



Cover illustration by  
Norman B. Saunders (1907 - 1989)

**Super Science Stories**, March, 1950  
Oil on Board, 15 x 20 inches.

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# Illustration

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Would you like to help us find artwork and images for future issues of this magazine? If you own original artwork—or photographs and other rare material—by any classic illustrator, and would like to see your pieces reproduced in *Illustration*, please get in touch! We are currently looking for transparencies and slides of original art by Eugene Iverd, Robert Maguire, Walter Baumhofer, Al Parker, Hy Hintermeister, H.J. Ward, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Reynold Brown, Basil Gogos, and of course many more. Please help us make this magazine great!

# Letters to the Editor

## SUNDBLOM AND H.W. McCAULEY

Dear Dan,

I wanted to drop you a note a week or so ago when I first received **Illustration** from you to thank you for such a wonderful product... This magazine is truly a spectacular production and the layout, the reproduction of the art, and the quality of the articles themselves puts your first issue on a lofty niche that few other publications can claim. I devoured the magazine from front cover to back, enjoying all the articles and the accompanying artwork. It's great to read a magazine devoted to professional illustration. Illustration has long been the poor stepchild of the art field, so it's nice to see that at least some people realize the importance and beauty of modern graphic art.

I found the article on Sundblom of especial interest because last year I had the good fortune to meet the daughters of H.W. McCauley and they spoke of their fond memories of Mr. Sundblom. McCauley as you probably know is remembered primarily as a science fiction magazine cover artist but he also was very active in advertising art. He studied with Sundblom and he and his family were very close friends with the Sundbloms. In the McCauley home, they had a beautiful large oil painting given to them by Sundblom. Hopefully I'll someday be able to get a photograph of it and send it along.

A terrific issue and I appreciate you sending it to me!

Best,  
Bob Weinberg

— *Thank you for your comments! I am a huge fan of H. W. McCauley! Are there any readers out there with H.W. McCauley pictures in their collections? If you have any additional info, photographs, drawings, tearsheets, etc., please get in touch! I would love to do a feature on this fine illustrator.*

## SUNDBLOM AND RICHARD THOMPSON

Hello Dan Zimmer,

Your article on Haddon Sundblom in the premier issue was called to my attention.

Your article left out my father Richard Earl Thompson (1914-1991) who was an apprentice in Sundblom Studios 1939-1943 or thereafter. My father was very instrumental in the early Coca-Cola ads done with the D'Arcy Advertising Agency in St.

Louis.

My father worked as an illustrator in the Chicago land area for over 25 years before he entered into a fine art career. I personally remember as a child visiting the Sundblom studio in Chicago and seeing the Coca-Cola illustrations in progress. Also I remember Sundblom coming to our home in Fontana, Wisconsin. He and my dad and several artists would go outdoors sketching (Gil Elvgren and Harry Eckman were in this group.) My Dad worked on many of the early illustrations in the Sundblom studio and helped Sunny out in many situations where he was unable to meet the agency deadlines.

In fact a story was told me by James Orthwein, President of D'Arcy Advertising, that if it hadn't been for my dad that they would never have kept the Coca-Cola account. As you know Sundblom had some problems and many times my dad would complete an illustration when Sundblom was unable to deliver. I remember my dad working all day and night on an illustrations at home to complete a job to be delivered Monday morning. Orthwein said my dad would even drive the job to St. Louis when Sundblom couldn't make the trip.

My dad left the Sundblom studio to go into business with James Sigman forming the Sigman-Thompson Studios in 1945. After that he went into his own business Thompson & Assoc. My dad left the commercial studio business in 1959 to become a fine arts painter. My dad was commissioned for illustrations by the following: Anheuser-Bush, Standard Oil, Coca-Cola, Carnation, Miller Brewing, John Deere, Motorola, Bendix, Monsanto, Florsheim Shoes, Continental Coffee, Dutch Cleanser. We have no family records of these ads as my dad was not a good keeper of records. My mother is still living and she is our source of our information. We have tried looking up several of these accounts, but most of these illustrations were owned by the agencies that no longer exist. Also I was told that there were some illustrations for Pabst Brewing as well.

For your information here is a link to my dad's web site and biography.

<http://www.richardthompsongallery.com>

A major art book has been written on his career and the story of his association with the Sundblom studio is told. His career in

fine art was very successful and there has been little told about his commercial years.

I am glad that your magazine was brought to my attention as this part of his career is little known. There will be a traveling museum tour of his fine art paintings starting in April of 2005 and the commercial background of his career will be an important contribution.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,  
Richard E. Thompson, Jr.  
RICHARD THOMPSON GALLERY

— *Thanks so much for getting in touch and filling us in on another part of the Sundblom story! Your father was a wonderful painter, and I look forward to learning more about his illustration work in the future.*

## ILLUSTRATORS OF THE PAST

Hi, Dan,

Love the first issue... when I saw it on the stands at Tower Records, I couldn't believe my eyes. Finally, a magazine solely featuring illustration, not illustration as a sidebar, or article in the back. When *How* started out, they did a lot more on illustration, as did *Step-by-Step Graphics* (who, of course still do illustration pieces, but less than I would like.) Design seems to have taken over these magazines as the main focus, so it's great to see **Illustration** magazine emerge.

I do have one hope for change, though, and that is to do features on current working illustrators, as well as the old masters. I don't know how many pages you can afford to print, but I know there are so many incredible artists out there, even only in the industries I work in (comics and games.)

Any plans of doing that, or is it only illustrators of the past that you will be focusing on? Hell, start with Bill Vann!

Feel free to check out my work on my site at [www.kenmeyerjr.com](http://www.kenmeyerjr.com), by the way.

Thanks,  
Ken Meyer Jr.

— *Thanks so much for your comments. At this time, Illustration will remain focused on the works of the "past masters." I have actually considered spinning off a magazine devoted to modern illustration art, as many people have written me to ask this very same question. It sounds like a great idea to me! Stay tuned...*

## SPECULATIVE PHYSICS

Dear Dan,

When I was in ninth grade, my best friend's brother was a Physics graduate student at the University of Minnesota. He told my buddy and me of a speculative theory that he paraphrased, more or less, as follows. "If you put a tennis ball on one side of a wall and the family dog on the other side, eventually (though it may take a very long time) the atoms, ions, neutrons, quarks, etc. of the ball will suddenly reorganize themselves on the other side of the wall and the dog will be happy."

Laying aside, for the moment, whether this theory holds water and whether the current situation is comparable in its finer points to speculative Physics, I feel like the family dog. I knew that one day **Illustration** Magazine would pop into existence, and I sure am glad that it did.

It's well-produced, scholarly without being pedantic, popular without being base and long overdue in our particular field of interest. All-in-all a superior publication. It has something that I always found to be lacking in *Step-By-Step Graphics*, a true focus on history. *Step-By-Step's* shortcoming (even in its best years) was the implication that contemporary graphic professionals are somehow intrinsically comparable to great illustrators of the past.

With *Step-By-Step* having just said that "We decided to let the dead rest in peace" they've eliminated what I perceive as one of their shortcomings, but certainly not in favor of those of us who care about history. This, I think, effectively eliminates them as competition to your publication.

As an historian, collector, dealer, lecturer, appraiser, auctioneer, writer and fanatic of American illustration, I applaud your magazine.

Thanks again, Dan, for the tennis ball.

Best wishes,  
Fred Taraba, Director  
Illustration House, Inc.  
[www.illustrationhouse.com](http://www.illustrationhouse.com)

— *Thank you for your letter, Fred. As you know, I was quite surprised by Step-By-Step's announcement that they were discontinuing the "Masters" column. I'm sorry to see it go. Thankfully, this magazine is ready to pick up right where they left off! (...I don't think any of us are ready to write off the proud history of American illustration just yet...)*

## THIS BOOK BELONGS TO...

Dear Mr. Zimmer:

Just a brief note to say thanks so much for sending us copies of your new magazine. They are already in the Library.

We are impressed with your delightful publication and obviously, we support all positive efforts which enhance illustrators and the illustration art of America.

With our very best wishes for much success in the future,

Sincerely,  
Laurence S. Cutler, Chairman  
Judy Goffman Cutler, Museum Director  
National Museum of American Illustration  
[www.americanillustration.org](http://www.americanillustration.org)

## IT REALLY IS ABOUT TIME

Dear Mr. Zimmer:

Thanks VERY much for sending me a copy of the splendid **Illustration** #1! It's an absolute beaut and I can't adequately express what a delight it is to gander at the pages. It really is about time!

Dunno if you're familiar with *COMIC BOOK ARTIST* magazine, but I feel a kinship to your glorious efforts! There's a direct relationship between comic book art and illustration and I will happily plug the heck out of **Illustration** in my next issue.

Thanks again so much for the lovely magazine. The color repros are to die for and your design sense is truly outstanding, never dominating the page, allowing the images to guide the eye... clean, elegant with a touch of the retro. Bravo!

Best of luck to you  
Jon B. Cooke, *Comic Book Artist Magazine*  
[www.twomorrows.com/comicbookartist](http://www.twomorrows.com/comicbookartist)

— *I encourage everyone to check out Jon's fantastic Comic Book Artist magazine! It is truly a work of art!*

## THIS TOWN AIN'T BIG ENOUGH...

Dear Dan,

**Illustration** #1 arrived last week and I've been meaning to write ever since I got it...

It's a handsome package, nicely designed and reproduced. I found your and Bill Vann's article on Sundblom to be the most approachable and enjoyable. The other two articles could have benefitted greatly from a less lofty view of their subjects. While I consider both Avati and Faragasso to be talented, professional artists, I don't place them so highly in the pantheon of paper-

back cover artists as your authors do. My opinion is perhaps not in line with your own, but both of the aficionados that I've shown **Illustration** to locally have shared the notion that Faragasso, especially, was not a strong candidate for inclusion in an inaugural issue. The cover hints at a different type of content which is fully met with the Sundblom piece, only slightly reflected in the Avati article and refuted by the Faragasso.

Ain't publishing grand? Sorry for the mixed review, but honest opinion means more to me than a pat on the back. I'll give you a big one of those for the notion, the production values, the Sundblom and, especially, for DOING it when everyone else merely talks wistfully about such a publication. Simply for the last one you're a winner in my book. I hope you're getting the orders and the subscribers you need to survive. You KNOW that I wish you well and I'll do all that I can to promote your efforts. Best of luck!

Peace,  
Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., *ImageS*  
<http://www.bpib.com/images.htm>

— *Jim's fantastic new magazine ImageS covers illustration art created prior to 1923. Printed on oversized paper with spectacular reproduction quality, it is not to be missed! Yes, there is room in the world for another magazine devoted to classic illustration art!*

## DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Dear Mr. Zimmer:

Just a quick note to thank you for your wonderful review of *The Great American Paperback*. The book has received an outstanding reception from reviewers and extensive coverage in periodicals ranging from *Paperback Parade* and *Mystery Scene* to *Playboy*.

Your own perspective, however, is different from any of the others, and is most appreciated...

Thanks again, and may **Illustration** have a long and prosperous run!

Sincerely,  
Richard A. Lupoff

— *Thank YOU, Richard, for writing such an amazing new book! It is a wonderful examination of the history of the paperbacks. Kudos to you and to Collector's Press for doing such an exceptional job!* ●



Super Science Stories, March, 1950. Oil on board, 15 x 20 inches.

# The Art of Norman Blaine Saunders

by David Saunders

He was renowned for his luscious palette and exciting action scenes, his sexy women and his ability to shoot from the hip when facing a deadline! Norman Blaine Saunders' illustration career was as big and successful as any artist could hope for, and no single genre could contain his remarkable talent. He painted them all — aliens and aviators, heroes and hunters, detectives and demons, quarterbacks and comic books, sex kittens and serial killers, westerns and wacky packs!

He was curious about everything in life, and his paintings were enriched with his detailed studies of people, history, science and nature. No matter where his visual curiosity led, he branded that world with his own dynamic design, playful skepticism and a solemn belief that life is tough. He was shockingly irreverent — a nonconformist who laughed at the self-righteous and advocated the School of Hard-Knocks. He was a colorful storyteller and an innovative thinker, charming, insightful and fearless. He loved women, children and puppies, and he always cried when the hero died.

His own autobiography begins...

*"I was born in Minnesota on January 1st, 1907 — "My very earliest memories are of the eighty acres that was our homestead and the one room log cabin we lived in, my mother, father and I.*

*"My father served in the 7th Calvary with General 'Blackjack' Pershing in the Spanish American War. He became an ordained Presbyterian minister when I was seven — and we moved further north to Roseau County, where he had a circuit that he served — and where he took on the added duties of County Game Warden, which included the American half of the Lake Of The Woods — a tribe of the Chippawa Indians were there and by the time I was 12, was practically a blood brother."*

The northern-most part of Minnesota, called Lake Of The Woods, was a wild frontier community of hard-drinkin' gun-totin' prize-fightin' crap-shootin' fur-trappers, moose-hunters, lumberjacks, railroaders and Indians. From the very beginning, Norm developed a rugged and humorously skeptical view of the human condition, and that outlook on life was profoundly confirmed when he read *Huckleberry Finn*.

Little Norm was such a darned-good doodler that the margins of his textbooks fascinated his classmates. All the students had to return their schoolbooks at the end of each semester, but before classes resumed, there was always a stampede of kids to reclaim Norm's books for their own use in the next semester. To restore order, the school set up a lottery to select the lucky winners. That raffle gave kids something to look forward to as vacation ended and it became a local tradition that lasted until the books fell apart.



Norman Saunders in his studio, 1951.

After this first taste of schoolyard glory, there was no stopping him! He took a correspondence art course, ("Just to brush up!") from the Federal Schools and after high school, he won a full scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute. Although his tuition was paid for, he still had to earn his keep, so in addition to his farm chores, Norm tried to earn some money by mailing a few of his drawings to his favorite magazine, *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*, a saucy joke-book published by William Fawcett in Minneapolis, and to his delight, they sent him back a check and an offer of steady work as an in-house staff artist. He stood at one of life's crossroads and asked, "Why should I go to Chicago to *study* to be an artist

when I can go to Minneapolis and *be* an artist!" So in 1927, at age 20, Norm Saunders decided to forego his college scholarship to become a full-time artist.

Over the next six years he produced hundreds of cartoons, graphic maps, charts and technical diagrams in pen & ink, black & white gouache and full color cover paintings. It was a valuable hands-on training in drafting, lay-up and mechanicals. He worked on most Fawcett Publications such as *Modern Mechanix*, *Technocrats*, *Whiz Bang*, *JimJamJems* and *Hooey*. He met a wonderful band of visionary young artists at Fawcetts, among them George Rozen, Doug Rolfe and his best friend Allen Anderson. It was the "Roaring Twenties" and they were all a part of the industrial frenzy of the jazz-age, late-night speak-easies and home-brewed hooch. The camaraderie of this group of college-aged "modernists" sustained Norm throughout his life. Minnesota was overrun with "Swedes," and so was the staff at Fawcetts. Allen Anderson was often teased for his Scandinavian name, so the gang fished around for some nickname and Norm suggested "Lil' Joe," just to be absurd, but it



1913, Bemidji, Minnesota, in the Tiger Forest area.  
Left to right: Grandmother Zina, Uncle Jimmy Cox, 6 year old Norman Saunders, father Clare Edgar Saunders, and Grandfather David Saunders.

stuck and forever after he was "Lil' Joe" Anderson.

By 1934 William Fawcett decided to move his operation to the East Coast to capitalize on the expanding circulation of his magazines. Norm's talent was outgrowing the Midwestern publishing "empire" so he moved to New York to join the big leagues, competing for cover jobs with pros like Ralph DeSoto, Rudolph Belarski and Dean Cornwell.

The conventional procedure at the time was for newcomers to find work among the pulps, and, if they played their cards right, in a few years they could hope to work for the "slicks." Established artists, like J.C. Leyendecker, Coles Phillips and Norman Rockwell were all getting giant fees to help sell giant circulations of "slicks" like *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers* and *Liberty*. So Dad got in line with all the others, thinking "Look out, Leyendecker! Here I come!" Norm made the rounds of all the major publishing houses with his portfolio of published works from the Midwestern publications and pretty soon he had steady work, and by 1936 he had all he could handle.



Modern Mechanix, August, 1933.



The Elks, April, 1935.



Saucy Movie Tales, March, 1936.

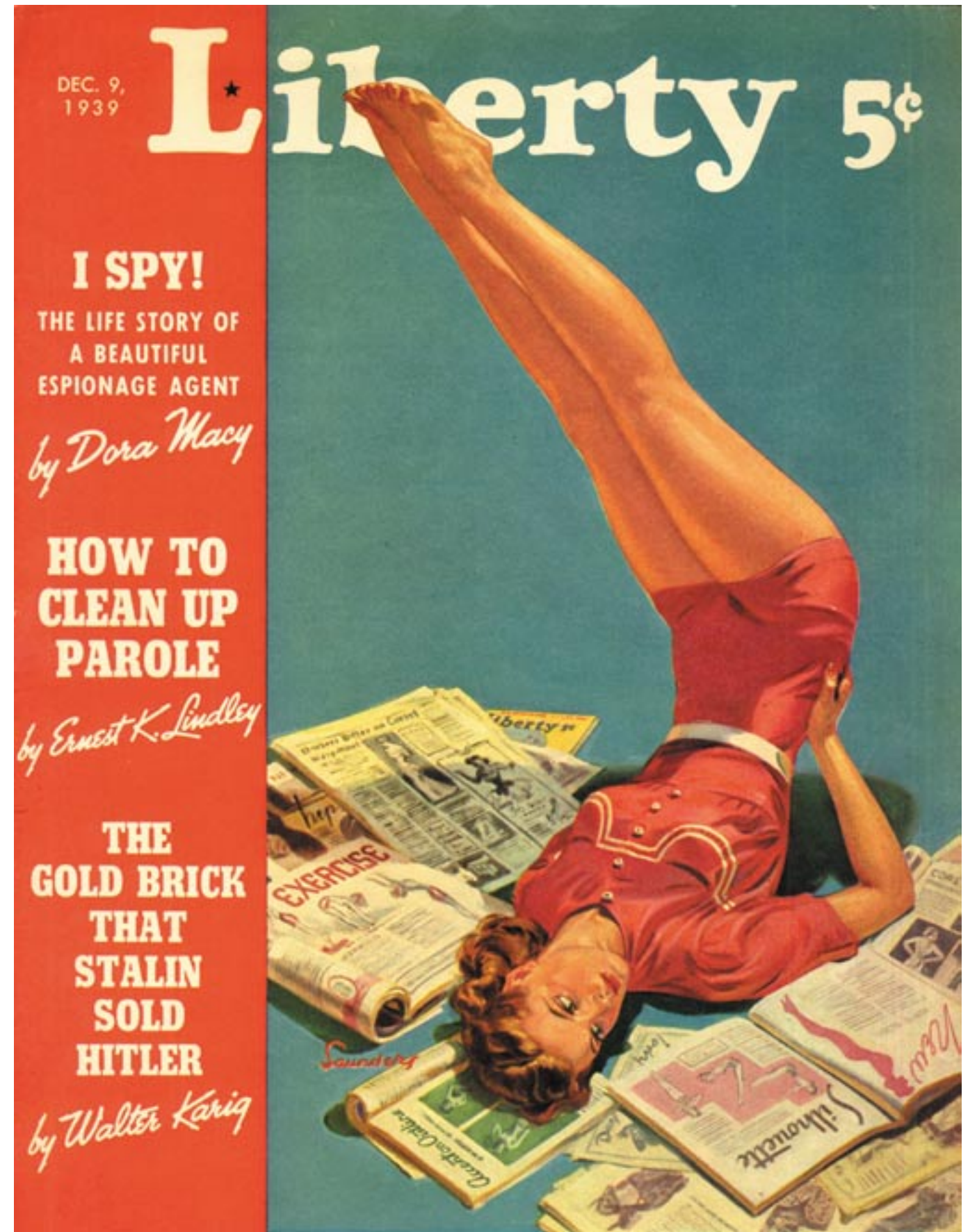
As Norm got to know the denizens of the New York publishing world, he heard about the famous evening painting classes taught by Howard Pyle's protégé Harvey Dunn at the Grand Central Art School. That was where Dad got his "graduate level" grooming and really learned to paint, along with Walter Baumhofer, Robert G. Harris, Tommy Lovell and dozens of other great illustrators from those golden years.

Dad loved the classes and profoundly respected "ol' man Dunn." His wisdom was filled with profound truths that applied to painting as well as life. "Art is a universal language and it is so because it is the expression of the feelings of man. Any man can look at a true work of art and feel kin to it and with he who made it — By this you may know that the Brotherhood of Man, is." All the students loved him. Dunn occasionally brought a selection of new magazines to class to critique and one night he singled out a pulp cover for lavish praise. Dad's face went red when another student spoke up, "That's one of Norm's covers!" Dad told me he felt awkward being the "art star" of the class but he was proud to be this particular teacher's pet. One day, Harvey Dunn came up behind Norm's easel and slapped him on the back and said, "Listen Blockhead, you're too damn good to hang around here pretending to be one of my 'pupils'! You've learned whatever I can teach you. You're good enough now so get out of the nest and fly! Go out and make yourself a living!" It was one of Norm's proudest moments.

Norm became a top cover artist for dozens of magazines like *Eerie Mysteries*, *Ten Detective Aces*, *Wild West Weekly* and *Saucy Movie Tales*. "Before the war, I sold a hundred paintings a year for 25 to



Smokehouse Monthly, February, 1929, p. 58.  
This cartoon is a self-portrait. The caption "Nifty Norm" was the artist's actual nickname.



Liberty, December 9, 1939.



*Black Mask*, July, 1949. Oil on board, 10 x 16 inches. (Note actual handprint of Norm Saunders in background.)



*Wild West Weekly*, March, 1939.



*Ten Detective Aces*, February, 1941.



*North · West Romances*, April, 1943.

75 bucks apiece, which was quite a chunk of change in those days! I was riding in style, right smack through the Great Depression!" His studio cost only \$35 a month. He had a shave, shine and manicure every morning and he went to hear Horace Heidt's *Musical Knights* for dinner and dancing at the Biltmore Hotel. Norm was such a snappy dresser that one night as he entered the Hotel Astor a mob of fans shouted, "It's Harry James!!!" He literally ran for his life as they tore his tux to pieces! Norm had two cars — a Buick open-car and a Pontiac convertible, which both sat undriven in a parking garage that cost more than the average rent. He hired his favorite models every day from a local agency, but often desperate young women would find their way up to his studio, ring the bell and drop open their robes when he opened the door. If he was all booked up, they might suggest other more intimate services. As Dad reported it, he had pity on them, dressed them and sent them on their way with a hand-out and with a tear in his eye.

Although times were hard, cheap thrills were in demand. Many Americans were steady readers of the pulps, faithfully watching their newsstands for new issues. This devoted market made the magazines a substantial backbone of popular culture in the era before television. Although black & white movies and radio dramas have a magical power of suggestion, the pulp magazines combined the written word with fantastic colorful paintings to produce a hand-held form of popular entertainment. These little magazines, made of low-quality pulp paper and high-quality full-color covers, provided the literal and visual means to substantiate the magic worlds of radio and movies. The pulps and Norm Saunders enjoyed a long heyday, leading up to the Second World War.

Dad was just painting his first covers for the "slicks," but everything changed with Pearl Harbor. He was a mature man of 36 who had worked his way to the top of his field and was suddenly faced with an historic cataclysm. He spent the war years illustrating his own service experiences. The "slick" magazine editors ran several

illustrated stories by "Master Sgt. Norman Saunders," so his career continued even during the war.

After a year state-side in the MPs, a case of whiskey helped him finagle an overseas transfer to Asia with the Army Corps of Engineers, building the Burma Road to supply the Chinese Nationalist Army of Chiang Kai-Shek. From 1943 to 1945 Norm explored a country and a way of life that profoundly inspired him as "the closest that mankind has ever come to being sensible." It was the happiest time of his life. Norm dove into the enormous prospect of documenting the magnificent spectacle of China. He was raised on tales of his father's war experience in the Philippines of 1898, so Norm relished his own opportunity to explore the exotic adventure of the Far-East Asian way of life.



Norman Saunders, New York City, 1938.

Dad made thousands of detailed watercolors of intriguing scenes that crossed his path along the Burma Road, and in retrospect, he felt these were his best works. I can never fully appreciate the influence of that experience on him, but these masterful artworks are a testimonial to China's inspirational impact. At the end of his life he told me his dream was to be cremated and have his ashes scattered along the Yang Tse River.

After the war, Norm returned to a changed America, where popular culture was trying to keep up with the new tastes. The pulps were still selling and Dad continued to find work with them until the end of the 1950s, but the publishers saw the writing on the wall. They had to repackage their products to keep in business. Many titles were ended, merged or reformatted as paperbacks, comic books or mens magazines, and Norm Saunders followed his old contacts from the pulps into each of these experimental new formats.

From 1948 to 1954 Dad painted covers for the earliest paperbacks of Ace, Bantam and others. This new product combined cover art and literature that both reflected hard-boiled social realism, and was *the* major success of the Post-War publishing industry.

The features of one particular beauty began to appear in all of



*Black Mask*, November, 1949. Oil on board, 15 x 20 inches.



China, 1945. From a personal portfolio of sketches of the artist's war experiences, 1941 - 1953.

Norm's work at this time. She was a young Greek model named Ellene Politis, and in 1947 they were married. They bought a four-story brownstone for \$25,000 on 104th Street in a racially mixed section of Harlem and started to raise a family.

At that same time Norm's old publishers also sent him many jobs painting covers for comic books.

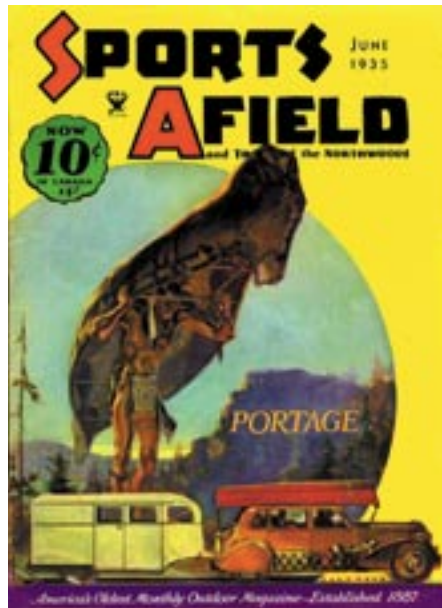
Comics were still evolving in these early years and they often had full color covers painted by pulp artists, and their stories were filled with the same shocking pulp fiction thrills. However, these products were being distributed along with innocent kiddie comics and this shared marketing raised many censorial eyebrows! The fact that Dad's covers looked realistic made their horror all the more gruesome. Letters of parental complaint led to a public campaign for the government to regulate "the trash we expose our children to!" This is a whipping-horse that still appeals to today's political opportunists. My father's painted covers were so nightmarish that the United States Congress actually passed a Comic Book Code of Decency Act to protect American youth from his kinds of images. (How many kids can say that!) The legislation was swept along with the general drive to crack down on "un-American activities" and by 1954 my Dad's controversial style of work was black-listed from the comics.

Dad continued to do freelance work with package design, calendars, jigsaw puzzles and any other illustration jobs he could find that weren't taken over by color photography or concerned politicians.

When Fawcetts and Columbia began publishing magazines like



Right: A sketchbook page from January, 1941. 8 1/2 x 11 inches.



Sports Afield, July, 1935.



Two-Gun Western, July, 1938.



Marvel Science Stories, April, 1939.

TRUE and SAGA and REAL, Norm produced a large body of work for these men's adventure magazines. They showed the same kinds of manly action adventures that were featured in Hollywood films of that time like, "Fort Apache," "The Big Sky" or "The Guns of Navarone." Dad felt these were geared towards men who had served in the war but had seen no action, so exciting tales of heroic deeds satisfied their frustrated fantasies. By 1962 these magazines had gone over the top into a whole new genre that was aimed at men's frustrated sexual fantasies. *New Man*, *Man's Book* and *Men Today*.

There were very few magazines after 1960 that still used painted covers, so Dad accepted these jobs and he left his works unsigned and uncredited. Nevertheless, he still painted them in his familiar style, so they're easy to identify. Dad actually got a good laugh out of doing such outlandish burlesques, mocking puritan clichés of dastardly wickedness.

One of the oddball jobs Dad took in the late fifties, was at Topps Bubblegum Company, doing corrections on color photographs of baseball and football players who had been traded to new teams after their cards were ready to go to press. Without time to rephotograph the players, Topps needed someone to come to their printing plant and fix a mess of complicated switch-a-roos! A Cleveland Indian uniform and cap had to be painted onto a former Pittsburgh Pirate, while a Pittsburgh Steeler had to become a Cleveland Brown.

His covers had once been enough to sell 100,000 copies of a pulp, and then he found



Norman posing for *Two-Gun Western* cover, 1938.



Ellene and Norm posing for western cover, 1953.

himself being hired as an anonymous retoucher. Nowadays they'd use a computer program, but in 1958 Dad took his paint box, an old, spattered green tin tackle box filled with paint tubes and a palette, his "nose dabber" (Kleenex) and a handful of Winsor Newton #6 Sable watercolor brushes, hop on the subway and ride over the East River to the Topps offices in Brooklyn. He always brought his glasses and green plastic poker-dealer visor, his big Sherlock Holmes magnifying glass, his hip flask of gin and sometimes even me! I'd sit on a stool and try not to be a pest, watching him doctor a dozen cards an hour, standing at an office table and muttering spicy old ditties to himself. "Barney Google, with his goo-goo-googly eyes! Barney Google had a wife three times his size!" — "K-k-k-katie! Oh, beautiful Katie. You're the only g-g-g-girl that I adore!" — "Today's the day to give babies away for a half a pound of tea, so if you know any ladies that want any babies, send 'em around to me!" Dad's love of the cornball left no room for snooty pretensions. He was hilariously irreverent! "Look, kiddo, I don't have any time to chew the rag with a snot-nosed brat, so don't get your ass in an uproar! Just sit on your hands and button your lip! Remember I love you madly, but I don't want to get any madder at you than I already am!" I was proud of my "Specialist" Dad, being called in to do emergency art jobs that no one else could do! The staff artists at Topps treated him like he was the Maestro! He laughed it off and loved every minute of it.

Eventually Topps got the idea to make better use of Norm by having him do a Non-Sports



Dime Detective, October, 1950. Oil on board, 15 x 20 inches. (Note: Signature reads "Norm-S" in code.)



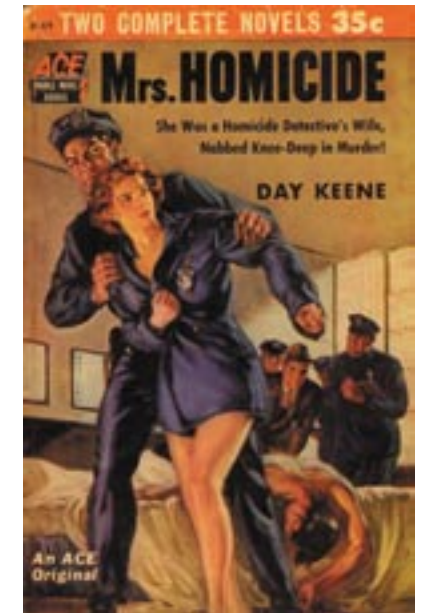
Star Western, April, 1952. Oil on board, 15 x 20 inches.



Drawn to Evil, Ace D-5, 1952.



Shakedown, Ace D-17, 1953.



Mrs. Homicide, Ace D-11, 1953.

Series. There was a big hubbub in 1961 about the centennial of the Civil War. The Civil Rights movement was on everyone's mind and there was a morbid curiosity about the "War To Free The Slaves," so Topps gave Dad a pile of rough sketches to get things rolling. He pasted tracing papers on them to redraw more dynamic compositions or he suggested other more dramatic scenes. Dad used Matthew Brady's infamous battlefield photos for research.

I knew the book was "not for children," so I started looking at it as soon as his back was turned. One day he caught me with the book, but instead of scolding, he sat with me in stunned reverence, describing the fuller implications of each detailed photograph, leaning over my shoulder, I was shocked to see my Dad's tears spilling on the page before me, as he wept at the pitiful waste of human lives.

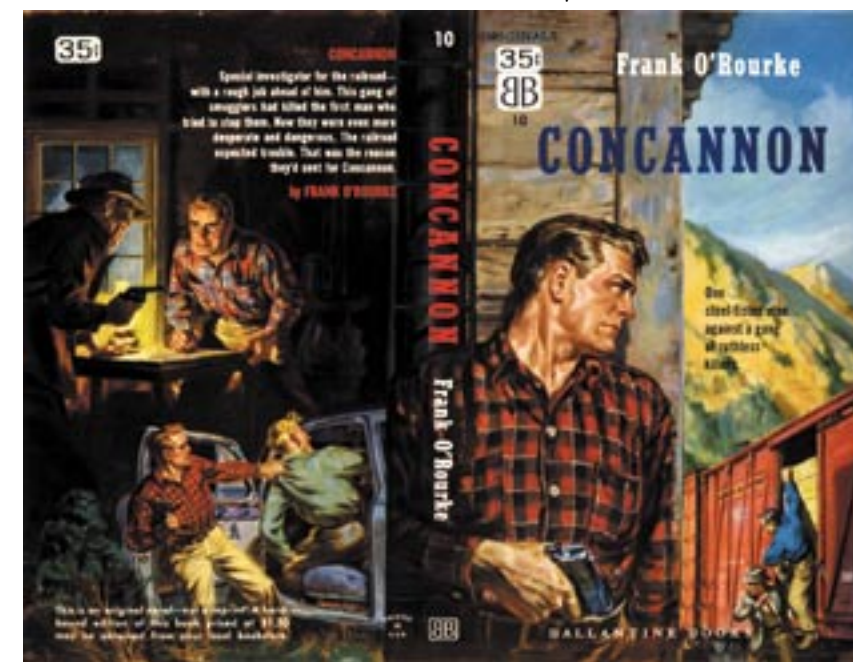
After Topps OK'd his compositions, he sliced up some Bainbridge illustration boards into 8 x 10 inch pieces and marked off little 4 x 6 inch central spaces for the artwork. This left a 2 inch border of neutral space where the production staff scribbled red and blue pencil instructions and registration marks for the printing process. Dad would sharpen an Ebony pencil to a razor fine point and transfer each revised sketch to its own little board. He intentionally did this by eye, without using any mechanical aid, because "the drawn line has more pizzazz than a mechanical trac-

ing," and he took advantage of this final redrawing to further refine the composition to suit his taste.

The *Civil War* cards depicted battle scenes of such bloody realism that Topps was flooded with letters of complaint. They decided to halt further distribution and to produce an "educational" series instead: *Flags of All Nations*, and later, after a similar reaction to *Battle!*, they issued *Flag Midgies*. Although the United Nations was a hot topic in those Cold War years, no kids bought flag cards, but Topps never expected them to. It was just a crafty legal defense, in case they wound up in court and needed to show some edifying product to redeem their public image.

The *Mars Attacks!* series was Dad's next big sensation! It showed us all the worst nightmares that kids could ever imagine about the world-wide mayhem of a Martian invasion!

On the day that Dad had first discussed the project, I had been given a plastic Captain Video space helmet by a friend. I'd never seen another kid anywhere with such a cool thing and I couldn't wait to wear it on the block. But, by bedtime it was gone! I looked for it all over the place and I finally found it in Dad's studio, up on the 3rd floor of our brownstone. He had set it up on his table, posing with a skull inside it! That skull was a plaster cast Dad bought from his art supply store on Broadway and 95th Street. He needed a model to study under various lighting condi-



Printer's proof for Concannon, Ballantine Books, 1948.





Tom Mix Western, November, 1949. Fawcett.



Crime Clinic, September, 1951. Ziff-Davis.



G.I. Joe, August, 1951. Fawcett.



Cinderella Love, April, 1952. Ziff-Davis.



Another World, December, 1952. Fawcett.



Worlds of Fear, June, 1953. Fawcett.

tions, and he created the entire invading horde of Martians from that one skull, as well as any fried earthlings that happened to get in their way!

The whole family and neighborhood friends loved to pose for Dad. He often dressed us in stage clothing and directed our acting roles under theatrical lighting. Our dog "Cindy" and I got to be zapped into ashes by a merciless Martian. At first Dad painted the scene with the dog roasted into a hideous charred skeleton, but Topps made Dad retouch the dog with a coat of fur. I've always wondered if the owner of that painting knew there was a more "x-rated" dog underneath that revision!

After we kids were all packed off to school, Dad's first work-shift began, between 9AM -to- 3PM. After 3PM he would give us snacks and do the shopping and cooking, the serving and cleaning up, the bathing and bedding of his four kids and pets. When we were all tucked away, he would start his evening work-shift. From 9PM to Midnight, Dad put in his most focused work. I would usually peek at his current paintings every evening before bed and sometimes he would point out some detail that was a "lucky piece of business. Lots of artists get lucky breaks, but only a smart one knows when to leave 'em alone!" But I also knew that I should leave him alone if he didn't initiate the conversation. It was better not to interrupt his concentration during his late-night work schedule.

Dad would take a last drag on his cigarette and go to work. Invariably, his cigarette burned down to the filter, dangling in his heavy glass ash tray for the next hour, until he'd "come up for air" Although he was a life-long chain smoker, who always needed a lit cigarette, whenever he painted he could go for hours without a smoke. This phenomenon amused him as another example of the absurdity of the human mind.

Dad was astonishingly good at graphics and hand-painted lettering.

He'd use a "blue-line" non-photographable pencil to block-in carefully spaced-out letters and then he'd swiftly paint-in his finished job. This was particularly impressive because of the minute size of the original artworks and the fact that Dad was getting so old, he suffered from poor eyesight and cataracts.

He invented and built his own optical aid device, which stacked up three consecutively more-powerful magnifying glasses under a 100 watt lamp. The contraption extended over his table and was mounted on a heavy floor stand. His adjustable drafting table was set at the height of a lectern and he stood on a swiveling barstool. By adjusting his optical device so that it was suspended before

his eyes, he would stare at his tiny artworks for nine hours a day with the intensity of a hopped-up toy-maker in his workshop, putting the eyelashes on Pinocchio. He gracefully brushed in the tiniest details with a sweep of his microscopic sable-hair brushes. He knew a million tricks for using bridges, french-curves and triangles, to produce slickly controlled effects which flowed from his brush as gracefully as an Olympic skater. He explained each technique to me as he employed them but they required a lot of practice, and I suspect many of his tricks are now lost forever.

Dad preferred to paint from observation of actual objects, so he arranged elaborate set-ups to refer to while he painted, and he always used dramatic lighting. He even used colored filters

to create lighting affects which enhanced the illusionism of his rendering. Many of his works feature a "hot light" (red, orange or yellow) glowing on one side of the object and a "cold light" (purple, blue or green) shining on the other side. This "hot-to-cold" color scheme is a traditional painter's technique for adding dimensional depth. It's based on the visual phenomenon that cool colors appear on surfaces that move away from the viewer's eye, while the brilliant potency of "hot" colors seem to jump out and confront the viewer's eye, but Norm intensified this principle to make his illustrations more eye-catching.



1961 studio photo taken by Norman to record lighting effects on prototype "alien."

Within a few minutes, Dad could transform a preliminary doodle into something that looked alive. He'd flesh-out the character, add some volume to the objects and touch-up the structural details in a flurry of intense focus. I loved to watch Dad work. He'd start by splashing around some "blocked-in colors" to get focused and then he'd rapidly make a seemingly reckless and abrupt color change that appeared like a mistake at first. If I squealed "Dad! What are you doing!! You're gonna ruin it with that dirty color!", he'd mutter an aside without losing his concentration, "Wait a minute. See where I'm going with this." If I was patient, his paintings would magically resolve before my eyes into realistic illusions. It was a thrill to watch Dad's imagination bring something to life, because, no matter how

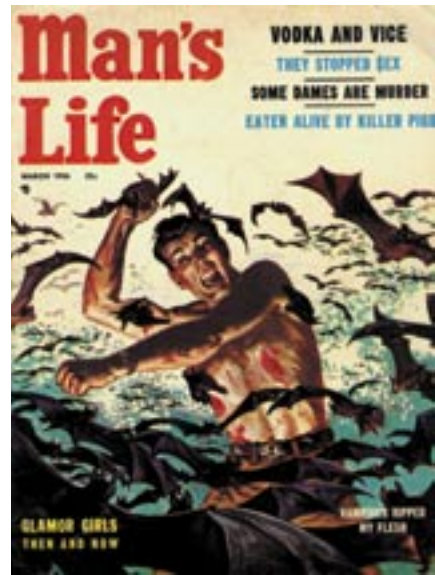
bumpy the ride, he'd always land at the other end in some strange and amazing illusion.

Dad used two white porcelain palettes each with a grid of 64 teaspoon wells. Before painting, he removed the saran wrap that kept the paint moist from his last session, and squeezed out paint tubes of any additional casein and watercolors needed. He adjusted their fluid consistency by squirting water from a turkey-baster, sucked from a gallon-sized pickle jar that he kept on a table beside his drafting table to dunk his brush in after each stroke.

He kept a stack of typewriter paper handy for grooming the paint-laden brush tip and wiping it off after each stroke. Once the top



Preliminary study for Mars Attacks! card #2, "Martians Approaching." Watercolor and casien on paper, 5 x 8 inches. 1961.



Man's Life, March, 1954.



Climax, May, 1961.



Real Combat Stories, October, 1963.

sheet of this stack was filled with slops and drips and splats, he would remove it — but rather than crumple it up, he saved them in another pile. Once every month or so, he would inspect this pile — holding up each page to earnestly appreciate the random beauty of the abstract compositions he had mindlessly generated. “Hmm! This one’s as good as any Pollock!” After selecting his favorites, he filed them away as respectfully as any of his artworks.

Dad followed the art world news and reviews in the *New York Times* and attended the important museum shows and he even took day trips to Philadelphia, Boston and D.C. to catch any major shows. The Metropolitan Museum was his favorite collection. He went about twenty times a year. It always started the same way. I’d be eating Sunday morning breakfast by myself and he’d walk into the kitchen and announce, “I’ll be going to the Met today, so anybody that wants to tag along should be ready to go in ten minutes!” He would never go alone. We always went together. I loved to study those master works with Dad. Great art was the only product of mankind that my father treated with the solemn awe he otherwise reserved for nature. As we walked through the museum, I listened to his ideas, which grew into spontaneous public lectures as a crowd of art lovers drew around. Many times he’d conclude his thoughts and walk away from a painting and the group would break into heartfelt applause. Those museum trips inspired me to love art.

Dad had always been a fervent advocate of sharpening one’s creative mind by detailed observation of the world around him. “Keep your wits about you! You never know when something will come in handy!” Our walks around town were routinely delayed by his



“The Bad One” by T.C. McClury, p. 24-25. *True Adventure*, April, 1959. B&W Gouache. 18 x 27..

spontaneous inspiration to stop and sketch. I’d sit on a stoop and pick my nose and wait for Dad to finish some astonishing drawing. He considered visual alertness to be a vital human survival skill that helped him to thrive in life’s harsh jungle. His mastery of observation may have been his greatest artistic talent. Dad trained me to look for new ways to walk down the same street, and to carry my head mindfully, to look around and to keep a pad and pencil handy, to make sketched notations of everything, and to be curious about how everything works.

“If you don’t have a pencil ’n’ paper, just drink it all in with your eyes and hurry home to make a sketch from memory! That’s how Robert Henri use to do it! It’s all useful material for some future picture or for getting out of some scrape! Let’s say some punks jump you from the alley. If you’re just walking like a zombie, they’re gonna clobber you! **BUT**, if you’re observant, you’d notice there was a garbage can right behind you! Everything can be used as a weapon to defend yourself in an emergency! You can grab that garbage can lid and whack’em on the head! Always keep your eyes open!” Walking around a cluttered Harlem street with Norman Saunders was to see it all come alive with his colorful imagination!

“Notice how the traffic light is counter-balanced by those wires from the lamp-post. It’s plastered with some nutty handbills, and those ratty sneakers some kids tossed up there, dangling by their shoestrings! It seems like an outrageous abstract sculpture, but you have to know what you can use and what to ignore! That’s what makes life and art interesting!”

Topps and Norm Saunders continued to collaborate on an incredible variety of gum-selling products, most of which reflected popular trends



Man's Story, December, 1965. Casein on board, 30 x 22 inches.



Left from top:  
**Mars Attacks!** card #36, Topps, 1962.  
**Batman** card #4, "The Bat Signal" (First "Black Bat" series) Topps, 1965.  
**Monster Cars** card "Fast Frank", Topps, 1966.  
**Battle!** card #33 "Nazi Terror", Topps, 1965.



on kiddie TV — *Batman!*, *Monster Valentines!*, *Ugly Stickers!*, *Nutty Initials!*, *Rat Fink!*, *Mad Foldees!*, *Insult Cards!*, *Monster Alphabet!*, *Groovy Names!*, *Flower Power Alphabet!* ... I can't remember them all, but they usually had a new project every few months, throughout the sixties.

Dad's lifelong journey from a backwoods one-room schoolhouse doer to a famous New York illustrator had reached the retirement age. He knew he was a great illustrator, he loved his craft and he was proud to belong to the noble tradition of painters. But instead of fading off into irrelevance, destiny delivered one last wacky package to Norm's doorstep! In 1967, there came one more, final painting project, that proved to be the most popular of his lifetime.

Dad was a life-long cynic, so he was the perfect advocate for skewering braggarts, especially when they were advertisers, puffed up with boastful hot air! Norm did most of the cooking, shopping and housekeeping in our family, so he was always over-worked. His frustrations often led to public scenes at the Food-A-Rama grocery store on Broadway. To my howlingly painful embarrassment, he would pick up a jar of Skippy Peanut Butter and proclaim, "NEW AND IMPROVED FORMULA, EH? WHAT THEY SHOULD REALLY PRINT ON THESE JARS IS 'WE FOUND A CHEAPER WAY TO MAKE THIS CRAP, AND WE'RE GONNA SELL IT FOR MORE!'"

The *Wacky Pack's* popular success was very satisfying to him, especially after storing up so many years of contempt for dishonest media men. He finally got paid to paint and to complain at the same time. It was the perfect job! Here at long last, he finally had a soapbox to preach on, and the creative freedom to say what he liked and an immense audience to entertain with different Wacky projects for the next 12 years.

The Topps office was a no-frills filthy old factory building, all smudged-up with printer's ink and the stench of snubbed-out cigars, spittoons and pencil shavings, a perfect reflection of their penny-pinching low-overhead approach to business. But one day in 1977, Dad went in to deliver some of the last wackies, and he was stunned to see they'd redone the whole place with polished conference tables, hardwood paneling and lavish interior decorations. When Dad asked, "What the hell happened here?" they said, "I hope you like it, because you paid for all this!" That finally brought it home for him. He calculated that *Wacky Packages* made Topps millions of dollars, but his only benefit, beyond the \$50 freelance fee for each artwork, was the pride in know-



David and Norman Saunders posing for *Battle!* card #33, "Nazi Terror." 1964.



Norman and David Saunders, 1980.

ing his work was so popular. He longed for recognition, just as all artists do, but in his case these were no delusions of grandeur — for those "fifteen minutes" (1967 to 1980) his *Wacky Packs* really were as famous as the Beatles. Topps must be strictly possessive, because even Tim Burton's 1996 movie, "*Mars Attacks*"; gave Norm no credit.

As Dad would say, "That's just the way it goes, kiddo! I wouldn't know what to do with that much money if I had it! As far as the fame goes, I won't care about posterity when I'm dead, which should be about any minute now! That's for you to worry about, David! I had a lot of good clean fun! I could do whatever I wanted. I could stay home and paint all day and not have some god-damned front-office-guy breathing down my neck!" Despite this frustration, it was still a thrill for Dad to watch the *Wacky Pack* fad triumphantly acknowledged on the TV news and the popular press. In fact, when *New York Magazine* ran a cover article on the *Wacky Packs* on October 1, 1973, Norm said, "Well, after 50 years in the business, I finally made it to the SLICKS!"

It's no wonder that Dad would smile and say, "My favorite, I think was the *Wacky Packs*. I had a successful career as an artist, but the first time my kids thought an artist was important, was when I put out a bubblegum card! I liked doing them because my kids were finally proud of their ol' man!"

Norm Saunders brought a rich heritage of painting to many generations. As long as 20th Century American illustration is collected, the pulps, paperbacks, men's magazines, comics and trading cards with the Norman Saunders touch will always be the classics. The creativity in his paintings will enrich our culture for generations to come. His love of painting shows through in every one. His saucy sense of humor and open-minded interest in life and his scorn for pomposity, made him a charmingly wise and outrageous character. He understood the value of the care and hard work he put into his creative efforts, and he knew that he was one of America's best illustrators. His spirit left his body on March 7th, 1989. As I go on through life without him, it's hard to always miss him, but I'm lucky he left behind so many great paintings, which are filled with a colorful spirit that I'm proud to say was my ol' man! ●

by David Saunders, © 2002.

David Saunders is himself an artist, with work in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He shows with the Fischbach Gallery in New York and Carrie Secrist Gallery in Chicago.



*New York Magazine*, October, 1973.



*Wacky Packages* card, Series 1, 1967. 5x7 inches. Gouache on board.







Cover illustration for *Tarzan and the Castaways*. Brush and ink on paper, 9 x 12 inches. 1964. Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz.

# Frank Frazetta's Little Miracles

by Dr. David Winiewicz

The oil paintings of Frank Frazetta have touched and enchanted a worldwide audience. Literally millions of artbooks have been sold in the past 25 years. Hundreds of thousands of prints and lithographs are in circulation and the demand is seemingly endless. A bushel of awards and honors of every shape and variety has accompanied all this financial success and popularity. Movie stars and other celebrities have made the pilgrimage to visit Frazetta on his estate in Pennsylvania. A great museum now stands on his estate as a testament to his lifelong achievement.

Frazetta is a truly great painter who stands in a long classical tradition of great artists like Michaelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Goya. History will prove this point. However, there is another facet of Frazetta's genius that is even more remarkable than his gift as a painter, and this point is recognized and appreciated by discerning connoisseurs throughout the world, namely, Frazetta is the most remarkable draftsman who has ever lived. His drawings in pen and ink are simply unmatched for their creative artistry. There is, of course, a cultural bias in the western world that holds painting to be more inherently valuable than ink drawings. This bias is not shared by the eastern world, where ink drawing and calligraphy are esteemed even more than oil paintings. The greatness of art should not be judged by its medium but by its degree of quality, its inherent expressive power. Frazetta thoroughly agrees with this sentiment: "I have many ink drawings that are far better than most of my paintings. Drawings are very difficult because you can't make a mistake. It requires a great deal of concentration and discipline. For example, drawing a simple silhouette is difficult because it has to be perfect. One mistake and the whole effect is ruined."

Let me make my point by introducing a little historical context. Frazetta began as a true child prodigy; his artistic gifts were recognized very early in life and nurtured. His childhood was steeped in the visual wonders of comic books, pulps, comic strips, toys, and anything that had a touch of fantasy about it. He absorbed everything and he loved to draw. He drew continuously. He produced countless little self-made comics and a large, full-color children's story of his character, SNOWMAN, that ran to 60 pages. He began working in the comic book field in 1944 and continued to draw



Frank Frazetta at work in his studio, circa 1994.

stories until 1955. His pen and brush technique got stronger and stronger throughout this period, amazingly so. By the time he was done, Frazetta had produced the finest art ever seen in the comics' medium. For the next 7 years, Frazetta worked as the main "ghost" artist on Al Capp's *L'il Abner* comicstrip. In the early 1960's Frazetta decided to break away from the treadmill of strip art production. His dream was to be a painter and enter the higher levels of art. He wanted respect and he wanted success. In the comic business he didn't get the type of acknowledgement he was searching for. The comic business was an artistic ghetto. Everyone believed that comic book artists were at the very bottom of the financial and aesthetic ladder. The upper rungs were occupied by the well-paid illustrators and painters; that was the goal he wanted.

Frazetta began to paint covers for ACE paperbacks in the early 1960's and produced a series of varied and truly charming images. At this same time he was offered a "prestige" assignment by the editors of Canaveral Press to illustrate a series of books by the famous Edgar Rice Burroughs. This was the moment Frank had been waiting for. Now he could show the world what he was capable of and use all his creative juice to display the power of his imagination and his unique inventiveness. In the opinion of many, this is the ultimate high point in Frazetta's career. He produced a series of drawings for three hardbacks: *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* (1962), *TARZAN AND THE CASTAWAYS* (1965), and *TARZAN: MASTER OF ADVENTURE* (1965). Other books on the ERB Pellucidar series were planned, but never published. Frazetta produced a total of 27 full drawings and several spot illustrations for the Canaveral Press. Ironically, Frazetta was badly used by this company and paid a big price. Frank clarifies: "I was screwed beautifully by those bandits. They made promises and never came through. I did extra drawings for them for books that were never published. I got paid peanuts, and never received further money. To top it off, they kept most of my art. I was only able to get four drawings back. When I complained, they threatened to sue. I was an artist; what did I know about lawyers and hidden clauses in contracts. I wised up really fast. That situation would never happen again."

Frazetta's drawings during this time are nothing short of miraculous.

No one had ever seen anything like them before. Look at the great draftsmen of the past, e.g. Michaelangelo, Bernini, Rembrandt, all the way to the relatively recent efforts of Daniel Vierge, Joseph Clement Coll, Pyle, Wyeth, Matania, Mucha, Hal Foster, Lou Fine, and Alex Raymond. Frazetta established a new level of creative achievement for the pen and brush. His achievement is unprec- edented. During lunch at the opening of the first Frazetta Museum in 1986, Frazetta and I discussed the Canaveral Press drawings. Frazetta commented: "I knew when I was doing them that they would be priceless. I realized this when I was drawing the image of the big bear in the snow. This is a very simple image, but the image started to take on a strange quality. It started to just come alive before my eyes. I didn't think I was doing anything different. After all, I had drawn my whole life, since I was a small child. This was something new and it was happening right before my eyes. I really don't know how to explain it; it just happened. The ink started to live." What really sets this group of drawings apart is their combination of technical virtuosity, unique compositions, exquisite execution, depth of creativity, and profound symbolic content. The "look" of a Canaveral drawing leads one back to the asian tradition of sumi-e inkwash paintings. There

is displayed a broad tonal range from light gray wash tone to complete black in the design. Frank comments: "Honestly, I never heard of this sumi-e Japanese art until you just brought it up. I probably saw art of this type, but it never made an impression. I began to water down the ink and change the tones because I was never happy with drawings that had too much contrast. I wanted to soften that harshness that sometimes comes with black and white. If you look at some of my watercolors, you'll see that I use a softer sepia line to outline the figures. A black line is just too harsh. I always wanted my drawings to be pleasing to the eye." It is easy to see precursors to this technique in almost all of Frazetta's early comic book work, especially the incredible cover to the EC comic *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29 and the "Untamed Love" story from *Personal Love* #32. Frazetta instinctively changed tonal values and utilized chiarascuro in these works; the results are uniformly superb.

However, this technique came into its full power of expression with the Canaveral drawings. By lightening the tones, Frazetta is able to give the finished art a solid, three-dimensional quality and to direct the eye to the areas of important visual interest. The high drama and violence of the subject-matter is mitigated by the extreme beauty of the result. Every drawing glows with a very satisfying beauty. These pieces have a sculptural quality, a felt presence of real life. Each one begins with a small, pencil thumbnail image. Nothing else. No photos, no reference, nothing between the initial idea and its ultimate execution on paper. Frazetta wants the whole process of drawing to be as creative as possible. He wants the freshness of discovery to be present in the finished product. Great art is always alive; it's a living thing. To achieve that quality is rare. Frazetta clarifies this a bit: "I try to work with a nervous hand. I don't want things to get too tight. That kills the drawing. My hand hovers over the surface of the paper until I can feel the hairs just graze the surface. You let your hand feel the picture and it will come to life."



Frank with original cover painting, 1992. (*Heavy Metal*, November 1990.)

Consider a few examples: The illustration depicting Tarzan rising out of a group of a dozen natives is entitled, "Lord of the Savage Jungle." It is a complete masterpiece— powerful in design, gracefully brushed, and totally hypnotic in its overall effect. The text on which this scene is based is completely irrelevant. This is where illustration meets fine art and becomes indistinguishable from it. Great art is always Fine Art, regardless of what its initial motivation is. Frazetta's brush explodes with emotion, mood, and characterization. The mysterious wonder and power of art is on full display as simple lines affect us, enrich us, and enliven us. Here we are absorbing a quality of Frazetta's powerful personality. This is not illustration; this is high Art at its highest level of excellence. This little jewel presents a magical, multi-layered expressiveness that grips both the imagination and the intellect. On a very literal level we view a dark, dramatic scene where straining and struggling natives attempt to subdue and capture Tarzan. The art is so compelling in the original that the natives' muscles seem to be alive with movement and heated exertion. A symphony of carefully coordinated lines captures our eye. The natives appear to be in constant motion. After this initial visual shock, the mind becomes

completely engaged. One begins to intellectualize about the scene: on a deeper, metaphorical level we are given an insight into the human condition and the nature of the hero, who endures, perseveres, and ultimately prevails no matter how daunting or overwhelming the circumstances. In the composition Tarzan does not look down at his earthly predicament; instead, his gaze is raised to the heavens and deep, inner strength is being summoned. His straining chest and matted hair give testimony to an almost superhuman physical exertion. An intricately woven lattice work of crosshatched lines defines

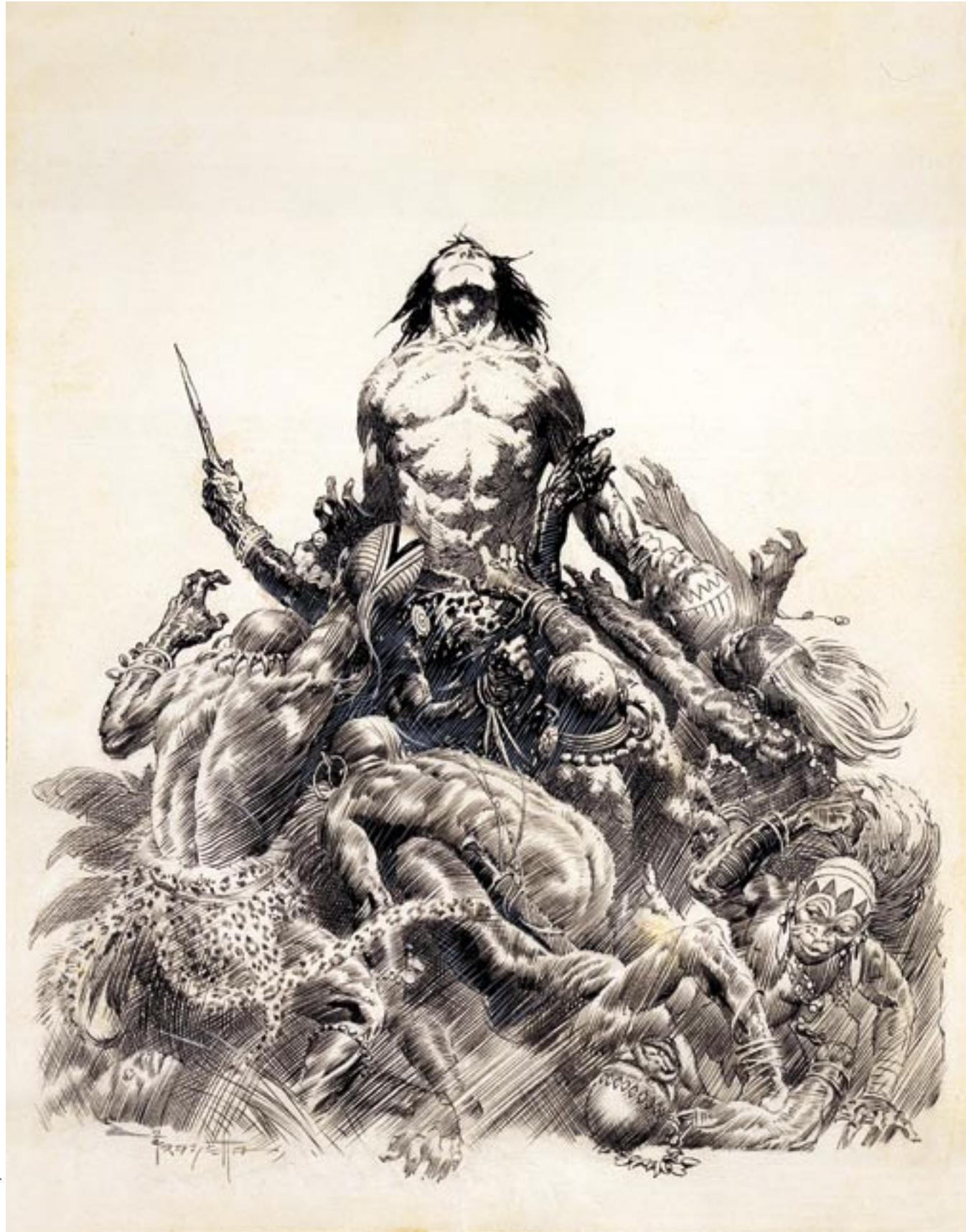
the form of Tarzan and separates him visually from the smoother brushwork on the natives. A rich, resonant light illuminates Tarzan and energizes the composition with a shimmering vitality. Frazetta has never been better. There is such richness of inspiration here. This is a picture of man overcoming his obstacles, transcending imposed limitations, and triumphing. It is a work of human affirmation. I asked Frazetta about the symbolic richness that I see in his work. His response was candid: "I'll be quite honest with you. When you point all these ideas out to me I'm rather amazed. I never really set out to put it in there, but, if you see it, it must be there. You're pretty good at this. It does make some sense and I can certainly see it now. A lot of people see things in my art and I am constantly amazed with what they say." The answer, of course, is that no artist can be completely aware of everything that goes into an original. It is a mysterious flow of soul that invests the ink and lines with an almost enchanted richness. After all, at its base, art is mysterious because creativity is mysterious. One man is disclosing part of his soul to another at a very deep level.

All the other Canaveral drawings are similar little polished jewels of perfection, little miracles. There is never a note of excess diligence or labor in these drawings; everything is accomplished with grace and ease. Another example is the drawing of the mahar raising his arm and entrancing the young virgin. This is one of Frazetta's favorite ideas and he used it later in several oil compositions. With



Artwork © by Frank Frazetta

Tooth and Claw. Brush and ink on paper, 11 x 13 inches. 1964. Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz.



Artwork © by Frank Frazetta

Lord of the Savage Jungle. Brush and ink on paper, 9 x 11 inches. 1964. Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz.

mere pen and ink Frazetta is able to convey the slimy texture of the reptilian mahar. Delicate tracteries of water fall off his upraised arm. The design is simple and simply perfect; there is nothing needed, nothing to add. Everything is in perfect balance, a perfect distillation of essentials. There are no tiny hesitations or misunderstandings present in the ink. The heavy background rendering pushes the female figure forward and outlines her form with a three-dimensional expressiveness. There is a provocative thrust in her hip that adds sensuality and erotic energy to the scene. She is so voluptuous, so earthy. The fingers and claws of the mahar are poised in a gesture of pure menace. Frazetta even manages to give a steamy atmosphere to the scene with his interesting choice of scratchy rendering lines in the background. His signature displays the same line-quality and perfectly blends into the background. This is a scene of high drama and evil portent. The theme of monsters and females can be traced all the way to Adam and Eve; it is a staple element in our consciousness. Is this illustration? No, it is much more than that. In the same way that Rembrandt's religious pictures are not just illustrations from the Bible, or the Sistine chapel is not just a cartoon version of biblical stories. A great artist often transcends his subject-matter and transforms it into a window into the soul, an insight into humanity itself. A truly creative artist like Frazetta gathers our attention and raises it to a higher level of penetration and elevates our lives in the process. Frazetta is not illustrating; he is presenting us to ourselves. In these drawings we are far away from simple technique. Technique is only the vehicle for private revelation. A great artist is always revealed in his work.

Pure perfection can also be seen in the amazing drawing of three pteradactyls attacking a sabretooth tiger. Frazetta once told me that, from a purely artistic standpoint, this drawing is probably the best. Once again, the drawing is exquisite; each form is beautifully

rendered; each line is perfectly placed. The composition is tight and seamless; the eye is immediately captured and drawn into the piece. The scene is one of swirling violence as these creatures attack and envelop the sabretooth. The pteradactyls are given an almost rocklike texture and appearance that reinforces their intimidating presence. The sabretooth has a curious and magnificent expression that seems to cry out "how dare you attack ME!" His face is an interesting blend of instinctive fear and savage rage. Frazetta's animal work is simply sensational. There is always such a palpable living presence in his animal drawings that screams with brutal life. Frazetta's carefully weighted lines are vivacious and filled with an irrepressible mercurial vitality. The ferocious circular motion of pteradactyls and sabretooth define a world unto itself, aesthetically self-contained with forms entwined in nature's dance of death. The eye is in constant movement among the varying light and dark areas, carefully placed to reinvigorate our attention at each moment of viewing. It is so intensely real in its effect that Frazetta only adds the most minor suggestion of earth and rock at the tiger's feet in order to provide a real foundation for the fight. Without that virtuoso touch, the creatures would float in a void. The overall effect would be greatly diminished. This is the type of deep insight that sets Frazetta apart from other artists. A slightly different variation of this theme, equally brilliant, can be seen on the cover drawing for *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* where thirteen sabretooths attack a mastadon, a masterful blend of savage forms.

Frazetta is famous for knowing when to leave detail out and when to include it. Much of his success in painting relies on suggestiveness and selection. A piece such as the extraordinary cover to *TARZAN AND THE CASTAWAYS* is rare in that it incorporates a wealth of detail. By far it is the most lavishly textured drawing that Frazetta ever produced. Thick vegetation, an ancient temple, exotic

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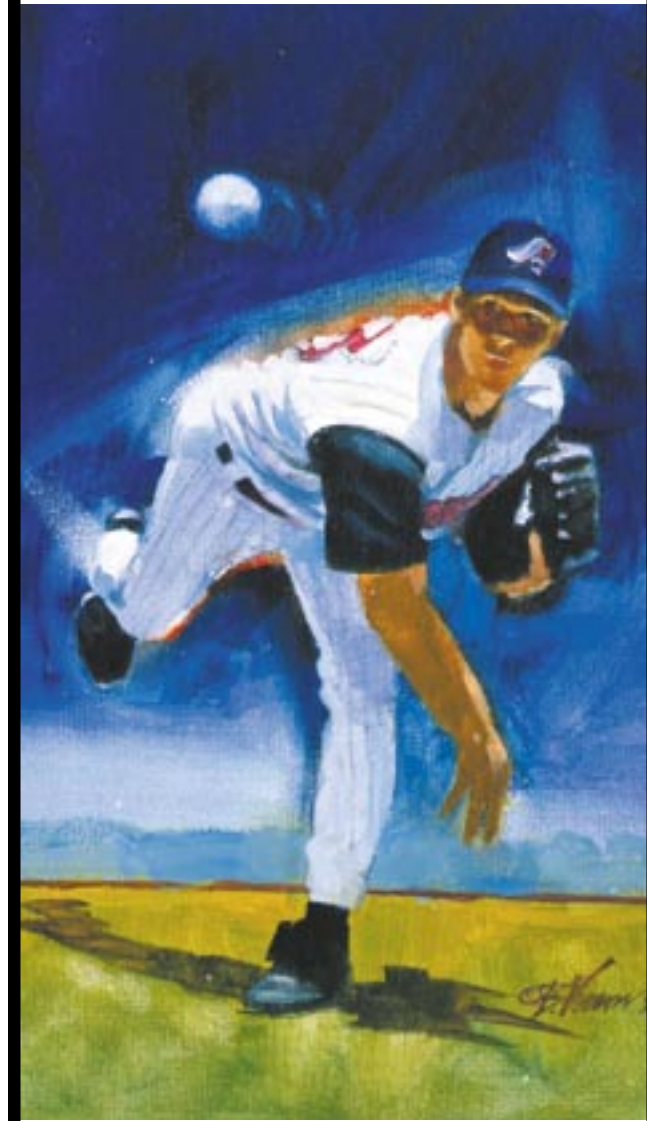
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Frank with cover art for *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29, 1996. (EC Comics, 1954.)

trees, and dappled light provide a rich and soupy atmosphere for Tarzan's escape to the jungle. This is a work of pure fun and, yet, it is a completely sophisticated tour de force that features multiple pen and brush techniques. Yes, Frazetta is showing off a bit, but the viewer loves it. Frazetta comments: "Dave, as much as you love my work, believe me when I say that I love it even more. I'm my best fan. I love looking at my stuff; it gives me a thrill, it really does. If I'm happy with a piece, then I'm pretty sure that others will like it too. The major sin in art is to be boring. I don't want to bore the audience and I certainly don't want to bore myself. That's why I try to always come up with something new and fresh. Repetition really serves no purpose." There is a bright sparkle that resonates throughout this image. Tarzan has hoisted the beautiful princess on his shoulders and presents her delicious bottom to us. We can almost feel the smooth porcelain skin as rendered by the soft and incisive lines. The dappled light ribbons on her backside only reinforce the erotic display and present a carefree sensuality. Tarzan's grip makes a soft impression on her skin; we feel the touch with our eye. We revel in the wild vitality of the scene and delight in savoring all the varied textures; each one masterfully presented. Skin, stone, metal, foliage, and hair are all real and fascinating to behold, to contemplate. Even the distinctive signature is applied in a cascading style that mirrors the steps from the background temple. Frazetta presents a world of romance and adventure that we never want to leave. I have always maintained that Frazetta transcends the limiting categories of comic book artist, or fantasy artist, or illustrator. He is, purely and simply, a creative artist of the highest accomplishment.

Each Canaveral plate contains its own rich mix of elements both visual and intellectual. We see the creative exuberance of a powerful mind at play. Every dip of the pen flows with magic. This is creative dreaming at its most profound level. There is nothing like them in all of art history. They set a new standard for creative excellence and what an ink drawing can accomplish. Their impact has been enormous. Hundreds of artists have attempted to emulate Frazetta's techniques. Whenever a serious discussion of Frazetta takes place, invariably these drawings will figure in the debate. They will continue to inspire, delight, and enchant for as long as art exists. ●

Article and photographs © 2001 by Dr. Dave Winiewicz.  
All artwork © by Frank Frazetta.



"Doc Dave" Winiewicz (left) has been energetically writing about the art and life of Frank Frazetta for over 25 years. He is the recognized authority in the field and a strong advocate for placing the body of Frazetta's work into the mainstream of art history.

Above: *Caricature of David Winiewicz*. Watercolor on board, 9 x 12 inches. A surprise gift from Frazetta, painted from memory in 1994.



Artwork © by Frank Frazetta

*The Spell of the Mahar*. Brush and ink on paper, 9 x 12 inches. 1964. Collection of Dr. David Winiewicz.



"The Grassy Place," *The American Magazine*, July 1952. Gouache on board, 14 x 16 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.

# The Illustrated World of Perry Peterson

by Dan Zimmer

It has been said that sometimes the most amazing discoveries are made completely by accident. That certainly was the case when I stumbled across the work of Perry Peterson during one of my daily eBay expeditions a few years ago. At that time, an amazing variety of illustration art was available on the site; the selection perhaps better than one is likely to see today. On that particular day, I discovered five original Peterson gouaches. Though I was only familiar with a few reproductions of his work in Walt and Roger Reed's "Illustrator in America" books, the paintings that I discovered impressed me tremendously, and I had to have them.

Today, as they hang on the walls of my studio, I am continually amazed by Peterson's technical mastery over such a difficult medium — gouache and casein. The bold brushstrokes, vibrant coloration and confident draftsmanship of this relatively lesser known artist also fueled my desire to find out more about him. The seller I purchased the paintings from had found them at an estate sale, carelessly piled up in the corner of the garage; a soiled tarp that smelled of decades-old mildew providing their only protection from the elements. As such, the paintings inevitably bear some stains and slight water damage.

Despite these inglorious circumstances, the paintings radiate a life and energy that thrill me. What information I've turned up about Peterson is only a starting point — one that I would like to expand upon in the near future (in addition to finding more of his original art!) But much like the location of the forgotten paintings themselves, the first step toward discovery is to merely peel back the tarp...

## The Early Years

Like most young artists, Perry Peterson had his personal list of art heroes that he aspired to become. Some were classical, such as Rembrandt; others, like James Montgomery Flagg, were more contemporary. F.R. Gruger, Charles Dana Gibson, Corot and El Greco were also counted among his favorites. So when he was a high school student in Minnesota in the 1920's, Peterson wasted no time enrolling in the Federal Schools correspondence course (later

known as Art Instruction, Inc.). He knew that in order to become a serious artist like his idols, an intense dedication to study and practice was essential. Around this same time Peterson attended night classes at a local art school, learning the requisite skills of oil painting and figure drawing.

His career as a budding commercial artist progressed quickly after graduating high school — freelancing for the Louis F. Dow Company in St. Paul where he painted calendar illustrations, and working in the art department of Jensen Printing Company in Minneapolis. While at Jensen, Perry was instrumental in the creation of the "Indian Girl" motif used by Land O'Lakes butter.



Perry Peterson, 1951.

In 1924, the former Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association made the decision to expand its butter market. In need of a name and trademark for the new brand of butter, a contest was held to choose the new name; the winner to receive \$500 in gold (to tie in with the color of the butter). Two contestants — E.B. Foss and George L. Swift — submitted the name Land O' Lakes; a tribute to the thousands of sparkling lakes within the state of Minnesota. Not only was the name selected as the winner, but it was so well received that the cooperative itself changed its corporate name to Land O'Lakes Creameries, Inc. An Indian maiden — in Minnesota's proud tradition of

Hiawatha and the Minnehaha tribe — was also suggested to appear somewhere on the butter's packaging.

In 1928, Land O'Lakes received a painting of an Indian maiden facing the viewer and holding a butter carton. Lakes, pines, flowers and grazing cows decorated the background. That painting by Perry Peterson inspired a new design for the butter carton, and the design remained until the spring of 1939 when it was simplified and modernized by illustrator Jess Betlach. Fifty years later, with only minor changes, his design continues to decorate Land O'Lakes products — a point of distinction when compared to most classic package art that has been endlessly revised or eliminated in the last half-century.



Perry Peterson at the drawing board, 1951.



This Week magazine illustration with two reference photographs. 1951.

But just as his career was starting to take flight, the crash of 1929 set the entire nation back a few steps. Peterson spent those years working as a freelancer for an advertising agency in Minneapolis, spending the often long periods of time in between assignments making new samples and perfecting his painting technique. The work he generated during this time would prove invaluable when later trying to scrounge up work when he moved to Chicago, Detroit and eventually New York.

Peterson met and fell in love with a Minneapolis girl named Angie, who worked as a nurse at the city's Swedish Hospital. They married in 1934, moving to Chicago where Peterson landed a job in the catalogue department of Montgomery Ward with a salary of \$50 a week. The tedium of drawing merchandise like pots, pans and bicycles only motivated him to do more figurative work. Eight months later, after showing his portfolio to an agency in Chicago, he was able to get in touch with an agency in Detroit. Peterson could now lend his skills to strong national clients like Delco, General Motors, Pontiac and other automakers in the Motor City in 1937.

This experience led in short order to yet another move... This time to New York city and into the Byron-Musser Studio. While there he did the usual drawings and comprehensives, and he did more national advertising work for General Motors, Ipana, Sal Hepatica and Schenley. During his time at Byron-Musser, Perry continued to work on his samples, expanding his technique and working with ink washes and Martin's dyes for a second color. After the birth of his first child, Penny, in 1939, Peterson knew that he had to work harder than ever now, and focus on his work full-time.

His goal was to break into the big magazines with the editorial work he longed to do. After many discouraging trips to the editorial offices around town, he finally got his big break with *Liberty* magazine in 1942. The job there involved illustrating a few short stories at first, and then evolved into working an eight-part mystery serial. More slicks enlisted in Peterson's services — *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook* and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

One day, as he was calling on *Cosmopolitan* magazine, he met Celia Mendelsohn, and event that would change his life. Celia and her brother Sidney operated American Artists Agency, a representative firm for illustrators. (Other clients of the Mendelsohn's included such notables as Walter Baumhofer, Andrew Loomis and Bradshaw Crandell.) Out of this chance meeting grew an association that lasted until the end of Peterson's life. Celia and Sidney took him under their wing, and soon recognized the elements of his work that were his signature. His flair for design and for composition made him very unique, and soon Peterson was accepting assignments from all of the top magazines. A constant source of amazement to the art editors was his uncanny instinct for fashion. He was a perfectionist, and for assignments where special attention to fashion was required, he would pay as high as two and a half times the going rate for a top model with a good wardrobe. He studied all the leading fashion magazines, and devoted more time to "window shopping" than most female contemporaries.

Despite this, Perry resisted any sort of stereotyping or pigeonholing. He did not want to be seen as strictly a fashion or glamour illustrator. "The latest fashion in the wrong pose is a total loss. The important thing in utilizing the fashion element in illustration is to employ it to enhance the whole composition." He insisted on doing a wide variety of pieces which stressed the dramatic as much as the romantic or decorative. His constant energy and inventiveness made his work exciting and dynamic, and he rapidly rose to the top of the field. At the peak of his success, Perry was promoted by his agents as "one of the ten best illustrators in the nation."



"The Woman in Green," mid-1950s. Gouache and casein on board, 21 x 24 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.



"Royal Bed for a Corpse," *The Saturday Evening Post*, October, 1954. Gouache on board, 16 x 24 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.

Perry's success afforded him many of the luxuries of the successful illustrators of the time, and he built a large home in the Danville, Connecticut wilderness, complete with a two-story high studio and large, northern-facing windows. His estate was considerable, with a lake and acres of woods that he and his children would hike in. A son, Peter, was born 10 years after his daughter Penny in 1949.

#### Peterson's Working Methods

"I think that one of the most important elements in the production of an illustration is the artist's mental approach to his work."

Perry would treat each new assignment as if it were an exciting sample of his work. Throughout the process, he would work to keep his enthusiasm and excitement up. "As far as I'm concerned, to make an illustration come off right, you've got to keep excited and enthused about it all. There's nothing more interesting or absorbing than composing and executing a job of art work — if you're sold on it."

"I don't make thumbnails, though I submit one to four sketches on an assignment." Peterson insisted that he would get no place by sitting down with a pencil in hand and doodling to try to think out the solution to a problem. It was more important for him to see the picture in his mind as a complete entity. He would get the germ of an idea and just think it out. Often the art directors would select the subject of his illustrations, but about half of the time Perry would make the selection himself.

Perry would frequently rely on his extensive scrap files (compiled over the course of 25 years) to help him visualize his illustrations. He would start by determining the location and the characters in the story, and then pull out appropriate visuals from his files. "I find that in going over this scrap, I generally slip into the mood of the story and the situation I've selected. ...It's funny the way just the sight of those few scraps of copy on the subject will bring you to the point where you start feeling the stone pavement and the cold buildings and the air of bustle as people hurry by on their way home to escape the icy bite of a cutting wind sweeping in from the East River; the wind will be whipping a few scraps of paper around the street and making ripples on a puddle left here and there from the cold rain that only stopped awhile ago; a pair of headlights will glare through the street... It's only scrap that you've cut and filed yourself, but it really starts to warm you up to your subject."

"I pick out interesting pieces of scrap: views of the Third Avenue 'El' or a skyline for background, traffic views, house fronts, street signs and the like... often, even after the art editor has selected a situation for the illustration, I'll present a sketch of an incident that I like along with a sketch of the one he's picked. The editors are looking for a good job, and they often switch to my choice."

Once Peterson had completely visualized the image in his head, and had gathered all of his appropriate reference materials, he would begin working on sketches and thinking of color schemes.

Once the sketches were approved, his next step would be to select and hire models. "Models can make or break a job at times, so I find I have the best success with professional models. They may cost a little more, but a vital looking girl who loves to act and buys clothes for their lines rather



"Politico," *The Saturday Evening Post*. Gouache on board, 20 x 16 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.



"The Ambassador's Daughter," *The American Magazine*, December 1950. Gouache on board, 29 x 21 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.



"Second Spring," *The American Magazine*. Gouache on board, 20 x 29 inches. 1954. Collection of Dan Zimmer.



Country Gentleman,  
August, 1945.

than their color, who has good bone structure and who can switch her hair around a dozen different ways in the space of a few minutes and who, no matter what the pose, can still look graceful, is just plain worth every last cent of her fee."

His photos would be taken either at his home in Connecticut, or in a photo studio in New York. "I usually have the poses pretty well thought out, but lots of times a pose may come up so naturally that it looks better than the one I had in mind. If necessary, I'll revise my composition to accommodate it."

The next step would be the rough working drawings, which would be made on progressive layers of tissue. The drawings were relatively tight and refined, and each layer would build on the next. One overlay would be a tone drawing, the others would be refinements to the original rough sketch. Finally, the line drawing would be traced down onto a sheet of Whatman board with a hard H pencil and made ready for painting.

### Mediums

Peterson's techniques and mediums changed progressively over the years. From 1930 to 1935, he worked in watercolors and oil. From 1935 to 1940, most of his work was made with Wolf crayon pencil and stump, used on a special tracing paper over a pencil working drawing. This was then mounted on board with dry mounting tissue. Color could be added after mounting.

For three or four years after that, Perry experimented with ink washes, employing a secondary color for magazine illustration work.

From the mid forties into the fifties, he worked primarily in Winsor and Newton's designer colors (gouache) and casein tempera. "These help me to really get my teeth into an illustration and to build up a solid painted quality in a picture."

"When you boil all of this down, though, you'll come right back to the fact that the original rough sketch is the hardest part of the job, because it's the backbone of it; without that, you could spend six months on an illustration and still not have anything."

Peterson would usually spend 8 days on an average assignment. A simple project might only take 2 or 3 days. "Facility will come with practice, and after all, anything worth doing at all is worth your very best efforts. The person who tries to rush his work, to see it finished in a hurry, is quite apt to find that the finished result will have the hurried appearance of work into which the producer has put more speed than brains."

"I believe that what an illustration has to say is the most important thing to think of. After that comes an exciting composition of line



Above: Two rough pencil sketches for "The Nuisance" by Paul Ernst. *The American Magazine*, June, 1950.

Above, right: Completed illustration in gouache and casein. The dog and the background of the illustration were done from reference scrap. The painting was varnished upon completion.

Right: Reference photograph.

Far right: The comprehensive color sketch, made to final size. The art director's notations regarding color are shown written in red.





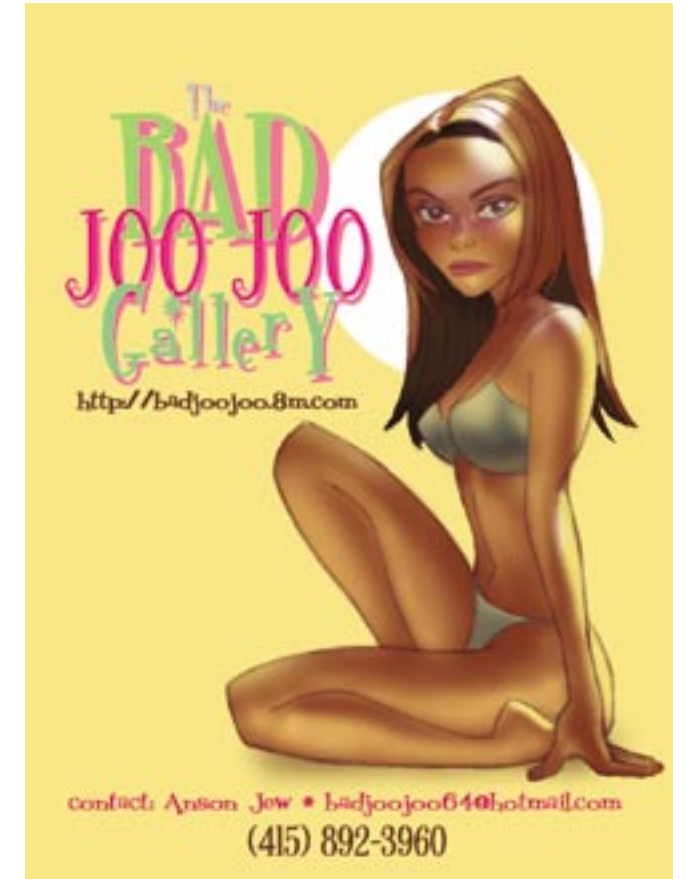
Gouache on board. 20 x 28 inches. Collection of Joel Naprstek.



"Joanne and the Stranger," *Woman's Home Companion*, July 1950. Gouache on board, 20 x 28 inches. Collection of Dan Zimmer.



Preliminary sketch for *Cosmopolitan* illustration.



and mass of color to put it over. It's the illustrator's job to get the reader interested in a story, whether through a mysterious looking, tantalizing mass of shadows with a ray of light piercing the gloom or by means of a bewitching girl with character in her face giving you a "come hither" look... It's more fun that way, and in the final analysis, I believe you should enjoy doing a picture or not do it at all."

A very heavy smoker all of his life, Perry Peterson died tragically after falling asleep with a lit cigarette and setting himself on fire in 1958. He suffered third-degree burns over most of his body, and passed away after suffering for over two weeks in the hospital.

Though his work has faded into obscurity today, I hope that this brief article will inspire others to re-evaluate the work and career of Perry Peterson. I will continue to add to this story and perhaps do an update some time in the future. Anyone with additional information is encouraged to please get in touch! ●

Special thanks to the family of Joe Kneisel, who were personal friends of the Peterson family and provided invaluable additional background information for this article.

For more information about Perry Peterson, please see:

Halsey, Jr., Ashley, *Illustrating for the Saturday Evening Post*, New York: Knickerbocker Press, Inc., 1951. (Pg. 84-85.)

Peterson, Perry, *The Technique of Perry Peterson*, Minneapolis, MN: Art Instruction, Inc., 1952.

Reed, Walt. *The Illustrator in America 1860-2000*, New York: The Society of Illustrators, Inc., 2001. (Pg. 285.)

Dan Zimmer is an illustrator and graphic designer who lives and works in St. Louis.

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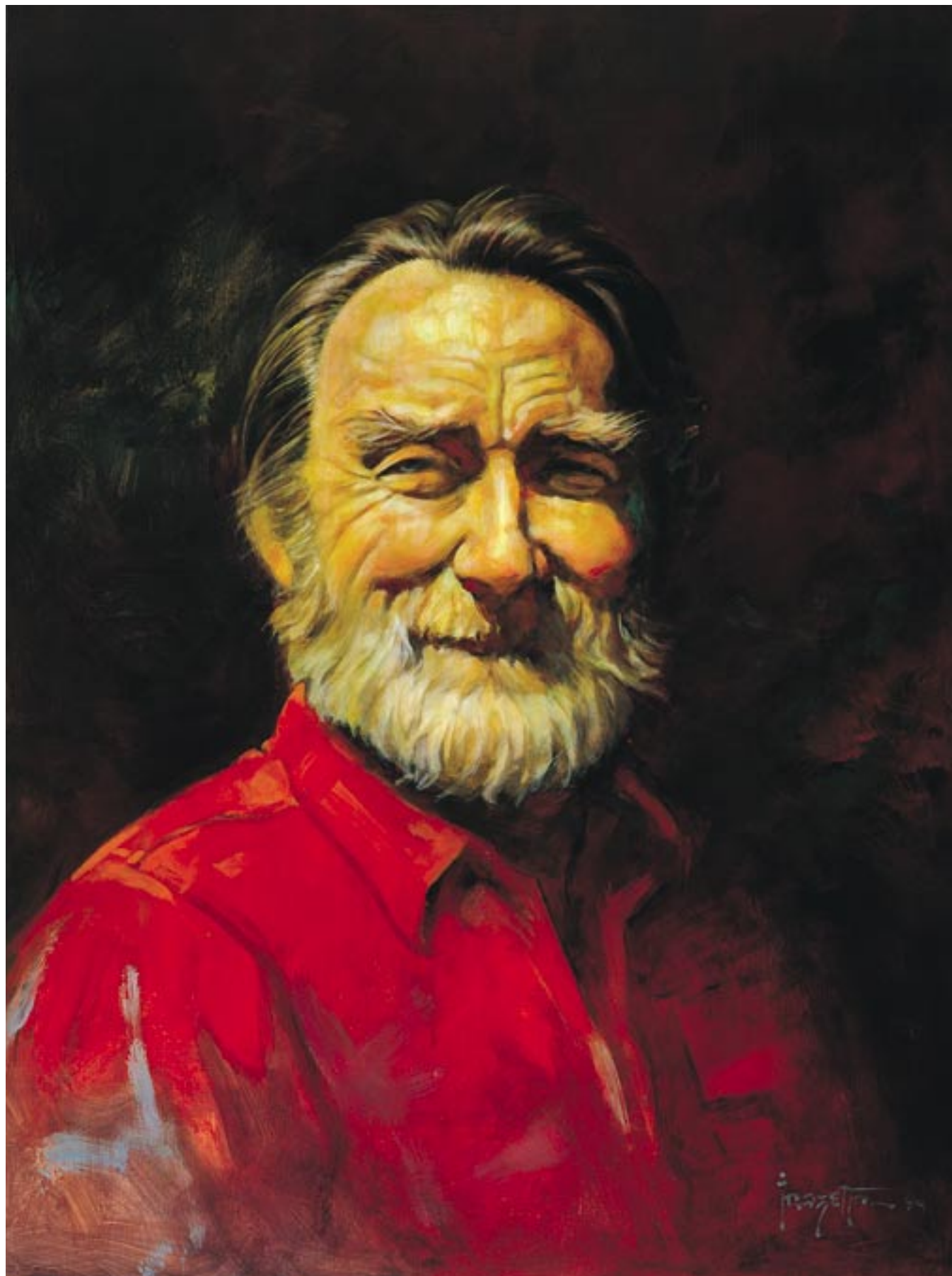
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"Portrait of Russ Cochran" © by Frank Frazetta. Oil on board, 16 x 24 inches, 1985. Collection of Russ Cochran.

# An Interview with Russ Cochran

by M. Todd Hignite

Russ Cochran has been a publisher of comic book and early newspaper strip related editions, portfolios, books and auction catalogues for nearly thirty years. His hardcover Complete EC Libraries — lavishly crafted reprint sets of the entire EC 'New Trend' comic output — were not only met with great gratitude on the part of collectors, but served as an important milestone in the study of comic art. Mr. Cochran was interviewed by Todd Hignite on the subjects of his pioneering involvement with, and promotion of, original comic art and the establishment of a serious collecting community, his publishing history, and the nature of collecting and nostalgia. His responses constitute an essential basis of historical information relating to the field. The conversation took place in the office of Russ Cochran, Publisher, West Plains, Missouri, on the afternoon of August 15, 2000.

**TH:** You began *Graphic Gallery* in 1973, is that correct?

**RC:** I believe that's correct. Or was it '71 or '73.

**TH:** Which coincided with your activity publishing EC projects.

**RC:** Right. All that started around the same time. I was a collector and a fan for I guess about four or five years, and then all of a sudden fan-produced things started to appear, so I decided I would start to try and do some of that stuff. The *Graphic Gallery* got started partly out of frustration because people would circulate lists and they would say, "Blondie daily 1935: \$100," and by a description like that you wouldn't know — you wanted to see it — it's a visual thing and you want to see it. So I thought, "Well, if people are going to collect this stuff, then there should be an illustrated list where you can see which characters are in it and exactly what the thing looks like."

**TH:** You were coming at it from strip art and comic art in general, your interests went beyond specifically EC, even from the beginning?

**RC:** Right. Well, my comic book collecting was pretty much EC. I did have some other interests, Carl Barks comics for example, but my collecting interest in the beginning was basically strip art, and

the *Graphic Gallery* was a way for me to get people to consign strip art to this auction and put it out where people could see it. And it was largely based around my own collecting interests, because in every issue of *Graphic Gallery* I would say "I'm looking for [Hal] Foster and [Alex] Raymond and [Frank] Frazetta," and so on and so on, and these are the things that I liked.

**TH:** In the early issues of *Graphic Gallery* there is an unbelievable wealth of work by Foster and Raymond, early Sundays in particular. What is the availability of such work now? Certainly you don't see such quality pages nearly as much.

**RC:** No. Raymond was one of my early favorites and I found it very hard to find much by him, and what was around was in the hands of collectors who were pretty reluctant to let any of it go. So I started on a project of getting to know Mrs. Raymond, his widow, and I found that she and her children still had quite a bit of stuff and I went to visit her back in Connecticut, and met her son who had a number of *Flash Gordons* and illustrations and things like that. Over a period of years, I guess what they eventually did was to divide up the art, and kept what they wanted to keep, what meant something to them, and then decided to sell the rest and split the

money. I was there when they were ready to sell.

**TH:** That was right about the time when *Graphic Gallery* was starting up?

**RC:** Yes.

**TH:** What incredible timing for establishing the catalogue.

**RC:** She's passed away now. I was too late to do that with Hal Foster. I had the idea of doing the same thing, but before I had a chance to do it, he had donated all his originals to The [International] Museum of Cartoon Art.

**TH:** Everything he still possessed...

**RC:** Well, what happened was, *Prince Valiant* started in 1937, and Foster never had much interest in keeping the originals. So they would come back to the syndicate, King Features in New York, and they would put them on a shelf there and younger artists would



Russ Cochran with the historic Johnny Craig original cover art to *The Crypt of Terror* #17, the first EC New Trend comic (April-May, 1950.) The title was renamed *Tales from the Crypt* beginning with issue #20.



Graphic Gallery auction catalogues through the years. (Left to Right:) Catalogue #7, 1976, Catalogue #21, 1985, Catalogue #41, 1990 and Catalogue #45, 1991.

come in to bring something in and see that and say “Oh, can I take one of these?” And by the time Foster decided to start hanging on to his originals it was like the early sixties, so that the stuff from the thirties, forties, and early fifties was just out there already. I believe before he died he had a stack of originals that was as tall as that table over there, but they were all from the sixties. He gave those to Mort Walker’s museum for fund-raising and contributions and things like that. They still have a lot of them there.

**TH:** The early pages were all, even at that point, in the hands of private collectors...

**RC:** He of course, Foster, he didn’t value the originals terribly highly, because back in the thirties, maybe to the early forties, if you wrote him a fan letter, he would send you a whole *Prince Valiant* original. Later on, he got to where he would just cut out a panel.

**TH:** Hence the single panels which come up for sale.

**RC:** Yes, those are the single panels. And often when you see them they’re signed “Best Wishes, Hal Foster.” And I don’t know whether he just got tired of wrapping up the entire thing- you know, a *Prince Valiant* original is big, almost as big as one of those movie posters — so he might have thought well, I’m not going to go to all that trouble, I’ll just cut out a single panel, which would be maybe 9” x 12”, or 8 1/2” x 11”, stick it in an envelope and send it to someone. Then after awhile he wouldn’t even do that. He got kind of old and crotchety or something, you know, and he didn’t want to mess with it, so he just gave everything to The Museum of Cartoon Art.

**TH:** That touches on something I wanted to ask you: I believe the majority of comic book art was kept by the publishing companies; was that the case with strip art generally?

**RC:** Well, actually that’s not true. Bill Gaines was the only guy that I know who kept the comic book art, and I think the reason for that, or one reason, was that there was no one back then who collected it, and another reason was that it all happened in New York City, and a storage space the size of this room we’re sitting in, in New York City, was expensive. It cost several thousand dollars a year, so if they ever did try to save some of it, some big boss would come in and say, “What’s all this stuff over here?” You know, “It’s

comic book art.” “Well, what are we going to do with it?” “Well, we don’t know, but...” “Well, toss it!” And, I’ve talked to a lot of guys who got some of their collections out of dumpsters. They would just happen to be there the day that somebody would haul some stuff out and toss it in a dumpster...

**TH:** (Laughs in disbelief) I’ve heard stories...

**RC:** ... and they would rescue what they could rescue. But Gaines was unique in that way, in that he kept every bit of EC art because he loved it, you know, and he was very nostalgic about it and he thought he might need it again for some purpose, and he paid those high New York storage prices in order to keep it.

**TH:** As someone who has been very much involved in this arena, how do you see the progression of collecting comic and strip art — did it kind of explode during this time period when you first got into it?

**RC:** It really did, and I think the thing that really spurred it was the appearance of comic conventions. Because, in the fifties, there were isolated guys here and there who collected comic strips or comic book art, maybe just a few guys, but they had no way of communicating with each other and they never got together to share their collections or anything. So, in the early sixties — and I sort of attribute a lot of this to a guy named Phil Seuling who was in New York. He was a teacher at a New York high school, and he was a comic book collector, and he started putting on these New York conventions where he would just go into one of the big hotels there and rent their ballroom for a weekend and sell tables to guys who wanted to come in and bring their stuff. And, of course, this expanded everyone’s

consciousness about what’s available, you know. I mean, there were probably people then who collected comic books who never even realized that there was such a thing as original art. If they thought about it then they realized, “Well, somebody had to draw this to begin with,” but then once you see a nice big piece of original art and you realize that some guy sat at his easel or his drawing table and worked on that for several hours or maybe even several days, then you started to realize more about what it really was.

**TH:** Sure, and it seems to me that during this time period, along with these early fan publications you mentioned, you were doing



Graphic Gallery auction catalogue #5, 1975.

this quite commendable thing of publishing and championing this important EC material — the beautiful quality of the EC art had something to do with it — people seeing the high artistic achievement of the EC work, and expanding their interests out from there.

**RC:** Right, it all worked together. I know I didn’t have the idea for doing the EC portfolios that I did, the big oversized ones... the idea for that was born after I first saw EC artwork, because the first thing I noticed when I looked at it was that there was a lot of detail in here that they didn’t hope to pick up in the comic book. No way they were gonna be able to reproduce that fine stuff, so I thought “Well, gee, other collectors would like to see it in this detail,” and that was what caused me to start doing that.

**TH:** Could you briefly describe the trajectory of your catalogues and the switch to the auctions?

**RC:** The first few were just lists, then I went into the auction format. What happened was that I asked Gaines, “Why did you keep all this art all these years?” And then the next question was “Wouldn’t it be better to have all this art strung all around the country, framed and hanging on people’s wall rather than have it in your vault in New York City?” He liked the idea but he replied that he might need to reprint a story or somebody might want to do a book and he would have to have access to the art to shoot it. I realized then that if I published it all in black and white, not in color, then he would have that ready-made. So if someone in Spain, say, wanted to print Spanish language EC comics, what Bill would normally have to do would be to go to the vault, pull out the art, have it shot, take it back to the vault, and it was a hassle. So after I did the hardcover books [the EC Libraries], all he had to do was just send them a copy of the book and they could shoot right out of the book. So, the next progression was, since we had everything recorded, we had negatives on everything, why not sell the original art? And he agreed.

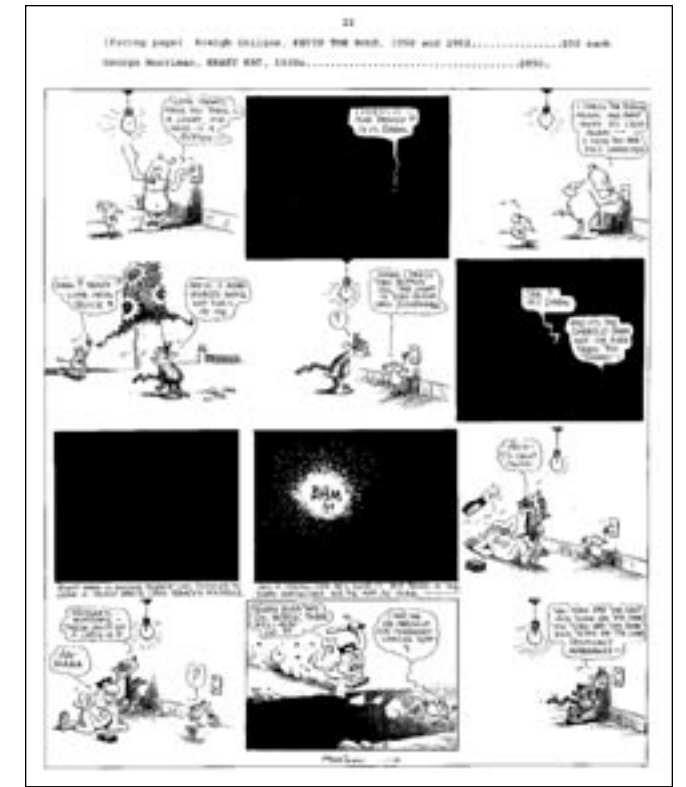
**TH:** The general auctions then came from that.

**RC:** Right, the general auctions started in ’78, ’79, something like that.

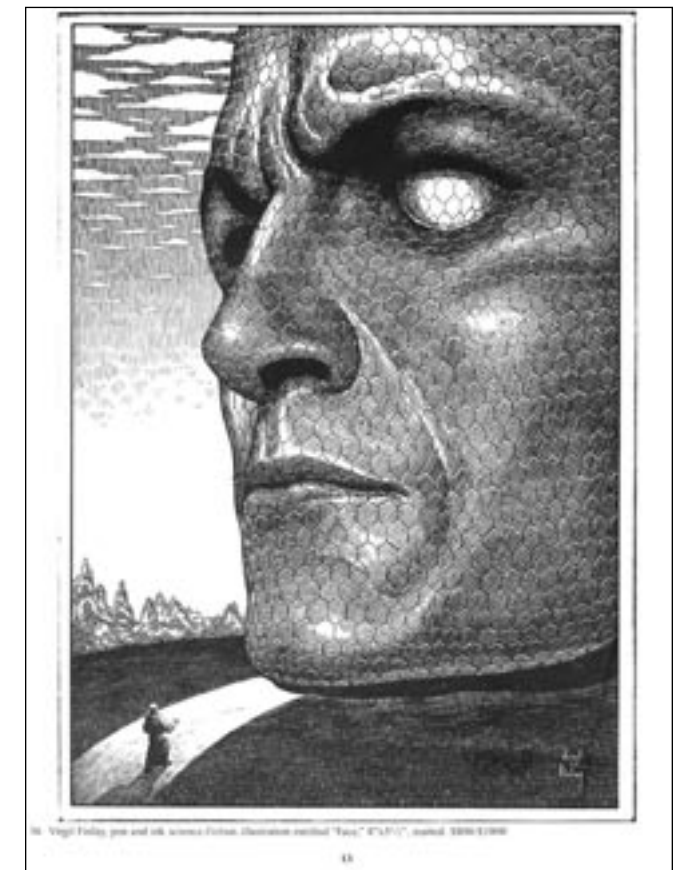
**TH:** Back in the early seventies, it was undoubtedly a smaller, tight-knit group of people involved in collecting — again, all tied in with conventions and fan publications — who seemed to also be devoted scholars of the artists and the field in general. How do you see that now — is it still a specific group of people or has the market totally opened up? I know a good deal of this work is in museum collections now and the investors are running rampant...

**RC:** Well, I think it has always ranged from people who had a scholarly interest in it to... There are guys out there that just like to read comic books. You know, it was an escape mechanism for them, it was like going to the movies or something. In fact, I’ve often noticed... We used to go to comic conventions in the sixties and seventies and some of the people that would come to these conventions looked like, you know, they crawled out of the woodwork somewhere. And then you start thinking about it and you realize that, well, yeah, these people needed superheroes. Some of them were physically crippled, some of them were mentally crippled — some of them weren’t, of course — but I mean, it seemed to be a disproportionate number of somewhat handicapped people, and they had used the comic book as a medium to escape their everyday lives.

**TH:** Carl Barks and [Graham] Ingels did paintings for your auctions, both recreations and new paintings of their characters. In the interview in the new EC book [*Tales of Terror! The EC Companion*, by Fred von Bernewitz and Grant Geissman], you describe



Graphic Gallery auction catalogue #5, page 22. George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*. Circa 1920s.



Graphic Gallery auction catalogue #58, page 13. Virgil Finlay, *Face*.





Graphic Gallery #56, page 16. Frank King, *Gasoline Alley* 11/4/24, 6 x 20 inches. A rare and early example of a single panel daily strip.

how the Ingels relationship came about. Perhaps you could talk a bit about Barks.

RC: Well, it's related to what we have been talking about. Barks started drawing *Donald Duck* in about '42, '43, something like that, and it was all routinely thrown away. He worked for Western Publishing rather than Disney because they had the license to do the Disney comics, so he would do an eight- or ten-page story, send it to Western and they would photograph it and throw it away. So when all these legions of fans came along in the sixties to pay tribute to Carl Barks and they wanted something on their wall by him, it was all gone. The only comic art by Barks around was a few stories from the sixties that people had saved once they realized it had some value. Most of this went to Poughkeepsie, New York. Of course we all dream of finding some little old man in Poughkeepsie who picked this up when they threw it out and put it in his trunk or something, and maybe he's gonna die next year and his trunk will be discovered and there will be a lot of Carl Barks art from the forties. But, it hasn't happened yet and it may never happen.

TH: Mostly what we see by Barks are roughs or things that were censored for whatever reason...

RC: Right, pages that he had to redraw. That was the same thinking that got started with the paintings. Since there was no comic art around, a collector named Glenn Bray in California asked Carl if he would be willing to do a painting for him, and Carl did. He charged him \$150 for it I believe, or something like that, and it was a painting of Donald and the nephews in a sail boat. So, one thing led to another and some other collector came over to Glenn Bray's house and said "Boy, that's nice, where'd you get that?" "Oh, I had Carl Barks do that for me." Well, within maybe a year, Carl had a waiting list of over a hundred names, and some people were on the list four or five times with pseudonyms, because Carl wanted to spread himself as evenly as he could. So if I really wanted five of them, I would put in my name, my uncle's and my cousin's, you know. Well, Carl realized that, and so, right about the time of the first *Graphic Gallery*, I convinced Carl that the way to do this was to notify all the people on his waiting list that he was now going to do paintings for auction and let them fight it out as to who got what, and at that time he was selling them for three to five hundred dollars each. Of course, the natural laws of supply and demand came in to play, and before long they were going into the thousands.

TH: I haven't seen many of those come up recently.

RC: There are two or three wealthy collectors that each own thirty or forty Barks paintings and generally when something new comes along, they snap it right up.

TH: Frazetta did some drawings for inclusion in your catalogues in the early nineties.

RC: It was a similar story with Frazetta. Frazetta liked to keep his art, and it was a problem to get anything out of him. He developed a big fan following in the sixties through the paperback covers that he did, and people wanted to have something of Frazetta's to collect. Well, I wrote to Frazetta and got to know him, went to visit him at his house several times and, you know, he had stacks of artwork all around, but none of it would he sell. So, one time I said, "Why don't you just sit down and do some drawings, pen and ink sketches and drawings, and sign them, and I'll take them to the conventions to sell them for you and take a small commission?" That was how that started. I was living in Iowa at the time and I would drive to New York to these conventions. So I would drive to Frank's place and sit there generally and watch him do half a dozen or ten or twelve or maybe more sketches, and I would take them into New York and sell them and then on the way back home I would drop off the money. That's kinda the way that started. The first published thing I did with Frazetta was that *Weird Science Fantasy* #29 coloring thing. That was because I really loved that cover and he kept it, still owns it today, and since he would never sell it, I thought, "Well ok, what's the next best thing you could have?" So I made some big, really pretty, very high quality prints, and he sat down with a set of watercolors and actually watercolored them in. That was my first project with Frazetta and it was a lot of fun working with him. He's a very interesting guy.

TH: I know he has had some physical problems. Do you know if he is working at all now?

RC: No, he had a series of strokes a few years ago and found it very difficult to draw with his right hand. Now, a friend of mine who goes to visit him regularly says he is starting to work with his left hand. I don't know, I haven't seen anything, it seems like it would be awfully hard after you've been drawing with your right hand for fifty odd years to switch to your other hand, but Frank was a good baseball player and he could switch hit, so maybe...

TH: Is everything gone now from the EC vault? The comics were all sold in the early nineties.

RC: They're all gone. Bill had saved four sets of the comics for his three children and his wife.

TH: Except *Vault of Horror* #12, right?

RC: Except *Vault* #12. The others were sold. Since that time Bill's son has died and his collection was sold, so his two daughters and his wife still have complete collections of file copies, but the others

are spread to the four winds. Again, I find it gratifying that these comics, which he saved so diligently and wrapped up to try and keep them in mint condition and so on, you know, they're literally all over the world now, and guys treasure them. That's better than having them boxed up somewhere away from the light of day.

TH: Your auctions now are pretty much consignment auctions from individuals?

RC: Yeah, they're totally consignment auctions. When I ran out of the EC material — what I've been trying to do now is get it back in a sense. All the guys who bought pieces from me, I'm talking to them from time to time, trying to get them to consign some of it back because the value's gone up a lot. There were some guys who only bought one or two pieces and there were other guys who just hocked the farm or whatever. You know, they just bought tons of stuff. One guy up by you in St. Louis has as much as anybody. I would guess he probably has fifty EC covers.

TH: Unbelievable!

RC: Yeah, and probably as many stories. He was a big player in the auctions, but he has been very slow to let anything go.

TH: Do you still collect yourself?

RC: Well, not nearly as much. I collected very ardently from the late sixties up until 1993 when I sold my collection to Steve Geppi, who owns Diamond Comics. He's got a gallery and a personal collection too, and he's personally very deep in Golden Age comics, and artwork from comics. He has a wonderful collection of his own. We were entering a period there, which I didn't know at the time — there was a big shake out in the middle nineties in comic shops. There's like half as many comic shops now as there were in

1990, because, I guess what happened was, like anything else, there got to be too many of them, more than the public could support. So the ones that were better managed survived, and the ones that weren't, didn't. And it really made a big difference for a small publisher like myself who is trying to publish these EC related things when all of a sudden your market shrinks. So it was very fortunate for me, and also for collectors, that I made that sale at that time, because he [Geppi] was able to keep going and publish all these comics which I probably wouldn't have been able to continue to do when the market started changing. And even, you know, the biggest comics, *Superman* and *Spiderman*, they're not profitable anymore. The publishers keep them going because of all the spin-off product. The movies are profitable, the lunch boxes, the T-shirts, the figurines. Those are all profitable offshoots, but the actual publication of the comic book itself... well, kids of today use TV the way we used comic books when we were kids. I was born and raised in this little town here and on a hot summer day like today there was absolutely nothing to do if you didn't have a stack of comic books. No TV. There were maybe two or three movie theaters in town but they didn't open until evening and changed their programs maybe three times a week or something, so there was just so much you could do. If you wanted to sort of mentally get away and escape, comic books were the way to go.

TH: How do you feel about thirty years of doing the auctions and collecting now, looking back? I live for this stuff.

RC: Well, the treasure hunting aspect of it is something that I've always enjoyed a lot. It's very unlikely now that it will happen, but it used to happen with more regularity in the sixties and seventies. When I was a professor in Des Moines at Drake University, I used to run an ad in the Sunday Des Moines newspaper that said

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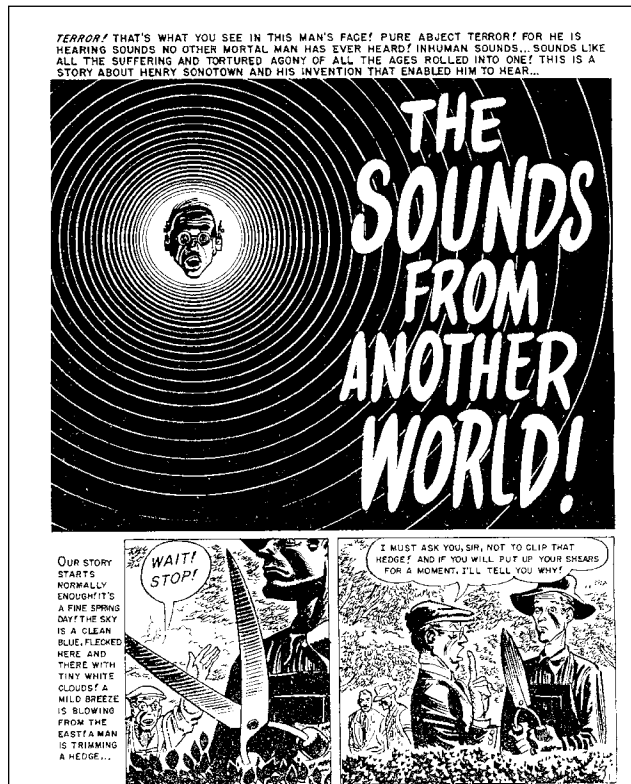
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Graphic Gallery #44, back cover. Walter Baumhofer, Doc Savage.



11. Harvey Kurtzman, "The Sounds from Another World!" 7 pages. from *Weird Science* #14 (#3). \$8000-\$10,000

Graphic Gallery #58, page 6. Harvey Kurtzman, *Weird Science* #14, page 3.

"Wanted to buy old comic books and newspaper sections," and for every hundred calls I'd get, I'd be lucky if one or two panned out. But those one or two were occasionally just mind-boggling. I remember one time a little old lady called me and we went up into her attic and she had saved the Sunday comic sections from the Des Moines Sunday Register from all through the thirties and forties. I said "Why did you save these?" and she thought maybe her grandkids would want to read them some day. But you know, they were up there stacked neatly in the attic: all the *Flash Gordons*, all the *Tarzans*, all the *Buck Rogers* strips. You know, *Bringing Up Father*, *Gasoline Alley*, all the great strips. They've been reprinted now, but back then there was no way to find them and it was just the idea that you go out and look at these places... nine times out of ten, or more than that, it wouldn't be anything worth fooling with, but that exception now and then is what we all lived for — to go and find somebody that had a room this size full of comic books all in mint condition!

TH: (Laughter)

RC: That never happened to me, but that's what happened with the Mile High Collection. Chuck Rozanski, who found that collection — it was just one of those things. This guy says "I've got a lot of comic books and I want to sell them," and there they were in mint condition, kept in file cabinets. It just happened to be humidity and temperature conditions were such that they survived. You know, he [Rozanski] bought them all for a dime apiece. Today, they're the standard by which all other comics are judged.

TH: Well, one still holds on to that hope, but today, I think eBay more than anything else is bringing everything to light.

RC: Yeah, well there aren't any secrets anymore. eBay, and of course, even back then the media would get ahold of these stories, "So-and-so just sold a *Batman* #1 for \$10,000." That's odd enough or newsworthy enough that it would make it into the newspaper. So then people would say, "I may have one of those, I'm gonna go up in the attic and look in that old trunk" or whatever. I'm sure that by this time, ninety-some percent of all the comic books have been rediscovered. But, there is still a possibility that right here in West Plains, Missouri somebody will find a huge box of them. I don't expect it to happen, but it's possible, and that possibility is what keeps me getting up in the morning.

TH: How about pulp cover paintings? Other than a few things, you never dealt a great deal with that stuff did you?

RC: No, I think that people were always a little more loath to throw away a painting than they are a drawing, and so the families of the artists kept some of that stuff. There's a fellow in New York named Robert Lesser, who did that book on pulp covers. His single-minded quest for the last twenty years or so has been pulp covers. The more lurid and the more tantalizing the better. He has collected those, and while they're certainly not common, they're not ultra-rare either. Of the lots of pulps, the *Weird Tales*, *The Spider*, and *The Shadow* are the most popular among collectors today, so these are the ones which demand the most money. But I'm sure that I'm safe in saying that ninety percent or more of that art is gone now. Of course, that being the case, the ten percent or so that has survived is worth more simply because it's rarer.

When guys like me in the sixties realized what was happening with these old comic books, I started going to the newsstand and buying five each of certain comics, just salting them away for the day that they'd be worth a lot of money. Well, of course, there were hundreds of other guys doing that too, so those comics are never gonna be worth what the older ones were. After a while I realized that

and gradually sold them off, but its... as you can see, *Tarzan* is a big favorite of mine (motions to large collection of original *Tarzan* movie posters.) When I was a little boy growing up here, I would go to a *Tarzan* movie and it would just take me away. You know, I could just completely be off on a fantasy trip for an hour and a half or however long the movie lasted. I never missed a *Tarzan* movie and they hold very nostalgic memories for me, more than the comic books. Of course, the *Tarzan* comics when I was a kid were the Dells and they weren't very exciting compared to the movies. It's a nostalgia trip and I think every time you go back and drink from that well, your thirst is a little more satisfied. You can only wring so much remembrance and nostalgia out of these things, because eventually I went on to get 16mm prints of all the Johnny Weissmuller movies and I showed them to my kids and to my friends and so on, so many times that I don't even look at them any more, because I know them by heart. All the nostalgia and happy memories and so on, I've wrung out, there's no more to wring out basically. It's kind of sad in a way, when you get to that point when you realize there's no more juice you can squeeze out of the lemon. I guess what you do is you go on to something else. These posters that I collect are just visual reminders of all the fun I had looking at those *Tarzan* movies. Of course, once you get into something, its easy to become a completist. My *Tarzan* was Johnny Weissmuller, there was no other *Tarzan*. But once I got all of the Weissmuller posters, I thought I better have some of the earlier silent movies and some of the Lex Barkers that came after that. Since I sold my collection to Steve Geppi, I've kind of resisted getting knee deep in collecting.

TH: You sold everything then? Comics, artwork...

RC: Everything. I kept my *Tarzan* posters and I kept a few pieces of artwork but other than that, I just sold it all. I think that sort of material should be passed on from collector to collector. Now, I disagree with those people who leave their collections with libraries and museums.

TH: Then it becomes a totally different thing.

RC: It's a totally different thing. The comic artists of the sixties did that as a tax write off. They could donate their originals to the University of Illinois, or whatever, and get a tax write off. But if you go now to the University of Illinois and say you want to see their collection on such and such, well it would be down in a basement in a box, where nobody can see it. If collectors have got it, it's framed and on the wall. I think that if I was an artist I would much rather have my work framed and hanging on somebody's wall where somebody can look at it and appreciate it from time to time rather than have it boxed up and sitting in a library or in a museum. Even though it is still being saved, it's not being savored, it's not being enjoyed. ●

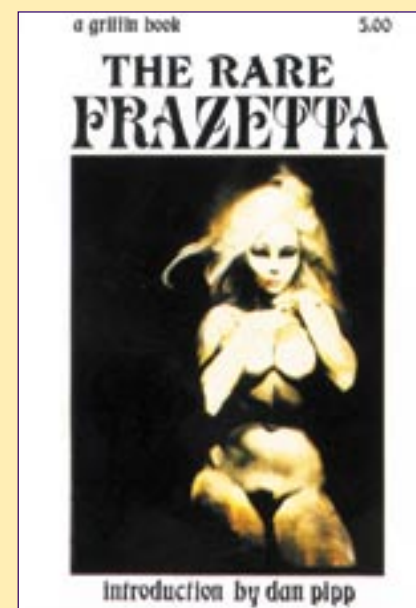
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Todd is an author and sometime curator. He recently wrote a feature article on contemporary comic art for *Art Papers* magazine and is now at work on a survey of museum exhibitions from the last twenty years containing comic book and strip art. He is also at work on a hateful novel entitled "Popular Culture."

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# From Spicy to Bland: Aspects of Culture-Trojan Self-Censorship

by Alfred Jan

Many comic book fans and collectors know about the Comics Magazine Association of America's Comic Code of 1954, when the entire industry decided to regulate product content. No such code existed for pulp magazines of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. However, one publishing empire named Culture Publications or Trojan Publications at various times (hereafter referred to as "Culture-Trojan"), and owned by Harry Donenfeld and Frank Armer, censored its own magazines. (For the most detailed history of Culture-Trojan available to date, see "DC's Tangled Roots! The unknown history of the Donenfeld publishing empire" by Will Murray in *Comic Book Marketplace* No. 53, November 1997.) In this article, however, I will show specific strategies adopted by Culture-Trojan to cope with increasing pressure by morals squads and city governments to clean up sexual titillation in the Spicy and related pulps and comics.



Left: Boxed star code. Right: No star. *Spicy-Adventure Stories* August, 1937.

During the 1936 and 1937 runs of *Spicy-Adventure Stories* and *Spicy Detective Stories*, Culture-Trojan devised a code on front covers to signify expurgated versus unexpurgated copies of a particular issue: a boxed star at the top near the month indicated the cleaned-up version, while a non-boxed star or no star meant the spicy version. Notice the two August 1937 *Spicy-Adventure Stories* covers are identical except for the boxed star to the right of "Aug." Pictorial and textual differences occur inside, where more exposed women inhabit the spicy version and more covered up women are found in the other version. In the example from "For Valor" by Robert Leslie Bellem, my favorite interior artist, "Jay M", drew one woman in bra and panties with nipples showing, and the other in a one piece teddy. The text on the same page also differ, with steam-



Left: Uncensored. Right: Boxed star. *Spicy-Adventure Stories* August, 1937.

ier words accompanying the sexier picture. Thus "For Valor" is actually two different stories in terms of language used to describe extent of female sexiness and degree of excitement engendered. Oddly, *Spicy Mystery Stories* did not appear this way, but true completists will need to collect both versions of *Spicy Detective Stories* and *Spicy-Adventure Stories*. I am not familiar enough with the fourth title in the series, *Spicy Western Stories*, to include it in this study; it was published later than the others, almost as an afterthought.

A second example of Spicy self-censorship involved borrowing an earlier cover painting and putting more clothes on the woman. She has on pink bra and panties on the cover of June 1935 *Spicy Mystery Stories*, and returns with a red dress on the cover of June 1939. The blonde whipping victim in bra and panties (*Spicy Detective Stories*) is reprised April 1939 as brunette in a torn green dress. In addition, the male villain no longer wears a mask and sports a different colored tie. But try as they might, I do not believe Donenfeld and company succeeded in toning down one of the most violent covers in the title.

The Spicys became the tamer Speeds beginning January 1943 and ending for good in the late 1940s, while the already tamer *Private Detective Stories* began in June 1937 and ran through June 1949. By the mid-1940s, most sexually daring pulps had retrenched, including Culture-Trojan's. Even exposed leg and thigh were deemed too risqué and had to be covered up, as in May 1941 *Private Detective Stories* and June 1945 *Speed Detective*, where the couple also ended up in a different location.

Most pulp magazines were gone by the mid-1950s, eclipsed by television, comic books and paperback books. Culture-Trojan had moved into comics by this time, and saw fit to re-use several *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers for at least two pre-Code titles, *Crime Mysteries* and *Beware*. The woman on the cover of *Spicy Mystery* February 1941 sported a two-piece outfit (not underwear) only to return on *Beware* No. 16 in a red dress, essentially covering her midriff and upper thighs. The murderess on *Spicy Mystery* November 1937 has a teddy showing lots of leg, but wears a full



*Spicy Detective Stories*, May, 1935  
Artist: H.L. Parkhurst



*Spicy Detective Stories*, April, 1939  
Artist: H.L. Parkhurst



*Private Detective Stories*, May, 1941  
Artist: H.J. Ward



*Speed Detective Stories*, June, 1945  
Artist: H.J. Ward



*Spicy Mystery*, November, 1937  
Artist: H.J. Ward



*Crime Mysteries* #9, September, 1935

length dress on *Crime Mysteries* No. 9. Ironically, Culture-Trojan censored its own cover imagery BEFORE the Code demanded it.

One last example must be discussed, something I learned from Will Murray's article. The June 1949 issue of *Private Detective*, specifically a panel from a Sally the Sleuth episode called "Death Bait," has the honor of being the only pulp with content reproduced in Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (SOTI). The good Doctor found the panel in which a milkman discovers a raped and murdered woman too injurious for young readers. Not surprisingly, the pulp version showed the female corpse with well defined breasts and dress hiked up high, while the SOTI reproduction revealed less, along with flatter breasts. Wertham took this image from *Crime Smashers* No. 1, another Culture-Trojan pre-Code title, which, in turn, re-ran it from *Private Detective*. Here, we have double irony, because Wertham condemned an already cleaned-up picture! Just imagine the coronary he would have suffered if he had seen the more shocking original!

As additional background, I must note that Sally the Sleuth's early exploits in *Spicy Detective Stories* of the 1930s usually ended with her wearing only bra and panties after villains had ripped off her dress. However, in "Death Bait," she kept her dress on throughout, but the various female attack victims were much more exposed in the pulp than in the comic book. Thus the entire comic strip had already been de-sexualized prior to Dr. Wertham's zeroing in on one instance.

This brief survey raises many questions. Why was *Spicy Mystery Stories* spared the boxed star treatment when it was considered the most notorious of the group? Why were dual issues only restricted to 1936 and 1937? How was the boxed star actually used? Some believe it identified issues distributed to Bible Belt states and other more conservative parts of the country. This seems plausible, since



Left: *Private Detective Stories*, June, 1949. Uncensored panel.



Right: *Crime Smashers*, #1. Censored panel as reproduced in *Seduction of the Innocent* by Frederic Wertham, M.D.

in many people's minds, morality with a capital M only means sexual morality, not for instance, the morality of helping those who cannot help themselves. Another theory says those issues were subscriptions sent through the mail and had to pass postal censors. This theory sounds reasonable if the magazines had subscription coupons, but they did not. Does that mean no subscriptions were offered? I am not sure. Perhaps they designated copies sold over the counter and the others were under the counter. Because company records are not available, we will never know the real reason for the boxed star code.

Questions regarding choice of covers for reprinting are intriguing as well. *Spicy-Adventure Stories* also re-used a mid-1930s cover for a late 1930s issue, but the degree of body exposure was almost identical. Why? Why did one *Speed Adventure Stories* re-use an earlier *Spicy-Adventure Stories* cover image without any changes at all, while the other Spicys did not do the same? Why were only a few *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers used for pre-Code crime and horror covers, and why those particular ones? One issue of *Crime Mysteries*, cleaned up of course, borrowed from TWO different *Spicy Mystery Stories* covers, but this time, I will invite readers to identify the three issues involved. Why was this done, and why only once? Ultimately, such questions may never be answered, since they may have been spur of the moment editorial decisions which were not recorded or justified in writing. Even if these records could be found, the person responsible is no longer around to help us.

Alls the pity that the Spicy publisher buckled under to societal pressures, but for better or worse, cultural artifacts, especially those sold in the marketplace, reflect attitudes of their time. Culture-Trojan started out pushing the boundaries of taste with their girly magazines, sexually charged pulps, softcover digests, and even hard-bound books, but we will never know what new directions it would

have taken readers and collectors. ●

Alfred Jan is co-editor, with Bill Blackbeard, of *Footprints on a Brain: The Inspector Allhoff Stories* by D. L. Champion, Adventure House, 2001, a collection of short stories originally published in the detective pulp called *Dime Detective Magazine*.

# Scenes from the Life of a Collector

by Walker A. Martin



Eleanor and Walker Martin at Pulpccon #1, with painting by Graves Gladney.

The auction room in the hotel is crowded with young science fiction fans as item after item of material related to Science Fiction is auctioned off to the highest bidder. The Collector, obviously older than most of the SF fans, watches the proceedings with a bored expression. With no warning, two pulp paintings are offered for bids. The Collector is stunned, the bored expression wiped off. The paintings appear to be from detective pulps and are the most beautiful and interesting things the Collector will ever see at a New York City Lunacon. No one else in the crowded room appears to show the slightest interest in the paintings. No one accepts the minimum bid of \$50.00, not even the Collector, who has lost the power of speech and movement.

After the auction is over the Collector obtains one of the paintings for \$50.00. He can't believe his good fortune. The painting is large, the canvas pinned to a heavy display board. It appears to be from the 1930s. On the train back to Trenton, New Jersey, he cannot stop looking at and talking about the painting. He and his friend are so absorbed that they miss their Trenton stop and continue on to Philadelphia. The conductor makes them pay additional money to cover the trip to Philly. Then they have to get off, buy tickets and

go back to Trenton. The Collector's wife is not amused by his late-ness and doesn't want the painting on the wall. Over the years, this will only be the first of over one hundred such discussions involving pulp paintings, paperback paintings, digest magazine paintings, and all sorts of interior magazine artwork.

Eventually, the wife even comes to appreciate much of the art and allows it to be hung in living rooms, family rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms and hallways. However, she draws the line and refuses to display paintings depicting insane, deformed cretins whipping young nude women.

The Collector often wonders why so many women object to these paintings...

## First Pulpccon Convention, June 1972, St. Louis, Missouri

The VW Beetle hurtles along the highway as the Collector and his wife eagerly speed toward Pulpccon #1. Well, maybe the Wife is not too eager, but the Collector keeps her amused with his theory of how each pulp magazine has a very distinctive scent. After two days of hard driving, they stumble out of the VW and meet a balding man at the hotel registration desk. He is very excited and close to tears. Ed Kessel planned and organized Pulpccon #1, and he was certain no one was going to come.

By Sunday morning the Collector is broke, having spent every last dime on hundreds of books and magazines. In fact, most of this



Edward Kessel, Rusty Havelin and Eleanor Walker at Pulpccon #1.

material will not fit in the VW and will have to be mailed back to Trenton. The Collector knows that nine paintings by Walter Baumhofer will be auctioned, so he starts to frantically beg and borrow money from his wife. He ends up buying two paintings from *Dime Mystery* and *Dime Detective*. Total price: \$230.00. The other seven paintings were sold at prices not much over the \$75.00 minimum. The rest of his life, the Collector will curse his stupidity for not somehow obtaining the other seven paintings. It is a mistake he will not often repeat.

## Sixth Pulpccon, July 1977, Akron, Ohio

The Wife is listening for the hundredth time about how great it would be if she would consent to using a perfume made out of pulp paper shreds. In disbelief she listens to her husband's latest idea... a tattoo of one of his favorite pulp magazine covers on his chest. He goes on to explain the back cover, showing some type of crazy advertisements, would be on his back with the spine showing the magazine title, date and volume number on his side. Since these ideas do not receive a favorable response, the Collector wanders outside to the hotel parking lot. He has been hoping to buy a pulp painting at this convention, but so far with no luck. He has asked everyone the same stupid question... "Do you know of anyone with pulp paintings?" He has finally resigned himself to the fact that there are no paintings available when a car drives into the lot. Recognizing the newcomer, he asks the stupid question and is amazed when he is told that here is a pulp painting in the car trunk. Not even letting the guy go into the hotel and register, the Collector buys the painting by Walter Baumhofer right out of the trunk for \$400.00. Practically crying with joy, he brings it into the huckster room and shows it to pulp artist guest of honor, Norman Saunders. Saunders is astounded about the story of buying a Baumhofer *Dime Western* painting out of a car trunk in the hotel parking lot. Staring at it he finally mutters, "Christ, Baumhofer was great." Considering how great Saunders was in the field of magazine illustration, this is fine praise.

## Cherry Hill Pulp Convention, August 1984

The Collector is just back from the convention and he is on vacation. Somehow he has managed to buy and trade for ten pulp paintings. Artists such as Raphael DeSoto, Norman Saunders, Walter Baumhofer, Lyman Anderson and George Rozen. Paintings from magazines like *Dime Detective*, *Argosy*, *Fifteen Western Tales*, *Adventure* and *Detective Short Stories*. From the couch, as he reads an issue of *Adventure*, he can see the ten bright new paintings lined up against the bookshelves. Unfortunately, he has run out of wall space and cannot hang them. Reading is the great solitary pleasure, but so is looking at original art, one of a kind and so unique. As usual, after a couple of hours of reading, the pulp smell — acting as a drug — weakens his hands and he falls asleep in a state of bliss, the pulp magazine lying open on his face.

## Paperback Convention in Saddle Brook, New Jersey, 1983

For two days the Collector has been pestering the pulp artist to sell one of his *Black Mask* paintings that is on display at the convention. The Collector has tried everything and nothing has worked. He has offered money, another painting in trade, food and alcohol. Finally the Collector drives home, digs up an old letter from the artist that was written years ago, and uses it to prove that the artist knew the Collector and therefore for old time's sake and in the spirit of friendship, the painting should be sold to him. (The Collector knows no shame.) He realizes the artist must think he is pathetic, but it works. The Collector still has the painting, one of three from *Black Mask*.



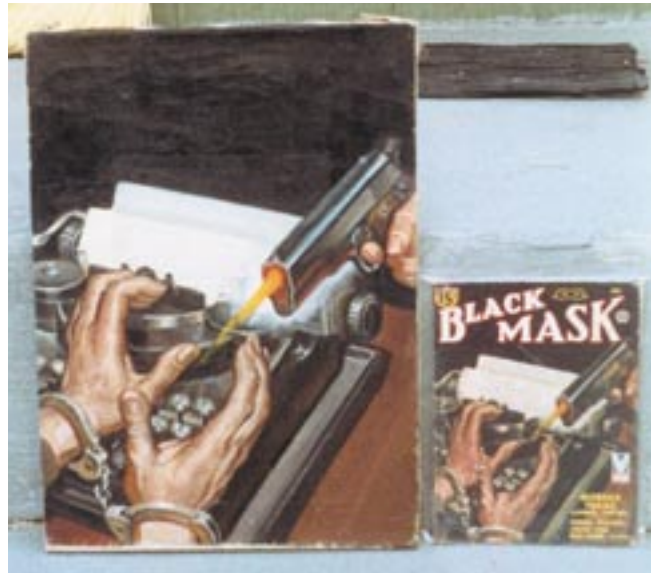
Walker and Norman Saunders, Pulpccon #6, July 1977.



Walter Baumhofer and wife, Cherry Hill Pulp Convention, 1984.



Walter with Raphael DeSoto, mid-1980s.



Original *Black Mask* pulp cover by Raphael DeSoto.



October 1997. Above Walker's head is the first original pulp cover he ever bought.

### Pulpcon #18, July 1989, Dayton, Ohio

It is four days before Pulpcon and the Collector has completely thrown his back out. Even the slightest move is painful and the muscle spasms are unbelievable. A doctor and a chiropractor both state the same prediction, that the Collector will not be driving 600 miles to Dayton, Ohio. However, since there might be a pulp painting at the convention, he stocks up on prescription pain killers, muscle relaxers and visits to the chiropractor. Moving in slow motion, with his back wrapped up like a mummy and doped to the gills, the drive takes sixteen hours instead of the usual ten. Halfway there he begins to realize that there is no way he can continue.

During the nearly 20 minute rest and stretch breaks, he tries to park the car near motels in case he has to give up and lie down for a week or so. Somehow the collecting urge and mania drives him on and he arrives in Dayton. During the next four days, except for meals and three hours of sleep each night, he remains standing because sitting is too painful.

After all this torture, not a single pulp painting surfaces during the entire convention.

### Real Estate Agent's Office, 1989

The Collection is literally pushing the Collector, the Wife and the children out into the street. There is not a foot of space for another book, magazine or painting. The house must be sold first and then they can buy a far bigger place. Real estate agents have been trying to sell the house for almost a year. Finally they call a conference and explain to the Collector that he must put the Collection into storage. It seems that the Collection is scaring away potential buyers... They object to the violent paintings and the thousands of books and magazines. The agents think the Collector is crazy (they call him "unique") but more important, he thinks they are



Walker's children with *Adventure* pulp magazine and original cover painting.

crazier. He explains that putting his collection into storage would be like asking him to cut off his right hand. He goes on to say that the potential buyers are ignorant and have absolutely no idea what they have been privileged to view. But there is nothing to worry about because he has the perfect solution...

He changes real estate agents.

### October 1989

The Collection moves into new quarters, a five bedroom barn of a house with the works: two car garage, family room, living room, dining room and full basement. In a feat worthy of the labors of Hercules, the Collector—despite severe back problems—personally packs and moves well over a thousand boxes of books and magazines. Somehow he manages to unpack and shelve this mass of reading material plus hang paintings throughout the house. Professional movers take care of a few hundred boxes that are too heavy, plus all the furniture and bookshelves. The neighbors watch in disbelief and astonishment as the Collector hires a building contractor to rip out the two car garage and turn it into a 20 x 22 foot library. The Collector explains to those who ask, "I didn't buy a new house to park our cars in it." Of course, no one understands what he is talking about.

### 1996

The Collector's daughter has just received her second tattoo. She now has a dragon on her ankle and a lizard on her shoulder. He is very disappointed. She knows he has been talking about his pulp painting tattoo ever since she was a little girl. Why didn't she get a *Black Mask* cover tattoo?

### ...Later in 1996

The Collector walks through the house in fear. The new library is full of books, pulps and paintings. The enormous basement is full, as are the living room, family room and bedrooms. He realizes there is no more space. Paintings and books are stacked on the floor, some spilling over in a chaotic mess. He realizes for the thousandth time that he is a very crazy person. No normal human addictions for him! Most people are addicted to drinking, shopping, drugs, gambling, sex, parties, work or watching TV. Even other collectors do not understand the Collector. He realizes with a shudder, once again, that it is time to move... ●

— by Walker A. Martin, © 2001

Walker Martin is an avid collector of pulp magazines, paperbacks and original art. He lives in a house jam-packed to the ceiling with neat stuff in Trenton, New Jersey.

### Editor's Note:

This story was the first writing ever contributed to this magazine. I had intended to run it in issue #1, but was forced to leave it out due to lack of space. I am happy to finally publish it here.

I and M. Todd Hignite visited Walker at his home in Trenton during the spring of 2001, and that awe inspiring visit helped to propel me to produce this magazine. Walker was a very gracious host, and we spent a few hours looking at his incredible collection, mouths agape. I have never seen more pulp magazines, paperback books or original pulp art in my life. His intense dedication to collecting is truly inspirational, and it showed me that if I am persistent, perhaps I, too can fill my house to the ceiling with cool stuff!

— DZ



Pulpcon #2, 1972. First *Doc Savage* cover by Walter Baumhofer—high bid, \$250!

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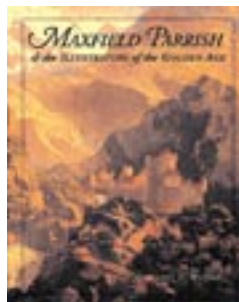
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## Maxfield Parrish and the Illustrators of the Golden Age

By Margaret E. Wagner

Pomegranate Books  
Hardcover, \$39.95



*Maxfield Parrish and the Illustrators of the Golden Age* by Margaret E. Wagner is an 120-page homage to the classical illustrators of late 19th/early 20th Century children's literature. But while Parrish's work serves as the centerpiece to this rich retrospective, the art of his contemporaries such as Howard Pyle, Anna Whelan Betts, N.C. Wyeth and Jessie Willcox Smith is also showcased.

The first half of the book gives a thorough and enlightening treatment of the development of children's book illustration during this period. Born in Philadelphia in 1870, Parrish was an only child whose parents exposed him to music and literature at a very young age. After enrolling in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1893, his early commissions included doing a mural for Philadelphia's Mask and Wig Club. It was this same year that Parrish's celebrated oil painting "Moonrise" was exhibited at the Philadelphia Art Club.

Parrish got his start in children's illustration with L. Frank Baum's *Mother Goose in Prose* in 1897, the success of this work enabling him to illustrate Washington Irving's *Knickerbocker History of New York* in 1898. After moving with his wife, Lydia, to an enchanted part of New England he referred to as "The Oaks," Parrish continued to produce a steady stream of work. His illustrations were reprinted in a variety of media — from books and magazines to calendars and murals — as they also breathed magic into the pages of children's fairy tales and poetry books.

Parrish's style was whimsical and fantastic, with Wagner describing "his well honed powers of observation combined with his innate love of nature... beautifully evidenced in his art of whispering forest... portraits of ancient trees." Advances in printing technology during his career also enabled his vibrant illustrations to be better reproduced in print than had been possible in earlier years.

The middle portion of *Illustrators of the Golden Age* features a gallery of the different illustrators' art, printed alongside excerpts from their selected books. It is an interesting technique that Wagner uses, helping to recreate the same sensory experience one might receive from reading the original work and seeing the illustration alongside it. The works of Wyeth, Willcox, Pyle and others juxtaposed with Parrish's gives the reader a true sense of the enormity and breadth of talent that existed during this true "golden age" of illustrative history. The stunning quality of the color reproductions is also first-rate.

In studying the book, one tends to get the impression that there is enough material here for Parrish to have the book all to himself. Despite this, the shared attention helps place Parrish in a context that illuminates himself and the period as a whole.

"In the heady days that became known as the Golden Age of Illustration, illustration was, in fact, one of the most distinctive, internationally recognized, and widely appreciated American arts. And Maxfield Parrish scenes, Parrish people, Parrish gnomes, dragons, genies and giants occupied a unique, independent niche in this colorful, evocative world," Wagner writes. ●

— Matt Zimmer

## The History of Mystery

By Max Allan Collins

Collector's Press  
Hardcover, \$45.00



Following in the tradition of other recent volumes from Collector's Press, *The History of Mystery* combines a comprehensive history of the mystery fiction genre with a spectacular gallery of full color illustrated images. Collector's Press have hit upon a winning formula, and this book is as much of a delight as *The Great American Paperback*, *Science Fiction of the 20th Century*, *Pulp Culture* and other similar surveys.

As an award winning mystery author himself (Max Allan Collins has earned nine Private Eye Writers of America "Shamus" nominations, and was a Mystery Writers of America "Edgar" nominee in both fiction and non-fiction categories) the author knows his subject well. As he states in his introduction, the focus of his book "is strictly on sleuths. No cops, only crooks who solve crimes, and very few one shot mysteries." He is clearly not out to chronicle every aspect of the crime fiction scene. Ten of the "movers and shakers" of the genre are profiled, and as the author states, "These choices reflect my bias and I stand behind them unapologetically."

Collins explores the fascinating history of the detective fiction genre, from the first modern detective book (the "true crime" *Mémoires* by François Eugène Vidocq in 1828) to Edgar Allan Poe's fictional detective Dupin (from *Murders in the Rue Morgue*) to tracing the modern detective story in the "memoirs" of real-life private eye Allan Pinkerton. While the emphasis is clearly on books and magazines, TV, radio and movies are also examined. The character's many creators and each major author of the genre is featured in their own small chapter... The careers of Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, Earle Stanley Gardner and more are examined in short biographies.

Mixed in with the fascinating history, and of particular interest to fans of illustration art, are the scores of high quality reproductions which pack the book's 200 pages. Covers from hundreds of pulps and paperbacks, comic strips, movie posters and more are all represented with unusual and not-often-seen images. The illustrations are large and the quality of the color printing is first rate. As the author states in his introduction, the images chosen are not necessarily the most rare or significant, but are to him the "most fun." There are "a disproportionate number of pulp covers and funky fifties and sixties paperback art. As a private-eye writer, I have a great fondness for the wonderfully sleazy, girls-and-gats paperback covers." His choices are fantastic.

As an overview of the genre, *The History of Mystery* is a wonderful introduction, and the tremendous variety of illustrations is an inspiration. ●

— Dan Zimmer

## Pin-Up Dreams— The Glamour Art of Rolf Armstrong

By Janet Dobson and Michael Wooldridge

Watson-Guption Publications  
Softcover, \$39.95

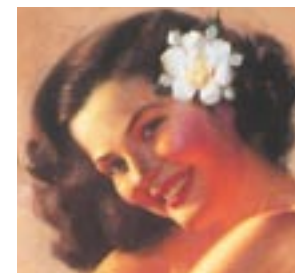


In the introduction to *Pin-Up Dreams — The Glamour Art of Rolf Armstrong*, Charles Martignette describes Armstrong's ability to paint "images of stunningly beautiful women... so powerful that they could stop sidewalk traffic."

This hefty new volume provides ample proof of Armstrong's show stopping talents.

Born the son of a tugboat captain in Bay City, Michigan, Rolf (born John Scott) Armstrong's artistic interests began early with adolescent sketches of sailors, boxers and cowboys. As a young adult, he enrolled in the Art of Institute of Chicago, afterward moving to New York to launch his voluminous magazine career.

In *Pin-Up Dreams*, we are treated to over 300 full-color reproductions of Armstrong's work, making it clear why he was, at one time, one of America's highest paid commercial artists. But authors Janet Dobson and Michael Wooldridge have made *Pin-Up Dreams* more than just a printed portrait gallery. The 246-page book is also a thoroughly researched biography of Armstrong's life



and 59-year career as an illustrator as popular as Gil Elvgren and Alberto Vargas in his day.

Christened the "Father of the Calendar" girl by the New York Times, the book gives rich and thoughtful consideration to the many different aspects of Armstrong's career. Beginning with the "Dream Girl" calendar for Brown & Bigelow in 1919, the term eventually came to represent the style of his work. Throughout the '20s and early '30s, Armstrong's images seemed to reflect the youthful charm of the "Flapper Girl," in addition to a confident, art deco sophistication.

Though his legacy was understandably forged by the power of his sensual pin-ups, Dobson and Wooldridge also selected a multitude of other pieces that comprised Armstrong's expansive career as a commercial artist gracing the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Screenland*, *Photoplay* and others. Noticeably absent from this book, however, is the sense of clutter often experienced with the inclusion of a large number of reproductions. At no point in *Pin-Up Dreams* is the quality of the art greatly comprised for the sake of space.

Readers will also appreciate the lively, entertaining quotes from Armstrong that start off each chapter. "There should be two artists — one to kill off the other before he ruins the picture." It is indeed Armstrong's larger-than-life persona (he was at one time a professional boxer) that often found him in the company of actors and other celebrities throughout his celebrated career. Included in this already sumptuous book are also rare photos of Armstrong and his models at work — from the beautiful calendar girls to even Boris Karloff in the make-up for *Frankenstein*. Nonetheless, it was Armstrong's work as a "glam-

## Original Paperback Book Paintings For Sale

Original Paperback book art from the 1960's through the 1990's. Artists represented are Don Daily, Robert Foster, Robert Maguire, Joel Iskowitz, Bob Larkin, Elaine Duillo, David Grove, Glenn Harrington, Ron Lesser, Barnett Plotkin, Victor Kalin, Kazuhiko Sano, Lou Marchetti, Robert Abbett, Mike Ludlow and others.

To view some of these images, go to our website at [www.graphiccollectibles.com](http://www.graphiccollectibles.com).

A color catalog of a number of the paintings is available for \$15.00.

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**Robert McGinnis**  
*So Rich, So Lovely, So Dead*  
Dell Books Early 1960's



## Book Reviews, continued

our artist” that forged his legacy.

“If Armstrong had simply wanted to paint beauty he could have chosen any one of a number of other subjects. But he obviously loved working with attractive women and loved making them even more attractive in his art. Whether he called it that or not, it wasn't really beauty he was painting. It was glamour,” the authors write.

Throughout the book, the theme of female or idealized beauty as an ideal or a concept is revisited again and again in the context of Armstrong's work. In a special essay written by Armstrong himself, originally printed in the February 1930 issue of *Screenland*, he presents his own take on the notion:

“To try to analyze this beauty, and translate it upon canvas in terms of paint or pastel, has been the lifelong struggle of many an artist. From my own observation and experience, I am inclined to believe that perception, originality, color sense, technical facility — indispensable as they are to the artist — are incomplete equipment for this particular undertaking.... no two beautiful women ever look exactly alike.”

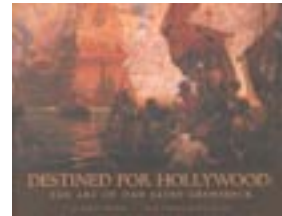
*Pin-Up Dreams* is a defining work about an artist who, in the 1920s, defined the ideals of feminine beauty for the next half-century. An additional introduction entitled “Notes to the Collector” also suggests that this book is for the serious art enthusiast, but remains accessible to anyone wanting to know more about one of American illustration's great practitioners.

“The success of Rolf Armstrong's art reflects the popularity and enormous public acceptance of his beautiful images of the ideal American girl and epitomized for many the spirit of the 20th Century,” Martignette writes, “In the 21st Century, art historians and the academic art community will continue to recognize Rolf Armstrong's invaluable contribution to the field of American Art.” ●

### Destined for Hollywood— The Art of Dan Sayre Groesbeck

By Robert Henning

Santa Barbara Museum of Art  
Softcover, \$19.95



— Matt Zimmer

Once a prominent member of the California art scene, Hollywood visualization artist Dan Sayre Groesbeck is the subject of *Destined for Hollywood: The Art of Dan Sayre Groesbeck*. Author Robert Henning, with help from the Cecil B. DeMille Foundation, attempts to piece together conflicting bits of information regarding Groesbeck's life, while at the same time showing the many different sides of an artist who was primarily known for his contributions to Hollywood's Silver Screen in the '30s and '40s.

This, as Henning notes in his introduction, was no easy task. Groesbeck's creativity and irreverence, apparently, was not limited to his art; in fact, he fictionalized many of the details of his personal life. Throughout the book, Henning struggles to find the truth behind some of Groesbeck's more outlandish assertions; but due to a lack of any other information the author must simply run with what he can find.

But Groesbeck's tall-tales — rather than limiting the scope of Henning's efforts — help us learn more about the artist through this rather humorous personality quirk. In 1919, when he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 85th Battalion to fight in

Russia against the Bolsheviks, he became a member of the Roadhouse Minstrels, a traveling theater group that included actor Raymond Massey. Groesbeck, not yet established in his career, painted scenery and helped in the construction of sets. Despite being a virtual unknown, he received the following write-up in a European newspaper after a production of *In Flanders Fields*:

“The success of the whole entertainment was made possible by the extremely clever work and untiring energy of Gunner D.S. Groesbeck, whose work as an artist is widely known and appreciated throughout America.”

This much is known, however: After returning to his native California in the '20s, Groesbeck became heavily involved in the regional art scene and met and befriended director Cecil B. DeMille. In addition to doing all of the concept sketches for *The Ten Commandments*, Groesbeck went on to lend his talents to a total of 23 different films, many in collaboration with the legendary director. An ardent fan of Groesbeck's, DeMille idolized the artist's ability to render complex character details that had to be realized in his movie masterpieces.

Experiences in Russia and in the Japanese war in Manchuria (1904-05) no doubt shaped Groesbeck's ability to visualize authentic detail. “His depictions of exotic costumes, Chinese and Russian writing, Korean sampans and Manchurian peasant coolies all have a verisimilitude that makes it difficult to separate the real from the imagined,” Henning writes.

Henning chooses to focus at length on the many films that Groesbeck had a part in crafting, and understandably so. But the



author also gives mention to another one of Groesbeck's passions — creating etchings and monotypes in his spare time. A complete and professional artist, Groesbeck was also involved in a myriad of other projects during his career including working for a San Francisco-based ad agency and doing three major mural commissions. Groesbeck created scenes from early California history in his murals for the Del Monte Hotel, Monterey (1925) and the vast panoramas in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse (1929) which trace California history from the arrival of Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542 to the coming of John C. Fremont over the San Marcos Pass

in 1846.

At only 70 pages in length, *Destined for Hollywood* falls short in providing enough reproductions to truly emphasize the enormity of Groesbeck's output. With so many feature film credits under his belt, the reader is left wanting more — to see the sketches that made Groesbeck such an integral part of the visualization process. As well, the brief opening chapter that glosses over the rise of magazine illustration in the early 20th Century seems extraneous. Most of those interested in the book's subject matter would already be more than familiar with such basic information.

The book's goal, however, is a valiant one — to restore some measure of recognition and appreciation to an artist who translated the pages of books and magazines to the relatively new medium of film. “He always knew what I wanted and he could capture character and drama in a few strokes of his brush, while his finished drawings...are worthy of a museum,” DeMille said. ●

**brian clarke illustration**

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“Doctor Doom”  
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“Thor's Flight”  
by Frank Frazetta



Alberto Vargas (1896-1983)  
Watercolor, 11.5 x 15.5. 1947.

When I was a wee lad, working as a messenger boy for Fawcett Publications in 1949—red windbreaker and all—I came up from the subway, exiting on west 49th or 50th Street. An amusement arcade fronted on Broadway and wrapped around down the side street to the subway exit. There was in the window facing the subway exit, a platform with wood panel backing about four feet high. This display case was empty except for four, possibly five (maybe six) original “Varga” paintings—all horizontal, as I recall. I’m sure I stood stunned for uncounted minutes, never having seen a Vargas original, much less unannounced, in a penny arcade window off Broadway. I know I circled and hovered like a bird of prey, consumed with equal parts of awe and a gnawing greed. Finally I went in and asked the only guy in attendance if he knew anything about the pictures in back. Naw, come back when the boss is here, was the bored reply. I paid the anonymous group of lovelies a number of repeat visits, but never connected with anyone who knew why or how they got there.

For days thereafter I knew no rest. I tossed and turned in fragmented sleep, increasingly consumed with one burning thought—how could I steal those unloved, orphaned paintings? At risk of seeming a rampant kleptomaniac, I would remind one and all that this is perfectly acceptable, if not downright normal, behavior for an eighteen-year-old Vargas fanatic. Needless to say, the lovely ladies soon disappeared from their dusty, minimum-security holding tank. Life goes on.

Remarkably (to say the least) in the early ’60s when I was with *Playboy* and acting as Alberto Vargas’ art director (would I kid you?) I happened to mention this to the artist and his lovely and

protective wife, Anna Mae, whereupon she looked sharply at Alberto and said, “Harry. Harry Bloomfield.”

It seems one Harry Bloomfield, a New York public relations man, had jumped into the resulting fray when, in 1946, Alberto Vargas revolted against his six-year bondage to *Esquire* and sued the magazine for assorted cruelties. Bloomfield became talent agent to Alberto’s newly formed company Varga Enterprises. Among other things, he brought in a portrait of Paulette Goddard for Paramount Pictures, a series of movie star portraits for *Motion Picture* magazine and a multiple calendar deal. The 1948 “Varga” Enterprises calendar was on the newsstands and all twelve of the horizontals for the proposed ’49 calendar were delivered to Bloomfield’s hands when *Esquire* brought a thudding halt to everything, by a not-so-gentle reminder to all concerned, that “Varga” was a trademark created by and belonging solely to *Esquire*.

Reading between the lines, it became clear to me that with *Esquire*’s fiat, Bloomfield, left with no product, left with nothing to sell as it were, left not so much holding the bag as holding twelve original paintings by a trademark called “Varga,” considered his options. Thus the abandoned assembly in a penny arcade, off Broadway, in New York City, in 1950.

A final note: a few years back, Illustration House in New York auctioned a lovely “Varga” horizontal of a blonde in a yellow picture hat. When I saw it I felt an immediate jolt, that mysterious pang one experiences when unexpectedly faced with the deep, familiar past. I’m convinced this was one of the penny arcade girls from fifty years ago and I swear she was more beautiful than I remembered. ●

— by Reid-Stewart Austin, © 2002

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## EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

### Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle: The Art of Charles Schulz

November 3, 2001 – May 12, 2002  
The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge

Original cartoon strips, studies, archival photographs and art materials will on be on view in this exhibition of the work of Charles Schulz. The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge will be the first venue for this exhibition curated by the Minnesota Museum of American Art and the Charles Schulz Museum. The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, Route 183, Stockbridge MA 01262.

For more information, call: 1-413-298-4100

### Jack Davis — A Retrospective

June 5, 2002 – July 3, 2002  
The Society of Illustrators Museum of American Illustration

A retrospective of the 50-plus year career of Georgia native, Jack Davis. Long known for his many characters in *MAD* magazine, he was also a prolific contributor to *EC* Comics in the 1950s, illustrated over 35 covers for *TIME* magazine as well as numerous *TV Guide* covers, three children’s books, movie posters and much more. This traveling exhibit was organized by the University of Georgia, Mr. Davis’ alma mater. At the Society of Illustrators Museum of American Illustration, 128 East 63rd St., New York, NY 10021.

For more information, call: 1-212-838-2560

### An Introduction to the Art of Illustration A Special Class Taught by Walt Reed at NYU

Sec 1: Fri., Sat., 10 am - 5 pm, Feb. 22-23, (2 sessions)

Such icons as Norman Rockwell, Maxfield Parrish, and N. C. Wyeth have lead the way as the subjects of traveling exhibitions, film, and television documentaries and have attracted the attention of the general public as well as collectors and museums. Walt Reed of the Illustration House is teaching a class for art appraisers who desire to become knowledgeable about this specialized field. The course presents a historical perspective over the last 100 years. Opportunites are provided to examine many original examples of the artwork to understand the mediums used, typical condition problems, and the standards of judgement for evaluating and valuating this art.

Note: This course counts as one 5-session elective toward the Certificate in Appraisal studies.

For more information, contact: 1-212-998-7080

Email: SCPSINFO@NYU.EDU

Registration Info: 212-998-7171

Admissions info: 212-998-7200

### Calvin and Hobbes: Sunday Pages 1985 - 1995

February 16, 2002 – April 14, 2002  
The Cartoon Art Museum, San Francisco

The exhibition will feature 36 original Sunday comic strips selected by creator Bill Watterson from his personal collection. The exhibition was organized by the Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library, where it is on display through January 15, 2002. The Cartoon Art Museum is the only other venue in the United States to receive this rare exhibition. At the Cartoon Art Museum, 655 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Please note: Bill Watterson will make no public appearances related to this exhibition and no other products or publications are authorized.

For more information, call: 1-415-227-8666

### N.C. Wyeth Arrives in Wilmington

September 7, 2002 – November 24, 2002  
The Brandywine River Museum

When N.C. Wyeth commenced his studies under Howard Pyle in Wilmington, DE, a century ago, technological advancements in printing had helped create a “Golden Age of Illustration.” To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Wyeth’s arrival in Wilmington, this exhibition examines the business and technology of illustration at the turn of the last century and features the work of the most popular illustrators of that time. At the Brandywine River Museum, U.S. Route 1 and PA Route 100, Chadds Ford, PA 19317.

For more information, call: 1-610-388-2700

If you know of any Exhibitions & Events anywhere in the world that you think we should know about, please get in touch. Help us make this section as informative as possible! ●

### In The Next Issue...



ROBERT MAGUIRE



EUGENE IVERD



AL PARKER

The Paperback Art of Robert Maguire by Gary Lovisi

The Art of Eugene Iverd by Dr. Donald Stoltz

The Life and Art of Al Parker by Dan Zimmer

The Famous Artist’s School, Part One by Kent Steine

... and much, much more!



## Norman Rockwell Paintings Recovered

Paintings stolen in 1978 are found in a Brazilian farmhouse



*So Much Concern*



*A Hasty Retreat*



*The Spirit of 1976*

### BY MATT ZIMMER

On a cold February night in 1978, a group of unidentified thieves gained access to the now-closed Elayne Galleries in St. Louis Park, Minnesota; slipping past security guards with seven original Norman Rockwell paintings and launching a search that spanned three continents and over 23 years.

On December 12, 2001, authorities with the F.B.I.'s Art Theft Recovery Program announced that the last three missing paintings from the heist had, at long last, been found. *The Spirit of 1976*, *So Much Concern* and *A Hasty Retreat* were paintings owned by Brown & Bigelow Company, the calendar publisher located in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The paintings had been on loan to the Elayne Galleries at the time of their disappearance, and, according to authorities, will finally be returned to them. Between 1925 and 1976, Rockwell produced more than 100 illustrations for use in the company's annual Boy Scout Calendar.

Between 1978 and 1994, the whereabouts of the seven missing Rockwells had been a complete mystery — not to mention a source of continuous frustration for Bonnie Lindberg, the owner of the Elayne Galleries and art appraiser who never gave up on her quest to locate them. At the time of the paintings' disappearance, they were collectively presumed to be worth around \$300,000; a sum that any one of the paintings individually would easily fetch at auction today.

Lindberg spent the years immediately following the theft trying to verify tips she had received, some more ludicrous than others (one caller told her to meet him in South Africa with \$500,000 in cash). The F.B.I. also began conducting its own secret investigation.

But a break finally came in 1994 when a Brazilian gallery owner and art collector named Jose Maria Carneiro contacted the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He wanted to sell them two Norman Rockwell paintings that were

in his possession: *The Spirit of 1976* and *So Much Concern*. The museum declined the offer, but promptly informed Lindberg of what had transpired. Five years later, Carneiro then contacted the Elayne Galleries about selling two other Rockwells: *Before the Date* — *Cowboy* and *Before the Date* — *Cowgirl*. Lindberg, this time, arranged to buy back the paintings.

A few months later, F.B.I. agents purchased two more paintings, *She's My Baby* and *Lickin' Good Bath*, from another Brazilian man who at first attempted to sell the paintings to a gallery in Philadelphia. They did not charge the man, however, and he claimed he was unaware that the Rockwells were stolen. At this point, four of the seven paintings had now been accounted for.

Carneiro's conspicuous solicitations, though, prompted U.S. officials to file a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) request with the government of Brazil in 1999. The country's bureaucracy kept the agreement from being ratified until February 2001. In September, Brazilian authorities executed a warrant on Carneiro's home and businesses in order to seize the three remaining paintings. Nothing was found. It wasn't until U.S. authorities traveled to Rio de Janeiro in December 2001 that Carneiro finally revealed that he had hidden the paintings at a farmhouse located in the countryside town of Teresopolis more than 60 miles away. Luckily for Carneiro, the Brazilian government does not extradite its citizens to the U.S. for non-drug related offenses and it is unlikely he will face any charges.

*So Much Concern* was done for the 1975 edition of the Boy Scout calendar depicting New Jersey scouts planting saplings.

*The Spirit of 1976* was painted the following year in commemoration of the bicentennial with the New York city skyline visible in the background. *A Hasty Retreat* was used in the 1954 Brown & Bigelow seasonal calendar. ●

Images by Norman Rockwell © 2002, Brown & Bigelow, Inc., St. Paul, MN. USA.