

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Villagers Take Part in Fandom, Too

Local residents enjoy science fiction and comic books, and have been involved in the culture since childhood.

By KRISTEN FIORE
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Fond memories of leafing through comic books, sitting down to dinner and Saturday night episodes of "Star Trek," and meeting up with other fans, are more than just memories for some Villagers. Comic books, science-fiction stories and conventions are a way of life.

He Has at Least A Thousand Comic Books

Steve Kirschnik, of the Village of Orange Blossom Gardens, fell in love with comic books as a child. His mother used to read comics like "Doctor Strange" and "The Incredible Hulk," and he picked up the habit.

Now he can say that he has at least 1,000 comic books and "Mad" Magazines.

"I have a little of everything," he said. "I have some older ones like 'Casper' and 'Archie,' to comics up to today like 'I Hate Fairyland' and 'Lady Death,' but a majority of my collection is from the '80s and '90s."

Kirschnik also enjoys attending comic book conventions, particularly MegaCon in Orlando.

"It's right up my alley," Kirschnik said. "I'm hardcore into horror movies and comic books, and at the cons, you get everything right there."

He likes seeing the different cosplays, but his favorite part of comic book conventions are the celebrity panels.

"I get celebrity autographs," Kirschnik said. "It's always cool to meet your idols. Being an artist, I also love to talk with the other artists."



Cindy Skop | Daily Sun

Melissa Barth, of the Village of Collier, stands among the many things she has collected over the years from her love for science fiction.

daughter was watching 'Star Trek' when she was about 18 months old. I had her in her highchair at dinner time on Saturdays and we'd watch it."

Years later, in the '90s, Barth and her daughter, Emily Honeycutt, randomly went to a "Star Trek" convention.

"We got such a kick out of it," Barth said. "I went in there and was just laughing. It was at a hotel, and I remember going into the hotel restaurant and seeing all of these people in costume eating lunch, and it looked like a scene from the show."

So they went to a few more conventions, and then they decided to produce their own.

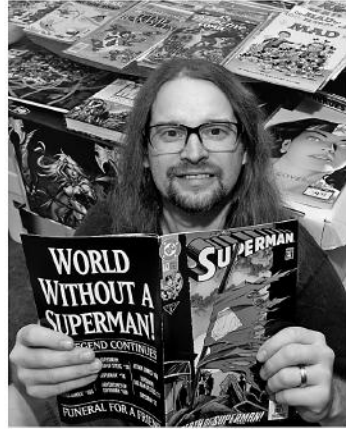
Their company was called Make It So Productions, and they produced conventions in Cleveland, Los Angeles and Jacksonville. The most successful was their Women of Star Trek Voyager Convention, which brought in people from all over the world.

At the time, conventions had a very mom-and-pop feel, Barth said.

"They were smaller," she said. "It was a nice community, because all of the convention producers watched out for each other as far as scheduling."

Together, Barth and her daughter called agents, lined up actors, made tickets, arranged airfare, contacted people who sold memorabilia and organized volunteers.

"It was always a thrill to see actors like Leonard Nimoy, who played Spock, up close and personal," Barth said. "We've



George Horsford | Daily Sun

Steve Kirschnik, at his home in the Village of Orange Blossom Gardens, shows his 1,000-plus comic book collection.

seen William Shatner and a lot of big names. A fun, whimsical part of it was seeing people in their costumes. It was just a fun



Daily Sun Staff

Christofur Sinclair, of the Village of Silver Lake, holds up a few of his comic books that he has been collecting for more than 45 years.

experience to be with other fans."

The creation of larger and highly funded convention companies is what ultimately ended the

business for Barth, but her love of 'Star Trek' never went away.

"Emily was brought up on 'Star Trek,'" Barth said. "I recently went out to visit her, and her son, William, was watching 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' and couldn't get enough. I thought that was cute."

He Started a Club

Christofur Sinclair, of the Village of Silver Lake, was looking for other comic book lovers.

Sinclair estimates he has somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 comic books, and he periodically attends conventions.

"As soon as you get there, it's like, 'Oh my God, these are my people!'" Sinclair said. "You look around and see all the cosplayers and it's so much fun."

Sinclair said he enjoys talking with like-minded people, listening to guest speakers, meeting artists and browsing through merchandise.

But he also wanted to connect with local comic book lovers.

So in 2011, he started the Comic Book Collectors Club.

"I read something once that said if you love something, you should share it with others and that way you can expand your friendship base," Sinclair said. "I wanted people to talk about comic books with, so I figured that's what I'd do."

The club has around 150 people on the email listing, but there is a core group of about 15 to 20 people who come to each meeting, Sinclair said.

"It's really unstructured," Sinclair said. "We just come in and sit down and talk about whatever we want. Sometimes 20 people are in the room carrying on different conversations."

Sinclair said new members and interested parties are always welcome to check the club out and join. The Comic Book Collectors club meets at 4 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month at Paradise Recreation Center.

"Even if you don't read comics anymore, please come," he said. "We have people in the club who never bought a comic book but still like the movies. It's open to everybody."

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