

# EXHIBIT HHH

# THEY WERE ACES!

John Severin interviewed—by mail—by Jim Amash

**THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR:** When did you first become aware of Simon & Kirby's comic book work? Did they influence you in any way?

**JOHN SEVERIN:** One of the first, or in this case two of the first comic artists I heard of when I got into the business were Simon & Kirby. I was a late bloomer in comics—it wasn't till late '47 that I entered the field and there seemed to be a hundred aces who I was encouraged to emulate, to swipe from or at the very least admire for their work. Simon & Kirby were two of the more outstanding aces of that group.

**TJKC:** How did you get work at Crestwood and Prize?

**JOHN:** There were quite a number of publishers in New York at that time, albeit their production was small. In those days the prospective artist lugged his portfolio of samples from company to company looking for work. One of the publishers I encountered during this routine was Crestwood—and there I met



the two stars of comics, Simon & Kirby.

**TJKC:** Was Will Elder working with you from the beginning or did he come aboard later? Who was the editor and what was your first work there?

**JOHN:** We—Bill Elder and I were partners at that time—were lucky enough to be given a script for one of the crime comics. The story was about two children—a young girl and her brother who murdered their mean stepfather.

Soon we were doing westerns for Crestwood's sister company, Prize Western—"The Black Bull" and "The Lazo Kid" were two of the series we did before the editor, Nevin Fidler, spoke to me about a new character they were creating called "American Eagle." I agreed to take it on and that ended our work with Simon & Kirby. They had been very helpful with their constructive criticism to two novices in the business.

**TJKC:** Who do you recall being at Prize at the time?

**JOHN:** M.R. Reese was the Head Honcho—Joe and Jack took care of the crime and romance books. After Nevin Fidler left, Joe Genalo took over; and of course Ben Oda was there, lettering away to beat the band. Marv Stein was there mostly doing work under Jack and Joe's wing.

**TJKC:** Did you ever socialize with Joe & Jack?

**JOHN:** Even though I no longer worked directly with Simon & Kirby, our relationship was always friendly.

**TJKC:** Who wrote the American Eagle stories?

**JOHN:** They started out with Jay Alexander, but when I began packaging the Eagle, I got Colin Dawkins to come in with me. We would work out the storyline together and at times collaborated on the final script.

**TJKC:** Did you do much work on the romance books?

**JOHN:** As to the romance stories for S&K, my mind is a blank. I don't remember whether or not I ever did any for Crestwood.

**TJKC:** Why did you quit working for Prize and/or Simon & Kirby?

**JOHN:** The work I was receiving from EC caused



(these pages) Severin inks over Kirby pencils, from Yellow Claw #4.

me to give the secondary Eagle stories to Joe Gevanter. There were times when I had to enlist the help of Al Williamson. We might even stay up all night in order to meet my deadline. Eventually I had to turn the whole magazine over to Gevanter and leave Crestwood.

*TJKC:* How did you get the job inking Kirby on *The Yellow Claw* for Stan Lee? Was that the first time you inked Kirby?

*JOHN:* I believe *The Yellow Claw* was the first time I inked Jack Kirby's pencils. I never asked Stan Lee how I came by that particular assignment and I didn't really care; it was such a pleasure.

*TJKC:* In the 1960s, you went back to work for Stan doing finishes on Kirby's "Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D." What led you back to Marvel?

*JOHN:* Again in the '60s I was working for Marvel. Kirby's "Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D." came my way (good ol' Stan). Jack's pencils were always complete, so again I was enjoying the inking on the ace.

*TJKC:* Did you talk to Kirby much during this period?

*JOHN:* Though Jack and I rarely saw one another whilst "S.H.I.E.L.D." was being produced, I do recall a bit earlier when he and I were at a business conference near Columbus Circle. When it was concluded, we—Jack and I—adjourned to a coffee house, nearby where Anastasia was shot down.

Jack wanted to know if I'd be interested in syndication. He said we could be partners on a script idea he had. The story would be set in Europe during WWII; the hero would be a tough, cigar-smoking Sergeant with a squad of oddball G.I.s—sort of an adult Boy Commandos.

Like so many other grand decisions I have made in comics, I peered through the cigar smoke and told him I really wasn't interested



*John graciously agreed to ink these pencils from the Kirby Unleashed portfolio for this issue's back cover. Thanks, John!*

AAAAH! THEN WE CAN BE OF SERVICE TO EACH OTHER! MISTER WADE... YOU SHALL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO THE YELLOW CLAW!



in newspaper strips. We finished cigars and coffee and Jack left, heading towards Marvel and Stan Lee.

Oddly enough, later on at Marvel I ended up working on Sgt. Fury and then "Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D."

*TJKC:* Was there any difference between working for Stan Lee in the 1960s as compared to the 1950s?

*JOHN:* Working for Marvel was always amusing (I don't mean "funny"). Stan Lee seemed to make every project exciting and colorful. He never changed from the time I first worked for him at the Empire State Building to the last on Madison Avenue.

*TJKC:* When did you quit working for Marvel during this time and why?

*JOHN:* During the '70s, other commitments such as Warren and *Cracked Magazine* consumed most of my time. Consequently it left me only working off and on for Marvel.

*TJKC:* How do you view Simon & Kirby's role in comic book history?

*JOHN:* It would be very difficult for me to give you my view of Simon & Kirby's role in comic book history. So much has already been said and much of it by those more qualified than I. All that I can say is, again, "They were aces!" ★