

Vol. 3, No. 184 Nov. 2023

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Contents

Writer/Editorial: Star-Crossed.....	2
The "Palmer" Raids	3
Tom Palmer talks to Alex Grand & Jim Thompson about inking—and <i>changing</i> —comics!	
Tom Palmer & Neal Adams At Marvel	43
Excerpts from James Rosen's interview with Palmer about a legendary art team.	
Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt!: "My Life With Wood!" (Part 2) .53	
Ralph Reese shares more with Michael T. Gilbert about his work with the great Wally Wood.	
Tributes To Joe Giella, Steve Skeates, & Lily Renee	59
re: [correspondence, comments, & corrections].....	63
FCA [Fawcett Collectors Of America] #243.....	71
P.C. Hamerlinck & Shaun Clancy present the Whiz Bang life of Capt. Billy Fawcett, Part II.	

On Our Cover: This breathtaking Tom Palmer painting appeared on the cover of The Avengers #402 (Sept. 1996), "The End of the Line"—which it was, since that was the final issue of the first volume of the series, until issue #500 came out, cover-dated Sept. 2004 and picking up the original numbering. Courtesy of Alex Grand & Jim Thompson.....

Above: Magneto (though not yet ID'd in the comic itself) and his mutant underling Amphibius think The Angel is dead. Hasn't either of them ever read a comicbook before? Script by Roy Thomas; pencils by Neal Adams; inks by Tom Palmer—from The X-Men #62 (Nov. 1969). Thanks to Sharon Karibian. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Tom Palmer,
Lily Renee, Joe Giella,
& Steve Skeates



Alter Ego™ issue 184, November 2023 (ISSN 1932-6890) is published bi-monthly by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Periodicals postage pending at Raleigh, NC. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Alter Ego, c/o TwoMorrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614.

Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. Alter Ego Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices. Six-issue subscriptions: \$68 US, \$103 Elsewhere, \$29 Digital Only. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. Alter Ego is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in China. FIRST PRINTING.



Star-Crossed

In some ways, Tom Palmer and I had a star-crossed relationship.

When he was suggested as penciler of *Doctor Strange* #171 in 1968, I was a bit underwhelmed with him as the replacement for Dan Adkins, and even Adkins' sticking around to ink that issue mollified me only a little.

With #172, Stan Lee decided Gene Colan should become *Doctor Strange* penciler, which pleased me no end—but I was less sanguine on learning this guy Palmer would stick around to ink the comic. "Has anyone ever seen any of his inking?" I asked Stan. I think the answer came back negative, but I guess the fact that he'd worked briefly in Wally Wood's studio predisposed them to take a chance on him. After all, that's where Marvel had got Dapper Dan Adkins from, right?

I confess to being skeptical—until roughly two seconds after I laid eyes upon the splash page of *Doctor Strange* #172 as penciled by Colan and inked by Palmer. While I wasn't immediately aware of what particular talents the new kid brought to the table—pen instead of brush, advertising techniques rather than standard comicbook skills—I knew what I liked, as did Stan. Even though the *Doctor Strange* title would soon go into limbo for a time, we all knew this Palmer dude was definitely worth hanging onto.

When Neal Adams came aboard a bit later to draw *The X-Men*, Tom was the obvious choice to ink him. Shortly afterward, I was fortunate to be able to snag him to ink a run of *Avengers* issues penciled by John Buscema. I also made sure he had a chance to hone his full-art abilities on a couple of horror classics adapted for Marvel's "mystery" titles. And I made one of my better (and easiest) decisions as associate editor (with Stan's blessing, of course) when I tapped him to embellish Gene Colan again, this time on *Tomb of Dracula*.

With all this history behind us, I was unpleasantly surprised when, not that long after reviving *Alter Ego* in 1999, I phoned Tom to suggest he be interviewed for the magazine.

"I knew you'd ask me and I've been dreading it," he said, "because I'm going to have to say no."

When I pressed him for a reason, he said he was again illustrating for Marvel (which I knew, of course), and he didn't want to hash over his 1960s-70s work in public... because that would just remind Marvel's editors of his age, and it might make them see him differently.

That, I'll confess, made little sense to me. After all, those editors could see him—and his vintage work was constantly being reprinted in hardcover editions—so his longevity in the field was hardly a secret. But I accepted Tom's reasons (outwardly if never inwardly) and never bothered him again with an interview request.

Still, when I learned about Alex Grand and Jim Thompson's lengthy interview with him for their *Comic Book Historians* podcast, I couldn't resist inquiring about its availability. I wouldn't have asked them, as owners of the copyright, to go against Tom's will; but I was delighted when Alex told me Tom had specifically said he'd love to see the interview in *Alter Ego*.

I may have exchanged an e-mail or two with Tom about the interview, and how happy I was to publish it... and then, suddenly, he was gone.

Whether or not he knew the *CBH* interview would be his last major one, I have no idea. But I'm happy to honor Tom Palmer—and thankful to have him honor *Alter Ego*—with the contents of this issue. He really was a transformative comicbook inker—as well as a helluva nice guy.

Bestest,



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The “PALMER” Raids

A Wide-Ranging Interview with TOM PALMER—Marvel’s Foremost Inker Of The 1970s

Conducted & Transcribed by Alex Grand & Jim Thompson

Tom Palmer

(1941–2022) in recent years, contemplating his two eras on Marvel’s *The Avengers*: first, as inker of Neal Adams’ pencils on the cover of #95 (Jan. 1972), next as penciler and inker of that of #255 (May 1985). That’s a whole lot of comics history and it’s only the beginning! Photo from the comicartfans website; covers courtesy respectively of the Grand Comics Database and Robert Menzies. [Covers TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



CO-INTERVIEWER’S INTRODUCTION: I didn’t know, when we interviewed Tom Palmer on November 8, 2020, that I’d be making a friend. At one point, Jim and I decided to send Tom Palmer an interview invite for the Comic Book Historians YouTube channel and podcast, and maybe it was a shot in the dark, but he had been a hero of ours for years, so it was worth trying. The interesting thing was that we’d never met him before, but always had marveled at his work. After I e-mailed Tom an interview request, he mentioned that he got requests all the time but decided on us because he liked the way I typed my e-mails. The interview was what you see before you (moderately edited and condensed by A/E’s editor for reasons of space and occasional repetition), with everyone really enjoying the experience.

Tom watched it on the YouTube Channel and responded: "I was very impressed from the start of the edited video PodCast by the constant movement on the screen of the graphics, all from books I had worked on and people/artists we were discussing. I was very impressed; [it was] very professional. After turning down many offers... I agreed to do yours with nothing but a hunch it was the right one and I was correct."

Afterward, Tom sent Jim and me some paraphernalia which was beautiful, like everything else he illustrated, but I couldn't help myself and maintained more e-mail communications. It turned out I liked the way he typed e-mails, too! Everything he wrote was positive and joyful, and I enjoyed continuing that energy. At one point, he e-mailed me a curious inking request from a fan who wanted him to erase the original pencils of another comicbook pro, which he refused to do, of course.

At the same time, I also continued to maintain a dialogue with Roy Thomas, who is really one of the stand-up comics historians and comicbook writers, a hero of mine. It occurred to me that Palmer's first work at Marvel was with Roy, and I asked how they both felt about publishing the interview in *Alter Ego*. Roy was happy to do it, and Tom wrote me, "I am very pleased that my old friend, Roy Thomas, wanted to showcase your interview with me in *Alter Ego* next year. Roy and I have been good friends since our first meeting at the Marvel offices in 1968; it's exciting to hear."

Tom was kind enough to submit high-quality scans for the cover being used here, and he went further with his kindness and wrote a blurb for my book *Understanding Superhero Comic Books*. I told him he'd get copies of the book and the *Alter Ego* issue with his interview. His last e-mail to me read: "Thanks for sending copies! Looks like you will have some exciting months ahead!"

I didn't know that was to be our last e-mail exchange, and when I found out that he had passed away a month later, I went back to our e-mails and fondly said my own private goodbye. There was a glow in the sadness: It is this interview, where he can be immortalized in *Alter Ego*, a publication edited by his old friend and first creative partner at Marvel Comics, Roy Thomas.

We love you, Tom.

Alex

ALEX GRAND: Welcome back to the *Comic Book Historians* podcast, with Alex Grand and Jim Thompson. Today we have a very special guest, inker and illustrator Tom Palmer. Tom, thank you so much for joining us today, and talking about your history and your history in comics. Jim's going to start at the beginning.

TOM PALMER: Well, thank you for the invitation. Looking forward to it.

JIM THOMPSON: Tom, let's start. Actually, just even with your name—did you change your name from your full given name? Are you Tom Palmer legally now?

PALMER: Well, my given name is Thomas John Palmer. Thomas J., and in some financial or legal [documents], I'll sign John or J. But, even when I was a kid, no one called me Thomas; even the nuns didn't. But Tom... it'll be Tom.

JT: Let's go back to New York in 1942, when you were born. Which part of New York did you live in, growing up?

PALMER: Queens, New York, Southwestern. I was born in Richmond Hill, Queens. Probably after high school, in my early 20s, is when I left [Queens].

JT: I know you lost your father at an early age. When was that?

PALMER: It was in the '50s. I was young. I can't remember the exact year anymore, because I was young.

JT: Was it before third grade and your hip problems or after?

PALMER: Oh, you know more about me than I realized. [chuckles] Well, he was still alive when I had my hip problems, yeah. I have one brother who was about eight years older than me. But I had a bunch of half brothers and sisters that were

old enough to be my parents, some of them. I have nieces and a nephew that was older than me. I have a niece right now, in North Carolina—she's older than me. Because my father's first two wives died, and then my mother was around and was related to the second wife. And out of propriety and everything else, he just had a big family. I think there were eight or nine children in all, and I was the last one.

JT: So, in the house, when you were growing up, how many kids were in the house? Was your brother still there or not?

PALMER: Yeah, he was, but he was so much older. I remember I never played with him. I got his old comicbooks, though. One was called *The Green Lama*. I think I saved a few of them. I don't think he bought *Batman*, but EC Comics... he had those. But I really didn't get caught up in it. I didn't go out and start buying those comics. But then when I did go out, the EC Comics would grab my eye. I was kind of young yet, but Wally Wood, Al Williamson, [Frank] Frazetta... oh, and I got the newspaper strips. I didn't get *Flash Gordon*... yes, I did, but this is after Alex Raymond, and I didn't care for it if it wasn't Mac Raboy. But Hal Foster on *Prince Valiant*. Oh, I saved every Sunday... poof, I cut that out.

JT: So, when you developed those problems, you were in crutches from like third grade up until almost high school, for four years or so. Were you staying inside? I know that's when you really started to draw and focus on that... and on comics, because you were drawing your own comics at that time, even as a kid, right?



How Green Was My Cover!

Mac Raboy's cover for *Green Lama* #6 (Aug. 1945). The character had originally been a mystic pulp-mag (and even comics) hero in a lama's robes, but in the mid-1940s Spark Publications turned him into a super-hero and got the incomparable artist of "Captain Marvel Jr." (and, before long, of *Flash Gordon*) to draw him. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

PALMER: Yeah. I guess I sat around a lot, because I got heavy. I don't know if my dad was gone at that point. He passed away when I was on crutches. But I used to go out on crutches and walk around, get into... not into trouble, but I'd sometimes trip and fall, and people would go, "Awww..." But I'd get up. I was like a stunt man. [chuckles] And I got off crutches in the eighth grade, luckily, just before high school.

JT: And so, when you were drawing, you had this archive of your older brother's comics. And you were getting to know artists like Wally Wood. Which other EC artists were you drawn to?

PALMER: Jack Davis, Al Williamson, and I should say [chuckles], Jack Kamen.

The last studio I was in... I was bouncing around in New York, in advertising studios. And I went for a job at one on Madison Avenue. I don't know if they were going to take me or not. And the fellow that owned the studio said, "This is our illustrator, Jack Kamen." I said, "Jack Kamen? EC Comics?" He turns around and says, "Yeah." It's like a voice out of his past. Well, [the guy hires me] and says it was just the fact that I knew Jack Kamen. I was there a couple years. Jack sat not that far away from me at the drawing board. So the EC comics had a big connection in my life.

AG: Could you recognize Jack Kamen with his pipe? Is that how you recognized him?

PALMER: No. I just... Well, in the comicbooks, they had a biography with a photograph. But when I asked, "Are you the Jack Kamen from EC Comics?" it could have been somebody else. He always looked the same, I think, even back when he was younger. But he wasn't smoking a pipe in the studio [like in the EC photo]. I don't think they allowed smoking.

JT: I think Jack Kamen's very important to your work, both in terms of how you got into comics, in terms of your contacts, but also in terms of molding you... I got the impression, not just as an artist, but also as a person.

PALMER: Very much so. I think in that period of time, even before, I was always looking for a father figure, because I'd lost my father so young. When you're young, you really need a dad, and I didn't have one. And my brothers were older, and on their own. I have a half-brother; he had his own family.

So, Jack was somebody I was really drawn to... and he was crippled. Not crippled, but he was laid up when he was a kid also. I think he fell off a bus or something; I don't remember the whole story. So there was a connection between us, and I don't know what he was doing during that time... maybe the same thing as I was: drawing. Who knows?

He used to buy a cart of six or eight Winsor & Newton Series 7 #2s. They were in cardboard with a rubber band holding them in. Every Monday morning, he'd start out with a brand-new brush, and he would not ruin it intentionally, but he would swish it out when he got done at the end of the day and stand it upside down in a burger tray. All that ink went in there; that's what happens. It's not the tip, it's what's inside that ruins the hairs.

So he was always passing me the brushes. And I just didn't like them. I didn't like the feel of them, and he was fantastic with them. He

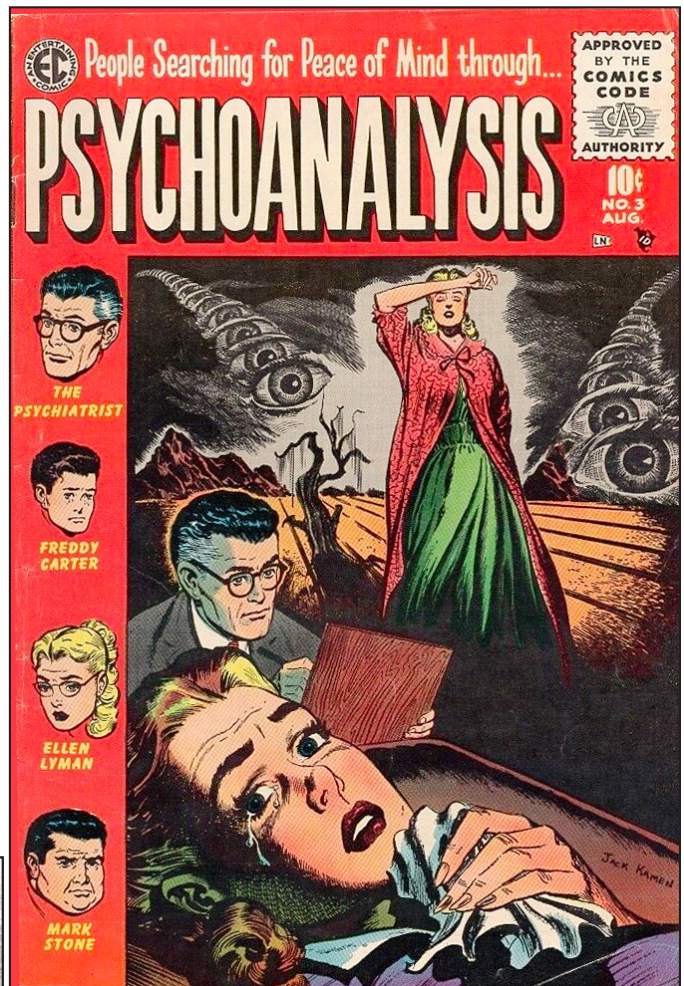
used to be able to do line work and everything else with the ruler, just bend the ruler. And he enjoyed the whole business. So, when he taught me something, it was: Make it enjoyable, whatever you're doing. And the comics worked for him, too.

JT: He had had kind of a mentor relationship himself, hadn't he? A person that he looked up to? Maybe I'm thinking of Frank Reilly.

PALMER: Oh... Yes, that's a real father figure.

JT: Let's get through high school, and then we'll go to that. All right, so you're reading books, you're also aware of illustrators at this point, not just comicbook artists. People like Jim Bama. I think most people know him as the Doc Savage artist. How was it you had become aware of Bama?

PALMER: The paperbacks, *Doc Savage* and a few others. But before Bama was Norman Rockwell. I wanted to be Norman Rockwell. I even wrote him a letter when I was in high school. And I went up to meet him, up in Stockbridge; that was a big deal for me. I mean, for him to say, "Come up"... Imagine today, just having a stranger come in to your [home]. There may be a lot of kooks out there. I don't want to get too far ahead of myself. When we get to Reilly, then I'll explain further about Rockwell.



Kamen Around The Mountain

Artist Jack Kamen, complete with trademark pipe, in a photo that appeared with his biography in a 1950s EC comic—and one of his last comicbook covers, for that company's *Psychoanalysis* #3 (July-Aug. 1955). Earlier for EC, he had drawn first romance comics, then horror stories, and he became a mentor of sorts to a young Tom Palmer. [Photo & cover TM & © William M. Gaines Agent, Inc.]



JT: In some interviews, you talked about Bob Peak, too. He's most known for his movie posters, starting with *West Side Story*. But for comicbook-type people, there are the Superman posters, and *Excalibur*, and *Star Trek*, and maybe most famously, the *Apocalypse Now* poster. Was it the film work that you noticed? Or was he doing commercial stuff before that?

PALMER: Commercial stuff... advertising, also. But his work had a comicbook look to it. It was a line; the butt and the basis of his artwork was line. All the different ways he drew and then painted over it, did all sorts of things, pastels and all that. I never really looked at his work to copy it or use it as reference. I really didn't. I think what I liked was his color, when he used it. Maybe that was an impression on me. But Bob Peak—just looking at his work would inspire you to do something. I think a lot of artists in comics are attracted to Bob Peak.

I'm a member of Society of Illustrators, so I would see him up there. But I really got to know him later on when I was in a studio in New Jersey, and the owner there was having a New Jersey Art Directors' Dinner, whatever. And Bob Peak was going to be there with his agent, and they're going to show slides. He was trying to get work out in Jersey.

And I went, but it didn't work out too well for him, because the people weren't aware of who he was. I think he was at the other end of his career, [at a time when] a lot of artists were getting hurt by the photography. It hurt me, too. They didn't use artwork for advertising [any more], and that's where you made money. And that was hurting him.

After he got off the stage, he went to the bar, and I followed him. And that's where we got to talk a little bit. He was banging them down, too. I think he was just frustrated. But I think he had a very good time. But I can say, I met somebody that I... It was like meeting Norman Rockwell. I met Jim Bama, too, because he was a student of Reilly. Frank Reilly.



JT: In fact, when you apply to the Reilly school, wasn't that a point of interest for you?

PALMER: Well, I don't want to say anything, bad words [chuckles].... I went to the School of Visual Arts, originally. This is right out of high school. And I wanted to learn how to paint, and they didn't have a very structured painting course, and I got tired of it. And I left. And I happened to meet this illustrator, in my bouncing around to the studios, and he said, "I heard about this famous teacher, Frank Reilly. He opened his own school up on 57th Street." And when I went up there, on the walls were... I'd never heard of Dean Cornwell. I never heard of J.C. Leyendecker... That's when my head—poof, exploded.

There was [also] work by Jim Bama. He was a student there around 1950, so it was a few years earlier. He's still working out in Wyoming, I believe. I just loved his work. But it's too tedious for me to emulate. I like something more brushy. He works hard. But his coloring.... What Reilly taught is the important part: the hue, value, and chroma. That's what made the difference in helping you learn how to paint.

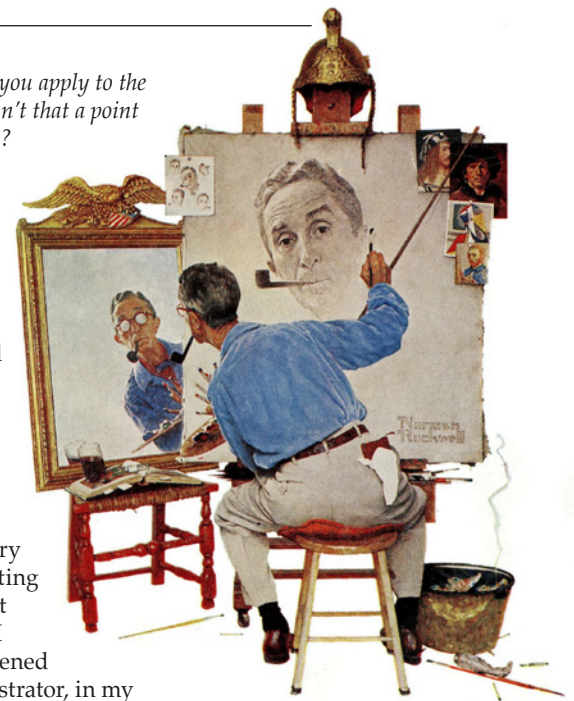
AG: Wasn't Howard Pyle also an influence on you in some way?

PALMER: Howard Pyle was the original American Illustrator. I knew his name, but I really didn't know who he was until I got to Reilly's. And he would refer back to him, because there were things you'd write about illustration, guys who had gone through that Pyle school... you had Harvey Dunn, you had Dean Cornwell...

Wyeth, Andrew Wyeth, the father, N.C. Wyeth.... So that's what Reilly went with when he worked on a painting. He brought something to it beyond just the thought.

JT: But before we get to Reilly... In some of the pieces I've read on you, there's also mention of the Art Students League, and I know Reilly taught there. A lot of people went in and out of there in some context. Was that just a place where Reilly lectured sometimes, or...?

PALMER: I think he had classes there. Later, I realized he took over for George Bridgman at the Art Students League. Back in the '40s, maybe... I'm not sure. But he was really good on those basics in drawing and painting.



Norman Rockwell

His famous "triple self-portrait." Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers were, at one time, the best-known artwork in the United States. [© the respective copyright holders.]



Bob Peak

A top illustrator of his day—plus an example of *why*, at left. [© the respective copyright holders.]

JT: Yeah. He also taught or lectured at Pratt. But I didn't see any connection with you. So, I'm glad we got that worked out. At the same time you were going to night school at the School of Visual Arts, you were working at a Lexington advertising agency. Was that like an internship? Or did they just not give you any work to do? I know you weren't happy there.

PALMER: Well, I didn't stay long. I was going to Reilly at the time. I think I was done with Visual Arts, but it was in the Graybar Building, and this agency was right on Grand Central Station. It was the entrance into the business—I was the gofer. I learned the ropes. I would be sent out next door to pick up the work. And one of the art directors there said, "The best thing to do when you are with the art director or the agency, when they're telling you what to do, if you have any questions in your mind, ask them. Don't hold back, because we're going to ask you the same questions."

I had to wear a tie and a sport jacket; it was something I was not taught in growing up, in my teen years. It was a subtle way of bringing me up to speed Madison Avenue, whatever. Advertising and business was really professional in New York at the time.

JT: When you started studying under Reilly in the school, how many teachers were there? How many students?

PALMER: I don't know. I was only going there nights, so it was only Reilly; but he had monitors in his two classes drawing and painting. You had to be in a drawing class for a while before you could go to the painting class.

And the monitor in the painting class, in the time I was there, Roger Kastel. He painted the famous *Jaws* poster—that artwork is lost—and he painted *The Empire Strikes Back* and other posters, but he was an illustrator doing work. At the time he was at Reilly, I think he used to go in the evenings. He knew Reilly very well, and he obviously didn't have to pay for anything, but we would watch what he was doing, and that was a lesson in itself.

On Thursday night, Reilly would lecture; he'd talk about something specific. But each night, he would have us go through the phases of doing a figure painting. You started with a wash, and then doing everything else. Putting out your palette or whatever. You watched what Roger was doing. And that was as good as having Reilly there, because it was of Reilly palette.

JT: Now, I've read that Reilly didn't touch a brush, for demonstrations... that he thought it was more about being a teacher than just painting in front of students.

PALMER: That's true. He didn't want you to paint like him. He wanted you to get the teaching, what he knew from about painting, about color, and everything else, compositions.

JT: And he had a very, would you say it was a scientific approach?

PALMER: I remember, the first time I was in the Society of Illustrators, they said, "Where'd you go to art school?" I said, "Frank Reilly." They said, "Oh, the mathematician." And I went,



Frank J. Reilly
and one of his many painted
illustrations. [© the respective
copyright holders.]

"What? The mathematician?" If you know anything about Reilly... it was all values, nine values and the chroma. You had all these numbers going out for the chroma, but it was hue, value, chroma. And that's why people say, "All the numbers." But when you first go into Reilly, you had a house next to a road and you had a tree. And you had to paint that in sunlight, cloud, and at night. Three different... And you did them in values, and he told you the values. He had Reilly grays in tubes, Grumbacher [Artist Supplies] had them. It's so much like filling in the numbers. You painted it, and you look at it, and it works: day light/sun light, cloudy day, and at night.

And that's what sold me. I said, "Holy smoke! That's a real lesson." And that was, I think, how Reilly caught you... well, not caught you, but how he got your interest. So, after that, when he was speaking to the class, you understood what he meant. And he has some terrific students that came out of his classes, fine arts students, not just illustration guys.

JT: In terms of people that the comics community would know, there's Basil Gogos from *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

PALMER: I probably would've gone longer to Reilly, but he had a brain tumor; he died. Back in '67, '68. They tried to keep the school open, but they couldn't. Reilly was the core. He was the backbone, so to speak, of the school.

JT: Before we get to your comics opportunities, let me ask a little more about *Kamen*. How long did the two of you work together?

PALMER: Wow... Gee... maybe three, four years? There's a blur there. There's so many things that were going on. Jack was a comicbook artist, but he was rounded. He had Harvey Dunn as his teacher. Harvey Dunn is one of those Howard Pyle students. And I would watch [Kamen] doing truck ads for Mack Trucks... how he would lay this thing out, and how he had a very odd way of painting. He would put down a base with acrylic, and then he would use Prismacolor pencils, and use that all over. And then he would use an ink eraser, the motorized, and he would then blend it with this abrasive. Here I am, going to school with Reilly and [chuckles] trying it with brushwork, with all the different types of brushes.

What I learned from Jack was not how to paint but how to work, how to set it up... how he would get a layout from somebody, and he would have a photo stock made, and make it larger. He never worked the same size. But he made sure that you fit that size in that area. And sure enough, that's what happened going out on

my own. You had to know what you were doing, at least on that basic level. And that's what I learned from Jack... in a roundabout way, I should say.

JT: Now, while you were there with Kamen, he sponsored you into the Society of Illustrators, too.

PALMER: Yep. And this is a quick jump forward: One night, I was in art school and I saw somebody else from EC. It was Joe Orlando, sitting in the front row, sketching. And I knew him, again, from the [EC] comicbooks, the bios they did. So, after the class was over, I went over to him and we got to talking: "I'm working in a studio, with Jack Kamen..." So we became buddies.

He was great. When he was the head guy up at DC, I was getting work from DC and everything else. I was at the Society of Illustrators with him, and I think he came as my guest. And he saw [singer] Tony Bennett, and he said, "Oh, I went to high school with Tony Bennett." I said, "You know, Tony Bennett is a member." "He is? How do you become a member?"

So, I got the forms, filled them out, and I gave them to Jack Kamen. And Jack Kamen sponsored Joe. And Joe lived at the Society of Illustrators, because he lived in the city at the time. He had a place upstate, but he loved the Society of Illustrators. I don't know if he was waiting for Tony Bennett to come in again. [Bennett] was and is a painter. He's still around.

JT: The way that I've read the story was, when you went to Wally Wood... and we'll talk about that in a minute... he's the one that sent you to Joe Orlando. But you already knew Joe Orlando. Is that right?

PALMER: I'm not sure if that's the order. Wally... I shouldn't say Wally. We call him Woody. He sent me to Joe or... Mike Esposito. I did some backgrounds for Mike Esposito. Then I did some backgrounds with somebody else. But I wouldn't do the whole

comic, just the backgrounds. I never did work with Joe Orlando. But we became friends, and remained so, to the end of his days.

JT: My understanding is that you asked Kamen, repeatedly, to connect you with some comicbook people, and that he wasn't helpful at first, because he wanted you to stay studying under Reilly. That he encouraged you to stay to keep your art studies going first.

PALMER: Right, and when Reilly died, that's when Jack relented. Yeah.

JT: Because you didn't have the school anymore. And that's when he called up Wally Wood and said, "I'm sending somebody for you to look at his portfolio"?

PALMER: Yeah, I guess. And it was up on 86th Street or something. That was his apartment, his studio. He had one of those... I always think of *The Odd Couple*—when you see the movie, those big cavernous apartments that Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon had. Woody had the same thing. He had a big Artograph that you put up on the wall. You can only have one [of those] in a very large studio or apartment. He had me working on that a little bit, too. So, I learned how to make an artograph. He would project automobiles, or people, or whatever, down in a kind of pencil form, in an odd way. But no, he wouldn't be penciling; he would be drawing rough sketches of things. That's all he needed. That's how he worked. I penciled something for him....

JT: The "Jungle Jim" story [for Charlton Comics].

PALMER: Yeah... the first I ever penciled. It was four or six pages, I think. I have the comic. If you see it now, you'd just say, "Wally Wood did that." When he inked something, it became him.

AG: Wally, in 1967, had some involvement in Tower and T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Did you notice, just behaviorally, any mental health issues with him during this time?

PALMER: No. You know, when you have somebody in your life that, when you were a kid... Wally Wood was the king. He was the guy I wanted to be. I'll just say that, after I met him, I wanted to do what he did but didn't want to be him. You know what I mean?

He was a very talented artist, unbelievably so. What did Bill Gaines call him? A tortured elf. I noticed about Woody that, in many ways, I think we all are, he was childlike. And he got caught up in things, his demons. But I think he's the only science-fiction artist that I know of, in the comics, at least, that stood out the way he did. He was just inspired, the work he did.

JT: Now, could you have stayed and worked and assisted Wood, if you'd wanted to, but instead you went to Esposito in DC?

PALMER: Well, I only went a couple of times. I made the mistake of... I'd be inking a page he had already worked on. And the pages were coming past me... and I started to tickle up the faces, and he exploded. He just got sort of



Mike Esposito

The veteran inker (and longtime partner of penciler Ross Andru) gave Tom Palmer some of his earliest pro work, inking backgrounds for him.



Joe Orlando

in a photo from a 1950s EC comic—and his splash page for "I, Robot," wherein he and original author Otto (Eando) Binder adapted the latter's SF prose story for *Weird Science-Fantasy* #27 (Jan-Feb. 1955). In the 1960s and '70s Orlando became a very successful editor of mystery comics for DC. [TM & © William M. Gaines Agent, Inc.; original story "I, Robot" © Estate of Otto Binder.]



Working Out At The Jungle Jim

Quite likely Tom Palmer's first professional comics work was this story for Charlton's *Jungle Jim* #22 (Feb. 1969), which scripter Bob Stewart reported that he laid out for Palmer to pencil and Wally Wood to ink... under Wood's direction, of course. From the comparative cover dates of *Jungle Jim* #22 and Marvel's *Doctor Strange* #171 (Aug. 1968), it would appear the Charlton tale sat on the shelf for a while. Thanks to Art Lortie. [TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc.]

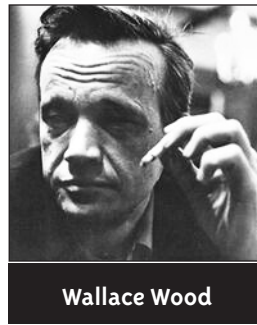
[fore]boding, "Do not do that."

So, I think he found I was more of a hindrance than a help. And he didn't say anything beyond that. I don't know if he had me back anymore. But I stopped going up there. But I think it was Mike Esposito... and I forget the other guy's name... he's from that era, and played poker with the group from Marvel...

JT: Esposito played with Sol Brodsky [then Marvel's production manager].

PALMER: Yeah. Sol Brodsky was at Marvel. Yeah, they used to play poker. Roy Thomas was part of that group. Mike said to Sol, "Hey, I got this guy," and I was doing some work for Mike, the backgrounds. So that's how I got up to Marvel. Sol Brodsky. All of a sudden, I was up at Marvel, showing my portfolio. I had only penciled six pages in my whole life, and the rest of it was advertising work and whatever; I forget what I had in that portfolio. And they wound up giving me... they figured I worked for Wally Wood... that *Doctor Strange* #171.

JT: Were you following comics at all, at this point?



Wallace Wood

PALMER: Yeah. I'm admitting it now. I didn't admit it when I was asked before. I was not a follower of Marvel and DC, at that point. I was looking elsewhere, at illustrations, paintings, paperbacks, the men's magazines, *Male*, *Stag*.... That's where Bama and a bunch of other guys were. So, I didn't know who Jack Kirby was. None of them. Good people came in after that, and then I knew of them. I think that's when the other part of my career opened up.

Roy Thomas was writing *Doctor Strange*, and within a short period of time, he had me doing some other work. He lived on East 86th Street, on the East side. And he had a big party, even Stan Lee was there, and Wally Wood, and blah blah blah. Gray Morrow. And he introduces me to Neal Adams and Bernie Wrightson. And it was terrific. I think that's what led to Neal and I working together. I don't know, because Roy was writing *The X-Men*. I'm giving you really these little landmarks that kind of took me in different directions. All of a sudden, I wasn't worried about doing paintings for the men's magazines or doing the *Saturday Evening Post* cover, like a Rockwell.

I always loved comics, but it was hidden. It wasn't something that was on the surface. And that really drew me in. I was still getting started in coloring. I thought that would really disturb me—putting a lot of work into the inking, and then they would hand it to somebody who had no clue, because they paid nothing. They paid like \$2 a page. So, you did it out of the love for the comics, and you want it to look good. And I wasn't the only one. A lot of the guys after me were doing it as well.

AG: Was Sol Brodsky [then Marvel's production manager] the one who then gave you the *Doctor Strange* #171 assignment?

PALMER: You know, I don't remember. Roy Thomas was there... and I remember meeting John Romita, Sr.... it was a very small group.

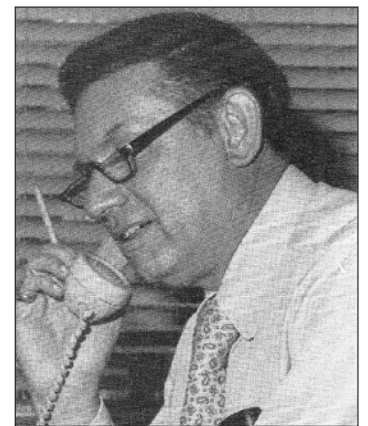
It was a riot. Stan [Lee] acted it out—the plot—for me in his office. And his gal Friday took notes for me. I just stood there. I couldn't believe there's Stan jumping on the couch and everything else. But that's the way he gave plots out to the artists when they'd come in. After a while, I guess, he'd call up Kirby and just say, "Yeah, have Captain America doing this," or whatever. And then the script was written after that. Flo Steinberg stood behind me by the door. She was fantastic. She only passed away the last couple of years. I'd go into Marvel even years later, I saw Flo. She proofread, and everything else.

AG: And you were inked by Dan Adkins on that issue....

PALMER: Yeah. And he saved me, too, because I didn't know who *Doctor Strange* was. [chuckles]

AG: So you hadn't seen the previous issues?

PALMER: No, no, no.



Sol Brodsky

Marvel's production manager from circa 1963-64 till 1970. From the 1975 Marvel con program book.



Making A Splash

Tom Palmer penciled this splash page for *Doc Strange* #171 (Aug. 1968), the third issue of the sorcerer's solo mag, which had taken over the numbering of *Strange Tales*. It was inked by Dan Adkins (who had fully illustrated the two preceding issues) and written by Roy Thomas (who'd scripted them). Thanks to Bob Bailey. Oh, and incidentally, all three photos in the surrounding montage are from the 1975 Marvel Con program book, complete with their nifty nicknames from same. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

AG: There's this double-page spread in that issue that I think has been in posters, or people have admired it a lot because it's so wonky. There's like this trans-universal cosmic-dimensional stuff. Did you put those patterns in there?

PALMER: Oh yeah, but I ripped off an illustrator that did something, a pop art thing. That was a period of time in the '60s... the pop art.

AG: Pop art. Yeah. So, you looked at some pop art stuff for that spread.

PALMER: Oh, yeah, because I needed that spread, and that was kind of laid out.

AG: When you say Adkins "saved" you—were you doing more breakdowns? Or were you actually trying to illustrate those panels?

PALMER: Oh, I was doing tight pencils, but they weren't comicbook pencils. Plus, I didn't really know the characters. They gave me work with comics that had been done by other artists. But you don't really know a book unless you've been on it for a while.

AG: So, you mean, for example, Adkins may have altered Stephen



Peerless Tom Palmer



Dapper Dan Adkins



Rascally Roy Thomas

Strange's face a little bit?

PALMER: Yeah, because he had spent a lot of time with Wally Wood. And I think he picked that up—not that he worked like Wally Wood, but he made those pages I penciled more like his own work. He had penciled and inked the two issues of *Doctor Strange* before me. So, I have no regrets on it. But I think Dan got all the original art pages back.

The following one, #172, was the one that I inked. It was the first time I worked with Gene Colan. I didn't know what comicbook pencils were supposed to look like. People had a problem [inking Colan], but they said that I used to draw into the shadows. You know, you find something in the shadows. You can't just make everything black. Because he looked like he made everything black, and it wasn't. Gene was a terrific artist. He could have been an illustrator. He *was* an illustrator, but you know what I mean. He wasn't somebody who took a pencil and drew by the point of the pencil. He used the side of the pencil.

AG: Who decided, "Okay we're going to have you ink, instead of continuing to pencil"?

PALMER: I think I just wasn't ready to [pencil]. Maybe Roy will say something.... Maybe my drawing was okay, but my storytelling was terrible. Because I know they discarded a page... and I'm trying to figure if they've filled it in [i.e., replaced it with a page drawn by someone else]. I got that page back. It wasn't badly done, I don't think, but I don't think it fit the story. It didn't tell the story. And that was the thing that you had to do, especially with Stan—is tell the story. And I didn't have enough experience to have them carry me along. So they asked me to ink, and I'd never inked a comicbook before.

And I said, "Sure." I never turn down work. You'll never know... [chuckles]

And I just did it. But what I did was, since I didn't know comicbooks, I used the instruments and the tools that I knew from when I did the advertising art. I was doing advertising art in line. I think that was the difference. With Wally Wood, I was using Zipatone, too. And people weren't using Zipatone at that time, like Woody—this was way past the EC thing; I don't think they knew what it was. Or Craft Tint, that was the other thing that I was able to use. Chemicals.

AG: And the textures of gray shadow, like you're talking about with Colan... it said



Stan (The Man) Lee in a 1973 photo. Tom Palmer found him "a riot." Thanks to Ger Apeldoorn

that you used Zipatone and cross-hatching on your inking to follow what he was getting at, to kind of flesh it out. And did you add some illustration lines to his ephemeral forms as well?

PALMER: I'm sure. I didn't follow. You really couldn't. If you followed Gene Colan's pencil, you'd have a big black area, and then maybe a head or a hand, because he did work in black. It wasn't even black, it was gray. He used a very soft pencil, and when you get up to 6, 7, 8B, that's very soft. No one uses it because the point wears down. But it's beautiful, lush, and they're very silky blacks. And when you get above HB, the only way you can make it darker is by adding clay to it. And your hands were black when you got done working on the pages! I used to take a kneaded eraser—this is after me getting to know Gene's work—and I would just roll it like you would with rolling dough on it. People were saying, "Oh, you were erasing it." And I said, "No, I'm not erasing it, I'm just taking all that clay off." And it would reveal Gene's lay-out, his drawing, his pencil lines. Then he'd fill it in with the side of the pencil or something. So what you saw was just a massive penciling. I think that's why people had a problem with [inking] him.

By me trying to get rid of the clay, I revealed something that made people say, "Wow!" It was to my benefit. So, I didn't follow every line. He wasn't like Neal Adams. You don't change lines on Neal, because they are there... Bam! You can add to them and make them, whatever, different thicknesses, different treatment, but you

don't change. With Gene you sometimes had to, because he worked so quickly, I think. But, again, he was just an artist, beyond, beyond the comic conversion.

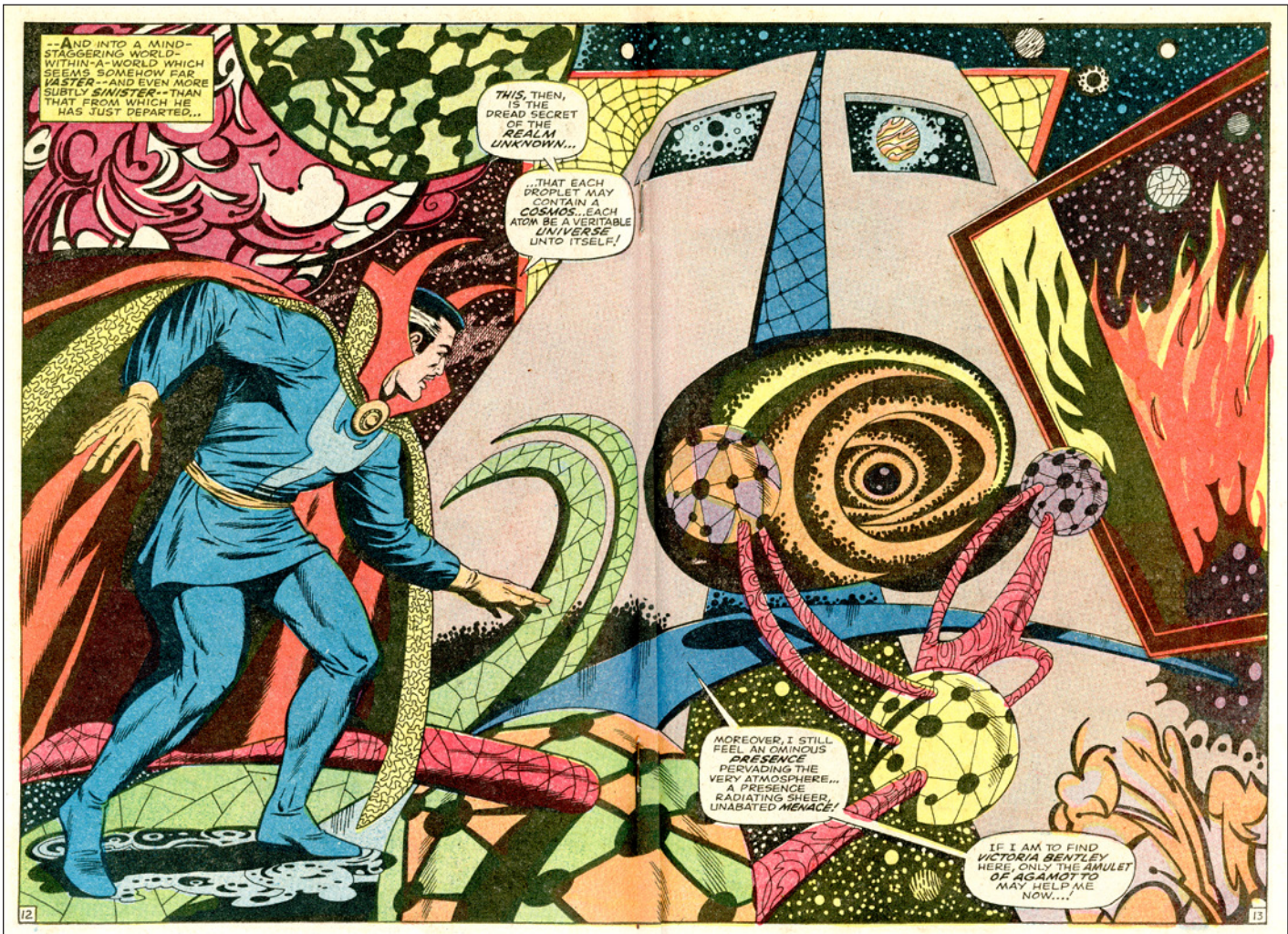
AG: On that first issue you did, there's a double-page spread that has almost kind of a similar layout to one in Doctor Strange #182. And Doctor Strange is like fighting this sorcerer magic creature with like planets being thrown. It's like a similar layout, but the synergy with you and Gene really explodes off the page. It's like a whole other thing is going on there.

PALMER: I don't remember [that spread]. But if I had the book here, I'd remember it and look it up.

AG: It's the Doctor Strange with the mask on.

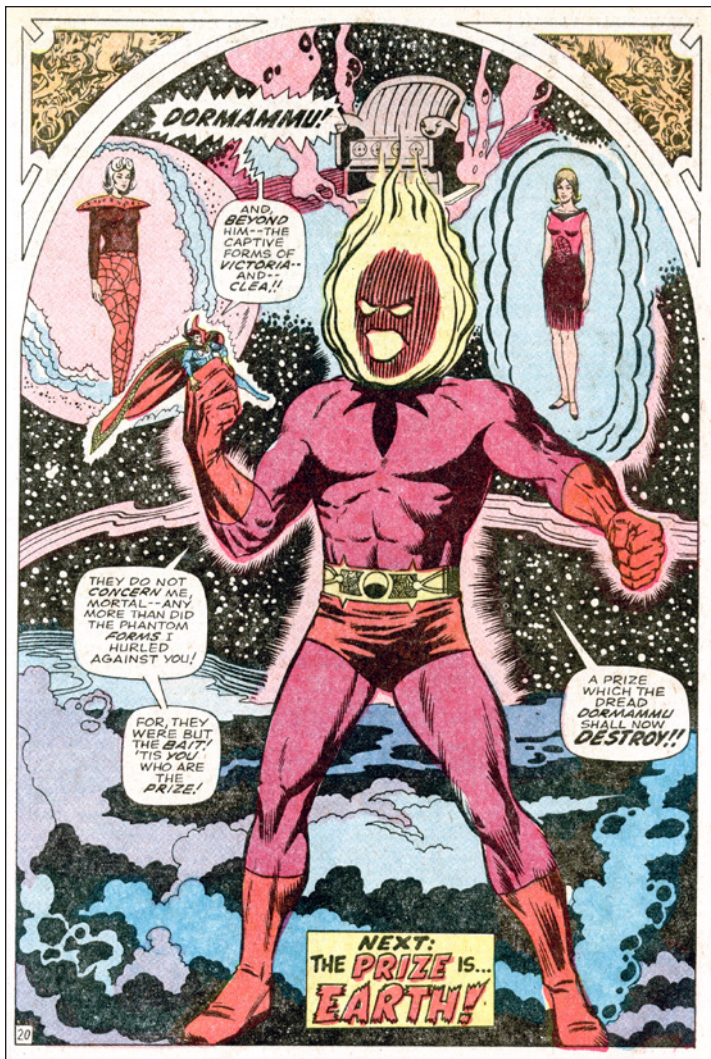
PALMER: Okay, that's when they wanted to make him like a super-hero.

AG: Right. They were trying to make him like a super-hero, exactly. There was an issue with Juggernaut... and I love what you guys did with Juggernaut. There's a whole page of him just materializing out of this dimension... I mean, it's incredible. But I noticed, sometimes, maybe in Doctor Strange more so than in Daredevil and Captain America, when there's a full body figure, there's almost like a distortion to them. Did you find yourself having to try to normalize some of Gene's full body figures, in a sense, or to make it more anatomically correct?



"Pop!" Goes The Easel

The Palmer/Adkins double-page spread from *Doctor Strange* #171... which Tom says he "ripped off" from a "pop art thing." Well, the late 1960s was definitely the time for *that*! Of course, there's a touch of Ditko in there as well. Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



The Dimensions Of The Problem

Doc comes face to face with the Dread Dormammu himself. Pencils by Palmer, inks by Adkins, script by Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

PALMER: I wouldn't do that to Gene. There were things that I would... well, not change, but help out.

AG: Help out.

PALMER: Yeah. If he was doing something quickly. But I'd never change the anatomy or anything like that. But sometimes, the shadows on a face would look good in pencil, but if you ink them, they would look grotesque. So you would just kind of have to work the dimensions of the head.

AG: I also noticed like it depended whether it was a magician Doctor Strange or civilian Doctor Strange. It almost kind of shifted in style, artistically. Was that kind of stuff that you kept in mind when you're inking that?

PALMER: A lot of it was just instinctive or just my natural approach. I really don't know.

AG: Natural approach, yeah. And then, the hair... if you look at Clea's hair in these issues that you inked, it's like lustrous hair; you see



Gene Colan

like each follicle of hair.

PALMER: Well, what I was looking at, at that time, was a couple of strip artists. One was Stan Drake. I'd wind up meeting him at one time. We would have lunch together. The stuff by Stan Drake, anything with women... I mean, he was just fantastic. I remember Jack Kamen mentioning his name. I think I started using the same pen point as Stan Drake. [Kamen] said Stan Drake was the highest paid illustrator in New York, back in the late part of the '50s.

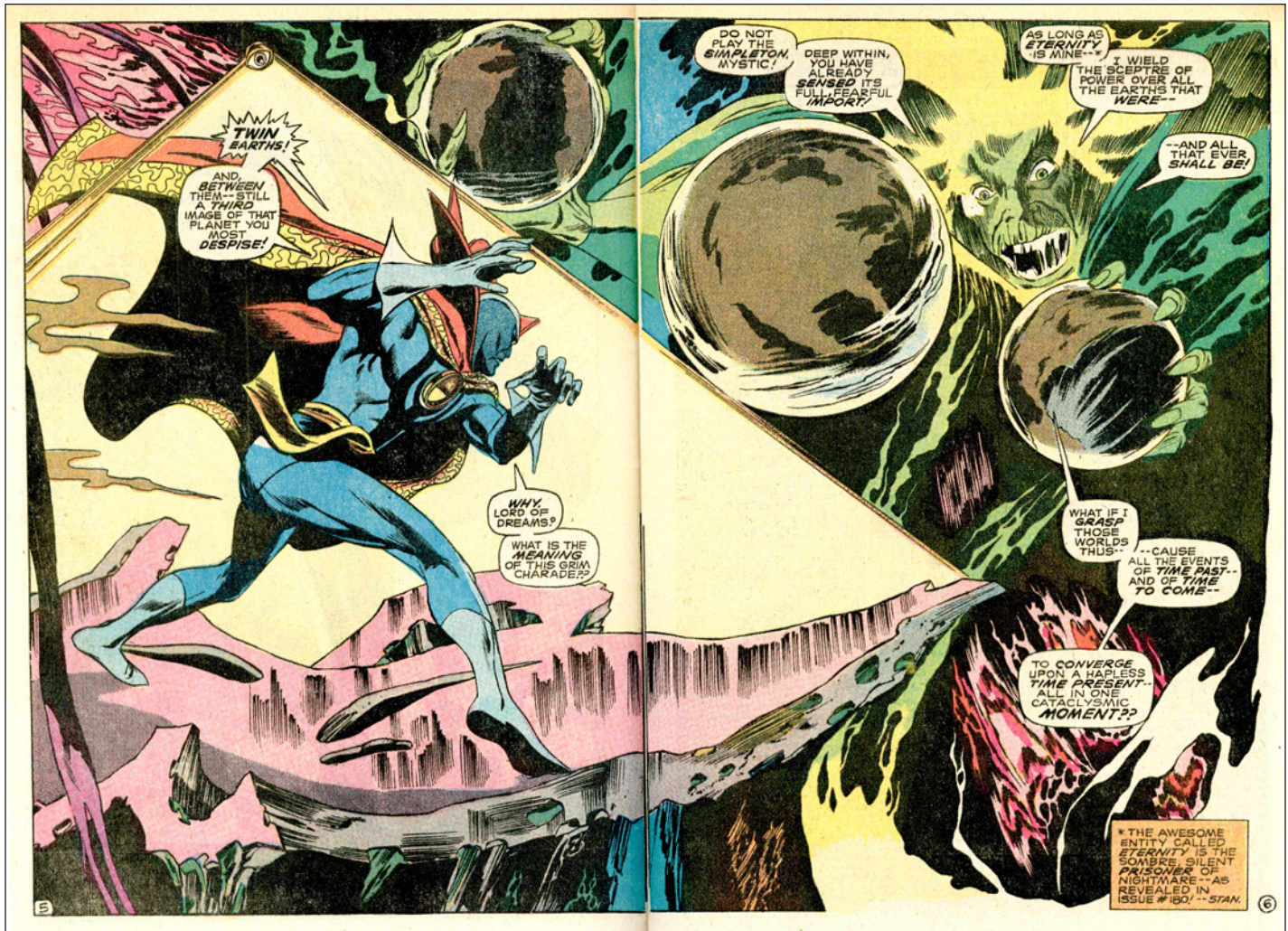
[Drake] was the first man in Manhattan with a Polaroid camera, when they came out. That's what made *The Heart of Juliet Jones* look so good. I had to get a Polaroid camera, and I started doing the same thing. I'd have a friend pose... a woman. So, I was kind of doing advertising. I had clippings and everything else.

I was not a brush man; Jack Kamen was. That's all he did was use brush. I did work with a brush, but depending on the artist... like on the *Kick-Ass* series I did with John Romita, Jr. But other than that, I like the pen. So, when I got into the business, I realized how many people were doing brush. It was the Milton Caniff school, I guess.



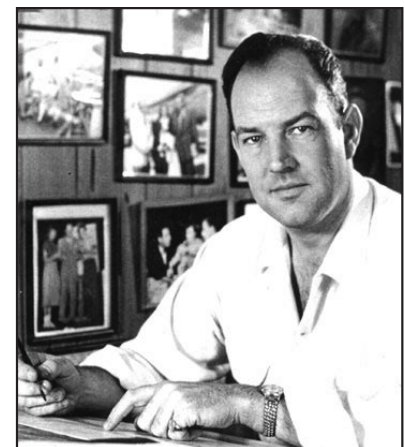
"We, Colan & Palmer..."

The first combination anywhere, ever, of Gene Colan (penciler) and Tom Palmer (inker)—the splash of *Doctor Strange* #172 (Sept. 1968), since that page was done before the cover. From the instant he first beheld that inked page in glorious black-&-white original art, Roy Thomas, both as scripter and as Marvel's associate editor, never had a moment's doubt that Gene the Dean had found his best embellisher ever! Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Worlds Enough And Time?

Alex Grand compares this double-page spread by Colan & Palmer from *Doctor Strange* #182 (Sept. 1969) to the Palmer/Adkins one from #171, seen on p. 11. So we thought you'd might like to do so as well. Script by Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Stan Drake

became a major American cartoonist with the launching of his comic strip *The Heart of Juliet Jones* in 1953. At left is an early Sunday. [TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc.]



Ain't That A Kick In The—Head!

The titular hero seems on the losing side of his own name in this page from *Kick-Ass* #1 (April 2008). Script by Mark Millar; pencils by John Romita, Jr.; inks by Tom Palmer. Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

I think that's what changed the comicbooks, because a lot of people were using pen, coming in behind me, and before me, maybe. But the older artists, whether it was Wally Wood—he'd use the pen for his faces, eyes, but he was brush—Joe Orlando was brush—Jack Kamen, like I said. So, that whole era.... And I think maybe that's why comicbooks changed in the later '60s, because... I'm thinking of Klaus Janson, so many people... they started using pen.

JT: Versus like Joe Sinnott, and George Klein, and that older school that so define Marvel, before you came, really, because you were the change, I think.

PALMER: I never thought of that. Well, I've known Neal for a long time. He was working in Johnstone and Cushing, and I think he picked up a lot from Stan [Drake]. But he also brought that quality in to comicbooks. We were doing *The X-Men*. When I got the first pages from Roy Thomas, I saw a couple of things. There was an operating room, and I [discovered that] I had that reference in my clip file... the operating room, and maybe it was, oh King Fahyed something. Which meant that Neal was using that reference as he would at Johnstone & Cushing, because they did advertisements on that. So, he was bringing that into the pencils. That's the first



John Romita, Jr.

time I saw it... my exposure to it.

AG: And that may have affected you as well, influenced you as well.

PALMER: Yeah, sure.

AG: You mentioned Stan Drake. Wasn't he the one in the car with Alex Raymond in that [fatal] crash?

PALMER: That's right. He told me that whole story over lunch that day. It raised the hair on the back of my neck. It must have been torture. He relived that day, over and over, for years. Probably to his last days. And he told it in such a colorful—well, not colorful, but tragic—way about that. I think he felt the guilt of losing Alex Raymond, being part of it, so to speak. But Alex Raymond was the one driving, even though it was Stan Drake's car.

AG: Right. So, there's like a PTSD, from this experience. And did he indicate that he thought Alex Raymond may have done that on purpose?

PALMER: No, I've heard stories, only. And maybe that's why he told me straight out. He didn't give me variations. It was starting to rain, and they were going on this curve. He knew that Alex was going a little bit too fast but he didn't say anything. And when he made the turn, they just went off the road. But there happened to be a tree there. And when they hit the tree, I believe he lost one of his ears—at least, the lobe was ripped off Stan Drake's head, when he went through the windshield or whatever. But Alex Raymond was impaled on the aluminum, around this coupé Corvette. You know, the first Corvettes, there was a big, thick aluminum chrome around the window. He was impaled, so when they found him, he was dead.

AG: In his mouth.

PALMER: Mouth and neck, or whatever. But he was dead. That's a ghastly part, maybe you can cut that out. [chuckles] Or maybe leave it in.

AG: I think leave it in. That's a good detail. That's very intense. So then, with issue #173 of *Doctor Strange* you asked to also color the book. Who did you ask that to?

PALMER: I just went in to Roy Thomas or Sol Brodsky and said... I think it was Roy. I connected with Roy, and he was a comicbook guy, and he was Marvel. And I said, "Can I color?" And he said, "Sure." And he says, "Let me take you into Marie Severin. Marie will give you this chemical color chart and all the bottles of Dr. Martin's dyes."

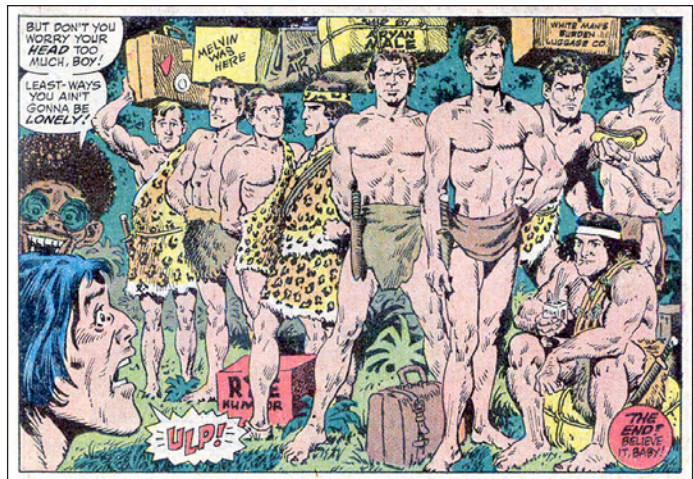
And she was so good. She opened the chart, she said, "Now, this color is beige, but you add water to it and this is the flesh, and this and this." Gray was red and blue, together. And they were all numbered charts. So, I said, "How long does it take you to do this?" She said, "Well, we can do at least a book or two a day," because it was only \$2 a page, so you could make \$40 a day if you were good, and had two books.

I went back to do it in the apartment, Queens at the time. Three days later, I was still working on it. And I still remember the page where Doctor Strange is levitating the Book of the Vishanti. I was doing a watercolor painting! And when I took it in: "Palmer, what are you doing?" I was not getting paid for it, but it was so much fun doing it. And also, having all those colors, because you had muted colors in the bottom rows, where all the colors were getting together. And then you had the bright colors, going up in

the top. Everything bright is *nothing* bright, so if you use the muted colors, you could make things bright.

AG: This is interesting, because a lot of the inkers and comics people start from a cartooning background. But you start from an illustration background, which is like a whole other thing, and that's great.

You did Doctor Strange all the way through the final issue, #183. You inked Gene Colan; Roy Thomas was writing it. And then you also did one Captain America Steranko issue in 1969, #113. How did you get that assignment? And what was your take on those pencils?



Mirthful Marie Severin

from the 1975 Marvel Con program book—and the final panel of “Tarzan and the Apes” from *Spoof* #2 (Nov. 1972), as penciled by Marie, inked by her brother John, scripted by Roy Thomas—and colored by Marie herself, one of many, many great coloring jobs she did over the years, first for EC Comics, then for Marvel. In 1968, she showed young Tom Palmer the chromatic ropes. Thanks to Michael Grabois. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

And I thought I was going to get another one, but he was working on the next issue but he wasn't getting it done in time, and they had to get those books out... so they got Jack Kirby to do the next issue, I believe. They would throw stuff at me and see how it worked out. I did John Buscema. I fell right into that. I was certainly got used, constantly.

I finally met Steranko a couple of years ago at a convention, and I went up to him. We've become best of friends since.

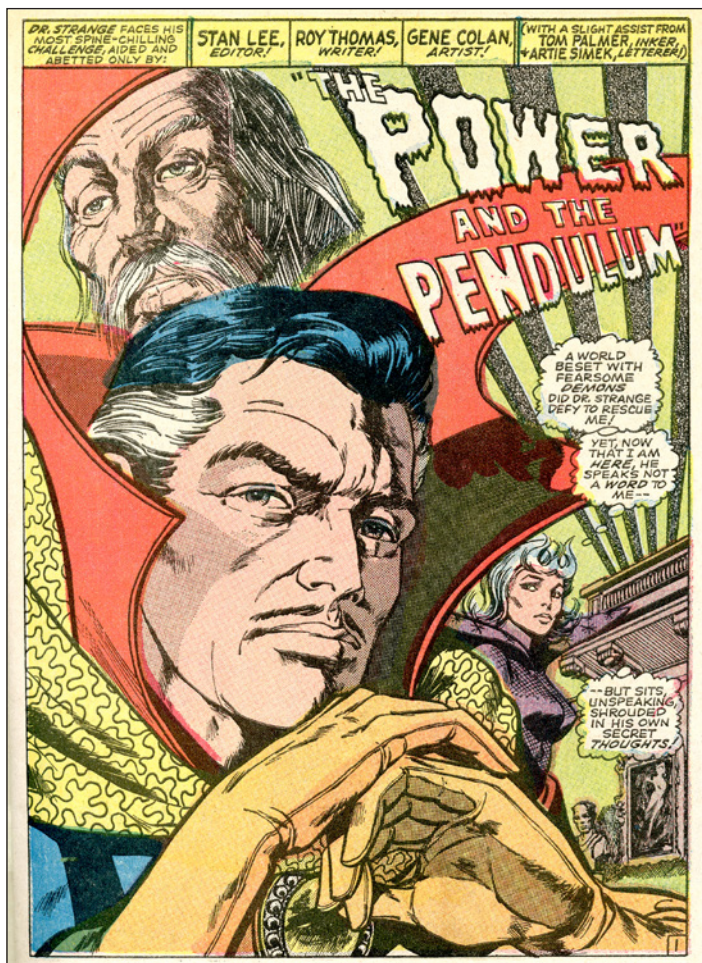
AG: You started inking Neal Adams on The X-Men beginning in the spring of 1969, issues #56 through #65. He was new to Marvel at the time, but had you already seen some of his DC work before that?

PALMER: When I started to do work for Marvel, I started to go to the comicbook stands and look at what other people were doing. I picked up Marvels, I picked up whatever. I remember picking up “Deadman,” and I was aware of Neal, but I didn't put two and two together. I didn't know he was the guy... Well, boy, it turned out he was. We were both working in Manhattan at the same time.

AG: You've said Neal's pencils were very tight, very illustrative... that you didn't have to add as much form to it as you had to on Colan. But you had also alluded to adding a little bit of...

PALMER: Zipatone. Where I thought it needed it. Here's how Zipatone came into my life: I always wondered why Wally Wood's [EC] pages looked different [from other artists']. And, what it was, there's this Zipatone underneath it. Marie Severin was coloring all those issues. But right over that, maybe a 10 or 20% Zipatone was different than the red without Zipatone. And you couldn't get that subtle difference with the limited color you had. So, you used percentages. You had to keep it simple: Yellow, red, and blue maybe worked, while you couldn't do with browns and everything. Well, I guess you could, but it didn't work out the same.

And that fascinated me. Somebody had their arms up, there's a cape, whatever. I can make it look like it had a background to it; you put some Zipatone on it. Or if you want to push something in the back, so when it's colored it does go in the back.... We're thinking that comicbooks are planes. Just like in painting, there's a foreground, middle ground, background. And you've got to



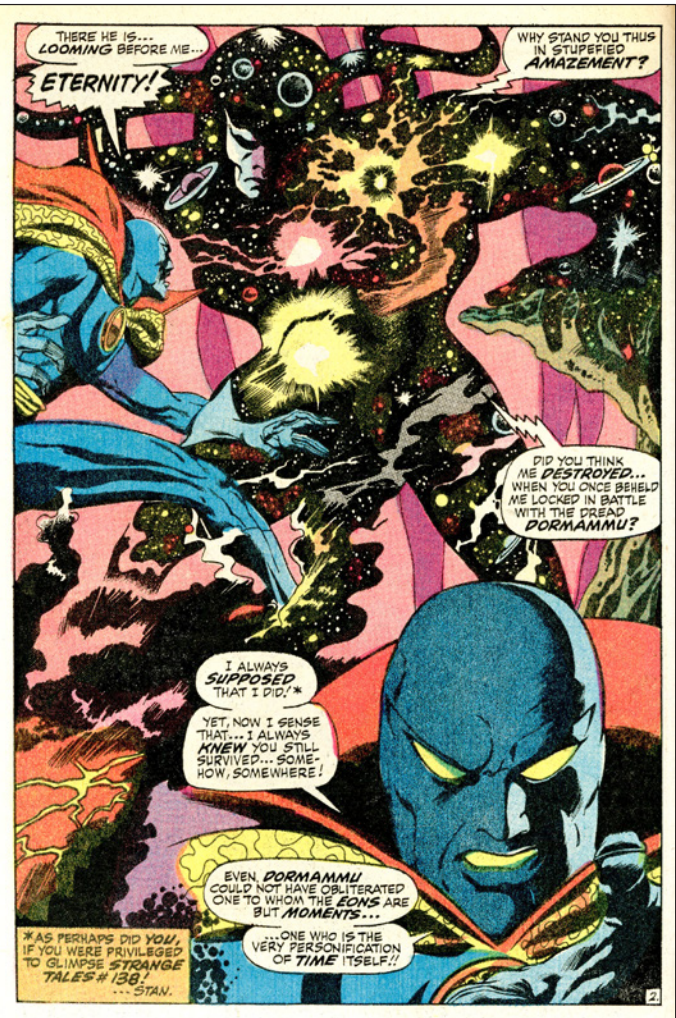
“The Power & The Pendulum” & The Paintbrush

Ye Editor could be wrong about this, but he recalls *Doctor Strange* #174 (Nov. 1968), Tom Palmer's third inking job on the comic, as being the first one he colored. Above is the splash page from that story. Pencils by Colan; script by Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Talking Till He's "Blue In The Face"

On the first page of *Doctor Strange* #180 (May 1969), Tom Palmer's use of Zipatone, running headlong into the comics industry's then-primitive repro techniques, produced the unfortunate situation in which the last three letters of the second use of the word "ETERNITY" in the title didn't just gradually fade away toward the right, as they were meant to do, but vanished entirely! However, there was a happier result on page 2, where Zipatone over the then-"masked" sorcerer resulted in a darker, more sinister blue over most of his "face" at lower middle. Script by Thomas, pencils by Colan, and colors (as well as inks) by Palmer. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



"scribbles"... I'd have to do wrinkles. And you know, I use the same wrinkles all the time. So I pull out of my folder, find some different unusual wrinkles. You have to go around the arm and all that—they're almost like little pieces of metal or paper—then put it together. I did variety. Maybe that's the illustrator in me—that you look at little details like wrinkles. The way they lie, and the lighting on them. The lighting is very important.

AG: Yeah, I noticed that. I was like, this is crazy stuff, in a good way. And if you compare it to the Werner Roth/Sam Grainger backup stories, it's like you stop reading when your section's done.

I know it's been a long time, but in *X-Men* #62, there were some memory segments where people weren't inked with black. It was almost like they were inked with blue or red, to show it was a memory segment. Did you not ink that, or did you ink it and then colorist later changed it?

PALMER: It would be on an overlay. You didn't ink it blue or red. That was a decision made in the production stage, and it was very crude back then. And then they finally caught up, because they were so used to the way comicbooks were colored and printed, really.

Before, there was letterpress, which meant the metal plate came down and printed black, and then the color came from something else; it was printed over. But once they brought up rotogravures, like a newspaper or a magazine, after that it can be anything. You opened up the world. Today, you do comicbooks in whatever medium you want. If you already had a foot in a regular business like an advertising studio, you were at that level of right thinkers, because this stuff was going into magazines, it was

studio; you had to get it done. You had deadlines. You had to be clean with the work; you couldn't deliver work that was dirty. I guess I brought that with me. Deadlines were very important to me. I can't say I've made every one of them, but if was going to have a problem, I let them know.

AG: I was going over those issues last night; you don't scratch off some detail. You'd see [Vince] Colletta scratch out some detail, or just ink it real quick. But you did not. You did not gloss over any detail. The backgrounds had just as much detail as the foregrounds. The little beads of sweat on Alex Summers, for example... clothes, suits wrinkling. Every little wrinkle, you inked all that stuff. The energy lines from Havok, exploding... You kept all that stuff. Did you also add some texture to that stuff as well? Because it's impressive, the detail in those pages.

PALMER: Well, if you showed me a particular page, maybe I would remember. I have a file; I use it today. A big folder of just wrinkles. Wrinkles on blouses, pants, whatever. And especially with John Buscema, when he was doing just breakdowns...

going here or there. So it had to have an overlay or some way of separating color. By the time you got to the comics, it was almost like unheard of, to them. Because they almost never did it. But some of the guys that were coming in were wanting to do it. Like Jim Steranko, or Neal. Was Jim Steranko there before Neal or...?

JT: Yeah. Steranko did a couple of X-Men issues before Neal did. Steranko, Barry Smith, and then Neal.

PALMER: Holy smoke.

AG: There's this one page of Ka-Zar and the sabertooth fighting some Savage Land goons. And there's so much detail, so many figures on this one page, and there's like no background at all. And you see every little muscle, every little body hair in this. It was almost like that Frank Frazetta Famous Funnies cover where there's like all this action in that fight. Do you remember that page?

PALMER: Not every detail, but yeah, a lot of those pages were... time-consuming. I don't know how long

they took, though. I never kept track of it. You learned that early on: you never look at the clock. Because it's so much more than just a chore, a labor. It is what you love to do, first of all. And you don't slough it off, and you don't -- "Oh! I spent 20 minutes longer than I should have, or 10 minutes longer." You do what you have to do.

I kept on doing advertising, by the way. I didn't give it up when I went into comics. I did comicbooks and advertising. I kept it up, paintings and everything. So, I had some late nights, and sometimes a real crunch doing the comicbooks.

Mostly, with Gene, it must have been the period with *Tomb of Dracula*. I remember there was one issue that Gene did very loosely, and I had to ink the whole book over a weekend. Lot of late nights. [chuckles] But it got done. I don't remember what number it was. There were times that you had to do what you had to do.

But Neal's stuff, to me... I don't want to say anything bad about Vinnie Colletta, but he used to erase things.



Nifty Neal Adams

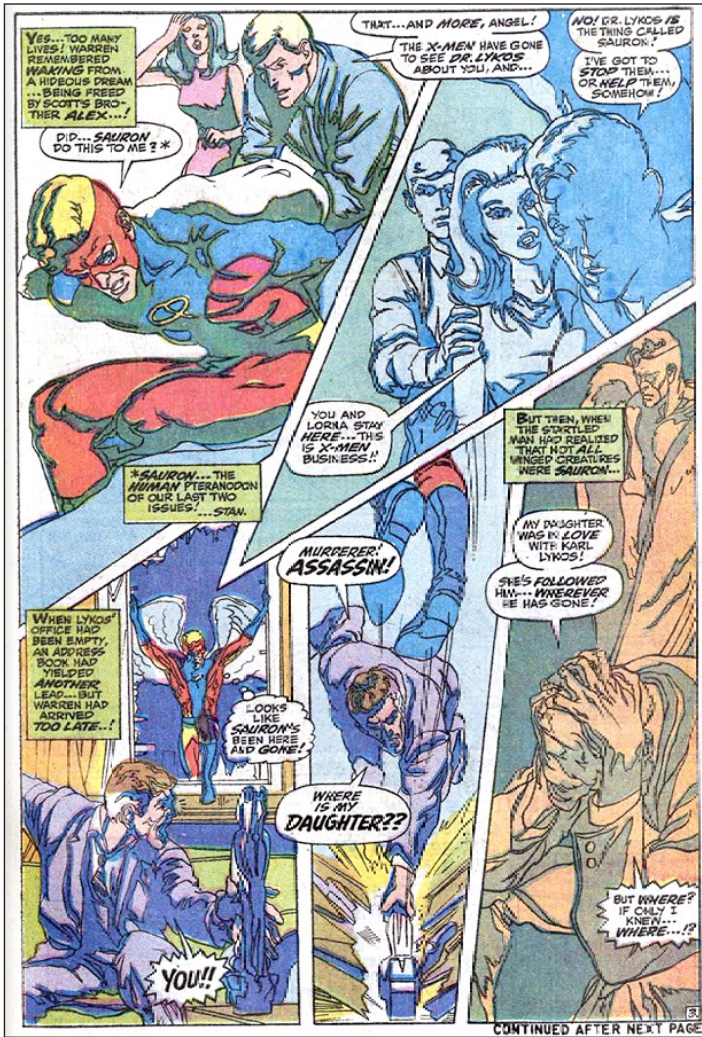


Big John Buscema



In This Case—Imitation Was No Form Of Flattery

(Left:) Page 1 from *The Avengers* #94 (Dec. 1971), penciled by Neal Adams. (Right:) Page 7 splash from the same issue, penciled by John Buscema. Roy Thomas scripted and Tom Palmer inked both pages, but, contrary to what Tom assumed, John B. was never asked to imitate Neal's style anywhere in the Kree-Skrull War issues. Ye Editor knew that Buscema would draw them just fine in his own style—and that Palmer's inking would hold it all together. The page scans are courtesy of Barry Pearl; the photos come from the 1975 Marvel Con program book, complete with awesome alliterative adjectives. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Make It Like A Memory

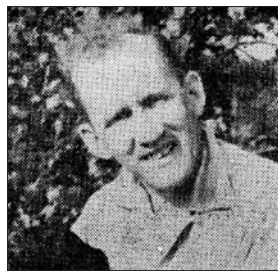
Tom and Alex discuss "memory segment" pages such as this one from *The X-Men* #62 (Nov. 1969), where Mr. Palmer inked Neal Adams' pencils. Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Sharon Karibian. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Walt Simonson got a *Thor* cover that Vinnie inked over Jack Kirby. I was over at his house one time, and I'm looking closely at it. I said, "Walt, come over here. Take a look. You can see Vinnie had erased a bunch of figures here." Imagine doing that. And Jack Kirby didn't realize it, I guess... the guys at Marvel didn't. But Neal made some comment... I think Vinnie Colletta inked one of his DC Comics stories.

AG: Yeah, I think it was a Flash issue.

PALMER: There was something about the arm, Neal said. The way he inked it, the arm looked like a stunted, short arm. And the reason was that you don't draw the lines going to the short end, you draw them to the outside. It's a long hand. So, Neal was very aware of that. And this was after weeks that we worked together. But I never rushed. I never scribbled. I really spent time in doing it.

AG: Yeah. Now, *X-Men* #64—that one is the Don Heck issue. And this is interesting in that, if you look at Don Heck stuff before,



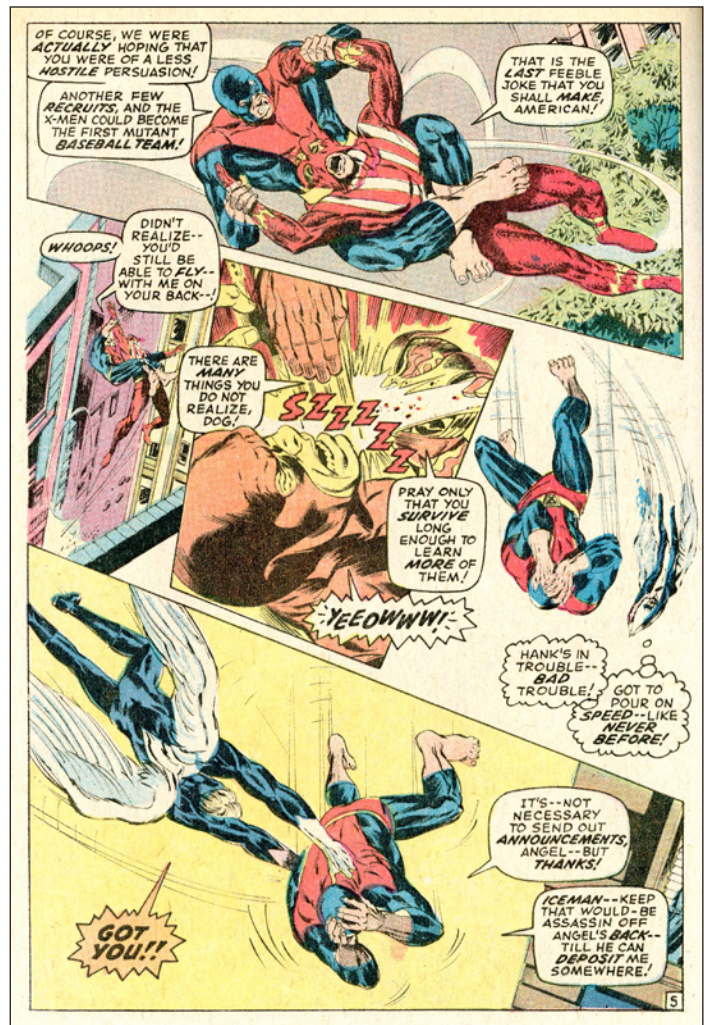
Don Heck

From the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*.

and even after that, that issue seemed different, because a lot of people say it almost feels like there is more muscle and texture in the anatomy than in the classic Don Heck stuff. Was that you who added that, to make it almost more continuous with what you and Neal were doing?

PALMER: Oh yeah. I had to redraw, pretty much, most of it. Not every line, but like you're saying, the anatomy and the folds, and the X-Men look, so to speak. But I had to redraw that, pencil it quick. I didn't make it a tight rendering to help me. That [issue] was on a shelf. They [Marvel] would do that. They would pull a book out and convert it into something that was late, or needed it.

AG: I see. So, you actually kind of redrew a lot of that issue, which makes sense because people are like, "Oh, Don Heck was trying to mimic Neal Adams." No, it was actually your inking that provided the continuous look there. If you look at Sunfire, who's the Japanese character in that, there are a lot of wrinkles in his uncle's face in that issue, that Don Heck just... I've never seen him do that. And then Jean Grey's face looked sexier. Iceman's face wasn't a block; it had all these textures, like a human face, almost. And I feel like that was the Tom Palmer effect.



Sunrise, Sunfire...

Maybe Roy T., as writer/associate editor, never asked John Buscema to draw like Neal Adams—but he *did* ask penciler Don Heck to do precisely that in the case of *The X-Men* #64 (Jan. 1970), since the debut of the Japanese mutant Sunfire was a fill-in story, to be published in between two of Neal's. And, far as Roy and Stan Lee were concerned, Dashing Donnie came through like a champ, especially as aided by the inking wizardry of Tom Palmer! Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



It's No Picnic Being Ant-Man!

One of a number of mind-boggling Adams pages chronicling Ant-Man's "Journey to the Center of the Android" in *The Avengers* #93 (Nov. 1971)—as inked by Palmer and scripted by Thomas Roy had always intended The Vision's interior to look nearly identical to a human being's, except composed of synthetic materials... but do you think he was gonna ask Neal to redraw this sequence? Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

PALMER: I don't have it in front of me now, but it looked much different. It looked like Don Heck. I think it still does, to the purist. They can see Don Heck's layouts....

AG: Sure. The layouts, yeah. And that's what Jim was also talking about, concerning the inking before you... but there's almost like this Dan Barry, slick New York line. And then you come along and make it more like an illustration effect. But I think it almost modernized comic art in some way.

We already talked a little bit about *The Avengers*, the John Buscema issues, and how you also tried to make it a continuous look with the Neal Adams stuff. Do you remember that? Were those Buscema *Avengers* issues mostly breakdowns, or were they tighter pencils?

PALMER: Well, when I first worked with John, I did a couple of issues of *The Avengers*, and then there was a big gap. And then, when I came back on, I stayed with it until over a hundred.

JT: You did issues #74 through #84, in 1970. Those were the real classics. And then you also did *Avengers* #93, with Adams, with the Ant-Man going into The Vision's body, right? That one was pretty amazing, because it looks like a cinematic odyssey. And you see every detail on Ant Man's

helmet, and Vision's face. How do you feel about that work? Do you feel proud of that work when you look at it?

PALMER: Yeah, I even colored that issue, by the way. Neal and I would swap the coloring. And Neal did a fantastic job. I mean, it was like it was meant for him. And I couldn't do less than my best on it. Maybe I used some Zip; I don't remember. I wonder... you know the one illustration where there is a tube going up and down?

AG: Yeah.

PALMER: [George] Lucas used it as reference when he was doing *Star Wars*. It was when they were having Luke and Leia... they kind of flew from that.

AG: There's a John Buscema *Avengers*—#83, the Rutland Parade—and you also inked that issue. Was there any discussion of Rutland when you were working at Marvel? Did they talk about it at all?

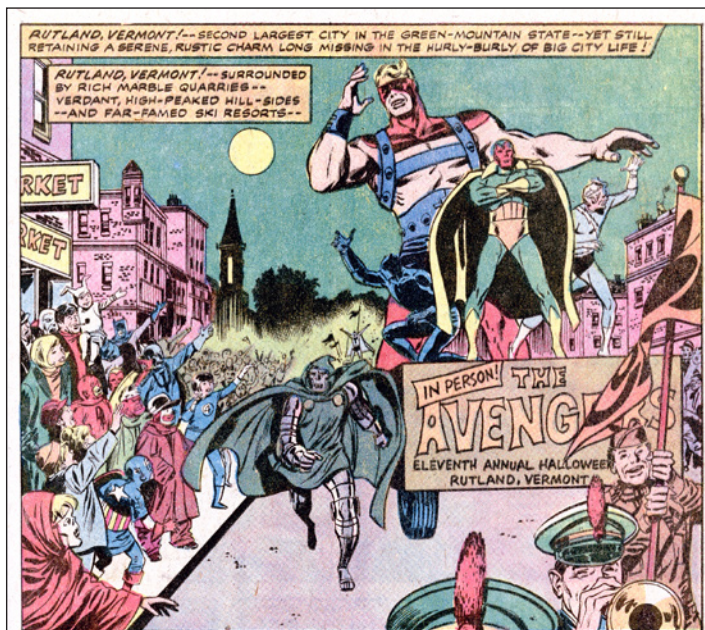
PALMER: You know, you're really bringing back memories. I don't think Roy gave me anything to work from, but he gave me some background. It seemed to be very important to comicbook people. What was that all about? Was it a meeting?

AG: Well, it was in Vermont and it was a Halloween parade. It was like really some of the early people dressing up in super-hero costumes. Fans, and having fun at this big house, Tom Fagan's house. But you never went to that, it sounds like.

PALMER: No. What year was it?

AG: This would be 1970, '71.

PALMER: I was in New York.



October Surprise—Marvel Style

The Rutland, Vermont, Halloween parades were a real-world thing, attended by a number of comics professionals in the late 1960s through the early '70s—but in *The Avengers* #83 (Dec. 1970), that year's festivities saw the added presence of the ol' Assemblers themselves—plus several of their worst enemies. This was the first of what eventually became well over a half dozen so-called "Rutland stories," first at Marvel, then at DC, and even at one or two other companies. Script by Roy Thomas, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Tom Palmer. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

AG: Yeah. Were you hanging around at the Marvel offices that much?

PALMER: No, no. During that, I was doing advertising. I was the oddball. I would visit an advertising client and I had a sport jacket on, I'd take the tie off... but I go up to Marvel, and I looked like, "Who is this?" Was I selling insurance, or what? [chuckles] I remember there's somebody who took a shot [photo] of me. They were doing, I don't know what, candid stuff; and as I was getting into the elevator, I had a sport jacket on. I was the only guy in the building, probably, in a sport jacket. But that was my life at the time. I had two hats, so to speak.

AG: And then you inked over Adams again in *Amazing Adventures* #5, 1971. This was "The Inhumans." Again you spared no detail, like Black Bolt's costume. You were able to maintain texture and shade in muscles on a black costume. Was that tricky? How do you ink a full-black costume?

PALMER: I think it's the tools that you have. There's Gillott pen points. No wonder they were around for a long time, for years. And luckily, I had some. They're flexible, but they're not flexible like rubber. They're like springy, and you can make thick and thin lines.



More Than "Inhuman"

(Above:) Jack Kirby's "Inhumans" splash page from *Amazing Adventures* #1 (Aug. 1970), as inked by Chic (not "Chick") Stone, and scripted by Jack himself. (Right:) When Neal Adams became penciler of that series, starting with *AA* #5 (March 1971), he probably decided to draw his own approximation of that scene, just to let the world know that a new era had arrived—even if, as it happened, it was destined to last only four issues, the same as Kirby's. Script by Roy Thomas; inks by Tom Palmer. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Plus, the characterization—I think that's the character Stan Drake has. If you look at Stan Drake's work, and it's what drawing should be like... if you're going to have, let's say, a wrinkle on a sleeve. When it comes around from the back of the arm, it would be thin. But to the front of the arm, it gets thicker. So, it's not just one thickness. That's what's great about those pen points. You have to think, as an artist, what you're doing when you're doing something: Where is it thick? Where is it thin? Or where it should be dark, or whatever?

So there are little things that make you stop and think, and do that. What I'm saying is, when you do that, the appearance is a realistic look. And I think that comes from the advertising. It's that it's got to be realistic-looking. Otherwise, it looks flat.

AG: Yeah. And it works because it creates this almost cinematic... like



Jack "King" Kirby
From the 1969 *Fantastic Four*
Annual.

you're reading a movie. I know that Alex Ross does that sort of stuff now, but what you guys did is like an early super-hero version of this, and I think readers love that stuff.

You inked Gene Colan on both *Daredevil* and *Captain America* for some issues. My question is, the art and inking, pencil and ink style, seem different from the *Doctor Strange* stuff, where there are a lot of misty scenes. These are more defined scenes, more illustrative figures, running around, a lot



of acrobatics. Did you approach the inking differently, or did Gene actually draw those pencils differently than he did Doctor Strange?

PALMER: [chuckles] I'm trying to think back... Gene Colan... You know that party I was telling you about at Roy Thomas'? Roy, at one point, called Neal and I... and who else?... I don't know... a few other people, a few other artists... into his bedroom. And he said, "Take a look at this." And he had a full issue, all penciled and ready for Roy to write. I believe it was a *Daredevil* issue of Gene Colan's pencils, and all of us were just amazed at what Gene had done. He was doing beautiful work at that time on *Daredevil*.

AG: Interesting. He seemed to approach his pencils on *Daredevil* as a tighter figure than the Doctor Strange. I don't know if you remember, but in *Daredevil* #77, you inked Colan drawing Spider-Man. Did you draw the webbing in his costume? Because the lines are so distinctly different than when I see those lines in other issues with Spider-Man.

PALMER: I don't know. I don't remember. *Howard the Duck*—I was going to say Gene would draw it differently. Yeah. That was a different Gene. It was the, almost the cartoonist Gene that you were

talking before, yeah. So, Gene had his styles.

AG: Yeah. It would vary on genre and things. Because he could do the funny-animal thing with *Howard the Duck*. Now, Jim wants to ask you a few questions about *Tomb of Dracula*.

JT: First, a quick question. Do you remember, did you or Neal color the *X-Men* issues? Or did you take turns like you did with *Avengers*?

PALMER: I didn't do all of them, but I did some of them. I'd have to see them. I don't know if Neal did all the ones that I didn't do. Neal and I were on the same page. I remember Neal saying that what he liked about my coloring is that I went down to the lower... If you ever saw a chemical color chart, it started out with the single colors, the balls, but then it was percentages, and then as it went down the chart, you started to mix up the colors.

And if you want to mute a color, you use its complement. To make it simple, red you could mute with green, or vice versa. You want to mute the green, you can use some red; it becomes almost like an army green. And you could go all the way down the bottom, you can get like 75% of that mix coming together, and if you use those around something, then the index goes back to Reilly.

He used to say that, "If everything's bright, nothing's bright." And if you want to, you can make somebody look at a thing in your painting by using values of color. That's what I was. I would go down and use those muted colors. Then if you took those muted colors, especially if they had some green in it, and put them next to a red, they'd make the red pop. It'd make the red very strong. And I think Neal was doing the same thing, too. He was aware of color.

JT: So, when you would do an inking job, and someone else would do the coloring, that was probably frustrating to you when they weren't doing that kind of technique in those things. Is that fair to say?

PALMER: Yeah. Early on, they used anybody that was walking around the office. Later on, there were some terrific colorists. Greg Wright was one... Christie Scheele... and many others. I can't think of all the names. And now it's even a broader thing—you're on the computer.

JT: And coloring has become almost the new inking, because of the technology.

PALMER: Yeah. But you have to know color. You can't just do a coloring block. The same principles apply, but you could do a lot of things with that simple chart. It's like you only have so many crayons in the box but you can still do a nice job.

JT: Sure, that *Avengers* issue with *Ant-Man* is amazingly colored, that whole sequence. It's fascinating to study.



Oh, What A Tangled Web We Weave...

Colan pencils and Palmer inks Spider-Man in *Daredevil* #77 (June 1971)—with a script by relative newcomer Gerry Conway. Looking at p. 2, it seems obvious to Ye Editor that the webbing of Spidey's mask has a quite different, much wider-spaced look to it than that on the rest of his costume. Most likely, Tom had to fix up the Wall-Crawler's webbing in various panels—but here he didn't quite have it down pat just yet. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Gerry Conway
From *FOOM Magazine*
#1 (Feb. 1973).

The other question I had, in relation to how you became Tom Palmer the inker, was: It seems to me that fortune smiled on you and that you had more tools than a lot of inkers had because of your training with Reilly in terms of the painting and the understanding of color. But also of grays, because I know in the palette, he focused initially on a lot of gray, and that might have helped you with understanding how to do Gene Colan in a way that other people weren't quite getting. And also, Kamen and his approach and tutelage.

Then you walk into Marvel. I think you got lucky because you got two of the hardest people to ink that there could be. Colan because of his

style, and Adams in what he expected, and how he viewed it similar to what you did in terms of the advertising backgrounds... so that you had to bring those tools out, initially, for those particular projects. And that sort of set a stage for who Tom Palmer was going to be as an inker going forward, so that it happened to work out perfectly for you. What do you think of that?

PALMER: I would like to have a copy of that, what you just said. That's perfect. [chuckles] I am flattered by that because I thought about the same thing. I walked into Marvel at the right time; they were expanding. If I had tried maybe a year before that, it wouldn't have happened. And I got the right training—a little bit here, and a little bit there—and it all worked.

So I found a home at Marvel. I'm glad I went to Marvel because DC—DC today is different than DC back then. They were kind of rough up there. Gene Colan used to work for them, and he told me some horror stories about an editor—I'm not saying his name—ripping up some of his pages. Well, I can't see anybody at Marvel doing that. If somebody did that to me, I think I'd really lose it.

The team at Marvel was very down to Earth... Flo Steinberg, Marie Severin, John Romita, the Senior. He was such, as they say, a mensch. He was unbelievable. He was the heart, I think in that sense, but then they had Roy Thomas, who was perfect; he was like an adjunct to Stan. And Stan was Stan: You want to hear a half a story, he'll give you three, and if you like, leap on the couch, and then you'd leave. It was like he was in his own world.

So, Marvel was the best place for me to walk into... not Charlton. Not DC. I think that's why, even to this day, I'd do work for them. I've been to other places. Looking back on it, it was a nostalgic period. It was a great time. I wish I could go back and do it over again. It was exciting. There was always something new.

JT: I think your greatest time, at least in terms of product, would be when you get assigned to Tomb of Dracula with issue #3 or so. And once Marv Wolfman comes aboard [as writer] and you all figure out... Everything gels. And then you go all the way through issue #70, just doing some of the best work, all three of you. And it was a perfect combination of artist, writer, and inker. One of the great ones of the '70s, for sure.

PALMER: Yeah. That was nice.

JT: You guys realized it, didn't you? I mean, at some point you said, "This is what I'm proud of." I know Colan did.

PALMER: Yeah. Well, I don't know "proud" so much as the challenge. I couldn't wait to see Gene's pages and what I could do with them. Let's say he took an HP pencil and did just line work... just drew with a pencil line... that would be as much a challenge, in a different way. What can I add to flesh it out? But Gene would throw something at you that was loose. Loosely done in the sense that it was like he used the side of the pencil. He would draw it in with the side the pencil.

But it was beautiful stuff. It should have been printed that way, and I think Marvel did that in the last decade. Something that he did—a *Captain America*, I believe. Just reproduce his pencils. Because you couldn't do that back then.

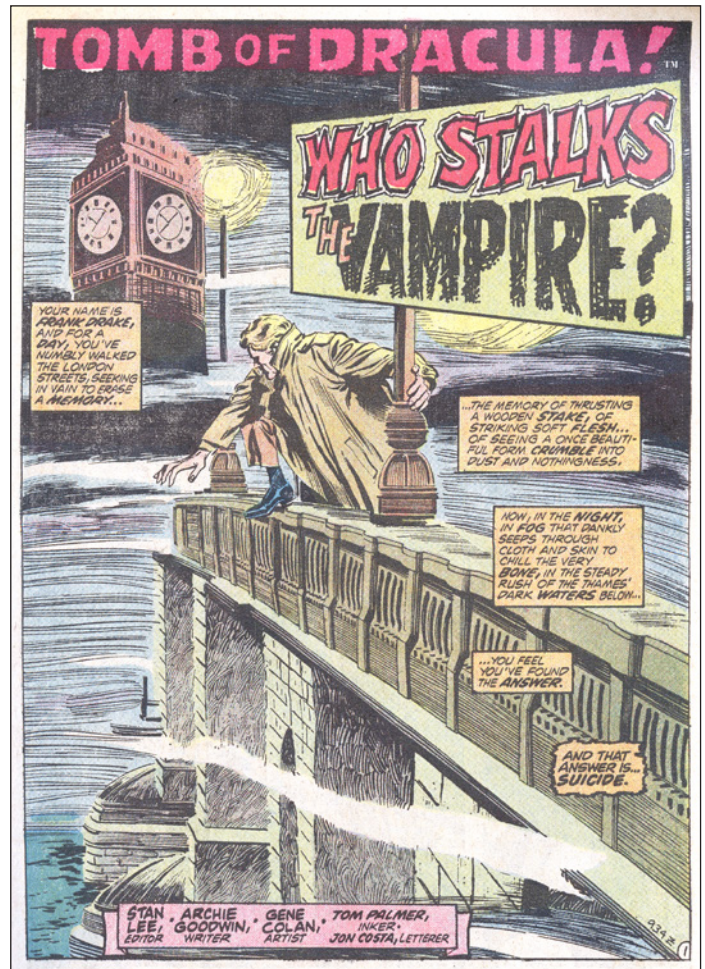
JT: Yeah, I know the thing you did with Don

McGregor for *Eclipse*, Ragamuffins. Just incredibly lovely.

PALMER: That's a piece of work. I must say, he did that for *Dracula* or the other ones, but it was that sort of thing that we were confronted with. And I hear people say, "Well, nobody can ink him." Because, if you try to ink him as you would another comicbook artist, it doesn't work. You have to approach in a different way. That's the only answer I can give—and I don't have some formula of doing it—I don't know, I just saw it in a different way.

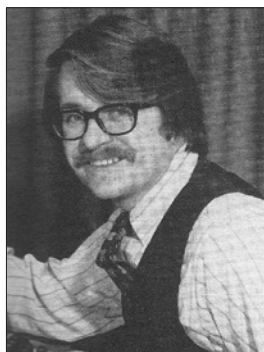
JT: Were you enjoying the horror aspect of doing *Tomb of Dracula*? You had grown up being very in touch with EC. Most of the artists you mentioned in there did some of the horror—Jack Davis, certainly. Were you having fun not doing super-heroes?

PALMER: I don't know if I thought about that that way. I just liked doing comics, drawing. I always said that I was making a lot more money doing advertising then. Doing comicbooks was my vacation. I couldn't wait to get on the comicbooks, because it was fun... I wouldn't say it was *easy*, but there was an ease to it. I think maybe that's what I brought, was an ease to it. And you kind of blended yourself with whoever you're working over. You just found what they were looking to do, and reinforced it.



Dracula Lives! (Or Whatever)

Tom Palmer made his un-dead debut inking Gene Colan's pencils in *Tomb of Dracula* #3 (May 1972), while Archie Goodwin was the title's writer. About-to-be editor-in-chief Roy Thomas recalled how great Colan and Palmer had looked on *Doctor Strange* a couple of years before, so he guessed (rightly) that a new team-up of the two was in order. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Artful Archie Goodwin

From the 1975 Marvel Con program book.

Gene was perfect for that. Did you know that he used, as his model... Jack Palance did a TV movie... I believe it was TV, not in the theatres... about Dracula. I saw it years after the fact. I saw Dracula's head in some of those scenes that I was working on, maybe in another time. Gene was using them. I don't know where he got the film from, because it was before video recorders or players. He was really into film.

He told me about a bunch of books that he used, which I still have in my book cabinet, and they were the silver covers and would have frames from different movies in different issues. One was with John Barrymore, maybe it was *Jekyll and Hyde*. I bought the books, and every so often I'd see that Gene would use some of those panels and those faces as inspiration. You need something to spark your creativity. And Gene was perfect for that, in the *Dracula*... They tried to revive it, and I just don't think people were ready for it. I did a little bit of work for him.

JT: Right after *Tomb of Dracula*, there was some carryover over to *Dracula Lives!* Was it different doing a black-&-white magazine versus doing it in color?

PALMER: Well, I could use Halftone. I could use opaque grays,



Black-&-White—And Read All Over!

The black-&-white *Dracula Lives!* #1 (1973)—well, actually, that mag's official indicia title at that time was simply *Dracula*—led off with a Colan/Palmer entry, "A Poison of the Blood." Note the use of what Tom refers to as "Halftone" to atone for the lack of color. And he knew just how to use it; note the realistically rendered shadow on the door of the police car in panel 4. Script by Gerry Conway. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

camo grays. I could use airbrush. I could do so many things, and make them into little illustrations in Halftone, black-&-white. In the color comics there is only line. It was more time-consuming. I don't know if they paid that much more than the comicbooks. But, whatever it was, I enjoyed doing it.

JT: I know Colan eventually took on the task of doing the covers of *Tomb of Dracula*, too. But Gil Kane did a substantial number in the beginning. And you were inking those, weren't you?

PALMER: Yes. A lot of them.

JT: Gil Kane did a huge number of covers for Marvel during that period in the '70s, and I see that you did at least some percentage of those. Did you enjoy inking Gil Kane?

PALMER: Yeah. I did a lot of work with him... on *Spider-Man*, too.

JT: You, Klaus Janson, Joe Sinnott... there's a couple of inkers that really do something different with Gil Kane, that I think works great. There's a great variety, depending upon who's inking those covers. And I was curious how you viewed those. Were they a challenge to do, or were they easy to do?

PALMER: Easy, in a sense. They were always dynamically... I guess the compositions were playful. He would do things... A great design, I can say that. If you look at the cover of the first Blade, I think, for *Dracula*, it's a foreground shot of Blade. His back is to you, and Dracula is up... I'm trying to remember the cover now. But it's a classic cover. But they all had a great structure to them. Gil had this sense of composition. He'd worked in everything that he did. You could always know it was Gil.

JT: Yes, there's no mistaking that. Now, on those Gil Kane *Dracula* covers, Colan made *Dracula* feral, and there was, as you said, the Jack Palance look. There was a nobility, or an aristocracy, to the Gil Kane ones. He would have a sash going across. But you inking it seemed to make it all part of the same tapestry. Were you aware you were sort of the keeper of the of tone and the look of the book?

PALMER: No, I never thought twice about it. I didn't change anything.

JT: There's one [Bernie] Wrightson cover of *Tomb of Dracula*. Neal



Coming In In A Blade Of Glory

The first glimpse any comics-buyers got of the vampire-slayer called Blade was the Gil Kane/Tom Palmer cover of *Tomb of Dracula* #10 (July 1973). Interviewer Jim Thompson points out herein that Colan's *Dracula* was more "feral," while on Kane's covers he seemed more of the "nobility, or an aristocracy." Ironically, Tom didn't ink the story inside; his long run on *TOD* (after one outing on #3) would begin the next issue, with #11. Courtesy of the GCD. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Adams, obviously, does the first cover, and everything else is I think pretty much Kane or Colan. But you were a consistency through that.

PALMER: I was in and out of the inside of the magazine. Maybe you know better than I what issue I came on: #8, or #9, or #10....

JT: You did issue #3, but then you miss #7 through 11. You had a little gap there, and after that there was no gap at all.

PALMER: I think they were trying to find maybe a look, I don't know. Then when I got back on, and I stayed, this was a whole series, up to issue #70. And you can tell when Gene wasn't crazy about that issue. [chuckles]

JT: You've been admirably discreet about saying anything negative about anyone. But when it comes to the end of *Tomb of Dracula*, there were a lot of ill feelings about how it was handled. Marv Wolfman said he was not liked by Jim Shooter, and that Jim Shooter kind of pulled the rug out from under him in terms of— There were going to be three issues [to wind things up], and then [Shooter] only gave them a double issue, and a lot of pages that were done were not allowed to be used. Did you ink those pages?

PALMER: Well, if you know what the system was.... Jim Shooter, I assume, was the editor-in-chief at the time, correct? And Marv was writing. Who was the editor? You have to take a look at a book. I don't remember who the editor was.

JT: Yeah, I'm not sure who was editing it at that point.

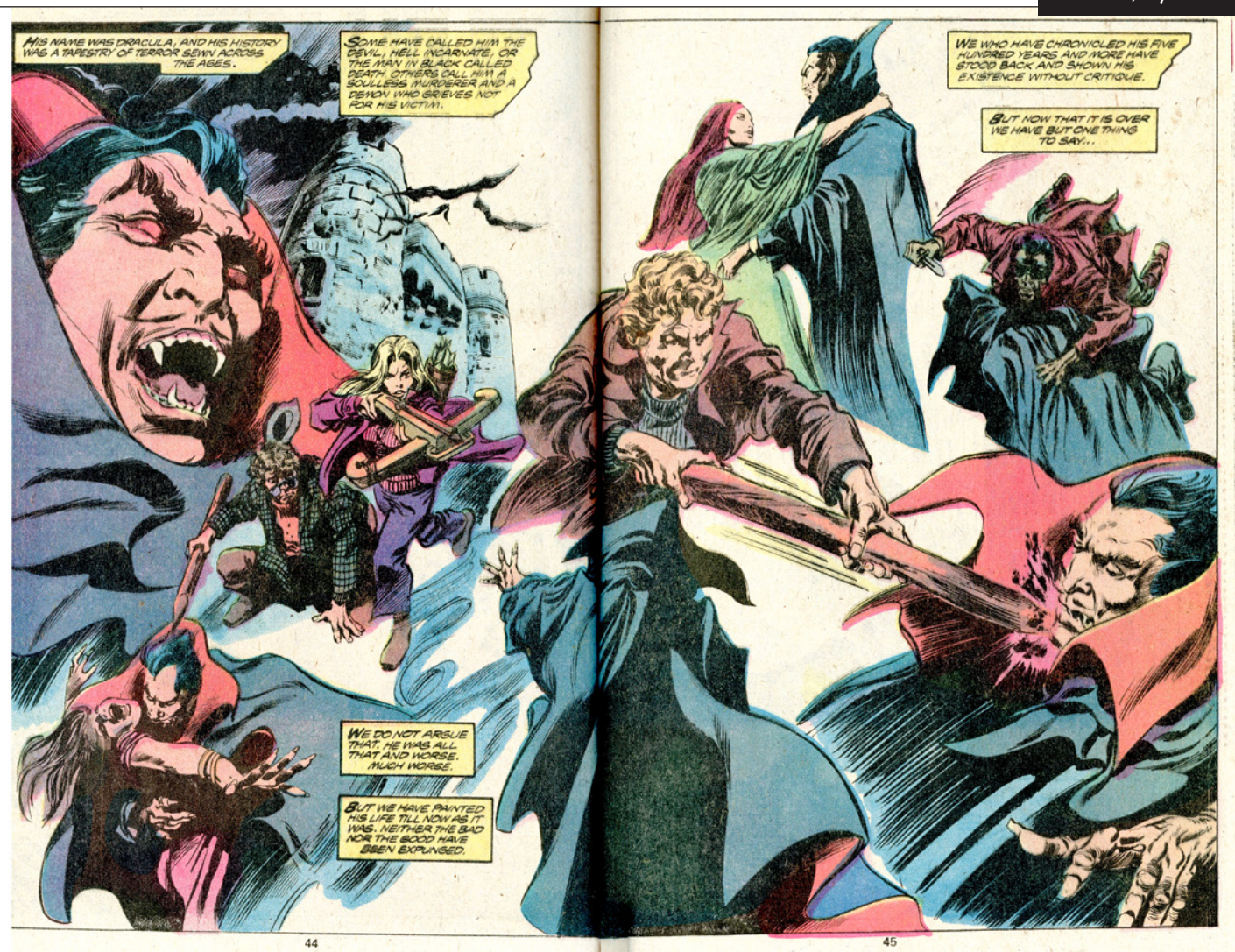
PALMER: Well, that would be my connection. I wouldn't hear from Jim Shooter, and certainly not any conversation he had with Marv. They didn't gossip about things going on, which was smart, because you can have a lot of hard feelings. Honestly, just saying that, you got to be careful where you step.

JT: Which is a good segue to: For [Steve] Gerber and Colan, you inked *Stewart the Rat*. Were you aware that that was a bit of a slap at Marvel? That Gerber was not happy over



Marvelous Marv Wolfman

That's how this photo was labeled in the 1974 Marvel Con program book, anyhow!



Sunset For A Vampire

This double-page spread, which made up two of the final three pages (out of 35) in the last color issue of *Tomb of Dracula* (#70, Aug. 1979), reminded the reader how long the mag had been among Marvel's best. Writer Marv Wolfman maintains, however, that #70 was actually supposed to have been a three-issue saga composed of regular issues, which would have meant an additional 16 pages total, but that editorial politics intervened. Still, the Transylvania trio of Wolfman, Colan, & Palmer had a nice lengthy run of 60 issues. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

things related to Howard the Duck?

PALMER: I didn't have a contract with Marvel, so I chose the outside work—I did my advertising, and I did a lot of other work, and I didn't want to start doing work with DC. I did a little work with DC on and off, but I didn't want to do so much where Marvel would stop using me on regular books. If I'd started doing too much DC and I wasn't getting Marvel work done, or if it looked like I was sloppy—I'm sure they would have pulled the book on me, so I didn't do that. But who was the publisher on *Stewart the Rat*?

JT: That was Eclipse, wasn't it?

PALMER: Dean Mullaney, yes. There were two brothers. I think I had done some other work with them. So it was fun working with Gene there, because it's a different Gene working on that.

JT: You had worked with Gerber. You had inked a Man-Thing issue that John Buscema did, with the Vikings. Do you remember that?

PALMER: I remember a cover, but I don't remember the issue. Wow. [chuckles] Was it one of those weekends? Like if you went to a rack and pulled a comicbook and said, "Do you remember on page 12 that you were..."

By the way, we're talking about working with people.... I remember calling up Roy Thomas and saying, "I made a mistake on that issue," the Neal Adams *Avengers* issue... the Ant-Man issue [#93]. And there's *The Vision*, in the first couple of pages. And I was coloring right up against the wall, I had to get it out on Monday, it was over the weekend. And one of the panels, I switched where the green should be and where the yellow should be on Vision's head. And I didn't realize it till the next day after I had sent it to Chemical Color. I went, "Oh, goodness..."

So, I called up Roy and told him, and Roy was like, "Oh, goodness!" Because he liked his books to be perfect, and I screwed up. And he called them up and had them change it. And they never changed it. I think it was already too late. But to this day, you tell somebody, "You go look at that comicbook." You don't see it. I'm not going to say the cape or the cowl... I don't remember, but it's something with the head. You see, it was yellow and green, yellow and green, and I got to a page and I did the green where the yellow should be. But it was a sign of the times. When you're pushing this



Steve Gerber

stuff out the door, you made mistakes.

JT: You did not a lot of Conan, but at least a couple of issues. Was that fun to do?

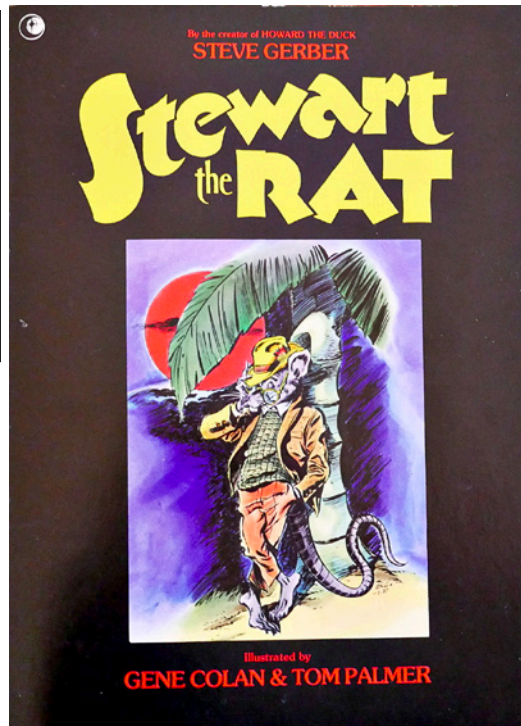
PALMER: Anytime I'm working with John Buscema was fun. He was such an accomplished artist—illustrator. He was in Chaite Studios. And other people in Chaite Studios at the time, maybe they didn't work there all the time, most probably Peak... Howard Terpning?

JT: Right.

PALMER: John had a great background. Talk about a guy doing advertising. He was at a much higher level than I was in a little studio where I was in. And he then was doing work for the comics, because he just couldn't take the pressure where he was. He loved the comicbooks. So he got to the point where he was doing pretty well with that doing breakdowns on most books. That's why he was around everything.

AG: It was, I think, Dell or something, but his Hercules before Marvel, you could tell it's like more illustration style. And once he goes into Marvel, you can see the Stan-Jack Kirby influence, where it's all dynamic layouts and things. But yeah, you can see the advertising aspect in his pre-Marvel stuff.

JT: Well, when we talked to Rick Marschall a long time ago and he was talking about that Marvel special series they did, *Shadows of the Warrior Realm*... that was done in color and Rudy Nebres did the inks on it. But John wanted to ink it himself. And apparently, had done some sample pages. Marschall said they were just



You Dirty Rat...

Gene Colan and Tom Palmer teamed up again for the graphic novel *Stewart the Rat*, published by Eclipse. The writer/creator was Steve Gerber. [TM & © Estate of Steve Gerber & any other respective trademark & copyright holders.]



Color Me—Some Color!

This is the section of *The Avengers* #93 wherein, as Tom Palmer says in this interview, he accidentally colored The Vision's headgear yellow instead of the correct green from p. 19 till the end of the 35-pager... although he'd colored it correctly earlier in the issue. Well, these things happen. Script by Thomas, pencils by Adams, inks by Palmer.

Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



A Hyborian Page

Tom had to ink quite a crowd scene as his introduction to embellishing the layouts of John Buscema when he became, for too brief a time, a part of the *Conan the Barbarian* team. This splash is from issue #52 (July 1975). Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Conan Properties LLC or successors in interest.]

brilliant. He was a great full artist, in terms of the inking as well.

PALMER: I got to speak to him a great deal when we were working together, especially near the end of his life. We'd be on the phone for a long time. He would talk about his early beginnings, and every Sunday they used to get the *Journal American* and he would get the pro pages. His favorite was Hal Foster, especially the old *Tarzan*. He was old enough to get those *Tarzans* from the 1930s.

And a certain amount of Alex Raymond from a certain period, also. His Captain America, especially the torso, if you look at a couple of his poses—not that he swiped it, but the legs, the way they were planted—his Captain America looked like he was growing out of the ground. There were roots. And with the Powermen of Mongo in *Flash Gordon*—I've got the volumes Woody Gelman had printed up in black-&-white. And you can see that. So John had digested all that *Flash Gordon* and all that Hal Foster. And his inking was the same. He has beautiful inks, and by brush. But he couldn't do both penciling and inking in comicbooks; he wouldn't have made enough money. That's why I was inking him. But he was a terrific artist, he really was.

AG: Are you pretty good at spotting a penciler's swipes?

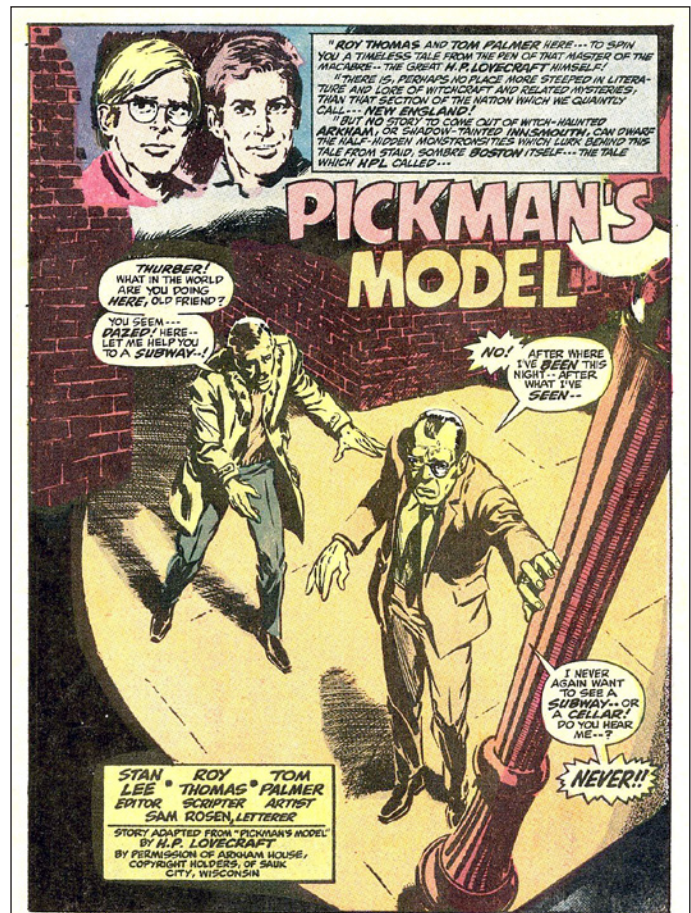
PALMER: Only if I have them. [chuckles] No, no, it's just that the time with Neal—well, Neal was somebody—I wouldn't say blatant,

but he used them, and the other [comicbook] people didn't. They would make it up. It's generic, you know. Police cars would all look the same. They didn't have any make or model. They were just the same.

Jack Kirby was perfect for it. But Kirby created his own world. I think Walt Simonson does that, too. And the cars fit that, and the buildings fit that, with Kirby. And it was certainly true of John Buscema, also... his people and his cars... his cars were all the same. I didn't try to change them, I left them the way they were. It was something I had to do when you had to get this stuff out. I don't know what their deadlines were, how many pages he did a day. It's a 20-page book; you're going to do more than a page a day, if they made a monthly issue, and he was doing more than one. So that's a lot of work, for anybody working it.

And Jim Steranko was trying to do such a beautiful job, which he did. He probably took two days to do a page; that's why it was tough to do 20 pages or so.

JT: At the same time you were doing *Dracula*, they had revived *Doctor Strange* with Steve Englehart and Frank Brunner, and then *Conan* came back on. And you did issue #8, and #11 through #18. Was *Conan* the same



Adapting The Master

Stan Lee decreed that new stories for Marvel's 1969-71 mystery titles lead off with images of one or more of the creators. Thus, when scripter Roy T. tapped Tom Palmer to both pencil and ink an adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's classic horror story "Pickman's Model" in *Tower of Shadows* #9 (Jan. 1971), the artist elected to draw the two of them as co-hosts. Perhaps the likenesses are a bit too idealized, but the tale itself turned out just fine, and was soon reprinted in a black-&-white mag. Thanks to Mark Muller. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.; original story © the respective copyright holders.]



The Doctor Is In—Again!

With *Doctor Strange* #8 (June 1975) of the revived and re-numbered series, Colan and Palmer were together again; and, if Gene's layouts and panel shapes were never quite as wild as they had been in 1968-70, well, maybe that was a good thing for the mag's sales. Writer: Steve Englehart. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

artist then as he was when you first worked with him, almost a decade earlier? In terms of *Doctor Strange*? Obviously, you were still working with him on *Dracula*.

PALMER: I really don't recall. It didn't strike me that he wasn't, so I don't know what to say. I think we all change, over time.

JT: Well, sure, because you were learning as you went along during the first run of *Doctor Strange*. By this point, you've had a decade of experience.

Jaws 2—People Zero

(Okay, so the above is basically a reminder of what the *National Lampoon* folks wanted to call the third shark movie in the series, when they were first approached to handle it!) Anyway, Rick Marschall wrote, Colan penciled, and Palmer inked and colored the adaptation of the film *Jaws 2* for the magazine-size *Marvel Super Edition* #6 (1978). The artwork is great, but all Ye Editor has to say is: "The comicbook was a lot better than the movie!" [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc. & Universal or other trademark & copyright holders.]

Incidentally, when Roy T. was editor-in-chief, he and publisher Stan Lee came this close to landing a deal to adapt the original novel *Jaws* in a similar (only black-&-white) format, at a time when the film was still months away and who knew if it would even come out, let alone be a hit? Now that would've been something for Colan & Palmer to sink their teeth into! Thanks to Art Lortie.



Steve Englehart

signing copies
some years back at
Forbidden Planet store
in London.

PALMER: Yeah, and I'd penciled in the beginning, when I first got at Marvel. I did some short horror stories. Roy Thomas had written them. And later on, Walt Simonson had done thumbnails writing some *Star Wars* issues. I penciled and then inked. Then I did the movie adaptation of the [movie] *2010*; it was for a magazine, though. But I penciled, inked. Joe Bonnie had done the layouts. I penciled, inked, and colored, and even painted the covers. So I was having a lot of fun flexing all the muscles I had about the production of a comicbook.

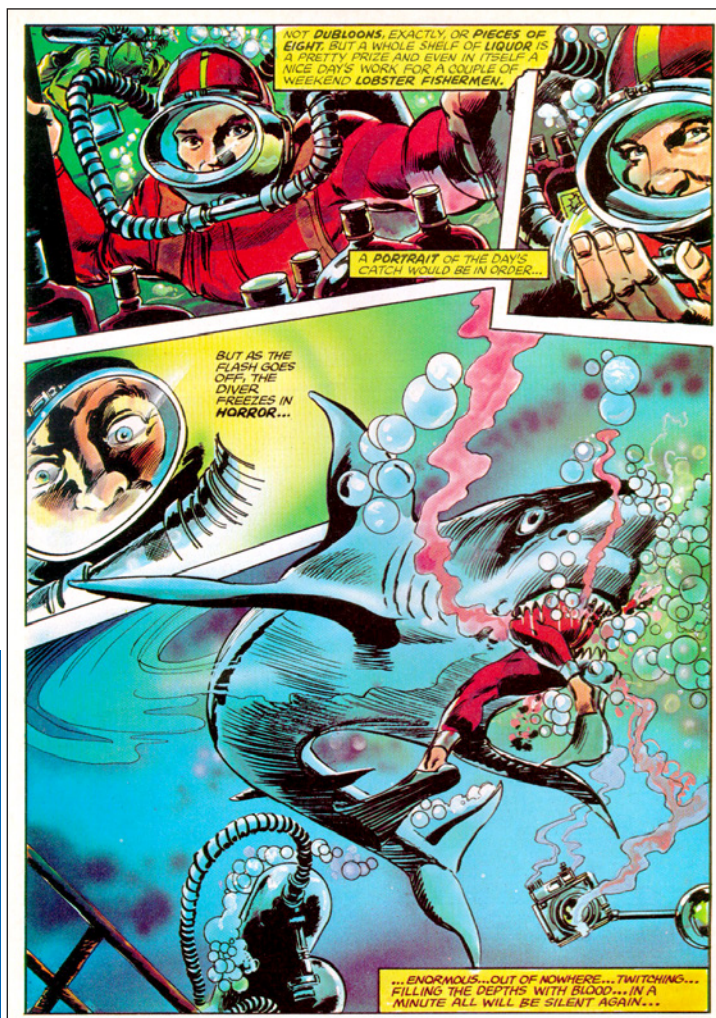
JT: You did *Jaws*, too, didn't you?

PALMER: Yes. I worked with Gene on that. And there was one, Sean Connery was in it, where the asteroid hits...

JT: Oh, that's right. You all were doing that, and nobody had seen the movie—and then, once you did, everybody realized it was going to be a horrible movie?

PALMER: [chuckles] I have a color painting for the movie version of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band... it was the Beatles. But it was that rip-off thing....

JT: One of the worst movies ever made. Who did it? The BeeGees or something?





No Time For Sergeants

Even worse than *Jaws 2*, in many people's estimation, was the film version of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* starring the BeeGees—whose cast record album thereof was famously said to have “shipped platinum both ways.” But at least Tom Palmer's cover for the Juniorpress comics adaptation of same was a winner. Too bad buyers had to open the mag! Thanks to the Grand Comics Database. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

PALMER: Yes. I was approached to do the cover for it. There was this guy, David Kraft I think, who was the outside vendor putting the book together. I remember meeting him and getting paid for it, but the cover was never used. Or was it? No, the book was never published. It was used over in Europe. I got paid for the painting, and I got the painting back. I'd had relatives, everybody, posing in the dining room for it. I had my Polaroid, taking pictures of everybody. I still have the Polaroids. Because that was a wild cover.

Oh, I also did a Beatles double spread, front and back cover, for a magazine that *was* published. And I remember leaving the building that day to pick it up, and Stan quickly got on the elevator with me and he said, “You want to sell it?” And I said, “No. No.” He said, “You sure?” I said, “Yeah. No.” So I still have that.

JT: That's a compliment, that Stan's coming up and offering you money.

PALMER: Yeah, I think he'd liked the Beatles, or just the persona and everything else.

AG: Do you remember that Doctor Strange page—I think it was Englehart's last issue or second to last—where Ben Franklin seduces Clea,

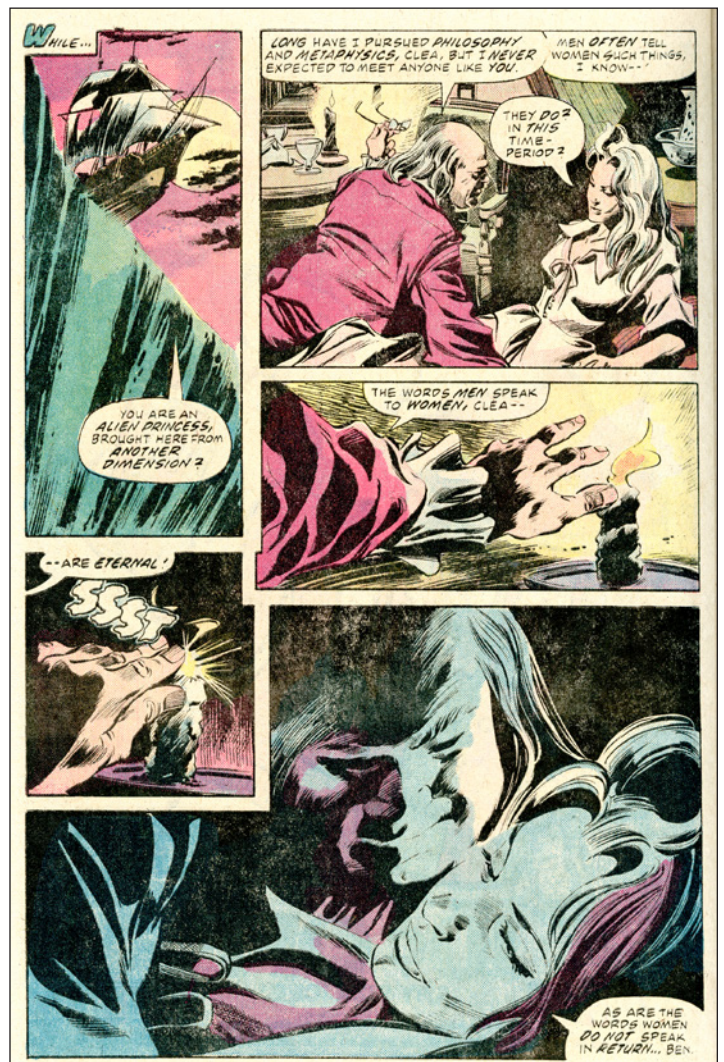
Stephen Strange's girlfriend? Do you remember inking that?

PALMER: No.

AG: [chuckles] It's memorable, and I love it. And it's a joke between me and Jim, because I love that Ben Franklin and Clea had an affair, while Stephen Strange was saving the universe somewhere. And you drew her hair beautifully, and everything else. I love the page, it's beautiful. And the shading you added... it was a very romantic shot, I'm not kidding.

On Nova #3-5 and Ms. Marvel #10, you're co-credited as artists with Sal Buscema. Does that mean he was doing breakdowns and you filled in the rest? Also, there was Hulk #213. They all say: “Sal Buscema – Tom Palmer, co-artists.”

PALMER: I don't remember those particular issues but if they put your names together... maybe it was breakdowns he did. I do remember that at one point Stan Lee was going to leave Marvel—they wouldn't give him a contract he wanted—he was going to start his own comicbook company. It was called Excelsior. And I did an issue for it with Sal Buscema, with him doing breakdowns. And I thought it was pretty good. It was a take-off on that *Starman*



Was The Feeling Electric For You, Too?

Doc's lady-love Clea and Benjamin Franklin (yes, *that* Benjamin Franklin) have a close encounter of the time-traveling kind in *Dr. Strange* #18 (Sept. 1976), courtesy of writer Steve Englehart and artists Gene Colan & Tom Palmer. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

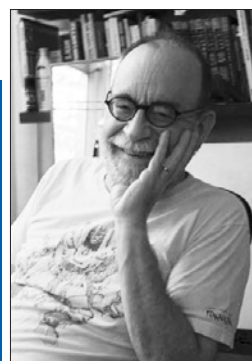


Howard Chaykin

Star Wars, Star Bright—First Star Wars I See Tonight!

(Left:) Roy Thomas, Howard Chaykin, and Tom Palmer introduce Jaxxon, the green rabbit(-like) alien, in Marvel's *Star Wars* #8 (Feb. 1978). Hope to see a lot more of him in the future!

(Below:) In *Star Wars* #56 (Feb. 1982), Tom inked Walt Simonson's thumbnail pencils, for a story plotted by Louise & Walt Simonson and David Michelinie. [TM & © Disney.]



Walt Simonson

movie with Jeff Bridges. I did one issue. I was, "Oh, this is going to be great." But we had to really pump this stuff out. It had to be done one a month... or it could be one a week. But I got halfway through the second issue and I get a call from the editor—I'd say Bob Tokar was Stan's editor, as he took him from Marvel—and I had to send everything back, because Marvel has settled with him. [EDITOR'S NOTE: See Roy T's commentary on facing page.]

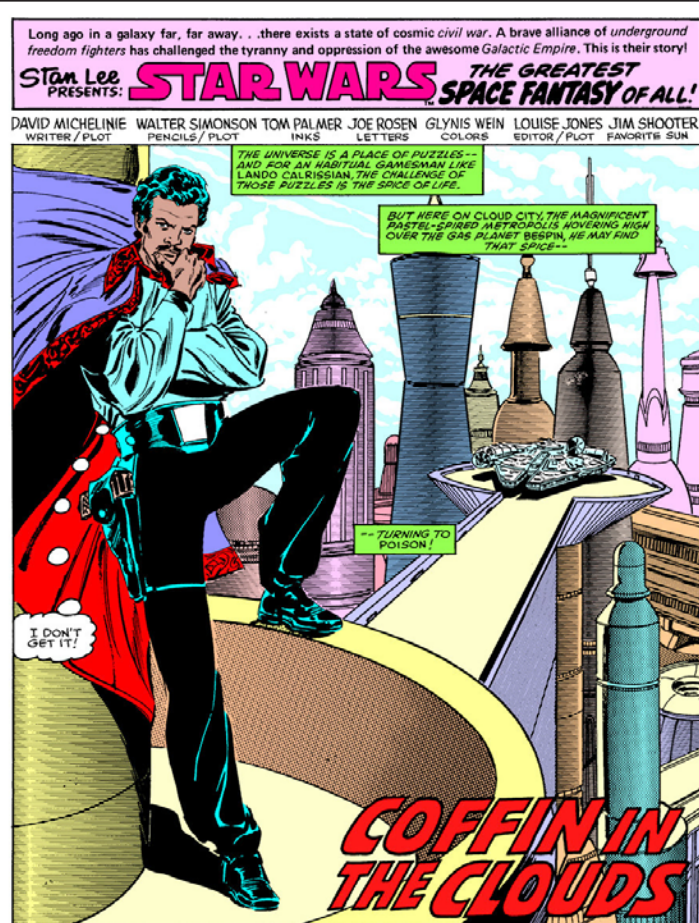
AG: What year was that? Not in the '80s, right? More like 2000 or so?

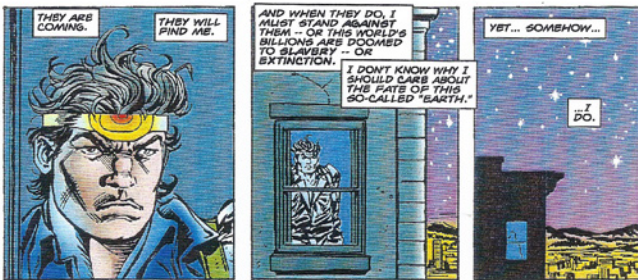
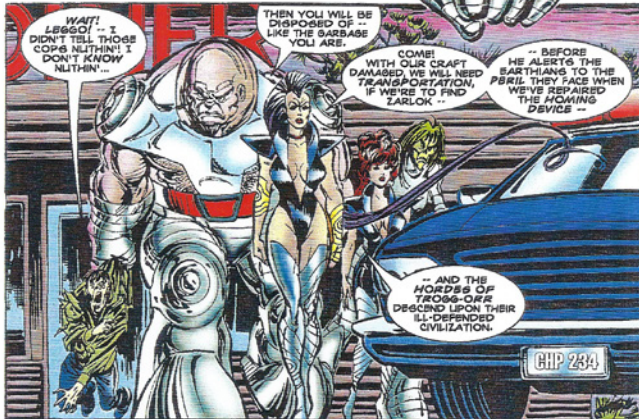
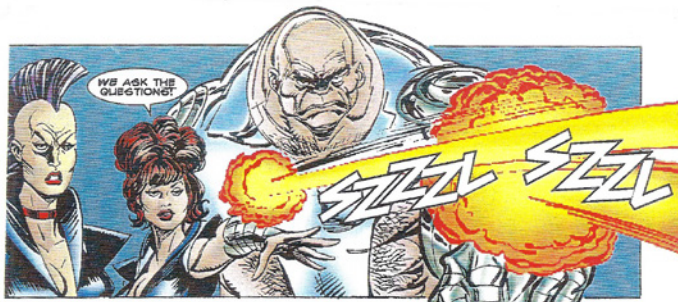
PALMER: It could have been the end of the '80s, going towards the '90s. Those pages are floating around somewhere, and I... Beautiful, like I said, but I kept Xerox copies of it.

AG: Now, Roy Thomas takes over *Thor* in 1978, issue #272, with John Buscema. And this *Thor* run goes through #277 in 1979. But there was also an equal billing in the art credit. So, this is kind of the same concept as with *Sal*, where John would do breakdowns and you would fill in the rest?

PALMER: Yeah. I did very little pen. If I was going to do penciling, what I did do on all the books, even *The Avengers*, I would plot where I was going to put shading. I wouldn't pencil it all in, though. I would take the side of the pencil and just guide—this is the area, whatever it is.

AG: Oh, I got you... so, mostly inking actually. Which is what Wally Wood kind of did, right? When he would ink someone, he basically just went straight to inking and would fill in a bunch of stuff just with ink.





Rhymes With "Warlock"

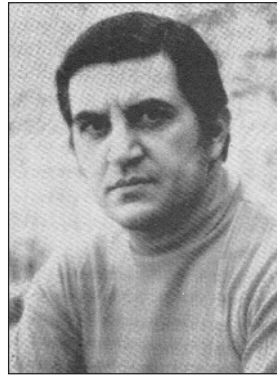
In the mid-1990s, for Stan Lee's later-aborted Excelsior line for Marvel, Sal Buscema layout-penciled and Tom Palmer finished *Zarlock* #1, whose final page is pictured above. The writer was Roy Thomas—but despite the similarity of the never-published comic's title to *Warlock*, it was Stan, not Roy, who named it. And the Excelsior line did *not*, as Tom thought, involve any dispute with Marvel. The whole story is coming up in *Comic Book Creator* #33. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

PALMER: When he got done, it became a Wally Wood drawing.

AG: Yeah. You also inked over Frank Miller, in *King-Size Spider-Man* #14 in 1980. Both *Doctor Strange* and *Spider-Man* are in that issue. Do you remember your take on Miller's layouts and pencils?

PALMER: I remember they were different. Walt Simonson, Howard Chaykin, and these other couple of guys, they had a studio over in Manhattan. I'd stop in on a Friday, if you're in the city, and you would show your work, what you were doing. And I'd bring some advertising, and somebody would bring something else. Frank Miller had come in, and it was a pretty good book he had penciled. It was beautiful. I don't remember quite what comic it was, though. He was somebody that was very talented coming in.

AG: That was pretty early for him, around 1980. What's interesting about that is, when I see other *Doctor Strange* and *Spider-Man* before him, or after him, there's usually a lot of detail in the face and background. In this one, you have an illustration background when you're inking, but there isn't very much detail in those Frank Miller pages. It's like a lot of shadow, the outline with like a white background, which he does a lot in



Our Pal Sal Buscema
From the 1975 Marvel Con
program book.

Sin City later. Did you think like, "Man, this is different! This guy's doing a different thing"?

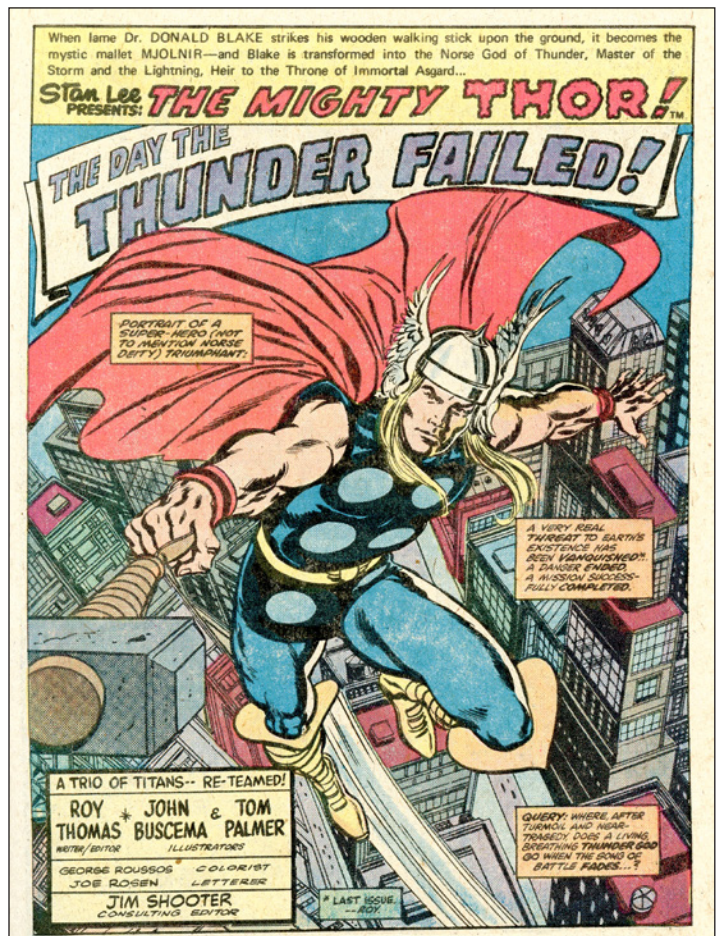
PALMER: If I did, at the time, it was a quick thought. This is going back too far for me to say, "Yes, I could have."

AG: Was there ever any thought like, "Man, okay, there isn't that much detail... Whooh! This one's going to be fast because I got to get this done"?

PALMER: Well, maybe, on certain things that you had to get something done quickly. But I just remembered, there was one where there's a bunch of heads or something, on the bottom on some decorative thing. The bottom of

the page. I remember that taking a while. That's what stands out in my mind.

AG: Now, on *Star Wars*, you inked over a Chaykin, a Simonson, Ron Frenz, quite a few people. When you look at the ones you inked over Chaykin and Simonson and Frenz, the look is really like Tom Palmer did



Asgard Or Bust!

When Roy Thomas was tapped to become the regular writer of *Thor* for a time, beginning in issue #272 (June 1978), he made certain that it was Tom Palmer who finished and embellished the strong penciled layouts by John Buscema. This issue adapted a Norse-myth tale, which led into the best time RT ever had scripting *Thor*, which involved a camera crew filming Ragnarok in Asgard! Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



**And Martin Goodman Claimed,
“People Don’t Like Spiders, Stan!”**

Palmer inked Frank Miller’s pencils in the 1980 *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #14. Thanks to Art Lortie. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

those. Did they give you breakdowns? Did Chaykin give you breakdowns? Or did he give you full pencils, and then you turned it into like more of a Tom Palmer thing?

PALMER: The first [*Star Wars*] cover was a Howard Chaykin pencil. And I followed it, pretty much. I remember we had so little reference on that. I remember calling... It was not Brodsky, it was the guy up in Marvel, big guy. Anyway: “What is that person in the background who looks like a masked fireman?”

AG: Darth Vader?

PALMER: Yeah, I said, “Is that a fireman’s mask?” “Yeah, yeah. Go ahead.” No one knew what *Star Wars* was about. I think Chaykin drew some reference early on. He knew more than all of us. So, if you look at that first cover, it looks like the bottom of a strainer. He was straining spaghetti in a whatever.

I have a copy of the original cover that is absolutely different. Marvel changed everything. They moved things around, and they added all these spaceships, and they put this color on there. And they re-did an area; it isn’t like the original cover. They took out, I think, the part of Darth Vader and all that.

I think Howard had people helping him when he was doing



Frank Miller

a few pages that I worked on in that first series. But somewhere he dropped out, and there were very loose breakdowns. And at that point, my interest... I loved *Star Wars* the movie when I first saw it. When I got into the whole series, I went and bought the models. They were selling large-scale models of the ships, the *Millennium Falcon*, all of them. The X-Wing. I built them. I would draw a line where the structures were, and my son was very little—he’d be in his pajamas; I have Polaroids of him. I’d have him hold the spaceship up and I’d take a Polaroid, and then use that as my reference. To get it correct, because nobody did it right.

And I worked over Carmine Infantino’s version, and it was terrible. I don’t mean *he* was always terrible, but it was tough getting the *Millennium Falcon* correct, and the X-Wing, too. I was a real stickler on that.

AG: Yeah. They look like the real *Millennium Falcon* on those pages.

PALMER: Well, as I got near the end of the run, I was getting



Star Wars—And Not The Ronald Reagan Kind!

Surely one of the most famous covers Tom Palmer ever inked was that of Marvel’s *Star Wars* #1 (July 1977), penciled by Howard Chaykin. Thanks to the GCD for the cover scan. [TM & © Disney.]

pictures out of the fan magazines. I forget the name of the science-fiction books with it. *Star Wars* was everywhere. And I was using pictures of Han Solo and the other characters—Chewbacca—and I was drawing from the photographs.

Again, for those pages that were before that, they didn't have reference on it. You couldn't get it from the movie; you had to get it from the outside. And initially, there was none, until the movie came out. But then as we got into the book, I think that the book looked better and better because we had reference.

And I worked on *Return of the Jedi*, the last movie. Helping Al Williamson out, back and forth. And I did some pages on my own. Archie Goodwin was the writer and editor of that. He's the one who got me on that. And at that point, the stills that they gave you were unbelievable. I mean, they're just perfect for what you needed. I did the scenes where they're doing that bunker, where they were going to fight fire from. One of the shots I got was of Han Solo holding his pistol up. He was hiding outside the bunker. And I used that as my cover painting I did for *Star Wars*. You couldn't use Han Solo for a whole period of time because he was frozen. But you knew what was going to be in the last movie from what they told you that you can't do in the comicbook while they were making it. The writer would let us know what we could and couldn't do.

So, it was like a give and take: "We can't do that." I go, "We can't?" There were some things we wanted to do, and they wanted to go through the writer. Still, it was fun. I'm sorry it ended. I think the comic was selling very well, but it kind of died away when it got near the end.

AG: Right. Because the [first three] movies were already a couple of years in the past by that point, when the comic ended. You also penciled and inked issue #87. You generated your own layouts for that. Do you like doing that?

PALMER: Oh, yeah. But again, I hadn't done any of that for a while. I did some of it... I did the inking, but that I was doing all the time. But if I had to do it every month, I don't think I could do it.

AG: Yeah, looking at some of the aircraft that you detailed in those—even when other artists would kind of give you a jumbled pencil version of the aircraft, you actually made it into the real aircraft—reminds me of some of those images I've seen of Noel Sickles, where he went into advertising and would draw real aircraft. Was Noel Sickles ever an influence on you at all?

PALMER: I love Noel Sickles' work, but his approach was different. He worked from almost patterns of black. He would draw something, and use black to hold the edge, and that's how he lined. It was not line work, so much. And he kind of gave Milton Caniff his style. [Before working with Sickles, Caniff] had a very cartoony style. They were in a studio together.

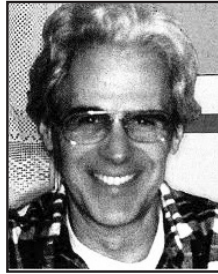
Noel Sickles is known by everybody in comicbooks, I think. Maybe not today, but anybody, especially in that period of all the brush artists. That's what he used, the brush, on most of it.

JT: You did several cover paintings for the *Star Wars* series, didn't you?

PALMER: Three or four.

JT: But they're standouts. They are very memorable, and I think *Star Wars* culture remembers those.

PALMER: One that I did was a montage of Han Solo, Princess



Al Williamson
Courtesy of
ComicWiki.



Take A Red-Eye To The Jedi!

The credits say that *Stars Wars – Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* was penciled by Al Williamson & Carlos Garzon with inks by Ron Frenz & Tom Palmer, so it's impossible to say for sure if this page was indeed inked by our interviewee. But we'd kinda bet it was! Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [TM & © Disney.]

Leia, and I forget who else. But he dominates. And when that was printed, it looked terrible. It was Marvel's first attempt at trying to print. So, the next time I did a cover was for the issue where I worked on the whole book—pencils, inks, coloring, and everything else. I painted the cover with what they call "blue line." In that, you draw it, ink it, and then Marvel would send it to someplace where they would put a blue line on a board, and on an overlay, and they would print the black where it would be an exact register. So, when you painted the board, the black overlay would lay over it.

So, when Marvel had it printed, the color was printed, and then the black overlay. It's an old process, but that cover came out well. And, like I said, with the one with Han Solo, it was terrible. I never saw a really good copy of it. They used it on the second or third *Omnibus* that Marvel did. They really did a nice job.

As a matter of fact, they had me take out the indicia box. I had to do a change on that. But by the time I did the last cover, which was issue #100—I think they had me back because it was the last one. And it was just a conglomeration of heads floating around, and whatever was going in the book. Nothing specific. But that was just a plain painting; and they had gotten much better, the paintings.

JT: That's right, #100 was the last. You'd stopped working on the book with #91 or so, but then you did the cover for #100.

Now, I'd like to talk about your work on *The Avengers*, after that. When you returned along with John Buscema, you painted that Captain Marvel cover—issue #255 in 1985.

PALMER: When Mark Gruenwald, who was the editor, asked me on board, I was busy doing everything else and I said, "I'll do one issue." So he says, "No, no. We want you to be on continued issues." I said, "All right. Let me paint the cover." I was into my painting mode. I came up with that design and did it. I don't think I painted a lot of covers for that. When I left and went to Image... What was the book? *Captain America*?

AG: Right. Before the "Heroes Reborn," a celebrated hallmark of comic history.

PALMER: Yeah. Well, when I did that last cover, I put everything into that one that I could think of. It was sad that that issue was printed, and Mark died of a heart attack like a month later. They said he had a party up where his house was upstate. So I think it was the only two paintings I did for *The Avengers*.

JT: And that would have been the last issue of that entire *Avengers* run... because that numbering didn't continue. It was started back up, as a new series, after that.

It's sort of funny—you're sort of a harbinger of doom, in terms of some of the series. You came in and closed out Doctor Strange as your

first job. Then you went to *X-Men* and closed that out. And then years later, you come to *The Avengers* and you don't leave it until it's done, too. And *Dracula*, also.

PALMER: Yeah, you get paranoid if you start to think about that: "Gee, did you bring it to its untimely end?" [chuckles]

JT: So, it starts off, you're back, and you're working with Roger Stern, who has a great run on *The Avengers* with John. And you've got new characters... well, Dane Whitman isn't a new character but he's a mainstay of this run of *The Avengers*, as are Hercules, and Monica Rambeau. Were John's pencils different? It seems like even the storytelling is different from what it was when you were doing *Avengers* in the early '70s.

PALMER: Yeah, [Buscema] was still doing his normal thing in the early '70s. When we got back together, the first couple of issues, it was pretty much the same; he was putting a certain amount of work in. And then I think he got too busy, or he was doing too many books, because he was doing only breakdowns, and he was doing a couple of books a month, and he started to get looser. And he didn't like Captain Marvel, because he said, "It looks like sour milk when she was in it." [chuckles]

I remember getting a page with her on it. He must have taken at least ten minutes to do that page, because she was in all the scenes and it was just... [chuckles] He just threw it away. I thought it was funny, because I had to find ways of using Zipatone or something, because you couldn't put any light or shade on her. She's going to be painted—curdled yellow milk.

And I could tell he was getting looser because of... You remember *Deathlok*? It was the last book John did for Marvel. He came in, Bobbie Chase was the editor, and she needed something very quickly, and he did the coloring. But John did the breakdowns, and I inked it. And it was like, it had to be done in less than two weeks, and it had to be colored. And he really banged that thing out, and when he got done, I asked him, "Do you mind if I buy your pages back?" And he said, "No, I'm not taking any money." So, I said, "No, John, let me do something." I think I wound up mailing him some Italian fruit basket with wine and everything else.

What I did—I really changed everything. I had to redraw everything. He really banged this thing out. But he did it. It was the last job he did for Marvel. But that's not the reason he left. He was on his way out.

So, to me it was important to have that part of going that far with John. But even when he was loose and rough, everything was there. He was uncanny in that he could take his pencil and draw a perspective line, and it was absolutely correct. If you took it back, there was a vanishing point, even though the vanishing point wasn't there. It was in his head. He'd been doing this so long, he could fit everything in its right place.

And I just love to take a pencil and kind of flesh out his breakdowns. It would be so well done. A finisher... that's what he was, a finisher.

JT: That run is much loved by *Avengers* fans. I like the early work you all did, in the '70s before the Kree-Skrull War, which is just fantastic. But this run, with the nobility of *Captain America* and the tragedy when *Avengers Mansion* is destroyed, there are moments that are some of *Avengers* fans' favorite moments... all of those issues you guys did together. And then it ended in #287. Stern stayed until then, but then Walt Simonson came on as a writer, and then John Byrne came on as a writer.

And when John left, Paul Ryan came in as the artist. You could have



"In A Galaxy Far, Far Away..."

Tom Palmer's original painting for the cover of 1983's *Star Wars* #81 minus logo, et al., so you can enjoy its pristine beauty. Thanks to Alex Grand.

[TM & © Disney.]

THE AVENGERS

272

3



Be Original!

Just 'cause we figured you might like to see it: a page of original art from *The Avengers* #272 (Oct. 1986) by John Buscema & Tom Palmer. Script by Roger Stern. Courtesy of owner Charlie Boatner. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

left, but you didn't. You stayed and continued to work throughout Ryan's run. Even when other writers like Larry Hama came on. And then, even when Bob Harris came on. And there was Andy Kubert for an issue or so, and then Steve Epting, and then Mike Deodato. And next thing you know, a whole decade has gone by, and as you've said, you closed out the series. What made you stay with *The Avengers* for that long a period of time... through what I would say is differences in quality?

PALMER: It was a constant gig. You knew you had it every month, that was one thing. Sometimes that's all I did in comics. I enjoyed all the people I worked with.

Paul Ryan's gone, so... Not that I'm going to say anything bad about him, but Mark Gruenwald said, "What a change from John Buscema to Paul Ryan." Because Paul was physically kind of taut, a very wiry type. And it was a contrast. His Captain America was a big contrast to John Buscema's. And Mark Gruenwald asked me to flesh out Captain America, not as much as Buscema but bigger than Ryan's... and he didn't tell Paul that. And Paul was quietly very annoyed at my changing his pencils. And I think I finally said, "You know, Mark Gruenwald asked me to do that. I didn't do that on my own. I didn't do that off the top of my head."



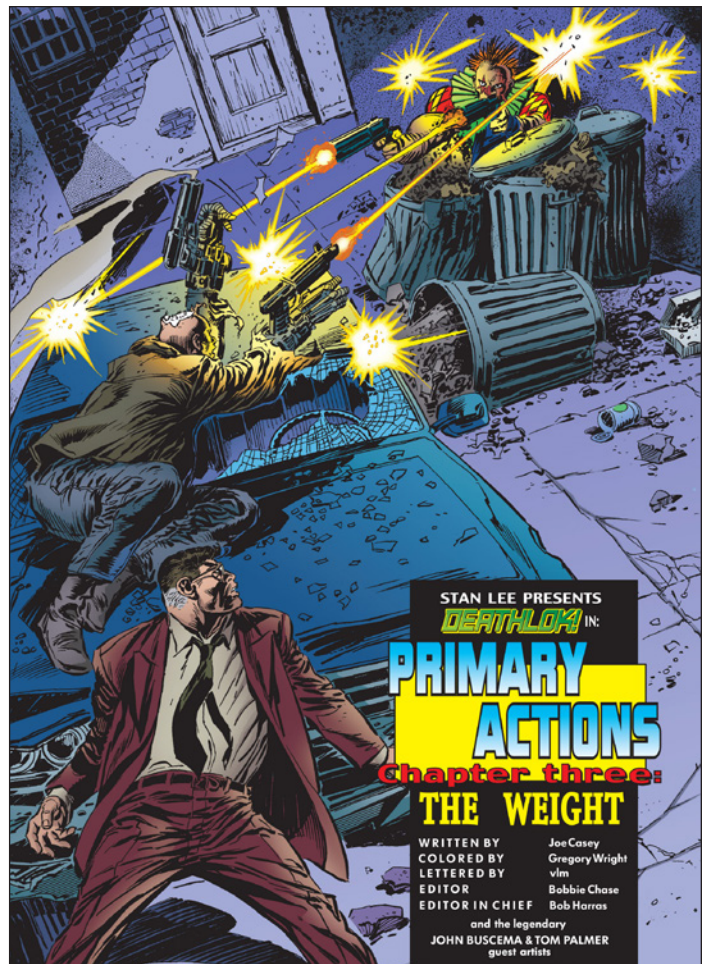
Roger Stern

But Mark Gruenwald was Mr. Marvel. Marvel was Mark. His initials were Marvel Comics Group, MCG... his middle name was Charles. But when he died, something left Marvel. It was a shame. He used to have such antics going on up there at Marvel. And he was an inspiration to so many people.

Just to mention Archie Goodwin: I remember when he was up there. I remember saying to somebody about Archie Goodwin that you could go in to Archie, especially when I was doing something on *Star Wars*, and he had a change he wanted made... instead of dragging your butt behind you, you couldn't wait to get back to your studio to do the change. That's how inspirational he was. Great editor to work with. He was a great, great guy. Big loss to the industry. He was at DC at the time, but anyway...

JT: We've interviewed an awful lot of people, and I would say that's the one consistency that we hear from virtually everyone—that Gruenwald was the life of Marvel, and the soul of it... and that Archie Goodwin was one of the best and nicest people in the industry of all time.

PALMER: Speaking of how versatile he was, he was doing a comic strip with Al Williamson, and he was doing the *Star Wars* comic



Deathlok, Be Not Proud!

The last team-up of John Buscema and Tom Palmer—for *Deathlok* #10 (2000). Sadly, Big John passed away not long afterward. Scan courtesy of Art Lortie. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Knight Rider

Tom's cover portrait of The Black Knight for *The Avengers* #273 (Nov. 1986). Thanks to Robert Menzies. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

strip. Whatever he touched, it was done in a very professional way. Just a great, great guy.

AG: Did the Marvel bankruptcy [in the '90s] shift you over to DC?

PALMER: I don't want to start opening up... because the names are still around. Well, there were some people at Marvel that... It was right after John Buscema had left, after I did that *Deathlok* issue with John. And I wasn't being given as much work, and *The Avengers* was gone, and everything else. And I said, "Maybe it's time for me to move on." Archie Goodwin was up at DC at the time. And that's when I went up there, and I was working at DC for quite a while. I did stuff with Graham Nolan. A lot of other people. I was up there for a while.

But it was good to see that DC was not the DC it was in the beginning. Someone said that DC [in earlier days] was the insurance company of the industry. Everything was double or triple form. Marvel was kind of a loose, Wild West type of thing. Not near the end, I think. It became very corporate. But it was nice going up to DC, and Archie Goodwin was up there.

JT: You didn't have like a super-regular book at DC, but you got to do some *Wonder Woman*, you got to do some *Batman* with *Two-Face*, you

got to do some *Superman*. You did a few issues of *Steel*. You got to play with a lot of different characters. That had to be fun, during that couple years that you were working up there.

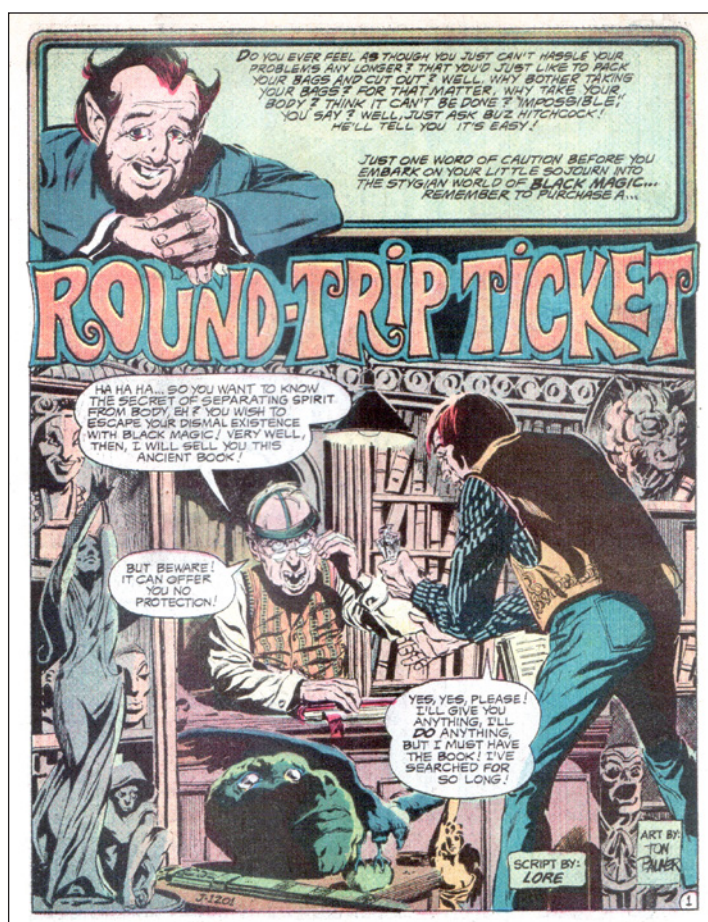
Then you went back to Marvel to do the work with Byrne on *X-Men: The Hidden Years*, right?

PALMER: That's right. John asked for me, and that's what brought me back to Marvel. Forgot all about that.

AG: You had done some work with John Byrne before. You inked his *Silver Surfer* #1—1982. Also on *Star Brand* #11, 1988. It's interesting—the credits look funny. They don't say pencil and ink, they say, "Sound and form: John Byrne; Substance: Tom Palmer." And then, I think, on *Hidden Years*, there's almost like a co-artist credit given on those. So, on all these, and then even going back to the 1982 *Silver Surfer* #1, it looks more like your art than it does John Byrne's. On these issues, is there an overall theme where it was like breakdowns, with you fleshing it out for a lot of them?

PALMER: Well, I think John's world opened up. He was living up in Canada, I believe, at the time as a young guy, when those *X-Men* issues came out. So, that was the dream, to come back and do that fill-in. Yeah, that was *The Hidden Years*, covering a year or two that they went to reprint.

John wanted me to make it look as much as I could like the [first] run. And what I did was use the black to show form—muscle



Maybe It Was A 100th Birthday Present?

Tom Palmer had done some earlier work for DC Comics—such as this full-art job for *House of Secrets* #100 (Sept. 1972). Script by Lore Shoberg. Thanks to Bob Bailey. [TM & © DC Comics.]



Some Things Shouldn't Stay Hidden

An exquisite Byrne/Palmer page of original art from *X-Men: The Hidden Years* #14 (Jan. 2001), courtesy of Charlie Boatner. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

form on the characters. So, John left a lot of it open for me to do.

AG: Right, because you had done the originals with Neal Adams, the *Savage Land* issues, so you're able to bring some of that vibe back, right?

PALMER: Yeah, kind of. Plus, I'm using the same tools, and I guess we're using Zipatone, too. John Byrne's a different artist, though; you can't make him look like Neal. Because it's almost like a dance, the way he approached the page. I think it's the page layout, more than anything else, and the views that you do with the characters. But I enjoyed it. It was a nice change of pace, I think.

AG: Did [Byrne] provide you much in the way of penciled faces? Because when I look at *The Hidden Years*, it looks like the faces are generally yours. I think the only face I saw that looked like Byrne was Mephisto's face or something.

PALMER: I don't remember. But I did a lot of work on it. No, he wanted me to make it look like the first *X-Men* ones.

AG: It's interesting, because you did that with Don Heck back toward the end of the Neal run. And then you're doing that with John Byrne, to try to make it look like Neal, in a way. That's a fascinating task that seems to be given to you sometimes.



John Byrne

PALMER: But the one with Don Heck, I had to do a lot of redrawing, because his drawing, from the bottom up, wasn't like the *X-Men* characters.

AG: Now, John Romita, Jr.—you've done a few things with him. There was *The Hulk* new volume in 1999. You also inked him on *Kick-Ass*. And I noticed that it looks less like Tom Palmer at this point. It looks like you're inking the pencil lines more. Were you consciously trying to dominate it less at this point?

PALMER: I remember John, when he asked me to work on this series, the original *Kick-Ass* run... I thought it was just going to be one run for the movie. He said he wanted to have this without any blacks in it, I think. And I said, "So, you're going to have to use some grays or whatever." I wound up using some grays, and the colorist, Dean White, because it was complicated, encouraged me to do more. It got to be so much that the renderings became lined with Halftone. But never darker than the fifth value. I'd scan them and send Dean the scans. And then, if he needed them darker, he would lower it on his end, the threshold.

So, it became a real collaborative book between John doing the pencils, and my doing the inks and the grays, and then Dean White literally painting, because at that point, there's some beautiful coloring in that series, in the original.

But by the time we got to "Hit-Girl" in that run, it was... Looking at those pages... they're nice. I think everything that John drew is there; what is changed or what's added, that may not be apparent in the inking, was the Halftone, the gray where we could use it. It's a different book, a different way it's used. I have copies of it, and I get them from all over the world... Asia, Spain, whatever. They reprinted them. I think the ones from Italy have the best printing. I wouldn't say they printed badly in the United States, but it's been around the world, and it's got a different look because of that gray tone. Dean White is a painter, so he added to it. He did a lot of beautiful renderings.

That to me is one of the last things I did. Most times, you come in, you ink something, or someone will come in and pencil it and then I ink it.

I did some work with DC, recently, with Pat Olliffe—*Scooby Apocalypse*. Yeah, we had fun with that. They got me on because they wanted some textures, and I said, "Oh good, I'm the guy with textures." So I put Zipatone and Halftone and whatever else I had. And it worked. It really did. Hanna-Barbera wanted to make a movie... which bombed, as you know... and they stopped the book. They didn't want the zombies running around, I guess, when the movie came out. I really loved working with Pat Olliffe. I think we did a *Dracula* back at Marvel.

See, when you get to that level—we're talking about a penciler now—you have to be good. And my hat's off to all of them. It's a tough, tough place to be to have the white blank page, it really is. Because I've been there, and I know the angst you can go through. On my end, my angst is not an angst. It's just a matter of putting my time in my work... doing the studies and everything else.

AG: You always stayed in comics, even though your time was going to be more profitable elsewhere. I know you love the medium, but in commercial work, is it as collaborative as it is in comics? Because the thing I think about you is that you formed really intense collaborations and you're



Scooby-Dooby-Doo!

Pat Olliffe & Tom Palmer's front cover art for Hanna-Barbera's *Scooby Apocalypse* #36 (June 2019). Thanks to the GCD. [TM & © DC Comics & Hanna-Barbera or successors in interest.]

known for those with Colan, and with Buscema, and with Neal Adams. Some of the most loved comics of that '70s era, especially, then later on as well. Was it that working together with somebody to produce something that was an attractive aspect of it?

PALMER: I'm just thinking as you're speaking about that. Advertising was paying a lot more. It probably still would, but they're not using that much art. I had some good art directors I worked for. I love working with them, because they challenged you, and they always had some great layout or great concept. But the rest of it was boring. Absolutely boring.

Sometimes, it was doing a band aid... where you spread it apart for Johnson & Johnson, showing the band aid at different layers. Airbrush. It paid well, but the most boring, boring, boring job. Because I was doing the airbrush renderings. Some renderings for airbrush I did Medical Economics. That was more fun; there was a good art director.

There were a lot of the things I did that were more fun [than advertising], but the comics topped them all. They brought me back to my childhood, probably. And we are all still children; anybody in comics is still a child.

JT: That's why we're all talking about it right now. Well, that answers the question, I think. You did some notable ad campaigns, working on things like Hertz and American... Was it Cyanamid?

PALMER: Cyanamid. Yeah, paintings.

JT: Winsor & Newton, and Panasonic... so you had lots of work. But you never gave up comics and we all benefited from it.

PALMER: Well, I did, too. I had my sanity. [chuckles] No, the comics were... When they started to have royalties... I don't know if I've ever mentioned this... When I was working on *The Avengers*... I'm trying to think what issue it was, that one with John Buscema, the second one, or the last one... We had just moved into the house where we now live, and I was working in the basement because I had the studio added on, where I am right now. It's got skylights and all that.

We had another house in town, and we sold that and used that to buy this one. I was having work done, like I said, adding the studio on. And my royalty check every month was paying the mortgage. The other stuff was being paid for, but I didn't have to worry about the mortgage. It was paid for by the royalties for *The Avengers*, plus I got paid for [inking] *The Avengers*. And I was getting breakdown rate. Great.

The book was selling over a quarter mil... 300,000. *X-Men* was doing maybe 600,000. *The Avengers* was at the top of the heap. Books were selling like crazy. People used to have fights over getting on the *X-Men* books. I'm kidding, verbally... but there was a lot of competition to get on those books because they sold unbelievably well. Even to this day, I get royalties on stuff like that. When they put out a compendium, a trade paperback of *Avengers* issues, or something like that.

And they're still selling the books, in a way. They design them in a different way. They're not [selling the actual comics] as like they were, wish they were... but the books still sell. It's almost like they're doing work all over again, so they've paid back many times.

And the advertising, sadly—when you do a painting for an advertiser, they own it. Once I did work for Volvo... a poster... and the artwork was too big for the art director's office, so he gave it



Strange But True

In recent years, Tom Palmer penciled this Dr. Strange figure as a commissioned piece of artwork. Thanks to Christopher Callaway. [Dr. Strange TM & © Marvel Entertainment, Inc.]

back to me. I still have it. But it's not like comics. It's nothing... it's a Volvo and there's a guy with skis on the roof, and whatever. He was saying he can use it in winter weather and summer weather.

It's wonderful. It's been a wonderful life. To be able to do something that as a child... How many kids draw or whatever? I've some grandchildren who are drawing. They'll come over and they'll sit in my studio and draw. They're very young, though. I don't know if they'd ever want to be... My son, I've never pushed him to be [an artist].

Nobody pushed me. No one even noticed what I was doing. When I was a teenager and I got out of high school, I bought a car and I had to sell it to go to art school. That's when I went to Visual Arts. My family looked at me like, "Pfttt..." You know, it's like going to the actors' studio to become an actor. But I was driven. You got to have that drive, and somebody can't say, "You're not drawing today," or "Send you to art school... art school?"

Frank Reilly had some great little notes. One is, "Creativity is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration." And you think about that, it's true. You do a lot of scraps, paper sketches. Another thing he said was, "At times in your career, you're going to come to a plateau, like with a bunch of doors, and you just have to pick a door, and go through it, and you'll find the next stage of your life."

And I've done that without ever seeing a door. But I notice I've been doing that through my life. And somehow, it's worked out, like painting more now, doing little stuff, and illustrations. It's like full circle, but I'm still doing comicbooks, and probably better than I did before. Because my skills have gone further.

But it's a great life, and it's going to be tougher to do advertising. There's no advertising art today. Doesn't exist that I know of... I mean, maybe one-shot. But I used to be doing it all the time. All the time, especially out here in New Jersey.



Jackson "Butch" Guice

JT: *I just wanted to say that, when you started at Marvel, their inking looked a certain way. It certainly wasn't as static as the DC style, but there were approaches, and there was a way of doing it. And you came, and you inked differently. And after you, other inkers didn't look the old way anymore... Klaus Janson or [Joe] Rubinstein or [Bob] McLeod. You made a real contribution to Marvel that ushered the Silver Age into the Bronze Age; you were a key ingredient to that. I think that needs to be noted more often than it is. And that's all I'm going to say.*

PALMER: Okay. Well, I'm smiling as you're just saying all that, because, recently, I did a phone interview with somebody who's writing a book about somebody else in the business. I won't mention any names here, but that's what he drilled on, and the advertising background changing my entry, and other people's, like Neal, into the business. And the guy knows Neal.

Looking back, I can see it now, what you're saying about the change. Change happens, subtly. It isn't like a thunderclap or lightning. Something has to catch the eye of the other participants—I guess like in acting. You have a Marlon Brando or a James Dean...

JT: *And it changes everything. Yeah.*

PALMER: Yeah, because not everyone was doing James Dean and Marlon Brando. Then, all of a sudden, they're doing something

different. I think it's the same thing with the comics... same thing with illustration. I was always looking at different techniques. I used to go up to the Society of Illustrators for the shows, and if something caught my eye, I'd go over and I'd look behind to see what kind of illustration board they were using. The texture, the different Crescent textures.

So I was being a nosy guy even with the illustration part, because I love the paint... I'm still doing it. And I still use different pieces, different types of illustration board. It's the curiosity. You're seeing what else you can do with what could be a very dull medium.

AG: *I was born in 1978, so I started reading comics in like '86, '87. But it was a Ron Frenz Thor and your Avengers and John Byrne's X-Men that caught my eye. And I would go back and read the Roger Stern stuff, and I was there all the way through Paul Ryan and all the later stuff.*

I probably phased out of it, when you left Avengers. And those faces, that Jim mentioned—Monica Rambeau, Dane Whitman, Hercules, Star Fox—those faces that you really crafted—I bonded with those characters in the form that you filled in and fleshed out.

I followed your career. I love the older Avengers stuff that I read later,



Any Adjectives Left That Haven't Been Tied To Ol' Greenskin?

A dramatic page from *The Immortal Hulk* #34 (Aug. 2020). Pencils by Jackson "Butch" Guice & inks by Tom Palmer; script by Al Ewing. Thanks to Art Lortie. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

but when I look at the inks you did on Lee Weeks for Wolverine-Captain America in the early 2000s.... it didn't look as much like you. You did 2011 X-Men: Legacy; again, it looked more like the artist's stuff than yours. You start to show in Underworld in 2006, but when I was reading The Immortal Hulk #34 [2020], which you have behind you, I can see some of that old Tom Palmer vibe, again. And I love it. It feels like I'm drinking coffee with an old friend when I look at this stuff that your inking dominates. So, I love the stuff that you've done and thanks so much for talking with us today.

PALMER: I didn't realize you could see behind me. Yeah, I'd like to work with [Jackson] Butch Guice again. He likes me working over him, and I like working over him. It's like me stepping back. He loves the Dracula stuff. It's funny... he brought some pages, not from me but from out there. He's somebody else that just loves the medium.

But it's nice of you to say that. This is what conventions have done. We'll close this year [2020] out without any conventions... don't know when they're going to start next year. But when I started to go to conventions, just a number of years ago, the fans come over and talk to you. It was so heartwarming, because you sit alone. It's a very lonely business. You sit in your studio and you do it, because you love doing it. But you never get feedback.

When I was first married, I was living in an apartment, and I'd get up every day and go out and get the newspaper or something like that. And the guy across the street, that I rented the garage from, he stopped me one day and said, "Tom, what do you do?" He thought I was a gambler, maybe. "I see you have a car..." [chuckles] And where was I making the money? So I said, "Oh, why the money is good?... Oh, I'm doing comic books. I'm an artist. It's that, I'm doing comic books." I'm doing something else. We go up to the corner, and buy comic books. At that time, I'm skimming the DCs. And he said, "They still make those?" I said, "Yeah, yeah."

Comicbooks were unknown, until—and this is where Stan really was the backbone of the industry. He used to go out on college campuses, and he was the one that really let people know they were still there, and different. Stan said there will always be comicbooks. There's something about the medium. And it's not a cookie-cutter, that everybody would draw the same way—but everybody brings something to it. No two comicbooks are the same. What fascinated you early on about comicbooks? Was it the super-hero part, or Star Wars...?

AG: With me, I think probably more the super-heroes, as a kid.

JT: I don't know. My first comics weren't super-heroes. I was reading Sugar and Spike and other things... Sheldon Mayer. But super-heroes kicked in pretty early, and once I was hooked — I've continued to read everything for my whole life.

PALMER: See, that is funny. I go into a comic shop, and it'll be mostly adults. You don't see many little kids in there buying the comicbooks. And I think this is why Marvel went through a rougher time there... they were kind of just doing older artists and their styles.

But now, I think they want to get that back. I'm not sure. But you pick up a comicbook if you recognize somebody on the cover. You open up a comic, and if it looks like the old Avengers that you remember, you go, "Wow!" Right?

AG: It's a good feeling, yeah. Your inks and Sinnott's inks, they make it feel like Marvel for me, probably because of so many issues you guys did.

PALMER: Well, here's a little promo, but we've run out of time. I

did this Immortal Hulk with Butch Guice, beginning of the year or so. But then at the same time they had a 30-page issue of Avengers Snapshots... I don't know what the hell it was... and they're doing more.

So I've worked with Staz Johnson. I haven't worked with him in a long time. He doesn't send the artwork, he sends a scan, and I have to print it out as a blue line. Kurt Busiek is the writer, and at the end of the run, it was 30 pages.

JT: I read some of the Snapshots ones, the Johnny Storm one, and some others. It's a return to the Marvel that we know. It's nice. I've really enjoyed the things that have come out so far. I look forward to that.

PALMER: Yeah, there'd been some delays. We have to go through this, you know. If this ship on the ocean is on calm waters all the time, it's a dull ride. But you go through a little bit of a storm, it's memorable in many ways.

JT: Yeah. Although, beware of exciting times.

PALMER: [chuckles] Yeah. Somehow, I made it through this and, I'm still alive. I think I'm always going to be [an artist]...even though I have to, say, paint turtles down at the boardwalk at the Jersey Shore. But that's why I [resist] doing anything on a computer



"It's A Long, Long Time From May To December..."

It seems perhaps fittingly ironic that the late great Tom Palmer seems to be gazing at his 1995 Avengers painting for a Marvel calendar in the final art spot related to this interview, since he unfortunately passed away before it could be printed. But his work will live on! The photo of Tom is courtesy of Comic Vine.

[Painting TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

beyond basic stuff. I find it boring, and tiring. I fall asleep at a computer. I didn't fall asleep here, because I'm not typing. But if I had to work, and look at a Photoshop...

So, I have done things on [a computer], but never from scratch. That's for the new generation; they ink with the stylus on a syntax ware, but I couldn't do that. I could do so many things with my pen points. There are two different pen points, one is a brush Gillott and the other one is a more flexible one. But it's a joy using the tools, and if you can keep doing that, I think it's staying in that world that you find enjoyment in. Maybe that's the secret to this whole thing.

You know, artists don't retire. Really. There's an artist up in Connecticut... Fred something... he's 100 years old, and he was ghosting *Flash Gordon* and he was doing a bunch of different things over the years. He's still working. Somebody had an article on him in a Connecticut magazine. So, if you can stand somebody up long enough to go... or sit down and draw... Look at Joe Sinnott...

JT: All right, so we look forward to decades more from you then.

PALMER: That's right. And I will visit you in a nursing home and I'll bring them to you. *[laughter]*

JT: Maybe we'll end up at the same place.

AG: And we're going to be there with cameras and a microphone doing an interview, part two.

Alex Grand is the author of *Understanding Superhero Comic Books* and a comics history consultant for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Lego*, and *The Today Show*. He appears in documentaries such as *Slugfest* and *Life According to Stan Lee*, wrote and/or co-wrote the award-winning graphic novels *Journey into Mexico* and *Hashman*, and produces an ongoing comics history docuseries as found of the Comic Book Historians social media and YouTube channel.

Jim Thompson is a film scholar/lecturer, an attorney, and a co-host of the *Comic Book Historians* podcast. He has presented comics-related papers at numerous academic conferences, *Comic-Con International*, and the *Comic-Con Museum*, was a judge for the 2021 *Eisner Awards*, and is a founder of "A People's History of Comics" Facebook group.



Alex Grand



Jim Thompson



TOM PALMER Checklist

[This checklist is adapted primarily from information provided by the online Who's Who of American Comic Books 1928-1999, established by Dr. Jerry G. Bails and viewable at <http://www.bailsprojects.com/whoswho.aspx>. Names of features that appeared both in their own titles and in others are generally not italicized. Key: (p) = penciler; (i) = inker; (w) = writer; (c) = colorist.]

Name & Vital Stats: Thomas John Palmer (1942-2022) – artist, colorist

Pen Name: T. Motley

Education: Art Students League; Frank Reilly School of Art; School of Visual Arts [NYC] – dates uncertain

Member: Society of Illustrators

Print Media: Artist – lithograph, *Captain America*; magazines: *Drug Topics* 1982; *Electronics Design* 1983; [inker] album cover, *Surfing with the Alien* 1987; production artist – Remus Art Studios (dates mostly unknown)

Commercial Art & Design: American Cyanamid; CBS Records; Hoffman-Roche Pharmaceutical; major ad agency 1988; Metropolitan Life; Mobil Oil; RCA; Winsor and Newton; N.J. Bell; Reader's Digest Philatelic Service; Sears; Parke-Davis; Union Carbide; J.C. Penney

Awards: Academy of Comic Book Arts Shazam – Best Dramatic Inker 1972; NJ Art Directors Club Award for ad illustration 1975, 1978, 1979, 1981

Promotional Comics: *Further Adventures of Savin' Dave and the Compounder* (i) 1997 for Merrill Lynch

Comics Studio/Shop: Wally Wood studio (p) 1967

Comics, Various: Salimba (i) for Blackthorne Publishing 1986; *Near to Now* (p)(i) for Fandom House 1987 (signed as "T. Motley"); *Captain Britain* (i) 1977 & covers (p)(i) Marvel UK 1976; *Steel Pulse* (w)(p)(i) for True Fiction Publications 1986-87; covers for Warp Graphics (i) 1985

COMICS (U.S. Mainstream Publishers):

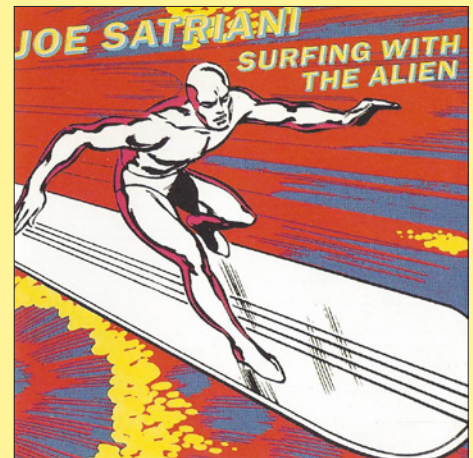
Charlton Comics: *Jungle Jim* (p) 1969

DC Comics: *Batman* (i); *Catwoman & Wildcat* (i) 1998; covers (p)(i) (paint) 1992-99; *The Flash* (i) 1997; *House of Mystery* (i) 1972; *House of Secrets* (p)(i) 1972; illustration (i) 1997; *Jesse Quick* (i) 1988; *Life Story of The Flash* (i) 1977 graphic album; *Sea Devils* (i) 1997; *Steel* (p)(i) 1998; *Superman* (i) 1999; *Wonder Woman* (i) 1998; *Wonder Woman & Jesse Quick* (i) 1997

Disney Productions: *Goofy* (i) 1991

Eclipse Enterprises: covers (i) 1985; *Scorpio Rose* (i) 1983; *Stewart the Rat* (i) 1980 graphic album; support (c) 1983

Marvel Comics: 2010: *Odyssey II* (p)(i) 1985 [film adaptation]; adaptations (i) 1980, 1986; *The Avengers* (i) 1970-72, 1987-96; *Bishop* (i) 1992; *Black Panther* (i) 1975, 1989;



Doesn't The Alien Have A Name?

Tom Palmer's *Surfing with the Alien* album cover from 1987. Thanks to Art Lortie. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



It's Disney's World—We're Just Living In It!

(Far left:) A private commission by Tom Palmer featuring a montage related to the 1980 *Star Wars* sequel *The Empire Strikes Back*. [*Star Wars* characters TM & © Disney.]

(Left:) Our featured artist's Silver Surfer cover for the June 1976 *Marvel World* #1, a so-called "pro-zine" (a fanzine with much or mostly pro content). Thanks to Aaron Caplan. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Captain America (i) 1967-1971; Conan (i) 1971, 1975; covers (p) (i) 1968-96; Daredevil (i) 1971-73, 1995; Doc Savage (i) 1973-74; Dr. Doom (i) 1971; Doctor Strange (p) 1968, (i) 1968-69, 1975-76, 1981; Dracula (i) 1972-79; Fallen Angels (i) 1987; Fantastic Four (i) 1996; *Giant-Size Chillers* (i) 1975; Howard the Duck (p) 1977, (i) 1977-78, 1980; Hulk (i) 1977; illustration (i) 1987, 1992; Illyana and Storm (i) 1983-84; The Inhumans (i) 1971; Iron Man (i) 1980; *Jaws 2* (i) 1978 [film adaptation]; Lilith (i) 1980; Luke Cage, Power Man (i) 1977; Magik (i) 1983-84; Man-Thing (i) 1974-76; *Marvel Universe* (p) 1986-87; *Meteor* (i) 1979 [film adaptation]; Moon Knight (i) 1980,

Thunderbolts (i) 1997; The Transformers (i) 1985; *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* (i) 1975; Valannus and Kalligor (i) 1971; Venom (i) 1994; What If Nova... (i) 1979; Wolverine (i) 1990, 1992; The X-Men (i) 1969-70; *X-Men: Heroes for Hope* (i) 1985

Skywald Publishing: cover (p)(i) 1971 [for *The Crime Machine*]; *Nightmare* (p)(i) 1970

Topps Comics: illustration (p)(i) 1993



THE AVENGERS



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TOM PALMER & NEAL ADAMS

At Marvel

One Of The Field's Greatest Inkers Remembers One Of Its Greatest Pencilers

Interview Conducted & Transcribed by James Rosen

A/E EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: As those who perused our extensive Neal Adams coverage in *Alter Ego* #182 may remember, national journalist James Rosen has been assembling materials for some years now for an eventual biography of that artist—and we eagerly look forward to it. When he learned we were doing a special issue on Tom Palmer, James offered to share with us a foretaste of that bio by allowing us to print excerpts from the long interview he'd done with Palmer

concerning his inking of Adams over the years—and how could we resist? Sure, some of the following info may duplicate to some extent parts of the Grand/Thompson interview earlier this issue, but there's plenty of new stuff—plus additional insights and angles on what was reported there. This interview was conducted via telephone between Rock Hall, Maryland, and Oakland, New Jersey, on October 6, 2020.

JAMES ROSEN: You mentioned in one of [your previous] interviews that the first time you saw [Neal Adams'] work was that Roy Thomas had brought you a page, or a half-page, of one of Neal's "Deadman" issues. Is that correct?

TOM PALMER: I had just started doing work for Marvel. I was up working on *Doctor Strange*. It was the first comicbook I ever worked on. And [Roy] had a party. He was living on 86th Street at the time... and everybody showed up there; even Stan [Lee] showed up for a short while. So it was quite an evening. Gil Kane, a bunch of other people. And Roy was kind of introducing people, or me, to people that were there. I was kind of new to the crowd. And that's the night I met Bernie Wrightson and Neal Adams. They were sitting together. And that's how we met, Neal and I and Bernie. Well, Bernie, I think, knew Neal prior to that. And I think it was before that, Roy had a—he purchased a half-page of, like you said, the "Deadman" page; it was the bottom half. And he had it framed in his house. And that's really when I saw the work [for the first time]. I said, "Gee, that's fantastic."

JR: When you say a half-page, he had purchased what—the original art, inked?

PALMER: Yes, he had the original art, yeah. When I say a half-page, I guess DC—Marvel did at some point, but DC was known to kind of have, maybe, an ad on—

JR: House ads and things.

PALMER: Yeah. So they would run a page of the continuity, bottom half. But it was different in so many ways. What Neal had brought to the industry was really a complete change in the approach to doing comicbooks. And I was working in the studio, an advertising art studio [Remus Art] at 40th and Madison... And Jack Kamen was the illustrator that was there, and I learned



Tom Palmer

and (below left) the first page he ever inked of Neal Adams' work: the splash of *The X-Men* #56 (May 1969). Yeah, we know we printed this same page back in *A/E* #181, but it couldn't be helped. Hope you won't mind. Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl for the splash scan, and to Comic Vine for the photo. [Page TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



a lot from him. And I was doing a lot of line art for that studio.... Jack was a brush man; he was using a brush. And I think [in] comicbooks, brush was in. You know, everybody was kind of doing a Milton Caniff. It was that look: that brush look. And I just didn't like a brush. So I was using pen points.... Jack would hand me the brushes when he was done with them. He was using one a week and I just couldn't get used to it. So when I saw Neal's—the first time I saw his work, you could see it was not brush; it was pen. And it was—it just looked different. You know, I mean, Neal used a brush, too.... Jack Kamen used to talk about Stan Drake, the hottest and most well-paid line-art guy in the city. And he was the one that was at Johnstone [and] Cushing. And it turned out that's where Neal started.... He picked up a lot from Stan.... When Roy finally got Neal over to Marvel from DC, Neal wanted to work on *The X-Men*. I think that was the magnet that got him over.* And I don't know; you'd have to talk to Neal or Roy to find out how I was selected, who asked for me. But when I was given the chance to work with Neal, I jumped at it. It was fantastic. It was right—we fit like hand-in-glove, I guess. At least for me.

JR: Just to go back to that party at Roy's place. So there you see Bernie Wrightson seated next to Neal Adams and you're introduced by Roy to them. Would this have been Neal's goateed period?



In Battle Joined

One of many powerful pages by the Adams/Palmer art team in *The X-Men* #56. Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

PALMER: No, he was clean-shaven. Now, I have to say that as Neal—I knew Neal's name but I didn't know who Bernie Wrightson was. I really was not into comicbooks at the time.... I wanted to paint *Saturday [Evening] Post* covers. I wanted to be Norman Rockwell. I even met him at one point. Wrote him a note and [laughs]—I believe I was eighteen and I drove up to Stockbridge and met him. But as I was going to school, the business was changing; it was like a bridge behind me was falling apart, because illustration was slowly morphing into something else. Magazines were dying.... So my dream of doing [magazine] covers was diminishing in front of me.

JR: And am I correct that it was at that same party that Roy showed you his half-page of "Deadman"? Or are those two separate events?

PALMER: You know, looking back, I don't remember. I just remember Roy showing me the artwork. It could have been during that party. But it was on a wall and it was framed. I remember that. It probably was that day, because I wasn't up to Roy Thomas' apartment more than once. It was the only time I was there, I believe; I don't remember going up a second time.... There was a lot of people there: Gray Morrow and, like I said, Gil Kane.... I remember talking [with Neal] about where we were from.... I believe his father was in the military? Stationed overseas?

JR: Correct.

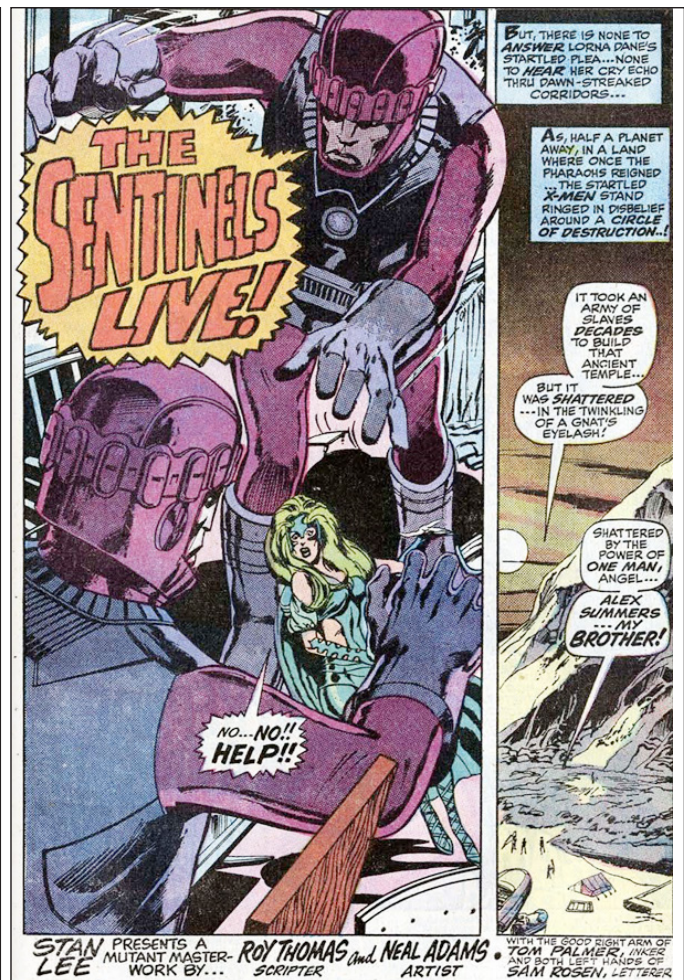
PALMER: Okay. That stayed with me. I still remember that.... Neal found—I felt, just over the years and [from] speaking with him about little things—Johnstone [and] Cushing was the hub. There were so many good artists in there. There were some of the artists going back to the '40s. And there was just very talented people. And Neal found a home there. He had to. Because the one thing that I was very impressed with, and I have to give him credit for—he started Continuity Studios, probably one of the last big studios in the city. And that was very important to him. And he held on. He may still have it—in a smaller version. Does he?

JR: Oh, yeah.

PALMER: Oh, okay.... I went up to see him there, I think it was 46th Street, right off 6th Avenue. And it was a huge place. And Dick Giordano was with him at the time. But it was—I was thinking to myself, "Gee, you know, he came from that background, Johnstone [and] Cushing." I had never been up there. But it was a bunch of artists who maybe didn't all work there, but it was home to Neal, you know? It was something that he wanted to re-create, I guess, in his own career, and that is a place to work in.... Stan Drake was known to people; it was said that he was the first illustrator in Manhattan, or the first artist, to have a Polaroid. And he was the one that was taking all those shots that were used in *[The] Heart of Juliet Jones*. And that's why they just had that graphic look to it [sic]. And... I think Neal jumped in a couple of times to help Stan out.

JR: He did. You know, Gil Kane has said—was quoted as saying, with a tone that struck me as not altogether complimentary, that all Neal Adams did (I'm paraphrasing but fairly closely)—all Neal Adams did was marry Jack Kirby to Stan Drake. [Palmer laughs heartily] In other words, he took the dynamism of Kirby—the comicbookism of Kirby—and married it to the sort of slick advertising professionalism of Stan Drake. There's

* In the many interviews where he recounted the origins of his association with Marvel, Neal Adams was consistent in recalling that his assignment to *X-Men* was the result of his initial meeting with Stan Lee, and Adams' expression of interest in drawing whichever title was Marvel's lowest-selling at the time.



Those Wedding Bells—And The Sentinels—Are Breaking Up That Old X-Gang Of Mine!

If this is an example, as Tom Palmer says Gil Kane claimed about Neal Adams' art, of "marry[ing] Jack Kirby to Stan Drake"—we'll take it, we'll take it! The first two story pages of *X-Men* #57 (June 1969), scripted by RT. This was only the Sentinels' second go-round as a menace. Thanks to Bob Bailey & Sharon Karibian. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

something to be said for that view. But I think it reduces Neal—it might be a case of what in Latin they would call *reductio ad absurdum*.

PALMER: [laughs] Well, my take on it... [from] the first couple of pages of that *X-Men* book, you could see Neal was really putting work in on it. And he was using reference. And I had a morgue, what you call a clipping morgue, you know, filing cabinet filled with all different categories and all that, that I was using. And it was a shot of an operating room and some doctors. And I had the same shot, and Neal was using it. And another one was [Saudi] King Faisal—that was a big thing with the Arabs, whatever was going on. And he was the bad guy. And Neal used something—and I had the same shot! [laughs] I couldn't believe it.

But he was bringing—I'm not laughing at it in that sense. Because illustrators use reference. And to make it look real, it's great to have a photograph or a Polaroid or a clipping of something: a car, you know—so it looks like the car. And that impressed me. Gene Colan was just an artist amongst himself, you know. He used reference a lot, but never slavishly. He was kind of—he used it for inspiration. But Neal was an advertising artist. That was what impressed me: He was an advertising artist doing comicbooks. And he brought that—I think that even grew in him as he went farther along, because you could see how his comicbook art changed. It was not advertising art anymore, after that; but that

early period was very, very tight, and I was very impressed by it. And I enjoyed working on it, too.

JR: Had you any familiarity with his work on Ben Casey? Had you followed the Ben Casey [comic] strip?

PALMER: You know, I think I saw it, and it ended before I got into comics.... There was some very realistic comic strips going on, and I saw Neal, the *Ben Casey* strip....

JR: Did you communicate to Neal that you had been able to notice that you had the same operating room and the same King Faisal shots?

PALMER: I did mention it to somebody; I don't know if it was to Neal. You know, I have to say that, over the years, Neal lived in his world and I lived in mine, in so many ways. And we bumped into each other the one time we were over in New York... and he invited me up to see Continuity. And it was a number of years later before I went up again, you know? It was not [as if] we ran in the same circles.

JR: So you would say that in terms of personal, direct, face-to-face interactions, you've only been in his company a handful of times; is that right?

PALMER: True, yes. The last time we were really together, and spent time, was when we both had done something for the *Heroes*



Ex-Avengers Assemble!

Roy Thomas (on left) and Tom Palmer (on right) met for a final time at a Rhode Island comics convention in 2016, as briefly brought together by publisher J. David Spurlock (center). Thanks to JDS & James Rosen.

book that Marvel put out. We both did something for the 9/11 book. Marvel put a book together to raise money for, I guess, the wives and children of the firemen and policemen that were lost that day. And Neal had the center spread and I had done a painting at the back of the book. And Neal and I did an interview for Channel 11 [WPIX]—what's her name? Most? Oh—you are a reporter, I understand, so—Jeanne Moos!

JR: Jeanne Moos. She was on CNN.

PALMER: Oh, she was on Channel 11 at the time; she was local, in New York City.** And [laughs] she did an interview with both of us, not together. He did his and I did mine. And prior to that—I still remember it because I thought it was really funny. Neal and I were talking about just working in general; I don't remember the whole conversation. But I said, "Boy, you were like a savant." And he said, "Hey—did you call me an idiot?" [laughs] I said, "No, I didn't call you an idiot! I said you were a savant. They're separate—it's two words!" We were going back and forth. And it was kidding. So [laughs] Jeanne is across the room there, and she comes over and she says to us, "You know, you two guys should take this on the road." [laughs] And I—we both cracked up. And I said, "Well, we're just two, you know, kids that are enjoying the jousting, you know, a little bit?"

JR: So when you were collaborating with him actively on X-Men and [The] Avengers, there wasn't any direct interaction. You would receive the pages; did they ever come with notes from Neal or guidance from him?

PALMER: No—not really. I did an *Avengers* book with him a couple of years ago [2011]. I'm trying to think. It was the *New*

Avengers that—I believe Axel Alonso was at Marvel, so it's within recent memory. And with that [project], [Neal] would leave—he would tip in little—I don't think he glued them down. I think he wanted a shot of some space vehicle, whatever it was, and he had a copy of it, so he would drop it in. Not drop it in, but kind of leave it there. And this is where he goes, and then I would fit everything else to it. And there would be little notes there. But there it was collaborative in the sense that it wasn't just a finished pencil page, and the pencils were a little looser, which was fine with me.

JR: You're talking about which period now—the original period or with this newer book?

PALMER: The newest book. Neal's pencils from the early [period]—the X-Men group—and I think there were seven or eight issues, and then—and that's funny. Marvel—it took a while before you realized that they were selling. Because the X-Men book was not selling. They canceled the book. And



Lest We Forget

Tom Palmer's painting for the *Heroes* publication dealing with 9/11. Thanks to Art Lortie & John Joshua. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

** Jeanne Moos remains a national correspondent for CNN, where she has reported light-hearted feature stories since joining the network in 1981. However, WPIX, Channel 11 in the New York City market, is a CNN affiliate.

the following month they find out it was selling like crazy [laughs] with Neal on it. And it was too late. The book went into reprints for a year. So when John Byrne wanted to do, he called it *The Hidden Years*, that year, year or two, whatever it was, [when] it went into reprint. I worked with John Byrne on it. Because that was the year I think people were just frustrated that they went to reprints; they wanted to see that continue, that look that Neal had brought to *The X-Men*.

JR: The first set of books was tighter pencil work?

PALMER: Oh, yes. Yeah, it was very tight. And I don't remember seeing—I had worked on *The Avengers* with him.

JR: He did a couple of issues of *Thor*. [EDITOR'S NOTE: *Thor* #180-181.]

PALMER: I didn't work on that.

JR: And he did "*The Defenders*"—at least a cover, a famous cover of *The Defenders*, with the Hulk coming right at you [Marvel Feature #1, Aug. 1972]. And I guess he did, you know, certain things like *Dracula* [Tomb of Dracula and Dracula Lives!]; he did covers for these things.



Neal Adams Is Back—And Tom Palmer's Got Him!

We forget which film from the movies' Golden Age had the above structure as a publicity tagline, but it works here, too—in *New Avengers* #16.1 (Nov. 2011). Script by Brian Michael Bendis. Thanks to Art Lortie. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

There were a bunch of Marvel magazines for which he did some painted illustration works. He did some Conan work. But in terms of your direct collaborations with him, it's *X-Men* and *Avengers*, in that period, that most come to mind, correct?

PALMER: You're right.

JR: There was one particular effect achieved in the *X-Men* books that I've wondered about, where it called for portrayals of the Huntley-Brinkley show [#58], and there was a guy talking on television in a kind of very demonstrative way. And it's a beautiful Adams image. And the way you inked it, it really looked like a television—a cathode ray tube image—with the lines going across the screen. Do you know what I'm referring to?

PALMER: Yup, yup, yup—I remember it well.

JR: Was there something special to achieving that effect?

PALMER: Well, I'm smiling as you're saying that, because the thing I took away from—I was a kid, now—Wally Wood; there was something about Wally Wood. And what he was using was a craft tint board. It was something that illustrators used; you would use a chemical to bring up a line and then a double line. It was like a two-tone grey. And he was using Zipatone, with dots and lines and everything else. And when I got into the comicbooks, the first thing I went to—especially working over Gene Colan—was the Zipatone, because that, to me, was adding a grey. The problem with comicbooks was it was just black and white; but if you added grey, and that was what it was—well, they had a grey black line, but they also had white: white dots to make something fade, or white lines, very thin. And you just cut that out. You laid it on the area and you cut it out. And I'm not sure if I used white line or black line. But if you put it in a horizontal way, across the screen, it looks like a cathode ray tube, you know.

JR: If you looked at it now, would you instantly be able to say, "Oh, yeah, I used a white-line or a black-line Zipatone on that"?

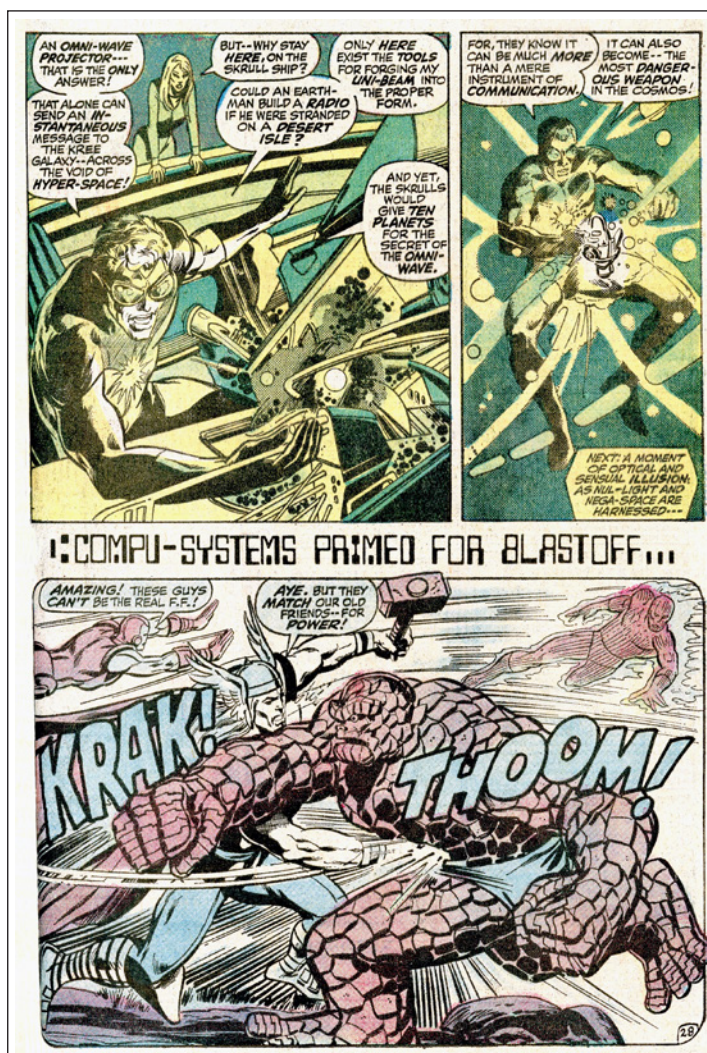
PALMER: Yeah. I think you could see it, too. It's either a light line going through it or it's a black line.

JR: Would that effect—that sort of horizontal-line effect for a TV transmission—would that have been in [Adams'] pencils, or would that have been something you added onto it?

PALMER: Well, he didn't give me a directive. I think that's something that I added on.

JR: I know that Neal was a huge fan of Zipatone from Ben Casey. And it's something that, again, he learned at Johnstone and Cushing. You know, Neal's own take on his rocket-burst on the scene, if you will, is that he couldn't believe such a big deal was being made of it because these were the standard techniques, the ones that he brought to bear, of advertising work; and it's just that no one had ever thought, really, to apply them to comics before.... The use of Zipatone, the perspective shifts, the expressions on faces, the attention to realism—all of this had been a staple of his—[of] advertising and illustration work for a long time; it's just that no one had brought them to comics. And as he likes to explain, at the time that he broke into comics... the people working in them as illustrators didn't even want to admit that... because it was such a reviled medium at the time. But all of this, for people trained in advertising work, and trained in commercial illustration, all of these [techniques] were de rigueur, so to speak. But those TV panels always struck me as an extraordinary bit of realism.

PALMER: Well, yeah. Neal gave me a chance to bring more realism. The other people I was working with, it was more fantasy [oriented]. The guy that I was impressed with through my whole time I was working with him, for a number of years on *The*



The Kree-Skrull War Effort

Captain Marvel (the Kree Mar-Vell) does a bit of jury-rigging on a Skrull spaceship, while on Earth Thor and Iron Man battle Skrulls who have resumed the shape and powers of two of The Fantastic Four—from *The Avengers* #93 (Nov. 1971), the first issue in which Thomas, Adams, and Palmer teamed up to get the Kree-Skrull War into high gear. Oh, for the trivia addicts out there, 'twas Roy T. himself who, at his parents' home during a trip to Jackson, Missouri, composed and even pasted up the computer-style lettering in between the panel rows, filling a space Neal had deliberately left empty for him. That countdown would last for four more pages, all lovingly hand-pasted in. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Avengers, was John Buscema. He was in a studio with Bob Peak and Howard Terpning—big illustrators. And John learned a lot where he was; it's funny how those studios kind of gave life to a lot of artists. Everyone brought something to the mix. And John was older, and all his civilians had hats, fedoras; and they kind of dated him, you know, because at that point when you see the old movies, like from the '40s or the '30s, everybody's got a hat, all the men have a hat. [laughs]

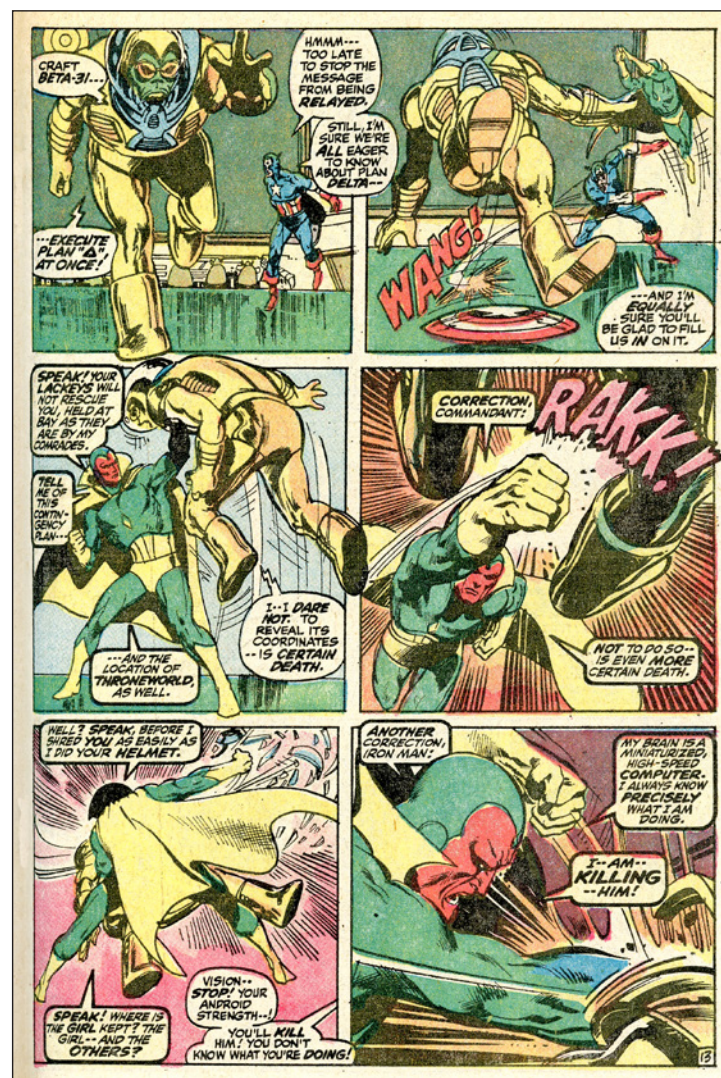
JR: JFK ended that when he gave his inaugural address without one.

PALMER: [laughs] Is that true?

JR: That's what's been said, yeah.

PALMER: Isn't that funny! Well, Neal—I guess I'm saying it without recognizing it—Neal was the new kid on the block, and

he brought a different realism. And I think he also inked John Buscema once or twice.... I think he enjoyed it. Neal enjoyed other artists' work. That night—something just came to me—that night that Roy Thomas had that party, Roy came over to Neal and I and said, "Come on into the bedroom, I want to show you something." And Gene Colan had penciled—that's what guys used to do at the time, was pencil a whole book, maybe 20 pages or 22 pages. And I forget the book that Gene Colan had penciled. But Gene penciled as if he were doing half-tone drawings. He wasn't a comicbook artist, so to speak. He didn't do just line, he did half tone. And both Neal and I were just—even Neal, he was just dead silent. He just looked at this beautiful, beautiful work, and it was not comicbook stuff. When Gene did *Tomb of Dracula*, or even *Daredevil*, he just brought another realism to the comicbooks. And I think that whole period was when comicbooks were changing. People were coming in from different areas and doing different things—and probably attracting a lot more art, because before that, you had to fit the mold.



In The Heat Of Battle

You probably already saw, back in *A/E* #181, the final page from *Avengers* #96, in which Neal Adams had drawn Rick Jones with six fingers—but since the error was corrected by Tom (after being spotted by proofreader Steve Englehart) in the inking and was never printed that way, we figured it made more sense to display a page from that issue that Neal was particularly fond of: the ever-so-logical Vision going berserk and nearly pummeling a Skrull space-soldier to death. That also became the issue's cover scene. Inks by Tom Palmer; script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Saving The Thunder

Joe Sinnott's inking of Neal Adams, on the splash page of *Thor* #180 (Sept. 1970), immediately after Jack Kirby's abrupt departure from Marvel. Script by Stan Lee. Tom felt that Sinnott's brushwork, while splendid in its own right (and ideal for Kirby's *Fantastic Four*), was less suited to work by Adams. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

PALMER: Roy tells a story about a particular page [The Avengers #96, p. 21] where Neal, either accidentally or intentionally, drew a hand with six fingers, and it came back from your inking with five fingers.

JR: [laughs] I don't remember that. But you know, you have to do that, if you're going to work with guy, a penciller. I'm laughing because it's not always Neal but a lot of times, it's different people that you have to—you see something wrong, you know, and you kind of—tangents. Tangents is [sic] a big thing. You have someone standing on a street corner, and they have a finger, and the finger then is touching a building, it looks like he's holding the building up. You know? You call that a "tangent." So I would be very aware of that.

Or sometimes, you know, the women didn't—there were certain lines that you had to move or remove. And it was just out of looking at what you're doing. You're not just a robot. There was that movie that a lot of us used to laugh at, it was [called] *Chasing Amy*, I think it was [1997]. And it was, "Oh, you're an inker—you trace things, right?" And I just thought that was humorous because I was never tracing, because I was thrown work that I had to really concentrate on. It wasn't something that you traced.

JR: There is such an intimacy between the penciler and the inker. Right? There's probably no more intimate relationship in comics—even between

the writer and the penciler. The penciler is truly creating the thing; he's truly, actually giving life to what is a series of typed words that no one will ever see. Right? And from the penciler, the very next person to see that artwork, generally speaking, is the inker. Right? And in those days, you were inking directly onto the penciled works, am I correct?

PALMER: Correct. Well, it would go to the letterer first, and it was Sam Rosen [no relation to interviewer]. He lived in Brooklyn. And when the pages were getting late, I would drive out to see him, in Brooklyn, and pick up the pages at his apartment. Sam Rosen was terrific. You look at those, those pages—beautiful lettering. Not that he was the only one; there were so many.... Sam would fit that lettering in, around the pencils, that it was artwork, also. It wasn't just "stick it down anywhere," as it is today. Digital, they just stick it wherever there's room, a lot of times. I don't want to knock it today. But back then, the letterer was an artist, also, one of them.

JR: Do you ever recall Neal expressing any displeasure with any facet of your work?

PALMER: Well, I think he was afraid to! [laughs] No, I'm only kidding.

JR: I mean, one thing about Neal is that he's never been afraid to express his displeasure with anybody, right?

PALMER: Well, maybe behind my back. I never heard any, and he never said anything to me.

JR: I raise it because he himself has told the story—and we know how close his relationship with Dick Giordano became, right? They ran a business together for a long time. But in the early period of their relationship as professionals, before Continuity, Neal has told the story about how he had to take Dick aside and say, "Look, if you're going to continue inking me, you've got to start doing this and stop doing that." And he said, "After that, we never had a problem." So he was not averse, it seems, to making clear when he did have displeasure....

PALMER: Dick may have been a brush man. I remember [Neal] saying—I think he said to somebody, and I heard it through somebody else—that he didn't care for what I did, because I made The X-Men look older and he saw them as younger teenagers. And I guess, maybe in the back of his mind, that was so; but he was drawing very, as you were saying, very good-looking, strong people. They didn't look like they were kids. So I kind of went with it, you know. I didn't redraw anything; I just added what I could to it. And I think with the pen point, it fits his style, in a way. I don't think brush fit Neal very well. I believe that when he worked on *Thor*... I don't know if I saw it early on, but it could have been Joe Sinnott who inked him. And that's a brush man. And I don't mean to put anyone else's work down, but I think Neal needs that pen work; there's something about a pen that you can't achieve with a brush, and vice versa.

JR: Let me ask you about some of the quotes that are attributed to you from the interview in *Comic Book Artist* #3 [Winter 1993], if you don't mind. You said, "It is irrefutable, when you see Neal's work, that he is an exception." And now, to this



Sam Rosen

"King of the letterers" is what the text said under Sam's photo in the 1969 *Fantastic Four Annual*—and he was definitely in the running, at the very least!

day, in the course of interviews for this project, I'm talking to people who really regard Jack Kirby, let's say, as the definitive icon of the medium; or [for] some, [Jim] Steranko, let's say; or what have you. Everyone's got their partisans, right? But you said, "It is irrefutable, when you see Neal's work, that he is an exception."

PALMER: Well, looking back on it—when you just said Jack Kirby, I was never a big Jack Kirby fan. But stepping back, he went back to World War II, he and Joe Simon creating Captain America and all that. Jack Kirby brought just power to the page, just design and power. I remember first going up to Marvel, I would see raw pencil pages lying around. John Verpoorten was the office manager and Roy Thomas would be there. And there would be pages lying all around. I remember looking at Kirby's pages and they looked like he—I don't think he light-boxed them. There was never any erasures; it was just this perfect, beautiful line. He'd almost—it was an art, a dynamic art. And if you see Neal's pages, I think it was my working in the advertising field and [my being] aware more of that than comicbooks—I didn't really know who Jack Kirby was, until I put my foot in at Marvel. I wasn't buying the comicbooks. I can see the difference in the two [men's work], and how people were drawn to Jack Kirby. Because that is comicbooks. And Neal has turned into being a comicbook artist on his own. But initially, I saw a lot of the advertising, a lot of the continuity work he was doing at Johnstone [and] Cushing, which attracted me to it just immediately. Just like seeing Stan Drake doing super-heroes.

JR: There is, in fact, a cult of Neal Adams. And I count myself as one of the slavish devotees to it since I'm eight years old. It's disappointing to me to see that he has eschewed realism in later years, but you can't expect an artist to just keep doing the same thing over and over again. I get that, too.

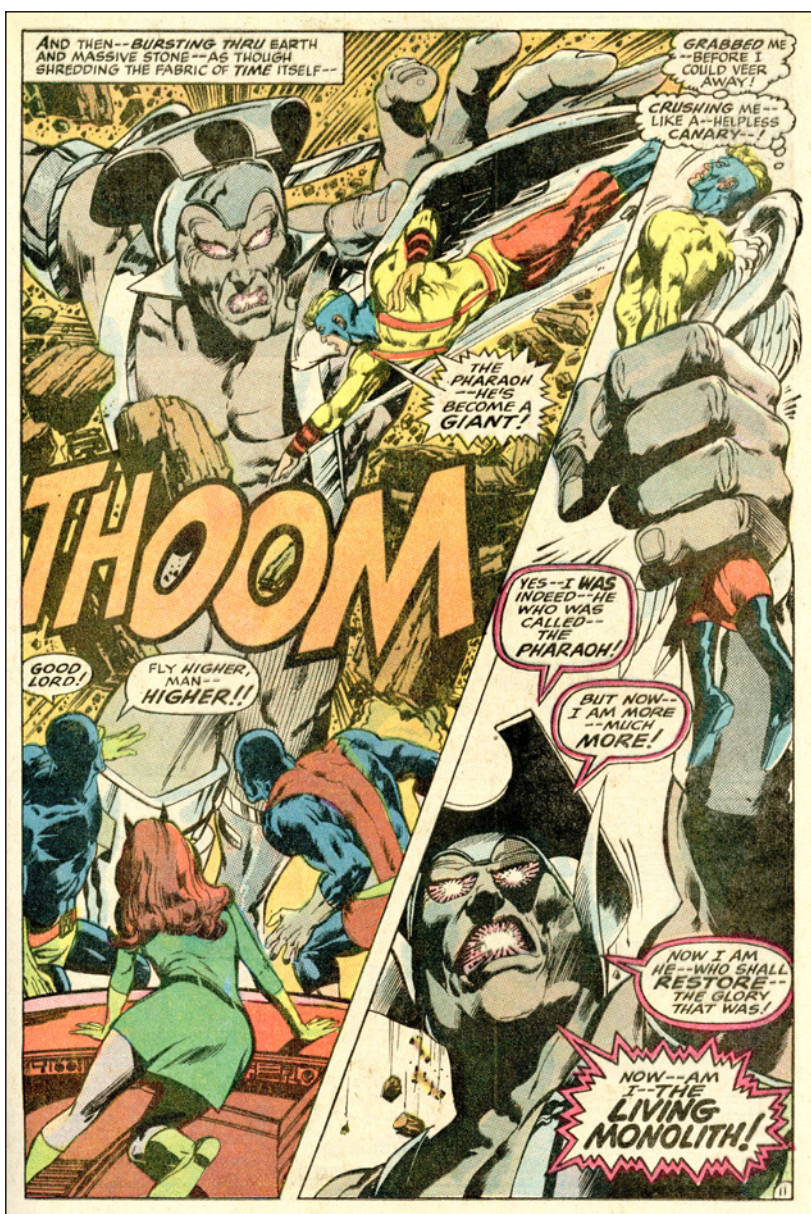
PALMER: You change. I think Neal has gone through many stages, many periods of time. And I guess he's changed, as well. You know, you don't draw the same way you did early on. You pick up things, you get rid of some things. And I guess he's done that. Neal did a terrific job [on the original X-Men run]. I was very impressed. That book was the first time I really saw his pencils. And it was so well done. The poses were more comicbook, of The X-Men, but all the things around it—it was just something you didn't see in comicbooks. And for me to work on it, I just knew I was working on something different. And I probably took more time on it.... I just really worked hard on it.

JR: You also indicated that you considered The Avengers more the high point: that you had matured, Neal had matured, your working relationship was more comfortable. And you indicate issue #93 as a high point. Does that ring a bell?

PALMER: Oh, yeah. Yeah—in many ways. Roy Thomas wrote that. And it was the riff on the movie [Fantastic Voyage]. I was coloring. Neal and I were bouncing back and forth in coloring, and I colored that issue. And it was a double-thick issue.

JR: Do you ever remember discussing the subject of Neal Adams with either Roy or Stan Lee?

PALMER: Well, I don't want to get too far astray here, but Stan had problems with Neal. He busted his chops about that first cover, I



Pharaoh 'Cross The Mercy—But There's No Mercy!

A dynamic Living Pharaoh page from *The X-Men* #56, with art by Neal Adams & Tom Palmer. Script by Roy Thomas. Thanks to Barry Pearl. [TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.]

think [the rejected original cover of X-Men #56]. Neal was being Neal, and Stan was being—not Stan, but he was—he had been in comicbooks since the '30s. And he, you know—he, I guess, was having a difficult time to see into the future....Roy was there for all of this. And he was probably—he was Neal's champion, I'm sure.



James Rosen is the chief White House correspondent for Newsmax and a New York Times bestselling author. His latest book, *Scalia: Rise to Greatness, 1936-1986*, the first of a two-volume biography of Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia, was published in March 2023 by Regnery. For a future biography of Neal Adams, Rosen interviewed the artist extensively between 1994 and 2019, as well as others close to Neal, including his family members and such collaborators as Roy Thomas, Denny O'Neil, and Tom Palmer.



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REESE DID HIM ONE BETTER BY DRAWING THE SYNDICATED *FLASH GORDON* STRIP FOR OVER TWO YEARS. BUT RALPH HAS A LOT MORE TO TELL ABOUT THEIR INTERSECTING CAREERS, AS WE'LL DISCOVER IN PART 2 OF...

"MY LIFE WITH WOOD!"

(Clockwise:) Harvey Kurtzman and Wally Wood's "Flesh Garden" from *Mad* #11 (May 1954). Next, Wood assists Dan Barry on the syndicated *Flash Gordon* strip in late 1957. Finally, below, a lovely 1991 *Flash Gordon* daily by Bruce Jones and Ralph Reese. [*Mad* splash TM & © EC Publications, Inc.; *Flash Gordon* TM & © King Features Syndicate, Inc.]



My Life With Wood (Part 2)

by Ralph Reese

Last issue, artist Ralph Reese related how, at sixteen, he became an assistant to the legendary cartoonist, Wally Wood. Now Reese discusses the story behind Wood and Bill Pearson's prozine *witzend* in the late 1960s. Take it away, Ralph....

Witzend, Etcetera

Wood was always aware of the fan scene, which at that time was quite small. Publishers of various fanzines like [Larry] Ivie's and *ERBdom* were often soliciting him for interviews or free sketches or whatnot, and he received several of them every month. When Dan Adkins came aboard along with Bill Pearson, they had both been involved in creating fanzines. Wood had several ideas and characters that he wanted to copyright himself and hadn't found a proper venue for. Somehow, in talks between them, Wood got the idea to publish his own zine.

It was never planned to be a big money-maker, but he figured if he could sell maybe five thousand of them then it could at least be self-supporting, pay for its own printing and postage. Besides the ideas he had been hoarding, Woody also had a bunch of unpublished material [such as] samples for newspaper strips that didn't make it, drawings he had done for his own amusement, and things he had done just to practice or sample some technique or style. He figured he knew enough other artists with similar stuff just lying around, or who had original ideas that they wanted to copyright themselves before letting anyone else publish them, to make a kick-ass little magazine. Bear in mind that at this time almost all comics and other illustrations were still being done on a



Some May Call Them "Minions"

"While other people who worked in the studio have later tried to take credit for this or that...." Other Wood assistants included Dan Adkins (left), standing next to Woody in 1965.

work-for-hire basis, so that the creators had no more right to their material than a bricklayer has to the building he constructs.

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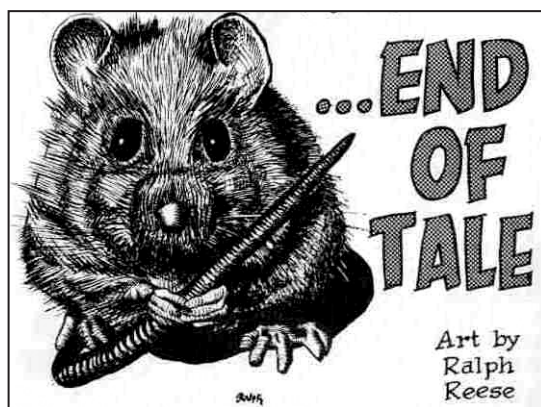
Ads for Dan Adkins' *Outlet* used that name as a placeholder for the as-yet-undecided-upon name for his new magazine. *Et cetera* was next, until Wood finally settled on *witzend* (with a small "w"). These were ads from *Guidebook to Comics Fandom* (1965) and also *Lunacon* (1965). [© Estate of Dan Adkins.]

Wood started calling people and calling in favors, and after a couple of months the first issue of *witzend* began to take shape. He was fortunate enough to get some dynamite material in the first couple of issues: an unpublished EC-style sci-fi story by Williamson/Krenkel/Frazetta [MTG NOTE: The story "Savage World" had originally been drawn for the unpublished 5th issue of Lev Gleason's *Amazing Adventures of Buster Crabbe*], his own "Animan" strip, stories from the Dillons and Archie Goodwin, Ditko's "Mr. A"... Gray Morrow's "Orion"... a story from Brad Holland... as well as single-page illustrations and spots from many others. He even gave me a page to show my still rather primitive skills.

Altogether, Woody managed to put together about eight good issues before he really started running out of material and energy, and then wound up turning it over to Bill Pearson. Bill had been his greatest helper and supporter in the effort, and had taken over all the scut work of meeting subscriptions and doing mailings, etc.... The magazine never really made any money and probably barely managed to meet its own expenses, if that, but it was an artistic success and has become a treasured collector's item. Looking back at it, I am amazed that it got done at all between the demands of doing the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* books and the other odds and ends he was taking on. Like I said before: the guy was a

workaholic and he was cranking seven days a week.

After the whole *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* thing collapsed, Wood scrounged around for a bit. He prevailed upon his friendship with Joe Orlando, who had been his assistant and studio partner in the early '50s and was then an editor at DC, to get him some inking work up there, since he would rather cut his balls off than work for Marvel and Stan Lee again. Joe gave him the *Superboy* book to ink, and we even did a couple of romance stories just to fill in. By this



End As A Fan

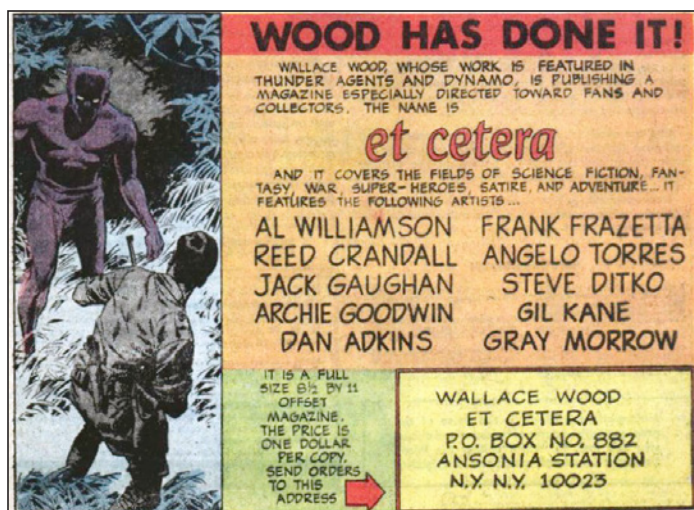
(Above:) Early Reese from *witzend* #1 (Summer 1966). Ralph was about sixteen when he drew this. [© Ralph Reese.]

witzend



At Their witzend

(Above:) And finally, just as Wood and Adkins were at their wits' end, a name stuck! From *witzend* #1 (Summer 1966). [© Bill Pearson.]



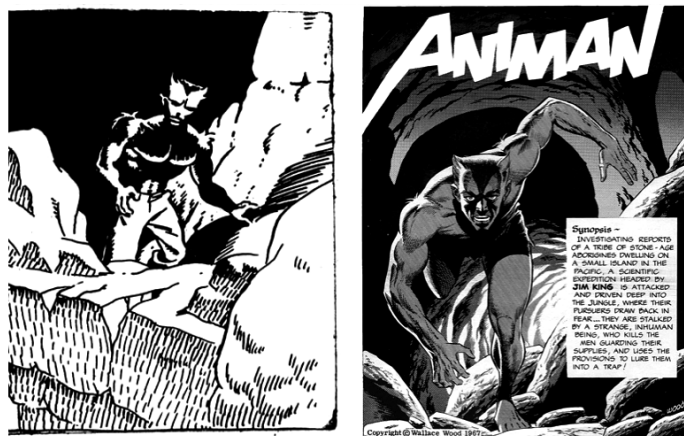
The More Things Change, Et Cetera...

(Above:) *Et Cetera* was the original title of Dan Adkins and Wally Wood's prozine, before trademark concerns caused Wood to change it to *witzend* at the last minute. This ad, which appeared in *Tower's Fight the Enemy* #3 (March 1967), still sported the old name—despite the fact that *witzend* #1 had been published a year earlier! "Well," Michael T. says, "they still got my dollar!" [© Bill Pearson.]

time, I had advanced to the point of being able to do whole backgrounds and was getting paid by the page rather than by the week. There was another sort of humorous caveman book called *Anthro* that he inked, and then we took over the inking on Bob Oksner's *Angel and the Ape* title, which up till that time Oksner had been doing himself.

It was during this period that I first started getting some work of my own, with Wood's help. He generously arranged with Judy Benjamin up at *Galaxy* to try me out on a few sci-fi illos by promising her that he would do a couple of jobs for her himself. He got Joe Orlando and Dick Giordano at DC to give me a couple of three- and four-page comic stories for their omnibus horror/mystery titles like *House of Mystery*.

Around this time, I got in some more trouble for pot possession and had to go away for a while. Upon my release I briefly moved



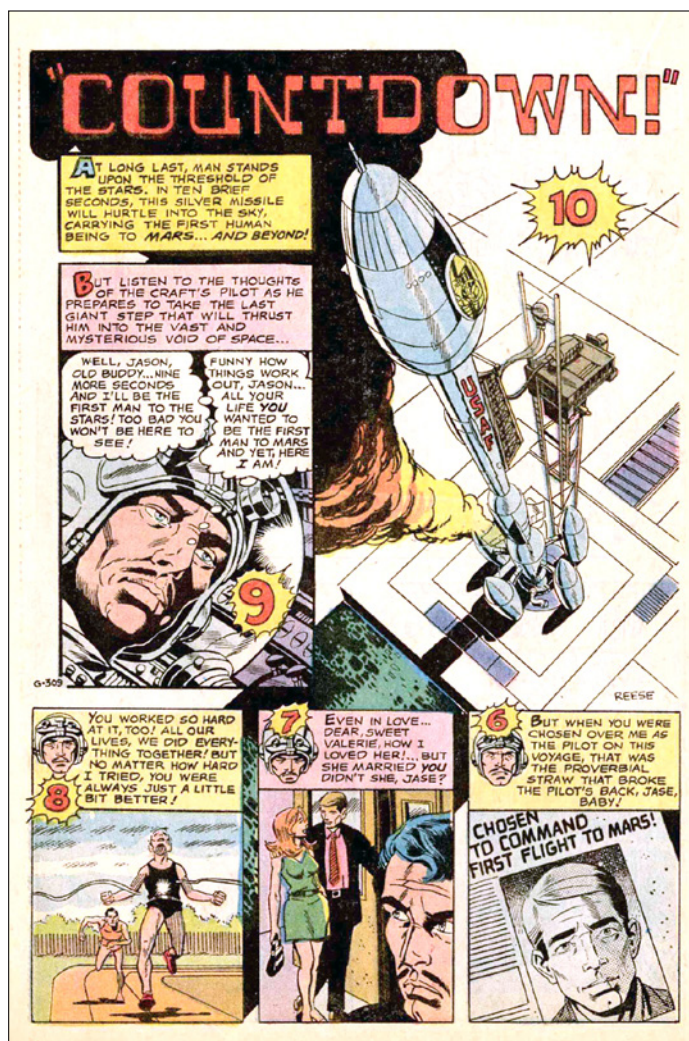
Before Anime, There Was—Animan!

(Above:) "Wood had several ideas and characters that he wanted to copyright himself." One of them was "Animan" (left), originally drawn when he was a teenager in the 1940s. Wood revived "Animan" in *witzend* #2 in 1967 (right). [© Estate of Wallace Wood.]



Rolling T.H.U.N.D.E.R.

A stunning T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents cover penciled by Reed Crandall and inked by Wally Wood. The exquisite color is most likely by Wood's first wife, Tatjana Wood. [© John Carbonaro.]



"Countdown" To A Solo Career

Woody helped Ralph get work at DC, as witness the Wood-inspired art for "Countdown" for House of Mystery #195 (Oct. 1971). [TM & © DC Comics.]



Should Auld Art Teams Be Forgot...

Joe Orlando and Wally Wood were an art team in the 1950s (as depicted by Wood, above). When times were lean, Orlando (then a DC editor), gave Wood work, such as inking Bob Oksner on DC's Angel and the Ape #5 (July 1969). [TM & © DC Comics.]

back in with my parents and tried going back to the High School of Art and Design to get my diploma. I soon realized that they had little to teach me there, as I had already received a more valuable practical education as Wood's assistant.

Woody & Wayne...

By the time I got hooked up with Woody again, he had moved out of the apartment on 76th street and separated from Tatjana, and was living and working in a small studio in an apartment hotel on Broadway and 74th, just a few blocks from the old place. By then, Adkins and Roger Brand had moved on to doing their own stuff, and Wayne Howard had entered the scene as Wood's regular assistant.

I'm a little vague on just what he was working on at the time, or what my role in it was, other than that by this time I had developed sufficient skill to pencil a whole page or job for him, or do complete backgrounds. I think he was doing some jobs for Warren and Topps, and there was a short-lived deal to produce



Midnight Expressed

Wood disciple Wayne Howard did a lot of work for Charlton in the 1970s, such as this cover for *Midnight Tales* #1 (Dec. 1972). Howard, one of comics' relatively few black artists at the time, imitated Wood's surface sheen, but lacked some of Woody's basic drawing skills. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

a newspaper-sized comic for Wham-O, the company that had invented the hula hoop. I think, in fact, one was published, for which Wood designed and wrote all-new characters such as "Radian," but then the whole deal fell through for some reason.

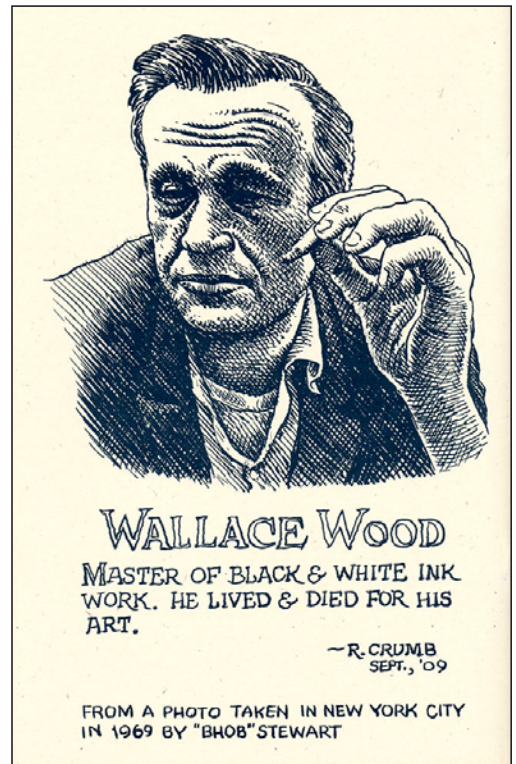
It is hard to imagine someone who was more different from me than Wayne. In spite of being a young black man, he was very conservative, very Christian, and pretty much a total hick from Cleveland. He had a loud and raucous hee-haw sort of laugh, and always called Woody "Mr. Wood"... as in "Gollee Mr. Woood!" Needless to say, we did not get along. But he worshipped WW and was a total imitator of his work and style, and was a reliable employee.

It was around this time that a number of folks from the blooming underground comics movement came to New York and made pilgrimages to the studio on West 76th Street. *Witzend* was really one of the earliest undergrounds, in a way, and Wood was sympathetic to their efforts, even if he found much of the artwork rather crude by professional standards. R. Crumb came up to visit and pay his respects, and struck me as being rather studious and quiet, always scribbling in his notebook. Trina Robbins and Kim Deitch became friends, and we still saw Roger and Michelle Brand now and then.



Opposites... Repel

"He was very conservative, very Christian." Cartoonist Wayne Howard was a reliable Wood assistant, but he and Ralph Reese did not get along.



Crumbs Of Fame & Fortune

"R. Crumb came to visit." Famed underground cartoonist Robert Crumb was a Wood fan, as demonstrated by his sketch of the comicbook artist (based on a Bho8 Stewart photo). [© R. Crumb.]

By then our relationship had developed into something more than professional. At that time I was probably Wood's closest confidante. In the late '60s the "encounter group" phenomenon was becoming popular, and with our mutual interest in psychology we went to a bunch of them together. We both wound up meeting women there whom we eventually married. In Woody's case he met a divorcee named Marilyn Glass from Long Island, who was a psychologist and had two children from her first marriage. For a while there he was really in love. They married and he wound up moving to her house in Woodmere. Wayne had by this time (around 1970) started doing some work for Charlton and went his own way, moving up to Connecticut.

That's it for this installment, folks. Next issue, Ralph discusses *Web of Horror*, *National Lampoon*... and being evicted! Don't miss it!

Till next time...

 **Michael T. Gilbert** 

A Couple Of Glorious *Misfits*

(Right:) Wally Wood scripted and Ralph Reese illustrated the former's series "The Misfits." This page is from *Heroes Inc.* #1 (1969).

[TM & © Estate of Wallace Wood.]



Marital Bliss – Round 2

Wally Wood and second wife Marilyn Glass in 1971.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP
1/4 Page

Lily Renee

(May 12, 1921 – Aug. 24, 2022)

"A Film-Worthy Life"

by Stephan A. Friedt

Lily Renee (Willheim) Phillips led what would be a film-worthy life.

Born to wealthy parents in Vienna, Austria... sent to England at 14 as part of the *Kindertransport* of children from Nazi-occupied Austria to England... reuniting with her parents at 16 in New York City, where they had immigrated.

As a child, she frequented art museums with her parents and loved drawing. When she got to New York, she returned to art, getting a job at Fiction House after answering an ad for comicbook artists. Since she often signed her work as "L. Renee," few knew that the well-received artwork on characters like "Werewolf Hunter" and "Señorita Rio" was from a female artist.

Lily was chronicled at length by comics historian Trina Robbins in several books, including a graphic novel about Lily's life.



Lily Renee

in a 1940s photo—also represented by her cover for Fiction House's *Fight Comics* #47 (Dec. 1946). Photo courtesy of John Selegue; art scan from Grand Comics Database. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

In 1948, she and her husband, artist Eric Peters, began working for St. John Publishing on *Abbott and Costello*, sharing penciling and inking duties. Lily would also contribute art for romance comics in the line, and together they worked for the Borden Dairy Company on *Elsie the Cow* promotional comics.

She left comics and continued providing art for children's books and for theatre programs. From there she gravitated to designing textiles and jewelry, leaving comicbooks far behind.

Lily Renee died in New York at the age of 101.



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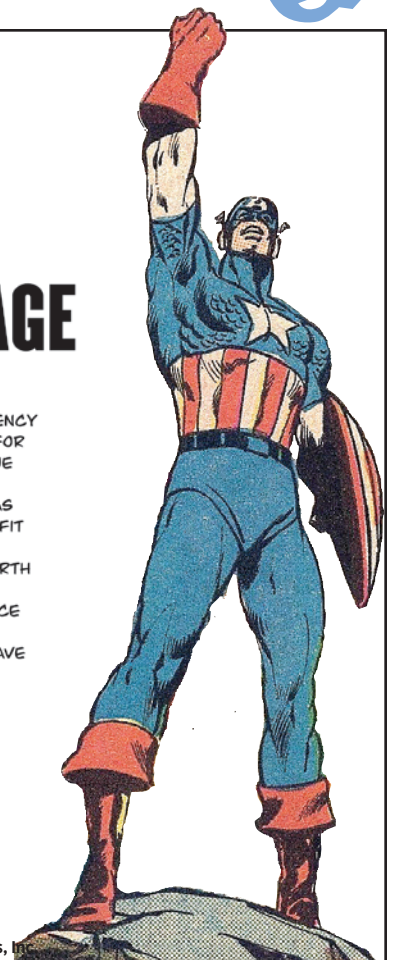
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Art by Neal Adams & Tom Palmer.

Captain America TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.



Steve Skeates

(1943 – 2023)

"25% Of What You Write Is Great..."

by Bryan Stroud



Steve Skeates

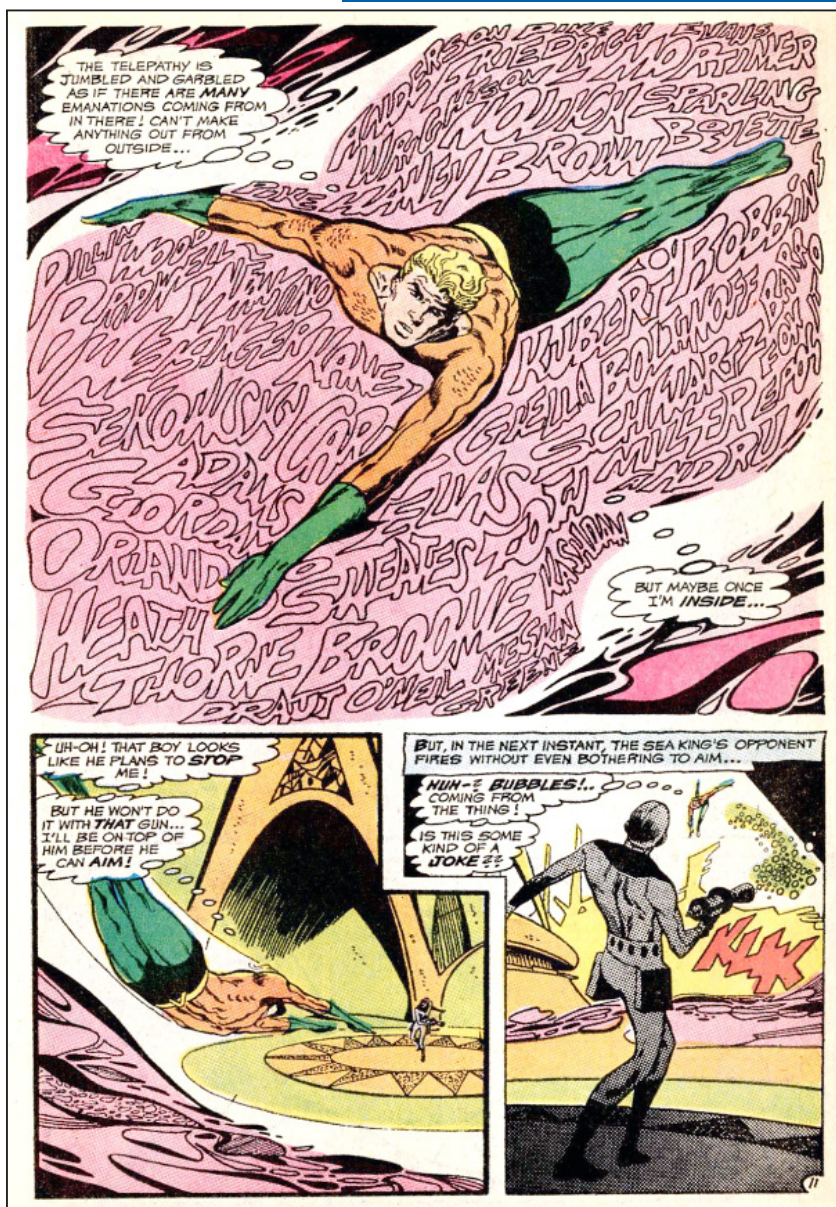
circa the early 1970s, and a playful page by the writer and artist Jim Aparo for *Aquaman* #50 (March-April '70). Thanks to Bob Bailey & Sharon Karibian for the page scan, and to Comic Vine for the photo. For featured coverage of Steve's comics career, see *Alter Ego* #84. [TM & © DC Comics.]

A unique voice has been silenced with the passing of Steve Skeates on March 30, 2023. Steve was born in Rochester, New York, on January 29, 1943. A self-described "dreamer," he became one of the earliest of the new wave of talent entering the industry, when Stan Lee of Marvel Comics hired him in June 1965 as an editorial assistant and proofreader. It soon became apparent his talents were better utilized as a writer, and he soon found himself as a freelancer, scripting Westerns for Marvel.

Embracing the freelance life, Steve built an impressive body of work for multiple publishers, including Tower, Charlton, Warren, Gold Key, Red Circle, Archie, and DC. He had an ability to expertly navigate genres from horror to humor with multiple points in between, and his gifts were recognized with multiple awards, including Shazam Awards in 1972 and 1973 for humor stories in DC's *House of Mystery* #202 (May '72) and *Plop* #1 (Sept.-Oct. '73). He was also named Best All-Around Writer in the 1973 Warren Awards, and in 2012 was presented with the prestigious Bill Finger award in San Diego.

Steve was the co-creator of DC's *The Hawk* and *The Dove*, drawn by Steve Ditko, and had memorable runs on the *Aquaman* and *Plastic Man* titles, working with such talented artists as Gil Kane, Pat Boyette, Mike Sekowsky, Ogden Whitney, Dick Ayers, and Jim Aparo. Another notable work was one of the earliest unofficial "crossovers" between DC's *Aquaman* #56 (March/April 1971) and Marvel's *Sub-Mariner* #72 (September 1974), which, ironically, were the respective final issues of each series.

In a 2009 interview, he described, in his typically tongue-in-cheek manner, the perils and payoffs of writing: "It's hardly a well-kept secret that when one is writing for a living, no way can every single thing said writer produces be a gem! In fact, the general consensus amongst all the other writers I've talked to about this tends toward being that there's a 25-50-25 split going on here; i.e., 25% of what you write is great, stuff you can truly be proud of; 50% is so-so; with another 25% taken up by those pieces that truly suck! The trick is to make the so-so stuff and somehow even the sucky stuff just passable enough so that you don't get fired!"



Joe Giella

(1928 - 2023)

"[He] Worked In Nearly Every Genre"

by Bryan Stroud

Silver Age stalwart artist and inker Joe Giella passed away on March 21, 2023, at the age of 94. He was born June 27, 1928, in New York City. His education included attendance at the School of Industrial Art and the Art Students League, both in Manhattan.

Joe's career began at age 17 in comics' Golden Age, on Hillman Periodicals' "Captain Codfish," published in *Punch and Judy* #11, cover-dated June 1946. Other early work included inking Fawcett's "Captain Marvel" and some work at Timely on the Sub-Mariner, Human Torch, and Captain America characters.

In 1949, Joe began his career with editor Julius Schwartz at DC Comics with work on such seminal characters as the Golden Age Flash, Green Lantern, and Black Canary. In a 2007 interview, he recalled of Schwartz: "I worked for him for 45 years. Julie ensured I had a job every week, and he always had a check for me upon



Joe Giella

(on left) with Bryan Stroud at a comics conventions a few years back—juxtaposed with a Christmas card Joe drew celebrating his years as both penciler and inker of the *Batman* newspaper comic strip. Thanks to Bryan Stroud. [Batman TM & © DC Comics; other art Estate of Joe Giella.]

delivery. That meant a lot to me. We became good friends."

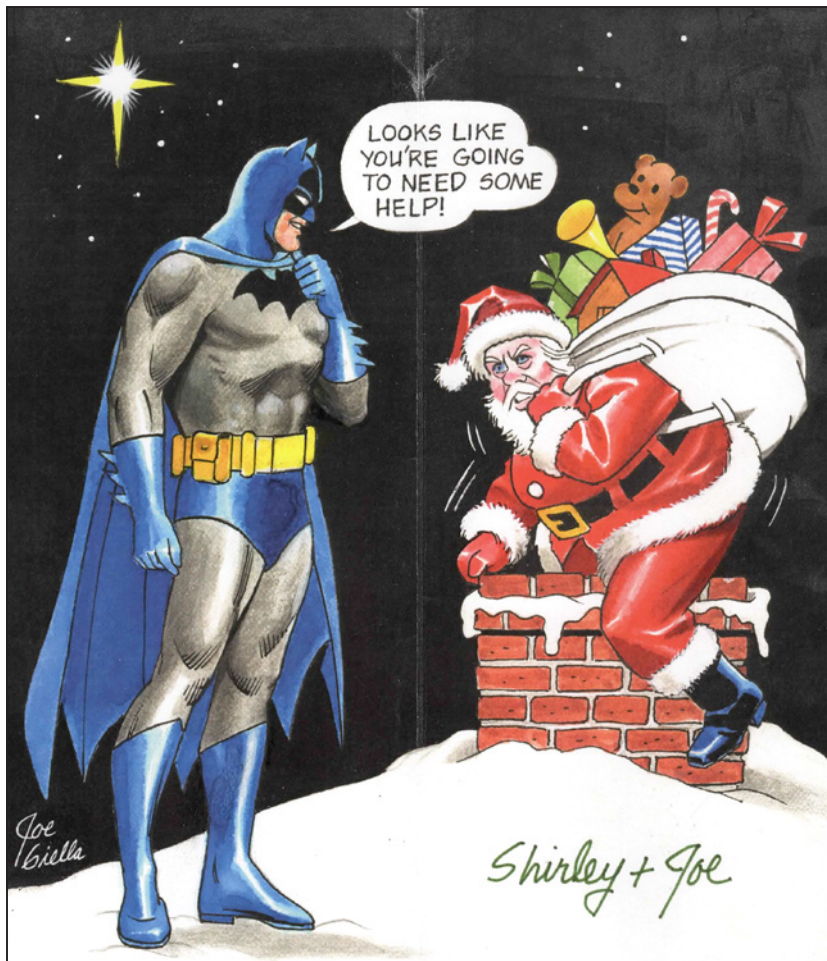
As the Silver Age took off in the 1950s, so did Giella's career, where he was often teamed with pencilers Mike Sekowsky, Gil Kane, and Carmine Infantino, working on such landmark issues as the Silver Age incarnations of *Green Lantern* and *The Flash* and inking the "New Look" Batman transition in *Detective Comics*. In the same interview, Joe remarked that "Carmine Infantino's drawings were tough to work on. You had to know how to draw and decipher. He's a good layout man and a master of storytelling, but his pencils are very scribbly and scratchy."

Giella worked in nearly every genre, including Westerns, science-fiction (including the first appearance of Adam Strange), war titles, teen humor, mystery, romance, and of course his signature super-hero work. He was also the illustrator on the 1977 *Mighty Marvel Superheroes Cookbook*.

Giella also found time to do commercial illustration, recalling, "I did a lot of licensing work, penciling and inking for Nabisco, for example. I'd go home and do the layouts and then get DC's approval for the use of the characters and deliver the final product. I designed 21 T-shirts for Disney, too. I did a lot of agency work."

Joe's talents expanded into the syndicated comic strip world with work on *Flash Gordon* with Dan Barry, *The Phantom* with Sy Barry, and with writer Whitney Ellsworth on *Batman*. He took over the *Mary Worth* strip for King Features in 1991, continuing with it until 2016.

He continued to be active in producing commission work and attending conventions in recent years, but the center of his life was always his family. Joe Giella was a friend to all and indisputably one of the good guys.



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W

e're gonna try something a wee bit different this time. Of course, we're proud to start things off with **Shane Foley's** rendering of a Tom Palmer/Dan Adkins Dr.

Strange figure from 1968 into a Captain Ego post—and I (Roy) hope to finally meet Shane is person down under, come next April, when Dann and I will be attending comics conventions in Melbourne and Gold Coast (near Brisbane). And **Randy Sargent** worked his usual coloring wizardly on this unmasked "maskot" drawing as well. [Captain Ego TM & © Roy Thomas & Estate of Bill Schelly; created & designed by Biljo White.]

And now for something completely different: We were already planning to double up in this issue's letters column, because our "re:" section got squeezed out last time. So when we discovered that three of our most consistent commenters—**Joe Frank**, **Bernie Bubnis**, and **Patrick Moreau** had each sent us an e-comment about both issues, we thought we'd deal with them together, for a change. **Joe's** up first:

Dear Roy,
[re A/E #174:]

Tremendous C.C. Beck cover on A/E #174. Great stylized charm and whimsy. Even better, rough sketches inside, where it progressively evolved into the finished form. Presumably, there are more unseen Beck works out there. Does anyone know how many commissions he did over the years?

I still think it an odd decision, when the character was revived, to assume [editor] Julius Schwartz knew more about Captain Marvel than the artist who worked on him, quite successfully, for over a dozen years. Maybe letting Beck, or a writer acceptable to him, plot the stories would have kept it more in character? But naturally, DC, back then, assumed *they knew best*.

Captain Marvel titles, much like EC, have a certain mystique

because they were snuffed out prematurely. Could Captain Marvel and family have continued on but for the lawsuit? Were sales still adequate, even with super-heroes on the decline? Could they have survived for later generations of super-hero fans much as Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman did? There was certainly nothing threatening or perverse about those titles, not that that would have stopped social crusaders of the day from inventing something.

[re A/E #175:]

I loved the focus in the Arvell Jones interview on how he and so many other talents originated in Michigan. Amusing in that I lived there as well, till I was twelve, and didn't have a clue what a comics paradise it was. Early conventions, used-book stores with back issues, talent that would move on to the comics, etc. Yet I couldn't have been more oblivious. All I knew is that Iron Man and the Hulk fought at a Detroit auto plant in *Avengers* #1.

Additionally interesting that Arvell wasn't solely in comics; he had other priorities, with education and a



"Binder"—Rhymes With "Hinder"!

Charles Clarence ("C.C.") Beck penciled and Pete Costanza may have inked this splash page for the second story in *The Marvel Family* #81 (March 1953), only eight months before Fawcett went out of the comicbook business—but it's curious how much the street scene in the panel at bottom right resembles the street scene in *Shazam!* #1 (Feb. 1973), almost exactly two decades later.

You remember, the latter is the one where Billy Batson is walking along and passes Otto Binder—who scripted *MF* #81 but was not invited to write anything in the revived comic? Thanks to P.C. Hamerlinck. [Shazam heroes TM & © DC Comics.]

job in television news. If assignments were sporadic or mostly last-minute, where's the incentive to stay? Sounds like there was significant comradery between him and his fellow artists, but good fellowship alone doesn't pay the rent. Even now, talent may be called "legendary" or "a superstar," but if so, where are the ongoing offers of assignments? Would people be looking for outside work—in advertising, movies, television, etc.—if comics treatment was so steady and lucrative?

Some, like Richard Howell, opted for their own publishing companies. Others, with lengthy careers, are only rarely invited back. Maybe a variant cover or short story every blue moon? How's someone supposed to get by on that?

How was a self-contained property like the *All-Star Squadron* any sort of threat to other DC properties [post-*Crisis on Infinite Earths*]? The presence of Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman is too confusing? Consider it a separate entity. For those who enjoy it, there it is. For others, who get a migraine considering the various implications, leave it on the spinner rack. It was offering something distinct and different. Same with *OMAC* and *Kamandi*. They were also adventures in another time. Why should the status of JLA players, before or after, even enter into it?

The end result of merging worlds is that we lose the variety of what came before.

Now, it seems like DC is simply strip-mining Batman. There's a Batman who teams with Scooby-Doo and another who's a dinosaur. Yet the Earth-Two rendition was too threatening to them?

Really enjoyed the Jerry Ordway interview. He's a favorite! Wish he'd been a child prodigy so we wouldn't have had to wait till 1980 to see him in comics. In fact, if he'd been born in 1947, as per

the typo on page 37, instead of in 1957 as he actually was, he could have worked with you on *Avengers*, Roy. Loved all the commissions of his that you printed.

Sad to say, after all this superlative material, there were a couple of mis-identified covers [in the "All-Star Squadron That Never Was" section]. *All-Star Squadron* #70 was based on *Avengers* #83, and #71 emulated *Avengers* #75. Don't feel bad. 89% is still a passing grade.

Joe Frank

Ulp! We can't begin to comment on as many aspects of your missives as we'd like to Joe, but here are a few fast thoughts:

Maybe P.C. Hamerlinck can figure out, for a future FCA, how many art commissions C.C. Beck drew after he quit the Shazam! title by the mid-'70s. They weren't all just of Fawcett characters, you know!

We agree that Julius Schwartz, despite his sterling track record a decade earlier re The Flash, Green Lantern, Justice League of America, The Atom, Hawkman, not to mention the "Batman" and "Superman" books, et al., was an odd choice for editor of the whimsical Captain Marvel. But he was DC's "go-to" guy at the time, and I take it he wanted the assignment. Would another editor have had more success, given DC's desire to carry on originally with Beck art and a style of story that was intended as a successor to the Fawcett days? Impossible to know.

My understanding has been that Captain Marvel Adventures, if not many/any other Fawcett titles, was still economically viable in 1953 when they threw in the towel. But if they'd been able to keep going, would they have survived as long as DC, Timely/Marvel, Harvey, Archie, Charlton, and Western did? Or would they have faded out by mid-decade like Quality, which in 1953 was still publishing Blackhawk, Plastic Man, and even Doll Man? Again, no way to tell.



To Rephrase A Caption Heading From *Alter Ego* #180, Page 20: Photoshopping Was Employed In The Making Of This Page!

Johnny Blaze Leavitt, who contributed several faux *Young All-Stars* covers to *A/E* #180, sent us his digital re-do of the final group image in *All-Star Squadron* #60 (Aug. 1986). For the backstory of this and other art sent us by JBL for this issue, see his e-mail on p. 68. The figures from the original, of course, were all penciled by Arvell Jones and inked by Tony DeZuniga. [TM & © DC Comics.]



Bad To The Bone

Johnny Blaze Leavitt also sent us this digital amalgam of *All-Star Squadron* #1-3 antagonist Per Degaton and (on left) his evil recruits for that storyline, and (on right) the Crime Syndicate guys he lined up for the 5-issue JLA/JSA/*All-Star Squadron* team-up in 1982. We'll let you tell us all the artists involved! [TM & © DC Comics.]

Glad you appreciated the coverage in #175 on Arvell Jones, Richard Howell, and Jerry Ordway. As for DC's decision to kill (and then immediately resuscitate a post-Crisis version of) *All-Star Squadron*, it's always been a mystery to me, too, Joe. In retrospect, I think that, despite loving the follow-up title *Young All-Stars*, it might've been smarter if I had acquiesced to DC's suggested title, *The New All-Star Squadron*. Still, the heroes utilized would still have had to be pretty much the same, so maybe it would've made no difference. All I know is that, the older I get, the more I feel I was really hung out to dry by the powers-that-were at the time of Crisis on Infinite Earths. But it worked for DC itself, garnering new interest in the company's comics, so it served its purpose... for them. My comicbooks and I were expendable.

Next up, the ever-lovely **Bernie**:

Hi Roy,

[re A/E #174:]

More William Foster III. Just what the doctor ordered. Great insights, told perfectly by Mr. Foster. This segment covers territory I had never seen. There is an artist of color who may have been left off the roster, though. A fellow who actually spent time showing Steve Ditko some of his work. Gene Bilbrew. He drew subject matter no different from what was available in most "underground" comics of the time. It is referred to as "fetish art."

I don't feel comfortable disagreeing with anyone who is dead, but I have to take issue with a few of Mr. Beck's beliefs. Although I cherish memories of a Capt. Marvel (simple and sort of cartoony but lovable), he feels that is the only Captain. I have never forgotten my first childhood vision of a Mac Raboy Captain Marvel Jr., either. But I guess we agree (dead or alive) that the DC re-boot was awful.

[re A/E #175:]

The page 9 photo of Ditko was taken by Eric Stanton and not his daughter, who was not born at the time the photo was snapped. She never tried to enforce any copyrights on her own photos, and the Internet now claims "ownership." It is great to see you giving her credit for this Ditko pic, even inaccurately.

Bernie Bubnis

Alter Ego was honored to be able to present Alex Grand & Jim Thompson's podcast interview with William Foster III, even if we had to break it up into two parts—and even though it was less chronologically structured than Barry Pearl's overview of black heroes in #173. If someone (you?) wants to do an appreciation of black artist Gene Bilbrew, I'd be interested—unless all his work was "fetish" stuff, in which case it might well be valid but it would belong in some other magazine.

The DC re-boot got better, in my not so humble opinion (as a reader, rather than as a Marvel-employed competitor at the time), once folks like E. Nelson Bridwell and Don Newton came aboard. Wish DC had started with them, so we could have seen how it worked out!

Thanks for the correction re the Ditko photo, though maybe giving his daughter credit for it was just an accidental way of making up for the fact that the pics she did take have been published so often without attribution.

You're up, **Patrick**:

Hi Roy,

[re A/E #174:]

Your two-issue interview with William Foster III was disappointing; it was almost rambling. Some of the conversation had no point to me. In #173 there is no mention of the very talented



Freedom!

Another digital Leavitt triumph, inspired by *All-Star Squadron*: “Freedom Fighters Unlimited.” Once again—artists list, anyone? [TM & © DC Comics.]

Matt Baker, but in #174, when it seems like they are talking about the Bronze Age, there is a mention of Baker at the end of the interview.

The rest of the magazine was very good. I have much more appreciation of [the original] Captain Marvel now than when I was a teenager, because of *Alter Ego*. The C.C. Beck essays were an interesting point of view, but I have learned to take him with a grain of salt. The CM trading cards were not my thing, but the piece was well written and well laid out. I loved the art on the cards.

Michael T. Gilbert’s *Mad* stories are a hoot to read because I loved *Cracked* when I was a kid.

[re A/E #175:]

Hi Roy,

[Richard Arndt’s] interview with Arvell Jones was insightful. I met Arvell a few years ago at Megafest in Framingham, Massachusetts. He is one of those artists who is overlooked. I can’t believe he’s not talked about more.

On a serious note, I was heartbroken with the passing of Neal Adams and George Pérez. Knew them both. They were very different men, but two of the greatest ever to grace our lives. What amazed me about both of them is that in their later years they could both still draw better than the flavor of the month. They were legends because they kept creating. George did a lot of work for the Hero Initiative, so I donated in his memory today.

Patrick Moreau

As we mentioned to Barry Pearl, Patrick, the Foster interview was not meant to cover things in a linear fashion, and probably being split between two issues didn’t help. But there was, we think you’ll admit, a lot of information in there! We wish someone would reprint his two works on blacks in and doing comics. For one thing, though we managed to score an approximation of the first, we still have never seen the second!

By the way, we highly recommend a new book that has just come out on a related subject: Desegregating Comics: Debating Blackness in

the Golden Age of American Comics, edited by Eisner Award winner Dr. Qiana Whitted of the University of South Carolina. Okay, so she and her husband are friends of mine, and I’ve spoken to her classes once or twice. It’s still an excellent, far-ranging study.

And I, too, was saddened by the passing of Neal Adams and George Pérez, two of the giants of 1960s-70s comics. We’ll not see the like of either of those titans again.

Now we come to someone who sent us only one e-mail—this one re A/E #175—but Steven Smith makes some interesting points about a WWII-era Japanese secret society mentioned in one of my captions:

Mister Thomas—

In the interview with Richard Howell, on p. 30, you provided two samples of his art with editorial comment. In the second, a sympathetic native-born Japanese-American nisei character is featured in a panel from a story adapting a 1942 original tale. The dramatic tension springs from the necessarily exaggerated fictional American machinations of the historically very real—but ultimately domestic to Japan—secret terrorist Black Dragon Society, when for at least the fourth time since 1984, to my knowledge, you imply ambivalence regarding its documented actuality.

Having been in my now not-short life your stoutest old-right arch-conservative paleo-libertarian reader, I fully assure you the Black Dragon Society was—thankfully past tense—all too real. It was cited briefly but chillingly in journalist George Morgenstern’s 1947 book *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*, published by the Devin-Adair Company, a longtime source of books written by people avid to prove that the dread reactionaries of whom your civics teacher warned truly exist.

Another book, appearing in 1960 with the portentous title *Which Way, Young Americans?*, by a then-teacher whose name escapes me asserted the documented reality of the Black Dragon Society in a chapter on groups world-wide that used terror to prevent normal people from asserting the natural rights that are vital to liberty. The publisher was Caxton Press of Caldwell, Idaho, source of some of the most reactionary screeds ever to grace



Everybody, Everywhere, All At Once!

And here's the piece de resistance—Johnny Blaze Leavitt's wonderfully over-populated drawing of every hero he could think of that was ever in (or slated to be in) the All-Star Squadron, including The Young All-Stars! Spot your favorite artist's version! [TM & © DC Comics.]

bookshop shelves. By no means do I make this characterization pejoratively or hostilely, though. Anything worth doing is worth overdoing, etc.

Steven Smith

As you're doubtless aware, Steven, the caption I wrote (on p. 30 of A/E #175) refers to that organization as "Japan's legendary (but apparently real) Black Dragon Society," so I've long since come to terms with its existence... even if writer Gardner Fox expanded its reach from Japan to the United States itself back in 1942's *All-Star Comics* #12. At that time, of course, few on this side of the pond had even heard of it, or were only beginning to learn about it in wartime books and films. I'm not always sold by the often undocumented reports that emerged during and soon after the war, but there was definitely something there, all right. And, in the middle of a war, how could pop-culture warriors not seize on a name like "Black Dragon Society"—especially as a foil to something called the "Justice Society"!??

Two additional features in A/E #175 centered on faux comics covers created under the aegis of and/or by two very enthusiastic fans of All-Star Squadron, and each of them had something to say that I thought you might want to know about. First, John Joshua, who dreamed up and commissioned all those post-All-Star Squadron #67 faux covers you saw in #175 and #180:

Hi Roy,

Alter Ego #175 is—for probably obvious reasons—my favorite

issue of the magazine to date. It's always great to get more behind-the-scenes details about the *All-Star Squadron*, whether from yourself or from the various artists who worked on the book, and this issue had it all!

The interviews with Jerry, Arv, and Richard were fascinating, and I have my fingers crossed that we might see a future issue in which you and/or your interviewers can pin down some of the other luminaries—perhaps Mike Clark, Mike Harris, and occasional *Squadron* inker Mike DeCarlo could share their memories in an "all-Mike" issue. Not forgetting, of course, those who had smaller but still important stints, such as Todd McFarlane, Tim Burgard, and even Kevin Sharpe, who drew the often-forgotten "All-Star Squadron" short in 1999's *All-Star Comics* 80-Page Giant.

I am, of course, honored to have the first of my commissioned "covers" appear in this issue, and I hope other readers enjoyed seeing them. A few minor typos crept in along the way, so I thought I should try to correct them.

In the "Special Thanks" credit on the first page, Craig Demak is actually artist Craig Cermak, and colorist Ron Shalda is actually Rob Shalda.

On page 58, the cover for issue #70 is adapted from *Avengers* #83, not #75 as listed.

On page 58, Rob Shalda is credited as Ron Shanda (obviously Rob has become a man of many aliases).

And on page 60, Craig Cermak is again mis-credited as Craig Demak.

John Joshua

Truly sorry about the typos, John, and happy to get them set straight, even belatedly. And Joe Frank, above, had pointed out one other mis-identification of the original inspiration for the faux cover of #71. These mistakes were possibly my fault—typos or brain burps or whatever. I'll try to do better in the future—and I'd love to get in touch in particular with Mike Harris and Mike Clark, both of whom penciled entire issues of All-Star Squadron. I had hoped, too, to convince one-time Squadron and Infinity, Inc. penciler Mike Machlan to talk with our ace interviewer, Richard Arndt... but alas, Mike passed away way too young just a few weeks ago as these words are typed. Perhaps we can achieve some of what you want in a future A/E dedicated to the Earth-Two of World War II, however.

Another enthusiast, **Johnny Blaze Leavitt**, contributed several faux covers to #181, which we'll deal with in a future "re:" segment. Meanwhile, he sent us a few other concoctions of his, which you can enjoy on the preceding four pages:

Hi Roy—

As a kid, I had no idea who Captain Triumph was. My local comic shop owner told me about him.

[All-Star Squadron was] such a brilliant series. It not only kicked off my comicbook collecting. It also started my love of researching Golden Age heroes.

I've attached a few other All-Star Squadron-inspired images I've cobbled together. I'm forever a fan. Two things I've always

loved this one: (1) seeing Captain Triumph among the rest of the Squadron, and (2) seeing Crimson Avenger and Wing meeting Judo Master and Tiger.

Johnny Blaze Leavitt

Thanks, Johnny. You can never have too many All-Star Squadron images, far as I'm concerned!

Meanwhile, if anybody out there has any comments, pro or con or simply corrective, related to this issue, please address them to:

Roy Thomas

e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com

32 Bluebird Trail

St. Matthews, SC 29135

Interested in being in an "old-style" chat group about Alter Ego and its illustrious ilk? Try the discussion/chat group <https://groups.io/g/Alter-Ego-Fans>. If you have trouble finding it or getting into it, please e-mail our marvelous moderator Chet Cox at mormonyoyoman@gmail.com.

Also, you might get a kick out of what immoderate moderator **John Cimino** calls The Roy Thomas Appreciation Board over on Facebook. Another great source for info about whatever Ye Editor is up to, these days. I often have to consult it myself!

Oh, and if any comic shop owner or convention promoter would like to make inquiries about booking RT for future events, or someone is interested in setting up interviews, podcasts, or the like, he/she should contact John Cimino (there's that name again!) at johnstretch@aol.com.

See directly below for the latest show—if you happen to have your passport handy!



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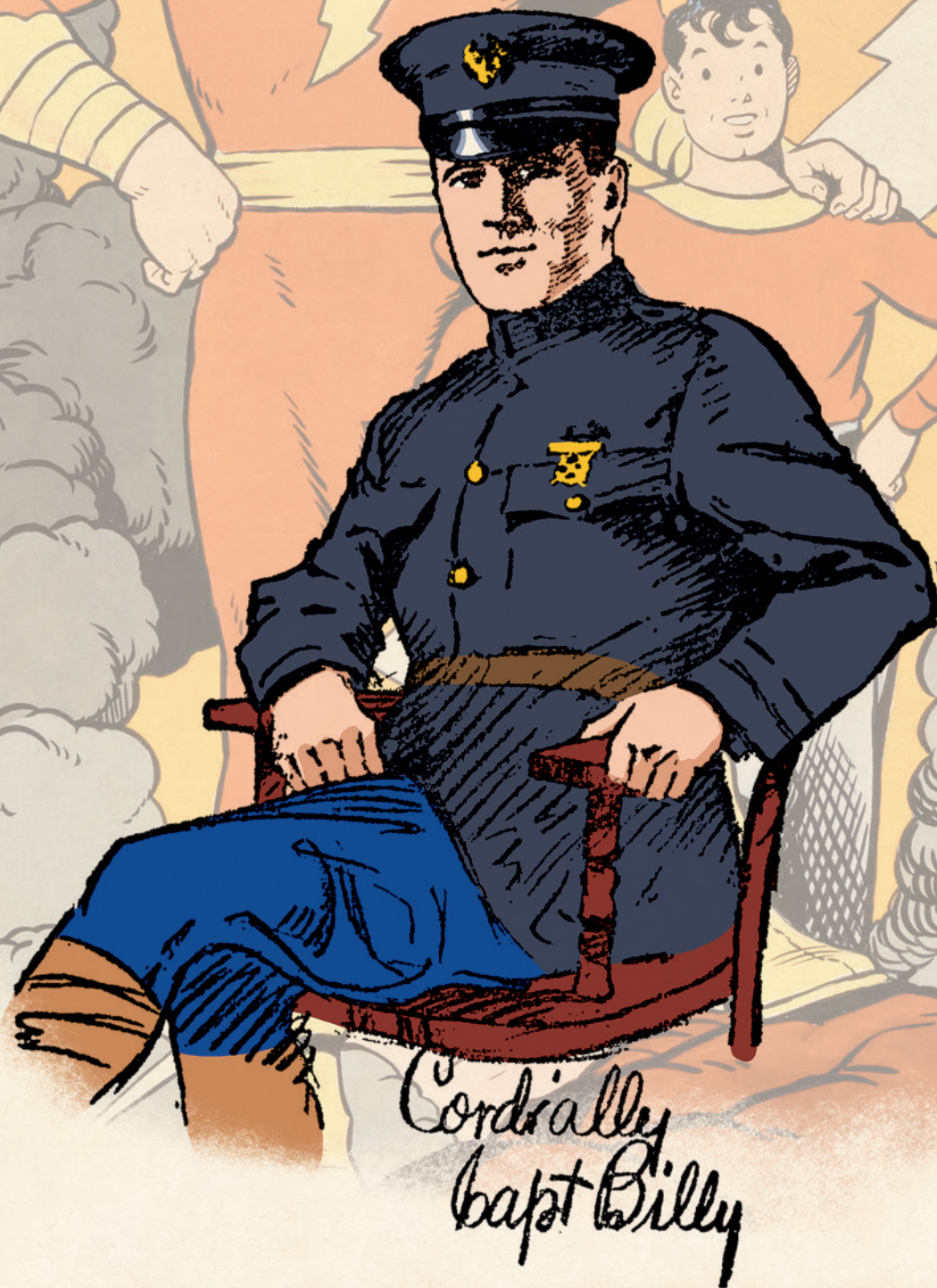
#243
Sept. 2023

P.C. HAMERLINCK'S

FCA 

Fawcett Collectors of America

Capt. Billy portrait drawing from Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang, May 1923; artist: unknown. Capt. Billy portrait TM and © the respective copyright holders.
Whiz Comics #22 cover re-creation by C.C. Beck (1976). Shazam hero TM and © DC Comics.



The Fabulous Fawcett Family – Part II

The Whiz Bang Life Of CAPTAIN BILLY, Cont'd

by Shaun Clancy

Edited by P.C. Hamerlinck

FCA EDITOR'S NOTE: Two issues ago, we presented Shaun Clancy's interview with Roscoe "Rocky" Fawcett, Jr. (1936-2018), the grandson of Fawcett Publications founder Wilford "Billy" Fawcett. Last time, Shaun covered the early days of "Captain Billy" himself, including the initial history of his dynasty-building periodical, the once-popular gag-mag Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang, which burst upon the public in late 1919 with a title reflecting memories of the First World War. With this issue, we continue—and, at least in the sense of his own life, conclude—coverage of the career of the man whose company became for a time, among other things, one of the foremost comicbook publishers on the planet.

Whiz Conquest

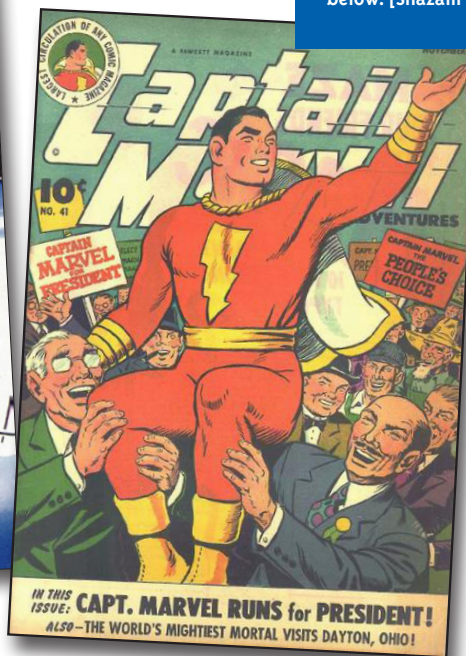
The year 1920 saw Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang taking off along with sudden monetary success. 1920 was also the year Billy and his wife Claire divorced.

Captain Billy's brothers Harvey and Roscoe moved to Minneapolis to help him run Fawcett Publications in return for a 10% ownership stake, apiece. Roscoe Fawcett had also been a captain in the US Army, as a fighter pilot. According to the Whiz Bang ownership statement from November 1921, the officers of Fawcett in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, at the time were: W.H. Fawcett; Claire Fawcett; George D. Meyers; Robert P. Kirby; Publisher & Editor, W.H. Fawcett; Business Manager, Harvey Fawcett.



Capt. Billy Fawcett

(on left) being interviewed on CBS radio in 1938, by unidentified announcers. (Ironically, Fawcett Publications would be sold decades later to CBS.) His earliest claim to fame was as the publisher of Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang, represented here by the cover of the November 1929 edition—while in the 1940s Fawcett Publications would own the best-selling comicbook in the world, Captain Marvel Adventures, whose cover for issue #44 (Nov. 1944), by C.C. Beck & Pete Costanza, is seen below. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics; Whiz Bang cover TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



The following year, Captain Billy married his second wife, Annette (Antoinette) Fischer (b. 1897), but he would again be divorced in 1932. (See the *Calgary EyeOpener* section coming up!)

Whiz Bang was so successful by the end of 1921 that a city in Oklahoma changed its name from Denoya to Whiz Bang City, as stated in the January 1922 issue of Whiz Bang. The town of Denoya had been created when an oil strike was discovered and, a year later, they voted to change the name to Whiz Bang. At the time of the change in 1922, the town had a population of approximately 10,000 people. The Denoya name originated from a prominent French/Osage Indian family and, even though the residents renamed the town Whiz Bang City, the post office still went by the name of Denoya. It was a violent town with bank robberies. The city of Whiz Bang



Wedding Bells Are Breaking Up...

Captain Billy with his second wife, Annette. This 12-26-23 photo was published in the 1924 *Whiz Bang Annual*. This marriage, alas, did not end well.

started a gradual decline in population towards the end of the '20s due to the oil reserves drying up, and eventually was abandoned sometime in 1942. Of notable interest is the fact that actors Clark Gable and Ben Jonson both worked those same oil fields before becoming movie stars.

Confessions & Competition

In the year 1922, the Fawcetts tried their hand at a second publication, called *True Confessions*, which would go on to be one of their most successful magazines. The following is the introduction from its premiere issue:

"With this issue there emerges from its chrysalis a new Fawcett Publication – TRUE CONFESSIONS. As its name implies, True Confessions is a magazine symposium of the most vivid romances of real life—irresistible masterpieces of realism. Its stories teem with dramatic situations that defy description; tear away the veils of pretense and paint the naked soul in indelible words of truth. In the announcement of our \$10,000 prize story contest several weeks ago the editor particularly emphasized that True Confessions was in the field for based-

on-fact, naturalistic stories describing intimate life—the lights and shadows, the frailties and falls, the perfect images of the lives of the shoplifters, the drug users, the demi-mondes, the bootleggers, the burglars—the langours and lassitudes and tremors of breakfasting love—and so on through the gamut of life—evading none of the problems, veiling none of the faults, telling all of the truth without exaggeration.

... Advance orders for the initial issue of True Confessions truly have been phenomenal. More than one-quarter of a million readers will peruse the magazine this month—and the August issue is only the beginning....

At the time of Billy's first publication of *Whiz Bang* in 1919, there were at least two other similar adult humor magazines already on the market—both which may have been influential in Captain Billy's creation of his magazine:

Jim Jam Jems was published from 1912-1929 as an editorial magazine, created by Samuel H. Clark (1885-1979) and C.H. Crockard. It was published in Bismarck, North Dakota, and even contained a "Monthly Preamble" written by Sam Clark which centered on sensationalism, propaganda, humor, and satire to expose corruption and spread truth. In its first year of publication, both Clark and Crockard were indicted by a federal grand jury in Fargo, North Dakota, for sending "obscene and immoral" reading matter in the interstate mail. News dealers throughout the Midwest—including in Minneapolis and St. Paul (where Captain



Tell Me True

After *Whiz Bang* came *True Confessions*. Launched in 1922, it became one of Fawcett's most successful magazines. Above is the May 1940 issue, with an exquisitely painted cover by Zoe Mozert. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

Billy resided in 1912)—were also being arrested for selling the publication. The magazine was so successful that they continued publishing it while fighting the charges. The legal battle lasted five years before a guilty verdict was handed down on December 1917. Even though they were found guilty, Clark and Crockard continued publishing the magazine until August 1929, when *Jim Jam Jems* was canceled due to low sales. Towards the magazine's end, Clark had moved to Minneapolis to take on several other unsuccessful endeavors.

Another possible influence in the creation of *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang* was *The Calgary EyeOpener*. First published in 1902 by Bob Edwards (1860-1922), it started out as a weekly newspaper of local news and humor located in High River, Alberta. After several years, the paper shifted toward satirical humor, often lampooning political and public figures of Western Canada. In 1920, Edwards also published a magazine entitled *Bob Edwards' Summer Annual*, which looked very similar to the *Whiz Bang Annuals* that began a year later. These successful-selling annuals contained humorous jokes and anecdotes written by Edwards; there were a total of five of them, with two coming out posthumously. Edwards published *The EyeOpener* until his death in 1922, with his wife, Katherine Penman Edwards, taking over the publishing duties and eventually taking on a business partner: the recently fired brother of Captain Billy Fawcett, Harvey Fawcett!

In 1922, when Captain Billy Fawcett had started a second monthly publication—*True Confessions*, with a cover date of August 1922—Harvey Fawcett had been put in charge of the publication; but it had soon been discovered that he was embezzling money and he had been quickly fired. It's unclear as to exactly when he was fired, as he was still listed as a part owner and Business Manager of Fawcett in the December 1924 *Whiz Bang* ownership statement. The firing led to Harvey Fawcett joining the *Calgary EyeOpener*, where he's listed in the publishing credits of the November 1926 issue; more than likely, he was fired by Fawcett sometime in 1925.

Harvey Fawcett and Katherine Edwards brought the publication to Minneapolis, but Harvey soon became ill and passed away in 1929, and the *Calgary EyeOpener* was sold to a Henry Meyer. When Captain Billy divorced his second wife, Annette Fischer Fawcett, in 1932, she used her \$60,000 divorce settlement to buy the *Calgary EyeOpener* from Henry Meyer! She is listed as the editor and publisher and went by the sobriquet "Annette the Henna-Haired Hurricane of Laughter and Joy." In 1936, she was questioned by authorities in regards to the murder of a Minneapolis editor and



The Distinguished Competition?

There were two top *Whiz Bang* competitors.

The first was *Jim Jam Jems* (1912-1929), whose two publishers in North Dakota were found guilty of obscenity charges in 1917, but somehow managed to keep the magazine going for over another decade! Pictured above is *JJJ*, April 1930.

The other was the *Calgary EyeOpener*, whose bizarre story is told in the accompanying paragraphs. Shown here is *Calgary EyeOpener* (Oct. 1929). [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

journalist, Walter Liggett. The story made the newspapers because she was the person who had introduced Walter to the suspected killer, Isador "Kid Cann" Blumenfeld. *The EyeOpener* was gradually losing readers and stopped being published in 1938, which was two years longer than *Whiz Bang*, which had ended in May 1936.

Beginning in 1922, Fawcett expanded their line of magazines due to the success of both *Whiz Bang* and *True Confessions*. New titles that premiered in 1922-1923 included *Triple X*, *Hollywood Magazine*, *Battle Stories*, *Screen Play*, and *Mystic Magazine*.

In 1924, Captain Billy Fawcett was a Captain of the USA trap shooting (shotgun shooting at clay targets) team at the Olympics held in Paris on July 6-7, 1924, where the USA team won a gold medal. Billy took a round-the-world vacation cruise on the *Empress of Australia* and later embarked on a hunting excursion in Africa (1929). He also purchased the St. Paul and the Minneapolis Boxing Clubs in July of 1925 and, that same year, he began entertaining numerous celebrities at his newly opened Breezy Point Resort at The Fawcett House residence, and continued doing so throughout the remainder of his life.

Breezy Point

On February 13, 1921, Captain Billy put \$500 down on an 80-acre Big Pelican Lake property called Breezy Point, which he had discovered during a previous hunting and fishing trip.

Two months after the Breezy Point purchase, construction



The Great Wide Hunter

A 10-14-26 snapshot of Captain Billy on the hunt. Prior to becoming a publisher, Wilford H. Fawcett served as a private in the Philippines Insurrection from 1902-1906, where he was severely wounded in the knee by the sword of a Moro tribesman. He rejected the suggestion of amputation and headed for Louisiana to a doctor who was able to save his leg. Upon recovery, he moved to Minneapolis, became an 80-dollar-a-month railway clerk, and started a family. To supplement his income, he applied for work on the night copy desk of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. His attraction to the printed word resulted in his promotion to reporter, at which point he took leave of his railway job. He later became the city editor on the *Winnipeg Free Press* in Canada, where his father, John Fawcett, had been a physician before moving his wife Maria and children to North Dakota—where Wilford, at the age of 16, ran away from home in 1902 to join the US Army.

began on a row of 20 cabins, with an additional 14 cabins built the following summer. A dance hall—which later became the clubhouse—was also built. Before the end of 1921, \$70,000 to \$80,000 had been spent on Breezy Point, with plans being drawn for further development.

Between 1921 and 1925, Captain Billy maintained an airplane and seaplane for business and pleasure purposes. The Captain flew back and forth between Breezy Point and his Fawcett Publishing offices in Robbinsdale, MN, three times a week. (The resort officially opened in 1925.)

The spring of 1922 saw work start on a golf course that was ready for play in the spring of 1923; Captain Billy hosted many major golf tournaments. At the end of 1922, construction began on the Breezy Point Lodge, containing 63 rooms that could accommodate 125 guests. After the main lodge was finished, plans were drawn for another lodge, called the Edgewater Annex; it was later destroyed by a fire in 1959. Before Captain Billy built the Fawcett House on the resort for himself, he had stayed a little further up the road at Thomas Cabin off Pelican Lake, which in the late '20s had become a favorite retreat for World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker.

The Fawcett House contains 11 bedrooms and 9 bathrooms. A moose head (shot by the Captain, of course!) hangs on the wall inside the House's entry hall. A folklore legend claims that Captain Billy's ghost can still be heard wandering the halls of the Fawcett House. The ghost is credited with doors closing by themselves, turning lights on and off, and tilting

lamp shades. Footsteps can sometimes be heard in the downstairs maze of bedrooms, closets and baths originating from the main level. Even in recent times, several guests have insisted that they had seen a man resembling Captain Billy wandering the building's grounds!

Fawcett as a publisher came of age with the film industry,

and Captain Billy used his business connections to promote Breezy Point. In addition to an international clientele, the resort became a favorite hideaway for Hollywood, with frequent visits from the likes of Delores Del Rio, Tom Mix, Lillian Gish, Clark Gable, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Rita Hayworth, Gene Autry, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Lionel Barrymore, Jean Harlow, Jackie Coogan, Betty Grable, and boxing champion Jack Dempsey. The Captain also invited novelists and journalists to come to the resort and rub elbows with Fawcett Publications' screen magazine and pulp fiction writers.

Captain Billy was always looking for new ways to attract guests to his resort. After the Longfellow Zoological Gardens in

Minneapolis closed in 1931, Captain Billy built a new home for some of the animals. The Breezy Point menagerie included elk, owls, bears, deer, raccoons, ducks, buffalo, rabbits, peacocks, lynx, eagles, and turkeys.

During the Depression, gambling brought more to Breezy Point. In 1932, Harry S. Truman is rumored to have hit the jackpot with one of the resort's slot machines. Other activities for guests included trap and skeet-shooting, fishing, horse riding, billiards, ping pong,



"Don't Fence Me In!"

(Above:) Captain Billy's daughter Mirian/ Marian and her two sons share a moment on the steps of the Fawcett House at Breezy Point Resort with the Singing Cowboy himself, actor/musician Gene Autry. (Photo courtesy of today's owner of the resort, Bob Spizzo.)

(Right:) Fawcett had published ten issues of *Gene Autry Comics* from 1941 to 1943, before Dell/ Western took over the title and continued the numbering. At right is the cover of issue #9 (July '43); art by Jim Chambers. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]





Whiz Bang At Breezy Point (A Clockwise Collage)

Breezy Point Resort — as it looked shortly after its grand opening in 1925.

Captain Billy makes another friend at Breezy Point! Amongst its many attractions for their guests, the resort had its own menagerie. (Photo from the April-1924 *Whiz Bang Annual*.)

This article's author, Shaun Clancy, took this photo of the Fawcett House during his visit to Breezy Point Resort in 2013.

The Captain's teenage daughter Mirian (a.k.a. Marian) at Breezy Point Resort in the late 1920s, ready to ride the *Whiz Bang* boat on Big Pelican Lake.



money on almost all of his publishing ventures, he could not show a profit on Breezy Point. The resort was just another expensive hobby for Captain Billy.

dancing, bridge tournaments, bowling, tennis, badminton, archery, horseshoes, croquet, and shuffleboard.

Captain Billy would often test jokes out on his staff to see if they would be good enough for publication. His humor can also be noted on a sign he posted at the entrance to Breezy Point, which states that the "Speed Limit is 80 mph"—when most cars at the time could only top out at 50 mph.

In 1946, six years after Wilford Fawcett's death, Breezy Point was sold. Captain Billy's children grew up at the resort, but their hearts were not in the business. The Captain's youngest son, Roscoe K. Fawcett—Circulation Manager of Fawcett Publications—said that, although his father was an astute businessman who made

The Fawcett Expansion

Fawcett began publishing additional magazines in 1925, such as *So This is Paris*, which was a spin-off of *Whiz Bang* with Captain Billy's handyman "Gus" doing the editorial chores (or so it states in the magazine's introduction!). Unfortunately, *So This is Paris* only lasted until the end of 1925, then changed its name to *Paris and Hollywood* for the entire year of 1926, then to *Paris and Hollywood Screen Secrets* for its last year of 1927.

Smokehouse Monthly was another *Whiz Bang* spin-off and was launched in 1928. It actually ran as long as *Whiz Bang* did, ending publication in 1936. *Smokehouse* was mostly filled with comedic poetry.

The Brainerd Daily Dispatch's weekly regional section

Brainerd (Minn.) Daily Dispatch, Wednesday, October 30, 1936 1N

A haunted house in Breezy Point



Spiraling through the levels a rounded staircase leads up to a loft overlooking the living room and down to bedroom wings and a sealed tunnel that used to lead to the supper club.

Capt. Fawcett's ghost still believed to roam mansion

By RENEE RICHARDSON Staff Writer

Lombard. "His company started Variety"

A group of women, unaware of the house's history, left after one night

Hollywood movie stars like Clark Gable, Carole Lombard and John Wayne were guests of Capt. Billy Fawcett in his 10-bedroom log mansion. The massive field-stone fireplace is highlighted by a heart and arrow shaped stone centerpiece. (Dispatch Photos by Renee Richardson)

This Resort Is... Haunted?

A number of past guests of Breezy Point's Fawcett House claim the ghost of Captain Billy roams the hallways at night! Above is a portion of a 10-30-36 Brainerd Daily Dispatch newspaper article reporting the phenomenon... paired with an issue of *Whiz Comics* #36 (Oct. 1942), wherein Billy Batson and Captain Marvel found themselves in "The Haunted Halloween Hotel." The art by Ray Harford. [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics; other material © the respective copyright holders.]

Wayne, Clark, Gable and Carole she looked no one was there. "The man we met over there was

Is there a ghost in the Fawcett house? Stories are numerous of paranormal activity in the historic home, from the fanciful to the downright frightening.

very nice and showed us around," couple pointed to a picture on the wall. "They said 'this man,'" Tweed said. "They pointed to the picture of Capt. Billy Fawcett."

When asked who that man was, the



which he detailed the aforementioned 1929 African safari he had experienced.

The End Is The Beginning

The magazine *Modern Mechanix*—later known as *Mechanix Illustrated*—premiered November 1928 and was yet another hit with the readers. *Modern Mechanix* had been founded as a competitor to *Popular Mechanics*, which had been launched in 1902.

In November of 1931, Captain Billy started divorce proceedings from his second wife, Annette Fischer Fawcett. It was a contentious divorce, ending in May of 1932 with an out-of-court financial settlement of \$60,000. (As previously stated, Annette used the settlement to purchase top *Whiz Bang* competitor *The Calgary EyeOpener*.)

Third time's the charm: Captain Billy married his secretary, Marie Frances Robinson, in Tijuana, Mexico, on March 31, 1935. Also that year, Captain Billy's four sons took on advertising and management positions at Fawcett Publications. The oldest son, Wilford "Buzz" Fawcett, Jr., had delivered the first issue of *Whiz Bang* to the post office by wagon back in 1919.

The last monthly *Whiz Bang* was the May 1936 issue, although there were two *Whiz Bang Winter Annuals* released in 1936 and 1937. On June 30, 1936, Captain Billy's brother Roscoe died in Rochester, Minnesota, and his wife and children retained a 10% ownership in Fawcett Publications.

In 1937, the Captain published a book entitled *Captain Billy's African Notebook - 1937 Edition*, in



In November 1939, Fawcett Publications sent the premiere issue of *Whiz Comics* (actually #2, since #1 had been an "ashcan edition" published only widely enough to secure trademark) to the printers in Louisville, Kentucky, to be ready for newsstands in December, as well as the inaugural issue of *Slam Bang Comics* that went on sale in January 1940.

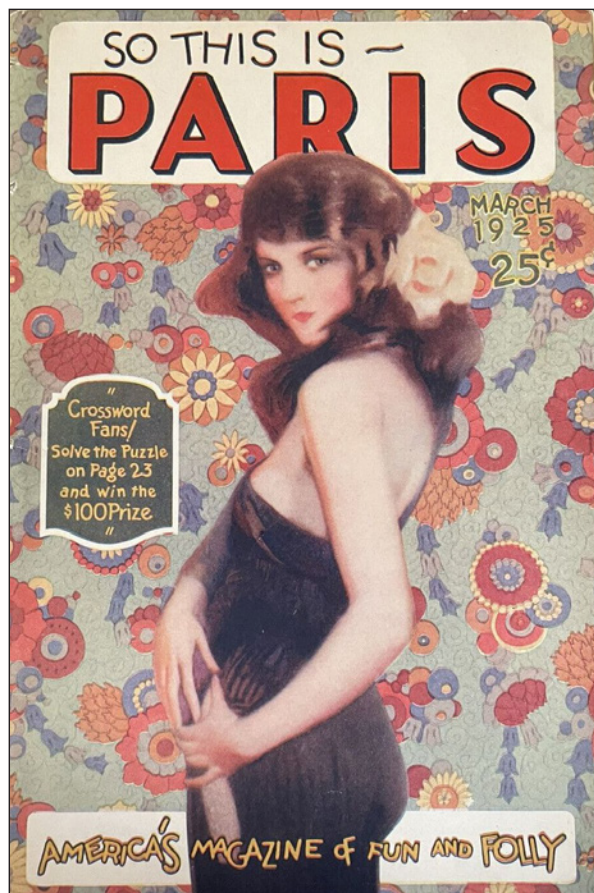
The year 1940 saw the rebirth of the *Whiz Bang Annual*, repackaged in a large magazine format. The first two issues hit the



Celebrity Sweepstakes

(Left:) Captain Billy Fawcett and renowned silent-movie comedian Harold Lloyd about to play a round of golf in Palm Springs, California, on Dec. 21, 1935.

(Above:) The Captain congratulates actors Betty Grable and Jackie Coogan on their engagement in 1935 at Breezy Point Resort. Their marriage lasted three years.



So This Is Paris—Or Hollywood—Or Somewhere!

In 1925, Fawcett began publishing spin-offs of *Whiz Bang*, such as *So This Is Paris* (March 1925 issue, above left)—which lasted only until December of that year, then changed its name to *Paris and Hollywood* for the duration of '26—then altered its name once again to *Paris and Hollywood Screen Secrets* for its final year of publication. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



Mechanix Infiltrated

Another top-selling Fawcett magazine was *Modern Mechanix*—later renamed *Mechanix Illustrated*, amongst other title changes. A rare “comic cartoons” article was the cover story for the Nov. 1933 issue, shown above. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]



A Mix-ed Blessing

Legendary cowboy actor Tom Mix (on left) rode into Robbinsdale, Minnesota, to visit Captain Billy (on right) at the “Whiz Bang Farm”—the nickname Billy gave his publishing offices. (That’s Robbinsdale’s Chief of Police John Bloberger in the middle.) This photo appeared in the August 1929 issue of *Capt. Billy’s Whiz Bang*.

Fawcett Publications later (some years after Mix’s death in 1940) produced a *Tom Mix Western* comicbook series that lasted 61 issues. The above cover for #21 (Sept. 1949) was painted by Norman Saunders; the stories themselves were illustrated by Carl Pfeufer and John Jordan. Fawcett also published comicbook adventures of Tom Mix in *Master Comics* and *Western Hero*. [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]





C.C. Beck
in 1942.



At Fawcett's Beck And Call

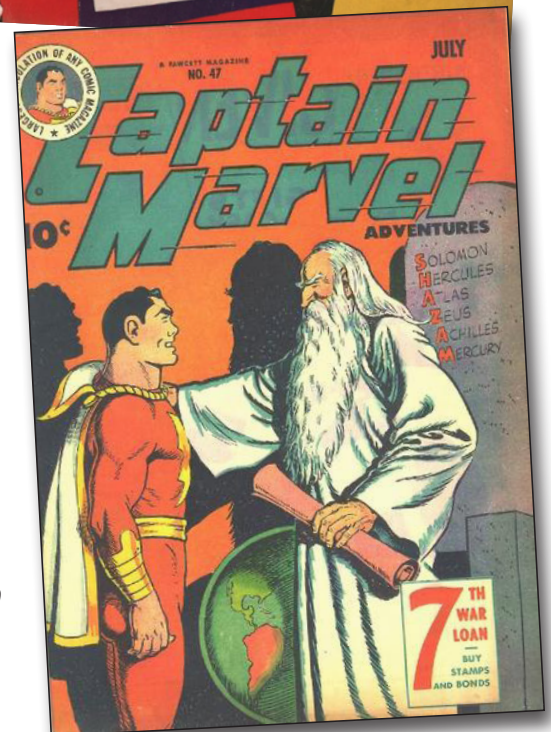
Before he became Captain Marvel's co-creator and chief artist, Charles Clarence ("C.C.") Beck provided artwork for various Fawcett magazines, including *Whiz Bang*. Here's a sampling of three covers Beck illustrated for some of Fawcett's very own imitations of *Whiz Bang*: *Smokehouse Monthly* (March, 1937); *For Men* (formerly titled *For Men Only*) (June, 1939); and *Hooley Annual* #9 (1939)—plus his cover for *Captain Marvel Adventures* #47 (July 194X). TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

newsstands in 1940, with issues #3 and 4 being released two years later in 1942, doubtless due to wartime paper allocation. (In 1955, Fawcett released via their Crest Books line a 144-page paperback one-shot featuring the "best of" *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*. The cover was drawn by former "Captain Marvel Jr." artist Bud Thompson.)

In late January 1940, Captain Billy contracted a cold while on the way to Hollywood from New York. He was ordered hospitalized by his personal physician, who flew to Hollywood to care for him. Wilford Fawcett died three weeks later on February 7,

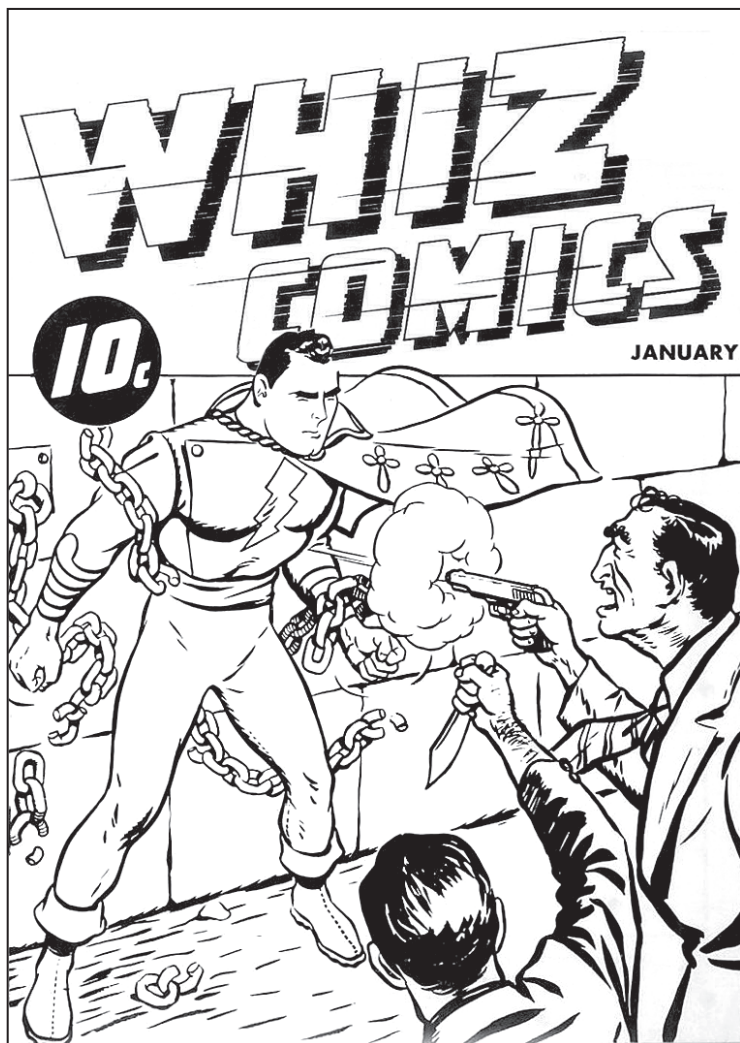
1940, of heart disease while at the hospital. His obituary in the February 19, 1940, issue of *Time* magazine imparted:

[I]n four years *Whiz Bang* soared to a circulation of 425,000, [and] brought Captain Billy close to \$500,000 a year. Then its trajectory turned earthward again: by 1930 it was down to 150,000, in 1932 it folded. Meanwhile, with his profits Captain Billy started *True Confessions*, *Screen Play*, *Modern Mechanix*, *Smokehouse Monthly*, *For Men*, *Amateur Golfer & Sportsman*, [and] various others. But *Whiz Bang* was his



Third Time's The Charm!

Captain Billy with his third (and final) wife, Frances. They eloped in April of 1935.



Third Time Lucky!

Fawcett Publication's initial two "ashcan editions" of its first comicbook title—small press runs produced only in order to copyright material and perhaps trademark a title—were foiled when first they learned that *Flash Comics* had just been reserved by All-American Comics, a company affiliated with DC... and their second try, *Thrill Comics*, ran afoul of the fact that the Ned Pines (proto-Nedor) group was already launching one called *Thrilling Comics*. So the editors did what maybe they should've done in the first place: They snatched the word "Whiz" out of the title *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang* and stuck it on there instead!

Apparently, there never really was an "ashcan edition" of *Whiz Comics* #1—at least, only the *Flash* and *Thrill* versions have ever been located. So P.C., Roy Thomas, and layout Chris Day stuck an errant *Whiz Comics* logo above that C.C. Beck hero-illo, just to show what it would've looked like, had it existed.

(As just about everybody knows nowadays, until the eleventh hour, "Captain Marvel" was also slated to be called "Captain Thunder"—but All-American's "Johnny Thunderbolt" in *Flash Comics* #1 and/or "Captain Terry Thunder" in Fiction House's *Jungle Comics* #1 made them change that, too. With all those difficulties in naming both character and comic, it's all the more amazing that the World's Mightiest Mortal went on to become, for several years in the 1940s, the best-selling super-hero in all of comics, isn't it?) [Shazam hero TM & © DC Comics.]

The Last Hoo-Hah!

(Right:) Fawcett's Crest Books gave old-time fans a chance to chuckle again with the 1955 publication of its reprint paperback *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*. The cover is by Bud Thompson, who until a year or two before had been the longtime mainstay on "Captain Marvel Jr." [TM & © the respective trademark & copyright holders.]

darling. Wherever he went while *Whiz Bang* lasted, Captain Billy picked up ribald jokes [and] sent them back with his monthly editorial, *Drippings from the Fawcett*. Captain Billy moved his office to Manhattan, then to Greenwich, Conn. Built a \$250,000 hunting lodge in Minnesota, traveled, shot big game in Africa, hunted in Canada, Asia, Alaska, captained an Olympic shooting team, flew his own plane, was thrice married, twice divorced, sired four sons and a daughter. Still in the money, but no longer an active publisher, he was vacationing in Hollywood last week when he suffered a heart attack, and Death, as it must to every man, came to Captain Billy.

Once their father passed away, Billy's four sons assumed the following positions at Fawcett: Wilford "Buzz" Fawcett, Jr., as President; Roger Fawcett as Vice-President; Gordon Fawcett as Treasurer; and Roscoe Fawcett as Vice-President and Director of Circulation. Other key positions that were filled were Allan Adams as Assistant Circulation Director, Allen E. Norman as Secretary, Ralph Daigh as Managing & Editorial Editor, and Al Allard as Art Director. Mirian (a.k.a. Marian) Fawcett Bagg, Captain Billy's daughter, did not join Fawcett Publications, even though she had an equal share of the company.

Robbinsdale, Minnesota—the city where the original Fawcett offices had been located (the old Fawcett building still existed there until the 1990s)—holds its "Whiz Bang Days" 4-day celebration every July. The event was launched a couple years after Captain Billy had passed away.

The annual summertime fest in Robbinsdale... the legendary Fawcett House still prospering at Breezy Point Resort... and the familiar names of Billy Batson and Captain Marvel are all pertinent homages to the *Whiz Bang* life of Captain Billy.

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