About a year ago, I, Joe Mosca, came across a most interesting letter in one of D.C.'s mystery mags. The letter inquired about several of their older artists and writers that had worked for HOUSE OF MYSTERY, HOUSE OF SECRETS, and THE UNEXPECTED in previous years. Editor Murray Boltinoff gave a most interesting answer: Writer John Broome is painting in Paris, Bernard Baily publishes a line of adventure mags, and Howard Purcell teaches art in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania which is only ONE MILE from where I live. That same night, with the help of a local operator, I contacted Howard Purcell and asked if he would consent to an interview. He consented and we got together at his home a week later. During the interview, which took close to three hours, Howard recalled his work on GREEN LANTERN, RED RARRIGAN, GANGBUSTERS, and RED, WHITE AND BLUE. Some of his other creations include JOHNNY PERIL and SAMSON THE SORCERER.

During the year that I've known him, he's been both friend and teacher, always willing to take the time with his friends and acquaintances. Howard's other interests include painting and teaching art. He is without a doubt one of the founding fathers of the comic industry.

JOE: First of all, could you give us a little background of yourself as to where you were born, boyhood interests, formal training in art, and so on?

HOWARD: Well, let's see. I was born in the state of Washington, November, 1918. The day World War I ended, I grew up on the west coast. When I was 16 I won a Tri-State Mural Competition. It was to decorate the new Arlington High School in Oregon. When it came through that I had won, they found out that I was under age, so there was quite an argument as to whether I could do it or not. But the people in the school district went to bat for me and I was allowed to do it. I did six walls of the cafeteria of the school on cooking and the culinary arts. I spent three months doing that. I sent those out east to a man named Walter Beck, who himself hangs in the Washington Museum of Art and had a book called "Self Development in Drawing." I had read his book and was fascinated. When he saw photographs of my work he sent for me and I enrolled at the Art Students League. Prior to that during this same period, I worked for a subsidiary of Walt Disney Productions in animated cartooning. This was a young company that started cartooning in Portland with the backing of Walt Disney and R.K.O. Sound. We turned out Phoney Phoms and Hysterical Hystories for a period of over two years. Eventually the company broke up and the various artists went south to work for larger animated outfits, while I went east when I received this offer from Walter Beck. I also attended lectures under Harvey Dunn and Dean Cornwell. I studied Corbinus at the League and Sternberg for murals. I was going to be a mural painter but I ended up a comic artist instead. I was 18 when I first broke into D.C. in 1936. Actually I had no money and I was tired of working at Netik, the sandwich shop at the corner, so I made up a character and just for the hell of it, called it MARK LAMING of MIKOSMTH. Then I walked into a place at 480 Lexington Avenue, D.C. SUPERMAN COMICS. They looked at it and said "Could you make a story out of it?" And I said yes. Although at the time I had no idea what the story would be. Whitney Ellsworth, then, who was a great guy, a top editor for many, many years, and who is now working on the west coast, clipped into his pocket and said "You look like you need a pants press and a shave. How are you fixed for money?" I remember saying not too good. So he said "Here's thirty dollars. Go out and get yourself cleaned up and see me in a few days." When I got out of the building I suddenly realised that I hadn't even given him my name. I then went to work for D.C. and it was a relationship that lasted for over thirty years. I've been borrowing money from them ever since, but they've always gotten paid back. I think that I've worked over 25 different strips during that time.
JOE: Have you ever written any of your own material?

HOWARD: Oh, many, many. I wrote and started JOHNNEY TERRIL. Then it went down the drain. Then they asked me to rewrite it only a short time ago, and they ran it again. I did the first issue; the pencils, the inker, and the story. It was taken over by another artist because at that time I went on the BLACK KNIGHT. I did a couple of those, and another one will soon be released — another 22 pages. One minute, you know, you're not on the stands at all, then, all of a sudden, you're out in four different books. And people say Holy Mahoney! Does he do all that work? Well, it accumulates. Then they re-release a number of things. For instance, D.C. has some stuff of mine that I wrote and drew for them. THE STRANGER. They'd separate stories of time and space and so on. I used to do a thing for D.C. some years ago called just "A Story." A lot of old artists will remember this one. They were along the line of THE SPIRIT. They were just normal, natural stories. We weren't always beating somebody's brains out, but it was popular for quite some time.

When I went into the service there was quite some break in my art operations. When I came back I had to re-adjust because I had been gone for quite some time. But I picked it up again and worked for some time under Sheldon Mayer, who was my editor for some time during that period. Also, during that period I started SARGON THE SORCERER which was eventually picked up by Robert. When Bloomer left D.C. he was GREEN LANTERN, HARRY HARRIGAN, AMERICA'S ACE OF THE AIRWAYS. I took it over and wrote and drew it for two or three years, when for a brief time (they were using me as a Jack Of All Trades then because I was young and could work all night and all day) I took over GREEN LANTERN. GREEN LANTERN had just started and I did the first cover and first decent cover I might say, for the first all GREEN LANTERN book. This dates back to 1939 or 1940 or somewhere back then. Then I did the GREEN LANTERN covers for ALL AMERICAN COMICS for some time after that. I also did some of the GREEN LANTERN scripts. Then I did GAY GHOST for awhile. But the competition was too great. I was up against WONDER WOMAN which was catching on like crazy, and we were both in the same book. It was a 64 page mag and I was getting only 12 pages while WONDER WOMAN was getting 13 or 14. But I still did that for a long, long time.

At that point I left it to take over RED, WHITE AND BLUE, SOLDIER, SAILOR AND MARINER with NORIS of G-2. I took over when Smith, I think his name was, left it. So I did that for awhile. I also did for several years, MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY from the old radio show. I turned the book out on that. My inker was Worthen. I often wonder where he is today. He was a good inker, a solid inker. When he and I worked on a job we turned out a pretty nice product. During that time for D.C. I did work for GANGBUSTERS along with HOUSE OF MYSTERY and HOUSE OF SECRETS.

You see, I've always done something for SCIENCE FICTION of the mysterioso type thing, of which, Joe, I've done literally hundreds and you'd probably recognize them if you saw them. I've got stacks of them but I rarely, if ever, sign my name. When I did MARK LANCING OF MIKESHORES I didn't sign my name. Ellsworth said "What's the matter? Are you ashamed of your work?" And I said no. The next issue that came out I had a huge signature, and he said "Look. Is this MARK LANCING by Howard Purcell or Howard Purcell by Mark Lancing?" I was a little embarrassed after that so the next time I just put a little "H.P." in the corner. So some things I've signed, and some things I haven't. You get known in the trade anyway. They learn what your work looks like.

Then I was always splitting from one thing to another. I was never what you could call a comic book artist. I was always taking flyers into illustration. For a short time in the fifties, I did some work for Blue Book — McCall's Corporation. I did things on Red Navy, submarine, sinkings and things of that nature. Then the editor of BLUE BOOK retired and a whole new crew came in with a new staff and everything. So I left BLUE BOOK and went with WIDER PUBLICATIONS. And I did some illustrations for the MAGAZINE PURPLE. After that I went back to my bread and butter — comics! I was asked to do another story and I was right back in the thick of it again. Also in the fifties I had a chance to teach art in a school that had mainly G.I.'s returning from Korea. So I did that for two years and comics at the same time. As the years kept rolling by I did a book on AQUMAN and HAMMER for D.C. which they liked very much; I pencilled and inked that book from cover to cover! Then I got Sea Devils (Some of Howard's original wash covers appear elsewhere), I would do that and the HOUSE OF MYSTERY at the same time. They had me under water for a long time and when I came up for air that was the end of that period. So I went back into illustration and did covers for SCIENCE FICTION Magazine. Now before I keep talking, are there any other questions?

JOE: [Laughter] Well, you've answered about the first twelve.

HOWARD: I probably have without realizing it.

JOE: Since this is an interview for a "sins slanting towards Marvel, maybe I'd better ask you about them. We haven't seen any of your work in any of the Marvel mags since Silver Surfer #7. Any reason for this?

HOWARD: Yeah — well, for Marvel I did the BLACK KNIGHT; then I did a few stories of THE WATCHER. Then I did another BLACK KNIGHT — another 22 pager. According to Stan Lee he's going to spring it when he feels ready. He said the BLACK KNIGHT is a very peculiar thing. They gave it a lot of push and if you'll notice that all the artists were working on him and he was suddenly appearing everywhere, then they nixed him down again. It seems like down at Marvel, they'll push a character to see how he's going. Will it take or won't it take? And according to the demand of the moment they will either soft pedal it or hold it. Then they'll wait and come back with it. You'll notice that there'll be a big pressure on a certain character all of a sudden. He'll be appearing in everything and then he'll fade and there doesn't seem much doing with him. Stan Lee was concerned; he said "I'm not too sure if the BLACK KNIGHT would ever continue to have his own book. We'll just run tests and find out." They have a story lined up and waiting, and I guess we'll see what develops with it — see if it pops out.

In the meantime, while that was lying on the fire, D.C. approached me and asked if I'd start preparing a new book for them; I'd write and draw the stories. I have to be a little careful with this because this book is in preparation for coming out so I don't want to anticipate them. They might be annoyed at me for handing out names and titles and stories and so forth, but it's another magazine. I turned the whole book out from cover to cover
and I have a beautiful cover on it. I did it in craftint and I'm very happy with it. They're a little concerned about the reproduction of it because I used the fine screen craftint and they're hoping that it won't lose. But they liked it very much and I anxious to see the results. This is a supernatural type book again. Stories of this nature right now seem to be selling well. I've always had a yen for this. In fact, this is a 16 page story I'm doing for it now [showing me some of the pencilled pages]. When this is done I'll be going in during the next few days I imagine. School is out now so I have more time to concentrate on this work. I am trying to set myself up with the school so I can have more free time. I have a better deal now than I had last year with them. I set up a commercial art department here in Wilkes Barre over at the Luzerne Community College. It seemed very gratifying. It really has. We teach commercial art, the pen and ink work, and we teach kids to draw and make a dollar. That's the whole idea behind it. I've already had good luck with one youngster, David Cook, who has already sold to ANALOG, SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. He's pretty thrilled about it. I rolled right down into New York, into the "Tigers Nest" you might say, and he said.

Some of the kids up here in this area, as you know, are not as sophisticated and as close to the markets as their brothers down in New York, and so to walk down into there and make a sale like that is something to be kind of proud of. I am teaching over at the school, so anything over fifteen hours is overtime for me and I get an added income. So now I can work on the things which will give me more time for comic strip work in the future -- so next fall I'll have more time. On the same token I'm doing illustrations (paintings). I intend to unload on the pocketbook market, because that's pretty fair market with POPULAR, GOLEMEDAL, PENGUIN, and CARDINAL pocketbook editions and there's good money in it. I did like to paint as well as draw strips. So, I'm sort of split like this in my desires and what I do. Yet I feel as guilty as the devil if I don't turn out a certain amount of comic strip work, because you can't do it for 30 or 32 years without becoming attached to it. So I still keep my hand in. As I said, you're liable to see me in the next month or so in three books and Bang Bang Bang, here we go again. I did a little stuff for Stan Lee on Nick Fury. I finished and worked up Kirby's pencils. We did a job on that and then a few others. I didn't care for that. I don't like to put together another man's work and it showed in the drawings.

JOE: I also noticed that the panel arrangement was all boxes.

HOWARD: Yeah, I was constricted. It wasn't my cup of tea. I'll tell you, but take nothing away from Kirby. He is as good as they come.

JOE: Did you know that he resigned from Marvel?

HOWARD: Has he too? [Note: This interview was conducted before most of fandom knew of Kirby's leaving Marvel -GSG].

JOE: In March.

HOWARD: My God! I didn't realize that!

JOE: It's in all the recent issues.

HOWARD: They send me everything. I must get 30 or 40 books from them a month. And along with D.C.'s books, they really pile up. I've got stacks of them in the basement dating back to 1938. So you can see there's an awful flock of them. I'm surprised though, because he's the right hand man of Stan Lee. Those two have worked in unison for many, many years and I can't help but think Stan Lee would be crippled without him. And there's only one place where Kirby would go -- D.C. But don't worry; despite all the sorry talk of the past they will come to terms. People do in business.

[Note: For certain reasons, the tape was turned off at this point; I will pick up with the following question.]

JOE: When we talked on the phone earlier this week you said that every time you want a story assignment, you go down to New York, to Marvel or D.C. and wait for an opening.

HOWARD: No, not really. I just telephone.
round the panels. Now in working with Stan Lee it was not required that I come in with everything, but not having worked as much with them as with D.C. I would prefer to come in and I would come in, in case there were any changes to be made or corrections needed. The only unhappy note about this Black Knight was the fact that I did them a good set of pencils and they liked them; but at this time they were having trouble with inkers and if you’ll notice on the leadoff, it says “Inked by Dan Adkins and Company.” Roy Thomas told me that Dan was terribly busy and he tried to make the Master Inks on the good stuff. So they were trying different inkers; no less than five different inkers worked on that strip! And that was enough to butcher it in my book. You can unerringly pick out where Dan Adkins inked; all the good panels were by Adkins. But Roy said “Look, it went over fine. It was very successful. They’re calling you ‘Sir Howard of Purcell’ so relax.” And I said it hurts me! I gave them a good set of pencils and they chopped them up terribly. You have all those people trying to ink and some got fouled up on my panels and changed panels. It just looked childish. I was unhappy about that. I really was, but what can you do? They were in somewhat the same situation themselves, I mean if you can’t get the inkers you can’t get the inkers. But I’d like to have Dan Adkins ink all my stuff. I like Dan Adkins. I think he’s an excellent man with a pen or brush or whatever material he uses. He’s as clean as a hounds tooth! He goes right to the core of the thing. He doesn’t fool around with nonsense. This business of wiggly lines and this artistic nonsense that does nothing but cloud the issue. You may realize this or you may not but I don’t like to ink. I never have been a very beautiful panel of drawings, but my inks — I had to slave over them. But I LOVE to do wash work, I would have loved to do some of their wash stories for them. I know I can handle wash well; I have the proof in my reproductions. Although there isn’t much opening for this kind of thing in the comic book business. But Dan is a fine inker. He’s working out well with Wood.

JOE: They’re very similar in their style.

HOWARD: Their similarity is in their style, as you say, but Dan, in my book is a terrific artist. I like Steranko too. Steranko is a person who in my mind is just developing and he’s going in all directions at once. And they’re going to be great directions, believe me. Because the guy’s an innovator. He’s not just satisfied to do a script. He’s got to tear the guts out of it and put it back together again. And when you see it, you read it because it’s so different. That’s one thing he’s got going for him. He’s a wonderful artist. There’s a lot of fresh new blood coming in and that’s interesting. But believe me when I say we’re going to need more. Because the comic book industry, up to a point, is an old man’s industry! There’s a bunch of old boys doing it and soon they’ll be gone and you’ll need a whole new crew. Believe me, in art, music, drama, and so on there will always be room for a good man. I honestly, firmly believe this. You take a younger that is sincere and that works and plucks and sticks with it — if he’s got anything to offer, they’re willing to look, and they’ll be helpful. I’ve never seen anyone turned away, unless the person is just a nuisance. I have seen kids just hanging around the offices and I know they’ve been pretty pesky. They want autographs, they want sketches, they want comic books, and up to a point the management tries to be nice. But they can’t turn their offices over to these fans who just sit around all day and chew the fat just because they’re interested in art. There’s a time for business and a time for the other.

If you do your work well, and you make up your samples and go down there as a young businessman and get an appointment and you’ll get your appointment and they’ll look at your stuff. Believe me, if you’ve got anything to offer they’re willing to look. Young David Cook who I sent to ALOG — I sent him first to Kubert. Kubert turned himself inside out to be kind to him. He gave him stuff to take home and work from. He gave him a test script to work on, which he’s working on now. I also sent him to Stan Lee. When Stan found out that he wasn’t of the mutation variety, gave him a stack of things to work on; stories, photos, original artwork to take home and study the pen and brush techniques. Stan told him that he was right on the verge. They were sure they could use him, an unknown, because he has a nice clean inking style.

So remember — the old are getting older, the young are coming in and you have to have young new people and young new ideas. Somebody has to take these jobs over. It might as well be you or the next fellow that works a little harder than the fellow who sits back and says “Well, the market’s glutted and I can’t get in and they won’t look at my work and oh me, oh my.” Not so! I have found that the bigger the company the more gracious. It’s usually the small little companies that are unfriendly and take advantage of you. The company that’s gotten up there can afford to be kind and helpful. Many of them have gotten up there because of this.

I’ve always been treated well, though. I have no gripe against the industry. It was an industry that was an orphan to begin with in a sense. As you know, Joe, or if you’ve studied the old books, the art was poor, the lettering was bad, the stories were slap-shod. It grew out of nothing and today it’s a sharp industry. Today there are a lot of clever men in it. I notice we’ve started the Academy of Comic Book Arts. I received the Literature in the mail and I’m going to join. I hope to become a Charter Member because, Lord knows, I’ve been at it long enough. I’ll be proud to be a member of it. It’s going to try to keep an eye on our industry and I think the general result will be a sharpening up of the in-
"Well, this is good enough."

Get the black and whites. Then the inks have got to be right. It's just a matter of fill-in. That's why I like Adkins. Adkins can ink up my work and make it beautiful. Someone else will butcher it. You know, Joe, my editor used to say to me "I don't care how you get it or what you use. All I care about is how it looks when it's on my desk."

Kubert, for instance, just doodles out his Sergeant Rock. He draws as he inks. Kubert in my book is a phenomenon. He's a beautiful artist, a tremendous man. Kirby's another one. He'll see something interesting and he'll say "I'll do something like that." The idea just triggers him. There are many others in the same group that use almost anything. I know a lot of the artists use movie stills. The reason I know is because I have thousands of movie stills myself. I bought them after World War II. I got bifolds of them when I worked at a theatre. But after all, if you're going to do a gun or a ship on a plane, you'd better get the material right because if you don't, the stuff looks weak. The reader doesn't know what's wrong, but he doesn't like it. And that's as simple as that.

JOE: Have you ever seen any of Jim Warren's books?

HOWARD: Creepy and uncle... [Laughter]

JOE: Errie.

HOWARD: Errie, that's right. I have all his books, of course. I have them in my files. They're very useful. Every other artist uses them too. We buy them merely as collector's items, because for files and for ghoulish stuff they're great. You just look through three or four issues and you can go and buy your own out. They're really very useful.

I dropped up there once a couple years or so ago. I thought I'd do story just for the hell of it. He wasn't in that day. He had a suite of rooms so I went up and talked to a couple of secretaries. It was on 42nd street, 42nd or 45th as I recall, just a vacant room. He had nothing over. He was immediately busy on something else and that was the end of that. I never bothered to get into these books and now they're mostly reprints. They just dress up these old stories and reproduce them. [Note: At the time this interview was conducted, Warren was in the middle of a big and eating career; at this time Creepy and Errie consisted of nothing but reprinted material from past issues of his magazines.]

JOE: They're doing that a lot at Marvel now.

HOWARD: Yes, I think so. Too much as a matter of fact. The magazines haven't mellowed enough to afford that practice.

JOE: What do you think of Stan Lee?

HOWARD: He's quite a guy. Quite a dramatic guy. He loves to dramatize the action shots. He'll usually get up and illustrate how to do a sock picture and how to carry through. He's very enthusiastic about all of his art. He loves his work and he thinks it's the finest work in the world. And this is good. He sincerely loves what he does. He loves his books, and he brags about his artists. He will immediately defend his comic art and the work his staff does.
HOWARD: I would say that D.C.'s editorial policy is a broader one. Marvel, for instance, no matter how a story is fashioned, is still a Superhero Group of books. D.C. has a wider range. D.C. carries a number of magazines on the supernatural, on romance, on pure adventure, and superhero. I'm not saying that D.C. is superior to Marvel; I'm just saying that D.C. is a bigger outfit than Marvel and turns out more books for another. The emphasis in the D.C. books is not so much as a smash picture on every page. There's more chance to develop a story. Although, once again I must qualify that. If you give Stan Lee a script, he will not throw it out just because fourteen people are not being killed on each page. But by and large I would say the editorial policy of Stan Lee is the superhero and a tremendous amount of action. And not so much in the D.C. books. D.C. tries out a numerous amount of other things too, which I'm not always crazy about, but they must be doing something right because now they're in a tremendous bargaining position. The comic book business is good. Some companies will cry business is bad and we're not selling and this and that, but don't let it worry you too much. Most of them are in a fairly good position of strength. They all have what you call their ebb tide but then the tide comes back in. There may be a summer slump or this and that, but business goes right back up and things are rolling right along. This is true in any publishing venture.

JOE: Do you have any other hobbies not pertaining to comics or art in general?

HOWARD: I've been a busy guy. We've had six children and I've put them through colleges and schools and so forth so I haven't had too much time for hobbies. I've been making being a cartoonist pretty much over my life. My hobby right now, you might say, is teaching school. I'm having as much fun as if it were a hobby. I see it as a mainline. I always try to work on my day off. I know I'm over there teaching kids art and I love it.

JOE: You've worked for quite a few inkers over the years. Who would you call your favorite?

HOWARD: I'd still give shad Dan Adkins the knot on this. If I had a chance to pick an inker right now I'd grab him so fast! And we'd do some terrific stuff together. I'll tell you something Joe. If I knew he was inking something up for me I'd change everything I'm doing. I'd give it a whole new treatment.

JOE: Why would this be?

HOWARD: Because of the fact that I know what he would do with it. If you know you're reproducing a man with superior ability in inking you're going to go out and do art that you might not normally do. You'll say "Holy Makone! I'm going to do this because Dan will go crazy with this and it will be just beautiful!" You'll work your head off on it because you know what will come out. This makes a lot of difference; you can't help yourself.

JOE: What do you think is an ideal age to start off a career as an artist or writer?

HOWARD: Just as young as you possibly can. The quicker you're battling your way in there, the better you'll be. Get all the education you can. That's another thing I would say to any fans out there reading this interview. I see it now, not that I teach. Every piece of paper that says you've done this or you've been here is a help in some way. I also feel that if you're dedicated enough you can make it without the degrees.

JOE: Being as specific as possibly, could you tell us what artist or artists have influenced your style the most?

HOWARD: The artist that I've cared for so tremendously in the comics field, and of course this strip started when I was a youngster, and that of course, is FLASH GORDON. When Alex Raymond started that strip it was something brand new. I never realized until later that they had a strip out during that time called TIM TWEEDER'S LUCK by Lyman Young, whose brother does BLONDIE and DAGWOOD. It was a story of African Adventure with two boys. I noticed that the art was getting awful good. Later I found out that Raymond was ghosting that strip and when he left it.
to create FLASH GORDON. It went back to being just nice drawing, but not with the flair it had before. Of course, there's another artist that I've admired as a kid and I still admire the man tremendously, and I thought the authenticity of his backgrounds and his semi-cartoonish figures were so great, and that is ROY CRANE who did WASH TUBBS for many years and is now doing BUZZ SAWYER. In the field of illustration and so on, my favorites are, of course, Harvey Dunn, the great, great American painter, and Dean Cornwell, the masterful painter. These men were giants in the thirties and forties. In the field of comics no one can forget Hal Foster and his PRINCE VALIANT. His work was once beautiful. It still is, but it's not what it was when he was at his peak---when he was doing some of the most fantastic pen and ink work you ever saw. I'm glad to say that on Alex Raymond and Hal Foster, I've got all their stuff! And I'm glad I have.

JOE: If I remember correctly, when Alex Raymond got out of the service he left FLASH GORDON and created RIP KIRBY not too long before his fatal car crash. You want to give us the story on that?

HONUARD: Yeah. Well, Alex Raymond bought himself a fancy, hot-shot racing car, sports model. Unfortunately he wrapped it around a tree one night. I was sorry when that happened because he was tremendous. He was so tremendous because he started this whole thing.

I'm not taking anything away from these men but look at this [hands me a copy of one of the King Series FLASH GORDON mags by Al Williamson] -- you'll recognize who this is. It's beautiful work. But every drawing here is taken from Alex Raymond. Those are old Alex Raymond drawings. I've got them all, that's why I know. All those figures are from Alex Raymond. As I said I've got everything Raymond ever did and I can dig up every one of those figures for you. All these heads, the portraits, everything. You see, there's very little original art in that book. If this man didn't have those old ones to draw from he wouldn't have a strip like this at all. I'm not taking anything away from this guy either. He's done a fabulous job. It's just terrific. Al Williamson is a fabulous artist. I rate him very highly, along with Wally Wood. He's absolutely tops! Did you ever see any of the THUNDER Agents?

JOE: I have some of the last few before they folded.

HONUARD: Yeah, they did go under didn't they? Wood did a lot of work in these. This is a guy that impresses me for putting... He does a tremendous amount of work. I look at it and say where did he get the four arms to do it? Because as I say, I'm not that fast. I don't even want to be. I want to settle back and take my time. You see, Joe, as I get older, instead of putting in sixty drawings to a story or seventy or eighty, more and more I have the urge to make one painting and say what I want to say in that. I want to do it in one painting and take the time and pleasure in doing it. I want to do it a fine thorough job. That's the conflict that lies within me now. But it's bound to happen after thirty-some years in this business. It's a natural thing to happen.

That's why I take fillers out on cover work and illustration. I like to get out and try something else just to prove I can do it. It's a great deal of satisfaction to take some paintings down to New York and come back without them. And then come out on a magazine cover and people say "Holy Hakone! Did you do that? I thought you were a comic artist!" And I'll say "Yeah, yeah. I do comics but I also do this." It's a prestige thing in a sense. It's nice to be able to do and nice if you can do it. And you'll go through the same thing someday.

Also, look Joe, if you're interested in a career in this, think in terms of writing. Try and write your own stuff. There are only so many basic plots. Gather good material and build up a files system. Get books on the strange and the unusual. Get books and magazines and build up a good files system because there's your library right there. And with a little clever judgment on your part you can change and develop anything. And maybe someday, you'll be an editor or put your own books together. Young people like you who dev-

[Editor's Note: The next page is a full page, half-toned pencil drawing by Howard. This was a possible cover drawing for an old HOUSE OF MYSTERY issue.]
ote yourself to this have that chance. I have kids twenty, twenty-one over at class. I've got them eighteen and nineteen, too, who have just graduated. And with some of them it's the one thing I try to drum into them. They don't know which way they're going, they don't know what they want to do. They're confused. What do you want to do? What plans have you made? If you haven't thought, start! Don't just draw Willy Nilly. Build up a portfolio and do it right. Some are afraid to go out and apply for work. And I have to say to them "Look! For God's sake, make a game out of it or something. Get out there and knock on doors. After a while it won't bother you at all. You'll go anyplace, and if someone treats you unfairly you just say 'Thanks bud — same to you!' and walk out. You'll laugh over it. It won't bother you, or crush you unless you let it." I used to apply for work when I was a kid after I was already working just so I wouldn't get timid or afraid to go. Today I'll walk in any place. And if I'm civil and if I'm polite I expect them to be the same towards me. If they're not civil to me I won't be civil right back! I'll give them spade for spade and it doesn't worry or bother me one little bit. It's good to do this just for that reason alone.

I'll tell you something: artists are notoriously poor business men. Many will let an agent do their work for them when they can find one. Especially during the early years you should do your own. You should get out on your own and look and learn about these places on your own. Later on when you're successful you can hire an agent to do your work for you and it's alright.

These are the years now, before you reach twenty, that you can develop like mad. And I'm confident, Joe, that by the time you're nineteen or twenty you'll be in this business. These are the important years. No one should waste them. So remember that and go for it. Really go for it and you'll get there.

[Editor's Note: My sincere thanks to Joe Mosca and Howard Purcell for this fantastic feature! Joe conducted the interview, and also transcribed it from the tapes, saving me a tremendous amount of time! And my special thanks to Howard for all the fine material he furnished for the interview, and the illustrations he did especially for it!]
multicon '70
A report on the Oklahoma City Comicon
by John Adkins Richardson

Being at that first auction was like watching a disaster in slow-motion. I was sitting next to John Novak, associate editor of Collector's Den. We have done a good deal of auctioneering — he of rare coins and I of comic books — but both aghast. Up in front a rather shaggy fellow was busy at work antagonizing three hundred potential buyers. He was very good at it. Of moderate superior wit and a certain course charm, his indifference to the demands of his role was staggering. He conveyed no sense of urgency. Things moved so slowly as to hardly move at all. Yet he cut off bidding with never so much as a "going... going... gone!" When a bid from the portly chap ahead of me was perceptively rejected, that bidder (Jim Harmon of The Great Radio Heroes fame) reacted sharply. And his "Why?" was called forth tremendous applause. For a moment I thought OAF signified more than the acronym for Oklahoma Alliance of Fans, the sponsors of Multicon '70. But things improved with a subsequent bidder and the appearance of Buster Crabbe, clearly the "star" of the convention.

Crabbe spoke extemporaneously for about an hour, very interestingly and easily, relying upon anecdotes about every phase of his life, from UCLA law student and Olympic swimming champion through the motion pictures and TV series to his current profession in the brokerage game. The latter, he said, "requires more agility than old 'Flash' ever needed to fool Ming." Now over sixty, Crabbe's Hawaiian genes have given him crisp black hair shot with silver strands, and his practice of tennis and judo has preserved the silhouette of youth. He was refreshingly candid about his career in movies, his motives, and his few personal weaknesses — one of which is the pride in the accomplishments of his son. Obviously, he was gratified by the sort of adulation welling forth from the nostalgia buffs at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City.

Both "Flash Gordon" and "Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars" were shown for the dedication of all "camp" followers and "B" movie fans. What I was looking forward to, however, was "The Drums of Fu Manchu." As a child I was a prodigious reader and a great fan to Sax Rohmer. This particular serial had seized my attention and modified my sleeping dreams. Yet, I had never seen the concluding chap 14. What had become of the fabled Sceptor of Chingis Khan? As it turned out, I still don't know. The episodes of this opus are unusually long and the print was old and dark. By Chapter Eleven the screen was blackness broken by spastic trails of white and occasional bursts of overexposure. A few moments after, with my ocular nerves, I repaired to my room.

Of the motion pictures the most outstanding was a superb old thing called "The Freaks." For straightforward grotesqueness it cannot be matched. I have seen it before, at one of those higher brow gatherings of comics afficianados who sit on Jean Luc Godard and can tell you the name of Max Reinhardt's script girl. The context of the Multicon — where, if you ritually chase a bug to get a chance to listen to ancient radio serials — enhanced the quality of the picture. The unusual thing about "The Freaks" is that its freaks were real freaks, that is, people of the sort displayed in circuses. The plot of the 1932 release concerns an opportunist trapeze artist who marries a midget for his money, tries to poison him, and is punished for her intentions by the freak fraternity. Director Tod Browning took this rather banal script and turned it into something unique and touching by using authentic grotesques instead of make-up and professional actors. One gets reality where one expects fantasy. Obviously the unfortunates had genuine talent as cinema performers. Intensifies the pathos of the characters. One can scarcely help but identify with the freaks, even if not somewhat deformed, within it without if not? And who among us has not sometimes felt as set apart from others as sideline attractions forever are?

Much of the time I felt that way at the Multicon. That it was held in Oklahoma City, where oil pumps chug on the capital lawn and all the bars are "bottle clubs" did not improve my mood. Not only did I miss my ritualistic breakfast before dinner martini, I seemed caught within a miasma of isolation. Never a phone call. Not a single message. Even when calls had been promised. Upon leaving I discovered that the bar tender had misread my registration. The clerk would not take my money! But it also meant that the hotel had refused to accept phone calls or mail for me. A feature of this was, of course, that I seemed aloof from a number of people I'd have liked to meet. On the other hand, it was the least expensive convention I've ever attended.

Even those who were charged for rooms didn't seem to be spending very much money. There were a vast number of tables in the dealers room but most of the action consisted of people trying to sell and buy old comics with words and gestures instead of money. Nixon's deflationary policies were hitting this small market along with the big one where Buster Crabbe does acrobatics now. Everyone I spoke with was a bit concerned; a number said they'd not even made expenses. One consequence was that there were real bargains up for auction. But even so the bidding was slow and uneven. There were exceptions, of course. I sold a good number of originals of things previously published, some of the comic books went for very high prices. Some were sold five paintings within an hour after arriving at the hotel.

Too, I did manage to meet some of the people with whom I've been associated for the last two years. Gordon Love and Andy Warner were on hand, Andy with a Polaroil that was "holding out" on him, and G. B. pushing the latest S.F.G.A. publication. Both are extremely sweet guys. Their table was among the most attractive, due in large part to a prominently displayed oil of Plain Gordon by Don Newton. I was happy to meet Don because he is, in my by-now-diminutive opinion, one of the very few fan artists who has any merit as a draughtsman. He turned out to be a good-looking, dark haired fellow in his middle thirties, as graceful and unaffected as his comic style. Our likes and dislikes seemed pretty much to correspond. And each of us spent about a third of his time explaining to youngsters that drawing comic strips is not a reliable way to earn a living.

I bought very little at the Multicon since comic books and pulp are ancillary to my research interests and I don't collect them. Still, the merchandise at one table proved irresistible. Most comic strips, including my own, are very retrograde in style and technique. But the work of at least two young men, named Rick Griffin and Victor Moscoso, seems to me to represent one way of the future. So I cornered them with this loaded with Zap Comix and things from Promethean Enterprises. So far as I know, Promethean's line with the intricate logo that spells no name is the only one in fandom ever to take notice of Guido Crepax, the Italian cartoonist. Now, I detect Rome almost as much as Oklahoma City; it's like the lower east side with monuments. But there's always a new, slickly printed paperback by Crepax in her bookstore. That fact, along with the Vatican Museum, the Forum, and the Coliseo is the feature of the "Eternal City." (Okay, I'm a fanatic, it's not Italy I'm down on, only Rome. Firenze is superb!)

Multicon '70 was the first fan gathering I had ever attended. What struck me most forcibly was the variety of types met together there. There were "straight" street people; cycle jockeys, cowboys, and hard hats; a couple college professors and a lot of high school kids. There may have been one black person; I wasn't sure. (Certainly, one of the morbidities of the Black Experience must be the ubiquity of Teutonic superheroes.) Nonetheless, in a world so polarized as ours, I was pleased to see the class-crossing popularity of fandom. It suggests, already, a far greater cohesiveness of the different levels of culture than one usually supposes. Such things are no longer of mere historic or comparative interest; they may have great significance for an age of increased social mobility and endless leisure.

On the way to the airfield the limousine driver had a few remarks to make about "them books interested in 'funny books.'" It was nothing to me. I sat there, watching side streets and dull prayer flow by, seeing the flip capabilities of the rag, and got ahead on next year's leg dangling. By the time we touched down in St. Louis, I was well into March of 1971.
"THE WINDMILLS OF MY MIND"
by TONY ISABELLA

You want to know how to do a regular column without ever boring yourself or your readers? Don't ever do it the same way twice. I don't mean change format from issue to issue. Your format is important. It identifies your column, distinguishes it from all the columns in fanzines. Just don't do the same thing every time. My first column in issue # 10 was concerned mostly with past issues of this magazine. Last issue, I talked about some of my gripes. And this issue I'd like to explore the broad field of creativity, both in its own right, in the professional comics field, and, of course, in the fanzines. Let's go, troopers!

CREATIVITY

My Webster's give creativity a simple definition — creativity is the ability to create. Like most dictionary definitions, it is an oversimplification. The mere act of creating does not make the finished product a creation or the producer a creator. Everybody's not a creative person. If they were, there'd be no reason to have a great entertainment field that brings the masses books and magazines, movies and television, song and music. And even these pro products are not always creative.

Confusing? Probably. You can't define creativity. You must tell people what you think creativity is. That's what makes you a critic. Everybody isn't a creative person, but everybody's a critic. You don't believe it? Everyone you switch off HEE HAW in disgust, you're a critic. Everyone you make that extra effort to watch ALL IN THE FAMILY, you're a critic. (One of the most fantastic things about the vast wasteland is that a show like the latter can follow two solid hours of sheer crap. See, I'm one of dem critic fellas, too).

You're a critic. I'm a critic.

I'll use my credentials as a critic to tell you that, for instance, 2001, A SPACE ODYSSEY (the book) says more and says it better than any of Truman Capote's books. I'll tell you that HATR is so much bull shit and that it takes a rock masterpiece like Andrew Lloyd Webber's and Tim Rice's JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR to prove that the whole rock music scene has any value. You disagree? Why? I'm glad to hear it. That makes you a critic. And that is why I have been running off at the mouth for the past few paragraphs. I had to establish that.

You and I are critics. We can't define creativity. We stick to telling people when we think we see a creative product.

What I want to do in the rest of this column is take one critic's look at the creative product in the prozines and the fanzines. If you can stand the company, let's move out.

CREATIVITY IN COMICS


T. Casey Brennan, a little known writer for a very minor line of comic magazines. Yet Brennan has done two of the finest comic stories I've ever read. Both "Death of a Stranger" in CREEPY # 31, and "On The Wings of a Bird" in CREEPY # 38 show an amazing ability to examine human nature on a number of levels. The first examines death. The second examines imprisonment, which is worse. This is a writer to watch in the near future. "On The Wings of a Bird" is surely going to be on the final ballot of Don and Maggie Thompson's Goethe Awards. This is not speculation. They've been giving the writer regular reports on how the ballots are running. I hope the story receives the honor it so richly deserves.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Not to brag, but remember when I suggested a simpler ballot for the Alley Awards? The Thompsons have been planning the Goethes for some time, but incorporated some of my award suggestions. Look at their ballot. Short and sweet. Oh yes, "On The Wings of a Bird" got my vote for best story, yours?)

Ernie Colon, Warren artist. Colon's been experimenting quite a bit with new storytelling techniques. Some of the stories he's illustrated are difficult to read as a result. But I can't berate him for that. Sometimes a story should be told in such a manner — to force the reader to read with a new sense. Colon isn't always successful with his experiments, but his having the graphic courage to attempt them surely rates him a place on my list.

Steve Ditko. What can be said about Steve Ditko? He is probably the comic book's first experimentor in using a comic story to promote his individual philosophy. He does it without using Denny O'Neil's overkill tactics. In Steve Ditko's stories, man is not the helpless creature he is in the Denny O'Neil stories. I think that Steve Ditko is wrong in many areas, but he does say that man has a choice.

Take a look at "The 9th Life" in GHOSTLY TALES # 85. He's combined this philosophy with some of the artwork in comics. This story alone would rate him a place on my list.

Charlton/D.C. editor, artist Dick Giordano. Giordano has the talent of getting the best out of the people who work for him. He has tried more experiments in his titles than anyone else in comics. No matter what book he's been given to edit, be it super-hero, SF, war or romance, he's improved that book. He's got the most absolutely fantastic record in com-
Gil Kane. Gil Kane is another one of the comic book's finest craftsmen and earliest experimenters. He examined human violence, human hatred in HIS NAME IS... SAVAGE! He examined national chauvinism in a CAPTAIN ACTION. The examples go on. Combining a strong sense of action, pacing, and angle shots with an introspective prying into human nature, Gil Kane is a creative master.

Creator Jack Kirby. No one else, perhaps, deserves to be put on this list as much as Jack Kirby does. Not only can Kirby boast of creating a string of the most popular characters in comics, but he can boast that he is still creating fantastic people. He seems to bring out the best in the people who work with him, too. Wherever he works, he becomes the creative center of that company. He deserves a place at the head of this list.

D.C. editor Joe Kubert. For all his artistic talent, the man's main fame lies in his editorial capabilities. In Tor, he shows us the birth of the nobility that should separate man from the beasts. In Firehair, he traces intolerance through the ages. In GI COMBAT and the other D.C., war books, he tries to show that war is an often dehumanizing thing, notable only for the occasional heroism by one of the players. But even that heroism seems pointless. Kubert is most definitely on my list.

Marvel editor Stan Lee. If Jack Kirby's genius is a continual spray of ideas, Stan Lee's takes another direction. He is able to think out his ideas and those of his staffers and give them the added dimension which sets the Marvel group apart from the others. Stan Lee improved many of Jack Kirby's Marvel creations, something I think is obvious. He's also shown his ability to tell epic-size stories competently. The Hulk's first 15-chapter battles with the Leader are a good example. Ditto Dr. Strange's search for the man called Eternity. And the first thirty-five issues of THE AVENGERS show his ability to fully develop characters. Stan Lee's possibly the major influence on my own writing, my spiritual father, to put it one way. You don't leave your father off your list of creative people, now do you?

Fine illustrator Gray Morrow. All of the artists on the list have something else to their credit besides their drawing. Morrow is on the list specifically for his drawing. His work for the ALL STAR WESTERN book, the romance books, the fantasy books show some very successful attempts to bring fine illustration techniques and styles to the four-color comic. This gets him on the list.

Marvel artist Barry Smith. Smith has the ability to say more with his artwork (witness the Conan series) than many of the established names in comics. This leaves the writer free to spin tales in which he can concentrate on embellishing with his words because the artist can fully present the plot with his drawings. Smith is possibly going to be the best artist in 1971, judging from the two CONAN issues that bear the 1971 date thus far.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Before I get roasted for last issue's teaser that I would beg Barry Smith to illustrate a story for the CREEPER MAGAZINE, let me state here and now that I did not intend to do so with-
own. He deserves credit as do all the many fans who carried on his ideas. Fans like Roy Thomas, Glen Johnson, Don and Maggie Thompson, Dave Kaler, Fred Patten, and countless others. Not to mention fans like Gary Brown (COMIC COMMENTS) and Stan Blair (STAN'S WEEKLY EXPRESS) that took ideas of Jerry's and improved on them. By my reckoning, fandom's father gave us the Academy, CAPA-Alpha, the comics newszine, ALTER-ECO, the advance, etc.

Of course, two pro editors deserve a lot of credit for bringing fans together. Fandom would have never been started if Julius Schwartz had not printed full addresses and would have never expanded had not Stan Lee continued the policy.

And who wants to try listing all the artists that have to be praised for making fanzines more colorful. Everybody has their own favorites. Some of mine are Alan Hanley, Wendy Fletcher, Dave Cockrum, Robert Kline, Bill Black, etc. All of them are creative people. Picture how dull all the writer's many words would be without pictures to relieve the monotony.

Phil Seuling deserves a pat on the back for his arranging the New York Convention for so many years. Ditto Gary Groch for allowing fandom a second place as to which convention to attend. I'll try to make the Metro Con this year, Gary!

Speaking of Gary, I think the kid deserves a hand for all the work he's put into this publication. I think it's one of the five best fanzines around. It's a far cry from issue #10 when I insulted him all over the place. Of course, he still grows a lot, but now it's to people like Sal Buscema and Jim Steranko. Maybe he'll tell you how he got that tattoo that looks like Jim's footprints if you ask him.

Fan writers. We've got some good people there. Mark Evanier can do an opinion column like no one else can. Dwight Decker's adventures of fan fiction are fanlish classics. Carl Gafford is one of fandom's finest writers and has done some remarkably mature and entertaining stories. As has Gordon Matthews.

As long as I'm being nice to everybody, I'll give Wally Wood, founder of WITZEND, a big hand. He was the first pro to jump into the fan publishing scene. He inspired Jim Steranko, Berni Wrightson, and Gray Morrow, heroes all.

Two more good folks. Marty Grein, publisher of the COMIC CRUSADER, does convention coverage and puts all other coverage, even our own included, into the shade. And Tom Long has presented the best work of several fans in GRAPHIC SHOWCASE. Berni Wrightson did not top his great "Uncle Bill's Barrell" from that zine until that King Kull story recently.

All of which is a heck of a lot of space to take to say something I could have said in two sentences. I love the comics field. I love fandom. No doubt I've reduced you all to tears with such a tender set of sentences.

Knock off that laughing, you stupid fans!

Nope. Doesn't have it. I'm just in too good a mood today, I guess. Send them cards and letters to 11203 Peony Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44111. I'll be waiting.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Honest, Gary! I'll get into a bad mood next issue! I promise!)
HOW CREATION WAS CREATED

In the beginning there was a great big NOTHING. Yeah, there was just this big fat nothing stretching all the way to nowhere. And things were pretty well off.

Then one day (except there weren't exactly "days") Ghud the first god created himself (because gods can do weird things like that). Well, when Ghud saw that he'd created himself into just a big pile of nothing, he wasn't too happy because that was an insinuation that he was nothing too. So, Ghud decided to create creation. Things were starting to get worse.

He hadn't gone far in his task of creating when he discovered that it was a lot more work than he'd bargained on. Ghud said "This is a pain in the ass." And thereupon Ghud decided to create a bunch of lesser flunky gods to take care of creating things. This he did and they did.

After the flunky gods had finished creating the heavens and the earth and all the stuff, they decided that it was a pretty raunchy deal being at the bottom of intelligent creation. So they created a bunch of flunky animals below them which they called Man. But Man wasn't too happy about being on the bottom of the totem pole either, so they created a bunch of lesser animals. This sort of pleased the lesser gods off because they felt Man was getting too uppity and high-falutin', so they took away Man's creating privileges.

I. HOW THE ASS WAS CREATED

One day Ghud was messing around and smoking a new brand of cigarette. He was easily creating when he heard his wife holl- ar "Hey Henry, the sink's leaking again!

Come 'n fix it, willya?" And Ghud said "Oh crap, this is a drag," and he went off to fix the sink and left the cigarette butt lying on his chair. When he came back, he forgot about it and sat on it. And his wife said "Hey Henry, you dummy, you're sitting on your butt!" That gave Ghud an idea, and so he gave everyone a butt to sit on.

II. HOW SEX WAS CREATED

One day Ghud was lying around the house with nothing to do and his wife was feeling bored, and there was no means of entertainment because X-rated pictures, hadn't been created yet. And so Ghud created sex.

III. HOW FIRE WAS CREATED

One day a man discovered sex, and so he went around spouting his discovery with all the women. This ticked off Ghud no end, because he felt that sex should be a privilege limited only to gods, so he threw a thunderbolt at this man and it burned him up. But it was to late, because Man had already discovered sex, and now he had fire too. Ghud counted to ten and went off to throw thunderbolts at dinosaurs.

IV. HOW GOOD AND EVIL WERE CREATED

As he grew older, Ghud started to formulate a philosophy, as youngsers tend to do around that part of their lives. And when he had thought the matter out well, Ghud said "Henceforth, anything that I like is Good, and anything I don't like is Evil." And so it was.

By this time things were really getting terrible...
A Piece of Bread, a Cup of Wine & my Comic Books
by Bernie Bubnis
A series of articles about fandom by a pro!

Now, those dealer folks are gettin' up pitty. I can remember when prices were low enough to get a collection going. Okay, gang, a little trip through history:

Comicollector #14 (February 1964) page 10: an ad from Lee Whittlesey for a copy of All Star #11 in mint condition for $10! Okay, get those cards and letters into 'ol Lee -- perhaps he hasn't sold out yet!

Speaking of bargains brings to mind a visit to Joe Simon (of Jack Kirby fame). It was about four years ago and we were just throwin' the ball for an article in my old 'zine, Comic Heroes Revisited. He produced a full book of original art by himself and Kirby of the last Fighting American saga that never got printed. "My God," I said with a hint of enthusiasm in my voice, "give me that stuff or I'll kill your entire family!" He deduced the art was worth a little something and put it back with the rest of his treasures, he made the comment then, that it might wind up in magazine form someday, but I think he was just trying to get me off the subject.

(I hadn't planned this to become a rambling type article, but goodness, that's exactly what is shaping up in front of me. Tune into the last paragraph and see what has developed.)

I remember meeting Jim Steranko for the first time at an early New York Comic Convention. He was only a dealer in those days and took me over the coals for six copies of All Star. We met again the following year, but he was starting to branch out -- into prodom.

"Bubs," he says to me while I slip a few copies of Spy Smasher from Phil Seuling's table, "I'm going to see Joe Simon today and ask him for a job."

[Scene change]: "Bubs, I didn't get the job -- guess I'll try Stan Lee."

"Hey, babes, take it from the Bubs -- you don't have a chance in this business. You're successful in commercial art -- stay there."

Needless to say a lot of new artists were lookin' for me to put down their art after this bit. Truthfully, I had no idea the talent I was talking to -- Stan Lee foresees the wonder. Jim's early work was a little crude except for a fabulous splash page for a character he created to show off his style. I think he gave it to me.

New York fans of old made it part of their weekly schedules to drop by to visit Julie Schwartz, the meanest man since Black Pete.

"You kids get out of my office or I'll throw you all out the window!"

"Aw, come on Mr. Schwartz, you don't have a window in your office."

There was only one fan even Schwartz couldn't cope with -- the infamous Ronn Fradin. Fradin had his close friend Joe Giella call Julie out of his office and then Ronn would run into his office and sit behind the desk. Schwartz would return to find Fradin reading Marvel Comics.

"Fradkin, get out of my office before I kill you!"

During the once frantic "get Hawkman his own comic" crusade (one of fandom's first causes) Ronn brought in a wild crow and set it loose in Schwartz's office. He screamed through a bull horn "Tweet tweet -- give Hawkman his own birdsed!"

"Fradkin, get out of my office!"

Sid Greene always drew Julie into a story he was involved in pencilling. Once Ronn got him to draw Schwartz as an alien creature and made such a big stink about it, Julie even mentioned it in print. "Funny, you don't look Martian."

"Fradkin, please get out of my office and I'll give you a job as my assistant editor." (Ronn took the job and has never been heard from since. Fool play at comic book National?)

(Gee, can this clown ramble on? Well, let's see if he can tie the whole mess together with his last paragraph.)

Okay, the article is finished.
FANTASTIC FANLETTERS

BILL CANTREY
809 Stonefield Avenue
Charleston, S.C. 29407

Many of the FANTASTIC FANZINE's readers may not be able to detect all the clues to the identity of the unnamed hero in "The Golden Vest." The silver-handled Colts in the posedo Kid Colt story were not a product of my imagination, but of recollection. I remember a Kid Colt of about twenty years ago. He wore the often mentioned Colts, slung from two separate gunbelts. The pose was leaner, meaner; and strangely enough, older. Since there was no Comics Code Authority, the stories were vastly more satisfying. The artwork of John Severin's excellent style, but the identity of the artist is unknown by me.

I believe that the present crop of Marvel super hero magazines surpasses the old time efforts. But, the westerns are badly hampered by censorship, and pretty dull by comparison to western mags from the late forties and early fifties. The present Kid Colt is a mere shadow of his former personality. The Rawhide Kid is a reflection of that shadow. The Two-Gun Kid is also a name from the pre-Coded past, and there the resemblances end.

The present Two-Gun is more like another pre-Code character, The Black Diamond. Black Diamond was also a masked lawman, with a powerful cohort, Rumper by name. I don't object to an editor dusting off and reviving an old idea; as long as it's an improvement. Marvel's westerns are not an improvement. Larry Lieber has made some valiant efforts, and I'd love to see what he might do unimpeaded. Restricted talent is a crime against human nature.

I doubt if the old westerns will ever be reprinted. Comic fan purists seem to scorn them along with teen and love magazines. Marvel has the men and the means to produce gutsy, realistic westerns. National's Hat Lash broke some of the taboos of this era; but he never came close to the original Kid Colt, the best of the West. Will he ever really be back? One can only hope.

CHARLES D. SCHRECK
El Paso, Illinois 61736

Received FANTASTIC FANZINE 12 and am again impressed at your product. The art throughout --- Kline, Newton, Cockrum (where, by the way, has he gone pro?), Hickman, Cornell, Richardson, Pinkowski, (not my favorite fan artist, but nonetheless talented) --- was great. Hanley's strip was especially interesting to me, due to my interest in Steranko. It is this kind of exploiter of original art that makes it so hard to obtain from the artist or the publisher. There is no way to do away with this type of money-grubbing, but it is still discouraging to see even a small sketch by a pro go for a fortune. And it is even more discouraging that people will pay that kind of price.

Tony Isabella's column was interesting as his usually are. His comments on the Alley Awards overlooked an important point. The Alley's originated when all the good comic art appeared in the pro magazines. Fan strips couldn't compete with Infantino and Fox. Therefore pro strips and fan strips competed separately. But now, many fan strips are equal to and more intelligent and better done than pro strips. Yet whoever does the Alley keeps trying to make the two --- pro and fan --- compete on a separate basis. This is why the Alleys have lost respect as an accurate competition for the best in comic art. To be really worthwhile, the Alleys would have to let fan strips compete with pro strips, on an equal basis. Spicer's Graphic Story Poll and the Thompson's Goche Awards have done this --- and are truly representative of the best in comic art.

The Syd Shore interview is not the first two-part interview in fandom. Mike Barret's FUNDYWORLD 12 carried the first part of an interview with Bob Clampett (Beany & Cecil, Warner Brothers); FW 13 will carry the second. There are probably other examples, too. It was a nice interview with Shore, though.

The price tag is a bit hard to swallow at first. Chad, it seems every $1 is raising its price. But, if you can come up with a $1 of the quality of FF 12 every time, and if it only comes out a couple of times a year, I can accept it.

If it would help lower your costs, I could accept a two-color cover. Very creative things can be done with two colors.

[Dave has had two strips published in CREEPY and VAMPIRELLA. And, by the time this sees print, a story he has been written and drawn may have seen print in one of the Warren publications. Last issue I "promised" not to have any more color covers for awhile, due to the extra high cost involved. However, because of several unusual circumstances, this issue's color cover cost me only $90 more than a 2 color cover would have cost. I couldn't pass that up. Next issue's cover will be black & white, which will help defray costs -$900].

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1019 West Calhoun
Springfield, Illinois 62702

To be quite honest I did not intend to order FANTASTIC FANZINE # 13. The big reason (besides the fact that it is a very good fanzine) I am ordering it now is because with FANTASTIC FANZINE 12, you included some advertising for SUPERGRAPHICS. I suddenly realized that if I hadn't ordered and received FF 12, I never would have known about PORTFOLIO ONE, and O'RYAN. As it were, I ordered them both, and would have been very angry if I had found out about them after they were sold out.

[?? -CCG].
ROBERT E. CITKOWSKI
P.O. Box 122
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201
I recently received FF #12 and what can I say? This definitely is your best issue to date and I said that about last issue. It's really pleasing to see that you don't just rest on your laurels, but keep striving for greater heights. More power to you!

The Kline cover was the highlight of the issue and really liked the page layout of the Kline Interview. Why not try the three column layout more frequently.

Seeing as how this issue put you in the hole financially, no doubt because of the slick cover, while you're waiting for your books to balance, why not ask Steranko to do one of his paintings for your next slick cover?

(Next issue, I'd like to alternate between two and three column layout. There is a chance that a future issue of FF will sport a cover painting by Steranko - GGG).

ALAN HANLEY
1055 West Granville Apt 608
Chicago, Illinois 60626
Fantastic job! Some of the material in FF 12 was not outstanding but because of the put-together job and overall quality of the product, it all looked great! FF and GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE are the best now - although I'm not sure if GFM is of and for fans, still. FF still is by, for, and of fans I'm happy to say.

Your cover was the best SF illustration I've seen on any 'zine in a year. I like Kline's color work even better than his black & whites. More than anything, I liked just restating ideas. As an artist, I expect he looks well accomplished, but his imagination looks fantastically promising. Guys like him need fandom to keep producing. He should be painting his own covers for magazines and pocketbooks, and getting wealthy doing it.

Cockrum's art is solid craftsmanship - like Murphy Anderson's. Same is true, I think, of Black. Richardson is obviously a great illustrator. Bad as my Captain Marvel picture was out of his hand. The Bummer strip was, I think their chief asset to FF 12 was alternative comic style. A little variety from all the excellent top heavy illustrations in FF 12. Very entertaining, well-written and easy reading. Thanks, Jim Wilson.

Sorry, Dwight, I just don't have the time to doubt Captain America's stalwartness, devotion and purpose in fighting for universal American political values. It's all I can do to keep my eyes on Chicago and local politicians.

The neatest thing about Steranko's (Steranko's!) HISTORY OF COMICS was I felt so satisfied at getting an honest-to-goodness bona-fide bargain.

MARK SKIBICKI
5946 Sheridan Drive
Williamsville, N.Y. 14221
I must comment on FF #12. It's fairly difficult for me to appraise a fanatic on the basis of comparison to other 'zines, since I'm relatively new to fandom and fanzines; but drawing on my limited ex-
posure, FF 12 was one of the top three fanzines I've ever seen.

Textwise, the high points of the issue were the Kline interview; Dave Trammell's "The Second Golden Age" and the Fantas-
tic Fanletters section. Honorable Men-
tions go to the Syd Shore interview and Rubins' Fanzine Fandom article. For some reason, the interview with Bob Kline caught my fancy much more than the one with Dwight Decker. From what I've read by Decker, both men are the best drawn men in places (as are most fan writers, in my opinion) and this carried over into his answers to the questions. The two-part Syd Shore interview held more information than Decker's five page. However, lest Mr. Decker feel persecuted, I will say I think he did a very nice job reviewing Steranko's HIST-
ORY OF COMICS.

About the art is your 'zine - what can I say? You obviously have more of the top artists in fandom per issue than any other 'zine I've seen. Furthermore, the artists seem to do better work for you than for anyone else. The Halmunillo by Bob Kline is probably the best art of him I've ever seen, and the cover by Fantucchio - WOW! Don't let my ravings go to your head, though; you did include a cover by Decker which I fell in love with in comparison with the rest of the mag's art. The ills by O'Neal, the Rice Captain America on page 30, and Jay Mikey's page 31 are all fall in this category. I'm not knocking these artists (with the possible exception of O'Neal), but I do think those ills should have been interpreted in more complex way. But as for the book, Believer was a cover again - what is there to say? The glossy stock and beautiful color reproduction of Kline's fantastic painting made up without exception the best color fanzine cover I've seen. Too bad you can't afford to do all your covers this way.

JIM WILSON
942 Juniper Street N. E. #82
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

After reading FF 12 through, what can I say? I was -- quite simply -- overwhelmed. I could go on for a page just goshgowling about the 'zine, but I'll leave that to everyone else this time, and try to comment on the issue itself.

The cover was beautiful. Period. The "living color," when combined with an unabashedly fantastic Kline painting, made FF 12 look completely professional! Inside, the appearance and layout was kept at this high standard; I doubt if a profession-
al magazine art director could have handled the appearance of the 'zine better! The art was much better this issue than last, if you can believe that. John Richardson's and Don Newton's art is a big welcome addition to FF and gives you the best art staff around. The only art I didn't like was that of Doug Haslew and Mike W. It is said before, they're just not in the same class; you've gotta admit that.

The interview with Bob Kline was very interesting and informative; keep 'em coming. Tell me -- was it Jan Strnad who wrote that article on Bob's gagfest? It seemed to me that Jan's writing style was the closest that used in the article.

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FF - WRAP UP

Since each issue takes so long to be printed (usually about one month), I thought it best to include a flyer announcing special publications, giving pluses, et cetera.

FAN CAL '72 is cut! It is 5 11/" x 17" sheets, printed on white paper, with some excellent professional artwork adorning and decorating the days and months of the year! It is available, mailed in a durable mailing tube from Byron Preiss, 3104 Glenwood Road, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230. The calendar features artwork by John Romita, Richard Buckler, Kenneth Smith, Joe Kubert, and more. Only $1.50 + 25c postage.

THE COLLECTOR is put out quarterly by Bill G. Wilson [1535 Oneida Drive, Clairton, Pa. 15025] and is a highly enjoyable art & article 'zine. Issues 23 and 24 are only 35c each. Issue 24, out in August, will contain a four-color cover of Superman by Don Newton and Dan Adkins; a report on the N.Y. Con by Bill and Tom Fagan, and more. Also, Bill is putting out PANORAMA, a special artzine. He'll unleash it at the N.Y. Con, and if it goes over well, will reprint it forandom distribution. Watch for it!

If Sword & Sorcery is your forte', then you shouldn't miss OMNIFAN. Published by David Anthony Kraft (who wrote that sensational S&S story, "The Sword of Eternal Strength!" last issue) it contains text fiction, articles and artwork, and material concerning past authors. Only 50c per issue from David: St. Michael, North Dakota 58370. Issues 4 & 5 are available.

The above 'zines are recommended by me, worth any fan's money. FAN CAL '72 is recommended more to the real art fans, since it is actually only 10 regular size pages long.

DEALERS: Special dealer prices for issues of FF still available are:
FF 11 [10 or more copies]: 75c each.
FF 12 [10 or more copies]: $1.00 each.
FF 13 [10 or more copies]: $1.00 each.

Last issue, there was an editorial error concerning cost of subscriptions. The indentua stated, 3 issues for $3.00, while I said 4 issues for $3.00. Sorry, but the indentua is correct. At $1.00 for an advance order, FF is one of the lowest cost fanzines for the number of pages, quality of material, etc. To lower subscription rates to $3.00 for 4 issues would surely doom FF.

My sincere apologies to John Fantuzchio, Kenneth Smith, Vincent Marchesano, Don Newton, and Howard Purcell for the poor printing of their works. I had, again, changed printers with this issue because of the fact that last issues' printer was located 80 miles away, which made it difficult to do business with him. This issue doesn't quite meet past issue's printing standards, and I, personally, am a little disappointed in the job. John's stunning cover was run by a different printer than the one who can't be inside. [I had given the original printer all the work, including the cover, but he couldn't meet the deadline and therefore had to subcontract out to have the cover done]. And as you can see, it's one of, if not John's BEST piece of work! Much of John's fine-line halftone work inside, unfortunately came out too dark; Kenneth Smith's logo to "The Golden Vest" clogged up terribly (and that being Kenneth's fine piece of work for FF, I'm particularly disturbed about that); the zipatone used on Lorna Dane [page 49], though admittedly fine, should have reproduced perfectly, instead chipped up. Due to the zipatone used on Don Newton's full page drawing accompanying "The Golden Vest", And lastly, Howard Purcell's renderings on pages 34 and 35 were NOT supposed to bleed off the page. There were numerous minor flaws, but these are the most serious ones. [All of John's works past issue here will be on exhibition at the METRO CON, so if you're coming - you can see it in its true beauty!]. Next issue I will be using one of the largest printing firms in Washington and guarantee a flawless job. Again, apologies to the above artists and to my readers for a print job that isn't up to par with our usual printing standard.

C.C.A. REPORT

Duffy Vohland

Well, as most of you have probably heard, the Comics Code was revised on January 28 of this year, and I think again sometime in late April or early May.

In case you haven't heard them, here's a list of the revisions that were made (at the time of this writing, May 11, I'm not completely sure about the first, most-recent made change. The others were made on the 28th and are taken from a newspaper article):

1. Written guidelines on the use of narcotics in stories have replaced the unwritten understanding that drugs would not be mentioned at all in comic books.
2. Restrictions on showing corruption among public officials as long as it is portrayed as exceptional and the culprit is punished have been deleted.
3. Restrictions on sympathetic depiction of criminal behavior have been deleted.
4. Restrictions on law-enforcement officers dying as a result of criminal activity as long as the guilty are brought to justice have been deleted.
5. Requirements that "all characters be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society" have been deleted.
6. Implied permission to suggest, but not portray seduction has been added.
7. Implied permission to deal with vampires, ghouls, werewolves, etc. in the classic tradition has been added.

Also, restrictions on the showing of blood, the use of stronger language and other areas have been lessened considerably.

Now that you've heard all of the changes, I want to ask you all a very important question. What should happen to this Revisial Campaign? Should we continue fighting for further changes in the Code? Or should the remaining money in the Campaign Committee be disbanded, everyone call it quits, and just be satisfied with the revisions that were made? Or do you have some suggestions as to what we might do? This is a big decision and the future of this Campaign rests on all of your shoulders, so please, everyone write and tell me what you think should be done.

Cary asked me to keep this as short as possible, so I'll finish now. Remember this though: it's up to you as to whether this Campaign continues or not, so write and voice your opinions!

DUFFY VOHLAND
P.O. Box 70 Clarksburg, Indiana 47225
It's the 1300th hour - Sunday, July 4, 1971. The great city of New York is celebrating our nation's Independence Day. At the renowned Statler Hilton the convention of comic collectors is in its third day. Collectors from many nations have convened at this designated site. A multitude of hard-core collectors are chattering about their favorite pulp-paper superhero, while in the adjoining banquet hall a number of them are seated listening, awe-inspired, to the very creators of these four-color heroes. Unbeknownst to these comic connoisseurs, shades of peril beckon as high above the city a battle of untold ferocity is about to commence. Two titanic and opposing forces are about to wage combat and scar the countenance of the majestic metropolis!