GRAPHEX

ISSUE 4, 1978

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DO IT MY WAY,

TIM HERZOG · PETE IRO · BILL MUTSCHLER present
THE CONDOR

OR DIE!!
As head of security for the secretly-shrouded consolidated Technotronics, I was summoned to President James Grogan's office concerning a new assignment. He filled me in on the details personally, since it was his wife--

---Diana, who had been kidnapped.

He gave me profiles on the three most likely suspects for the crime.

Knowing my methods for dealing with intrigue, he had--as usual--already set to boiling it down this far. To go from there to confront were, it was as much of a physical one.

Technotronic's existence is invisible to the public. No ransom note had been sent yet, and Grogan had recently seen to lessen Contech's dependence on the government for the business by expanding into public related fields. He was met with strong, violent opposition from the board of directors. It was logical to assume an internal scandal. I looked at the profiles...
**PRELIM ONE**

CARLEY, THOMAS

DANIEL

(SEE PERSONNEL-

AS 1BC)

**PRELIM TWO**

STEVENSON, JOHN

MICHAEL

(SEE PERSONNEL-

9652-C)

**MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND:**

THE SERVES AS CONTECH'S ASSISTANT BOARD CHAIRMAN AND IS DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY GROGAN'S DECISIONS. A FORMER INTERPOL AGENT, HE MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE FLIGHT CONTACTS. HE IS MARRIED AND WORKS STEADILY FOR HIS GOALS.

**MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND:**

SERVES AS HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND WANTS TO MAINTAIN CONTECH AS A MILITARY/INTELLIGENCE BUSINESS. HE KNEW DIANA BEFORE HER SUDDEN MARRIAGE TO GROGAN. HE HAS FORMERLY WORKED AS A FREE AGENT AND FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY. THIS INDICATES GOOD CONNECTIONS. HE IS SINGLE AND WORKS INDEPENDENTLY FOR HIS PERSONAL DESIRES.

**PRELIM THREE**

FAIRFIELD, STEPHEN

PAUL

(SEE PERSONNEL-

CD 504)

**MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND:**


**I’LL START WITH HIM.**

**THAT NIGHT, AFTER FOLLOWING UP SOME LEADS ON GROGAN'S SHADY--AND DISAPPEARED--CHAUFFEUR--**

**--I CHECKED MY EQUIPMENT AND DIVE INTO--**
-- My field of specialty; the first stooge was stubborn and uninformative.--

-- But he did give me some good exercise and lead me to a--

-- Secondary henchman.

A lot of bruises and blood put his mouth to working soon enough.

Thanks, dude?

VOTE
DUFFY
Vote
CITIZENS FOR VOKLAND
I went to where I was told Diana was being held.

Unfortunately, he picked the wrong time to catch a cigarette.

Being at the wrong place--

PHHHHT!

--At the right time was his--

A quick survey revealed that I had a few more men, upset by my shot, to deal with.

The second scum was
NO TROUBLE

AT

ALL.

THE THIRD?

WELL, LET'S JUST SAY THAT THREE

JUST PHHT!

WASN'T PHHT!

HIS PHHT!

LUCKY NUMBER.

DIANA?
It was about time
to confront

The man behind it all?

What?

...something clicked...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? DID YOU GET ANY LEADS ON THE KILLER?

YES! IN FACT, I'VE GOT HIM UNDER WRAPS RIGHT NOW, YOU!

YOU'D FIGURE ME OUT.

CAN YOU SEE HOW THE CONDOUR SOLVED THIS CRIME?

FINI.
LIFE AND TIMES
-Larry Twiss-

Like the proverb concerning great trees sprouting from little acorns, one of the better series to float about the comic world in the last couple of years came from rather weak beginnings. Warlock's initial appearances (he was known only as Him back then) certainly lend for his validity as a character to be questioned. One of Stan Lee's weak points was his habit of representing social concerns in a rather simplified form. The outsider learning about our society was a common concern of his, and a formula which worked vastly better with the Silver Surfer. As he was then presented, Him came off as a rather ignorant Silver Surfer, stumbling in and out of the ways of society but lacking the nobility, poetic bearing, or intellectual thought which marks the Surfer. When the Surfer got in trouble with society because he did not understand the screwed-up way in which things work on Earth here, that we can be concerned. But when Him got in trouble with Thor because he tried to swipe Thor's girlfriend away, I'm more likely to chalk that up to stupid ignorance.

Efforts to punch up the character by planting Him on the newly created Counter-Earth and turn him into a biblical character were steps in the right direction. (For one thing, he finally got a name that we could handle—Adam Warlock—and we didn't have to worry about calling him Him anymore.) Such tales of biblical interpretation through modern art forms can be rather tawdry; done properly they can be sensitive and meaningful, done the least bit poorly they become distasteful and blasphemous. Unfortunately, Warlock was to be in the latter category for most of his stint on Counter-Earth. When the writers weren't drawing rather poor parallels between Warlock and Jesus, they were playing around with the fact that Counter-Earth had no other Marvel characters as we know them, so they thought that it might be rather cute to do something like turn Victor Von Doom into a crusading scientist or Reed Richards into a rampaging brute. It's no wonder that the series was cancelled and the loose ends were tied up in INCREDIBLE HULK.

At that point, Warlock's crucifixion and resurrection were rather well done, even if it did lack some in the creative category (after all, the initial story was written about two thousand years ago).

After Warlock's resurrection, it appeared that he was doomed to float around in limbo for a while. I have nothing against getting rid of a poorly done character (which is what Warlock was for the most part up until this point), but I do like to see loose ends tied up. If you have a bad character, kill him off with a final definite ending, don't let him float around in nowhere for the rest of eternity. It gets kind of sloppy. Luckily, Warlock was pulled out of Limbo by one Jim Starlin.

The two went together perfectly and created a magnum opus for both that was well needed. I have always felt that Starlin felt a bit restricted with Captain Marvel, where he had to abide by the rules of science fiction which had been constructed for the series before him. With all the cancellations and revamps that Mar-Vell has suffered, it seems as if each one only ties him down more. This was not any place where the dreams of fantasy within Starlin's head could run free. None the less, his work on CAPTAIN MARVEL was an important time for the artist, or perhaps I should say the writer, in that Starlin got his feet wet in the practice of turning out galactic epics within the Marvel Universe. Where Mar-Vell's Thanos epic was a bit dragged out and poorly constructed, it's evident that Starlin learned from that experience and then showed us all how do do it with Warlock's Magus epic, which was much better in construction, development and pacing.

As I have just said, the Magus epic was a terrific story and fine comic entertainment, however,
like almost all major works, the story went beyond the realm of entertainment and added something in the philosophy department as well. This tale contained many theological implications as well. Ever since he was first tied into the pseudo-Christ characterization on Counter-Earth, Warlock has come to represent all organized religion, and more specifically, Jesus Christ. As all good stories do, the Magus epic utilized this characterization, thereby allowing it to grow and be developed. This is quite a chore for any writer, and quite an accomplishment when it is done well. But when the characterization is built upon such philosophical concerns as Warlock’s was, the examining of his character must also include some examining of society as well. This was done extremely excellently here.

By matching Warlock up against his future self, the Magus, Starlin presented us with a dualistic God figure. As Peter Sanderson pointed out in the letters page of Warlock #9, this allowed us to look at the God who is a figure of good, but allows suffering; which is one of the oldest paradoxes ever, perhaps going back to the creation. Rather than examine this however, something else in the Magus epic caught my eye.

Remember that Warlock was/is to become the Magus. Warlock represents the idealistic earmarks of the religion with true principles and values. Magus is the church as a corrupt institution which goes through the “cleansing” of others in order to “indoctrinate them” and make them members of their group, which furthers their goals. Warlock becoming Magus traces the development of religious ideas into almost-evil practices as they must conform to society and become an institution. What this has to say about both religion and society is considerable. Perhaps it is pointing out that in order to survive and remain meaningful, or effective, religion must become a heavy-handed force to rule our lives. Perhaps society is thus that it cannot adapt itself to religion and must convert religion to fit itself. Perhaps it is something within us all that causes this. Whether we are basically good or evil is an old philosophical concern, and it comes up once again. However, this story does not seem to cast totally negative images upon us, but rather society (whether we create society or it’s the other way around is questionable) is what gets these negative points. As Warlock commands those on the Death Ship in STRANGE TALES #179, it is up to each of us to govern our own lives, not to allow religious institutions to overtake its initial goals of peace, justice, and brotherhood. (Familyhood if you prefer.) One of the founding practices of religion today is its concern with gaining more members, as is represented here.

Strange Tales #178 (where the Warlock saga was picked up and carried through #191, after which Warlock’s own magazine was revived for issues #9-15) set up the initial forms of the Magus story to come. Although it has been done, it is sometimes not advisable to add a new philosophical twist to the topic with every issue of an epic-length story, but rather to simply set up the concerns and develop them throughout the entire epic, as it is done here. In #179, Warlock comes on strong with the “govern yourselves” principal (he’s still a pseudo-Christ, as one can see by his sermons and allegorical parables) and in #180 we have a look at how religions can be self-justification and heroes in their own eyes, but other than that the series continued to develop by building onto the initial premises in a long flow of stories instead of concentrating on one area at a time.

As I stated earlier, the Magus epic was far better paced than the Thanos epic, and this is nowhere as evident as when Warlock got his own title back and Warlock #9 hit the stands. This is a finely constructed issue, building the proper suspense quite effectively. All the unanswered questions about how Warlock was to become the Magus were answered, and I frankly wondered what loophole Starlin had left himself in order to save the character. However, the tendencies of a creative person to dwell upon a character or concept which has proven successful or popular are strong, and Starlin
that Warlock had the sales to survive, but not necessarily become a big seller. But at this time (and you may be wondering why so many series were cancelled at about that time), Marvel passed down a new policy which I consider wise: putting a limit on the number of titles that they publish in order for something new to come, something old has to go. Even if that something has the nominal sales to survive. By this elimination by fire, only the finest attempts will stick around. Also at this time, Jim Starlin elected to leave Marvel for undisclosed reasons. At first Jerry Conway was announced as the new writer. But I can’t imagine doing Warlock Starlin did. Not unlike Marvel’s move to couple Steve Gerber’s departure from MAN-THING with the falling sales of monster books at that time, perhaps all of the above added up in Archie’s and Stan’s collective minds and brought about the cancellation.

Nonetheless, #15 was a beautiful conclusion to the saga of Warlock. Very Hamlet-ish, the tale is very poetic as Warlock goes in and out of various lives. Most fittingly, the tale concludes with Warlock finally confronting the Soul Gem face-to-face. (Bet you thought that I had forgotten about that.) The Soul Gem represents something within us all. It’s a hungry, vicious vampire that puts self-preservation above all else. Warlock does not let in to it. And neither must we. As Warlock says in his closing lines, life is more important to the Gem than freedom. “That is why you’re destined to stay a cold, emotionless stone.” he addresses the Gem as he flies off into the cosmos, “That is why, good or bad, I shall always be Adam Warlock!”

let in to them and the ever-popular Thanos of his earlier CAPTAIN MARVEL series made an appearance. His intervention into the tale did distract from it a bit. However, the tale continued on to be one of his best, as pages 15-16 of issue #10 show. Here, we are treated to an extremely fine exhibition of his character. The story went on to an excellent conclusion. Starlin was constantly amazed us with fine little nuances, and indeed the closing scene is one of those. Warlock and Pip seeing the Matriarch at the end of the tale gave it a classic touch.

After this magnum opus, things died down a bit for the last four issues. Both the Pip story in #12 and the following Star-Tief two-parter were fine pieces of science fiction and fantasy. The stories were strong in the characterization but didn’t throw any new lights in that area. Issue 15 was, however, an excellent way to end the series. Conclude the series? Yep. Not being Jim Starlin or Stan Lee (or even Sanchez of the mail room) but rather a simple fan and letter writer, I’m afraid I can’t give you any firm reason why. I can, however, piece together sundry facts. Sales, of course, were big factorially. I was under the impression
STERANKO:

IN THE ROUGH
UFO!

THE UNITED FANZINE ORGANIZATION CHECKLIST

**ALL CURRENT ISSUES IN THE CHECKLIST ARE NOW AVAILABLE FROM UFO CHAIRMAN JAY ZILBER. CURRENT AND BACK ISSUES CAN BE BOUGHT FROM REPECTIVE EDITORS. PLEASE MENTION GRAPHED WHEN ORDERING. THANK YOU.**

GRAPHEX is a member of the United Fanzine Organization, a co-op of fannine editors who mutually aid each other in the production and promotion of their fanzines. The members of the UFO trade zines with each other and receive free advertising through the UFO Checklist, which appears in each member zine. The UFO requires its members to maintain a high level of quality; when ordering from a UFO Checklist you can be certain that these are among the finest fan publications available anywhere. The UFO encourages diversity in its ranks, and as a group its zines appeal to a wide variety of interests. Fan editors and publishers interested in joining the United Fanzine Organization co-op should contact its current chairman, Jay Zilber.

**Batmania 23**

Batmania, one of the oldest fannines still being published since it was revived by Rich Morrissey, is the fannine dedicated to fans who enjoy reading and collecting the adventures of Batman and Robin. This issue branches out into related topics as well, featuring an exclusion with Gardner Fox on his comics writing career, which spanned three decades and produced countless classic stories for many major comics publishers, most notably DC. Other features include: Jay Zilber's regular "UPDATE" column, this time reviewing the tabloid reprint edition of Batman vs. Ras al Ghul; reviews of the Batman and Wonder Woman encyclopedias by Tom Fagan and Alan Totrainsky; Martin Loga takes a look at Batman in Brave and Bold: "The Legend of Two-Face!" by John D. Hannings; plus, a brief interview with TV's Joker, Cesar Romero. The usual features and letters round out the issue. Artwork abounds, featuring the work of A1 Bradford, Arian Schumer, Wes Smith, Merry Van Vlack, among other fan talents. 28 off-set pages, $1.00 from Rich Morrissey, 55 Claudette Circle, Francischim, WA 98221.

**CLYDE'S COMICS AND TALES 3**

"Special Freudian Issue," including a psycho-analysis of my own "Violet Woman." 8 dite pages of fanish self-indulgence. 5$ by 4 by 9, 25$ from Terrence Kiley, 1425 6th St., Rockford, IL 61104.

endeavor 13

If you've ever wondered what future professional writers and artists do before they become pros, you'd do well to check out Kurt Erichsen's ENDEAVOR. Each issue features a collection of fan fiction by some of the most talented up-and-coming writers to be found anywhere, and this issue is no exception. Issue 13 features the fourth in a series of Kurt's "Adventures of Erius and Plathmeropa" tales of Atlantean fandom, this installment spotlighting the earliest test run of THE FAN MACHINE. Also this issue: "Find a Different Dream...or Die," a familiar tale about a down-and-out would-be comic artist by Frank Watson, Kim Bruning, and Sharon Van Sluys, and more top-notch fiction by Dale Nelson, David McDonnell and Greg Swan. Regular features include "Reactions," ENDB's unusually long and chatty letter column, and other short fillers. The entire issue is profusely illustrated by Kurt Erichsen, Cliff Kowalski, Dale Nelson, and others; covers are by George Erkling and Tim Lynch. ENDEAVOR is one of the finest fanzines, containing some of the best full-color mimeography in print of fandom. Offset covers, 76 pages, $1.50 from Kurt Erichsen, 1580 Myrtle Ave., Coos Bay, Oregon, 97428.
Fandom Funnies 3
(The Buyer's God)

FANDOM FUNNIES is a parody-zine, with each issue lampooning other well-known comics fanzines. This tabloid-size issue parodies a typical issue of THE BUYER'S GUIDE, with its regular features: "Flying Balloons" by Don and Maggie Married (Bill Sherman, Jay Zilber, and Roger Caldwell), "So What?" by Murray Blastoff (Harry Broertjes), and the rest of TBG's regular columnists. The advertisements have to be seen to be believed, including the classic "Jack Kirby School of Modern Comics Writing," and a revealing interview with Alan Right. Also included is a new Ear-Fall-Off Floyd Portfolio and an assortment of other FANDOM FUNNIES features. Artwork includes covers by Alan Hutchinson, and Kurt Ericksen, as well as more graphics by Ron Harris, Rich Bruning, Jim McPherson, Al Williamson (swiped by Martin Grime), Ken Barr (swiped by Martin Grime), and Frank Robbins (swiped by Martin Grime). THE BUYER'S GOD is easily the funniest zine of 1977. 28 pages, 11 x 17 offset on newsprint for $1.00 from Jay Zilber, Oberlin College, #740, Oberlin, OH 44074.

Sheldon Mayer began his career in the late 1930s as the artist/writer of "Scribbly, Boy Cartoonist." Eventually, he moved on to funny animals and then wrote and drew 96 issues of SUGAR AND SPIKE. Sheldon Mayer is a creative genius, right along side Carl Barks and John Stanley...and now, there's a fanzine devoted to the artistry of Sheldon Mayer. GLX SPTZL GLAAH! premiers with a never-before-published essay by author Ron Goulart on "Scribbly"; Mark Evanier discussing Mayer's personal approach to humor; Gary Brown "interviewing" the now-retired Patsy Mouse from Mayer's famed THREE MOUSEKEETERS strip; and Rich Morrissey taking an in-depth look at one of S.M.'s more recent creations, The Black Orchid. Also included are examples of rare, unpublished Mayer artwork and information on the REVIVE SUGAR AND SPIKE movement. If you're a Mayer fan, this is what you've been waiting for. This first issue is 28 offset pages, 8½ by 11, 60¢ from Ken Gale, 220 East 85th St., #5-R, New York, NY 10028.

Just in, this issue features 'Mail' by Bill Sherman, plus 'His New Post,' more articles, as well as advertisements for Transex Corp, 'The Fund for a Bigger Baptist Church,' Colonel Speed's new brand of Chicken Delight, and several other insanities. 24 8½ by 11 offset pages, 75¢ from Bill Sherman, 608 E. Douglas #2, Bloomington, IL 61701.

Radiation 6

The emphasis in RADION is on interviews, this time peering into the minds of Tom Batiuk (of 'Funky Winkerbean') and book cover artist Michael Whelan, who discusses his background, his work and getting screwed over by Marvel. Ron Goulart discusses his pseudonyms, WEIRD HEROES, s-f, and future projects. (Along with the Goulart interview is a checklist of his work, a scorecard of his pseudonyms, and the first three episodes of STAR HAWKS.) In other features, Douglas Herring Sherman, "The Doom of Captain Arimbone" and Tom Mason, blatantly self-indulges in an editorial. Cover by William Neville/Sam De La Rosa and Doug Herring, as well as other interior illos by Tom Batiuk, William Black, Willie Blyberg, Alan Weiss, and others. All offset, 36 8½ by 11 pages from the chairman on Tom Mason, 705 Draper Rd., Blacksburg, VA 23060, for $1.00.
TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS

ed in 1972 and continues today in its fourth volume under chairmain Jay Zilber. TF is published monthly
and on time, featuring the official business of the UFO, reviews of current UFO zines, and an up-to-date
checklist, lots of fannish matter, personal gab, occasional feuds and other fun goings-on between the
members. 15 to 30 ditto pages, 50¢ or 4/$1.50 from Jay Zilber, Oberlin College #740, Oberlin OH 44074.
Still Available:
Batmania #22-$1.00 from Rich Morrissey
Clyde's Comics and Tales #2-50¢ from Terrence Noye.
Endeavor #2 ($1.50), 8($5.00), 9($1), 10($1.40),
11($1), 12($1.75) from Kurt Ericson
Entropy Cosmix #1-75¢ from Bill Mutschler
Graphix #2 ($3), #3 ($2), or $1 for both from
Bill Mutschler
Ludicrous Situations, Ltd.--#s 1-4 ($75¢ each)
from Bill Sherman.
Omniverse #1-$1.75 from Mark Gruenwald
Radio--#4 ($1.75), #5 ($2.50) from Tom Mason
The Comics Journal--#s 27-38 ($1.00) from Gary Groth and Kim Thompson.

Addresses:
Gary Groth and Kim Thompson, PO Box 292, Riverdale, MD, 20840.
Mark Gruenwald, 211 W. 85th St. #3-A, NYC 10024
Jim Main, 85-A Prospect Hill Rd., New Milford, CT, 06776

OZARK FANDOM 9/10

This special issue presents cartoons and strips
instead of OZ's usual letters and articles for-
mat: MOOSIE, Bob Votko's answer to Lassie: 'Na-
ture Girl,' by Ron Foss, and 'From Beyond,' a
comic strip adaptation of H. P. Lovecraft's
story, with artwork by Mike Vosburg. On the text
side is 'The Comic Book Industry Seen As A Helix
of Semi-Precious Star' by David Kirby, which
takes on the topic of inter-company imitation.
In all, 20 8¢ by 11 all-offset pages for $1 from
the UFO Chairman or Chris Rock, Rt. 2, Box 265,
Mountain Grove, MO 65711.

OMNIVERSE

MARCos/
MUTSCHLER 77
This interview was conducted over a year and a half ago at Doug's rural home in Pennsylvania. This second half concentrates on their underlying personalities, and in particular, Don's values and motivations. Although talk was influenced by his firing just days before, I think that this can function as a unique insight. At last point in issue three, we were at the point of each's entry into the field.

Bill: I can remember seeing a few letters by you, Don.
Don: They were probably in SHIELD. I had letters in virtually all of them. I loved the way Steranko did them. Steve Gerber's said to me, "I don't see why you still rave over Steranko." But to me, he's one of the most creative people in comics, especially at the time.
Doug: No doubt about that.
Don: He blasted things wide open. I understand that the one problem was that the books weren't financially successful, but that doesn't diminish them in my eyes. Steranko did them, and they'll always be there. My admiration of Jim is very large.
I think there's too much of a competitive nature about the industry. If you're safely within the middle ground, then you're just fitting in and nobody can be jealous about what you're doing, real you're an idiot for it, or not understand why the hell you're even doing it. This has caused incredible blocks in me at times when sitting at the typewriter and thinking, "Why? Why am I doing this? Why don't I just knock it out? That's what they want. What the hell do I think I'm trying to accomplish?" It certainly would have been easier on me. They'd say that I shouldn't listen to the fans, and I'd feel very intimidated before I ever began. At times I've written certain lines for a strip and I knew immediately the kind of reaction that there'd be. You could say, "Well, I'm not going to do it," and then the book won't be as good—as at least in your vision—as you think it could be. Therefore you feel completely dissatisfied with it. Or, you take the risk, and if you take the risk often enough... I really wish that I didn't have to say this, but I think there's a Nurse Ratched mentality in this field. If there's things you've done wrong, people don't come up to you and say, "I don't think that this worked and here's why." Instead, you're cast down, ridiculed, or chastised for it. And if you get a phenomenal response in the mails, other people will react to that in a very negative sense, because they'll want to know why they aren't getting it. How the hell do I know? I'm familiar with my books and the ones I particularly like: Doug's and Paul's Shang-Chi, Gerber's Howard the Duck—I loved his Man-Thing even more, Starlin's Warlock, Deathlok.

Incidentally, I was due to take the latter one. Recently they said that they'd let me do Deathlok, and Rich asked me if I'd work with him on it. Seeing as how the Black Panther was being taken away, I said OK. We had come up with what I think would have been interesting ideas for it. But again, it'll never see fruition, such as the last Killraven strip. It was to be called "Slow Fade of an Endangered Species." It would have been a commentary of the killing off of the mavericks in society, and even my view of what's happening to the industry as a whole.

Bill: I realize you can get absorbed into comics and fantasy as a way of life, but I was wondering what else interests you, music-wise or whatever.

Doug: Well, I'm a good old rock and roll freak here. Rolling Stones is my favorite music. The other big things in my life, outside of my private life, are movies and reading. I also like swimming and stuff like that. But when you're talking about intellectual pursuits...

Don: (Laughs) There are a few other things that I've heard you're interested in. I thought that they were pretty interesting myself, but we won't go into that. Like Doug, I'm a big movie freak. I love everything going back to serials and westerns all the way up...

Doug: Well, I don't go that far; B westerns I don't go for. Quality westerns I really like, but I'm not like Don—Hopalong Cassidy and all that.

Bill: In your opinion, what was the last good western?
Doug: Well, as long as they can do such hits as "All in the Family" using one set, they're not going to spend a lot of money except in special cases like a science fiction thing.

Don: One of the things that gets me with all TV series now is that they have a sameness about them within the series; they never stray from their format. In the "I Spy"s, like the one we saw the other night, "The Room With the Rack," they did this thing about the CIA giving false information and using other people.

Doug: Which I thought was my original plot at one time, and "I Spy" had already done it!

Don: Culp wrote several of the original scripts. He did phenomenal themes, things like that in three or four of them. But then they could also go into a lighthearted comedy. Take "Baretta," you'd never see them do a light piece. At times you'd never even know "I Spy" was an espionage show; you'd say, "What the hell is this?" It was just character stuff, and very nicely done.

Bill: What other TV series did you enjoy or think was well done?

Don: "Route 66," Sterling Silliphant bled his heart out in those days. Silliphant was just one of the most incredible writers. I think. He influenced me a lot, I know. I still love it.
The stuff he does today is just no comparison. I suppose he's opted for the money, and I don't blame him, because he's getting paid well for it. I don't know how he made out when he was doing "Route 66." 

Doug: And yet he's not producing many successes. He's getting paid . . .

Don: Not true.

Doug: "Fesledon Adventure," as much as I dislike the film. OK, that. But what since then?

Don: "The Towering Inferno". How good did that do?

Doug: Did he write the screenplay for that?

Don: Yes he did.

Doug: One of my good friends--Frank Robinson--wrote the original book.

Don: He's had successes with some of his movie scripts, but I don't think that they were as passionate. When he did "Route 66" they were very personal scripts. I just loved them because they were so involving. When he did "Naked City"--there haven't been one police show, despite the ad nauseum infinitum of cop shows that we've had in the past two or three years, one that comes up to "Naked City". That's because "Naked City" was about people, about humanity. It wasn't just about cops going out and cracking down on pushers or no-goodniks hiding out in sleazy bars. (Phone rings, for Doug.)

Bill: Maybe it's DC trying to hire you.

Don: Actually, I may do some stuff there. I don't know. As a matter of fact, I turned down a series from National because I thought it would come into conflict with Marvel. There's a thing that even as a freelancer they don't leave you go from company to company.

Bill: How do they wield their power?

Don: They say, "If you do that, then we're not going to keep you on our favorite list." As soon as some books come up or have to be dropped, . . . well, it's all meant to keep you in line. It's kind of like using the electric prodding stick to make sure that you behave yourself. At times there's kind of an insensitivity to people's feelings by other people within these places, even people that you've known for some time. Somebody came up when Craig and I were talking about the demise of Killraven--we had just found out about it--and already there was somebody saying, "Craig, hey, why don't you do this and such?" That's insensitivity, that abruptly and brusquely and not even realizing that there are people's lives here that have been affected.

Bill: Doug (who's in between phone calls now), is there anything outside of comics that you'd like to spout on about?

Doug: Yes. My writing started outside of comics; men's magazines, fiction, articles, book, movie, and record reviews, newspaper Sunday supplement articles, and novels. Comics were the last thing. Most people start in comics and go on to bigger things, it seems, but I worked my way down to comics (laughs). It just sort of happened backwards.

Right now I'm seriously considering branching out, but not dropping comics altogether. I'm fed up with the hassles attendant with working in there. No, it has nothing to do with comics themselves, I will always love them. If I were to write a bestseller that was critically acclaimed, becoming a millionaire and the idol of the literary critics, I'd probably still write comics. You might think that I'd say goodbye to comics, but I don't. I honestly love them, but I don't love them to the exclusion of everything else. At one time I did, but not now.
Bill: Would you like to see a new direction for comics? A change within the same format or a change of format?

Doug: I'd like to see room opened up for new things. Not necessarily changing everything. In other words, I think even the most typical comics shouldn't change to become some sort of supersophisticated thing that older fans will like and the little kids won't comprehend. But, I would like to see more markets opened.

Don: I can really agree with Doug on that. I think one of the problems is that there's not enough experimentation done. It's sort of risky and they don't want to chance it.

One of the things that I was hoping to do with Black Panther and Killraven was that if somebody's nine or ten years old and reads it for the action and the graphics, fine. But, if they could go back to it when they're thirteen or fourteen and say, 'Hey, there's something here I've never realized before. This is relating on this level.' And maybe they could go back to it when they're even older, read it a third time, and say, 'Wow, I still didn't realize what's here.' Then, I don't think that they'd become bored with comics, and therefore you wouldn't have a different audience coming in every three or four years. When people got older they wouldn't just say, 'I can't stand this nonsense and I don't want to read it anymore.' You could perpetuate them a little bit better, and widen the field so that more people have interest in comics.

Bill: Do you think there's more room for experimentation in comics' decline?

Don: They'd be more cautious than ever.

Doug: In a crunch, there's no risks taken, no gambles. You stay with the tried and true, and the proven successes. You don't fool around unless you're in such desperate trouble that it's a last ditch attempt.

Don: I think there's entirely too much negativity going on in comics too, which makes people hesitant to try and go beyond what they've been doing. I know that's happened with me, and similar things have happened with Doug. We really get hung up because you're really afraid of the reactions you'll get once it makes it to the offices.

Doug: Yes, the negativity creates blocks within you. I freeze you almost completely and scares you. You don't want to do the tried and true,
because then they'll say that you're repeating yourself. You don't want to try something to new, or else they'll say, "This isn't Marvel Comics. Marvel Comics is this and this is what we want. You see, we want you to do this, but don't do it." You know what I mean? You're caught between what they want being what they don't want.

Don: If you don't hold true to whatever artistic vision you have and just do what they want, then you're chastised from the outside. If you don't do it, then in a way you're ridiculed by them.

Bill: Didn't you get offered anything to replace the taken books, or were you just cut off?

Don: It was about like that. I don't know whether I should have seen it coming or not, because they had taken the other two books. But, there had been so many changes in editorial stands there. I know that when Roy was coming he said not to worry, because he had things in mind for me to do. Then there were so many changes, and each wrought further disasters, especially since so much of the material was being taken up.

One of the things that bothered me about the Cage book was that it was a series that I really wanted to do. I had lost it once, and then they said I could do it again. Then somebody else decided they wanted to do it. It was somebody I knew and thought I knew pretty well, someone who knew that I had wanted to do it. I kind of really felt hurt about it, that they'd just take it, and also knowing that I didn't do too many books.

Then I got conflicting stories from different elements. Somebody would say, "I want to use this stuff, and those people don't." And then you'd hear from the source, "Well, no. It's not me, it's them." God knows where it all goes. Obviously, when the stories are conflicting to such a major degree, somebody's not telling the truth. It's kind of like a Watergate thing in miniature, if you will, but not quite as devastating in nature. Still, it's indicative of a kind of mentality. There's just a lack of sensitivity. I don't know whether this makes sense to you or not, but . . .

I still have a lot of love for Marvel Comics, like I said, many of the books that are coming out some of Doug's and Steve Gerber's, as well as a few that Steve Englehart does. A few of these people, I think, are people who try to do something with the genre beyond what they were, and yet were also successful as genre
Bill: Something they can easily identify with or keep as an excuse against thinking for themselves?

Don: Or maybe they've been passionately or emotionally moved by the oratory of certain people within the group. I'm concerned about it. I wish we had a chance to do more with that. If we had gone into a third Panther novel, we'd have done something with the Black Panther and the apartheid in South Africa. I would have done something about his mother, too, because there's never any mention of his mother.

Bill: 'Sounds good. I know another writer who was exiled from South Africa for political reasons.

Don: I would have been interested in talking to him if we had ever gotten around to doing it. Most of the stuff is pretty well researched, especially the Africa material. In Wakanda, all the details were as researched as was possible for a seventeen page book. What happens is that much of it you can't use, you just can't fit it into the format that you have in comics, especially in the limitation of pages, in which using plot, structure, characterization and theme, you've got to keep mixing all of these. I hope we did it fairly successfully.

Bill: You were going to introduce a Moon-type figure.

Don: That reminds me of something. I don't know if you remember the God-Killer in Panther's Rage. Basically it was about the fact that people come to a point in their lives where they have to examine what they've been brought up with and their religion and their life. Either they reinforce them and become stronger with them, or they kind of live with them in some amorphous middle ground.

I got a letter from somebody on that issue, and I'll tell you about it just to show you how readers can interpret things entirely different from what the creative people have in mind. We got a letter saying that the fact that we blew up the offices at Marvel Comics because I was obviously advocating all blacks going out to kill all whites because the Black Panther killed a white gorilla. I don't know how in the hell that guy got that out of the story. I only used white gorillas because it was a schtick they had come up with long before. I felt that it was part of the Panther mythology, and I thought that I'd flesh it out and show what would happen if it was really there. Let you get a reaction of that sort, a total miscomprehension of what you've done.

Bill: The Moon thing would have been important idea-wise to show people and make them see. It's only coming to life now how people are getting sucked into these things.

Don: Exactly. Wind Eagle is all about that. He's Puerto Rican, a very strict Catholic. Due to the events and circumstances that have happened in his life, he's become very disillusioned at a young age and begins seeing something else. This is what picks him up. See, it's really not important whether it's the Klan, the Reverend Moon, or whatever. What they do is use the things that you feel are oppressing you to get you to join them. It would be the same if it were the Black Panthers or a Woman's Lib group. I would prefer to see people start doing things as individuals. If you must join an organization, if it's really the only way you can get anything started to make things better for yourself, then only stay as long as you need it and then get out and still be true to yourself.

Normally what happens when you set up an organization is that you have to have a committee. Then the committee starts making money off the thing. They have to support themselves and they want to make a bit more money as time goes by. You end up where 85-90% of all your effort, passion and belief goes into perpetuating the organization than the thing you want to cure.

I'd like to see, even though at certain times—and I guess that I can speak from experience now— even at personal expense for people to stand up as individuals. I have a feeling that they are trying to lower the mavericks down. They don't want to see that type because it's disturbing to them, especially to the people that don't have the guts to do it or don't have the inclination and just don't care. But, they are disturbed that it disrupts whatever
peaceful little status quo that they have managed
to set up, so they're going to try to weed them
out, force them out one way or the other. How
about that?
Bill: This may seem self-contradicting, but as a
mass I don't think that people are capable of
standing up for themselves. If everybody did man-
age to, however, there'd be chaos. There has to
be a median between the extremes.
Don: Sure, I agree with that. I'm not talking an-
archy here. I'm not saying that I'm entirely against
political systems. I don't like the way they've got-
ten a bit too vast and a bit too all-powerful in the
things that they can do. I think that's indicative
by the kind of things we've seen in the past decade
or more.

Here's some pages from the last Xillraven for
you to see.
Bill: So, Craig draws with blue pencil just like
Paul Gulacy.
Don: Not all the time. That's because he was do-
ing layouts in this issue. Our next issue was
going to take them down to Disneyland, but it
won't occur now. In fact, to show you how the guy
is, he was going to travel down to Disneyland so
he could actually visit the places we were going
to use in the story.
Doug: (Coming back from the phone.) Did I miss
the end of the interview?
Bill: Not really. Have you had much trouble with
Marvel asking you to change things?
Doug: Yesterday, as a matter of fact, I had a lit-
tle trouble.
Don: (Laughs.)
Doug: Well, I did. Lately it's worn off. I'm not doing as much as I used to. I want to do more, as a matter of fact, but not as much as I once did. Now that I am in this house and it's easy to step outside and see how beautiful the real world is... When I was trapped in a little matchbox in New York City there wasn't much else to do. Working was the only thing that was really worthwhile to me besides going out to the movies, and even that I didn't enjoy too much because of the New York streets.

Bill: Have you seen 'Taxi Driver'? What did you think of it?

Doug: Yep. I liked it very, very much. I've had a lot of arguments about it because most of the other people who've seen it--some of them liked it but were disturbed by it or... Obviously, everybody makes their own interpretation. Mine was derived from what I thought was apparent. It seemed very clear and simple to me. I didn't have to analyze it to get what I thought was the point of the story.

Bill: I was somewhat confused by it, although impressed by certain aspects. What exactly did you get out of it?

Doug: Sort of a reverse image of 'Deathwish'; vigilante as a psychopath rather than a hero, showing that taking the law into your own hands is... how crazy it can be. And yet, the crazy guy is worshiped as a hero in the end. Therefore, people who worship vigilantism are condoning something that's as bad as what it sets out to eradicate.

And while I don't necessarily agree with that stacked-cards point of view—in fact, like Travis Bickle, I'd often like to take personal justice into my own hands. I'm fairly sure that's what 'Taxi Driver' intended to espouse. But again, I'm rooting for Charlie Bronson.