

ROY THOMAS' ACTION-HERO
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

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**DICK
GIORDANO**

**AT CHARLTON & DC
1952 TO 1970!**



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Dick Giordano, Pete Morisi

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On Our Cover: Our thanks to Gary Groth and Fantagraphics for permission to reprint the photo of artist/editor Dick Giordano from an issue of *Comics Journal*—and to Michael Ambrose, Neil A. Hansen, Michael Dunne, and Bob Bailey (hope we didn’t we leave anybody out!) for the late-1960s art scans from Charlton and DC mags depicting work by Dick himself (*Sarge Steel*), Steve Ditko (*Captain Atom*, *Blue Beetle*, *The Question*, and *The Hawk and The Dove*), Pete Morisi (*Thunderbolt*), and Jim Aparo (*Aquaman*). Oh yeah, and to layout guru Jon B. Cooke for putting the whole marvelous mishmash together! [Art © 2011 DC Comics.]

Above: A decade or so back, Dick Giordano contributed this *Sarge Steel* illustration to a “Charlton Portfolio”—and since he always said Sarge was his personal favorite among the heroes he’d drawn, it seemed the perfect lead-in for this issue of A/E. Thanks to Neil A. Hansen. [Art © 2011 DC Comics.]

This issue dedicated to the memory of:

Dick Giordano, Tony DiPreta, Jon D’Agostino, Vern Henkel,
Lew Sayre Schwartz, & Marshall Lanz



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FIRST PRINTING.

One Of The Greats—*And* One Of The Good Guys

Maybe I went about it all wrong.

Perhaps the thing to have done this issue would've been to locate a rare, maybe even never-printed interview with the late Dick Giordano and make it the centerpiece of *Alter Ego* #106.

However, I was aware that many, many interviews with Dick had been published over the years, particularly after he became DC's managing editor. Oh, if an interview had popped up that had seemed an ideal fit for this magazine, I'd have been happy to print it... but none did, and I didn't really go looking for one. If one does show up, I hardly feel I'm forever precluded from running a Giordano interview in *A/E*.

Or perhaps I could've talked someone into writing a retrospective of Dick's career, at least through 1970 or the mid-1970s, the somewhat elastic area of *A/E*'s chronological franchise.

However, I felt Michael Eury, editor of *A/E*'s sister mag *Back Issue*, had already done a good job of that in his 2003 book *Dick Giordano: Changing Comics, One Day at a Time*. That volume may have officially gone out of print, but recently TwoMorrows publisher John Morrow announced that a few remaining copies of the book had turned up, so technically it's even still available without one's having to troll for it on eBay.

So I settled for a couple of discussion panels at notable comics conventions on different coasts, held only a little more than a year apart—but with vastly different purposes and feels.

In June of 2009, as the introduction to the next piece will expand upon, Dick and I sat together in Charlotte, North Carolina, on what sadly

would turn out to be the last of maybe two dozen panels we'd shared over the past forty-plus years, whereon we had answered questions and volunteered anecdotes for an audience appreciative of the behind-the-scenes activities of the comics industry. That Steve Skeates, a major scripter for editor Dick at two companies, joined us this time was the cherry on the sundae.

Thirteen months later, in July of 2010, with Dick having passed away on March 27th of that year, five of his friends and colleagues celebrated his life and achievements on a "Remembering Dick Giordano" panel at the San Diego Comic-Con—and several more fellow professionals rose up out of the audience to add their own vocal tributes to the chorus.

This latter panel was an homage to a towering and beloved talent... while the earlier one was just three guys sitting around in a room swapping yarns about the comic book biz, mostly about the last half of the 1960s.

Between those extremes—yet embodying them, embracing them—lies the essence of who Dick was, and why all of us cared—and still care—so much about him.

No, I don't think this issue will provide the last word you'll read about Dick Giordano in the pages of *Alter Ego*.

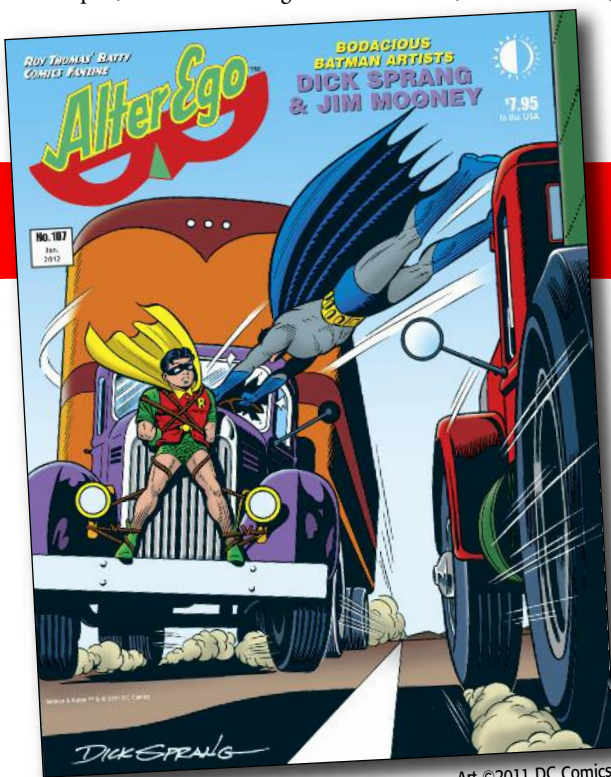
For as long as we live, and hopefully afterward, people will fondly remember Dick and what he did in and for comic books.

Like I say in the above title: he was one of the greats—and he was also one of the good guys.

Those two things aren't always encompassed by the same man—but they definitely were in the case of Dick Giordano.

Bestest,

Roy



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#107

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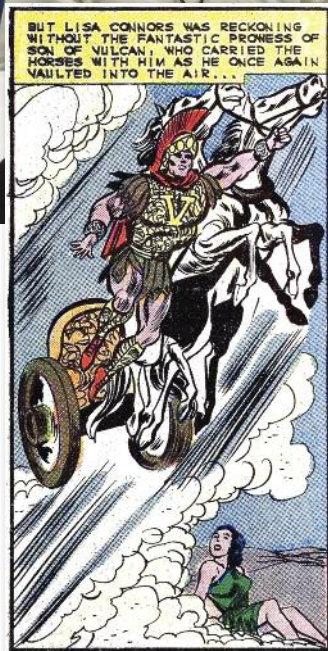
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[illegible]

Dick Giordano was the original artist of *Sarge Steel*, the metal-fisted private eye. His cover above for issue #4 (July 1965) was done not long before Dick succeeded Sarge's official creator, Pat Masulli, as Charlton's comics editor. [All three art spots © 2011 DC Comics—and ain't that a kick in the head!]

In Charlotte, for some years, I (often in tandem with A/E associate editor Jim Amash) moderated a Golden Age panel. By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, however, the relatively few surviving 1930s-40s creators came to fewer and fewer cons—and even the



It Was Forty Years Ago Today...

Roy and Dick together on another panel—nearly four decades earlier, in 1971, probably at a New York comics convention.
Thanks to Mike Feldman.

GIORDANO: Well, Roy was probably feeling guilty, so he recommended Denny O'Neil to me. They were... pals?

THOMAS: Denny and I met back in Missouri, right before I came to New York. He was writing for the local daily newspaper in my home county of Cape Girardeau. It's the biggest town between St. Louis and Memphis, on the Mississippi River. That's where I went to college; it's near the little town of Jackson, where Gary and I grew up. And Denny was in Cape, living behind the police station, which was currently housed in what had been a church. My mother saw a couple of articles he wrote about comics in the *Southeast Missourian* to fill in for the summer, and she sent them to me. I contacted him, and next time he was coming back through St. Louis, where he'd gone to college and where I was teaching, he interviewed me. And so later, when I moved to New York, I sent him the Marvel writer's test, and he went on to ... I don't know. Whatever happened to Denny? I don't know whatever became of him.

[audience groans]
Yeah, some obscure little career, only writing some of the best "Batman" stories ever.

GIORDANO: Denny, of course, had enough to do at Marvel, and



Abbott And Costello Meet Steve Skeates

On the 2009 panel, Steve gets agitated while making a point—maybe about the Charlton *Abbott & Costello* series he scripted for Giordano with artist Henry Scarpelli, based on the Hanna-Barbera TV-cartoon starring the famed comedy team. Thanks to Jim Ludwig for retrieving this page from issue #5 (Nov. 1968)—and to Donnie Pitchford for the "screen capture" from Bob & Mary Lou Burr's DVD recording of the panel, as forwarded by Michael Ambrose. [AEC panels © 2011 the respective copyright holders.]

they didn't like him wandering around, so he became "Sergius O'Shaugnessy" when he worked for me. If you find any of the old Charlton books, "Sergius O'Shaugnessy" is Denny O'Neil. And Denny, I think, recommended Steve [Skeates]. I was desperate for talent... Whoever walked in the door got a job to do, and I was trying to do comic books with Charlton better than they had been.

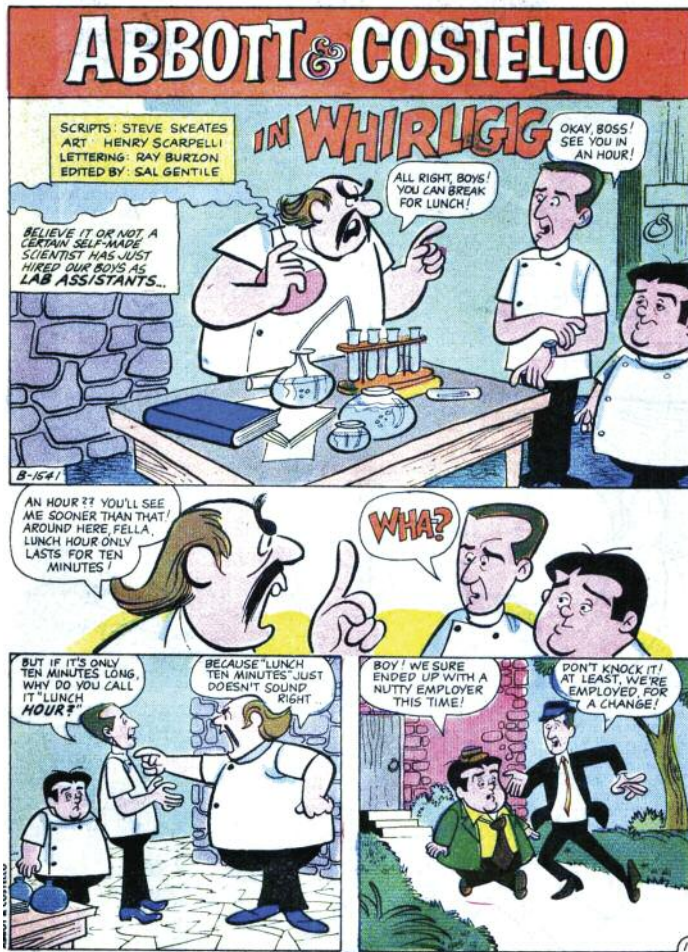
THOMAS: [to Skeates] That was us. We walked in the door.

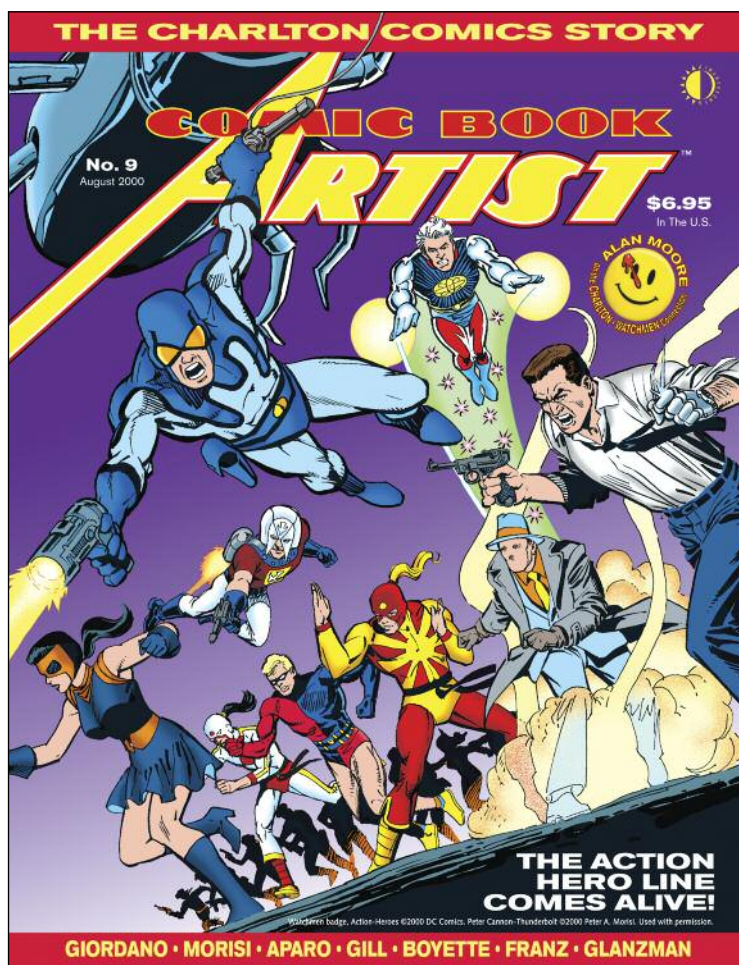
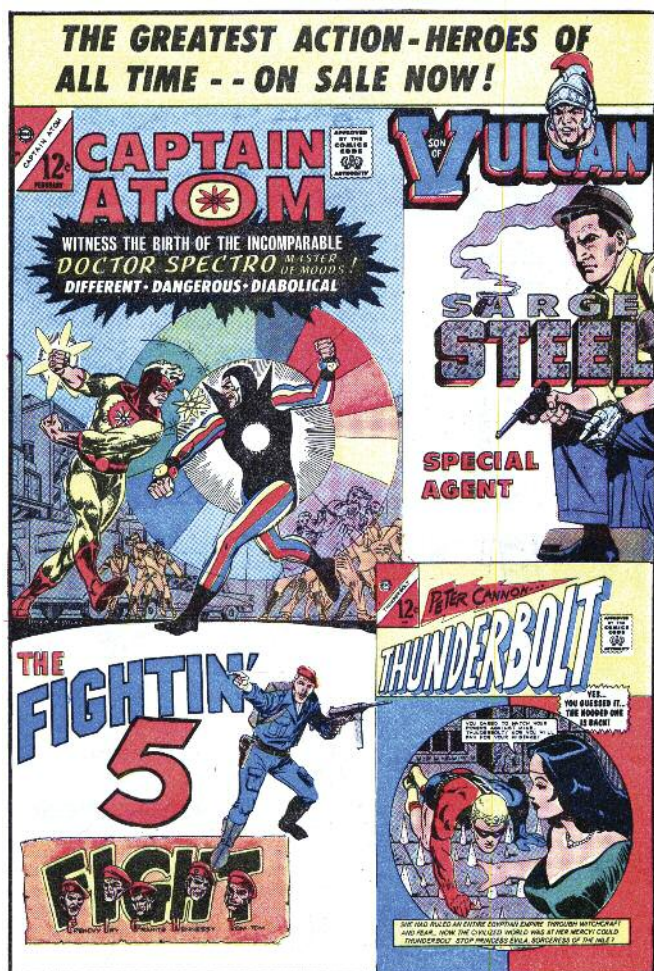
GIORDANO: I found some people—amazingly, Jim Aparo was in a filing cabinet. Not him, but his work. [audience laughs] He sent in samples, and everybody ignored them. And the first day I got there, I'm going through the filing cabinet and I'm picking talent out that had been totally ignored. So he [indicates Thomas] helped me with Denny, Denny helped me with Steve, I found Jim on my own, and later on, I think you [indicates Thomas again] helped me with Gary [Friedrich], too. Didn't you put Gary in touch with me? [Thomas affirms] So we had our incestuous, but happy, team. We were all intergrouped together.

And Roy and I always—even though he was working for Marvel and I worked for Charlton—we would find ways to get together in places where we were unlikely to meet up with anybody from our respective companies, and it was a fun time, actually, until I found out who I was working for. [chuckles] They posed as publishers, but they were really junk dealers. Not the kind of junk you might think. I remember, one time, during the course of my employment there—if you're not familiar with this, the editorial offices and the printing plant were in the same building.

THOMAS: Up in Derby, Connecticut.

GIORDANO: Yeah. We had some artists on staff, names you may have seen.... Charlie Nicholas was on staff... Vince Alascia, Jon D'Agostino.





Lights! Camera! Action Heroes!

(Left:) Dick probably composed this early-1966 house ad for Charlton's "Action Hero" line right after he became editor, because *Son of Vulcan* (which Dick never edited) is still ballyhooed, and Ditko's *Captain Atom* cover depicts the hero still in his original costume, which Dick would soon have changed—or else it was vacating comics editor Pat Masulli who coined the term "action hero," which seems less likely. "Blue Beetle," *Judomaster*, *Thunderbolt*, and "The Question" were still just around the corner at this point in time.

(Right:) In 2000 Dick drew this spendid cover for Jon B. Cooke's *Comic Book Artist* vol. 1 #9. The latter is a major reference work for the history of Charlton's Silver Age. [Heroes TM & © 2011 DC Comics.]

across the street from Marvel. Fifty-ninth Street.

THOMAS: My own experience working for Charlton was a little weird, because you [indicating Steve] were in New York, at least [when] working for Charlton, and of course, [indicates Giordano] you'd been doing this for years. In my case, I was still teaching high school [in St. Louis] and running the first incarnation of *Alter Ego* as this little magazine I had just taken over, and suddenly I got the letter from your predecessor [to Giordano] as editor of all the various Charlton things, Pat Masulli. He had previously sent me a couple of letters that I could print, but I couldn't use his name, and he now said he wanted to try to get some new writing blood into the Charlton books.

So he sent this letter to several fanzines and said, "Can you put it in your magazines that we're looking for people to write maybe a *Son of Vulcan* or a *Blue Beetle*?" Well, I didn't put out more than one or two issues a year, and I'm not going to tell anybody else and create my own competition. So I never published any information about that; I figured I'd leave that to the other fanzines. I just wrote a story myself! [audience laughs] I did a *Son of Vulcan* about filming a Trojan War movie and sent it in. And then Pat Masulli asked me to write a *Blue Beetle*, in which I used a lot of Egyptian mythology, because, a couple of years earlier, I'd been accepted by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute to study Egyptology, but I didn't have the money to support myself while studying,

so I couldn't go there. If I could've got by without eating for several years, maybe I'd have become an Egyptologist, and I'm not sure that would have been anybody's gain.

About that time, ["Superman" editor] Mort Weisinger offered me a job at DC. And as soon as he found out I'd done those scripts for Charlton, he said, "Well, that has to stop immediately. You can't be working for DC and work for that crummy little outfit at the same time." But the funny thing is, as soon as I got to New York, I discovered I hated working for Weisinger, so I just lasted two weeks.

Does anybody else on the panel have anything they want to say? Otherwise, we'll turn it over to questions from the audience. [when neither Skeates nor Giordano speaks up:] Of course, the most famous thing Charlton did was to publish the characters that became the springboard for the *Watchmen*, right? They were sort of mutated by Alan Moore, because he had wanted to kill them off and turn them into monsters and so forth. DC had just bought them; they weren't going to let him do that, so he ended up making them into the *Watchmen*, which worked out better for all concerned.

GIORDANO: Absolutely.

THOMAS: So the Charlton-born characters still live on, and DC has



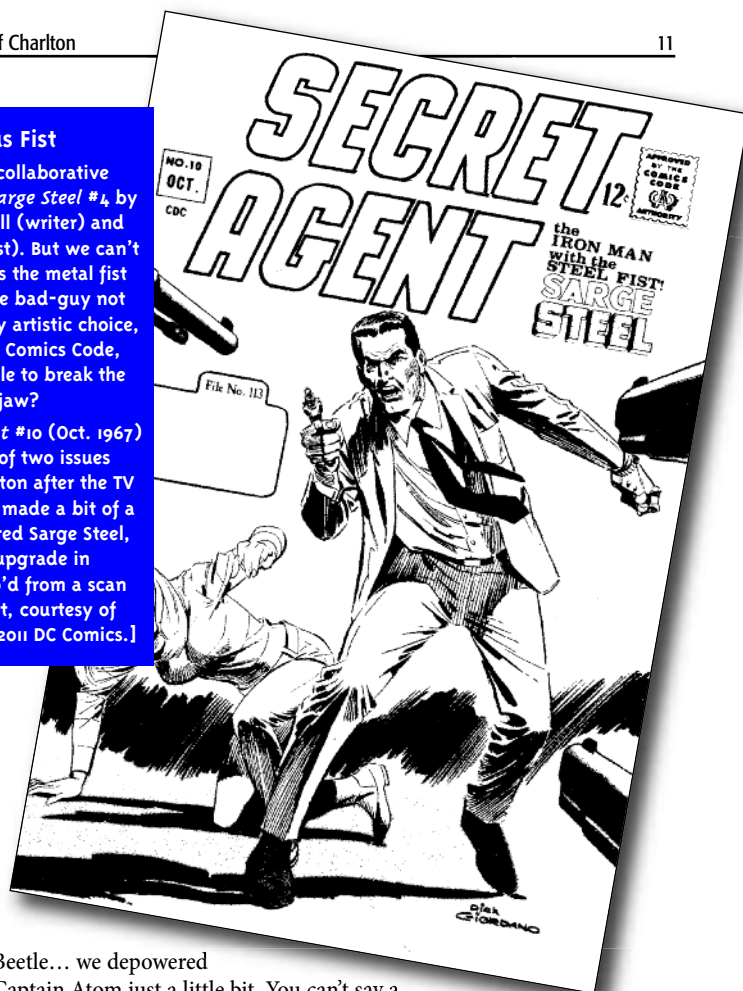
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Archives volumes reprinting *Captain Atom*, *Blue Beetle*, and "The Question."

GIORDANO: Yeah. I called our [Charlton] line the "Action Hero" line, because I was never really a fan of super-heroes. And I'm still not. [audience chuckles] Capes and spandex groups, as a rule, don't appeal to me. I liked Batman because he *didn't* have super-powers. So, starting with that as a background, I tried to establish a line of action heroes—that's why I called them that—that weren't particularly super-powered, but had something interesting to help them along the way. Another new Blue

A Ferrous Fist

(Left:) A nicely collaborative action page from *Sarge Steel* #4 by the team of Joe Gill (writer) and Dick Giordano (artist). But we can't help wondering: Is the metal fist that's slugging the bad-guy not shown in panel 3 by artistic choice, or by edict of the Comics Code, 'cause it'd be liable to break the crook's jaw?

(Right:) *Secret Agent* #10 (Oct. 1967) was the second of two issues published by Charlton after the TV series *Secret Agent* made a bit of a splash—but it starred Sarge Steel, with a slight upgrade in occupation. Repro'd from a scan of the original art, courtesy of Neil A. Hansen. [© 2011 DC Comics.]



Beetle... we depowered Captain Atom just a little bit. You can't say a guy with that name had atomic powers but he doesn't have them anymore, because there's only so much you can do with them. So we concentrated on people who had reverence of some sort for *The Fightin' 5* and *Sarge Steel*.

THOMAS: I forget who did *Sarge Steel*.

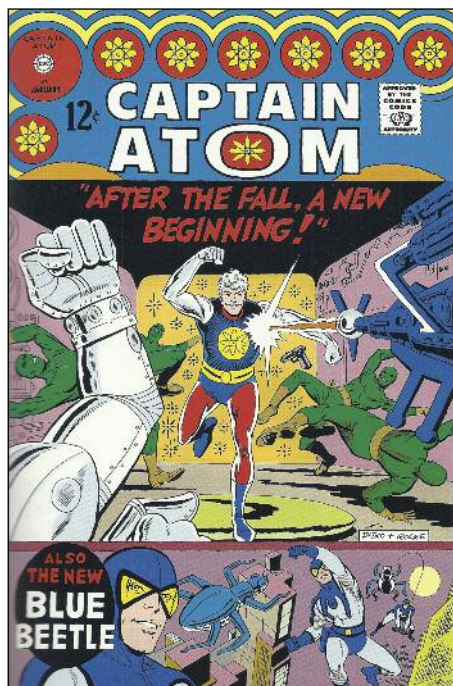
GIORDANO: I loved that character. When I moved to DC, Paul bought up a bunch of the Charlton characters for me to play with, which I never got around to doing. I put up with the Alan Moore thing that you mentioned a little while ago. But I felt that he should create new characters sort of loosely based on the Charlton characters, and then he could have ownership of them, which worked out, as you said, better for everybody.

THOMAS: And the interesting thing is that, because you had Captain Atom as the only real super-hero at Charlton, that's why in the *Watchmen* book and the movie, a lot of the structure is based on the fact that there's really only one super-hero—Dr. Manhattan—and everybody else is just guys in masks....

GIORDANO: With Ditko's help, we took the scarab away from the Blue Beetle and gave him a "Bug" [vehicle] to fly with. In my mind, it looked a lot like Spider-Man, his

A Ditko Machine

After he left Marvel at the turn of 1966, artist/plotter Steve Ditko became virtually a one-man comics company for cut-rate Charlton—drawing both a sartorially-redesigned "Captain Atom" and a second 1960s "Blue Beetle" starting with *Captain Atom* #84 (Jan. 1967). The Beetle was soon spun off into his own title, whose first issue (dated June '67) also inaugurated Ditko's offbeat series "The Question." Sure, Locke Mastroserio inked "Captain Atom" and Gary Friedrich dialogued the first four "Blue Beetle" outings—but it was mostly a Ditko tour de force. And the whole star-studded smorgasbord can be found these days behind the hard covers of a single hardcover book: *The Action Heroes Archives, Vol. 2* (2007)! [© 2011 DC Comics.]



flying down with his handle on it off the Bug. But, of course, Ditko had just come off of *Spider-Man*. You can't help but be influenced by what you just did, with everybody raving about it. And then "The Question" came along. I think that's the first time we saw Steve's being interested in the Ayn Rand philosophy. It didn't mean anything to me, but he left two people dying in the sewer. He didn't kill them; he let them die. What a wave of mail [audience chuckles] I got, because at the time, that was unheard of!

THOMAS: The Question, of course, was the basis of the Rorschach character [in *Watchmen*].

GIORDANO: [to Skeates] Did you write "The Question"?

SKEATES: I dialogued it, yeah.

GIORDANO: I know Steve [Ditko] didn't like to take credit for writing, and he often gave credit lines away, including one to "D. Glanzman," I think. I forget what book that was, but that was my assistant. Dick could barely write his own name, much less write a comic book. [audience laughs]

THOMAS: So are there any questions anybody has about Charlton?... Yes, in the back first?

MALE FAN #1: Charlton had those very weird covers. They were printed on inferior cover stock, and I've heard they were printed with machines that were used to print cereal boxes.... [Thomas repeats and reinterprets the fan's question to Giordano]

GIORDANO: Oh, the Charlton cover stock? Everything that Charlton printed was done for the cheapest amount of money they could spend. And yes, all of the stock looked bad. The interior stock was not as good as our competitors'.

THOMAS: I've got a question... about Charlton's really awful lettering. [to Skeates] You had it, too.

SKEATES: Oh, yeah. "A. Machine."

The "I's" Have It!

(Right:) Dick's description below of the workings of the lettering device which sometimes received a byline as "A. Machine" must be read to be believed! This panel from *Son of Vulcan* #50 illustrates his point about the problems posed by the contraption's rendering of the letter "I," which, because it lacked horizontal bars at top and bottom, left way too much "air" before and after it, as per the spacing in the words "it" and "time." And yet—"A. Machine" definitely did possess a "barred I," which Son of Vulcan uses as a personal pronoun; in fact, that version was sometime employed when a word beginning with an "I" led off a sentence, as with the word "It'll" in the lady's tirade. So why didn't "A. Machine" simply use that "I" character all the time? Alas, we can only guess at that minor mystery.... [© 2011 DC Comics.]



THOMAS: Yeah, it was a machine. [to Giordano] What was "A. Machine"?

GIORDANO: That was somebody else's idea, but my wife [Marie] was "A. Machine." What it was—it was a big typewriter with a big head so that you could put a 12-inch page into it, because in those days, the pages were twelve-by-eighteen. What I did—actually, in a way, they're doing it now, but [we did it] very clumsily—Charlton had somebody who had a metal font, and they made metal pieces for the typewriter. And what happened, really, was that I got the typewriter in my house, Charlton had paid for it, and my wife sat there, typing the balloons and the captions.

THOMAS: Oh, so she did that!

GIORDANO: And sometimes, yeah, we'd get a little extra income, too.

MALE FAN #2: So you actually put the original pages through this thing? [Thomas relays the question to Giordano]

GIORDANO: Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! [audience laughs] This is all before computers.

THOMAS: Did they curl through, or did they go straight?

GIORDANO: They curled up, just like on a typewriter. The board was fed in this way. [mimics feeding a sheet of paper into a typewriter]



Blessed Are The Peacemakers

(Above:) The Peacemaker gets downright warlike in issue #2 (May 1967), drawn by artist/co-creator Pat Boyette! Script by Joe Gill. Thanks to Mike Nielsen. [© 2011 DC Comics.]

The photo of Boyette (left) appeared, along with a brief bio, in *The Peacemaker*, Vol. 3, #1 (March 1967)—while the pic of ubiquitous Charlton scripter Gill was originally spotlighted in Jon B. Cooke's *Comic Book Artist* [Vol. 1] #9 back in 2000. Thanks to Michael Ambrose for the Boyette photo scan.



they had, including a few romance books. *Sweethearts*, I think, was one of them. So Charlton got, along with the rights to those titles, stacks of artwork, and put me out of business for a while because they had enough artwork....

THOMAS: That's why you blew up the dam! [audience laughs] Another question?

MALE FAN #5: The second part of the question is why, a year later, there was a *Mysterious Suspense* with "The Question" and a final issue of *Blue Beetle*. I'm assuming that was inventory.

GIORDANO: Stupid. Stupidity had a role in that. [audience titters]

THOMAS: Not in finally printing the stories.

MALE FAN #5: When I was a kid in high school, I loved the books. And all of a sudden, they disappeared.

GIORDANO: What happened was, because our marketing department at Charlton was not active in promoting the Action Hero line, the sales were low, and that was my real main reason for leaving there. I felt like I had worked very hard on that line and it wasn't being backed up by anything. When I left, I don't think they cared much, so after I left in '67, something like that, they just cancelled the whole line. Sal Gentile [pronounced "gen-TILL-ee"] was the editor, my replacement at the time, and Sal was a very sweet guy but wasn't very aggressive, and I guess he didn't work hard enough to keep things going. But they finally sold those properties to DC.

You know, I found out later—and this may have applied to the Action Hero line as well—they did not copyright most of their stuff or trademark most of the properties that they were publishing. They didn't bother; it cost too much money. Did you know that, at that time, a trademark, worldwide,



Nothing Will Ever Be The "Thane"

After "Thane of Bagarth" artist Jim Aparo began doing work for Dick Giordano at DC, new Charlton editor Sal Gentile gave the assignment to Sanho Kim. Writer/co-creator Steve Skeates didn't feel Kim's work was appropriate to the strip, whatever its artistic worth. Thanks to Michael Ambrose. [© 2011 the respective copyright holders.]

would have cost \$10,000? They weren't going to pay \$10,000 on 30-40 titles, so I'm not even sure those were copyrighted at all or not. Paul [Levitz, publisher of DC] got them for a very, very low rate moneywise. And right up until the time they were closing the doors, we were sending royalty checks out to Charlton. Every time we used one of the characters in a book of a certain length, or if the book was titled after the character, we figured at a higher rate. We kept sending out checks, but they were very, very low compared to what we were paying for new stuff.

THOMAS: [to Skeates] You worked for Sal Gentile for a while. I was going to see how the transition from working for Dick Giordano was from him. Would you have continued working for Charlton after you started

working for Dick at DC?

SKEATES: Yeah, yeah. I didn't want to give up "Thane of Bagarth" or the *Abbott and Costello* stuff, so I kept doing those books and, I think, *Dr.*

Graves, and things like that. I liked Sal Gentile and found him to be a very friendly and nice human being, but I disagreed with just about all of his editorial decisions, so it put me in a strange place. Ultimately, I just stopped working for Charlton and concentrated on DC. But for a while there, I was still enjoying a lot of what I had been doing and wanted to continue doing it, until certain editorial decisions made me change my mind. But yeah, I liked the guy.

THOMAS: Wasn't he the



All You Need Is Dove

(Left:) Steve Ditko (seen in 1960s photo taken by studio-mate Eric Stanton) was credited as giving "plot suggestions" to writer Steve Skeates for the debut of "The Hawk and the Dove" in *Showcase* #75 (June 1968), but took over the scripting himself as the series got its own title.

(Right:) Ditko was succeeded on *The Hawk and the Dove* by Gil Kane (photo), who also wrote and drew an issue or two—before the scripting reins were returned to Skeates with #4 (Feb.-March 1969). The Kane photo was used in material to promote his *Star Hawks* newspaper comic strip.

[H&D © 2011 DC Comics.]



one that put the Japanese artist on your sword-and-sorcery hero, "Thane"?

SKEATES: Yeah, Sanho Kim.

THOMAS: All of a sudden, there was a "slight" switch in art style from Jim Aparo, even though Kim was a good artist.

SKEATES: Yeah, yeah, that was one of the decisions that I didn't like. But Jim could no longer do it. He had a lot of stuff he was doing over at DC by then, and I just didn't like that choice. Kim's art just didn't seem to fit the character much, so that's one of the things I started losing faith in continuing there. Also, a change in artist in *Abbott and Costello* and a different letterer on *Abbott and Costello* who'd often do the punchline first and then the setup line. [audience chuckles] Boom!

THOMAS: They'd gotten away by that time from "A. Machine" at least, slowly.

SKEATES: Yeah, right, yeah.

THOMAS: [to Giordano] But how did you get rid of "A. Machine?" Because your Action Hero books didn't use "A. Machine" much. You got away from that.

GIORDANO: Oh, yeah, we did. Not all of a sudden. All of the books had backup stories.

THOMAS: But in the lead stories, you were getting away from it.

GIORDANO: I remember we were using it on "The Question," mostly because Steve was doing nine-panel pages, and we had to try to fit things into a very narrow area. That was easier to do on a machine than real lettering. Jon D'Agostino was the staff letterer. He stutters very badly, but he's a great letterer. He was our Gaspar Saladino when you wanted it done, and a lot of the hand lettering he did. Well, he couldn't do 17 books a month; nobody could.

Turning a moment to *Aquaman*, [indicates Steve] that was his shining

S.A.G. Under The Sea

Artist Jim Aparo and writer Steve Skeates caricature themselves as sea-bottom working stiffs in these panels from *Aquaman* #50 (May-June 1970). Note mention of their slave-driving boss, "Dikk"! Thanks to Jon B. Cooke.
[© 2011 DC Comics.]



moment, in my humble opinion, at DC. We never worked really hard at it. We got together once every three or four months. Jim Aparo didn't like to come into the city. He lived in Connecticut. We'd get together and talk over a couple of ideas, [indicates Steve] he'd go ahead and write them, I'd send them to Jim; he'd go over them. I think Steve used to get a little nervous because I'd just stare at the copy. Of course Steve likes to write this much [holds his hands wide apart] when he only has space for this much. [moves hands closely together; audience chuckles again] Steve pointed out I'd made a serious blunder one time. I don't remember what it was—

SKEATES: Me, neither, actually.

GIORDANO: But basically, all I was doing was cutting. I wasn't rewriting; I was just cutting out some of his stuff. But I thought those books did very well. I was not told that they did very well until Paul Levitz came across [retired DC co-publisher] Jack Liebowitz's handwritten notes. We found out that the sales on *Aquaman* were sky-high. They were much better than we were told at that time. There was no glory, because you wouldn't have gotten any royalties, but it was a relief for me to find



When More Than Mortgages Were Underwater...

Jim Aparo and two panels of his from *Aquaman* #50 (March-April 1970), as written by Steve Skeates and edited by Dick Giordano. Photo courtesy of Ed Fields; thanks to Bob Bailey for the art scan.
[Aquaman panels © 2011 DC Comics.]

“This Is Really Our Last Chance To Talk About Dick”

The San Diego 2010 “Remembering DICK GIORDANO” Tribute Panel

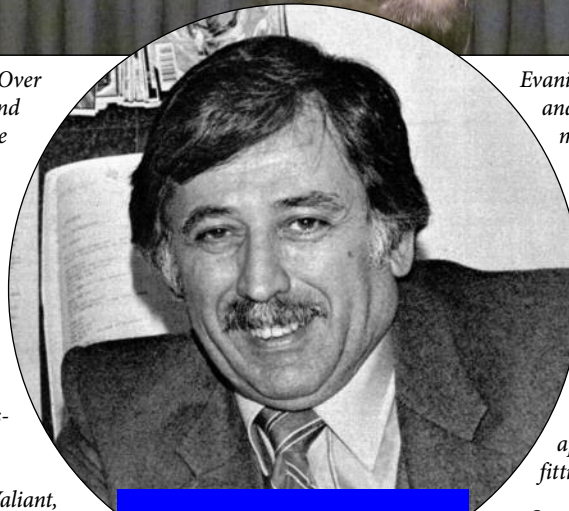
Conducted by Mark Evanier • Recorded, Transcribed, & Annotated by Mark DiFruscio



TRANScriber's INTRODUCTION: Over the course of his 50-year career, artist and editor Dick Giordano stood as one of the great cornerstones of the comic book industry, and remained so until the time of his passing at age 77 on March 27, 2010. Widely regarded as the quintessential consummate professional, and loved by many of his colleagues for being both friend and mentor, Giordano's legacy remains one of the more unique in the annals of comic book history. Spanning the better part of a half-century, that legacy encompassed a multitude of professional roles and creative partnerships at numerous comic book companies, including Charlton, Warren, DC, Continuity, Marvel, Valiant, and Future Comics. Indeed, a listing of Giordano's various collaborators over the years reads like a veritable Who's Who of legendary artists, from Adams, Andru, and Aparo to Buscema, Ditko, Infantino, and Rogers—and far too many more to be listed here.

In the months since Giordano's death, numerous memorials have emerged in different forms, prominent among them the tribute panel “Remembering Dick Giordano” at the 2010 San Diego Comic-Con. The program notes described it thus in advance: “A panel of comic luminaries and friends... pay tribute to the man who left a huge impact on the world of comics.” TV and comics writer Mark Evanier skillfully presided over the proceedings, joined by writer-editor Paul Levitz, writer-artist Bob Layton, artist Joe Rubinstein, and Giordano's longtime assistant Pat Bastienne.

Before the panel began, Layton took his place on the podium with



And, In This Corner...

(Top:) The San Diego tribute panelists, left to right: writer Mark Evanier (moderator)—artists Joe Rubinstein & Bob Layton — Dick's associate/assistant (and 1980s DC talent coordinator) Pat Bastienne—and writer Paul Levitz. Photo taken by and courtesy of Mark DiFruscio.

(Above:) Dick Giordano himself, in a photo published in the 1980s in *Comics Interview* magazine. Photo courtesy of editor/publisher David Anthony Kraft.

Evanier to await the arrival of the other panelists, and chatted affably with some of the audience members as they filed into their seats. “There's already been several of these things,” Layton said of the tribute panel to come, “so this is really our last chance to talk about Dick.” When an audience member then playfully called out, “Bring back Future Comics!” Layton responded, “Working on it, actually.” He went on to explain: “There's that little thing called the iPad now, which is kind of like the new version of Future Comics. It gets rid of distributors and things. I've been approached. So I'm optimistic. That would be a fitting tribute for Dicky, as well.”

Once everyone took his/her seat, Evanier began with some opening remarks and then invited his fellow panelists to express their thoughts and appreciation for Giordano. Eventually Evanier welcomed audience members to share their reminiscences as well, prompting fellow professionals Anthony Tollin, John Lustig, Brent Anderson, and Bill Sienkiewicz to offer their heartfelt recollections of Dick Giordano.

“What's To Say? If You Knew Him, You Loved Him”

MARK EVANIER: How many people here in this room feel they owe a large chunk of their career to Dick Giordano? [A number of hands go up around the room] That's a lot of people. I'm gonna ask everybody to just talk about what Dick meant to them. I was trying to think of a way to describe what Dick meant to the industry... and I think I came up with something that I might want to throw out here:

There was a change in how comic books were edited around 1970 in this business. Prior to that, there was this tendency to kind of keep the freelancers as peons. To keep them thinking they were expendable, to think they were always about to be fired. Even the editors that we now look back with a certain amount of respect at were not that nice to the freelancers sometimes. I remember I interviewed George Kashdan, who was the editor that Dick replaced at DC, more or less. And one of the reasons he gave for why he was let go at DC was they felt he was too nice to the freelancers, and that he kept encouraging them to ask for more money by making them feel they had value.

Well, there are exceptions to this, obviously—we can all name many—but typically, today editors work with the talent more. And it always struck me that Dick was kind of the bridge between the old way of doing comics and the new way of doing comics. The first time he went to DC, he didn't quite fit in there because they weren't yet fully ready to turn loose of that old way of [doing things]. And he also had some clashes with the management there.... By the time that he came back to DC, there was a transition that had gone on in the business. And the business had kind of found its way towards Dick's way of looking at comics, and Dick's way of treating new talent, Dick's way of encouraging new talent and embracing it, and not looking at new people as a threat. I think that Dick may have the world record for having encouraged more new talent and more people to get into the business. Especially early on, at a time when it was kind of like, "Wait a minute, this isn't your industry, this is our industry."

He was a guy who loved comics his whole life. I think he always identified with readers more than he did with the publishers. The first time I met him, he was so gracious, he was so encouraging to everyone. He talked to everybody that I could see as an equal, even if they were a lowly person who had done nothing in comics. Obviously, at that point, he had been an established editor and a very talented artist. And I also found that he was a very, very nice man. You could go to him, and say to him, "You know, I think your company has screwed up." And he'd say, "You know, you're probably right. We have." A lot of people don't want to say that in this business.

I'd like to just ask each person to stand anywhere they like and tell us what Dick meant to you. And what you think people who didn't know him should know about him. Joe, I'll start with you...

JOE RUBINSTEIN: What's to say? If you knew him, you loved him. If you didn't know him, you're probably sad you didn't get to know him. By the way, especially since you were talking about "encouraging" as a world record, I was thinking that if you put all of Dick Giordano's and Wally Wood's assistants together, you'd have to have a coliseum for all of them.

BOB LAYTON: You'd need bigger than this room.

RUBINSTEIN: Oh yeah. Because you were Woody's assistant, and I was. And you were Dick's assistant, and I was. He was adorable. When you're in your teens, it never occurs to you that your parents were anything but your parents. Like, that's where they started. [Later] you realize that they had a life and a history. And once Dick passed away, I started to think about things... especially when I started to read all of the recollections and obits.

When I was 13 years old, I became Dick's assistant. [And] it suddenly hit me, he was never Mr. Giordano. He was Dick. He never went, "I'm the grown-up, you're the kid." I was trying to learn how to be an artist. I was learning how to be an inker. I'd say, "Dick, how do you do this?" And he would stop, on a deadline, and show me. I won't do that if I'm busy. But Dick would go, "I'm gonna show you how to do this."



Next Stop—Mount Rushmore!

Although, as Mark Evanier notes, Dick Giordano was a well-respected and influential editor—indeed, Michael Eury's 2003 book about his career, published by TwoMorrows, was subtitled *Changing Comics, One Day at a Time*—his heart always lay, clearly, with his art. Giordano's crisp, clean style loaned itself to producing definitive images of many of DC's major heroes, as indicated by this 2007 commission illo done for collector Arnie Grieves. [Superman & Wonder Woman TM & © 2011 DC Comics.]

He was sweet, he was adorable, he never got mad. He got *righteously* mad. He didn't like when people were screwed over.... You never once saw him yell at anybody. I saw him get frustrated once with a writer, who will remain nameless. I walked into Dick's office when he was editor in chief at DC. I go, "What's the matter?" He says, "I just talked to [the aforementioned writer]. I have to take a minute. Okay..."

So it's not like he would ever badmouth anybody. It's not like he would ever say anything to put anybody down. He was just the nicest man you ever met. As I said at his memorial in New York, whenever I saw him, I would usually plant a kiss right on his mouth. And he would fight me—

LAYTON: Who wouldn't? [laughter]

RUBINSTEIN: And you'll never have that experience. [laughter] Because that's what you do with your father, you know? You hug a fat guy. And he would laugh and he would let me do it. And he just knew that I loved him. Definitely. And I realized you and I loved him. I realized that Klaus [Janson] loved him, Terry [Austin] and Bob Wiacek loved him. I just



Mark Of The Professional

Mark Evanier has been working in comics since 1970; his scripting credits include *Groo the Wanderer*, *The DNAgents*, *Crossfire*, *Scooby Doo*, *Blackhawk*, and lots of characters covered in fur or feathers; he also writes TV animation, live-action TV, books on comic book history (such as *Kirby: King of Comics*), and a much-read blog at www.newsfromme.com. In the mid-1980s, during the editorial regime of Dick Giordano, he and veteran artist Dan Spiegle produced a critically acclaimed run of *Blackhawk*, set during the Second World War—as exemplified above by their splash page from issue #267 (Feb. 1984). Photo courtesy of Mark. [© 2011 DC Comics.]

RUBINSTEIN: That's it. The philosophy that Dick developed that everybody talks about is, he found good people and he let them do their thing. And that made them do their best. So my first job, I think it was Sol Harrison who said [to Dick], "All right, I'll give him the job, but you have to watch him." So I did the job, and I showed it to Dick, and he went, "Yeah it's fine." And it's not that he didn't care. It's like, "Yeah, I knew you could do it. There it is. Go hand it in."

[Or] I would be late on a job, and the great Dick Giordano would be there to help me with it: "Yeah, I'll take five pages." Most of you probably don't know the stress of meeting deadlines in comic books. But it's a lot. It's homework every night. It never stops. If you're lucky, it never stops. And then it piles up on you. And you can turn to somebody, a legend, your mentor, and say, "Can you help me?" "Yeah, I'll take five pages."

LAYTON: You know, one of my proudest days [was] when he asked me to help him out on a deadline. Those two or three pages I had drawn, I was so proud. I mean, oh my God.

RUBINSTEIN: Or there was this *Conan* black-&-white that got late that Dick was inking... and he got all of us, "The Legion of Super-Assistants," to help him out.

"It Was Dick's Idea To Do Future Comics"

LAYTON: It's gonna be really hard for me. These guys have all done these things before. This is the first time I've really appeared in public before to talk about Dick. Like Joe, I knew him when I was a teenager. I met him and Patty [Pat Bastienne] when I was like 19. And I didn't start out working for Dicky. But what happened was, I was working for Wally Wood. And we lived nearby, and I would ride in on the train. Patty would take me to the train station. And I would deliver pages for Wally Wood and I would catch the train with Dicky. And while I had him, like, captive prisoner for two hours on the way in, I would always be pulling out my stuff and forcing him to give me art lessons, you know. So that's kind of where our relationship began. But we—Pat and Dick and I—have always been kind of close.

I don't know that I can add to what Joe said in terms of him like as a mentor. He was terrific. He didn't heap a lot of praise on people. That's one of the things I kind of liked about Dicky. He wouldn't sit there and gush when you did a good job. Because you were *supposed* to do a good job, you know? He didn't say, "Oh man, you really knocked that one out of the park," or anything like that. He was just kind of like—if he didn't look at a page and, you know, say, "That head really sucks," you know you did okay. I kind of liked that.... One of the things he stressed to me very early in my career was that I should learn every aspect of the business. Not just being an inker, or being a penciler, or being a writer, but, you know, learn how the books are made. Learn how accounting works. You know, talk to those people in accounting. Because you wouldn't believe how many times I had a check problem. But if you actually know the people in accounting—[Layton points to an audience member] Remember Billy? How many times did Billy save my butt at Marvel, dude?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Every time.

LAYTON: Yeah, exactly. I was a screw-up... [laughter] And that was something that he inculcated in me, because he also said the guy who knew how to do everything was a guy that kept working. And so, 35 years later, I'm still working. So I guess he was right. And those lessons were very, very valuable to me when I wound up running Valiant [Comics]. I

didn't realize that *everybody* loved him. Because I didn't realize that this wonderful, warm way of dealing with the world was the way he dealt with the world. And not just us....

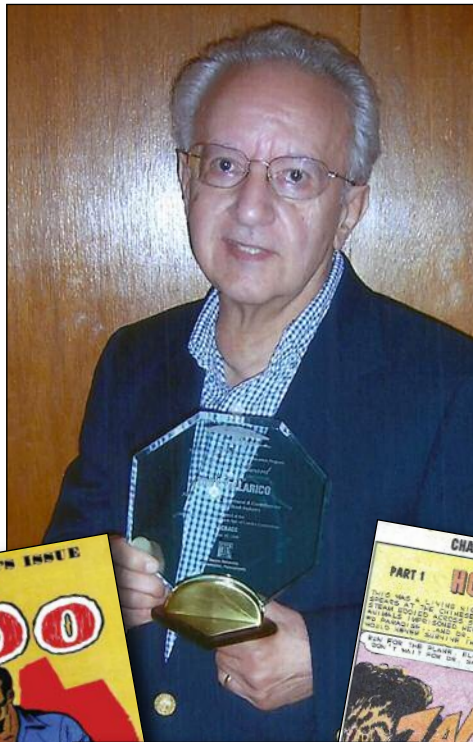
LAYTON: I've heard so many fans come to me and talk about, "Dick looked at my paintings. At one time I wanted to be an artist, and he took the time to look at my stuff, even though it was awful. And he'd tell me it was awful. And he would tell me *why* it was awful." You know, he would go to the trouble of doing that. That's one of Dick's really wonderful qualities. Continue....

“I Liked The Area Of Comics In General”

Part I Of A Career-Spanning Interview With Veteran Comic Artist TONY TALLARICO

Conducted by Jim Amash • Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

INTERVIEWER'S INTRODUCTION: The first time I called Tony Tallarico to discuss doing an interview, he chuckled and said, “I was wondering when you were going to get to me.” I said, “Tony, I had to put the youngsters at the end of the line!” He replied, “Flattery will get you an interview.” All kidding aside, I’d always planned on talking to Tony, who has had a fascinatingly diverse career in illustration. He started out as an assistant to Frank Carin, Burne Hogarth, and Al Scaduto, later working for Avon, Youthful, Dell, Warren Publications, Harvey, Feature, Gilberton, Story, Trojan, Treasure Chest, and Charlton. His Charlton work is probably what he’s best remembered for, a fair amount of it done with his friend Bill Fraccio. As packager or solo artist, Tony has drawn stories in every genre in comics, and I imagine nearly everyone reading this has some of Tony’s work in his/her collection. But Tony’s comic book career is eclipsed by his work in children’s books, of which he’s done over a thousand at last count. And Tony’s still working, which makes me wonder if he now has the record for drawing the most published books outside the comic book arena. If not, he soon will have, because Tony claims he’s just getting started! Special thanks go to our mutual friend Stan Goldberg for giving me Tony’s phone number. —Jim.



“[I Went To] The School Of Industrial Arts”

JIM AMASH: Guess what, Tony? I’m going to ask when and where were you born.

TONY TALLARICO: [laughs] Brooklyn, New York, September 20, 1933.

JA: I was looking at your list of artistic influences: Frank Robbins, Ken Bald, Roy Doty, Stan Drake, and Milton Caniff. Obviously, you started reading newspaper strips at an early age.

TALLARICO: Yes. We had several big newspapers in the New York area. *The Daily News* had great comics at the time. *The New York Journal-American* had fantastic comics and great, great Sunday comics. I still remember the *Prince Valiant* page that they ran in

full color on Sundays. Oh, it was beautiful! I used to clip them and save them. I didn’t know why, but I did that. [mutual chuckling] Strips were the thing, and eventually the comic books became interesting, too.

JA: You would have been about five years old when “Superman” came out. So you probably didn’t see him at the very beginning.

TALLARICO: No, but I was a comic book collector.



Eyes On The Prize

On May 20, 2005, Tony Tallarico received the Pioneer Award, given for his co-creation of the first African-American comic book hero, *Lobo*, a post-Civil War cowboy who appeared in two issues of his own Dell/Western title. The honor was given at a ceremony held at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Flanking photo from left:) Tallarico’s cover for *Lobo* #1 (Dec. 1965)—the cover of the phenomenal politico-satiric bestseller *The Great Society* comic book (1966), which was written by D.J. Arneson and illustrated by Tallarico (reportedly with a helping hand on the pencils from Bill Fraccio)—super-heroics by artists Fraccio & Tallarico (and writer Joe Gill) for Charlton’s *Blue Beetle*, Vol. 2, #2 (Sept. 1964). [Blue Beetle TM & © 2011 DC Comics; other material © 2011 the respective copyright holders.]



TALLARICO, ANTHONY F.
2912 Tilden Avenue
Brooklyn 26, N. Y.
Class Treasurer, Service Squad
(3), Prom Committee, Palette Staff,
Highlights Staff, Senior Day Com-
mittee, Attendance Certificates (6),
Honor Roll (4)



TORRES, ANGELO
1113 Hoe Avenue
Bronx, N. Y.
Highlights Art Staff

Alma Matrix

(Left:) In the 1951 high school yearbook of The School of Industrial Arts, the photos of Tony Tallarico and fellow future artist Angelo Torres were on the same page.

(Right:) In 2002, Tony's old high school held a reunion. (L. to r.:) Angelo Torres, Tony Tallarico, and Al Gallo, who Tony informs us was the scenic designer on Perry Como's TV show. Thanks to Tony for these photos.



I read just about all of them from Archie to Marvel to DC, and a lot of others in between. I liked to see the different types of comics.

JA: Did you draw your own characters and your own stories as a kid?

TALLARICO: Oh, sure. In fact, I have a book out called *How to Draw Comics*, and that's one of the things I emphasize. You should do your own. Even if you think it's terrible, it's terrible because nobody else has seen it, that's all.

JA: Did you go to one of the art high schools in New York City?

TALLARICO: Yes, The School of Industrial Arts. Emilio Squeglio went to the same school before I had. But Dick Giordano was in my class, as was Angelo Torres—and Murray Tinkleman, who is an illustrator. He and Dick worked for Jerry Iger.

It was a small class, about 150 kids in each grade. The classic thing about it was that we had an annex and a main building. The first two years we were in the annex; second two years we were in the main building. But the interesting thing was that they were both hospitals during the Civil War.

JA: Did you get to be friends with Dick or any others? Obviously you did with Murray Tinkleman.

TALLARICO: Yes, and with Angelo and Dick, too. [Dick and I] were good friends. His first real job after Iger's was at Charlton, and he gave me a lot of work there. Dick did not start in my grade. Dick was out of school for a year because of illness, so when he came back, they put him back one year, and that's when I met him. I knew him one year in the annex, and then two years in the main building. He was a very nice guy. I remember him coming over to my house in Brooklyn. He lived in the Bronx, so that was a long trek, about two hours. He wanted me to show him how to ink, and was very grateful for that. To me, at that same time,

it seemed silly. "Don't thank me for that." [Jim chuckles] I didn't mind helping him. You would do the same thing.

JA: Did the three of you hang around together outside of classes?

TALLARICO: We were both in the Illustration class together, but it was very difficult to be friends outside of school there, because the school was in Manhattan, and hardly anybody lived in Manhattan. Angelo lived in the Bronx, and Dick lived further out in the Bronx. Murray lived in a different area of Brooklyn than I did. So after 3:30, that was it. I'd see them again the next morning, and of course we'd be great friends during the day. It wasn't like going to a neighborhood school.

JA: I knew that, but I know there were some guys who lived distances, but still got together after school sometimes.

Cartoonist Class Cohorts

Seen at right is a signature page from Tallarico's 1951 high school yearbook, signed by four fellow students of once and future importance to him. In Tony's words (referring to entries clockwise from top of page):

- "(1) Frank Eliscu — sculptor/modeling instructor. He made several bronze bas-relief doors for Rockefeller Plaza—also did the 'Heisman Trophy.'
- "(2) Bob Dunn — cartoonist and writer of *They'll Do it Every Time* newspaper feature.
- "(3) Al Scaduto — cartoonist of *Little Iodine* comic books and *They'll Do it Every Time* daily and Sunday feature."
- (4) Mike Fafaniello — comic book/strip letterer."

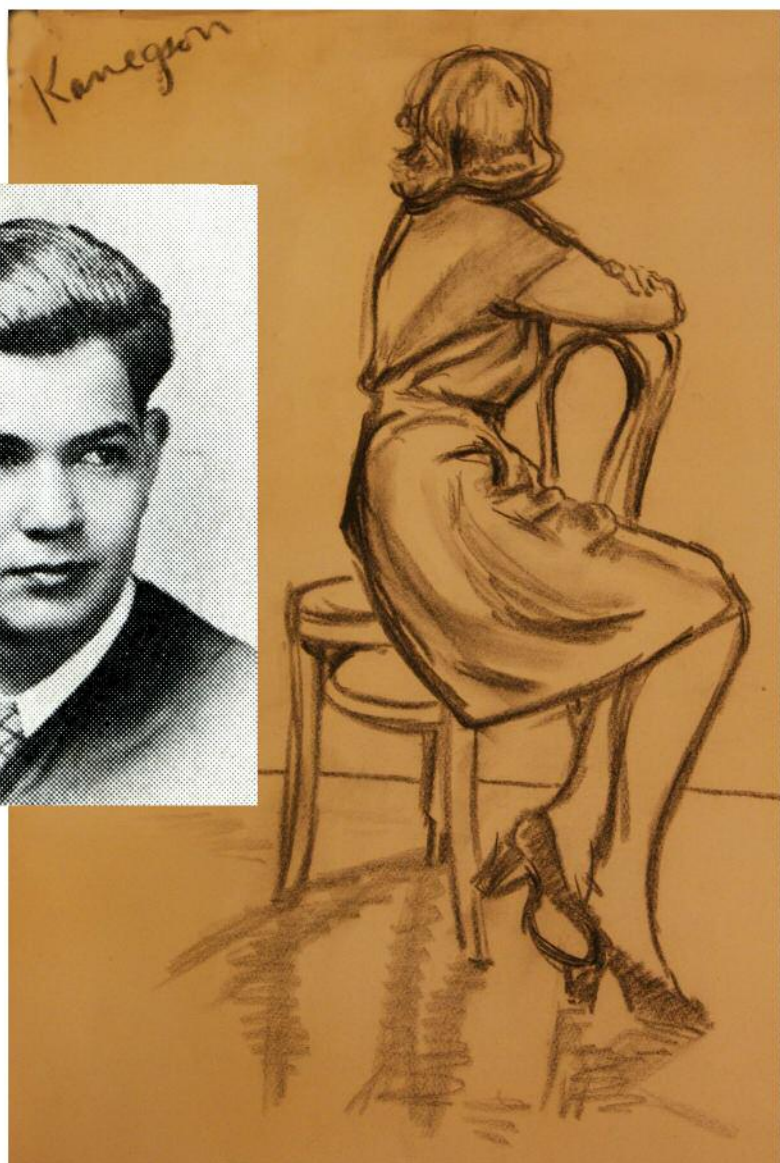
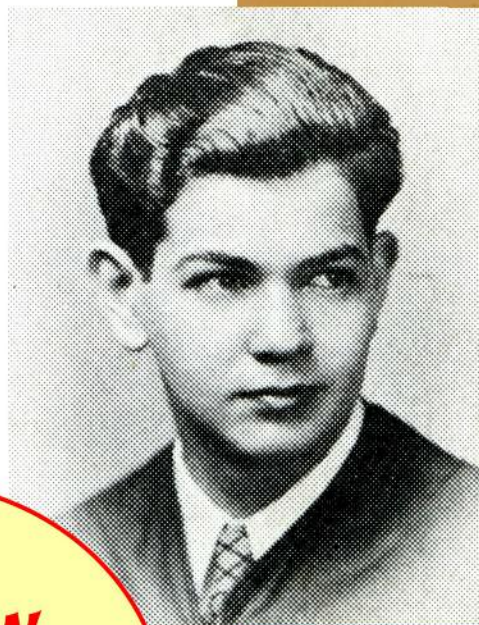
[Art & text © 2011 the artists.]





ABE KANEGSON WAS WILL EISNER'S FAVORITE LETTERER UNTIL ABE SEEMINGLY VANISHED IN THE EARLY 1950S. FOR DECADES ABE'S POST-COMICS CAREER REMAINED A MYSTERY! BUT THE MYSTERY WAS RECENTLY SOLVED! LAST ISSUE WE INTERVIEWED ABE'S SISTER, RITA, AND HIS SON, BEN.

THIS ISSUE WE'LL BE CHATTING WITH ABE'S YOUNGER BROTHER, LOUIS, WHO STARTED COLLECTING COMIC BOOKS IN THE LATE '30S. WE THINK YOU'LL FIND HIS COMMENTS FASCINATING!



**ABE
KANEGSON**
"THE MYSTERY OF
THE MISSING
LETTERER!"
(PT. 5)

LEFT: ABE KANEGSON, AGE 15, TAKEN FROM HIS HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK. THE CAPTION READS "KANEGSON, ABE, 1231 BOYNTON AVENUE, GLEE CLUB, MAJOR ART CLUB." RIGHT: A 16 X 24 SKETCH ABE DREW IN THE LATE '40S. [© 2012 RITA PERLIN.]

The Mystery of the Missing Letterer—Part 5

by Michael T. Gilbert

Last issue we discussed Will Eisner's lettering genius, Abe Kanegson, with son Ben and Abe's sister, Rita Perlin. Now we have a fascinating interview with Abe's younger brother, Lou Kanegson, a comic book fan since the late '30s!

MICHAEL T. GILBERT: *It's a pleasure to talk to you. I'm a long-time admirer of your brother's work, his comic book lettering especially. And for many years, Abe has been kind of a mystery, because nobody really knew what happened to him after he left comics around '51 or so. So let me ask you a few questions...*

LOU KANEGSON: What purpose is this information that's being obtained? What are you going to do with it?

MTG: *I'm a cartoonist and a comic book historian. I write a column for a magazine called Alter Ego that studies the history of Golden Age comic books in the '40s and the '50s, primarily.*

KANEGSON: Well, I was a reader of those [comic] books.... I believe I was reading from the [start] of Superman and Batman, or close to it. Walt Disney and the [Human] Torch; I think that was Marvel Comics. Also Captain America or Sub-Mariner. All kinds of stuff, basically. Even though I was a little bit older and I was reading novels and stuff, I occasionally kept my eye on the comic book situation. Including the—what was it?—was it EC publications, that came out with the horror...?

MTG: *Right. Tales from the Crypt and Weird Science.*

KANEGSON: I read that. I was [a big fan of that stuff] for many years. Because I was kind of into that and science-fiction and all that. They sort of complemented each other.

MTG: *How old would you have been when EC was coming out? Let's say in 1954 or so, for Tales from the Crypt and The Vault of Horror...*

KANEGSON: I was in my early 20s. I read quite a number of those magazines, so there was a lot of continuity. When I was younger, Archie Comics and stuff of that nature—I read just about everything that was around in those days... [starting when I was about] seven years old, around 1939, 1940.

MTG: *Wow. So you were really there, right from the start.*

KANEGSON: Yeah, but I wasn't a collector, because I was little. I didn't have the hindsight—I should say the future sight of what was going to happen with comic books. I just kind of enjoyed them.

MTG: *Well, if everybody had foresight of everything, the comics would be worthless today, because everyone would have them. [laughs]*

KANEGSON: Right. I still remember when in "Batman"—I could be mistaken, but I believe that originally his valet Alfred was a fat guy.

MTG: *Yeah, he was, for the first year or so. Then*

they slimmed him down. So you have a good memory for that stuff. Was Abe a comic book fan too?

KANEGSON: I don't recall that he was. He worked in the field because, as you said, his lettering was very unusual. But he was actually an artist, in the sense that he drew, not too many big pictures like canvases and watercolors, though he had a few—but basically, he sketched with a charcoal and pencil, and he made up all kinds of dream scenes and dramatic sketches. He was into art. He could sketch you a portrait in say five, ten minutes and it would be a very intense picture of you. Not like Atlantic City boardwalk, but he would capture something. So he was an artist in addition to being a letterer.



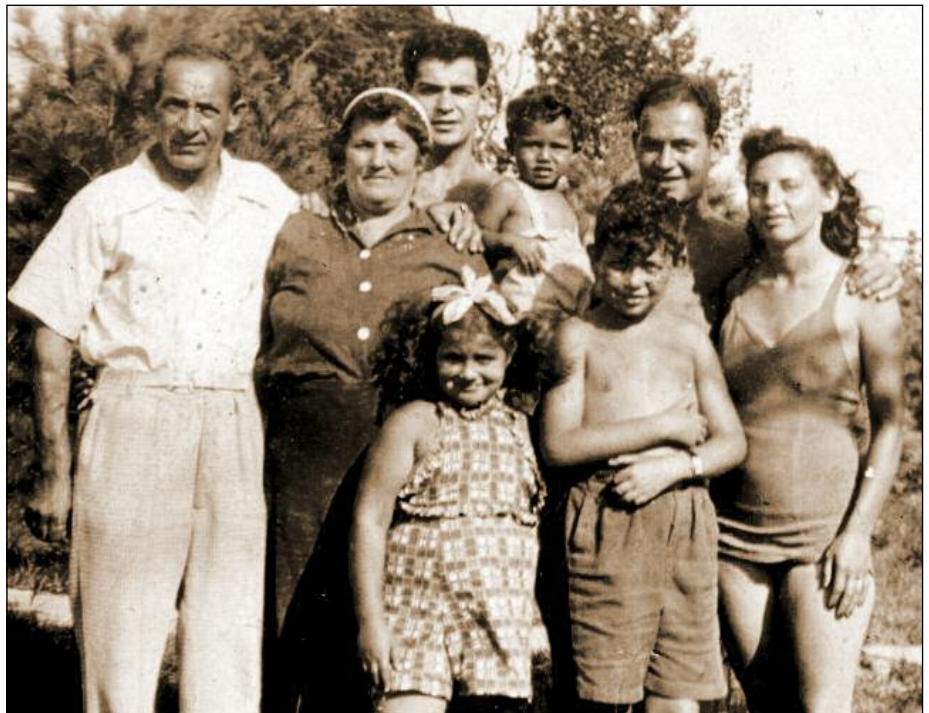
"Here Comes Alfred!"

First appearance of Batman's butler, Alfred Pennyworth, from *Batman* #16 (April 1943).
[© 2012 DC Comics.]

MTG: *Right. And I know, when he was working with Will Eisner on The Spirit, he actually helped him do some of the plotting, also. They were talking about stories and such.*

KANEGSON: It may have been. By the way, one of the guys that worked with him at that early stage was Jules Feiffer.

MTG: *Right, I know. As a matter of fact, Jules Feiffer just this year came out with an autobiography about his work career and such, and spoke highly of Abe.*



The Kanegson Krew!

(Left to right:) Back row: Abe's father and mother, Dave and Ester Kanegson; Abe; nephew Bert (son of brother Mack and Sylvia); Mack; and Sylvia. Front row: Rita and Lou, probably around 1940.
[© 2012 Rita Perlin.]

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

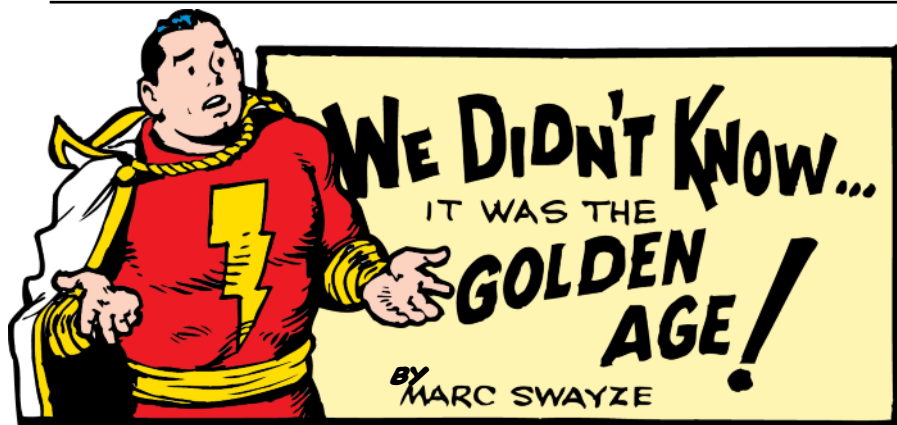
#165

December 2011



Art: Eric Jansen. Color: Walt Grogan.
The Phantom Eagle TM & © 2011
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JANSEN
2011



[Art & logo ©2011 Marc Swayze; Captain Marvel © & TM 2011 DC Comics]

[FCA EDITORS NOTE: From 1941-53, Marcus D. Swayze was a top artist for Fawcett Publications. The very first Mary Marvel character sketches came from Marc's drawing table, and he illustrated her earliest adventures, including the classic origin story, "Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel (Captain Marvel Adventures No. 18, Dec. '42); but he was primarily hired by Fawcett Publications to illustrate Captain Marvel stories and covers for Whiz Comics and Captain Marvel Adventures. He also wrote many Captain Marvel scripts, and continued to do so while in the military. After leaving the service in 1944, he made an arrangement with Fawcett to produce art and stories for them on a freelance basis out of his Louisiana home. There he created both art and stories for The Phantom Eagle in Wow Comics,

in addition to drawing the Flyin' Jenny newspaper strip for Bell Syndicate (created by his friend and mentor Russell Keaton). After the cancellation of Wow, Swayze produced artwork for Fawcett's top-selling line of romance comics, including Sweethearts and Life Story. After the company ceased publishing comics, Marc moved over to Charlton Publications, where he ended his comics career in the mid-'50s. Marc's ongoing professional memoirs have been a vital part of FCA since his first column appeared in FCA #54 (1996). Last time, I discussed with Marc the very first illustration depicting all three members of the Marvel Family together that had been majestically drawn by the artist. In this issue, Marc sheds a little light on the bylines he received for a time in Wow Comics, as well as his thoughts on the Man of Steel.

—P.C. Hamerlinck.]

Back in the Golden Age of Comics, it was common practice for writers and artists never to have their names appear on the comic book features on which they worked. Artist C.C. Beck once elucidated that one of the reasons for this was because—as explained to him by Fawcett Publications—the readers believed that the stories in comic books were true, and displaying creators' names in the strips would have been an admission that the accounts told in the books were fictional, and in so doing would alienate readers. Beck later observed that Golden Age artists were better off anyway working anonymously or under pseudonyms, adding that "Good writing and good pictures are still good, no matter who made them"... and that the later-day practice of multiple

bylines found at the beginning a comic book tale only helped "spread the blame around" when a story was lousy. By mid-1943, Fawcett had eased their policy to some extent when they designated Beck as "Chief Artist" on the contents pages of certain Captain Marvel-related books—but only after he had threatened to leave the company.

Moreover, there was a brief period in 1943 when Fawcett allowed their illogical rationalizations regarding bylines to subside when they tolerated the names of artists Mac Raboy, Jack Binder, Phil Bard, and H.V.L. Parkhurst to appear (albeit quite small) beneath the splash pages of their respective strips within a small number of *Master Comics* issues



Airway Acknowledgments

Above are two examples of credited Marc Swayze "Phantom Eagle" pages from *Wow Comics* #50 (Dec. '46) and #57 (Aug. '47). Initiated in the August '44 issue of *Wow* and appearing sporadically over the next few years, the miniature typeset (or hand-lettered) "Drawn by..." artist bylines were found situated at the bottom center margin of the first pages of stories. The uncommon practice, which occurred for only a brief time in just a couple of Fawcett's books, went against the grain of the company's original policies and mindset, and against those of most other publishers from that time period. [Phantom Eagle TM & © the respective copyright holders.]

“Is *This* What I Want To Do For The Rest Of My Life?”

The ROY ALD Interview, Part 3

by Shaun Clancy

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

Roy Ald was an editor and writer for Fawcett Publications' comic books from 1946 to 1953, applying his talents to such titles as *Wow Comics* (featuring *Mary Marvel*, *The Phantom Eagle*, *Commando Yank*, *Mr. Scarlet*, and his own comical creation, *Ozzie and Babs*), *Captain Midnight*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *This Magazine Is Haunted*, *Captain Video*, *Life Story*, *Strange Suspense Stories*, *Worlds of Fear*, *Beware! Terror Tales*, *Negro Romance*, and others, as well developing Fawcett's early graphic novel experiment *Mansion of Evil* before editing various Fawcett magazines after the publisher terminated its comics line. Ald later moved on to other noteworthy publishing ventures with various companies and also authored dozens of books—predominately in the health and fitness fields.

Last issue, the 90-year-old Mr. Ald had relayed his reminiscences about creating the groundbreaking *Negro Romance* comic book and working with one of the book's artists, Alvin Hollingsworth, as well as briefly commenting on the *National vs. Fawcett* lawsuit, artist C.C. Beck, and Fawcett's editorial procedures. In this installment, interviewer Shaun Clancy guides Ald to talk about how he went about writing comic book scripts, meeting a popular pulp cover artist, and more memories of the many people he worked with at Fawcett Publications.

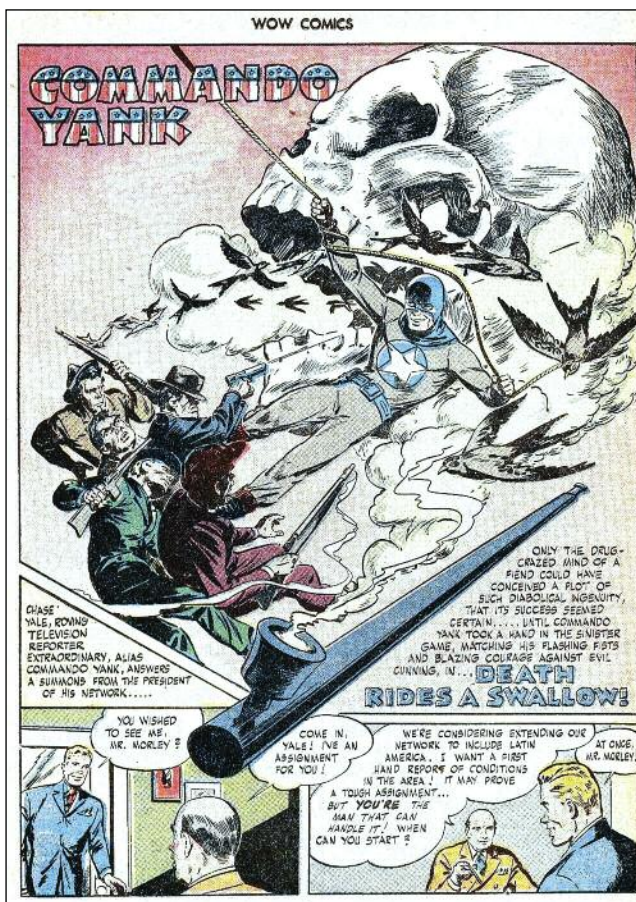
—PCH.

SHAUN CLANCY: What was your education and background for writing?

ROY ALD: When I got out of the Army in 1944 I started taking all kinds of courses at various universities, but never pursued a degree. I would take the most esoteric courses they offered ... Latin ... Greek ... Anemology ... stuff like that. While never formally taught in it, I was born to write. I have written everything that you can think of, from books and magazines to greeting cards and fortune cookies. [both laugh] When I was first looking around the city trying to find where I could peddle some stories, I stopped by Fawcett because I had once noticed my kids reading their comics, and in the middle of them were two-page text stories. After my first submission to

Fawcett, Will [Lieberson] immediately offered me a job as editor.

SC: When FCA interviewed Lieberson in the '70s, he stated that “Roy Ald was one of the most important Fawcett comic editors, who handled many comics. Out of all the editors, Roy was number one when it came to fresh ideas on comic book ideas and stories.” I understand Fawcett had a policy in place where comic book editors couldn't be paid to write scripts on the side. So, besides editing, would you also supply story plots to your writers?



Post-War Writer

From 1946-48 Roy Ald (see photo above) was the editor of Fawcett's *Wow Comics* and, as he did with several other comic books he edited, he also frequently wrote stories for the title, as well... including the post-WWII adventures of *Commando Yank*, as seen in this splash page drawn by Carl Pfeuffer for *Wow* #58 (Sept. 1947). Ald praises Pfeuffer's artistic abilities in this issue's installment of his interview. [Commando Yank TM & © 2011 the respective copyright holders.]



ALD: No. I had written some of the stories under my sister's name, Shirley Lee. I'm sure Will [Lieberson] knew what I was doing, because I believe he was doing the same thing with writing those two-page text fillers! I'd write a synopsis, get approval from Will to have it written, then I'd go home and write it, and then have my sister mail in the script to Fawcett. She would get paid by them and then give me the money. I did this with several comic books each month right up until Fawcett quit publishing them. It was better income than my actual job! [both laugh]

SC: But did you still assist other writers?

ALD: Yes, of course. As an editor, I



was always helping my writers, and they never had a problem with anything ever being rejected or having to be re-written.

SC: Were you aware of any of your writers also doing stories for other publishers?

ALD: No ... and I wasn't interested in working with any of them who were doing that.

SC: Were the circulation numbers discussed with the editors?

ALD: No, that information went straight upstairs to the Fawcetts, and they kept it to themselves.

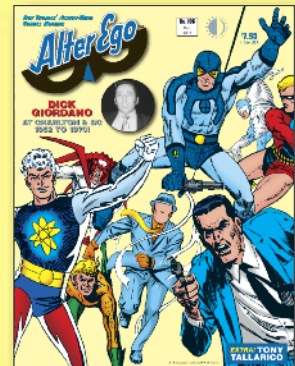
SC: On Wow Comics, you worked on stories featuring Commando Yank, and one of the artists who drew the character was Carl Pfeufer. Do you remember him?

ALD: Yes, he was a great artist and a superb watercolorist... a fine artist who was just trying to make a few dollars from comics. Here's an interesting story: I was also put in charge of hiring artists, and there was an agent who used to come by the Fawcett offices all the time trying to sell works from different artists who were available to do comics. He would bring with him all sorts of samples, and one day he pulled out an extraordinary painting that just knocked me over, so I asked him for the name of the artist who did it. He said, "I'm not at liberty to tell you." I came back with: "I always look through your portfolio when you bring it in, so until I get to meet this artist, I'm just going to stop looking at all these others!" A few days later I get a phone call from a man identifying himself as Modest Stein.

SC: The fine artist who painted many of the pulp covers!



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ALD: I remember the day I met the illustrator in the early 1960s (he was a tall, thin, and somewhat eccentric-looking man with a large nose and a wide-brimmed hat, and he was wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark tie). He was in his 30s and suffered from poor eyesight, but considered neither thing an issue and was still going around New York looking for work. He was respectful, down-to-earth, and I was in awe of him. He used to call me up just to chat, and one time he called and told me, "I fell asleep last night and I had no clothes on!" [laughs] I visited him once at his studio and witnessed him working. He would stare at a blank wall and begin painting figures and things that came directly from his mind. Of course, he never did any comics for us, as he wasn't a comic book artist.

SC: Of the four Fawcett brothers—Roger, Roscoe, Buzz, and Gordon—which ones did you have the most communication with?

ALD: Roger and Roscoe. They were the two principal Fawcetts that were involved on the comic book side of things; I never saw any of the others. They were the ones I used to send up memos to with my ideas ... and they never used any of them! [laughs] I remember talking to Roger after I had left Fawcett, and he mentioned that my memos were the things that kept their meetings running so long! [both laugh]

SC: Do you recall writer Jon Messman?

ALD: He was a nice, pleasant fellow whose parents forced him to play the violin while growing up. He would come to the Fawcett Christmas parties