

collecting activity that most students left behind with their third grade haircuts, but one that can mean big bucks these days.

Your bank account may show practically nothing, but if you have a copy of the first Superman comic book you are worth \$4,200, according to the 1980 Comic Book Price Guide.

And what is enough to make the man of steel feel like tin, the first comic book to actually bear his name is not even close to what a Marvel Comic No.1 is worth. That sum is a tidy \$12,000.

Though big cities are the place to get really old comics, Heiligmann says, comic collecting can be done in Bryan-College Station on a limited scale. Besides the racks at corner convenience stores, Bobbi's Books, 3527 Texas Ave. in Bryan, stocks all the current comic magazines and some back issues.

Owner Bobbi Garner said her store has comic books dating as far back as the 1960s.

Garner said her sales of comic books are pretty brisk. Most customers buy new ones, but it "runs in cycles," she said. Sales of old comics will be very slow for as long as a month, then someone will come in and buy an armload, Garner said.

Garner said the ages of customers interested in comics is split fairly evenly between youngsters and college-age buyers. The kids probably buy more, she said, perhaps because they don't have as many.

Pamela Rutt, a spokesman for Marvel Comics in New York, said Marvel sells 6 million comic books a month to readers in the 6-17 age group.

With pass-along readership, Marvel has an audience of over 17 million in this age group alone, she said. They have no figures on older readers, but she said the number is considerable.

Jack Harris, a spokesman for D.C. Comics, the second of the 'big two' comic publishers, was not able to give sales figures for his company. Harris did say that sales fluctuate so often that any sales figures given would be misleading.

Local collectors interested in obtaining really old Marvel or D.C. comics, or any other line for that matter, need to go to the big cities, Heiligmann said.

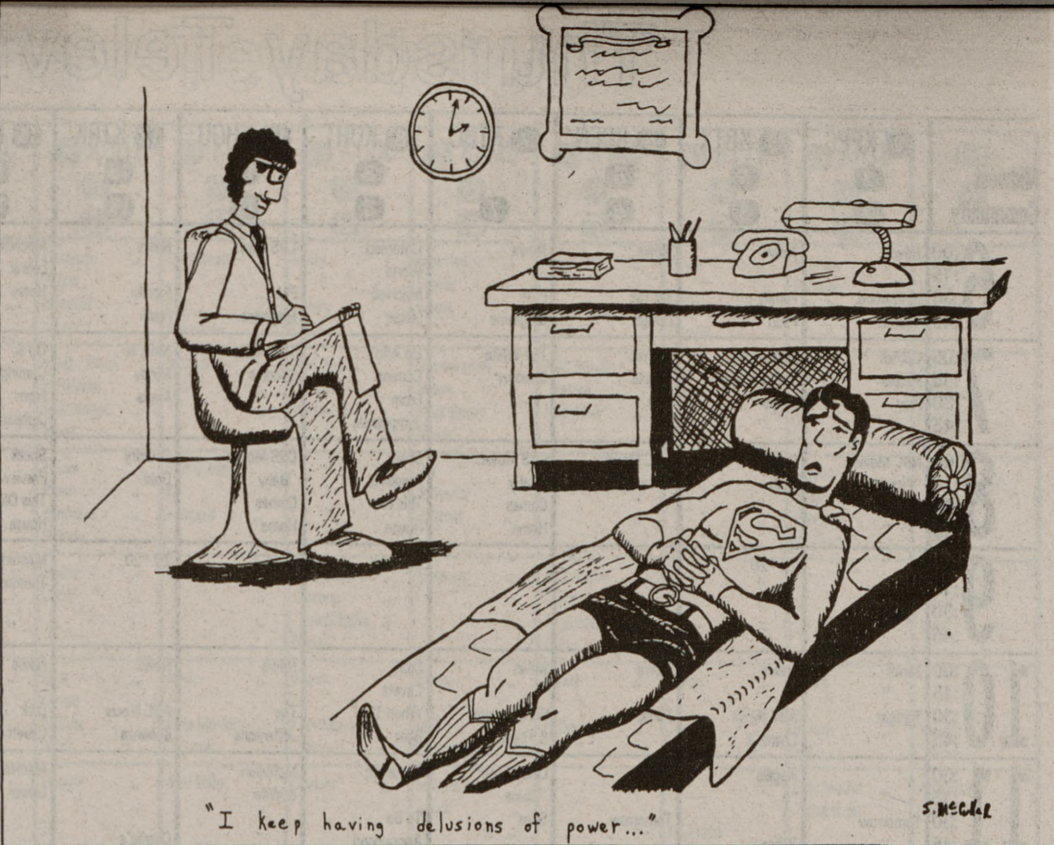
He named in particular Books Unlimited of San Antonio, the Pirate's Den in Austin, Lone Star Books in Arlington and Camelot in Houston.

Heiligmann said AggieCon, the science fiction convention held on the Texas A&M University campus each spring, brings some of these dealers and others. He reported that every dealer at the convention last year claimed to make money.

A dealer may bring as many as 10,000 comic books, Heiligmann, who is head of the dealer's room and secretary for AggieCon next year, said.

So-called 'Silver Age' comics are experiencing the fastest rise in popularity among collectors. Though not as expensive as the 'Golden Age' comics such as the first Superman and Marvel, Silver Age Comics are rising the quickest in price, according to the 1980 Comic Book Price Guide.

Silver Age dates back to the late 50s or early 60s and includes com-



"I keep having delusions of power..."

S. Hecker

ics like Spiderman, The Fantastic Four, and the X-Men. Both Heiligmann and Graham named the X-Men as particular favorites of theirs.

A spokesman for Camelot in Houston said the X-Men are the hottest items for collectors. Though back issues cost at least a bit more than the newsstand price of 50 cents for current issues, both old and new comics are potential goldmines.

As listed in the Comic Price Guide, there are many hundreds of comic books that are already worth 1,000 times their original price. And there are other comics such as Action No.1, Whiz Comics No.1 and Motion Picture Funnies Weekly that all list for over \$5,000.

Doug Dodson, though, takes this attitude: "The thought of a return one day is nice, but I buy comic books because I like to read them. The investment is secondary."

But maybe 40 years from now his grandchildren won't agree. Especially if they are able to get their hands on the comic books he buys today.



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