

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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The 'write' stuff

From comics to coffee-table books, Aggies well-represented in publishing scene

By Amber Gray
THE BATTALION

Appearing at his first book signing this past weekend, Ruben DeLuna, Class of 2001 and author of the "Fish" comic strip featured in The Battalion from 1998 to 2004, joined other Aggie authors in presenting their published works.

While creating comics began as just a job for DeLuna, he said he longer the strip ran, the more interested he became in it.

"It became more of a priority because it was something I was proud of, which made me put more effort into creating (the comics)," he said.

While DeLuna's comic series came to an end in May, he has created two books to encompass the collections of his work. The first book, "Fish Out of Water," was released in January and features a compilation of the best comics throughout the first 10 semesters of the comic ran. His second book, which came out over the summer, "Gone Fishing: The Complete Final Year," features the past two semesters' series of comics in their entirety.

"A lot of the comics have real-life roots. They are based on things that have happened to me," he said. "Only they are partially true because I exaggerated a little to make them more humorous."

While the bulk of the series is based on real-life experiences, DeLuna said the rest is based on random thoughts that he would just turn into jokes.

"The comics are mostly all A&M-inspired since the audience are students here," he said. "Although I would like to think there's some universal humor in them, I think people who don't attend A&M (wouldn't) get it."

DeLuna said events that were occurring on campus would be humorously incorporated in his series. Controversies at the time, such as poking fun at Transportation Services and traditional administration, were some of his favorite topics to illustrate.

"I used the comic strip as my own venting place for things students would be griping about," he said.

While most students find it hard enough just to keep up with their studies, DeLuna would have to find time every day to sketch his comics.

"I would have to devote a couple of hours each afternoon to the strip," he said. "I mean, my grades may have suffered a little at times because I would be drawing when I should have been studying, but I found the time to write."

To get his collections of comics published, DeLuna opted for the online publisher InstantPublisher.com. Someone interested in this resource can send in their manuscript on CD or online through their self-publishing software.

"It was good because the minimum print is 25 books and since I wasn't mass producing, it was good alternative at a decent price," DeLuna said.

While DeLuna's first book of comic collections was complete within two weeks, his second took a few weeks longer to print.

"This book has some color pages which I guess makes it a more difficult process," he said.

For future comic strip illustrators, DeLuna said practice is the key to becoming more advanced in the art.

"As you keep publishing and creating more and more you will get a feel for the process," he said. "You will see your drawing and your writing will improve."

For a good start at getting practice, DeLuna suggests applying at the school paper.

"Or begin writing Web comics," he said. "It is the easiest way for everyone to get published and for people to see your stuff."

As DeLuna nears graduation from graduate school in visualization science, he is keeping his options and mind open; however, he would love a job as a comics artist.

"I have had so much experience and done so much already, I feel I could do the job well enough," he said. "It's just making a living out of it that might be difficult."

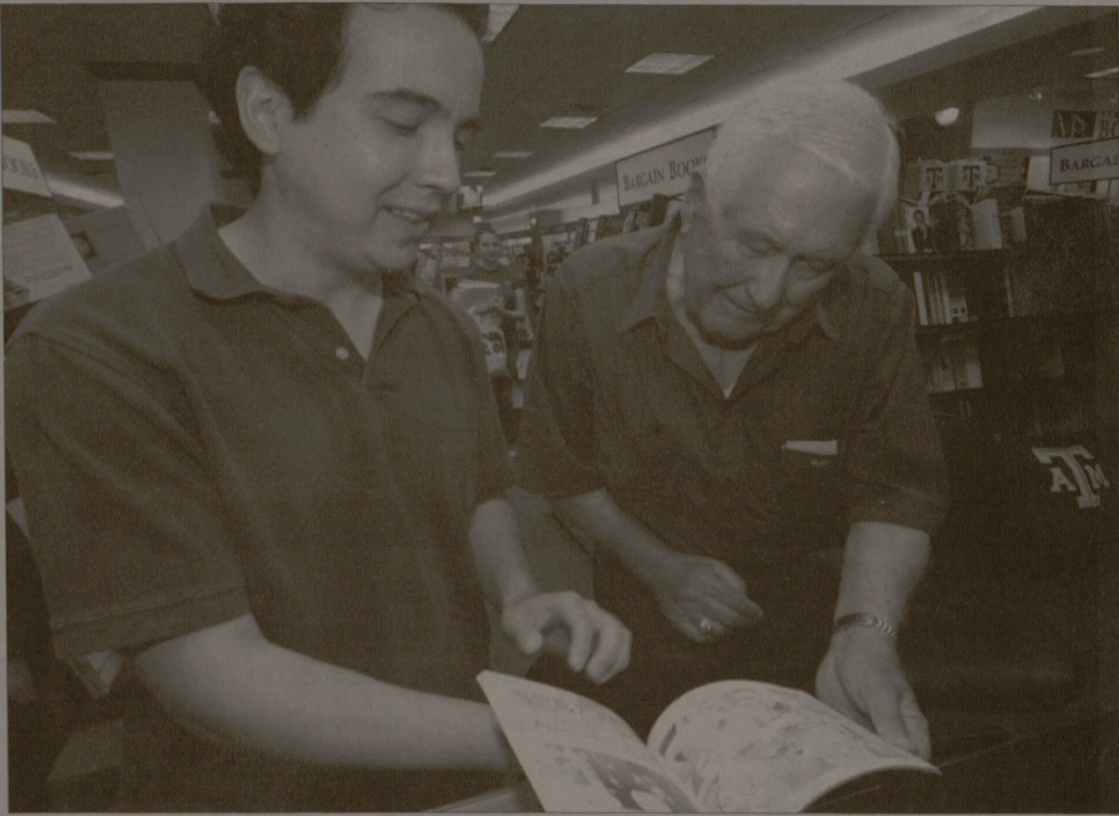
For more information on DeLuna, students can check out his Web site at www.rdeluna.com, or pick up a copy of his book at the MSC Bookstore.

When Nancy Glenn, another Aggie author, went to college, women were not allowed to attend the A&M. Over the years she has become involved with in the Texas A&M Women's Club, the OPAS Guild and the Aggie Mom's Club. In addition, she and her husband have adopted American and international Aggie students for 25 years.

"We just loved this area," she said. "And we wanted to move to a community that focused on education in order to raise our children."

Glenn said she received her inspiration for creating the historical, fine arts photographic book, "Texas A&M University: A Legacy of Tradition" from one of her and her husband's favorite hobbies: traveling.

"We love to buy books that portray the beauty of the countries we visit," Glenn said. "It was my love for these that created my interest in



At the MSC Bookstore last Saturday, author Jimmy Tiller (right) of "Tales of a Helicopter Cowboy" views a section of "Gone Fishing: The Complete Final Year" by author Ruben DeLuna. DeLuna's second book is a compilation of the last two semesters of his "Fish" comic strips, which ran in The Battalion for six years.

producing a beautiful book about A&M."

Her book debuted right before the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse.

"I wanted to create something that would be very honoring to the University and the people who impacted it," Glenn said.

Glenn hired an award-winning photographer whom she flew to Texas several times over the course of the two-year period she spent producing the book.

"With the color photographs making the publishing process more expensive and with the limited audience, a book like this was more difficult to get produced," she said.

Glenn said when creating the book she focused on campus history

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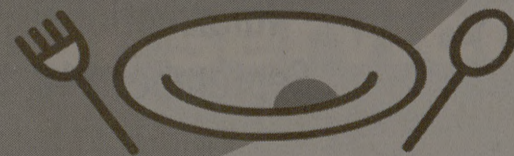


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