

# Eagles'

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR EAGLE SCOUTS

SPRING 2020



NESA.org

# Call



**THE EAGLE SCOUT EDITOR:**

## AN ORIGIN STORY

**Dave Marshall's** Scouting background helps him keep Dark Horse Comics on the cutting edge.

### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

Eagle Scout Pianist Hits All the Right Notes  
Popular Podcast Shines Spotlight on Service  
Getting to Know Scouting's Top Volunteer  
Meet a Napa Valley Legend



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

“It was something that helped me realize that you can take a hobby, an interest, a fandom and act on that — not just be a passive consumer of it but be creative and do something.”

# EDITING IMAGINA



# ATTENTION

How an **Eagle Scout** helps keep Dark Horse Comics running.

By Mark Ray

THOMAS BOYD



**S**uperheroes and antiheroes. Snow White and Jedi knights. American Gods and Hellboy.

Those are just some of the colorful characters around whom Dave Marshall (Eagle Class of 2000) spends his days. As editor-in-chief of Dark Horse Comics, Marshall oversees production of some 50 titles a month, many of which look nothing like the comic books you might have grown up with. Or that he grew up with, for that matter.

Like many kids, Marshall grew up on a steady diet of Superman and Batman, and enjoyed weekly trips to a local comic shop in Monroe, Conn.

“I loved the community of the comic shop,” he says. “You go every week and you see the store owner and you see the same people picking up their comics. There’s that watercooler aspect of talking with your friends about what happened in this issue and what’s going to happen in the next issue.”

Along the way, however, Marshall realized he didn’t want to just talk about the action; he wanted to control it. And that realization was an outgrowth of Scouting’s merit badge program, which focuses on active participation, not passive learning.

“It was something that helped me realize that you can take a hobby, an interest, a fandom and act on that — not just be a passive consumer of it but be creative and do something,” he says.

He came to that realization at a propitious time. As he was coming of age, so, too, was the comic book industry. While Superman and Batman weren’t going away in the late 1980s and 1990s, they increasingly began sharing shelf space with more diverse characters and more complex storylines.

“The creators really had the intention of proving that comics weren’t just for kids, that they could explore more sophisticated literary themes, that they could handle

edgier content,” Marshall says. “And that enabled me to have material to grow into.”

One such visionary creator, Frank Miller, had made a name for himself at DC Comics and Marvel Comics — the industry heavyweights — but then had moved to number-three Dark Horse Comics, whose creator’s-rights platform offered writers and artists more control over their work. Of course, that’s not what drew the teenage Marshall to series like Miller’s *Sin City*; he simply found the work to be intense and captivating.

“It just felt like there was nothing that comics couldn’t do,” he says.

## MAJORING IN COMICS

At Boston University, Marshall started off as a film major. He later transferred to Brown and graduated as an English major. And he sees comic books as falling neatly between the passive experience of watching a movie, where everything is laid out for you, and the active experience of reading a novel, where you have to create the images and sound effects in your mind.

“When a comic is clicking, it absolutely comes to life for you in the way a movie does and in the way a book does,” he says. “That sort of bridging of the two is still one of the most exciting things for me about comics.”

Marshall completed an editorial internship at Dark Horse while still at Brown. After graduating in 2005, he returned to the Milwaukie, Ore., publisher as an assistant editor, primarily working on Dark Horse’s line of *Star Wars* books. In 2008, he became an associate editor and took charge of series like *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, *Conan the Barbarian* and *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. He was promoted to editor in 2011 and, in rapid succession, senior editor and editor-in-chief in 2015.

Along the way, he took on more responsibility. But he also pushed the company in new directions. Most notably, he spearheaded Dark Horse’s expansion into books

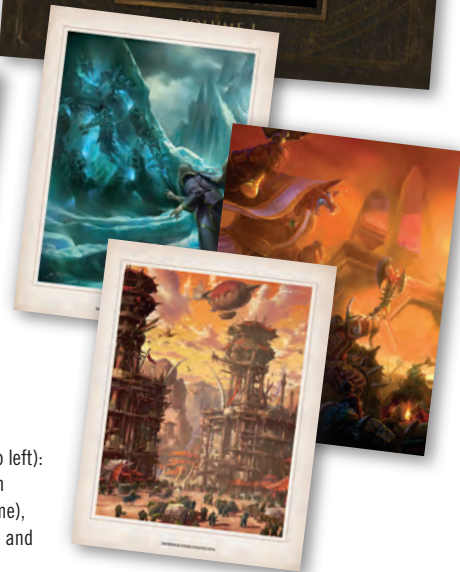
## THE ADVENTURES OF AQUABOY

When he wasn’t haunting comic shops as a teen, Dave Marshall was active in choir, drama, swimming and Scouting. Those last two pursuits came together when it was time to do the mile swim at summer camp. Although Scouts typically train throughout the week to swim a mile on Friday, Scoutmaster George Oldroyd challenged Marshall to swim a mile every day, which he did.

“After that, we called him Aquaboy,” Oldroyd says. “I know that’s not why he went into comic books, but I always thought it was kind of fun that he was a superhero.”

As Marshall remembers it, that story demonstrates that Scoutmasters can be superheroes, too.

“[George] was the one that was there with me as I did it, who rowed the rowboat next to me every day,” he says. “He put the idea in my head, and then he facilitated me accomplishing it.”



Among the titles published by Dark Horse (clockwise starting at top left): *The Legend of Korra: Turf Wars* (based on the animated Nickelodeon TV series), *Overwatch: Anthology Vol. 1* (adapted from the videogame), *World of Warcraft: Chronicle Vol. 1* (another videogame adaptation) and *The Orville Season 1.5: New Beginnings* (from the Fox TV show).

based on videogames, starting with the art book *The Art of Alice: Madness Returns*. (The book features art related to game designer American McGee’s reimagining of the Lewis Carroll classic.)

Here, too, Marshall is quick to credit Scouting — and especially his Scoutmaster, George Oldroyd.

“George was very good at instilling in us a sense of potential and a positive ambition, a sense of self-reliance, a sense of willingness to take the right kind of risks,” he says.

## SPREADSHEETS AND FANBOY MOMENTS

As editor-in-chief, Marshall manages a team of editors and also edits his own slate of books.

“With the development timeline of anywhere between 12 to 24 months for a book, you can imagine that’s many, many books

in progress at any given time,” he says.

And the range of books is impressive. In addition to those that feel more or less traditional, Dark Horse publishes manga titles, graphic novels in collaboration with authors like Neil Gaiman and Margaret Atwood, and a wide range of coffee-table books, including art books like *The Art of Overwatch* and “lore books” that offer a deeper dive into the worlds of videogames such as *World of Warcraft* and *The Witcher*.

“I’m usually working on some sort of mix of those kinds of books — a few from each column, let’s say — and also managing the editorial department broadly and sort of helping to solve problems for the other editors, who all have a slate of books of their own,” he says.

Marshall also sits on Dark Horse’s costing committee, which meets regularly to decide which books the company will publish,

how they’ll be priced and what their budgets will be. And like any busy executive, he answers plenty of email, which can come in at all hours of the day and night since Dark Horse’s contributors live around the globe.

Not surprisingly, some of those emails come from people Marshall grew up idolizing — perhaps more than he idolized the characters they drew or wrote about. A seminal moment in his career was when he got to work on a series of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* graphic novels with comic book artist Gene Luen Yang, whom he calls a “truly gifted and brilliant cartoonist and writer.”

“Even after all these years, there still is the opportunity for that fanboy thrill,” he says.

But Marshall also knows he has a chance to create that fanboy thrill in a younger reader, perhaps a fellow Eagle Scout, whose life will be transformed by what he finds in his local comic shop this week. 