



A "KING"-SIZE
68-PAGE ISSUE
ON JACK'S WORK AT
MARVEL COMICS!!

A RARE 1970
KIRBY INTERVIEW

A 1975
INTERVIEW WITH
STAN LEE

INTERVIEWS WITH
EVERY BULLPENNER
WE COULD FIND,
INCLUDING:

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JOHN ROMITA
JOHN BUSCEMA
MARIE SEVERIN
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**ANT-MAN
THE ETERNALS
BLACK PANTHER
& MORE**

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INCLUDING PENCIL
PAGES *BEFORE*
THEY WERE INKED,
AND *MUCH MORE!!*

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OR JOURNALISTIC PRESENTATION



THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR

ISSUE #18, JAN. 1998

\$5.95
In The US



**JACK
KIRBY**

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Back cover inks: Joe Sinnott

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Back cover color: Tom Ziuko

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JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR



Our front cover is an unused Marvelmania poster drawn and colored by Jack, circa 1969. Our back cover is an unused Fantastic Four #71 cover (pencils shown above), which Joe Sinnott graciously agreed to ink for us.

The Jack Kirby Collector, Vol. 5, No. 18, Jan. 1998. Published bi-monthly by & © TwoMorrrows Advertising & Design, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605, USA. 919-833-8092. John Morrow, Editor. Pamela Morrow, Asst. Editor. Jon B. Cooke, Assoc. Editor. Single issues: \$5.95 (\$6.40 Canada, \$8.40 elsewhere). Six-issue subscriptions: \$24.00 US, \$32.00 Canada and Mexico, \$44.00 outside North America. First printing. All characters are © their respective companies. All artwork is © Jack Kirby unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter is © the respective authors. PRINTED IN CANADA.

THE GREAT ATLAS IMPLOSION

by Jim Vadeboncoeur, based on a story uncovered by Brad Elliott

(Brad Elliott was originally hired to produce the Marvel 50th anniversary book that eventually became Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades by Les Daniels, instead of the true history that Brad had envisioned. Brad had full access to all Marvel records for well over a year and here's what he learned about Marvel/DC and the late '50s.)

If you pay any attention to the names in the Ownership Statements, you'll notice that up until 1952, Robert Solomon is listed as the Atlas Business Manager. In that year a new name appears in that position: Monroe Froehlich, Jr. Remember him; he created comics as we know them today. Honest!

For those of you who may not be completely aware of the magnitude of the events of 1957, let me explain exactly what the evidence of the comics shows.

In 1957 (cover-date time), Atlas published 75 different titles — monthlies, bi-monthlies, and one-shots — during the July through October period. In November and December of that year they put out 16 (all bi-monthly). So what happened? And who the heck is Monroe Froehlich, Jr.? Here's the script.

THE SET-UP:

Atlas, as you may have known, was not really a comics company, but was in fact a distribution company. The comics were published by Martin Goodman's various corporations (Chipiden, Timely, Red Circle, etc.) and distributed by Atlas Magazines, Inc.; all legitimate incorporated entities. Atlas Magazines (wholly owned by the Goodmans, Martin and Jean) was paid a fee to distribute Goodman's comics — profits, profits, profits.

THE CATALYST:

Monroe Froehlich, Jr. was Goodman's golfing partner who somehow finagled himself into the business manager position. He pretty much had a free rein with the comics, the pulps and the newsstand magazines, but he was kept out of the distribution end of the business. Being apparently an ambitious sort, he wanted to expand his political base in the company to include some measure of control over distribution. Arthur Marchand was the man in charge of Atlas Magazines, Inc. and exerted every effort to prevent this.

THE PLOY:

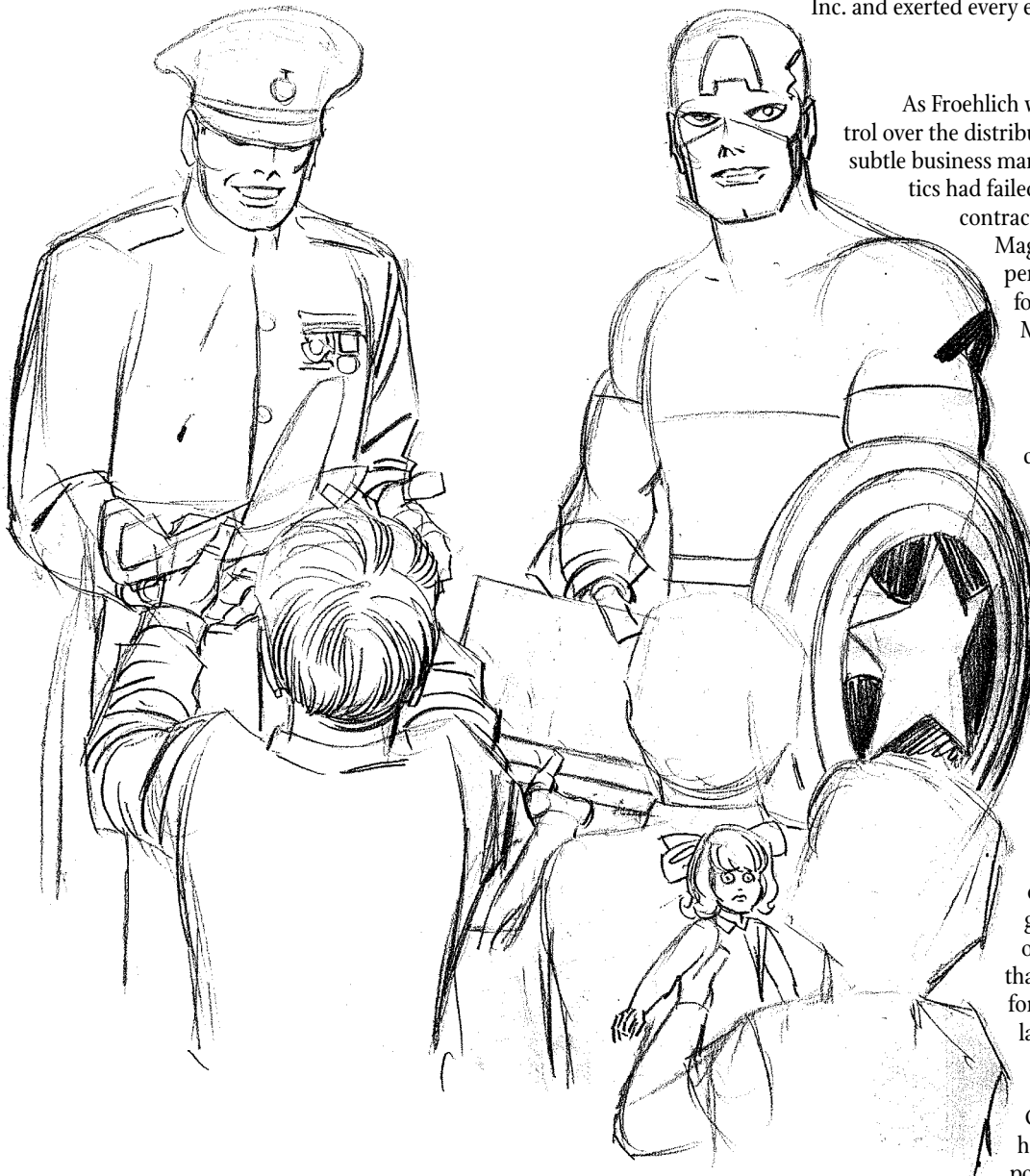
As Froehlich was frustrated in his attempts to gain control over the distribution arm, he eventually resorted to some subtle business maneuvering to accomplish what office politics had failed to do. He somehow renegotiated the contract between the publishing arm and Atlas Magazines so that the latter received a lesser percentage of the price of each publication for the distribution service. On paper, Atlas Magazines, Inc. began to lose money.

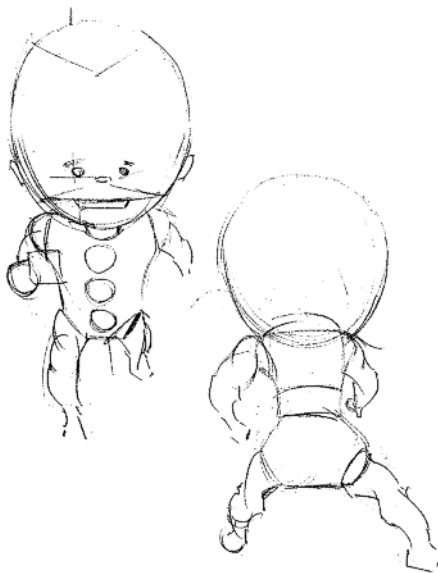
THE STING:

Froehlich exploited this apparent change in the distribution situation to convince Goodman that he needed to switch to a national distributor. In the summer of 1956, when Goodman gave the go-ahead, Froehlich negotiated a five-year contract with American News Co. (the ANC on the covers of so many comics in the early Fifties) to distribute comics, magazines and Lion paperbacks. Goodman disbanded his distribution system and Froehlich was apparently "king of the hill."

THE ZINGER:

American News Co. was Mafia-connected and under investigation by the government for less-than-legal transactions of some sort. (ANC was into a lot more than periodical distribution — restaurants, for example — and it was there the troubles lay.) Rumors flew that ANC would soon be out of business. Even before the contract, Arthur Marchand had tried to warn Goodman of the potential problems, but he was viewed as merely playing in office politics against Froehlich.





THE CRASH:

American News Co. assumed the distribution of the Goodman line Nov. 1, 1956. Six months later, American ceased operations. Not having time to re-establish his old network, Goodman was forced to lay off the entire staff with the exception of Stan Lee, while he searched for an alternative distributor. It took about a month (corresponding to the October 1957-dated books).

(Note: Brad Elliott has discovered records which show that the cover dates of Atlas titles were not totally accurate. During any given month, shipments could include books with cover dates spanning three months. We hope to eventually show that books like *Dippy Duck*, which has an October 1957 cover date, were actually shipped with the August and September books.)

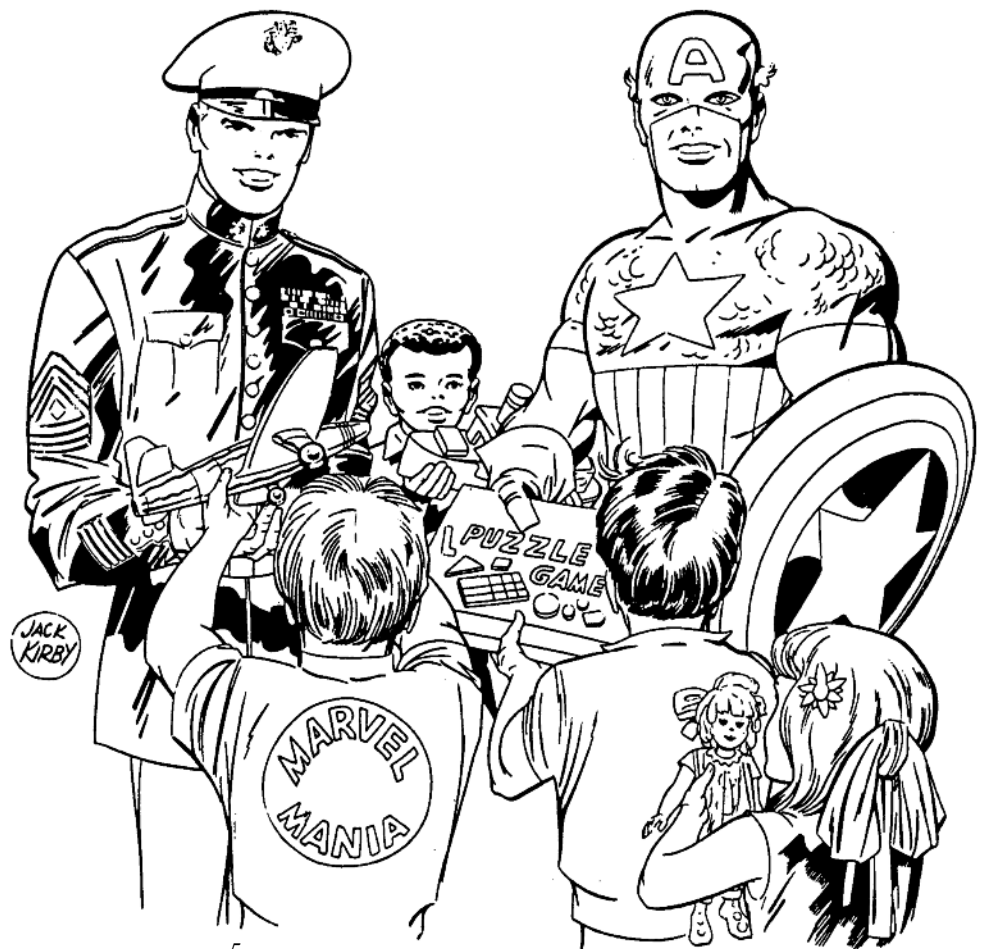
THE AFTERMATH:

Goodman did find himself a distributor. It was DC-owned Independent News Co. They agreed to take him as a new account, but the terms were tough indeed: Independent would handle all of Goodman's magazines, but Lion Books had to go (Independent News was already handling New American Library), and since DC wasn't about to support its biggest and more successful rival, Independent News insisted that only eight comics per month could be accommodated.

Goodman and Lee opted to use that allotment to publish 16 bi-monthly titles. The first eight (*Gunsmoke Western*, *Homer the Happy Ghost*, *Kid Colt Outlaw*, *Love Romances*, *Marines in Battle*, *Millie the Model*, *Miss America* and *My Own Romance*) came out dated November 1957, the second batch (*Battle*, *Navy Combat*, *Patsy and Hedy*, *Patsy Walker*, *Strange Tales*, *Two-Gun Kid*, *World of Fantasy* and *Wyatt Earp*) in December. With inventory on hand to fill 75 titles, Lee simply cancelled 59 of them and hardly bought a story for over a year. Most 1958 material was produced in 1957.



In the mid-1960s, Jack was asked to create poster art for the "Toys For Tots" campaign put on by the US Marine Corp. The annual campaign collects donations of toys and distributes them to needy children at Christmas. On the previous page is his original preliminary pencil rough for the poster; on the back of that art, still in pencil, are rough drawings of several little elf-like creatures (an example is shown on this page). Shown below is the final art from his first attempt, and above is the final art that was eventually used on the poster.



THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF HENRY PYM

A Look at Kirby's *Ant-Man/Giant-Man*, by Mike Gartland

When I was asked to write an article on Ant-Man, I realized I never really gave much thought to the character — and neither, it appears, did anyone else. Therein lies the basic flaw in the character of the Ant-Man: Fans were interested... but not very.

First of all, why make a super-hero out of a character the size of an insect? I'm sure anyone familiar with Ant-Man already knows that he started out as scientist Henry Pym, who shrank himself down, and got trapped in and escaped from an anthill in a then throwaway fantasy story "The Man in the Ant Hill," published in *Tales to Astonish* #27, Jan. 1962 (approximately the same time *FF* #2 appeared). Lee plotted the story and the art was by Kirby/Ayers. (Dick Ayers remembers sending Stan a note back with this story, telling him he found the concept of a man in a world of insects intriguing.) But the scripting (dialogue and captions) was by Stan's brother Larry Lieber, one of the unsung heroes of early Marvel. Lieber scripted many of the early Ant-Man stories.

Shortly after this story was published, Lee began the task of converting his "monster comics" into super-hero magazines. Perhaps it

was due to fan response to the anthill story, or the fact that during this time Lee (or Kirby) was in a "bug" kind of mood (there was also "The Man in the Beehive" story in *Suspense* #32 and the debut of Spider-Man approximately one month before the



Dr. Pym's first appearance from *Tales To Astonish* #27.

Ant-Man introduction), or the fact that DC had successfully re-introduced the Atom, a six-inch super-hero, in *Showcase*. Since the artwork is submitted approximately (but not always) six months before the cover date/month, the Ant-Man story would have been drawn shortly after *Showcase* #36 — the end of the Atom's debut run — and Lee may have wanted a tiny super-hero in his growing stable of stars.

In any event, the Ant-Man debuted in *Tales to Astonish* #35

(Sept. '62), on the rack with *FF* #6, *Hulk* #3, and *Journey into Mystery* #84 among others. The Ant-Man costume was clearly a Kirby creation, and it never looked as good as it did after the first splash page. The chest emblem was designed to resemble a huge ant, complete with head, thorax, and legs. The helmet was beautifully reminiscent of an ant's head with antennae and mandibles. The boots were also unique inasmuch as they appeared to be designed for treading underground, and were never used again after the first issue. Sadly, over time (and with the frenetic pace Kirby was working under), the costume became a diluted version of the original, with the boots resembling the gloves, the helmet sometimes without antennae, and the ant emblem becoming simply a large black ball on the hero's chest.

According to Lieber, Stan named the character Ant-Man, but Larry came up with Henry Pym — just as he came up with Don Blake, Tony Stark, and other characters whom I grew up with, never realizing the creative input of this quiet man. Larry Lieber was the principal scripter not only in Ant-Man's introduction, but also in Thor's, Iron Man's, and the Human Torch's in *Strange Tales*. Stan gave Larry the scripting chores on the monster comics that became hero comics, not to mention the many westerns, romance, and fantasy stories he was scripting at the same time. If anything, this should make him just as important in launching these characters as Stan and Jack were; remember when you go over these classic stories, the words were by Lieber.

Perhaps the reason Ant-Man had problems finding an audience was the premise; a super-hero the size of an insect was interesting, but not sustainable over the long run. The early Ant-Man stories were a good read and Kirby's visuals were entertaining; it had to be a challenge to



Splash page from *Tales To Astonish* #35. Note the ant-like symbol on Ant-Man's chest.

EXCERPTS FROM THE 1975 STAN LEE PANEL

*Held at the 1975 San Diego Comic Con
(Special thanks to Kevin Shaw, and especially Carl Taylor
for providing a tape of this panel)*

(Editor's Note: We weren't able to bring you a new interview with Stan this issue as we'd hoped, so we're presenting this panel, which was held shortly after the announcement that Jack was returning to Marvel in 1975.)

STAN LEE: Thank you, culture lovers. *(laughter)* I hate to listen to speeches; that's one of the reasons I hate to *make* speeches. I don't want to make this any more unbearable for you than it has to be. I'm equally inept at any kind of speaking; it doesn't matter what I talk about, I do it badly, so I might as well talk about what you'd like to hear. Does anybody just want to shout out something they'd like to hear about, so at least I'll know I'm saying something that at least *somebody* wants to hear?

AUDIENCE: What about the Silver Surfer?

AUDIENCE: How did you get started?

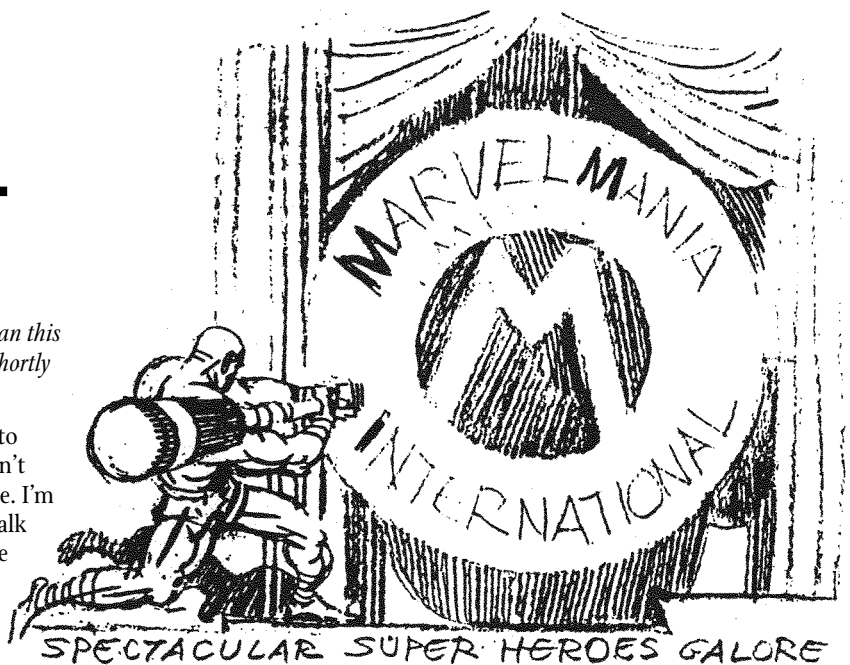
STAN: All right, let's do it that way. How did I get started, and then we'll *segue* into the Silver Surfer. *(laughter)* When I was a kid, many decades ago... just to show you how things never work out, I wanted to be an actor. They had something called the WPA Federal Theater; it was part of Franklin Roosevelt's NRA New Deal. It was to keep guys off the streets from stealing hubcaps and so forth, and they set up little theatrical groups. I joined one; Orson Welles was also a part of this thing, and many other big names. The only thing is, the other guys stayed with it, but I had to make a living and it didn't pay too well, so I got a lot of very, very exotic jobs in writing, because I was always pretty facile at it.

I got one job writing obituaries for a news service; obituaries of famous people who are still alive. When a celebrity dies, an hour later there's a special issue of a paper, and his whole life story is in the paper, and you've probably wondered, "How did they ever write this so fast?" Well, that thing's been on file for years. Guys like me have been writing them. I kept the job for a few months, and I quit because it gets very depressing writing about living people in the past tense. *(laughter)* I gave that up, then got another very glamorous job writing publicity for a cancer hospital. *(laughter)* I gave that up after a few months.

Then I heard there was a job open at Marvel Comics, which was then called Timely Comics, for a reason that nobody's figured out. Jack Kirby and Joe Simon were practically the whole staff, and they... I better watch what I say, 'cause I never know; Jack may be here. I'm not noted for always telling the truth, but at least people don't usually catch me at it.

But Jack may remember this, so I'll be careful.

(laughter) Anyway, he and Joe were virtually the whole staff. Jack sat at a table behind a big cigar, and he was drawing. Joe stood up behind another big cigar, and he

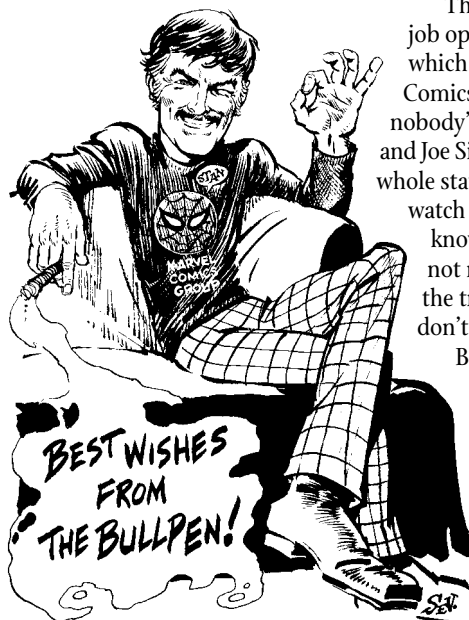


Unused Kirby art for MarvelMania International.

would ask Jack, "Are you comfortable? Do you want some more ink? Is your brush okay? Is the pencil all right?" And then Joe would go out and yell at me for awhile, and that was the way we spent our days. I was a gofer; I'd go for the coffee, for the broom, for Jack's cigars. They also let me write some copy. Little by little, when they found out I could spell, and I knew which end a sentence to put a period at, they started exploiting me, *(laughter)* just the way I've done with Marv Wolfman and everybody else over the years. *(laughter)*

After awhile, Joe and Jack, for reasons that history will one day record, left Timely Comics. The publisher, a stalwart named Martin Goodman who owned the company and all that his eye beheld — namely me at the moment *(laughter)* — looked around at his vast empire. He saw this one skinny kid with a broom in one hand, and a typewriter in the other, and he said, "Hey, where's the rest of my staff?" And I said, "I'm it." At that time I was about 16½, and he said, "Somebody's got to edit these books. Stan, can you hold down the job until I get somebody else?" I think I was offered a half-dollar more a week, and to me that was like gold — it still is — and I said, "I'll take it." So he went off into the outside world to seek another editor, and I was now Stan Lee, Boy Editor *Pro Tem*. It's lasted ever since then.

I'm going to tell you a story there's really no reason to tell, except I've got to kill a few minutes here somehow. Years ago, I was doing some work for a film, and a guy from the *Hollywood Reporter*, which is a motion picture trade magazine, came to hear me. Now if you think I'm dull standing up here, you should've heard this guy! He's doing an interview that's going to be published in the *Hollywood Reporter*, and these are the questions he's asking me: "How do you spell your name? When were you born? Where do you live?" and other stimulating facts like that to intrigue and entrance the reading public. I said, "I've got to jazz this up somehow." So he asked, "Where did you get your start?" So I told him this fascinating and enthralling story about Martin Goodman, and Joe and Jack Kirby, and me being the only one there. And I saw him writing half asleep, and I wanted to jazz up the story a little bit, so I said, "About thirty years ago, I was told the job was temporary. He never told me it was permanent, so as far as I know, Martin's still out there looking for another editor." Ha-ha. *(laughter)* So the guy wrote it down. *(laughter)* This'll teach you never to try to liven up an interview when some dullhead is writing it. This is the way it came out in the *Hollywood Reporter*: "Stan Lee lives in New York City and is the editor of Marvel Comics. He's been there for 30 years, and presently his publisher is looking for a new editor." *(laughter)* So that taught me, "Stan, a comic you'll never be."



There was another deep, meaningful question hurled at me; in quivering tones, I heard someone say, “What about the Silver Surfer?” I would like to answer in kind: What *about* the Silver Surfer? (*laughter*) Actually, the Silver Surfer is one of my really true great loves, next to being up here talking to you. (*laughter*) I did not really create the Silver Surfer. Those of you who are historians or archivists, take note. Jack and I were doing the *Fantastic Four*, and we came up with this plot; something to do with Galactus and our usual crazy stuff. I was telling Jack, he wasn’t listening, and I wasn’t paying attention to what I was saying. He went off and drew something. The way we worked, for those of you who don’t know, is not the way they work at other companies, where the writer writes a script, and it’s given to an artist, and the artist draws it, and that’s the end of it. With us, it’s a *marriage* of talents. (*laughter*) The artist and the writer will discuss the plot together, then the artist goes off to his little nook where he works, and he — without benefit of script! — only with this vague, ridiculous plot that he’s discussed, goes and draws the whole story all by himself.

In the early days, I was writing scripts for virtually all the books, and it was very hard to keep all the artists busy; poor little frail me, doing story after story. So I’d be writing a story for Kirby, and Steve Ditko would walk in and say, “Hey, I need some work now.” And I’d say, “I can’t give it to you now, Steve, I’m finishing Kirby’s.” But we couldn’t afford to keep Steve waiting, because time is money, so I’d have to say, “Look, Steve, I can’t write a script for you now, but here’s the plot we’ll use for the next *Spider-Man*. Go home and draw anything you want, as long it’s something like this, and I’ll put the copy in later.” So I was able to finish Jack’s story. Steve in the meantime was drawing another story. Then Don Heck would come over and say, “Hey Stan, I need something to do.” I’d say, “Well, I can’t write it for you Don, but here’s the plot for *Iron Man*, you go and draw it, and I’ll put in the copy later.” That way I could keep five, six, ten artists busy; they were drawing, and as they’d bring in the strip, I’d put in the copy. Okay, it started out as a lazy man’s device — or maybe a guy who just didn’t have enough time — but we realized this was absolutely the best way to do a comic. Because any artist who really belongs in this field — and of course our artists do — is a storyteller himself. He tells stories with pictures; he has imagination, he knows continuity, he knows how a story should be told. So if he just knows what the general plot is, the idea is: Let him go home, let him draw the things that he thinks are the most interesting. Don’t have the writer say, “Panel one will be a long shot of Spider-Man walking down the street.” The artist may see it differently; maybe he feels it should be a shot of Spider-Man swinging on his web, or climbing upside-down on the ceiling or something.

So following the basic plot, the artist draws it. Then, when the writer has to put in the copy, just imagine how much easier

it is to look at a drawing and suit the dialogue perfectly to the expression of the character’s face — to what the drawing represents — than to try and write perfect dialogue when you’re looking at a blank sheet of paper, trying to imagine what the drawing will be like. So it worked out as the fastest way to work. It also gives us the best results. And you’re all sitting there thinking, “What does this have to do with the Silver Surfer?” (*laughter*)

Here’s what it has to do. Jack and I had discussed a story dealing with Galactus. All I remember is we were saying, “We’ve already had Doctor Doom, we’ve already had Sandman, and all these powerful villains. What can we do to top what we’ve done? The only thing to do is get a villain who’s practically a god... who doesn’t want to *conquer* the earth; a villain who destroys whole planets!” Well, that sounded good.



Unused page from either *Fantastic Four* #17 or #23, based on the mention of “Dr. Doom’s robot” on the page. It’s inked by George “Bell” Roussos, and if it’s from #17, this was probably his try-out for the inking chores.

It was easy for me to say it; now it was up to Jack to go home and draw it. (laughter) I don't remember; Jack may have come up with the name Galactus, or I might've. I probably wanted to call him Irving. (laughter) The thing came back, and lo and behold, Jack had Galactus, and I loved it. Well, I love everything Jack does. I'd look at these drawings and I couldn't wait to start writing the copy. All of a sudden, as I'm looking through the drawings, I see this nut on a surfboard flying in the air. (laughter) And I thought, "Jack, this time you've gone too far." (laughter) And under his cigar, Jack said, "No, no, Stan. I figure anybody like Galactus, who's that big and powerful and travels through space, needs a herald." That was about as logical as anything else we've ever done, (laughter) so I figured the Silver Surfer will be the herald. But now comes the part that makes Marvel Marvel! We didn't make him a herald who said, "Hey, there's a nice place. I think I'll sit down there and have a smoke." (laughter) We made him a herald who said, "This planet is a virtual paradise. Why don't men realize the glories that they have all about them? Why do they wage war when they should make love?" and other typical Stan Lee profound sentiments. (laughter) Somehow this naked, nutty character... I didn't even realize he was naked until the third issue, y'know? (laughter) Who pays attention? He was naked in a very unique way, which we'll get into later when we have our adult session. (laughter) Anyway, I figured if we could get away with this, we could get away with anything.

Well, the readers loved the Silver Surfer, they loved Galactus, they loved everything. After awhile... my memory is bad, and Marv can probably tell you later on if you stay after class. I don't know how it happened, but Jack was doing his *Fantastic Fours* and his *Thors* and this and that. And we were getting mail: "Why don't you give the Silver Surfer his own book, his own movie, his own world, his own everything?" (laughter) John Buscema had joined us prior to that, and we were looking for a new script for him, and we decided to do a whole book just of the Silver Surfer.

Here's what happened: The older readers loved the *Silver Surfer*. He became a cult figure. Every time I'd lecture at colleges, one of the first questions was, "What about the Silver Surfer?" But the younger kids, the very young ones... we still need a lot of young kids to buy our books, because we have to sell 72 million a year, and there aren't enough intelligent older readers to keep us going. (laughter) So I'm dependent on the intelligent younger readers. We lost a few sales. It didn't sell as well as our other books. We got more fan mail on the *Silver Surfer* than on virtually any book we had. It was mostly from older readers. So I had a conference with my then-publisher who said, "Y'know, we ought to downgrade the stories a little. Let's make them a little more simple. Stop using thirty-syllable words, Stan. Let's make the stuff simpler, and get more action and fighting and stuff, and then it'll sell better."

For once in my life, I was ethical and true to my convictions, and I said, "Aahh, to hell with it. I don't want to change the Silver Surfer; he's too pure and beautiful. Let's wait until we've upgraded the tastes of the whole human race, and then we'll bring him back again."

(laughter, applause) Thank you, ye of great faith. (laughter) I think you'll admit we've been making great progress, as evidenced by this overflow crowd. Pretty soon, we'll probably bring the Surfer back. I don't have the time to write it, and I'm too rotten a person... I'd just as soon nobody else do it, because it'll probably become a big hit, and I don't want anybody else to become more famous than I am. (laughter) I was talking to Jack about it. Maybe we'll do a big super-special one-shot issue; maybe a 200-page Silver Surfer story. We'll sell it for five bucks, and print it in hardcover, and exploit the hell out of the public like we always do. (laughter, applause) You know, the usual: Silver Surfer t-shirts, Silver Surfer toothbrushes. (laughter) We'll probably take a year or two to do it. Jack'll do ten pages an hour as he usually does, and I'll probably write ten pages a week. Sooner or later, we'll get it finished.

Actually, I have a terrible problem. I don't know what I am. Sometimes when strangers say to me, "What do you do?", my first



Pencils from Machine Man #6, page 3.

ROY THOMAS INTERVIEW

Interviewed by Jim Amash

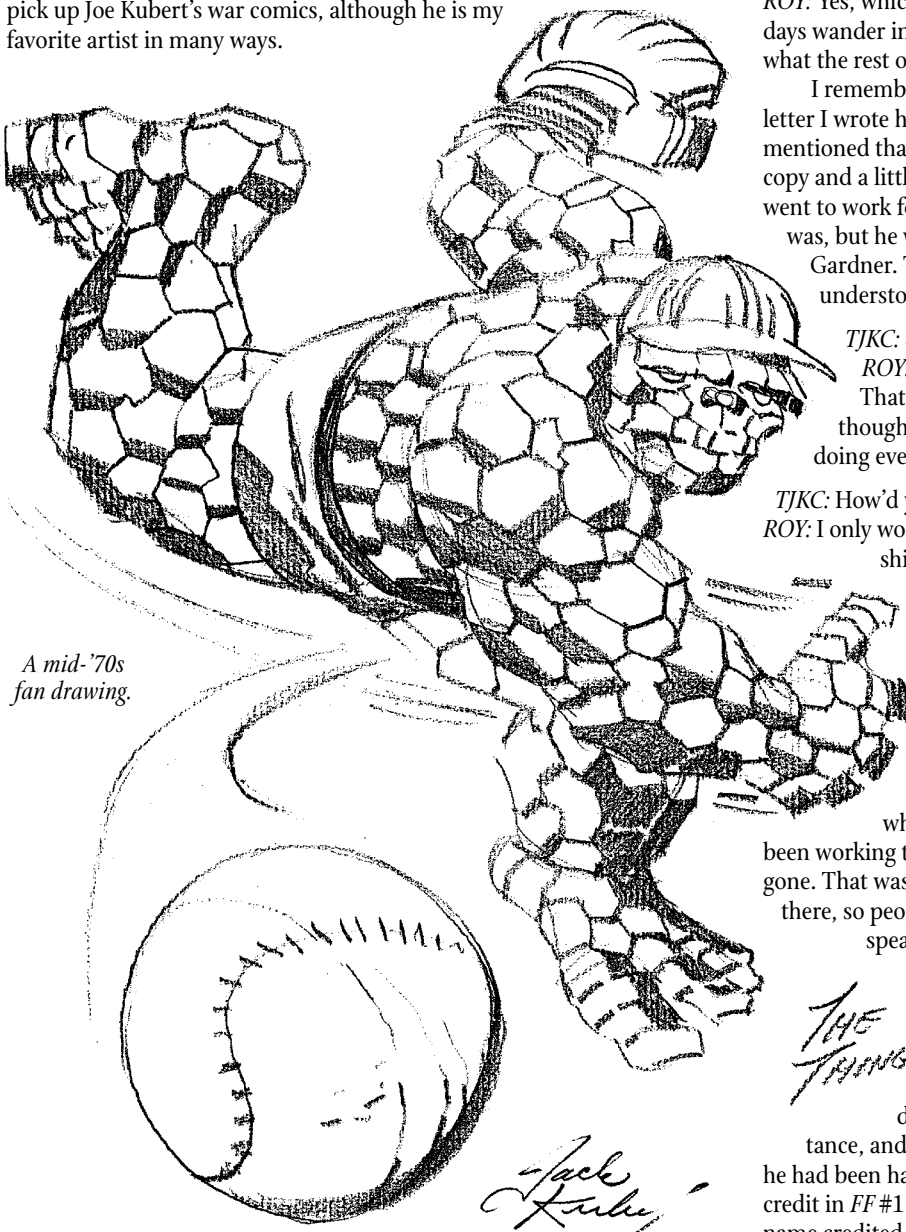
(Roy Thomas was born November 22, 1940. His involvement at the beginning of 1960s comics fandom led to his eventual employment as Stan Lee's assistant editor at Marvel Comics in 1965, and a lengthy career as one of comics' most prolific writers. This interview was conducted by phone in September 1997.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: When were you first aware of Jack's work?

ROY THOMAS: It must've been fairly early after the war, when Joe and Jack started up again in 1946 or '47. I recognized the names "Simon & Kirby" along with Joe Kubert's name as artists; I recognized both their styles, although Jack was imitated by more artists. And who knew what was Simon and what was Kirby, or still does exactly? I felt their stories were better written than most, and they certainly had their own unique style.

TJKC: Did you read their romance comics in the late 1940s?

ROY: I'm sure I saw the artwork and recognized the style, but I wouldn't necessarily have picked those up, just like I didn't generally pick up Joe Kubert's war comics, although he is my favorite artist in many ways.



A mid-'70s fan drawing.

TJKC: When did you get into fandom?

ROY: Comics fandom only really got started in early 1961, with Jerry Bails starting *Alter-Ego* and Don and Maggie Thompson starting *Comic Art* at almost exactly the same time. It began to get going in late 1960 when Jerry and I got in contact, even though the real impetus was him, not me. I was like Robin to his Batman, Tonto to his Lone Ranger. (laughter)

TJKC: Did being involved in fandom lead to meeting people like Kirby?

ROY: No, not really. I did exchange letters with a few people here and there, including Julie Schwartz, Gardner Fox, and Otto Binder, whom I call the three patron saints of *Alter Ego*. I was only helping Jerry by writing articles, so I wasn't doing a lot of corresponding with other professionals. The first pro I ever met — in the Spring of 1965 — was Wendell Crowley, who had been the editor of all the Captain Marvel comics. He'd gone into the family lumber business after Fawcett folded its comics line. He came through St. Louis and called me up, because we'd exchanged one or two letters. I skipped school, (laughter) and we split a pizza that day. He told me I was an old man, getting into the business at age 24, (laughter) compared to him and all the people that started in the forties. I guess at 24, maybe I was. I'd already had four years of another adult career.

TJKC: You were a teacher, right?

ROY: Yes, which I think is kinda good. I think too many people nowadays wander into comics as writers and artists, and they have no idea what the rest of the world is like, and I had a little of that anyway.

I remember my only contact with Stan Lee in those days was a letter I wrote him; I'd missed an issue of *Spider-Man* (#4 or #5), and mentioned that I was going to hunt it down, and he kindly sent me a copy and a little note. It was the only contact we ever had up until I went to work for him. He was aware of who I was and what *Alter Ego* was, but he wasn't the same kind of correspondent as Julie and Gardner. They'd write occasionally, and that was all I'd expect; I understood they were busy with other concerns.

TJKC: Stan was busy being an editor, too.

ROY: Yeah, editor and writer; he was working pretty hard. That's one reason I didn't ask him for a job. Who'd have thought he needed any help? He looked like he was happy doing everything himself.

TJKC: How'd you finally get that job with Stan, and meet Jack?

ROY: I only worked for DC for a couple of weeks in 1965, and I jumped ship to Marvel when Stan offered me a job, because I was unhappy working for Mort Weisinger. Of course, people didn't come into the office that much, and at Marvel, much less than DC. Marvel didn't have much in the way of offices; just three or four little rooms. Stan's office was as big as everything else put together, and Sol Brodsky, Flo Steinberg, and Marie Severin were crowded into two other little rooms. There was somebody else who was working on commercial comics, who was sort of half a comics person. Steve Skeates had been working there a week or two before I came in, and was soon gone. That was really about it. There were not many people working there, so people just brought in their work. Ditko and Stan weren't speaking by that point. So Ditko would come in, deliver his stuff to Sol, Sol would take it in to Stan; it was a very weird, strained atmosphere. Jack and Stan were still getting along pretty well. They'd go out to lunch together occasionally when Jack would come in. I was introduced to him, but I don't remember "the day I met Kirby." But I was well aware of his importance, and from the first issue of *Fantastic Four* I was aware that he had been half of the Simon & Kirby team, even though the original credit in *FF* #1 was only for "J. Kirby," and Stan Lee had his whole name credited. Jack's name got abbreviated for some reason.

THE THING

TJKC: We see a lot of that. We saw a lot of "S. Ditko" too. (laughter)
 ROY: Some people said Stan did it because his name was so short, and he didn't want anybody's name to be longer than his, (laughter) but I don't think so. I don't know how it happened; it wasn't happening when I came there.

There were only a couple of Kirby-related incidents I really remember about that first year or two. One of them was a lunch, and I don't think Stan was there. I may have had lunch once or twice with Stan and Jack and a couple of people, but never with Jack by himself. I remember this one lunch with Jack, and probably Sol Brodsky and John Romita and Frank Giacoia; five or six of us. This was one of the relatively few times Jack had lunch with us, as opposed to Stan. The only thing I remember from that lunch, besides nice anecdotes and being with an entertaining guy, was somebody asking, "What's going to be the next big thing in comics?" Super-heroes had been going for years; what's next? Jack said, "I don't know any more than anybody else, but the one thing I can tell you is, it's not gonna be me, and it's not gonna be Stan Lee. It's gonna be two guys in a garage somewhere, coming up with something, just like Siegel and Shuster did." I think of that from time to time, when I see something like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* come out. There's a certain amount of truth to that, that these things come out of nowhere. And it's as likely to be done by an unknown as it is by an established professional.

The other incident I remember was one of the seminal problems that I know Stan has always felt led to — not exactly a final break between Jack and Stan, but heaping more coals on the fire of animosity that Jack felt, I think more than Stan, probably because Stan's position was more secure. Jack was the key artist. No one was going to replace him, but on the other hand he had no real secure situation like Stan. There was a big article in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, where some reporter came in and interviewed Stan and Jack. For some reason, I was called in to be a witness or whatever, because I certainly took no part in it. We're talking within six months or a year of when I started there. Stan is always "on," and he's promoting Stan, but he's also promoting Jack. I saw that, y'know? And Jack would jump in with his own pronouncements, and Stan strides around, and Jack just kind of sits there, but he was eloquent enough in his own way. And the reporter is more interested in Stan, but at the same time is talking to Jack. And then the article came out, which of course Stan didn't have any prior approval of. The article is somehow very unfavorable toward Jack. It talks about him sitting there in a Robert Hall suit, and Stan saying something, and Jack falling off his chair in glee. It sort of put down Jack in a way that made Stan very embarrassed, and Jack very upset. Stan always had the feeling that Jack felt Stan had somehow maneuvered that. And other than Stan being Stan, and Jack being Jack, and this reporter having his own agenda, I just didn't see any of that. There was no jockeying between Stan and Jack as to who was the top person, but of course Stan was the editor, and he's the person who was doing the writing, and he's a little more eloquent in speaking, maybe, than Jack was. But it was just one of those unfortunate situations that I think really did heap a lot of coals on the

fire, and Stan always considered it an important turning point in his relationship with Jack. But there's no way to prove that or straighten it out. How do you say, "I didn't do it. I wasn't responsible for what this reporter wrote."?

Within a few years, Jack had moved out to California, as one of the first comics people to do that. His status was such that he could afford to do that, and Marvel would keep working with him, even if Stan was probably reluctant to see him leave, for the lack of personal contact. Once Jack moved out to L.A., I didn't have much more contact with him. I do have this weird memory that I'm sure about, though it's a bit vague. It was after Jack moved out to L.A. At some stage, Stan called me into his office, and told me Jack had some new characters he wanted to do, some new concepts and ideas. And Stan was very happy wanting to keep Jack on *Thor* and *Fantastic Four*. I've always had the feeling that it may have been Jack thinking of offering Marvel things like the *New Gods*.

It was not that much longer after that that he quit. I know Stan was very upset, and a little depressed when he called me and Sol into the office to tell us Kirby had just called to quit. When he quit, he was already working for DC. He had already set up everything else before he even told Stan he was thinking of quitting. I think this is because Jack bottled it all in, so when he quit, he had to do it as a clean, total break, with no niceties. You can see where almost anybody would be upset in that kind of circumstance.

TJKC: I take it Stan didn't see it coming.

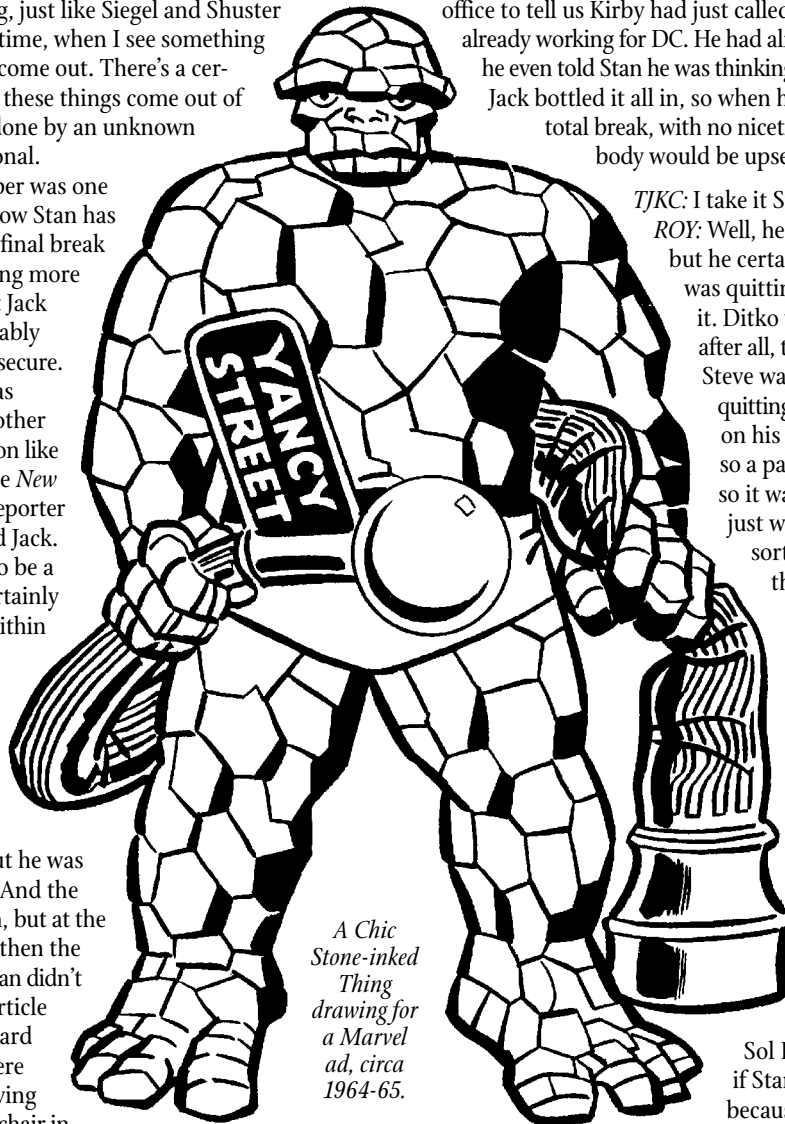
ROY: Well, he knew there were some difficulties, but he certainly didn't see it coming that Jack was quitting, or I never got any indication of it. Ditko wasn't a great surprise, because after all, they weren't speaking, and one day Steve walked in and just told Sol he was quitting. Sol was sitting there with a memo on his desk to give Steve a raise of \$5 or so a page, or whatever they could afford, so it wasn't a matter of the money. He just wanted to quit. But with Jack, he sort of bottled it up, and Stan knew there were problems, but he didn't know how deep they ran.

Some of the problems were about what should be done, or shouldn't be done, which is a matter of opinion. Some people are so rabidly pro-Jack that anything Stan does is automatically seen as being the work of the devil. (laughter) Stan is being castigated for every time he asked Jack for a correction, like it's automatically wrong. And it isn't. Stan was the editor; he was responsible for quality control. Production manager

Sol Brodsky would get very frustrated if Stan wanted Jack to do a correction, because Jack just wasn't good at corrections. The thing about Jack is, he had seen

the thing already in his mind before he drew it. To him, drawing was almost like photographing the strange, realistic world that he saw inside, which was his genius, his talent. For somebody to tell him, "Can you change this facial expression?" or do a different arm or something; it's like telling Jack to forge a photograph, almost. It just wasn't the way he saw it. That's why John Romita and other people would be asked to do faces on Jack's art.

I know I was happy when Jack finally did one *Conan* cover for a



A Chic Stone-inked Thing drawing for a Marvel ad, circa 1964-65.

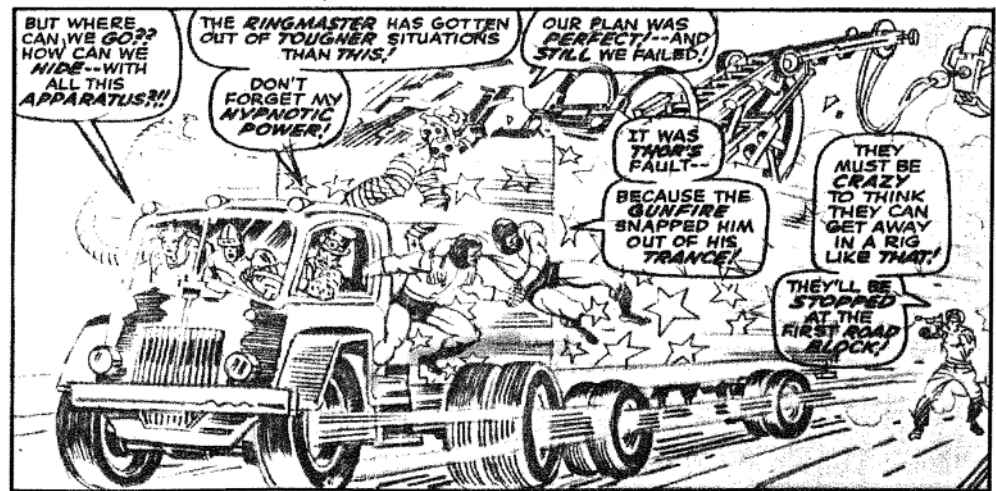
CGI ELEMENT USED IN GOLDEN AGE
WHICH ALMOST CAME OFF

reprint that had Conan and Elric on it. Stan had John Romita do the face over, so it still wasn't quite a Kirby drawing. It's annoying; as much as I love Romita, I wanted to have a Kirby face on that cover. I know it wasn't me who had it changed. It was usually either Stan who had a drawing changed, or Romita might change it on his own, knowing that Stan would want him to change it. John was very good at anticipating Stan, and sometimes when people thought Romita was changing it on his own authority, he was doing it, yes. But he was very good at anticipating what Stan wanted him to do, which is why he stayed art director until the time he retired.

Aesthetically it's impossible to say "Stan was right" or "Jack was right." Maybe sometimes it wasn't handled as tactfully as it could have been. Mostly, Stan would just have people do it. If Jack had been there, they might have talked. But because Jack was off in California, I think these things festered more than they needed to, because they never got together to talk it over. The distance didn't help that situation.

TJKC: Especially on *Thor*, a lot of 1960s covers Jack did were rejected.
ROY: Stan didn't talk to us when he had a cover done over. Stan had his own ideas of the covers, and he was ultimately responsible for them. So it was his right, and maybe if Jack had been there they could have talked it over, but increasingly, as Jack was out of the area, they couldn't even do that.

TJKC: So you think the distance led to the deterioration of the relationship?
ROY: I think it did, although the fact remains it could've gone to pieces anyway. After all, Jack went to work for another company and was equally distant from them. Within a couple of years, that relationship floundered as well. Despite Funky Flashman, Houseroy, and the whole thing in-between, when I was out there in the summer of 1974 for the San Diego convention, several people — Jack and their son Neal and probably Roz and maybe someone else — got together with me to my surprise to talk about the possibility of Jack coming back to Marvel then, about a year before he actually did. It didn't quite come to anything just yet, but it was obvious that within that three or four years, the bloom was definitely off the rose at DC, too, and Carmine was now the enemy, as he was to many other people. Again, I'm not saying whether Jack was right or wrong; at some stage, when Jack got tired of trying to talk to people, or he didn't feel he could, he'd just move on to something else. And all I could say to Jack was, "The only thing between you really is that Stan was a little hurt about the way you left, but that's not a big deal. And the Funky Flashman stuff bothered him a little bit, because it seemed, to Stan at least, some-



THOR
LATER
IN
POLICE
STATION
IS
GIVEN
QUESTIONS
BY
DETECTIVES



OKAY-- LOCK HIM UP --
INFORM HIM OF HIS RIGHTS --

WE'LL TAKE THAT
HAMMER

Pencils from Thor #147, page 4.

what mean-spirited." I said to Jack, "I don't take the Houseroy stuff that personally, because you don't know me. My relationship to Stan was somewhat like what you said, and partly it's just a caricature because I was there. And the name 'Houseroy' is clever as hell, and I kinda like it." I'm even a sympathetic character because I got tossed to the wolves. (laughter) But I said, "We can get past that. Stan would love to have you back; he never wanted you to leave." The only thing is, a month or two later I left myself, and it took several more months, and I was gone by the time Jack actually came back.

TJKC: There was a mention in *Rocket's Blast ComiCollector* that Jack was thinking about coming back as early as 1972, and would take over *X-Men*.

SUPER-HEROES WITH SUPER PROBLEMS

by Nat Freedland

Originally published in the New York Herald Tribune Sunday Magazine Section on January 9, 1966

(Editor's Note: This is the article that, as mentioned in this issue's Roy Thomas interview, was a turning point in the relationship between Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. The interview for this article probably took place in November or December 1965, due to Stan's comments about Federico Fellini returning "in January." The art that accompanied the article was from the cover of *Fantastic Four* #49, and the page mentioned in the first paragraph is from *Fantastic Four* #50, cover-dated May 1966, which would have been on newsstands about the time this article appeared. The plotting conference at the end of this article was for *FF* #55, an issue just after the most prolific period of new character creation on the series. Steve Ditko also quit Marvel Comics around the time this article saw print.)

On the drawing board is a big oaktag sheet recording the *Fantastic Four*'s last-ditch struggle to save Earth from being "drained of all basic elements" by the godlike villain Galactus. One picture shows cosmic force rays bombarding Manhattan. Stan Lee, chief writer-editor of Marvel Comics, tells production man Sol Brodsky, "It's not clear that the rays are hitting now." He thinks for a few seconds and then pencils in "ZIK, ZIK, ZIK" at the points of impact. No other comic book writer would have wasted that few seconds to think what cosmic force rays sound like. They would have just written "Pow" or "Zap" or something equally conventional.

Stan Lee, 43, is a native New Yorker, an ultra-Madison Avenue, rangy lookalike of Rex Harrison. He's got that horsy jaw and humorous eyes, thinning but tasteful gray hair, the brightest-colored Ivy League wardrobe in captivity and a deep suntan that comes from working every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday on his suburban terrace, cranking out three complete Marvel mags weekly.

He is also a good mimic and does a fine reproduction of that rolling, Continental voice we were hearing on the class TV interviews back in October. That voice got on the phone to Marvel Comics at 625 Madison Avenue and said, "Hello, this is Federico Fellini. I like very much your comics. In one hour I come see you, yes?"

No, it wasn't a put-on. Somebody had shown Fellini a couple of Lee's Marvel masterpieces while the great Italian film director was racked out with a virus at the Hotel Pierre. Fellini turned up at Stan Lee's office with a medium-sized entourage his first day out of sickbed. "He's my buddy now," says Lee. "He invited me to come to see him at his villa any time I'm in Rome. I'm supposed to take him to the cartoonists' convention when he's back here for the *Sweet Charity* opening in January."

Stan Lee drew a bigger audience than President Eisenhower when he spoke last year at Bard, one of the hippest schools on the Eastern Seaboard. Co-ed dormitories! From the Ivy League to the Pacific Coast Conference, 125 campuses have their own chapter of the "Merry Marvel Marching Society." The M.M.M.S. is at Oxford and Cambridge, too.

Pre-college Marvel fans at times have taken to assembling on the corner of Madison and 58th Street, waving wildly with homemade signs whenever anybody appears at the second-floor windows of Marvel's three workrooms. "Like we were the Beatles or something," Lee muses.

In terms of the real world, all this adulation means that Marvel circulation has tripled in three and a half years. With an annual circulation of 35 million, Marvel (which puts out 17 super-type comic books) is now a comfortable number two in the comics industry, gradually edging up on the long-established Superman DC line.

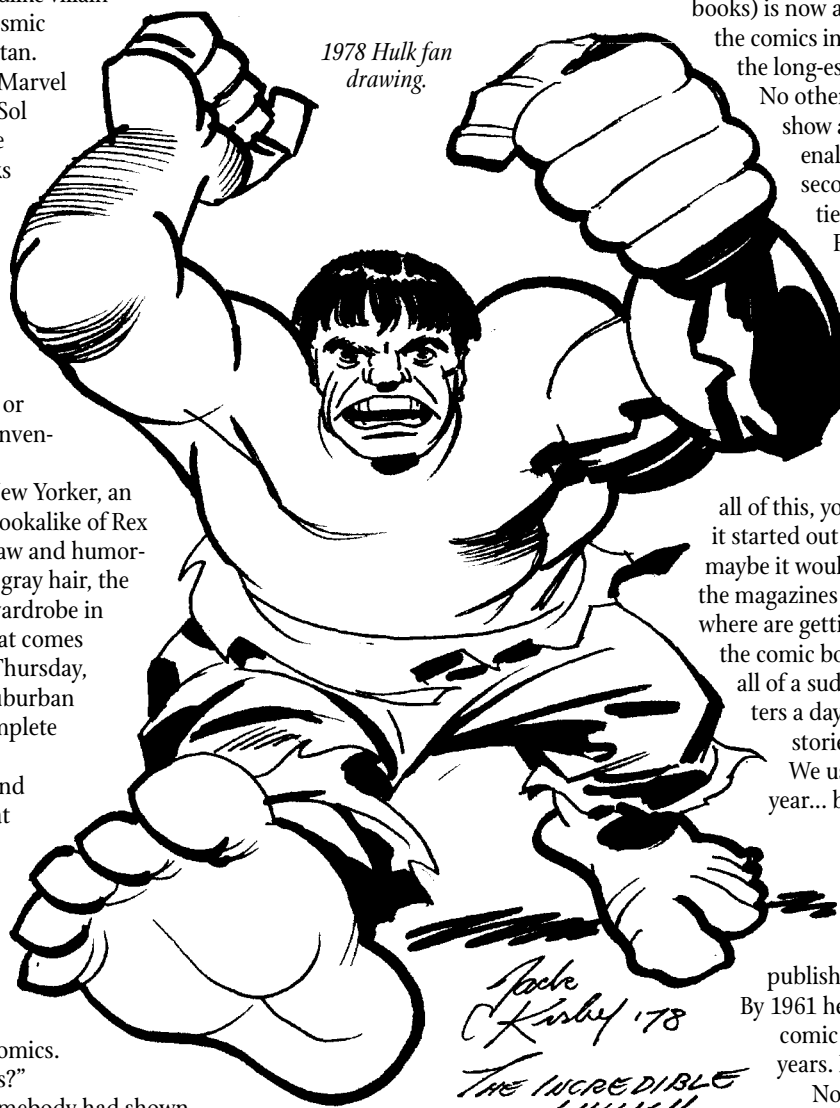
No other comic book publisher can show anything like Marvel's phenomenal sales growth in the Sixties. A secondary harvest of promotion tie-ins is starting to bloom, too. Forty thousand Marvelites have come up with a dollar for their Merry Marvel Marching Society kits. In the works are plastic models, games, a Spider-Man jazz record, and a television cartoon series.

"We really never expected all of this, you know," Lee admits. "I mean it started out as a gag, mostly. I just thought maybe it would be worth trying to upgrade the magazines a little bit. Audiences everywhere are getting hipper these days. Why not the comic book audience, too? And then all of a sudden we were getting 500 letters a day about what great satire these stories were, and how significant. We used to get about one letter a year... before."

Before Stan Lee dreamed up the "Marvel Age of Comics" in 1961. When Lee went to work for the comic book division at Martin Goodman's publishing outfit he was 17 years old. By 1961 he had been manufacturing comic strips at the same stand for 20 years. It was getting to be tiresome.

Nostalgia about old comic books is a large item now, what with Pop art and Camp riding high, but fond remembrance of childhood joys is one thing, and actually reading that stuff is something quite different. It's no accident most adults outgrew the comics of their day at puberty. The carefully selected samples in Jules Feiffer's *Great Comic Book Heroes* anthology give pleasure because they are perfect examples of their form. But as the same old tired stories and stiff drawings were

1978 Hulk fan drawing.



GEORGE "INKY" ROUSSOS INTERVIEWED

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(Familiar to modern fans mostly as a colorist, George Roussos has had a career in comics which spans back to the dawn of the art form, beginning as a background inker for Bob Kane's studio on Batman. Working for nearly every comics publisher, George earned his keep as penciler, inker, letterer, and correction artist beside a veritable Who's Who of the industry and, astonishingly, after 57 years he still works in the business today as staff cover colorist for Marvel Comics. This interview was conducted by phone on May 27 and November 26, 1997.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: When did you start working in comics?

GEORGE ROUSSOS: In 1940, I started work with DC Comics. First, I worked directly with Bob Kane on *Batman* in his studio, but the character became very popular and he couldn't produce the work fast enough — he was very slow — so they decided that Jerry Robinson and I would go into the office several months later.

I was doing the backgrounds and lettering on *Batman* and Jerry was doing the figures. Bob would send us the pages. This way the office was able to keep tabs on us.

TJKC: In those early years, did you like working on *Batman*?

GEORGE: I liked it, but it's hard for me to explain it. At this moment I see it in such an odd way. I imagine it was mostly in the economics — I needed a job — and that was the emphasis primarily in whatever I did. That's why I've never succeeded like others did. The others threw themselves in totally and I was never able to do that.

TJKC: Did you work at Timely in the '40s?

GEORGE: There was a guy by the name of Bernie Klein (who later got killed in the Army) who was a sports cartoonist, and he wanted me as an assistant. (They all wanted to use me because of the technique I developed on *Batman* for the backgrounds.) Bernie got a job from Jack Kirby to do some inking on *Captain America* and I did the backgrounds on it. I think it was the third issue.

TJKC: Did the fact that Simon & Kirby were going over to National have any effect in the office?

GEORGE: Yes, everyone was impressed with Simon & Kirby. We were all impressed with Jack's very unusual, terrific style.

TJKC: When did you first meet Joe Simon and Jack Kirby?

GEORGE: I met them at DC, while I was on staff, when they began bringing in their *Boy Commandos* pages. I spent more time with Jack. For some odd reason, Jack penciled a drawing and he asked me to ink it. I inked it very quickly and he was very pleased with it

because I followed what he had penciled; his pencils were quite precise. Joe I remember vaguely. I do remember that the artwork was on illustration boards — it look liked they brought in the Ten Commandments — there were so many pages and they were so thick! (laughter)

TJKC: Do you remember how they worked?

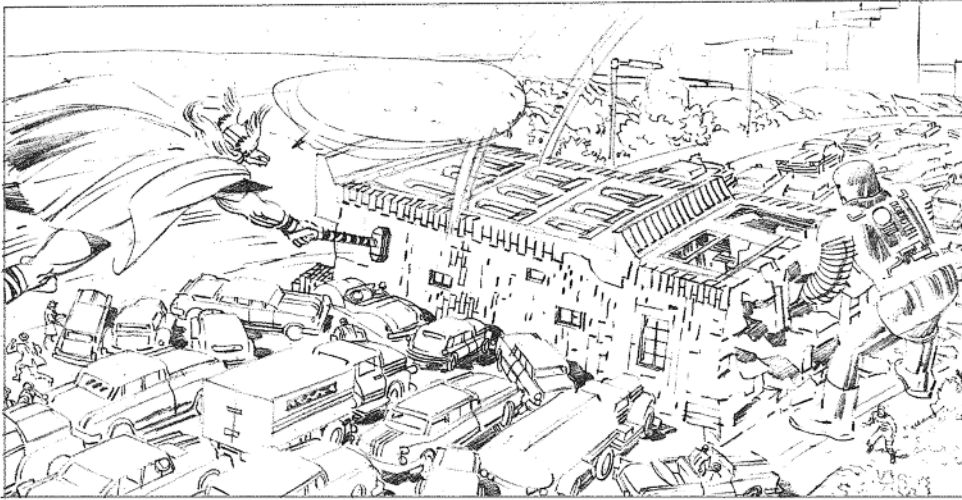
GEORGE: Joe was the writer — he never trusted Jack with the writing — and Jack would do the penciling, which Joe would ink. Sometimes both of them pitched in to ink.

TJKC: When did you get the nickname "Inky"?

GEORGE: It was given to me by Bob Wood because I was doing a lot of inking. He wrote a story using me as a villain named "Inky" Roussos in one of his books. And then Jack Kirby picked it up and he



(this and next 3 pages) Pencils from pages 10-13 of Journey Into Mystery #101, which George "Bell" Roussos inked. We ran the first nine pages of pencils from this story in TJKC #14.



always called me "Inky" every time he saw me.

TJKC: So Simon & Kirby named their newspaper strip after you?

GEORGE: No. I believe there was a play on Broadway about a cartoonist. I don't know if Bob swiped it or whatever.

TJKC: Did you enjoy the work of Mort Meskin?

GEORGE: Oh, Mort I liked very much. He lived just downstairs from me in the Village. I worked with Mort and, in fact, helped him out of a very difficult situation that he got into. Mort was a very uncertain guy, extremely sensitive. He got in trouble with the office for some reason, with Whit Ellsworth — some kind of disagreement; probably the artistic temperament out of control — and they asked me to take over his work. (Mort did "Johnny Quick" and "Vigilante.") I tried to get him back again. They were doing the movie serial of Vigilante and we were to do a 16-page giveaway for the movie theatres, and I told Whit that this was a bit too much for me to handle. I could ask Mort to do the penciling

and I would finish it off. So I was able to get him back.

TJKC: Was Mort heavily influenced by Kirby?
GEORGE: No. He was influenced by the artist who drew *The Shadow*; the pulp illustrator. It was line drawings with crayon shading of grays.

TJKC: Mort's work always reminded me of Kirby's, what with all the action.

GEORGE: Mort's work was more graceful. Jack's was exaggerated action and dramatic — one leg would be about ten feet away from the other. Mort was a gymnast so it had an influence on his Johnny Quick and Vigilante. Mort was graceful, but Jack was dynamic. Later on, Mort left comics and went into the advertising field.

TJKC: Besides the *Captain America* story, did you work for Simon & Kirby in the '40s?

GEORGE: No, but later on I worked on some mystery stories or something — nothing very important. I inked a few jobs of Jack's but I don't remember them.

TJKC: Did you go into the office when they worked up at Crestwood?

GEORGE: Yes, in fact I worked in the office sometimes. They were up somewhere off Broadway. It was not bad, a small outfit, a lot of fun. Ben Oda, the letterer was there. Carmine Infantino's younger brother worked there for awhile; very nice guy. Marv Stein and Mort Meskin were there. I was working there on a freelance basis. I liked working with Joe and Jack. Joe was the real business manager; very clever, efficient guy, and also an excellent artist. He was the brains.

Jack was there at the drawing board. He hardly talked; he just *produced*. So there was a lot of energy inside of him that he didn't waste on talking and kidding around. He'd do six or seven pages, starting from the left side and go right across, the next line and the next line... (*laughter*) amazing guy, really. It was a very pleasant atmosphere and I enjoyed working there.

When some difficulties arose at Crestwood, a few artists weren't paid. This caused a lot of resentment toward Joe and

Jack, and they avoided them. I met Jack later at an art store at Grand Central Station. He was happy to see me, and I sensed he wanted to talk. So we walked to Stan Lee's office and back to Grand Central. He was talking away. I wish I had that dialogue today, but who would ever think that someone would come along and ask questions! (*laughter*) We covered every subject, only he did all the talking. I guess it was a pent-up energy and he was rather hurt that people took out their anger on him — unnecessarily he felt.

TJKC: Were the troubles tied to Wertham and the downfall of comics?

GEORGE: I don't know if it had anything to do with that. I was surprised because prior to the situation, the books were selling as much as 95 percent. I don't know what happened to bring them down. Their books were nice and clean. They weren't doing the weird things Gaines was doing, and shouldn't have been criticized. Gaines and Bob Wood's books — they're the guys who created the monster.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JOHN ROMITA PANEL

Held at Comic Con International: San Diego on July 19, 1997
Transcribed by John Morrow

QUESTION: When did you start working on *Spider-Man*?

JOHN ROMITA: I started it in 1966, but only because Stan absolutely conned me. (laughter) Before I actually agreed to pencil any stories for him, he took me out to lunch and hit me with everything in the book. I told him I had taken a job at (advertising agency) BBD&O. He said, "Do you want to be a little fish in a big pond, or a big fish in a little pond?" I've been in this little pond for 46 years now, and I've always made a living, so I guess I made the right decision. I don't have an ulcer, and I've got a wonderful son that works in the business, so I'm very grateful to all the fans who care and remember. I'm still amazed that people remember my artwork from the Sixties.

QUESTION: What's your favorite issue of *Spider-Man*?

ROMITA: There was a two-story arc having to do with Flash Thompson returning from Viet Nam, where some Southeast Asians

were out to kill him because they felt he had desecrated their temple when he was a GI. It was my plot, a lot of it was my idea. Stan injected Dr. Strange into the second half, which was great. That second half is in the book *The Art Of John Romita*, the whole story. It's my favorite because I like the story, and also because I was a *Terry and the Pirates* freak when I grew up. I used to absorb it through my pores every Sunday, and in that storyline I had a big Chinese chauffeur who was based on Big Stoop.

QUESTION: Was there a scramble when Steve Ditko suddenly quit *Spider-Man*?

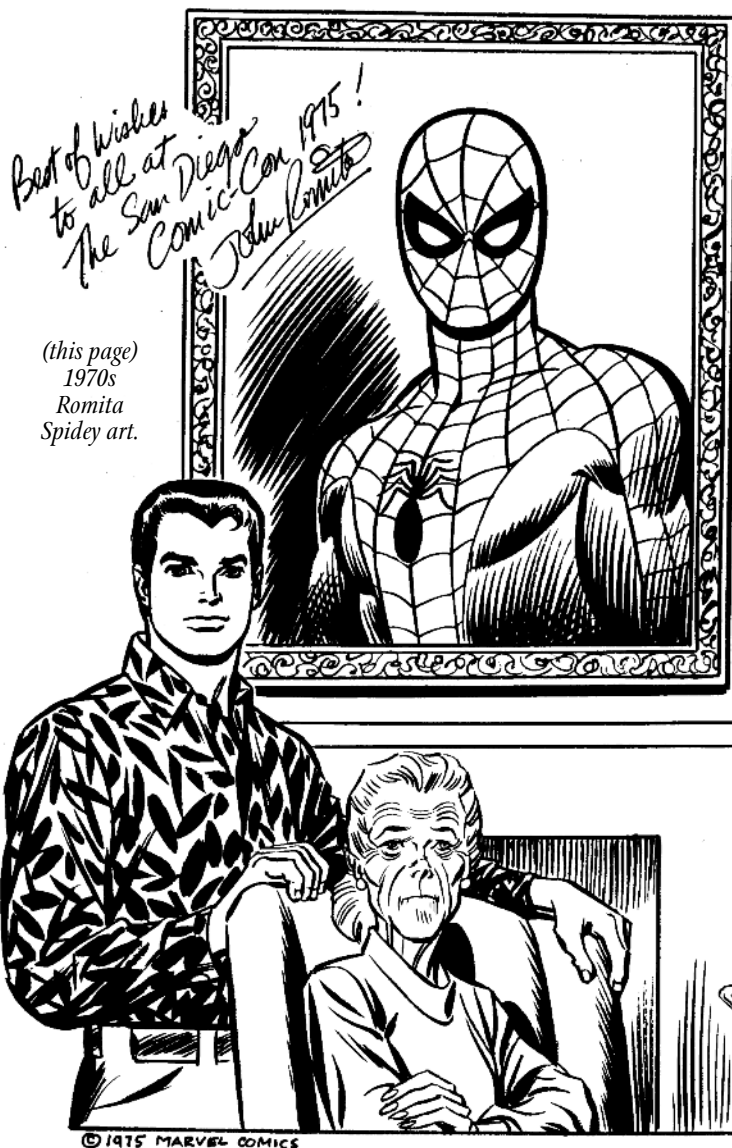
ROMITA: I had heard a couple of times that he was thinking of leaving. He and Stan didn't get along; they disagreed on plotting, they disagreed on motivations for the characters, and I found out later on they disagreed on the identity of the Green Goblin — and I think that's what broke the camel's back — but there wasn't a scramble. Stan asked me to draw *Spider-Man* as a guest star in *Daredevil* #16 and #17. That was sort of like a try-out. But frankly, I thought Ditko was just going to leave for a few months until he got over his anger, and then come back. If I had created a character like *Spider-Man*, and he was getting bigger and bigger every year, I wouldn't have given it up. I don't care if I was working for Godzilla, it wouldn't have mattered. I always got along with editors because I let them have their way. I always figured my obligation was to give him everything he wanted, as close to what I liked as possible, but more what he wanted than what I wanted. I thought that was the obligation of a paid artist.

Ditko was really ahead of his time; he was like the young artists today. They want to inject their own feelings and their own version of everything. When I took it over, my generation felt the obligation to ghost a book. If you look at my first few issues, they look like Ditko. I tried to make them look so much like Ditko that nobody'd notice. I thought that's what a guy should do when he took over a successful book. It was a failure, but I figured they wanted to see Ditko — and let me tell you, young fans were absolutely cruel to me for at least eighteen months. Every time I ran into fans, they would say, "When is Ditko coming back?" It hurt me, but I also understood it. Frankly, up until maybe 1968, I felt like a stranger on that book, ghosting for somebody else temporarily. I never quite lost that sense of being out of place all during my run on *Spider-Man*.

QUESTION: But sales rose.

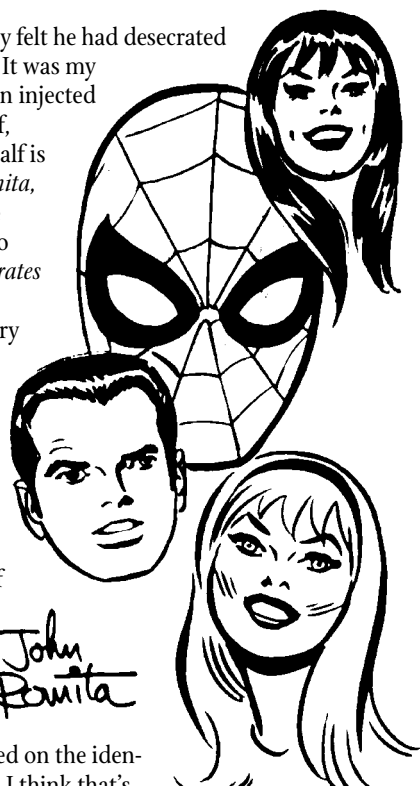
ROMITA: Well, that's the reason I'm here. (laughter) I'm credited everywhere as the man who brought *Spider-Man* up to number one; *Fantastic Four* was our best-selling title before that. When I first saw the book, Stan gave me the first 33 issues to look over, and I said, "Gee, it looks silly. It looks dumb." By the time I reached the twenties, I realized Ditko was really rolling. I had an interview once that just quoted the first part of that statement, that I thought it was silly and crude. That's all that ever got into print, and it's a wonder Ditko ever talked to me after that. They never put in the other part that said how much I loved it and respected it after I got into the run.

The first thing today's artists want to do is change the costume, the characters. They want to make it scary and heavy and



(next page) Romita & Steranko made face changes to this Captain America #102 page.

John Romita



dark. Stan always wanted it lighthearted with laughs. The reason we killed people like Gwen Stacy and Captain Stacy was because Stan made it so lighthearted, people were starting to take it for granted. Nobody would ever get hurt, nobody was getting killed. So we killed Captain Stacy, and then Gwen, because we wanted the readers to see, every issue, they don't know who's gonna survive.

QUESTION: Where did Mary Jane come from?

ROMITA: She was in the book about three or four issues before I took it over; but this is another reason they disagreed — I don't know if Ditko wanted her to be unattractive, and Stan wanted her beautiful, or vice versa — but they never could agree on what she looked like, so in her first few appearances it was a suspenseful gimmick where Peter Parker is supposed to meet this girl, and he kept breaking the appointment. There was this scene where this huge flower was blocking her face; all you could see was the back of her hair, and you saw her in silhouette and shadows. They couldn't decide on her look. So when I took over the book, after we decided that Norman Osborn was going to be the Goblin — Stan decided, I didn't decide; he just told me; that's why I was on the book (laughter) — the second thing he did was ask me what I thought about Mary Jane. I thought she should really be a knockout, and really ooh him. This way, he'd be ducking her for a year, and when he finally sees her, he'd say, "What, was I stupid?" He went along with that, and I did a sketch which I still have, the first sketch I ever made of her. It was based on Ann Margaret, with dimples and a cleft in her chin, and red in her hair.

When it came out, it didn't come out as good as I wanted. My first pencil sketch was much better, and my first penciling on that page looked better than the final inking. I almost went nuts because I didn't like what it looked like, and I tried two or three times to improve it, and I never could get it to where I wanted it. Slowly but surely I learned how to draw her.

I gotta tell you something about Stan and his terminology. He gave us all nicknames in lieu of money. (laughter) Martin Goodman was very tight with page rates. But when it came to nicknames, he had two names for me, and all the nicknames were based on your first or second initial. So I was "Ring-A-Ding" Romita sometimes, and I was "Jazzy" John sometimes. When my mother saw that, she said, "What's this 'Jazzy' John?" I said that was just one of the nicknames. She said, "You tell Mr. Stan Lee everybody can't be as fancy as he is." (laughter) She took it wrong, like it was a condescending wisecrack about the fact that I was a square, and that "Jazzy" was like a joke.

QUESTION: Who did Steve Ditko originally want the Goblin to be?

ROMITA: From what I've gathered — and this is secondhand information, because I never asked Steve this — he wanted it to be someone unknown. And his theory was sensible; this is the reason Stan and he disagreed a lot. Ditko had a feeling that more real life should be put into the strips, and I thought he was a pioneer that way. He wanted politics in the strip, he wanted sociological upheaval in the strip; that's

why there were riots on the campus in the strip and all that stuff. He was a very political animal, and he was very conservative too, as you probably know. He wanted all this stuff to look real, and he said, "In real life, if there's a masked criminal, and you unmask him, 99 times out of 100 it's going to be someone you never know." And Stan's like, "What are you talking about? We're not doing real life here; this is a guy who crawls on walls." (laughter)

QUESTION: What was the reaction when the Comics Code didn't approve the drug issues?

ROMITA: I plotted those stories with Stan, thinking I was going to do them, then he yanked me off them to do *Captain America* or *Fantastic Four* or something. Gil Kane always got the biggest issues, and I wanted to kill him. (laughter) I never got a chance to do one landmark issue.



MARIE SEVERIN INTERVIEW

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(Marie Severin is renowned for her humor, friendliness, and generosity, not to mention her exceptional capabilities. Best known for her satirical work on Marvel's Not Brand Echh, Marie is also an accomplished penciler, colorist, breakdown artist, and cover designer, achieving critical success with her brother John on the lauded Kull the Conqueror series in the early '70s. She also served as Marvel's art director for a brief period in the late '70s. This interview was conducted via phone on November 10, 1997.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How'd you get started in comics?

MARIE SEVERIN: John, my brother, was at EC and they weren't happy with the coloring. He suggested me to (Harvey) Kurtzman for the war books and I passed muster. Then Bill (Gaines) and Al (Feldstein) gave me the science fiction and horror. I did most of the covers but Harvey always did his own. They were chopping people up and doing all kinds of icky stuff... I figured it wouldn't be quite so offensive if I muted some icky stuff with darker colors — they called me a censor but they never would have let me hurt the storytelling.

TJKC: Was it a riotous atmosphere working with Bill Gaines?

MARIE: Oh, it was fun, but it was quite intense work. Guys didn't sit all day and talk to the editors. Al wrote intensely most of the day — Harvey, too. He brought in tons of layouts for all his books. We had breaks where they fooled around. One day, Al came to me with a push pin pasted on his palm, with some red ink. It looked painful, but being practical me, I just yanked it out and then saw the glue and the pin had no point, and the guys were just disgusted with me... the unshockable. Kurtzman was very intense and he knew what he wanted. I hated tramping around the city doing research with a duffel bag — this was 1953, and it wasn't in fashion! But he made me laugh a lot. He'd try out a little scene from a *Mad* story, and he would turn into one of his cartoons.

I learned a lot there. It was my first experience in comics. Al Williamson and I were the youngest. They paid well, and they paid right away. The workers worked and were respected.

I remember Williamson and his baseball team coming in; y'know, Frazetta and Torres and all of those guys. They were funny; they really were. They were so ahead of their times; they came in wearing dungarees and stuff, and in New York, all the guys had on shirts and ties. These guys were the forerunners of the '60s styles.

TJKC: What happened in 1954, when Bill went down to Washington to defend horror comics?

MARIE: That was awful. We were in the office, and it was on a poopy little black-&-white TV set. I was just annoyed. I remember saying to Johnny Craig, "Jeez, poor Bill. He's all alone there!" And then they held the cover of the book with the (severed) head on camera, and Johnny was saying, "Why my art?" (laughter) Years later, Bill was honored on TV with an award from the Horror Hall of Fame. He felt it vindicated EC. He was very proud of EC and his gang.

TJKC: When did you go over to talk to Stan about working for Atlas?
MARIE: The Comics Code knocked out the EC color books and I was working on *Mad*. But there wasn't that much to do. I didn't think *Mad* would last; ha-ha! I followed John to Stan, who was doing a wannabe *Mad*-type thing. He hired me as one of his production people. It was a big bullpen with Stan's office up front. John, Bill Everett, Joe Maneely, Danny Crespi, and a great bunch of letterers all worked together. Except for two proofreader ladies up front, I was the only gal. It was fun being in the middle of a bunch of guys, *except* when it got into exhaustive baseball discussions. Once I yelled at Artie Simek because he had not shut up for 40 minutes about the darn Yankees.

TJKC: How long did your initial stay with Marvel last?

MARIE: I think about a year and a half. The newsstands had more comic titles than they could handle, and with the overly strict Comics Code, the covers and stories were dopey. I went to work for the Federal Reserve Bank after getting laid off from Marvel and did a lot of their graphics. I also did a comic called *The Story of Checks*. John did the finished art. It was a classy-looking little book. I was hired away from there to do educational film strips for about a year.

Then I heard that Stan was reviving stuff, so in 1964 I brought my portfolio in. Stan said, "Marie, I'm so glad to see you! Sol needs someone to help him in production. Sol! Look who's here!" And I said, "Stan, I'm..." A couple of months later, *Esquire* magazine wanted to have an article on Marvel Comics on college campuses, or the Marvel-type art dealing with dope on campus. Anyway, Sol didn't want Kirby to endanger a deadline — which I'm sure would *not* have happened as Kirby could pop off the *Esquire* spread in an hour or two — so Sol sent me, as I had started doing penciling as well as production and coloring. When Martin Goodman saw the printed version, he said, "She shouldn't be doing paste-ups, she should be drawing." Ditko had just quit, and Bill Everett was getting sick, so I took over *Dr. Strange*. I was on staff all those years because I wanted something steady. I didn't want to be walking around New York in heels with a portfolio.

TJKC: Did you ever see Martin Goodman in the office?

MARIE: Sure. I'd pop into his office to thank him for a bonus. Once, when I knew he was out for the day, I took a nap on his couch. Nancy Murphy — the longest continual employee except for Stan — admired him a lot. Nancy handled his contributions to a big charity. Flo, Nancy and I keep in touch; we plan to blackmail the lot in our old age.

TJKC: Was Goodman involved in day-to-day operations of the comics?

MARIE: I don't really know. In the beginning, Stan had to check in with him about what was going on. When the company was sold, Stan was a free man. He had proven himself, and Martin didn't interfere, to my knowledge.

TJKC: What was Stan like when you met him?

MARIE: Oh, just the way he is now; a mixture of Jack Benny and Errol Flynn. He's funny and he's charming, and he's interesting. I like Stan. He was always a gentleman. One time he corrected me in front of the



(above) Marie's cover for Thor #175; strangely enough, it's signed by Jack. (next page) Jack's original, unused version of the cover.

INTERVIEW WITH THE INVISIBLE WOMAN, FLO STEINBERG

Interviewed by Michael Kraiger

(Hardly invisible herself, Flo Steinberg was there from the start as Stan Lee's loyal secretary/girl Friday. Stan gave her the moniker "Fabulous Flo" and if you meet her you'd know why. What has this to do with Jack Kirby? Well, in 1978, Jack Kirby wrote and penciled Marvel Comics' What If? #11 featuring a story entitled "What If The Original Marvel Bullpen Had Become The Fantastic Four?" The idea was Roy Thomas', who offered the concept to Jack Kirby. Jack took it and flew with it, returning to the Fantastic Four after eight years, not only to pencil the new story but, for the first time, to receive writing credit as well. In the story, Stan Lee becomes Mister Fantastic, Jack becomes the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing, production man Sol Brodsky becomes the Human Torch, and Flo Steinberg becomes the Invisible Girl.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: What does it feel like to be turned into the Invisible Woman?

FLO STEINBERG: It feels great! It's such a wonderful compliment, it's such a great story and I'm utterly flattered to have been immortalized by Jack. He's the best!

TJKC: When *What If?* #11 came out you were no longer working at Marvel. How did you find out about your role in the story?

FLO: It was 1978 and I was working at *ARTS* magazine. I was still connected to comics through friendships. Jim Shooter called me up and told me the whole premise — what Jack was doing — and he asked for my permission. I said, well, if Jack wants to do it, that's great! I'd be very pleased. I had to sign something, which I did, and they promised to send me some free comics, which they did. It was all done properly, so I wouldn't sue.

TJKC: What was your friends' reaction at the time to you becoming a member of Marvel's original super team?

FLO: Oh, my friends in comics thought it was a riot and just loved it. I got a wonderful kick out of it, too. My friends who weren't in comics didn't quite get it, but they thought it was funny. I reread it every once in a while and I'm just amazed at how Jack captured everybody's speaking patterns. Sol was just that way, very practical. Sol would have looked for the practical side of things, and figured how to get out of the situation. Rereading it, I find it a very warm and loving thing. I don't see any of those problems that developed years later which I wasn't party to. I'm sorry that happened.

This is so funny, this one (pointing to page 37, panel 3). It just cracks me up every time I read it, that one panel. I mean that's just... (In the panel, Flo Steinberg as the Invisible Girl is pleading with the Sub-Mariner.) "Oh, please listen to us, Prince Namor! We're simply aching to be our old selves again! We need your help so badly!" (laughter)

It just amazes me that he wrote this great copy that captured everybody so well, and I think it's done with affection and respect.

TJKC: What did you think of Jack's depiction of you? Do you think he got a good likeness?

FLO: Physically, yes, it's me, but I think he really caught me in my office mode so well. So many of the things that I said in there, I actually did say; Stan and Sol and Jack also. It really was how we all talked. You know, sometimes I was a little whiny when I needed to get things done.

TJKC: I don't know if he was working from memory or a photo, but I think he caught your eyes. I look at it and see Flo's eyes.

FLO: It's just the way we were in the office, and the way we talked. The way Stan speaks and writes, it's really the way he is. People really did say things like "honestly," and I did call them boys. Stan was always telling me to pipe down when I'd be bothering them about something. On page 15, where I bring in the box, I'm sure I actually did say things like, "Surprise, Stan! I've got something here that will brighten your day." And he would have said, "That's what I was lacking — a brighter day!" Jack caught the way we talked. I think he got our personalities perfectly.

TJKC: According to an editorial in that issue, this was Roy Thomas' idea, and he was meant to play the Human Torch, with either you or Marie Severin playing the part of the Invisible Girl.

FLO: That would have made Roy very happy, but I guess Jack was more comfortable with Sol, whom he had known forever.

TJKC: The story takes place after you open a mysterious package in the office. How typical was it for Jack to be in the office?



HERB TRIMPE INTERVIEW

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(Herb Trimpe, best known for over 100 issues of the Incredible Hulk, also worked in the Marvel Bullpen from 1966-'70. An accomplished biplane pilot, Herb is also recognized for outstanding work on Ant-Man, Killraven, and War is Hell stories during his freelance days in the '70s. He is now doing freelance art while studying to be an art teacher in New York. Herb was interviewed via telephone on November 12, 1997. The interview was transcribed by John Morrow and copy edited by Herb and his wife, Linda Fite.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: How did you get started in comics?

HERB TRIMPE: I came out of the Air Force in 1966; I'd just spent a year in Viet Nam. I had worked prior to entering the Air Force for a year or two for a man named Tom Gill who did mostly Gold Key and Dell comics. I did backgrounds for him, right out of art school, on western stuff like *Bonanza* and *The Lone Ranger*. Then I went into the service for four years. While I was in, a friend of mine who I went to art school with, John Verpoorten, was working at Marvel. When I left the service, John said, "Hey, you oughtta bring your stuff up, because we're looking for people." So I got some samples together. I had art school stuff; I'd gone to the School of Visual Arts after high school. I took some material up there and talked to Sol Brodsky, who was the production manager at the time. He gave me some inking work; for about eight months I worked on Werner Roth stuff, *Kid Colt*, *Rawhide Kid*. This was 1966. Kirby was already taking off, and all the big characters were already in place. I came in between generations. Barry Smith came in around the same time. It was a great atmosphere. Marie Severin was in the Bullpen.

Sol called me one day and said they didn't have enough work for me, but they did have a job in the production department coming up, operating the photostat machine. It'd be a full-time job, and I could pick up some freelance. So I said sure, great. I started at \$135 a week, which was okay in those days. I worked for about six months doing that, during the period I did the *Phantom Eagle* with Gary Friedrich for *Marvel Super-Heroes* #16. That was the first pencil and ink job I did.

TJKC: Were you hoping the book would take off?

HERB: In those days, artists weren't really linked with the creative effort as a package the way they are today. It was a very loose arrangement. If a book failed, it wasn't a black mark on any of the creative people. They considered the people that did the books to be competent professionals. If a book failed, they cancelled it and started up another, and you got another assignment. There was no such thing as failure. Roy and Stan might've felt like failures if a book failed, but as far as the creative people go, there was little attachment.

I wanted to draw like Jack Davis; I had a very cartoony adventure style. That was my natural style. When I got to Marvel, that all went out the window. Stan didn't say, "Draw like Kirby," but he was always throwing his storytelling style at me. Everybody had to look toward Kirby in the mid-Sixties.

So I worked in production for six months, and then the Hulk was in *Tales To Astonish*. Marie was doing the Hulk, and when it switched to his own magazine,

that was the first regular pencil assignment I got. Basically Stan said, "You want to draw the *Hulk*?" Marie was pretty much exploited, as we all were, I guess. To this day, she's one of the most versatile and talented artists — and I mean *artists*, not just comic book artists — I know. She can do anything. She's just astounding.

So I wound up on the *Hulk*. On that first issue, I did a couple of pages and took them in to show Stan, and he said, "No, no, no, no. Let me get Frank Giacoia in here." I always had very good storytelling ability, but I was used to the EC stuff. I liked Jack Davis, so there was a lot of in-close stuff; the subtle, weird stuff that he does. There wasn't enough slam-bang going on. So Frank laid the story out, and Stan said, "Do it like this. Watch Frank." I penciled over Frank's layouts. Frank laid the story out, and I followed it.

When I started on the *Hulk*, I basically worked there for another six months, and since I wasn't doing production anymore, there really wasn't any need to work in the office. So Stan says, "Why don't you work at home?" From that point I was a salaried quota person.

TJKC: Marie Severin said you were the last person who received direct attention from Stan.

HERB: Yeah, I was. Stan understood the whole philosophy of Marvel,

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You can really see the Kirby influence on Herb's Ant-Man, from Marvel Feature #4.

JOHN BUSCEMA INTERVIEW

Interviewed by Jon B. Cooke

(John Buscema came to join the Marvel Age of Comics in 1966, first working on Nick Fury and the Hulk. His exceptional artistry is fondly recalled on his repeated Avengers runs, Conan, the early Sub-Mariner issues, and the Fantastic Four. His Silver Surfer series is considered by some to be the finest super-hero comics ever to appear from the House of Ideas. John was interviewed via telephone on November 18, 1997.)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: Did you read comics as a kid?

JOHN BUSCEMA: Yes, I think I started around age 12. The first comic I ever saw blew my mind; it was *Superman*. By 14 or 15 I stopped reading comics. That was back around 1939-41.

TJKC: Do you remember seeing Kirby's work when you were a kid?

BUSCEMA: No. I probably did, but I saw Kirby's stuff, just a bit of it, when I started working for Marvel back in 1948. I saw one or two pages of pencils that he had done, that were laying around the studio there. I was very impressed with the drawing. It was a different style than he had later — very loose.



TJKC: Were you an avid reader of comic strips?

BUSCEMA: I was never really interested in the stories, but I was always interested in the drawings. The three artists I followed were Hal Foster, Alex Raymond, and Burne Hogarth. I don't know how many years of Sunday comics pages I saved, but then in 1957, I threw everything away. (laughter) I was angry. Comics were in a bad situation. I couldn't buy a job in those days. I'd worked for Marvel, I worked for Western Printing; I don't know how many different outfits. They all folded; it was like a domino effect. I just got ticked off, and all those strips and anything comic related that I'd saved, I threw out. When I think about it, tears well up in my eyes. (laughter)

TJKC: Did you have aspirations to be a comics artist?

BUSCEMA: No, I never really wanted to. I wanted to be a painter. But who could make a living at that?

TJKC: How'd you get into comics?

BUSCEMA: Funny, I never got anything making the rounds, until I read a "wanted" ad in the *New York Times*. Timely was looking for cartoonists. That's the first time I met Stan Lee.

TJKC: What was he like?

BUSCEMA: Like he is today, except he had a little more hair, I guess. (laughter) He was a very energetic guy, very personable guy. At the time I thought he was a genius, because I knew nothing about comics. He gave me a staff job, my first job in comics. I worked in a large room with a group of artists: Carl Burgos, Syd Shores, Danny DeCarlo, and Gene Colan were there. Bill Everett worked there too, but he wasn't on staff. There were many others, but I can't recall their names.

John took over Thor after Jack left Marvel; here are Jack's pencils from Journey Into Mystery #112.

A TALK WITH ARTIST-WRITER-EDITOR JACK KIRBY

Interviewed by Bruce Hamilton, and originally published in Rocket's Blast ComiCollector #81

(Editor's Note: This interview was conducted shortly after Jack left Marvel in 1970 to realize his Fourth World series at DC.)

BRUCE HAMILTON: Do you care to discuss your main reasons for switching to DC?

JACK KIRBY: I don't mind at all. I can only say that DC gave me my own editing affairs, and if I have an idea I can take credit for it. I don't have the feeling of repression that I had at Marvel. I don't say I wasn't comfortable at Marvel, but it had its frustrating moments and there was nothing I could do about it. When I got the opportunity to transfer to DC, I took it. At DC I'm given the privilege of being associated with my own ideas. If I did come up with an idea at Marvel, they'd take it away from me and I lost all association with it. I was never given credit for the writing which I did. Most of the writing at Marvel is done by the artist from the script.

BRUCE: Was the concept of the Fantastic Four your idea or Stan Lee's?

JACK: It was my idea. It was my idea to do it the way it was; my idea to develop it the way it was. I'm not saying that Stan had nothing to do with it. Of course he did.

We talked things out. As things went on, I began to work at home and I no longer came up to the office. I developed all the stuff at home and just sent it in. I had to come up with new ideas to help the strip sell. I was faced with the frustration of having to come up with new ideas and then having them taken from me. So, I was kind of caught in a box and I had to get out of that box, and when DC came along and gave me the opportunity to do it, I took it. I believe working for DC can lead to other experimentation and a better kind of comic book, and the kind of comic book that could lead to all sorts of different things.

BRUCE: What do you feel is your single greatest creation in 30 years of working in comics?

JACK: Well, there's no doubt that Captain America became some kind of an institution with some kind of a legendary status. I accept that as probably the big one.

BRUCE: Is it true that some of the things signed by Simon & Kirby actually contained work by other people?

JACK: Yes. We had, for instance, Eddie Herron, the man who created Captain Marvel. He was an editor for Fawcett who later became a writer for DC. He also created the Red Skull, which I used in an early *Captain America*. Compared to Captain Marvel, that became his biggest hit. In fact, the Red Skull stands out as a kind of an all-time villain. He proved to be a great character — but I didn't create him. And I used him to good effect. We had things like that from time to time.

BRUCE: There's been a continuing controversy whether you or Beck drew *Captain Marvel* #1 and who drew the *Special Edition* that came out before that. Did you do either one?

JACK: I did the *Special*. I originated the costume and all that business.

I did that for Eddie Herron.

BRUCE: Let's talk about the future. Is it true that Superman is really from New Genesis?

JACK: No, it's not. The people from New Genesis are not the kind of people who are made into persons of Superman's class, although they are super-beings in their own right. They don't stem from that kind of an origin.

BRUCE: John Clark of Phoenix came up with the idea the other day that maybe Superman was really the son of Highfather and that he'd been kidnapped by Darkseid and injected with a false memory of his origin. We thought it was interesting speculation.

JACK: There is a concept in the strip that the true son of Highfather is going to be brought out, but it's not Superman.

BRUCE: In your many years of collaboration with Joe Simon, we were wondering who usually wrote, who penciled, and who inked? Or did it sometimes vary?

JACK: Joe Simon is a very very competent man and he is quite capable of doing all those things, but I wrote them and I penciled them... and (*laughing*) I inked them half the time! It was a lot of fun doing them, though.

BRUCE: Is he still active in comics?

JACK: I don't know what Joe is doing. I haven't seen or talked to Joe in about five years.

BRUCE: You were quoted in an interview six or seven years ago as saying you didn't think the Alley Awards for the Best Artist were given to enough people. Would you care to comment on that?

JACK: Yes. I believe the Alley Awards were sewed up among a few people and were handled in a sort of clique fashion. In other words, they were dominated by one group, which gave it to one group. It became a kind of an overall self-promotional, which I thought was wrong. I feel that the people who handed out the Alley Awards stayed within their own likes and dislikes. They didn't give enough study to the other artists in the field who were doing pretty competent work for other books. This was because of the clique situation.

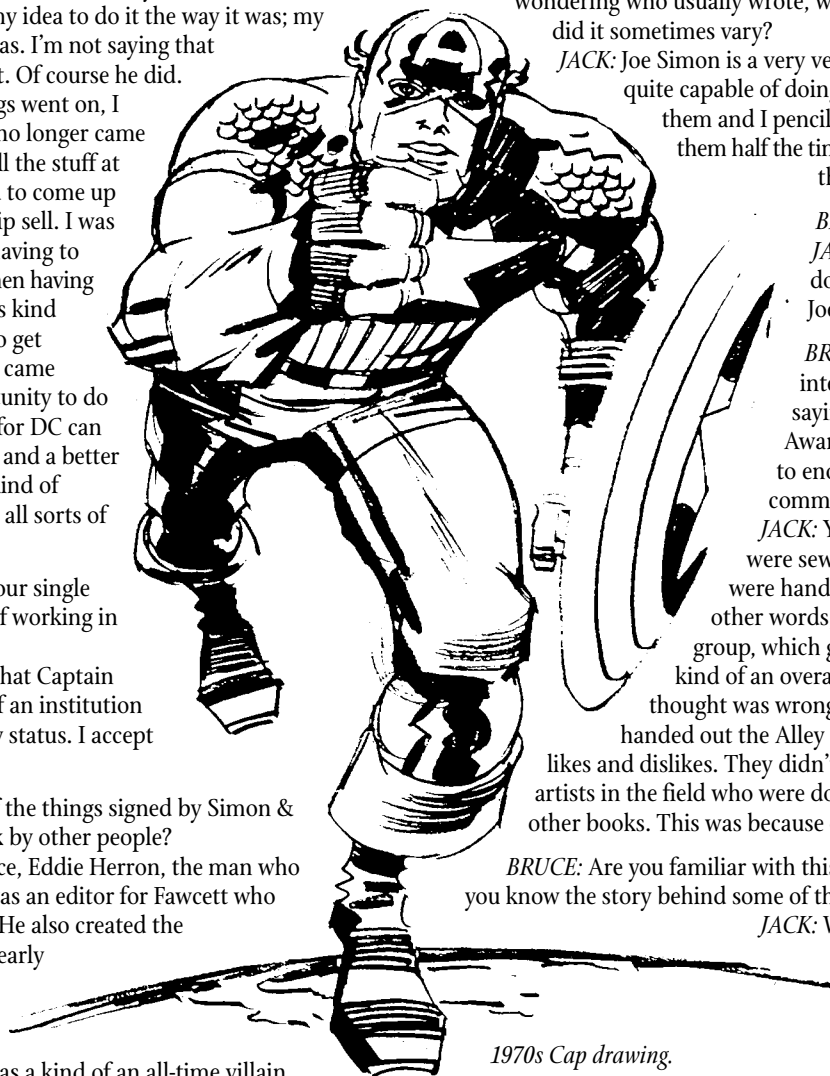
BRUCE: Are you familiar with this new publisher Skywald? Do you know the story behind some of the old comics they're reprinting?

JACK: Well, it's probably a simple story. I don't know the story behind it, but I've done the same thing in the past myself. Purchasing old artwork cuts down on costs. I see they got hold of some of my old *Bullseyes*. I

don't know how they did that, but I'm quite sure they bought it legitimately; but I don't know from whom.

BRUCE: Do you feel comics are here to stay in their present form?

JACK: No, they're not. I feel that they're going to change. I feel there's being a lot of experimentation in that respect. I feel the change will



1970s Cap drawing.

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