

ROY THOMAS' ALMIGHTY
COMICS FANZINE

No.96

August
2010

\$7.95
In the USA

Alter Ego™

The MIGHTY CRUSADERS!

Now WITH
FULL
COLOR!

'NUFF SAID?

PLUS:



& MELL LAZARUS

ML/Archie heroes TM & ©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.



Alter Ego™

Edited by
ROY THOMAS

The greatest 'zine of
the 1960s is back, **ALL-NEW**, and

focusing on
**GOLDEN AND SILVER
AGE** comics and creators with **ARTICLES,
INTERVIEWS, UNSEEN ART, P.C.** Hamerlinck's
FCA (Fawcett Collectors of America, featuring
the archives of **C.C. BECK** and recollections by
Fawcett artist **MARCUS SWAYZE**), Michael T.
Gilbert's **MR. MONSTER**, and more!

**2010 EISNER AWARD Nominee
Best Comics-Related Periodical**



**Other issues available, & an ULTIMATE
BUNDLE with all issues at HALF-PRICE!**



ALTER EGO #82

MLJ ISSUE! Golden Age MLJ index illustrated with vintage images of The Shield, Hangman, Mr. Justice, Black Hood, by IRV NOVICK, JACK COLE, CHARLES BIRO, MORT MESKIN, GIL KANE, & others—behind a marvelous MLJ-heroes cover by BOB McLEOD! Plus interviews with IRV NOVICK and JOE EDWARDS, FCA, MR. MONSTER, and more!

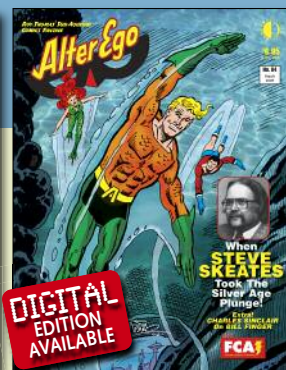
(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #83

SWORD & SORCERY PART 2! Cover by ARTHUR SUYDAM, in-depth art-filled look at Marvel's Conan the Barbarian, DC's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, Dagar the Invincible, Ironjaw & Wulf, and Arak, Son of Thunder, plus the never-seen Valda the Iron Maiden by TODD McFARLANE! Plus JOE EDWARDS (Part 2), FCA, MR. MONSTER, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #84

Unseen **JIM APARO** cover, **STEVE SKATES** discusses his early comics work, art & artifacts by **ADKINS, APARO, ARAGONES, BOYETTE, DITKO, GIORDANO, KANE, KELLER, MORISI, ORLANDO, SEKOWSKY, STONE, THOMAS, WOOD**, and the great **WARREN SAVIN!** Plus writer **CHARLES SINCLAIR** on his partnership with Batman co-creator **BILL FINGER**, FCA, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #85

Captain Marvel and Superman's battles explored (in cosmic space, candy stores, and in court, with art by **WALLY WOOD, CURT SWAN, and GIL KANE**), an in-depth interview with Golden Age great **LILY RENÉE**, overview of **CENTAUR COMICS** (home of **BILL EVERETT's** Amazing-Man and others), **FCA, MR. MONSTER**, new **RICH BUCKLER** cover, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #86

Spotlighting the Frantic Four-Color **MAD WANNABES** of 1953-55 that copied **HARVEY KURTZMAN's** EC smash (see Captain Marble, Mighty Moose, Drag-ula, Prince Scallion, and more) with art by **SIMON & KIRBY, KUBERT & MAURER, ANDRU & ESPOSITO, EVERETT, COLAN**, and many others, plus Part 1 of a talk with Golden/Silver Age artist **FRANK BOLLE**, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #87

The sensational 1954-1963 saga of Great Britain's **MARVELMAN** (decades before he metamorphosed into Miracleman), plus an interview with writer/artist/co-creator **MICK ANGLE**, and rare Marvelman/Miracleman work by **ALAN DAVIS, ALAN MOORE**, a new **RICK VEITCH** cover, plus **FRANK BOLLE**, Part 2, **FCA, MR. MONSTER**, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #88

First-ever in-depth look at National/DC's founder **MAJOR MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON**, and early editors **WHITNEY ELLSWORTH, VIN SULLIVAN, and MORT WEISINGER**, with rare art and artifacts by **SIEGEL & SHUSTER, BOB KANE, CREIG FLESSEL, FRED GUARDINEER, GARDNER FOX, SHELDON MOLDOFF**, and others, plus **FCA, MR. MONSTER**, and more!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #89

HARVEY COMICS' PRE-CODE HORROR MAGS OF THE 1950s! Interviews with **SID JACOBSON, WARREN KREMER, and HOWARD NOSTRAND**, plus Harvey artist **KEN SELIG** talks to **JIM AMASH!** **MR. MONSTER** presents the wit and wisdom (and worse) of **DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM**, plus **FCA (Fawcett Collectors of America)** with **C.C. BECK & MARC SWAYZE**, and more! **SIMON & KIRBY** and **NOSTRAND** cover!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #90

BIG MARVEL ISSUE! Salutes to legends **SINNOTT and AYERS**—plus **STAN LEE, TUSKA, EVERETT, MARTIN GOODMAN**, and others! A look at the "Marvel Super-Heroes" TV animation of 1966! 1940s Timely writer and editor **LEON LAZARUS** interviewed by **JIM AMASH!** Plus **FCA, MR. MONSTER**, the 1960s fandom creations of **STEVE GERBER**, and more! **JACK KIRBY** holiday cover!

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #91

FAWCETT FESTIVAL! Big FCA section with Golden Age artists **MARC SWAYZE & EMILIO SQUEGLIO**, and interviews with the **FAWCETT FAMILY!** Plus Part II of "The MAD Four-Color Wannabes of the 1950s," more on **DR. LAURETTA BENDER** and the teenage creations of **STEVE GERBER**, artist **JACK KATZ** spills Golden Age secrets to **JIM AMASH**, and more! New cover by **ORDWAY** and **SQUEGLIO!**

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #92

SWORD-AND-SORCERY, PART 3! DC's Sword of Sorcery by **O'NEIL, CHAYKIN, & SIMONSON** and Claw by **MICHELINIE & CHAN**, Hercules by **GLANZMAN**, Dagar by **GLUT & SANTOS**, Marvel S&S art by **BUSCEMA, KANE, KAYANAN, WRIGHTSON**, et al., and **JACK KATZ** on his classic First Kingdom! Plus **FCA, MR. MONSTER, STEVE GERBER's** fan-creations (part 3), and more! Cover by **RAFAEL KAYANAN!**

(100-page magazine) \$6.95 US
(Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #93

(NOW WITH 16 COLOR PAGES!) "Earth-Two—1961 to 1985!" with rare art by **INFANTINO, GIL KANE, ANDERSON, DELBO, ANDRU, BUCKLER, APARO, GRANDENETTI, and DILLIN**, interview with Golden/Silver Age DC editor **GEORGE KASHDAN**, plus **MICHAEL T. GILBERT** and **MR. MONSTER, STEVE GERBER, FCA (Fawcett Collectors of America)**, and a new cover by **INFANTINO** and **AMASH!**

(84-page magazine with COLOR)
\$7.95 US • (Digital edition) \$2.95



ALTER EGO #94

(NOW WITH 16 COLOR PAGES!) "Earth-Two Companion, Part III!" More on the 1963-1985 series that changed comics forever! The Huntress, Power Girl, Dr. Fate, Freedom Fighters, and more, with art by **ADAMS, APARO, AYERS, BUCKLER, GIFFEN, INFANTINO, KANE, NOVICK, SCHAFFENBERGER, SIMONSON, STANON, SWAN, TUSKA**, our **GEORGE KASHDAN** interview Part 2, **FCA**, and more! **STANON & GIORDANO** cover!

(84-page magazine with COLOR)
\$7.95 US • (Digital edition) \$2.95

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
Editorial Honor Roll
Jerry G. Bails (founder)
Ronn Foss, Biljo White
Mike Friedrich
Cover Artist
Mike Machlan
(after Paul Reinman)
Cover Colorist
Tom Ziuko

With Special Thanks to:

Heidi Amash
Bob Bailey
Mike W. Barr
Pat Bastienne
Alberto Becattini
John Benson
Dominic Bongo
Jerry K. Boyd
Bob Brodsky
Frank Brunner
Nick Caputo
Bill Croskey
Michaël Dewally
Michael Dunne
Mark Evanier
J. Fairfax
Shane Foley
Bob Fujitani
Jeff Gelb
David George
Janet Gilbert
Jennifer Hamerlinck
Roger Hill
Alan Hutchinson
Denis Kitchen
Mel Keefer
Bob Layton
Mell Lazarus
Jim Ludwig
Mike Machlan
Dan Makara
Bruce Mason
Darrell McNeil
Brian K. Morris
Lou Mougín
Mark Muller
Will Murray
Rik Offenberger
Jake Oster
Mrs. Edith Penty
John G. Pierce
Gene Reed
Trina Robbins
Ethan Roberts
Peggy Rosenberger
Steve Rude
Buddy Saunders
Anthony Snyder
Chris Squires
Desha Swayze
Marc Swayze
Dann Thomas
Kevin Tomaszewski
Michael Vance
Chris Ware
Brett Weiss
Steve Whitaker
Gregg Whitmore
Eddy Zeno



**NOW WITH
16 PAGES
OF COLOR!**

Contents

Writer/Editorial: Too Many Super Heroes? 2
Those Mighty, Mighty Crusaders 3
 Will Murray chronicles the Rise and Fall—and Rise and Fall and Rise—of Archie’s Silver Age super-hero group.
“Toby Press Was My College” 31
 Artist/writer/editor Mell Lazarus talks to Jim Amash about his 1940s-50s comic book career.
Tributes to Dick Giordano, Bill DuBay, Jim Mooney, Valerie Barclay . . . 55
Comic Crypt: “Super-Man Unmasked!” 59
 Michael T. Gilbert & Mr. Monster on Chris Ware’s oddball super-villain.
Comics Fandom Archive: Of Texas Trios, Wars, & Comics Shops. . . . 65
 Bill Schelly presents Brett Weiss’ interview with 1960s super-fan Buddy Saunders.
re: [comments & corrections] 70
FCA [Fawcett Collectors of America] #155. 73
 Mary Marvel and Marc Swayze—presented and annotated by P.C. Hamerlinck.

On Our Cover: Collector Michael Dunne kindly provided us with three tributes by pro artists to Paul Reinman’s cover for *The Mighty Crusaders* #4 (April 1966)—and we were pleased as perdition to run all three in this issue! The cover spot went to the rendering by Mike Machlan, who among other things was the inker/co-creator of *Infinity, Inc.* in the 1980s. Our only regret: to leave room for our A/E logo, we had to omit the smallish figure of the hero *Fireball* from the upper left of the drawing. But you still got plenty of super-heroes for your money—and besides, you can see the missing figure in living black-&-white on p. 20! [Heroes TM & ©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

Above: And here’s a rare specimen—the vintage (1965-67) Paul Reinman art to a *Mighty Crusaders* house ad featuring *Fly Man*, *Fly Girl*, *The Comet*, *Black Hood*, *The Shield*, *Dusty*, and *The Web*. Reprod’d from the original art. Thanks to dealer Anthony Snyder, whose ad can be seen on p. 54.
[©2010 Archie Comic Publications.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
**Dick Giordano,
Jim Mooney,
Valerie Barclay,
& Bill DuBay**



Alter Ego™ is published 8 times a year 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. Eight-issue subscriptions: \$60 US, \$85 Canada, \$107 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. ISSN: 1932-6890

“Too Many Super Heroes”

The above phrase is the title of the most famous/infamous, most archetypal story in the several-year history of Archie Comics’ grandiosely dubbed Mighty Comics Group.

You can read about *The Mighty Crusaders* #4—and even count the nearly two dozen costumed cut-ups who cascade through its color-splashed pages (with a couple of the heroes transformed into villains)—on pp. 17-19 of this issue.

Of course, as the guy who back in the early ’80s dreamed up DC’s *All-Star Squadron*, whose 60-plus members dwarfed even the Crusaders’ lineup, I should be the one to talk about “too many super-heroes,” right? But then, I’ve never had any quarrel with the basic concept of a sizable gang of long-underwear characters. It’s all in how you handle them.

For my own part: from a sales viewpoint, in my 67-issue series, I probably should’ve focused more than I did on a small core group of heroes—a handful of JSAers plus Johnny Quick, Liberty Belle, Robotman, maybe The Shining Knight, a few of the later “retro” characters. But, for better and/or for worse, I was more interested in creating a visual tapestry than a personality-driven storyline... and in being true to my history-based belief that, during a Second World War in which super-heroes had existed, President Franklin Roosevelt would’ve probably pushed them all to join a single organization responsible directly to him.

In the case of the rather briefer 1960s life of *The Mighty Crusaders* (including their pre-christening antics in the revived *Fly Man* comic), I suspect writer Jerry Siegel and his superiors were simply trying to develop, almost overnight, an amalgamation of virtually all the super-heroes who’d rampaged through the pages of MLJ Comics during the 1940s. The Archie folks probably wanted to catch up fast with Marvel’s two dozen or so key heroes... who of course had been launched one or at most a few at a time over the preceding several years.

Perhaps, apart from any other problems, it was all done a bit too quickly—so that *The Mighty Crusaders*, surfacing in the turbulent comic book world of the mid-1960s, experienced a four-color equivalent of “the bends,” that dangerous and painful condition suffered by deep-sea divers who come up for air too quickly.

Jerry and artist Paul Reinman have taken a lot of lumps from fans over the past nigh half-century. And they take a few more from comics historian Will Murray in the main piece which follows, as reprinted from a 1980s magazine in which he deliberately took a more fannish and less historical approach than is usual for him. So I asked Rik Offenberger, a freelance writer who’s also the public relations coordinator (whatever that means) for Archie Comics to add his own thoughts, which I’ve made a trio of sidebars to Will’s article—and Rik himself brought in a third voice, that of broadcaster, artist, and comics fan Chris Squires, to write about his own enthusiasm for *The Fly/Flyman* and *The Mighty Crusaders*.

These combined pieces also cover the earlier runs of *Adventures of The Fly*, *The Double Life of Private Strong*, *Adventures of The Jaguar*, and even Archie’s version of *The Shadow*—the 1959-64 predecessors of the Mighty Comics Group.

Together, they—added to Jim Amash’s conversation with Toby Press editor Mell Lazarus (who went on to create two popular, long-running comic strips)—made it impossible for us to include the fourth and final installment of Jim’s extra-long interview with the late DC editor George Kashdan, which we’ll get to (we promise!) in our October issue.

Then we’ll be back on track—till the *next* time!

Bestest,

Roy

COMING IN OCTOBER

#97

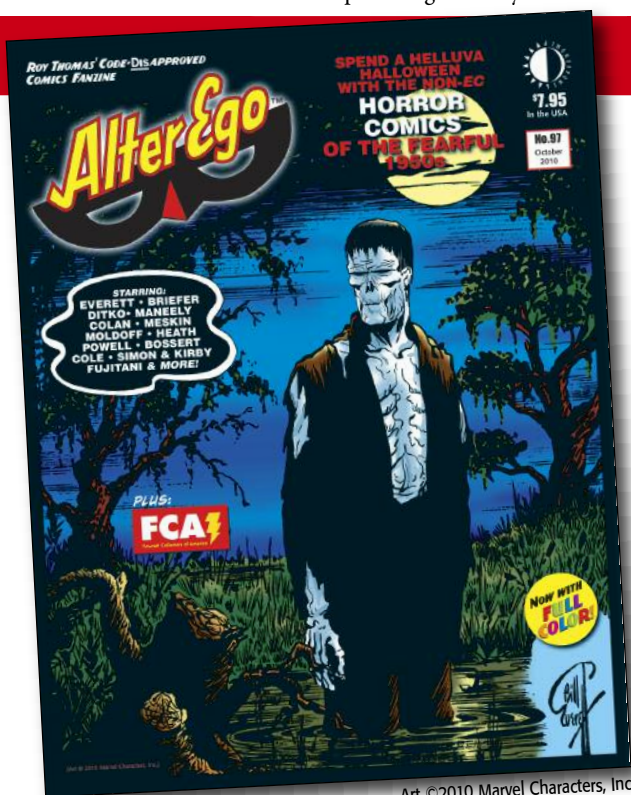
HALCYON HALLOWEEN HOOTENANNY! THE NON-EC HORROR COMICS OF THE 1950s!

- Creepy cover of Simon Garth, Zombie—by **WILD BILL EVERETT!**
- “The Other Guys!” Ominous overview—from *Menace* to *House of Mystery*—from *Adventures into the Unknown* to *Tomb of Terror*—from *Weird Tales* to weirder Wertham—with awe-inspiring art by **EVERETT • BRIEFER • DITKO • MANEELY • COLAN • MESKIN • MOLDOFF • HEATH • POWELL • COLE • NOSTRAND • SIMON & KIRBY • CAMERON • PALAIS • TUSKA • AVISON • DRAUT • HARRISON • KRIGSTEIN • LAZARUS • FUJITANI**, & many another—examined by **LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS!**
- “The Hand of Doom!” An incredible interview with one of horror’s most enduring stars, by **GARY BROWN**—with art by **KIRBY • KANE • BROWN • MOIRERA**, et al.!
- At last! The phantasmagorical finale of **JIM AMASH**’s colorful conversations with Golden/Silver Age DC editor/writer **GEORGE KASHDAN!**
- **FCA** with **BECK & SWAYZE—MICHAEL T. GILBERT** on “Clowns in the Comics!”—& **MORE!!**

Edited by **ROY THOMAS**

SUBSCRIBE NOW! Eight issues in the US: \$60 Standard, \$80 First Class (Canada: \$85, Elsewhere: \$107 Surface, \$155 Airmail).

NEW LOWER RATES FOR INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMERS! SAVE \$4 PER ISSUE!



Art ©2010 Marvel Characters, Inc.



TwoMorrows. Celebrating The Art & History Of Comics.

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

Those Mighty, Mighty Crusaders

The Rise And Fall—
And Rise And Fall
And Rise—Of
Archie's 1960s
Super-Hero Group

by Will Murray

A/E

EDITOR'S INTRO: Will Murray is the author of more than fifty novels, ranging

from Doc Savage to Nick Fury, and with artist Steve Ditko created the Unbeatable Squirrel Girl. He recently penned a history of Marvel for the Marvel Comics Golden Age Omnibus. He has written widely on the subject of comics for magazines, and in the following article has scribed a distinctly personal look at the Silver Age super-hero comics published by Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

This article was edited by Will from a piece that originally appeared in the magazine *Comic Feature* #56-57 (July & July 1987). Will says that, when we discussed reprinting the piece, he was tempted to rework it more than he did and take out the personal approach, but in the end opted against it. Thus, this article remains what it originally was: an informal, partly historical and partly nostalgic look at Archie's super-hero output, dealing largely with the late 1950s through the 1960s... as an adjunct to our index/study of the 1940s MLJ comics in *Alter Ego* #82...

Part I: Radio Comics

When I began collecting comics in the early 1960s, my allowance was a mere dollar a week. But comic books were only 12 cents. It was enough to buy all the DCs—my first love—and most of the Marvels. And a smattering of lesser titles from the Charlton, Dell, and ACG lines.

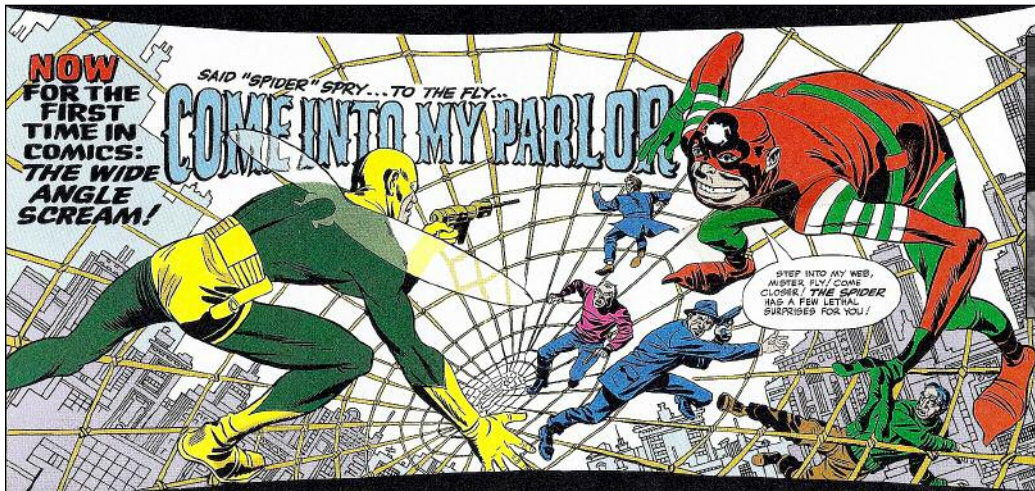


"Too Many Super Heroes!"

That was the highly appropriate name of the book-length story in *The Mighty Crusaders* #4 (April 1966), easily the best-known of all the group's Silver Age tales—so over the past few years collector (ε A/E benefactor) Michael Dunne has commissioned several artists to draw their own homages to its multi-costumed Paul Reinman cover. Mike Machlan's version appears on the cover of this issue of *A/E*... that of Bob Layton can be seen on p. 17... and here's a version done in 2007 in black-ε-white "wash" by the late great George Tuska, one of the earliest artists of *Adventures of The Fly*. If this doesn't put you in the mood for *Mighty Crusaders* madness, *nothing* will! Thanks to Michael D.—and to George, who gave us permission to use it some time before his recent passing. [Heroes TM ε ©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

High on my "smattering" list were the unlikely pair of *Adventures of The Fly* and *Adventures of The Jaguar*, products of the Archie Adventure line, formerly known as MLJ Comics, but for some reason now calling themselves Radio Comics. I bought those two titles for simple reasons: they were bright, colorful, and most importantly, between 1961 and 1964, they were practically the only super-hero comics not published by DC or Marvel.

They were also relentlessly anonymous. No writer credits were given, and the artist never signed his work—they were just very simple stories of



certainly not olive green, it lay somewhere in between. Definitely an insect green. I've rarely seen this specific hue before or since, and I'm told that in colorist parlance it's known as Y3BR2—which means that it's a blend of 50% yellow, 25% red and a solid blue. Not every comic book company had the palette to reproduce it properly. Apparently it was formulated to mimic the iridescent green of the common housefly.

By contrast, The Jaguar's costume was a bright red, relieved only by spotted leopard-skin boots and belt, with a black jaguar symbol etched on his chest. He was a sort of animal-powered version of The Fly, and John Rosenberger originated him, in concert with his uncredited "Fly" scripter, Robert Bernstein. I suspect

Fly On The Wall

The last hurrah of the fabled team of Joe Simon & Jack Kirby (who are seen l. to r. in photo at left) was *Adventures of The Fly* in 1959... even if their actual partnership had broken up a few years earlier. Their two-page "Wide Angle Scream" splash panel appeared in issue #1 (Aug. '59), and is reprinted from the 2004 trade paperback *The Adventures of The Fly...* while the oft-reprinted 1940 snapshot of S&K appeared in Joe's invaluable historical 1990/2003 memoir *The Comic Book Makers*.

The longest-lived *Fly* artist, by far, was John Rosenberger, seen below in a photo printed with Roger Hill's biography of the artist in *A/E* #23; it had been provided to Roger by the artist's widow, Peggy Rosenberger. Next to the photo is JR's lead splash from *Adventures of The Fly* #28 (Oct. 1963), the third-from-last issue. Script attributed to Robert Bernstein. [Fly pages ©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

a couple of well-drawn and fairly new super-heroes. I never ran across any of the pre-1961 issues of either title, so I never suspected that it hadn't always been that way. Nor did I have an inkling that the figure of The Fly buzzing out of the magazine's bold logo—it *had* to be bold because the title was so wimpy—was actually drawn by no less than Jack Kirby. But I get ahead of my story.

Adventures of The Fly was the older of the two titles—its first issue had had a cover date of Aug. 1959—and my favorite of the pair. Blond attorney Thomas Troy possessed a magic ring which, when he rubbed it in the fashion of Aladdin and his magic lamp, transformed him into the heroic Fly. Clad in a spiffy green and yellow outfit, a buzz gun hanging at his hip, and clear fly wings growing out of his shoulders, he was half-man, half-insect. The Fly could fly, spin hard steel cocoons around his body, and communicate with an obedient insect world. He also possessed the proportionate strength of an insect—a super-power analogy that went back to Superman's earliest days. In many respects, The Fly was an anticipation of Marvel's Spider-Man and Ant-Man, two characters on which Jack Kirby would later claim co-creator status.

The stories were simple and straightforward, but in truth, dull. The Fly fought the usual hoods, an arch-enemy uninspiredly called The Spider, and hosts of alien invaders. Alien invaders were a *Fly* staple. Curiously, almost all of them were similar saurian bipeds armed with death rays, doom robots, and names like Lxo III, Roxr, and Bra-kr. But the art sparkled. It was mostly the work of John Rosenberger, now deceased, who drew in what might be described as the Silver Age DC house style—crisp and clear of line and devoid of frills—only he was doing it mostly for Archie/Radio.

One thing that fascinated me was The Fly's costume. It was a bright yellow and green. But no ordinary green. Not quite blue-green, and

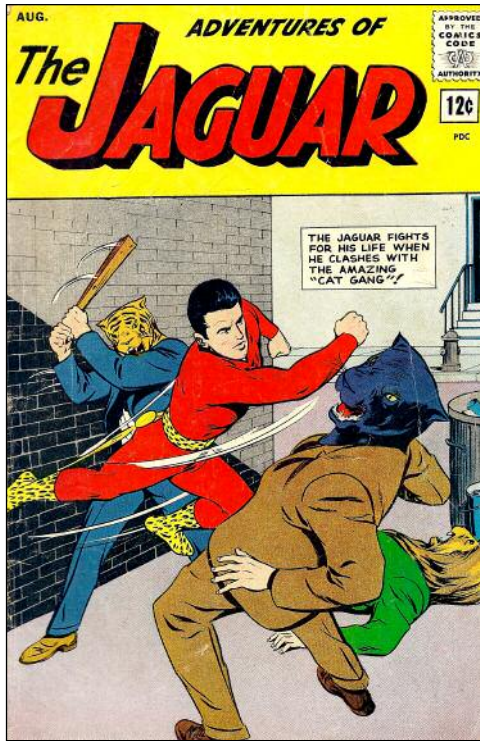


their inspiration for the character came from the Jaguar luxury sports car, which in the late 1950s was taking America by storm.

As revealed in his first issue (dated Sept. 1961), The Jaguar was really Ralph Hardy, a zoologist who stumbled upon an Inca temple in Peru while hunting the fabled white jaguar. In the ruins, he discovered a Jaguar Belt. Donning it, he became The Jaguar, imbued with animal strength, invincibility, and the power to telepathically communicate with all animals. He added a pair of nucleon-jet energy pods to his belt and thus acquired the un-jaguarlike power of flight. How a zoologist possessed the technical genius to invent a flying belt was never addressed.

Where The Fly's magical transformation included a yellow aviator-style helmet and goggles to conceal his true identity, when Ralph Hardy became The Jaguar, his pencil-thin Clark Gable mustache simply—disappeared. The transformation obviously worked in the same suspension-of-disbelief way that Clark Kent' glasses confused everybody's perception of Superman's rugged face.

In fact, there were a lot of Superman touches to the Jaguar series. He had a snooty girlfriend, Jill Ross, who was pretty sure The Jaguar was really Ralph. And, like Superman's Lois Lane, whom she more than resembled, Jill Ross had plenty of competition. There was the green-skinned sea siren Kree-Nal, who loved The Jaguar with the same watery



Driving A Jag

The team of Rosenberger & Bernstein likewise produced *Adventures of The Jaguar*. Pictured are the cover of #13 (Aug. 1963) and the "Black Hood Teaches Karate" page from the selfsame issue. The scripter of the latter page is unknown. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

AS RALPH HARDY HEARS THE TERRIFIED SHRIEK...

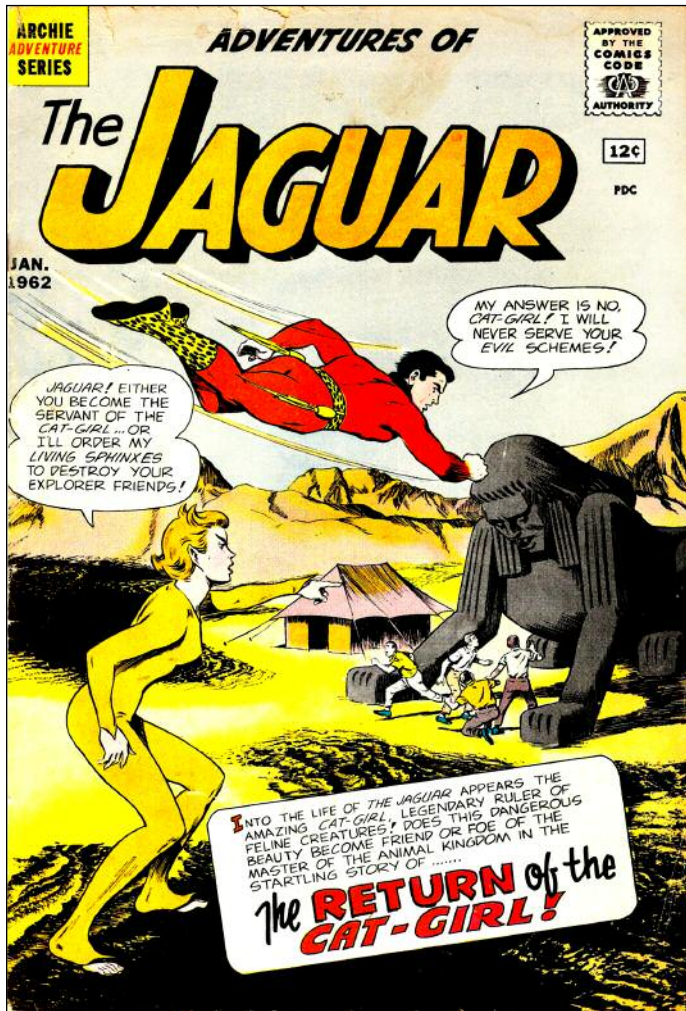


(Jaguar) Man And Superman

(Left:) Though it doesn't ever seem to have been mentioned in dialogue, Ralph Hardy's mustache magically disappeared when he donned his Jaguar Belt, as per these not-quite-sequential panels from #1 (Sept. 1961). As Will writes, this was roughly the equivalent of Clark Kent taking off his glasses and combing his hair a bit differently and nobody discovering his secret identity. Script by Bernstein, art by Rosenberger.

(Right:) Superman had Lois Lane—and occasionally Lana Lang—and, briefly, Lori Lemaris. Rosenberger's cover for *Adventures of The Jaguar* #7 (July 1962) depicts his trio of "love interests"—clockwise from top left, The sea-born Kree-Nal, Jill Ross, and Cat-Girl. Thanks to Gregg Whitmore for both scans. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]





Love Sphinx!

Cat-Girl (a.k.a. Cat Girl) had looked a wee bit different when she first appeared, on the cover of *Adventures of The Jaguar* #4, (Jan. 1962). Thanks to Gregg Whitmore. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

fervor that mermaid Lori Lemaris loved the Man of Steel.

Then there was Cat-Girl.

In many ways Cat-Girl was more intriguing than even The Jaguar. The modern reincarnation of the Sphinx, she first appeared in *Adventures of The Fly* #9 (Nov. 1960) as a villainess who attempted to enslave that book's hero. Failing that, she turned her sights on her natural counterpart, The Jaguar. In the process she fell victim to evil entities from a two-dimensional world, and the Jaguar had to rescue her. Naturally, she fell in love with him—and, for the rest of the series, was disposed toward trickery and mischief in her quest to become Mrs. Jaguar. The pair first met in *Adventures of The Jaguar* #4 (Jan. 1962), over a year after her introduction in *The Fly*.

Cat-Girl possessed supernatural powers such as flight and invisibility, as well as telepathic control over felines. She also changed costume a lot, first appearing in a tawny leotard, adding leopard-skin trim after her first encounter with The Jaguar, then changing to a blue miniskirt and tiger(!)-striped tunic, and, in a girlish touch, a 1950s ponytail. Despite that, there was more than a touch of dominatrix to her bad-girl persona, which set her apart from comic book femme fatales of that more innocent era.

In *Adventures of The Jaguar* #13, Cat-Girl reappeared as society girl Lydia Fellin, having lost her supernatural powers as a result of strontium buildup from atmospheric nuclear tests. She also lost her cougar-colored

ponytail when her sandy hair turned as black as an unlucky cat. But she still pined for The Jaguar and helped him to fight the Cat Gang. It looked like the beginning of a new chapter in their lives, but *The Jaguar's* magazine was cancelled a mere two issues later. Alas for ongoing subplots.

Superman-like plot devices were also a *Fly* staple. He wasn't burdened with a snooty girlfriend, but he did inherit the equivalent to a Supergirl. Actress Kim Brand (think Kim Novak) first appeared in issue #13 in 1961. The Fly happened to save her life when she fell from a roof and he caught her—a standard "Superman" story opening—and they became friendly. Elsewhere in that issue, an ad alerted readers to watch for first appearance of Fly Girl in the very next issue. (Three guess who *that* was likely to be!)

Our hero again bumps into Kim Brand in *Fly* #14 and their friendship—it was never a romantic interest—resumes. Along comes the Metal Monster, an alien whose powers strikingly resemble those of future *Hulk* villain The Metal Master, but who looks like a silver robot with an ice cube for a head. While The Fly has his hands full fighting off The Metal Monster's robotic menaces, Kim receives an unexpected visitation.

That visitor is Turan, the self-styled emissary from the Fly Dimension. He explains that, years ago, he appeared before Thomas Troy and presented him with the magic ring that transmogrified—is there a better word?—him into The Fly. Turan, who looks like a man except for his insectlike complex eyes and costume, tells Kim that The Fly needs a helper. And you're it, honey.

In the space of a page, Kim Brand becomes Fly Girl—or, in alternating stories, Fly-Girl with a hyphen. (If I ever become a super-hero, I hope my origin is that painless!) Her costume is identical to The Fly's except for a yellow domino mask and the lack of a helmet impeding her long hair from flowing in the wind. Good thing, too. She was a doll. Together, The Fly and Fly Girl mop up The Metal Monster and begin their new joint career. Typically, they teamed up at least once an issue, but Fly Girl always had a five-page solo story at the back of the book.

Some of my favorite stories of this period actually involved Fly Girl. Like the time a trio of juvenile delinquents glogged her magic ring and suddenly she had to defeat three evil Fly Girls or she'd never be able to revert to normal Kim Brand again.

It should go without saying that Fly Girl's powers were identical to those of The Fly—including a deadly weakness. Both were vulnerable to chlordane, a component of insecticides. It was their kryptonite. It was even colored kryptonite green—and was also as overused as kryptonite, which is strange, because The Jaguar had no specific weakness, and that never seemed to get in the way of a good story in his title.

The Fly and The Jaguar continued their roughly parallel adventures, which in turn were nearly identical to Superman's adventures, until 1963 when, after 15 issues, *Adventures of The Jaguar* was quietly cancelled.

The Fly kept going, but he lost John Rosenberger's liquid-lined artwork when that artist took on two new Radio Comics titles, the *Dr. Kildare*-inspired *Young Dr. Masters* and a revival of *The Shadow*. Artist John Giunta replaced him on *The Fly*. At that time, I didn't warm to Giunta's work. It was thin, scratchy, and unappealing. Little did I dream that Giunta was in fact returning to the series after a long absence.

There was a *lot* I little dreamed, because when Turan told Kim Brand the story of how he'd come to give Thomas Troy the magic Fly Ring, he left out a teensy little fact: he hadn't gifted it to Thomas Troy, attorney at law—but to little Tommy Troy, orphan!

That tale had been told in the *Adventures of The Fly* #1, cover-dated August, 1959. Young Tommy Troy is shipped from an orphanage to live with Ben and Abigail March, reputed wizards. The Marches work the little tyke pretty hard, and one day he seeks refuge in their dusty attic, where he finds the Fly Ring caught in a spider web. Rubbing it, he is astonished

when Turan appears, explaining that his people originally ruled the Earth with magic. But wars and catastrophes ruined their civilization. Some Fly people were reduced to mere houseflies, but others escaped to another dimension, where they rule anew.

Turan explains that he has been searching for someone “pure of heart” to fight injustice on earth. By rubbing the Fly Ring, Tommy is projected into the Fly world, but assumes the form of the adult Fly on Earth. I’m not clear how the metaphysics of that works, because in all subsequent issues, Tommy simply becomes The Fly à la Billy Batson and Captain Marvel. That’s how the character’s creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, explained it back in 1959.

I would never have dreamed that Jack Kirby, who in my early collecting days was responsible for the *Fantastic Four*, had co-originated *The Fly*, but he had. I should have suspected as much, I suppose. Somewhere around 1963, I found a back copy of Radio Comics’ *The Double Life of Private Strong* #1 (June 1959). A Simon & Kirby production, it premiered two months before *Adventures of The Fly*. It was a revival of MLJ’s patriotic super-hero from the 1940s, *The Shield*, except that the character in costume and origin now closely resembled Simon & Kirby’s Captain America in virtually all respects expect the lack of a... shield.

No matter. This Shield was Lancelot Strong, an orphan adopted by a farm couple who discover he has superhuman powers. Lancelot grows up, joins the Army as a bumbling private, and battles injustice Captain



Fly Away Home!
While John Rosenberger drew the lead story in *Adventures of The Fly* #28, as seen a few pages back, it was Golden Age artist John Giunta—one of the first real “comics fans” to turn pro in the early 1940s—who drew the backup “Fly” tale in that same issue. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications.]



They Say Women Can’t Keep A Secret...
Fly Girl, a.k.a. Kim Brand, reveals her secret identity to The Fly in her debut appearance in costume, in *Adventures of The Fly* #14 (Sept. 1961). Script by Bernstein, art by Rosenberger. Thanks to Gregg Whitmore. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

America-style—with a little of Simon & Kirby’s Fighting American thrown in. I suppose not calling the comic book *The Shield* hurt sales, and not reviving the original Shield—who in fact predated Captain America by quite a few months—annoyed some Golden Age fans. But most importantly, Simon & Kirby merely launched the character, hiring a battery of other talents to draw some of the stories for them. That may have doomed the magazine, although the story goes that DC Comics objected to the character on the debatable ground that his powers suggested a star-spangled Superman. *The Double Life of Private Strong* died with issue #2.

Adventures of The Fly was a similar packaging job. Simon & Kirby dropped out after only four issues. With the fifth, Robert Bernstein took on the scripting chores. The artists ran the gamut from the forgotten Bill Vigoda to John Giunta. With issue #5, Giunta took over the art chores completely. In that issue, Tommy Troy and the Marches disappear—and the adult Thomas Troy, lawyer, stands in his place.

Bernstein and Giunta redefined the series and perhaps saved it from early extinction. It was during these 1960 issues that Cat-Girl first appeared. In issue #7, the company’s greatest Golden Age hero returned in a story called “The Fly and The Black Hood Join Forces!” Next issue, The Fly teamed up with a rather bland non-Kirby Shield. The Shield seldom appeared after that, but Black Hood emerged as a frequent drop-in guest.

Black Hood was no Superman as super-heroes went, but back in his heyday (the 1940s) the acrobatic Black Hood, alias patrolman Kip Burland, had had his own comic book, pulp magazine, and even radio program—the latter distinction one he shared with Archie Andrews. I imagine the name Radio Comics is a holdover from those halcyon years.

Starting with issue #11 (May 1961), John Rosenberger took over the art, and the golden age of *The Fly*—as far as I’m concerned—had commenced. Regardless of how limp Bernstein’s scripts were, his stories were always a feast for the eyes. In them, The Fly fought the colorful menaces that were a hallmark of the Bernstein-Rosenberger years. In fact, The Fly and Fly Girl acquired such a collection of foes that, in issue #21,

six of the worst, including The Spider and The Metal Monster, teamed up as the Anti-Fly League. Over the next several issues they spun a wheel of fortune-like pointer to see who would next take a crack as the stub-winged duo. One by one, they failed. Evidently, they became dispirited and prematurely gave up their plans, for the idea petered out before every member had his or her shot. You'd have thought they would have all ganged up at once for a sure-fire victory. But Silver age villains weren't very sophisticated.

It was probably no coincidence that, six months before the Anti-Fly League surfaced, Superman had had his first encounter with a very similar group, who called themselves the Superman Revenge Squad.

WHO IS THIS MAN? WHAT IS HE? WHAT IS THE INCREDIBLE SECRET THAT MAKES HIM THE MOST FEARSOME FIGHTING MACHINE EVER ENCOUNTERED IN THE BATTLE FOR JUSTICE?

MEET LANCELOT STRONG

THE MAN WITH THE DOUBLE LIFE!

SEE HIM HURL BOLTS OF LIGHTNING GENERATED IN HIS OWN BODY...

...GASP AT THE REFLEXES THAT DEFEAT THE DEADLIEST WEAPONS AT POINT BLANK RANGE!

WATCH HIM ADAPT TO TEMPERATURES IN WHICH NOTHING CAN STAY ALIVE!

FOLLOW HIM INTO UNDERSEA DEPTHS WHERE NO MAN CAN FOLLOW—BEGIN THE AMAZING, SPINE-TINGLING ADVENTURES OF THE SWIFTER—A NEW AND DIFFERENT TYPE OF HERO WHO PACKS THE PUNCH OF A HYDROGEN BOMB!

BEGIN HIS STORY NOW—ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES!

DARKNESS CANNOT STOP HIM—NO MORE THAN IT DOES THE BAT, WHOSE UNCAINNY INSTINCT IS MORE ACCURATE THAN RADAR!

Private Matters

Joe Simon and Jack Kirby handled the first issue of *The Double Life of Private Strong* themselves, as per the introductory "powers page" above—but by #2 (Aug. 1959), George Tuska (top right) was rung in to pencil two of the stories. Kirby, in fact, contributed no art to the second issue except for the cover.

The same "Trojan Horse" technique was employed for *Adventures of The Fly*, as well—as witness the page at right drawn by Bob Powell for issue #3 (Nov. 1959). Reprod'd from a scan of the original art, courtesy of Ethan Roberts. Incidentally, Sol Brodsky is erroneously listed as the artist of this story in the 2004 trade paperback collection of the same name.

©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

THE SHIELD

UPSY DAISY

Introducing PEE WEE,
Private Strong's Army Buddy

FLY-3-#20

WHILE DOWN ON THE STREET, ALICE LAKE AND HER LITTLE SISTER DOLLY, DRIVE THROUGH TOWN...

ALICE! LOOK UP AHEAD!

QUICKLY! GET OUT-- AND AWAY FROM HERE!

LOOK, ALICE! IT'S THE FLY! HE'S GOING AFTER THAT MONSTER!

AS IF STRUCK BY THE RECOIL OF A CANNON, THE FLY IS EASILY SLAMMED ASIDE BY ONE POWERFUL HAND.

THAT GUY'S AS HARD AS STEEL--AND HAS THE FORCE TO BOUNCE ME AROUND LIKE A PINGPONG BALL! BUT..

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GIVE HIM A DOSE OF MY BUZZ GUN!



Be My Guest!

The Black Hood and The Shield popped up in team-up tales in *Adventures of The Fly* #7 & #8 (July & Sept. 1960), with stories by Robert Benstein and art by John Giunta. Thanks to Gregg Whitmore. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

Evidently, sales took off during the Bernstein/Rosenberger tenure, because the companion *Jaguar* title was launched in September of 1961—the very same month Fly Girl debuted. All three super-heroes grew so popular they took turns appearing in *Pep Comics* and *Laugh Comics* between stories featuring Archie Andrews and his pals. But that era, too, was short-lived. The last of these was printed late in 1963. An inventory story from an unpublished issue of *Adventures of The Jaguar*, it took him back to his origin.

The tale was called “The Return of the White Jaguar” and it appeared in *Pep* for January 1964. Back in Peru, Hardy and his group are waylaid by bandits who make off with his wallet and Jaguar Belt. Tracking them to the Inca temple where he had originally found the magic Jaguar Belt, Hardy comes into the sights of a sniper when the White Jaguar itself appears out of nowhere and cuffs the sniper into fleeing for his life. Other bandits open fire, but the rounds go right through the supernatural creature.

Three's Company

While battling the Anti-Fly League in the course of *Adventures of The Fly* #23 (Nov. 1962), Fly Girl met The Jaguar—who was pretending to be The Fly so the latter could go off on a mission to the Fly Dimension. Shades of Superman and Batman in many a *World's Finest Comics* saga! Script by Benstein, art by Rosenberger. Thanks to Gregg Whitmore. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]





A Pep-py Jaguar

This page of original John Rosenberger art from the "Jaguar" story that was printed in *Pep Comics* #157 (Sept. 1962) is courtesy of Ethan Roberts. The writer may—or may not—have been Robert Bernstein. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

When the bandits are all felled, the White Jaguar picks up the Jaguar Belt in its mouth and offers it to Hardy. So ends the original career of The Jaguar, exactly where it all began.

After *The Jaguar* had bitten the dust and John Giunta resumed his *Fly* art chores, things went downhill. The Spider returned, but he was no longer the roly-poly costumed Spider Spry of the Simon & Kirby era, but a bald master criminal who bore a suspicious resemblance to the '60s version of Lex Luthor—right down to the habitual prison gray uniform. Coincidence? I doubt it. For the new scripter was no less than Jerry Siegel, co-creator of "Superman," who did most of the scripts in *Adventures of The Fly* #29 and #30.

One unusual story in *Fly* #30 introduced the handsome rainbow-helmeted Comet, a native of the planet Altrox, who came to Earth to marry Fly Girl. But Fly Girl's annoying suspicions—she thinks he might be an alien invader come to trick her—put him off, and he departed in disgust. The Comet was actually a revival of a Golden Age hero who had worn a very different costume in the old MLJ days.

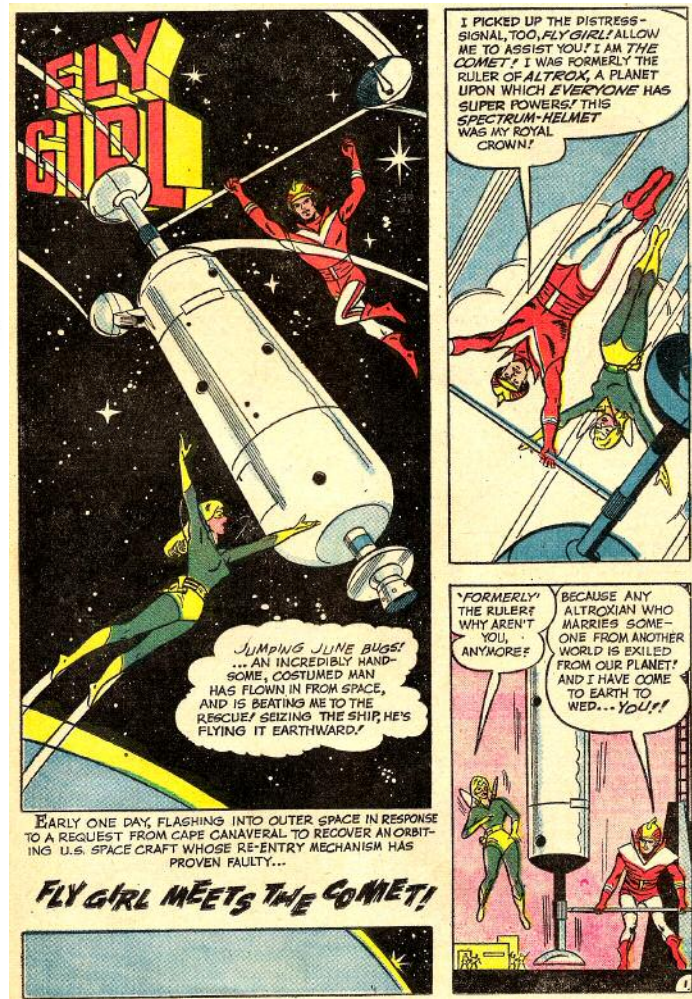
This was the final story in the last issue of *Adventures of The Fly*. Ten months had passed between the previous issue and this one. So clearly the title was limping along until the flyswatter of cancellation struck.

John Rosenberger went to work for DC Comics. Robert Bernstein jumped over to Marvel, where, as "R. Berns," he scripted early "Iron Man" and "Thor" epics before disappearing from the field. Earlier in his career, he had scripted "Captain America" and other Atlas features for Stan Lee.

It was later revealed by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby that "The Fly" was a reinvention of a concept their studio had developed with Captain Marvel's C.C. Beck. When Archie's John Goldwater had asked them in the late '50s for some new super-heroes, they had salvaged one called "The Silver Spider" and redrawn him as "The Fly," taking the name from the famous 1958 science-fiction/horror film. Costume elements from another aborted Simon & Kirby concept, "Night Fighter," were added to the mix.

Further, Simon has recounted how he and Kirby and their artists were booted off *The Fly* in favor of talents willing to emulate the DC house look. Kirby went over to Timely (not yet called Marvel), where he has claimed that he offered still another version of "The Silver Spider" to Stan Lee. Out of this came "Spider-Man," certainly the most successful super-hero since Captain Marvel. [A/E EDITOR'S NOTE: *Respect Joe Simon greatly though I do, and without a suspicion in the world that Joe is being anything less than 100% forthright when he relates the story in his book The Comic Book Makers, I see the connection between "The Silver Spider" and "Spider-Man" as being considerably more tenuous and debatable than Will's article suggests.*]

[Continued on p. 12]



On, Comet...!

"Superman" co-creator Jerry Siegel wrote and John Giunta drew this "Fly Girl" story from *Adventure of The Fly* #30 (Oct. 1964) that introduced a new and quite different character using the name of the 1940s MLJ hero The Comet. Thanks to Gregg Whitmore. [©2010 Archie Comic Publications, Inc.]

“Toby Press Was My College”

The Comic Book Career Of MELL LAZARUS, Creator Of *Miss Peach* And *Momma*

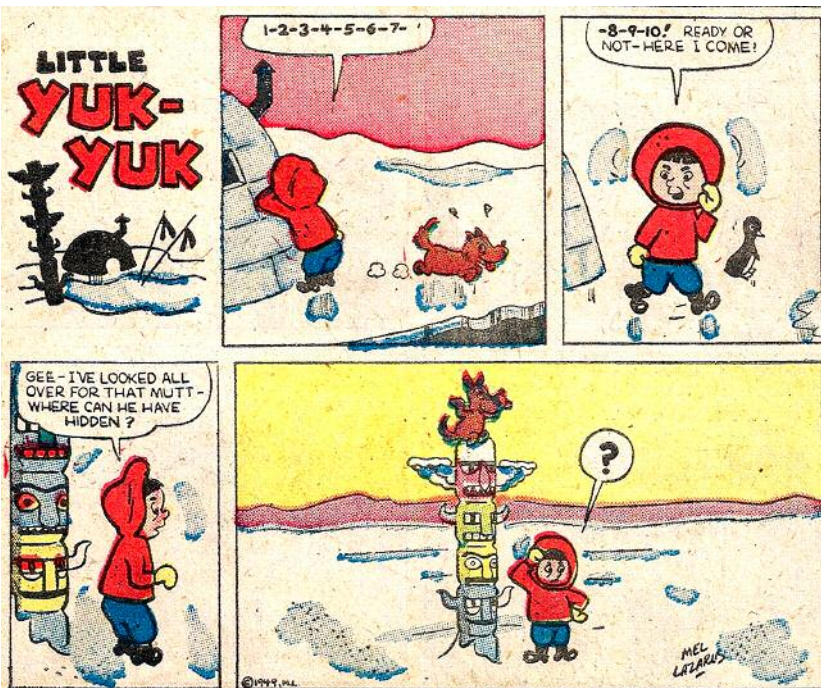
Conducted by Jim Amash

Transcribed by Brian K. Morris

Since 1957, Mell Lazarus has tickled our funnybones with his *Miss Peach* and *Momma* newspaper comic strips. But few readers know that Mell's previous job was being the editor at Toby Press, a comic book company which was owned by Al Capp of *Li'l Abner* fame. Mell oversaw a lot of good comics during the four-plus years he worked there, from the various *Li'l Abner* spin-offs to John Wayne, The Black Knight, Billy the Kid, and many more. Mell even wrote a satirical novel about his time at Toby, titled *The Boss Is Crazy, Too!* But, just for us, Mell here takes a more serious look at his time there, for which we thank him. We also appreciate his patience in waiting as long as he has for us to get his interview into print. Thanks go also to Mark Evanier for giving me Mell's phone number several years ago. —Jim.

“Nobody Had Any Money—Everybody Stayed Home”

MELL LAZARUS: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, during the Great Depression. Literally, socially, there was nothing to do. Nobody had any money—everybody stayed home. When I say “nothing to do,” there was nothing exciting or expensive to occupy our interests, but we had great times. I had a marvelous older sister and parents: intelligent, funny people. I had no toys, so I had to do something. I discovered pencils, and they would take a little extra money, and we had a lot of newspapers in New York at the time. My dad used to buy me the Sunday newspapers every week, which only cost a few pennies each. I read them and copied them, and learned to read before starting school from comics such as *The Katzenjammer Kids* and *Slim Jim*. What grabbed me in the first place was the idea that somebody drew these strips. I had no sense of the business of it all, but I knew somebody had to draw them. At the age of five or six, it occurred to me that when you grow up, you have to have something important to do. And drawing newspaper strips was what I wanted to do.



JIM AMASH: You were born in '27, so you were the right age to see comic books when they started coming out.

LAZARUS: Yes, but to be honest, they never fascinated me. In terms of comic books, I was more intrigued by the anthology comics—like *Famous*

Mell Lazarus—From The '50s To Last Week

Mell Lazarus, circa the 1970s—flanked by a half-pager he wrote and drew for a 1950ish issue of Toby Press' *Al Capp's Li'l Abner* comic book, and his *Momma* newspaper strip for May 11, 2010. Thanks to Mell for the daily, and to Bruce Mason for the photo and “*Li'l Yuk-Yuk*.” [*Momma* ©2010 Mell Lazarus; other art ©2010 the respective copyright holders.]



CREATORS.COM / © 2010 MELL LAZARUS

Funnies—wherein the syndicates United Features or King Features would publish a comic book dedicated to reprinting their own strips, as opposed to super-hero features, which never grabbed me. I don't know whether it was because I couldn't really draw that well, or I just enjoyed the "comic" comic books.

JA: Nearly every humor cartoonist I've interviewed told me the same thing. And nearly every adventure artist I've talked to preferred adventure strips.

LAZARUS: I knew I was never going to be flying to Mars or trudging through the jungle. Of course, *Tarzan* fascinated me, but no, I was a bigfoot cartoonist even before I knew I was.

JA: You graduated from high school in '43?

LAZARUS: I spent two years in high school. I would have graduated in '45, but I quit high school in '43. There was a rather large war going on... it was in all the papers. [Jim laughs] It was a given that, two years from then, if the war was still on—and we had no indication that it wouldn't be—I knew I'd be in the military one way or another. So I quit high school. My parents allowed me to, which is astonishing. They were incredible people, both self-educated. They both had a high school education—everything else they learned, they taught themselves. My mother was a great grammarian. Although she was born in Eastern Europe, she came over when she was young, and spoke perfect English. She gave me a real love for language and taught me how to speak it properly. Then along with a couple of very stern English teachers in the New York City system, which was quite good at the time, I became fascinated by words and funny pictures, a great combination.

"I Endeavored To Freelance"

JA: What did you do when you left high school?

LAZARUS: I freelanced. Actually, I endeavored to freelance. I had a couple of little jobs, like delivering packages and things, but essentially, I wanted to draw the filler pages for comic books. I felt at that time that practically everyone else of age was in the service, and there seemed to be a shortage, because a lot of the stuff that was being done in the comic books was really crappy. So I started drawing things like "Little Willie" and took a couple of pages to Holyoke Press, who published *The Blue Beetle*. I actually sold a couple of pages of "Little Willie" to them at three bucks apiece. I was overpaid. They were terrible; totally simplistic and very badly drawn. The jokes were simple and silly, but I saw my stuff in print and was hooked. I loved every step of the process. I wanted to see the engraving plates that they made! I thought, "My God, what a career. Draw a picture, it gets turned into metal, and then it's printed on paper. In color, no less."



I Like "Iceberg Ike"—"Little Willie," Maybe Not So Much!

Mel Lazarus may have felt he was "overpaid" in getting paid at all for his "Little Willie" gags—but he needn't apologize for cashing checks for both it and "Iceberg Ike." Both appeared in Holyoke issues of *Blue Beetle*, the former in #22 (June 1943). Note that the cartoonist then spelled his first name with just one "l." [©2010 the respective copyright holders.]

JA: I have you as doing three series for Holyoke: "Little Willie," "Mister Grouch," and "Iceberg Ike."

LAZARUS: I don't remember "Mr. Grouch" or "Iceberg Ike." Isn't that odd?

JA: Not really. I've interviewed a lot of people who don't remember every feature they did. And of course, we're talking 60 years ago, so I can understand that. Who hired you at Holyoke?

LAZARUS: S. Philip Steinberg. My impression of him was that he was not really in that business, that he was doing a friend a favor. I mean, this is just based on his appearance. He was so different from anyone that I tended to bump into in that business. He was very quiet and very refined; impeccably dressed and very conservative. He just came in and sat there. He was there every time I went up. He was very nice, a real gentleman, a real old school gentleman. He came from Boston, and had a small office in the Graybar Building in New York City. I think he felt sorry for me.

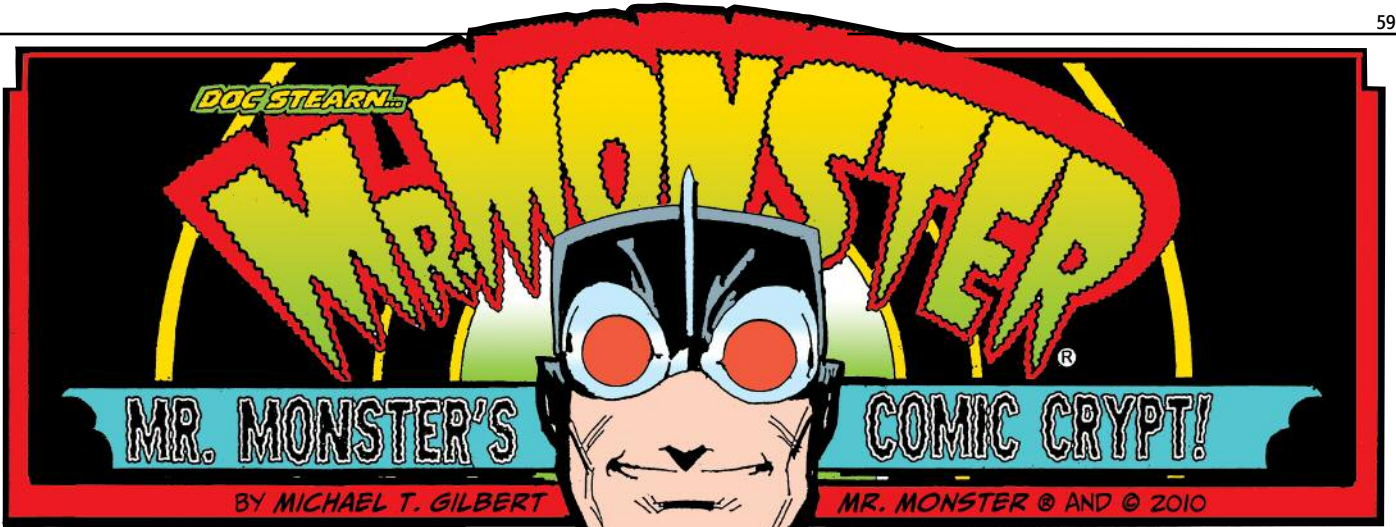
JA: Well, he was also going to get something and get it cheap, even if it wasn't that great, which would help their profitability.

LAZARUS: Probably. Yeah, three bucks—I went wild. "I'm getting paid!" It was a real step for me, because I remember saying to my mother, "Now, when I go to the syndicates, I'll have a leg to stand on." [laughs]

JA: Well, there's truth to it, because you could always have gotten hired as an apprentice, if nothing else. The features you did for Holyoke: did you letter them, too?

LAZARUS: Yes, and they didn't last very long, I must tell you. I think *Blue Beetle* was bi-monthly. I was only in a few issues.

JA: Did you meet anyone else at Holyoke?



IN 1994, CARTOONIST CHRIS WARE PRODUCED THE FIRST ISSUE OF HIS AWARD-WINNING THE ACME NOVELTY LIBRARY COMIC SERIES -- STARRING JIMMY CORRIGAN, (ALLEGEDLY THE SMARTEST KID ON EARTH!). A SECOND CHARACTER SOON APPEARED, BEARING A DISTURBING SIMILARITY TO A CERTAIN BELOVED HERO.

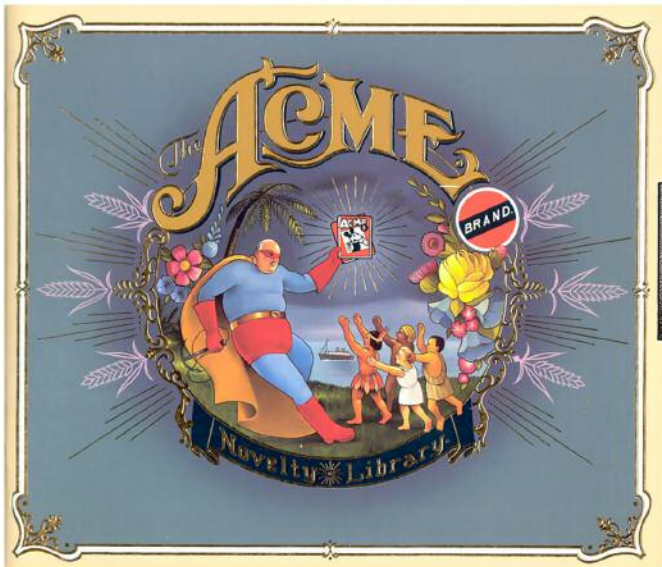
YES, TO ALL APPEARANCES SUPERMAN EMERGED AS A CONTINUING CHARACTER IN THE SERIES. BUT WAS HE REALLY?



NO! THOUGH OFTEN REFERRED TO AS SUPERMAN OR SUPER-MAN, CLOSER EXAMINATION REVEALS THAT UNLIKE THE GENUINE ARTICLE, WARE'S HERO SPORTS RED GLOVES AND A MASK. HE'S ALSO A TAD MORE PUDGY THAN DC'S MAN OF MIGHT! POW! TAKE THAT, DC LAWYERS!

SO WHO IS THIS CHEAP IMITATION FOISTED UPON AN UNSUSPECTING PUBLIC BY THIS WARE FELLOW? THE ANSWER, READERS, IS MORE SORDID THAN EVEN I, MR. MONSTER, SUSPECTED!

WE'VE DUG INTO THE DARKEST RECESSES OF COMIC BOOK HISTORY, AND TO UNCOVER THE SORRY SECRETS OF ...



Man And Super-man

(On this page:) The Acme Novelty Library #10 features a scene inspired by a famous sequence in Action Comics #1. The cover of Acme #8 shows a godlike Super-Man and his devoted fans. That's him, too, holding the flashlight from issue #2, and a portrait from the first issue. Since turnabout is fair play, the Chris Ware pose at top center has even been adapted by MTG as Mr. Monster! [Acme Novelty Library art & story ©2010 Chris Ware; Mr. Monster TM & ©2010 Michael T. Gilbert.]

Of Texas Trios, Wars, And Comics Shops

An Interview With BUDDY SAUNDERS About His Fifty Years In Fandom

Conducted & Transcribed by Brett Weiss

Introduction by Bill Schelly, CFA Editor

Today, Buddy Saunders is best known as the owner of Lone Star Comics, an eight-store chain in the Dallas/Fort Worth Area. He also runs www.mycomicshop.com, an on-line comic book store that boasts the world's largest selection of back issue comics.

Fans who were around in the 1960s, however, will remember Buddy as one of the premiere artists in early comic fandom, and as a member of the legendary Texas Trio, publishers of the very popular *Star-Studded Comics*, perhaps the premier source of amateur comic strips of the day. Others may be familiar with Buddy's writing, which has been substantial; he co-authored the paperback novel *The Texas-Israeli War: 1999*, wrote a number of stories for *Creepy* and other Warren magazines, and in 1976 was nominated for a Nebula Award for his short story "Back to the Stone Age."

Businessman... fan artist and publisher... successful professional writer. All these aspects of Buddy's life are explored in Brett Weiss's interview with the man, which begins anon!

BRETT WEISS: In 1974, Del Rey published *The Texas-Israeli War: 1999*, which was written by "Jake" Saunders and noted science-fiction writer Howard Waldrop. Where did the name "Buddy" come from and how did it catch on?

BUDDY SAUNDERS: Buddy is my nickname, given to me by my father. His name was J.D. (just the initials—for Jefferson Davis), but he went by Jake. When I met Harlan Ellison at a Southwestern Con and he learned I was an aspiring writer, he told me "Buddy" was no name for a writer. He asked me what my dad's name was, I told



Lone-Star-Studded

Buddy Saunders in a recent photo taken at his Lone Star comic book shop—and (below) his 1968 Powerman cover for the 13th issue of *Star-Studded Comics*, perhaps the most important fanzine of the period that specialized in original "ama-comics." [©2010 Buddy Saunders.]

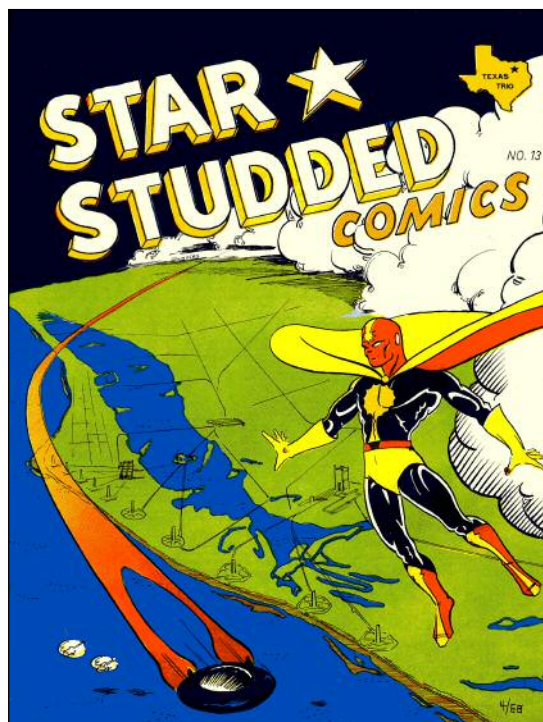
him Jake, and he immediately said, "You should write under Jake Saunders; that has a good ring to it."

BW: It's funny that you should mention Harlan Ellison. Over the years, I've spoken with any number of comic book and science-fiction fans, retailers, dealers, and pros, and it seems that most everyone has a Harlan Ellison story. Were you ever friends with Ellison, and do you have any other anecdotes to tell about the fiery fantasist?

SAUNDERS: More like acquaintances than fast friends. The first time I ever saw Harlan was at the 1969 World Science Fiction Convention in St. Louis. I was a kid standing with the hoi polloi, watching from the back of the room during the awards banquet, expecting everything to be very serious and dignified, only to see Harlan get into a shouting match with members of the audience over how best to spend money raised earlier that day—Harlan wanted the money spent on a writer's workshop, but his adversaries wanted it for beer. Goggle-eyed, I watch as Harlan dodged spoons and forks being thrown at him. I learned a lot about science-fiction fandom that evening!

I first met Harlan several years later at a science-fiction convention in College Station, Texas, where he was the guest of honor, and next at a Dallas comic con where he was again our guest of honor and featured speaker. Because I was an aspiring writer and a member of the con committee in Dallas, I had a chance to talk with him. Harlan tells great stories and is fascinating to listen to. With the single exception of my longtime friend Howard Waldrop (another very successful writer), Harlan is unmatched in this regard. Although we're miles apart politically, I like Harlan very much.

BW: What is/was your relationship to Howard Waldrop?





A Novel Idea
 The Texas Trio and friends. (Left to right:) Howard Waldrop, Gary Acord, Buddy Saunders, Howard Keltner, and (sitting) Larry Herndon, circa 1965. (Below:) The cover of Saunders and Waldrop's 1986 novel *The Texas-Israeli War: 1999*.
 [©2010 the respective copyright holders.]

SAUNDERS: Howard and I met during our first year of high school. We've been friends ever since, from double-dating in high school to being fans of sf and each being an aspiring writer.

BW: Please explain the collaborative effort that went into *The Texas-Israeli War: 1999*, from original idea to nuts-and-bolts writing to eventual publication.

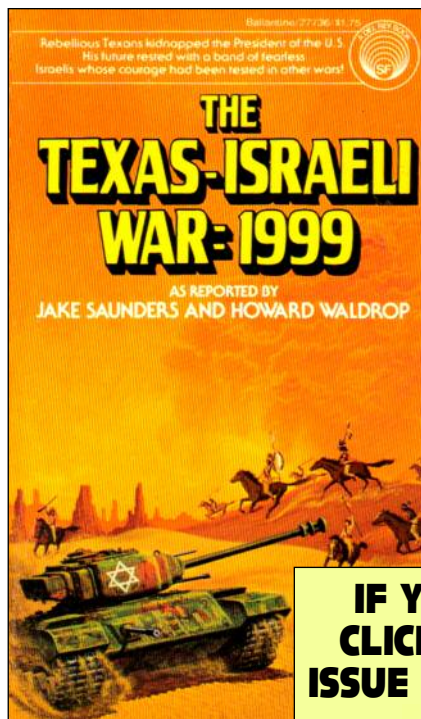
SAUNDERS: Howard and I originally co-wrote a novella titled "A Voice and Bitter Weeping" (a quote from the Bible), an sf story that alternated converging storylines between two groups of soldiers who were in the process of invading Texas during the aftermath of World War III. We shopped the story around to several magazines with no luck. Then I edited it down to 10,000 words, hoping a short version might have better luck. The first magazine I sent it to, *Analog*, accepted it immediately. After publication in *Analog*, Howard and I received a call from Judy-Lynn del Rey (the wife of Lester del Rey and then sf editor at Ballantine Books). She asked us if we would be interested in turning the short story into a novel. It didn't take us long to say yes. The first step was easy. We just put back in all the material I had cut out, then went from there, Howard writing some chapters, I the others, and we each editing the other's chapters. Despite Howard's tendency to procrastinate, we finished the novel on schedule.

BW: In *The Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction (1990, Pharos Books)*, David Pringle describes *The Texas-Israeli War: 1999* as "a zany little idea which is here spun out at too great a length." Do you think that is a fair assessment of the book?

SAUNDERS: Nope. What do you expect from a man whose big claim to fame is putting potato chips in a can?

BW: Heh, that's a good one! What is the book basically about, and were you and Waldrop trying to convey a particular political message?

SAUNDERS: The story was straight action/adventure with an sf backdrop. I really enjoyed researching the military hardware and laser technology. And I got a fan letter asking if I was Jewish, so I guess I did a good job developing my Jewish mercenaries. As to a political message, there wasn't any intended, and I don't think any seeped in. I always chuckle when some idiot reviewer suggests that all the giant monster movies of the 1950s are metaphors for our Cold War fear of communism (a reasonable fear, by the way). The only thing the makers of those neat old movies had in mind was bringing an audience into movie theatres.

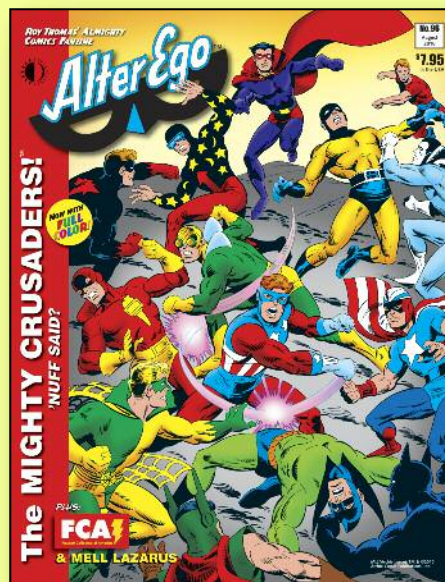


And that was our intent—to sell a book with a good story.

BW: In 1976, you were nominated for a Nebula Award for the short story "Back to the Stone Age." What was that story about?

SAUNDERS: That story sprang from one of the many friendly arguments Howard and I used to get into. I remember once we argued over what lane on a highway was the inside lane and which the outside. "Back to the Stone Age" came about when we argued over dropping the bomb on Japan to end WW II. Howard argued it wasn't necessary. I said it was. But that got me to thinking. What if we hadn't dropped the bomb? How then would WW II have ended? Told from the point of view of a cynical newspaperman, the story explains why we had no bomb to drop and the consequences that followed when the Allies decided to blockade the Japanese Islands rather than invade. The action takes place aboard a surplus B-24 bomber in the Bolivian Air Force, the only aircraft that poor nation can afford to provide as part of the Japanese blockade. Even then, to make ends meet, the plane has to take on paying sight-seers on its bombing runs. The story revolves around what happens on a particularly eventful bombing run. The cynical newspaperman survives, but he's missed the big story.

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



ALTER EGO #96

(NOW WITH 16 COLOR PAGES!) Focus on Archie's 1960s MIGHTY CRUSADERS, with vintage art and artifacts by JERRY SIEGEL, PAUL REINMAN, SIMON & KIRBY, JOHN ROSENBERGER, tributes to the Crusaders by BOB FUJITANE, GEORGE TUSKA, BOB LAYTON, and others! Interview with MELL LAZARUS, FCA, MICHAEL T. GILBERT, and more! Cover by MIKE MACHLAN!

(84-page magazine with COLOR) \$7.95 US
 (Digital Edition) \$2.95 US