



# Spotlight

## New breed of young cartoonists trace political views

By Andrew LaMar  
Of the Emerald

It's hunting season again, but this year's prey, Pres. Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale, aren't easy game for political cartoonists.

"Reagan makes a very tough target because of his popularity. Eisenhower was a difficult target for the same reason,"

says journalism Prof. Roy Paul Nelson. Nelson, a free-lance cartoonist, has written several books about cartooning and caricatures.

Nelson says that some traits of politicians are difficult for cartoonists to portray. One example of this is the perceived dullness of Walter Mondale.

Cartoonists are livelier today

than they were 10 years ago, probably because they are younger, Nelson says.

"Before there was only Herblock and Mauldin. For about 20 years they were the only two major cartoonists," Nelson says. "Then came Oliphant, and about 10 years ago, MacNelly, who brought with them a whole new group of younger cartoonists."

Nelson began selling gag cartoons when he was in high school.

"Back in those days we had to carve them (cartoons) out of linoleum," he recalls. "We couldn't just draw a cartoon and send it in."

He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University and, after holding jobs as a reporter, copywriter and public relations man, returned to the University to teach. Nelson says he was hired as a "junk man," teaching a variety of classes, because of his experience in designing, cartooning and reporting. He has been on the faculty for 29 years.

According to Nelson, Pat Oliphant of Universal Press Syndicate and Jeff MacNelly of the Chicago Tribune are the top political cartoonists in the country today. Oliphant is liberal and unpredictable whereas MacNelly is conservative and a better draftsman, Nelson says. Nonetheless, he adds, both of them are "marvelous artists."

Nelson concedes that it's difficult to make a living as a cartoonist. There are only about 150 political cartoonists in the country, and few make anything near the six-digit figure of a Jeff MacNelly.

"You have to be somewhat angry to be a good political cartoonist. I, myself, am a bit too bland for that," Nelson says.

Cartoonists don't have problems coming up with material, he insists. "I don't think it's

dictated to by a syndicate and cartoonist as to the size of the strip," he says. "If I was a cartoonist on the comics page, I would be annoyed that someone else's strip got more space than mine."



Roy Paul Nelson

difficult to maintain ideas. Creative people have their ways to keep the pump primed."

Along with livelier cartoonists, another trend is the increased willingness of comic strips, such as Doonesbury and Bloom County, to address social and political issues.

"I'm not overly enthusiastic about that," Nelson says. "I'm a bit traditional. I like to see political opinions on the editorial page."

With the return of Doonesbury, artist Garry Trudeau has insisted that his strip be run larger than the other strips, which surprises Nelson.

"What amuses me (about Trudeau's request) is that an editor of a newspaper will be

"Actually, I don't think that Garry Trudeau is a great artist like MacNelly and Oliphant," he says. "He's a great idea man and very creative with his strip, but he's not a great artist."

Certain distortions exist when portraying political opinions through a cartoon. Nelson says cartoonist have the most freedom of any journalists, often reshaping reality to portray an image.

"In a way they tell visual lies," he says.

Though he believes that political cartoonists don't change people's opinions, Nelson says cartoons do challenge beliefs. "They are organs of criticism that make you think."

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8:00 p.m. Keynote Address: **Ralph Nader** EMU  
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available at EMU Main Desk  
\$2.00 general/\$1.00 students

#### State of the State

Tuesday, October 16, 1984

#### State of Justice

Wednesday, October 17, 1984

#### State of the World

Thursday, October 18, 1984

8:00 p.m. **Dr. Helen Caldicott** EMU  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Ballroom

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