

ROY THOMAS' MEAN & GREEN
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

GREEN GROW THE LANTERNS

NODELL, KANE,
& THE CREATION OF A
LEGEND—TIMES TWO!

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IN BRIGHTEST DAY,
IN BLACKEST NIGHT,
NO EVIL SHALL
ESCAPE MY SIGHT!

Mark Nodel

CO-CREATOR OF
GREEN LANTERN
40



06

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P.C. Hamerlinck presents Marc Swayze and the Golden Age giant *All-Hero Comics*!

On Our Cover: For years, we’d wanted to find just the right Mart Nodell image of Green Lantern to run on a front cover of *Alter Ego*, and Dominic Bongo finally found it for us in the Heritage Comics Archives, bless ‘em both! And for the Gil Kane half of the “two GLs” equation, Dom found one of the best Kane-GL pencil figures Ye Editor has seen, which we had inked by embellishing great Terry Austin. (You can see Gil’s unadorned original on p. 8.) All that, plus a marvelous background montage which layout man Chris Day assembled from published and unpublished art by the likes of Nodell and Kane, as well as Irwin Hasen, Carmine Infantino, Paul Reinman, Neal Adams, Mike Sekowsky, & Dick Dillin.

Above: For the cover of the 1980 small-size reprint comic DC Special Blue Ribbon Digest #4 (the title was almost bigger than the book itself!), Dick Giordano drew this classic pose of the two Green Lanterns who really matter. Thanks to Michael Dunne for a scan of the original art. Especially colored for A/E by Randy Sargent. [©2011 DC Comics.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
**Mart & Carrie Nodell,
Vic Dowd, & Jerry Grandenetti**



The Eternal Green Lantern

An Overview Of The Emerald Gladiators Of Two Comic Book Ages

by Will Murray

I. The Golden Age Green Lantern

The star-spanning exploits of Green Lantern began with a modest set of sketches that came close to being rejected.

Martin Nodell was the artist. He submitted drawings of a new hero he dubbed The Green Lantern to All-American Comics, Inc., editor Sheldon Mayer in 1940. He reported that the idea came to him on the subway ride home from Mayer's New York offices after their first meeting.

"While I was waiting around 34th Street, I noticed the train man inspecting his tracks and waving a red lantern," Nodell remembered to *Comics Scene* magazine. "When he OKed the tracks, he got behind the pillar and waved a green lantern, and the train rushed in. I thought, 'That's interesting. A green lantern. I don't know what it means or what I'm going to do,' but I hoped to get something out of it. I put down the words 'green lantern,' and thought, 'There have been 'Super-man' stories and 'Bat-man' stories. Maybe it won't be 'Green-man.' Maybe I should change it completely. How about using it as a power source?'"

Weaving elements out of Chinese mythology and a meteorite strike, then designing a super-hero costume inspired by Greek theatre mixed with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., as The Black Pirate from his 1926 film of that name, Nodell arrived at an opening situation.

As he related to Kim Howard Johnson: "At first, I thought of seeking an honest man with the lantern, but it didn't quite work. I was interested in Wagnerian operas, so the Ring Cycle made me think of rings. I felt I could do something with the ring, maybe have the lantern activate a ring. I wrote it up, along with a few drawings. In those days, you pencilled, inked, and lettered a job. I drew up the figure and the completed pages, a concept sheet, and my philosophy of it all."

When he took his concept sketch back to Mayer, the young editor was doubtful. Mayer recounted the genesis to Ron Goulart in *Comics: The Golden Age*: "Nodell's drawing was crude. What he did have, crude as he was apt to be in his drawing, was an effective first page. He had taken the lead from the Superman motif and applied the Aladdin formula to that. I don't know if he included the ring, but he did have the hero with the magic lantern. I didn't want to take that. I thought, what the hell, this is the direction we're already going in, and Nodell didn't seem good enough to handle the feature. And yet he had walked in with the idea. I wasn't going to use Green Lantern and do it with somebody else. So Bill Finger and I fleshed out the concept..."

"Batman"'s Bill Finger was one of the hottest comic scripters of that time. He has been credited as an equal in the creation of "Green Lantern," but Nodell never saw it that way.



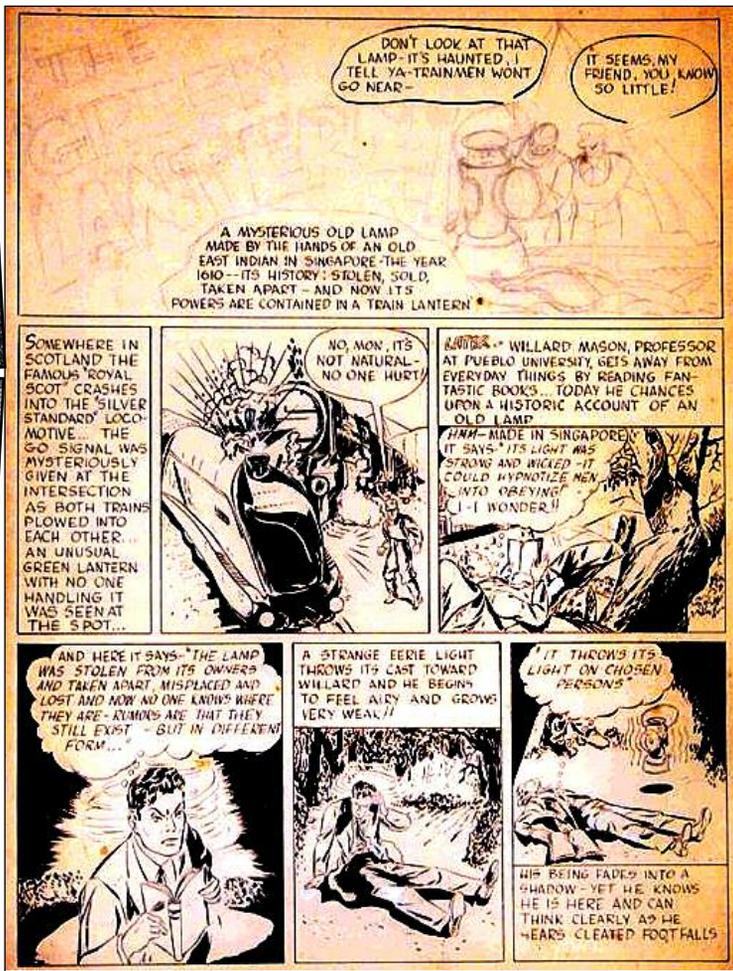
Going For The Green

This commissioned drawing of the Golden and Silver Age Green Lanterns was done a couple of years back by Andy Smith, known for his work on Crossgen's *The First*, DC's *Green Lantern*, et al.; it has been colored especially for *Alter Ego* by Randy Sargent. Thanks to dealer Anthony Snyder (see ad on p. 68) for providing us with a copy of this art—and to Andy himself for then sending us a hi-res scan, as well as for his permission to print it. [Green Lanterns TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]

"After I had done three pages—which they used, along with a few other pages that I worked on, as the introduction—they brought in a writer," Nodell told *Comics Scene*. "I didn't know one writer from another. They brought in Bill Finger, who had been doing 'Batman' with Bob Kane. He was the first writer with me on it. Apparently, DC, in claiming him to be co-creator, had something else in mind—I don't know. They have me down as co-creator, but what I gave them was the beginning of 'Green Lantern.'"

Finger recalled his input for the *Steranko History of Comics*: "We needed a name for his alter ego, so naturally I thought of Aladdin and his magic lamp. I suggested the name Alan Ladd and Shelly said, 'That's ridiculous. Who'd believe that?' So we substituted the name Alan Scott. A little while later Alan Ladd turned up as a movie star. Shelly could have kicked himself every time he thought of the publicity we might have had."

The origin story was steeped in quasi-scientific mysticism. Construction engineer Scott pulls a weirdly-glowing green signalman's lantern from a train wreck—and it speaks to him! Fashioned from a green meteor, it had already been remade many times. Forging a ring from the



lantern's metal, Scott obeys the voice and becomes The Green Lantern. Working as a radio announcer, Scott operated out of Gotham City—a Bill Finger touch, without question.

The new hero's costume—undoubtedly one of the most garish of the Golden Age—was modified before publication. "About the only thing that Mayer changed was, believe it or not, to make the costume a little *more* elaborate, and have a little *more* color!" Nodell explained to *Comics Scene*. "I don't remember whether he added purple to the cape. But he did do something like that. And that was the beginning."

Mayer also decided to give GL an Achilles' heel: the ring would not work against anything made of common wood.

The Green Lantern debuted in *All-American Comics* #16 (July 1940). Within months, he joined the Justice Society of America in their inaugural adventure in *All-Star Comics* #3 (Winter 1940). The following year, the magical name was blazing across the cover of his own comic book.

Nodell—who initially signed the strip "Mart Dellon"—found Finger an enjoyable collaborator. They often worked out story ideas by phone, after which Finger produced a full script.

"I had thought of the character and his stories as being fantasy," he explained to *Comics Scene*. "By Green Lantern's thinking, he could do

something because of the extra power from the lantern that came from a meteor thousands of years ago. He would wish himself, or think himself, to fly or go through a wall, as long as the ring was activated. Bill would write great stories around that." Gradually, that power was mutated—until soon GL was using his ring to form shapes of anything he could think of, such as giant hands or walls or hammers. But always subject to that wooden weakness.

Both Nodell and Finger fell away from their creation after six or seven years. In 1944, Sheldon Mayer hired Julius Schwartz, who as the head of the Solar Sales Service literary agency represented science-fiction writer Alfred Bester, as editor. Bester was then scripting "Green Lantern" for Mayer.

Bester credited Finger with teaching him the craft of comic book scripting. As he told Guy Lillian III: "Bill took me in hand and said, 'I'm going to teach you how to write comic books.' He paced up and down in an office with the rain beating against the panes telling me—and I absorbed every word—about comic books and comic book writing. I still regard that as a high point in the generosity of one colleague to another."

Bester created the final version of the famous Green

Lantern oath, which went:

"In brightest day, in blackest night,
No evil shall escape my sight!
Let those who worship evil's might
Beware my power—Green Lantern's light!"

"When Shelly gave me complete control," Bester later admitted to *Comics Interview*, "I dumped it. I dumped Doiby Dickles... with that cockamamie derby hat, driving his cockamamie cab." Dickles was a comic-

In The Beginning...

Photos of young "GL" artist Mart Nodell (top left) and writer Bill Finger (bottom left), fuzzy as they were, appeared in *Green Lantern* #1 (Fall 1941)—while Sheldon Mayer (right, from a 1976 issue of *The Amazing World of DC Comics*) was the editor who helped shape the package. Only in the past few years has one of the trio of "Green Lantern" sample pages written and drawn by Nodell turned up and been viewed on the Internet; thanks to Michael Feldman. More about that landmark art and about Marty Nodell on pp. 15-30. For the published version of GL's origin in *All-American Comics* #16 (July 1940), see the hardcover *Golden Age Green Lantern Archives, Vol. 1* (1999). Thanks to Marc Svensson, Jim Ludwig, and Gordon Green for sending as good copies as we're ever likely to get of the Nodell and Finger pics!

[Nodell & Finger photos ©2011 DC Comics; Green Lantern TM & ©2011 DC Comics; sample page (never published by DC or showing GL) ©2011 the respective copyright holders.]

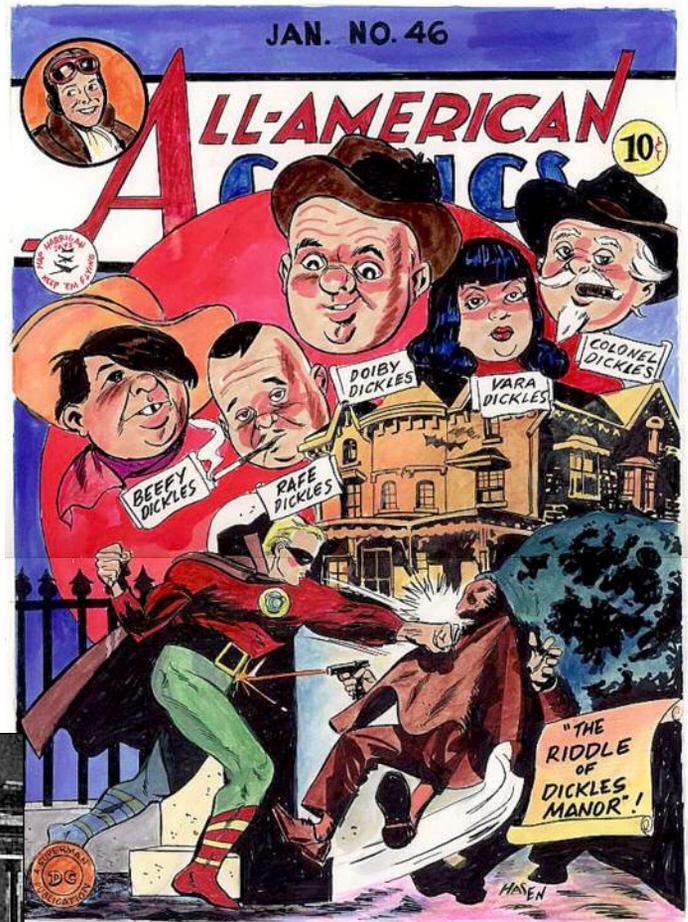
Various differences from not only the art but even the Finger-shaped story in the published version are apparent on this try-out page. The young man who will soon become The Green Lantern is not blond "Alan Scott" but dark-haired "Willard Mason, professor at Pueblo University"—while the magic lantern comes to him while he sleeps. The train crash that figures so prominently in the published origin here occurs in Scotland, nor is the future GL involved in it...but it gave Nodell a chance to utilize the "green-lantern-as-railroad-signal" image that, as he always related, inspired the hero's name and motif. And wouldn't we all dearly love to see those other two, still-missing sample pages!



"[Kuttner] wrote it ['Green Lantern'] for about a year," Schwartz recalled in *Amazing World of DC Comics*. "He loved every minute of it. His wife, C.L. Moore [also a fantasy and sf writer], was wild about Doiby Dickles."

After a year, Kuttner left. Schwartz asked Dave Vern, but in declining Vern recommended his friend, pulp writer John Broome.

"I worked on a kind of philosophy of comics," Broome admitted in "POV Online." "I said that 'The essential of comics is a gimmick that works!' And Shelly Mayer, who was my editor before Julie... said he never came across a writer who, when he hit it—that is, when the gimmick was operating—hit it as hard as I did. I would work up a kind of a curve of an idea. It would start off low and finally, all of a sudden — POW! That's what I prided myself on when writing the story."



Good, Better, Bester
 A young Alfred Bester eyes the first encounter of Green Lantern and Solomon Grundy, as he scripted it and Paul Reinman drew it in *All-American Comics* #61 (Oct. 1944). Bester went on to become one of the most respected science-fiction writers in the history of the field—which he eventually left to scribe for such venues as *Holiday* magazine. Incidentally, the "GL" page is reproduced from Ye Ed's copy of the actual comic, not from a reprinting. [©2011 DC Comics.]

relief sidekick introduced by Finger in 1941.

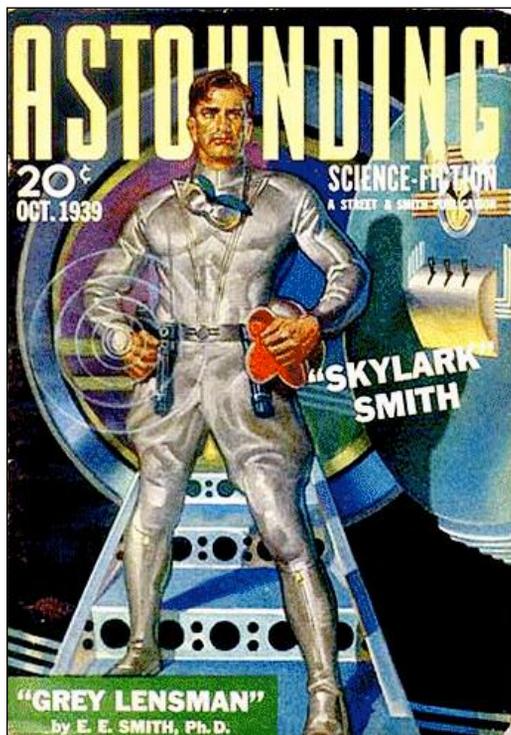
Among Bester's most enduring contributions was the creation of the monstrous Solomon Grundy, who came about in 1944 as the result of an emergency phone call from Sheldon Mayer. As Bester related to *Comics Interview*: "He called me and said, 'Alf, we're thirteen pages short for the so-and-so issue, and I've got to get a script to the artist by tomorrow morning. For God's sake, can you come up with something?' And I went home... and sat and thought. Actually, do you know what the inspiration for it is? It was a story by Ted Sturgeon called 'It.'"

When Bester moved on, Schwartz asked another sf legend, Henry Kuttner, to take over. At first Kuttner refused. But his wife prevailed on him to reconsider.



A Doiby Is Also A Hat—in Brooklyn
 Above left, a young Henry Kuttner & C.L. Moore, who after their marriage would usually write together under a series of pseudonyms, have reason to gaze at this 1992 re-creation by second regular "GL" artist Irwin Hasen of the latter's cover for *All-American Comics* #46 (Jan. 1943). After all, it was reportedly Moore's affection for GL's sidekick Doiby Dickles, whom Hasen designed (based, Hasen reports, on character actor Edward Brophy), that led her to convince Kuttner to take the "Green Lantern" assignment! So said, at least, Kuttner's one-time science-fiction agent Julius Schwartz, who in early 1944 became story editor of the *All-American* line. [Green Lantern & Doiby Dickles TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]

At left, Irwin Hasen (seen on far right in photo) shares a moment at a recent event at New York City's MoCCA (the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art) with late-'60s *Green Lantern*/*Green Arrow* artist Neal Adams (center) and early "Batman" artist Jerry Robinson, who never drew the Emerald Gladiator—but *should* have!



Friends, Romans, Countrymen... Lend Me Your Ears!

When editor Julius Schwartz asked colorist Anthony Tollin if he felt that the Silver Age "Green Lantern" resembled E.E. "Doc" Smith's series of "Lensmen" novels (most of which were serialized in the magazine *Astounding Science-Fiction* in the 1930s and early '40s), Julie may have been responding to an article which *A/E's* editor had asked fellow fan Shel Kagan to write for *Alter Ego* [Vol. 1] #9 (1965) comparing the Lensmen and the Green Lanterns. Nor were those three the only folks to notice the similarities. "If the Lensmen didn't influence Schwartz and Broome, at least subconsciously," says Roy, "then maybe Siegel & Shuster weren't affected by Philip Wylie's novel *Gladiator*, either!"

Seen above is Hubert Rogers' cover for the Oct. 1939 issue of *Astounding*, which spotlighted Smith's novel-length yarn *Grey Lensman*. The "Ph.D."-sporting author is referred to on that cover as "'Skylark' Smith" because his earlier novel, *Skylark of Space*, had virtually created intergalactic science-fiction, a sub-genre which the Lensmen series—and later the Silver Age *Green Lantern*—continued dramatically. The thread continues right on through George Lucas' *Jedi Knights*! [©2011 the respective copyright holders.]

between the two series. Julie assumed the Lensmen similarities had probably been introduced by John Broome, who of course had been an sf fan and pulp writer during the 1940s."

Reportedly, Broome also denied the influence. If true, it was not the only strange GL coincidence.

"John Broome was a very nice guy," Kane related to *The Comics Journal*. "Looked a lot like me. Many people thought we were twins. Sort of kidding, I'd be stopped in the hallway and someone would say, 'John! I haven't seen you in a while!' The difference was that he was a blond. I was 23 or 24, and at this point John must have been 35. But we looked alike: He was 6' 3"; we weighed the same..."

No matter who scripted the series, Kane fretted under editorial guide-

lines that tamed the action. As he told Mark Voger, "Julie would write an entire 'Green Lantern' story with one punch.... That was the only panel of violent action. And I would try to extend it and strengthen it, but it was so rigid."

As Kane complained to Roy Thomas, "Everything had to be done by that damned ring."

The truth was that DC specialized in puzzle stories, often based on a cover idea that artists like Kane had been instructed to conceptualize.

"We had a provocative cover, and it was a challenge to us to look at the cover and figure out how a thing like that happened," Schwartz explained in "POV Online."

"The cover sometimes provided the story in a sketchy kind of way," Broome clarified to Mark Evanier. "Then I'd work out some kind of understanding or explanation of the cover. The cover usually presented some kind of mystery. Something was happening, someone was getting poisoned or frozen or killed or something like that."



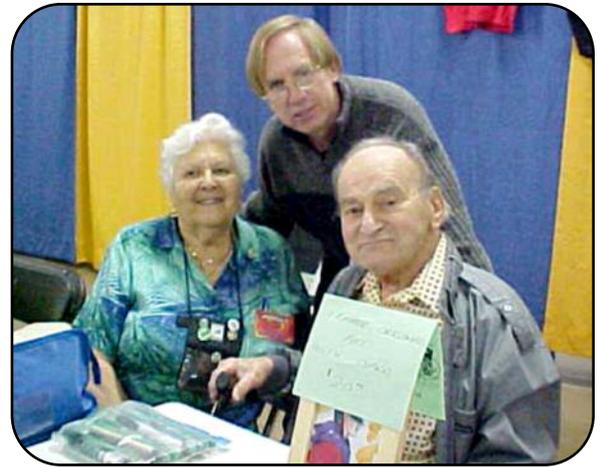
He's An Icon!

This Gil Kane pencil done around 1968-69, when inked, was the prototype of the icon art that was repro'd small at the top of every *Green Lantern* cover circa 1969-70... ironically including a number of issues produced while Kane had temporarily left the comic to try his luck at Marvel. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [©2011 DC Comics.]

“Marty Created ‘The Green Lantern’!”

A Conversation With MART & CARRIE NODELL

Conducted by Shel Dorf (Year & City Unknown) Transcribed by Brian K. Morris



A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Roughly ten years ago, the late Shel Dorf, who among other things was the co-founder of both the 1964 Detroit Triple Fan-Fair and, in 1970, of the San Diego Comic-Con, sold *TwoMorrows* and me several taped interviews, of which this is one. He says at a couple of points on the (undated, probably 1980s or '90s) tape that it was being done for David Anthony Kraft's late lamented *Comics Interview* magazine... but it was never published there, or anywhere else. Now, alas, Shel is gone and we can't ask him to clarify these things. The tape naturally deals to a considerable extent with Mart Nodell's comics career, particularly his work on the “Green Lantern” feature he originated... but large portions, with no apology, also deal with the lifelong love affair between Mart and his wife Carrie. They were an engaging couple, whom I—along with, I suspect, hundreds of other people—greatly enjoyed conversing with at conventions over the years in San Diego, in Florida, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and elsewhere. So just pull up a seat and listen, as Shel, his own fannish enthusiasm very evident, eggs on first Carrie, then later Marty, to talk about their personal lives as well as about Marty's career. Here and there, the conversation may get a bit tough to follow for a few lines... but bear with it—you'll be able to hop back aboard the train of thought in a moment! Those of us who reveled in the pleasure of their

company still miss them, half a decade and more after their passing, a couple of years apart. The tapes, which have had to be considerably edited and abridged, begin in mid-conversation. With Marty in the room but saying little, Shel abruptly turned on his tape recorder while Carrie was relating some history not of her own family, but of Marty's...

“He Said, ‘I Just Did That’—And It Was All-American #16”

CARRIE NODELL: [Marty's father] left Russia when he was about four years old, with the circus. He didn't leave Russia—he left home, with his family. Four years old, playing the piano—a great pianist, but his fame was for the mandolin. And he traveled with the circus; he went to school a little bit. Somehow, he got to the Philippines. He traveled through the country; he picked up a Filipino [sic] there and brought them to the U.S. Marty would be able to give you more detail on it.

SD: Oh, no. This is great. Keep going.

CARRIE: And they got to the U.S., that plane from the Philippines, across Europe, and called a rich uncle, the one who was the leather merchant. And he said, “Get me a room... the best hotel... the Ritz in New York”... and “Get me this” and “Get me that.” He set himself up, and I think it was about 20-some odd years—

SD: I'll bet that was good vaudeville.



Call Me Marty! (Or Just Mart!)

(Top of page:) Carrie & Marty Nodell and their fan Roy Thomas at a comics convention—probably *Heroes Con* in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the 1990s or early 2000s. Marty, incidentally, told *Ye Editor* on more than one occasion that he disliked being called “Martin,” so we've mostly used just “Mart” or “Marty” in this issue. Photo probably by Dann Thomas. Back in 2000, Roy interviewed Marty for *A/E*, Vol. 3, #5; that issue is out of print, but still available from *TwoMorrows* in a digital version. And of course Marty and Roy teamed up on a three-page “Green Lantern” sequence in *All-Star Squadron Annual* #3 (1984).

(Left:) A commission drawing done some years back by MN for collector John Schwirian, who also edits and publishes *The Aquaman Chronicles*. Guess you couldn't persuade Marty to draw the Sea King, huh, John?

[Green Lantern TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]



Dorf Tracy

Interviewer Shel Dorf with part of his collection of *Dick Tracy* artifacts. In the 1980s Shel was editor of Blackthorne Publishing's *Dick Tracy* reprint title. Sadly, Shel passed away in 2009.

Dad, wasn't very business-oriented.

SD: *The Ritz Brothers? The Marx Brothers?*

CARRIE: Not Marx. One group of comedians—I'm not sure. Marty would know.

SD: *Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo?*

CARRIE: Yes. [laughs] But anyway, talking about Marty's uncle, Ray Bathelon [sp?])—he was the greatest mandolin player in the world.

SD: *Let me get back to Coney Island, where you first met Marty. You said he impressed you by showing you a spinner of comic books—*

CARRIE: He showed me a wire rack at a candy store. In those days, comics were sold in candy stores. And he said, "I just did that"—and it was *All-American* #16, the first time Green Lantern appeared in a comic book, or any book, as a matter of fact. And I sort of looked at him quizzically... and we started to date. And we walked the entire length of the Boardwalk back to where I lived. It was about two miles. And then he



CARRIE: All those years, he played three, four shows a day. He discovered Señor Wences.

SD: *Did he discover the Three Stooges? Because I know Moe Howard's daughter...*

CARRIE: Marty will be able to tell you. He did discover a group of three who are very famous, and Marty had certainly said that he,

moved to Huntington, Long Island, just about that time, and I thought I'd never see him again.

SD: *You were both hurting. You had lost your father.*

CARRIE: I had just lost my father; he had lost his father maybe a year before. My mother had died that fall. And anyway, it was really Marty's mother who introduced me to Marty. She met me and she said, "I'd take my ring off for this gal." [laughs] And there it is.

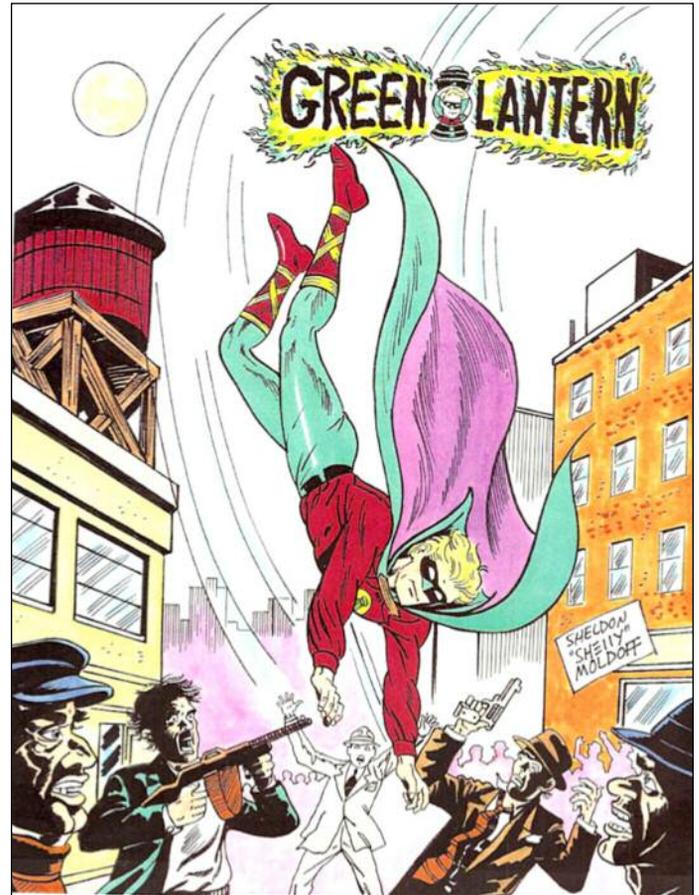
SD: *That's a wonderful story.*

CARRIE: And this friend—my mother was her friend and that's how I met Marty.

"They Had 'Superman,' And They Had 'Batman'"

SD: *What were the early days like? Were you like Roz Kirby? Did you help fill in blacks or letter or do anything with the book?*

CARRIE: Marty says I did letter a little. I don't remember that much, because we had our oldest son a year after we'd married. It was wartime.

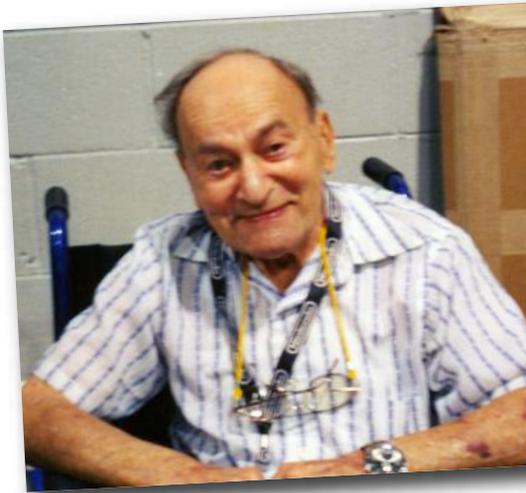


Playing "Musical Lanterns"

(Left:) The Green Lantern cover for *All-American Comics* #16 (July 1940) has often been reprinted—and besides, it was drawn by Sheldon ("Shelly") Moldoff, not Mart Nodell—so we thought we'd substitute a "re-painting" done by Marty of the cover of *Green Lantern* #1 (Fall 1941) in the style of its artist, Howard Purcell. Nodell never claimed he drew either published cover, however. By the way, Carrie's memory to the contrary, the stories Marty drew were almost invariably either 12 or 13 pages, not 18. Art retrieved from the Heritage Comics Archives by Dominic Bongo.

(Above:) Just to balance things out a bit, here's a more recent Moldoff drawing of GL. For more of same, visit the website www.shelly-moldoff.com. [Green Lantern TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]

New York or in Chicago? I want to hear the story from you. You're such a popular couple. When you think of Marty, you think of Carrie. Can you start it from the beginning?



NODELL: From the beginning?

SD: Where she picked you up in a bar or something? Was that it?

NODELL: I picked her up at her dad's. The end of story, I guess it was, [unintelligible] a confectionery store in the area of Coney Island, and my mother liked her immediately. She wanted me to meet her, so I met Carrie. We took a walk around the Boardwalk on a beautiful spring day and she asked me what did I do? "I bum around, I don't do very much." We walked into a stationery store, a candy store in those days, and on one of these revolving stands was an All-American #17 or #18 that I had worked on. And she said she didn't believe me, because the name was "Mart Dellon" on it. Why was I using "Mart Dellon"? Because in advertising in those days, which was what I wanted to get into, you couldn't use your own name. It was a dangerous thing, because it was a low degree of culture.

SD: Because comics were a lower art form in the minds of advertising, yeah. Generally, if you couldn't get anything else, you did comic books. So you changed your name to protect the innocent.

NODELL: Yeah. [laughs] That's a good line, very good. That was true, very true.

SD: So you went to the Boardwalk and you showed her your work.

NODELL: Yeah, so I finally got her to believe me, and we went out a few times, and I married her about a year and a half later. And it was all very nice until I left comics in 1950. We lived, part of the time, up on Long Island... Huntington, Long Island... and then part of the time in Brooklyn. And during the ad agency time, I lived in Brooklyn on [sounds like "Bushman Coupling"], if you know the area.

And then I was transferred from an ad agency in New York to Chicago, and I went with a couple of agencies there. I did very nicely, but there was more money on the outside, so I freelanced for Sears Roebuck, doing television commercials.

SD: Back up a little bit. How many children do you have?

NODELL: Oh, we have two sons, one whom you know, the other chap in Florida. Okay. Spencer is the younger fellow, and my oldest was Mitchell. My oldest son was born in '43, and Spencer was born in '46.

SD: And have you been made a grandfather yet?

NODELL: Oh, sure. We have one in [sounds like "Mack-verre"]. Tiffany is 15, and we have one 18. And we have three more in his family, so there are five, and three more in Mitch's family; that's eight.

SD: Eight grandchildren, that's wonderful. Any of them artists?

NODELL: No. They're interested in various things



Indestructible Marty

The splash of the third story in 1947's Green Lantern #24—and a photo of Nodevell from the May 2005 Motor City Con—"one of his last," says granddaughter Jacque, who provided it. Script attributed to Alfred Bester. [Page ©2011 DC Comics.]

"From 1950 Until 1975, I Didn't Look At A Comic Book"

SD: Well, getting back to your career in comic books, did you do any other [DC] work after you've [started] "Green Lantern"? Any other comics characters?

NODELL: No, not really.

SD: Did you do many "Green Lantern" stories before you went back into advertising?

NODELL: I don't remember exactly how many.

SD: You weren't making big bucks off of doing comics.

NODELL: For those days, it was good earnings, but no big bucks.

SD: But you didn't stay in the comic book business, is what I'm getting at.

NODELL: No, I didn't stay. From 1950 until 1975, I didn't look at a comic book. [pause] Don't say that. [Shel laughs] By 1975, however—oh, backing up to about 1970, I was working a lot for Sears. I worked for special sections of newspapers on their promotions for going back to school, motor news, various other informational sections, health sections, and so on. I was planning and designing the projects. I did some

“Life’s Not Over Yet!”

The Conclusion Of Our Interview With Comics And Animation Writer JACK MENDELSON

Conducted by Jim Amash

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

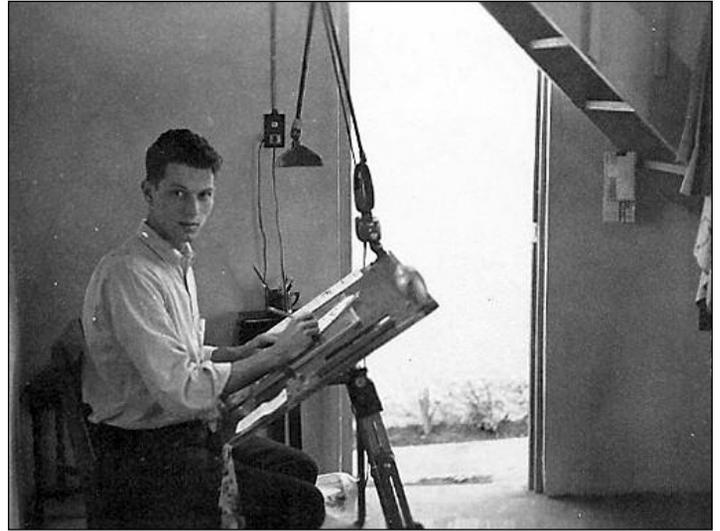
Jack Mendelsohn has certainly had a variety of jobs in his professional career as a writer/artist. From the '40s through the '60s, he wrote humor comics at Archie, DC, Dell, EC [Panic and later Mad magazine], Quality, Tower, Standard, and Ziff-Davis. Among the many things he did for which he is rarely credited is writing comic book stories for his close friend and former studio mate, the late Howard Post (whose own interview will appear in an upcoming issue of A/E). His newspaper credits include Felix the Cat and the fondly remembered Jackys Diary. His animation writing includes The Beatles, The Impossibles, Milton the Monster, Wacky Races, “Fearless Fly,” Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles; and he co-wrote the movie Yellow Submarine, among other cartoon features. On live TV he wrote for The Carol Burnett Show, Laugh-In, Three’s Company, Chico and the Man, and Carter Country, and many other series.

As is our wont, we focused on Jack’s comic book days and the people with whom he worked. But we did not neglect the other parts of Jack’s career, and judging by the quality of the stories he told me, you’ll be glad we didn’t. Special thanks to David Hajdu (author of The Ten-Cent Plague) for giving me Jack’s phone number a few years back. And thanks to Jack for his patience in granting such a long interview, and for waiting for us to get this into your hands! —Jim.

“I Sort Of Adopted Jerry [Siegel]”

JA: For Ziff-Davis, you wrote “Dolly in Dreamland” and Nursery Rhymes.

MENDELSON: Yes, I remember that. I would write an entire issue in rhyme.



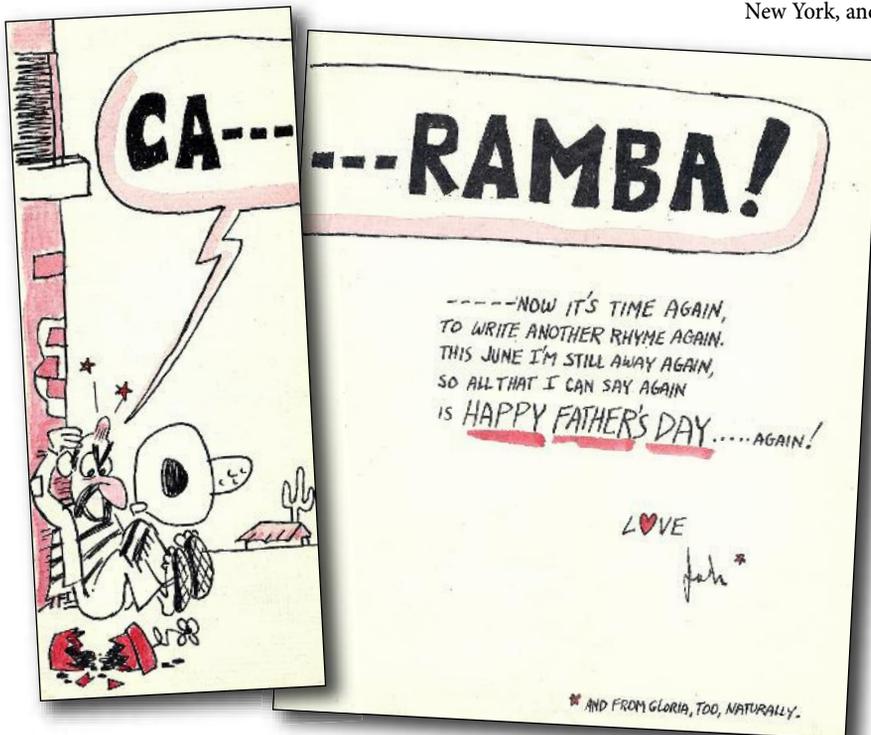
South Of The Border

Jack Mendelsohn at work in his Mexico City studio in 1956—and (below) a birthday card with a Mexican theme that he wrote and drew for his father, most likely during the period when he was living in that country. Thanks to JM for the art, and for all photos accompanying this interview unless stated otherwise. [©2011 Jack Mendelsohn.]

JA: What was it like to work for Jerry Siegel? I assume that’s where you met him.

MENDELSON: That’s right. I was living with my parents in Great Neck, New York, and he was living in Great Neck. I remember reading a big front-page story in the local paper one day where he went on a hunger strike. He had a wife and baby, and he felt that he was being treated very unfairly by DC, so he went public with it, literally going on a hunger strike. How that was resolved, I don’t know, but three years later, he was with Ziff-Davis as an editor.

He was a strange guy. Later, in the late '60s, I was working at Hanna-Barbera when I got a call from Joe Barbera—“Come into my office. There’s an old buddy of yours here”—and I couldn’t figure out who he was talking about. It was Jerry Siegel, who I never considered “an old buddy.” But Jerry must have mentioned my name somehow, and Joe made that connection. I was a staff writer, and the next thing I knew, Barbera put Jerry in my office as a writer. I guess Joe thought we were old pals, and that Jerry would feel at home. When I spoke to Joe about it, he said, “I don’t know. The guy seems to have just one idea, and he doesn’t understand film at all. He’s still writing comic books, and I don’t want comic filmic ideas.” Jerry had created a character that was a rip-off of The Joker, called “The Gagster,” or something like that. He kept trying to sell Joe on it, and he spent weeks rewriting and



rewriting. Joe said to me, “I don’t know what to do with this guy. I felt sorry for him, but I don’t think he’s going to work out.” And eventually, he didn’t. Joe let him go, but in that period, I got to know Jerry quite well, and heard all of his stories, and saw all of his craziness.

Jerry was in the Army during World War II, and when he got out, he started this lawsuit against DC based on a lot of things. For one thing, DC had him signing contracts; he signed away all of his rights to “Superman.” Here’s the story that Jerry told me, so I have to believe it’s true. He was a civilian, and was on his way to see this high-powered lawyer. You know, Jerry had a gazillion-dollar case, and he bumps into a guy [Albert Zugsmith] in the street. They were talking under an awning, and he said to Jerry, “Hey, how’re you doing? I haven’t seen you, blah, blah. Where’re you going?” Jerry said, “Well, I’m going to see So-and-so, my lawyer,” and he told him a little about it. And the guy said, “Hey, you don’t want a guy like that, so high-priced. I’m a lawyer. I’ll take the case.” He was so bad that Jerry and Joe Shuster, his partner, not only ended up losing their case, but having to pay the court fees, too. [NOTE: *Actually, Siegel and Shuster won the case pertaining to “Superboy,” but they did indeed lose the “Superman” rights suit. —Jim.*] Can you believe that? It was a lock! How could you lose something like that? So that was 25 years previously, and a copyright lasts 27 years. Then you have to renew it. So 27 years was just about to go by, and Jerry was preparing with a new lawyer—*hopefully*, a new lawyer—to go back into court, and reclaim the copyright. And that’s the period at which I met him. We’re talking 1964, ’65. And that came to nothing, too.

I sort of adopted Jerry, because he was like an orphan out here. He was so innocent and he was so ingenious. He reminded me of Truman Capote, because when he talked, [*imitates Truman Capote’s gentle lisp*] he talked like this. He was so timid about everything. I mean you could see why he would invent “Superman.” He had a perfect outlet for what he’d like to be. I took him home to my family. My wife made chicken soup for him as kind of a comfort food. We tried to talk him out of suing, and every night he would listen to a bunch of self-improvement tapes some guy had made, and sort of brainwash himself. He’d put them under his pillow and listen all night. The basic theme of it was, “Every day, in every way, you’re getting better and better.” So that was his mantra. Sometimes, when he was upset, he’d sit in the corner and stand on his head to kind of center himself. Whatever philosophy it was, he was into it. It was so sad to be with this guy. And then he was waiting and waiting for his new trial to come up. Finally, it came up, and guess what? [Siegel and Shuster] lost again. So now it’s going to be another 27 years. Finally, at the third go-around, there was so much public awareness of what was happening to him that DC made a settlement with both Jerry and Joe Shuster.

JA: *They got their names restored as creators on “Superman” stories, and a pension of \$20,000 a year, which was upped over time.*

MENDELSON: Yes, but that’s still not a lot of money. We’re talking multi-millions of dollars, and “Superman” is still going strong.

JA: *What was Jerry like as an editor?*

MENDELSON: He didn’t change a word of anything I did, so I don’t know. Everything I wrote was published word-for-word the way I wrote it.

JA: *Did you have any story conferences?*

MENDELSON: No. I’m sure I had an initial meeting with him. I remember being in his office, and he told me the kind of things he was interested in doing. Whether I wrote a premise first or just went out on a limb and wrote the whole thing, I don’t remember. It went very smoothly, but the books didn’t sell. Ziff-Davis quit publishing comics after a while.

JA: *He was always described to me in the later years, and even around*



Jack Be Nimble... Jerry Be Quick...

(Above left:) Jerry Siegel, co-creator of “Superman” and early-’50s editor of Ziff-Davis’ comics division. Photo retrieved from the Internet.

(Above right:) A page, probably scripted by Jack Mendelsohn under Siegel, for Ziff-Davis’ *Nursery Rhymes* #10 (July-Aug. 1951—actually the first of the two published issues). The artist is Howard Post; Jack recalls scribing most of the stories his artist friend drew for DC in the ’40s and Ziff-Davis in the ’50s. Thanks to Jim Ludwig. For a photo of Howie Post, see previous issue. [©2011 the respective copyright holders.]

the time you knew him at Hanna-Barbera, as being rather disheveled-looking, a lost soul.

MENDELSON: He looked like a real loser, and when he opened his mouth, he sort of gave it away. He was just so soft-spoken and shy about everything. I do know that in his worst times, and at Christmas time, he was working at the Post Office. That’s how bad it got, that he had to take a job at the Post Office for two or three weeks. That was probably after he lost the second lawsuit, because I lost touch with him. Joe Barbera let him go after about two months, and that was the end of it.

You know who used to date his daughter, his little girl that was on the front page when he was going on his hunger strike? Mell Lazarus. I don’t think it was like a long-term affair or anything.

“[Mell Lazarus] Suggested That Toby Press Hire Me”

JA: *Speaking of Mell, he was an editor at Al Capp’s Toby Press. [NOTE: For details about Toby Press, see my interview with Lazarus in A/E #96. —Jim.] Didn’t you work for Mell there?*

Bob & Betty —& Archie & Betty

The Betty (Cooper) Tokar Interview, 11-16-10

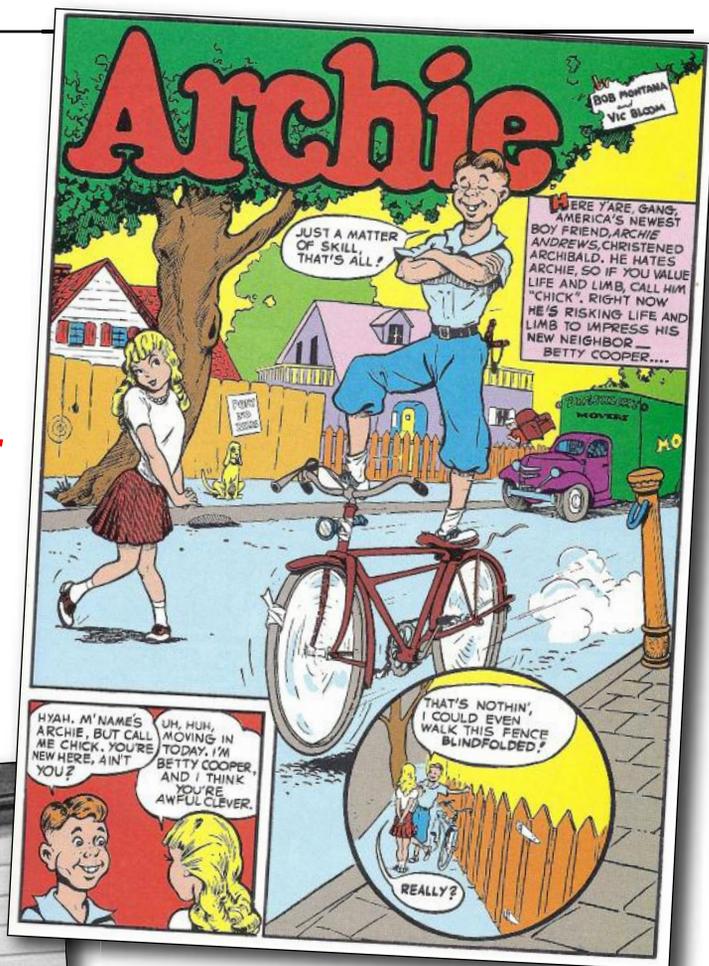
by Shaun Clancy

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION: *On a May 2010 trip with my brother Mike from Bellevue, Washington, to my home town of Lawrence, Massachusetts, we were reunited with our dad after 35 years. Our talks took us down memory lane and, before long, the discussion of Haverhill High School led to its connection to the*

Archie comic book and comic strip, and its creator, Bob Montana. The thought finally occurred to me that perhaps this story should be researched, and thus began my year-long project of fact-finding. Who better to tackle this project than myself, who grew up in the area? Never did I suspect how involved this task would be, nor how much information had been previously provided about the origins of Archie Andrews.

In one of the many interviews I did, Eda Edwards suggested I talk with a fellow by the name of Rich Rubinfeld, who had written a few interviews with and articles on artists Harry Lucey and Joe Edwards (Eda's late husband) that had yet to be published. Rich and I immediately hit it off, and in fact I arranged for those interviews to be included in my upcoming book. He soon put me in contact with Barbara Lucey Tancredi, Harry's daughter; she in turn relayed a story in passing about her aunt Betty having once dated Bob Montana. From my research to date on the subject of who inspired which characters in the Archie world, I immediately believed, from Barbara's description of Betty's life, that I had found the woman whom both Bob and Peg Montana had mentioned in earlier interviews as the inspiration for Betty Cooper.

The following is a very slightly abridged version of the interview I had with Mrs. Betty Tokar Jankovich; I hope you will find it as entertaining as I did, and will wish to read the rest. For more on the people and places that Bob Montana utilized to help created the "Archie" world, I would suggest you keep an eye out for my book, forthcoming in December of 2011, which will be the 70th anniversary of Archie's debut in comic books...and it is not 1941's Pep Comics #22, as everyone believes! The book will also feature interviews with the families of Montana, Harry Shorten, and others... as well as key interviews with current and former employees of MLJ and Archie Comic Publications, Inc.



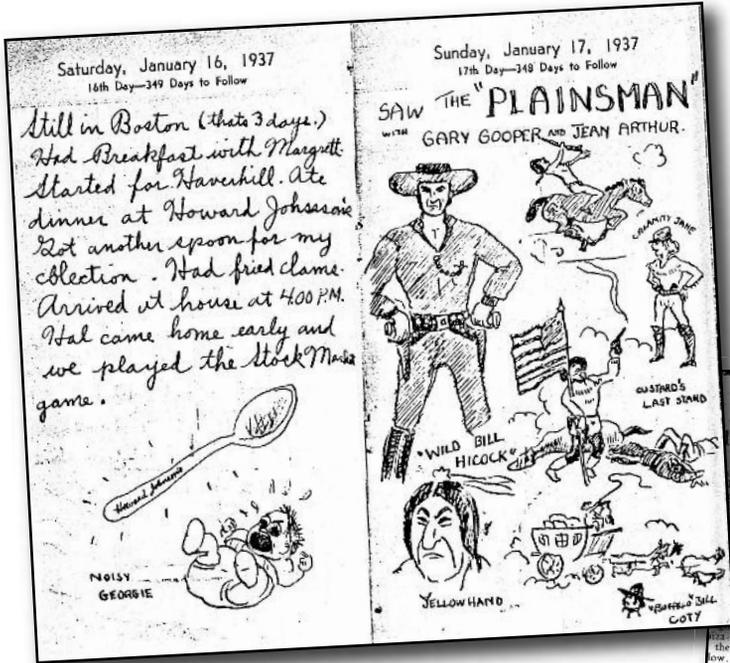
Everything's Archie—And Betty!

(Above:) The oft-reprinted first page of the first "Archie" story, from *Pep Comics* #22 (Dec. 1941), as per the 1991 trade paperback *Archie Americana Series: Best of the Forties, Vol. 1*. Written and drawn by Bob Montana, with Vic Bloom. [©2011 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

(Left:) Bob Montana and Betty Tokar at Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire, in 1942. Courtesy of Barbara Lucey Tancredi, via Shaun Clancy.

In the spring of 1941 to the fall of 1942, original "Archie" writer and artist Bob Montana and Harry Lucey, a great "Archie" artist in his own right, became good friends while working at MLJ (the company that before long would change its very name to Archie Publications) and even shared a studio together. They remained in contact all their lives, with Harry even helping occasionally on the *Archie* daily newspaper strip (launched in 1946) when Bob needed immediate help.

As you'll see below, Mrs. Elizabeth (Betty) Tokar Jankovich—who is referred to for convenience in this piece by her maiden name of "Tokar," since that was her name when she knew Bob Montana—did not step forward with her story earlier because her late husband was not aware of her past relationship with Montana. For the first month of the courtship, Betty, Helen (Betty's sister), Bob, and Harry would meet in the lobby to chat; they would then have lunch as a group but were still unsure of who was really "dating" whom. If one stretches his/her imagination, this can be seen as yet another example of the potential Betty/Archie/Veronica romantic triangle which became the essence of the "Archie" feature. At last, it was Harry Lucey who made the first move, asking Helen out on a date, which then led to Bob and Betty dating for 6 to 9 months. During the beginning stages of the relationship, they would double-date with Harry and Helen. Harry and Helen eventually married, but the romance between Betty and Bob ended in the summer of 1942. One can only



Harry liked my sister more than he liked me, and then Bob and I were paired. We liked each other, also.

SC: I recall a Gil Kane interview stating that, when he worked at MLJ, he saw Charles Biro pointing out to the other people that you could peek into the next-door locker room by looking through the transom above the connecting door. Was this true?

TOKAR: I don't recall that, but I know you could hear sounds and conversations from next door, but that was as far as it went. Our office was on the same floor as theirs. This was on 60 Hudson Street in New York.



SC: Were you working there long before you met Bob?

TOKAR: I started there at about the time war broke out in Germany, so about 1937 or '38.

SC: Are you older than your sister Helen?

TOKAR: I'm younger by a year and a half.... I got her a job there.

SC: This place you worked at, what did they do?

TOKAR: It was a 23-story Western Union building, so it was the telegraph business.... I [worked for] the Nestlé Company, which was new back then, and they had their own private dining room, so I used to wait on the men there. They were all men....no women at all.

SC: Do you remember how long you and Bob were seeing each other?

TOKAR: It was a nice relationship, but somehow we drifted apart... let's put it that way. He was a very, very nice young man, and slender. I think he, his sister, and his mother lived together.

SC: That's right. It was his sister Ruth. His mother, Roberta, had another child who would have been maybe three at the time, named Georgie. I heard that Georgie passed away as a child, so that might have happened before you met them. Did you ever meet Bob's mother?

TOKAR: I visited the apartment once. I think he wanted to introduce me to his mother. It was somewhere uptown in Manhattan, because I lived in lower Manhattan near Delancy Street and Houston Street.

SC: Did you and your sister live with your mother then?

TOKAR: Yes, we did.

SC: Did Bob meet your mother?

TOKAR: Yes, he probably did.

SC: Did Bob have a car?

TOKAR: Very few people had cars at that time. We traveled by subway and by trolley and such.... I know [Harry's] mother and father had a car.

SC: When you went to Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire with Bob, how did you get there?

TOKAR: He and his mother had a cabin up there, and I took a bus from New York. When I got off the bus he was waiting there with a rowboat, and he rowed me across the lake to the cabin.

High School Comicial

Two specimens of Bob Montana's youthful hometown writings: (Above:) An illustrated 1937 "note home," later printed in a 1939 issue of the local *Brown and Gold* high school magazine.

(Right:) Cartoon done for the *Haverhill High School* newspaper, Jan. 27, 1939. Thanks to Shaun Clancy for these items. [©2011 Estate of Bob Montana.]

speculate as to what might have been, if they had stayed together. Maybe the "Archie" world we know today might have been totally different. We will never know, but it's definitely fun to speculate....

SHAUN CLANCY: I was in your area last weekend, and your niece, Barbara Lucey Tancredi, tells me that you just celebrated your 90th birthday last Saturday?

BETTY TOKAR: She should have invited you to it. There were lots of people there, but mostly family. There's nothing nicer than family.

SC: She did mention it, but unfortunately I was involved in taping a TV Show for PBS called *The History Detectives*.... I am writing a book on the creation of "Archie" comics and its characters, and a majority of the book will be about Bob Montana. Bob went to high school in Haverhill, Massachusetts, from 1936 to 1939, before graduating in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1940. I grew up in the Haverhill area, plus both my parents and both sets of grandparents also went to Haverhill High School, so I'm very familiar with the influences and inspirations Bob Montana used in his "Archie" work.... I've interviewed many of his former classmates from both schools. I've also interviewed many people who were involved in MLJ and Archie Comics, and recently talked with Rich Rubinfeld, who was a very close friend of Harry Lucey. In addition, I've talked with your niece Barbara Lucey. Both have highly recommended that I talk with you next about a little-known fact—that, in addition to being related to the Lucey family, you also dated Bob Montana in 1941-42.

TOKAR: I believe I met Bob when the book was already well established.

SC: "Archie"'s first appearance had the cover date of December 1941, so do you recall if you met Bob before or after Pearl Harbor?

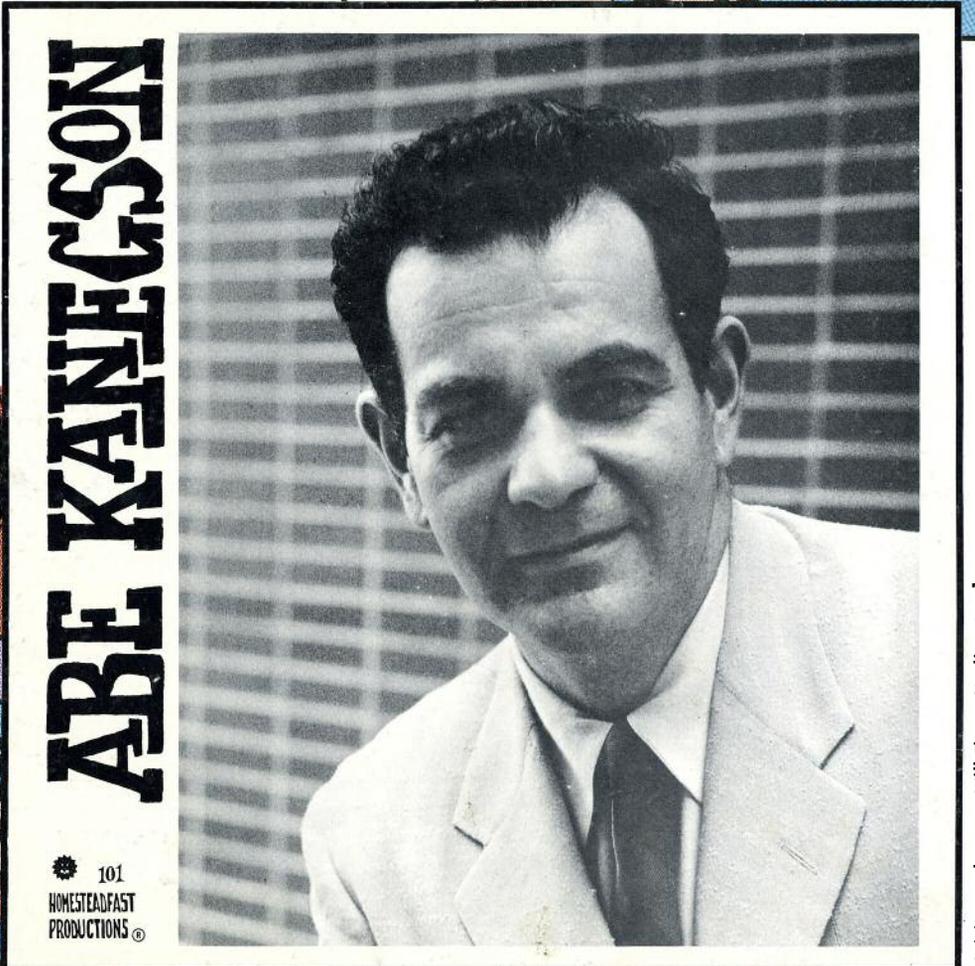
TOKAR: I believe Pearl Harbor happened after [I met Bob], but I'm not sure. Our work locker room was next to the MLJ offices, and my sister and I met Harry and Bob in the lobby of the building we all worked at.



LAST ISSUE WE EXPLORED THE CAREER OF ABE KANEGSON, WILL EISNER'S LETTERING ACE. AFTER ABE LEFT COMICS IN 1951, HIS WHEREABOUTS REMAINED A MYSTERY FOR NEXT 60 YEARS! CARICATURES IN A COUPLE OF OLD SPIRIT STORIES PROVIDED HIS FANS WITH THE ONLY CLUE TO HIS APPEARANCE. NO PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MYSTERIOUS ARTIST EVER SURFACED.

UNTIL NOW!

THIS ALBUM COVER IS THE FIRST PHOTO OF ABE KANEGSON HIS FANS HAVE EVER SEEN. HOW IT SURFACED IS A STORY IN ITSELF. . .



The Mystery of the Missing Letterer! - Part 2

"I started off, as most cartoonists do, hating lettering, feeling that it wasn't worthy of my time. I hired people to do it. Then I hired a fellow named Abe Kanegson, who I've lost touch with over the years. He was one of the most brilliant letterers I have ever met in all my life. He could write in Old English...or in any font. It enabled me to attempt weird things, not weird, but highly imaginative things."

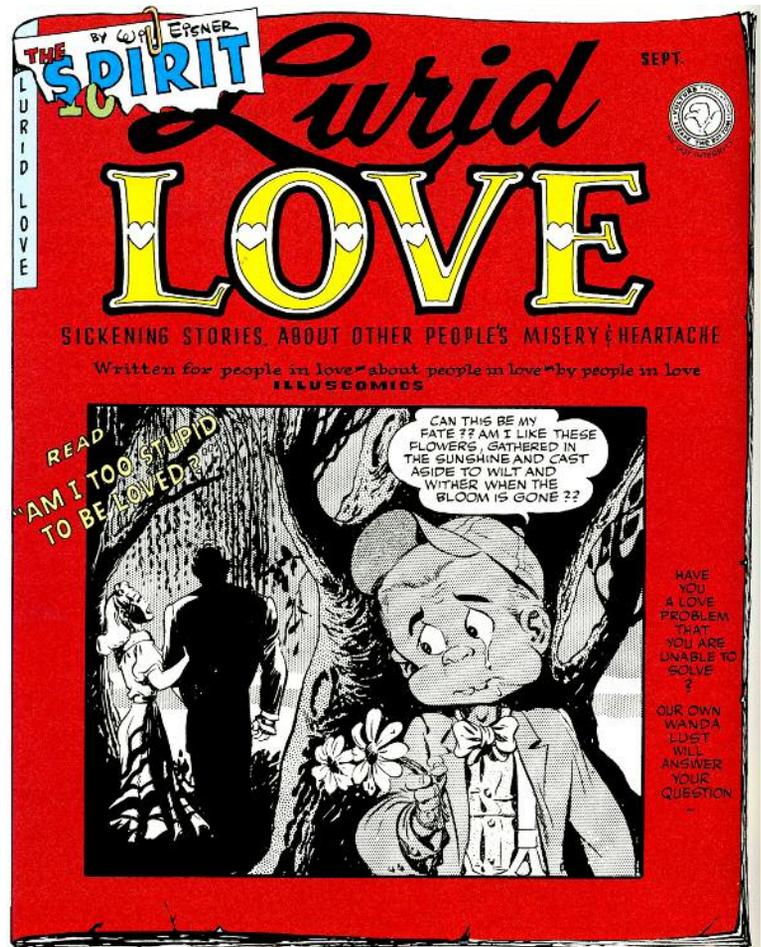
—Will Eisner, quoted in Durwin S. Talon's
Panel Discussions: *Designs in Sequential Art Storytelling*

Where was Abe Kanegson? For decades, *Spirit* fans wondered about the fate of Eisner's master letterer after he quit comics forever in 1951. Though his career barely lasted five years, Kanegson made an indelible mark on the comic book field. His subsequent life and career remained a mystery even to Eisner, who tried for years to find his old friend.

Now, 60 years later, the mystery is finally solved. That story is nearly as interesting as the discovery itself.

In September 2010 I started the research for a proposed book on "The Secret Files of Dr. Drew," a feature the Eisner studios produced for Fiction House in the late '40s. The series was written and drawn by three of Eisner's most talented ghosts, writer Marilyn Mercer, artist Jerry Grandenetti, and letterer Abe Kanegson. My first order of business was to find out more about them.

While there was ample information on Grandenetti and a little about Mercer, almost nothing was known about Kanegson. Will Eisner, Jerry Grandenetti, and Jules Feiffer had shared some brief personal



Lurid Lettering!

(Above:) Abe parodied love comics lettering in this pre-*Mad* edition of *The Spirit* from Sept. 18, 1949. Art by Will Eisner, script by Jules Feiffer. Eisner had fun having parodies of comic book ads and radio commercials interrupt his stories. [©2011 Will Eisner Studios, Inc.]

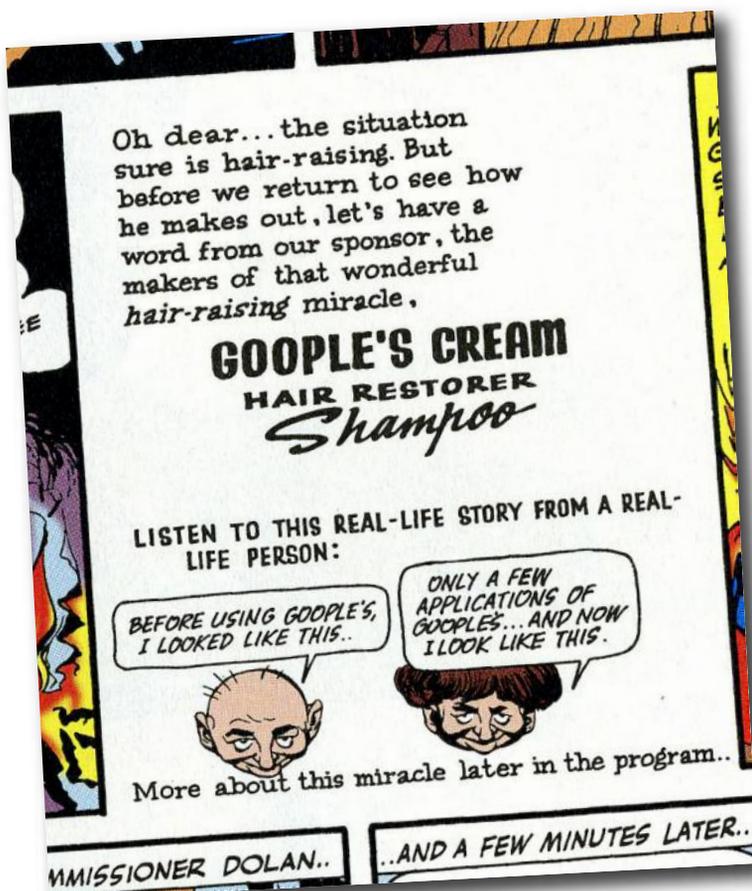
anecdotes, but I found nothing about Kanegson's early life or his post-comics career. Even the indispensable *Who's Who of American Comics* (1928-1999) came up blank on that score, aside from mentioning Abe's interest in folk music. But that fact, plus an article in which Jules Feiffer mentioned Abe's pronounced stutter, eventually provided the key that unlocked the mystery. That, and dumb luck.

As part of my research I entered the name "Abe Kanegson" on eBay, curious what might pop up. And something sure did—a 1969 folk record called *Abe Kanegson*, with the photo of a fortyish dark-haired man on the cover! Could it possibly be the same man? The photo jibed perfectly with caricatures of Abe that had appeared in an old *Spirit* story, but I needed solid proof.

Working on the assumption that both Abes were the same man, my wife Janet volunteered to investigate. She scoured the Internet, and within hours discovered that album. Abe was a respected professional square dance caller, folk singer, and songwriter, credited for "Abe's Donegal" and "Abe's Skirt Swisher." Further research showed ads for Abe Kanegson in New York square dance clubs as early as 1953. He also performed at the

Hair Apparent

(Left:) Phony ad from "The Torch" *Spirit* story from April 25, 1948. Jules Feiffer believes that Abe wrote, drew, and lettered the faux ads scattered throughout this and the "Lurid Love" *Spirit* story. [©2011 Will Eisner Studios, Inc.]



What if, instead of selling his half-ownership of All-American Publications to National/DC co-publishers Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz in 1945, as happened in *The World We Know*, AA co-publisher Max Charles Gaines had instead purchased DC from them?

Just imagine: a comic book industry in which (due to legal problems involving Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, and Bob Kane which resulted in there being two competing versions of Superman and Batman on the nation's newsstands in the late 1940s, with both renditions eventually being cancelled) the AA characters Green Lantern, The Flash, and Wonder Woman had instead become the surviving Golden Age super-heroes—stars of comic books, radio, movie serials, and early TV?

That was the premise of Bob Rozakis' series of articles which appeared in eight issues of *Alter Ego* in 2008-2009, as well as in a number of issues of our sister *TwoMorrows* mag *Back Issue!* However, after the final A/E installment had appeared, *Ye Editor* asked author Bob Rozakis if he'd be interested in clearing up a few questions left unanswered to date.

This piece is the result: not a dream (precisely)... not a hoax (because we're telling you about it up front)... just an imaginary tale of an alternate universe we call *Earth-22*... even though, in *Our World*, all art on the next four pages features characters which are TM & ©2011 by DC Comics. So, enjoy with us now the ultimate A/E segment of...

The Secret History Of All-American Comics, Inc.

by Bob Rozakis

Book One – Bonus Chapter: "Ask The Answer Man!"



Under Western (All-) Stars

The published cover of All-American's *All-Star Comics* #58—the final issue—with its Wild, Wild West theme and villains. Art (perhaps) by Arthur Peddy & Bernard Sachs; repro'd from the original art, from the joint collection of Larry Guidry & Shane Foley. Flanking the printed cover are a couple of gems from Larry's solo collection: the original not-positively-ID'd pencil sketches for the "monster" and "crime" covers which were considered for #58, if the decision had been made to go in one of those directions as far as content.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Bob Rozakis built a reputation as “The AA Answer Man,” replying to readers’ questions about the history of All-American Comics, Inc., and its characters in a column regularly included in the company’s various titles. The following are a sampling of questions he answered, with new information and relevant artwork added.

Q: In early 1951, All-Star Comics changed its title to All-Star Western and began featuring cowboys like *The Trigger Twins* and *Johnny Thunder*. What happened?

Long before Bob Dylan sang that “the times they are a-changing,” the comic book industry saw a significant drop in reader interest in superheroes. Publishers were looking for new types of books and, in concert with the rise of the popularity of cowboys on television, found a market for Western heroes. They also found audiences for comics featuring war stories, crime and detectives, romance stories, and horror and science-fiction tales.

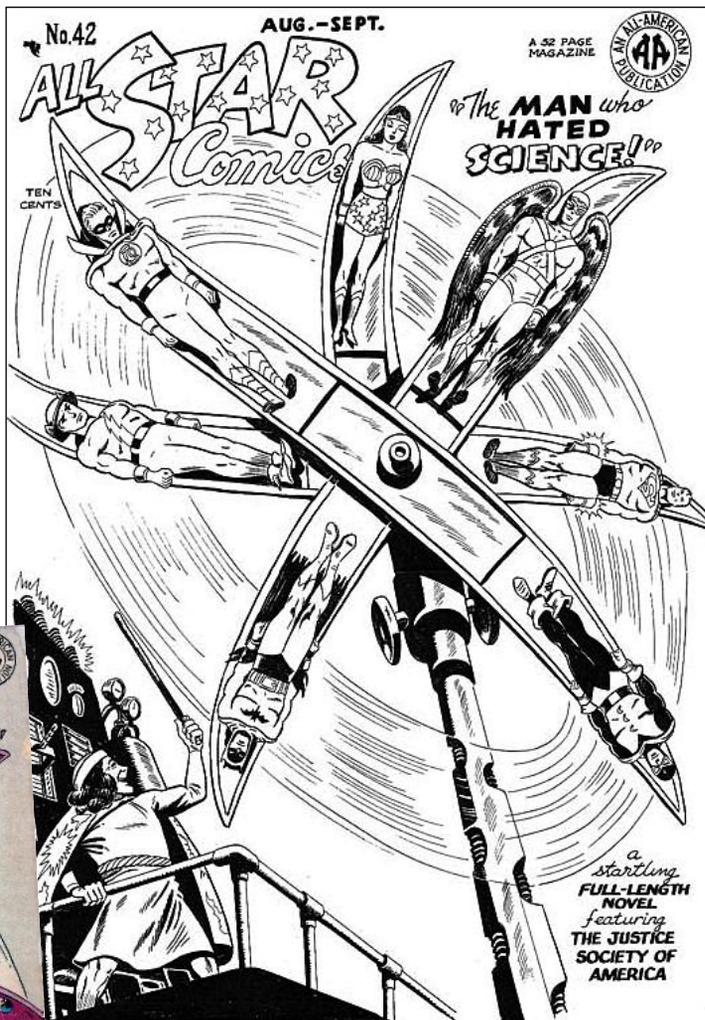
In some cases, the changeover of a title from one genre to another was abrupt. *Action Comics*, for example, which starred the original

Superman, became *Action Western* after cowboy stars Johnny Thunder, The Vigilante, and Tex Thomson pushed the Man of Steel first off the cover and then out of the magazine entirely. Two years later, however, it became *Action Men of War*, with nary a Western hero in sight. (See A/E #78.)

In the case of *All-Star*, the change began in #58, with the Justice Society being transported back in time to the Old West. There they were confronted by The Wizard’s new *Injustice Gang*, a team that included Billy the Kid, Jesse James, and Belle Starr. During this adventure, the super-heroes met up with *The Trigger Twins* and together they defeated The Wizard and his outlaws. The Twins, along with Strong Bow, The Roving Ranger, and the cowboy Johnny Thunder, took center stage in the following issue in separate stories, with Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Batman, and The Atom appearing only in the splash panels to introduce the tales.

What readers (and, until recently, most of the AA staff) did not know is that *All-Star Comics* almost went in different directions. Found among editor Julie Schwartz’s old files were other, unused cover sketches for *All-Star* #58. One of them showed the JSA members battling Dracula, a witch, the hunchback, and Frankenstein’s monster. Notes scribbled on the sketch indicate that AA was considering changing the name of the comic to *All-Star Horror*, *All-Star Monsters*, or even *All-Scare Comics*.

Another discarded sketch pictured the JSA members facing off against



Stand-Ins For The (All-) Stars

(Above:) The published cover of *All-Star Comics* #42, by Irwin Hasen, repro'd from a scan of the original art. From the collection of Shane Foley.

(Left:) This alternate version of that cover, with The Atom and Black Canary pictured instead of Superman and Batman, accidentally got printed in house ads that appeared in a handful of AA comics.

Al Capone, John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, and Machine-Gun Kelly. Indications were that the name “Justice Society” would have been played up on this version, along with “Crime Syndicate,” and suggests that the magazine’s title might eventually have been changed to *Justice vs. Crime*.

The basic premise for each of the two unused versions seems to have been the same as for the one that was published: The Wizard recruits a new team, be they monsters or gangsters, and brings them into battle with the JSA. New heroes, current to the time period or genre, would have been introduced and would’ve taken over the comic in succeeding issues. While there are no indications which heroes might have been introduced in the “crime” version, it seems likely that Doctor Thirteen, who debuted not long afterward in *Sensation Comics* #106, might have been slated to appear in the “monster” version.

Q: What is the relation between the Johnny Thunder who was in the *Justice Society* in the 1940s and the cowboy who appeared in the '50s?

Originally, the only thing the two had in common was their name. However, in 1982, editor E. Nelson Bridwell, who loved to connect all the pieces of the AA Universe together, wrote “Whatever Happened to Johnny Thunder?” for *AA Comics Presents* #48. In the story, he showed the

The Rudi Franke Interview – Part II

More Scintillating Talk With One Of Fandom's Finest Early Fan-Artists

Conducted by Bill Schelly, CFA Editor

NOTE: The first half of this conversation with Rudi Franke, one of the bright lights of the early-'60s San Francisco area fan-group known as Golden Gate Features (the other members being Barry Bauman, Bill DuBay, and Marty Arbutich) appeared in *Alter Ego* #99. Unfortunately, the special 100th issue and then an overcrowded #101 prevented the publication of the second half till now.

BILL SCHELLY: The only time you collaborated with Bill DuBay, according to my notes, was on that strip "The Invincibles" in *Fantasy Heroes' Hangout*. Do you remember that ditto strip?

RUDI FRANKE: Yes, I do. I was looking at it recently. I can't tell you how we decided to do what, but I think he probably inked a lot of it, or rather, transferred my art to the ditto master.

BS: What was the first comics convention you attended?

FRANKE: The 1965 New York comicon. I was stationed over there in the Navy at the time. I could only stay for a couple of hours, because I had other commitments. That same summer, I visited Larry Ivie in the city, which was interesting. Like Roger Brand, he had scrapbooks with pages and panels cut from comic books that he had pasted into them.

BS: Okay, let's skip ahead a bit, after you finished your time in the Navy and were back in Oakland. I have a photo—which I think you sent to me a number of years ago—of a fan gathering in your garage in Oakland.

That was the beginning of California fandom, of fans wanting to come together in those pre-Comic-Con days. I presume it was, like, for a few hours one afternoon.

FRANKE: We called our group "Northern California Comic Collectors." The meeting you are referring to was our second meeting, and that was Mike Friedrich's garage, not mine. 25 or so fans showed up, on a Saturday or something like that. I recall that Mike had some contacts at DC, because he had gotten some artwork from Julius Schwartz for the occasion. It was given out as prizes.



Franke Turns On The Fawcett

Rudi Franke in the late 1960s or early '70s—juxtaposed with two of his takes on Fawcett heroes: *Spy Smasher* from *Voice of Comicdom* #15 (May 1969) and an undated drawing of *Captain Marvel* with a trio of his friends and foes. [Shazam characters & *Spy Smasher* TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]

BS: It was the usual thing then, right? Trading? Selling?

FRANKE: Trading. I seem to recall that Bill DuBay invited somebody in comics who lived in the Bay Area. He wasn't a big name, but he was there. Maybe he worked for *Treasure Comics* [i.e., *Treasure Chest*] or *Catholic Comics*. I only remember two such meetings. One was at my house; that could have been the same year.

Let's see, I'm just trying to think when we had that. Yeah, one was at my house and two was at Mike's house, I'm sure. [After consulting some



A Monstrous Talent

(Above:) This page from Rudi Franke's *Voice of Comidom* #12 (1968) features Richard Corben's first published comics work, "Monsters Rule." Thanks to Rudi, Rich Corben e-mailed Ye Editor: "'Monsters Rule' was a story consisting of eight one-page chapters, like a serial." [©2011 Richard Corben.]

(Right:) Rich Corben in 1969. Photo courtesy of the artist and photographer Orlan Hill.

notes:] Okay, January 8th, 1966—that's what I have for the one at my house. We had rented a projector, and I think we watched the *Captain America* serial. We had people from, I think, Sacramento to San Jose, because I know my dentist, Dr. Pierce, who was a collector, talked about meeting at my house. Barry and Marty and Bill had set up tables there for trading and stuff. And I think we had a box lunch for everybody. I had a pretty big backyard. We had some tables set up, and we had some chairs set up in the garage for the movie. The weather in Oakland is always pretty nice, pretty even-going.

BS: By then, you were kind of "between fanzines," weren't you?

FRANKE: Well, in 1967 I started *Heroes' Hangout* again, picking up with #4. Now it was all photo offset, a little half-size format, 5 1/2" by 8 1/2". I charged 20¢ apiece for them. Like the earlier ones, they had work by Roger Brand.

BS: How did it happen that you took over publishing *Voice of Comicdom* from Bill DuBay? That happened around this time, didn't it?

FRANKE: Yes. I think what happened was, Marty contacted me because he wanted the Steve Ditko cover illustration that we had used on *All-Stars*. So I went over there, and I think that was when I learned Bill was

giving up *Voice of Comicdom* because he was about to go into the military. I was interested in continuing it, so he gave me or sent me some pages before he went into the Army.

BS: So you inherited some things that Bill had been preparing for future issues, and that helped you get started on *Voice of Comicdom*. You had quite a run on that zine. As I recall, one of the central pieces of it was the work by Richard Corben. Was he a friend?

FRANKE: Yeah. I met him through a fanzine publisher in San Jose by the name of Dennis Cunningham. Dennis published [the fanzine] *Weirdom*, and he did *The Plague*. I don't remember how we met. Dennis said, "Look at this artist I have." It was Richard Corben. I asked if it would be okay to write to him. Richard and I struck up a friendship, and he did a strip for me right away. I published it in *Voice of Comicdom*. I think it beat out Dennis Cunningham's zine, so I believe Richard's work appeared in *Voice of Comicdom* before it did in anything else. It was called "Monsters Rule."

BS: The George Metzger strip wasn't through Dennis, was it?

FRANKE: No, it wasn't. George was down by San Jose State. I had seen his work and contacted him. It was in like an underground, maybe. Could it have been Bill Spicer?

BS: Yeah, Spicer was publishing Metzger in *Graphic Story Magazine*.

FRANKE: Mm-mm, so I'm not sure about the time, but it had to be that or when San Jose was publishing a newspaper called *Red Eye* or something with Metzger's work.

BS: I feel the Metzger influence is very noticeable in your strip for *Star-Studded Comics*, the "Doctor Weird" strip.

FRANKE: Oh, really? [laughs]

BS: If you look at it, it looks like this guy has seen Metzger. It fits with "Dr. Weird."



FRANKE: You know, I was really into the poster art and the lettering at that time in San Francisco, and I got a lot of the ideas from them. A psychedelic approach, and it's more unconscious if it's from George Metzger. I just really loved his work.

BS: With *Voice of Comicdom*, you were really into pretty big-time fanzine publishing. You did a number of issues, and they're some of the very best fanzines of the late '60s and early '70s, and quite different from the issues DuBay had done.

FRANKE: I enjoyed it, and the zine grew into a different type of thing. I changed the format and probably shouldn't have kept the name. The real difference from Bill DuBay's issues came with #16, with the wrap-around cover by Richard Corben. He had done the [color] separations on plastic.... Somehow he knew how all this was going to come together, so I had to find one of these big presses in downtown San Jose. We were going by the seat of our pants doing it, but it turned out very well. It's gorgeous. The printer did a good job.

BS: *Voice of Comicdom* had become, basically, a strip fanzine with very few articles. There were interviews....

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

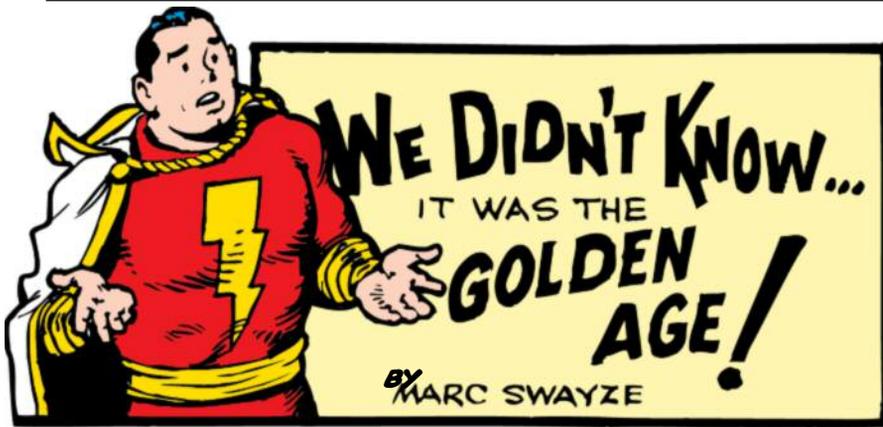
FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#161 - June 2011



Best
Wishes
John
BELFI
'66



[Art & logo ©2011 Marc Swayze; Captain Marvel © & TM 2011 DC Comics]

[FCA EDITORS NOTE: From 1941-53, Marcus D. Swayze was a top artist for Fawcett Publications. The very first Mary Marvel character sketches came from Marc's drawing table, and he illustrated her earliest adventures, including the classic origin story, "Captain Marvel Introduces Mary Marvel (Captain Marvel Adventures No. 18, Dec. '42); but he was primarily hired by Fawcett Publications to illustrate Captain Marvel stories and covers for Whiz Comics and Captain Marvel Adventures. He also wrote many Captain Marvel scripts, and continued to do so while in the military. After leaving the service in 1944, he made an arrangement with Fawcett to produce art and stories for them on a freelance basis out of his Louisiana home. There he created both art and stories for *The Phantom Eagle* in Wow Comics, in addition to drawing the *Flyin' Jenny* newspaper strip for Bell Syndicate (created by his friend and mentor Russell Keaton). After the cancellation of Wow, Swayze produced artwork for Fawcett's top-selling line of romance comics, including *Sweethearts* and *Life Story*. After the company ceased publishing comics, Marc moved over to Charlton Publications, where he ended his comics career in the mid-'50s. Marc's ongoing professional memoirs have been a vital part of FCA since his first column appeared in FCA #54 (1996). Last time we re-presented for the first time in the pages of *Alter Ego* Marc's wife, June Swayze's heartwarming essay about her man. Beginning in this issue, we reprint John Pierce's discussion with Marc from Comics Interview #122 (1993)... with special thanks to publisher David Anthony Kraft [comicsinterview.com].

—P.C. Hamerlinck.]

ORIGINAL 1993 INTRODUCTION: Marcus D. Swayze stands as one of the most amazing, if little known, comics creators of the 1940s. Not only was he an artist who could draw in both the cartoony style associated with Fawcett's original *Captain*

Marvel, but also in the other, more realistic style, as well as having been a writer (in those days when writers and artists were usually separate entities in comic books), plus a musician and an athlete.

In 1956, Marc left the comics field to establish and become director for an art department with the Olin Matheson Chemical Corporation in Monroe, Louisiana, where he remained until 1980. He received his Master's degree in art from Northeast Louisiana University in 1973, and later served as an adjunct professor of art at NLU.

As a musician, Marc plays guitar, piano, and several other instruments. More recently he has been playing in a Dixieland band made up chiefly of NLU professors.

Among comics collectors, Swayze is mainly known as one of the early artists of Fawcett's *Captain Marvel*, having drawn a number of stories,

Golden Age Great

Marc doubts if any other artist produced more *Captain Marvel* art than he did before joining the armed forces in 1942. Fawcett allowed him not to be part of their "assembly-line" for producing comics, letting him generally illustrate stories all the way through, from layout through penciling and inking. As the visual originator of *Mary Marvel*, one of his most prominent and beloved works was illustrating the first tale of the "World's Mightiest Girl" for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (Dec. 1942), from which all three panels accompanying this first part of the interview are taken. The original *Mary Marvel* concept sketch he mentions on p. 76 (and which was printed in *A/E V3* #1) was the basis of the panel at right. [Shazam heroine TM & ©2011 DC Comics.]

written others, illustrated several covers, and drawn the original *Mary Marvel* character and the first MM tales. He is also remembered as artist on the *Flyin' Jenny* newspaper strip for Bell Syndicate.

Of Swayze's work and person, two of his now-deceased former Fawcett colleagues had the following to say. First, the late C.C. Beck: "Swayze is a remarkable

person, a... and a bea... addition, Southern... from the l... "Although... *Mary Ma*

have before me the numbe... garb is amazingly mod wi... Swayze, of course, wanted... was my distasteful job to c... the *Captain Marvel* team.

JOHN G. PIERCE: Okay, Keaton [on *Flyin' Jenny*]?

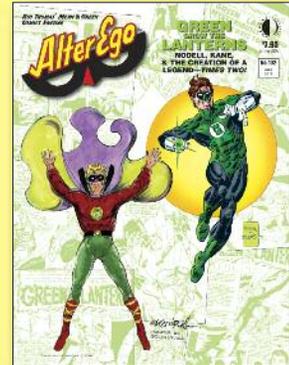
MARC SWAYZE: A relative faculty at Louisiana Tech a... a truly great professional a... work with him, and particu... the conviction that a good... pencil, ink, letter, even wri... until I got to New York, to

JOHN: Tell us, then, how... mean.

MARC: I returned to Louisiana after leaving Keaton and contacted several publishers and newspaper syndicates. I was called to New York by France E. (Eddie) Herron, Fawcett's comics editor. This must have been early '41.

JOHN: Let's concentrate on your Fawcett period for a while. You were there from ...

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