

ROY THOMAS' MOST-WANTED
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego™

GOLDEN/SILVER AGE ACE INKER
MIKE ESPOSITO
ON ROSS ANDRU, SPIDER-MAN,
WONDER WOMAN, & MORE!



\$6.95
In the USA

No.54
November
2005

EXTRA:
ROBERT KANIGHER
ON CREATING THE METAL MEN
& SGT. ROCK!



PLUS:



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About Our Cover: *To illustrate the sterling work of the Ross Andru/Mike Esposito team at DC, Marvel, and elsewhere over the past half century, Mike Esposito could've re-created any number of fondly-remembered and well-composed covers, featuring Wonder Woman, the Metal Men, Spider-Man, or other characters. But Ye Editor unabashedly prevailed upon his old poker buddy to do a slightly different riff on that of Wonder Woman #108 (Aug. 1959), with the mugs of Ross and Mike replacing that of the original Princess Di on the "Wanted" poster. Incidentally, the original art of this cover—and numerous other commissions—is for sale by Mike, who can be reached at Espo@mightymikeesposito.net; or see his website at: <http://mightymikeespo.net/> [Art ©2005 Mike Esposito; Wonder Woman TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]*

Above: *An Andru & Esposito panel from The Amazing Spider-Man #156 (May 1976).*
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FIRST PRINTING.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
John Albano, Jim Aparo,
Sam Kveskin, & Byron Preiss

“The Triple Pillar Of The World”

Sure, the Shakespearean quote above (from *Julius Caesar*) is a tad hyperbolic when applied to comics creators (or to *most* triumvirates, come to that), but it seemed like the logical title of this page—just as the way the three-man theme that emerged for this issue of *Alter Ego* seemed the most natural thing in the world.

For the three names seem destined to be intertwined forever, in some thick underbrush of comic book history: Ross Andru—Mike Esposito—Robert Kanigher.

We began, of course, with the second half of Jim Amash's epic interview with Mike, which would deal in large part (though far from solely) with the years he and partner/penciler Ross Andru spent drawing *Wonder Woman*, *Metal Men*, and “The War That Time Forgot” for DC, before they became a bit less of a team first at Marvel, later at DC again, as well.

And since Robert Kanigher was both the editor and writer of virtually every one of the stories Ross and Mike drew for the three above series, and for a few other tales as well, we were delighted when Lynn Woolley showed up with notes written by RK himself about the origins of the Metal Men. For good measure, we asked Robin Snyder for permission to reprint material from his excellent monthly magazine *The Comics!* (née *History of Comics*, about a decade and a half ago) which

was written by Kanigher—as well as by the late Bob Haney, by Robin as moderator of sorts, and by artist Joe Kubert (who's long since given us his blessing to print any old material of his that we run across—as long as we don't ask him to draw anything *new* on his backbreaking schedule). Maybe Ross and Mike were just as well *out* of that one, though they did draw other war stories for Kanigher.

You'll find some disagreements in these pages as to who did what, and when, and to whom—but that's par for the course in *any* situation that deals with history, and not merely that of lowly comic books.

Basically, though, despite a few harsh words exchanged in print a few years back between Kanigher and Haney, two great talents who sadly are no longer with us, we hope you'll find this issue a celebration of them as well as of Mike Esposito and Ross Andru, and the numerous other collaborators with whom one or the other of that team worked—including Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Carmine Infantino, Julius Schwartz, Gil Kane, John Romita, Barry Smith, the Brothers Buscema, Marie Severin, Gerry Conway, even a Thomas named Roy.

Well, every issue can use a bit of comedy relief.

Bestest,

Roy



[Art ©2005 Alex Ross; Marvel Family TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

Edited by ROY THOMAS

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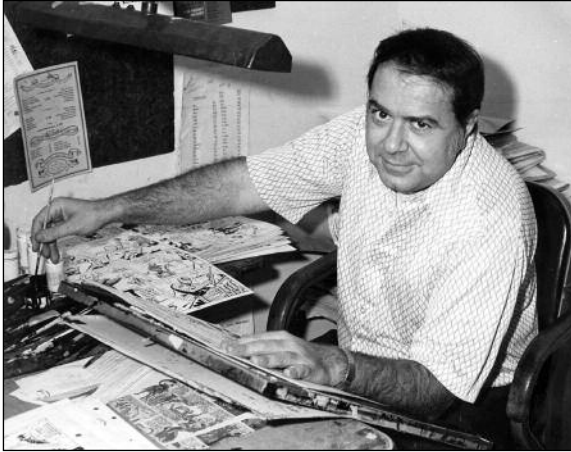


Mike Esposito: The DC & Marvel Years

Part II Of A Tintinnablatin' Talk About ANDRU, KANIGHER, LEE—And Up Your Nose!

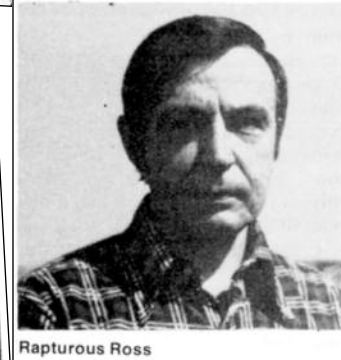
Interview Conducted by Jim Amash

Transcribed by Tom Wimbish



Golden/Silver/Bronze Age inker Mike Esposito has had primarily a two-pronged career—as half of the long-running team of Ross Andru & Mike

Esposito, and as an inker (and, in the early days, penciler) on his own. Last issue dealt with Mike's early years in the comics field, how he and Andru teamed up in the postwar 1940s—and even briefly became, in the pre-Comics Code 1950s, publishers with their own companies, Mikeross (also sometimes spelled MikeRoss), and Mister Publications, with such titles as Mister Mystery, Mister Universe, 3-D Romance, 3-D Love—and Get Lost, which resulted in their being sued by EC as an imitation of the four-color Mad! During this long period they also drew for Timely/Marvel, Ziff-Davis, Standard—you name it. At the end of Part I, Mike related how he and Ross first began doing work for DC



Rapturous Ross

Four On The Floor— And Amid The Skyscrapers

(Top left:) "Mighty Mike" Esposito at work at Marvel, 1975. Courtesy of the artist.

(Left:) A late Andru & Esposito teaming at DC—the first page of the lead story in *The Flash* #182 (Sept. 1968); with script by another Silver Age legend, John Broome. Thanks to Carl Gafford. [©2005 DC Comics.]

(Top right:) Marvel reprinted Andru & Esposito's *Amazing Spider-Man* #141 (Feb. 1975) in the 1995 trade paperback *Spider-Man: Clone Genesis*. [©2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

(Above:) This rare photo of Rapturous Ross Andru appeared in Marvel's *FOOM Magazine* #15 (Sept. 1976). [©2005 the respective copyright holders.]



The Kanigher Touch

The caricature at right of DC editor & writer Robert Kanigher appeared (first?) in conjunction with an RK interview in *The Comics Journal* #86 (Nov. 1983), and was drawn by Ernie Colón. With thanks to Ernie, Gary Groth, and Fantagraphics. See RK photo on p. 41. [©2005 Ernie Colón.]

(Above:) This Andru-*Esposito*-drawn "Suicide Squad" page from *The Brave and the Bold* #26 (Oct.-Nov. 1959) has all of RK's trademark flourishes, including multiple-panel sequences in the top and bottom tiers. Whether or not he was the "first" to employ such cinematic techniques in comic books as he and others often claimed, he was definitely an early and prolific (and skillful) user of same. Thanks to John Wells. [©2005 DC Comics.]

*Comics, the company with which the Andru-*Esposito* team is forever associated in the minds of many comic aficionados. This issue focuses on their DC work during the 1950s and beyond—and on their later work (both separately and together) at Marvel and occasionally elsewhere.*

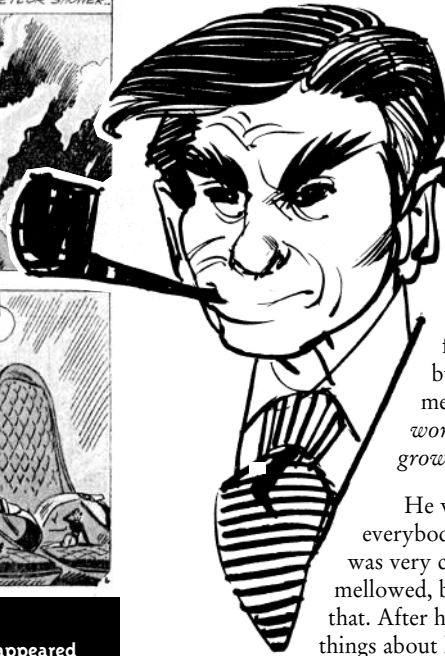
"Kanigher Was Our Man"

JA: When you went back to DC, you worked strictly for Kanigher, right?

ESPOSITO: Kanigher was our man. If I liked him at the time, it was only for fear of *not* liking him. I was so afraid of losing the jobs we had that I wouldn't do anything to disturb his temper or his mood. Once, Ross and I made the mistake of going to Howard's Clothing Store and buying matching suits. So we walked into DC wearing the same outfit. [chuckles] Bob Kanigher looked over and said, "What're you two, the Bobbsey Twins?" So we got a reputation: it was like we were Siamese twins; we were glued together.

JA: I know how Kanigher treated some people; he was brutal to Mort Meskin.

ESPOSITO: Oh, he ruined Mort. He almost gave him a nervous breakdown. [Meskin had already suffered one such breakdown. —Jim.] One day, I was coming into the office as Mort was leaving, and he was holding a package of drawings under his arm. He had a frozen look on his face. I opened the door for him and said, "Hey, Mort," and he was just staring. I said, "Are you all right?" He kept right on staring. I put my arm around his shoulder and said, "Come on, Mort. Relax. Everything's all right. Things are going to be fine." It was like he was on drugs; his eyes were frozen as if he'd been on heavy tranquilizers. That's when I realized that he'd probably had a nervous breakdown, though not at that very moment. He seemed like such a nice guy.



Ross was very upset with Kanigher for being that way. Years later when Kanigher had his nervous breakdown, I felt sorry for him; I shook his hand and asked how he was feeling. Ross said, "What're you doing?" I said, "I'm sorry, Ross, but I can't carry my anger to this stage, where I'm feeling well and he's feeling terribly." Ross felt that Bob's mistreatment of freelancers and tight deadlines were unjust, but that was just Bob's style. He didn't mean it. He was like General Patton. [Mike wordlessly imitates George C. Scott's growling for several seconds.]

He was tough on the workers, but not on everybody; he was a great man to his friends. He was very close with Irv Novick. Later on, he mellowed, but I'm sorry to say he wasn't always like that. After his nervous breakdown, I wrote some nice things about him in a magazine. He wrote an article for another magazine in which he said, "Thank you, Mike. I wish my family could hear you say that." I said nothing but complimentary things about him. I praised him for his genius work on *Metal Men*, and the way he handled *Wonder Woman*. He was a brilliant writer for comics, and I can't help but appreciate that he gave me a chance to develop what I do today. I respected him for what he gave me and what he gave Ross. Ross didn't; he had his own feelings.

I've always had nice things to say about Bob, because if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be as good as I have become. I meant it; he may have been tough, but he made me work. He made me *not* hack. He made me worry about the quality of what I was doing, and even if it wasn't up to other people's standards, he made me believe that I had done the best I could.

He didn't have to do that to Ross, because Ross was damned good, and he knew what he was doing. Bob was responsible for helping Ross and myself to develop as we did, whether Ross believed it or not. He knew we were a team. He said to Ross, "Think of this as a TV screen. It's not a giant movie screen. Get close; get in there on the faces, and then put those other things behind it." Ross got a little better at it, as you can see in some of his war and *Metal Men* stories. Bob thought that Ross was a genius at storytelling. He taught him how to get up close, so that we could read the characters' expressions. It rubbed off on Ross, whether he would have admitted it or not. We were good to Bob, and Bob was very good to us; he kept us working when other places had no work to offer us. When things got tied up at the office and he had no work for us, he recommended us to other editors. That was unheard-of: each editor had his own stable of artists, and there wasn't much sharing, but Bob let us do *Rip Hunter* for Murray Boltinoff.

Bob also recommended me to Jack Miller. When Ross bolted to Marvel, Jack Miller pulled me in to do *Swing with Scooter*, *Inferior Five*, and *The Maniaks*. Finally, he agreed to try Ross out on a romance story. Ross penciled the story and made it really powerful. Jack Miller didn't like it, but Bob Kanigher said, "You've got to admit that it's dramatic." It was; Ross saw it as a really dramatic story. It wasn't pretty; it wasn't in the Bernie Sachs style, or Bob Oksner's, with those pretty legs on the women. That wasn't Ross' style. Ross was a dramatist, a storyteller, and Bob defended Ross when he heard Jack's criticism. Eventually, Miller decided that since everybody else was saying it was a good job, it must be.

Bob had his moods. Sometimes I'd think, "Gee, what a nice guy he can be." But then he'd make me feel very uncomfortable. Once I said to him, "Y'know Bob, we've never had a vacation." He said, "You had all of last month off." I said, "What do you mean? You were away for the whole month, and we were out of work!" He saw that as a vacation. We were biting our fingernails for six weeks while he was skiing in Switzerland. He had said, "Take off, boys. I'm going away."

When Christmas time came, he would tell everybody what he wanted for Christmas. One time he was going skiing, and he wanted something that had to do with skiing. I couldn't afford to buy it, though. But we always *had* to buy him Christmas presents.

JA: Or else?

ESPOSITO: Or else. When we went to Marvel, they said, "We don't do that here. We don't buy Christmas presents for the editor." Big difference. [NOTE: *It was never company policy at DC, either.* —Jim]

There were times when Ross and I would have to pull all-nighters in order to finish a job. When that happened, we'd be so involved in what we were doing that we'd end up sleeping in our clothes. After one of these sessions, I went to Bob Kanigher's office, tired and beat—my hair wasn't combed, my clothes were a little wrinkled, my shirt was open at the collar, and I wasn't wearing a tie. But here I was, feeling like a hero because Ross and I had broken our backs getting this job done on time for Kanigher, and I was thinking I'd at least get some praise for delivering the work under those conditions. Kanigher looked at me and said, "Don't come in here looking like that. When you come in here, wear a coat and tie." Thanks for nothin'!

We cartoonists were always dealing with deadline problems. We lived for the euphoric joy of getting a job done under tough conditions and turning it in, so we could start the vicious cycle anew. The euphoria of doing our job under such conditions was spoiled by the bucket of ice water named Kanigher.

JA: Do you know what triggered Kanigher's breakdown?

ESPOSITO: It might have just been the old cliché, that he saw himself in the mirror. He was sort-of a run-around, too, a womanizer. That could have come down on him; maybe he had problems at home because of it. Who knows?

"[Kanigher] Couldn't Take Any More of Harry G. Peter"

JA: How did you and Ross get the Wonder Woman job?

ESPOSITO: Kanigher wanted a change. He couldn't take any more of Harry G. Peter. Peter was always late with his work, and Bob didn't know how to get rid of him. I was in the office one day, and I heard Kanigher saying very gently to Peter, "Do you like to go fishing? Do you want to keep going fishing?" Peter said, "Yeah, I love to fish," and Bob said, "Then you've got to keep turning the jobs in, to get the money. You can't be late all the time, unless you want to retire." This went on for a while, and then one day Bob said to Ross and me, "I think maybe, down the line, you may be able to do *Wonder Woman*, because I think Peter's going to retire or be eased out." We were elated, but Ross was a little frightened by it, because he didn't think he could draw pretty girls. And he couldn't, at the time. His work wasn't pretty like Johnny Romita's.

We got the OK to do it in about 1957.

Ross started laying it out and got very upset. I said, "Let me call Johnny Romita and ask him if he'd like to do just the women's figures and faces." I only vaguely knew Romita then. Johnny was a couple of years younger than I, and all he was doing at the time was romance stories for DC. I called him at his home, and he wasn't too keen on the idea. He drew very slowly, and he probably wasn't too sure of himself. Taking on a lot of responsibility is not too good for a guy who doesn't draw that quickly. A guy like Mike Sekowsky would say, "Hey, give it to me," because he'd do one story with his left hand and one with his feet, but Johnny and Ross gave the work so much of their attention that they couldn't split themselves up and still do good jobs. Ross could never do more than one thing at one time. I think Johnny is the same type of guy. When he does a job, he breaks his back to do it; he gives it all of his attention. When I suggested the *Wonder Woman* thing to him, he backed off.

So Ross said we would do it on our own. I had a lot of arguments with him about it. Sometimes he drew her eyes too big—they were buggy—but that's the way Ross wanted to draw her. When Ross left DC for Marvel, Irving Novick drew a couple of issues, and I was amazed at how attractive his *Wonder Woman* faces were compared to Ross'. He approached it differently. It wasn't that Ross couldn't do it; he saw the attractiveness in other ways: in gestures and movements, in bending the arms and fingers gracefully. Guys like Novick and Romita stamp an attractive look on a character that is undeniably pretty. It doesn't look labored; it doesn't look like they struggled to do it. You don't even have to be an artist to see it; you just look at it, and it looks right. With Ross, it looked good, but it looked labored. It was great when he did *The Punisher*, but not when he did *Wonder Woman*.

JA: Did Peter retire, or was he forced off the book?

ESPOSITO: He might have been eased out, probably with a pension. I think they gave him a few hundred dollars a month.



The Wonder-Full Worlds of Robert Kanigher

To any but the youngest readers, *Wonder Woman* seemed overcrowded with quasi-clones of herself as *Wonder Girl* and *Wonder Tot*—with even Hippolyta dubbed "Wonder Queen" for a time, as per the A&E cover of *WW* #124, (Aug. 1961)! The 1961 Alley Award fan-poll named *Wonder Woman* the "series most in need of improvement." [©2005 DC Comics.]



Ring Out The Old—Ring In The New

(Left:) By the time H.G. Peter drew the splash at left, circa 1953-54, he'd been illustrating "Wonder Woman" for more than a dozen years. In 1957 Kanigher would replace him on her mag with Andru & Esposito; Peter passed away the following year. But, when the Amazing Amazon became a hit on TV in the series starring Lynda Carter and Lyle Waggoner (center), it was HGP's work that was reprinted in a 1978 black-&-white paperback, albeit with art and copy rearranged. The title of this story was "Wonder Woman's Wedding Day!"

(Right:) As for A&E's *Wonder Woman* work: well, let's see. We could either reprint the cover of the issue that featured their first interior story, "The Million Dollar Penny" (#98, May 1958)—or #99's space cover—or the archetypal striding Amazon from an issue or two later—or one of her encounters with Egg Fu—or the cover that was re-created by Mike for this ish of *A/E*. Or we could show you a bit of *all* of the above by showcasing the powerful composite cover of *Comic Book Marketplace* #79 (May 2000)! Yeah, that's what we'll do! [WW art ©2005 DC Comics; CBM composition ©2005 Stephen A. Geppi.]

JA: *While you were still on Wonder Woman, you started working on "Metal Men." What do you remember about it?*

ESPOSITO: Editors at DC had to take turns doing *Showcase*. Each guy created a series that would run for several issues, featuring a set of new characters. If a series caught on, it would become a regular title. One was "Suicide Squad," and Murray Boltinoff did "Rip Hunter, Time Master." When Bob Kanigher's turn came up, he did "Metal Men." He only had a week to develop it, and he was going crazy trying to think of something till he finally got the idea to try robots. Robots were a big thing in the B-movies of the '50s.

He looked up the properties of metals, did all the research on it. Then he called up Ross and we went down to see him. We got the script, but we had to develop the characters. I remember the first one, with the big stingray. On the cover, the Metal Men are on a rooftop, about an inch high, and the stingray takes up three-quarters of the space. Ross had wanted to highlight the characters, but Bob Kanigher said he wanted to play up the stingray. So even though Ross laid out the cover, Bob dictated the layout. He gave us a byline on the book, because "Metal Men" was something we had developed. [NOTE: See the following article for Robert Kanigher's own take on the creation of "Metal Men."]

"Charles Moulton" [Dr. William Moulton Marston] was the creator of Wonder Woman, and he got a credit for years after. Even after he died, his estate or somebody kept putting his name on every "Wonder Woman" script. We didn't get a byline in the book until we had been working on it for years. It wasn't "Wonder Woman by Andru and Esposito;" it was just a little box on the splash page, listing us as the artists. DC didn't give bylines in those days. Later, at Marvel, Stan Lee

realized that personal identification between the reader and the people who created the comics meant something. He was right: fans started writing in, saying they liked this guy's work or that guy's work. They identified the artists with the characters. Credit lines didn't matter to Ross, but I wanted people to know what I was working on.

I remember when Marv Wolfman came up to Ross and me at DC and said [*nerdy little voice*], "Mr. Andru? Mr. Esposito? Can I have your autograph?" Ross looked at him and said, "What do you want my autograph for? I'm *nobody*. I'm no different than a garbage man. I'm no celebrity." Marv said, "But I really want your name in there, Mr. Andru." So I signed it: "Heck, yeah, I'll do it for you." Ross finally did, too. Years later, Marv was Ross' boss.

JA: *Did Kanigher always tell Ross what to put on the covers?*

ESPOSITO: He used to have conferences with Ross. He would tell him what the story was going to be about, and then they would choose an exciting scene for the cover.

JA: *As a kid, I liked the art on Wonder Woman, but I didn't think Kanigher's stories were very good. I don't think that was his best writing.*

ESPOSITO: His tongue was in his cheek so deep that he couldn't get it out. He wasn't writing for self-satisfaction; he was just hacking it out. They were just impossible stories, fantasies. He'd borrow from the movies. But you have to remember something: he had to turn that stuff out, page after page, book after book. He'd turn out a story in a day. In those days, he got \$10 a page, and he made a lot of money. If you got paid \$25 a page to pencil, you got garbage: two pages a day if you were lucky.



JA: He had more of an emotional investment in the war stories than in Wonder Woman, right?

ESPOSITO: I don't think he believed in what he was doing with *Wonder Woman*. He did for a while in *Metal Men*. The war stories were personal things to him, though. He identified with the soldiers that he wrote, and he liked to add little personal touches. There was a story about a hand grenade that was a dud, but the soldier carried it around with him anyway. Finally, a tank was coming at the end of the story, and in desperation, he threw the dud at the tank, and it blew up. The touches that he put into those little five-page stories made them unique. Later on, Stan Lee used the same kind of personal touches in *Spider-Man*.

JA: There's no denying that when Kanigher was at his peak, he was very good.

ESPOSITO: He created some good characters: Black Canary, Rose and Thorn, which Ross and I did in the 1970s. The best thing I thought he did in my time was *Metal Men*, because they had so many personalities. All my life, I loved things where people have character, movies like *The*



Wonder Of Wonders!

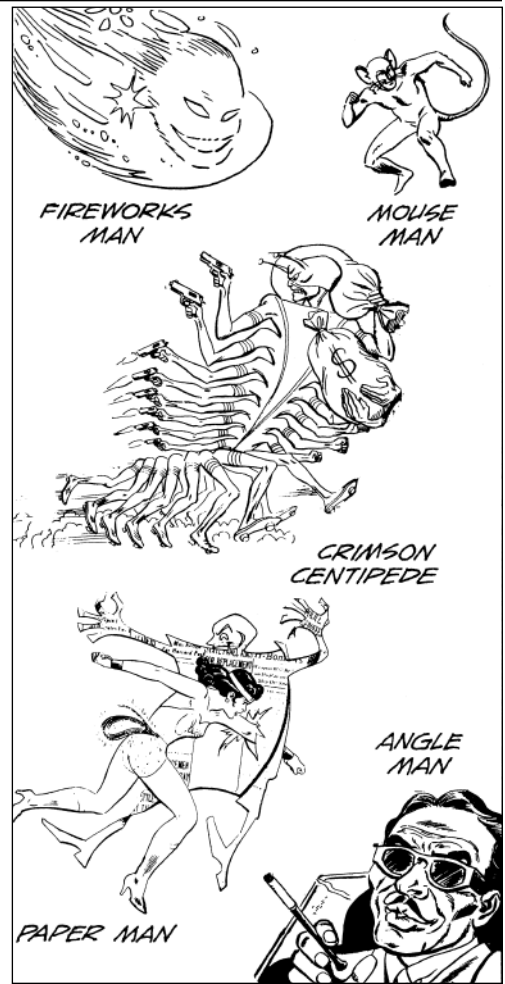
Just for the record: at top left is the first *Wonder Woman* cover by Andru & Esposito—#94 (Nov. 1957), four issues before they were handed the artistic reins of the interior art. [©2005 DC Comics.]

And, at top right: a montage of some of the most unforgettable *Wonder Woman* villains of the Kanigher era. (At least, we've never forgotten them, though Lord knows we've tried!) This montage appeared in the company's house fanzine, *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #15 (Aug. 1977). [©2005 DC Comics.]

Still, Ross and Mike were good sports about it all, as per the above photos taken from the same issue of *AWODC*.

Fiends Of The Fourth Wall

(Left:) In this panel from *Wonder Woman* #158 (Nov. 1965), Wonder Woman can only gawk and stare at writer/editor Robert Kanigher (his face modestly averted from readers' eyes), who had cold-bloodedly ordered artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito to kill off her Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot manifestations. Well, you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs... as we were telling Egg Fu just the other day. Thanks to Carl Gafford for the issue ID. [©2005 DC Comics.]



Light That Failed, or *Mrs. Miniver*. The people are real, and they have character. Bob did that in the *Metal Men*.

"[The Flash] Wasn't My Style, And It Certainly Wasn't Ross"

JA: Was Ross the type to change a script?

ESPOSITO: Not with Bob. Up at Marvel, he got to be very friendly with Gerry Conway. He would suggest things to Gerry, and Gerry would tell him to go ahead. He never spoke to Stan Lee about it. With

individual writers like Marv Wolfman or Len Wein, he would come up with things that he wanted to do in the stories. Ross had a very good, creative, script-writing mind. When we were self-publishing, he had some great ideas.

JA: Ross and you also drew some Sea Devils stories.



ESPOSITO: We did a couple where we drew ourselves into the stories. There's a panel in one story where Ross and I are meeting the Sea Devils. We're shaking hands and introducing ourselves to them. I think we only did one or two issues.

JA: Let me ask you about *The Flash*. You and Ross took over after Carmine Infantino, which must have been daunting.

ESPOSITO: We were shocked that we were asked to do it, because it wasn't the kind of thing we would do. It wasn't my style, and it certainly wasn't Ross'. I could ink Carmine up to a point, but I couldn't do what Joe Giella did; Joe was a master at handling Carmine's artwork. Carmine would really cut up the paper; he'd go over and over it until he had black, massive lines. I did a better job with him on *Spider-Woman* at Marvel. He had a style, and I liked doing his stuff, but I got intimidated by all the lines. Joe Giella knew how to take his eraser and clean the pencils up, then find the rhythm. Carmine had a rhythm to his under-drawings, and Joe could find it and put it in the inks. It wasn't sketchy when he got through; it had a consistency, as if it had been penciled exactly like that. I had difficulty doing that. I had the same problem with Ross until Joe Giella showed me what to do, which was to erase Ross. Then I got better.

Carmine and Joe Giella were brilliant on *The Flash*. It had a slick, science-fiction look. It was metallic, sterile, and clean. When Ross and I did it, *The Flash* looked muscle-bound, as if he'd been weightlifting, and he had slowed down ten miles per hour. He didn't have that speed. Ross—with his Slavic and Russian background—drew himself, with muscular legs, thick wrists, and biceps. Artists draw themselves. When I draw myself, I need a brassiere.

Carmine suggested Ross and me for *The Flash* because we were the hot team, and Carmine knew that Ross could really tell a story. I don't think Julie Schwartz was crazy about Ross's pencils, but Carmine liked it because it was completely different from his own *Flash*. Editorially, Julie grew up with Carmine; Carmine developed the whole sci-fi look of Julie's books. He set the pace at DC, the way Alex Toth did at Standard Publications. I appreciate that Carmine gave us the book, because he showed respect for Ross and me as a team, but when Ross heard



Metal Of Honor
In the selfsame issue of *Amazing World of DC Comics*, word balloons were removed from this "Metal Men" panel to display a primo example of Andru & Esposito's artistry on that series, which Mike E. feels is one of Robert Kanigher's finest creations. [©2005 DC Comics.]

about it, he had problems. He was very unhappy with it because he knew he wasn't getting the speed out of the character. He wasn't lithe and swift. When Carmine drew him, *The Flash* was going 90 miles an hour; when Ross did it, he was chuckin' along at 35. Never got a ticket.

JA: Do you think Julie liked what you guys did?

ESPOSITO: I don't know if he appreciated the look deep down inside, but he did appreciate the storytelling. John Broome and Gardner Fox were good writers; they really understood the science-fiction quality of *The Flash*. Some of the scripts were pretty involved. Ross had a way of animating action; he wouldn't do one picture with speed lines behind it; he'd actually show the leg in four different positions. I really liked the cover he did of *The Flash* racing with Superman for issue #175. Ross never repeated himself. He was always thinking, "How can I have this character do this in a way that you've never seen before?" Ross wanted everything to look like you were seeing it for the first time. In so doing, sometimes it didn't look familiar enough; you wouldn't recognize it right away.

JA: Did you like working for Julie Schwartz?



Flashes Of Two Pages
Two more quick glimpses of the Fastest Man Alive by Andru & Esposito.
(Left:) A page repro'd from a black-&-white Australian reprint, with thanks to Mark Muller.
(Right:) Flash and Kid Flash, from issue #189 (June 1969). Repro'd from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Mike Zeno. [©2005 DC Comics.]



“It Wasn’t My Turn To Do Another Showcase”

But That Didn’t Stop
ROBERT KANIGHER From
 Dreaming Up The Metal Men!

by Lynn Woolley
 (with documents by RK)



Robert Kanigher—photo printed in *The Comics Journal* #86 (Nov. 1983). Thanks to Gary Groth.

Introduction: The Fantastic Four, flagship of what would soon be Marvel Comics, was less than half a year old when DC writer/editor Robert Kanigher (1915-2002) conceived “The Metal Men” for Showcase #37 (March-April 1962). Naturally, if anyone had ever dared suggest in his presence that his new series was a response to (let alone a “copy” of) the F.F., that might have led to the first anecdote of a comic book editor throwing somebody else out a window! In 1977, Lynn Woolley, the author of several books on comics, sent a letter to “RK,” as he liked to sign himself, posing several questions about the offbeat series. Lynn’s precise questions do not survive, but Kanigher’s answers do, on DC stationery—and Lynn’s queries can easily be deduced.

Thus, we’ve chosen to lead off Lynn’s article, written some years back for an issue of *Amazing World of DC Comics* but never published till now, but never published till now, with a reproduction of the editor’s actual 2-page note. Oh, and of course, by A/E’s definition, RK was actually the co-creator of *The Metal Men*, along with artists Ross Andru & Mike Esposito, but why quibble? —Roy.

FROM THE DESK OF:
ROBERT KANIGHER

Dear Lynn:

I’ve been on a carousel of chaos since I’ve come back from Istanbul. The SOP of Comics. But since things have quieted down to mere bedlam, I seize this moment to answer your questions:

1--it wasn't my turn to do another SHOWCASE. But the other editors hadn't come up with an idea. Irwin Donnenfeld asked me did I have any. I immediately said: "Metal Men with human characteristics." Irwin said: "go ahead." That was Friday. Saturday morning I took my daughter Jan to her ballet class at Juillard Music School. I sat in my convertible on Riverside Drive, I gave myself a crash course in a subject of which I knew nothing, Chemistry, and started writing. I knew nothing, Chemistry, and started writing. (There is a secret to writing authentic Metal Men which is obvious to me as their creator, but which has eluded the writer(s) of the revival of MM.) Monday morning I came in with the finished script.

2--I selected Andru-Esposito to illustrate MM, as I assigned Joe Kubert to do the art for my Viking Prince, Sgt. Rock and Enemy Ace; Novick for my Silent Knight, Johnny Cloud, Capt. Storm; Heath for my Haunted Tank and Sea Devils; Grandenetti for my Gunner and Sarge--because each in his own way was uniquely suited by skill and temperament to project my visions onto another dimension. On Monday morning, I went over the breakdowns with Andru, trying for a different approach. I had a cover in mind. Ten days later the book was finished, cover to cover, from the initial Friday.

3--I wrote and edited all issues of MM, until I left my editorial desk, for a leave of absence, which became permanent.

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FROM THE DESK OF:
ROBERT KANIGHER

3(cont) I regret to say I had to use a horror from someone in New Jersey, to cover my transfer. Mea culpa!

4-- Tina(Platinum)being female, it was inevitable that she was unpredictable, and fell in love with Doc Magnus. Remember, I created the entire DC Romance line.

5-- I believe Tin was most popular. As the lowliest of the MM, I gave him an inferiority complex, which I manifested by his stammering. This endeared him to the fans.

6-- Yes. Andru-Esposito brilliantly carried out my wildest ideas. Fans have still to recognize the uniqueness of their work, in what is probably the most taxing of comic characters.

7-- Before I started each script, I gave myself an instant refresher course with Nostrand's, to guarantee that each MM acted within his chemical boundaries; which also dictated their human responses. Whatever they did was stretched to the nth degree. But never violated it.

8-- I haven't the faintest idea who See-Threepio or Artoo-Detoo are. I know nothing of comics. I never read them. I use the comics media. I paint in oils and water colors and write poetry, short stories, plays. The readers haven't complained. Only some editors.

9-- I have nothing to do with, nor am I responsible in any manner, shape or form with, the MM revival.

10-- Many people have asked me why I killed all the MM in the very first issue. They were so difficult to do--I didn't want to do a repeat performance. I was wrong. RK.

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Heavy Metal

(Top left:) The splash page of *Showcase* #37 (March-April 1962)—the debut of the “Metal Men” feature, credits and all—as seen in the Australian black-&-white reprint comic *Giant Flash Album* #10, which also contained most of *The Flash* #214. Thanks to Eric Schumacher—who’s not even Australian! [©2005 DC Comics.]

(Left & above:) This two-page letter from Kanigher to Lynn Woolley, on the stationery of the company then known (and trading on the New York Stock Market) as National Periodical Publications, speaks for itself.

Mr. Kanigher Shows His Metal

Somewhere—in between the original Robotman and the team of See-Threepio and Artoo-Detoo—there was a band of “droids” with quite a following of its own. No, not a multi-million-dollar screen extravaganza like *Star Wars*, but in fact a comic book.

That’s right. A comic book.

Suppose editor/writer Bob Kanigher is instead producer/director of a major motion picture house in 1962. And, just for kicks, suppose his new project, *Metal Men*, is to be a feature-length thriller for the big screen. Suppose producer Kanigher has called a meeting with his special effects crew to discuss the optical illusions he wants created for the epic. Now, with the scene set, we turn the clock back to 1962, and listen in....

“I guess you’re all wondering why I called you here,” says Kanigher as he clutches his chin and paces back and forth across the floor. “I just want to let you know that I’ve got a plot outline here for *Metal Men*, and I want to introduce you to the main characters.”

The crew of effects men look at each other and nod. The producer continues:

“This is a science-fiction flick—so we’ll need a scientist. We’ll call him Doc Magnus.”

“Sounds reasonable,” someone puts forth.

“And from there, it’s all downhill. We’ll need five male robots, and a girl robot, each representing a different metal.”

At this point, we hear a faint murmur from the assembly.

“Hold it down,” continues producer Kanigher. “The leader of the android band will be a golden robot who can stretch into a wire fifty miles long. *That* should look great on the screen.”

A hush falls over the crowd. Kanigher is undaunted.

“Now, our lead and iron robots are strongmen. Heh heh. They can change shape at will. Right off the bat, we’ll have Iron change into a giant crane, and we won’t use animation, either.”

One of the effects men faints and is carried out on a stretcher.

“Our Platinum lady robot can form instant coils to travel from place to place [*chuckles*], our Tin robot can form himself into a shield, and here’s the best effect of all...”

Two more men lose control, and are escorted away.

“...our hot-under-the-collar robot, Mercury, shrinks when the temperature falls, and expands when it rises. And he can be splattered into thousands of slippery little globules, and then re-assemble. Well, guys, can we do it? Huh?”

One of the few remaining effects men rises to his feet, and with a lump in his throat offers: “Gosh, boss, it sounds impossible. We might as well try to film a space station the

size of a planet, or a spectacular dogfight in outer space. It just can’t be done.”

Another man suggests: “Mr. Producer, why don’t we just put our heads together, and do a *Metal Men* comic book?”

The idea is acclaimed by all, and it comes to pass later that year. And Producer Kanigher never even *got* to the part in the movie where the villain comes in—a 50-story walking test tube with arms and legs that gurgles as it moves about its errands of menace.

Enough supposin’. In reality, the *Metal Men* concept was destined from the very first to be a comic book—and a darn entertaining one at that.

Panel one of the very first adventure summed up the origin in one sentence: “Forged in the fiery foundries of science and rising like gleaming ghosts out of boiling steam, is the most fantastic band of heroes the world has ever known—the *Metal Men*.” If the truth be known, the story didn’t spend much more verbiage than that on the group’s beginnings. The adventure began, as a matter of fact, with the origin of the first menace the group was to fight.

“Irwin [Donenfeld] Said, ‘Go Ahead’”

“The Flaming Doom” was the title of that first story, which starts off with a giant manta-like creature being frozen in ice back in prehistoric days. (Prehistoric, that is, for everything, except comics.) The creature predictably thaws out in the ’60s and sets about using its flaming nostrils to turn the Chrysler Building into a giant torch.

And you thought *you* had sinus problems.

Later, at a national defense emergency nesting, Colonel Henry Jasper proclaims that the answer to the problem is to call the man who “makes science fiction ideas practical.”

They do... and he does. But we’ll tell the story in a bit more detail.

Jasper immediately makes tracks to what is called “the huge laboratory complex of the inventive genius whose millions from countless patents have been turned back into continuous inventing....”

Guess what Col. Casper found?

He found Dr. Will Magnus dancing with a woman-shaped platinum robot. That’s right, trivia buffs—the *first* Metal Man was indeed a metal *lady*. It takes the Colonel a while to realize that Tina is an android (due to her faulty responsometer), but before long, it’s down to business as the military man explains the problem of the radioactive flame creature.

Magnus stares at a photo of the menace, noting that it should be combated chemically, then he ponders, “Hmmm—I’ve long toyed with an idea.”

That “idea” is, of course, the *Metal Men*, and in the space of one panel, Dr. Magnus pours the molds that eventually bring forth the new band of do-gooders.

One additional panel is used to introduce the *Metal Men* to the readers, and to each



One For All & All For One!

On this skillfully-designed Andru & Esposito cover for *Showcase* #37, all six of the Metal Men get a chance to strut their stuff—except, of course, poor hapless Tin.
[©2005 DC Comics.]

Who Created Sgt. Rock?

ROBERT KANIGHER, BOB HANEY,
JOE KUBERT, & ROBIN SNYDER
All Give Their Own Answers To That Question

Sgt. Rock of Easy Company is (pun intended) easily the most successful war-comics hero of all time, beating out Marvel's Sgt. Fury and the Howling Commandos and Combat Kelly and even the original G.I. Joe from Ziff-Davis. Over his long career, which hasn't totally ended even yet, Rock has spouted words and bullets devised by several writers (particularly Robert Kanigher and Bob Haney) and artists (most notably Joe Kubert and Russ Heath, but also several others). The series lives on, with no less than three hardcover DC Archives volumes to date—as many as there are of the 1960s Flash, the veritable harbinger of the Silver Age!

But who created this crag-faced classic character? In the early 1990s, one-time pro writer and editor Robin Snyder asked that question in the very first issue of his monthly oral-history magazine History of Comics (now renamed The Comics!)... thereby

willingly poking his finger into a veritable hornet's nest. With Robin's blessing, and with minimal editing, what follows is the initial posing of the query... and the impassioned answers from Those Who Were There. All comments are ©2005 by those who originally made them. The first three entries are all from the same first issue of History of Comics; other comments are identified where they appear. —Roy.



Like A Rock

Sgt. Rock barks a command in a powerful full-page drawing by Joe Kubert—which was almost certainly scripted by Robert Kanigher. But holding off the German Army was a breeze, compared to trying to get a consensus on “Who Created Rock?” Repro'd from a black-ε-white Australian comic, with thanks to Shane Foley. [©2005 DC Comics.]

(from *History of Comics*, Vol. 1, #1 – Jan. 1990)

Who Created Rock?

by Robin Snyder

A simple enough question. But what's the answer?

Comics historian Will Murray, in “Pieces of Rock” [*Comics Scene*, Dec. 1989], says: “Rock... was created by writer Robert Kanigher and artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito for *Our Army at War* in 1959.”

[What does he mean by “created”? Is he implying all three men originated the idea, each contributing one-third of the whole? Including Esposito, who, one could assume, simply inked Andru's pencil drawings? Which issue is he referring to?]

Mike Gold, in “The Rock of Easy” [*Sgt. Rock Special* #5, Sept. 1989], says the first story was “The Rock of Easy Company” [*Our Army at War* #81,

Rockin' Robin

(Left:) Robin Snyder's monthly “oral history of the past, present, and future of The Comics” has gone by a couple of names since its 1990 debut as *History of Comics*—but it's always been worth any real comics fan's dime. (Well, actually, he has to charge a *bit* more than that for it—see ad on p. 53—but it's still a bargain!) The mag's logo drawing is by the great Creig Flessel, who was interviewed in *Alter Ego* #45. [Art ©2005 Creig Flessel.]

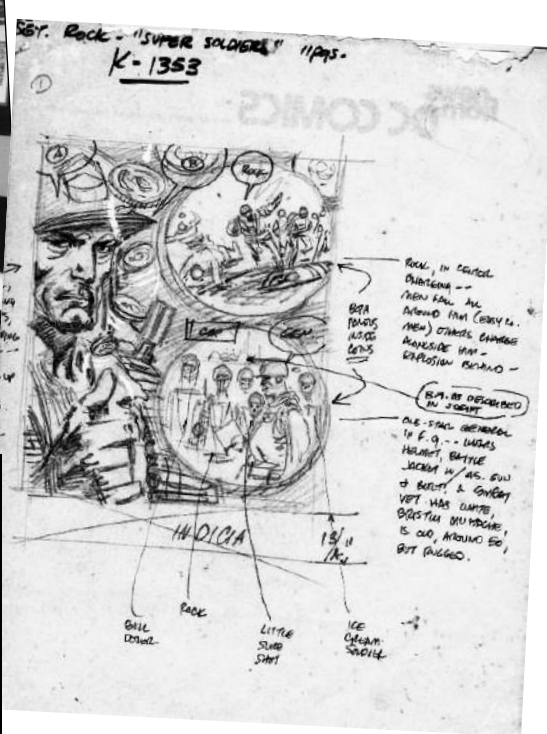
(Above:) “The Rock of Easy Co.!” in *Our Army at War* #81 (April 1959) was written by Bob Haney—and drawn by a couple of artists whose names you may have run across earlier this issue: Ross Andru & Mike Esposito. The editor, of course, was Bob Kanigher. This became the second story printed in DC's deluxe hardcover *Sgt. Rock Archives*, Vol. 1—preceded only by “The Rock,” of which more in a moment. [©2005 DC Comics.]



Upon This Rock...

(Above:) A confab of comic artists at the 1989 AcmeCon in Greensboro, North Carolina. (L. to r.): Jim Amash (wonder whatever happened to that guy)... Joe Kubert ('nuff said!)... Charles Paris (inker of many a classic Dick Sprang "Batman" tale, among his other accomplishments)... and another war comics artist/writer/editor of some note, name of Harvey Kurtzman. The fella with the visible belt buckle standing behind them is artist Tim Truman. Photo by Ed Fields.

(Right:) Thumbnail sketch of the first page of a Kubert-drawn "Sgt. Rock" story from the March 1976 issue; by then the name of *Our Army at War* had been changed to *Sgt. Rock*. All 11 pages of thumbnails for this tale were recently auctioned off by Heritage Comics (<HeritageComics.com>). With thanks to Dan Mangus & Eric Schumacher. [©2005 DC Comics.]



any of those he accepted. He was the editor—so—he edited.

Whatever I did in the drawing was my attempt to graphically dramatize that which was written. The graphic effects are mine—the initial creation is his.

409966

by Robert Kanigher

Your questions can only be answered by people whose whole lives are comics, who keep records, receipts, cassettes, and ledgers in some subterranean vault

electronically guarded against moisture and thieves feverishly bent on destroying their deathless work. Since I've never kept records or copies of my work, except for the few where I could have immediate access to research material, you'll have to rely on my memory.

As you surely must know, I was occupied with writing poetry, plays, short stories, movie treatments and scripts, radio plays, novellas, and that big book on writing, travelling, sketching obliging nudes, doing oils and water colors, skiing, fencing, making love daily, being a supporting father to my parents for 25-28 years, from chewing gum to coffins, being a husband since 1942 and a father, twice. This is for public knowledge. The agony and ecstasy and violence and ESP I've experienced is my own business.

Anyway, I'm a writer and editor. I re-wrote most of Haney's scripts. I don't understand the logic of his conversations with Gold. Haney said he wrote "The Rock of Easy," which Gold said was the first Rock. Then Gold said I created Rock. The two are irreconcilable. Why this hallucination now, decades afterward, when I have been given credit in so many publications, including the first movie script, for so many years?

The chances are that I re-wrote Haney's story from start to finish and even titled it. In Gold's mind that becomes the first Rock tale.

It's all so much bull****.

One glance at the Xeroxes of earlier stories you sent me tells another story. Here it is.

Unlike all my other characters which sprang fullblown, as from Zeus, Rock came to full term in his own good time, without my consciously being aware of his kicking to emerge.

In the beginning he was "The Rock," an ex-sports star, the man they couldn't budge. He carried that "reputation with him into combat" ("Combat Anchor Man," *All-American Men of War* 28, December, 1955).

In "Fireworks Hill," *G.I. Combat* 45, February, 1957, he was an ex-sports reporter who stood like a rock against the human wave of NK vets.

He was just a nameless marine on a cover, wounded, choosing to remain behind, TG in his hands, his back against a tree, to cover his

April 1959) and that it was not written by Kanigher. But, "Clearly, Bob [Kanigher] created Rock," and "the only thing that makes... [it] the first Sgt. Rock story is that it was the first time the character was called Sgt. Rock."

Then he quotes Bob Haney: "Oh, yeah. I remember that one. I wrote it."

Gold concludes: "So here we are faced with an unusual situation, wherein the writer of the first story isn't really the creator of the series—nobody challenges Kanigher's claim, and Haney freely volunteers he was writing to his editor's exact specs. But, as a matter of historical fact, Bob Haney was the man who wrote the first bona fide Sgt. Rock story."

[Only Gold can say what his attentions were when he wrote this piece. If no one is challenging Kanigher's statement of creating Rock, why does Gold mention it? If "The Rock of Easy" was the first story, if it was the first time the character was called Sgt. Rock, if Haney wrote that story—wouldn't that make Haney the creator? By Gold's logic?]

So who created Rock? To find the answer I made Xeroxes of key stories in my files and sent them to the men who were there in the beginning. To Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert. Asking them that question.

In re: Rock by Joe Kubert

If you hadn't included Xeroxes of those early stories, I'd never have remembered that I did 'em. In terms of determining who did wot n when—I'm the last one in the world who'd have those answers.

But...

As far as I'm concerned, RK is the creator and originator of the Sgt. Rock character. All I did was illustrate his incredibly graphic prose. And if you've ever seen any scripts from writers who'd written for RK, editor, you'd know that he had more than just a light scanning effect on

DOG STEARNL

MR. MONSTER'S

COMIC CRYPT!

BY MICHAEL T. GILBERT

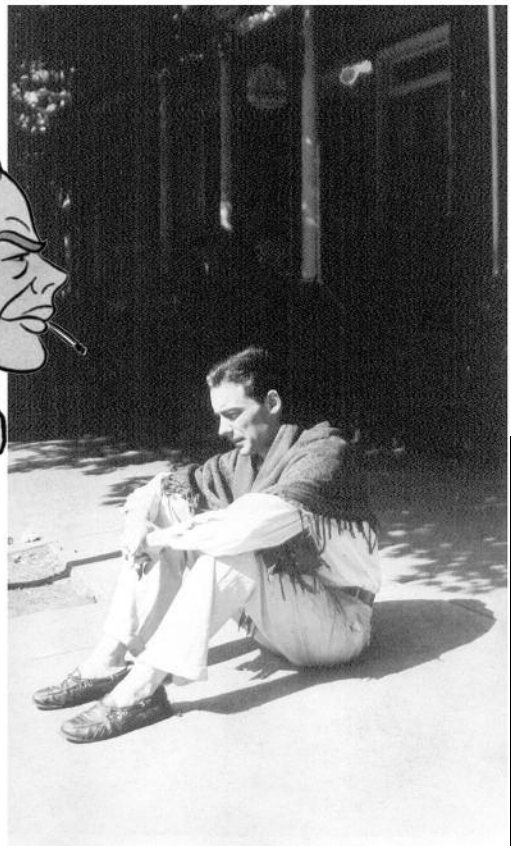
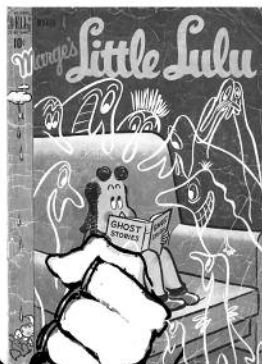
MR. MONSTER © AND © 2005

LAST ISSUE FEATURED SOME SPOOKY TWICE-TOLD TALES BY JOHN STANLEY, THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE LEGENDARY LITTLE LULU COMIC BOOKS. THIS ISSUE WE HAVE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER!

JUDGING FROM HOW FEW INTERVIEWS HE GAVE, MR. STANLEY WAS A VERY PRIVATE MAN, SO WE'RE PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO SHARE THIS LONG-FORGOTTEN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW -- REPRINTED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS!

"STANLEY COMICS HELP QUELL FUROR," ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN NEW YORK'S PEEKSKILL EVENING STAR ON AUGUST 11, 1965,* JUST A FEW YEARS AFTER STANLEY LEFT LITTLE LULU TO WRITE AND DRAW OTHER DELL COMICS. IT'S A RARE PERSONAL GLIMPSE AT ONE OF COMICS' GREATEST CREATORS.

* (©1965 PEEKSKILL EVENING STAR.)



John Stanley—photo courtesy of Jim Stanley.

WE'VE EVEN SCORED SOME EVEN-RARER PHOTOS OF JOHN STANLEY, COURTESY OF HIS SON, JIM STANLEY, WHO ALSO SHARES SOME MEMORIES ABOUT HIS DAD! THANKS, PAL!

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT -- YOU'RE ONE LULU OF A GUY YOURSELF!!

Stanley Comics Help Quell Furor

by Dorothy Krumeich

The old furor over comic books has pretty much died, and chances are that comics such as those produced by John Stanley were a factor in the demise.

The Continental Village man, a pioneer in the comic field, has written the stories for Walt Disney's Donald Duck and Porky Pig, and comics about other animated cartoon characters, such as Little Lulu and Woody Woodpecker, all of the wholesome, not horror, type.

Created "Thirteen"

For the last few years, Mr. Stanley has not only written, but drawn ("the whole deal," he says) a comic called *Thirteen*.

This is a 32-page comic, as are most, according to Mr. Stanley, who creates three or four a year. Each contains six separate picture stories of six pages each.

In the years when parents, teachers, and general do-gooders were giving their attention to the evils of comics, they were thought of as "just growing"—no one ever conceived of the books as "being born."

But the creation of comics is not an assembly-line process, it can be deduced from Mr. Stanley's conversation.

"In fact," he says, "right from the beginning, I always felt 'I can't do another' at the completion of every book—there never seemed to be an idea left in me."

But there always was, and probably always will be.

For one thing his *Thirteen* deals with the problems of that age group, and these problems are ever-changing and always new to those just attaining the teens.

Wholesome, Plus

The comics in which Mr. Stanley has had a hand weren't only wholesome but popular as well.

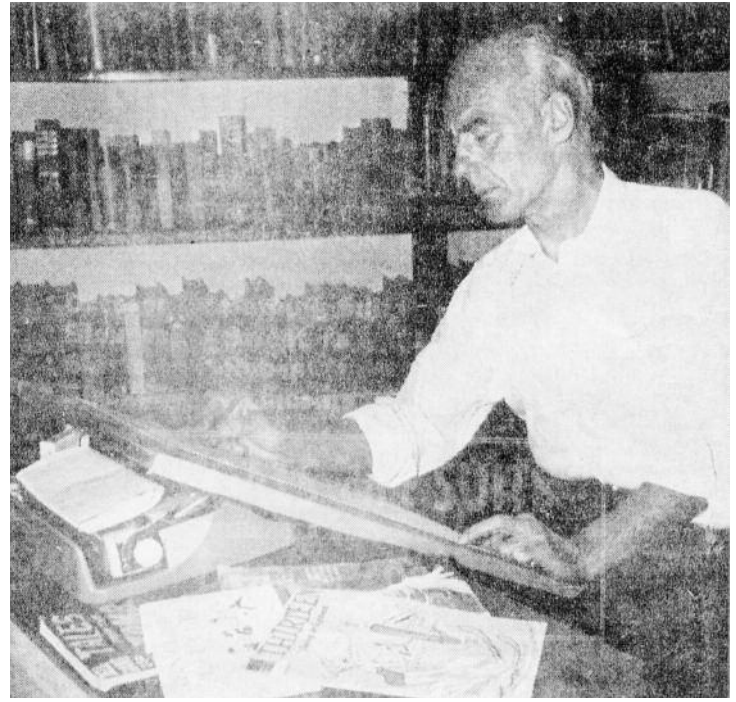
[*Little Lulu*], for one, was a top seller for 14 years, up to a decade ago.

Mr. Stanley has been in the field since the first of the Walt Disney comics. His involvement in the story-writing came about more or less by accident, as do many careers.

"I just drifted in: I was a commercial artist and letterer in New York," he says of his past, "when a friend who was in the comic book business asked for some help."

"I did the artwork, but was unhappy with the story and suggested I write my own," is the way he tells about his start.

He trained at the New York School of Design, and in his early days worked in the animating department at the Fleisher Studio, where *Betty Boop* and *Popeye* movie cartoons were produced.



John Stanley at his drawing board in 1965. This was the only photo that appeared in the original *Peekskill Evening Star* newspaper article.

Comics Started 60 Pages

Comics were originally of 60 pages, Mr. Stanley reports; then went down to 40, finally to the 30 or 32 that most are today.

The price was ten cents; is now up to twelve.

The apparent decline in comic book popularity is not that at all—it's transference, in Mr. Stanley's opinion.

"Watching television is now the thing kids do that parents and teachers and educators disapprove of," is his view, giving the impression that adults have to have something to focus "agin" as far as children are concerned, but also conceding that there is considerable basis for much of the TV disapproval.

"Comics at their worst never approached the mayhem rampant on the TV screen today," he says.

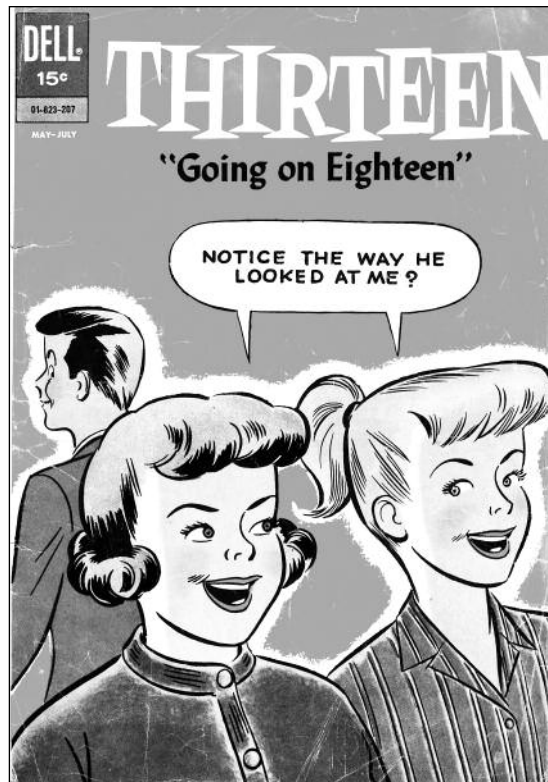
"There is much good television" he feels, "but it's up to mother and father to guide the selections."

Enters "Real" Book Field

He has just entered a new but related field, with the publication by Rand and McNally of his first "real" book.

It's Nice to Be Little is "for very little children," the writer says.

Jean Tamburine made the drawings for the 32-page (Mr. Stanley can't get away from the comic format) full-color



Issue #3 of John Stanley's *Thirteen* (*Going On Eighteen*) comic (May-July 1962). Dell published 26 issues from Nov. 1961 to Dec. 1967. Three additional issues were reprinted between 1969 and 1971. [©2005 the respective copyright holders.]

1966: The Year Of THREE (Or Maybe 2½) New York Comicons!

by Bill Schelly

Part 2: The 1966 New York “Benson” Con - Continued



“May I Have Your Autograph?”

(Above:) A page of signatures collected at the 1966 Benson con by one comics fan (whose name, alas, escapes us at the moment)—surrounded by examples of work those pros were doing at the time or had done previously. [On this and facing page:]

Jim Steranko began drawing for Marvel only at about this time. His first “S.H.I.E.L.D.” art, with pencils & inks over Kirby layouts, would hit the newsstands that fall, in *Strange Tales* #151 (Dec. 1966).

[©2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Otto O. Binder, until recently, had been writing for Mort Weisinger’s “Superman” line, but attended the con mostly to talk about his glory days (1941-53) on Fawcett’s titles. This Binder-scribed splash drawn by artists C.C. Beck and Pete Costanza is from *Captain Marvel Adventures* #144 (May 1953).

[©2005 DC Comics.]

Len Brown, a young Topps Chewing Gum exec, had scripted the first two “Dynamo” stories for Tower’s *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, leading artist/editor Wally Wood to name the hero’s alter ego after him. Dynamo had been created as Thunderbolt, but Len’s name for his foe in issue #2 (Jan. 1966) became the hero’s name instead, with the villain redubbed Dynavac. Repro’d from DC’s hardcover *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents Archives, Vol. 1*. [©2005 John Carbonaro.]

Larry Ivie, along with a bit of work for Tower, had scripted the “Human Torch/Thing” offering in *Strange Tales* #132 (May ‘65). [©2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Jack Binder had drawn (and even headed a comics studio) for Fawcett in the early 1940s. This tale from *Mary Marvel* #18 (Nov. 1947), probably scripted by his brother Otto, was recently reprinted—in full color!—in Mike Bromberg’s *Mary Marvel Fanzine* #3. All three issues are available at <www.designbymike.com/fanzines>. Check ‘em out, okay? (BTW, the next issue of *A/E* features a 1970s self-interview (with photos) by Jack and Otto. Check that out, too!

Roy Thomas had begun writing and editing for Marvel the previous summer; his fifth *X-Men* issue (#24, Sept. 1966) came out around the time of the con. It’s currently on view in both *Essential Uncanny X-Men, Vol. 1* and the hardcover *Marvel Masterworks: The X-Men Nos. 22-31* (color). Collect ‘em all!

[©2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Gil Kane, co-creator of the Silver Age Green Lantern and Atom, penciled this splash for *The Atom* #9 (Oct.-Nov. 1963); it’s repro’d from a black-&-white Australian reprint comic, sent by Mark Muller. [©2005 DC Comics.]

Sal Trapani drew these studies of actor Patrick McGeehan while doing research for Dell’s 1961 *Danger Man* comic. Courtesy of Ray A. Cuthbert.

[©2005 Estate of Sal Trapani.]

Rocke Mastroserio, though he usually did full artwork (see last issue), also inked some of Steve Ditko’s *Captain Atom*—including #82 (Sept. 1966), on sale around the time of the Benson con and featuring a script by rival 1966 con-host Dave Kaler. For more, see DC’s *Action Heroes Archives – Captain Atom, Vol. 1*.

[©2005 DC Comics.]

pretty much happened according to plan.

One change at the last minute, however, occurred when veteran fan Larry Ivie was drafted to fill in for *Mad* associate editor Jerry de Fuccio on the first panel of the day. It was called "Comics in the Golden Age of the '40s," which is re-titled here as "The Fabulous '40s" as suggested by moderator Ted White in his opening statement.

"The panel today is devoted to the Golden Age of comics, the Fabulous '40s," White began. He then introduced the rest of the panel: Klaus Nordling, principal artist on *Lady Luck* in *The Spirit* Sunday comic section, who also worked for Quality Comics; Otto Binder, referring to his long stint writing *Captain Marvel* and *The Marvel Family* from 1941 through 1953; and Larry Ivie, who had both written and drawn for pro comics, including 1965's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* from Tower, but who was there mainly for his expertise on the history of comics.

White called on Ivie first, to "sketch in a little bit of the general background of the Golden Age." Larry began by filling the audience in on the comics of the mid-to-late 1930s to set the scene, then commented on what the industry was like after "Superman" created such a sensation starting in 1938. "I believe the first act of

the '40s was mass confusion," he said. "Nobody really knew what they were doing. They had this new medium, a communications medium—the comic book—which was suddenly a big success, and nobody really knew what to do with it or where to go from Superman. So everyone figured they'd play it safe by imitating Superman." Ivie theorized that this was the reason super-hero comics became the dominate comics genre. He seemed to suggest that if it had been a Western comic that had "made" the field, then Westerns would have become the dominant genre.

Then he turned to the next guest in line: "Let's pass the mike to a man who was instrumental in writing one of the most popular Superman-inspired heroes... Otto Binder."



"Ted's got it a little wrong," Binder impishly responded. "I didn't make Captain Marvel. Captain Marvel made me," to much laughter from the audience. Otto concurred in part with Larry: "The big splash that Superman made was really astounding. None of us knew what was going on. In those days, you didn't come in with just a script, you came in with a raft of characters." For Binder, the peak of the Golden Age didn't occur from 1938 to 1942, as most comics scholars contend, but slightly later. "I feel 1945 was a time of real inspiration for all of us writers and artists.

The "Fabulous '40s" Panel—Plus!

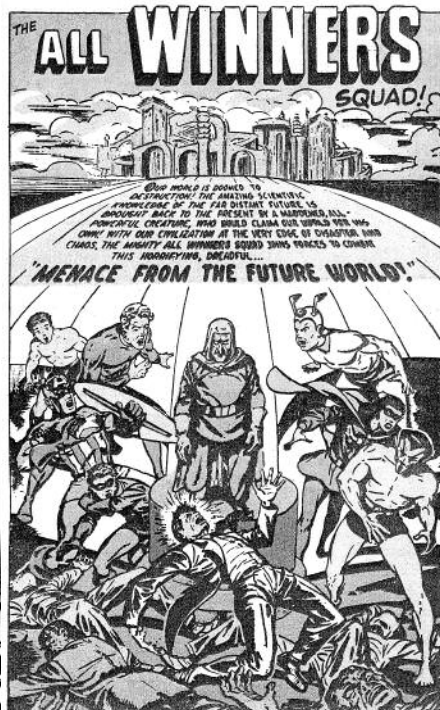
Thank Crom for Jack C. Harris and his 1965 camera! (From left to right:)

Klaus Nordling also worked for Quality, et al., wrote and drew the "Lady Luck" feature for the weekly *Spirit Section* from 1942-46, as reprinted in Ken Pierce's 1980 publication *Lady Luck*, Vol. 2. [Art ©2005 Estate of Will Eisner.]

Otto Binder wrote in the 1940s for Fawcett, DC, Quality, and just about every other outfit! He also scripted the second and last Golden Age "All Winners Squad" story (in JSA format) for Timely/Marvel's *All Winners Comics* #21 (Winter 1946). The latter tale was reprinted—in hastily-retouched fashion, as seen below—in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #17 (Nov. 1968); Roy Thomas had the words "The" and "Squad!" added to the splash logo. Syd Shores probably contributed to the art. And boy, do we wish Marvel'd reprint this issue the way they did a few years back with *All Winners* #19, the first "Squad" story! [©2005 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Larry Ivie, who'd scripted the intro story in *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #1 (Nov. 1965), was, as Bill Schelly says in his 1995 book *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*, "one of the most knowledgeable comic fans" around; he soon launched his own magazine, *Monsters and Heroes*. [©2005 John Carbonaro.]

Moderator Ted White had been one of the most active of early EC fans, and in 1966 was becoming a pro science-fiction writer and editor, as will be described next issue.





P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

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Fawcett Collectors of America

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P.C. HAMERLINCK
(after Raboy - Newton - Eisner)

[Art ©2005 P.C. Hamerlinck; Capt. Marvel & Batman TM & ©2005 DC Comics; Spirit TM & ©2005 Estate of Will Eisner.]

Hollywoodchuck Part I

Batman Begins Co-Producer MICHAEL USLAN On Captain Marvel & Other Wonders

by P.C. Hamerlinck



INTRODUCTION: *Michael E. Uslan's journey began by reading comic books, a place where dreams are made but seldom meet reality. But his passion for comics enabled him to make his own dreams come true. The executive producer of five Batman feature films—including this year's awe-inspiring Batman Begins—he is currently developing feature film versions of Will Eisner's The Spirit, as well as Shazam! Captain Marvel fans should rest assured that the film, currently in the latter scripting stages, will magnificently capture the World's Mightiest Mortal in the style of the original character created and formed by Bill Parker, C.C. Beck, Otto Binder, William Woolfolk, et al. —PCH.*

Jersey Kid

How do you get there from here? What do you do when you ultimately want to produce motion pictures about characters you care about? What do you do when you don't know anybody in Hollywood, have no relatives in Hollywood, and don't come from wealth? How do you get there from here?

For Michael E. Uslan, it was having dreams ... and perseverance.

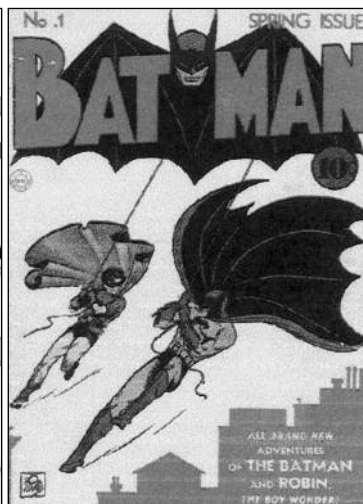
Michael's mother told him he learned to read from comic books when he was just three years old. He was first exposed to comics by his older brother's bringing them into their Jersey shore home, and by finding them stacked up at the local barbershop. *Casper* and other kid-faves soon gave way to the guy with the big red "S" on his chest, which led

him to his favorite, Batman, and to other heroes. It was also down at the barbershop that he first saw an issue of *Captain Marvel Adventures*.

Ocean Township, just north of Asbury Park, was Uslan's New Jersey Shore stomping grounds, with wall-to-wall kids. Out at the playground one day in 1961—shortly after the *Justice League of America* comic first appeared—Uslan's friend Barry Milberg informed him about a "different" Justice League book that had just appeared on the stands: "But it's just about four of them," his pal explained, "with some guy who can turn into flames."

"I didn't know what he was talking about," Uslan says, "so I went hunting to as many candy stores as I could until I finally turned up a copy of *Fantastic Four* #1." That purchase confirmed his passion for comic books ... early Marvels by Lee, Kirby, and Ditko ... Schwartz's DC revivals ... and good ol' boys The Spirit, Captain Marvel ... and Batman.

At 12 years old, Uslan merged his comic collection together with that of Bob Klein, his best friend, who also shared his enthusiasm for comic books. The boys ascertained that many comic book creators lived in New York or New Jersey ... and that most of the major comics companies were located in New York City. Living just an hour outside of NYC, the two Jersey lads would beg Uslan's parents to take them into the city, where the boys would go on the DC Comics tour, then go over to hang out in the lobby of Marvel Comics. "Anybody who was walking in or out of the door we would ask them for their autograph," Uslan recalls. "Then we would ask them, 'Who are you?'"



Michael Uslan—A Real Whiz Kid

A young Mike U. had his copy of *All-Flash* #25 autographed by John Broome and Julie Schwartz during a tour of DC Comics. Also shown are the covers of *Flash Comics* #1, *Batman* #1, and *Captain Marvel Jr.* #1. *Batman* #1 was among the comics young Mike saw Jerry Bails auction off at the 1965 New York comics convention. [Covers ©2005 DC Comics.]

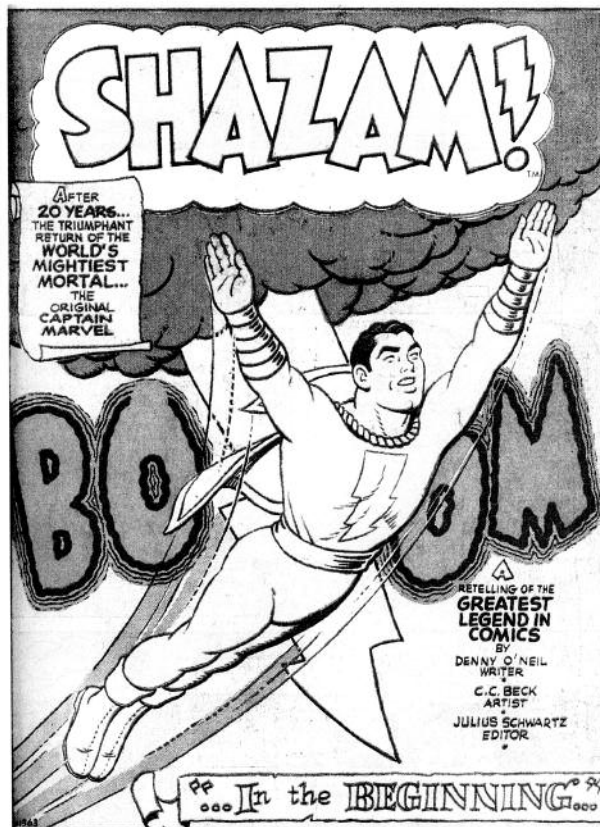
Fandom

The two youngsters were soon indoctrinated into the world of comic book fandom during its infancy, by sending away for a fanzine, *The Rocket's Blast-Comicollector*. "We could not believe there were other geeks like us that were really into this," Uslan remarks about his and Klein's realization of fandom. "We really thought we were the only two guys in the world into comics. We had no idea there were other people like us." Besides the *RBCC*, the two friends became charter subscribers to such seminal fanzines as *Alter-Ego*, *Batmania*, and *On the Drawing Board*.

The kids began to amass a huge collection—dating back to 1936 and eventually numbering over 50,000 comics—thanks to a backdate magazine stand at a flea market near Uslan's home. "Every Friday night my parents would take Bobby and me there because that was the night the guy would come in with boxes of comic books ... old comic books ... but because they were 'old' and therefore had 'no value' he only charged a nickel apiece for them," Uslan says. "We picked up *Superman* #2, *Mad* #1, *Police Comics* #1, *Captain Marvel Jr.* #1 ... all for a nickel apiece." The party was over when word started to filter out that old comic books actually had value. But the boys' excitement had already been fueled, with a common interest to study the history of comics and meet as many comic creators the artists as possible.

In 1965 the two 7th-graders attended the first full-fledged comic book convention in New York City, held at the decrepit Hotel Broadway Central Hotel near Greenwich Village. "We were there with a bunch of other comic fans ... and a bunch of rats and roaches scurrying about," Uslan says. "I couldn't believe that my parents actually stayed with us in that fleabag just so we could go to this thing ... but being at the first comic convention was an amazing experience. They had a masquerade; I dressed up as the original Sandman from 1940 and Bobby dressed up as The Shadow." During the con, Jerry Bails auctioned off *Action Comics* #1 and *Batman* #1. Uslan remembers the excitement: "CBS-TV had a local camera crew there for the auction. *Action* #1 went for around \$40. Then came *Batman* #1. Batman was absolutely my favorite super-hero of all time, and I wanted that book. So Bobby and I pooled all the money we had saved for the convention: \$20. The bidding starts. We can see that the book was going to go higher. I tell Bobby to try to stay in the running while I go to find my parents and get more money. I return with 5 extra bucks I got my dad to cough up. We now bid our \$25 for it, but it ends up going for \$37 ... so by twelve dollars I miss owning *Batman* #1 at that time. I wound up getting it later in life ... but I don't even want to tell you what I paid for it."

Uslan and Klein started writing for fanzines, thus making more trips to Manhattan, and frequently haunting the hallways of Marvel, DC, and beyond. "We went up to see Joe Simon when he was editing the Harvey action line," Uslan remembers. "We went to see Sam Schwartz at Tower ... we saw Bill Harris at King ... we were hitting everybody we could."



Julie And The Captain

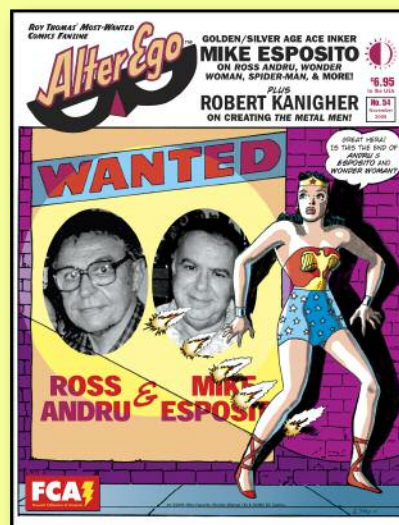
Julius (Julie) Schwartz, of course, was the editor the Silver Age versions of *The Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Hawkman*, *The Atom*, *Spectre*, and *Justice Society* (as the *Justice League*), but he would also be the first editor of the revived *Captain Marvel*, with the publication by DC of *Shazam!* #1

Julie

The boys, now heavily involved in fandom, learned about the Golden Age as they were living and breathing what later would be known as the Silver Age. Uslan favored the DC books by the "good" editor: "Bobby and I didn't know his name early on, but we knew was that he was the 'good' one, and you could always pick out his books. Then I learned his name was actually Julius Schwartz, not JULIUS SCHWARTZ EDITOR."

Uslan began corresponding with Schwartz, and the editor passed along to him tidbits of background information about DC and the company's history and current activities. It was at that initial DC office tour where he first met Julie Schwartz: "Walter Halitchek was the production guy who was taking us around this particular tour. Then he took us to the section and showed us original artwork. Sol Harrison stood in front

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