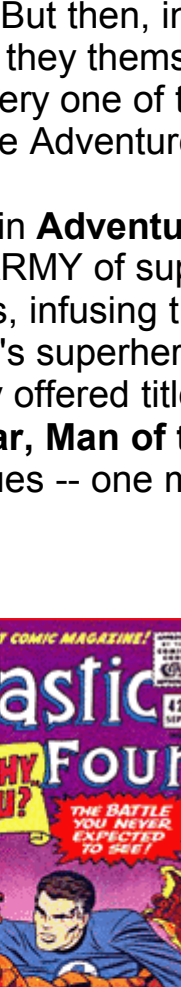
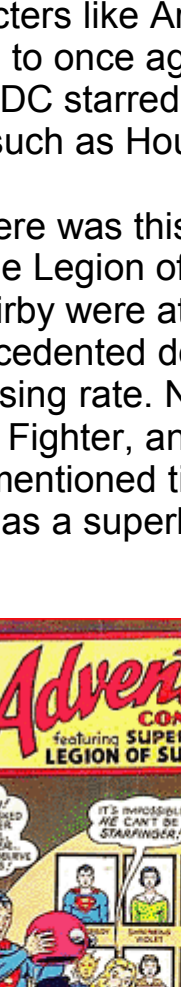


The Giant Superman cover below left was the basis for Robby's "Pureheart Origins" cover!

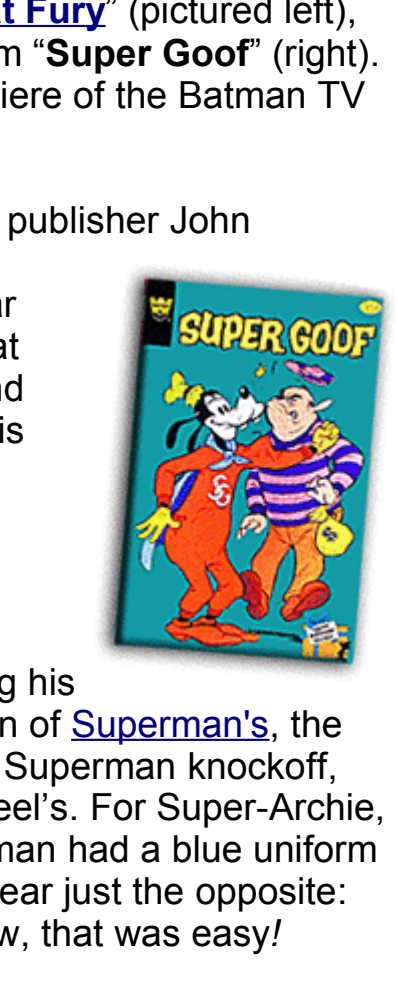


SECRET ORIGINS OF ARCHIE AS PUREHEART!

PART ONE OF FIVE

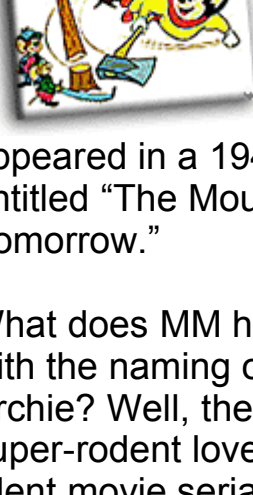
Enter Pureheart!

Just imagine! Archie Andrews -- America's Favorite Teenager -- a superhero! Complete with uniform and super powers! When did it happen? How did it happen? WHY did it happen? I, Robby Reed, creator of this blog and author of this article, have got all the answers -- and here they are, in a five-part series that will one day be recognized as the definitive study of the Pureheart Universe!



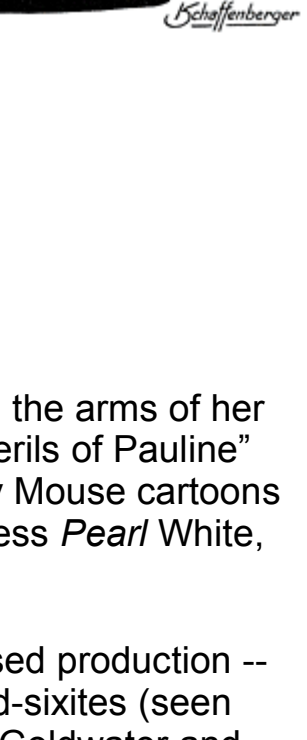
Archie Andrews, created by Bob Montana, first appeared in Pep Comics #22 (Dec 1941), but he didn't make it to the title's cover until Pep #45 (Jan 1944, pictured right). As superheroes had fallen out of favor with the public, characters like Archie gained in popularity. But then, in the mid 1960s, Superheroes began to once again dominate the medium they themselves had created -- the comic book. DC starred superheroes in almost every one of their books, even former genre titles such as House of Mystery and Strange Adventures.

Nowhere was this trend more evident than in Adventure Comics featuring Superman and the Legion of Superheroes -- a small ARMY of super-types. Over at Marvel, Lee and Kirby were at the height of their powers, infusing the Fantastic Four with an unprecedented dose of "realism" as Marvel's superhero line expanded at an ever-increasing rate. Not to be left out, Gold Key offered titles such as the futuristic Magnus Robot Fighter, and the super-scientific Solar, Man of the Atom. Pictured below: the aforementioned titles' September 1965 issues -- one month before Archie made his debut as a superhero!



These three publishers didn't hog ALL the superhero action -- nearly every comic company got into the superhero game with a vengeance! ACG, the American Comics Group, stuck Herbie in red long Johns and dubbed him "The Fat Fury" (pictured left), and Disney stuck Goofy in equally red long Johns and called him "Super Goof" (right). And this was several months before the premiere of the Batman TV show in January 1966!

Testing the superhero waters, Archie Comics publisher John Goldwater, writer Frank Doyle and artist Bob White decided to do a story featuring their star character -- Archie -- as a superhero! But what would "Super-Archie" look like? What would his powers be? And since they couldn't really call him "Super-Archie," what would his name be? In this case, all these questions had the same easy answer: just steal everything from established superheroes!



SUPERHERO SCAVENGER HUNT

Perhaps the easiest part of making Super-Archie would be designing his costume. Nearly every superhero outfit is just a different version of Superman's, the great Granddaddy of all superhero uniforms. So, like any good Superman knockoff, Super-Archie had to have a uniform modeled on the Man of Steels. For Super-Archie, Goldwater and company used a simple reverse design. Superman had a blue uniform with red outer "underwear" and cape, so Super-Archie would wear just the opposite: BLUE outer "underwear" and a BLUE cape! Uniform done. Wow, that was easy!

Perhaps the most important aspect of any superhero, instead of which MAKES him (or her) "super" to begin with, is their super POWER. Just as clothes make the man, the power defines the hero. But for Super-Archie, who existed in a world where "continuity" had yet to be discovered, powers were largely a matter of convenience. If Super-Archie had to have a certain power to move a story forward or make a gag work, then he'd HAVE that power -- if only for the panels necessary.

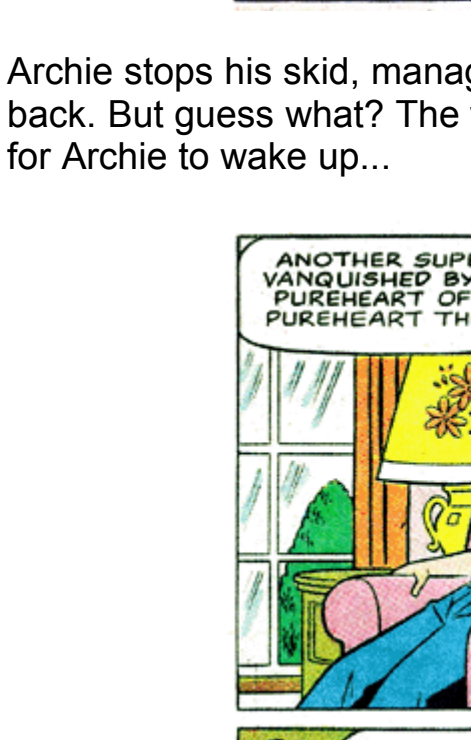


In his first outing alone, Super-Archie would evidence Superman-inspired abilities such as flight and invulnerability, as well as additional powers like the "heat of his inner goodness" (pictured left), and the "magnetic mind projector."

More important was how Archie would TRANSFORM into Super-Archie: He would simply call upon his inner superhero and POOF! -- his uniform and super powers would appear like magic. This concept, of course, was lifted from Captain Marvel, aka "Shazam" -- but given the ages of the characters involved, it might be more fitting to say that Super-Archie was copied not from Superman and Captain Marvel, but from SuperBOY and Captain Marvel JUNIOR (pictured right by artist Kurt Schaffenberger, who drew both character's series).

A NAME IS BORN (BORROWED?!?)

Every superhero needs a great name. "Super-Archie" was just too close to Superman, so a new name had to be created -- and its unlikely source just might have been... a Mighty Mouse cartoon! Mighty Mouse was created as a Superman spoof by Izzy Klein and Paul Terry of Terrytoons, and he first



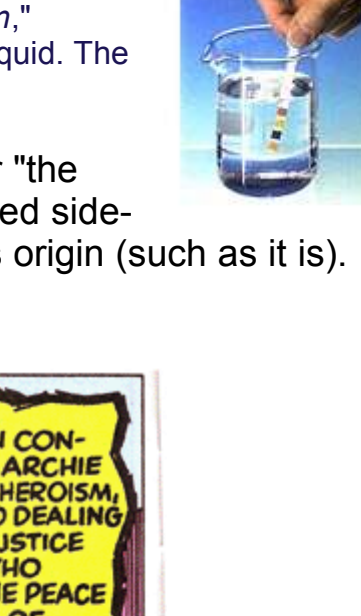
appeared in a 1942 short entitled "The Mouse of Tomorrow."

What does MM have to do with the naming of Super-Archie? Well, the name of Mighty Mouse's girlfriend, pictured right in the arms of her super-rodent lover, was inspired by "Pauline" of the famous 1914 "Perils of Pauline" silent movie serial. The character first appeared in a series of Mighty Mouse cartoons that satirized the old cliffhangers. "PAULINE" had been played by actress Pearl White, and Mickey's galpal was named Pearl! PUREHEART!

Pearl Pureheart didn't fade away when Mickey Mouse cartoons ceased production -- she appeared regularly in Gold Key's Mighty Mouse series of the mid-sixties (seen above), so she was kept "current," and she may have inspired John Goldwater and company to dub the newly-minted Super-Archie... PUREHEART! THE POWERFUL!

LIFE WITH PUREHEART!

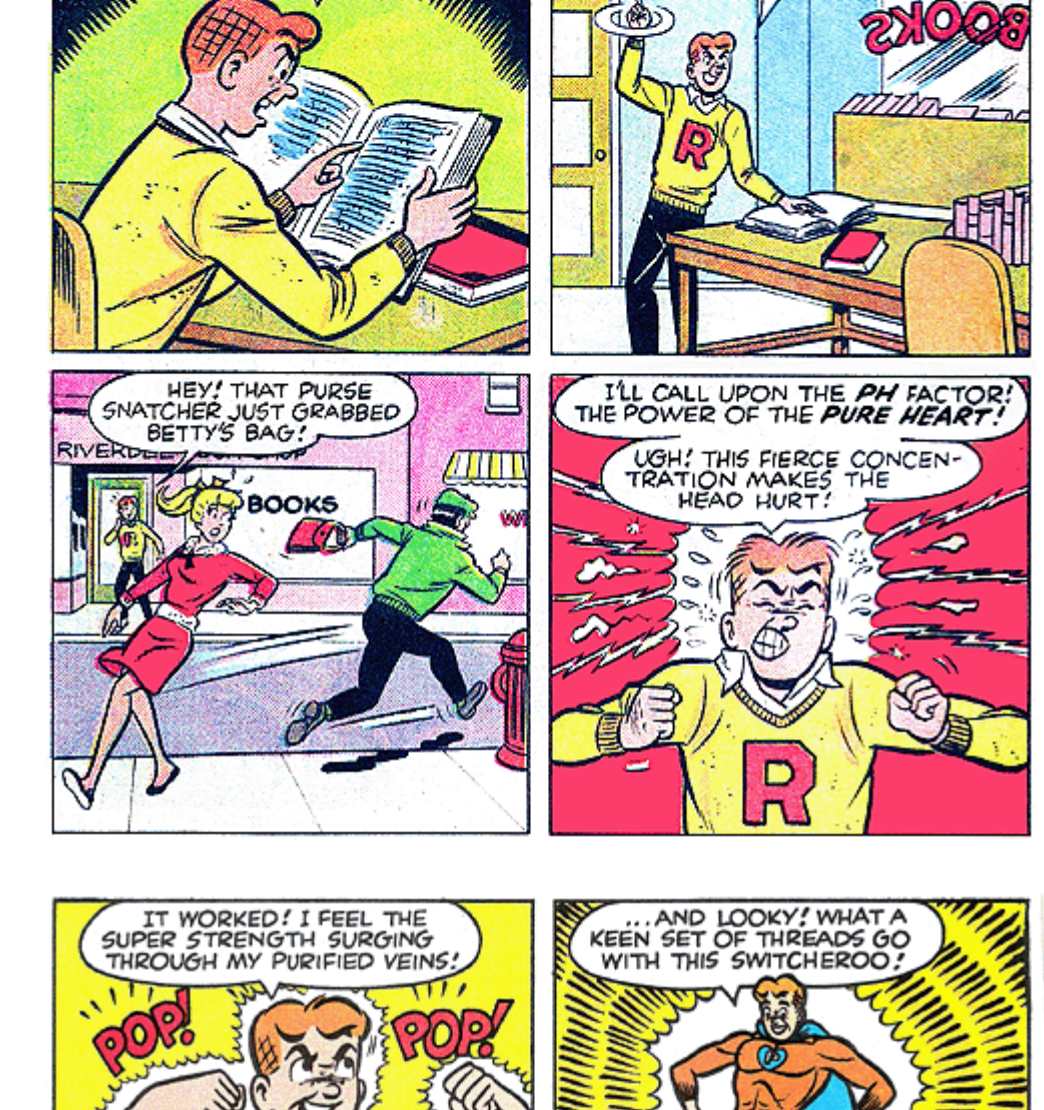
Which of the many Archie comics published in 1965 would feature Pureheart The Powerful's debut? There were dozens of Archie titles at this time, and each on the showcased a slightly different aspect of the world of America's Favorite Teenager. For example, "Pep" was devoted to humor and gags, "Betty and Veronica" offered a girls view of the Archieverse, and "Life with Archie" featured the gang in adventure stories. This made it the logical choice for Pureheart's premiere.



Of course, to be a real super hero, Pureheart needed a super VILLAIN! This role was first assigned to a diabolical super-fink" who called himself The Ice Cube. This particular bad guy was far from original -- he's a knockoff of the Batman villain originally called Mr. Zero, pictured above in his chilling debut appearance.

Mr. Zero's appearance on the Batman TV show as Mr. Freeze did NOT inspire the creation of the Ice Cube -- or of Pureheart himself, for that matter. Although Pureheart's existence is usually attributed to the popularity of the Batman TV show, in fact this is not the case, because Pureheart first appeared in October 1965, and Batman premiered on ABC in January 1966 -- many months AFTER the advent of Pureheart!

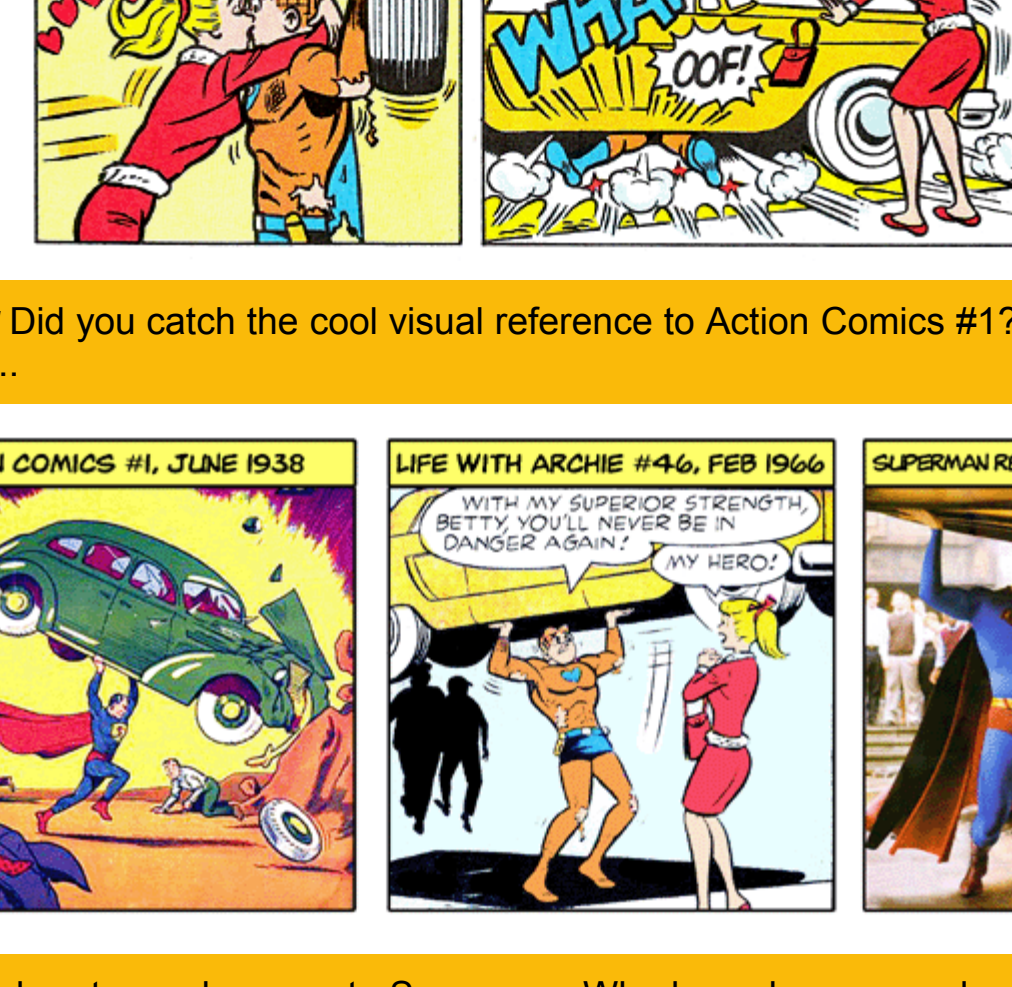
The classic cover blurb on Pureheart's debut issue (written by Frank Doyle, art by Bob White and Marty Epp), Life with Archie #42, reads: "ENTER PUREHEART, teen-age superhero, to battle the diabolical super-fink.... THE ICE CUBE!"



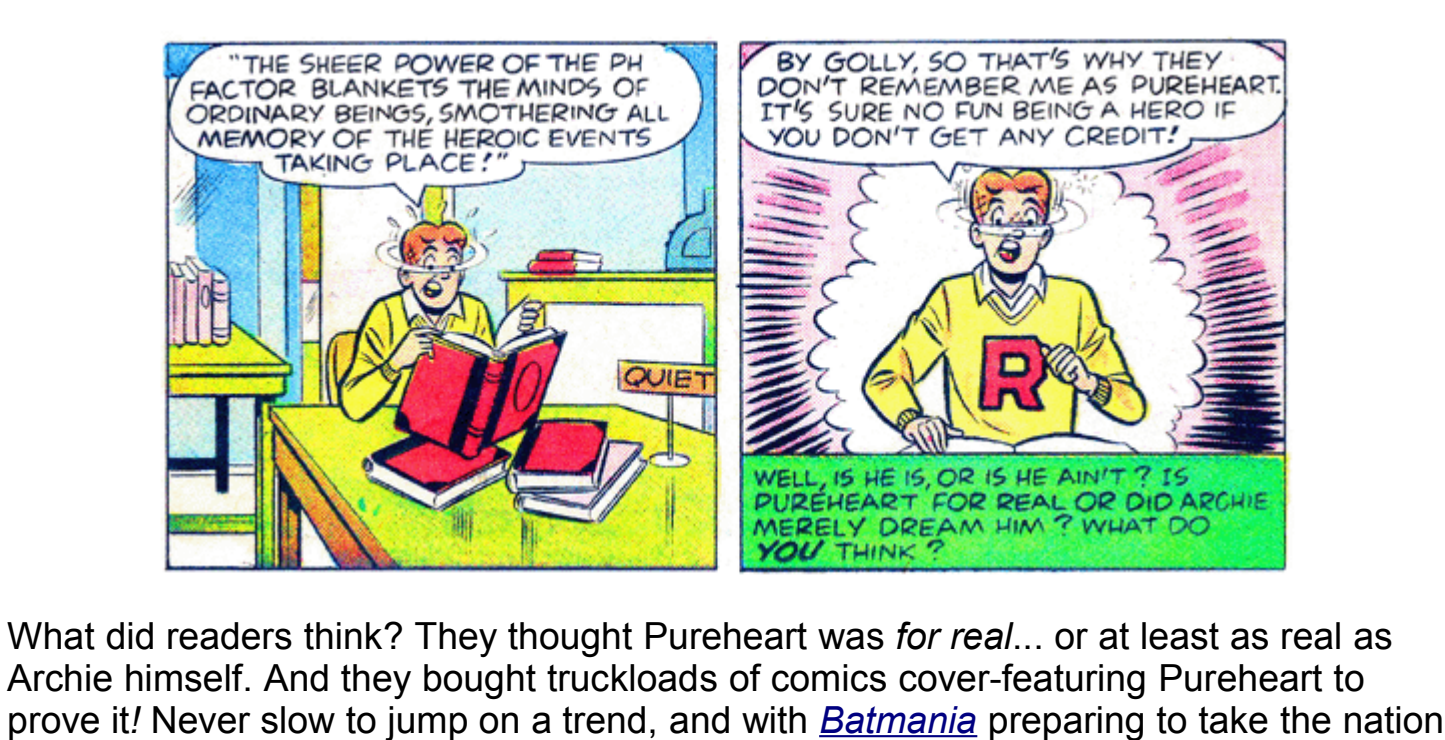
Here's a page from Pureheart's first story, called "Cold Cash." It shows Pureheart The Powerful in action for the first time against that frigid, frosty fink -- the Ice Cube! Brrrr!



Archie stops his skid, manages to defeat the Ice Cube, and gets Mr. Lodge's millions back. But guess what? The whole entire thing was just a DREAM! And now it's time for Archie to wake up...



PUREHEART GETS AN ORIGIN -- SORT OF!



THE PH FACTOR!

Months after Pureheart made his million dollar debut, writer Frank Doyle with artists Bob White and Marty Epp finally got around to giving the guy an origin story in Life With Archie #46, Feb. 1966. In his previous appearance as a character in one of Archie's dreams, Pureheart's uniform had been mostly red. Now, without explanation, it was suddenly as orange as Archie's hair, and Pureheart's cape had vanished entirely. Good! That made the character less like "Superman," and more distinctively "Archie."

SCIENCE FUN FACTS: A pH test uses a strip of special paper (pictured right) to measure of the amount of acid in a liquid. The abbreviation "pH" stands for "Potential Hydrogen," referring to the amount of hydrogen mixed with the liquid. The pH scale ranges from 0 (most acidic) to 14 (least).

But in the Pureheart Universe, "PH" stood for the power of a pure heart, and the "PH factor" had a very unexpected side-effect. It's all explained in the pages below, showing Pureheart's origin (such as it is). It's called -- what else? -- "The PH Factor!"

STOP TAPE! Did you catch the cool visual reference to Action Comics #1? Take a closer look...

Wow -- Pureheart pays homage to Superman. Who knew he was so deep!

At the end of Pureheart's origin, we discover why no one in Riverdale ever seems to remember the superheroic exploits of The Powerful One! It's a side-effect of the titular "PH Factor" -- it smother's all memory of Pureheart's good deeds. A major bummer for super glory-hounds!

What did readers think? They thought Pureheart was for real... or at least as real as Archie himself. And they bought truckloads of comics cover-featuring Pureheart to prove it! Never slow to jump on a trend, and with Batman's age preparing to take the nation by storm, it was decided that all the members of Archie's supporting cast would become superheroes. The Pureheart Age of Comics was about to begin!

