

## Yearbook could be a major asset Internet sparks growing market

Reuters

Friday, May 23, 2008

NEW YORK -- If one of your school or university colleagues ended up famous or rich, you could have a hidden asset -- your old yearbook -- especially if your celebrity classmate signed it.

AbeBooks.com, an online seller of used, rare and out-of-print books, has found collectors are paying increasing amounts for their favourite star's yearbook with the annuals from schools and universities always limited editions and out-of-print, so rare.

"A yearbook is something special in that not everyone can get their hands on one, making them a valuable edition for any collection," Scott Laming from AbeBooks told Reuters.

"The highest prices are attributed to celebrities who have made a lasting contribution in their field and whose yearbooks contain the greatest personal connection."

Laming said the Internet had sparked the growth of this market although only a fraction of student yearbooks ever make it to the collectors market. Genealogists and history buffs are the biggest collectors.

"Annuals are also popular because it gives collectors a glimpse into the celebrity's past, from before they were stars," he said.

Laming said the most expensive yearbook sold that he knew of so far was Nobel Prize-winning author William Faulkner's 1921 yearbook from the University of Mississippi which sold for \$4,500.

This book contained one of Faulkner's earliest published poems, Nocturne, as well as photos and lists of clubs he belonged to.

But a 1942 University High School "Chieftain" yearbook featuring 10th grader Norma Baker who transformed into Hollywood bombshell Marilyn Monroe was currently up for offer at \$4,500. This was believed to be the only yearbook with her photo with Baker dropping out of school soon afterwards, aged 16, to marry Jimmy Dougherty.

The second most expensive book on the list was the Lincolnian Yearbook 1937 that went for \$750. This featured Frank Herbert, the author of Dune with an inscription: "Dear Bud; May I linger in your memory as the fellow who could get up in front of the U.S. History Class and make a bigger fool out of himself than anyone else in the room. Sincerely, Frank Herbert."

Third in the list, sold for \$650, was The Sequoian (John Muir high school) which was the second and last high school annual documenting the achievements of baseball legend Jackie Robinson.

Fourth was The Harvard Freshman Red Book 1940 (University of Harvard) for \$500, the class of John F. Kennedy, folk singer Pete Seeger and Broadway lyricist Alan Jay Lerner.

Laming said the demand for yearbooks was not just for investors but also sentimental, with people looking to replace lost annuals and demand rising after a natural disaster.

"After the wildfires in southern California I received many inquiries from people looking to replace annuals that were lost in the fires. A couple of the buyers actually drove up to meet

me in person; they didn't want to trust the yearbook to the postal service," he wrote in a recent report on the growing trend.

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