

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

The Imperial Republican will feature a new column on collecting, beginning next week.

The new column, "Collecting with Jeff Figler," will begin with the basics of collecting, including how to get started, what to collect, keeping good records, insurance, and many other topics.

Republican co-publishers Russ and Lori Pankonin recently met a good friend of Figler and shared Figler's background on collecting.

Figler later contacted The Republican, offering to enlighten readers on the collecting hobby.

Figler is a national expert on collecting. He has written for a major newspaper, The San Diego Union Tribune, and is the Collectibles Editor for Hall of Fame Media.

In addition, he is the host of "Sports Collecting with Jeff Fig-ler" on the Fox affiliate in St. Louis, and soon will be airing "Jeff Fig-ler's this week in Sports History" on the same station.

He also conducts classes on collecting for various cruise ships. He recently returned from South America, as well as Panama, and will soon be off to Europe aboard a cruise line.

His areas of expertise include sports, historical/presidential and pop culture, but his column will include other types of collecting as well.

Figler started collecting when he was growing up in St. Louis, and was pleasantly surprised when his mother told him that she never threw away his baseball cards.

"Of course, all the rest of us wish our mother had never thrown away ours as well," Figler jokes, but he was lucky.

In fact, his collection has expanded to the point where he now has a museum in the San Diego area to house his memorabilia.

The museum has three galleries, one for sports, historical/presidential and pop culture items.

For all of the baseball card collectors out there, Figler owns the Holy Grail of sports cards—the T206 Honus Wagner card.

His card is one of about only 20 in existence. In 2007, a pristine Wagner card sold for \$2.35 million. "I'd rank mine 10th out of the 20," he said.

Other items in Figler's collection include the glasses John Lennon wore on the Sgt. Pepper album cover, Frank Sinatra's hat, an original script of Casablanca, and the first comic book to feature Superman.

Then there's his presidential collection. Figler has an original signature from every president dating back to George Washington.

"As you can see, Figler knows collecting inside out, Pankonin said. "That's why we're so excited about this new column."

Figler noted everyone is a collector, whether it is of magnets, books, stamps, coins or a variety of items.

Pankonin noted Figler welcomes e-mail questions from readers and will try to answer as many as he can. Questions will reach him at collectingwithjeff@sbcglobal.net.