COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

BACK ISSUE!

May 2013
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BACKUP SERIES ISSUE!

GREEN LANTERN • GREEN ARROW & BLACK CANARY

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

METAMORPHO • GOODWIN & SIMONSON'S MANHUNTER

PASKO & GIFFEN'S DR. FATE & more!

Volume 1,
Number 64
May 2013

Celebrating the Best Comics of the '70s, '80s, '90s, and Beyond!

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BACK ISSUE
Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!

This issue: BACK UP SERIES of the 1970s and 1980s!

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GREEN LANTERN® THE EMERALD BACKUPS

by Robert Greenberger

The 1970s was not a kind decade to DC Comics' superheroes. Experiencing a period of transition on many levels, the company's administrative needs and struggle with a changing distribution landscape, coupled with its focus on other genres, left its stalwart heroes and heroines somewhat adrift. The decade began with a bang of energy as Superman editor Mort Weisinger retired and Julie Schwartz was asked to reinvigorate the Man of Steel, just as he was freshening the Dark Knight after the Batmania fad quickly dissipated. Comics from both DC and Marvel Comics began to deal with real-world issues, and suddenly "relevance" was the catchphrase on everyone's lips.

Leading the way was Schwartz's *Green Lantern*. Rescued from sales oblivion thanks to the creative team of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams, the book evolved from a space opera into a morality play. O'Neil and Adams brought Green Arrow into the series to provide a liberal counterpoint to GL's more conservative outlook and took the green-clad duo across America in search of truth. Newspapers and magazines noticed and wrote about it, especially when the series became the first to deal with drug addiction while still carrying the Comics Code (credit goes to Stan Lee for defying the Code earlier with *Amazing Spider-Man*).

Schwartz delighted in letting his team explore reality-based themes, and the early-1970s' run of *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, from #76–89, remains one of the most creative stretches from any editorial office. The problem remained that sales rose, then stagnated, while the creative team struggled to meet the publication deadline. Issue #88 (Feb.–Mar. 1972) was a reprint to buy time, and then came one final issue.

With the writing on the wall, Schwartz knew the title was going to be canceled but liked GL, having been the man to resurrect and revamp the name back in 1959. He decided, better Green Lantern be reduced to a backup feature than gone entirely from sight. No stranger to backups, which were a DC mainstay during the 1940s–1950s, Schwartz found a home for the ring-wielding hero in the pages of *The Flash*.

BACK IN A FLASH

Four months after the final issue of *Green Lantern* saw print, GL, GA, O'Neil, and Adams took up residence in *Flash* beginning with #217 (Aug.–Sept. 1972). Previous backups in that title had featured the Elongated Man, Kid Flash, and even the Flash from Earth-Two, so readers were not necessarily shocked to find the Sultan of Speed sharing space.

Relevance Relegated to the Rear

Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams' award-winning *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* feature was demoted into the back pages of *The Flash* beginning with issue #217 (Aug.–Sept. 1972). GL/GA image, from the *1976 Super DC Calendar*, is by Adams and Dick Giordano.

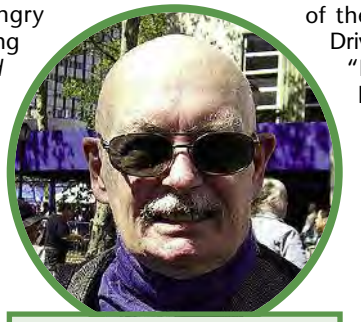
Hard-Traveling Heroes

Behold! Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*), an original art page from the first GL/GA backup, which appeared in *The Flash* #217 (Aug.–Sept. 1972). Words by Denny O'Neil, art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano.

According to O'Neil, "We knew that the book was headed for cancellation, but Julie wanted to continue it, at least a little. Hence, the three-parter" starring GL and GA that ran in *Flash* #217–219.

The story O'Neil wrote was his angry response to Green Arrow's callous killing of a criminal in *The Brave and the Bold* #100, in a story written by Bob Haney, who didn't pay much attention to the characterization used by host series' writers.

Nearly four decades later, the writer tells *BACK ISSUE*, "I didn't rip the plot from the headlines, maybe as acknowledgement that our good times were all gone. I think this was the first completely character-driven piece I ever did. Back then, plot was still king." This particular story, with Oliver Queen killing a man and running away to an ashram to regain his moral center, wound up resonating for years to come, and played a major role in the archer's continuity in the 1990s and 2000s.



DENNY O'NEIL

By issue #220 (Feb.–Mar. 1973), though, Adams, Green Arrow, and Black Canary were gone. Hal Jordan was down to his last $200, done searching for America, still reduced in status and power as a member of the Green Lantern Corps, and adrift. Driving through a desert, Jordan thought, "It's good to be alone—all that hassle with Green Arrow … him accusing me of being an establishment cop-out … me saying he's a hot-headed kid … then, to cap it, Black Canary nearly being killed by a maniac driver … more than I could take!"

So began GL's transition from a relevant hero to just another super-hero having adventures, which was also reflected in so many of the DC hero titles of the time.

O'Neil doesn't recall why Adams left or what prompted him to jettison Green Arrow. There was "no grand plan, ever," he admits. "We pretty much made it up as we went along. If some element vanished … maybe we just forgot about it."

Interestingly, despite Hal Jordan and a wheelchair-bound Carol Ferris rekindling their romance at the conclusion of *GL* #84, she was never referenced or seen during Green Lantern's tenure as a backup hero. Similarly, none of his familiar rogues were used as antagonists. According to O'Neil's hazy memories, there was no reason to avoid them; it just never happened. (In *Superman* #261, on sale the same month as *Flash* #220, readers saw Carol seated in an airplane when she hallucinates a battle with Green Lantern and Superman. That prompted a flare-up of her Star Sapphire persona, who fought the Man of Steel and ultimately disappeared. The story closes with Carol *walking* off the airplane. Although never stated as such, the magic of Star Sapphire presumably canceled out the earlier spell that prevented Carol from walking.)

MYSTERIES IN SPACE

For the four years Green Lantern appeared in the pages of *Flash*, he did have escapades, beginning on Earth with alien menaces, and then slowly shifting the focus once more to the breadth of Space Sector 2814. Early on, Green Lantern asked dispensation from the Guardians of the Universe to be given his full power back to deal with a threat, but they never seemed to have reduced his ring's power after the mission was concluded. Indeed, the Guardians were seen calling on Green Lantern to deal with interstellar affairs.

After all the earthbound, reality-driven stories, this was a significant change of pace for the character and his readers. According to O'Neil, "There was no reason not to have space fare, and maybe we were trying for some visual and plot variety. I had a soft spot for old-fashioned spacers."

No sooner did Neal Adams leave than an alien came gunning for Hal Jordan in "A Duel for a Death-List," the first of a two-parter that set the tone for what was to pretty much follow through *Flash* #246 in 1977. Staying behind with O'Neil, though, was Adams' inker, Dick Giordano, who took over the penciling chores, making a nice visual continuity for the character and letting the artist stretch a bit. It was here that the Guardians ended their champion's "two-year" leave of absence from the *GL/GA* arc, ending their differences with Jordan.

The alien represented a new species, and the mystery of why he wanted Jordan (and other Lanterns) dead

FlashBack

The Ballad of Ollie and Dinah

The Romance and Adventures of Green Arrow and Black Canary during the Bronze Age of Comics

by Jim Kingman

It began back in the summer of '69. As chronicled in DC's* Justice League of America *#74 and 75 (Aug. and Sept. 1969), millionaire Oliver (Green Arrow) Queen had lost almost all of his vast fortune and Dinah (Black Canary) Drake Lance was tragically widowed. His simplistic views of the world changed, as did his apparel and look, and he became a hot-tempered, wisecracking, obstinate, leftist activist. She changed parallel universes, from Earth-Two to Earth-One, to cope with the death of her husband, Larry Lance, but lost none of her compassion. They found comfort in each other despite their differences, and a relationship formed, a loving one, yet tumultuous. *Hmm … were the Emerald Archer and the Blonde Bombshell a kind of "John and Yoko" of the DC superhero community during the Bronze Age of comics?* ponders this writer. Elliot S! Maggin, Mike Grell, and Mike W. Barr will weigh in shortly on this matter, and other GA/BC-related topics.

The "ballad" of Oliver and Dinah is a lengthy song, detailing a strong, often fragile romance that managed to endure over 40 years. While their history together goes beyond the scope of this issue's backup feature theme, said theme allows us to focus substantially on the first decade and a half of their relationship. Even that is a force to be reckoned with, so as we would single out destinations on a map for travel purposes, we will hone in on three "locations," *Action Comics*, *World's Finest Comics*, and *Detective Comics*, and begin our own journey through the first stanzas of the romance and superheroic exploits of Oliver and Dinah in the pages of *Action*.

GREEN ARROW AND BLACK CANARY IN *ACTION COMICS*

December 1972–January 1976

Green Arrow's first backup series in the Bronze Age began in *Action Comics* #421 (Feb. 1973), and continued in issues 424, 426, 428, 431, 434, 436, 440–441, 444–446, 450–452, and 456–458, for a total of 18 episodes, rotating with two other features, the Human Target and the Atom. Elliot S! Maggin wrote all the stories, with artist Mike Grell receiving a co-scripting credit for #444's installment. Maggin also adjusted Grell's original plot featuring the reincarnation of King David, a.k.a. Davy Tenzer, in *Action* #450–452. Artists included Sal Amendola, Dick Giordano, and Dick Dillin. Grell came on board as illustrator for the remainder of the series beginning with #440. Julius Schwartz edited all episodes. GA also appeared in full-length Superman tales in *Action* #437 (July 1974), 443 (Jan. 1975), and 455 (Jan. 1976). He could also be found in *Justice League of America*, *The Brave and the Bold* #106 (Mar.–Apr. 1973), *Wonder Woman* #217 (Apr.–May 1975), *World's Finest Comics* #231 (July 1975), and *The Joker* #4 (Nov.–Dec. 1975).

For Better or For Worse—

—is the subtitle of the Green Arrow/Black Canary trade paperback featuring DC's other dynamic duo, as well as this cover art by Alex Ross.

First Shot

A montage of action (how appropriate!) highlights this splash page to Green Arrow's first *Action* backup, from issue #421 (Feb. 1973). Story by Elliot S! Maggin, art by Sal Amendola and Dick Giordano.

ELLIOT S! MAGGIN

While Black Canary appeared as Dinah Lance in *Action* #421 and as needed in subsequent issues, she did not appear in costume until #428. She assumed a more prominent role in #440 (Oct. 1974), further upgrading her starring status per each three-issue mini-"epic." During this time she appeared in *JLA*, *The Brave and the Bold* #107 (June–July 1973), *Action* #443, *Wonder Woman* #216 (Feb.-Mar. 1975), *Superman Family* #171 (June–July 1975), and the *Joker* issue noted above.

Although artist Neal Adams and writer Denny O'Neil effectively transformed Green Arrow visually (in *The Brave and the Bold* #85, Aug.–Sept. 1969, which was written by Bob Haney) and politically (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #76, Apr. 1970, beginning the classic O'Neil/Adams series than ran through #89, Apr.–May 1972), making the Emerald Archer relevant during the turbulent times of the late 1960s and early 1970s, relevancy didn't sell, and GA's liberal activism was tabled by the time he separated from Green Lantern in late 1972. Also, Oliver and Dinah had successfully recovered from severe mental and physical ordeals chronicled in a three-part Green Lantern/Green Arrow tale in the back of *The Flash* #217–219 (see previous article).

"I liked Green Lantern as a character better," recalls Elliot Maggin, "and Denny preferred Green Arrow, but it was Julie's perception that GL was the principal character and Denny was the more experienced writer. If it had been either of our decisions it would have gone the other way around. Julie was also a little amused that I patterned the Arrow's speech patterns after a parody of my own. I spoke fluent '70s New York wiseass in those days."

Socio-political causes gave way to the personal as Oliver pursued a steady job and Dinah wrestled with her romantic feelings for Ollie (her romantic incident with Batman in *Justice League of America* #84, Nov. 1970, had been just that, an incident). As far as employment was concerned for Dinah, she went with what she knew, establishing a flower shop as she had on Earth-Two. Notably, Dinah had already tested the job-hunting waters earlier in the year in *Adventure Comics* #418–419 (Apr.–May 1972), only to cross the villainous path of Catwoman. This two-part Black Canary backup tale, written by O'Neil, is superbly illustrated by Alex Toth, and was reprinted in *Black Canary Archives* vol. 1.

Ollie decided to become a public-relations agent, and selected as his first job gaining publicity for Dinah's shop. He actually started getting pretty good at the profession. An assassination attempt on Black Canary's life and a miscast spell spoken by Zatanna that caused the magician to temporarily believe she was Black Canary, complete with feelings for Green Arrow, drew the couple closer together. After Dinah was

METAMORPHO® IN ACTION COMICS

A CONVERSATION WITH ARTIST JOHN CALNAN

by Bryan Stroud

"Great Guns!" "Blue Blazes!" "Holy Hannah!" Alliteration run amok? Nah. Just examples of the colorful dialogue for the equally colorful "Fab Freak of 1000-and-1 Changes," Metamorpho, the Element Man!

Metamorpho was first spotted in DC Comics' house ads prior to his debut in the pages of *The Brave and the Bold* #57 (Dec. 1964–Jan. 1965). A copy of the cover, accompanied with some terrific text, promised great things to come:

"Metamorpho is liquid—solid—gaseous … able to will the chemicals of his body into any shape or form!"

"Metamorpho possesses all the power of the universe—from the tiniest electron to the mightiest sun!"

"Metamorpho opens a new era in comics thrills—the *bravest*, the *boldest*, the most *bizarre* hero of all time!"

And we only had to wait until the sale date of October 29, 1964 to check out this new hero—and what a hero he was, though becoming the Element Man certainly was never the goal of Rex Mason, soldier of fortune.

MEET THE ELEMENT MAN

Rex was fiercely independent and had passion for only two things: adventure and Sapphire Stagg, daughter of wealthy industrialist and brilliant scientist Simon Stagg. This, of course, created the tension in the initial storylines. Simon Stagg holds an insatiable lust for power and has no qualms about using his seemingly limitless wealth to pursue it, along with any other leverage he can muster, and while Rex desires to be free of "Mr. Millions" and to spirit away his lady love to a life all their own, Simon will use any trick or treachery to keep both under his thumb.

Still more tension exists via Java, Stagg's revived and intellectually enhanced prehistoric manservant. Java has the physical makeup and great strength of the large simian–like caveman he resembles, but has been given intelligence to be able to interact with the world he's been brought into. He has strong desires of his own, both to please his master and to win the love of Sapphire for himself, causing another antagonist for Rex Mason.

The Element Man came about quite by accident in this debut story titled, appropriately enough, "The Origin of Metamorpho." Rex is dispatched to an ancient pyramid to fetch the Orb of Ra, an artifact that contains legendary power and is therefore coveted by Simon Stagg. The payoff: a cool million dollars. The downside? Java is accompanying Rex on the trip—and we know where his interests and loyalties lie.

Once inside the pyramid, the pair discovers the Orb of Ra and immediately a fracas breaks out as Java is determined to get credit for the find and to maroon Mason there. After a brief battle, Rex is

And You Thought the Addams Family was Freaky…

Undated Ramona Fradon pencil sketch of the Metamorpho cast, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*).

knocked unconscious and Java departs with the artifact. Rex awakens a short while later to discover he is on an automated platform that his body weight has activated and is being transported to the very heart of the pyramid, where a chamber holds a meteor that has begun to glow and give off great heat. Convinced his number is up, just prior to blacking out Rex ingests a chemical formula Stagg had given him, concealed in his ring, that he was instructed to take if death was imminent.

The meteor glows brighter and hotter, then cools and fades. Rex revives and staggers out of the chamber, in awe that he has somehow survived when he comes upon a full-length mirror in an upper passageway and sees for the first time the weird transformation of his body.

His hairless head is now white, and his body, devoid of clothing save a handy pair of trunks, seems to be divided into four distinct quadrants with different textures and colors. Reeling from this revelation, but still acutely aware that he is trapped within the confines of the pyramid, he instinctively calls upon his new abilities and converts himself into a gas that can seep out between the stones and to freedom.

Mason soon begins to comprehend that he has control of the elements within the human body and can convert part or all of this new form into them at will. Making his way back to the Stagg compound, he is determined to set things right, starting with a kayo to Java with a cobalt right cross. He is about to take on Simon himself when they discover his body is impervious to bullets, but not to the Orb of Ra, which has a weakening effect on the Element Man.

A hasty truce is called and Simon Stagg promises to cure Rex of his condition. A series of experiments in Stagg's lab, however, prove fruitless, though Stagg is greatly impressed with Rex's invulnerability to electricity or acid. He further confirms through testing that "…your cells have been transmuted into pure forms of the elements found in the human body! Some are the basic building blocks—carbon, oxygen, calcium … some are just trace elements like fluorine and cobalt! Evidently you can will yourself to change completely into any one of these body elements…"

Mason, however, remains unimpressed, wanting only to be restored to his natural state and to marry Sapphire, who is initially taken aback at his new appearance but proposes he use his new abilities for good until a cure is found. Simon, meanwhile, quietly stashes the Orb or Ra as an insurance policy and some leverage.

Thus the basis for Metamorpho is established, along with the conflicts of a man thrust into a position he didn't desire, and at least two people close to him who certainly do not have his best interests at heart.

Metamorpho was conceived through a group effort, according to his original artist, Ramona Fradon:

"I believe George Kashdan thought of the basic concept—a character who could recombine the four elements to produce different effects—but Bob Haney fleshed him out and wrote the original plot. I designed the characters after reading Bob's script. The Metamorpho character took a lot of thought. At first I gave him the usual

RAMONA FRADON

"The Kid and the Corruptors!"

Guest-star Randall Stagg complicates "Uncle Rex" Mason's life when he visits the Staggs in *Action* #417 (Oct. 1972). Original art by and courtesy of John Calnan.

"METAMORPHO" IN *ACTION COMICS* AND *WORLD'S FINEST COMICS*

- *Action Comics* #413 (June 1972)
- *Action Comics* #414 (July 1972)
- *Action Comics* #415 (Aug. 1972)
- *Action Comics* #416 (Sept. 1972)
- *Action Comics* #417 (Oct. 1972)
- *Action Comics* #418 (Nov. 1972)
- *World's Finest Comics* #218 (July–Aug. 1973)
- *World's Finest Comics* #219 (Sept.–Oct. 1973)
- *World's Finest Comics* #220 (Nov.–Dec. 1973)
- *World's Finest Comics* #229 (Apr. 1975)

A Rose by Any Other Name... Would Be Thorn

by Dewey Cassell

Sometimes you find the best of things in the least likely of places. An old baseball glove tucked away in the back of a hall closet. A ten-dollar bill wedged in the back of a couch. Or a run of smartly written and drawn superhero stories in the back of *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* entitled "Rose and the Thorn."

The Rose and the Thorn backup series first appeared in *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* #105 (Oct. 1970). The main character in the series is Rhosyn "Rose" Forrest, whose father was a police detective, killed by a criminal organization known as "the 100." The trauma of her father's death leads Forrest to develop a nocturnal personality, the Thorn, who discovers a costume and weapons in the building next door to her apartment and seeks revenge on the 100. The Thorn persona only manifests itself when Rose is asleep, although in later issues, the character becomes almost narcoleptic, enabling the Thorn to emerge whenever trouble arises. The Rose and Thorn personalities are largely unaware of each other, but both are aware of their loss, Rose mourning her father while the Thorn hunts for his killer.

The organization called the 100 comprises one hundred criminals, nicknamed the "Centipede of Crime," and the Thorn makes it her mission to defeat them all, one by one, in retaliation for her father's murder. Over the subsequent issues, she makes considerable progress toward her goal, finally accomplishing it (with Superman's help) in issue #122, but it is revealed the following issue that the 100 replaces members it has lost, not unlike Hydra, the villainous organization that battles Captain America and S.H.I.E.L.D. in the pages of Marvel Comics.

"Rose and the Thorn" Blooms

The Rose and the Thorn was created by writer Robert Kanigher, who was also writing the Lois Lane stories, and was first illustrated by artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. The character was actually a reinvention of a Golden Age DC Comics character of the same name. It was not the first time Kanigher had breathed new life into an old DC character, having co-created the Silver Age Flash with editor Julie Schwartz and artist Carmine Infantino in *Showcase* #4 in 1956. Kanigher, Andru, and Esposito were also responsible for introducing the Silver Age version of Wonder Woman. As for Rose and the Thorn, the costume of the new Thorn, including mini-skirt, boots, and gloves, actually bore some resemblance to the original character's, but most of her background story was changed.

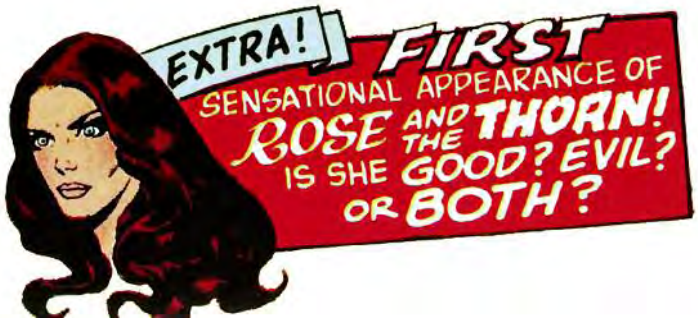
John Broome and Carmine Infantino created the original Rose and Thorn as a villain who debuted in 1947 in issue #89 of *Flash Comics*. Rose Canton, as the Golden Age character was known, also suffered from multiple personality disorder. When Canton was

These Chicks Don't Click

Thorn, in a cover appearance drawn by Dick Giordano, from *Superman's* (weepy) *Girl Friend, Lois Lane* #114 (Sept. 1971).

"ROSE AND THE THORN" BACKUPS

- *Lois Lane* #105 (Oct. 1970)
- *Lois Lane* #106 (Nov. 1970)
- *Lois Lane* #107 (Jan. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #108 (Feb. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #109 (Apr. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #110 (May 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #111 (July 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #112 (Aug. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #113 (Sept.-Oct. 1971) – 80-Page Giant featuring reprints of Lois Lane stories, along with a two-page excerpt from an unpublished Flash story featuring the Golden Age Rose and Thorn
- *Lois Lane* #114 (Sept. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #115 (Oct. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #116 (Nov. 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #117 (Dec, 1971)
- *Lois Lane* #118 (Jan. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #119 (Feb. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #120 (Mar. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #121 (Apr. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #122 (May 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #123 (June 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #124 (July 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #125 (Aug. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #126 (Sept.1972)
- *Lois Lane* #127 (Oct. 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #128 (Dec, 1972)
- *Lois Lane* #129 (Feb. 1973)
- *Lois Lane* #130 (Apr. 1973)



Prickly Protagonist

(left) Gray Morrow-drawn page from *Lois Lane* #111 (July 1971). (above) Cover blurb—drawn by Rose and the Thorn's first artist, Ross Andru—from the feature's first outing on *LL* #105.

studying biology on the island of Tashmi, she came into contact with the sap of a jungle root which caused her to transform into the Thorn, giving her the ability to control plants. Thorn became a nemesis of the Flash, although in her Rose persona she often sought help from his alter ego, Jay Garrick. The Amazons of Paradise Island, birthplace of Wonder Woman, treat Canton to rid her of the Thorn persona and Canton falls in love with Alan Scott, the Golden Age Green Lantern. Canton and Scott marry and have twin children, but the Thorn persona resurfaces, and rather than harm her family, Rose Canton takes her own life.

Several different artists worked on the new Rose and the Thorn series, among them Gray Morrow, who gave an ethereal feel to the story, and Dick Giordano, who drew himself as a villain who turned the Thorn into a statue. Giordano was succeeded by a young artist named Rich Buckler. Buckler describes how he got the assignment: "As I recall, Dick Giordano mentioned the character to me and asked if I would be interested in working on it. Not long after that, Bob Kanigher just came up to me in the office and introduced himself. 'I understand we will be working together,' he said, but in a manner that made it seem like we already knew each other."

RICH BUCKLER

Some artists would have been intimidated working with seasoned vet Kanigher, but not Buckler, who notes, "I was just a mere whelp and here I was working with a writer who I considered to be a master storyteller. Other artists I talked to said they found him difficult to work with. For me, it was just the opposite. Maybe it was his intensity that put them off, I don't know. I found the passion and dedication he exhibited to be refreshing and stimulating."

In taking over the character, Buckler did not receive much editorial direction. "Actually, I was given very little background, and no guidance to speak of," he says. "There were no actual model sheets back then. I only had the previous printed stories to go by. What did happen early on was that I got to meet with Bob Kanigher and we had many creative sessions where we discussed the character in depth. That helped a lot."

Those creative sessions provided Buckler a chance to get to know Kanigher better, which only deepened his admiration for the writer. As Buckler recalls, "Bob was a very special breed of writer. If he was afforded the opportunity he would not hesitate to discuss in intense verbal detail just about any particular story he wrote—almost like reliving it, as if it had actually all happened in real life. It was that way with Rose and the Thorn. And when Bob and I had these discussions, he would frequently go off on these wonderful tangents and discuss the works of other authors or specific movies that influenced him. All very

FlashBack

SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY: LOST IN TIME AGAIN

by Jack Abramowitz

One of the most unusual features in the annals of comic-book history was published in the back pages of* Adventure Comics *in 1975–1976. The Seven Soldiers of Victory appeared in a serialized epic, adapted from a found Golden Age script and drawn for the first time by a variety of Bronze Age artists. (It ran for six issues but, because of *Adventure*'s bimonthly publishing schedule, that was actually a full year's worth of the series.)

The Seven Soldiers of Victory, also known as the Law's Legionnaires, first appeared in 1941, in the pages of *Leading Comics* #1. The team consisted more of mystery men than of bona fide superheroes, as most of the members possessed nothing even approaching superpowers. Members included the Crimson Avenger (DC's first masked crimefighter), Green Arrow (an archer), the Vigilante (a cowboy), and the Star-Spangled Kid (um … an acrobat?). Only the Shining Knight, a winged-horse-riding, time-displaced warrior from King Arthur's Court, had an element of fantasy to him. Also unusual was that *sidekicks* were part of the team in the form of Green Arrow's ward Speedy and the Star-Spangled Kid's adult mechanic, Stripesy. The Crimson Avenger's "Oriental" sidekick Wing, however, while a constant presence in the team's adventures, was not considered an actual member.

The Seven Soldiers appeared in *Leading Comics* for 14 issues, after which they were edged out by such humor series as "King Oscar's Court." (The cover of *Leading Comics* #15 informs us that "They walk! They talk! They're just like humans but they're all animals—and they're a riot!" The hilarity of King Oscar's Court, however, must remain a topic for another day.) An unused Seven Soldiers script went into a drawer, while the Law's Legionnaires themselves entered comic-book limbo, where they would remain for nearly three decades.

It was not until 1972 that the Seven Soldiers would return, in a three-part saga that began in the pages of *Justice League of America* #100. For three issues, the combined members of the Justice League and Justice Society traveled throughout the ages retrieving the

Magnificent Seven (left to right) Green Arrow, Speedy, Crimson Avenger, Shining Knight, Vigilante, Star-Spangled Kid, and Stripesy are quite chummy here as rendered by Mort Meskin.

Eight is Enough

The late, great, lamented Joe Kubert was a young turk back in 1944 when he drew this tryout piece starring the Seven Soldiers—including their unofficial eighth member, Wing. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*).

Soldiers, who had been time-tossed in a previously unrevealed exploit. Four years later, the revived *All-Star Comics* #58, featuring the Star-Spangled Kid, would reveal that the other members returned to their point of origin in time. The backup series in *Adventure* would be the only new (at least, the only previously unseen) Seven Soldiers epic in the interim. (A classic Seven Soldiers saga was reprinted in *Justice League of America* #111–112.)

Adventure Comics was as good a place as any—and a better place than most—to showcase this lost tale from the Golden Age. Long the home of Superboy, the Legion of Super-Heroes, and Supergirl, *Adventure* was experimenting in the mid-1970s with fantasy and horror with such headliners as Black Orchid and the Spectre. Backup features included such unusual characters as the pirate Captain Fear. The lost Seven Soldiers tale was perfect to fill the backup position in *Adventure*, focusing as it did on a different character each installment.

PAUL LEVITZ

Golden Age reprints were fairly common at DC in the 1970s. These often had tenuous connections to the books in which they appeared. For example, *Superman* #252 reprinted Golden Age tales of Dr. Fate, Hawkman, the Black Condor, and others on the shaky premise that these were "DC's flying heroes." Occasionally, a previously unprinted Golden Age story would surface, such as the heretofore-unseen Atom story that appeared in *Batman* #238. Renowned comics historian John Wells points out that unpublished Golden Age tales also preceded the Seven Soldiers in *Adventure*; an unused Black Canary tale belatedly appeared in #399, while a Dr. Mid-Nite episode that had only been penciled was completed by Sal Amendola for #418. While Amendola inks over decades-old pencils is interesting, it pales before what was done with the Seven Soldiers under the guidance of then-assistant editor Paul Levitz.

John Wells tells the tale:

"In July of 1973, DC was in the process of moving from 909 Third Avenue to a new base of operations on the sixth floor of the Warner Communications Building at 75 Rockefeller Plaza. And that also happened to be the time period when 16-year-old Paul Levitz snagged a job as Joe Orlando's assistant.

"During the big move, the Seven Soldiers script was apparently discovered by Paul," Wells continues. "Unlike the older, wearier DC personnel around him, he was enough of a fan to delight in the find itself and, more importantly, well-versed enough in DC history to recognize that it had never been published.

"It was undoubtedly Paul who encouraged Orlando to have the story illustrated. And since Levitz was also the editor of *The Comic Reader* newszine at the time, word of the discovery was relayed to fans as early as *TCR* #100 (dated and evidently on sale in August). The *Adventure Comics* #433 letters column opened with a missive from Paul Kupperberg, who asked for a 'sneak preview of what to expect from the ever-changing *Adventure* in the near future.' Kupperberg was *TCR*'s assistant editor and the letter was an obvious setup for an editorial reply (almost certainly written by Levitz) plugging the Seven Soldiers serial."

The announcement in *The Comic Reader* #100, provided by Wells, reads as follows:

"An unpublished Golden Age Seven Soldiers of Victory script was found in National's files in the process of moving the offices. A little bit of rewrite work, and poof—a Golden Age script with new art—due to appear as a serial in *Adventure Comics* #435–438 next summer and fall."

The serial did not end up beginning with *Adventure* #435, running instead from *Adventure* #438 through #443. According to Wells, the cartoon *Super Friends* is to blame. Due to Aquaman's sudden surge in prominence thanks to the cartoon, the Sea King was given the backup position in *Adventure* #435–437, before bumping the Spectre from the lead slot starting with #441. The third Aquaman backup, in #437, ended with a half-page ad drawn by Jim Aparo, promoting the Seven Soldiers serial that would begin in the following issue.

Paul Levitz corroborates Wells' telling of the story. "I found the script when we moved to 75 Rock," he explains. "In the course of the move, I found the old onion skins of [Joe] Samachson's unpublished script and I talked Joe Orlando into letting me clean it up and adapt it for the backups."

The lost script, dating back to 1945, features the adventures of the Law's Legionnaires in "The Land of Magic!" At first glance, this conjures memories of the Justice Society's Fairyland from *All-Star Comics* #39 and the Justice League's Magic Land from *JLA* #2. Upon reflection, however, it becomes apparent—and noteworthy—that Joe Samachson's Seven Soldiers story predates not only the 1960 Justice League escapade, it even beats the 1948 Justice Society tale by three years.

non-sumero comics

"Detective Comics is returning to the idea that it is a comic book about detectives," a report in* Etcetera & the Comic Reader *#80 (Dec. 1971) declared. "Even the Batman stories will be based on the idea that he is the world's greatest detective." In support of editor Julius Schwartz's directional shift, a new logo was created for the title and Batgirl—who'd had prominent co-billing on every cover for the past few years—was given her walking papers.

Her replacement as the *Detective* backup feature was no stranger. Introduced in a 1969 Batgirl two-parter (*Detective* #392–393), Jason Bard had been a pipe-smoking criminology student, an aspiring detective, and, in retrospect, something of a trailblazer. He was a Vietnam vet in an era when anger over the war was at its peak. The knee injury that sent him home forced Jason to use a cane, something he became adept at using as a weapon once he made the acquaintance of Barbara Gordon.

As the boyfriend of Batgirl's alter ego, Jason rarely had the opportunity to upstage the feature's star. Issue #424 (June 1972) was one of those exceptions, with the young detective positioned to prevent Babs' assassination at the hands of political enemies. In "Batgirl's Last Case," despite the mob's best efforts, dark horse Barbara Gordon won a Congressional seat and flew off to Washington. "As Gotham City loses an ace crime-fighter in Batgirl," the closing caption declared, "it gains one in Jason Bard."

The motivation for dropping Batgirl is unclear, but Schwartz must certainly have viewed the character—created at the request of the 1960s *Batman* TV series' show-runners—as a conspicuous reminder of the campy atmosphere he'd been trying to overcome since 1969. Replacing her with a straight detective also played to the strengths of writer Frank Robbins. Although he'd built an impressive résumé of superhero features like Batman, Batgirl, and Superboy since

For Your Eyes Only

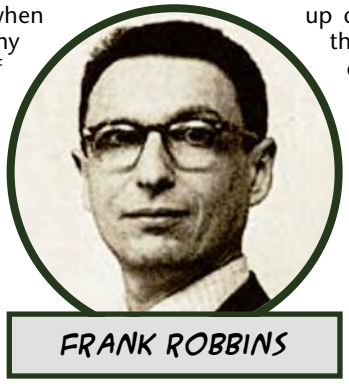
Originally Barbara (Batgirl) Gordon's love interest, Jason Bard graduated to his own backup series during the Bronze Age.

Case Worker

Writer Frank Robbins' creation, Jason Bard, debuted (left) in the Batgirl backup in *Detective Comics* #392 (Oct. 1969, art by Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson) before landing his own feature, which included (right) the Don Heck-drawn tale from issue #425 (July 1972).

1968, Robbins earned his reputation as a writer *and* artist on the more realistic *Johnny Hazard* newspaper strip that launched in 1944.

Without missing a beat, the Batgirl creative team (Robbins and artist Don Heck) opened "The Master Crime-File of Jason Bard" in *Detective* #425 (July 1972). Now a full-fledged private eye, Jason's first case was essentially a freebie, triggered when he learned that his schizophrenic Army buddy Matt Clay had been accused of murdering his psychiatrist. Matt *was* crazy—his addled scuffle with Jason proved that—but he wasn't a killer. The true culprit was a colleague of the psychiatrist whose description of Clay's manic rampage didn't match the sedate details of the crime scene.



FRANK ROBBINS

Unlike Batgirl, Jason didn't have an exclusive claim to *Detective*'s back pages. He strictly appeared in the odd-numbered issues while super-heroes like the Elongated Man, Hawkman, and the Atom cavorted in the even-numbered ones. Consequently, Jason didn't return until issue #427, wherein the investigator's search for a shipping magnate's estranged wife landed him in a watery deathtrap.

Issue #429's "Case of the Loaded Case" involved a briefcase packed with $100,000 being left on Jason's doorstep with the stipulation that the detective guard it for 20 hours in exchange for a 10% retainer. The detective was actually protecting the funds from his client, a compulsive gambler who needed to pay off a loan shark but didn't trust himself with the money until the deadline. Bard fulfilled his end of the bargain, but, as in the previous installment, his client wound up dead when he inadvertently missed the cut-off time. Jason did succeed in drawing out the killer, though.

Each episode of the strip featured a call-out to readers at some point, alerting them to a subtle clue that affected the case. The aforementioned missed deadline, for instance, was a consequence of the victim forgetting Daylight Saving's Time, an event that had been subtly established in a TV broadcast early in the episode. In issue #431's "Crime on My Hands," Jason observed that a murdered bartender (first seen in issue #427) was wearing a raincoat that was too small for him and obviously not his own. That detail proved crucial when the detective noted that his main suspect—the victim's uncle—was clad in a raincoat that was too big.

Jason's time in the Veteran's Administration hospital was central to issue #433's "Case of the Forged Face." After three out-of-town cases in which clients failed to

FlashBacks!

HUNTING THE HUNTERS: MANHUNTER AND THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

by Alex Boney

When the tagline for your story is "He stalks the world's most dangerous game," then that story had better be good. Not *just* good—pulse-pounding, suspenseful, and dynamic good. This catchphrase is, after all, a call-out to a widely known and oft-cited work of American literature. In 1924, *Collier's Weekly* published a short story by Richard Connell called "The Most Dangerous Game," in which a big-game hunter named Sanger Rainsford falls from his boat into the Caribbean Sea, swims to a remote island shore, and finds himself the target of a manhunt orchestrated by a wealthy Cossack named General Zaroff. The story has been adapted to film over a dozen times and referenced by countless pop-culture outlets. Even if audiences don't know the exact source of the story, they tend to recognize the general premise.

Nearly 50 years later, Archie Goodwin was trying to come up with a backup feature for *Detective Comics*. He had recently taken over editorial duties on the long-running book, whose sales were lagging, and he wanted to find something that would fit the focus of *Detective Comics* while providing a tonal divergence from the book's star character: "What I wanted was something that would fit (however loosely) within the 'detective' format of the book, but contrast vividly in terms of mood, character, and artistic style with the lead stories, something that would nail the eye of the casual browser and maybe eventually develop a following of its own, bringing the book a few readers beyond the dyed-in-the-wool Batman fans" (Foreword, *Manhunter: The Special Edition*, p. 5).

Goodwin found his inspiration in the cowboy stories of his youth, his fascination with obscure comic-book heroes, the surge of martial-arts interest in the 1970s, and, of course, Connell's short story. His Manhunter story was born of a unique mix of elements blended at just the right time, and it became a cult classic through an inspired collaborative synergy of writing and art. Walter Simonson's distinct visual stylings breathed life into Goodwin's complex narrative, and a story that unfolded as a backup feature quickly eclipsed the main feature of DC's longest continually running book.

THE MANHUNTER LEGACY

Goodwin and Simonson's series may be the most well-known comic-book story to feature a character with the Manhunter name, but it wasn't the first. Manhunter is a legacy character—one that spans numerous generations and iterations. Manhunter makes up one of DC's most complicated legacies—and for a company whose ranks include Flash, Green Lantern, and Hawkman, that's saying something. One of the main reasons why the Manhunter legacy is so hard to parse is that, while the character name stretches back to the same Golden Age that spawned Green Lantern and Flash, it's never enjoyed as high a profile as DC's more iconic characters.

Masked Manhunters

The main players in Archie Goodwin's Manhunter saga, as rendered by Walter Simonson for *Manhunter: The Special Edition* (1999).

Manhunter first began as a feature in Quality Comics' *Police Comics* (#8, Mar. 1942). Dan Richards was a rookie cop who wasn't particularly good at his job. He was much better at tracking down killers as a superhero than preventing crime as a policeman. With the exception of his chest emblem (a shoeprint in a circle), his costume was relatively generic. But he did have a pet dog named Thor that helped him fight crime, and he lasted for quite a long time by Golden Age standards. Richards appeared regularly in *Police Comics* until the series ended in 1950.

Just a month after Dan Richards debuted in *Police Comics*, another character named Manhunter—written by Joe Simon and illustrated by Jack Kirby—appeared in DC Comics' *Adventure Comics* #73. This Manhunter was a big-game hunter named Rick who turned his attention to hunting criminals after a friend was murdered by a costumed criminal. Shortly before this friend (a police inspector) died, he shared an observation with Rick that set the tone for the character's entire history: "Listen, Rick! You're a nice boy and the world's best hunter! But you're batting in a minor league! Yeah! I know! Lions and tigers are tough … but there is game more dangerous, cunning and treacherous than all the beasts you've hunted … and that's man!"

Rick's name was changed to Paul Kirk in the next issue (*Adventure Comics* #74), and he was given a light-blue mask to go with his red-and-blue spandex outfit to complete an almost android-looking costume. Though DC's Manhunter feature was helmed by an A-list creative team, it didn't last nearly as long as Quality's Manhunter. Simon and Kirby left the strip by the end of 1942, and the feature stopped appearing in *Adventure* in summer 1944. His last story (in *Adventure* #92) features Manhunter traveling to Maine to defeat a group of Nazi invaders and saboteurs.

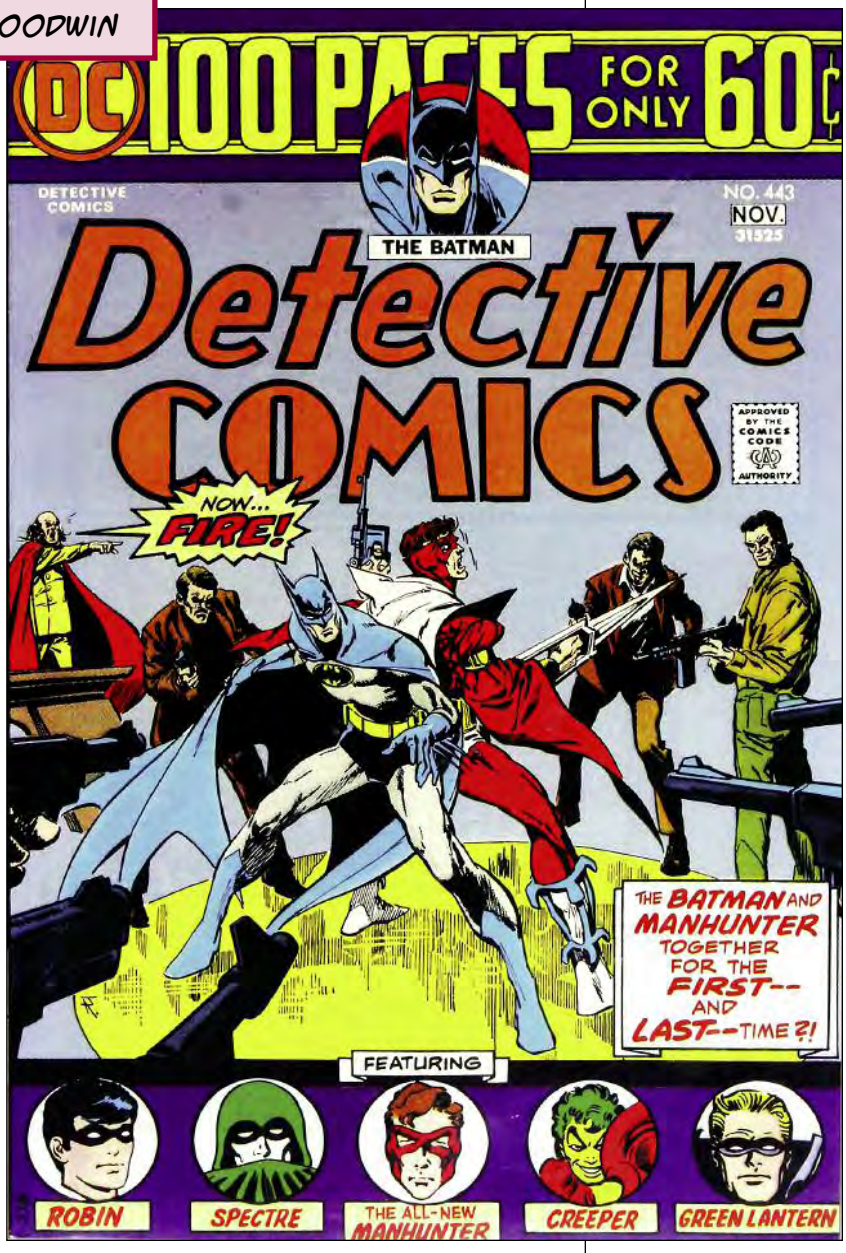
ARCHIE GOODWIN

The story of Paul Kirk didn't end as World War II drew to a close, though. In 1973, Archie Goodwin resurrected the character (literally) and gave him a vast reworking before serializing his story in the back of *Detective Comics*. According to Goodwin's tale, Kirk retired from crimefighting after the end of WWII and resumed his life as a big-game hunter. While on safari in Africa, Kirk fired a rifle shot that startled a bull elephant out of the brush. The elephant trampled and killed him—at least (as they say) mostly. A syndicate called tthe Council reached Kirk at the moment of death and placed him in frozen stasis for decades, until science and technology had advanced to the point where they could revive him. While Kirk lay in cryogenic sleep, the Council made enhancements to his body that gave him a healing factor along with advanced strength and agility.

The Council, a secret society of "the world's top minds," explained that its mission was to free humanity from its

First and Last

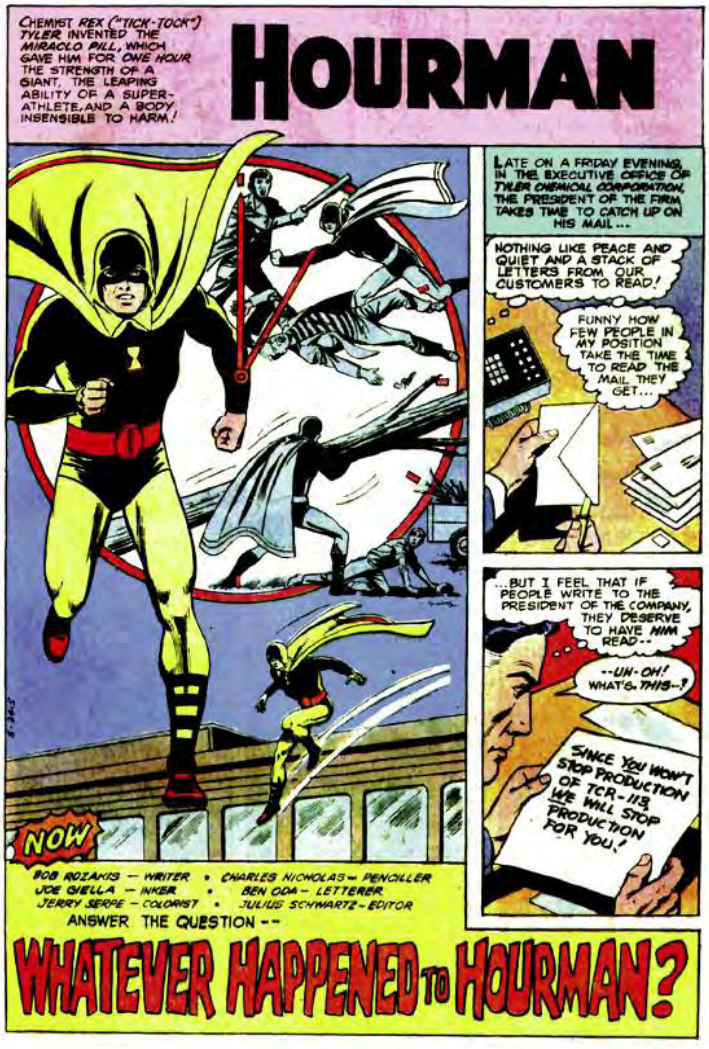
(left) DC's first Manhunter, a Simon and Kirby creation, first cornered crooks in *Adventure Comics* #73 (Apr. 1942). Cover by Kirby. (right) The last adventure of Goodwin and Simonson's Manhunter, a Batman team-up in *Detective Comics* #443 (Oct.–Nov. 1974).



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

FlashBack

by John Wells



The library of characters in the DC Comics pantheon is vast. In the early 1940s alone, when most titles carried six or more features per issue, a kid with a handful of dimes could follow the adventures of 40–50 DC characters. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, dozens more heroes joined the fold only to fall away as genres fell out of favor or readership tastes changes. They were gone, but not forgotten.

Certainly not by many members of DC management, who saw that reservoir of bought-and-paid-for stories as something that they could economically republish instead of new material. In that way, dormant characters like Congorilla and Robotman and Johnny Quick stayed before the public eye, reprints of their 1950s adventures inserted into the back of comics like *World's Finest*. In the 1970s, the reprint push accelerated with old stories included as supplements to new ones in a 1971–1972 initiative and as part of its 100-Page Super-Spectacular format that peaked in 1974.

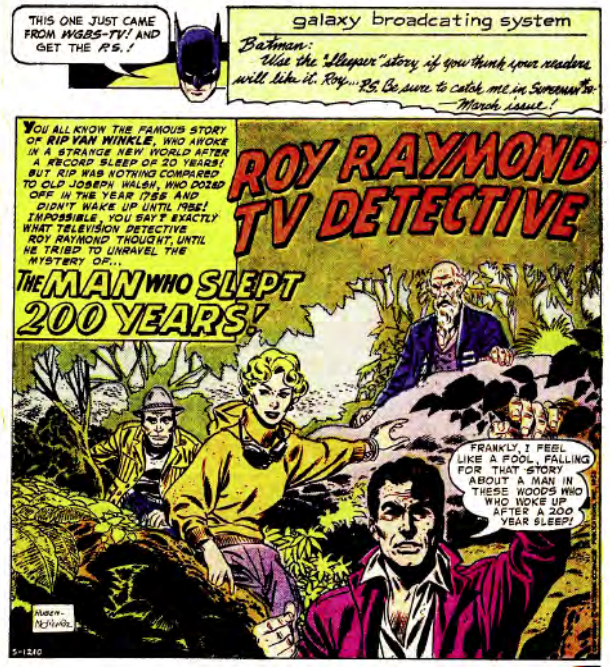
JULIUS SCHWARTZ

The hidden benefit of all those reprints—hidden at least to the eyes of corporate—was that they gave renewed name recognition to characters with whom present-day readers would otherwise have been unfamiliar. The savviest DC writers and editors even used the reprints in support of old characters that they wished to revive. A reprint of the Creeper's 1968 origin in *Detective Comics* #443 in 1974, for instance, was a precursor to the character's brand-new guest-appearance with Batman five issues later. And 1950s Roy Raymond reprints in *Detective* #444 and 445 promoted a modern tale in *Superman* #285 that revealed whatever happened to the famed TV detective.

Guest-shots, more often than not, were the best that most dormant DC characters could hope for. No matter how fond fans and pros were of many Golden and Silver Age characters, they were no longer viewed as headliners. In June of 1980, when DC added eight story pages to each of its standard-format titles, the extra space was often filled with backup features starring relatively recent creations like Firestorm, the Huntress, and OMAC. (Adam Strange, created in 1959 and allotted a spot in *Green Lantern*, was a rare exception.)

Back in Action

Actually, back in *DC Comics Presents*. Samples of the first two "Whatever Happened To...?" installments, starring (left) Hourman, from *DCCP* #25, and (right) Sargon the Sorcerer, from #26. A BIG thank-you to John Wells for providing most of the art scans used in this article.



Before "Whatever Happened To…?"…

…DC's stars of yesteryear—like Roy Raymond, TV Detective—were only seen in the occasional reprint (this one, top left, from *Detective Comics* #445) or a cleverly placed cameo (such as in *Superman* #285, bottom left).

For editor Julius Schwartz and consulting editor E. Nelson Bridwell, the question was what backup feature would best complement the Superman team-ups that headlined each issue of *DC Comics Presents*. The Man of Steel typically joined forces with the stars of some other active DC series but, like the Batman team-ups in *The Brave and the Bold*, he was periodically paired with a character that had no current feature. There was value in periodically pulling those old characters out of mothballs, not just for nostalgia's sake but to keep those names and trademarks alive.

Just suppose, someone might have argued, that this philosophy was extended to the still-unrealized *DCCP* backup feature. Each episode could check in on some long-unseen DC character, heroes who weren't necessarily commercial enough to star alongside Superman but still held appeal to a subset of older fans and might spark the interest of new ones. With literally hundreds of inactive Golden and Silver Age heroes to draw on, these updates would never run out of subjects to revisit. Effective with *DC Comics Presents* #25 (Sept. 1980), each issue would close with an eight-page superhero update that posed the question "Whatever Happened To…?"

Sixty-Minute Man

Hourman's "WHT?" backup is trumpeted in the blurb on this original cover art to *DC Comics Presents* #25 (Sept. 1980). Art by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*).

MAN OF THE HOUR

The opening installment turned the spotlight on one of DC's earliest costumed heroes. Originally featured in *Adventure Comics* #48–83 (1940–1943), Hourman had been revived in the 1960s as part of the Justice Society of America but hadn't actively worked with the team for most of that time. Still, he was a relatively familiar choice to launch the strip, and the opening installment revolved around the central concept that chemist Rex Tyler gained 60 minutes of super-strength by ingesting a Miraclo pill. While fighting saboteurs at his plant,

Pro 2 Pro

A MATTER OF (DR.) FATE

MARTIN PASKO AND KEITH GIFFEN DISCUSS THEIR MAGICAL *FLASH* BACKUP SERIES

by Shannon E. Riley

SHANNON E. RILEY: ***I would argue that your Dr. Fate backup overshadowed the lead feature in terms of quality, drama, and excitement. Tell me how the assignment for the backups in* The Flash *came about. Did you pitch it as a collaborative effort or were you paired up by DC editorial?***

KEITH GIFFEN: [We were] paired by DC editorial. I know I remember this right because I was still on probation up at DC because of my less-than-stellar entry into the comics biz a few years earlier. I was working the DC "horror" books and making deadlines, so—and here I'm guessing—Mike Barr, *Flash* editor at the time, figured he'd give me a shot. Trust me, at that time I was, career-wise, in no condition to pitch anything up at DC.

MARTIN PASKO: I can't confirm or refute how Keith came to the project; I remember Mike Barr offering me the backup series and mentioning that Keith would be penciling it almost in the same breath. I jumped at the chance to do it because I wanted to work with Keith again—he'd penciled an issue of *Kobra* I wrote a few years earlier, and he and I had gotten to know each other a bit when he'd drop by the apartment I shared with Paul Levitz while he and Paul were working on *All-Star* with Wally Wood. I'd seen how Keith interpreted the character I'd come to think of as one of my "babies" and knew he was an excellent choice.

MARTIN PASKO

As for picking me to write it, I think DC thought of that as a no-brainer. A while after Walt Simonson and I redeveloped the character in '75, DC wanted me to do an ongoing monthly, but that didn't happen. So I was somewhat surprised when, two or three years later, Mike called me. I knew the shorter backups would be much easier to write at night and on weekends, after my animation day job, than a full book would've been, so I was up for it. I never knew whether Mike approached Walt or not, but I never asked. I thought Keith was a great choice and, when I saw the first pencils and saw how much Keith had evolved since the *Kobra* job, I realized that my highest hopes had been exceeded. Then Larry Mahlstedt's terrific inks plussed the whole package. I really loved the art on those backups.

RILEY: ***Martin, your* 1st Issue Special (FIS) *#9 (Dec. 1975) story really elevated Dr. Fate to "premier status" in the DCU and laid the groundwork for all future appearances of the character. The concept that the spirit of Nabu possesses Kent Nelson when he wears the helmet has been embraced by every creator ever since. (To give you an idea of the reach, it was recently seen in the* Young Justice

Having a Ball

The Mystic Mage as rendered by Keith Giffen in 1987 for the *History of the DC Universe Portfolio*. Original art scan courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions (*www.ha.com*).

KEITH GIFFEN

animated series episode "Misplaced," in which Giovanni Zatara is overtaken by the Helm of Nabu.) Do you recall how the "possession" idea came about?

PASKO: Yes. I was fascinated by the married-superhero angle and had never written *Hawkman*, so *Dr. Fate* gave me my first opportunity to explore how being a costumed crimefighter—or, in this case, sorcerer—could affect marital obligations. And I thought that Kent and Inza Nelson's marriage was much more interesting, and had far greater dramatic possibilities, precisely because, unlike Katar and Shayera Hol [Hawkman and Hawkgirl], Kent and Inza Nelson *weren't* partners in Spandex. I thought I could do a lot with what I found so sexist and creepy about the Golden Age stories I consulted: Kent and Inza lived in this tower without windows or doors, and Kent would go off on missions and leave her there for days at a time with no way to leave, because his magic was the only way in or out—she was, in effect, his prisoner. The poor woman was doomed to this quasi-reclusive existence simply because she'd had the misfortune to fall in love with an archaeologist who became a superhero. I figured this woman would be under enormous emotional strain. I wanted to echo a theme you find in a lot of police procedurals, in which a cop's spouse (if they're a civilian) almost becomes jealous of the force and the demands the job places on the husband or wife. The special bond between peace officers is a kind of relationship the spouse can't share, and the spouses feel alienated and excluded from the central events of their loved ones' lives. This adds a burden to a relationship already constantly strained by the civilian spouse's fear that every time their partner goes on duty, he or she might not come back alive.

So that's the first scene that came into my mind before my initial plotting conference with Walt and the [*FIS*] editor, Gerry Conway: She's in this prison, half out of her mind with cabin fever, and cut off from any communication with her husband for days while she's worrying that he's gonna get killed—it's not as if he'd've been texting her from his iPhone, even if there'd been such a thing back then. So he shimmers through the wall and then passes out before she can find out what happened, and it makes her crazy. Then I thought, how do we take that a step further so that all through the story she continues to be an outsider, even as she participates in the story? The answer was to tweak the concept a bit.

(Here, I'll digress to say that before Gerry brought Walt in, he'd already gotten permission from the publisher to rework the property a bit. The whole motivation for doing the *1st Issue Special* in the first place was to deliberately retcon the property. Gerry thought it was kind of lackluster as it was being treated in the *JLA* books—too much reverence for the Golden Age mediocrity—and Gerry and I wanted to turn it into something that had the potential to go in at least as many exotic directions as *Dr. Strange* had.)

So I thought, what if even when he comes to, Kent can't tell her what happened to him because he *can't remember*? That would make Inza feel even more cut

Round of Applause

(left) The corny Carmine Infantino/Bob Smith cover of *Flash* #306 (Feb. 1982), premiering the backup starring (right) Dr. Fate, seen here in an undated Giffen sketch from the Heritage archives.

NEMESIS

BALANCING THE SCALES

by John Trumbull

"The scales of *justice* … held in perfect balance, they symbolize a fair and impartial *judgment* between men. But *unbalanced*, truth and equality are *mocked*! One man risks his life to *regain* that balance! A man called … *Nemesis*!"

From the very beginning, Nemesis was a somewhat mysterious character. A 1980 double-page ad for DC Comics' new eight-page backup features showcased such familiar characters as Adam Strange, Firestorm, and the Huntress, but one character stood out by being UN-familiar: a silhouetted figure standing behind the scales of justice. The caption only read "Nemesis: A New Hero Appearing in *The Brave and the Bold*."

CARY BURKETT

ENTER: NEMESIS!

The man commissioned to create this new hero was writer Cary Burkett. "[Batman editor] Paul Levitz had a tremendous amount of input into the creation of Nemesis," Burkett recalls. "He tapped me to create a backup series for *Brave and Bold*. Paul always liked the idea of comics with more than one story in them, and a lot of his books had backup series.

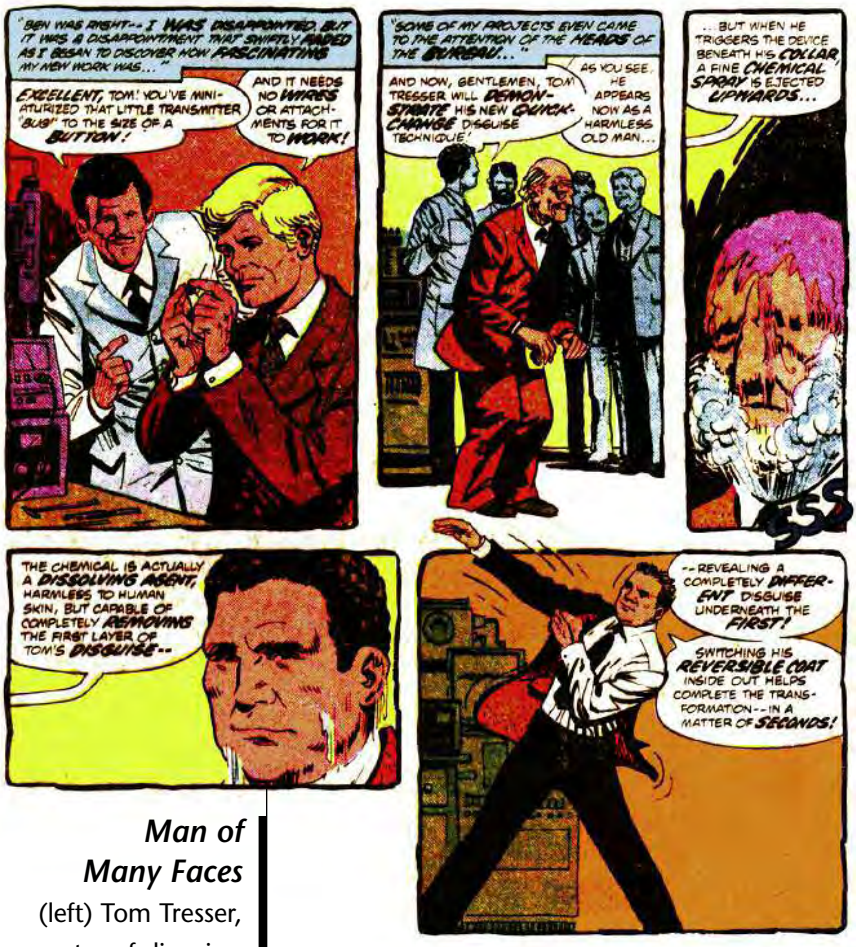
"His instructions were for me to create a character who was a 'non-costumed' hero, one who would fit well into a Batman-themed book … with some general similarities, but strong differences," Burkett continues. "He would be non-powered, but highly skilled in a variety of ways. As I recall, I think Paul threw out the idea in one brainstorming session that he might be a hitman who had reformed and was fighting crime with inside knowledge. Paul also came up with the name, eventually, though we batted around a few other ideas."

Burkett's background in theater added an important element to the character: "The idea of a master of disguise had strong appeal to me. But I didn't like the idea that he was a hitman in his past and driven by guilt to atone for his crimes. I wanted him to have a more positive motivation, a certain idealism that was foundational to his nature."

Regarding the selection of the illustrator of the "Nemesis" strip, Burkett says, "Paul had Dan Spiegle in mind as the artist before the character was created, I think. I figured that costume-wise, Nemesis would operate in basic black, but Paul added the touch that he would have a patch of the scales of justice on his costume. It was the right touch, I think—the symbol was important to the character. The first time I saw the character was on the first page of the first story, the art already penciled and already inked for the whole story." Although Burkett initially pictured the character as looking "closer to [Joe] Kubert's

The Scales of Justice

The splash page to the first outing of Burkett and Spiegle's "Nemesis" backup. From *The Brave and the Bold* #166 (Sept. 1980).



Man of Many Faces

(left) Tom Tresser, master of disguise, from the second Nemesis story, in *B&B* #167. (right) Note the Nemesis blurbs on the Jim Aparo-drawn cover to B&B #166 (Sept. 1980

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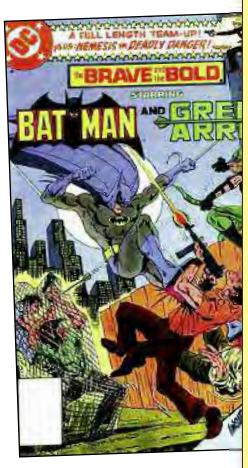

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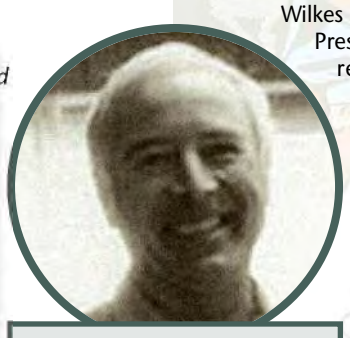
Sgt. Rock" instead of the younger, handsomer fellow Spiegle drew, Burkett was quite impressed by his new collaborator: "I loved Dan's art and his storytelling. He always added a lot to the scripts and helped clarify some of the complexities I put in the stories. He handled everything beautifully and really knew how to make the eye follow the pace of the story. He brought a lot of life into the characters."



DAN SPIEGLE

equipment section instead. Tom invents both a special type of disguise that instantly dissolves with a chemical spray and "toxin bullets" that knock out, rather than kill, opponents. But when Ben Marshall is appointed director of the Bureau, Craig Tresser inexplicably assassinates him at the installation ceremony before being gunned down himself. His family name ruined, Tom Tresser decides to take a name the ancient Greeks used "for one who delivers *just punishment for crimes*": Nemesis.

Cary Burkett remembers, "The story I based his background on was that of Edwin Booth, famous American actor in the 1860s and brother of the assassin John Wilkes Booth. After John Wilkes Booth killed President Abraham Lincoln, Edwin Booth's reputation was destroyed as well for many years. He carried around the disgrace of the Booth name for years after the assassination. I crafted the origin of Nemesis around a similar situation. I thought the idea of the disgraced name did two things well—it provided a sense of tragedy, but also provided him with a certain virtue to see that by his personal code, the honor of his name was important to him, worth risking his life for."

Burkett also took some inspiration from a real-life friend of his: "I got his name from a buddy of mine who I was working with in a Shakespeare production at the time … Thomas Tresser. I used Tom's name because I thought he would get a kick out of it and because the alliteration of superhero names was common in those days. But Nemesis wasn't modeled after Tom, I just used his name." The name for Ben Marshall "came from George Marshall, the secretary of state who oversaw the Marshall Plan after World War II. I wanted to evoke the idea of a great statesman who had been slain by Nemesis' brother."

balance. As Tom the first time, his information: Ben rother, Craig! t. 1980), we learn tice: Brothers Tom in "the country's never named, but ent Ben Marshall. ng a field agent, him in the special-