

Favourite funnies of local yokels

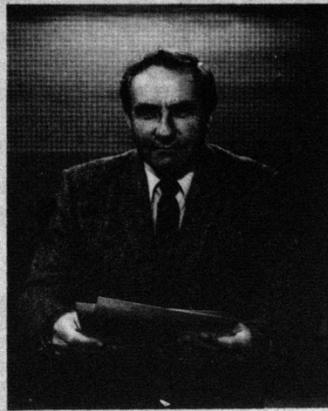
by Brenda Waddle

Can you imagine Pierre Trudeau slurping his morning coffee while giggling over the morning funny papers? What about Ronald Reagan dunking his doughnuts while reading Dennis the Menace? Well, these intriguing visions have dominated the Gateway's waking hours these last few days. Unfortunately, our concern over PET's feelings toward Bloom County remains unalleviated. We did, however, manage to reach a few slightly lower profile notables and ask them the pressing question: "What is your favourite cartoon strip?" Here are the answers we got...



Bruce Hogel

Herman, I think it's great. A laugh or a smile with one picture, a real change of pace, and Peanuts are a close second, even though they aren't as funny as they once were. The reason why so many journalists like Herman might be the pace of our profession, you can read it in ten seconds and still get a laugh out of it.



Alex Moir

I'm not really a comic fan, Yardley Jones I guess, even though I don't look at him often, but his cartoons are as good as any. He usually tells it as it is, like it or not, even though he occasionally goes overboard.

Mark Messier

I like Doug Wright's Family. It's realistic and true to life, and always keeps you thinking.

Randy Gregg

BC - It's very animated and yet it deals with a lot of relevant social issues.

Pierre Couchard

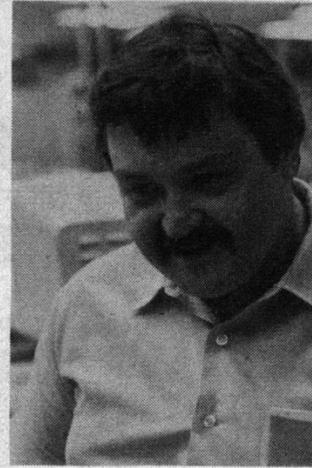
I've never read comics. I have not got the faintest clue.

Wayne Gretzky

I've never read a comic book in my life. I don't read the funnies either. I do watch the Saturday morning cartoons sometimes. I guess Scooby Doo is my favourite.

Wayne Crouse

Pavlov, well for one thing, it's just bizarre enough for my tastes, and I've met the guy who draws it. He's just crazy enough to get a laugh out of me in the morning. I really hate Garfield.



Andy Moog

I like Shoe - you know, the one with the birds in the tree with the newspaper? It's funny and realistic. They make up a lot of good puns.

Ken Linseman

I don't read comics. What do you think, that comics are all hockey players can read?

Nick Lees

There are a couple I like, like Doonesbury (even though he's off on some holiday travelling the world) and I like the Peanuts. I used to read Giles in England who was a bit like Uluschak, but funnier, he did a daily strip over there, and I used to follow Andy Capp.



Barbara Kelly

Herman, I had Jim Unger on my talk show as a guest and he was delightful. I also like Ben Wicks (who was also on my show and is also delightful), both are extremely talented.

Myer Horowitz

I like cartoonist Gerry Trudeau (Doonesbury). I have a collection by him entitled "The President Knows More Than You Think", which was given to me by a friend inside the university. I also collect cartoons. I have the original copy of the Gateway editorial cartoon from the day of my appointment as president framed and hanging in my office.

Eddie Keen

Herman, I think the guy's a genius to get a simple cartoon to get across some complicated ideas that would take a columnist a half dozen paragraphs or a broadcaster three minutes to say what he can say with a few drawn lines. I also like Yardley Jones.

Mama, don't let your babies grow up to read comix

by Ninette Gironella

Since 1940, controversy has raged about the effects of comic books on the innocent minds of children. Do comics act as a catharsis for aggression or do they plant ideas of violence? Do they inhibit the development of reading skills by distracting with their four colour drawings, or do they encourage reading with their interesting plots?

The portrayal of violence and its effect on aggressive behaviour has been studied countless numbers of times for both adults and children and for all the mass media, comics included. There is yet to be any conclusion drawn from the myriad and often conflicting collection of results. About all that can be said about reactions to comics and other media is that they vary depending on the differing psychological states of the readers and even on the individual's mood at the time. Factors such as age, gender, education, upbringing, social status, marital status as well as many others, will affect psychological state. However, weak unstable characters do tend more towards heightened feelings of aggression than strong stable people and thus are more susceptible to portrayal of violence.

Unfortunately, there is no practical way to ensure that only strong, stable adults and children have access to the mass media and that weak, unstable types are shielded from the vaguest suggestion of violence.

One fascinating expose on the evils of comic books is

Frederick Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). He saw comics as portraying violence, sadism, and cruelty; they inhibit children's spontaneity and prepare the ground for later aggressive behavior. Indeed, many of the examples Wertham uses are obscenely violent, and he backs up his claims with numerous clinical cases. However, many of his cases deal with children whose social environments and family background would already have done so much to contribute to delinquency that comic books probably could not have had much influence in bringing these children in conflict with the law.

Wertham believed that not only did comics seduce children into crime but also into sexual perversion. He saw phallic and vaginal symbolism, fetishism and other sex symbols lurking everywhere. With his vivid imagination, Wertham found in the detail of a shoulder the image of a *mons veneris*. Batman and Robin were clearly homosexual, and Wonder Woman was a lesbian — even her magical lasso was a vaginal symbol.

Wertham's writings occurred during the McCarthy era, heyday of hysteria, when evil could easily be located in simple things. Indeed, Wertham ends his book by telling a young mother that she need not look for faults in her son's upbringing or social environment, that comic books are to blame for his delinquency.

Since Wertham's time, we have come to realize that

children's fundamental character traits are profoundly influenced by parents. Thus a violent comic book will have much more influence on a child if it is espoused by a parent. Adults as well as children enjoy watching Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, The Roadrunner, and Coyote and all the other anthropomorphic animals, blow up each other, flatten each other with steam rollers and falling rocks, as well as other "just" treatments for their enemies.

In addition comic book publishers voluntarily imposed a code upon themselves in 1954. This code called for "clean" dialogue; decently attired characters; no excessive violence or gruesome illustration; respect for marriage, consensual sex, and love; good triumphing over evil; and also regulated advertising.

The next controversy is comic books' effects on reading. On the one side is the contention that comic books harm the develop-

ment of reading skills. As evidence, proponents of this view point to the large number of illiterate children who "read" comic books. They claim that by referring to the pictures, children can bypass the words yet still follow the story. Moreover, comics can prevent early diagnosis of reading difficulties by giving parents the impression that the child can read.

On the other side is the view that comics stimulate reading by maintaining that child's interest in the book. Indeed, in the late forties, thousands of children learned to read with the help of a *Superman Workbook*. In the late sixties, Classics Illustrated published shortened and in comics form literary classics such as

Shakespeare and Mark Twain. These comics were intended as an introduction to these great works, not a substitute, and at the end of the book encouraged the child to read the original. In contrast to film or television which induce

passive reception, comic books demand active mental activity to figure out the plot, most of which is imbedded in the text. Indeed it is hard to see how the "See Dick run" primers are superior to *Donald Duck* for developing reading skills. Both use pictures to illustrate the text, but the comic books also have the advantage of a much more interesting plot.

The controversy over the evils and benefits of comics will likely continue for years. But since the forties when people believed comics corrupted youth, thousands of children have grown up surrounded by comic books, good, bad and mediocre. Some of these children have indeed gone into lives of crime, are illiterate, or turned to journalism. Many more have become respected citizens. Regardless of the controversy, children continue to pour out money for comic books and eagerly trade them. And the interest in comic collections show that adults fondly remember the comics they had as kids.

A C / B C

By Johnny Come Lately

