

The Bub Slug Story; a hard-

by Hans Beckers

For almost a year now Edmonton's very own Bub Slug has graced the pages of *The Journal's* Saturday comics. Slug, a lovable, hard-hatted waterfall maintenance man (with bumps on his nose) has led a very exciting first year; he's won Lotto 649 and, most recently, he's become an integral part of the Edmonton Oilers' lineup (having amassed 56 points and 300 penalty minutes in his first nine games).

The strip, which for now is only being run in Edmonton, is the creation of two former U of A alumni: Gerry Rasmussen and Gary Delaine. Recently, I had the privilege to chat with the artistic half of that duo - Gerry Rasmussen.

When did you and Gary (Delaine) start your collaboration?

We started about ten years ago. We met in first year of Fine Arts. In second year, we started to do some jam-cartoon sessions where we got together and each started a strip and then passed it around. By the end of the night you'd have a totally incomprehensible story that everyone thought was really funny... until the next morning.

When was Bub Slug created?

We took one of the ideas that we came up with at one of these sessions. That was Bub Slug. He was a guy who was just sitting there watching his plant and he got invaded by creatures from another planet who all looked like beer cans and weiners. They invaded him because they heard he was abusing them on Earth... That was 1976.

What is your motivation for doing the strip? It's non-syndicated and appears only once weekly — surely, it can't be for financial reasons?

Don't get the wrong idea that by doing Bub Slug, we're starving. Although, you're right, money isn't the motivation for doing it. It's been a long time that I've been involved in drawing and cartooning and both Gary and I came to the point where we realized that you're put on this Earth to do something and it's a question of finding out what it is. We found out that what we really wanted to do, and what our purpose was — to mercilessly lampoon things.

Do you find that you have a good working relationship with Gary or does it get trying at times?

We've been really lucky. We met each other at a formative time in our lives. We developed at the same time, so when we got into doing cartoons we both wanted the same result. If you can get somebody who wants to come up with the same result as you do, then you've got something... I can't see how you could work in a collaboration without that kind of similar interest.

When you and Gary do a script (ie. your lottery/wizard/mud-monster scenario), is it planned from beginning to end? The reason I ask is that you had a poll in *The Journal* as to whether Bub Slug Jr. should have his nose bumps removed or not — your whole storyline depended so much on the poll results — did you fix the results to suit your story development?

(laughing) One piece of news is that we have to do the strip five weeks in advance because the colour work is all done in Buffalo. When we did that 'bumps' poll, that was a joke. We didn't even think anyone would write in. By that time we had already worked out what the poll results were going to be. (laughing) The whole thing was just a joke.

So you know what your epilogue'll be when you start your story?

It's not that outlined. It's outlined in that we know "something's" gonna happen and we know how long our story's going to be, within one or two episodes. The details are actually very loose. If all of a sudden one week we want to put Bobby (sic) Curtola in, well, by gum, he goes in!

Do you find that you both put a lot of pressure on yourselves to be funny?

I don't feel any pressure to be funny and I don't think Gary does either. Part of that is that we've spent enough years doing this that we really don't care what the people around us think. No, there's not a lot of pressure that way. I think the key to humour is to give your own outlook on life. If you can truthfully say what you really think about things, there's going to be humour in that.



Gerry Rasmussen: co-creator of Bub Slug

Photo: Marc Tremblay



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The experience I've had with people running syndicates is that they're just businessmen. They have no sense of humour, or art, or anything that makes up comics. The only things they look for, in terms of which strips they are going to syndicate and which ones they want to market, are figures in terms of dollars and cents and what the computer spits out on the graph. If there are going to be any new changes in cartooning, it'll be in spite of these syndicates — they're essentially just leeches on the artists.

Besides Bub Slug, what is your favourite cartoon strip or cartoonist?

One of my favourites, not as a strip but as a cartoonist, is George Herriman. He drew "Krazy Kat" and "Stumble Inn". He had a lot of strips that people have never heard of. "Krazy Kat" was running, I think, in the New York Times. It was very unpopular, but it was (publisher Randolph) Hearst's favourite strip so it stayed in for years. Herriman did whatever he wanted... he felt no compunction to stay within the English language. Most of his stuff was just a complete hybrid of English words — he was a riot!

Do you see cartooning as a viable profession in the future? It seems that all the 'great' or long-running strips (Peanuts, Wizard of ID, Blondie) are running out of ideas — every situation or joke has been played out by one character or another. Do you agree?

The form of cartooning has got to change and I think that's one of the reasons why we've gotten into what we're doing (full page cartoon). The four-frame strip has been done to death. It came about initially because of lack of space, where you wanted a strip that could run every day, that was an off-

shoot of your Sunday Comics. What happened was that as the newspaper industry got shrunk further and further down, in terms of space, the strips got printed smaller and smaller and gradually the interest reduced with the size. I don't know what form it's going to end up as, but it's a challenging time for cartooning. The interest is there, but people are tired of the form they're in right now.

Do you think syndications will give cartoonists the opportunity to find these new