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ROY THOMAS' FAWCETT-HAPPY  
COMICS FANZINE

# Alter Ego™



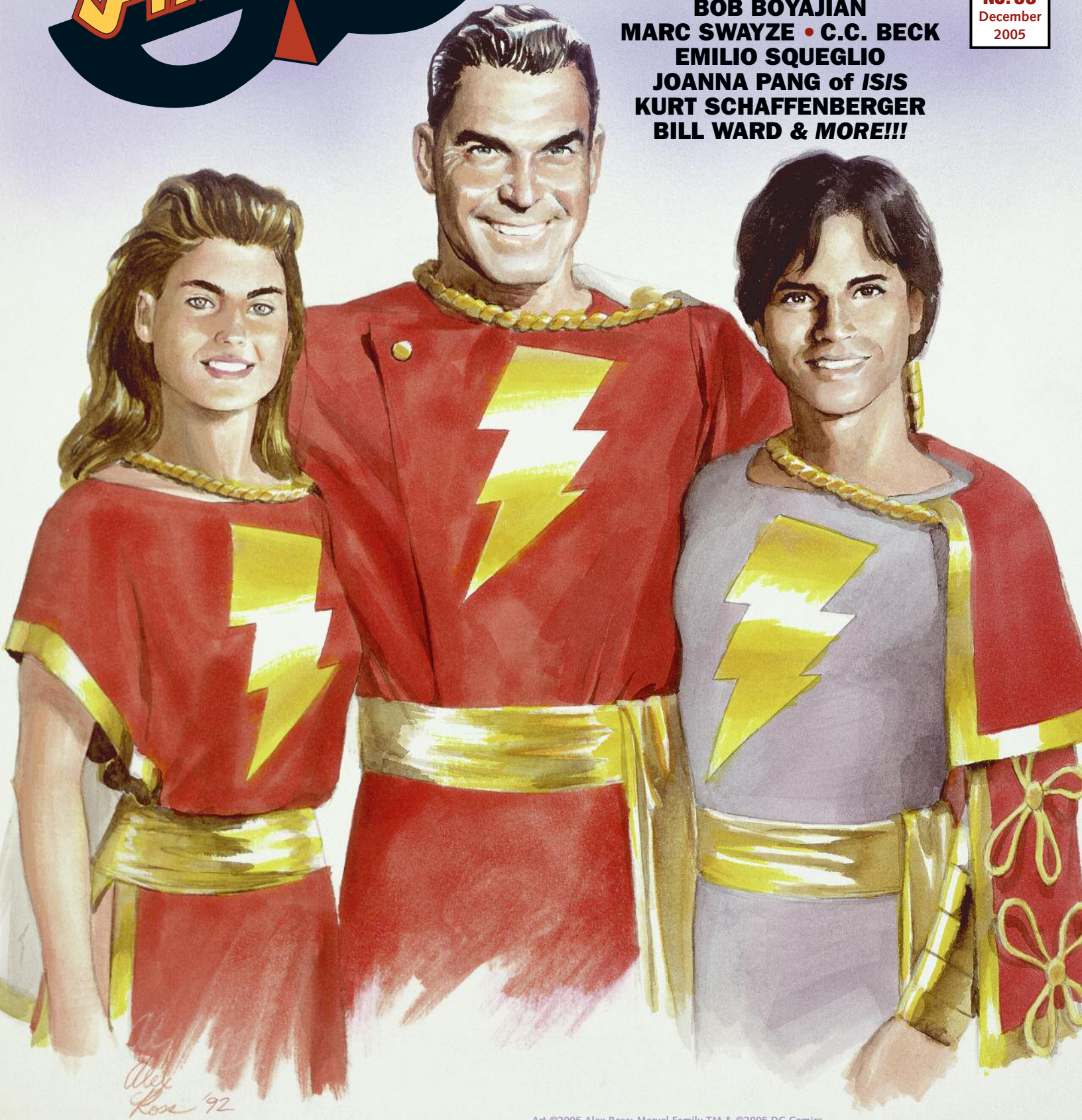
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JOANNA PANG of ISIS  
KURT SCHAFFENBERGER  
BILL WARD & MORE!!!**

**No. 55**  
December  
2005



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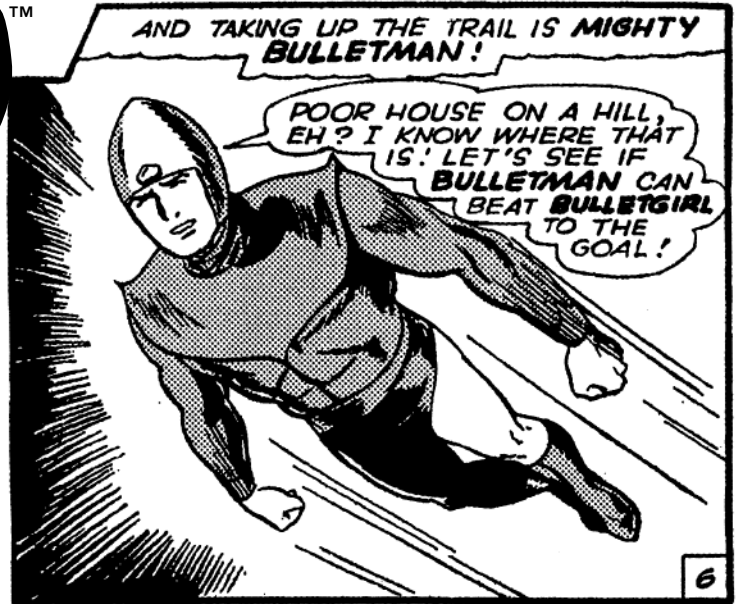
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## Our Annual Fawcett Festival!

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**A Brand New 1943 Pin-Up Calendar & Christmas Cards From The Pros** ..... Flip Us!

**About Our Cover:** *Super-star artist Alex Ross clues us all in—on p. 4.* [Art ©2005 Alex Ross; Captain Marvel TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

**Above:** A panel penciled by Golden Age artist Ken Bald from *Bulletman* #9 (Nov. 13, 1942). You'll see a lot of art from this story in this issue! [Restored art ©2005 AC Comics; *Bulletman* TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

This Issue Is Dedicated  
To The Memories Of  
**Otto & Jack Binder**



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# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! See You On Groundhog Day!

**W**ith this issue, I've had to bite the bullet (if not Bulletgirl) and ask publishers John & Pam Morrow to cut *Alter Ego* back from 12 fat issues a year to a "mere" eight for 2006.

I'm happy to say my reluctant decision had nothing to do with sales. It's just that, with a little encouragement (!) from my loving wife Dann, I sat down recently and added up the amount of work I had to do for next year: *A/E* every month... *The All-Star Companion, Vol. 2*, slated for June 2006 (it has the page count of two *A/E* issues, but needs as much work as at least four!)—two hardcover "bookstore books" for later in 2006... several actual comic books (including at least four issues of *Anthem* for Heroic Publications, the first of which goes on sale this very month—see opposite page!)... all this plus one or two secret projects. A relatively full plate, considering last month I turned 65—old enough for Social Security and alleged retirement!

Poring over the above list, I realized something had to give. And the only thing I *could* scale back, without giving it up completely, was *Alter Ego*.

Please note I didn't bump the mag back to bimonthly, let alone to its original quarterly frequency. I did what minimally *had* to be done—with the fervent hope and intention that, in 2007, we'll return to monthly

publication with a vengeance.

Thus, *A/E* #56 will go on sale in February—actually, most people will see it closer to Valentine's Day than to Groundhog Day, but the latter made for a catchier title—and we hope you'll think it worth the two-month wait. #57 is set for March (a Golden Age of Marvel super-spectacular), then we'll be monthly from May through August. *And* we're already planning out next year's Halloween and Christmas/holiday issues!

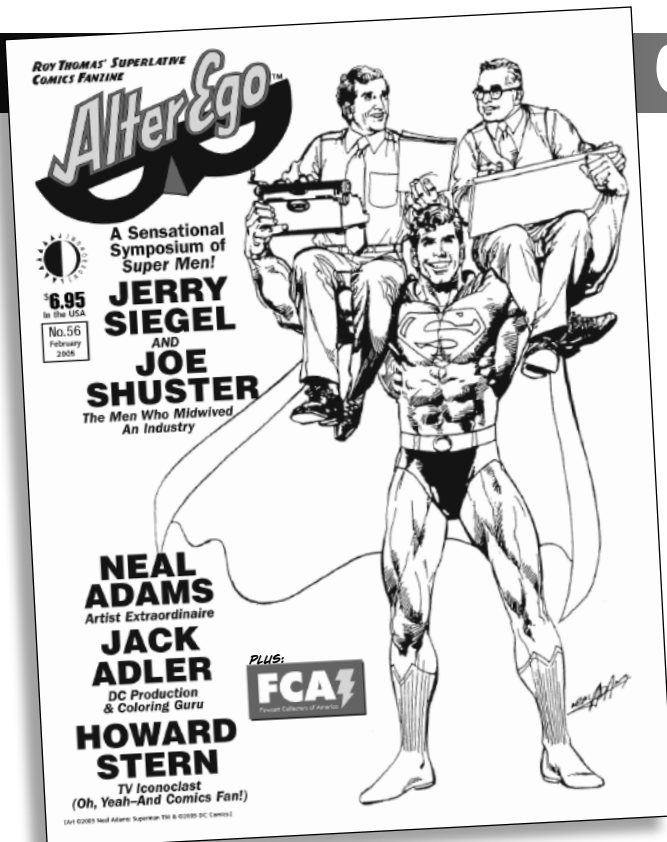
Meanwhile, enjoy this month's Fawcett fiesta, from its lavish Alex Ross cover to—well, to its Liberty Belle cover! Designer Alex Wright put together such a great 1943 pin-up Christmas calendar (just what you *asked* for this Yuletide, right? Well, it will be, when you see it!) that we just *had* to restore our flip-cover format long enough to show you WWII movie star Veronica Lake as Libby in full color.

Don't say we never gave you anything!

Bestest,



P.S.: Our letters section will be back next issue—cross our heart!



## COMING IN FEBRUARY

# #56

## A Sensational Symposium of **SUPER MEN!** ADAMS-ADLER-SIEGEL & SHUSTER -and **HOWARD STERN?**

- A superlative "3-S" cover drawn & colored by NEAL ADAMS!
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# “I Did Better On *Bulletman* Than I Did On *Millie The Model*”

Golden Age Great KEN BALD On Drawing Comic Books, Comic Strips, And Lots More!

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Amash

**K**en Bald is remembered by comic book fans for his self-assured, illustrative style. A graduate of Pratt Institute, Ken simply outdrew most of his peers during his career. Not many artists can go from art school to being art director at a place like the Jack Binder studios as easily as Ken did. Ken's style lent itself to various genres—a must in those days of ever-changing trends. If an artist couldn't go from drawing super-heroes to romance or crime stories or Westerns, he soon found himself unemployed. Ken never had that problem. He could change styles effortlessly and effectively: from Captain Marvel to Millie the Model, to newspaper strips like Dr. Kildare and Dark Shadows, and to illustration. To most observers, it appears that there's nothing Ken couldn't do—except hide from us when we came a-callin'. This interview's about the only way we could get this inveterate athlete off the basketball court! Take ten, Ken! —Jim.

## “Tarzan In The Elephants' Graveyard Really Sparked My Imagination”

JIM AMASH: Let's start off at the usual place: when and where were you born?

KEN BALD: New York City, August 1, 1920. I was the oldest of five children. My father died in 1931, when I was ten. He was a policeman in Mount Vernon, New York, and worked the morning shift. He had what he thought was only a gas attack, and kept on walking. What happened was that he had appendicitis, and when he came home that Saturday morning, he collapsed in front of us. I was the oldest, and the youngest was my sister, who was ten months old at the time. I had two other brothers, one who was eight and the other, three. Another brother, Clifford, died at the age of four months. A couple of years later, doctors would have been able to save my father, but they didn't have the knowledge to do so at the time. Unfortunately, my sister and I are the only ones left alive.

JA: What got you interested in writing and drawing?

BALD: I think most children like to draw. It's only the ones who keep at it that get anywhere. I used to draw a lot of actors' and actresses' faces. Then I saw Hal Foster's *Tarzan* in the newspapers, and seeing *Tarzan* in the elephants'

graveyard really sparked my imagination. I took every art class I could in school, and luckily I turned out well enough so that one of my art teachers, Elsie Nourse, got me a scholarship for Pratt Institute. I did well enough at Pratt that they kept renewing my scholarship each year. In fact, I was number one in my class.

JA: Before I ask you about Pratt, tell me about the cartoon contest you won.

BALD: Oh, that was when I was little kid... about fifteen. I drew a heavy woman with a kid in her arms and three or four kids running around, while she's ironing something. There was a load of dirty clothes waiting to be washed in the kitchen. Back then, there was a popular song titled “Alone on a Night like This,” but I won't sing it for you. The woman is singing “Alone.” That drawing won me five bucks.

JA: I know that was a big thrill for you. [Ken agrees] Tell me about the friends you made at Pratt. I know Bill Ward was a fraternity brother.

BALD: That's right. Bill was a year ahead of us and was working at Jack Binder's shop. He recruited a whole slew of Pratt students: Bob



The Bald Truth

Ken Bald circa the late 1940s, looking like he might be in a wedding party, in a photo sent by Dorothy (Mrs. Kurt) Schaffenberg to P.C. Hamerlinck some time ago—

—while at right is one of the few Golden Age super-hero stories which has definitely been attributed to Bald, from *Bulletman* #9 (cover-dated Nov. 13, 1942). This art was restored, with grey tones added, by Bill Black and the gang at AC Comics, publishers of the most invaluable line of Golden Age reprint comics around. (See their comics ad on p. 34.) [Restored art ©2005 AC Comics; *Bulletman* & *Bulletgirl* TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

Boyajian, Vic Dowd, Kurt Schaffenberg, Ray Harford, and me, among others, I'm sure. The five of us started at Pratt in the fall of 1938. We spent a lot of time together, doing things on weekends, like going to the Palisades. We'd all go out together with our girlfriends. In fact, three of us—Ray Harford, Kurt, and myself—married the girls we dated at Pratt. Of course, you know I married Vic's sister Kaye.

I played semi-pro football while at Pratt. I broke my leg just above my left ankle in my last year in high school, though it healed rapidly enough. Our football team was called the Courtland Tigers, and we played throughout Westchester County—our home field being in Mount Vernon, though we played in the Bronx sometimes. We never made that much money. I played left half and cornerback; I wasn't very heavy, but I was tall enough. I was also a kick returner. My brother was a lineman and was bigger than me. We wore leather helmets and didn't have face guards until the last year I played. I broke two ribs in my last game. We practiced on Saturdays and played on Sundays. Then I graduated from Pratt. By the way, my son made all-Ivy playing cornerback at the University of Pennsylvania some thirty years later.

## "[Jack Binder] Treated Me As A Member Of The Family"

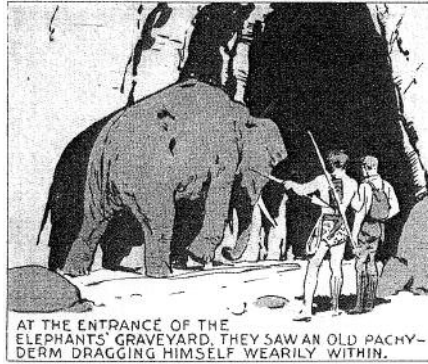
**JA:** *Sports is a big topic in my family, too, as my brothers and I are all athletes. So, was Jack Binder the one who hired you?*

**BALD:** Yes. He had a big home in Englewood, New Jersey. His brother Otto may have been living with Jack when I started working there, because I remember that Otto got married during my time at Binder's. **[NOTE: Photos of the Binder brothers appear in this issue's edition of FCA. —Roy.]**

Otto was a great comics writer, and he also did a lot of science-fiction writing. He wrote wonderful comic book stories. He married a very pretty lady, but unfortunately they suffered a terrible tragedy [in the early 1970s]. Their 13-year-old daughter [Mary], who was the apple of their eye, was in high school. She was walking towards the parking lot, bent down to pick up a book she dropped, and some hot-rod kids came pulling into the space and killed her. Otto and his wife were never the same after that.

I'd double-date with Jack and his wife, and we'd go visit [main "Captain Marvel" artist] C.C. Beck, and sometimes Otto came with us. Jack had a lovely daughter, and his wife Olga was a sweet, great gal. Jack used to say... I think he came from Michigan or some place with a lot of snow.... "I ran barefooted through the snow to go to school. You guys don't know what work is!" *[laughter]* He was a delight! Most guys liked Jack.

He treated me as a member of the family. He made me the art director. We first started working in one of the downstairs rooms of his big home, and when he finished fixing up the top floor of his barn, we moved out there. We had close to thirty people working there. After a year, he thought it best to

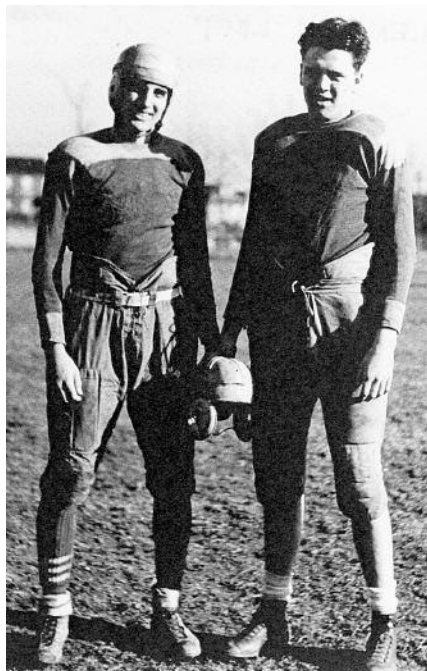


**Dig My Grave Deep... Very Deep**  
After the first Johnny Weissmuller-starring movie, *Tarzan the Ape-Man*, was released in early 1932, the *Tarzan* Sunday comics page quickly picked up on the concept of the fabled "elephants' graveyard," as illustrated by Harold R. Foster. This panel is from the strip for 9-25-32. Thank Goro for those wonderful NBM/Flying Buttress volumes of the complete Foster & Hogarth years! ©2005 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.]

Bulletgirl figures, and other artists did the rest. Fawcett was our main account, and then we started producing a lot of work for Street & Smith. We did "Captain Marvel" and then, of course, DC sued Fawcett over that character. That suit dragged on for years and years.

**JA:** *How did you find out about the lawsuit? And what was the general reaction to it?*

**BALD:** I guess they just told us. We didn't see any real comparison between the two. I suppose you could make every super-hero seem the same if you base it solely on their having super-powers. I did not think Captain Marvel was in any way a take-off on Superman. Billy Batson was a kid who said "Shazam," and he was not like Clark Kent, a meek and mild adult who only needed to take off his business suit to become Superman.



**You've Gotta Be A Football Hero...**  
Ken (at left) and his brother Walter in 1939. He says it's "the year before our face guards." Ouch! Photo courtesy of Ken Bald.

move to New York, so we moved the studio to 507 Fifth Avenue. That was so much better for me, because I didn't live in New Jersey and this was an easier commute.

Now, you know we were doing piecework on these pages. Very often, the artists would draw a back view of the characters. The Fawcett offices called us "The Backside Binder Studio." It's very easy to draw the back of a character in the foreground to hide details. That was a cute joke, but there was enough truth in it that we wanted to change that perception.

**JA:** *What did you start out doing in the Binder shop?*

**BALD:** I started out doing main figures, and I think I made \$4 a page for that. The art cost for an entire page was around \$17.50. I had an ability to get reasonable likenesses of people. I may have done some secondary figures, too, but as we got busier, I concentrated on the main figures. For instance, I'd draw the Bulletman and

**JA:** *One of the things that was alleged was that some Fawcett artists used Superman art as swipes.*

**BALD:** That was *not* true. I *never* saw that happen. But I was out of comics and into the service by December of '42. I was only there from May '41 until December '42—less than two years. C.C. Beck had a formula for drawing Captain Marvel, so there was no need to swipe from Superman. If someone had swiped from Superman in the studios, I'd have *known* about it, and that did *not* happen while I was there. I don't think C.C. Beck would have stood for that, either, and he more or less saw everything that was done on "Captain Marvel."

**JA:** *I agree, because the C.C. Beck I knew didn't even like Superman, and he certainly drew better than Joe Shuster. I'd like to change subjects now and ask you about the softball games you guys played. You did that in New Jersey, right?*

**BALD:** Right. In New York, we'd work late, but not as late as we did in New Jersey. We were all young then. We'd take a two-hour lunch and play during that time. After that,



**Two Shopmeisters: Beck & Binder**

(Left:) Otto Binder's note on this photo he sent Roy Thomas circa 1964: "On the left is Charles Clarence Beck, chief artist for Captain Marvel from the very start to the very end—1940 to 1953. He is now living in Florida and doing commercial art. That's just a friend in the middle; on the right is Pete Riss, deceased some years ago, who worked in Jack's art shop while it lasted, then did romance comics, Westerns, and such for Fawcett, Goodman, and several other old-time comics publishers." Actually, Beck drew the first "Captain Marvel" story in 1939, though it was cover-dated Jan. 1940.

(Right:) 1941 photo of the original "studio" in Jack Binder's home, prior to its moving into the large barn in Englewood, New Jersey. (Clockwise, from lower left:) Vic Dowd (whose own interview follows this one)—Jimmy Potter (whose life was cut short in a training accident during World War II)—Bob Boyajjian (his interview follows Dowd's!)—and Ken Bald. We can't be sure what feature the lads are drawing—but from the amount of flames on these pages, maybe it's "Ajax the Sun Man," a series none of the artists interviewed in this issue recalls ever drawing, but which ran for several years in *Street & Smith's Doc Savage*. (We showed a sample of it in *A/E* #49.) Fawcett and longtime pulp-mag publishers Street & Smith were the Binder shop's two chief clients. Photo courtesy of Ken Bald.

Jersey. We'd play each other and, at times, we'd play the Fawcett team. It was fun. We were all young, and then the older guys came in and played with us.

**JA:** *Who were the good ball players?*

**BALD:** Well, if you asked Rod Reed, he'd have said I was Pee Wee Reese [*Hall of Fame shortstop of the Brooklyn Dodgers*. —Jim.]

We weren't outstanding, but were good enough.

**JA:** *I've read that Mac Raboy was a good ball player.*

**BALD:** Otto Binder said that, and you know, he was wrong. Mac did not play with us. Possibly Otto had Mac confused with me. I don't know why he thought Mac played.

**JA:** *Did C.C. Beck play?*

**BALD:** No, he didn't. I knew Beck through Jack Binder and we did some of the "Captain Marvel" stuff, but I didn't see much of Beck

we'd work and then go have dinner in town. Sometimes we went back to the barn and worked until 11 or 12 o'clock.

**JA:** *Who came up with the idea for the softball teams?*

**BALD:** I think Fawcett did, so they could play the Binder team. [Writer and sometime editor] Rod Reed—whom I liked very much—got the Fawcett team together. We had been playing among ourselves in New

during that period. After the war, I saw Beck and his wife Hildy, who was very nice. I went out to dinner with my date and the Becks a few times before the war. I liked C.C. very much. Jack was a charmer, and I couldn't have had a better boss. He was like an older brother, in a way.

**JA:** *Did everyone else feel the same way about Binder?*

**BALD:** No. No, but a lot of fellows really liked him. He had trouble with a couple of fellows. One fellow—I hesitate to give his name—didn't like Jack and felt he was being taken advantage of.

**JA:** *Were there any practical jokers in the studio?*

**BALD:** Not really, because we were too busy.

**JA:** *Who was the art director when you started working there?*

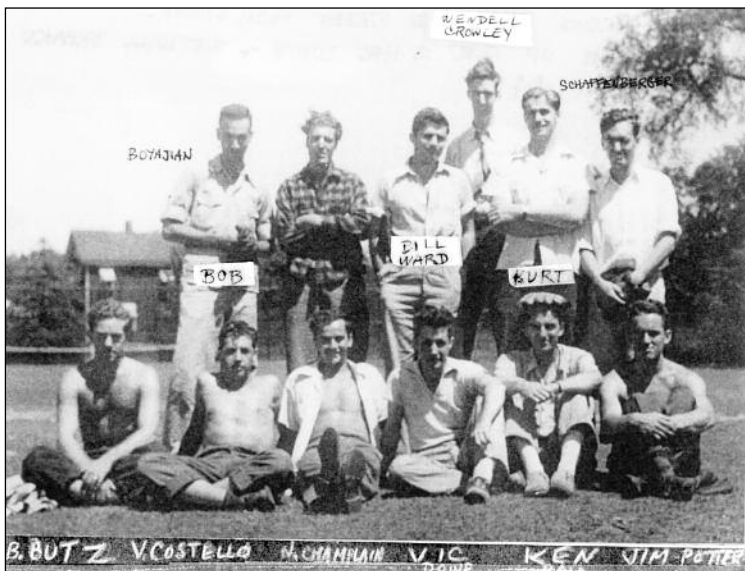
**BALD:** Actually, Jack was. There were only five or six guys there then. But when the studio got bigger, a very nice fellow named Peter Riss became the art director. Pete didn't like the job; he wanted to do his own stuff. That's when Jack asked me to become the art director. I thought the money was pretty good, and I could still do the main figures on the pages as well as drawing the covers.

**"The Prestige Of Being A New York Studio"**

**JA:** *So you were paid a salary for being the art director, but you also got paid for your other work.*

**BALD:** Oh, yeah! And when we moved to New York, the glass-paneled door read "Jack Binder Studios - Ken Bald, Art Director." That was the office part for Jack, Wendell Crowley, and myself. The rest were in a great big room, and at one point, there were 35 artists in there. I was thrilled to see my name on that door.

Now, the guy who had painted all this stuff on the door had just left, when the phone rang inside the office. I turned the door knob and pushed the door with my shoulder. The knob didn't turn fully and the glass breaks and shatters on my feet! [*laughs*] I thought,



**We'll Root, Root, Root For The Home Team**

We've run this photo of the Binder studio baseball team twice before—including just last issue—but couldn't resist showcasing it again, this time with Ken Bald's personal IDs of most of the players. Artist Nat Champlin told us in *A/E*, Vol. 3, #3, that he "set the camera on delayed action and jumped back into the picture"—and still managed to look nice and relaxed, third from the left, sitting! Unidentified by Ken in the photo are two of the standees: Dick Rylands (second from left) and John Westlake (on far right). Ken adds the info that this pic was taken "across the street from the studio—one of our two-hour lunch and softball breaks—1941."



### Takin' A Whiz

It's generally difficult, if not impossible, to be certain which stories Ken Bald drew for Fawcett, but at one time or another he worked on Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, and (earliest) Golden Arrow—all pictured in this ad for *Whiz Comics*, which appeared in *Spy Smasher* #7 (Oct. 1942). [©2005 DC Comics.]

But—the beneficent Mr. B. drew the sketch at right of the Big Red Cheese specifically as a gift for Jim Amash. And, incidentally, for the rest of us! [Art ©2005 Ken Bald; Captain Marvel TM & ©DC Comics.]

“Oh, my God!” But Jack was great about it, and called the guy back to replace the glass. I felt like such a dumb kid. And I *was* a kid! I was 21 at the time. It's one of those things you never forget!

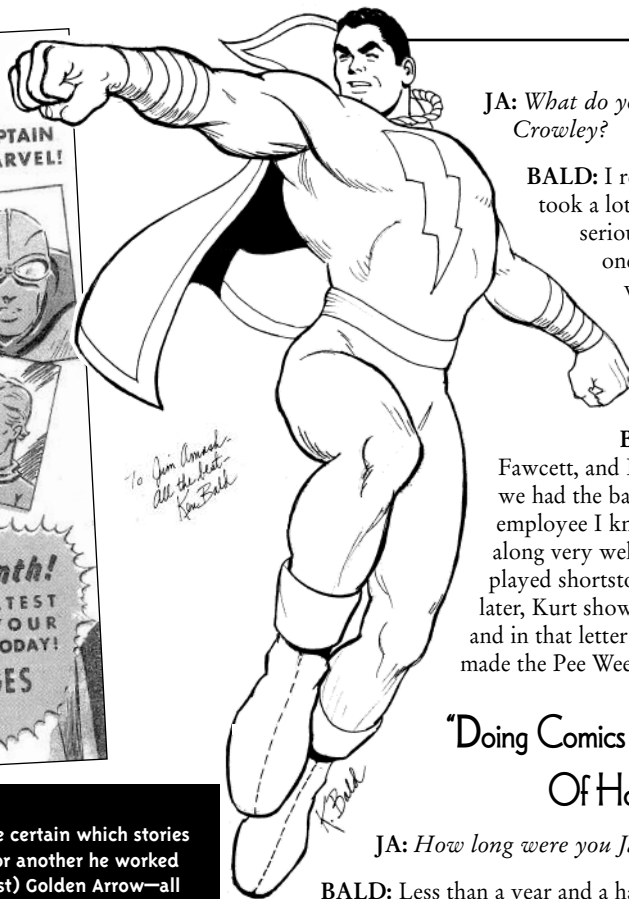
Now, I lived in Mount Vernon, and it used to take me two hours each way to get to Pratt. When I got home, I'd have to do my homework. But when you're young, you don't need much sleep and can keep those kinds of hours. When I got the job with Binder in New Jersey... now, if I'd had a car, I could have gotten there in a half hour. But I had to take a trolley, then the subway, and finally a bus. I did that for one month before Vic Dowd and I decided to share a room close by. We did that until Vic got appendicitis. Oh, he was so sick! He didn't come back to work for Binder after that. They had sulfa drugs by then, so Vic was able to get the treatment he needed. They didn't have those drugs when my father was stricken, or they'd have been able to save his life. After Vic left, Kurt Schaffenberg and I took a room together at Ma Bogart's house.

**JA:** *Why did Jack Binder move his operations to New York?*

**BALD:** I think because we were doing so much work for Fawcett and Street & Smith that he wanted to be closer to them. And there was the prestige of being a New York studio.

**JA:** *How much artwork did Jack Binder do in the shop? It seems like he'd been too busy to do a whole lot, but I know he signed a lot of stories.*

**BALD:** He didn't do any of our artwork, but he had done artwork. I remember him coming around showing us how to draw an ear. He had a formula for drawing the inside of an ear and so forth. He did some art-directing, initially, but I never saw him put pencil or pen to paper. He was like the company salesman; he got us the work. Wendell Crowley handled all the business and the numbers—he was the office manager.



**JA:** *What do you remember about Wendell Crowley?*

**BALD:** I remember his voice and his height. It took a lot to make Wendell laugh. He had a serious countenance and was the serious one. He saw things in numbers, but he was certainly easy enough to get along with. We were pretty different from each other.

**JA:** *Did you know Al Allard?*

**BALD:** He was an art director for Fawcett, and I think he came out to Binder's when we had the ball games and picnics. The Fawcett employee I knew the best was Rod Reed. We got along very well and he was astute enough to think I played shortstop like Pee Wee Reese. [laughter] Years later, Kurt showed me a letter that Rod had written, and in that letter he asked about me, and that's when he made the Pee Wee Reese comment.

## “Doing Comics Gave Me A Very Good Idea Of How To Tell A Story”

**JA:** *How long were you Jack Binder's art director?*

**BALD:** Less than a year and a half. I became art director in August or September of '41 and held that position until I left for the service. Outside of what I told you earlier, my duties included making sure the artists did what they were supposed to do and that the work got out on time.

**JA:** *Did the fact that you started out as a peer and then became a boss have any effect on the others?*

**BALD:** Not then, but when I came back from the service, Jack Binder and Beck wanted me to become art director for the group that they had. I did it as a favor for Jack, but left after a month, because I could see some of the fellows didn't like being told to change this or that. I didn't want any part of that. I'd been a captain in the Marines. I left to do my own stuff. There weren't problems like that during my first go-round. I think everyone took it well when I was in charge.

**JA:** *In Steranko's History of the Comics, Otto Binder gave you a lot of credit with regard to how the pages were divided up between the artists. How involved were you in that?*

**BALD:** I had a lot to say about it. Doing comics gave me a very good idea of how to tell a story. The reader should know what's going on without word balloons explaining everything, though text is important. I felt some artists didn't do that. We were there to tell the story. We didn't break up panel arrangements in the way that it's been done since, but we tried to get a variety of shots so we could get rid of that “Backside Binder” reputation. I can't take that much credit for the division of labor, but Jack and I had something to do with how it was done.

**JA:** *What do you remember about your Street & Smith work? I have you listed as doing “The Shadow,” “Rex King,” “Doc Savage,” “Blackstone the Magician,” and “Ajax the Sun Man.” And did you prefer working on these features as opposed to Fawcett's? Or did it matter?*

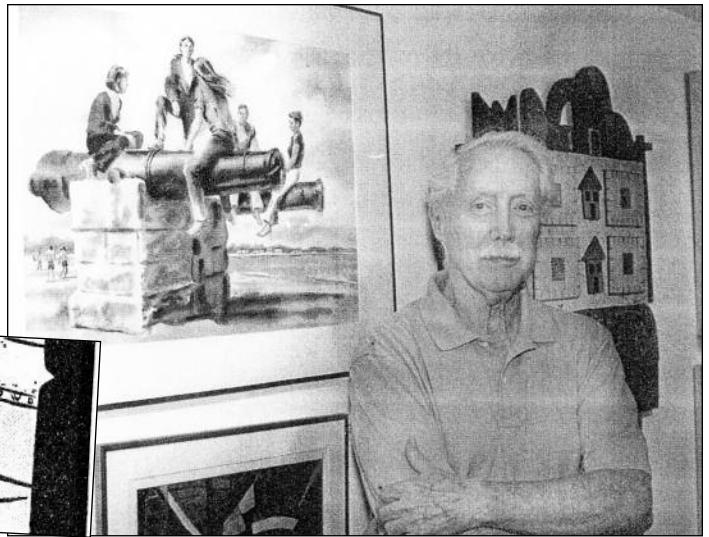
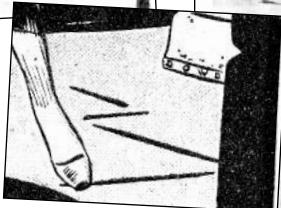
**BALD:** I don't remember “Ajax the Sun Man,” but I remember the others. It didn't really matter what company I was doing work for, though I did like “Blackstone the Magician” and “Doc Savage.” I did “Spy Smasher,” “Golden Arrow,” “Captain Midnight,” and “Bulletman”

# “I Thought That Comic Books Would Never Last”

VIC DOWD Relates What He Feels Is “The Typical Cartoonist’s Story”

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Amash

**T**his interview is a good example of why *Alter Ego* exists. Vic Dowd’s career has been documented, though not nearly as fully as it should have been. Beyond that, I’m often surprised at what unrevealed aspects of people’s lives are sitting there, waiting to be uncovered. I’m not just talking about new information on what comic creators did during their careers, but in the non-comics portions of their lives, too. I won’t spoil the surprise for you, because you’ll see what I mean when Vic talks about his war experiences. Around those events, Vic discusses his career at Fawcett and Timely—among other places—and the people he knew. And thanks to the wealth of material that Vic sent us, you get to see how well-rounded and versatile an artist Vic has been over the years. —Jim.



## “It Was A Logical Progression”

**JIM AMASH:** I’d like to know about your background and what got you interested in drawing.

**VIC DOWD:** I was born in Brooklyn, New York, November 7, 1920. I was always drawing. My story is the typical cartoonist’s story. I grew up in a very athletically-oriented neighborhood, in that those were the days when kids played ball without parental supervision. I belonged to a neighborhood team, started playing stickball, and when we got older, we were playing softball and basketball... whatever the team sport of the season was, was what we played. But, as a little kid, my mother never had any problems with me because I liked to draw.

It was an uncle who alerted my parents to the fact that I had more than just a typical little boy’s interest in drawing. I was the class artist in grammar school, and it was suggested that I do more with it. I took art classes in high school, and by the time I was finished, I had a portfolio that got me into Pratt Institute. It was a logical progression; each school I went to told me to continue on.

I was always interested in drawing. I used to read the newspaper strips and spend time looking at the rotogravure section, especially the Hearst rotogravure section. I was a fan of Alex Raymond’s work as far back as I can remember: both his *Jungle Jim* and *Flash Gordon* strips. I devoured magazines like *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier’s*, and the women’s magazines, for their illustrations. That was my art gallery. As I said, it’s a typical story for cartoonists of my generation.

I made copies of the covers in the magazine sections of the Sunday newspapers. They’d be painted by well-known illustrators like McClelland Barclay and James Montgomery Flagg. As a matter of fact, I went to high school at Brooklyn Tech, which was a very good school, but was mainly turning out engineers. The reason I went there was because they had a very good art department. I took college preparatory courses all through high school, but the extra art was done after hours, so I couldn’t try out for the baseball team, which practiced at 3 o’clock. I

(Above:) Vic Dowd before his painting “At the Cannons,” which was displayed at the Westport Arts Center in Westport, Connecticut, in 2003. Photo courtesy of Vic.

(Left:) Alas, neither Vic nor we have been able to positively identify any comic book work that was definitively his—but researcher Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., sent Jim Amash these two pieces of art from *Super Magician* #5 (May 1942), published by Street & Smith and starring “Blackstone the Magician,” into which the artist sneaked his initials and last name! The first detail, near the “C!” in case it doesn’t show clearly here, says “V.C.D. &” plus another name we can’t read—while the second detail, now that it’s been magnified several times, clearly shows the name “Dowd” at the base of an object near the lady’s foot.

Jim V., who’s kept a record of such things, says that this issue has “some of the best sneaks [of artists’ hidden names] ever to appear in comics!” He goes on: “1st page of ‘Blackstone’ is pure Binder Shop with many hands at work on the center-spread where background artist Clarence Rousch delivers yet another great sneak (oddly, spelling his name Roush!).” Unfortunately, neither Jim V. nor Jim A. has an actual copy of actual issue so we could show you the full pages that went with them, but hey—you do what you can! [©2005 the respective copyright holders.]

took an hour and a half every afternoon, drawing from a clothed model or drawing each other, if no model was available. I was always drawing people. My ability to draw people helped me get into Pratt.

**JA:** I have a note here that says you grew up in France.

**DOWD:** No, I spent my 9th birthday in France. My mother was French and was a World War I war bride. She married my father, who was Irish-American, and in the American Army. He was stationed in France in 1918, which was where they met and married. In those days, when a woman married an American, she automatically became an American citizen, which is very different from the way it is today. My mother spoke English, so she must have had a good education in France.

Part of her training was—since these were the war years, and before America got into the war—that in school, she wrote letters to English

fighting men, whose names were assigned to her in school. That sharpened her English and kept up the morale of the soldiers. As far as my being in France, my grandmother was in France when I was a little boy, and we visited there a couple of times. I did live in France for a year and went to school, but I was happy to come back to the United States and rejoin my pals.

Besides my ball-playing friends, I found a friend in Brooklyn, who liked to draw and paint. On rainy days, we'd do that together. We'd also go to the Brooklyn Museum—all of which kept us out of the pool hall. In my neighborhood, people played fair and fought fair—no piling on if a fight broke out. I think the movies and church influenced us to be honest people.

My sister Kaye married Ken Bald. I didn't meet Ken until I went to Pratt. We hit it off immediately, and we used to visit each other at our homes, which is how he met Kaye. Ken had a similar background, though he grew up in Mount Vernon. We had a lot in common.

### "The Four Musketeers"

JA: What was Ken like in school?

DOWD: He was low-key, didn't come on strong, but was very confident and good at what he did. We were equally friendly with Bob Boyajian and Ray Harford. We used to call ourselves "The Four Musketeers." We met in our first year of Pratt, went to Jack Binder's together, and stayed friends all throughout these years, though Ray Harford passed away a couple of years ago. Al Duca was there, too, though I lost touch with him after we worked at Binder's.

Kurt Schaffenberger was there, but Ken got to know him better than I did. Kurt married young, Ken married young, so they socialized together. I didn't get married until I was 30. Kurt and Dottie got married before Ken and Kaye did—in fact, Kaye was 18 when they got married. Kaye is three years younger than I am. She married Ken while he was in the Marines.

JA: When you were at Pratt, did you have a particular art career choice in mind?

DOWD: Yes. Ken and I... and I think Bob, too... signed up to take a class with Monty Crews, who was a professional illustrator, doing work for pulps like *Blue Book*. What happened was the pulps took a big hit when comic books came along. There had been some very good illustrators and writers working in the pulps, like Dashiell Hammett, Austin Briggs, and Ed Cartier. Both Ken and I wanted to work in pen and ink, or brush and ink, so pulps seemed to be the logical place for us to work. But the pulps were dying.

Bill Ward was the one who got us to go to Binder's. He had been a

year ahead of us in school, but he was a fraternity brother of Ken, Bob, and mine. We were in Alpha Pi Alpha. Bill did wonderful girlie cartoons, even in school. He'd cover the walls with full-page cartoons, with a nice, flowing line. He was a personable guy. He did layouts in Binder's shop, and so did a wonderful artist named John Spranger.

Then, there was a fellow named Clem Weisbecker—a real character from Greenwich Village—who was older than we were. He was a tough-talking New York-accented artist, who apparently did very good paintings of animals. What he did for Binder was to lay out the pages; they were rough and vigorous. Ken and I would rub the pages down with a kneaded eraser before we worked on them. I did main figures, someone else did secondary figures, and another person would do backgrounds.

I was good at drawing pretty women, because, as I told you, I'd practiced drawing them from the rotogravure sections of the newspaper. Remember the Petty girls? I used to draw those when I was very young, and Petty drew perfectly-proportioned women, so I developed the knack of drawing them very early on.

JA: Is there anything in particular you remember about Weisbecker?

DOWD: I remember being amused by him. We used to take these long lunches, which wasn't always good, because we were doing piecework. If you took two-hour lunches, you weren't making any money. Being single, I didn't care and would just work later at night. Ken and I got tired of commuting to Binder's shop in Englewood, New Jersey, so for a while we rented a room near Binder's.



#### No Clem—But Here's The Bill

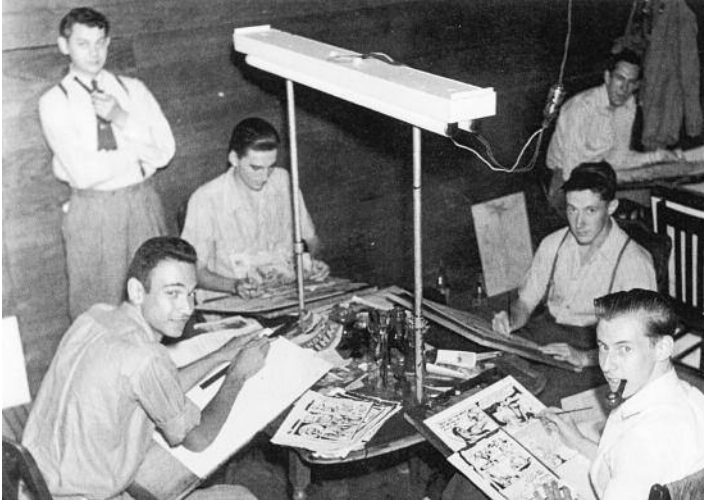
It's frustrating not to be able to run work by Golden Age artist Clem Weisbecker, who's recalled in this issue by both Vic Dowd and the Binder brothers (see *FCA* section). Ye Editor recalls the late Gil Kane mentioning him as drawing "Captain America" stories for Timely during the early 1940s when Gil was briefly passing through Martin Goodman's company—but, far as we know, no one has yet identified any stories to which he contributed.

Bill Ward, happily, is another matter. He can be seen in a photo on p. 7, as well as in this tiny photo of "PFC Ward" from his World War II days. It's surrounded here by:

(Top right:) A strip done for the Army circa 1943, featuring "Ack-Ack Amy," the prototype of his postwar "Torchy" done for Busy Arnold's Quality Comics Group. [©2005 Estate of Bill Ward.]

(Above left:) A "Bulletman" panel he drew for an issue of *Master Comics*, as retouched and grey-toned by Bill Black's AC Comics for the b&w *Men of Mystery* #38 [Restored art ©2005 AC Comics; Bulletman TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

(Bottom right:) The first of four daily-style strips done circa 1990 for *W.O.W. The World of Ward* #1, published by Allied American Artists, "a division of Mort Todd Ltd."—also the source of the "PFC Ward" photo. Note the reference to drawing "Captain Marvel" and to Fawcett editor Wendell Crowley! With thanks to Mort Todd. [©2005 Estate of Bill Ward.]



### Shopping Around

Did we run this photo of the Binder shop before? No matter—either way, we consider ourselves damn lucky to have it (courtesy of Vic)! Clockwise from top left, where studio head Jack Binder stands puffing on his pipe are: Ken Bald—Sam Brooks (in back, top right)—Vic Dowd (with suspenders)—Ray Harford (also with pipe)—and Bob Boyajian, whose interview follows this one. Wish we had more shots like this!

Getting back to Weisbecker: we'd have lunch and he'd tell these raunchy stories about his escapades with loose women. He was a little guy, not very good-looking, but gave the aura of being completely self-confident. He was a Jimmy Cagney, John Garfield type. But he could draw, though I never saw him draw realistic people. He exhibited his paintings in Greenwich Village. I don't know how long he was at Binder's, but I know he was already there when I started.

JA: *I've heard he had a drinking problem. Do you remember that?*

DOWD: No, I don't. I'm not surprised if he did, but I never knew about it. How he got to Binder's, I couldn't tell you. I just know he could draw very quickly and lay out a page in minutes. The long shot, close-ups... all roughly drawn, but full of verve! He drew with the side of his pencil and would just swing it in there, so that when you rubbed it slightly with an eraser, you could correct any drawing that needed it, or just finish the drawing.

At some point, I got appendicitis. I was still living at home in Brooklyn, and got these terrible stomach pains, so the next day they took out my appendix. I didn't do any more work for Binder after that. I was ready to join the Army, because if I didn't enlist, I'd have been drafted. We were kind-of recruited at Pratt, so I decided to join the Army and not work for those few months between recovering from my operation and going into the service. I had a perfectly good recovery, dated a lot, and had fun with my friends, before I had to serve my country. I graduated from Pratt in May 1941, and went into the service in August of 1942, so I couldn't have been at Binder's for more than a year. I also worked with the Fawcett studio in New York, but not for long.

I remember a lot of people from my Binder days. Jimmy Potter was there, and he left to become a pilot in the Army Air Corps, where he trained others to become fighter pilots. He wrote to us while we were working at Binder's and said, "I'm very anxious to go overseas, if these kids don't kill me before I get my chance." And sure enough, someone froze while at the controls, and they crashed, killing both men. Jimmy was a happy-go-lucky type; a big smile on his face... nothing fazed him. Jimmy Potter was at Binder's when I started, and he died while I was still working there, so you can see he wasn't in the service long. His death was a big dose of reality to all of us.

JA: *I can understand that. What do you remember about John Spranger?*

DOWD: He was a very quiet guy. I believe he tightened up Clem's layouts and drew the main and secondary figures. He drew with a controlled line; it wasn't emotional at all, but was well done and clean, and lent itself to drawing "Captain Midnight" or whatever. He drew with a mechanical pencil. Spranger was German, and his pencil line was Germanic. He was a solid draftsman. I probably inked some of his work. I didn't ink secondary figures. I drew pretty girls and heroic men, but I also inked main figures, so I must have inked some of his work. I also finished some of Clem's layouts.

Another fellow who worked there was André LeBlanc. He drew wonderful villains and secondary characters. He was from Haiti and was a very cocky, self-confident guy. I know he had a very long art career.

JA: *Tell me about Ray Harford.*

DOWD: Of the four of us from Pratt, Ray was the quietest. He smoked a pipe, and looked very English, I'd say. He came from a nice, refined family. We were so friendly that we visited each other's homes, and got to know each other's parents. Ray, Bob, Ken, and I would visit quite often—we were all very close friends. Among the four of us, Ken and I were the closest, of course. Ken was so much like the people I grew up with, but different enough to be interesting. In fact, my wife and I were just over at Ken and Kaye's house a couple of weeks ago. We all wish we lived closer. If we did, Ken and I could play golf together, instead of him still playing basketball. He's too old for that! [*mutual laughter*]

Ray married Edith while we were at Pratt. After the war, he moved to Rochester, New York, and drew newspaper illustrations for various department stores. He had a very nice career there. He must have done well, because he belonged to the Oak Hills Country Club, which has a very famous golf course. I'm sorry we didn't keep in closer touch in his later years. Edith died first, and Ray remarried. We'd exchange Christmas cards, but that was about it. You know, it's hard to see people as often as you want when we're living in Connecticut and he's in Rochester. I was busy with four children and being a freelance illustrator, and he had a family and career, too.

Have you talked to Bob Boyajian?

JA: *Yes, I have. He, like you, was a little surprised that someone would want to interview him. But he was very gracious and helpful to me.*

DOWD: He would be. Now, Bob got a job in Akron, Ohio, right after the war. You have to realize that after all of us got out of the service, we couldn't wait to get our lives started again. Bob got a job with the Firestone company. Ray got the job I mentioned earlier, though I don't remember the name of the place he worked at. I think each of them did that, thinking they'd stay for a short time, and get some experience. Well, Bob stayed until he retired, when he moved to Vermont. And Ray stayed in Rochester until he died.

## "Another Name From The Past"

JA: *What do you remember about Al Duca?*

DOWD: Al had a peculiar sense of humor. He was funny, and he came from Boston, so he had a slight Boston accent. He'd say something, and if you didn't react immediately, he'd say, "Do you get the humor in it?" "Well, of course we get the humor in it, Duca. What do you think we did...crawl out from under a rock?" That's how we teased him. He was very friendly and amusing. But I lost touch with him when I got appendicitis. The last time I heard about Al was from Bob Boyajian. And Ray had been very ill the last couple of years of his life, so I was unable to talk to him. You know, these things happen when you get older.

Obviously Ken and I were the closest of any of us, partly because he married my sister, whom I'm very close to. Ken and I think of each

# “Comics Weren’t My Main Goal In Life”

Nevertheless, Artist **BOB BOYAJIAN** Talks To Us About Life At Fawcett & The Jack Binder Shop

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Amash

**B**ob Boyajian may be an unfamiliar name to most of A/E’s readers, but don’t blame Bob for that! He only worked for Jack Binder’s shop, which supplied several comic book companies (including Fawcett) with art and stories, for a little over half a year in 1941. Then he was sent to work directly for Fawcett, where, again, he worked only for half a year. The policies of both places didn’t allow artists to sign their work, and if not for a combination of the records Jack Binder kept and the memories of those who knew him, Bob might have totally faded into comic book obscurity. But you know us—we’re not about to let that kind of thing happen if we can help it! So now Bob tells his story for the first time. Hey, his comic book career might have been short and sweet, but it’s worth remembering, both for its own sake and for the light it sheds on other events and personalities. —Jim.

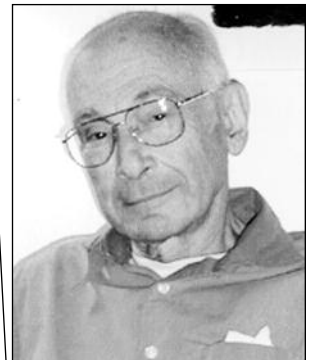
## APOLOGIA from the Editor of *Alter Ego*:

Somehow, in the 11th hour, as this interview was being prepared for publication, I discovered that, in some manner, photocopies of several pieces of Bob Boyajian’s later, non-comics art had been mis-filed, and they could not be located in time for inclusion with this interview. Since Bob had been unable to send any comic art that was specifically his, we’ve instead illustrated this section with related work. We offered him the option of our postponing publication of his interview till a later date, when those photocopies have been found or replaced—but, because of his friendship for Ken Bald and Vic Dowd, he preferred that it still be included in this issue, so we’ve done the best we can. I want to take this space to apologize personally to Bob for the mis-filing—and assure both him and A/E’s readers that, as soon as the missing work is available, we’ll run a special section spotlighting it! —Roy.]

## “Pratt Institute Was Where I Met Ken Bald, Vic Dowd, And Ray Harford”

**JIM AMASH:** Let’s start off with my basic opening questions, which are: where and when were you born? And tell me about your time at Pratt Institute.

**BOB BOYAJIAN:** I was born in New York City, January 17, 1922. Pratt Institute was where I met Ken Bald, Vic Dowd, and Ray Harford. We were classmates, studying illustration. We were allowed to leave school before Commencement, but we did graduate. Jack Binder, who



### A Man For Many Seasons

Bob Boyajian in a photo taken in 2003 by wife Gail Boyajian—and an ad from (and for) Fawcett’s comics, many of which were produced by the Jack Binder shop for which he worked, and on some of which Bob worked. [Restored art ©2005 AC Comics.]

had a shop out in Englewood, New Jersey, and was an artist himself, was an agent who got work from various comic book publishers. A lot of us went straight from school to Binder’s shop.

Kurt Schaffenberger was with us at Pratt and, unlike me, he stayed in comics. Bill Ward was a year ahead of us at Pratt and was the one who told us about Jack Binder. I believe we started at Binder’s in May of 1941.

The war was coming and we all knew we’d be in the service before long, so working for Binder sounded like a pretty good idea. Jobs were hard to find then, because employers were afraid to hire men who might be drafted at any time. So this was a chance to earn some money, and I think we were all single then. I lived with my folks in New York City and made the commute opposite from most of the commuters in the morning. I think that was true of the others, too.

**JA:** Did Binder do the actual hiring?

**BOYAJIAN:** Yes. And it was all piecework. We weren’t paid salaries. We got paid by how much work we did. We worked upstairs in his barn, and there was as many as 18 to 20 of us there.

When I started there, I was doing everything that came my way. It was an assembly-line process. Someone, usually Jack’s brother Otto, started by writing a script. Then someone laid out the pages, and



### A Golden Arrow For A Golden Age

Boyajian, who drew the "Golden Arrow" series in *Whiz Comics* briefly, at some time between 1942-44, may or may not have drawn this story from issue #33 (Aug. 1942), featuring the archer who fought crime in an Old West setting. But, as it happens, Ye Editor owns a coverless copy of one of those giant *Xmas Comics* that Fawcett put out during the war years, which includes the contents (minus covers) of entire issues of *Captain Marvel*, *Spy Smasher*, *Bulletman*, *Wow Comics*, and *Whiz Comics*—so we thought we'd give it a shot. What say, Bob? Recognize this work as yours? [©2005 DC Comics.]

someone, usually Kurt Schaffenberger, lettered the pages. Then someone would pencil in the main figures, and someone else drew the backgrounds. Three people usually inked the pages: one would do the main characters, someone else the secondary figures, and a third inked the backgrounds.

I started out at the lowest level as a background penciler. Gradually, I worked myself up. We did a bunch of features, and I eventually had one all to myself, which was "Golden Arrow." We didn't work on "Captain Marvel" at Binder's, which is why Ray Harford and I eventually went over to work in Fawcett's art department. They obviously needed help, and Jack Binder wanted to stay on Fawcett's good side, so he sent us there. I did "Captain Marvel" covers.

JA: Did you do "Golden Arrow" at Binder's?

BOYAJIAN: Yes, pencils and inks, but I only did a few stories. When I went to work directly for Fawcett, I stopped drawing the feature. He was a back-up feature in *Whiz Comics*.

JA: What do you remember about Jack Binder?

BOYAJIAN: He was something of a character. He had a checkered career and had done some art, though I never saw any that he had done.

He was in his late 30s and came from Chicago. Ken knew him better, because he [Ken] became the art director at the shop before he went into the service.

I remember that it was hot in the summer time and terribly cold in the winter. Binder installed a couple of fans for the summer months. In the winter, he put in a wood stove. The first guy in was supposed to start it. We worked in our overcoats because it took until noon before the place got warm enough to take them off.

JA: Pete Riss was Binder's art director before Ken was. What do you remember about him?

BOYAJIAN: He was a Russian. He'd tell us Russian stories, but was very low-key and hardly ever raised his voice. He gave up the art director's job and became a regular shop worker. I don't think Pete was the kind of guy who enjoyed bossing people. He was quite a good comic book artist. Kurt Schaffenberger was more outgoing.

JA: Even though I've interviewed Ken Bald, I'd like to hear your impressions of him.

BOYAJIAN: He was a terrific art director and a marvelous artist. He's a very good friend. He's always had a great work ethic. I remember while he was doing the *Dr. Kildare* newspaper strip, he was also working as an illustrator. And he's still working, doing television storyboards. He's just amazing!

JA: Did you get to know Otto Binder?

BOYAJIAN: Not really, though he'd come to the shop every once in a while with his scripts. He worked at home.

Bob Butts was also a classmate at Pratt. He was a hard-working, quiet man. I don't think he was the type to have wanted an art director's job. He was quiet in school and on the job.

## "The Fawcett Gang"

JA: I'd like to throw a few more names at you to see what you remember about these people, starting with Vince Costello.

BOYAJIAN: He was a classmate, too. We all wanted to be illustrators and doing comic books was pretty close, so we were willing to do it temporarily.

JA: Ray Harford.

BOYAJIAN: He was a close friend of mine. I was the best man at his wedding. We both served in the same outfit in the war, as did Vic Dowd. We were in the camouflage outfit. Ray was born in 1920, and was just short of turning 80, when he died in 1990.

I actually heard about the birth of his son before he did. I got a V-mail from my mother, who saw his mother, and got the news. My V-mail got to me before Ray's got to him.

There was a fellow who wrote scripts. His name was Wendell Crowley, and he was a very tall guy. I think he only had one good eye. He was at Binder's, but later went to Fawcett and eventually became the *Captain Marvel* editor.

Al Duca went on to quite a different career. He wasn't in comics too long. He invented a kind of acrylic paint and had an association with MIT, developing methods of casting sculpture. He had a nice career as a painter, too. He was from Boston, and I think he went back there after the war.

Al was at Pratt with us, and he was quite a character. He did a marvelous imitation of Groucho Marx. He did not go into the service, but I don't know why. Al and I went back to our 45th reunion at Pratt, with



COOL PIC, NO? LITTLE LULU ARTIST JOHN STANLEY GAVE IT TO HIS SON JIM IN THE EARLY '70S.

JOHN STANLEY WAS BORN IN 1914 AND DIED IN 1993. IN BETWEEN, HE WROTE AND DREW SOME OF THE BEST KIDS' COMICS EVER! AFTER WORKING IN NEAR-OBSCURITY FOR DECADES, JOHN STANLEY WAS FINALLY HONORED IN 1976 AT BOSTON'S NEWCON.



IT WAS STANLEY'S FIRST COMIC CONVENTION APPEARANCE, AND TO MARK THE OCCASION, DON PHELPS WROTE THE FOLLOWING PIECE FOR THE CON'S PROGRAM BOOK. JIM STANLEY RECENTLY PASSED THE ARTICLE ON TO US, SAYING IT "... COVERED MY FATHER'S CAREER VERY THOROUGHLY."

INDEED IT DOES! WE'RE PLEASED TO PRESENT MR. PHELPS' INSIGHTFUL ARTICLE HERE, AS WE CONCLUDE OUR THREE-PART JOHN STANLEY TRIBUTE...

## Introduction

by Michael T. Gilbert

**T**he following John Stanley tribute appeared in the 1976 Newcon Convention booklet, written by convention organizer Don Phelps. We're pleased to reprint Mr. Phelps' insightful article, with only minor editing.

## John Stanley

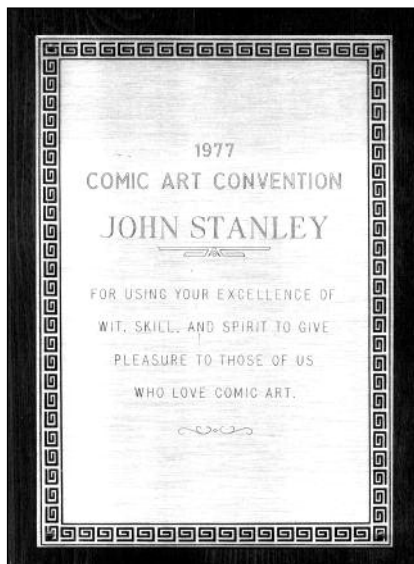
by Don Phelps

In 1968, Bill Spicer's *Graphic Story Magazine* carried an interview with Dan Noonan in which he paid tribute to a fellow artist and story man with whom he had worked at Western Publishing Company. The colleague's name was John Stanley, and Noonan remarked that he regarded Stanley as a brilliant idea man. He also noted that Stanley had been responsible for the *Little Lulu* comic book stories. Well, this article made me aware of the name John Stanley for the first time, but *Little Lulu* was certainly not unfamiliar to me.

During the '50s, my reading habits, as far as comic books were concerned, started when I was five years old with a subscription to *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*. From then on, the whole Dell menagerie became fast and lasting childhood friends. Gradually, though, tastes changed, and *Superman* and his "family" displaced much of the Dell coterie ... but not all! Someone quite unknown to me at that time was doing masterful things with a character called Scrooge McDuck. But just as masterful to me were the stories contained within a seemingly innocuously-drawn comic book called *Little Lulu*.

Published monthly, *Little Lulu* featured an average of four stories an issue ... but what stories! They were cohesive and tightly constructed, with nary a loose thread in the plot. Most importantly however, they were unsurpassed on a purely literary level by any of the so-called "kid strips" done then or now. John Stanley was, of course, the reason for the strip's success. He both wrote and drew the early *Four Color* issues, and he continued to write the "Little Lulu" and "Tubby" stories right up until he left the books to work on other chores during the late '50s. His dealings with Western Publishing became so strained toward the end (the late '60s) that he turned his back completely on comic book work, and he is now working for a silk screening company in upstate New York. He is understandably bitter about his handling at Western (for years the *Lulu* books have featured reprints of his stories without any credit or compensation), the company he had toiled for for over twenty years. Because of this and the fact that he is a shy man by nature, the last ever to blow his own horn, so to speak, it has been difficult for anyone in fandom to contact him.

Bob Overstreet and I visited Stanley for the first time a number of months ago. He was tremendously gracious and every bit as unassuming as I found Carl Barks to be upon my first visit with him. There are many similarities between the two men, paramount of which is their disbelief that their work is being taken so seriously, or, more aptly, that their work is being enjoyed by such a growing number of fans. Fan mail was never forwarded to them, so they had no idea just to what extent, if any, their work was being appreciated. To find out so long after the fact surely was a bit overwhelming. The personal history of both Barks and Stanley is still hazy, but we have garnered some facts about the elusive Mr. Stanley:



This plaque reads "1977 Comic Art Convention - John Stanley. For using your excellence of wit, skill, and spirit to give pleasure to those of us who love comic art." But the con took place in 1976—honest!

John Stanley was born in Harlem, N.Y. on March 22, 1914. His high school artistry was good enough for him to win a two-year scholarship to the New York School of Art. He felt very uncomfortable there, as most of his classmates were well-to-do and, being a city kid, he did not really blend in. After finishing his two years, he landed a job with the Max Fleischer studio, then in New York. He began as an opaquer, did some inking and in-between work. Before rising to assistant animator status, John left Fleischer's to work for Hal Horne, who was hiring artists to work on the *Mickey Mouse Magazine*. Besides drawing characters and illustrations for the magazines, Stanley also drew some covers, among which may have been the very first large-size *Mickey Mouse Magazine* cover!

Through his association with Horne, Stanley next went to work for the Kay Kamen outfit, drawing characters for the Disney merchandise items including the character drawing for one of the *Mickey Mouse* watches.

Around this time (1937-1940) Stanley attended the Art Students League evenings, taking up lithography. By his own admission, he didn't learn much about lithography, but he did meet a group of "good-time guys" who believed in revelry and a whole lot of tipping the elbow ... it was a more personally satisfying experience than his stint at the New York School of Art had been. John freelanced for a year, selling cartoons to various magazines, before going to work for Western Publishing under editor Oscar Lebeck. With regards to his being given the *Lulu* job: "Oscar handed me the assignment, but I'm sure it was due to no special form of brilliance that he thought I'd lend to it. It could have been handed to Dan Noonan, Kelly, or anyone else. I just happened to be available at the time." Thus, with typical Stanley modesty, we learn about the



# Leonard Darvin Speaks— About The Comics Code

## Part 3 of “1966: The Year Of THREE (Or Maybe 2½) New York Comicons!”

Interview Edited by Bill Schelly

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**I**ntroduction: Starting two issues ago, the Comic Fandom Archive is devoting several installments to a series of pieces related to the (more or less) three comics conventions held in New York City over a 6-month period between July 1966 and January 1967: a “mini-con” sponsored by Calvin Beck’s Castle of Frankenstein magazine—a full-scale convention hosted by EC fan John Benson—and, only three weeks after the latter, a convention put on by David Kaler, who had produced the “Academy Con” the year before. The Beck con could count perhaps as half a convention; hence our series’ title. It and the 2nd KalerCon will be discussed upon completion of the coverage of the Benson con. Parts I & II presented an overall view of that gathering at the Park Sheraton Hotel in Manhattan on July 23-24, 1966. This issue presents a key partial transcription of a panel from that con.

Comic book fans had been longing to express their frustration with the Comics Code Authority, which was seen as censorship—even if self-imposed by the comics industry itself, in response to the hue and outcry about violent comics in the early 1950s. Rarely have the fans ever been able to go head-to-head with an administrator of the CCA, or with “private citizens” (such as Dr. Fredric Wertham) whose agitation led to its creation. The Code was widely viewed as thinly-veiled censorship, and as the cause of the demise of EC and other comics companies after it was adopted in 1954-55.

The following, then, is a rare treat, courtesy of audio tapes from the convention in the possession of John Benson. This con’s initial panel was a debate between Leonard Darvin, acting administrator of the Comics Code Authority, and Don Thompson, Cleveland, Ohio, journalist and



co-founder of the fanzine *Comic Art*, which was then on a hiatus which, alas, eventually became permanent. Before the hour was over, Darvin had to face the organization’s most vitriolic critic: Ted White, a comics fan with a special fondness for the EC comics he had bought off the stands in the 1950s, had a bone to pick with the Code about the behind-the-scenes drama that had resulted in the demise of EC.

Actually, Leonard Darvin had looked upon comics fans with a friendly eye when he first learned about comicdom in the early ’60s. At one point, in 1964, he was actively helping a group of New York fans organize a national comicon, though the plans of George Pacinda and friends fell apart in disarray. So it’s not surprising that Darvin accepted the invitation

### And In This Corner...

1960s photos of the two scheduled debaters of the ’66 Benson Con’s first “panel,” flanking the Comics Code Authority’s seal of approval:

(Above right:) Code administrator Leonard Darvin, flanked by two women who worked on the Code staff, reviewing comics pages submitted by the member companies. An attorney by profession, Darvin had been with the Code Authority since its founding in the mid-1950s, as a branch of the new Comics Magazine Association of America; in 1967 he became its third administrator, succeeding Judge Charles F. Murphy and Mrs. Guy Percy Trulock (the latter had retired in late 1965). Though at the time of the 1966 con he was only “acting administrator,” Darvin would soon be appointed officially to the post and would hold it for the next decade or so. He supplied this photo in 1969 for *Alter Ego* [Vol. 1] #10, which featured a short article by him, as well as reprinting the Code itself.

(Left:) Don and Maggie Thompson, seen on the left, chatting with Roy Thomas when they first met at a Chicago fan-meet held over Christmas vacation in 1964. Both Maggie and Roy were in the audience at this panel, and will be heard from next issue. Don passed away in 1994. This photo first appeared in Bill Schelly’s acclaimed book, *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*.

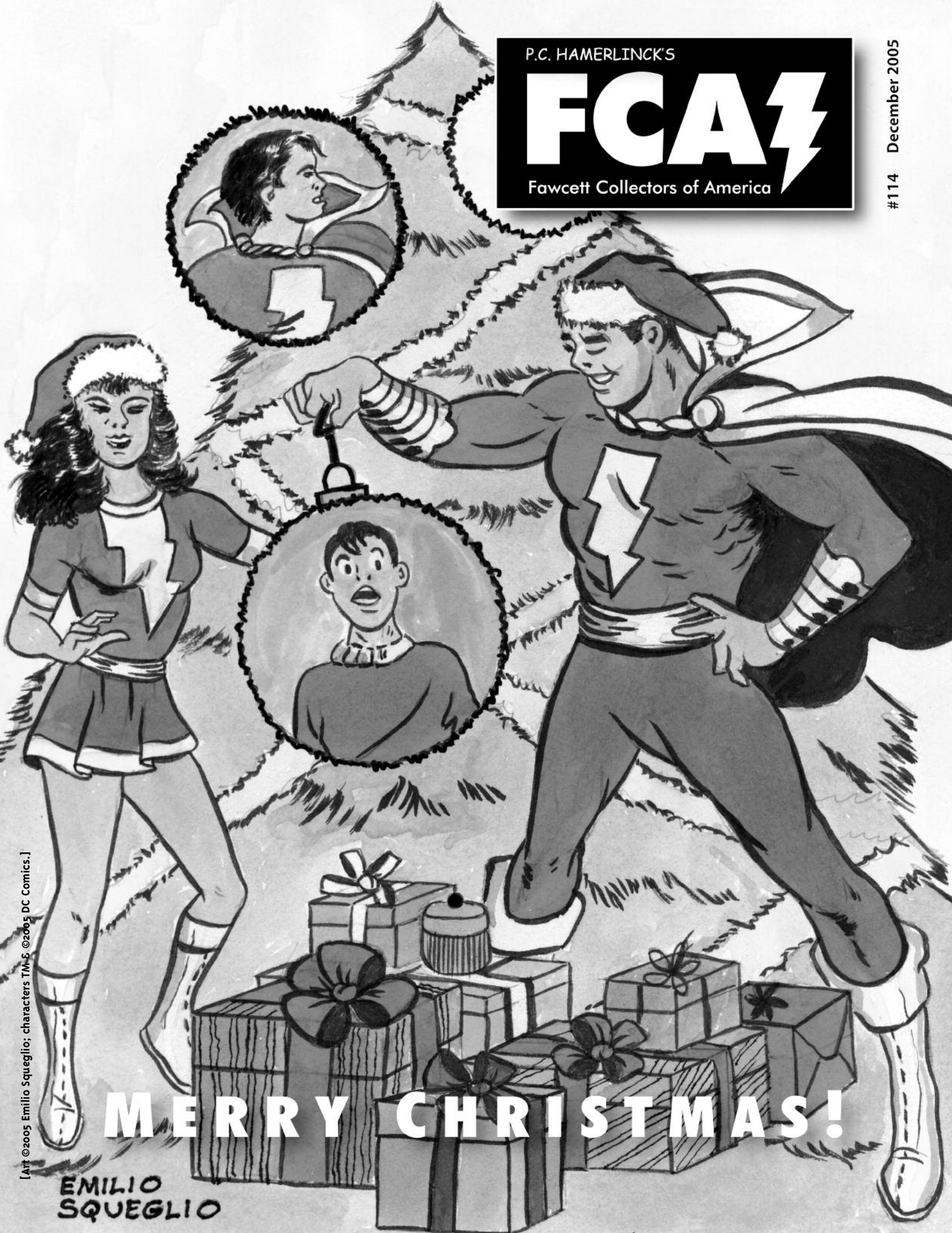


P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

# FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#114 December 2005



[Art ©2005 Emilio Squeglio; characters TM & ©2005 DC Comics.]

EMILIO SQUEGLIO

# MERRY CHRISTMAS!

# A Real-Life “Marvel Family”

A 1973 Talk With Golden Age Artists Jack & Otto Binder

Interview Conducted by Richard Kyle

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**A/E** EDITOR'S NOTE: Recently, our oft-times (and valued) contributor Will Murray contacted Alter Ego about a three-decades-old audio tape that was in the possession of my 1960s fandom colleague Richard Kyle. The tape contained a by-mail “interview,” with questions sent via mail by Kyle to artist Jack Binder being answered by the latter on July 29, 1973—and, later in the tape, also by his writer brother Otto. Between them, the two siblings had drawn and written many fine stories in the 1940s and early '50s for Fawcett, as well as for other companies; Otto wrote many, probably most, of the classic “Captain Marvel” tales from 1941 onward. In addition, until World War II drained away much of his work force, Jack also operated a comics shop/studio which supplied artwork to various companies, as noted in previous issues of A/E.

Our thanks to P.C. Hamerlinck for making this long-lost interview a part of this issue's FCA, even though it meant delaying for a month or so a pair of shorter pieces originally planned for this issue, including the second part of his talk with Michael Uslan and a piece on Fawcett artist Emilio Squeglio, whose interior-cover drawing was still used this time around. Both those pieces will appear in the next couple of issues. P.C. and I wish to thank both Richard Kyle and Will Murray for making available this valuable first-person addition to Golden Age history, to Brian K. Morris for transcribing the interview from a most-unclear tape, and to both Richard and Jim Amash for going over the transcript to try to make this printed version as accurate as possible, since many words on the tape are basically unintelligible. We've tried to indicate places where this is the case. A/E readers with additional information or



**A Man And His Art**

Jack Binder (on left) with fellow artist (and one-time employee) Pete Riss, circa 1950. This photo, one of a number sent by Otto Binder to Roy Thomas in 1964-'65, was first printed in the 1997 trade paperback *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine*. On the back, Otto wrote that Riss “was one of Jack's mainstays in his art shop, staying to the very end and doing inking for countless jobs.” That “end” came in 1943, when the World War II draft had decimated the shop's personnel.

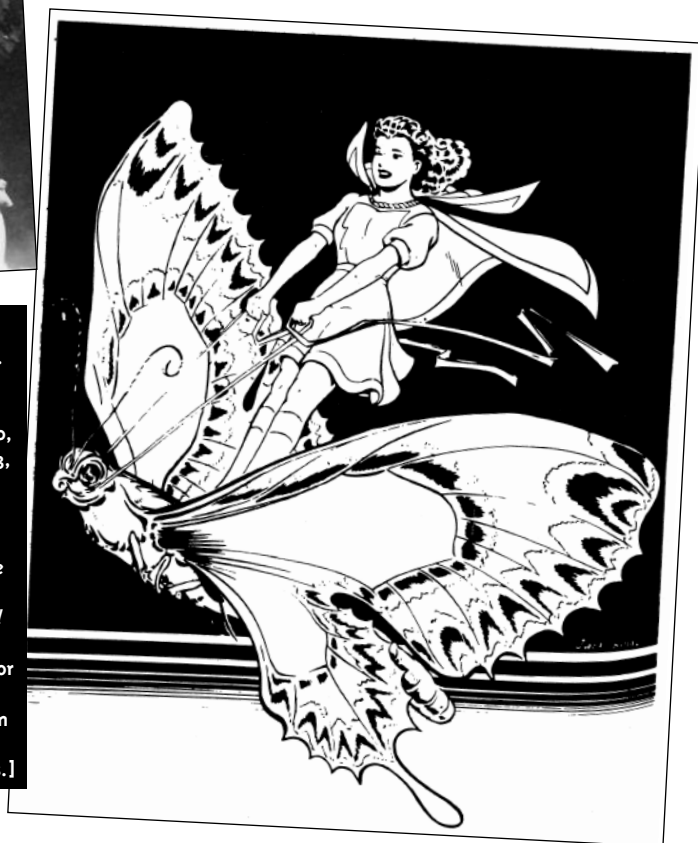
Although FCA's own Marc Swayze visually designed Mary Marvel for her 1942 origin, and though C.C. Beck, Kurt Schaffenberger, and others drew her in “Marvel Family” tales, it's Jack Binder more than any other artist who is identified with the look of the World's Mightiest Girl for most of her Fawcett career. This drawing for the cover of *Mary Marvel* #5 (Sept. 1946) is repro'd from the 1976 edition of Maurice Horn's *World Encyclopedia of Comics*. The entry on “Mary Marvel” notes that, artistically, “Jack Binder handled the strip with a verve and style rarely seen in his work. Known more for his organizational talents rather than his artwork, Binder constantly produced clean, pretty, and interesting interpretations. His backgrounding and panel details struck an aesthetic balance between C.C. Beck's cartoonish ‘Captain Marvel’ and Mac Raboy's illustrated ‘Captain Marvel Jr.’” Yeah, that's about how we'd rate it. [©2005 DC Comics.]

speculations are invited to send them to us for a future “re:” section. And now, we'll let Richard himself tell you of his involvement in the interview, which has been edited somewhat for ease of reading.  
—Roy.

**INTRODUCTION:** In 1973, Jerry de Fuccio, then an associate editor of *Mad*, a sometime comic book writer, and a lifelong comics fan, was planning to write a book about early comic book artists. His idea was to publish re-creations by the artists of their original Golden Age work, and to accompany the new drawings with interviews and profiles. Paul Gustavson, Fred Guardineer, Frank Thomas, Tony DiPreta, and others contributed. Jack Binder was one of the contributors, as well. I conducted his interview for Jerry—by mail—at a time when I was editing the magazine *Graphic Story World*. Despite many plans, Jerry's book never came to be. This is the first publication anywhere of this once-lost interview. —Richard Kyle.

## “I Will Proceed To Answer Most Of Your Questions”

**JACK BINDER:** This recording, made this 29th day of July 1973, especially for Richard Kyle. Richard, I was certainly glad to receive your letter. And I was greatly impressed and particularly happy that, even though we have never met, you have remembered us and said that we had a great impact on you and gave you so much enjoyment. I have gone over your letters several times and I will proceed to answer most of your questions and give you as much information as possible about the people you've made requests about.



[NOTE: At this point, Binder mentions several items he's sending Kyle, including Photostats of the original art of two Winsor McCay Little Nemo Sunday pages (reduced to ½ size)—a McCay editorial cartoon done for Arthur Brisbane, famous early editor for the Hearst newspapers—a stat of the original cover McCay did for a How to Draw book (for which Jack Binder had done the layouts and Bob McCay, artist son of Little Nemo's creator, the inking)—two Photostats of original work by Gill Fox—a full-sized unpublished "Other Worlds" illustration by JB himself—and "three Sunday page layouts in full color, done at the [Harry "A"] Chesler syndicate where I did the layouts for Little Nemo when we [Binder & Bob McCay] tried to revive it," with the latter inking. The final item being sent—"two pieces of broadside advertising regarding Bob McCay and his father and his family"—Jack said was the only copy he had, so should be returned; Kyle was invited to keep all the others, though alas, he no longer has them.]

You want to know if I was influenced by movies, by films, in my approach towards illustrating comics. My only approach was simply to tell a story without taking away from the story itself, not to over-embellish with artwork, or to over-embellish into drawing a lot of unnecessary things. In other words, I tried to get right down to the nitty-gritty of what was going on in a particular panel and to somehow give a smooth and good continuity. We weren't influenced by anything but our own need for doing the comics, and getting them out so that we wouldn't miss a deadline; and also by the fact that we were so excited about this being our own work and our own creation. Except for following the general storyline or story plot as a script indicated or requested, we were on our own on how to best illustrate this particular panel and the story matter in it. I feel that today's comics, or so-called comics, are too close to being just pure illustration. They don't seem to have that simple approach to getting directly at the essence—or, as I term it, the nitty-gritty—regarding what I consider good storytelling.

The questioning in your letter about what I was influenced by in my work—you probably realize that I had 2½ years at the Art Institute of Chicago, and that I studied under J. Allen St. John and his like, and also studied Life [Drawing] under George Poole [sp?]. I studied Perspective under Miss Lacey [sp?] and Graphics under Phipps. I took Color Theory under Shook [sp?], and took a special Anatomy course with Filbrick [sp?]; and of course Life Drawing and Cast Drawing [i.e., drawing from plaster casts], and Painting, and so forth, took up much of our time while I was a student.

And, of course, you realize that after my year and a half in the copper and steel engraving business, which went bust, as you probably know from Steranko's *History [of Comics]*, I spent seven years away from the art field, but found my way back into it again by starting to do magazine illustrations for Farnsworth Wright for *Weird Tales* [magazine]. I illustrated a number of

Otto's stories in that, also. And of course, when I came to New York, I started doing magazine illustrations for Street & Smith and for Ned Pines [publisher of the Standard/Thrilling pulps and later of the Thrilling/Nedor comic book line]. I did a feature called "If," featuring the great people who influenced the world as scientists and so forth. I did those for quite a number of years.

And through all of this, with the discipline and the need for doing saleable work, work that was acceptable to the publisher, for which he spent money—we, of course, had to extend ourselves and do the best we knew how. In magazine illustrating, I usually read the story and chose, or picked, my own spots to illustrate. So there again, we have to use good judgment and satisfy the editor and, in the final analysis, the reader as well. But the movies were far out of my mind in those days.

## "Shop Talk"

You ask about the great storytellers and shop talk about storytelling at Chesler's. Well, beginning with Charlie Biro: Biro was a very intense, very sincere person, and he had a secret ambition of becoming, aside from being an artist, a radio announcer and an actor. He took part, even while he was at Chesler's, in various plays and readings, I think he did finally wind up at one of the studios as a scene designer. [NOTE: According to Jerry Bails' *Who's Who in American Comic Books, from 1962-72 Biro was a graphic designs artist for NBC-TV.*] I don't recall anything about his formal education background, but I do know that he mentioned the fact that he had worked in the animation field. I'm not sure whether he said Disney, or whether it was one of the other

animation studios that were in existence at the time, but I do know that Charlie was an excellent animator, because I worked for, oh, about six months for Charlie Biro and Bob Wood [at Lev Gleason Publications]. [Tape pauses.]

Gill Fox, I think, was with us, too, at the [Fleischer] studio on Broadway. I recall in particular one humorous incident. I had charge of the inking and opaqing department, and occasionally I helped out in the composing room. And I recall, particularly, this film we did for the government at the time—it gave people an idea of the farmer. The government wanted to stress that agriculture was so very necessary and very important in our country. So anyway, this one scene showed a farmer in a wheat field. He had his wheat all in bags and he was tossing them onto a truck. Well, there's someone who hadn't gotten to the background man, so that truck [drawn there] was completely out of scale. And here was this farmer pitching sacks a mile a minute, and when we had put it into the composing section, there was a truck about the size of a toy truck standing beneath this great big pile of sacks of wheat hanging in mid-air. And this was about 12 o'clock, because they had a deadline to meet. I think it was the next day that that film was to be completed and



### Have Boomerang, Will Travel!

One of the key art jobs of Jack Binder's early comics career was the very first story of "The Daredevil," in *Silver Streak Comics* #6 (Sept. 1940), from *Your Guide Publications*. This splash page with his byline has been repro'd from Alan Light's 1970s black-&-white reprint.

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# “The Plot Against Christmas”

By John G. Pierce

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

[This article represents the first in a series of Fawcett Christmas story reviews. These articles will appear in every December issue of FCA.]

—PCH.]

**Y** it is good to be children sometimes,  
And never better than at Christmas,  
When its mighty Founder was a child himself.”

— Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

When Charles Dickens penned his classic short novel (or long short story) *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, he could scarcely have imagined the status it would achieve. Certainly, he could not have imagined that its theme (and even its very plot) would be utilized by other writers, in numerous homages and outright imitations. And it would have been impossible for him to foresee the rise, many years hence, of a new type of literature called the comic book, whose writers would also dip into the Dickensian well time and again.

Some of these efforts have been patently obvious, such as a 1960s “Teen Titans” tale in which the Titans tackled a foe named Scrounge, and in the process even realized that they were living out the Dickens novel! But a much earlier—and much less overt—effort appeared in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #42 (Jan. 1945) in a story called “Captain Marvel and the Plot against Christmas.”

As this story opens, boy newscaster Billy Batson is seated at his desk, rejoicing over the many Christmas cards he and Captain Marvel have received, but lamenting that he is an orphan, and wishing he could share the holiday with more than just friends. (Of course, it seems Billy is forgetting his twin sister Mary Batson Bromfield, a.k.a. Mary Marvel, but that’s okay. Although Fawcett editors and writers used a fair amount of continuity uncommon for the day in their stories, they were not hamstrung by it; quite a contrast to today’s stories, which are heavily continuity-driven, and which virtually require a reader not only to have read many previous issues of the magazine, but all the rest of the line’s output, as well.)

Billy’s thoughts about how other orphans might feel are interrupted by his boss, Sterling Morris, who sends Billy on an assignment. It seems that toy-making brothers, Happy and Jolly Smith, are planning to give away toys to the orphans at Creedmore Orphanage.

At the Smith Toy Company, Billy interviews the two brothers, who have a motor-driven sleigh ready to take toys to the orphanage on Christmas Day. They don’t want their older brother, Gouge, to become aware of their plan, but somehow he finds out. (The Smith brothers, of course, in Captain Marvel tradition, have names befitting their personalities and/or roles in the story. If this seems unrealistic, remember that the same is true in the Bible, as well as in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien ... hardly bad company to be in!)

Gouge Smith is furious, so he hurries over to the

company’s loading dock, and in his anger pushes his brother Happy toward the sleigh. Happy is about to fall into the whirling propeller blades, when Billy says “Shazam!” and Captain Marvel prevents disaster. “You almost killed your own brother, Gouge!” Cap remonstrates, but Gouge seems unconcerned, and issues orders for the toys to be returned to the warehouse.

Captain Marvel, undeterred, tells the remaining brothers to go on home and celebrate Christmas Eve as they were planning to. He has a plan. A little later, Billy announces over the radio about a “plot against Christmas,” but assures listeners that Captain Marvel intends to iron out the problems with Gouge Smith. Gouge, listening to the broadcast, thinks Billy “must be out of his mind!”

Then, however, Captain Marvel shows up at Gouge’s door. His own and Gouge’s visible breath shows him that “Your house is almost as cold as your heart, Gouge.”

“I like it that way,” responds Gouge. “Will you get out—or will I have to have you *thrown* out!” (One has to wonder just *how* Gouge would accomplish that.)

Cap, however, replies, “I’ll go, but you’re coming with me. Here, put this coat on.”

So, Captain Marvel, ignoring Gouge’s protestations, flies him to the home of brother Jolly, who welcomes them both. The children are



**I'll Deck Your Halls!**

Splash page to “Captain Marvel and the Plot against Christmas” (*Captain Marvel Adventures* #42, Jan. 1945). Art by C.C. Beck & Pete Costanza. [© 2005 DC Comics.]

# Super-Hero Sidekick

Joanna Pang of "ISIS"

by P.C. Hamerlinck

**J**oanna Pang once solved problems with a high school teacher (who also happened to be a powerful, white-skirted super-hero), but throughout her career the actress/dancer has accomplished her own fair share of amazing feats.

Raised in the California bay area, life as a performer began very early for Pang. She literally grew up at the San Francisco Ballet School, where her mother taught for many years. By the time she was five years old, Pang had landed her first professional dancing job. At 12, she acted in her first movie (an Ann Margaret film, *Once a Thief*). She soon pursued musical theatre with her brother Joey. With dancing in their blood, the two talented siblings became regulars as a ballroom dance team on a daily San Francisco TV program, *The Ted Randal Show* (later becoming *Dick Stewart's Dance Party*). "It was similar to *American Bandstand*," Pang said. "One time we won a dance contest that the show held, and our prize was a TV set, which was really a big deal!"

As a result of their contest victory, *The Lawrence Welk Show* contacted the Pang kids and invited them to perform live during one of Welk's Bay area concerts. What Welk hadn't realized was that Pang and her brother were on TV every single day in the Bay area, causing a tremendous reaction from the hometown crowd during their performance at the concert. Welk was so impressed by the Pangs that he flew them down to Los Angeles to appear twice on his television show... until Welk deemed the duo "too young" to be regulars on the show. "Our family was excited when we appeared on Welk's show," Pang said, "especially since it was my grandmother's favorite TV program."

Relocating to New York City and aspiring to break into theatre, Pang's path instead led to more TV gigs, including dozens of commercials. She became a regular on the CBS children's program *The Patchwork Family*, and appeared in and narrated a children's Chinese opera for *CBS Festival of the Lively Arts*. Her work for CBS caught the attention of an executive in charge of the network's children's programming. "He told me there was a new Saturday morning series starting out in Los Angeles," Pang said, "and asked if I'd be interested in flying out there for an audition. Since I'd already done a lot of children's television, I jumped at the opportunity. Two days later I was on a plane to L.A."

On the very same day of her audition for *Isis* at Filmmation Studios, Joanna Pang landed the part of Cindy Lee. Joanna Cameron (*Isis*/Andrea Thomas) and Brian Cutler (Rick Mason) had already been cast for their parts and weren't present during Pang's audition; the show was already in pre-production. "Once I was cast, we started shooting a few weeks later," Pang said. "In the interim I flew back to New York, packed up my things, and headed back to California for *Isis*. It all happened pretty fast."

A spin-off from the successful *Shazam!* live-action series, the original concept for *Isis* involved detective-based storylines and a youth crime-solving

group, but was soon changed to a high school setting with problematic students and situations providing the show's lesson-oriented, plot-driven drama. "They never really defined my character," Pang said of the Cindy Lee role. "I wasn't sure whether I was supposed to be just a student, or a teacher's aide, or, most likely, just one of those overly-enthusiastic students who gets involved in everything and always wants to help the teacher. It was never clear because some episodes I called the teacher Andrea Thomas by her first name, then other episodes I'd call her 'Miss Thomas.' But, with Saturday morning TV shows, you shoot very fast and don't have a lot of discussion about the characters ... so you sort-of make up your character's own background and history."

*Isis*' simple, formulaic scripts didn't bother Pang. "At the time I was doing *Isis*, I was thrilled to be doing a national TV show," she said. "I enjoyed working on *Isis*, loved my part, and didn't really delve into the writing of the scripts, nor did I want to try to change things. I think every actor who does a TV series thinks that it can always be better, but I just tried to do the best job I could with the script."

The part of Cindy Lee wasn't much of a stretch for Pang. "I think the character was very much like me," she said. "Cindy was positive, upbeat ... she always wanted to help. Sometimes she would do something with good intentions but it would somehow end up causing some kind of trouble, and then Isis would have to fly in and rescue her or her friends. But, basically, I am pretty much like that person, so it was easy for me to play the part."



CBS-TV's *Isis* cast: Joanna Cameron, Joanna Pang, and Brian Cutler.  
[Photo © 2005 the respective copyright holders.]

Even though many of her scenes on *Isis* were with Joanna Cameron, Pang didn't really get to know the actress who portrayed the leading role. "A lot of us didn't get to know Joanna that well," Pang said. "She didn't have a lot of free time on the set because either she was portraying Andrea or she was in makeup and wardrobe getting ready to change and become Isis. However, I did become friends with a girl named Jill who was the stand-in for Isis. My best friend from the series was Brian Cutler, who was like a big brother to me. Brian and his wife were just great, and I loved spending time with them and their two children. The entire crew was good to work with, particularly two of our directors: Arthur Nadel and Hollingsworth Morse, a tall, wise old white-haired man who always wore a cowboy hat." Both men also directed several later episodes of *Shazam!*

It was common for the *Isis* crew to frequently run into the *Shazam!* crew. "We had a couple of shows that crossed-over with *Shazam!*" Pang remembered, "and both shows were always working in the studio at the same time, so we got to know the people from *Shazam!* quite well."

Pang made occasional personal appearances during the height of *Isis*' popularity. One event in particular was the Cherry Blossom Festival held in Medford, Oregon, which she still fondly remembers: "The people in Medford had called CBS and asked if I could come up and be the grand marshal of their festival's parade. It sounded like a lot of fun, so I told them I would be there. My mother accompanied me when I flew up there. As we landed I was looking out the window and I turned to my mother and said, 'Look at all that... there's a red carpet, there's a band, there's hundreds of people out there ... I wonder who's on our plane?' And my mother said, 'I think that's for YOU!' I just hadn't put it all together, but it was indeed all for me! Besides my being the grand marshal at the parade, they took me over to a fair where many people had come to see me and we conducted an hour-long Q & A session. That was a lot of fun. They also took me over to a nursing home where the people always watched the show. I walked around, shook hands, and talked to the elderly people who lived there. We had a wonderful time."

After the first season of *Isis*, Pang's character was abruptly written out of the series. Why? Filmmation may have opted to revive and merge in the show's original "youth crime-solving group" concept with new actors, which became apparent in episodes from the show's second season ... or perhaps it was simply Filmmation's habit of replacing established cast members on proven hit shows, with the belief that children wouldn't know the difference or even care (as in the case of Jackson Bostwick being replaced as Captain Marvel by John Davey shortly into



the second season of *Shazam!*). To this day, Pang herself still doesn't know the reasons why she wasn't asked to return for *Isis*' second season.

"Shortly after filming the first season, I flew back to New York," she said. "When time came around to get ready to do the second season, I hadn't heard from anybody so I called my agent, who also didn't know what was going on, but said he would look into it. It took him several days to get any answers, but when he finally called back he said that they weren't going to use me for the second season and that no one really gave him any reasons why. Maybe he got the standard 'going in a different direction' answer. I had been very happy on *Isis* and the show had gotten very good ratings. I don't really know what happened."

Pang returned to television

**Isis In A Crisis**  
Joanna Pang's character Cindy Lee receives help from Captain Marvel and Isis, on this page from *Shazam!* #25

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