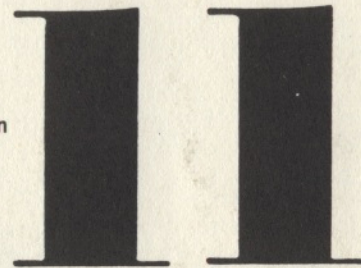


Famous Artists Cartoon Course
Westport, Connecticut

Drawing in the panel

Lesson



Rube Goldberg

Milton Caniff

Al Capp

Harry Haenigsen

Willard Mullin

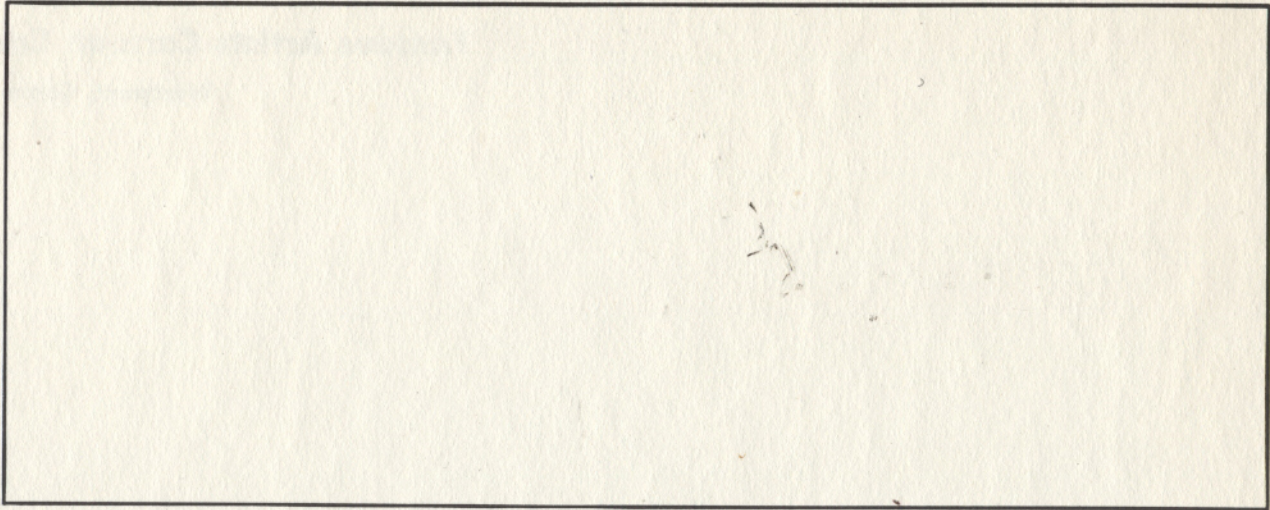
Gurney Williams

Dick Cavalli

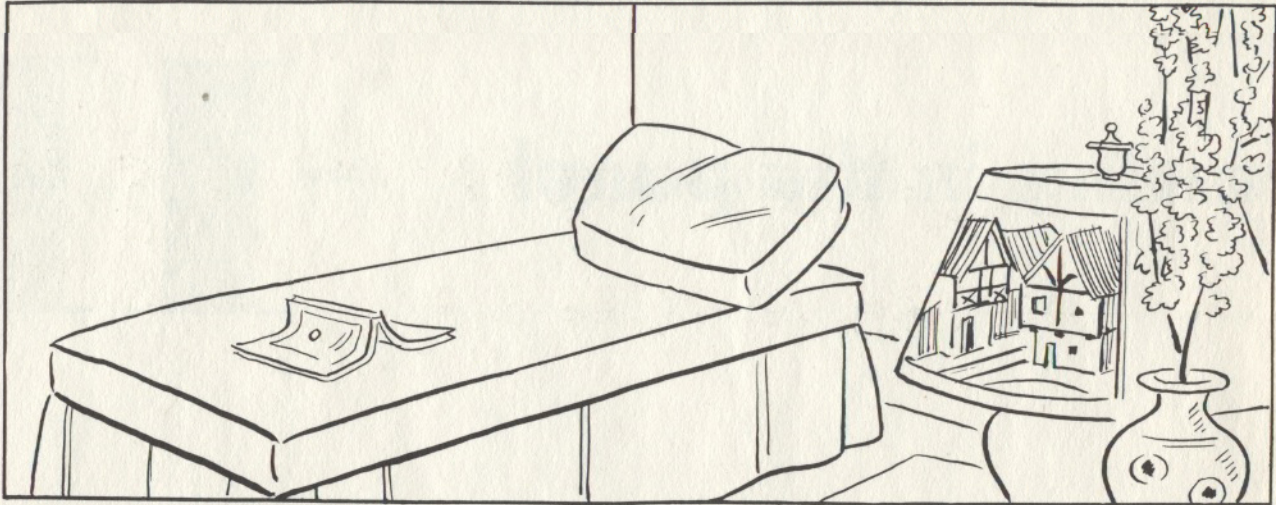
Whitney Darrow, Jr.

Virgil Partch

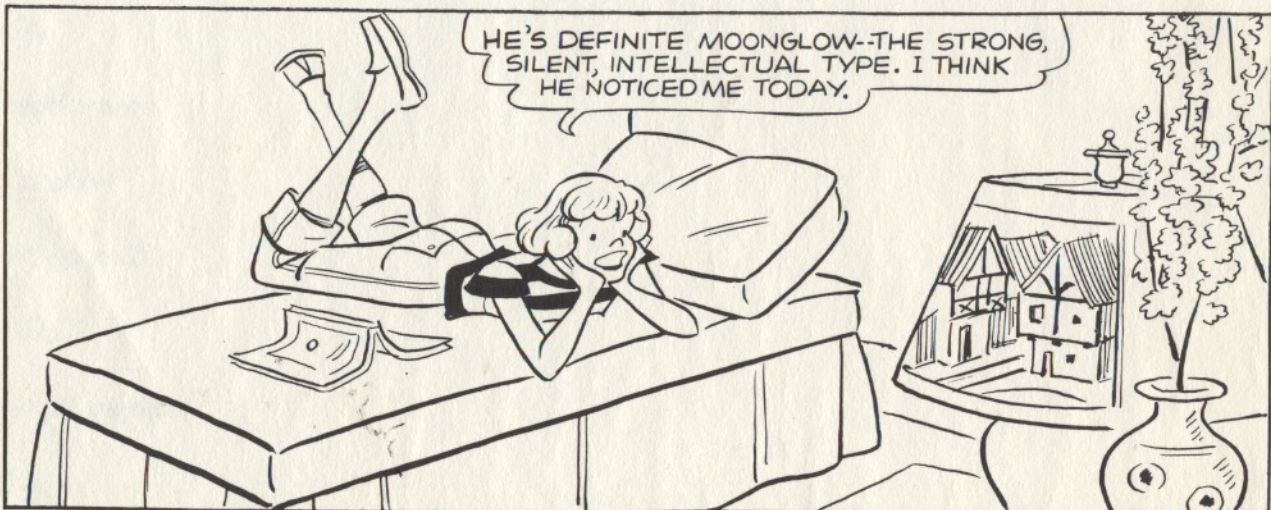
Barney Tobey



The panel is your stage



As a cartoonist you must design the scenery and place it on the stage



Then you must create the characters that are to perform on the stage

Drawing in the panel

In Lesson 5, we touched lightly on drawing in a panel so that you would start working that way. Now we are ready to go into this problem in more detail. Ninety percent of your work as a professional cartoonist will have to be done within a panel, so you can see how important it is for you to understand the problems that you will come up against.

As we have said before, the panel is your stage and it is your job to put the characters and actors in it. Where and how you place them will have a lot to do with the success of your feature.

For the time being, don't worry too much about backgrounds. Later on in the Course we will cover these in detail. For now, we are more interested in the proper placing of the figure in the panel.

Lots of beginners start off by drawing the figure first and then, if they like it, drawing a panel around it and finally the background. This would be swell if you never had to worry about the size or shape of your panel. But cartooning in respect to panels and proportions of panels is an exact art. An editor asks you for a cartoon panel of a certain size. The size he asks for is the size he wants — and he will mark you off his list if you don't give it to him. Normally you will work larger than the size the drawing is to be reproduced, so you must be sure that the panel will reduce to the size desired. The only way to be sure of this is to scale up your panel to the correct proportions. After checking it, you can start your drawing. Space in a newspaper or magazine is valuable. If you should send a drawing to an editor, and that drawing is the wrong size — say an inch and a half too high — he has two choices. He can throw the drawing away or have it redrawn. If he doesn't have time for redrawing, he may use your work, but he will be robbing himself of an inch and a half of valuable space that could be sold for advertising.

Here's another reason for learning to draw in a panel frame. If the beginner starts out just drawing any old place he feels like on a piece of paper, he soon becomes accustomed to working that way. When he is given a picture frame and told to draw a figure in it, he doesn't know how to proceed. The panel frame has a psychological effect upon his sense of proportion. He won't know where to start drawing the head or the figure. When he does start it, chances are the feet will run out of the bottom of the picture. Drawing is a habit — and for your own future good you should develop, as you go along, habits which will help, not hinder you.

Your panel can show a thousand miles of territory or it can show just the hand of a character. Think of it as a cameraman does in the movies. Before starting to pencil in a panel, decide whether you want a distance shot or a close-up. Most of the time the story you are telling and the action of each individual panel will determine how much or how little you will show. If you are going to show a cowboy being thrown from a horse, you wouldn't want a close-up of the cowboy's head; you would need enough distance to show the whole action. If the cowboy is going to wink at a girl, you would want a close-up shot. By thinking first, you will save yourself a lot of trouble.

As you will see later on in this lesson, the placing of the figures themselves within the picture frame will many times set a mood for the over-all scene. This placement of cartoon figures for their mood value is very important to putting over an idea. Many times our daily comic strip of four panels will be best when all the figures in all four panels are placed exactly on the same level. Again, on the very next strip you might find that Panel 1 will show a full figure; Panel 2 a close-up; Panel 3 a far-distance shot; and Panel 4 another close-up. This is known as "change of pace." This change of pace is very important and adds color and interest to your work, but be sure there is a reason for it.

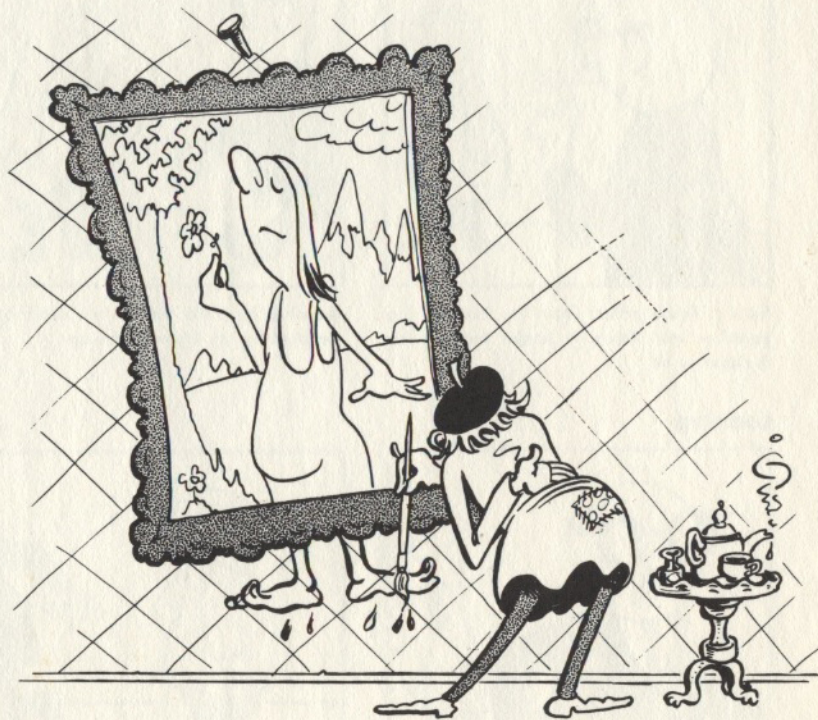
Also in this lesson we will take up the procedure for drawing a Sunday page or a daily newspaper comic. The differences between drawing a single panel cartoon and a daily comic strip are quite fundamental. With a single panel cartoon, the artist is more concerned with putting over one individual idea, usually with a wallop. He is not particularly concerned with what came before or what came after — the whole idea is shown in one panel. The artist drawing the comic strip, on the other hand, is concerned with first putting across his idea — not in one panel, but in a series of panels. He must carry his reader's interest from the first through to the last panel and at the same time tell his story, both visually and by the use of the balloons.

The panel is your stage

Someone once said that every cartoonist is a frustrated ham actor. Since the average cartoonist usually eats with more regularity than the average actor, the frustration should be easy to control. A cartoonist's interest in the stage can really be an asset. The panel has its definite limitations — so has the stage. Your job is to present a clear, interesting production within your confined space.

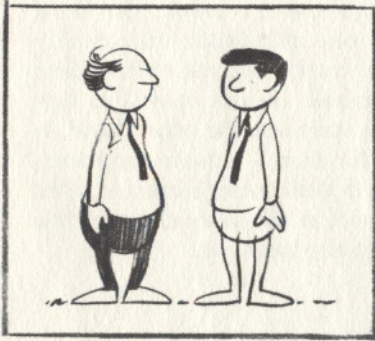
Milton Caniff had a close squeak when he almost became a professional actor after college. Today, his advice to a young cartoonist is apt to be full of stage and movie lingo. The business of stage settings, movie close-ups and long-shots also applies very pointedly to drawings. Caniff's "Steve Canyon" doesn't suffer because of his knowledge. Neither will your work.

When we tell you to accustom yourself to working in a panel, we don't mean just for your finished art work. You should also work in a panel when you are doing practice work. For your practice work on these lessons, rule up a bunch of panels beforehand on your paper. It doesn't make any difference what size or shape the panels are, just so there is a panel outline to confine you to a given space. Once you have formed the habit of thinking as well as drawing in panels, you will find that you prefer to work inside of panel frames.

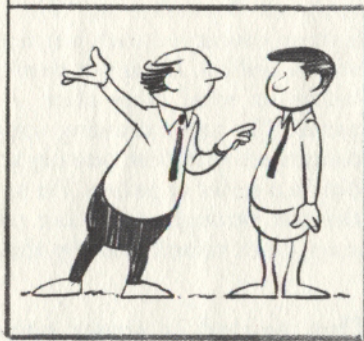


Position sets up the idea

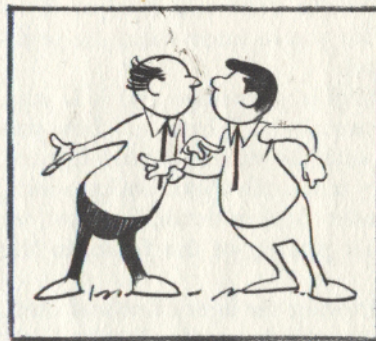
The way you place figures in your panel and the action you give them will determine to a large degree how fast the reader gets your idea. In these small panels some basic ideas have been set up by the position of the figures, without the use of any words. It is the action that tells the reader what is going on, and to emphasize this point the facial expressions have been purposely omitted.



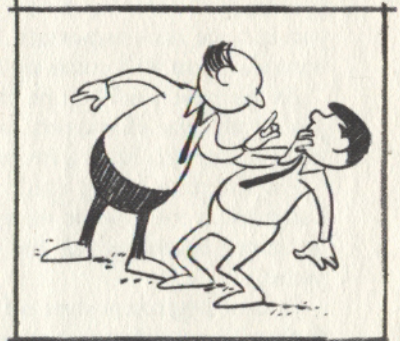
Here are two figures in a panel — both of them are static — the picture tells no story at all



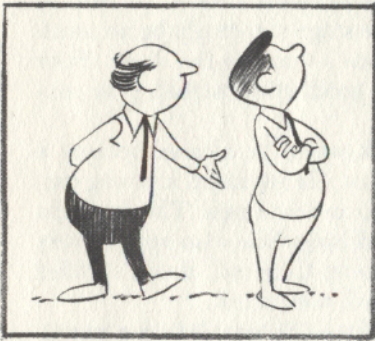
One figure leans forward and points his finger. The reader knows he is talking



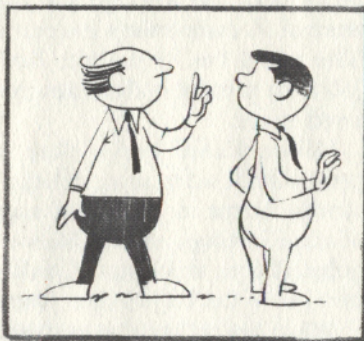
Here both figures are leaning forward — you know they are arguing



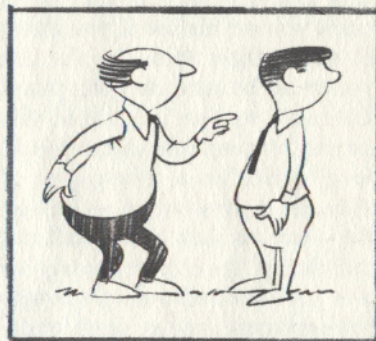
Now the figure on the left is overpowering the other figure



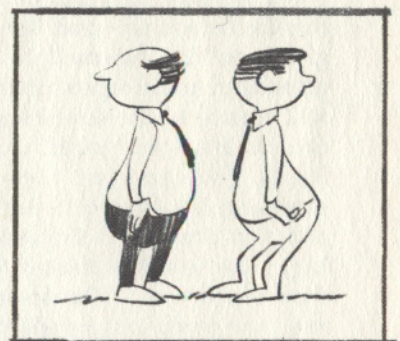
The figure on the right is showing disdain by turning his back to the other figure



By turning just his head to the figure on the left the man on the right is saying "Did you say something?"



The man on the left is talking about something behind the man on the right

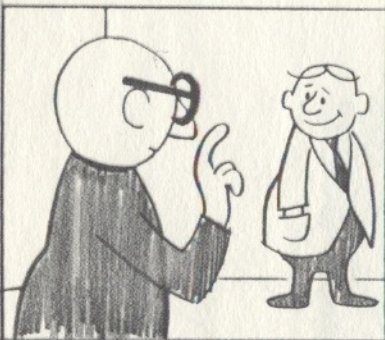


Bodies facing each other, but heads turned away indicate that they are looking for something or someone

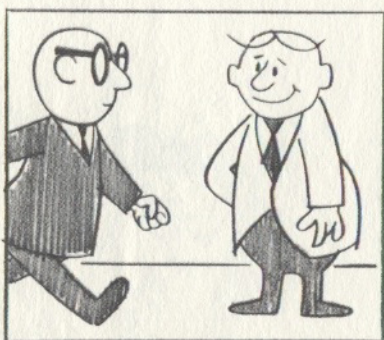
In and out of the panel

Comic figures don't always stay put. Sometimes you will want to show the figures you draw coming into or leaving the panel — here are some examples of how this is done.

Entering



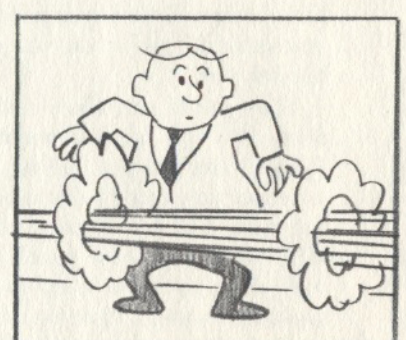
Here a figure enters from the front of the panel — front figure is larger because he is closer to us



Entering from the side — maintain correct proportions of figure entering



Entering from an angle



Here we don't see anything but speed lines — but we know something has entered and left the panel

Leaving

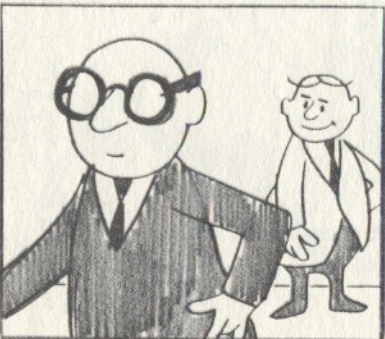
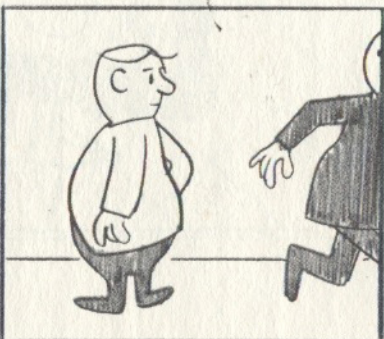
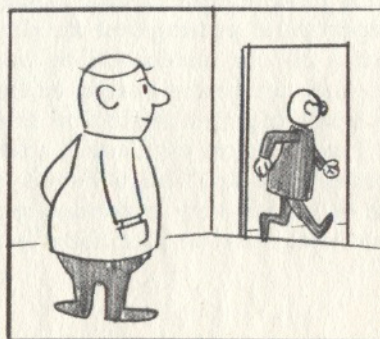


Figure leaving panel at the front



Leaving from the side



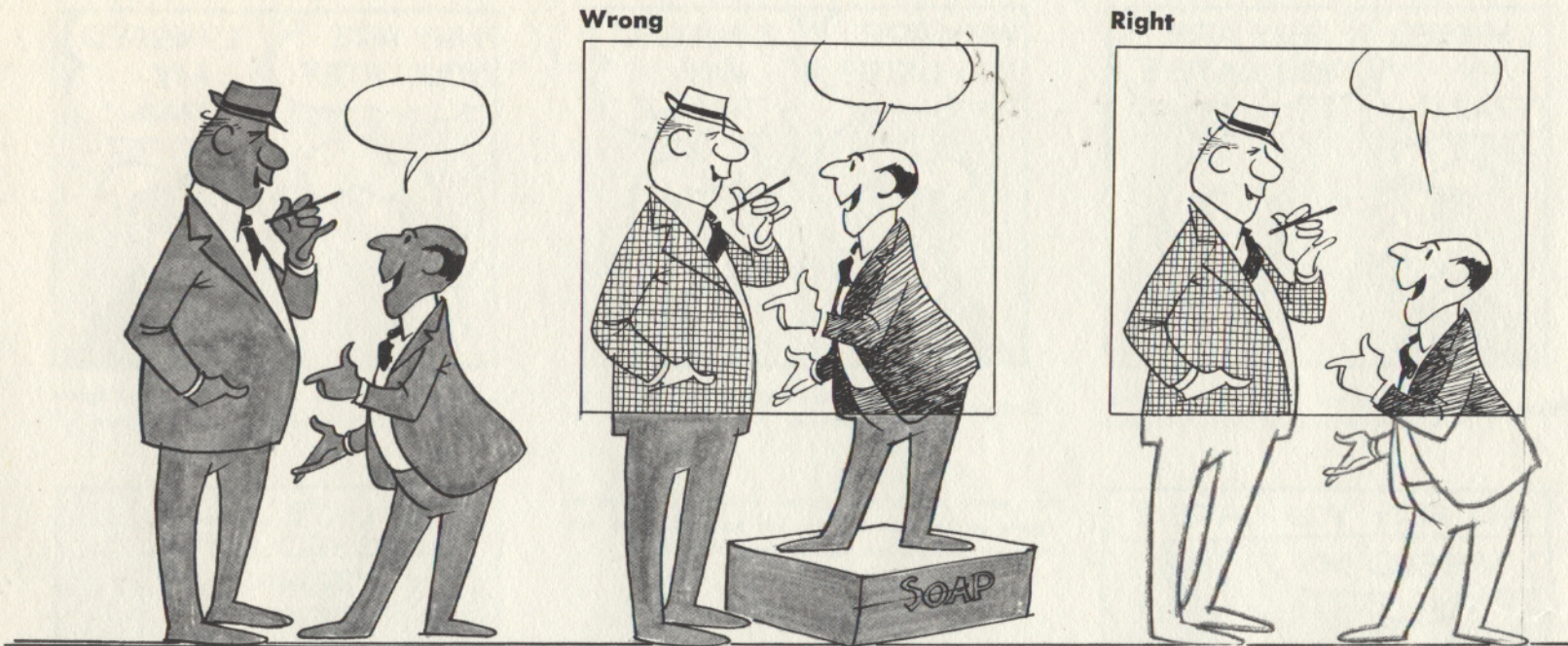
Leaving at an angle



Leaving from the top of the panel

Part of figures out of panel

When only parts of your characters appear within the panel, it is wise to pencil in the figures completely. This enables you to relate them properly in size and to give more convincing action to the visible portions. Do the same with figures entering or leaving the panel.



Here's our subject — two characters talking. Their sizes already have been established in the reader's mind; one is tall and one is short

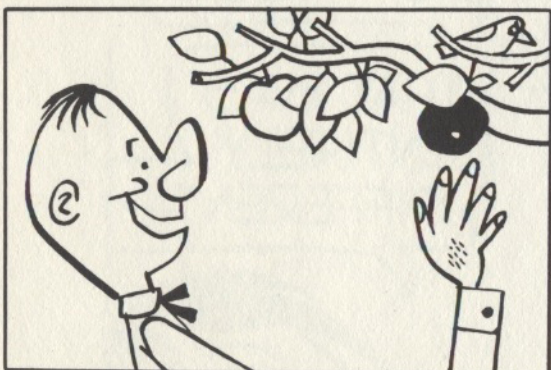
Here's a common mistake — their heads have been drawn on the same level. This gives the reader the feeling that Shorty is standing on an invisible support

To avoid that mistake, pencil in the lower halves of the figures as shown. This extra effort will result in a more convincing relationship between the portions of the figures visible within the panel

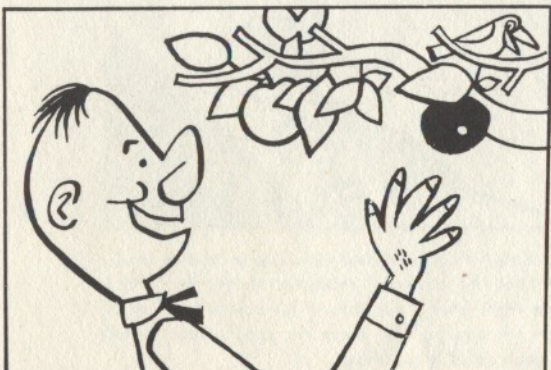
Maintaining proportions of cut figures

When you are drawing part of a figure in a panel, you must be sure that the parts shown are in correct proportion to the figure as a whole.

Here are two drawings of a man reaching for an apple. In the drawing below, the hand, as shown in the panel, couldn't possibly belong to the man because his arms couldn't be that long



Wrong
Arm would be too long



Right
Here the arm is in the right proportion to the rest of the figure



Here is an example of how Milton Caniff makes sure that the proportions of his figures are correct when only a part of the figure is in the panel. Notice that part of the gun is drawn out of the panel, too — whenever you have the space around your panel to draw the rest of the figure you should do so. It's good insurance against mistakes in proportion

Position of figures and balloons

As shown on this page, the figures in a panel must be placed in a position that will permit the correct reading of the balloons.



Wrong This is wrong and should never be done. The question is answered before it is asked



Better In an emergency this could be done but it is not a good idea



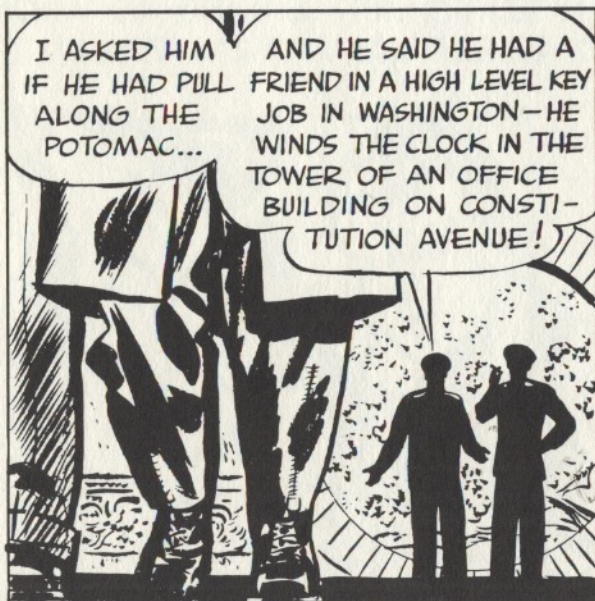
Right This is right — the balloons and figures are both in the right order to be read



In a comic strip it is sometimes impossible to shift the figures so that their balloons can be read in the right order — here are two ways to overcome this

By lifting the first balloon over the second you force it to be read first

But the best way is to change the wording of the balloon so the figure on the left is the first to speak



With this device Milton Caniff created hesitation in his character's speech before springing the joke. To show indecision, change of mind or confusion, any number of short balloons from the same character in the same panel can also be effective



Since your readers are used to reading from left to right and from top to bottom, make it a rule to arrange your drawing so that the left-hand character speaks first. Place balloons of right-hand characters on the right and, if possible, a bit below the level of the first balloon. In single panel cartoons it also pays to place the speaker on the left and keep his mouth open so the reader knows who is speaking

Composition

In cartooning, composition is used solely to point up your gag or draw attention to the action of your characters in a story. Composition is the tool you use to add clarity to your work, much as re-writing and elimination add punch to your gag or story. You must be aware of it with every line you draw.

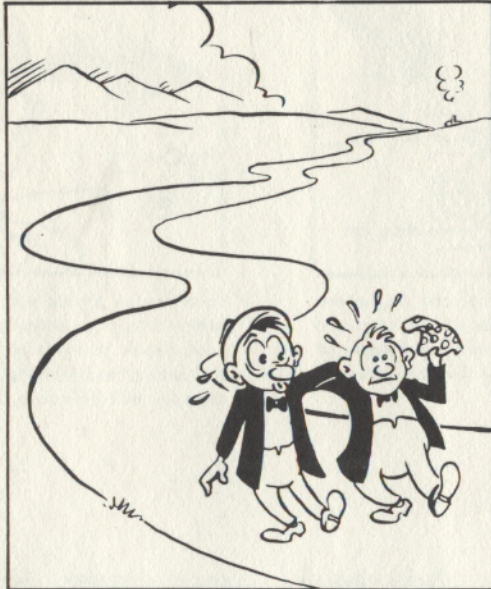
Like politics, composition is a subject people can argue about forever and arrive nowhere. There are no hard and fast rules — your composition-sense will grow to be as personal to you as

your style of drawing. However, certain things catch and interest the reader's eye, others repel it. We have tried here to give you a few important fundamentals to start you off.

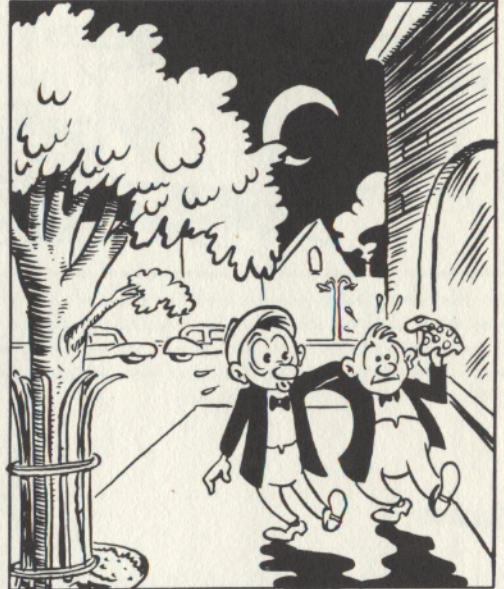
This is a part of your art that should keep growing with every new picture you draw. *Think* when you draw: think of blacks and think of whites — will this or that line help guide or distract your reader's eye? If a line or tone doesn't help direct the eye to the right spot, change it or eliminate it.



Your idea calls for two tired figures. Here they are placed in a panel with room to develop the idea. Composition will help or hurt that development



Here the figures have a composition that shows why they are tired, and the winding road that tired them leads right to them



Same figures — but the idea was a little different. Composition is entirely changed, but still leads interestingly to the figures

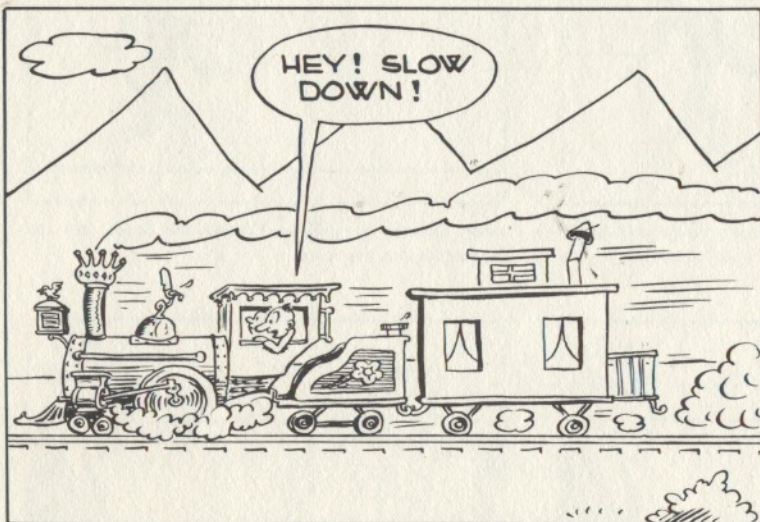
Make it interesting

In today's competitive market, a cartoonist can't get very far without imagination. A picture may be drawn with painstaking correctness and still be uninteresting. To be uninteresting is the greatest crime a cartoonist can commit.

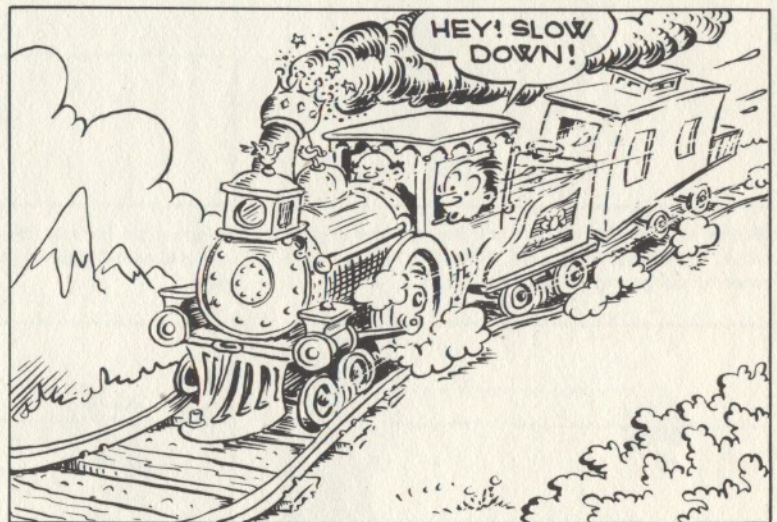
When composing your panel, don't just draw your subject so that it is recognizable. *Think*: can you include some action or a different viewpoint that will be exciting to the reader's eye? Perspective, action, background — all the elements of cartooning must be considered as ingredients that can help you make interesting compositions.



Formal balance is for statues. Very little of it is seen in living figures — which are what we try to create



Nothing wrong with this, but it's a bit flat. Could we compose the speeding train into a more interesting picture? Let's try it

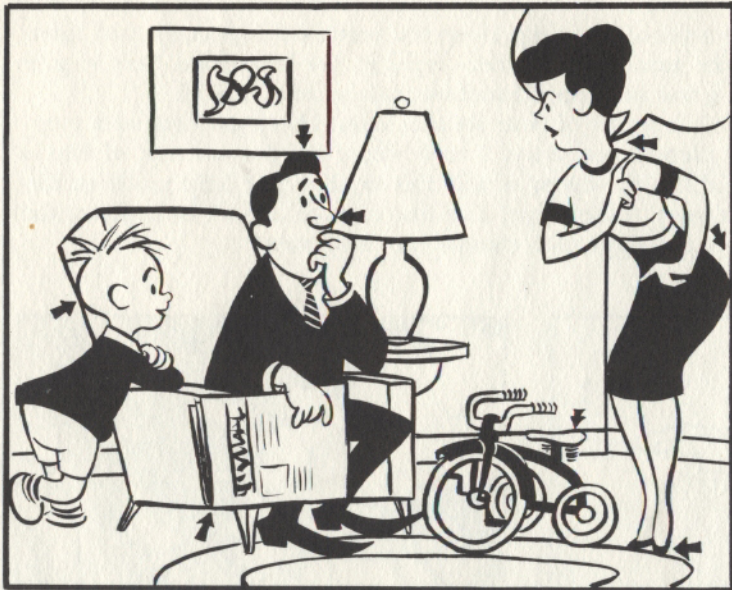


Sure! By changing the view and getting an interesting relationship of spaces — draw a worm's eye view if you feel it will make it more interesting

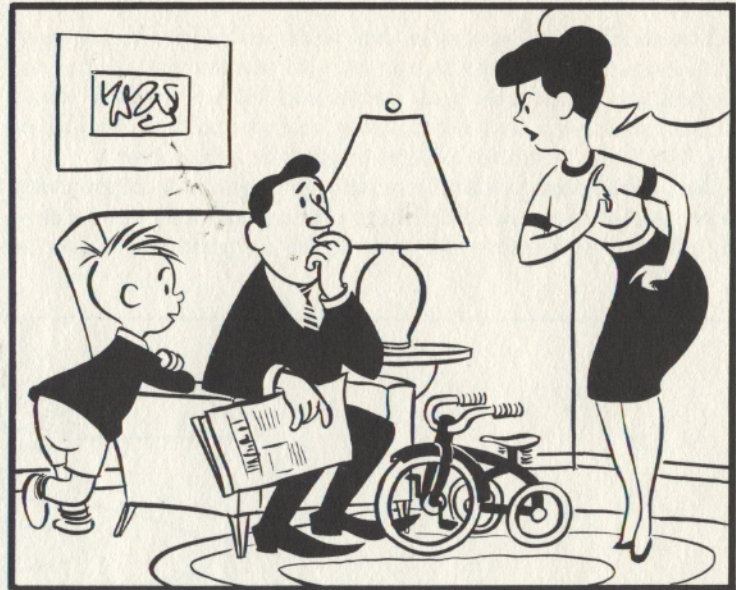
Contact points

Confusion in a drawing is bad unless your idea deliberately calls for it. If you allow two elements or lines to touch in a picture (such lines are called tangents) you create the illusion that both are the same distance from the reader — although one may be in

the foreground and the other in the background. This impairs the feeling of depth in the cartoon. Accidental points of contact hit the eye the way sour notes hit the ear. The two drawings below show some visual crimes of this type and how to avoid them.



Here the picture frame appears to rest on the man's head. His nose and finger seem to be attached to the lampshade, and the tangent formed by the chair bottom and the lower edge of the newspaper makes it difficult to tell where one form leaves off and the other begins. There are a dozen more of these "clinkers" than are indicated by the arrows. See if you can find them

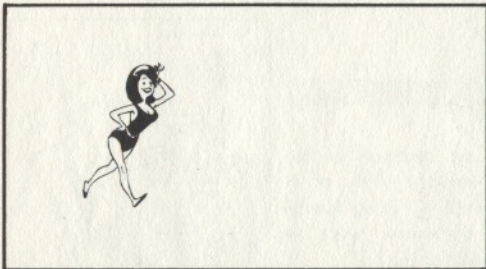


Compare this picture with the previous one and note how the troublesome contact points have been corrected. Bad contact points should be avoided in the pencil stage (when you're inking it's too late) by overlapping the elements decisively or by keeping them definitely apart. Of course, if two forms are actually intended to touch (as with the man's elbow on the chair arm) there is no problem

Space

Just as shapes are important to a picture, so is the relationship of space to these shapes. Space is used to show the distance between objects on a flat surface and, more important, to create an illu-

sion of distance. The proper use of space around your figures gives an illusion of depth and also contributes to the mood of the picture.



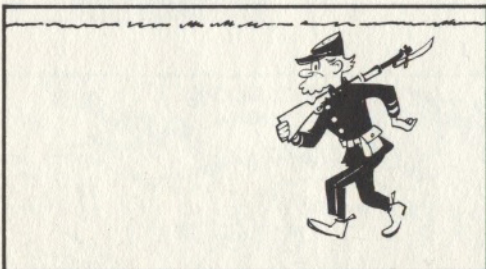
Surrounding a tiny figure with a large amount of space places the figure in the distance



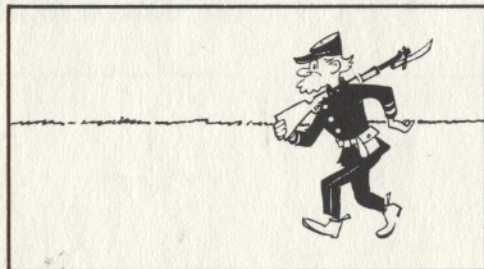
Enlarging the figure decreases the surrounding space and brings the figure closer



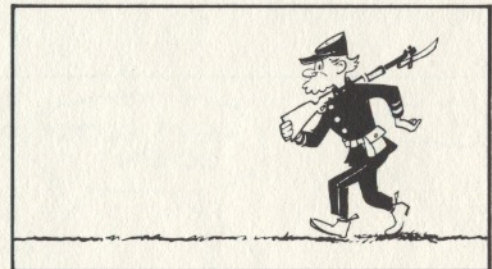
Enlarging the figure further brings it in for a real close-up view



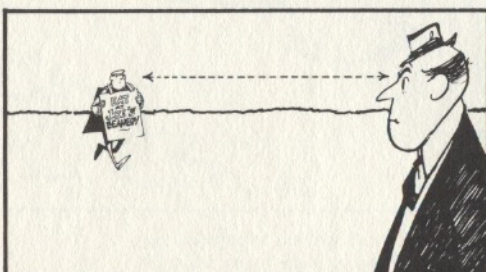
Division of space by the horizon line can govern the feeling of distance and mood. Here the figure, dominated by the ground space, seems lonely



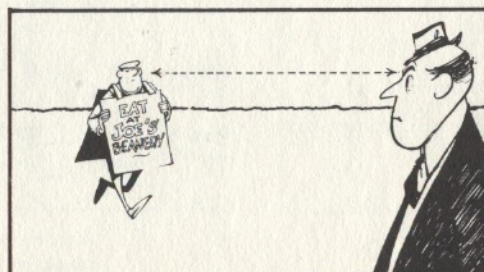
Lowering the horizon line decreases the ground space and makes the figure appear more important in the scene



Here, with the ground level below the figure, the old boy dominates the scene



When one of two figures is drawn very small they seem far apart. (But compare length of arrows in panels)



Drawing the sandwich man larger reduces this apparent distance between the figures



When the figures are drawn approximately the same size they appear to be quite close together

Solid white and solid black

Present-day comic strips are printed so small that it pays to think twice before putting any of that grand old pen shading in your work. It's apt to close up and look like hair — and hair doesn't grow on chairs or doorknobs.

Always be alert for chances to simplify your work into solid whites and blacks. For an object to stand out in a composition

it must contrast in value with the surrounding area. Solid black is a great eye-catcher, but over-use makes it tiresome. Clean white space is just as powerful. When you draw solid whites and blacks, keep the outlines sharp and clear-cut so that the shapes are easily recognized. Over-shading can ruin your outlines — avoid it.



Wrong

Here is an overdrawn night scene. With too many pen lines of the same weight there is no variation in values — everything is flat



Right

Here the whole drawing has been simplified by using solid blacks and whites. Notice how the clean whites stand out and add depth to the composition



Note that there is a minimum of shading within white areas. The use of clear white spaces is effective in night scenes

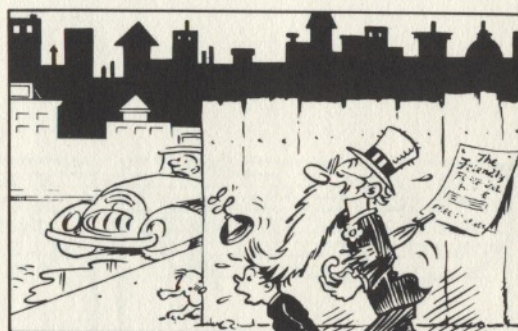
Using silhouettes and solid blacks



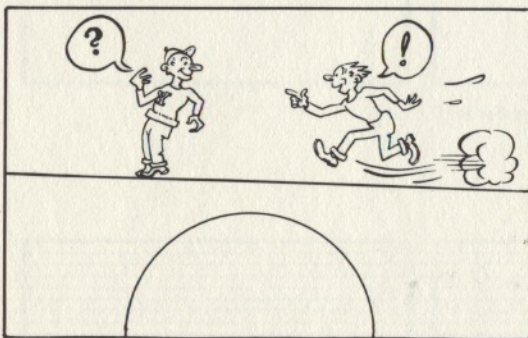
Interest and depth-in-panel can be increased by use of solid black silhouettes in the foreground



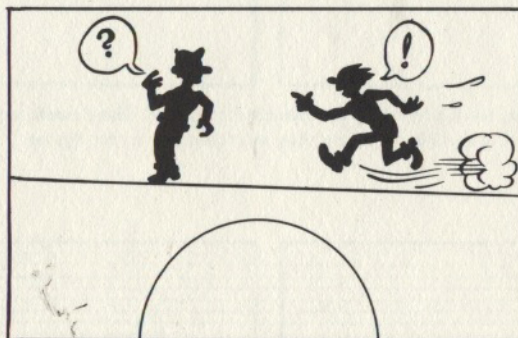
Silhouettes are very helpful for punch and action when you have to draw small



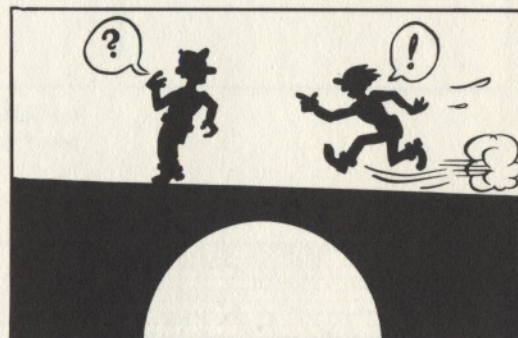
Trees, mountains and buildings in silhouette are effective backgrounds—be sure shapes are definite



Small figures in the distance. Here the detail becomes so small that the action is lost — drawing loses meaning



By using silhouettes, action becomes stronger. Drawing will reproduce much better without all those fine lines

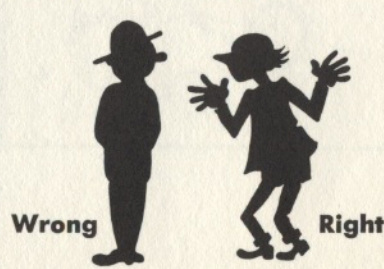


Here the whole drawing is in silhouette. Solid black is a great eye-catcher on a page of line drawings. Be sure your outlines are sharp



At left, small black figure commands attention first. Foreground figure blacked in takes over the stage at the right

Your idea determines which figure is to become the center of interest

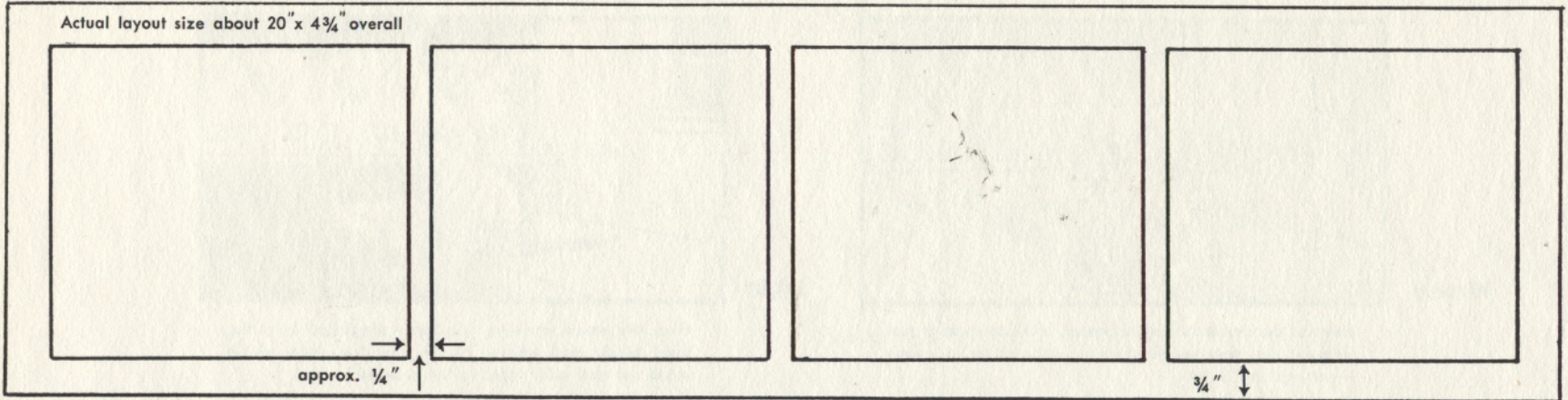


Wrong

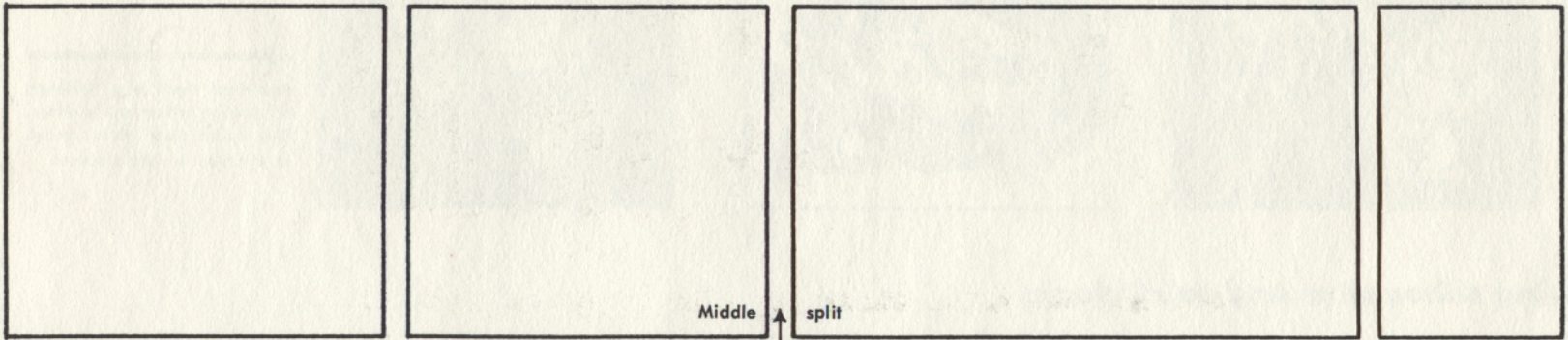
Right

Be sure small silhouettes have definite shapes so action is plain to reader

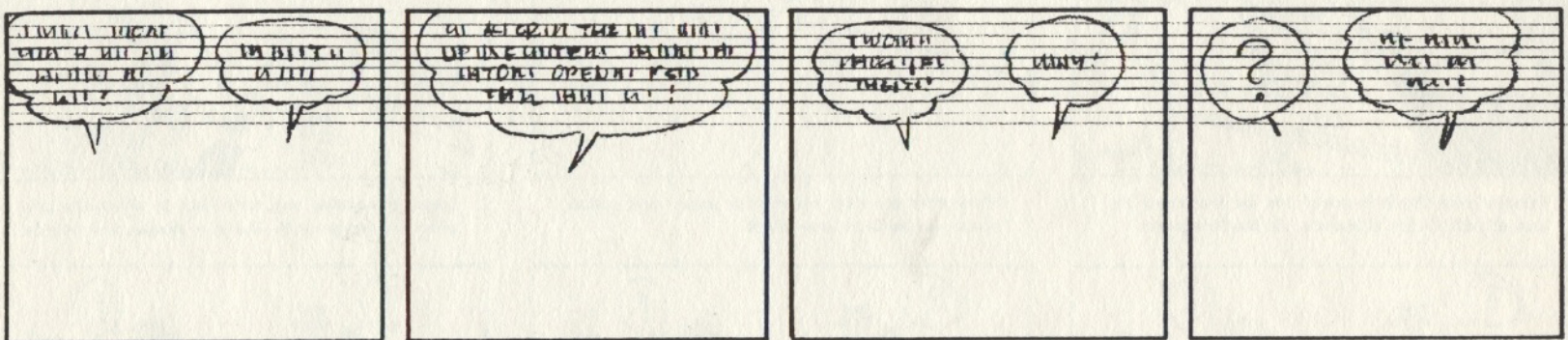
Laying out a comic strip



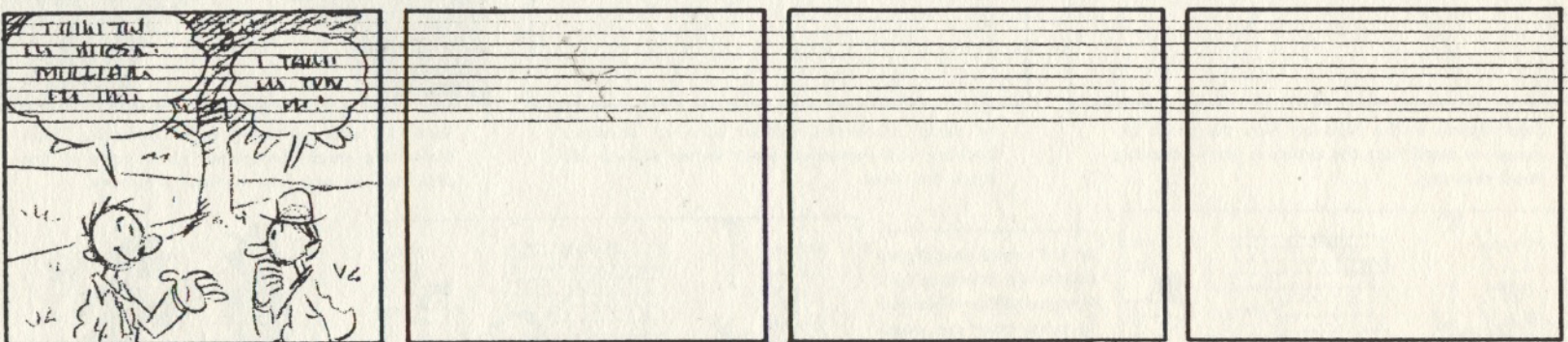
Here is the layout for a daily comic strip. It is drawn in pencil on a hard-surface bristol for pen, or on a rough-surface bristol for brush. Sizes of layout will vary depending upon the syndicate or paper it is drawn for. But always leave 3/4 of an inch border around layout



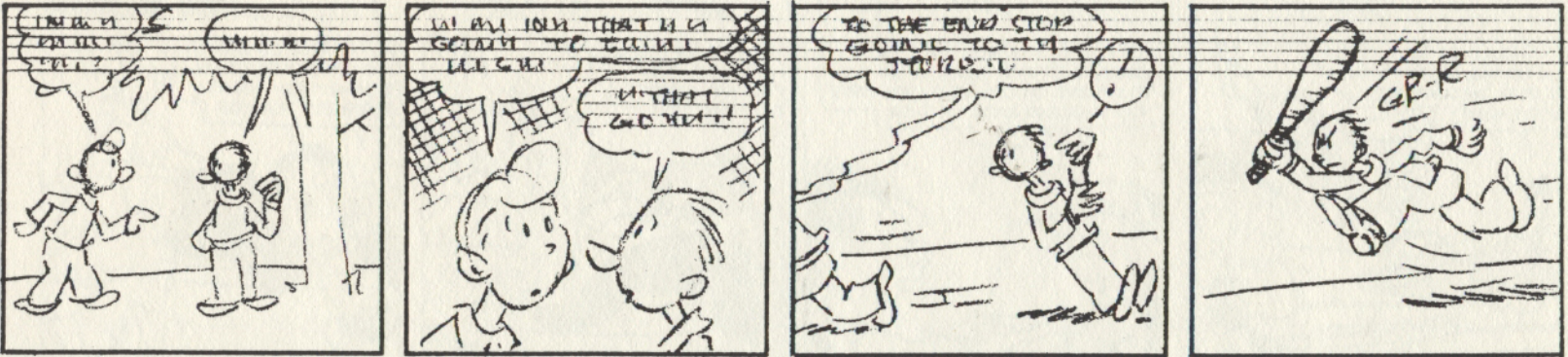
The strip may be split up any way the artist wishes, but the middle split must always be kept. Some papers like to cut a strip in half and put one half over the other to make a "box"



The guide lines for the lettering are pencilled in lightly. Some comic artists prefer to pencil in all of the balloons before they start drawing in the figures.



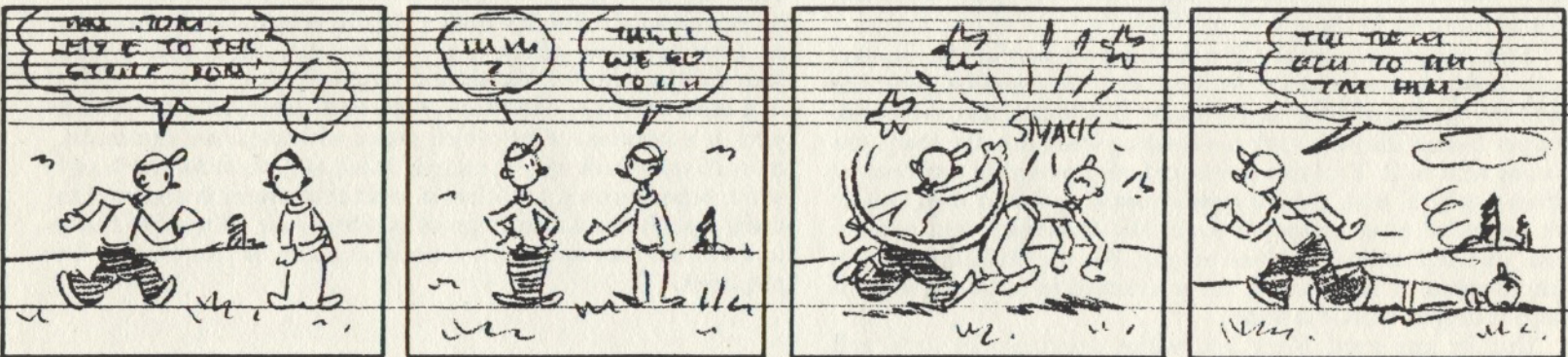
Others prefer to do balloons and figures together as they work from one panel to the next. This is up to the individual, only you can tell which is best for you



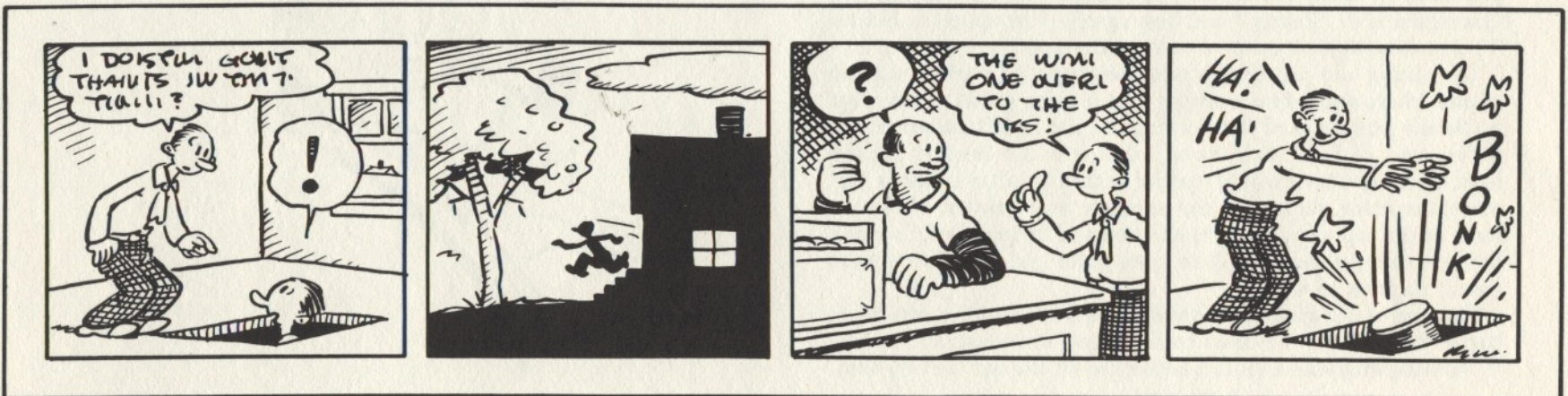
After the strip is in pencil, look it over before you ink it. Have you put over the gag the best way? Can you improve the wording of the balloons? It's hard to change ink — be sure it's right before you pick up your pen



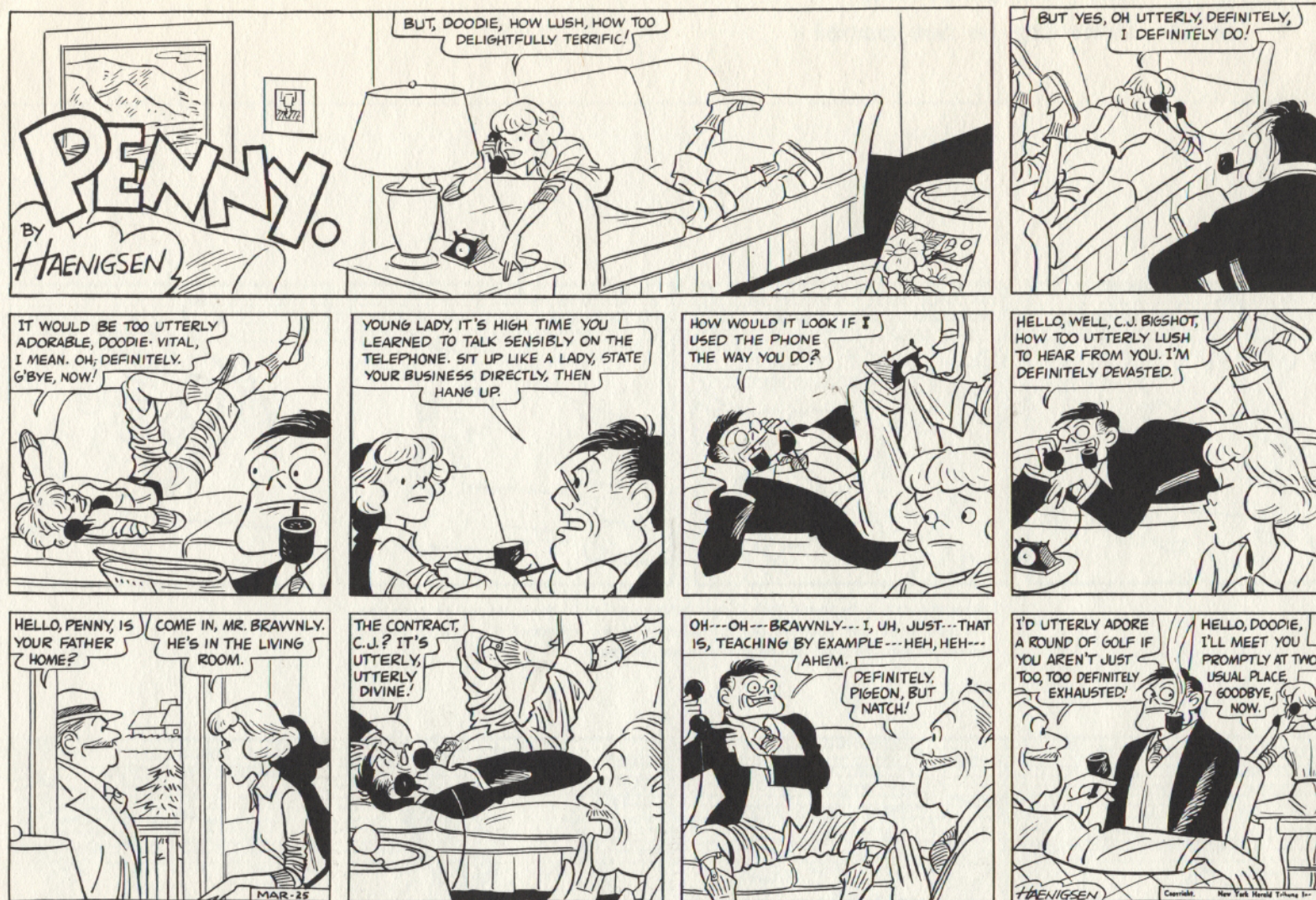
A word about composition — most adventure-type strips have a wide variety of scenes — close-ups, distance shots, half figures in one panel, full figures in the next or maybe just a head or silhouettes



The average gag strip on the other hand, will tend to have all the figures in the strip standing on an even line. This is not a rule — you do not have to do it this way



When the strip is finished in ink — erase the pencil lines before you make any corrections with Chinese white — the white will rub off with erasing — that's why you erase first. Don't forget to clean up the borders too!



The Sunday page

Each syndicate has certain requirements for the sizes and layouts of their Sunday pages which must be kept in mind if you plan to submit work to them. For instance, here is a Sunday "Penny" as it was drawn by Harry Haenigsen in black and white, but scaled down to fit the size of our book.

This, enlarged, would fill a half-page space in the Sunday paper. But, some papers want the feature in one-third page size and the syndicate must supply them. You notice that the entire upper line of drawing with the heading leads into the story, but is not vital to it. This line can be cut off, leaving the two bottom lines — which, with a small type-set heading, would then exactly fit one-third of a newspaper page. Mr. Haenigsen had to keep this in mind as he developed his gag. For the tabloid page size, photo-prints of the drawing are rearranged to make the over-all layout deeper than it is wide.

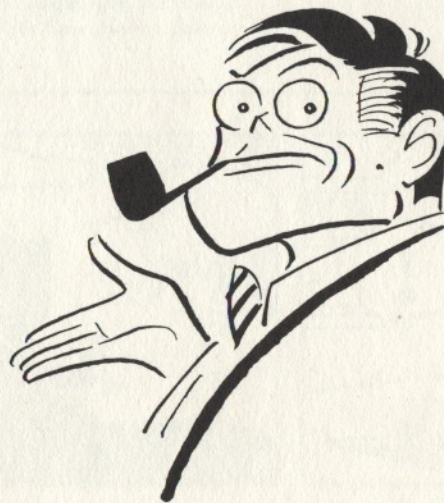
Usually any good black and white drawing will look well when it is colored. It pays, however, to keep color in mind when drawing Sunday pages. Careful attention to areas of whites and blacks can make a world of difference in the drawing when reproduced in color. Notice how economical of pen shading Mr. Haenigsen is in "Penny," and how carefully he spots his blacks. This results in good, crisp color reproduction.

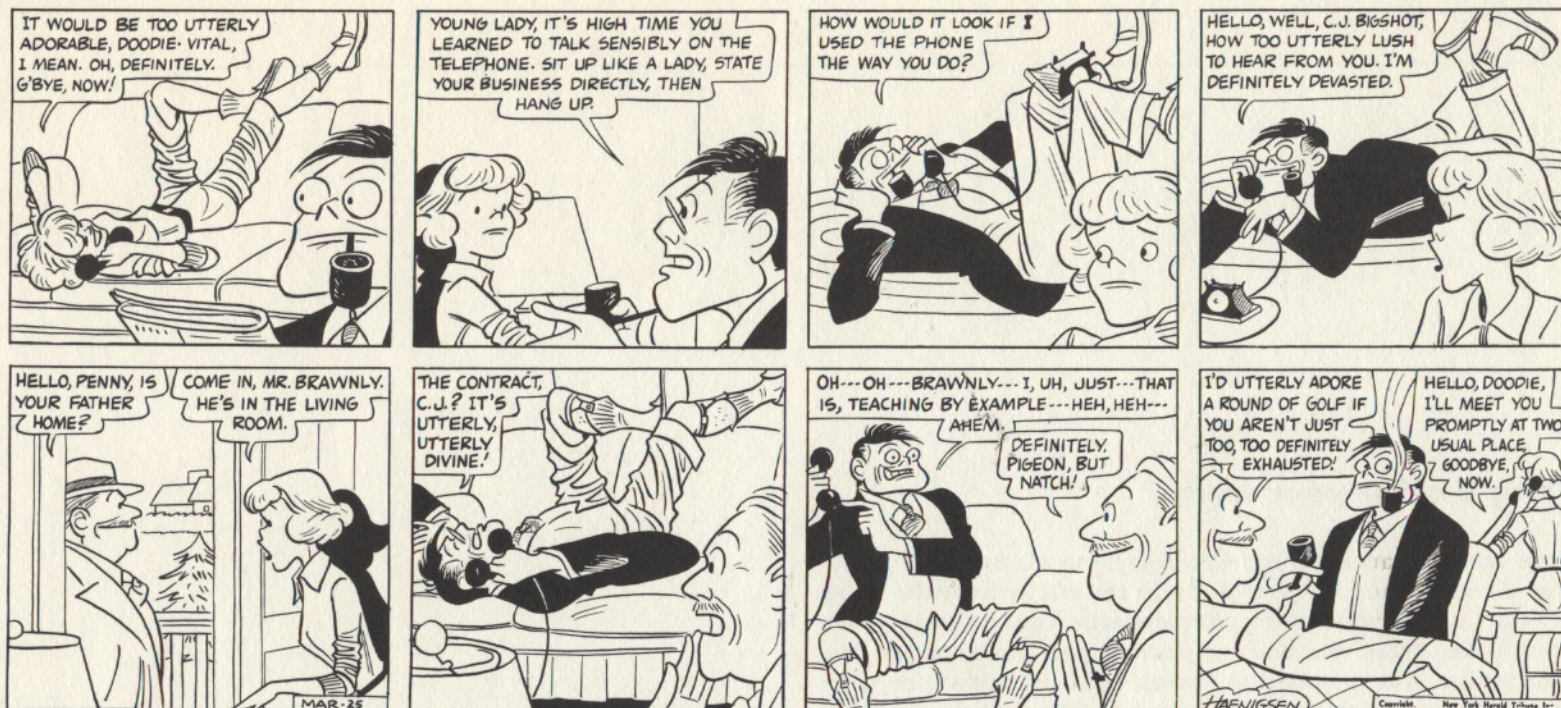
In making the printing plates, the engraver works from the master black and white drawing and a color guide. This color guide is a photo-stat of the drawing the size it will appear in the paper, and colored with water colors, colored inks or aniline dyes. Most syndicates have special artists who do nothing but make the color guides for the engraver and printer. However, some of the top men, Harry Haenigsen and Milton Caniff among them, insist on making their own color guides. The results justify their extra work.

Because of the syndicates' production costs and the continual battle for space in the color comic pages, a newcomer's chances of winning acceptance in this field right off the bat are very slim.

The usual procedure is for a cartoonist to build up a good backlog of readership with a daily strip or panel. When the editors feel that the demand is great enough, they will invite him to add a Sunday page to his chores. A number of magazine cartoonists have entered the Sunday comics via this system, but it is usually an invitation-only affair. Very few Sunday pages have leaped into the spotlight full-blown and stayed there.

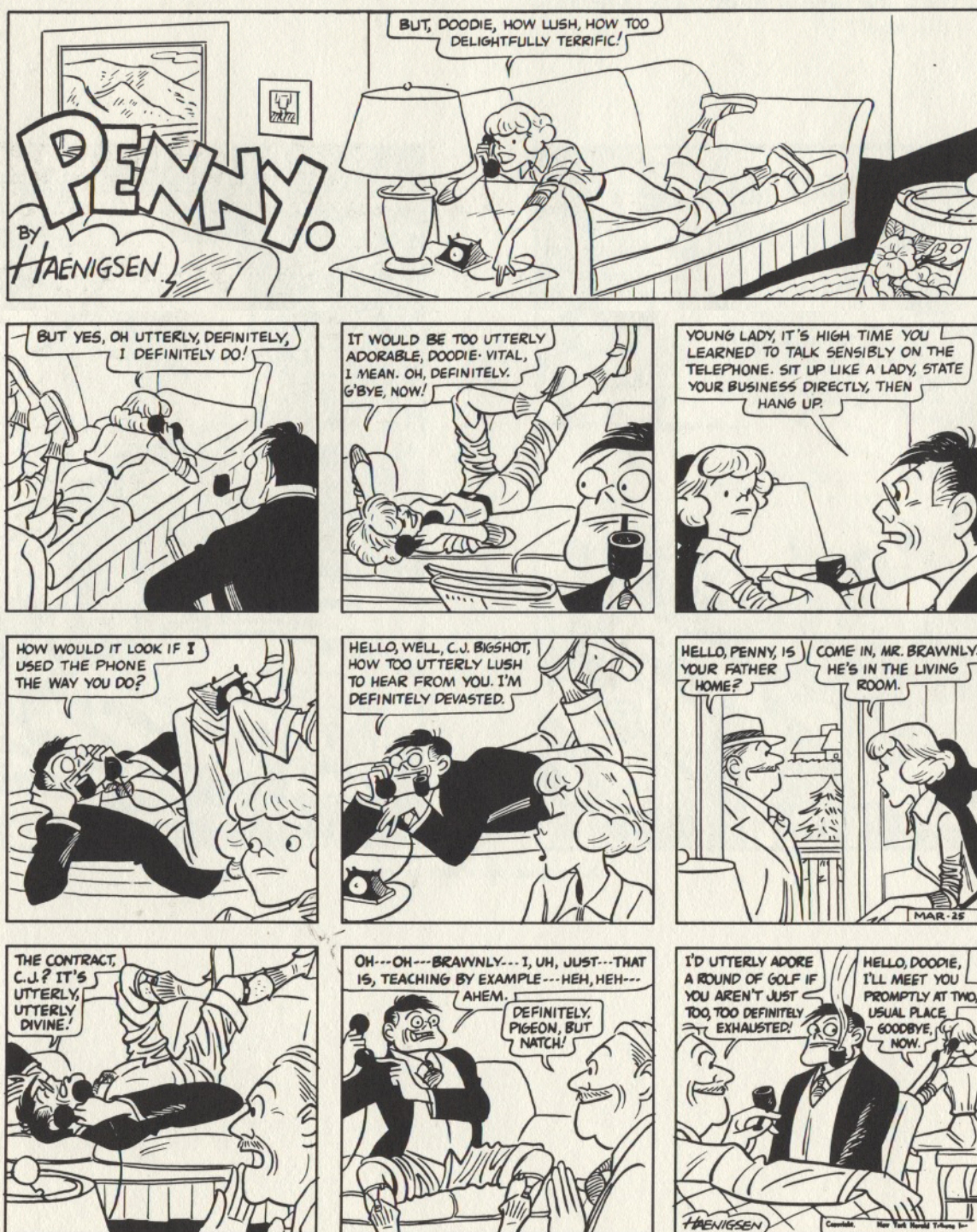
A sense of color, like your composition sense, of which it is a part, is a personal thing which grows with use. As a cartoonist, most of your work will be done in black and white for black and white reproduction, and that is what this course is designed to teach you. But, on that happy day when your editors are ready to spend all that money for four-color plates of your work — be prepared.





For the 1/3 page size the first two panels — the entire top row — are left out

Tabloid



The tabloid page size uses the same number of panels as the half-page. The cartoonist must plan his panel-layout so the breaks are correct for rescaling

Compose for your story

Here are two panels Milton Caniff drew to illustrate this business of composition for cartoonists. In the first he drew the scene in detail, spelling everything out pictorially. In the second panel most of the detail was omitted, leaving just enough to get the *idea* across. Also, moving the camera right up behind the rifleman's shoulder puts the reader closer to the action, and gives him that important feeling of participation. Both panels are well composed, but the second is much better for the purpose. The important thing is to add power and clarity to the story. In case your Russian is rusty, the balloon reads: "The Americans have taken the city — this way!"



Reproduced same size as drawn

FAMOUS ARTISTS CARTOON COURSE
Student Work
Lesson 11

The problem of drawing in a panel is essentially one of composition. Composing is the arranging of all the elements in a cartoon in the most pleasing way that will tell your story quickly, clearly and effectively. A good composition puts emphasis on what is important in the situation or gag and at the same time creates a well-balanced picture.

To study and practice

Read the lesson assignment below, think up a suitable idea, gag or situation and how you are going to illustrate it. Decide what characters, background and props are necessary to express your idea. Then, on typewriter paper, make a great many trial pencil sketches 5-1/2 inches wide by 4-1/2 inches high. In them arrange the elements in as many different ways as possible until you come up with a composition that tells your story well.

In this planning stage do not concern yourself with details of figures, props or backgrounds. Merely sketch the general size, shape and action of each figure. Concentrate on placing the figures in the proper relationship to one another and to the props and background. If you use balloons with dialogue, they too, are important elements and their placement should be planned just as carefully as that of the other objects in the drawing.

The assignment you are to mail to the School for criticism

The cartoon editor of the local paper needs a one-panel black-and-white line cartoon. He likes your work and trusts you to come up with something fresh and interesting to his readers. The job will be reproduced 5-1/2 inches wide and 4-1/2 inches high. Your original should be scaled at least "twice up" and be able to reduce to your editor's exact specifications. (Aha -- remember that page on "Scaling" in the Introduction you skipped by so lightly? Take another look!)

You happen to know that the subject matter this editor really likes is either (A) summer vacations, or (B) local sports items. Pick either subject -- keeping in mind that future jobs will depend on your performance on this one. Be sure your cartoon idea explains itself to the readers. If it does not, you should furnish a caption, a headline or balloons.

Select the best one of the composition sketches you did for the practice assignment and work it up into a finished cartoon. Finish it in ink with neatly ruled panel borders ready for the engraver.

When we criticize your cartoon, we will look to see how good your idea is, how well the composition emphasizes the idea and how well the entire picture is balanced.

Present your assignment in the same clean, professional manner you would use if you were submitting it to the cartoon buyer of a publication. Letter your name, address and student number carefully in the lower left-hand corner of the page. In the lower right corner, place the Lesson Number. Mail to:

FAMOUS ARTISTS CARTOON COURSE
Westport, Connecticut