

ROY THOMAS' EARTH-TWO
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

JUSTICE ON TWO WORLDS!

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2010

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In the USA



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Alter Ego

**NOW WITH
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On Our Cover: For the full, unfettered story behind this DC-lightful Carmine Infantino cover, as inked by A/E's associate editor Jim Amash, see the first page of "Justice on Two Worlds." [Heroes TM & ©2010 DC Comics; other art ©2010 Carmine Infantino & Jim Amash.]

Above: This pulsating splash page by Gil Kane (penciler) and Sid Greene (inker) heralded the first "two Green Lanterns" story, in *Green Lantern* #40 (Oct. 1965). For more about it, see p. 14. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2010 DC Comics.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Joe Rosen



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FIRST PRINTING.

All In Color For A Crime

The past never changes—only the present's way of perceiving it. And of *presenting* it.

With this issue, at the same time as our TwoMorrows sister magazine *Back Issue*, *Alter Ego* adds a touch of *color* to what has been, for 9000 or so pages, an ongoing black-&-white examination of the ironically named Golden and Silver Ages of Comic Books.

Well... black-&-white except for the covers, which have *always* been in color.

For that matter, so have the interior pages of late, if you're a subscriber to the digital edition.

Truth is, adding 16 color pages to *A/E* is both *more* and *less* than I personally wanted to see.

Less, because ideally the entire mag would've been in cover-to-cover color from the start—so that Superman and Captain Marvel could've battled it out in primary colors, and Captain America been portrayed as the red, white, and blue Sentinel of Liberty, and Green Lama and Yellowjacket and Blue Bolt revealed why they carry those color-specific names.

But *more* than I wanted, too—because I've relished spotlighting b&w reproductions of original comic art and unpublished pages and commissioned sketches.

Color, for all its glory, can be a tyrant... tempting an editor to choose a mediocre color image rather than a more important black-&-white one. Besides, paradoxically, drawings intended to be printed in color can be more clearly viewed, in terms of an artist's style, if no colors obscure his/her pencil or ink lines.

So we're patently pleased to add interior primaries and pastels to

A/E... and we're also bound and determined not to let King Color warp the magazine. We'll present "special color sections" of 16 pages if the occasion readily presents itself... or we'll let the rainbow hues start up in the middle of one article and vanish halfway through the following interview if to do otherwise would necessitate shortchanging the content of one or both.

But we're not trying to fool you. You can *count*. So you know that economic factors have dictated that, as we add color, we drop 16 pages of our previous page count. (At least half those, however, had been taken up each issue by our largely repetitious TwoMorrows "catalog," which we now ask you to access online if you're interested in buying back issues—and we sincerely hope you will be. So we're actually losing only a handful of article/interview pages per issue.)

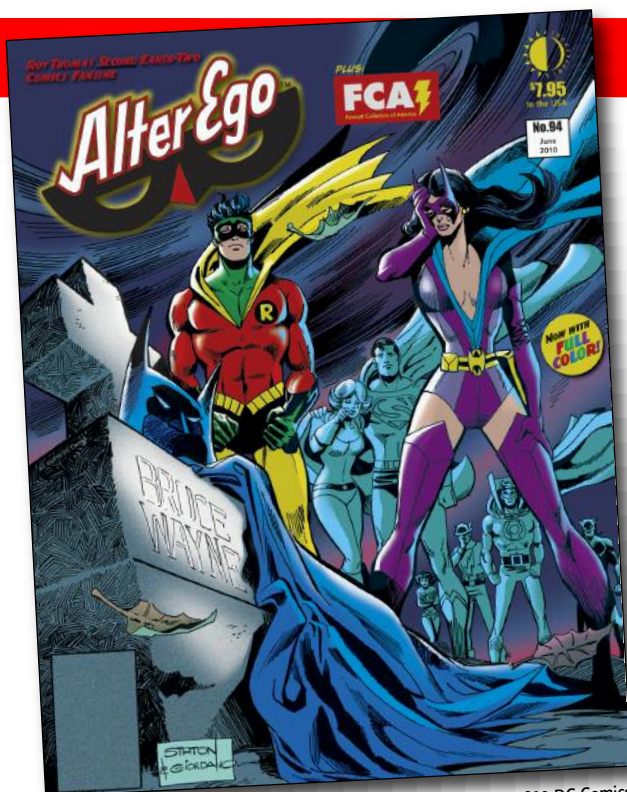
And we've a truly—dare we say it?—*colorful* subject with which to inaugurate this new era: the first of several issues showcasing DC's 1961-1986 "Earth-Two" crime-smashing capers that couldn't be squeezed into our four fat volumes of *The All-Star Companion*. And squeeze we did have to, even here—to the extent that, though the aesthete in us would've preferred not to, we took to abbreviating "Earth-One" and "Earth-Two" as "E1" and "E2," at least half the time.

But hey—all that space we saved probably adds up to another art spot or two over the course of the issue! (Even though it's the super-informative George Kashdan interview, rather than the E2 section, that soaked up most of this issue's interior color.)

And who knows—that extra art spot *may* be one of the ones that's in *color*!

Bestest,

Roy



Art ©2010 DC Comics.

COMING IN JUNE

#94

EARTH-TWO—PART 2! The Twin-Earths Team-Ups—And George Kashdan—Just Keep On Coming!

- Striking cover by JOE STATON & DICK GIORDANO—originally intended for *All-Star Comics* #75!
- "Justice on Two Worlds—Part III!" Mr. & Mrs. Superman—Dr. Fate & Hourman—Starman & Black Canary—Power Girl & The Huntress—Batman & Robin—plus lots more, chronicled by MITCHELL & THOMAS! Amazing art and artifacts by ANDERSON * COLAN * GARCIA-LOPEZ * SIMONSON * GIFFEN * STATON * SCHAFFENBERGER * SWAN * BUCKLER * VOSBURG * DILLIN * APARO * NEWTON * NOVICK, et al.!
- The second installment of the GEORGE KASHDAN interview, conducted by JIM AMASH—spotlighting his fellow Golden/Silver Age DC editors, not to mention ADAMS * CARDY * CERTA * DRAKE * FRADON * GRANDENETTI * HEATH * HERRON * INFANTINO * KANE (both of 'em) * KIRBY * KUBERT * MOLDOFF * PAPP * PARIS * PURCELL * ROUSSOS * SAMACHSON * SPRANG, & numerous others!
- FCA with MARC SWAYZE & Nyoka the Jungle Girl * MICHAEL T. GILBERT with more on DOC WERTHAM * STEVE GERBER's *Crudzine*—& MORE!

Edited by ROY THOMAS

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Earth-Two: A Mini-History

An Oracular Overview Of Twin Worlds According To Schwartz, Fox, Et Al., 1961-1986

by Kurt Mitchell

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: This piece has been abridged by the author from his longer article on the subject published in *The All-Star Companion*, Vol. 3 (2006).

If [physicist Hugh Everett's "many worlds" theory of wave function decoherence] is correct, then at this very instant your body coexists with the wave functions of dinosaurs engaged in mortal combat. Coexisting in the room you are in is the wave function of a world where the Germans won World War II, where aliens from outer space roam, where you were never born.

— Michio Kaku, *Parallel Worlds: A Journey through Creation, Higher Dimensions and the Future of the Cosmos* (2005), page 169

Two objects can occupy the same space and time—if they vibrate at different speeds! My theory is, both Earths were created at the same time in two quite similar universes! They vibrate differently—which keeps them apart! Life, customs—even languages—evolved on your Earth almost exactly as they did on my Earth!

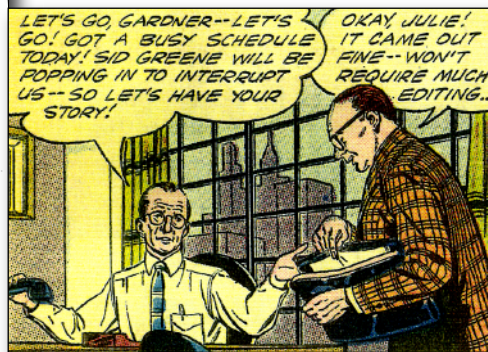
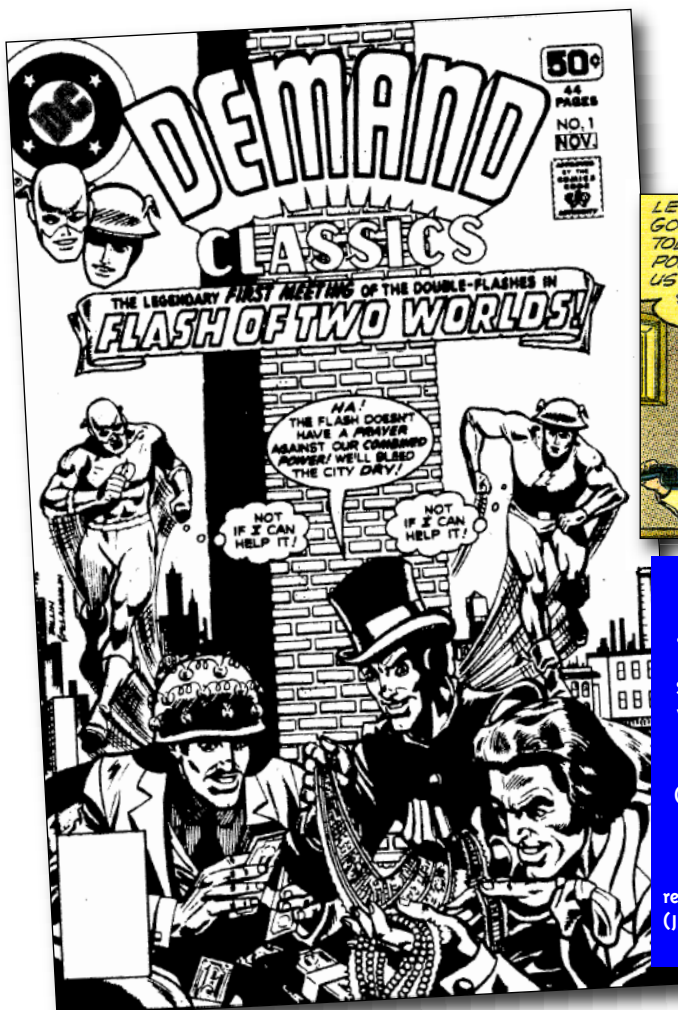
— Barry Allen, *The Flash* #123 (1961), p. 4

When DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox first introduced the parallel world they named Earth-Two, their goal was simply to tell an entertaining story (and sell a few hundred thousand comic books). If they were aware of Hugh Everett's radical theory, quoted above, they may have wondered what all the fuss was about: parallel Earths had long been a staple of science-fiction and sf comics.

Nevertheless, "Flash of Two Worlds" in 1961's *The Flash* #123 was something special—so special that we're still talking about Earth-Two nearly half a century after that seminal issue. The collective creative effort of some 180 different writers, artists, and editors, the original E2 cycle encompasses over 400 individual comic books published between 1961 and 1986. That's a lot of history to take in. In this survey, therefore, we shall divide it into three overlapping periods imaginatively labeled Early, Middle, and Late.

The Early Period (1961-75) is dominated by the editorial personality of Julius Schwartz. Reintroducing the Golden Age members of the Justice Society of America in his various super-hero titles, Schwartz laid out the basics of the multiple-Earths paradigm. The Justice League of America and other Silver Age super-heroes live on "Earth-One." The JSA and other World War II-generation mystery-men live on "Earth-Two." Some E1 characters—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, et al.—have twins or "doppelgängers" on E2 (or is it vice versa?). Each world occupies the same space as the other but vibrates at a different frequency on the molecular level. There are an infinite number of such realities existing side by side. By altering their vibratory rate, people can cross from one to the other. If you understand these ground rules, you've just passed Multiple Earths 101.

The seed had been planted in 1956's *Showcase* #4, when nascent super-hero Barry Allen borrowed his heroic alias from the 1940s Flash, whose comic book adventures he'd read as a boy. By this device, Schwartz (and scripter Robert Kanigher) acknowledged DC's past even while making a clean break with it. Over the next five years, Schwartz and various collaborators similarly updated Green Lantern, Hawkman, The Atom, and the JSA itself, reconceived as the *Justice League* of



Parallel Whirls

(Above:) Far as we can tell, the concept of parallel universes—at least as promulgated by a scientist—goes back to a physicist named Hugh Everett, who proposed it in 1957, though his theory took decades to be taken seriously by his peer group. But DC editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox weren't far behind Everett, at least in pop-culture terms, with their "Flash of Two Worlds" epic in *The Flash* #123 (Sept. 1961). Here, Julie and Gar are seen in the first panel from the classic "The Strange Adventure That Really Happened!" in *Strange Adventures* #140 (May 1962); thanks to Bill Schelly.

(Left:) A reprinting of "Flash of Two Worlds" was to have been featured in the premier issue of a title called *Demand Classics* (Oct.-Nov. 1978). A cover was duly penciled by Dick Dillin and inked by Frank McLaughlin, as an homage-with-a-difference to the '61 original by Carmine Infantino & Murphy Anderson, which can be seen on p. 6. This less-than-perfect reproduction of the *Demand Classics* #1 cover saw print in the newszine *The Comic Reader* #158 (July '78)... but the projected comic fell victim to that era's infamous "DC Implosion" and was never published. Thanks to Jim Van Dore for sending us this scan. [©2010 DC Comics.]



Poster Boys—And A Gal

This poster hails from the latter 1970s, the “middle period” by Kurt Mitchell’s reckoning. We kept meaning to fit it into a volume of *The All-Star Companion* series, but never found quite the right spot. We’re not sure of the artist, but it might be the work of Dick Giordano. Thanks to Al Dellings. [©2010 DC Comics.]

America. The latter new heroes and a few of the old guard—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow, Aquaman, Blackhawk—made E1 a world of heroic fantasy as rich and colorful as its Golden Age predecessor, a predecessor few young readers even suspected existed.

Flash #123 changed all that. On the surface a typical Schwartz sci-fi fest, something subtler and more layered was at work. The world of the E2 Flash had a tangible history, accessible to any readers who could track down its yellowing relics. The two Flashes met again in *Flash* #129, whose flashback to *All-Star Comics* #57 (1951), the last Golden Age “JSA” tale, gave us our first look at the E2 Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Atom, plus two “new” heroes, Black Canary and Dr. Mid-Nite. In *Flash* #137, a forcibly-reunited Society vowed to stay together, a promise spectacularly fulfilled a few weeks later in *Justice League of America* #21-22. There, seven JSAers, including founding members Dr. Fate and Hourman, teamed with the JLA to battle villains from both worlds. Reader reaction and sales led to a sequel: *JLA* #29-30 introduced “Earth-Three,” where history “happened backward” and the Crime Syndicate of America, evil counterparts of the JLA, ruled.

[**Aside #1.** If readers thought the formula was as simple as “1940s = Earth-Two,” however, *Hawkman* #4, which reintroduced Zatara the Master Magician as an E1 character, proved otherwise. Schwartz would use the same strategy to revive Sargon the Sorcerer and The Vigilante on E1.]

The mid-’60s brought a small explosion of comics with an E2 theme.

There were the now-annual crossovers in *JLA* #37-38, 46-47, and 55-56. Schwartz, Fox, and artist Murphy Anderson also produced tryouts starring teams of JSAers—Dr. Fate and Hourman in *Showcase* #55-56, Starman and Black Canary in *The Brave and the Bold* #61-62—then reintroduced The Spectre, whose solo stand in three issues of *Showcase* earned him his own title. Golden Age stars reintroduced during the aforesaid explosion include Sandman, Wildcat, Mr. Terrific, Johnny Thunder (with his Thunderbolt), and an all-grown-up Robin. The popularity of the recurring Flash/Flash team-ups led to other JLA/JSA duos. A GL/GL pairing in *Green Lantern* #40 warranted three sequels, while *The Atom* #29 & 36 co-starred heroes whose dissimilarities posed quite different storytelling challenges than the identically-powered Flashes or GLs. Gardner Fox’s last issues of *JLA* (#64-65) added a new JSAer: The Red Tornado, an android with no connection to the 1940s heroine of that name.

The *JLA* baton passed in order to writers Denny O’Neil, Mike Friedrich, Len Wein, and the team of Cary Bates & Elliot S! Maggin. Each brought his own sensibility to the tradition: O’Neil shook up the status quo, relocating Black Canary to E1; Friedrich used identical JLA/JSA rosters; Bates and Maggin co-starred in their two-parter. Wein made the biggest imprint on E2 continuity, reintroducing the early-’40s Seven Soldiers of Victory (from DC’s *Leading Comics* #1-14), the Freedom Fighters (composed of Quality Comics characters DC had purchased) who dwelt on “Earth-X,” where the Nazis had won World War II, and Sandman’s kid sidekick Sandy. In *Flash* #179, the E1 speedster visited “Earth-Prime,” supposedly our own universe where super-heroes are fictional. Even as parallel universes multiplied, JSA appearances outside the summer crossovers dwindled. Despite a steady influx of Golden Age revivals—including Fawcett’s Captain Marvel of “Earth-S” (for Shazam)—the early ’70s left E2 fans hungry for more.

[**Aside #2.** Not everyone at DC was as invested in the E2 concept as Schwartz. Issues of *The Brave and the Bold* featuring JSAers Spectre and Wildcat, for example, didn’t mention the theory of parallel Earths; and a second “Spectre” series in *Adventure Comics* (#431-40) ignored his Silver Age continuity altogether. Neither *1st Issue Special* #9, a memorable “Dr. Fate” solo story, nor *Super-Team Family* #2, a Wildcat/Creeper team-up, mentioned Earth-Two.]

The Middle Period (1976 through the early ’80s), which overlaps with the Late Period covered below, saw the revival of *All-Star Comics*, beginning with #58. Launched by editor/writer Gerry Conway, this new “Justice Society” series (also called “All-Star Super-Squad” for its first year) spotlighted teen heroes Power Girl (the E2 equivalent of Supergirl) and The Star-Spangled Kid. Writer Paul Levitz and penciler Joe Staton assumed the creative duties as of #66, continuing to explore the theme of super-heroic generations by introducing The Huntress, daughter of E2’s Batman and Catwoman. *DC Special* #29 by the same team revealed the previously unrevealed origin of the JSA. Their trilogy of “Power Girl” stories in *Showcase* #97-99 did not lead to an ongoing series, but their “Huntress” origin in *DC Super-Stars* #17 led to solo stories in *Batman Family* and a five-year run in *Wonder Woman*. When low sales led to *All-Star*’s cancellation with #74, the “JSA” feature moved to *Adventure Comics*. The violent death of Batman in *Adventure* #462 stunned readers. Clearly, *nothing* could be taken for granted in an E2 story.

Over in Schwartz’s titles, the two Flashes still teamed up regularly. In *Action Comics* #484, the E2 Man of Steel married Lois Lane and soon launched a “Mr. & Mrs. Superman” series. “Whatever Happened to...?,” a new backup series in *DC Comics Presents*, spotlighted a number of E2 heroes, while various E2 villains challenged Schwartz-edited E1 stars.

The hit 1970s *Wonder Woman* TV series inspired DC to replace the E1 Amazon with her E2 doppelgänger and to set her exploits during World War II. Elsewhere, the E2 Emerald Crusader guest-starred in *Green*

Lantern #108-12, the 1940s Batman joined forces with several WWII heroes in *The Brave and the Bold*, and Dr. Fate appeared with the E1 Batman in *B&B* #156. The annual JSA/JLA crossovers continued, with the teams encountering Earth-S's Squadron of Justice (the Fawcett heroes), The Legion of Super-Heroes, Jonah Hex and other heroes of history, The New Gods, and the Secret Society of Super-Villains, and solving the murder of Mr. Terrific. But it would be *JLA* #193's *All-Star Squadron* insert in 1981 that would herald a new era of Earth-Two history.

[**Aside #3.** The 1970s saw more Golden Age DC heroes revived as E1 characters: The Guardian and the Newsboy Legion in *Jimmy Olsen* #133... an updated Manhunter in *Detective Comics* #437... TNT and Dyna-Mite in *Super Friends* #12... Robotman and Air Wave in *JLA* #144 and *Green Lantern* #100, respectively. And then there's Quality's Plastic Man, whose post-Golden Age history at DC would require a book of its own to explain.]

The Late Period (1981-86) is, like the Early Period, characterized by a predominant editorial voice. Roy Thomas, a lifelong JSA fan, used his new E2 titles to explore that world's past, present, and disappointingly short-lived future.

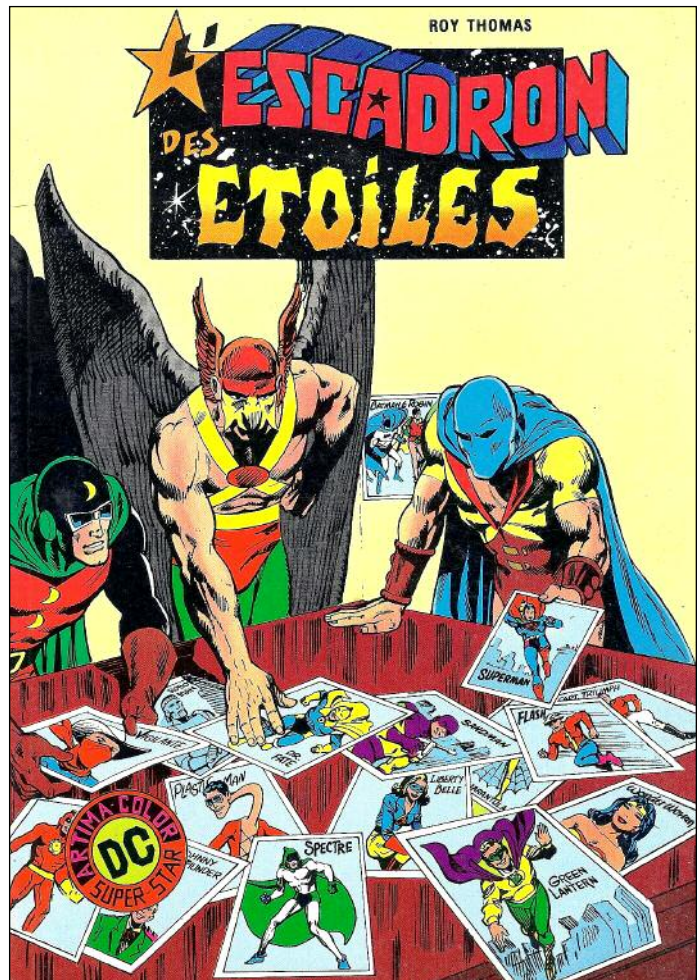
The premise of *All-Star Squadron* was logical: If super-heroes had existed, President Franklin Roosevelt might well have conscripted them after Pearl Harbor into a single organization answerable directly to him. Thomas' dictum that all 1940s DC and Quality heroes originated on E2 freed 62 pre-existing super-heroes to serve with the Squadron during its 70-comics run—also ringing in the star of 1978's *Steel the Indestructible Man* and several new heroes created to provide much-needed gender and racial balance. The series interwove authentic World War II history with Golden Age continuity, rooting the Squadron's fantastic adventures in reality. Guest stars, too, were plentiful, including Earth-S's Marvel Family.

Infinity, Inc. #1 (and three time-perplexed issues of *All-Star Squadron*) introduced "the sons—the daughters—the protégées of the legendary Justice Society of America." The JSA were frequent guest stars, but the series focused on the kids.

The older heroes had problems of their own. In the 1985 mini-series *America vs. the Justice Society*, a diary left by the late Batman accused the JSA of secretly aiding Hitler during WWII. Although the majority of his E2 work was for new titles he developed, including *Secret Origins*, Thomas also wrote *World's Finest Comics* #271, featuring the origin of the E2 Superman/Batman team; co-wrote with Gerry Conway the 1983 JLA/JSA crossover that revealed Black Canary was her own daughter; and plotted *DC Comics Presents Annual* #3, a team-up of the two Supermen and Captain Marvel, for Julius Schwartz. The latter editor was making comparatively spare use of the E2 characters during this period outside the "Mr. & Mrs. Superman" and "Whatever Happened to...?" series, utilizing Vandal Savage as a recurring foe of the E1 Superman and guest-starring Power Girl in *DCCP* #56 and the Freedom Fighters in #62.

The occasional E2-themed story continued to turn up in *The Brave and the Bold*, and a "Dr. Fate" series ran for some time in *The Flash*.

However, a growing editorial "consensus" at DC that the multiple Earths were confusing and restrictive led to their elimination via the 1985-86 maxi-series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. There was a final abbreviated JLA-JSA team-up in 1985 (*Infinity, Inc.* #19 & *JLA* #244); but, over the course of the 12-issue epic crossover in *Crisis*, Earths-Three and -Prime were destroyed and Earths-One, -Two, -4 (the Charlton super-heroes), -S, and -X universes all merged. In the new DC Universe, the E2 Superman, Batman & Robin, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow & Speedy, and Aquaman had never existed. JSA history had to be rewritten. Those challenges would be met in post-*Crisis* issues of *Infinity, Inc.*, in the *Young All-Stars* series that replaced *All-Star Squadron*, and in the new *Secret Origins* title. But first, the "JSA" saga came to an apparent close in the *Last Days of the Justice Society Special* (1986), in which most of the group were exiled to a Ragnarokian equivalent of a mobius strip, to



Squadder's Rights

Rich Buckler's cover of the French edition of *All-Star Squadron* #1-2—roughly translated here as *The Squadron of the Stars*. Oddly, several of the hero "photos" on the wall behind Dr. Mid-Nite, Hawkman, and The Atom got dropped—and Green Lantern's shirt wound up yellow. RT wishes he could recall who sent him this mag, published in France in 1982. Inking by Dick Giordano. [Art ©2010 DC Comics.]

prevent the Twilight of the Gods from destroying the new Earth.

Still, super-hero comics being what they are, the JSA would return by 1992, and has appeared in hundreds of comic books and graphic novels in the quarter-century since *Crisis*. Even Earth-Two itself has been brought back in the past few years, perhaps proving the point of those who contended that it never should have been "destroyed" in the first place.

And yet, for some, something is missing. The affection that the Silver and Bronze Age generations hold for Earth-Two may seem inexplicable to modern readers accustomed to comic book universes crammed to the rafters with super-heroes. But the continued interest in these old stories—reflected in the recent spate of JSA-related trade paperback collections—suggests that their appeal is cross-generational. As for those still disconsolate over its loss, we may find some comfort in Hugh Everett's theory of infinite possibilities: somewhere, somehow... Earth-Two lives.



KURT MITCHELL is a former freelance artist, computer programmer, methodologies analyst, and database designer who has finally found his true calling as a comics historian. A 1970 graduate of the University of Washington, he lives in Tacoma, Washington, with a cranky old cat named Bittys, a hunka hunka burnin' dove named Elvis, and waaaay too many comic books.



Justice On Two Worlds

The Other Earth-Two Stories – Issue by Issue, 1961-1986

Part I Of A Companion Feature To The All-Star Companion, Vol. 1-4

by Kurt Mitchell

A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *The four volumes of TwoMorrows' All-Star Companion series, edited by Yours Truly, dealt with not only the 1940-1951 history of "The Justice Society of America" in All-Star Comics (including the members' solo tales during that era), but also with the JLA/JSA team-ups of 1963-85, with the latter-'70s "JSA" feature, and with DC comics series set in whole or in part on Earth-Two, such as All-Star Squadron, Infinity, Inc., and Secret Origins (as well as the post-E2 The Young All-Stars). That, however, still left uncovered a number of E2 stories of the pre-Crisis on Infinite Earths decades. In this article, Kurt Mitchell has recorded pertinent information concerning each of those series, character by character... a listing long enough that it will need to be continued in next month's A/E and beyond. By and large, Ye Ed has been content to work with Kurt on choosing the illustrating artwork, to write the accompanying captions, and to shoehorn a few words into the narrative where it seemed appropriate. We commence with...*

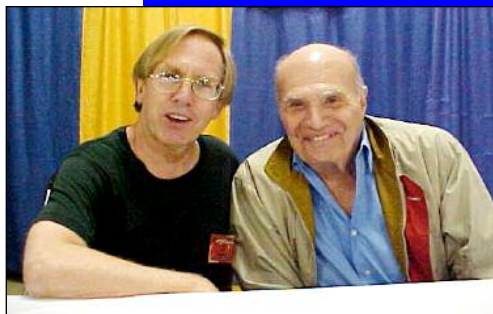


THE FLASH

It all started with the Fastest Man Alive.

The Golden Age Flash was the first Earth-Two super-hero that readers of the late 1950s would meet. Middle-aged, married, a respected research chemist and businessman, Jay Garrick was the very picture of contented domesticity, his days as a costumed crimefighter behind him. Yet it took only a nudge from his young Earth-One counterpart in *The Flash* #123 (Sept. 1961) to bring the original Scarlet Speedster out of retirement, beginning a chain of events that over the next two years would lead to the return of the entire Justice Society of America.

Hawkman may have been chairman of the JSA, but The Flash was its heart: ever the most amiable of



Carmine Of Two Worlds

Back on our contents page, we promised you the full story behind this issue's cosmic cover, and here it is: As you surely already know, Carmine Infantino (on the right in the photo below) penciled the cover of the very first full-fledged Earth-Two tale ("Flash of Two Worlds" in 1961's *The Flash* #123)—so we truly feel honored that, though he draws very little nowadays, this legendary artist consented to pencil a multi-hero version of that classic illustration for this mag.

'Twas tricky for Ye Ed to decide precisely *whom* to depict on the opposite sides of that brick wall. The Silver Age Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Atom were inevitable on the "Earth-One" side—with The Spectre added because he was the final Earth-Two hero to be revived as a solo star, in one form or another, by editor Julius Schwartz. (Besides, the Ghostly Guardian would have no trouble crisscrossing between those twin worlds.)

On the other side, just as inevitably, are the E2 Flash and Green Lantern—and, though the E2 Hawkman would've been visually repetitious, the Golden Age Atom would've fit in, certainly—but we asked Carmine instead to show the E2 Superman and Wonder Woman, each of whom starred for a time in a solo series set in that world.

As for the substitution of Julie Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox for that single, faceless, falling-girder-menaced workman on the cover of *Flash* #123—that, too, was a natural choice! Thanks, Carmine—and Roy, who's been a major Infantino fan since that July 1956 day he purchased *Showcase* #4 at Fulenweider's Drugstore in Jackson, Missouri, will always treasure your original pencils (seen above) for the drawing, which now hang proudly on a wall in the Thomases' home. [Heroes TM & ©2010 DC Comics; other art ©2010 Carmine Infantino.]

Oh—and the photo, taken a few years back at a comics convention in New York City, shows Carmine and Roy talking over those 1960s-70s days when they were respectfully competing on the newsstand. Our thanks to the picture-taker, whose name somehow got detached from the scan.

mystery-men, his level head and gentle sense of humor anchored the group through all its Silver and Bronze Age incarnations. Perhaps that explains why, compared to virtually all his teammates, there were no life-changing events or big emotional upheavals visited on him by the creative personnel who handled the character during those years. Aside from his revealing his secret identity to the public in the mid-'70s (an event first mentioned in the 1978 *Flash Spectacular*, a.k.a. *DC Special Series* #11), the E2 Flash of 1986 was the same centered presence he had been at his reintroduction in 1961.

One of the hero's greatest contributions to E2 lore was his rogues' gallery, including The Fiddler, The Shade, The Thinker (all reintroduced in *The Flash* #123), The Turtle (*Flash* #201), The Rag Doll (*Flash* #229), The Thorn (*All-Star Comics* #72), and even *Flash Comics* #1's Sieur Satan (*All-Star Squadron Annual* #3).

Surprisingly, despite his recurrent appearances in *The Flash* and in the annual JLA/JSA crossovers in *Justice League of America*, Jay Garrick got only one shot at solo stardom: a back-up story in *The Flash* #201 (Nov. 1970) by Robert Kanigher and Murphy Anderson which established Garrick's fear that age was eroding his super-speed, a theme touched on in

later appearances but never allowed to overwhelm either hero or story.

Such matters were irrelevant to The Flash's many appearances in which he was depicted in his Golden Age prime, notably in *DC Special* #29's "JSA" origin (Aug.-Sept. 1977), a two-part team-up with the Amazing Amazon in *Wonder Woman* #239-40 (Jan.-Feb. 1978) during which he posed as his own Nazi counterpart, and throughout the run of the World War II-set *All-Star Squadron*, which featured a one-sided rivalry between Flash and his insecure Squadron teammate Johnny Quick. He would continue to be a major player with the JSA throughout the back-to-back-to-back traumas of *America vs. the Justice Society*, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and *Last Days of the Justice Society Special*, surviving the eradication of Earth-Two only to be exiled, along with the rest of the JSA, to a Ragnarokian realm to help forestall the Twilight of the Gods, never to return.

"Never" lasted all of six years. The JSA returned in 1992's *Armageddon Inferno* mini-series. The Scarlet Speedster has remained a mainstay of the DC Universe ever since, as both elder statesman of a reinvigorated JSA and as avuncular mentor to Wally West, the post-*Crisis* Flash. It looks as though the Golden Age Flash has many more miles of road left to run....



Note Infantino's autograph on the cover of Bob Bailey's copy of *The Flash* #123. [©2010 DC Comics.]

THE FLASH #123 (Sept. 1961)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: "Flash of Two Worlds!"
– 25 pp.

WRITER: Gardner Fox

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Joe Giella (i)

SYNOPSIS: The E1 Flash accidentally vibrates himself into a parallel universe, where Jay Garrick, the 1940s Flash, lives in retirement. The speedsters team up to capture E2 villains The Fiddler, The Shade, and The Thinker. Jay decides to resume his Flash career.

NOTE:

- Jay Garrick is married to his Golden Age girlfriend, Joan Williams, and heads Garrick Laboratories, a chemical research company.

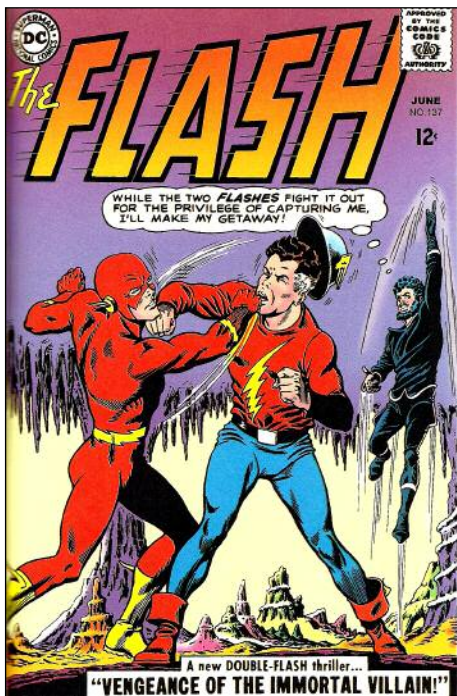


Crass Reunion

(Right:) Three of the 1940s Flash's primo foes returned in *The Flash* #123. (Left to right:) The Thinker, The Fiddler, and The Shade. Thanks to Bob Bailey [©2010 DC Comics.]



#129. Thanks to Betty Dobson. [©2010 DC Comics.]



#137. [©2010 DC Comics.]

THE FLASH #137

(June 1963)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: “Vengeance of the Immortal Villain!”

WRITER: Gardner Fox

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Joe Giella (i)

JSA GUEST STARS: The Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Johnny Thunder, Wonder Woman

THE FLASH #129

(June 1962)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: “Double Danger on Earth!” – 25 pp.

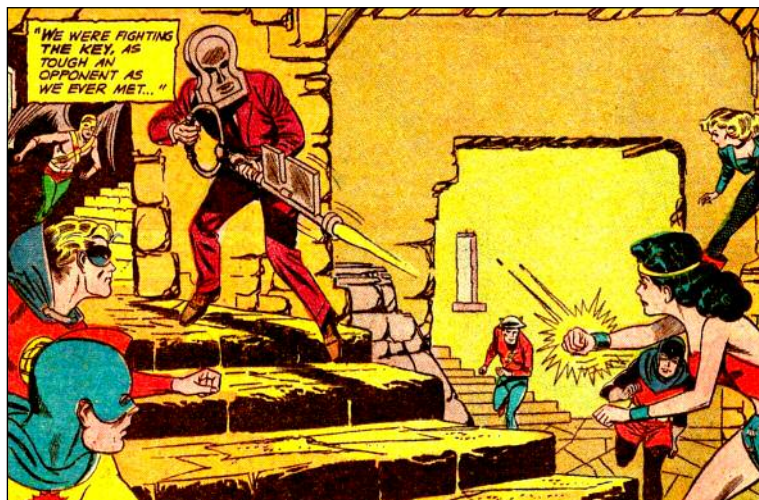
WRITER: Gardner Fox

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Joe Giella (i)

JSA GUEST STARS: The Atom, Black Canary, Dr. Mid-Nite, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Wonder Woman, in flashback to *All-Star Comics* #57

A Key Scene

(Right:) In #129's Flash-back to the events of *All-Star Comics* #57, the villain known as The Key was depicted in the symbolic mask shown on the 1951 mag's splash page. He wore no mask in the story itself. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2010 DC Comics.]



While The Flash Is Away...

In *The Flash* #137, Wonder Woman suggested the JSA come out of retirement. [©2010 DC Comics.]

SYNOPSIS: Vandal Savage captures six retired JSAers. He forces the two Flashes to battle each other, but eventually they free their comrades and apprehend the 50,000-year-old villain. The JSA decide to come out of retirement.

NOTES:

- Vandal Savage debuted in *Green Lantern* #10 (Winter 1943).
- Savage traps Johnny Thunder rather than Black Canary, probably because he recalls JT

SYNOPSIS: A comet strikes Earth-Two's sun, unleashing a wave of deadly epsilon radiation. The E2 Flash travels to E1 to obtain a meteor whose chemical composition neutralizes epsilon rays. With his counterpart's help, and despite the interference of Captain Cold and The Trickster, Flash returns with the meteor in time to save his world.

NOTE:

- The E2 Flash utilizes an interdimensional matter transporter in this story, the first use of what would be labeled “transmatter” technology in *Justice League of America* #107.

from *All-Star Comics* #37, while he'd never encountered the Canary.

- Hawkman wears his winged helmet rather than his later cowl-mask, though it's colored totally yellow rather than orange-and-yellow. (But at least the colorist rendered JT's bowtie yellow, instead of “Jimmy Olsen red” in the manner of many later colorists!)



#151. Thanks to the Grand Comics Database; see p. 68 for details. [©2010 DC Comics.]

THE FLASH #151

(March 1965)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: "Invader from the Dark Dimension" – 25 pp.

WRITER: Gardner Fox

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Joe Giella (i)

SYNOPSIS: A rash of thefts committed by shadow creatures leads the E1 Flash to E2, where The Shade has been on a spending spree since allegedly going straight. With the aid of his E2 counterpart, Flash captures Shade and returns him to E1 for trial.

THE FLASH #170

(May 1967)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: "The See-Nothing Spells of Abra Kadabra" – 23 pp.

WRITER: Gardner Fox

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Sid Greene (i)

JSA GUEST STARS: Dr. Fate, Dr. Mid-Nite

SYNOPSIS: Abra Kadabra's spell renders The Flash incapable of seeing, hearing, or otherwise perceiving criminals in action. Dr. Fate, Dr. Mid-Nite, and the E2 Flash secretly deal with the ignored crimes until they can trick Abra into lifting the spell.



Flashes Of Two Worlds—Doctors Of Two Hospital Wards

For the first time in the annals of E2 "Flash" stories, the original Fastest Man Alive wasn't seen (or even mentioned) on the cover of *The Flash* #170—but that didn't stop Drs. Fate and Mid-Nite from showing up to keep the Flashes of two worlds company. [©2010 DC Comics.]

THE FLASH #173

(Sept. 1967)

COVER: Carmine Infantino (p) & Murphy Anderson (i)

STORY: "Doomward Flight of the Flashes!" – 23 pp.

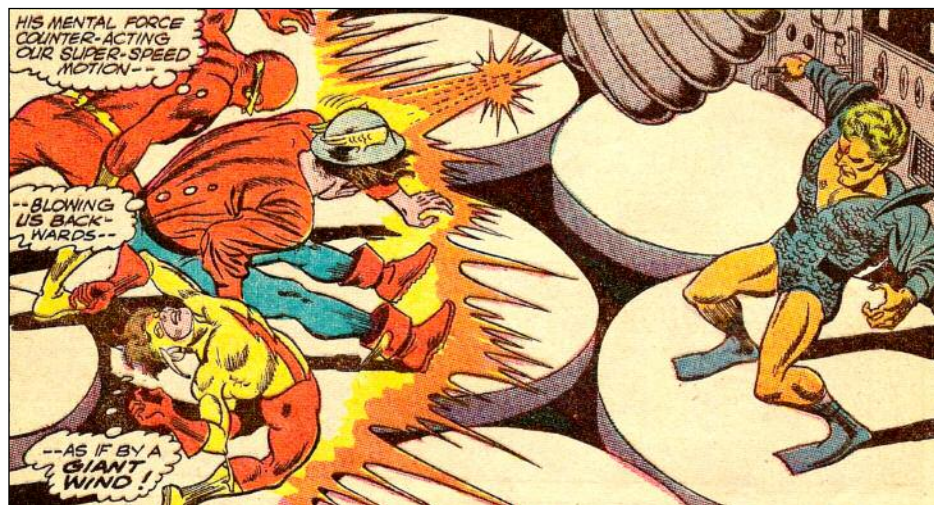
WRITER: John Broome

ARTISTS: Carmine Infantino (p) & Sid Greene (i)

SYNOPSIS: The Golden Man of the planet Vorvan captures the E1 Flash to power the genetic accelerator that will turn prehistoric Vorvanians into mutants like himself. When Flash fakes his own death, Golden Man snares Kid Flash and the E2 Flash as replacements. He triggers the accelerator but, thanks to Jay's extradimensional vibes, it devolves the mutant into a caveman.



#173. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2010 DC Comics.]



Three To Get Clobbered...

All three Flashes (including the Kid) couldn't stop the Golden Man—at least for the moment—in issue #173. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2010 DC Comics.]

“I Graduated From Plato And Aristotle To Superman And Batman”

DC Golden/Silver Age Editor GEORGE KASHDAN Rattles A Few Skeletons In The DC Closet

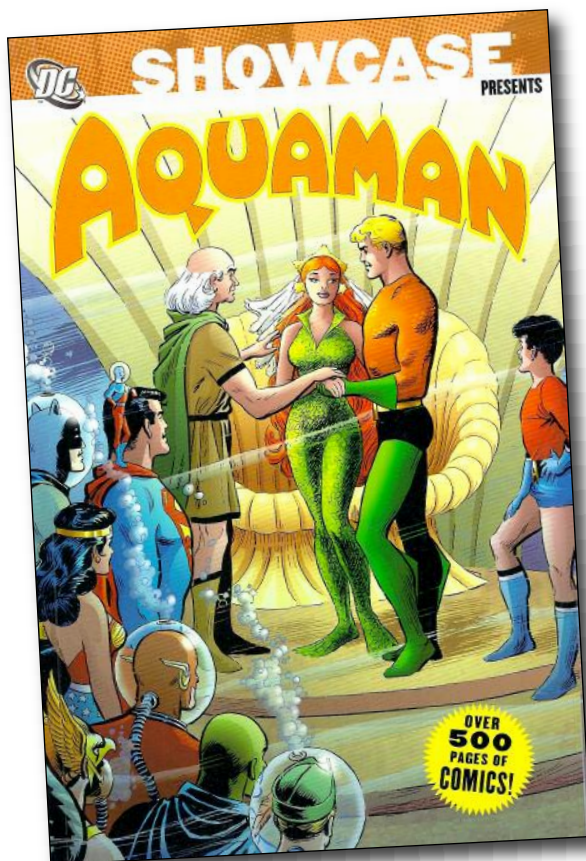
Interview Conducted by Jim Amash

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

George Kashdan (1928-2006) was a writer and editor for DC Comics from 1947 until sometime in the 1970s, and finished his comic book career with Western Publishing. At both companies, he dealt with many major DC characters, including Batman, Superman, Tomahawk, Blackhawk, Aquaman, Green Arrow, Teen Titans, Sea Devils, and Metamorpho, among others. When some of those DC heroes became Saturday morning cartoon features, George also wrote them for Filmation.

While many Golden and Silver editors have given interviews over the course of time, George was the only one who really opened up about what it was like to work in the DC offices. His takes on many of the people with whom he worked are surprisingly blunt, and, at times, unflattering. Originally, he was a bit hesitant to talk about individual personalities in detail; but when former DC romance editor Phyllis Reed passed away during the course of my interviewing him, he changed his mind. What he tried to do was to give me an honest look into the

private side of those who made the comics. I know he held back some stories from me, as was his right, but I also know that, as the sole surviving DC editor of his era, he felt a moral responsibility to relate—from his point of view—an honest oral history of the company and the people whom he knew. As I was listening to him telling these stories, I seldom detected malice in his voice. Some of his observations may lead you to think otherwise, because we can't reproduce vocal inflection with cold type. But I got to know him well in his final days, and I never thought he was settling old scores or wanting to hurt anyone. I asked him for honest assessments, and he did his best to co-operate.



“Do You, Mera, Take This Aquaman...?”

George Kashdan (right), in a driver's-license photo circa the 1980s... and the cover of *Showcase Presents Aquaman, Vol. 2* (2008). All or nearly all of the stories in that 528-page volume were edited by George between 1962 and '65. At various times, he also wrote and/or edited the four-color adventures of several other DC heroes depicted by Nick Cardy in this cover drawing done for *Aquaman* #18 (Nov.-Dec. 1964), including Superman, Batman, Hawkman, and Green Arrow. [Aquaman art ©2010 DC Comics.]

It was not easy for George to do this. He was a bedridden stroke victim, paralyzed on his left side, who often had trouble formulating words and phrases. At many times he spoke haltingly, with long pauses between words and sentences, which led to occasional disjointedness in his answers, as he pushed his mind and body to talk to me. We did this interview over the course of many sessions—some as short as three minutes. George called me as often as I called him. “We need to finish this. It's important that I tell these stories so the history won't be lost,” he said more than once, believing he was going to get better, but fearing death was around the corner. “I suppose some of what I say may not sit well with some people, but this is how I saw it.” —Jim.

“The Opportunity To Write Comics Presented Itself”

JIM AMASH: When and where were you born, George?

GEORGE KASHDAN: In the Bronx, New York City, on May 1928.

JA: Did you buy comics as a kid?

KASHDAN: Oh, yes. I liked “Superman” very much, and “Batman.”

JA: In 1941, you were a prize-winner in a Superman contest. Tell me about it.

KASHDAN: It was a matter of taking some pictures of

Superman in *Action* [Comics], and giving them titles. I won a hundred-dollar Bond.

JA: Did you grow up wanting to be a writer?

KASHDAN: Oh, yes. My progress took many unexpected turns. When I was at the University of Chicago, I did a lot of heavy reading in Philosophy in my courses. It was a very humanistic education. I got a Bachelor of Arts degree with a heavy Liberal Arts background. So you might say I graduated from Plato and Aristotle to Superman and Batman. My plan when I went to college was to be a writer. I began writing short stories, and then the opportunity to write comics presented itself. You might say I was an old childhood fan. When I got home from college in 1947, my brother Bernie, who worked in the business department of National Comics Publications—back then, they were called Detective Comics, Inc.—Bernie told me that he heard the editors needed more writers. “Why don’t you come down and talk things over with them? So I came in and met Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff. Mort hired me as a freelance writer. The first script I wrote was for “Zatara.” When I started at DC, I had been an editor/writer for a trade paper in the liquor industry called *The Beverage Times*, and I wasn’t happy there. It seemed like a dead-end.

JA: Did you have to submit a written plot first?

KASHDAN: A brief synopsis was first submitted. Back in those days, if an editor liked an idea, he sat and chatted with the writer about it, and out of that came a good verbal storyline. That would be an assignment. I’d go home and write a script. Every editor at DC worked this way. After “Zatara,” I went on to other characters like “Captain Compass,” and “Aquaman.” “Captain Compass” was really more of a filler, to give a book the look of variety. I subsequently graduated to “Superman” and “Batman.”

JA: When you wrote these series, were you the regular writer on these assignments?



Did They Let Two Georges Do It?

George Kashdan had no memory of ever writing “The Shining Knight,” “Johnny Quick,” or “Boy Commandos,” but he does recall scripting “Green Arrow” in the ‘50s. Here’s a George Papp-drawn splash from *Adventure Comics* #153 (June 1950) with no writer attributed by the GCD—so who knows? [©2010 DC Comics.]



Three To Get Ready...

We’ve printed this early-’40s photo before, but how else to depict a trio of major early DC editors in one fell swoop? (Left to right:) Mort Weisinger, Bernie Breslauer, & (seated) Jack Schiff. Comics historian Joe Desris, who supplied this pic, says it was probably taken at the offices of the Thrilling/Better pulp-mag group, where all three worked before migrating into comics.

KASHDAN: In those days, there were no “regular writers” on series, as you put it. We were part of the writing crew. If an editor needed a story, like Jack Schiff, then he’d have me write some “Tomahawk” stories. When I first started writing, I thought I’d like to write “Superman,” which I did get to do.

JA: You also wrote “The Shining Knight”—and I have you in 1947 and ‘48 writing “The Boy Commandos,” “Vigilante,” and “Johnny Quick.” Do you remember doing any of those?

KASHDAN: I remember “The Shining Knight,” but I don’t think I wrote the feature. “Green Arrow” was a series I wrote in the 1950s, though I wasn’t what you’d call the regular writer. I don’t recall writing any of the others.

“I Moved Into [Bernie Breslauer’s] Desk”

JA: Were Mort and Jack Schiff co-editing the books?

KASHDAN: Basically, yes. Co-editing meant Jack might fill up one of his books, and then he’d call out to Mort, “Hey, Mort! I need a ‘Green Arrow’ story to close the book,” and Mort would get him a “Green Arrow” story. Or Jack and I would buy a “Green Arrow” from someone else, or Jack might tell me to bring in some plots for “Green Arrow,” and then I’d write the story. Both editors handled the art, and would work with the artists of the story that he purchased.

JA: At the time you started there, would you consider them to have been equals in terms of rank?

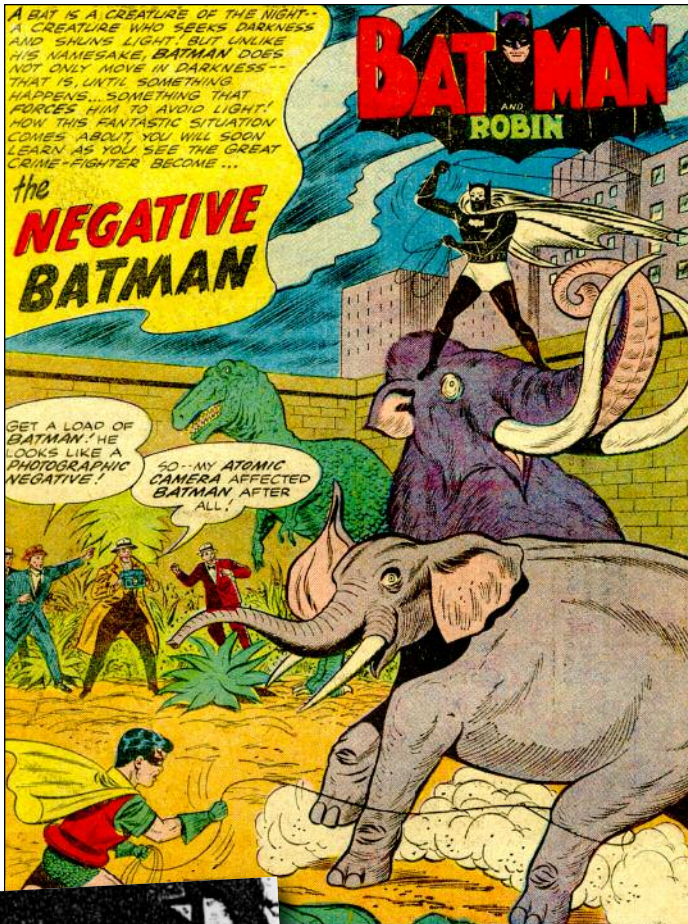
KASHDAN: Jack Schiff was basically the managing editor of all the books, but he still had responsibility to get out a few of them on his own. When I say “managing editor,” he didn’t have any veto power.

JA: Did they have assistant editors when you started?

KASHDAN: No. I became one.

JA: How long were you a freelance writer before you became an assistant editor?

KASHDAN: I’d say about two years. There was a small emergency there. One of the editors with whom I had worked was Bernie Breslauer. He was a very nice man, an Old World gentleman. He was in the hospital briefly,



KASHDAN: Whitney was in charge of all the books. He was in charge of the office and rules of behavior. He often came in to participate in conferences, like a cover conference. We all did things like that. [Everybody basically answered to Ellsworth], but he gave us a pretty free hand.

JA: *Would all the editors get together to discuss the covers?*

KASHDAN: Only the group in our unit. There was Mort, Jack, and I, and Murray Boltinoff. We might sit around: "How about a cover showing Superman swooping out under a tank and lifting it off into the air?" [After a while, we'd come up with an idea for the artist.] The other editors were not involved in our books in an editorial way.

JA: *Who would assign the artists to the covers? Sometimes Win Mortimer would do a "Superman" cover, sometimes Wayne Boring.*

KASHDAN: We had a bunch of old pros there [to draw the covers]. Mort and Jack made cover decisions for their books. Often, for "Batman," Bob Kane did it and we had inkers on that. We had one of the best inkers in the business, a man named Charlie Paris.

"DC Needed A Strong Guiding Hand, Which Whitney [Ellsworth] Provided"

JA: *So Ellsworth wouldn't interfere with what anybody was doing unless he had a real problem with something?*

KASHDAN: That would be correct. People got along with Whit, although I was unhappy about his drinking problems. He had a great sense of humor. If there was a problem, he would do his best to help solve it. He was in the office every day until he went out to Hollywood to work on *The Adventures of Superman* television show. He built a career for himself out there.

JA: *In the late '40s up until the late '50s, his name was the only one listed in the indicia as the editor.*

KASHDAN: I wouldn't know why that was. But he came in and set the policy. I know while World War II was on, he went along with requests of government agencies to show the Japanese as ugly, evil monsters, and showing them like bug-eyed monsters. I think he was very happy to do that.

JA: *I'd never heard that was a request by our government. Did it bother the other editors that Ellsworth's name was on a book that they edited? For instance, Mort was editing the "Superman" books, but it was Whitney Ellsworth's name listed as editor, and I was curious if that bothered Mort.*

KASHDAN: Well, Mort had a big ego involvement in his work, and he demanded to be given the "Superman" books as his own baby. When he finally got that, the Ellsworth name disappeared. [NOTE: George was right that Weisinger demanded sole control of the "Superman" books, but he is in error regarding the credits of Ellsworth and Weisinger, because Mort was in charge of the "Superman" titles long before he was listed as editor in their indicia. —Jim.] But there wasn't any resentment. DC needed a strong guiding hand, which Whitney provided.

JA: *So you wouldn't classify him as an autocratic type of editor-in-chief.*

KASHDAN: No, he wasn't autocratic. [Mort Weisinger] was rather autocratic with the



The Dynamic Trio
DC editor Murray Boltinoff (photo supplied by P.C. Hamerlinck)—and the "Batman" splash page from *Detective Comics* #284, (Oct. 1960). The indicia lists Jack Schiff as editor, with Murray Boltinoff and George Kashdan as associate editors. Scripter uncertain; art by Sheldon Moldoff. [Page ©2010 DC Comics.]

and Mort called me. He said, "Hey, we need an editor here." Bernie came back, and I remained, basically as a copy editor. I wasn't buying stories or giving

out plots, or giving out assignments of any sort. Bernie died a year or two later, I guess—around 1950. I moved into his desk. Bernie had been editing some of the other characters: "Green Arrow," "Green Lantern," and he bought some stories for "Aquaman." [NOTE: Off tape, George said he probably was in editorial as an assistant/copy editor by 1949, but he wasn't fully integrated into full assistant editor until Breslauer was unable to work any longer. Of course, after the turn of 1949, there'd been no more solo "GL" stories for anyone to edit—and through 1948 the "GL" editor had been Sheldon Mayer, with Julius Schwartz perhaps briefly succeeding him right before Green Lantern was cancelled. —Jim.]

JA: *So Breslauer was editing features, but not necessarily whole books?*

KASHDAN: I'd say that's right. He was a patient and encouraging man; very quiet, very intellectual and scholarly. Many writers enjoyed working for him. He had a bad heart. It finally destroyed him.

JA: *You said Jack Schiff was the managing editor. What was Whitney Ellsworth doing?*



A Place In The (Red?) Sun
DC's managing editor Whitney Ellsworth—probably during the Hollywood years of the 1950s.

writers and artists. I got along well with Mort. I used to tell him to take it easy on so-and-so, don't insult this writer or that writer.

JA: *Would he take your advice?*

KASHDAN: Sometimes he did.

JA: *There's a story that someone tried to throw Mort out a window. Do you know if that's a true story?*

KASHDAN: I think that was David Vern, who was one of our writers. He was fooling around, not really trying to push him out. Mort screamed for help, and some of us ran over and tore Dave away from him.

JA: *I know someone tried to do the same thing to Kanigher.*

KASHDAN: Kanigher owed Vern payment for a story, and told Vern he's not paying him. Kanigher used to do that sort of thing. He would withhold money and say, "I'll give you a check when you fix the dialogue in that panel." And Vern said, "I want my payment! Don't you give me that crap!" And he grabbed Kanigher in a bear hug, pinning his arms to his side. He said, "If you don't give me a check, you're going out that window!" It was an open window in the old offices. Kanigher said, "All right, let go of me. Give me time and I'll give you that check." And the story went around the office. Kanigher came into our room, telling Mort, Murray, and me, "I fully expect David Vern to end his life in an insane asylum." [NOTE: *This incident was not the only one involving Bob Kanigher. Another artist did the same thing to him, and was talked into putting him down by Julie Schwartz. When I asked Julie about it, he denied this had happened, but the man who tried to throw Kanigher out the window insisted that Julie was there, along with a couple of other people. Julie finally said to me, "Aw, it's not important," so I suspect he just didn't want to tell a tale out of school. Because of promises made to the artist who admitted to the encounter, and to an eyewitness to the event, I cannot at this time reveal who that man was. —Jim.] Bob had an ego problem, but he had a sense of fairness. He used to edit romance stories, and bought a few from me.*



Kanigher & Crew

(Above—from left to right:) DC editor/writer Robert Kanigher, writer Cary Burkett, and writer/artist/letterer Morris Waldinger enjoy an outing, probably in the 1970s. Thanks to Bob Rozakis.

(Right:) Beside writing for comics he himself edited, such as *Wonder Woman*, *Metal Men*, and the war titles, Kanigher also scripted for other DC editors—such as this "Viking Prince" epic, originally from *The Brave and the Bold* #14 (Oct.-Nov. 1957), edited by Julius Schwartz. The credits were added for its reprinting in *The Best of The Brave and the Bold* #5 (1988). [©2010 DC Comics.]

JA: *How heavily involved was he in the plotting?*

KASHDAN: He only came up with helpful suggestions. And he didn't heavily edit my scripts.

JA: *Did any of the other editors heavily edit final scripts?*

KASHDAN: Many of them gave me scripts to edit. I did what was necessary to make sure that it moved, that the transitions were smooth, and the dialogue was clear and not too heavy. You know, writing for the comics was a skill that needed specific dialogue. Dialogue balloons had to be short, terse, and understandable. We were told to use small words, and they had silly fears about words that could be considered dirty language.

JA: *Did you deal with the artists at all when you became an assistant editor?*

KASHDAN: Sometimes, if an artist made a mistake, we would point it out to him. Like once, when I was editing *Aquaman*, which was drawn by Nick Cardy, there was a panel or two in which Aquaman was leading his fish army against an enemy. I had to tell Nick, "Make this fish army more formidable-looking. Show some swordfish and sharks." He'd take it home with him and make the change. The same sort of thing was true of "Superman." If Superman was racing around, beating up, catching crooks, we'd sometimes say, "Show bullets bouncing off him."

JA: *Since you were an assistant and not a full editor, did Mort and Jack treat you like a junior partner, or like an equal?*

KASHDAN: Oh, there were times when I felt I was kind-of being treated like the boy wonder. Now I'm an old man. [mutual chuckling] Mort and Jack were old friends. Their experience harkened back to the glorious days of pulp magazines. Jack began his writing career as an author of pulp



fiction, and they all had memories of some of the famous names of pulp fiction, like Cornell Woolrich. They used to talk about the old days.

"Jack [Schiff] Was Very Much Involved In Politics"

JA: What was Jack Schiff like? Arnold Drake described him as DC's "house radical" because of his political opinions.

KASHDAN: Schiff was a high-strung man; excitable. Jack was very much involved in politics. I wouldn't have gone so far as to call him the "house radical"

JA: I think the implication was that he leaned so far to the left in his politics, that some people accused him of being Communistic.

KASHDAN: Jack had very strong opinions, and he and many of the writers argued about "Who are you voting for? Why are you voting for so-and-so?" But Jack would research a man's background and his history as a politician. He was always well-informed. Whenever he had an opinion, he expressed it.

JA: Someone once described him as "Schiff on skates," because he'd go from one place to another place to another place to another place.

KASHDAN: Oh, he was all over the place. Jack kept himself in shape, and even invited me to bowl with him on some lunch hours.

JA: He seemed to have gotten along with most of the people who worked for him.

KASHDAN: He got along well with them. A lot of them couldn't take his high-strung behavior. He was quiet when he was working. Arnold Drake wrote for him and they got along well. Jack believed in giving the writer his head of steam, and once the story was plotted, let's see what he comes up with. Jack had confidence in his writers, more so than Mort did.

JA: Schiff was the one who did those one-page public service ads for DC.

KASHDAN: Jack enjoyed doing them. I think maybe Whitney Ellsworth was queried on it, and he said, "Why don't you talk to Jack Schiff? He might be interested," which was an understatement. [laughs] Jack was interested.

JA: I'm under the impression that Jack Schiff was a very compassionate type of person.

KASHDAN: Yes, he was. He was always getting writers out of trouble with their wives, and with bill collectors.

"Bill [Finger] Would Be... Begging For An Advance"

JA: You mean like Bill Finger?

KASHDAN: Yeah, Finger. He certainly did [have those troubles]. He spent a lot of money. One afternoon, he sat down with Whitney Ellsworth, who said, "Okay, Bill. Let's see your bills. We'll help you pay them off. You've got to come in, and write your stories. Don't ask for advances." And Bill said, "Yeah, yeah, okay." They went down the list, and one bill was for a set of golf clubs—one of the higher-priced ones—for four to five hundred dollars, and a suit from one of the fancy men's stores. Bill had no concept of saving money when you try to buy something. So DC paid it off, and then Bill would be in there, begging for an advance, which he promised never to do.

JA: Would he get the advance?

KASHDAN: He might, yes. Or sometimes, Schiff would say to him, "No,



When Career Choices Were All That Smallville Had To Worry About

A "Superboy" public service page from mid-1950—probably scripted by Jack Schiff. Art by Winslow Mortimer. [©2010 DC Comics.]

Bill. Bring in a piece of that story, and maybe I'll give you an advance." He and Finger would get into fierce arguments about money. Bill became annoying to all of us. He was a very unhappy man. His first marriage, to Portia, was a bomb. They got divorced, and reached an alimony agreement. One of his problems was getting enough money to pay her alimony. Afterwards, Bill had a live-in girlfriend, and talked about marrying her. He was always arguing with her. Sometimes, he'd get on the phone and call her, and there'd be a real screaming match. But we kept our noses out of his business.

JA: So he sounds like he was a little bit of an argumentative person.

KASHDAN: Not over stories. When he plotted a story and you told him, "Look, I don't think this thing is working. Why don't you change the sequence here, and bring in such-and-such a character?" he would say, "Yeah, yeah. Good idea. Thank you." He'd do it, but it sometimes took him six months or so.

JA: Why was he such a slow writer?

KASHDAN: He was always getting himself involved in things, like when he had a date with a woman.

JA: So he would ignore his deadlines.

KASHDAN: He often did.

JA: Did you think he was a good writer?

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

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Thanks to Keith Barber.]

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“Who Reads The Magazine Comics?”

Fawcett’s Mid-’40s Research Of Readers

by P.C. Hamerlinck

Largest Circulation of Any Comic Magazine” was distinctly proclaimed on *Captain Marvel Adventures* cover corner logos during much of the 1940s. That somewhat accurate spatter of hyperbole was orchestrated by Fawcett Publication’s circulation manager, Roscoe K. Fawcett.

It was twelve years ago on a crisp autumn Saturday afternoon. I found myself in the den of Captain Billy’s youngest son, thumbing through his mass collection of bound volumes of ancient inter-company marketing magazines and brochures, such as *Fawcett Distributor* and others. Roscoe pointed out to me in the periodicals various sales charts, research studies, and circulation figures—all with a gleaming sense of pride and accomplishment.

Like the publications shown to me by Roscoe, another analogous Fawcett *objet d’art* was unearthed last year in a Hake’s Americana auction. Entitled *Who Reads the Magazine Comics?* (they’re never referred to as “comic books” in the investigation), the red-plastic comb-bound, 36-page, duo-colored booklet delineates a study presented by Fawcett’s Market Research Department, dated January 1944. The special publication’s exclusive illustrations and charts are drawn by none other than Captain Marvel co-creator and chief artist C.C. Beck.

On the front cover, Beck depicted a large, diverse group of children and adults gathered together to read a giant copy of *Captain Marvel Adventures* #33 (March 1944). The booklet opens with a Beck one-page specialty strip (“Captain Marvel Turns Research Expert and Finds Out Who Reads the Comics”), in which the World’s Mightiest Mortal pays a visit to the Fawcett Publications and the office of advertising director Elliot Odell. (Those of us ardent enough to have studied the indicia inside Fawcett’s comic books—that postal paragraph at the bottom of the first printed page, or sometimes the inside front cover—will be familiar with Odell’s name.) Cap, while holding issues of *Whiz Comics* and *Captain Marvel Adventures*, cites the numerous Captain Marvel Clubs nationwide, and



[Shazam hero TM & ©2010 DC Comics.]

hankers to know just “who reads the comics?” before Odell sends him out with questionnaires to find out the answer.

The extremely limited-distributed booklet goes on to include a survey revealing that a staggering 72% of homes at the time were filled with comic book readers. Further findings are broken down according to age groups, sex, and by readers in the armed forces. The heavily researched study also divulges the averages of comic books read per month, the economic status of readers, their education, employment, and so forth.

Beck’s lucid layouts and chirpy specialty spot drawings of Captain Marvel exhibit the content in a hearty manner—with scenes of Cap filling out surveys and watching young fellows trade comic magazines... all during his mission to learn who’s reading the scores of four-colored narratives.

Roscoe In Full Accord

Joe Katzev, owner of the Sunset News Co., Los Angeles, looks over an array of Fawcett product (including *Magazine Digest*, *Motion Picture*, and *True Confessions*) with Fawcett Publications’ Vice President and Circulation Director Roscoe K. Fawcett, in a photo from *Fawcett Distributor* (“Published in the Interest of Independent Magazine Wholesalers and Dealers”), Sept. 1944 issue. FGA editor P.C. Hamerlinck visited and interviewed Roscoe Fawcett in 1998 (a year before his death), where he perused bound volumes of *Fawcett Distributor* in Mr. Fawcett’s library. When this snapshot was taken, Roscoe had just transferred to the West Coast from previously being stationed at Camp Stewart, Georgia, during World War II.





[Shazam hero TM & ©2010 DC Comics.]

Captain Marvel Turns Research Expert

Captain Marvel shows up one day at Fawcett Publications and heads up to the office of Fawcett's advertising director, Elliot Odell.

“Well, well! Captain Marvel, in person!” says the surprised man seated at his desk. “What’s on your mind, Cap?”

Captain Marvel gets right to the point. “I want your help on a problem, Mr. Odell.”

“What?” asks the flabbergasted Fawcett executive. “Captain Marvel, the World’s Mightiest Mortal, coming to *me* for help? What’s your problem, Cap?”

As Captain Marvel holds up issues of *Whiz Comics* and *Captain Marvel Adventures*, he articulates his dilemma: “My problem, Mr. Odell, is ... for several years, I’ve been featured in these Fawcett comics magazines that you folks print by the millions each month! I get tons of fan letters and know all about the Captain Marvel Clubs all over the country and their hundreds of thousands of members! But that’s not enough! What I really want to know is - *who reads the comics?*?”

“That’s a fair question, Captain Marvel!” concurs Odell. “As a matter of fact, we’ve been wondering the same thing and are just about to start a survey!” Odell rings for his secretary, Polly, and asks her to “get Captain Marvel those questionnaires we had printed up.”

The advertising director hands Cap a large stack of papers. “Now, Captain Marvel, you take these questionnaires with you and fly all over the country and interview all kinds of people! Then bring them back here and we’ll have the answer to your question ...”

Odell wishes Captain Marvel “good luck” as our hero flies out of the

office window with a heap of questionnaires tucked under his arm. The one-page introductory strip concludes with a caption: “The following pages show the results obtained through personal interviews with 5,030 people in all walks of life and contain authoritative data on the amazing readership of the comics!”

Purpose Of Study

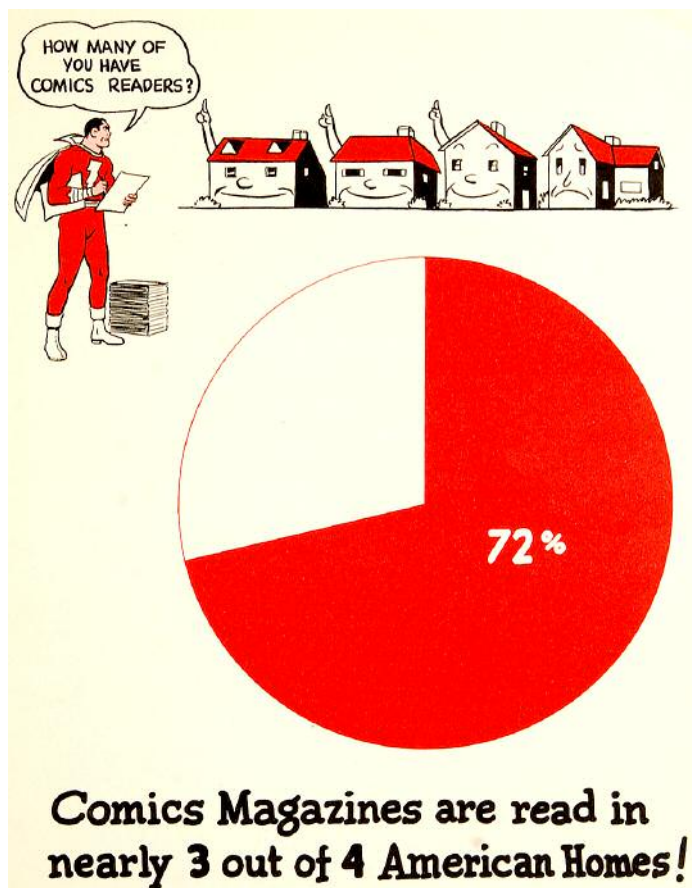
As Captain Marvel begins his journey, the purpose of the study is defined: “Working with the Market Research Company of America, Captain Marvel set out to learn all he could about who reads magazine comics ... how many they read a month ... how education, economic status, city size and other factors affect comics readership ... how many people read each copy, and any other pertinent information that would help him—and you—to know more about magazine comics fans ... not just his own ... but all magazine comics fans! Here’s what he found out ...”



Home Readership

Captain Marvel strolls through neighborhoods and asks each American household how many of them have comic readers. The circulation and popularity of comics during the '40s was nothing short of astonishing:

“Of all homes covered, whether with or without children, some 72% or nearly 3 out of 4 have one or more family members who read comic magazines.” Further on, the study shows the influence of children in the home on adult comics readership.





Readership By Age And Sex

Captain Marvel is not kidding above. When readership of comic magazines by age and sex was examined, more eye-opening results were revealed: 95% of all boys and 91% of all girls ages 6 to 11 read comics regularly; 87% of all boys and 81% of all girls ages 12 to 17 read comics regularly. The statistics naturally spiraled downwards a bit for adults, but the numbers were still extraordinary for the 18-to-30-year-old crowd, where 41% of men and 28% of women read comics regularly; the numbers were cut a little over half of that for both men and women 30 years and older. But a whopping 44% of our armed forces read comics on a regular basis.

"Comics magazines appeal to every age, although their appeal decreases slightly with increasing age and women are a little less interested than men. Note that readership among the armed forces coincides with that of their largest comparable civilian age group."

Number Read Per Month

"Did you ever see anything like this! They read them by the carload!" That was Captain Marvel's overstated response to the survey results of the average number of comics magazines read per month. Children 6 to 11 of course led the way, with boys reading 14.1 and girls reading 10.9 comics per month. The numbers were still high for children in the 12 to 17 age group, with boys reading 13.7 and girls reading 11.0 per month. With more men than women in the workforce, allowing fewer opportunities to enjoy comics reading, adults 18 to 30 had more women (8.8) than men (6.5) reading comics per month. A turnaround occurred with adults 30 and over, with men leading the way with 7.5 comics magazines read per month, and women at 5.7 per month. Again, our armed forces showed their great support of the medium, with 7.6 comics read each month.



"The range from which these averages are obtained is wide. 50% of the boys read 10 or less such magazines a month; an additional 25% read between 11 and 15 and another quarter read from 16 up. Similar wide spans were found among other groups, While the average for young women is higher per month than for young men, this is largely due to some extraordinarily high readership in this group."

Economic Status

Captain Marvel receives responses from the wealthy and working class alike (see illo at right) as the influence of economic status on adult comics readership is probed. Low- to mid-range earning households averaged between 15-20% regular comics readers, while mid- to high-range earning households averaged between 25-29% regular comics readers.

"While regular adult readership of magazine comics increases slightly in the lower income groups, occasional readership varies only 2% from high incomes to low."

Influence Of Education

Next, Captain Marvel approaches the smart—and the not-so-smart—to ascertain the influence of education on adult comics readership ... with a rather unforeseen outcome.

At the grammar school level, 25% read comics regularly, while 12% read them occasionally; there was a slight increase at the high school level, with 27% regular readers and 14% occasional readers; but a decline for college students, with just 16% regularly reading comics and 13% occasionally reading them. That figure eventually changed over the ensuing years.



"Educational background has some effect on adult comics readership, but not as much as one might expect. However, it was noted that not only do less college men and women read magazine comics, but they read fewer per month on an average."

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