

## Half Staff – Jerry N. Weist, 61

January 7, 2011



GLOUCESTER — Jerry Norton Weist, science fiction and comic art expert, author, and collector, as well as artist, died Friday, Jan. 7, 2011, at Boston’s Beth Israel Hospital, of multiple myeloma. He was 61. Weist’s lifelong passion for the surreal drove him to amass one of the country’s largest collections of science fiction and fantasy art and related memorabilia and to write many books on the subject, including a biography of science fiction author Ray Bradbury. Up to the time of his death, Weist bought and sold original comic and science fiction art, comic books, rare paperbacks and pulp magazines, rare first editions, and science fiction posters.

Born on Sept. 16, 1949 in Wichita, Kan., Weist’s interest in science fiction started at a young age with *Nightmare*, a 1950s late-night television show aired in Wichita, which featured Universal Studios horror and science fiction movies. His first permanent mark in the science fiction world came in 1967 when, at 17, he produced, along with childhood friends Roger Hill and Bob Barrett, the first edition of *Squa Tront*, an EC fanzine that science fiction enthusiasts considered to be the “Cadillac of EC fanzines” and continues today under a different editor. The fanzine celebrated the titles of Entertaining Comics and Mad magazine publisher William Gaines, and eventually included Gaines’ previously unpublished EC 3-D science fiction stories of the early 1950s.

After graduating in 1971 from Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kan., Weist moved to New York City to launch a career in art, where he had many one-man shows for a Soho gallery. However, Weist’s passion for science fiction and comic art led him to Harvard Square in Cambridge where he and fellow collector Chuck Wooley opened a specialty comic book store in 1974 called “The Million Year Picnic” and later a second store, “The Science Fiction and Fantasy Bookstore,” also in Harvard Square. The name “The Million Year Picnic” derives from one of Ray Bradbury’s short stories from his 1950 novel, *The Martian Chronicles*. At this time, Weist also devoted time to his art, producing hundreds of abstract oil paintings and prints, many of which are now in private collections.

Moving back to New York City in 1991, Weist launched the first major comic book and comic art auction at Sotheby’s, selling more than a million dollars of rare comics and comic art and ultimately producing 10 auctions for Sotheby’s. In 1993, Weist married Dana Hawkes, then the director of Sotheby’s Collectibles Department, and in 1998, moved with his family to Gloucester where he continued to buy and sell science fiction and comic art and to write books on the subject.

His price guides and books include the R. Crumb Price Guide and *The Underground Comic Price Guide*, which he produced with publishing partner, Barbara Boatner; several editions of the *Original Comic Art Identification and Price Guide*; *The 100 Greatest Comic Books*; and *From The Pen of Paul: The Fantastic Images of Frank R. Paul*, an overview of the life

and career of one of the early and great science fiction artists. A Ray Bradbury enthusiast and ultimate friend, he wrote and produced Bradbury: An Illustrated Life: A Journey To Far Metaphor, featuring the art that had illustrated Bradbury's stories during his lengthy career.

Among science fiction and comic art circles, Weist was known for his expertise and reliability. His friend Harlan Ellison once said: "The landscape of genuinely reliable reference guides is an ugly, arid junkyard. Mostly lit by the dim bulbs of the amateur, the slovenly, the jumped-up fans stealing from each other's inept, error-riddled trashbooks. Jerry Weist towers, like the Great Lighthouse of Alexandria, casting a knowledgeable, insightful beacon. He can be trusted because he is so savvy." In addition to his love for science fiction and comic art, Weist had a passion for professional sports and music. His music collection was comprised entirely of mint-condition vinyl records.

He is survived by his wife Dana Hawkes; two sons Ian, 15, and Eric, 13, all of Gloucester; his sister, Lenore Leader of Wichita, Kan.; and many nephews, nieces and cousins.

**ARRANGEMENTS:** A memorial service will be held Saturday, Feb. 26, 11 a.m., at the Gloucester Unitarian Universalist Church, 10 Church St., Gloucester. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, c/o Dr. Jacalyn Rosenblatt, 330 Brookline Ave., KS-121, Boston, MA 02215, payable to Bone Marrow Transplant Program.