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# A Personal Relationship to the Development of Drawing into the Cartoon Form

V. Gene Myers

*Eastern Illinois University*

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A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE DEVELOPMENT

OF DRAWING INTO THE CARTOON FORM

(TITLE)

BY

V. Gene Myers

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ART

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1972

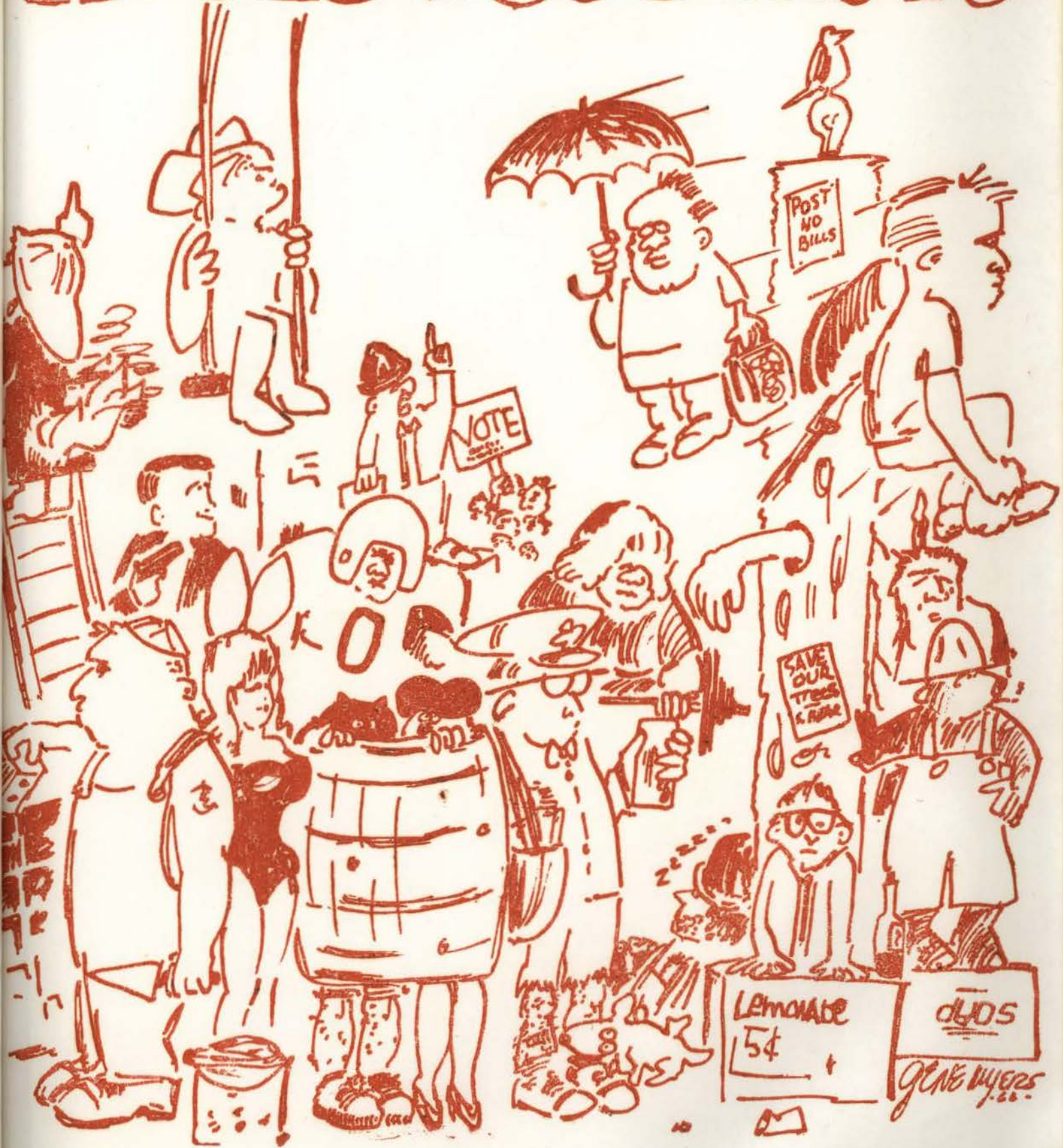
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## INTRODUCTION

The field of cartooning is a "side-branch" of drawing that many artists probably do not associate with what they believe to be art. In this paper no attempt is made to relate it to any great works or to make excuses as to why it should be given a berth along with the great works of art. It is preferable to have the majority of those people who see cartoons to look at them not so much as art but as cartoons. The whimsical nature of the drawing itself, the idea that makes you laugh are all the reason a cartoon has for existing.

Of course one should not get the impression that people who can't draw end up as cartoonists. On the contrary, cartoonists probably know the field of serious drawing as well as any artist. After all, before the cartoonist can draw cartoons he must have a complete knowledge of reproducing nearly everything on paper correctly before he changes it into a cartoon. Probably for more than any other reason the area of cartooning is somewhat limited to those who find it within their grasp to not only reproduce people and objects properly but to those who are able to



alter the drawing's appearance just enough to make them cartoons.

For these reasons this paper is devoted to the cartoon and the cartoonist. Drawing will be discussed from its beginning as it first appeared in history and its evolution from just a simple drawing to the cartoons that we know as the comics, the reason for the comics, their popularity and my own approach to the drawing as a cartoon.

V. Gene Myers

CHAPTER I  
HISTORICAL NOTES ON  
THE ART OF CARTOONING

The recorded history of man began with the hunter of the Paleolithic or Stone age who drew, painted and incised likenesses of the animals of the hunt on his cave walls. (Fig. I) Depending on certain animals for his livelihood, the Paleolithic man was keenly interested in "capturing" these animals on his cave walls before the hunt. Each animal was characterized by definite and identifying marks: the heavy hump and powerful body of the bison with its small eyes and short sharp horns, or the thin, long, and graceful legs and horns of the deer. It was by this representation of each animal, primitive man felt that he was achieving a certain magical control of that animal; the symbol on the walls of the cave remained fixed, forever accessible for the magic-ritual activities that insured success in the hunt.

And it is these simple representations that have served throughout thousands of years as a means of telling the story of man's life on earth. These drawings were man's

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Fig. 1

first attempt to depict a story to relate his life. "It was the first illustration of an idea-story, the beginning of both writing and painting and the forerunner of today's comic strip".<sup>1</sup>

Of course, these simple cave-art representations were not meant to be cartoons but they were related to the cartoon, because in both the caves and the comics man was, and still is, representing his life with a simple drawing. Other picture stories of civilizations past have been found in tablets long-buried under desert sands, or enshrined on pyramid walls. (Fig. 2) The ancient Egyptians used a simple drawing throughout the 4,000 years of their history. The artist was governed as to what he drew by the priests and rulers who directed decorating the walls of palaces, temples, tombs and buildings according to long established traditions and rules. Of course these Egyptian drawings as well as those drawn by the Paleolithic man were far from being light-hearted entertainment. The caveman was attempting to gain some mastery over the mysterious and overwhelming forces of nature, and the Egyptians developed their drawing as a part of their religion trying to transcend the mystery and finality of death.

The actual comic strip or cartoon did not come along for quite some time, but drawing continued to develop through the centuries with artists getting ever closer to

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<sup>1</sup>Gaines M.C., Narrative Illustration-The Story of the Comics reprinted from Print Summer 1942 p. 1



Fig. 2

what we know to be the cartoon. Francisco Goya, a Spanish artist of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries drew continuously. Many of these drawings reflect his amazing ability to summarize the human drama with irony, humor, or compassion in a few telling lines and bold tonal contrasts. Characteristics like these are basic to a good cartoonist. One example of his work "Easy Victory" (Fig. 3) combines sardonic humor with a quick moving line that comes alive. Although the drawing appears to be quickly drawn and sketchy it is quite well placed and well executed. For his ability to portray man in a complex of ideas and feelings with only a few simple graphic notations and lines, Goya has become one of the great commentators on man as a social animal. Goya drew in many ways the same as do contemporary political cartoonists. He drew quickly but with feeling to prove his point, stating his idea in the simplest of terms.

Another artist of the Mid-nineteenth century who concerned himself with man as a social and political animal was Honoré Daumier. He was a satirist who made his living by caricaturing the political personalities and social issues of the day. Through his lithographs which appeared in the pages of Caricature and Charivari, as well as other liberal journals of his time, Daumier helped play an important part in shaping the democratic process. To do this Daumier developed his style into a terse, bold and witty art form pointing out social, political, and economic problems.



FIGURE 6-17  
Francisco Goya (1746-1828; Spanish).  
"Easy Victory." Chalk, 5 1/8" x 8".

Fig. 3

In just a few brush strokes, Daumier could create an expressive gesture or posture that brought his drawing to life. One good example of this is "Don Quixote and Sancho Panzo". (Fig.4) The sketch was initially done in charcoal and then highlighted with brushed ink accents. The inked accents show Daumier to be a master of summary with a minimum of means. The contrast between Panzo's paunch and Don Quixote's straight back cannot be surpassed by written commentary to create a humorous scene.

Daumier's drawings are made most distinctive by the energy of the line with which he builds his drawings. "The Clown" (Fig.5) was drawn through an initial tangle of charcoal lines, reinforced by a wash. Through this matrix of interweaving lines emerges a solid figure, moving with energy and emotions. Without a doubt Daumier still stands as an artist-cartoonist who gave such life to his drawings that they still live to this day.

As the cartoon developed in Europe it was only natural that it should find a place in America since the colonists carried ideas to their new home from the old country. After the drawings of Goya and Daumier one finds in the history of cartoons, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Nast waiting to try their hand at creating this form of expression.

The earliest known example of cartoons in the col-



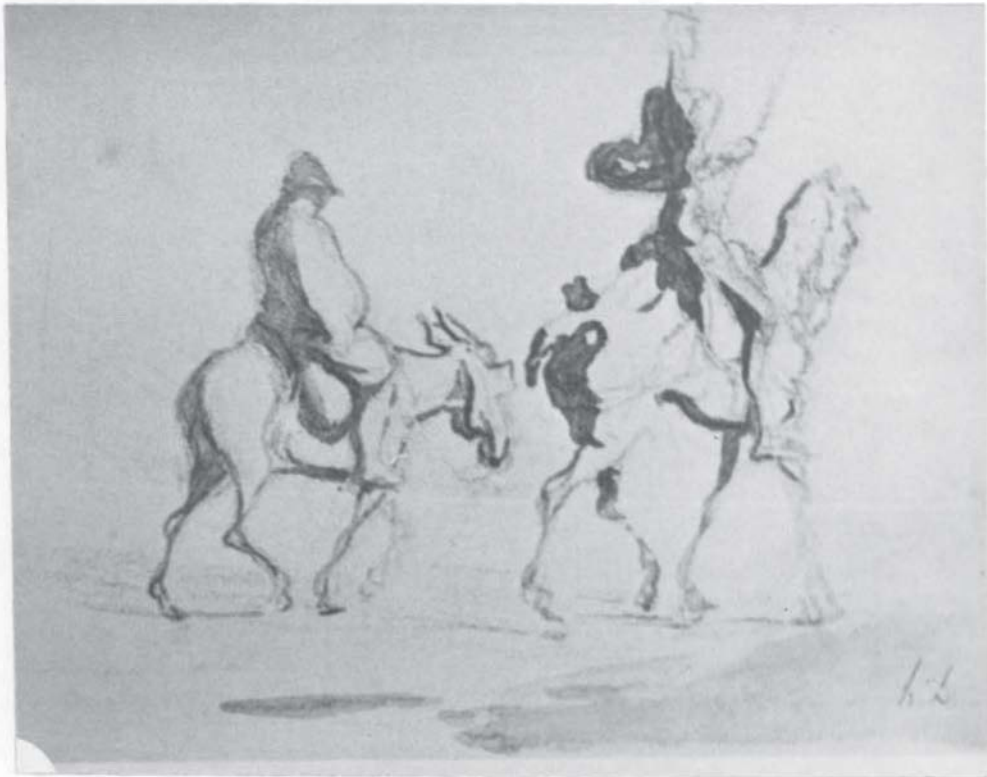
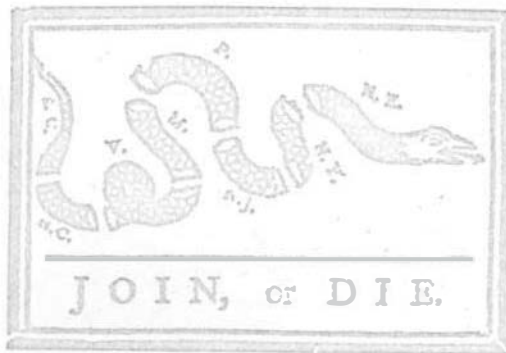


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

onies appeared in 1754 in the *Pennsylvanis Gazette*, printed by Benjamin Franklin. The cartoon was drawn by Franklin and carried the message of greater unity for the colonies. It showed a snake cut up into sections with each segment representing a colony. The caption read; "Join or Die". (Fig. 6) This drawing appeared quite frequently during the next 20 years as the colonies drifted toward revolution. Although these early cartoons are quite crude by today's standards, they carried the message to the public at a time when many could not read and when there were no movies, TV or photographs.



NO. 7

"Join or Die" had the force of what we now would call a slogan. But it played a great part in focusing the attention of the Colonists on the necessity of a solid union against the French and Indians. It was almost immediately reproduced in newspapers in Boston and New York, and was revived during the agitation against the Stamp Act in 1765, and again throughout the armed struggle with England.

Fig. 6

After the War of Independence the political cartoon began to develop with the rise of the party system. It was a good time for the cartoonist, for there was a great atmosphere for his work. With class struggle, partisanship as a result of the war and the setting up of the constitution, the cartoonist found himself surrounded with a number of subjects to work from. An example of work in this early era appeared in 1812. It was the Gerrymander figure (Fig. 7) by Elkanah Tisdale. The Democratic Republicans had arbitrarily dis-

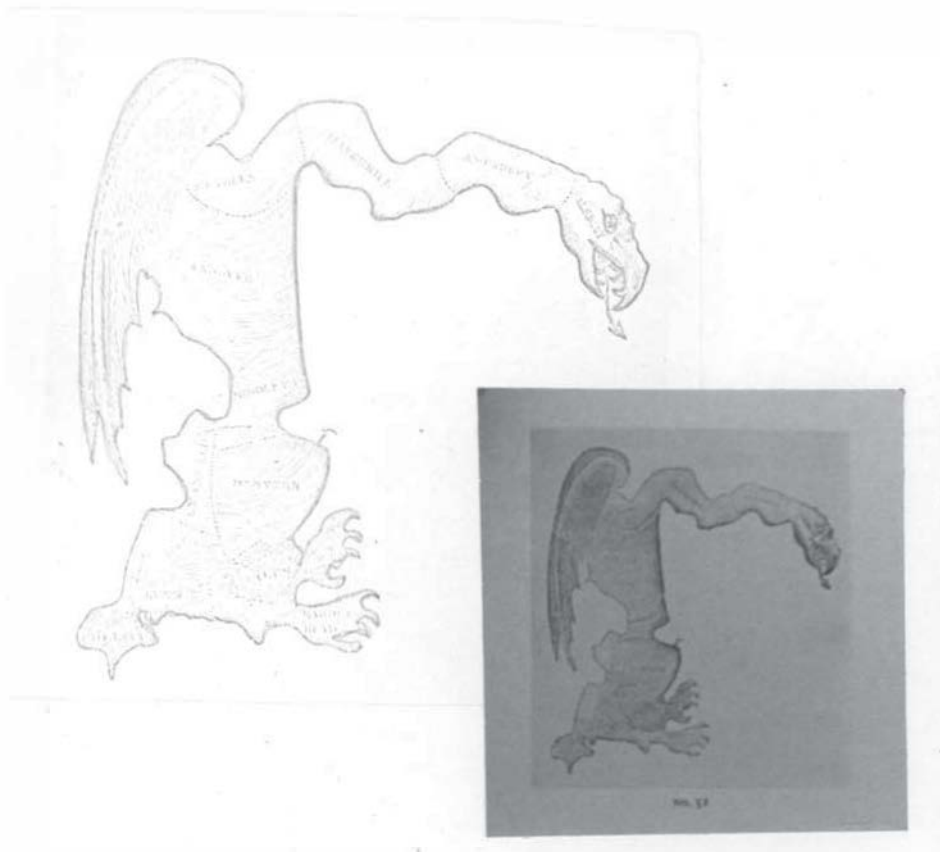


Fig. 7

tricted certain townships in Essex county, Massachusetts to insure themselves a majority. "By adding teeth, wings and claws to the outline of the area the artist produced a dragon of fearful mien, immortally ludicrous".<sup>1</sup> Partisan politics with no fear of libel laws and no respect for individual dignity, gave the cartoonists their themes in the early days of our country.

Techniques as far as drawing and style of cartoons remained the same until the Civil War, although, as would be expected targets varied with changing politics. "The American's propensity for nicknames helped supply fit subjects for caricature such as the Coonskinners, the Know-nothings, Bleeding Kansas".<sup>2</sup> In the 1860's, the cartoon was more likely to be found in magazines than in newspapers. Newspaper was set in narrow columns with the borders or rules locking the type to the revolving cylinder of the press. This made it quite inconvenient to print anything larger than one column in width, much too confining a space for effective cartoon presentation. But by 1870 the metropolitan papers were using presses and devices that no longer placed such limitations upon the printer, and from that time on some of the best graphic art was found in the newspaper.

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<sup>1</sup> Nevins and Weitenkampf A Century of Political Cartoons N.Y. Chas. Scribner's Sons 1944 p-9

<sup>2</sup> Becker Comic Art in America N.Y. Simon & Schuster 1959 pp289-290

It was in the late 1870's when the cartoons of Thomas Nast began to appear in the New York Times and Harper's Weekly. Nast had pitted himself and his cartoons against the notorious political gangster "Boss" Tweed. Nast's fearless attack on Tweed (Fig.s 8&9) was revealed in by his readers. For the first time Tweed and his gang began to fear public opinion. The newspaper was offered a bribe to stop printing the cartoons and Nast was offered \$500,000 and asked to leave the country. Both refused, and eventually through Nast's cartoons Boss Tweed was driven to prison.

The cartoon was definitely finding its place in society. By 1896 newspapers were vying with magazines to produce outstanding cartoonists. William Randolph Hearst had just invaded New York City, and the great newspaper war between himself and Joseph Pulitzer was thundering up and down Park Avenue. Both men understood the popular appeal of graphic illustration and were doing nearly everything in their power to make it part of his own paper. Until this time, however, the cartoons and cartoonists had dealt only with the political scene. It was nearing time when the newspaper business would see the birth of the strip cartoon or rather the true "comic strip".

It was in February of 1896 and the New York World



Fig. 8

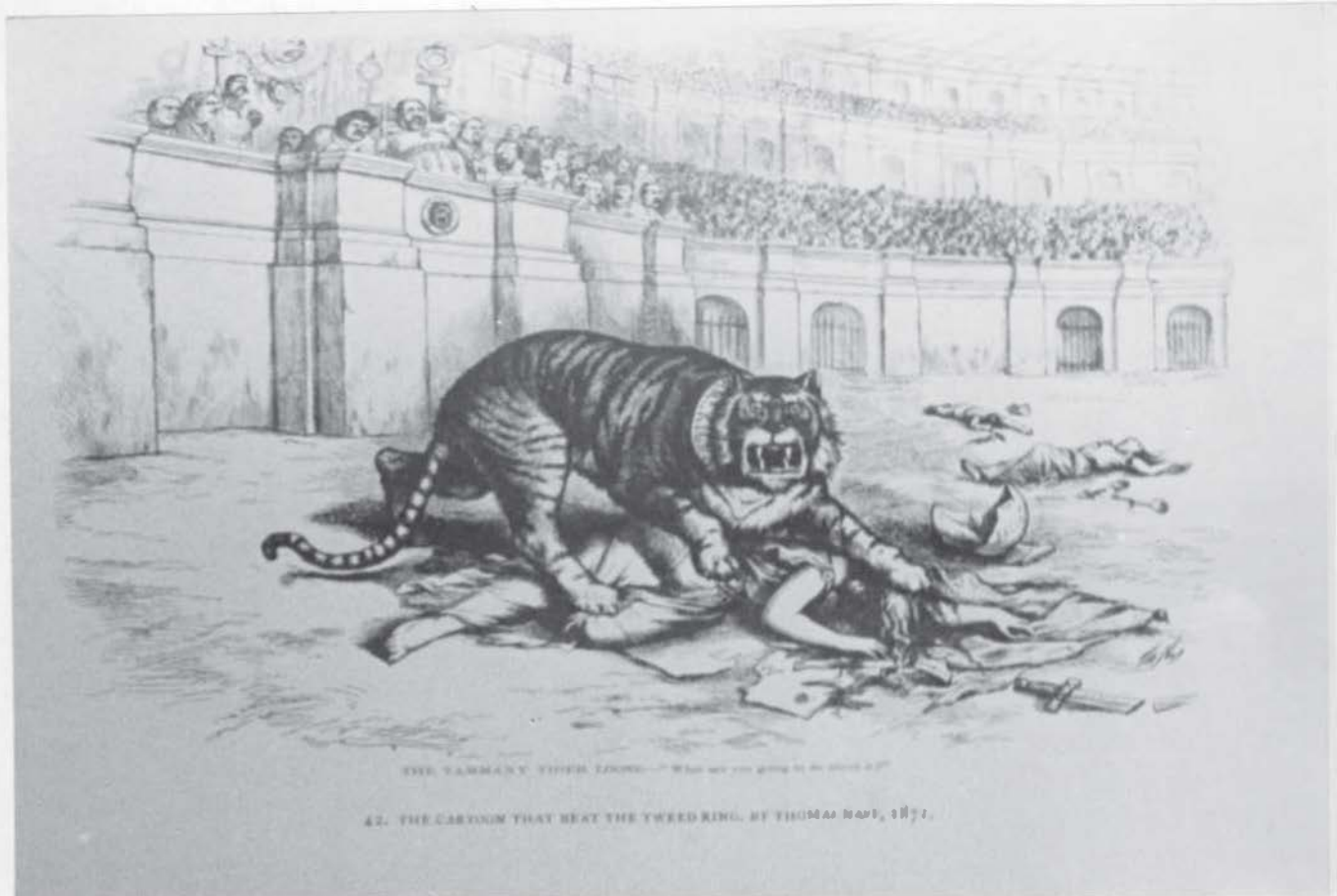


Fig. 9



was having problems with its tint-laying Ben Day machine using yellow ink. Trying to solve this problem with color, they executed an experiment using yellow ink. The experiment consisted of a cartoon of a young boy, a kid, a yellow kid. It was a yellow kid that started an entirely new form of entertainment, the comic strip; as well as contributing a famous phrase to our society, "yellow journalism".

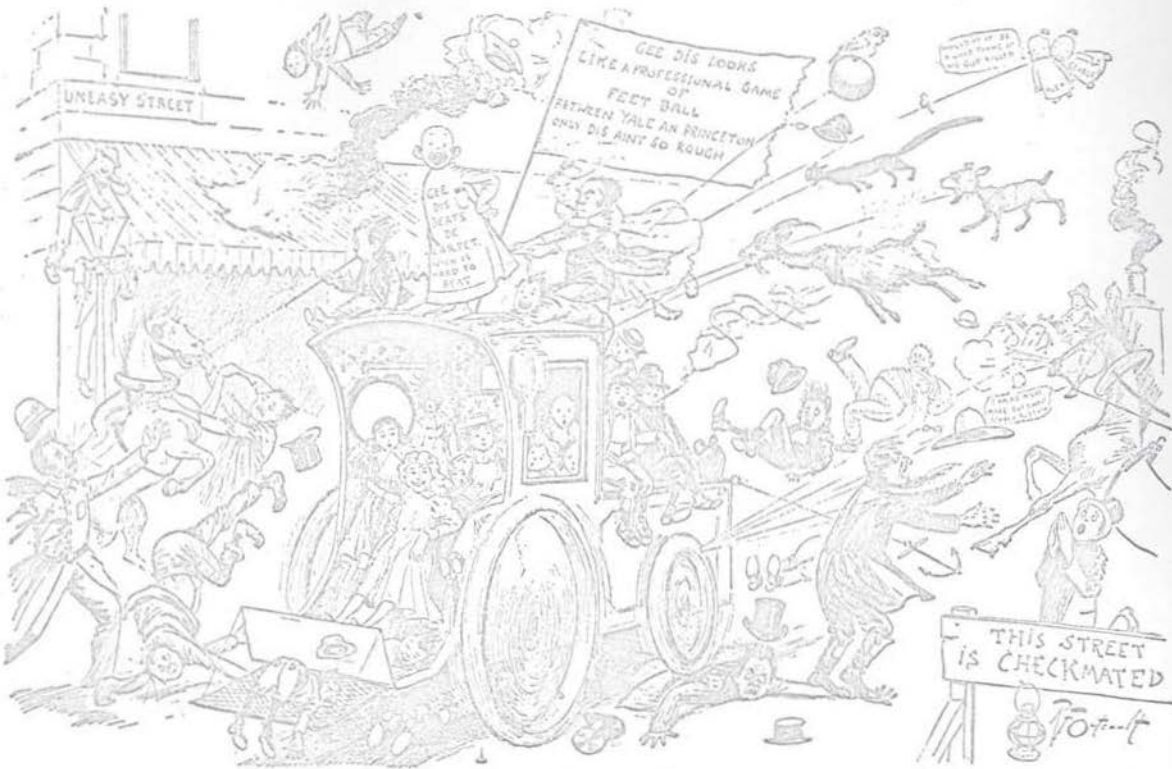
The exact date was February 16, 1896 when the readers of the N.Y. Sunday World sat back in their easy chairs only to find something they'd never seen before. It was a large section of the paper devoted to funny drawings, a three-quarter page in color entitled "The Great Dog Show of M'Googan's Avenue" and signed "Outcault". It appeared to be a panorama of the city's slums, but yet it was different. There were cats and wash hanging out and a lot of tough children in high society costumes, who were busy exhibiting their pets. These kids surrounded a key figure, a strange creature, who, though evidently a boy, appeared to have passed through the major experiences of life in the first six months. Although he was small, he was important looking. His head was bald with flap ears, his face was faintly Chinese and he looked directly into the reader's eyes with a quizzical, interrogative smile half-timid, half-

brash, as if he understood exactly the portentous event which was happening through him. The kid was dressed in a kind of nightgown on which was a smeary handprint, and this nightgown was colored a pure light yellow, which made a vivid mark in the middle of the page.

People in New York noticed the Yellow Kid and laughed. (Fig. 10&11) Actually, there must have been a lot of people who laughed, for on March 15, 1896 the Yellow Kid made his second appearance. There were significant additions this second time and the drawing was entitled, "War Scare in Hogan's Alley". The patriot kids were lined up with posters such as "Why Don't England turn der X-rays onto der Monroe doctoring and dey can see wot's in it?" And in the nearest position was the Yellow Kid dragging a tiny cannon. He had a red cocked hat, more handprints on his dress and (the significant point) a word written across it, "Artillery". The kid made reappearances in the following weeks, interpreting events, becoming the reader's man, and always while looking right at the reader. Eventually, the words on his nightgown expanded rapidly into sentences, into a medium of communication.

The Yellow Kid had caught the public's eye. Hundreds of thousands of readers were endeared to the funny kid in the yellow nightgown. The Kid became one of

THE YELLOW KID TREATS THE CROWD TO A HORSELESS CARRIAGE RIDE.



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FIGURE 10. The Yellow Kid shows 'THE YELLOW KID TAKES A HAND AT GOBY.' personality comes to



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FIGURE 11. Appearing only a week after the drawing in Figure 1, this experiment clearly prefigures the new form. We are very close here to the actual birth of the comic strip.

Fig.10 & 11

the well known people of New York. New Yorkers themselves were quite unaware, however, that a new form of communication was about to be built on this foundation. They enjoyed the kid because he made them laugh, but actually two of the typical aspects of the comic strip had been thoroughly established by him: a large number of readers, and "the talk" in the actual drawing, instead of an outside caption.

Actually, neither of these ideas was new. Back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an English cartoonist Thomas Rowlandson had made a number of drawings of a Dr. Syntax, which were examples of a continuing, popular and funny personality. In the United States a somewhat crude ancestor of the modern comic, "Ferdinand Flipper" ran in a lurid New York weekly called Brother Jonathon, the first copy of which was issued July 13, 1839. The illustrations were numerous woodcuts, which presented a picture-by-picture account of the then raw, new land of California. The strip told a definite story. Speech had also been used in a drawing, especially in political cartoons, since the days of Hogarth. The custom was often to enclose the words in a pen line, with a point leading toward the speaker's mouth. This device came to be known as a "balloon".

But these examples were merely experiments and were

were far from being comics in the modern sense. A better example, and much closer relative in the days prior to "The Yellow Kid" was the series, "The Little Bears and Tigers". This was a strip about funny animals which romped week after week in the San Francisco Examiner. The Little Bears and Tigers first appeared in 1892. Actually there is nothing especially outstanding about this strip compared with other humorous drawings of the time except for their regular recurrence. The Little Bears and Tigers made friends with a large number of readers through the advantage of a large newspaper audience. James Swinnerton was the man who drew the strip, and he holds a high position in the field of cartooning for his efforts. He may be said to be one of the three founding fathers, who between them gave the comic strip the form in which we know it today. The other two artists were Richard F. Outcault of the Yellow Kid and Rudolph Dirks originator of the Katzenjammer Kids. None of these three created the comic form in its entirety, but they all learned from one another, with the result that all three were doing true comics as the 20<sup>th</sup> century began.

As was mentioned earlier, Pulitzer and Hearst were staging a stormy rivalry for popular attention of their own papers in the 1890's. Perhaps the mere appearance

of the "Yellow Kid" in the World's pages wouldn't have been enough to have started the comic strips without the fierce competition of the moment. It was because the comics functioned as highly important weapons in this newspaper war that they became so deeply imbedded in the American consciousness. Therefore, in many ways, comics owe their existence and beginning to a newspaper war. To understand the war is to understand the comics. The newspapers' first purpose was to build circulation. The comic sells the paper and in return the paper gives the comic-strip character his chance to make friends with millions of readers. This sort of set-up, the basis for the comic strip business, only became possible during the years we are considering. This is why it can be said that the history of comics began in 1896. It was at this time in history that newspapers were just beginning to develop huge circulations. Although drawings had been around for thousands of years that were of a humorous nature, the funnies as we know them, needed the newspaper to help create their sensational debut.

There were however, moments when the comics attained more than their share of sensationalism. Outcault's Yellow Kid eventually achieved a low-down vulgarity that was somewhat more than mere penetrating humor.

The cartoon became quite cruel especially in "The Yellow Kid's Great Fight", December 20, 1896. In this episode the Kid knocks down a little black opponent and dislocates both jaws. Then a goat butts the negro and cheerfully pulls the hair out of his head.

It was this type of cartooning that exasperated a lot of people at that time. It also created a storm of resentment against the screaming sensationalism of the new journalism. Because of all this a phrase was created to express this sensationalism, a phrase directly descended from the Yellow Kid---"Yellow Journalism". There were attempts to stop this type of journalistic expression, most of them unsuccessful, except for one in 1908, the Christian Science Monitor. This paper planned to combat yellow journalism by expressing a much friendlier, and cleaner world for its readers.

The yellow journalism type of cartoon was not a lasting ingredient of what has become today's funnies. The cartoon has left this area of interest to develop into a family entertainment known as the funny paper. The word "funnies" itself was coined by the kids in the early 1900's. They referred to the brightly colored comic section of the Sunday paper as the "funnies". The word stuck and soon grown-ups as well as children were referring to the comics as the funny paper.

The words funny paper tend to identify the Sunday paper more than the daily comics. The word comics has had a multiplicity of meanings. In the days before the comic strip, "comics" referred to any amusing, humorous drawing. But with the advent of the daily strip and its immediate popularity the word comics pre-empted its old meaning and today describes the funny paper.

From that day in 1895 to the present the comics or funnies have grown and matured into a variety of cartoons representing all aspects of life. There are dozens of strips and they all owe their beginning to the Yellow Kid. Many more are yet to come. Many have varied their format and theme and are not really funnies but more or less cartoon stories. They all started with the same basic beginning and have branched out from what went before them, into their present form.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CARTOON AND ART

Looking back we've seen the drawing develop from a simple cave painting to a much more refined way of expression until the drawing itself has branched off into something called the cartoon. And since that February day in 1896 the cartoon or comic strip has become as much a part of everyday life as the days of the week. But exactly why has it? What is so special about funny drawings or cartoon drawings that make people follow them so closely? And what makes people draw them to begin with? Perhaps these questions can be answered and some others can be raised in the following paragraphs and chapters.

The question may arise about the place a cartoon has in the field of contemporary art, but exactly where the cartoon fits into contemporary art as well as the masterpieces of the past isn't really relevant. After all the cartoon isn't meant for just those who can appreciate a Mondrian or a Van Gogh, or those who try to appreciate these masterpieces. The cartoon is meant for everyone from child to adult no matter how young or old.

In other words, if you tried to make a young child understand the abstractions of a Picasso or the surrealism of a Magritte you might run into some difficulty making the child understand how it could be lauded as something great. To a child, something good in art is something that looks realistic, and natural, something that is "pretty". So to make a child understand these unusual drawings and paintings and abstractions on an adult level (or a sophisticated level) might be a tough job. But for a child to look at a cartoon and see a funny character he immediately sees something he can understand because it's funny and it's on his level. And even though the cartoon can be understood by a child doesn't cancel out its acceptance by adults. As a child sees a cartoon and laughs at the funny drawing, so an adult sees the same funny drawing and also laughs. No matter how old a person gets to be he never outgrows the ability to laugh. So when a child looks at a cartoon and enjoys its humor it isn't unusual for his father or mother to come along and laugh at the same cartoon.

But do cartoons fit into the world of art? There can be no denying it; cartoons are an art form. And the people that draw them definitely have to know what they're doing. It takes a true draftsman to be able to draw cartoons, and draw them well. But usually

cartoons aren't displayed in art museums or in people's homes even though the idea isn't completely impossible. Cartoons are meant for the funny paper, and paintings or drawings are meant for museums and people's homes. This doesn't mean that cartoons aren't good enough to make it to a museum; it just means that cartoons are in a different category. Many cartoonists are artists on the side and show their work whenever possible, whether it be serious drawing, painting or sculpture. But regardless of what type of serious artwork the cartoonist turns out, there isn't really any reason to compare the two forms. Cartoons and serious artwork are related to each other but can't really be compared against one another.

## CHAPTER III

### The Diversification of the Comic Strip

At one time cartoons and comic strips had a universal appeal due to the humor contained in them. Originally this was the way it was. All comic strips were funny. Things have changed quite a bit since Krazy Kat and the Katzenjammer Kids. Comics now cover almost every facet of life and are still universal. There are detective strips, romance strips, soap-opera strips dealing with the problems of everyday life, adventure strips like "Terry and the Pirates" or "Brenda Starr", and all these strips are known as "comics". Somewhere along the line these strips seem to have gotten into the wrong category. The various types of cartoon drawing that has sprung up since the beginning of the funnies, have definitely not followed the pattern of humorous drawing. They still appear on the funnies page in the newspaper because they are cartoon drawings even though they're not really comics. I suppose one can understand their presence by the mere fact that people not only like to laugh they also like to identify with adventure, romance, or everyday problems they see in these strips. After reading the whimsical thoughts of Snoopy in Charles Schulz's "Peanuts"

it's kind of nice to switch to the ever-exciting life of detective "Dick Tracy". Perhaps the word to justify these non-humorous strips is balance. Comic strip readers like to balance their reading with something that is still in the funny paper but isn't really funny.

Of course we can't forget the drawings that came before the comics. Political cartoons were the first kind of drawing that appeared in the newspaper and they're still finding a home there. There are many different kinds of drawing styles as well as types of wit or satire that are implemented into the present day political cartoon. Many of these political cartoons are not funny but rather bring to light something that the cartoonist feels is wrong in the government, the United States or the world. Their idea is to inject their pen into something or someone with the intention of making the subject known by making it "hurt" the people involved. It isn't entirely impossible for a political cartoonist to be funny and at the same time be able to inject their editorial "venom". In the last few years the editorial cartoon has seen the rise of various cartoonists who use a funny approach to make their point known about some very un-funny topics. This satirical approach in lam-

pooning a timely issue in the news is not only a good way of attracting readers to perhaps otherwise dry commentary but is also a good way of ridiculing and editorializing something in the news. (This funny type of editorial cartoon will be discussed in Chapter V.)

We see that not only does humor play an important part in attracting readers to the funny page and the newspaper but so does drama, adventure, romance as well as the political issues of the day. People who read the newspaper are affected by such things as humor, drama, adventure, romance so in turn they enjoy seeing their favorite comic strip characters affected by these same feelings. Being able to identify with these comic strip characters and cartoons makes the reader that much more interested in what he sees each day in the "funny paper" and the editorial page.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AUTHOR'S INTEREST IN CARTOONS

Exactly what has motivated the author to draw cartoons isn't really something that can be pinned down, except that it's something that has always been done. The author believes like most artists, that the ability to work in the arts is not something you can acquire solely through instruction. Don't see this wrong; instruction in the arts is important, but before one sends his hard-earned cash away to some school of Great Artists there had better be a bit of innate ability present. Guidance in the field of art can help an aspiring artist to polish his technique and acquire a professional flair to his work, but before anything else, especially in the field of cartooning, there must be an inborn ability to draw in this manner as well as an inborn quality of thought that lends itself to the comics. In fact, most successful cartoonists who deal in humorous cartoons, almost have to live the life of the cartoon. He is the creator and in fact the living cartoon. What shows up in the funny paper in black and white are the cartoonist's thoughts and

ideas. Basically what you are reading each day is the cartoonist's mind as he sees the world we live in.

But how could a cartoonist actually live the life of the cartoon if there is more than one character in the strip and each with differing personalities? Well, perhaps the cartoonist doesn't actually live each characters life step-by-step, but he is the creator of the characters and so to a certain extent he must know the personality of his "people" fairly well. A cartoonist is a writer who accompanies his stories with pictures. So when he creates a situation he must not only know what words the character needs to say to "make it work" but also must know the way they(the characters) must look to finish the situation. Therefore, when it is said a cartoonist lives his life through the characters it is meant not only is he using his own special personality to bring the strip alive but also he is interpreting a situation as he feels each individual character would.

Of course just drawing and representing this world could be done by anyone with a bit of drawing ability, but how do you train someone to think funny? As far as is known it can't be done. Drawing instructors can assign a comic strip to a class of students and end up with nothing funny except the results. People can't be funny



unless they possess this trait, and not just occasionally, but every day. So we see regardless of the desire to be funny unless it is there of its own accord, there won't be a funny cartoon.

For this reason, one can see that the cartoon can be absolutely ineffective without a winning idea. The characters of a comic strip can be funny to look at at first, but once we're accustomed to their appearance there must be something to carry them along. Their actions and thoughts have to carry an idea that will make them a success or they won't last. And to make people laugh seven days a week every week of the year is a tough job unless, as has been said before, the cartoonist lives the life of his own characters, and even then it can be tough.

The ingredients of a successful cartoonist have for the most part, always been with that person. Through practice and drive, perhaps the cartoonist has improved and developed his skill to a fine art, but basically his ability to draw like a cartoonist and think like a cartoonist have always been with him. But even with these innate abilities present a cartoonist cannot expect to remain in competition with other present day cartoonists unless he constantly hones his present knowledge to a sharp edge. Just

like any other skill it takes a constant practice to keep everything involved working to its peak. Take for instance a professional golfer. The abilities the golfer uses on the course to a great extent are probably quite natural. He isn't an average golfer, because more than likely he has an inborn quality of movement and concentration that have helped him "pick up the game" much easier than most golfers. But even with these natural qualities without a desire to keep everything within this sport at its best the golfer won't last. He has to keep working every day, constantly training himself to be the very best at what he's doing. So it must be with the cartoonist. He must train himself to think cartoons, see cartoons in things that nobody else sees. Drawing cartoons is his job and it's an everyday job. Being born with an ability to draw cartoons as well as think funny won't be worth anything unless the cartoonist accepts these things and constantly works them and develops them into a true art form.

How does a cartoonist develop humor in his drawings and what are the characteristics behind a good humorous cartoon? First of all a good cartoonist has to know how to cartoon. The quality of his drawing is a very important factor in trying to create a good cartoon. The cartoonist must be able to exaggerate a figure or an

animal just enough to make it recognizable as the being it is and still be a cartoon. Once he is able to draw the characters in the strip and the surroundings that go with the strip it is necessary to put them into a funny situation. The exaggeration of the figures involved makes for an enjoyable cartoon drawing, but it isn't complete until they're in a funny situation. The situation can arise through various methods. The strip can be satirical and poke fun at any numerous things in our society for the sole purpose of ridiculing them. Or the strip can be funny just for the slapstick situation the characters are involved in. Then again, the lines that accompany the drawings can be funny alone by themselves, using the drawings only to complete the form of the cartoon strip itself.

CHAPTER V  
A PERSONAL STATEMENT  
ON CARTOONING

As for the author, the motivation to draw cartoons isn't something someone else has instilled but rather something the author has instilled in his drawing. Ever since it can be remembered the author has drawn, looked at, and read cartoons, as well as envied people who drew them.(See Figs 12,13,14,15,16) As a child, when these funny people were seen in the paper or dancing across the television it seemed only right to try to copy them. Hopefully, the author's technique has improved since a personal style\* began to develop. Whatever style of cartooning he possesses today, has been derived from interest as well as from imagination

\*Whenever the word "style" is mentioned in this chapter the author is referring to the type of drawing used with all its notable characteristics. For example Hal Foster who draws "Prince Valiant" has a very refined and precise and life-like approach to his drawing. Each cartoon is a "finished" drawing in every respect, with an almost photographic quality. Foster's style is completely contrasted when compared to Brant Parker who draws "The Wizard of Id". Parker's drawings have an almost child-like simplicity that are definitely cartoons. The styles of drawing mentioned here are probably closer to being completely opposite than any two styles in the field of cartooning.



Fig. 12

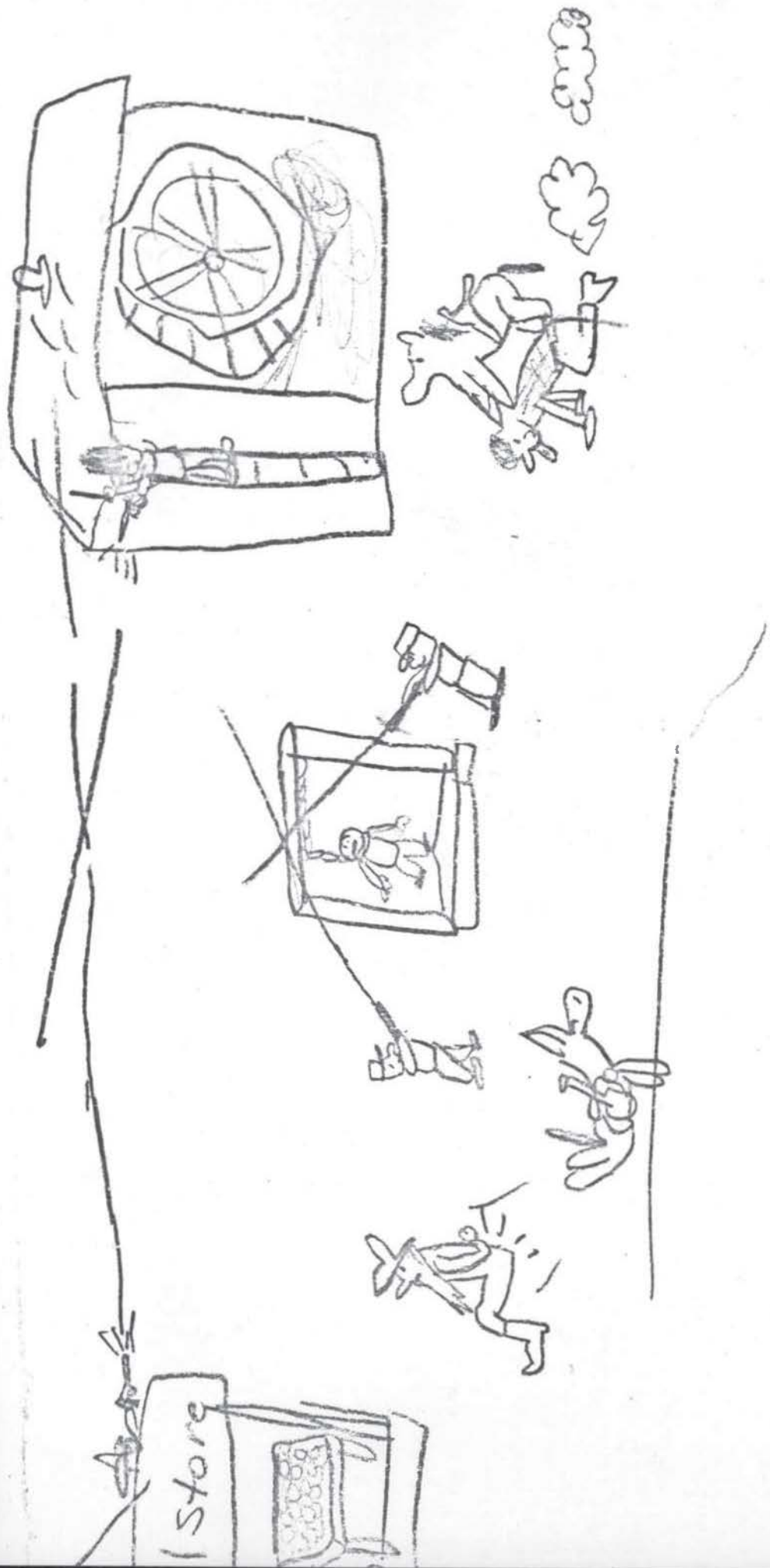


Fig. 13

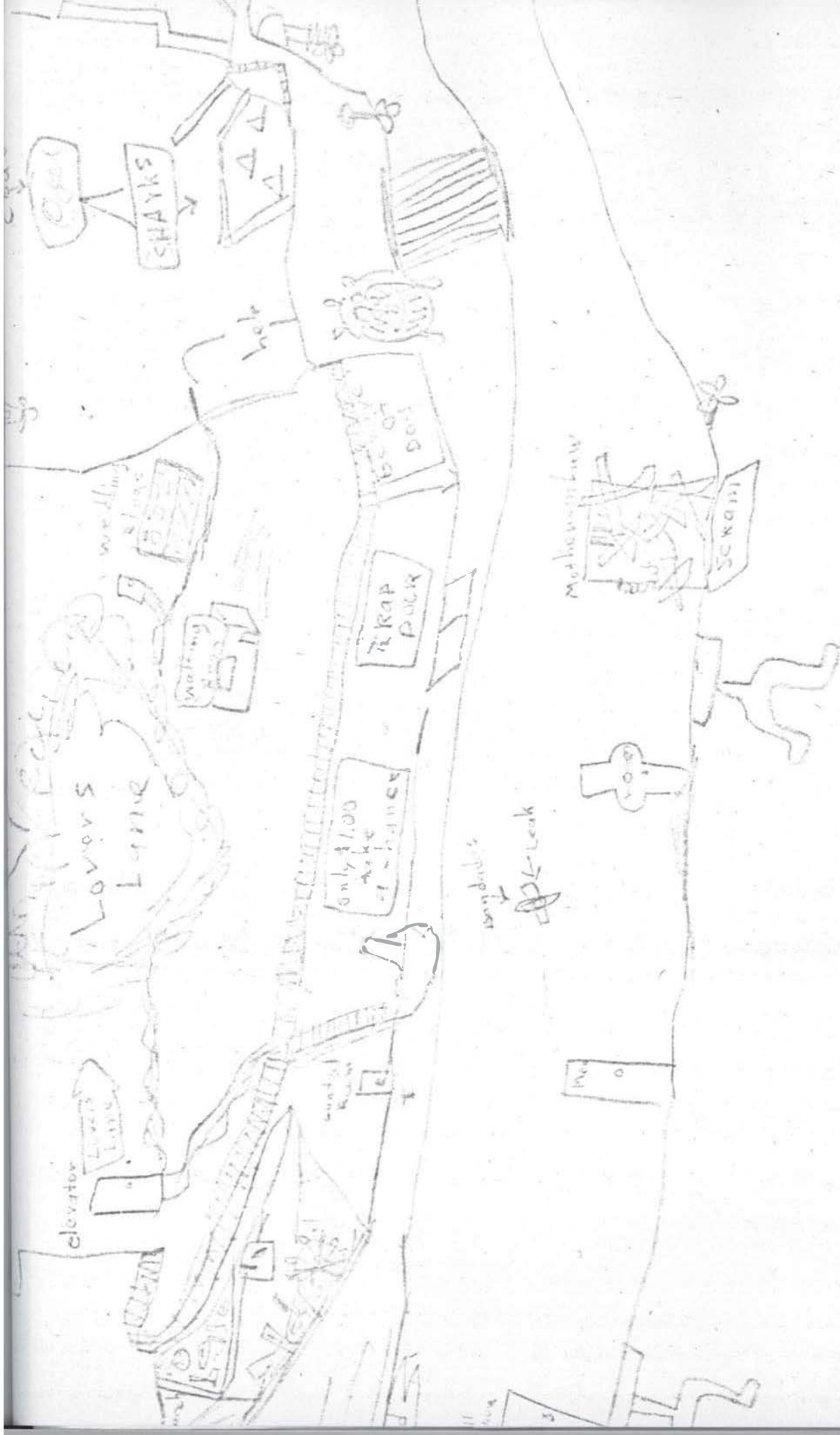


Fig. 14

"I was workin' for a nold slave driv"



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



in addition to a lot of copying of available cartoons.

Where does an idea for a cartoon originate? From the cartoonist's mind, of course, the same place the drawing originates. It would be very hard to explain where an idea comes from, for anything no matter who or what you are talking about can enter into the idea. Every person is different and consequently every person thinks differently and in his own way. It is just as reasonable to ask where did Thomas Edison get his idea for a light bulb. This was the way he thought, in experiments and mechanisms and possibilities and perhaps. And so the cartoonist thinks in his own way, and as best he can. The cartoonist sees things in a "funny way", things that normally wouldn't be funny. But because he has trained himself to think like this, his imagination can carry him into things and bring him back laughing along with anyone who might happen onto his drawings.

Naturally, the cartoonist uses experiences of his own in everyday life in his cartoons, but he also uses experiences he must twist a bit to create a funny situation. In other words he can see someone slip and fall on a banana peel and laugh, but people have been slipping and falling on banana peels since they invented

the banana peel cliché. Therefore if the cartoonist wants to express a bit of a change or a twist on an old joke he must see things in his own unique way. For instance, in a cartoon, a fellow draws a picture of a banana peel on the sidewalk and then sits back and waits for someone to come along. Sure enough along comes someone walking down the sidewalk. The unknowing victim steps right on the drawing of the banana peel and of course slips and falls while the prankster-artist sits back and admires his work. The whole situation is ridiculous but that is the idea, and hopefully it would make someone laugh.

Cartoon ideas come from not only ridiculous situations like the one described above but also from situations that are much more realistic. In some instances there would even be underlying editorial statements made in some cartoons, that aren't necessarily editorial. Again, for example, there are two fellows involved. Both are dressed in Hippie garb, the one talking is holding a guitar and wearing a cowboy hat, boots and a fringed jacket while his friend is just standing staring off into space. The caption from the fellow in the cowboy hat, "You think your parents don't understand you, mine gave me a horse for Christmas!!" (Fig.17) What is being brought to light literally by the cartoonist is

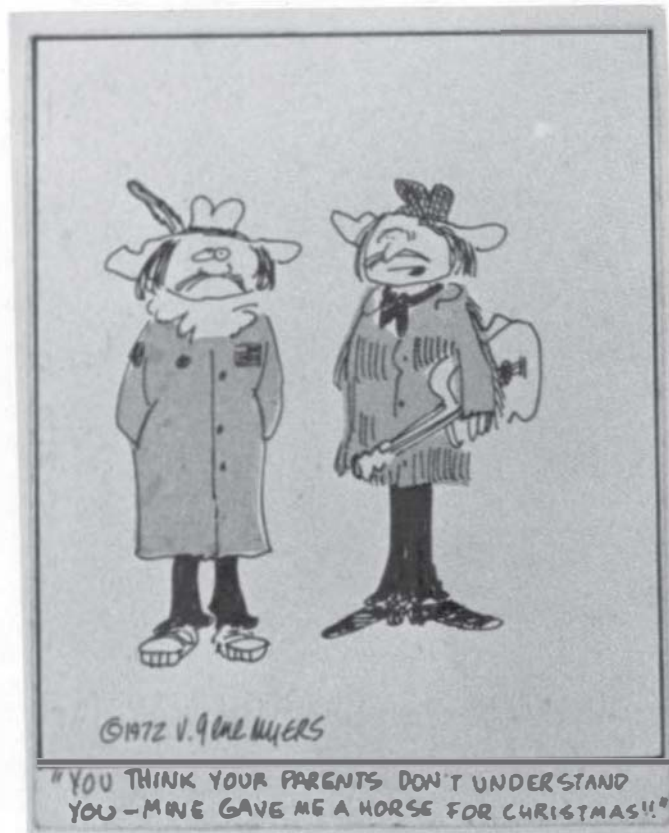


Fig.17

the situation of current misunderstandings between today's youth, their fashions and ideas, and their parents. At the same time, there is the desire to express these ideas in a humorous manner.

Other methods for a cartoon idea come from a more basic technique that involves placing a character in a situation that is all very possible but completely unlikely. This is known as a sight gag.(Fig.18) It can

be imagined that many people who are not cartoonists might be more apt to come up with ideas along this line than in any other situation. For instance, the

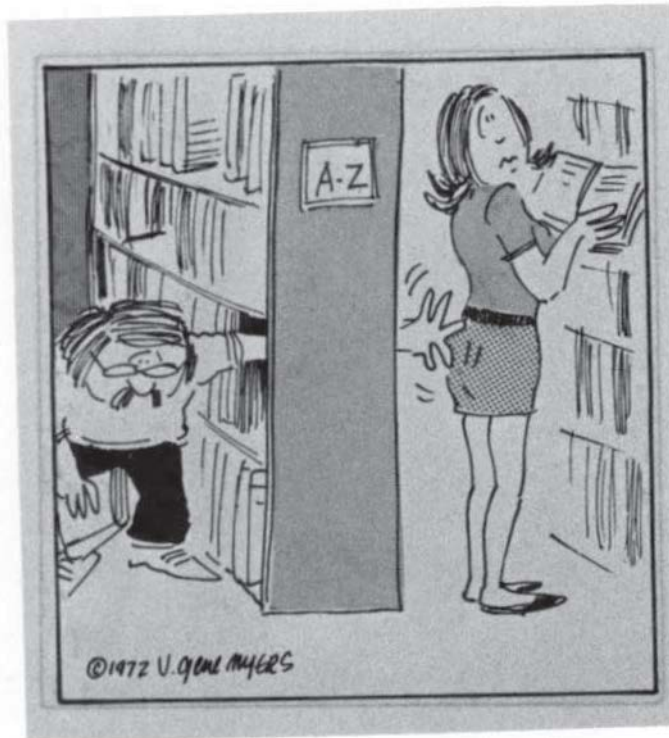


Fig.18

classroom is the setting; the instructor at the front of the room is writing on the blackboard, and is dressed in only his swimming trunks and wearing a rubber duck around his waist. One student in the front row says to another student, "Summer school seems to have a rather informal atmosphere!:" (Fig.19) The charac-

ters in the cartoon accept the situation, knowing it isn't typical but instead of laughing they try to reason out the situation. Exactly what makes this idea humorous, assuming it is humorous, is not just the fact that the instructor is dressed in his swim trunks and a rubber duck but also the fact that his students accept the fact and reason it to be a result of the casual atmosphere of summer school. Somewhat like a comedian



Fig.19

who delivers his best lines with a straight face, so likewise does a cartoon character.

But cartoon ideas are not always easy to come by no matter who is doing the thinking and the drawing. At times ideas can come one after another and then be followed by a complete void. When ideas start running low a cartoonist has to go looking for situations he can turn into cartoons. Being around people can be inspiring for ideas as well as being alone to think, but since people are the center of cartoons it only makes sense that being with people would be a good place to seek ideas. It is important to just watch people and their mannerisms, what they say and how they react to problems. All these things lend themselves to the cartoonist and his characters. Filling a cartoon character with thoughts and mannerisms with which everyone can identify, even if the responses are a bit exaggerated, make the character that much more believable.

Once the idea has found its way to the cartoonist's mind it is then his job to put it down on paper in such a manner that all his readers can see the humor in such a situation. This is where the technique and style, ability with a pen and draftmanship play their all-important part in completing the cartoon

idea. A cartoonist's style can attract or detract his audience and either make someone want to read his strip or shy away from it all together.

A cartoonist's style continues to change with every drawing, even though it may not always be noticed if compared over the span of a year. Over a period of ten years a cartoon style can make some very noticeable changes. At times the cartoonist may make the effort to change something about his style with which he isn't satisfied, or a change may take place that the cartoonist isn't completely aware of himself. Being aware of the works of other cartoonists also gives a cartoonist a bit of an insight into the various styles and possibilities. Often a cartoonist may lift a particular technique from a fellow cartoonist to help improve or better his own style. Many artists try to stay aware of other contemporary artists and their works; a cartoonist does the same.

A cartoonist's style develops from his own personal way of working plus any bits of style he may want to implement that he picks up from other cartoonists. For instance if a cartoonist happens to appreciate another cartoonist's way of working, if it is at all possible, he may try to imitate in some ways that cartoonist's way of working. Although it isn't the best pol-



icy to steal a complete style, it doesn't hurt to pick up helpful tips and techniques whenever possible. Through practice and experience plus odds and ends of styles that are available a cartoonist can find a particular style that is truly his own. And once he has a personal style the cartoonist can continually change and improve this style in each succeeding drawing until he has finally worked out what is truly his way of working.

The author's style developed and is still developing from an interest in drawing as well as an interest in cartoons. Copying cartoons from comic books and magazines was the first step. Many times cartoons were copied from television, and this was even more of a challenge because one wanted to complete the cartoon before it was gone from the screen. Things and objects that came to mind were also drawn and cartooned. Being aware of the cartoons that are contemporary as well as those in the past was also an influence on technique. Looking at other cartoons, one tended to pull out certain qualities that seemed appealing and then trying to work them into a personal way of cartooning. Perhaps what is being done now is a combination of thoughts and ideas and techniques that have been building since the first awareness of cartoons. Several styles of car-

tooning can be noted. A neatly drawn and precisely drawn cartoon can be appreciated as well as a freer style of cartoon. The author's personal style tends to be more free and simply drawn. At times it varies, and appears more detailed in some drawings than in others but basically they are not what could be called hard-edge drawings. In other words settings and furniture in these cartoons aren't usually symmetrical or exact but the idea is evident and one knows what they are. Because these things are in a cartoon they themselves are cartoons therefore they all work together. What is being said is as long as everything in the drawing reflects the same style it's going to work at least as a cartoon.

The freer style lends itself to the cartoon for a couple of reasons. Cartoons aren't meant to be compared with drawings by Andrew Wyeth; if they were they wouldn't be cartoons. Cartoons are meant to be simple and free(at least it is thought so) and that is why they are drawn like that. If a cartoon starts getting too cluttered with too much detail it stops being a cartoon and starts being a detailed drawing. So for the reader's sake as well as for personal preference they are kept simple, for if the drawing is simple, then the cartoon idea tends to fit the mood of the

drawing even better. The idea of a comic strip is usually light-hearted so why shouldn't the drawing be of a similar nature?

Many comic strips, especially those that are not of a humorous nature, such as detective, or mystery strips, or soap-opera types usually implement a more serious style of drawing. This is probably done because of the story content. It might be rather hard to get dramatic if the people in the strip didn't really resemble real people but were funny looking. There are reasons, then, why some cartoonists use different styles to tell their stories.

Variety is the spice of life, and perhaps this is why not all comic strips are funny. It is thought by the author, that a comic strip to be a comic strip should be funny. The characters should be funny or it really isn't a comic strip. Cartoons are a form of entertainment and many people don't have time or want to take time to have to keep reading a dialogue every day. A reading audience usually wants to be able to pick up a newspaper and laugh at the comics without worrying about following any definite story line. If a reader hasn't looked at a paper for six months, he should be able to turn to the comic section and immediately find something to laugh at.

For this reason cartoons should be something everyone can look to for entertainment. Readers should think of the author's cartoons as something to make them smile. To be honest with yourself as well as your readers, a cartoon should reflect your true feelings about what you are doing. If a cartoonist doesn't do this it is sure to show up in his work. As has been said earlier a cartoonist has to live the life of his characters or at least be able to feel their own personalities within himself before he can put them down on paper. In other words he has to know what they're going to do (his characters) before they do it.

To compare the author's drawings to contemporary cartoons they might be best aligned with the work of Johnny Hart and Brant Parker who draw "B.C." and "The Wizard of Id" respectively. These types of cartoon strips can be enjoyed for their humor as well as their simplicity. There is no excess of line or scenery but just the necessities to state the point and make you laugh. Occasionally these strips reflect what is happening currently in the world even though the setting is the stone age for "B.C." and the Middle Ages in the "Wizard of Id". By this, one can see that although a contemporary problem is implemented into a setting from

the past a reader can identify with it. The reader is identifying with the contemporary problem while the Middle Ages setting supplies the incongruity that in turn supplies the humor.

To mention all the comic strips that appear in the funny paper would be an impossibility but there are two strips that I feel should be mentioned. One is Al Capp's "Lil' Abner" and the other is Walt Kelly's "Pogo". These two strips attract a wide audience for two main reasons, both are very well drawn as well as being well written. Capp and Kelly deal largely in their strips with contemporary political satire taking jabs at people in the news and on the political scene whenever they can. At one time Capp was sued by Joan Baez because he had drawn a caricature of her in his strip and was referring to her as "Phonie Joanie". Kelly uses a bit different approach since all the characters in his strip are animals. This doesn't interfere with the reader's interpretation at all, for the "animals" are always recognizable. J. Edgar Hoover has been drawn in "Pogo" as a bulldog and Spiro Agnew as a Great Dane. Other notable characters include President Nixon as well as former Attorney General John Mitchell. The caricatures copied with Kelly's satirical imagination make the strip one of the best

in the business. The author has mentioned these two strips for their merit alone. The cartoons the author does do not follow or imitate these two styles but this doesn't stop him from appreciating them for what they are.

The author also does not place himself in the category with editorial cartoonists although occasionally he has done this type of cartoon.(Fig. 20,21, 22,23)



Fig.20



Fig.21



Fig.22



"FIREWORKS ARE ILLEGAL IN MY HOMETOWN NOW— TOO MANY PEOPLE GETTIN' HURT!!"

Fig. 23



Normally his cartoons are not in this vein but try to reflect something humorous without cutting into someone. If a cartoonist can editorialize in a biting and yet funny manner he truly has a winning style. Editorial cartoonist for the Chicago Sun-Times Bill Mauldin says a cartoon must "ridicule not praise".<sup>1</sup>

(Fig.24)

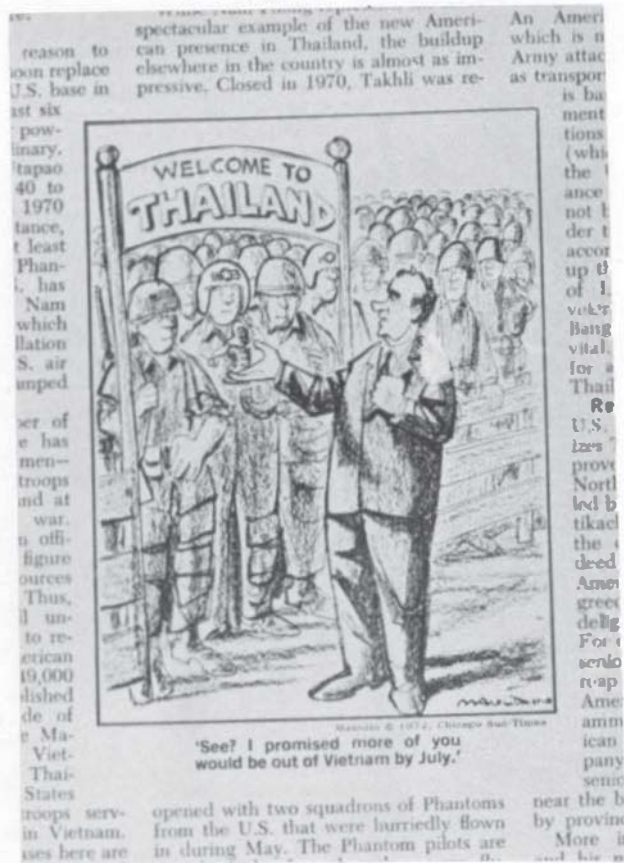


Fig.24

<sup>1</sup>Rogers, W.G. Mightier Than the Sword: Cartoon, Caricature, Social Comment. N.Y. Harcourt B&W. 1969 p.241

Another cartoonist that fits this category is Pat Oliphant of the Denver Post. (Fig.25) His cartoons are always biting and to the point and always carry a wit that is unequalled. Because of his effective type of drawing, his style has been copied by many leading cartoonists. Ironically, the young cartoonist that won this years Pulitzer prize, Jeffrey K. MacNelly of the Richmond Leader, has a style that is

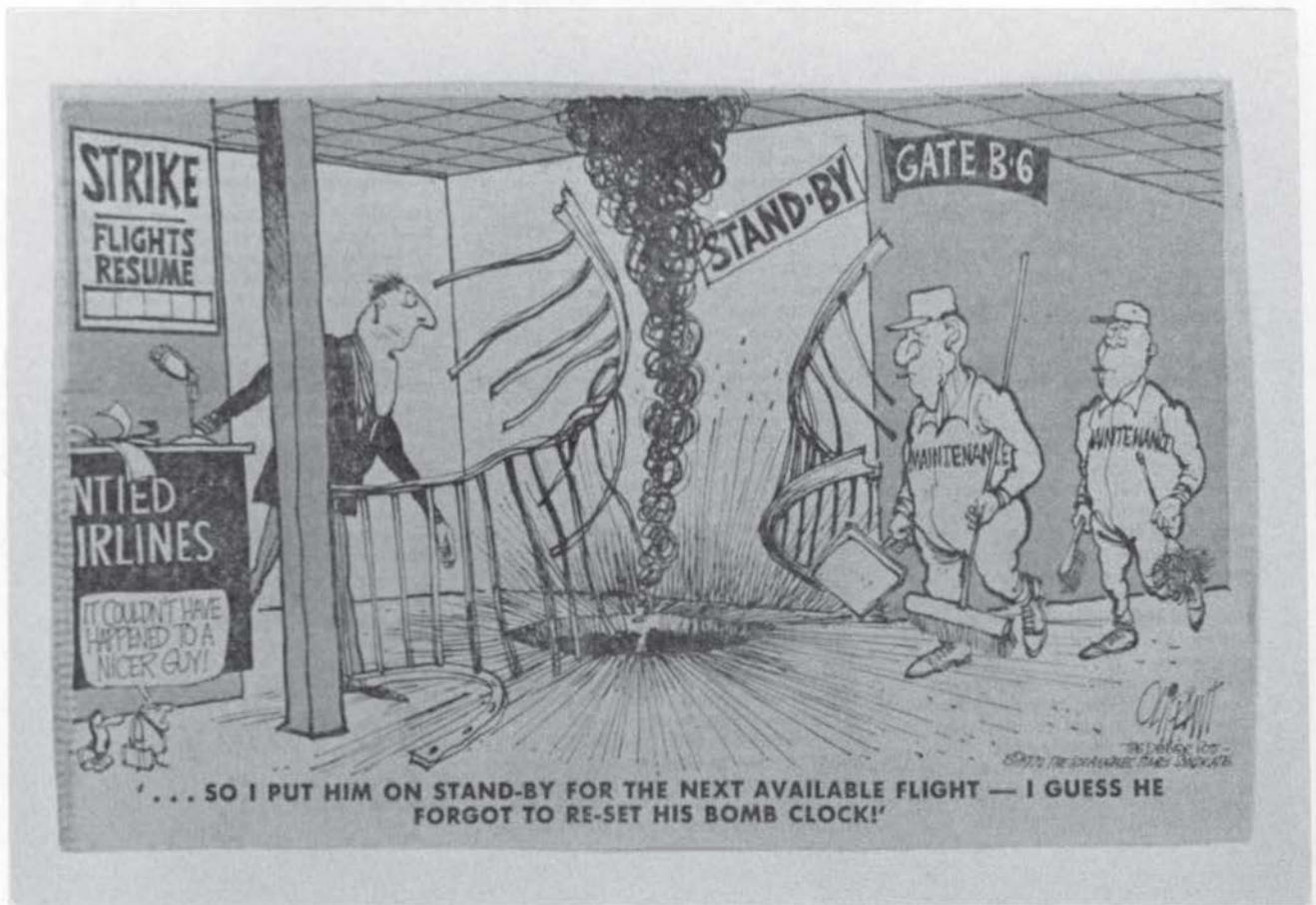


Fig.25

unbelievably like Oliphant's who himself is a Pulitzer prize winner. I suppose if a style is attractive enough it can be lifted by another cartoonist and prove to be successful again. However flattering this may be to Oliphant, he is somewhat displeased with this whole idea and refers to those cartoonists who have picked up on his style as "Those Bastards".<sup>1</sup>

But regardless of Oliphant's feelings there still must be a bit of pride knowing that various editorial cartoonists throughout the United States have found his style to suit their needs. Exactly what this "borrowing" says for the other cartoonists is left to the reader or perhaps to the Pulitzers. It has often been thought that it would be nice to draw in a manner resembling Oliphant's, but it would feel much better to know that your style was a unique way of drawing (especially if one ever won an award as prestigious as a Pulitzer). Actually, but quite unrealistically, it is hoped that someday cartoonists throughout the United States will be imitating the author's style.

<sup>1</sup>Newsweek March 31, 1972 p-54

## CONCLUSION

What has been said about cartoons in general? Probably not much that hasn't been said many times before, but at least personal feelings about the art of cartooning have been stated. Cartoons are an integral part of the author and it is hoped that they always will be. It is also hoped that they are always a part of someone else as well, for without these other people in one's life perhaps there never would be any cartoons. Half the enjoyment of drawing cartoons is knowing that someone else is able to enjoy and appreciate these drawings also. It is presumed that as long as cartoons can find an audience the author will continue to draw them as best as is possible.

Cartoons themselves are interesting and always will be as long as the artists go out of their way to make them that way. Each day is different for every comic strip and as long as people have curiosities, they will be turning to the funny paper to see what the cartoons are saying for that day.

Funnies are an art form that provide light-hearted entertainment for everyone. As long as people continue to read them they'll be there, and it is imagined that will be for quite some time.

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