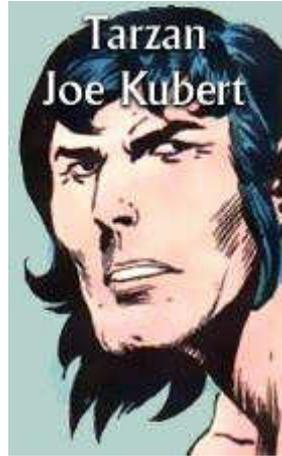


EDGARDEMAIN: A Century of Tarzan
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A CENTURY OF TARZAN

By John Martin

Half a century after he was created, Tarzan was banned. Half a century after that, he was honored by the U.S. Postal Service with a stamp.



Well, actually it was Tarzan's creator, Edgar Rice Burroughs, who was honored, but his most famous creation, Tarzan of the Apes, occupies the lower portion of the stamp.

The stamp was officially released nationwide Aug. 17, 2012, 100 years after the ape-man first appeared in *All-Story Magazine*.



Linda Burroughs, left, Dejah Burroughs and John R. Burroughs

Burroughs had been a cavalryman, cowboy, police officer and a pencil salesman, among other things,

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but couldn't seem to make a go at any of those occupations. When he was in his late 30s, with a family to support, Burroughs read a fiction story magazine and thought to himself that he "could write stories just as rotten." So he began working up a fantastic yarn about a former Confederate cavalry officer who was mysteriously transported to Mars, where he fought his way to honor among the citizens and won the hand of a beautiful princess.

That first story, which also appeared in *The All-Story*, was titled *Under the Moons of Mars*." In 2012, the Disney movie *John Carter* was released, portraying a Hollywood version of that first Burroughs story. With staying power like that, Burroughs' stories obviously were not "rotten."

Once Burroughs had created Tarzan, though, he had the key to making a living with his typewriter. Soon, the character not only appeared in the series of books he wrote, but also was in newspaper comics, a radio serial, motion pictures and other mediums, including bubble gum cards and toys.¹

Those who never read the books, but saw Tarzan only in the movies, understood the ape-man in a different way than the readers. The Tarzan in the movies was depicted as more of an unlearned



¹ ERB also marketed *Tarzan* for such products as oil, ice cream and bread. Burroughs continued to market and license his "bread and butter" ape-man throughout his life.

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character than the Tarzan of the books who, after having been raised in the jungle by apes, eventually learned human language and found out he was a descendant of British nobility. Underneath his "thin veneer of civilization," however, he was always first and foremost the king of the jungle.

* * * * *

It was the movies which led to Tarzan being banned in libraries across the nation when, in 1961, the Downey, Calif. school district banned Tarzan books because, they said, there was a lack of evidence that Tarzan and Jane were ever married.²



It was true that the movies of the day never showed a marriage ceremony. However, fans of Tarzan were quick to point out that Tarzan and Jane, after having their courtship interrupted in the first novel, found each other again and were married at the end of the second book, *The Return of Tarzan*. Jane's father, an ordained minister, performed the ceremony.

The banning of Tarzan resulted in headlines around the country, and inadvertently the Downey librarian caused a boom in Burroughs books, which had been out of print for several years. Those headlines prompted publishers to check the records, and they found out the copyrights on many of the

² It may be of interest that by the mid-Sixties the paperback ERB boom put that firestorm out.

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books had expired. So, several publishers began reprinting the Tarzan books as well as the other stories that Burroughs had written about adventures of heroes on Mars, Venus, the Moon, the wild west, and a world inside the earth, to name some.

That's what introduced Burroughs to me. I was in high school in the early 60s and began seeing Tarzan and other books by the same author on the paperback shelves, adorned with eye-catching art. Soon, I was buying and reading them...and hooked.

My passion for the stories themselves grew into an interest in collecting, not only the new paperback books, but the older, original books as well. This has provided a lot of fun over the years, finding Burroughs books in musty old bookstores as well as meeting and making friends with a lot of fellow collectors.

Around 1996, I started making friends in another hobby. As a rural mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service, I became especially interested when a stamp was issued honoring the first century of rural delivery. That's when I started learning about first day covers and how to make them and get those special cancels. I began in earnest in the hobby, and it wasn't long before I crossed paths with members of the Art Cover Exchange, an international group of people who make specially themed postal covers and mail them to each other, with friendly letters inside.

And so, my two hobbies met at last -- with the writer of the books on a U.S. postage stamp!

EDGARDEMAIN: Celebrating the literary
legerdemain of Edgar Rice Burroughs