

Young cartoonist dreams up crazy characters

By TERESA BANAS

LeRoy the Bear isn't quite as violent today, as when he was first created. According to his illustrator, he might punch you in the mouth, but he wouldn't shove a tire down your throat.

LeRoy has come a long way since his conception by a young Redford cartoonist, Brian (Joseph) Waskul. Brian, a 16-year-old Thurston High junior, has hopes to someday become a professional cartoonist, such as his favorite illustrator, Jack Kirby of Marvel Comics.

LeRoy and his buddies, Taco the Cat, Moose Mole, Fats Wallabie, Charlie Cheeta and others were dreamed up by Brian's older brother, Rick, in stories told to young Brian. "I'd make up stories and tell them to my brother and he'd use them," Rick Waskul says. He liked my characters and always encouraged me to tell another story. He's the one that elaborates on them and puts them in scenes."

Rick Waskul is an aspiring illustrator himself, and is presently flirting with the idea of being a car designer. Brian says the characters' tempers have mellowed over the years since his brother first described them in a story. About a year and a half ago, Brian gave visible dimension to these figures and has since polished them into what they are today.

BRIAN DESCRIBES LeRoy's character as "easy going."

"In a lot of strips, he's the underdog in the end," he says.

"Fats Wallabie—he isn't very smart, to say the least. He's a real car nut. It's all he knows about."

"Moose Mole—my brother's imagination, doesn't talk. He does a lot of fancy footwork."

Brian says Moose solely relies on his feet for all activities, such as holding things, lifting objects and even hitting people.

"Taco—he's just a mischief maker, just another Cheshire cat."

About his favorite illustrator, Kirby, Brian says, "he's got good perspective of everything. Things really stand out. He has a lot more impact than other illustrators."

Brian is among seven children in the Waskul family. His father is an illustrative designer.

Rick says they are all "arty in some way, but Brian is the only one who moved to the comic side."

Brian, a soft-spoken young teen, says he gathers most of his strip ideas from "unusual situations" around him. Sometimes, he gets an idea from watching television cartoons, though "mellows out the violence."

Not surprisingly, Brian is also a comic book collector. He has more than 1,000 books stacked in wood grain boxes tucked away in his basement.

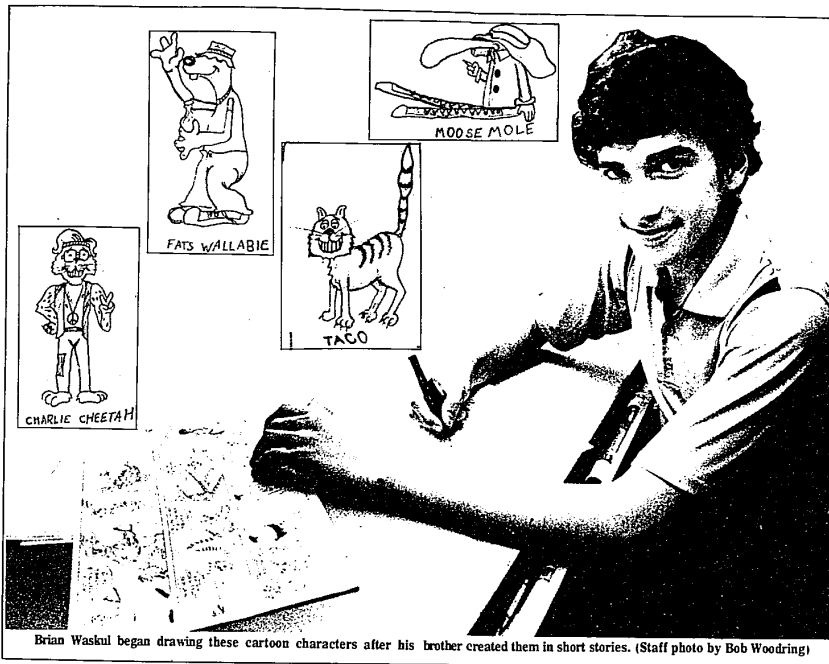
"I'M WORKING on a complete set of the Fantastic Four series, from the newest issue back. The first one costs \$30. It's going to take a while to get that much money."

In addition to collecting, he also repairs old comic books for himself and friends.

His brother and promoter, Rick, says he runs a "comic book bump shop."

Rick says it's not unusual to see his brother carefully ironing out crumpled pages and repairing pages by meticulously pasting in missing tears and painting in the missing parts.

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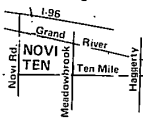
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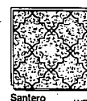
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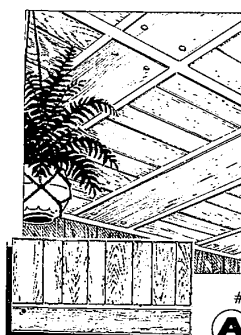
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