

THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF CLARK SAVAGE III

By Brad Mengel

A Life Half Lived.

There has been one member of the Wold Newton Family, who until now Wold Newton scholars have largely overlooked. There are several reasons for this, the main one being that in his one canonical appearance in issue 2 of DC comics DOC SAVAGE mini series, Clark III is presented as failing to live up to the legacy of his father.

Strictly speaking, Clark III made his first appearance in the last panel of the first issue of the DOC SAVAGE mini series. Whilst the series itself claims to be set in 1945, just after the end of the Second World War, subsequent research by Win Eckert in his Doc Savage Chronology has shown that these events take place in 1950.

In second issue we jump forward to August 27, 1966. Clark III is 16 years old, but like his father before him, he is assumed to be older. Certainly the beard that Clark III is sporting adds to the illusion. (It may be this appearance of being older that lead Denny O'Neil to assume that Clark's birth took place earlier than was the case.)

In that issue, Clark III has just attended the final concert from the Beatles and he hates the noise. As he and his girlfriend head back to his sports car, a group of three members of the Rumlbers gang is waiting and they start making comments to Clark's girl. Clark takes a swing at one of the gang and misses by a considerable margin, but the Rumbler strikes him. The Rumlbers tell Clark's girlfriend that they can be found under the Brooklyn Bridge if she wishes to dump Clark and they leave. Clark claims that he was taken by surprise; otherwise he would have taken all three of them on. The girlfriend takes him home and she makes him forget about his worries.

The next morning, at dawn, Clark tries his father's exercises. According to the commentary of the remaining four of Doc's aides five hours later, Clark never lasted more than five minutes. The exercises which worked so well for Doc Savage did nothing for his son.

Clark then leaves the Empire State Building with what Renny refers to as "Doc's own personal gun" (1) Clark goes to see his girlfriend and informs her that he is going after the Rumlbers to avenge the insult to the Savage name. Clark drives off, leaving his girlfriend behind.

By mid afternoon he has found the Rumlbers and opens fire, killing all of them. It is at this time that police cruiser with Sergeant Felton inside appears. Felton orders Clark to drop the gun which Clark doesn't do. Felton shoots Savage in the left side and immediately pronounces him dead.

In all the controversy, Doc Savage's aides decide to leave New York about month later and Clark's girlfriend tells them she must go with them as she is carrying Clark's child.

But is that all the story?

We are told that Clark's mother Monja F'Teema is reported to have died in childbirth, but later we discover that Monja faked her death.

So Clark III is for all intents orphaned and left to the care of his father's aides, Renny, Johnny, Monk, and Ham. It would seem that they decided to raise the boy to be a new Doc Savage, and they teach him the exercise regime that his father used. Given the fact that they do not understand the exercises, it seems likely that what they taught the boy was not likely to be as effective as it was for his father. One can imagine that Doc's surviving tutors, were called on to train the son as well as some of Doc's fellow crime busters, (such as Richard Henry Benson, Richard Wentworth, Kent Allard, Richard Curtis Van Loan, Solar Pons, Britt Reid, Capt. Hazzard, Ellery Queen, Nero Wolfe, Frank and Joe Hardy, Tarzan to name a few possibilities) were asked to also help.

Equally likely is the fact that the boy could never measure up to the large shadow his father cast and Clark III appears to have self esteem issues. Certainly having Monk Mayfair constantly suggesting his father's blood had run thin wouldn't help.

By age 16, the pressure of having to live up to the name Clark Savage had gotten to the boy. As Renny points out the boy is "not untalented nor lacking in intelligence" but as hard as he tried nothing seems to match up to what his father did and the harder he tried the worse the situation got.

Which brings us to the incidents recorded DOC SAVAGE 2. There are a few points which seem unusual.

In the initial encounter with the Rumlbers, Clark seems unable to fight even though we know that he had been trained in boxing by Monk Mayfair (DOC SAVAGE 2 p4 panel 2) and most likely other fighting arts. So why does he not fight the Rumlbers? The simple explanation is that he was with his girlfriend. This unnamed girlfriend was quite active in the peace movement and frowned on violence, for example, the next morning we see her literally suggesting to make love, not war (2). So whilst Clark III prepared to tackle all three of the men using his fighting skills, he knew that his girlfriend would disapprove and made an ineffectual effort which resulted in a blow to his face and his ego.

The timeline for the next day is also confusing. Clark started exercising at dawn and continued for about five hours. In New York, during August the sun rises between 5.30am and 6am. (3) Thus Clark's exercising would finish about 11am at the latest. Five minutes later Clark meets his girlfriend just outside the Empire State Building and he leaves her no later than 11.10am.

Next we see Clark it is mid afternoon, in fact looking at Clark's watch in panel 5 of page 5 it appears to be nearly 3pm when he finds the Rumlbers under the Brooklyn Bridge. The drive from the Empire State Building without traffic would take about 10 to 15 minutes (4). August 28 1966 was a Saturday so more than likely traffic would have been light. So if he went straight from the Empire State building to the Brooklyn Bridge he should have been there by 11.30am.

So there is a gap of nearly three and a half hours of missing time. If Clark had to search for The Rumlbers, then this gap could be accounted for but The Rumlbers told Clark where they would be so there was no need to search.

Next just after Clark has gunned down all of The Rumlbers, a Police cruiser arrives on the scene. Now it is possible that a car could have been on patrol at just the right time but it is curious that in that car is Sergeant Felton. We first met Felton in part one of the miniseries as a patrolman, who help treat the wounded when some renegade Nazis attempted to kill Doc and his men. Patrolman Willie Felton is presented as having a major case of hero worship for Doc Savage.

Felton arrives and orders Clark to drop his weapon which Clark doesn't do and Felton opens fire. Now this is quite reasonable the man has just killed in cold blood three men and may well open fire on either the police or other bystanders.

Felton's one shot hits Clark on his left side just below the ribs and Clark falls to the ground and drops his weapon. Immediately Felton declares Clark dead. No checking for a pulse, no first aid, just declares Clark dead. Whilst Felton's shot may have ruptured Clark's spleen, if it missed that organ it shouldn't have killed him. (5)

So what does all this mean?

Doc Savage cast a large shadow on his son's life. Doc's aides were constantly referring to the fact that Doc's blood had run thin. The exercises that made Doc a superman appeared not to work for his son, but this may come from the fact that the men who taught Clark didn't understand the exercises and what they did.

Clark felt immense pressure from different sources to live up to the legacy of his father and be able to right wrongs.

It is unknown how and when Clark met his unnamed girlfriend but her pacifist views may have been part of her appeal to Clark but she expected him to be non-aggressive.

The incident with the Rumlbers seems likely to have been a defining incident in the life of Clark Savage III. We see Clark try to be a pacifistic milksop who couldn't fight and get bashed and humiliated. He had to be driven home by his girlfriend. It is implied that she made Clark forget about that incident by sleeping with him.

We may assume that Clark felt that she was only sleeping with him out of pity, especially if it was their first sexual encounter. Clark wanted to be angry but she wouldn't let him and Clark may have felt that she, like his father's aides, wanted him to be something he was not.

Then when Clark awakes at dawn he immediately goes to his father's gym and begins the exercises his father did. Perhaps after the failure to be the man his girlfriend wanted he would try again to follow in his father's footsteps. Five hours later Doc Savage's aides arrive and immediately they start commenting on Clark. In his state, Clark more than likely felt that they were criticizing him.

Clark was prepared for this eventuality. He failed as a pacifist and as the new Doc Savage. The only way was to make his own way in the world and make a mark as his own man.

He'd packed a bag, the only contents we can be certain of is his father's gun, but we can imagine that there were some clothes, money, and perhaps some of his father's gadgets.

It seems that Clark had come to the conclusion that the criminal element responded to force. His girlfriend's policy of not fighting was ineffective and resulted in him being injured. His father's policy of treating criminals seemed equally ineffective and unappealing. He would punish the criminals; the only good criminal was a dead criminal.

But he knew that Renny, Johnny, Monk, and Ham would try to stop him as would his girlfriend. So when he left the Empire State Building, he did not go straight to the Brooklyn Bridge but instead went to arrange his "death."

Sergeant Willie Felton, as I mentioned earlier first came to the attention of Doc Savage and his men as a patrolman when he helped an injured Long Tom. The story does not tell us if Felton stayed in touch with Doc's men but it seems likely that he would have.

This would explain why Felton just happened to be patrolling around the base of the Brooklyn Bridge at the time that Clark opened fire on the Rumlbers and why Felton declared Clark dead without checking the body. He helped Clark to fake his death.

After faking his death, I believe that Clark did several things. Several of his mentors had connections and he was able to create a new identity. He adopted the surname of Camellion, which sounds like chameleon and reflected his facility with disguises. Richard was taken for several of his mentors, Richard Henry Benson (the Avenger), Richard Wentworth (the Spider), Richard Curtis Van Loan (the Phantom Detective), and Richard Hannay. Joseph was taken in honour of another mentor Joe Hardy.

He then moved to St. Louis, Missouri and became a History teacher and eventually the man known as the Death Merchant.

So why do I believe this?

The physical description of both men is similar Camellion is described as six foot tall, slender but strong looking, hair dark brown, eyes blue, clean shaven with short hair, Clark is drawn as slender but muscular, his hair is a bronzy-brown, eye colour unknown, in height he appears to be about six foot and has short hair with a beard.

A study of the Death Merchant's recorded adventures gives clues that point to the fact that this is the case. In #62 THE SOUL SEARCH PROJECT it is revealed that Richard Joseph Camellion is not the name on his baptismal certificate and earlier in #24 THE KRONOS PLOT when asked if Camellion is his real name, he merely replies it doesn't matter.

After adopting his new identity, he started to study Martial arts as well as furthering his formal education as is revealed in this biographical sketch from #30 THE SHAMBALLA STRIKE:

"We know everything about you, Richard Joseph Camellion. We know that you were born on St. Louis, Missouri, in the country of the states that are united under a central government. We know that you have a Bachelor of Science degree from St. Louis University. We know that you possess a degree in engineering from Washington university in St. Louis. We know that you have studied the occult extensively, are an expert in electronics, and know many things." P94

In #53 THE JUDAS SCROLLS Camellion reveals that he studied for six years at St Louis University. My research has found that he was enrolled in a dual degree program in which entitled him to a Bachelor of Science majoring in Chemistry and an Engineering degree which explains why he was so long at St Louis University. In both #9 LASER MISSION and #61 BULGARIAN TERMINATION it is mentioned that Camellion is an amateur archaeologist. So we can see the influence of Long Tom (electronics), Monk (Chemistry), Johnny (archaeology and history), Renny (Engineering) on the skills that the Death Merchant possesses.

The fact that there is no reference to degrees in history, Archaeology or teaching is most unusual for a man who is referred to several times as an ex-history teacher (in both #1 THE DEATH MERCHANT and #9 LASER MISSION) which seems highly suggestive that the occupation of history teacher was merely created along with the identity of Richard Joseph Camellion.

One problematic part of that statement is that Richard Joseph Camellion was born in St. Louis; surely the son of Doc Savage was born in New York? Well there are two possible explanations. Firstly, it is only implied that Clark was born in New York, perhaps for security reasons, Doc may have sent his wife to St Louis to give birth, or the

aliens who are making the revelations are referring to the creation of the Camellion identity.

Throughout the Death Merchant's adventures we see other hints and clues. As pointed out earlier Clark III had been trained by many heroes and adventurers, Camellion makes reference to some of these as though he had met these men. In THE KRONOS PLOT Camellion makes a reference to Dr Watson saying "Great Scott" whilst this may be a reference to the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce films it seems more likely that Camellion had actually met Dr Watson. In #49 NIGHT OF THE PEACOCK Camellion mentions The Shadow's ability to know what evil lurks in the hearts of men and regrets that it was unlikely that The Shadow will turn up.

The Death Merchant is regarded as having a supernatural knowledge and a miraculous ability to escape traps and get out of trouble that comes from his planning ability just as Doc Savage is credited with a similar supernatural knowledge and miraculous ability. Camellion uses the manipulation of nerves to knock out a woman in #1 THE DEATH MERCHANT a trick frequently used by Doc Savage. Another Doc Savage-like trick employed by the Death Merchant is the fact that he carries a lock pick concealed under a fake scar on his left arm as revealed in #9 LASER MISSION. In #24 THE KRONOS PLOT we see the following scene "Camellion took a small metal case from one of his cargo pockets, opened it, and removed a small gelatin-like capsule. He pinched the capsule in the middle and, holding his breath, held it under the old man's nose to the count of twenty. Juiced or not the old duffer would not awake for several hours." This gas seems remarkably similar to the knockout gas used by Doc Savage.

In #4 CHINESE CONSPIRACY, The Death Merchant uses a weapon he designed himself. The weapon is described as short barreled, one and a half foot long with an aluminum frame stock clip which also served as front hand grip which is two inches wide on all four sides which carried 3,117 explosive cartridges. The Death merchant is described as spraying the room with this weapon. It seems that this weapon is the next generation of Doc Savage's superfirers, the shoulder holstered, ram's horn shaped sub machine pistol shooting .24-calibre bullets, 786 a minute, 66 in a magazine. We may reasonably assume that Camellion was working from the designs of the superfirer he took the day he faked his death when he designed this weapon.

So as we can see the man known as Richard Joseph Camellion would appear to be the son of Doc Savage, with much of his methodology and skills showing a clear influence from the legacy of Doc Savage.

(1) Doc Savage is generally referred to as disliking guns and refusing to rely on them but in the DEVIL'S THOUGHTS miniseries and THE LAND OF TERROR we see Doc carrying and firing a gun. In both cases Doc was dealing with issues relating to people close to him. His first love Danielle betrayed him in the former and his mentor had been murdered in the latter.

(2) The child the couple conceived Clark Savage IV, also known as Chip, was raised by his mother, Monk, Ham, Renny and Johnny. Chip called himself a pacifist, a trait his surrogate fathers would not have encouraged.

(3) Thanks to Rick Lai for this information.

(4) Thanks to Art Bollmann and Patrick "Jumpy" Lozito for this information.

(5) Thanks to my wife Stephanie for this medical information.