

YOU CAN'T BE **STUPID** IF YOU DON'T EVEN TRY



By
C.C. Beck

So many stupid things happen all the time that one often wonders if this is just happenstance. When a man is shooting at a target, his misses are attributed to his lack of skill more than to bad luck. But when everybody is missing all of the targets all over at the same time, as it seems to be happening at present, something or somebody must be at work, deliberately causing everything to go wrong.

I believe that I have tracked down, and can now reveal, that there are actual people who, by being willfully stupid, can make everything turn out badly. These people are not ordinary man-on-the-street stupid, they are highly-trained, college-degree stupid. If they weren't, one of them might now and then do something right, which these experts in planned stupidity would never do knowingly.

As I know nothing about politics, economics, or international affairs, I will not try to explain the part played by stupidity in Watergate or the Arab problem, or such matters, but will confine my remarks to one field which I know pretty well: the comic book business. A comic story starts with a writer who puts down on paper what he believes will interest the readers. If he has any brains at all, he will not write about dull, uninteresting things, nor will he write about interesting things in a dull, uninteresting way. His story goes to an editor who does his best to clean up and sharpen the writer's story, using his own skills and experience to best advantage.

Then the story goes to an illustra-

tor, usually a quite competent artist in his own field. Coloring artists, separators, engravers, do further work on the comic story; then it is printed and distributed to the public. Does all of this sound simple and foolproof? It would be, if each expert in the assembly line were allowed to do his part. But no, he isn't! The stupid stands all along the way, doing everything they can to gum everything up.

A stupid can be identified by his habit of, whenever you ask him anything, shrugging his shoulders and pointing to someone else. He knows nothing, and is proud of it. Nothing is ever his fault... don't blame him. As hardly anything ever goes right, you seldom have to praise him for anything, but once in a while (they aren't 100 percent perfect yet) a stupid will accidentally get some praise. Then he will blush all over, go into a fit of shrugging, and point in all directions at once, trying to indicate where the praise should go instead.

If you track down in a huge publishing house the head stupid under whom all the others operate, he will shrug magnificently (that's how he got his job) and point to a mysterious board of directors who, if you attend one of their meetings, you will find all point to a nebulous body of superstupid known as the stockholders.

If you could track down a stockholder, he would cheerfully admit that he knows nothing whatsoever about writing, drawing, editing, printing, publishing, or

even about making money. "Then who runs the whole business?" you may cry.

"The public," the stockholder will answer, pointing to a little eight-year-old kid reading a comic book. "Nobody," the stockholder will declaim, "really knows anything. No writer or editor or publisher knows what will sell and what won't. It's all blind luck."

And that's why a stupid will never allow a skilled marksman to come up to the line and do his stuff. "Who knows where the mark is?" the stupid says with a shrug. "We want only people who will shoot in all directions at once. The public can't tell good from bad, and neither can I nor anyone else in this business... All anyone has is opinions, and yours are no better than anybody else's. Get lost!"

So when you wonder why everything seems to have gone wrong lately, blame it on the ultimate in stupidity, the public. Which is, as Pogo said, us. The fingers all point at us, collectively and individually. Although you and I might want to assume a little blame or receive a little credit for our parts in the comic business, we aren't allowed to. A finger must always point elsewhere, not at its owner.

After all, who are we to think that we're qualified to say anything at all? We can't even shrug convincingly. Perhaps we should start learning; it may take some time but it would be worth learning.

Wouldn't you like to be a rich, successful stupid, too? I sure would!

SHAZAM!

is the name of the game

by william reynolds

LOGO BY JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO

As I write this, the current issue of *SHAZAM!*, National's new revival of the old Fawcett Captain Marvel ("The ORIGINAL Captain Marvel!!" as DC insists on telling us every other page), is the seventh issue... This issue's lead story deals with Mr. Tawny, a tiger who talks, and who aid Captain Marvel in capturing an evil jewel-smuggler.

This, as well as prior and doubtlessly succeeding issues, stays well in step with the original Captain Marvel stories of the 1940s and 1950s, as do the new Captain Marvel, Jr. and Mary Marvel characters.

These tales resemble innocuous fairy-tales, what with their simple concept of justice (simpler even than other comic books), the cartoonish draftsmanship, talking animals, etc. This, to borrow from historians, was the "charm" of Captain Marvel, the reason he out-sold and out-lived his better-drawn and better-written peers. It was an odd, yet incredibly perfect combination of simplicity and gentle satire that any ten-year-old could appreciate. Captain Marvel, unlike Superman, Batman, and the rest, was a magazine played almost solely for the comic relief;

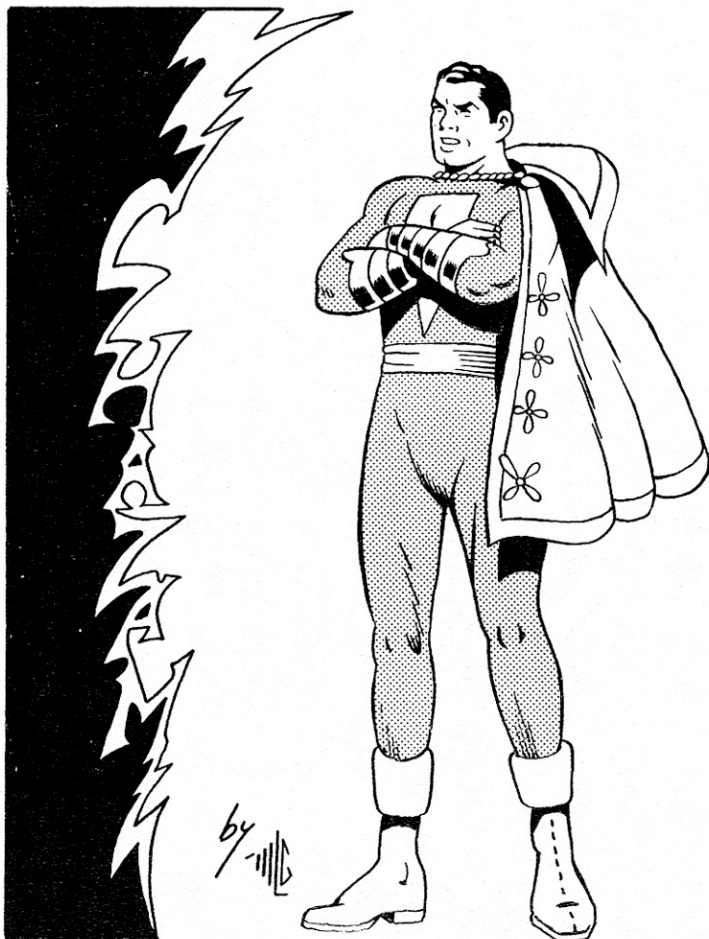
in my own opinion, which does not seem to be shared with the rest of the universe, this is the very thing that will eventually play a major role in the demise of *SHAZAM!* and the entire Marvel Family renaissance.

Please don't mistake my presumptions and suppositions with any wishful thinking -- I enjoy *SHAZAM!* as well as the next fan... I am merely presenting the facts, and the possibilities as I see them.

First, the, consider the general, obvious disadvantages. The first, seemingly having no effect on *SHAZAM!*, is the usual problems a new magazine faces. Fortunately, *SHAZAM!* seems to have side-stepped the early poor-distribution problems that are brought about because dealers and distributors are slow to risk anything unproven. *SHAZAM!* has had good distribution, and NPP reports high early sales for it - but, as Marvel is learning with its black and white monster mags, initial sales have a tendency to level off once the novelty dies.

The next general disadvantage is the fact that currently comics are in a rather depressing slump. Having neither the time nor the inclination to go running through my back issues studying the sales statements, I will, in accordance with proven scientific principles, let another do the work for me. I will then, with no apologies, refer you to a set of graphs published in the somewhat less-than-spectacular final issue of *COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY*. For those who were too intelligent to buy that issue, or who are too lazy to go dig it out, it contained two graphs illustrating the decline in sales of comics from 1966 - 1971. The graphs, which deal with several assorted Marvel and National titles, show a drop on *BATMAN* 900,000 in 1966 to just over 200,000 in that aforementioned five-year period. Similarly, *SUPERMAN* went from over 700,000 to just over 400,000; *SPIDER-MAN* from less than 350,000 in 1967 to about 400,000 in 1969, then to just a bit over 300,000 in 1971. I could go on and on but suffice it to say that of the thirteen magazines charted, all experienced rather alarming drops in sales. As a rule, also, newer comics tend to get axed before the established titles. I'm too lazy to show it offhand; look it up yourself.

Secondly, the general "cutesy-wootsy" Captain Marvel format is bound to become a little redundant, not necessarily to the fan, but to today's average buyer, the fellow who knows absolutely nothing about artists, writers, editors, production, and fandom, but who decides ultimately whether or not a comic lasts. For example, I am a



fan, and I buy comics more-or-less habitually. I buy *SHAZAM!* specifically for the collector's item it is. Yet I am getting quickly fed up with the fairy tale atmosphere. It's a sign of the times.

Therein lies another great disadvantage. The average buyer is a very fickle character. If he's bored with a comic, he's certainly not going to buy it for sentimental reasons, or for its worth to a collector. He'll probably forget about it.

Next there is a rather strange and confusing paradox in audience directions.. In other words, National seems to be aiming at two separate audiences at the same time. This is best illustrated in the *SHAZAM!* issue of DC's *COLLECTORS' EDITION*. As the title of the magazine rather subtly implies, the book is aimed primarily at the collector, who would be more willing to spend a dollar to cover the inflated price tag. Yet the contents- disregarding the stories themselves temporarily- specifically the feature pages and the format itself, indicates that it would be intended for a more juvenile crowd, unfortunately a crowd less likely to have that dollar to shoot up on an overgrown comic book. And keep in mind that the "Collector's Edition" tag means a lot less if you aren't a collector.

This paradox also continues into the twenty-cent comic. Remember, in the opening paragraph, how I pointed out that National had a fetish regarding telling us repeatedly that this is "The ORIGINAL Captain Marvel"? We can use this to extend the line of reasoning I was pursuing above ... The Captain Marvel revival was heralded by all of fandom as "the Comic Books News of the Year", but recall again that it is not the comic fans who determine whether a comic folds or flies. It's that old average buyer again. But this fellow most likely has neglected to subscribe to *THE COLLECTOR*, or *THE COMIC READER*, or *COMIX-SCENE*, or even *THE PHANTASY REVIEW* (very remiss of him) and consequently knows little or nothing of this earthshaking event, and sees in it little more than another comic book. Therefore, continual touting of "The ORIGINAL Captain Marvel", in addition to being boring as a result of sheer repetition, means virtually nothing to this customer, the possible exception being that he is well familiar with Marvel's Captain Marvel. Since most non-fan buyers seem to operate on a hit-or-miss buying pattern, it's unlikely that he would be. Still confusion may result, so let's compromise and keep "The ORIGINAL" on the cover, and out of the story captions.

All this talk of "The ORIGINAL Captain Marvel" brings us pell-mell into the last of the glaringly apparent inherent drawbacks - that of "preserving" the Big Red Cheese in his golden-age amber. This is quite marvelous (no pun intended) for fans and nostalgia buffs who want to see Captain Marvel in the same old vein, and especially for those fans who were not gifted enough to time their births right, and missed the Captain Marvel era entirely, but this may eventually prove more harmful than praiseworthy.

Recall that Captain Marvel was created for a slightly different era- the 1940s ... Even with a certain amount of updating the series cannot change enough to become acceptable as 1970s material. The magazine is apparently aimed at ten-eleven- & twelve-year-olds, and I don't see how it can become interesting and eventually acceptable to them without one or more structural changes in the format - which DC has promised not to attempt.

In addition, the ten-year-old of 1974 is undeniably more "mature for his age" than was the ten-year-old of 1940. Today's lad is a bit less likely to voluntarily submit himself to what seems to him a con-



HOLEY MOLEY! Even I'M having trouble getting my HANDS on a copy of SHAZAM #1!!!

stant drivel of ancient graphic pablum for a very long period of time. But the younger ages - those perhaps more comparable to the ten-year-old of 1940 - hasn't really got that money to spend regularly on a comic mag. Also, his attention is drawn to the Harvey and Gold Key "kids" titles from sheer familiarity. In general, this "dating" of the Marvel Family material is something that obviously cannot be eliminated without altering the format and changing Captain Marvel. He would then no longer BE "The ORIGINAL Captain Marvel". On second thought, though, it might be worth it just to get away from that phrase.

To summarize: In my opinion, DC's Captain Marvel revival is a noble effort; it clearly shows that their hearts on indeed in the proper location, but to my way of thinking, several inherent disadvantages are likely to prevent it being a big seller over an extended period of time. While

it has avoided the usual early-sales-slow-start syndrome, the fact that comics are in a depression may lead to an early-cancellation should sales drop. In addition, the format was intended for a different time period and little can be done to change this without changing the series format structure. There exists a paradox in the desired audience direction, and lastly there is a harm resulting from the fact that DC has done little in the way of "kiddie" comics for several years, leaving others much of that audience.

Hopefully I've read the signs wrong. I would rather have *SHAZAM!* continue to be successful than to have Captain Marvel fade once again. But I would rather have the good Captain fade away gracefully than to become someone we can no longer recognize as our own Big Red Cheese.

...AND **THAT** FOR YOUR
COCKAMAMIE SECRET
IDENTITY!

DON'T JUST STAND THERE,
STUPID... **DO** SOMETHING!

B-BUT THIS IS **RIDICULOUS!**
THEY HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN
FORMALLY INTRODUCED!

SNAP!

TO **BILL WILSON...**
BEST WISHES FOR THE
FUTURE SUCCESS OF
"THE COLLECTOR"

Schaffenberg



Schaffenberg

by BILL G. WILSON

As an extra, added feature in addition to KURT SCHAFFENBERGER's great cartoon of Superman-Lois-Captain Marvel, opposite page, I asked Mr. Schaffenberg a number of questions about himself and his work and those answers are printed here in the form of a profile feature. This is not intended to rival the excellent autobiography of Mr. Schaffenberg printed back in *JIMMY OLSEN* #155, nor is it intended to rival the excellent interview with him in Martin Greim's *COMIC CRUSADER* #15. It is printed here for the sole purpose of providing some background information about the man behind the three characters in the cartoon to the left, and hopefully will also add to what has already been said about this man in other publications before.

When I suggested a cartoon of some type for this issue, I gave Kurt two suggestions: 1) The idea of the rivalry over Lois Lane as pictured in Kurt's cartoon; or 2) A compilation of every character he had ever worked on. To this second suggestion he replied, "...I was amused" by your suggestion that I do "a compilation of every character you've worked on." Honestly, Bill, for that you would have to insert a gate-leaf fold-out in your magazine or devote a whole issue to it, as the number would be at least between 25 and 30. What's more, I don't even remember how some of the characters looked any more, as this would cover the approximately 33 years that I have been in the business..." So, we agreed upon my initial idea, and I am by no means disappointed.

BILL WILSON...

The following are the answers to several questions I put to Mr. Schaffenberg re: his work and career. Rather than present this information in the form of an interview, I am presenting the commentary only in Mr. Schaffenberg's own words:

I initially worked on the Capt. Marvel series, not directly for Fawcett, but through the Jack Binder Studio in 1941... immediately on graduating from Pratt. As I recall, my very first job was doing the backgrounds on a story that had been done by Bill Ward and Bob Butts (two fellow grads from Pratt who had preceded me by several weeks at Jack's). After that, I had relatively little to do with Capt. until after I got out of the service in late '45. I worked for a brief time at the Beck-Costanza Studio (about two weeks I believe) drawing Capt. Marvel, but then I went out on my own as a free-lancer. I initially did Ibis for Fawcett for several months, and then gradually worked into Capt. Marvel, Jr. then to Capt. Marvel for *Whiz* and by the time Fawcett got out of comic books in 1953, I had been doing most of the Marvel Family books for about three or four years. My capacity at all times was that of a free-lance artist.

In the Marvel series, I created a number of secondary characters that were used in subsequent stories (but don't ask me to name them), but the main characters were all the creations of Clarence Beck.. He and I became not only collaborators, but also close friends, and I still consider him as one of the truly great creative spirits in the comic book field.



As for which of the two characters, Supie or Cap, that I preferred to work on I have somewhat mixed emotions on that. I have always felt that Cap was a better strip for me to work on in that it was done with humor (and after all, aren't they supposed to be comic strips?) whereas I always felt that Superman was taken much too seriously by the editors concerned. It used to upset Mort Weisinger no end when I'd try to jazz things up a bit by inserting some innocuous humorous touch into the Lois Lane books. "This is too comicky," was a recurrent admonition. Too comicky for comic books??? I must say, though, that the years I spent doing Lois Lane were very gratifying to me, in that I had the chance to take Lois, a somewhat secondary character in the Superman stories, and develop her into someone with a definite personality and character all her own. As for the time I spent on Supergirl, the less said the better. The fact that she was an impossible character to begin with was not helped at all by the fact that in every issue they would have other artists drawing her along with me-- and the styles were totally incompatible.



At ACG I did not work on any one character, but did only one-shot stories--mystery, adventure, or romance. When the "union suit" heroes were making a comeback in the mid-sixties, however, I did develop the "Nemesis" and "Magic-Man" characters for them, although I never did any of the inside stories for them. From '58 on I was doing only covers for them, initially under my own name, and then under the pseudonym of "Lou Wahl" (my mater-



SELF-PORTRAIT BY *Schaffenberg*

ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN *JIMMY OLSEN* 155

-nal grandfather's name) when National objected to my using my own name on a "conflict of interest" basis. The vast preponderance of work I did at ACG was in the commercial comics field for its subsidiary, Custom Comics.

As I stated earlier in this, the number of different comic book characters I have worked on must number between 25 and 30. Excluding Supie and Cap, some that come to mind are Ibis, Bulletman, Scarlet and Pinky, Blackstone the Magician, Archie, Capt. America, Igor the Archer, Diggy-Do and Diggy-Don't, Pinky Lee, Pat-sy and her Friends, Marco Polo, etc., etc.

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, STUPID... DO SOMETHING!

B-BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS! THEY HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN FORMALLY INTRODUCED!



CAPTAIN MARVEL'S ROGUES GALLERY

by William Reynolds

LOGO BY JOHN G. FANTUCCIO

Almost as interesting as the Big Red Cheese and smaller Red and Blue Cheeses are the villains and sometimes - villains that not only plagued their existences, but oddly enough made their existence possible and worthwhile!

The most logical to begin with is : the thoroughly despicable Dr. Sivana. Sivana was an old, crinkly-eyed, toothy, bald-pated scientist in a white pharmacist's jacket (that's white jacket, not white pharmacist) who was motivated by one simple, understandable desire --- to become the ruler of the Universe.

It seems that Dr. Sivana -- or Thaddeus Budog Sivana, as he was known to his non-existent friends -- is the self-styled Rightful Ruler of the Universe in, unfortunately, name only. So it is only natural that he should wish to assume this title in actuality as well. And if he happens to bump off the Big Red Cheese in the process, well, c'est la vie.

Sivana had a sometimes-ally in the form of his daughter Beautia, who, strangely enough, is beautiful, and whose aid took the form of winning beauty contests and presidential elections on platforms of beauty. Confusing to say the least.

Captain Marvel had his hands full with another old foe, another ally of Dr.

Sivana's, Z. Z, sporting a blue uniform and dark moustache, was reputedly as powerful as the World's Mightiest Mortal, but naturally, villainous. For the first time in his career it looked like Captain Marvel may have a time of it trying to emerge victorious. In the final analysis, of course, he did, by delivering the World's Mightiest Punch to Z, who, it was then discovered, was nothing more than a mechanical man, another diabolical Sivana innovation. (I knew it all along!)

Another of the good captain's purely villainous villains took the form-or perhaps forms-of one Ibac the Invincible. Ibac, in reality Stinky Printwhistle, a professional loser, made a deal with the devil for, what else, power. His main claim to fame was in the unique parallelism he had with Captain Marvel. In order to become the hideous, thoroughly evil Ibac, he merely pronounced his name which, not unlike SHAZAM!, was an abbreviation for the beings from whom he derived his power. He was then gifted (?) with the terrorizing ability of Ivan the Terrible, the cunning of the Borgia family, the fierceness of Atilla, and the cruelty of Caligula. In the end, again, good triumphed, and Ibac, returned to his original form, was dusted under the carpet of defeated bad guys.

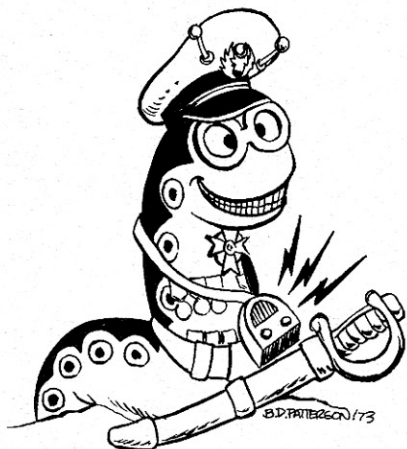
In the meantime, of course, Sivana was busy...in a different way than you'd expect. He has, at one time or another, managed to sire a grand total of four evil offspring, including the questionable (evil-wise, at least) Beautia. His next contributions to the human race (and in this case I use "human" rather loosely) were Sivana, Jr., (original, nest-ce pas?) a younger version of himself, and Georgia Sivana, a female version of himself who plagued Mary Marvel from time to time. Perhaps the most interesting of his children was Magnificus, a strong, blond headed chap, graced with the strength and physique of the proverbial Greek god. His strength served little more than to break the monotony for the World's Mightiest Mortal. For a while, at least, until he was put on ice.

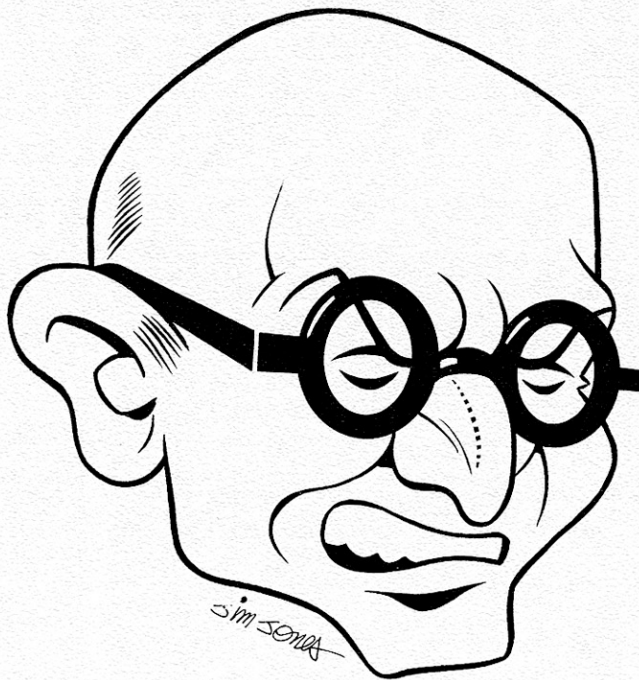
Mr. Atom was a villain who taught Captain Marvel a lesson - namely that when good triumphs over evil, it is not necessarily for keeps. Mr. Atom, another one of those bulky mechanical men, was fed up with the hand the robots had been dealt,

and decided that the simplest way to even things out would be for him to rule the world. Naturally, Captain Marvel managed to capture and imprison him, not without some difficulty, but Mr. Atom escaped to terrorize again. The Big Red Cheese had to learn the hard way that the thing just could not be imprisoned forever.

Other foes worth at least a passing mention are Professor Universe, the Master of all Knowledge, and his accomplices Slaughter Slade, a phony pugilist, and Dr. Allirog, obviously a distant brother to King Kong. Quaint company.

Captain Nazi was the gent responsible for the creation of Capt. Marvel, Jr. Captain Nazi, apparently bored with battling Bullethead, decided to try his luck against Captain Marvel. In the course of the conflict, Freddy Freeman was gravely injured, and Captain Marvel too him to Shazam for help. The rest is history. Junior picked up where Captain Marvel left off, battling Captain Nazi almost cease-





CAPTAIN MARVEL! CAPTAIN MARVEL! I'm so sick of hearing ALL about HIM! How about me--SIVANA??? I'm a BIGGIE from the GOLDEN AGE, too!!!

lessly for the duration.

Junior's other noteworthy nemiseses were Mr. Macabre, The Pied Piper, Sabbac, the Acrobat, Dr. Eternity, and Captain Nipponese, among others.

I have saved for last the most memorable of the Captain's arch-enemies, Mr. Mind. Mr. Mind, who hailed from a distant planetoid, was an intelligent, spectacled worm who spoke through a radio amplifier. He was the head of the Monster Society of Evil, which included Captain Nazi, Mr. Banjo, Nippo the Nipponese, and several monsters. Even Sivana was at one time or another one of the wily worm's lackeys.

Among Mr. Mind's more noble plots were plans to stop the rotation of the Earth, and another to blow the Earth into two separate worlds, one free, one Axis.

Finally, though, Captain Marvel caught up with the little fellow, but Mr. Mind had led the Captain a merry chase. It was only after several encounters that Captain Marvel even discovered that Mr. Mind was a worm, so clever had the latter been.

But Mr. Mind's misdeeds caught up with him. He was duly tried and convicted of the murder of 186,744 persons. You would think at least one of those had to be manslaughter. At any rate, he was executed in the electric chair, his lifeless body stuffed and placed in a museum. It leaves one wondering if it wouldn't have been simpler to merely step on him.

Oddly enough, Mr. Mind appeared in only one story, serialized from March 1943 to May 1945. That's longer than the average lifespan of a worm, but then Mr. Mind could hardly be called an average worm.

Naturally, in their thirteen-year lifetime, the Marvel Family battled, individually or collectively, hundreds of other menaces. Many of them, however, become sheer non-entities when compared to these "extra-special" villains. It was they who held that precious gift, charisma. They are as colorful, as dramatic, as unforgettable as the World's Mightiest Mortal himself.



CHAPTER 5 OF THE MR. MIND SERIAL ... FROM "CAPTAIN MARVEL" NUMBER 26



MR. ATOM RETURNED WITH THE COMET MEN IN "CAPTAIN MARVEL" NUMBER 81



JOHN ADKINS RICHARDSON '74

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL



by **JIM VAN HISE**

CHAPTER TITLES :

- 1) CURSE OF THE SCORPION
- 2) THE GUILLOTINE
- 3) TIME BOMB
- 4) DEATH TAKES THE WHEEL
- 5) THE SCORPION STRIKES
- 6) LENS OF DEATH
- 7) HUMAN TARGETS
- 8) BOOMERANG
- 9) DEAD MAN'S TRAP
- 10) DOOM SHIP
- 11) VALLEY OF DEATH
- 12) CAPTAIN MARVEL'S SECRET



In 1940, Republic Pictures announced that one of their serial releases for the following year would be "Superman". But, when negotiations with National over the excessive control they wanted over Republic's script, they turned to Superman's biggest rival, Captain Marvel. Negotiations with Fawcett were without a hitch, and Republic not only secured Captain Marvel, but had Spy Smasher thrown into the deal for good measure. Republic would use these two characters to make what are now regarded as probably their two finest serials, and which of the two is the better is a debate still hotly argued among serial fans. It is uncertain whether Fawcett actually wanted any script control, but they definitely didn't receive any, a fact which C.C. Beck will comment on in the conclusion of this article.

Republic released "ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL" on March 28, 1941. Now, when a serial is released, it was not released all at once. This date is when chapter #1 was released, as the remaining chapters were released one at a time, each week, for the following eleven weeks, thus completing the twelve-chapter run. In fact, the entire serial wasn't even finished being edited when chapter one came out, as chapter twelve completed editing on May 5th, only a couple weeks before its release. The serial itself was filmed from December 23, 1940 through January 30, 1941. This is about the average time most serials were filmed in. It required tremendous teamwork to accomplish all the filming required in so short a time, but Republic pulled it off time and again, and did it very handsomely. This was quite an astounding feat when you consider the total running time for the serial was three hours and thirty-six minutes. One thing

that must be pointed out here, though, is that most serials employed stock footage when possible and "CAPTAIN MARVEL" was no exception. Stock footage included scenes in chapters one and twelve of massed natives taken from a 1938 Republic feature, "STORM OVER BENGAL"; clips from the 1937 serial "SOS COAST GUARD" were used to construct the cliffhangers to chapters five and ten and a sequence from 1940's "MYSTERIOUS DR. SATAN" was used for the cliff-hanger on chapter seven. This is not to take anything away from the serial, since most all serials used stock footage due to the tight budgets they operated on. Actually, you'd have to be very familiar with serials to even tell what was actually stock footage as it was always very carefully handled for maximum effect.

Although there had previously been serials based on fictional heroes, such as "THE SPIDER'S WEB" (Columbia, 1938) and "ZORRO'S FIGHTING LEGION" (Republic, 1937) "ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL" was the first serial employing a super-hero. But this wasn't the only thing that made the serial unique, as the concept of Billy Batson turning into Captain Marvel was much different than the average superhero who merely sheds his street clothes and plummets into action. Billy Batson and Captain Marvel in no way resembled each other in the comic strip, ergo this was carried into the serial. On the screen, Billy Batson was played by Frank Coghlan, Jr. who had appeared in "SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE" (Universal, 1939) as well as in such classic films as "BOYS TOWN", and "THE PUBLIC ENEMY" in which he played James Cagney as a boy. Coghlan was a perfect choice for Billy Batson, as he looked very much like the comic book characterization and came across as being just



BILLY BATSON MEETS SHAZAM

as nonchalantly naive. Although his portrayal, replete with soprano voice, is sometimes a bit hard to take by today's standards, it was perfect for the time within which it was made and there is no doubt when seeing him that it's Billy Batson.

Captain Marvel was a perfect choice of casting in that he was played by Tom Tyler. Tyler was not that excellent an actor, but his acting talents were seldom required, as Captain Marvel's dialogue for the entire serial hardly filled three pages. His lines were usually very abbreviated, consisting mostly of clutching a frightened felon by the throat and saying "Talk or I'll...". The crooks invariably talked as Captain Marvel's threat was by no means idle. In chapter one when fight-

ing Arabs, he captured a machine gun nest and used the weapon to gun down three fleeing Arabs. In chapter five when confronting a gang of the Scorpion's men on the roof of a multi-leveled parking garage, Captain Marvel grabs one of them & throws him off the top of the building... Captain Marvel didn't mess around. The character of Marvel in the serial was obviously not the "Big Red Cheese" of the comics, but rather the character which Captain Marvel had in the very early stories he appeared in, especially the origin in *WHIZ* #2. In fact, a scene in the *WHIZ* origin story is used in chapter five of the serial when Captain Marvel rips open an elevator door and pulls the elevator back up by its cables to catch the felon who was attempting to escape. The



MARVEL IN ACTION

transformation on screen of Billy Batson into Captain Marvel consisted of Batson being enveloped in a bursting cloud of smoke, which clears to reveal Captain Marvel. This was very simply accomplished by just having flash powder set off on cue, stopping the film, substituting Tom Tyler and setting the powder off again... The effect it produced was quite impressive. Although the film was in black and white, the uniform of Captain Marvel was blue-gray with a cream-colored cape and gold chest bolt, sash and trim.

The special effects of Captain Marvel flying were overall quite convincingly accomplished by Republic's ace special effects man Howard Lydecker. Unlike the later Superman serials from Columbia which employed the unconvincing and horrendous method of superimposing cartoon animation over the film, Republic's Captain Marvel came across in top form by using a combination of methods to obtain convincing flying sequences. First they used the familiar process method (..which was used in the Superman TV show, for example) in which Tom Tyler was suspended on wires before a moving backdrop. The wires were invisible on film and the process was effective although only limitedly, thus it was only used on close-ups... What prevented this method from being completely effective is the fact that it's difficult to maintain a convincing flying position when suspended by wires, thus Tom Tyler's legs were often dropping off from the strain. Plus, the cape he wore flapped only as if caught by a vagrant breeze rather than the way it would if Marvel were actually flying. These shots weren't used terribly often, though, and in fact appeared mostly in the titles. There was one process sequence though which was very handsomely done and this was when Captain Marvel was supposed to be flying quite rapidly. The closeup of Tyler in front of a quickly moving process scene was extremely effective, and in fact, actually breathtaking. The other flying-scene consisted of using a dummy on pulleys suspended from a wire. The wire was stretched over the landscape, or area required, and strung at a downward angle. The dummy was then placed at the top of the wire, head up, with the cape tied down. The dummy was then released and the camera was cranked in reverse. The effect when seen on the screen is fantastic! The dummy doesn't look at all like a dummy on screen. It was constructed of paper-maché and was seven feet long to project the proper illusion. There are two especially remarkable scenes involving this dummy in flight. One is in chapter two when Captain Marvel is flying after a moving van as it speeds down a mountain road. Both Marvel and the van are in the shot simultaneously and the effect is truly remarkable as he flies inexorably toward the speeding vehicle. The other such scene is in chapter seven when Captain Marvel swoops down on a fleeing crook as he runs across a high narrow dam. Again, we see Marvel as he is flying down on the fleeing crook and the illusion is perfect.

There is one other thing which contributed to the effectiveness of Captain Marvel's flying, and that was the take-offs and landings. These were accomplished by stuntman Dave Sharpe. Dave's agility is quite remarkable and he put it to good use in the countless stunting roles he had. He could turn a fight scene into something truly remarkable to behold, and this was especially true in the *SPY SMASHER* serial wherein his tumbles and stunts bring gasps of admiration from the audience. In *CAPTAIN MARVEL* his agility is employed in the flawless leaps from cliffs and off the ground as Marvel takes off... Dave Sharpe also did Marvel's landings as well as all the complex fight scenes, in-

cluding those of Billt Batson. Speaking of complex fights, in chapter one he does a stunt I've never seen he or anyone else ever repeat in a film. This is when he's doubling for Tom Tyler who, as Captain Marvel, is faced with two attacking Arabs ... As they come toward him, Sharpe does a standing backflip and knocks the two foes out simultaneously with the tips of his toes!! It's fantastic to see, and it displays Dave's talent in top form. Dave Sharpe's stunts extended beyond the screen in "ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL", and were, in fact, employed to save himself from serious injury. In a scene when he was supposed to dive off a cliff into a net, a gust of wind threw him off target just enough that his dive would miss the net. One of the crew immediately realized this, chose the correct spot near the net and crouched down so that Sharpe used him to do a summersault off of into the net. Dave lent his athletic artistry to many serials and films, and still does stuntwork, recently having appeared in "CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES" and "THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE".

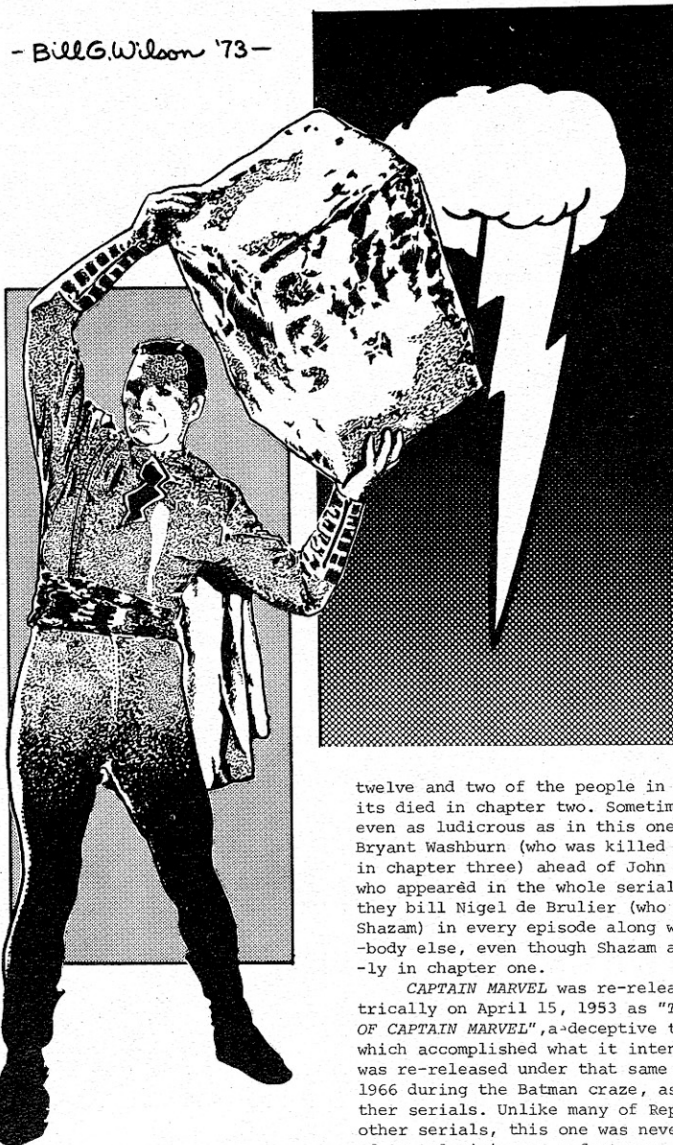
The villain of the film was the diabolical Scorpion. His costume consisted of a black robe and hood, each embroidered with scorpion emblems. It's somewhat humorous the way he first appears in the serial as it's late one night at the camp sight of the Malcolm expedition in the Valley of Tombs. That day the expedition had discovered the mysterious Golden Scorpion atom smasher and decided to parcel it out among the members to prevent its awesome power from being misused. That night, the Scorpion, in full garb, suddenly appears from one of the tents. It's done purely for sinister effect, but it's rather illogical as there was no way any of the expedition knew they'd find such a device. The Scorpion, as in the case of many serial foes, was a mystery villain. The audience did not know who he was, further than being sure he was one of the expedition. To further confound us, every one of the suspects acted suspicious throughout the film, although we were given help in the form of the suspects being riddled down by assassination throughout the serial. It was impossible to detect the Scorpion by his voice, as another voice, that of Gerald Mohr (who wasn't in the serial) was dubbed in whenever the Scorpion spoke.

The credit for the success of the serial must go to its two directors, William Whitney and John English. This team directed many of Republic's finest serials and they were known as the action directors.

The original screenplay for "ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL" was written by Ronald Davidson, Norman S. Hall, Arch B. Heath, Joseph Poland and Sol Shor. The plot was far more interesting and much less padded than most serials, especially those like "MYSTERIOUS DR. SATAN". The storyline though took many liberties with the Captain Marvel character, and although most were an improvement over his oafish comic book counterpart, the origin was completely revised and was by no means as effective as the comic, plus, at the end of the serial, Billy Batson loses the ability to become Captain Marvel as the Scorpion curse has been ended. The characterization of Shazam, though, remains intact and extremely well done, as Nigel de Brulier is perfect in the role. In fact the portrayal of Shazam in the serial as close that he looks as if he stepped from the pages of WHIZZ.

As mentioned before, Howard Lydecker did the special effects for this serial, but those efforts did not cease with Captain Marvel's flying scenes. Howard was an expert with miniatures and did the explosions, volcano erupting, and even the

- Bill G. Wilson '73 -



twelve and two of the people in the credits died in chapter two. Sometimes it's even as ludicrous as in this one billing Bryant Washburn (who was killed off back in chapter three) ahead of John Davidson, who appeared in the whole serial. In fact they bill Nigel de Brulier (who played Shazam) in every episode along with everybody else, even though Shazam appears only in chapter one.

CAPTAIN MARVEL was re-released theatrically on April 15, 1953 as "THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN MARVEL", a deceptive title, which accomplished what it intended. It was re-released under that same title in 1966 during the Batman craze, as were other serials. Unlike many of Republic's other serials, this one was never released to television as a feature version, so when it does appear on TV around the country, which isn't often, it can be seen intact.

THE STORY: The serial's adventure opens with these words of introduction: "In a remote section of Siam, near the Burmese border, lies a desolate, volcanic land which has for centuries been taboo to white men -- The Valley of Tombs! To this realm of mystery, jealously guarded by native tribes unconquered since the dawn of time, has come the Malcolm Archaeological Expedition to find the lost secret of the Scorpion Dynasty."

The Malcolm expedition consists of: John Malcolm (Robert Strange), Dr. Stephen Lang (George Pembroke), Prof. Luther Bentley (Harry Worth), Henry Carlyle (Bryant Washburn), Dwight Fisher (Peter George Lynn), Billy Batson (Frank Coghlan, Jr.), Whitey (William Benedict), Betty Wallace (Louise Currie), Tal Chotali (John Davidson) and James Howell (Jack Mulhall). Even before the expedition attempts to explore the tomb of the Scorpion Dynasty, the natives threaten to attack under the leadership of Rahman Bar (Reed Hadley). Tal Chotali meets with Rahman Bar under a flag of truce and in angry tones Tal Chotali points out that Rahman Bar has no right to

effects in the stock footage that was used (that of the airplane in chapter three and the ship in chapter ten.). Lydecker was a master of special effects who has seldom been recognized outside of circles of serial fans. He did work with miniatures in films (cars, trucks, trains, explosions, etc.) that is unexcelled. Many of his scenes of buildings exploding looked like the real thing and were used over and over again. Some of the last miniature work Howard did in films was in: "VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA", "TORA, TORA, TORA" and "OUR MAN FLINT" (he did Galaxie Island; remember the impressive destruction of it?).

The music in "ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL" was credited to Cy Feuer although the actual breakdown of compositions is: Mort Glickman (10), Ross DiMaggio (10), William Lava (2), and Cy Feuer (3). The music in the serial is good but varies very little throughout the film, thus reducing its effectiveness. In chapter one, though, more work seemed to have gone into the disposition of scores in reference to scenes as musically it is superior to remaining chapters.

One thing that's true in most serials is that the credits for each chapter never vary, even if you're seeing chapter



CAPTAIN MARVEL AND "FRIENDS"

attack for the legend states that were the valley being desecrated, the volcano Scorpio would erupt and it has not done so. Rahman Bar calls off the attack and the expedition enters the tomb. In the catacombs they come upon an inscription which Tal Chotali translates as "Let what reposes behind this stone remain hidden from the eyes of mankind for all time." Billy Batson refuses to be a part of the desecration of the tomb and after he leaves, Tal Chotali follows suit, Malcolm, Prof. Bentley, Dr. Lang, and Fisher work the stone free and enter the tomb where they find a golden statue of a scorpion, each of the statue's upturned legs bearing a lens clutched in the claw. Bentley suggests that

they bring all the lenses into line and, as they do, a shaft of sunlight through a hole in the ceiling passes through the lenses resulting in a puff of smoke followed by an explosion. There is a tremor, which blocks the entrance and hurls the scientists into unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, Billy has been startled by the tremor but before he can decide what to do, a slab opens in the wall, and Billy enters a heretofore unknown chamber. The door closes behind him. A sarcophagus opens before him and reveals an aged man with a long white beard. He reveals that he is Shazam and that he has slept for centuries, only to be awakened by the desecration of the Scorpion tomb.

Shazam (Nigel de Brulier) tells Billy he is giving him the powers of Captain Marvel to protect innocent people from the Scorpion curse. He is only to speak Shazam's name to gain the powers. Billy speaks the name and in a thundering cloud of smoke he becomes Captain Marvel (Tom Tyler). He then goes to the tomb where the scientists are trapped, lifts the massive slab and then changes back to Billy before he goes in and pulls them out. Later the scientists decide to divide up the lenses, the statue and the parchment that explains its use among them so that none of them can misuse the awesome power (including turning ordinary stone into gold). That night the Scorpion makes his first appearance and signals an ambush on the camp by the natives. The encampment is warned in time to mount defenses but they are hopelessly pinned down. They dispatch a radio message for aid but as the troops are riding to their aid, they are ambushed by Rahman Bar, incited by the eruption of Scorpio. With things looking bleak, the scientists load into the cars and flee, Billy remains behind and as the others leave he becomes Captain Marvel. Then he begins his one-man return attack against the natives as he destroys machinegun nests, fights off attackers, and attempts to stop the dynamiting of the gorgebridge. He fails in this though and the chapter ends with the car containing Betty and Whitey plunging with the crumbling bridge as it explodes and falls into the water.

Chapter two shows Captain Marvel pulling Betty and Whitey from the car and to shore and then changing back to Billy Batson.

The remainder of the serial is concerned with the Scorpion's attempts to secure the golden scorpion statue and the remainder of the lenses, a goal which he draws closer and closer to as the lenses are stolen from their holders and some of the scientists are murdered. We know that one of the expedition is the Scorpion, but it is difficult to determine who, as all of the suspects act suspicious, casting sidelong glances during the suspicious moments, listening at doors, and just generally looking odd. This is the red herring method used by Republic in many of their serials and it makes it impossible to guess the villain's identity before the last chapter or so.

Due to the fact that Captain Marvel was a superhuman character, it was difficult to come up with cliffhangers involving peril to him that would be convincing. For the most part, the cliffhangers involving Captain Marvel were re-evaluations of the extent of his powers when he used them to escape. For instance the cliffhanger in chapter two had an unconscious Captain Marvel on a rolling conveyor as a guillotine falls toward him... The escape is merely the guillotine blade shattering on Captain Marvel's chest, as he then wakes up, brushes himself off, and leaves. The reason he was unconscious is the only real weakness of his shown in the serial, that being that he can be stunned by an electrical charge. The lead-in to this cliffhanger was really excellent, as Captain Marvel leaped to an upper-story window, shattered it, bent open the bars blocking it, and then attacked a gang of thugs, tossing them around the room. The next chapters involving Captain Marvel cliffhangers are numbers five and six. In chapter five he is shocked into unconsciousness by the electrical defense on a safe which the Scorpion was going to rob. The rest of the cliffhangers involve either Billy, Betty or both as they are subjected to such things as a time bomb set to explode aboard Billy's plane, Betty's car speeding down a garage ramp toward certain destruction as she's unconscious at the wheel, Billy and Betty trapped in



THE GOLDEN SCORPION IS DESTROYED

a shack as bombs are being dropped, Billy unconscious in a car driven by Prof. Lang as a booby-trapped car driven by crooks pulls up alongside and explodes, as well as Billy and Betty standing in front of a safe as the machine guns automatically guarding it go off and even trapped in a ship as it slips off a reef and sinks like a rock. The escapes involving Billy and Betty are mostly engineered by Captain Marvel, although the one with the machine guns is sort of a cheat as a number of things happen between the time Billy and Betty begin to open the safe and the machine guns fire, and in the case of the sinking ship, Billy rescues Betty without changing to Captain Marvel, which was an interesting touch. Captain Marvel's cliffhangers merely involve him jumping through a hole in the cave ceiling and brushing himself off, or after being shocked, standing up and brushing himself off.

Finally, it becomes apparent to the remaining members of the expedition that the Scorpion is succeeding and after Lang is killed, they discover that he had left his lens in the Scorpion tomb and so they return to the Valley of Tombs to beat the Scorpion to the lens. In the tomb, they are trapped when Scorpio erupts once again. Malcolm and Bentley search the tomb for another escape route while Billy urges Tal Chotali to convince his countrymen to cease their violence. In a darkened passageway, where Malcolm and Bentley are walking, we see one of them attack & kill the other but it is uncertain who does what. Meanwhile, Billy changes to Captain Marvel and rescues Betty and Whitey. The Scorpion is reconnoitering the Malcolm camp when to his amazement he sees Captain Marvel emerge from the cave carrying Betty and from a distance, the Scorpion sees Captain Marvel disappear in a cloud of smoke and Billy Batson emerge. The Scorpion orders Rahman Bar to capture them and as Billy is searching the caves for Malcolm and Bentley, he is knocked out. He awakes and finds that he and the others are bound and gagged. The Scorpion is there and he demonstrates the power of the Golden Scorpion, which he has with him, to the assembled natives by focussing the lenses on one of Tal Chotali's followers and vaporizing him. Betty is next but the Scorpion states that he will save her if he reveals how he changes to Captain Marvel (an aside here; in a scene shortly before this, the Scorpion muses to Rahman Bar that perhaps Batson accomplishes the transformation by means of a powerful drug). Upon removing Batson's gag, Billy states that he'll not only tell him, he'll show him, and he quickly says "Shazam!" and becomes Captain Marvel. Marvel leaps forward and unmasks the Scorpion to be Bentley. Then Bentley suddenly grabs Betty and pulls a gun on her as he backs away to make his escape. Rahman Bar, realizing that he & his people have been duped, positions the Scorpion lenses so that Bentley backs into their path and is disintegrated. With that the Scorpion's end is ended and Shazam's voice is heard speaking his name, transforming Captain Marvel to Billy Batson for the final time. This happens after Marvel had thrown the Scorpion statue into a pit of lava, destroying it forever. With the threat ended, Billy, Betty, and Whitey start for home. Thus ends "THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL".



THE SCORPION UNMASKED!

C.C. BECK comments on the serial:

I haven't actually seen a whole lot of the film, but what I did see when I looked in at different chapters, at a screening once, it all seemed to be just stock shots; men on horseback riding around, volcanoes exploding, etc. At the time the serial was first made, some of us from the staff at Fawcett were invited to a screening of some of the scenes from the film before they were all edited together into the finished serial. I asked the man there why he didn't ask any of the Fawcett people for ideas for the ser-

ial and his response was, "We know how to make movies. Nobody has to tell us." I really didn't feel that they made a Captain Marvel serial. What they made was a serial with Captain Marvel in it. The story was primarily about the scientists and the Scorpion, and the Captain Marvel character really wasn't necessary for the story as just about anyone, Douglas Fairbanks, Mickey Mouse, whoever, could have been used instead and it really wouldn't have affected the story much.

ZERO HERO

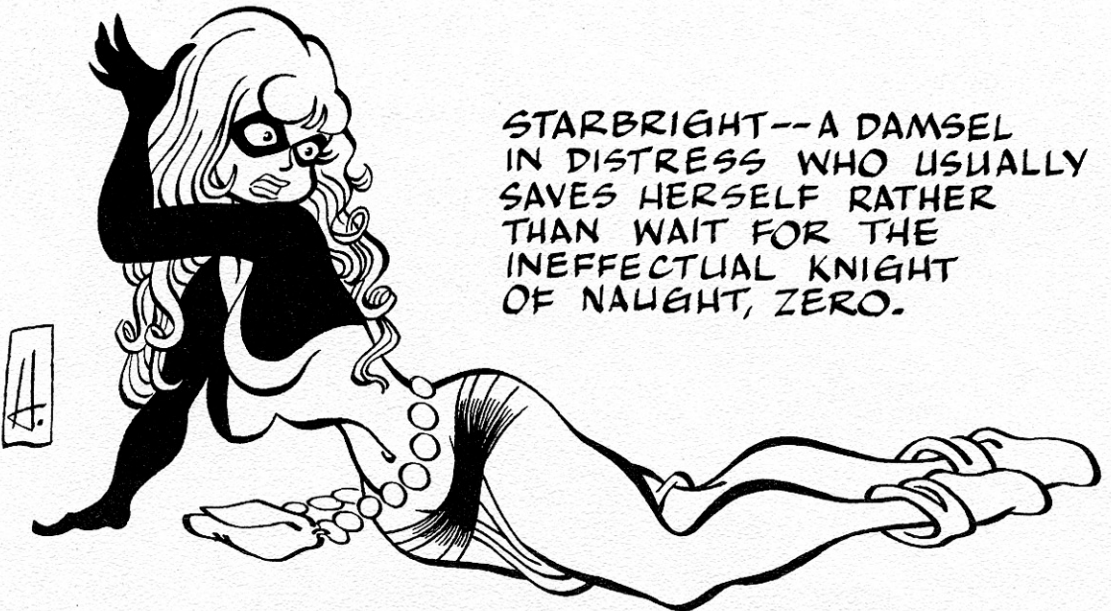
STARRING CAPTAIN HEAVY!

...AND STARBRIGHT



CAPTAIN HEAVY DOOTIE
--ZERO HERO HISSELF.

BY RC HARVEY

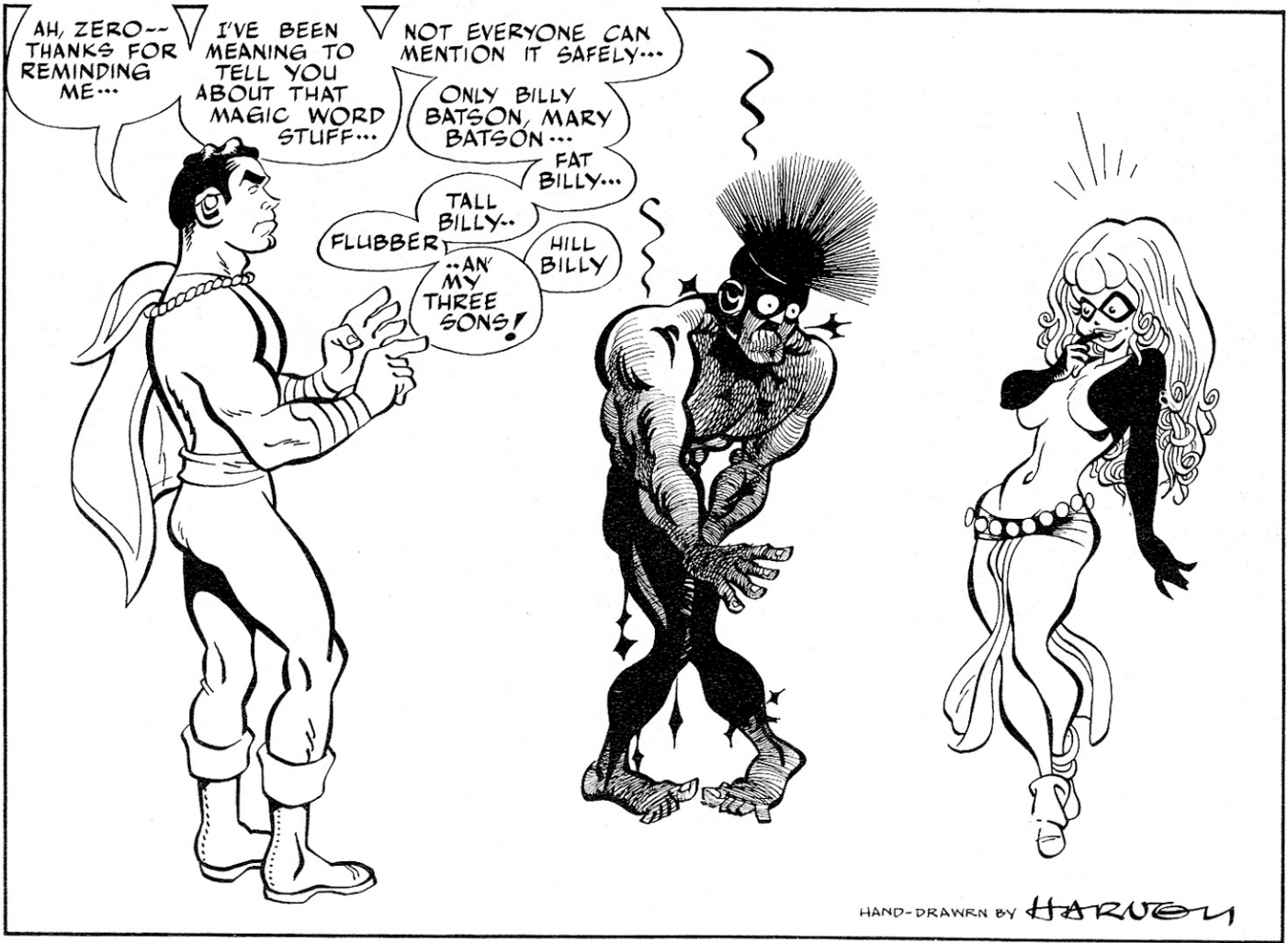
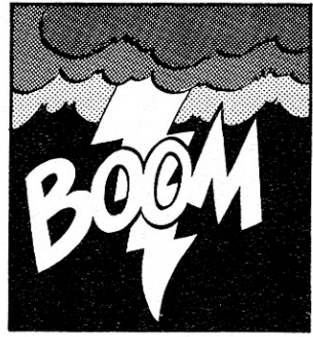
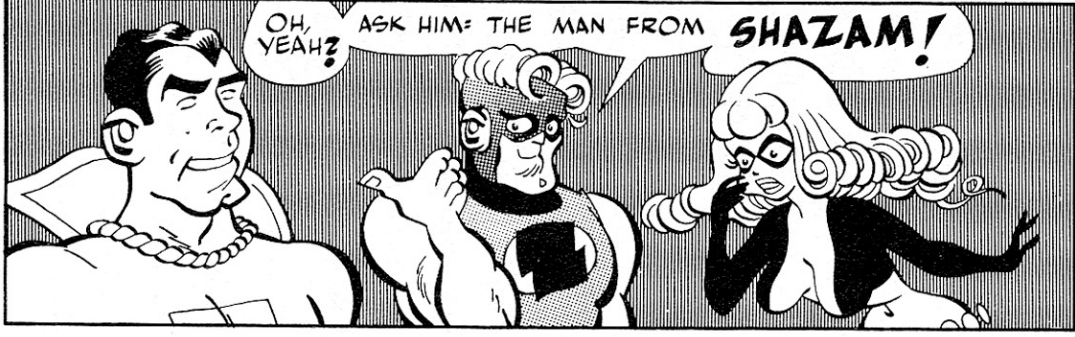


STARBRIGHT--A DAMSEL
IN DISTRESS WHO USUALLY
SAVES HERSELF RATHER
THAN WAIT FOR THE
INEFFECTUAL KNIGHT
OF NAUGHT, ZERO.

ONCE UPON A TIME (ALMOST), HEAVY DOOTIE WAS A SLIGHTLY NINETY-POUND WEAKLING IN NYGHWOLD'S ROYAL GUARDS, BUT HE DID HIS MORNING CALISTHENICS ALL DAY LONG, AND BEFORE DAWN, HE WAS PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN WITH A 75-INCH CHEST. THE BODY-BUILDING, HOWEVER, SHIFTED HIS CENTER OF GRAVITY FROM HIS MIND TO HIS MUSCLES, LEAVING HIS BRAIN-PAN NICELY COVERED WITH ONLY A VERY SHALLOW LAYER OF GRAY MATTER.

IN CONSEQUENCE, CAPTAIN HEAVY DOOTIE WAS KNOWN HAPPILY EVER AFTER AS ...

ZERO HERO



LIBERTY OR DEATH
WITH
LIBERTY AGENT



LIBAGE vs. CHAIN

COPYRIGHT © '74 STEVE DITKO

THERE IS NO ESCAPE, COMRADE ZELL! YOU ARE GOING BACK!



CHAIN!

SECRET ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAITOR ZELL'S RETURN ARE ALMOST COMPLETE!
FOREIGN EMBASSY GROUNDS... BUT OUR AGENT SAID ZELL IS BEING HELD HERE!



DR. ZELL DEFECTED, CHOSE FREEDOM. CAN'T LET HIM BE FORCED BACK INTO SLAVERY!



THAT SHOULD BE DR. ZELL!



COMRADE CHAIN WAS RIGHT!



...TRAP... BETRAYED! WHO? WHERE IS DR. ZELL?

YOU WILL NOT ASK QUESTIONS! JUST ANSWER THEM!



LIBAGE HAS ONE CHANCE. SIGNAL HIM WE'RE ACTIVATING THE DAZZLER!

WH... IF I CAN STOP HIM, CAN'T JUST GET HIM ALIVE! SEE!?



GET DOWN! I'LL STOP HIM!



(O# THE FOOL IS) ... SO... YOU... WILL... ALSO... DIE...



WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE?



LIBAGE.. ED IS DEAD! HE DESTROYED HIS SECRETS AND HIS KILLERS!

WHEN ED'S HEART STOPPED IT ACTIVATED HIS EXPLOSIVE CHARGE! ED WON'T EVER BE FORGOTTEN!



..WE'LL NEED A REPLACEMENT! ... WHERE IS DR. ZELL NOW, AND WHO SOLD US OUT... CAUSED LIBAGE.. ED'S DEATH!

PICK ED'S REPLACEMENT, THE NEW LIBAGE AND GET HIM READY!



YOU'RE RIGHT, LOLA... ELIS IS THE BETRAYER! HE'S WITH THE RED AGENT CHAIN! ...LIBERTY AGENTS!?!... I... I'VE BEEN FOUND OUT! CHAIN HELP ME ESCAPE!



HOW UNFORTUNATE FOR YOU, FOX!

BUT YOUR DEATH, FOX, CAN STILL SERVE OUR CAUSE! BORIS... IVAN!



BACK! THEY'RE NO CHAIN... NOT ALONE! MERCY... AAGH!!

I LEARNED WHERE DR. ZELL IS... BUT NOT FOR LONG... OLD FACTORY...



YOU FOUR WILL BE LIBAGE'S SUPPORT IN ZELL'S RESCUE! WE ONLY HAVE A FEW HOURS BEFORE ZELL IS SHIPPED OUT OF THE COUNTRY!



FOX IS GONE, BUT THE COBRA IS STILL IN THEIR MIDST! WE'LL KNOW THEIR MOVES IN TIME TO CRUSH THEM! SOON THE WHOLE LIBERTY AGENT ORGANIZATION WILL FEEL THE CHAIN!



THE STAND-BY UNIT IS IN PLACE! YOUR POSITIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS ALL CLEAR? TO ZELL AND THEN BE READY FOR MY SIGNALS!



WE'LL BE READY... JUST GET ZELL AND KEEP YOURSELVES IN ONE PIECE!



NO HIDDEN ALARM SYSTEM... MUST NOT BE A REGULAR HIDEOUT!



COBRA! WHAT! THEY KNOW... THERE NOW! I'LL ALERT SECURITY! THEY MUST NOT GET ZELL ALIVE!



ALARM!?! BUT THEY COULDN'T KNOW I'M HERE!



...WON'T TURN BACK OR LEAVE WITHOUT DR. ZELL!





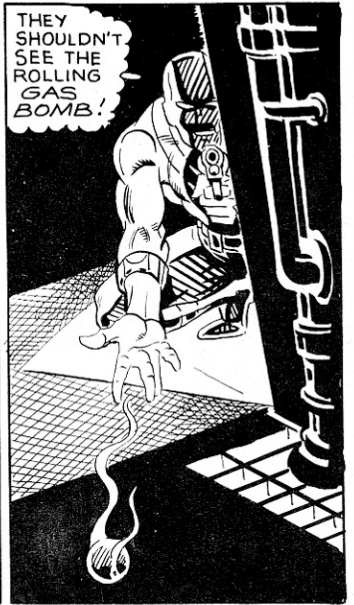
..DESTROY LIGHTING SYSTEM..STAND BETTER CHANCE IN THE DARK!



..SENSOR PICKING UP MOVEMENT..TALKING..OH, OH!
LET ANYONE GET INSIDE TO ZELL AND YOU WILL ALL ANSWER TO CHAIN!



..TOO MANY.. CAN'T SURPRISE..GET CLOSER!



THEY SHOULDN'T SEE THE ROLLING GAS BOMB!



DR. ZELL IS OUT ..DRUGGED?! GIVE HIM A SHOT, BRING HIM AROUND ..EASIER TO HANDLE..



DR. ZELL, I'M GETTING YOU OUT OF HERE!
..IF, IF YOU..CAN'T.. PLEASE..PROMISE ME.. KILL ME... WON'T GO BACK... RATHER..DIE..MUST PROMISE..PLEASE..

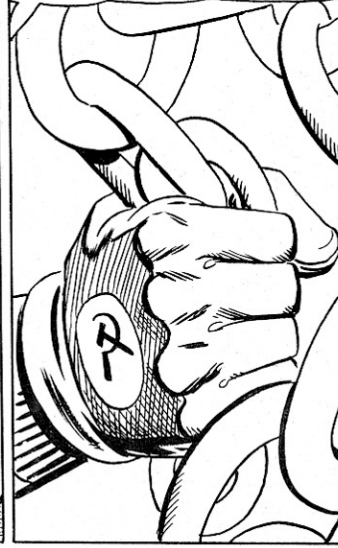


YOU'RE GETTING OUT ALIVE AND FREE, DR. ZELL!
..TIME TO SIGNAL FOR A SOUTH SIDE DIVERSION!



EVERYONE REINFORCE THE SOUTH EXIT! HURRY! THEY'RE TRYING TO BREACH OUR DEFENSE..MAKE A LINK UP!

..BE SO OBVIOUS..SO RECKLESS?:NO!..A TRICK!



WOULD THEY BE SO DIRECT?



..CELLAR..WE'LL SOON BE SAFE AND FREE, DR. ZELL!



..FREE.. SOB.. FREE..

THAT'S FAR ENOUGH! NO HEROICS!.. PUT DR. ZELL DOWN SLOWLY..

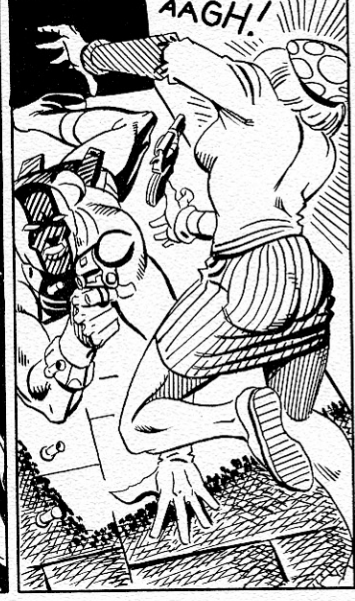




...NO TRICKS... NOW UNBUCKLE YOUR GEAR...



..WHA..I'LL KILL YOU! #@*



AAGH!



YOU DIRTY. #@*



I SHOULD KILL YOU NOW, BUT YOU ARE MORE VALUABLE ALIVE AND SPILLING ALL YOUR SECRETS...



..AND YOU WILL TALK AND DIE.. BY MY HANDS..AAGHH..



IT'S ALL OVER... SOB! FREE.. OUT OF THEIR GRASP. FREE.. SOB..



COBRA IS DEAD, BUT I'M STILL ALIVE! THEY HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST OF CHAIN! THOSE LIBERTY AGENTS WILL PAY FOR THIS WITH THEIR LIFE!



YOU ALL RISKED A WORLD BETTER THAN WE ARE STRANGER.. WHY? WE DON'T EXPECT A WORLD BETTER THAN WE ARE WILLING TO BE OR EXPECT OTHERS TO MAKE AND KEEP IT BETTER! A DECENT WORLD BEGINS AND IS SUSTAINED BY CONSISTENTLY ACTING TO CORRECT ANY INJUSTICE!



WHEN ANY GOVERNMENT WON'T PROTECT RIGHTS, IT WON'T ALLOW FREEDOM! THEN EACH MAN MUST CHOOSE TO EITHER COMPROMISE, TO EXIST AS THE STATE'S SLAVE, OR TO FIGHT FOR HIS RIGHT TO LIVE AS A FREE MAN!

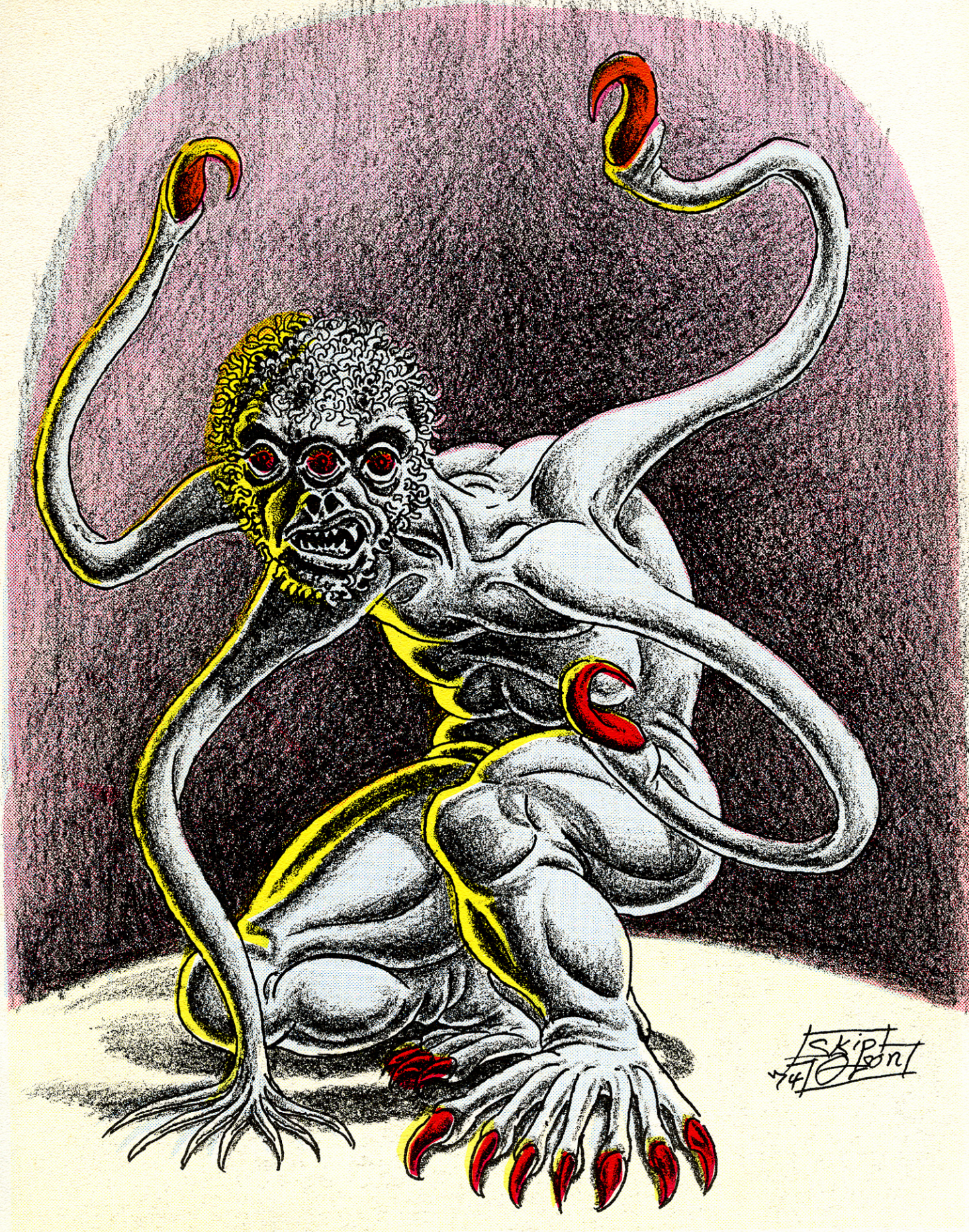
I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN YOUR LIBERTY ORGANIZATION!



END 4



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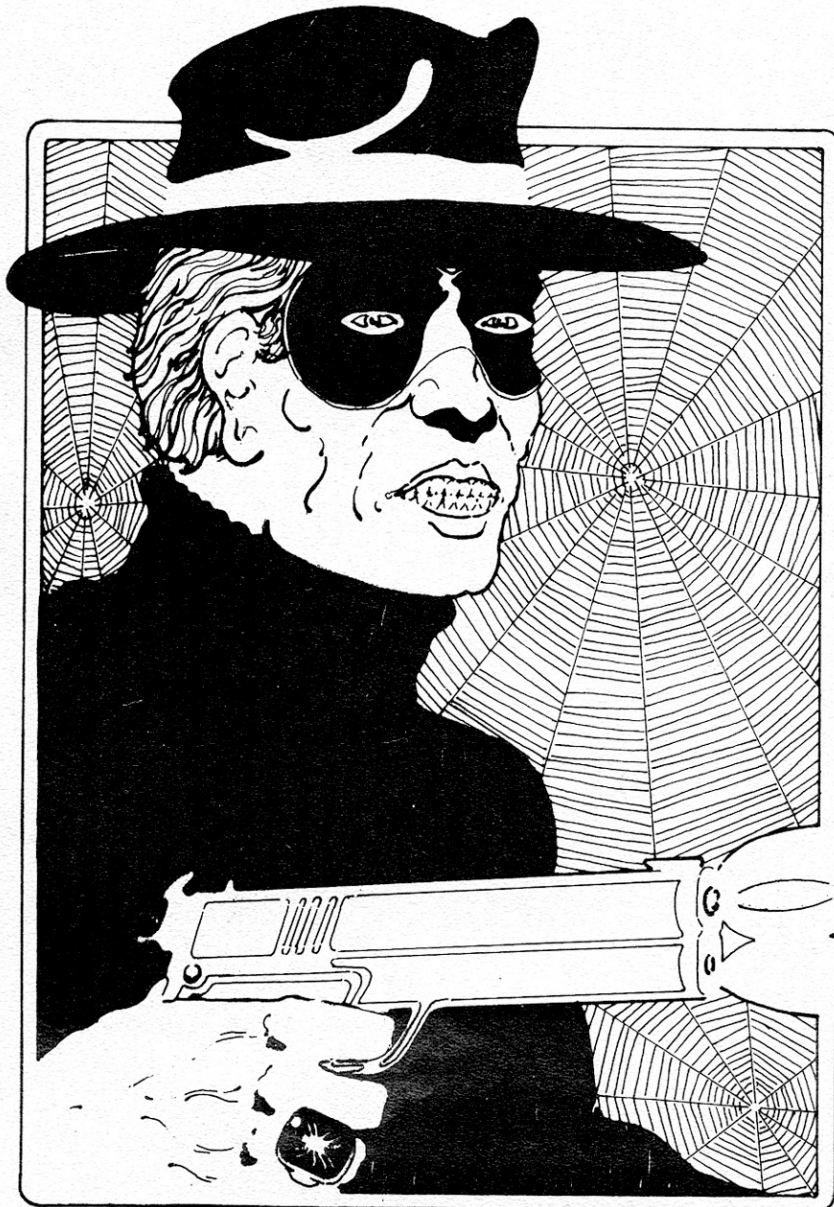


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A SHORT HISTORY OF PULP FANDOM

by **ROBERT WEINBERG**

ILLUSTRATION BY HOWARD BENDER



First, let us begin by defining our terms. A pulp is a large-size magazine (usually approximately 6"x9") featuring fictional material, with color cover, black and white interior illustrations, printed on the cheapest available wood pulp paper ... This cheap pulp paper differentiated the pulps from the better-quality paper, and thus more expensive magazines called "the slicks" by fans. An example of the slicks is *Esquire*. The pulps died in the early 1950's. Digest-size magazines such as *Galaxy*, *Analog*, etc. etc. aren't pulps. The pulp paper era lasted approximately 70 years, from the latter part of the 19th century to the mid-1950's.

The beginning of pulp fandom, in the truest sense, was in the early 1930's; it began with the first science-fiction fanzines. As all of the science fiction magazines were pulps, early science fiction fandom was also "pulp fandom". However... the common acceptance of the term seems to refer to those people who collect what are known as "single-character pulps", or "hero pulps"; those magazines that featured a continued hero in every issue. In the scope of this article, it is those collectors who will be denoted as "pulp fandom".

There has always been a fringe element in the science fiction field of hero pulp magazine collectors. However, little was ever done to organize this group until the early 1960's. Lynn Hickman, a long-time science fiction fan, a publisher of several other fanzines, began a new fanzine entitled *The Pulp Era*. *Pulp Era* featured articles on all types of pulps, including such diverse titles as *Argosy*, *Pirate Stories*, and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. Pieces ranged from fond-memorytype articles to more factual studies by pulp authors.

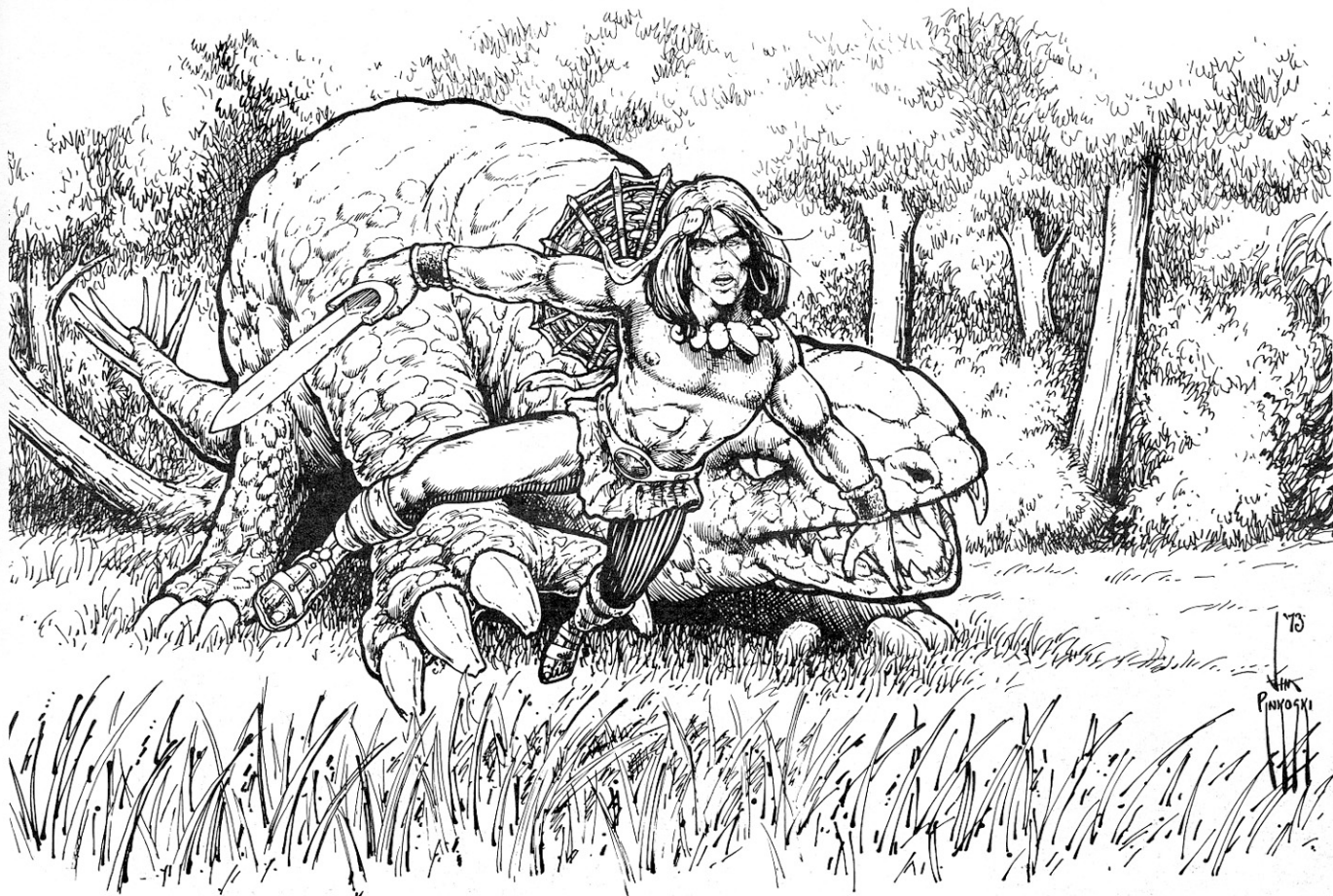
Soon after *Pulp Era* began, Fred Cook began his fanzine *Bronze Shadows*. *BS* referred of course to Doc Savage, and was devoted almost entirely to the character pulps. It featured more checklists than *Pulp Era* and the articles tended to be more factual.

With the increased popularity of the Doc Savage paperbacks, interest in hero pulps grew. Rusty Hevelin, an Ohio collector, began a short-lived advertising fanzine which specialized in the pulps: *The Pulp Advertiser*. The more well established *Fantasy Collector*, the primary marketplace for science fiction collectors, began to feature more and more hero pulp advertisements. An active correspondence between collectors resulted.

In the late 1960's, I met Lohr McKinstry, a character pulp collector, at the July Comicon in NYC. Between the two of us, we developed the first index of novels published in the major character pulp magazines. This was published by me back in 1970, in an edition of approximately 325 copies. It sold out immediately. Also during this time, I began a new fanzine on the character pulps titled *Pulp*. *Pulp* featured articles and checklists only on character pulps. At this time, it is the only fanzine of this type being published though at a frequency of about two - per year.

During this time, I began sending pulp information to Howard Siegel's column in the *RBCC*. Soon after, Jim Van Hise began a pulp column in *Rocket's Blast*, and I contributed a number of pulp articles to it. Ron Goulart's book on the pulps, "*Cheap Thrills*", had already been completed at this time, but the *Hero Pulp Index* was used by Jim Steranko in writing the pulp chapter of *The History of Comics*.... Credit is given to Richard Weinberg!

Also during this period, I gave a number of slide shows at various comic conventions, trying to drum-up interest in the character pulps. Usually the talks



were well-attended, but never by fanzine editors, who either ignored them or wrote afterwards that they had been too busy to attend. I continued to write several columns on the pulps for fanzines, and have done approximately one hundred such pieces in the last few years.

In 1971, Camille Cazedessus Jr., publisher of *ERBdom* and *the Fantasy Collector*, contacted me about a revised version of *The Hero Pulp Index*. I did this revision, starting over from scratch, expanding the book to double its length. It was published late in 1971, and remains, to this day, the only detailed index to the character pulps.

In late 1971, Ed Kessell, a St. Louis fan, came up with the idea of a convention of only pulp collectors. Kessell single-handedly did all of the work involved with this convention. PULPcon # 1 was held in early summer, 1972, in St. Louis. Kessell was the prime mover behind the convention and spent a great deal of his own money to insure its success. Among the highlights of the convention was the auction of a number of original paintings done by pulp artist Walter Baumhofer, including the first *Doc Savage* magazine cover. Graves Gladney, famous cover artist for *The Shadow* magazine, attended the con as did several other pulp personalities.

In 1973, a second Pulp convention was held in Dayton. This convention was chaired by Lynn Hickman, Rusty Hevelin, & Gordon Huber. The convention was again a success. This year we're planning PULPcon III. For more details, send a SASE to: Robert Weinberg, 10533 S. Kenneth, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453.

Pulp fans, in general, are glad to see anything on the pulps appear, mainly because there has been so little done any-where. Thus each reprint, comic, movie, etc. is greeted with loud cheers..... Of

course, shoddy jobs are not looked upon with great favor...but even they advance the cause. Tony Goodstone's book on the pulps was no in-depth study, but it provided an interesting look to the layman. And, Steranko's chapter on the pulps in his comic history, again, while hastily-written and not too accurate, generated enormous interest (how else did all the comic fans suddenly discover the pulps?).

In the comic field, I can't say much other than I am in touch with Roy Thomas, and he sincerely seems to be making an effort to make his *Conan* comic, and other pulp-related projects as accurate to the original source material as possible, no matter what comic fans might think. *The Shadow* comic from DC seems to be based on ideas gathered from radio shows, later issues of the *Shadow* pulp, and the writer's imagination. The Comic Shadow is not the Pulp Shadow.


Pulps seem to be selling well in paperback, and hopefully will continue to do so. The Avenger did so well that Ron Goulart was commissioned to do several new novels. The Spider will be back in paperback, as well as *The Shadow*, in reprints of classic novels. And, reports about the *Doc Savage* movie from George Pal sound very good. The movie might give the lagging sales of the *Doc Savage* paperbacks a needed boost.

My own fanzine, *Pulp*, is not dead, but is dormant. I'm just too busy to get that next issue out. Instead, I am publishing *Pulp Classics* instead. This is a series of booklets featuring studies of famous pulp characters (#1 is *Gangland's Doom - The Shadow*) as well as reprinting rare pulp novels (#2 features the only Captain Hazard novel, #3 is horror - pulp stories, #4 is a Secret Agent X novel, and we have lots of other ones planned.

Pulp fandom is still a small group,

but it is expanding continuously. We are always looking for people who want to get involved. More and more people are finding out that the pulps are fun --more fun in many ways than comics. Artwork is not comparable of course, but the stories are better, the letter columns are lots of fun, and collecting is a lot cheaper. Unfortunately, the field has recently attracted a number of deadbeats who seem primarily interested in raising up the prices of rare pulps they have for sale, and little else. Pulp fandom is fun. Don't be misled by high prices and ignorant characters. Climb aboard. There is room for everyone.

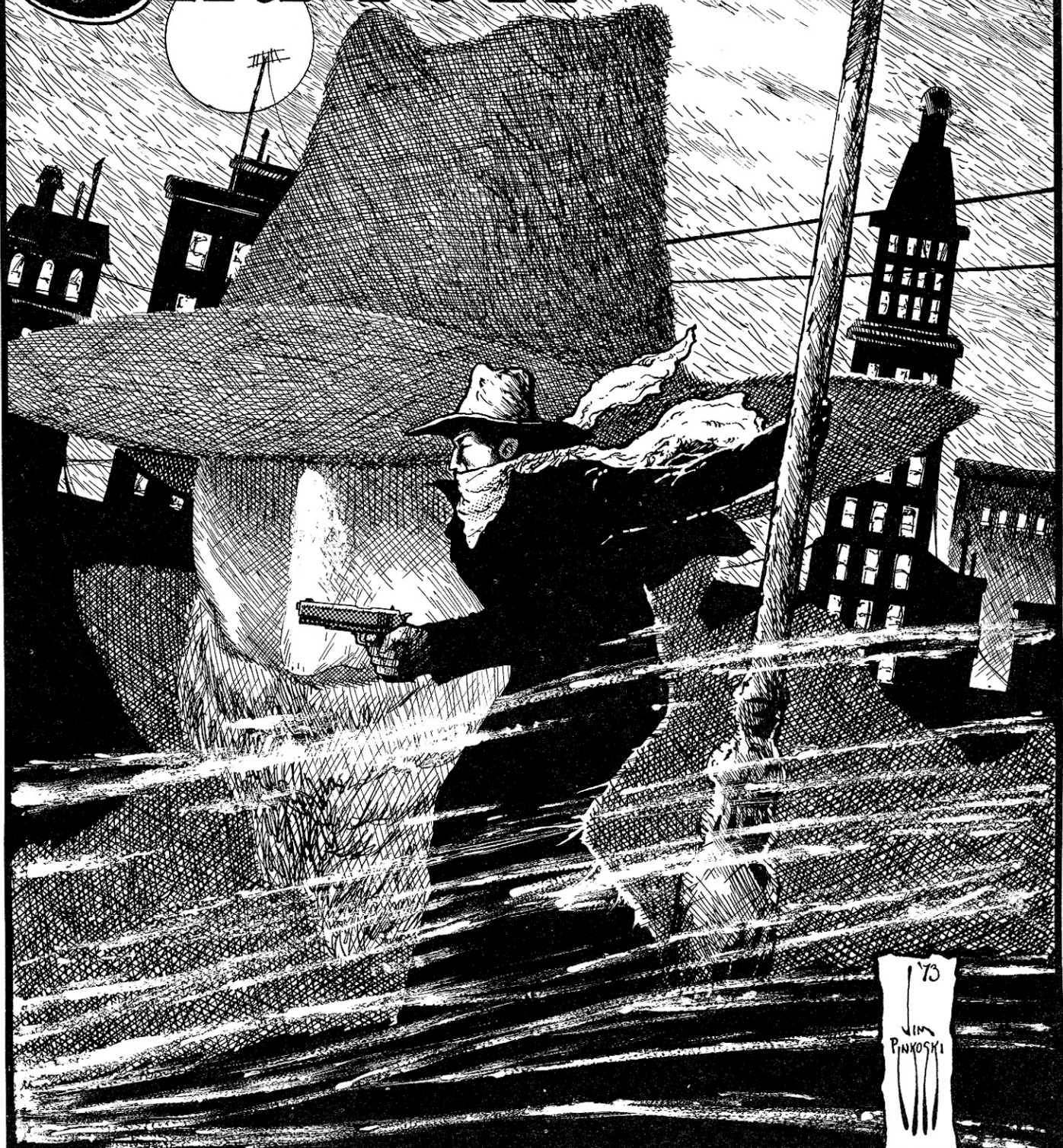
GANGLAND'S DOOM



PULP CLASSICS

ROBERT WEINBERG
10533 S. KENNETH
OAK LAWN, ILLINOIS 60453

THE Shadow



1973
JIM
PINKOSKI

The HEROES of NOSTALGIC LITERATURE

10c

PULPS vs. COMICS



The hero has had a long career in nostalgic literature. Most of us have grown up on a relatively new innovation.. called a comic book, though the hero here has his roots in those that went before him. The oldest champions in popular American literature date back to the Beadle and Adams dime novels of the 1860's, which led to the weeklies of the turn of the century, and eventually to the pulps. The magazine hero found his finest hour in these pulp-wood novels of the thirties & forties, and although the pulp hero and comic book hero differed in their form of communication, they shared a lot of common points and parallel each other quite nicely.

Telling a story in pictures dates back to caravan times, but the comic book medium is relatively new in this country. Comic strips, which began developing in the 1890's, first popularized the technique, even though the adventure hero did not come into style until 1929, with the appearance of *Buck Rogers* and *Tarzan*. So when the comic book began, its heroes lacked much of the sophistication seen in the novel-hero of the time.

Nevertheless, each form had strength that made it popular. Pulps could really develop the personality of its heroes, weave intricate plots and dangers, and

paint wild pictures of adventure in the reader's mind. Comic books could graphically illustrate a scene with some detail only the wildest imagination could see otherwise. Men like Harold Foster could draw a face that just shined of personality. Comics could give you explosive action and movement in fight scenes that rivaled even the best-written battles of the pulps. Comic adventures moved so very quickly, however, that they lost one of the most powerful vehicles open to pulps: suspense. I often sit on the edge of my seat when I read pulp thrillers, and this example from the September 1935 issue of *Secret Agent X* gives you a taste of this suspense. In this scene, Agent X has penetrated the enemy camp and has disguised himself as a corpse that seemingly drives an armored roadster, whose machine-guns systematically destroy any police who interfere with the robberies of his gang. The car is apparently remote controlled, so as the gang heads off on another job, "X" vows to stop the mysterious roadster that had easily massacred the prime of the city's police force:

"X" fully realized the peril of his position. The roadster was closely followed by the sedan, and the occupants of the latter never moved their eyes from the car in front of them. 'X' hadn't a chance in the world of freeing himself

from the machine gun as long as those criminals were watching him. They would have shot him down at the first movement. No, he had impersonated a corpse. He knew that unless the odds should suddenly shift in his favor he would be a corpse in a few minutes. He was caught between two fires. The police would unhesitatingly shoot him on sight; the gangmen following the roadster would shoot him if he made a move.

The mystery car moved smoothly ahead... The steering wheel in the hands of the corpse remained motionless, though the car negotiated turns easily enough.

The roadster gained speed. It was heading toward a part of the city where many factory workers dwelt. No doubt the objective was some bank where hard working men and women stored the savings of a lifetime.

Staring straight ahead over the long hood of the car, "X" saw the rear end of a special police cruiser. Suddenly, the siren of the police car began to whine. It wheeled to the center of the street, and fairly leaped ahead. "X" ventured a look behind. The blue sedan no longer followed. Evidently, it had speeded ahead to the bank that was to be robbed. The ever alert police had heard the alarm and were rushing to the scene of the crime.

But if the police car seemed to leap the black roadster seemed to have sudden-



The Spider in action...

ly begot wings. Its powerful motor abruptly opened up. The acceleration was so great that "X" felt as though his head would be snapped from his shoulders. The distance between the black destroyer and its prey shortened alarmingly.

But Agent "X" was not idle. He knew the hidden hand that guided the car would open up the machine gun as soon as the roadster overhauled the police car. He knew, also, that police guns would send a hail of lead that "X", in his position in the roadster, could not possibly avoid... The powerful muscles of the Agent's arms swelled until it seemed that his skin might burst. There was a sound of ripping fabric as he broke through the friction tape which held him to the gun.

As his hand pulled free, a great shout arose from the police car. They had sighted the roadster that was overtaking them. One of the police leaned far out & sent a shot whining above the Agent's head. There were few people on the street and the police would have no reason to hold their fire; they would shoot to kill.

The Agent's hands worked like lightning, tugging at the clasp that held the ammunition drum of the machine gun in place. The clasp yielded. He fastened both hands on the drum, and yanked it free. He hurled it into the street. At the same time, police automatics barked. A slug thudded against "X's" bullet-proof vest. He could not hope to be that fortunate always; one of those hungry pellets must find his head.

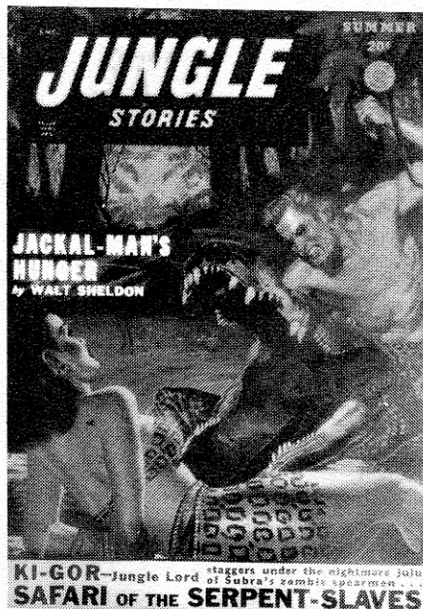
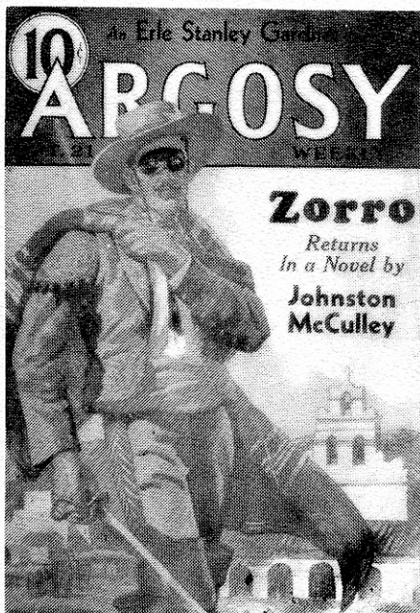
Staring down, he saw the pavement, a speeding ribbon beneath him. To leap meant -- But where was the choice? Without a moment's hesitation, "X" swung one leg over the door of the roadster. A bullet sliced across the calf of his leg, and spanged against the armor plate body of the roadster. The Agent's body rocked. He was thrown completely off balance. His arms shot out in a mighty heave... that threw him off into space. He had a sickening sensation, as though he were being hurled off of a spinning planet. He was running before he touched the pavement, but it would have been impossible for him to time his pace with that of the roaring speeding roadster.

His legs doubled under him. He rolled like a ball. A slug imbedded itself in the asphalt not more than an inch from his head. His left shoulder encountered the curb with such force that his entire left arm went suddenly dead.

But he was on his feet, dizzy with the speed of his fall, and momentarily sick with pain. He ran as he had never run before. It was something more than the thought of what might happen to him if he were caught that gave him strength. He was urged on by that exhilaration that comes to a man after he has attempted the impossible and succeeded. For the first time, the terror car was crippled. This time, the killer could not kill.

Many pulp heroes, like the master spy G-8 who constantly escaped imprisonment and execution at dawn, used suspense in making the pulps the most exciting novel heroes of all.

Pulps and comics overall have covered just about every adventure conceivable so I will limit my discussion to just those pulp heroes who had their own magazines and to the comic book heroes/superheroes. Tarzan and Conan appeared irregularly but also had a quality so great, that I cannot include them in this discussion. Also, the pulp period basically lasted from the beginning of *The Shadow* in 1931 to the end of the *Phantom Detective* in 1954, and in all fairness I can only make comparisons within that time-span. The comic book has developed greatly since then, but the pulp heroes have



KI-GOR—Jungle Lord of Sabra's zombis...
SAFARI OF THE SERPENT-SLAVES

all but disappeared. In the old days, a "pulp-y" story meant a certain type of adventure and a certain kind of publication, so today we have to look for pulp heroes elsewhere. Pulp-type adventures have continued under the Mickey Spillanes the Ian Flemings, and the Don Pendletons, and the modern comic heroes would have to be compared to them. Since the roots of the comic book hero rest in the pulp age, we will concentrate on that point.

In conducting this broad over-view, I will of course run the risks of broad generalizing and over-simplification. There may be examples where my theories do not hold, but I'm showing the overall trend here and will try to handle any exceptions that come to mind.

I also must avoid the comic strip hero, for that format allowed a degree of sophistication the comic books and pulps never had. Comic strips could leave you in hopeless suspense by creating a tight scene and letting you sweat it out until next Sunday. They could develop a story over a period of time that outshined anything appearing in a comic book. Flash Gordon's epic adventures on the planet Mongo year-after-year give proof to that. This sophistication was due in part to the audience of the strip, which was more than just a motley collection of teenage and pre-adolescent youngsters. Also, after ten or twenty years with a strip, you have read a complex annal of adventure that surpasses anything else you could ever find. So we will leave the comic strips alone and discuss two basically similar forms: the pulps and the comic books.

In approaching our study you may say that pulp heroes and comic heroes are basically identical outside of the complexity of the pulps' stories. I'll admit pulp stories had more depth, but this is only the beginning of a trend. Complexity of plot is a simple difference, for the pulp hero himself had a method of operation all his own, too. In addition, we must remember that the pulppublishers directed their magazines at a more mature audience so there were bound to be changes.

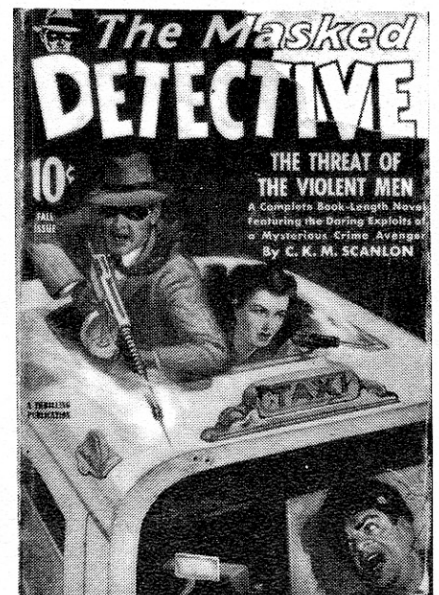
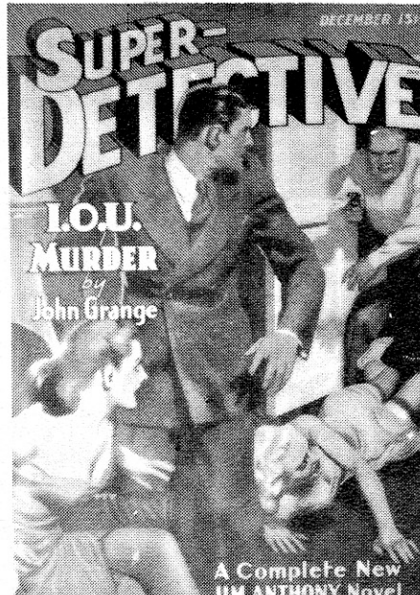
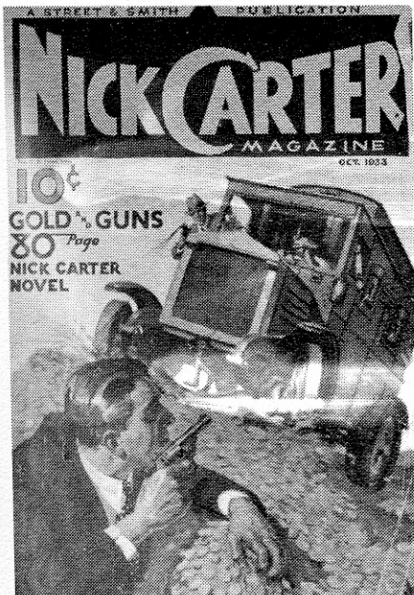
Our heroes all encountered the same psychopathic villains, but the actual crimes differed between comic and pulp. The author of a novel has to catch the reader's attention quickly and hold it... Pulp writers guaranteed this by using vulgar crimes that really shocked the average reader. For example, the Spider once fought a gang of super-crooks who saturated

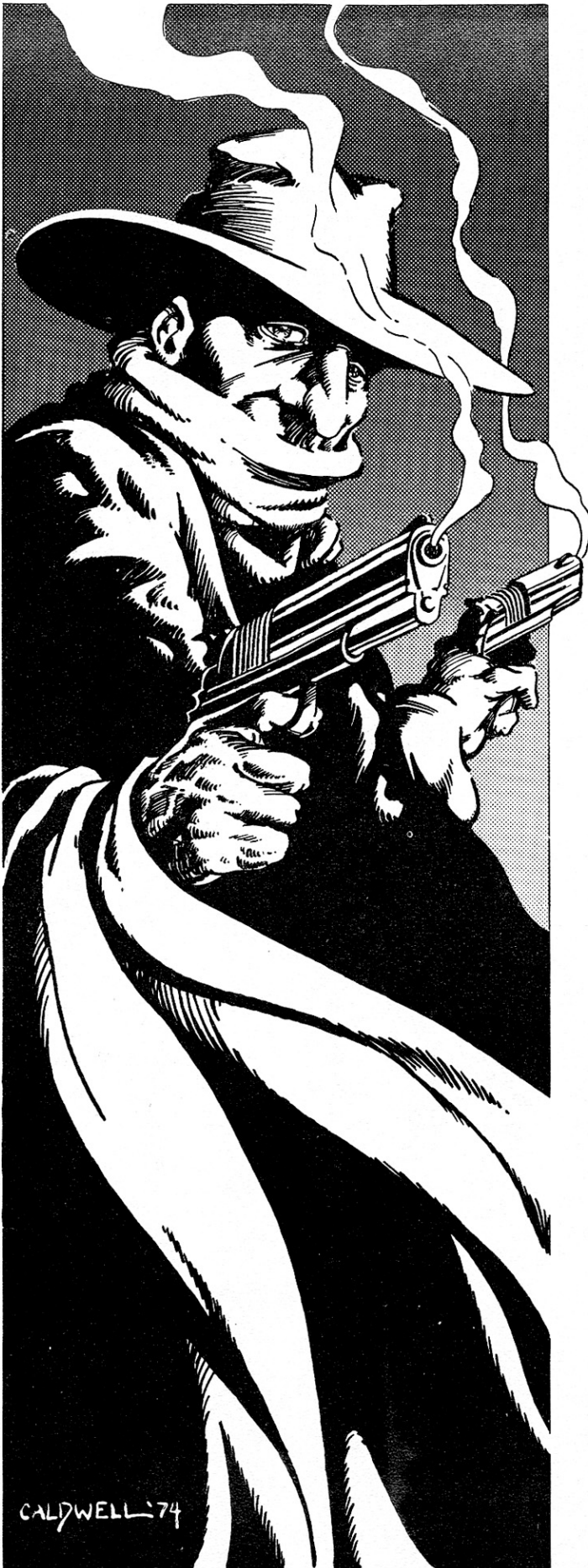


RICHARD WENTWORTH

ted metals (like coins) with radiation that indiscriminately killed any poor soul coming in contact with it (May 1941) or the Masked Detective battled a ruthless, murdering loan shark organization that terrorized many of the honest, hard-working members of the community (Winter, 1941); or the Black Bat challenged a gang of robbers whose devilish machine turned people literally blind (January 1942); or the Green Lama attacked a fiendish dope

ring that planned to spread hard drugs to students through comic book vendors (August 1940); or Operator #5 valiantly stood against the dread Emperor Rudolph and the armies of the Purple Empire that ravaged the American heartland (June 1936 - March 1938). Every adventure started this way, and readers got involved because they understood the crime and realized how easily this could happen to them. These stories earned the title of "the bloody pulps"





The pulp writer felt the more horrible the crime was, the more the hero would have to overcome and the more incentive he would have to do it. Thus the stories got better as the crimes got worse. The comics took a different stand. Most early comics did not have this extreme emphasis on plot and used generally accepted criminal acts instead of accenting the horror of the crime. Gangsters, & spies (especially during the war) usually attacked in a predictable fashion and usually succumbed under a finale of fists. The super-villains, like Sivana and Lex Luthor, caused a little more trouble, but the superhero held them in check. These villains did come up with some tremendous crimes, like a fool-proof plan to destroy the world, and the reader got interested, but he didn't really get involved because he had no conception of a disaster of that nature. A person could visualize his wife and child being blown to bits by a bomb in the family car much better than seeing New York City being washed away by a tidal wave. The pulps contained an element of realism that the comics did not even attempt to match.

A hero is something more than a man; a person who wields power and succeeds where no ordinary man could. Comic and pulp writers had a different conception of this "power", so consequently their heroes approached problems from different directions. Of course physical strength was important to both, and the great heroes all excelled there. Unfortunately, that was all most comic book heroes needed, outside of some common sense and some remedial detective skill. The pulp hero had to have more. Like the Shadow; he was a master of disguise and could penetrate any enemy lair with some confidence. (... strangely enough, almost all of the great pulp detectives had perfectly mastered this art, giving it incredible importance for being only one of many valuable crime-fighting techniques.) Like the Phantom Detective; he was a master of criminology and he continually appeared in complicated who-done-it formula stories that never seemed clear until the very end. Like Doc Savage; he was a master of the sciences, whose chemistry could trace and/or fight villains, and whose technical know-how enabled him to nullify the super-weapons of his foes.

In all honesty, no man could develop and practice these abilities without skill opportunity and money. Here again we see an added dimension of reality, in the pulps. Money talks. Wealth is power. The pulp writers knew it and used it well. Many men excel in their mental and physical powers, and can't make a mark in society. Clark Savage Jr., Richard Wentworth (the Spider), Dick Benson (the Avenger), Richard Curtis Van Loan (the Phantom Detective), the Shadow (whether in or out of his Lamont Cranston guise), and others all had great wealth at their disposal, & did not hesitate to use it in the relentless battle against crime. Our hero "Cash" Gorman - the Wizard, spent his entire time dealing in money and using it to get companies out of tight spots. These strong-willed and aggressive men seemingly deserved the money they had, for they were the most capable and productive members of society. If their civilian identities did not show this, their actions in fighting crime left little doubt. Not all pulp heroes had money to throw around, but the most successful and popular heroes had very few financial worries.

The comic book hero, on the other hand, emphasized physical strength almost entirely. Then as well as today, nothing satisfies the comic reader than a Simon-and-Kirby-ish fight scene, complete with flying bodies and near-contortive punching by the hero. Here, the comic book he-



ro was in his "element"; that is, fighting was his most interesting quality. Now, pulp heroes got into battles too, only readers didn't look for their fighting skill, but were more interested in their technique. You saw the pulp hero in his element when he fought as he knew best. Fast-thinking, and using fear, like the Shadow's echoing laugh, earmarked interest in the pulp hero where sheer physical power too precedence in the comics.

As I mentioned earlier, the comic book hero/superhero in general had little use for heavy thought. This does not mean the comic hero was a stupid man; he just didn't have to show his scientific and artistic talents in fighting crime. He did have to think fast if he wanted to stay alive, and Captain America and his followers (followers of the Kirby influence) proved they could get out of a tight spot time and time again. Captain Marvel somewhat differs from this pattern since he possessed the wisdom of Solomon (the first letter of Shazam!) and often needed it to battle Dr. Sivana. Captain Marvel did not follow the Kirby school, partially because he was too strong, and the simple art style differed entirely with the "action" tradition. What the good Captain needed was a strong story, and fortunately he got it. The success of this hero rested on his difference from the other comics, and although his stories are by no means as realistic as the pulps, Captain Marvel stands alone among the heroes of his time.



We can understand the comic book approach better if we see it in a comparison. Superman, the first comic book superhero, really exemplifies the concept of "hero", for he personally had more potential power for fighting crime than any of his peers. Yet Superman was patterned after the pulp hero Doc Savage, who, as far as I'm concerned, is the ultimate hero. Let's look at Doc first, through a passage from the July 1933 issue of his magazine:

"Doc Savage: man of mystery... Wizard of science! Muscular marvel!"

"...Doc Savage was all of these things. His mental powers and strength were almost fantastic. He was the product of intensive expert, scientific training that had started the moment he was born."

"Each day of his life, he had performed a two-hour routine of unusual exercise. Doc's powers might seem unbelievable, but there was really no magic about them. Rigid adherence to his exercise, coupled with profound study, was responsible"

"Doc was a big man, almost two hundred pounds- but the bulk of his great form was forgotten in the smooth symmetry of a build incredibly powerful. The bronze of his hair was a little darker than that of his features, and the hair lay down tightly as a metal skullcap."



... The lines of Doc's features, the unusually high forehead, the mobile and muscular and not-too-full mouth, the lean cheeks, denoted a power of character seldom seen."

Doc Savage had mastered all the sciences, all the arts, and had developed his physical capacities to a superhuman level. Author Lester Dent had said it all: Doc was everything a man could want to be.

If Superman was really going to be "super", he would have to out-do Doc in every way possible. Physically, Doc Savage "had it all", EXCEPT that as any man, he could be injured. Superman equalled Doc's strength and did him one better by becoming invulnerable. This meant, however, that Superman would not be "human", so he became a man from another world, not bound to our standards. Superman was quite capable intellectually because he descended from an advanced culture, thus rivalling Doc's great intellect, but his comic book adventures had little use for his thinking or scientific skill. We only saw this side of the Man Of Steel when he visited his Fortress of Solitude (another concept by the way, that originated with Doc). Superman advanced the incredible capacities of Doc's senses by developing super-super hearing and X-ray vision (later followed by heat-ray vision, which has nothing to do with the sense of sight at all). Lester Dent made his hero believable and plausible, but a "Superman" goes beyond all realms of reality. Yet the public loved Superman, showing us that comic books, at least to some extent, thrive on the fantastic. The comic audience seemingly did not want much of the reality seen in the pulps.

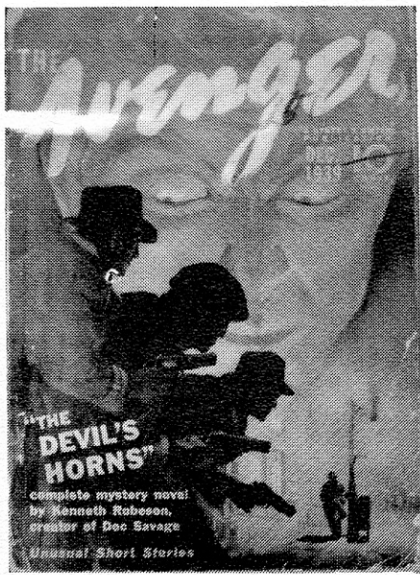
Because of the emphasis on physical power in the comics, the power of money never really reached the comic scene. Both Clark Kent and Billy Batson were successful but nevertheless lowly reporters, and never had a lot of money even though they were the two most powerful heroes in comics. Most of the superheroes had average occupations and incomes, and they only affected society in their hero identity.. A rich man could make his mark either way ... Two heroes, the Sub-mariner and Wonder Woman, were prince and princess of their own people and could work with wealth if they chose to. However, they did not, nor did they emphasize this additional power in working with the ordinary people about them. At one point, Atlantis declared war on the Nazis (*Daring #9*) thus showing the Sub-mariner's influence, so

Prince Namor stood out in the comic reader's mind as being somewhat more powerful (only in a different light) than his peers.

By now you've probably realized that I have omitted one important comic book hero who, contrary to the pattern, is a master detective, a criminologist and scientist, one who has realistic super-hero abilities and is wealthy. I'm speaking of the Batman. *Batman #1* tells us, "As the years pass, Bruce Wayne prepares himself for his career. He becomes a master scientist. He trains his body to physical

perfection until he is able to perform amazing athletic feats." Bruce Wayne developed the technology to create a "utility belt" for his fight against crime, and of course built up his physique, only this time by believable means. His father had left Bruce quite a bit of money when he died, and Bruce used it to change his society through various philanthropic activities, not to mention building an elaborate laboratory and headquarters in the Batcave.

Why, then, do I mention this hero separately? Batman, unlike his peers, is a



true son of the pulps. When he was just a boy, a hold-up man ruthlessly gunned down his parents while he watched; an obviously horrible crime in the pulp tradition. This loss, like that of Dick Benson (the Avenger), caused Bruce Wayne to dedicate his life to fighting crime. All the skill I have mentioned mirror the pulp heroes. Even his name, "Bat"-man, comes from that school of adventure writers who developed the mysterious and frightening heroes: the Shadow, the Spider, the Whisperer, the Green Ghost, the Moon Man, and others.

But Batman's roots go even further than this. Bob Kane says his inspiration for the Batman came from a section of Leonardo da Vinci's sketchbook on flying apparatuses (one of which looks very much like a bat) and the 1920 film classic, *The Mark of Zorro* starring Douglas Fairbanks Sr. This film was based on the 1919 pulp story "The Curse of Capistrano" by long-time pulpster Johnston McCulley. So, indirectly, Batman comes from a pulp hero. Bill Finger, who wrote a great many of the early Batman stories, had his eye on the pulps as he developed his hero. No other early comic book hero compared with the Batman's mysteriousness and depth of character. Since Batman was still a comic book hero, however, he had to act like one, so gradually his slug-it-out skills took precedence in the series. He still remained the master detective and did not lose his pulp-ish traits completely. Batman stands over the motley array of comic characters because of this added dimension and may owe much of his success to his unbreakable link with the pulps.

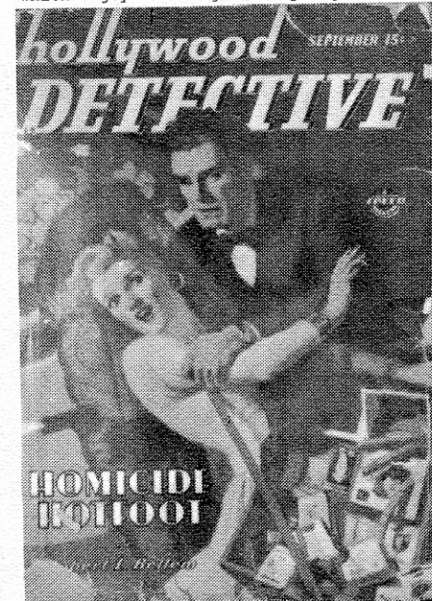
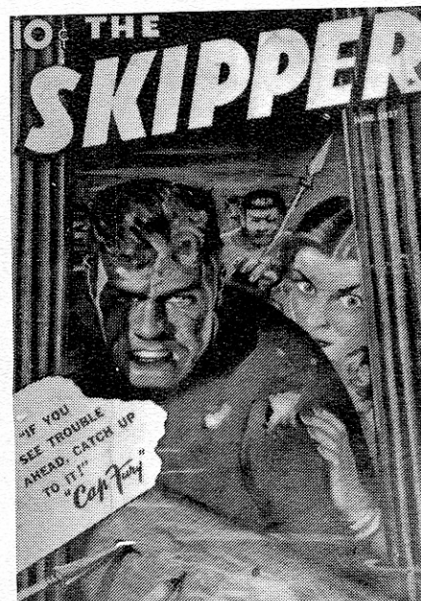
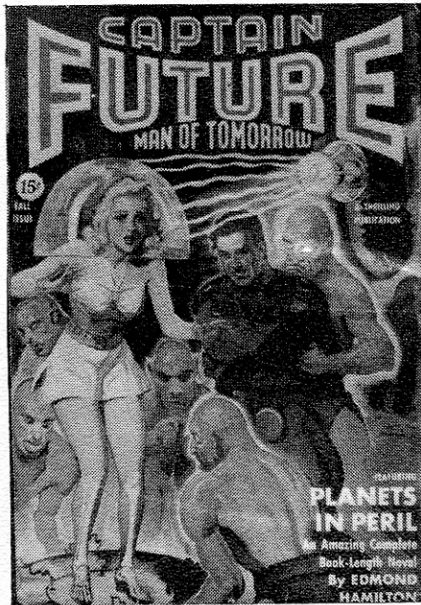
You would think that pulp heroes, with all their qualities, wouldn't need any help in their work, yet very few of them worked alone. Practically every pulp hero has assistants of some sort. Villains ended up fighting crime-busting teams instead of individuals. Pick any setting: in the past you find G-8 and his three fellow Battle Aces (World War I) and Pete Rice, the sheriff of Buzzard Gap, and his two deputies (the Wild West); in the present you have numerous heroes like the Shadow with his network of assistants (17 were mentioned, but apparently there were many more), and Doc Savage and his five brothers-in-adventure; and in the future you'll discover Captain Future with his three futuremen (.. none of which were true "men", since two were artificial creatures and one was a human brain living in a plastic box) and the warriors like Dusty Ayres and his four Battle Birds who battled invaders of the future.

Assistants was a specific purpose. Even though they were all somewhat less talented than their leaders, they usually conducted the leg-work of investigating so their chief could plan and act. Several heroes had big, strong bruisers on their team to help out in a case that required their "talents". The Avenger had Smitty (Algernon Heathcote Smith by name), and the Black Bat had Butch O'Leary in this capacity, just to name a couple. The hero did not need these assistants to operate, but they sure increased his efficiency.

Now the comic book heroes had assistants too, but instead of using teams of helpers, they had one (more or less) efficient partner. The teams that did appear, like the Blackhawks and the Justice Society, still differed from the pulp groups in that the members were all equals; no real leader or superior leaders stood out. Every member of the Blackhawks was a competent fighter and could have acted as leader of the group. The partners on the other hand, had the same abilities as the "main" hero, only in some reduced quantity. Robin was a qualified detective and could slug-it-out with crooks just like Batman, but he did not have the same raw strength of his adult mentor.

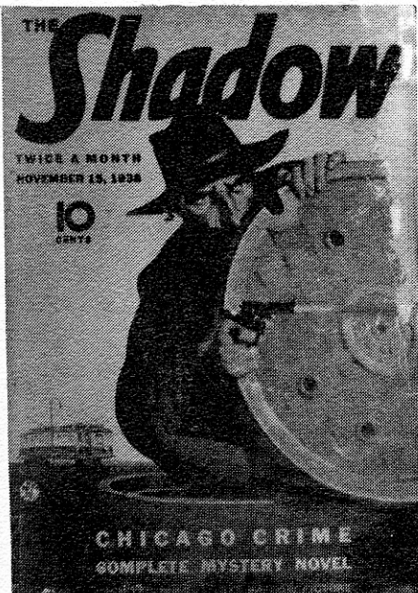
The pulp assistants took a different approach. No mere helper could rival the qualities of a pulp hero, so assistants also became specialists in one of many heroic qualities. Doc Savage's assistants all excelled fantastically in some science or profession, and one of them, Renney (Colonel John Renwick by name), had huge hands and took great pleasure in the pounding of them against some undesirable obstacle or person, so he also excelled unusually as a physical fighter. Ram Singh a personal servant of Richard Wentworth, was a fearless and aggressive warrior, but overall he could not parallel the Spider's capacity for criminology. Very few comic series went into such great depth of character required to sustain a hero with such specialized helpers.

Some comic book partnerships consisted of the hero and his sweetheart, like Bulletman and Bulletgirl, and Hawkman and Hawkgirl. The rest of these teams were men and boys, like Batman and Robin, Captain America and Bucky, the Human Torch and Toro, the Wizard and Roy the Super Boy, Mr. Scarlet and Pinky, and so on. One group, the Star Spangled Kid and Stripesy had a boy for the main hero. Here we see something very fundamental about comic books. Comics sold to a young audience, which enjoyed seeing other youngsters the



same age as heroes. Pulp sold to a somewhat older audience that wanted to relate to adult heroes instead. So in the comics you see many kid-gangs and heroes who did not act their age, but like clear-thinking adults still in the body of an early age. Pulp readers saw that they were no longer children and consequently admired the adult and looked forward to when they would become "the real thing".

Yet the pulps did not completely ignore the concept of a boy hero. Street & Smith came up with Danny Garrett, a boy about twelve to fourteen years old (depending on what story you read), and gave him a very small but secure spot in their line-up. Danny ran as a short story filler in *The Shadow* magazine from 1937 thru 1943, and showed how the pulps would handle the hero prodigy. By Danny's age, he is probably a pre-adolescent or early adolescent boy, which puts him in perfect parallel with his comic book counterparts. Originally Danny worked as a lowly shoe-shine boy without a family when two detectives, Mike Ryan and "Slug" O'Donnel, befriended him and let him ride along with them while on the job. Danny had a great interest in criminology and was quite well-versed on the subject, so of course he took advantage of this opportunity, got personally involved in some of Ryan and O'Donnel's cases, and proved his brilliance by solving some cases before the detectives. He received so much praise and publicity that the Police Department gave him an honorary badge, and a weekly allowance to replace his shoeshine job. All the policemen accepted the red-haired, freckle-faced Irish boy as one of their own, and respectfully dubbed him "the Kid".



Danny Garret was created by Steve Fisher and later written by Grant Lane, and their way of handling Danny's superiority changed from time to time. We can safely say, however, that Danny's brains, no physical strength (although he supposedly "can fight like a tiger", in Slug O'Donnel's words), gave him the edge. Danny got the clever hunches before his comrades, which did not build him up so much as it downplayed the abilities of his adult friends. In Steve Fisher's hands you never forgot that he was still a child, for he could not knock-out big gansters like his comic peers, he could get captured and rendered into complete helplessness (something the great pulp heroes never experienced), he was just as gul-



libile as any other youngster: his age, and emotionally he was still quite immature.. Yet Danny's detective abilities brought him through. Grant Lane's stories unfortunately dimmed these basic differences, and made Danny much less interesting. Nevertheless, the Danny Garrett series lasted almost seven years. However, readers generally didn't want to be reminded of their own helplessness or immaturity, so for heroes their own age they would turn to the infallible boys of the comics, and leave the reality of the situation behind. Danny Garrett could never have succeeded in his own magazine.

One striking characteristic of the comic book hero is his costume. Everybody had a costume. These skin-tight, multi-colored uniforms started with Superman, for they have very few roots in the pulps. The Shadow wore a long, black cloak, but it made him invisible instead of conspicuous. Other pulp heroes used make-up to change their faces for protection, and the Spider wore a monstrous face to frighten his foes, but that was all. In the late thirties, the Black Bat began and he wore a caped costume something like Batman's, only its solid black color hardly compared with the flashy wardrobe of the comic book heroes.

I've often wondered what the purpose of the costume was, for if the pulp heroes could get along without it, it could not be all that necessary. Make-up could easily serve the purpose of disguise. Costumes don't inspire fear. I wouldn't run away if a red-white-and-blue clad character came charging up to me. Only reputation inspires fear. Gangsters had a good reason to run from the Spider, because he had a reputation of shooting down crooks and criminals without hesitation. Costumes never provided any protection, for Batman got shot-up more times than he'd care to remember. Doc Savage's bullet-proof vest protected him better than any colorful underwear, or overwear, if you prefer. Costumes very seldom act as camouflage. Captain Marvel's bright red suit hid him about as much as a bullfighter's cape hides him.

Pulps sold because of their plots & style of writing. Comic books sold, because of their visual effects. Costumes came naturally to the comics and really, they helped to distinguish hero from hero. Pulps didn't need such an elaborate system. If you'd prefer to think the costume had greater importance than just marketing value, then let me suggest that he-



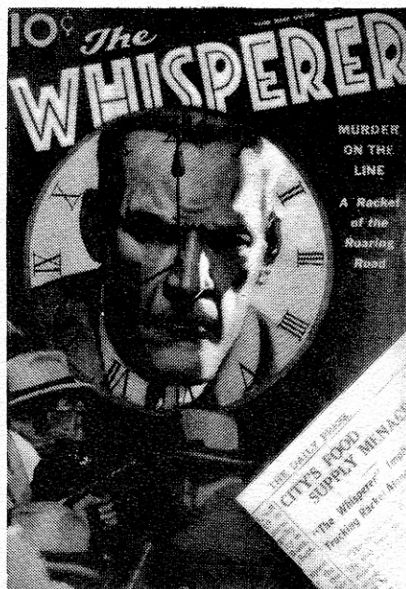
heroes wore costumes for their general public, and for themselves. The costume was a mark of hero-dom, and the public recognized heroics by virtue of the costume. Villains like Captain Nazi and the Red Skull wore costumes too, but only to show they were the champions of evil.

Strangely enough, pulp heroes didn't need this brand. In fact, the general public in the comic books hailed their heroes and supported their work, whereas the pulp hero was seldom acknowledged by his public, even less often understood, and many times hunted by the police. Now we have exceptions in both fields. Many comic book heroes had trouble with the police when they started, but after a while they resolved all their problems and were loved by the public. The rampaging Human Torch settled down so much that he joined the police force. The Sub-mariner turned to fighting Nazis. Many pulp heroes, like Captain Future and Nick Carter and the government agents, had the good graces of the authorities. Those who didn't had a tough time.

It seemed everyone of these pulp heroes had their own way of dealing with the police. The Phantom Detective refused to testify in court, so he lost the good graces of the District Attorney. He had the support of the police in general and carried a universally accepted badge, a small domino mask made out of platinum and inlaid with diamonds, for identification no matter what disguise he wore at the time. Police Lieutenant McGrath constantly suspected D.A. Tony Quinn of being the Black Bat, only Tony Quinn was blind, a victim of acid thrown by a convicted gangster (the same situation appeared in the comics, only there the victim turned into Two-Face). Yet Tony Quinn was the Black Bat, and though every eye doctor swore he was blind, Quinn had had certain parts of a dying man's eyes transplanted into his, restoring his sight so he could battle

crime and still remain unsuspected. In another case, Police Chief Stanley Kirkpatrick often had strong evidence pinning the identity of the Spider on Richard Wentworth, but incredibly fast thinking or preparation continually saved Wentworth from the law he fought so hard to preserve. The *Whisperer* series had the most interesting gimmick of all. James "Wildcat" Gordon swore that as police commissioner he had a solemn and righteous responsibility to capture this dangerous gangster-type known as the *Whisperer*.... while at the same time he, Wildcat Gordon was the *Whisperer*. He could stay one step ahead of the law because he knew exactly what was going on, and he could change back to his civilian identity near a crime without anyone getting suspicious.. So you see, many pulp heroes had a rough time doing their job, mostly because of the unorthodox methods they used to get results. Public support really changed the situation for the comic book hero. I again would be inclined to think the pulp approach is the more realistic one, for when you work with people, good or bad, you always have trouble.

I've mentioned this notion of "secret identity" several times before thus far, and I think it deserves a little closer look. We have two different kinds of secret identities: 1) the disguise a hero puts on so that no one will recognize him as a crime buster, and 2) the disguise worn by a man that reveals him as a hero and not an ordinary citizen. Most pulp heroes were heroes in their true identity, so they used the first type most often. Secret Agent X used it to such an extent that we never found out who he really was. The second type works very well with a costume, and comic writers used it extensively. The Spider and the Phantom Detective, however, developed this secret identity in the pulps and probably had a lot to do with it later popularity. The



pulps and comics found common ground on this identity business, although it probably got more use in the comic books. Nevertheless, it did help make the reading more interesting.

We also find common ground on the subject of women. Both kinds of literature find women acting competently, like Margo Lane in her detective work or Wonder Woman in her crime fighting, and inevitably getting into trouble. Ki-Gor had to constantly rescue his mate Helena from some kind of jungle terror, and Superman just wouldn't have had anything to do without Lois Lane. The pulps probably showed women in the more positive light, but neither form escaped from the stereotype of the times.

We've seen a lot of differences between comics and pulps by drawing analogies between the two separate groups. Now let's take a different approach, and see how the two forms handle the same character. We have several heroes to choose from, but I'll just take two to give us the general idea; one where the hero went from comic book to pulp, and the other from pulp to comic.

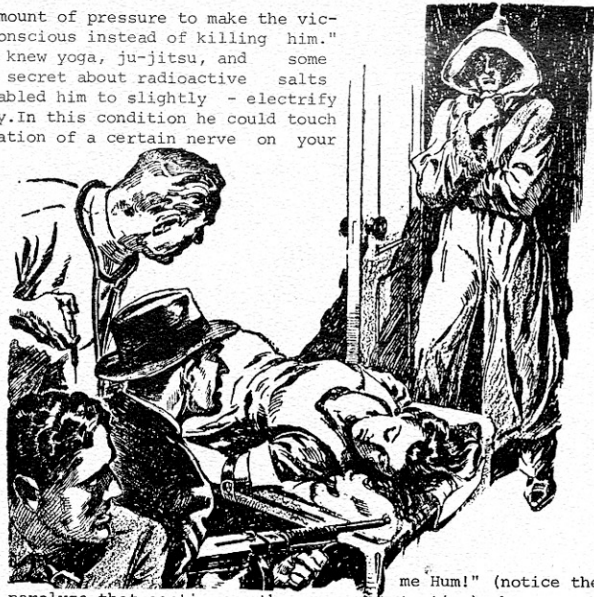
The MLJ people published a line of superhero comic books and a few pulps, including *Crack Detective* and *Science Fiction*, during the early-to-mid-forties. One of their heroes was the Black Hood, who appeared in *Top-Notch Comics*, his own comic book, and in his own pulp. The comic book version, which came first, pictured the Black Hood as a typical slug-it-out hero dressed in bright yellow tights topped off with a black hood and black gloves, trunks, and boots. In his regular identity he was Rip Burland, a regular police officer. Strangely enough, the Black Hood received an unusual amount of trouble from the police for a comic book character, but the authorities distrust never amounted to anything more than circumstantial suspicion. The Hood was able to stay out of jail.

The pulp version came out at the same time the comic books appeared, although veteran pulp writer G.T. Fleming-Roberts made very little effort to keep the two identical. In the pulp, Kip Burland was a former policeman who had been framed and disgraced by the heinous villain, the Skull (a different origin than in the comic book). Kip became a fugitive from justice and fell victim to a trap laid by the Skull's gang when he tried to redeem himself. An old hermit scientist found him, nursed him back to health, taught him chemistry so he could fight crime with science, and enabled him to become the Black Hood. Now he sounds a little more like a pulp hero. To top it off, Fleming-Roberts added a long, black cape to his earlier costume so he could hide in the shadows like some other pulp heroes we know. In all honesty, he would have done better to get rid of those bright yellow tights, but then you would not have recognized the Black Hood. This pulp didn't last long, just three issues, and it's probably just as well. The Black Hood epitomized the comic book hero, and had no business in the pulps at all.

Our other hero epitomized the pulp formula. Jethro Dumont was a wealthy young Harvard graduate with a Ph.D. in oriental religions and an extensive background in the sciences. He traveled to the Orient, and after some study, became an ordained Buddhist priest (a lama). When he returned to America, he took up crime-fighting, as the Green Lama.

The Green Lama wore a floor-length green monk's robe and a red scarf, about five feet in length, that acted as his only weapon. The first Green Lama story tells us that he "was so proficient with the scarf that (when looping it around some foe's neck) he could use just the

right amount of pressure to make the victim unconscious instead of killing him." He also knew yoga, ju-jitsu, and some strange secret about radioactive salts that enabled him to slightly - electrify his body. In this condition he could touch the location of a certain nerve on your



body and paralyze that section on the nervous system. The Green Lama was a fearless fighter, yet he was a devout pacifist and a very devout priest. He constantly pronounced ancient proverbs and prayers on those around him, especially the prayer "Om! Ma-ni pad-me Hum!", which means, "Hail! The Jewel in the Lotus Flower!"

He acted very much like a pulp hero, for he had a battery of assistants that seemingly grew every issue. He had the strange honor of even having three identities: the two I have mentioned, plus that of Dr. Charles Pali, a Buddhist priest by profession. The stories even included a mystery woman, Magga - the lady from Lhasa, who was another Buddhist, but one who appeared and disappeared like some kind of all-knowing goddess. The series, to say the least, was delightfully creative and interesting.

The Munsey people published the *Green Lama* pulps in the early forties (except for one that Popular Publications, who bought out Munsey, printed in 1943). The comic book version came along a few years later from a totally unrelated company, Spark Publications, and they really proved that a comic book shouldn't muddle with pulp heroes. Jethro Dumont retained his Tibetan servant Tsarong, but that was about all. Now when he said "Om Mani Pad-

me Hum!" (notice the change in the punctuation), he was suddenly transformed into a green-costumed Captain Marvel, complete with super-strength and flying abilities. He might as well have said "Shazam!". He exchanged his monk's robe for green-tights, a cape, and a floppy hood straight out of Peter Pan. The comic book never really tried to parallel the pulp stories, although I suspect a close adaptation wouldn't have sold anyway. The price demanded for superherodom was far too great.

So what have we proven? Comic books don't ruin everything they touch, like this last example implies. Comic books have their own forté as do pulps, & these two forms of popular literature have both made a worthwhile contribution to the concept of hero. The pulp hero and the comic book hero differ greatly, and each version appeals to a different part of the reading audience. I can't say one hero is superior to another; that is a subjective choice you will have to make. I can say that the pulps contributed to the rise & success of comic books. I hope that, after reading this dissertation, you can recognize the different approaches to the hero in popular literature a little better, and realize that you can't create a new hero, but only build on what has gone before...

