

GRAPHIC ARCHIVES

THE MAGAZINE

MAY 2021



HEROES



*Miss Cumberland
Julia Kay Gregory*



*Mr. Cumberland
C. Wayne Ballard*

 **“Phoenix”**

My parents met at Cumberland College and found each others glory of getting through life’s challenges. **“Phoenix”** was the title of their 1964 college yearbook and this is a photograph showing them as **Mr. and Miss Cumberland**. It was truly a rebirth for each of them as life took on new challenges and I was born a few years later. Both are my truest **Heroes** as they have guided me through so many struggles and challenges. I’ve been truly blessed to have them throughout as they are an inner strength for me to understand how much **Heroes** are to the Heart and Soul of the driving force of willpower.

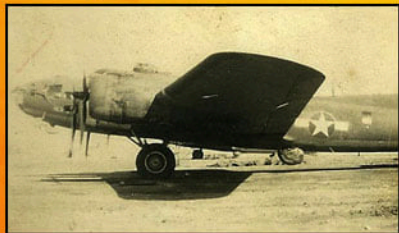
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THE MAGAZINE • MAY 2021



The Amazing World of Comics

Comics became an essential part of growing up with strength through art and writing.



Ballard Bombers

Family Heroes and the story behind the history.



Family

My Parents are my greatest Heroes of All-Time.



Collective Memories

A new feature for those with childhood memories.



Canada Geese

Partners for Life!
My experience and fascination with those that were so close.



Wings of Victory

Gourmet Gallery's latest recipe tales flight with Chicken Wings!



A World Without Heroes

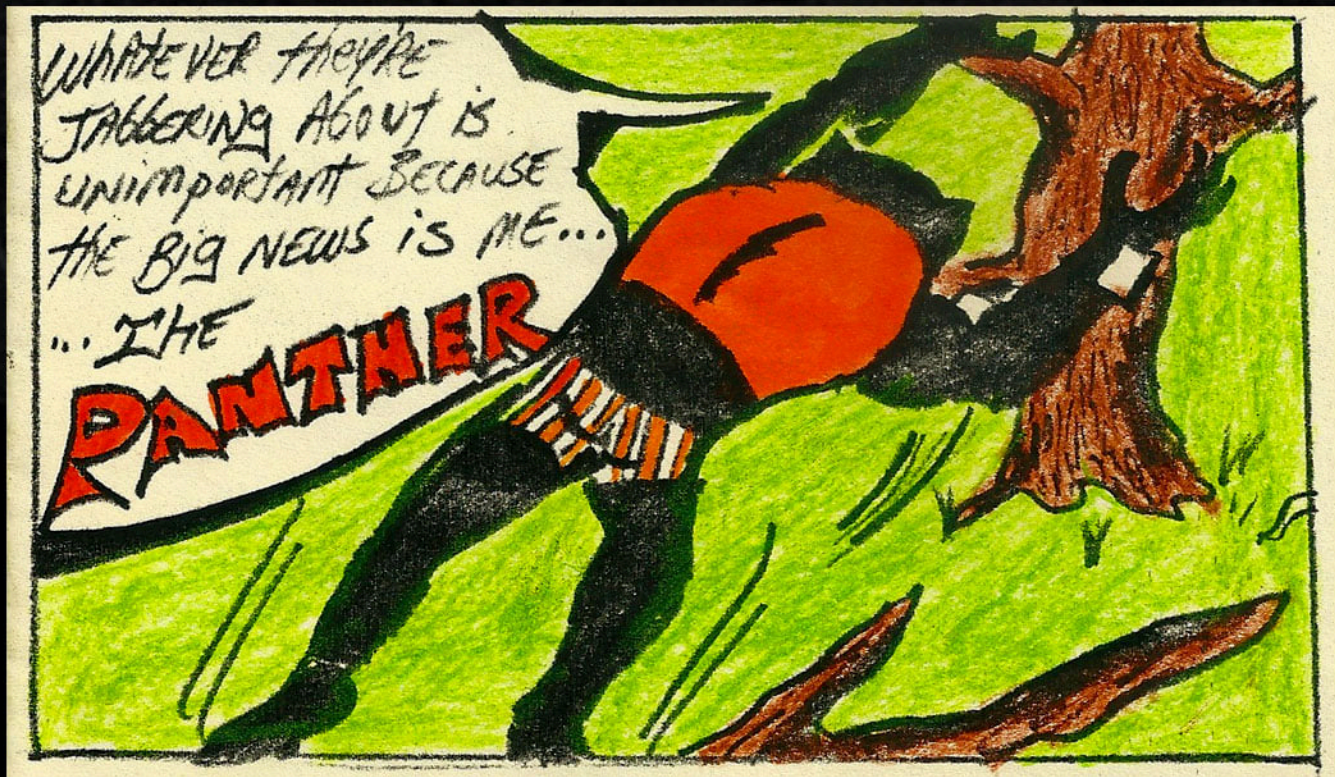
A true story account of sharing the stage with the rock group KISS!

Have No Fear... Chris is Here...as the Greatest American Hero! Or so many believed when I had a perm in College. I was often mistaken for William Katt from the televisions series.

Cover: Illustrations of Superheroes from a calender project I created in 2018.

- 4: Introduction
Some words about what makes a Hero.
- 20: WHO Are YOU?
How would you define yourself and the difference between success and significance.
- 24: Pop Quiz!
A story about Teachers and how they are true heroes to all!
- ..26: MAUS
A Graphic Novel account based on true life circumstances with a Pulitzer Prize Winning Creative approach.

Back Cover: Song Lyrics from "A World Without Heroes" by the rock group KISS.



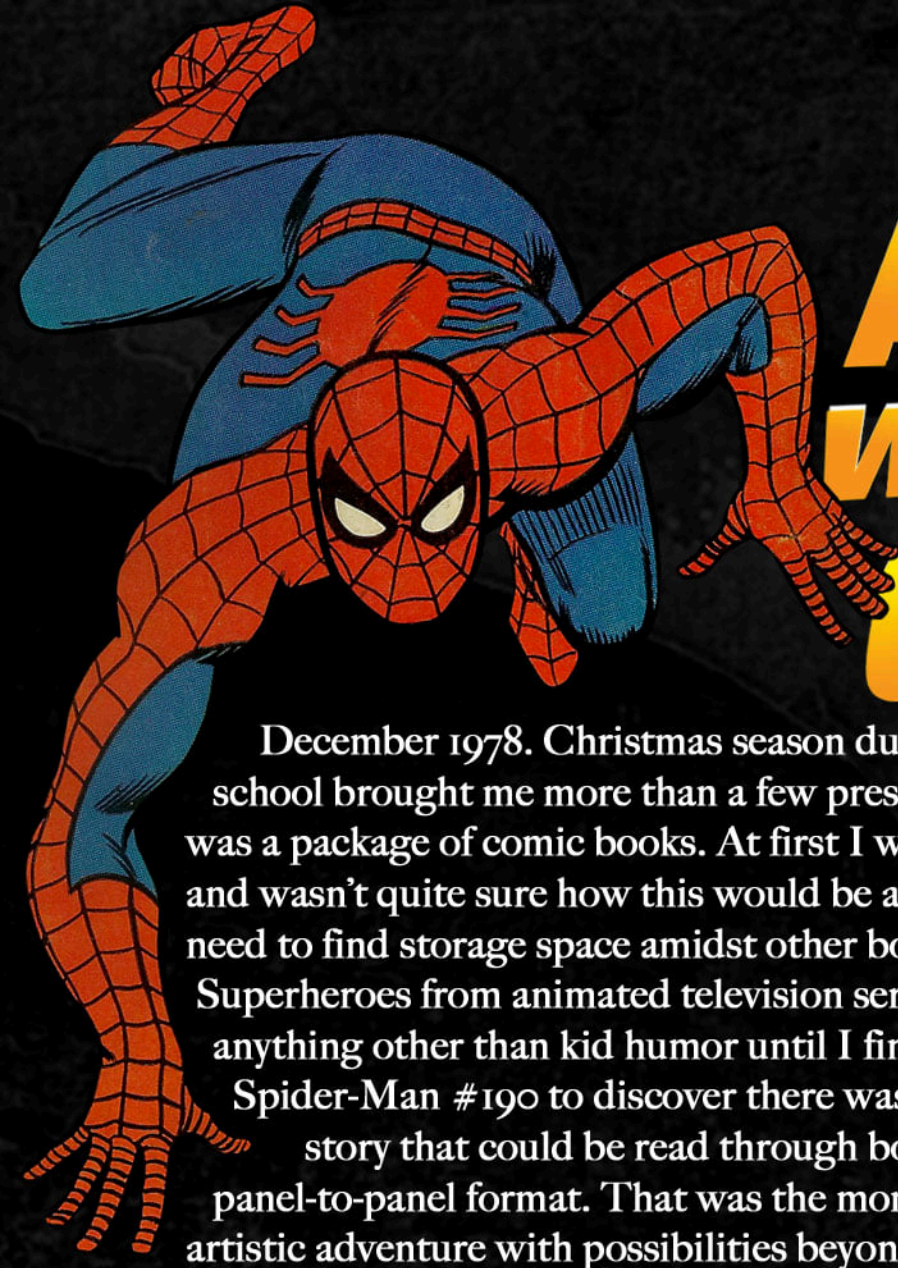
True story when I was young and became fascinated with Superheroes, I came up with an orange and black costume pieced together from sports uniforms and made a mask to hide my true identity as I planned to go out into the world and fight for truth and justice. I was going to be "The Panther" because that was my school's mascot. I got about 15 feet outside my parents house when the neighbor stepped around the corner and I ran from my own embarrassment! I knew then I was never going to become a SuperHero!

I guess creativity has it's own Kryptonite of weaknesses, but the spirit and determination were forces I could utilize in reality and that is what makes more sense to me now. We each find our own strength from others and various sources that help motivate and push us to become something bigger and better than our own imagination.

Fly along with me through this month's issue to discover those fascinations of heroic adventures as we both build a better world for each of us. Meanwhile, I'm going to go back and see if I can find that "Panther" costume again and give it another try! LOL!

Love and Wishes!





THE AMAZING WORLD OF COMICS

December 1978. Christmas season during my Sixth grade year of Middle school brought me more than a few presents from classmates. One such gift was a package of comic books. At first I was confused as I didn't collect comics and wasn't quite sure how this would be anything more than something I would need to find storage space amidst other books. I was only vaguely familiar with Superheroes from animated television series and wasn't considering comics as anything other than kid humor until I finally opened the pages to *The Amazing Spider-Man #190* to discover there was really cool artwork and a sophisticated story that could be read through both words and pictures in a sequential panel-to-panel format. That was the moment I fell in love with comics as an artistic adventure with possibilities beyond my own imagination!

I soon realized the significance of the two disciplines of both writing stories and art as it had become a revelation for me to find that creative path to explore the potential and possibilities. My first attempts were trying to mimic those heroes that already existed, but that soon gave way to stories and characters I wanted to create for myself. I quickly turned one of my parents rooms into my art studio where I could escape and bring my ideas to life through the comic book design, or what can be more appropriately considered sequential art as it is an artform that encompasses more than superheroes and humor strips.

Spider-Man was my first love affair and I would walk a few miles down to the nearest convenient store to see if the latest edition had been released. I would have it read by the time I got back home and was inspired to create something for myself. It wasn't so much the incredible powers within the heroes than the stories that revealed the struggles I was experiencing growing up as an only child to give me confidence and strength through the stories and the art.

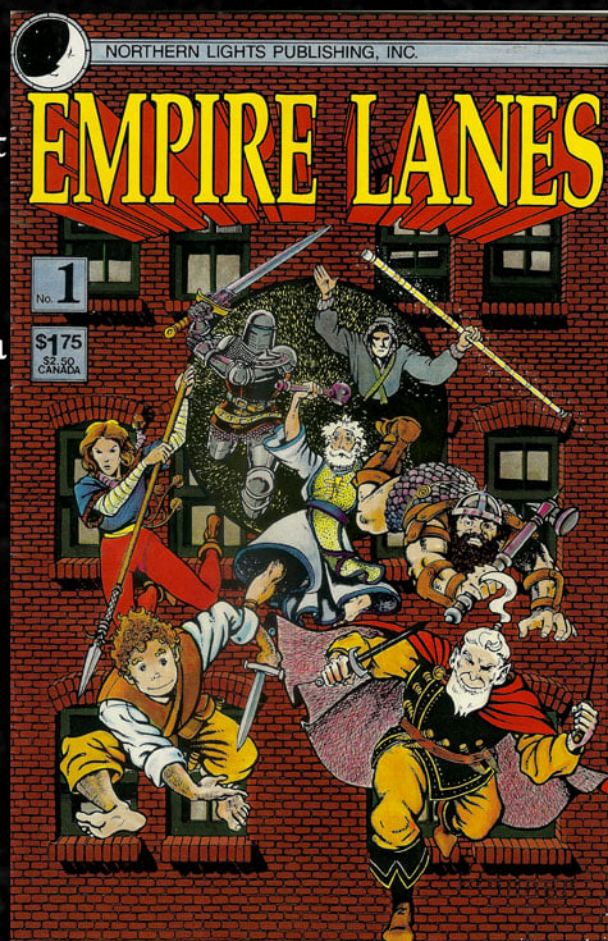


The first comics artist I met was Dave Cockrum as a new Comics specialty store finally opened to the public and had invited him as an attraction. There were many surrounding him as his latest work “The Futurians” had become a fascination amongst fans. I was intrigued, bought the graphic novel book, and had him sign it for me. It was a thrill for me to meet others who were living the life I was aspiring to become. One question that came up from another to the artist was “What would you want to be if you weren’t doing comics?”

“An astronaut,” was Dave’s reply. I think most comic artists are explorers through imagination, yet it was a sincere answer that there’s a distinction between reality and fantasy.

I met so many amazing artists during the next several years as it became my social practice to discover more about that world and opportunities that would develop from being part of those experiences.

Comic conventions became the social network for my inspirations. A few took place in my hometown in Knoxville, Tennessee but I had to travel throughout the Southeastern states to attend those with all my heroes. From Charlotte, North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia, I would either drive on my own or go with friends that took interest. I even drove to Chattanooga one morning just to meet Peter Gross as I knew he was making an appearance at their mall. I had met him previously as he had found his own creative venture through independent publishers to write and illustrate his series of “Empire Lanes.” It was a fascinating story about fantasy characters that go through a portal to reality and wind up in a bowling alley in which their powers must cope with new challenges. I showed him my portfolio and he provided much insight into the business and how to go about achieving my ambitious goals...as he had done.



As I left High School and entered College, I began to think more seriously about art and the possibilities of turning my ambitions into a career. It was brutal at first as I struggled through the many courses of discipline, yet gained a sense that my learning was more along a broader scope than what I had imagined for myself. There were other options to consider and I began to excel once I realized how much there was to learn. Art is an exploration of ideas from within, but only experience will give you some indication about where your talent may be more beneficial.

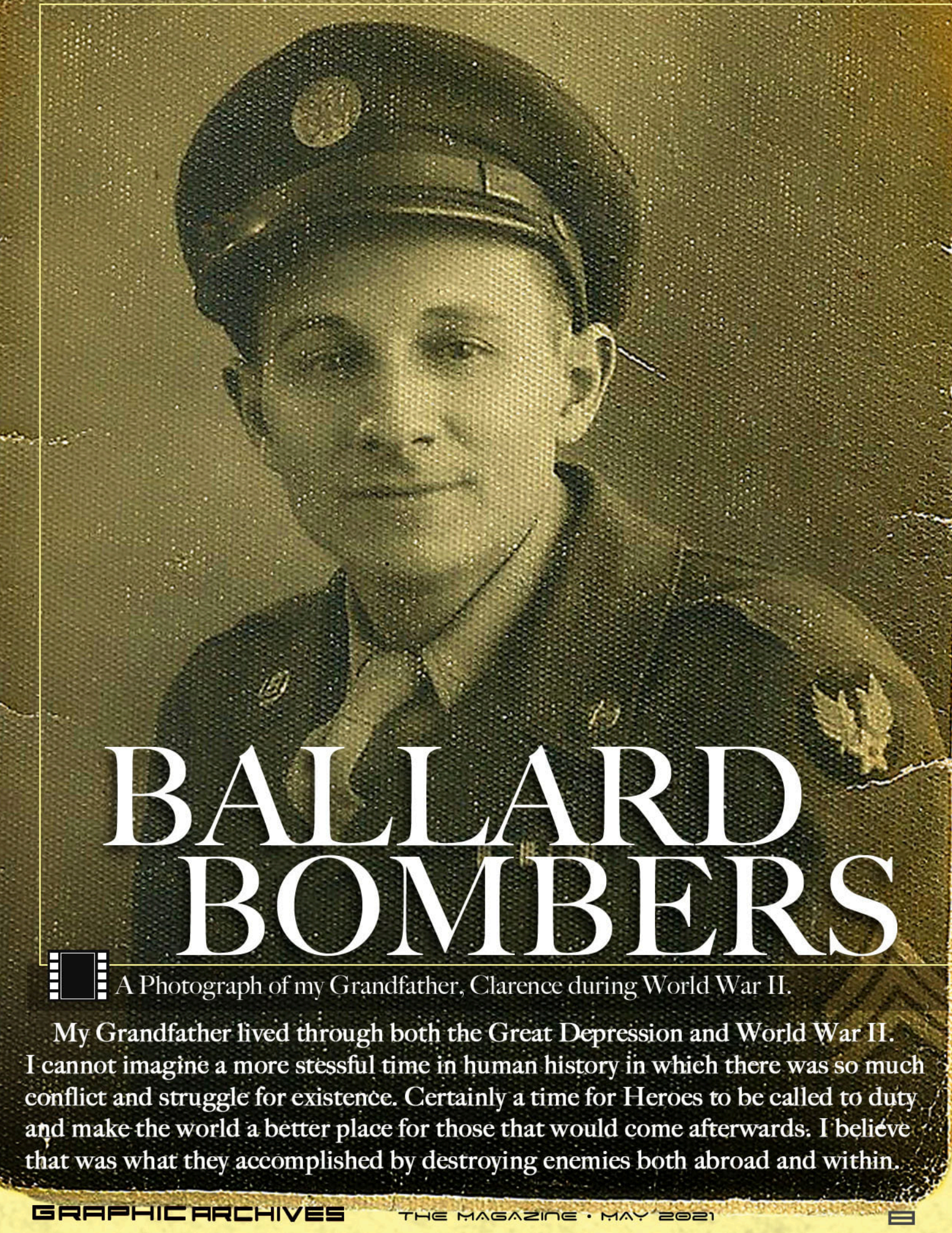
The comics industry was changing radically as “Graphic Novels” were becoming more prominent. Superhero comics were now in competition with more prestigious books in which the quality printing and wider range of story genres became more popular. Individual artistic style was also becoming more distinctive amongst fans that became attracted to certain artists moreso than the superhero characters.

Spider-Man had made a prominent comeback after years of decline as Todd McFarlane took over as artist. It was as much due to his artistic flair than the stories. I had the opportunity to meet him at conventions and waited in line for hours it seemed, but as I took my turn and got a few issues signed, I left feeling that I was his biggest fan. That impressed me so much that an artist as popular as he was in his prime took so much interest in his fans.

Richard Case, Brian Stelfreeze, Craig Hamilton, Dave Dorman, Lurene Haines, and even Boris Vallejo were just a few that encouraged me to keep at my craft. Perhaps the most strange encounter for me was meeting Frank Miller. I was starstruck and didn't know what to say. He was already amongst those that were elite in the business and has since gone onto even greater success with the film industry.

It took a few years and a few more conventions, but I finally made my own way into the industry. Innovation Publishing was looking for an airbrush artist and I had taken to the medium with special interest. I met with artist Mike Okamoto in Dearborn, Michigan at a comic convention and he needed assistance with his latest graphic novel. Knowing that I could help with deadlines as the airbrush technique was incredibly time-consuming, the publisher gave me a chance to work on the series.

My heart and spirit had been given me great strength, yet it wasn't just me going down the road as much as all of those that helped push me towards my ambitions. That is what should be taken from the top of this story in that so many influential voices began to guide me towards an articulate life. It is something I cherish and would not be possible without all of those HEROES that have molded my own special identity. From my classmate friend that gave me my first comics to those artists at conventions, and all the teachers that pushed my talents to another level are those I consider heroes!



BALLARD BOMBERS



A Photograph of my Grandfather, Clarence during World War II.

My Grandfather lived through both the Great Depression and World War II. I cannot imagine a more stressful time in human history in which there was so much conflict and struggle for existence. Certainly a time for Heroes to be called to duty and make the world a better place for those that would come afterwards. I believe that was what they accomplished by destroying enemies both abroad and within.

Clarence never talked about the War and as a grandchild growing up, I was never aware he took part. It was many years later as an adult I was given a few details about his experience. Something to do with communications and planning bombing attacks from air bases in Europe over Germany. That is about as much as I know, but can add that after the war, he was offered a prominent position in the US Intelligence, yet turned towards other ambitions. War is Hell and to be one that makes the sacrifice for their country is the highest honor.

Coincidentally (and unrelated to my family history), there are a couple of schools that go by the name of Ballard Bombers. One is in Iowa, while the other exists in Kentucky. My father came across this information while teaching and decided to implement the name for his students as a special title to encourage their efforts. He was committed to education and those nuances of creative motivation helped establish respect amongst students.

Ballard Bombers has now become an homage to family and the sacrifices taken for liberty, country, and the next generation. Each are unique and the diversity is more apparent today than ever before. Perhaps that is where we are losing our sense of understanding what it was like to unite together and fight for a common cause. New generations lose something from the past and may not realize how much of a sacrifice our country has been through to provide us with so many idealistic and truly valuable commodities...such as Freedom!

Most of those reading this never actually had to fight for freedom as it has become more of an entitlement. I guarantee, nobody reading this ever planned a bomb attack on Nazi Germany. My Grandfather did just that!

For those that are serving or have served in our military on any level understand the conditioning and sacrifice it takes to prepare for the worst...For that is the most respected duty you can perform for an entire nation. I have an uncle and two cousins that also served heavily in the military and feel fortunate that I never had to take that path in life. It's a blessing to have a choice, but that would not be possible without those that STAND for those who prefer to kneel in disrespect for their service.

History teaches us much about ourselves and I would think World War II was a time when everything changed as a result of ignoring the real problems that existed because nobody wanted to face the truth. That's what Heroes do...they fight for truth and justice and are willing to sacrifice themselves for others. My grandfather passed away many years ago and I only wish I could pick his mind today to understand what he thinks about where our world is headed and to know more about his own personal experiences.

Heroes

The Diaper Syndrome may be a viable theory in that when your parents change your diapers as a baby...it becomes an intrusive and endearing act of responsibility that never ends. My parents have changed my diapers on a daily basis for so many years in that they never feel as if I can manage on my own. That's true parenting and also why they both are my HEROES!

As an only child, I was the focal point of attention and that may be what is wrong with me today as it was just a given circumstance. Childhood left me so many days ago...LOL!

Yet, I am still a child at heart. It's all my parent's fault I often express, but the truth is they are the strength of my mindset. My collective memories are still vivid to this very day as I can reflect on happiness throughout my life with the upbringing, teaching, and family values that I had growing into more mature years. It takes a lifetime to understand how much the mind can absorb the pains of responsibility and yet I was fortunate to have two parents that cherished so many aspects of living.

I was spoiled only in that I knew I had something special going for me, but never really recognized it until later. Most children without siblings and do not have another to share are often assumed to be selfish by nature in that they become rewarded more extravagantly. That was not the case with me as my parents expected more in turn to earn those things I wanted for myself. Sure, they provided me with what was needed, but the life lessons were about proving something to myself and to others the value of what I had to offer..

That was true parenting in that they have always been in the frame of mind that I would gain through ambitious efforts while still having the freedom of any choice I would make. There was never a question about my creative pursuits and they have never been critical of any direction life would take. As parents, they did their job and were responsible for many life lessons years ago and still support me throughout.



■ ■ ■ Mom and Dad's Wedding
September 10, 1964

I lived in my father's shadow throughout school, but that was a blessing in disguise as he was a popular teacher to many students and I began to see the impact he had on others. Mom was the true force behind the initiatives as she managed everything from cooking, cleaning chores, financial obligations, and anything that needed organization. She was office manager for various companies through the years and that just seemed to be a natural gift. In addition, she was a fan and support system to us both as she would drive from West Knoxville to northern Knox County to cheer for both my dad's basketball team and me as well.

Dynamics change over time as I moved off to college, but they made all of that happen for me to become well-educated. Both had comparable incomes and I can never recall any arguments about financial matters. Both lived simple lives that were rewarding to themselves as I was raised without much need for extra flair as the memories of happiness sufficed through the lens of my parents.

True Heroes! The solid foundation in which I stand upon the solid rock foundation they created for themselves and for me. It's difficult to write such an article with so many so many reflective properties as they continue to help me through life's challenges.

There's an adage that states, "You don't get to pick your parents and you can't turn back time." It's appropriate in that I have been so very blessed with both as I cannot imagine better parents as the time with them still is a strength to my heart and soul.



Mom and Dad at the Wonderland Lodge,
Smoky Mountains National Park, 1992.



 Mom and Dad Photo back in the 80's at 'Ye Olde Steak House' restaurant.

Life was always in constant motion as I recall as both parents had an active schedule that kept us all busy with not only the daily grind of working careers and school, but everything else that was worthy of pursuit. My dad put his athletic opportunities on hold for marriage while mom supported his pursuits of education. The two relied upon each other knowing their goals would take time to achieve through hard work. After I was born, we moved to Knoxville and dad took on coaching in addition to teaching. It wasn't the extra money that he received as an added bonus, but rather the opportunity to explore his ambitions to provide kids with his own sports knowledge to help build skills through athletics. 7 Championship Tournament titles with Girls Basketball is proof he knew more than just the X's and O's of the game of life. Mom's career was just as impressive as she became the office manager for anesthesiologists at Baptist Hospital. She then continued to train with additional resources in which she helped start an engineering business that had much success during those years she worked to make it successful.

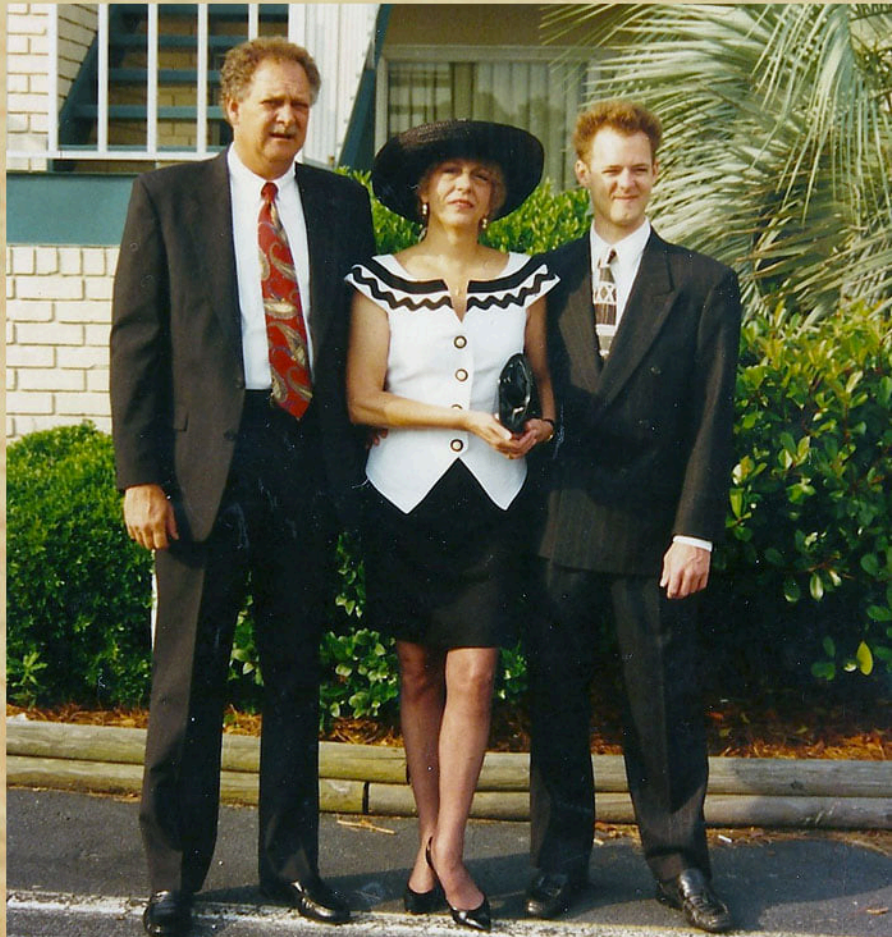
The reflection now is more profound than ever in that life growing up is often taken for granted and it takes a lifetime to understand how much those things had an impact upon you. It was never easy as there was always something to strive for, whether a personal goal or otherwise, but those values had been engrained through my parents love and guidance.


My college years began and I was no longer home as often. Life took on new factors and I began to become more serious about future endeavors through my studies. It was always a relief to get back to them for holidays and special events as those dynamics change over time. Our camping days with other groups of friends offered a much-needed transition for both myself and my parents. They were dealing with life without me as much as I missed them, but those were really special times for us all! Pets are always a benefit for those that need something to distract them from elements of reality that go through so many changes. I often joke that it took ten cats for my parents to replace me LOL! It's not that far from the truth, but we never had cats growing up, but we did have dogs.

Life goes through many phases and there are always new challenges and my parents have worked hard throughout. Tragic circumstances are inevitable as well, but we work through our own resolve to continue to help each other through those issues. My own life is a complete catastrophic epic and it seems too late to wave a magic wand to make any difference, but I become more focused on my parents at this point. Age doesn't discriminate and there will be a time when I may be better to serve their needs more than my own. It's nothing new to my mind as it often penetrates both my heart and soul as I realize how truly special they have been to me throughout.

My Graduation from the Savannah College of Art and Design was truly special. My parents came down to see me awarded for a graduate degree and I finally felt an inner-sense of pride in which they felt as well about me. After all, it was just only a few years ago they were changing my diapers!

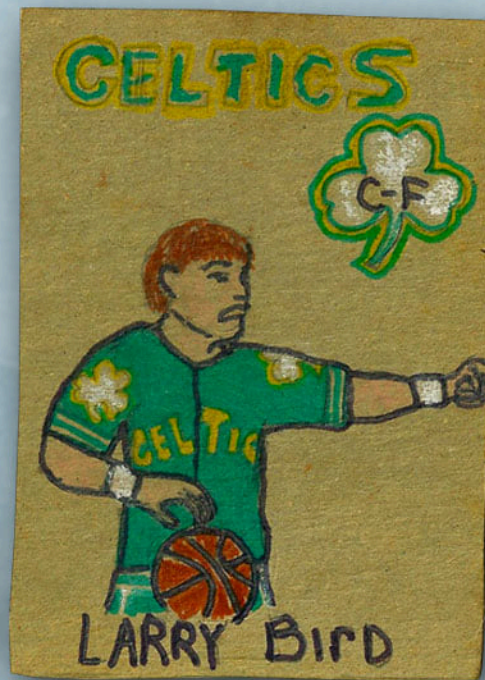
That's the reality of parenting is that your kids grow up too fast and there's little time to adjust for what may be expected in the future. For now, they are very relaxed and comfortable in retirement and going through those changes that come through age, but I know they think heavily on what more they could've done...how they could've done more, etc. It goes through my mind as well, but it may be me that changes their diapers in the end. Love and Wishes to my Parents...My Heroes!



 My Graduation from SCAD with parents Savannah, Georgia 1996

Collective Memories

Sports Cards



I turned my parents living room into my personal playground area in which I would position my collection of cards with all the athletes into their respective positions and use my imagination to “play the game!” Masking tape defined the boundaries on the slick carpet as each new season began. Sports had an undefinable impact on my life as I was surrounded with athletic competition in virtually every aspect from my father as a coach and my own ventures from little league baseball, grasshopper football, and recreational league basketball. It was no wonder athletes soon became my heroes as I had such an impression that would become my life as well.

The one problem I had with collecting cards was that I did not have every player involved on any given team. I wanted to play my game, but had to find a means to fill every position. So, I began to create cards I didn’t have of the players I needed. This wasn’t so much a desire to create art as much as I needed a player to fill the position. Yet, I became passionate about the ability to manufacture or generate cards on my own without having to rely upon the chance that I could obtain them through the Topps card distribution in small packages that included a small stick of bubble gum.

I would use cardboard material (typically from the backside of packaged goods from the grocery store) to cut into the shape of a regular card and then create the card based on photos or images I had seen on television with anything from crayons to magic markers. At such an early age, I was already discovering both illustration and graphic design as a means to create and develop a product.

I was unique and different in that my childhood was spent searching for an expressive means to entertain myself. As an only child, there weren't others to compete with as most of the kids in the neighborhood were older and I couldn't play board games on my own, so I had to find other avenues that would suffice. My imagination began to build a foundation of problem-solving solutions and that is creativity at its central core. What I NEED becomes a consideration for creativity, whether it is simply a desire for fascinating dreams or something essential to life.

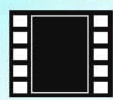
Necessity is the mother of invention and that was the sole reason I began to create cards for myself so I could play every position and use my creative imagination to act out the game. I look at these cards quite differently today as my age has put such a difference between now and childhood. It's as if I never stopped being a child in my thinking because I work professionally in the field that offers me the benefit of the same creative problem solving solutions.



We each have gifts amongst ourselves and I think that is what makes us all unique. The flipside of the coin is that we must not be too individualistic to respect to others that may be different. It's both a triumphant joy and a realization that we think differently based on knowledge, experience, and childhood memories. Let us not assume we came from the same mold because creativity has its own set of circumstances and there is no formula for any creative solution as there is in mathematic equations. As soon as an artistic movement becomes a fashion there are those who find something more intriguing.

“Collective Memories” will become a new addition to my “Graphic Archives” magazine on a monthly basis as there are endless topics to wander through and recollect how life changes as we go through new challenges and discover those things within that reflect upon the past.

Canada Geese



Photos of Canada Geese just outside my apartment in Bluff City, Tennessee 1990-1991.

Boone Lake in Bluff City, Tennessee winds around the landscape and finds a few tributaries that would spill just outside my single room apartment building when I first moved away for a career in artistic exploration. Fond memories of Canada Geese that would gather in their gaggle just outside my large sliding-glass window as summer months brought so much of nature to my world. I got to know the birds very well as I would often feed them crackers just beyond my door. It was a paradise for me for as one who loves nature and it became a daily habit as I began to work exclusively from my small apartment.

I noticed a number of behavior patterns in there was a pecking order and a hierarchy amongst them. The King and Queen raising their offspring got first choice in food selection while others had to settle for grass.

There were a few instances when I was able to feed them by hand, but they preferred to keep some distance and would at times hiss at me if they felt threatened. For the most part, we had a mutual agreement in that they got crackers while I could enjoy their company:

The tributary would diminish during the fall and winter months as Canada Geese breed along lake shores and coastal marshes while gathering in flocks amidst open fields not too distance from water source areas.



Possibly the parents of their chicks as they stood between me and their offspring as a protective measure. Hissing was common if I wanted to get too close, but we lived a very amicable life together for a couple of years.

Another familiar characteristic trait is their “honking” voice even while flying together in “V-shape” formation that is believed to be a more aerodynamic flight pattern. It’s also something to note they change positions on occasion during flight so the leader gets some relief from the air’s initial impact.

Perhaps the most intriguing discovery I found in my research was they are one of the few types of birds that mate for life. Most birds simply bond for mating purposes, but they stay together throughout existence. The Trumpeter Swan and Albatross are others with significant partners, but it’s something unique to birding nature to make that commitment for a lifelong journey together.

<https://graphicasyllumweb.shutterfly.com/pictures>

Gourmet GALLERY

Every Hero has an appetite and it's important to feed those who stand for truth and justice and sacrifice a meal worthy of those victorious flavors!

the Fine Art of Cooking



This is a recent recipe I came across and then made a few modifications as I wanted to take on a new challenge and continue to expand my own boundaries of cooking. I'm calling them "Wings of Victory" simply because I felt like I had won a battle after the preparation and labor of love for cooking. It's also one that has many options, depending on your cooking preference, so it can be simplified by charcoal cooking, smoking or baking in the oven, yet still deliver that home-cooked special taste. Try this recipe and Taste the Victory!

Wings of Victory



WINGS:

4 lbs Whole Chicken Wings (about 12-18 pieces)
Garlic Salt
Celery Salt
Ground Black Pepper



1. PREPARATION:

Rinse Wings with cold water, then blot dry with paper towels. Place the Wings on a Baking Sheet and sprinkle generously with Garlic Salt, Celery Salt, and Black Pepper.



2. BASTING MIXTURE:

Place the Italian Dressing, Honey, Lemon Juice, Liquid Smoke, Oregano, Red Pepper Flakes and Black Pepper in a Mixing Bowl and whisk to mix ingredients. Season with Kosher Salt to taste.



GRILLING NOTES:

If Charcoal Grilling the Wings, a drip pan is recommended to place in the center on top of coals as this method is considered Indirect Grilling. Wings are placed in the middle of the grill rack as the heat from the coals cook from the outer sides. Using a Smoker to grill is also an option, but you will not need a drip pan as there are no coals to flare up underneath the Wings.

Brush the Wings with the Basting Mixture and (for Charcoal Grilling) cover the grill and cook for 30-40 minutes or until golden brown and cooked through. While cooking, continue to brush Wings with Basting Mixture every 10-15 minutes coating both sides as needed. If necessary, move the Wings more directly over the coals a few at a time until cooked through. For those that want more spicy hot wings, add any favorite hot sauce during the grilling process in addition to the basting mixture. For Smoking, simply grill until cooked through for that extra smoked flavor.

BASTING MIXTURE:

1 1/2 Cups Italian Salad Dressing
3/4 Cup Honey
3/4 Cup Fresh Lemon Juice
1 1/2 Teaspoon Liquid Smoke
2 Teaspoons Dried Oregano
2 Teaspoons Hot Red Pepper Flakes
2 Teaspoons Ground Black Pepper
Kosher Salt

For more recipes from my "GOURMET GALLERY" here is the link:

https://graphicsylumweb.com/graphicsylumweb.com/Gourmet_Gallery.html

WHO ARE YOU?

“Creeeeeeeeus!....Creeeeeeeeus!”

I would be asleep as my father turned on the overhead light to get me out of bed. Going to school was not something I had been dreaming throughout the night and so I simply squinted my eyes shut to pretend I was still asleep.

“Creeeeeeeeus!....Creeeeeeeeus!”

It was baby talk and my father already knew me well enough to know I hated baby talk and my mouth would curl into a smirky grin because I knew he knew what the best method would be to get me angry enough to get out of bed.

It would be 5:30 or 6:00 am in the morning and I would need to rise up and take a quick shower to get into dad's Jeep Renegade to get to school. Not living in the same school district meant I didn't have the option to get to school otherwise, so I knew I had to follow the only course that was available to me.

It wasn't until my Sophomore year in High School that I missed a day of school...and that wasn't my chosen decision either, but it should provide some insight into how my life revolved around school and my father's teaching agenda.

I felt different than most kids and was always trying to fit into some acceptance value that would provide me with some sense of self-worth. The problems with teenagers are that they are testing the boundaries to discover how far they can go before they fall over the edge. That's how I would describe my own experience as I never fit in with any one particular crowd or group, yet shared a commonality amongst many.

My creative side began to propel me with opportunities as life had become something in which I enjoyed my 'alone' time in which I could focus and concentrate on anything within my own imagination. It was both a blessing and a curse as I became more of an introvert and alienated myself from others.

I had painted myself into a corner, so to speak in that my ambitions became far more important than significance of life experiences. There's a difference between success and significance. Significance is something which is of greater value to others, while success is a personal gain.

At the age of 12 I had at least more than twenty trophies for just participating in specific sports and events. I can't honestly say I really earned those iconic awards, but the irony is that the harder I began to work for success, the less I was rewarded for my efforts. It did not make sense to me either, but in the end...it becomes the significance of what you are doing that is far more valuable than your own personal success.

At 24 years of age I found the top of the mountain of my own achievement goal in life. That was only a deception of my own vision. I wanted more! And to illustrate this in more of a personal way, I thought my job ambition had led me on a path to becoming something special for others to admire. That never impressed anyone. People saw me for who I was and ,my goals and ambitions and everything I hoped to achieve meant absolutely nothing to others in terms of significant value.

Well, then...where do you go from there after depression and things begin to spin in your mind about not wanting to face another day? I checked into "Hotel California" and that is probably another story for another day, but a radio interview with Don Henley altered the course of my thinking. From that point on, I had a new attitude about life and had new insight on creativity as an articulation that goes beyond the canvas.

That optimism from such a dark place in life began to shine through. For all the success and failures I had meant nothing to me because I wanted to be more significant than successful. That's when everything changed in life as well because life began to grow from within myself in response to others needs. Friendships began to blossom and I found myself in a world of others that provided a sense of security.

We all go through different phases of life, but the one factor that makes me feel special are those that I help make a difference in their lives. I believe that becomes significant even if I am not rewarded or presented with a trophy. After all, there are so many friends in my life that have helped me along the way and kept me grounded enough to realize how special those moments have been significant to my own.

I wake up each morning now thinking my father is going to baby-talk me into getting up and face a new day. What was once a horror is now an incentive and propels me for a new day to take on life's challenges with significance!

Here's the challenge for you, the reader as this issue takes you through a number of thoughts and discussions about heroes and their impact upon you...Who are those that had the most influence and Who are You? How have others helped to define you and what life circumstances have helped build your strength of character?



A WORLD WITHOUT HEROES

Saturday Night, January 4, 1986. KISS was in Knoxville, Tennessee to Rock and Roll all night as I had been driven to create a special gift I could throw on stage. I had been working on a comic just for the occasion as those Rock Stars had become more of Idols of Creative Inspiration to me as I felt compelled to share something in return for their music and other qualities that I admired through the years.

I made my way close to the standing room only stage set behind two women that were dressed to kill. The concert's opening act was WASP and they performed well knowing everyone was really there to see KISS, but had that chance to entertain the sold out crowd at the Civic Coliseum.

The lights dimmed after the intermission just before fireworks exploded and the giant marquee KISS logo lit up as "Deuce" started the show's experience. It was their "Asylum" Tour and the band was no longer wearing the traditional makeup that had become such an enigmatic persona that had become such a fascination from fans throughout their career.

This was my second KISS concert to witness live and felt I had some authority as a student of Rock and Roll in that I had become consumed with music as a topic of interest and made a habit of listening to every interview, feature program, and other specialty shows that would give insight into those Stars that had become successful through a career in music performance. For whatever reason, I felt there was a deeper connection between music and the arts as I was going through the college experience and learning basic composition and color theory. I had much to learn at the time, but the inspirations of those that compel you towards a life that leads to such a measure of self-fulfillment and gratification are often the ones that propel more than music.

I had been working on a comic book to create for myself and for the band that I felt at the time was unique and would be at least a curiosity to them. I knew Gene Simmons was already a huge fan of comics and had a vast knowledge and that had been my goal at the time to become a comics artist and that may have been what propelled me to create such an issue to deliver as an homage to the band's glory.

After a few songs into the set, I threw my zip-loc bag containing my comic book onstage. It took a couple more songs before Gene looked down onto the stage and noticed. He picked up my comic as Paul Stanley was entertaining the crowd with one of his dialogues. Gene walked over and Paul gave it a glance. Paul then wrapped it onto his microphone stand as they began to perform their next song.

That was a thrill to me to see my comic book on display on their microphone stand! It lasted only a few minutes until it became somewhat of an annoyance and it fell to the stage as Paul grabbed the microphone stand. I couldn't believe it, but was taking in more of their actions onstage than what had just occurred. I had titled the book "A World Without Heroes" from a song from one of their albums in relationship to rock stars as heroes. Indeed, they had been inspiring to me with their creative persona and music and this was my way of giving something back.

The concert ended after another encore and my comic book was still laying on the floor of the stage. I hung around after it was clear and most fans were walking out the door when I asked the security guard to take the item to the band backstage. He promised he would, but I will never know. There wasn't any identifying information within and I'm just guessing the security guard probably threw it in the trash, but it wasn't about the results as much as the experience. For a few minutes, my work was on a microphone onstage with KISS!

I am a fan of many and I think that is what drives my own initiatives. How can I do something that gives back to those that inspire me? The world is full of heroes that provide some measure of strength within ourselves and that is my best description of a hero...Those that provide inspiration, entertainment, or otherwise that helps to build your own sense of self-value.

LESSONS LEARNED

Pop Quiz! What does Elvis Presley have to do with education? I'm not sure either, but I remember when news spilled over the radio in August 1977 when he passed, I was helping my father cutting trees in our neighbors back yard. The conversation shifted amongst the adults from Rock Stars to Teaching. That's when my ears began to listen more introspectively to what was said. On the one hand, a rock star performer was all the news of the day and yet there was something to be said about the teaching institution. It was a more honored profession before pop culture began to dominate social interests more than learning about those basic subjects that could be taught to students to encourage more philosophical thinking.

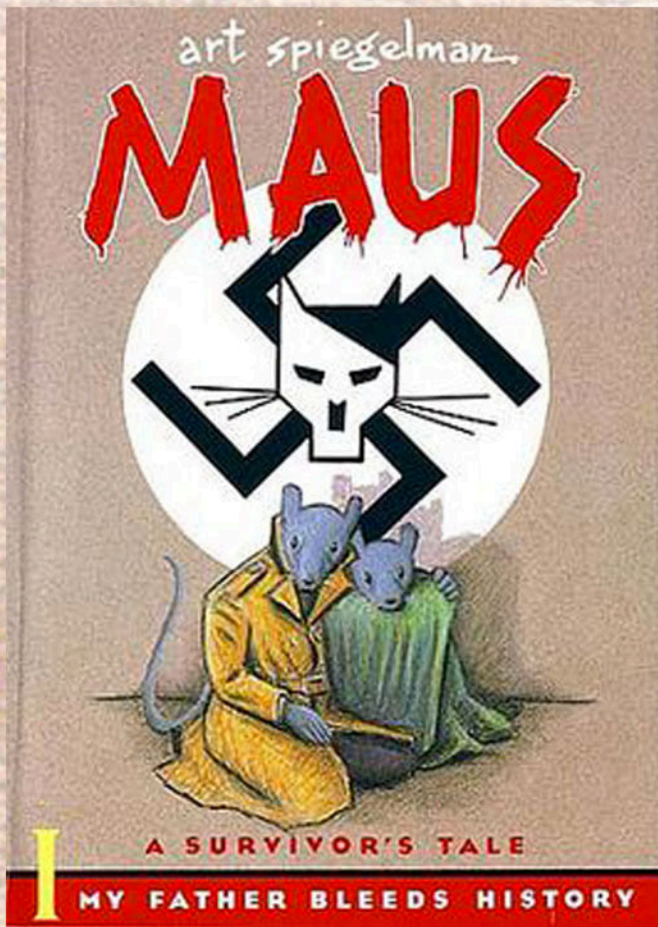
Those gifted in motivating students found the barriers of politics and government becoming too involved with curriculum testing as it became the new standard for teaching success. In turn, educators were left with the same business-like motive to become puppets to administration practices. Teaching had lost character with those heroes in which each had some magic power to build others into something bigger than themselves.

My father had many tactics he would utilize to both educate and entertain to add interest to social studies and history lessons. It was all interesting to me, yet it takes a special teacher to influence students to learn the subject and provide the tools that will take them beyond their own expectations. Coaching and teaching are intertwined in that it's often difficult to know the difference. Dad performed both very well.

A radio interview with Tony Dungy became an epiphony on the subject of what it means to be a mentor. The revelation was to be one that helps to remove the obstacles for others for them to succeed. One can only do this on an individual level as each student is different and that is where our education system has lost much of it's respectability.

Teachers should be our Rock Stars as they literally build the foundation for the next generation. I have been blessed to have so many that opened doors to new ideas and guided me through the challenges to overcome anything that would prevent me from achievement. Teachers are Special! They are Today's Modern Heroes!

MAUS



Released in 1991, “Maus” is the only graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize for its unique and creative approach as an autobiographical account of family history. The story is told from Art Spiegelman’s point of view through interviews with his father that had been a survivor of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. Jews were depicted as Mice, Germans as Cats, and Polish people as pigs. As Art Director of RAW, an Avant-Garde Graphics magazine, Art introduced the story first in a series and then later compiled the stories into a Graphic Novel. Another interesting note about the creative process was that the artwork was created actual size with a regular pen, which was radically different from any normal comic process in that pages are created on a larger scale and reduced in size for printing as a refinement to detail. Spiegelman wanted his art for the work to be more intimate with the reader and chose to create the pages actual size for printing so that every detail would be viewed as it had been created. An amazing account of his family’s history surviving World War II.



NEXT:

Health and Fitness

Our well-being is the most important topic I want to cover next month. I am just as guilty in that I take much for granted and need to manage my health better as age begins to become a factor. I’m also going to go into those current topics related to worldwide pandemic awareness as well as those with health conditions that were pre-existing without their ability to manage for themselves. Also, there will be some incentives that I think are important to volunteer, donate, and simply provide for those that are in need of care. It’s an issue worth devoting the theme of taking care of ourselves as much as taking care of each other and I hope to give insight into how the most basic actions make major differences and help to propel a new spirit towards those we love. Until next month, be safe and healthy and take good care of yourself and others! - Chris

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A World without Heroes
is like a world without Sun
You can't look up to anyone
without Heroes
A World without Heroes
Is like a never-ending race
Like a time without a place
A pointless thing devoid of Grace
Where you don't know what you're after
Or if something's after you
And you don't know why...you don't know
In a world without Heroes

In a World without dreams
Things are no more than they seem
In a World without Heroes
It's like a bird without wings
Or a bell that never rings
Just a sad and useless thing
Where you don't know what you're after
Or if something's after you
And you don't know why...you don't know

A World without Heroes
Is nothing to be
It's no place for me

“A World Without Heroes”
Song Lyrics from KISS
from their 1981 album “The Elder”