



MIKE BARON AND  
EDUARDO BARRETO

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COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

# ATARI FORCE

TORN BETWEEN TWO WORLDS!





THANKS TO

# AMAZING HEROES

**BEST 10 BOOKS OF 1984\***

① **SWAMP THING<sup>+</sup>**

② JON SABLE

③ AMERICAN FLAGG

④ **TEEN TITANS<sup>+</sup>**

⑤ FANTASTIC FOUR

⑥ X-MEN

⑦ **BLUE DEVIL<sup>+</sup>**

⑧ **ATARI<sup>++</sup> FORCE**

⑨ DR. STRANGE

⑩ POWER PACK



\*BEST BOOKS OF 1984, PER R. A. JONES, AMAZING HEROES # 63

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ATARI STATION,  
IN ORBIT AROUND  
NEW EARTH.

TO THE SCIENTISTS OF THE ATARI INSTITUTE,  
HIS CODE NAME IS TEMPEST, TO REFLECT  
HIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO PHASE BETWEEN  
DIMENSIONS.

HE WAS BORN CHRISTOPHER CHAMPION,  
SON OF MARTIN CHAMPION AND LYDIA  
PEREZ, ORIGINAL LEADERS OF THE  
ATARI FORCE.

LOW-LEVEL  
SONIC SATURATION  
PREVENTS HIM  
FROM FOCUSING  
HIS PHASING POWER.  
HE IS A PRISONER.

'NOTHER DAY,  
'NOTHER DOLLAR,  
HUH, KID?

BITE  
THE BIG BLUE ONE,  
HUNTER.

YOU WANT TO  
WATCH THE SMART MOUTH,  
KID. I CAN ALWAYS HAVE 'EM  
SHUT OFF THE SONICS AND  
PUT YOU BACK ON SCOPADRON. YOU  
LIKE THE WAY IT MAKES  
YOU PUKE UP YOUR GUTS  
IN THE MORNING?  
SAY THE WORD.

FACE IT.  
YOUR OLD MAN'S GONE.  
LEFT YOU HOLDING THE BAG.  
I'M GIVIN' YOU ONE MORE  
CHANCE--TELL ME ABOUT THE  
PLOT TO STEAL SCANNER,  
WE'RE WILLIN' TO DICKER  
ON THE CHARGES.



BITE IT.



OKAY--  
YOU'RE  
GOING BACK  
ON SCOPE  
IN THE  
MORNING!

DAMN  
CIGAR-- TASTES  
LIKE A FUEL  
PELLET.



HE MEANS IT...  
MUSTN'T LET HIM KNOW  
I'VE CONTACTED DART VIA  
MINDLINK. GOT TO PHASE  
OUT OF HERE TONIGHT.

WHAT HUNTER  
DOESN'T KNOW IS  
THAT I'VE REGAINED  
LOW-LEVEL PHASING  
ABILITY... ENOUGH  
TO STICK MY HAND  
THROUGH THE WALL  
AND RIP HELL  
OUT OF THE  
SONICS.

THAT'LL  
SET OFF  
ALARMS...  
I'LL HAVE  
A MINUTE--  
MAYBE--  
TO GET  
OUT OF HERE  
BEFORE HUNTER  
RETURNS WITH  
THE GOON  
SQUAD.

WELL,  
NO TIME LIKE  
THE RIGHT  
TIME...

I WAS  
AFRAID OF THAT...  
BUT I DID IT!  
THE SONICS ARE  
OFF!

LINGH!

A-WOODGAH!  
A-WOODGAH!

I'M GONNA  
KICK YOUR BUTT,  
KID!

DAMN!  
HERE THEY COME!  
GOT TO  
CONCENTRATE...

CONCENTRATE!

HOLY--!!  
SHOOT HIM! HE'S  
GETTING READY  
TO PHASE!

CONCENTRATE!



# ATARI FORCE

CREATED BY GERRY CONWAY, ROY THOMAS AND JEFF FORD

TOO  
BLOODY  
LATE!

SO LONG,  
HUNTER!  
DON'T WAIT UP!

# TEMPEST TOSSED!

MIKE BARON WRITER  
-bob (offen) LETTERER

EDUARDO BARRETO PENCILLER  
TOM ZILKO COLORIST

RICARDO VILLAGRAN INKER  
ANDY HELFER EDITOR





HI, EVERYBODY!



LONG TIME  
NO S--



--HOLY--!!  
THIS ISN'T  
WHERE I WANT  
TO GO! AND I KNOW  
Z DIDN'T MAKE A  
MISTAKE, WHICH  
MEANS...



...THE MULTIVERSE IS  
SERIOUSLY SCREWED UP!  
I'M PHASING BLIND AGAIN!  
ALL MY HARD WORK  
TRYING TO ESTABLISH  
PHASE COORDINATES--  
OUT THE WINDOW.

LUCIA CAITLIN VENTURES'  
QUARTERS  
ON ATARI STATION.



WELL,  
PROFESSOR,  
MAYBE HE AIN'T  
HERE... THEN  
AGAIN, MAYBE  
YOU KNOW  
WHERE HE  
WENT.

MAYBE  
I DO...



MAYBE I DON'T. BUT  
I DO KNOW AN ILLEGAL  
SEARCH, MY ZEALOUS FRIEND.  
AND I HAVE IT ON HOLO.  
WHEN I'M THROUGH TALKING  
TO ATARI SECURITY, YOU'LL  
BE UP ON CHARGES  
YOURSELF. CIGAR?

NOT MY BRAND.

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.



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4. Favorite Cover .....
5. Favorite Comic Book .....
6. Favorite Story .....
7. Favorite Book\* .....
8. Favorite Character .....
9. Favorite Supporting Character .....
10. Favorite Publication about Comics .....
11. Favorite Writer about Comics .....
12. Favorite Fan Artist .....
- Phil Seuling Award for Favorite Direct-Sale-Only Title .....

\*"Favorite Book" can include your favorite graphic novel, favorite reprint collection, favorite book about comics, etc. — with a copyright date of 1984.

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Mail your ballot individually in a single envelope by April 13, 1985 to:

**The Comics Buyer's Guide Fan Awards**  
700 East State Street  
Iola, Wisconsin 54990

Name ..... Age ..... Male ..... Female (circle one) .....  
Street or Box .....  
City, State, and ZIP .....

Please type or print your vote and information clearly.



SOMEWHERE IN THE MULTIVERSE, ABOARD SCANNER ONE, WHERE MORPHEA RECENTLY CLEANSED KARGO OF THE DARK DESTROYER'S SPIRIT...

MORPHEA, YOU HAVE RETURNED CONTROL OF MY LIFE TO ME... I WILL STAY AND SERVE.

THIS ONE HAS NO NEED OF SERVANTS, BUT PERHAPS MARTIN WILL LET YOU JOIN HIS CREW.

HE'D MAKE ONE HECK OF A MERCENARY.

THAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE.

THIS IS RARE LUCK-- KARGG CAN PROVIDE US WITH PRICELESS INFORMATION ON THE DESTROYER...

YOU'VE HAD NO PROBLEM WARMING UP TO KARGG-- WHY WON'T YOU TRY WITH BLACKJAK?

WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS HOW YOU CAN STILL TRUST HIM.

SOMEONE MENTION MY NAME?

WHEN I LOOK PEOPLE, I SEE SURROUNDED BY LIKE LITTLE INDIV. ATMOSPHERES.. ALIRA IS UNIQ.

I HAVE TO CHECK ON THE FOOD.

OL' MARTY'S STILL GOT IT IN FOR ME.

GIVE HIM TIME...

T THEM  
UZAS,  
LIAL  
DOCH

HOW'S THE NEW EYE?

WEIRD. I FEEL LIKE "X- THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES" FROM THAT ANCIENT MOVIE...





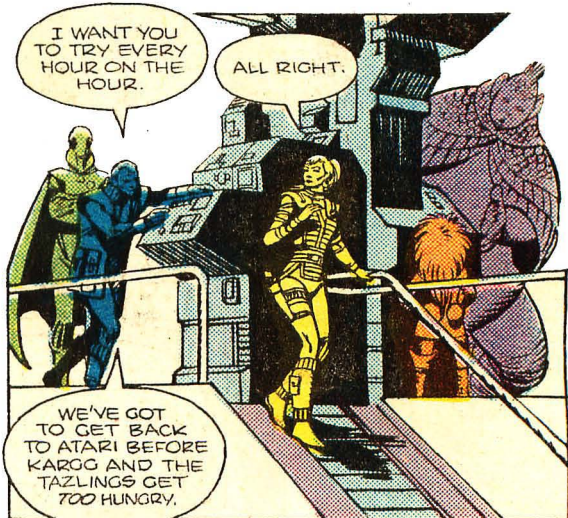
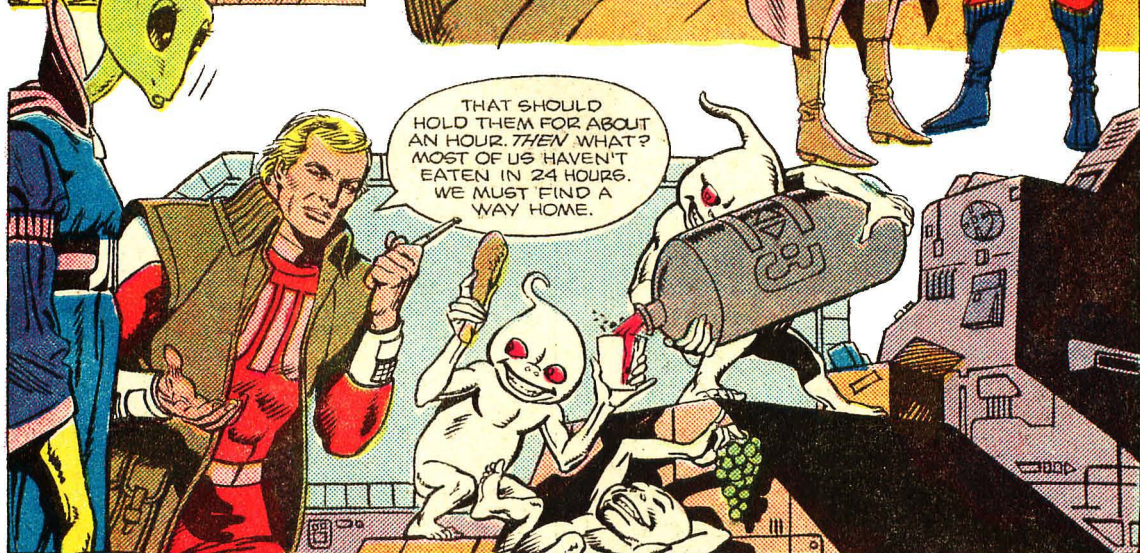
"OLIVE. HE SEEMS BENIGN TO ME... I BELIEVE HE REALLY HAS CHANGED IN SOME WAY."

I AM HUNGRY.

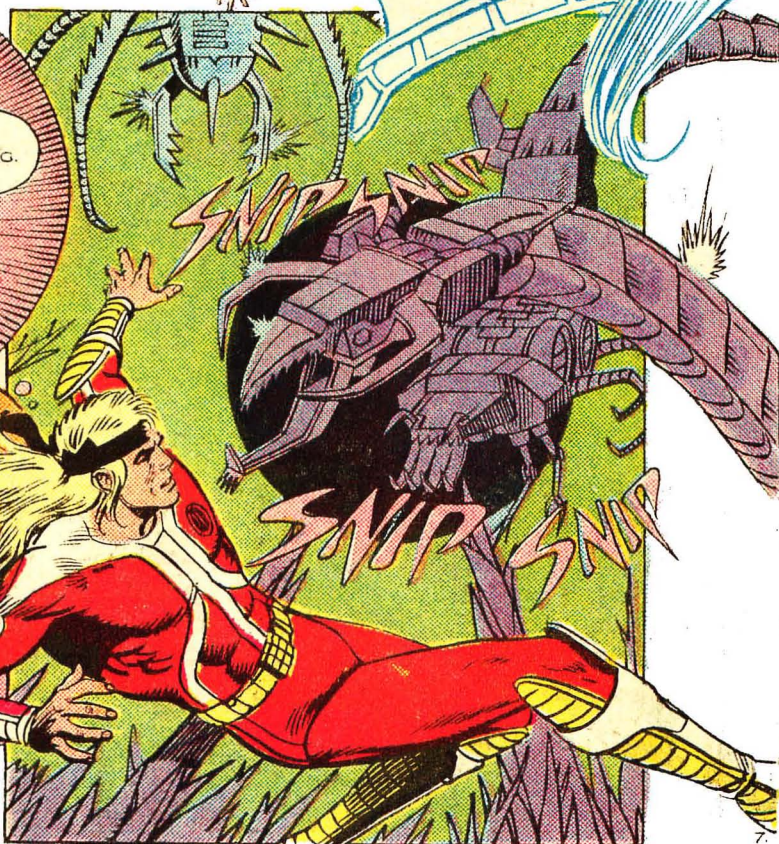
THIS ONE WILL SEE WHAT IS LEFT, KARGG...

MARTIN, WHAT IS THE FOOD SITUATION?

GRIM. THE TAZGLINGS FOUND THE LAST SUPPLY STORE ABOUT 15 MINUTES AGO.









CHRIS: I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE OVERSHOOTING--  
JUMPING TOO FAR AND PASSING OUR UNIVERSE...  
JUST CONCENTRATE ON ME... RELAX...

CAN'T RELAX  
HERE--HAVE TO  
PHASE NOW!

THE MIDDLE  
OF SPACE=GASPS!  
I HAVE AN INSTANT  
BEFORE MY BLOOD  
BOILS...

OH, NO--!  
GIANT  
ANTS!

PHASE  
TO ME!

DON'T  
GIVE UP NOW,  
CHRIS! YOU'RE  
SO CLOSE...

OKAY!  
ONE MORE  
SHOT.  
=GASPS=

WATCH THE  
CEILING!

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.



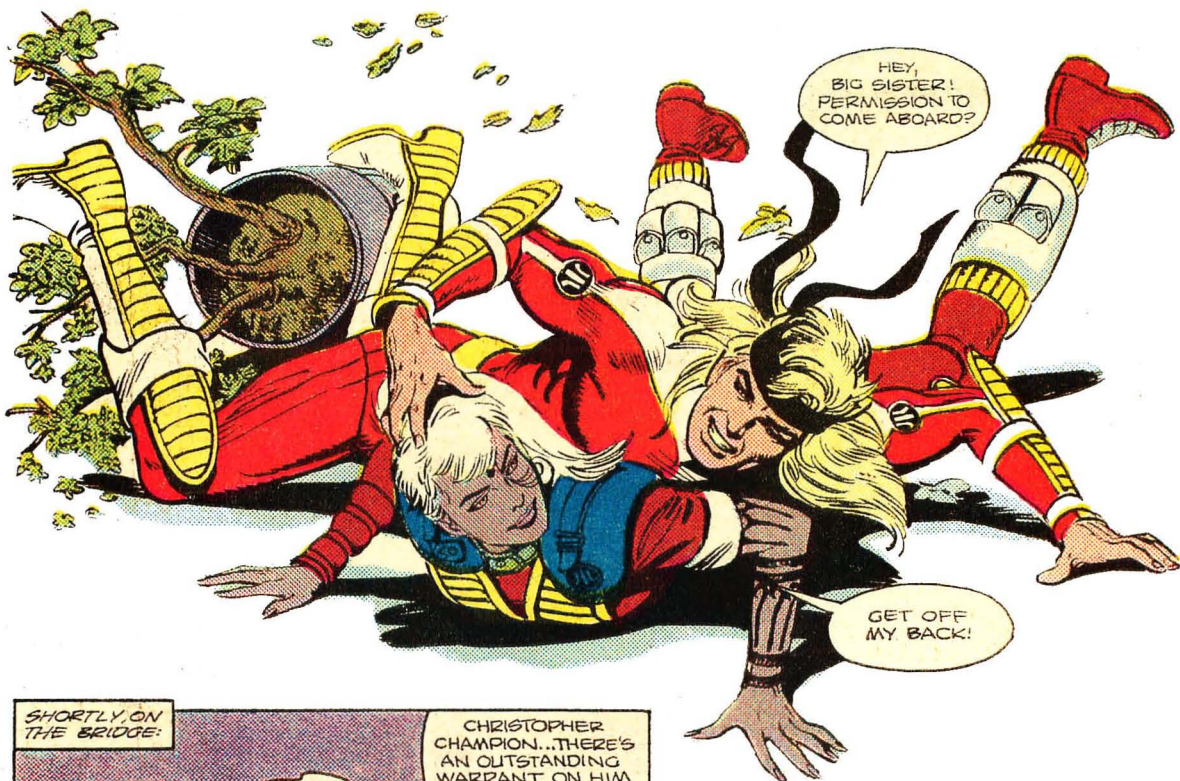
# "Shadamedafas"

(I TRAVELED 369,484,278.025 MILES FOR REESE'S PIECES.)



So he buys quite a few to take back with him. He says his mother loves the out-of-this-world peanut butter taste of Reese's Pieces and so does XYTOPUV, his cousin.





SHORTLY ON THE BRIDGE:

I KNEW IT... I KNEW YOU WOULD COME BACK TO US.

SIGH...

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPION...THERE'S AN OUTSTANDING WARRANT ON HIM AS WELL, ASSUMING THE COUNCIL DIDN'T JUST TURN HIM LOOSE...

SO MUCH FOR YOUR "DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE" THEORY, EH, PROFESSOR?

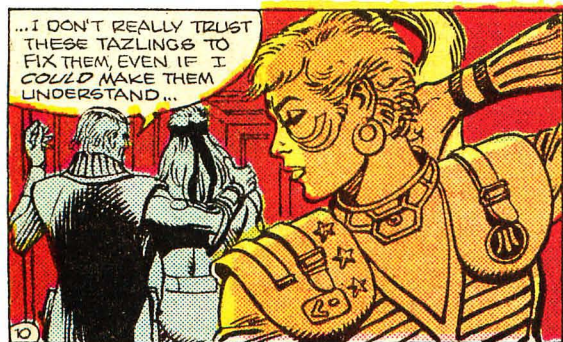
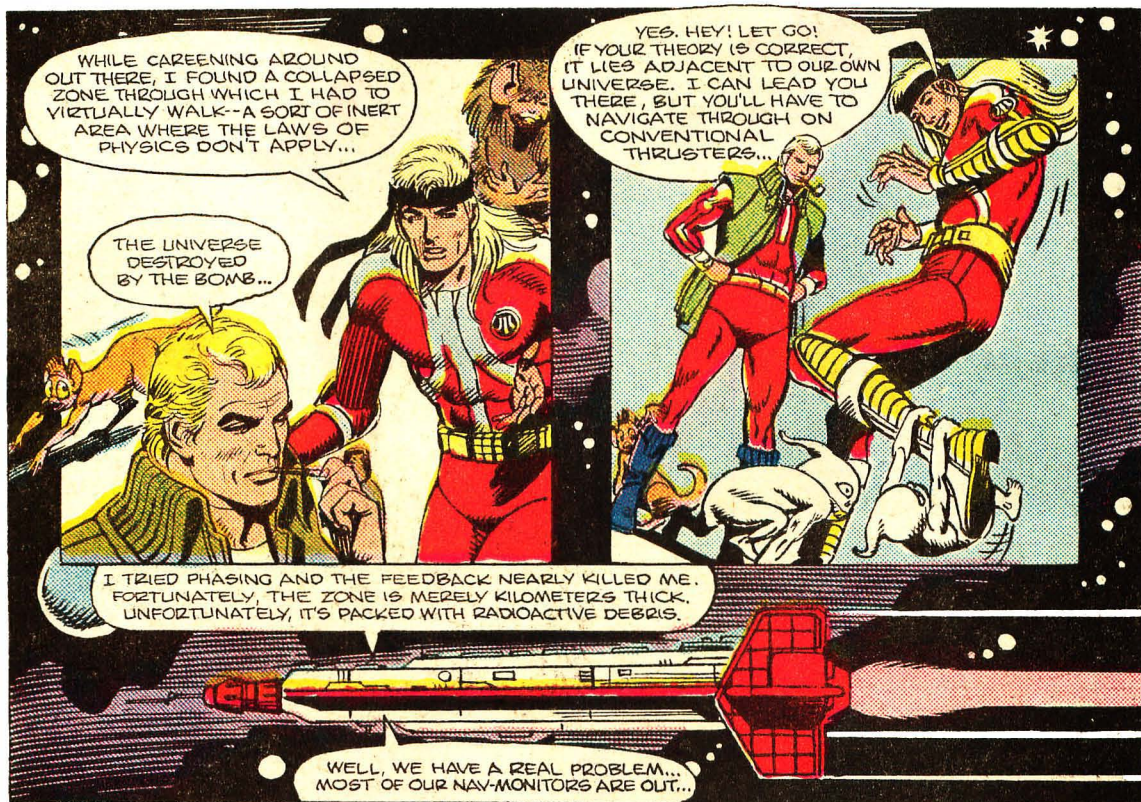
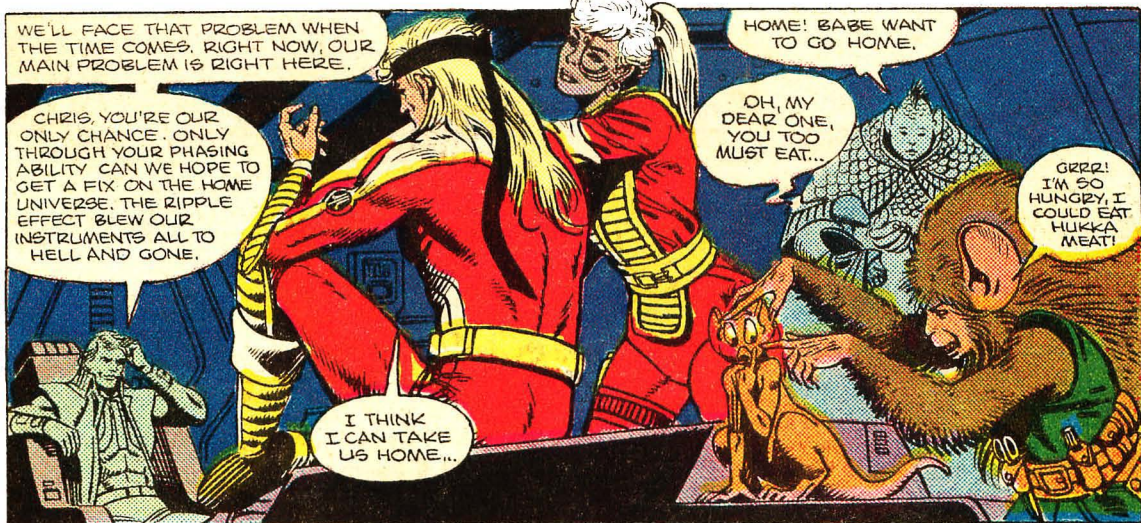
UH, CHRIS, THIS IS OFFICER RIDENT OF ATARI SECURITY.

OH, YES... HUNTER SENDS HIS REGARDS.

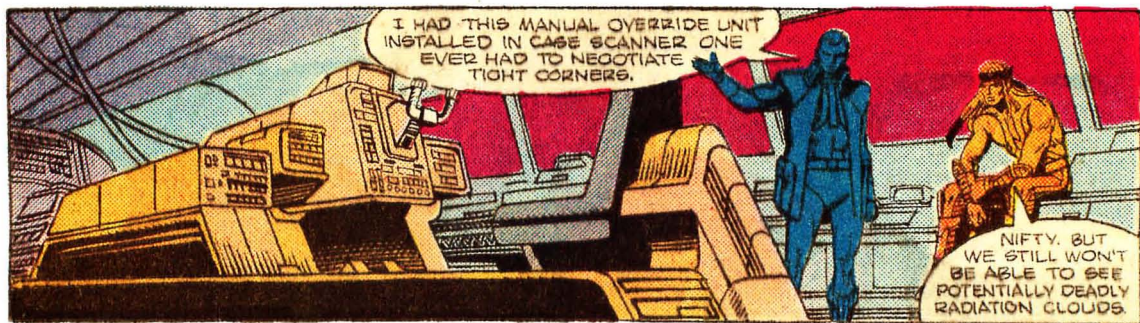
RIDENT SAYS WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE ARRESTED, SHOULD WE GET BACK.

IT'S THE TRUTH, DAD. HUNTER'S GOT ATARI WHIPPED INTO A REAL WITCH-HUNT FEVER!













IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED. THE TAZLINGS "IMPROVED" BLACKJAK-- THEY SEATED HIM AND REPLACED HIS PORTA-ORBS WITH AN ORGANIC UNIT. BLACKJAK SAYS THE NEW EYES BEEN GIVING HIM TROUBLE... HE SEES TOO MUCH.



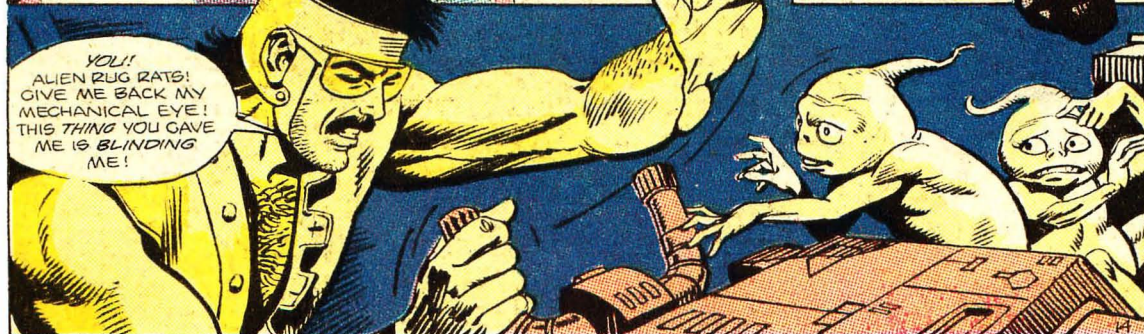
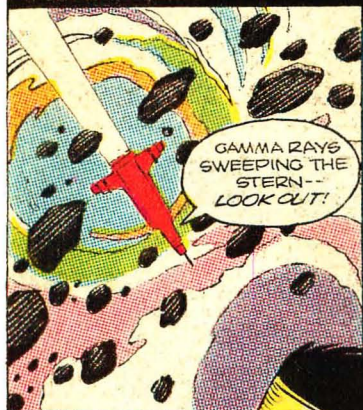
DON'T YOU SEE? THAT'S IT! BLACKJAK WAS MEANT TO GUIDE SCANNER ONE THROUGH THE COLLAPSED ZONE!



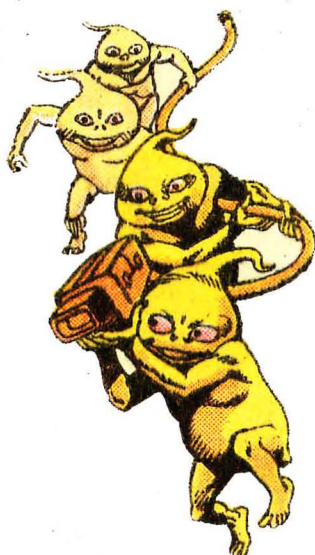
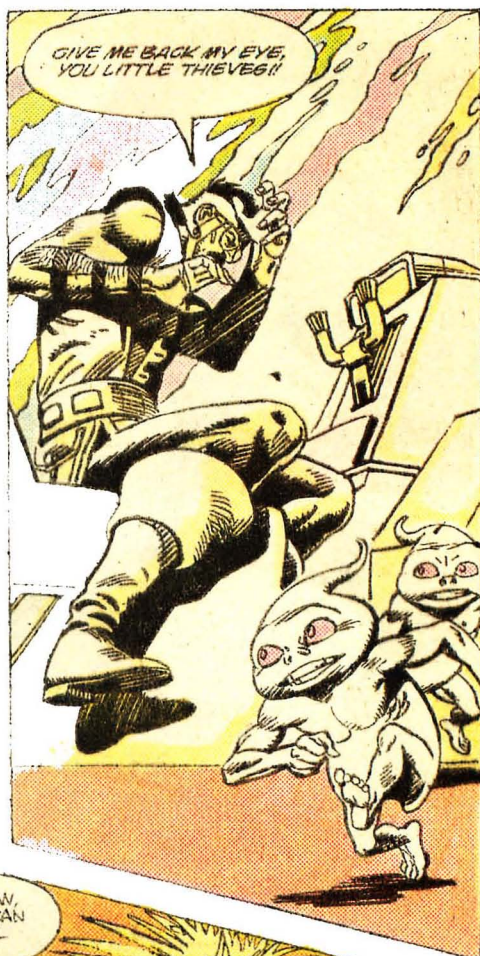




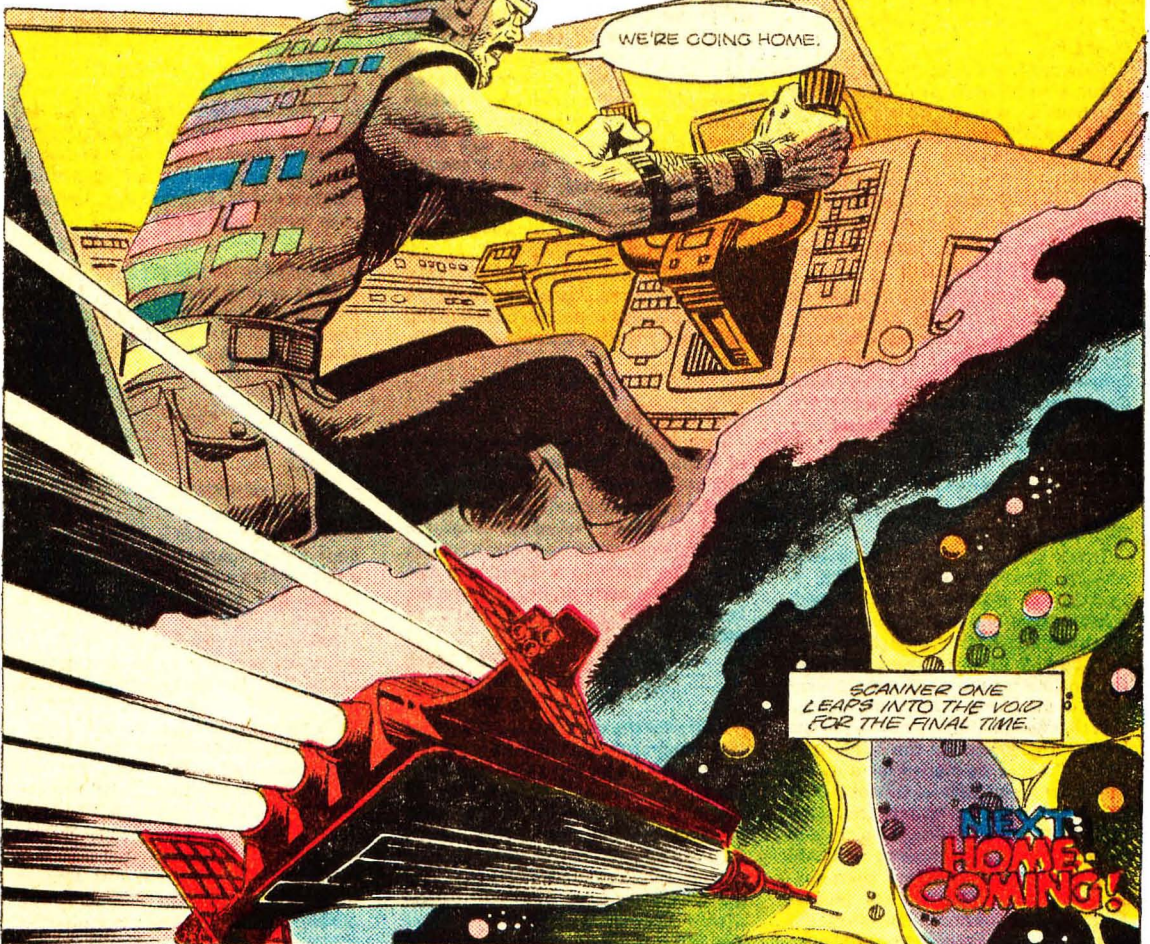
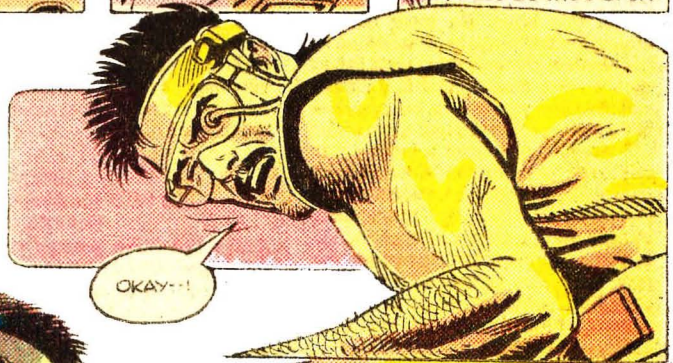
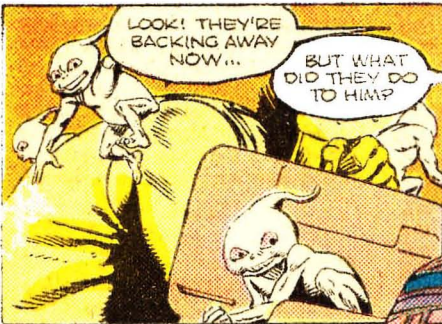
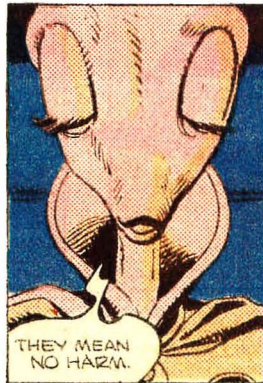














# FORCE FEEDBACK

L-1961

We're back—and thanks to your critical acclaim vis-à-vis these pre-letter-column updates, we'll get right to the letters this issue. No more beating around the bush—we know when we're not wanted! The only thing we'd like to mention this time around is a simple plea: We love your letters, but please—in the future, could you type them up for us? Y'see, ye olde letter column writer has to re-type all the handwritten letters over again, and believe us when we tell you—it's a pain! Besides, if your letter is already typed, it stands a better chance of being reprinted in these pages. So take the extra time—you might be pleasantly rewarded for it! And now, without further ado—as promised earlier—LETTERS!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Guys:

You guys know what the worst thing about ATARI FORCE is? After page 23 you have to wait 30 looong days for more fantastic art, great story, and an all-around good time!

John Coates  
498 Crossroads Drive  
Conway, SC 29526

P.S.: Giant ants with rocket launchers???!! I LOVE IT!!!

(Yeah, well, John, we loved it too! And if you've kept on reading the monthly adventures of the Force—which, judging from your letter is a good probability—you already know that Mike Baron's giant ants were just the first in a looong line of rather bizarre Atari Force adversaries!)

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear ATARI FORCE:

Thank you very much for the pure science fiction of ATARI FORCE. A tradition of excellence started with issue number one and has been growing greater each issue, straight through to issue #14. To the creators, and those responsible for the continuing adventures of the ATARI FORCE: my loyalty.

Well, enough of that—now on to the basics: Thank you for the "Return of Rident!" I may be stoned for this, but Interfederation Customs Officer Rident Oly is by far my 2nd favorite character. (Dart is #1—after seeing her picture in DC sampler #2, I was hooked on ATARI FORCE.) For months I have been anxiously waiting for good ole brother Rident to show up and either 1) save the day, or 2) mess everything up! You guys

chose the former, and I am satisfied. Although, to be truthful, I was expecting Rident to show up at the end of issue #12 and arrest everybody! Please, whether as friend or enemy of ATARI FORCE, keep Rident alive and well, and very much a part of the action. I mean, heck, what kind of galaxy would we have without the blues?

Faithfully,

Billy Moorhouse  
305 W. Evans Street, Box 180  
Florence, SC 29502

(Looks like we've granted your wish, Billy—since Rident reappeared on the scene back in issue #14, he's been a constant source of aggravation to the Force—and he's just getting started! Also, you mentioned the DC Sampler, and since some of our readers might not be aware of its existence, we thought we'd explain a bit about it: The DC Samplers are distributed free of charge in comic book stores and comic book conventions across the country—you won't find them on newsstands. They contain thirty-two pages of info on a selected bunch of our monthly comics. The idea, of course, is to make you interested enough in some of our comics to go out and try them! There have been three DC Samplers so far and more will undoubtedly be coming your way in the future. Just one more reason to seek out your nearest comic shop and become a regular customer.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Force Family:

I would like to comment on the cover of issue #14. This is the best cover artistry I've seen on this book so far. This topped my now second favorite cover on issue #9 of Dart. I loved the concept of drawing this cover from Pakrat's point of view. The rendition of Kargg was also the best I've seen yet. So, José and Ed, keep up the good work—that's an order!!

Todd Emoto  
17632 69th Ave. W.  
Edmonds, WA 98020

(Thanks for the compliment, Todd—but your congratulations may be a wee bit misplaced! Y'see, the cover you mentioned was actually designed by Ed Hannigan, who, because he rarely does finished pencils on covers, often receives no credit for his work. That's a shame, considering he's also designed the covers for issue #13—DD versus Martin Champion—and #16—intro of the Tazlings—both of which we con-

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sider of equal quality. And when Ed H.'s too busy to grace us with a cover design, we place our confidence in Paris Cullins, who designed this issue's cover, as well as last issues startling Black-jak/Tazlings illo—which is our personal favorite among all the ATARI FORCE covers. And lest we forget—the contribution of regular cover inker/fixer-upper José Luis Garcia López can not be underestimated. After all—he's the guy who created the Force—and he knows how to draw 'em better than anybody!!)

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Atari Force:

I've been collecting comics for one year now, and I have to tell you, ATARI FORCE is my favorite DC Comic book. I have the whole set! I just read issue #14. The cover drove me wild! With Kargg over Pakrat and Taz's feet sticking out—it was like a magnet! But you shouldn't have killed Kargg in this issue. I like Taz a lot. Please keep him in ATARI FORCE a long while. He has a lot of potential. If you could, could you do a solo story about him? Even just a back-up story would be nice to see. Anyway, keep up the good work!

Wade Young

(You asked for it, you got it—a Taz solo story is coming in the very next issue! Written and drawn by Ed Hannigan, it's kinda, sorta an origin story, but then again it's a—aw, read it and see for yourself!)

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi, Guys:

Before I start to ramble, let me tell you where I'm coming from. I'm a 24-year-old college student at U. Mass Amherst and I pull 30 hours weekly working with a direct sales store—Comics Plus. As a result, this letter is going to be a fan/retailer reaction.

Anyhow, on to ATARI FORCE. In short, it's one of your highest quality books. Real life has been breathed into the characters both on the parts of Conway and Lopez. It's paced well, has good plot twists and suspense, and stars characters that I find more "human" than found in most other mainstream comics. I'm also pleased that it's not written strictly on a teenage level—it's got many adult aspects that give it a good taste. It's also not bad science fiction—as comic book science fiction goes. It's got it's share of pseudo-scientific doubletalk (i.e. the Multi-

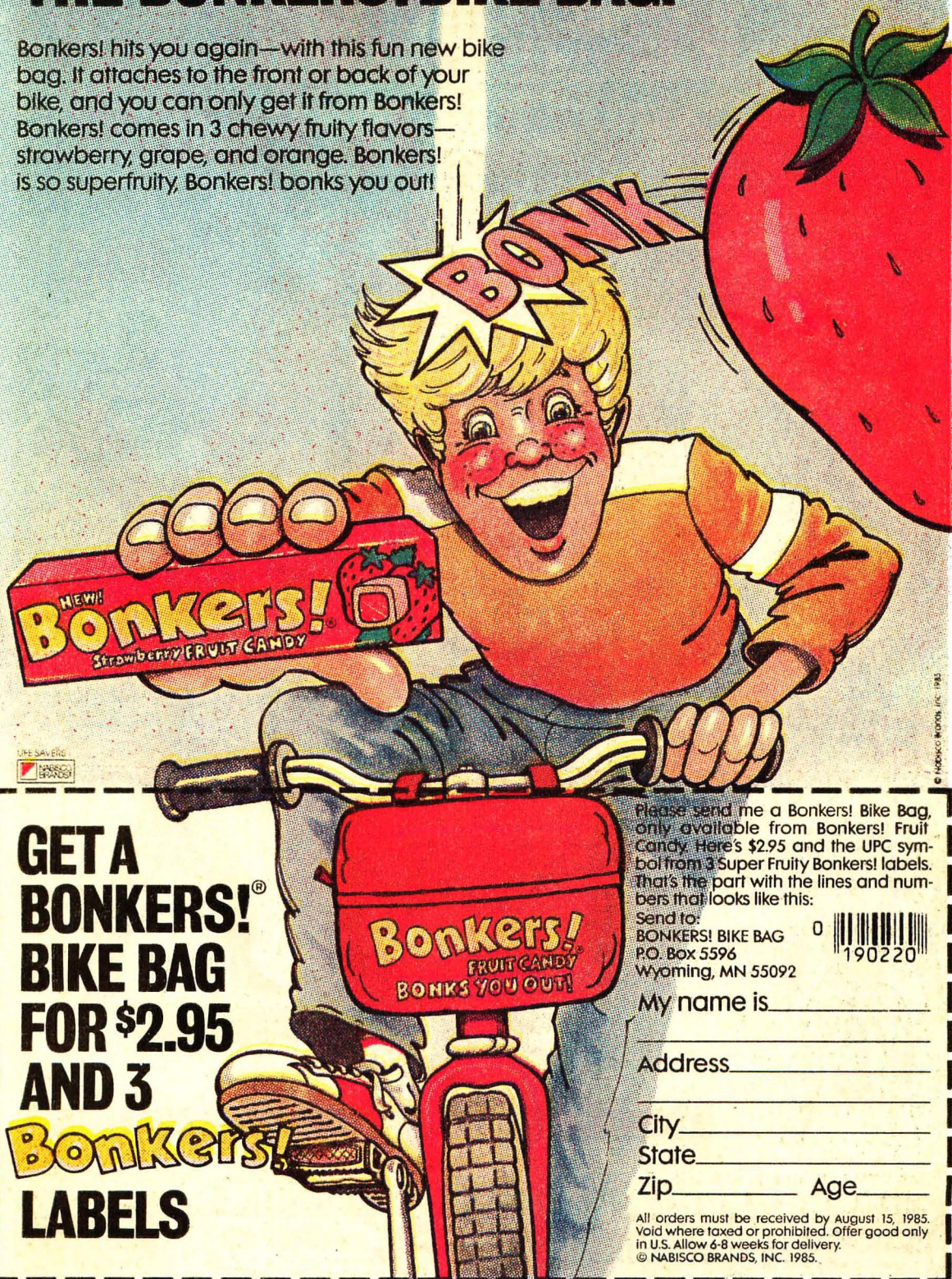
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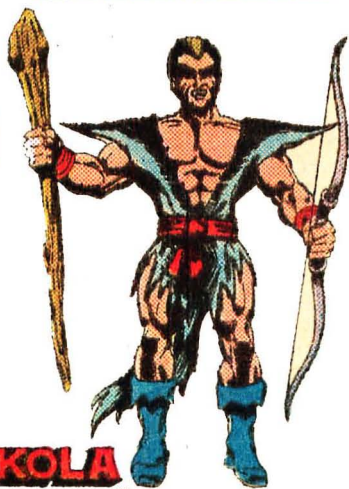
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THE SAVING PLACE

STORES!



verse), but on the flip side of the coin we've got reasonably good aliens (albeit humanoid) and some of science fiction's staples (i.e. anti-matter weapons). All in all, in my opinion and many other of my employees (and R.A. Jones), it's one of the top ten books on the stands today.

Why doesn't this "highly acclaimed" book *sell* like a top-ten book? Well, we both know the answer to *that*. It gets so frustrating trying to turn readers on to the book, and getting back "ATARI FORCE? C'mon—video games?" And it seems that no matter what you say, they won't look beyond the title. A sad thing—and their loss. I don't know if you should do a title change, though, since the book *does* have a fan following (though not of the size it deserves) that may react negatively. Personally, it wouldn't make any difference to me.

The book's future? I really hope it keeps going. I was really bummed when I heard that Garcia Lopez was leaving—I still am—and when I heard that Gerry Conway was calling it quits on the book too, I was about to follow suit. But when I heard Mike Baron (*the* best writer in the field, I feel) was coming *on* the book, my enthusiasm came rushing back! I really look forward to, and am curious about, ATARI FORCE's future issues. Well, if it's any consolation to the book's creators, this retailer is behind you all the way!

Bob Caswell  
35 Presidential Apts.  
Amherst, MA 01002

*(Thanks for the vote of confidence, Bob. It's always good to hear from people inside the comic book business—especially when they have something to say about the quality of our book. That's always been our number-one priority here—but a top-selling book would be nice too. We've spent some time thinking about just the things you mentioned, and while we haven't made any decisions yet, we do have more than a few interesting ideas we'd like to try on our readers. Watch for 'em!)*

Dear Andy:

Puzzling the source of Taz's pain is internal—a tumor, perhaps, or a—Oh Oh!

Please, don't tell me that after all this time of thinking that Taz was one of the homeliest fellas around, "he" is really a "she"—and pregnant at that! Please—say it ain't so!

Somewhat disoriented,  
Kimberly Robbins  
5220 Pentridge Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

*(Hee Hee Hee! We really got ya with that one, didn't we? But seriously, Kim, the true sex of Taz was a well-kept secret that Gerry Conway came up with when we first introduced the character back in issue #8. Soon to be reprinted, by the way, in this year's YEAR'S BEST COMICS DIGEST SPECIAL—if you missed it the first time, don't do it again! We'd been hinting at this revelation for a long time, but you were the first to actually guess the truth—albeit begrudgingly—so we thought we'd print your letter here and offer you our congratulations!)*

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear DC:

Before I begin this letter, let me just say welcome aboard to Mike Baron and Ed Barreto and wish you guys a happy and eventful run on this mag.

Onward. The cover for ATARI FORCE #14 was just great. It had really good use of cover space with excellent use of bright and dull colors. The misplaced logo made it eye-catching.

It seems that Mike Baron is just full of story ideas; we got just a glimpse of them in Issue #14. We got the maturing Babe, the mysterious Taz, a hint as to the fate of Blackjak and Atari HQ, as well as the fate of Chris. But if Mike's ideas are so numerous, why are the stories only 16 pages long? Not that I don't like back-ups, but full-length stories have room for more development.

Issue 14 just seemed to be a warm-up to what's coming, and I suspect it to be better than what we've seen so far (although what could be more eventful than the destruction of an entire universe?). Nevertheless, my suspicions remain strong, especially about Taz, who I think is more than he appears to be. Am I right?

I'll find out soon enough.

Ralph Ienco  
11 Oakland Drive  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Canada L8E 3R4

*(Correct, Ralph—except the part about he—Kimberly beat you on that count! As far as the 16-page lead stories, while Mike Baron could write a 50-page story each and every month, artist Ed Barreto has many other commitments at DC that prevent him from turning around 23 pages a month. What with Superman covers, Teen Titans paintings—look for 'em soon—and other very secret projects, Ed's a very busy guy! Not to mention inker Ricardo Villagran, who's already got his hands full inking both ATARI FORCE and STAR TREK each and every month!)*

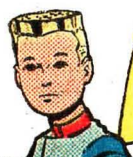
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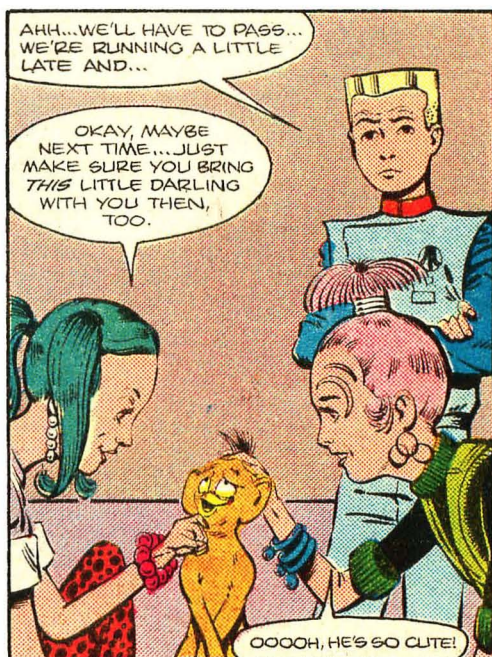
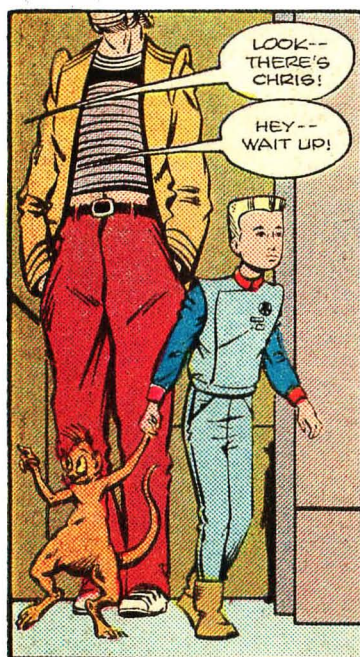
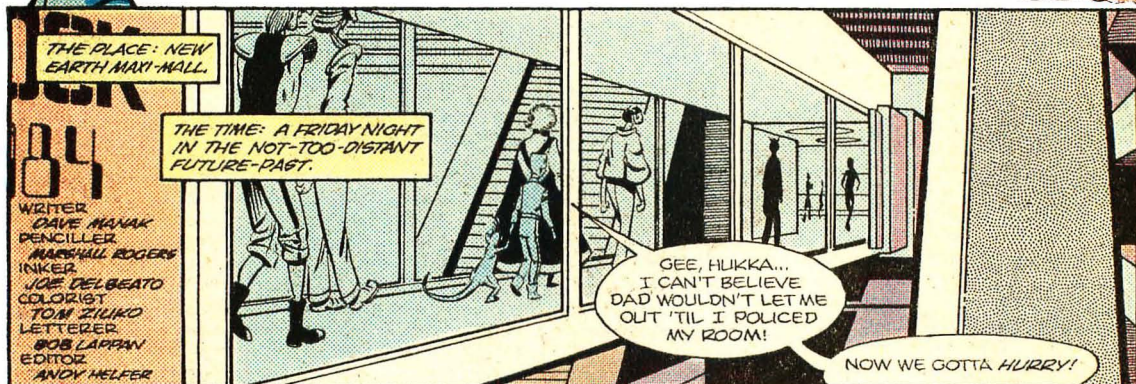
—Andy Helfer



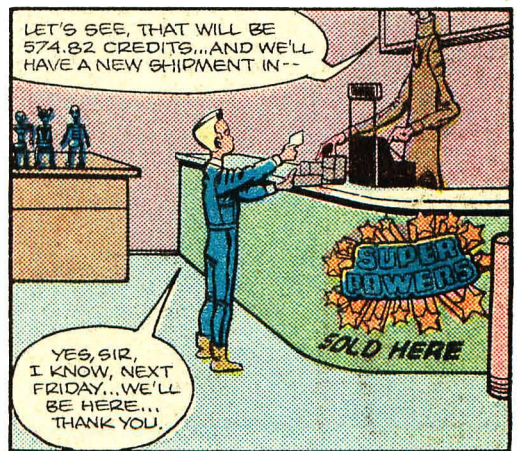
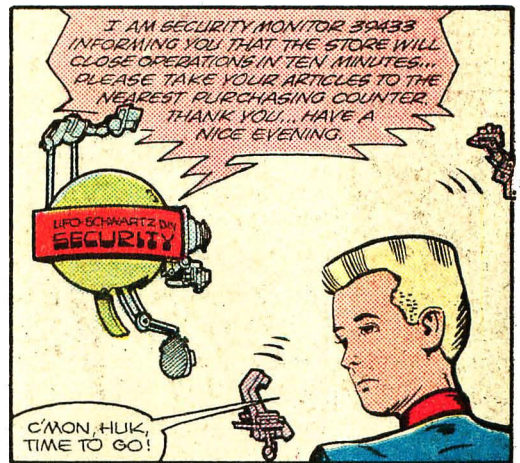
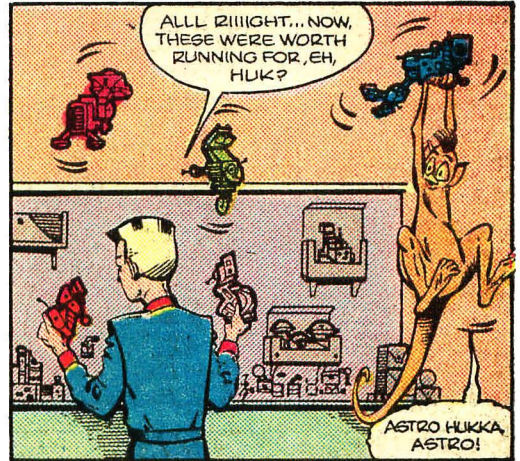
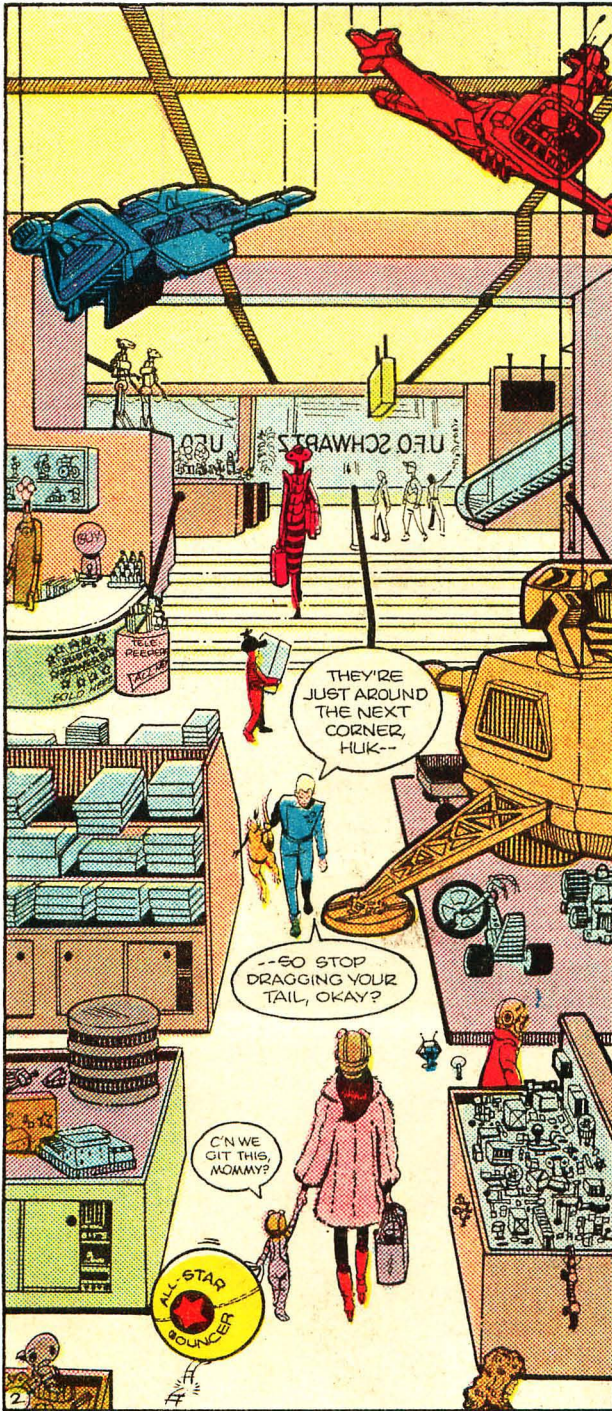




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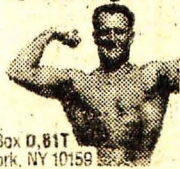
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G U E S T

# MEANWHILE

## BEN ODA REMEMBERED

BY ANDREW HELFER

You probably never thought twice about Ben Oda. He was never interviewed by the fanzines. He was never the guest of honor at a comics convention. Fans never begged him for his autograph. The spotlight never touched him. And there's probably a very good reason for that. Ben Oda was neither writer nor artist nor comic book creator. He was just one of the hundreds of people who put the finishing touches on comics. Ben Oda was, to put it simply, a letterer.

But Ben Oda had a fan club. An exclusive group. We kept its very existence a secret. Instead of calling it "The Ben Oda Fan Club," we called it DC Comics. To us, Ben was not only our favorite comic book letterer; he was also our favorite human being. And when he passed away a few weeks ago, we all became acutely aware of a space in our lives that would never again be filled.

Ben Oda was one of an ever-dwindling group of comic book professionals—the "old timers." He worked on comics in their infancy, through their heyday, and right into the present. In the forties, his distinctive lettering style graced the pages of Jack Kirby's early work. In the fifties, when Harvey Kurtzman needed hand-lettering for his now-famous EC war comics, Ben was the man asked to

do it. He was a letterer for the **Chicago Tribune** and **King Features Syndicate**, regularly turning out pages of **Prince Valiant**, **Little Orphan Annie**, **The Phantom**, and others too numerous to mention. And until mere days before he left us, Ben was also the most prolific letterer working at **DC Comics**.

Those are the facts—they're easy to tell. What's harder to explain is the way Ben touched us all—every day of his life.

Among other letterers, Ben was the acknowledged master—I remember Tom Orzekowski's delight over being introduced to him some years ago; and Bob Lappan literally studied Ben's work with a comprehensiveness that Ben found both flattering and confusing. He never quite understood why anyone would give his work a second glance—as far as he was concerned, his job was simply to make the writer and artist look as good as possible.

And that's exactly what Ben did so well—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, or so it seemed. Ben would come into the DC offices every day at four-thirty in the afternoon (you could set your clock to it) with a staggering number of lettered pages. If you had a book that needed to be lettered overnight, you just gave it to Ben. Truth to tell, we took him for granted. He was the ultimate pinch-hitter, and he got the DC team out of more than one deadline jam. But, like most pinch-hitters, he seldom received the praise he deserved.

And as much as we'd all like to believe otherwise, Ben was no speed demon. He'd work long hours, sit

hunched over his drawing board late into the night, all to meet what he undoubtedly felt was a personal commitment to a friend. Sometimes, in his desire to please and help out, he would push himself too far, and the strain would show. Often, the results were hilarious. Once in a while, Batman might "fight a wart on crime," and Superman might be referred to as "The Man of Seal." We'd laugh together over Ben's occasional blooper, and seldom think about the sleepless nights he'd put in just to get the job finished. Again, we took him for granted.

But when the job was finally done, Ben would sit himself down in one editorial office or another and just shoot the breeze. This was where you really got to know and appreciate Ben. He could talk about practically anything—World War II and his time in the service (he was a paratrooper, a spy, and a part-time baseball player), his memories of comic book pros he'd worked with in the past, his family, the performance of various players on his Monday night bowling team, and the current state of the comic book field. All his stories and opinions were delivered with such a keen sense of humor that you couldn't help but laugh.

But there was more to Ben than just that. When Ben told a story, he became a kind of Japanese Will Rogers, a homespun humorist with a shy smile that could melt ice. Dozens of wrinkles etched into his face, laugh lines mingling with the ones that simply come with age, Ben often seemed like an ancient yet humane sage, always aware of the humor in life, and enjoying every minute of it. You had only to talk to Ben to see that this was true. His eyes would sparkle with life, and in an almost mystical transference, our eyes would sparkle too.

And perhaps, when all is said and done, this was the most wonderful thing about Ben—his uncanny ability to make us smile, to make us laugh, to lift us out of our late-afternoon doldrums with a simple anecdote or tall tale—to simply be Ben. These were his gifts to us, these were the things we took for granted, and these are the things we will miss the most.

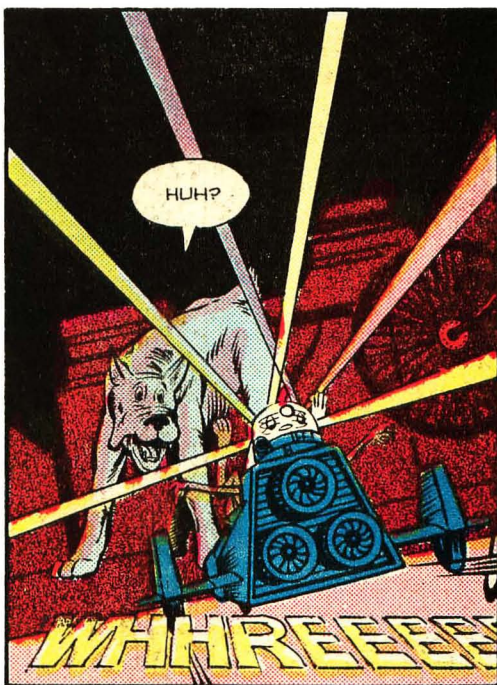
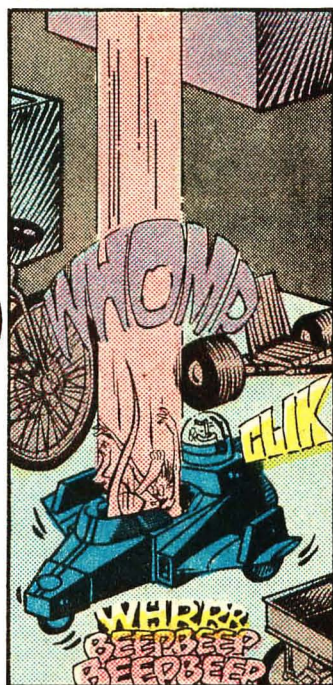


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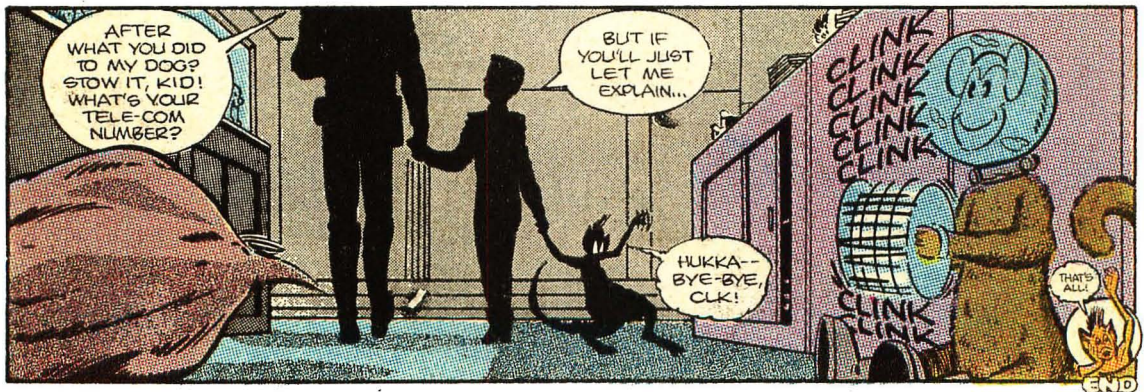
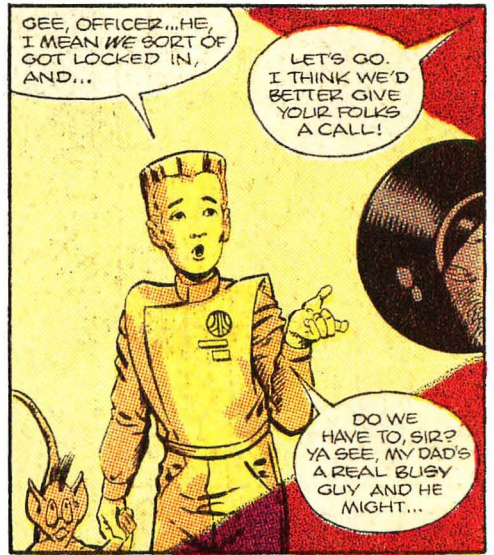
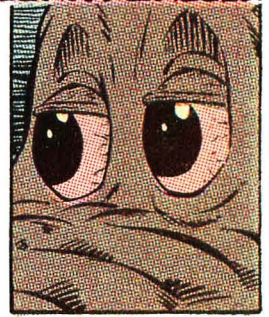
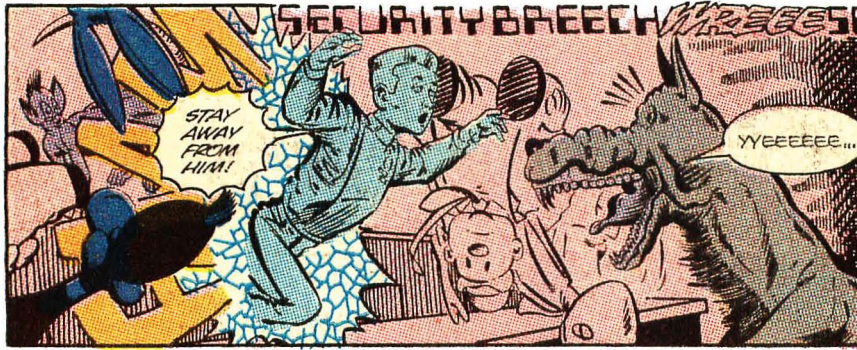
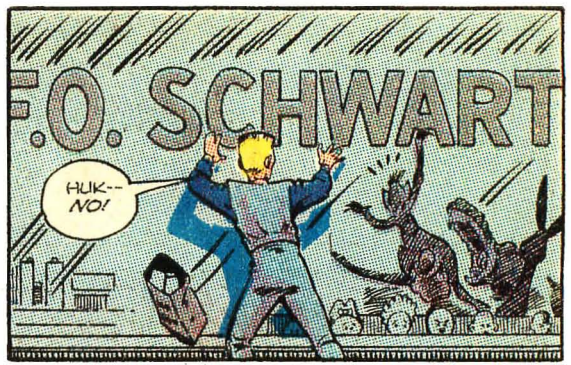
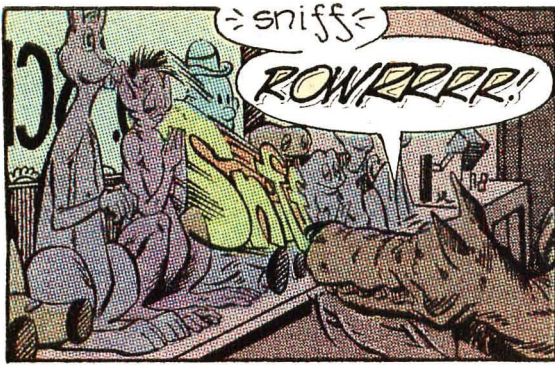














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