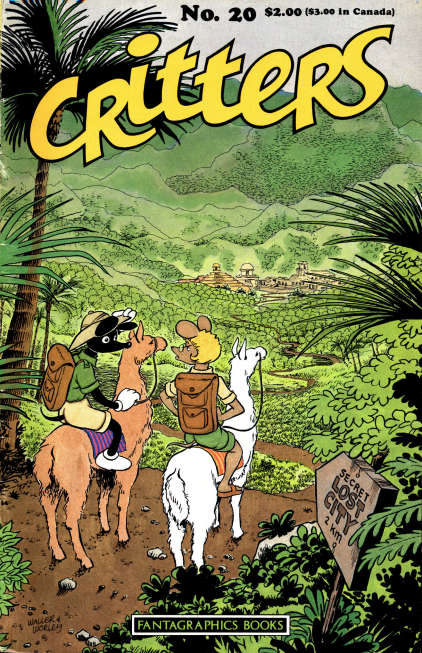
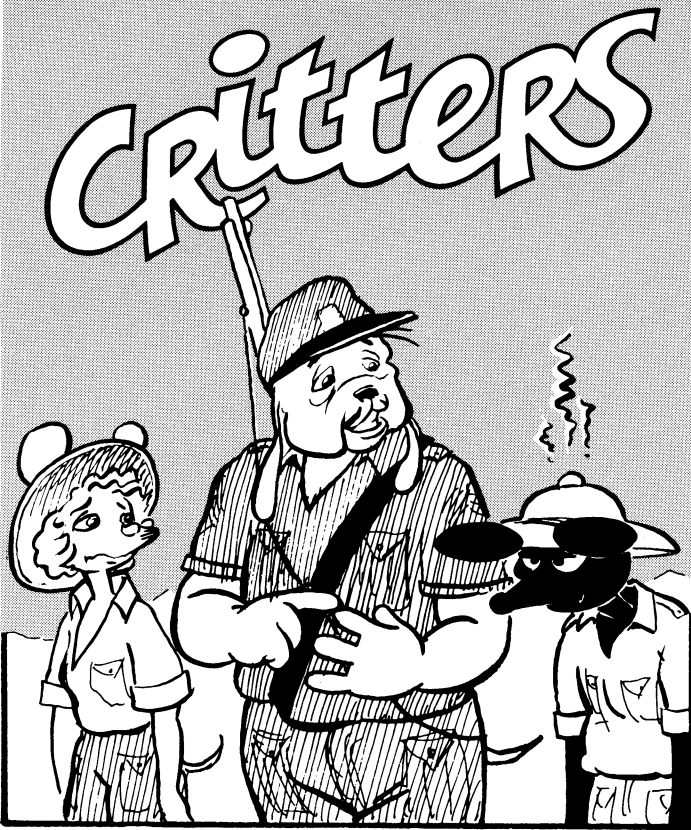


No. 20 \$2.00 (\$3.00 in Canada)

CRITTERS



FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



NUMBER 20 JANUARY 1988

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I promised you last time that I'd talk about this year's Christmas special issue of **Critters**, didn't I? Okay, here goes. Time for some shameless self-promotion.

Well, first of all, we're going to have a lot of different cartoonists. Last time I checked, the following **Critters** regulars and semi-regulars had agreed to do stories for it: Tim Fuller, Mike Kazaleh, Sam Kieth, Reed Waller and Kate Worley, Steven A. Gallacci, Freddy Milton, Stan Sakai, and Tom Stazer. In addition to which, Scott Shaw! will be contributing a tale, as will Ty Templeton. Enough to fill up another 68-page issue, you bet.

But wait! There's more!

Ty Templeton's story chronicles the exploits of a teddy-bear blues band. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Boy, I wonder what that would sound like!" That's what I thought when Ty told me about it. And since I'm the publisher, I was in a position to do something about it.

Critters #23, on sale this December, will feature the first-ever Fantagraphics Books Incorporated Music and Noise flexi-disc—several hundreds of seconds of Teddy Payne and the Bluebears performing the soulful "Right to the Blues," an original composition by the multi-talented Ty Templeton. So far, I've only heard the demo (which includes Ty's stirring impression of a harmonica using only his nose), but the finished version, Ty promises, will be as slick as can be.

Now, Just like every argument, every record has two sides—and our other side is a doozy. Through special transatlantic arrangement, **Critters** is proud and privileged to bring you Alan Moore's "March of the Sinister Ducks"—a gruesomely funny cabaret-style number heretofore released only in Great Britain. And it will be backed up by a brief article by Moore explaining the genesis of this bizarre project.

Ty Templeton and Alan Moore: They write! They draw! And now, in their effort to leave no stone unrolled, they sing! Not together, granted, but back to back—in the most magnificent multi-media presentation assembled since **RAW** magazine's bubblegum card insert! Wow!

By the way, if you subscribe to **Critters** today, you'll get that issue (which will retail for \$3.95) at no extra cost, hint, hint.

Next issue, we'll have a full 32 pages of comics, which means no letters page (awww...). Be on the lookout for the Sam Kieth "Is of Bullet Valley" cover!

—Kim Thompson

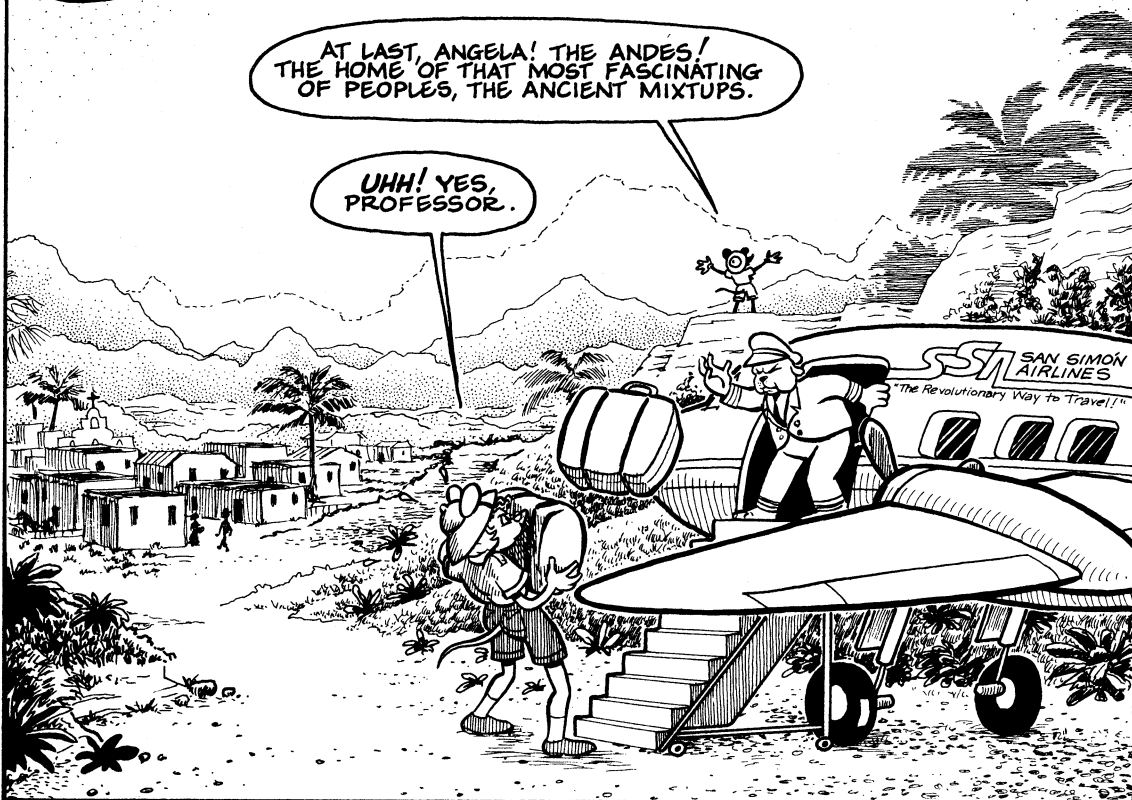
Critters #20, January, 1988. Editor, Kim Thompson. Art Director, Doug Erb. Production Assistant, Coco Shinomiya. **Critters** is published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc., and is copyright © 1987 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All characters, stories, and art © 1987 their respective creators: Freddy Milton, J.P. Morgan, William Van Horn, Reed Waller and Kate Worley. Cover separations by S*M Graphics. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission from Fantagraphics Books and the creators. No similarity between the any of the names, characters, persons, animals, and institutions in **Critters** and those of any living or dead persons or beausties 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: October, 1987. Available directly from the publisher for \$2.00 + 75¢ postage and handling: Fantagraphics Books, 1800 Bridgegate Street Suite #101, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

WALLER and WORLEY'S

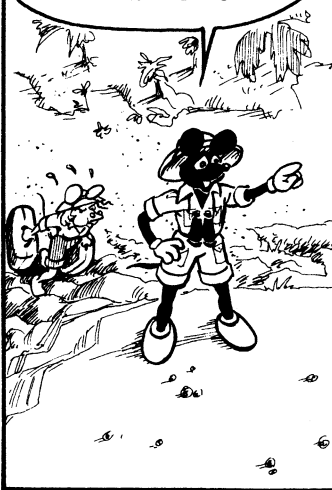
SPEAKING STONE

AT LAST, ANGELA! THE ANDES!
THE HOME OF THAT MOST FASCINATING
OF PEOPLES, THE ANCIENT MIXTUPS.

UHH! YES,
PROFESSOR.



SOMEWHERE IN THOSE
TOWERING PEAKS, IN
ONE OF THOSE REMOTE
VALLEYS, LIES THEIR
ULTIMATE SECRET-THE
SACRED CITY OF
POCOCATAPULTEL.



THAT'S NOT WHAT
PROFESSOR FLINDERS
THINKS.

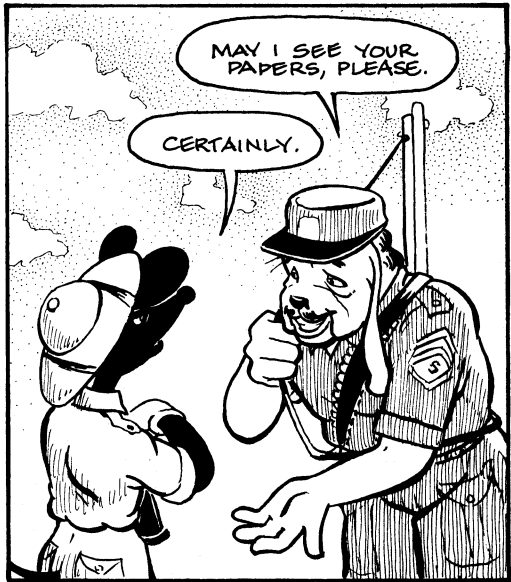
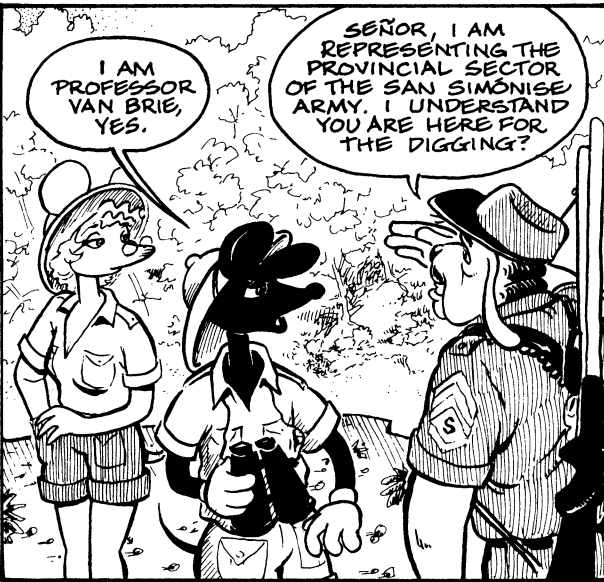
FLINDERS, BAH!
THAT BLIND FOOL! I HAVE
STUDIED ALL THE CODICES
OF THE MIXTUPS, ALL
THEIR LEGENDS ABOUT
THEIR GREAT CAPITAL.

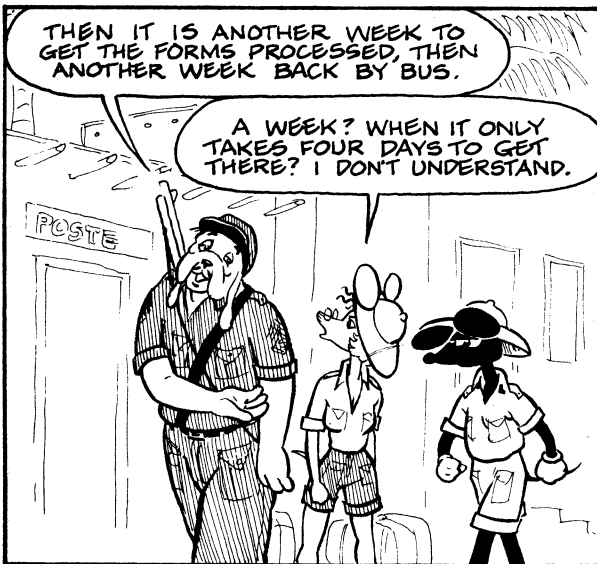
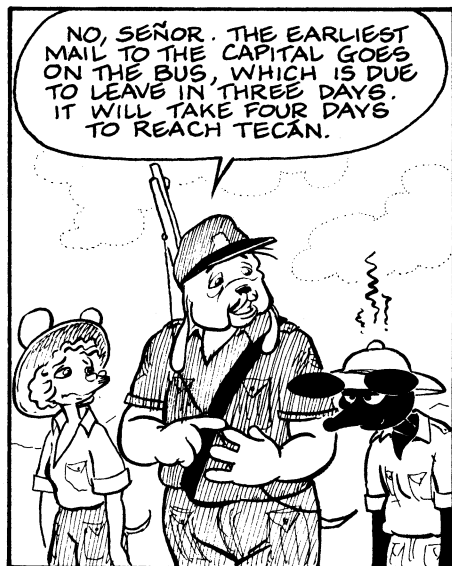
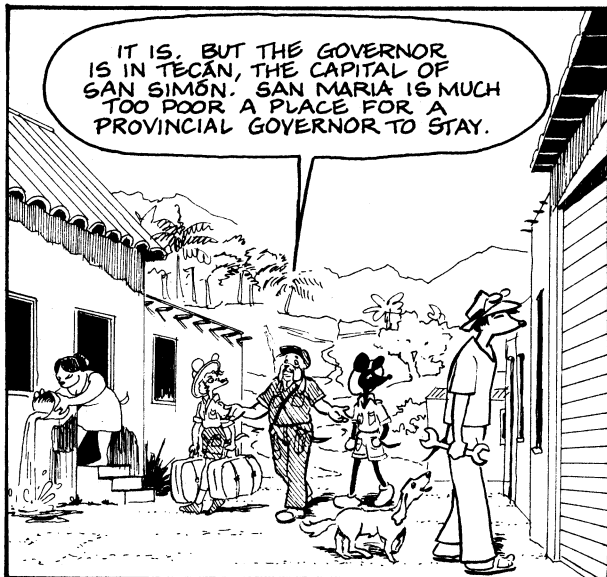


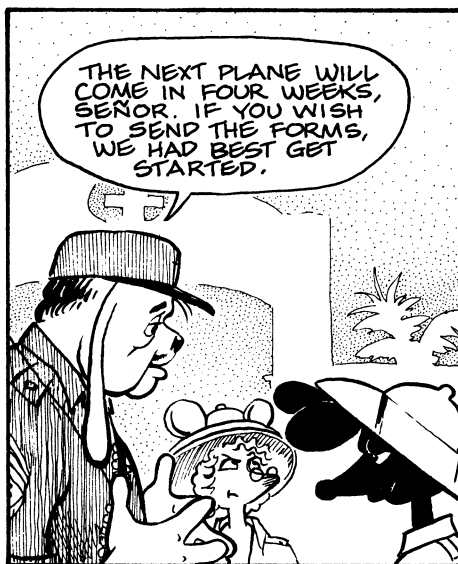
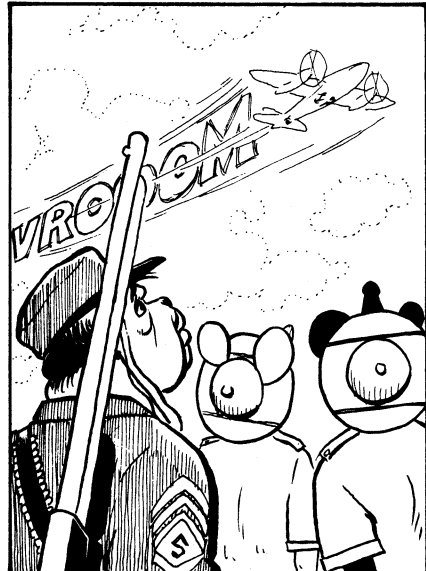
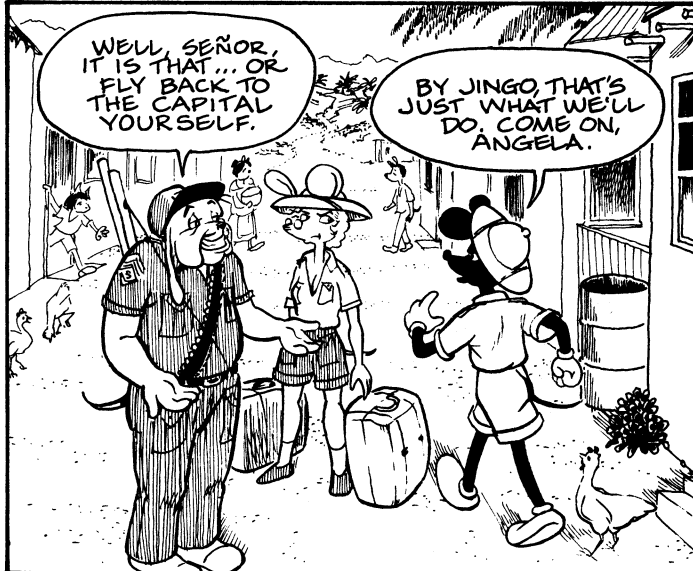
AND I SAY IT IS HERE IN THE
MOUNTAINS OF SAN SIMÓN
THAT WE WILL FIND IT.
I KNOW IT.

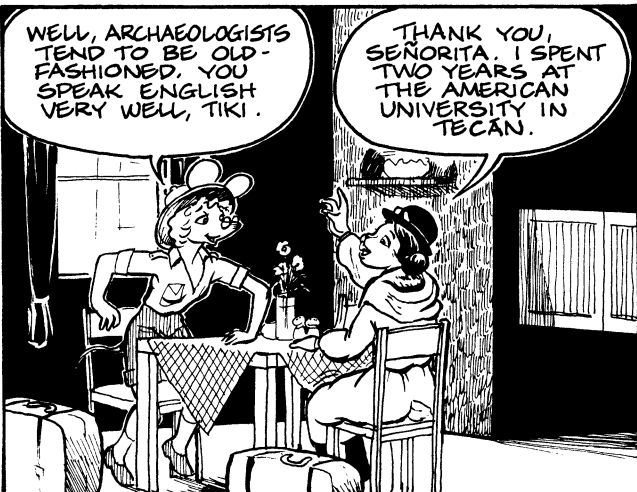
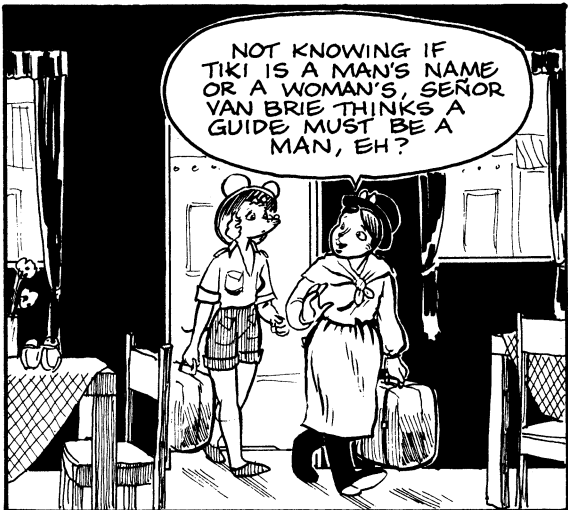
SEÑOR
PROFESSOR
VAN BRIE?











HE IS FILLING OUT
GOVERNMENT FORMS?
A WASTE OF TIME.

BUT LEGALLY
WE NEED...

YOU ARE GOING
WHERE THE LAW
DOES NOT REACH,
AND THAT IS GOOD.

WELL, MAYBE IT'S
DIFFERENT FOR
ARCHAEOLOGISTS
IN SAN SIMÓN...

THERE ARE NO
ARCHAEOLOGISTS
IN SAN SIMÓN. THE
GOVERNMENT-BEFORE-
LAST HAD THEM
ALL KILLED.

WHAT?!
WHY?

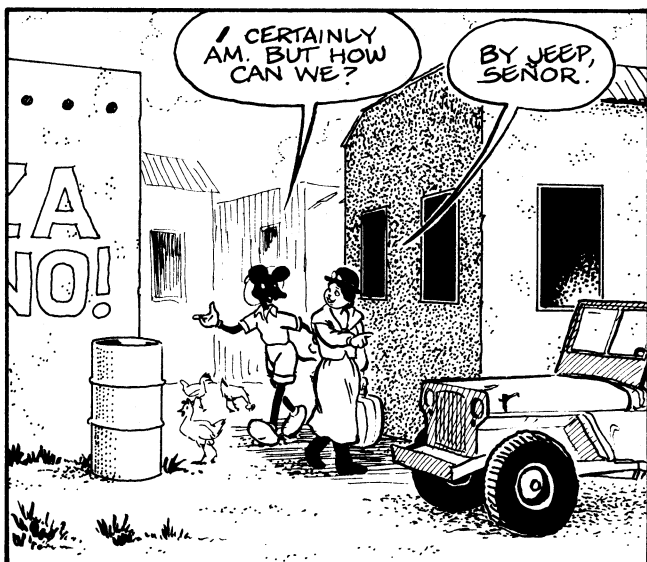
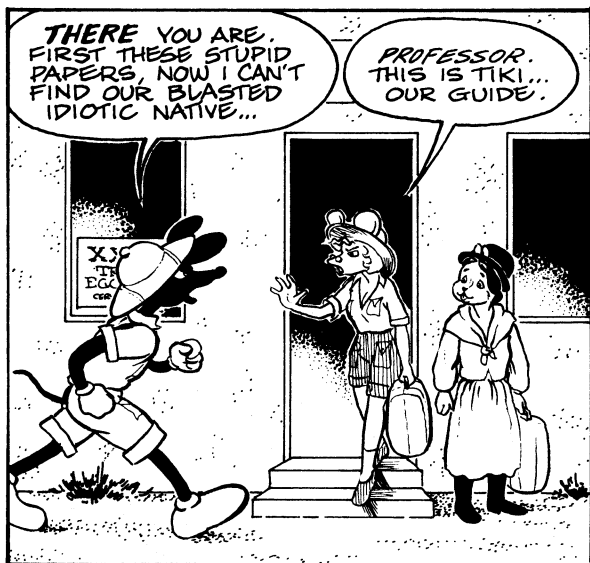
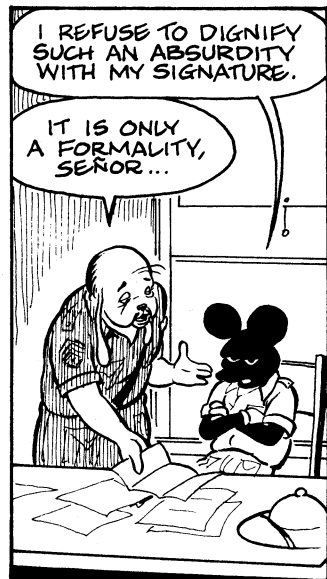
TREASON. THEY
MAINTAINED THAT THERE
WERE CIVILIZATIONS
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT-
BEFORE-LAST TOOK
POWER.

THEN THE
PROFESSOR IS IN
DANGER! WE'VE GOT
TO GET OUT
OF HERE!

MAYBE, MAYBE NOT.
THIS GOVERNMENT
HAS NOT DECIDED
IF ANY LAWS THE
OLD GOVERNMENT
MADE ARE VALID.
IS THE SEÑOR A
PATIENT MAN?

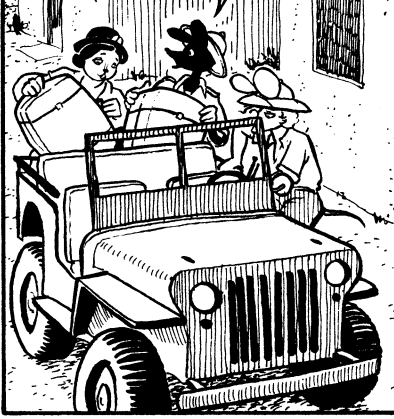
WELL, ... NO. I
WOULDN'T CALL
HIM PATIENT.
WHY?

THEN HE
WILL BE ALONG
SHORTLY. MORE
TEA?

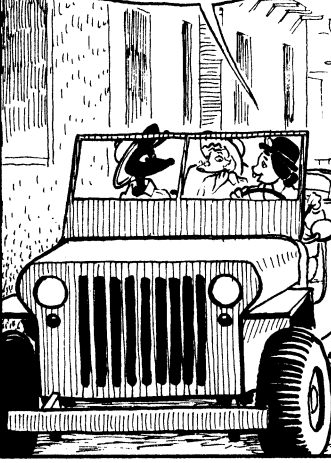


ALL YOUR SUPPLIES ARE
READY AND WAITING IN MY
VILLAGE, AND THEN YOU GO
ON TO THE MOUNTAINS.

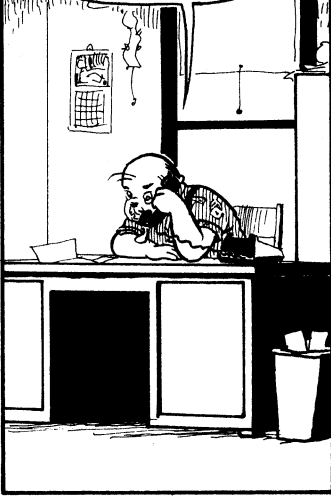
BUT IF THE
GOVERNMENT
FINDS OUT...



NOT TO WORRY,
SEÑOR PROFESSOR.
YOU GO... A FEW
WEEKS PASS... THE
GOVERNMENT
FORGETS ALL
ABOUT YOU.



SÍ, COLONEL.
HE REFUSED TO
SIGN THE ASSURANCE.
SHOULD I DETAIN
THEM OR...



HAVE THEY DECIDED
ABOUT THE LAW
YET, COLONEL?



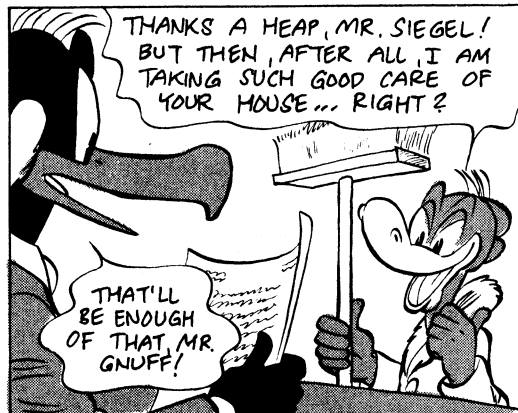
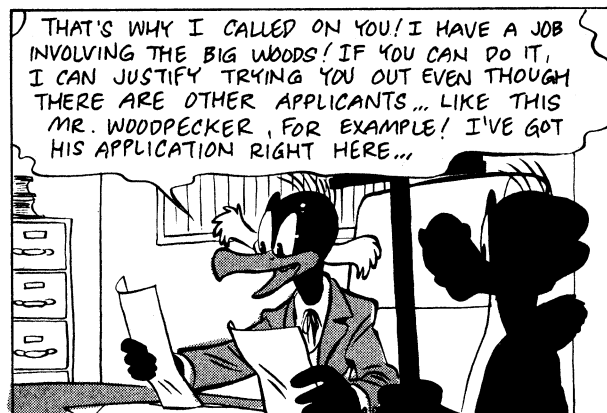
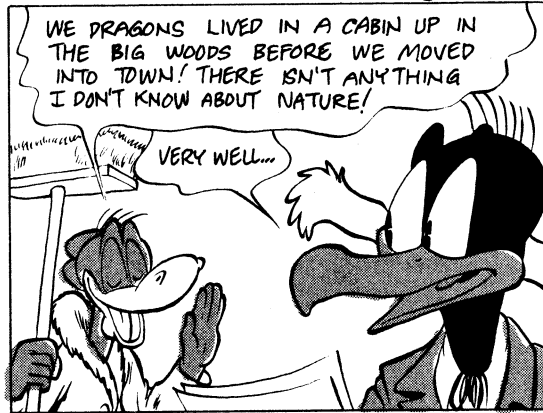
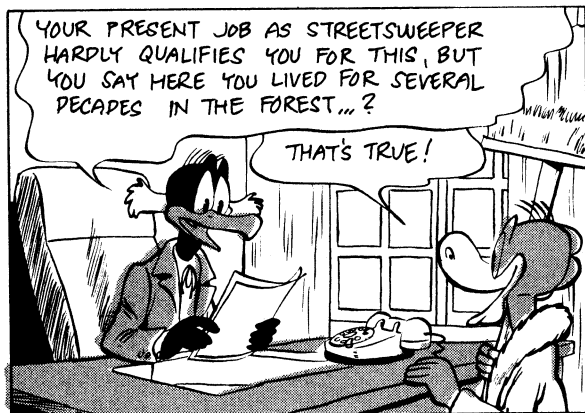
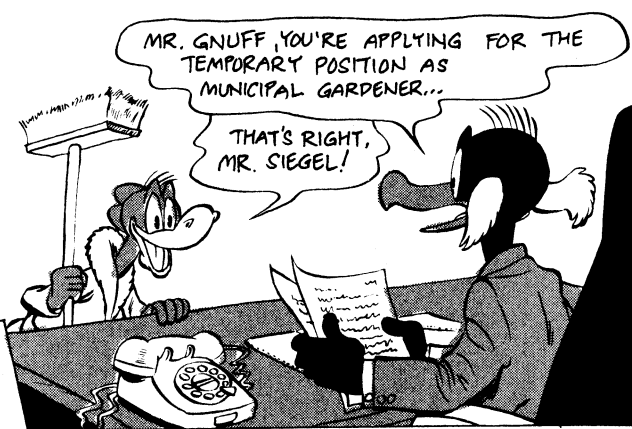
TO BE CONTINUED...
STORY: KATE WORLEY ART: REED WALLER

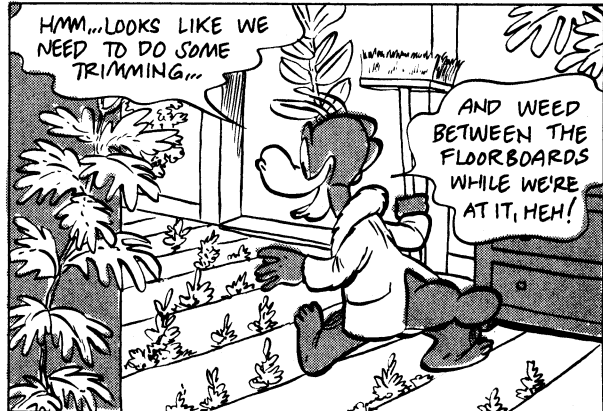
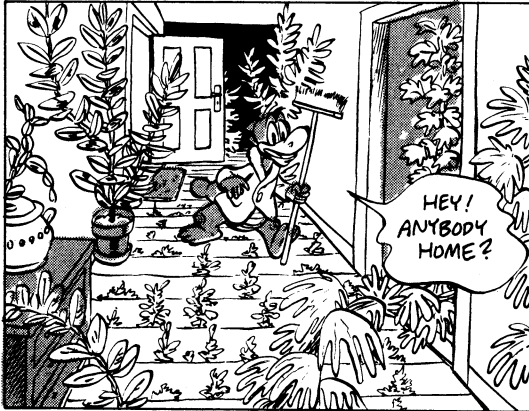
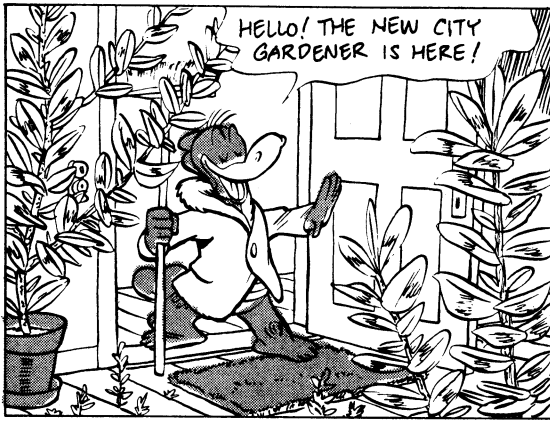
Freddy Milton's Gnuff

ART &
STORY
FREDDY
MILTON

"NATURAL
SELECTION"

GNUFF IS A STREET
SWEEPER WITH
AMBITIONS...





SO THERE YOU ARE AT LAST!
WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE?

PLANT
FOOD...

HEAR THAT, LORD?
THE BOY'S BRINGING
PLANT FOOD!

THIS IS FOR OUR
PLANT SHOW AT
SCHOOL! IT WAS
ON SALE THIS
WEEK!

IT'S NICE THAT YOU'RE SO INTERESTED IN
PLANTS, GNICKY, BUT DID YOU HAVE TO MAKE
A JUNGLE OUT OF THE APARTMENT?!

BUT IT
ISN'T MY
FAULT!

SO WHOSE FAULT IS
IT, MAY I ASK? LOOK--
PLANTS SPROUTING OUT
OF EVERY NOOK AND
CRANNY!

HONEST - I DIDN'T HAVE
ANYTHING TO DO
WITH THOSE PLANTS!
THEY JUST GREW
BY THEMSELVES!

NONSENSE, GNICKY! NOTHING
HAPPENS BY ITSELF! GET
RID OF THIS STUFF!

I'VE TRIED...
BUT IT
KEEPS
GROWING
BACK!

GNELLIE'S OUT CAMPING WITH HER WOMEN'S
CLUB NOW, BUT SHE WON'T LET ME
USE SPRAYS!

I CAN UNDERSTAND
THAT! THEY'D MAKE
THE HOUSE SMELL
LIKE CHEMICALS

WEED EVERYTHING OUT OF THE FLOORBOARDS!
IF GNELLIE COMES HOME AND SEES THIS,
SHE'LL SKIN US BOTH ALIVE!

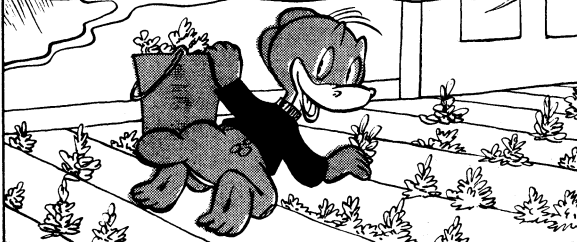
OKAY! OKAY!

BY THE WAY, I'VE BEEN APPOINTED CITY
GARDENER, SO I HAVE TO SET A GOOD
EXAMPLE FOR TAKING CARE OF PLANTS
HERE IN TOWN! YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?!

WELL,
CONGRATULATIONS,
MR. CITY
GARDENER!

AN' IT WAS MY SEEDLINGS THAT WERE THE VERY BIGGEST AT THE SCHOOL PLANT SHOW, TOO!

YEAH, BUT YOU DIDN'T USE THE SEEDS YOU WERE GIVEN! THEY GOT SQUEEZED OUT BY THOSE OTHER WEIRD SPROUTS...

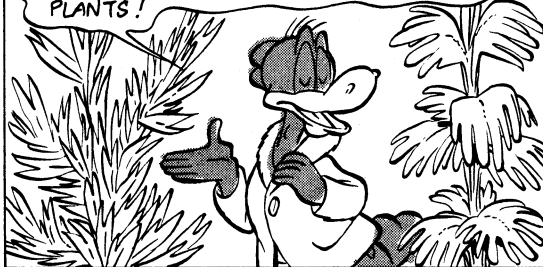


WE HAVE TO KEEP THE HOUSE IN TIPTOP SHAPE NOW! WITH MY NEW POST, WE'LL HAVE IMPORTANT GUESTS!

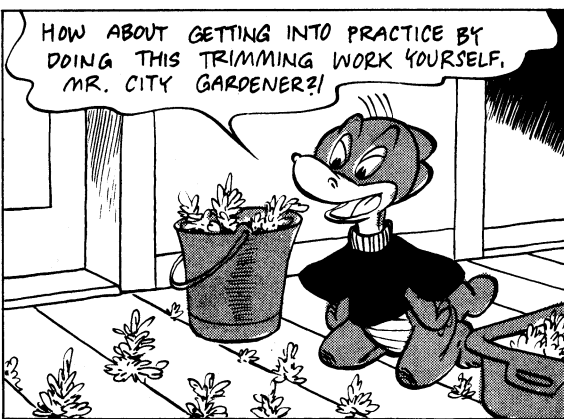


WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS SO NEGATIVE, GNUFF?

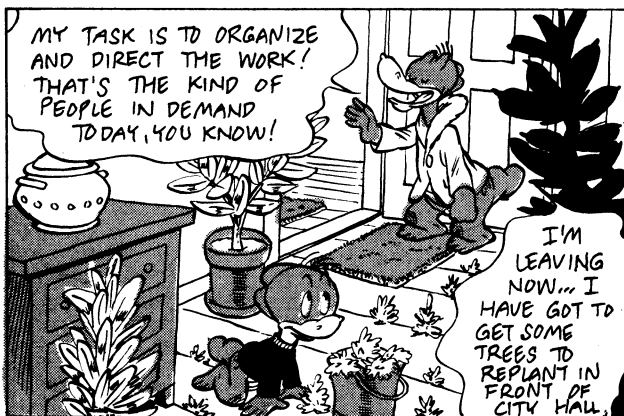
AS CITY GARDENER I MUST BE VERY CRITICAL! WHEN YOU ARE DONE WEEDING THE HALL, YOU CAN TRIM THE POTTED PLANTS!



HOW ABOUT GETTING INTO PRACTICE BY DOING THIS TRIMMING WORK YOURSELF, MR. CITY GARDENER?!



MY TASK IS TO ORGANIZE AND DIRECT THE WORK! THAT'S THE KIND OF PEOPLE IN DEMAND TODAY, YOU KNOW!



I'M LEAVING NOW... I HAVE GOT TO GET SOME TREES TO REPLANT IN FRONT OF CITY HALL.

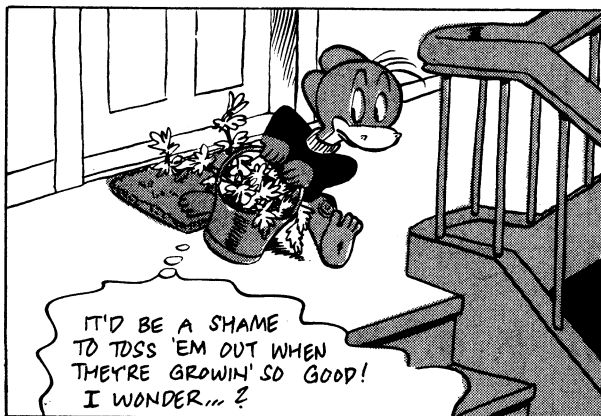
LATER...

WELL, I DID WHAT GNUFF TOLD ME...



... BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE PLANTS?

IT'D BE A SHAME TO TOSS 'EM OUT WHEN THEY'RE GROWIN' SO GOOD! I WONDER... ?



NOW I KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA DO!



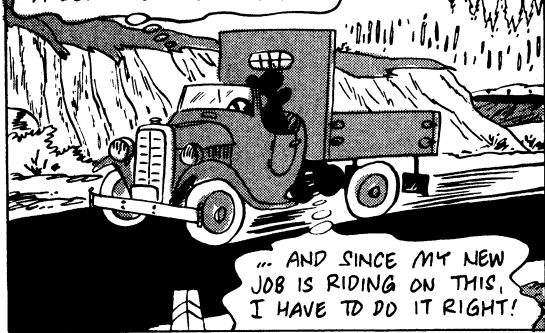
AN' BOY, WILL IT BE A SURPRISE!

SOMEWHAT LATER
IN THE BIG WOODS...



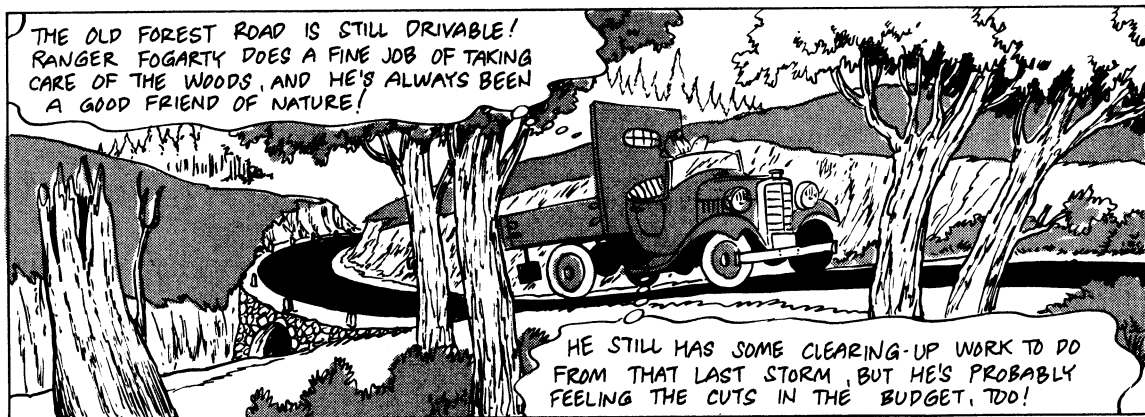
FINALLY ... BACK IN
THE BIG WOODS! IT'S
BEEN A LONG TIME
SINCE I WAS HERE LAST!

IT'S KINDA SILLY TO HAVE TO DRIVE SO
FAR, OF COURSE, BUT THE COUNCIL WAS IN
A SENTIMENTAL MOOD!



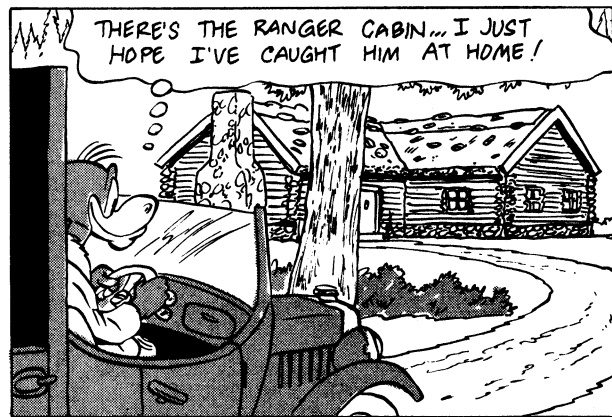
... AND SINCE MY NEW
JOB IS RIDING ON THIS
I HAVE TO DO IT RIGHT!

THE OLD FOREST ROAD IS STILL DRIVABLE!
RANGER FOGARTY DOES A FINE JOB OF TAKING
CARE OF THE WOODS, AND HE'S ALWAYS BEEN
A GOOD FRIEND OF NATURE!

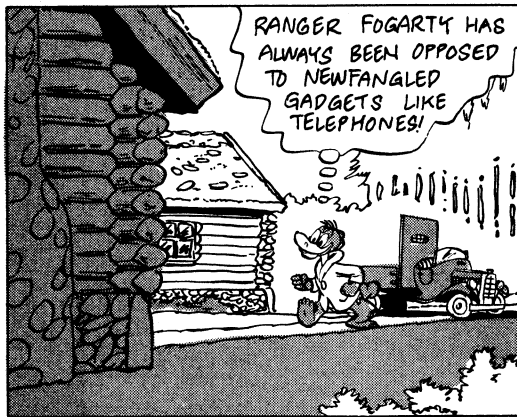


HE STILL HAS SOME CLEARING-UP WORK TO DO
FROM THAT LAST STORM, BUT HE'S PROBABLY
FEELING THE CUTS IN THE BUDGET, TOO!

THERE'S THE RANGER CABIN ... I JUST
HOPE I'VE CAUGHT HIM AT HOME!



RANGER FOGARTY HAS
ALWAYS BEEN OPPOSED
TO NEWFANGLED
GADGETS LIKE
TELEPHONES!

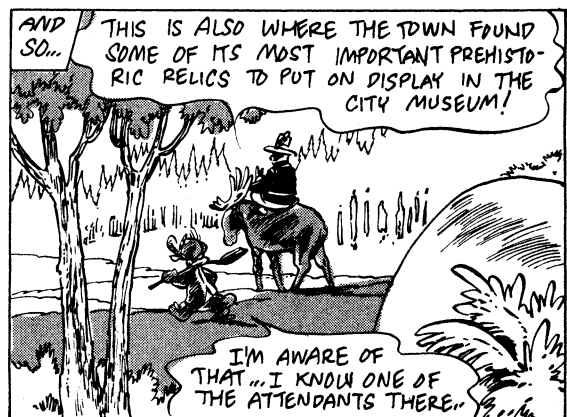
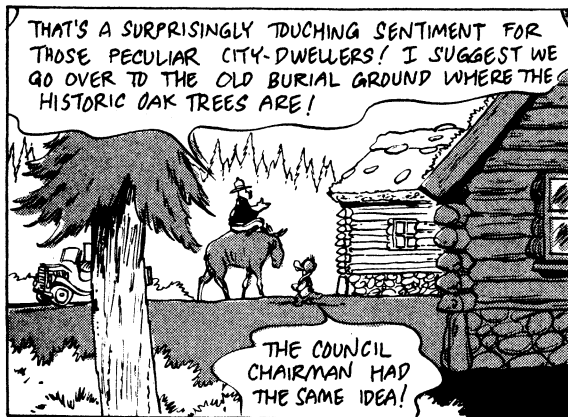
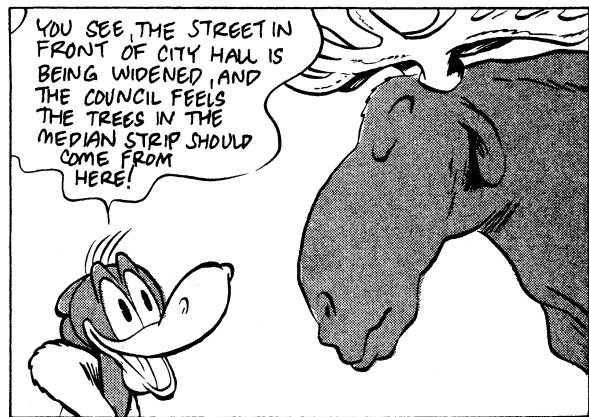
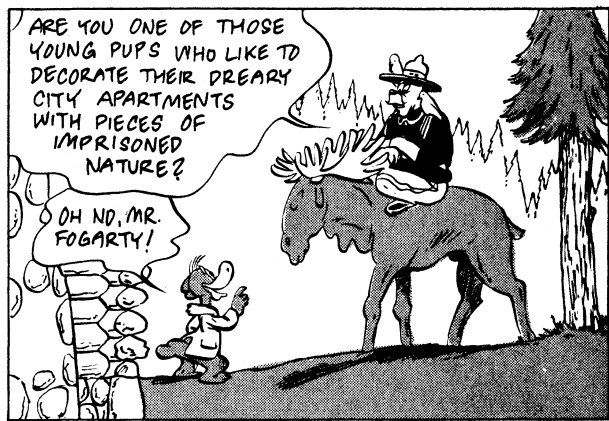
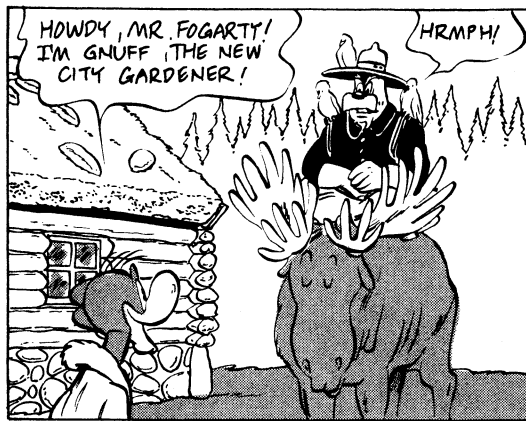


BONK
BONK



WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR, STRANGER?

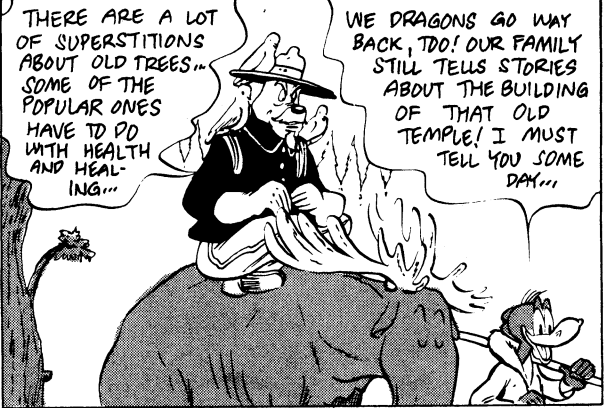






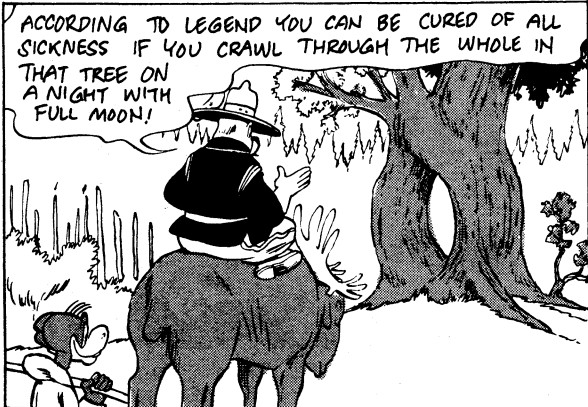
THAT GREAT OAK TREE IS THOUGHT TO BE THE OLDEST LIVING THING IN THE LAND!

TIME HAS LEFT ITS MARK ON IT, BUT THERE'S LIFE LEFT IN IT YET...



THERE ARE A LOT OF SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT OLD TREES... SOME OF THE POPULAR ONES HAVE TO DO WITH HEALTH AND HEALING...

WE DRAGONS GO WAY BACK, TDO! OUR FAMILY STILL TELLS STORIES ABOUT THE BUILDING OF THAT OLD TEMPLE! I MUST TELL YOU SOME DAY...

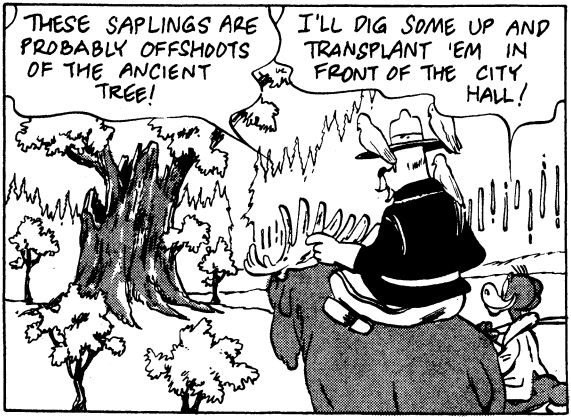


ACCORDING TO LEGEND YOU CAN BE CURED OF ALL SICKNESS IF YOU CRAWL THROUGH THE WHOLE IN THAT TREE ON A NIGHT WITH FULL MOON!



THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A PLAQUE ON THE TREE LISTING ALL THE FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO'VE CRAWLED THROUGH IT OVER THE YEARS, BUT IT'S STOLEN EVERY YEAR BY CHILDREN ON SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS!

KIDS WILL BE KIDS!

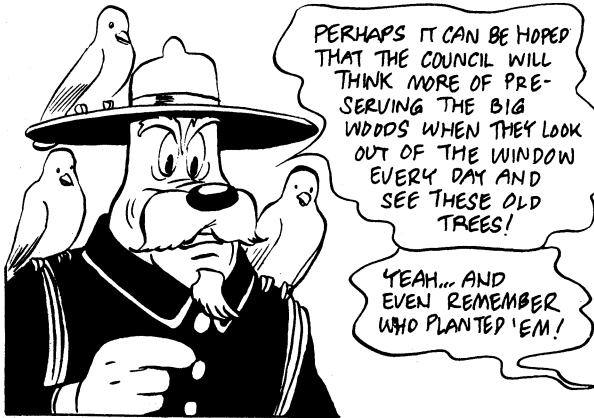


THESE SAPLINGS ARE PROBABLY OFFSHOOTS OF THE ANCIENT TREE!

I'LL DIG SOME UP AND TRANSPLANT 'EM IN FRONT OF THE CITY HALL!

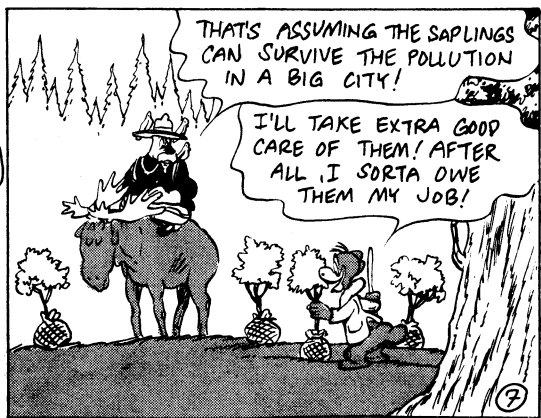


THEY LOOK LIKE ANY OTHER SMALL TREES, OF COURSE, BUT THE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN IS SENTIMENTAL AND INTERESTED IN HISTORY!



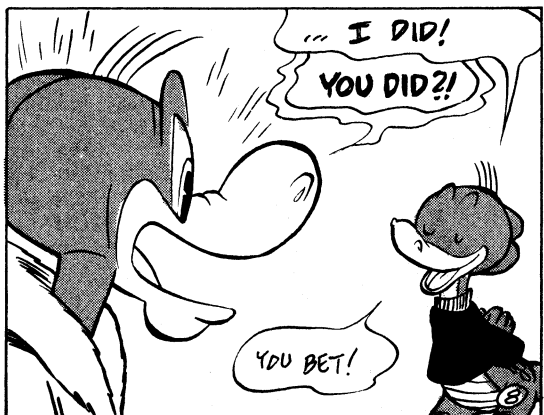
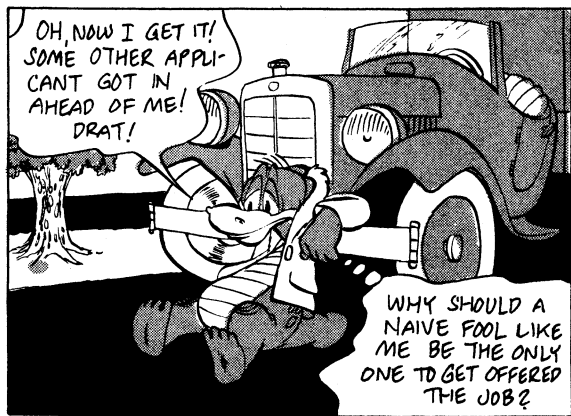
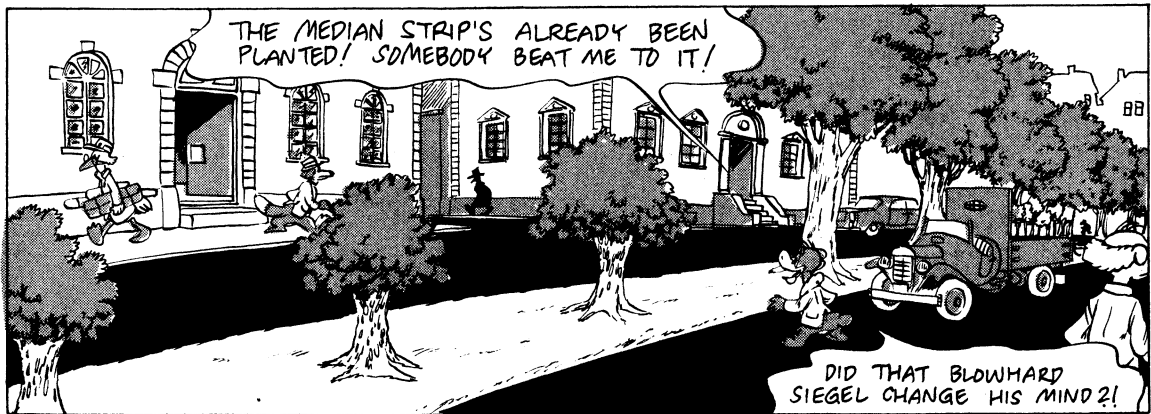
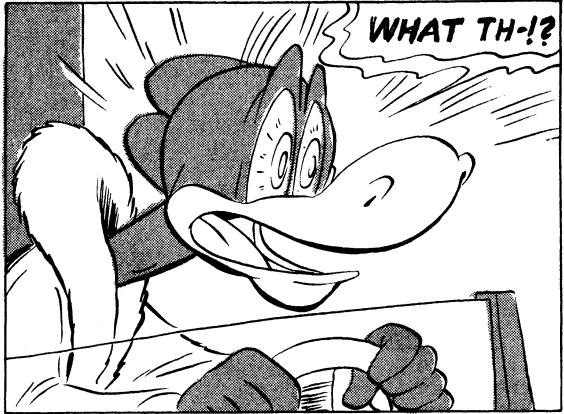
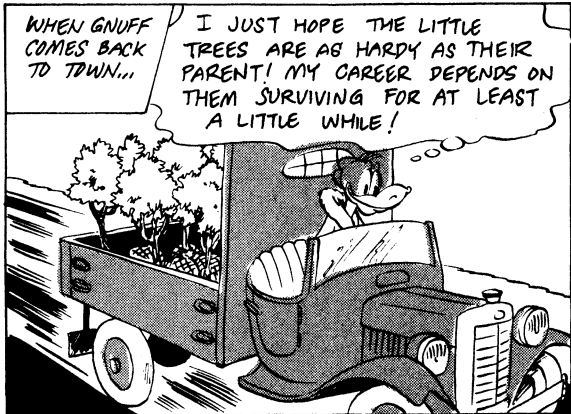
PERHAPS IT CAN BE HOPED THAT THE COUNCIL WILL THINK MORE OF PRESERVING THE BIG WOODS WHEN THEY LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOW EVERY DAY AND SEE THESE OLD TREES!

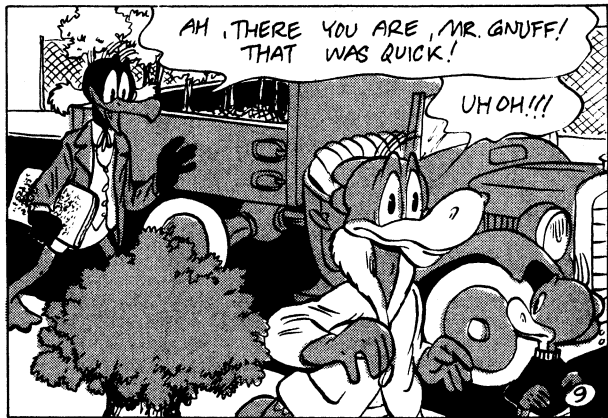
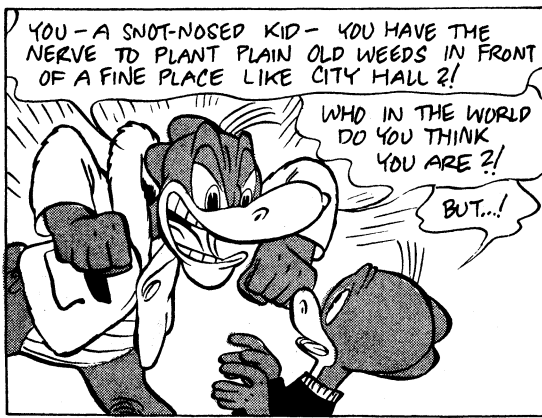
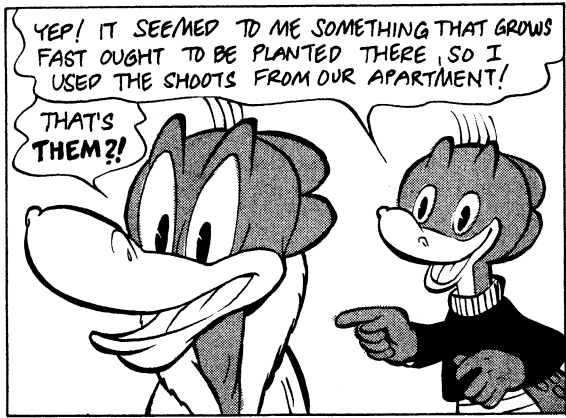
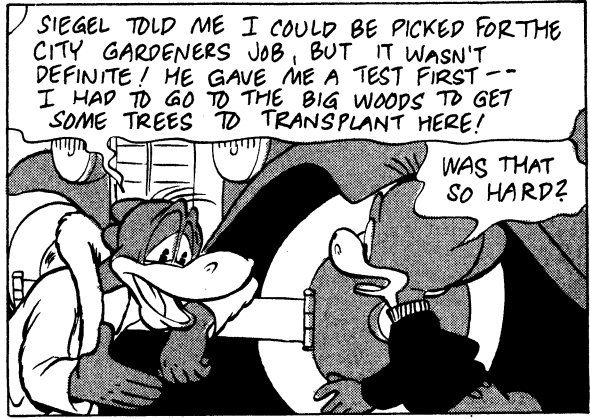
YEAH... AND EVEN REMEMBER WHO PLANTED 'EM!

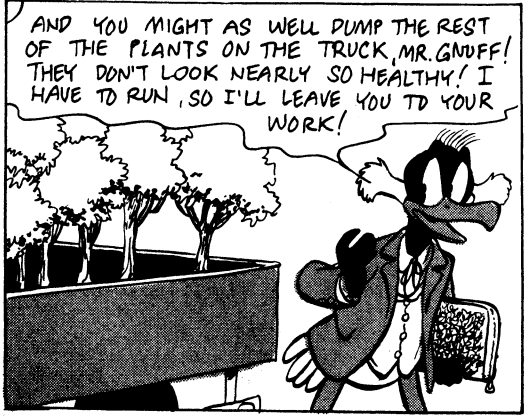
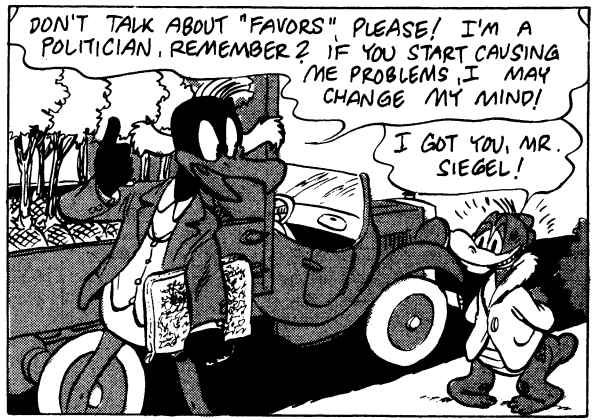
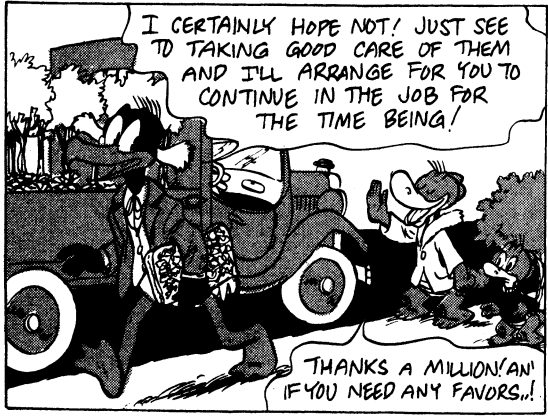
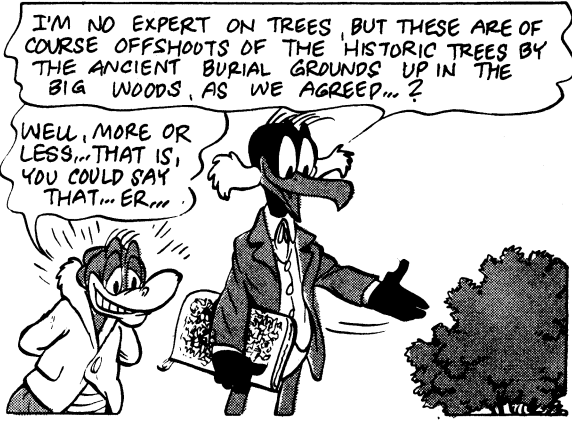
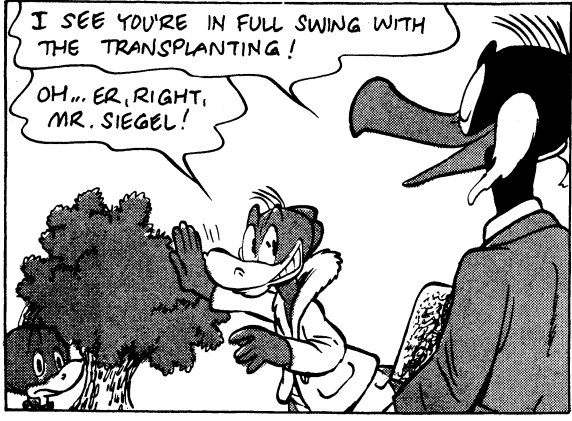


THAT'S ASSUMING THE SAPLINGS CAN SURVIVE THE POLLUTION IN A BIG CITY!

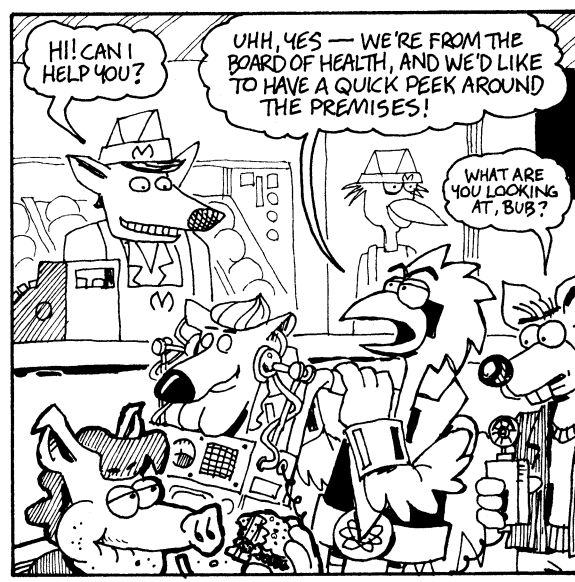
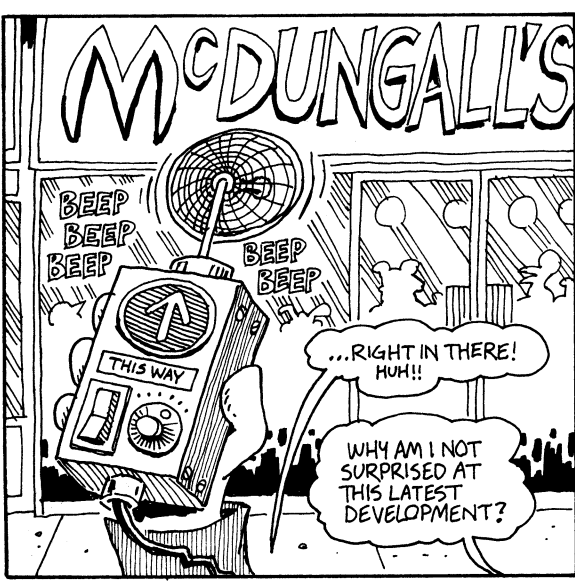
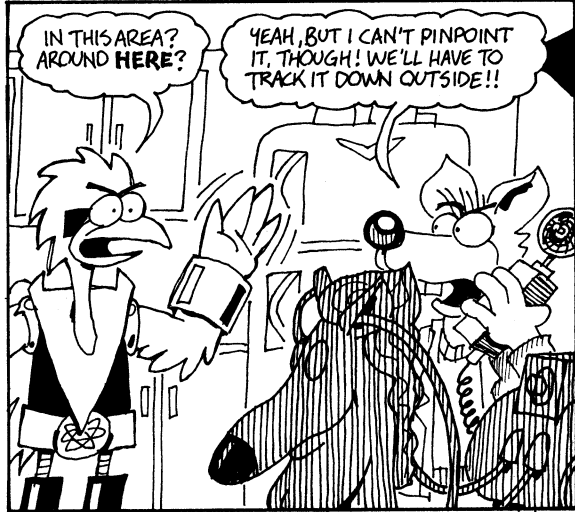
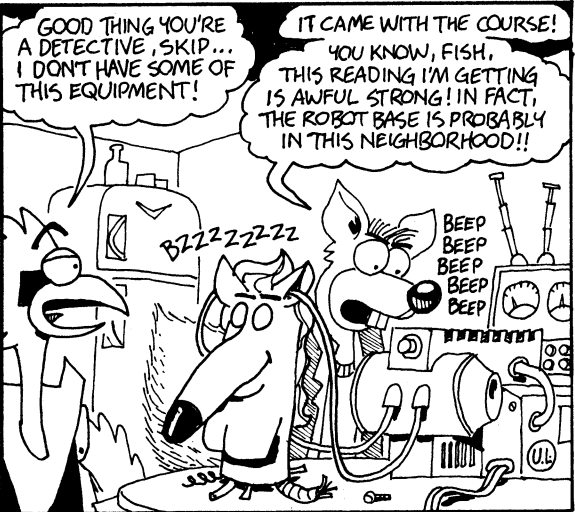
I'LL TAKE EXTRA GOOD CARE OF THEM! AFTER ALL, I SORTA OWE THEM MY JOB!

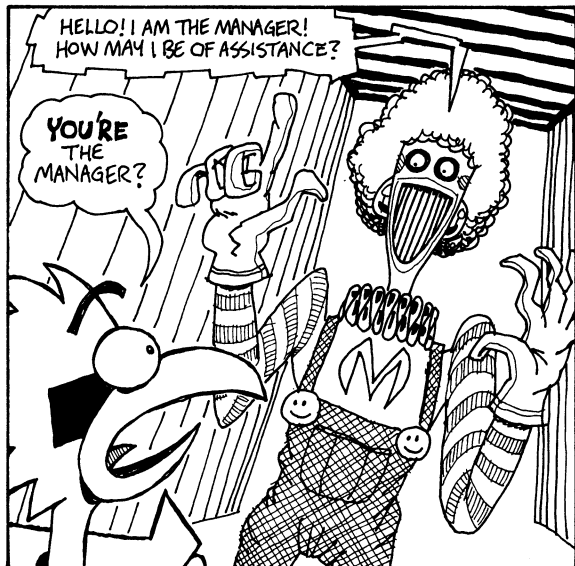


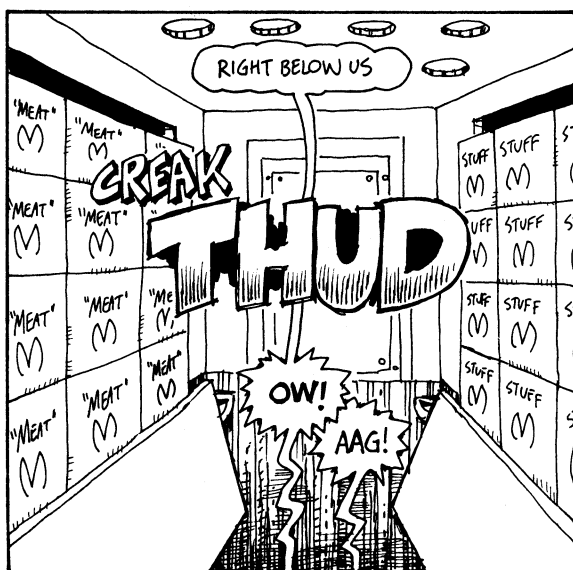
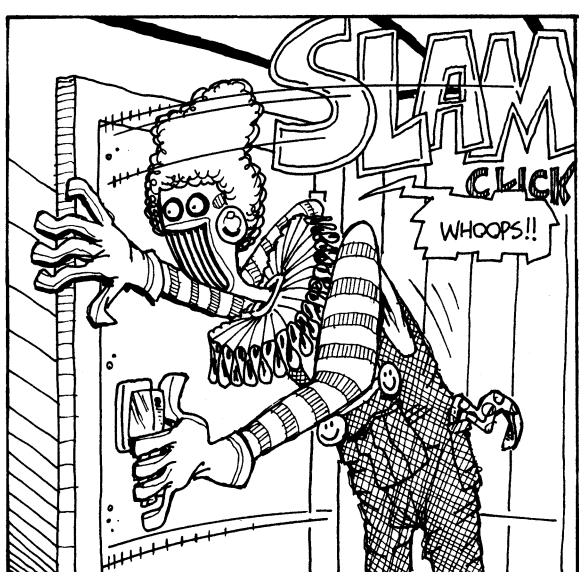
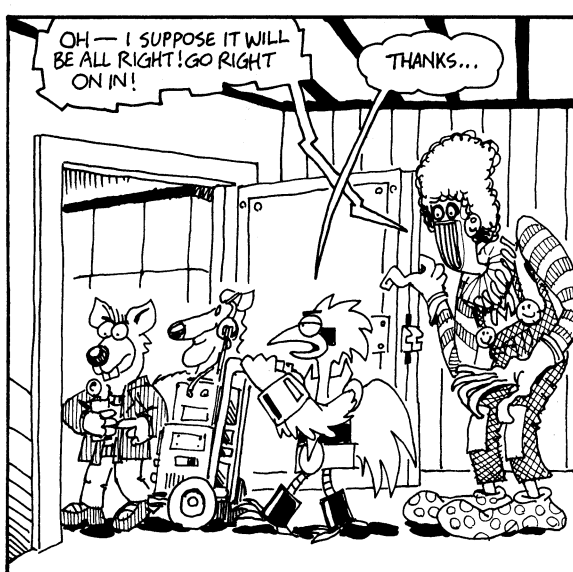


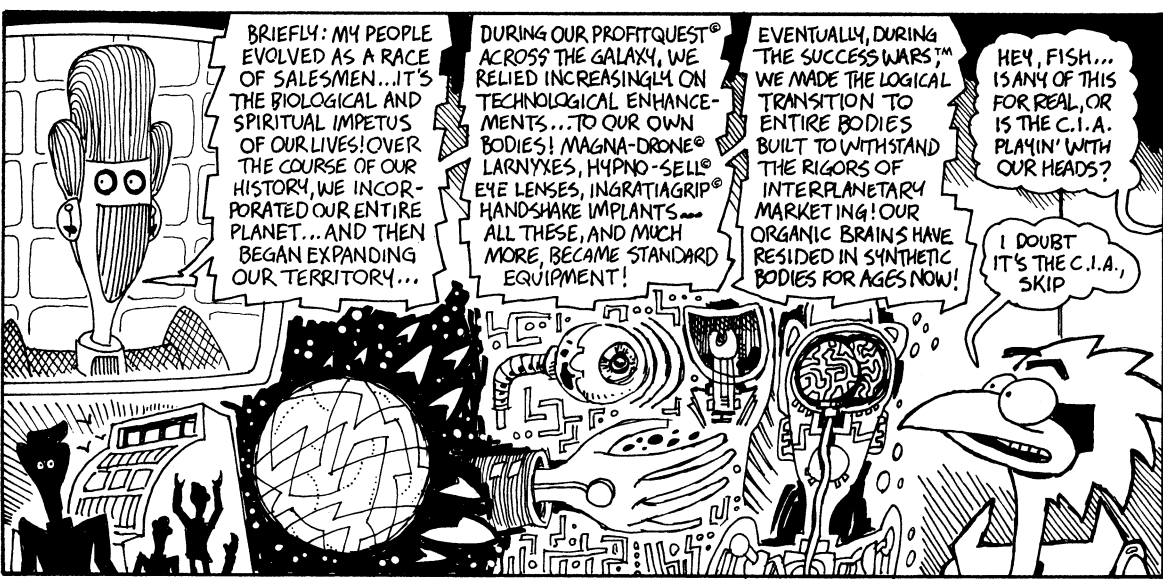
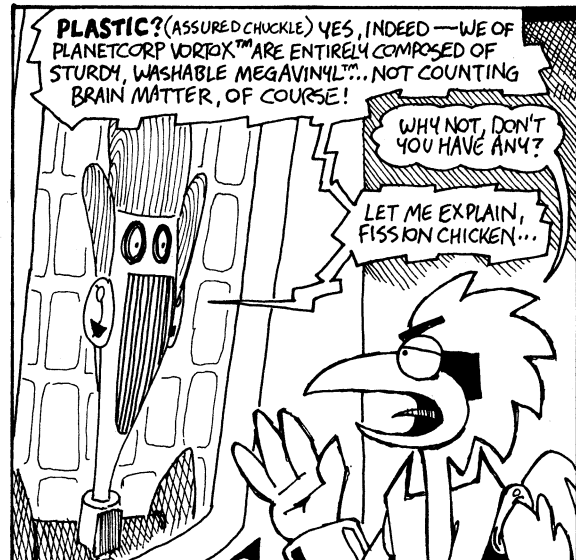
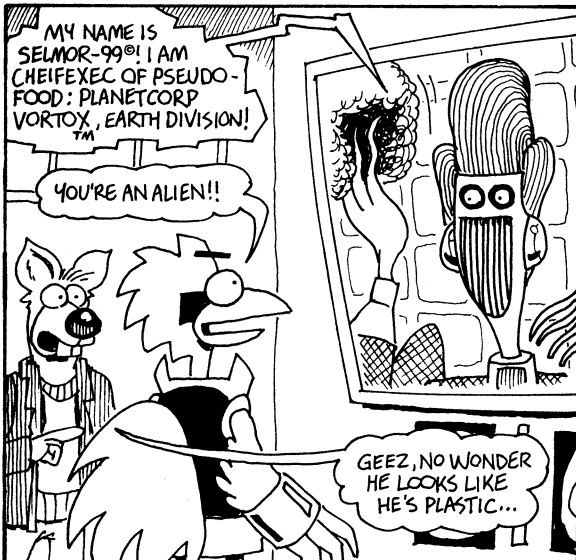


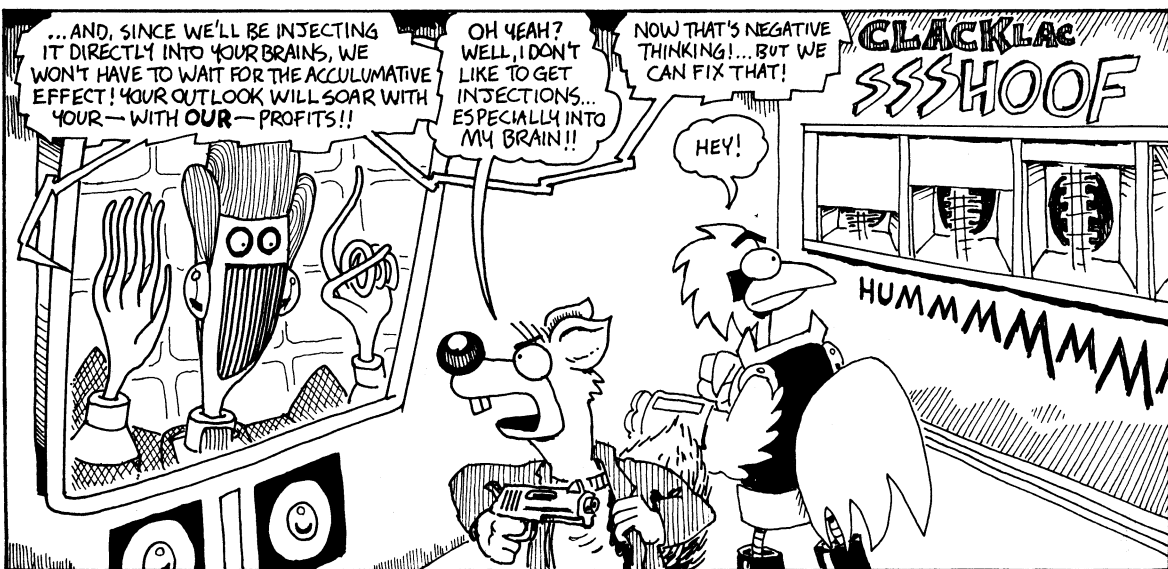
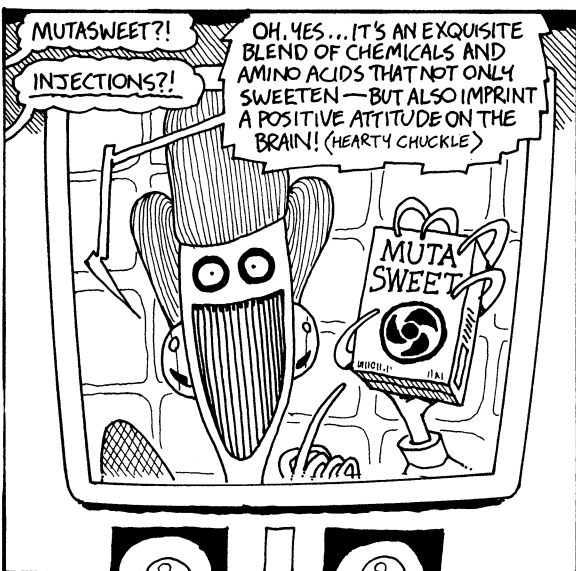
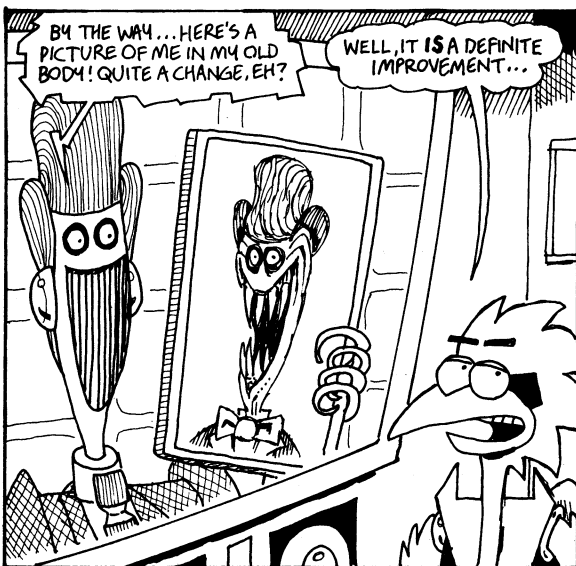
FISSION CHICKEN vs. "THE MARKETING EXPERTS FROM BEYOND!" PART II



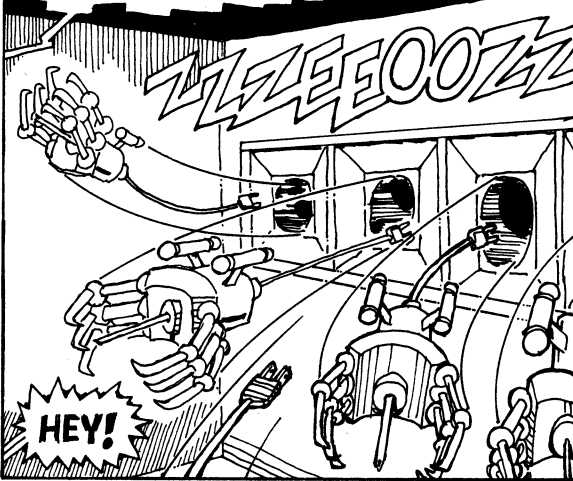








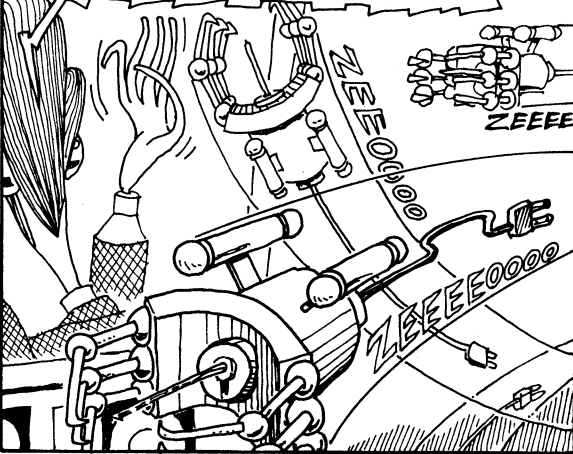
THESE ATTITUDE INSECTORS WILL DISPENSE AN OUNCE OR SO OF MUTA-SWEET® INTO THE BASE OF YOUR SKULLS...



OH, AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE MESS— THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THEY CAME FROM!

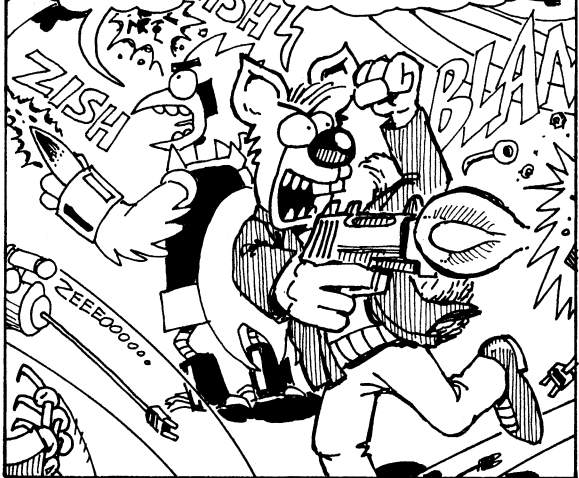


NOW, I HAVE TO START PRODUCTION OF THOSE "FISSION CHICKEN" GLASSES... BUT I'LL RETURN SHORTLY, AND WE CAN HAVE A "POWER LUNCH"! (SELF-INDULGENT GIGGLE) CIAO! CLICK!



THEY'RE GOING FOR THE BACKS OF OUR NECKS!!

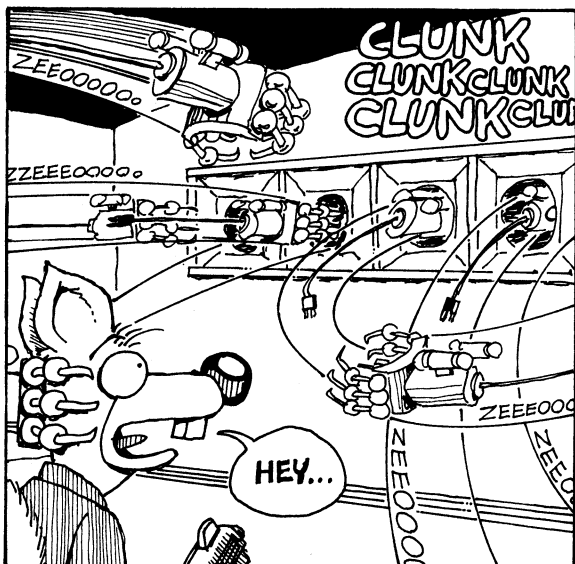
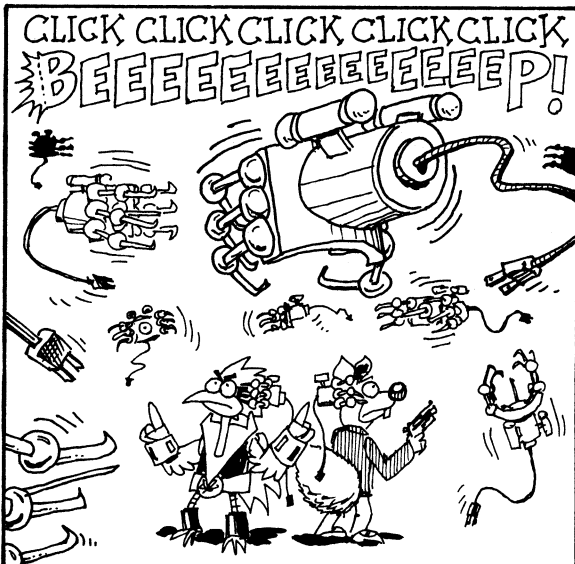
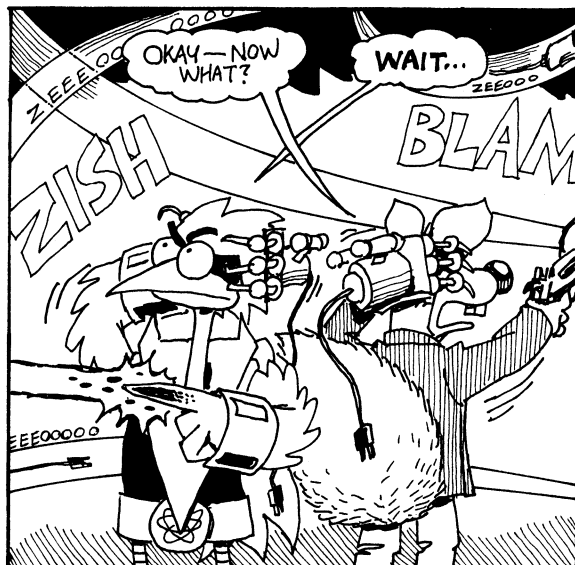
AND THEY WON'T STOP COMIN' OUT OF THE WALLS! WHAT NOW?!



KEEP SHOOTING, I'M GOING TO TRY SOMETHING!

HURRY! GEEZ!!





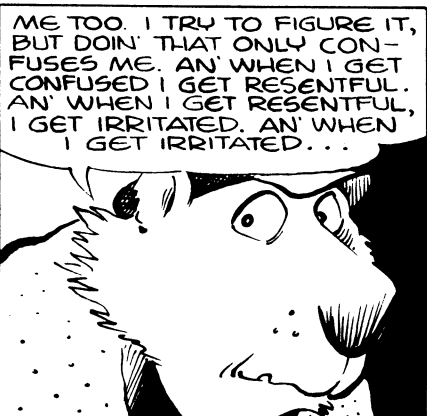
ANGST



WHY CAN'T I DO
NOTHIN' RIGHT,
RATFACE?
WHY IS MY WHOLE
LIFE ONE BIG
SCREW UP AFTER
ANOTHER?

BEATS
ME
LOUIE.

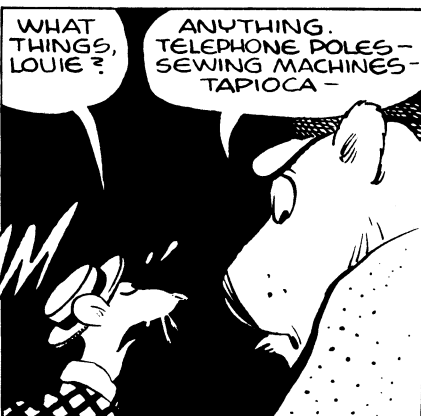
QAG



ME TOO. I TRY TO FIGURE IT,
BUT DOIN' THAT ONLY CON-
FUSES ME. AN' WHEN I GET
CONFUSED I GET RESENTFUL.
AN' WHEN I GET RESENTFUL,
I GET IRRITATED. AN' WHEN
I GET IRRITATED...



I HATE THINGS!



WHAT
THINGS,
LOUIE?

ANYTHING.
TELEPHONE POLES -
SEWING MACHINES -
TAPIOCA -



ESPECIALLY
TAPIOCA!

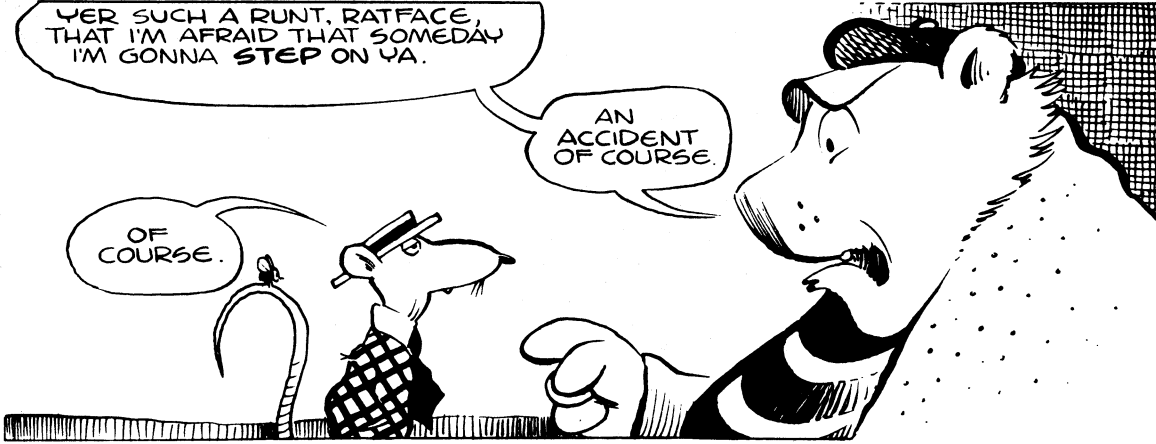


WHAT ABOUT ME,
LOUIE. YOU DON'T
HATE ME, DO YA?



NAW, RATFACE. I DON'T
HATE YA. YOU DEPRESS
ME, THOUGH.

ME?
HOW CAN
I
DEPRESS
YA?



YER SUCH A RUNT, RATFACE,
THAT I'M AFRAID THAT SOMEDAY
I'M GONNA **STEP** ON YA.

AN
ACCIDENT
OF COURSE.

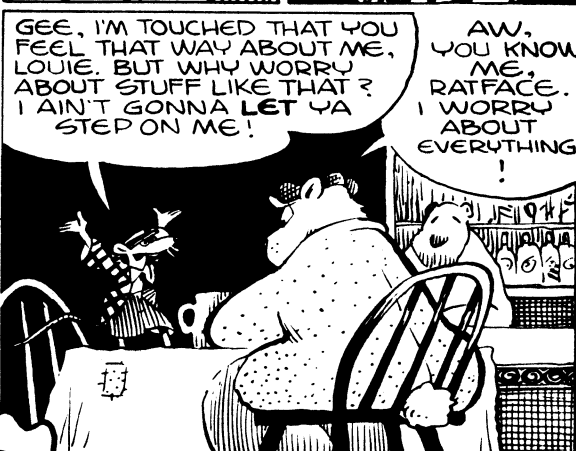
OF
COURSE.

BUT ACCIDENT OR NOT,
I'D STILL HAVE SLOP
ALL OVER MY FOOT,
YA SEE, AN' IT'D
SQUOOSH UP BETWEEN
MY TOES SOMETHIN'
AWFUL!

SURE, LOUIE.
I'D BE A MESS
ALRIGHT.
NO DOUBT
ABOUT IT!

YEAH, BUT THAT
WOULDN'T BE THE
WORST OF IT,
RATFACE.

WHAT THE HELL
COULD BE
WORSE?



AWRIGHT, YOU MUGS —
GROW!

CHEER UP, LOUIE,
AND HAVE ANOTHER
BEER. WHO KNOWS,
MAYBE IT'LL ...



GROW?
WHAT'S HE
TALKIN' ABOUT,
RATFACE?

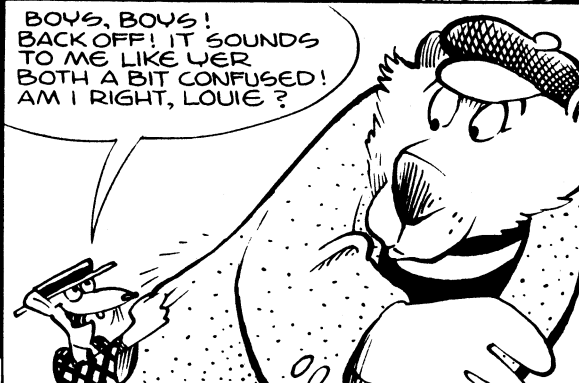


IT'S A STICKUP,
LOUIE. I THINK
HE WANTS WE
SHOULD PUT
OUR HANDS
UP.

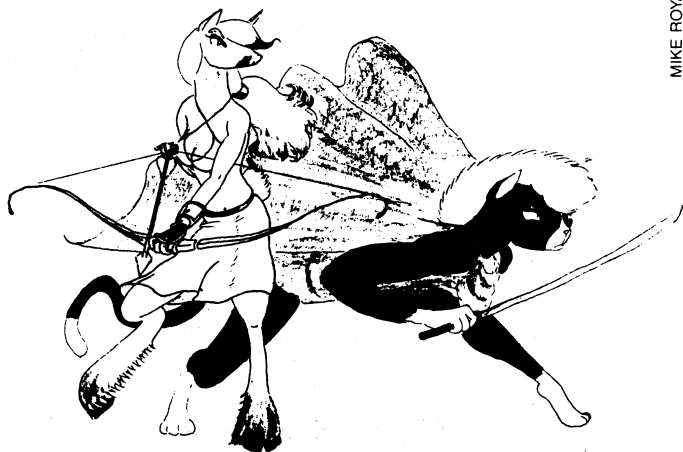
A STICKUP?
NOW AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE
I BEEN TELLIN' YA? I CAN'T
EVEN HAVE A SIMPLE
MINDED BEER WITHOUT
EVERYTHING GETS
SCREWED UP!











MIKE ROYAL

Hey, Kim.

Thanks for printing my letter in #16. I really didn't think the thing with the paper would cause this much trouble! Actually, I thought that would be the least printable of my recent letters. Which is the subject of this letter.

Don't really have much to say about #16, except thanks for printing my letter. Speaking of which, due to recent static about my comment letters I will explain how I go about writing one for **Critters**.

First of all, I **buy** the issue. It's hard to be objective when you skim over a book in five minutes. Then I read what stories I like, and the editorial/letters page. By the time I am finished with the last letter I have a good idea of what I'm going to write.

Now, **Critters** is an anthology, which means different types of stories. There will be some stories people love and others hate. It's no secret my favorite story is "Birthright" but that doesn't give me license to blast the others—so I won't. Shoot, there are probably some people out there whose tastes in stories may be the exact opposite of mine! To sum it up, if I don't care for a story I won't write about it.

I make an effort not to give out mindless praise. I ask myself: "What do I like about it?" Then I write that down. If there is something I think needs to be brought up, I do. Occasionally, I made predictions or observations. If people (i.e. the artists) don't agree with me, so what? I'm only one opinion. It may not make me popular with the artists, but I do make them think.

So if any of the readers would like to try my letterhacking methods, feel free. It's the only chance to let somebody know how they're doing. Plus, it's more likely to get printed. I should know, I've

had 11 letters, two mentions, and two indirect mentions as of this writing (three letters in **Critters**).

Thank you, Kim, for letting me speak my piece.

Noel Tomlinack
Indian Head, MO

I will explain how I write a response to a letter to CRITTERS. First, I read the letter. Then I decide if it's worth taking seriously and printing. (Since I get so few letters these days, I'll print just about anything.) If I decide to print it, I reread it and try to figure out if it is interesting or not. If I decide it's completely worthless, or if the letter-writer comes off like a clown because he takes himself and his letter too seriously, I might do something nasty—like, for instance, write a malicious parody of it, or possibly add a sarcastic answer. This may seem a bit mean until you realize that this kind of action might sober up a letter-writer who, otherwise, might persist in acting like a pompous blowhard for the rest of his days.

—KT

Dear Mr. Thompson and Co.

I've been following this magazine from its inception, but issue #17 caused me to ponder the rather unique indicia. I mean, if I were a bear, I might take some slight exception to the allegation that cab-riding bruises "always break something." Fortunately, a seemingly broad-minded legal department has spared you that worry.

Don't get me wrong, though—the rest of the issue is excellent reading, too! I wonder if Tom Stazer wrote "Polar Bear Hunt" from the initial inspiration of the one-page "teaser." I like Lionheart; he's a believable character. Hope he gets something published this time.

As for "Birthright III," there had jolly well better be one. Alton hasn't inherited **anything** except

his hide and a ring, at this point. The story could easily be novel-length...if Steve Gallacci could be chained to a table...if, if, if...

I once considered Gnellie a quaint, stuffy nag. I haven't changed my opinion, but at least now I know **why**. The "Gnuff" storyline moves at a slower pace than most of the fare on this side of the Atlantic. So where's Gargantua, anyway?

It's good to see that the recent "economic downturn" hasn't caused a switch in material to mindless shoot-'em-ups. The medium may alter imperceptibly, but the message remains, and that ought to be worth something. Thanks a million!

Mike Royal
Los Angeles, CA

Gargantua made a brief sort-of-dream-sequence appearance last issue, and she will have a major role in "The Big Sneeze," which is scheduled to debut sometime around **CRITTERS** #28 or #29. —KT

Dear Kim,

This is the first letter I have ever written to an editor. If it seems incoherent or inept, please forgive.

Until **Critters**, I did not buy any comic on a regular basis. Instead, I drifted in and out, buying whatever caught my eye.

Issue #12 was my first and it was S.A.G.'s cover that did it. Since then, I've gotten all the back issues I could find. To date, #3 is the only holdout. (I paid more for #1 than I care to admit to my wife!)

I've always liked "funny animals" and I was damn glad to find a publisher who takes it seriously enough that a 35-year-old male could enjoy it.

I picked up #17 about three weeks ago. I have toyed with the idea of writing this letter since then. I finally said that I'd either write it or go bust.

I decided to write after re-reading letters, stories, and editorials in my back issues. Taken in one gulp, it takes some time, but is enjoyable.

Everything I have seen is of the highest quality. In a field and market where the majority of the offerings are 99 and 44/100% crap, you and the crew at Fantagraphics are really trying to give people their \$2.00 worth.

Don't let the nit-pickers who complain about price or paper quality bother you. They know what the alternative is!

I'd like to comment about one issue you (and most other alternative publishers) are speaking out about. You and they are all concerned about a mystifying drop in sales (40-50%), which is understandable. A report I read stated that Americans have

shifted from passive entertainment (books, movies, spectator sports) to active entertainment (bowling, jogging, health clubs). Not very happy news for you, I'm sure. If there could be anything good said about this, it is that most of the previously mentioned crap, already afflicted with terminal stupidity, will wither away and strengthen your market.

Disquieting thought: I have a 15-year-old son who buys this crap. Try as I may, neither he nor his friends show any interest in **Critters** should I present it to them. Why? "Birthright" is over their heads; "Gnuff," just not entertaining. "Usagi Yojimbo": mild interest (due to the ninja craze?) The rest: no comment.

Suggestion: Run an informal poll of your readers. Ask age, sex, income, education, hobbies, etc. You might be surprised at what you find.

Aside from that, Americans are fickle. They'll come back around. Hang in there!

Finally, I have never been disappointed by an issue of **Critters**—until now. You predicted a "stir." I imagine a revolt is more like what you have been hearing. Yes, I'm a "Birthright" fan. The final chapter left me enough loose ends to weave a rope. I am reminded of how I felt after seeing "The Empire Strikes Back" for the first

time: Great story! Loved every minute of it! Hated the ending! Can't wait for the next one!

Please encourage Steve to do it once more! And also do this: **end it**—good, bad, or otherwise, close the book on "Birthright." But not here, not now. Yes, he's over-extended himself, yes, deadlines are a headache and more of them just makes it worse. I understand! If it takes six months or a year to pick up again—fine! I'll wait!

Thanks for a great magazine!

W.M. Akers
Marion, OH

Thanks for your sociological interpretation of the alternative comic-book market collapse, but I think it's a lot simpler than that. A substantial percentage of the people buying the black-and-whites during 1986 were buying them just for speculation purposes and had no interest in reading them. When it turned out they weren't going to make any quick, easy money reselling bad (or good) comics, they lost interest and dropped out. For the sake of sales figures, I wouldn't mind having these guys back, but at least now I figure every copy of CRITTERS is being READ, which is some kind of consolation. —KT

Dear Kim,

In regard to the comments made by Mr. Kamp in #16, I say

that I must side with you. I don't believe that your current price is too steep; in fact, I think it to be quite fair. Also, even if **Critters** was more expensive, I'd still buy it.

As for all that other stuff, I must admit to being naive about business. I trust what you are doing completely. Also, the change to newsprint has not affected my love of the zine. Actually, I like it more. I have very sensitive eyes, and newsprint doesn't glare as badly as 60 lb. white does. I can actually enjoy it more than before—thanks!

Mike Higgs
President, Fantasy Studios

You shouldn't trust ANY publisher completely, Mike. Like anybody else in this business, we've done money-grubbing things before and we will again. But your faith is appreciated anyway. Thanks for the drawing, too.

—KT

Mr. Thompson,

I first began buying **Critters** when #6 came out and have been collecting ever since. I now collect **Usagi Yojimbo** and have managed to scrape together #1-5 of **Threat!** I write (among other things) to ask if there is any truth to the rumor that Usagi will no longer be featured in my favorite comic (**Critters**, naturally). I bought **Critters** #1-5 at the MO-KAN convention this spring and would hate to see Usagi leave.

As for the other features, I love "Gnuff." "Lionheart" is great. "Blue Beagle" is cool. "Fission Chicken" is superb. "Firecracker Jack Bunny" is excellent, but "Birthright II" is confusing unless you read the previous issues over, and I have trouble telling the characters apart.

Before I sign off, one more question: How come everybody who writes to **Critters** writes such long letters? Almost all of the published letters take up half a page of teeny tiny print.

An avid, loyal reader.

Bret Kalsor
Springfield, MO

Anybody who has his own comic, as Stan Sakai now does, is bound to want to spend as much time as possible working on it; as a result, Stan's appearances in these pages will be rare, and probably short. But look at it this way: If Stan hadn't moved almost entirely out of CRITTERS, at least one of the OTHER strips you enjoy might not have made it in for a long time.

As for the other question, I guess funny-animal fans are just a bunch of motormouths, every one of 'em except Zack Mays. As witness the following correspondent... —KT

Dear Kim,

Congratulations! I'd like to commend you on the best



My secretary,
Cookie, getting her
first issue of
Critters!



©87 Mike Higgs

MIKE HIGGS

continuing series ever! You do a fabulous job putting these issues together, and your contributors, well, they speak for themselves!

I was led to your pages indirectly through **GROO**. Stan Sakai's Usagi Yojimbo was mentioned and after months of searching I found a copy. Well, what can I say? **Wow!** Through it, and a recommendation, I found **Critters**. I also found **Albedo** and Tom Stazer's **Spaced**. Not to mention that I, an abnormally obsessed anthropomorphic reader, found issues of **Captain Jack**, **Doomsday Squad**, **Anything Goes!**, and about 10 other funny-animal titles. But I didn't stop there! When I found out about Mark Armstrong I gathered all issues of **Peter Porker**, just for his artwork. All in all, I have 111 (one hundred eleven) comic books just of funny animals. That includes issues **#3-16** of **Critters**. So anybody wanting more reading material featuring animals, well, there's more than enough! Now for some comments on each issue and contributors...

Issue **#3** was fantastic! I love "Usagi" and "Birthright" and enjoy "Gnuff." Issue **#4** was better yet! The best cover yet! By Ken (**Dr. Watchstop**, **Contractors**) Macklin! "Birthright" and "Gnuff" were fine and "Lionheart" was great. Number **#5** was great! "Nilson Groundthumper" was outstandingly funny! "Gnuff" and "Birthright" were terrific! Number **#6** was just about the best! The best "Birthright" story and art ever! And the cover! **WOW!!** As for people saying that "Birthright" should be done in any way other than it is, they're dead wrong!

The shading, story, art, look—it's just outstanding!

Not much new came through the later issues although they continue to be the best efforts ever seen on paper! I love "De Grand Wa-Zoo" and "Speakingstone"! They were fine additions! As for "Fission Chicken," well, the art leaves something to be desired, but it's a breath of fresh air. As for Tim Fuller, well, what can I say? **WOW!** "Quax Bedroom" was great, to say the least, and "Blue Beagle" was fine.

This is getting to be quite a letter. I hope you don't mind its length. I know you're busy. Well, a couple closing comments. Usagi Yojimbo deserved his own book; what can people who say they couldn't read 20 pages of it every other month be thinking? It's probably the best comic to come through the comics scene in years. And lastly, about your decision to reprint "Jack Bunny" in **#8**: well, I and many other people had never seen it and it was great! Especially under the circumstances! Well, that's enough hot air to blow off for one letter. Thanks for your time!

A loyal fan.

Zac Van Note
Albuquerque, NM

Thanks for yours, Zac, and for the cool mini-illustrations that accompanied your letter (one of which, God and the art director willing, is printed somewhere on this page). And a belated thanks to Mark Evanier, who plugged **USAGI YOJIMBO** in the pages of **GROO**, which you all should be reading even though there are no funny animals in it. (Only funny humans.)

Whaddya' mean ya' never heard of "Critters"?!



ZAC VAN NOTE

We'll be seeing Mark in the pages of **USAGI YOJIMBO** in a few months, acting as accomplice to Scott Shaw! on the eagerly-awaited "Digger Duckbill" story.

You mention all the funny-animal comics you are collecting. I hope you've reserved a place on your list for the entire Gladstone line of comics, whose vintage reprints of **UNCLE SCROOGE**, **DONALD DUCK**, and **MICKEY MOUSE** are some of the best comic books ever—bar none!

Speaking of Mickey Mouse, an upcoming issue of **THE COMICS JOURNAL** (#120) will feature an in-depth interview with Floyd Gottfredson, the man behind the Mickey comic strip for many decades. And (as an interesting sidenote) the man conducting the interview is none other than Arn (**NEIL THE HORSE**) Saba. It's a small world, isn't it? —KT



SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE MAGICAL KINGDOM OF OZ AND A REALLY DAMP TURKISH PRISON IS A LAND THEY CALL "THE BLUES." AND THERE'S ONLY ONE BEAR THAT LIVES THERE.

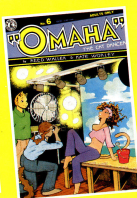
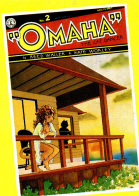
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