

STRIPPED!

BY SHAD POWERS
ASSISTANT EDITOR

IT'S LIKE A SNOWMAN WITH A HEAD. It's like having rules for Calvinball. It's like eating your greens and being nice to the babysitter. It's just plain unthinkable. Bill Watterson, the creator of the beloved comic strip tandem Calvin and Hobbes, pulled the pen on the cartoon on Dec. 31.

The untimely departure has left many college students befuddled. Lost souls, they're forced to read second-rate comics, sixth-rate student cartoons or even worse — the news.

For 10 years, the strip chronicled the frustrations of a kid struggling to make it in a grown-up world. Hey, wait a minute. We're kids struggling to make it in a grown-up world. We're like 20something Calvins. Whoa, no wonder it appeals to our generation so much.

Calvin, take me away

More often than not, it was a pair of college-aged eyes that took in the strip and followed Calvin and his imagination on journeys in and out of this universe. What is it about this 6-year-old that appeals to 20-year-olds?

"College is a transition period between childhood and adulthood," Colorado State U. senior Amy Calder says. "Calvin and Hobbes gives us encouragement to hold onto our childhood."

It only takes four panels for the hectic, mile-a-minute lifestyle of term papers, interviews and finals to be reduced to a leisurely walk down memory lane.

"It's an escape into the past," U. of Virginia sophomore Robin Pinnel says. "We're faced with so many different things every day. It helps you forget about the real world and scary things like that. Calvin can always brighten your day, no matter how bad it's going."

The diversity of the humor plays a large role in the cartoon's appeal among students. The strip features pratfalls — like Hobbes' pouncings or snowball facials — for slapstick aficionados, and wry wit to appeal to even the sharpest senses of humor.

"It's a smart cartoon," U. of New Mexico senior Doug Johnson says. "It's not like *Prince Valiant* or something — we can relate to it. There's a little Calvin in all of us."

That internal Calvin is what makes college students engage in a good, old-fashioned snowball fight or question authority until they get a good answer. But with every Calvin one must have a Hobbes to help stay out of trouble, groundings and detentions.

Earning his stripes

A twisted conglomeration of tiger and boy rolling outside the front door every day after school

— that's the image that often sticks in the minds of Calvin and Hobbes buffs.

Hobbes has exploded past Frosted Flakes' Tony and Winnie the Pooh's Tigger as America's favorite striped feline. He may even be more popular than the boy that begat him.

"Even though he's a figment of Calvin's imagination, I like Hobbes the best," U. of Illinois junior Mike Cetera says. "He's the smart one. He's always telling Calvin, 'Don't do that.' We could all use someone like that."

Hobbes is also Calder's favorite. She may be considered an expert in some circles, since she says she talks to her stuffed animals. Don't worry — they don't talk back. "Hobbes has got such a matter-of-fact view of life. He always brings Calvin back to reality."

Say it ain't so

"I believe I've done what I can do within the constraints of daily deadlines and small panels," Watterson said in a letter explaining his decision to retire the strip. "I am eager to work at a more thoughtful pace, with fewer artistic compromises."

With these words, two-time cartoonist of the year Watterson, like a frustrated parent, put a stop to all the snowball-throwing, bath-avoiding, homework-procrastinating and general Calvin-ness that had become a part of our daily routines.

"I'm disappointed, but I think it's pretty admirable of him," Cetera says. "I agree that he had an opportunity to do this, and now he wants more space and time to make a more complete story and try some different things."

Watterson says he doesn't know what he'll do next, but rumors are flying about more books and maybe even a movie.

Standout Comic

The C & H phenomenon has reached epic proportions for a comic strip. Almost 2,400 newspapers internationally carried the cartoon, and more than 23 million copies of books based on the boy and tiger are in print. Each of the 13 collections sold more than 1 million copies in its first year.

At production time, *The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book* was

in its 15th week atop *The New York Times* best-seller list and No. 1 on the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* list of hot books on campus.

And, of course, what campus is complete without the unauthorized Calvin and Hobbes beer-drinking T-shirts? You know, the ones with the catchy slogans: "Friends don't let friends beer goggle." Phrases so clever, it's as if Watterson penned them himself.

The puckish pair have reared their oversized heads in other genres, too. The evil doctor on TV's *Melrose Place* (the one who discriminated against Matt's sexuality and subsequently got sued, but only after Matt's new friend told him to... oh yeah, the story, oops) is named Dr. Calvin Hobbes.

At Bucknell U., Penn., a group of students dedicated to finding ways to have fun while staying sober came up with an interesting moniker. Their goal: creating a lively, valuable, ingenious new habit of being at Bucknell and enjoying sobriety. Take out the ats and ands, and you've got the easy-to-say acronym C.A.L.V.I.N. and H.O.B.B.E.S.

And Calvin and Hobbes are alive and kicking on the 'net. There are hundreds of home pages dedicated to the troublesome twosome, including sites from France, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Korea and even a distant place known only as Canada.

As we wish Calvin and Hobbes a fond farewell, we must focus on getting on with our lives. Follow the lead of New Mexico's Johnson, who seems to be finding a way to fill the void.

"The Far Side's gone. Now Calvin and Hobbes is gone. There's nothing left... except Dilbert."

Shad Powers enjoys Calvin and Hobbes, but he wishes people wouldn't overlook Marmaduke. He's such a big dog, and he's always in the way.



Funny
page fans
frustrated
by another
farewell

"There's a
little
Calvin in
all of us."

DOUG JOHNSON, SENIOR,
U. OF NEW MEXICO



Guest Expert: Jerry of Ben & Jerry's

On Calvin's
Favorite Flavor:
"Chubby Hubby. It's
chocolate-covered,
peanut butter-filled pret-
zel in a vanilla malt ice
cream with peanut butter
and chocolate fudge
swirl. I think of Calvin as
the kid who breaks all the
rules, and that combina-
tion of chunks, swirls and
stuff inside other stuff
strikes me as Calvin."