

LOGLINE: Geeks & Gangsters is a film about Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two geeks from Cleveland, and the gangsters who stole their greatest creation: Superman.

“[Jerry Siegel] and [Joe Shuster] created a piece of American mythology. It was my privilege to be the onscreen custodian of the character in the `70s and `80s. There will be many interpretations of Superman, but the original character created by two teenagers in the `30s will last forever.” - Christopher Reeve

ACT ONE

Setting: Martin Printing Company. Lower Manhattan. 1931.

Notorious gangster FRANK COSTELLO is sitting in an office belonging to his best friend, publisher HARRY DONENFELD. HARRY has just introduced FRANK to JACK LIEBOWITZ, his new accountant and business manager. HARRY has been allowing Costello to smuggle alcohol over the Canadian border in trucks carrying his printer paper. However, with the end of Prohibition looming on the horizon, bootlegging will no longer be economically viable. Gangsters did not see publishing as anything more than a cover for their criminal enterprises. HARRY, on the other hand, needed to think fast if he wanted to continue earning for Costello and his associates. He began producing pulp magazines featuring their two favorite activities: sex and violence.

The date is June 2nd, 1932. In Glenville, Ohio, JERRY's father, MICHEL SIEGEL is a tailor and the owner of a second-hand clothing shop. A sturdy white-haired man with a perpetual frown, he sits behind the counter reading the newspaper. His sole customer, a thin black man, is looking over some loose shirts and ties, when the front door opens and three suspicious looking men enter the store and begin browsing. MICHEL steps out to assist them, when a sudden flurry of motion occurs. One of the men has grabbed an expensive suit and bolted for the door, only to be stopped by the burly old shop owner. A struggle ensues, MICHEL drops to the ground, and the men disappear into the night.

A phone rings at the Siegel home, JERRY awakes to the sound of his mother screaming. The sci-fi rag he was reading before falling asleep hits the floor as he springs from the bed and rushes downstairs. His mother cries out: *Jerome! Jerome!*. JERRY holds his mother tightly as they both slide to the ground in grief.

At the hospital, a man identifies himself as a reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and begins questioning JERRY's mother. She is distraught and not making much sense, though he is still clearly scribbling away on his notepad. At the same time, a police

officer is speaking to JERRY, also with no clear answers regarding his father's death. Despite uncertainty regarding the cause of Michel Siegel's death, the reporter jots down the word 'murder'. JERRY never learns the truth.

Day breaks in Glenville, a family-oriented neighborhood on the outskirts of Cleveland, Ohio. It's no Smallville, but its residents are just as friendly. Shortly thereafter, a bell rings at Glenville High. JERRY and JOE are about to meet for the first time, outside the principal's office. JOE, a scrawny runt wearing extra thick glasses, is holding a bloody handkerchief over his nose. With his other hand, he is drawing a sketch of Tarzan in a notebook. JERRY can't help but lean over to take a glance. Like the generations of fanboys they would inspire, the two boys geek out over their love of fantasy and science-fiction. JERRY is going on about Edgar Rice Burroughs and JOE is trying to steer the conversation towards Charles Atlas and his "muscle man" ads, when the principal steps out and calls JERRY in.

The principal tosses a bunch of raggedy pulp magazines on his desk and begins to lecture JERRY when a woman with a thick Lithuanian accent can be heard bursting into the main office outside the door. The principal's assistant has no luck trying to stop her from storming into the principal's office. This force to be reckoned with happens to be JERRY's mother, Sarah, and neither he nor the principal can finish a sentence before she demands to know why she has been called in. The principal responds, pointing to what he refers to as "girlie magazines". Sarah is not having it and comes to JERRY's defense. Not only did she buy them for him, but she did so because she believes JERRY is a creative student, destined to be a writer. The principal insists that they are a distraction, and that JERRY's academic future is in jeopardy, when he makes a grave error. He inquires about JERRY's father. At that, Sarah grabs JERRY by the arm and exits the room. On the way out, she notices JOE, still holding the bloody handkerchief. JERRY introduces JOE as his new friend and asks his mother if they can have him over for dinner. She agrees and the two exit.

At dinner that night, JERRY and JOE start to learn more about each other, their families and their aspirations. JOE is impressed with the fact that JERRY prints his own science-fiction magazine, titled *Science Fiction*, using the school paper's mimeograph machine. Sarah is preparing a delicious meal while JOE is demonstrating isometric exercises. JOE explains that he is an advocate of the Charles Atlas program, and that he is a "physical culture enthusiast." JERRY explains that JOE wants to be a bodybuilder. Sarah stifles a smile as she serves dinner. JERRY mentions an assignment he has been given for the school newspaper, "The Glenville Torch".. He tells his mother about JOE's sketches from earlier that day when an idea hits him. JERRY's

been asked to write a comic strip but he needs a cartoonist. This is the start of a partnership that would give the world its first superhero.

Setting: A barbershop in lower Manhattan, 1933.

HARRY and FRANK are headed to their local barbershop for a trim and a shave. On the way, they pass a newsstand. HARRY tosses the owner a coin and grabs a copy of *Funnies on Parade*. After explaining the concept of reprinting comic strips in book form, HARRY tells FRANK his idea of publishing a comic book featuring entirely original stories. As they take their seats in the barber chairs, HARRY tosses the comic book to one of the shady characters hanging out in the barbershop. The man who catches it is a particularly sleazy individual, a little on the slow side. He dismisses the funny book and expresses his preference for HARRY's nudie mags.

Back in Cleveland, JERRY brings JOE to the office of "The Torch" and introduces him to LOIS, a perky teenage girl who clearly fancies herself an intrepid reporter and newspaper editor rolled into one. She has only just begun to describe the new project to the pair when DAVE and his pretty girlfriend burst into the room laughing. LOIS instantly forgets JERRY and JOE exist, gives both a hug, and starts to talk about prom with them. As the two girls excitedly share details about their dresses, DAVE notices JOE staring at his girlfriend. DAVE confronts JOE but JERRY gets between them and attempts to deescalate the situation. DAVE considers pounding them both when the bell rings and LOIS and his girlfriend yell for him to escort them to their next class.

Later that night, JERRY and JOE are commiserating in JERRY's bedroom. To JERRY, DAVE is the quintessential bully, the jock, the guy that gets all the girls. JOE isn't quite as bothered, and somewhat admires his athleticism. JERRY asks JOE if he can sketch DAVE. JOE would rather draw DAVE's girlfriend but agrees. As soon as JOE finishes his sketch, JERRY's imagination goes into hyperdrive. With revenge in mind, JOE's sketch of DAVE transforms into GOOBER THE MIGHTY, a Tarzan-esque ape man complete with loincloth and goofy, dim-witted expression. Thus marks JERRY and JOE's first collaboration.

JERRY and JOE's second collaboration is inspired by their next encounter with DAVE, and his menacing pal, LUTHER. Apparently, everyone in school was able to recognize DAVE in the GOOBER comic strip printed in the school newspaper. DAVE ends up having to restrain his friend, LUTHER, while setting the record straight with JERRY and JOE. DAVE is no GOOBER, after all. In fact, he is President of the Latin Club, the Debating Team, and is even on the Honor Roll. Stunned by this revelation, JERRY and JOE go back to the drawing board, literally. JERRY, in another fit of inspiration, begins

to imagine the threat an imposing figure like DAVE could have if he were equally formidable in intellect. JOE starts to feverishly draw, attempting to keep up with JERRY's flurry of ideas.

We once again have DAVE as the central character. Now, he is an everyman on the breadline of Depression-era NYC. He is chosen by a mad scientist to be the subject of his evil experiment. The experiment leaves Dunn with an array of super-powers, most notably the ability to manipulate the minds of others with his super brain-waves. Gradually Dunn begins to use his powers for selfish reasons, taking his vengeance on the world.. JOE describes the character as a super-man. The story fades but the name sticks.

The neighborhood soda shop is where Glenville teens hang out, including JERRY and JOE. JERRY is lamenting the failure of *Science Fiction*, and commenting on how newspaper salesmen can't even give comics away to the guy who owns the shop.. Things are already looking down when DAVE enters the shop, again with his pal Luther. This time, Luther takes the lead in harassing JERRY, only he takes it too far by trashing his father. Even DAVE knows how wrong this is, and surprises JERRY by sticking up for him. JOE takes notice of this latest revelation of DAVE's character. Seeing someone as a bully turns out to be only half the story, black and white. Since this is the first time JOE learns of the story of JERRY's father, it occurs to him that his friend has a hidden side, a secret identity. Meanwhile, in DAVE, a vision of a strong man who fights injustice starts to form.

JERRY and JOE are on fire. Every influence from Doc Savage to Tarzan to Charles Atlas are being tossed around, as they dream up their muscle-bound hero. His costume, on the other hand, will be based on Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers, who wore full sci-fi space suits with emblems on their chests. JOE's affinity for strongmen, like wrestlers and boxers, serves as inspiration for the tights, with shorts worn on the outside, and lace-up boots to finish the look.. Gone are the jokes of Goober The Mighty, as well as the selfish, vengeful Bill Dunn. This super-man is going to be something else, a superhero. Before they know it, the boys have a week of completely inked strips, and three more weeks in pencil, material that would end up rejected by every publisher, before ending up in the hands of HARRY DONENFELD and Jack Liebowitz. The boys are on a roll, but they are missing one thing: a muse.

JOAN CARTER was born Jolan Kovacs. Much like JERRY and JOE, JOAN likes to think big. To support her sisters, she decides to take out an ad in *The Plain Dealer* announcing that she is a model and is seeking work. However, with a mind filled with images from the silver screen and magazines, a rich fantasy life far removed from

reality, JOAN does not anticipate the barrage of letters from adult men looking for dates. The first ad she comes across that seems innocuous enough is from a cartoonist seeking a model for a comic strip. This is how JOAN meets JERRY and JOE.

When she shows up at JERRY's house, she is under the impression she is visiting the offices of Siegel & Shuster. When SARAH opens the door, JOAN strikes a movie-star pose, wearing sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat, as if she were in disguise. She is wearing cherry-red lipstick, with an unlit cigarette in her mouth. SARAH is not fooled for a second, and with great amusement, asks her to have a seat, as Mr. Siegel and Mr. Shuster will be right with her. Both are gobsmacked at the sight of her, as she addresses them in her most sultry starlet voice. SARAH, meanwhile, can't help but notice JOAN's bra is stuffed, with one side larger and the other sagging. SARAH has the boys look the other way and helps the girl with a knowing wink.

As soon as the trio get to work, it is apparent that JOAN only has eyes for JERRY, while JOE's dreams of romancing a model quickly fade. Yet it is JERRY's infectious enthusiasm that causes JOAN to almost forget why she is there and become swept up in their burgeoning career as cartoonists. She is not just their inspiration for Lois Lane. She is their first fan.

Meanwhile, in the New York City offices of National Periodicals, with framed copies of the spicy, or "girlie", pulps it is known for hanging on the wall, HARRY DONENFELD and JACK LIEBOWITZ are faced with a crisis of the sort that only Superman can solve, literally. They've come to the realization that the content they publish poses a problem of legitimacy, or the lack thereof. As long as decent, everyday Americans link their magazines to illicit behavior and juvenile delinquency, their profits will be severely limited. Granted, some of the blame lies with HARRY and the company he keeps, but these pulp fiction novels are simply taboo, relegated to the bottom of the news racks. The answer to all of their problems lies on their editor's desk in a comic strip depicting a man of action, wearing bright, primary colors, and pummeling a bad guy. The world is about to be introduced to Superman, the Man of Steel, in *Action Comics #1*, on April 18th, 1938. The fortunes of HARRY and JACK,, not to mention JERRY and JOE, were about to change forever: one for the better and one for the worse.

Back in Cleveland, the mythology of Superman continues to evolve, as JOAN and even SARAH have begun contributing. SARAH suggests that Kal-El's origins mirror that of Moses. Much like Moses' mother saving his life by sending him down the Nile River in a basket, baby Kal-El's parents would send him to Earth in a rocketship, sparing him their fate on the doomed planet of Krypton. JOAN, still enamored with but sadly unnoticed by JERRY flips the script by suggesting a female reporter that fails to notice that her

co-worker, Clark Kent, is actually the love of her life, Superman. The paths of our geeks and gangsters are finally about to meet.

The sight of a big, fancy car with New York license plates pulling up in front of the Siegel house does not go unnoticed. Neither do the men dressed like movie mobster James Cagney, or Edward G. Robinson. Imagine *their* surprise when they find themselves sitting in a living room, across from two teenage nerds, the creators of their meal ticket. When the boys are offered a contract to produce Superman stories, offering only \$130 for exclusive rights to the character, SARAH expresses misgivings, but the money is too good to turn down.

ACT TWO

JERRY is now living in an apartment in New York City, married with children. His family is in the background, but his mind is occupied elsewhere. Instead, he is on a long distance call with JOE, who is churning out Superman pages with the help of assistants, who he clearly needs because his eyesight is deteriorating further. Both are under a great deal of pressure, but JERRY is in over his head, with a family he cannot support, and bosses he cannot seem to please. In passing, he mentions his competition, an artist named Bob Kane, who after the call went out for the next Superman, submitted a character called The Bat-Man.

Meanwhile, in the office at National, the framed copies of girly mags have been replaced by framed copies of *Action Comics* and *Superman* comics. However, JACK LIEBOWITZ does not look as thrilled as he should, as a rather intimidating gangster is sitting across from him, representing former associates of his and HARRY. These 'associates' have taken an interest in the success of Superman, and are blackmailing HARRY and JACK. With their newly legitimate public image, it would certainly not be beneficial if their shady past was revealed.

JERRY and his beautiful wife, BELLA, have just entered an upscale latin-themed nightclub in Manhattan. It is obvious they are out of their element. This is the domain of the elite. Businessmen and gangsters fraternize, including those reveling in the success of all things Superman, success clearly not being enjoyed by JERRY, or JOE back home in Cleveland. JERRY and BELLA head over to the table where JACK is seated with his wife and HARRY is cavorting with his mistress. As soon as JERRY goes to the restroom, HARRY is flirting with BELLA. It couldn't be more clear how sleazy JERRY's new 'friends' are. Even worse, JERRY is sycophantic while around them, by no means his best self. He's become a bit of a jerk, a little fish in a big pond, full of sharks.

JERRY's world comes crashing down when he learns of his mother SARAH's death. He briefly reunites with JOE and JOAN at the funeral. JOAN can see how miserable her friends are.

JOE is sitting at the old soda shop after the funeral, waiting to meet JOAN. Now, the soda shop owner proudly displays Superman comics, and even those featuring his countless imitators. JOAN walks in but JOE almost doesn't see her. They discuss JOE's impending move to New York City. Then, the conversation turns to the business and how much it's changed JERRY, who has separated from his wife. JOAN manages to remind JOE of his reason for doing what he does, producing the old newspaper ad she answered from her wallet. Before they part ways, JOE mentions a costume ball that HARRY and JACK are holding, and invites her to come see him and JERRY in the city.

JERRY and JOE are sitting with JACK in his office. JERRY and JOE are struggling, not just financially, but creatively as well. JACK prefers Superman to be invincible, while JERRY is arguing for their superhero to have challenges that he must overcome. He's suggesting weaknesses while JACK is suggesting new powers. JERRY is describing a mysterious green element that can kill Superman, but JACK is incredulous at the idea that Superman can die. For a moment though, we can see where JACK's devotion to escapism comes from. Americans, especially Jewish-Americans, have plenty of opportunities to feel small, that the rich and powerful can take away their livelihood. JACK and JERRY simply don't see eye to eye. It is apparent that their working 'relationship' is not just suffering. It never existed in the first place. The creators of Superman had to beg their publisher for money, only to be told they could easily be replaced.

The year is 1947. JERRY and JOE have decided to sue HARRY and JACK and are fired as a result. They receive a small settlement, barely enough to pay the bills. The following year, JOAN, JERRY, and JOE reunite for the first time since the glory days in Cleveland, at the Cartoonists Ball in New York City. It is April Fools Day, 1948. Though it is JOE who invited JOAN, the sparks fly once more between JERRY and JOAN. JOAN now goes by the name JOANNE, and has had her own share of adventures. During World War II, she worked in California, building battleships. JERRY can't help but notice that the young girl who once pretended to be a movie star now actually looks like one. She is dressed as Dixie Dugan, the cartoon character, wearing an enormous ball gown that JOE rented for her from the Brooks costume company.

Later that year, JERRY marries JOAN after reuniting at the costume ball, just months after his divorce from BELLA is finalized. They are a happy couple, but more

importantly, JERRY has a partner who will see him through his darkest times, including bouts of suicidal depression

For JOE, it is somehow worse. In 1958, a policeman finds him sleeping on a park bench. Story has it that he drew a sketch of Superman to prove he was who he said he was. In 1959, JERRY returns to work for National, accepting standard pay and no byline. A second lawsuit is filed in 1965, in another attempt to regain rights to Superman and seek restitution. It drags on for years, leaving JERRY and JOE desperate and destitute.

After the death of HARRY DONENFELD in 1965, JACK LIEBOWITZ sells DC to TIME WARNER. JERRY and JOE don't stand a chance against this giant corporation.

It is the 1970s. JOE is still living in New York City, selling his furniture and records to get by, unable to afford tickets to the Superman musical playing just down the street on Broadway. A check from National would show up from time to time, but he still had to take odd jobs as a cashier and even as a stock boy.

JERRY, meanwhile, lived on the other side of the country, with JOANNE, in a one-bedroom apartment. JERRY worked in the mailroom at the California Public Utilities Commission, while JOANNE sold Chevys and folded bathing suits in a clothing store.

ACT THREE

The year is 1975. JERRY is working quietly in the mailroom when a newspaper headline catches his attention. According to the article he reads, Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler, producers of the recent Richard Lester-directed film *The Three Musketeers*, have purchased the screen rights to Superman for a reported three million dollars. The movie was to have a fifteen million dollar budget and be written by Mario Puzo, author of *The Godfather*. JERRY loses it.

In what is more of an essay than a press release, JERRY puts a "curse" on the production of the Superman movie. The lengthy missive begins with these words:

It has been announced in show business trade papers that a multi-million dollar production based on the Superman comic strip is about to be produced. It has been stated that millions of dollars were paid to the owners of Superman, National Periodical Publications, Inc., for the right to use the famous comic book super-hero in the new movie. The script is by Mario Puzo, who wrote The Godfather and Earthquake. The film is to have a star-filled cast.

I, Jerry Siegel, the co-creator of Superman, put a curse on the Superman movie! I hope it super-bombs. I hope loyal Superman fans stay away from it in droves. I hope the whole world, becoming aware of the stench that surrounds Superman, will avoid the movie like a plague.

Why am I putting this curse on a movie based on my creation of Superman?

Because cartoonist Joe Shuster and I, who co-originated Superman together, will not get one cent from the Superman super-movie deal.

Superman has been a huge money-maker for 37 years. During most of those years, Joe Shuster and I, who originated the character Superman, got nothing from our creation, and through many of those years we have known want, while Superman's publishers became multimillionaires.

Read the following and you will get some idea of how it feels to create one of the most successful fiction characters of all time...and be cheated out of your share of its profits.

The publishers of Superman comic books, National Periodical Publications, Inc., killed my days, murdered my nights, choked my happiness, strangled my career. I consider National's executives economic murderers, money-mad monsters. If they, and the executives of Warner Communications which owns National, had consciences, they would right the wrongs they inflicted on Joe Shuster and me.

Decades of the creator's pain and suffering are now the ammunition for a "shot heard around the world", especially by artists and writers currently toiling away for the Big Two, Marvel and DC. As for the public at large, the story would have been a mere blip in history, had it not been for a maverick comic book artist by the name of NEAL ADAMS.

Along with writer Denny O'Neil, ADAMS has been breathing new life into DC superheroes, such as Batman and Green Arrow. ADAMS is cocky and outspoken, the perfect spokesperson. As the president of the Academy of Comic Book Arts, ADAMS is the perfect advocate for JERRY and JOE's cause. He is cocky and outspoken, the right man for the job. JERRY, however, is certain that all hope is lost, to which ADAMS responds: "No, no, I can represent you to the people...I don't know what I'll do. BUT if you let me do it, I will do it. I will get publicity, I will get attention, and I will try to turn this around." With nothing else to lose, JERRY and JOE agree.

So, ADAMS goes to work. He starts by personally driving JERRY and JOE around to any news outlet that will listen to them. When they have no money for lodging, ADAMS convinces the TV stations to put them up in hotels. The story starts to pick up heat but the old men only have so much stamina. ADAMS then turns to his fellow creators, whose livelihoods were built on the back of JERRY and JOE's sacrifices. First, he reaches out to legendary Batman artist and co-creator of the Joker, Jerry Robinson. Despite being the former president of the National Cartoonists Society, Robinson can only help draft another letter of protest. In a stroke of luck, the Overseas Press Corps has an office in the same building that the two men are meeting. Once their story is told to a packed room of news people, their story catches on like wildfire.

ADAMS lands a meeting with a young Warners executive named JAY EMMETT, who also happens to be the nephew of JACK LIEBOWITZ. Emmett, who would go on to be president of Warner Communications and help create the Special Olympics with Eunice Shriver, would also one day be convicted on fraud charges in the 1980s.

It is clear that EMMETT has far less to lose than ADAMS. In fact, he tells ADAMS in a phone call that Warner Brothers is thinking of selling DC anyway because it isn't making the company any money. ADAMS, in one shrewd move, siezes on EMMETT's connection to original gangster, JACK LIEBOWITZ. ADAMS reminds him that his now-rich uncle paid *him* millions of dollars to handle licensing for Superman, after his return from the Korean War.

Calling his bluff that Warner Brothers would ever sell off Superman, ADAMS knew he had public opinion on his side and the beginning of a PR nightmare for the giant corporation. This put him in the position to refuse their initial offer of \$10,000 and accept a final settlement of \$30,000 a year for JOE and JERRY, as well as continued payment for their families after their death. The news is reported on the *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*. The final victory is a byline to be added to all current and future Superman publications: "Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster". Those words would also appear in the credits of *Superman: The Movie* in 1978.

Months later, in the February 12, 1979 issue of *People* magazine, there is an article about JERRY, JOE, and JOANNE. Its placement in the back pages indicates how short-lived those victories were. Yet, the piece contains one very special photo of all three. JERRY is seen pulling his shirt open to reveal a Superman t-shirt. Bespectacled JOE is Clark, and the always intrepid JOANNE is wielding the mighty pen and notepad of Lois Lane.

EPILOGUE

On August 2, 2006, JOANNE SIEGEL gave a video-taped deposition in Beverly Hills, related to ongoing legal battles with Warner Communications. Her beloved husband JERRY died almost ten years earlier, on January 28, 1996, of a heart attack. His partner JOE SHUSTER passed away a little less than five years before that, on July 30, 1992; around the time DC Comics announced their *Death of Superman* publicity stunt. JACK LIEBOWITZ retired from Warner in 1990, before dying in 2000, at the age of 100.

Although Shuster was now supported by a lifetime stipend from DC Comics, he fell into debt – close to \$20,000 by the time of his death. After he died, DC Comics agreed to pay off his unpaid debts in exchange for an agreement from his heirs to not challenge ownership over Superman.

Much like Superman's fight for truth, justice and the American way, the battle is neverending. On October 8th 2004, Siegel's heirs filed a lawsuit claiming ownership of the copyright of Superman, with the other half belonging to the Shuster family. Soon after, they claimed 100% of the rights to Superboy, which is solely the creation of Siegel.

Off camera, lawyers are asking complicated questions about when Jerry first submitted *Superboy* and how much money DC is sending her. They ask her about a letter she wrote in 2002 comparing DC Comics to the Gestapo.

In December of 2010, another letter addressed to Jeffrey L. Bewkes, the chairman and CEO of Time Warner, Inc., went public. Here is the letter, in its entirety:

December 10, 2010

Jeffrey L. Bewkes

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

Time Warner Inc.

Dear Jeff,

I am Joanne Siegel widow of Jerry Siegel, creator of Superboy and co-creator of Superman with Joe Shuster. It has always been my policy to be in touch with the Chairmen of the Board of your company going back to when Steve Ross formed Warner Communications.

Steve Ross knew how to take care of large vexing problems. He paid the price, whatever it was, then went on, and the company prospered. He was gracious and friendly when my late husband Jerry and I met him at a stockholders meeting after he sent Jerry, Joe, my daughter Laura and me company stock. He also phoned me to say if we needed anything I should just pick up the phone and call him. He said if he could not be reached for some reason, one of the top officers in the company, Deane Johnson, would handle things personally. Laura and I believe if Steve were alive our copyright ownership matter would have been successfully resolved long ago.

Jerry Levin was also reachable and thoughtful. He sent my husband and later me, cases of grapefruit at the holiday season. He remembered Jerry's birthday with a Superman sculpture. When my Jerry passed away, Jerry Levin told Laura and me that we are part of the Time Warner family, part of its history. Unfortunately he retired before our rights issues were resolved. He had given his attorneys too much power so that negotiations were unsatisfactory and a settlement was impossible. Dick Parsons, on the other hand, was not friendly and, under him, the attorneys hired by the company were arrogant and pro-litigation.

Now you are Chairman and CEO. Because we are in litigation I held off writing to you. I now believe had we had contact early on, things might not have gone so far off track.

My daughter Laura and I, as well as the Shuster estate, have done nothing more than exercise our rights under the Copyright Act. Yet, your company has chosen to sue us and our long-time attorney for protecting our rights.

On December 1st I turned 93. I am old enough to be your mother. I have grown grandchildren. Unfortunately I am not in the best of health. My cardiologist provided a letter to your attorneys informing them that I suffer from a serious heart condition and that forcing me to go through yet another stressful deposition could put me in danger of a heart attack or stroke. I am also on medications that have side effects which force me to stay close to home and restrooms. Nonetheless your attorneys are forcing me to endure a second deposition even though I have already undergone a deposition for a full day in this matter. As clearly they would be covering the same ground, their intention is to harass me.

My dear daughter Laura too has painful medical conditions including multiple sclerosis, arthritis, glaucoma, spine disorders, and fibromyalgia. She has already had her deposition taken twice by your attorneys while in pain. Her doctors have given written

statements saying she should not be subjected to a third deposition, yet your attorneys are insisting on re-taking her deposition in an effort to harass her as well.

So I ask you to please consider – do these mean spirited tactics meet with your approval? Do you really think the families of Superman's creators should be treated this way?

As you know, DC and Warner Bros. have profited enormously from 72 years of exploiting Jerry and Joe's wonderful creation. Superman is now a billion dollar franchise and has been DC's flagship property for all this time.

As for this letter, the purpose is three-fold:

To protest harassment of us that will gain you nothing but bad blood and a continued fight.

To protest harassment of our attorney by falsely accusing him of improper conduct in an attempt to deprive us of legal counsel.

To make you aware that in reality this is a business matter and that continuing with litigation for many more years will only benefit your attorneys.

This is not just another case. The public and press are interested in Superman and us and are aware of our and your litigations.

The solution to saving time, trouble, and expense is a change of viewpoint. Laura and I are legally owed our share of Superman profits since 1999. By paying the owed bill in full, as you pay other business bills, it would be handled as a business matter, instead of a lawsuit going into its 5th year.

Even though you will no doubt pass this letter on to your attorneys, the final decision is yours. Your image as well as the company's reputation rests on a respectable and acceptable outcome, and I hope you will get personally involved to insure this matter is handled properly.

The courtesy of a friendly and meaningful reply from you will be most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Joanne Siegel

Two months later, on February 12, 2011, JOANNE SIEGEL passed away at the age of 93. Her daughter, Laura Siegel Larson, took over the cases and became executor of the Siegel estate.

In an April 18, 2013 judgment, a judge denied all of the Siegel heirs' claims and the rights to Superman and Superboy reverted back to DC Comics. Later that year, a new byline was added to DC comics and other media featuring Superman that states "Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, by Special Arrangement with the Jerry Siegel family."

As for the future of the neverending battle, the copyright for Superman is expected to expire in the year 2033. At that time, unless any new legislation is introduced, Superman as he is depicted in *Action Comics* #1 will become public domain, along with other story elements such as Lois Lane and the city of Metropolis.

"The story of the creation of Superman is about many things: it is just as much about the beginnings of corporate America and its relationship to popular culture as it is about artistic creation and familial relationships. It is a story about the haves and the have-nots: creators, a son, a father, the Depression, and companies and families trying to protect themselves and those who come after them." - Brad Ricca, *Super Boys*