

*Was Superman a*  
**SPY?**

**BRIAN CRONIN**



A PLUME BOOK



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## *Was Superman a SPY?*



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PLUME

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*For my grandfather, Bernard Flynn*

*“Knowledge is the food of the soul.”*

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*—PLATO*

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## *Introduction*

A musingly enough, it all began with falling for an urban legend myself. A few years ago, I wrote on my comic blog, *Comics Should Be Good!* about comic writer-artist Walter Simonson's run on the comic book title *Fantastic Four* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I made a comment regarding Simonson's distaste for the ways some writers had handled the *Fantastic Four*'s most famous villain Doctor Doom, over the years. Simonson had written a story that could explain away many of the appearances as having been made by impostors. I had read more than once that Simonson privately kept a list of the character's appearances that he specifically felt should be ignored. Well, sometime after my comments were published, I received an e-mail from—who else?—Walter Simonson!

Simonson kindly pointed out that he had never made any such list but that he repeatedly had heard people refer to the supposed list! Simonson specifically noted how bemused he was at the fact that he himself was the subject of an “urban legend.” While chagrined over my error, it occurred to me that there were plenty of comic-book-related stories out there that have been passed around for years without being checked out, so I decided it would be a great idea to either confirm or debunk them. In June 2005 I began a weekly column on the topic.

Three years and over 500 urban legends later, here we are with a collection of 130 comic book stories—65 of my favorite legends from the column plus 65 brand-new legends! Some of them are false and some of them are true, but all of them demonstrate the fascinating history of comic books.

In an effort to make it easier to find the legend you're looking for, I've split them into three parts: one for legends related to DC Comics, one for those related to Marvel Comics, and one for legends related to all the other great comic book companies out there.

I had a lot of fun compiling these stories, and I hope you have a lot of fun reading them!

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## *Part One*

# **DC COMICS**

DC Comics began in 1937 as a deal between pulp magazine publisher Harry Donenfeld and comic book publisher Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, who needed Donenfeld's financing to publish his latest project, *Detective Comics #1* (hence the DC part of DC Comics). Donenfeld owned DC Comics and had a partnership with Wheeler-Nicholson's original comic book company, National Allied Publications, as well as with Max Gaines's All-American Publications. (Another early comic innovator, Gaines may have been the very first person to actually think of charging for comic books—the earliest comic books were designed as promotional giveaways.)

All three companies published together under a loose partnership, calling themselves National Comics. Donenfeld soon bought out Wheeler-Nicholson, and in 1944 he bought out All-American Publications as well. By this time, while officially going by the name National Publications, the company was known colloquially as DC Comics, and DC is what appeared on the logos of the books. The company would not take the name officially, though, until the late 1970s.

Donenfeld and his former accountant Jack Liebowitz ran the company (though Donenfeld's son Irwin Donenfeld, eventually took over for his father) until, in 1967, it was purchased by Kinne National Services, which quickly changed its name to Warner Bros. after it acquired the famed Warner Bros. movie studio as well. DC Comics is currently a subsidiary of Warner Bros. Entertainment, which has turned a number of its comic book properties into films and television series.

## SUPERMAN

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two teenagers from Cleveland, had pitched their idea for a comic strip called *Superman* to a number of different comic strip distributors, but to no avail. Their story about an alien who came to Earth from a dying world and (while secretly pretending to be a meek newspaper reporter) became a hero thanks to the extraordinary powers he possessed did not seem to have a place on the market at the time. However, in 1938 National Publications was starting a new, ongoing comic book anthology called *Action Comics*, and they were desperate for features. An editor-acquaintance recalls rejecting the comic strip pitch and recommending *Superman* to National. After some changes were made (Siegel and Shuster had to turn their comic strip samples into a thirteen-page comic book story, which required some cutting and pasting), “Superman” was ready to be the lead feature in *Action Comics* #1, and the comic book industry was never the same again.

*Superman* was soon one of the highest-selling publications in the whole country, selling over a million copies a month, and in no time every comic book company was rushing to put out its own superhero comic book. Siegel and Shuster went from being a pair of unknown teens trying to break into the comics industry to being two of the most famous creators in the United States. Eventually, though, they began to resent the fact that they had sold the rights to their character for only \$130,000 while *Superman* was making National Comics millions of dollars. In 1947 the pair sued National, to recoup their rights to *Superman*, and lost. They were fired from the comic and had their “created by” credit stricken from the books. It was not until the late 1970s, due to public outcry over their treatment during the publicity leading to the release of *Superman: The Movie*, that Siegel and Shuster were given a stipend for the rest of their lives (originally around \$35,000 and believed to be more later on) medical benefits, and a “created by” credit from that point forward.

By the time the film was released, Superman had already become an American institution, with comic books, movie serials (both animated and live action), a popular radio series, and a popular television series (not to mention as many licensed products as you could imagine). The film, though, brought a brand-new wave of popularity and went on to spawn three sequels during the 1980s and a relaunch of the film franchise in 2006.

When Siegel and Shuster sold the rights to Superman in 1939, copyrights lasted for only fifty-six years (an initial twenty-eight-year period followed by a twenty-eight-year renewal period). In 1976 the United States Congress passed a new copyright act, which extended the protection period from fifty-six to seventy-five years. In part, the act allowed people (or their heirs) who sold their copyrights to cancel the transfer of their copyright and get it back for the additional nineteen years, under the theory that when they sold the copyright it was only for fifty-six years, so it would be unfair for the buyer to gain the benefit of those extra nineteen years.

Just recently, the heirs of Jerry Siegel (Joe Shuster had no heirs) successfully regained their half of the Superman copyright, giving them one-half of the Superman copyright in the United States.

(retroactive to 1999). However, in 1998 another new copyright act was passed, this time extending the copyright-protection period from seventy-five to ninety years. This time around, not only can heirs cancel the transfer, but also the estates of the original copyright holders. Therefore, the estate of Joe Shuster will be able to regain his half of the Superman copyright in 2013 (seventy-five years after the publication of *Action Comics* #1) for the extra fifteen years of copyright protection, meaning DC might very well lose the copyright to Superman in only a few short years.

AS YOU MIGHT imagine, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, as two Jewish men from Cleveland, were not fans of the Nazis during World War II, so I am sure they took great pleasure in the offer they received from *Look* magazine in early 1940. *Look* wanted the pair to draw a short story demonstrating how Superman would handle the war in Europe, which was still almost two years away from direct involvement involving the United States.

Their story involves Superman getting fed up with the war, so he flies over to Europe, smacks around the German troops for a little bit, then flies into Hitler's bunker and captures Hitler. Superman then makes a stopover in the Soviet Union, to capture Stalin as well. He then flies the two men to Geneva, for a war-crimes trial before the League of Nations, where both Hitler and Stalin are found guilty of "modern history's greatest crime—unprovoked aggression against defenseless nations." It is particularly interesting to note just how Stalin was viewed at the time, as presumably Siegel's take on Stalin would not be much different from the average American's prior to the uneasy alliance struck up by President Roosevelt and Stalin later in World War II.

While you might imagine that Nazi Germany would not be a fan of this story, you would probably also think that a two-page comic book story would not draw much attention, but surprisingly Siegel and Shuster's tale drew a response from none other than *Das Schwarze Korps*, the official newspaper of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (also known as the SS—Hitler's elite military force), a month after the story appeared. In the piece, the author decries the story and *Superman* in general (while, interestingly enough, showing a certain amount of admiration for the comic's sheer novelty) as an example of American aggression and for stressing brawn over brains—particularly the simplicity of Superman kidnapping two world leaders and dropping them off at the League of Nations. He further explains how Siegel uses the character to undermine the minds of the youth of America (naturally, there are also more than a few unkind epithets directed toward the Jewish Siegel) by feeding them hate, suspicion, evil, and criminality rather than courage and justice. It's fascinating to see the Nazi propaganda machine so concerned with something as simple as a short superhero story.



**DURING THE WAR**, the covers of the *Superman* comics prominently displayed advertisements urging the purchase of war bonds and radiated overall pride in the troops “over there,” but the comic inside rarely dealt with the war—mostly, I suppose, because of the sheer disjunction of having superpowerful hero interacting in an all-too-real war. A few stories here and there attempted to explain why Superman was not fighting on the European battlefield, but for the most part, it was simply ignored until, toward the very end of the war, Clark Kent began serving as a war correspondent on a Naval vessel, the *USS Davey Jones*.

Jerry Siegel, though, who was drafted in early 1943, managed to get one dramatic war story into the *Superman* comic strip before departing (drawn by Joe Shuster and a team of assistants because of Shuster’s increasingly deteriorating vision, which had kept him from being drafted for military service). And what a story it was! In the monthlong tale, readers marveled as Superman invaded Nazi Germany to rescue no less of a figure than Santa Claus!

The story opens with three leaders of the Axis—German führer Adolf Hitler, Italian premier Benito Mussolini, and Japanese general Hideki Tōjō—gathered together as Germany’s head propagandist Joseph Goebbels, delivers a message to the people of the world: Santa Claus has been captured by



Nazi forces! The readers see the devastation that the news brings all over the world, but they also see Superman quickly make the decision to rescue Santa, even if it means invading Germany.

Along the way, Superman saves the lives of some French resistance fighters, and they aid him in his mission. During his time as a prisoner, Santa Claus gets in a number of speeches explaining how evil the Axis powers are.



Eventually, Superman rescues Santa Claus and gets him back to the North Pole just in time to help him deliver toys around the world (including an empty gift box for Hitler).

**ALMOST SIXTY YEARS** later there was another Superman story involving the Nazis, only it went over a bit less successfully. In 1998, in celebration of Superman's sixtieth anniversary, each of the four monthly Superman titles spent a few months telling stories set during different points in Superman's history. For instance, one title told a story that evoked the Superman stories of the 1960s and another told a story that evoked the stories from the 1970s. In the pages of *Superman: The Man of Steel*, the longtime creative partnership of writer Louise Simonson and cowriter/artist Jon Bogdanove unfurled a story set in the 1940s, at the time of the Holocaust.

Bogdanove expertly re-created the style that Joe Shuster used in drawing *Superman* at the time, and the story made clever use of comparing Superman to the traditional Jewish figure of the mystical superstrong golem, specifically the classic piece of Jewish folklore about Rabbi Judah Loew creating a golem to defend the Prague ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks during the sixteenth century. In the story, Clark Kent is sent to Europe to expose the horrors that were being inflicted by the Nazis. Which

undercover as a resident of the ghetto, Superman ends up protecting the denizens in much the same way that the famous golem did in the sixteenth century. The story is told with quite a few graphic depictions of the conditions in the ghetto and the savagery of the Nazis. However, many people were put off by the fact that DC Comics made a specific point of telling the whole story without using the words *Jew* or *Holocaust*.

When the story became a bit of an issue (even making it onto the *Howard Stern* morning radio show), the editor of the title, Joey Cavalieri, explained his decision to specifically excise the words in question (together with the word *Catholic*) in an attempt to *avoid* offending anyone. He felt that young readers might end up using the insults the Nazis in the comic hurl at Jewish children and that a comic designed to speak of tolerance shouldn't give more fodder to intolerances. Thus Cavalieri chose to make readers search a bit for the identity of the people that the Nazis were persecuting. Such phrases as the "target population of the Nazis' hate" and the "murdered residents" were used, although a great deal of Yiddish was used as well, so it was not exactly a mystery—just not evident to children unfamiliar with the history of the Holocaust.

DC issued a public apology for the incident, which was accepted by the head of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League.



THESE WERE NOT the only times that DC Comics found the content of its *Superman* comics close examined by outside forces. In fact, during the 1940s a number of Superman stories drew reactions from the United States Department of War that might lead one to ask the question, "Is Superman a spy?"

The first two instances came from issues of *Superman* that the U.S. government (which kept a watchful eye on popular publications of the time) quietly asked DC to hold off from publishing. The first, "The Battle of the Atoms," was written by Don Cameron, Jerry Siegel's successor as writer of the *Superman* comic when Siegel went to war. In it, Lex Luthor attacks Superman with what Luthor calls "an atomic bomb." It holds no resemblance to an actual atomic bomb, but the government felt it would be better to avoid any mention of the term *atomic bomb* until it was made public that the government was developing one, so the story was delayed for a couple of years.

The second, "Crime Paradise," was written by a writer whose name has been lost to history (credits at the time were nonexistent, but it was most likely Cameron, Alvin Schwartz, or perhaps even Siegel).

after he returned from the service). "Crime Paradise" was written after the atom bomb became public and was about Superman filming an atom bomb detonation for the army. The comic was again delayed for a year or so, most likely because the government preferred not to have the atom bomb featured in this manner so soon after its use in World War II.

The most notable example, though, was Alvin Schwartz's *Superman* comic strip, which led to the U.S. War Department filing official reports on its attempts to keep Schwartz's story quiet. Schwartz was a young, well-read author who worked in comics for a number of years. He joined Cameron on the comic books but was also the successor to Siegel on the *Superman* comic strip. In 1945 DC Comics was contacted by the War Department over a story Schwartz was developing in the strip that involved a cyclotron (also called an atom smasher), which was what physicists used throughout the 1940s to develop the very first nuclear power plants in America. During that period, all nuclear research was kept under strict government control because of fears that it would lead to other countries developing nuclear weapons. Any possible leaks were cause for concern, so when Schwartz wrote a story involving one of the key tools in current nuclear research, the government sprang into action.

The FBI first approached Siegel in the army, thinking that he was still writing the comic (his byline was still on the strip). When he explained that he was no longer working on the strip, the War Department went directly to DC Comics to ask them to censor the strip, which they did. Later on, the agent assigned to the case, Lt. Col. John Lansdale Jr., explained in a memo his twofold reasons for getting involved with the *Superman* strip. The first, as mentioned above, was fear of a leak, even from a comic strip. The second, and more prominent, reason, though, was that nuclear energy was soon to become an important part of American power, and the government wanted its citizens to take the mechanics of it seriously. They felt this would be undermined if they were appearing as part of *Superman* comics.

Amusingly enough, Alvin Schwartz was informed of the situation when a number of newspapers featured the story after the war (no one told him about the controversy at the time) and revealed where he got his information about the cyclotron: an article he had read in *Popular Mechanics* a decade earlier!

**THE NAZIS WERE** not the only real-life bad guys that Superman found himself dealing with back in the 1940s. In a memorable story line from the Superman radio series, Superman went head-to-head with the Ku Klux Klan!

The story was the brainchild of the author Stetson Kennedy, who spent a good amount of time after World War II infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan, along with a network of other undercover agents, all working together to get as much information on the secretive racist organization as possible. Kennedy's theory was that if he was to pierce the cloak of secrecy the Klan surrounded its activities with, then the Klan would lose a great deal of its power.

As a means of achieving this goal, Kennedy contacted the popular Superman radio show, *The Adventures of Superman*, which starred Bud Collyer as Superman (and Clark Kent, naturally), and suggested that they do a series on the Klan, with Kennedy providing information he collected (either in person or through one of his operatives) to make the story more realistic. The show agreed, and

June of 1946 began the story line “The Clan of the Fiery Cross,” in which Superman encounters the evil Clan of the Fiery Cross (standing in for the Ku Klux Klan). The story used a number of actual passwords from the Georgia branch of the Klan (which was headed by former Imperial Wizard D. Samuel Green), though perhaps less secret information was passed on than listeners might recall. The story was spread out over sixteen parts, so the secret information was similarly divvied out. Still, secret Klan information was distributed to the radio audience of the Superman radio show.

That much is undisputed, but what is disputed is exactly what effect the show’s story line had upon the Klan or America’s view of the Klan. There have been stories told of the Klan attempting to organize a boycott of the radio show on Georgia radio affiliates, but there has been no real proof of any such boycott attempt, and if there was one, it was not successful, since the show continued to be broadcast normally in Georgia. In addition, the story line has been repeatedly credited with spurring a decrease in Klan enrollment, which seems to be a difficult statement to prove, since the Klan did not exactly take a precise census of its membership. Even if there was a decrease, there is yet to be any proof that the decline was related to the Superman series (Klan membership had been dropping steadily since the 1930s).

**A PLACE WHERE** the Superman radio show did have an undisputed impact was on the Superman mythos as a whole. *The Adventures of Superman* had its radio debut in early 1940, less than two years after the creation of the *Superman* comic book. The show lasted an impressive eleven years, finally coming to an end in March 1951. Until the late 1940s, when it expanded to a thrice-weekly half-hour show, it ran in syndication three to five times a week, in fifteen-minute installments usually airing in the late afternoon or early evening. In an attempt to maintain the illusion that Superman actually appeared on the program, his portrayer, actor Bud Collyer, went un-credited for the first six years of the show’s run.

Due to the fact that there were only two years’ worth of stories to adapt from the comic book, the radio show quickly ran out of stories and was forced to create some of its own. And the radio show was not always consistent with the comics. In fact, in the second episode the radio show came up with its own origin story that was drastically different from the one in the comics, but this story, which involved Superman coming to Earth as an adult and befriending a professor who helped him take the identity of a reporter named Clark Kent so as to study Earth, did not catch on with the public.



Superman star Bud Collyer reading about the man he portrays on air.

The radio show had better luck with the characters it introduced. If the comic did not have a character it needed, and often even if it did, the radio program just created a new one. A number of these new characters, like Superman's police contact Inspector Henderson, became so popular that they were quickly adapted for use in the comic books. The most notable new additions were Clark Kent's coworkers at the *Daily Planet* (in fact, the radio show came up with the name *Daily Planet*—the comic called it the *Daily Star* in the original stories), specifically editor Perry White and cub reporter Jimmy Olsen. Olsen, in particular, was so popular that he had his own spin-off comic that lasted for over a decade, *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*.

One of the radio show's strangest additions to the Superman mythos was the introduction of Kryptonite, the pieces of Superman's home planet Krypton that came to Earth in the explosion that destroyed said planet. The small fragments are radioactive and are highly deadly to Superman. The radio show came up with the idea of Kryptonite because of a format constraint. Since it was a weekly program, the writers needed gimmicks to give Collyer opportunities to take vacations. In the episode with Kryptonite, Superman is deathly ill, so another actor could simply make moaning noises to fill in for Collyer. Kryptonite was soon added to the Superman comics, and over the years many different varieties of Kryptonite have popped up, each one having a different effect on Superman (the most popular varieties are green, which hurts Superman, and red, which causes different unpredictable transformations, like turning him into a dragon or a giant).

**WHILE KRYPTONITE MADE** its first appearance in the Superman radio show, it could have been

in the comics first if it had been up to Jerry Siegel. He wrote a script in 1940 that would have dramatically shifted the Superman mythos but instead ended up dramatically shifting the creative dynamic between him and DC Comics.

“The K-Metal from Krypton,” written by Siegel and drawn by Joe Shuster’s studio, was most likely originally intended to appear in 1940 in *Superman* #8. In this tale, Siegel introduced K-Metal, a meteor made up of pieces from the exploded Krypton that was passing close to Earth. As it passed by, Superman felt weak and lost his powers. After hearing a scientist explain where the meteor came from, Superman realized for the first time that he was from the planet Krypton (this was not revealed to Superman in the comics for a number of years). Later, while investigating some crooked mine with gangster connections, Clark Kent and reporter/love interest Lois Lane are trapped inside a mine shaft with a group of gangsters, slowly losing oxygen. While there, though, the meteor travels far enough from Earth for its radiation to cease affecting Superman. With his strength returned, he must make a choice—with the group trapped in a small space, there would be no way he could save them without revealing his secret identity.

Ultimately, he decides that their lives are more important than his secret, and so he rescues them all. The gangsters, upon being freed, take the opportunity to attack Superman and Lois, and the end result is an avalanche that kills everyone except Superman and Lois. With the knowledge of his secret identity, a beaming Lois quickly agrees to become Superman’s partner, helping him to maintain his secret identity. After some time to reflect, though, her disposition changes: she realizes that Superman/Clark has played her for a fool for years. Still, she agrees to act as his partner, but only for the good of mankind, not because of any personal feelings for him.

The script was drawn and ready for publication when DC editorial coordinator Whitney Ellsworth decided to pull the story (see page 37, where Ellsworth makes a similarly important editorial decision). No specific reason was ever given, but one would think that the dramatic change in the Superman-Lois relationship was the deciding factor. Ellsworth was also the DC liaison to the Superman radio show, so it would not be surprising to learn that he passed on the unpublished Kryptonite idea to the show’s writers (although this has never been established). With this decision, it became clear for the first time in the history of the young strip that the destiny of the characters would not be controlled by Superman’s creators but by DC Comics.

The story was lost until, almost fifty years later, a DC employee, Mark Waid (who would later go on to become a popular writer for DC), discovered a faded, dusty copy of Siegel’s scripts in a box in the back of DC’s library archives. While DC has decided not to publish the script, at least fans now have access to the original story. In fact, there is a Web site (<http://k-metal.cc>) where a group of artists illustrate Siegel’s script.

Interestingly enough, in the 1990s DC ended up doing what it would not let Siegel do in 1940: allow Superman to reveal his secret identity to Lois Lane and let the pair eventually become husband and wife.

**IN THE 1980S**, DC rebooted *Superman*. It brought in a new writer-artist, John Byrne, and gave him the freedom to revamp the entire line of Superman comics. Byrne ended up keeping about 90 percent

of the elements of the comic before the reboot, changing only relatively minor aspects of the character. One of the changes was that Clark Kent was given a bit of a makeover and depicted as more of an attractive character in his own right. Indicative of this change in his characterization, the writers that followed Byrne eventually had Lois Lane date Clark Kent. The two became a steady couple, and finally in 1990 Clark proposed to Lois and she accepted! Soon after the engagement was announced, the next big shock came when Clark revealed his secret identity to Lois.

In 1991 the creative teams and editorial staff of the Superman titles (at that point consisting of four different titles) got together to plan the next step in the Superman mythos, which at the time was thought to include the marriage of Clark Kent and Lois Lane. The proposal took place in *Superman (Vol. 2) #50*, so the plan was to have the wedding take place in #75, in late 1992. However, a bit of a snag came from outside DC Comics editorial.



As noted earlier, DC Comics is a subsidiary of Warner Bros. Entertainment, and at the time Warner Bros. was planning a new Superman TV series. It was to focus more on Lois Lane (early possible titles included *Lois Lane's Daily Planet*), and by 1991 the name had changed to *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*.

While the series was not scheduled to start until 1993, Warner Bros. felt that the comics should begin taking the television series into consideration before its debut. Since the new series would be very much based on the emerging relationship between Lois and Clark in the comics (which differed from the classic stories where Lois has no interest in Clark as she pines for Superman), it was felt that eventually the characters would get married on the television series, so the comics should hold off until the show got to that point.

With the marriage story taken off the table, the Superman comic creators came up with a crazy idea that ended up being one of the highest-selling comic book stories of all time: instead of marrying Superman off, they would kill him off! "The Death of Superman," in late 1992, caught the public's attention in ways no one could have imagined, and the end result was booming sales for the Superman titles, with total sales in the millions and more media coverage than DC could have possibly expected.

(especially considering that the death had been announced in advertising months earlier).

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Eventually, of course, Superman returned from the dead, and Lois and Clark were back together. However, since their relationship could not end in marriage until the television series (which was doing quite well in the ratings with them being single) got to that point, the writers decided to have Lois and Clark break up in the comics. This happened in early 1996. However, after seeing the ratings for *Lois & Clark* go down, the producers and ABC quickly decided to have Lois and Clark marry early in the 1996-7 season, well ahead of schedule, in hopes of saving the show. So now, with very little notice, the comics had to get Lois and Clark back together and marry them all within a month (see pages 112-14 for a similar problem at Marvel). The marriage, sadly, did not end well for the TV series, which was canceled at the end of the 1996-7 season.

**THE SUPERMAN COMICS** often had to deal with the fact that adaptations of the character in other media were not always going to be particularly faithful, although occasionally, as with some of the characters created for the radio show, the changes were good enough to be incorporated back into the comics themselves. One such change came about, not as a well-thought-out addition to the mythology, but as a simple attempt at saving money.

Fleischer Studios was an animation house run by two brothers, Max and Dave Fleischer. At the height of its popularity, it was the number one competitor to Walt Disney's cartoons. Before it began working with the Superman character, Fleischer Studios' most notable characters were Betty Boop and Popeye, who both starred in popular theatrical shorts throughout the 1940s. However, the animation world changed dramatically in 1939 with the release of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. This high-quality, full-length color movie revolutionized the marketplace for animated theatrical films. Fleischer Studios felt that it needed to respond, so it began hiring more animators and producing full-length features too. These longer films came with larger costs, which were hard for the small studio to bear. Soon Fleischer Studios began looking for ways to cut costs wherever it could.

Even though, to achieve the same high-quality look as the Disney films, Fleischer's 1941 series *Superman* shorts marked the company's highest budget up to that point (about fifty thousand dollars), it was still important to cut corners wherever possible. One such corner was Superman's method of



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