

The Adventures of Starman and Flasher

The 1950s began an era known as the Silver Age of comic books. In 1954, a book entitled “Seduction of the Innocent” was published by Fredric Wertham. The book warned of the harmful effects of comic books and led to the creation of the Comics Code Authority, which acted as a censoring body in the industry. The result was the creation of campier, good-natured comics, like the Amazing Spider Man and the Fantastic Four. Adult interest in the genre waned, but children’s interest soared.

Coppell residents Pete Wilson and Jimmie Harwell were two such children. Wilson was a superhero fanatic, subscribing to dozens of comic magazines. Harwell was an artist with a fascination for horror stories and muscle-bound heroes. Together, they decided to create their own comics.

“We used manilla drawing paper,” Wilson said. “The slightly yellow, rough paper that came in packages— and either colored pencils or crayolas. Tracing through the manilla paper wasn’t always easy, so at my request and following my plans, my father built me a light box. It was a box with a light bulb in it with a plexiglass cover. The light was strong enough to shine through the manilla paper and whatever comic book cover we were plagiarizing.”

They renamed the characters and gave them new stories. Among their creations were Starman and Flasher, the later being a name that the Comics Code Authority would undoubtedly have frowned upon.

“We never realized that Flasher could have a double meaning.” Wilson said, “It didn’t matter. No one saw our comics anyway.”