comic book CREATOR

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THE NEW VOICE OF THE COMICS MEDIUM

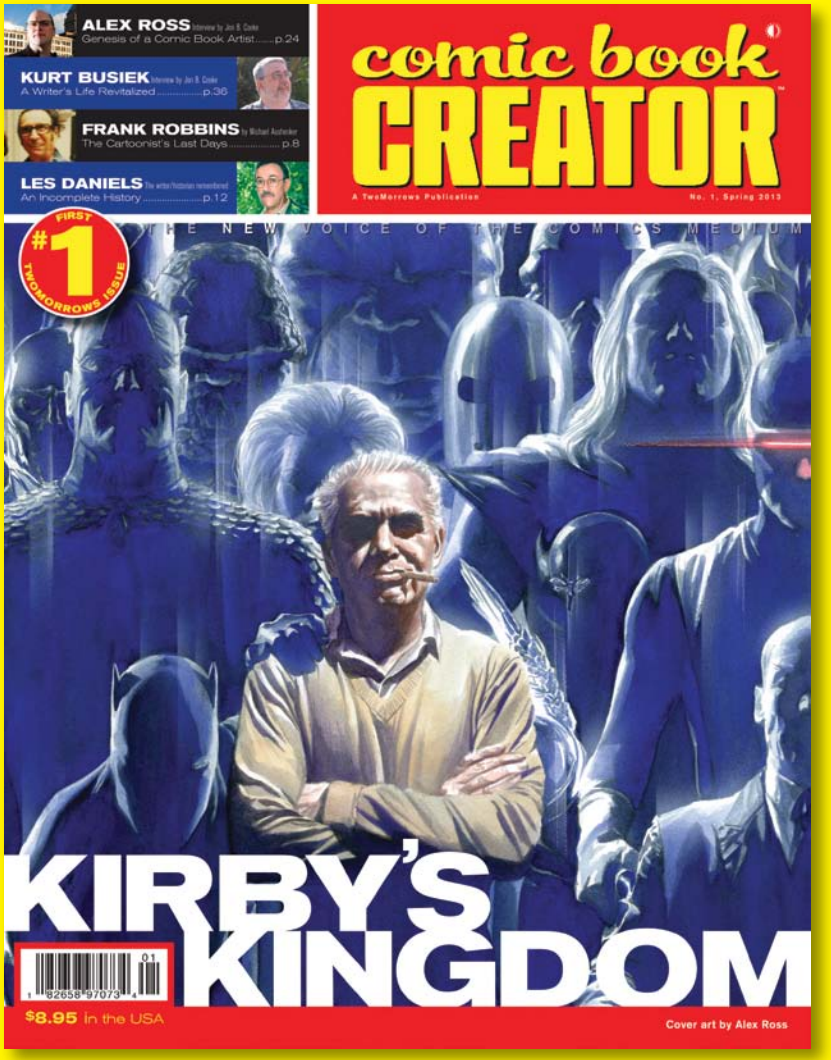
FIRST #1 TWOMORROWS ISSUE

KIRBY'S KINGDOM

$8.95 in the USA

Cover art by Alex Ross

CBA's Jon Cooke is back in April!



Make ready for COMIC BOOK CREATOR, the new voice of the comics medium!

TwoMorrows is proud to debut our newest magazine, **Comic Book Creator**, devoted to the work and careers of the men and women who draw, write, edit, and publish comics, focusing always on the artists and not the artifacts, the creators and not the characters. Behind an **ALEX ROSS** cover painting, our frantic **FIRST ISSUE** features an investigation of the oft despicable treatment **JACK KIRBY** endured from the very business he helped establish. From being cheated out of royalties in the '40s and bullied in the '80s by the publisher he made great, to his estate's current fight for equitable recognition against an entertainment monolith where his characters have generated billions of dollars, we present Kirby's cautionary tale in the eternal struggle for creator's rights. Plus, **CBC** #1 interviews artist **ALEX ROSS** and writer **KURT BUSIEK**, spotlights the last years of writer/artist **FRANK ROBBINS**, remembers comics historian **LES DANIELS**, sports a color gallery of **WILL EISNER**'s Valentines to his beloved, showcases a joint talk between **NEAL ADAMS** and **DENNIS O'NEIL** on their unforgettable collaborations, as well as throws a whole kit'n'caboodle of other creator-centric items atcha! Join us for the start of a new era as TwoMorrows welcomes back former **Comic Book Artist** editor Jon B. Cooke, who helms the all-new, all-color **COMIC BOOK CREATOR!**

80 pgs. • All-color • Quarterly
$8.95 cover price
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IF KIRBY IS KING

WHY HAVEN'T JACK'S HEIRS MADE ONE MEASELY THIN DIME OUT OF THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS GENERATED BY HIS CREATIONS IN HOLLYWOOD MOTION PICTURES?

CAPTAIN AMERICA

and the Curious Case of the COUNTERFEIT CREATORS

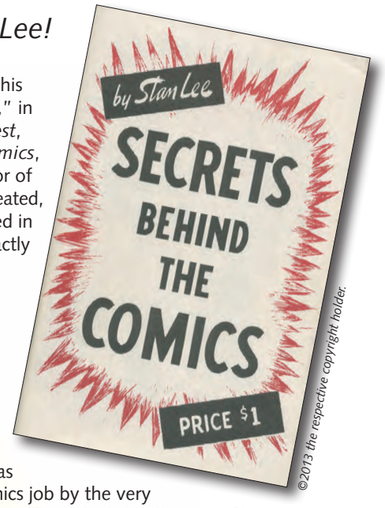
Even after the team of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby suffered the indignity of being cheated out of royalties for their creation of Captain America, insult was added to injury when, in 1947, Timely publisher Martin Goodman is publically given credit for originating the "Sentinel of Liberty" by a guy who certainly knew better — *Stan Lee!*

Simultaneous to the appearance of his article, "There's Money in Comics," in the November 1947 issue of *Writer's Digest*, Stan Lee's booklet, *Secrets Behind the Comics*, an inside look by the editor and art director of Timely Comics on how funnybooks are created, is published by Famous Enterprises. Included in the 100-page pamphlet is a focus on "exactly how Captain America was created."

Well, not "exactly." Bizarrely, Timely publisher Martin Goodman is cited as the creator of the star-spangled hero and — *surprise!* — there is no mention of Cap's real creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

This revisionism is particularly odd because, as any Marvel fan worth his/her salt knows, the author of the tract was hired in his initial comics job by the very same Joe Simon (then Timely's first editor) and Stan functioned as a "gofer" for both Joe and Jack.

In 1985, much to Kirby's chagrin, the Cannon Group lists *Stan Lee* as creator of Captain America in movie trade publication advertisements (trumpeting the eventually aborted film version).



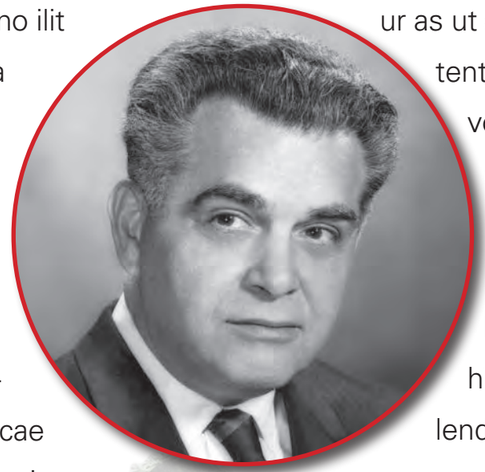
NOT COOL: *Variety's Cannes film festival supplement included this ad which featured an erroneous acknowledgement giving Stan Lee credit for creating Captain America.*

Left: *Relettered detail from* Captain America Comics *#9 (Dec. 1941). Art by Jack Kirby & Joe Simon. ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.*

Secrets Behind the Comics scans courtesy of Javier Hernandez.

KIRBY'S KINGDOM

The Commerce of Art



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by Jon B. Cooke with Patrick Ford · Intro Art by Alex Ross

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CINEMA À LA KIRBY

Worldwide Box Office Grosses of Films Derived from Jack Kirby Co-Creations

X-Men (2000)
X2: X-Men United (2003)
X-Men: The Last Stand (2006)
X-Men Origins: Wolverine (2009)
X-Men: First Class (2011)
Untitled *X-Men* Sequel (2014)

X-Men franchise: $1,890,097,619

Hulk (2003)
The Incredible Hulk (2008)

Incredible Hulk franchise: $508,788,031

Fantastic Four (2005)
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer (2007)

Fantastic Four franchise: $619,627,482

Iron Man (2008)
Iron Man 2 (2010)
Iron Man 3 (2013)

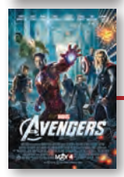
Iron Man franchise: $1,209,107,553

Thor (2011)
Thor 2 (2013)

Thor franchise: $449,326,618

Captain America: The First Avenger (2011)
Captain America 2 (2014)

Captain America franchise: $368,608,363



Marvel's The Avengers (2012)

The Avengers franchise: $1,448,320,000

Grand Total Worldwide Box Office (as of 7/5/12):

$6,493,875,666

Amounts distilled from boxofficemojo.com

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The Mexican Sunset of Frank Robbins

Fran Rowe Robbins and friends discuss the final years of the renowned artist/writer

by MICHAEL AUSHENKER CBC Associate Editor

In the 1970s, polarizing artist Frank Robbins simultaneously astounded and repelled mainstream comic book readers with his anatomically flipped-out work on such series as *Captain America* and *The Invaders* at Marvel, and DC's *The Shadow* and *Detective Comics* (in which he created Man-Bat). The late artist brought to such features as *The Human Fly* and "Legion of Monsters" a cartoony flair he had developed while working on the syndicated comic strip *Johnny Hazard*, heavily inspired by mentor figure Milton Caniff. Robbins even wrote classic stories for other artists, such as his famous *Batman* #250 campfire tale, "The Batman Nobody Knows," and a few "Unknown Soldier" missions, and as an artist, he took some throwaway licensed properties, such as Marvel's *Man From Atlantis*, and breathed animated life into these otherwise rote comic-book adaptations of B-level entertainment properties.

Above: *A self-caricature by cartoonist Franklin Robbins.*

But understand this: By the time Frank Robbins retired to Mexico, in the late 1980s, where he spent his final five years, he was done with comics. *Done.* As in: *Never looking back again.*

"When he finally retired, he retired. That was it!" Fran Rowe Robbins,' his widow, told *Comic Book Creator* in an exclusive interview this past October. "Frank very rarely talked about cartooning. I knew about *Batman* because the books were there. I knew about *Johnny Hazard* and *Scorchy Smith*. But I didn't know about any of the other stuff [such as *The Invaders, The Human Fly,* etc.]. I was so unaware about how popular he had been."

"The other painters down there knew [Frank] as a painter," said longtime Archie Comics artist Stan Goldberg. "He didn't stress it that much that he had a career in comics. He didn't make a big deal about it."

What Robbins was not through with, however, was the arts, with which the dynamic artist had a lifelong love affair. Depicting life as he saw it around his quaint Mexican village, Robbins took to the canvas with brushstrokes that remained unapologetically, unmistakably Robbins-style, even if his subject matter had switched from a pair of human torches combating Nazi man-monsters to the graceful, poetic grandiosity of a matador or a ballet dancer in motion.

If anyone writes a coffee table book about the man, it should be titled *Love It or Hate It: The Art of Frank Robbins.* Flamboyant and colorful, Robbins' late-period art, while more abstract than his Marvel or DC output, retains the figurative elasticity which once spawned some crazy, *impossible* contortions in super-hero books such as *Power Man* and *Ghost Rider,* and stirred up Marvel's letter columns (pro and con) for the Boston-born artist. By all accounts, Robbins was always professional, albeit uneasy, drawing the "Marvel Way." In an interview with Jim Shooter in *Back Issue* #20 (for this writer's piece on *The Human Fly*), the former Marvel editor-in-chief admitted that Robbins did not really fit in aesthetically with the Marvel house style. And yet, based on Robbins' reputation as a syndicated strip artist, Shooter was moved to make sure he continued to get work, as his eccentric brilliance pored through his super-hero work. Robbins had many high-powered fans within the Bullpen, including Marvel's art director, the legendary artist of *Amazing Spider-Man*, John Romita.

"He was just as much a fan as anybody else," Goldberg said.

The Shadow ©2013 Condé Nast.

Batman, Man-Bat ©2013 DC Comics.

Above left: *With writer Denny O'Neil, Frank Robbins obviously had a ball drawing the adventures of* The Shadow *(here the cover of #5, June-July 1974).* **Above:** *Frank was also a fine comics writer, as evidenced by his creation of Man-Bat. Here's the splash to* Detective Comics *#429, Nov. '72, also drawn by Robbins.* **Below:** *As artist, Robbins had a memorable run on* The Invaders. *Here is his entry for* The Mighty Marvel Bicentennial Calendar *(1976) featuring that title's Golden Age heroes.*

Located four and one-half miles northwest of Mexico City, the small town of San Miguel de Allende was, appropriately, something of an artist's colony when Frank Robbins settled down circa 1989.

"He was extremely happy in Mexico," Stan Goldberg said. "He was part of the community down there."

Still friends today with Fran Rowe Robbins, Goldberg remembers socializing with a very happy couple while visiting Mexico in February 1994.

"She was a teacher from upstate New York who had stopped teaching and moved down there," Goldberg said of Rowe.

When Robbins met Fran, she was staging play readings and directing theater in San Miguel.

"I taught English there," she said. "I met Frank while I was directing a play reading of *Amadeus*."

In the late 1980s, Robbins had been healing from the death of his longtime life partner when his path crossed Fran Rowe's.

"His wife had died two years before I met him," his second wife recalled. "We were together for about five years. We had a wonderful marriage. It was a big loss when he died, let me tell you."

It was only in 2011 when Fran Robbins finally packed it up and moved back to the United States, due to health reasons connected to atmospheric conditions in Mexico.

"I was there for 21 years," she said. "Unfortunately, at 6,500 feet, the air is very thin… I had to move back to sea level. I didn't want to leave, but I had to."

Now a resident of Vero Beach in Florida's West Palm Beach, Fran sounds misty-eyed for her previous life south of the border.

"We had a gorgeous Casa de los Padres, built in 1710. A Colonial house with a patio and garden, and 20-30 foot ceilings," she recalled. The house had a courtyard and shared the wall with the adjacent Oratorio Church. "When we looked out the bedroom, we saw these gorgeous towers."

The Robbins enjoyed San Miguel's laid-back pace.

"Everybody walked everywhere," Fran recalled. "We can go to all the restaurants and clubs within 10-15 minutes."

It seems natural that Robbins turned to painting in retirement. What may not be as expected is that Robbins was, in his widow's words, "the musical guru of the City of San Miguel." Robbins enjoyed jazz, pop and opera, and he had myriad albums in the collection of the local library there, where they remain still. Music, after all, was an intrinsic part of his artistic process when creating comic books.

"When he was drawing, when he was cartooning, he

The Human Torch, Toro, Sub-Mariner, Captain America & Bucky ©2013 Marvel Characters, Inc.

Right top and middle: *Fran Rowe Robbins and Frank Robbins during their 1980s-90s Mexican romance and marriage (courtesy of Fran).* **Bottom right:** *Renowned Archie cartoonist Stan Goldberg and his friend Frank Robbins, Mexico, 1994 (courtesy of Stan and his son Bennett).*

All paintings ©2013 the Estate of Franklin Robbins.

Clockwise from above: *Paintings by Frank Robbins include "Club Mama Mia," "Dancer," "Loss of Youth," and "¡Hay Toro!," all rendered during his Mexican years. Please visit* **www.frankrobbinsartist.com** *for many more lovely examples. Courtesy of Fran Rowe Robbins.*

listened to music," Fran Robbins said. "It was, in general, classical music. His knowledge was very extensive. He knew all the pop singers: Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, Mel Torme… He knew all of them, the clubs in New York City, Harry Belafonte. He really knew music."

Robbins' daily life centered around music appreciation.

"In the afternoon, they had comida — a dinner in the middle of the day," Fran said. "In the afternoon, he listened to music for two hours. He would just sit there, smoke a pipe, and listen to music."

Goldberg recalled how Robbins also enjoyed a glass of mescal, "the poor man's tequila with the worm at the bottom of the glass."

Point of interest: "All the houses [in San Miguel], they utilized their roofs," Goldberg said. So it was not uncommon to have an after-dinner drink with Robbins on the roof of his house.

"People don't realize this," Goldberg said, "but Frank was not only a great artist, he was a great fencer, a great inventor, he loved classical music. He was a true renaissance man."

Robbins was also a passionate cinephile. "He read a lot and he watched movies," his second wife reported. "We had tapes of 600 to 700 movies. He loved Kurosawa. He had a collection of Japanese armor. He loved Fellini, Italian directors, foreign, Goddard, the *noir* films. He loved them all."

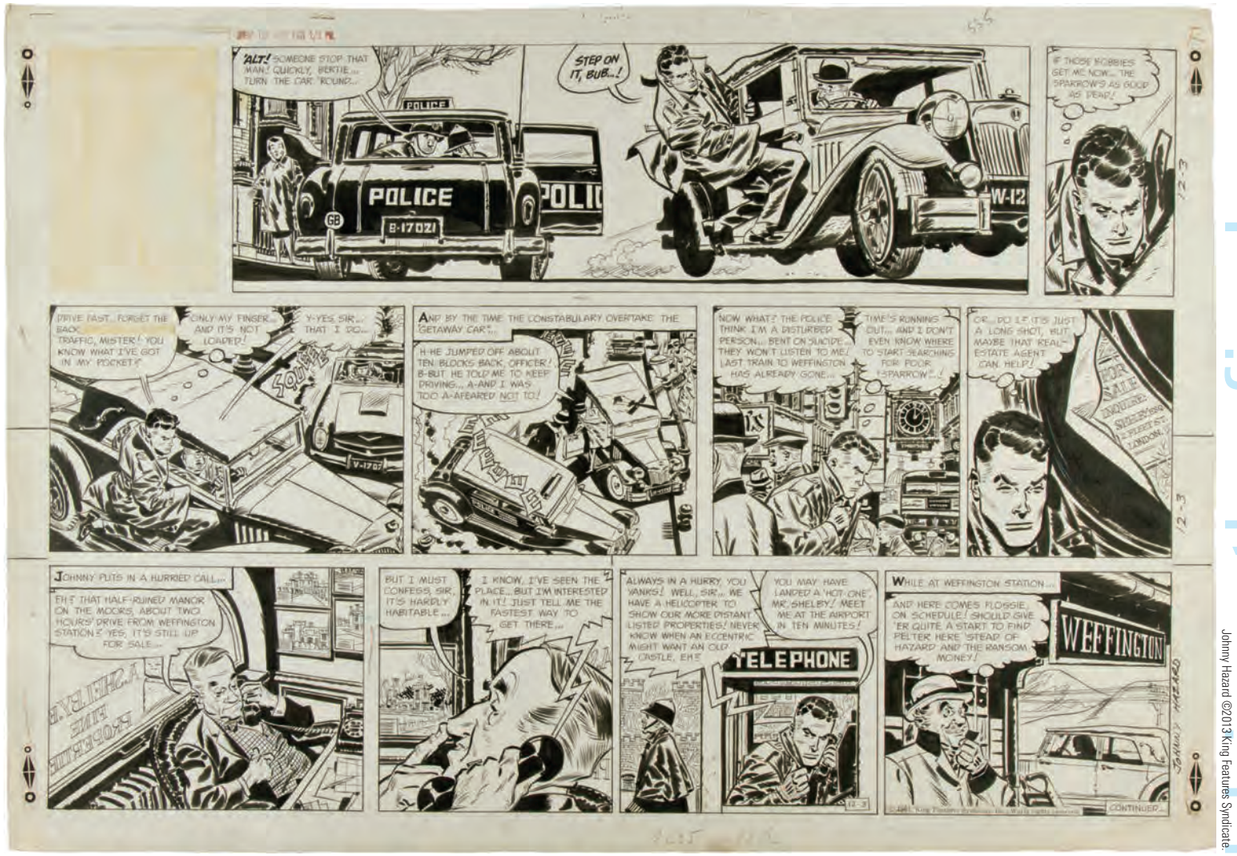
Robbins enjoyed contemporary films as well.

"We went to the movies often," she continued. "There was only one theatre. There were a lot of movies on television that he was able to tape… He loved Hitchcock, John Ford, Orson Welles, Chaplin. He liked Spielberg, Scorsese, Billy Wilder. He loved all the Italian movie actors. He thought the most beautiful actress was Ava Gardner. He thought she was more beautiful than Elizabeth Taylor. He loved Marilyn Monroe, especially in films such as [Wilder's] *Some Like It Hot*. Frank was a big buff."

The one medium he did not indulge in during his final years? The one he made his name on.

"He very rarely talked about his own work," Fran Robbins said. "[Artistically], he was interested in bodies in motion. It isn't just simple lines. It's a lot of it was action."

Beyond meeting with the occasional cartoonist, such as Goldberg, who would sweep through town, Robbins stayed clear of the comic book world, including conventions and cartoonist events, by the early '90s. Part of the reason he



Johnny Hazard ©2013 King Features Syndicate.

perhaps detached from the industry, Fran Robbins suggests, had to do with an ugly episode taking place in the years before his death.

"Frank had a bad situation with a stalker," Fran said. "This stalker followed him from New York to Mexico. Frank kept the envelopes and photos. He was frightened. He was scared. The guy got a hold of his phone number and Frank had to change his number. This man was suggesting all these revisions to Frank's work and had all these characters he came up with that he wanted to discussed with Frank."

The intrusion on Robbins' privacy escalated until,"all of a sudden, he just stopped, either he was put in an institution or he died," Fran theorized. "The things we got in the mail were all postmarked from Dallas. Then he showed up in Mexico."

Fran continued, "It was scary. It was hairy for about seven years. There was nothing the cops could do. It stopped about three years before Frank died."

Fran shakes her head musing over the episode.

"A cartoonist," she pondered rhetorically. "Why would anyone want to stalk a cartoonist?"

Franklin "Frank" Robbins entered the world on September 9, 1917 in Boston. He started drawing when he was just three years old. Growing up in a New England settlement house, he learned about Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. He discovered drawing."

"He knew how to make gesso," Fran Robbins said. "He knew how to make his own paints. He went to art school, he was very classically trained. In the height of the Depression, when this was considered frivolous. He ended up support-

Above: *Perhaps Frank Robbins' greatest claim to fame is his long-running syndicated adventure comic strip* Johnny Hazard. *Here is his Dec. 3, 1961 Sunday. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions*
Below: *Prior to* Johnny Hazard, *Frank worked as comic strip artist on the renowned Noel Sickles' creation,* Sorchy Smith, *between 1939-44. The original art, dated March 22 (year undetermined), is inscribed to fellow cartoonist Gill Fox! Courtesy of Heritage Auctions.*

Scorchy Smith ©2013 Associated Press News Features.

Above spread: *Photos from the late Jud Hurd's unforgettable magazine,* Cartoonist PROfiles, *issues #8 and 42, which included features on Frank Robbins. These pix capture the prolific artist/writer simultaneously working on his "Batman" features and syndicated daily comic strip* Johnny Hazard. *Courtesy of John Heebink.*

ing his mother by the time he was 14. She worked for a hat maker. Then they moved to New York and he started to do other things that were impressive. He painted billboards in a movie theater. Lobby paintings at Radio City Music Hall. He also did the murals."

Of Jewish descent, Robbins did not connect profoundly with his heritage beyond the most casual of ways.

"He was a cultural Jew," Fran Robbins said of her late husband. Of course, in the immigrant-driven world of comics' Golden Age, many of his closest cartoonist friends were Jewish. "He wasn't a religious Jew at all, but he was a humanist. He studied at the National Academy of Design, then designed murals for a children's studio at NBC. Even when he was young, he had a talent. He was a prodigy, obviously."

Robbins seemed to be very much a product of his times.

"He used to smoke cigarettes," Fran said. "That was a time when everyone smoked. He used to use a long cigarette holder. The last twenty years of his life, he didn't smoke cigarettes."

Robbins, whom many editors and colleagues accused of aping Caniff, befriended his hero. "Milt Caniff was a friend," Fran Robbins said. "He really admired Caniff. Who didn't?"

Something of a mystery man in the comic book industry, Robbins rarely socialized with other cartoonists, a fact reinforced by the reality that Robbins, like most of his ilk, freelanced from home. Two artists whom did consider Robbins friends included Golden Age comics artist and *Dondi* co-creator Irwin Hasen and Goldberg.

"He was a very, very private serious man," Hasen, who knew Robbins from National Cartoonist Society meetings decades ago, told *CBC* last October. "Very little can be said about him. He was a great inventor and a great artist. He was a very private guy. He was a cartoonist's cartoonist. He was low key and laid back. If one were to be asked about him, they couldn't talk about it."

When asked if Robbins had much of a sense of humor or personality, Hasen shot back with an emphatic *"No!"* and then laughed.

"Frank was a marvelous painter!" Goldberg said. "He was a great artist. Hasen, his dear friend, said that Frank Robbins one of the greatest artists, it's just too bad he had to be a Milton Caniff clone," Goldberg said. "He could have been his own man. He was that great. In my eyes, he *was* great."

The late Jerry Robinson, co-creator of the Batman mythos, was another close friend of Robbins. "Frank and him were very, very, very close," Goldberg said. "Jerry told me the story, the first official job in '38, '39, for *Look* magazine, was a job that Frank was supposed to do but he was very busy. So he passed it onto Jerry. Jerry remembered that he gave him his first very big professional job. Robbins also worked with Alex Toth. Robin Snyder asked Alex Toth to do a whole feature on Robbins."

Stan Goldberg and his wife love to travel. And so, in February of 1994, the Goldbergs passed through San Miguel while on vacation in Mexico. The Archie cartoonist had heard Robbins lived in the village, so he found a phone directory, took a stab, and bingo! "There, in English, there it was: 'Franklin Robbins,'" Goldberg exclaimed.

When Goldberg reached out to Robbins, the former recalled, "He knew I was a cartoonist in town and he said, 'How fast can you come over?'

Goldberg spent some time with Frank a mere nine months before the *Johnny Hazard* cartoonist passed away. When Goldberg arrived at Robbins' home, he found Frank on his shortwave radio. It was via that shortwave where "he heard that Jack Kirby had died," Goldberg reported.

In general, Goldberg learned, Robbins had moved to Mexico because "he wanted to be left alone. He had a very close-knit handful of people as a gringo living his life down in Mexico." Yet Robbins was by no means aloof. He just yearned to socialize amid a different scene.

Goldberg remembers the Bohemian environs inside Robbins' Mexican hacenda."He painted big paintings of jazz musicians," the cartoonist remembered. "He had pictures on the wall that he did when he was seven and eight years old."

Goldberg remains agog trying to describe the impression Robbins' monster canvases had on him. "It would explode off of the wall," Goldberg said. "It's hard to describe his style. It wasn't his Milton Caniff style, that's for sure. He had that drummer, he captured him in three or four shots in one painting."

The kinetic motion of the figures, the color pallette, and the multiple, quasi-Cubist depictions of figures strayed from Robbins' relatively ham-strung renditions of superheroes colored in Ben-Day dots. Robbins' latter artwork might be compared to something akin to Marcel Duchamp's seminal 1912 canvas "Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2."

"He would've loved to have been a serious painter but he had to make a living," Goldberg said. Hence, a career in comics. As a first-time syndicated cartoonist, Robbins took over *Scorchy Smith* in 1939 after Bert Christman (co-creator of DC's Sandman soon thereafter) left the legendary Noel Sickles-created strip. Robbins' run on *Scorchy* proved so impressive, King Features Syndicate hired him in 1944 to create a similar aviation-adventure strip, *Johnny Hazard,* on which Robbins enjoyed a decades-long run that overlapped with his mainstream comic-book work.

By the late 1960s, Robbins had landed at DC Comics, where he initially wrote and later drew a number of features into the mid-'70s. Though Goldberg said "Frank didn't like DC," Robbins produced impressive scripts for *Batman, The Flash* and *Superboy,* as well as contributing some knockout artwork on *Batman, Detective Comics, The Shadow,* and for the mystery anthology titles. When Robbins cold-called DC's competition in 1974 to ask if they could use his help, Marvel production manager John Verpoorten reportedly said, "How fast can you get over here?"

Robbins transitioned to Marvel with early work that included art for "Morbius the Living Vampire," *Power Man, Ghost Rider* and *Captain America* before joining writer Roy Thomas for a lengthy stay as penciller on *The Invaders* (roughly dividing the issues with another Caniff disciple, Lee Elias), and collaborating with writer Bill Mantlo on short-lived books *Man from Atlantis* and *The Human Fly* (the latter for which Elias also drew issues). Producing his daily comic strip even as he pumped out a prolific monthly comic-book output, Robbins wrapped up *Johnny Hazard* in 1977 (after a 33-year or so run!) while still employed by Marvel.

Despite being something of a square peg during the Bronze Age's super-hero comic-book scene — as, again, Robbins was both loved and loathed by comic book fandom during the 1970s — Goldberg insists Robbins did not leave the industry angry. "He wasn't bitter, [just resigned]," Goldberg opined. As if to ask himself, "Why am I knocking myself out here?"

An Evening With Denny & Neal

The legendary Adams-O'Neil comics team discuss social relevancy in their '70s work

Photo ©2013 Seth Kushner.

Above: *Dennis O'Neil, writer (left), and Neal Adams, artist, shake hands at the Big Event in this portrait by Seth Kushner. All photos of the talk are used with his kind permission.*

Inset right: *Seth Kushner's photo of Joe Simon's drawing hand and a certain Big Apple landmark grace the cover of his and writer Christopher Irving's smash tome,* Leaping Tall Buildings: The Origins of the American Comics, *available in bookstores and comic shops and via their publisher at* www.powerhousebooks.com. *Many thanks to our chums for the words and pictures here!*

Moderated by CHRISTOPHER IRVING CBC Contributing Editor

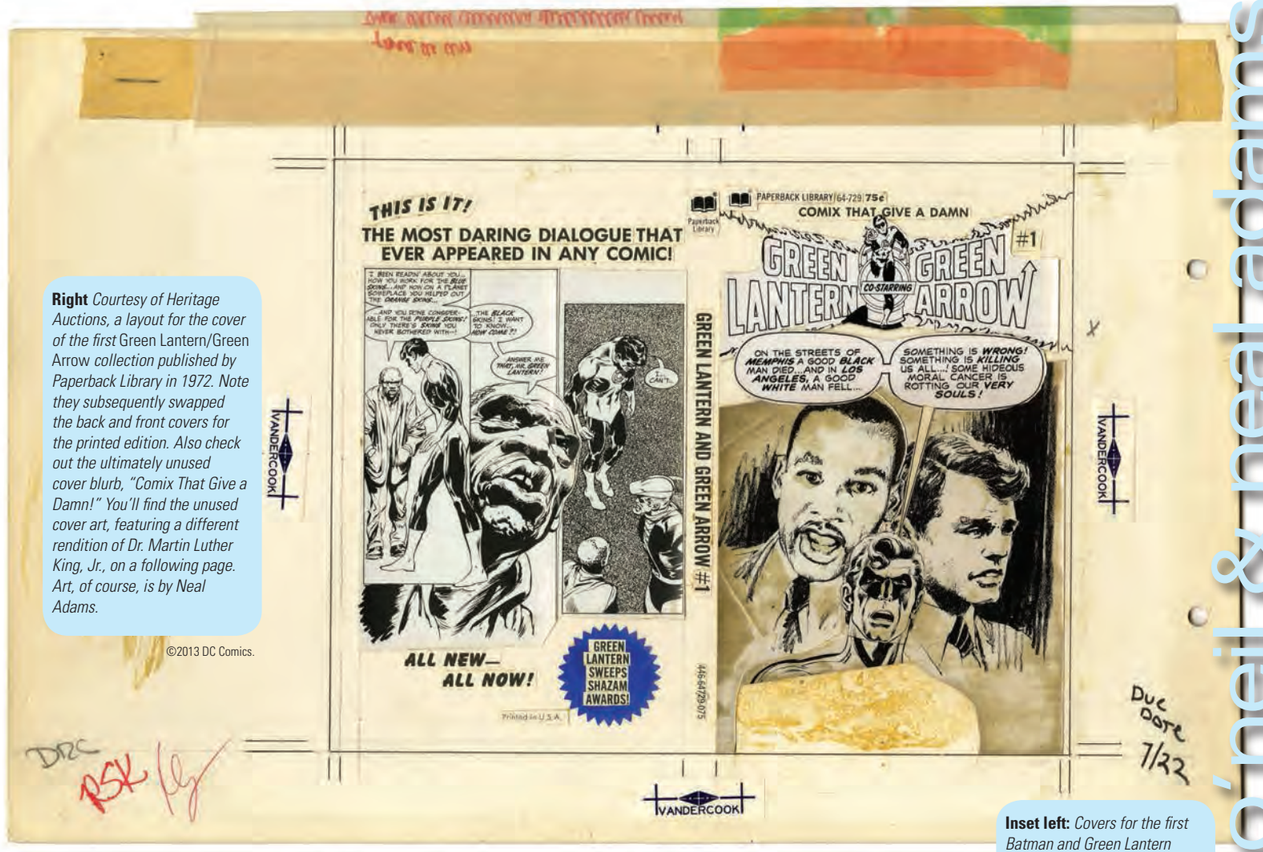
When writer Dennis O'Neil and artist Neal Adams teamed up in the early 1970s, their take on Batman restored the Dark Knight to his brooding roots, and established the version that is reflected in the recent films. Just as importantly, they introduced social relevance into super-hero comics with Green Lantern/Green Arrow, *most famously with the drug abuse issues, in the process elevating super-heroes to a more adult, earthbound level. A former crime reporter, O'Neil brought real-world grit to the genre, while Adams' art style and design elicited both a breaktaking realism and dynamism rarely found in the super-hero comic book. O'Neil edited the Batman line at DC for a number of years. Adams continues to draw and write comics, most recently with DC's* Batman: Odyssey *series, and is currently drawing* The First X-Men *for Marvel, co-written with Christos Gage.* Leaping Tall Buildings: The Origins of American Comics *(Powerhouse Publishing) writer Christopher Irving and photographer Seth Kushner, and Housing Works Bookstore Café reunited O'Neil and Adams for a special benefit panel on social relevancy in comics. This talk took place before an audience on July 17, 2012, at the SoHo café.*

©2013 Christopher Irving & Seth Kushner.

Christopher Irving: *Seth and I — Seth, say hello to the people.*
Seth Kushner: *Hello. Thanks for coming tonight.*
Neal Adams: Doesn't Seth get a chair?
Christopher: *No, he's going to be photographing because he's a shutterbug…*
Neal: Ohhh.
Seth: *He does the talking and I take the pictures.*
Christopher: *I do the writing and he creates the pictures. [*To Dennis and Neal*] You guys can relate, right? [*laughter*] Anyway, Seth and I started a website called GraphicNYC four or five years ago and the culmination of our artist-writer-creator profiles is* Leaping Tall Buildings: The Origins of American Comics, *which has about 50 or 60 creators, at least, including these two handsome gentlemen sitting right next to me: Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams. [*applause*] Let's get started. Do you want to try and make some time for questions? Then there's going to be a quick signing with Neal and Denny. Okay. They need no introduction but I am going to introduce them anyway. Dennis O'Neil was born in 1939, the same year that Batman first swooped over the rooftops of Gotham City in* Detective Comics *#27. While working as a newspaper reporter in Cape Girardeau, Michigan —*
Dennis O'Neil: Missouri.
Christopher: *Missouri? Oh! I'm ashamed! I'm sorry.*
Neal: Scratch that out.
Christopher: *I don't have a pen, unfortunately. I'll just use my fingernail. [*Neal hands him a pen*] Thank you. Okay: Cape Girardeau,* Missouri.

A meeting with upcoming comic book writer and editor Roy Thomas led Denny to move to New York to write comics. He started writing for Marvel and then became a mainstay at Charlton Comics. He later went to DC Comics in 1968 with his [Charlton] editor Dick Giordano.

Neal Adams brought an unprecedented sense of realism to super-hero art of the 1960s, stemming out of his prior work in advertising and also his artwork on the Ben Casey comic strip —
Neal: And Archie.
Christopher: *That's right. How many Archie stories did you do?*
Neal: Just some pages. Just a few.
Christopher: *Real quick: Just as an aside. Neal, who did you meet with when you first went to Archie?*
Neal: His name is Gorelick. Victor Gorelick.
Christopher: *There was someone else working there who first warned you away from comics.*
Neal: You're talking about Joe Simon? I didn't meet Joe Simon. They called him on the phone because they took pity on me because I was such a sad case. I went up there three or four times because Jack Kirby and Joe Simon were doing *The Adventures of the Fly* and "The Shield." I didn't go up there to work for Archie; I went there to see Jack Kirby. Joe Simon didn't come in though they said he would come in every Thursday, but he didn't come in. I came in every week to try to get work and I brought my samples – every week I had more samples – so they got him on the phone. And Joe Simon says, "Kid, I'm going to do you a big favor: I'm not going to use your work." [*laughter*] "It's good but get a real job doing something real. There won't be comic books in a year."
Christopher: *I actually asked about that because, besides being the hand on our cover [*of *Leaping Tall Buildings*] *– we have a very special guest. [*To audience member*] Emily? Can you please stand? Joe Simon's granddaughter Emily came here. Everyone give her a round of applause. C'mon, everybody! [*applause*]*
Neal: [*To Emily*] Your grandpa told me he was going to do me a favor by *not* giving me work and he said, 'Kid, you're not going to understand it now, but this is the biggest favor anybody could do for you. Comics will not exist in America in a year." [*laughter*] So the guys at Archie gave me *Archie* pages to do. Pitiful. "Comics are doomed!" [*laughter*] I *love* your grandpa! I just want you to understand that he didn't give me work.
Christopher: *So, I —*
Neal: Wait a second! I have an end to the story! [*laughter*]
Christopher: *Please, Neal!*
Neal: It's a great story. [*To Emily*] You're hearing this for the first time, right? After awhile I became Neal Adams. It took me a bunch of years. You know, the guy in the white hat on the horse who saved everybody's career and all the rest of it. So Joe Simon, your grandpa, comes up to DC Comics and he's heard of my reputation with original art and all the rest of it. He says, "Neal, I've got to talk to you about this. I'm trying to get the rights back for Captain America but I don't know what process to follow. You're obviously know more than anybody on earth about it, so how do I do that?" I said, "Come on to



Right *Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, a layout for the cover of the first* Green Lantern/Green Arrow *collection published by Paperback Library in 1972. Note they subsequently swapped the back and front covers for the printed edition. Also check out the ultimately unused cover blurb, "Comix That Give a Damn!" You'll find the unused cover art, featuring a different rendition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a following page. Art, of course, is by Neal Adams.*

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Inset left: *Covers for the first Batman and Green Lantern O'Neil/Adams collaborations,* Detective Comics *#395 (Jan. '70) and* GL *#76 (Apr. '70).*
Below: *Detail from the Neal Adams (pencils) and Berni Wrightson (inks)* Batman *#241 (May '72) cover. (Yep, Ye Ed confesses to flopping the art!)*

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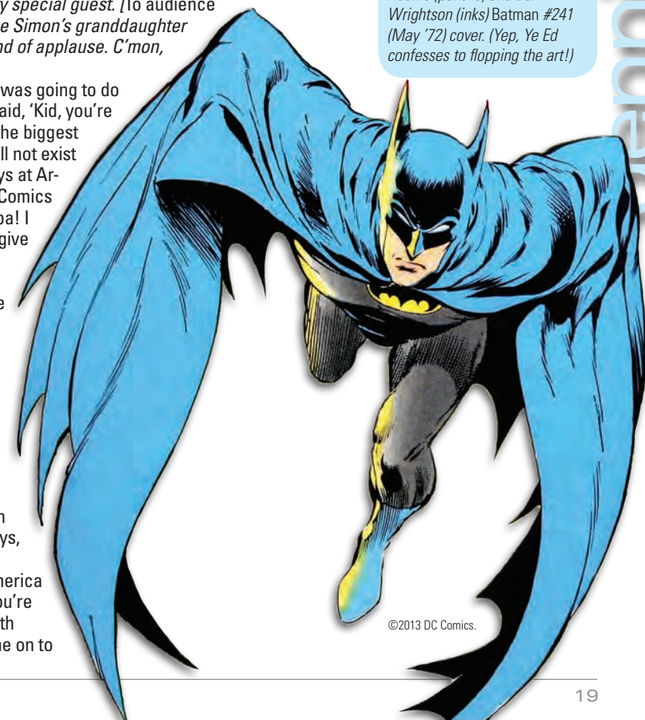

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Poster ©2013 Seth Kushner & Christopher Irving. Batman ©2013 DC Comics.

Above: *Poster for the charity event as designed by Seth Kushner (and, natch, featuring the shutterbug's pix, as well).*

leaving, right? And he thanked me and I realized, stopped him, and said, "Mr. Simon, can I buy you a second cup of coffee? I have another story to tell you." [*chuckles*] "You turned me down when I was a teenager." "*No!*" [*laughter*] Okay, that was it.

Christopher: *That's a great story. So, leading up to January 1970's issue of* Detective Comics *[#395], "The Secret of the Waiting Graves," which teamed up Denny and Neal in the first of their atmospheric and very gothic Batman tales. Neal had previously drawn Batman in* The Brave and the Bold, *including an issue which had the newly redesigned Green Arrow, courtesy of Mr. Adams here. A question I have for you, Neal, is: You worked primarily with writer Bob Haney on* The Brave and the Bold.

Neal: Right.

Christopher: *How was your work with Bob different from your work with Denny?*

Neal: I was not used to comics being written realistically. I was used to comics being written in that '50s style. I was aware of Dick Giordano bringing Denny O'Neil to DC Comics but I was not aware of his history and how he got to things. But in talking with Denny, it seemed to me he was a child of the '60s – the marching on Washington and the Chicago Seven trial – and he seemed to be into that stuff. Bob Haney was into comics and he did terrific stories. All I asked him to do was to make the stories happen at night and I put a better cape on Batman and gave him a realistic anatomy. I had a great time working with Bob, but my goal was to work with Julie Schwartz, the science-fiction editor-god of DC Comics. He said, "I got this guy, Denny O'Neil, whom I am stealing from Dick Giordano." I said, "Is he going to write that stupid *Batman* I see on television? Because that's not what I want to do." Julie said, "No. He writes realistically."

I don't think we did clown-villains for five or six stories, did we, Denny? Finally, we did The Joker. He wrote realistic stories about people and events that had nothing to do with The Mad Hatter or Two-Face or Clay-Man, or whatever the hell that was; he wrote stories about people. He wrote stories that delved into the Orson Welles-type character that you might find in good, classic drama. He wrote "The Secret of the Waiting Graves," about flowers that keep you young. He wrote comics stories that other people didn't do because he came from a place that really wasn't that comic-book genre. Not that he didn't understand it; he's written super-hero characters most of his life. But he had that gritty, realistic style that you wanted to see in Batman.

Christopher: *Denny, what was it like to work with Neal as compared to, say, Irv Novick, who was also drawing Batman?*

the coffee room." We went to the coffee room and I gave him the phone numbers and cards of two lawyers, neither of whom charge money — I know, this is fantasy, right? [*laughter*] — I gave him these cards and I gave him some advice, like sending bills to people who you think owe money to you and they will send it to the accounting department and the accounting department — are there any accountants here? Accountants have glue on their fingers. So if you send them a bill, they can't throw it away. They try to throw it away but they can't do it. Because they think one day, ten years later, someone will come and say, "Do you have a bill from that guy?" And they go, "Oh, shit." So they can't throw a bill away. You're going to pile them up with these bills and they';re going to have to pay them eventually or else there's just going to be this big pile.

So, anyway, I have this long talk with Joe Simon. Your grandfather is this very tall guy and I look up to him in many ways. So we have this conversation and we're

Right inset: *Bob Kane's iconic* Detective Comics *#33 (Sept. 1939) cover and the Neal Adams homage cover,* Batman *#227 (Dec. 1970).*

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Dennis: When I wrote "Secret of the Waiting Graves," the mission, as I chose to take it, was to do something better. Comics had been, kind of half-heartedly, trying to follow the path of the Adam West TV show, which was a comedic take on super-heroes and Batman. Satirical. And I had no quarrel with that. That's a way to interpret it but I don't think very many of the comic-book guys really got camp. I talked to Stan Lee the morning after the first show and I asked him what he thought of it and he said, "I liked the little bit of animation in the beginning, but the rest of it, no." But, nonetheless, because it was having a positive effect on sales, the comic-book guys tried to do camp. But then it was over like that. The TV show lasted two years as a semi-weekly serialized thing and then it limped into its third year and it was cut. Julie said we're obviously going to continue to publish Batman (though *Detective Comics* may have been on a slippery slope at that point). So, what I thought we did was simply take it back to what Bill Finger and Bob Kane did in 1939. [*To Chris*] *Detective #*27 was *May* 1939, by the way, also the same month I was born. [*laughter*]

Neal: Wouldn't you also say Jerry Robinson?

Dennis: I was being polite. [*chuckles*] You could add a few other names in there.

Christopher: *[*Deadpan*] It wasn't all Bob Kane?*

Neal: No.

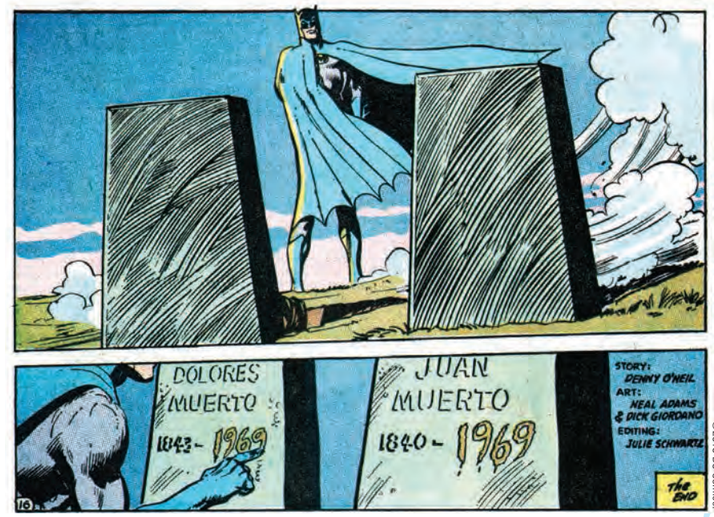
Dennis: Are there any Time-Warner executives in the crowd? [*laughter*]

[*To Neal*] What you and I did was… strongly implicit in Batman, after the first issue, after the origin… but wasn't very much to emphasize. I got the idea from reading an essay by Alfred Bester. Does anybody in this room *not* know who Alfred Bester was? You can go to hell if you don't. [*laughter*]

Christopher: *No pressure.*

Dennis: Arguably, Bester was the best science-fiction writer in the 20th century and he was a guy who got his start in comics. He wrote an essay for *Science-Fiction Writers of America* magazine about writing for obsessed characters. I read that and realized that's the psychological key to Batman: He's *never* gotten over seeing his parents killed. I don't think I would have come up with that if Bill Finger had not written that seventh story ["The Batman Wars Against the Dirigible of Doom," *Detective Comics #*33, which contains the origin of the character], it was always strongly implicit, but not very much explicit and then gone for years at a time. [*To Neal*] So what you and I did was… I kind of have a false memory, but this is what is should have been—

Neal: We went back to the origin and tried to pick it up after Jerry Robinson let it go and it went to hell. I mean, you don't



Above: *Finals panels for the first collaboration of Dennis O'Neil and Neal Adams, "The Secret of the Waiting Graves,"* Detective Comics *#395 (Jan. 1970).*

want Bob Kane to draw comic books for too long; he's just going to draw crap. Then he's going to hire ghosts to draw crap, so you get a lot of crap. Then they're going to try to save it and then the TV show came along and they did crap. So the question was with Julie Schwartz, how do we avoid doing crap? Maybe we should get some talented people to do it. *Du'oh!* [*rising laughter*] So they did and we didn't do crap any more. I mean it really comes down to that. Denny and I picked up where Jerry Robinson had left off. We did the same Batman. We can't say we did a better Batman, we didn't even do a more original Batman. We basically did The Batman.

I remember Julie Schwartz, before we started this little partnership, stopped me in the hallway when I was doing Batman in *The Brave and the Bold* and ask, "Why do you think *you* know how to do Batman and *we* don't?" I said, "Julie, it's really not just me — it's me and just about every kid in America. The only people who don't seem to know what Batman is all about is you guys here at DC Comics." [*laughter*]

Dennis: Among other things, they were trying to duck the heat that came with the witch hunts. There was no such thing as an attempt at, say, consistency at characterization. The best tool I had when I was editing *Batman* was the bible, which originally when I first wrote it was about four pages and now with writers and my assistants adding to it, it's currently 30 pages and they're still using it. Part of it was, "Look, this is the ballpark I'm asking you to play in. Batman does not fight aliens! Batman does not time-travel or fight dinosaurs! Here's the ballpark. Anything I haven't say you can't do, do." Nothing like that was ever on the radar for a comic book editor before. So Julie Schwartz did a Batman and Murray Boltinoff did, allowing for sameness in the costume, in terms of characterization, a very different Batman. Some of them were trying to follow, I think, the lead of Mort Weisinger's Superman, what I like to think of as "science-fiction light." Y'know,

Left inset: *Batman's origin is revealed in this* Batman *#1 (Spr. 1940) page. Art by Bob Kane, words by Bill Finger; and penciller Neal Adams's take of same, from* Batman *#232 (June 1971). Script by Denny O'Neil; inks by Dick Giordano.*

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Above: *Unfinished and (obviously) unused cover for* The Brave and the Bold *#85 (Aug.-Sept. 1969), which featured Neal Adams's brilliant redesign of The Green Arrow. Art by (obviously) Neal Adams. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions.*

silly stories about time travel and story after story after story about poor, numbskull, blind Lois Lane trying to find out who Superman really was. [*laughter*] She should have moved a little lock of hair. [*laughter*]

I'm not as down on that stuff as Neal is. I don't enjoy it but I kind of understand what they were trying to do was appropriate for what was the time and place. And *nobody* knew how to edit comics! I was a comic book editor for 27 years and I don't remember anybody giving me instruction. Dick Giordano was close to a genius in that he could suck good work out of me when I was working at Charlton for four bucks a page. Weezy [Louise] Simonson was like that. Some of them just had a way to do it. One poor woman was pulled off the street. She helped her husband write a couple of comic book stories and someone wanted her husband to relocate to New York and he brought his wife – it was sort of an old-fashioned marriage – and she had seven comic book titles plunked on her desk and was told, "You're editing these." And that was it! She had *no* editorial experience, damned little writing experience. (I had edited a news magazine, I had helped edit books and had edited lots of different kinds of things. Comics are the hardest by far.) So this poor woman was just off the deep end of the pier and try and swim. By the time she reaized she was sinking, she came to Mike Carlin and I and asked for help, but it was too late. That's the kind of business it was. Loosey-goosey.

Neal keeps talking about quality — as well he should — but [*chuckles*] was anyone really worried about that at the time? I don't remember anybody using that word.

Neal: They *might* have been worried about it if they had read the comic books but they did not. From editorial on up, they didn't read the comic books. That's why we got away with so much. I had a guy come to me with a letter from the governor of Florida saying — we had just done a *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* story ["And a Child Shall Destroy Them," *GL* #83 (April-May 1971)]— and the governor wrote, "You caricaturized Spiro Agnew, the Vice-President of the United States, in your comic book and made a fool of him! If you ever do this again, I will see to it that any DC Comics are not distributed in the state of Florida." [*laughter*]

Dennis: Oh, how things have changed!

Neal: We had already done it. We weren't going to do a second one. So, kind of an empty threat. But the people at DC above editorial, they are the people who came in to me with the letter and said, "What's this about?" "Ahhh, we made fun of Spiro Agnew in this comic book. Didn't you read it?" [*laughter*] "Oh!" They had no idea. That's how we got away with all that shit.

Dennis: Julius Schwartz didn't really feel that there was any obligation to let his boss know. One of the articles of faith is that you could not have a continued story and once a year he did a "Justice League Meets the Justice Society" [two-parter]. So I asked him, "One of the first things I was told is that I can't do continued stories." He said, "I didn't ask for permission." And I'm sure he didn't tell anybody where we were going with *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*. Our job was: Save the book. It was floundering. "Do what you want." The first guy [from DC who] was interviewed [about *GL/GA*] by the *Village Voice* — Neal wasn't mentioned, I wasn't mentioned, Julie wasn't mentioned — I bet the son of a bitch had *no* idea *what* that reporter was talking about! [*laughter*] Then we began to actually get publicity. We got invited places and we became respectable.

Neal: Carmine got invited to tour all around the country to do radio interviews as if he did it. [*chuckles*]

Dennis: Do you think he knew?

Neal: He had *no* idea. Poor Carmine. I love Carmine.

Dennis: We just saw him three weeks ago. In Florida.

Neal: I love Carmine. Carmine is a great guy. He didn't read the comic books.

Dennis: It was the Peter Principle.

Christopher: *When Julie put you two together for* Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, who's idea was it to team the two heroes up? And why make it a book about America? Why make it socially relevant?*

Neal: Julie.

Dennis: Well, it was, "This book is in sales trouble." A lot of guys wanted to get the assignment for *Superman*; I wanted a book that was failing or iffy or needed help, because that meant that fewer people were going to be looking over your shoulder. So, with that, I had done some (my vocabulary falters here) relevant material in a story for Charlton which people still sometimes mention, called "Children of Doom" ["Can This Be Tomorrow?" *Charlton Premiere* #2 (Nov. 1967)]. [I also did] something for Julie Schwartz based on that river in Ohio that caught fire ["Come Slowly Death, Come Slyly," *Justice League of America* #79 (Mar. 1970)]. And I was an active dude. I was married to a Catholic Worker at the time (and nobody knows what Catholic Workers are and that's okay; if you don't know who Alfred Bester is, you don't know Catholic Workers). Anyway, I was going on peace marches and stuff, and this was a chance to do that.

[*To Neal*] I don't know if you know this, but I wrote ["No Evil Shall Escape My Sight," *GL* #76 (Apr. 1970)] assuming Gil [Kane] would do the art.

Neal: Actually, Julie kept secrets.

Dennis: Yeah, he did. When I looked at the splash page from the proofs—

Neal: By the way, Gil was off of that [title] for about five issues at that point. [*Actually Gil Kane penciled the previous eight issues,* GL *#68-75, Dick Dillin #67, Mike Sekowsky 64-66, and Jack Sparling #62-63.*—**YCE**.]

Dennis: Was he really?

Neal: Jack Sparling was working on it. A whole bunch of guys. That's why it was going down the tubes. It missed Gil Kane. [*to audience*] Do you know who Gil Kane was? [*applause and cheers*] *Green Lantern* had lost Gil Kane because Gil Kane had gone on to do *Blackmark*, the graphic novel. He was gone and they were willing to give it to anyone who wanted it and walked into Julie's office. I went in and I said, "Julie, before you cancel this damn book, how about letting me do a few issues?" He said, "I've got an idea, kid. I'm going to get Denny." So he got Denny to do it. And, by the way, apparently the Green Arrow character I did in *The Brave and the Bold* ["The Senator's Been Shot," #83 (Aug.-Sept. 1969)]? Apparently fans loved it but it had no place to go, so I guess Julie kind of opted it and threw him in with Green Lantern.

Dennis: No, that was me. Because we needed a dialectic.

Neal: Another green guy. [*laughs*]

Dennis: We needed somebody—

Neal: We want to use the Toad. [*laughter*] It's not easy being green.

Dennis: The Green Goblin belonged to another company, so what were we going to do? That was a minus, actually, that they were both green. The idea was, "We're going to do stories about real problems. That's a given. Hal is going to be the best cop who ever lived. I was living in this neighborhood [SoHo] at the time and I was a hippy, and I didn't have any great love for the boys in blue. But I had known a couple of cops who were really, really good guys. So that's Hal. His problem would have been that he takes his orders from somebody else. He believes in authority, and if there's one thing I didn't believe in when I was 27 years old, it was authority, and if there's one thing I don't believe in when I'm 73, it's authority. [*laughter, applause*] We needed somebody to provide a dialetic.

Neal: I, on the other hand, am a cop. So that applause was out of order. [*laughter*]

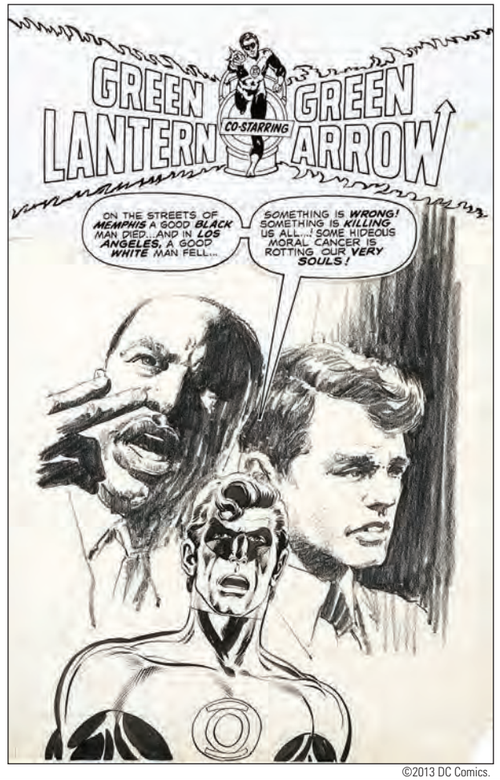
Dennis: [*Chuckles*] And I don't expect to get home without handcuffs tonight. We needed somebody to be the voice of the counter-culture. Neal had done a *sensational* job — even before I thought I was ever going to be involved with Green Arrow, I saw *The Brave and the Bold* and "Oh my God, *this* is what this character is supposed to look like! He looks like a tough guy, for one thing, not like a paper doll. The other thing about him was that there was very little baggage. He was created in 1940, allegedly by Mort Weisinger. There is a movie serial called *The Green Archer*, which was shot in Westchester County [New York], and I kind of sat through half of it.

Christopher: *[Lead actor] Victory Jory, right?*

Dennis: Yeah.

Christopher: *I sat through, like, maybe a third of it. Not so good.*

Dennis: Despite what publicity people said, "Green Arrow" was obviously an attempt to cash in on Batman's popularity. He had a kid sidekick, he had an arrow car and an arrow cave (yeah, it was just all a coincidence). But he had no characterization ever, he had no backstory; we didn't know anything about him other than he had this kid sidekick and he shot arrows that were sometimes gimmicky. So he could be anything we wanted him to be, and that made him an ideal candidate to be the guy who would argue with Green Lantern.



©2013 DC Comics.

Neal: Grist for the mill.

Christopher: *One question I have for you, Denny: When I interviewed you in '09 for* GraphicNYC*, you had talked about your time in the Navy and how you used to be a little more conservative. I always wondered, because* Green Lantern/Green Arrow *is so much about Green Lantern's discovery that there are grays rather than black-&-whites, how much of your time with the Navy did you tap into when you were writing that?*

Dennis: First of all, I should admit that I was probably the *worst* sailor in the entire history of the United States Navy. As for my conservative background, my high school girlfriend is sitting right here. Maryfran, was I a conservative guy to date on Friday night? I was unbearable! I was a Catholic goody two-shoes, go-to-confession-and-mass-three-times-a-week-and-obey-the-rules kind of guy. And it wasn't working for me. But in the Navy, and through encounters after the Navy — well, I never had any doubt that racism was wrong and that we needed to integrate this country. I think I got that from the *Superman* radio show. When I was about seven, they did what I now know as a public service announcement in which Superman explained to us kids – the gang – "Hey, gang! Some stuff called melatonin makes some skin dark and some skin light. And that's the only difference in people." And that stuck.

Though my parents


©2013 Seth Kushner.

Above: *From left, moderator Christopher Irving, writer Dennis O'Neil and artist Neal Adams at their July 2012 talk. Photo by Seth Kushner.*

Inset left & below: *Original cover art intended for the first volume of Paperback Library's* Green Lantern/Green Arrow *collection, featuring a version of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that was altered when finally used as the book's back cover art. Kudos to Heritage Auctions. Below is the actual cover.*

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Les Daniels
The Incomplete History

Celebrating the writer/historian who gave the world much more than he got

by JON B. COOKE CBC Editor

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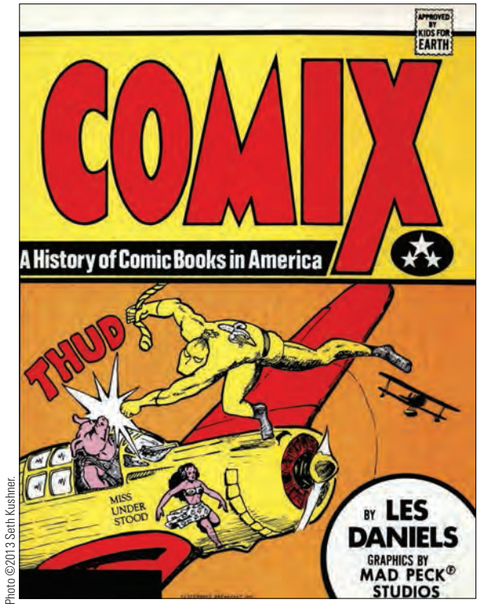

Photo ©2013 Seth Kushner.

Inset right: *Seth Kushner's photo of Joe Simon's drawing hand and a certain Big Apple landmark grace the cover of his and writer Christopher Irving's smash tome,* Leaping Tall Buildings: The Origins of the American Comics, *available in bookstores and comic shops and via their publisher at* www.powerhousebooks.com. *Many thanks to our chums for the words and pictures here!*

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Portrait by Cortney Skinner

ALEX ROSS GETS REAL

Coming into his third decade of comic book super-stardom, the artist reflects on the illusion of realism, keeping old school in the digital age, and the call of independence

Nelson Alexander Ross is in coasting mode. Though urged by frequent collaborator and friend Kurt Busiek, among others, to focus on creator-owned material — and nagged by his own desire to produce the Great American Graphic Novel — the artist is hesitant to risk all in the face of a sluggish economy and fickle comics medium, choosing, for the moment, to play it safe. But the examples of Kirby, Adams, and Ware continue to entice the ambitions of Alex Ross.

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Interview conducted by Jon B. Cooke

Comic Book Creator: *It qui nus et ut in re adignatur, atem dolor sunte velenem eati dellenis raeriorum es nus quis eum es et la corempo-ria voluptios milibusam estor renimpos reiciduntur aligend ipienda nonseri autem dolor am, temporerunt..*

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Above: *Steve Gan ably inks Frank Robbins on the opening page of* Marvel Premiere *#28 (Feb. 1976), which introduced that* team terrible, *the Legion of Monsters!*

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris • Portrait by Seth Kushner

Astro City's KURT BUSIEK

The Art of Writing Comic Books and Revitalized Life in the Age of Marvels

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Right top and middle: *Fran Rowe Robbins and Frank Robbins during their 1980s-90s Mexican romance and marriage (courtesy of Fran).* **Bottom right:** *Renowned Archie cartoonist Stan Goldberg and his friend Frank Robbins, Mexico, 1994 (courtesy of Stan and his*

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