

Not Just Funny

By Pete Clark

My memories of funny papers go back to the mid-1940's, when I and my brother began looking at the funnies in the *Denver Post*, as actors at KLZ in Denver, Colorado read them aloud. The part of the experience that was new, was my not having to form the words into pictures, as the images were on the page lying on the kitchen table, in front of me. 'Terry and the Pirates' and 'Steve Canyon,' both drawn by the same Colorado man; 'Red Ryder,' also drawn by a Colorado man, with the beauty of 'Prince Valiant,' the detecting of 'Dick Tracy' and 'Denny Dimwit, mostly standing in a corner, who would not be seen today, were there along with many more comic characters.

I stayed with the funnies of the *Denver Post* many years, at one point adding the comics of *The Northern Wyoming Daily News*, out of Worland, Wyoming, when I delivered that paper for a few years. As my knowledge base enlarged and my world view broadened, I became interested in editorial cartoons. Cartoons I have seen on editorial pages have both made me laugh and made me think. Artists, such as Herblock, Pat Oliphant and Mike Peters have broadened my world and as a bonus, Mike Peters gave me the joy of reading 'Mother Goose and Grimm.' Jeff Mac Nelly provided pictorial, editorial comments and was a master of irony with the comic strip 'Shoe.'

My favorite editorial cartoons will always be Bill Mauldin's work, displaying the conditions under which millions of GI's fought. Willy and Joe, were his put upon, bedraggled, Dog Faces of World War II in Europe. Mauldin's favorite cartoon was a Sergeant of Cavalry standing beside a jeep with a broken front wheel, with his eyes covered in sorrow and his forty-five pressed against the hood of the jeep. I understand. I have stood by faithful vehicles that would never run again. General George S. Patton wanted Mauldin's tired, dirty, ragged GI's out of the *Stars and Stripes*. Ike said to talk it over. They did. Bill Mauldin survived the meeting with Patton and his cartoons remained a part of the *Stars and Stripes*, a victory for the common Dog Face. Bill Mauldin won a Pulitzer Prize for one of his cartoons in 1945. His cartoons were published in book form by the *Stars and Stripes* in 1982.

My favorite comic strip is 'Pogo,' drawn by Walt Kelly. Pogo Possum was a compatriot of Albert the Alligator and the other denizens of the Okefenokee Swamp. Kelly created the comic strip for both entertainment and political commentary. The comic strip was originally titled Albert the Alligator, who soon gave way to the not totally literate, but very sage, Pogo Possum. Some newspapers dropped 'Pogo' because of Kelly's political stands, but that didn't bother him a bit: his crusade for things he considered right and just continued. My takeaway from spending time with 'Pogo' was his statement, "We have met the enemy and he is us."