



Fantastic Fanzine Special

Address all letters to: FANTAGRAPHICS' FAN-MAIL, Gary Groth, editor, 7263 Evanston Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150.

PAUL REW
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I was very much impressed by FF 13. While it was not the Quantum jump in quality number 11 was over number 10, it at least maintained your high standard of quality. And to be able to maintain high quality, is in my opinion, much more important. Not that I don't think improvement is good, but anyone could have a fluke issue while a steady flow of quality is very important, and much more difficult.

I am also impressed by the fact that the larger percentage of your art is by amateurs or semi-pros like Fantucchio. I didn't have to look at page after page of semi-rendered pro work at exorbitant prices. I think that these art-zines which have sprung up everywhere are a bit tiresome. Of course, editing a bunch of drawings can't be very difficult.

Getting down to specifics I must say that Purcell's interview was the highlight of the issue. It was the finest interview I have read in quite awhile. And the graphics by Fantucchio were superb. I find some of his methods to be a bit jarring,

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RUDI FRANKE 2-16-71

FANTASTIC FANZINE SPECIAL II

VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 2 • FEBRUARY 1972

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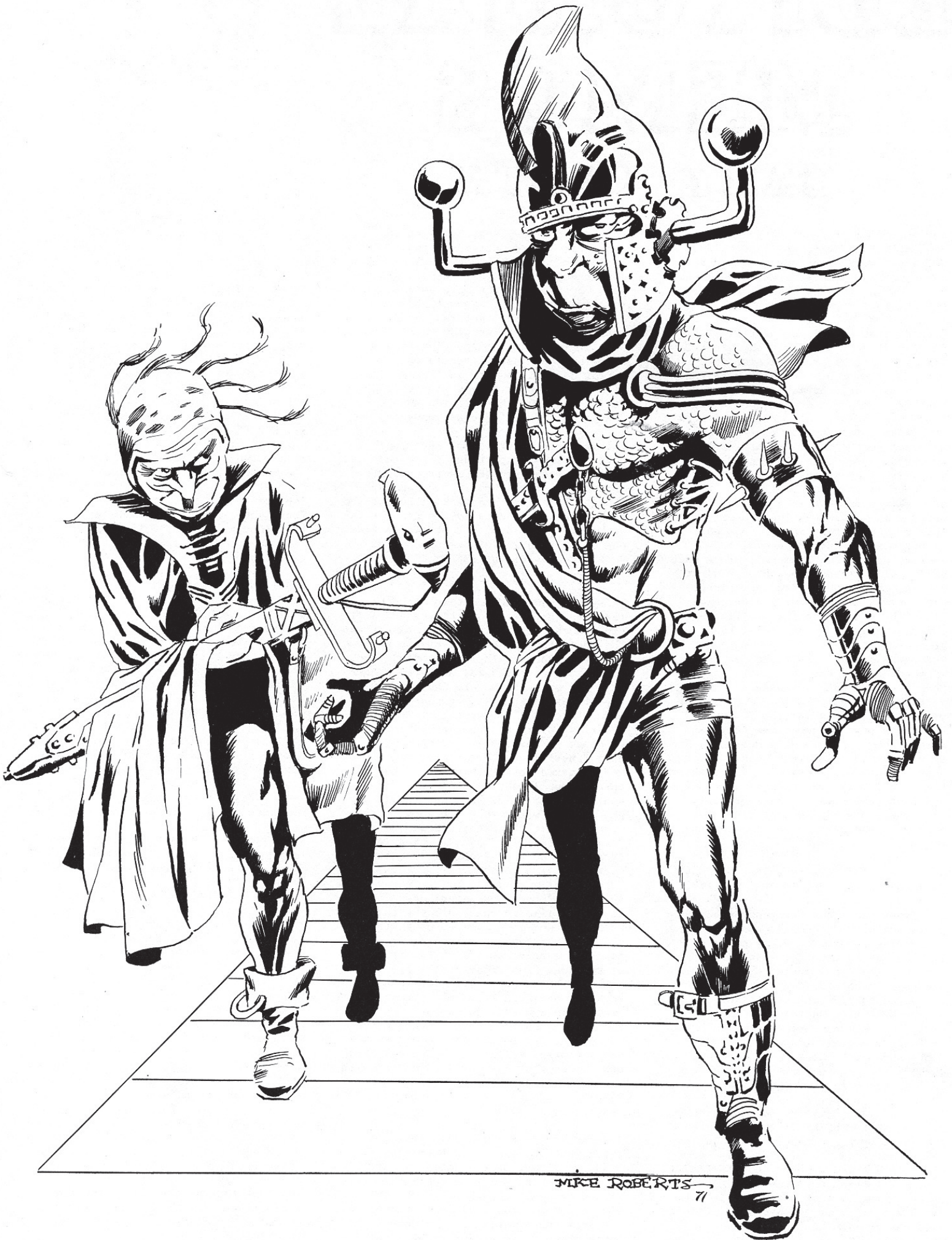
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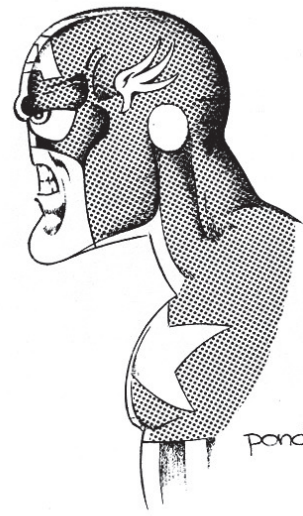
Artists featured this issue: Dave Cockrum, Rudi Franke, Mike Roberts, Robert L. Kline, Dennis Fujitake, H.D. Harwood, Jay Mike, Berni Wrightson, M.Y. Starkey, John Adkins Richardson, Vincent Marchesano, Carter Scholz, Robert Hugel, Joe Sinnot, John G. Fantucchio, Jim Steranko, Howard Purcell, Barry Smith, Donald Wong, Kenneth Smith, Gary Kato.



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EDITORIAL MEMOS

GARY GROTH



The editorial space of each issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is the last thing I do. After working hundreds of hours, many months, on this issue, I'm almost at a loss as to what to say. But, of course, that's never stopped me before.

I think that this issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is a particularly significant one. Its historical importance is obvious. When a History of Comics Fandom is written, the mammoth report on the 1971 Comic Art Convention in this issue will help chronicle our fandom. It's also quite obvious that a lot of work has gone into the report. Jeffrey Wasserman deserves all the credit for compiling each individual report, an enormous job and one that I didn't want to tackle. Jeff got many of the finest writers in fandom together to write this report; Martin Pasko, Carl Gafford, Alan Brennert, Carter Scholz, and of course, he and Bob Zimmerman wrote much of it. Bill Cantey came through with, not one, but two reports in a pinch. With photos taken by Martin Berkenwald, Mike Catron and myself (totalling over 150 photographs of the con) I had a great selection to choose from. Dave Cockrum and Dennis Fujitake did drawings especially for the report (note Dave's humor strip on page 24). And Berni Wrightson... Take a look at that masterpiece decorating the EC Panel Report on page 38. With the heaviest work schedule he's had in years, he did this drawing for a tight deadline. There's just not enough I can say about him or his work. Thanks again, Berni! And then, Phil Seuling is thoroughly dissected in a 6-page interview that acts as a prologue to the convention report.

And if you think we're going to do it again next year, you're crazy!

I believe there's a new fanzine being published with the sole purpose of presenting reports of every comic convention in the country. That, plus the fact that FF's new publisher, Alan Light, will be offering a three record set of convention activities and a Memory Book with photos and transcriptions, has given me reason enough not to feature another lengthy New York Comicon report. Thank God! Jeff said he doesn't want another nervous breakdown 'til he recovers from this first one.

As all of you probably know, this issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is the first to be published by Alan Light's Dynapubs. I think that this is the first time something like this has been done in fandom, and I think this publishing-change-over will be to your advantage as well as to mine. For me, Dynapubs' taking over the publishing and distribution of FF will save me countless hours of book-

keeping, mailing, keeping files and cross-files, and most important, I won't be losing money on FF any longer, which was perhaps the biggest burden. Dynapubs' printer is much more reasonable than my own, and because of this, FF can contain many extra features in future issues, including interior color. Though Alan is in charge of publishing and distribution, I still retain total editorial control, and am in charge of all of FF's contents. Please send your LOC's to me, and your subscription money, Change of Address's, etc. to Dynapubs.

This issue's cover is the long-awaited Dave Cockrum wrap-around piece that has been squeezed off the cover spot twice already! It's printed in two colors, though all future covers will be printed full color. Incidentally, this cover was drawn two years ago, but still ranks as one of my favorite pieces of Dave's work. Thanks for putting up with the delays, Dave.

This issue does not contain three of the features that were advertised, and I'll explain why here. First and foremost was the space factor. Several of the planned features ran over their estimated page count, and as a result, squeezed others out. The strip by Howard Chaykin may appear next issue, as negotiations with Howard are still in progress. The page of interior color was substituted for a piece of professional work that will appear next issue. Metro Con Highlights was squeezed out of this issue, but may appear soon in a new publication from FANTAGRAPHICS. ["Highlights," meaning photographs with transcriptions of the Keynote Speech by Denny O'Neil and the "Writers of Comics" panel, which was said by many to be the finest comics panel ever done at a comicon.

Speaking of the Washington Comic Convention, I'd like to thank all the people that came and made it a success. To Frank and Ellie Frazetta for rushing down late Saturday evening to attend the second day of the con. Frank moderated a special seminar the second day, which took place in his exhibition room, which housed over twenty of his beautiful paintings. Unfortunately no recording of this event was taken. And to Len Wien and Marv Wolfman and Berni Wrightson -- and all the other pros who came down and helped with the activities. [An interview with Denny O'Neil, conducted at the convention, will appear next issue].

In the reprint section this issue, I attempted to present the best artwork from the older, itek-printed issues of FF, in which much of the detail and fine line work was lost. Three of the drawings are reprinted from last issue because of the poor reproduction they received. Barry Smith's Silver Surfer page has

never been published in an issue of FF, even though an 11" x 14" poster of it had been made some time ago. I should mention that this is an older piece of work, certainly not representative of what Barry does now, but still, in my opinion, a very fine piece of artwork.

Jim Wilson will become a regular columnist beginning with the next issue of FF. His FF Control satire this issue is a little different from most fan satires, to say the least, and your opinions on it are wanted. His column, *Highest Castle, Deepest Grave*, will begin next issue as a replacement of Tony Isabella's *Windmills*. Tony Isabella will not have any more work published in FANTASTIC FANZINE because of personal problems that have developed between us.

Donald Wong debuts this issue, with a fine piece of humor-art on page 81. Don will be a regular contributor. Vincent Marchesano helped me out in a pinch, and did an illustration for Bill Cantey's short story this issue, and will have much more work in next issue. Vincent's "pocketzines" advertised in *The Buyer's Guide* contain a lot of his own strip-work, and even though the books are very small and the strip-work reduced quite a bit, they contain some of Vincent's best work and shouldn't be passed up. Wayne Pond does some outrageous superhero caricatures (note above) and some very nice, serious wash work, which will be presented in future issues.

I'd like to digress from further comments on the 'zine for a couple minutes and bring up something that's been bothering me for awhile. I've heard reports to the effect that Mark Hanerfeld has resigned from National, sold all his comics and has generally left comic fandom altogether. I hope that these are just exaggerated reports (I haven't checked them out yet) because, as anyone who knows Mark will attest, Mark is one of the nicest people in the business, and one of the comics' staunchest supporters. Mark actually saved the '71 Metro Con from being a total financial wipe-out by bringing quite a few pieces of original artwork down to be sold at the auctions. If this is true, I can only wish Mark all the success for the future.

Next issue will sport a full color cover by the master of the mysterious -- BERNI WRIGHTSON! There will be interior color, interviews with Denny O'Neil and Dan Adkins, artwork and articles by FF's regular line-up of super-talented artists and writers. And there will be a letters column, so please write and give me your thoughts on this issue.

SO, YOU'RE DAVID BERG?

Yeah, that's about what I said to him. In the past I might have gushed a little and asked him to autograph my arm, but these days I'm a pro too! Yeah, that's what I said to him, just before I gushed and asked him to autograph my arm.

Pro or no pro -- I'm still a fan at heart and the sight of David Berg enjoying his first comic convention (NY Circa 1969) was all I needed to tag behind him. I spotted him signing papers and shaking hands outside of an elevator at the Statler Hilton. He was flanked by two charming young pre-teens (although his daughter insisted she was 13) and a look of despair on his face.

"Wow, I never realized that so many people knew me!"

Surely he knew his fame amongst MAD readers, but I don't think he realized that organized fandom revered its honored guests in splashy, affectionate greetings of ooohs and ahhs.

The subject of the esteem of some artists were held came up when we saw a fan pay fifty dollars for a Kirby original. This brought up the discussion of the price of talent and another delightful sidelight of organized fandom -- the splashy, affectionate display of money.

In the corner of the dealer hall was our good friend Ed April. Ed had a sizeable amount of original artwork for sale and one piece caught David's eyes -- a splash page from his very own COMBAT KELLY. I saw that glow on his face and tried to lead him in the other direction. He stood his ground, unhooked his arm from mine and was off to the races with April:

"Say, isn't that a page of COMBAT KELLY by David Berg?" says David Berg.

"Who?" mumbled Ed April.

"That must be worth a few bucks!"

"Who?" mumbled Ed April.

"What would something like that cost me?" slyly smiles Mr. Berg.

"It's yours for a five spot," says our good friend Ed April.

I braced David as I felt him tense up his muscles and start to fall backwards. His mouth moved up and down, but so sound was made.

"Kirby -- \$50 ... Berg -- \$5 ... \$5??" he finally mumbled.

About this time I noticed a slender gentlemen pushing through the crowd towards us. He was dressed casually enough and I figured him for a Larry Ivie type who wanted to talk shop with Berg. It turned out to be Bill Everett who just wanted to say hello and tell Berg what a pleasure it was working with him in the past. Dave couldn't remember Everett's name so I whispered to him that he was the creator of the Sub Mariner (a subtle hint to jog

that fantastic Berg memory into action).

"Good to see you Mr. Mariner, it's been a long time."

It was finally determined that Dave hired Bill years ago and this was the first time they've seen each other in ages. As a matter of fact it was the first time Berg had seen anyone in years.

I picked up a Captain Marvel tie clip for my newest son (it was just going to be a case of father like son for my young-un or I'd surely trade him to Phil Seuling for an early copy of BATMAN.) Mr. Berg chuckled and let me in on a bit of information I was never aware of -- he told me he posed for C. C. Beck and in reality (comic book reality) I was standing next to the good Captain Marvel. Berg, a handsome strong faced man for his years did very well conjure up visions of Captain Marvel in my mind. I could readily see the resemblance and was in awe for the rest of the night.

We went to have dinner in the hotel restaurant. The table next to us was occupied by visiting tourists from Germany and France. His button cute daughter struck up a conversation with one of the younger Claude Killy types and I learned a very interesting fact about David Berg -- he has learned to say, "I am David Berg -- I draw for MAD MAGAZINE" in seven different languages. He stopped mid meal to shake hands and sign autographs, menus, napkins, and one check that wasn't ours.

Forget it, my friends, you can have all the original David Berg art you can carry at five bucks a shot, with my blessing. Remember that the talent and essence of the Berg artistic and personal beauty is beyond the scale of any amount of money.

Mr. Berg, your value as a friend is most surely worth more than all your artwork; and I've got just one word for Mr. Ed April:

"Who?"





THE J.S. STRNAD HANDY REFERENCE GUIDE TO FOILING THE P.O.

Written by **JAN STRNAD**

Illustrated by **ROBERT KLINE**

I suppose it's normal for Kansas to have more than its share of postal difficulties, having only recently been forced to abandon the time-honored Pony Express System when our final horse was struck down by an International Harvester somewhere along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, but all the same it's a little depressing at times.

The change wasn't an easy one for us to make. Many carriers had grown fond of the scent of horse's sweat on all incoming and outgoing mail, and I'll admit I had been looking forward to it as something of a distinguishing characteristic for my magazine. I even had a small ad campaign worked out along those lines: "Buy ANOMALY -- The Fanzine With A Flavor All Its Own!". But once the postmaster learned of the many advantages a machine-operated office provided, there was no stopping Kansas from going modern.

For one thing, the machines could mangle mail nearly five times faster than any

mere human. No human limb could hope to compete with arms of steel. A private contest of clerks was organized to prove the machine's superiority, and though many strongly thewed youth turned out to challenge the "new-fangled contraption" none succeeded in felling the metal newcomer. I recall one particularly well-muscled black lad, recruited by his fellows especially for the task who immediately won the heart of the crowd when he vacated his post at the stockyards to "make junk outta 'dat piece 'o tin". Employed weekdays to bludgeon cattle with an oversized sledgehammer, the boy walked up to the new machine with the blood still wet on his coveralls. He stood like a pagan god above the sacrificial altar and looked the gadget straight in the electric eye; a tight smile played itself slowly across his mouth. Two conveyor belts ground into action and packages of a hundred sizes and shapes headed toward each contestant. Huge black arms shot out and massive hands like vises locked the first package in their grip. The muscles in his arms

tightened into rock-hard consistency and the package crumbled under the pressure. As the collapsed remains were carried away by the conveyor, the youth's eyes were already summing up the next object, a long narrow package nearly two inches thick. With the edge of his hand he slashed the victim through the center and then folded it double, slashed again, and folded it once more before unwillingly letting it pass on -- there was obviously more he would like to have done were speed not a deciding factor. The third package came into reach; a small box, only four inches to a side but of oak nearly an inch thick, nailed, glued, and dovetailed. The giant only grinned, placed the box atop his bicep and brought his forearm down upon it with a crash. The box splintered into a hundred pieces. The crowd roared and hurriedly gathered the shards of wood as souvenirs. The lad continued, smashing, crushing, destroying all. Like a modern John Henry he fought, but, alas, to no avail. At the end of the given time, the machine had piled a stack of debris clearly four

times the height of the boy's, and though it was unanimously agreed that the youth had annihilated his packages with an admirable degree of variety and finesse, the machine had indeed performed with unequalled speed and was well worth installing in the main post office. The postmaster hummed to himself.

A second advantage the machines offered was in delivery. A man on a horse generally knew where he was supposed to go and would invariably have numerous tales to tell at each stop and could hear all about what to expect along the rest of the way. In this way, the rider was prepared for where he was going, the post office clerk who handed him his mail load knew he had the proper rider going the proper place, and quite often even the horse knew which way to head should some misfortune befall the rider. Chances to misroute mail were pitifully scarce. Under the new system, the mail was handed from the post office clerk to the carrier who drove it to the airport where it was handed over to airport personnel who tossed it on the nearest conveyor belt which transported it to whatever plane happened to be waiting at the other end and on which it was promptly flown to wherever the plane was hijacked. The possibilities bred into this modern conception were endless. In this manner the stupidity and criminality of every person combined with the blind obedience of the machine to provide maximum failibility and highest chance of error. The postmaster beamed as he thought of letters

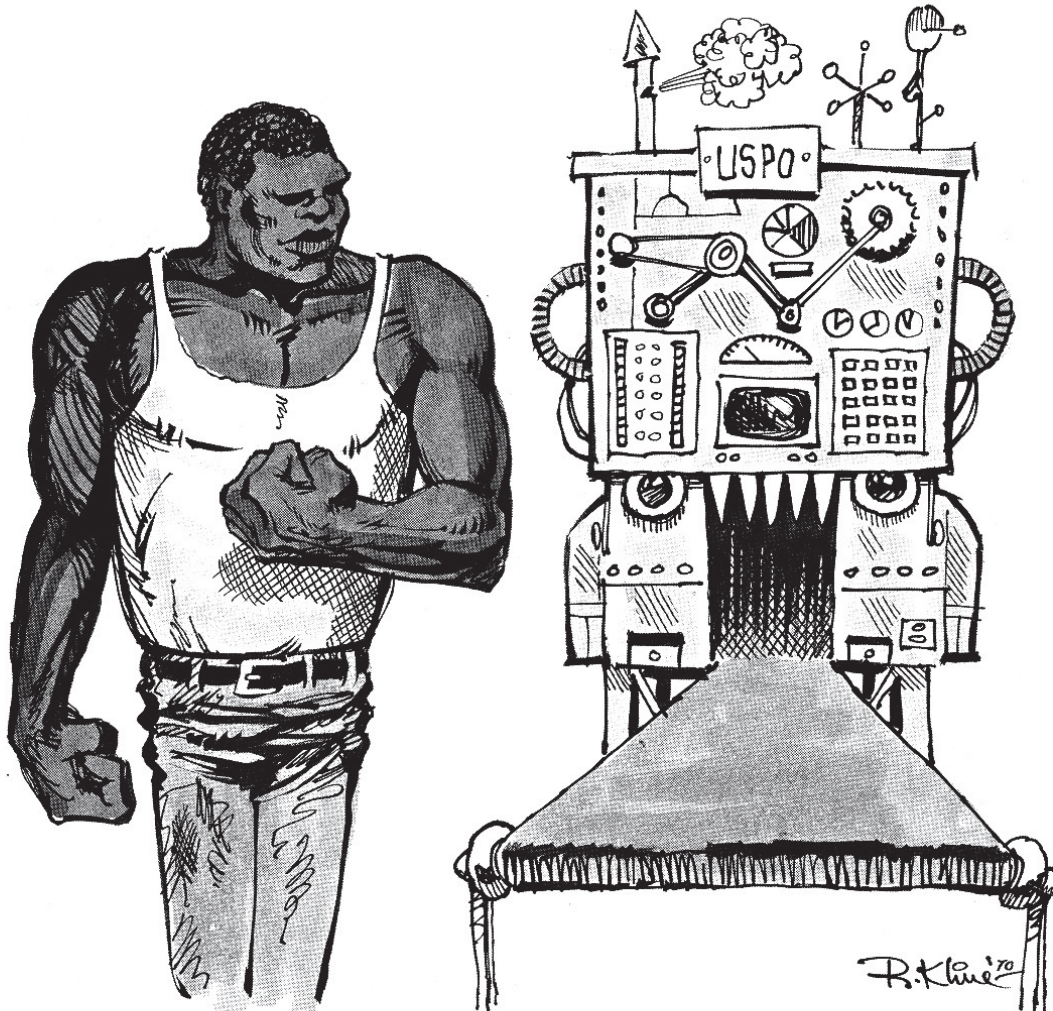
circling endlessly from New York to Los Angeles to Miami to Havana and back again; of letters lying in heaps at airports fraught with weather, plane, or union difficulties; and of letters caught eternally, irretrievably, in the jet stream of air currents hundreds of feet above the earth. But best of all were the parcel post items, for no package constructed by man could yet withstand the weight of even the smallest of the jet transports -- where many a horse's hoof had failed to totally demolish a particularly well fortified package, the miracle of modern engineering would succeed. One sudden jar loosening one package from its place on one conveyor belt and dropping it unnoticed in front of one wide wheel supporting one exceedingly heavy aircraft, and box and contents would soon be dust. The postmaster clapped his hands together and laughed aloud.

But the most subtly fiendish was yet to come.

"Think," the government agent said, "of the utter confusion you can cause. Even the most simple procedure can be made incredibly complex, vastly inscrutable to the layman, and also inordinately expensive. For instance, suppose a letter is genuinely undeliverable. The simple (and therefore unthinkable) thing to do would be to return it to the sender; with first class mail there is little you can do to complicate matters, though we do have people in Washington studying the problem. But third class -- Hoo-hah! First,

do not return any item marked 'Return Requested'; ah, true, we used to return such items, and thousands of people across the United States still believe we do, but no longer! Now they must say 'Return Postage Guarenteed'! (Do you know how few people can even *spell* 'guarenteed'? Chortle!) And if they want it forwarded, they have to say 'Forwarding Postage Guarenteed' plus they have to pay an extra fee! And if they want to be notified that their material is undeliverable and they haven't said 'Return Postage Guarenteed', they have to pay *another* fee just to find out that we've thrown it in the trash! And then, if they want the forwarding addresses of people who've moved and whose mail we've forwarded, they have to pay still *another* fee plus having to write 'Address Correction Requested' on the envelope along with all that other gluk! He-he -- they'll be lucky to have room enough left for the address!"

The postmaster roared and the government agent shook and the clerks became hysterical. The entire office was in an uproar while the patrons standing nearby cringed in terror and stared in wide-eyed disbelief, afraid of what they had just heard. Their mouths hung open and their faces went white. Their knees rattled together and their minds screamed in fear and confusion. It was mad, totally impossible, that such a fate could befall the residents of a quiet, unassuming little state tucked securely within its fields of wheat. And yet it



was true. Unavoidably, irrevocably true.

So it was into this situation that I strode, pile of freshly printed fanzines stacked neatly in the cardboard box tucked lovingly in my arms. And I was greeted by the oldest, meanest, most wrinkled, withered, wretched, and rotten postal clerk to ever walk the earth. Her eyes glowed with an evil malevolence; her hair was pulled back in an obscene bun to clearly reveal her sharply pointed ears from which hung skull-and-crossbones earrings; her teeth were fangs and her fingernails were claws and her skin was that of a poorly preserved mummy; her disposition was that of people who kick dogs, step on cats, dangle goldfish by their tails, and teach in Boston schools. She sipped blood from a goblet as she spoke.

"We don't take no mail from hippies," she said as she saw me approach.

I was taken aback! Granted, my hair is far from short and my clothing tends toward the modern, but I am in reality one of the straightest dudes to ever see the light of day. I mean, I have a job on campus, I brush my teeth, love apple pie, bathe regularly, spend money, and have never dropped pot or smoked LSD in my life -- and yet here I was, all of a sudden, *branded!* My lower lip quivered and tears welled up in my eyes as I began to explain that she had evidently made a terrible mistake. But no sooner had the words "Well actually, ma'm..."

passed my lips when she cut me off and in a blaze of fury screamed,

"And we don't take no *backtalk* from hippies *either!*" She slammed the window in my face and I was rendered helpless. Slowly I regained my composure and, cradling my box of fanzines in my arms once more, walked quietly home to ponder my first encounter with the new regime.

Upon reflection, I determined that my first mistake was in my basic attitude. I had walked into the post office to request a favor -- I should have *marched* in demanding a right. After all, if I paid taxes, that's what I would be paying taxes for. Yes, it was my right as a citizen to obtain postal service.

My second mistake had been my ignorance. Not knowing precisely what was expected of me nor what I was entitled to receive in return had made me nervous, insecure, and suggestible. So I studied, for three weeks, the charts, lists, and pamphlets plastered around the post office walls. I learned all about third and fourth class mail, second class mailing privileges, bulk and magazine rate. I learned how much space had to be left on the envelope for the address, and what had to be printed on them to get undelivered fanzines returned. I learned how much it cost to mail things within the United States, to Canada, and overseas. I even memorized the commemorative stamps for the last three years. I was leaving nothing to chance.

And finally, and most important of all, I conducted a survey. I began by scrutinizing my own mail, conversing with friends and correspondents as to what successfully passed through the postal gauntlet and what was lost or demolished. I talked with businessmen who dealt frequently with the postal service, those who fared well and those who mailed themselves into bankruptcy. And lastly, I transferred my findings to IBM Cards and fed them into a computer. The results were staggering -- an unbelievable plan of action was clearly outlined, and I followed it exactly.

I have been publishing ANOMALY now for many months, and since that first unfortunate encounter I have experienced no trouble whatsoever in getting my mail delivered or returned. Coupled with a good amount of self-confidence, I believe the Strnad Method is as close to infallible as any system could be; indeed, I have enjoyed a remarkable 98% completed-delivery record -- the missing 2% may, I think, be attributed to normal human failure. I have given FANTASTIC FANZINE exclusive printing rights so that the Method may be shared with the rest of fandom; it appears here in a basic form that may easily adapted to suit particular needs and situations. Here then is the Strnad Method for Foiling the P.O.:



PART I -- FANZINES

It has been proven that the type of mail most likely (by good percentage) to be delivered is junk mail. The Post Office has found that it pays to deliver junk mail; it not only gives them the appearance of doing something constructive, while actually serving no good whatsoever but it also bolsters their percentage-of-completed-deliveries record tremendously. This forms the basis of the Strnad Method: make your fanzine look as much like junk as possible. (In some cases, no change in format is necessary at all.)

STEP ONE -- THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS. In different handwriting and on varying stationery, notify the post office that you are receiving totally worthless material and request that they deliver no more such items. (Be careful not to imply that the material is in any way pornographic; pornography comes under the jurisdiction of the vice squad, and they'll get anyone they can lay their hands on.) Mention your own fanzine by name as an example of this useless trash in at least one quarter of the letters and request that future copies either be held by the post office or destroyed, preferably the latter.

STEP TWO -- THE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. Write similar letters under different names to the editor of the local newspaper(s). You need not specifically mention your fanzine in every letter, but do mention it frequently enough that the name will stick in the editor's mind and he will pick one of these letters to print. When the letter is printed, send a copy of the paper to the P.O. and circle the letter in red pen or pencil; in the margin write, "WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS???" Naturally, they won't - this is precisely the sort of things the post office thrives on.

STEP THREE -- THE PHONE CALL. Phone the main post office and identify yourself as the publisher of X Magazine and explain that some of the branch offices have refused to carry any more of your "packets." (The word "packets" is important; while "magazine" implies something morally objectionable, "packet" implies merely junk, useful to no one and yet perfectly legal.) You will find the postal employees friendly and eager to serve you. Caution: at no time should you hint or imply that your "packet" is actually worth receiving! It must be pure unmitigated garbage or the employees may succumb to their natural temptation to destroy anything of value.

STEP FOUR -- THE ENVELOPES. If you mail your fanzine in an envelope, you have one more opportunity to prove your sincerity and to indicate the utter trashiness of your material. Make your envelope busy and cluttered. Print in large letters in a prominent spot, "VERY IMPORTANT - OPEN IMMEDIATELY!" This is an old ploy of professional junk mailers and verifies the



contention that the insides are without value; the post office will recognize it immediately and you will swell in their esteem. Also, it is at all possible, include the word "SWEEPSTAKES" on the envelope or a statement to the effect that "YOU MAY BE THE GRAND WINNER!" If you can manage this added touch, the world is yours for the taking.

STEP FIVE -- THE ADDRESSES. Under no circumstances should you address the envelope to a particular individual. This would indicate that some degree of selection has gone into your choice of recipients, and must be avoided at all costs. "Resident" or "Postal Patron" will not only suffice to get the "packet" delivered, but will, in fact, practically insure it. If you find it necessary to differentiate between the residents of one location, remain as general as possible; for instance, "X Magazine Subscriber."

If these five steps are followed closely, you will find the post office an extremely pleasant agency to work with, full of helpful suggestions and complete cooperation.

PART II -- PACKAGES

Mailing packages successfully is no easy feat and should not be attempted until you have won the gratitude of the local P.O. with your previous junk mailings. When you can no longer hold the artwork, etc you have promised to return to the artists, and you find yourself obligated to send packages through the mail, it is best to gather as many as possible to be mailed simultaneously. This again gives

the impression that you are reasonably unconcerned as to who gets what and the post office will be much more likely to lend you their assistance.

Be sure to emphasize the fact that the merchandise you are sending was *not* ordered by the intended recipient and that he most probably would have no need for it under even the most bizarre circumstances. (You may wish to devise make-believe merchandise such as tongue-warmers or gall bladder agitators to serve as examples.) Also mention that rough handling may cause the more expensive items to break down before the guarantee is expired -- a horrendous situation for any manufacturer and one with which the post office will sympathize.

With packages it is much more important that you be able to adjust your stories to the situation and be able to think rapidly on your feet than it is to memorize a step-by-step procedure. You must also be able to lie blatantly, but this should pose no problem to most fanzine publishers (as a quick glance at their advertising will indicate).

I sincerely hope the Strnad Method will gain fandomwide acceptance and will abolish forever the spectre of undelivered magazines and mangled artwork that has become a tradition with post offices across the country, and will once again place moral atrocities exclusively in the experienced and capable hands of the military.

Best of luck to you all...

Strnad

JAMES WARREN : KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Introduction & Transcription by CARTER SCHOLZ

When James Warren stepped up to the podium to address the 1971 Comic Art Convention, he appeared drawn, harried, more than a bit on edge. In the earlier parts of the speech, a noticeable tremor occasionally edged its way into his voice. Throughout, heavy sarcasm lent a very acrimonious tone to many comments.

But if the president of Warren Publishing Company, home of CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA, tended to be a trifle bitter, no one in comics today has a better right. The text of his speech enumerated his position as a businessman, an unthankful position in a world where creative talent is heralded as the guiding force, a position made less enviable by a bad business recession in progress.

So if Jim Warren appeared even more caustic than usual towards the fans whom he really deeply appreciates, he can be forgiven that temporary mood of more concentrated cynicism.

He's an interesting character; a hard-boiled cynic whose love for comics is necessarily bounded by realistic financial considerations. He's a pragmatist in a world of idealists. It makes for a frustrating situation, one that easily leads to sleepless nights, Warren freely admits. The fans hate him. The pros hate him, other publishers hate him. Very seldom is a kind word said about James Warren in fannish circles.

The man is intelligent, competent, intellectually curious. Almost any time he speaks he says something worth quoting. And in the same breath he can say something that makes you want to castrate him. All in all, a querulous bundle of contradictions that seldom gets the credit he deserves for creating and maintaining a niche for nonregulated, high quality (well, sometimes), black-and-white comics in a four color industry. An

accomplishment to be envied, considering the scores of competitors that have tried and failed at the same thing.

Some maintain that he is too egotistical, too hardbitten, even misanthropic. Perhaps. Sometimes he is brusque and blunt, unwarrantedly. Occasionally an issue of CREEPY, EERIE, or VAMPIRELLA will completely bomb. But despite his numerous detractors, the vociferous hecklers, the sleepless nights, he's always in there trying. A more devoted friend comics never had.

[Beginning of speech garbled on tape:]

...I also stand before you as a pro publisher doing business in America today in the year 1971. So, you see, I'm really in a spot that deserves your complete sympathy all the way. I'm highly appreciative, of course, of the honor and the privilege of speaking to this group. Because all of us at Warren Publishing recognize the importance of a group like this and we understand what a tribute it is to address you because you've come to this place not only as fans but as members of a forum that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. And this convention means a lot to us in our company because it's composed of fans and it's not composed of the other parts of the industry that we really don't think too much of.

Last year, the keynote address was given by Neal Adams, a superior artist, the year before it was Gil Kane, another excellent creative man, and both spoke about the present and future condition of comics in America today as seen through their creative background, their creative viewpoint.

Today, now, I want to hold you spellbound with the real reason for the existence of comics. We're going to take a look at the deep, dark, up till now unknown secrets

of a creativity of a different nature: The creativity of surviving as a business enterprise in the comics industry. And if you think that's easy, you spend a week with our company. When I finish, I guarantee that nobody here is going to grow up and want to be a comic book publisher. Just as well, because we have too damn much competition as it is.

What does a 35-year-old industry consist of? Six separate and distinct groups, six of them. Listen to this:

First, the creative people. The editors, the artists, the writers, the letterers, the colorers, the production men; the creative team. These are the people who are most popular with the fans and with the readers. And these are the people whose autographs we usually all want.

Second, the printing plants, the paper mills. We call these the heavy guys.

The third category: The magazine wholesalers and distributors and newsstands and candy stores and drugstores, and retail outlets.

Fourth: The readers and the fans. You people. You're number four.

Fifth: The general public. The critics, the Comics Code, the parents, the teachers, the authority people; the ones who know what's good for you and what isn't good for you. [Laughter]

And last, the publisher. Me. He's the guy that throws the party for all those other groups. And he's the guy that picks up the tab for that party whether anybody comes or not.

Now. Let's examine what motivates each one of these groups. Let's examine them a little closer.

Take the first one: The creative people. The ones that you're all very familiar with. These are the guys that speak to us

PHOTOS ABOVE: Left and right, Jim Warren delivers Keynote Address to 1971 Comic Art Convention.



Vampirella copyright (c) 1971 Warren Publishing

and address our capacity for delight and wonder. They speak to our sense of mystery and fantasy that surrounds our lives, to our love, to our pity, to our beauty, to our pain, to everything about us. They appeal to our feelings of fellowship and love with all things. This gift belongs to the creative people. They're among the most valuable assets of any publishing company. But at the same time, they're the most unmanageable bunch of egomaniacs who ever breathed air, and the biggest pains in the asses.

Now usually when you hear an artist or writer complain, he's complaining about his publisher. But that does not prove he's really at war with -- took me ten years to find this out -- he's at war with you, dear reader. You're the peculiar animal, the enemy that has to be assaulted and won through the medium of his typewriter or through his pen and ink. The big competition is not between him and me, as a publisher; it's not between him and the other creative people who he competes with; it's between him and the readers. And that's the only measure of his ability to communicate. And that's one of the reasons why most of the time he's tormented. Because he can't get through to you the way he wants to.

Yet so many artists and writers get confused about this. They consider me, the publisher, as their antagonist, when it's really you they should be constantly assaulting with their talent and with

their new ideas and with their perfected techniques.

But we've learned to live with this, and we understand it, and the fight goes on, and it goes on twenty-four hours a day, and it always will go on, and the only people who benefit are you, the readers, eventually. The artist gets ulcers, the publisher goes bankrupt, but you benefit in the long run.

Now, the second group. These are the heavy people. The printing plants.

The comics industry is one that depends mainly on discretionary income. Discretionary spending is necessary for its livelihood. It is not like the textbook industry where books are produced no matter what's happening in the economy, because kids always have to go to school, they always have to go to college, and textbooks will always be there. Colleges have to buy them, and if they don't have the money, the government will give them the money. But nobody gives anybody money to buy comic books.

We're in the throes now of a very bad business recession. I'm not going to bore you with business facts. We've had recessions before, we're going to continue to have them again. They're a natural consequence of our economic system, which in spite of all its weak points, I still believe is the best for the most people. I think it still works the best for the

overwhelming majority of our population. But while economic conditions are disturbing for most businessmen, they are disastrous, particularly disastrous for printing plants. Printing plants spend millions of dollars in equipment a year or two in advance, and then, when they're hit with cancellations by publishers of magazine titles, these millions of dollars of equipment and these crews that they've hired and trained, are standing by ready to produce, but there's nothing to produce. And when that happens, the printing plant does one of two things; it either gets out of the comic book publishing business and into something else, or it goes bankrupt.

Now, two major comic book producing printing plants have gone out of business in the last five years. You haven't read about them, you haven't heard about them; you read about Lockhead and you read about Rolls-Royce in the headlines, but you don't read about the printing plants. You don't. I do. I read about them. And then I spend a few sleepless nights -- excuse me, I spend not a few, many sleepless nights. Now, printers will freeze up when this happens. And they won't commit income or capital or labor or materials for expansion during such a business climate like we have now, and like we've had for the past couple of years. And if they don't, publishers face rising costs when they do decide to publish, and when they go back to the printer and say, "Okay, Joe, I'm ready now, start the presses," Joe says, "Well, yes, but your press is going to be so many thousands of dollars higher." The publisher looks at this, and he looks at his price, and he looks at his profit, and he decides not to publish a new title for you readers out there.

Y'know, when a publisher goes bankrupt -- publisher -- the loss is in the thousands. It's only a few thousand dollars, or a few hundred thousand, or maybe three or four hundred thousand dollars. But when a printing plant goes bankrupt, the loss is in the millions. Many, many millions of dollars. And that's why these printing plants, the heavy-duty people that we depend on, are being rocked by the economy, and that's why people like myself are holding back on new titles for the most part.

Now let's talk about the third group. My favorite. The magazine distributors and wholesalers. [Laughter]

This reminds me of Jim Bouton's remark, because the people in our industry refer to these people as the "distributing game." They call it a game because it's too screwed up to be a business. Magazines are still marketed, distributed, and sold exactly the same way that they were a hundred years ago.

Now, you know, there are only two businesses or professions in the world that still do business the same way as they did a hundred years ago. Magazine wholesalers and prostitutes. And that's all. [Laughter]

Now the fourth category. This is you. The readers and fans.

You people are really something. You're fanatics, you're absolute fanatics. Look, if I told you -- is Phil Seuling in the house? Phil, are you here? Yeah, he introduces and he runs out on me. [Laughter] Alright. Tell him this. Tell him this afterwards. If I went up to a normal

person and I said to them, "Phil Seuling just died suddenly," they'd say, "Oh, that's terrible! What a shame!" But if I went up to a comic fan and I said, "Phil Seuling just died suddenly," he'd say, "Gee, I wonder who's gonna run the comi-con next year." [Laughter. Applause]

You fans also keep me vomiting continuously with your damn rumors. Always, of course, represented as fact. Always represented as fact. You print them in your fanzines, you tell them, you call me up and tell me about them, and it's absolute fact.

If I took a fan, a comic fan, any of you -- put him in jail in solitary confinement for three days with no food, no water, no nothing -- and if at the end of the three days I would say to him, "Take your choice. You can now have food or you can hear the latest unconfirmed comics rumor," he'd say, "The hell with the food. Give me the rumor! Give me the rumor!" [Laughter] Take it one step further. I give him this choice: I would say, "Look, you can go free, or you can stay in jail another three days without food or water, but -- not in solitary. During those three days you can roam around the jail and talk to all the other prisoners and repeat the same rumor." He would sure as hell stay in jail, starve for another three days, just to be able to do all this. So much for fans. [Laughter]

The fifth group. Another favorite. The general public. The critics. The Comics Code Authority. [Hisses and boos]

You can't judge a book by its cover, but some people can't even judge one by its contents. [Laughter]

The general public. What the hell do they know about our kind of comics? [Applause] They haven't read a comic magazine in 15 or 20 or 30 years. Their idea of comics is Blondie and Dagwood and maybe Dick Tracy.

This fall, dear listeners, we will be treated to a CBS-TV spectacular in full color, in prime time, produced by Ed Sullivan, titled, "The Comics," portraying well-known comic strip characters. Which ones? Get this: Kerry Drake, Brenda Starr, Rex Morgan, and Major Hoople. [Laughter] Isn't that terrific?

When I read about this, I called up on the phone and I talked to somebody pretty high up and I asked him if they'd like to use Vampirella. [Laughter] And then this well-informed television vice-president asked me who Vampirella was, and I couldn't stand it, I told him she was the illegitimate daughter of Wonder Woman, and he hung up on me. [Laughter. Applause]

Now, the general public. I've been asked to repeat the story I told at last year's comicon about the lady who came up to me and said, "Mr. Warren, why do you only publish horror comics? Why don't you publish good books?" And I said, "You mean like the Bible?" And she said, "Nothing wrong with that." So I spent the next few weeks reading the Bible. I counted 23 murders, 65 assaults with intent to kill, two rapes and one crucifixion.

The Comics Code. Oh, boy. Now don't knock the Comics Code. For years it has stood for everything in America that is decent, and good, and stupid. [Laughter. Applause]

Reading from the NEW YORK POST, April 3, 1971. Get this. Big headline:

"COMICS TO JOIN IN DRUG WAR.

"Leonard Darvin, the Code administrator of the Comics Association says that the war against drugs is going to be mentioned in comic books. The proposal, made by Carmine Infantino, editorial director of DC, stipulates that narcotics addiction shall not be presented except as a vicious habit."

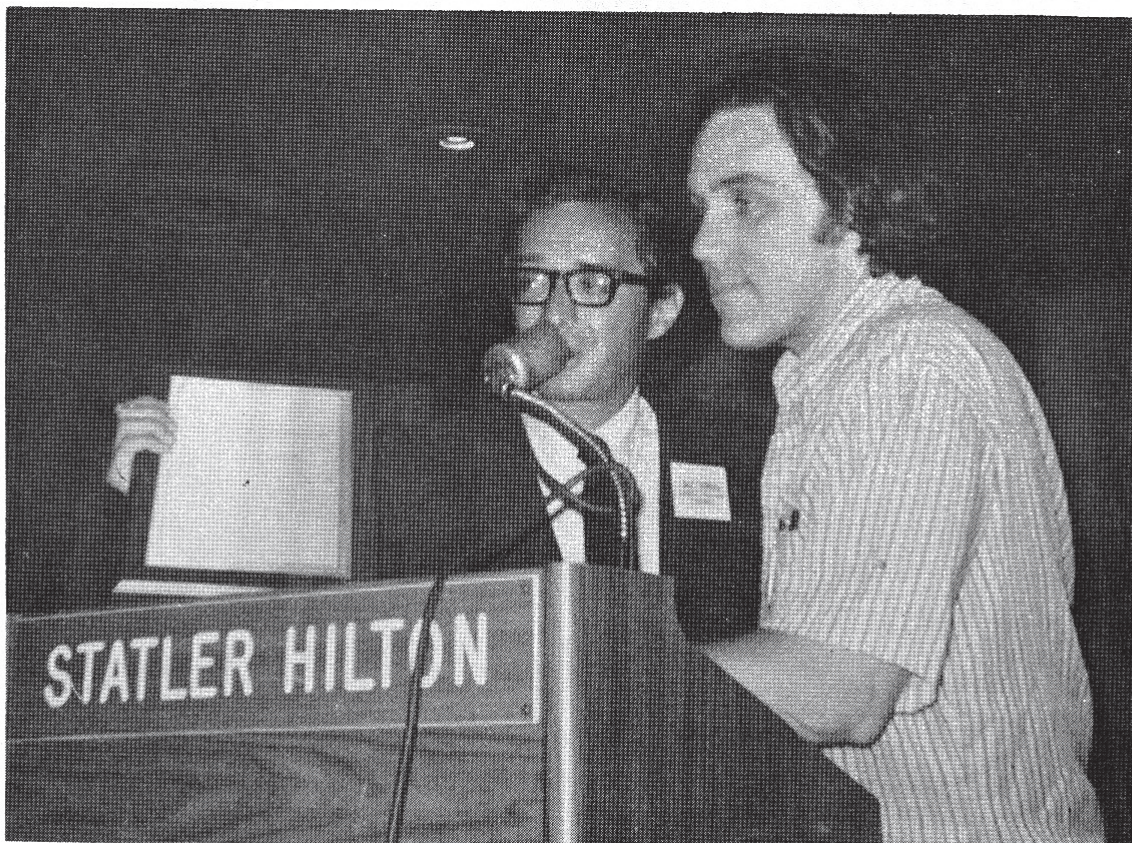
Now get this:

"Leonard Darvin said he believed the proposal stood an excellent chance for passage and any portrayal of narcotics, said Mr. Darvin, would show them to be dangerous and would have to be presented (-- get this --) so as not to present knowledge about drugs." [Laughter]

God forbid we should impart knowledge to our readers about drugs! Don't dare tell them anything about it! Their young minds can't handle this hot information! It's not healthy for them to know the difference between a barbituate or an amphetamine. Handle it the same way they treated sex thirty years ago, with me. Don't tell me about it, don't tell them anything about it until it's too late. [Laughter]

The Comics Code. What bullshit. [Applause]

In case any of you young readers out there don't know the meaning of that word [Laughter], I suggest you get a copy of a book called SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT by a man named Wertham, and read every page, read every word, cover



Following a question-and-answer session after the speech, convention chairman Phil Seuling presents a plaque "to James Warren for bringing challenge, vitality and new concepts to the publishing of comic art."

to cover, and when you're finished, ladies and gentlemen -- that is bull-shit! [Applause]

Now I've been accused of being an irresponsible publisher. I'm a responsible publisher. I'm concerned about my reader's world because it's also my world, and I'm selfish. I want for their world to have more peace, less smog, more fun, less tanks, more freedom for them to be themselves. And yet it seems that the answer proposed by organizations like teachers and the Comics Code is more regimentation, more organization of your young thinking. Get the thinking organized, says the Code and the educational experts. And we'll conquer poverty, disease, and pollution. Maybe. But no one will be wandering his own way with his own thoughts. Now this is upsetting. Because you cannot produce a Mark Twain, a Ray Bradbury, or a Fellini by telling him he can't read my comic books. Not every reader is a budding Ray Bradbury; but then, he *could* be if he isn't stifled and it isn't stifled out of him.

The last category. The publisher. [Laughter] It's a wonderful job for people who have never had a nervous breakdown but always wanted one.

Y'know, I get tired of listening to people talk about comics as if they were 100% art form; they're *not!* This is a business; it's tough, hardboiled, unethical -- yes, unethical -- as any other business. Warren Publishing has a reputation of sorts for hating its competition. Now, that's true; we do. We're in a continual sales war with them, because -- well, particularly those who publish black-and-white comics. We're in a continual 24-hour battle with them. We've earned our battlefield commission in this war, and we've earned it the hard way, those of you who know the history of our company. We don't like our competition. We're not friendly with them. Does Hertz like Avis? Does Crest like Colgate? Does Pepto-Bismol like Alka-Seltzer? Of course not!

I had a little talk with Stan Lee recently, genial Stan Lee, and Stan -- I like Stan -- he told me I was wrong to take this attitude. He said, "Jim, you shouldn't do this." He said, "Don't you believe there's room on the newsstands for all of us?" And I said, "Sure, Stan, I believe that. I also believe in Santa Claus, the Stork, and the tooth fairy." [Laughter]

Now Stan's thinking was okay during the golden age of comics. And up to a few years ago it was okay. Y'know, once comic publishing was a lot of exciting profitable fun. But not now. The economics have narrowed profit margins; staggering costs have been forcing publishers to wonder about their survival. All of them. The big boys. DC, Marvel, Gold Key, you name it. The decline of comics was signalled by television and sealed by the supermarkets and the shopping centers and the gradual disappearance of the corner newsstand, the drugstore, and the corner cigar stand. And how do we survive? By utilizing the best talent we can find to work for us. But more than anything else, we'll survive by making constantly correct business decisions, and nothing more.

The smart comics publisher has to know when to develop new publications for new markets and at the same time he has to know when to withdraw when a market is saturated. It's a tough job. I defy any

normal human being to live through the agony of waiting for sales reports on the first issue of a new title. Y'know, it's a life and death situation. The current ratio is out of every ten new magazines -- get this -- out of every ten new magazines, two of them survive to celebrate their second birthday.

The ones that do survive don't last forever. Our industry is volatile. It's like a seesaw. In 1946, Superman and Batman were among the top best-sellers of all the magazines in the world together. That includes LIFE, TIME, NEWSWEEK, LOOK, everything. In 1948, comics sales were running sixty million copies a month. DC is now selling, by the way, thirty million a year. In 1953, 3-D comics were the rage; remember them? In 1954, the United States Senate had nothing better to do than investigate violence in comic books. Ralph Nader, where were you when we needed you? They didn't investigate General Motors, they didn't investigate the things that they should have, but they investigated violence in comic books. In 1955, the Comics Code Authority put 98 comic titles out of business, and not one of them ever started up again and none of them ever will. In 1961, the ten-cent comic book became twelve cents. In 1963, some guy named Warren published a comic magazine called CREEPY and the Comics Code threatened to run him out of this country. In 1966, Batman appeared on

prime TV and every BATMAN magazine that was produced at the printing plant sold out. In 1968, Vampirella was born, and people started calling me a dirty old man. [Laughter]

In the final analysis, let me tell you that I love my company and I love the characters we've created, Creepy, Eerie, Vampirella, and I love my work. And we're both here today because of a unique love story. You, you're here because of the pure love that you have for the subject of comics. I'm here because of my personal love for comics, and for my own passion for creating a good product. And that's some love affair.

Now, what can you say about a 35-year-old industry that's sick and maybe dying? Well, when a few thousand fans show up each year at a comic convention like this it's a good sign that the patient may recover and live another 35 years. And guys like old Dr. Warren, tired and weary and wracked with pain, will be encouraged by this, and we'll work even harder to make the patient stronger, and healthier again.

Thank you.

[Long applause]

PARDON ME
WHILE I HAVE
ANOTHER
FAN INTERVIEW!



COUSIN EERIE copyright (c) 1971 Warren Publishing
GARY GROTH copyright (c) 1971 Gary G. Groth

THE WARREN AWARDS

AWARD CEREMONY & PRESENTATION

Report by MIKE CATRON

What is the purpose of an awards ceremony? Sure, sure, we all know the idea is to honor those individuals who have scored some outstanding achievement in their particular field of endeavor. But an awards ceremony also functions as a promotion gimmick for whatever organization sponsors the affair.

Honoring those outstanding people is a great way to get some free publicity. The movie industry gets a lot of attention just before the Oscars are awarded. Television gets loads of "who's-it-gonna-be this year?" press space prior to the Emmys.

ACBA uses the Shazams to promote the comics industry. And Jim Warren uses the Warren Awards to promote Warren Publications. It's great Public Relations. Besides, it *does* give those outstanding talents a chance to receive some well-deserved recognition for their work.

With that in mind, how well did the 1971 Warren Awards fulfill their purpose? I'm sure that anyone who was present in the Penn Top Room South last July second would agree that the Warren Awards certainly served their purpose as publicity for Warren Publications.

But how well did it honor the five trophy winners? Obviously, they were the center of attention when the awards were announced and during the question and answer session that immediately followed. But, as with most panel discussions, speeches and other such events, the last impression one receives is the most enduring.

The last impression I (and presumably most other attendees) got from the 1971 Warren Awards was not a good one. Warren deliberately ended the question and answer session on a sour note by dragging out (in front of close to 1,000 fans by his own estimate) some of the seamier aspects of magazine publishing. This would have been best left to another time



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Nick Cuti, Billy Graham, Archie Goodwin; James Warren speaking at podium.

when the revelations would not have detracted from the honors being paid Warren's own outstanding artists and writers. But more on that later.

The Warren Awards followed the keynote speech (covered in the preceding article by Carter Scholz) and, since Jim Warren happened to be the keynote speaker he was able to begin the awards ceremony almost immediately upon the conclusion of his speech.

Following the precedent he set last year, Warren began by introducing from the audience many of the people who work for Warren Publications (and several who don't). Inevitably each introduction was accompanied by a pre-selected insult for each pro. Some of the insults were genuinely funny, such as the one about Billy Graham ("On a list of the ten best artists in America, Billy would have to rank eleventh") and the "real reason" Marv Wolfman got married ("He had to. He was pregnant.")

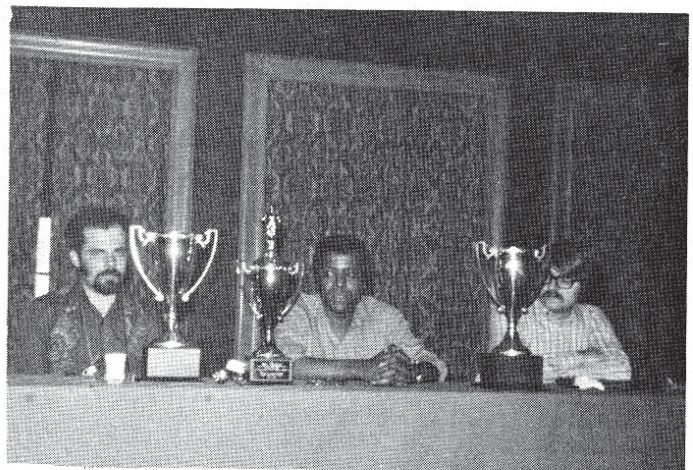
But one insult in particular seemed out of place and downright nasty. Warren in-

troduced Berni Wrightson (who, by the way, wasn't even present, and doesn't work for Warren because he doesn't want to) and said that Berni doesn't work for him "because he isn't good enough," pointing to Berni's strip in CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN # 17 -- "A Case of Conscience" -- as proof of his statement that Berni wasn't "good enough to work for Warren Publications." Mr. Warren, obviously counted on the fact that most fans in attendance either did not see the story in question, or thought that it was one of Berni's recent stories and that "Wrightson is slipping." Not true. "A Case of Conscience" was drawn over four years ago, and Berni was paid \$5 per page for it. I thought this below-the-belt attack on one of the comics' finest illustrators was totally uncalled for and in very poor taste. [Editor's Note: And I daresay, Berni is good enough to work for any comic book company today; which a quick look at his full page EC drawing in this issue would quickly prove]

Introductions over, Warren picked up the first trophy, a silver cup, and removed the paper that concealed the inscription.



LEFT: Mark Hanerfeld; RIGHT: T. Casey Brennan



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Nick Cuti, Billy Graham, Archie Goodwin

"In recognition of his creative excellence as an artist and a writer in the field of comic art, this cup is awarded, for last year's work in our publications, to Mr. Wallace Wood." Amid the applause that ensued, Warren managed to say that Nick Cuti would be accepting the award for the absent Mr. Wood.

Next, the Ray Bradbury Cup was given to T. Casey Brennan. The award was for the excellent "On The Wings of a Bird" which appeared in CREEPY # 36. Brennan modestly accepted the trophy and took his seat on the dais.

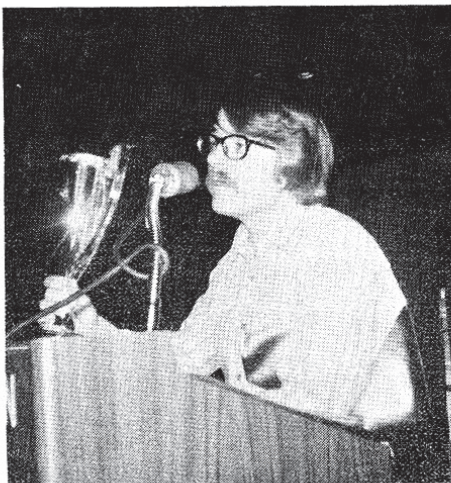
The Frank Frazetta Cup, for the best inside artwork, was awarded to Jose Gonzales for his first work on the VAMPIRELLA series, "Death's Dark Angel," published in VAMPIRELLA # 12. Bill Graham was present to accept the cup for Mr. Gonzales, who was in Barcelona, Spain. Graham added a unique touch to the event by reading a short acceptance speech in Spanish. Although I doubt if many of those present understood the language, the speech ended with two words everyone could understand, "gracias amigos."

For the second year in a row, Frank Frazetta was awarded the Jack Davis Cup (named after the cover artist of CREEPY # 1) for the best cover on a Warren magazine. The award-winning cover appeared on VAMPIRELLA # 7 and although Frazetta did show up later during the convention, Mark Hanerfeld accepted the trophy in his absence.

The final award of the day, a silver cup for the all-around best writer at Warren Publications, was given to eight-year Warren veteran, Archie Goodwin for his work on the VAMPIRELLA series.

There followed a question and answer session with emcee Warren and panel members Mark Hanerfeld, T. Casey Brennan, Nuck Cuti, Billy Graham, and Archie Goodwin.

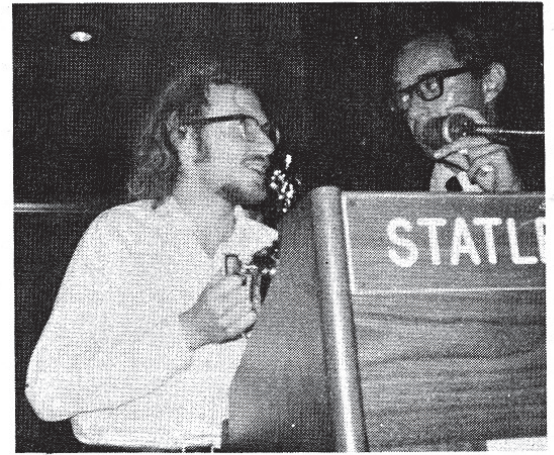
Things were going fine, with questions on the future of Warren Publications, (the new Warren publication Wally Wood is editing "will be sold only to readers eighteen and over and two issues would hit the stands before next year's con"), how the panel felt about artists writing their own stories and even a comment about the sadness of the passing of BLAZING COMBAT. But, when a fan asked, "What happened to the first issue of EERIE?"



Archie Goodwin giving acceptance speech.



LEFT PHOTO: T. Casey Brennan steps down from the dais, with his plaque, which read, "To T. Casey Brennan, winner of the Ray Bradbury Cup, for Best Story, 'On The Wings of a Bird' - CREEPY # 36." RIGHT PHOTO: Jim Warren hands T. Casey his award.



(the question is almost an annual event in itself, it seems) things started to turn sour.

Warren told of beating a rival publisher to the stands in order to secure the rights to the name "Eerie." He used the tale as an example of how sordid and corrupt the publishing industry is and proceeded to relate a more recent equally distasteful incident:

"One of the big three comic book publishing companies, and it was either DC or Marvel, or -- you name the other one, it doesn't matter -- but one of those, sits with me on a board of directors of the publishers' association. And this clown got up a survey that cost our association eight thousand dollars, for our magazines to better our marketing and better our distribution. And the survey was to be sent to 50 select wholesalers -- eight thousand dollars worth of a survey. And we paid for that -- our entire association.

"I went to Europe last March. And while I was there, this clown deliberately omitted my titles from that survey. Yeah. He said it was a mistake."

[Unfortunately, at this point, a few seconds of Warren's talk was lost on the tape]...better change it and correct it and he said, 'okay, we will' and he never did. And so that survey went out with all of his magazines and none of mine. And when I found out about it -- I got back from Europe -- I naturally, was a little peeved and I sent this bastard a letter and he apologized profusely -- took four pages to tell me that he was awfully sorry. But the damage had been done. It wasn't any great victory to have him pick up our share of the eight thousand dollars... [again, a few seconds were lost] ... but that's the kind of world we live in.

"I don't want to mention any names, but the guy who did that is called MARVEL COMICS. Any other questions?

[Silence]

"All right, I think we ought to call it quits, unless you have some questions for some people up here." [More silence]

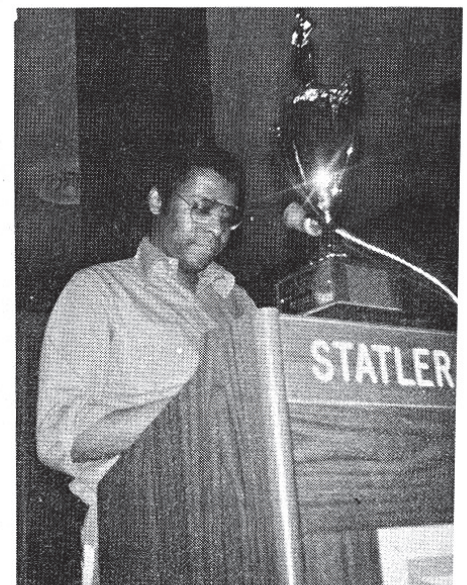
"All right, see you all tomorrow. Enjoy yourselves. Have a nice evening."

[Applause]

So ended the 1971 Warren Awards. For the most part, I had enjoyed the event up until Warren so graphically depicted how dishonorable the industry was and yet made himself appear as a lily-white innocent forced to play this game with those mean old nasty men.

Admittedly, questions from the audience might have been a little scarce due to the fact that only two of the five award winners were actually present to be asked anything. So, much of the responsibility for an interesting panel fell on Warren's shoulders. But Warren didn't go into the survey story by accident. He's too good of a public speaker for that. No, it was the slur on all of MARVEL COMICS, instead of the man who allegedly cheated Warren, Martin Goodman.

I was glad to see Wood, Brennan, Goodwin, Gonzales, and Frazetta honored for their fine work in the past year. But I was appalled at the grandstanding play by a man who derided the unscrupulous of others and yet was equally unscrupulous by telling such a tale solely to gain publicity for his own publications. It left a bad taste in my mouth.



Billy Graham, giving Jose Gonzalez' acceptance speech in Spanish.

film showing

Revue by ALAN BRENNERT



With echoes of last year's disastrous filmic fiasco still ringing in our ears, the convention members passed into the Sky Top Room with vague hopes that at least *this year* we would not be subjected to commercial trailers and similar inanities. We were not; in fact, this year's film showing proved to be one of the finest ever presented at *any* convention.

The keynote was variety and novelty, albeit starting off traditionally enough with the mandatory serial chapters: Chapter One of Republic's DICK TRACY and Chapter Twelve of Universal's FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE. Nostalgia was the byword here, whether marvelling over the ineptitude of Ralph Byrd's acting, or revelling in the dynamic action that only Buster Crabbe could afford; nostalgia and the smallest hint of derisive laughter.

The third film was strictly for *intentional* laughs. The long-awaited STAR TREK blooper reel was sped in by special messenger and turned out to be everything expected of it. More a cleverly-constructed spoof film than a reel of actual outtakes it nevertheless abounded in scenes of Shatner, Nimoy, Kelley, *et al*, blowing takes, delivering off-hand remarks on camera, and generally having one hell of a time. Each resulted in a tumult of laugh-

ter from the audience, quickly hushed as soon as the next flashed on the screen. Marvelous.

Back to the movie trailers; but with a difference! While last year we were "treated" to bland, black-and-white trivia, this year we savored the color, the artistry, the pure pleasure, of clips from such Disney triumphs as SNOW WHITE and FANTASIA -- accent on the latter. Including the Bela Lugosi - styled Devil, you've all heard about.

Fifth, by request of Phil Seuling, "a film by Samuel R. Delany" was shown. Described by Steinbrunner (who had not seen it either) as *experimental*, that is perhaps the most euphemistically pleasing word possible. Delany has gone far beyond the New Wave in this atrocity, which pardonable for the sin of being ambiguous and silly, is just too unforgivingly dull. Notables such as Berni Wrightson and George Alec Effiger made their film debuts in this muddled, allegedly SF story in the nude, produced by Barbara Wise. At one point in the banalities, the naked Wrightson strides over the floor-stationed camera, thereby providing con members with the running joke of the evening: "Tomorrow, crotch shots of Berni Wrightson will be available in the dealers room." The real pity of it all: it lasted more than twenty minutes.

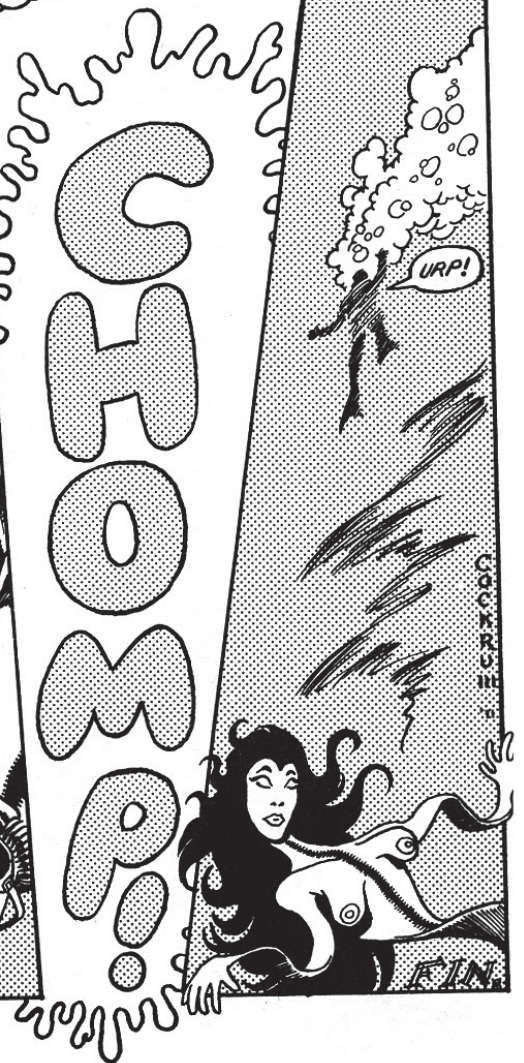
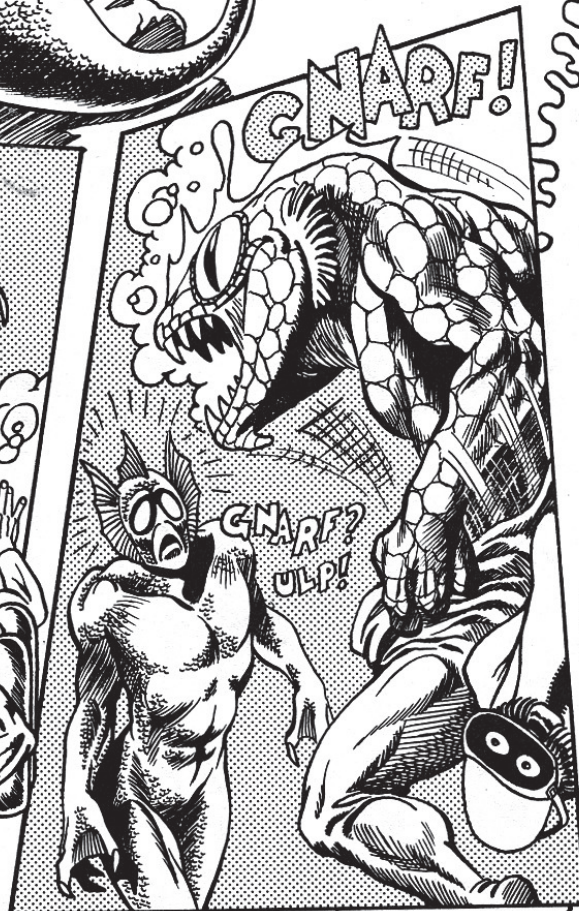
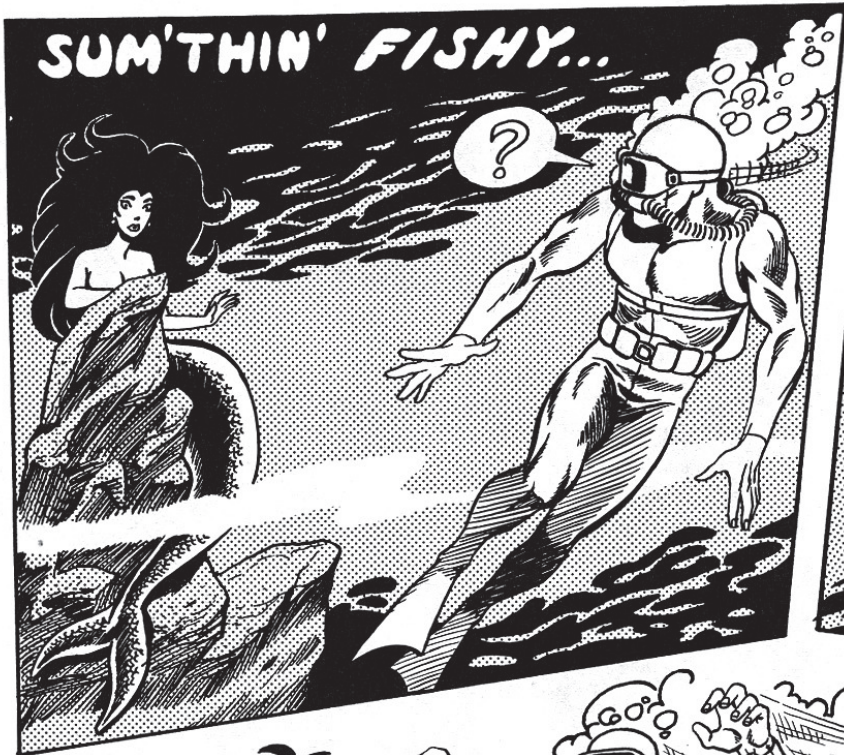
Next came another experimental film, this one produced by Richard Corben of NEVER-WHERE fame. The difference was startling. Brought to the con by Vaughn Bode, it was in actuality a series of truly experimental special effects, gorgeous to behold and intricate in detail. A planet, ob-

scuring the sun but wrapped in a golden corona of its own; a scarlet spaceship flying through black space; when the lights went on, the audience was speechless, and rightly so. Stanley Kubrick would have turned green. Barbara Wise would have turned green.

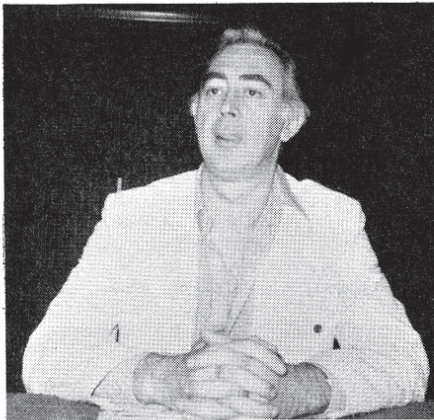
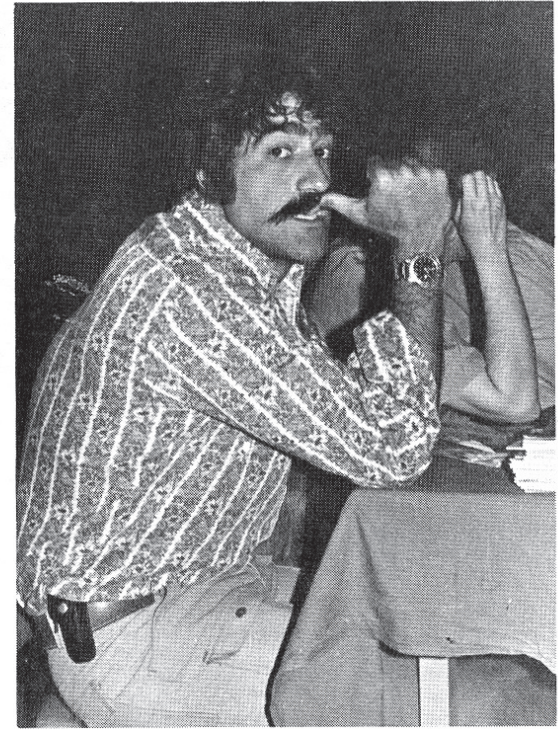
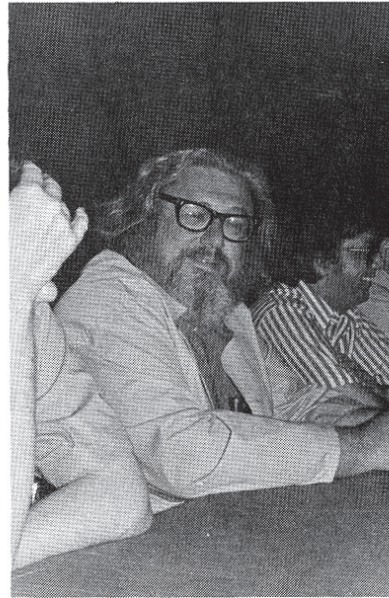
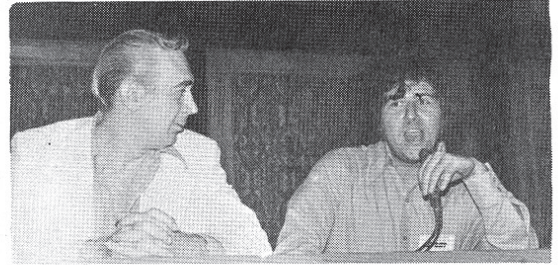
Then, in honor of the visiting Kirk Alyn (the screen's first live-action Superman) his first chapter of Columbia's 1952 BLACKHAWK serial was shown. The dialogue was just too fruity to believe, and the plot (replete with long-lost-twin-brother and vicious-commie-agents-out-to-get-America) looked like something out of a Lorenzo Semple nightmare. The acting (sorry, Kirk) was no better, ranging from bad to "he *must* be putting us on," but again, it was so bad, it was good.

The last event of the evening was also the *best* event of the evening. As advertised, three of the Dave Fleischer/Paramount SUPERMAN cartoons of the '40's were shown (in black-and-white, unfortunately) featuring the rousing voice of Bud Collyer. There was no laughing at this. The episodes shown, "The Bulleteers," "The Twelfth Hour," and "Jungle Drums," rank with some of the finest animation ever shot. The use of shadow was absolutely inspired, the direction flawless, the scripts intelligent and sympathetic. Every entry was greeted with enthusiastic applause. We could only have asked for more of the same.

And when it was over, and as Chris Steinbrunner started the process of packing up his film cans and retiring back to WOR-TV there was time to contemplate one burning question; "What could he *possibly* do for an encore?"

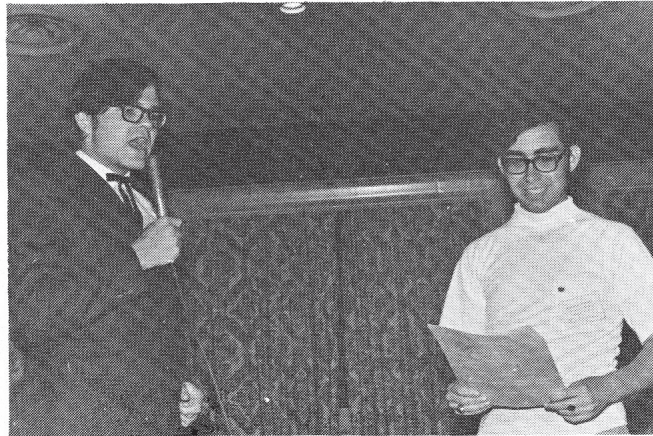


“DON'T KICK SUPERHEROES WHEN THEY'RE DOWN!”



Goethe Award Presentation

Report by **CARL GAFFORD**



Dwight Decker

Tony Isabella

The first annual presentation of the Goethe Awards was delayed three-quarters of an hour due to the deluge of art-hungry fans on Neal Adams at the conclusion of the Pro Panel. When the presentation finally got underway, Phil Seuling introduced the Awards presenters Dwight Decker and Tony Isabella and briefly explained the Goethes.

The Goethe Award (pronounced Ger-ta) was named by Don & Maggie Thompson after the first Big Name Comics Fan. It was this critic and author who encouraged Rudolphe Topper in 1831 to further the pioneering of comic art. The awards themselves consist of a Tim Kirk illustration bearing the name of the winner. Unfortunately, difficulties with the printer prevented the Award Sheets from being available in time for the presentation. As a result, this year's winners were presented "handshakes and smiles" from Dwight, Tony and pro presenter Jim Steranko; the awards sheets to be mailed to the winners later. (Incidentally, "Goethe" does not appear on the award sheets. Don & Maggie leave the name of the award still open to suggestion).

Tony Isabella started the presentation with a remark aimed at Jim Steranko, who had failed to appear to aid Dwight and

the two). Neal Adams won "Favorite Pro Artist" and Dick Giordano won "Favorite Pro Editor." Dick commented on how ironic it was to be presented a "Favorite Editor" Award so shortly after leaving the editor's desk.

The ten categories were presented briskly. So briskly in fact that the con was put back on schedule at the end of the awards, making up for the Adams delay.

Those winners who were not present, had their awards accepted for them by others. Such was the case with Jan Strnad who had won "Favorite Fan Writer." Dwight accepted Jan's handshake and smile for him. Both Dwight and Tony had been nominated for the award along with Jan. Tony, who lost the award by one vote, was quick to point out that Dwight ranked fifth and last in the vote; behind "No Award."

Neal Adams accepted the "Favorite Comic Book Character" Award for Deadman, attributing that character's great appeal (unfortunately not extending to sales) to Carmine Infantino and the late Jack Miller, who had created the earthbound avenging spirit.

Roy Thomas was not present to accept his "Favorite Pro Writer" Award, but fellow-winner Denny O'Neil was (the vote for this award had resulted in a tie between

the two). Neal Adams won "Favorite Pro Artist" and Dick Giordano won "Favorite Pro Editor." Dick commented on how ironic it was to be presented a "Favorite Editor" Award so shortly after leaving the editor's desk.

The fan section of the presentation was completed with Robert Kline as "Favorite Fan Artist" (Gary Groth accepted Robert's handshake & smile), CAPTAIN GEORGE PRESENTS as "Favorite Underground Comic" (Tom Robe accepted for Captain George), and NEWFANGLES as "Favorite Fanzine" (Tony Isabella accepted this one for Don & Maggie Thompson).

The climax came when Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams rose to accept awards for GREEN LANTERN as "Favorite Pro Comic-Book" (they had already won "Favorite Comic Book Story" for GL # 76's "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight"). They received their handshakes from Dwight wearing puppets of his two heroes: Trickie Dicky and Spiral Agnew (these puppets were available from NATIONAL LAMPOON). Dwight gave a brief speech to Denny and Neal in mono-tone Nixonese, "I just want to say that you have misjudged my administration very much. After all, I am very much against pollution. I want to make America perfectly clear."

"If anyone thinks we're going to follow that act, they're out of their minds," remarked Neal.

Following the presentation was a short question and answer period.

Don & Maggie report that next year's Awards Presentation (WITH the Tim Kirk award sheets) will be done on a much larger scale. Distribution of both the nominating and final ballots will be spearheaded by major dealers like Phil Seuling and Captain George and large circulation 'zines like THE BUYER'S GUIDE and RBCC. A later deadline of June 1st for the final ballot will be used in place of this year's March list deadline to allow more time for distribution and voting. The results will be kept secret until the presentation at the con.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Dwight Decker, Jim Steranko, Neal Adams, Tony Isabella

HARVEY KURTZMAN

Report by PAUL LEVITZ

The Kurtzman event was billed as a "talk" on the program, but quickly turned into a question and answer session. After thanking everyone for the pleasure of being there, Mr. Kurtzman revealed that his true joy of the convention would be the selling of his bundles of HUMBUG, amounting to about 5,000 copies! Later in the session, when questions were pressed about those self-same bundles, he began to consider actually bringing them next year.

The question session began on a no-holds barred note. Actually, there were some forbidden topics as he explained in the beginning:

"Don't ask me what 'potzrebie' means; don't ask me where the 'What me worry?' kid came from; don't ask me who models for Annie Fanny; or what Hefner is like (I only discuss Easter bunnies)." And then the barrage of questions began.

The topics ranged over his past, present and future works as well as several things that he had no direct connection with. His present work on Annie Fanny was discussed in detail; the degree of work he does (layout-type), how the others are concerned with the strip, and what Hefner does with all the artwork. According to Harvey, it is hoarded and later re-used. He also said that he wanted to do other things, but that he had no time at the present. Another facet of his present work is his book of the history of the comics, to be entitled, THE HISTORY OF THE COMICS. When asked about the book in relation to the ESQUIRE article by him of the same name, he said that they have entirely different formats. His piece appeared in the June, 1971 issue of ESQUIRE. It was basically eight pages of reprints which spanned the life of comics. Harvey mentioned that he was hoping for his book to appear this fall.

His past was very lightly touched upon, principally in a discussion about the origin of MAD. Kurtzman said that he wanted to start a magazine at that time that he "could write without leaving the room." The amount of research involved in his various other books was beginning to get to him. The answer was MAD.

His future works were discussed in connection with the underground comics

field. The discussion opened when someone in the audience asked about some underground work he had done. Kurtzman was astonished when anyone had recognized his touch because the work in question had been done at a jam session, where, as he put it, "ten guys are working on one piece of paper." He said that he would like to work for the underground field, calling it a new frontier, but he felt that it would be hard, and both timely and financially unprofitable (although he said he heard that the situation was improving with respect to money).

One of the things that he went into that didn't directly concern him was Freudian symbolism and connotations of some strips. He got a special joy out of talking about Flash Gordon. According to Harvey, the situation was perennially thus: Flash fighting all varieties of monsters and villains with a sword when there is a perfectly good blaster at his hip that he could zap them all from a safe distance. "Why are they fencing in jock straps?"

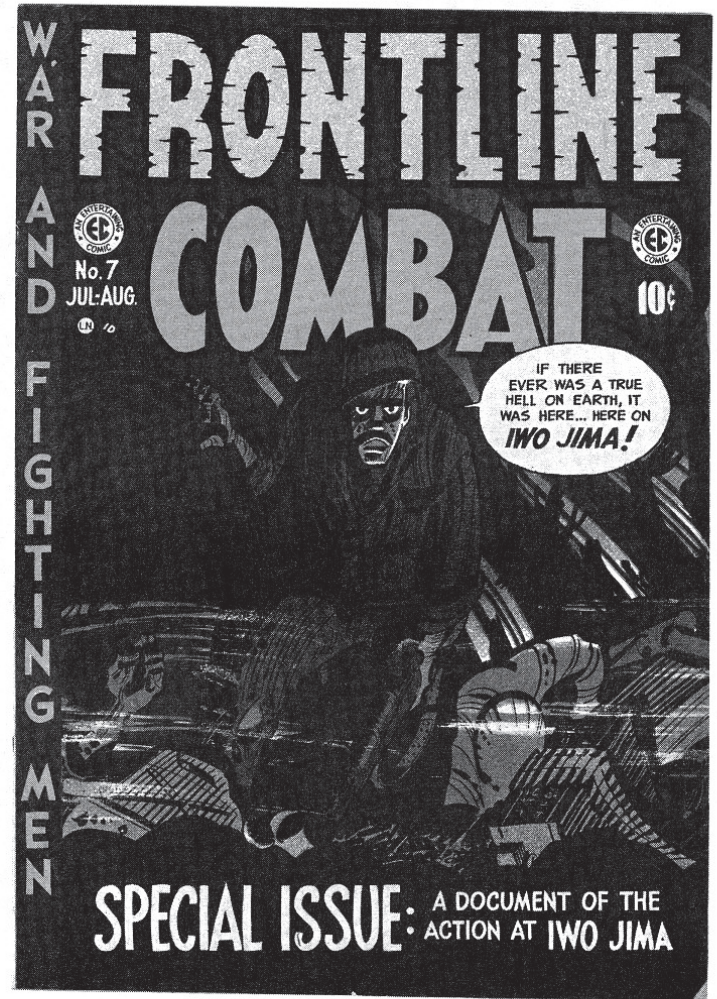
"Why is Dale always dressed wearing something that looks like it's out of burlesk?" This brought quite a lot of laughter and applause.

Urged on by the crowd, Harvey related the story about an old Willie Elder escapade.

"He used to be a crazy lunatic, once upon a time. I'm tempted to go into Will Elder stories like I did at Milwaukee. You know, I think you've asked enough questions, so I'll go into this crazy story about Willie that I told in Milwaukee.

"Will, when we went to high school together, was an absolute lunatic. Very often, I'd see him in the lunchroom's telephone booth with a trickle of ketchup running down the side of his chin. He'd be a fighter pilot going down with the plane. He was always carrying on.

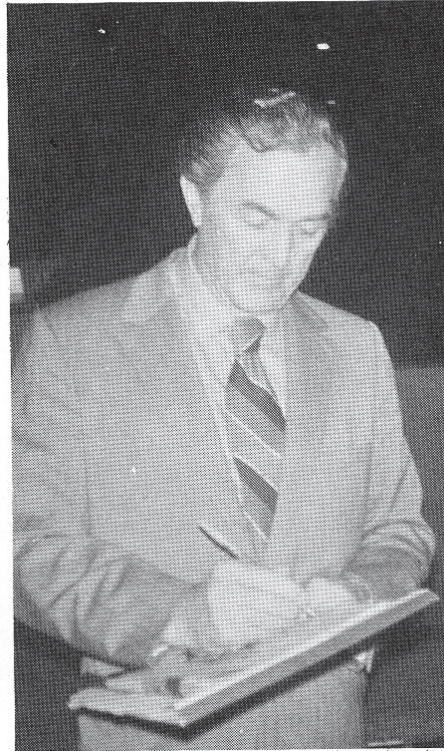
"We'd go into a restaurant and he'd eat his meal, come out to pay the cashier and open his wallet which would be filled with real lettuce." The audience chuckled but quickly quieted down as Kurtzman said "My favorite story is about him in the army. He and a buddy of his would fill a hot water bag with goulash. They would go to a bar and on a given signal, Will's friend would throw up the goulash all over the bar." Here the crowd made a lot of wry faces with sounds to match. "And Will would start eating it!" This could only have been the highpoint of the con. With the fans applauding and laughing, Harvey thanks the audience for having him and left the stage amidst more applause.



"HARVEY KURTZMAN. A talk by one of the authentic masters in the field, who has created such wondrous and divergent pieces of work as FRONTLINE COMBAT and Little Annie Fanny." --- 1971 Comic Art Convention Program Book.

Pushing This Book Really Is 'A Job For SUPERMAN'!

Report by MARTIN PASKO



Not since Liz Carpenter toured the country in her "Lizmobile," pushing her book about her antics as press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson, has there been a more bizarre circuit for a book-plugging author to travel: The comic convention circuit. Aging, but rosy-cheeked, peddling nostalgia and looking rather like a Brooks Brothers Buffalo Bob Smith in a discreetly fashionable gray suit, Kirk Alyn, "star" of an all-but-forgotten 1948 movie serial named "SUPERMAN," stepped up onto the podium at 11 AM Sunday morning, direct from his much-heralded engagement at the D-Con in Dallas.

He beamed his still-handsome matinee-idol smile at an audience that was an odd combination of dewy-eyed ex-children, whose memories of their favorite Saturday afternoon thrill were still quite vivid, and the curious, gawking fans, who turned out to see the freak from the red and blue suit they once marvelled at in a dog eared copy of SCREEN THRILLS ILLUSTRATED. This was the big moment for Alyn, whose book, A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, is published in softcover by Alyn himself; because it is too crudely written to be distributed by a legitimate publisher. This was the crowning moment; the biggest comicon of them all! Alyn's five-month tour had carried him from Disneyland to Fun City, recalling the same tired anecdotes (suggesting the range of his memory) but never tiring himself; and at the same time employing some latent acting talent left after some 23 years since first donning "The Uniform," as Columbia called it.

A hush fell on the small group of the curious assembled in the Penn Top room as promoter Seuling and guest-speaker Alyn entered. Seuling, looking appropriately awed, took his place on the podium, behind which stood a large color cutout of the famous, early Wayne Boring rendition of Superman, intended as a fitting backdrop for his flesh-and-blood's 45-minute oral memoirs.

"DC sent these... cutouts," remarked Seuling, by way of introduction. "I didn't even know they were going to do it; it was amazing to me that they showed up.

"I started seeing serials when I was, oh, I'd say 12... 11," sighed Seuling, suddenly waxing nostalgia as he began his introduction, "and the thing I remember most about all the serials I saw was that I once swallowed the money that I had for the movies... I was carrying it in my mouth; I guess I didn't have pockets... eventually I got it back." Seuling leers, and there is laughter.

"What picture was it you were going to see?" called out the eager Alyn, waiting on the sidelines for Seuling to get to the point, and hoping to help him get there.

"I can probably tell you..." stammers Seuling. "It was something about G-Men; where it was probably any one of six guys; and you had to wait fifteen chapters; and one-by-one they got killed." Seuling never did mention the title of the serial, a telling testament to the forgettable nature of almost all of the cheap studio "chapter plays" of those halcyon days.

His story about the money was an amusing anecdote, but had nothing to do with the reason everyone was there that morning. He inadvertently struck a keynote in so doing, however because neither did anything Alyn had to say bear any relation to what convention-going is all about.

But when Seuling got down to brass tacks: His comments about what it's like to see a favorite comic book hero personified on the screen, he struck a core of a profound experience. "...it was so dramatic to me it was like a shaking experience. You know what comic books are; they're

not part of your life, they are your life. They're part of your experience; they're not separated from it. You are what you read, what you see, whatever impinges on your consciousness; and comic books were part of who I was. And there they were, on the screen. When I met Kirk Alyn at this convention, I felt... well, I felt the same way as when I met Hal Foster, and I feel that way now." Seuling continues growing maudlin. "My life is taking an extra dimension that I never expected it would take. I'm really delighted that I met the legend, the star, the serial character. And it's been a very great pleasure to get to know the man... Kirk Alyn."

Alyn began his talk properly humble, with a "shucks, ma'am" sense of wonder at the nice folks he met. "I would like to say that this is only my second [?] convention," Alyn began, "and until I came to a convention, I never knew there was such a thing, especially this New York convention. It's the *biggest thing* and the most *wonderful thing I've ever seen*. I've met so many nice people and it seems that comic book collectors have something in common that very few other people in life have." Speaking extemporaneously, Alyn betrayed a rather simplistic outlook on life throughout his little speech. "They'll never suffer from some of the things that people who don't have hobbies suffer from. The comic books not only bring back a nostalgia for those who've seen these things earlier," he continued, as if comic books were dead, "but the younger folks seem to enjoy them just as much. Being downstairs selling the book, I have met so many darn nice people, I'm afraid I'm hooked. I'm gonna become a collector myself. I didn't even collect my own stills, so when I did the book, I had to go borrow 'em from people that were collectors.

Though Alyn possessed an artichoke's gift of transition, he had a pleasant manner and a good stage presence which made his anecdotes a little bit more bearable despite their corn. "I've had many questions asked, in fan letters and downstairs, [such as] 'What pictures did you have the most fun in?' and 'What picture did you like to do most?' and 'What stu-

dio did you like to work best in?' Well, I can only say that after you've done SUPERMAN, the rest of 'em don't seem like anything at all.

"I made five serials before I made SUPERMAN, which were G-MAN serials, and I had a lot of fun in those, and in those pictures. I always had a double or what we call a stunt-man, who did all the dirty-work for me. But when I did SUPERMAN, I did all my own stunts. I had no double. It's funny that psychologically, during the filming of SUPERMAN, the director [Spencer Gordon Bennett] and everybody on the set, including myself, would be given to think I was really Superman, once I was in that uniform, all day long." It is a point much elaborated on in Alyn's book almost to the point of repetition.

"There were a lot of fire scenes, and of course, I was always rescuing people. In SUPERMAN, I didn't fight with the fists, as I did in G-MEN, FEDERAL AGENTS and all those other things I did, because Superman is so powerful that if he hit anybody it'd be the end. All I did was gently knock their heads together, and that'd be enough.

"I was always out on a rescue... Poor Lois Lane [Noel Neill, who Forest Ackerman once said that she had been tied up during her career "more times than a Chinese laundry"] was always being tied up gagged and the very first day of shooting we went out on location." Alyn tells the long, pointless and only slightly amusing tale of his encounter with a fast-moving train while the cameras photographed the illusion of Superman bending a crooked rail back into place. It is a story told much better in the book.

Also told better in the book is the story of how Alyn flew in the film. To the question, "Did you use wires?" Alyn said that he always has to answer, "Yes and no." It seems that the special effects men had convinced the producer that they could put me on wires, and they would opaque the wires and light them in such a manner that when they were photographed you wouldn't see them... They made a plaster cast of my torso... they made a metal breast plate which I put on underneath my uniform, then they hooked the wires onto that, so you couldn't see the wires pulling on the costume. They raised me about fifteen feet above the floor... but they didn't make any provisions for my legs, just my torso... 'Hold your legs up, Kirk! Hold 'em up!' That's all I kept hearing, and my stomach muscles began to hurt. Did you ever lie on a table and try to lift your legs up like this two or three times? Your stomach muscles begin to hurt. But I did this for about ten hours up there! I was alongside a plane. It seems there was a bomb planted on the wing and I was supposed to fly up, get the bomb, throw it away, and it landed in the lake about ten miles away, and exploded like an atomic bomb. In order to give the audience the illusion I was moving in space, they had to have clouds go by me. So they had a smoke pot in front of me, and behind it was a fan, blowing the smoke, so it looked like there was clouds going by. But in this case, it seems like they had the fan too close to the smoke pot... and a whole lot of sparks came out of the smoke pot..." The fan blew the sparks down into Alyn's costume, where they became lodged between his breastplate and him. Beating the plate to put out the "fire" was useless, because of the metal, so "I screamed bloody murder up there. I said, 'Let me

down outta here! I'm on fire!' So they let me down as quickly as they could - about fifteen minutes -" There is laughter. "...and they got a pitcher of water and poured it down in there. It was incidents like this that had me ready to quit at any minute, but you already have some film in the can, so you can't quit..."

However, his labors and his agony were almost all in vain. "The last day we worked twelve hours doing those wires scenes, and the next day, they went in to see the rushes, and...the wires stood out so beautifully, you could see every wire! The producer ["Jungle Sam" Katzman] said in the loudest voice he could muster, 'You're all fired! Get out!' He fired everybody, including the cameraman, the special effects man; everybody. We went to a special effects studio, where they had a camera mounted on gimbals." They shot the scene with Alyn standing vertically, and the camera was turned on its side. When Alyn as Superman "took off," he leaped over a camera mounted on a high hat; and animation was used in the long shots of Superman flying off into the distance.

Alyn related two other incidents (also in the book). One is about a stray lightning bolt in a scene involving a mad scientist's electrical equipment which was attracted by the metal buckle on the belt of the Superman costume, striking and frightening Alyn, who was saved only by the rubber soles of his "super boots." The other concerned a scene in which Alyn was to carry the stricken reporters, Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen (Tommy Pond, whose character Alyn insists upon misspelling in his book as "Jimmie Olson"), out of a burning building, each under one arm. Noel Neill at 110 pounds and Bond weighing in at 140 came to a staggering 250 pounds, which began to feel like tons

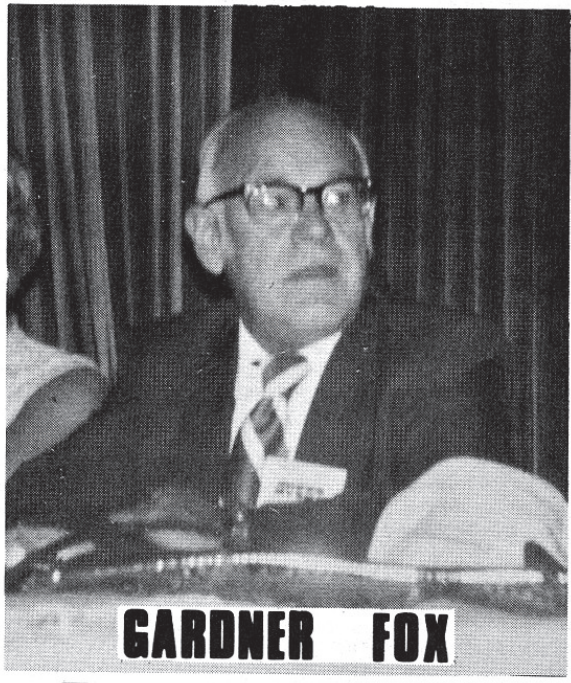
around the fifth take. As the rushes revealed Alyn straining under the massive load, he was asked why he struggled so. It was then that director Bennett shamefacedly informed Alyn that the scene was intended to have been shot with dummies, not the live actors.

One fan aptly described A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, on sale at the convention for \$4.50, as "very light reading." It is obviously intended for children, has a bad sense of organization (chapters seem to run into one another, making it difficult to tell what's chapter-heading and what's sub-heading), mediocre layout, and poor writing. It does contain some interesting stills (some I've seen before) and some mildly amusing anecdotes, even if the book, which one would believe to be almost exclusively about Alyn's adventures playing the Man of Steel, devotes less than one-fourth of its pages to that topic, and totally ignores Columbia's sequel ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN.

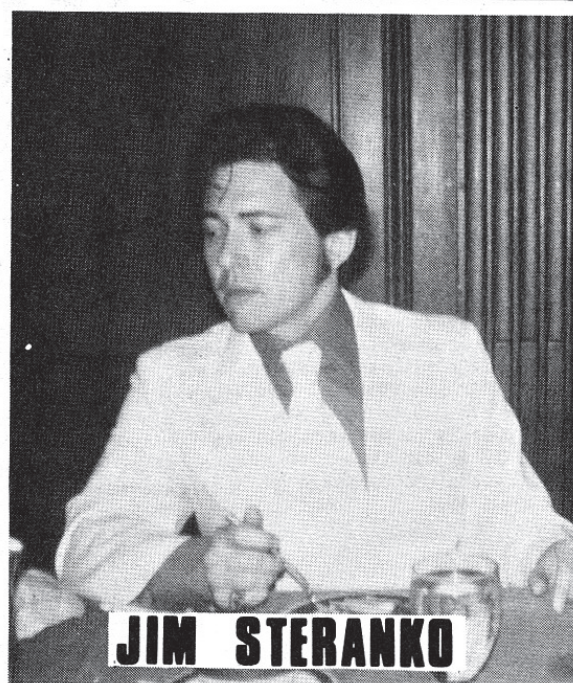
Alyn devotes several minutes to a banal question-and-answer session, during which late-comers asked questions about things Alyn had already explained (the classic, "How did you fly?" among them) Alyn demonstrated the severe limits of his fuzzy recollections (he could not say, for example, what role ex-Superman editor Mort Weisinger played in the writing of the screenplay of ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN) beyond the quasi-humorous anecdotes he dutifully recited.

The audience held its collective breath, waiting expectantly for the moment when a small, childish voice would pipe up from the back of the auditorium, like a ghost from Alyn's personal appearance tours of the '40's, to ask the great flesh-and-blood Man of Steel to fly. Oddly enough, it never came.





GARDNER FOX



JIM STERANKO

AWARDS LUNCHEON

Report by **BILL CANTEY**

Transcription by **JEFF WASSERMAN & BOB ZIMMERMAN**

The 1971 Comic Art Awards Luncheon was an orderly highlight of the New York Convention. The generation gap closed with a satisfying sigh as older fans in coats and ties sat down to break bread with their younger brethren who were attired in --ah-- more bizarre clothing. At numerous tables, some fans obligingly tied back their long hair, temporarily exchanging their "cave-man" look for a "frontiersman" appearance.

Food was promptly served, and just as promptly disposed of; all attending being anxious to attack the real meat of the meeting.

Seated at the high table, Kirk Alyn, the serial Superman from the forties began an impressive line-up. Although Mr. Alyn was noticeably silent during the gab sessions that followed the introductions, he would later address a large assembly, in a lengthy and highly entertaining talk on the, now happy, hazards of portraying the Man Of Steel, as well as a number of other equally difficult assignments. His book, *A JOB FOR SUPERMAN*, was on sale in the dealer's room, and an autographed copy made a super-fine souvenir of the convention.

Next, Gardner Fox, an award recipient, was seated to the immediate right of Convention Chairman, Phil Seuling. On Phil's left, Jim Steranko, who would receive the second award. John Benson held down the

final position as interview-moderator.

Often, conventioners are accused of presenting awards to anyone with a "name" who'll show up. Not true in this case; over four dozen professional writers and artists were in attendance at the 1971 Comic Art Convention, which completely squelched any such thought.

The selection of Fox and Steranko to receive special honors was a stroke of genius. First, Gardner Fox is the most prolific producer of stories, characters, and comic book ideas that the industry has ever seen. A thirty-odd year veteran of comic book writing, Fox has contributed something close to fifty million words to the worlds of popular fiction. Which is the equivalent of a thousand novels at a pace of over twenty novels a year. And he's still writing. Mr. Fox entered the comic book field in its golden age beginning, when the accent for creation and the responsibility for success was placed heavily on the writer, with the artists taking a back seat. The general contention being that one picture may be worth a thousand words; but it takes words to say that. Gardner Fox in the pursuit of his love affair with words has invented a multitude of worlds. Indeed, the DC empire was built upon a Fox Foundation.

Second, Jim Steranko, the personification of the immediate presence in the comics world, both as fan and professional. His

success as an artist, writer, editor, and publisher in such a relatively short period of time indicates a human dynamo of talent as well as a genuine love for the graphic story. And again in reference to the "one picture, thousand words" theory, Jim Steranko knows *which* thousand words can be replaced by a picture. His blendings of words and pictures emerge as music for the eyes; music, being another field wherein Steranko enjoys more than a fair degree of talent. His place in the final history of comics is already assured, and his presence at the Awards-Luncheon lent a fine feeling of generation-balance to the occasion.

After Phil Seuling's introduction wherein Jim Steranko emerged as "one of the best artists in the field," Gardner Fox, "one of the best writers," and John Benson, "one of the best interviewers," the talk-fest began in earnest. I don't recall if Kirk Alyn was described as, "one of the most exciting film actors," or not, but Phil Seuling is very much the diplomat; and held the four-day convention together almost single-handedly in spite of blunders by hotel management (and mis-management) in their frequent attempts to sabotage the entire affair by re-renting convention space already consigned to scheduled activities. The Luncheon period was one of the few times that Phil wasn't racing around like a hairy Wozy Winks, recovering fumbles not of his making. An amazing man, and a super-fan, Phil Seul-

ing, one of the best convention chairmen --oh hell, the best!

John Benson took over with a fine, warming-up session of questions. Following, is a full transcription of the interviews with Guests Jim Steranko and Gardner Fox by John Benson and Phil Seuling respectively:

JOHN BENSON: There are a lot of fine professionals, but Jim is about the only one creating comics in a single, individual way today. I think I know how you got into comics because you went around the country and had and that's that. What did you do before you went into the comics field? I understand that you worked in magic and so forth. Was this a sideline or your main occupation at that time?

JIM STERANKO: Magic was more or less a hobby. I worked in bars, as a close-up magician behind the bar; I worked table to table. I wrote a number of books on magic, most of which will be republished by SUPERGRAPHICS in the next year perhaps. Since the time I was 17, I supplemented my income by playing in almost every band within 50 miles of my town, which is Reading, Pennsylvania. I played every instrument, but primarily the guitar. As a livelihood, I've done nothing but artwork in one form or another. Finally, when I got into comics, I was an art director at a small advertising agency in Reading.

JOHN: There's one question that particularly interests me. I think that in the last several years, although you've done some comic work, you've done it because you like the field, other than your other outside sources of income. Do you think that there is any relationship between, that the fact comics are not your own field and that you've done many unusual things in comics that aren't otherwise being done today?

JIM: I think there is a corollation between those things, John. For example, when I worked as an art director in the ad agency, I was constantly viewing many different kinds of artwork. I myself was doing wash drawings, photo touchings of large machinery by air brush, doing compositions, typography and so forth. Really, I've said this many times, but I don't consider myself an artist. When I think about people in comics like Reed Crandall, Neal Adams, and a half dozen other people, who really draw amazingly well (there are many I'm leaving out, of course), I realize that these people are the real artists in the comics. If I would have to categorize myself, I would probably say that I belong in the class of the storyteller. As a matter of fact, things like typography, design, photography gimmicks, op art and pop art in my comics, which came from films, from radio, from pulps, from the ad agency, from business, from everything that I could possibly apply from my entire background (including the magic I have done and the gigs I have played over a period of 13 years), go into every comic book story. Nick Fury became Steranko. I gave him my background and said, "Here, this is what you are." I wrote him into it. So perhaps every area that I'm interested in eventually will show up in most of my stories.

JOHN: And incidentally, someone told me that Mr. Miracle was based on one of your magic books.

JIM: Yes, as a matter of fact, that is

true. I remember that when I first met Jack Kirby, I gave him one of my books. It was called, STERANKO'S WORLD OF ESCAPES. There I had explained how to break out of jail cells, packing boxes dropped to the bottom of a river and etc. And soon afterward, he did a SHIELD story when it was in STRANGE TALES, about a jail break; of course, it was all Kirby, there was nothing of Steranko there, yet it inspired him to do that. But about a year and a half ago, I met Jack in New York; he had moved out to the coast and came back to New York City. Jack said this to me: "Kid, you don't know what you got." "What do you mean, Jack?" "No, no. I'll tell you later. You don't know what you got." "Okay." I didn't know what he was talking about. He elaborated on it a little bit, but what he was saying was that it was something I knew about, that I hadn't exploited, taken advantage of, or used to my best possible advantage. About a year later, MR. MIRACLE came out. And Mr. Miracle was based on that book, STERANKO'S WORLD OF ESCAPES. So, I suppose by rights, you could say I was Mr. Miracle, which completes a very strange cycle. A cycle of a boy growing up, being influenced by comic books, getting into the business as an artist and writer, and suddenly finding a book on the newsstands that's roughly based on some of his exploits.

JOHN: In your HISTORY OF COMICS [Volume I], the long early piece on the pulps is certain evidence that you had conversations personally with some of the big pulp writers. I wonder if you knew any anecdotes that would make that history interesting.

JIM: Of course I have many anecdotes, but I don't think that any could be told in public. There is a man that I referred to in that book who has written THE SHADOW, who has written many books on magic and has been an idol of mine for years and years. He was the editor of GENT MAGAZINE when they were competing heavily with PLAYBOY. He's the editor of ROAD MAGAZINE now. His name is Bruce Elliot. Bruce Elliot was like my father here in New York City. He's always there to give advice, to turn me on to the right people and so forth. Now Bruce wrote for comics, he wrote for pulps, he wrote things like RED DRAGON COMICS, he wrote NICK CARTER and others. He wrote many, many pulp stories and a number of SHADOW stories in the late forties when THE SHADOW became a detective. Now, through Bruce I met Walter Gibson. Walter Gibson, as most of you know, is really the author of THE SHADOW. He wrote THE SHADOW under the pen name of Maxwell Grant. Now the last time I saw Walter was about five months ago. He's in his seventies, he's an amazing man, he's very prolific. He was writing as much as twenty thousand words a day, which is incredible. He wrote a novel every other week. They were good novels; they were creative. All pulp work was rather formulated as Gardner Fox will probably tell you later. He was amazingly inventive, and besides THE SHADOW, he wrote THE SHADOW COMICS and worked for Charles Biro writing crime stories; Crime Reporter-type of things. Walter Gibson is sort of Bruce Elliot's father and sort of took care of him. And so if you really want to put this puzzle together, you might call me the son of the son of The Shadow. Who knows? [Laughter]

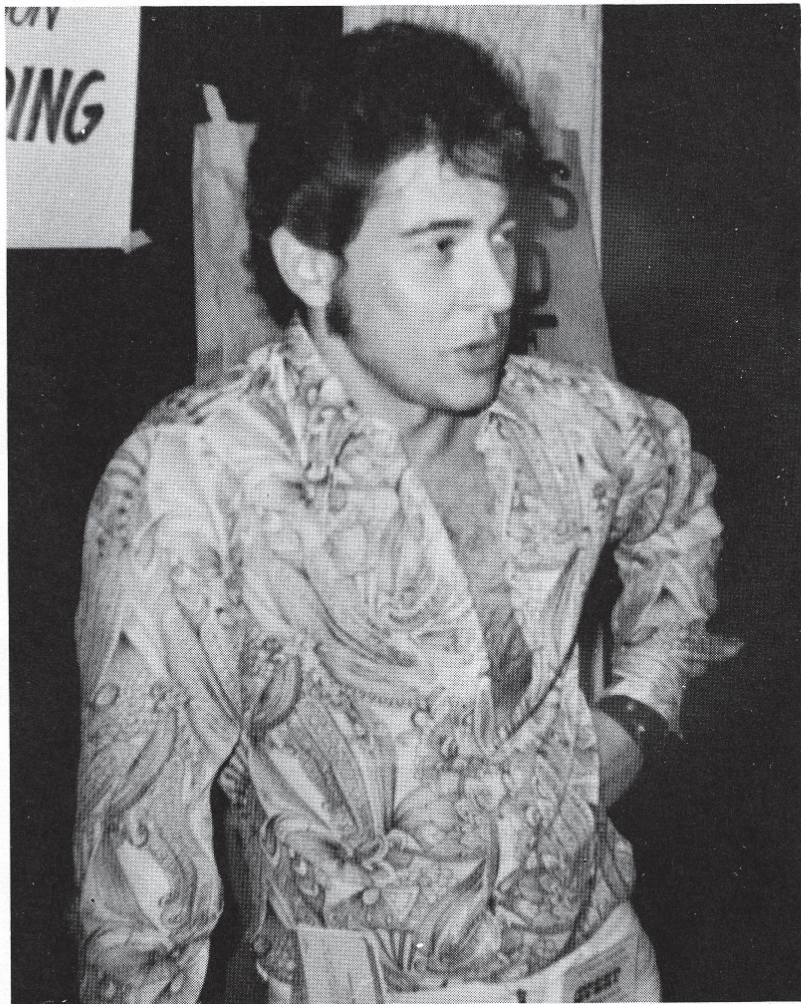
JOHN: In preparing THE HISTORY OF COMICS, it would interest me to know what was your starting point, the structure of the book. Did you try to write an outline for

it; in other words, an extensive written outline, or did you go through the research first to find out how the structure fit?

JIM: Well, the story of THE HISTORY OF COMICS is rather complex. [Addressing audience:] If you would like to hear it, I'll tell you, but it would take a few minutes. [Applause]

I'd ride from Pennsylvania to New York and after you've made the trip about three hundred times, it gets tiring. It takes about two or three hours depending on the traffic, the weather and so forth. So in order to amuse myself and not fall asleep as I'm always prone to do, I play games. Little mind games. Right around the time the idea for THE HISTORY OF COMICS STARTED, I thought that perhaps it would be a good idea if I spent the two hours on the trip to New York thinking of an idea that would earn me 100 or 500 dollars. If I could think of one idea in those two hours, it would be worth the trip. And I conceived the idea of doing a book about the history of comics as a Marvel summer one-shot. Marvel always has been hung up in the summer as to what to put out. Wouldn't it be great to do twenty pages of comic book history in one of those books? I began elaborating on that idea and by the time I got to New York, it was going to be a MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT 75¢ slick book like TRUE ROMANCES, if you can call that a slick book. I presented the idea to Stan Lee, and he was kind of cool about it. Of course I had nothing to show him, I had no presentation. One interesting sidelight, was that about a year earlier, maybe in 1968, I had taken a presentation called something like, HOW TO WRITE AND DRAW FOR THE COMICS, to my agent, Henry Morrison. The presentation was with illustrations and a typed-up outline of the book. I was going to tell how to write and draw for comics, and include a gallery of comic art. Another section to that was going to reprint some comics.

Anyway, I presented the idea to Stan. I then went home, worked on the idea and presented it to him again in this fashion. I said, 'It will write a book and we'll call it STAN LEE'S HISTORY OF COMICS.' I knew I wasn't getting through to him earlier, so I changed my approach. 'This book will be so good, you can't afford not to be able to put your name on it.' And so he consented to it. [Laughter] This is taking nothing away from Stan. I told him, 'I will give you x percentage to put your name on this book, because the name Stan Lee is magic; it sells.' So whatever you put his name on will sell well. Anyway, I collected many fanzines and I browsed through my comic collection. Originally I intended to have 16 chapters in the book. The book was to be 64 pages, 8 1/2 x 11. That's about one fourth the size of the book now. I talked to a friend of mine and I gave him the complete format of the book on little playing card reproductions which broke it down into what I told him. I gave him all the fanzines and he wrote me an outline based on those fanzine articles. Full of misinformation. I took that outline and talked to the people connected to the industry; people I worked with, people that I didn't work with, but knew; people that I had to call up on the phone; people that I didn't know, but admired. The manuscript was originally 300 pages long. If you go up to the Sky Top Room, you'll see a display of THE HISTORY OF COMICS material. It contains some handwritten



be alive, to do what he's doing. He has this whole attitude of, "Holy Smokes, I get paid for this?" And I'm talking, of course, about the Ernie Banks of comic books: Gardner Fox, who said just those words: "I get paid for this?" Is that figure of five million words kind of accurate? Fifty million would be close. Isn't that incredible? Fifty million words and still enjoying it. I think that's fantastic. I'm going to ask you a nice, easy question in the beginning. What are your sources? I mean besides everything in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Where do you find the thoughts that lead you on.

GARDNER FOX: The first thought obviously comes from inside my head, but actually, I maintain two file cabinets chock-full of stuff. As my wife can tell you, the attic is crammed with books and magazines -- all the LIFE Science Nature books and all that kind of thing. Actually, what I don't have at my fingertips at home are travel books. Anything that I need about unusual facts of science or nature, I can find in my files or somewhere among the, at least 3000 books that I have. One rule we do have in the house is that nobody touches my books, not even my grandchildren, because I know just about where everything is; if it's downstairs, or up in the attic, or in a corner somewhere, that's where it is.

PHIL: I guess that's a fairly accurate description of your mind. Do you love to store away little known facts? Do you have the kind of mind that can answer the \$64,000 question?

GARDNER: I go in for trivia because you never know when some little fact, some little legend can be put to some good use in a story, whether it's a comic book or a novel that you're writing. Sometimes some fact or legend will lend a little extra flavor and improve the atmosphere of the story.

PHIL: I really didn't mean that your mind was a storehouse for useless information, [laughter] -- which I realized after I had asked you. What I wanted to ask you was, "What are your pet subjects?" I feel that I am drawn into some things that I have no business being drawn into, like vertebrate anatomy. What are your favorite fields?

GARDNER: I am a lawyer, but I haven't practiced law in 33 years. I was a lawyer before I became a comic book writer. I'm always interested in knowledge, if only for the sake of knowledge. My only problem is that when I'm looking up things, I get so involved in reading and researching, I have to say, "Let's get back to work. We're not making any money this way." I remember that when I once wrote THE SWORDSMAN, I had to get a map of the city of Cairo in the year 1350. Well, you'd figure that this is a little difficult to get, but I managed to track one down in a Mount Vernon library. The librarians just hated to see me come in, [laughter] -- because if I couldn't find something in their library, and I knew it pretty well, they didn't have much chance of finding it either. I remember that I once went through two books for the word, 'versitrix.' I know now that it's a medieval term for the member of the household who carries around the spending money in a purse. I searched thru Anglo-Saxon dictionaries, all kinds of dictionaries, but I couldn't find it. So finally, I went to a reference library and said "Can you tell me what the word 'versitrix' "

pages by me. The entire book was written in long hand. If you go, you'll see some of those pages, if you can read them. Putting together the book, collecting the facts and verifying it, was quite a task. The second volume that will be coming out in August was even tougher because I was dealing, not only with just two top companies, National and Marvel, where many of the people remain, but with companies that were defunct for twenty-five years; Fiction House, Saint John, Quality and so forth. Volume II was really very tough to put together. It will be much bigger than Volume I, with 400 illustrations in it. It's going to be quite a book. I think I mentioned most of it John. Maybe I touched upon something you would like to ask me about.

JOHN: I think that that does cover what I was interested in finding out. The book was published by SUPERGRAPHICS. This is your publishing house and I would like to know what houses you used before.

JIM: Well, working as I have in many areas of, not only comics, I thought it would be wise to stop working for other people and maybe do a little for myself. I think I made a lot of money for a lot of people over the years, and really have almost nothing to show for it. So I decided to take a publishing venture myself, and came up with SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLISHING COMPANY. What we will publish is all comics-related material. I have a man working right now who will be doing a series of film books. The first one may be out in September or October. I guarantee you that they'll be the most exciting film books that you've seen in a long time. I bought the copyright back on

all of my magic books. I will be republishing them, which are completely devoid of comic material, but I think comic book fans and myself included, will enjoy the magic books and doing the tricks. I think many of the people here have probably seen me do a card or coin trick. I have several other projects in the works, that I can't tell you about right now, because they're rather far away. I don't want to give away the impact that they will have when I announce them. There are other things coming up. Of course I'm working on THE MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART, which will be in full color with comic material; TALON, (of course many people have asked me about this), the S&S character that will be out in LIFE MAGAZINE size with a full color, wrap-around cover; a book called HOW TO WRITE AND DRAW FOR THE COMICS; and one HISTORY OF COMICS each year. There will be about six HISTORY's altogether. This year, Volume II will be out. That's THE RETURN OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. Next year, THE SON OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. The following year THE REVENGE OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. [Laughter, applause]

PHIL SEULING: I'm waiting for THE HISTORY OF COMICS MEETS ABBOT AND COSTELLO. [Laughter] I listen to baseball a lot. That's one of my hang-ups. And every sports writer that hits Chicago comes away with stories of one man: Ernie Banks. He's 40 years old now and he has played baseball for a good long time now, maybe 20 years, and he has hit 500 home runs. Every day he gets out there, he looks around. It could be raining, there could be snow on the ground, but yet he says, "Isn't it a beautiful day for baseball?" He gets out there and he's glad to

means? I think I know what it means, but before I use it in a book, I want to be sure." Well, they spent about three weeks looking up that word and they couldn't find it either. [Laughter] So everytime I came near that reference desk, they began to groan. I'm interested in knowledge, just for the sake of learning. It's kind of a hobby with me. I like sports; I follow the Mets, the Jets, and all that stuff. I have season tickets at the Saint John Basketball games and I drag my wife to them occasionally. I get a lot of fun out of life. I'm not rich, but I get a lot of fun out of life.

PHIL: I think that what you've just described is your sense of wonder, which is operating all the time. It makes me marvel that there are times when I turn off and that after fifty million words in comic books, I don't think you'll ever turn off. What do you read for your own amusement? Do you do any pastime reading?

GARDNER: I read the works of two writers. I reread them and reread them. One, I'm sure no one has ever heard of, Jeffrey Farnell, and the other is a mystery writer, John Dixon Carter, whose style I admire tremendously. He also writes as "Carter Dixon." I think he's absolutely fantastic. I can still remember the time I read my first Edgar Rice Burroughs' on a brownstone stoop in Brooklyn. I think I was eleven years old when I got THE GODS OF MARS and THE WARLORDS OF MARS. This opened up a complete new world for me. When I was eleven years old, there were no comics. I read all the Burroughs', Harold Lamb's, Albert Mundy's, and most of those I have home in my library. Once in a while, I'll pick one up and reread it and enjoy it.

PHIL: You've been in the business a long time and I think that it tells a lot about you since we on the fringe of the field can see the great hollowness, emptiness, stubbornness and minds that won't move, in and of the industry. Now that you have some perspective in the field, have you ever regretted any directions the field has not taken? Are there any things that you think could have been done more fully?

GARDNER: That's a very tough question. First of all, as a creative person, I never set any business standards for any of the outfits I worked with. Where creativity comes into conflict with the sales department, creativity will always take a backseat to sales. I don't care what it

is. I know that at some of the paperback outfits I write for, their every move is dictated by the sales department. If such and such is selling, write that. Don't write what isn't selling. The comic book publishers are guided on that same principle. Now for something out of my own personal experience... I still love a character called ADAM STRANGE. [Applause] I enjoyed writing Adam Strange tremendously, but as they say, "the Almighty Dollar rears its head." It wasn't selling as well as other things and at that time, National made a change-over and gave Julie Schwartz and me BATMAN to write. That's when the New Look came in. Creativity must necessarily take a back seat so any new direction in artwork or writing must keep the sales in mind. This is an unfortunate part of our world but it happens to be true. A lot of times, what writers would like to write, or the way they would like to handle a story cannot be done because of certain -- let's call them -- editorial policies.

I feel that if the publishers change their viewpoints on a lot of things, there would be millions of new directions. Offhand, I wouldn't want to say what they would be without actually sitting down and giving that question a good couple of hours to think about. The commercial end of it, however, always has to be considered in anything like that.

PHIL: If you were to meet that mythical angel that everybody reads about and he came down with millions of dollars in his pockets and said, "Gardner, I like you. I'll give you any price to write anything you want," what would you be doing?

GARDNER: I enjoy writing fantasy. I enjoy writing sword and sorcery. I enjoy any kind of story that is entertaining. If I had a million dollars, I don't think my life would change one iota. All it would mean to me would be security, so that if somebody didn't like that story or didn't like that novel, I could still eat. And I enjoy eating. [Laughter]

PHIL: Gardner, you've stirred the imagination, the hearts and the minds of many. What have been the rewards for you?

GARDNER: Well, of course, this Luncheon is reward enough. I think, though, that there are two rewards. One is the self-satisfaction of turning out a story that you really think is good. Now by that, I'm not on an ego trip. What I mean is that you do the best you can. I will say

that with nine out of ten stories that I write, there is always this nagging doubt; "Could this have been better? How could I have made it better?" But, of course, when you're confronted with deadlines, you don't have too much time to put it away for a month; there's an artist waiting. He has to eat too, you know. So you bring the script in and that's it. But there's always that little aching feeling that it could have been better. The other reward is the fact that the fans say that they enjoy this, that they remember that. It's always a lot of fun to be able to bring pleasure to people. I'm sure that writers, while they write for money (no question about that), will attest that there is a certain amount of good feeling that's involved in this kind of work.

PHIL: Gardner, my appreciation of your last fifty million words is second only to my anticipation to your next fifty million. [Applause]

GARDNER: I'm not through, Phil. I want to tell you that sometimes I feel like 175 years old. Other times I feel like 20; and I still have a lot of my best writing ahead of me. Maybe I'll try to get some of those fifty million words out.

After the two interviews, there followed a short question and answer period.

Steranko and Fox disagreed mildly on the possibilities of breaking into the comic book business as a new, creative writer. Fox advised hopeful, young writers to consider television, or anything but comics. Still, if you're determined to write for comics, the best bet is to tailor your stories to suit the comic format before approaching the comic book editor. Break it down into pages and panels, prove its adaptability. It's up to you to sell your story by bending your efforts in the comic medium's direction. No easy task for a newcomer.

Jim Steranko is of the opinion that new talent, real talent, will always find room in comics. He passed on the advice given him when he first entered the art field via an advertising agency. The secret of success? Be good at your craft; so good that when you approach a company with a sample of your work, they'll hire you to keep you from going to the competition. Determination and practice, it's that simple. Now you know.

Actual presentation of the Award Plaques concluded the luncheon. The first, inscribed, "To Gardner Fox for the worlds he has created and the marvels he has wrought through his storytelling in the field of comic art." The second, "To Jim Steranko for the agility of mind and pen he has used to bring excitement to the field of comic art."

Heavy stuff, it seems now. But a sincere and deeply appreciated event. Gardner Fox beamed with pleasure by an overwhelming display of fan gratitude. Jim Steranko accepted his award as a vote of confidence, modestly reminding the assembly that he'd written less than thirty comic stories; seemingly a small contribution to Gardner Fox's mind-stunning record.

But, the combination of "old-timer" and "new-comer" guests of honor increased the quality of the luncheon (as planned), and gave the gathering of fans a valued, "cross-section" view of living, comic history.



L to R: Kirk Alyn, Mrs. Fox, Gardner Fox

THE PARADE OF...



SUPER-STARS



THE LINE-UP:

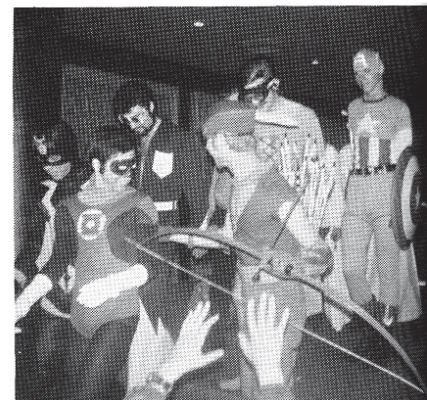
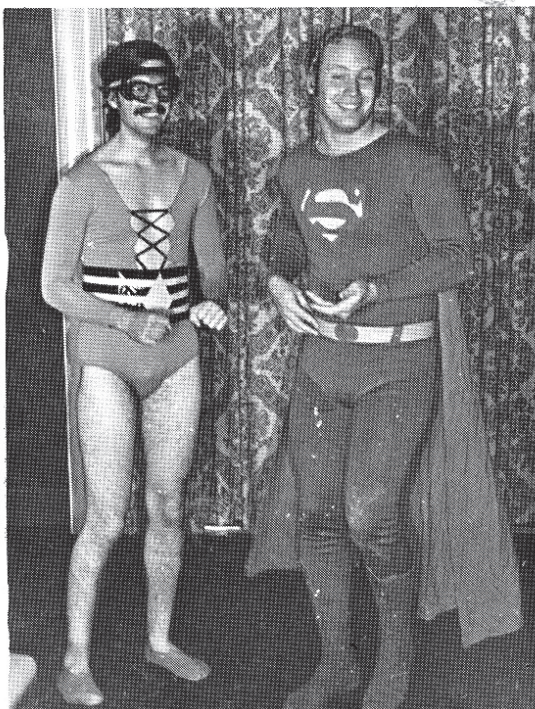
BLACK BOLT [with black box on head].... Ethan Roberts
CAPTAIN AMERICA [with a trashcan shield].. Bob Miller
THE GHOST RIDER..... Jerry Sinkovich
COUSIN EERIE..... Neal Pozner
COLONEL SANDERS THE JUNKIE..... John Suzac
MR. SPOCK..... Bill Garnett
SUPER STERANKO..... Gerard Geary
BLACK BOLT [in blue and black]..... Mike Zeck
DEADMAN..... Kurt Golzonk
THOR [with white helmet]..... Al Bradford
FRANKLIN RICHARDS..... Natasha Hyman
WILMA DEERING..... Heida Saha
BOY, SON OF TARZAN..... Matthew Saha
THE SHADOW..... Allan Emanuel
DARKSEID..... Martin Pasko
CAPTAIN AMERICA [with red shield]..... Jim Glenn
PLASTIC MAN..... Bob Weckesser
GREEN LANTERN..... Mike Gilbert
THOR..... Jeff Strell
THE VISION..... David V...
GREEN ARROW..... Harry Sobel
SUPERMAN [in the television threads]..... Mike Nolan

PRIZE WINNERS:

MIKE ZECK..... Black Bolt
KURT GOLZONK..... Deadman
HEIDI SAHA..... Wilma Deering

THE JUDGES:

Gardner Fox * Jim Steranko * Kirk Alyn



After the costume parade, those who were slated to appear on the EC Panel made anything but a prompt appearance. Seeing as to how he only wanted a few minutes for his own question and answer period with the fans, and being the true showman he is, Steranko decided that he should fill the gap in the con schedule with his own event.



THE RHYTHM OF STERANKO

Report by JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

Instead of talking about his HISTORY OF COMICS, Steranko immediately asked for questions from the assembly. The crowd was rather small. The EC Panel was what was scheduled and none expected Steranko to be holding his discussion at that time. The small audience, limited to questions outside of THE HISTORY OF COMICS by Steranko's request (he had just talked about it for a half hour at the Luncheon that same day), managed to come up with quite a few interesting ones.

The first of which was about Jim's future jobs for Marvel and DC. Jim said that none existed at the moment. He echoed a remark that Stan Lee made on one of Alex Bennett's radio shows last year; that Jim can have an assignment just as soon as

they can come up with one that doesn't have a definite deadline. "I don't work on comic book deadlines again, ever." Jim would work on SUPERGRAPHICS matters first before those of comic books.

The next question was a result of the first. Asked why he doesn't do any comic book work now, Jim replied that he was never making so little money during his life as he was during his comic book days. He explained that he had been six feet tall before he took on the jobs of being a comic book artist, a member of a band and an art director at an advertising agency at the same time.

Addressing the son of the son of the Shadow, a fan asked if Bantam Paperbacks were planning to reprint anymore SHADOW novels. The grandson of Lamont Cranston said that Bantam was searching around for the best format to present it. Jim went on to say that Sandy Kassim, who did the first few Shadow covers, drew the caped nemesis of crime as a lunatic, a grinning madman, and that the readers didn't like this image. "I for one would love to do those covers. Hint, hint, in case anybody from Bantam is out there. [Applause]"

Asked if he knew if further Spider novels would be reprinted, Jim admitted that he doesn't know everything about the pulps. "You're getting humble," called a fan. On that line, Jim went on to say that while he was painting the G-8 covers for Berkley Medallion, they were issuing the SPIDER, and that he was to do the covers of the second five SPIDER books. A fan asked why he was taken off the G-8 cover assignments. The SPIDER bombed, he said, but people bought the G-8's and as an experiment, Berkley Medallion decided to use the old pulp covers for the paperbacks. "This experiment bombed, right into the ground."

"Do I have any intention of wrapping up the loose ends of the SHIELD epic?" Jim repeated the question addressed to him. He replied, saying that he didn't want to tell the ending of "Who Is Scorpio?" and "Whatever Became of Scorpio?"; that he would like to finish the Scorpio stories in his MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART, perhaps in text form. If Marvel denies him the permission to end it in his own magazine, Jim said that he would produce the story without having anything to do with SHIELD; but starring in it would be a secret agent with an eye patch.

Jim announced that a Hollywood studio was producing a screenplay of his and that he was very interested in the film industry. The name of it was still tentative and that was all he could say about it.

"As a matter of fact, I probably learned to read by reading comic books," answered Steranko. He was always interested in comics, but never got a chance to get into them until he joined Harvey, created a lot of characters for them and didn't like the way they were drawn. He then showed samples to other companies and was taken in. That was how Steranko got started in comics.

"Whatever happened to Secret Agent X?" was the question. Being that it was a Paramount property, slated for TV, when the Paramount Cartoon Studios closed, the entire project was stopped. Someday, Jim hoped, he could print the 20 pages of



pencils from the project in the MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART. The first issue of this publication should be out in early '72, announced Jim.

"Why would you ask me that question?" Jim went on to explain that it was *Dan Adkins* who drew the *Starhawk* strip, *not he*. The *Guardians of the Galaxy* bombed so badly that the *Goodmans* decided to have no more science fiction, so they shelved *Starhawk*.

Jim then fielded the question of who he prefers to ink his work, himself or *Joe Sinnott*. "Well, actually, I don't like inking my own work, because it's so tough, there's so much detail." He explained that after writing, pencilling and planning the layouts of a strip, he didn't like to have to go over it again in ink; that he'd rather have someone else do it. *Sinnott*, whose style is as tight as his own, made the strip look much better than it really was, explained *Steranko*. *Frank Giacoia's* loose and bold style helped to loosen the strip and added a lot of his own style to what he inked.

Jim would like to do comics in a different format; that one was expected after thirty years of the same thing. It would be done *SUPERGRAPHICS*-wise, he added.

Talon, he answered, will cost around five dollars and be the size of *LIFE MAGAZINE* with black and white insides. It will have a full color cover, wrap-around. *Marvel* was never intended to have *Talon*, he explained. He went on to say that most sword and sorcery stories now in the comics fall short of *Robert E. Howard's* intentions. Jim said that he believed that he could do it, but *not* in the style that he did *SHIELD*, with all its psychedelic and pop art effects.

Jim started to list who influenced his art: *Chester Ghould*, *Joe Maneely*, *Wallace Wood*, *Jack Kirby*, *Hogarth*, *Poster* and in some way, almost all the art he had ever seen.

Steranko intends to assemble the very best of *fan writers* for *SUPERGRAPHICS*, and do whatever artwork that is needed for the magazine. Jim doesn't want to write as he has plenty of his own to write besides *THE MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART*.

Westerns are a favorite of Jim's, as he pointed out. The art exhibition held a few western paintings of Jim's. He doesn't like doing *S&S*, or science fiction as much as he likes to do western illustrations.

Jim then explained about his book about drugs. He said that *THE BLOCK*, whose originals were on display at the con, was published by *SUPERGRAPHICS* and copies are available to any organization who requests them.

"I believe that comics can be used to *instruct*, to *inform* and *educate* people. I think that comics have an incredible power. [Applause] They do. Just judging by myself, comics have influenced me greatly, and I think that they have influenced minds. It's the *literature of the young*. I think I said it in *THE HISTORY OF COMICS* that the comic book, not the comic strip, but the comic book, is the sole turf of the pre-adolescent people. I think that they believe in it, they take it seriously and it can be used to help. We have yet to prove it, I suppose, but whatever I can do in that direction or in the anti-drug direction,

I will do. If I have to do 20 of them I'll do them. If they keep using them, I'll keep doing them. [Applause]

Approached about DC's *Edugraphics Program*, Jim replied, "What *Edugraphics Program*? There isn't any."

Another question on sword and sorcery followed the query asked for Jim's thoughts on *Marvel's Conan*. "I think that they ought to get rid of the people on it and start from scratch."

Jim explained that everything that was himself was put into *Nick Fury*. He went on to say that the ending of the *Scorpio* plot as portrayed in the *AVENGERS* was *not* the way he had intended it to end. "They lied."

The question and answer period over, *Jim Steranko* started to drum up some business for his posters on sale in the dealers room and for the \$25 a night seminar he was holding on how to write and draw for the comics. Amidst the applause, Jim welcomed the crew from *EC* and started the introductions of the panel.

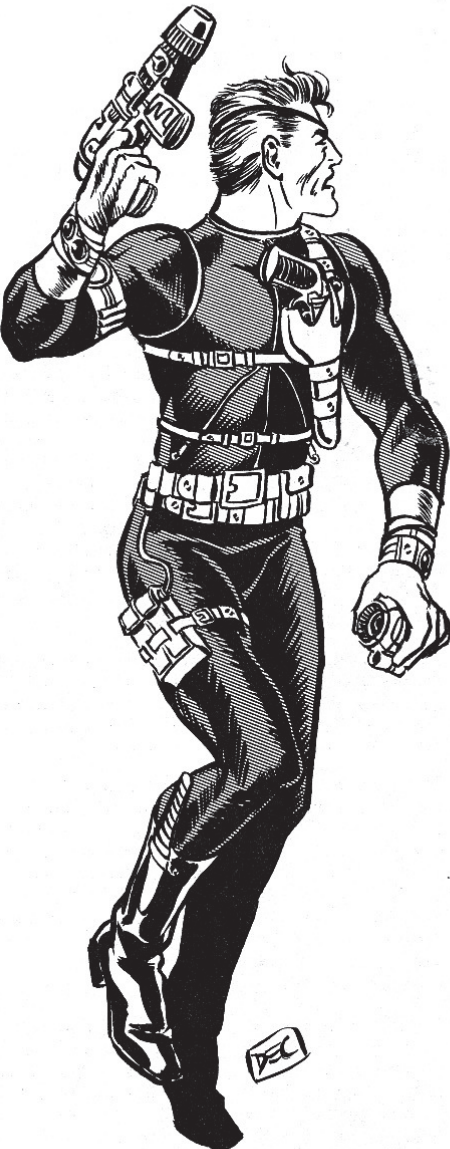
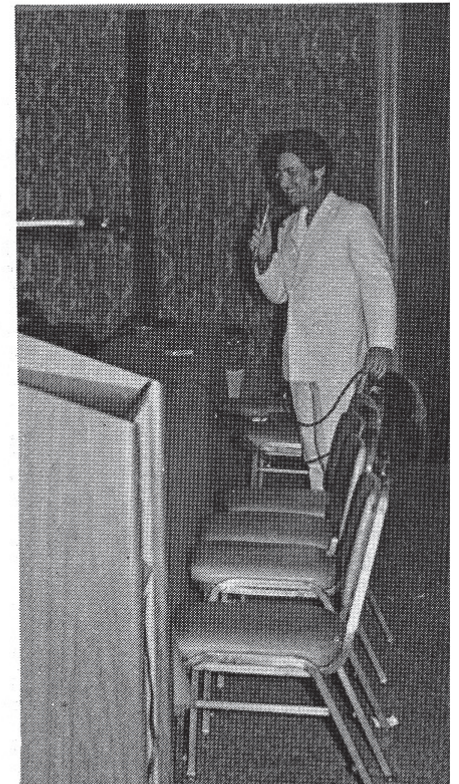


PHOTO ON PRECEDING PAGE: *Jim Steranko* question and answer session, taken from front of stage. BOTTOM: *Steranko*, taken from side of dias.

Illustration of *Val* on preceding page by *Jay Mike*; *Nick Fury* illustration by *Dan Cockrum*.



THE LIVING SPIRIT OF E.C.



Report by **BILL CANTEY**

Illustration by **BERNI WRIGHTSON**

There are worlds within worlds, and comic fandom must be the most "inside" world of all. For even inside that inside world exist a myriad of worlds, ranging from cherished collections of yellowed newspaper strips to a just recovered, favorite fanzine. Standing tall and secure in its position, the world of EC Comics is enthralling three times over. First, by virtue of its superior writing and artwork. Next, because of the fact that it "holds still;" a comparatively small line of titles were published, beginning in the very late forties and ending abruptly in the mid fifties. Their crushing overkill being affected by zealous do-gooders, envious competitors in the publishing world, and masterstrokes of stupidity on the part of distributors and wholesalers. But the third, and most enduring factor, was EC's enthusiasm, starting with the actual, creating era and continuing down to this present time of still struggling collectors, recollecting fanzines, and EC reprints, both amateur and professional. The overwhelming feeling of kinship that exists between the politically attacked professionals, who brought the comic book to its finest hour, and the often harassed comic fans, who continue to applaud them, was reflected in the EC Panel, a highlight of the 1971 Comic Art Convention.

The Panel, from a fan's eye view of left to right, included Al Williamson, a former EC artist, and, of course, a present day artist of exceptional talent. Bill Gaines, the mastermind and first writer of EC comics. The man whose imagination attracted and inspired the best artists and illustrators in the field. And the man who bore the brunt of the absurd political and press attack directed toward comics (and especially EC comics) in the mid-fifties. (It is interesting to note that EC's second writer, Al Feldstein is still employed by EC's MAD MAGAZINE as editor. EC lives in actuality, as

well, as in spirit). Joe Orlando, EC artist, and presently very active at National Periodicals as a writer and editor as well as an artist. Working with Wallace Wood, Joe developed an eye-pleasing style which enhanced many an EC classic. E. Nelson Bridwell, a National executive and expert on the legal aspects of publishing. Russ Cochran, EC fan exceptional. Whenever Bill Gaines' memory failed him during the panel discussion, Russ supplied additional information. Fantastic recall. Roger Hill, dedicated EC fan. Writer and artist for Squa Tront, a superlative EC fanzine. A quick conference between Russ and Roger could answer any question on EC's history; they're more than fans; they're disciples.

The panel began with introductions and general information to ascertain all assembled were aware of the subject to be discussed. A great "warming-up" story was told by Bill Gaines, referring to a fan letter written by a former EC reader who was a comics buying youngster when EC was an active publisher. Currently, as president of EC Fan Addict Club # 3, he wrote to Mr. Gaines to let him know how their five member group finally turned out. He, their president was a Ph.D. and head of the physics department of Drake University. Another was a doctor, the third a lawyer, the fourth a successful businessman, and the fifth -- was in jail. Which proves that comics not only causes delinquency, but doctors, lawyers, professors, and managers as well.

Opening the panel to questions not only gave the encounter a communicative flavor but provided a series of "springboards" for the panel members to expound upon. The first query gained us the information

that the average print run of an EC issue was between 350,000 and 400,000, with about 75% sales. Some of the more popular horror books went to 450,000 with even higher sales. Which would be a terrific percentage by today's standards. But, comics sales were much better twenty years ago, and EC was always a relatively small publisher, so no one made a fortune. Then, if EC was so popular, why did it fall? A one-two-three punch. One, bad publicity resulting from a congressional investigation of comics, condemnation of comics by P.T.A. committees and similar organizations, and the general feeling that since comics weren't really necessary and they *might* be harmful; why not stamp them out, and see if the crime rate would go down? (Almost no one over thirty held comic books as a fond memory from their childhood, so comics had no strong defenders). Two, the Comics Code Authority was formed, and -- well -- kicked the guts out of the comic story. (EC's main story-strength was in its love for the hard hitting climax). Three, while EC had the courage to publish uncoded comics, distributors and wholesalers wouldn't touch them. EC finally tried a series of coded comics, but their "bad" reputation had already ruined them. They just couldn't move their product.

The EC hard-cover book of horror stories was discussed next. Christmas of '71 was the hoped for publishing date.

A brief discussion of science fiction in the Gaines style focused attention on the EC classic, "Judgement Day." A hard-hitting story then, it holds up well now. Briefly, a colony of blue robots and orange robots, left to fend for themselves on an undeveloped planet are visi-

TOP PHOTO: Left to right: Al Williamson, Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, E. Nelson Bridwell, Russ Cochran, Roger Hill. BOTTOM PHOTO: Left to right: Al Williamson, Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, E. Nelson Bridwell.



WRIGHTSON
-71

ted by an ambassador from Earth to see if they're ready to join "The Great Galactic Republic." But, the orange-colored robots had gained and maintained an unfair advantage over the blue. "Not ready!", judges the ambassador, and re-enters his spaceship. After blast-off, the Earthman removes his space helmet. He is a negro. Beautiful! Published a second time as EC was in its death throes, the Comics Code Authority objected to the line, "---the beads of perspiration on his dark skin---." Incredible! But, Gaines stuck to his guns, and the story survived, beads of sweat and all, to become the most remembered EC science fiction tale. Bill Gaines is rightly proud of his science fiction magazines, and praised the work of Orlando, Wood, Williamson, and all the other super-talented artists who contributed to their high quality.

A question on the mechanics of lay-outs and artwork was referred to the artists, Al Williamson and Joe Orlando. EC placed its accent heavily on writing. Artists were restricted, but the writers had a clear understanding of the problems of developing stories artwise. Pre-lettered panel-pages were supplied by Al Feldstein leaving space for the drawings. A fast method of creating graphic stories for experts only. Al Williamson enjoyed doing his own layouts when possible. Joe Orlando preferred the pre-lettered pages to facilitate a creative mood; less tedious. Bill Gaines recalled some instances where the special talents of an artist should have been turned loose on certain jobs, allowing them to add more to the development of the story. But, time was a factor to be considered. Gaines wrote a story a day; Feldstein "broke it down" on the board, lettering was added, and the artist contributed his work last. Harvey Kurtzman, an artist, writer, and editor for EC, sketched in abbreviated figures and backgrounds, as he wrote, leaving no doubt what and where the artist assigned was to draw the finished product. Wow!

A hope for EC color reprints of high quality was stifled by Gaines. The hundreds of assembled fans were not - ah - typical people. The market for such a product just doesn't exist. We'll have to content ourselves with bits and pieces from Ballantine Paperbacks, Russ Cochran's fine EC PORTFOLIO, Alan Light's FLASHBACK's, and Nostalgia Press's hardback of horror. SQUA TRONT was a genuine labor of love; Jerry sold some of his treasured EC collection to finance his 'zine. Greater love has no fan, than that.

Someone made the observation that the popularity of Frank Frazetta's work relied on something more than the fact that it's superbly rendered. And could that undefinable quality be described? A good subject for artists on the panel. Joe Orlando's comment was pure praise for Frazetta's work. A Frank Frazetta exhibit was on display in the hotel; one look and the significance was obvious, if undefinable. The EC story, "Squeeze Play" was suggested as an example of Frazetta's comic art. Russ Cochran expounded on certain artists' styles being suited to certain stories. Frazetta being especially suited to action stories involving muscular men and beautiful women. Well put. Al Williamson, youngest of the EC artists, tried to explain his working conditions and arrangements with his fellow artists. It was a highly social atmosphere with mild confusion resulting to this day when EC addicts try to decide who did what. But, although a Frazetta or Torres panel may occasionally pop out of a Williamson story, the job was always better than 95%



Jim Steranko welcomes the EC Gang on stage; shown are [from L to R]: Bill Gaines [sitting], Jim Steranko, Al Williamson.

Williamson when signed by Al. Gaines insisted on an artist signing an assigned job, to build what he called EC's "star system." EC had no continuing characters (until their "new direction" mags attempted to adhere to Code Authority), and depended strictly on the quality of its writing and artwork to survive. An interesting (and humorous) sidelight was that Al Williamson assisted Frank Frazetta on the story, "Squeeze Play," after passing up the assignment because it looked too complicated. Russ Cochran and Roger Hill revealed that their research indicated that EC's artists often exchanged ideas, to the credit and enhancement of the finished product. EC had *life*; and it had it more abundantly.

E. Nelson Bridwell made an effort to explain the working of the Comics Code Authority; comparing the power of today's Code to the more "touchy" Code of the late fifties. A lot depends on which member of the Code checks the comic story. Basically, the Code "soft-peddles" everything. And EC couldn't survive that.

With refreshing candor, Bill Gaines rephrased and sharpened a fan's question, asking himself, "Did you plagiarize Ray Bradbury?" The answer was a resounding, "Yes!" But, Bradbury was not offended. Correspondence between the two resulted in EC's adaptation of more Bradbury stories, with only token payments given for comic publishing rights. (This story was confirmed by Ray Bradbury in his interview in CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN # 13).

Marie Severin was EC's coloring artist, according to a questioning fan. Didn't EC's artists want to color their own work? Joe Orlando and Al Williamson were quite content with her work. Bill Gaines recalls it as a highly workable arrangement. Good story, good artwork, good col-

oring. "A one-two-three punch that could only be ruined by the printer."

A quick question revealed that most of the one-page text stories of EC were written by Jerry DeFuccio.

MAD MAGAZINE to be a National Publication? Bill Gaines reveals that it already is. Having sold MAD to the Premier Corporation of America (a holding company) in 1960. They sold MAD to National in 1964. Kinney Enterprises owns National along with Warner Brothers, several other magazines, record companies, funeral parlors, and a multitude of other businesses in and outside of the country. "All part of the MAD empire!" quipped Gaines.

Is MAD worried about the competition of the NATIONAL LAMPOON? Mad is a very strong magazine with a very broad appeal. the LAMPOON is for the over eighteen, under thirty group; sexier and more sophisticated. No threat to MAD.

Which was better, the old MAD comic book or the new MAD MAGAZINE. Harvey Kurtzman was the editor of the original MAD comic with its outrageous lampoons of, then present and recently remembered, movie and comics characters. The current MAD is the more popular product. MAD MAGAZINE had an initial circulation of over two million, and is the fifth largest selling magazine in the country. Outselling, over the years, popular magazines like LIFE, LOOK, SATURDAY EVENING POST, COLLIER'S, LIBERTY, FAMILY CIRCLE, WOMAN'S DAY, T.V. GUIDE, and PLAYBOY! A fantastic achievement for a humor magazine, and a proud, happy note to end the EC Panel discussion.

Considering the hard work that Bill Gaines, Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, and the rest of the EC Gang put into their early magazines, and the terrific beating they took toward the end, it's a wonder they're willing to talk about them at all. But, it's a favorite topic; they're not embittered. Bill Gaines' final decision to go all out with MAD MAGAZINE was a winner; publishing one magazine a month instead of over a dozen was a lot less work for a lot more money. Still, he recalls the chaotic phrase of the EC saga, not as wasted years, but a time of stimulating activity and high creation. Nor will those years ever die. Gaines himself has a dozen copies of every EC comic ever published, as well as the original artwork. Dedicated collectors have complete and near complete collections, accumulated over periods of years at considerable expense. And when something can't and won't die, it *must* be great.

The EC era, a tangible fragment of the human spirit; I'm glad I lived when it happened.



EC Panel, from L to R:
Bill Gaines
Joe Orlando
E. Nelson Bridwell
Russ Cochran
Roger Hill

THE WERTHAM PANEL: WHY IT FAILED

Report by Bob Zimmerman



Left: Gerard Geary, right: Phil Seuling

Any comic fan who hears the name Fredric Wertham automatically feels an impulse to jeer. Wertham represents to every comic fan the illogical, the unfair, the over-generalized, and the inaccurate. He led to the destruction of innumerable comic companies and to the overwhelming fatalism that pervades the comic industry over the last fifteen years. Unfortunately, most fans know little beyond this about the subject. I suppose one of the purposes of the Wertham Panel was to clarify the subject to the fans. Since the discussion was called, "Was Wertham Right

After All?" its main purpose must have been partly this. Whatever the purpose of the panel, nothing of any value occurred. It was a complete failure.

Phil Seuling gave his usual 15-minute introduction of Gerard Geary, which was followed by Geary's own 10-minute speech on the subject of violence in comics. It was extremely interesting; many of his ideas were penetrating and intelligent. He asked for the removal of violence in comics. And in its stead, he pleaded for "...more artwork that is pleasing to the

eye and more stories that are pleasing to the spirit."

Unfortunately, Geary dealt more with generalities and emotions, than he did with facts and specifics. He complained about the violence in EC Comics even though EC has not existed in that form in almost fifteen years. He complained about the blood and gore in Warren Publications but Warren's sales figures are miniscule in comparison to Marvel's or National's.

Geary stated that violence in art and comics was wrong. This is good. Unfortunately, he felt that all violence was wrong. He called Shakespeare a "craftsman" because he used violence in his plays to a certain maintained degree. This is taking the idea to a ridiculous extreme.

None of these facts could have ruined the panel discussion to the degree it was wrecked by Geary. He had a sound idea and he attempted to tell us about it. Regrettably, he only tried to tell us. During the question-and-answer period, it became evident that Geary would not listen to anyone. He would constantly interrupt people to hop on a point that he could destroy them with, without actually listening to what they were saying. A man would talk of getting frustrations out in comics and Geary would say, "So you think it's alright to get the better of somebody else?" Another person would explain that the reason a collector buys an EC includes the issue number, the artist, the writer, the specific comic title, and the year. Geary would then say that it's because a collector likes to look at the pictures that glorify violence.

To emphasize this inability to listen, I shall quote from the letter Mr. Geary sent with the transcript of his speech:

"Any letters defending violence will be 'positively' ignored. However, I will pray that the Lord will help you see the light." [The quotation marks within the quote are not the product of the author of this article]

Geary, like Dr. Wertham, had many very good ideas but he could not listen or compromise and therefore failed to achieve anything which could benefit us all. The most unfortunate fact of it all was that, although Geary had something different and intelligent to say, he prevented its communication to the fans.





Report by BILL WILSON
Illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE

WILL EISNER'S
THE SPIRIT:

**A SLIDE
SHOW**

Certainly one of the most interesting, enjoyable, and educational events of the con, *for me at least*, was the slide show by John Benson of some of Will Eisner's finest work on THE SPIRIT. The one important thing which made it so was the fact that John managed to pick out some of the best-rendered and most amusing of Eisner's (and others') work on the strip from its beginning on June 2, 1940.

Besides merely showing the audience selected strips and panels, John managed to inject humor and interesting oddities and facts as he went along. For instance, one of the first slides was of the very first SPIRIT strip. If you happen to have that valuable piece of nostalgia locked up in a vault somewhere, check to see if Denny Colt wears a mask. *He doesn't*. How-

ever, when the page was reproduced in POLICE COMICS, a mask was added, and also the introductory panel was lengthened to conform to the change in size.

Emphasis in the slide show was placed on Eisner's odd angles, flashy splash panels and his use of newspaper headlines and the like in getting his point across. John remarked that, although Eisner was not an excellent artist, he was an excellent *storyteller*. And, although Eisner managed to come up with some fantastically intricate splash panels and actually made his characters come to life in his stories, I'd have to agree with John that he was a much better storyteller. His ability to keep a storyline constantly moving by utilizing his now-famous odd angle shots and even his poetic prologues and humor have had a very noticeable and excellent effect on many of today's artists, Jim Steranko for one, but there are many, many others.

Although Eisner's work was most emphasized, a considerable amount of time and a number of slides concentrated on artists who worked under him and with him on some of the strips, both on THE SPIRIT and on the back-up features in the Sunday SPIRIT section. Worthy of mentioning are

Bob Powell, who worked on Mr. Mystic, a four-page back-up feature; Nick Cardy and Klaus Nordling, who both worked on the LADY LUCK strip; Lou Fine, who handled THE SPIRIT while Eisner went to the army; Jerry Grandenetti; and Jules Feiffer, who added a dash of wit and humor in a back-up feature in THE SPIRIT section. These, men, fine artists all, were the tools used to make THE SPIRIT Sunday sections of the past so memorable today.

Unfortunately, the gradual downfall of the SPIRIT sections was also covered, following the shift to an eight page SPIRIT strip, then the change-over to only a frequent SPIRIT strip, and finally the drastic and terrible storyline switch to the adventures of Denny Colt in outer space.

But, aside from this, the slide show did much to preserve the name of Will Eisner in the annals of comicdom history and to give fans who may not have been that familiar with THE SPIRIT and/or Eisner the chance to see the excellent way in which the strip was handled.

No other comic strip deserved such an excellent presentation. Will Eisner's THE SPIRIT was *definitely* one of the best.