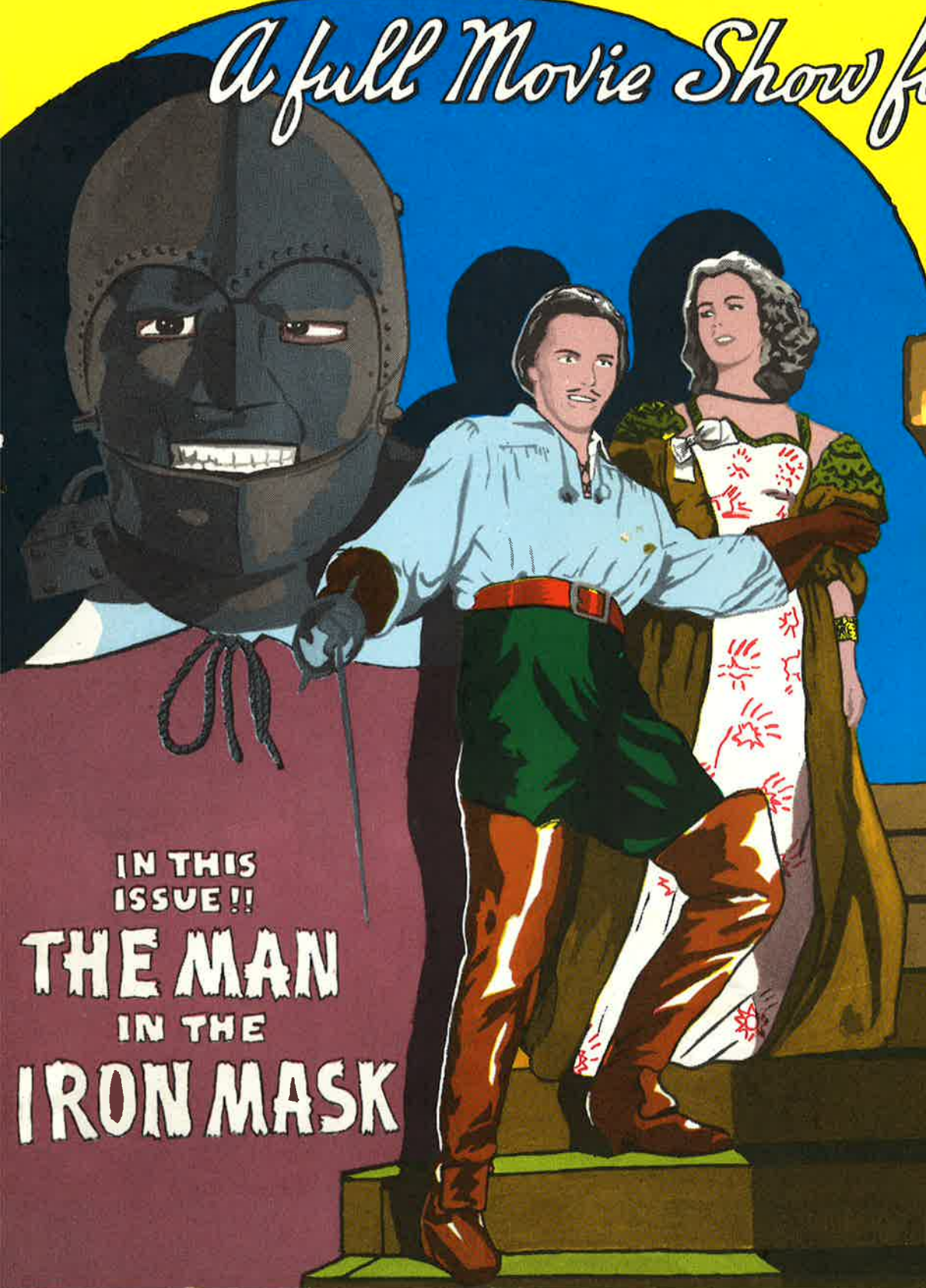


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  - THE GIRL AND THE GAMBLER**  
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# AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS

No. 10

★ COMICS ★ MOVIES ★ ANIMATION ★ NEWS AND REVIEWS ★ BEHIND THE SCENES ★ JAN. 1976 ★ \$1.50



BEHIND THE SCENES IN DC'S PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT



# SOL HARRISON AND JACK ADLER



# SCENEMAKERS BEHIND THE SCENES

BY CARL GAFFORD

Most people in comics fandom are familiar with the artistic side of comics. They are aware that a writer writes a script and that an artist draws these scenes as the writer has indicated, and the conclusion of this is a finished comic. But the trip from editor's desk to the newsstand is a long and complicated one, and it takes a special kind of ability to steer that comics story through the complex processes of production and printing. It takes people with a great knowledge of printing tempered with a love and understanding of the comics medium to insure a presentation faithful to the original creation. Two such people are Sol Harrison and Jack Adler, **DC's** Vice President of Operations and Production Manager, respectively. Together they share a friendship that spans nearly 45 years and a professional experience that encompasses the entire history and range of comics. Together they have innovated some of the finest techniques in comics printing. They are such a team that when it came to doing a "Production" issue of **AWODCC**, it was impossible to interview them separately. As you will see, their past is linked more closely than most friendships or partnerships ever could be. . . .

## THE OBVIOUS FIRST QUESTION IS HOW DID THE TWO OF YOU GET TOGETHER?

**JACK:** Sol and I both went to the same junior high school, but I don't think our paths ever crossed there. We knew each other, but we weren't in any classes together. My contact with Sol started in the art department at Franklin K. Lane High School in Brooklyn.

**SOL:** We attended an art class together.

**JACK:** It was a very peculiar kind of art class in that it was composed of all sorts of art students. I think you were a four year art major, weren't you, Sol?

**SOL:** Yes. So for me they called it "major art."

**JACK:** In my case it was different. I was on a souped-up three year program in school, and I could only fit art into my program during my last year. We had a teacher named Jack Fabrikant who was absolutely great.

**SOL:** Fabrikant was the head of the art department at Franklin K. Lane, but he was also the art director for an advertising agency. The agency handled a lot of Jewish merchandising accounts like matzohs, bread, beer and white label whiskey. That year (1933) Fabrikant had won an award for designing the stubby bottle for Trommer's Beer, one of the agency's clients.

**JACK:** He seemed to be a very cold guy, but actually he wasn't. He was a very strange kind of person, but a very good teacher . . . an expert at knowing how to approach something fast.

**SOL:** And as a practicing commercial artist at the time he knew layouts, lettering . . . he also designed newspaper logos.

**JACK:** Very good lettering. As a matter of fact, Sol gets his style of lettering directly from him.

**SOL:** The things I learned from him! He used to bring in the lettering jobs that he needed for newspaper ads and I used to work on them as class projects and he would sell them. We got a lot of practical experience. And in those days, a really big form of advertising was the subway advertising cards. He handled a great many of those which we did as class projects: I did a Lucky Strike ad for him.

The things we learned during that period in high school were things that I've used commercially over the years. But while you're in school you never realize that you're learning things that are going to be useful to you in the future.

**JACK:** He taught us that you must have some sort of reference. To me, there was no reason for swiping something, since we were artists and were thinking in terms of being originators. He showed me how you could use swipes and change them.

I remember something that he did for the composer who wrote "Shortnin' Bread." The composer was a music teacher in our school and Fabrikant designed the sheet music for the song. I remember that he had a hand with a baton, and I commented that it was just beautiful. He showed me what he had swiped it from, without copying it. He taught us short-cuts. We got so used to it that short cuts became synonymous with our approach to almost everything we'd do. Sol uses an expression that I've thrown back at him a number of times: "Jump in with both feet." Tackle it. Get in there and do it . . . there is no other approach.

It was a wild time at that high school. We had a sketch class in the hallway because there were no rooms available for it . . . and no official sketch class. One of the girl students would stand up and model for us.

**SOL:** Even then Jack was too fresh.

**JACK:** And remember that I was only 15½! I was precocious! This was during the depression, when W.P.A. had first come. We had a teacher who was part of this program; a very famous illustrator named Thomas R. Booth who was down on his luck. He gave us our first lessons in illustration. He used to sit with us, and use Bridgeman's technique of breaking everything down into boxes to teach us illustration. He didn't talk like a teacher; he treated us like adults.

Between these two artists we got a background, a quick approach to learning how to illustrate. And remember this is in an ordinary high school, when there were no high schools for teaching art. Sol had more classes than I did; I was going through junior high school in two years, and high school in two.

**SOL:** I took classes in perspective, rendering and lettering. I learned all about commercial art from the ground up.

**JACK:** Sol had wanted to be a show-card artist for subway posters, and he had a very odd kind of experience. I think it was the first time he ran up against any form of discrimination. Sol





Sol (background, left of center) and Jack (foreground, right of center) in their high school sketch class.

applied for a job at Collier Advertising ... they did the subway art. His portfolio was accepted under the name of "R.S. Harrison."

**SOL:** When I went down for the interview, they asked me if I was Protestant or Catholic. Then they asked me what church I belonged to. I didn't know what to say, so I said "the Church of Saint Mary."

**JACK:** They immediately got it. That was the end of the interview right there.

**SOL:** After we graduated in 1934, Jack Fabrikant gave me my first job. He was also a businessman, and he had a part interest in a photoengraving plant. That first job was to opaque negatives and deliver packages. This was at the Strauss Photo-Engraving Company, on Canal Street ... later known as Photochrome.

I learned the beginnings of the engraving business there. It was an entirely different type of engraving from the one used by Chemical Engraving, the people who do our plates today. There was an odor from the chemicals and materials, fumes of acids and the filth of acids and powders used for etching. Entirely different than what you see today; the difference between a battlefield and a hospital.

**JACK:** Going into one of those places still depresses me today.

**SOL:** But the knowledge you were able to gain was great. It was a non-union shop, and you could learn to do all the processes of engraving, if you were willing to learn. You're not allowed to touch a negative in an engraving plant today, if you're not an engraver. So it was good field experience; you learned everything. And you learned how to sell the product at the same time. When I delivered a proof to a customer I had to "talk up" the product. If there was something that wasn't right, I'd say that it was a piece of dust on the plate, but that the plate was perfect.

**JACK:** Sol was a real "con merchant" in those days; if there was anything wrong he would always say something like "Well, that was the way he wanted it." But you had to do it that way, because the make-overs were so expensive.

**SOL:** I enjoyed it immensely because I didn't do anything for more than an hour at a time. I was doing so many different things, from designing labels to pulling proofs on a hand press, and as I said it was a great learning experience.

**JACK:** Let me say how we got together at that point. From high school I had been offered a one year, free-tuition scholarship at Pratt, but I couldn't consider it because there was no way I could afford the other two years (it was then a three-year course), so I went to Brooklyn College as a fine arts major. I finished a year of day school, and then I had to have some money. I went on to night school and got my first job, which I got through an uncle in the fur district. They told me it was an open-air job ... pushing a hand-truck, delivering fur supplies to the fur stores. I went up the ladder quickly there; up to 14 dollars a week. At that point my cousin who lived near Sol and was a close mutual friend (he went to high school with us) met Sol and told me Sol was at a place and had a job for me. I went to see Sol, who had already established a little place called "Repro-Arts Service." He was primarily designing letterheads and labels. ...

**SOL:** We were also designing greeting cards.

**JACK:** Yes, I recall that Sol would make three sketches. When one was accepted, he'd make a finished drawing and a plate. If I recall correctly, it was six dollars for the entire product: a blocked plate ready for printing in two colors. I was offered a starting salary of six dollars a week; I went from fourteen dollars a week to six because I wanted to get into the art field. I wanted to be

an art teacher at the time. I had majored in art and minored in education. I continued right through at night and got my Bachelor of Arts degree in fine art. Sol and I worked together, and then they started doing the comics.

**SOL:** Before the greeting cards I had been fired from Strauss Engraving because of a misunderstanding with Joe Strauss, the owner's brother. After Strauss, I left the engraving business and went to work in a house that manufactured ladies' hats. But directly opposite my window, on 24th street, I could see the light of an engraving plant. At night, you could see the open arc lamps with their purplish haze which were used only for engraving.

As I got my last paycheck from the hats, I went across the street, and asked for a job. They asked me what I could do. I said I did artwork, and had worked for Strauss Engraving. The owner said he had some new work that he was doing. This was at Rex Engraving and the interviewer was a Benday engraver. The job was the first issue of **FAMOUS FUNNIES**. He was reducing the Sunday pages to comics size. The size of the panels were reduced and you can imagine the number of panels that had to be done to a page.

The work that I ended up doing for him was gamboging; painting around the areas where you wanted the color for Benday.

**JACK:** It was actually a masking process in which you used two incompatible materials as you worked on the actual metal printing plate. Gamboge was a water-soluble substance, so you painted around the area where you wanted the dots. The dots were made up of an ink which was not water soluble and they were actually pressed on with a machine that you used.

**SOL:** You kept building up dots, and a dot next to it, below it, building a square of dots. The more times you inked the rollers and pressed on it, the deeper the value would become.

**JACK:** How complex it was! To give you an example, when one Benday artist did the color separations for one page for a standard Sunday comics section he had one week to do it. Nowadays, if anybody doing it spends more than two hours on it, he's spending more time than he should.

**SOL:** Little by little, working at Rex Engraving, I started to use the Benday machine and learned not only the art end but the mechanical as well. Then one evening going home on the subway I met the owner of Strauss Photo Engraving. He was glad he ran into me. It seems that Strauss was doing

some work on comics and that he could use some artists to help out. I said that's funny, I'm working on comics now.

He offered me a job which paid much more than I was getting, and put me in charge of a department to work on comics. Actually, there were very few comics publishers at the time as the industry was just beginning. Strauss was working on the comics for Major Nicholson.

**JACK:** Sol brought in Ed Eisenberg and I came on right after that. I was already going to school at night, and working in this fur place. When Sol called me, I immediately took the job at his Repro-Arts Service, then went with him to Strauss ... almost all the guys brought in were students of Fabrikant.

**SOL:** The people who we asked to come into the place were the people we knew from school. We needed artists, because artists who were skilled with a brush did the separations better than a Benday man.

**COMICS WERE JUST COMING OUT AT THAT TIME. DID THE PUBLISHERS KNOW WHAT THEY WERE DOING IN TERMS OF PREPARING THE MATERIAL?**

**SOL:** The package of black-and-white art was delivered to the engraver. The publisher did nothing about the color scheme, which was left to the engraver.

**I'VE HEARD THAT'S HOW CAPTAIN MARVEL GOT THE COLORS OF HIS UNIFORM ... BECAUSE AN ENGRAVER SAW A LIGHTNING BOLT ON HIS CHEST AND COLORED THE SUIT YELLOW AND RED.**

Jack Adler at work separating the Prince Valiant page you see here.



**JACK:** That's how a lot of us worked. When we did the first **SUPERMAN** color schemes, backgrounds weren't even indicated. You decided as you went along what you were going to do with it.

**HOW MANY COLORS DID YOU HAVE? IN THE VERY EARLY COMICS, ONE PAGE WOULD BE IN RED TINT AND THE OTHER PAGE WOULD BE IN BLUE.**

**SOL:** When they were done with Benday, all the values were used like they are today. But later, the second method that evolved was Craftint, and with Craftint they only had a 25% and a 50% value. Then you'd paint in your solids.

**JACK:** We took advantage of the Craftint system, and started making shapes and patterns.

**SOL:** Even if there was only a 25% or 50% value, we dotted off an area by hand so that we got the breakdown and made it almost like a shaded background. We used to throw in shadows that were not in the artwork, just to get the effect.

**JACK:** We learned to read upside-down and backwards as easily as reading forwards, because you were looking that way as you were working.

Just a funny aside on the color numbering system. Why is there no "R-1" or "Y-1"? Why is "R-2" the first value used? Well, we used a gray series put out by the Miller Brush Company. In shooting, in order to get the flesh value and lose our blue line the first value that picked up as a 20% was a number 2, not number one. Number one got lost, so we actually used the grays' numbers

as the numbering system ... and today the colors are R, R2 and R3 for red solid, 25% and 50%, and so on.

**AT THIS TIME YOU BEGAN TO DO THE COLORING AND COLOR SEPARATIONS ON HAL FOSTER'S PRINCE VALIANT. WAS THERE ANY SPECIAL MATERIAL USED ON THAT JOB?**

**JACK:** We were using anything that would take on illustration board. We had a blue image printed on illustration board as our key plate. We actually had to paint the face value in, and if you had any modelling, you did it on top of the face value.

**SO IN EFFECT YOU WOULD DO A BLACK-AND-WHITE PAINTING FOR EACH COLOR PLATE, RIGHT?**

**JACK:** Yes. We used pencil shading, charcoal, smudge marks, airbrush. ...

**WERE EITHER OF YOU CONSIDERING MORE CREATIVE WORK CONSIDERING YOUR ARTISTIC BACKGROUNDS, OR WAS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO?**

**JACK:** Each of us thought that we were going to become engravers. Sol's aim was to become a Benday artist. My aim was to do the photography, and the company led us to believe that it was going to happen, so we were working with the union men at that point. By permission, really, because the regulations said that once a piece of art had come into the shop and it had been handled by union men, it could not be touched by anyone **BUT** union men. If it went through non-union hands, it would be stopped at that point. But they



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The separations room at 487 Broadway in the 1940's. Sol is on the left, standing by a cabinet. Jack is sitting in the middle of the front row.

overlooked that for us. At first the union forced them to bring in Benday artists, and they brought in ten Benday artists but it just wasn't adequate.

**SOL:** They could never have created the industry that we have today if they kept Benday men only. They had to find faster ways of making the separations.

**JACK:** So we discovered, in reading our contract (our boss Emil Strauss was pretty shrewd) that they described the system that was used; in other words, what the men had to do. So our idea was to get around that, and we worked the system out where we would do the materials with grays. We went to the grays for the special stuff and used Craftint mostly for the regular stuff. It was all right for awhile, but then they finally clamped down and said that no non-union men could work on the material.

In a discussion we decided the way around that was to create an art department to do all of the work from the art through the separations **outside** of the shop and present the separations as black-and-white copy. From that point on, the engravers could touch it. In other words, it meant that no part of it got into a union man's hands until the separations had been in. We could do that ourselves and it was no problem.

**SOL, YOU HAVE DONE SOME INKING THOUGH, I BELIEVE.**

It was on Bruno Premiani's **Tomahawk** (#16 and 17) in 1953. He was sick, and they needed an inker but there wasn't anyone around. There was a long weekend coming up, so I decided to knock myself out and ink it. I ended up doing two issues over his pencils, and didn't do any more inking after that.

**LET'S RETURN, THEN, TO YOUR WORK AS SEPARATORS.**

**SOL:** Then we took a room in the same building with **ALL-AMERICAN COMICS**, at 225 Lafayette Street. We worked there for a short period of time.

**JACK:** Art Color Associates was the name of our place. We did a little bit of artwork, with Sol out part of the time selling because he was our best salesman.

**SOL:** We were looking for other things besides comics, but mostly we did comics separations. And Strauss loused us up all the time. Instead of giving us work in the morning, they'd give us work at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and want it first thing in the morning. We worked every night. The money that we made averaged about twenty dollars a week, but we didn't have much of an alternative because there weren't too many jobs around. You couldn't just walk out of that and walk into another place. The things we were doing were highly specialized, and that's where the work was.

**JACK:** We did have a lot of fun. There was a camaraderie that was really most unusual. At that time, we were negotiating with King Features to get their separations, and if we had been able to hold out, we might have had it. But it was too difficult.

**SOL:** We tried a lot of things and then the point was reached where we weren't going anywhere. I think Strauss wanted to take all of us back, but I said I wouldn't go. I left. There must have been about five engraving plants in the New York metropolitan area that were

doing comics. One of them was an art department in a company that was doing comics a little differently, a house on 21st Street that I worked for.

They were doing the **Blue Beetle** and some other comic books. I got a job there immediately and I was put in charge of the art department. There I learned about fine commercial engraving because the rest of the engraving plant was doing work other than comics. Finally, since that place couldn't compete with Strauss in the price of comics, the art department closed. I left there and went to work at the Metropolitan Engraving Company, which was one of the classiest engraving plants. They had one top notch man in each department. I'd never seen men work like that, because Strauss Engraving, Photochrome and the others . . . they were actually like a Ford assembly plant. Metropolitan was like a Cadillac.

Metropolitan was constantly experimenting in fine engravings while Strauss was interested in the Ford operation: get stuff in quickly and get it out and start on something else.

**JACK:** I went back to Strauss, and every once in a while Emil Strauss would walk into the art department, but I wouldn't be there. He'd catch me at the Proofing Press, or maybe in the darkroom. He was a heavy smoker and had a gruff voice, and he'd ask me what I was doing there . . . that I was an artist and belonged in the art department. I'd always ask him "How am I going to learn what happens to my stuff if I don't see what somebody's doing to it?" He'd just go by and let it go.

And, really, that's one of the ways to learn. Engravers, by nature, even when they have apprentices take the longest

time in the world to teach an apprentice what he has to learn. It's a kind of jealousy about teaching what you know. We encountered that to such an extent . . . it's not like approaching Sol today and asking him how to do something and getting an answer . . . they never gave you an answer. They'd say look at it, find out, figure it out.

**THEY WERE AFRAID THAT THEY HAD SO LITTLE TO SAY THAT THEY WOULDN'T SAY IT?**

**SOL:** Absolutely true. An apprenticeship program took six years, which meant that you were allowed to learn your craft in six years. That is, you would learn just that one part of the process.

**JACK:** . . . And you weren't allowed to work on any real, finished work until you got your sixth year card. It didn't take six years to learn most of the jobs. For example, stripping up; doing paste-up jobs. The proofer had to know a little bit more. The router, who used a little machine to take out the dead-metal areas that were not necessary for printing constantly had his apprentice cleaning up. But he would not permit him to learn except by observation.

**SOL:** The thing that I liked about Metropolitan Engraving was that there I learned a great deal more than I learned in any other place because each man, although there was only one man in each department (the place was dying because all the salesmen had left) each man was doing experimental things to see if they could keep the plant in business. This also gave me the opportunity to do new things, because each of the men who worked were tops. And for some reason, they answered all my questions and curiosities. They were unlike any other engravers I had met. It was a great learning experience.

**JACK:** One of the things we did with that was particularly interesting. We were able to take a black-and-white photograph or drawing, make prints of it and retouch the prints with an air-brush. In other words, you were building up in tones without really drawing . . . just lighting the values, and in this way make a job that looked like it had originally been a color photograph. No skilled engraver, looking at that, could tell that it was done that way. We used this in comics on the back covers with the Daisy rifle ads and the Thom McCann shoe ads. The Thom McCann people never sent us pairs of shoes; they'd always send one of each shoe. We never knew what to do with them until someone thought of calling a Veterans Hospital where there were a lot of one-legged guys. They got some weird-looking shoes. We did things

then that we don't dare do now, due to reasons of time, costs, and lack of the people who can do it. It's not what it used to be. If you look at some of the old comics, you'd find we'd get a color scheme to work on, and it would be on a blank background. We never left it blank; we didn't care what the artist had in mind. We would put in stock kinds of shapes; sometimes concentric circles, or shadows, or air-brush the sky.

**SOL:** Whatever the mood was in the story, we tried to intensify it. The color schemes were made in the art department, so you could add to it before it reached the engravers.

**JACK:** As a matter of fact, the publishers never saw the color schemes, or approved them, either. We just did them.

**SOL:** When Metropolitan Engraving finally closed down, I returned to Strauss. They asked me to set up an art department at night, because they didn't have additional space where they could be working.

**JACK:** That was already war time, and it was difficult to get anybody.

**SOL:** Yes. . . . I started to break in a whole new crew in the evening. We only worked it for a couple of months, and it was my first experience at working at night. Then we got another, larger place and we put both day and night departments together. I had been in charge of the night force and Jerry Serpe was in charge of the day force.

**JACK:** . . . And I was in charge of the commercial stuff and all the Sunday pages.

**SOL:** So we finally put the one department together, and that's where Midge Bregman was working. Midge had already been on the day shift at Photochrome Now she's my secretary and assistant at DC.

**JACK:** The building we were in was the narrowest building in New York City, 487 Broadway. It was about 50 feet long and only three windows wide. A corner building, so that entire side of it was one of the best-lit buildings. Sol, what do they call that area now?

**SOL:** Soho. That's where all the artists are living downtown. (South of Houston Street)

**JACK:** We had a little photography department where we shot our own work. We had a little freedom in that we had the responsibility for the whole thing. I don't recall why we were separated from everything else, but I think it also had something to do with unionization, because we unionized

right after that.

**SOL:** We had more space there . . . and we were only three blocks from the plant . . . made it convenient for delivering the material. So that worked out for about another year.

**WOULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN A BIT ABOUT THE EARLY TITLE "MOVIE COMICS", WHICH YOU DID FOR STRAUSS ABOUT THIS TIME?**

**JACK:** That was in the very beginning, around 1939. My feeling, and I think that Sol brought it out, was that Emil Strauss wanted to do comics without being in competition with his clients. I would say that that was the reason for selecting that format for the book. The whole idea was to take a film, get some still shots, write a short script based on the movie script, and then piece together the pictures so they'd look like the original photographs. In most cases, we did not have the photographs that fit the story. We had to piece heads, hats, uniforms together, flop faces and fit the various pieces together.

**DID YOU HAVE TO SEE THE MOVIE FIRST TO DO THAT?**

**SOL:** No, we never saw the movies. I think an outline was given to us, and a group of stills that were taken from the movie. If you didn't have something that fit into that sequence, then we had to fake it.

**JACK:** And we had to prepare it ACTUAL PRINTED SIZE, as opposed to the large size other comic art was drawn. This was because we could not reduce the halftones. We also had to prepare it for color, and if you look at it in the terms of what we did, using halftones, it was darn good reproduction.

**SOL:** Remember that engravings then were not the same as you have today . . . it wasn't as fine. Printing of comics was only in its early stages. I remember that it was a very enjoyable part of the work we were doing. It was a break because we were actually preparing the artwork, when normally we were just doing separations for the others. So here we were involved with creating something.

**JACK:** An interesting part of that was that all of us had a hand at doing pages; doing an actual script, drawing some pages, pencilling or whatever. Sol, I think, got more involved in that than most of us. We had decided at that point that the creative area wasn't the area that paid. That's why we got tied up with engraving more than we did at the art end. The finished page of story, pencils, inks, etc., was a six dollar



package. We knew the time it would take, and we saw engravers making a minimum scale of \$63.00 per week. That's where we wanted to be . . . that's where the money was.

**SOL:** And there was just too much work involved in producing that type of story and material for reproduction. I don't think the sales were anything special because we were competing with movie magazines that had more realistic material. I don't think that we were able to get all the movies that we wanted at the time; you had to take whatever you were able to get. Strauss and his daughter were the publishers, and when they decided to let it go I think we had prepared something like six or seven issues.

Then I got a call from Emil Strauss. He said he had a request from M.C. Gaines, the publisher of the **ALL-AMERICAN** line. Gaines wanted me to work as art director at his place. Emil said he could get me a good salary but I told him that I didn't know, that I'd have to think it out. He said I should let him negotiate for me. I felt peculiar, because I didn't understand what his involvement was.

I knew Sheldon Mayer because we

became friendly when we were in the same building. We'd have lunch and sit and play cards. We worked on all his books so there were lots of questions about all sorts of things, like what we could and couldn't do in color reproduction. So we had a good rapport.

I went over to officially meet Mr. Gaines and Shelly, when they said they wanted me to be their art director. I didn't know what it involved. Sheldon said that I knew what they were interested in and he didn't think I would have any problems. I was offered a five dollar increase so I said, yes. It was a big opportunity and I was always interested in moving ahead.

It was a terrific association, because I always wanted to involve myself more in the creative areas of publishing. It wasn't a month before the production manager who was there was fired. Gaines was constantly yelling at this man, and they just didn't get along. He had been there for some time, handling the printing and the proofs and schedules. Gaines called me to his office and said "Sol, I want you to take over the production job." So I did.

I must have been there for oh, about two years when there was a consuma-

tion of the sale of **All-American** to **National Comics** in 1944. Jack Liebowitz and Harry Donenfeld bought all the material and the rights for all the characters from Gaines. Gaines was allowed to publish material that was considered educational. He started some material on American History and he was doing the Bible. All the superheroes (**Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, The Flash**) were bought by **DC**. Shelly and I were traded like they do in baseball today. We just went from one office, downtown, to another uptown. Jack Liebowitz and Harry Donenfeld asked us to come up. The lawyers were there because they had just closed the deal, and we were introduced to everyone. They said they were glad to see us working with them because at the time the advertising revenue that used to be in **All-American** and **DC** were the same ads, and I was handling all the advertising down at Gaines'. So when we came uptown, I was doing the same job plus the production for both companies.

**JACK:** I was still with Photochrome at this time. And the problem we solved at that time was the problem that every time an ad ran in the magazine, it was

different. Every time we did the separations there'd be a mistake here, a change there, and the advertisers didn't like it. So I made the suggestion that we do the ad once, print it photographically and then insert them in position on the plates. Sol agreed so they took to the idea. At that time we were experimenting with a whole bunch of techniques at the engravers. I suggested that we do covers photographically in some way. Sol decided that as long as we were doing covers that way that they were special and totally different. He felt that it would be to the advantage of **National** if we came over and did the separations there, got an allowance from the engravers for it and then you'd have the type of separations that were different from everybody else's.

**SOL:** Basically we had the problem that we'd always have to tell the engraver what we wanted. The explanation had to go through three hands before it was finally done. I was coloring all the covers then and handling all the advertising, and I felt that as long as I knew the fellows who were available and the type of problems at the engravers, we could work something out. I called

Jack, Jerry Serpe and Tommy Nicholosi and set up our own color separation department. We color separated all our covers and advertising.

There was another reason, too. Jack, Jerry and everybody else who was working down at the engravers was trying to get into the union. It had just reached a point where there was nothing going for them; they couldn't go any further. I felt at the time that making our own separations department was a way to get them altogether to work for us and use their expertise.

**JACK:** I saw that the union at Photochrome was playing a game with me. As Sol has had his experience with anti-Semitism as he explained, this was my first experience with it. There was a vote, and I was voted down. I couldn't understand it. These men were men who I had worked with, they were supposedly our friends. Also, Sol and I and Jerry knew more about engraving than any of the men working in the plant, and they knew it. When I was turned down, I was absolutely distraught.

It wasn't until one of the other men, a fellow who was Irish, came up to me one day. He said Jack, you're planning

to be a teacher. You're still going to school at night and I suggest you continue. I said, "Jimmy, what are you telling me? I've found something that I like to do and I know I could be a damn fine color photographer, I think that it could be my gravy." He said let me spell it out for you as plain as I can . . . he said you're Jewish and you're not going to make it here. I was absolutely stunned because we had heard about things like this but we had never actually experienced it.

So I went to National.

**SOL:** I actually had to sell the idea of the department to Jack Liebowitz, because it was a more costly way of producing the material. The company would now be paying out for it, so now it was an actual cost. But for that period in time it was a good idea. It did a lot to advance the work of the color separations we were actually doing. That's when we started to try things in halftones and photography and using washes. We were also able to give advertisers quality that they had never gotten before.

**JACK:** This company was the first. It was suggested that we start doing

## SOL HARRISON AND THE



Sol Harrison's dedication is not limited to his profession. He also shares a deep human dedication for the health and treatment of brain injured children. In over fifteen years of active work on various projects, Sol Harrison has been instrumental in the instituting of specialized education in New York schools and has been President of a number of organizations for brain injured youngsters. It was for one organization in particular that Sol brainstormed two special projects. That organization was the New York Association for Brain Injured Children (NYABIC), which he served as President for three years.

His first project for them was an idea for a special encounter camp unlike any other camp for retarded and handicapped children. For years parents and teachers were confused over the varying reactions each would get from the brain injured child in different environments. Sol came up with the idea of a special environment that would bring parents and other members of the family together with the brain injured child and the teachers. A special camp called the NYABIC Research and Study Center was established. Families would spend a three week period there with teaching students from Columbia University, who Sol had managed to

obtain special credit for work at the Research Center.

Every evening the parents would compare notes with the teachers and evaluate how their children had reacted. In particular, a system was developed for the dinner hall. Tables were broken up into groups of eight, and no more than one parent sat at that same table as his brain injured child. Also at the table might be a doctor, a psychologist, a teacher, a normal sibling, and another combination with another brain injured child, one of his parents, etc. In this way a parent might have to look over at another table to see their child and thereby would see how that child would be reacting with the other people around him.

Teenage brain injured children were the waiters and busyboys. Sol reports that in the entire three year period from 1966 to 1968, he didn't recall a single time when a waiter or busboy spilled anything or dropped a tray. It was the incredible sense of responsibility that gave these children a pride in the work they were doing for their fellow campmates.

But a camp of such special needs requires funds, and it was very difficult getting publicity for a cause like brain injured children. Then one day Sol read that actress Patricia Neal was recover-

## CAMP WITH TWO NAMES

ing in England from an almost fatal brain injury. He suggested to the board of NYABIC that he contact Patricia Neal and her husband Raoul Dahl about the possibility of her coming to America for a benefit dinner at the Waldorf Astoria for NYABIC and their programs. NYABIC agreed to the idea and Sol wrote Mr. Dahl suggesting the idea. The response he received was favorable.

Sol then received an okay from NYABIC to visit the Dahls at their home outside of London and discuss the details involved in such an event and to make certain that everything would be in accordance with the wishes of the Dahls.

They loved the plans and Patricia agreed to write a personal letter which Sol would print and send to her entertainment industry friends in New York. Producer Richard Adler agreed to handle the entertainment for the evening, as a friend of Patricia who had not seen her for years.

Sol prepared a souvenir booklet of photos and text of the evening, featuring people like William B. Williams, Pat Hingle, Arlene Francis and Phyllis Newmann, all of whom were friends of Patricia and worked selflessly for the dinner event.

New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay proclaimed the week of March 12, 1967, the week of the dinner, to be

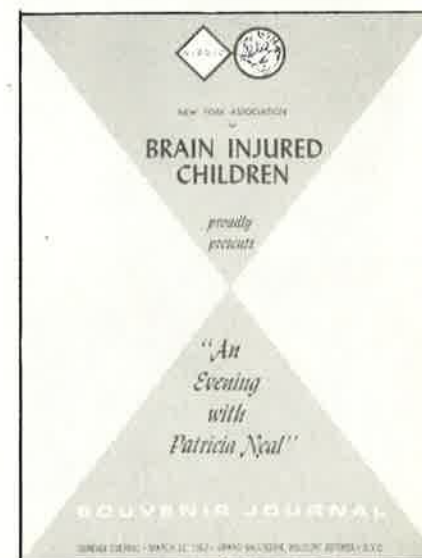
Brain Injured Children's Week in a proclamation that Sol had written for the mayor.

On March 12, 1967, the event began with a young Broadway actor named Michael Maitland reading a piece called "I Am A Brain Injured Child" that Sol had prepared. "I'm sad sometimes and I don't know why. I feel very alone," he read to a darkened room. When the houselights came on at the conclusion of the piece, the entire audience was in tears.

Richard Adler then introduced Patricia Neal. She limped a bit as she approached the podium, but she soon faced the audience and said, "It was evil. . . ." When she finished there was an incredible uproar as her show business friends who were sitting in the front rows rose up to welcome her home.

Sol described the evening as the most incredible night of his life. Although he no longer is able to be active on a day-to-day basis with the organizations, many of the projects he started exist today such as a residential center for young brain injured adults. Probably the most tangible sign of his successes was when the young people of the NYABIC Research and Study Center themselves elected to change the name of their camp.

They named it Camp Harrison.





washes for covers, and we were talking about it for so damn long, but nobody attempted it. I think Grandenetti did the first one, an army cover with somebody floating in the water. I think that was the first wash cover that was done. That one ended up looking like a full color painting.

**SOL:** The idea was that we wanted something attractive and different looking on the newsstands.

**JACK:** There was a **Green Lantern** one that I recall. Gil Kane pencilled it, with **Green Lantern** fighting a lizard. I inked that one myself in tones and separated it. ((Refer to our centerspread this issue to see this rare combination of talents.)) There were a number of wash covers on. . . .

**SOL:** . . . **Rex the Wonder Dog.** We did a number of those trying to get the qualities of a painting.

**WHEN WAS THE SEPARATIONS DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHED AT NATIONAL?**

**JACK:** It was 25 years ago exactly. I came to National in January, 1951, so you have a starting point to see some of the changes. Right about then you can see some covers that came through that were a bit startling. I believe Toth did one in which we began to hold the drawing in color. He would sit with us and actually work with us. If he had an idea, we would tell him exactly how to prepare the art. One that I remember was **SENSATION MYSTERY** with a jack-in-the-box that popped out. There was another one by Toth, a western cover with the shadows on the wall held in tone. We started holding black areas in gray and doing all sorts of things that could be done with the medium that were never really tried before.

**SOL:** In our own department, we felt we could put in the extra time.

**JACK:** Not only that, but we had the go-ahead. If something looked right, and we couldn't show it but just explain it, Sol told us to go ahead and do it. At the end of about a six week period I went to Sol and said that I was really disturbed.

He asked what was the matter and I said we've been getting effects we've never gotten before, and nobody's saying anything. He made a remark that was funny, and it stayed with me and it really is typical of what you should expect of Sol. He said that I would hear plenty if they didn't like it, but if nothing is said, then everything's okeydoke.

**DID YOU SEPARATE THE INSIDES, TOO?**

**JACK:** No, at that point the engravers did that. It was just the covers and the ads we did here. If you look back at some of the ads that were done, like flower packages and some other very complicated things that were done, it was stuff that you don't want to even touch today. There was no technique that we left untouched. The fact that we did try it was to our advantage, since we weren't afraid to make an attempt at it. It was a great help having Sol approve the final result, of course, because no one above him really understood what we did. Their judgements about art were based more on business values;

would it or wouldn't it sell? In terms of what kind of graphic would go out to the public, I don't think anybody made a judgement beyond Sol.

**SOL:** During that period I was coloring all of the covers at National.

**JACK:** I can tell you exactly when that stopped. It stopped at the point when Irwin Donenfeld took over for his father, and Irwin had Sol become more involved with the advertising. At that point the covers were turned over to me for coloring and they became a part of the department. Jerry, at that point, was handling all the coloring for the insides. Not only doing them, as I was, but supervising them, also.

**SOL:** That was at least ten years back.

**JACK:** Sure, I think we can almost gauge it by the changes.

**DID ED EISENBERG TAKE OVER THE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT THEN?**

**JACK:** No, but there was a period in

there when Eddie was being tried out. Eddie Eisenberg was assistant production manager during the period in which Sol was handling advertising and general management. Sol was in production, he was into the advertising, I couldn't really describe his job because he was into everything. It was at that point where Sol brought Eddie in as his assistant.

**SOL:** Eddie was in the army during the war. He was going to be coming out in a couple of months and he needed a job. I needed more people in the department, so I held the job open for him. I knew he'd be able to handle the work, so he became my assistant. What we did was to divide the work load so that he handled the insides of the magazines and I would handle everything else; the covers, the advertising, etc.

**NOW IN THE LATE SIXTIES THE SEPARATIONS DEPARTMENT AT NATIONAL WAS CLOSED DOWN. WHY?**

**JACK:** The department went as an

economy measure that Carmine and the **Kinney** executives instituted. They felt that it cost too much in terms of salaries and so the separations were sent back to the engravers. But we weren't doing only separations . . . I was coloring the covers, for example, and Jerry at that point was in charge of all the color for the insides. He would hand it out, get it back and clean it up. I was also coloring some stories free-lance as was Tommy Nicholas.

**SOL:** One person in the department was not doing his work, that's what set it off.

**JACK:** It really boiled down to that. And frankly the problem was one which is not uncommon. It was one of alcoholism, and it really shattered the department.

**SOL:** We were covering for the one man, and we finally reached the point where it was just hurting the department and so the economic answer was to cut the department out.

**JACK:** At that point, when the depart-

# THE MIS-INVENTIONS



Jack Adler's inventive genius is not limited to the offices of National Periodicals. It is a penetrating inquisitiveness that cannot be stopped until he has pursued a point to its conclusion. Jack once remarked that his mother used to say of him that he "wanted to know where the legs grew from."

It's an inquisitiveness fanned by frustrations. When not given straight answers by the engravers he worked with, Jack went out and learned anything he could on the subjects he wanted to master. Primary among his pursuits was his love of photography. It's been both a hobby and a vocation to him through the years. For an artistic person who was working with a brush all day, painting as a relaxation gave way to photography. Through the years Jack has done children's portraits, wedding pictures, magazine photography, and much more. Cameras are also a weakness, as any collecting hobby soon takes over the better judgement of the collector.

Carving is another hobby that relaxes him and one which he puts to good use. He makes furniture and has built a hutch which slides perfectly into the wall. Jack made all the moldings and the doors himself.

But it's photography which has brought some of his greatest accomplishments in other related fields. Shortly after he started at National in 1951 they asked him if he thought he

could prepare black and white art for 3-D. Jack replied that he could easily, but the company did not follow up on their request until some time later, when they heard that another firm was going to come out with a line of 3-D books. Jack then prepared a presentation of a cat and a mouse in 3-D with the use of the red and green glasses, and that same day he got the approval to prepare the **3-D Superman** and **Batman** comics.

The 3-D books got Jack to thinking, and it wasn't too long before he developed a way in which to print **FULL-COLOR** comics in printed form in 3-D **WITHOUT** using red and green glasses. Small wonder why he is unquestionably the "King of 3-D."

The 3-D fascination did not stop there. Jack developed an idea to do 3-D slides that could be viewed with a special viewer or projected in full 3-D on the wall. Sounds very familiar, you say? Suppose I remind you that this was in 1951, **LONG** before the current rash of Viewmasters and GaFs. The sad fact that they do not bear the name Adler is part of a history of bad luck Jack has had with his inventions. Jack went into partnership with his friends Sol Harrison, Ed Eisenberg and Jerry Serpe in the hopes of marketing the invention for use as a toy, or as a way of presenting comics in a new way to the young audience, or possibly as a series of slides with an accompanying recorded soundtrack. The patent at-

# OF JACK ADLER

torney they hired conducted a thorough patent search that clearly indicated there were no similar devices existing, but Jack was turned down for a patent! He was turned down even though his invention was a new idea on the technicality that it involved using materials that were already in existence and already patented.

Jack and his partners had already received requests from Army Ordinance asking that they do 3-D slides of disassembled weapons and requests from Boston Medical College for medical text book illustrations in 3-D. But Jack and his partners believed that the greatest market was still the toy field. Years later Viewmaster would successfully use a similar though less effective system.

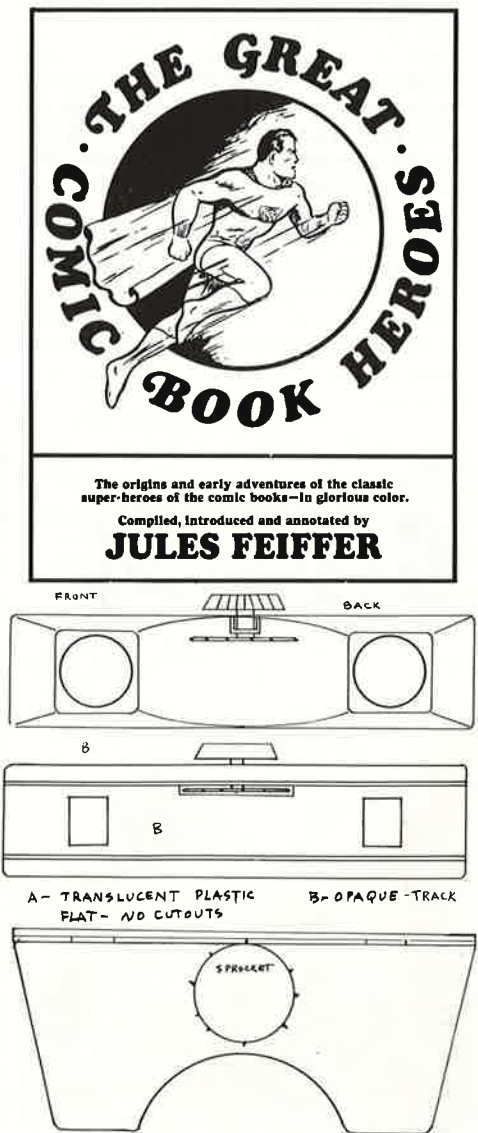
Cameras have always been a source of entertainment for Jack, and he loves to fiddle with them, customizing them to his special needs. One day he was trying out a new single lens reflex camera and was frustrated that he had to constantly stop down the aperture. A few customizes later and he had developed an automatic diaphragm that would instantly stop down the aperture of any single lens reflex camera without constant refocusing and readjusting. The technician friend who built the device to his specifications suggested that Jack show the automatic diaphragm to someone in the camera business. Unfortunately, Jack showed it to the

WRONG person, who promptly jumped at Jack's not having then applied for a patent and stole Jack's idea.

Jack's finesse with the printed image has led to some very important innovations for National in regards to the reprinting of old stories for which no negatives or black and white material still exists. At Carmine's request Jack came up with a series of different ways to drop out color ranging from the most effective, a multiple filtration system using 35mm film, to less expensive methods using infra-red or ultra-violet. The filtration system was used first, but there soon followed so much work that the time proved to be too great, and quicker methods were adopted.

The multiple filtration system was used by Jack to prepare the old comics stories in Jules Feiffer's famous **THE GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES** in 1965. Jack prepared every page of that color section shooting repeatedly to drop out color and maintain the quality of the art.

Jack is still called in by commercial advertising outfits for his special expertise in color separations. To give you an idea of how highly his work is regarded, in 1970 he was awarded a certificate for color and color separations at the 50th Annual Exhibition of the Art Directors Club of New York for a CBS Saturday morning lineup pamphlet he did with Murphy Anderson, who drew the characters in the pamphlet.





ment was disbanded, Sol asked me to come on as his Assistant Production Manager, and I began to color the covers on a free-lance basis because there was no time for them during the day, until we reached a point where we realized that that was too time-consuming. They had to be done some other way and I had been discussing it for some time. That's the point at which Tatjana Wood started to color them. Jerry had become a full-time colorist then as did Tommy. Then Tommy left and Liz Safian (now Liz Berube) started coloring and she's been coloring ever since.

**DID LIZ EVER WORK IN YOUR DEPARTMENT?**

**JACK:** No, she never did. She worked at **Archie Comics**, as an assistant editor and colorist. She's a good artist, too. She did some romance art for Dick Giordano's love magazines in the sixties.

When I started to hand out the coloring I stopped doing any myself. My feeling was that I shouldn't put myself in the position of competing with the other colorists when I was the one handing out the work.

**CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS IN RECENT YEARS WAS THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS WITH ARTWORK FOR COVERS. JACK, COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?**

**JACK:** We had an idea for a long time to combine fantasy with reality. The first one we did was a **Flash** pulling his wife from the comics side of it. I retouched the faces so that nobody was

recognizable in the photograph side.

The next one was an **ACTION** with **Superman** flying over the city. That was an easy one to do, all I had to do was shoot the scene from the top of the Empire State Building. Then there was the one with **Superman** on fire racing down Park Avenue, which I photographed at great peril to my life because I would stand in the street and wait for the cars to come down, then jump out of the way.

Next came a couple of **SHAZAM** covers. I used my older grandson in the first one and we had to do a follow-up because my younger grandson was jealous. So we did the one where **Captain Marvel** is holding a youngster (my grandson) in his arms. I even had my son-in-law pose for where C.C. Beck drew the figure of **Captain Marvel**.

**IN AN EARLIER ISSUE OF AMAZING WORLD WE FEATURED SHELDON MAYER. SOL OF COURSE WORKED WITH HIM AT ALL-AMERICAN. HOW WELL DID YOU KNOW SHELLY?**

**JACK:** Shelly used to call me and we'd have bull sessions together on coloring and the various things that could be done with comics. There was never a night when I went with Shelly that wasn't a total disaster; the most outrageous things would happen to us. I'd come back the next day and tell Sol and Jerry and Larry Nadel, who was an editor there at the time, and they'd never believe it. Always with these bull stories they'd say. Okay, I said, so you've got to go along with us next time. Which they did.

No sooner did we all get to this place then someone took a large bottle and broke it and went at Shelly with the broken edge. It had something to do

with some remark Shelly had made about photography. This guy came at him yelling something like "You guys with your 35mm cameras. . . ." and came at Shelly ready to kill him. Sol and Jerry just carefully turned around, grabbed their coats and went out.

This was a continuing thing with Shelly. There was never a time that I went with him that didn't end in something disastrous or idiotic. The last thing that I remember seeing him, he was waltzing down 43rd Street toward Third Avenue with a beautiful Eurasian girl at about two thirty in the morning. They waltzed until they disappeared in the darkness.

**BRINGING YOUR CAREERS UP TO DATE, SOL AND JACK, YOU'RE NOW RESPECTIVELY THE VICE PRESIDENT IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS AND THE PRODUCTION MANAGER. WHAT NEW INSIGHTS OR RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE THOSE TITLES ADDED?**

**SOL:** When I became vice-president in 1973, additional responsibilities were given me, mainly in the area of licensed merchandise using our characters. Besides checking the art and packaging of new products, I could recommend the use of additional characters who were doing well in their magazines at the time, and this kind of discussion helped to create more interest in our other character. As an example, when the TV show **Super-Friends** became popular, Aquaman and Wonder Woman merchandise started to appear as well as the old stand-bys **SUPERMAN, BATMAN** and **ROBIN**.

I've been able to talk to the editors and get them to think in terms of products for merchandise using our characters. **The Joker Van** was created and Mego Toys made a vehicle similar to it. We are now working on a Wayne Foundation Building, which could become a playset.

**JACK:** Well, I was in charge of the color separations department and when that was disbanded Sol asked me to be his assistant. Sol eventually got involved in many new projects and when he became Vice President I became Production Manager. Since then we've been trying in production to unify our schedules and operations more efficiently. I enjoy the hectic kind of thing that being Production Manager means, like putting together things that are constantly coming in late and in various stages of preparation and trying to make certain it gets to the engravers in time and that it's the best possible product we can offer to the readers.

**SPEAKING OF OUR READERS, MANY OF THEM ARE YOUNG HOPEFULS TRYING TO GET INTO**

**THE COMICS INDUSTRY. I KNOW THAT YOU TAKE SPECIAL EFFORT WHERE THEY ARE CONCERNED.**

**JACK:** One of the things that I resented as a young man was going in with a portfolio and not having anybody bother to look at it or if anyone did it was always a quick skim then they'd say no and that was it. What I do and Sol does also with his Junior Bullpen Program is give the young hopefuls the right time of day, really. We look at their work and advise them on how to prepare it professionally so that if they go anyplace with it (including our competition) then they're coming in with material that's prepared professionally so that they can best show how they can work in the medium. That's the kind of training that they don't seem to be getting in the schools today and that bothers me a great deal. They're not shown how to prepare work and many people come in unprepared to face the rigors of competing with professionals. We supply paper and show them the format and they're free to come back as many times as they wish. Every so often somebody will break through like a ray of sunshine and that's how some of our young artists have started. Of course, some came in and started working the instant they showed their work. Simonson is an example. John Workman here on staff is another example. I was called in to look at his art and right away I saw something in his lettering. I see in him one of our great designer-letterers. You never know who the gems are going to be and we've made some great finds that way.

**SOL:** Besides continuing the Junior Bullpen Program, I am working with the High School of Art and Design and their cartooning teacher Mr. Bellin in a Work-Study program. This allows two

students to spend their mornings with us. When they go back to school, two other students spend their afternoons with us. The purpose is to show them the day-to-day activities in a publishing firm, and to help them in their professionalism. Their last assignment is to write and draw a four page story about their work at DC.

**SOL, YOU WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN LAUNCHING THE TABLOID FORMAT COMICS IN 1972. . . THE FIRST TIME THEY HAD BEEN DONE SINCE NEW FUN COMICS IN THE THIRTIES.**

**SOL:** We were looking for a new format, because our magazines weren't getting proper placement among the 120 magazines on the newsstand at the time. Returning from a trip to the World Color Press plant at Sparta, Illinois, I began to play around with different sizes for comics. None of the sizes seemed to work, since they couldn't be put on a newspaper high-speed color press. But by opening the comic up, with one less fold, we could create a tabloid size comic that would stand out on the newsstand.

I convinced Carmine that we should test it, and we launched this new format with Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer. This led to the Limited Collectors' and Famous 1st Edition series. Carmine then asked me to design a package that could be sent direct to a magazine or book dealer, containing 80 dollar comics, and set up as a display. These magazines and displays have opened up many new outlets.

**DO YOU THINK THIS FORMAT HAS A FUTURE?**

**SOL:** Certainly. **THE BIBLE** was the

first issue to use all new material, and I think it was the most expensive comic ever produced. The results were favorable, so we're preparing further Old Testament stories and the New Testament for next year.

But most important is the fact that these books are getting into bookstores and airline terminals where the regular comics were never sold. They're being treated like paperbacks with a longer shelf-life.

**WHAT ABOUT COMICS THEMSELVES? WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD?**

**JACK:** I think that much of the potential of comic art has still not been realized. We are striving in every way to use our art form as an instrument for learning as well as a force for good relations and understanding.

**SOL:** Comics are here to stay. Two hundred to two hundred and fifty million copies are sold each year and DC is going to sell a big share of them, as always. Besides our regular artists, writers and editors, we are developing new talent. We are working with the best group of Assistant Editors, new writers and artists that I have ever seen. We are constantly thinking of new products and new directions.

**The Adventures of Superman** movie will be released late in 1976 or in the Spring of 1977 and it will be a Block Buster! Two new TV series are now in the planning stages and they will bring attention to our teen-age super-heroes. Movies, TV and character merchandise are all visual stimuli that must help our future sales of comics on the newsstands.

I have good vibes about the future for comics and DC.

A few of the special tone covers Jack and Sol developed.



Carmine's original sketch for the cover of Shazam #6.

