BY CREATING A POWERFUL UPDRAFT, I'M CAUSING THE GIRDER TO RISE INTO THE AIR, BACK TO THE POSITION IT FELL FROM!

"WHEN I DECIDED MY CHIMPANZEE DEPUTY NEEDED A VACATION, I GOT HIM A LOT OF TRAVEL FOLDERS..."

WELL, BOBO--HAVE YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND YET WHERE YOU WANT TO GO ON YOUR VACATION?

IK-KOO! DON'T RUSH ME, BOSS...

YEP! THIS IS THE ONE I LIKE BEST.'

THUNDER ISLAND? BUT THAT'S JUST ACROSS THE BAY, AND IT'S ONLY A LITTLE PLACE.' ARE YOU SURE IT'S THERE YOU WANT TO GO?

Carmine Infantino is the artistic and publishing visionary whose mark on the comic book industry pushed conventional boundaries. As a penciler and cover artist, he was a major force in defining the Silver Age of comics, co-creating the modern Flash and revitalizing the Batman franchise. As editorial director, publisher, and president he steered DC Comics through one of the most creative and fertile periods in their long history. Presented here is the life and career of Carmine Infantino, in his most candid and thorough interview ever, along with the amazing images that made him a legend.

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SECONDS LATER, ADAM'S RANN-SWEETHEART IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN--AND THE EARTH-MAN HIMSELF IS SWALLOWED UP BY THE ODD WEAPON...

I--I'VE FAILED RANAGAR... ALANNA... MYSELF!...

IN THE SKIRMISH THAT FOLLOWS, THE GUNMAN'S PISTOL SEEMS TO FIRE WILDLY...

IF I DON'T AIM THIS JUST RIGHT--

POW!

--MY WHOLE PLAN--

POW!

POW!

--WILL FALL TO PIECES!

CARMINE INFANTINO

Penciler · Publisher · Provocateur
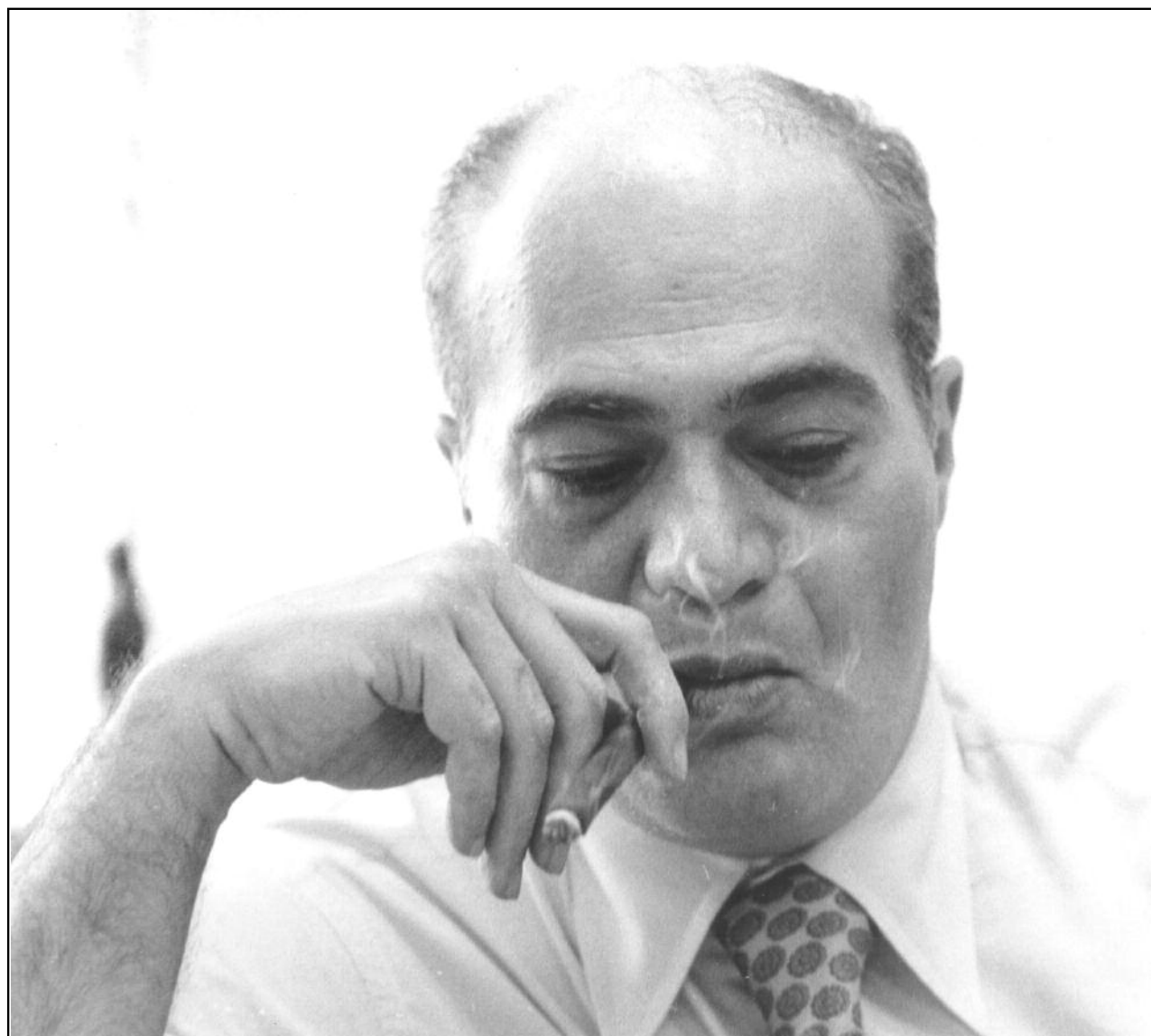
BY JIM AMASH WITH ERIC NOLEN-WEATHINGTON

CARMINE INFANTINO & JUDE

CARMINE INFANTINO

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Dedication
To my wife, Heidi, and to Keif Simon and Terry Austin. — Jim

Special Thanks

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YOU MAY HAVE BEEN THE *FASTEST MAN ON EARTH* IN *YOUR TIME*, FLASH-- BUT HERE IN THE 25th CENTURY, YOU'RE THE *SECOND FASTEST MAN ON EARTH!*

THAT FUTURISTIC COUNTERPART OF MYSELF-- IS MOVING AT SUCH A FANTASTIC RATE -- I CAN'T EVEN CATCH UP TO HIM!

STRIP IN INDICIA- FLASH #139- SEPT.

Lightning Strikes Again

(below) Meet the Flash! An all-new Flash sped onto the scene in the pages of *Showcase #4*. This opening splash page was a play on one of Carmine's cover sketches for the book, and showed off a sleek, new speedster.

FLASH ™ AND © DC COMICS.

JA: *How did you find out that there was going to be a new Flash?*

CI: One day I was delivering a job, and Julie says, "Carmine, we're going start doing super-heroes again." I said, "Aw, no!" I didn't want to do them. I figured it's old hat all over again. And he said to me, "No, no, you don't understand. We're going to do the Flash, but we're going to do a new version of the Flash." Bob Kanigher sat in on that meeting, and said the same thing: it was to be different, exciting, blah, blah, blah. Julie said, "We're changing everything about him. I'd like to see some sketches from you for the Flash."

Later, Kanigher was over at my apartment and saw the Flash sketches I had done. He liked them. My Flash costume was designed to emphasize the fact that he was a runner. The old costume didn't really do that; it wasn't as skin-tight as mine. I added the lightning accents to the costume for identification and because I knew I could do something with them when I drew the Flash running.

JA: *How often did Kanigher come to your house?*

CI: Oh, quite a bit. He used to stop by every couple of weeks. He'd stop in, we'd talk, kid around. I lived about six, seven blocks away from DC. He loved to talk. When he wasn't in the office, he was a different guy. He could be fun. We never talked business though, isn't that strange?

JA: *Had a script been written when you had this meeting with Julie and Kanigher?*

CI: I don't believe so, not yet. Julie said, "When you come in next week, Bob said we'll have a script ready." And Julie added, "Bring some sketches in for covers." I said okay, but by the time I'd come in, Bob has his own cover sketch, and that's the one they took.

JA: *Kanigher gave you the idea for the film strip cover [Showcase #4].*

CI: Yeah, it was his idea. I did three different rough versions of that cover, but they were all variations of the same idea. One of them was of the Flash running towards the reader, breaking through a page. Another had Barry Allen in the background, with the costume coming out of the ring. And the third had the film strip, which, of course, we used. But it was really Kanigher's basic idea, and

that's the one that Julie wanted. It was a good idea, and as it turned out it's a classic cover.

JA: *Do you think Julie picked you to be the artist because you were his "number one" artist or were you picked because you had been the last artist to draw the Golden Age Flash?*
CI: I don't know. I never thought about having been the last Flash artist or whether or not that influenced Julie's decision to have me draw the new Flash.

JA: *Julie also chose the last "Hawkman" artist — Joe Kubert — to do the new "Hawkman" series. He couldn't use the last "Green Lantern" artists — Alex Toth and Irwin Hasen — to revive that character, because they were no longer working for DC.*
CI: That's right. I'm sure all of that entered into Julie's thinking. And he put Mike Sekowsky on the *Justice League* because most of the original "JSA" artists were either not at DC or too busy on other books. I'm glad I didn't have to draw the *Justice League*. That was a busy book! I was busy enough with Julie's other titles.

JA: *When you're going to draw the new Flash, because you had been the artist of the old Flash, you're not the same person, you're not the same artist any more.*
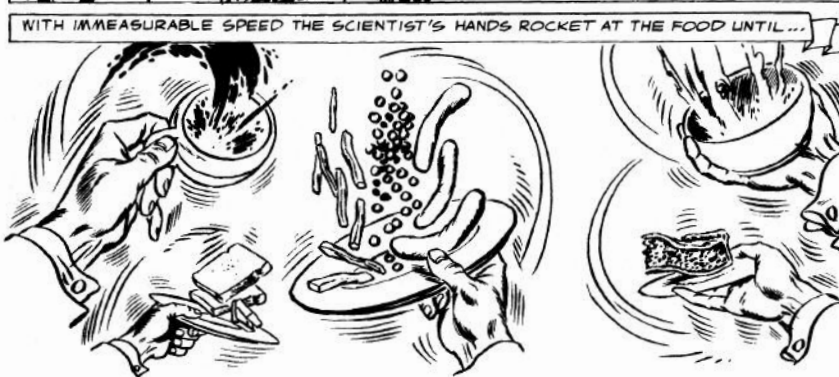**CI:** I didn't feel that way in the way you phrased it. I didn't even think of it that way. I don't think they did either... I don't know.

JA: *But you knew that you were different, that your work was changing.*
CI: I knew that I was different.

JA: *When you were thinking about, "How am I going to draw him running?" thinking about what Mort Meskin did with "Johnny Quick," thinking about what you had done on the Golden Age "Flash"... what were your thoughts?*
CI: My immediate thought is, "Think animation here, think animation." That was my basic thought. How could I get more movement? I didn't want it to look like the old Flash, and neither did anyone else. That was the key, and my basic aim was "get movement here." If we

didn't accomplish that, we weren't going to accomplish anything. There wasn't much real movement in the old Flash. He was a little stupid-looking with that hat.

JA: *So what did you do to create more movement?*
CI: Well, I used multiple figures. I tilted the Flash's body when he ran. Don't forget, when a

(above) Barry Allen discovers he has super-speed when a falling plate of food seemingly freezes in mid-air before his eyes. From *Showcase* #4. Written by Bob Kanigher, with inks by Joe Kubert.
FLASH ™ AND © DC COMICS.

(above) This panel from the final page of *Showcase* #8 was the first instance of Carmine using multiple images of the new Flash to depict his speed.
(left) Wide horizontal panels helped Carmine give the Flash a sense of movement.

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figure's running, the head and torso lean forward. The body takes almost an elbow-shaped angle. I drew the last figure first and the first figure last. That created more motion, but I didn't explain a lot of this to Bob or Julie — I just did it. They liked it, but they didn't know why they liked it. It was a lot of work to draw it that way, but it worked!

JA: *What was your initial impression when you read the first script?*

CI: I loved the part with the costume in the ring and the part in the restaurant where the waitress spills the soup. That was all Bob's thinking, and, again, he was creating as much motion as he could in the scripts. Every story element he used was promoting motion. He was very

sharp that way. I give him a lot of credit. He and I thought in the same direction. Of course, I brought it in, he said, "That's it. I love it." He didn't talk that way, ever. Praise for others was not common for him, but it made me feel good this time.

For some reason, Julie took Kanigher off the book after that lead story. Something happened there that I wasn't privy to, but when I went in to get the next story, I saw that John Broome had written it. I looked at Bob; he looked at me and shook his head.

JA: *Actually, Kanigher wrote one story in each* Showcase, *and Broome wrote the other. Kanigher didn't write* The Flash *when it first became a series, though he came back years later.*

CI: Okay. But no matter what, Bob did not like losing the series or sharing responsibility for writing the stories. This I know absolutely! And you can't blame him, because he did the hard work of recreating the Flash, and then, all of a sudden, there's John Broome writing what Kanigher felt was his series. Well, Julie and Bob didn't like each other, I think.

JA: *There's no question they disliked each other. But years later, Kanigher did write some* Flash *again. I know that Kanigher wrote a story [#161] in the mid-'60s. Julie had a story idea about the Flash giving up his costume, and he had Gardner Fox and Kanigher each write a story based on that idea.*

CI: I created the cover for that idea, and they had to invent stories around that, right?

JA: *Right. And in the letters page on one issue, Julie said that Kanigher was the originator of the Flash.*

CI: Really? I'm surprised by that.

JA: *Around '69 or '70, John Broome retired from comics, and Kanigher wrote some* Flash *stories again, including the 200th issue. In issue #201, Kanigher wrote a new "Golden Age Flash" back-up that Murphy Anderson penciled and inked.*

This is what Julie told me: Irv Novick lived a block or so away from Kanigher, and sometimes Novick would drive over to Kanigher's house and give him the pages. Then Kanigher would bring them in to Julie. So one day there're no pages. Julie went to Kanigher and asked, "Where are Novick's pages? They're supposed to be in today." Kanigher coldly said to Julie, "Novick is your problem." That was the last straw for Julie.

CI: I never heard that story. What book was Novick doing?

JA: *He drew* The Flash *for a long time, but he also drew* Batman *for Julie.*

CI: His *Batman* work was terrific. You couldn't get much work out of him. He was very slow. He used to do a lot of advertising in between comics stories. That's why he couldn't get the work done on time.

JA: *Of all the* Flash *writers...*

CI: Bob and John were the best. Gardner wrote pretty nicely, but Julie rewrote his stuff so much it was like Julie wrote it himself. It was really overdone, I thought.

JA: *What do you feel that Gardner Fox's stories lacked that John Broome's had?*

CI: Warmth. John was much more creative, slow. But Gardner was very academic.

JA: *Contrast an Eddie Herron script with a John Broome script.*

CI: They were very different. John's stories were more light-hearted. Eddie was not light-hearted. It was good, hard, solid stuff, but he could be funny, too. They both wrote detailed scripts.

JA: *You didn't like having scenes described in that much detail.*

CI: No, I didn't pay attention to them anyway. [*laughs*]

JA: *It took a while for the Flash to get his own book.*

CI: Well, what happened is they put out four issues in *Showcase*. When the first sales figures came in on "The Flash," they couldn't believe them because they were so high. Then the second one came in, and they were even higher, and the third and fourth were higher still. They knew they had a hit.

JA: *Do you have any idea why they started the numbering at 105? It was a continuation of* Flash Comics' *numbering from the 1940s.*

CI: Is that what it was? Maybe they had a thing about starting with issue #1? They probably wanted the distributors and the fans to think this book had a history. People don't always want to try new stuff. These were conservative times. That's my guess.

JA: *How did you feel when you found out that* The Flash *was going to be a regular series?*

CI: Well, they didn't tell you very much, you know. I came into the office one day and Julie said, "*The Flash* is going to be a regular series." He said nothing else. I didn't have any feeling one way or another. It was work, and, after Senator Kefauver and Doctor Wertham's witch hunts, that's all I cared about at the time.

I know this is off the subject, but I want to interject something here. Comic books today show and tell everything. There aren't many boundaries now, and I don't like it. There was one good thing about the Comics Code, though I didn't realize it at the time. We weren't allowed to do some

stuff, and though I don't like censorship, that censorship forced us to be more creative in a way. We had to imply what we couldn't show. It forced us and the readers to use our imaginations.

JA: *How good were you about meeting deadlines?*
CI: I was perfect. I never missed a deadline in my whole life. One time I had to go to the hospital for an operation. I called Julie and said, "I'll get your work done before I go in." Julie said, "Carmine, you need to take it easy." I said, "No, no. I'll get the work done." I had someone deliver the work for me, but I got it in on time.

There were a few guys who were notorious for blowing deadlines. Julie didn't like having his schedules disrupted and would get upset sometimes. We considered those guys to be unprofessional.

JA: *Did you have any input with the scripts once you started drawing the stories?*
CI: No, I never did that.

JA: *Not even on an artistic level? For instance, if you had a page that called for five panels, would you ever stretch it to six?*
CI: No. I always adhered pretty closely to what I was asked to do. [*pauses*] Well, sometimes I might have added a panel. I didn't make a habit of it.
JA: *There was never a time when you said to Julie, "This plot point doesn't make sense"?*
CI: No, no. I never saw a need to do that. Julie always edited very tightly. At times there was more rewriting on the scripts than what originally had been written. The only person Julie didn't rewrite was John Broome.

JA: *Did you ever think about writing your own stuff for Julie?*
CI: No. I did write my own stuff for the newspaper strip ideas I had, but only then. I was too busy drawing to even consider writing. The one time I did, Julie said, "I've got my own writers. I don't want anybody else." And since John Broome was so good, how could I compete with him? My fate was just to pencil for Julie, except when I could talk him into doing a little inking. I had to demand that with "Detective Chimp" and "Elongated Man," and got my way then.

JA: *Did you feel as though Julie was more enthusiastic about doing the science-fiction comics as compared to his other books?*
CI: Absolutely. If you read his super-hero stories carefully, you'll see he always had a lot of science-fiction in them — *Batman* being the exception. But Julie worked just as hard on the Westerns as he did on the science-fiction. Julie was diligent; he worked very hard to make his

(above) Julie Schwartz, of course, came to DC Comics from the field of science fiction, having been an agent for many successful SF authors. It made perfect sense for him to edit titles such as *Mystery in Space* and *Strange Adventures*. Seen here are an opening splash panel from *Mystery in Space* #39 (Aug.-Sept. 1957) and a page from *Mystery in Space* #14 (June-July 1953).

books the best. Julie knew what he wanted and what worked. That's what made him so good. And he began to like what I did, so I was in good shape. When I was in his office, he made me read the script before I left. He said, "Read the script. If you have any problems, tell me about them now." If there was a problem, we'd talk it out, but generally there were no problems.

And later, when we did "Strange Sports Stories"... I'm not sure, but I think Irwin Donenfeld wanted a sports book, so Julie came up with this idea. Julie called me and said, "I want this to look dif-ferent." I came up with those silhouettes in the captions to make it different. I always tried my best to please Julie, and he respected me. We had a good rapport after a while.

JA: *So your relationship with Julie started changing?*
CI: A little. He started asking me to come up with cover ideas with which he'd base stories on. That's when I knew he was starting to come around. He said, "Why don't you do covers for me, and I'll build stories around them? You'll get more work that way." I'd bring in two or three cover layouts about the size of typewriter paper, and he'd pick out which ones he wanted. Sometimes, he'd take the whole three at a shot.

JA: *Before we get further into the* Flash *discussion, I want to talk about your artwork and how it was changing.*

CI: That started in the early 1950s, I feel. I studied under William C. McNulty at the Art Students League, and he said to me, "Have you ever read anything about art?" Of course, he saw some of the stuff I'd been drawing. I was putting backgrounds in the scenes. "So why are you doing that?" I said, "I like to draw the whole scene." He said, "Why?" I said, "I like to balance everything out."

So he showed me a Frank Lloyd Wright book. I went nuts over it and went out and bought my own copy.

JA: *Is it fair to say that in the '40s — your first decade of work — that most of the art you were doing was more intuitive rather than studied?*
CI: Yes, absolutely.

JA: *So this was mostly work from your gut. You were not analyzing your work.*
CI: No, no, not at all.

JA: *Joe Kubert told me he was the same way then.*
CI: Really? I didn't know that. That's interesting. Well, McNulty tore me to shreds, and then he rebuilt me. I was drawing my brains out on the figure, every nut and bolt. He says, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm drawing realistically." [*chuckles*] He said, "You're making photographs when you do that. And photographs can do it better than you can, so why bother?" That comment made me tear the drawing to shreds. Then he says, "I want you to rethink," and thus, he taught me to think. So I said, "Well, that's easy." "No," he said, "That's

not easy. What I'm telling you to do is not easy. I'm telling you to restructure your thinking. You're a designer, but you don't know it." He was tough. He was good. I studied with him for about two years, three times a week, because I so admired him.

JA: *As far as I can tell, it looks like you must have been studying there around '51 or '52.*
CI: Yeah, but my comic book work got very bad because of my studies. Julie says, "What are you doing here, for Christ's sake?" I was changing rapidly, the stuff was going through a whole metamorphosis, and Julie was really upset with the new stuff I was turning in. He said, "You're turning in crap, you know that? Don't you want to work any more?" They didn't know what I was doing. I didn't explain it either. Julie wasn't an artist and couldn't understand what I was going through.

JA: *Well, this was the first time you started thinking about positive and negative shapes, deep focus in space, and the way shapes work with each other. Because you were just drawing by rote before then, this was the first time you really analyzed what you were doing.*
CI: By rote, yeah, and I didn't do that any more, thanks to McNulty. He'd sit down with me and say, "Why this shape? Why this? And why are you putting this shape against this shape?" Then he would say to me, "You put a figure on a page, right? About one-quarter of the page — make everything point to that figure." When I did that, I saw what he was talking about. You build up all your backgrounds, pointing to that bigger figure, and it works. It started to work, but it took a while to understand this. I had never thought about positive and negative space before.

JA: *This is where you really start to become a designer. Would you agree?*
CI: Yes, but Julie, he hated the stuff when I began changing. When change happens, you're a nothing in between the changes, you know what I mean? I was stopping the drawing. I was literally dropping all the drawing. I didn't care about it any more, and the designing was taking shape and form, and it overtook my drawing.

JA: *Was Kanigher saying anything to you?*
CI: He liked what I was doing, Bobby did. Isn't that funny? He used to say to Julie, "Leave him alone, leave him alone. I like what he's doing."

JA: *Alex Toth told me that in the late '40s, early '50s, Sol Harrison used to be on his back all the time.*

CI: Oh, he was a pain. He didn't like me. He hated everybody. He promoted himself as the Art Director at DC Comics, but he wasn't. He was the production man, period.

JA: *Alex told me — I'm talking late '40s, early '50s — that he would show Sol his work, and Sol would say, "It's very nice, Alex. But you don't know what to leave out." Did you ever hear stuff like that?*
CI: No. He never talked to me like that.

JA: *So when your art was changing, there was silence.*
CI: Not a word. I never even went near [Sol Harrison]. I didn't bother him at all. Alex used to look for comments from everybody. That was the difference. He went to him, he went to Jack Adler, he went to everybody. I didn't care. I did my own thing, so I didn't care what anyone else thought. That's the loner in me. [*laughs*]

JA: *In late '40s, early '50s, Alex, Joe, and Jack Adler told me that DC set up a modeling session one night a week where they drew from a model.*
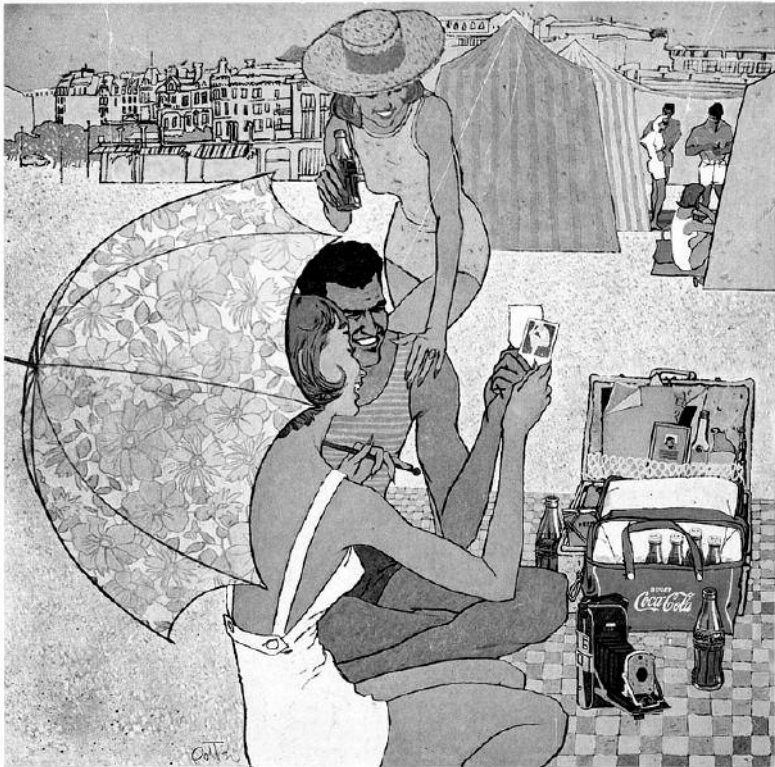
(below) Jack Potter (1927-2002) was a successful illustrator with an impressionistic style, who made his name with a series of ads for Coca-Cola in 1956-57. Not long afterwards, he left the world of commercial art to become a teacher at the School of Visual Arts. He developed a class called, "Drawing and Thinking," which he taught for 45 years until his death.

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(above) On the left is "L'Absinthe," 1876, oil on canvas, by Edgar Degas (1834-1917), a French painter and one of the founders of Impressionism. On the right is "Seated Nude," 1916, oil on canvas, by Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), an Italian-born painter and sculptor who primarily worked with figures and nudes.

CI: I didn't go. I didn't have a need for it, I felt. I was going to the Art Students League, and then I went to the School for Visual Arts. I was getting my education from trained professionals.

JA: *Did you go to Visual Arts after the Art Students League?*
CI: Yes. I needed more, and I studied with Jack Potter.

JA: *What did Jack Potter do for you?*
CI: He was a brilliant designer. He really pushed me further into design. Whatever I was doing in design wasn't enough. He would really elongate the figures more. He stretched them like rubber. He'd look at my work and say, "See these figures on the paper? They've got no purpose. Do three figures or four or five." "I don't see why." He'd answer, "Just do it. Do it." And I'd draw the three figures, or five figures there, depending on what the eye would see when the figure's in a certain position. I did this for about two years. After that, I was through. I never had another teacher. I was on my own then. I think I had developed by that time what I wanted to do. I was at a point then that I knew where I was going with this stuff.

JA: *In the past, we've talked about how Modigliani and Degas had influenced you.*
CI: William McNulty put me onto Modigliani, Giacometti, Degas, and Frank Lloyd Wright. The shapes that Wright used in his house designs greatly influenced me. It was his work that got me to thinking about how to draw houses and place them in a scene. I took his ideas about shape and design and did my own version. There was drama in his style, and I incorporated that drama into my work.

JA: *What did you learn from Degas' work?*
CI: Design. He, like Modigliani was a designer. Degas used his shapes beautifully. There's a beautiful painting he did of the absinthe drinker. He's sitting there with the prostitute, having a drink, and, if you notice, the table begins on the far right and turns right into the picture, takes you right into the picture. That's designing. And then Degas had his figure bent forward, his arm is holding the drink; every part of the figure is posed to lead your eye down to the drink. The girl is bending forward into the drink and pointing up to him. Everything points to him, but he does it very

feminine in style. I shouldn't say "feminine," just "softer," but Giacometti's work was harder. If you combine the two styles, it makes a wonderful figure and a wonderful look.

JA: *Let's tie this in with* The Flash. *By the time you were drawing the series, your approach to page and panel composition was changing.*
CI: Yes, I wanted to emphasize his speed and used long, stretched-out panels for that effect.

JA: *Your emphasis on horizontal panels rather than the standard vertical helped create the sense of speed, but, also, it caused you to think differently about spatial relationships of forms.*
CI: There're two things involved: I was using negative space all of a sudden and using long panels for speed effects. It was a matter of using both or one opposed to the other... anything to create contrast.

JA: *As far as the captions were concerned —*
CI: That was my idea. When I was a kid, I never once read a caption. No one did. So I figured, "I'll fix that." I took the caption — it was one big piece — and broke it into three sections. I put the pointing hands on the boxes, and everybody liked that.

JA: *What gave you the idea to do that? You didn't do that before, so why now?*
CI: Jim, I didn't read them myself. I started thinking, "Why don't I read them?" Because they were boring! All of a sudden, I saw the captions as a detriment. I figured, "Let's make them part of

subtly, very gently, and your eye goes there without realizing what you're doing. That's designing.

JA: *And Degas' approach to drawing human forms?*
CI: Again, the same quality. If you look at his stuff carefully, there's no real design there, no reality to his clothing designs or the folds in his clothes. It's all basic shapes — that's all it is. Where there's clothing, there's just one, big shape with touches of shadow. Same thing with his figures. It's so simple, it's frightening.

JA: *What did you learn from Giacometti?*
CI: He had a real raw quality about his work, which is contrasted with Degas, who was

the composition. Readers would pay more attention to them if I did." Everything I did there was for the sake of the composition.

JA: *When you penciled it, did you place the balloons?*
CI: Oh, yes. Every word balloon, I placed specifically. Balloons are part of the composition, and I would get pissed the first couple of times they screwed around with me there. I said to Julie, "I'm going to stop doing this thing if they don't follow my balloon [placement]. The shape is part of the picture." Julie got wise to what I was saying and said, "Okay, I understand that." They followed [my placements from then on].

JA: *When you roughed out the panels on a page, did you consider each panel as a separate drawing, or the whole page as one drawing, as one piece of art composed of separate drawings?*
CI: Sometimes I added panels on my own and sometimes I combined panels; I had that liberty from Julie. I was thinking, "If I was a reader, what

would please me more?" The whole page was always a unit, and one panel would flow to the other. Then, of course, I did three across the top. The third one would always point towards the next one down below. I drove the reader where I wanted him to go.

JA: *When you were laying out a page, were you laying it out abstractly?*
CI: Abstractly. I laid the whole story out from beginning to end. But after I laid out the whole story, I went back and, if there were some areas I didn't like, I reinforced or changed them. Sometimes I changed whole pages or threw whole pages away if I felt that what I did wouldn't work. Once that was done, I was satisfied; then I finished them off. Some artists thought page by page, panel by panel. I didn't think that way. I thought of the page as a whole shape, one big package.

JA: *Then drawing line directionals to make the eye travel smoothly across a page was intentional.*
CI: Always. It was very important, I thought.

JA: *Around the mid-'50s, you started using more silhouettes, too.*
CI: Yeah, that was the "Strange Sports" stuff; that was done purposely.

JA: *Yes, but you were doing it before that.*
CI: To a degree, but not like that. That was special with the sports stories.

JA: *What led you to drawing more silhouettes?*

CI: It's a different approach to a drawing. I always tried to get a different approach. Every issue, I tried something different.

JA: *Your backgrounds versus your foregrounds — usually the foreground is what the viewer sees first unless you design otherwise.*

CI: If I wanted the reader to look into the background first, I'd use a very simple shape in the foreground. Let's say there's a guy's head; I used the most basic shape I could, and all the detail would be in the background stuff. You've got to look there first.

JA: *More often than not, your backgrounds were designed, but it was the way you spotted blacks. You saved your blacks, it seems, for the important areas.*

CI: I used them as sparingly as possible, especially for *The Flash*. I didn't think *The Flash* needed much black. I believe that very strongly, because large, negative spaces keep the panels wide open. It's not a *Batman* story where blacks close things in. *The Flash* was much lighter; it had much more flow. Once you get dark and heavy, you lose the kind of space I wanted the stories to take place in.

JA: *"Adam Strange" had a little more black in it.*

CI: Not much, but he was a different kind of character. The space scenes took more black. But then the other settings went to the reverse. Dark on the planet, and open on the space: I took all kinds of chances on this. But, again, it was effective, I think.

JA: *Your cityscapes were very modernistic for the time.*

CI: Yeah, that was the whole trade thing. I always wanted to be an architect, and how else could it come out of me? I couldn't afford to go to school to be an architect, so my feelings for art came out in the science fiction and the cityscapes whenever I had a chance. Even if I had a background of forest and trees, you'll notice it was very organized all the time. I liked doing those kinds of backgrounds, too. But I preferred to draw cities.

JA: *When you drew interiors, they looked more roomy than a lot of other artist's interiors.*

CI: Yes, because I'm a fan of the Baja School of Architecture. You know what that is? That was where my base idea of drawing rooms came from. They were very basic with your effects — mostly on the walls. The paintings, the bookcases, and the furniture were simple structures. My own apartment is built that way right now. [*laughs*] There's always space around a couch or at a table or around something when people walked in. I would *design* rooms, I wouldn't just *draw* a room.

JA: *Were you using any reference for this?*

CI: No. They were all my own invention. I was surprised when I heard years later that people paid attention to what I was doing.

JA: *Sometimes you drew backgrounds and cityscapes just for decorative purposes. When would you do a trade-off between decoration and functionality?*

(below) In *Mystery in Space* #72 (Dec. 1961), Adam Strange arrives on Rann 100,000 years in the future, giving Carmine an opportunity to fill the bottom of a page with a futuristic cityscape. But since Adam Strange is still the focus of the story, Carmine has him looming in the foreground, in a detailed suit and with heavy blacks. The city, meanwhile is open and sparsely detailed, leaving it firmly in the background. Inks by Murphy Anderson.

COURTESY OF HERITAGE AUCTIONS (WWW.HA.COM). ADAM STRANGE ™ AND © DC COMICS.

CI: It depended on what was happening in a scene. I never disrespected a storyline. That was very important to me, because the story had to be simple and to the point — always. I got that from watching Alfred Hitchcock movies. That was his main theme. If you've read anything he said about his movies, it's that his storylines were always simple and to the point. You never destroy the storyline. Backgrounds are supposed to be backgrounds. You show them, but you don't make them the most important thing, unless there's a reason to do so. The story dictates that. That's the difference between decoration and function.

JA: *Did you ever look at your work in a mirror?*
CI: No, why would I do that?

JA: *A lot of artists, in order to check their composition, look at their art in a mirror.*
CI: No, I was very confident about what I was doing by this time.

JA: *When you were drawing scenes, say a fight scene or a war scene with lots of noise, did you hear the noises in your head when you drew?*

CI: No, I just let the fantasy take over my head for what I imagined was taking place, period.

JA: *Jack Kirby told me he heard the sound effects in his head when he drew.*
CI: Really? That's amazing. I didn't know that.

JA: *Joe Kubert said he didn't hear them either.*
CI: I'm with Joe.

JA: *Did you ever identify with the characters you drew? For instance, if the Flash was running —*
CI: No, I was not a runner. I played tennis.

JA: *But you never fantasized yourself as being any of the characters?*
CI: No, never.

JA: *Your inking was like your penciling: scratchy, more choppy, rather than a smooth flow. You knew your inks weren't considered commercial, so what led you to ink that way?*
CI: I was comfortable inking that way. I wanted a complete replica of how I penciled. I wanted my inking to be like my penciling, my drawing,

(above) Carmine didn't often get the chance to ink his own work at DC. He was, however, able to ink a dozen ten-page "Elongated Man" back-up stories, including this one from *Detective Comics* #329 (July 1964). Carmine inked primarily with a chiseled-down fountain pen. The only brushwork evident on this page can be seen in Sue Dibny's hair, where it appears Carmine applied a dry-brush technique.

to reflect my style. I took a fountain pen and chiseled it down. I sandpapered the end of the fountain pen. I wanted a flat, dead line. Then I added little spots of black here or there. It was very strong and different. It was my look. Joe Kubert had his own look, Alex Toth had his own look, and I had my own look. When somebody else inked it, it really wasn't me anymore.
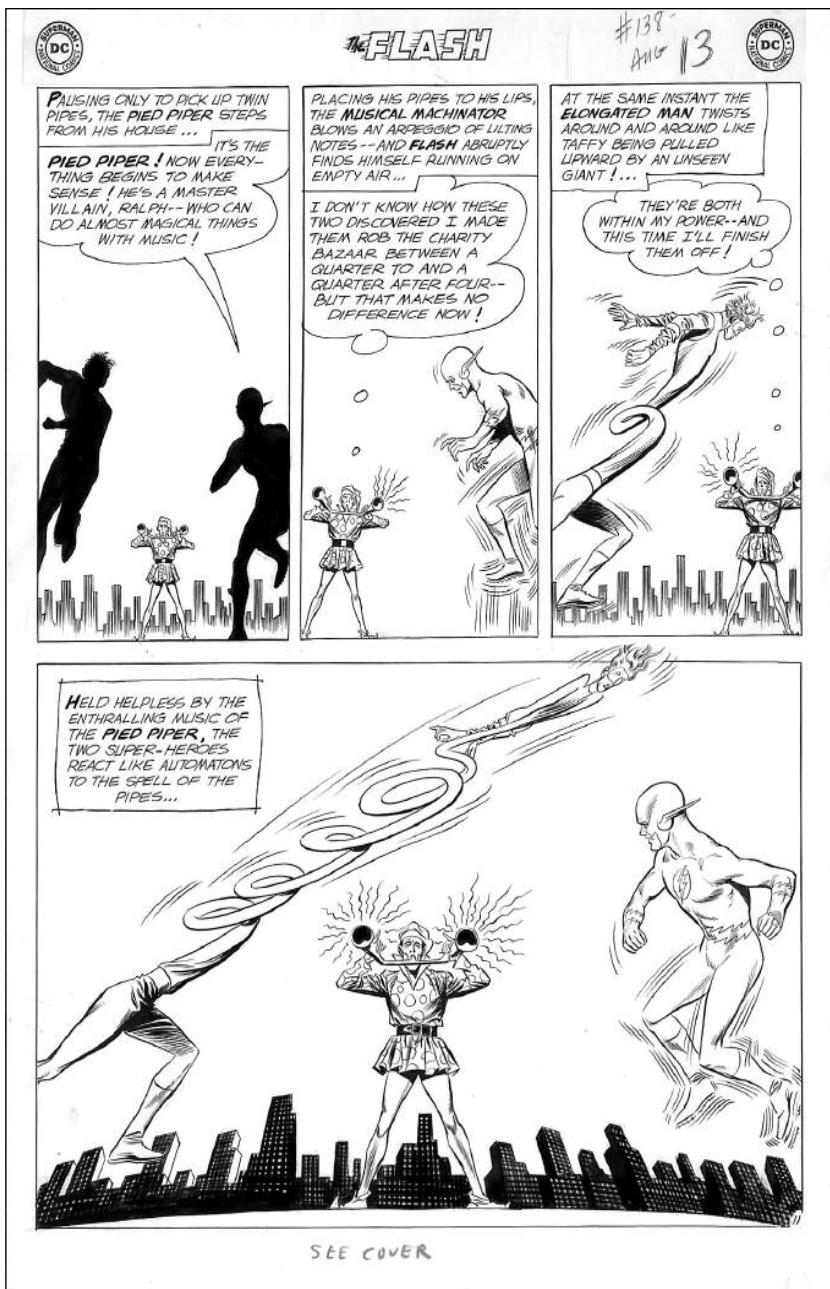
JA: *A lot of pencilers don't fill in the black areas. They'll just put an "X." Did you put Xs in?*

CI: No, I shaded in the black areas with the side of the pencil. I always put the blacks in. I would never leave that to the inker. That's all part of the page design.

JA: *How much brush did you use?*

CI: Very little, just to put the blacks in. I chipped off the end of the brush, just spreading out flat blacks, really. The blacks were pretty solid. I was using a solid mass to get a line, and I thought it worked very nicely. It's pure design. That's why the inkers used to complain — Murphy Anderson and Joe Giella — that they had to fix my drawing. I was very pissed about that. But Murphy, later on, came to understand what I had been doing and has said so.

Murphy kept putting the drawing back into my work. At the beginning, they couldn't figure out what I was doing. Murphy used to complain about inking my work. Joe Giella didn't understand what I was going for. We were on a panel in San Diego a few years back, and Joe said he used to erase my pages down before he inked them. He said he was fixing my drawing. But when he inked — redrew, whatever you want to call it — he enlarged the heads of my figures and made them look like toy dolls. Dan DiDio, who was on that panel, was surprised by this, and said that he didn't think that my work needed redrawing. And it didn't. This always bothered me, because people thought I drew those big

heads on the Flash bodies. The inkers didn't understand what I was doing.

Murphy's inks gave my work a commercial look that the fans liked. But the fans also liked my own inking. Still, I have to admit that, as a team, Murphy and I were popular. We gave DC a good, solid look that turned fans on. Looking back, our work was important to the company.

JA: *But Julie was telling Joe and Murphy to make those changes to your work.*

CI: But, like a lot of artists, I wanted my work to look like *my work*. You're the same way. When you ink somebody, you keep to their style, don't you?

(above) Joe Giella's (seen here with author, Jim Amash in 2008) inked more of Carmine's work than anyone else, including this page from *The Flash* #138 (Aug. 1963).

COURTESY OF TERRY AUSTIN.

ELONGATED MAN, FLASH, PIED PIPER ™ AND © DC COMICS.

> AS THE *DUCTILE DETECTIVE* DEMONSTRATES HIS DEDUCTION..
> I SKI TOWARD THIS TREE--AND STOP MY FORWARD PROGRESS WITH MY HANDS ON ITS BOLE--
> THEN SLIDE MY SKIS AS FAR FORWARD AS I CAN ON EITHER SIDE OF THE TREE...

> I BEND DOWN-- WITHOUT ELONGATING MYSELF--
> AND UN-SNAP THE CATCH OF MY SKIS SO I CAN KICK OUT OF THEM...

> CATCHING HOLD OF THE TREE AT ITS FORK I HOIST MYSELF UP-- OUT OF THE SKIS-- AND THEN LET MYSELF DOWN ON THE *OTHER* SIDE OF THE TREE...

> HANGING BY MY ARMS, I THRUST MY FEET INTO THE SKIS--AND THEN TAKE OFF !
> MY MANEUVERING WAS A LITTLE SLOPPY--THE SKIS MADE WRIGGLY MARKS WHEN I DID IT-- BUT THE MYSTERY SKIER MUST HAVE PRACTISED IT LONG ENOUGH TO PERFORM THE FEAT SMOOTHLY !

> YOU'RE GROWING !-- THAT'S IT--! YOU'RE GROWING-- GETTING BIGGER--EVERY SECOND !

JA: *Always.*

CI: Then you know what I'm getting at. I liked Sy Barry's inks most of the time, but not always. And I wasn't crazy about Sid Greene's inking either. He was heavy-handed on the inks.

JA: *I thought he was trying to imitate Murphy Anderson somewhat.*

CI: He was not as good as Murphy. Murphy knew more about drawing than all of the other inkers. Frank Giacoia was really good. You know why? He never lost the character of my work, and that was important to me. When Murphy got done inking me, it looked like Murphy's work. When Giella inked me, it looked like Giella's work.

JA: *Although later on, when Giacoia didn't care as much, his work got heavy-handed.*

CI: Yeah, I don't think he inked half of the work he had. He had people helping him, like Mike Esposito and Joe Giella. He'd get sloppy, because he didn't care. He'd rather watch movies than ink pages. But when he was on, he had magic in his brush.

JA: *A magician with the brush, but not with his deadlines. Which reminds me of a story I heard about you. You came into Julie's office one day with two pages of a story and you were very tired. Julie asked why, and you said, "I drew four pages last night." Julie said, "But there're only two here." You said, "Yeah. I didn't like the two pages I drew, so I tore them up and did them over." True story?*

CI: True story. I did that often. Many times, I drew a page, didn't like it, and threw it away. I was very meticulous; if I didn't like something, I had to do it over.

JA: *As far as your figure work is concerned, by this time, you quit worrying about anatomical correctness.*

CI: Oh, I didn't want it. I couldn't have cared less about it.

JA: *Why didn't normal body proportions work for you any more?*

CI: Because I couldn't get the flow I wanted. If I wanted all kinds of speed, I'd literally distort the figures. If I got the flow I wanted, I didn't give a crap, because McNulty taught me that if the flow is there, and the design is right,

forget the drawing. It doesn't mean anything. Now, not everybody agrees with that, but that's the way I felt.

I was an Impressionist. If creating movement meant drawing broken feet, then I drew broken feet. I drew whatever it took to create movement, at the expense of correct drawing. And it worked for me.

JA: *I kind of think of you almost as much as an Expressionist as an Impressionist, because your lines are Expressionistic. Your ink lines are active, expressive, and dramatic.*
CI: That's what I was going for. I went against the house look.

JA: *Were you, in a sense, rebelling against the Dan Barry-type of DC house style?*
CI: Yes. I could not work that way and I *wouldn't* work that way. But I wasn't being a rebel. I just felt I had to ink my way. Of course, Julie didn't want it. I don't understand that. So I did his things the way he wanted with my penciling, and, when I got a chance to ink, I did it my way. Oh, how Julie hated it. He used to look at those pages, [*imitates Julie growling*] I could see him marking all over it, and I'd sit there and smile at him. [*chuckling*] I could be a bastard sometimes. [*Jim laughs*] Isn't that funny? "How do you like it, Julie?" [*imitates Julie growling again*]

Now, you're laughing at what I was doing. You see, I inked a story for Kanigher, "Tank Trap" [in *Star Spangled War Stories* #21]. I enjoyed that. That was a beaut, I thought. I inked other stuff, like "Pow-Wow Smith" and "Super-Chief." The other editors didn't object to my inking, but Julie did.

JA: *You've got a period here from the mid-'50s to the early '60s where you're really doing a variety of different things, not just* The Flash. *You drew war stories up until 1958, Westerns, "Detective Chimp," and "Adam Strange" came along.*
CI: When I took it over — I'm not trying to pat myself on the back — the sales jumped like crazy.

JA: *Did Adam Strange ever strike you as another version of Captain Comet?*
CI: I didn't think it was that way at all.

JA: *But you did not design the Adam Strange costume.*

(below) It's Adam Strange to the rescue in this commission pencil illustration.

(left) One of the odder strips Carmine worked on was "Super-Chief," written by Gardner Fox. This splash panel is from *All-Star Western* #119 (June-July 1961), the final issue of the title.

COURTESY OF TERRY AUSTIN.

SUPER-CHIEF ™ AND © DC COMICS.

(right) After penciling their debut in *All-Star Western* #58, Carmine drew nearly half of the "Trigger Twins" features. More often than not he was inked by Joe Giella (or Sy Barry), but he was able to ink several of the strips himself, such as this one from *All-Star Western* #105 (Feb.-Mar. 1959).

COURTESY OF TERRY AUSTIN.

TRIGGER TWINS ™ AND © DC COMICS.

(above) It takes more than clothes to make the man. Though Carmine generally preferred John Broome's writing to Gardner Fox's, in this case the opposite was true. Carmine saw Fox's "Adam Strange" as a much better strip to work on than Broome's "Captain Comet." Shown here are the covers for *Mystery in Space* #83 (May 1963), inked by Murphy Anderson, and *Strange Adventures* #10 (July 1951), inked by Bernard Sachs.

CI: No, I did not. It was a bout between Murphy and Gil Kane about who designed that costume. I think Gil did it, but Murphy claims he did. I don't know who the designer was. I was on an overseas tour with the National Cartoonists Society at the time "Adam Strange" was developed. But Julie told Mike Sekowsky, who drew the *Showcase* issues, that "Adam Strange" would be my feature when it got made into a regular series. I made sure of that, because I didn't want to take a character away from anyone. I spoke to Mike, and he said, "I knew from the beginning that ['Adam Strange' would] be your feature when you got back." I didn't like the short sleeves that Gil Kane gave Adam Strange, and Julie said, "Change it if you want."

JA: *Then you didn't see much correlation between Captain Comet and Adam Strange.*
CI: Not really, no. Adam Strange was a different character altogether. It was a little more fun, actually, because the stories were better and

tightly written. He had personality, and Captain Comet did not. Of course, we did have more pages to work with, which helped.

JA: *Why were the "Adam Strange" stories so short in length, usually nine to twelve pages?*
CI: I don't know. Maybe because I was too busy with other projects to draw a whole issue of "Adam Strange" stories? Maybe because Julie liked anthology books?

JA: *By the time you drew "Adam Strange," several years had passed since the "Captain Comet" series. Your whole approach to architecture and design changed in the meantime. When you were designing Rann, where Adam Strange would go visit, what entered your thought process on designing a futuristic city?*
CI: That was it. Rann had to be a futuristic city. It was not Central City, where the Flash lived — it was a whole, different city. I did one splash — I don't know if you even remember it — I had three different layers of city where they lived on Rann. The city was built on layers. Of course, the ground was dead. It was gone. It was very interesting, the premise. The scientists of the period said, "We've got to build an area where it's pollution-free, smoke-free." So I built cities in layers, and they got smaller as they went up, and they floated above the ground, which is clever, I think. Gardner Fox didn't write it that way, by the way. He said, "Make three different walls." I

said, "How are you going to have three different walls on Rann? You can't do that. You're going to go to world, to world, to world?" So on my own, I made them layers of cities. Julie said, "Hey, it looks better." I said, "Good, because I'm not changing it." [*laughter*]

JA: *When you drew backgrounds in Westerns, it seems like you were drawing more panoramas when you drew the prairie than when you drew a city.*
CI: Well, I was influenced by the great Western movies of the time: *Shane* and *High Noon*. And of course, the John Ford movies: *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Stagecoach*, etc. I pulled away from that a little bit. I started with the Ford stuff, but that was very tightly-meshed, not as airy as George Stevens' *Shane*. Stevens was a little more open as a director. You had the feeling of space in his scenes. You always saw the prairie and the sky. Or the town and the sky. That's what I picked up on. I didn't quite get that with Ford for the most part.

Stevens believed in very strong contrasts. You'd have a long, long shot, then — boom — he'd hit you with a close-up. That's the way he worked, which was clever. Remember the great scene where the villain [Jack Palance] came into the bar in *Shane*, and you know he's a villain? All you see are his black boots standing there. The dog gets up and moves to the other side of the room. That's genius. You knew he was the villain just from that reaction. And the great scene where Elisha Cook, Jr. was shot by Jack Palance. His body went flying backwards a long way. That's movement!

JA: *Your panoramic scenes of deserts, jungles... Monument Valley, which was a favorite location of John Ford — you saved those shots for when you needed them. You didn't just put them in there.*
CI: That's the John Ford idea. I read a lot about him and studied his films like crazy. That was his method. Hit them with lots of long and medium shots, and then stun them with a bold shot.

JA: *More often than not, that's what your vertical panels did. They were your close-up shots, as a contrast to your horizontal panoramic views.*
CI: Absolutely, and they worked just as you said. I tried to think that way. One of my favorite movies is *The Third Man*. The English directors really understand staging, and I was always attracted to their movies.

JA: *How often did you watch movies during the '50s and '60s?*

CI: I used to go a couple of times a week. Frank Giacoia and I used to go all the time. We worked so late at night, we'd be dog tired. We'd go to a movie, sometimes fall asleep during the thing. And then we'd have to watch it again. [*laughter*]

JA: *Who picked the movies, you or Frank?*
CI: Both of us together. We'd toss a coin. We'd see a Ford film, or a Hitchcock.

JA: *Since the Westerns were starting to fade out in the late '50s —*
CI: And the romance comics were starting to fade. It's basically *The Flash*, "Adam Strange," "Detective Chimp" — he was a back-up character and then he disappeared.

JA: *Did you think the "Super Chief" series was an attempt to save the Western genre?*
CI: In a way, but [the genre] was dying. Nobody could save it. You could see it was toward the end. Name characters from movie or television Westerns — they were dying, too.

JA: *You also drew some "Space Museum."*
CI: Yeah, those were fill-ins. I enjoyed doing it and got to ink some of the stories, too. Gardner wrote good stories there. Julie didn't wield too much of an editorial hand in those because they were short stories. I think Gardner got screwed that way. Julie squeezed him too hard. He didn't let him get a creative flow going. That's my feeling, anyway.
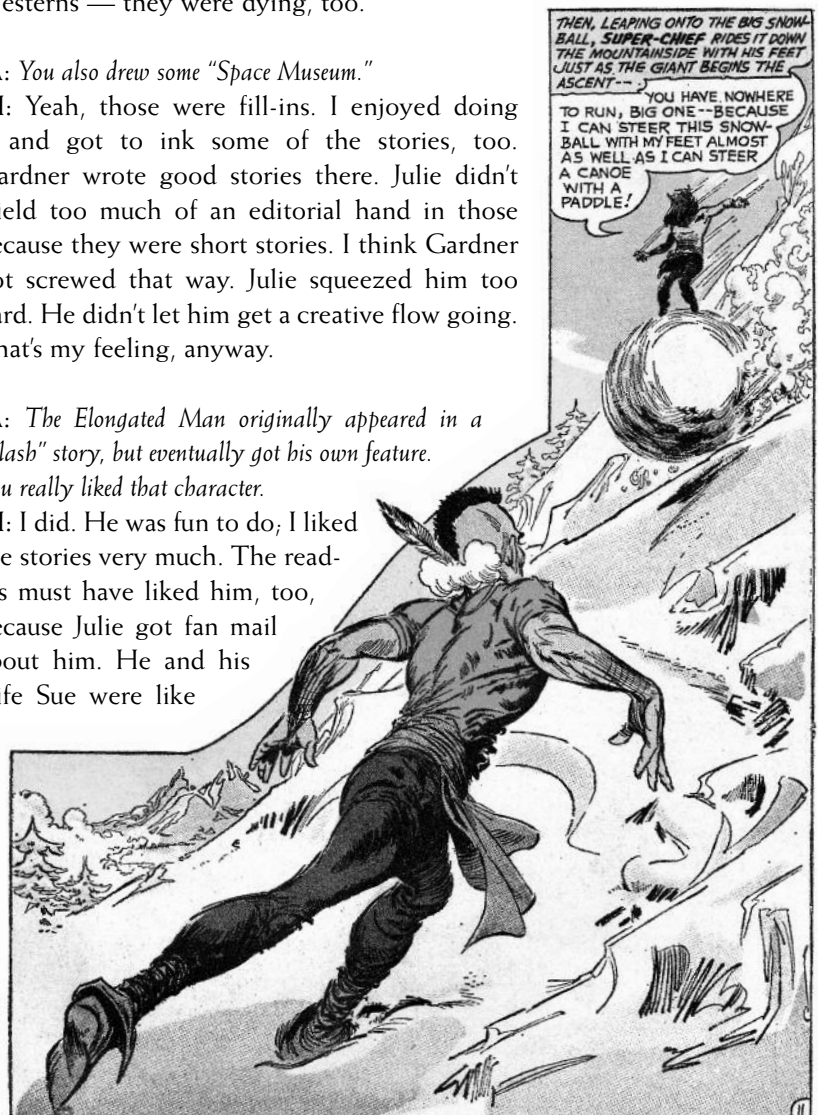
JA: *The Elongated Man originally appeared in a "Flash" story, but eventually got his own feature. You really liked that character.*
CI: I did. He was fun to do; I liked the stories very much. The readers must have liked him, too, because Julie got fan mail about him. He and his wife Sue were like

(below) The "Super-Chief" back-up feature blended the Western, super-hero, supernatural, and sci-fi genres like no other series. Maybe that's why it only lasted three issues. On the plus side, Carmine was able to pencil and ink all three stories, including this one — featuring a race of giant Native Americans — from *All-Star Western* #118 (Apr.-May 1961).
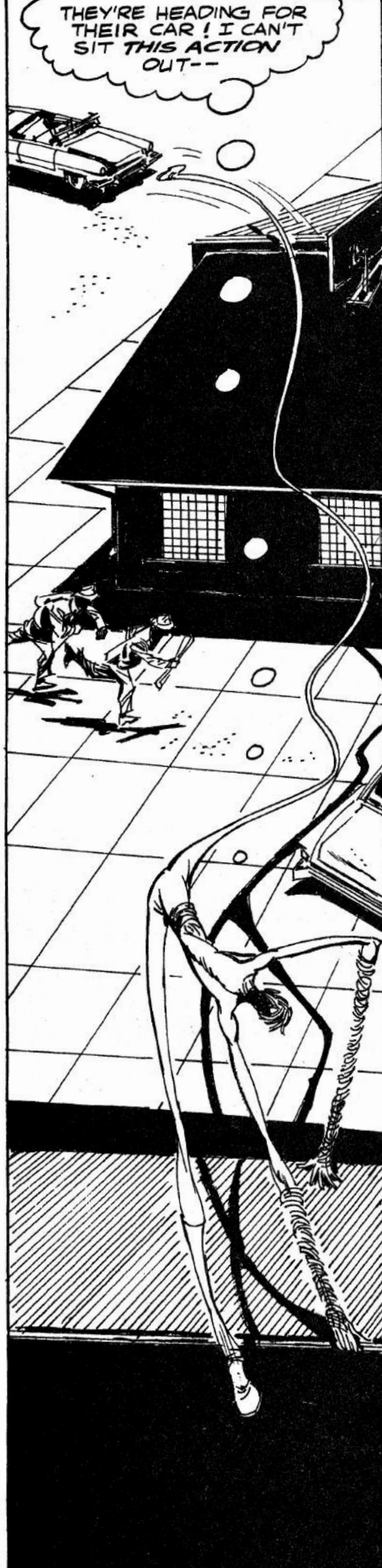
THEY'RE HEADING FOR THEIR CAR! I CAN'T SIT *THIS ACTION* OUT--

(right) Carmine, always one to experiment with layouts, made the most of Elongated Man's abilities by often showing him use his powers in very vertical or very horizontal panels. This panel from *Detective Comics* #350 (Apr. 1966), which Carmine himself inked, stretched fully from the top of the page to the bottom — something rarely done at the time.

ELONGATED MAN ™ AND © DC COMICS.

(far right) The wide, horizontal panels that worked so well when drawing the Flash in action, worked just as well with a stretched out Elongated Man. Panel from *The Flash* #112 (Apr.-May 1960). Inks by Joe Giella.

ART COURTESY OF HERITAGE AUCTIONS

ELONGATED MAN, FLASH ™ AND © DC COMICS.

Nick and Nora Charles from the *Thin Man* series. They were a good couple.

JA: *Did Plastic Man enter your thinking here?*
CI: No, isn't that strange? It should have, but it didn't. It must have been in the back of my mind. I loved Jack Cole's work, so it had to be in my mind, maybe instinctively.

JA: *Was there any discussion about Plastic Man when you did "The Elongated Man" with Julie?*
CI: No, he never mentioned him. First of all, the Elongated Man was never meant to be an important character. When he became one, we had to figure out what to do with him. John Broome did that.

JA: *When you started drawing "The Elongated Man," this presented another series of layout challenges for you. How did you adapt to the layouts on "Elongated Man," because you've got a guy that stretches? That's a different visual than a guy who runs.*
CI: That's right. Here's a guy who's like a rubber band, so your panels had to work the same way. Horizontal panels worked well here, but I did it for a different reason than I did on *The Flash*.

JA: *Did it take more time to draw the "Elongated Man" stories, because it required a different kind of thinking for you?*
CI: Yes. Look at the panels I used in the stories. They had to encompass that long stretching — vertically and horizontally. The panel shapes had to reflect that. It was a challenge, but I was ready for it. It was hard work, but fun.

JA: *By 1960, you seemed more secure about the business, because you're doing a lot of features. What changed your feelings?*

BUT JUST BEFORE THE *WORLD'S FASTEST HUMAN CA*

GOT IT!

HUF

BUT AS HIS FOOT HITS A LOOSE STONE IN THE RIVER...

OHH! THE WATER'S RIGHT BEHIND ME AND-- I'VE TWISTED MY ANKLE! IT'LL CATCH ME-- BANG ME AGAINST THE CLIFF WALL-- BEFORE I CAN RECOVER!

CI: When Irwin Donenfeld came into Julie's office and asked, "Who did those covers?" Julie said, "Carmine." That's how I knew my work was selling. And with Julie giving me all the work I could handle, I knew how he felt, too, even if he wasn't going to tell me. [*laughs*]

JA: *When you originally drew Kid Flash, you gave him a cut-down version of the Barry Allen suit.*
CI: Well, the script called for that, but I eventually created a new costume. I was tired of drawing a miniature Flash. I said, "Julie, it's stupid. We're living in a different period." He says, "What do you mean?" I said, "You can't draw the same costume small. It doesn't work. It doesn't look right. It's too confusing to the readers." So he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I'll come in with a [new costume]. I want to try it." He said, "All right, give it a shot," and I did. He liked it.

JA: *What do you remember about your thought process when redesigning the new Kid Flash costume?*

CI: I had to incorporate the same things as I had on the old suit, but differently. It was just another version of my Flash costume, but with a twist.

JA: *Did you suggest the colors or did someone else do that?*
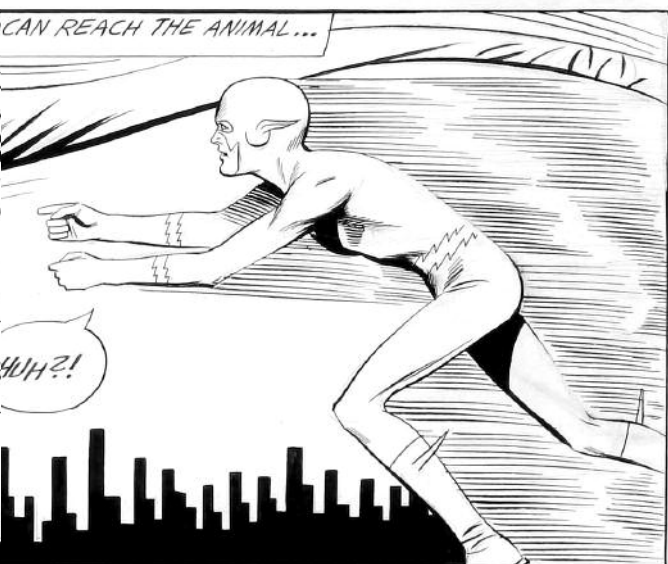**CI**: I suggested reversing the color scheme. But Jack Adler in production did the actual coloring. He was good.

JA: *I think that red works better than blue for super speed, don't you?*
CI: Oh, yes. Absolutely. Then I did the reversal on the Kid Flash, with yellow being the dominant color. He had to look differently than the Flash. Now remember, I could submit the idea, but they didn't have to listen to me. [Artists] didn't have that much influence, but I was lucky they listened to me.

(above) Carmine's redesign of the Kid Flash costume, which debuted in *The Flash* #135 (Mar. 1963), ranks among the very best super-hero costume designs of all time. This panel comes from a "Kid Flash" back-up story in *The Flash* #144.

KID FLASH ™ AND © DC COMICS.

...CAN REACH THE ANIMAL...

YUH?!

CARMINE INFANTINO
PENCILER, PUBLISHER, PROVOCATEUR

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