

Hey kid, you want a \$1,000 comic book?



Armed with a list of rare comic books, Melissa Pretnick helps a friend shuffle through the thousands of comics at the recent 'Fantasticon' in Farmington. (Staff photo by Harry Mautner)

By STEVE BARNARD
Farmington editor

Word characters peered from every corner. Ghastly, feral, vampire-like creatures surrounded me. The colors were dazzling. No, it wasn't a house of horrors. Rather, it was Farmington's first "Fantasticon," sponsored by Southfield's own Stu Shapiro. For the uninitiated, "Fantasticon" is the label Shapiro tagged onto the recent comic book convention conducted in San Juan Hall, Nine Mile and Middle Belt. The ghastly figures commanding all the attention are the comic book characters of the modern day comic entrepreneur. Shapiro, 16, smiled contentedly as he surveyed his empire, filled with make-believe super heroes and villains.

"I CAN'T believe it. This has been such a great success. I never expected that many people to turn up," said Shapiro as he gazed around the hall full of people. Fans from as far away as Toronto had come to Farmington. All were in search for their hero—their artist, script writer or super sleuth.

Although many bulls speculate in buying comics written by certain persons or drawn by a particularly competent artist, most were there to find a rare edition of their comic book, being sought anywhere from five cents to \$2,000-\$3,000.

The names are mind boggling. Dr. Strange, Vampirella, Kamandi, the Hulk, Conan the Barbarian, all were there to make the faithful.

A group had gathered around one booth habited in an amusement, as they admired a copy of "More Fun Comics" estimated at a sleek \$1,000. That's right, \$1,000.

But and Joan West are the proud possessors of that truly rare edition.

There were 21 known editions left in the entire world of the comic printed back in the 1930s, according to Mrs. Warren. The comic is valued so highly because it



T. CASEY BRENNAN

features the Spectre, a rather ominous looking chap who is the only pre-war comic hero to have been killed off and come back as a spirit.

At another table, some admiring fans pressed in to get a glimpse of a blond, curly haired, quiet spoken man with a scar above his left eye. A person had to wait in line to hear what was being said.

I was impressed with the potential of writing scripts for the comics, said T. Casey Brennan, who has become something of a folk hero among the knowledgeable.

Brennan, 27, has been writing scripts since 1969. His efforts have earned him the Ray Bradbury Award. He has put his pen to such characters as the elfman and was, Vampirella. He also has written for Creeps and Ark Comics.

There is something very mystical writing this type of thing, he felt the fans. In other areas of the hall, bargain hunters

could be spotted with bits of rare editions crumpled in their hands as they fanned through the myriads of comics.

I came here from Flint to find some good Spiderman. He's my favorite, not plans Larry Dean. I've collected about 2,000 comics, he says.

A FURTHER SURVEY of convention goers reveals that this is about the average number the collector possesses.

Dean explained that a comic's value depends on the artist, work the writer, artist or sequence of printing.

Throughout the years, comic publishers have printed first copies of certain characters in a few editions. If the first edition sells, the publisher will go all out and sell that character throughout the months, says Dean.

If the character proves popular, that first first edition becomes highly valued.

Other comic characters may start out as a supporting character in another, start a book. If the support proves popular, he gets his own edition.

Captain America and Howard the Duck are typical of such a rise to stardom.

Howard, by the way, is a motley looking character, resembling Donald Duck. But he's hardly a Walt Disney type. Instead, Howard smokes a cigar and fights off ferals such as the guy who turns into a gasp-finger.

We'll look that is the case in the modern day comic scene. If you want to get a taste for yourself, visit the next convention at San Juan planned for April 4.

Be there. Believe me, it's different.



Super heroes abounded at the recent 'Fantasticon' comic book convention. (Staff photo)

Nursery marm tries to remember to make it better for youthful set

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

The heating system hadn't been installed yet and the ground was cold and muddy, but the four Farmington children who were treated to a sneak preview of Willow Brook Nursery School on Beck and 12 Mile in Nov. didn't notice.

They were too busy riding the Shetland pony, feeding the school's two ducks and raising one of the dogs down the new but muddy slide.

"I really enjoy running the kind of nursery school I run—it can open a whole new world for them," says Kelly Turner, supervising teacher of the school.

Miss Turner tries to remember what it was like to be three years old. She fits the school's activities to the way children view the world.

"I ask myself, when I was three or four what did I like?" she explains. "I even walk around on my knees sometimes. It helps me figure out how to structure the room."

SHE WAS careful to place the school's windows low so a child could see out of them. "Windows placed at adult height don't help a child much," she explains.

"I want to feed the duck," the children clamored. A small boy holding a large pile of duck feed tugs at the gate to the duck pen. He looks impatiently at the teacher who is still engaged in making sure that the horse's area is closed.

I want to feed the duck, another boy insists.

Teacher, teacher, I want to feed the duck, a little girl adds to the singing demands.

I don't think you can get more than two or three children together and get them to agree on anything, Miss Turner says.

She believes a nursery school shouldn't have the pressures and competition of a grade school.

They're too young for the pressures of a regular school, she says. Children need some time to grow to explore to experiment. They need a lot of time.

Her students don't compete against each other. No one ever loses at our school. Everyone always wins. Everyone always has a turn. Everyone always has a chance, she says.

Each child develops differently, she explains. Some children develop their motor control first.

THEIR ATHLETIC abilities develop first, while other children may be more skillful in craft activities.

If a child is interested in learning the alphabet, the materials are available at the school. Each child does whatever is best for him, she says.

Willow Brook, which will open Monday, March 15, will have one teacher for every six students. Three teachers will conduct the school, but the size of the staff will increase as enrollment increases.

I hear about Kelly, the mom, Mrs. Joan Ober of Farmington Hills says. Her children, Michael, 2, and Shelly, 4, attend the school.

I really looked for a nursery, Mrs. Ober says. Kelly treats the children as individuals.

Mrs. Ober's children attended the nursery school Miss Turner used to teach before she decided to open Willow Brook.

Some parents follow me whenever I go, Miss Turner says.

There's so much for them to do, says Mrs. Sue Lattimer of Farmington Hills. They're little individuals.

Miss Turner tries to teach the children that they aren't at the center of the world.

CHILDREN HAVE to learn that their teachers have the right to get their needs met, she says.

I can't come there right now, she tells Natalie Mathias, one of her students, 4, in two.

I see two moms, parents come in and do everything for their child, she says. I'd rather have them say they need three hours for guitar lessons.

Her school will accept children up to five years of age. Each child is ready for nursery school at a different time, she says. I'm not pretending my school is for everyone, she adds.

Parents must bring their child with them when they come to look over the school before the child's enrollment.



Shelly Ober (left) of Farmington enjoys the ducks at the Willow Brook Nursery School. Looking on is owner Kelly Turner. Farm animals

are a big part of the scene at the pre-school nursery. (Photo by Louise Okrutsky)

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