

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST



Ed Valigursky

Ed Valigursky is a paradox. So much so that he might well be called a deliberate young man in a hurry. At the age of 17—in late 1943—he considered the situation and decided, characteristically, to get his military training over and done with. So, without waiting for Uncle Sam to crook the finger, Ed joined the Navy and served through to 1946.

This obligation met, he put on civvies and held another pondering session, during which he asked himself—What kind of a career do I want? Mind you, he didn't ask—What am I best fitted for? What would be the easiest? Or, how can I make the most money? The only question in his mind was—What do I *want* to do?

He decided on art and signed up at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, commuting back and forth from his home in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. But if Ed had decided to build bridges, write novels, open a brokerage house, or almost anything else you get the feeling—after knowing him a while—he would have succeeded equally well. This because of his remarkable determination and an ability to concentrate that is given to few people.

Ed finished his art course and headed—as do most young hopefuls in his chosen field—towards O. Henry's fabulous "Bagdad on the Hudson", New York City.

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He got the first job he applied for, and probably did not think it at all remarkable—an assistant art director's post here at Ziff Davis. Leo Summers was art director then and Howard Browne was editor of the Fiction Group where Ed was assigned. He never stopped learning, having a quaint idea shared by greats in many fields that school is but a springboard and that true knowledge is gained only after graduation exercises. No job was too rough for Ed; no deadline too tight; and when he didn't know something he was never too bashful to ask. Thus, a lot of Summer's knowledge became his knowledge—also a lot of everyone else's.

Prior to coming to work at Ziff-Davis, Ed had submitted a full-length oil painting on canvas, done during his art course. It impressed both Leo Summers and Howard Browne. It was bought for cover use and became the illustration for Ivar Jorgensen's *Rest In Agony*. Ed later presented the original to Ivar and it is now one of the latter's prized possessions.

So Howard Browne watched Valigursky's work very closely and one day when he thought the time was right, called him in and said, "Ed, my boy—you're fired." Val's jaw dropped. He got it back up and asked, "Hasn't my work been satisfactory?"

Howard answered, "It will be impossible to replace you."

"Then why the sack?"

"Because you're hurting yourself here. This job is a blind alley so far as you're concerned. So I'm letting you go, but I want you to do our covers."

Ed was neither grateful nor happy at this offer. He asked, "How come? I've only done one cover. What makes you think I could satisfy you?"

"Satisfying me is impossible," Browne answered. "Personally, I like the *Mona Lisa*. It's the readers you have to worry about. They're the folks that count."

"What if they like the *Mona Lisa* too?" Ed inquired with marked gloom.

"Maybe they do, but not on the cover of *Amazing Stories*" Browne said. "So collect your severance pay and go home and get to work."

Ed picked up his check and went home and he's been working ever since. And with such success it's hard to believe, over the years, that he ever stops—even for lunch. He long ago vindicated Howard Browne's faith in a young assistant art director—not only at Ziff-Davis but in many other markets, because his fine covers for *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic*, and for *Dream World*—a new magazine we are launching shortly—are but a small part of his overall production.

Besides working for other Ziff-Davis magazines, he fills regular assignments with other publishers and often rejects orders he has no time to fill.

But he always has time for the Z-D fiction group because—glory be!—we found him first.