

ROY THOMAS' AMERICAN  
COMICS FANZINE

# Alter Ego™

# FORBIDDEN ADVENTURES



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**SPECIAL ISSUE!**  
**MICHAEL VANCE'S FABULOUS  
FULL-LENGTH HISTORY OF THE**

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**About Our Cover:** *Between 1941-1967, Pines/Nedor and ACG produced a relative handful of Golden and Silver Age super-heroes; but hey, this is Alter Ego, so we decided several of those should appear on our color-splashed cover. We owe a debt of gratitude to artist and friend Dick Giordano, who certainly isn't afraid of a little hard work (and at bargain basement rates, too!), since he volunteered to draw Roy's vision of an homage to Jack Burnley's JSA-featuring cover for 1942's All-Star Comics #13, only spotlighting three Nedor and six ACG stalwarts: The Black Terror, The Fighting Yank, Miss Masque (somebody had to stand in for Wonder Woman!), The Hooded Horseman, The Spirit of Frankenstein, John Force - Magic Agent, Magicman, Nemesis, and Herbie the Fat Fury. Between this A/E cover and ones done for #9 & #32, Dick easily holds the record for the most super-heroes drawn for our triply-blessed title! (And three guesses which magazine editor wound up with that pulsating prize hanging on the wall of his gym/guest house! ACG's Forbidden Worlds logo was adapted for A/E by Al Dellinges. [Cover art ©2006 Dick Giordano; characters TM & ©2006 the respective trademark & copyright holders.]*

**Above:** *ACG wasn't primarily about super-heroes, though—and indeed, the jewel in its quarter-century crown was the field's first ongoing horror comic, Adventures into the Unknown. So here's a splash panel by ACG mainstay Edvard Moritz from issue #20 (March 1952), as supplied by Mark Cannon. The story was called "The Mark of the Monster"—and that's just what the creepy-crawlies made in AITU—a mark in comics history—for two dynamic decades! [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
**Richard Hughes**



# Truth, Justice, And The American (Comics Group) Way

A few years ago, I learned of the existence of a hardcover history of the American Comics Group, one of many comics-related subjects I wished to know more about. I found the book *Forbidden Adventures: The History of the American Comics Group* to be a thorough look at the small company which had given the world its first ongoing horror comic (*Adventures into the Unknown*, which even I had read for several early years), a pair of Silver Age super-heroes (Nemesis and Magicman), and one truly creative, offbeat hero comic (*Herbie*, which I admired, even if I was never a regular reader).

In addition, I was delighted that author Michael Vance also dealt with the somewhat earlier comics company alternately known as Pines, Better, Nedor, and Standard. In the later 1940s I had read its tales of Princess Pantha and Judy of the Jungle, Supermouse, and in particular its super-heroes The Black Terror and The Fighting Yank. The latter were good characters, even if their stories and art rarely lived up to the promise of their colorful names and outfits (except for the last few issues of their solo titles circa 1949, which contained not only better stories, often with real human interest, such as one tale set in Chinatown which had a profound impact on how I felt about such mysterious ethnic ghettos, but also superb artwork by the team of Mort Meskin and Jerry Robinson). True, the book said little about Standard/Nedor once ACG had emerged, but it was still more than I'd ever known about the Pines company.

I also learned about the B.W. Sangor comic art shop and its intricate connections with both Pines and ACG (and with DC, which had puzzled me by carrying house ads for ACG's *The Kilroys*). I was intrigued to learn that Richard Hughes, later ACG's editor, had earlier conceived Black Terror, Fighting Yank, and several other Nedor heroes. I'd long heard the rumor that Hughes had single-handedly written every ACG story (turned out we were all wrong about that last part).

Much as I love the interviews that form the heart of *A/E*, I've always wanted to publish more "company histories" and "hero histories," as well. I simply have to find folks who feel like writing pieces I feel like reading. I found that in Michael Vance's book.

Thus, when Michael independently contacted me on a separate matter, I immediately set about to acquire from academic publisher Greenwood Press permission to reprint *Forbidden Adventures* in *Alter Ego*, with considerably more art than the hardcover had contained (a single illustration). In that, I was aided not only by Michael, but by such worthies as Mark Cannon, Bill Field, Matt Moring, Daniel Best, Scotty Moore, Mark Muller, Bill Leach, Michelle Nolan, Steven Rowe, Ron Frantz, and several others whose names you'll encounter in the pages to come. And special thanks to Michael and also to Hames Ware and Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., for last-minute help IDing some of the Nedor and ACG artwork that follows. Thanks also to Clare Cox of Greenwood Press—and to Brian K. Morris for retyping the text.

Trying to squeeze the entire tome into a single issue of *A/E*, I stripped this edition down to just *Forbidden Adventures*, Michael T. Gilbert's "Comic Crypt," *FCA*—and a short interview by Jim Amash with artist Al Hartley, whose earliest work had been for Standard/Nedor and ACG.

Even by adding an 8-page signature to give this issue 104 interior pages instead of the usual 96, we could only include what amounts to the first 128 pages (with minimal additional editing) of the book's 161. We had to leave its three appendices and bibliography for next issue.

But, for now, read and savor Michael Vance's *Forbidden Adventures*...!

Bestest,

*Roy*

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- Never-before-published Man-Thing and Werewolf by Night cover by MIKE PLOOG!
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- Fabled EC artist AL WILLIAMSON on his 1950s work for the American Comics Group—often with fellow legends FRANK FRAZETTA, ROY G. KRENKEL, & ANGELO TORRES!
- Special features on ACG's horror titles—plus MICHAEL VANCE's lists of ACG & Sangor Shop personnel & milestones, lavishly illustrated by BUSCEMA, SCHAFFENBERGER, COSTANZA, REINMAN, STONE, WHITNEY, MOLDOFF, BALD, LANDAU, et al.!
- The final DICK BRIEFER dailies starring his funky *Frankenstein!*
- ANTHONY TOLLIN celebrates the 70th anniversary of *The Shadow!*
- Plus *FCA* with MARC SWAYZE, MAC RABOY, JAY DISBROW, & C.C. BECK—MICHAEL T. GILBERT with more *Twice-Told Tales of Dr. Strange*—BILL SCHELLY on the 1966 KalerCon—& MORE!!

Edited by ROY THOMAS

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#62

# FORBIDDEN ADVENTURES

## The History Of The American Comics Group

by Michael Vance

Text © 1996, 2006 Michael Vance



### Preface (1996)

**F**orbidden Adventures: The History of the American Comics Group is the most comprehensive history of one comic book publisher ever written, reflecting the reading habits of millions of adults, teenagers, and children during the seminal Golden and Silver Ages of Comics (1938-1970). This book answers several long-standing questions among historians about the relationship between ACG and the largest publisher of comic books at this time, DC/National. Forbidden Adventures also dispels some long-lived myths about EC Comics and their (in)famous horror titles, while shedding light on the early history of the most popular art form in the world.

As an independent agent, the Sangor Shop began producing comic book material for publishers in 1941 and had grown into the American Comics Group in all but name by 1943. Never the largest publisher, ACG was nevertheless a microcosm of the entire industry, publishing titles in every major comics genre, including funny animals, horror, adventure, Western, romance, humor, and super-hero. At their peak, many of its titles sold 500,000 copies an issue. ACG's comic books used as premiums or sales tools reached 10,000,000 copies an issue, and more than 1,000 comic books and 27 titles were published.

During the Shop period of ACG, many famous comic book characters were created, including the first animal super-hero, "Supermouse," and such crime-fighters as "The Black Terror," "Pyroman," and "The Fighting Yank." ACG's *Herbie* remains one of

### The Terror, The Unknown—And Richard Hughes

ACG editor/writer Richard Hughes, in a decidedly fuzzy photo—but it's one of only two we've ever seen of the guy! Photo courtesy of Michael Vance. Hughes is flanked by covers of two important comics associated with him:

(Left:) Pines/Nedor/Better's *Exciting Comics* #9 (May 1941) introduced The Black Terror, the most notable Golden Age super-hero he created (Herbie would have that honor for the Silver Age). Art by Elmer Wexler, who was interviewed in *A/E* #36.

(Right:) *Adventures into the Unknown* #1 (Fall 1948) was the first regularly-published horror comic book. Though Avon Periodicals issued its *Eerie* #1 one-shot in 1947, the ongoing series didn't begin till 1951—with a new #1. Though the original edition of Michael Vance's book credited this cover to Ken Bald, Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., IDs it as being by Edvard Moritz, and Michael now concurs. [Covers ©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

the best-loved humor characters in comic books.

Producing several of the earliest funny animal titles, the Sangor Shop used dozens of moonlighting animators and writers from the Fleischer and Walt Disney studios who collectively wrote and drew numerous cartoons and feature-length animated movies. Among these films were *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the *Pink Panther* cartoons. For many, their only comic book work was published through Sangor, and their memories of early animation are recorded, as well.

Most importantly, the first horror comic book series, *Adventures into the Unknown*, was created by Richard Hughes through ACG. It sparked an explosion of imitators and inadvertently triggered the infamous Kefauver hearings in the US Senate during the McCarthy era. Coupled with the release of Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent*, and a growing paranoia over Communism, these events led to the most severe censorship in American history, under the Comics Code Authority, and to the complete destruction of a number of comic book companies.

Many major artistic talents germinated at the Sangor Shop and at ACG, producing novels, scholarly books, comic strips, motion picture posters, and motion pictures. Kin Platt wrote mystery novels, while Norman Fruman produced a book on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Al Vorpan was a novelist and prominent member of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, and Everett Raymond Kinstler painted the portraits of several American presidents that can now be seen in the White House. Inventor Harry Lazarus holds many patents and illustrates children's books, Patricia Highsmith wrote *Strangers on a Train* (filmed by Alfred Hitchcock), and Frank Frazetta produced dozens of famous book covers, movie posters, and the film *Fire and Ice*. Milt Gross (*Count Screwloose*), Frank Willard (*Moon Mullins*), Leonard Starr (*On Stage and Annie*), Hy Eisman (*The Katzenjammer Kids* and *Popeye*), and Al Williamson (*Secret Agent Corrigan* and *Star Wars*) have all been famous comic strip artists.

This history surveys the Sangor Shop and ACG, using many primary sources, exclusive interviews with creative and editorial personnel, and a wealth of information available in the comic books themselves. It includes many capsule story summaries from selected titles. Much of editor Richard Hughes' philosophy of writing and producing comics is explored, as well as the entire process involved in creating a comic book.

Importantly, *Forbidden Adventures* is accessible to popular culture scholars as well as to comic book fans who are interested in comic books from this seminal period of time.

## Acknowledgements

I thank the American Comics Group writers, artists, and editors, as well as the comic book scholars who made this book possible. In particular, gratitude is extended to: Annabel Hughes, Norman Fruman, Jim Davis, Frederick Iger, Edwin Murray, Dr. Jerry Bails, Steven Rowe, Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., Hames Ware, Will Murray, and Dr. Jon Suter. Special thanks are given to R.A. Jones.

## Mr. A. Mutt Starts in to Play the Races



### Mutt And Jest

While some experts challenge the primacy of *The Yellow Kid* as a comic strip (since it didn't even start out in 1896 as a "strip," but as a single panel), Bud Fisher's *Mutt and Jeff*, launched as *A. Mutt*, was one of the most successful and long-lived of early entries. (Above:) The very first daily, from Nov. 10, 1907, as it appeared in the Classic American Comic Strips collection *A. Mutt - 1907-1908*, edited by Bill Blackbeard. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

## Chapter I Happy Birthday To Hughes

I run into people who seem to think that literature is all words and that those words should preferably be a little stuffy. Who knows what literature is? The literature of the Cro Magnon is painted on the walls of the caves of Altamira. Who knows but that the literature of the future will be projected on clouds?

—John Steinbeck, in his introduction to *The World of Li'l Abner* comic strip collection, 1953.

The history of literature and the philosophy of criticism and the theory of criticism ignore what I call "transient, esthetic states," namely, esthetic experiences which are not recoverable by future generations, or even by yourself even several years later, but which are, at the time, extremely important. All of us can remember movies that we're embarrassed to look at on television now, or other things that we say we've outgrown that were important once. Those comic stories, for a great many people, were important experiences.

—ACG editor, writer, and professor of Romantic literature, Norman Fruman.

Comic strips and comic books are the most popular art form on Earth. It is estimated that the Japanese alone buy one billion comic books each year. The comic strip *Peanuts* is enjoyed by more than 250 million readers a day. But, in 1906, no sane person would have bet on the bastard offspring of horse racing, cheap pulp paper, and origami to win that popularity title.

In 1907, Bud Fisher created the first daily newspaper comic strip, which was published in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. It started as funny, illustrated horse racing tips. But *A. Mutt* copped the daily double by becoming the first daily sports *panel* to combine all of the elements recognized in comic strips: these include dialogue balloons and continuing themes, stories, and/or characters. *A. Mutt* was wildly successful and trotted on to national syndication as *Mutt and Jeff*, still running in newspapers nearly 100 years later.

The first horse out of the comic strip gate, however, was *The Yellow Kid*, which began publication in October 1896. This strip eventually introduced the first newspaper color—yellow—and bred the long-enduring slur, "yellow journalism." It and early comic panels like *The Katzenjammer Kids* (1896) and *Happy Hooligan* (1900) even carried thematic concepts from one week to the next, but none contained *all* of the elements of contemporary comic strips.

This American art form rapidly grew in popularity, and, on January 31, 1912, the first full page of comic strips was published in newspapers. By the 1920s, a crowded field of strips filled hundreds of pages in hundreds of newspapers. By 1933, the illustrated horse racing tips of *Mutt and Jeff* now ran with comic strips featuring the vine-swinging *Tarzan*, pipe-chewing *Popeye*, and planet-hopping *Buck Rogers*. Readers could have made book that comic strips were becoming big business if they also had bet on origami to win.

Origami was not a horse or even a comic strip about a horse. It was and is the art of folding paper, and the proud parent of comic books.

By 1933, printer Harry Wildenberg must have watched newspaper comic strips roll off the presses at Eastern Color countless times. As the huge 36" x 23" sheets of newsprint were folded once by the press, a chaos of color, art, and words became a newspaper. But he must have wondered what these sheets would become if folded *twice*.

They became tabloids. When folded a *third* time, one giant sheet of comic strips became 16 pages of comic book. Max Gaines, a salesman at Eastern Comics, sold these "books" of reprinted comic strips to Procter & Gamble, Canada Dry, and Wheatena. These soap, soft drink, and cereal companies gave buyers of suds, soda, or breakfast food a comic book as a premium when their products were bought. *Famous Funnies*, *Century of Comics*, *Funnies on Parade*, and other comic strip collections were given away in quantities of 250,000.

Gaines watched those big presses printing and wondered if people would actually *buy* these new-fangled books of comics. With permission, he gambled and asked local newsstands to try selling *Famous Funnies*, the first comic book title, with 10¢ labels. The books hit newsstands in New York City on a Friday. They were sold out by Monday morning.

These new comic books were sharing newsstand space with well-established pulp magazines. Cheap pulp paper had led many magazine publishers to the Winner's Circle of profit in the 1920s and 1930s. Many "pulp" sold over a million copies

each, and titles including *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage* had become household names. But, by 1934, the Great Depression had stopped several publishers dead in their tracks and had crippled many others who would eventually turn to publishing comic books instead.

Harry Donenfeld owned a number of presses fed by pulp magazines and published several pulp titles, including *Pep*, *Spicy-Detective Stories*, and *Gay Broadway*. Donenfeld also printed comic books for Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson. Wheeler-Nicholson, a former pulp writer, edited and published several comic books, among them *Fun Comics*, *Detective Comics*, and *Action Comics*. As pulp magazines began to fade, it was common for their themes, ideas, and characters to find new homes in comic books, and Wheeler-Nicholson's titles easily slipped into Donenfeld's back pocket when the Major failed to pay his printing bills.

Donenfeld first introduced the character "Superman" in *Action Comics*. By the 16th issue, this title was selling 87% of a 725,000 issue print run and out-performing Donenfeld's pulps. When Superman graduated to his own title, the first issue sold a million copies in two print runs. Donenfeld had bet on comic books and won.

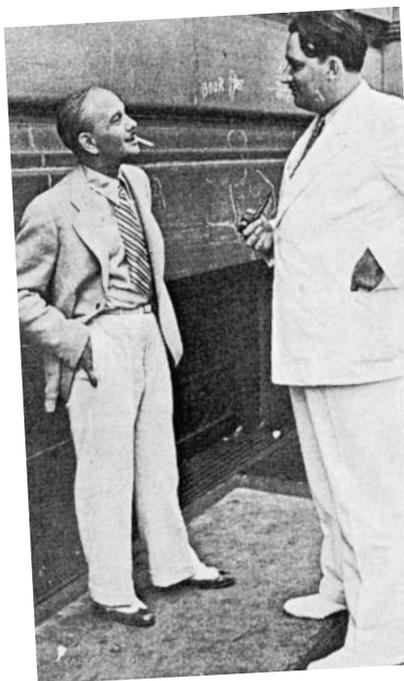
It was in June of 1938 that Superman began leaping over skyscrapers like an angry red kangaroo and started punching holes through steel vaults. The reading public was initially puzzled. But newspapers were filled with adventure comic strips that were soon translated into movie serials. The Silver Screen was alive with animation, and *The Shadow* knew "what evil lurks in the hearts of men" both on radio and in pulp magazines. They had paved the way for Superman's success.

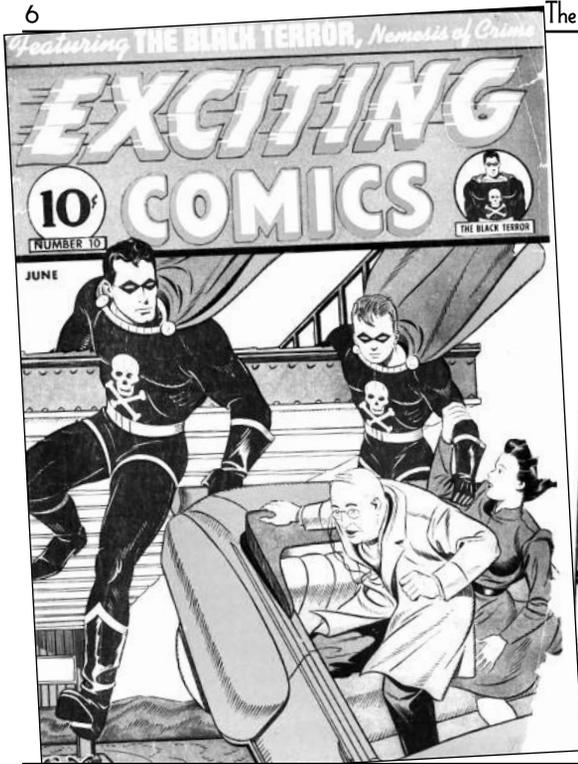
The first super-hero, Superman, stirred up a revolution in the fledgling comic book industry, which was busy *reprinting* comic strips. Almost overnight, a horde of eager imitators in skin-tight leotards were sucked into the backwash of his sky-rocketing success. Comic books had grown beyond their origins to become a separate and distinct art form. By 1941, there were over 30 comic book publishers producing 150 different comic books each month, with combined sales of 15 million copies a



### Captains Of The Pulp Empire

Sorry we couldn't come up with a photo of publisher Ned Pines, but the one on the left shows his "legendary" editor Leo Margulies (the shorter of the pair; the tall guy is pulp & comics writer Manly Wade Wellman)—while on the right is a pic of Mort(imer) Weisinger, a Pines editor who in the early 1940s jumped ship to National/DC and in the '50s and '60s would helm the "Superman" titles. By *Startling Stories*, Vol. 12, #1 (Spring 1945), pulp sales were definitely ebbing; this mag starred the series hero Curt Newton, a.k.a. Captain Future. Photos from James Gunn's 1975 tome *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. [Photos & cover ©2006 the respective copyright holders.]





### Terror Firma

The cover of the above copy of *Exciting Comics* #10 (June 1941) may be a bit dog-eared, but it and the interior page from the second "Black Terror" adventure demonstrate that writer Richard Hughes had come up with a winning character, whose skull-and-crossbones visuals were probably his strongest selling-point. Artistic originator David Gabrielson and Elmer Wexler are both credited with drawing the hero in his first year. Is the splash Gabrielson's work, and the cover Wexler's? Scans by Mark Fuller.

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month and a projected readership of 60 million. By 1943, comic book sales had almost doubled again, to a new high of 25 million copies a month (as reported in Maria Reidelbach's *Completely Mad: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine*, published by Little, Brown & Company, 1991).

It was a golden age for comics readers. And from this fertile ground a small, stable, and very significant publisher sprang in 1943, eventually producing thousands of comic book adventures over a 24-year period. This publisher would become the American Comics Group, or ACG, and Ned Pines would become its godfather.

Comic book publishers were multiplying like super rabbits when Ned Pines joined the hutch in 1941.

Born in 1905, Pines had attended Columbia University and was a major pulp publisher in the 1930s and 1940s. With editor Leo Margulies, Pines had produced pulp titles that included *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Startling Stories*, *Black Book Detective*, *Thrilling Sports*, and *Thrilling Mystery*. Pines' pulp empire eventually collapsed around 1954, but before its demise, his involvement forever altered the history of comic books.



### Terror At Twilight

In the last five issues of the solo title *Black Terror* (#23-27), the stories (no longer written by Hughes?) were drawn by the fabled team of Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin, as per the page at left from *BT* #24 (Sept. 1948), as restored by Matt Moring. (Note the reduced size of the heroes' masks.)

Another primo artist in the hero's waning days was Ruben Moreira (above); this splash panel, supplied by Don Mangus, is reproduced from a photocopy of a half-page of original art for *Exciting Comics* #65 (Jan. 1949). The late-'40s comics starring "Black Terror" and "Fighting Yank" deserve an *Alter Ego* feature all their own! [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

Thrilling Mystery, begun in October 1935 using Margulies' editorial guidelines, laid the groundwork for the first horror comic book in 1948. *Adventures into the Unknown* became ACG's first and longest-lived horror title.

Margulies himself became a legendary figure in the world of pulp fiction, eventually increasing Pines' empire to 25 titles and earning the title of "The Little Giant of the Pulp." He eventually edited magazines including *Mike Shayne*, *Weird Tales*, and *Zane Grey*. In the tightly

interwoven professions of pulps and comics, another Pines editor, Mortimer Weisinger, became a pivotal editor of Donenfeld's National Periodicals [later and better known as DC Comics], one of the largest publishers of comic books in the world. Weisinger directed the development of the entire Superman mythos for several decades.

Long before *Adventures into the Unknown*, writer Richard Hughes, who would become one of the most important players in the story of ACG, and artist David Gabrielson created a new super-hero,



**The Yanks Are Coming!**

Four "Fighting Yank" pages from the Hughes hero's heyday—though perhaps post-Hughes scripts. Clockwise from top left (and all ©2006 the respective copyright holders):

A splash from *Startling Comics* #32 (March 1945) by Ken Battefield; with thanks to Mike Catron.

Alex Schomburg's cover for *Fighting Yank* #25 (Aug. 1948). Schomburg is best remembered as a pulp illustrator, and for his action-packed covers for Timely Comics during World War II. Thanks to Mark Muller for the scan.

A Robinson-Meskin splash from *FY* #27 (Feb. 1949). Thanks to Mike Catron.

A purely Meskin splash from *FY* #28 (April 1949). For some reason, Meskin and Robinson dropped this hero's mask entirely! Did they have something against secret identities? Scan by Bill Field.



"The Black Terror," for the 9th issue of *Exciting Comics* (May 1941), produced by Pines' Better Publications division. At various times, Pines' comics company was known as Better, Nedor, Standard, or Pines Publications, but throughout its history, "The Black Terror" would remain the top seller of the line.

The Black Terror donned his black costume emblazoned with skull and crossbones in more than 170 adventures. He fought throughout the pages of *Exciting Comics* until September 1949 (issue #69), in 31 issues of *America's Best Comics*, and in his own title for 27 issues. He augmented his strength with a super elixir discovered by druggist Bob Benton, his alter ego. He fought crime on America's streets and battled the Axis during World War II in hectic, two-fisted stories. The Black Terror's creator would become an important piece in the puzzle that became ACG.

In September 1940, Hughes added a second super-hero, "The Fighting Yank," to Pines' *Startling Comics*. This patriotic do-gooder, first drawn by artist Jon Blummer, wore a three-cornered cap and a costume designed from an American flag. "The Fighting Yank" headlined *Startling* until January 1948 and starred in his own book for 29 issues. He quickly became Nedor's answer to Marvel [Timely] Comics' super-hero Captain America, and was also a response to the growing patriotism in America during World War II. A bulletproof cape added tremendous strength to quiet Bruce Carter III, The Fighting Yank, who used his powers to challenge crime.



### Reap The Wildfire!

(Above:) The Grim Reaper goes into action in *Wonder Comics* #16 (Feb. 1948), as retouched for AC Comics' Nedor-filled *Men of Mystery Spotlight* #1—see AC's ad on p. 91, for the best in black-&-white Golden Age reprints. Art by Al Cammarata. Hughes' heroes had this thing about skulls and crossbones, didn't they? Roy Thomas borrowed the character's name, though little else, for a 1960s *Avengers* villain. [Retouched art ©2006 AC Comics.]

(Right:) Pyroman looked (and his name sounded) like a Human Torch wannabe, but his powers were more electric—or perhaps we should say "eclectic"? This story apparently appeared in *America's Best Comics* #3 (Spring 1942). It was retouched (with gray tones added) for AC Comics' *Golden Age Men of Mystery* #9 in 1998, which is still in print. [Retouched art ©2006 AC Comics.]

"The Grim Reaper" and "Pyroman" soon followed from Hughes' prolific pen, and the new pieces that would build the ACG puzzle fitted firmly in place. They had been put there by a relative of Ned Pines—a man named B.W. (Ben) Sangor.

While Superman kicked down skyscrapers, animated cartoons were bringing down the house from coast to coast. Writers and artists were flocking to Detroit, Florida, and California for work. And a comic book industry (including Donenfeld and Pines) hungry for talent began to snatch crumbs from the tables of the animation studios. One agent who supplied those "crumbs" from the animation crowd was Pines' father-in-law, B.W. Sangor. Using moonlighting animators, illustrators from pulp magazines, and new, untested talent, Sangor began to funnel hundreds of pages of art and story to Pines, as well as to Donenfeld and other publishers. These super-talents of animation were so prolific that Sangor began to skim off pages for his own adventures in the world of publishing. His publishing house was named Creston, and it was the final piece of the puzzle that would become ACG.

In retrospect, ACG's accomplishments from 1943 to 1967 remain impressive today. Unnumbered hundreds of thousands of ACG readers have had moments of epiphany forever etched into their memories as they traveled on forbidden adventures into unknown worlds of imagination.

Written for scholars but accessible to comic book fans and casual readers as well, this book is intended for all people interested in comic books and in the history of the men and women who created them during the early days of the most popular art form in the world.



## Chapter 2

### B.W. Sangor

At times in my films, I seek to find the color and verve of Flash Gordon and his [comic strip] world, like that which the Italian newspapers printed.

—Federico Fellini, filmmaker, in his introduction to *The Steranko History of Comics* #1.

Mr. Sangor was pressing him on why-the-hell-more-didn't-get-done or why-they-couldn't-do-this or why-they-couldn't-do-that. They had this relationship in which Richard commonly felt threatened of not being fired, but of being disapproved of. I remember Richard keeping an account of everything that he did throughout the day, and then triumphantly showing them, expecting to get an apology or something.

—Norman Fruman, ACG assistant editor.

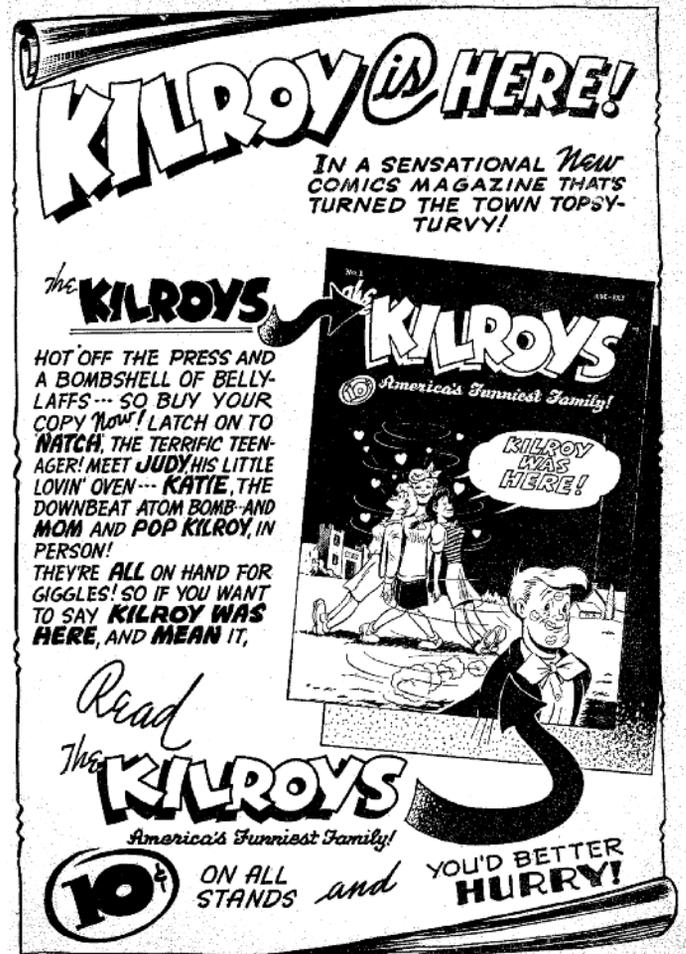
In the early days of its existence, the comic book industry was centered in New York City. Many of the industry's founding creators and publishers were Jewish, and more than a few were related to each other by birth or marriage. Among these publishers and shop owners were Harry Donenfeld and his partner Jack Liebowitz of National/DC Comics; Martin Goodman of Timely/Marvel; Jerry Iger and his partner Will Eisner; and Ned and Dora Pines of Pines/Nedor/Better Publications. These relationships intertwined to form a rather interesting "family tree" whose branches spread throughout the burgeoning business of publishing comic books. The history of these relationships is difficult to reconstruct because few records were kept, and decades-old memories are altered by time, personal prejudices, and the emotions common in all businesses.

These tangled relationships can be readily seen in the formation of the Sangor Shop, which evolved into the American Comics Group. B.W. Sangor, who founded ACG, began his involvement in the comics field by establishing a studio that supplied artwork to other companies already publishing comic books. Frederick Iger, initially Sangor's business manager by 1947 and briefly the son-in-law of Harry Donenfeld, went on to become ACG's publisher after Sangor's death. He has recounted the family connection that first drew Sangor into the field:

*His [Sangor's] son-in-law was Ned Pines. Ned Pines needed artwork. They were using it at a tremendous rate at that time. And he casually mentioned to Sangor that he could use another source of art. And that gave Sangor an idea. He had some friends out in Hollywood that were associated at the time with the Fleischer Studios. He went out there and contacted a fellow by the name of Jim Davis. I met Jim later on. And he recruited Jim to set up a studio, and Jim got hold of a lot of artists, and they started to produce material.*

*He [Sangor] was an attorney by trade. He had retired from practicing law. He was a good friend of Harry Donenfeld's. They were gin players together. But, primarily he got into the business on behalf of Ned Pines. If I remember correctly, it was a matter of paper allocation, and I think Ned Pines had some connections in Canada to obtain newsprint. Mr. Sangor was an excellent businessman. [He died] in 1955 [in Florida], on a belated honeymoon, as a matter of fact. He was just married.*

The initial contacts, in fact, were made with animators Jay Morton and Jim Davis in Florida, not Hollywood. Jim Davis would soon move to California to recruit a new set of animators who would moonlight as



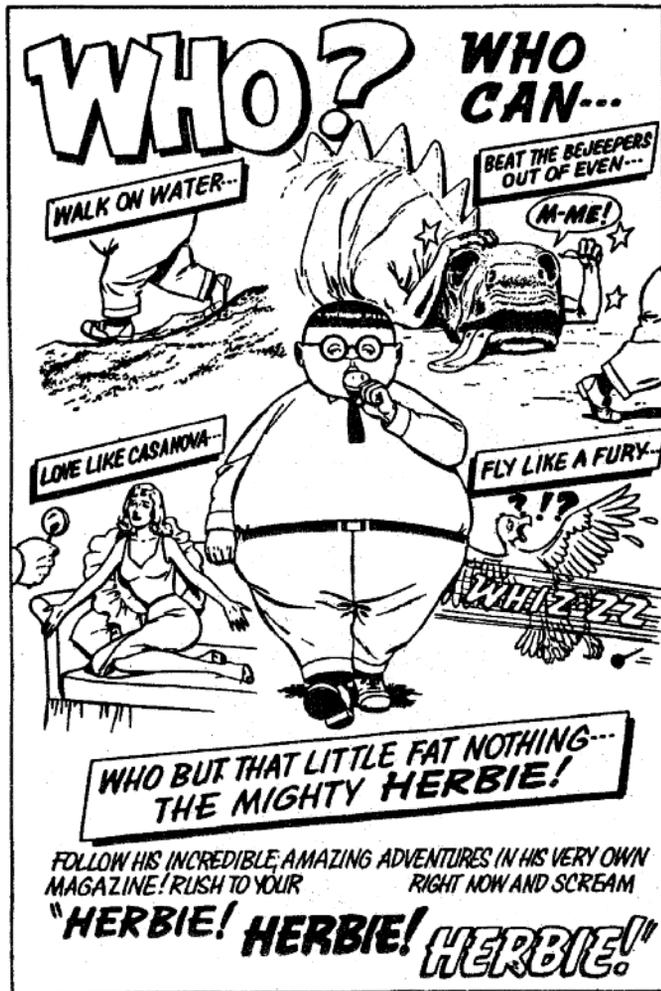
### Kilroy Was Here!

*The Kilroys (with Sangor-produced story & art) was one of the early ACG titles that rated an ad (full-page size, yet!) in DC titles. This ad for issue #1 appeared, among other places, in All-American Comics #87 (July 1947). Art probably by Dan Gordon. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]*

comic book writers and artists. Norman Fruman, who came to work for ACG as an assistant editor in 1951, has added reminiscences of Sangor that shed just enough light on the man to reveal that there are still shadows and rumor in his background:

*Mr. Sangor was certainly in advanced middle age when I met him, between 50 or 60 then. He was stocky, a little overweight, with a round face. He had been in the publishing business before that, but I was never able to get any details about it. There were rumors around, rather dark ones, about him having been involved in—and these are all speculative—a publication of a kind that may have been mildly pornographic. And that Richard [Hughes] had been in his employ before that and had sort of kept some business affairs going for him. That he was in the publishing business at all was really quite surprising, since he was an immigrant—I believe that he had been in the country a long time—and was certainly not a cultivated man in the sense of being formally educated. I strongly suspect he was Eastern European, maybe Russian.*

Iger's first connections to Sangor and eventually to ACG started with his relationship to Sangor's friend Harry Donenfeld. From around 1939 to 1941, Iger worked briefly at National/DC Comics with Bob Maxwell, the producer of the radio shows *Hop Harrigan* and *Superman*. Born on July 12, 1924, Iger became an apprentice at about 15 or 16 years of age, learning the radio end of Donenfeld's publishing



### "That Little Fat Nothing"

Hughes must've liked that pose of Herbie, 'cause he utilized it again in this house ad when the super-powered youngster got his own comic book! (Maybe that lollipop was spinach-flavored?) Reprinted here from *Fat Fury Special* #1 (1998). More of Herbie's "Fat Fury" stage coming up! [©1998 Roger Broughton.]

"Gnaw and Nibble," and "Witch Hazel" and other stuff, but not much. Acting as an agent was what had taken up most of my time.

I think the Warner Bros. cartoons were accepted by adults as entertainment, and good entertainment. And the Disney cartoons, likewise, I think. In those days, it was part of the show that you got a cartoon with every feature. We had the same attitude for Sangor's material that the writers at Warner Bros. had. They were writing to be funny, but they were not directing it towards youngsters—it was just trying to be funny.

With the exception of *Herbie*, 1955 marked the last breath of the humor era for ACG. The Sangor Shop (Cinema Comics) had closed its operations in late 1947 and early 1948. Ned Pines had contracted with another production shop, and DC had opted to work directly with Jim Davis and other West Coast animators. ACG continued to use these artists and writers until 1955, the year their humor line was canceled. Dan Gordon's heading for the letter column in *Adventures into the Unknown* would continue to run until 1967. But the days of funny animals, funny teenagers, and moonlighting animators were gone forever from ACG.

There was, however, a last gasp. In 1955, Modern Comics contracted with ACG to release 6 titles to be sold exclusively through department stores at a lower cover price. All 6 issues reprinted funny animal

material from earlier ACG titles, including *Ha Ha* and *Giggle*. *Funny Comics* reprinted an "Anthony and Cleopatra" story, as well as a "Blunderbunny" adventure. *Gay Comics* featured "Tee Pee Tim," "Witch Hazel," and "The Hare-Brained Tortoise." *Pop Comics* included "Izzy & Dizzy" and "Our Pal Piggy," while *Smile Comics* reprinted "The Duke and the Dope" and "Hector the Specter." The final two titles were *Tickle Comics*, featuring "Rip Rooster" and other characters, and *Whee Comics*, which included "Robespierre" (a cat) and "Gabby Gander." These issues are not catalogued as ACG titles because they were not sold on newsstands.

Nevertheless, as is often true, as one door closes, another opens. In 1947, the heyday of ACG was actually on the horizon, and it would include Richard Hughes' masterpiece, *Herbie*. *Herbie* was ACG's final humor title; it ran for 23 issues from 1964 to 1967. This book won an Alley Award for Best Humor Title in 1964 and was written by Richard Hughes (under his pen name "Shane O'Shea") and drawn by Ogden Whitney. Herbie began as a character in a story in *Forbidden Worlds* #73, reappearing in issues #94 and #116 of that title before he won his own book, due to an outpouring of reader demand. Many critics consider *Herbie* to be ACG's finest moment and certainly its most original humor book. Annabel Hughes fondly remembered her husband's love for Herbie "The Fat Fury," and his spontaneous laughter when writing the series.

Herbie Popnecker was short, fat, physically awkward, uncertain, socially shy, and an embarrassment to his parents. He embodied the self-image of most adolescent boys. But Herbie was also secretly magical (his power augmented by bizarre lollipops) and was universally known by all living and nonliving entities as the most dynamic, heroic figure in history. That is, known by everyone but his dumb mom and dad. Herbie was every child's power fantasy—a premise that lies at the heart of all escapist literature.

A typical issue, *Herbie* #15 (Feb. 1965), included two stories written by "O'Shea" and illustrated by Whitney: "Call Me Schlemiehl" at 11 pages and "Herbie Goes Nap-Happy" at 9 pages. A 2-page "Here's Herbie" letters column, plus assorted advertisements for Yubiwaza (self-defense martial arts), 7-foot long cardboard submarines, and muscle developers, filled out the issue.

"Call Me Schlemiehl" promised "87,216 belly-laffs." Herbie begins the tale by accepting a medal presented by Vice-President Herbert Hoover (!) for "moxie." That honor is overshadowed, however, by the appearance of Pud Bimbo, an old classmate of Herbie's father at Peepwhistle Prep. Bimbo had once dated Herbie's mother and is still romantically interested in her. Herbie's dad's jealousy sparks a contest between him and Pud, promising disaster. After all, Pincus Popnecker is a complete failure and fraud! Herbie decides to help his dad secretly.

The intended judge of this contest, Dean Whiffenpoofski of the music school, is, after a fashion, dissuaded from his judging; Herbie then disguises himself as the dean. The boxing match, swimming contest, mile run, and high jump competitions that follow are filled with visual pratfalls, fantasy, and Herbie standing by his "old man."

Pincus, Herbie's dad, also kicks off the second adventure by trying to pick Herbie's friends. They include their next-door neighbor Professor Flipdome and an alien from the planet Saurkraut. Meanwhile, a director living in "The Unknown" (a wild mixture of Heaven, Hell, and fantasy) has discovered someone selling magic lollipops to a mere mortal—Herbie. To prevent his superiors from discovering this transgression, the director commands that Herbie be eliminated.

A "one-way time lollipop" carries Herbie into the lap of Napoleon's empress, Josephine. Of course, *all* women are mad for Herbie, and a jealous "Nap" (Napoleon) puts Herbie literally through the wringer. But every torture simply leads Herbie back to Josephine's arms. Only

very rarely used as a marketing tool by Hughes, his influence, editing, and writing touched every magazine containing material from the Sangor Shop or released under the ACG shield for more than 25 years. And, as evidenced by their accomplishments with other publishers after having left ACG or the Sangor Shop [see Appendix A—next issue], hundreds of artists and writers carried Hughes’ influence throughout the industry. Yet the first question asked in reference to this pivotal writer and editor remains: “Who was Richard Hughes?”

Richard E. Hughes was born on November 5, 1909, and died on January 15, 1974, of myelofibrosis, a rare blood disease. Hughes and his wife Annabel were married on January 19, 1935, and their 39-year marriage produced only a single child: the American Comics Group.

His assistant editor, Norman Fruman, has painted a picture of Hughes that would have fit many of the early creators in the comics industry: “Richard Hughes was a fictitious name that he used. I suspect, in fact, that he had a substantially Jewish name and, for whatever reason, didn’t use it. Richard Hughes was not his name; his wife occasionally called him ‘Leo’ in my presence.”

Frederick Iger has elaborated further, opining that Hughes’ real name was Leo Rosenbaum: “He had a *dozen* pen names, I just imagine for tax purposes. He had a terrific sense of humor. In my opinion, he was an absolute genius, the most underrated editor in the field. He was remarkable. He certainly deserves any accolades that could be accorded

him. He was a real talent.”

Hughes was a pioneer in the comics magazine industry as one of its most prolific and influential editors and writers during his lifetime. “Dick” created dozens of memorable characters, edited thousands of comic book stories, and wrote well over a thousand of them in his career. Yet, when describing himself in his last résumé, he wrote, “An experienced and competent editor... a writer who knows how to employ the right words. Public relations oriented. Expert in visual writing. Able to wed words and illustrations with maximum effectiveness.”

Hughes’ career during the Great Depression of the 1930s is ignored in his résumé. Only his graduation in 1930 from New York University with a Bachelor of Arts degree (English major, Economics minor) is recorded. On his résumé, he listed no occupation before 1940 (when he was 31 years old). Thereafter, for one year, he worked as a sales correspondent for Standard Mirror and Metal Products of New York City. He was involved in catalog production, including writing product copy. He left this position “to secure higher wages” at Syndicated Features Corporation in 1941.

By 1942, Hughes had become the best-selling writer and creator of the character “The Black Terror,” which appeared in *Exciting* and *America’s Best Comics*, produced for pulp magazine publisher Ned Pines. Hughes had also created and was scripting “The Fighting Yank,” “Pyroman,” “The Commando Cubs,” and “Supermouse,” all solidly popular comic



Richard Hughes’ Best Comics

That’s what Pines/Nedor’s *America’s Best Comics* could have been renamed, since writer/editor Hughes seems to have co-created its four major stars (Black Terror, Fighting Yank, Doc Strange, and Pyroman), as seen in this Alex Schomburg cover and three splashes from #18 (June 1946). “Black Terror” splash by Edvard Moritz, latter two splashes by Ken Battefield. By ’46, some if not all of these were doubtless being scripted by others, but Hughes’ super-heroes endured till the late ’40s. Scans by Mark Muller. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

time for reader response to have influenced this, with only one month separating the release of the two issues.

Lazarus eventually drew more TrueVision stories than any other ACG artist, even though the process was used in several of the company's other titles, including *Confessions of the Lovelorn*, *Romantic Adventures*, *Cookie*, *The Kilroys*, and *Commander Battle and the Atomic Submarine*. Before the demise of the process, even paid advertising and the letters pages in the comic books were printed with massive black borders.

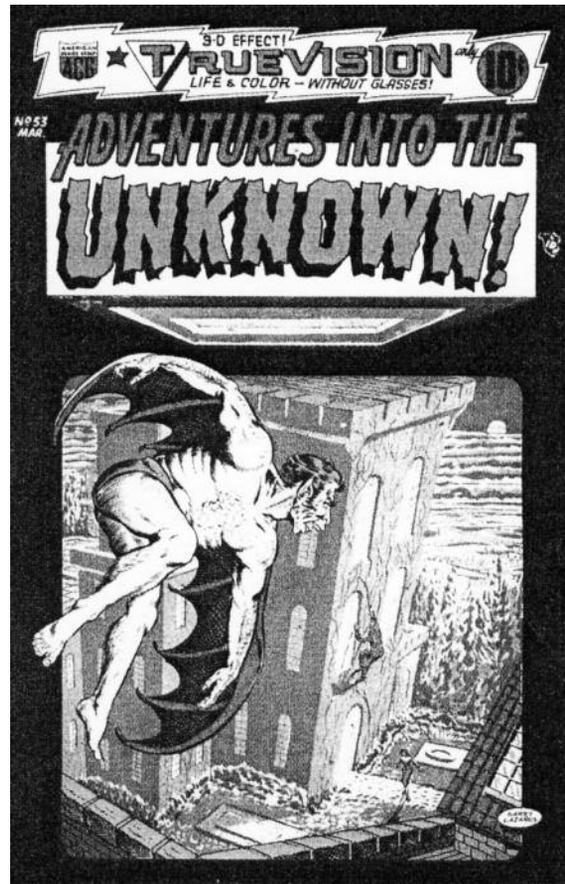
TrueVision added a melancholy, foreboding atmosphere to the stories, effectively heightening the tension and anticipation of readers. While very appropriate for *Adventures into the Unknown*, when used on the humor and romance titles, this effect added an angst, an expectation of disaster, that went unfulfilled in the reader, and it inadvertently produced some of the most bizarre humor and romance comic books in the history of the industry. Whether TrueVision was abandoned due to growing industry sensitivity to demands for true 3-D comic books or because it failed to add new dimensions to sales, the process was gone by *Adventures into the Unknown* #61. Both Lazarus' 3-D process and the original ACG are now history, but Lazarus still carries fond memories of his years in comics.

"Today," he has written, "I'm a long way from comics. In the 1960s through 1970, I became a book illustrator for many large publishers like McGraw-Hill, Western Publishing, and others. I also wrote children's books for Putnam under my name. During that time and steadily since 1970, I have been functioning as a freelance inventor, and have over 35 patents in my name."

There is very little real innovation in art or literature. When a new twist is financially successful, imitation is the standard for television, movies, music, books, and... comic books. It has always been so, and, despite its claim to be a pioneer in the industry, the American Comics Group was more often a follower than a trendsetter. TrueVision was a response to and a variation on successful 3-D movies and comics. ACG's funny animal titles followed the success of animation and other animation-related comics. "*Cookie*" and *The Kilroys* were ACG's answer to the enormously popular *Archie* series of comic books. Likewise, near the end of ACG's history, the company's only two super-hero characters—Nemesis and Magicman—were simply a reluctant response to the booming new fad generated by Marvel Comics' super-heroes in the early 1960s.

#### When Titans Clash

In the 1960s, The Flash buddied around with Green Lantern, while Marvel's heroes would instantly start clobbering each other upon contact. ACG opted for the latter approach when Magicman encountered Nemesis, as per this Kurt Schaffenberger cover for *Forbidden Worlds* #136 (July 1966). Like Costanza and Stone, Schaff had drawn "Captain Marvel" and other comics for Fawcett during the Golden Age. Reprod'd from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Scotty Moore. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]



#### It's Coming Right At You!

Harry Lazarus' detailed yet dynamic cover for *Adventures into the Unknown* #53 (March 1954) was one of several rendered in the not-quite-3-D "TrueVision." With thanks to Barry Forshaw and Peter Normanton of the English horrorzine *From the Tomb* #17 (Oct. 2005). Barry's coverage there of ACG's horror titles will be featured in our very next (Halloween!) issue. To find out more about *From the Tomb*, e-mail [Peter.Normanton@btinternet.com](mailto:Peter.Normanton@btinternet.com). [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

Richard Hughes fought openly against including super-heroes in ACG's line-up of titles for many months in his own letters pages. He had already created several very popular super-powered characters in the early days of the industry, and he had seen super-heroes wax and wane in popularity several times over the decades he had spent in the industry.

Possibly, Hughes believed that Marvel's success with *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* was



# “The Lord Gave Me The Opportunity To Do What I Wanted”

Artist AL HARTLEY On Timely, Archie, Spire, & A Famous Father—Not To Mention Nedor & ACG

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by Jim Amash

**A**l Hartley (1925–2003) had a long and distinguished career in comic books. His gifted cartoonist's touch realized many entertaining stories during his Timely and Archie Days. His best and most important work was done on a series of Christian comics in the 1970s. These titles, combined with his earlier work, make Al Hartley one of the most fondly remembered humor writer/artists of his time. He was honored with an Inkpot Award in 1980 at the San Diego Comic-Con, proving that his work was appreciated and respected by many people. And by this interviewer, too. —Jim.

## “I Did Some Humor Work For Richard Hughes At ACG”

JIM AMASH: I have you listed as doing humor work for Street & Smith in 1942–1944.

AL HARTLEY: The work I did for Street & Smith was done before

Pearl Harbor. I did a Western story about Tecumseh. I don't recall doing more than that. I had been selling gag cartoons before that. The war was coming, and it was obvious that we had to go fight. I volunteered to go into the Army Air Corps the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, but I wasn't called up until 1942. I was a pilot and stayed in the service until 1945. I was in Europe, flying B-17s, and flew twenty missions.

JA: Your father was Representative Fred Hartley, who co-sponsored the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which was a very important piece of legislation for our country. What was it like being the son of a famous Congressman?

HARTLEY: I have to say it was wonderful. I wasn't at all impressed with the fact that my father was such an important man, because he was a very regular guy and wonderful father. It didn't really affect me at all, in terms of our relationship. He was just my father. When I went to Washington and the White House, I was very young and the significance of it didn't really sink in, in the sense of making me inflated with the experience or our relationship.

JA: What did your father think about your drawing comic books?

HARTLEY: He encouraged me. He knew I wanted to draw from the

### Debbie Does ACG

(Above:) Al Hartley, as photographed especially for *Marvel Tales Annual* #1 (1964). At left are two Hartley pages from an early “Debbie” story in “Cookie” #11 (Feb.–March 1948). Though Al speaks to Jim Amash of doing “teenage comics” for Standard, then later “humor work for Richard Hughes at ACG,” “Cookie” was officially published by “Michel Publications” and “American Comics Group.” It must've been hard to remember whether one had worked at a particular stage for Standard or ACG, since the Sangor comics shop was doing artwork first for Standard/Nedor, and, beginning in 1943, for ACG. Al's name appears on the Sangor shop lists as a “writer/artist” in “1947–48.” Special thanks to Steven Rowe for the “Cookie” scans and info. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]



Affable AL HARTLEY





### Cookie & Pickles To Go

Two more pages of Hartley's ACG work. (Left:) A "Gus" one-page filler from "Cookie" #22 (Dec. 1949-Jan. 1950). (Right:) The first page of another story featuring Debbie and Pickles (how did they dream up these names?) from "Cookie" #26 (Sept.-Oct. 1950). Thanks to Steven Rowe. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]

time I could hold a crayon, so he always encouraged me. I worked on the local newspaper while I was in high school. My father wanted me to pursue my own dreams and never attempted to steer me in any other direction.

I didn't know what direction I wanted to take my art career in. When I got out of the Air Force, I made a list of publishers and started making the rounds. The first place I went to gave me a job. That was Standard Comics. That's a hazy period and I don't recall much about the company, except that I did teenage comics for them.

I did some humor work for Richard Hughes at ACG, but I don't remember much else. I remember that Hughes was a very nice man.

I did some work for Ace Comics on "Dottie" and also some romance work. The editor's name was Harvey something. I remember he did a newspaper strip called *Cairo Jones*. He was an artist and was very good to me.

## "It Wasn't Difficult To Get A Job At Timely"

**JA:** *Timely/Marvel was where you really started making a name for yourself, so I'd like to talk about your working there. How did it start?*

**HARTLEY:** I'd developed enough of a reputation that it wasn't difficult to get a job at Timely in 1949. Stan Lee knew my work and hired me. The only assistant I remember Stan having was Sol Brodsky, whom Stan always referred to as "Solly." Sol was a very engaging, sweet guy, very considerate and easy to work with. He was a very professional employee.

When I started working with Stan, he wrote most of my stories, although I later wrote all of my own stories. We did all kinds of genres: war, Westerns, detective, science-fiction...you name it. But these things ran in cycles, and when sales started falling on one genre, we'd switch to another theme.

We'd take a theme, and I'd illustrate the story. There were no typed scripts, just a very loose plot line. It was my job to draw the story with as much excitement, surprise, and suspense as I could. Then, Stan, would write the dialogue. It was a very creative way

to work.

**JA:** *When did you start working that way, which is more identified with the 1960s and after, when it became known as the "Marvel method"?*

**HARTLEY:** It's hard to put a time frame on it, but I'd guess we started working that way in the mid-1950s. I didn't work on staff; I always worked at home and would bring my stories in.

**JA:** *You did some horror stories in the 1950s. Did you feel comfortable doing those?*

**HARTLEY:** They weren't my favorites, but I don't remember doing stories that went as far as the ones EC did.

**JA:** *Well, there were titles like Uncanny Tales that had rotting corpses and zombies and such. If you'd been handed that type of story, would you have drawn it?*

**HARTLEY:** I'd have felt uncomfortable doing those and probably would have turned them down. That type of stuff wasn't my type of bag.

I didn't get to know many people there because I rarely went into the office. I did at the beginning, but after that, I'd go in maybe once or twice a year. I either sent my work in by messenger or by mail. I didn't enjoy going into the city that much.

There was one point in the early 1960s when I was Stan's assistant for about two months. I didn't feel comfortable in that position, so I went back to freelancing. As Stan's assistant, frankly, I did everything I

normally did, and did some of the things that Stan did. I edited and wrote stories. I don't recall doing art corrections on anyone else's work. I remember that Sol Brodsky was helping Stan out, too. He was at Marvel when I started in 1949. He was a jack of all trades in the art department; he did everything and handled all the loose ends.

Stan wrote a lot of the stories, but there were a couple of other writers, too. Stan shepherded the whole bunch, since he was the executive editor. He gave out all the assignments. We spent time together and had some very interesting get-togethers.

## "I Probably Did More Romance... Than Anything Else"

JA: You did one "Thor" story for Stan in the 1960s. Do you remember anything about it?

HARTLEY: I just remember that I did it, but super-heroes weren't really my forte. I don't recall the circumstances that led me to draw that story. At that stage of the game, I was mostly doing work that I was more comfortable with, mostly teenage and humor stories.

I did a lot of romance stuff in the 1950s. I used to take Polaroid photos of my wife for reference when I drew covers. I probably did more romance in that period than anything else.

JA: There's a "Patsy Walker" story in the early 1960s where you drew Jack Kirby as an artist in the story.

HARTLEY: I don't remember that. We were probably just having some fun.

JA: Sometimes you wrote your own stories and sometimes you didn't. Why was that?

HARTLEY: It probably had to do with the amount of time there was to get the work done. Things were going so fast in those days that I never thought much about things like how an artist drew something that I wrote. I was too busy concentrating on what I had to do. We didn't get paid that much, so I was concerned with trying to make a living. I never collected my work or the books when they came out.

JA: You drew Mrs. Lyon's Cubs for newspapers with Stan. What

do you remember about that?

HARTLEY: Stan developed that strip, and when Joe Maneely tragically died, I was asked to take it over. It wasn't out long when that happened, and I only did it for a few months. Joe Maneely was a very capable artist, but I didn't get to know him.

JA: Did you ever spend any time with Jack Kirby?

HARTLEY: I used to see him in the offices at times. He was quite a remarkable guy. I remember times when he'd come into the office and Stan would need a cover. Jack would sit down and, in an hour or so, he'd draw that cover. He was a very creative, prolific artist. When I worked as Stan's assistant, I remember Stan and Jack sitting down and brainstorming on a story. It was very interesting to watch the sparks fly when those two creative minds got together to create a very suspenseful, creative storyline.

JA: I'll bet it was. Who did most of the talking?

HARTLEY: Well, Stan was vaccinated with a phonograph needle. [laughs] He was a great talker.

JA: Was Steve Ditko in the offices much?

HARTLEY: Not that much. He had more of an artist's temperament than Jack did and was hard to get to know. Steve would talk with Stan, but I didn't have much communication with him. He was a terrific artist, but rather shy. Jack was a very sweet guy and did a lot of story-plotting with Stan. The creative juices really flowed. I never sat in on any of their discussions, but I was in earshot and could hear them talking.



(Left:) Al Hartley's earliest Timely work—at least the earliest that Dr. Michael J. Vassallo could locate, and he's an expert! It's from *Girl Comics* #1 (Oct. 1949)—part romance, part adventure.

(Right:) A horror splash from *Mystic* #5 (Nov. 1951). Thanks to Doc V. for this one, too. [Both pages ©2006 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

DOG STEARN

MR. MONSTER'S

COMIC CRYPT!

BY MICHAEL T. GUSTY

MR. MONSTER © AND © 2006



NO, READERS, YOU'RE NOT SEEING DOUBLE -- OR EVEN TRIPLE! BUT YOU ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE ANOTHER EXCITING INSTALLMENT OF TWICE-TOLD TALES!



MAYBE YOU REMEMBER THIS GREAT STRANGE TALES COVER FEATURING NICK FURY, PLUS A DR. STRANGE CAMEO? WELL, ONE FAN, HOWARD HALLIS, WONDERED HOW THIS COVER WOULD HAVE LOOKED IF IT HAD STARRED DR. STRANGE INSTEAD OF S.H.I.E.L.D.'S HEAD HONCHO. (SEE UPPER RIGHT.)



AND THEN HENRY R. KUJAWA TOOK THE SAME COVER AND ELIMINATED DR. STRANGE ENTIRELY! AND THAT'S JUST THE START! WE'VE GOT A BUNCH OF OTHER "WHAT IF" DR. STRANGE COVERS IN A FEATURE I CALL ... TWICE-TOLD STRANGE TALES!

YOU'LL CALL THEM FANTASTIC!



P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

# FCA

Fawcett Collectors of America

#120 August 2006

## THE FAWCETT/ACG CONNECTION



[Captain Marvel, Ibis the Invincible,  
& Taia TM & ©2006 DC Comics;  
Magicman TM & ©2006 the respective  
TM & © holders; Art by Bill Fugate.]

# The Fawcett/ACG Connection

Three Who Flew For The Brothers Fawcett—And For Richard Hughes

by P.C. Hamerlinck & Roy Thomas

**K**urt Schaffenberger—Pete Costanza—Chic Stone.

In the pages of *Alter Ego* and *FCA*, those names are most often associated with their artwork for Fawcett Publications—or for National/DC—or (in the case of Chic Stone) for Marvel. But each also drew, at some point, for the American Comics Group. In fact, all three were called upon to portray ACG's 1960s super-heroes, Magicman and/or Nemesis—and did so in styles that were at least as reminiscent of their Fawcett days as of DC or Marvel! This special edition of *FCA* presents a brief look at their Fawcett art (where we can identify it), compared to their work for Richard Hughes and ACG....!



Kurt Schaffenberger

Kurt S., of course, is best remembered in Fawcett terms for his work on the title feature in the later issues of *The Marvel Family*—and at DC for *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*. At ACG, as covered earlier this issue, he drew numerous stories and covers, often as “Lou Wahl”—and when the company made a stab at super-heroes, he reportedly designed both Nemesis and Magicman, and also drew a number of hero covers for *Adventures into the Unknown* and *Forbidden Worlds*.



Where's Magicman When You Really Need Him?

(Left:) Kurt's Nemesis cover of *Adventures into the Unknown* #161 (Dec. 1965-Jan. 1966); with thanks to Daniel Best. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]



## One Big Happy Family

(Clockwise from top center:) Schaffenberger (seen in a self-portrait from P.C. Hamerlinck's *TwoMorrrows* volume *Fawcett Companion*) drew the “Ibis the Invincible” entry in *Whiz Comics* #87 (July 1947)—good practice for Magicman and his turban, *n'est-ce pas?*

Kurt's lead story in *The Marvel Family* #87 (Sept. 1953) came only a few months before Fawcett discontinued its comics line. But the latter action came because of the lawsuit with National/DC over alleged infringement of the Superman copyright, not because of the quality of Kurt's work! [Ibis & Marvel Family TM & ©2006 DC Comics; caricature ©2006 Estate of Kurt Schaffenberger.]

## Pete Costanza

Costanza was co-owner of the Beck-Costanza Studio which produced "Captain Marvel" material for Fawcett through much of the 1940s. Later, the two artists made a good team on the adventures of the World's Mightiest Mortal, with Costanza giving Beck's work the slightly more realistic feel desired in the feature's last few years.



Pete Costanza.  
Thanks to Michael Vance.

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### Costanza's Fawcett Decade

One of Pete Costanza's early assignments was the "Golden Arrow" series, as per the splash at left, from *Whiz Comics* #22 (Oct. 1941)—but later his art carried entire issues, such as *Fawcett Movie Comic* #19 (Oct. 1952), seen above. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]



### ACG Goes To The Dogs

This Costanza cover art for "Magicman" in *Forbidden Worlds* #130 (Sept. 1965) is repro'd from a photocopy of the original art, with thanks to Scotty Moore. [©2006 the respective copyright holders.]