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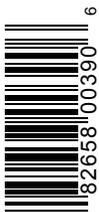
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RETRO FAN

THE CRAZY COOL CULTURE WE GREW UP WITH

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Scott Saavedra



CHARLIE'S ANGELS™

by Jack Condon

For those who lived through the unexplainable Seventies, it was a time when shag rugs, bellbottoms, and the disco craze epitomized a time of self-discovery and independence. In 1976, America was celebrating the 200th anniversary of its independence. It was also the year of the Apple Computer launch by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak; the first space shuttle, introduced by NASA; and Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter being elected the 39th president, defeating Republican incumbent Gerald Ford.

Throughout the course of these events, another milestone emerged. It was March 21, 1976, and a new television movie aired on ABC, which placed #6 for the week. This program caused an unexpected sensation that launched the pilot for a new series that would soon change the face of television, *Charlie's Angels*.

Before there were streaming channels such as Netflix or Hulu, and before there was cable, there were three networks: ABC, CBS, and NBC. These were the only choices for original programming, and all three offered up an array of successful crime-drama shows, mostly featuring gritty male leads. During the 1976–1977 television



season, the networks featured Robert Blake in *Baretta*, William Conrad in *Cannon*, Buddy Ebsen in *Barnaby Jones*, and duo-cops Paul Michael Glaser and David Soul in *Starsky & Hutch*. NBC did venture out of the male-dominated mindset in 1974 by featuring Angie Dickinson as the lead in *Police Woman*; however, her character was usually dominated or rescued by her male counterparts. In a series that would feature three female leads, there would be no man to save these women!

From Alley Cats to Angels

The concept for *Charlie's Angels* did not come immediately, nor easily. Power producers Aaron Spelling and longtime partner Leonard Goldberg toyed with the idea of creating a female detective series for some time. Spelling, who originally produced hit television shows with Danny Thomas, including *The Mod Squad* (1968–1973), previously attempted to launch a female detective series, *Honey West* (1965–1966), starring Anne Francis. The series lasted only for one season [but will be explored by columnist Will Murray in the next issue of *RetroFan*—ed.]. Goldberg, a former vice president of daytime programming, was a fan of the British espionage television series,

(ABOVE) The *Charlie's Angels* logo and iconic “praying hands” publicity photo of the original *Charlie's Angels* stars, Farrah Fawcett, Kate Jackson, and Jaclyn Smith. Unless otherwise noted, all photos accompanying this article are courtesy of Ernest Farino. *Charlie's Angels* © Sony Pictures Television, Inc./CPT Holdings, Inc.

The Avengers (1961–1969), and he envisioned a concept of three women similar to *The Avengers*' Emma Peel character, played by Diana Rigg.

The idea to produce a series with female leads was first developed by Spelling and Goldberg at the Beverly Hills Hotel's famous Polo Lounge. The idea of three tough, leather-clad, crimefighting women enticed both men. They titled their first concept *The Alley Cats*, featuring the characters of Allie, Lee, and Catherine (Al-Lee-Cat) as the three gorgeous detectives. Poised with confidence, the partners pitched their idea in 1975 to ABC's then-Senior Vice President Michael Eisner and his mentor, Barry Diller, who did not share the same enthusiasm as the two producers. Dubbed by Eisner as "the worst idea he ever heard for a series," Diller weighed in by adding, "Three beautiful girls running around and chasing criminals... it's not believable... it's terrible!"

Spelling and Goldberg were disappointed, but determined to make this proposal a reality. Goldberg contacted Academy Award winner Ernest Tidyman to write the pilot. Known for acclaimed films including *The French Connection* (1971), *Shaft* (1971), and *High Plains Drifter* (1973), Tidyman had the talent, but was unable to draft a script that was suitable for the producers. Undaunted, the two men sought out another team of executive producers and writers, Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts, who had ended their eight-year stint on another CBS detective series, *Mannix* (1967–1975), starring Mike Connors.

Goff and Roberts were a prolific writing team, penning Broadway plays, films, and television dating back to the Thirties. Their screen credits included *White Heat* (1949), *Man of a Thousand Faces* (1957), and *Portrait in Black* (1960). One of their early television entries they created was a short-lived series *The Rogues* (1964), for ABC. The show starred David Niven, Charles Boyer, and Gig Young as former con artists who each week would set up an unsuspecting mark for the right cause. Although the series produced only 30 episodes, it was the same style of writing that the two men used to create the pilot movie for the then-titled *Harry's Angels*.

In 1975, Fred Silverman was named president of ABC Entertainment, after heading the entire program department at CBS. He seemingly had the extraordinary ability to greenlight hit series such as *All in the Family* and *The Waltons*. ABC was hoping Silverman could do the same for its sluggish network, which he ultimately did, catapulting it from third to first place. *Charlie's Angels* was one of the savior series. Silverman was as hopeful for the pilot as Spelling and Goldberg were initially; however, the concept as to how the characters became detectives was still muddled. In an impromptu move, Spelling explained that they began their careers as policewomen who under the doldrums of routine police work, left their jobs to work at the detective agency. That pitch sold Silverman on the series, but not the



Producer Aaron Spelling.

title. He thought the name *Harry's Angels* would be confusing since it was similar to another series airing at the time, *Harry O* (1973–1976), starring David Janssen. Hence, the title was changed for a third and final time and with a blessing from the new ABC president, *Charlie's Angels* were about to spread their wings.

The Former Rookie

Charlie's Angels was not the first television series Spelling and Goldberg developed; however, it is the most remembered. Spelling, father of former *Beverly Hills, 90210* co-star Tori Spelling, once quipped, "My tombstone, my epitaph will be: 'Tori's father, Candy's husband, producer of *Charlie's Angels*!'" Prior to launching



(RIGHT & OPPOSITE PAGE) Before they were Angels: Kate Jackson wooed audiences as Nurse Jill Danko on ABC's *The Rookies*, while Farrah Fawcett and Jaclyn Smith were popular faces in advertising. The Rookies © Sony Pictures Television, Inc. Image courtesy of Heritage. Fawcett ad © 1973 Schick. Smith ad © 1972 Breck, Inc.

what would soon become a phenomenon, Spelling worked for the television company Four Star Productions, formed in 1952 by some of Hollywood's elite stars: Dick Powell, David Niven, Ida Lupino, and Charles Boyer. The company was known for many famous series of the Sixties including *The Rifleman*, *The Big Valley*, and *The Rogues*, which inspired the *Charlie's Angels* pilot-movie concept. It was Spelling's first venture into producing television originals. By 1966, Spelling was ready to branch out and joined forces with *Make Room for Daddy* star Danny Thomas to form Thomas-Spelling Productions. One of the first programs they launched was the popular ABC series, *The Mod Squad*.

It was his future partner Leonard Goldberg that purchased *The Mod Squad* for ABC. Goldberg, who began his career at the network as director of development, worked his way up to Vice President of Daytime Programming. He helped to establish popular morning programs including *The Dating Game* and *Newlywed Game*. Within a year, Goldberg became head of all programming for the network, where alongside *The Mod Squad* he originated the idea of producing made-for-television movies. Soon after, he left ABC, to become Vice President of Production for Screen Gems, the television division of Columbia Pictures, which at the time was producing hit series such as *Gidget*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, and *The Partridge Family*. Dismayed with his position at the studio, Goldberg decided to team up with Spelling and form Spelling-Goldberg Productions. The first series that they sold to ABC was an hour-long crime drama, *The Rookies* (1972–1976).

The Rookies, similar to *The Mod Squad*, featured three young, attractive leads. It followed the exploits of rookie police officers working for the fictitious Southern California Police Department (SCPD). It was primarily an all-male cast consisting of series

stars Gerald S. O'Loughlin, Georg Stanford Brown, Sam Melville, Michael Ontkian, and eventually Bruce Fairbairn, who later replaced Ontkian. The only female cast member of the series was a relatively new actress who would ultimately dominate primetime television, Kate Jackson.

In Spelling and Goldberg's eyes, Kate was a star. It seemed evident from the moment she came to Hollywood. Born Lucy Kate Jackson, she was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. Growing up, Kate always knew that she wanted to act, ever since she performed in plays at Brooke Hill High School. After graduation, she attended the University of Mississippi for two years and performed a season of summer stock at the Stowe Playhouse in Vermont. Kate was fulfilling her dream, which eventually led her to New York, where she enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She appeared in several plays while taking odd jobs to support herself by selling skis, modeling, and working as a tour guide at the NBC studios at Rockefeller Center. Not long after, she received her first big break. She was cast as Daphne Harridge, the ghost of a 19th century governess, in the popular ABC daytime drama *Dark Shadows* (1966–1971). Her stint on the gothic soap opera led to a co-starring role in the film adaptation of the series, *Night of Dark Shadows* (1971), which eventually led her to Hollywood and a new chapter in her life.

Upon arriving in Hollywood, Kate immediately found work, guest-starring in popular series such as *Bonanza* and *The Jimmy Stewart Show*. In 1972 she was cast in two failed pilot series, *The New Healers* and *Movin' On*, before co-starring in the series that would eventually catapult her career, *The Rookies*. During the four seasons playing *The Rookies'* Nurse Jill Danko, Kate received



Angels. She auditioned for the role solely due to her agent's persistence. Once she was cast, her character, Tiffany Welles, was developed based on some of Shelley's New England traits. She would come into the series as the collegiate daughter and recent police-academy graduate of an old friend of Charlie, who also happened to be the police lieutenant of Boston. Spelling wanted to emphasize the glamour of Shelley's appeal in the Charlie commercial, and have it transcend into the new season with an emphasis on chic elegance, exquisite costumes, and exotic destinations. This mindset began with the season opener filmed on location in the Caribbean on the island of St. Vincent.

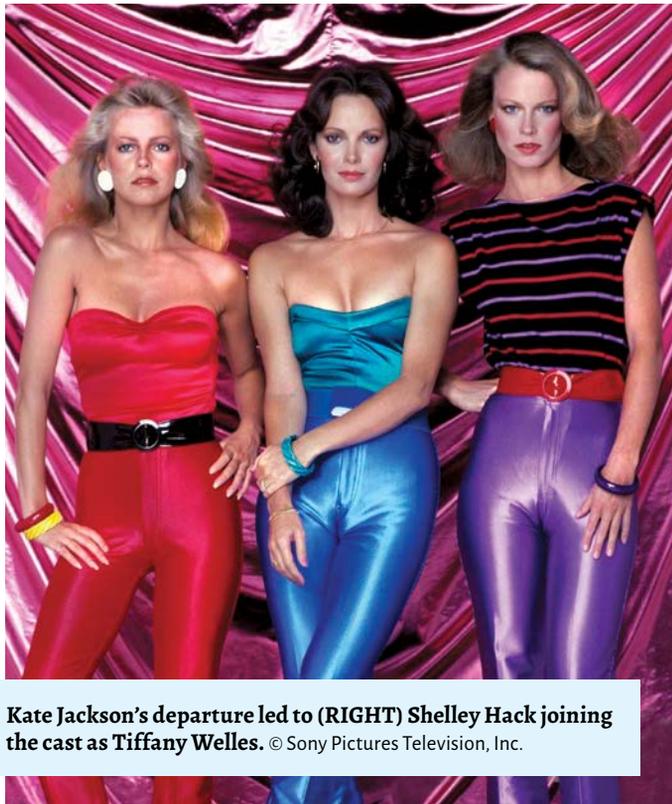
The first episode featuring Jaclyn Smith, Cheryl Ladd, and Shelley Hack began like previous seasons with a splashy two-hour kick-off (INSET). The



cast of *The Love Boat*, another Aaron Spelling-produced series, made cameos as part of the storyline involving the investigation of stolen art, which the Angels set sail on the *Pacific Princess* cruise ship to investigate the crime. The episode aired on September 12, 1979 and was the #1-rated show for the week, earning a 28.0 rating. It would be the last time *Charlie's Angels* would reach the preeminent top spot for the remainder of the series.

Falling from Grace

The fourth season of *Charlie's Angels* began to see a downslide as ratings dropped. It appeared that Shelley or her character did not warm up to the general public. Originally, it was reported that because an actress had not been cast immediately, the new



Kate Jackson's departure led to (RIGHT) Shelley Hack joining the cast as Tiffany Welles. © Sony Pictures Television, Inc.



© Hanna-Barbera Productions. Courtesy of Heritage.

MEET THE TEEN ANGELS

Remember sexy cartoon sleuths Brenda, Dee Dee, and Taffy? Spoofing *Charlie's Angels* (and drawing inspiration from *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You!* and *Josie and the Pussycats*), animation giants Joe Ruby and Ken Spears developed for Hanna-Barbera Productions the animated series *Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels*. It ran on *Charlie's Angels'* own network, ABC, on Saturday mornings for three seasons, from September 10, 1977 through June 21, 1980. The comedy-adventure show starred the trio of young female mystery-busters and their dim-witted, super-powered pal "Cavey," better known as Captain Caveman. Forty episodes were produced.

character would be marginal in the beginning episodes. Tiffany was not prominent until the tenth episode, thus not making her immediately relatable. Unlike Cheryl's showcase premiere episode, Shelley was nothing more than a backdrop in her first episode. She also did not do the talk-show route like Cheryl did to gain audience reception. The only prominent interview she gave was for *People* magazine, which featured her on the cover. It was the poorest-selling issue of 1979.

Aside from the casting of another new Angel, there was also a shift in the writing. Jaclyn and Cheryl wanted more time off to pursue other projects, so each episode focused primarily on one Angel, to give the actresses more time off. This changed the dynamics of watching the Angels work together as a team, losing the camaraderie that was evident in the previous seasons. One is hard pressed to say if the lack of interest in the fourth season had to do with Shelley, the scripts, or that the novelty of the series was simply beginning to wane. NBC moved the popular comedy series *Diff'rent Strokes* to compete with the show. Even original Angel Farrah Fawcett's last guest-star episode did nothing to fuel interest with viewers. It placed #34 and was the lowest-rated show for that season. The series was losing its audience, placing year-end at #20 in the Nielsen ratings. Knowing the importance



Jaclyn Smith

From TV Angel to Real-life Superwoman

by Chris Mann

She began inspiring generations as one of ABC's karate-chopping *Charlie's Angels* in the Seventies, became a trusted lifestyle brand in the Eighties, and empowered women as a breast cancer survivor in the 2000s. But now, actress, entrepreneur, and wellness advocate Jaclyn Smith strikes a healthy balance in part by chasing after her cherubic, three-year-old granddaughter and embracing fond memories. Among those: her life-changing primetime gig opposite Kate Jackson and Farrah Fawcett (and later Cheryl Ladd, Shelley Hack, and Tanya Roberts) as Charlie Townsend's longest-running private eye, Kelly Garrett.

And while she has elegantly upheld her status as one of TV's superwomen, the age-dyng Smith, who turned 74 in October 2019, is quick to reveal that even the most multitasking of gals should regularly take a breather and practice self-care. "It's about balance and being good to yourself," she says. "I think a lot of women think they've gotta prove everything and do everything, and they really don't. If they're not being good to themselves, they can't be good to anybody else."

Since 1985, Smith has helped women fashion a sense of wellbeing by offering affordable lines of ladies clothes and, more recently, home linens and furnishings at Kmart and Sears. Her eponymous lines of skincare and fashion wigs, available via *JaclynSmith.com*, offer the same brand of wholesome glamour that Smith has embodied since her days as a Breck and Wella Balsam hair-care model-turned-Aaron Spelling-blessed TV Angel-turned Max Factor spokeswoman. And her Spencer line of baby clothes—named after her daughter, Spencer Margaret Richmond, and inspired by Spencer's own daughter, three-year-old Bea—is extending Smith's multigenerational brand appeal in Sears and

Photo by Charles Bush. Courtesy of Jaclyn Smith.



Captain Action

The Original Super-Hero Action Figure



Captain Action original artwork produced for a 1966 model kit from Aurora. Artist unknown. Captain Action TM & © Captain Action Enterprises. Courtesy of Heritage.

by Michael Eury

I cried like a baby that Christmas morning.

Now, before you RetroFans rechristen ye ed as this mag's "Crybaby-in-Chief," let me explain. I *was* a baby. Or close to it. A grade-school boy, in fact.

And the Christmas I'm referencing was in 1966.

That's the year I experienced The Big Disappointment.

For much of 1966, I had been whipped into a Pavlovian slobber-state by advertisements. Television commercials and the ad pages of my beloved Batman comic books tag-teamed to pound it into my consumer conscience that I *must* own what would become my favorite childhood toy, Ideal Toys' Captain Action. I could not escape Captain Action's siren call. Once the leaves fell and the air chilled, that tome of dreams, the *Sears Christmas Wishbook*, also summoned me, its slick, color-packed pages possessing my thoughts with their dynamic poses of the good captain garbed as some of my favorite super-heroes. Wow, a super-hero who could become *another* super-hero? Including my (as-seen-on-TV) fave, Batman?

My dad, always eager to please, shrugged off my constant badgering for a Captain Action and costumes with this response: "Add it to your Christmas list, son." And what a list it was, with my cursively penned pleas for the Captain Action figure plus uniforms for Batman, Superman, and Aquaman (not to mention Ideal's 23-piece Batman and Robin playset and Mattel's Batman Switch 'n Go Batmobile Set).

Come the morning of December 25th, I received proof that Santa Claus did indeed read my scribbled entreaty as each of my requested Captain Action items, all neatly giftwrapped, waited for me under the tree. After the fevered exhilaration of shredding apart the colorful wrap to uncover my bounty, my heart sank. My mint-in-box Captain Action action figure, anchored rigidly at attention, gripped into position by upper- and lower-body cardboard support pieces, his awesome lightning sword and ray gun safely secured inside a plastic pouch, had... two left hands.

Let the bawling begin.

I learned two important life lessons that day. First, be prepared for disappointments—not everything is always going to go your way. And second, I was reminded that I

had the coolest, sweetest mother in the world, as the day after Christmas she whisked me to the nearest W. T. Grant department store and marched to the toy department to buy me a replacement Captain Action... and yes, she opened the box first to inspect his hands.

(Somewhere out there is another Baby Boomer who has a similar childhood story about how his Christmas was ruined by receiving a Captain Action with two *right* hands. If you're out there, brother, I'd like to hear *your* story...)

The Super-Hero G.I. Joe

Some of you may be wondering, who is this Captain Action?

Captain Action started as a 12-inch poseable action figure (don't you dare call him a doll!) for boys, introduced by the Ideal Toy Company at the 1966 Toy Fair. Two years earlier, Hasbro rolled out G.I. Joe, an articulated action figure billed as "America's movable fighting man." G.I. Joe's creators, licensing impresario Stan Weston and toy exec Don Levine, appropriated from Mattel's popular Barbie line the "razor/razor blade" marketing approach: sell a kid the "razor" (the primary figure) and she/he will be compelled to buy the "razor blades" (clothing and accessories). Through an expanding array of uniforms, G.I. Joe could become a sailor, a Marine, a frogman—even an astronaut!—and Hasbro dropped a decisive salvo onto war-toy competitors.

Weston, a fan of comics and pulps, was convinced that lightning could strike twice with this "razor/razor blade" concept for boys. He conceived a generic super-hero that could "become" different commercially popular champions with the mere change of a uniform. "It was a logical move for me, since comic books were my left arm," Weston told me in 1998 in an interview for my TwoMorrrows Publishing book, *Captain Action: The Original Super-Hero Action Figure* (First Printing, 2002; Revised Second Printing, 2009). From Weston's thinking, magic would trigger the hero's transformations—hence the original name of his action figure: Captain Magic. "I had a sample of a basic figure and a foldout of comic-book characters that would allow me to show which heroes Captain Magic could become," Weston said.

Weston proposed the idea to Ideal Toys' Larry Reiner in 1965. Reiner, who had previously been involved with the development of G.I. Joe, was reluctant, fearing that Captain Magic's own identity would be lost behind the rubber masks of the better-known characters' faces—"I hated the product



(ABOVE) Captain Action products from the 1966 Sears Christmas Wishbook catalog. (LEFT) A beautifully drawn (by Kurt Schaffenberger) ad that appeared in many DC Comics titles in 1966. (BELOW) The magical man who brought us Captain Action, Stan Weston (1933–2017), at his Leisure Concepts office in New York City in 1990. Weston was also fundamental in the development of G.I. Joe, the Mego World's Greatest Super-Heroes, and ThunderCats. Photo by C. J. Zumwalt, New York Daily News. Captain Action TM & © Captain Action Enterprises. Characters © their respective copyright holders.



when I first saw it," Reiner told me in 1998—but he conceded to Weston's enthusiasm. Ideal designed the hero with subtle military implications including the rank of "Captain" so as not to stray too far from G.I. Joe, but rebranded him with a name more reflective of a super-hero: Captain Action. Ideal's development team, led by artist Dan Windsor, one of the original designers of Smokey the Bear, began refining Weston's toy concept. Working with Windsor were staff artist Norman

Doug Wildey

Creator of *Jonny Quest*

by Will Murray



Over the course of nearly 30 years of interviewing celebrities and other artistic talent with the Starlog group of magazines, I have probably talked to several hundred people. Much of it was routine, but every once in a while I had the rare opportunity to interview someone who resonated with me.

As often as not, this category included people who influenced me during my childhood. One of my favorite interview subjects was Doug Wildey, with whom I spoke back in 1987 during a revival of a childhood favorite, *Jonny Quest*.

Wildey's Wild Adventures

The Adventures of Jonny Quest was an animated TV show produced by Hanna-Barbera Studios back in 1964–1965. It had the distinction of being shown in primetime, something that was pioneered by Hanna-Barbera's *Flintstones* four years prior. But *The Flintstones* was typical TV animation—a cartoony takeoff of *The Honeymooners*. *Jonny Quest* was something vastly different. The animation and storytelling were realistic, atmospheric, and illustrative. And the person chiefly responsible for this was the legendary artist Doug Wildey, who created the series and designed most of the characters.

Jonny was an 11-year-old boy. His father was Dr. Benton Quest, one of the top three scientists in the world, who

lived and worked on Florida's Palm Key. Because of his importance to U.S. interests, the Quest family was guarded by Race Bannon, who worked for a government agency called Intelligence One. This was during the Cold War.

Jonny Quest came about when Hanna-Barbera toyed with reviving the classic radio show, *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*, about a 17-year-old who travels the world with his uncle, having exotic adventures. Wildey assembled test animation footage for an episode set in Africa. Partners Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera loved it. But rights issues compelled Hanna-Barbera to abandon the property and turn their ambitions toward an original character. And so was born *Jonny Quest*.

I spoke with Doug by telephone, and he couldn't have been more gracious or generous with his time. His career had begun with drawing *Buffalo Bill* comics for Street & Smith back in 1948. He soon branched out to other publishers, specializing

The *Jonny Quest* cast: (FRONT) Hadji, Jonny, and Bandit; (MIDDLE) Race and Dr. Quest; and (BACK) occasional cast member Jezebel Jade. *Jonny Quest* creator Doug Wildey produced this illustration in 1986 when the property, originally launched in 1964, was enjoying a comeback in comic books and on syndicated television. TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions. Art courtesy of Heritage.



in Westerns. For Marvel's Stan Lee, he drew *The Outlaw Kid* between 1954 and 1957.

Wildey drifted into TV animation in 1962, when Cambria Studios hired him on *Space Angel*, a science-fiction cartoon whose "animation" was limited to superimposing real lips onto faces drawn by another fugitive from comic books, character designer Alex Toth.

"The animation was nonexistent," Wildey recalled. "It was simply well-drawn still figures. Alex Toth carried about 80 percent of the show with his style."

After *Space Angel*, the artist applied to Hanna-Barbera, where they were taken by his realistic painterly art and decided to build *Jack Armstrong* around it. When that project crashed, Wildey was asked to salvage the idea.

"Joe Barbera strolled in and said, 'Create another show for us, then,'" he recounted. "I went home and wrote another one, which was actually a parallel to *Jack Armstrong*. I subsequently came up with Jonny Quest. The working title was 'The Saga of Chip Balloo.' Later, I got 'Quest' out of the LA phonebook."

Joe Barbera came up with 'Jonny'—short for Jonathan. Wildey was made supervising art producer, but was denied a "Created by" credit.

"I was not in charge of the animation because I'm not an animator," he explained. "I would write the story and set the mood, the backgrounds, the characters. I would work mostly on the action part."

His first task was to design the cast. Blond Jonny was inspired by two kid actors, Jackie Cooper and Frankie Darrow. Red-bearded Dr. Quest came from a character in a Wildey episode of *The Saint* newspaper strip. Bodyguard Roger T. "Race" Bannon was based on white-haired actor Jeff Chandler. "He wasn't the greatest actor in the world, but he had this rather striking screen presence," Wildey told me.

With an eye toward future syndication, Hanna-Barbera directed that the show look as if it was set ten years ahead, with futuristic airplanes and advanced technology. They also wanted Jonny to have a pet dog, designed for toy licensors.

"I fought against Bandit quite a while," Wildey said. "He was a cartoon dog. It was a little bit too unrealistic for the characters."

Flintstones animator Dick Bickenbach designed Bandit, the white bulldog. Wildey had pitched a pet monkey and a small white cheetah, and hated Bandit's cartoony, raccoon-masked look. But he was stuck with him.

"As soon as they put in Bandit," he noted, "I immediately created Hadji. I felt very strongly that we needed someone besides a dog. It's simply not natural for a kid to talk to grown-ups on the same level."



(TOP LEFT) Doug Wildey. (TOP CENTER & RIGHT) Which Jonny Quest monster gave you nightmares? In addition to creepsters the Invisible Monster and the Robot Spy, the mummy Anubis, shown here in Wildey design illustrations, had a lot of Sixties kids leaving their lights on at bedtime! (ABOVE) Wildey's 1964 original art showing the size comparison of the Quest cast. TM & © Hanna-Barbera Productions. Courtesy of Heritage.

Hadji joined up in the second episode, but his origin was not told until Episode Seven, "Calcutta Adventure." Wildey wanted a minority companion for Jonny, and reached into his movie-going memories for inspiration: Sabu Dastagir, star of *Elephant Boy* and *Thief of Baghdad*. In the JQ series, street urchin Hadji saves Dr. Quest from an assassin's knife and is adopted as a companion for Jonny.

"Later on," Wildey told me, "when we were auditioning for voices on the series, Sabu's son, Paul Sabu, showed up to audition." But he didn't get the part.

Wildey put careful thought into making each character separate and distinct, giving every major personality a different hairstyle and color.

"I still feel that the most important thing in character design is the hairstyle and the color because these are the two things in long-shots, or close-ups, or silhouettes, that identify the characters. If you get two people with black hair and they're the same size, you're in trouble."

Next came casting the voice actors. Wildey did that as well. Future *Animal House* star Tim Matheson landed the plumb part of Jonny. Race Bannon was voiced by Mike Road, who also played Mr. Fantastic in *The Fantastic Four*. Paul Subu lost the part of Hadji

An Interview with **Larry Storch**

by Rose Rummel-Eury

Who would have thought that Facebook would provide me with a magical reunion with my past? Was it those photos of my friends' grandchildren? "They're really cute"... but no. Reuniting with my high school and college alumni? "You haven't changed a bit"... but no. Highly charged political debates? Don't even go there.

It turns out the "magic" was a chance posting about a page dedicated to Larry Storch. Really? I can now be "friends" with the object of my prepubescent desire, as I confessed in issue #5's "Celebrity Crushes" article, Corporal Randolph Agarn of *F Troop* fame?! Sign me up!

Readers of *RetroFan* will certainly remember Mr. Storch from *F Troop*, and read in previous issues about his co-starring with *F Troop*'s Forrest Tucker in Filmation's Saturday morning show *The Ghost Busters* and his voice work on *The Groovie Goolies*. But you may not know he started in stand-up comedy; was a guest star on numerous TV sitcoms and variety shows; recorded comedy LPs; appeared in more than 25 movies; and, beyond *Groovie Goolies*, provided cartoon voices for shows such as *Cool Cat* and *Garfield and Friends*, plus the animated film *Journey Back to Oz*.

After a couple of enjoyable months on Facebook "getting to know" the now-96-year-old Mr. Storch as he attended parties, hung out with his celebrity friends, and continued to give his fans the hilarity he is well known for, I contacted his daughter, June Cross, to see if she could persuade her father to participate in an interview. She confirmed that Larry would be happy to answer a few questions and served as my intermediary.

So here we go, RetroFans!

RetroFan: How did you come up with your various cartoon voices?

LARRY STORCH: Cartoons always bring to mind a high-pitched character. I don't remember where I got it from, but a high-pitched voice is easy to do.

Cartoon voices were mostly screamers. So I just used a very high falsetto.

RF: What kind of training did you have for your cartoon voice work?

LS: I learned how to do voices going to the movies and listening to cartoons. The movies used to be 25 cents when I was a kid, and I lived on 77th Street [in New York City], so I went whenever we could scrounge the money together. Also, my mother owned a three-story rooming house, and a lot of out-of-work actors lived there. I would

listen to them practicing their lines, and copy them. That's how I learned to do voices.

RF: For *Tennessee Tuxedo*, you were the voice for one of your more famous cartoon characters, Phineas J. Whoopee. How did his voice originate?

LS: I have no idea, even after re-watching the video. But then again, I still don't understand how television works! I'm a high school dropout! [laughs]

RF: What was the process of recording your animation

voices? Did you record solo, or with a group?

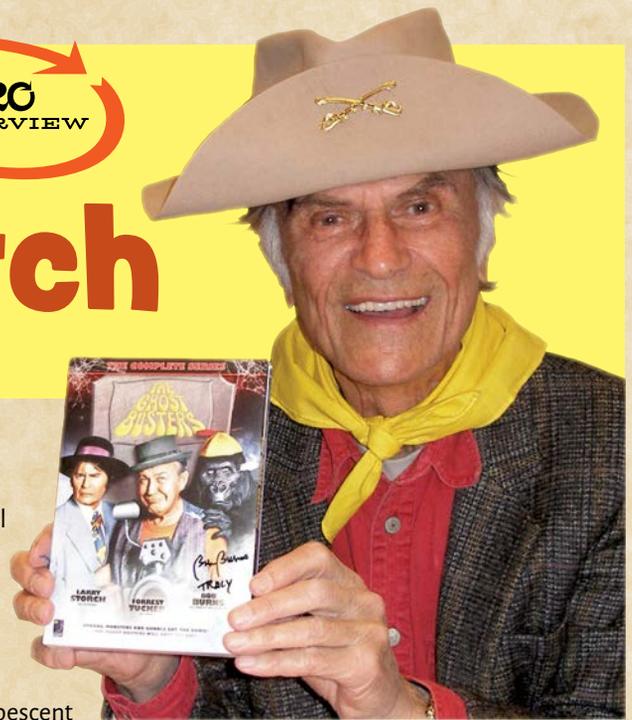
LS: I would be in a room with other actors. We just had scripts and we read them. They made me reread hundreds of times, it felt like, to get the intonation right!

RF: On *F Troop*, the hat you wore as Corporal Agarn was almost as famous as you. Did you choose that prop, or did wardrobe? What happened to the hat?

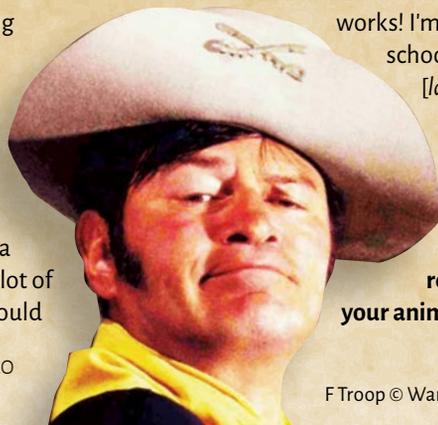
LS: They gave me the uniform. I remember it was hot as hell, because the long johns were red wool and the uniforms were made of wool, too... It was over a hundred degrees most of the time when we taped those shows, and I just remember being hot! I have a replica of the original hat, which fell apart years ago.

RF: *F Troop*'s set was one of the more impressive sets of its day. Where was it located? Was it dismantled after the show ended, or did it get reused?

LS: It was shot on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank. That was over 50 years ago!



Wearing a facsimile of his famous Cpl. Agarn hat, Larry Storch in 2007 with the then-newly released DVD set of his Seventies' *The Ghost Busters* series. The Ghost Busters © Filmation. Photo courtesy of Andy Mangels.





Collecting Angels

by Jack Condon

Once upon a time, there were three little girls who went to the police academy... and they were each assigned very hazardous duties. But Charlie took them away from all that, and I began collecting. My name is Jack Condon.

The three girls who grew tired of their policewomen duties—parking tickets, clerical work, and crossing guard detail—became *Charlie's Angels*, television's biggest stars of the Seventies. Kate Jackson, Farrah Fawcett, and Jaclyn Smith (plus later replacements Cheryl Ladd, Shelley Hack, and Tanya Roberts) created a sensation when *Charlie's Angels* debuted on ABC on Sept. 22, 1976. The series, produced by Aaron Spelling and Leonard Goldberg, was characterized as a crime-drama; however, it was more escapism and fantasy.

Being an impressionable child, I was primed for the series. It was unique from the traditional detective and police dramas, shot stylistically throughout Los Angeles, and featured a relatively unknown cast of actresses. For me, the women came off as larger than life, yet approachable. I was not alone. The chemistry of the three leads was an instant success, landing the action series in the top five of the Nielsen ratings right from the beginning.

My interest in the show was incited by another Spelling-Goldberg series, *The Rookies* (1972–1974), which featured Kate. As the only female of an all-male cast, she stood out to me. There were episodes that featured Kate's character, Jill Danko, being

kidnapped or stalked. Those were the episodes that impressed me because of her character's vulnerability and strength.

As an avid television watcher, I would look forward every week to the new issue of the *TV Guide* to be delivered by mail. I would scan through each page to see what was airing for the week ahead. When the March 20–26, 1976 edition announced the pilot movie for *Charlie's Angels* airing on March 21, I was enthusiastic about it after seeing a small image of Kate in the ad. I also recognized Farrah from TV guest appearances she did previously. Billing the movie as an ABC Special Sunday Double Feature, the advertisement stated, "Money, Mystery, Murder... They're in it Up to Their Gorgeous Private Eyes." The premise reminded me of another series I enjoyed, *Get Christie Love* (1974–1975), starring Teresa Graves as a sexy undercover cop. In my mind, I thought, with the concept similar to *Christie Love* and Kate attached to the movie, how could I go wrong? After watching the 90-minute film, I was more enthralled than before and hoped that it would become a weekly series. Little did I know at the time, the pilot movie would be one of the highest-rated telefilms of the year, and the series was already in the works.

I first learned that *Charlie's Angels* would be part of the 1976 fall television lineup when my mother read to me a blurb about it in the local newspaper in June. The anticipation to watch it weekly grew for me during the summer months. Once it aired regularly at 10:00 p.m., I was allowed to stay up for each episode as a special occasion, even though it was a school night. I did not set out to collect initially; however, collecting ran in my family. I had a grandmother and aunt who loved to shop and pick up mementos along their travels. Subconsciously, they might have instilled the

(ABOVE) Charlie's Angels Super Collector Jack Condon stands with a promotional standee featuring the original Angels in their iconic pose. © Sony Pictures Television, Inc./CPT Holdings, Inc. Photos by Joe Zastawny.

collecting mentality within me at an early age. One week after the series premiered, all three actresses graced the cover of the Sept. 25, 1976 issue of *TV Guide*. It was an alluring cover that *TV Guide* attempted to recreate in 1990 with the cast of David Lynch's cult classic, *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991). The issue also had a behind-the-scenes article on what it was like working on the series. Back then, my mind would race with thoughts of flying out to Hollywood to be on the set and what it would be like to meet the actresses who I had an instantaneous liking for.

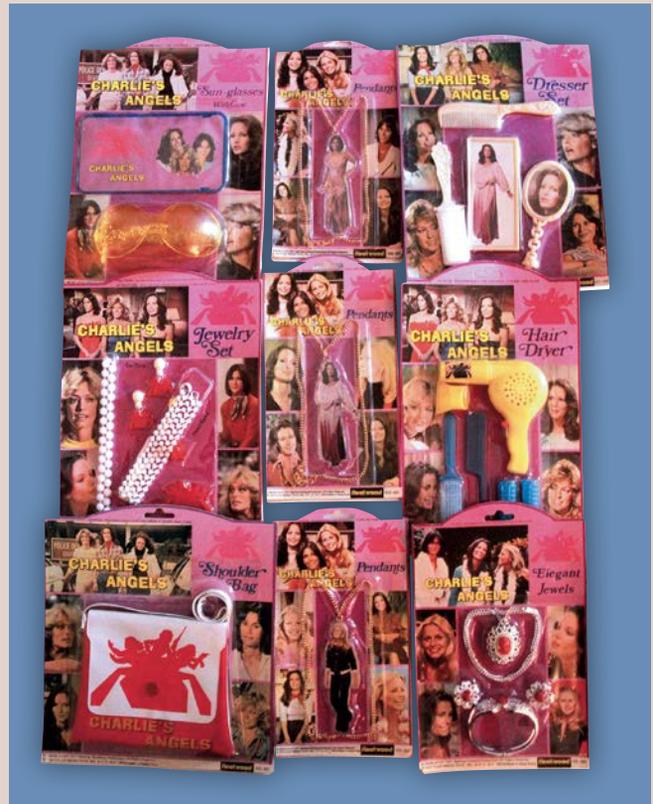
As I continued watching the show, so did the rest of America. According to the Nielsen rating figures, 59% of all television sets were tuned in to watch *Charlie's Angels* on Wednesday nights. This did not go unnoticed by the then-prestigious *Time* magazine, which featured the actresses on their Nov. 22, 1976 cover, dubbing them "TV's Super Women." Two weeks later, the actresses once again gained national attention by appearing on the cover of the Dec. 6, 1976 issue of *People* magazine. The magazine was 50 cents at the time and I used my lunch money to purchase that issue, bringing my collection to three items total.

December 1976 was my introduction to the merchandising blitz that was about to hit. During my winter vacation, a local music store, Discland, featured a *Charlie's Angels* poster in its window. I froze for a moment, thinking, "Oh, my gosh, I have to have it!" I ran into the store feverishly to make my \$2 purchase. While inside, the clerk offered me the now-famous Farrah swimsuit poster. It was the first time for me to see it. As excited as I was, my next question was if there was a Kate and Jaclyn poster as well. Since there was not, I passed on the Farrah poster, feeling that I could not buy one of her and not of the others. That was my first realization that I could not play favorites when it came to collecting.

During its first season, *Charlie's Angels* was an undeniable hit amongst children and adolescents. I was among the target market for the series, and finding things on the show not only thrilled me but also became a passionate hobby. I was all business when it came to collecting. Before long, friends and family helped with my pursuit of acquiring new products. I believe this satisfied their desire to collect without them having to spend any money, except for the classmates who would spend ten cents a pack for the Topps *Charlie's Angels* bubble gum cards and later give them to me when they tired of them. Currently, I have over 50 complete sets.

Presently, there are primarily two department stores that carry toys: Target and Walmart. However, when I grew up in Boston there were a vast array of department and toy stores which all carried various items on *Charlie's Angels*. It was a matter of searching through each store for the payoff. Some of my favorite stores at the time were Caldor, King's, Zayre, Turn-Style, Child World, and Play World. I can still remember the exact store that I first discovered each item and how much every item was. Zayre was the store where I purchased my three jigsaw puzzles for 99 cents each. King's offered the board game for \$3.99, and Child World introduced me to the wrist radio for \$8.99. I was constantly hitting these stores along with local variety and mom-and-pop shops on a regular basis.

Television merchandising was prominent during the late Seventies. If a series was featured in the top 10, there was bound to be lines based on that program. Throughout my quest, I would see items on *The Six Million Dollar Man*; *Welcome Back, Kotter*;



(ABOVE) The number of beauty-related *Charlie's Angels* products certainly seemed endless. (BELOW) Two of four series of trading cards released by Topps.





by Scott Saavedra

The idea of having a specialized collection of a particular focus is alien to me. I collected coins, some stamps, comic books, and *MAD* magazines as a kid. My specialty was not having a specialty. My other specialty was not having much of anything. Except for my unexceptional collection of comic books and *MAD* magazines, when I first moved away from home (as a lad of but 18 summers) I managed to fit most of what I owned into a backpack. The summers piled up quickly, so too did the stuff that I, and eventually, I and my wife accumulated. We both have a tendency to hang on to things. But this is not the same thing as being a collector.

Before we were married a church counselor advised us—not against marrying, exactly—to be aware that we'd likely encourage each other's worst traits. Spot on, my good man. He was absolutely right. And yet, we're still together 31 years later. I suppose that says something about how hard it is for us to get rid of old things once they've been gotten.

(ABOVE) 'Tis but a portion of the Secret Sanctum collection of collections. Proper storage and thoughtful display efforts are always recommended for the serious collector. (INSET ABOVE) Is there anything worse than a collector who goes on and on about their collection? Panels from *Key Comics* #3 (Winter 1945). Art by Fred Ball. Except for the comic panels all photos by the author.

We're both driven to keep and/or acquire objects based on whether it attracts or touches us in some way. These days, if we have large ongoing, specific collections of anything, it would be wife Ruth's heaping masses of wool for spinning and my multiple boxes of blank paper going back to before World War II (much of it inherited from my late father-in-law, an amateur printer) intended for... oh, I'm sure I'll think of something someday. Neither are the stuff of legendary *RetroFan* Super Collector articles (like this issue's Super Collector on page 37).

However, despite our unfocused and meandering ways we do have a few items which fall into the areas covered by this fine, fine publication and may be of interest. For today's episode of Secret Sanctum they've been organized into (very) small, related groups. Collections, if you will, that are anything but super. Let's talk about these not-so-super collections, shall we? We shall.



The Mistakes Were Made Collection

The Martha Kent Slurpee Comic Cup is now one of my favorite objects. But it was once one of my most loathed. It was something I saved only because it was like other things that I was already saving. That is the madness of collecting right there. Around 1973–1974, 7-Eleven convenience



stores gave out DC and then Marvel comic-book character cups with every 25-cent Slurpee, a hyper-sweet, brain-freezing treat. These were cheap plastic cups decorated with each company's most noted characters, colored with a limited palette—the main physical difference being that the Marvel cups were squatter than the DC versions.

At my 7-Eleven location—a place run by a sour old couple—cups were given out randomly, and one day, instead of Superman, Batman, or even Hourman, I got a Martha Kent cup. Martha Flippin' Kent. Mother of Clark. One has to assume that DC either didn't care to put any effort into this promotion or simply hated kids. I think they hated kids. Marvel, on the other hand, used some very spiffy artwork. I say that as someone who was a giant DC fan at the time. The DC cups featured support characters while Marvel's did not, though there was a "Super-Stan" cup. Another oddity from the DC batch were the Marvel Family heroes, Captain Marvel, Captain Marvel, Jr., and Mary Marvel, who were listed as Shazam, Shazam, Jr., and Ms. Shazam, respectively.

What is most amazing about this collection is that it exists at all. Very few things besides comic books and *MAD* magazines survived my tender youth, and these cups are delicate. I have 18 DC and Marvel Slurpee cups out of 120 designs produced. Lost is a duplicate cup that I covered over using correction fluid with the un-realized intention of creating a custom cup. Of what? Pfft! Who knows? I was a stupid kid.

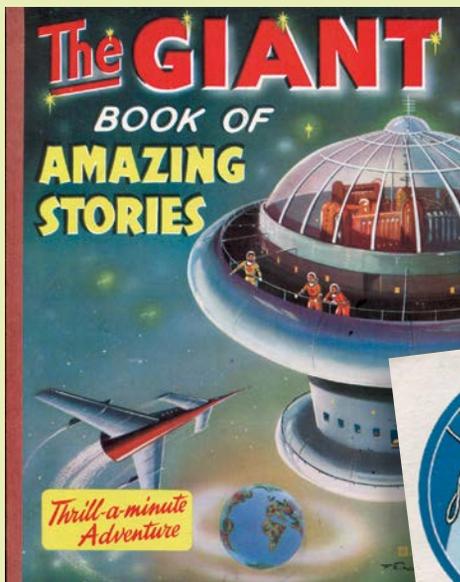
I have in my possession a single Dr. Strange sticker. It comes from Topps' Marvel Super Heroes Stickers set from 1976. Each package cost a dime and contained some stickers and a checklist. On the back of the checklist was one-ninth of the cover to *Conan the Barbarian* #1. I'm really not a fan of these "funny-speech-balloon"-added-to-existing-photos-and-art sorts of things. Here, Dr. Strange complains of house calls. He was a surgeon. No house calls for him. Some of the "gags" on the cards I don't have are just painfully... well, strange. Luke Cage, Hero for Hire screams on one, "Like my denture work?" So, yeah. Funny stickers.

The Annette Cut-Outs (Authorized Walt Disney Edition) is full of random paper clothes from other cut-out dolls (this is not how it was sold but rather how it ended

up decades later). The Mouseketeer T-shirt is obviously for Annette. Is it a little skeezy that I have a cut-out doll package featuring a young teenage girl? It is, right? Sigh. My late mother-in-law gave this to me. (We miss you, Ma.)



Dr. Strange TM & © Marvel, Mickey Mouse TM & © Disney.



The Outer Space Collection

In *RetroFan* #2 I mentioned my failed attempt to send one of my brothers into low Earth orbit. In *RetroFan* #6 I shared my account of contacting *Apollo 11* commander Neil Armstrong in the hope of getting some Moon rocks (it was my dad's idea and, spoiler alert, no rocks). My interest in all things space extends to the real and imaginary and has been life-long. The *Gemini 9* space-mission sticker is another relic of my youth and was one of 20 designs included free inside boxes of various Kellogg's cereals in 1969.

That was not the extent of Kellogg's' participation in the run up to the *Apollo 11* Moon mission. The groundbreaking company produced breakfast cereal cubes in frosted and fruity corn-flake (ick) versions for the history-making voyage. To be honest, I'm baffled that I only have one of these stickers. It's the only one I remember. We ate lots of boxed cereal. Maybe we were just a General Mills family.

The Giant Book of Amazing Stories (Children's Press, 1960) is a British collection of illustrated stories and



Giant Book of Amazing Stories © The Children's Press, Gemini 9 sticker © Kellogg's.

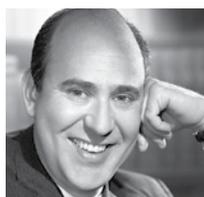
Walnuts and Wenches and The Guns of Navarone

...or, Don't Trip Over That Ottoman!

by Ernest Farino



The Dick Van Dyke Show premiered in 1961, the brainchild of one of comedy's true geniuses, Carl Reiner. Actually, Carl Reiner might not be regarded as such now had the original plans fallen in line.



Reiner had conceived and written the pilot for a comedy series called *Head of the Family* and cast himself in the lead role of Robert Petrie, a writer for a famous TV comedian. His wife, Laura, was played by Barbara Britton, who previously co-starred with Richard Denning on the TV series *Mr. & Mrs. North* (1952); she was Revlon's pitchwoman for 12 years, and appeared in "B" films as Arch Oboler's infamous foray into 3D, *Bwana Devil*, in 1952. However, the pilot tripped over its own ottoman and fell flat on its face.

But producer Sheldon Leonard had faith in the project and decided to give it another go. Reiner didn't want to do it again at first, saying that he didn't want to fail a second time with the same material. Sheldon Leonard replied, in his Brooklyn-ese, gangster-ish way of speaking, "You won't fail because we'll get a better actor than you!"

So they started anew. Sheldon Leonard had been dazzled by Dick Van Dyke's performance in the Broadway production of *Bye, Bye Birdie*, so Dick became the reinvented Rob Petrie



(LEFT) Sheldon Leonard. (RIGHT) TV Guide listing/ad for *Head of the Family*, the original pilot for *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. © TV Guide Magazine. *Head of the Family/Dick Van Dyke Show* © CBS.

(LEFT) Carl Reiner. (TOP RIGHT) *The Dick Van Dyke Show* opening title. (ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT) *The Dick Van Dyke Show*'s stars, Dick Van Dyke as Rob Petrie and Mary Tyler Moore as Laura Petrie. © CBS. (INSET BELOW) Meet "the girl with three names." Mary Tyler Moore as an uncredited model on the LP record album for *Latin Rhythms with Miguelito Valdez* (Sutton, SSU 288), pre-*Dick Van Dyke Show* (exact year unknown). Mary appeared on at least ten such album covers during this time.

(beating of Johnny Carson, who was also considered). Later, Dick commented, "It's quite hard to act yourself all the time. My first wife, Margie, used to say she could see no difference between Rob Petrie and me. She said, 'You're not acting. You are exactly the same on screen as you are at home.'"

Rob's wife Laura was a bit more difficult to cast. According to Reiner, he had auditioned 26 actresses but hadn't found the right one and was getting frustrated. Sheldon Leonard said, "You'll know her when you see her." Producing partner Danny Thomas then remembered "the girl with three names" whom he had turned down previously on another project, so a lengthy search began through photos and records.



They finally found "the girl with three names" and in came Mary Tyler Moore, looking, as Reiner put it, "like Mary Tyler Moore." She delivered her first line with a "ping" of an inflection and Reiner said, "That's it!" And he clamped his hand down onto the top of her head and marched her into Sheldon Leonard's office and said, "I found her."

Ironically, Mary later wrote that she almost skipped the audition. Although she had appeared in guest spots on numerous TV series such as *Thriller*; *Hawaiian Eye*; *Surfside 6*; *The Deputy*; *Bachelor Father*; *Riverboat*; *Wanted: Dead or Alive*; *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* (on which, famously, only her legs were seen under her desk), and a few movies like *Operation Mad Ball* and *X-15* (opposite Charles Bronson and directed by Richard Donner), she had become unhappy with what she felt was a stalled career



(LEFT) Mary posing for a group of photographers. Seated at far right (in white suit) is famous celebrity photographer Gene Trindl (1924–2004). Trindl was the most prolific creator of covers for *TV Guide*, shooting more than 200 covers, as well as having photographs published in *LIFE*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Collier's*. This author owns a 16x20 original B&W print of Mary from this photo session, purchased directly from Mr. Trindl in the late Nineties and signed by him. (CENTER) *TV Guide* cover. © TV Guide Magazine. Dick Van Dyke Show © CBS. (RIGHT) “My Blonde Haired Brunette,” Moore’s breakout performance.

and had initially brushed off the audition. However, a friend (or her agent, depending on what you read) convinced her to go at the last minute. And the rest, they say, is history. She became an indelible part of the American TV landscape, and blossomed into a deft comedienne whose career thereafter skyrocketed.

Mary was 25 when cast in *The Dick Van Dyke Show*; Dick was 36. Reportedly, Mary lied about her age a little to make herself “older” in order to get cast. The 11-year age difference was a concern to others as well. Dick told *Entertainment Tonight* that he didn’t think Moore would be a good fit for the role, saying at the time, “She’s a little young, isn’t she?” Reiner argued, “Nobody’s going to know.” And nobody ever even mentioned it. Dick added, “The first time [Rob and Laura] kissed on the pilot, that was it. They were together.” Dick says he and Mary were so in sync, sometimes they didn’t need a script to film a scene. “We became like improv,” he said. “You could just tell us a scene and we could make it up.” He did admit that he had a real crush on Mary, though, although nothing happened between them because they were both in relationships. Dick was married to Margie Willitt, while Moore would marry television executive Grant Tinker (who was 11 years her senior) in 1962.

Originally, the focus of the show was the workplace, the “Writer’s Room,” which Reiner based on his experiences as a writer on Sid Caesar’s *Your Show of Shows* (the character of Alan Brady was based on Sid Caesar himself, for example, while Buddy Sorrell, as played by Morey Amsterdam, was based on Mel Brooks, with whom Reiner would later partner for the long-running comedy improv duo *The 2000 Year Old Man*). However, the focus of the show shifted to favor Rob and Laura, especially after the bonafide classic

episode, “My Blonde-Haired Brunette” (Season One/Episode 2, original airdate 10/3/61).

Laura believes that Rob has grown complacent in their relationship and temporarily dyes her hair blonde. This was actually the ninth episode filmed during the first season, but it was the second episode to air because Carl Reiner was so impressed with Mary’s performance that he wanted to feature her as soon as possible. Laura’s “meltdown” when she tries to explain her half-a-head of blonde hair remains one of the enduring highlights of television sitcom history, and became Moore’s own personal favorite episode. Many years later Mary would catch the old shows on TV and said, “Without any trouble at all, I’ll lose



(LEFT) “A Good Cast is Worth Repeating.” LEFT TO RIGHT: Morey Amsterdam, Richard Deacon, Moore, Van Dyke, and Rose Marie. (RIGHT) One happy family: Moore as Laura, Larry Mathews as Richie, and Van Dyke as Rob. The Dick Van Dyke Show © CBS. TV Guide © TV Guide Magazine.



STREAKING

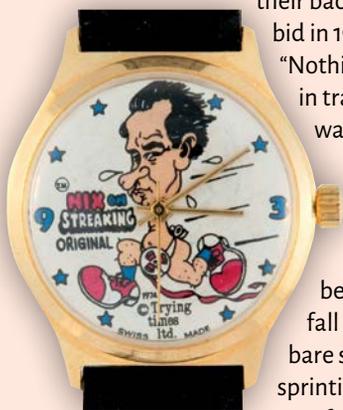
by Michael Eury



David Niven witnessed a moon shot on April 2nd, 1974, but NASA was nowhere to be seen. Clearly visible, however, was Robert Opel, a photographer/activist who entered the annals of infamy by flashing the peace sign—and everything else, for that matter—while running in the nude before a live television audience as Niven co-hosted the Academy Awards® broadcast. The suave actor, momentarily flummoxed, upstaged Opel by wisecracking, “Isn’t it fascinating to think that probably the only laugh that man will ever get is by stripping off and showing his shortcomings?”

That wasn’t the last we’d see of Opel, despite Niven’s dismissive quip. After giving the fad tagged “streaking” its widest exposure imaginable, Opel was purportedly invited to streak at a celebrity party. As have many others prone to publicly showing their backsides, he made a U.S. presidential bid in 1976, campaigning with slogans like “Nothing to Hide.” Opel’s story ended in tragedy, however, as in July 1979 he was murdered during an attempted robbery at his studio.

The craze he personified started as a ballsy college prank. Streaking, as a contagious fad, began on college campuses during fall semester 1973, with scores of totally bare students, either solo or in groups, sprinting past public gatherings. The fun was often augmented by out-of-shape



(TOP) Students at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, participate in the wildest campus craze of 1974. © The Jambalaya Yearbook. (ABOVE) Oscar® wasn’t the only naked male figure on view at the 1974 Academy Awards®. (BELOW) Tricky Dick Nixon, starring on the Streaking Watch. Did you have one? © 1974 Trying Times

campus cops huffing and puffing after them in hot pursuit. Long before the term “flash mob” was coined, over 1,500 University of Georgia students let it all hang out with a “mass streak”—and if you think that couldn’t be topped, some students of that same college parachute-streaked onto campus. Even brave high school students caught the fever, wearing little more than a pair of sneakers (and sometimes a ski mask) as they gave students and families attending graduation ceremonies something to look at other than tassels and diplomas.

Streaking, the confluence of two other fads—the sexual revolution and running—became an inescapable sensation in

The 1975 AMSCO Marvel World Adventure Playset

The magical toy that put the entire Marvel Universe in every child's hand!

by John
"THE MEGO STRETCH HULK"
Cimino

If I were to tell you that one of the most legendary Marvel super-hero toys ever made came from a company that specialized in reality-based toys such as kids' kitchen sets, plastic food products, and baby dolls that pooped themselves, you might say I'm crazy (hey, I've been called worse). But it's true, it's damn true. In 1975, American Metals Specialties Corporation, a.k.a. AMSCO (a division of board-game manufacturer Milton Bradley), put out four remarkable adventure playsets: Space: 1999, Planet of the Apes, The Waltons (the wording of "adventure" was removed from the title on that set), and the standout star of the bunch—Marvel World.

Before we get into the meat and potatoes of this article, let's all pause for a moment, bow our heads, and say that name again in its entirety—THE AMSCO MARVEL WORLD ADVENTURE PLAYSET! That's a name that Marvel Comics lovers' dreams are made of, and a name that implies *exactly* what kids got if they were lucky enough to hold this magnificent piece of toy heaven in the palms of their hands.

The entire playset is made from heavyweight cardboard (called fiberboard) with full-color graphics printed on both sides. All of the pieces are die-cut and easy to punch out. You simply assemble the buildings and create your own Marvel Universe. *Yes, you read that correctly. By building this playset, the entire Marvel Universe actually came alive in your home!*

Think I'm joking? Included was the Fantastic Four's Baxter Building and Air Car, the *Daily Bugle* Offices, the Avengers Town House, Dr. Strange's Mansion (a.k.a. the Sanctum Sanctorum), Peter Parker's Apartment, the Negative Zone, a working elevator, a secret trap door, and even a wall for the Hulk to rampage through! And make no mistake about it, these weren't simple



MARVEL WORLD

ADVENTURE
PLAYSET

A complete Play experience right from your favorite Marvel Comics.

- Featuring:
- Baxter Building
 - Daily Bugle Offices
 - Peter Parker's Apartment
 - Avenger's Town House
 - Dr. Strange's Mansion
 - The Negative Zone
 - Fantastic Four Air Car
 - Working Elevator
 - Secret Trap Door

- Favorite Stand Up Marvel Characters, including: Spiderman, Thor, Captain America, Fantastic Four, Avengers, Hulk, Dr. Strange, Daredevil, and many more heroes and Super Villains.



Durable fiberboard completely diecut, ready and to assemble. Complete illustrated instructions.

cardboard cutouts—the buildings and landscapes were detailed and completely accurate to what kids were familiar with in the funnybooks. Not only did the structures look great from the outside, but you could turn them around and have your heroes "step inside" for authentic comic action at its finest.

And speaking of heroes, they're all included here, along with those malevolent masters of malice that would constantly give them pause. Marvel World really was a "world" in every sense and came with an extraordinary 34 character cardboard stand-up pieces to use, a who's who of all the super-heavyweights of the Marvel Universe: Spider-Man, Captain America, the Hulk, Iron Man, Thor, Dr. Strange, Sub-Mariner, Silver Surfer, Valkyrie, Scarlet Witch, the Vision, the Thing, Mr. Fantastic, Human Torch, Invisible Woman, Daredevil, Hawkeye, Luke Cage, Shang-Chi, Captain Marvel (dubbed Captain Mar-Vell), Falcon, Redwing (Falcon's sidekick bird), Lady Sif, Dr. Doom, Loki, Dr. Octopus, the Red Skull, the Green Goblin, Kraven the Hunter, the Lizard, J. Jonah Jameson, Aunt May, Mary Jane, and *the devourer of*

(ABOVE) Shrink-wrapped, unopened example of Marvel World. Characters © Marvel. Courtesy of Heritage.

Oddball Comics

Holy **BATMAN** #183!

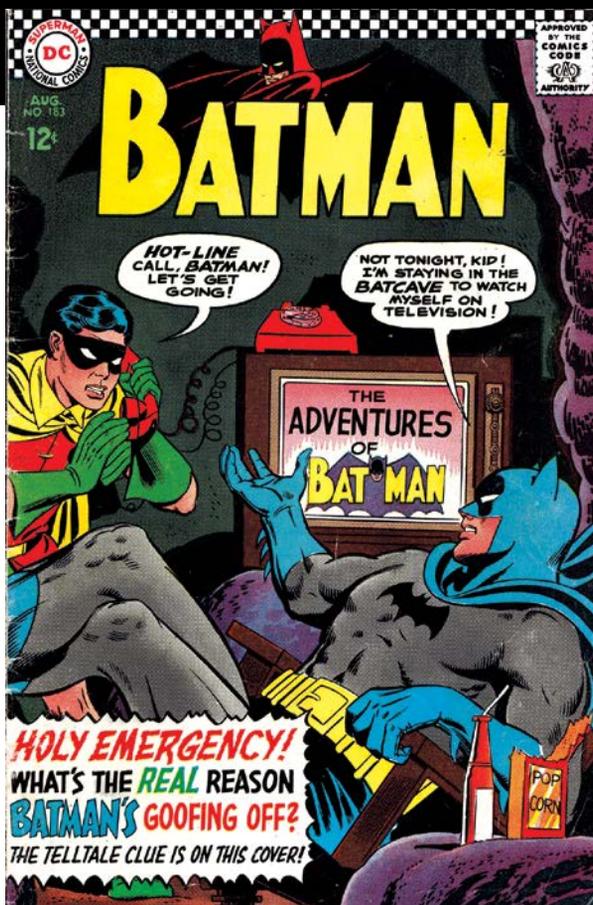
by Scott Shaw!

This cover, which was designed and penciled by Carmine Infantino, inked by Joe Giella, and lettered Gaspar Saladino (the colorist remains undetermined), was quite a big deal when it hit the spinner racks.

ABC's *Batman* series, airing twice weekly on Wednesdays and Thursdays, had premiered on January 12, 1966, and every comic-book fan in America had been buzzing about the series for six months. The younger you were, the better you liked it. I was in high school and I loved the show, but most of my comics fan buddies felt otherwise. They disliked its "campy" approach, while I primarily dug the overall art direction's attempt to replicate the look of comic books' staging, design, and coloring.

But whichever way our opinions fell, we were *all* watching it, despite the fact that *Batman's* twice-a-week schedule caused the series' unique appeal to wear out twice as fast as usual. We probably would have appreciated the television show even more if we'd known that the comic books that it was based on were almost *cancelled* just a few years before!

During the Fifties and early Sixties, a man named Jack Schiff edited *Batman* and *Detective Comics* for DC Comics. He wasn't particularly a risk-taker, though. He patterned the Batman stories he oversaw on editor Mort Weisinger's line of Superman comics, adding derivative characters like Batwoman, Ace the Bat-Hound, and Bat-Mite to the world of Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson. For a while, the books were very successful, but by the early Sixties, the books' art style and overly familiar gimmicks were beginning to falter noticeably. Sales were down and plummeting faster. National Periodical Publications, Inc.'s (DC Comics) brass took notice. At first, they considered cancelling both Bat-titles but immediately relented, since DC needed Batman to flesh out their



Title: *Batman*
Issue Number: 183
Cover Date: August 1966 (actual on-sale date: June 2, 1966)
Publisher: National Periodical Publications, Inc. (DC Comics)
Cover Artists: Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella

trifecta that included Superman and Wonder Woman. Suddenly, Jack Schiff was out and editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz and artist Carmine Infantino were brought in to visually remodel the Batman character and the feature itself. (I'm sure that Batman co-creator Bob Kane's "ghost artist" Shelly Moldoff was just very happy to still be working.) Editor Schwartz dubbed their impressive effort as "The New Look," the first examples of which appeared in the pages of *Detective Comics* #327 (May 1964) and *Batman* #164 (June 1964)

And miracle of miracles, "The New Look" *did* improve sales. Infantino was a terrific designer and storyteller; he gave the character a sleek and dynamic look that was far different from *Dick Tracy*, the comic strip that influenced Kane and Batman co-creator Bill Finger from the beginning. While a lot of us loved the classic Batman work by ghost artists like Jerry Robinson and Dick Sprang, the world of super-hero comics was rapidly changing. Marvel Comics cartoonists like Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko—both with extremely "cartoony" drawing styles—were swiftly overtaking DC's sales figures at the time, although Sol Harrison and the other big shots at DC refused to acknowledge any of that.

Then ABC's *Batman* primetime action series came along. The details of how that came to pass have been amply documented elsewhere... but one fact is unquestionably true: 1966's *Batman* irreversibly changed Pop Art, pop culture, and comic books forever. And *Batman* #183 absolutely confirms that. Although the *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen* comic book was directly inspired by the *Adventures of Superman* live-action TV series, this era in



The Land of Oz

by Tim Hollis

The story of how a theme park based on L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* came to exist on a mountaintop in northwestern North Carolina actually begins with another innovative aspect of tourism for that region of the country.

In 1966, the three Robbins brothers (Grover, Harry, and Spencer), who were already well known in North Carolina's tourist industry, announced plans to build an entertainment complex on top of Beech Mountain, a 5,506-foot summit near Banner Elk. The main feature of their new project would be a ski resort; the idea was a novel one for the southeastern part of the U.S., where obviously the ski season was much shorter than in Colorado or New England. For that reason, the Robbins family also wanted to do something that would make use of the ski facilities during the long off-season.

The Robbinses turned to their valued associate, Charlotte-based designer Jack Pentec, to come up with an idea for their summer attraction on Beech Mountain's summit. In recounting the story, Pentec often related how he was first shown the

property for the proposed development, and it was the indigenous trees, twisted and gnarled by centuries of exposure to the harsh mountain climate, that reminded him of the crabby apple trees in MGM's 1939 movie version of *The Wizard of Oz*. As it turns out, though, Pentec had long wanted to create a theme park based on the story. In the early Sixties, he had been responsible for a walk-through Oz display that served as a Christmas feature for the Charlottemall, and ever since he had dreamed of doing basically the same thing on a full-scale basis. When he

(ABOVE) Most theme park souvenir maps were designed to help people navigate their way around the property—but the Land of Oz map was more graphically attractive than functional. It was by no means drawn to scale, and showed things that were not usually part of the experience, omitting other things that were. (Unless otherwise noted, all images in this article are courtesy of Tim Hollis.)

suggested to the Robbinses that they build the Land of Oz atop Beech Mountain, the brothers heartily agreed.

Considering that Baum's book had been published in 1900, it is somewhat surprising that it took nearly 70 years for it to become the basis for a theme park. Way back in 1906, Baum himself had announced plans to build an Oz park on a small island off the coast of California; had he done so, it might have qualified as the first "theme park" in American history, beating an entrepreneur named Walt by a half century. From approximately the same period, fading newspaper clippings mention some Oz attractions in a Chicago amusement park without being specific enough to identify just what they were. The 1933 Chicago World's Fair incorporated Oz characters into its children's area known as the Enchanted Island, and Cincinnati's Coney Island Park also had a Land of Oz section at one time. Nothing on the scale of what Pentes and the Robbins brothers had in mind had ever been attempted, however.

Their timing was nothing if not fortuitous. In the Sixties, most people's familiarity with the Oz tale was probably about equally divided between Baum's book and the 1939 movie, which was shown on network television once each year. In those days before home video, that single annual exposure was the extent of its reputation, and fans did not have the opportunity to memorize every line of dialogue and sound effect, as many seem to have done today. Baum's story and characters had gone into public domain in 1956, so after that point, anyone could do whatever they wanted with the underlying property as long as it did not resemble the appearance of the movie. Using elements created by MGM, including the music, required a separate licensing agreement. (It should be noted that Baum went on to pen 13 more Oz novels before his death in 1919. His publisher subsequently assigned other authors

to California and back proved impractical, so once they were installed on Beech Mountain, they never left. North Carolina's Land of Oz opened on schedule in June 1970, and soon became one of the state's top attractions.

Accessing the park property was done by one of two methods: a bus ride up the twisting mountain road, or by using the gondolas that serviced the ski resort during the winter season. Either way, upon arrival, one could visit the Oz Museum, displaying many of the costumes and props secured from the MGM auction, plus copies of the Baum books and some beautiful examples of the park's concept art. The next sight visitors encountered was also one of the only direct references to the movie to be found in the park's original 1970 format. This was the Judy Garland Memorial Overlook, a gazebo with a breathtaking view of the surrounding mountains and a bust of Garland in character as Dorothy, clutching Toto in her arms.

It was then onward to Uncle Henry's farm, with a petting zoo in the barn. Whereas Baum had described Dorothy's house as a one-room shack, and the movie made it look like a setting out of a contemporary Depression-era WPA photograph, the park's farmhouse was modeled after the one in the background of Grant



At the Land of Oz grand opening in June 1970, park designer Jack Pentes (CENTER) was flanked by special guest star Debbie Reynolds (RIGHT) and her not-yet-famous teenaged daughter Carrie Fisher (LEFT).

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Wood's famous *American Gothic* painting. Groups were admitted inside at periodic intervals, and could wander through the rooms and marvel at the authentic antiques and other furnishings that gave the home a suitable circa-1900 look.

The tour would be interrupted by a frantic announcement that a cyclone was imminent and that everyone should head for the storm cellar. As one might expect, this is where things began to get weird, as the storm cellar was actually a dark maze with many zig-zagging turns, all the while accompanied by ominous music and the sound of wind. The end of the maze sloped gradually upstairs again, and everyone emerged into the light in what appeared to be the same farmhouse—only now the floor was tilted several degrees and the furniture was a wreck. Often a park worker would have to be stationed at the exit from the storm