

A CHRONOLOGY FOR THE AVENGER by Rick Lai

The adventures of Richard Henry Benson, better known as the Avenger, have many chronological problems. Some of the problems resulted because the series was written by three different men (Paul Ernst, Emile C. Tepperman, and Ron Goulart) who hid behind the byline of Kenneth Robeson, a house name also used by Lester Dent and other writers of the Doc Savage series. Some of the problems resulted from editorial decisions concerning how the character should be presented. This article is an attempt to reconcile these chronological difficulties.

Two major problems can be found in the Avenger novels by Paul Ernst, the original writer of the series. The first problem concerns various references to the Avenger's past. Benson was originally conceived as a man in his mid-thirties. By the end of the series, the Avenger was a man in his mid-twenties. As a result, Benson could not have done various things attributed to him in his unrecorded past if he was so young.

The second problem with Ernst's novels was caused by tampering by the editors at the publishing firm of Street and Smith. The Avenger had initially suffered an extreme nervous shock when his wife and young daughter were murdered by criminals. Consequently, Benson's facial muscles became paralyzed. This malady permitted him to mold his face like clay. His black hair was also turned white. In an effort to improve sales, it was decided to cure the Avenger's facial condition and restore his black hair. This event happened in a pivotal novel, *Murder on Wheels*. Three novels, *Nevlo*, *House of Death* and *Death in Slow Motion* were submitted before *Murder on Wheels*, but published afterwards. These three novels received editorial insertions and alterations to be consistent with *Murder on Wheels*, but inconsistencies still surfaced.

For the order in which the Avenger pulp series was originally submitted to the publishers, the reader should consult a list found in Will Murray's "Origin of an Avenger" in *Nemesis Incorporated* #17 (June 1984). This list was later reprinted in Howard Hopkins' *The Gray Nemesis* (Golden Perils Press, 1992).

When Street and Smith canceled the Avenger's magazine, it still permitted the character to appear in a series of six short stories which were published in two other magazines, *Clues* and *The Shadow*. For these short stories, Ernst was replaced by Emile C. Tepperman. The Avenger had been in Ernst's novels a non-lethal crimefighter in the tradition of Street and Smith's Doc Savage. With one notable exception (in *Three Gold Crowns*), Benson never killed any of the criminals opposing him. Although Tepperman continued this tradition in his early Avenger yarns, he eventually transformed the Avenger into a violent slayer of criminals. Tepperman also may have rewritten some unpublished stories about other characters into Avenger stories. One story, "Cargo of Doom," was submitted in December 1942 but contains references which indicate that the story was set before the United States entered World War II. "Cargo of Doom" is one of those stories in which the Avenger took human life. One of Tepperman's earlier Avenger stories, "A Coffin for the Avenger," was set after a state of war existed between Nazi Germany and the United States. However, the Avenger was still refraining from taking human life in this tale. It would have to be imagined that the Avenger returned to his old non-lethal ways sometime after Pearl Harbor in order to reconcile this chronological inconsistency. The Avenger short stories were republished in issues 8 through 13 of *Pulp*, a fanzine published by Robert Weinberg in the 1970's and early 1980's.

The Warner Paperback Library reprinted all of Ernst's Avenger novels in the 1970's. Ron Goulart was then contracted to continue the series. Tepperman's contributions to the Avenger saga were ignored, and Goulart followed Ernst's conception of the Avenger as a crimefighter. Goulart's chronological observations about Benson's age were consistent with the references in Ernst's later novels. There are really no questions concerning the chronological order of Goulart's novels. They clearly take place in their published sequence. The only minor difficulty is caused by Goulart inserting references to the next adventure in the closing chapters of each novel. Most of these references imply that only a few days or weeks elapsed between the end of one novel and the start of the next. Nevertheless, various seasonal references in the novels sometimes indicate that some of these novels were actually separated by months.

The first issues to be resolved in any chronology of the Avenger are the questions surrounding Benson's past. At this time, it would be appropriate to list various references in Paul Ernst's novels.

"For two years, since he had acquired his last half million in an Australian amethyst venture, he and his young wife and little Alice had played over a large part of the globe. Bermuda, Hawaii, California, Florida, Alaska--all had seen them" (*Justice Inc.*, chap. 3).

"I've located mines in the arctic. I've taken emeralds from Brazil. I brought a forty-thousand-dollar cargo of animals to the Cleveland Zoo from the Malay jungles. I held a crew in mutiny across the Pacific for twenty-three days" (Ibid., chap. 4).

"Benson had nearly been killed, in his teens, by a madman with a hatchet in Australia. He had used now the tactics that had instinctively saved his life then. And after the narrow escape in Australia, he had monkeyed with hatchets himself. He had learned to throw one so he could split a knot at thirty feet. He could throw an axe almost as accurately---" (Ibid., chap. 6).

Benson talked about his throwing knife, Ike, after showing how he could snip a coat button over a man's heart: "But then it's been three years since I used it--ten since a Javanese taught me the trick in Singapore." (Ibid., chap. 8).

"Thirteen years before, in Alaska, Benson had known a man called Bull Red. He was just under seven feet tall, with a leonine mane of red hair, and bent crowbars without bothering to brace them over his knee" (Ibid., chap. 8).

" ' When you go into a place where you have the least suspicion of bein' watched, son, *don't come out the same hole you went in!*"

A so-called Arizona badman, whose 'badness' usually resulted in the death of someone long overripe for death, had tipped Benson to that little piece of advice years ago, when Benson was still in his teens but was taking his place just the same as a grown man in a tough country" (Ibid., chap. 10).

Benson used his gun, Mike, to knock out people by "creasing" their skulls. This talent resulted due to a revulsion towards killing: "Ever kill a man, Smitty?...Well, I had to, once. In Tahiti. I swore that I'd never kill again, if I could possibly avoid it. And to help avoid it, I practiced with Mike till I could hit that dime at fifty paces" (Ibid., chap. 10).

"In his extreme youth, when he was piling up a fortune in far corners of the world, he had been forced to kill a man. The memory of that still bit and cut" (*Nevlo*, chap. 10).

"Benson, as an adventurer, had met thousands of men in positions ranging from that of water-front bums to governors of States. As rich man and business promoter, he had met more thousands, bankers, accountants, stock salesmen. Few men in the world had as varied and prodigious an acquaintanceship as his. He had lines of friendships leading into all sorts of places" (*Justice, Inc.*, chap. 12.).

"Quite a few years ago...I charted most of the lower peninsula for the Mexican government" (*The Yellow Hoard*, chap. 15).

"As Benson had said, he had charted the territory all through here for the Mexican government. He had done it when just out of school" (Ibid., chap. 17).

"As he went, he had recourse to a trick that had saved him once in Tibet among dark-eyed people. He jabbed his eyes with his thumbnail till they were bleared and reddened and their pale flares were a little disguised" (Ibid., chap. 17).

"In steaming jungles and Antarctic cold, in city and wilderness, he had wagered his life on his miraculous hearing---and won" (*The Devil's Horns*, chap. 7).

"In his teens, he had spotted rubber in South American jungles, led native armies in Java, made aerial maps in the Congo. In his twenties he had mined amethysts in Australia and emeralds in Brazil; found gold in Alaska and diamonds in the Transvaal" (*Tuned for Murder*, chap. 6).

"I have done work for several governments" (Ibid., chap. 13).

"Richard Henry Benson was not primarily an engineer; but as a youth he had done several jobs for the French Railway in North Africa..." (*The Glass Mountain*, chap. 2).

Benson to Jim Crast of the Central Construction Co.: "I'm not forgetting the time you saved my life in Australia" (Ibid., chap. 2).

"He had come to talk to an old foreman of his, with whom, when hardly out of his teens, Benson had engineered projects in Africa and China." (Ibid., chap. 13). This foreman, a Swede named Johnson, recalled an incident from his past association with Benson: "Remember the time you yanked me out of the clutches of a Arab band in Morocco and saved my worthless life?" (Ibid., chap. 13). Benson had also saved the life of a "salesman of farm machinery" in Fez, Morocco (*The Flame Breathers*, chap. 7).

Before becoming the Avenger, Benson had gained fame as "the inventor of the alpha lamp, which produces light without heat" (*The Flame Breathers*, chap. 7).

Millionaire Lorens Singer to Benson: "And I know the name quite well, indeed, over an oil deal in Venezuela, years ago. You won some concessions there against me and several other men" (Ibid., chap. 8).

Benson had "licked" a millionaire named Pierpont Ryan "in a couple of South American power deals years ago" (*Nevlo*, chap. 13).

"The caller was an American newspaper correspondent in Warsaw. Benson had saved his life once in Albania" (*The Flame Breathers*, chap. 17).

"Richard Benson had spent years adventuring. His tremendous personal fortune had been acquired in jungle and arctic waste, in dangerous desert and on hazardous mountaintops" (*The Smiling Dogs*, chap. 6).

"Adams was a mining and railroad power. In both circles he had heard of the vastly wealthy Ben- son." (Ibid., chap. 13).

"The Avenger had made a fortune in strange, dangerous places. He had made millions in minerals from Peru, more from engineering feats in Siam and Arabia and Africa. He had lived in antarctic wastes and tropical jungles" (*River of Ice*, chap. 6).

"He was a past master at traveling through such cover, as many a jungle head-hunter could have testified" (*Murder on Wheels*, chap. 7).

"Dick Benson had made his first fortune in the wilds of back-country Australia. He had made more fortunes in Borneo, China, South America, and Africa" (*Three Gold Crowns*, chap. 15).

Benson "opened up the Mosul oilfields" (*House of Death*, chap. 6). The Iraqi oil fields of the Mosul district were opened up during the spring and summer of 1927.

"Thirty-five or forty feet, he judged it, from an adventurous past in which, for a time, he had been a pearl diver" (Ibid., chap. 10).

"Only Benson, with his miraculous sense of hearing developed in a hundred wilderness and arctic places where he had wrested a large fortune before he entered the crime field, caught the distant, sighing sound" (*Death in Slow Motion*, chap. 6).

"Dick Benson had made his large personal fortune in the wildest parts of the uncivilized world, much of it when he was still in his teens" (Ibid., chap. 12).

Benson apparently had once been in Transylvania where he learned an "obscure" Hungarian dialect (Ibid., chap. 16).

Benson on engineer Alden Stahl: "...an old friend of mine. I traveled Brazil and Peru with him for nearly a year. We worked on some tin mines I promoted when I was about twenty" (*The Green Killer*, chap. 3).

Benson had been in the Brazilian jungle before, "prospecting for tin and rubber" (Ibid., chap. 12).

"This card was given me several years ago by a German military attaché in Chile" (Ibid., chap. 11).

Benson was the inventor of a "tin-reclamation process" (*The Black Death*, chap. 5). For the Stockbridge Corporation in the United States, he fixed a "new smokeless powder process" (Ibid., chap. 11).

"He had mapped jungles, explored wildernesses, and sought for treasure in places where no white foot had ever trod before" (*The Happy Killers*, chap. 12).

Benson "financed the Texas Synthetic Rubber Corp" (*Midnight Madness*, chap. 4).

In addition to these quotes, the reader can make various logical deductions about Benson's past. Benson's wife, Alicia, was probably a Canadian because her mother resided in Montreal. Since his daughter could speak coherent sentences at the time of *Justice, Inc.*, she was probably at least four years old. Since Benson hadn't used his knife, Ike, in three years at the time of *Justice, Inc.*, then he probably had not used his gun, Mike, for the same interval as well.

When Emile C. Tepperman took over the writing chores of "Kenneth Robeson," he contributed to the legends surrounding Benson's past. As a sort of explanation for the radical evolution of Benson into a violent vigilante, Tepperman created a character from Benson's past, Junius Jones, in "Vengeance on the Avenger." Jones was a crook whose life Benson had spared years ago: "Ten years ago he had held this Junius Jones at the point of a gun with his finger grimly ready to pull the trigger. That man, known as Junius Jones, had groveled for his miserable life; and though his life was forfeit, Benson had spared it" (chap. 2).

Junius Jones would seem to have been so evil an individual that Benson nearly abandoned his pledge never to kill another man when the two adversaries first clashed. When Jones returned in the 1940's, the Avenger abandoned his non-lethal policy, and continued to kill criminals in three other stories by Tepperman. Benson had caught Jones with the help of another man in South Africa:

"Jan Doberman. He was a South African. I met him in Johannesburg years before the war. He was a curio dealer. There was a bandit out there in those days who went by the name of Junius Jones. Jan Doberman and I tracked him down and fought it out with his gang and captured Jones. The mistake we made was in sparing his life" (chap. 2).

Doberman and Benson were very close, and Doberman later immigrated to the United States where he died:

"When Jan Doberman died...I promised him on his deathbed that I'd always be ready to help his son, Toby, in trouble. Jan had two watches which he had brought with him from South Africa. They were twin watches, eighteen-carat gold, and no larger than a dime. He gave one of them to me and the other to Toby. Here's mine" (chap. 2).

Tepperman also claimed that Benson learned judo in the Orient ("Cargo of Doom," chap.3) This statement would imply that Benson also visited Japan during his travels in the Far East.

It was the original intention to portray the Avenger as a man in his thirties. However, an editorial decision was then made to take about ten years off his age. There were various references in Ernst's novels which indicate that Benson is a man only in his twenties. *Tuned for Murder* (chap.6) depicted him as "still a very young man." In *The Glass Mountain* (chap. 2), he was described as a "young man." *Stockholders in Death* described him as "young" (chap. 2). According to *River of Ice*, he was "obviously young" (chap. 3). *Murder on Wheels* described him as "really a very young man" (chap. 3). *Three Gold Crowns* claimed that he was "only in his twenties" (chap. 2). *Nevlo* asserted that he was "still in his twenties" (chap. 2). *The Hate Master* even professed that Benson was "in his early twenties" (chap. 4). In *Pictures of Death*, Benson was in his "twenties" (chap. 6). In *The Happy Killers*, Benson was "still in his twenties" (chap. 2). Benson was "still very young" in *The Wilder Curse* (chap. 1). In *Midnight Murder*, he was "very young" and "in his twenties" (chap. 2).

It is impossible for Benson to have been so young and have done all the things attributed to him before becoming the Avenger. If Benson was only in his early twenties in *The Hate Master*, a novel set during the presidential campaign of 1940, then he would only have been at most twenty-five. He then would have been only twelve when he worked on the Mosul oilfields in 1927! These references to Benson's age in the 1940's must be viewed as distortions.

Ron Goulart picked up on these allusions to Benson's age, and also portrayed him as a man in his twenties. In *The Blood Countess*, a novel set in 1943, it is stated that Benson was "not yet thirty" (chap. 2). This whole matter is further complicated by the fact that Goulart created in the same novel a female character, Elizabeth Bentin, whom Benson dated in college for "a semester or two." She was definitely under thirty in 1943.

In order to explain these discrepancies in Benson's age in the 1940's, a chronologist is forced to expound an elaborate theory. Mine is that Benson tired of his life of adventuring in the early 1930's, and regretted the fact that he had never gone to college like normal men. There are actors who portray teenagers even when they are in their early thirties. Benson could have lied about his age, and enrolled in an American college for a brief period. The most likely time for this to have happened would have been after Benson nearly broke his oath not to kill in South Africa. Benson would then have been afraid that the strain of further adventures would cause him to kill another man. After only two semesters, Benson then returned to his life of danger.

There is one mystery about Benson's past which can never be fully resolved. How did this man gain such amazing abilities?

As described in Ernst's original novels, Benson was an incredible physical specimen. For a man only of average height (five feet eight) and weight (160 or 165 pounds), he was incredibly powerful: "Now and then you get a man like Benson in whom, ounce for ounce, sinew and muscle are packed with force beyond any scientific explanation." (*Justice Inc.*, chap. 3). Benson could tie knots in steel cables with his bare hands (*The Sky Walker*, chap. 12).

Benson's senses were extraordinary: "Dick Benson's hearing was a marvelous thing. He had trusted his life to it in the wilderness of tropical jungles---and also in the wilderness of city streets. His sight was even more marvelous. Those colorless awe-inspiring eyes could take on telescopic power when necessary. Just as they could examine a close object with almost microscopic ability." (*The Devil's Horns*, chap. 1). His eyes also possessed "the rare quality of being able to see in the dark" (*Midnight Murder*, chap. 3).

Benson could do many more extraordinary things. Benson could read lips (*The Glass Mountain*, chap. 6). He also knew sign language (*The Blood Ring*, chap. 17). He could render people unconscious by touching nerves on their necks (*The Yellow Hoard*, chap. 17). Benson had "an eye for color that was like an artist's chart" (*The Flame Breathers*, chap. 13). He knew *la savate*, the French art of fighting with the feet (*Stockholders in Death*, chap. 3).

Benson's accomplishments in all fields create an extraordinary resume. Benson was "one of the world's great experts in aerodynamics" (*The Sky Walker*, chap. 2), "a superb physician himself" (*The Frosted Death*, chap. 15), a man who "knew a dozen languages" (*Ibid.*, chap. 13), "the world's greatest engineer" (*The Glass Mountain*, chap. 6), "an expert Egyptologist, probably without peer in the world" (*The Blood Ring*, chap. 2), a "great" psychiatrist (*The Smiling Dogs*, chap. 13), an expert at dating documents (*River of Ice*, chap. 3), "the world's greatest hypnotist" (*Murder on Wheels*, chap. 15), a doctor "as brilliant in oral surgery and advanced dentistry as he was in general medical practice" (*Three Gold Crowns*, chap. 15), "a great electrical engineer" and "a master of law" (*Nevlo*, chap. 6), "one of the world's leading scientists, pick any branch you please" (*The Hate Master*, chap. 7), "the world's foremost authority on locks" (*Pictures of Death*, chap. 8), "the world's best authority on tropical diseases" (*The Green Killer*, chap. 3), "an outstanding medical authority" who "had written treatises on bubonic and other plagues that were used in most post-graduate courses" (*The Black Death*, chap. 4), "the world's best pilot" (*Ibid.*, chap. 11), "one of the world's best sculptors" with works on exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum (*The Wilder Curse*, chap. 13), and "a composer, sculptor and artist of rare merit" as well as "a military tactician" whose opinions were often asked by "the United States Army's general staff" (*Midnight Murder*, chap. 2).

Richard Henry Benson was in a many ways a superman equivalent to Doc Savage. While we know that Doc gained his extraordinary talents from being trained to be a superman from the cradle by scientists, we have no idea how Benson gained his extraordinary intellect and physique. Did a similar group of enlightened scientists trained Benson to be a veritable superman? Or was it a gout of *unenlightened* scientists? The fact that Benson would appear to have become a global wanderer in his teens suggest that he was running away from something or someone. Maybe a group of evil men experimented to make him into a superman, and Benson rebelled against their malevolent designs.

If we assume that Doc Savage and the Avenger co-existed in the same fictional universe, then we could make some interesting speculations. There is some evidence in the Doc Savage series that German Intelligence was spying on the experiment to transform Doc Savage into a superman. In Lester Dent's *The Golden Man* (April 1941), the secret date of Doc's birth was known to a high intelligence official in an unnamed nation which is generally believed to be Germany. No matter who wrote the Avenger's exploits, Benson was always tangling with German spies. In the novels by Ron Goulart, there are incredible German spy rings in the United States during World War II that were composed of "moles" and "sleepers" who were sent to America long before the rise of Hitler. These spy rings even conducted bizarre scientific experiments inside the United States. If an equivalent German spy ring had existed inside the United States in the early 1900's, then it could have infiltrated the project which was training Doc Savage to be a superman. Furthermore, it could have sought to duplicate the experiment on a young American male who supposedly would grow up to be a German spy. The subject of this experiment could have learned of this guardians' sinister intentions, and fled to become the man known as Richard Henry Benson.

The above theory is pure speculation, and readers should feel free to unconditionally reject it. However, it should be noted that even the United States government had unanswered questions about Benson's origins:

"The Avenger had helped the government in several important cases; he was known to every high official. Yet, in the last analysis no one knew anything *about* him. He was essentially a man of mystery." (*Nevlo*, chap. 13).

CHRONOLOGY OF RICHARD HENRY BENSON'S UNRECORDED PAST

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| 1902 | Birth of Richard Henry Benson |
| 1917 | At the age of fifteen, Benson befriends an Arizona "badman." |
| 1918 | At the age of sixteen, Benson makes his first fortune in Australia. He is attacked by a madman with a hatchet. Jim Crast, an engineer, saves |

- Benson's life (it is unclear whether this rescue involved the madman with the hatchet, or was a totally separate incident).
- 1919 Benson learns to be a pearl diver in the South Seas. He kills a man in Tahiti. He develops his special gun, Mike.
- 1920 Benson travels to Borneo. He leads native armies in Java.
- 1921 Benson makes aerial maps in the Congo.
- 1922-23 Benson spots rubber in Brazil. He promotes tin mines in Brazil and Peru with Alden Stahl. Benson finds emeralds in Brazil. He encounters jungle headhunters in Brazil.
- 1924 Benson works as an engineer for the French Railway in North Africa. He rescues Johnson the Swede from an Arab band in Morocco. He also saves the life of a salesman of farm machinery in Fez, Morocco.
- 1925 Benson looks for gold in Alaska. He meets Bull Red. He locates mines in the Arctic.
- 1926 Benson works with Johnson the Swede on an engineering job in China. Benson also visits Tibet.
- 1927 Benson helps to open up the oilfields in Mosul, Iraq. He works on engineering projects in Arabia.
- 1928 Benson learns tricks in knife throwing from a Javanese in Singapore. He creates his knife, Ike. He brings a forty thousand-dollar cargo of animals to the Cleveland Zoo from the Malay jungles. He holds off a crew in mutiny in the Pacific for twenty-three days. He learns judo (probably in Japan).
- 1929 Benson works on an engineering project in Siam. He looks for amethysts in Australia.
- 1930 Benson travels in Antarctica.
- 1931 Benson looks for diamonds in the Transvaal. With Jan Doberman of Johannesburg, Benson captures bandit Junius Jones.
- 1931-32 Seeking to abandon his reckless life of adventure, Benson enrolls himself in an American college in the fall of 1931. Although he uses his real name, he pretends to be twelve years younger. This deception will lead to confusion concerning Benson's real age during his exploits as the Avenger in 1938-44. Benson stays in college for only two semesters. He dates Elizabeth Bentin during this time.
- 1932 Now "out of school," Benson does a land survey for the Mexican government.
- 1933 Benson beats out Lorens Singer in a lucrative oil deal in Venezuela. He also triumphs over Pierpont Ryan by gaining some electrical power contracts in South America. He meets a German military attaché in Chile. Benson marries a Canadian woman named Alicia.

1934	Benson invents the alpha lamp and a tin-reclamation process. For the Stockbridge Corporation, he works on a new smokeless powder process. He finances the Texas Synthetic Rubber Corporation. Benson's daughter, Alice, is born. Jan Doberman dies in the United States.
1935	Benson travels to Eastern Europe where he visits Transylvania, and rescues an American correspondent in Albania. He uses Ike (and possibly Mike) for the last time before the events of <i>Justice, Inc.</i>
1936	Benson gains half a million dollars in another Australian amethyst deal. He retires from business.
1936-38	Benson and his family travel to Bermuda, Hawaii, California, Florida and Alaska.
1938	In May, word reaches Benson in the United States that his mother-in-law is dying in Montreal. He decides to board a plane with his family in Buffalo, New York. The events of <i>Justice, Inc.</i> begin to unfold.

CHRONOLOGY OF RICHARD HENRY BENSON'S EXPLOITS AS THE AVENGER

A) The novels by Paul Ernst published in *The Avenger* magazine

1. 1938: May-June (35 days)
Title: *Justice, Inc.*
Published: September 1939

"Under the May sun..." (chap. 1). "...the June dark..." (chap. 12). "A June rain was brewing." (chap. 14). Besides explaining how Benson became the Avenger, this novel introduced his first two aides, Fergus MacMurdie ("Mac") and Algernon Heathcote Smith ("Smitty").

2. 1938: October (5 days)
Title: *The Yellow Hoard*
Published: October 1939

"...black autumn night..." (chap. 3). This novel introduced Nellie Grey as the latest recruit to Benson's team of crimefighters.

At the conclusion of *Justice, Inc.*, Benson announced his intention to make his headquarters in New York. When this novel opened, Benson had been established in his Bleek Street headquarters in New York for some time. The police were very well acquainted with him. They arrested people at his request (chap. 11), and even permitted him to violate minor traffic laws (chap. 13). Benson called his group "Justice & Co." in this novel, and the door of his headquarters bore the single word "Justice" (chap. 3). The sign will eventually become "Justice, Inc."

3. 1938: October (4 days)
Title: *The Sky Walker*
Published: November 1939

This novel introduced Josh and Rosabel Newton. The activities of the master criminal in this novel led to false speculation that an unnamed foreign power was going to seize Alaska, California or Oregon (chap. 6). The unnamed nation was probably intended to be Japan, which had been at war with China since 1937.

By the time of this adventure, Benson had garnered quite a reputation as a crimefighter. The underworld recognized him as "a deadly enemy" (chap. 4). Benson had letters of reference

from both Chicago's police commissioner and the governor of New York (chap. 5). He was even rumored to be a "buddy" of President Roosevelt (chap. 8).

4. 1938: December 21-24 (4 days)
Title: *The Devil's Horns*
Published: December 1939

"...frosty winter night..." (chap. 1). "...cold December night..." (chap. 1). "...the full of the moon ...occurs day after tomorrow, December 26th" (chap. 16). This observation about the full moon was made on the last day of the adventure.

This novel claimed that the Avenger was "responsible for the deaths of a dozen crime geniuses with their scores of helpers" (chap. 1). Since only three recorded adventures of the Avenger had transpired prior to this novel, then there has to be at least nine unrecorded adventures between *Justice, Inc.* and *The Devil's Horns* in order for the Avenger to have ended the careers of twelve master criminals.

The Avenger had become much wider known to law-enforcement officials by this time. "A great many patrolmen and detectives, of the rank and file over the country, did not know of Benson. But there wasn't a police chief in the United States who did not know the Avenger." (chap. 3).

5. 1939: May (4 days)
Title: *The Frosted Death*
Published: January 1940

"The night was fairly warm." (chap. 1). By this time, every cop on the New York police force "from the greenest rookie up" knew the Avenger (chap. 4).

The plot of this novel involved a deadly bacteria being developed for an unnamed European power. The country was meant to be Nazi Germany. World War II had not yet erupted because one character noted that "there'll be war soon" (chap. 12).

The sign on the door of Benson's headquarters still read "Justice" (chap. 6).

6. 1939: June (5 days)
Title: *Tuned For Murder*
Published: May 1940

The plot involved a famous inventor who created an incredible new weapon. The scientist hoped to ensure world peace by threatening to turn his invention over to any nation which would be the victim of future aggression. The novel obviously transpired before the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. At the novel's conclusion, Benson took this invention to a secret vault of the United States government. Since this fictional weapon was never used after the United States became drawn into World War II, it could be speculated that the invention either a) never worked, b) was of so deadly a nature that it could backfire on whoever employed it c) was destroyed by an act of sabotage committed by a foreign power or d) resided forgotten in a secret government storage center like the Ark of the Covenant discovered by Indiana Jones. The exact nature of the secret weapon was never revealed, but it was hinted that it was an explosive (chap. 2). Could it have been an atomic bomb?

Although Benson weighed 160 pounds in *Justice, Inc.* (chap.3), he weighed 165 pounds in *Tuned for Murder* (chap. 10). The sign on the Bleek Street door still read "Justice" (chap. 2). The Avenger now had a portfolio of letters of reference "from governors of several states, from the head of the department of justice and from many police chiefs" (chap. 15).

7. 1939: Early July (5 days)
Title: *The Glass Mountain*
Published: February 1940

"It was hot as blazes..." (chap. 6).

This novel noted that "the commonest form of attack" against the Avenger, "next to gunfire, was an attempt to get him by deadly gas" (chap. 9). *The Devil's Horns* had involved the use of poison gas against the Avenger. Probably poison gas was employed against him in many unrecorded adventures prior to *The Glass Mountain*.

The Avenger now had letters of introduction from the governor of New York, J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI and President Roosevelt (chap. 10).

8. 1939: Mid July (5 days)
Title: *The Flame Breathers*
Published: September 1940

"The early summer air was hazy and windless." (chap. 8). The plot involved a group of Polish scientists who were hiding all over the world. One scientist hid in Berlin (chap. 1). He only could have done this before the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939.

Benson's letters of introduction were again mentioned in this novel. He had letters "from several State governors, the head of the F.B.I, and only but very short intimate one from the president himself " (chap. 3).

Benson and his aides now wore bulletproof clothing which he "recently perfected" (chap. 7).

The sign on the Bleek Street door now read "Justice, Inc." (chap. 9). It had been "Justice" solely in previous novels.

This novel treated Benson as a real person. Supposedly Nellie Grey kept notes of all the Avenger's exploits which were then used by "Kenneth Robeson" as the basis for the novels (chap. 11).

9. 1939: Late July (5 days)
Title: *The Blood Ring*
Published: March 1940

This novel would seem to have transpired in the summer since the nights had to be warm in Washington D.C. Various people in the novel were wandering around at night clad in scanty Egyptian garments. Although the novel contained at least two references to 1940 (chap. 6 and chap. 16), the publication month of the novel indicates that it could only have transpired in the summer of 1939.

The Avenger was wearing the bulletproof clothing (chap. 6) recently perfected in *The Flame Breathers*. However, the Bleek Street sign was now again just saying "Justice" in *The Blood Ring* (chap. 6). It may be that Benson went back to the old sign, or possibly some unscrupulous souvenir-hunter stole the comma and the "Inc."

10. 1939: August (5 days)
Title: *Stockholders in Death*
Published: April 1940

The Bleek Street sign still read "Justice" (chap. 2). Benson was utilizing the bulletproof clothing (chap. 12) from *The Flame Breathers*.

11. 1939: August (5 days)
Title: *The Smiling Dogs*
Published: June 1940

The plot involved helium deposits that "might mean the difference between victory and defeat in time of war" (chap. 12). However, there were no references to World War II raging in Europe. This novel would seem to have taken place when the European situation was tense, but no actual fighting had erupted yet.

12. 1939: September (3 days)
Title: *River of Ice*
Published: July 1940

A brief passage indicated that World War II had started in Europe: "Down the second block loomed something that was a common sight in European cities. The wrecked shell of a building, standing stark and ragged in the night. It looked as if a bomb had gone right down through the center of it and exploded in the cellar." (chap. 6). World War II had erupted on September 1, 1939.

The novel contained a reference (chap. 13) to the Avenger's operation on Josh Newton in *The Glass Mountain*.

We learn in *River of Ice* that Benson did not personally utilize the title of the Avenger. "Never in his life had Benson called himself the Avenger. That grim title had been bestowed on him by others, principally members of the underworld." (chap. 17).

13. 1939: Late September (5 days)
Title: *Murder on Wheels*
Published: November 1940

This is a pivotal novel for two reasons. First, it introduced a new recruit into the Avenger's organization, Cole Wilson. Second, this novel had Benson cured of the physical condition which froze his facial nerves and rendered his hair white. So far, this chronology had followed the submission order of the original novels as opposed to their publication novels. Although Paul Ernst wrote three novels before *Murder on Wheels*, these stories, *Nevlo*, *House of Death*, *Death in Slow Motion*, were published later with editorial alterations which contained references to Cole Wilson and Benson's cure. Therefore, I am forced to place these novels in chronological slots after *Murder on Wheels*.

Viewed in isolation from the next chronological entry, *Murder on Wheels* could have logically been placed in early 1940. It was stated that Benson lost the use of his facial muscles "nearly two years ago" (chap. 13). Furthermore, a night watchman made a reference to "a cold winter day" (chap. 13). However, Cole Wilson's next adventure with Benson was *Three Gold Crowns*, a novel clearly set in early November. A reference the night being "warm" in *Murder on Wheels* (chap. 5) also implied that the time was not winter. The time was more likely autumn rather than summer because a "summer villa" was boarded up (chap. 8). Benson lost his white hair in *Murder on Wheels*, and was totally bald for a brief period. His hair began to grow back as black when the novel concluded. It was fully back by the time of *Three Gold Crowns*. At least a month had to pass for Benson's hair to grow back. Since *Three Gold Crowns* was set in early November, then *Murder on Wheels* should be placed in late September. This placement means that the novel took place sixteen months after Benson's face became rubber-like.

The sign on Bleek Street read "Justice Inc." again (chap. 3). All later novels and stories in this chronology are consistent with this reference.

Benson was revealed to be an "honorary member" of the United States Secret Service (chap. 6).

A reference to Benson having "once been forced to fight the giant Smitty" (chap. 12) was either a reference to *Justice, Inc.* (in which the two tangled because they misunderstood each other's motives) or *Tuned for Murder* (in which Smitty was the victim of a mind control device).

14. 1939: November 6-9 (4 days)
Title: *Three Gold Crowns*
Published: January 1941

"It's sure warm for November..." (chap. 2). Three nights before the Avenger became involved in this case, a man had been murdered on "November 3" (chap. 4).

Cole Wilson had "recently joined" the Avenger's group (chap. 2). In fact, this was "his first job with Benson's band" (chap. 7, Cole had not been an official member of Justice, Inc. in the prior novel).

Rather than his usual gray clothing, the Avenger wore black in this novel (chap. 7). In later novels, he would be back to wearing gray. He also found himself in a situation where he had to temporarily abandon his code of not directly killing an enemy (chap. 7).

Besides the usual letters of introduction from the president, the state governors and the New York police commissioner, Benson now had credentials proving himself "a member of the FBI and an honorary member of the city detective bureau" (chap. 9). Since Benson "had solved so many crime cases for the police that no one in the department could quite remember them all," the police commissioner allowed him to investigate crime scenes before the official constabulary arrived on the scene (chap. 14).

NOTE: Sometime in 1939, Benson battled Egon Black, a master criminal who headed an organization called the Death Syndicate. Black was believed falsely to have perished (see entry #28).

15. 1940: April 23-30 (8 days)
Title: *Nevlo*
Published: July 1941

The date "April 27th" (chap. 3) figured prominently in this adventure, and I judge it to be the sixth day of the adventure. References to the presence of "war-weary refugees" inside the United States (chap. 13) indicate that World War II was raging in Europe.

Cole Wilson "had been called to Washington as a technical adviser on one of the nation's great defense projects" (chap. 3). This reference to Cole's absence was really an editorial insertion since this novel had originally been written before *Murder on Wheels*. Similar insertions were made to *The House of Death* and *Death in Slow Motion*.

It was reiterated in this novel that poison gas was "a much-used weapon in the fight of the underworld against the Avenger and his crew" (chap. 5).

It was stated that the Avenger "never took a human life" as a crime-fighter (chap. 10). Because of editorial tampering, this novel has to follow *Three Gold Crowns* in which the Avenger deliberately broke his code by fatally shooting a crook in the neck.

In *Nevlo*, the Avenger was wrongly suspected of being the mastermind behind the crime wave threatening the nation's electrical power supply. Benson was pursued by a group of Federal agents led by Paul Edward Arnold, also called P. Edward Arnold (chap. 13). Arnold was head of a government agency called a "bureau" (chap. 17). Arnold was meant to be a thinly disguised portrayal of J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is interesting to note that although the FBI had given Benson a letter of recommendation and at least honorary membership, this government organization still didn't fully trust the Avenger. Arnold (Hoover) had learned a lot about Benson from their prior association. For one thing, the Federal chief knew where Benson hid Mike and Ike (chap. 14).

The super-weapon which caused power failures in this novel was given to the War Department when the criminals were bough to justice. Maybe it ended up in the same government vault as the top-secret invention from *Tuned for Murder*.

16. 1940: May (4 days)
Title: *House of Death*
Published: March 1941

The year of this exploit has to be 1940 because Sharnoff Haygar had been an expatriate for "seven years" since fleeing Russia in 1933 (chap. 5).

Cole Wilson was now "in Detroit, acting as a consultant on an important engineering task with which he had been associated before joining the Avenger's crew of crime-fighters" (chap. 3). It could be that the government sent Cole to Detroit after briefing him in Washington. Cole could

have been loosely associated with some defense project in Detroit prior to joining the Avenger in 1939.

In the previous adventure, P. Edward Arnold (alias J. Edgar Hoover) temporarily turned against the Avenger. In *House of Death*, another old-time ally, the New York police commissioner, wrongly suspected Benson of committing crimes (chap. 7). The spring of 1940 was apparently a time period when the Avenger briefly lost the trust of important law-enforcement authorities. Perhaps the commissioner still had his doubts about Benson being innocent of the crime wave thwarted in *Nevlo*.

17. 1940: May (6 days)
Title: *The Hate Master*
Published: May 1941

There were rabbits (chap. 3) and pigeons (chap. 4) in the state of New York. "It was an unreasonably warm day..." (chap. 13).

Benson foiled the scheme of a corrupt man seeking the Presidency. This novel had to be set in the presidential election year of 1940. In those days before the creation of the New Hampshire primary, presidential campaigns were shorter. They usually began in the spring since the presidential conventions were held in the summer.

18. 1940: August 1-5 (5 days)
Title: *Death in Slow Motion*
Published: September 1941

The Wardwear plant was sabotaged on "August 2nd" (chap. 18). This happened on the second day of the Avenger's involvement in the case. The novel was set during World War II: "With war all over the world, and even talk of the inevitability of America's own entrance..." (chap. 3).

Cole Wilson, who had been present in *The Hate Master*, was now again back "in Washington aiding the government on an important defense project" (chap. 3).

The villain, Count Franz Bord, was the agent for an unnamed foreign power which wanted to sabotage the American rubber industry. The unscrupulous nation was clearly meant to be Nazi Germany.

19. 1940: August 16-19 (4 days)
Title: *Pictures of Death*
Published: November 1941

"And it's now one o'clock in the morning of August 19th!" (chap. 13). This statement was uttered on the last day of this case.

The Avenger battled foreign saboteurs working for a nation which had access to the art treasures of France. The unnamed nation was meant to be Nazi Germany, which had conquered France on June 22, 1940.

Lieutenant Parsons of the New York police had met Benson "several times" (chap. 6). Since this was Parsons' only appearance in the series, his previous meeting with Benson must have been unrecorded.

Benson's knife, Ike, was incorrectly called "Mike" (chap. 15), the name of the Avenger's gun.

20. 1940: September (4 days)
Title: *The Green Killer*
Published: January 1942

There was a reference to the fall of France (chap. 10). France fell in June 1940.

Benson had recently designed "a revolutionary type of supercharger" for airplanes. It was now "in the vaults of the War Department" (chap. 7). Benson probably worked on the supercharger during June-July 1940 since I have no recorded adventures for those months.

21. 1941: May (3 days)
Title: *The Happy Killers*
Published: March 1942

There were "crickets" and "a bird" (chap. 12) in Long Island, New York, but the time was not summer. There was mention of "a few summer houses here and there, deserted save in mid-summer." (chap. 5).

For an unknown reason, the address of the Avenger's headquarters is given as Bleeker Street (chap. 3) rather than Bleek Street.

22. 1941: May (6 days)
Title: *The Black Death*
Published: May 1942

"...that spring afternoon..." (chap. 1). There was an old license plate dated 1940, and it was described as "last year's plate" (chap. 12). Therefore, the novel is set in the spring of 1941. There were references to "the present war" and "a time of war" (chap. 14), but there were no references to a direct American involvement in World War II. There is no difficulty with placing this novel before the Pearl Harbor attack (December 7, 1941), because the United States was supporting Britain and Russia through Lend-Lease and other measures.

23. 1941: June (2 days)
Title: *The Wilder Curse*
Published: July 1942

"...in summer, as it was now..." (chap. 1). It is implied that the year is 1942 because the novel's villain was described as "some 1942 Jack the Ripper" (chap. 5). My reason for not putting this novel in 1942 stems from the fact that I want to reconcile Paul Ernst's novels with Emile C. Tepperman's short stories. The best way to do so was to keep each of the works by these Avenger authors in separate chronological periods rather than mix them together. Tepperman's "Cargo of Doom," was set before the Pearl Harbor attack, I can not place any of Ernst's novels after 1941 because then I would be mixing his and Tepperman's contributions to the Avenger saga. If there had been compelling reasons to chronologically mix the authors' works together, I would have done so. Fortunately, I couldn't find any.

By this time, Cole Wilson and all the other aides of the Avenger had identification cards from "the police departments of a dozen big cities" (chap. 5).

24. 1941: July (3 days)
Title: *Midnight Murder*
Published: September 1942

Although Benson battled foreign spies in this novel, the villains were not Axis agents but freelance agents who sold their secrets to the highest bidder. Germany and Japan were mentioned as foreign powers interested in obtaining American defense secrets (chap. 4), but there were no references to a state of war existing between those nations and the United States. This novel would seem to have taken place before Pearl Harbor.

We learn some important things in this novel about Benson's relationship with law-enforcement agencies. His membership in the FBI was only honorary (chap. 3). His integrity was vouched for by the heads of the Secret Service and army intelligence (chap. 2). The Avenger was an honorary captain in the New York police, and he had forty-seven other identification cards giving himself various positions in official law-enforcement agencies (chap. 5).

Benson was designing a new plane for the American military (chap. 2). He probably worked on this design during the long gap between *The Green Killer* and *The Happy Killers* (October 1939 to April 1940).

B) The short stories by Emile C. Tepperman

25. 1941: July (1 day)
Title: "Death to the Avenger"
Published: *Clues*, September 1942

In this story, the Avenger refrained from taking human life. This policy will change dramatically with the next chronological entry.

According to this story, Smitty had been educated at Groton, Cambridge and Edinburgh (chap. 3).

In Ernst's *The Wilder Curse*, it was claimed that Justice, Inc. had four different telephone numbers for their Bleek Street headquarters (chap. 1). In Tepperman's stories, three different numbers were given. "Death to the Avenger" (chap. 4) gave Lakeside 7-7777. "A Coffin for the Avenger" (chap. 6) gave Liberty 1-1111, and "Cargo of Doom" (chap. 3) gave both the previously cited number and the alternate number of Liberty 2-2222.

26. 1941: August (1 day)
Title: "Vengeance on the Avenger"
Published: *Clues*, January 1943

Junius Jones, the evil man whose life had been spared by Benson in South Africa, ten years earlier, returned looking for vengeance. The reappearance of this old adversary caused Benson to totally lose his self-control. He abandoned usage of his specialized weapons, Mike and Ike, and adopted conventional firearms. He now killed criminals out right in self-defense rather than render them unconscious or cause them to fall victims to their own machinations. Benson was now increasingly nervous about confronting criminals. Perhaps his adoption of smoking cigarettes (chap. 4) was an attempt to ease his nerves.

While it was emphasized in Ernst's *River of Ice* (chap. 17) and *Nevlo* (chap. 4) that Benson didn't like to be called the Avenger, he brazenly claimed that title in "Vengeance on the Avenger" (chap. 8). For the record, it should be noted that Benson seemingly called himself the Avenger during a conversation with the New York police commissioner in Ernst's *House of Death* (chap. 7). However, the man talking to the commissioner was actually an actor impersonating Benson.

In "Vengeance on the Avenger," Nellie Grey and Smitty had been missing for two days (chap. 2) before the story opened. At the time of their disappearance, Benson had been "out of New York on some other matter" (chap. 3).

27. 1941: August (1 days)
Title: "Cargo of Doom"
Published: *Clues*, May 1943

The Avenger continued his policy of slaying his enemies in this story. The plot involved a Danish ship which had fled the Nazi invasion of Scandinavia with a fortune of gold. The Danish sailors hoped to use this money to finance the Resistance back in Denmark. Benson saved the sailors from the Nazis, but kept the details of the gold hidden from the American authorities. This decision to withhold information resulted because the gold might be impounded since the United States was still neutral. The short story was set before America's entry into World War II due to the Pearl Harbor attack.

There were references to the Nazi invasions of Denmark and Crete (chap. 4). Denmark was invaded in April 1940 and Crete in May 1941. The Danish ship had gone to Spain and South America after the Nazis invaded Denmark. When the Nazis traced the ship to Spain, the ship

then spent about "fourteen months" sailing from port to port in the Western Hemisphere until arriving in New York. Fourteen months after the invasion of Denmark would be June 1941, but probably a month or two passed between the time the ship left Denmark and the Nazis traced it to Spain.

There was also some chronological information regarding a crewman on the ship, Miguel Fatuma. The accuracy of this information is doubtful because it was made by a Nazi agent pretending to be one of the Danish sailors. Benson spotted the contradictions in this information and exposed the impersonation. Fatuma was supposedly half-Spanish and half-Greek. It had been asserted by the Nazi spy that Fatuma fled the invasion of Crete (May 1941). It was eventually revealed that Fatuma had been murdered by the Nazis in Buenos Aires two months before the events of "Cargo of Doom" unfolded. Assuming the Nazi spy was telling the truth about Fatuma fleeing Crete, then Fatuma must have fled to South America and then joined the Danish ship there. Eventually, the Nazis slew him in Buenos Aires. Two months after the invasion of Crete would be July 1941, but Fatuma would probably need a month to flee Crete and make his way to South America. For the above reasons, I place "Cargo of Doom" in the month of August.

Nellie Grey was the only assistant present in this story. Smitty was in Washington, and "the other members of the Avenger's staff were dispersed over the four parts of the world" (chap. 1).

28. 1941: August (1 day)
Title: "To Find a Dead Man"
Published: *The Shadow*, August 1944

The Avenger continued to kill criminals. This policy was probably confirmed in Benson's mind by the reappearance of Egon Black, another old adversary from an unrecorded adventure. Although it is stated at one point that Benson fought Black "about a year ago," it was later stated that their initial encounter was really two years previously. In their unrecorded battle, Black had led the Death Syndicate, an organization which insured men's lives to a phony charity and then murdered them. Benson had captured Black and turned him over to the police. Black then escaped and faked his death in a plane crash. When Black returned seeking revenge, the Avenger shot him in the forehead.

Nellie Grey was the only other member of Justice, Inc. present in this story. This fact leads me to conclude that "To Find a Dead Man" took place shortly after "Cargo of Doom."

29. 1942: January (2 days)
Title: "Calling Justice, Inc.!"
Published: *Clues*, March 1943

The time was probably winter since Nellie Grey was taking a vacation in Florida. The year is deduced as being 1942 because of the history of the Zaharoff jewels in this story. A family named Zaharoff had kept valuable jewels on an island in the East Indies. The family had moved to the United States when "the war had bought the swarming Japanese barbarians" (chap. 3). Then the family was murdered by a criminal named Royce Haggard. After hiding the jewels, Haggard was sent to prison. He escaped after "five years" had passed. The Japanese actually invaded the East Indies shortly after Pearl Harbor. This can not be the time in which the Zaharoffs fled the Far East because then the story would be set in 1946, three years after it was published. The Japanese did begin their invasion of China in 1937, and the Zaharoffs probably foresaw this military operation eventually leading to the conquest of the East Indies. If the Zaharoffs came to the United States in 1937, then the events of this story transpired in 1942.

A reference to "defense work" in Florida (chap. 1) implies that the story was set after Pearl Harbor. Benson had also recently designed the "gun assembly" for a "converted Beaufort fighter" sent to the United States by the British government (chap. 4). According to this story, someone named Holloway was in charge of maintaining Benson's airplanes.

The Avenger continued to slay criminals in this story.

In all of the chronological entries from August 1941 to January 1942, Benson and his aides were no longer wearing their bulletproof undergarments. It may be the factory creating

these unique pieces of clothing had been sabotaged by Benson's enemies (most likely Nazi spies).

30. 1942: March (1 day)
Title: "A Coffin for the Avenger"
Published: *Clues*, November 1942

The Avenger was now back to his policy of refraining from taking human life. This fact neatly dovetails with Ron Goulart's novels. Probably Benson got over the shock of re-confronting Jones and Black, and reinstated his old policy. His old traditional weapons (Mike, Ike, sleep gas etc.) were now once again being utilized.

The Avenger fought a Nazi spy called the Black Tulip. This secret agent was after a depth charge which could "clear the seas of submarines within a couple of months" (chap. 5). This statement strongly implied that a state of war existed between the United States and Nazi Germany. Consequently, I place this story after Pearl Harbor.

Four months before the story began, the Black Tulip had tried to purchase the depth charge unsuccessfully from its inventor (chap. 2). Probably this meeting transpired before the Pearl Harbor attack. This meeting probably took place in November 1941, and the events of "A Coffin for the Avenger" then happened in March 1942.

This story claimed that Cole Wilson learned Hindustani "during his five years as a surveyor for the British government in India" (chap. 6). There is nothing in Ernst's novels to suggest such a background for Wilson, and statements in Goulart's novels regarding Wilson's movements during the 1930's would contradict Tepperman's assertion. The best way to reconcile these contradictions would be to pretend that it was really Cole's father who was the land surveyor for the British government. It can then be theorized that the elder Wilson moved his family to India for five years, and allowed young Cole to accompany him on his surveys.

C) The novels by Ron Goulart published by Warner Paperback Library

31. 1942: October 31-November 3 (4 days)
Title: *The Man from Atlantis*
Published: June 1974

The story opened on Halloween (chap. 1).

According to this novel, Cole Wilson was expelled from "several" colleges (chap. 16). These included UCLA, where Willson spent three and a half months, and Heidelberg, which he attended in Germany during 1936.

This novel introduced federal agent Don Early, who will act as both ally and rival to Justice, Inc.

32. 1942: December (8 days)
Title: *Red Moon*
Published: July 1974

Nellie Grey "was spending a quiet pre-Christmas week in rustic and rural Connecticut" (chap. 2).

In some previously unrecorded instance, Benson had met General Barnum and his daughter Susan (chap. 10),

33. 1943: February (7 days)
Title: *The Purple Zombie*
Published: August 1974

It was "late winter" (chap. 1). This novel featured a metal detector which had been used "the year before" (chap. 18) in *Red Moon*.

In *Purple Zombie*, Cole Wilson had been in Hollywood for about a week (chap. 1) before the novel started. At the conclusion of *Red Moon*, Cole announced his intention to vacation in Hollywood. However, he may not have left right away, and more than a month could have passed between the two novels.

In *Purple Zombie*, Wilson saw a "casual acquaintance," Lamont Cranston, at a Hollywood party (chap. 7). Lamont Cranston, of course, is a millionaire whose identity was frequently assumed by The Shadow in pulp novels by Walter B. Gibson (published under the pseudonym of Maxwell Grant). The novel also mentioned Norgil (chap. 10), a fictional magician whose exploits were written by Gibson in Street and Smith's *Crimebusters* magazine.

34. 1943: February (7 days)
Title: *Dr. Time*
Published: September 1974

It was "a late winter day" (chap. 1). The novel mentioned the events of *Red Moon* and *The Purple Zombie*: "...that recent mess up in Connecticut and the strange doings in Hollywood" (chap. 2).

Dr. Time was the first novel to mention Wonderman (chap. 6), a comic book character whose strip will play a large role later in *The Cartoon Crimes*. Ron Goulart based Wonderman on Superman. This Wonderman has no connection with a current namesake created by Marvel Comics in the 1960's.

Dr. Time mentioned that Click Rush, the noted inventor, was one of Smitty's friends (chap. 13). Lester Dent had created Click Rush, the Gadget Man, for *Crimebusters*.

MacMurdie was packing for a vacation (chap. 26). This vacation will be described in the next novel, *The Nightwitch Devil*, but MacMurdie probably had to delay his vacation for two to three months. If he had taken his vacation right after *Dr. Time*, then it would only have been late winter or early spring. However, chronological references in later novels indicate *The Cartoon Crimes*, a novel set in the summer, transpired approximately a month after *The Nightwitch Devil*. MacMurdie had to take his vacation much later in the spring.

35. 1943: May (4 days)
Title: *The Nightwitch Devil*
Published: October 1974

"We haven't had such a wet spring since before the war." (chap. 11).

Although Benson had shed himself of many of the characteristics which he picked up in Emile C. Tepperman's "Vengeance on the Avenger," the crimefighter maintained the habit of calling himself the Avenger in this paperback novel (chap. 21).

At the conclusion of *The Nightwitch Devil* (chap. 26), Smitty announced his intention to travel to California "next month." The next novel picked up on Smitty's trip.

36. 1943: June (5 days)
Title: *Black Chariots*
Published: November 1974

"Spring had reached Manhattan..." (chap. 7). The novel mentioned the events of *Red Moon*, *The Purple Zombie* and *The Nightwitch Devil* (chap. 7).

Walter Gibson's Norgil was again mentioned in *Black Chariots* (chap. 13).

Rosabel Newton gave birth to twins when the novel concluded.

37. 1943: June (7 days)
Title: *The Cartoon Crimes*
Published: December 1974

"...a gray hazy summer day..." (chap. 1). The Newton twins, born in the previous adventure, were "only a week old" (chap. 5). Don Early had met Benson "last year" (chap. 13) in *The Man from Atlantis*.

According to *The Cartoon Crimes*, Cole Wilson had visited the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair (chap. 14).

38. 1943: October (5 days)
Title: *The Death Machine*
Published: January 1975

"...crisp autumn afternoon..." (chap. 1). Benson was already to investigate this case at the conclusion of the prior novel, but the long interval between the adventures suggests that some other pressing matters delayed him. This delay had severe consequences. While there had only been three mysterious deaths at a scientific project when Benson had first been asked to investigate, there were now eight (chap. 6). During the summer and early autumn of 1943, Justice, Inc. must have been very busy. Josh Newton didn't have "any time off since the twins were born" (chap. 6). Furthermore, Fergus MacMurdie took a long while recovering from the injuries which he had experienced in the last recorded adventure. He "was still a bit pale from what had befallen him while working on the cartoon crimes case" (chap. 6).

There was a reference to "the Man from Atlantis case" (chap. 12).

39. 1943: November (12 days)
Title: *The Blood Countess*
Published: February 1975

There were references to Benson's earlier adventures in *The Purple Zombie* and *Red Moon*: "Since he founded Justice, Inc., he'd seen dead men walk, and he'd fought against werewolves" (chap. 10). There was also a reference to *The Cartoon Crimes* made by Cole Wilson (chap. 17). He also remembered *The Purple Zombie* as "that zombie thing" (chap. 27).

The Blood Countess was the first novel in which members of Justice, Inc. were listening to a radio program called *The Romance of Mary Joyce, MD*.

The Blood Countess was set in the fictional South American country of Panazuela, whose name suggests that it was based on Venezuela.

40. 1943: December (5 days)
Title: *The Glass Man*
Published: March 1975

There was "snow" in New York (chap. 7). Dr. Dean "had come to New Mexico nearly two years ago, the month after Pearl Harbor" (chap. 7). Since the Pearl Harbor attack transpired in December 1941, then Dean went to New Mexico in January 1942. December 1943 would be nearly two years later.

This novel not only mentioned Norgil the magician but his creator, Walter Gibson, as well (chap. 13).

A movie theater was screening *The Purple Zombie* (chap. 6), the movie made in the novel of the same name. It was being shown with "a Wonderman cartoon."

Reference was made that a German spy had been planted in this country years ago "like that guy we run into up in Connecticut last year" (chap. 25). The Connecticut spy had appeared in *Red Moon*.

Werner Konrad, the major German spy in *The Glass Man*, escaped at the novel's conclusion. He probably would have returned if the series had not been canceled.

41. 1943: December (3 days)
Title: *The Iron Skull*
Published: April 1975

The title of the first chapter is "A Hot Day in December." Justice, Inc. had finished their previous exploit "two days ago" (chap. 1).

Smitty remembered the events of *The Death Machine* and *The Purple Zombie* in a conversation with Cole Wilson: "Look at what happened when I went to Frisco a few months ago. Or how about the last time you were out in Los Angeles with them movie picture buddies of yours?" (chap. 27).

Like Werner Konrad from the prior adventure, this novel's villain, the Iron Skull, escaped.

42. 1944: January (7 days)
Title: *Demon Island*
Published: May 1975

A character named Jepson had lost all his money in 1932, and it was now "a dozen years later" (chap. 1).

Cole Wilson became engaged to Heather Brail, an actress whom he had met in *The Purple Zombie*.

Demon Island featured the *Necronomicon* (chap. 20), the fictional book of black magic created by H. P. Lovecraft.

At this adventure's conclusion, Benson was going to investigate a rumor that his wife and child were still alive. This exploit was never written because the series was canceled. According to Will Murray's "Origin of an Avenger," Ron Goulart would have brought back the Iron Skull in this projected novel. Considering that the Skull constructed life-like robots, then it is likely that this rumor about the Avenger's family was a trap.

Author's Note

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