

Stan Lee and Spider-Man

By Simmi Patel

Spider-Man is a popular comic book superhero who continues to delight his fans some 50 years after his creation. In the autobiography *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*, his creator, Stan Lee explains his version of how Spider-Man came to life.

Stan Lee had been working in the comic book business for over twenty years. He wanted to create a hero who had a realistic life in addition to superpowers. Lee presented his idea to his boss and publisher, Martin Goodman.

“I told Martin I wanted to feature a hero who had just a touch of super strength but his main power was that he could stick to walls and ceilings,” Lee says. Lee explained that his hero, Spider-Man, would also be a normal teenager raised by his Aunt May and Uncle Ben.

According to Lee, the creation of Spider-Man sprung from his reading as a child. One of his favourite magazines was called *The Spider – Master of Men*, and Lee loved that name. He remembers the character wearing a slouch hat and a special spider ring. If the Spider hit someone, he would leave the impression of a spider on his victim.

Martin Goodman hated his idea. Goodman felt that a superhero couldn't be a teenager with personal problems. He said that Spider-Man seemed more like a comedy character than a powerful superhero. Since most people don't like spiders, Goodman thought that the name “Spider-Man” was a terrible choice.

But Lee couldn't give up on his idea of Spider-Man. He gave artist Jack Kirby a plot line for Spider-Man and asked him to illustrate it. As Lee tells it, “Jack started to draw, but when I saw that he was making our main character, Peter Parker, a powerful-looking, handsome, self-confident typical hero type, I realized that wasn't the style I was looking for. So, I took Jack off the project.”

Lee reassigned the project to Steve Ditko, who used a more subtle and stylized style of drawing. They finished the comic strip, and it was published in the last issue of *Amazing Fantasy* in 1962. The sales figures of that publication showed that the Spider-Man issue was a great success.

Spider-Man became one of the most successful comic book characters ever. When Spider-Man headed up Marvel comic books' line of heroes, sales increased from 7 million copies in 1961 to 13 million copies in 1962.

The Birth of Spider-Man

By Max Bruno

What do you think of when you hear the name Spider-Man? A superhero who can cling to almost anything? Devices that shoot spider webs? A “spider sense” to outwit enemies?

Since his appearance in the early 1960s, Spider-Man has been different than other comic book superheroes. Initially, he was a teenager who had to deal with loneliness, rejection, and other realistic problems. Over the years, Peter Parker went to college, got married, taught high school, and became a freelance photographer. By 2011, he had become a member of two superhero teams, the Avengers and the Fantastic Four. But how did Spider-Man crawl into existence?

In his autobiography, *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*, Lee explains his version of the birth of Spider-Man. Stan Lee had been working in the comic book business since 1939. According to Lee, he had been trying to develop a superhero who also needed to deal with the normal problems of daily life. He presented his idea to his old boss, Martin Goodman. Lee maintains that Goodman thought Spider-Man was a terrible idea.

Lee claims he asked artist Jack Kirby to illustrate his plot line but later reassigned the job to artist Steve Ditko. Lee liked Ditko’s stylized approach. The comic strip was published in 1962, and it became a huge success.

Others, however, have called Lee’s version of events into question. In the book *Stan Lee and the Rise and Fall of the American Comic Book*, authors Jordan Raphael and Tom Spurgeon explain, “Stan Lee expressed the desire to do a teenage superhero using the spider motif. Jack Kirby had long wanted to do an insect-related superhero.” Kirby started to put together a slightly different version of the tale. He rejected “some of the more fantastic Lee story elements,” instead adding a “kindly aunt and uncle, and giving the superhero a secret origin revolving around a neighbour who happened to be a scientist.”

The character of Spider-Man was eventually given to artist Steve Ditko. He worked from a story summary and Kirby’s ideas, and eventually he created the drawings of Spider-Man and Peter Parker with “bottle-thick glasses, slumped shoulders, and a homemade costume.