



A few of the vintage Spider-Man comics to be offered in Witherell's sale.  
PHOTO BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

## From web-slinger to investment

Spider-Man, other comics become top collectible

**Spider-Man is a gold mine, and not just for movie makers.**

"Spider-Man is the Babe Ruth of comics," said auctioneer Brian Witherell of Witherell's auction house in Sacramento. "And comic books are the hottest thing going now."

Not just as fodder for summer blockbusters; comic books themselves rank among the top collectibles for today's investment market.

More fun than precious metals, comic books also can be affordable. Their value depends on several factors including rarity, age, condition and character popularity.

Witherell's will offer hundreds of vintage comic books Labor Day, Sept. 2, in an online-only "Buy It Now" sale. The comics will be sold in lots of five, priced at \$50.

"This is a good wholesale way to buy some very nice comics; just log on and buy it," Witherell said. "We've found more younger guys want it now; they're not patient enough for an auction. This is a way to quickly build or add to a collection."

But act fast, Witherell added. "The last time we tried a sale like this, one guy bought the whole sale."

These comics all came from the same source: The collection of Larry J. Tilley of San Jose. A research scientist who specialized in water quality, he built a large comic collection before his death in 1998.

"The comic books were kind of like therapy," said Carol Tilley, his widow. "When he was off work, he didn't want to read anything in depth. He used to tell me, 'It's history. These (comic) stories are so full of history.' He really enjoyed that."

Mrs. Tilley, who now lives in Lincoln, recently attended one of Witherell's free evaluation Tuesdays.

"She came in with a list of comics," Witherell recalled. "She said, 'I don't know what they are. Are you interested?'"

Witherell recognized some gems on her list and accepted the consignment: 28 boxes and about 2,400 comic books.

"They're in really good shape," Witherell said. "They all come from the golden age of comics, 1950s through 1980s."

With estimated values of \$1,000 to \$2,500 apiece, the rarest examples will be sold next June during Witherell's annual Father's Day sale. But that still left many boxes for the Labor Day event.

"They're a lot of fun," Witherell said. "And there are a lot to choose from."

Details: [www.witherells.com](http://www.witherells.com).

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