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Fighting American, Speedboy
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Jack Kirby

706 16

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THE
COLLECTED
JACK KIRBY
VOLUME TWO COLLECTOR



THE COLLECTED JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR, VOLUME TWO

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DEDICATED TO:

The late *Rosalind Kirby*, in loving memory.
Her constant support of *The Jack Kirby Collector*
is the reason this book is possible, and her legacy,
as well as Jack's, lives on in every issue.

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JOHN'S JUKEBOX

Welcome to our second Trade Paperback, reprinting issues #10-12 of THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR! Since those issues were first published in 1996, TJKC really came into its own, garnering thousands of new readers and more than a couple of Harvey and Eisner Award nominations along the way. Since #10-12 are sold out, and I promised way back in TJKC #1 to always try to keep the back issues in stock (at reasonable prices), these compilations are the most economical way of doing that. This also gave me the opportunity to run "The House That Jack Built," a wonderful account of a British fan's visit to Jack and Roz's home (particularly appropriate since this volume reprints our "International" theme issue). The article made me think of my own trips to the Kirby house, and all the delightful conversations I had with Roz. With her passing, those visits have sadly come to an end, but hopefully this article will serve as a "guided tour" for those of you who weren't fortunate enough to experience the Kirbys' hospitality firsthand. Roz was always incredibly supportive of TJKC, and it wouldn't be where it is today without her.

Let me take a moment here to thank Jerry Ordway and Barry Windsor-Smith for their superb cover inks on the issues in this volume, and special thanks to our regular colorist Tom Ziuko for constantly extending TJKC's palette; proofreader Richard Howell for helping us watch our P's and Q's (and all the other letters); World Wide Webmaster Rand Hoppe for connecting TJKC with the world; Steve Sherman, Mark Evanier, and Mike Thibodeaux for always being there; Robert Katz and the Kirby Estate for carrying on the tradition of excellence; the "guys" in Raleigh, NC for sharing warm friendship and cold pizza whenever a new issue needs to be mailed; my beautiful wife Pam for her encouragement and support (and this volume's introduction); my slightly less-beautiful Associate Editor Jon B. Cooke for the thousands of words I didn't have to write myself; and especially all the Kirby fans and pros out there who've contributed to TJKC by writing articles and letters, sending art, or simply picking up each new issue. You're what it's all about, folks.

People always used to ask me how long a magazine about a single artist could sustain itself. After ten years and forty issues, they've finally stopped asking; and as long as you're interested and I'm able, we'll keep meeting back here every few months to swap notes about that amazing artist from the Lower East Side—Jack Kirby.

Long Live The King!



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Front cover inks & colors: Jack Kirby
Back cover photos: Glenn B. Fleming & Bob Latimer

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MY ETCHINGS?"

Rosalind Kirby Interviewed (conducted by John Morrow on December 12, 1995)

THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR: What's your favorite color?

ROSALIND KIRBY: Yellow. I love yellow roses.

TJKC: What's your favorite ice cream flavor?

ROZ: Choc... no, actually, I like cherry jubilee.

TJKC: Wow, that's an interesting choice! So where were you born?



Jack and Roz at home in 1991.

ROZ: I was born in Brooklyn, September 25, 1922. Now you know my age! (laughter)

TJKC: I won't do the math. (laughter) What was your childhood like? Did you grow up in the same kind of neighborhood as Jack?

ROZ: Jack was brought up in the lower east side of

Manhattan, in tenement houses. I was brought up in Brooklyn in small, private homes. But my folks were also very poor, and they had a tough life. My father was a tailor, my mother did a lot of work dress-making and things. I was very ill as a young girl because I had asthma. From age eight I was very sick. I used to sit up at night and help my mother do hand-sewing and I became very good at it. Before I met Jack I was working as a lingerie designer, doing very fine work designing all those pretty things you put on women's lingerie, and laces and things like that. That's why I was able to do inking, because I always used a fine pen and ink for the lace work. Right after I graduated high school, I got the job and did it for a few years.

TJKC: Did the Depression hit your family pretty hard?

ROZ: Well, it didn't have to hit. There was always a depression for us. It was always pretty difficult for my folks. They worked hard all their lives. We moved to so many places. When we couldn't pay the rent, we had to move to another apartment. But they always managed to have a roof over our head, and have food for us, and the children always came first for them. They were good parents.

TJKC: How did you and Jack meet?

ROZ: That was one of the times we were moving. It was to one of these attached brick homes, and Jack's family lived downstairs, and my folks rented the apartment upstairs. The first time I came there, he was playing stickball with his friends. I was 17½, and Jack was five years older. His parents and my parents were getting acquainted, and he came over to me and started talking. The first thing he says to me is, "Would you like to see my etchings?" (laughter) I didn't know what the word 'etchings' meant, and he said, "My drawings." So I said, "Oh, sure." So he takes me to his bedroom, and I thought, "What could happen? My folks are there, his folks are there." (laughter) And that's the first time I saw Captain America. I'd never read a comic book in my life.

TJKC: So he was already working on *Captain America* at the time?

ROZ: Yes. It was the summer of 1940. I was telling everyone I was disappointed. I thought he was going to fool around! (laughter) And from that time on... let's see, I was 17½, on my 18th birthday I became engaged. We were engaged for a year, and when I was 19 and he was 24, we were married.

TJKC: What did your parents think of Jack when they first met him?

ROZ: Well, they thought, "He's an artist. He'll never make a living." (laughter) His parents always wanted him to be a mechanic so he could make a living. In the Army, he was a mechanic for three months, and he couldn't even change a tire. (laughter) I have a little 3" x 3" diploma from the Army that says "Jack Kirby, Mechanic, U.S. Army." He didn't even know how to change a tire, so you can imagine...! (laughter) But he always called me a cheap date, because I lived upstairs, and he didn't have to go far to pick me up to go out.

TJKC: Did your dad like him right off the bat?

ROZ: They got along pretty well. I was always really ill as a young girl, and I didn't do too much dating. Then when I met Jack, we really became close pretty fast. We just hit it off, that's all.

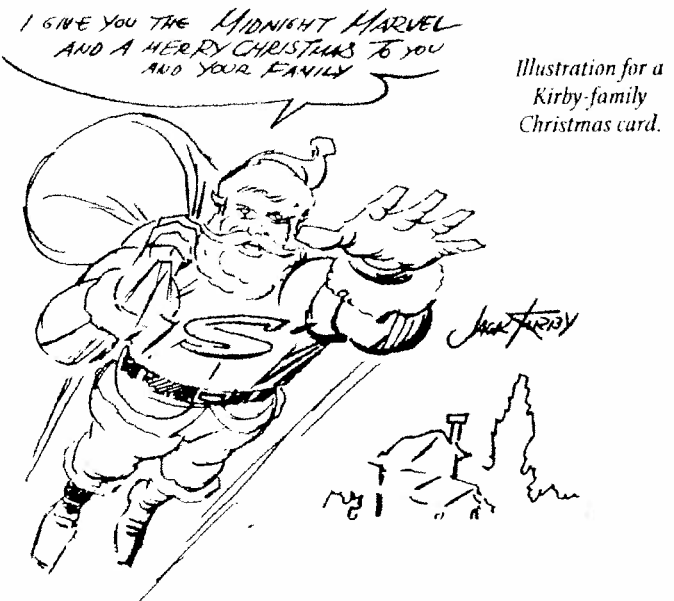
TJKC: Was he a "Ladies' Man"? Did he have lots of girlfriends?

ROZ: When I moved in, the neighbors had five daughters, and every one of them was after him. (laughter) It was lots of fun, let's put it that way! (laughter) They all wanted to marry off their daughters, and they wanted to get ahold of a bachelor.



SAD. LOOKIN' SIGHT, AIN'T I?

A drawing Jack sent to a fan while stationed at Camp Stewart, GA during WWII.



it book by book, and everybody thought all the books were the same.

TJKC: After working as a team for so many years, was Jack concerned when Joe went into advertising in 1959? Was it difficult for him emotionally to be out on his own again?

ROZ: Well, the field was very bad, and they were both looking for work at that time. But Jack was always able to get work. Not as much, but he was always able to find work. Jack never liked the advertising field. I'm sure he could have gone into it, but he never liked it. His heart had always been with comics, so he stuck with comics. So Joe went his way, and Jack went his way. They both had families to support, so they did the best they could.

TJKC: But the parting was amicable? There wasn't any kind of big blow-up or anything?

ROZ: No, no, no. Nothing like that. It was just economics.

TJKC: Let's talk some more about Jack's work habits. You said that he liked to work late at night. Was that from the very beginning?

ROZ: From the day I met him, he always worked in the evenings. When he came back from the service, we were living with my mother until we were able to get our own place. We had the bedroom, and he worked there. I'd go to bed, and the baby was sleeping, and he'd be working all night long. That's the way he liked it. And the funny part



Jack at his fabled drawing table in 1991.

walks with the children, took them for ice cream and things like that.

TJKC: Were Jack and Joe really close, or were they just co-workers who got along really well?

ROZ: I wouldn't say they were close, but they got along very well. Jack always thought of Joe as a big brother.

TJKC: Well, he was so tall! *(Roz laughs)*

ROZ: Jack was always the shrimpy. *(laughter)*

TJKC: I've always wondered how two tough, rugged guys like Jack and Joe did all those romance comics. Did you give them ideas for stories?

ROZ: Oh, no, no. If I suggested anything to Jack, he'd get hysterical. You know the crazy names he always came up with? I'd say, "I have a great name for you." He'd look at me and get hysterical and start laughing! *(laughter)* So I said, "Okay, I'm not gonna give you any more ideas!" *(laughter)*

If I read a story, I'd tell him if I liked it or not, and he liked it when I did that. But I never gave him any ideas for anything. Sometimes when he came up with things like the Silver Surfer and the Black Racer, I'd say, "It's crazy. It'll never go over. What kind of crazy names are those?" *(laughter)* But his vision... he'd look ahead and say, "Don't worry, they'll catch on. Don't worry."

TJKC: When Jack and Joe's Mainline company went out of business due to the whole Comics Code thing and the way the industry was going, was it a really scary time in your lives?

ROZ: I'm trying to remember. I never dealt too much with the business end of that. But it was tough times. Like nowadays, the books weren't doing well. If you put money into it, you lost your money. At that time, with that guy Dr. Wertham, there was a lot of that going on.

TJKC: Did Jack have many sleepless nights over parents burning the books and Dr. Wertham going on his tirades?

ROZ: He was always very angry about it, but there was nothing... he called Wertham all kinds of names. *(laughter)* But life went on. There wasn't anything he could do about it. They felt their books weren't that bad. But Wertham lumped all the books together, he didn't take

of it is, even when we moved to our own place, he always liked to have voices around him. He'd have the TV picture going, and the sound turned down so he could see action. Then he'd have the radio going to hear the voices. *(laughter)*

TJKC: So after he'd work until the wee hours of the morning, would he sleep until noon?

ROZ: Yes, I'd let him sleep late.

TJKC: So then would he spend the afternoons with you and the kids?

ROZ: Right. If I had to do my food shopping, he'd stay with the kids. We did a lot of things together. He helped me a lot with the children. He was very good about that.

TJKC: So then he'd start back to work drawing after dinner?

ROZ: Yes, the kids would be quiet, they'd have their dinner and their baths, and they'd be put to bed. Then he'd sit down and do his artwork.

TJKC: Did you get to take some nice vacations around then?

ROZ: No, we couldn't afford vacations. We'd go up to visit my sister. She lived up in the Catskills in the summertime. But we never took any real vacations with the children, or even by ourselves.

I did go to Europe with my brother. My brother was working for the airlines, and I had three children at the time. I was in my thirties, and I said I needed a vacation. So Jack says, "Go. I'll take care of the kids." So I went with my brother Larry to Europe. We landed in Helsinki, stayed a couple of days in Norway, Denmark, a day in Paris. It was a very fast trip, two weeks. But I had a good time.

When the kids were older, Jack and I went to Israel, before he passed on, about eight years ago. That was great, because he always wanted to go there, to see the Wall. He put a note in the Wall, so I said to him, "What did you write?" And he says, "Thanks for the vacation." *(laughter)* We were there for about three weeks. We went with our temple, with a group of about 40 people. We had a great time, because they took us to the out-of-the-way places. We were up on the Gaza Strip, and right on the borders. It was very, very exciting. Everybody should do it. I'm glad that, before he passed on, he got to go on that trip that he wanted.

TJKC: How much inking did you do over the years?

ROZ: Well, when we were in my mother's house, in the bedroom, we had two tables there, and I would help him ink while the kids were sleeping. He would do most of the outlines, because his hand was steadier than mine, and he knew how to make it thick and thin. And you know how he's so good at putting in all his shading. He made it very easy for the inkers because he put in all the shading. It was very easy for me to just go over his shading lines.

TJKC: Do you remember which specific books you inked?

ROZ: You'd have to ask Mike Thibodeaux. He would know. *(laughter)*

Jack did this pencil drawing for Joe Sinnott's son Mark in return for Joe inking the Fighting American drawing that appeared in the Kirby Unleashed portfolio. *(See page 30 of this issue)*



To tell you the truth, it's difficult for me to remember.

TJKC: Through the years, did you generally see what Jack was working on? Or were you too busy taking care of the kids?

ROZ: Oh, no. I always looked at his work. I'd tell him if I liked the story, or if I didn't like the story, or if I liked the drawings. I always put my input in. Of course, he still did what he wanted to do, *(laughter)* but I still gave him my opinion.

TJKC: Well, that's called "being married!" *(ROZ laughs)* But did he discuss the ideas with you as he was coming up with them?

ROZ: No, he never discussed the ideas, because he would sit down at the board, right? With the paper blank, he would just start drawing. I'd ask, "How do you know what the story is?" He'd say, "I know what the story is." Like when he was doing the trilogy—*The New Gods*—three books at one time, or four books. I said, "How do you know when one story starts and one story ends?" He says, "Because I just know." And that's the way he was. He'd put a hand in one panel, and