

# Dog Boy ain't your usual Fido

Take a hike, Huckleberry Hound, move over Marmaduke and watch yourself, Garfield.

Dog Boy is here, and he's hungry for a piece of the cartooning action.

Dog boy was a figure of Steve Lafler's imagination until he came to life a few weeks ago in Dog Boy Number One, the sixth edition of the Cat-head Comics series.

Lafler, a Eugene artist and entrepreneur, began the series a few years ago in the hopes of making a living as a cartoonist. The dream still



survives, but inventories of back issues are mounting to the critical point.

"I'll know by May whether this'll be something that will go, that I can make a living at," says Lafler. "I'm confident that I'll

succeed."

But don't expect Dog Boy to grace the comic section of the Sunday paper, at least not in his (or its) present form.

In Dog Boy Number One, we discover that the protagonist has a fetish for members of the opposite sex (species?) wearing open-toed shoes. Dog Boy gets into trouble when he accosts a store clerk who is wearing a pair of provocative pumps.

Dog Boy fails in his attempt to procure the shoes for his girlfriend, but it turns out that Dog Girl is already wearing a pair of open-toed shoes when her fella comes home. Suffice it to say that on Page 12, Dog Boy and Dog Girl become Dog Couple.

Lafler acknowledges that overtones of bestiality may not be every reader's cup of tea.

"If some people get bummed out about it, that's OK," says Lafler. "But they'll probably go away thinking that's what the magazine is all about when it isn't. Sometimes I like to bounce a few non-sequiturs off people's heads, not so much to confuse them as to make them think."

Lafler's idea of a non-sequitur, a conclusion that does not follow from the premise, is illustrated in the comic book's last page, which is devoted to "more Pope jokes."

After asking the standard question "Is the Pope Catholic?" Lafler considers — with supporting graphics — "Does the Pope shit in the woods?" Lafler's contention is that the Pope does indeed defecate in the woods and in decidedly unsanitary fashion.

Like the Pope, Dog Boy is not free from common vice — and not endearing vices such as Fred Flintstones's weakness for brontosaurus burgers.

Born years ago in a crude sketch on a table napkin, Dog Boy, says Lafler, eventually evolved into "a basically grotesque, sort of funny character, but he was a manifestation of the macho, blunt, piggish male. And sort of perverted too."

Lafler finances his publishing venture with profits from a silkscreen T-shirt business based in Eugene and from fees earned by freelance work for ad agencies and art directors.

"The T-shirt business makes a good profit, and I invest that back into the comic books," says Lafler. "I have friends who are heavy capitalists that say if I reinvested the money into something else I'd make a good profit, but I want to make the cartooning work."

Lafler, a native of Massachusetts, says

he gets part of his inspiration from Alberto Salazar, Oregon's top-ranked long-distance runner. As a miler in high school, Lafler competed against Salazar, who was a year younger and a student at a rival high school.

While Salazar "blew me away" in the race, Lafler admired his competitor's attitude.

"Talent like his is more determination than anything physical. I'm certain of that," says Lafler. "He wants to be the best long-distance runner in the world, and I want to be the best cartoonist. You find out that if you do certain things and do them with enthusiasm and heart you'll succeed, but you have to do it professionally."

Lafler says he began doodling at age three and drawing cartoon formats by age 10 or 11. Early influences include Richie Rich and Sad Sack. Later it was Spiderman, Fantastic Four and other Marvel Comics characters. Then it was Will Eisner, who drew cartoons in "The Spirit" from 1940 to 1952.

Lafler, 25, earned a degree in oil painting at the University of Massachusetts. "But what I really did in college was get my cartooning degree," he says. He penned 500 strips of "Aluminum Foil" for the college newspaper while earning his degree.

He eventually headed west and settled in Eugene, where from January to June of 1981 he authored the comic strip "Mixed Nuts" for the Emerald.

Lafler's East Coast perspective was ill-received by many University students. "I got a good amount of hate mail, which I sort of enjoyed," says Lafler, revealing a personality trait he finds essential in the publishing business.

"Self-publishing is for the true masochist with thousands of bucks to blow," writes Lafler in Dog Boy. "... try like hell to sell thousands of copies to distributors, band together and do it with other artists!"

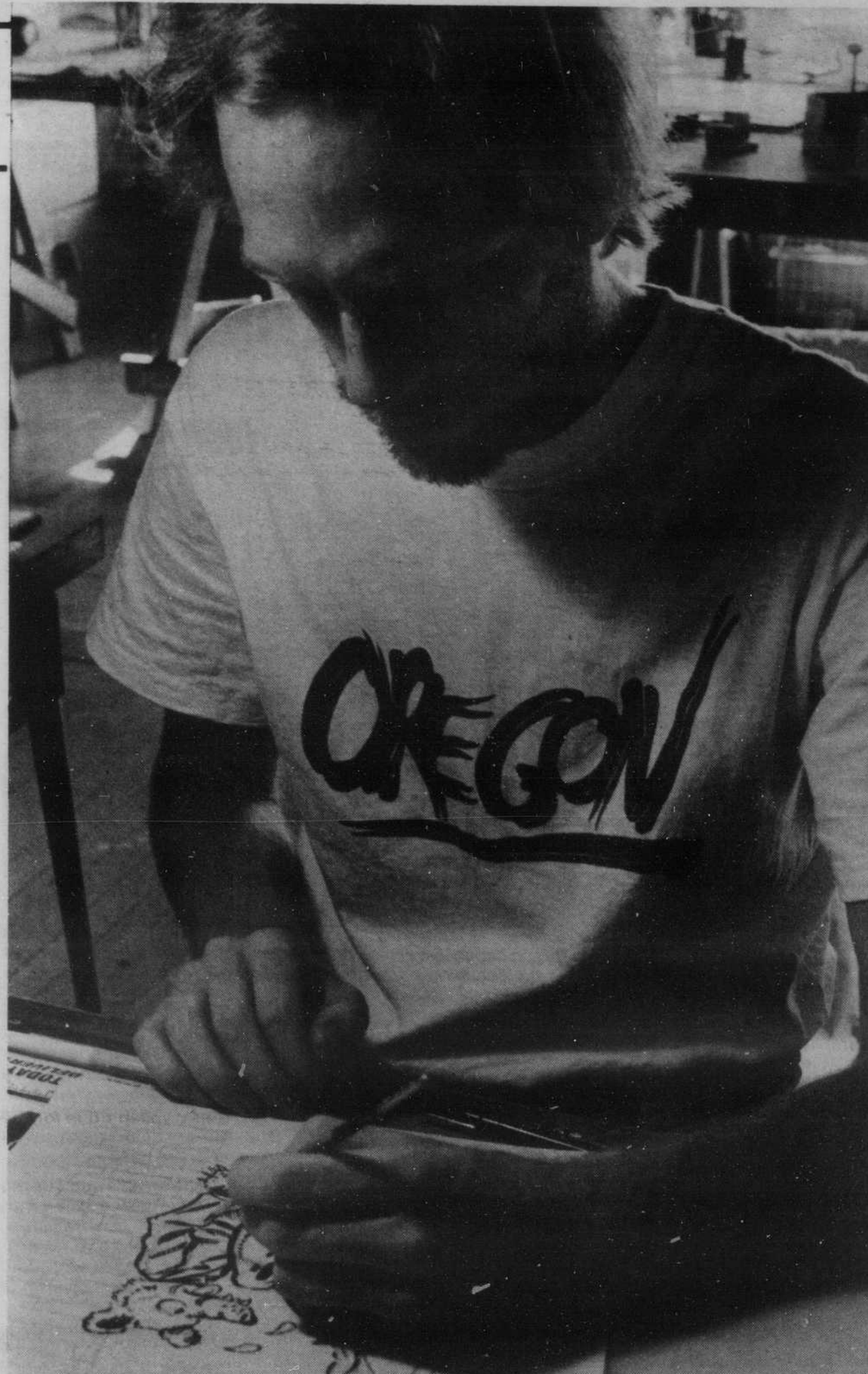
Dog Boy Number One already has sold nearly 900 copies of the 2,500 press run.

"I'm pretty jazzed up by the original reaction," says Lafler. "The last book only had initial sales of 300 copies."

However, 5,500 unsold copies of previous issues sit gathering dust in storage.

Lafler sells some copies to area outlets like Emerald City Comics and Warp Factor 7. But he says the "big money" is in finding a distributor who will make bulk purchases at 40 percent of the cover price.

Making money isn't Lafler's only goal,



Steve Lafler hopes his cartoons will make people think some "crazy, crazy thoughts," however.

"I want to redefine what a cartoon book is. I want to change people's sensibilities about what to expect from a comic book," says Lafler. "Things like (Dog Boy) throw a

curve ball with people. Hopefully, this will help them think some crazy, crazy thoughts."

Story by Sean Meyer  
Photos by Elisabeth Podesta

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