

**No. 6**

**\$2.00**  
(\$2.05 in  
Canada)

# **Critters**



**FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**

SA. GALLACCI '86



# CRITTERS

No. 6 Nov., 1986

## LETTERS

Send to: CRITTERS, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301

I have a couple of things to get off my chest before we go to the letters:

This issue marks the grand finale of Steve Gallacci's epic "Birthright" — kind of. As you can tell if you've read the story, it ends on a fairly ambiguous note, and if you think that means there's more hassles in store for our valiant freedom fighters — well, give yourself an "Empire Strikes Back" button! Steve is going to be busy working on his own *Albedo and Zell, Sworddancer* comics over the summer, but "Birthright II" is already scheduled for *Critters* #11 — so don't go away!

My apologies to Lela Dowling and Toren Smith for the substandard repro job afforded their two-page strip in the last issue. No one's fault, really — it was something of a gamble trying to transfer Lela's delicate pen-and-watercolor drawings to black-and-white, and our printer did the best he could, but the final result left a bit to be desired. I hope that one day we can present some of Lela's black-and-white work, done proper justice in terms of reproduction.

The rabbit ronin is everywhere! In addition to the now-on-sale *Usagi Yojimbo Summer Special*, our long-eared bodyguard is scheduled for appearances in *Doomsday Squad #3* and an upcoming issue of First's *Grimjack* — and he still has time to show up in this issue of *Critters*, the next issue, and two more before the year is out! Boy, we should give him his own book or something! (Hold that thought...)

If you're going to be attending the San Diego comics convention this year, be sure to catch the funny-animals panel I'll be hosting. Confirmed guests so far include Steve Gallacci, Stan Sakai, Mike Kazaleh, Scott Shaw!, and Mark Evanier. Mark Evanier? Well, although Mark is probably best known for his work on *Groo*, *DNAgents*, and *Crossfire*, he's written more funny-animal stories than all the rest of the panelists put together have probably read in

their lives — and since Mark can be articulate, informative, and funny on any subject for any amount of time, I figured I'd play it safe and invite him. Should be an interesting time, as we finally nail Gallacci to the wall and ask him why the heck it is he draws funny-animals that aren't funny!

After a real deluge of mail for the premiere issue of *Critters*, you guys have slowed down your correspondence quite a bit. Let's see some comments, folks! What do you like, what do you hate, what do you want to see more of... I can't guarantee I'll follow your advice, but I love getting the feedback anyway!

On to the letters.

— KT

### To Critters:

At last, a title that ranks up there with such classics as *The Fox and the Crow* and *Uncle Scrooge*. Maybe you guys could put out such merchandising tie-ins as a Usagi Yojimbo electric sword or a Cutey Bunny inflatable doll. How about a *Critters Digest* with a *Double Digest* edition and a *Fun and Games* edition? The latter could have such goodies as "help Cutey Bunny find a brassiere that fits."

Sakai's "Usagi Yojimbo" has Groo's recklessness and Cerebus's cunning. The series itself reminds me of the early *Cerebus* stories — before Dave Sim started imbuing the series with idiosyncratic, socio-political satire.

Some fans claim that Mike Kazaleh's style is reminiscent of Bob Clampett. I see influences of Walt Kelly and Chuck Jones juxtaposed with Clampett's style in *Captain Jack*. The reaction poses of these characters is pure Jones (see *Critters* #2, page 16, panel 4) and I almost expected Marvin the Martian to make an appearance.

"Gnuif" clearly shows the influences of Carl Barks (plot and gags) and Walter Lantz (character design). Maybe some of Freddy Mil-

[SEE LETTERS, PAGE 31]

## CONTENTS

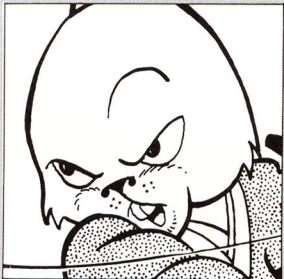


### Page 1

#### BIRTHRIGHT "Chapter Six"

by STEVEN A. GALLACCI

The rebel forces, under prince Alfon's orders, have succeeded in storming the stronghold of the Tosu.



### Page 11

#### USAGI YOJIMBO in: "A Quiet Meal"

by STAN SAKAI

All Usagi Yojimbo wanted to do was eat his meal in peace — now, that wasn't too much to ask, was it?



### Page 21

#### FIRECRACKER JACK in: "Archivals"

by MARK ARMSTRONG

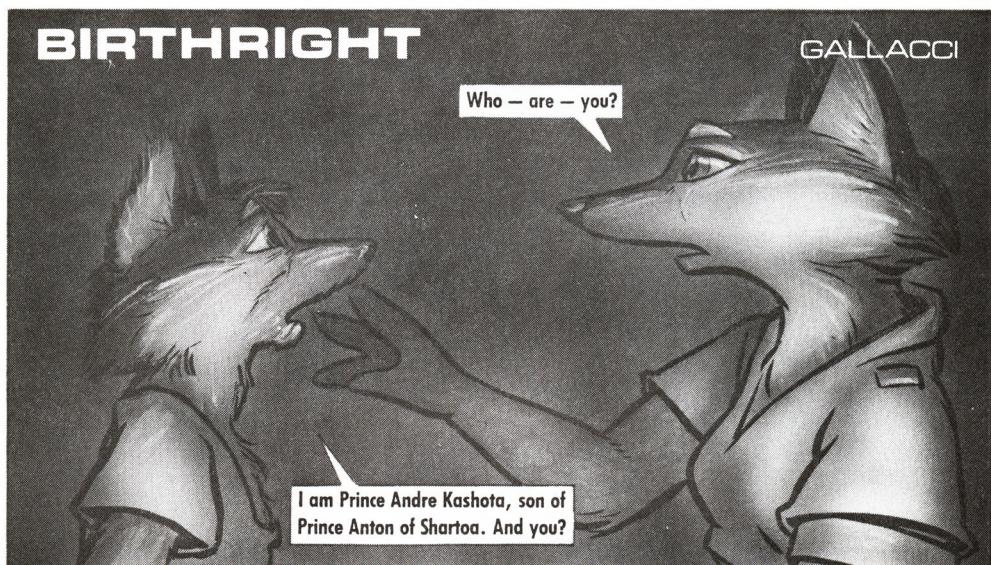
Firecracker Jack discovers a terrific site for his new fireworks factory. Too bad his nemesis is within earshot...

**CRITTERS** #6, December, 1986. *Critters* is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1986 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art © 1986 their respective creators: Mark Armstrong, Steven A. Gallacci, and Stan Sakai. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and the creators, except for journalistic purposes. No similarity between the any of the names, characters, persons, and institutions in *Critters* and those of any living or dead persons is intended, and any such similarity that may exist is purely coincidental. Letters to *Critters* become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for those purposes. First printing: July, 1986. Available directly from the publisher for \$2.00 + 50¢ postage and handling; Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301.

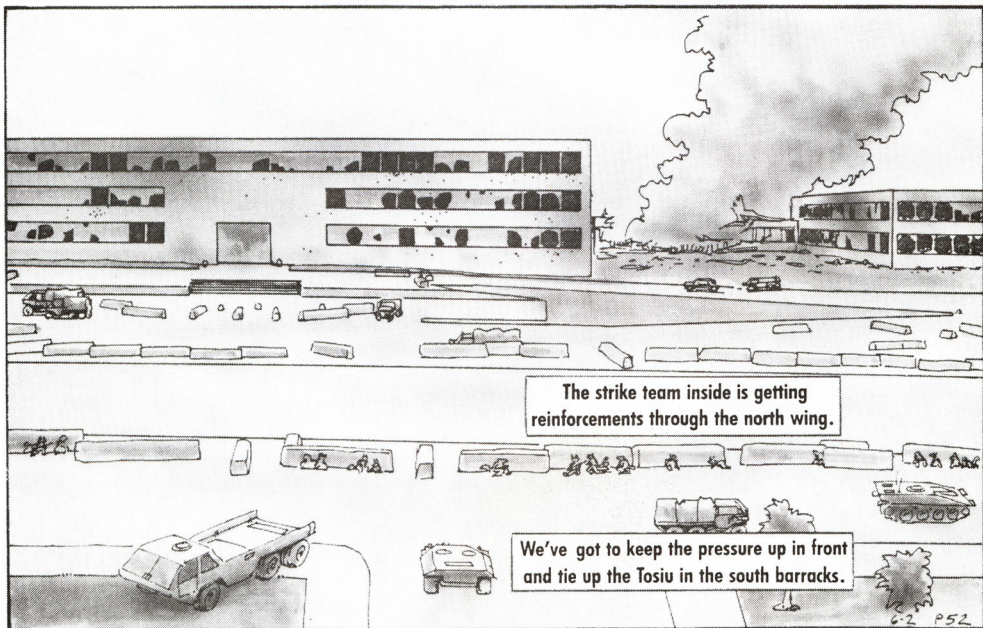
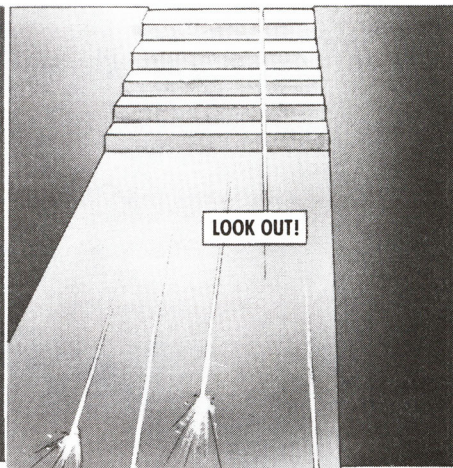


# BIRTHRIGHT

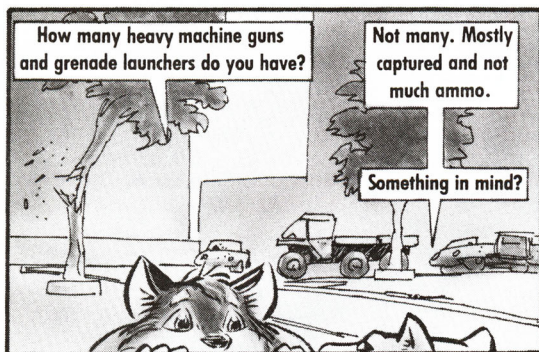
GALLACCI







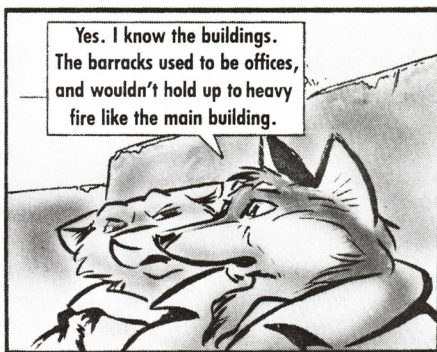




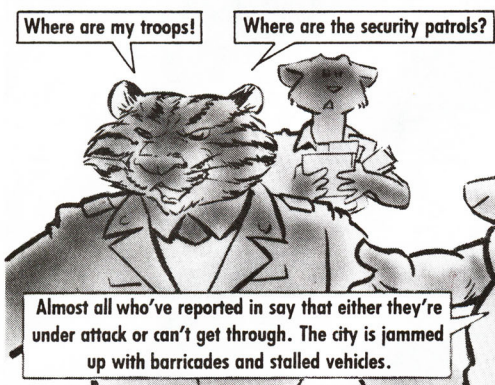
How many heavy machine guns and grenade launchers do you have?

Not many. Mostly captured and not much ammo.

Something in mind?



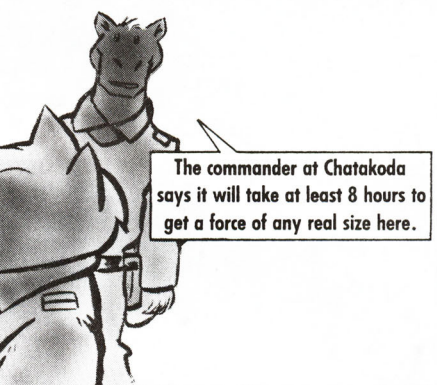
Yes. I know the buildings. The barracks used to be offices, and wouldn't hold up to heavy fire like the main building.



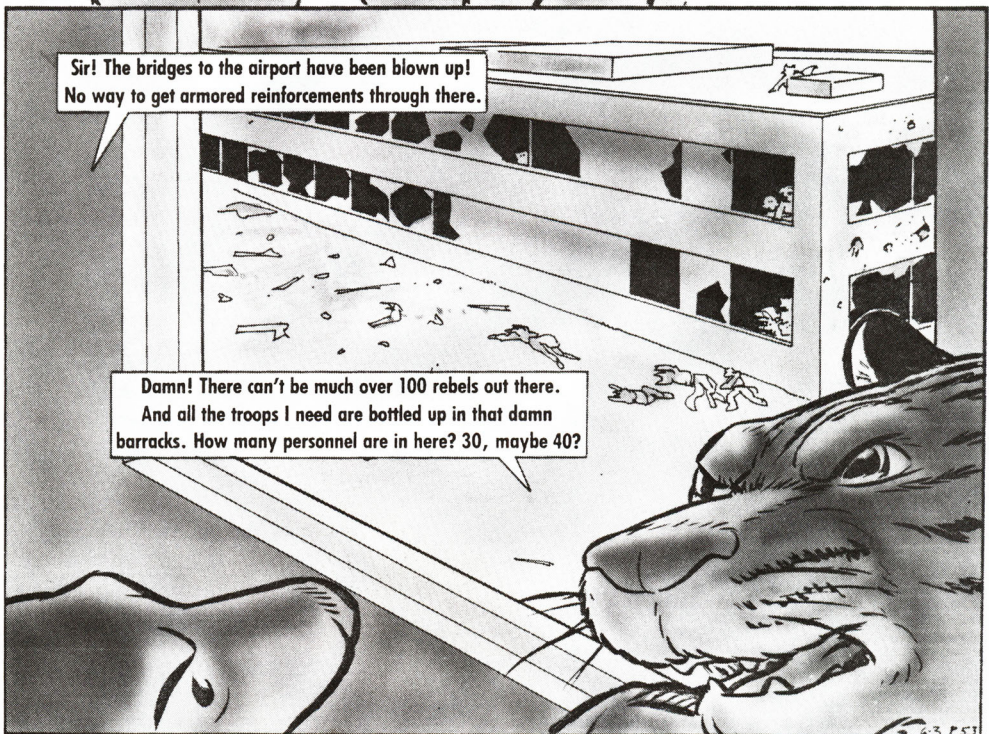
Where are my troops!

Where are the security patrols?

Almost all who've reported in say that either they're under attack or can't get through. The city is jammed up with barricades and stalled vehicles.



The commander at Chatakoda says it will take at least 8 hours to get a force of any real size here.

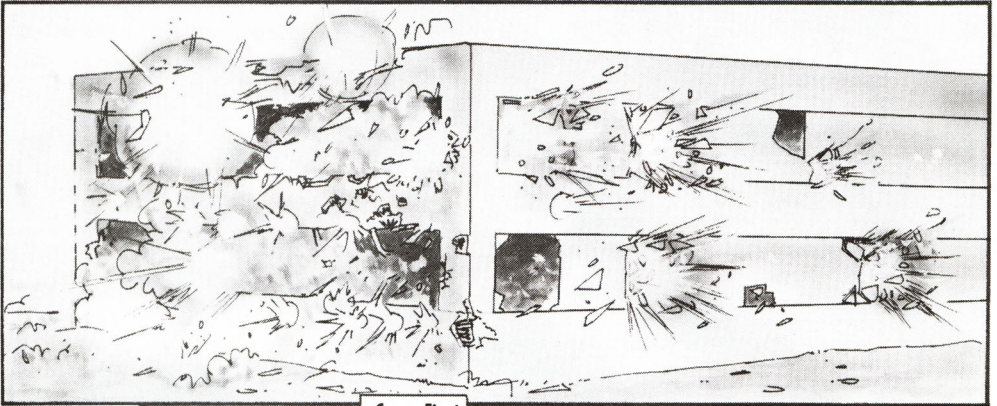
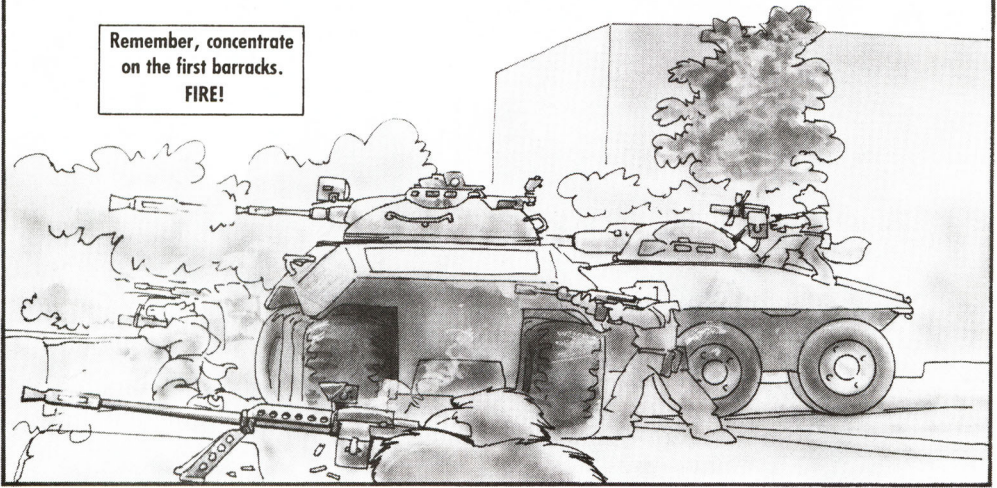


Sir! The bridges to the airport have been blown up! No way to get armored reinforcements through there.

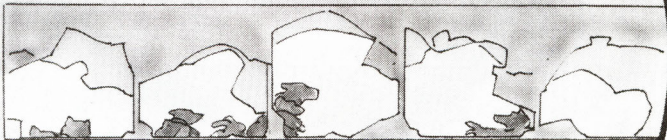
Damn! There can't be much over 100 rebels out there. And all the troops I need are bottled up in that damn barracks. How many personnel are in here? 30, maybe 40?



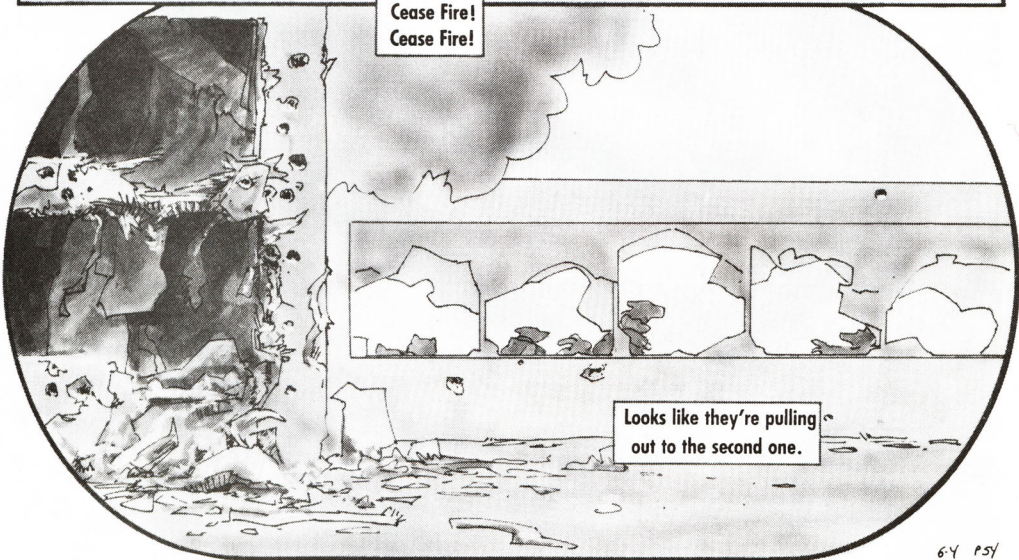
Remember, concentrate  
on the first barracks.  
**FIRE!**



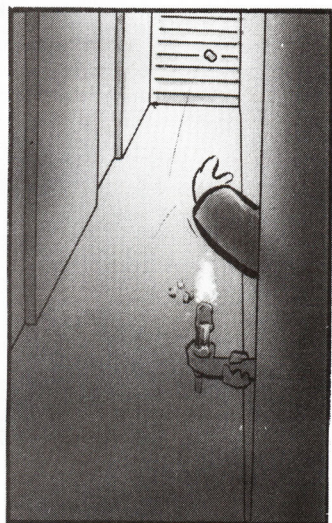
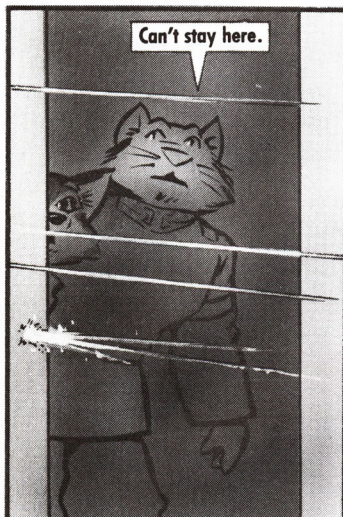
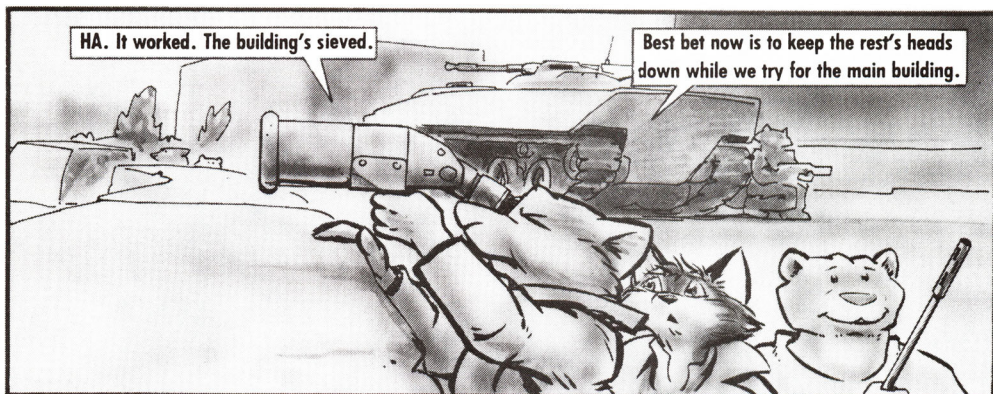
Cease Fire!  
Cease Fire!



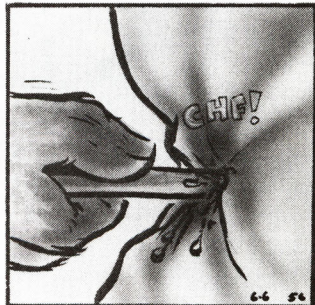
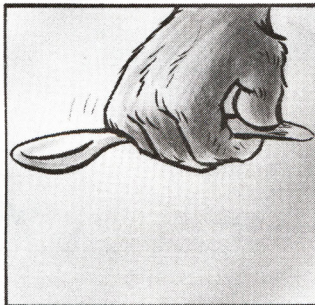
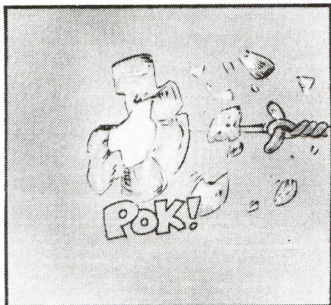
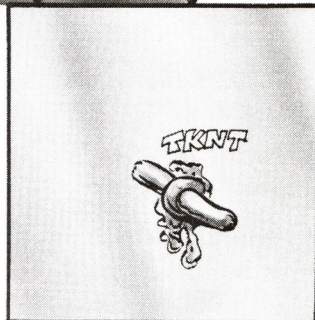
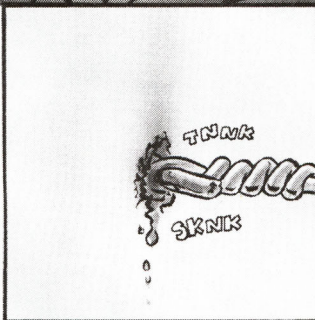
Looks like they're pulling  
out to the second one.



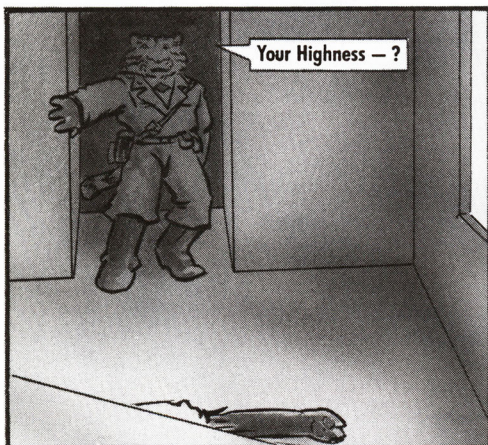




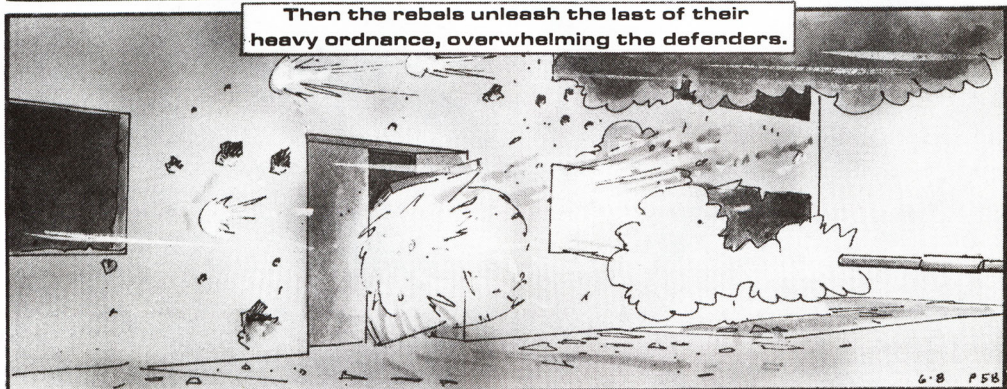
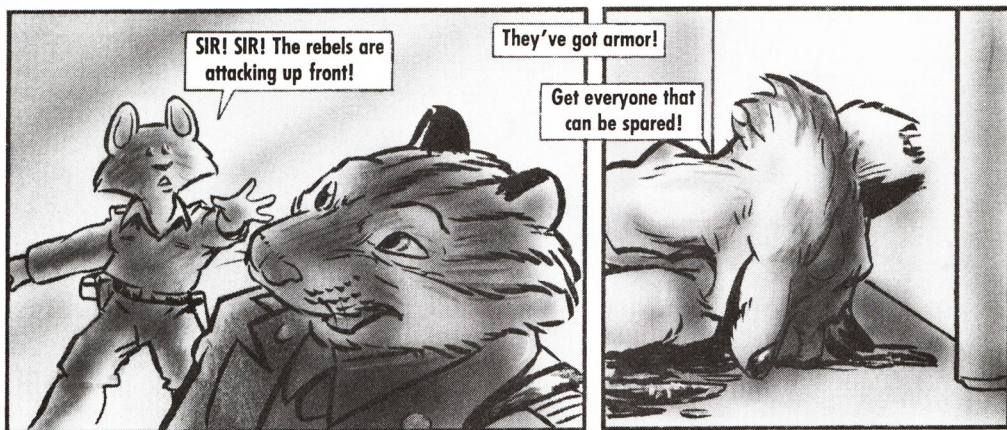




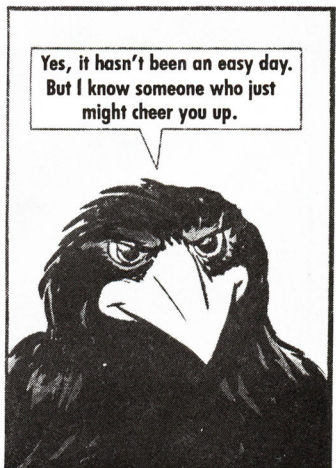
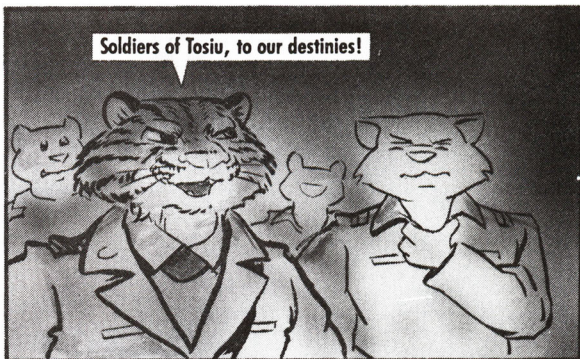
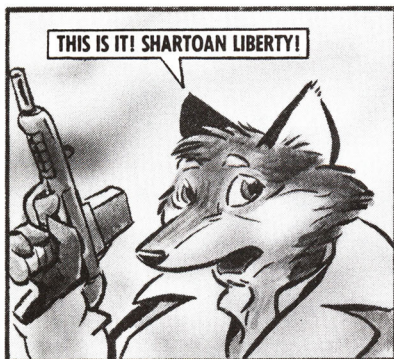




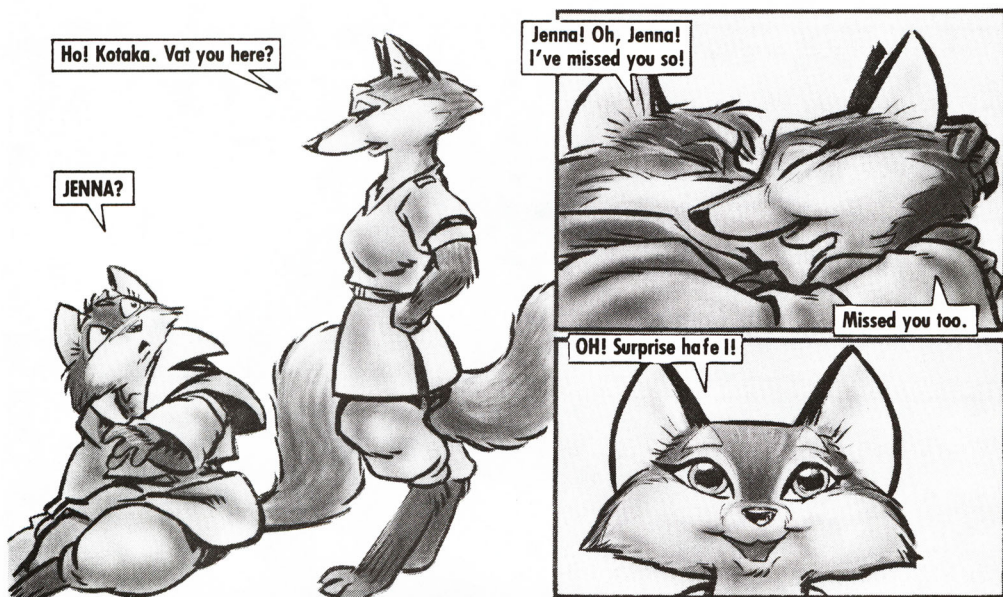




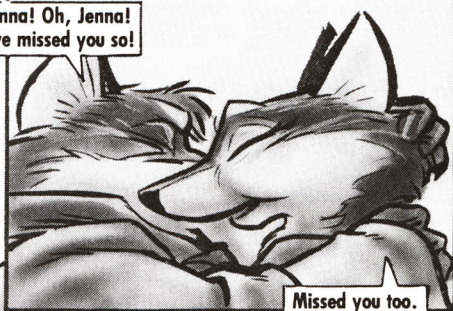








Jenna! Oh, Jenna!  
I've missed you so!



OH! Surprise hafe!!



The first small battle for Shartoan freedom is done. While it has captured occupation headquarters, the rest of Shartoa is still under Tosiu control. However, the victory has galvanized the population into action. And with the release of the captured Kashota family, there is now hope for the rest of the nation.

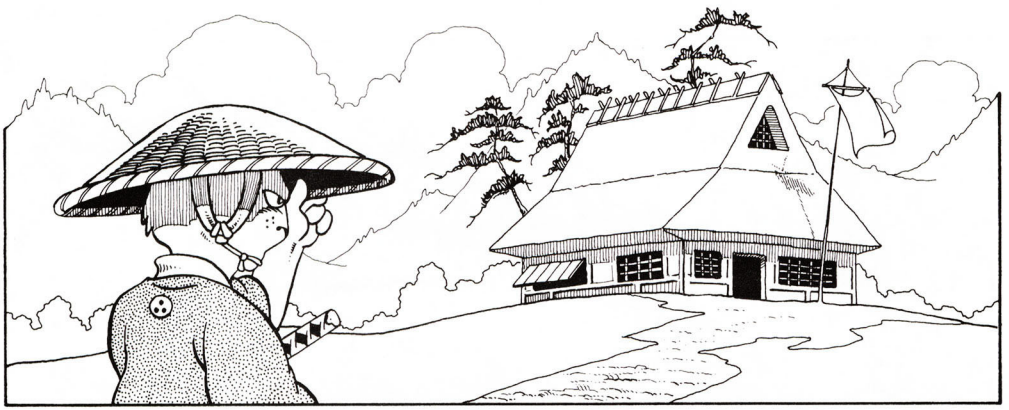


# USAGI YOJIMBO™

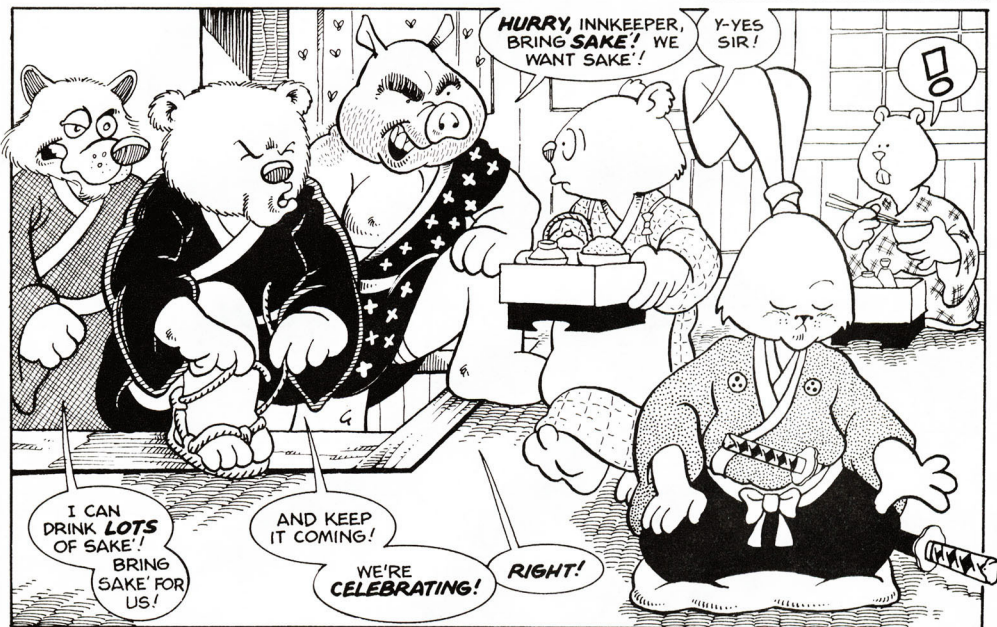
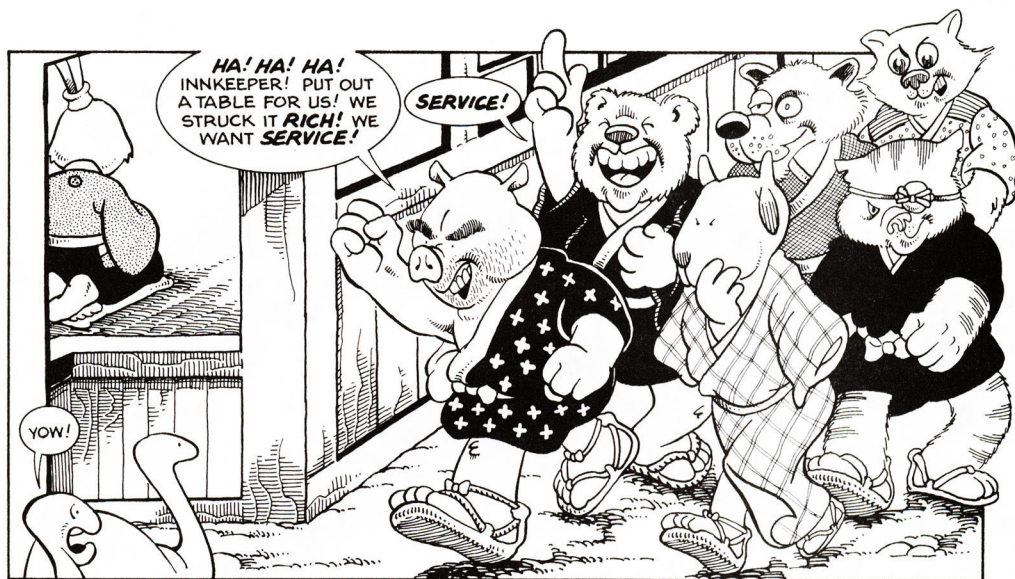


坂  
井 ©1986 SAKAI

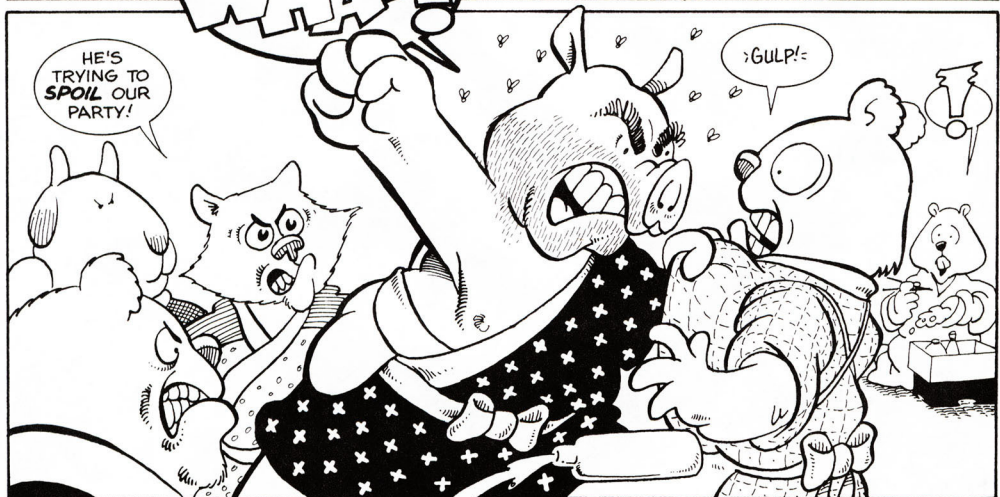
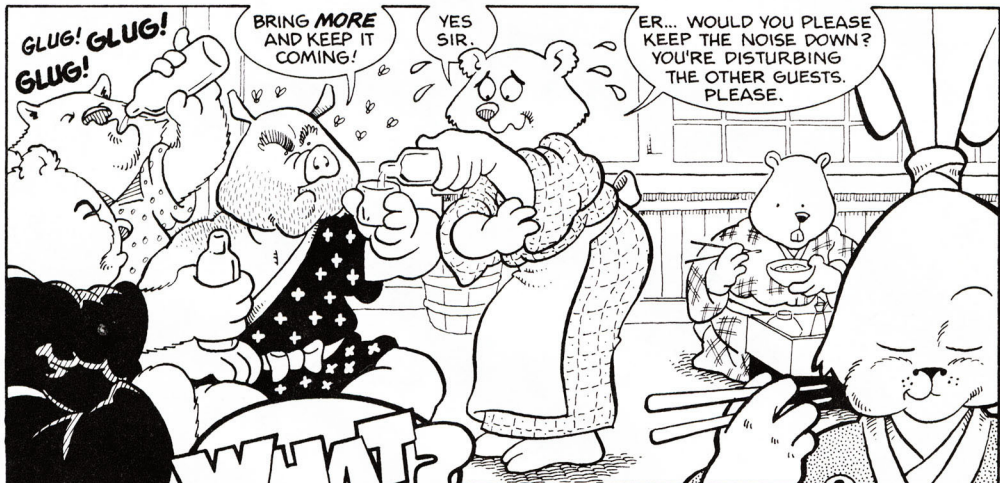
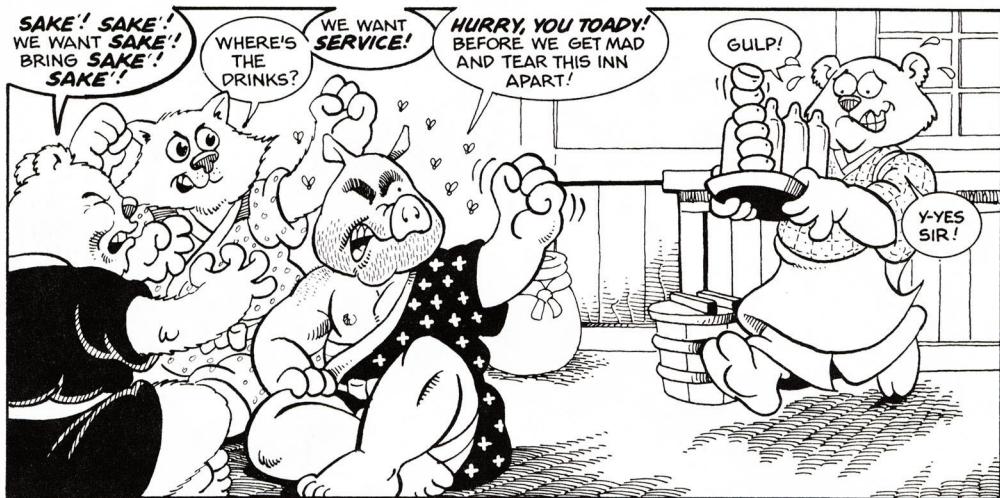












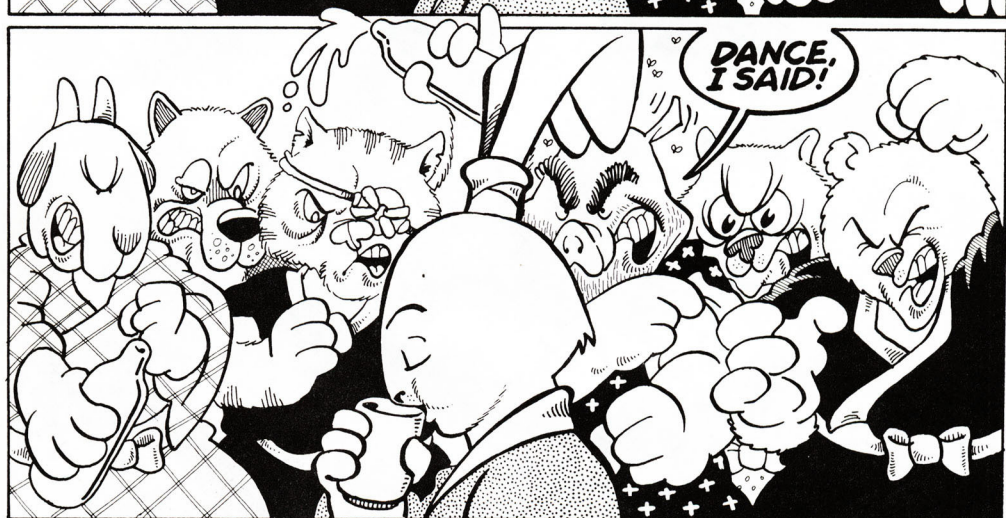
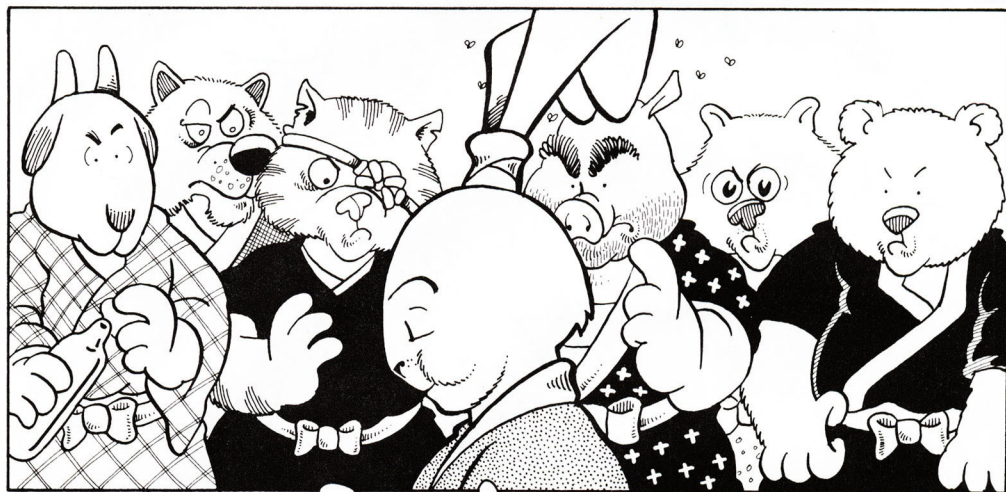
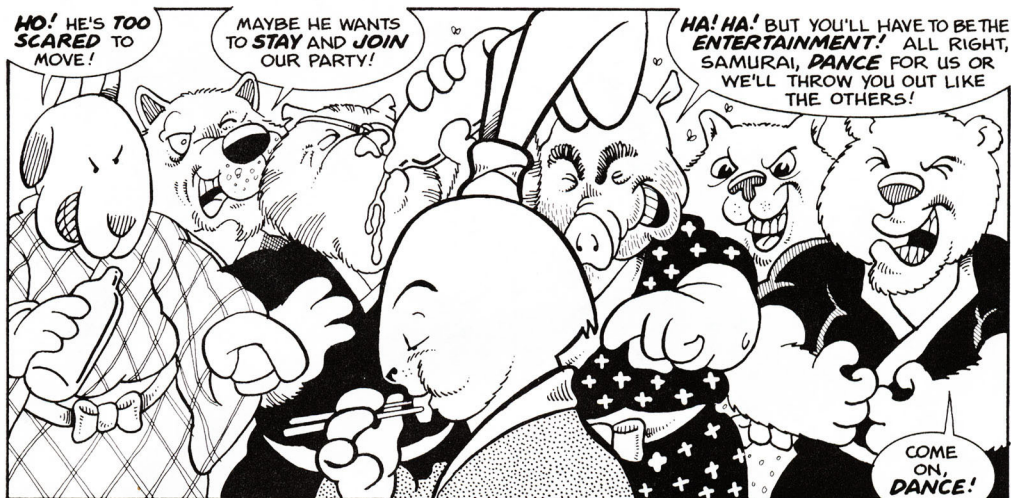




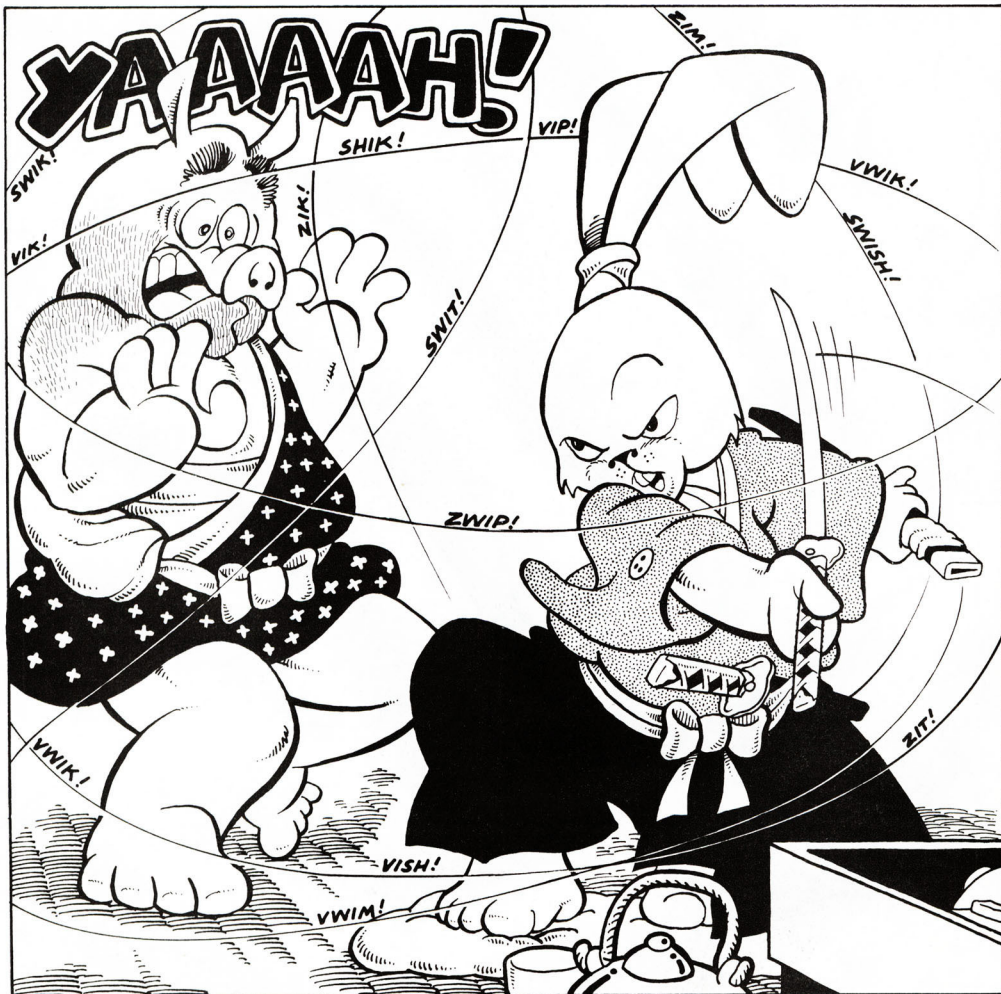
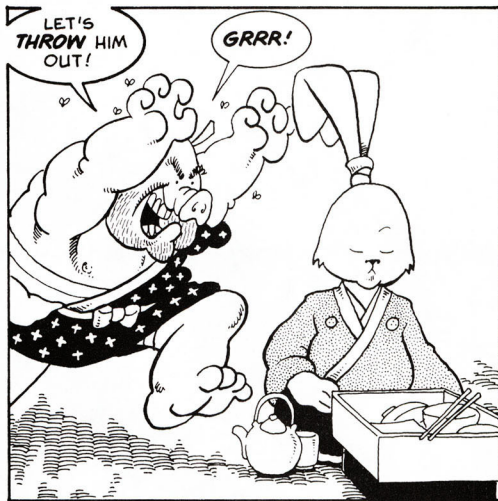
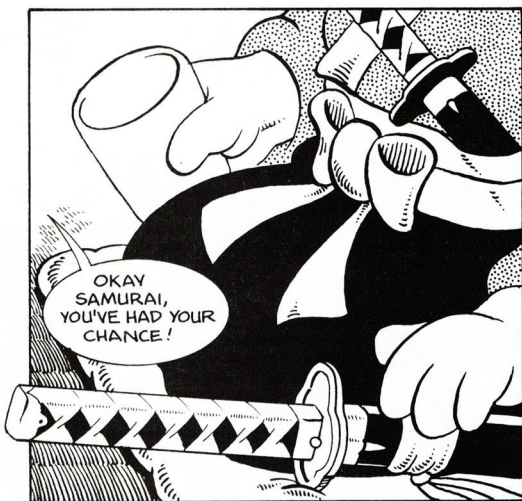




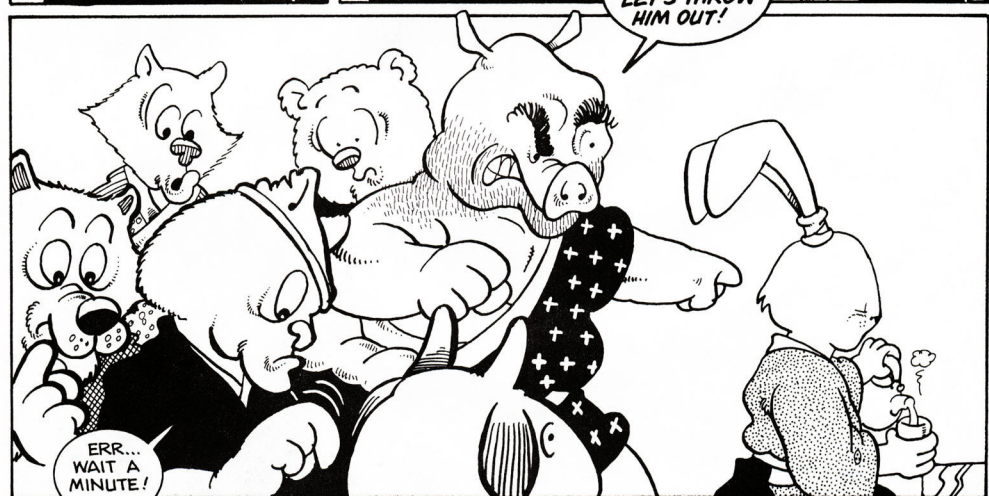
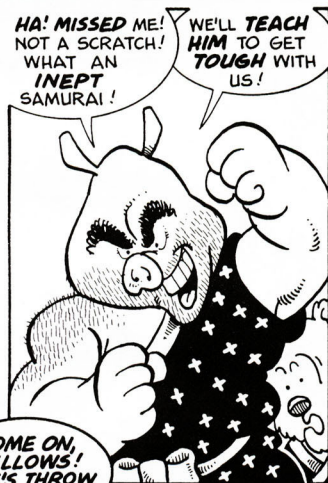
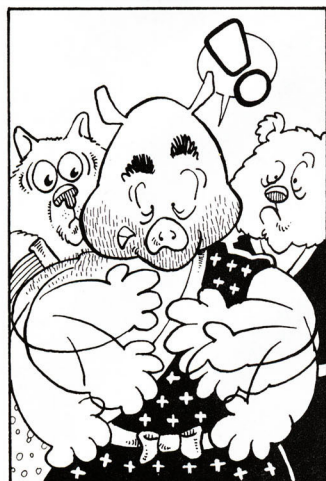
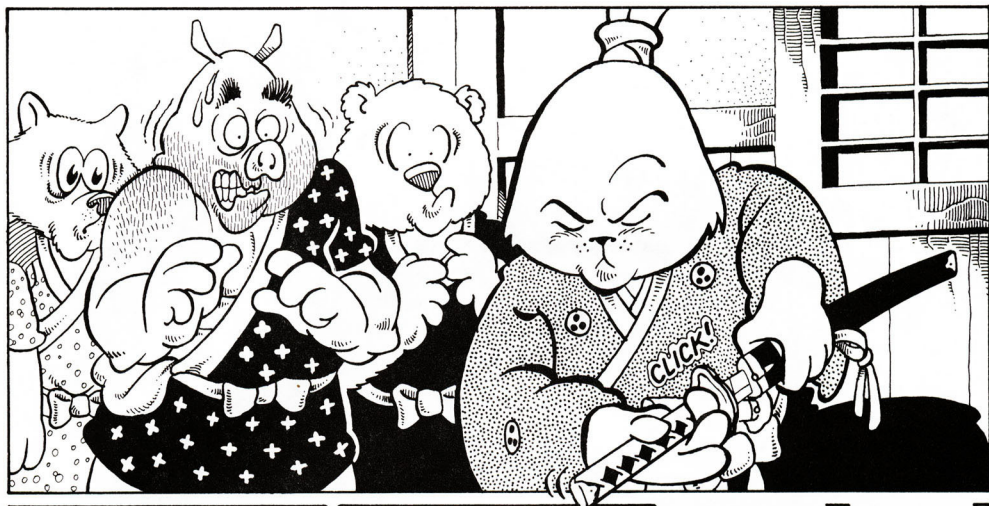




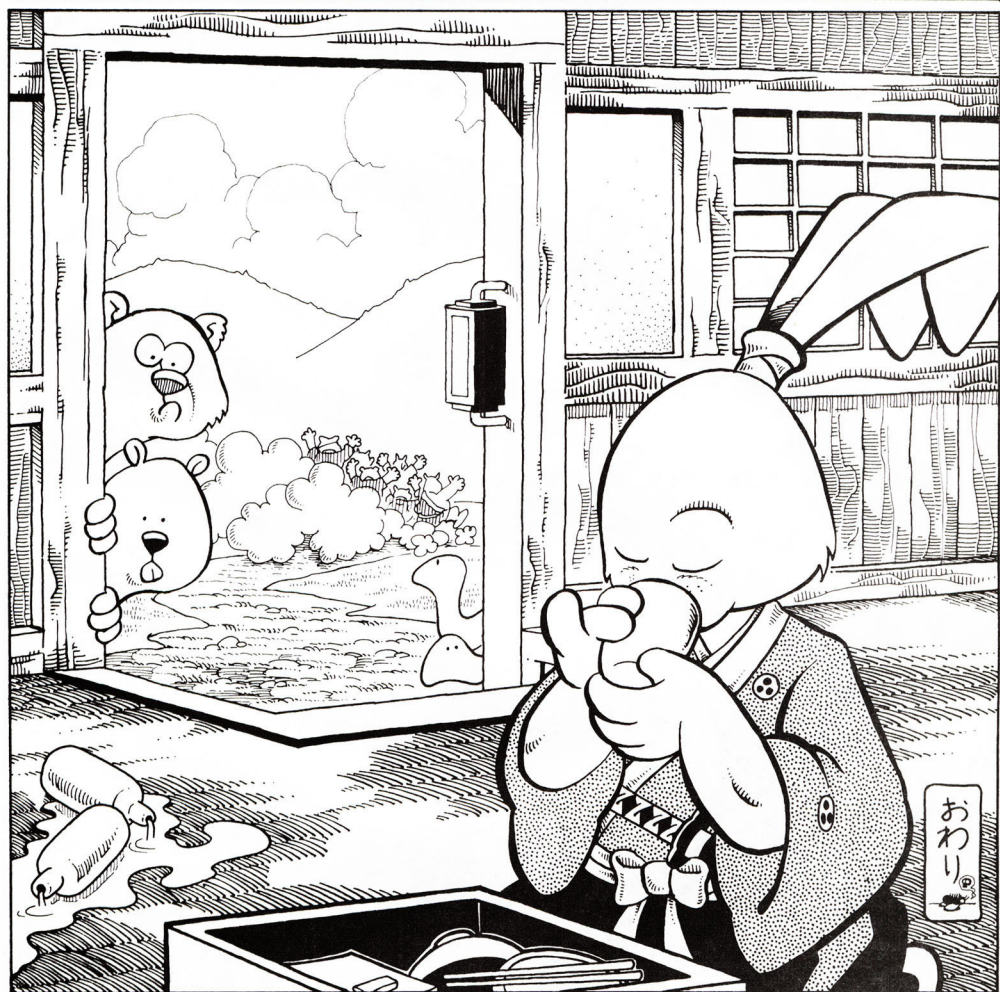
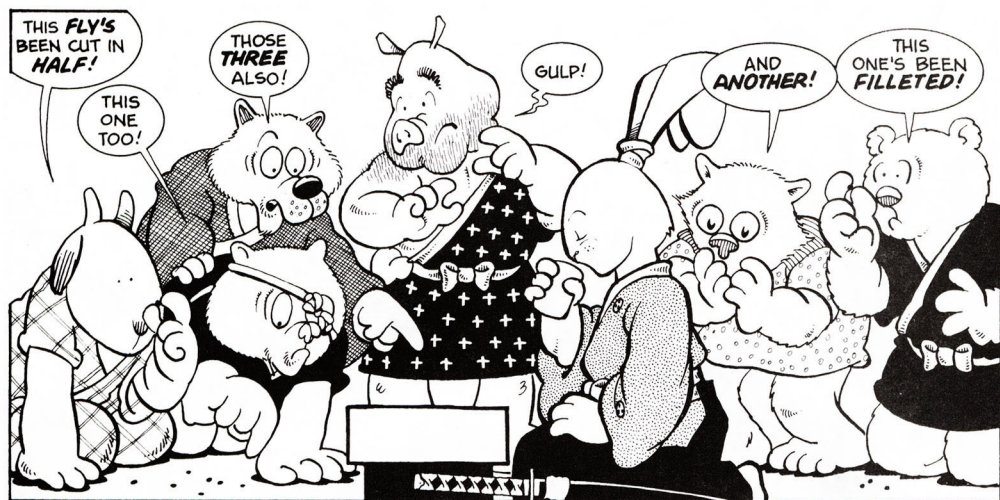












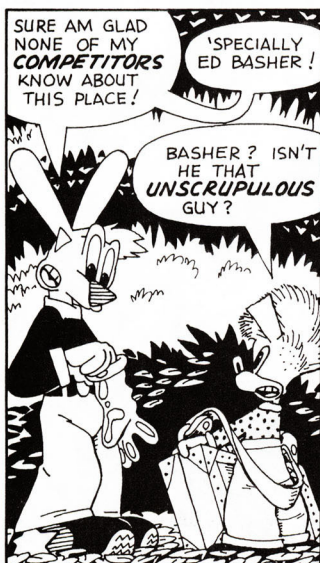
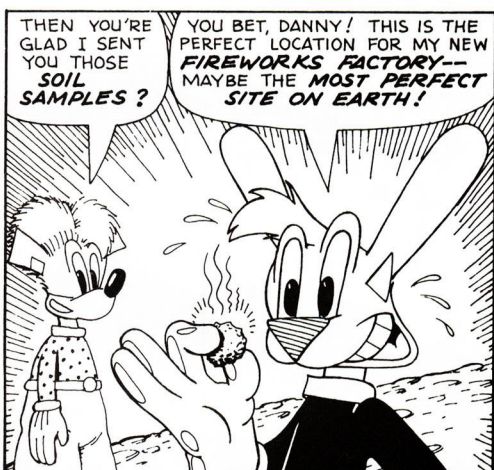
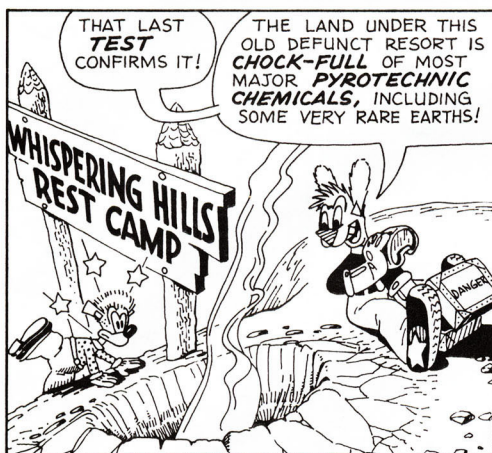
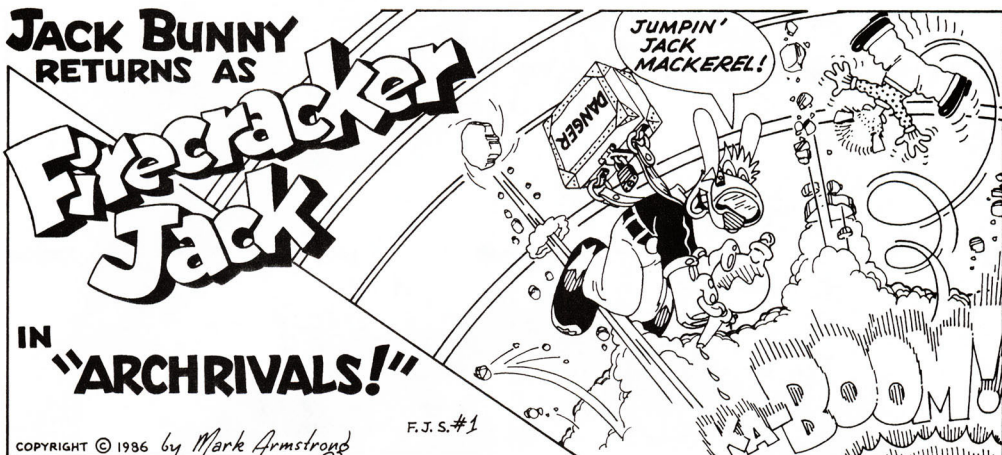


# JACK BUNNY RETURNS AS **Firecracker Jack**

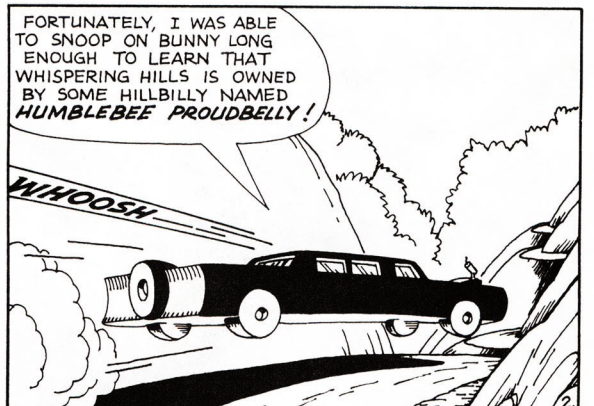
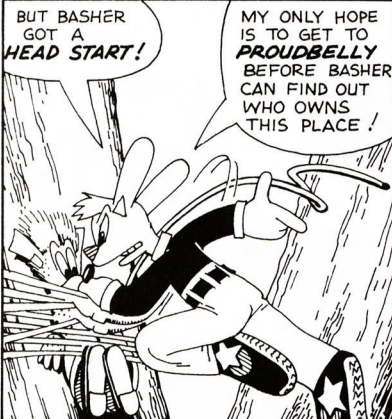
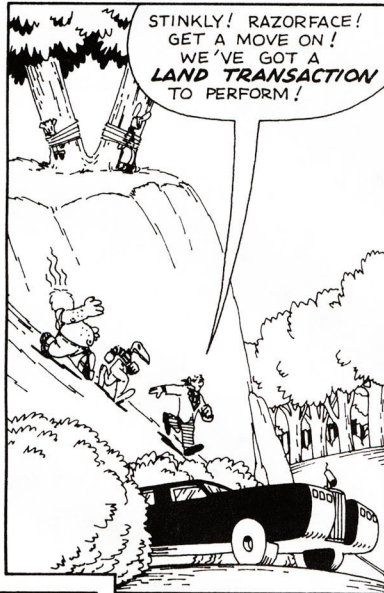
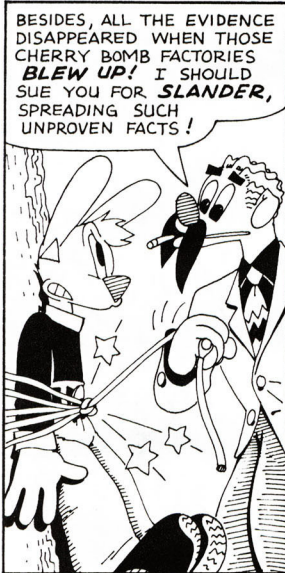
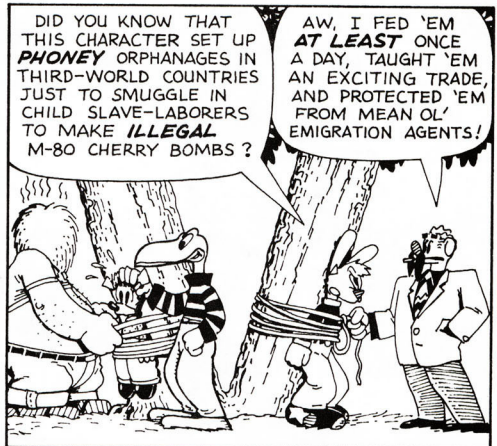
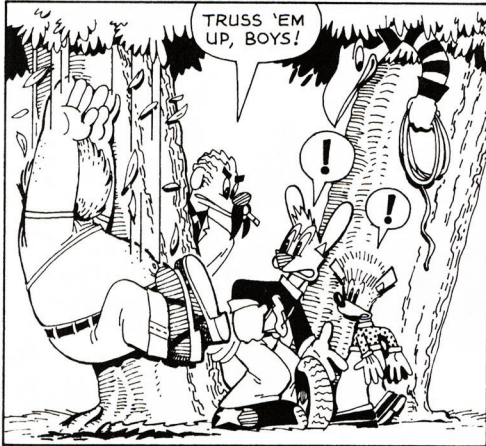
IN  
**"ARCHRIVALS!"**

F.J.S.#1

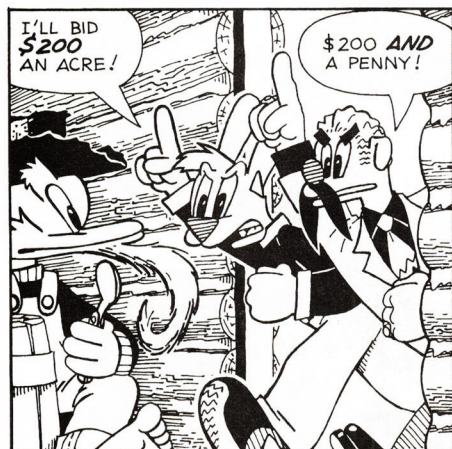
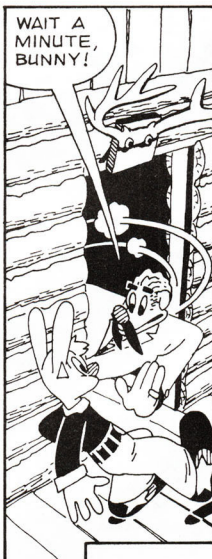
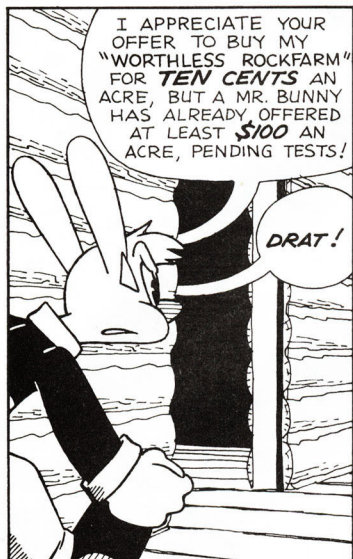
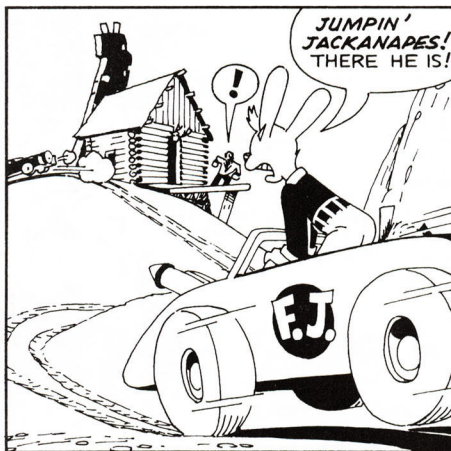
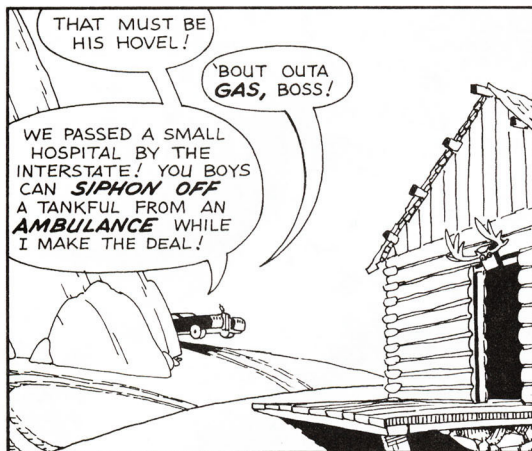
COPYRIGHT © 1986 by Mark Armstrong



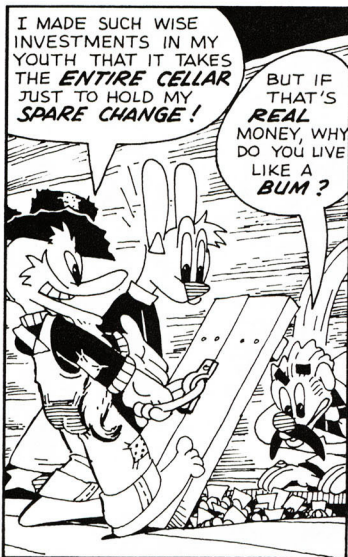












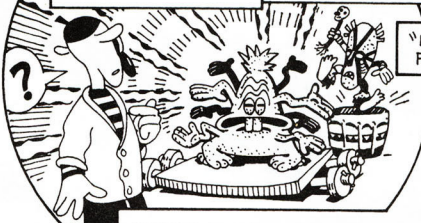
"YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT SMUGGO MADE HIS PILE IN THE ADVERTISING GAME!"

"WELL, IT SEEMS THAT DURING ONE OF THOSE HIGHLY-LUCRATIVE LOCATION SHOOTS, HE HELPED OUT A WITCHDOCTOR!"



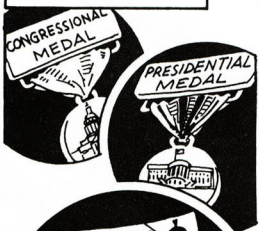
"THE WITCHDOCTOR WAS SO GRATEFUL THAT HE GAVE HIM A MYSTIC GIZMO IN RETURN -- THE **BOO-DOO STATUE!**"

"NOW, ANYTIME THAT SMUGGO PERFORMS AN ACT OF CHARITY THE STATUE MAGICALLY ARRANGES FOR SMUGGO TO GET INSTANT RECOGNITION AND PRAISE!"



"LOTSA PRAISE!"

"WAY TOO MUCH PRAISE!"



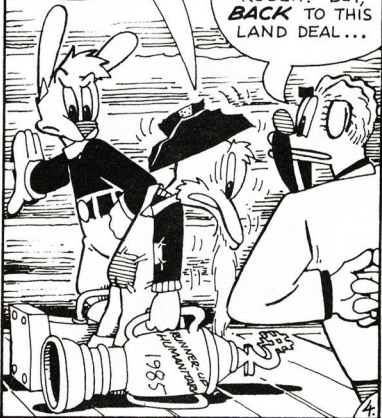
SMUGGO HAS BEEN NUMBER ONE HUMANITARIAN **EVER SINCE!**

ALL US **OTHER** PROFESSIONAL HUMANITARIANS HAVE BEEN PUT IN THE SHADE!

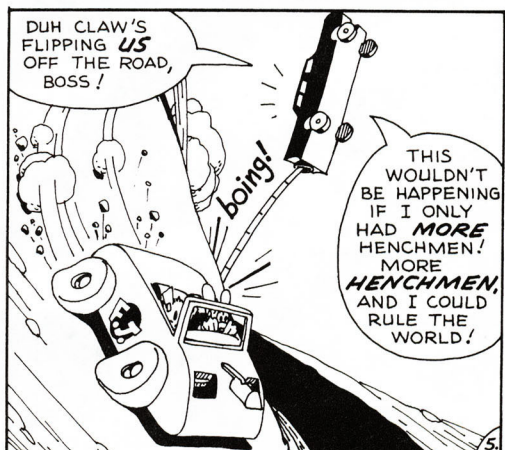
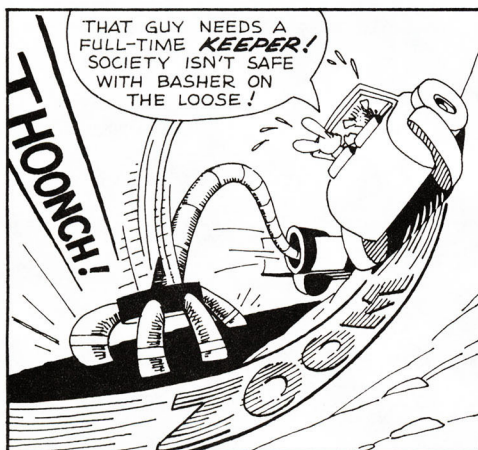
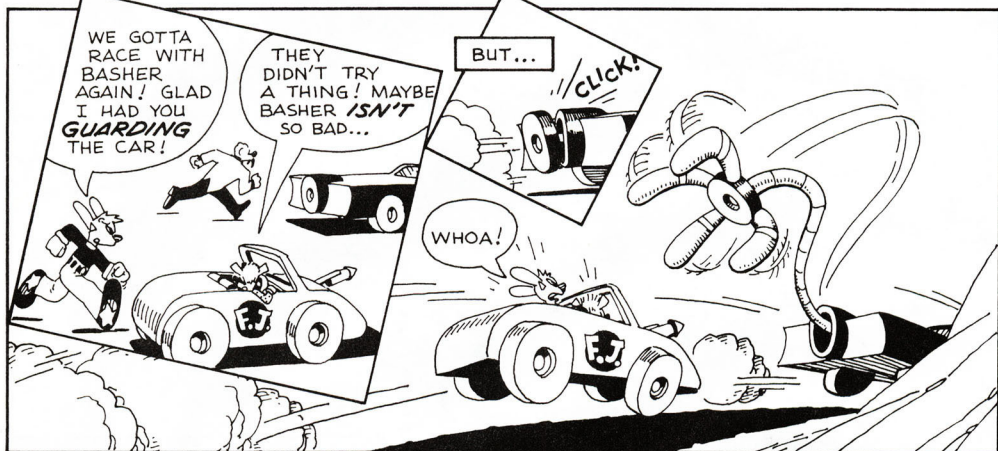
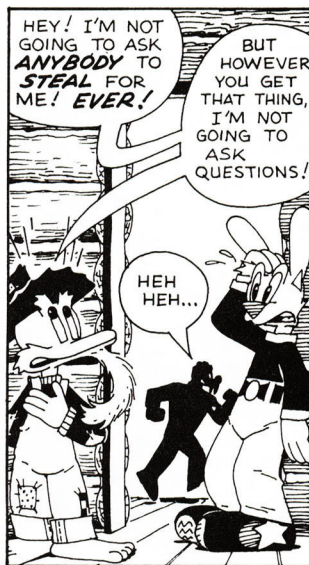
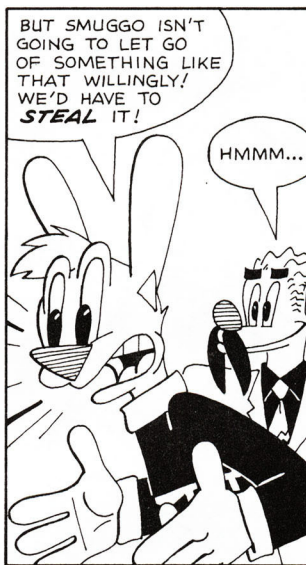
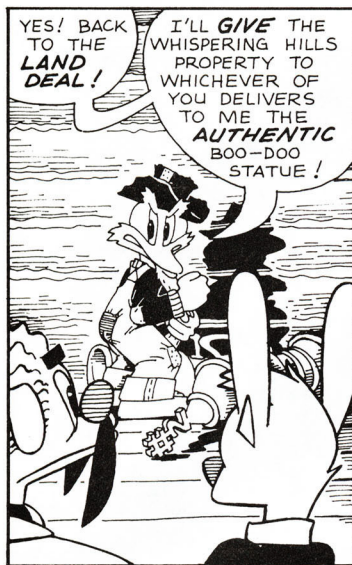


WHAT'S THE **POINT** IN BEING A HUMANITARIAN WHEN SOME OTHER HUMANITARIAN HOGS ALL THE GLORY?

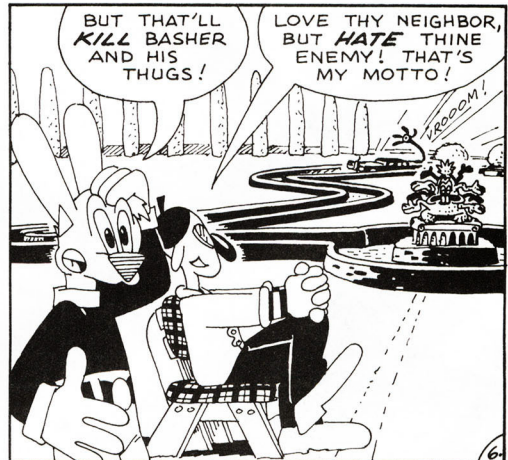
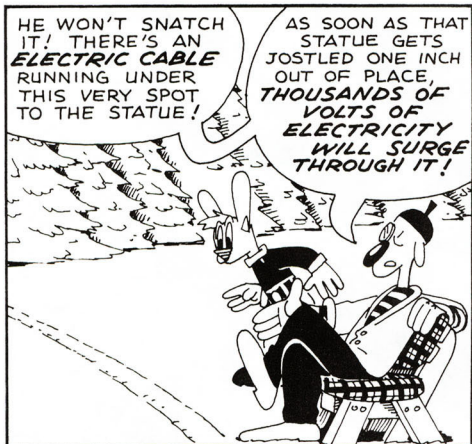
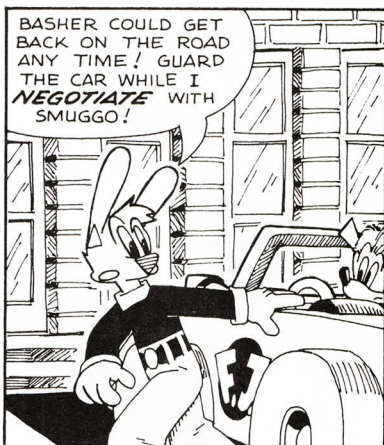
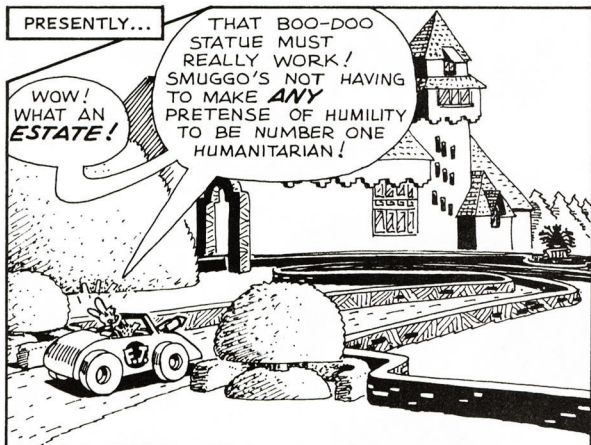
GEE, SORRY YOU HUMANITARIANS HAVE IT SO ROUGH! BUT, **BACK** TO THIS LAND DEAL...



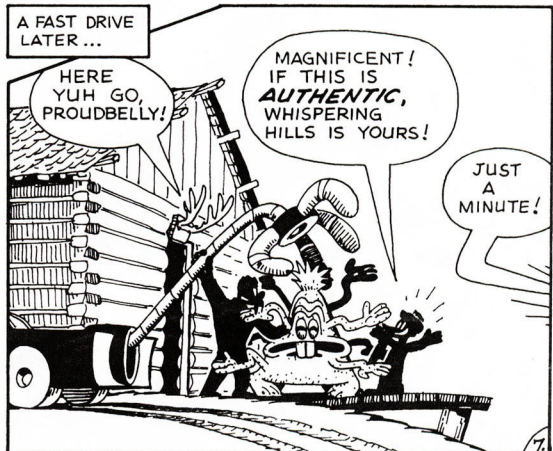
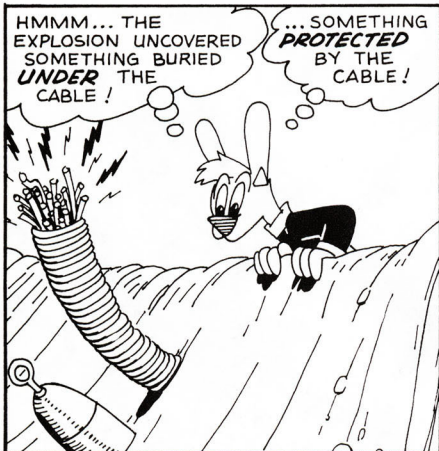
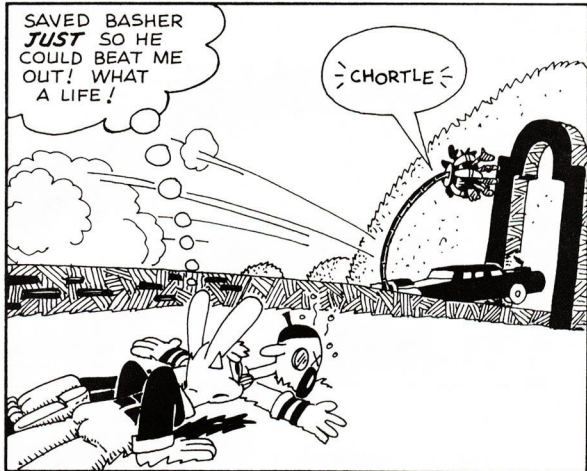
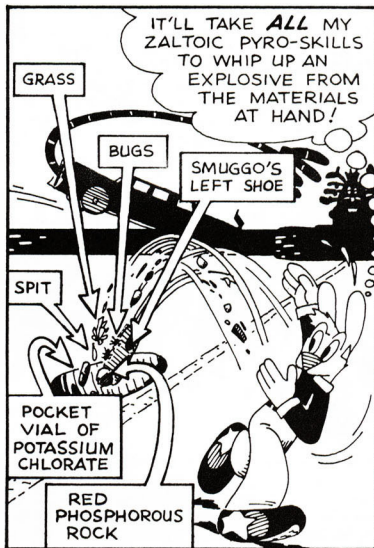
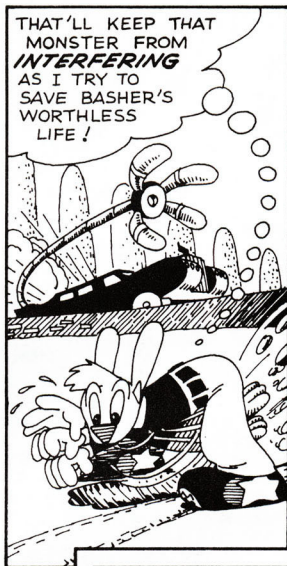




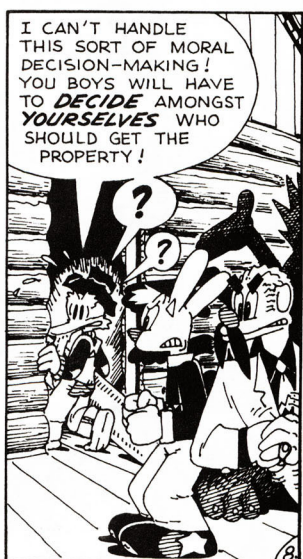
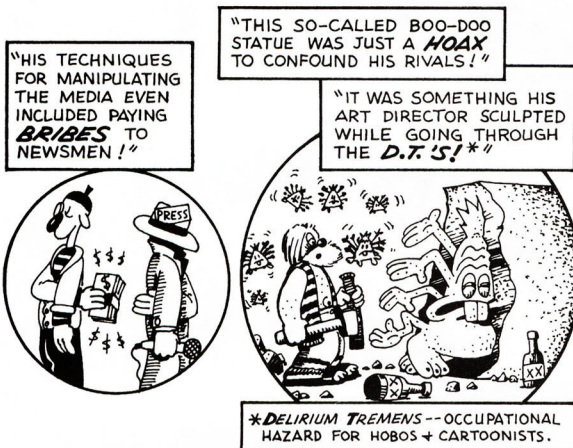
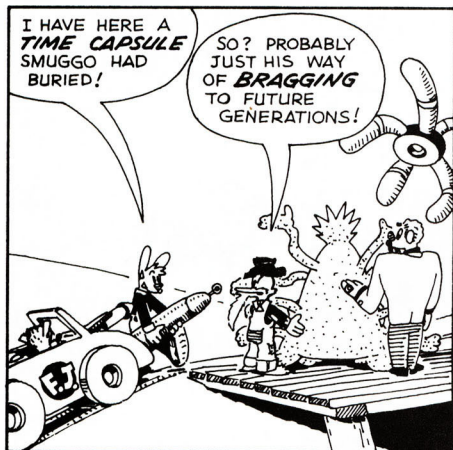




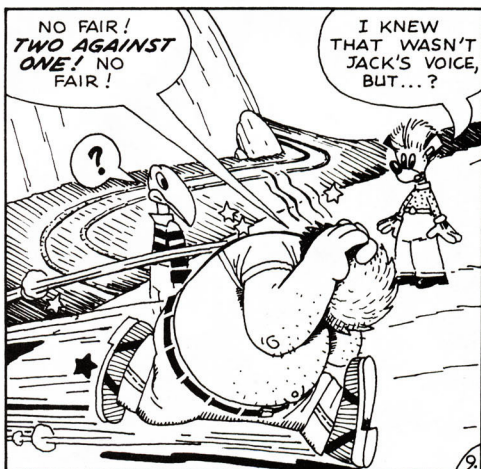
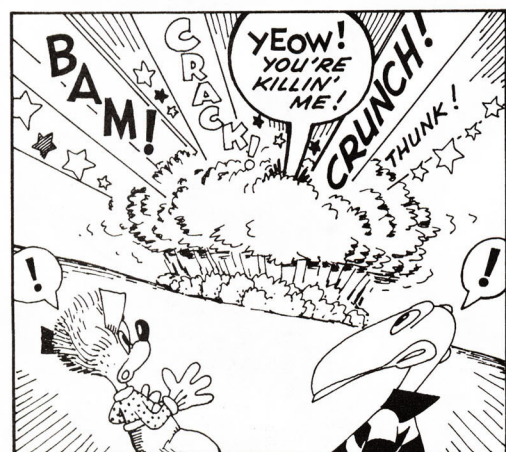
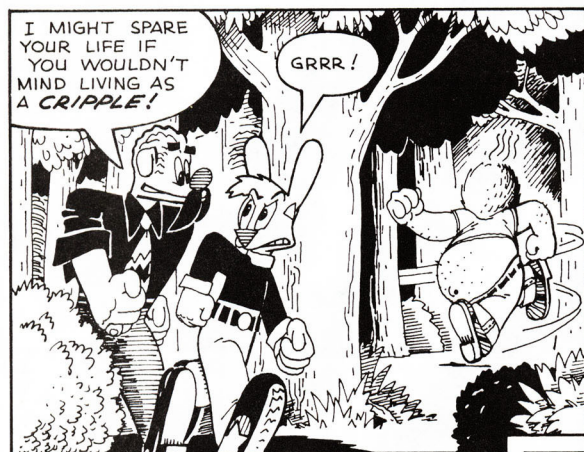




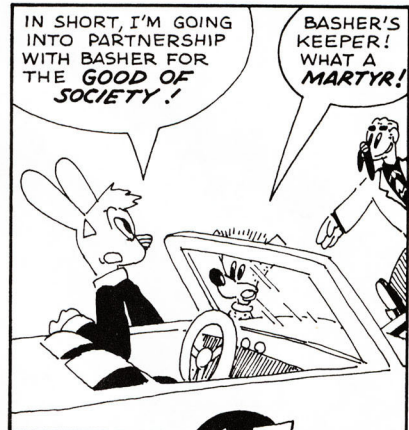
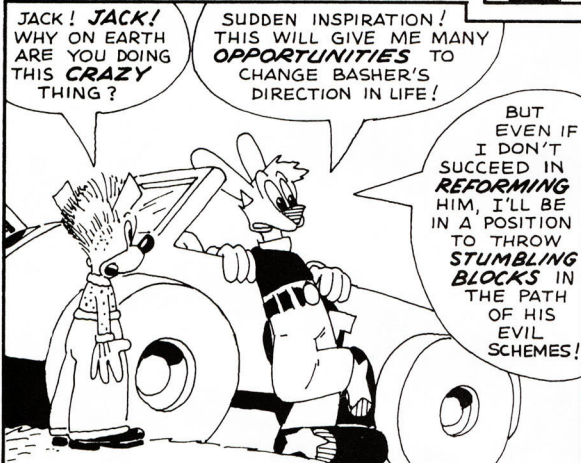
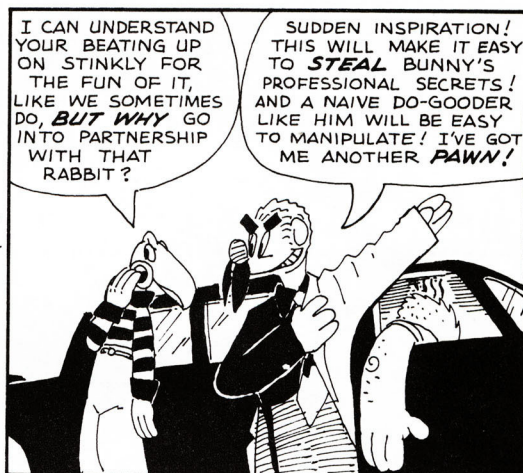














(LETTERS, FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)  
ton's "Woody Woodpecker" work  
could be reprinted in this title.  
Speaking of people named "Mil-  
ton," maybe Milton Knight can  
come out of his hibernation and  
revive Hugo for this book.

**Billy Ford**  
Richmond, VA

In fact, Freddy Milton and I are now work-  
ing on assembling a regular monthly book  
that would reprint not only Freddy's "Woody  
Woodpecker" work, but also a lot of the older  
"Gnuff" material—at which there's over 500  
pages! This wouldn't mean that "Gnuff"  
would leave CRITTERS, however, since Fredd-  
y would like to continue his new material in  
this book at the same time. We may end  
up running parallel "Gnuff" serials in two  
different books just to confuse everyone!

As for HUGO, although I doubt we'll be  
working much with Milton Knight in the  
future, I understand a fellow independent  
publisher is right now talking about reviv-  
ing his book. I sure hope so—I miss reading  
it! —KT

Dear Mr. Steven A. Gallacci.

After reading "Birthright," it  
dawns on me that your work will  
make a great full-length animated  
film. Just find a big movie producer  
and sell him your idea; your story  
can't lose. **Think about it!**

**Zack Mays**  
Griffin, GA

It's been a rough couple of decades for  
feature-length animated movies. Zack, so we  
wouldn't hold our breath waiting for "Birth-  
right: The Movie." But it certainly is a  
thought to conjure with... —KT

Dear Kim Thompson.

I don't know why I walked into  
this comic and used paperback  
bookstore ten days ago, but I'm  
very, very glad that I did. I think  
that **Critters** is wonderful! The lack  
of graphic storytelling in my life  
had become quite depressing since

I finally gave up on the deteriorat-  
ing **Heavy Metal**. **Critters** more  
than fills that void... everything in  
#1 and #2 is just great! (Naturally,  
I had to pick up **Captain Jack** #1 as  
well).

I wonder, too, why anthropomor-  
phic or "funny animal" characters  
have such strong attraction for  
some of us. Perhaps we can feel  
emotional about such characters  
much less equivocally than we can  
about human characters. There's  
no chance of a "good" character  
like Prince Anton Kashoka remind-  
ing you of a cousin you've always  
hated, or a "bad" character like  
General Theok reminding you of  
your favorite uncle. Also, in the  
animated film format, there's no  
chance of your mind slipping out  
of gear and reminding you that  
these characters are just actors  
being paid obscene amounts of  
money for displaying often limited  
skills.

**John W. Pharr**  
Saskatoon, Sask., Can.

Dear Editors.

On "Birthright" was Steven A.  
Gallacci influenced by the Disney  
film **Robin Hood**?

**Zack Mays**  
Griffin, GA

I rather hope not, since that's one of the few  
real stinkers the studio ever put out (in my  
humble opinion, at least). More generally, I'd  
say the Disney anthropomorphics have influ-  
enced "most every funny-animal cartoonist  
of the last 50 years, and the biggest specific  
kinship between "Birthright" and **ROBIN  
HOOD** is that the stars are both foxes.

Hey, didn't I just answer a letter of yours?  
—KT

Dear Mr. Thompson.

After a very lackluster first issue.

I'm glad to say that **Critters** #2 was  
a real treat to read and was of the  
artistic caliber that I've come to ex-  
pect from Fantagraphics Books. For  
me the highlight of the issue was  
Freddy Milton's "Gnuff," which put  
me in Barks heaven for 12 pages.  
Mr. Milton has instilled in his work  
a lot of genuine charm and com-  
passion which I find lacking in  
most American cartoonists' work. I  
hope his stories are a permanent  
fixture in this magazine. Is there  
any chance of Fantagraphics re-  
printing his Woody Woodpecker  
books in color (I can dream, can't  
I?)

I also liked "Birthright" much bet-  
ter this time around, although Gal-  
lacci's work still suffers from poor  
reproduction. "Captain Jack" was a  
riot—the scene of the crew pushing  
the "Glass Onion" through space  
was one of the wildest images I've  
seen in a long time. Great stuff. I  
take it that the "Captain Jack" pre-  
view was the most recent work  
Kazaleh had done at the time; it  
was both looser and funnier than  
the Captain's first solo issue.

All in all, **Critters** #2 was an en-  
joyable, respectable issue, and I'm  
looking forward to many more.  
May **Critters** have prosperity!

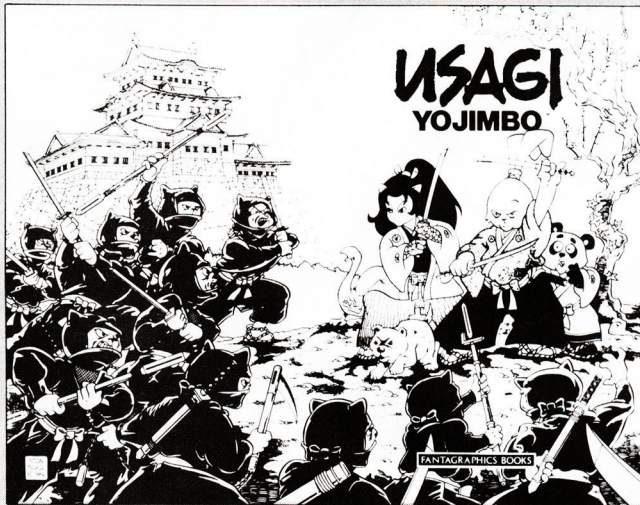
**Michael Neno**  
Columbus, OH

As far as Freddy's Woody Woodpecker stuff,  
see the above response to Billy Ford. Yes,  
Kazaleh's CRITTERS short was done after his  
first CAPTAIN JACK issue—and I think his  
continued improvement is indeed quite  
noticeable. When Mike returns for a special  
guest appearance in CRITTERS #11, those  
readers who haven't been following CAP-  
TAIN JACK (shame on them!) should be in  
for quite a surprise! —KT

Dear **Critters** people:

Like I said to the local comics

## USAGI YOJIMBO SUMMER SPECIAL!



Now collected  
together for the  
first time in a  
beautiful 48-page  
package with a full-  
color wraparound  
cover—the rabbit  
ronin's very first ex-  
ploits, with a *brand  
new* story by STAN  
SAKAI and special  
contributions from  
MARK EVANIER  
and SERGIO  
ARAGONES!

The **USAGI YOJIMBO  
SUMMER SPECIAL** is  
on sale at a comic  
shop new you—or  
available for \$3.25  
postpaid (outside U.S.:  
\$4.00) from **CRITTERS**,  
4359 Cornell Road,  
Agoura, CA 91301.



specialty shop guy: "I can't believe I'm doing this!" This meaning plunking out the equivalent of \$2.45 and \$2.75 for the first two issues of **CRITTERS** and **Threat!** I struggled like mad to resist the impulse to buy them... they aren't cheap... but I lost the fight.

Would it interest you to know that yours is the first comic I'm writing to in 16 years of collecting?

**CRITTERS** is great—most of the time. That's the trouble with anthology comics. The quality varies. Sorry to tell you guys this, but the "Cutey Bunny" and "Captain Jack" strips didn't do all that much for me. Issue #3 sounds like my ideal issue: "Usagi Yojimbo," "Gnuff," and "Birthright."

"Usagi Yojimbo" looks like a cross between **Groo** and the better Japanese "manga" (which we also get here, by the way, in profusion! Some of 'em make your mouth water!) I guess R.A. Jones was right when he complained that the comic expressions on the face of the bandits getting killed were a bit out of step with the strip's overall "serious" approach—but what the heck! I loved it!

"Birthright": interesting. I don't see what's so downbeat about Part One. The fall of any regime is always grim. I can't help contrasting Prince Anton and Princess Kenda's heroism with the debacle of Marcos and Imelda's flight from the Philippines. The artwork is great, so's the plot, but the dialogue... oh, boy, I know what the guy's trying to do... more realistic dialogue. But there's still too much "Ah!" "Um..." and "Er..." floating around, and some of the dialogue sequences weren't too clear. Still, "Birthright's" good.

"Gnuff"—what can I say, except that you guys had better make it to #10... I don't intend to miss the second Gnuff novella!

One final point: You don't have to sound so apologetic about publishing a funny animal comic. The three strips I'm raving over happen to be "adult" in approach. "Usagi" and "Birthright" can be drawn using human protagonists and still not lose their appeal (except for the cuteness(?) of the animals). "Gnuff" is, as you so rightly pointed out done with a different sensibility from most funny-animal strips. Dare I compare it to Walt Kelly's **Pogo**?

**Michael Lai**  
Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia

Oh, I don't think anyone will object if you compare his work to **POGO**, Michael. By the way, **POGO** fans are in for a special treat in the next issue of **CRITTERS**, as Ty Templeton pays homage to... but you have to read it to see.

And if I sounded apologetic about publishing a funny-animal comic, I sure didn't mean to. (For one thing, I'd have to do a lot of apologizing, since we'll probably be publishing close to a half dozen regular funny-animal comics by next spring.) —KT

**CREDITS:** "Birthright" was written and drawn by **Steven A. Gallacci**, with typesetting provided by **Western Type**. "Usagi Yojimbo" was written, drawn, and lettered by **Stan Sakai**. "Firecracker Jack" was written, drawn, and lettered by **Mark Armstrong**. The cover was painted by **Steven A. Gallacci** and separated by **Impact Productions**. The **CRITTERS** logo was designed by **Freddy** and rendered by **Ingo Milton**. Printed at **Port Publications**. Production by: **Tom Mason**, art director, and **Dave Nelson**, production assistant. **CRITTERS** is edited by **Kim Thompson** for **FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS**.

## SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Coming up in the second half year of **CRITTERS**: The return of "Lionheart" in a novel-length epic of mystery and terror! The return of "Gnuff" in "Animal Graffiti"! The sequel to "Birthright"! Lots more "Usagi Yojimbo"! New work by Ty Templeton and Sam Kieth! A "Captain Jack" short! Do you dare miss a single issue?



☐ Begin my subscription to **CRITTERS** with the next issue off the presses! I enclose a check or money order for \$9.00 for the next 6 issues (outside U.S., \$11.00 in U.S. funds).

Also, send me a copy of ☐ **CRITTERS** #4; ☐ **CRITTERS** #5; ☐ **CRITTERS** #6. I've enclosed \$2.50 for each (\$3.00 outside U.S.).

name \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

state/prov. \_\_\_\_\_

zip/country \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: **CRITTERS SUBS**, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura, CA 91301. (Allow 6-8 weeks for your first copy to arrive; all copies mailed flat in protective envelopes.)

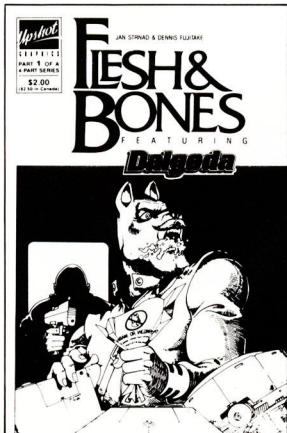


# It's Time

by Jan Strnad

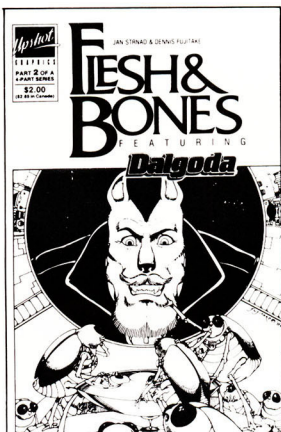
Yep, you've dallied long enough. It's time for *you* to start picking up "one of the best titles around" (according to Martin Crookall of *Fantasy Advertiser*).

Dal's back in his own mini-series in the first offering from the new *Upshot Graphics* division of *Fantagraphics Books*! Here's what's in store for Dal fans, old and new, in the four-part series *Flesh & Bones*:



**Book One:** The humans under Dal's command are revolting, and none of them is more revolting than **Colonel Kenneth Moxley**, leading the people in mutiny! Has Dal cracked under the strain?

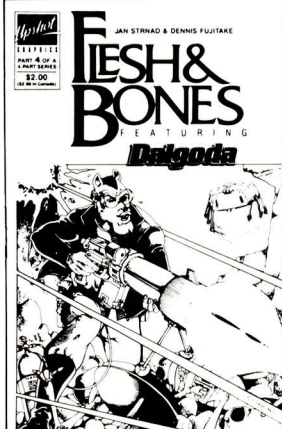
**Book Two:** Is it just sub-space psychosis, or is Navigator Stark really seeing angels? Dal's not waiting to find out—he's out to kick tail on the planet of the bubble-people. Gunner's new sub-space torpedos are put to the test!



**Book Three:** Dal's on the trail of his lost people and Stark's under the sway of her "angel"—or is it something more sinister? Meanwhile the Nimp are closing in and the fur is about to fly!



**Book Four:** Dal descends into the Demneon Pit, the Nimp attack in force, the Canidans are caught in the thick of it, and now the whole planet's tearing itself apart! A grand finale to the Saga of Dal!



And as if that weren't enough, every issue of *Flesh & Bones* sports a complete chapter of the indelible *BoJeffries Saga* by those two crazy Brits **Alan Moore** and **Steve Parkhouse**. Is a humble rent collector any match for a girl who can "turn a cream egg into a diamond and then eat it anyway?" And doesn't the family werewolf violate the rule against keeping pets?



*Dalgoda's* gathered critical acclaim from comics professionals from Frank Miller to Howard Chaykin, reviewers from R.A. Jones to Don Thompson, and about 30,000 fans have loved it too! *Fantasy Advertiser* calls it "one of the finest packages going." Don't you think you've waited long enough?

Look for *Flesh & Bones* at your local comics shop or order it from your subscription service... or get it straight from Fantagraphics Books!

**To Order:** Send check or money order for \$8.00 for all four issues of *Flesh & Bones* to: *Flesh & Bones Subs*, Fantagraphics Books, 4359 Cornell Road, Agoura CA 91301. All copies are mailed flat in an envelope.



# ALBEDO

## ANTHROPOMORPHICS



### MORE THAN JUST FUNNY ANIMALS

Follow the exploits of Erma Felna and the Extraplanetary Defense Force in an interstellar scenario of social and political upheaval. Or, on a lighter note, watch Howarth & Kister's *Konny and Czu* wheel and deal their way across the galaxy. Closer to home, Deal Whitley's *High Orbit* has an anthropomorphic near future space colony suffer the soap opera foibles of its youthful inhabitants. ALBEDO, now finally on a regular schedule, will have these and other stories in a not necessarily "funny" animal vein every other month. Available at your more adventurous comic shops, or order direct from Steve Gallacci at P.O. Box 19419, Seattle, WA. \$2 per issue, including postage, and just multiply that for extended subscriptions.

Also from *Thoughts & Images* is the first issue of ZELL, SWORDDANCER, an amalgam of sword-and-sorcery and serious science-fiction by Steve Gallacci and Steve Adams. Like ALBEDO, ZELL, SWORDDANCER is \$2 per issue, published alternate months.

A perfect companion to Fantagraphics Book's USAGI YOJIMBO SPECIAL, the first issue of COMMAND REVIEW is a reprint of the first four episodes of *Erma Felna, EDF* from ALBEDO. Published semi-annually, COMMAND REVIEW is \$4 per issue.



