

Star collector

"Star Collector of the Month" presents in-depth profiles of prominent collectors throughout the world who specialize in various types of memorabilia.

Lost and Found (and Lost and Found and...)

Robert Rogovin

"Rob Rogovin collects quality, and anyone who underestimates Rob's ability to stay ahead of the game will find himself left behind."—
Diamond International Galleries President John K. Snyder, Jr.

Some people feel their comic collection is sacred. That it should be put on an altar and worshipped. Nothing should be sold or traded from it. They stand pat.

Others feel their collection is an investment to be put away for a rainy day. It is a marketable asset that is treated like any other investment. Buy if you can, sell if you must.

And then, there are those who just love their collection for what it is, and don't care what it's worth because they never intend to sell. One guy said to me, "These things that I love the most will be buried with me. After all, why shouldn't I enjoy them in the afterlife?" (No, he wasn't a pharaoh, just eccentric.)

There's something to be said for all three viewpoints. In my collecting, I seem to bounce back and forth between them. I have no hard and fast rules for collecting. I've learned to be patient and flexible. Most people know me as a dealer (I own Four Color Comics), not as a collector. I don't advertise the fact that I collect comics because I have found that people seem to want, from my personal collection, what is not for sale. As a dealer, I don't want to disappoint my customers; as a collector, I'm not ready to sell. So, I usually skip the issue altogether.

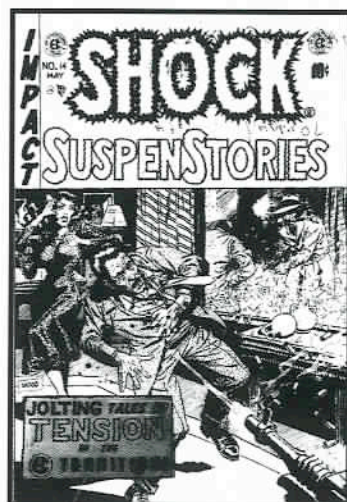
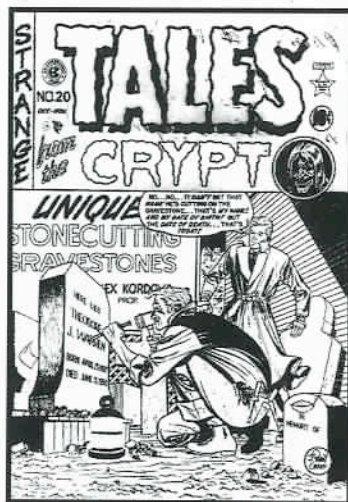
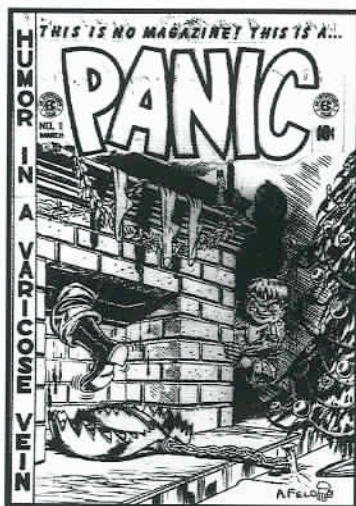
Not that I won't sell something when my interest has waned. I have sold comics to buy movie posters, and sold movie posters to buy original art, and vice versa. Since a portion of my collection was purchased many years ago, and another portion within the last seven years, I try to weed out from my collection those things that no longer hold my interest. I find myself trying to complete some runs as I give up on others.

I sold my collection of EC comics in favor of collecting EC original cover art. Having the art as opposed to the books was just the next step for me. Simply said, my tastes changed. I felt the art was unique. It was something I could live with and enjoy every day. The comics, which I had had forever, were becoming a little old hat. I found out early that selling a lesser thing to help pay for a better thing can be very rewarding. As better material comes along, I add to my collection. I'm not afraid to sell something that I bought earlier in favor of new and better material. As my collecting interests have changed, my collection has evolved.

I now collect movie posters, original comic art, and board games as well as comics. My collecting is more interesting than ever.



"I grew up with comics — and comics, it seems, have grown up with me."
Robert Rogovin, shown here with a sampling of his comic books and other related collectibles (including the 1948 Superman six-sheet movie serial poster behind him).



"I sold my collection of EC comics in favor of collecting EC original cover art," which included cover works from *Panic* #1 (by Al Feldstein), *Tales from the Crypt* #20 (by Johnny Craig), and *Shock Suspensories* #14 (by Wally Wood).

I'm not stuck with any one collectible any more, and enjoy going from one to the other. It's confusing and expensive, but fun.

OK, how did I get into this collecting thing, anyway?

When I was about six years old, my Mom started reading comics to me. I was a tough kid to put to sleep and she needed all the help she could get. I still remember *Four Color* #386 being read to me; seeing Scrooge McDuck in his vast Money Bin, diving and swimming in money, was great entertainment. Donald and his nephews had wonderful adventures with Scrooge, and I felt like I was along for the ride. My little accumulation began to grow as my Mom continued to buy and read comics to me. I remember laughing at the same spots in each story as they were re-read to me over and over again.

As I got older, I started reading Superman, Batman, and most of the DC Comics line. I had a lot of books already, but they were all pretty beat up. My friends and I would read, trade, sell, and even flip cards for comics. After we were through with the books, there wasn't much left better than a "VG" (although the term "VG" would actually take many years to surface). It was a community collection that got a little more destroyed every day.

Then came Black Monday. A day that will live in infamy (sorry, FDR).

I came home from school with some friends and went downstairs to play knock hockey. When we opened my storage closet to get the game out, I saw that my comics were gone. I yelled out, "Mom! Mom! We've been robbed! Call the police! Call the police!"

Her reply still haunts me: "I threw them out to clean up and make room for your other toys, dear. You don't need those old beat-up joke books anymore."

Like a drowning man, I saw my life flash before my eyes. All those stories, gone. All those memories, lost. Even a lucky dime couldn't help me now. What a cruel hand fate had dealt me. I vowed never to let it happen again.

Like a man (boy) possessed, I went out into the world (the town, actually) to replace the comics I had lost. I made Mom feel incredibly guilty, so she gave me money to replace some of the books she had thrown away. The doctor's office, the neighborhood barber shop, the candy store, and my friends all

helped me assemble a small collection once again.

I continued to buy and read comics, but this time around, a new style of comic storytelling caught my fancy: Marvel Comics. I remember buying *Fantastic Four* #1, *Amazing Fantasy* #15, and *Spider-Man* #1 off the newsstands. I must have read them 10 times before I shared them with my friends. Between all of us buying and collecting, we got to know the whole Marvel Universe really fast. Superman and his imaginary tales were out; kiss the Batcave good-bye. Here were real heroes with real problems we could relate to. They were everyday people who just happened to be gifted with super-powers. If only it could be one of us. If only it could have been me.

At 19, my collection had grown to about 4,000 books. At that time, I decided to go to California to pursue my interest in art. I left my collection in the family factory, where my father had given me a room to put my books in. Under lock and key, I felt they were safe.

Unfortunately, upon my return two years later, I found that my father had given about half of my books (is this sickening, or what?) to one of his workers who asked to read them. Of course, he forgot who, and no, he didn't return them, and yes, he left the job soon after. Where was my old man's mind? Out to lunch, or what? I felt like Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront* — "I could have been a collector..."

At least I didn't lose everything. It was a small consolation, but I still had half of my books. I didn't have to start from scratch. In my efforts to rebuild my collection, I met many people who shared my enthusiasm in comics. One sold comics out of his apartment in Greenwich Village, and it was there that I filled in my runs. This was, maybe, 1967 or 1968. He had stacks of *Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *Strange Tales*, etc. The books that looked brand new were priced higher than the ones that didn't. Since I just wanted to replace what was lost, I bought what I could afford, your basic "VG."

It took me several years to rebuild my collection and, as I became more affluent, I became more grade-conscious. Owning a complete run of Marvel Comics in "VG" was OK, but not for me. Buying the best copy instead of something the cat dragged in took a commitment of time, effort, and money. It seemed I was always replacing books — books that were thrown out, books that were given away or stolen, and finally, books that needed upgrading. I bought Disney and ECs, Marvel-Atlas and DC Silver. Reading many of those stories again brought back memories of my first collection.

Today, I do not own one comic from that collection. Though I have replaced many of them, it is not the same as having the ones I had as a child. I grew up with comics — and comics, it seems, have grown up with me. I've watched the comics industry grow from a few isolated fans to a legion of collectors. In that time, I've made the transition from collector to dealer and back again. And I've begun to realize that collecting, for me, means more than just comic books. ☐



Rogovin's love for classic DC Comics characters lives on in his collection of movie posters inspired by such heroes as Batman & Robin, shown here in a 1949 six-sheet for their Columbia Pictures serial.