

ROY THOMAS' BATAILOUS  
COMICS FANZINE

# Alter Ego™

## DARK NIGHTS & STEEL

IN THE GOLDEN & SILVER AGES



\$6.95  
In the USA

No. 59  
June  
2006



**SUYDAM • ADAMS • MOLDOFF**  
**SIEGEL • PLASTINO**  
**MANNING • MATERA**

*& MORE!!!*

PLUS:



*Suydam*

Batman TM. & ©2006 DC Comics

Editor  
Roy Thomas

Associate Editors  
Bill Schelly  
Jim Amash

Design & Layout  
Christopher Day

Consulting Editor  
John Morrow

FCA Editor  
P.C. Hamerlinck

Comic Crypt Editor  
Michael T. Gilbert

Editors Emeritus  
Jerry Bails (founder)  
Ronn Foss, Biljo White,  
Mike Friedrich

Production Assistant  
Eric Nolen-Weathington

Cover Painting  
Arthur Suydam

And Special Thanks to:

Neal Adams	Richard Martines
Heidi Amash	Fran Matera
Michael Ambrose	Sheldon Moldoff
Bill Bailey	Frank Motler
Tim Barnes	Brian K. Morris
Dennis Beaulieu	Karl Nelson
Alberto Becattini	Jerry Ordway
John Benson	Jake Oster
Dominic Bongo	Joe Petrilak
Jerry K. Boyd	Rubén Procopio
Geoff Brenneman	Ken Quattro
Bob Brodsky	Gene Reed
Bob Cherry	Ramon Schenk
Bob Cosgrove	Flo Steinberg
Ray A. Cuthbert	Bhob Stewart
Shel Dorf	Arthur Suydam
Justin Fairfax	Marc Swayze
Michael Feldman	Dann Thomas
Rex Ferrell	Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.
Shane Foley	Dr. Michael J.
Ramona Fradon	Vassallo
Janet Gilbert	Hames Ware
Arnie Grieves	Henry Wessel
Jennifer Hamerlinck	Ted White
Jonathan Ingersoll	Robert Wiener
Jeff Jastras	Ike Wilson
Jim Kealy	Renee Witterstaetter
David Anthony Kraft	Eddy Zeno
Richard Kyle	

# Alter Ego™



## Contents

Writer/Editorial: Dark Nights & Steel ..... 2

Arthur Suydam: "Heroes Are What We Aspire To Be" ..... 3  
Interview with the artist of *Cholly and Flytrap* and *Marvel Zombies* covers, by Renee Witterstaetter.

"Maybe I Was Just Loyal" ..... 14  
1950s/60s *Batman* artist Shelly Moldoff tells Shel Dorf about Bob Kane & other phenomena.

"My Attitude Was, They're Not Bosses, They're Editors" ..... 25  
Golden/Silver Age *Superman* artist Al Plastino talks to Jim Kealy & Eddy Zeno about his long and illustrious career.

Jerry Siegel's European Comics! ..... 36  
When Superman's co-creator fought for truth, justice, and the *European* way—by Alberto Becattini.

"If You Can't Improve Something 200%, Then Go With The Thing That You Have" ..... 40  
Modern legend Neal Adams on the late 1960s at DC Comics.

"It Only Took 40 Years... To Be The Steve Roper Artist!" ..... 48  
Fran Matera tells Jim Amash about *Quality*—and not just the comics company.

Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt: Russ Manning – Part 2 ..... 61  
Michael T. Gilbert and Ray Cuthbert continue their look at the *Tarzan/Magnus* artist.

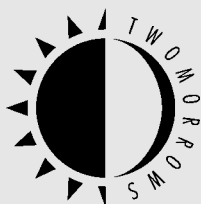
The Forgotten '50s - Part II ..... 67  
Bill Schelly showcases the 1966 EC panel with Ted White, Bhob Stewart, & Archie Goodwin.

re: [correspondence, comments, & corrections] ..... 72

FCA (Fawcett Collectors of America) #118 ..... 79  
P.C. Hamerlinck presents artists Rubén Procopio & Marc Swayze, plus more!

**About Our Cover:** *This panoramic Batman painting by Arthur Suydam was far too large to fit onto our cover; there's a whole passel of bats and wolves you'll have to look up the full illustration elsewhere to savor. But when Ye Editor saw just how gorgeous it was—and without that Johnny-come-lately yellow circle around the bat symbol on the hero's chest, to boot!—he couldn't resist asking if it (or most of it, anyway), was available. Arthur, as well as Renee Witterstaetter, said yes... and we wound up with one of A/E's most splendid covers ever!* [Batman TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

**Above:** *A self-portrait of longtime DC and United Feature artist Al Plastino surrounded by several of the characters he's drawn in newspaper comic strips over the years. Of course, he illustrated a "Superman" tale or three in the pages of comic books, as well!* [Superman, Batman, & Robin TM & ©2006 DC Comics; Nancy & Ferd'nand TM & ©2006 United Feature Syndicate; portrait ©2006 Al Plastino.]



*Alter Ego*™ is published monthly, except Jan., April, Sept., and Nov. by TwoMorrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. *Alter Ego* Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. *Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices.* Single issues: \$9 (\$11.00 outside the US). Twelve-issue subscriptions: \$72 US, \$132 Canada, \$144 elsewhere. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. *Alter Ego* is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in Canada.

FIRST PRINTING.

# Dark Nights & Steel

A few months back, while writing an intro for a collection of the astonishing art of Arthur Suydam, I perused scans that Eva Ink's Renee Witterstaetter had sent me of his recent paintings. Naturally, I was knocked out by the illustrations—especially a “wide-screen” image he'd done of Batman. I asked if, by any chance, it could be used as a cover for *Alter Ego*, and I was ecstatic when they said yes.

Arthur (Red) Suydam just makes it in under the wire as a figure of the Silver Age, by the broad definition I've always used for *A/E*—namely, the period from 1956's *Showcase* #4 through the mid-1970s. I can understand why many folks count 1970 or thereabouts as the cutoff date, but since I left my position as Marvel's editor-in-chief in late 1974, with mags under my aegis coming out through much of '75, I've always stretched those parameters a bit, at least for the purposes of this magazine. And Arthur's first published comic book story was done for DC editor Joe Orlando and *House of Secrets* in 1974. (He and Renee go beyond that point in their freewheeling discussion, but that's only to be expected—and in any event, much of what Arthur has to say deals with his early days and influences.)

With Arthur's lush, moody painting and interview as the hub, I decided to center an issue around Batman and Superman, even though the Man of Steel was headlined only three issues ago. For one thing, we needed to complete Jim Amash's fascinating interview with Neal Adams on his late-1960s DC work, which began in #56. Also, Alberto Becattini had sent us an article on Siegel's 1960s work on “The Spider,” a European adventure strip little known in this country. We also had on hand Eddy Zeno and Jim Kealy's talk with Golden/Silver Age

“Superman” artist Al Plastino, which definitely deserved an airing herein... the more so since the artist also drew the *Batman* comic strip for some time.

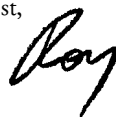
As for Batman: well, we had a 1994 Shel Dorf interview with longtime Bob Kane ghost Sheldon Moldoff which we'd been wanting to run for a long while... along with a number of his never-seen commissioned illos.

All that, plus a welcome interview with fellow Golden Ager Fran Matera, not to mention the completion of Michael T. Gilbert's coverage of Russ Manning and of Bill Schelly's presentation of a 1966 EC panel, and of course *FCA* and a delayed letters section, pretty much filled this issue to the brim. So much so, in fact, that Dwight Decker's announced article on “Superman vs. the Nazis” and a piece by Murray Bishoff on the 1975 “Superman” settlement had to be delayed till a near-future issue. Sometimes it's ridiculously easy to figure out what to include in a given issue—and ludicrously *difficult* to squeeze it all in.

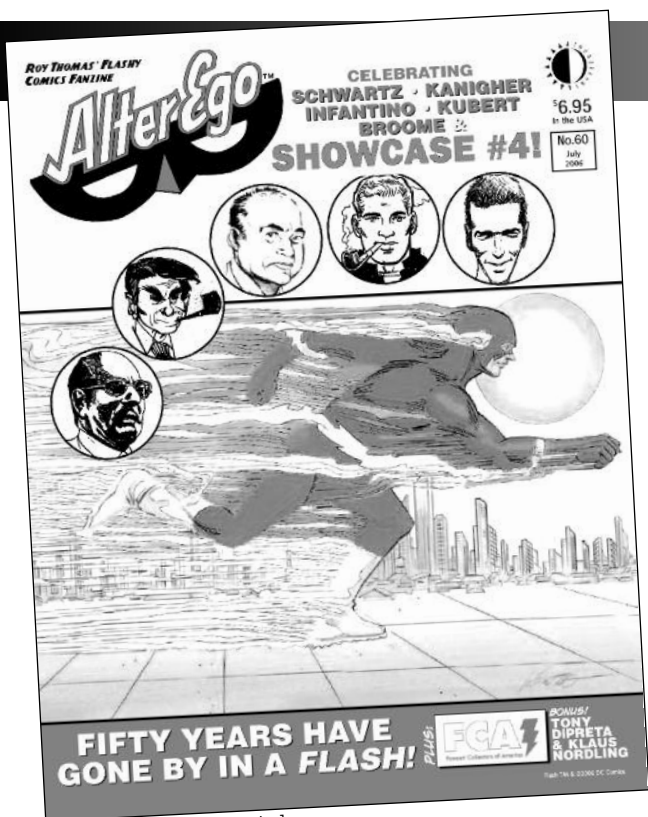
This was one of those times.

So what else is new?

Bestest,



P.S.: And a big if belated Happy Birthday to George Tuska, who turned 90 on April 26! You're the greatest, George!



[Flash TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

## COMING IN JULY

# #60

# FIFTY YEARS HAVE GONE BY IN A FLASH!

## Celebrating A Half Century Since SHOWCASE #4!

- Never-before-published, full-color *Flash* cover by CARMINE INFANTINO!
- Rare interviews with and articles on the greats who created *Showcase* #4 in 1956—the comic book that launched the Silver Age! JULIUS SCHWARTZ—ROBERT KANIGHER—CARMINE INFANTINO—JOE KUBERT—& JOHN BROOME!
- Spectacular art from an unpublished 1948 *Flash* story, penciled by INFANTINO!
- Golden Age (& *Joe Palooka*) artist TONY DIPRETA, interviewed by JIM AMASH! Rare work from Timely/Marvel 1950s horror comics, et al.!
- 1966 Golden Age panel—the only comic-con appearance ever by *Lady Luck* artist KLAUS NORDLING! A BILL SCHELLY Comic Fandom Archive special!
- MICHAEL T. GILBERT on “Twice-Told Tales” by—MICHAEL T. GILBERT!
- *FCA* with MARC SWAYZE & ALEX ROSS—& MORE!!

Edited by ROY THOMAS

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!** Twelve Issues in the US: \$72 Standard, \$108 First Class (Canada: \$132, Elsewhere: \$144 Surface, \$192 Airmail).

NOTE: IF YOU PREFER A SIX-ISSUE SUB, JUST CUT THE PRICE IN HALF!



## TwoMorrows. Bringing New Life To Comics Fandom.

TwoMorrows • 10407 Bedfordtown Drive • Raleigh, NC 27614 USA • 919-449-0344 • FAX: 919-449-0327 • E-mail: twomorrow@aol.com • www.twomorrows.com



# Arthur Suydam: “Heroes Are What We Aspire To Be”

An Interview With The Artist of *Cholly And Flytrap* And *Marvel Zombies* Covers

Conducted & Transcribed by Renee Witterstaetter

**A**bout Arthur Suydam: Marvel *Zombies* cover artist Arthur Suydam burst onto the scene with his creative innovation of infusing the art of sequential art with classical painting. His extraordinary work helped revolutionize the industry and began the comic art renaissance of the 1980s, opening doors for mainstream writers and artists to create literature for a more mature readership.

Recently honored with the coveted Spectrum magazine Gold Award for Excellence in Illustration, Suydam's immense body of written and illustrative work comprises an aesthetic that is uniquely distinguishable. Recent releases include Arthur Suydam: The Art of the Barbarian; Skin Deep; The Alien Encounters Poster Book; Visions: The Art of Arthur Suydam; The Fantastic Art of Arthur Suydam; Mudwogs, and The Adventures of Cholly and Flytrap, published worldwide and currently in pre-production for film. Suydam has contributed text and artwork to numerous comics publications, including Batman, Conan, Tarzan, Predator, Aliens, Death Dealer, and National Lampoon, to name only a few, as well as new work coming out from Image, Last Gasp, Vanguard Productions, and Eva Ink.

In fact, Arthur is on the comics scene in a big way this year, having in 2005 alone received the “Artist Guest of Honor” Award from Dragon Con in Atlanta, GA, and Lifetime Achievement Awards from the University of Maryland and the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain. He has also just been inducted into the august Society of Illustrators in New York City.

You may have also seen his new super-hero work from DC Comics and Marvel Comics over the last year—mostly recently his Marvel *Zombie* covers that have been named in the “Wizard Magazine Top Covers of the Month.” Issue after issue of this over-the-top-selling comic has been going back to press.

All are fitting tributes to this writer/creator/artist, whose over-riding passion has been creating stories, characters, and memorable moments in a wide range of fiction via either his words, his art, or, sublimely, both.

In April 2006, I was able to sit down with Arthur for a candid interview about his artistic beginnings as a child and his start in comics at DC and then Heavy Metal, as well as catch up on what the creator is doing currently. —Renee W.



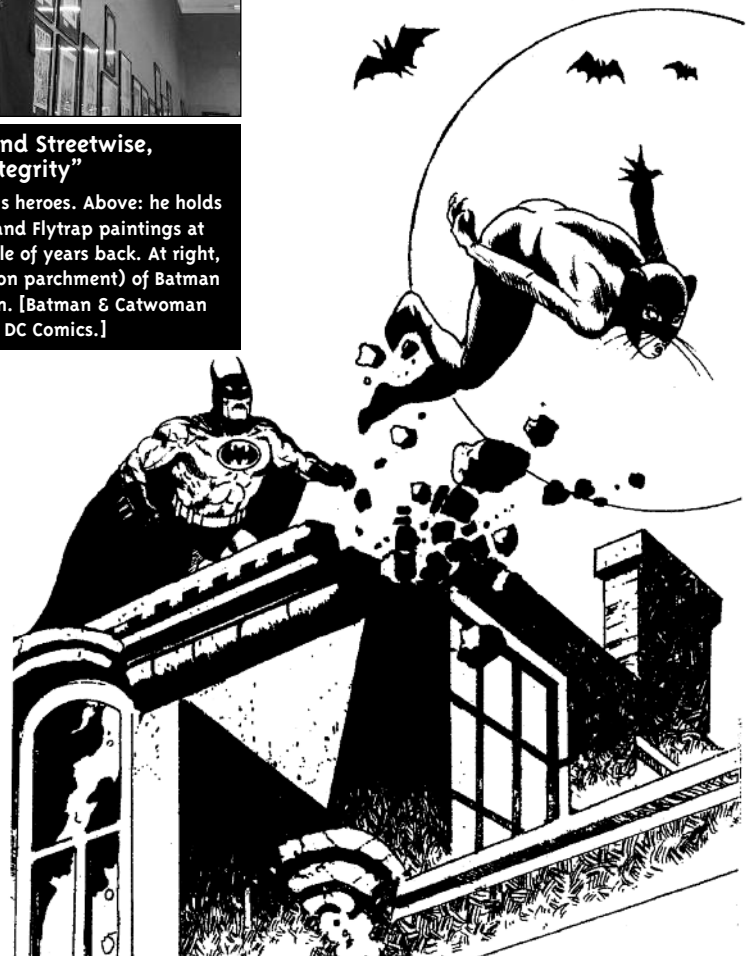
## “Two-Fisted and Streetwise, With Integrity”

That's how Arthur likes his heroes. Above: he holds aloft one of his Cholly and Flytrap paintings at a gallery in Spain a couple of years back. At right, a drawing (pen and ink on parchment) of Batman pursuing The Catwoman. [Batman & Catwoman TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

## “Heroes Are Pure Expressions Of Masculinity”

**RENEE WITTERSTAETTER:** As a young boy growing up, what do you remember about your first encounters with art and heroic fantasy?

**ARTHUR SUYDAM:** When I was in the hospital [as a child], my parents brought me comics—*G.I. Combat* with dinosaurs. Later, I found magazines and art books with classical etchings and the works of the Italian and Dutch Renaissance artists, Michelangelo, Bouguereau, and many other artists from that period.



**RW:** As an artist, what in literature makes the hero's journey so compelling to you?

**SUYDAM:** I believe that, as proud men, heroes are what we aspire to be. It's what all that Bible-thumping and religion is about, only the media communicates more effectively. For a boy, these heroic tales define codes we, as developing children, aspire to and define not only the way we see ourselves, but the way the world sees us, as well. Heroes are pure expressions of masculinity, still relevant today, and appealing to both sexes. For me, those early paintings and etchings helped define gender roles and are universal.

Even *King Kong* is heroic fantasy. King Kong was the hero, a tragic hero, very Shakespearean. What made him tragic was his inevitable demise. Who didn't root for the monkey at the end of that film?

**RW:** What do you see as the universal theme in heroic fantasy?

**SUYDAM:** The Stranger. An unexpected individual rising to a challenge where others fail, at a risk of losing it all, but coming away a more evolved individual in the end.

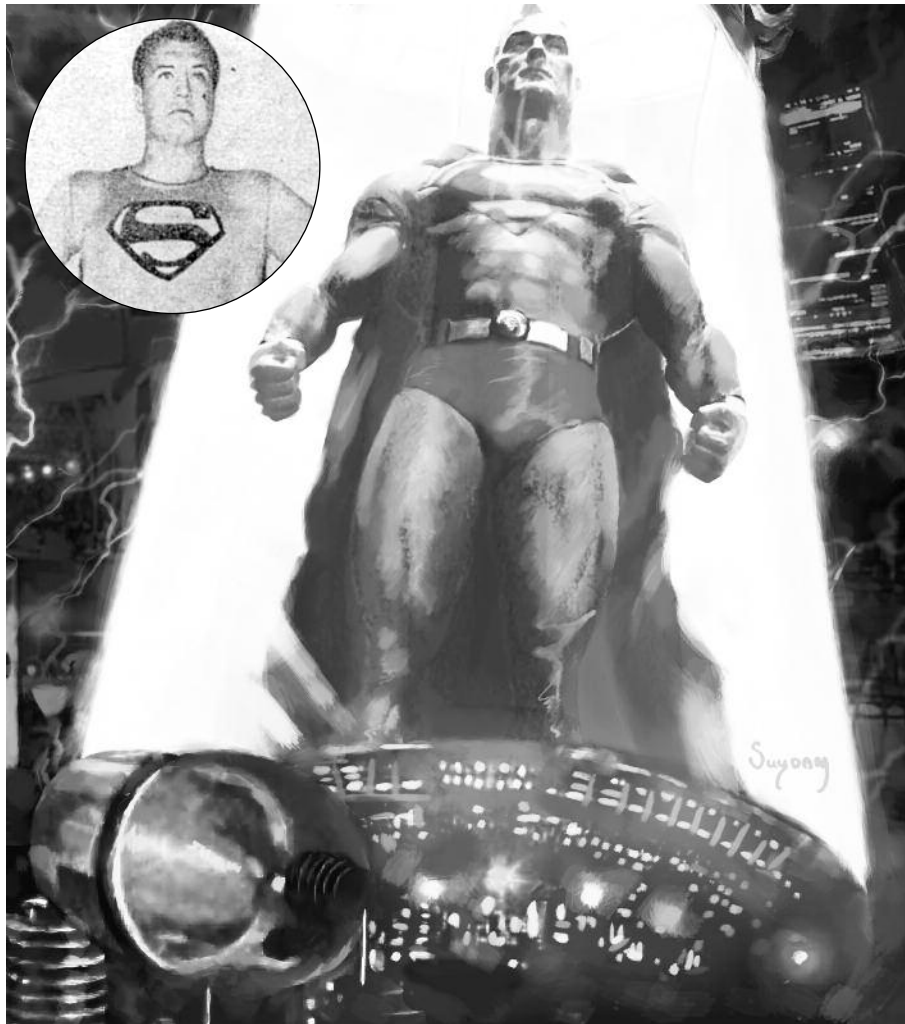
**RW:** What in popular culture helped you to define your own personal take on heroic fantasy and your art?

**SUYDAM:** Survivors of war, sports figures, mainly real people—historical figures who effectuated change in their time and made a difference. DaVinci, Teddy Roosevelt, Einstein, Martin Luther, Madame Curie, the list is endless. DaVinci was the universal man, the eternal student-teacher. He took it upon himself to learn absolutely everything he possibly could about the world. He was a sculptor, a draftsman, a painter, an inventor, a scientist, and a skilled musician—but most of all, a keen observer of life.

**RW:** That sounds so familiar.

**SUYDAM:** Who, me? [laughs]

**RW:** What about modern media heroes, in film or otherwise? Who influenced your own personal idea of the hero in your own artistic growth?



### "That Guy Was Real"

Arthur says that to him at age five, George Reeves as Superman (see insert) was "real." The artist brought that TV icon to life in his own way, in this 2005 painting done in oil and mixed media, which he calls his homage to popular illustrator Alex Ross. To see it in color, pick up a copy of the recent volume *The Fantastic Art of Arthur Suydam*, published by Vanguard Press. [Superman TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

hospital for a year was utter hell—the thing I looked forward to was *Superman*, and getting a half decent reception on a little black-&-white TV. I could see little pieces... the reception was sometimes so bad. I was five. I thought he was real at the time. I was absolutely convinced and nobody could tell me differently. Like Santa Claus—that guy was real.

### "I Was Dying, Basically, And I Didn't Realize It"

**RW:** Looking back now, did anything about that time help to shape your future?

**SUYDAM:** I don't know. Maybe. Those are the learning years, both physically and psychologically. You start deciding what you want to do with your life. What excites you. What inspires you. How exciting it was to watch some of those films and TV shows and see some of the classical pictures in art books, and read Mark Twain—they are all about heroes. I wanted to create that excitement not only for myself, but for other folks as well. I wanted to be part of that excitement. I think that's what it's all about.

I started drawing at about the age of four. I started writing at six. I started writing when I could walk again and I was able to go away to camp. I started writing songs.

**SUYDAM:** Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Bogart, in just about any movie. Two-fisted and streetwise with integrity. But a hero has to be fallible. Otherwise it's not viable. People relate to what feels "real" to them in storytelling. Parallels are what it's all about. The possibility of failure makes it exciting. Take Superman. If Superman has a flaw, it is that he is not fallible *enough*. That makes him not real.

Nobody knows this, really, but when I was five years old, I was burned pretty badly. They didn't think I was going to make it. I didn't even think about this until now... but at that time, the single thing I had to look forward to was watching *Superman* on TV in the playroom. *George Reeves*. I was wrapped up like a mummy. I couldn't walk. The only thing sticking out of the bandages was my face, really. But once a week—being in that

# “Maybe I Was Just Loyal”

Longtime “Batman” Artist SHELDON MOLDOFF Talks About Bob Kane  
And Other Phenomena

Interview Conducted by Shel Dorf

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**A/E** EDITOR’S NOTE: *The following interview was conducted in 1994 on behalf of David Anthony Kraft’s Comics Interview magazine, but has never before been published. Our thanks to Shel for making it available to us. Because the interview with Shelly Moldoff published in Alter Ego, Vol. 3, #4, is still available from TwoMorrows, the following has been edited so as to repeat relatively little material which was covered in the earlier-printed piece. In addition, due to limitations of space, some material concerning animation could not be included. The audio tape begins with Shelly relating an interesting anecdote, so we’ve left it that way:*

## “Did I Take The Wrong Path In The Crossroads Of Life?”

**SHELDON MOLDOFF:** We were talking briefly about Milton Caniff and Steve Canyon and it reminds me of when a woman at the Daily News [Syndicate] was looking for somebody to replace Caniff on *Terry and the Pirates*. Somebody told me about it, so I did four or five dailies of *Terry* and submitted it to her. She called back in about a week, saying she liked it and to please come in.

So I was all excited and went in. And she gave me a load of material and says she wants me to do six weeks: write a story, do six weeks, “pencil head”—that means pencil all of it and ink in half of it and then bring it in. Then I said, “Well, what do you pay for that?” She says, “We’ll pay you \$60 a week for that.” When I got home, I started to think about \$60. I was making, I think, \$150 a week in the comic books. And I said, “*Terry and the Pirates*—that should bring in much more money.”

I called her up and I told her, “Well, I’ll do it for the \$60, but what will it pay if I get the job?” She says, “Well, why don’t you just do this first?” I said, “Well, I have to find out, because you need an assistant, you need a writer. I want to know what the budget is for it. Can you tell me that?” She says, “You know, I have someone I really think I’m going to give it to. Why don’t you just send everything back?” [Shel Dorf groans.]



### In the Moldoff Mode

Several years ago, for a Yuletide card sent by himself and his charming late wife Shirley, Shelly Moldoff caricatured himself and a number of the characters he had drawn over the years, most of which are mentioned in this interview. Shown in the central portrait, of course, are sketches of Hawkman, Batman, Catwoman, and The Penguin. The rest are (clockwise from top left): Green Lantern, Black Terror, Captain Midnight, Dr. Death (of Fawcett’s *This Magazine Is Haunted*), Hawkman, Robin, Courageous Cat & Minute Mouse (with a froggy nemesis), Kid Eternity and his heavenly Keeper, Batman, The Joker, and The Flash. Sheesh! And he didn’t even include any of the Superman family! Who *didn’t* Shelly draw? With special thanks to Craig Delich. [Batman, Robin, Catwoman, Penguin, Joker, Hawkman, Green Lantern, Flash, Kid Eternity & Mr. Keeper TM & ©2006 DC Comics; Black Terror, Captain Midnight, Dr. Death, Courageous Cat & Minute Mouse TM & ©2006 the respective TM & copyright holders.]

You know, all my life—and that’s gotta be 35, 40 years ago, at least—I’ve wondered, did I make a mistake? Did I take the wrong path in the crossroads of life? And I still have those panels somewhere.



**Terry And the Low-Rates**

You'll understand the above heading when you read Shelly's first anecdote in the interview. Circa 1946, he penciled and inked these two sample dailies as a tryout for the great newspaper adventure strip *Terry and the Pirates*. He says they were "submitted to Mercy Scot, Daily News [Syndicate] editor when [Milton] Caniff was going to quit" to begin a new strip, *Steve Canyon*. "They chose George Wunder," he adds; Wunder drew the strip until it ceased publication in 1973. Sorry we've lost a tiny bit from the photocopy of the final panel of the first strip. [Art ©2006 Sheldon Moldoff; *Terry and the Pirates* TM & ©2006 Daily News Syndicate or successors in interest.]

SD: Never heard that story before. Thank you for sharing that.

[At this point Shel shuts off the tape and restarts it, with a more formal opening.]

**"Our Lives Were Tied In With Batman"**

SD: This is Sheldon Dorf, talking to Shelly Moldoff. It's March 26, 1994; we're at the Motor City Comics Convention in Novi, Michigan. Shelly, it's good to finally sit you down and talk with you a little bit. Your career started in the very early days of comics. But first I want to find out where you were born.

MOLDOFF: Well, I was born in Manhattan, New York City, and moved to the Bronx at an early age and spent all my years in the Bronx until I went into service.

SD: This is World War II?

MOLDOFF: World War II, yeah. You didn't think it was World War I, did you?

SD: No, I thought it might have been the Civil War. [laughs]

MOLDOFF: You know, the comics took a lot out of me, but I hope it didn't take *that* much out of me. Now that's where I lived until, as I said, I came out of the service.

SD: Let's go back to the Bronx in the early '40s. What was your art education?

MOLDOFF: Well, I have no real art education, but I loved to draw since I can remember. [NOTE: At this point Shelly talks about meeting pro artist Bernard Baily, who later drew "The Spectre" and "Hour-Man," at the age of 12... about being staff artist on his high school paper in the late 1930s... and about meeting famous sports cartoonist Willard Mullins. All of the above was detailed in A/E V3#4.]

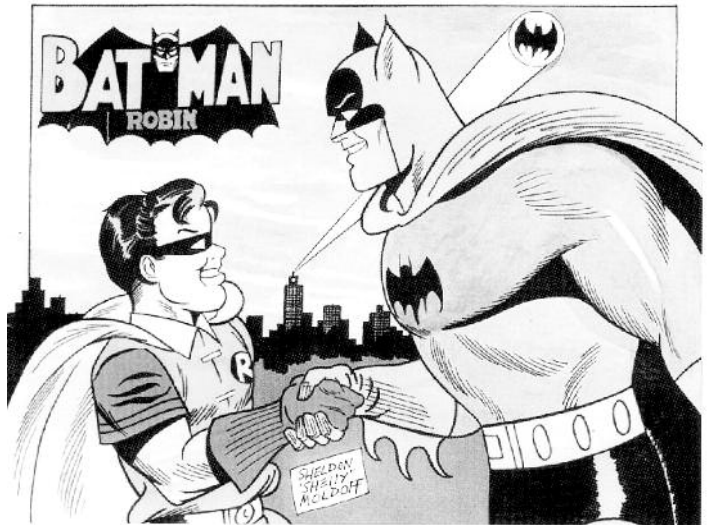
My first [pro] work in comic books was doing filler pages for Vincent Sullivan, who was the editor at National Periodicals [now DC Comics]. I had met Ellsworth and Sullivan maybe a year or two earlier, as I tried to peddle my work at different places. They had their own little outfit, as did Iger and Eisner. Will Eisner—I met him, too. I would just make the rounds until one day I cracked it and Vince said, "I'm gonna use you on some filler pages." Those were oddity pages that could be about animals, it could be about sports, it could be the movies. You'd try to clip things out of newspapers that were interesting or humorous and fill a page with a half dozen or so little facts. [NOTE: Again as detailed in A/E V3#4, one of Shelly's first sales was a sports filler on an inside cover of the first issue of a new comic book that would be titled... Action Comics.]

And then the great World's Fair in New York came along, and Vincent called me in and said, "Shelly, I want



**"Peekin At Pictures"**

This, Shelly writes, is "a typical 'filler' page that I sold to editor Vincent Sullivan & DC Comics in 1940s." It provided art experience (and "practice, practice, practice") which served him in good stead later. [©2006 DC Comics.]



### Robin Dies At Dawn—And Lives By Night

(Left:) One of the most celebrated tales Moldoff ever penciled was “Robin Dies at Dawn!”—the cover story of *Batman* #156 (June 1963). Bill Schelly wrote a whole article about it for *A/E* V2#5, which was reprinted in *Alter Ego: The Comic Book Artist Collection*—but alas, both are out of print. Here’s a key page (inked by Charles Paris), repro’d from a photocopy of the original art as autographed by Shelly some years back. Script by Bill Finger, who else? [©2006 DC Comics.]

(Above:) Shelly drew this pic for the cover of the program book for Joe Petrilak’s magnificent All Time Classic New York Comic Book Convention, held on June 9-11, 2000—only, unfortunately, this “NY” con took place in White Plains, NY, and not enough people made the trek from Manhattan to let it turn a profit. But it had one of the greatest Golden Age guest lists of any comicon ever, and we have enough untranscribed writer-artist-and-editor panels from it to fill a whole issue of *A/E* one of these days—if we could only locate Joe P.! [Batman & Robin TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

you to do about three pages on the World’s Fair.” I went out to the World’s Fair and got as much information as I could on how much concrete and how much steel and different oddities about the building and some of the exhibits, and I did half a dozen or more pages which were used in the book. Vincent Sullivan was very nice to me. In fact, last year in San Diego, he was a Guest of Honor, and I was there, too. We met each other again after close to fifty years. [NOTE: *The 1939 and 1940 issues of World’s Fair Comics were reprinted in 2004 in the hardcover DC Comics Rarities Archives, Vol. 1.*]

SD: *Isn’t that remarkable? I was in the audience that day and there was an electric atmosphere in that room. The whole living history of the comics was there.*

MOLDOFF: At that panel, I met Dick Sprang. That was the first time the two of us had ever met, though both our lives were tied in with “Batman,” very much so. I think, between the two of us, we have probably done more “Batman” pages than anybody. He worked directly for DC, but he moved early in his career to Arizona, because they had a lot of confidence in him. They knew that, when they sent him a script, it was going to come back beautifully done. I worked for Bob Kane as a ghost from ’53 to ’67. DC didn’t know that I was involved; that was the handshake agreement I had with Bob: “You do the work and don’t say anything, Shelly, and you’ve got steady work.”

SD: *Did he pay well?*

MOLDOFF: No, he didn’t pay great. But it was steady work, it was security. I knew that we had to do a minimum of 350 to 360 pages a year. Also, I was doing other work at the same time for [editors] Jack Schiff and Murray Boltinoff at DC. They didn’t know I was working

on “Batman” for Bob. I did *Mr. District Attorney*, *Blackhawk*—I inked in a lot of Curt Swan “Superman,” some covers. I did “The Legion of Super-Heroes” for Mort Weisinger. So I was busy. Between the two, I never had a dull year, which is the compensation I got for being Bob’s ghost, for keeping myself anonymous.

### “[Alex] Raymond Influenced Me Greatly In My Work, Especially In ‘Hawkman’”

SD: *Let’s pick up the time between 1939 and 1953. You made some waves as the “Hawkman” artist. Tell me a little bit about how you got the job doing “Hawkman.”*

MOLDOFF: Okay. When I did the filler pages, someone had already introduced me to Bob Kane, and I think I was his first assistant. I started doing lettering, backgrounds, the logos, and helping him. I knew his family very well, his father and mother and sister. They thought Bob was the greatest and that “Batman,” that he had just created, was going to be a sensation. They stimulated him, they really backed him. A lot of people have said he has to have had a great ego, and he does, no question about it. But I think that pushed him and the creativity of the early “Batman,” because it had something that none of the other strips had. There was a tremendous sense of mystery and shadow in his work. Chester Gould [*Dick Tracy* writer/artist/creator] wasn’t the best artist in the world, and neither was Kane, but they did impart a flavor and a feeling.

SD: *A sense of drama.*

MOLDOFF: A sense of drama, that’s it. You nailed it on the head. And

# “My Attitude Was, They’re Not Bosses, They’re Editors”

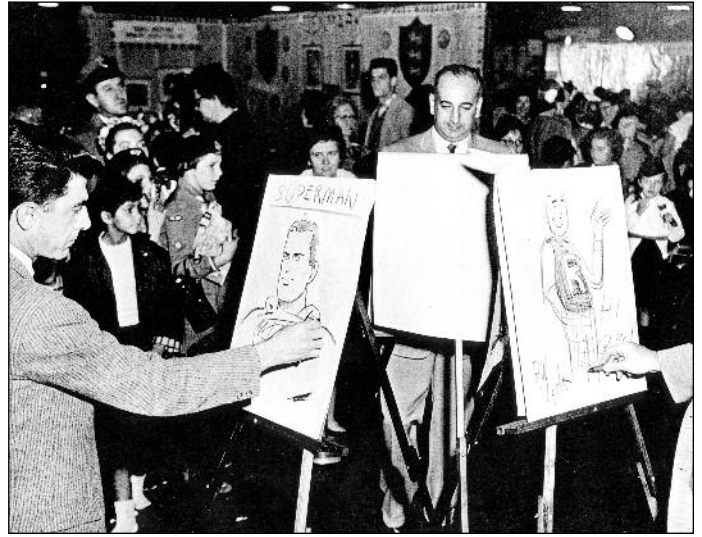
Golden/Silver Age “Superman” Artist AL PLASTINO On His Long And Illustrious Career

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Kealy & Eddy Zeno

**B**orn in 1921, former “Superman” artist Al Plastino, like so many of his generation, served his country during World War II. Considered more valuable to the cause by remaining a civilian, he worked in the Pentagon’s art department. Because it had air-conditioning, a great luxury at the time, Plastino volunteered for extra duty so he could spend both days and nights there to avoid the sweltering summers of the nation’s capital. He still has some of the war posters he did to help the war effort.

For decades an employee of United Feature Syndicate, Al stepped in during emergencies, copying the styles of featured artists on several long-running newspaper strips. He did this while simultaneously working elsewhere. Other jobs included serving commercial art accounts and illustrating various features, first for the Chesler Studio, then for Funnies, Inc., and later for National Periodical Publications (now DC Comics). Plastino remembers being hired by DC sometime after Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel departed in 1947. His first verified “Superman” work, according to the Grand Comics Database, appeared in the story “Superman, Stunt Man” (Action Comics #120, May 1948). This coincided with “The Un-Super Superman” in the May-June 1948 issue of World’s Finest (#34), and was immediately followed by “The Oracle from Metropolis” in Superman #53 (July 1948). Al was up and flying. His tenure with the Superman family lasted more than twenty years. Besides the titles listed above, Plastino had assignments on Adventure Comics, Superboy, Superman’s Pal Jimmy Olsen, and Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane (introducing her solo try-out in Showcase #9). He delineated Supergirl, Brainiac, and Bizarro in their first comic book stories, along with “The Legion of Super-Heroes,” before going on to produce beautiful work on the Batman newspaper strip.

And so, while fellow artists Wayne Boring and Curt Swan basked in the public eye, sterling work was being done by Al Plastino, who was, and shall remain, one of the definitive Superman illustrators of all time. His work, like theirs, helped keep the Kid from Krypton



## Plastino And Company

(Above:) Al Plastino draws Superman, while Joe Simon (of Simon & Kirby) draws at center, and Bill Vigoda sketches Archie at a show at the 34th Street Armory in New York City, 1949.

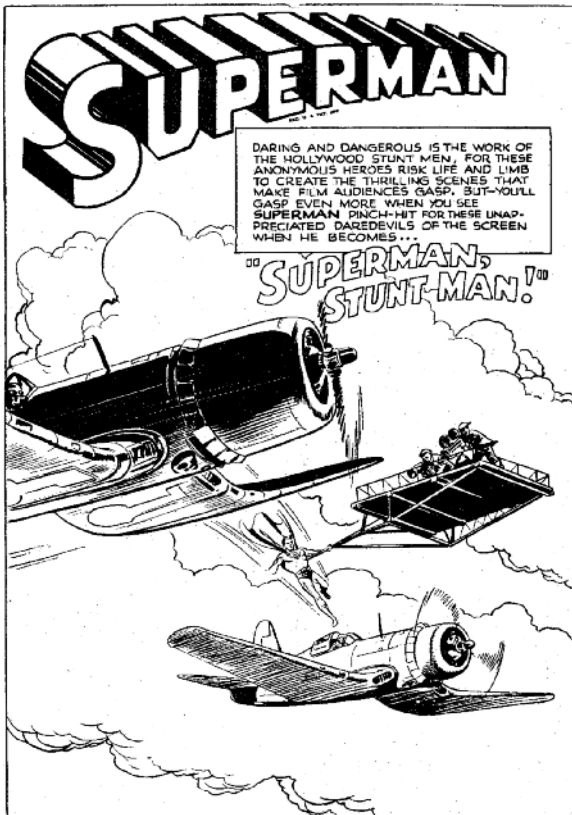
(Below:) While best-known for his work on “Superman” tales, Al has also drawn numerous “Batman” adventures. Here he gives equal time to both in a 1993 drawing. [Superman & Batman TM & ©2006 DC Comics; Archie TM & ©2006 Archie Comics Publications.]

aloft during the dark days of falling comic sales in the 1950s.

Today, the mostly retired Mr. Plastino enjoys being with his wife, four children (“three girls and one boy, all successful”), and five grandchildren.

He is an avid golfer and a lifelong lover of the game. Al recently drew a cartoon of the Man of Steel and Tiger Woods together which fetched \$800 at auction. Contributing drawings to children’s charities and other worthy causes remains a source of fulfillment. Likely the only early “Superman” artist other than Jack Burnley still living, and the only one actively taking commissions, he can be reached at 44 Pinetree Drive, Shirley, NY 11967 by interested parties.

The following interview is the result of combining various phone conversations between Mr. Plastino, Jim Kealy, and myself between mid-2005 and March 2006. Thanks to Mr. Plastino for helping to edit the interview to insure accuracy. — Eddy.



At the Da Vinci school we had still-life setups and classes with nude models. I was so young, but I learned a lot. I also learned about the modern masters, the Renoirs, the Cezannes, who added color directly without the under-painting. Because these guys had worked outside, the teachers would point out how to light up a sky, and so on. When they painted scenery, there'd be more grays in the atmosphere as you drew back.

Once, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I was copying a Renoir ("By the Seashore") for three hours. This guy watched me the entire time. His name was Howard

Christian Chandler, and he didn't know if I was showing off or what. Turns out he was writing a book about New York. It had these tremendous maps showing a bird's-eye view of real estate. He gave me a job painting houses on the maps. He didn't pay me, but I loved it!

**It's a Bird—It's Two Planes—It's Stunt Man!**  
Plastino's first published "Superman" story appeared in *Action Comics* #120 (May 1948). This photocopy of the splash page is taken from the *British Superman Annual 1954-55*. Eddy and Jim wish to thank the Grand Comic Book Database for the info. [©2006 DC Comics.]

**Yeah, But Can Superman Shoot 10 Under Par?**  
This 2005 drawing by Plastino of Superman and golfer Tiger Woods was auctioned off, with proceeds benefiting a charity cancer fund. It was also turned into a poster. [Superman TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]

[A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: Except where otherwise noted, all material accompanying this interview was supplied by Eddy Zeno and/or Jim Kealy... some ultimately by Al Plastino himself.]

### "I Started... At The Metropolitan Museum Of Art"

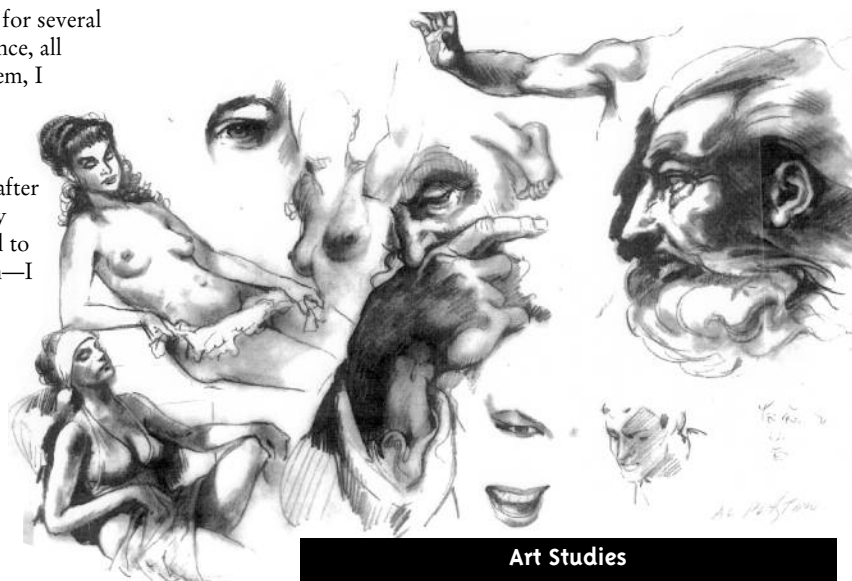
EDDY ZENO: *How'd you get started as an artist?*

AL PLASTINO: How I started was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. My dad took me to the museum a lot; he'd drop me off for several hours and pick me up. People were there from Italy and France, all over the world, copying paintings on commission. Seeing them, I learned how the old masters painted in oil; they'd start with tempera first; white, then sepia. (That's why Rembrandt's paintings have that brownish tint.) The transparent under-painting gave a beautiful glow. Then they'd put down color after color, reds and yellows, just like copying a photograph. They had to wait for each layer to dry, then they put on linseed oil to give it a gloss. Canvas vibrating when you hit it with a brush—I used to cry, these guys could paint so great!

I grew up in the upper Bronx near Pelham Manor. It was all rural in those days—nice houses. For a while, I went to the Leonardo Da Vinci Art School. It wasn't far from home, and the other art schools were all the way in Manhattan. You'd smell the paint and clay; it was gorgeous. Once, I was working on a little sculpture. Next time I went back and couldn't find it so I asked where it was. They said, "Oh, we threw that piece of crap out because we needed the clay." [laughter]

### "Chesler... Was A Strange Guy"

EZ: *When did you begin your comics career?*



**Art Studies**  
A study of faces, hands, and bodies. [©2006 Al Plastino.]

PLASTINO: I worked for Funnies, Inc. [Lloyd Jacquet's comics shop], inking "Sub-Mariner" and "Captain America." That was before the war; I was doing it on the side. I started first with the Harry "A" Chesler studio. Before that, even, I did black-&-white drawings for a magazine called *Youth Today*. It went out to all the high schools and had exactly the same format as *Reader's Digest*. I won three prizes: two firsts and one second place. They'd give you \$50 and put your drawing on the cover. They decided it would be cheaper to have me on staff, so I began doing freelance drawings for this magazine while I was still in high school in the Bronx.



Around the same time, Chesler had an ad looking for black-&-white artists. I answered the ad and started working there. Jack Binder was the art director, and he only paid me \$5 a week at the start, but I was glad to get it. He had me ruling lines. Jack was doing pulp stuff. Soon he had me penciling these futuristic things, and he'd ink them. Then he finally gave me some stuff to ink. Jack showed me how to use a brush to do thick-and-thin lines and feathering; he taught me a lot. I got paid \$45 a week and finally got up to \$60. Chesler himself was a strange guy, but he had a beautiful wife and two boys. He had a house with all sorts of statues, antiques, all different styles of furniture, whatever he liked. Everything was mixed up. He had a Coca Cola machine in his living room and you had to put 5¢ in to get a Coke.



**I'm A Rocketman**

The ever-researching Hames Ware and Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., sent these images of Plastino's work for Harry "A" Chesler, who besides running a comics shop also published comics at various times. Here's a quartet of pics, all ©2006 the respective copyright holders.

(Top row:) The splash pages from Chesler's *Dynamic Comics* #3 (Feb. '42) and #13 (Jan. '45) are strongly believed by Hames to be Plastino's work... but Al himself, when he saw them, could not confirm that he had drawn the latter. (Dynamic Man's costume, incidentally, inspired Roy Thomas in 1969 to give the Squadron Sinister villain Hyperion, and later the Squadron Supreme version, a cape attached only to one shoulder.)

(Bottom row:) The splash page of the "Rocketman" story in *Dynamic Publications' Scoop Comics* #2 (Jan. 1942). Hames says his battered copy of that issue is disappearing: "pieces of it [were] literally flaking off and flying away in the near-to-March windy breezes on my long walk to the photocopy place." But he says he needed to make copies, if the comic were "to be preserved in any manageable form."

Also shown is an enlarged detail from that splash, which is signed "Al Pla." Hames reports that, even a few letters shy of a full name, this story represents "the only signed Plastino [work] at Chesler."

Chesler always had a cigar in his mouth, never lit, while he'd hum in the back of the office. There were about twenty guys there, desk after desk. He wanted to keep everyone happy, so he served his artists juice. Also, we had to come in on Thanksgiving to work for half a day, but we had turkey. He'd hock his coat—anything, to make the payroll. But Chesler made millions selling reprints, everything, during the war. He began buying real estate and it seemed like he owned half of the part of New Jersey next to Dover, where the Joe Kubert school is now.

Other artists there at the time included George Tuska and Rafael Astarita, who were both into lifting weights. They had me lifting but it didn't last long. I was getting veins, so I quit. [laughs] I met Mac Raboy, who suggested that I send some of my black-&-white drawings in

# Jerry Siegel's European Comics!

## When Superman's Co-Creator Fought For Truth, Justice, And The *European* Way

by Alberto Becattini

### Prologue

1966 was not a good year for Jerry Siegel, as the 52-year-old co-creator of Superman lost two important writing accounts. His second and last stint with DC Comics, freelancing scripts for the "Superman" family of characters and other titles, ended after eight years. So did his two-year tenure with Archie Comics, where he had taken part in the ephemeral revival of such Golden Age heroes as "The Shadow" and "The Fly."

For quite a while, his only steady writing job had been, and would continue to be, with Fleetway/IPC, a colossus of British comic publishing. For that company, Siegel conjured up the suspenseful adventures of "The Spider," a black-clad criminal mastermind whose fantastic garb enables him to spin his own web and swing from one building to another.

### King Of Crime—Reformed

The Spider's adventures were serialized in weekly two-page (later 4-page) episodes in the comics magazine *Lion* (later known as *Lion and Champion*) from June 26, 1965, until April 26, 1969. Some of these continuities were later reprinted in *Vulcan* (1975-76). The initial artist of "The Spider" was Reg Bunn, a solid draftsman who had been active in the British comics field since 1949.

Although it was Siegel who basically built up the Spider mythos, it must be underlined that the character was *not* created by him. The creator of The Spider was Ted Cowan, who wrote his stories from the beginning until the January 1, 1966, episode. Siegel, then, came



### Jerry Siegel Always *Did* Like Heroes Whose Names Started With "S"

The Spider, "Our Man of Mystery," leaps into action on the cover of *Lion and Champion* for July 1966. Repro'd from a photocopy of the 11" x 14" original art by Reg Bunn when it was auctioned off as featuring "a character created and scripted for this English comic by Superman creator Jerry Siegel" (left). As Alberto Becattini relates in this article, Siegel wrote—but did not create—this Anglo arachnid. 1974 photo courtesy of Shel Dorf. [©2006 IPC Magazines or its successors in interest.]

aboard the "Spider" bandwagon in late 1965, under the aegis of Fleetway editor Geoff Kemp.

The fact that Siegel was later given a by-line as the writer of "The Spider" (a most uncommon practice in British comics in those days) led most comic readers and historians to believe that he had first conceived the character. Fleetway did nothing to disabuse anyone of this assumption, and probably credited him because of the prestige of having the creator of Superman writing for them.

An inside-front-cover note for the Italian edition of the series (most likely translated from English) informed that "The adventures of this criminal scientist [...] are conceived by an American scripser who has been offered millions of dollars to write screenplays for Hollywood movies. Yet The Spider's creator is too fond of his character and hasn't yielded to this tempting proposition." What seems unlikely is that Siegel turned down such an offer in the movie business, considering that he had basically been trying to make both ends meet ever since he and Joe Shuster had first left DC Comics in 1947.

The Spider undoubtedly had something in common with *The Amazing Spider-Man*, but few people seemed to notice that—in the UK, at least. In fact, apart from those who managed to get Marvel comic

### America's Master Crook Meets A Fearsome Opponent!



The splash page of the first "Spider" story written by Jerry Siegel. Art by Reg Bunn. With thanks to Tim Barnes—who sent us the whole story on CD! Wish we had room to show more... but we'll save it for a future issue. [©2006 IPC Magazines or successors in interest.]

# “If You Can’t Improve Something 200%, Then Go With The Thing That You Have”

Modern Legend NEAL ADAMS On The Late 1960s At DC Comics

Interview Conducted by Jim Amash

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

**A**lter Ego #56 featured a talk with Neal Adams about the late 1960s at DC Comics, in conjunction with Jim’s in-depth interview with longtime production and coloring “guru” Jack Adler. Unfortunately, we didn’t have room to run quite all of the Adams/Amash discussion at that time, so we saved it for this issue. Part I contained most of the conversation about Adler and coloring, but Jim still had a few questions about Neal’s early DC work, which the then-artist of features such as “Deadman” and The Spectre, as well as a lot of fabulous and influential covers, generously answered... —Roy.

## “Forget The Deadlines—We Have To Do Some Covers”

**JA:** When you first started doing covers, Carmine was already cover editor, wasn’t he?

**ADAMS:** No. When I first started doing covers, I was doing “Deadman” and a couple of things. But then, almost immediately, Carmine became what they call “art director”—which wasn’t so much “cover editor,” but if you had to define it, the term “art director” really applied to the covers. So he was art-directing covers.

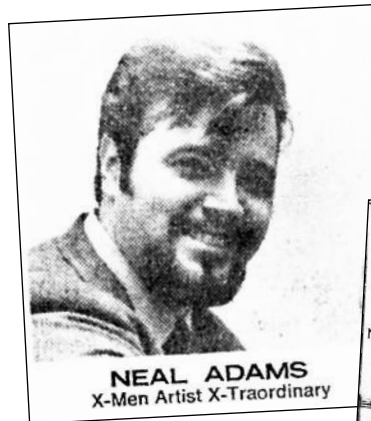
**JA:** I first saw your work on those Action “Superman” covers. The first one I remember seeing was the one where Superman was on the witness stand and a little girl accused him of killing her father. When you were doing those covers initially, whom did you deal with? What was the process like of creating the covers?

**ADAMS:** Well, mostly I was originally doing covers on my own stuff. When Carmine became the art director, he decided I was going to either make suggestions for covers, or he was going to art-direct covers himself and I would go ahead and finish them. And I guess he chose me because I was making a difference up there. People were noticing that my work had some impact that was more dynamic than what you normally saw.

So he felt that, if he was now becoming an art director, he wasn’t going to draw the covers. He needed the dynamics to be in the work that had to be done. He knew that I was interested in doing my own covers on “Deadman” and certain other covers. He needed other covers, so he would call me in and say, “Look, we’ve got to get some covers done for So-and-so and So-and-so.” I would say, “I have some

deadlines.” He would say, “Forget the deadlines—we have to do some covers.” So I’d say, “Okay, fine.” And then we would kick around ideas and he would do some sketches and I would do some sketches.

Sometimes his sketches were sufficient and fine to work off of. If I



### And A Little Child Shall Lead Them... To Neal Adams

Neal Adams’ photo appeared in the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*, since by then he was doing work for Marvel as well as for DC. Interviewer Jim Amash remembers Neal’s cover for *Action Comics* #359 (Feb. 1968). Unlike many comic book artists, Neal was always very effective when drawing children. Thanks to Bob Cherry for the scan. [Photo ©2006 Marvel Characters, Inc.; cover ©2006 DC Comics.]





**Deadman Gets It Off His Chest**  
 Not much doubt that Neal's most memorable DC feature during the 1960s was "Deadman," which he inherited from co-creator Carmine Infantino after the origin story. The entire saga has been reprinted in hardcover form. The cover of *Strange Adventures* #213 (Aug. 1968) is repro'd from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Richard Martines. During that era, Neal also drew the cover above right for the 5th issue of Bob Cosgrove's fanzine *Champion*—with thanks to Dennis Beaulieu. [©2006 DC Comics.]

paper back and forth or whatever.

**JA:** *There's one cover that's sticking in my mind at the moment. It was Action #361 where The Parasite hits Superman. He says, "I gave you two black eyes—now I'm going to bust your nose."* And Superman's coming at the reader, almost in a Kirbyish pose. That cover is striking, if you'll pardon the pun.

**ADAMS:** That's a perfect example of what I'm talking about, of my doing a sketch, of Carmine doing a sketch, my doing a little sketch over his, him doing a little sketching over mine, and then coming to a composition that was neither his nor mine, but was very powerful. And if you look at it and say, "Well, gee, that's a Kirby sketch," you could

had an idea I liked, I would fight for the idea. And if Carmine thought that it was a good enough idea, he had the sensibility and sensitivity to go with my idea. If he felt he had a better idea, and strongly felt it, I could have taken the option and say, "Hey, look—you know, I don't really like the idea, I don't really want to do it. I'll go off and peddle my papers and do something else." I could have done that, but usually I agreed that his concept was more powerful, even though I may not have liked the concept of the composition.

You can tell when something is stronger and gets across an idea more readily, that there's no reason not to go with that. It's my philosophy—that if you can't improve something 200%, then go with the thing that you have. So if I couldn't come up with something that was so much better than Carmine's that I could see it 200% better, then I would say, "Heck, you know, I'm cool with that. Let's try this." So I'd do a little variation on that maybe, but I would say that in the time that I worked with Carmine, something like a quarter of the covers were his layouts directly and the rest of them were either mine or conglomerations of his and mine, or passing the

practically make it a Kirby sketch. There are things that are universal, and Jack seemed to be the man sitting at the hub of that universality. So that probably is why that cover reminds you of Kirby. Look for a dynamic, find Jack Kirby. I said in an interview recently that if you look up the word "dynamic" in the dictionary, it probably says "Jack Kirby."

**JA:** [laughs] *I wouldn't argue a bit. When you drew a cover for a story you did not illustrate, did you read that story first?*

**ADAMS:** I would try to. I would at least try to get the gist of the story before I started drawing, because I did not like doing a cover that didn't relate directly to the story. So there was a lot of casualness applied to that. I would try to go and sneak the story and read it before I was obligated to do a layout.

**JA:** *How often was a cover done before*



**"If You Look Up The Word 'Dynamic' In The Dictionary, It Probably Says 'Jack Kirby'"**  
 Neal feels the cover of *Action Comics* #361 (March 1968) was one of his most Kirbyesque. Thanks to Bob Cherry. [©2006 DC Comics.]

# “It Only Took 40 Years... To Be The *Steve Roper* Artist!”

Artist FRAN MATERA Talks About Quality—And Not Just The Comics Company!

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Amash

**F**ran Matera may be better known as the artist of the comic strip *Steve Roper* and *Mike Nomad*, but he also drew his share of comic books. From “*Doll Man*” to romance, crime, Western, and war comics, from *Treasure Chest* to “*Sunset Carson*” and *The Hulk*, Fran’s unerring draftsmanship has delighted both readers and editors, as he accumulated some interesting experiences. More in the Milton Caniff school than the Raymond/Foster school, Fran’s fun, energetic style lent itself to a variety of features, as you’re about to see—with thanks to Geoff Brenneman for sharing Fran’s contact info with me, resulting in this 2003 interview. One of the true nice guys in cartooning, Fran sells his *Steve Roper* originals on eBay and donates 10% of the proceeds to ACTOR, the organization that benefits comic book people in need of financial assistance [see p. 46 for more information]. A grand gesture from a grand guy! I asked him a question...and we’ll start right out in medias res with his answer.... —Jim.



## “World War II Took Me Away”

**FRAN MATERA:** I was into cartooning by my first year in high school. One day, a salesman representing the Federal Art Schools correspondence course knocked on our door and told my mother that her son had won the “Draw Me” contest. My brother ‘fessed up and admitted that he had drawn the prize-winning entry. He then told our mother that he wasn’t interested in taking the course. That was my clue to yell out, “Hey, mom, can I have that course?” She paid for the course, which I took during my high school years.

I desperately wanted to do a newspaper strip. I had also collected comic books and had my favorites, like the “*Green Lantern*,” Reed Crandall’s “*Blackhawk*,” and others. After school, I’d go to the public library to read the comics, going through all the different newspapers they had. I loved Alex Raymond’s *Flash Gordon* and Alfred Andriola’s *Charlie Chan*, drawn in a Milton Caniff-like style. I wrote a fan letter to Andriola, requesting a *Charlie Chan* original, and that was the beginning of my association with him.

This was 1943, just before I went into military service. In my “thank you” note to Andriola, I enclosed some of my art samples, which he liked. He asked me to come down from



### Matera And Friends

Fran Matera, in an early-1980s photo taken when he was drawing the then-new *Legend of Bruce Lee* comic strip. He’s flanked by a montage of studies (dated 1982 on the sheet) which he did of Lee at the time—and a sketch he generously did for interviewer Jim Amash of *Doll Man*, a super-hero he drew briefly for Quality Comics in the early ‘40s. Unfortunately, we didn’t have any vintage “*Doll Man*” art of Fran’s we could positively identify—but clearly, the ol’ Maestro Matera still has the magic touch! [Bruce Lee art ©2006 Bruce Lee or successors in interest; *Doll Man* TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]



Bridgeport, Connecticut, to New York City, where he was. I brought more samples with me, and he said, "How would you like to try doing some more art samples? There might be an opportunity for you." Andriola sent me to Quality Comics in New York, where I worked for a couple of months.

But World War II took me away. When I came back in 1946, Andriola asked me to come and see him. By this time, he was drawing *Kerry Drake*, from Allen Saunders' scripts. Allen Saunders was looking for someone to draw *Steve Roper*. I went home and looked at some old comic books *Roper* was appearing in. I drew a couple of strips, which I still have, showed them to Andriola, who said, "These are good. How would you like to work for me?" I told him I would.

Andriola never created anything on his own. The stories were thumbnailed on newsprint, cut to the size of the original art, and the figures were drawn as stick figures. I'd take those home to Connecticut and come back with a whole week of penciled *Kerry Drake* strips, dailies and Sundays.

I wanted to ink the strip, and Andriola said, "Okay, you can ink everything but the hands and faces." That was the standard at the time when people employed ghost artists. I did this for a couple of weeks, until I decided to show off. I inked a couple of the character heads, and Andriola said, "Okay, fine." I asked if I could keep doing that, and he said I could. I did that for five weeks for \$75 a week. He had a letterer, whose name I've forgotten, and a background man, too. I did the finished pencils and some of the inks, and then Andriola gave the strips to someone else to polish up.

I stopped doing this because the Associated Press hired me to take over *Dickie Dare*. I went to see Coulton Waugh and his wife, Odin. Waugh was writing and doing a lot of the art, and his wife worked on it for a while, signing it "Odin." Her brother lettered. Gradually, both Coulton and Odin wanted to taper off the doing the strip so they could paint, and I took over. Odin's brother continued to letter it, but he didn't live near me, so I decided to take that over. But I realized I wanted to do something else, because I was only making \$120 a month, even though that was good money in 1947, '48.



**Ghost Of A Chance**  
 In 1946 Fran ghosted the popular *Kerry Drake* newspaper comic for its creator, Alfred Andriola. Supplied by the artist. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

### "There I Was At Quality, Doing 'The Doll Man' And 'The Clock'"

**JIM AMASH:** Let me back up for a moment and ask you about Andriola's comic book work. You remember his "Captain Triumph" for Quality Comics?

**MATERA:** Yes, I do. It was nice work, but I didn't have any part in doing that.

**JA:** Did he create that feature?

**MATERA:** He might have... I don't know. I didn't help him on his comic book work. But Andriola got me into Quality Comics, as I said. There were two guys editing there: John Beardsley and George Brenner. I was still in high school.

**JA:** I see. By the way, when were you born?

**MATERA:** December 9, 1924. I remember meeting a guy who was working for them and he was crying because he had to go into the service. I wish I could remember who he was. But anyway, Quality was losing people left and right to the war, so I was hired on the spot.

**JA:** Was Gill Fox editing when you came up there?

**MATERA:** He may have been, but I think he was on his way to the service, though he did show me around when I first came up to Quality. What I remember is that there was a conflict between Beardsley and George Brenner. They bickered about who was the head honcho. One of them once pushed the other through the door with his shoulder, so it was obvious that they were having problems working together. By the way, Harry Chesler's son Jay was working there, and



**We Dare Ya, Dickie**  
 A *Dickie Dare* daily from the 1947-48 period. Supplied by Fran Matera. [©2006 Associated Press News Features or successors in interest.]



MR. MONSTER HERE, WITH PART TWO OF OUR RUSS MANNING TRIBUTE! LAST ISSUE WE PRESENTED A RARE SELECTION OF SOME OF HIS EXTREMELY IMPRESSIVE FAN ART -- SOME DRAWN FOR SCI-FI FANZINES WHILE RUSS WAS STILL A TEENAGER! THESE EXAMPLES COME TO US COURTESY OF COMIC-ART MAVEN RAY CUTHBERT.

WE'VE GOT MORE MANNING MASTERPIECES THIS ISSUE, DRAWN DECADES BEFORE RUSS MADE AN INDELIBLE MARK IN COMICS ILLUSTRATING *MAGNUS*, *ROBOT FIGHTER*, *BROTHERS OF THE SPEAR*, AND OF COURSE -- *TARZAN*! WE'RE DELIGHTED TO SHARE THESE WITH YOU.

WE'RE ALSO REPRINTING SOME OF RUSS' COMMENTS REGARDING SOME OF HIS FELLOW *TARZAN* ARTISTS. SO SIT BACK, FRIENDS, AND ENJOY THIS RARE LOOK AT SOME OF THE FIRST PUBLISHED WORK OF THE INCREDIBLE ...

**RUSS MANNING!**



THE SHAVER SERIES V AS LITERATURE  
by THOMAS H. CARTER

"Way back in January '44, the prosaic AMAZING STORIES published an alphabet called "Mansong", which was contributed by one Richard Sharpe Shaver. This alphabet was the "key", Mr. Shaver claimed, to the "mother tongue of all languages".

Since then Mr. Shaver has written quite a few stories, gained a tremendous popularity (though not with many scifi fans, certainly), and the circulation of AMAZING has vastly increased. All this is sf fan history.

The fact that a certain amount of basic truth was claimed for the series has caused considerable sensation, and has been discussed, ridiculed, and bandied about generally.

However, the fact that these Shaver-tales are also stories has been generally ignored. Why is it that AMAZING READERS keep devouring Mr. Shaver's yarns so eagerly? True, many new readers were attracted by the "Mystery" angle, but what kept so many coming back for more?

Well, let's look at some of these stories and see. The first thing that would naturally come to mind is the Shaverian mythology, which is really, to my mind, a tremendous concept. I shall only run over it briefly here; if anyone wants to look it up, a complete summary is given in the "Observatory" of the June '47 AMAZING.

Shaver's theory starts with the sun, which, he says, throws out particles, or matter, or something to that effect, which cause people to age and die, and, incidentally, causes them to be evil. When the sun was young, new, it didn't throw off this malignant stuff. Consequently, instead of dying, you kept on growing! The people, living then, were incredibly wise and equally as good; their civilization was a wonderful thing indeed. When you grew too large for earth, you simply went to another, heavier planet; and if you could find it, one with no sun. The other planets throughout the universe were also populated with these "Titans", as Shaver calls them. (According to the Shaver theory as I understand it, the Titans still live on many of these other worlds!) Life for these folks, with their science and all, was one glorious paradise of growth, both physically, and mentally. This is what Mr. Shaver calls the "Elder Race".

Unfortunately, the serpent in the garden turned out to be our sun, which was aging, and throwing off its deadly matter. Even when you weren't so badly infected by this poison as to be evil, your thoughts, for that you were unaware of it were always in error, incorrect. For that reason the Titans of earth had an epic fight. Eventually they realized what was wrong, and migrated to elsewhere.

So much for the Elders. However, before they left, they had built great cities underground in an effort to escape the sun's rays. These cities were really gigantic things, created for Titans who were, some of them, over forty feet tall. After the mass migration, the cities remained as they had been, a few of them peopled by solitary Titans, already wicked, who did not go. These cities are situated in caverns all over the earth, many of them under surface metropolises, such as New York.



From Fantasy Advertiser, Jan. 1948.

ALL TARZAN AND BURROUGHS ART ©2006 BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, INC. OTHER MANNING ART ©2006 BY THE RUSS MANNING ESTATE

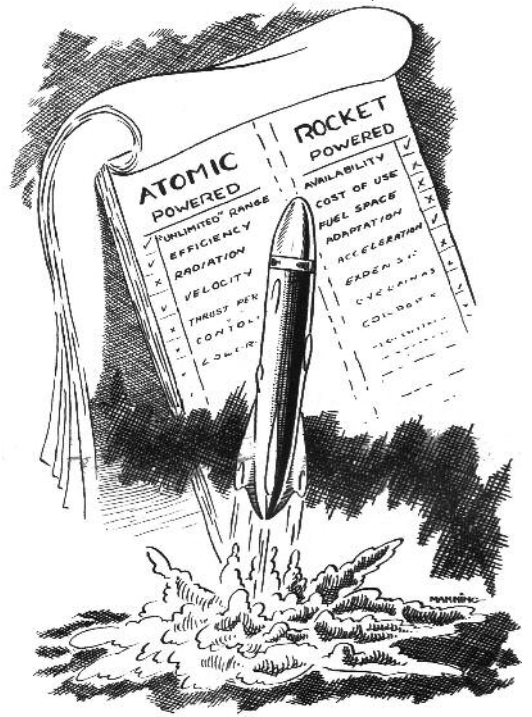
# Russ Manning – Pt. 2

By Michael T Gilbert

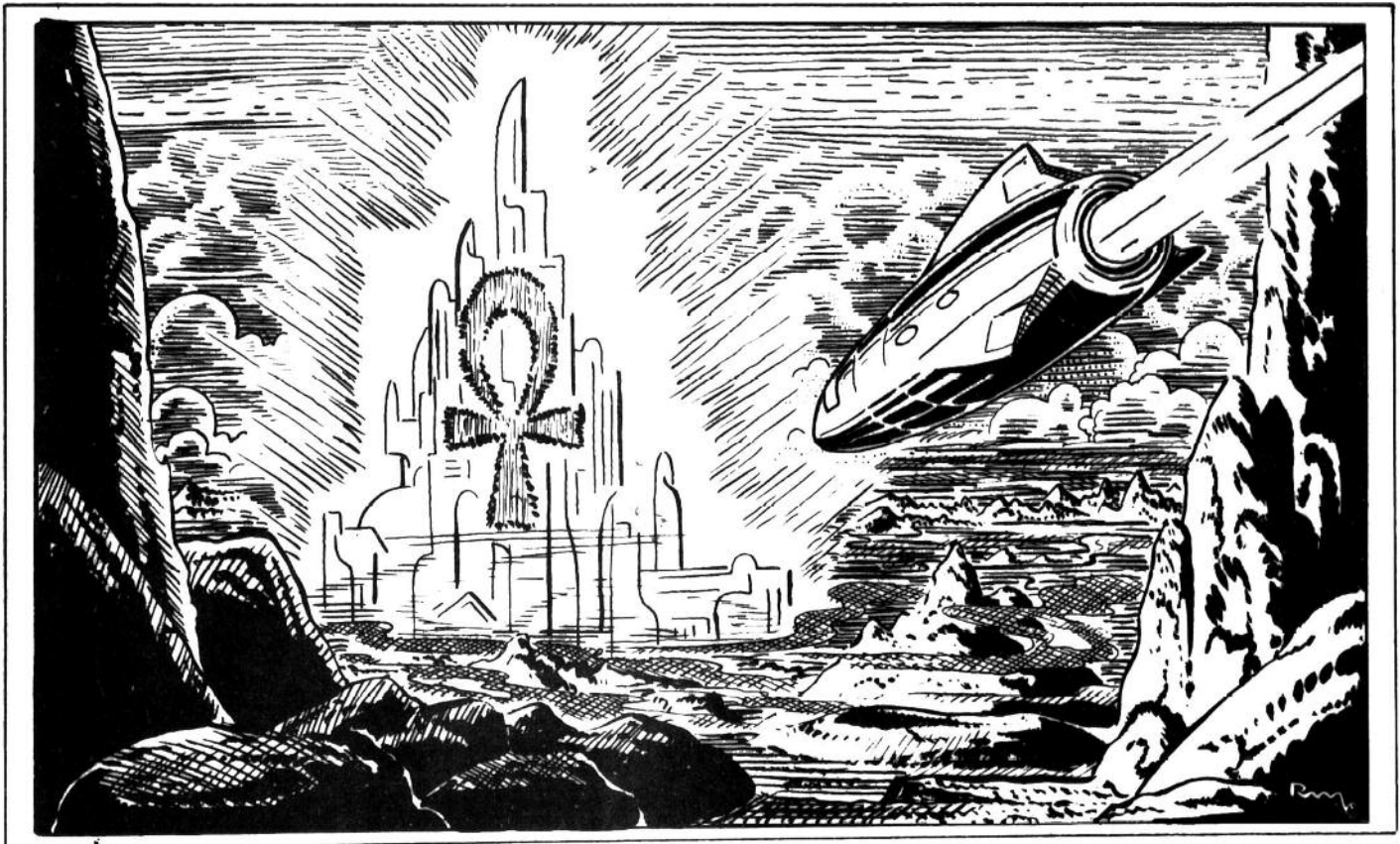
It's always fun to compare an artist's early work, brimming with raw potential, with his later art. Amidst the awkward drawings and stylistic experiments, one often glimpses hints of future greatness. Such is the case with Russ Manning (1929-1981).

Manning's first published drawings appeared in a handful of science-fiction and fantasy fanzines between 1947 and 1951. Russ turned pro in 1952 when he began drawing "Brothers of the Spear," a back-up strip in Dell's *Tarzan* comic. His first installment appeared in *Tarzan* #39 (Dec. 1952), and he continued for an impressive 14-year run, ending in *Tarzan* #156 (Feb. 1966).

Russ also drew "Tarzan" himself in 1952, for a never-published 3-D comic. The story appeared two years later in Western's *March of Comics* #114. Manning also illustrated the *Tarzan*



Above left: *Science, Fantasy and Science Fiction* Vol. 1 #2, July 1948.  
Above right: *Science, Fantasy and Science Fiction* Vol. 1 #1, April 1948.  
Below: *Science, Fantasy and Science Fiction* Vol. 1 #1, April 1948.



# The Forgotten '50s: Will Comics Ever Again Be As Exciting As EC?

## Concluding A 1966 Panel With Ted White, Bhub Stewart, & Archie Goodwin

Part VI of "1966: The Year Of (Nearly) THREE New York Comicons!"

by Bill Schelly

Panel Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

### Introduction

**L**ast issue, as part of this series (begun in A/E #53) on the three comics conventions held in Manhattan between mid-1966 and very early 1967, we printed the first half of a three-man panel on comic books of the 1950s. The intrepid panelists, who had actively read and collected comics during that decade, talked especially about why those produced by EC (Entertaining Comics) were different from those that came before them and after they were discontinued following the 1954-55 advent of the Comics Code Authority. Could EC's spirit of innovation embodied by the work of Harvey Kurtzman, Bernard Krigstein, and other EC artists ever return—and, if it did, would there be any comic book readers around to appreciate it? We re-commence at the mid-point of the discourse on EC and the Comics Code being made by panel moderator Ted White:

**TED WHITE:** The Comics Code Authority is a valuable thing to the extent that it probably did save the comics field. Comics probably would have been wiped out with the exception of Classics Illustrated and Dell, who'd managed to keep aloof from the whole argument and managed to stay out of the Code. All the rest of them probably would have been wiped out. The Kefauver Committee was investigating; there was all kinds of stuff going on.

I've got a file of newspaper clippings which Bhub Stewart over here sent me when he was still in Texas, back in

the early '50s, and they're the most frightening clippings. I take them out about once every two years and look at them. They're examples of mass hysteria, of boobism on the rampage. They're about the book-burners and the censors who have no idea what they're burning and don't care, and these are the people who almost killed the field. And they didn't care about whether or not whether a man like Jack Kirby could get work anywhere else, or whether or not anything would survive, or the people involved whose careers they would be destroying. It's not important to them and it never has been.

Today we do have people like Jack Kirby giving us some really fine stuff. We even have work by Wally Wood, Al Williamson, and others. But we don't have EC. The reason we don't have EC [is that], back when the Code was formed, it was formed to kill, primarily, two companies: Lev Gleason and EC. These two companies were considered by an uninformed public to be the worst offenders in the field. It was felt that they gave the worst image of the field.

Lev Gleason *was* publishing some pretty strange comic books. He was publishing "Crimebuster" [in *Boy Comics*] and a number of others, [including] *Crime*

*Does Not Pay*. These are pretty violent. I'll tell you that as a kid, I did not enjoy them. As an adult, I went back and read them and I was amazed at what seemed to be a very strange character to them. They were really writing those stories, I think, for slum kids. I think they made sense within the atmosphere of a big city slum. I grew up



I See, You See, We All See—EC!

Our three 1966 panelists were so EC-centric (though not without ample reason) with regard to the Entertaining Comics group and its 1954-55 battles with the Comics Code Authority that we figure this image makes a perfect visual intro to this piece. The EC symbol and Code seal are surrounded by (clockwise from bottom left): Ted White (seen here with then-wife Robin circa 1967)—Bhub Stewart (in a vintage photo taken by well-known photographer Henry Wessel)—and Archie Goodwin, in the Benson Con pic we showed last time. Hey, you think the writer/editor of *Creepy* and *Eerie* had nothing to do but pose for pictures? [EC symbol TM & © William M. Gaines Agent.]

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

# FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America



INSPIRED BY A SCENE IN *WHIZ COMICS* #22  
(CAPTAIN MARVEL TM & ©2006 DC COMICS, INC.)

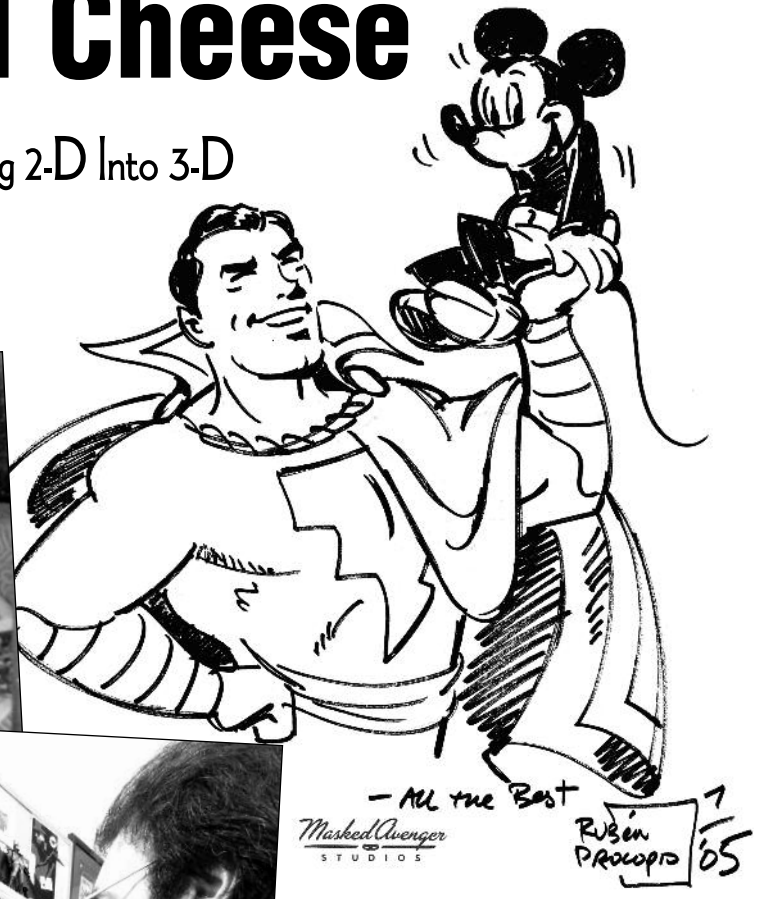
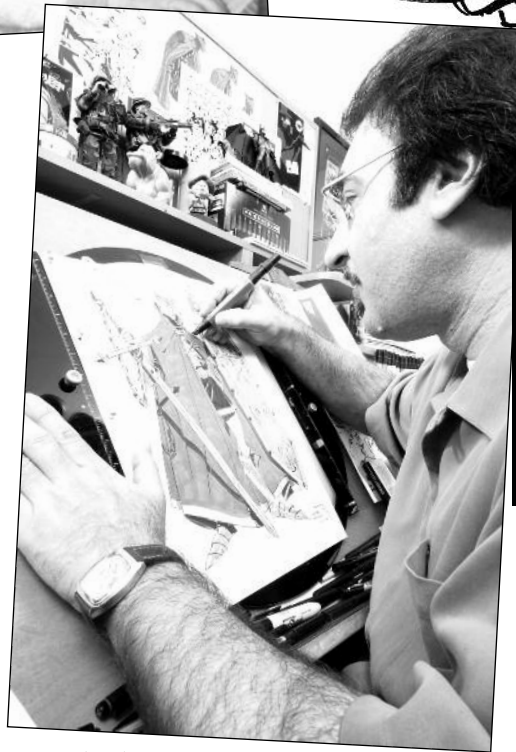
RUBEN  
PROTOP

# Sculpting Red Cheese

Artist RUBÉN PROCOPIO On Turning 2-D Into 3-D

by P.C. Hamerlinck

**R**ubén Procopio ([maskedavenger.com](http://maskedavenger.com)) has been in the animation industry for over 25 years. His creative skills were taught to him by his father Adolfo, and he went on to receive scholarships to both CalArts and Art Center. Arriving at Disney Animation, Rubén trained under Eric Larson, one of Disney's legendary "nine old men," and began a career working in multiple creative roles on over a dozen Disney animated features, including *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Tarzan*, *Mulan*, and *The Lion King*. Rubén's versatile skills include sculpture, character design, animation, and illustration. Rubén recently sculpted DC Direct's impressive *Power of Shazam! Deluxe Statue* (based on a design by Jerry Ordway), depicting the transformation of young Billy Batson into the *World's Mightiest Mortal*. —PCH.



## My Fan Club Is Bigger Than Your Fan Club

(Above:) Sketch of the Big Red Cheese and the Little Black Mouse by Rubén Procopio drawn especially for the Hamerlinck family.

[Captain Marvel TM & ©2006 DC Comics; Mickey Mouse TM, ©, & ©2006 Disney.]

(Left:) Photos of Rubén at age seven, reading comics before bedtime—and Procopio the pro today, working in his Masked Avenger Studios. With thanks to the artist.

Rubén Procopio is a masked avenger with multiple identities: illustrator, designer, animator, and sculptor.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Procopio came to America with his Italian immigrant parents in the mid-1960s when he was four years old; the family soon moved to Burbank California, their stomping grounds ever since. "My dad is a sculptor and worked for Disney Imagineering for over 35 years," says Procopio, "and my mom worked in the fashion industry, so I grew up around two very creative people. With all that inspiration around me, I naturally wanted to be an artist." Television played its influential role upon the impressionistic youngster, especially the Hanna-Barbera adventure cartoons (*Space Ghost*, *Super Friends*, and *Johnny Quest*) and heroic live-action shows like *Batman*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Shazam!* with Jackson Bostwick as Captain Marvel.

Comic book-wise, Procopio was primarily a "DC kid," who later would also grow to appreciate the Marvel universe. His favorite artists were Adams, Aparo, Cardy, Buscema, Romita, Kirby, Kane, Kubert, and later, Garcia-Lopez. His father saw his son's interest in comics and drawing and started guiding him at a young age. "I was copying comics," Procopio recalled, "then my dad introduced me to the foundations of art, like anatomy, design, perspective, and painting. He

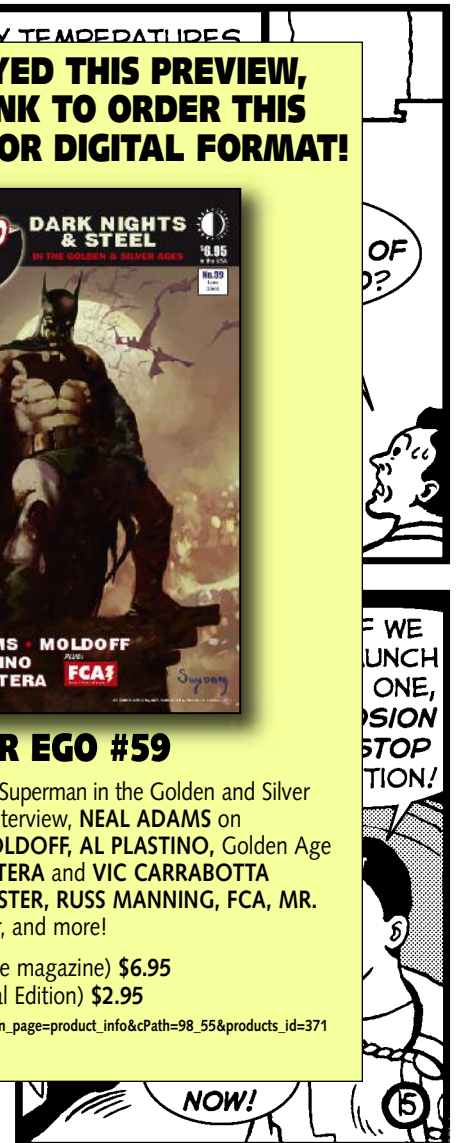
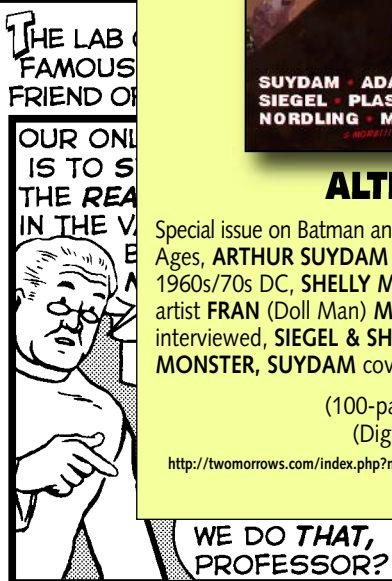
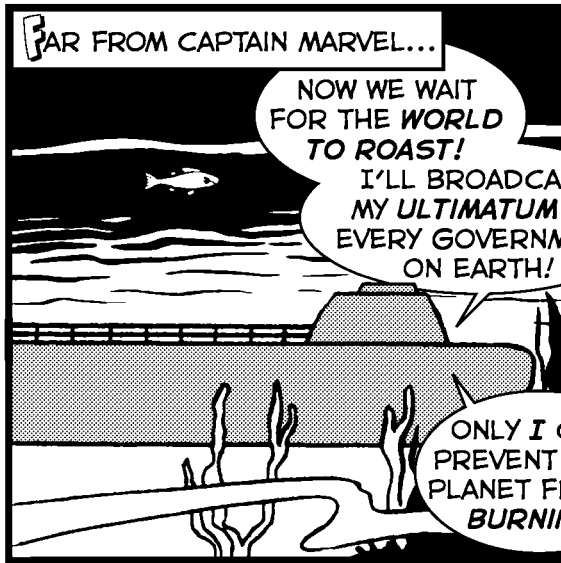
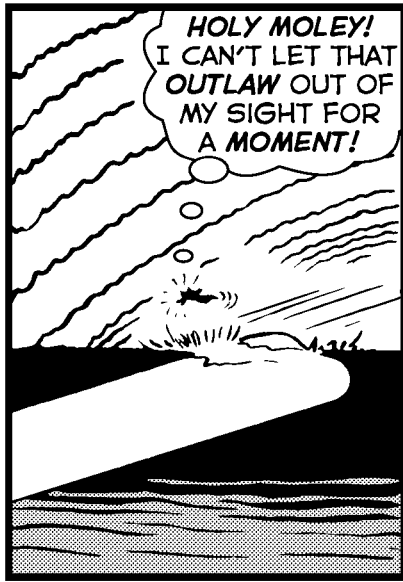
would leave me assignments before he left for work in the morning: for example, a note in an anatomy book saying, "Today you're going to learn about the arm, and how all the muscles interact and work." Later, when he would come home, he would review with me what I did. I look back now and realize how fortunate I was. He did that with languages as well, so you can imagine I had a lot of homework!"

One day while rummaging through piles at an old bookstore, Procopio came across a folder full of Hanna-Barbera animation model sheets. "The drawings seemed to sing off the pages," he remembered. "They had emotion and feeling to them. I was hooked!" He looked down to see the signature on the drawings: ALEX TOTH. Years later he learned that Toth lived close by to him, and he began corresponding with the legendary artist. "One thing led to another, and today we've become very good friends," Procopio says. Alex introduced me to all his influences: Sickles, Caniff, Raymond, Foster ...."

Besides teaching him about classic comic artists, Procopio's father in turn introduced his son to all the sculpting marvels of the past. Then,

# “Captain Marvel Meets The Human Torch” (Continued)

BRAZILIAN BONUS: Two more pages from the 1964 *Almanaque do O Globo Juvenil*. The comics of Brazil printed new stories of Captain Marvel and family for years after Fawcett's cancellation of its comics line in 1953. In this extraordinary tale, Cap meets the original Human Torch—yeah, Carl Burgos' android—since the adventures of the two heroes had been published by the same company in Brazil, though not in the US. On this page the Big Red Cheese continues his battle with The Cobra. [Captain Marvel TM & ©2006 DC Comics.]



**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW, CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!**

**ALTER EGO #59**

Special issue on Batman and Superman in the Golden and Silver Ages, ARTHUR SUYDAM interview, NEAL ADAMS on 1960s/70s DC, SHELLY MOLDOFF, AL PLASTINO, Golden Age artist FRAN (Doll Man) MATERA and VIC CARRABOTTA interviewed, SIEGEL & SHUSTER, RUSS MANNING, FCA, MR. MONSTER, SUYDAM cover, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95  
(Digital Edition) \$2.95

[http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=98\\_55&products\\_id=371](http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=98_55&products_id=371)