

STATEMENT BY - RUTH H. FOSTER (wife of Frank D. Foster II)

Re: Preparation of drawing and coining the name of "BATMAN"

I met Frank in 1927 while he was studying art at Designer's Art School in Boston. We were married on July 15, 1932, the year after finishing his studies. It was most likely that the original drawings of "BATMAN" were executed during the latter part of his attendance at Art Schools (1930-1931) as I know they were done before our marriage. I am sure his acquaintance with Al Capp was instrumental in his endeavor to create a comic strip character. At the same time he was also drawing cartoons which he tried to sell in New York to various publications without success. This was the year before we were married. All of his drawings were put aside from 1932 to September 1937, during which time all of his efforts were made in trying to earn a living in the painting and decorating business to support me and our son (Frank D. Foster III) who was born on December 25, 1935. His business failed, and in September 1937 we moved to New York City where he had some periodical work in his brother's painting and decorating business. The following three years from September 1937 to October 1940 were financially grim years (the Depression at its worst - particularly for an unknown free-lance artist) from October 1938 to October 1940 we lived on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. It was during this period that Frank had some mural work at the World's Fair on Long Island. Julian Marson who was a good friend of ours was instrumental in Frank doing this work for the City of Jamaica, L. I. Julian was then Art Director for Abraham-Straus Department Store in Brooklyn.

I feel sure it was in 1939 that Julian Marson gave Frank the name of Munsey Publications to submit his drawings of "Batman" and another set of drawings of "The Raven". The reason I feel positive of this time is that Frank got employment at the Mellon Art Gallery then under construction in Washington, D. C. (Now the National Gallery of Art). He went to Washington in the early Spring of 1940. My son Frank and I moved to Washington to join him in September, 1940.

I clearly remember Frank taking his drawings of "Batman" and "The Raven" to a publisher or agency, but I truthfully don't remember the name of such firm. However, I do remember that they gave him a few days work executing some drawings (which was more than welcome to us at the time), and that they kept his drawings while he was there. When he left Munsey, they told him they couldn't use "Batman" or "The Raven" drawings and so they were filed away in "dead storage" so to speak. Imagine our surprise when a few months later we noticed a "BATMAN" comic strip published. We discussed the possibility of doing something about it, but with literally no money or "know-how" and not knowing any legal authority, it seemed to be an impossible project. It was during this period that he was offered work in Washington and with the prospect of finally earning a small regular income, the whole matter of comics was forgotten. We have referred to these incidents many times during the past 35 years between ourselves and to some of our relatives and friends, but no physical action was ever taken.

I am writing to Arthur Wolfrum and Howard Shooshan, former friends and art students in Boston, at the same time Frank was studying art. They may recall the original drawings of "Batman"

I am writing to Bradford, Byron and Peter Macdonald, (3 brothers and long-time friends who lived in the same apartment house as we did on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village.) As a matter of possible interest, Frank named two characters "Pete" and "Nancy" in his endeavor to create the comic strip "THE RAVEN". At that time Peter Macdonald had a girl friend by the name of Nancy. Maybe one and possibly all three brothers will remember the "BATMAN" episode as I am sure there was much conversation about it during that period.

I am writing to Julian Marson, now retired in Phoenicia, N. Y. He may recollect the incidents referred to on Page 1.

Frank located a book entitled "COMIX" - A History of Comic Books in America, by Les Daniels, published by Bonanza Books, New York. On page 12 (lower left column and top right column) I quote "A similar status was enjoyed by Bob Kane, who received all the credit for "Batman", a feature which was to become D.C.'s (Detective Comics) second giant, and to establish the company as the leader in the field. Working with writer Bill Finger, and soon to be joined by artist Jerry Robinson, Kane created the Caped Crusader Comics bowed in spring 1940, following Superman Comics (summer 1939). Here at last were two original characters good enough to carry their own comic book titles. "Batman" immediately distinguished himself from his alien predecessor and his host of imitators by being more mortal, with no fantastic powers at all." etc.....

The coincidence of dates of my estimated time that Frank submitted his "Batman" drawings to Munsey in 1939, and the fact that the BATMAN COMIC STRIP was first published in the Spring of 1940, seems very indicative that someone along the way used Frank's original drawings for this strip.

May 12th, 1975

(Signed)

Ruth H. Foster