

World-Renowned Local Cartoonist Makes Forum Debut

by Sandy Perlic

Rex May makes a living being funny. This local cartoonist and gag writer has had material published in newspapers and magazines around the globe, including the Wall Street Journal, Saturday Evening Post, Good Housekeeping, and Reader's Digest. His work also appears in *Gesundheit, Dummy!*, a compilation of some of his best cartoons.

Of course, for someone as prolific as May, selecting his best work may be difficult. May estimates he has written over a third of a million gags, or jokes, to accompany cartoon drawings.

He started his career in humor by freelancing for National Lampoon back in the '70s. Shortly thereafter he found himself writing gags for other cartoonists. "After a year or two of gag writing, I had a lot of material and I started drawing some of it myself and started selling it," May said. "That's how I got in(to cartooning)."

May, who often pens cartoons using his old Army nickname "Baloo," developed his characteristic spare but expressive drawing style while writing gags. One of his clients wanted his gags a little differently. "He preferred his gag writer, instead of describing, to just do a quick sketch and a caption," May said. "So I did that, and after I did that about five thousand times I developed a drawing style by accident which is very much oriented towards doing it really fast."

With decades of experience behind him, May does everything quickly. On a recent day he wrote 102 gags in about three-and-a-half hours, and he estimates that he spends about ten times as much time writing as he does drawing.

Coming up with new gags can be tough. Although he still sells much of his material to other cartoonists, May doesn't deliberately try to write for a certain strip or about certain topics. "I find that I choke up and just don't produce as much," he admitted. "It's far better if I just free associate and try to be funny."

Despite the difficulties of being humorous on demand, May enjoys it. "It's a nice challenge to be funny every day," he said.

Another thing he likes about his work as a humorist is the opportunity to express himself. Although much of the cartooning and gag writing he does is meant to simply entertain, "Every now and then, like any kind of creative work, you get to make a point that you want people to think about," May said.

May's entertaining and sometimes thought-provoking cartoons will now be a regular feature in the Fort Collins Forum.

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