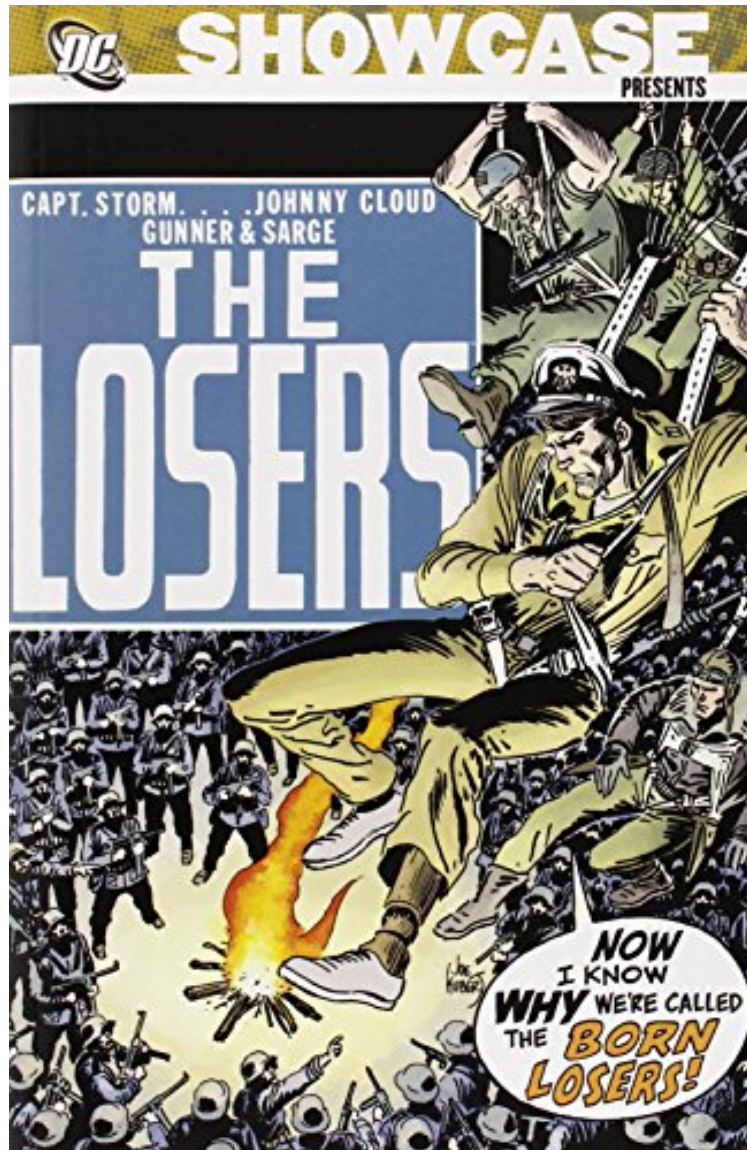


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Robert Kanigher

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#645013 in Books DC Comics 2012-04-17 2012-04-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.10 x 1.21 x 6.60l, 1.15 #File Name: 1401234372456 pages | File size: 37.Mb

Robert Kanigher : Showcase Presents: The Losers Vol. 1 (Showcase Presents Library of Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Showcase Presents: The Losers Vol. 1 (Showcase Presents Library of Classics):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great Piece of Nostalgia.By William R. HancockBeing a "dinosaur"

I grew up on Dell, DC, Gold Key, Marvel, and Charlton comics and these DC Showcase pieces bring back a lot of great memories for me. This volume, *The Losers*, was a title that combined characters from several different DC battle series into a unified story line. The combining didn't really make any logical sense to me at the time---still doesn't---- but, my attitude was always one of "What the heck! It's only a COMIC BOOK!". Originally, DC had a long running series of stories about two marines in the South Pacific, "Gunner" and "Sarge", and their combat adventures against the Japanese (many times against a relentless "Col. Tanaka"). They were frequently aided by a white german shepherd k-9 "troop" called "Pooch" (go figure). Another series in another DC comic was "PT Boat skipper", Captain (Bill) Storm, who lost one of his legs in action and became a prosthetic-legged swabbie---still commanding P.T. boats---who stayed in service rather than being discharged and sent home. Yet another contemporary series involved Capt. Johnny Cloud, the "Navajo Ace", who went to war in the sky as a representative of his people in Arizona and who, as a fighter pilot, traded the four footed Mustang he'd ridden growing up on the reservation for a FLYING "Mustang" (a P-51) with a Rolls Royce Merlin engine. At some point the "powers-that-be" at DC decided to consolidate these characters and created a "special missions" force incorporating them...the so-called "Losers" (the rationale behind this has always escaped me). It must be said, though, that the Losers stories were always entertaining (even if far fetched) and you got some good art in the package with them, especially when the great John Severin became their regular artist. Another DC WWII series---"Big Al, Little Al, Charlie Cigar"---didn't make the Losers cut and finally ended up being REAL losers, LOL!The only thing that always left one scratching one's head in this series had to do with Capt. Storm. In the stories it was always being said that he was "outranked" by Capt. Johnny Cloud, but it was often hard to get a handle on this. Storm was a NAVAL officer and, in the Navy, the term "captain" can be ambiguous. There is a TITLE, "Captain", that is given to any man who commands a maritime vessel; a boat or ship's "captain", either naval or civilian. There is also the Naval RANK of Captain, which falls just below that of ADMIRAL, and is generally equivalent to "bird" Colonel. The sense of the likelihood of Bill Storm's "captaincy" is that it is a command title and his actual rank is that of Lieutenant (J.G.) or Lieutenant. If it is the latter then he is the same rank (O3) as Johnny Cloud. The equivalences are always foggy with DC. Thing is---he KEEPS being identified as CAPTAIN. This gets hinky when the Losers get "seconded" to some Brit MAJOR, who is deemed their "superior officer". Not if Storm IS a captain, he's not. I must ASSUME---always did---that Storm is a Naval LIEUTENANT, equivalent in rank to Cloud, but with just less Time-In-Grade. Confusions apart, the Loser stories are entertaining and great fun for all. And, Oh, that Severin ART!!!!BTW....another DC confusion (and inconsistency) involves the name of the commander of "The Haunted Tank" in another old series reprinted in "Showcase" editions. In the original story---first one or two in the series---he is named SMITH---Jeb Stuart SMITH---after the Civil War confederate cavalry general. However, in short enough order, his SMITH surname gets DROPPED ENTIRELY and from then on he is just Jeb STUART. Whew! Comic books will drive you crazy!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Great Beginning for A War ComicBy Elvin OrtizI enjoyed this collection of war romance stories about DCs legendary Sgt. Rock and Easy Co. This first Showcase edition gives Rock fans the opportunity to enjoy his WWII adventures from the very beginning. Robert Kanigher introduces this valiant and hard-nosed character in G.I. Combat #68, while Bob Haney narrates the first Our Army At War (#81) appearance of (and perhaps creates) Easy Co. It also has the tale of how Rock became a sergeant in 3 Stripes Hill, in Our Army at War #90. These narratives, whether written by Kanigher (who writes most of these stories) or Haney, are quite intense and suspenseful. The first stories focus on Sgt. Rock's sturdiness and stubbornness as a soldier and they rely on a third person narrative (Our Army At War #s81-84). Later on, the story takes on a first person narrative, using Sgt. Rock's own voice, always telling stories of courage, brotherhood, and personal sacrifice, often involving new recruits. Sometimes there are stories of cowardice turned into courage. It is also during this early period where Sgt. Rock establishes the famous motto, "That's the way it is in Easy Company... where nothin' is easy!" Other stories are quite dark: dead men holding there positions (which may have been a stark picture to present to younger audiences) as a lesson of what a true soldier (in this case a true Easy Co. man) would and should do."Sid never lost his position... It's a rule of Easy's... You won't find it written down... But no one's broken it!" ("Calling Easy Co.!" in Our Army at War #87)"Who knows how long the enemy tried to climb the wreckage... Who knows how long Freddy Miller pinned them down... Who knows when they retreated... Who knows when he finally stopped?" ("The Big Star," in Our Army at War #102)Yes, some lessons on heroism from Easy are a little over the top, characterized by Kanigher's hard-boiled surrealism. While other stories show a sense of humor: "Luck of Easy" (#92); "A New Kind of War" (#104); "TNT Birthday" (#105); "Meet Lt. Rock" (#106); "That's An Order" (#110); and "Rock's Battle Family (#115)."Also, inthis first volume Kanigher creates different battle situations and different personal conflicts albeit the typical conclusion of "That's the way it is in Easy, where nothing is Easy." Sgt. Rock's persona also develops during this early stage into a mythical hero: he has a combat antenna that warns him of dangerous situations. Kanigher carries this skill to surrealistic dimensions in the mystical "S.O.S. Sgt. Rock" (#116). In addition, his man to tank and man to plane combats, and his coolness, or rockiness under the worst of circumstances give him the superhuman qualities that will characterize him from here on. We also get to see the introduction to some Easy regulars, such as Ice Cream soldier in a story titled after his nickname in Our Army At War #85; Bulldozer in an exciting and intense "Battle of the Stripes," #95; and Wildman, in a wild and action-packed "Eyes

for A Blind Gunner," #113. And in latter issues, the stories of Easy are occasionally populated by other regulars such as Zac, the bazooka man, Sunny, and Wee Willie, characters which will disappear permanently later on. It is interesting though, that Ice Cream soldier gets kayoed twice, in "Doom over Easy!," #107; and in "The Snafu Squad," #117; only to reappear in later issues after #110 until a second death in #117, the last issue for this volume. We'll see again Ice Cream soldier in action after #118. One thing that I enjoy from these stories is Kanigher's adroit use of metaphors and similes. You got to get a kick out of "Suddenly, a machine opened up on us like a bank that hadn't had a customer in years..." There is also a literary style in his use of repetition to intensify heroism inspired by Rock's own sturdiness: Men who couldn't rise... Rose to their feet... Men who couldn't lift a finger... Lifted rifles... Men who couldn't fight... Fought! ("The Rock!," G.I. Combat #68) Haney's contributions live up to the mood and style established by Kanigher, so that it is hard to tell the difference between the two. Accompanying these great stories is Joe Kubert's hyperbolic, surrealistic, and cinematic style. Men confronting "buzzards" and tanks, men in action, and men under stress and fear. Jerry Grandanetti also does a good job at drawing war material, but my all-time favorite will always be Kubert, whose art pairs well with Kanigher's dramatic, and sometimes, poetic language. He gives Sgt. Rock the features that make him look the rock he is meant to be. Ross Andru, Mike Esposito, Mort Drucker, and Irv Novick are responsible for one issue each among the early stories. Trivia: What was Sgt. Rock's occupation before the war? In which issue does Sgt. Rock panic and runs away from battle? 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Another Great Collection of DC War Comics By Elvin Ortiz A collection of war romances about four "out of luck" soldiers: Johnny Cloud, an Indian and air force pilot, Captain Storm, an ex-PT boat captain, and Gunner and Sarge, two marines. Each of these have lost men that were under their command, and thus, consider himself out of luck. They meet accidentally in Jeb Stuart's Haunted Tank (G.I. Combat #138) and later start their adventures as a team in Our Fighting Forces #123, always accepting missions because they've got nothing to lose. This tome collects their adventures until OFF #150. The stories are written by Robert Kanigher, and although I missed the poetic language from his stories in Sgt. Rock and the Haunted Tank, his creative powers are still at work, mixing humor, romance, and psychological drama with action-packed plots. The team is headquartered in London and they see action in every place affected by WWII, including London under bombardment. They visit France, Norway, the Pacific, India, and even North Africa. Although these stories follow an anti-hero formula, where bad luck pursues them everywhere they go, these four heroes share traits similar to those of Sgt. Rock and the Haunted Tank's crew. They are courageous and they have an indomitable will to accomplish their mission even when they see the odds are against them. In addition, they are loyal to each other. These qualities are highlighted the more when everything seems to turn against them. Although these stories may be formulaic, Kanigher shows he can vary formulas a bit. At times, a Loser may suffer from survivor's guilt. We see this vividly with Johnny Cloud in Ride the Nightmare (January 1971) and with Captain Storm in Half a Man (May 1971). Romance is at the heart of war in Angel's over Hell's Corner (September 1970), where an American pilot falls for an English nurse; The Last Charge (April 1974), where Johnny Cloud marries an Arab woman while fighting in the desert; and A Bullet for a Traitor (June 1974), where Ona's romance with a German soldier and a Norwegian prisoner are part of a secret from the past. Ona, by the way, is a female character created by Kanigher to join the Losers during a mission in Norway in Death Picks a Loser (January 1972). In this issue Captain Storm supposedly dies, and Ona joins the team to compensate for this personal sacrifice. Perhaps, Kanigher wanted to add a more interesting dimension to his team. Perhaps later, he discovers that there isn't a role for her in the Losers and decides to eliminate her without killing her. She appears for the last time in A Bullet for a Traitor, amidst a romantic triangle, being discovered by Gunner after months of disappearance, and Gunner ends up thinking that she may have become a traitor. Was Kanigher going to move forward with this plot? or was this his way of saying good bye to a character who may have added little to the Losers? Kanigher also adopts the strategy of running on his stories beyond one issue, something which he seldom did with Sgt. Rock, and only started doing with The Haunted Tank in the seventies. In the stories following Captain Storm's alleged death in Death Picks a Loser until The Bad Penny (January 1973), the Losers accomplish different missions, but the loss of Captain Storm and the presence of a wild pirate with a wooden leg and an eye patch become the thread that connects these issues together. Of course, when the reader sees this pirate, he or she must be wondering how come the Losers can't figure out who this pirate is. But it is the world of comics. If Superman writers can get away with simple eye glasses, I guess Kanigher enjoys the same right. Another major thread starts with Diamonds are for Never (June 1973) and end in Mark Our Graves (August 1974). In these stories, the Losers are sent to North Africa to accomplish a mission of getting some diamonds that are important to the enemy, but they fail, and instead they get sidetracked over and over, going through a series of adventures in the desert, fighting along a French major in a deserted French garrison (A Flag for Losers-October 1973), a mad English major and former movie actor who has lost his men and now believes that he is living one of his war movies (The Glory Road-February 1974) an Arab tribe (The Last Charge-April 1974), and two survivors from a Jewish brigade (Mark Our Graves-August 1974). Like Ulysses in the Odyssey, the Losers move from one war scenario to the next without any end in sight. These stories are perhaps darker than the earlier ones, but they do not move from the heroic spirit that is at the heart of Kanigher. Most of the stories are illustrated by John Severn (1971-1974) and Ross Andru (March 1970-May 1971). Russ Heath is responsible for the Haunted Tank issue and Ken Barr

for the first Losers adventure. Each illustrator is commended for their realistic drawings of characters and war scenarios. As usual, Kubert draws the covers always with a sense of irony that makes us want to move on into the story. If you like war stories don't miss this one.

"Originally published in single magazine form in G.I. combat 138, Our fighting forces, 123-150."

About the Author Robert Kanigher worked on The Justice Society of America, Hawkman, Green Lantern, he created Black Canary, Rose and Thorn and The Harlequin, and more! Joe Kubert has produced countless stories for countless characters including Hawkman, Tarzan, Enemy Ace, Batman and The Flash. He also edited, wrote and illustrated Sgt. Rock for thirty years.