

ROY THOMAS' THUNDERCLAP OF
A COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

FEATURING: AN

FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

FOUR-COLOR FIST-FEST!



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**ALSO:
LEONARD STARR**



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P.C. Hamerlinck presents a double helping of Beck, Thomas, Bingham, Boyar, & Swayze!

On Our Cover: Neither **Emilio Squeglio** nor **Joe Giella** is an artist whose name springs to mind when somebody mentions *Fawcett Comics*—but both did work for the company. As revealed in past issues, Emilio did corrections (which included sometimes drawing *Captain Marvel* or other Fawcett stars) for quite a few years—and Joe, while more identified with DC Comics in particular, informed Jerry Bails some years back for the online *Who's Who of American Comic Books* 1928-1999 that in 1946 he had also worked in Fawcett's production department, and had done some inking and even a spot of penciling on at least one "*Captain Marvel*" story. So P.C. Hamerlinck (like we ourselves) was happy when they teamed up to draw this iconic *Shazam* illustration especially to be this issue's cover! [*Shazam* heroes & word "Shazam!" TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

Above: Before he wrote and drew the comic strips *On Stage* and *Little Orphan Annie*—even before his DC artwork for "*Ghost-Breaker*" and "*Pow-Wow Smith*"—**Leonard Starr** inked the pencils of fellow future great **Carmine Infantino** on several "*Heap*" stories for *Hillman Periodicals*. These panels of the stalking swampman-thing are from *Airboy Comics*, Vol. 3, #5 (June 1946); script quite probably by Carmine. Thanks to Jim Ludwig. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of:

Emilio Squeglio, Lou Cameron,
Mick Anglo, Bill Benulis,
Marvin Levy, & Joe Simon



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FIRST PRINTING.

“I Think I Worked For Every [Comics] House In The City”

Part I Of A Decades-Spanning Interview
With Noted Comics Artist LEONARD STARR



A Starr In The Firmament

(Above center:) Leonard Starr in a photo taken by Alan Light—surrounded by art from three noted stages of his distinguished career.

(Above left:) The Heap goes into his trademark mute action in *Airboy Comics*, Vol. 5, #8 (Sept. 1948)—scripter unknown. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders]...

(Above right:) A modern-Western splash page from *Detective Comics* #175 (Sept. 1961)—ditto [© 2012 DC Comics]...

...and (right) the classic *On Stage* Sunday strip for April 5, 1959, in which Broadway star Mary Perkins encounters Maximus, Starr's answer to *The Phantom of the Opera*. Starr himself wrote that one. [© 2012 Tribune Media Services.]

Thanks to Rod Beck for the "Heap" sequence and to Gene Reed for "Pow-Wow Smith." The Sunday is reproduced from Classic Comics Press' admirable reprint series *Leonard Starr's Mary Perkins On Stage*, which we highly recommend to all fans of exquisite comic art.

Interview Conducted by Jim Amash • Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

The incomparable Leonard Starr was good from the beginning. He started out as a background artist at Funnies, Inc., quickly becoming an inker and then penciler/inker on several features, including *Timely Comics'* "Sub-Mariner." During the '40s and '50s, Leonard's work appeared at many companies, including McCombs, Orbit, Parents Magazine Press, ACG, Avon, DC, *Timely/Marvel*, and *St. John Publications*, among others. He left comic books in 1957 to do the widely

acclaimed *On Stage* newspaper strip that he had created; later he drew the venerable and eternally young *Little Orphan Annie*, as *Annie*. Leonard's work was stylistic and/or realistic, always adaptable to the subject matter at hand. He was and is a true illustrator who drew really well, never letting overly flashy graphics mute the potency of his storytelling. Special thanks to our mutual friend Tom Sawyer (whom I interviewed in A/E # 77) for giving me Leonard's contact info. —Jim.



Flash-y Art

A very young Leonard Starr found the art of Milt Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* comic strip "simply more approachable" than that in Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon*. Seen above are *Flash Gordon* panels from Dec. 9, 1934 (the strip had debuted early that year)—below, a panel from the very first *Terry* Sunday, on the selfsame date. [*Flash Gordon* © 2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.; *Terry* © 2012 Tribune Media Services, Inc.]



"I Read The Comics When I Was A Kid"

JIM AMASH: *When and where were you born?*

LEONARD STARR: New York City in 10-28-1925. I read the comics when I was a kid, and I believe that most of us had reading skills before we entered school because of the comic strips. My favorite strip, early on, was *Flash Gordon*, and I just barely looked at a lot of the other stuff. And then my loyalties were sort of stolen by *Terry and the Pirates*, which was a more contemporary feature. It

was my very first experience with fickleness. I felt guilty because I had lost my love for *Flash Gordon* and gone on to something else. *Terry and the Pirates* had terrific drama. Terry was a little older than I was, I guess, when I started reading it. What year was Terry started?

JA: 1935. [ED. NOTE: Actually 1934.]

STARR: I was ten and Terry was about 12, I think, in the early strips. And of course, the adventures were good, I liked the drawing, and I wasn't alone. [mutual laughter] Terry probably turned more guys on to doing comics than any other strip. *Flash Gordon* was too well-drawn, for one thing. Milton's work was very good, but approachable. You could get the feeling of the thing without knowing a hell of a lot. It was simply more approachable.

JA: *A lot of artists who gravitated towards adventure like you did. I know you've done humor work, but—*

STARR: Not a hell of a lot.

JA: *I was thinking of Little Orphan Annie primarily, in regard to humor.*

STARR: The funny thing is, I thought of *Annie* as a humor strip, but it was really a straight strip. Harold Gray was drawing it as well as he could, and trying to draw straight. Also, there was this whole period where Caniff's work influenced Gray's, and he went into heavy chiaroscuro.

JA: *I've noticed, when I interviewed people who drew humor comics, that their favorite comics were almost always exclusively humor comics. When I interview people like you who did a lot of adventure, more realistic stuff, you were influenced by the more realistic artists.*

STARR: Yes. To give you an idea about how humor works: I was working at Johnstone & Cushing [advertising art service] at the time, and a friend of mine, an insurance man, and his brother were moving their office. They asked me if I could

do a drawing for a sign, just a mailing piece. It was supposed to be sort of funny, so I asked Dik Browne, who was also at Johnstone & Cushing at the time, if he could do a rough sketch for me. Man, he turned it out in about five minutes, and it was funny as hell. It was easy for Dik to draw. It was his area, cartooning. I really couldn't go in that direction. [NOTE: Dik Browne later created the newspaper comic strip *Hagar the Horrible*. —Jim.]

JA: *You went to the High School of Music and Art.*

STARR: Yes, after junior high school, when the ninth grade was actually your freshman year of high school. I got in on the third term. I graduated in June '42, so we go back three years and that makes it '39 to '42.

JA: What got you interested in making art your career?

STARR: The need to earn a living. I had a knack for it, and the thought of maybe making a living out of it was very scary, actually. I was very, very good in the sciences. I never did any homework. I did all my notebooks in class, and I never got less than a 98 on something. And so my parents—God knows how, because they were Russian immigrants—somehow got the money together to send me to medical school at Cornell. I passed the boards, and then I had two ways to go about it. A friend of my mother's had a son who was a cardiologist, so she says, "Go speak to Meyer, and see what he says." He was good enough to see me after his office hours, and he went through what it would take, how many years of school there was, and internship. It was a lifetime of peering into people's orifices, and it didn't sound all that great to me, so I decided to take a chance [at art], and let's say that my parents didn't fight it.

I had won prizes in drawing, like the Wannamaker Prize, and there's some sort of interscholastic school prize for posters and that kind of thing, and so I realized there was a chance for me to make it in that profession. Now don't forget, we're talking about the Depression, and the Depression in my memory is that the sun never came out for about ten years. [Jim chuckles] Really! Of course, it must have, but you just sort of went through it. I was a kid, and the other kids were pretty much in the same shape. I'm talking about the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

JA: What were your living circumstances at the time? Obviously, your family didn't have a lot of money.

STARR: It was pretty much the story of first-generation Americans, and it was astonishing—well, probably not astonishing, because that's who we were. Very many of the cartoonists of my generation were first-generation.

"Funnies, Incorporated... Needed Some Help"

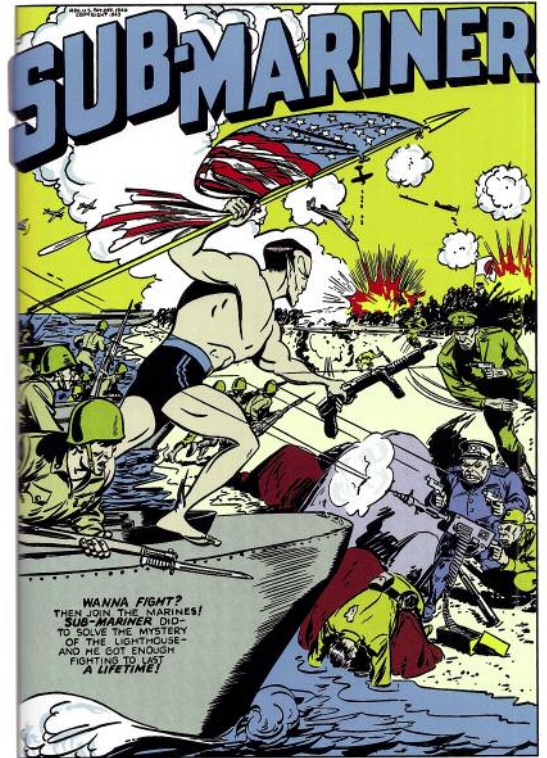
JA: When you decided to pursue an art career, did you have comic books in your sights or newspaper strips? Or were you just going to take anything you could get?

STARR: Actually, it was kind of accidental. I thought by the time I got to Pratt Institute that the way to go was illustration. My experience at Pratt was not especially fortunate. They were doing all sorts of three-dimensional design, and God, I just wanted to know how to draw, and they didn't teach that. The teachers who could teach it somehow didn't, and that wasn't much better than the High School of Music and Art. There was no foundation stuff in how to set up the figure or anything. It was just studio practice



The Once And Future Princes

Carl Pfeuffer at a 1968 reunion of the Jack Binder early-'40s art shop, and his "Sub-Mariner" splash from *Sub-Mariner* #8 (Winter 1942). It was during this period, when Pfeuffer was drawing Prince Namor's exploits through the Funnies, Inc., studio after creator Bill Everett had been drafted, that Leonard Starr met Pfeuffer. Starr himself would later draw "Sub-Mariner." Photo courtesy of Marc Swayze; page from *Marvel Masterworks: Sub-Mariner Vol. 2*. [Page © 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



mainly, and actually, it was astonishing the difference in how well students drew after a year than when they came in, and that was just from practice, just adjusting their light to the model.

Anyway, there was a notice at the school from Funnies, Incorporated, saying that they needed some help. The students came in, they would be interviewed, and so forth. Frank Bolle and I went to high school together. We were also both at Pratt, and we both went to Funnies, Inc. We got some work, first penciling backgrounds, and then inking them. And who did I do them for? The first one was for, oddly enough, Bob Oksner, and his work was terrific. Man, he just had this quick, loose, lively style. And Carl Pfeuffer was there. He was a fine artist who was drawing "Sub-Mariner" at the time, which I ultimately took over.

JA: What was Frank Bolle like in those days?

STARR: We were two kids interested in drawing; we had the same ambition. We spent a lot of time together, and we were very, very close buddies. We still are. At that point, I was thinking more in terms of illustration, and I think Frank was as well. The reason we went to Pratt is because when we went there, the hallways were full of Norman Rockwell oil sketches. And if that doesn't discourage you from becoming an illustrator, I don't know what the hell would.

I studied at Pratt for about a year, if that. I switched to evening school, thinking that maybe I could still learn something. But it was all so desultory that it wasn't worth my while. They would teach me all sorts of things that had absolutely nothing to do with what I wanted to do.

JA: Who hired you at Funnies, Inc.?

STARR: The editor then was a woman named Bobbie Ross, Roberta Ross, and she was terrific. She was very helpful and highly educated, knew her stuff, and I suppose she, too, during the Depression, was getting whatever work she could. I think her

a Spanish museum, which was the first time I ever saw Joaquin Sorolla's work, and various others. Pfeufer was an educated man, a very nice guy. So was Harry Fisk, who was kind of blustery and sort of a bon vivant of the old school.

JA: Pfeufer was an important artist there at Funnies, and he took over "Sub-Mariner" when [creator] Bill Everett was drafted.

STARR: I don't know if Carl did anything else. Maybe he did a few "Human Torch" stories, but I did both "Sub-Mariner" and "Human Torch" subsequently.

JA: Pfeufer was an interesting man. He was disappointed that he never became well known for his fine art, and didn't want to be known for his comic book work, so he wouldn't talk about it. That's why I was interested in what you knew about him in terms of his attitude, in terms of his disposition.

STARR: I saw his paintings and, as I say, they were mainly about war scenes—particularly the Civil War—and very well done without too much glamor. I thought he might have done them for the *National Geographic*, but I'm not certain.

JA: Do you think Pfeufer liked doing the comics?

STARR: I think he was glad he was working, like all of us. I never heard him complain. I never heard him say, "I should be doing



"Pfeufer" Rhymes with "Lifer"

We picked up this particular scan of Carl Pfeufer's splash from *All Winners Comics* #8 (Spring 1943) not from a *Marvel Masterworks* but rather online, and it seems to be an image from an actual copy. But the fact that it's hard to be 100% certain shows how far the *Masterworks* have come from that first hardcover volume of *Marvel Mystery Comics* not too many years ago! (DC's *Archives* have improved, too.) But, for some reason, some *Masterwork* volumes spell Pfeufer's last name the way he spelled it, while in others it's rendered as "Pfeuffer." [© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

something else." He was very happy to have done the Stonewall Jackson cover I mentioned. That came in so he did it, and did it beautifully, and then he did a couple pages of "Sub-Mariner."

JA: Did any of these people take you under their wing and try to help you?

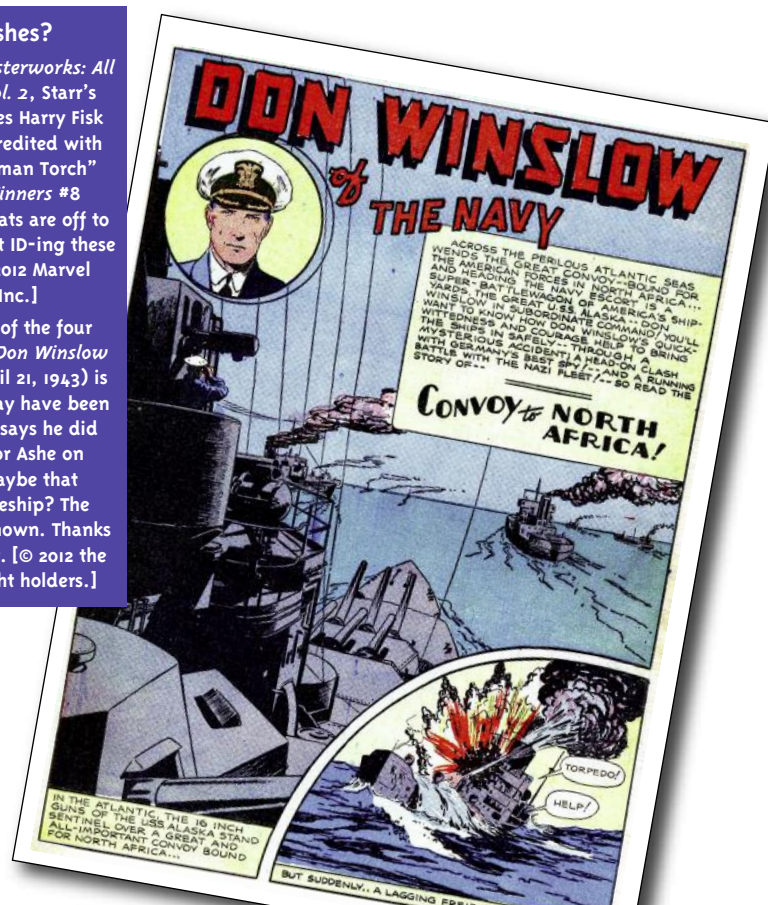
STARR: No, not really. In terms of mentoring or giving lessons, the guy who spent time helping me was Herman Stackel, and that was not

artistically. He had a wide range of intellectual knowledge and introduced me to various things, people to read, and stuff to look at. We used to spend hours and hours drinking coffee, and talking. He was at Funnies when I started, and was there after I left. He was a letterer. He was just a terrific guy, and I guess in his later life, work dried up or something. He was very bitter, and I was very, very sorry to hear that.

Ashes To Ashes?

(Left:) In *Marvel Masterworks: All Winners Comics, Vol. 2*, Starr's Funnies, Inc., cronies Harry Fisk and Edd Ashe are credited with the art on this "Human Torch" effort from *All-Winners* #8 (Spring 1943). Our hats are off to the folks who work at ID-ing these vintage tales. [© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Right:) The artist of the four stories in Fawcett's *Don Winslow of the Navy* #3 (April 21, 1943) is unidentified, but may have been Edd Ashe. Leonard says he did "backgrounds" for Ashe on *Winslow*—but maybe that included the battleship? The scripter, too, is unknown. Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



JA: Was *Stackel* the only letterer there?

STARR: As far as I can remember, he was the only letterer there. He was forty and I was like seventeen, and so it was a whole world I was unfamiliar with, the world that he had experienced on his route to being forty, and he shared his experiences with me.

JA: When you did backgrounds for *Bob Oksner*, did you meet him?

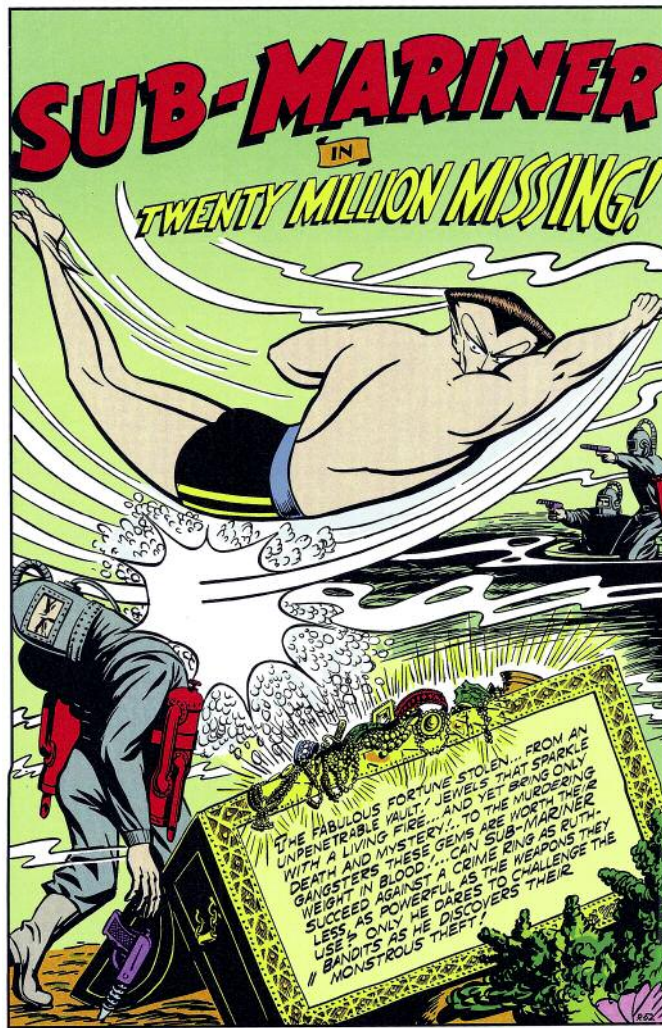
STARR: No, I didn't. I met him much later, but not then. I don't think it was just backgrounds; I'm thinking I inked his figures. I think maybe I inked the whole page, but I'm not altogether sure about that.

JA: What do you remember about *Harry Fisk*? You say he was an older man. I know he did some stuff for *Fawcett*.

STARR: I can't remember his comics work at all. All I remember is him bringing in these large paintings, and they were full of figures, and sort of academically well-painted. His color sense was not vibrant, and at the time I thought they were perfect. He filled the whole damn canvas. [mutual laughter] Wow! He was friendly and very talkative, with a loud voice, sort of a bon vivant of the old school. I remember he would refer to somebody he didn't like as being "that part of a horse that goes over the fence last." [Jim laughs] He was of that generation. Funny, you know, now that we're talking about particular ages: in the *Smithsonian* magazine, I read about Abraham Lincoln's whole ordeal with the Emancipation Proclamation, and the various things that were written by Seward and Smith, and the various guys around him, and they all wrote beautifully. The fact that Lincoln wrote a little better than them is really astonishing. He had a gift for imagery. The point is, though, every one of them was absolutely so literate and wrote so beautifully, and had such a command of language that it was natural that he should have come out of that. It sounds like the rest of the guys were "dese," "dems," and "dose." [Jim chuckles] So the part of the horse that went over the fence last was probably of his generation, because that's the way they used profanity: creatively and colorfully.

JA: What do you recall about *Edd Ashe*?

STARR: Just that he did some of the most traditional—he's sort of in the Caniff class. His figures moved, and he imparted a particular look to them. *Don Winslow of the Navy* was running in the paper, but not by him. Edd drew the comic book. As a matter of fact, I think the very first thing that I did for Funnies was the



Chu On This!

Funnies, Inc., artist Chu Hing is believed by the art ID-ers to have inked Jimmy Thompson's pencils on this sub-sea yarn from *All Winners Comics* #14 (Winter 1944-45). Repro'd from *Marvel Masterworks: All Winners Comics*, Vol. 3. [© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

backgrounds on *Don Winslow*. Edd was very ebullient, and he was a nice guy. There was nothing specific about him like there would be about *Harry Fisk*, but *Ashe* was of a slightly older generation. He was twenty years older than me, but younger than *Harry Fisk*.

"I Don't Know How Long Funnies [Inc.] Lasted"

JA: I'd like to throw out the names of some Funnies employees, and see if you'll remember them or not. *Nina Albright*.

STARR: The name sounds very familiar, and I have absolutely no other recollection of her.

JA: *George Kapitan*.

STARR: Oh, yes. A nice guy. He worked at home, too, but we would go to lunch and did a lot of coffee talk and smoked a lot of cigarettes... that kind of thing. As a matter of fact, I think very often his work was just sent in.

JA: When you went out to lunch, was there a particular crowd that went out or was it whoever was there?

STARR: It was catch-as-catch-can.

JA: *Al Bare*. *Sy* and *Dan Barry* did some freelance for him about that time. I don't think *Dan* did very much, though. *Ken Battefield*.

STARR: *Al Bare*, no. *Ken Battefield* sounds very familiar, but I don't remember anything about him.

JA: *Tex Blaisdell*.

STARR: Oh, sure, but save that for later. I don't think *Tex* was at Funnies.

JA: There's confusion about when he started at Funnies.

STARR: Well, I don't know how long Funnies lasted.

JA: Funnies actually lasted until the early 1950s, believe it or not.

STARR: Then he may have put in some time there, but I didn't meet him until much later at *Hillman Publications*.

JA: *John Giunta*.

STARR: I knew *John*, but I didn't know him there.

JA: Anything else about *Chu Hing* that you recall?

STARR: He was very, very proud of himself, and I didn't really



What's In A Name? Plenty!

Starr doesn't recall Gus Schrotter, a fellow Funnies, Inc., inmate who drew "Angel" stories for Timely—such as this one from *Sub-Mariner* #12 (Winter 1943-44), rerod from the hardcover *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Sub-Mariner*, Vol. 3.

[© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

But Leonard definitely remembers Ernie Schroeder, who later drew (and probably wrote) this "Heap" story for Hillman Periodicals' *Airboy Comics*, Vol. 7, #11 (Dec. 1950). Thanks to Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., for the scan. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

THE HEAP

A SHIP LEAVES FRANCE FOR A SMALL STORM-SWEPT ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF DENMARK... THERE IS GREAT EXCITEMENT, FOR IT CARRIES A HOLLYWOOD PICTURE-MAKING COMPANY HEADED BY THE DIRECTOR OF HORROR AND SUSPENSE MOVIES, ERIC ZAZERAC. AND HIS BIG STAR IS THE ATHLETE LON CALYPSO WHO IS A MAKE-UP MASTER AND IS NOTED FOR HIS FAMOUS "WILD MAN" IMPERSONATION. AT THE MOMENT CALYPSO IS ANNOYED BECAUSE THEY'VE ASKED HIM TO WEAR HIS WILD MAN COSTUME FOR PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS. THROUGH HIS GNARLED TEETH HE COMPLAINS TO THE FEMALE STAR, CORNELIA ERIN...



want to spend a hell of a lot of time in his company, and not for any particular reason except because, as I said, his big boast was that he said he studied with Harvey Dunn. But you really couldn't see it. I wish I had studied with Dunn!

JA: So do I! A lot of people studied under Harvey Dunn. Charlie Paris told me what a great teacher Harvey Dunn was, and how he'd influenced his whole life. [NOTE: Charles Paris was a major "Batman" inker at DC during the 1940s to the early '60s.]

STARR: That happened to me with Frank Riley from the Art Students League when I was about 28, 29. If I had just started with him instead of going to Pratt, like a fool, I might have wound up learning how to draw. [chuckles]

JA: Jim McArdle worked at Funnies, too.

STARR: I knew Jim, but not there. I met him later on at the Society of Illustrators. By that time, he was doing a newspaper strip called *Dr. Bobbs*. He was a good storytelling Irishman.

JA: Al Plastino.

STARR: I knew Al later. He was sort of the bane of the cartoonists because he was the best golfer. [mutual laughter] No, really. I don't think anybody thought very highly of his art, but he would only show up for the golf tournaments, take the prizes, and go home. It really ticked everybody off, as you can imagine,

[laughs] because it's the only time they ever saw him. As a consequence, they didn't think much of his work, either. And as I remember, his work wasn't really first-rate, although I may be misremembering. I'd have to see it again.

JA: Gus Schrotter. [NOTE: The German name "Schrotter" is pronounced "shro'-der," basically identical to the Anglicized pronunciation of the name "Schroeder"; hence Leonard Starr's answer that follows:]

STARR: I knew a Schroeder, and he was a terrific guy. Ernie Schroeder is the one I knew. He was just a wonderful guy. He may have been at Funnies. If not there, then someplace else in the comics business. He was always telling me about artists. He was working somewhere where the guy across the hall was putting out catalogues. He had a whole bunch of gnomes in there drawing breast pumps, and all sorts of little illustrations for the catalogues. He paid them miserably. The guy was Italian and wore a Borsalino hat, smoked with a cigarette holder, all of that. [chuckles again] Since Ernie didn't work for him, he didn't mind having lunch with him a lot. Ernie would say, "Why don't you give these guys a working wage, for God's sakes? They're working very hard and you're doing okay." The guy says, "Let me tell you something about our office. If I locked any one of them in a closet for a month with just an electric lightbulb, and slipped pieces of paper under the



Blair With A Flair

Writer Joe Blair shows a comely model a story he'd scripted for MLJ's *Jackpot Comics* in a photo printed in the Aug. 1941 issue of that company's magazine *Close-Up*. Thanks to Mike Catron, that entire photo feature was reprinted in *A/E* #82, our MLJ issue. [© 2012 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]



MICHAEL T. HERE! IN THE LATE '90S, THE EDITORS AT **MARVEL VISION** MAGAZINE ASKED ME TO RE-IMAGINE ONE OF THEIR COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS. I ULTIMATELY CHOSE **THE MOLECULE MAN**, THE FANTASTIC FOUR VILLAIN CREATED BY **STAN LEE** AND **JACK KIRBY**. MY VERSION REINVENTED HIM AS A LATE-'50S ATLAS SUPER-HERO. THAT WAS FUN! BUT RECENTLY I HAD EVEN MORE FUN DRAWING...

THE COVERS THAT NEVER WERE!!



Twice-Told Molecule Man!

Gilbert's imaginary version from *Marvel Vision* #22 (Oct. 1997) and a Kirby/Ayers pin-up from *Fantastic Four Annual* #2 (Sept. 1964). [© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

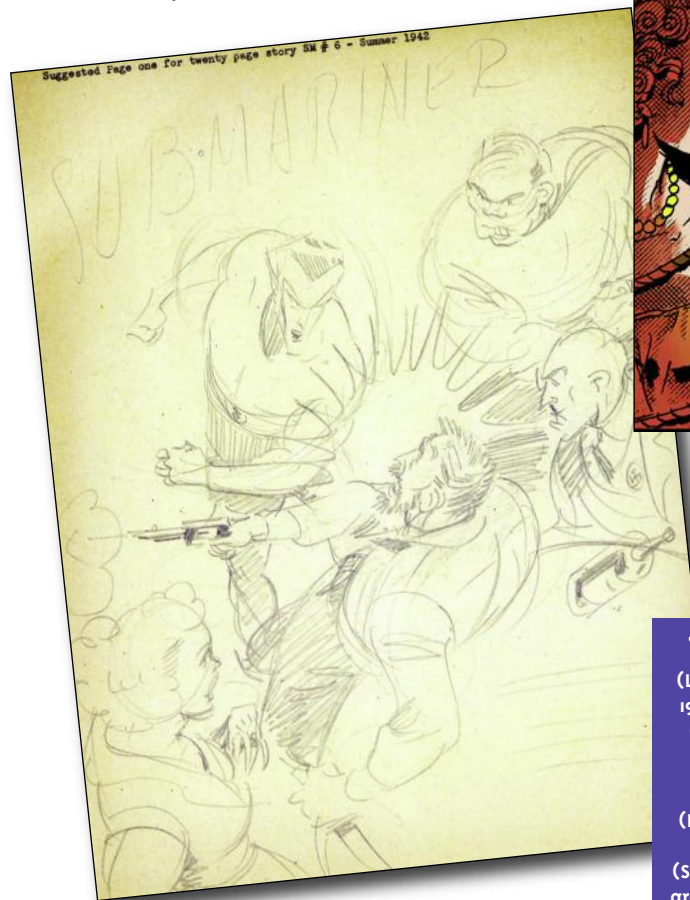
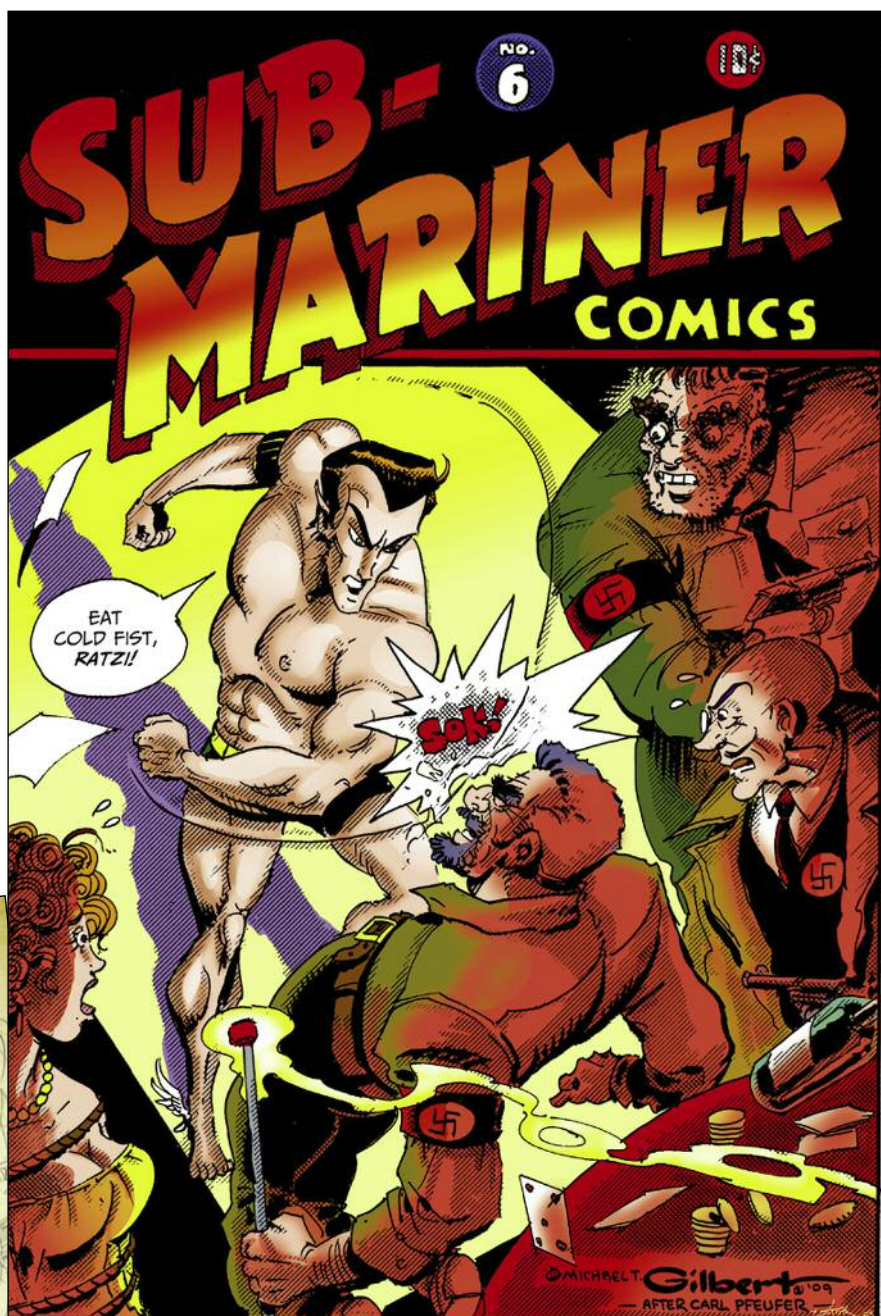
The Covers That Never Were!

by Michael T. Gilbert

Back in 2007, Roy Thomas and Peter Sanderson produced *The Marvel Vault* for Running Press publications. This book was a brief historical overview of Timely/Atlas/Marvel Comics that included faithful reproductions of rare Marvel comic book ephemera.

This delightful book included treats like a 1957 John Severin drawing of himself crouching with fellow 1950s Marvel mainstays Joe Maneely and Bill Everett. There were also miniature reproductions of watercolor postcards sent by Sub-Mariner creator Everett in 1956 to his young daughter Wendy, plus a replica of the classic 1960s Merry Marvel Marching Society kit.

But what really caught my intention was a series of unpublished Marvel cover sketches drawn in the 1940s, faithfully reproduced on imitation cheap pulp paper to look like the originals. (Roy recently reminded me that these sketches had *first* seen print right here in *Alter Ego*, in issue #49, the Carl Burgos special—by courtesy of comics researcher Robert Wiener.)

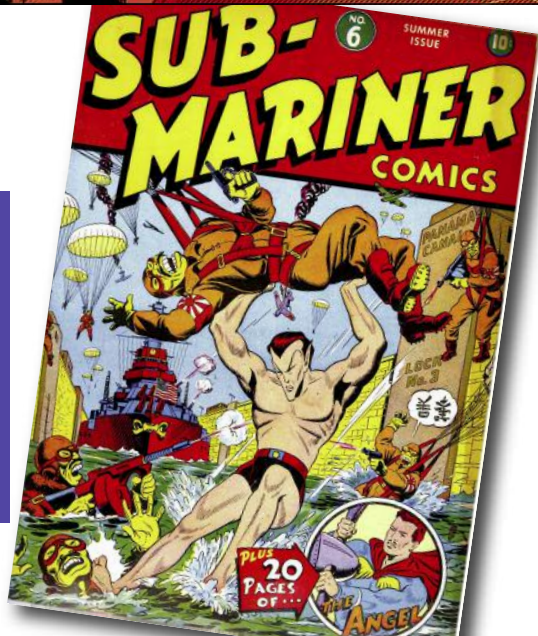


"Eat Cold Fist, Ratzil!"

(Left:) One of the unused-in-1942 *Sub-Mariner* layouts by Carl Pfeufer or Bill Everett.

(Above:) The finished Gilbert cover.

(Lower right:) The published cover to *Sub-Mariner* #6 (Summer 1942) by Golden Age great Alex Schomburg. [© 2012 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Fandom Reunion 2011: The Golden Age of Fanzines Panel

Introduction

As photographically demonstrated in *Alter Ego* #108 & 109, Fandom Reunion 2011 at the Comic-Con International in San Diego was a well-attended, rousing success. Almost 160 fans attended the “Meet and Greet” party for members of the early days of comics fandom, celebrating half a century since the first issues of seminal comics fanzines *Alter-Ego* and *Comic Art*, both of which arrived in fans’ mailboxes in spring of 1961. But, though this culminating event was a thrill for all concerned, the special events to commemorate fandom’s 50th birthday leading up to the Saturday night party were special in their own way.

Now *Alter Ego* returns to the “kick-off” event on that theme, the Friday, July 22nd, panel which put the convention’s special

guests of honor on the dais to talk about the fanzine phenomena of fandom’s formative years: Maggie Thompson, Richard Lupoff, Patricia Lupoff, Richard Kyle, Paul Levitz, Roy Thomas, and Jean Bails. All except Jean (who sat in for her late husband, Jerry Bails) had been editors of early, highly influential amateur publications, and this was a unique opportunity to hear from them on the subject.

It was my honor and good fortune to moderate this panel of literary lions and lionesses, and Brian K. Morris provides the transcription of this 90-minute event. I hasten to add that the length of the text and accompanying photographs and illustrations required that we split this feature into two parts. Here’s Part One.

—Bill Schelly.

BILL SCHELLY: My name is Bill Schelly and I was a fanzine publisher. However, my fanzine, *Sense of Wonder*, was not a groundbreaking fanzine. What we have for you today are the editors and publishers of genuinely groundbreaking fanzines. I believe this is a historic aggregation. I don’t think these people have ever been on the same panel together.

ROY THOMAS: I’ve never met any of these people. [audience laughter]

MAGGIE THOMPSON: I don’t think I’ve ever met Richard Kyle.

BS: Really?

THOMPSON: Seriously.

PAT LUPOFF: A senior moment. [audience chuckles]

BS: We’ve got Roy Thomas who, with Jerry Bails, launched the fanzine *Alter-Ego* in 1961. And with us, representing Jerry, is his wife of 38 years, Jean Bails. [audience applauds] Next, we have the editor of a fanzine called *Wonderworld*. It started out, actually, as *Graphic Story World*. Its editor and publisher—who invented the terms “graphic story” and “graphic novel” in 1964—Mr. Richard Kyle. [audience applauds] Then we have a panelist who, though he has had a few accomplishments over the years, will always be remembered for publishing *The Comic Reader*, Paul Levitz. [audience applauds]

DICK LUPOFF: Never heard of him.

BS: And of course, we have the editors of the fanzine *Xero*, which first appeared in September of 1960—Richard and Pat Lupoff. [audience applauds] And last, but certainly not least, we have one of the editors of *Comic Art*, which debuted in spring of 1961, Maggie Thompson.

[audience applauds] Any fanzine story should begin just like any good comic book story, with an origin. So I’d like to ask the panelists—let’s start with Maggie on the end—to tell us how your fanzine got started. How did *Comic Art* come into existence?

THOMPSON: I met my late husband Don at a science-fiction picnic in 1957, and one of the things we talked about all that day was comics. It was sort of, “Well, who does comics and they’re sort of anonymous and what the heck is all that about?” The first



The Bill Comes Due

Author and *Alter Ego* associate editor Bill Schelly doing his best as the panel’s moderator. As most *A/E* readers surely know by now, fanzines are one of Bill’s favorite aspects of comics fandom, and he says: “I was just as interested as the substantial audience which showed up to hear these Big Name Fans recount their experiences as pioneers in that fannish field of dreams.” Bill is currently working on several new books concerning comics and fandom history. Above is the event’s ID tag, designed by Gary Sassaman. Photos by Aaron Caplan.

NOTE: This is the third installment of our extended, multi-issue coverage of the “50th Anniversary of Comics Fandom” events at Comic-Con International 2011 (San Diego).



(Above:) The late Jerry Bails, original editor of *Alter-Ego*, pictured in 1960. Jerry was with the fandom panel in spirit, so we wanted to add him here. Photo courtesy of Jean Bails.



Seven Soldiers Of Fandom

(Left to right across two-page spread made up of two separate photos:) An historic aggregation of panels, beginning with Jean Bails and Roy Thomas (*Alter Ego*), Richard Kyle (*Graphic Story World/Wonderworld*), Paul Levitz (*The Comic Reader*), Pat and Dick Lupoff (*Xero*), and Maggie Thompson (*Comic Art*). Photos by Aaron Caplan.

As for what these folks have been up to since: Jean Bails has become known on Facebook as an astute political commentator... Roy Thomas has been a writer and often editor in the comics field since 1965... Richard Kyle continues to write but uses a pseudonym that he declines to reveal... Paul Levitz, after a long stint as publisher and president of DC Comics, has recently returned to his original love, comics writing... One-time IBM exec Dick Lupoff is editorial director of Surinam Turtle Press, an imprint of Ramble House, and his next publication should be a police procedural novel, *Rookie Blues*, from Dark Sun Press of Virginia... his wife Pat works for Dark Carnival Bookstore, managing their Children's Department... and Maggie Thompson is senior editor of *The Comics Buyer's Guide*.

contact that we had after we had spent that day talking about comics as well as other things was when Don sent me a folded-over comic book in a #10 envelope. He said, "I don't know if you've seen this, but you might find it interesting." It was *Humbug* #1.

So it actually was an initial contact that way, but it wasn't until 1960 Worldcon in Pittsburgh that the costume competition involved, among other people, the two sitting next to me here. I'm sure you can imagine them now, posed heroically dressed as Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel. [audience applauds] Beautiful costumes, really gorgeous, home-made—oh, yes—you couldn't buy them factory-made at that point. And so the next night was the banquet, and we sat there with Hal Lynch and Bill Thailing, science-fiction fans. Bill was also a pulp dealer and looked around and said, "What is it with comics and who writes them? Who draws them? And by the way, what about magazine cartoons? And what about animated cartoons and doing newspaper strips and who does all that? Do the people who sign their names—Walt Disney—really do the comic books?" [audience chuckles]

And so, that fall, we sent out a one-page flier to all the science-fiction fans we knew addresses for and said, "We're going to do this fanzine about comics." Bill Thailing put us in contact with the Lupoffs, and that spring, it was comic book time—it was comic book fan time, because there had been other little-bitty starts—EC fandom, satire fandom—but there had not been an amateur magazine devoted to all aspects of comics and there had not been an amateur magazine devoted to all aspects of capes and secret disguises and super-powers.

And so, virtually simultaneously, *Alter-Ego* and *Comic Art* #1 came out. Our experience was in the science-fiction world; their experience, Heaven knows—more power to Jean and to Jerry Bails, to Roy Thomas, to that little coterie who all by themselves hand-grew their own publication. We had the example of others; they were just great pioneers.

DICK LUPOFF: Right. The term "fanzine," as I understand, was invented in the late '30s or early '40s by a non-hearing fan named Louis Chauvenet.

THOMPSON: Probably. I didn't know how to pronounce his name until this very moment. [NOTE: Pronounced "sho-vuh-NAY." — Bill.]

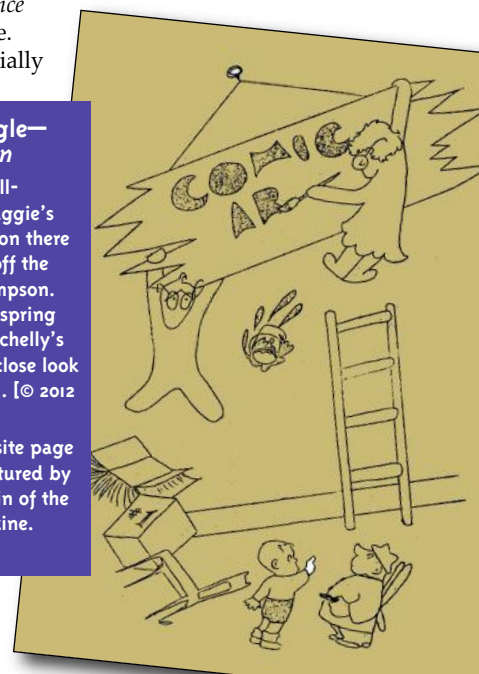
BS: Let's have the Lupoffs tell us how *Xero* got started.

DICK LUPOFF: Firstly, I have to claim credit as the world's first male seamstress. I made those costumes. [audience applauds] The Captain Marvel suit was a set of men's long red underwear with a yellow lightning bolt that I cut out of a piece of cloth that was stitched on. The golden sash was a yellow scarf that I borrowed from Pat. The golden boots were a pair of long yellow socks, no shoes under them, and the white cape was a pillow case. [audience chuckles] That was the costume. And Pat's costume was essentially

Hanging Out Their Shingle—And Then Hanging On

Comic Art is certainly an all-encompassing title—if only Maggie's caricatured self can get the "T" on there before new hubbie Don falls off the masthead! Art by Maggie Thompson. *Comic Art* #1 was published in spring (apparently April) of 1961; Bill Schelly's "Comic Fandom Archive" took a close look at it and its creators in *A/E* #10-11. © 2012 Maggie Thompson.]

The 2011 panel's audience (opposite page bottom), for its part, was enraptured by Maggie's recounting of the origin of the Thompsons' pioneering fanzine. Photo by Aaron Caplan.





(Above:) The late Don Thompson, original co-editor of *Comic Art*, was also with the panel in spirit. Photo courtesy of Jean Bails.

a man's long t-shirt with other accessories. Somebody took a photo of us in those costumes, and it has been circulating for the past fifty years.

PAT LUPOFF: I have a copy, but I don't know if I took it.

DICK LUPOFF: Charlie Brown took it. [NOTE: *Charlie Brown was a prominent science-fiction fan and convention-goer.* —Bill.]

PAT LUPOFF: Excellent, so he must have sent us a print. See how it works? This was the Internet before the Internet. [audience laughs again]

DICK LUPOFF: Charles Brown, the editor and publisher of [the sf newszine] *Locus*, took that picture. He only confessed that to me about a week before his death. [audience chuckles] But anyway, yeah, we did this first issue of *Xero*; it was designed just for fun. This morning over breakfast, Pat asked, "Why did you write that article about Captain Marvel?" [NOTE: *Dick's article "The Big Red Cheese," about Captain Marvel, was the lead feature in Xero #1.* —Bill.] And I said, "Because nobody else would." [audience chuckles]

Nobody else was writing about comic books. There was a certain amount of literature about newspaper comic strips. Not a great deal even of that, but some. There were two or three books and an occasional newspaper feature about Skeeze [Gasoline Alley] or Smilin' Jack or Dick Tracy, but nobody

was paying any attention to comic books. I thought that this was a seriously overlooked area of popular culture, and as the late Lin Carter used to say, "If you want to read a book and it doesn't exist, you have to write it." And that's where "All in Color for a Dime" got its beginning. That's my story.

Oh, one more thing: I remember that convention in 1960 in Pittsburgh. I had a stack of copies of the first issue of *Xero* in my arms and I was literally running down the hallway, chasing people, trying to get them to take free copies. [audience laughs] And I remember people running away from me. [more laughter] I don't know what one of those would be worth today. I imagine it would be substantial.



From *Xero* To '60

The more famous of the two photos taken of Dick and Pat Lupoff as Captain and Mary Marvel at the 1960 Worldcon was seen in color in *A/E* #108. So at left is the cover of *Xero* #1, which was distributed by Dick and Pat at that same science-fiction convention; the image by "Joe Sanders & co." is of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Xanadu*, left over from when that X-word was briefly slated to be the fanzine's title, before the Lupoffs learned that another science-fiction zine was already using it. The World's Mightiest Mortal appeared on the title page of Dick's landmark article "The Big Red Cheese"; that art was last seen in *A/E* #100. Incidentally, for the most comprehensive coverage ever of *Xero*, see *A/E* #18. [© 2012 the respective copyright holders.]



We're going for broke this time—covering comments on no less (but actually more) than three issues of *Alter Ego* this month: #97, 98, & 99, beneath the playful C.C. Beck homage by **Shane Foley** featuring our Marvel-ous “maskot” *Captain Ego*—as colored by his chromatic cohort **Randy Sargent**. Thanks guys! [Captain Ego TM & © 2012 Roy Thomas & Bill Schelly; created by Biljo White.]

Before we get to missives re #97, though, we have two communications left over from *A/E* #96 to slip in, since somehow they got mislaid last time around. One of these is detailed in the art and caption on the following page—while comics artist and animator **Will Meugniot** sent the following e-mail about points covered in an article in #95-96 by fellow animator **Darrell McNeill** to FCA editor P.C. Hamerlinck, who in turn forwarded it to us:

Hi, Paul,

I always enjoy your articles in particular and *Alter Ego* in general.

While I didn't do the *Shazam* models [for the 1981 Filmation animated TV series], I did do some black-&-white comic-style pictures for the presentation used to sell the series and also had a hand in designing the series' stock animation. The bulk of Filmation's presentation art, including the big color art for *Shazam*, was done by the amazing Bob Kline. The series models would have been supervised, and largely drawn, by Herb Hazelton and Carol Lundberg—with an assist from other members of the layout department, which included Mel Keefer, Russ Heath, and Dave Stevens at that point.



Prior to the series going into full production, I was offered a chance to work on *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* for Marvel's new animation company, and I took it. I kept freelancing for Filmation that year, though, doing storyboards with Larry Houston and Rick Hoberg on the *Zorro* series, which was animated in Japan by TMS. Prior to that, I'd been a storyboard supervisor for Filmation on *Flash Gordon*, *Tarzan*, *Sport Bill*, and *The Lone Ranger*.

Will Meugniot

Ye Editor was gratified, Will, to see that Filmation's crew contained the names of several talented folks I've worked with in comic books... and both P.C. and I appreciate your sharing that information (and the drawings seen below) with us.

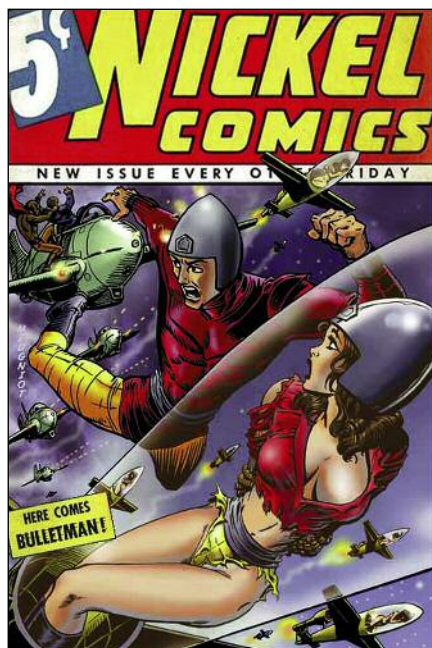
Now, on to remarks re *Alter Ego* #97, beginning with this one from **Darcy Sullivan**:

Editor,

Lawrence Watt-Evans' article on horror comics was entertaining and educational—both the E's in EC, in other words. I was also delighted to see the cover of *Horror Comics of the 1950s*, as I got that book when it came out and it's one of my all-time favorite collections.

Here's a terrifying, shocking, appalling (etc.) fact: Horror comics are still banned in the UK.

Well, not exactly. However, when my family and I moved to England this summer, we were of course given the list of items prohibited for import by UK customs. [On the list, along with



Faster Than A Speeding Bullet, Man!

Maybe artist Will Meugniot (whose best-known comic book work, perhaps, is his 1980s co-creation *The DNAgents*) didn't draw the 1981 TV-animation *Shazam* models attributed to him in Darrell McNeill's FCA article; but he definitely has drawn some Fawcett heroes from time to time: to wit, his own rendition of a Bulletman cover for the early-1940s *Nickel Comics*... a model sheet of sorts featuring Bulletgirl... and Mary Marvel introducing a faux-Fawcett star *Tiger Woman* (who could've given Nyoka the *Jungle Girl* a run for her money!).

[Bulletman, Bulletgirl, & Shazam heroine TM & © 2012 DC Comics; other art © 2012 Will Meugniot.]

"firearms," "drugs and narcotics," "counterfeit currency," etc., was:] "Pornographic material and horror comics." I groaned when I saw this, knowing the rule must have been in effect since the 1950s. It was: it's the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955. The law is covered in Martin Barker's book *A Haunt of Fears*.

Holy Crikey!

Jeff Taylor, after commenting on other features in *A/E* #97, wrote: "Got a kick out of Michael T. Gilbert's article on evil comic book clowns. Unlike him, I've always liked clowns both good and bad (one of my favorites fright flicks is *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*), so I will definitely be hunting down my own copy of Mike Hoffman's *Super Clowns*. Thanks, Mr. Monster, for bringing it to my attention."

Re the issue's *FCA* section, he went on: "*Crikey!*, the British equivalent of *Alter Ego* which covers the United Kingdom's long history of comic characters, had on the back cover of their 16th and unfortunately final issue, as part of an ad for the English comic book shop Blasé Books, a reprint of the cover of a 1948 Spanish reprint edition of *Captain Marvel* called *El Capitan Marvel en La Hora del Radioyente* that was originally one of those crossover stories Fawcett was so proud of.

"However, since the local editor obviously felt that his readers would neither know nor care who Golden Arrow, Spy Smasher, or Ibis the Invincible were, he had an artist redraw them as The Lone Ranger, The Phantom, and Mandrake the Magician. The Big Red Cheese's usual flabbergasted 'Holy Moley!' facial expression on the cover certainly takes on a whole new meaning!" Fortunately, Jeff managed to track down that image in time to send it to us, and we've reprinted it above. Jeff added: "Please notice that The Phantom is wearing a red outfit, the color his costume was throughout most of the non-English-speaking world rather than the purple we know over here." [Shazam hero TM & © 2012 DC Comics; Phantom & Mandrake TM & © 2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.; Lone Ranger TM & © 2012 Lone Ranger Television, Inc., or successors in interest.]

I called my mover in the UK, who laughed and said, "That's odd, isn't it?" I replied that I had several boxes of what anyone would consider horror comics, including books like the EC one noted above. Although the movers have to state that you are not importing any prohibited items, they said that no one is enforcing the horror comics prohibition. One mover even told me, "If we see a box labeled 'Horror Comics' and we open it and it's full of horror comics, we won't care."

All my horror comics made the journey safely. So, unlike all the stories in them, mine had a happy ending.

Darcy Sullivan

Glad to hear it, Darcy. To get everything in, we've truncated the remainder of the letters we're printing re #97, but rest assured there were plenty of them, mostly wildly favorable—and as always we've emphasized those which add a bit of info to the mix, with our comments (if any are needed) placed as usual in italics:

Don Ensign: "I just finished reading Lawrence Watt-Evans' rather breezy survey of 1950s horror comics. I appreciate his myth-busting approach. On page 30, he mentions that Dr. Wertham fled Germany in the 1930s. However, according to an online bio (<http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Fredric-Wertham>), Wertham was born in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1895, graduated from the University of Würzburg in 1921, moved to the United States in 1922, became a U.S. citizen in 1927, and moved to New York in 1932. This was all well before the Nazi takeover of Germany in January 1933."

George Hagenauer: "The *Eerie Adventures* cover painting on p. 16, I am pretty sure, is by Alan Anderson. Basically, three artists (Norman Saunders, Alan Anderson, and Clarence Doore, who were



FCA

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NO. 169
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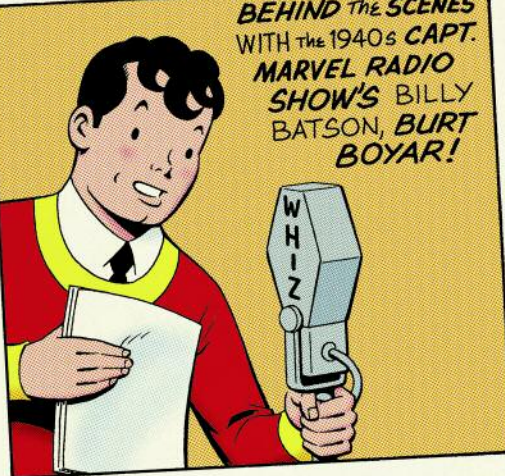
SECRET ORIGINS

OF THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL

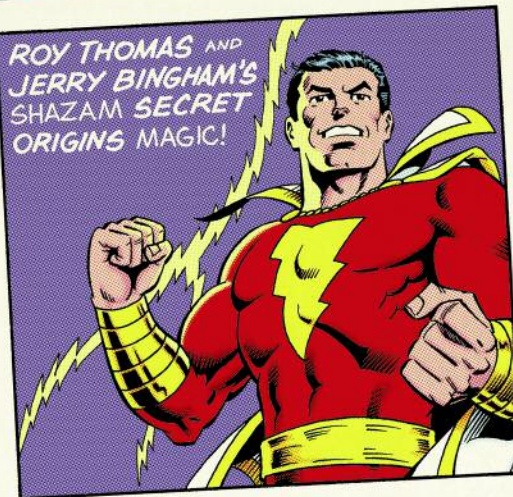
CAPTAIN MARVEL'S ORIGIN EXAMINED --
WITH COMMENTARY BY **C.C. BECK!**



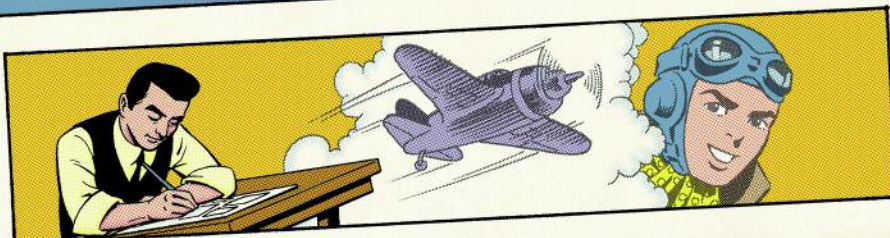
BEHIND THE SCENES
WITH THE 1940s **CAPT.**
MARVEL RADIO
SHOW'S BILLY
BATSON, BURT
BOYAR!

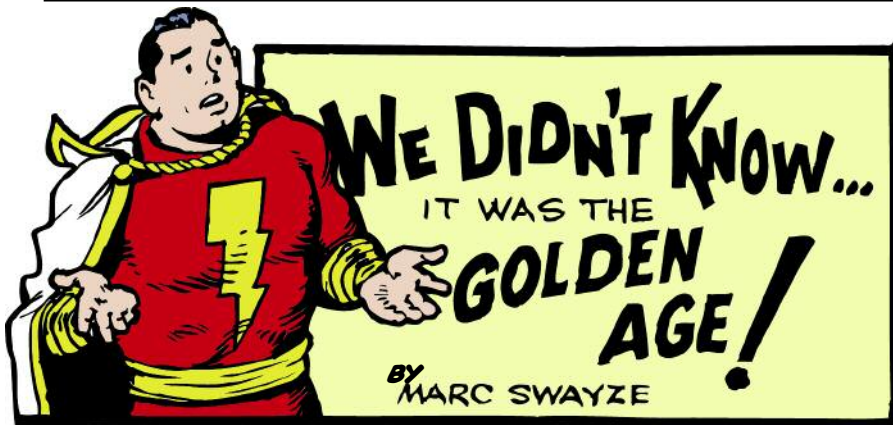


ROY THOMAS AND
JERRY BINGHAM'S
SHAZAM SECRET
ORIGINS MAGIC!



PLUS! **MARC**
SWAYZE'S
VERY FIRST
PHANTOM EAGLE
STORY!





[Art & logo © 2012 Marc Swayze; Captain Marvel © & TM 2012 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

Wow, What a Start!

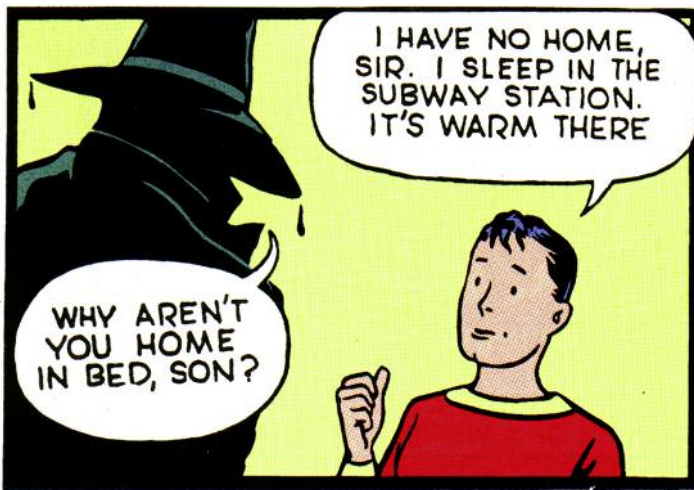
Marc Swayze's debut of drawing the "Phantom Eagle" feature—which he did until the end of the strip's run in 1948—took place in *Wow Comics* #30 (Oct. '44). Jack Binder's cover depicted second-fiddle heroes Mr. Scarlet, Pinky, Commando Yank, and Phantom Eagle trying to keep up with cover starlet and Shazam girl Mary Marvel. The issue's "Phantom Eagle" story—reprinted in its entirety herein—co-starred the Eagle's "Phoenix Squadron," an international support team of six young flyers from Axis-conquered countries that assisted the Eagle during World War II. Swayze later deemed that the extended lineup only weakened its main character, as well as the feature itself, from a narrative standpoint; the Squadron was eventually phased out in the post-War years. [Shazam heroine TM & © 2012 DC Comics; all others TM & © 2012 the respective copyright holders.]

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 we reprinted, in its entirety, Marc's one and only story of "Ibis the Invincible" from 1944. This time around, we re-present the very first Swayze-drawn "Phantom Eagle" adventure, from *Wow Comics* #30, October 1944, entitled "The Phantom Eagle and the Black Mace" (written by Otto Binder and edited by Mercedes Shull) in which Mickey Malone, on his never ending quest for the long-lost "Golden Mace"—a staff formerly in the hands of his ancestors which contains the priceless inscription of Merlin's magic formula for world peace and prosperity—learns of a far different and ominous scepter during an escapade that takes place in

Nazi-occupied Holland.

—P.C. Hamerlinck.]





Billy's plight is shown in his face.
[Shazam characters TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

At the end of the hall, sitting on a marble throne and surrounded by scrolls, a large old book, a globe of the world, and a tripod bearing a container of flaming oil, was an old, old man.

"Welcome, Billy Batson," said the old man as the boy and his guide approached.

"H-how did you know my name?" the wondering boy stammered.

"I know everything," said the old man. "I am...SHAZAM!"

A huge black cloud, a blinding lightning flash, a deafening peal of thunder formed out of nowhere as the old man spoke his name, and simultaneously a curious inscription explaining Shazam's name appeared magically on the wall:

SOLOMON wisdom

HERCULES strength

ATLAS stamina

ZEUS power

ACHILLES courage

MERCURY speed

Once again Shazam spoke, "For 3,000 years I have used the wisdom, strength, stamina, power, courage, and speed the gods have given me to battle the forces of evil which every day threaten to extinguish man from the face of the earth," the old man explained.

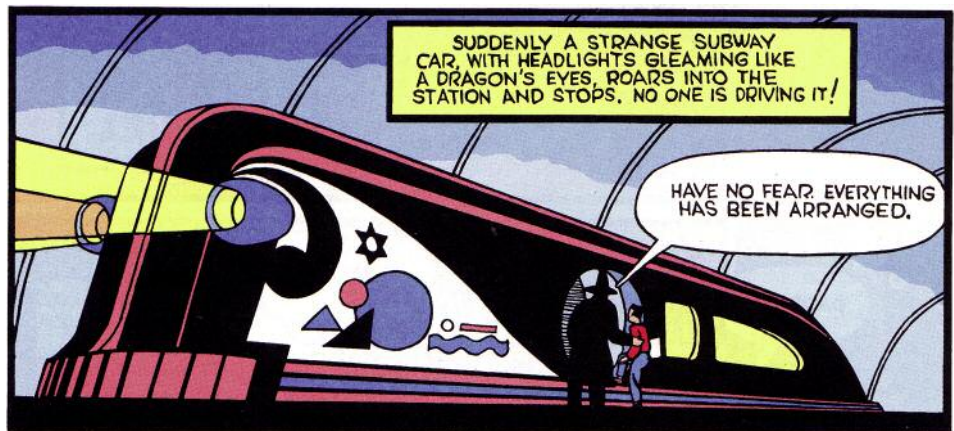
"THREE THOUSAND YEARS!" Billy gasped.

"Yes, son, and during that time I have seen everything, known everything, that happened throughout the world from the highest to the lowest," Shazam said with a kindly smile. Then he clapped his hands once and shouted, "THE HISTORAMA!"

Miraculously the historama, a super-television screen capable of depicting past, present, and future events appeared on the wall. Billy saw himself as a very young boy being driven away from home by his wicked uncle.

"Through this historama I have watched you from the moment you were born, Billy," Shazam said. "On this screen I saw your wicked uncle drive you from his house to make your own way in the world after your parents died, leaving you in his care. I know that he got rid of you in order to get possession of the money and bonds your father willed to you."

Directly above Shazam's head a massive granite block weighing tons hung from a slender, frayed thread. If the thread broke, the granite would



The numinous subway train ... an enchanting art-deco delight.
[Shazam characters TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

crush the old man to powder, and the reader could see that the thread was almost worn through. Old Shazam continued his speech.

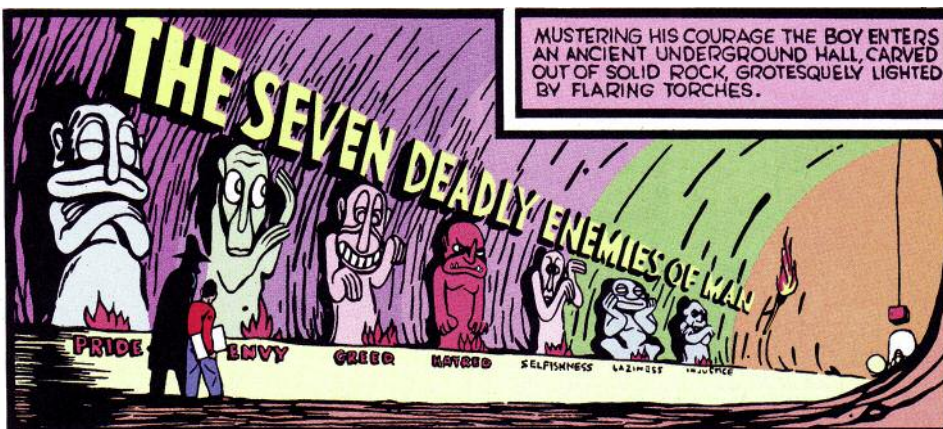
"All my life I have fought injustice and cruelty," he said sadly. "But I am old now—my time is almost up. You shall be my successor. Merely by speaking my name you can become the strongest and mightiest man in the world—CAPTAIN MARVEL! Speak my name!"

"SHAZAM!" shouted Billy. BLAM! Came a huge black cloud and a flash of magic lightning and the boy, Billy, disappeared and a powerful man, dressed in a tight red uniform trimmed with gold appeared in his place.

"Captain Marvel, I salute you," said Shazam. "Henceforth it shall be your sacred duty to defend the poor and helpless, right wrongs, and crush evil everywhere."

"Yes, Sire," replied Captain Marvel.

"To become Billy Batson again, also speak



The Seven statues... suitably ugly, beguilingly peculiar. [Shazam characters TM & © 2012 DC Comics.]

The Secret's Out!

Roy Thomas & Jerry Bingham's '86 *Shazam!* Redux

by John G. Pierce

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

The world of adventure fiction has given us many memorable and classic origin stories for its various and sundry heroes: the English boy who grew up to become “king of the jungle” ... the sole Texas Ranger who survived an ambush ... the single survivor of an extinct planet who grew up on Earth “with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men” ... the boy who witnessed his parents’ brutal murder, and thus dedicated his life to crime-fighting ... the Army reject who was turned into a super-soldier ... the high school science student bitten by a radioactive spider ... and, among so many others, the orphaned newspaper boy who was led into a subway tunnel and an encounter with an ancient wizard who gave him fantastic powers.

In the mid-1980s, DC published a book devoted specifically to retelling the starting-point stories of characters whom it owned from the beginning, or had acquired from other publishers. That book, *Secret Origins*, actually had a rather intriguing secret origin of its own, as it was conceived in part thanks to the 1984 Summer Olympics. In order to escape the congestion caused by the event, then-Los Angelenos Roy Thomas and his wife Dann took a 6,000-mile drive around the Western United States. During that trip, Roy developed the idea of a new title devoted to origin stories, but with a difference: “Why couldn’t we redraw

and re-dialogue—and even, where necessary, re-think—those fabled stories from the late 1930s and 1940s? That would avoid the stigma associated in some readers’ minds with simply reprinting old stories.”

DC managing editor Dick Giordano and his superiors liked Roy’s ideas, but with one stipulation: that one out of every three issues should spotlight a hero from the Silver Age or later. As Roy reported in *The All-Star Companion*, Vol. 4: “All I really cared about was to be allowed to follow my original plan for the series—which was to present the 1930s-40s stories in chronological order. This DC generally allowed—though (like me) they felt that we needed to start not with Siegel & Shuster’s Dr. Occult from mid-’30s *More Fun Comics*, but with Superman. And, after a discussion, Dick and I also agreed that one other early hero origin—that of Fawcett’s original Captain Marvel—would come before that of The Crimson Avenger, who was the second DC costumed hero.”

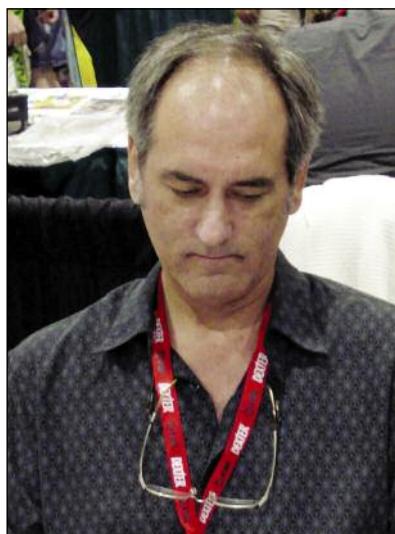
“Captain Marvel was one of the most important characters of the Golden Age, right up there with Superman and Batman,” Roy commented recently. “He was also one of the earliest, coming out in late 1939, and it was my intention to publish the origins primarily in chronological order.”



ReCAP

Artist Jerry Bingham (left) and writer Roy Thomas surround the cover to *Secret Origins* #3 (June 1986), their magical modern-day re-creation of the original Captain Marvel’s starting point. Jerry supplied this fairly recent photo; Dann Thomas took the pic of hubbie Roy in the Irish countryside in 1988, perhaps carousing with an icon of one of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man.

[Cover © 2012 DC Comics.]



ENTERING AN OLD, ABANDONED SUBWAY, THEY DESCEND DEEP INTO LONG MINUTES OF BONE-CHILLING BLACKNESS. THEN AT LAST THEY EMERGE INTO A GREAT HALL, RIMMED BY GIGANTIC ICONS AND GLAZING TORCHES.



FAR, FAR TO THE END STANDS AN ANCIENT THRONE AND SETTED THERE AN AGED, YET AWE-SOME FIGURE, GARBED IN THE ROBES OF AN ERA LONG SINCE PAST. ABOVE HIS HEAD HANGS A HUGE STONE, SUSPENDED BY A SINGLE THREAD!



Get Real

The first true realistic-style rendering of Captain Marvel's origin came in the form of a 2-page character by future comics professional—and Marvel Family artist—Don Newton. The strip appeared in fanzine *The Rocket's Blast Special* #8 in 1970. [Shazam heroes TM & © 2012 DC Comics]

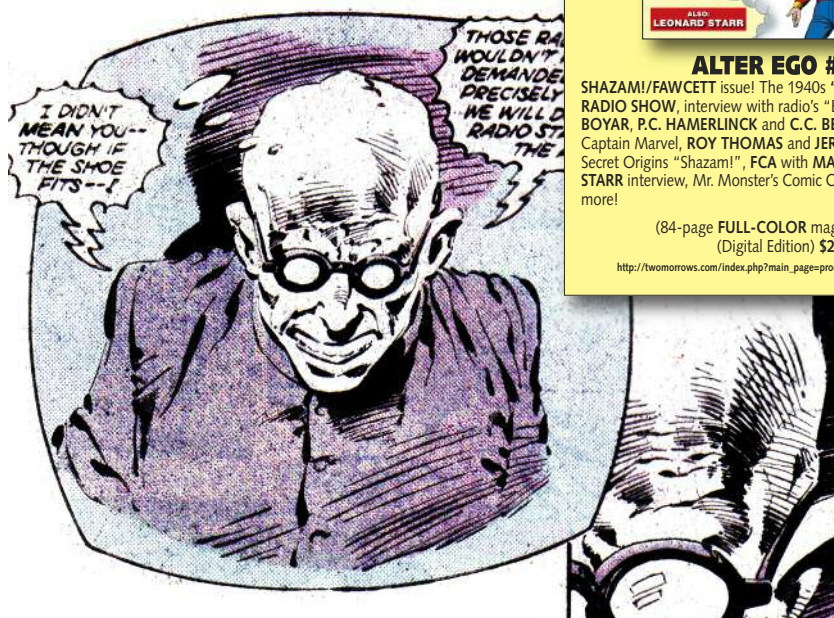
Assigned to draw the re-told "Captain Marvel" origin, based on the original from *Whiz Comics* #2 (Feb. 1940), was Jerry Bingham, an artist whose style was dramatically different from that of Marvel's artistic co-creator, C. C. Beck. The job of inking Jerry's pencils fell to Steve Mitchell, the only part of the enterprise that Roy now regrets. "Steve Mitchell's inking had too weak and scratchy a look for my tastes," Roy said recently. "I don't recall how he came to be chosen, but I probably had a hand in it—I suspect at Steve's request. He and I both played poker (probably at that time) in an L.A. group that also consisted of Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Marty Pasko, Mike Barr, and Jerry Bingham."

Sometimes the secret origins behind the stories are fascinating, sometimes they are rather prosaic, but they're almost never boring! From the Olympic games to a poker game—who would have thought?

A short while ago, when Roy asked Jerry Bingham about their "Shazam!" origin story, the artist responded: "It's always difficult for me to

in terms of

Secret Origins Captain Marvel style, as opposed to Fiction Company's G. B. Love, page atmosphere



You've Got To Change Your Evil Ways

Captain Marvel's first foe, Dr. Sivana, was as evil as ever in 1986. [© 2012 DC Comics.]

come up with comic [work-related] anecdotes. I used to feel like I was working in a vacuum most of the time and moving from one job to the next, and they kind of blend together in my dotage. But I do remember enjoying the work on that one [*Secret Origins* #3]; I liked the cover, so I was happy you liked it as well. Naturally I, like many of my peers, was (am) a big fan of yours [RT] and, after many painful jobs, you made this one easy for me."

When asked about how much direction he had given to Bingham, Roy replied that "Mostly Jerry was just instructed to redraw the story. I suspect he understood that he could flesh it out with room for Cap and Billy to be thinking about their predicament, and to give Billy

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ALTER EGO #110

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in Beck's style, but also somewhat different from his own earlier approach to the characters.

Dissimilar to *The Rocket's Blast Special* version, *SO* #3 recreated the *entire* origin—not only in a different artistic style, but with added dialogue and thought balloons, as Roy attempted, as he commented, to "get inside the head (heads?)