



A SPECIAL **HUMOR** ISSUE, EXPLORING THE **LIGHTER SIDE OF JACK!**

A **FUNNY** AND **TOUCHING** INTERVIEW WITH JACK'S WIFE **ROSALIND KIRBY**

MCCARTHY IN LONG UNDERWEAR? **FIGHTING AMERICAN**

YOU BEGGED! YOU PLEADED! BUT HE'S STILL IN THIS ISSUE:

GOODY RICKELS

THE CREATOR OF **DESTROYER DUCK** INTERVIEWED:

STEVE GERBER

FANS & PROS TELL **FAVORITE STORIES ABOUT JACK**

FEATURES ON:

KIRBY'S **LOCKJAW**, **THE ALLIGATOR**, **EARL**, **THE RICH RABBIT**, **MY DATE**, **BRAND ECH**, MODERN ART, PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AND MORE!

UNPUBLISHED ART

INCLUDING JACK'S PENCILS FROM **JIMMY OLSEN**, **DESTROYER DUCK** AND **THOR** BEFORE THEY WERE INKED-- AND **MUCH MORE!!**

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ESTATE

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

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JOHN MORROW

DESIGN AND LAYOUT ARE
THE FAULT OF:
JOHN & PAMELA MORROW

PROOFREADING ERRORS WERE MISSED BY:
RICHARD HOWELL

WE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO
BE COLORED THIS ISSUE BY:
TOM ZILKO (HE'S OFF THE HOOK!)

THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS
ARE GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION:

JIM AMASH
TERRY AUSTIN
JERRY BOYD
TOM BREVOORT
LEN CALLO
NICHOLAS CAPUTO
JON B. COOKE
AL CZARNECKI
STUART DEITCHER
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DANNY SERAFIN
SCOTT SHAW!
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JOE SINNOTT
JOHN STANGELAND
JIM STERANKO
GREG THEAKSTON
RICH VITONE
PETER VON SHOLLY
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EREZ YAKIN

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THE FOLLOWING
WERE INVOLVED IN
BEHIND-THE-SCENES
MISCHIEF (FOR
WHICH WE'RE
GRATEFUL):

LEN CALLO
STEVE GERBER
D. HAMBONE
MARC FACELLA
GREG THEAKSTON
& OF COURSE,
ROZ KIRBY.

THE FOLLOWING GOT
A LARGE NUMBER
OF RARER CUTS
WHILE STUFFING
THIS ISSUE
INTO ENVELOPES:

GLEN MUSIAL
ED STELLI
PATRICK VARKER
BOB PERMER
AND ALL THE
OTHER KIRBY FANS
IN RALEIGH, NC.

Jack Kirby '77

WE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE
THIS ISSUE TO THE AMAZING
WOMAN BEHIND THE MAN:

ROSALIND KIRBY

THANKS FOR KEEPING JACK
SO HAPPY (& PRODUCTIVE) ALL
THOSE YEARS, AND FOR
PUTTING UP WITH ALL US FANS.

(Our front cover is the art from a poster
sold in conjunction with Jack's 1979
Masterworks Portfolio.
Shown here are the uninked pencils
from the portfolio's cover.)



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"DON'T ASK! JUST BUY IT!"

THE WACKY WORLD OF JACK KIRBY, CARTOONIST

by Scott Shaw!

The first time I met Jack, I blurted out, "Jack Kirby!?! You're my favorite cartoonist!" And surprisingly, Jack seemed quite pleased to be described by that simple term, usually applied to those of us who write and draw nothing but the funny stuff. I suppose that's because Jack probably saw himself as a cartoonist, too.

Most people tend to think of Jack Kirby in melodramatic superlatives. He's been described as the ultimate comic book artist, a master's master of graphic fiction, an incredibly talented creator of dynamic heroes, dramatic action and cosmic conflicts. Comics aficionados have dubbed him "King" Kirby (a title he wore with some discomfort), and have compared his work to that of Da Vinci, Rembrandt and Rockwell, among other artistic greats. He was, without a doubt, the single most imaginative individual ever to work in the field of comic books. He was equally comfortable working in any of the familiar comic book genres of super-heroics, romance, westerns, science fiction and war, among other dramatic themes. But Jack Kirby was also very *funny* as a writer, as an artist and as a person, and left behind a surprisingly large body of work to prove it.

One of the strangest paradoxes in comics is that most "straight" comic books (in such "realistic" genres as super-heroes, western, romance, war, etc.) are drawn in styles that actually bear almost no resemblance to truly realistic illustration! Yet, many fans (and even editors) of these comics turn up their noses at anything resembling the kind of humorous cartooning sometimes referred to within the business as "big-foot drawing." In my estimation, Jack Kirby's artwork somehow bridges this aesthetic gulf.

Judging by life-drawings that he had done as a young man, Jack had always possessed a natural ability to work in a much more realistic style than that with which he is now usually associated. It appears that the exaggerated and dynamic anatomy, poses, design, composition and



foreshortening that have become such a Kirby trademark may have been the result of a conscious aesthetic decision on Jack's part. One thing is certain, however; once he began his professional career (under a variety

of pen names), no matter what the character or genre, whether the subject was serious or light-hearted, Jack Kirby could only draw like Jack Kirby—and if humorous illustration could be described as an exaggeration of realistic art, then Jack Kirby's humor work is nothing less than an even greater exaggeration of his normally exaggerated style!

Some of Jack's earliest professional work was doing "in-betweening" on the animated *Popeye* shorts at the Max Fleisher Studios. Although he soon tired of the job and left the studio, citing that the work was far less than creatively fulfilling, it's apparent that his experiences at Fleisher's had some influence on him, because one of his early comic strips was *Socko the Seadog*, which was a fairly blatant *Popeye* imitation. But it's likely that this early animation training also had a long-range effect on Jack throughout his six-decade career. Not coincidentally, in the 1980s Jack found himself back where he started, working in the animation field, doing character designs and concept development for Hanna-Barbera and Ruby-Spears Productions (including extremely cartoony designs for H-B's *Scooby Doo* cartoons!). Here are a few notable examples of prime



(left) S&K's movie parody as seen in *From Here To Insanity* #1 (August 1955).
(above) Earl The Rich Rabbit splash page from *Punch & Judy Comics* Vol. 3, #2 (Dec. 1947).

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MY ETCHINGS?"

Rosalind Kirby Interviewed (conducted by John Morrow on December 12, 1995)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: What's your favorite color?

ROSALIND KIRBY: Yellow. I love yellow roses.

TJKC: What's your favorite ice cream flavor?

ROZ: Choc... no, actually, I like cherry jubilee.

TJKC: Wow, that's an interesting choice! So where were you born?



Jack and Roz at home in 1991.

ROZ: I was born in Brooklyn, September 25, 1922. Now you know my age! (laughter)

TJKC: I won't do the math. (laughter) What was your childhood like? Did you grow up in the same kind of neighborhood as Jack?

ROZ: Jack was brought up in the lower east side of

Manhattan, in tenement houses. I was brought up in Brooklyn in small, private homes. But my folks were also very poor, and they had a tough life. My father was a tailor, my mother did a lot of work dress-making and things. I was very ill as a young girl because I had asthma. From age eight I was very sick. I used to sit up at night and help my mother do hand-sewing and I became very good at it. Before I met Jack I was working as a lingerie designer, doing very fine work designing all those pretty things you put on women's lingerie, and laces and things like that. That's why I was able to do inking, because I always used a fine pen and ink for the lace work. Right after I graduated high school, I got the job and did it for a few years.

TJKC: Did the Depression hit your family pretty hard?

ROZ: Well, it didn't have to hit. There was always a depression for us. It was always pretty difficult for my folks. They worked hard all their lives. We moved to so many places. When we couldn't pay the rent, we had to move to another apartment. But they always managed to have a roof over our head, and have food for us, and the children always came first for them. They were good parents.

TJKC: How did you and Jack meet?

ROZ: That was one of the times we were moving. It was to one of these attached brick homes, and Jack's family lived downstairs, and my folks rented the apartment upstairs. The first time I came there, he was playing stickball with his friends. I was 17½, and Jack was five years older. His parents and my parents were getting acquainted, and he came over to me and started talking. The first thing he says to me is, "Would you like to see my etchings?" (laughter) I didn't know what the word 'etchings' meant, and he said, "My drawings." So I said, "Oh, sure." So he takes me to his bedroom, and I thought, "What could happen? My folks are there, his folks are there." (laughter) And that's the first time I saw Captain America. I'd never read a comic book in my life.

TJKC: So he was already working on *Captain America* at the time?

ROZ: Yes. It was the summer of 1940. I was telling everyone I was disappointed. I thought he was going to fool around! (laughter) And from that time on... let's see, I was 17½, on my 18th birthday I became engaged. We were engaged for a year, and when I was 19 and he was 24, we were married.

TJKC: What did your parents think of Jack when they first met him?

ROZ: Well, they thought, "He's an artist. He'll never make a living." (laughter) His parents always wanted him to be a mechanic so he could make a living. In the Army, he was a mechanic for three months, and he couldn't even change a tire. (laughter) I have a little 3" x 3" diploma from the Army that says "Jack Kirby, Mechanic, U.S. Army." He didn't even know how to change a tire, so you can imagine...! (laughter) But he always called me a cheap date, because I lived upstairs, and he didn't have to go far to pick me up to go out.

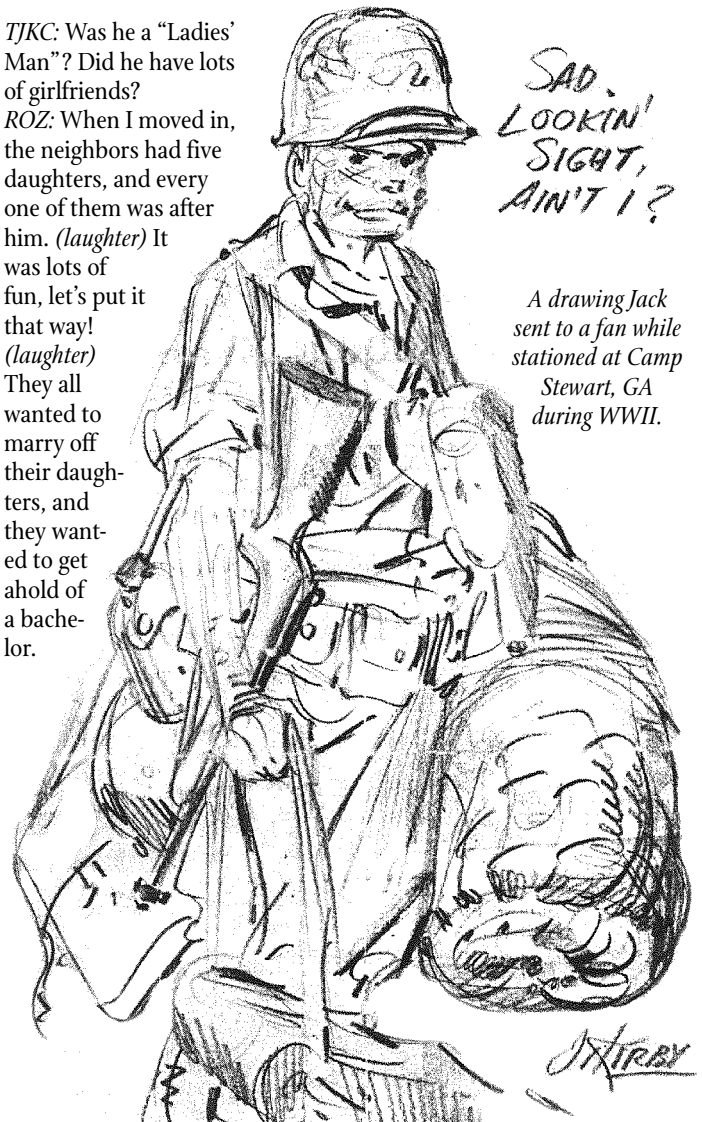
TJKC: Did your dad like him right off the bat?

ROZ: They got along pretty well. I was always really ill as a young girl, and I didn't do too much dating. Then when I met Jack, we really became close pretty fast. We just hit it off, that's all.

TJKC: Was he a "Ladies' Man"? Did he have lots of girlfriends?

ROZ: When I moved in, the neighbors had five daughters, and every one of them was after him. (laughter) It was lots of fun, let's put it that way!

(laughter) They all wanted to marry off their daughters, and they wanted to get ahold of a bachelor.



TJKC: How did you know Jack was "the one"?

ROZ: Well, when we started dating... y'know, nowadays the young people want to have their "space." But we never did that. No matter what we did, we always did it together. We went to movies, went out to dinner, went for walks, bike riding. We were constantly together. I didn't want to be with anyone else, and he didn't want to be with anyone else, and that's the way it was from that day on. It lasted over 50 years.

TJKC: What was the date of your wedding?

ROZ: May 23, 1942.

TJKC: Was that right before he went off to war?

ROZ: We were married for about a year before he was drafted. He wasn't drafted the first year because he was supporting his parents, so they let him have a certain time off. Then after the year, all his friends were in the service, so he said, "That's it" and he went in the year after we were married.

TJKC: When you first met him, had he legally changed his last name from Kurtzberg to Kirby?

ROZ: The name was legally changed before he went into the service. We got married with the name Kurtzberg, and it was legally changed right after we got married.

TJKC: So when you met him, he was going by Kurtzberg, even though he was signing the comics 'Jack Kirby'?

ROZ: Right. Everyone was starting to call him Kirby, and they'd call his mother's house, and she'd say, "I don't know any Kirbys." (laughter)

TJKC: So you legally changed yours as well. Was it difficult to get used to the new name? You were Rosalind Goldstein before you met Jack.

ROZ: Well, it wasn't difficult, because I wasn't Kurtzberg that long. It was difficult for Jack because his parents were hurt about it. They didn't want him to do it. That's why he never denied it in all those interviews; he said his original name was Kurtzberg.

TJKC: So he changed his name for commercial reasons only?

ROZ: Oh, yes. Remember how many names he had when he was doing all those characters?

TJKC: Yes! Jack Curtiss, and all of those.

ROZ: Right. When the kids were born, we were legally the Kirby family.

TJKC: Where did you and Jack live when you first got married?

ROZ: We had an apartment in Manhattan Beach, right on the beach. I remember we paid \$53 for a tremendous apartment. It was beautiful! But you can't compare today with 50 years ago. What you earned then wasn't comparable to what you earn now. A little went a long way.

TJKC: At that point, did you feel like you were doing pretty well financially, considering how young you both were?

ROZ: Yes, considering what he was making. He supported me, he always helped his mother and father. And we were still able to get a bond every week from his paycheck, so the money went far. At that



Pencils to the inked Fighting American drawing we published in TJKC #5.

time, if you made a hundred bucks, it was considered a fortune.

TJKC: While Jack was off in World War II, what were you doing? Was your family nearby?

ROZ: I still worked at the lingerie shop until he came home from the service. Back then, we all lived nearby, we were all very close. When Jack went to the service, I gave up the apartment and moved in with my mother so I wouldn't be alone.

TJKC: I take it you got letters pretty often from Jack during the war. Was this a weekly occurrence?

ROZ: Oh yes, most of the time. There were times when he'd be out in the field, and I wouldn't hear from him for weeks at a time, and I'd be really worried. And finally when a letter came, you gave a sigh of relief. I've still got all these V-Mail letters, some with pictures drawn on them.

SIMON & KIRBY'S EARLY HUMOR

by R.J. Vitone

WE RATE MY DATE COMICS!

Produced at a time when the comics industry was in an economic slump, *My Date Comics* ran its short course and just disappeared back in 1948. At first glance, it was an uninspired effort... but it did serve as an important piece of Jack Kirby's career.

When World War II ended, public tastes changed. Comic book publishers saw sales dip sharply, and did what many businessmen had to do to stay in business; they panicked! Titles were canceled. Artists, writers, inkers, and whole production staffs were let go. Entire new titles and concepts were published, untried, and left to sell or die. And the most talented artist/writer team of all had to ride along with the trend.

But Jack and Joe never just went along with the pack. Since the superhero market that they helped define was weak, they just created new ones! In the five years after WWII, Simon & Kirby developed, wrote and drew the first-ever romance comic. And *My Date* was their prototype. (They also revamped crime strips and westerns during this period, but that's a story for another time.)

Hillman Publications was a second-rate comics company headquartered in Chicago. (I live in Chicago, and I have to admit that as a kid I went over to their address in search of a leftover stash of Golden Age treasures. It was still a printing house, but no one



(above) Cover to *My Date* #1. The teenage conflict was right out of M.L.J.'s *Archie*.

(below) #2, page 9—House-Date Harry will go to any length to invade your home and stay forever.

(left) Oversized "Kid Gang" thugs cause trouble...

(next page)...but any trouble can be resolved with a crashing bit of Simon & Kirby action!



(below) The entire cast of characters assembles for the first splash page.





A TOY STORY

by John Morrow

In 1971, Mattel (a major manufacturer of children's games) decided to produce a series of Card Game Puzzles; one each based on the Lone Ranger, Tarzan, and Superman. Besides needing packaging art for all three, the Superman game involved assembling cards into jigsaw-like pictures, so four Superman drawings had to be done. These games were going to be done in a limited pressing and test-marketed in select areas of the US.

Alex Toth was originally asked to do the art, but when he became unavailable, he recommended Jack for the job. Jack ended up doing the drawings, Mike Royer inked them, and Mattel was delighted with the result. But just like on the *Jimmy Olsen* comic, DC insisted that Murphy Anderson redraw Jack's Superman heads. Presented here is the front and back packaging art, with the Superman Card drawings shown on the next two pages. ☺

It's not very often you get to see Jack draw Tarzan and the Lone Ranger! The white spaces above are where the decks of cards were inserted in each package. It's interesting that Green Arrow (instead of the more well-known Batman) was chosen to be on the back of the Superman game. Maybe DC was afraid of what a Kirby Batman would look like!



FAVORITE STORIES ABOUT JACK

We asked fans and pros tell us stories about their most interesting and (oftimes unintentionally) hilarious encounters with Jack, and some of the stories they heard about him over the years. Keep in mind that Jack was not only a consummate storyteller on the comics page, but in real life as well. Since he sometimes tended to exaggerate (making his stories get better as time went on), take his stories with a grain of salt!

KING OF HIS CASTLE?

by Peter Von Sholly

I visited the Kirbys at their home in 1976 and was duly awed by both the array of original artwork on the walls and the incredible hospitality I was shown. Roz offered coffee and cake and Jack spun stories of World War II, his philosophy, the comics biz, etc. But at one point, Roz came out of the kitchen and asked Jack to take the garbage out! I was stunned. Roz looked at me, smiled and said, "He may be the King, but I'm the Queen." And Jack cheerfully took the garbage out.

THE PHONE CALL

by Chris Harper, Editor of *The Jack Kirby Quarterly* in England

In the Summer of 1986, I was 18 years old, and I'd just become a member of the short-lived UK "Kirby-APA." An APA-Zine is like a fanzine except there's only about 10 members/readers, and you all individually produce your own "fanzine" and send it to the "Central Mailer" who collates the 'zines and mails 'em back out. One day, I was with my cousin Steve (a fellow Kirby fanatic) and I had an idle, almost sarcastic thought. I said, "Hey! We could interview Kirby for the next K-APA!" I think I got a blank expression in response, but what was initially a joke quickly became a (semi-) serious concept.

In 1983, Jack had sent me a wonderful 2-page letter which included his personal address. I thought of this and said to Steve, "We've got his address. Let's try paging his number!" Yeah, right. Like, a living legend such as Jack Kirby would be listed. Dream on.

At this time, we hadn't much knowledge of how much phone calls to the US would cost, so we were terrified of the consequence of making a fairly lengthy call to California. On top of that, while we made this call my Mom was sitting a matter of 6 feet away, hearing everything we said and, I imagine, watching the clock very closely.

To our surprise we got the number and tried it. A lady answered, who I now know was Roz. I gave her the usual line about wanting to interview Jack, and without question she said, "Hold on." Was this it? Was I about to speak to the King himself?!? Suddenly, a voice came over the line – and although I'd never heard Jack's voice before, I knew who the hoarse, almost whispered, tones belonged to immediately.

So, I spoke to him... and I asked him some of the stupidest questions you ever heard. Then I handed it over to Steve, who asked him the second half of our collection of supremely cretinous queries. And he answered them all, patiently and without sign of strain or annoyance.

Steve handed it back to me and I spoke to him a while longer. I was well aware of my Mom throughout the conversation, who was letting out quite audible groans every time we said something dumb – which was, basically, everything we said. That fact, coupled with my worry of how much the phone call was costing, made me start to panic somewhat. And in the midst of this panic, I came up with one of the most tactless remarks you could ever hope to make. I said, "Anyway, we'd better go now. This call must be costing us a fortune!"

My Mom let out the biggest groan yet. I think it was something like, "Oh, God!!!" And I realized what I'd said. I think I could've reasonably expected a sarcastic reply from most people; something along

the lines of, "Well, you shouldn't have called then!" What did Jack say?

He said, "Well, I can appreciate that. I apologize for keeping you on so long. And listen, feel free to call again anytime!"

He apologized!!!!

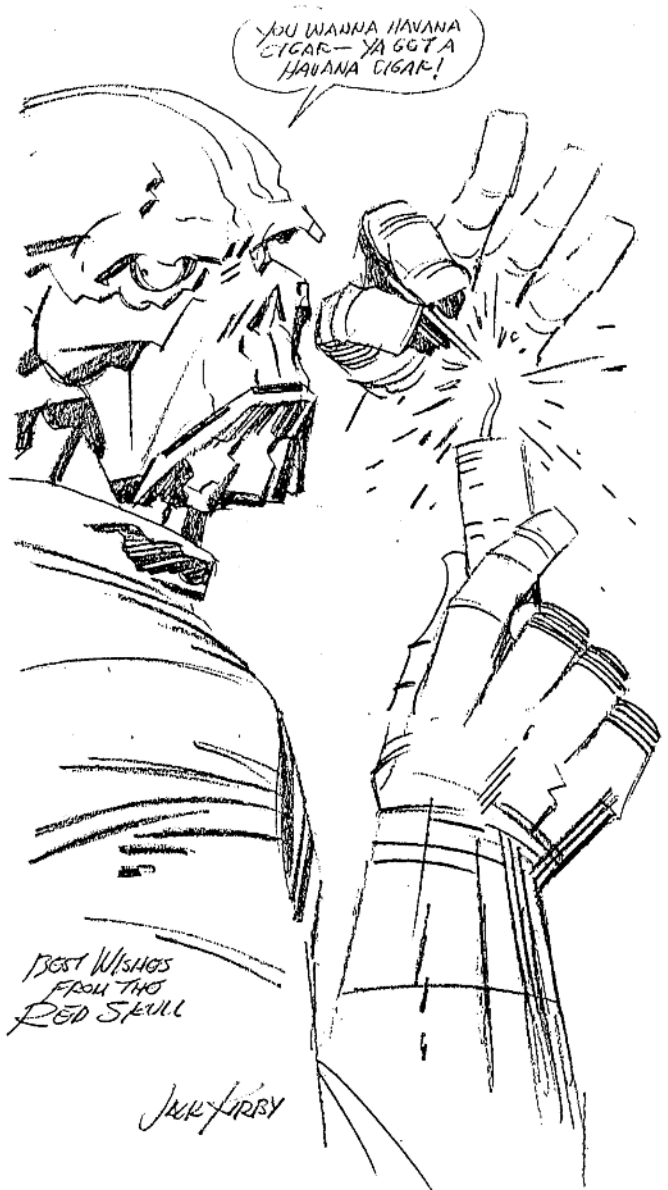
At the time, I couldn't believe it. Later, I came to realize that it was typical Jack. He just saw me as a kid that was worried about running up a huge phone bill, and he was simply being sympathetic and considerate. It was Jack demonstrating one simple fact – *he cared*.

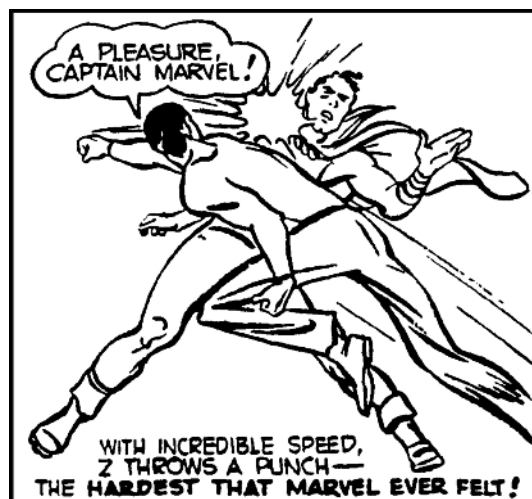
And that was what Jack was all about. He was a very considerate man. And I can't help but smile whenever I think of the time that I called Jack Kirby and he apologized for keeping me on so long!!

A PUFF PIECE

by Harold May

A note about Jack's cigars: The proper name for the cigar company is Roi-Tan, and the actual cigars Jack smoked were Roi-Tan Falcons. How do I know? When I met Jack in Nashville in 1972, he handed me a 5-dollar bill and sent me out to pick up a couple of boxes for him.





FAWCETT FANS!! DON'T MISS THIS!

If you're a fan of Fawcett comics (everything from the *Marvel Family* to *Spy Smasher*, *Bulletman*, and all the other greats of yesteryear), I strongly urge you to order *FCA* (*Fawcett Collectors of America*). It's a fabulous quarterly 'zine, very reminiscent of *TJKC* in tone, and beautifully and professionally designed and produced. The latest issue (#54—it's been around awhile!) contains a 1979 interview with C.C. Beck, articles by Trina Robbins, Dave Berg, Golden Age artist Marc Swayze, and more! \$2/issue, \$8/year (US prices). Contact Paul Hamerlinck at P.O. Box 24751, Edina, MN 55424-0751.

A KIRBY CAMEO

Research by David Penalosa

You won't find *Patsy and Hedy* #88 (June 1963) listed on any Kirby checklist, but maybe it should be. While there's not one smidgen of Kirby art in #88 (or any other issue of *P&H* that we're aware of), Jack does make a guest appearance! It seems that old Jack was

making a surprise visit to Patsy and Hedy's hometown of Centerville to find a typical American girl to pose for his next *Love Romances* cover. The two girls stumble all over each other trying to get discovered by him, and since they don't know what Jack looks like, end up spending all their time with a stranger they mistakenly think is him!

The mistake is understandable though. Artist Al Hartley drew Jack so generically that Roz wouldn't have recognized him! But thanks to Stan Lee's dialogue, we find out that a bystander the girls completely ignored early in the story is really Jack. Their friend Nan



Patsy & Hedy find out Jack's coming to Centerville.



The two "goops" hatch their scheme to get noticed by Jack...



...but end up mistaking this guy for Jack. (He does kinda look like an artist, though.)



Meanwhile, the real (?) Jack is sharing a cab with Nan, a clueless friend of *P&H*'s.



Patsy (an appropriate name as it turns out) discovers her mistake...



...and the real Jack gets his model. (Gee, did Roz know all this was going on?)

befriends Jack and gets to pose for the cover, and Patsy and Hedy are left feeling dejected. (It's probably just as well for the girls; *Love Romances* was canceled one month after this story saw print!)

The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* states *Patsy and Hedy* #88's only real importance is that it contains a "lingerie panel" (and a pretty tame one at that). Even with that dubious distinction, it only costs a few dollars in NM condition. If you're a total Kirby fanatic, you'll want to locate a copy of this hilarious and undoubtedly hard-to-find Kirby cameo. Good luck! ☺

SUPER-HEROES & STUPID VILLAINS

A Look At *Fighting American*, by Jon B. Cooke

"*Fighting American* was the first attempt at satire in comics. It was a satire — of *Captain America*. It was very, very funny... It was a period when I really enjoyed doing the comics."

Jack Kirby, *The Comics Journal* #134, February 1990.

Obviously with the forerunning success of Harvey Kurtzman's brilliant *Mad* comics, not to mention the long-underwared spoofs *Supersnipe* and *Red Tornado*, Kirby was a little off on his comics history. But on the last two points the King was dead-on. *Fighting American* was a very funny satire of superhero comics, especially the villains, and one Kirby and Joe Simon obviously loved creating. Simon & Kirby's *Fighting American* came to being in a decidedly unhappy time for both America and its floundering comics industry. The United States was besieged from within by the Red-baiting Senator from Wisconsin, "Tail Gunner" Joe McCarthy and his commie witch-hunts. Comics, while just short of being accused of being Marxist, were persecuted as the cause of juvenile delinquency — seducing the innocent — by Dr. Frederic Wertham and his ilk. The team of S&K, after delving into romance, western, war, 3-D, and horror genres returned to what they did best: superheroes. And this time they went unabashedly back to the template they created: *Captain America*.

It's reasonable to speculate that S&K were responding to the recent revival of their star-spangled creation over at Marvel in the pages of *Young Men* comics in the fall of '53. Their response came the following winter with *Fighting American* #1, cover dated April-May 1954. "We were determined to make the public forget about *Captain America*," Joe Simon wrote in his introduction to the *Fighting American* collection published in 1989 by Marvel. "This time the copyright belonged to Simon and Kirby."

And they stuck pretty darn close to that template, adding only a few modern, and albeit, bizarre twists. Super-patriot broadcaster Johnny Flagg alerts America to the onslaught of commie Fifth-Columnists on his TV show. Though ruggedly-built and a war hero, Johnny is confined to using crutches due to battle wounds, while his weakling-but-able brother Nelson writes the anti-Communist diatribes for the broadcasts. Commie agents beat Johnny to near-death and government agents recruit the skinny brother to become the "Agent of the Future," and avenge his brother's tragedy. In panels, some of which are identical to Cap's origin tale, Nelson's mind is transferred into the body of Johnny Flagg to become Project *Fighting American*. Whatever became of Nelson's body is never revealed, but regardless, another super-patriot hero is born and now, to complete the rip-off of their own creation, S&K needed a Bucky. Speedboy debuts in the second story, an enthusiastic page boy at the television station who uncovers the newly-rejuvenated Johnny Flagg's secret. In his seven-issue run (eight if you count the 1966 revival one-shot published by friend Al's Harvey Comics — emblazoned with the outrageous cover statement, "Most Imitated of All!"), F.A.'s strange origin is never alluded to again, and no psychological complications of such a bizarre creation seem to arise.

His background properly disposed of, *Fighting American* took on the godless Communists almost non-stop. Mostly, S&K's use

of Reds as villains was simply because they filled the stock needed at the time. While Jack has said, "My enemies were the commies — I called them commies ... Communism became the doorway to chaos, and the doorway to chaos was the doorway to evil," the bad guys in F.A. were mostly used for laughs. (Though in one disturbing sequence S&K give us the nice, happy couple John and Martha as Communist agents, apparently using the controversial figures of recently executed Ethel and Julius Rosenberg as an odd source of humor material.)

At best, the comic was all-out burlesque, ridiculing (after a melodramatic start) the Red Menace, and presenting probably the oddest assortment of bad guys to appear in a four-colored title, rivaling the freaks who battled Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*. Their names alone are now legend among those of us who care: The Handsome Devils, Doubleheader, Poison Ivan, Hotsky Trotsky, Square Hair Malloy (a Flat-Top swipe if ever there was one!), Count Yuscha Liffso and his diminutive pal Sawdoff, Ginza Goniff, Massamuttin, Doraymirio Wolfirosoff, Invisible Irving, Deadly Doolittle, Space-Face, Round Robin, Commisar Yutz, that trio of *Fighting American* imposters, Skudnik, Yakfoot and Grummel, and the unforgettable Super-Khakalovitch, Hero of the People.

And S&K had a field day naming the varied assortment of buxom women who cavorted with our heroes: Madame Butterscotch, Zuzu Amor, Pamela Hardwhack, Marilyn Biltrite(!), Charity Bizarre, Scarlet O'Haircut, wrestler Gorgeous Georgia and neme-



Joe Sinnott inked this piece for the Kirby Unleashed portfolio.

THE OTHER DUCK MAN

Steve Gerber speaks about working with Jack on *Destroyer Duck*
(Interviewed by John Morrow on March 11, 1996)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How'd you first discover Jack's work?

STEVE GERBER: I going to make a confession. (laughter) I think this is the only time I've ever admitted this publicly. In my entire life, there's only one thing I ever stole. It was the first issue of *Fighting American*. They had a copy of it at my elementary school, which they used to keep in a box in the gym for kids to read during rainy days. I was so fascinated with this thing that, in the fourth grade, I stuffed it under my shirt and walked out of school with it! (laughter) I've been waiting about forty years to get that off my chest! (laughter)

TJKC: So Dr. Wertham was right; comics did cause juvenile delinquency! (laughter)

STEVE: Absolutely! (laughter) That was the first time I'd encountered Jack's work. I told Jack about it later. The whole notion of the weakling, milquetoast brother putting his mind into the body of his dead older brother freaked me out completely! (laughter) I loved that book.

TJKC: Did you read the subsequent issues?

STEVE: I encountered some of them later, and was probably too young to understand the satire at the time. Now, of course, I think it's very, very funny.

TJKC: How'd you meet Jack?

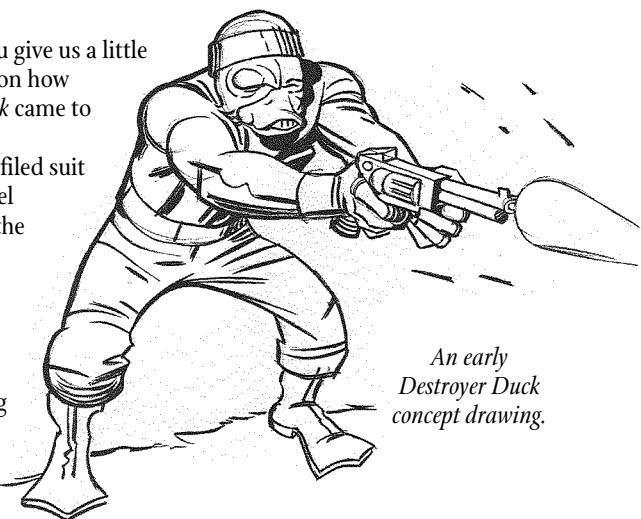
STEVE: Mark Evanier and I are not able to agree on this story, so I'm not sure exactly whose idea it was to bring Jack into Ruby-Spears. Joe Ruby was looking for someone to design the *Thundarr the Barbarian* series. I don't remember whether I suggested Jack to Joe directly, or whether Mark had beaten me to it, and Joe asked what I thought of the idea. Anyway, I said, "Yes, yes, yes!" (laughter) And that was the first time Jack and I worked together, on *Thundarr*.



An early concept drawing of Ned Packer's mother, *The Battle Axe*.

TJKC: Can you give us a little background on how *Destroyer Duck* came to be?

STEVE: I had filed suit against Marvel Comics over the ownership of Howard The Duck, which I had created. The lawsuit was becoming extremely expensive, so we came up with the idea



An early *Destroyer Duck* concept drawing.

of publishing a benefit comic for the lawsuit. Dean Mullaney and cat yronwode at Eclipse Comics agreed to do it, and all the profits from the book went to pay for my lawyer. (laughter)

This left us with the problem of what to put in the comic book. I was willing to work for free, but I didn't think anybody else would be. I knew I wanted to do a satire on Howard and the whole work-for-hire business, and Jack and I were both working at Ruby-Spears at the time. Jack wasn't working in the office as I was, but he'd come in once or twice a week with model sketches and character designs for the various animated shows.

He and I had gotten to know each other pretty well, and I liked him very, very much, and the feeling seemed to be mutual. So I decided to approach the King of the Comics and ask him to draw a 20-page story for nothing! (laughter) This is not something you do every day.

I was so terrified that I had to take Mark Evanier with me out to Jack's house for moral support. We went out there and sat down in the living room. Roz brought us coffee and cookies and all the usual stuff. (laughter) I sat there, pouring sweat, and explained about the lawsuit. (laughter) Every time I started to 'hem' and 'haw,' Mark leaped in. And we explained to Jack what the lawsuit was all about, and that it involved Marvel, and it had to do with character ownership and creator's rights. We went on for about an hour and a half about this, and finally we got around to the benefit comic book. I said, "I want to do this character called *Destroyer Duck*. I've got this idea for it. I... I... I really, really want to... to... know whether you'd... um... be willing to draw the book... (gulp...) for... nothing." (laughter)

I just waited there with the silence hanging in the air, and Jack kind of rubbed his chin and said, "Yeah, sounds like fun." (laughter)

An hour and a half of blind terror had been completely wasted! (laughter) He probably could've drawn two or three pages in that time! (laughter)

TJKC: So he didn't even flinch?

STEVE: No, not even a semi-flinch. He got this weird smile on his face like he'd really enjoy sticking it to them, and then just said "yes."

TJKC: When would this have been? Around late 1981?

STEVE: Probably later than that. The book came out in mid-1982, and we put it together just a couple of months earlier.

TJKC: Jack was pretty adamant about writing his own books after leaving Marvel in 1970. How did it feel to be one of the few writers he had worked with?

STEVE: I was very flattered. You know, I don't think Jack felt any disdain toward writers. I think he felt that some particular writers he'd been working with weren't really holding up their end of the partnership. And to a certain extent that's true. Stan would give him 2-page plots, or they'd talk out a story in the office, and Jack would just make notes and go home and draw it.



Medea pounces in these Destroyer Duck #2 pencils! The victim's face was altered when inked.

That's not meant to disparage Stan Lee, by the way. I think he *did* make a vital contribution to the work he and Jack did together. I just think Jack contributed almost equally to the stories, particularly in terms of pacing, fight choreography, and, of course, the creation of characters. Stan had an incredible resource in Jack, an artist with an instinctive understanding of story, and he used it. In and of itself, there was nothing wrong with that. The problems all arose as a result of Marvel's work-for-hire arrangement, which rewarded Jack's creativity, and that of all the other artists, with, essentially, nothing.

Anyway, the plots for *Destroyer Duck* were running anywhere from 6 to 10 pages long, single-spaced. I was really writing the book, while also trying to give Jack as much freedom as I possibly could to interpret the stuff. I think Jack felt pretty strongly that *Destroyer Duck* was a genuine collaboration.

TJKC: Who inked the cover of #1?

STEVE: Steve Leialoha.

TJKC: What was Jack like to work with on the book?

STEVE: Oh, hysterical! Absolutely hysterical! A good number of the jokes in the book are his. The "Grab It All, Own It All, Drain It All" slogan of Godcorp was his. The designs of the Godcorp complex were his, and virtually all of the visual gags in that first issue. My contribution tended to be the verbal stuff.

TJKC: So as far as the look of the entire book, that was Jack?

STEVE: (laughter) When you're dealing with Jack, how can you dictate the graphic look of *anything*? We discussed what Destroyer Duck's build would be like, and the fact that he'd be gray instead of white or black or yellow. I probably described him as "Charles Bronson as a duck." (laughter)

TJKC: Did you give him a full script to work from?

STEVE: No, a detailed plot. I'd break it down by page, and in some instances by panels. Jack, being Jack, did whatever he felt he needed to with it. He added some things and dumped others. He adapted it to the way he draws.

TJKC: Did you both see eye-to-eye on where the book should go? How well did he convey your ideas?

STEVE: Well, you know what you're going to get when you have Jack Kirby draw a comic book. (laughter) If I'd wanted any other look, I'd have gone someplace else. What I got was exactly what I'd hoped to get — a Jack Kirby comic book. And it floored me.

Although I did manage to find the one object in the universe that Jack Kirby could not draw: a cartoon duck beak! (laughter) We were constantly having the inker fix the duck beaks. Everything else was pure Jack, and absolutely pure wonderment, as everything he ever drew was. But he could not get that beak right. (laughter)

TJKC: Whose idea was the dislocated spine? I mean this as a compliment: I think it was one of the most disgusting things I've ever seen in comics. (laughter)

STEVE: That was mine. But I couldn't dictate the look of it. I could tell Jack, "The spine curls up and bursts out of the guy's back, and slithers off down the street." (laughter) From there, it was Jack's job to turn it into a visual, which he did, and it came out looking exactly the way I expected it to. And yes, it was seriously gross! It was supposed to be. (laughter)

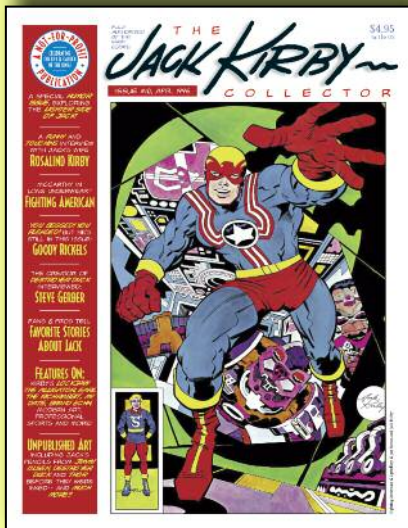
TJKC: How did Alfredo Alcalá get put on the inks? Was he your choice?

STEVE: (pause) Yes, probably my choice. He was inking Jack's sketches at Ruby-Spears, so we knew what that looked like. Jack knew him obviously, and was happy with his work. The look of Jack's work changes, depending on who inks it. Sinnott's inks look very different from Colletta's, and both of them look different from Dick Ayers or George Roussos. I wanted a distinctive, and different, look to this. Obviously, there's no way to disguise 'Jack Kirby,' (laughter) and only a fool would want to, but I wanted an inker who'd bring out something different in Jack's pencils.

TJKC: What were the specific people or events that inspired you to create the characters in the book, like Ned Packer? Or would revealing that get you in trouble?

STEVE: It probably would get me in trouble. It's interesting that you mention Ned Packer, because I'm told Jim Shooter believed that char-

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