

Series 1: 1969 (Adventures of G.I. Joe)

Monday, 08 December 2008

The first series included 11 comics, all numbered on the front cover. The predominantly green covers are made from a slick, glossy paper stock. The comics that continued beyond 1969 typically have two or three variations: white-bordered cover with 60's-era club ad on back (1969 issue); 1970 product checklist on inside with 60's-era club ad on back (1970 issue); and 1970 product checklist with updated Adventure Team club ad on back (1971 and later).
1. Danger of the Depths (1969-75):

G.I. Joe investigates a wreck that poses a hazard to navigation. Two sharks attack, and Joe uses all his wits to make it out alive. Curiously, the spear gun proves useless as it bounces off the shark's hide. Decent story and good artwork. Highlight: Joe plays chicken with shark and wins. Inconsistencies: Joe ascends from sea bottom in seconds - risking death from the bends; shark is twice the length of Joe but toy shark is puny (sadly). Also packed into the 1975 Atomic Man set Dive to Danger.

2. Perilous Rescue (1969):

A high government official's plane crashes in the fog, a potential disaster since he is carrying secret documents. G.I. Joe is dispatched to "bring back those papers!" In the helicopter, Joe sees the drowning official and dives into the water in full scuba gear. He saves the man with the breeches buoy and rescues the papers. Highlight: Official's plane goes down in spectacular crash. Inconsistency: The other end of the breeches buoy gets to the mainland without explanation.

3. Secret Mission to Spy Island (1969-73; 75):

Spies break in to the Pentagon and steal top secret papers. They have been traced to an island code named Spy Island. G.I. Joe, USMC, is assigned to retrieve the documents. Joe hops aboard a destroyer and paddles to the island in the black raft. Joe takes out a guard, dons the guard's uniform, and sneaks into the compound. There, he sees a huge, guarded vault where the documents must be stored. He also finds something more sinister - a huge silo filled with massive missiles that pose a threat to the U.S. Joe sneaks into the curiously unguarded silo, plants the TNT, and then starts running through the compound because there is little time. The island explodes as Joe is safely out to sea. Probably the greatest of all AT comics. Highlight: Joe single-handedly takes out island of spies. Inconsistencies: Pentagon has a single guard and nearby concealing shrubbery; Joe is somehow rescued by a jet plane instead of nearby destroyer. Unresolved plot point: Joe fails in his mission to rescue the papers. This leaves room for a sequel; we don't know who was behind the plot, and we don't know if the papers were really in the safe. Also used later in 1975 Atomic Man set Secret Mission.

4. Mysterious Explosion (1969):

A strange looking soldier looks out of place at Fort Gray. He sneaks furtively from building to building. Suddenly - buildings start exploding! The fire is headed for the ammo depot! G.I. Joe dons the fire suit to fight the fire, and grabs a "powerful fire extinguisher to hold back the blaze for a while." Joe points the "big fire extinguisher" to where the blaze is strongest, and temporarily tames the raging inferno. All the other G.I.s flee - it's only Joe against the flames. When help arrives, he is exhausted and helped onto a stretcher. But Joe sees the mysterious soldier, jumps off the gurney, and gives chase, catching the slow-footed man. Highlights: Joe is the only one brave enough to fight a monstrous blaze with a hand-held fire extinguisher. Lowlight: Joe actually holds back monstrous blaze with hand-held fire extinguisher.

5. Fantastic Freefall (1969-74):

G.I. Joe, Test Pilot, is pushing the limits of a pursuit plane when it malfunctions. The plane is on fire, and Joe looks for a way to ditch it. He heroically avoids hitting a school and then bails out. But the plane is falling on top of him - if he opens his 'chute, he will hit the plane and die. If he falls farther, he risks being too low to the ground. He misses the plane by inches and manages to open the 'chute in time. Highlight: Good artwork. Inconsistency: White helmet in comic does not match gold one in set, but everything else does.

6. Eight Ropes of Danger (1969-74):

An uncle sends Joe an old desk.. Inspecting it, Joe finds a secret treasure map. The treasure is in the South Seas, but there is a grim warning: "Beware the 8 ropes of danger." What could it mean? Joe gets to the area and dons a diving suit, which he keeps in a "mysterious box." He pokes around on the sea bottom while a horrible storm brews above. Suddenly, an octopus attacks (aha - the prophetic warning!). With a mighty thrust, Joe stabs the octopus over and over, killing it. The ancient monster was guarding a chest filled with gold. Highlights: The cool map with grim warning. Inconsistencies: Octopus is easily twice the size of Joe; flag buoy in comic is rare version with white flag. At least two different printings exist, which vary in their juxtaposition of text and panels.

7. Mouth of Doom (1969):

G.I. Joe, Jungle Explorer, wants to capture a huge and rare Amazon crocodile. Joe uses the machete to cut a vine, trapping the beast, and he uses tranquilizers to keep it sedated while he brings it to civilization on the raft. Joe goes ashore for supplies, but gets trapped in quicksand. The croc wakes up and a big fight ensues. Joe gets to the hunting rifle and kills it just in time. Nice artwork. Highlight: The cool case with tranquilizer darts would have made a great accessory. Inconsistency: The croc is easily ten feet long, while the one included is a puny four scale feet.

8. Hidden Missile Discovery (1969-73):

Joe is on the Moon - his mission is to prevent the destruction of Earth(!). The "moon orbiter" has detected an artificial crater where one shouldn't be. Joe goes to the suspect area with the mine detector. The detector indicates metal on the surface of the crater, meaning the crater is fake. As Joe is absorbing this revelation, a giant door slides back to reveal an "interspace missile, pointing straight at Earth!" The missile retracts and the door slides back in place. It was just a test! Luckily, Joe has some land mines with him on the moon. When the rocket reappears, he knocks a boulder down onto the land mine, causing an explosion that veers the rocket harmlessly off into space. Joe then blows up the facility using the other mines. Highlight: Joe takes out underground moon base with two tiny land mines. Unresolved plot point: Why would someone presumably from Earth want to blow up Earth?

9. Spacewalk Mystery (1969-70):

Joe is blasted into space to orbit the moon in a televised broadcast. Joe is shown waving to the camera as he flies through space. When it's time for him to walk in space, Joe gets outside the capsule, but the propellant gun malfunctions. He grabs the safety tether to pull himself back into the capsule, but that gives way, too. Joe is trapped in space! There is one last, desperate gambit. If Joe releases his remaining oxygen supply in bursts, will there be enough force to propel him back to the capsule? The gambit works, and he makes it back to the capsule just in time. The public cheers! Highlight: The horrified television public is turning off their TVs because they fear Joe is dead. Inconsistencies: Where did the camera come from that is showing Joe and the capsule the whole time?

10. Fight for Survival (1969-70):

The call comes in to the US arctic outpost - the British Polar Team is trapped! Joe is the only one on duty, and since everyone else is gone, there are no snowmobiles or airplanes left for him to take. There's only one hope - the dog sled team that G.I. Joe himself has trained. Suddenly, an avalanche! Joe is trapped beneath the snow, with little room to work. He manages to jam his ice pick through to the outside, and the dogs dig Joe out. They have helped their friend! The sled is OK and the team makes it through to help the Brits. The dogs are the heroes. Inconsistencies: Joe could have rescued himself through thin debris; sled and dogs curiously untouched by avalanche.

11. The Shark's Surprise (1970-74):
Joe is looking for uranium off the Florida Keys. He has heard tales of ships in this area being sucked into a whirlpool, but "G.I. Joe scorns superstition! He has come for the uranium!" While searching, he is knocked overboard into the whirlpool - "The Circle of Horror!" The Coast Guard saves him, and Joe returns with a new boat. Now a giant shark guards the Circle of Horror. Joe sees something glowing in the whirlpool. He dons the frogman suit and dives in. He kills the shark with one shot of the spear gun. Instead of uranium, there's a huge hoard of golden treasure. Highlight: Joe loses first boat in whirlpool and immediately commandeers another, no questions asked. Inconsistencies: Features orange/black sea sled, not correct blue version; galleon's sails and rigging completely intact after centuries under sea.