dawn" made it one of the 1960s' best-remembered Batman stories.

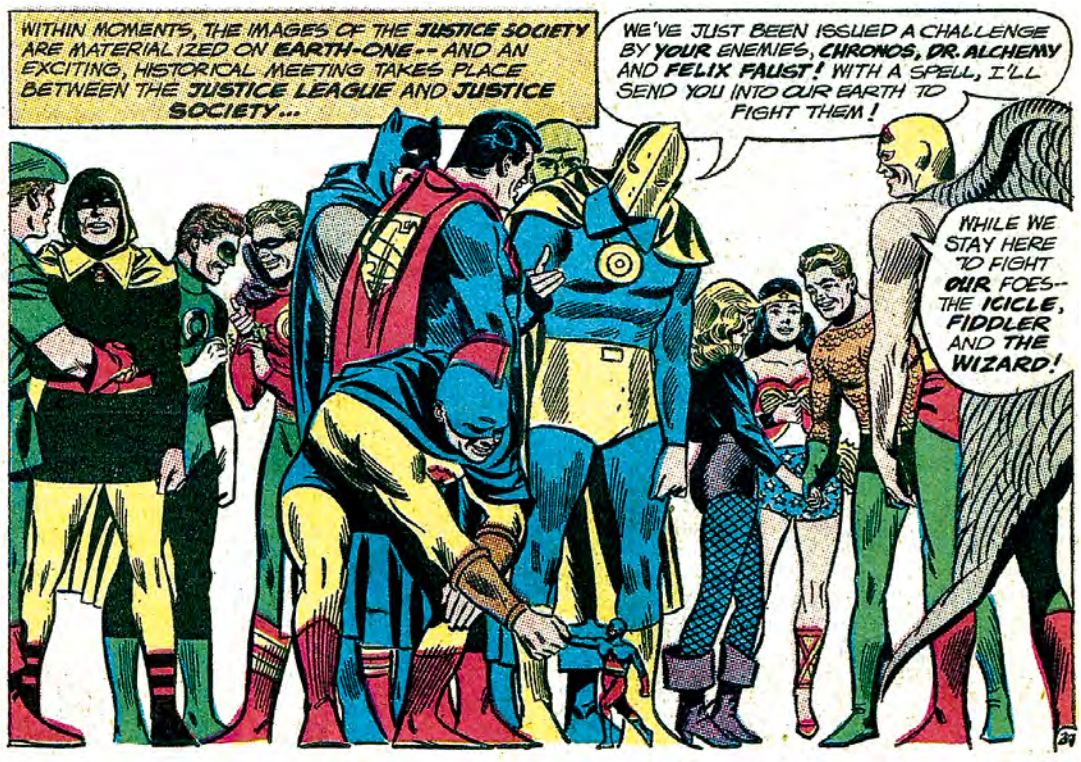
his mentor's costume and Schwartz declared that it was time for a change. Consequently, Infantino designed an elegant variation that maintained the old costume's red leggings but otherwise shifted to a yellow color scheme and a lopped-off hood that exposed the boy's hair. The distinctive hood had, in fact, been part of one of the artist's original Flash concept drawings in 1956 but he rejected it because he disliked the idea of the hero's hair blowing in the wind. Seeking a more distinctive, youthful look for Kid Flash, Infantino concluded that "this approach is perfect now" (Murray, "The Legendary Carmine Infantino" 44).

Arguably the most historic double-Flash story of the year, though, reunited the present-day Barry Allen with his 1940s counterpart Jay Garrick for the third time in *The Flash* #137's "Vengeance of the Immortal Villain." The title character was Vandal Savage, a millennia-old immortal who'd fought the first Green Lantern in 1943 and the Justice Society of America in 1947. Ever since Gardner Fox and Infantino had revived Jay in 1961, Julius Schwartz had built up a mystique about the other heroes of the 1940s and it finally paid off here. Seeking revenge for his last defeat, Savage captured several members of the Justice Society. Freed by the two Flashes, the JSA decided that it might be a good idea to come out of retirement.

Fans were euphoric, all the more so because Schwartz, Fox, and Mike Sekowsky followed the story two months later with a landmark two-part adventure that began in *Justice League of America* #21 (August 1963). Magically bridging the divide between the parallel Earths of the JLA and JSA, villains from each world joined forces to go on a rampage and ultimately used magic to lock down the Leaguers in their own headquarters. Using a magical crystal ball once given to the team by Merlin, the League was able to contact the Society for help. Shaking hands and making introductions in a historic half-page panel, the teams resolved to switch worlds for the duration and take on their respective foes. The saga climaxed in issue #22 with a double-page spread of the heroes defeating the villains.

With a cast of sixteen heroes and six villains coupled with a complex plot, Schwartz felt obligated in *JLA* #22 to recap the first chapter for readers who had missed the previous issue. The entirety of page one, then, was a block of text framed by head shots of the entire cast. "In the old days the pulp magazines like *Argosy* would run two or three serials in the same issue, and they'd always lead off with a page or more





The Justice League and Justice Society's milestone first meeting was a huge hit with fans.
Justice League of America TM and © DC Comics.

Despite his formidable arms, Doctor Octopus still had vulnerabilities like thick eyeglasses that Spider-Man covered with his webs.
Spider-Man TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

The series was still a work-in-progress and one of its signature devices was only created after the Chameleon story was penciled. Looking over the art, Lee noted the climactic sequence where Spider-Man pursued the disguised villain during a blackout. Ditko recalled:

> "Stan asked me a very good question: 'How, in the darkened room, does [Spider-Man] know where the Chameleon is?' At some point I took a pencil and drew squiggly lines radiating from S-m's head and said, 'S-m' has 'spider-senses,' the way bats can detect, sense insects, objects at night. Stan accepted the idea as valid. The 'senses' worked for the character. We went over the earlier pages, panels and wherever we thought appropriate, I added the squiggly lines denoting the spider senses around [Peter Parker or Spider-Man's] heads." (Ditko, "A Mini-History 3" 83, 90)

A split-face effect—half Peter/half Spider-Man—was established by Ditko with issue #2 (inspired by his 1960 Captain Atom cover for Charlton's *Space Adventures* #36) to symbolically suggest the spider-sense when the character wasn't in costume. The visual device helped placate Lee's concern that Spider-Man wasn't appearing often enough in his own comic book. "He believed," Ditko later wrote, "the point of a superhero [story] was to show the costumed hero in action" (Ditko, "A Mini-History 4" 8).

Lee's collaborator didn't entirely disagree but later asked, "What is the point of doing a teenage hero if his regular teenage personality, his home life, school environment, etc., is to be just a brief (few panels) interruption between the hero and villain battles?" Ultimately, Ditko concluded, "it is important to show how a costumed hero acts in a non-costumed (non-villain) situation. It reveals the consistency or the contradiction in his values in striving to do what is right. Is it the costume that makes the hero or the personality inside?" (Ditko, "A Mini-History 4" 8).

Even when working from synopses, Ditko had little room to depart from Lee's plots in issues #1 and #2 that contained two stories apiece. Once the series shifted to full-length stories with issue #3, the artist finally had the leeway to maintain that civilian/hero balance.

Thanks to Spider-Man's webbing, Daily Bugle publisher J. Jonah Jameson was at a rare loss for words in Amazing Spider-Man *#7.*
J. Jonah Jameson TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Still, costumed characters were the point and the first half-dozen issues began building a classic rogues' gallery. The Chameleon was followed by the wizened Vulture (#2), the atomically-altered Sandman (#4), and a good-hearted scientist who mutated into the Lizard (#6). Lee's Tinkerer (#2) was unmasked as an alien, a development that Ditko regarded as inconsistent with the series' tone (Ditko, "A Mini-History 4" 8). However fanciful the science involved in their creation, most of the early villains were rooted on Earth.

Taking Ditko's idea of "a villain with four mechanical arms," Lee dubbed him Doctor Octopus and came up with the story of Otto Octavius for *Amazing Spider-Man* #3 (Ditko, "A Mini-History 4" 8). The elongating robot arms had originally been used during atomic testing until an accident fused them to Octavius' torso and sent him over the edge. Unable to defeat

Don't Get Comfortable

"Sweetness and light—who the hell wants it?" cartoonist **Harold Gray** snarled in the September 4, 1964 issue of *Time*. "What's news in the newspaper? Murder, rape, and arson. That's what stories are made of" (Smith 73).

On the *Little Orphan Annie* newspaper strip's 40th birthday, its 70-year-old creator wished to make it very clear that he hadn't mellowed with age. Those familiar only with the later stage and film version of *Annie* could scarcely imagine that its comic strip predecessor had built its reputation on suspenseful high drama that was, at times, shockingly violent and politicized. As far as Gray was concerned, it wouldn't be straying from that path.

But there were no constants, even in comics. Forty years after creating the first modern adventure comic strip (*Wash Tubbs*) and 20 years after launching *Buz Sawyer*, **Roy Crane** (with writer Edwin Granberry and art assistant Hank Schlensker) decided the *Sawyer* strip needed a shakeup. In a bleak sequence running the same time as Harold Gray's remarks, Sawyer lost his wife Christy in a typhoon and then, desperate for a distraction, left the Navy to join the CIA after depositing their 11-year-old son with his parents. For a strip that had always leavened grim events with lighter family moments, it was a startling shift in the balance and a reminder to jaded readers that they couldn't even count on that anymore.

In good ways and bad, the post-Kennedy United States was changing. Things that were once taken for granted were no longer set in stone. Mid-1964's Civil Rights Act effectively outlawed much of the racial discrimination and segregation inflicted on minorities but breaking through generations of entrenched racism would be an uphill battle.

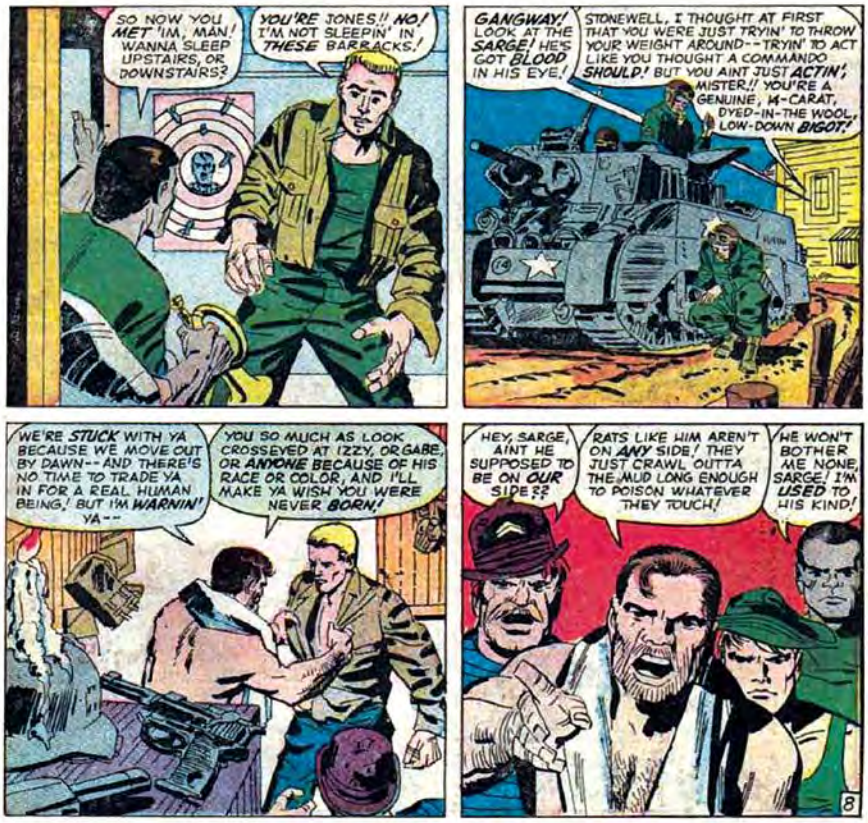
Early in the year, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *Sgt. Fury* #6 (March 1964) had tackled the subject head on. Ostensibly about the Howling Commandos' mission to take on Erwin Rommel's Panzer Division in North Africa, the story was truly concerned with bigotry. Joining the squad as a temporary replacement for the injured Dino Manelli, blond George Stonewell (named after American Nazi Party founder George Lincoln Rockwell) barely concealed his distaste for the Commandos' Italian and Jewish members. He was delighted to learn that one man in the unit had "a real American name like Jones" but recoiled when he learned that Gabe was black. "I'm not sleepin' in *these* barracks!" Stonewell shrieked.

A disgusted Nick Fury read him the riot act. Conceding that "there's no time to trade ya in for a real human being," Fury

issued a stern warning: "You so much as look crosseyed at Izzy, or Gabe, or *anyone* because of his race or color, and I'll make ya wish you were never *born*!"

Over the course of the story, Stonewell found a lifetime of racism challenged at every turn. A captured Nazi noted that they were philosophically the same. Backed into a corner by enemy soldiers, Stonewell owed his life to the Jewish Izzy Cohen, who cracked, "I notice you ain't complainin' about my religion all of a sudden." And, finally, when the bigot was wounded and needed a transfusion, the life-saving blood came from Gabe Jones. George Stonewell never quite owned up to the fact that he'd been wrong but he did leave behind his new address—directed specifically to Gabe and Izzy—upon departing the Commandos.

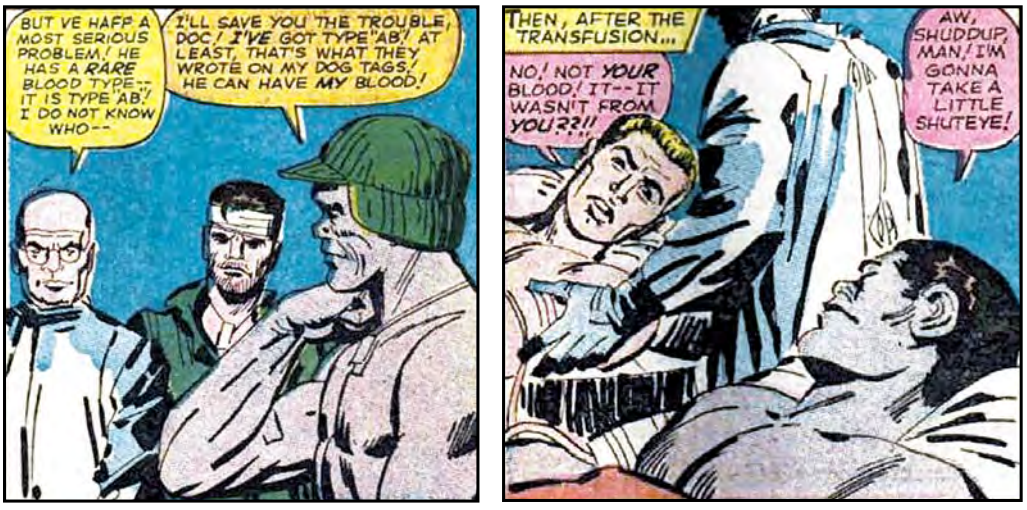
The message itself was not unprecedented in comic books of the era. DC often ran Jack Schiff-scripted public service pages that denounced bigotry. Anti-racism content appeared in the Catholic school-distributed *Treasure Chest* comic book, as well. The distinction was putting that message in the context of a mainstream adventure story. Simply including a black soldier amidst white ones without comment—as Lee and Kirby had done in *Sgt. Fury* #1-5 and Bob Kanigher and Joe Kubert before them in 1961's *Our Army At War*'s #113—was progressive in its own right but sometimes a less subtle approach was called for. Even concealed within a seemingly ordinary war comic, it was a daring move in a time when many southern retailers might balk at selling it altogether.



The anti-racism message of Sgt. Fury *#6 was daring content for a 1964 war comic.*
Nick Fury TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Meanwhile, a serial in *Treasure Chest* Vol. 19, issues #11-20 (January 31 to June 4, 1964) mirrored the spring's Presidential primaries as New York's Governor Timothy Pettigrew—a Catholic like John F. Kennedy—vied to become his political party's nominee for the White House. This story took place not in 1964, but in 1976, and the story challenged young parochial school students to consider the world that they would shape as adults.

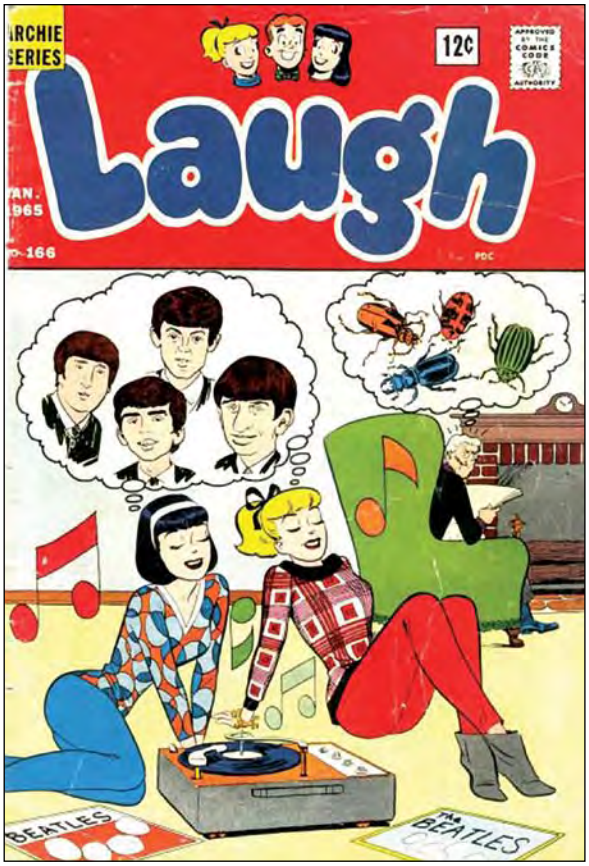
Over the course of ten installments, writer **Berry Reece** built sympathy and suspense for his protagonist, chronicling political setbacks like accusations of cowardice in Vietnam and even an assassination attempt. "I wanted to walk kids through the basic steps of the nominating process of a Presidential Election," the writer explained. "I also wanted to make sure they were given an entertaining narrative and hook them with some funny and entertaining characters at the same time" (The Main Event). Thanks to creative staging by artist Joe Sinnott, however, the governor's face remained hidden until the very end of the story when he won the nomination. And only then did readers discover that Timothy Pettigrew was "the first Negro candidate for President of the United States."



In 1965, DC ran a parallel version of this scene in Our Army At War *#160's Sgt. Rock story.*
Nick Fury TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

"Would he win?" the closing caption asked, after noting that 1976 would mark the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. "Well it would depend in part on how the boys and girls reading this grew up and voted...in 1976. It would depend on whether they believed, and, indeed, lived those words in the Declaration—'All men are created equal.'" "What we wanted to do," Reece explained, "was get the readers in deep through this Pettigrew's integrity, his charisma, before we ever disclosed his race so that they would not prejudge him"

Aside from Dell's authorized Beatles one-shot, the Fab Four's 1964 comic book appearances were mostly played for laughs.



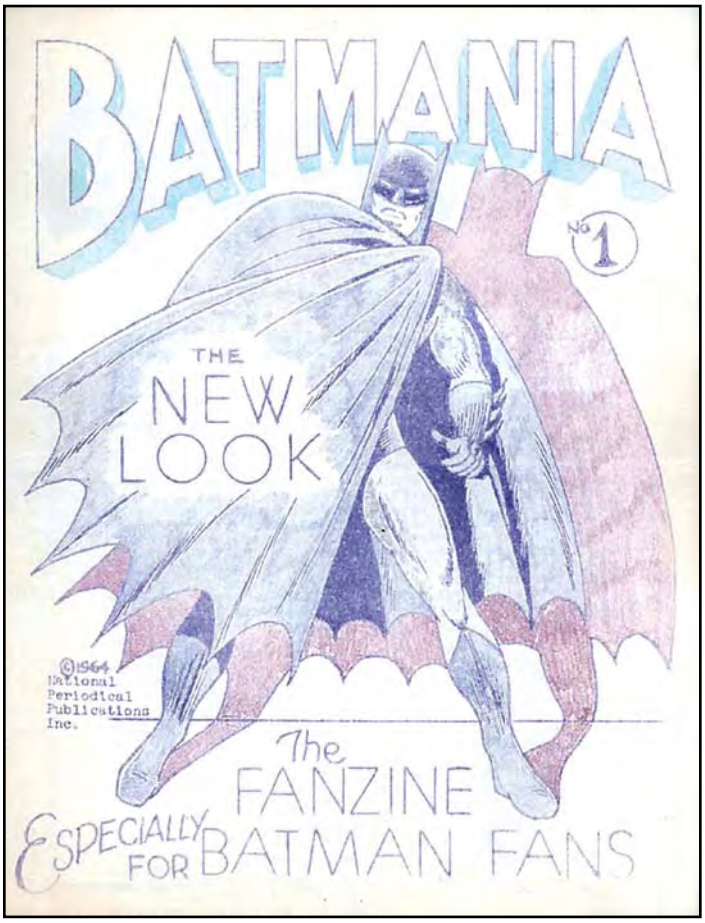
a "mop top"—started another trend. Betty and Veronica were gushing about the new hairdo for boys as early as the cover of *Laugh* #160 (July 1964) and dreaming of the Fab Four themselves on the front of issue #166. By fall, Charlton was spotlighting the Beatles on the covers of *My Little Margie* #54 and *Teen Confessions* #31.

The trendy Beatles wigs that sprang up shortly thereafter became the focus of a short tale in July's *Betty and Veronica* #105 even as Superman's pal was hawking them to natives of the distant past—while crooning rock songs—as "the Red-Headed Beatle of 1,000 B.C." in DC's *Jimmy Olsen* #79. Over in ACG's *Herbie* #5, its comical star simply donned a literal mop-head to become a rock star in "Herbie, Boy 'Beetle.'" *Mad* #90's back cover used a Frank Frazetta-illustrated caricature of the Beatles' Ringo Starr as the centerpiece of a Breck (as "Blecch") Shampoo ad parody while one of cartoonist Al Jaffee's first *Mad* Fold-Ins (issue #88) suggested "The Only Hope For Curing 'Beatle-Mania'" would be the "premature loss of the Beatles' hair."

The Beatles' hugely-anticipated first U.S. appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (February 9, 1964) was the subject of an early parody in *Laugh* #162. It recounted Archie's hilarious efforts to fix the reception on Veronica's television just minutes before the debut of the Termites Five on *Sullivan*.

In July, Dell published the official Beatles comic book, a one-shot that sandwiched their 64-page "life story" (illustrated by Joe Sinnott) amidst several full-page photos. Giant comics still retailed for a quarter but Dell charged 35-cents for this one, well aware that fans would snatch it up.

In April, the massive New York World's Fair opened on nearly one square mile of land in Queens, New York. Although dominated by U.S. interests, the exposition's goal was to celebrate "Man's Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe" and demonstrate the way that technology would improve the lives of everyone. Towering over the festivities was the Unisphere, a 12-story



Missouri fan Biljo White was so taken with the revamp that he created the Batmania *fanzine in support.*
Batman TM and © DC Comics.

Archie when they ran their own folk music story in *Betty and Veronica* #101 (May 1964).

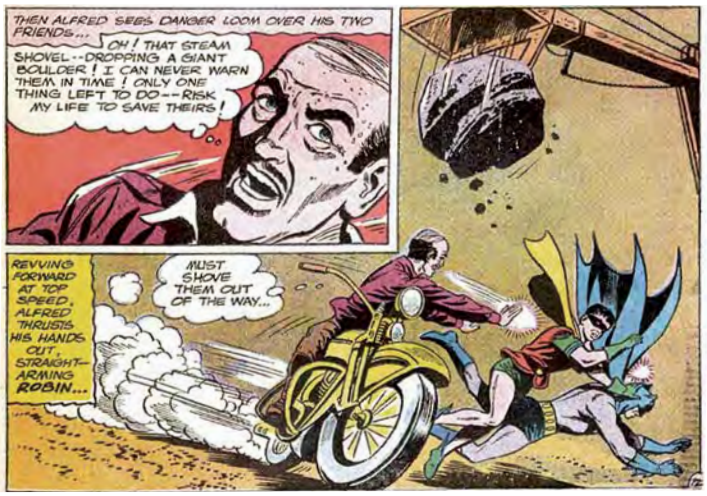
Under orders from Schwartz, Infantino had drawn a yellow oval around the bat on the hero's chest, establishing a clear line of demarcation between the end of the Old Look Batman and the beginning of the New. (A bat within a circle could also be trademarked where a bat alone could not.) Most of the editorial changes were held back three weeks until *Batman* #164 (June 1964). Schwartz had banished weird science from the series but, as DC's foremost science fiction editor, believed that the introduction of more rudimentary technology was long overdue. Thus, an elevator replaced Wayne Manor's stairway entrance to the Batcave, a hotline was established as a supplement to the Bat-Signal that lit up the night sky, and a concealed automatic door was unveiled as an entrance/exit for the upgraded Batmobile.

Batwoman, Bat-Girl, Bat-Mite, and Bat-Hound vanished without explanation from Gotham City, but another member of the cast got an unexpected send-off in *Detective* #328 courtesy of writer Bill Finger and artists Moldoff and Giella. Joining Batman and Robin in their battle with the Tri-State Gang, their butler Alfred knocked the Dynamic Duo out of the path of a falling boulder in the climax and was crushed. In the aftermath, Bruce Wayne established the charitable Alfred Foundation in his honor even as a new face showed up at Wayne Manor. Learning of the tragedy, Dick Grayson's Aunt Harriet insisted on taking over the household duties, oblivious to the secret identities of her nephew and his guardian.

Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham had infamously characterized Batman and Robin as latent homosexuals in his 1950s screed *Seduction of the Innocent* and the presence of Alfred did not dispel his delusion. Aunt Harriet—named after a line in Hoagy Carmichael's 1929 song "Rockin' Chair"—was Schwartz's means of breaking up Wayne Manor's all-male household (Schwartz 119-120). With Kathy (Batwoman) Kane banished from the series, a prospective new girlfriend for Bruce Wayne was also lined up in the form of policewoman Patricia Powell, but she was dropped after two issues (*Batman* #165-166).

More effective recurring characters were the Mystery Analysts of Gotham City—a diverse group of local detectives first seen in *Batman* #164—and the Outsider, an unseen villain who knew intimate details about Batman and Robin and could strike from anywhere (*Detective* #334).

Prominent fan writer-artist (and Missouri fireman) **Biljo White** was among those taken with the revamp. Possessed of a near complete *Batman* collection, he enthusiastically



The death of Bruce Wayne's butler Alfred prompted the arrival of Dick Grayson's Aunt Harriet to replace him.
Batman TM and © DC Comics.

and you've got to realize that you can't count on them to know the whole legend of the character. Even Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman are going to be new to somebody. (O'Connell 56)

The rich Superman mythology came to the fore in many of the early Weisinger-edited *World's Finest* stories with writer Edmond Hamilton creating a recurring Jimmy Olsen-Robin team (*WFC* #141) and immersing Batman in the culture of the bottle city of Kandor (*WFC* #143). Much as Carmine Infantino refreshed Schwartz's Batman books, penciler **Curt Swan** revitalized the Superman-Batman team-ups here, and the series looked better than it had in years.

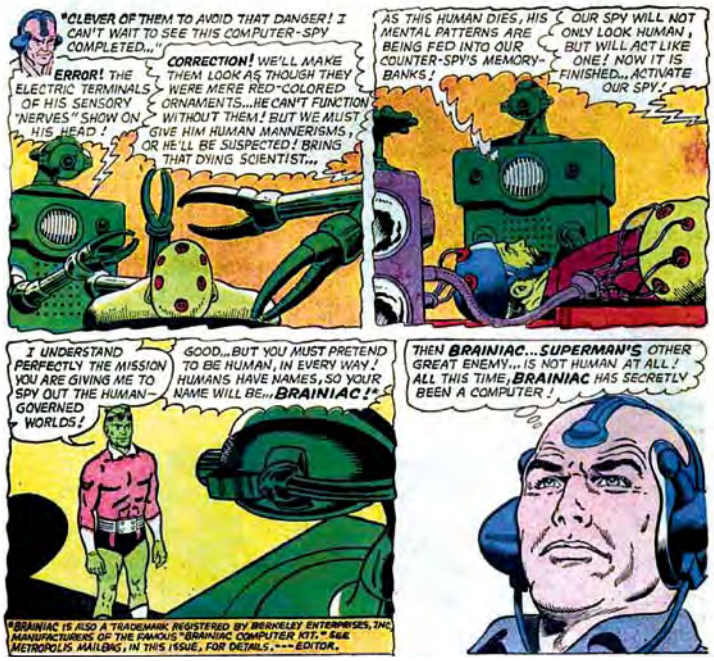
Hamilton and Swan's second issue (*WFC* #142: June 1964) introduced perhaps the toughest foe that the heroic team had ever faced. He was the Composite Superman, a villain whose right side resembled the Man of Steel and whose left duplicated Batman. Secretly the newly-installed custodian at the Superman Museum, Joe Meach had been endowed with the powers of the entire Legion of Super-Heroes in a freak electrical accident that also stirred up unfounded resentment toward Superman and Batman. Given his power set, the Composite Superman was virtually undefeatable and the World's Finest team survived only because his powers wore off. The story ended with Meach unaware of what had happened and the heroes equally in the dark as to who their nemesis had been. Weisinger and company were evidently stumped as to how to defeat the villain, too, because a sequel didn't appear until 1967.

In the case of another Superman villain, there was briefly a question of whether he'd ever appear again. In mid-1958, a green-skinned alien named **Brainiac** arrived on Earth to shrink and bottle Metropolis, one of countless cities he'd stolen from other worlds as part of a mission to repopulate his own world that had been decimated by a plague (*Action Comics* #242). In 1961, Weisinger finally began to play up the character as a major member of Superman's rogues gallery and, in so doing, seemed to have attracted the attention of a prominent computer scientist named Edmund C. Berkeley.

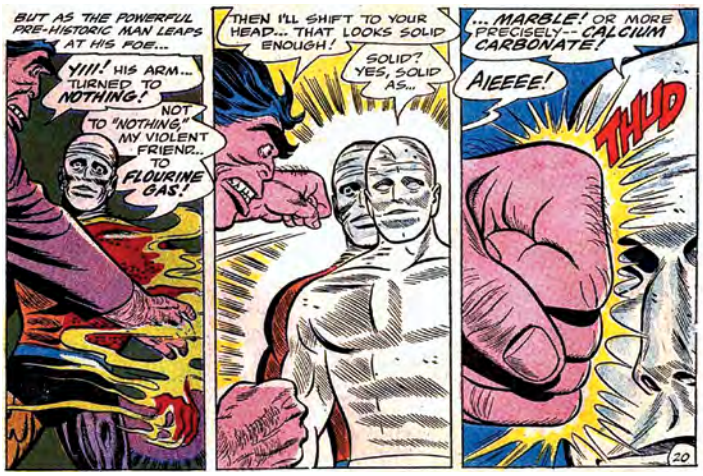
In 1955, Berkeley had extended his passion to an educational "computer kit" marketed to kids under the name of Geniac. A more economical version of the kit was also offered in the mid-1950s and that was the sticking point. It was called Brainiac.

It could be argued that Otto Binder, who wrote the first Brainiac story, might have heard of the computer kit in his capacity as a science fiction writer. (Binder also edited the rocket science magazine *Space World* from 1960 to 1963.) On the other hand, as historian Carl Gafford told *American Comic Book Chronicles*, "the term 'brainiac' had been a slang term for an egghead probably going back to the 1940s, when those brainiacs came up with the A-bomb."

Rather than engage in protracted legal wrangling over what began as a generic description, DC and Berkeley came to an agreement. "In deference to [Berkeley's] 'Brainiac,' which predates ours," the letter column in late 1963's *Superman* #167 (dated February 1964) announced, "we are changing the characterization of our 'Brainiac' so that the master-villain will henceforth possess a 'computer personality.'" (Ironically, the 1958 comic strip version of the villain—Romado—had actually possessed a literal computer brain.) The write-up concluded with an address where readers could order Berkeley's unit. As Carl Gafford noted,



The content of Superman *#167 was influenced in part by teenager Cary Bates and computer scientist Edmund Berkeley.* Superman TM and © DC Comics.



There was no love lost between Metamorpho and the resurrected caveman Java.
Metamorpho TM and © DC Comics.

morpho; his wealthy blonde girlfriend Sapphire Stagg, torn between her love for Rex and her devotion to her daddy; scheming magnate Simon Stagg, whose lust for power was equaled by his desire to prevent Mason from marrying into his empire; and Java, a resurrected caveman who gleefully joined in Simon's plots while secretly coveting Sapphire for himself.

"That was good dialogue," Haney would say proudly of the first script. "A little bit tongue-in-cheek and good dialogue and good concept and a little bit different from most DC stuff" (Catron 175). Taking that script, Kashdan realized it could be gold in the hands of the right artist. **Ramona Fradon** was that person.

Blessed with an open, cartoony style, Fradon drew more than a decade's worth of Aquaman short stories that had recently come to an end with *World's Finest* #139 (February 1964). Now the mother of a toddler, the cartoonist was ready to retire. Still, George Kashdan had shown her uncommon friendship and support in the male-dominated comic book industry and she took him up on the offer:

> We all sat around one day—Bob Haney, George, and I—and I did some sketches of Metamorpho, what I thought he'd look like, and at first I had him in a cape and the usual stuff, and that just didn't seem to fit him. It was in desperation that I decided to take his clothes off. Since his body was always changing into different chemical combinations, I figured it might as well be visible. You know, naked. So that's what we did, which worked out okay. I think we all worked it out together, really. Then I designed all the other characters and they were satisfied with what I came up with. (Amash, "It Was a Daily Identity Crisis" 40)

Satisfied was perhaps an understatement. Beyond Metamorpho's distinctive look with his body's four segments each displaying separate colors and textures, Haney was delighted with Fradon's execution of the origin as a whole. "I was knocked over when she brought back her work," the writer exclaimed. "I thought, 'Oh, wow. This is great.' I mean, she really made it better than my scripts" (Catron 175).

"A lot of that had to do with Bob Haney's writing," his artistic collaborator insisted. "We had fun together doing that

Ramona Fradon and Charles Paris' introductory Metamorpho covers clearly demonstrated the new hero's diversity.
Metamorpho TM and © DC Comics.

strip. We took off on each other. Everything he wrote stimulated my imagination, and my drawing stimulated his. It was one of those lucky things. I've never had as much fun as working on that strip" (Voger 47). The mutual admiration society extended to Fradon's inker Charles Paris, who'd lost his regular assignment inking Sheldon Moldoff's Batman thanks to the New Look. According to Kashdan, the embellisher considered her "the best artist I ever inked" (Amash "Sales Don't Tell You Everything" 45).

Kashdan, now the sole editor of *The Brave and The Bold*, broke away from the team-up cycle to launch Metamorpho in *B&B* #57 and #58 (December 1964-January 1965 and February-March 1965). Deeming the series a hit, DC had *Metamorpho* #1 on the stands five months after the tryouts ended.

With its tragic hero and hip, irreverent dialogue, the Metamorpho feature possessed the same sensibilities that **Arnold Drake** was bringing to the Doom Patrol. Both features had the flavor of the best of Stan Lee and company's comics but, significantly, neither was trying to duplicate Marvel's success. Rather, the Metamorpho and Doom Patrol creative teams were producing work that was challenging and exciting to themselves. Those personal voices, reflected in the humor and bite of the stories, sounded fresh and contemporary in ways that most DC titles did not.

Creep(y) Show

It was Gaines' famed 1950s EC horror comics—the same ones that fueled the creation of the Comics Code—which served as the inspiration for a new black-and-white comic book in late 1964. Approached by a budding young cartoonist and former Marine named **Russ Jones**, Gaines appreciated his enthusiasm for reviving the chillers in a black-and-white, non-Code magazine like *Mad* but wasn't interested in doing so himself. Instead, Jones turned his attention to **Warren Publishing** (Jones).

Jack Davis' lighthearted cover eased readers into Warren's new horror comic book in late 1964.
Creepy TM and © New Comic Company.

Since the late 1950s, publisher James Warren had published a small group of magazines like *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Spacemen* devoted to the science fiction and horror movies of the past and present. His line also included Harvey Kurtzman's *Help!*, the critically-beloved humor magazine. Its eclectic comics content had ranged from Gilbert Shelton's Superman takeoff Wonder Warthog (reprinted from 1962 and 1963 issues of the *Texas Ranger* college magazine) to excerpts from decades-old *Mutt and Jeff* newspaper strips. It also attracted its share of headaches, notably the 1962 lawsuit from Archie over Kurtzman and Bill Elder's Goodman Beaver story. Following the February 1964 edition (including Joel Siegel and Hank Hinton's inflammatory "My First Golden Book of God"), *Help!* went on an eight month hiatus and Warren began entertaining possibilities for a new magazine.

Prominent fan writer-artist Larry Ivie had previously pitched the idea to Warren but he, like Jones in 1964, was turned down (Goodwin 9). The former Marine was nothing if not persistent and—backed up by recent acquaintances and former EC artists Wally Wood and Joe Orlando—eventually managed to sell the publisher on a six-page "Monster Comics" feature in the new *Monster World* magazine. Jim Warren finally agreed to a full comic magazine and "Project D" was underway. Inspired by a word balloon in an EC story featuring the Old Witch narrator, Jones suggested ***Creepy*** as the series' official title and his publisher loved it (Jones).

"My deal with Jim Warren was five hundred dollars an issue," Jones remembered. "I was editor, and packager. The headaches had already started, when some of the proposed talent began to complain about Jim's page rate. He wanted to spend thirty dollars a page for art...not a cent more. I began to wonder if he really wanted to do the mag, since obviously, he didn't want to pay what both Dell and the newly formed Gold Key Comics were paying—thirty five per page. Finally, I simply told Jim to deduct five dollars a page from my editor's fee, and give it to the artists. If I'd done the same with the scripts, I would have done everything for free" (Jones).

Larry Ivie was soon part of the mix as a writer and, through him, artist **Al Williamson** joined the fold. Highly regarded for his elegant illustrative style, the 33-year-old Williamson was as passionate a fan of the artists who'd preceded him as he was of some of the highly-polished contemporaries who shared his sensibilities. With his help, idols like Reed Crandall, George Evans, Frank Frazetta, Roy G. Krenkel, and Joe Orlando were recruited to work on the new horror comic book, as were friends Gray Morrow and Angelo Torres. In the absence of color, several of the artists added further dimension to their work through a wash effect that only added to *Creepy*'s lush look.

As important as each of the artists was to the project, it was *Creepy*'s other primary writer who may have been most significant in making it gel. Originally envisioning himself as more of an illustrator, 27-year-old **Archie Goodwin** had built an impressive résumé by 1964 that included a stint on Leonard Starr's *On Stage* comic strip and an editorial post at *Redbook* magazine. His abilities as a writer were considerable, but it was Goodwin's even-tempered editorial and management skills that consistently helped him cultivate stellar creators throughout his career. His influence was great enough that he was named story editor with Russ

A mammoth Kirby-choreographed fight in Fantastic Four *#25 culminated with the Hulk's defeat of the Thing.*
The Hulk, the Thing TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

What was left of the once abundant fantasy stories were mostly being dressed up as quasi-series usually scripted by Larry Lieber over Lee plots. *Tales To Astonish* backed up its Giant-Man lead feature with Wasp stories where she'd narrate a science fiction short. The enigmatic Watcher (first seen in *Fantastic Four* #13) did essentially the same thing following the Iron Man stories in *Tales of Suspense* although issue #53 did slip in the character's origin. The thrill of being part of an ongoing saga was not to be had in throwaway episodes like these.

Effective with issues on sale in the summer of 1964, Lee did something about it. *Tales To Astonish* #59 boasted a fight between Giant-Man and the Hulk. When the dust settled in issue #60, the Green Goliath had his own co-feature by Lee, Ditko, and Roussos. (The latter, incidentally, used the alias George Bell on all his Marvel work to avoid retaliation from his DC editors.) Meanwhile, *Tales of Suspense* #58 ran its own dust-up with Iron Man and Captain America. Sure enough, Cap was starring in a Lee-Kirby-Stone co-feature one issue later. (Content to leave superheroes behind, Larry Lieber found plenty to occupy his time on Marvel's Westerns.)

Cap's strip overflowed with thrilling acrobatics and action, embodying Jack Kirby's evident pleasure at once again being able to draw the character's solo adventures. (That thrill extended to Cap's wartime guest-appearance in *Sgt. Fury* #13.) Lee, on the other hand, might have taken more satisfaction in the Hulk strip—featuring a mystery menace called the Leader—since it reversed the villainous trajectory he'd been on.

The Hulk's short-lived turn as a rampaging bad guy reached its zenith in *Fantastic Four* #25-26 (April-May 1964). Discovering that Rick Jones had "deserted" him for Captain America, the monster stormed Manhattan and the FF was its first line of defense. With the Invisible Girl and Human Torch rendered unconscious and Mister Fantastic already sidelined with a virus, the Thing suddenly became the city's last hope. The conflict raged for pages. Vehicles were torn in two, buildings collapsed, whole blocks lost power, and the valiant Thing was finally left in a heap as *FF* #25 ended. The Hulk had prevailed.

Staggering to his feet, Ben Grimm tried to process the first defeat of his career. "Like my dear ol' Aunt Petunia used to say," he sputtered, "'you only die once.' And that's the *only* way he'll stop me now...by *killin'* me!!"

The concluding installment brought the Avengers into the fray, literally running into the embattled FF and allowing the Hulk to escape in the process. With neither group willing to budge on jurisdiction, they all converged on the metal shell of a partially constructed building for their last stand. Rick Jones, alone among all the heroes in knowing that the Hulk was really Bruce Banner, finally got close enough to administer a gamma-powered sedative that allowed the green

Every Lee-Kirby superhero came together over the course of Fantastic Four *#25 and 26's Hulk opus.*
Fantastic Four, the Avengers, the Hulk TM and © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Spider-Man was distinctively agile and wiry in the hands of original artist and co-creator Steve Ditko, as seen in these pages from The Amazing Spider-Man *#10 (March 1964). The web-slinger's conflict with the Big Man and the Enforcers also advanced a subplot involving Peter Parker's romance with Betty Brant and culminated with a bit of soul-searching by Daily Bugle publisher J. Jonah Jameson, who admitted to himself that his vendetta against Spider-Man was rooted in jealousy. Original art scans courtesy Heritage Auctions.*