



John Byrne

**AN ANALYTICAL PROBE
 INTO THE GRAPHIC
 PRESENTATION AND
 EVOLUTION OF THE
 SURREALISTIC MONDO
 OF...**

Mr.

written and illustrated by
JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO



PART ONE

DITKO- Steve- to comic book fandom is more or less a mysterious, legendary personality. The type of questions that usually arise from fans are: What is his background? What does he look like? Does he resemble any of the creatures he has created? What do his meals consist of? Are they fortified with vitamin M for mysticism? What kind of paper, pencils, ink, penpoints, brushes, erasers does he use? What we should be more interested in is what the artist is trying to say in his pictures in the form of line, texture, symbolism, and color. Have you ever asked yourself - why are his aliens, spaceships and futuristic people so unique? Why do they stand alone in the annals of imaginative panel art?

Undoubtedly today's graphic master of mood, mystery, and mysticism, Ditko progressively through the years has strived to create a mature, intellectual graphic concept of adventurism on the cheapest material any graphic art form has ever been printed on - pulp paper. Ditko is one of a few artists (who can be counted on one hand) of modern comic book delineators that are not shackled by the pioneer adventure strip illustrators - those forefathers of illustrative panel art - Foster, Raymond and Hogarth. This man has taken the role of a god and within the ruled lines of the two dimensional comic page has created a wondrous world of uniqueness, bordered by a majestic aura in which the mature reader is beckoned, dared, and seduced into a higher plane of total escapism. In this world Ditko has broken away from tradition, eliminating much of the overactive backgrounds by using softer lines, tones and abstract forms, thus giving the figure or figures in the foreground a greater sense of depth, meaning, and characterization. He has

invited the reader's natural imagination to PARTICIPATE (that is the key word), rather than making a definite statement in every panel with the reader being merely a spectator.

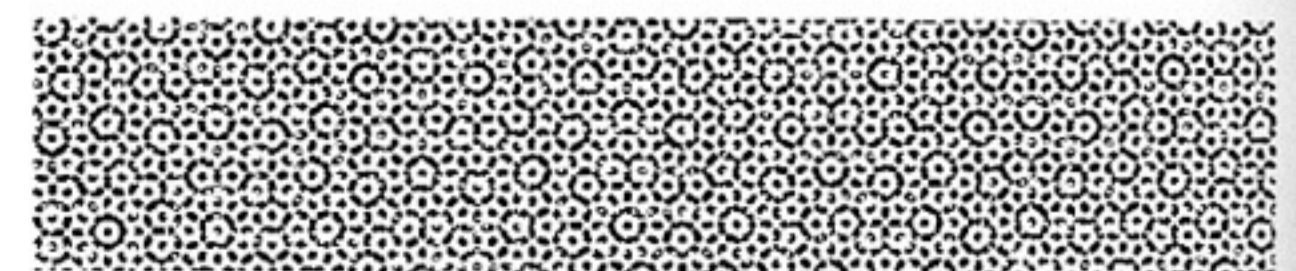
In a sense, it's much like old time radio versus color T.V. In the days of radio, you could visualize scenes of unequalled splendor in your mind's eye; whereas on modern day color T.V. many of the scenes are overcrowded, producing a mass of confusion. That, perhaps, makes the difference between a mature or adult graphic story presentation and that which is oriented towards a busy-scene audience. This audience is awed by overactive fine background lines, which at first are impressive and connote the draftsmanship of the artist; but further study and impartial diagnosis reveal that it is a hindrance to the flowing continuity of the story and detracts from its main objective. The simplified forms advocated by Steve Ditko are perhaps more appealing in the long run. There is a greater stress for bold design and even a greater play of color. Much of his early work for Charlton revealed this. Whether or not he colored the panels in those early days is unknown, but it does seem as if he had a hand in using color to its fullest potential.

The use of solid color in various values and croma as a background to compliment the simplified line drawings is one of his fortes. This also holds true for much of his figure work. A beautiful example of this can be seen in MYSTERIES OF UNEXPLORED WORLDS # 3, 1957, story - "A Forgotten World." In just a few pages, Ditko has displayed the use of color to create various moods, leaving an impression upon your sensory system. In most cases this would be an unconscious reaction on the reader's part. The red, orange, yellow, and magenta hit one's nerves and omit an air of intense excitement; on the other hand, green, blue, and violet have a more tranquilizing effect.

In his first works in the early fifties, Ditko displayed a definite indication of experimentation and the greatness that was to follow. We see marvelous circular stone staircases, beautifully textured; introduced are old withered witches endowed with fascinating hypnotic hand gestures never before seen by the impressionable comic book audience; a new interstellar world of futurism had been unveiled with spaceships as never before conceived, even by the greats of the E.C. line. Space adventurers' garb and interior of spacecraft one day would be mimiced by the nation's adult T.V. science-fiction program, STAR TREK. An interesting example can be found in SPACE ADVENTURES # 32, 1960.

Ditko is unmistakably a thinking man's artist. He has incorporated many of the innovations that you would normally find in fine art paintings. Inspired by the classic approach of cubism á la Picasso and the surrealistic sensationalism of Dali, united with design concepts of the orient - which are highly simplified and illustrated in an ageless and direct manner, his presentation is perhaps the utopia of continuity panel achievement.

to be continued



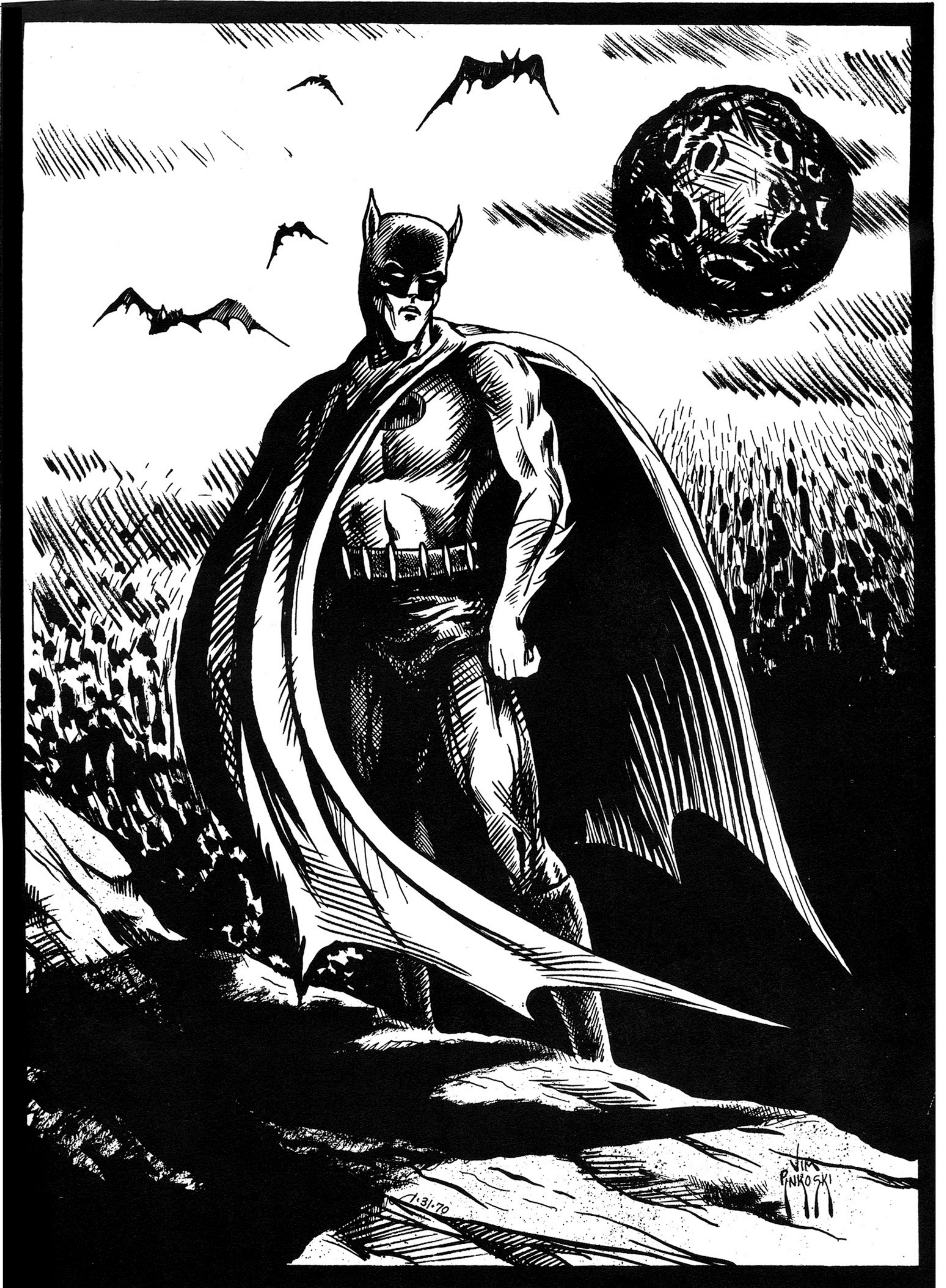
NOTICE TO FANDOM:

We are preparing a Ditko checklist and need your help. Send book title, month, year, and company to me, JGF, in care of Gary Groth. Also interested in buying books with Ditko stories and covers at reasonable prices. Do not send book - just information. Thank you, JGF.

THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN



PAINTED TO COMMEMORATE THE 100th ISSUE OF THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN - A TRIBUTE TO THE GENIUS OF LEE AND DITKO. ESPECIALLY DEPICTED FOR F #13 BY FANDOM'S JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO



Editorial Memo's

Gary Groth

The change this issue has been planned for many months now, I've been dropping hints about it in fandom for some time, and I hope no one's disappointed at "the big surprise" in FF 13. If you know me at all, you probably know the reason for this change in size and format. I felt that I was beginning to stagnate. I was turning out the same two-column layouts for 6 issues now; 243 pages! Since this is a hobby, I want to make it as exciting and new for me as I can; and consequently, for you, the reader. The larger page affords more room for experimentation, not to mention, the full page drawings will be just that much bigger. The only negative comment about this larger size was a storage problem; it'll stick out of a stack of "normal-sized" fanzines. But, I think we should concern ourselves more with the magazine, and the fact that it's good, or bad, or midline, rather than the size of it. If the product is creative, well-done, enjoyable and interesting, then a storage problem comes second. But this is only my opinion. And in most cases, I follow my readers' decision. This will be one of those cases, so please write in and tell me how you feel about the format change.

Even with the larger page size, and reduced type, I couldn't fit everything in this issue, that I had originally intended to put in. The Joe Sinnott Interview, the FF Control Satire, and one of Bill Cantey's short stories had to be cut. But, they'll all be here next issue.

As you may have noticed already, I was a little cramped for space, even when the above three features were cut. The '70 N.Y. Con photo spread is almost a year late, but I included it because I'm pretty sure most comic fans enjoy seeing pictures of their favorite pros; I know I do. While at the N.Y. Con last year, I was selling copies of FF, plus comics and posters. I'd like to thank all the great artists on FF's staff that let me sell some of their work at the con. This includes the work of Dave Cockrum, William Black and others. It just helped FF that much more, to help meet expenses on printing, and other publishing costs.

Last year's Metro Con was a real enjoyable fan event! Bill Cantey's report on the Metro Con covers it pretty well. I hope many of you can make it to this year's Metro Con. Last year's con ended late Sunday night; the following day, Berni Wrightson, Alan Weiss, and two local comic fans, Irene & Ellen Vartanoff accepted my invitation to come over to dinner. After dinner, Alan and Berni gave me pieces of artwork, both of which are printed in this issue. Berni's full page drawing (half-completed, with a half-toned background in order to bring out every detail) is a "self-rejected" splash page to his revoltingly funny, "Wrightson's Revolting Rhymes" in ABYSS # 1. And Alan, as many of you know, has become a fast-moving pro in the past year. Many thanks to both of you for those great drawings!

Jeffrey H. Wasserman, who will be the coordinator of next issue's big N.Y. Con Coverage, analyzes Conan this issue, from issue 1 to 7. The Sal Buscema drawing accompanying Jeffrey's article was the back cover to last year's Metro Con Program Booklet; but since it under-

went such a great reduction, I thought a "reprint", in this case, would be acceptable. Also, Gary Kato, a fine Hawaiian artist, debuts this issue, with a half-page S&S rendition on the last page of the Conan article.

Our pro-interview this issue with Howard Purcell, is one of the best interviews I've ever read. Thanks to Joe Mosca who conducted it for FF. Comments on the presentation of this interview, as compared to the previous issues interviews would be appreciated. All the fine half-tones cost money, so please let me know if you'd like to see this practice used in future interviews.

About the artists this issue: Mike Roberts has his first published work in FF this issue, as our inside back cover. An interview with Mike will appear in FF 15, after one or two full page renderings next issue. One of Dave Cockrum's finest drawings appears as our back cover this issue. Next issue's cover is, in my opinion, Dave's greatest piece of work: A wrap-around, black & white explosive rendition of the Silver Surfer in

combat with the Vision! The Maxor drawing that appears opposite John's Phoenix Con report will appear in a much condensed version, in his S&S strip. And John Fantucchio -- I think all his work this issue speaks pretty much for itself. I'm sure everyone can see for themselves how much work John's put into this issue. John will be taking a "leave of absence" from fandom for about a year, starting this July. A few things by John will be appearing in fandom, but not too much. And all of John's work in this issue will certainly leave tremendous memories of John's fantastic talents.

Hope everyone enjoys this issue. As always, your letters of comment are appreciated and most welcome; so please write. This issue is dedicated to one of fandom's finest artists, and one of my best friends in fandom, John Fantucchio. John's helped me out more times than I can remember and has certainly been a great influence on my work in fandom. Thanks John, for all your great help!

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CONAN



As man evolved from Apes, in such a way did pulps give birth to comics. From pulps, the comics borrowed much. Style, stories, and even characters themselves were to be found spreading across the

pages of the new young industry. And with the "borrowing" of Tarzan, the Shadow, Ka-Zar and many others, there comes now another pulp hero from the past to brighten the unseen future. From the

frozen wastelands of the far gone Cimmeria he comes, proudly proclaiming the coming of. . .

CONAN! OF MARVEL

BY JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

What with L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter unearthing the fabled legends of Conan, their ranks are now joined by another. By one who wishes to supplement to the history of the barbarian Amra rather than cataloging, and packaging his adventures in paperbacks. This new one has transformed the pulp hero of Robert E. Howard's into the comic book character of Roy Thomas'.

"To The Death!" reads Conan's word balloon on the cover of the first issue. The cover is a battlefield itself as Conan stands waiting the attack of his next opponent. At his feet lies his prize, a woman of goodly attributes. Such is the beginning of Conan the Barbarian! Whether this magazine is destined for success matters not. Thomas' and Smith's newest endeavor shall be remembered until time immortal.

"...until time immortal." Those are powerful words, but it shall not be so because of its bloodshed and vicious sword play. Its fame shall lie in the attempt made by Marvel to truly capture "pulp literature" in comics. For in the world of comics and the Comics Code, Sword & Sorcery can only exist by careful handling of the stories. With bloodshed, profanity and sex barred from comic periodicals, the amount of Sword & Sorcery stories that can be used is limited and their story plots can be severely hampered. To produce an S&S yarn, without some of its integral qualities is to risk disaster and degradation for and of this undertaking. But to put out a *successful* S&S magazine lacking these members is a masterpiece to be marveled at and one well worth remembering for a long time.

A flip of the page reveals the cast: Thomas, Smith and Adkins. I had hoped Barry to be inking his own work, especially because of that great job he did alone on a Conan-like story a few months ago*. That story was a sampling of what was to come and most probably, its overwhelming acceptance by fandom led Marvel into its decision to producing Conan The Barbarian.

* The story being referred to is, "The Sword and the Sorcerers!". It appeared in Marvel Comics' Chamber of Darkness.

The first issue saw Conan fighting the way I like him to, boldly, fiercely and unthinkingly. Young and yearning for adventure. Conan has sold his services to the Aesir. Pitted against winged furies and an ancient shaman, Conan is held captive by the elderly supernaturalist for sacrifice to the world of the "bat-winged devils." Conan smashes loose, destroys the old one's stone of power and runs from the ruins which are gutted with fire. Again, his prize is a woman. A woman who metamorphoses into one of the devils! Conan's thoughts drift to the sights of the future that the shaman had viewed,

especially that of an older Conan being crowned king, as the story closed.

Barry Smith managed to capture the excitement of the battle and mysticism that played its way through Conan's first issue. Barry's artwork has indeed improved and it has now found its proper place. Dan Adkins did a good job of inking, but there are others who could do better. Roy Thomas' writing is a fairly good piece of "pulp literature" which could perhaps rival the Conan novels someday.

As the artwork in the second issue im-



proves over that in the first, the artwork of the covers has depreciated. Conan # 1's cover revealed Conan as a warrior supreme, his muscles rippling and straining for action. Number 2's cover showed the Cimmerian without his mighty muscled frame. Along with this, the solitary word balloon on # 1's cover has swelled in size, this time with more drivel than before. Had there been any more space that could be covered up, Marvel would have done so with more balloons.

The second issue's splash page was a welcome sight indeed! Sal Buscema has helped Barry to raise Conan to even greater heights than before. Along with a new inker, a new colorer has joined the Conan staff. His use of many shades of blue and green set off Sal's inking fantastically!

The artwork does improve issue after issue and I'll hasten to admit this. Sal manages to bring out every thin line of facial expression, bodies, shadows, and backgrounds. This is really a superb job of inking!

The story itself, at first glance, led me to believe that it was an illustrated version of one of Howard's stories*. However, the woman, who was not as scantily dressed as the one in the short story led Conan to enslaving abominable snowmen rather than to frost giants. Even if it was an illustrated version of a Howard story, I would have welcomed it gladly; the artwork was that good.

* The story is Howard's, "The Frost Giants Daughter", which appears in the second volume (according to plot sequence) of Lancer Books' Conan series. The volume is entitled: "Conan of Cimmeria."

Conan is lured by the fleeting girl into the ambush set by the intelligent apes and brought as a slave to their underground kingdom. It is there that Amra discovers other humans who willingly remain under the apes' bondage. Conan's strong will to escape and be free sets a heroic example for the enslaved masses, who rally to his aid and rebel against the ape-tyrant. And yet in victory, there is tragedy. The slaves find their leader dead. Killed by a cowardly blow from behind.

"For he was the last of the manlings --", but first among -- men!" proclaims Conan, as he crowns the dead leader king of the freemen.

In both issues of Conan, one thing has struck me as odd. The Comics Code states that, "All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes ... shall not be permitted," but does that mean there can be NO BLOODSHED at all? It is highly unrealistic to see dead apes slaughtered by Conan, Conan smashed by spears, lions dying, and people knifed, without blood appearing! Not one solitary drop was to be seen! I don't ask for gushers and pools of blood, but merely bloodstained bodies and some

traces of this body fluid where one would expect it. As fantastic a scene the second issue's splash page is, it is ridiculous to have a dead ape full sprawled out for all to see that without one cut or wound.

And it is this that I want to point out. With Marvel running Conan under the Comics Code, there can never be any equality between both illustrated and written versions of the barbarian. Marvel cannot give their magazine the savageness, swordplay, or overwhelming appeal that the literary original has. They can never portray any Conan story in an illustrated form without having to put some scenes off-panel or to rely upon "brilliant lines."

Marvel's CONAN THE BARBARIAN can climb to frightening heights in the realm of comics, but never can it do so in the field of pulp classics. For Howard's Conan appeared first, and so shall it remain fixed in men's minds over Conan of Marvel. This fact and the existence of the present Comics Code shall result in Marvel's effort in being nothing more than a somewhat milder substitute. Never can it replace or take a rightful place alongside the literary Conan. This is the way it shall and should be.



CONAN POSTSCRIPT

JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

Since the writing of "Conan Of Marvel", a great many events have occurred. Marvel's CONAN THE BARBARIAN has appeared several more times and has developed into a monthly publication. The youthful Cimmerian has also taken up residence in Marvel's new, pulp-oriented fifty-center, SAVAGE TALES.

The adaptation of "The Grey God Passes" casts Conan as a meaningless pawn in the deliverance of dead warriors' souls to their respective hereafters. As the Grim Grey God leads the souls of the brave to Nirvana, Conan helps a cowardly and treacherous traitor find his destiny by way of death. This story, unlike most of these in the Marvel series, emphasizes the barbarian's war career rather than his personal adventures.

One of the most truly magnificent of Howard's stories appears in issue four. "The Tower Of The Elephant". The edifice of a stranded space wanderer, last of the marooned group. Confined, tortured and shackled by he who was once friend, the galactic elephant-man sits within his bejeweled and treasure-filled stronghold. The many fortunes to be had drive two adventurers to attempt entrance into the deadly lair of Yara, tormentor of the imprisoned one. Facing the multitudes of Death's tools, only one intruder survives. Conan!

He finds his way into the sky-reaching structure and comes upon the elephant. Trespasser and common robber becomes benefactor and deliverer. The elephant bids Conan to end his (the alien's) life and thereby free his soul from its agonized body. An interesting deviation from Howard's novelette occurs here. In the literary version, the elephants heart was to be placed on the spherical jewel. The Marvel version, bound the Comics Code Authority's restrictions, had the gem change to blood red by the mere fact that the alien was dead. Both comic and novel become as one again at this point. Bearing the rubied heart in hand, Conan presents it to Yara. The mighty sorcerer finds himself facing his persecuted victim within the jewel heart. A man anew, filled with the lust for vengeance, the elephant flies after Yara. Jewels dissipate and the tower collapses as Conan is



once more an observing pawn of another.

Issue five of CONAN THE BARBARIAN tells of a kindly old conjurer whose daughter, a catty type, has a part time job as local tax collector. The local peasantry, enraged by the prospect of having to fill out new 1040 Forms with higher tax rates, enlist the aid of a mercenary. They send this personage (need I tell you his name?) as their tax specialist to consult with the elderly prestidigitator about his new tax tables. Finding his daughter in the arms of Conan, father confronts barbarian with demonic spells, netherworld spirits and bewitching dependent. Both hastily depart, leaving Conan with "Income other than wages, dividends and interest." All this (and admittedly more) from Robert E. Howard's poem, "Zukala's Hour."

Seriously now.

The first two stories discussed are almost exact adaptations in the cases of plot and script. Precious little writing and absolutely no plotting had to be employed in the conversions from written to illustrated form. Progressive has been the quality of the art. Issue three was better than issue two, and issue four, better than issue three. Indeed, issue four represented the perfect artwork and mastering for and of the Sword & Sorcery visual novel.

The inking of Frank Giacoia is rough and crude in comparison to the delicate, fine inking of Conan in the past by Sal Buscema. Over the space of one month, Giacoia managed to age Conan into a middle-aged man. His face and features, in particular lost their youthful appearance and became heavy and darkened. If there is anything that can weaken a young strip such as Conan, it is the constant switching around of a vital constituent. Especially when drastic changes take place. Surely, and hopefully, Marvel will realize this and keep a steady inker on Barry Smith's



Conan pencils.

Thomas' writing in "Zukala's Daughter" contained many abrupt stops and go's in the action. As the wizard lies at the mercy of Conan, his daughter hastens to attack the dark-haired northerner and then decides against it. Whereupon the netherworld spirit appears. Hurling aside the sorcerer's tigress-daughter, the ghoul faces the axe-wielding Cimmerian. The outsider vanishes at the bidding of the warlock, and then he too, with child in arms, follows suit. The denouement of the issue leaves the readers with a somewhat sour taste in their mouths. For as Zukala's image fades into nothingness, he tells the young warrior to, "Beware!" "Beware," of what? Could it be that a time would come to pass when barbarian and magician would meet again? That they would face each other in a manner similar to how Doctor Doom makes regular visits to the FANTASTIC FOUR magazine. One wonders how low Marvel would stoop.

Once more, I found Conan chasing a "fleeing girl". This time the woman was "as scantily dressed as the one in the novel," leaving no doubt in my mind that this truly was "The Frost Giants Daughter". As in the previous Marvel Comics' adaptations, both story-line and dialogue followed the literary version.

Ere I had finished perusing Barry Smith's work in SAVAGE TALES, I realized that fantastic artwork such as this had never appeared before in black and white comics. At least not since VAMPIRELLA # 9 which contained "The Boy Who Loved Trees." Barry illoed this story and along with Gardner Fox, wrote it. Whereas Smith's previous non-color labor lacked any shadings of gray (leaving it look like an inked pencilling), CONAN THE BARBARIAN contained varying tones of black and white. His employing of dark and light, and shades thereof, gave a certain quality and texture to the drawings. They were developed from cold, sharp ink ren-



derings by the usage of finely shadowed mists that drifted over facial and body contours and clung to what little apparel was worn. A great deal of zip-a-tone (those itty-bitty dots of varying shapes).

"The Wings Over Shadizar" was the "landmark story", in issue 6, that removed the disaster that rested on Conan's head for the past 5 issues; his twin-horned helmet. In a scene that Robert Wagner and Raquel Welch could've done wonders with, Conan's horned helmet finally succumbs to the soothing hands of a woman, while in the last five issues, it withstood the swords and sorcery of countless warriors and warlocks. Also in this issue, thanks to the revisions of the Comics Code Authority, we see Conan with a bloody nose; and unlike bloody noses in comics before, this one is *bloody*. And somehow, it doesn't come across as well as would be expected.

Clouted on the head five panels after his helmet is taken off, he is knocked unconscious, and Jenna, the beautiful "wench" in this month's story, is taken captive by the men of Shadizar. Learning she is being held captive from Jenna's uncle, Conan steals his way into a mammoth minaret, a towering structure that stands over the city of Zamora, a building that holds the city in fear. Jenna, is shackled to a table, and Conan is too late to save her from the clutches of the mysterious, time-forgotten, "Night-God"; a giant bat. The bat already has Jenna in its claws, when Conan grabs the object nearest him, and leaps on the creature's back, flailing an iron-cast torch. He manages to ground the beast. Waking up a second time, he realizes that the goodbye kiss he received from Jenna hours before, was not meant only for him; all his gold vanished, along with Jenna.

The coloring, though superior in all the Conan books, stands out in this issue, and supplements Barry Smith's dynamic flair for fine art. Sal Buscema has returned this issue, and with him, some of the best inking comics have been endowed with.

Following one of Conan's worst splash pages, Marvel's Conan # 7 turns out to be one of the best issues yet! (Incidentally, with the exception of issues 2 and 7, the splash pages of the Conan books have, strangely enough, been the low-point, art-wise, for me). Saving Lady Aztrias, niece of the governor of Numalia from a wolf-pack, earns Conan the "honor" of being the Lady's new charriot driver. The story of "The Great Bowl" is revealed to Conan from Lady Aztrias. The Great Bowl was delivered to Karanthes of Hanumarm, priest of the God-Bird Ibis, as a gift. It is believed to contain treasures beyond compare. That night, Conan was to steal the Bowl -- for Lady Aztrias -- though I'm sure he had other ideas.

Conan works his way into The House Of Relics in a one-page masterpiece-sequence by Barry Smith, on page 7; he finds the guard dead. Conan is quickly abducted by a nightwatch, and is soon surrounded by the city guard. Lady Aztrias walks in and denies ever telling Conan to steal the bowl. Conan's rage is short-lived, as Arus, the night watchman, crawls weakly, from the adjacent room. Walking into the same room that Arus just left, the only thing Conan & Co. find is a bust of a serpent's head. One of the trigger-happy guards fires a cross-bow shaft directly under the serpent's head, bringing the coiling creature suddenly to life! Wrapping around Lady Aztrias, the closest person to "it", the chief inquisitor and Conan are the only one's that remain in the room; the rest flee in terror. The

writhing serpent quickly subdues the courageous blonde warrior [Demetrio, chief inquisitor], leaving only Conan to face it. Leaping into battle, Conan fights fiercely with the thing, finally battering its face into tattered ruins, defeating the monster that just seconds before, held Conan in a death-grip.

The grand finale is the huge head of THOS-AMON, the most feared of Stygian Wizards who emerges in a cloud of smoke, from the golden bowl. "And now, at last, the full horror of it all rushes over Conan... .. and he flees..."

Barry Smith has demonstrated once again that he is one of the comics' greatest story-tellers. His panels, especially in this and the fourth issue, have more fluency than most in comics being published today. He's combined the fine art with the exciting story-telling techniques most characterized by Steranko's superb comic book work.

Running parallel to the literary series, Conan's success is imminent, illustrating many of Howard's stories can afford the magazine with the same readers that buy the paperbacks. Publishing "licensed" comic magazines could bring fandom's favorite fantasy characters to Marvel, and in turn, bring much needed money to the outfit. Imagine Marvel picking up Doc Savage, or the Shadow, and maybe even REH's Brak Mak Morn!

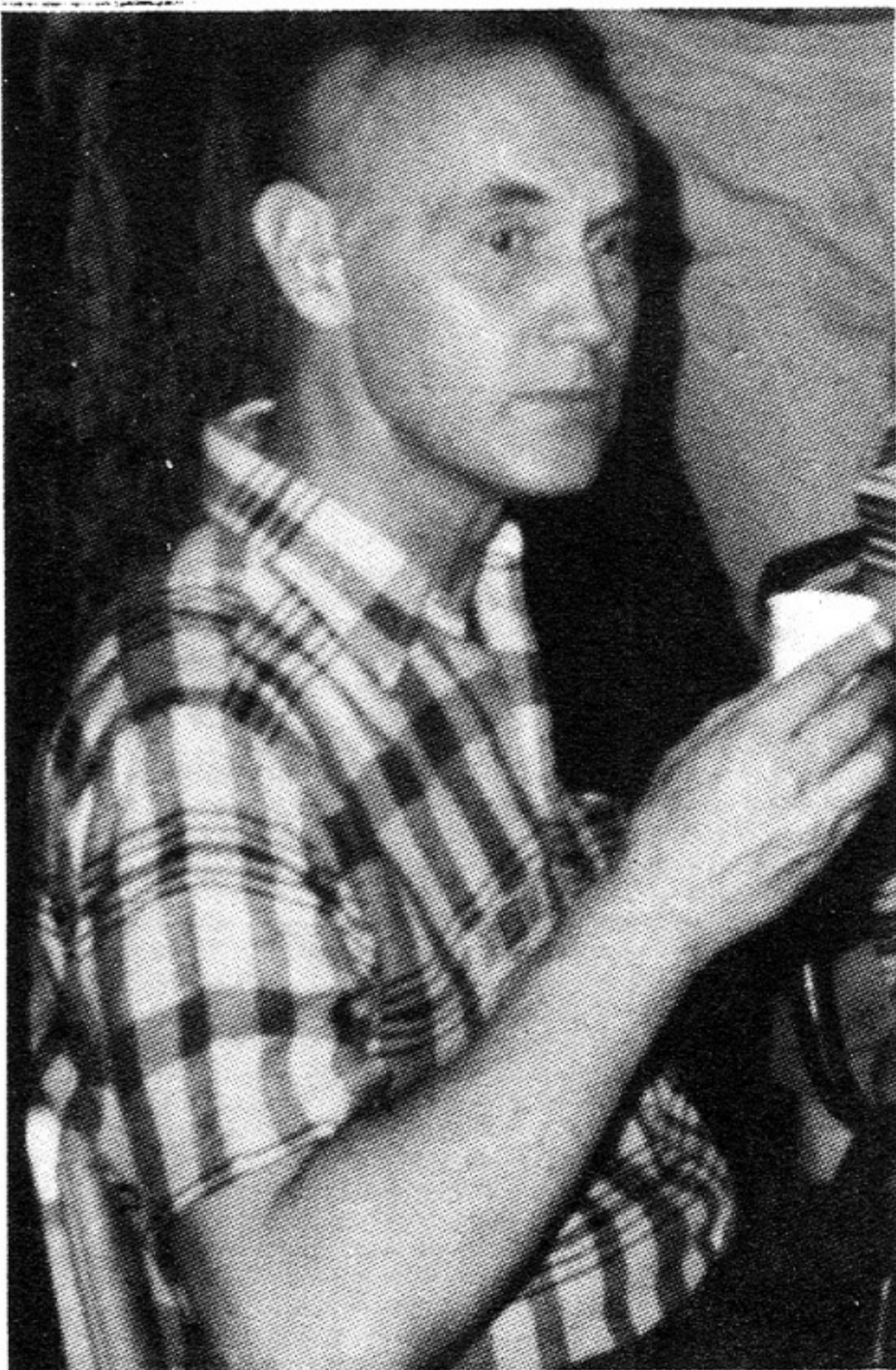
The 1970 Comic Art Convention took place at the New York Statler Hilton Hotel over the July Fourth week-end [July 3rd, 4th and 5th]. Over 1900 comic fans converged at the Pen Top Room at the Hilton for this, the biggest comicon ever! Professional comic writers, editors and artists attended. The program was filled with panel discussions, slide shows, film showings, auctions, a Luncheon, and other special events, not to mention the huge exhibit room, housing the works of Gray Morrow, Jim Steranko and Neal Adams, the two enormous dealer rooms, and the rapping with old friends. Some of the pros that attended the con were Al Williamson, Frank Frazetta, Gil Kane, Neal Adams, Tom Sutton, Kenneth Smith, Mike Friedrich, Al Weiss, Roy Thomas, Bill Everett, Joe Kubert, Joe Sinnott, Ken Kelley, Robert Kline, Wally Wood, Dave Cockrum, Roy G. Krenkel, Neal Adams, Dick Giordano, Nicola Cuti, Jim Warren, Vaughn Bode', Berni Wrightson, Gray Morrow, Mike Kaluta, Murphy Anderson, John Buscema and Stan Lee! Some line-up of professional guests, heh? This issue of FF is too late to give a lengthy report on the con activities [Next issue will have an in-depth report] but it's said a picture is worth a thousand words... So, start "reading" . . .



TOP: Neal Adams gives Keynote Speech at beginning of con. After Dick Giordano introduced Adams to the jam-packed auditorium of anxious fans, Neal began his talk. He spoke frankly and articulately on the change of comics; from the famed EC's, to today's comics, which Neal feels are "coming of age" at long last. After his talk, Neal fielded questions from the audience. Twenty-two questions later, Neal drew to a close, what was one of the finest panels of the con.

BOTTOM: From left to right, Frank Jacobs, Dave Berg, Jerry DeFuccio, John Putnam. All MAD staffers. This was taken after the Mad slide show came to a close. Between the kibitzing, John Putnam moderated this insane event!

LEFT: Roy G. Krenkel takes a breather from the hustle and bustle of the con activity.



BOTTOM: Phil Seuling starts the con off,



A PICTORIAL REPORT ON...



GIL KANE is always willing to take time out and give fans his opinion, and give suggestions and tips to improve their art.



ROY THOMAS and his beautiful wife, Jean, pose for this snap. JEAN: "You can have your ALTER-EGO! Just give me back my copy of FANTASTIC FANZINE!"

the '70 N.Y. Comicon!



PANEL: The Direction of Comics in the 1970's. From left to right, Johnny Romita, Denny O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Dick Giordano, Gray Morrow, Archie Goodwin, Neal Adams, Jim Warren. As the name suggests, this panel delved into the future of comics. Moderator, Dick Giordano stated that if comics don't change he won't be in the business five years from

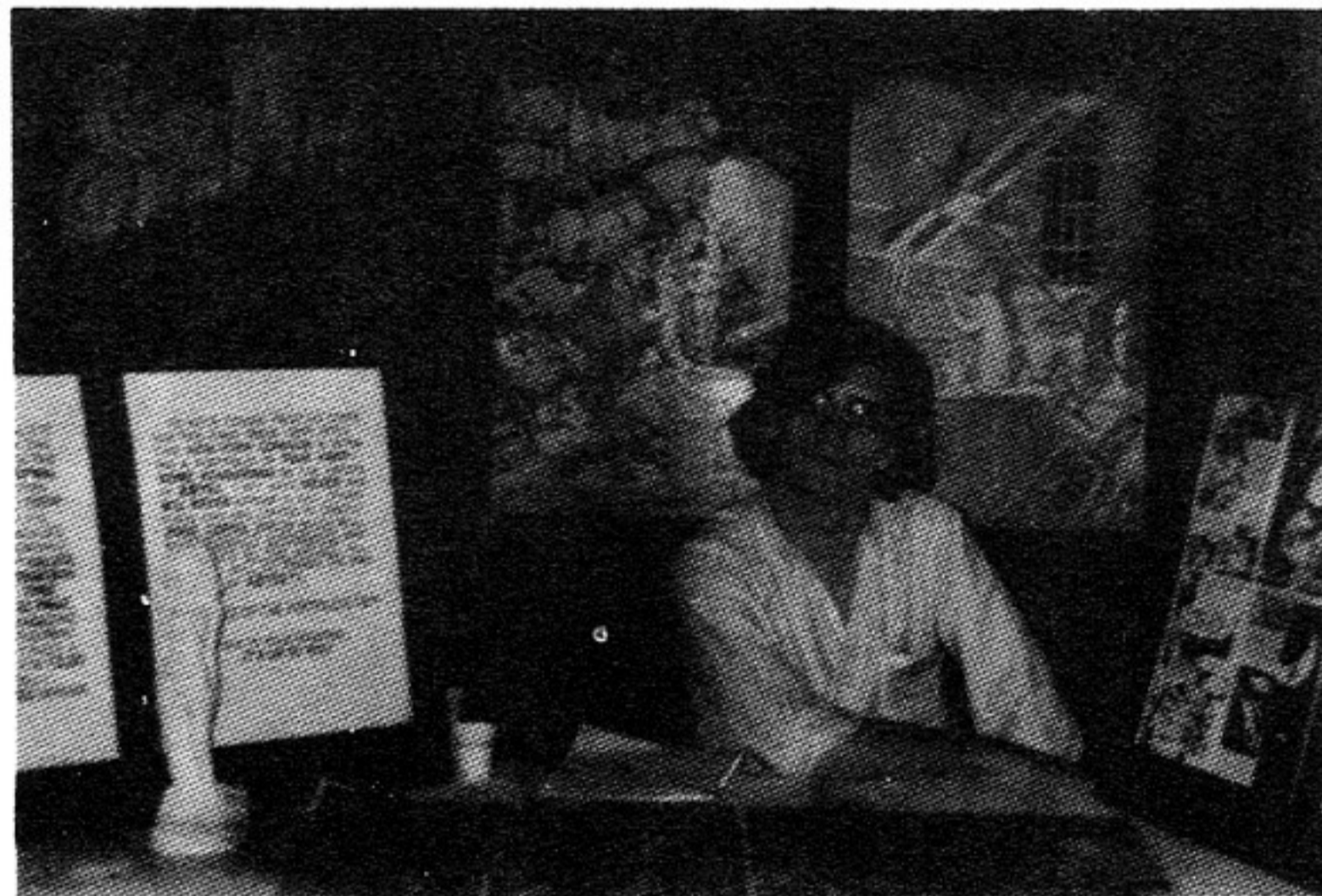
now. Neal Adams was most vehement about changing the comic books into adult, graphic masterpieces. Publisher, Jim Warren argued with Adams, saying, "I'm with you Neal," and continued, "BUT - you're going to walk into a publisher's office with your beautiful stories and 'strips, and they're going to say, 'They're nice...but WILL THEY SELL?'"



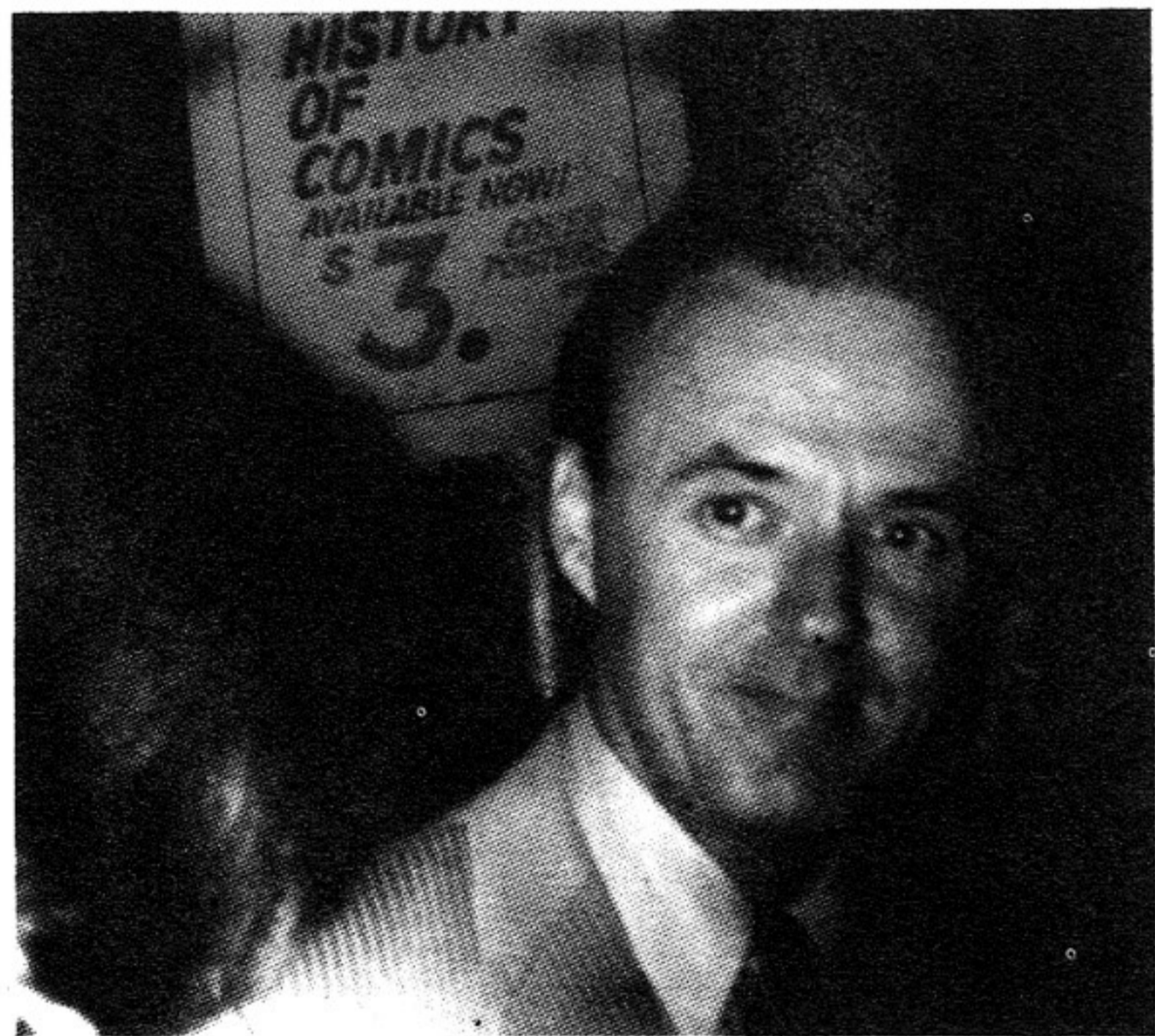
TOP WARREN ARTIST, Ken Kelley patiently rummages through his portfolio. Ken & his beautiful wife were two of the friendliest people I met at the con.



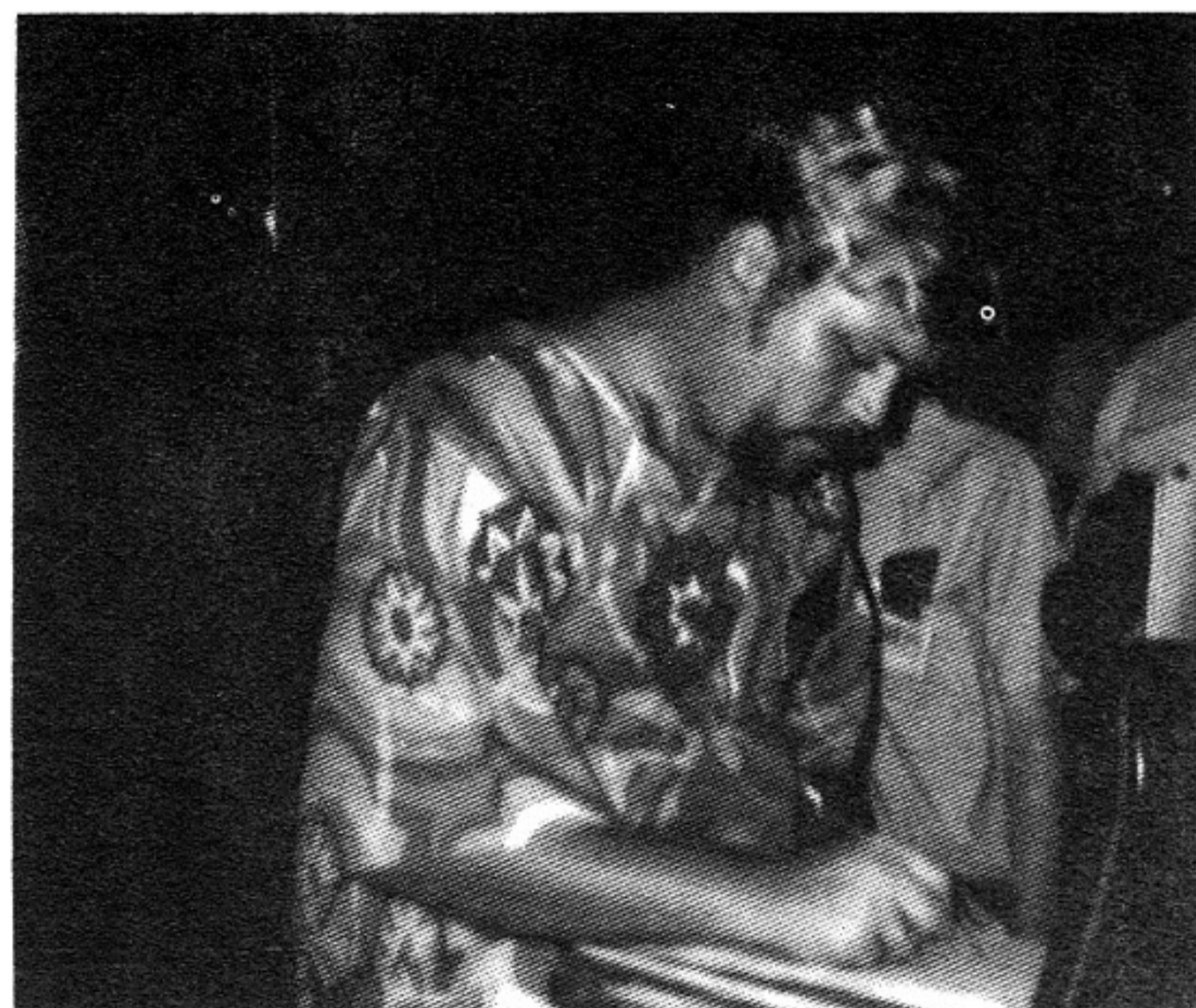
WALLY WOOD talks freely to some of his many fans. Currently, Wally is reported working on a new book for Warren.



TOP: Berni Wrightson behind the Abyss table. BOTTOM: Jim Steranko appears as though he's drinking water.



TOP: Joe Sinnott, whose interview will appear in next issue. BOTTOM: Dave Cockrum does sketches for one of his many fans.





THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN VEST



by Bill Cantey



Tork was at it again. The mishapen dwarf was forcing the queen bee of the saloon floozies to dance naked on the bar, while he flayed her with a small whip that he carried for that purpose. Although women were scarce this far west, and none of the men present would normally allow one to be mistreated, no one broke up the fiendish runt's play or even voiced an objection. Not even the brawny barkeep dared to interfere by moving toward his shotgun under the bar. For the weak, weaponless Tork was the pet of Vince Colby, the man in the golden vest.

Colby sat, calmly regarding the scene, bemused at Tork's antics as the unfortunate female was chased screaming nude up the rickety stairs to disappear behind a slammed door, with the guffawing dwarf giving her a departing shot before returning to his master's side. Tork was a card, no doubt about that. Years of being scorned by women had vested the unpopular cripple with a hatred for the opposite sex that could not be satisfied. But he'd keep working at it.

Colby's pale hands were manipulating cards in a game of solitaire with a dexterity and speed that the normal eye could not follow. And it was this same speed that held the roomful of armed men at bay while Tork had enjoyed his sport. Once a saloon flunky and a general handy man, Tork did indeed enjoy his newly aquired status as the town's second citizen.

The first citizen had arrived only two weeks and three days ago. When this slightly built, dark haired man with his pale complexion and piercing blue eyes got off the stage, he was immediately spotted as a professional gambler. The local law, a sheriff and one deputy, gave him twenty-four hours to move on; with no gambling to be done in the meantime. The next morning he stepped out, wearing a thirty-eight Colt Lightning and a gold-colored silk vest, embroidered with genuine gold wire. His boots were decorated with gold studs. His cuff links were tiny golden skulls. Even his double-action revolver was gold plated. He killed the sheriff and deputy in a single shoot-out. No one had braced him after that.

So the town was his. After a week of basking in his glory, he'd elevated Tork to the position of his valet and second in command. Tork took to it like a duck

and provided the gambler with more sport than he'd thought the small frontier community could provide. But now he was bored, ready to leave town. The previous night, he'd ordered Tork to round up the town's leading citizens for a game of no-limit poker. He smiled at the memory. He'd cheated shamelessly, obviously. And they'd all been too frightened to complain. Then he'd won the biggest pot with five aces, and still no one had spoken up. Now he had most of the town's money; and he'd had the town. He was ready to move on. But it had to be done just right. He couldn't simply board the morning stage. His departure had to be done with finesse. A gunfight would suffice; but who? He had the whole town treed; no one would dare stand up to him. He was trying to decide whether to burn down the church or the schoolhouse, when the newcomer arrived.

He was lean, but powerfully built, this young stranger. The kind of man who might be used to holding his own and standing up for himself. He was hatless, and being blond had paid the price. His tanned face was freshly sunburned to a rosy hue across the tip of his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. His wiry, blond hair curled forward at either temple above watchful blue eyes. His red shirt was covered with trail dust so that its faded pinkness matched his newly altered complexion. His pants and boots were too dusty to have their color identified, but the gambler's attention stopped at the young stranger's waist. A pair of heavy, single-action forty-fives depended from two, crossed shellbelts. This then, was his finale. His triumphant exit from this dirty little pesthole of a town. Colby shot the cards in a shower toward the cuspidor and approached his living, dead man.

It hadn't turned out exactly as the gambler had planned. His insistence that the young stranger indulge in straight whisky was naturally refused, since the dust-covered kid had obviously been riding hard without food for days. When Colby attempted to throw the refused drink into the young man's face, his world exploded. The glass spun from his hand, and a rock-hard fist smashed into his jaw, sending him sprawling. But the wry gambler had kept his wits. He'd not drawn. It would have been foolish to draw, flat on his back, under another man's gun. Besides, his working vest was up in his room; this one was only silk. So, he'd simply gotten up and made an appointment for sun-up the next morning. He'd make his kill, and board the stage in triumph. The salty taste of blood in his mouth, tonight, would be replaced by the sweet taste of revenge tomorrow morning. He slept with the joyful anticipation of a child on Christmas Eve.

It was a beautiful morning for it. Colby stood on the wooden sidewalk in full regalia. He felt safe and confident inside his golden shield. Not that there was any chance of that nameless drifter getting in the first shot. But some of these bumpkins were stubborn about dying. The steel plates inside his vest would decrease the possibility of a fatal hit from a dying man's parting shot. Good crowd; nice turnout.

The stage was scheduled to pull out at first light, but it'd wait for him. The driver valued his life. Besides, the passengers wanted to see the sport. Tork was standing by to leave with him. He'd have to. Colby would drop him in the next

town; he was just as bored with the demented dwarf as he was with the town.

If that saddle bum didn't show up soon, he'd have to send Tork into the hotel to rout him out. He fingered the two derringers in the vest's pockets. Four-shot pepperbixes, altered to fire all four barrels at once, like miniature shotguns.

A murmur in the crowd turned his attention from the hotel to the livery stable. The young fool had led his horse from the building, tied him at the hitchrail, and was walking in his direction. Having made it to the stable, he could've slipped out of town and saved his worthless life. Why hadn't he? Colby was a little less cocky as he stepped into the street and walked to meet his intended victim.

The stranger had replaced his lost hat with a new, white stetson. His clothing was now free from dust, and he'd donned a calfskin vest. Its black and white patterns contrasted sharply in the early morning sunlight.

Colby stopped and held his ground; he didn't want to be walking when he drew,

The slender, young figure moved closer. His gunbelts and boots had been cleaned, and polished. The grips of his two, heavy revolvers had been dull grey-black yesterday. Now they caught the sun's rays like tiny mirrors. The handles of the Colts were of polished silver.

Initially, Colby was pleased that this young pup had shown some flair. But the silver handled Colts stirred an uneasy memory. He recollected stories of a six-

gun wizard, an outlaw who carried s weapons. The suddenly powerful form within range and still, casually, proaching.

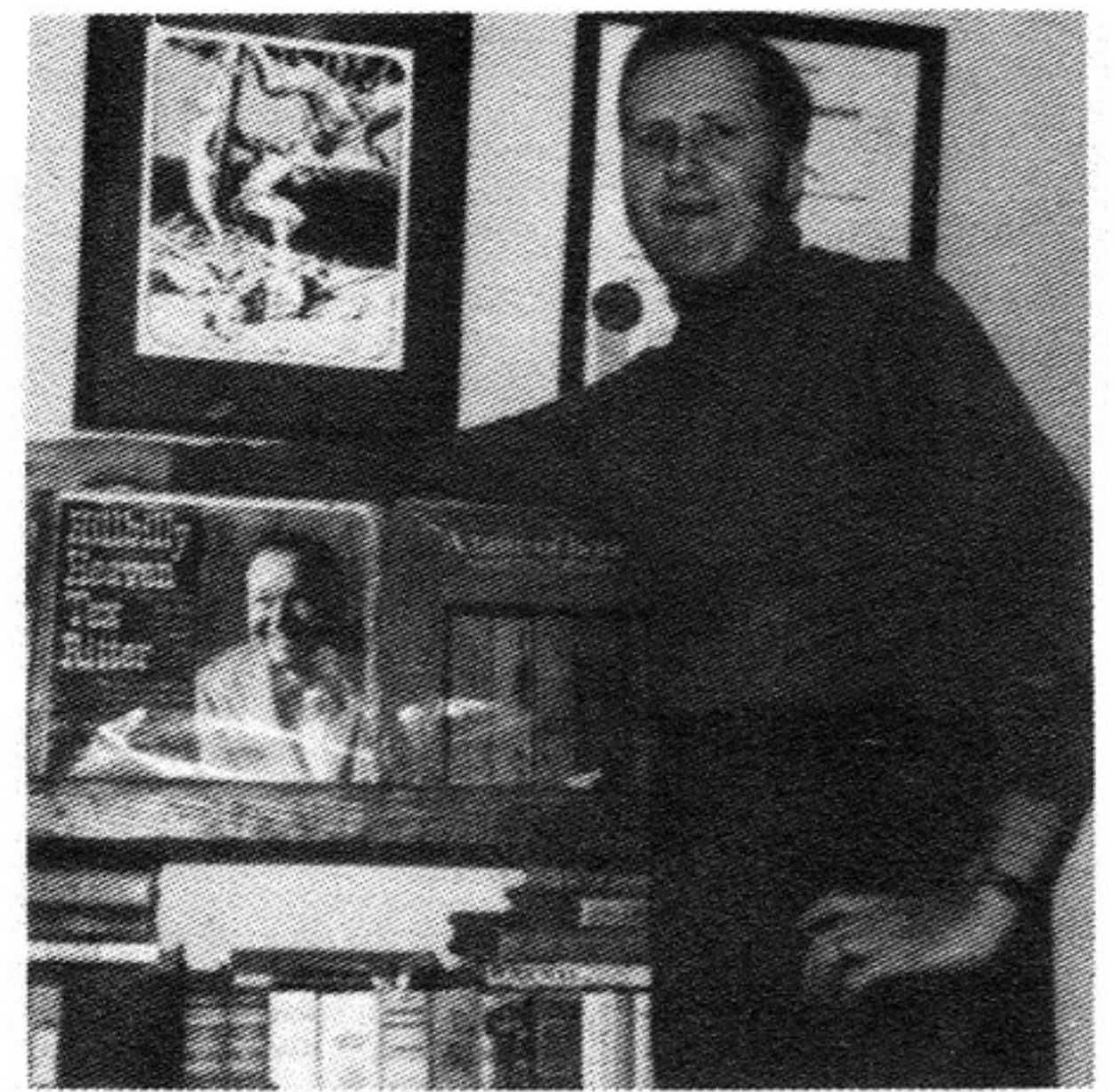
The sweating gambler clawed at his Co. A jarring blow numbed his arm and s him half-way around. He fell on his bac his unfired gun lay several yards aw. At first Colby thought that someone the crowd had thrown something at hi. But a glance at his ruined right a revealed that he had indeed been stru by a heavy slug. The bullet entered t top of his wrist, plowed the length his forearm, then destroyed his elbo. With the loss of that limb, his easy li as a gambler-gunfighter was ended. E he'd kill the man who crippled him! Ro ling on his stomach, he left-handed o of the derringers and thrust it forwar. Before he could cock the tiny hammer, t stranger's heavy weapon exploded agai. The large caliber slug entered the ne of the vest, blazed a trail of agony long his spine, then tore away his ma hood as it exited. Excrutiating pain o cupied his entire being. He was rough turned on his back, the remaining derri ger was taken from his vest, and bo were thrown out of reach. An unnecessa precaution; Colby was paralyzed. He cou only move his head. He tried to ca. Tork. But the now, unprotected dwarf w being drowned in a horse trough by tl reinstated town bully. The stage lurch and rolled away, like life leaving h behind. His last sight on earth was tl young gunfighter on a steel-grey stal lion, riding out of town and into tl living world of western legend that i was leaving forever.



Western sketch by JOHN FANTUCCHIO

INTERMISSION

WITH BILL CANTEY



[Editor's Note: This interview with Bill Cantey, the exciting story-teller that has written around such characters as Ka-Zar, the Sub-Mariner, Spider-Man, and many others, will hopefully give you insight to Bill Cantey, the person. I've known Bill for at least two years now, and in that time, he's been both a good friend, and a good staff member; always a pleasure to work with. FF will continue to publish Bill's terrific short stories as long as Bill will write them for us. My only regret is that I wasn't able to print Bill's story, "The Hole In The Universe" in this issue; it'll definitely appear in the next ish, but for now, enjoy this feature:]

When did you first become interested in fandom and fanzines and how did you discover them?

In 1967, I was finishing a correspondence course in cartooning. My appreciation for good cartooning increased as I painfully attempted the third and final phase of the course. My ultimate plan at the time was to eventually try my skill at creating one-panel jokes for various magazines. I was having some trouble with backgrounds so I checked the current crop of comic books to see if there was anything I could swipe --I mean-- learn. The Marvel mags caught my eye and I got interested in comics again after an abstinence of over ten years. I investigated some of the ads, started getting THE ROCKET'S BLAST and got hooked. Oh yeah, I finished the course, but never did anything with it. I'd advise anyone who's contemplating such a move to either enter an actual school with real classes, or just buy some books on the subject. If you've got enough drive to finish a correspondence course, you'll do just as well as a self-taught student. And fandom is the greatest place in the world for free criticism.

What was the first fanzine to feature your work, and how was it that this was the first fanzine you discovered and decided to work for?

That would be the old YANCY STREET GAZ-

ETTE. They got my address out of Marvel's letters section and invited me to join the "Gang". They printed my first fan fiction, a one page "Hulk" story with an assist from Steve Ziegler.

Up to now, what fanzines have featured your work?

Mostly the FANTASTIC FANZINE, thanks to your interest and encouragement. Mark Wheatley's NUCLEUS has published a story and an article. He's holding some other work which will appear in future issues. Mark calls me his head-writer, because I once sent him an article written on paper towels. Dwight Decker printed the first story that I ever wrote in his TRUE FAN ADVENTURE THEATRE. It was an effort at humor before I became fan orientated. Bill Wilson of THE COLLECTOR is planning to print an article of mine in his next publication, # 23. And Jim Stewart has promised to feature two articles in his upcoming NEBULOUS. Art-wise, MARVELMANIA accepted my club insignia design, and ERB-dom recently printed my first one-panel joke.

Who do you consider to be the best fan writer?

I'm a Dwight Decker desciple. Ol' Dwight reminds me of the ex-convict who'd spent five years in solitary confinement. He could run a three minute mile, but he ran it in a six-foot circle. If they can ever

straighten him out, he'll be one heck of a miler. However, I'm confident that Decker will straighten out, and be a future pro. The fan-appeal of Dwight's work is evident; when he finds the right direction for himself and the general reading public, he'll start selling. And we can say we knew him when he was just another self-centered member of fandom. No! I'm just kidding. Some fans might feel that Dwight is something of an egotist; but I've had some correspondence with him and found him to be a likeable fellow with a keen sense of humor. In fact, when I submitted some work for publication in his TRUE F.A.T., he was quite cordial. Replying promptly and in a neatly typed letter, he saith unto me, that whatsoever I should sendath unto him he would by no means cast it out. A little strange, but a heck of a talent.

As a side note, there was a story called "Tales Of The Nightwalker" in GOSH-WOW # 2 with spot illustrations by John Fantucchio that I found slightly terrific. But, I don't know if the writer, Larry Brody, did any more work for fandom. If he did, and they're as good as "Nightwalker", he just might be the best. And finally, I think the best fan fiction to appear in the FANTASTIC FANZINE was Dave Cockrum's "Ayesha" in issue 8*9. Since it wasn't comic-oriented, it might not have received the attention it deserved. But it was good by any standards.

Outside of comic-fandom, Jan Strnad is another fine fan writer. His 'zine, ANOMALY, is devoted to Fantasy-Adventure and Science Fiction.

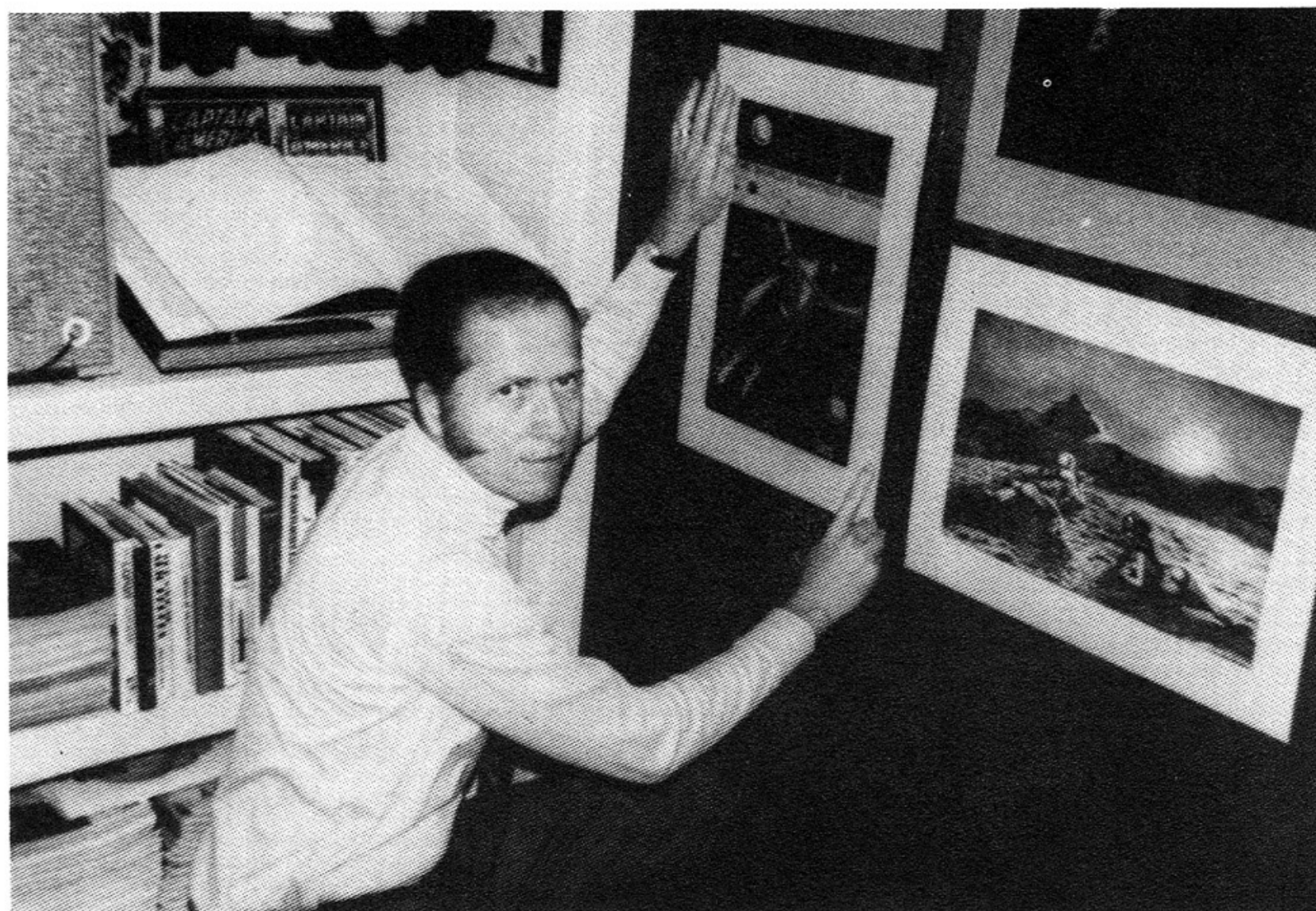
Who's your favorite fan artist?

Robert Kline, master of the fine line. And I told you that before he flattered one of my inept stories with one of his excellent illustrations. Incidentally, the original of Kline's Ka-Zar drawing now hangs, professionally framed, in my home; and gets quite a reaction from non-fan visitors.

Next, I favor the electrifying style of John Fantucchio's paintings. Dave Cockrum and Richard Corben are two other favorites. But I think all four are pros now; or at least semi-pros. So, I'll choose a second string just in case the first selections no longer qualify: Don Newton, Jim Jones, and Dave Russell.

With two others, worthy of mention: Jay Mike and Al Grinage.

Currently, which fanzines, in your opinion, are the best art-wise?



WITZEND, or maybe PARAGON. WITZEND has wasted an awful lot of space on some pretty primitive stuff, and William Black's work is beautiful; I'm sure he's a pro. But, I think that WITZEND is my first choice. Wallace Wood's 'zine introduced two highly impressionable characters; Animan and Mr. "A"

Text-wise?

GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE is the publication to beat. I also subscribe to CARTOONIST PROFILES. Both are excellent publications, and although I'm not always interested in everything they print; they are, I think, the best.

If I were an E.C. addict with a complete or near-complete collection, I'd be enraptured by SQUA TRONT and SPA FON.

GOSH-WOW, ALTER EGO, MARVELMANIA, and COMICKAZI should also receive honorable mentions. But, they're so many beautiful 'zines (pro and fan) that it's pretty much a matter of preference when you consider the top contenders. Among which the FANTASTIC FANZINE rates highly.

Just what is it that you look for in a fanzine? What is it that appeals to you most in a 'zine?

I look for looks. If a 'zine's ad looks good, I'll risk sending for it. Then if the 'zine itself is well laid out with neatly typed and printed articles (or stories) with related illustrations, I count it a winner. Now, if the writing is extremely bad, the effect is wasted. But, it's unusual for an editor to go to the trouble and expense of publishing really poor material in a luxurious format.

Do you get many requests for articles and stories from 'zine editors?

Not a lot. Once in a while, I'll get a letter from an editor I never heard of. At first, I tried to oblige everyone, but after a second would-be editor failed to go to press, or return the requested article, I decided to bend my efforts in more trustworthy directions, meaning the FF and comparative publishers. I usually answer requests, but the answer's usually negative, since I'm just writing myself out of a common fan-writer's bind, promising too much to too many. And it's getting to be work.

What, in your opinion, is the best all-time fanzine ever published, considering art, text, layout, et cetera?

Any fan favors the 'zine with which he's associated. So I should continue to exclude the FANTASTIC FANZINE from our discussion and make another selection. But, I won't. FANTASTIC FANZINE # 12 was the fanzine that I've enjoyed the most. It featured my favorite fanzine artist and favorite fan-writer. And since it contained no material by me, I feel that I may be forgiven for expounding on my "home" fanzine.

When and where were you born?

At 60-A Cannon Street, Charleston, South Carolina; August 24, 1936. That makes me thirty-four, but my mental age is closer to fifteen, so maybe I can still be trusted. Incidentally, this was in the old days when doctors made house-calls. Right. The ol' Doc just stopped by one day and --uh-- helped me out, so to speak.

Oh, and I've been married for about four years; maybe five by the time this is printed.

What do you think of today's comics as compared to those of the Golden Age and EC's?

The early beginning of comic books was exciting. I still like to read about how they came into existence and evolved into the present form. When Marvel or National offers a reprint of a comic story from the early forties, I always buy it (and occasionally remember it). Place the Golden Age reprint (or original) beside today's best, and the superiority of the current crop, artwise, is readily apparent. The old style story was great in its day, and still has nostalgic value and interest. But, I can't imagine it succeeding now.

The E.C. era, I vividly recall. Entertaining Comics came into being as I entered my mid-teens. And probably when I would've lost interest in the comic book as entertainment. But, the quality of the E.C. was so obvious that they weren't even considered with their fellow publications. In other words, you'd have been laughed at for reading a common comic book, but an E.C. was something else; it was socially accepted by an extremely critical age group. Of course, E.C.'s also attracted the wrong kind of attention. Reformers attacked them on a national scale, driving them to the wall in a classic example of chasing a mouse with lions loose in the house. Enter the code, and exit what might have been the most communicative form of visual entertainment that has ever existed.

The very best, I hope, is yet to come.

Are there any fields besides comics that particularly interest you?

Science fiction and heroic-fantasy are my life's blood. Reading is my main interest, and mainly I read fantasy-adventure stories and novels. Usually the old, pre-forties stuff, and reprints of the best pulps in paperback form.

Movies were another mainstay from my youth, and I love to catch a well remembered film from the late forties or early fifties on television. And I still have a passion for sending for things. A hang-over from the old time radio days, with its by-products of adventure, rings and things of brass and glass.

Probably, my present interest in comics is mostly nostalgic. We had three distinct forms of entertainment; comics, radio, and movies. Today's television is a conglomeration of all three. And maybe it's my age talking, but T.V. is just -- too easy. The weekly motion picture with its side dishes of cartoons and serials was a big deal, but now -- it's routine. It takes a supreme effort of self-discipline to limit one's T.V. watching to the things that really interest him.

Have you ever given any thought to going pro in the writing field, whether it would be pulp literature, comics, or whatever?

No. It'd be much too difficult. I've got "word blindness". Can't spell, and I have to be drilled on unfamiliar words before I can pronounce them correctly. Also, my recollection of the rules of grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation is very vague. If I wanted to become a writ-



er, I'd literally have to go back to school. I'm flattered that you asked, but even with my overactive imagination, I can't imagine that I'll ever sell a story or even a story idea. Conversely, writing (after reading) is my favorite pastime. I love to make up stories; can't help it in fact.

The pulp era has passed, and reprints of past triumphs as well as current efforts in the genre have pretty much saturated the market. So, there's not much chance for even a talented newcomer to break into the field. Still, the pinnacle of success for me would be to create a character that would stand beside the best known fiction heroes that came out of that time. Tarzan, Doc Savage, and Sherlock Holmes, being notable examples.

Are there any writers in the pro field who have influenced your work?

Nothing I've written, with the exception of some humor, would stand up outside of fandom. Edgar Rice Burroughs is my most read author. Robert E. Howard is another favorite. I'd be very pleased if someone told me that something I wrote reminded him of either.

What kind of comics do you collect?

Basically, I'm a fan of the artist and/or writer. Not the publishing companies, the magazines, or even the characters. I do have a lot of Marvels, and a good supply of Nationals. I have only a few pre-Code comics, recently purchased. I was a simple enjoyer, not a collector, in my early years. Simple is the word; the comics that I could have bought for a dime once, are collector's items today. But I traded away, gave away, and finally threw away several hordes of comics. But, how was I to know that I'd fall victim to the fine madness called comic-fandom?

Currently, who is your favorite pro artist?

Jim Steranko; although I'm quite aware of other great talents in the business. Nor do I begrudge Jack Kirby his honorary title of "King". His startling style is the essence of the super-hero concept, which is in turn the soul of the comic book industry. Other favorites: Wallace Wood, Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson, Jack Davis, Steve Ditko, and the Buscema brothers. Oh, and that fellow who "graduated" from comic books, Frank Frazetta.

I wish they'd all end up working for SUPERGRAPHICS.

And who's your favorite pro writer?

In comics, the artists who also do their own writing and do it well. The graphic creator is an exceptionally talented human being. Good examples are the aforementioned Jim Steranko, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, and Wallace Wood.

Outside of comics, I'll vote for the "terrific prolific" of Edgar Rice Burroughs; then jump ahead a few decades to name a fairly new author as my second favorite. John Norman, the careful chronicler of the Counter-Earth series, has managed to combine the appeal of *Sword & Sorcery* with an epic adventure relating to the values and attitudes of today. And if I may insert a plug here, an interview with Mr. Norman is scheduled to appear in my "home" away from "home", NUCLEUS.

Other writers that I watch for are Ted White, Fritz Leiber, John Jakes, Lin Carter, and the already mentioned Robert E. Howard.

How's your working speed? Could you tell us approximately how long it took you to finish your two latest stories, "The Golden Vest" and "The Hole In The Universe" [to be printed next issue]?

I dream up stories fast, but get 'em down on paper slow. First I write the story completely -- in my head. Then I scribble it down on paper as fast as I can. I rough-type it (double space) as soon as I can, least it get "cold" and even I can't read it. A few days later, I'll re-read it, correct the spelling, change some sentence structure, and retype it as well as I can. I don't write every day, so actual time spent on a story varies. Incidentally, I don't think of them as stories, but "story ideas". Anyway, I spent a total of about twelve hours on "The Golden Vest", and twice that on "The Hole In The Universe."

Right now, what, in your opinion is the best all-around company producing comics?

When Marvel lost Kirby, National gained an obvious advantage. Further, National has really found the handle with the Neal Adams BATMAN. But, Marvel's not finished yet. Currently, my two favorite comic characters (Conan & Ka-Zar) are Marvel's. Wood and Wrightson could do wonders with either. National has always had the edge on Marvel in the war and westerns department, in spite of the fact that Kid Colt is a well remembered favorite of my youth, and that John Severin is one of the best straight-adventure artists in the business. But all things considered, I'll cast my vote for National. If Marvel had allowed men like Kirby, Steranko, Ditko, Wood, and Severin to edit as well as draw and write, they'd have the most creative line of comics that have ever

existed. But in all fairness, that's a dream-wish, and might have been a disastrous experiment. Fan approval is rarely an indication of financial success; it's more likely the kiss of death.

What, in your opinion, was the best all-time strip ever published?

I'm glad you keep saying, "opinion", because I don't feel qualified to make such a judgement, I'm not an expert. Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON eventually had everything. Hal Foster's PRINCE VALIANT is an epic never to be equaled, but "Val" is trapped in time while Flash knew no inhibitions. Accordingly, I choose FLASH GORDON which encompassed every form of high adventure as the number one comic strip to date. Third choice: Burne Hogarth's rendition of TARZAN.

Who's your favorite pro inker?

Joe Sinnott's precise pen is first; then Tom Palmer's soft shading. However, in fan polls I often vote for John Severin as best inker. He's a favorite of mine from the E.C. days. Like the others, he's much more than just an inker. He could easily handle all the chores on a comic magazine; writer, artist and editor. But, he's been through it once and why should he knock himself out trying to be creative? The comic medium under its present restrictions wouldn't allow him the freedom of expression he displayed in the old TWO FISTED TALES.

What do you think of the present number of 'zines being published in fandom now?

Fandom has the same problem as prodom. Too many publications. You can't possibly buy all of either, and you invariably miss something you would have valued.

Perhaps the Academy of Comic Book Arts will encourage companies to produce thicker, less frequent publications and the attitude will be reflected by fandom. I hope so; the comic buying public is just not capable of consuming the deluge of publications that professionals and amateurs are capable of producing.

Just how did you get the idea to write "around" the comics' characters, so as to avoid any copyright/legal problems?

Everyone wants to make up stories involving their favorite characters. But, since they can't be published, even for fun, names have to be changed or omitted. As stories, my "stories" are very weak; they are suggestions for real stories.

Gray Spaces was another attempt to allow fans to make up stories and story ideas. Like fan-fiction, it was not meant to be my exclusive domain. But it flopped. Which might be just as well; I prefer the more direct approach of fan-fiction anyway.

Nor is "writing around" someone else's character(s) just an amateur pastime. An excellent example of a professional effort is Phillip Jose' Farmer's double ACE novel, "The Mad Goblin/Lord Of The Trees". 'Tarzan' and 'Doc Savage' are featured in concurrent stories. It is slightly terrific.

There's been a lot of talk in fandom to the effect that fans are becoming too money minded; the RBCC is getting too commercial, fanzines are becoming higher priced, et cetera. How do you feel about all of this?

The temptation to make a fast buck from fandom often overwhelms a would-be fan. Fortunately, the same insight that enables a true fan to recognize artwork also helps him to spot a money-grabbing phony. Like ants at a picnic, they'll always be around.

I like the ROCKET'S BLAST; and I'm aware that many fans don't, and why they don't. Ads and adzines are informative; limited publications are bound to be expensive. When a professional magazine really starts moving, they stop selling the magazine, and start selling advertising space. This enables them to increase quality, and keep the price of the publication nominal. Fanzines rarely, if ever, have a circulation high enough to afford this advantage. However, the ROCKET'S BLAST could improve by incorporating its "specials" into the regular publications, and featuring the ads on a "pull-out" section, ala ERB-dom/FANTASY COLLECTOR. But, that's just another opinion.

Fandom is overwhelming; it adds to what is already a "throw-away" medium. You can't embrace it all, even if you were able to buy and store everything. Many fans sell out, and get out; because they feel that they don't have the time or money to keep up with everything. Actually, it's just time for them to start specializing. And one of the most popular forms of specialization is to become aligned with (and concentrate on) your favorite fanzine.

Or possibly, the secret of not taking a financial beating is simply not to buy or send for anything you don't really want.

What's the one thing in a 'zine that can just ruin it for you?

Aside from the 'zine that doesn't get published after all, the "rush job" is my pet hate. Often it is obvious that a few "fans" have pooled some purloined artwork and surrounded it with unrelated or just plain unintelligent articles. They'd have done much better to contribute to an existing publication, or issued prints and posters. But, they're anxious to see their names in print, or to become a "name" in fandom. They get a name alright but we can't print it here.

Would you ever like to publish a fanzine yourself someday?

No. I'm quite content to let someone else endure the slings and arrows of outraged fandom.

And lastly, what type of stories do you like to write best?

Dirty. No. I'd like to be able to write fantasy, or more exactly, heroic-fantasy. Stories wherein "all men are mighty, and all women beautiful". It is the purist form of escape-entertainment, and the finest example of the highly communicative, story-telling desire that is a vital part of the human psyche.

to my very good
friend —
GARY GROTH
with all best wishes
BERNI WRIGHTSON
'70



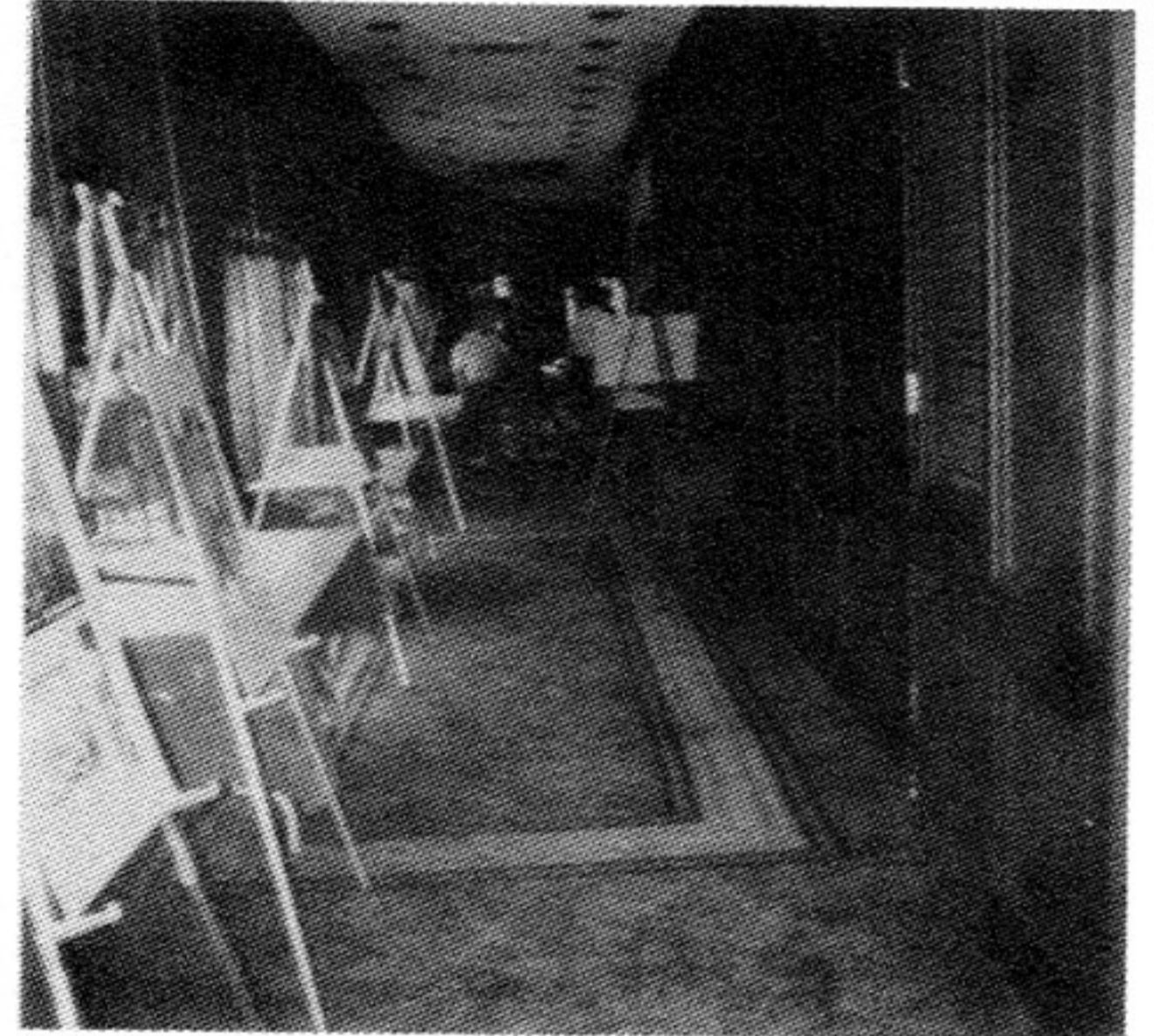
A RUSHED & BELATED REPORT ON
THE 1970 METRO
COMICON
by Bill Cantey

Beginning Saturday, August 21st, the convention appeared, to this inexperienced fan, to be well laid out. The registration desk and the entrance to the convention floor was directly off the second floor lobby of the Crystal City Marriott Hotel. And a plush scene it was. Heavy carpeting and a more-than-needed number of comfortable chairs with convenient tables (for perusing portfolios and such) made crowding unnecessary so that the opening was managed smoothly and quietly. The corridor, which had been transformed into a gallery of original, comic oriented artwork, was flanked on one side by a wall of clear glass admitting daylight, and on the other by entrances to the Luncheon area, dealers room, and auditorium. A tour down the alleyway of talent would've impressed any visitor with the quality of artwork that exists within the comic book industry. A good idea might have been to allow interested outsiders (and there were plenty) to have a quick look at displayed paintings and panels; a great way to win converts, if it could be arranged.

Well represented was the electrifying style of John Fantucchio's fantastic talent; his pulsating paintings crackled with color. The collection included a large portrait of John's mystery character. Larger than life-size perhaps, but who knows? Maybe he's a giant. On tables, under clear plastic, were full-size pages of original comic art. Several pages of Sal Buscema's precise pencilling was the neatest, tightest example of un-inked artwork that this fan has ever seen. The effect was much more memorable than the finished product which appears on the newstands. No one who's seen such an exhibit would be likely to consider comics a mechanized "non-art" again; the lively touch of human talent is much too evident. Additions were made to the exhibit as the convention progressed. Also presented was the entire original artwork for Berni Wrightson's "Feed It" which appeared in WEB OF HORROR # 3. The cover painting from that same issue graced a nearby easel. Sadly, a beautiful Wrightson illustration was stolen. It was a pen line drawing of a carefully rendered fantasy scene. The setting was mountainous; in the foreground were three amazons wearing little more than their weapons. A Burroughs-type "lost city" is seen in the background. As far as I know, the drawing was unpublished. Further down the hall, Mike Kaluta's talent was in evidence, as was Steve Hickman's. At the end of the hall was a huge painting by Steve. A space scene of rockets and planets; with sun-bursts and star-shines creating beautiful effects of light and color across a canvas over six feet square! Nobody stole that!

Jim Baldwin, my cousin (also from Charleston) joined me about that time. And after a quick look into the dealers' room, the convention activities began with Sal Buscema's keynote speech. Sal, with other visiting pros would fill in for the absent guest of honor, Neal Adams. But, a Neal Adams interview was featured in the convention program booklet; so he was very much there, in spirit.

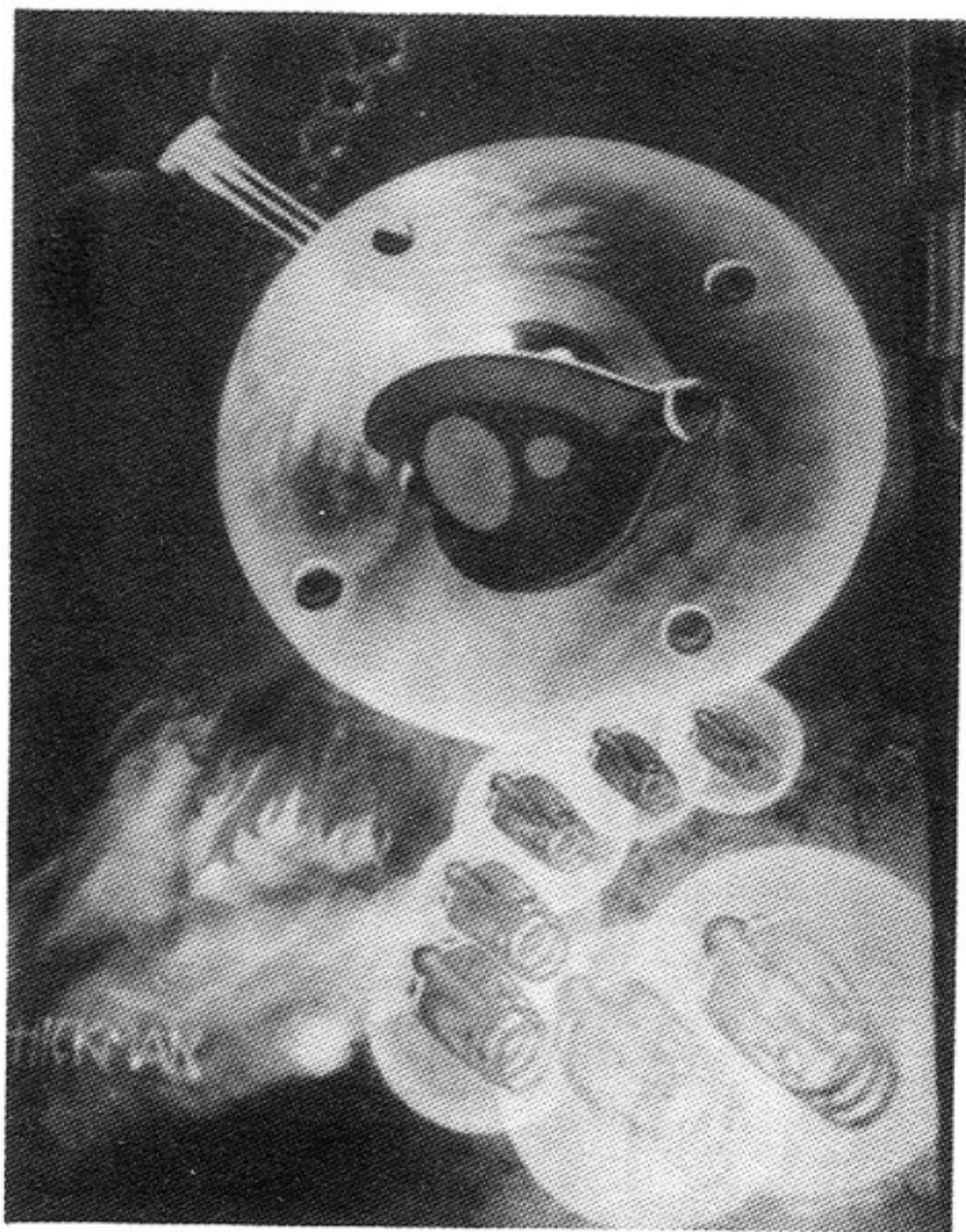
Sal Buscema's speech was well delivered. He spoke on the need to improve the image of the "lowly" comic book in the eyes of the general public; and the hope of doing so in the future, via upgrading comics in general, the encouragement of a growing fandom, and the purposeful formation of The Academy of Comic Book Arts. Sal himself is an excellent image of the comic book industry. He is a fine artist who could easily "graduate" into a more socially accepted form of commercial art. But, he believes in the graphic story as an artform as well as a highly specialized method of story-telling. Questions and comments followed to a preview of what was to be a highly communicative convention; due, in large part, to the outgoing personality of Sal Buscema with his gift of gab and genuine fondness for people.



This photo of a part of the exhibit hall was taken early Saturday morning, before registration began.



Sal Buscema, giving Keynote Speech



This Black & White photo doesn't do justice to Steve Hickman's beautiful SPACE MURAL!

The Sunday Luncheon had already been cancelled, but Saturday's was on. Seated at the high table were Marv Wolfman, Berni Wrightson, and Mike Kaluta. Later, I would learn that I'd been sitting at a table with Steve Hickman. Like many talented people, Steve is quiet and unassuming. If I'd painted the explosive canvas on display, I'd have carried a sign proclaiming, "I'm Steve Hickman!" The Luncheon was a highly enjoyable event. Wolfman has a talent for off-the-cuff speaking which rivaled the fluency of Sal Buscema. Comments and discussion questions were fast and numerous. Marv Wolfman vouchsafed information on new ideas forthcoming from D.C., which have since become reality and/or history. Wrightson and Kaluta, close friends, spoke on pet projects and past triumphs. I can't recall all that was said, but several items made an impression even in my thick skull. Given a free hand, Mike Kaluta would like to illustrate fairy tales. Which sounds pretty dull unless you've read some of the macabre gems from the brothers Grimm; "The Snow Queen" being an excellent example. His suggested approach to graphic heroic-fantasy was a novel idea; his hero would be a powerful, hunchbacked dwarf, who allows his tall, handsome partner to take all the bows. Why? Because it's good for

business, dragon killing or whatever. Mike is a fan of writer/artist Wallace Wood. Among the publications mentioned were the fanzines, THIS IS LEGEND and ABYSS. Both feature work by Wrightson and Kaluta. Since all three guests are enthusiastic fans of their chosen profession, and enthusiasm is contagious, we very nearly got involved in Sword & Sorcery, which was to be the subject of a scheduled panel discussion later. But time was up, and we had to get out.

After the luncheon, Jim and I had the extreme good fortune to engage artist Bob Kline in a private conversation. Bob looks more like a college fullback than the master of the fine line. At my urging, the friendly fullback unlimbered his portfolio and treated us to a close-up view of some really great artwork. I'd seen some of Bob's work in fanzines, but reproductions don't do him justice. The effect of his halftones and the quality of his colors are more than professional. He was justly proud of a Conan illustration, a scene from QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST. Bob had involved two forms and sources of light, torchlight and moonlight. This illustration had already been printed in ANOMALY, and has since been more successfully re-presented as a poster. But, the original picture *glows*; light seems to come out of the illustration. Unless the attitude of comic books changes even more, Bob might do well to go into magazine illustration and cover painting. He even had the illustration he drew for my "Ka-Zar" story in FANTASTIC FANZINE # 11. But not for long; I've got it now. The talk with Bob Kline, and the procurement of that illustration was, for me, the high point of the convention.

Sal Buscema's chalk-talk amazed me. How anyone could draw anything under such difficult conditions is beyond me. But, he drew three large illustrations, and seemed to enjoy his task as much as his audience. Sketching lightly in pencil, and finishing with a black marking tool, Sal executed full length renderings of the Hulk (his favorite character) and the Silver Surfer. Then changing his method, he drew a larger-than-life head, and shoulders shot of The Mighty Thor. The Thor illo was the best and brought a high price at the Sunday auction.

I attended the auctions out of curiosity since I was allowing myself the expense of the trip only. Still, I couldn't resist buying a Cockrum drawing at a near

giveaway bid. Other than that, I just sat there and silently cried while a Conan illustration by Wrightson, a Mr. "A" drawing by Ditko, a Sub-Mariner painting by Fantucchio, and the Sal Buscema posters went for very high prices. Active in the bidding was Martin Greim, editor of COMIC CRUSADER. His bid took the unpublished Wrightson, and later, the chalk talk Thor.

There was time between events to check the dealers room. Although it wasn't as large or complete as I'd hoped, I managed to pick up several fan publications and close some gaps in my comics collection. Two notable items were on sale; the remainderd Buck Rogers hardback and the soft cover, STERANKO'S HISTORY OF COMICS. Fantastic Fanzine Enterprises [Now Fantasy Graphics] offered several fine posters (some free) which were great souvenirs for the --ah-- less affluent fan. And for those who had the money, very old comics and sort-after trivia were on sale.

The Film Showing was a complete washout. A few silent movies were being shown when the projector broke down! And everyone retired to their rooms to read STERANKO'S HISTORY OF COMICS, to sleep, or whatever.

Next morning began the postponed panel on Sword & Sorcery in Comics. By now the convention Program was just another souvenir, albeit a valued one. The panel positions were well filled by Dave Cockrum, Bob Kline, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, and Steve Hickman. Their remarks were far too numerous for complete recollection. But mostly the discussion concerned the possibility and problems of presenting sword & sorcery in the then existing line of Code restricted comics. The problem, of course, is that most sword & sorcery involves a great deal of bloody, flesh-rending action as well as an abundance of naked females; and the Code condemns both nudity and violent action. Big Dave Cockrum looked very much like a character from the world of heroic-fantasy with his longish blonde hair and full beard. Had he been holding a broadsword across his knees, it would not have seemed out of place. Dave judged the success of real sword & sorcery by Marvel or D.C. a remote possibility. Of course since then, the Code has loosened up a little, Marvel has brought out SAVAGE TALES, and Dave has gone to work for Warren Publications. (If you missed his artwork in VAMPIRELLA # 11, you missed a sword-swining good one). Kline said that



Left to right: Marvin Wolfman, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta at Banquet Luncheon.



Panel: *Sword & Sorcery In Comics*. Panel members, from left to right: Bob Kline, Dave Cockrum, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Steve Hickman.



it couldn't be done, not under the present restrictions. Wrightson felt it might be done, via the "suggested" illustration. Sword & sorcery being a shadowy world, the action could take place in a darkened area or even "off-camera;" with nudity handled in the same fashion, suggested -- not shown. Berni's Nightmaster renderings had been very recent, and he seemed satisfied with the basic idea. Nightmaster, you may recall, had an earth-bound alter-ego in the form of a rock singer. Wrightson hardly endorsed the idea, expressing disappointment that it hadn't succeeded.

even without this most recent triumph, Wood's then latest efforts were applauded by the entire panel. Hickman claimed that sword & sorcery was not a good choice of material for comics since he felt that the only real sources of sword & sorcery adventures was the highly limited works of Robert E. Howard. (Hmmm -- what about John Jakes, Fritz Leiber, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp --?) Anyway, Steve applauded the general use of science fiction and fantasy in comics; especially mentioning Ditko's Dr. Strange with its fantastic exploitation of planes, dimensions and fantastic graphic techniques. Perhaps suggesting that comics should offer those unique effects that no other medium can manage without a great deal of expense. As we now see, sword & sorcery is being tried (or re-tried), and I hope it'll be the biggest success in the comic book industry since Superman.

vention. Berni Wrightson stayed until the bitter end, assisting in the auctioneering and maintaining the high degree of enthusiasm that prevailed throughout the entire convention. Berni Wrightson, still a fan as well as one of the finest talents in the business.

Personally, I preferred the situation in "--And In A Far-Off Land" (WITCHING HOUR # 3) wherein a life-imprisoned convict was drawn by magic into a bizarre world of fantasy adventure. It was an early Wrightson effort that preceded the milder Nightmaster. Kaluta remade his suggestion for a non-serious approach with his distorted dwarf idea. Which reminded the panel of some recent Wallace Wood contributions. At that time, Mike's ideal had already made some comparatively bold efforts to combine sword & sorcery with the graphic story. TOWER OF SHADOWS numbers 5, 6, and 7 contain some of Wood's best, recent work for Marvel. Those stories, "Flight Into Fear," "The Ghost-Beast," and "Of Swords And Sorcery," were written and drawn by Wood. They stand as more than fair indications of how good fantasy-adventure in comics could be if graphic creators like Wallace Wood might be allowed to produce, unfettered. The more recent "War Of The Wizards" in VAMPIRELLA # 10 being a refreshing sample. However,

"Comic Books, Past, Present, & Future" was a fine lecture, complete with placards, delivered by John Fantuccio. Comic Book History was cut to the bone; which still left a lot to cover. A staggering amount of material must have been researched to prepare the capsule report of over twenty-five years of comics. A very interesting and relevant report. Immediately afterwards, a panel of visiting pros batted questions and answers back and forth with anyone who wanted to suggest, predict, or speculate on the future of comics. The pros were most interested in how the fans thought the Code should be changed. Which is actually a very tatty question. It is extremely difficult to attack the Code without attacking morality itself. And creative-expression privileges have too often been abused by the mongers of gross sensationalism. (Well drawn gross sensationalism might not be too bad; but the two seldom go hand-in-hand. Usually it's bad all the way around). However, the really talented artists/writers in the business will not prostitute their talents in base directions. (E.C.'s artists often passed up assignments they thought were too rough). I'm for "bonding" the recognized and respected comic creators, then giving them a free rein. No Code; just an honor system underwriting personal integrity.

All things considered, I judged the convention a success. True, some things that were supposed to happen, didn't. But enough unscheduled incidents filled the void and pros aplenty abounded. The location was ideal, the company was the best.

In closing, I encourage all interested fans to check COMIC CRUSADER # 10 for a more concise report of the '70 Metrocon. Although I've not seen Martin Greim's convention coverage issue as of this date, I'm sure it's superior to mine. This was my first convention, and so, my first report.



FF's staff fallback - Bob Kline!

I missed the art contest, but cousin Jim had an entry picked and won third prize, a Kline drawing of Nick Fury, the original of the print that appeared in FANTASTIC FANZINE # 11.

We left before the end of the final auction and the official close of the con-



About one-fifth of the dealers room.

FANTASTIC FANZINE
FEATURES FANDOM'S

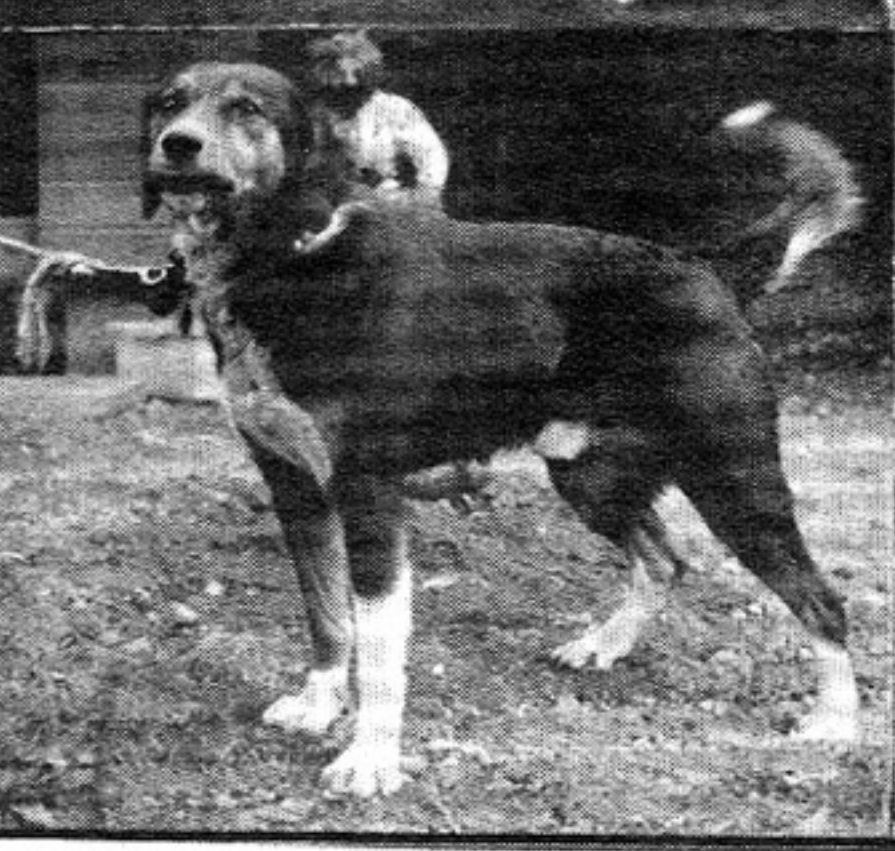
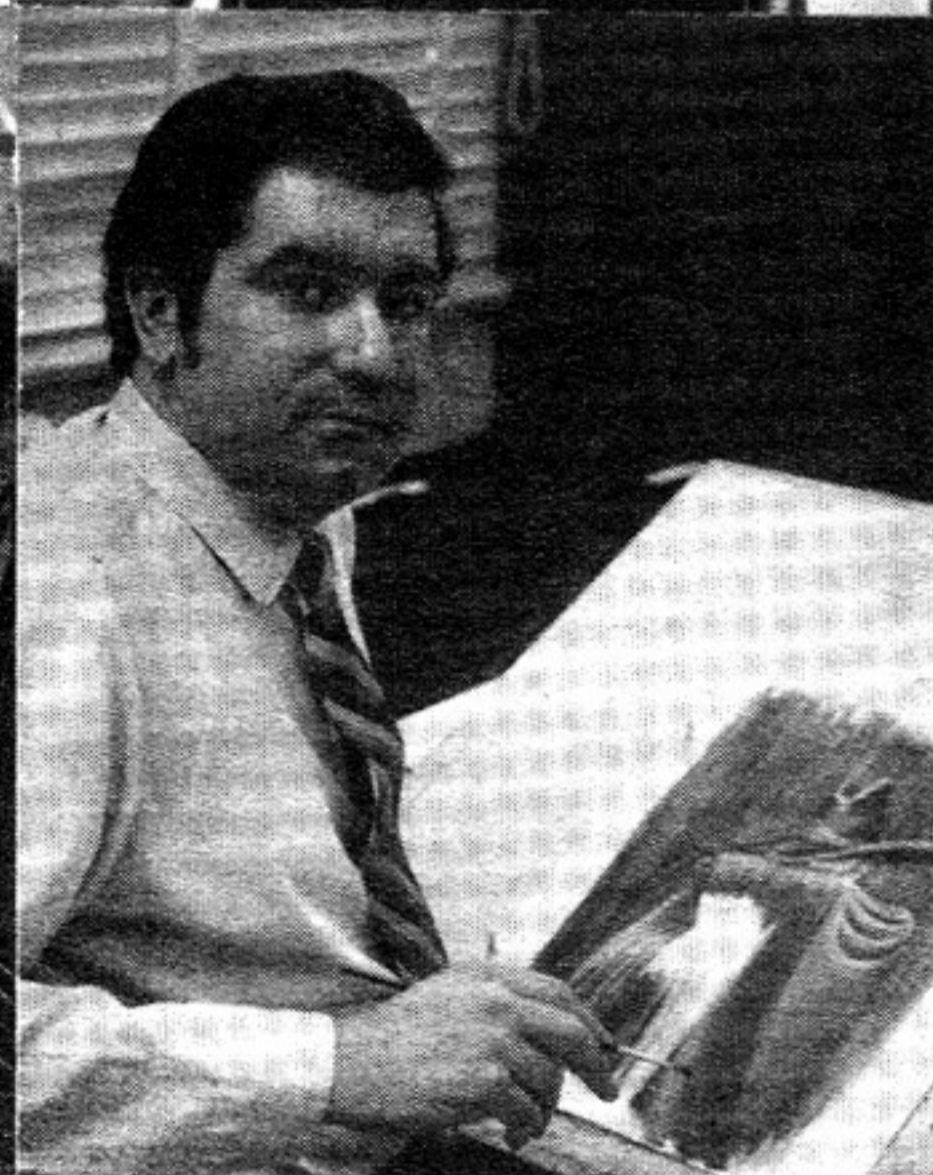
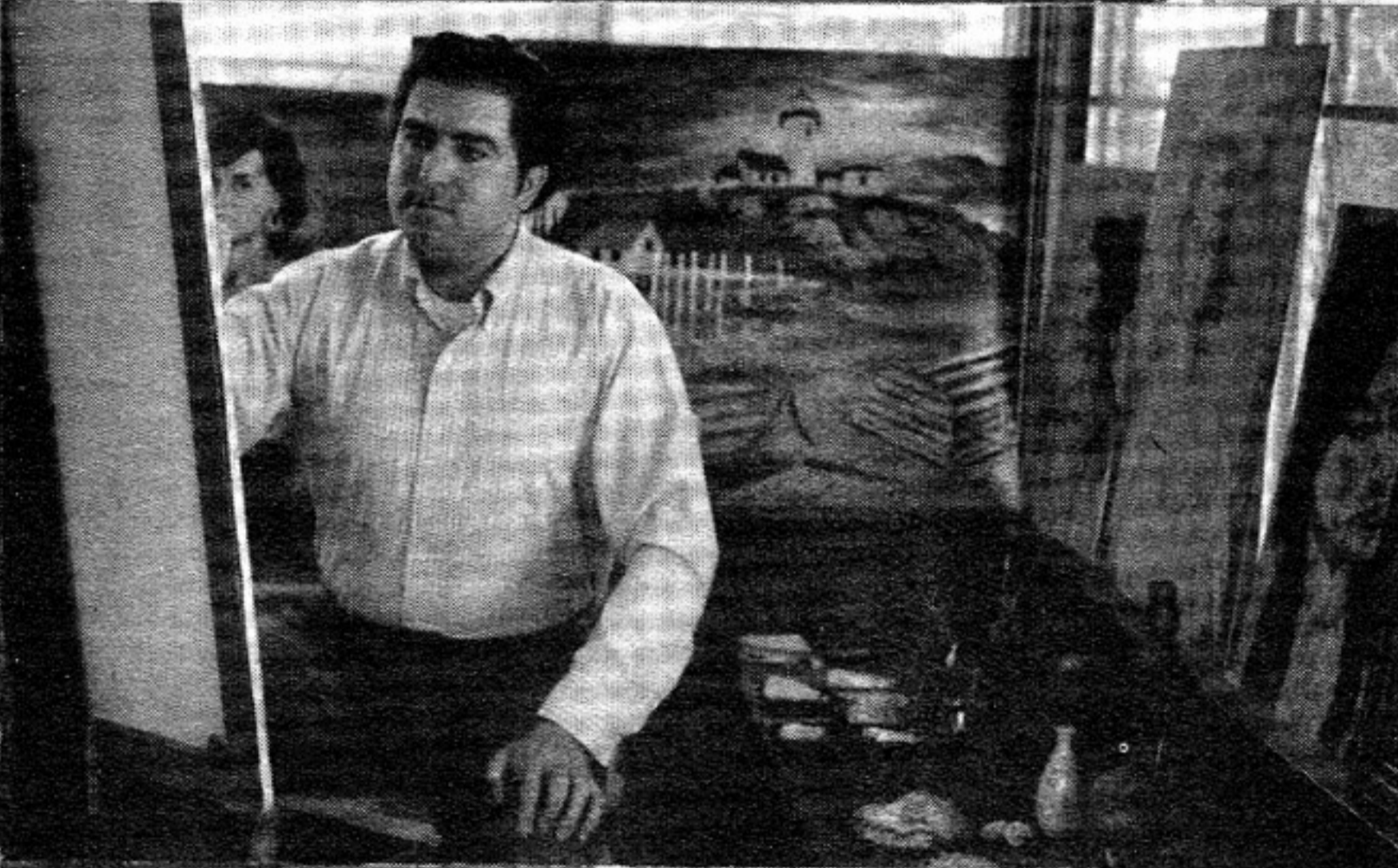
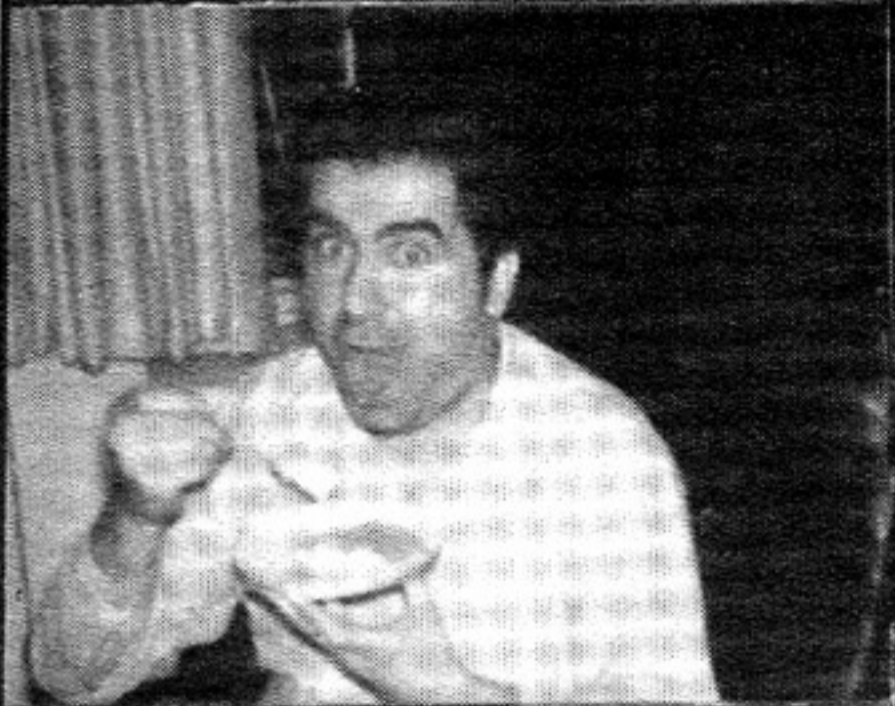
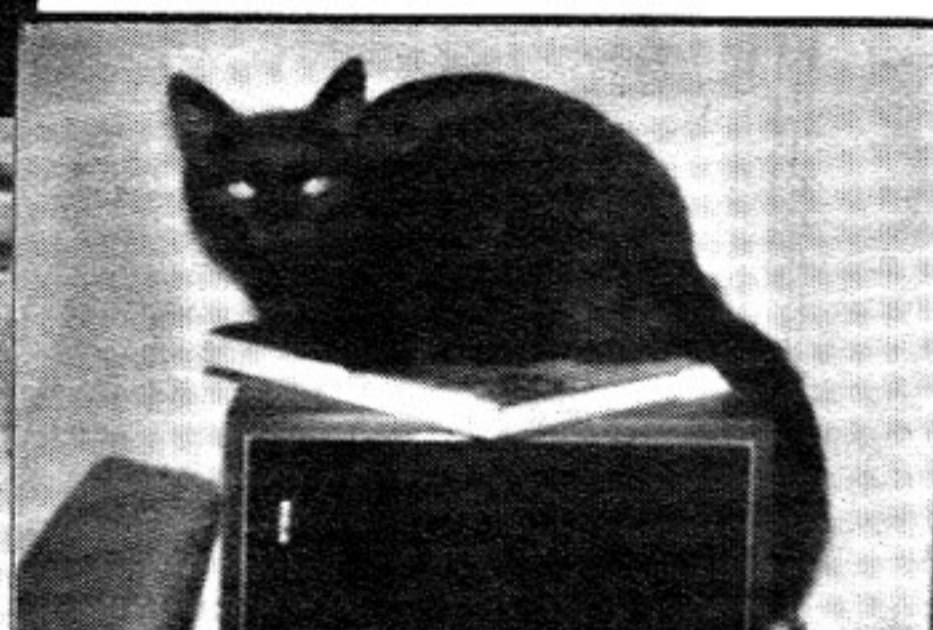
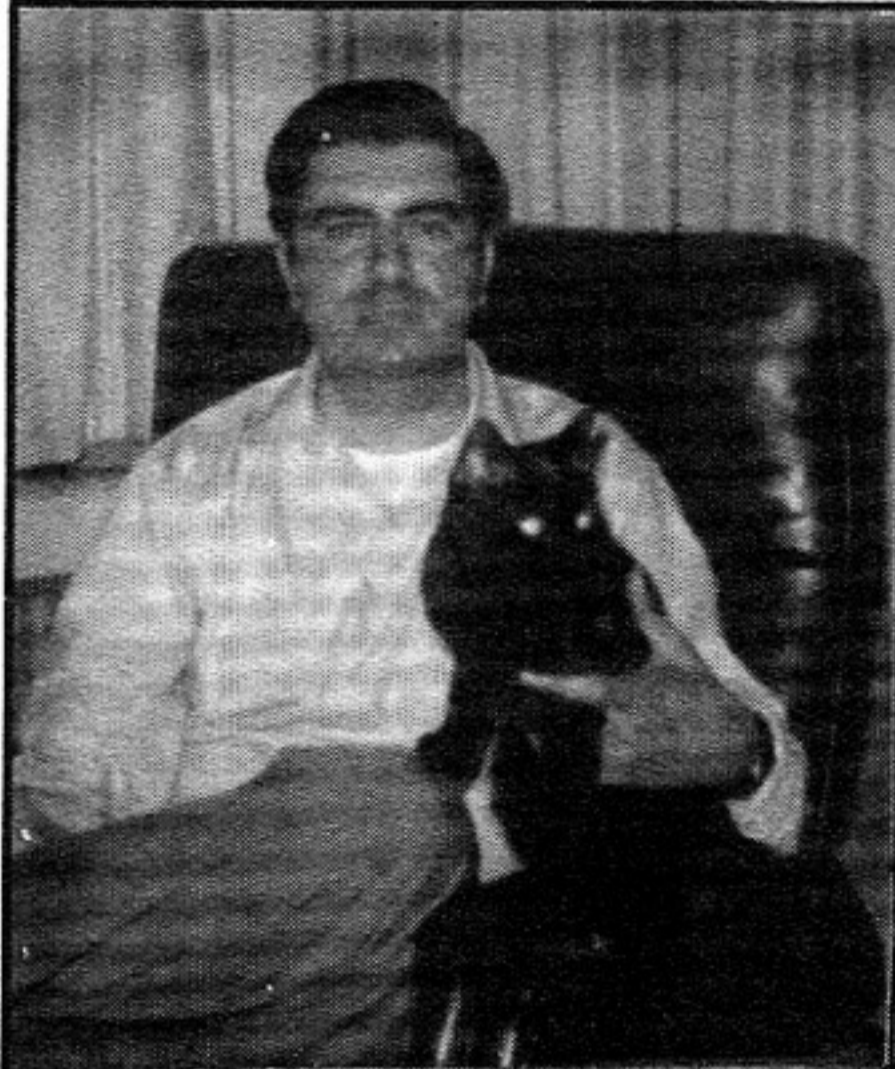
FANTUCCHIO



WELCOME TO THE COMIC FANDOM WORLD OF
JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO ! I'M YOUR HOSTESS,
THIRTEEN. IN THE PAGES TO FOLLOW YOU WILL
VISIT THE FANTUCCHIOS, BEHOLD A GALLERY OF
PAINTINGS, AND PERHAPS WITNESS A HINT OF
PHANTOMS TO MATERIALIZE...

Mr. & Mrs.

at home



We would enjoy hearing from you. John & Mary



Hogarth



WELL, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT A 400 YEAR OLD LEGEND TO LOOK LIKE ?