

10th Anniversary Edition

# **BEST EDITORIAL CARTOONS OF THE YEAR**

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**1982 EDITION**

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**Edited by  
CHARLES BROOKS**

**Foreword by MIKE PETERS**



**PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
GRETNA 1982**

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# Foreword

My cartoon ideas usually focus on a subject for which I have a great deal of concern. I believe this is of critical importance in creating a successful editorial cartoon. If I do not care about the issue involved, then my readers are not going to care. I do a lot of cartoons about the Equal Rights Amendment, a topic that I care about desperately. Yet there may be only one out of five cartoons that I do on this subject that people will react to. I have to really feel a subject in my gut before I can communicate it effectively to people. I get no vibes, for example, about President Reagan or the Gross National Product. On the other hand, I feel deeply about poor people not eating or not having jobs, and this, I think, is reflected in much of my work.

You will see many cartoons similar to this: a big truck, labeled "The Economy," with President Reagan in the front throwing a monkey wrench into the motor. That topic does not appeal to me at all, so I do not try to get that message across in my cartoons.

Once I decide to draw about a particular issue, I generally know what I am going to say. The ERA is a good example. I know that I want to say that the ERA is in trouble and that women are still downtrodden. It is no longer popular to be a proponent of ERA because most people are convinced that it has lost its momentum. In my opinion, women are still second-class citizens, just as they were before the 1970s.

As I begin to work, I sometimes find myself staring at a blank piece of paper, hoping that the angel of inspiration will come down, tap me on the shoulder, and say: "Here's your idea for the day, Mike." Many people have this misconception about cartoonists. They seem to think we wake up in the middle of the night, come up with ideas inspired from on high, and then go to the office and knock out something in a few minutes. That has never happened to me. I have never received inspiration in the middle of the night for a cartoon.

A cartoonist friend of mine decided it would be fun to devise a stock way of originating cartoon ideas. He thought it would be amusing to tell people that he had two shoe boxes. One was labeled the topic box, containing different subjects selected from the daily news such as ERA, or President Reagan and the economy, or Nancy Reagan's china. The other box was reserved for approaches to cartoons (general, hackneyed ideas that we editorial cartoonists use to put across ideas: a man on a desert-

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The procedure was to shut your eyes, stick your hand in the topic box, and pick out a piece of paper. It might say “Reagan and the Economy.” Then, you reached into the approach box and pulled out a slip that might say “Alice in Wonderland.” Finally, you combined the approach and the topic to get the day’s cartoon. Well, it never worked for either of us. We chose the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance disarmament as the topic and Winnie the Pooh as the approach. The idea, of course, was an absolute failure. What at first sounded like a good, easy formula could never work.

Routinely, I arrive at the office around 6:30 or seven o’clock in the morning. I usually allow for about an hour and a half to work on the previous day’s cartoon, which must be finished by my nine o’clock deadline. I will have jotted down a number of topics the night before after reading several newspapers and watching the television news. I drive my wife and children crazy switching channels back and forth, but it is an effective method for me.

As I begin the new cartoon for the day, I sit and stare at a blank piece of drawing paper. Sometimes the staring lasts for hours. What a matchless torment it is to still have a blank sheet of paper at four o’clock in the afternoon. That can be demoralizing, so I try to start fairly early to ensure that it does not happen.

Having selected two likely topics, I then begin to brainstorm. Brainstorming can work great in a group, but it is not easy to do by oneself. By definition, brainstorming is an exchange of ideas between two or more people, so one person can be approximately one too few. Nevertheless, I have managed to create my own particular method of brainstorming.

I sit at the drawing board and experiment with my idea. Let’s say I want to do something on the ERA. I know, generally, what I want to say about the ERA, but I will search for a new approach. Given the fact that I have drawn a thousand cartoons on the subject of the ERA, I have to find the 1001st idea. I might picture a wheel with about ten or fifteen spokes, radiating outward from the ERA in the center. I then try to write something that represents women on each spoke. I might jot down Adam and Eve, Whistler’s Mother, the Susan B. Anthony dollar, the Mona Lisa, Little Miss Muffet, or the Old Lady in the Shoe. Then I attempt to connect them, or determine which visualization might be a new and effective way to convey the message. Primarily, this process helps me overcome my fear of the blank sheet of paper, and it helps me *not to accept the first idea* that occurs to me.

When I first began drawing cartoons, and for many years afterward, one of my biggest problems was drawing the first idea that came into my mind, instead of going for the second, or third, or fiftieth idea. I have found that the first idea usually is the most obvious. It is the one that fifty other cartoonists will be doing the same day. That is one of the reasons

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why brainstorming with myself is so beneficial. It provides me with about four or five other ideas that I might not have thought of had I settled for the first knee-jerk idea. Furthermore, it gives me a couple of extra ways to put across an idea the next time I want to deal with that subject.

This idea of brainstorming is certainly not new. In fact, cartoonists such as George Booth, Sam Gross, Charles Adams, and Charles Rodriguez have been doing something called single-theme spread, which is similar to single brainstorming. The single-theme approach can be used when the drawing of cartoons is confined exclusively to one topic. Sam Gross is a master of this technique.

Picture, for example, the gingerbread man running down a path in the forest. With a little imagination, he can become a jogger, or perhaps he is chased by a dog. The method is to extrapolate ideas from the theme and to keep making those ideas more and more bizarre. The cartoonist tries to create the most ridiculous situation imaginable.

There is, of course, no stock way of developing ideas for cartoons. Ideas are a nebulous, natural phenomenon that one can never quite master. Good ideas are born from blood, sweat, tears, and I often have concluded that providence had a great deal to do with their creation—in my case, anyway.

MIKE PETERS  
Editorial Cartoonist  
*Dayton Daily News*

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# Award-Winning Cartoons

## 1981 PULITZER PRIZE

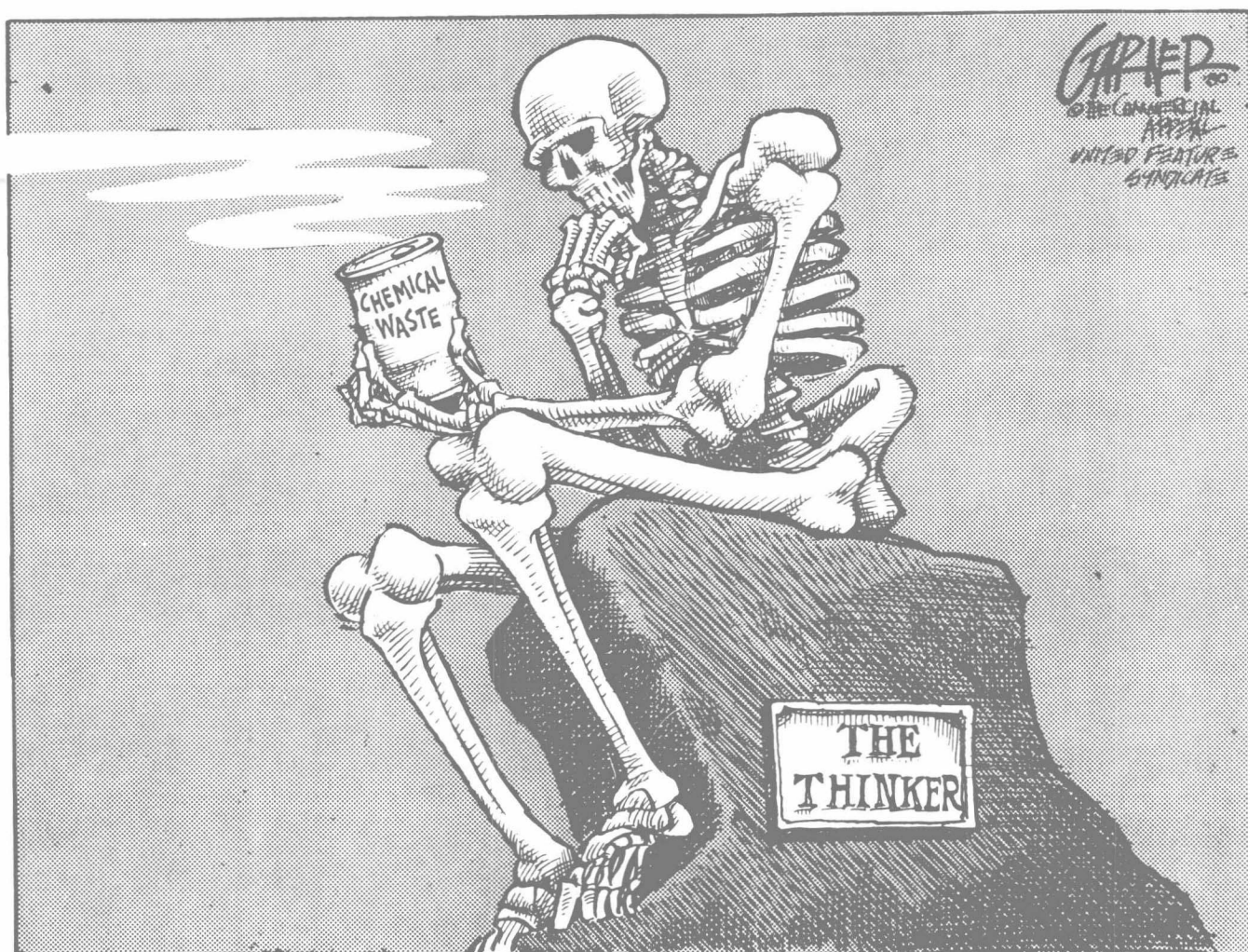


### MIKE PETERS

Editorial Cartoonist  
*Dayton Daily News*

Born October 9, 1943, in St. Louis, Missouri; earned bachelor's degree in fine arts from Washington University, 1965; joined staff of *Chicago Daily News* as cartoonist in 1965; served as U. S. Army artist in Okinawa, 1966-1967; rejoined staff of *Chicago Daily News*; editorial cartoonist for the *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News*, 1969 to present; cartoons syndicated through United Features Syndicate; author of three books; cartoonist in residence for NBC's "Today" show; his work also appears on NBC's *Nightly News*; winner of Sigma Delta Chi Award for cartooning, 1975; Overseas Press Award, 1976; and Distinguished Alumni Award from Washington University, 1981.

## 1981 NATIONAL HEADLINERS CLUB AWARD



### **BILL GARNER**

Editorial Cartoonist  
*Memphis Commercial Appeal*

A native Texan; served for three years as cartoonist and illustrator for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* in Tokyo; staff artist and editorial cartoonist for the *Washington Star*, 1963-1976; editorial cartoonist for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 1976 to present; paints in acrylics and watercolors; has had portraits and landscapes exhibited in various galleries.