

Famous Artists Cartoon Course
Westport, Connecticut

The figure in detail



Rube Goldberg

Milton Caniff

Al Capp

Harry Haenigsen

Willard Mullin

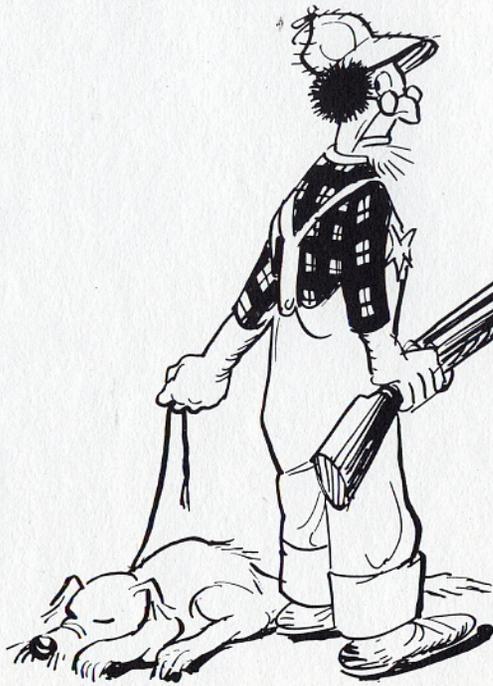
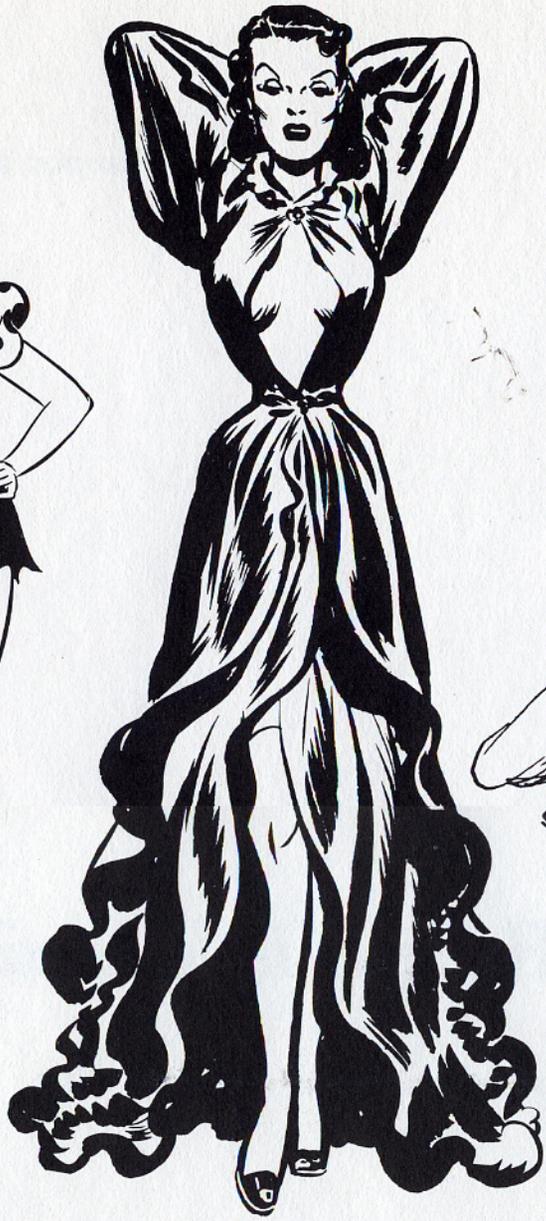
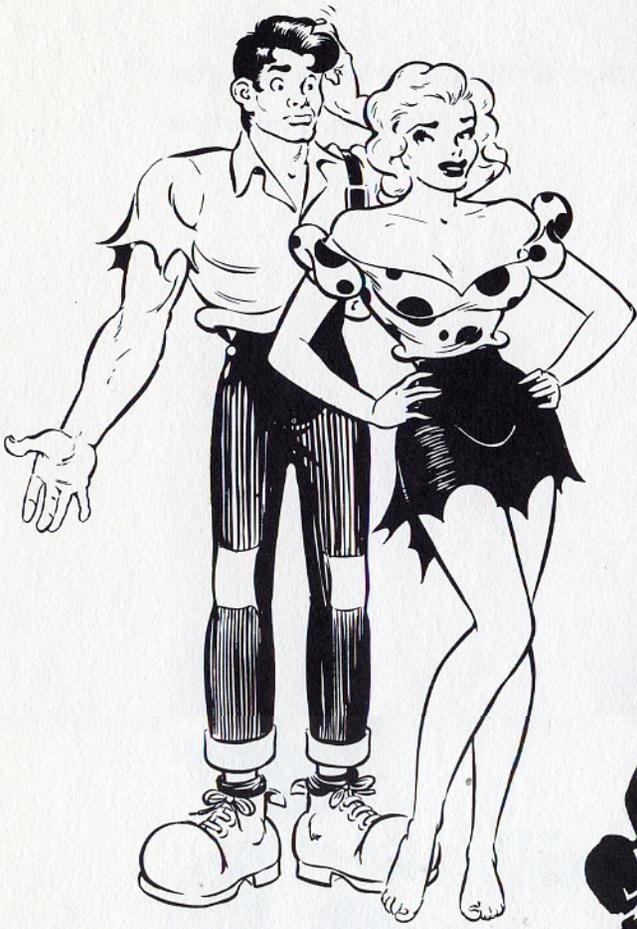
Gurney Williams

Dick Cavalli

Whitney Darrow, Jr.

Virgil Partch

Barney Tobey



The figure in detail

In Lesson Two you studied and practiced drawing the comic figure in its basic form. We are now ready to tackle the comic figure in greater detail. What you learned in Lesson 2 will still apply in this lesson. The gesture-action sketch or stick figure should continue to be used throughout the first part of this Course. The preliminary figure is the "skeleton" which helps you determine the size and basic shape of the cartoon character.

It is at this time that your own individual style will start to assert itself. Don't fight it. Use what we give you as a guide, follow it as closely as possible, but if you find that your own style starts to wander in respect to details of features and technique of inking, let it. When we criticize your work we will keep this in mind and try to help you develop along your own path. Of all arts, cartooning is probably the most individual. A cartoonist must draw as he sees and feels. Remember that you are portraying the doings of human beings. Each of us sees and draws our fellow humans in a little different light.

To show you how styles may differ and yet be built from the same basic beginning, each member of the faculty has drawn a comic figure, starting from a simple foundation and proceeding to the final inked figure. Their styles are miles apart, but each started in a similar way and used a similar method to determine size, action and over-all shape.

While practicing drawing the cartoon figure, don't tumble into the nasty pitfall of always drawing figures in the same position. Many beginners and even some professionals develop, without being aware of it, the bad habit of drawing most of their figures facing in the same direction, and with the hands

and legs in the same position. It may be fun to practice drawing the figure in one position to show off to your friends, but even they will tire of it if you don't change it once in a while. The human figure is never static — even when it is asleep or relaxing, there is a feeling of motion — and the cartoonist must be able to draw it in any of its countless positions.

At this stage of your work, don't pay too much attention to fancy clothes and shading. These things will be covered in greater detail later in the Course. For now, you are primarily concerned with drawing the figure in simple outline. Keep the dress plain. Many beginners who have failed to construct their comic figure soundly will try to cover up the bad job with clothes and shading. This never works. A figure that is off balance or improperly constructed will remain so, regardless.

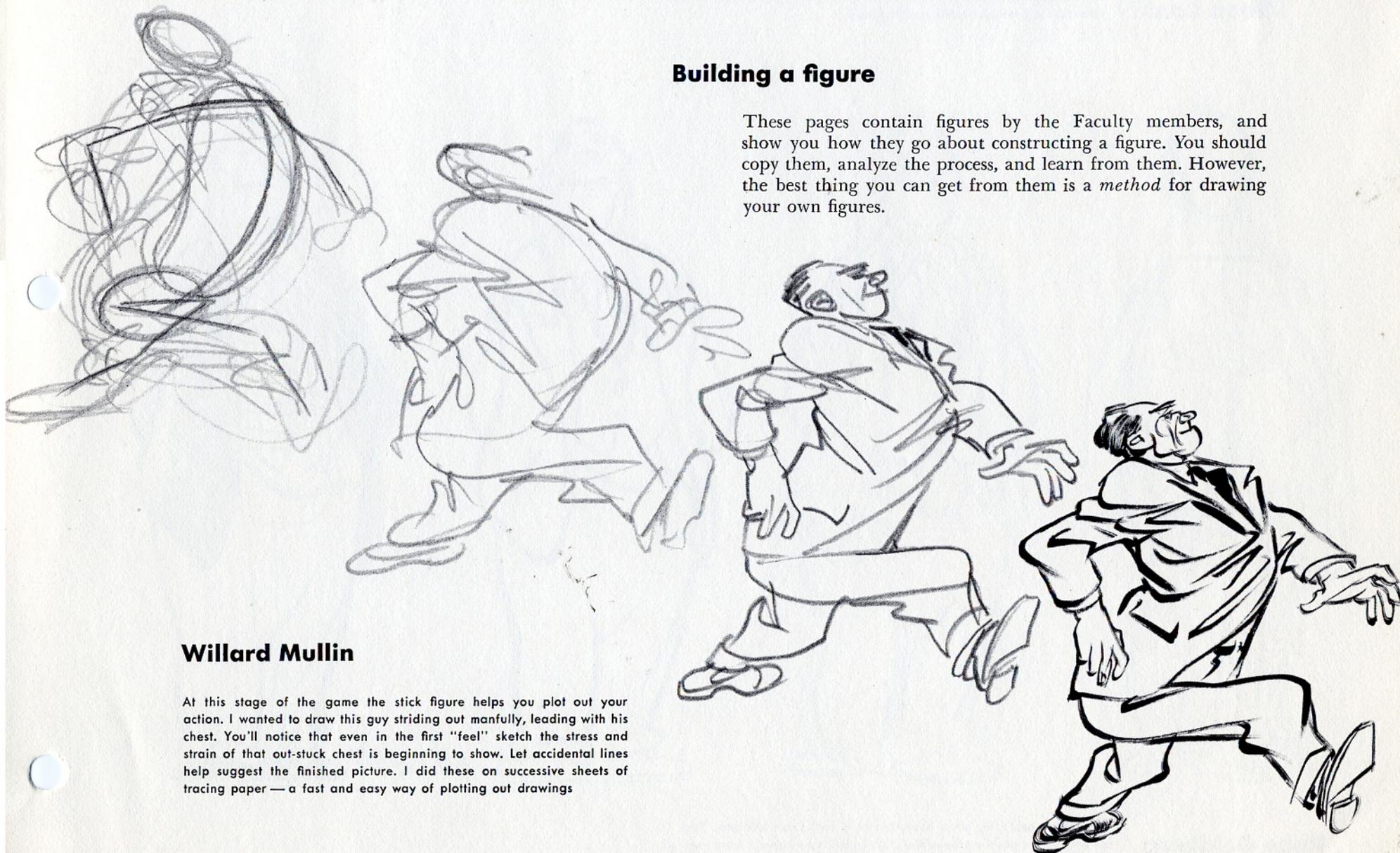
When working on this lesson, pencil lightly, because after you ink the figure you will want to clean it up by removing the pencil guide lines with an eraser. Heavy pencil lines are hard to remove and will give your drawing a messy look. When the figure is finished in pencil, and you are sure that it is the way you want it, you can start inking. Ink with care, but try not to freeze up. Ink is so final that it seems to scare most beginners. The only way to overcome this fear of inking is to throw yourself into it and let the pen or brush swish out the figure. Don't be afraid of making mistakes in ink. Ink mistakes can be fixed if they are not too bad. You can always start over. You won't learn to ink with complete freedom by drawing three or four figures; it will take hundreds — but each completed figure will make the next one that much easier.

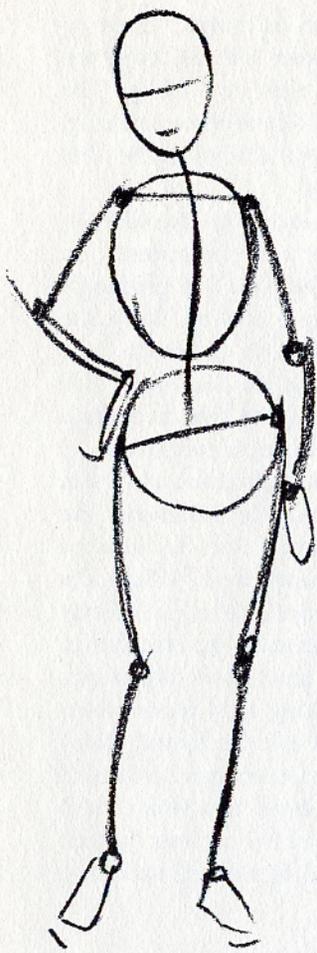
Building a figure

These pages contain figures by the Faculty members, and show how they go about constructing a figure. You should copy them, analyze the process, and learn from them. However, the best thing you can get from them is a *method* for drawing your own figures.

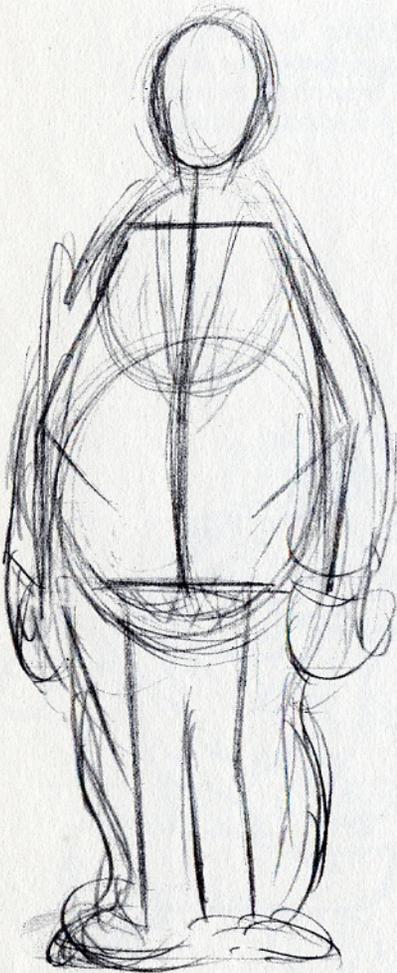
Willard Mullin

At this stage of the game the stick figure helps you plot out your action. I wanted to draw this guy striding out manfully, leading with his chest. You'll notice that even in the first "feel" sketch the stress and strain of that out-stuck chest is beginning to show. Let accidental lines help suggest the finished picture. I did these on successive sheets of tracing paper — a fast and easy way of plotting out drawings

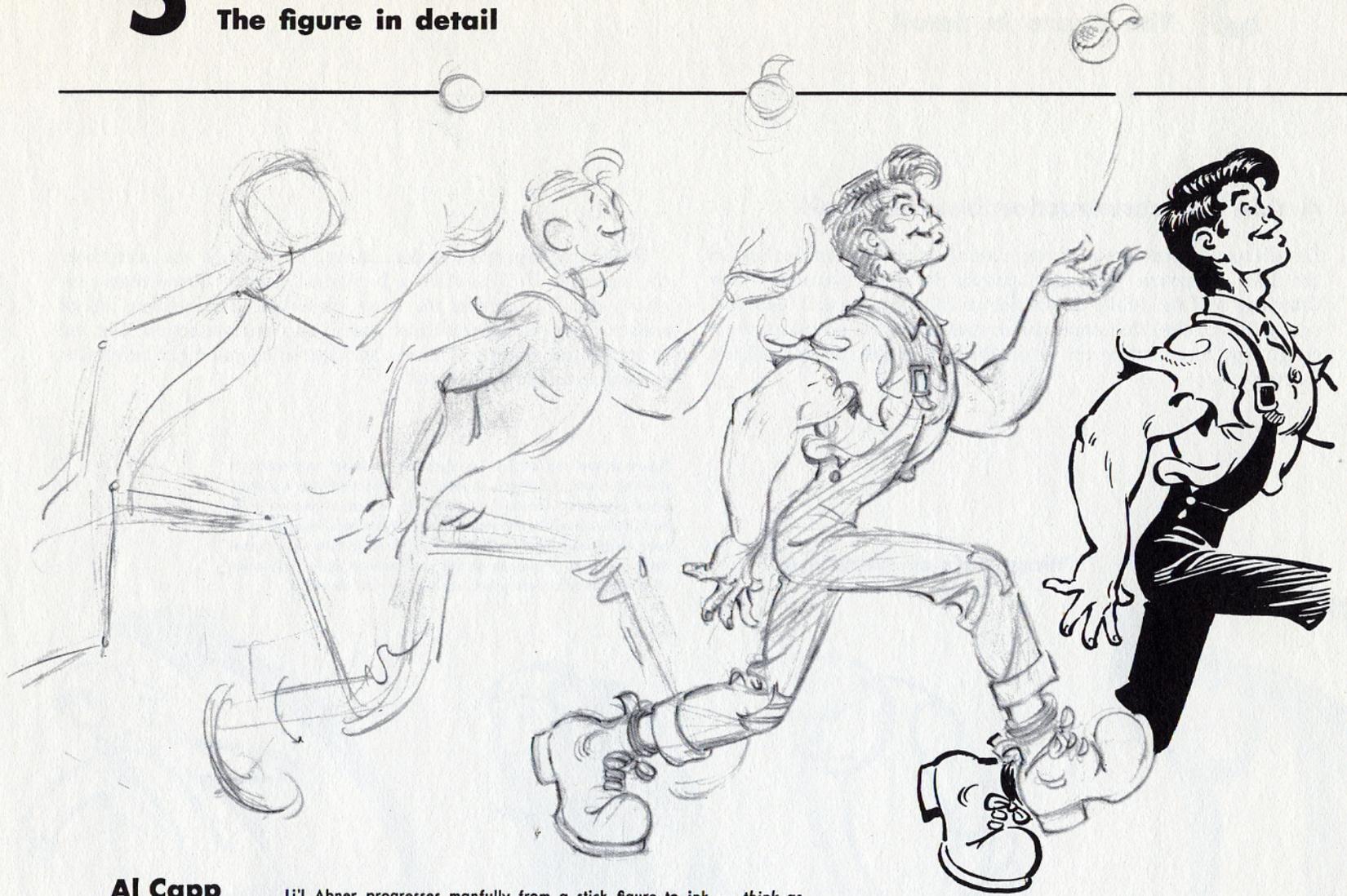


**Milton Caniff**

The realistic adventure figure starts with the stick figure, requires more attention to life-like details and anatomy

**Rube Goldberg**

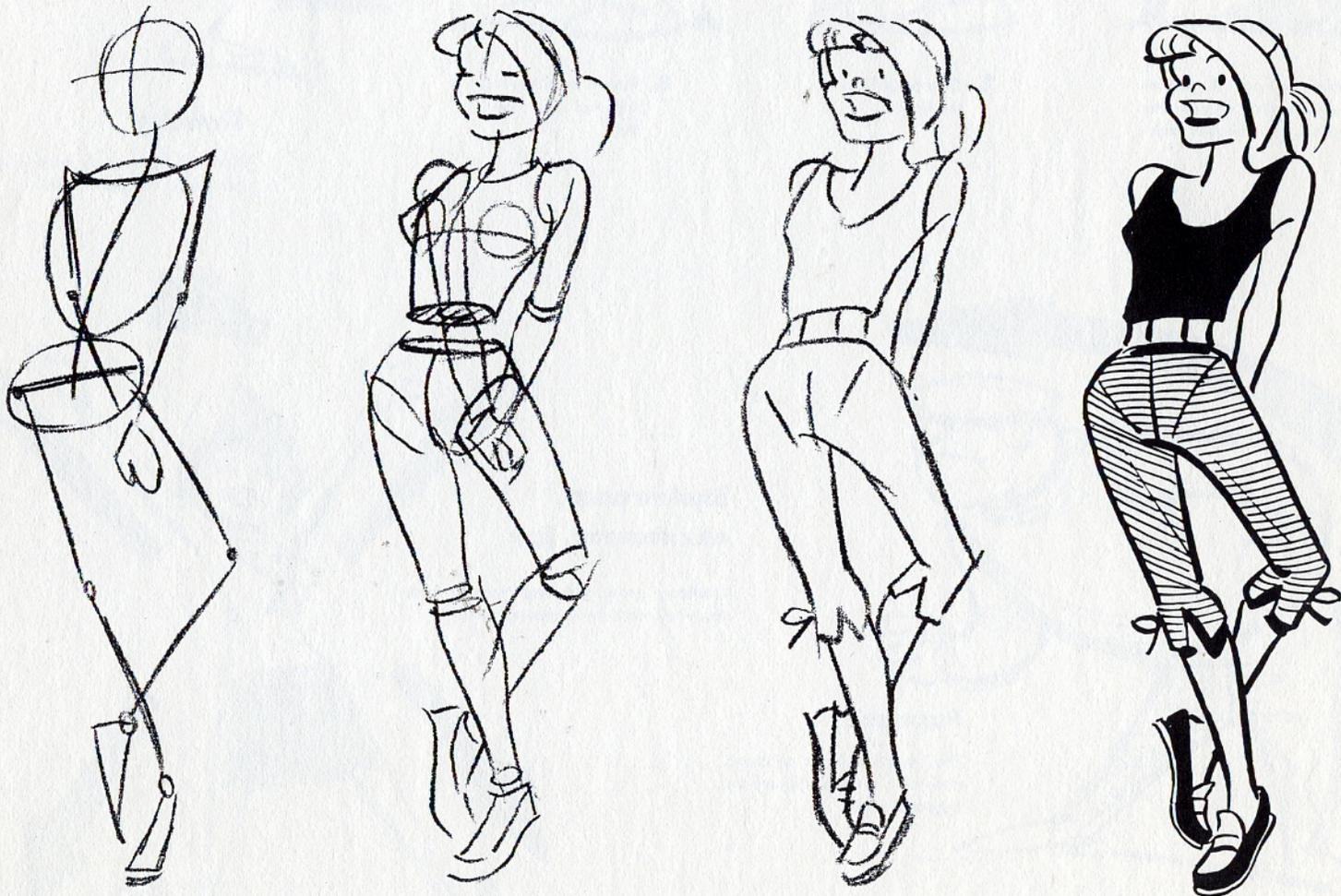
I wanted a pompous, large executive of a very small business. First, I set up a loose doodle around the stick figure, then came a more careful job of penciling. Outlines are inked in first, then come the patterns, details and shading



Al Capp

Li'l Abner progresses manfully from a stick figure to ink — think as you draw

Al Capp



Harry Haenigsen

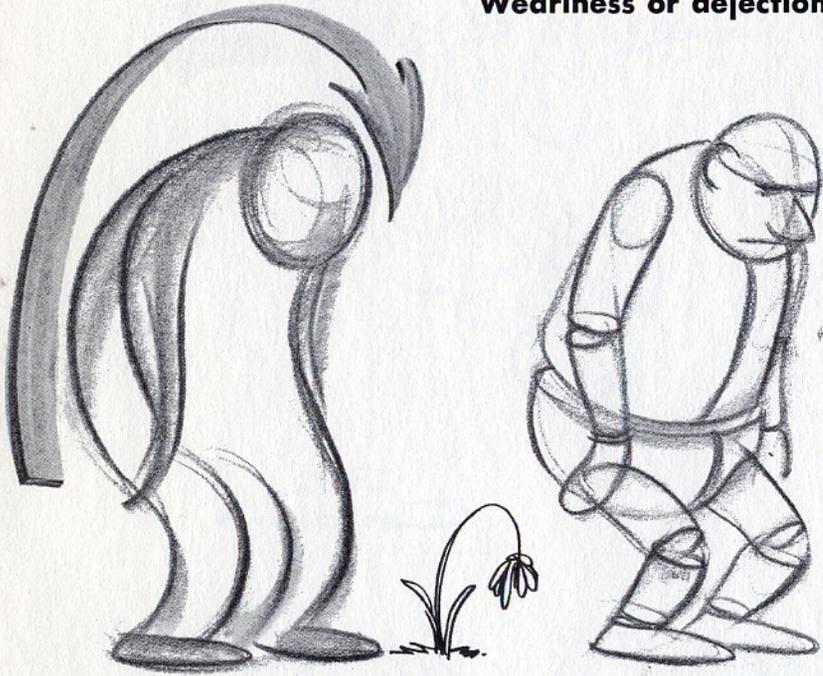
Here's a development of Penny in action to prove that the stick figure method works

Action and construction before detail

Details are important in giving character to cartoon figures, so the more observant you are of people the more successful your drawings will be. Make a practice of carrying a small pad and pencil. You'll find that once you've made a sketch, no matter how rough, you'll remember the details long after the sketch has been thrown away.

However, important as details are, they should not overpower the figure itself. Too often a beginner, eager to draw character-giving details, neglects the more important preliminary job of constructing the figure solidly and in appropriate action. Get the overall action of figure, hands, and feet solid and right before becoming involved with detail.

Weariness or dejection



1. Establish the overall gesture or action first. Note the drooping, wilted-flower look

2. Give solid form to the figure

Figure action can be just as eloquent as facial expression in showing mood or attitude. A dejected person droops; a pugnacious guy leans forward aggressively; a scared person pulls back. Put yourself in the place of your characters. Imagine what your reactions would be in the situation and then exaggerate those reactions. If you can do this your cartoon figures will come alive instead of standing around like wooden dummies

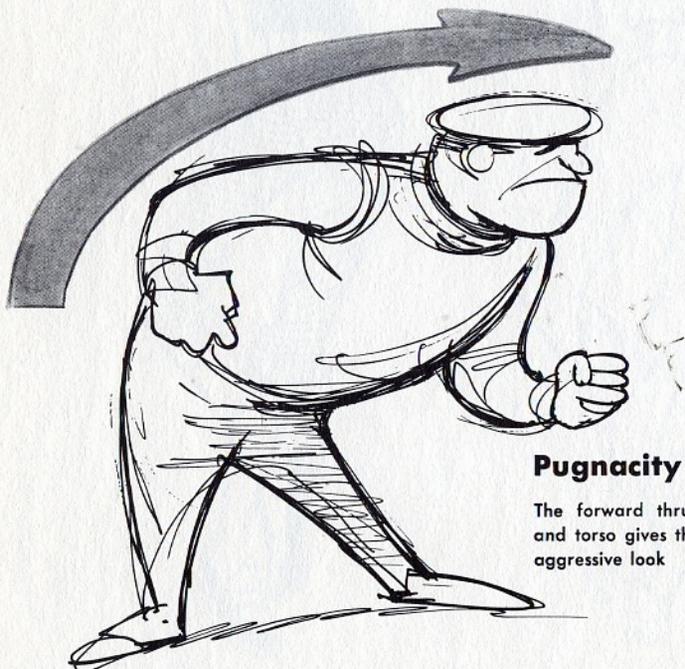


3. Finally add clothing and other details



Timidity

Here the figure pulls back to suggest fright or apprehension



Pugnacity

The forward thrust of head and torso gives the figure an aggressive look

Exuberance, excitement, joy

Outflung arms and legs radiate from torso to create an explosive quality



Hands

Look at any number of comic strips and you will have trouble finding a hand that follows true, anatomical construction. But every hand you see gives the *impression* of a real hand and not a lifeless wad of dough attached to the wrist. No matter how loosely he draws hands, a good cartoonist knows what a real hand looks like—and has simplified that knowledge for his work.

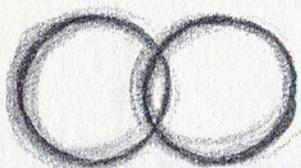
You don't have to go to art school to know what a hand looks like. You have two at the ends of your own arms. Use your own models over and over, either drawing them directly, or by look-

ing in a mirror. They'll show you the positions hands can assume. Then—with these pages as a guide—learn to *simplify* them.

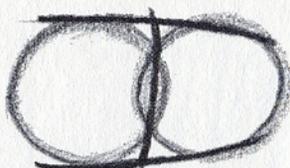
Follow the same procedure you did in drawing the entire figure: establish the overall shape and action before becoming involved with details. Think of the hand as encased in a mitten with all four fingers as a unit and only the thumb projecting from the palm.

In telling a story and showing expression, the hands are second only to the face, so you must learn to draw them in every action.

Drawing the hand in mitten form



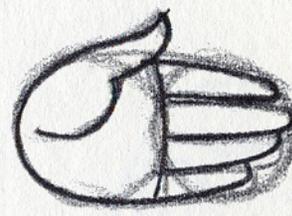
1. Draw two interlocking circles—one to represent the palm and the other the fingers



2. Draw tapering horizontal lines touching the edges of the circles and a curved vertical line between them



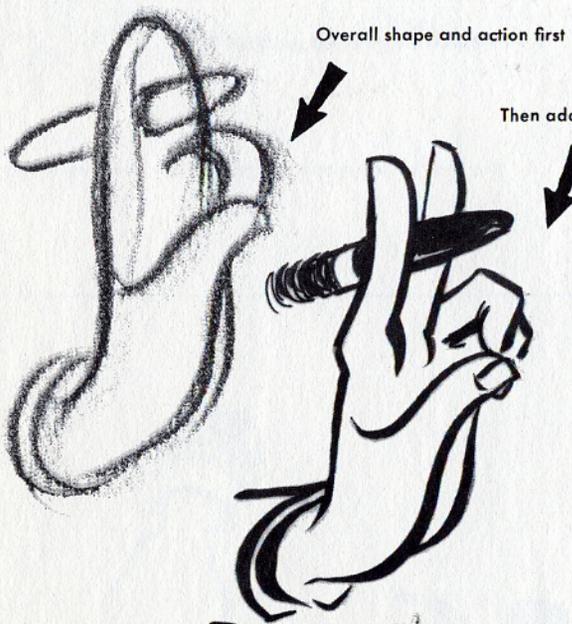
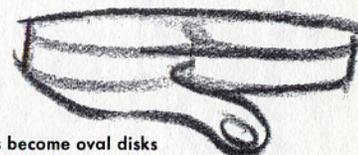
3. Add a thumb and you have the basic mitten shape



4. Complete the hand by drawing the fingers



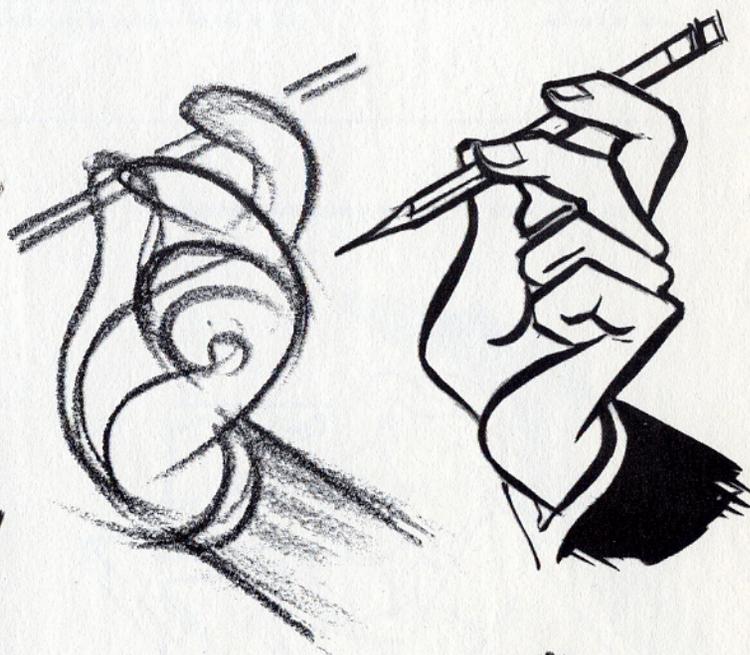
As the hand turns over to a side view the circles become oval disks



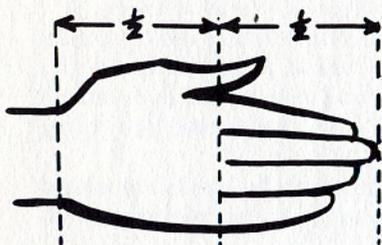
Overall shape and action first

Then add the details

In the closed fist the third and fourth fingers curve in toward thumb



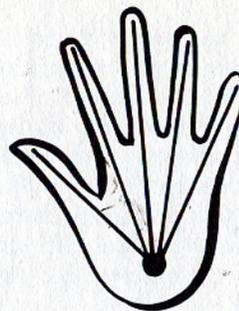
Things to remember



Note proportion of fingers to the body of the hand



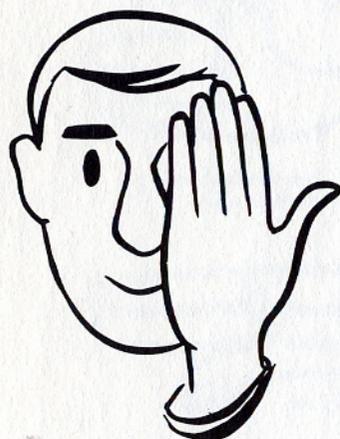
Each finger is a different length



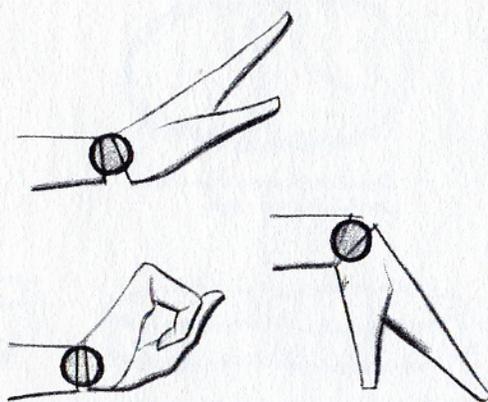
Fingers and thumb all radiate from the same point



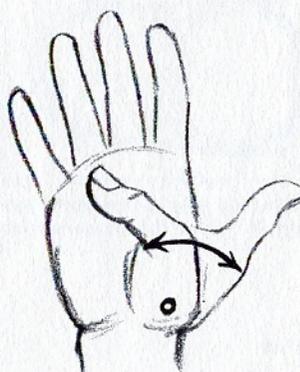
The fingers and thumb each have three joints



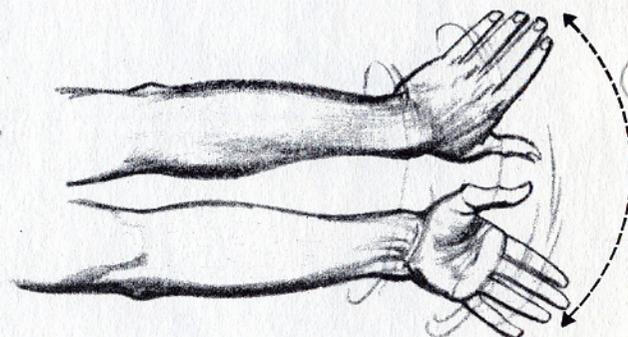
In size the hand reaches from chin to hairline



The great variety of wrist movements in combination with the action of the arm gives a complete range of movement



The thumb is attached to the wrist and swings independently of the rest of the hand

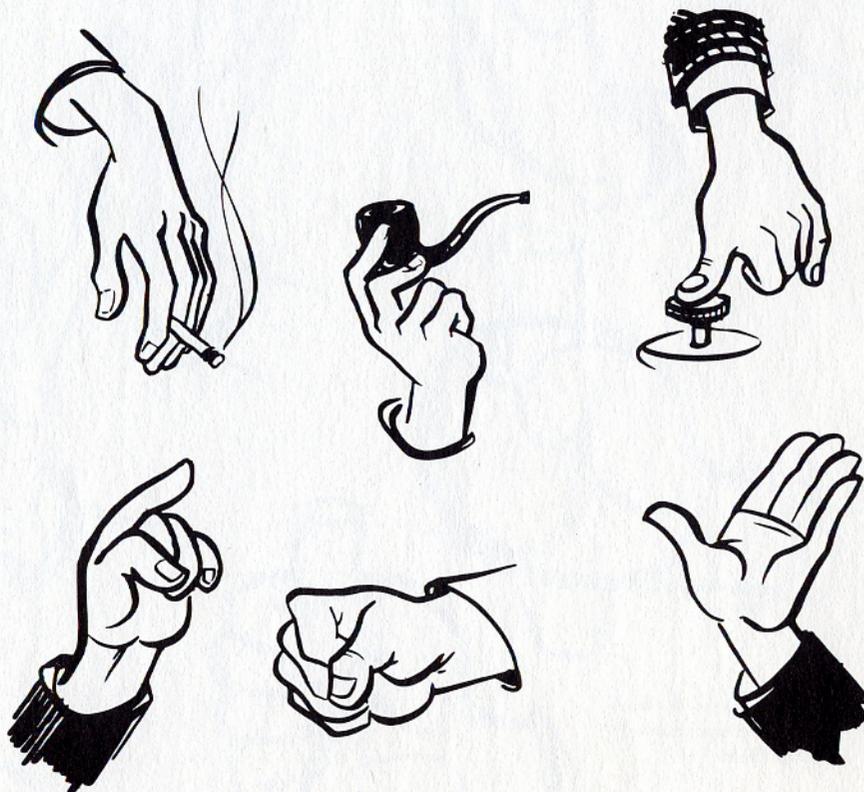


The hand in conjunction with the arm can turn completely around

Use a mirror to study your own hands



Practice drawing 'em in every possible position and action



Cartoon hands

In drawing cartoons, as in the old Chinese brush drawing, "it isn't what they put in — it's what they leave out." Good cartoonists simplify their hands — but you can't simplify until you understand the actual construction.

Don't ever kid yourself into thinking that a successful cartoon has been "tossed off" by the artist. Write this down in your little book of knowledge: Every line that has the appearance of careless informality is the result of the greatest care and past study on the part of the cartoonist who has drawn it.



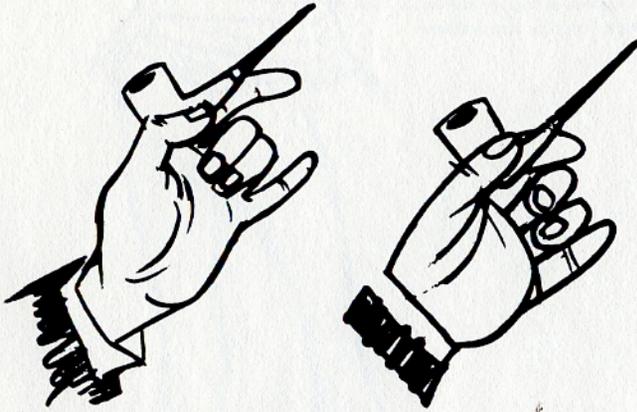
This detailed drawing would be fine in a cartoon showing a close-up view of the hand but otherwise it's a bit too complicated for an average cartoon



A simpler version of the same hand. Still fairly realistic but with most of the detail omitted



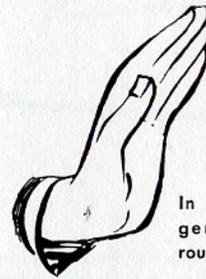
Further simplification of outline gives an exaggerated comic version of the hand



Another example of simplification and exaggeration to give the hand more cartoon quality

Types of hands

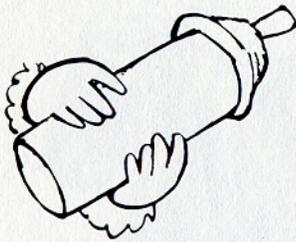
Be sure to give the proper type of hands to your cartoon figures. The hands of a circus fat lady attached to the arms of an old-maid schoolteacher would look grotesque and out of place; an elderly gent's wrinkled and gnarled claws on a teenager would make your drawing look decidedly queer; and hands with slender tapering fingers, although fine for a hairdresser or piano virtuoso, would hardly belong to a stevedore. Always give your cartoon figures hands suitable to their character or occupation.



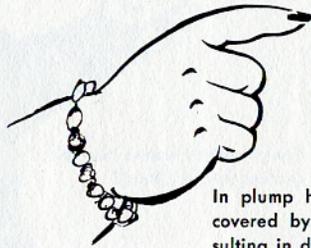
In youth, hands and fingers are smooth and rounded



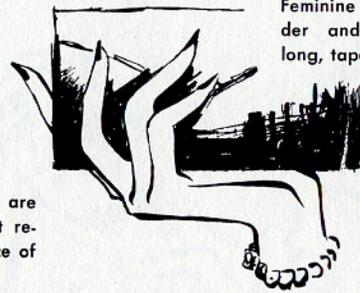
In old age, bony protruding knuckles and wrinkled skin are characteristic



Infants' hands are small and chubby with short, pudgy fingers



In plump hands, fingers are covered by layers of fat resulting in dimples in place of visible knucklebones



Feminine hands are slender and graceful with long, tapering fingers



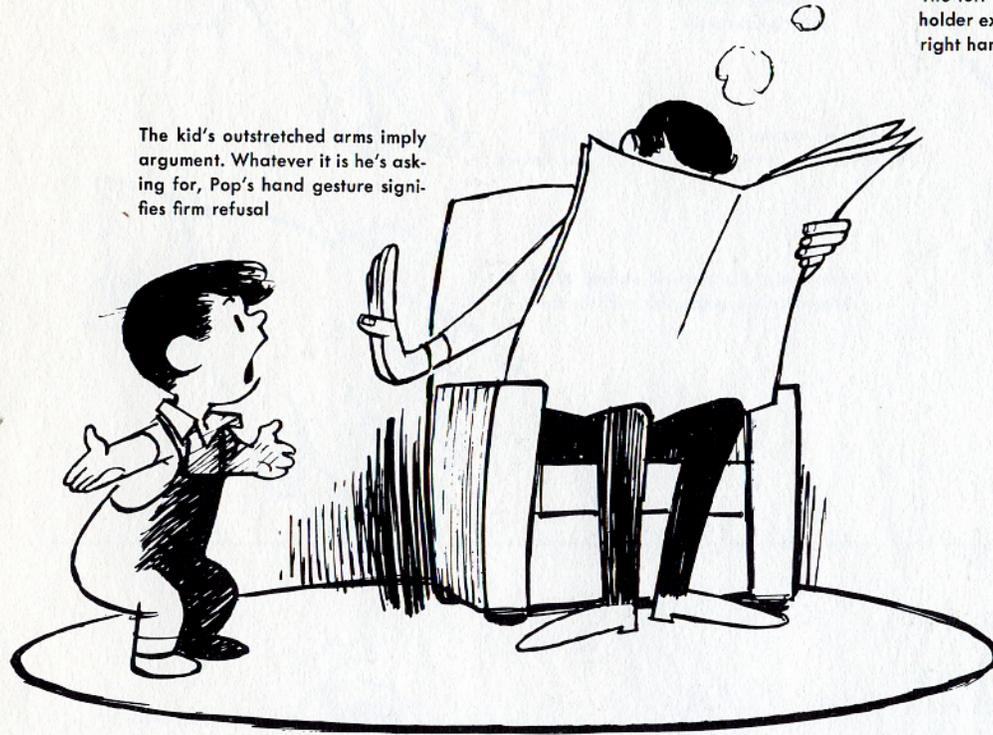
Masculine hands are more square and angular



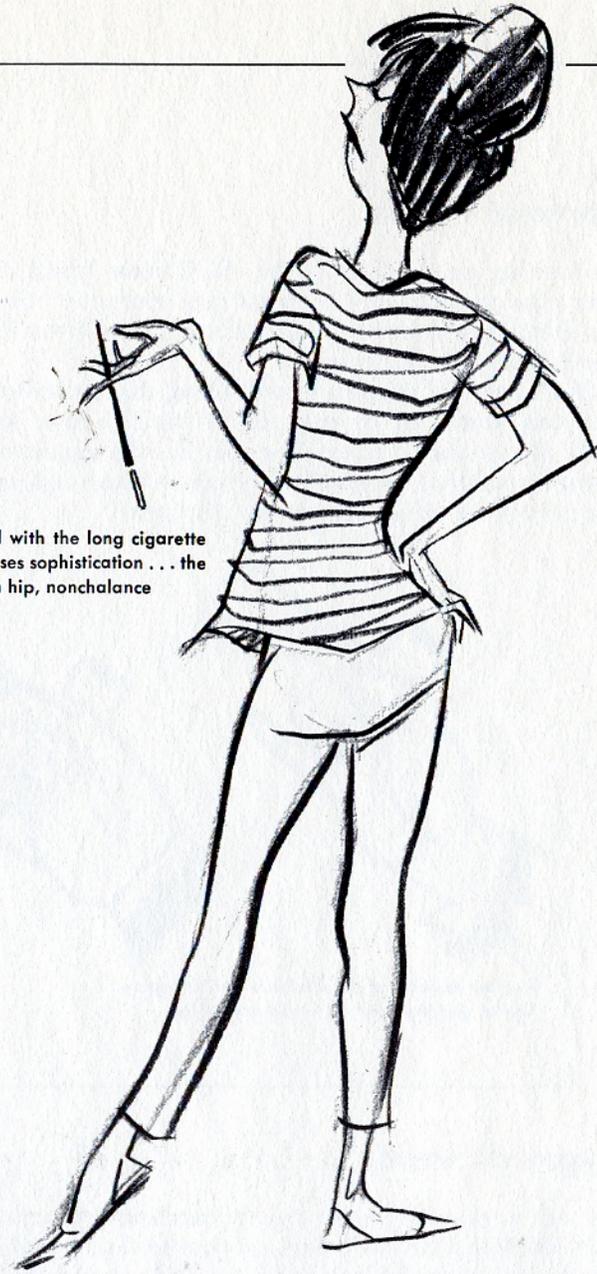
It helps to think of how your hands would look if you blacked them in solidly like a silhouette. The eye catches the meaning of a gesture more quickly if the fingers are spread out a bit. At left, note how the hands above are stagnant in silhouette — and how much more expressive the lower ones are with the fingers spread

Hands help tell a story

After the face, the hands are the most expressive part of the human body. Even a hand hanging loosely at the side adds something to a cartoon if it was properly "felt" by the cartoonist. Watch hands and their movements — and when you draw them, try to "feel" what they are doing. Even when they are not to be in motion, give hands a fair amount of thought as you draw them. Don't just put them in as a matter of course. Hands express character and add greatly to humor.



The kid's outstretched arms imply argument. Whatever it is he's asking for, Pop's hand gesture signifies firm refusal



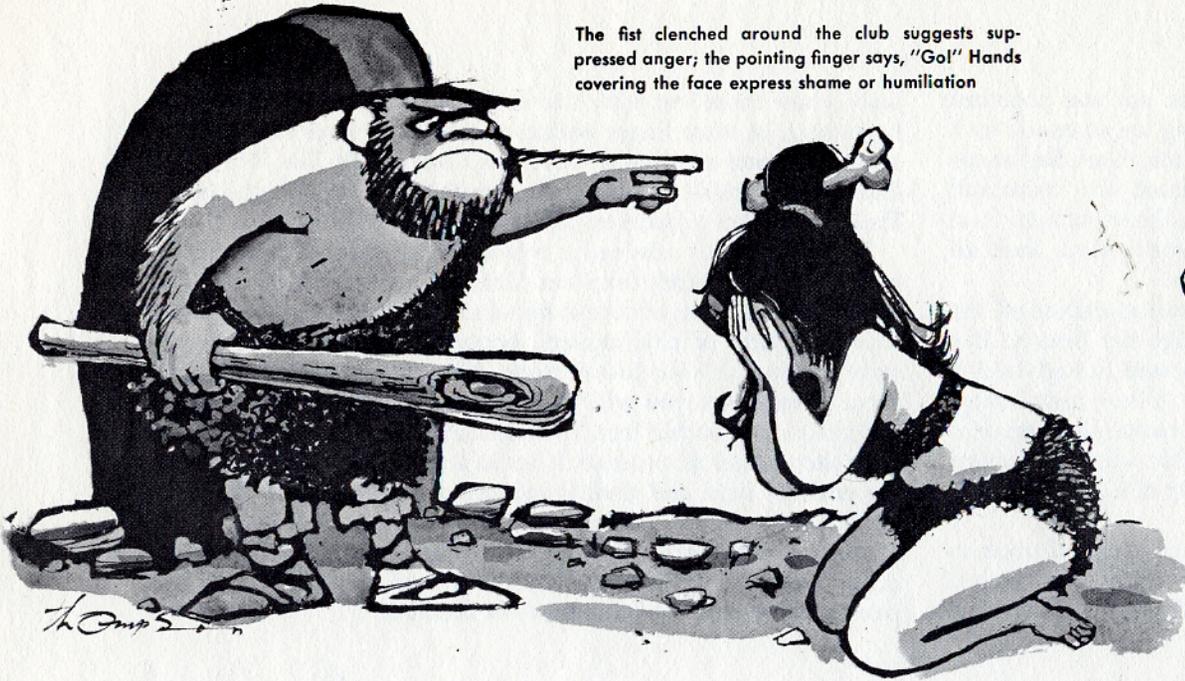
The left hand with the long cigarette holder expresses sophistication . . . the right hand on hip, nonchalance

The forefinger of the boss stabs the clerk accusingly. The outturned palms of the employee say, "Honest, Boss, I didn't do it!"



Every motorist knows that this gesture means "Stop!"





The fist clenched around the club suggests suppressed anger; the pointing finger says, "Go!" Hands covering the face express shame or humiliation



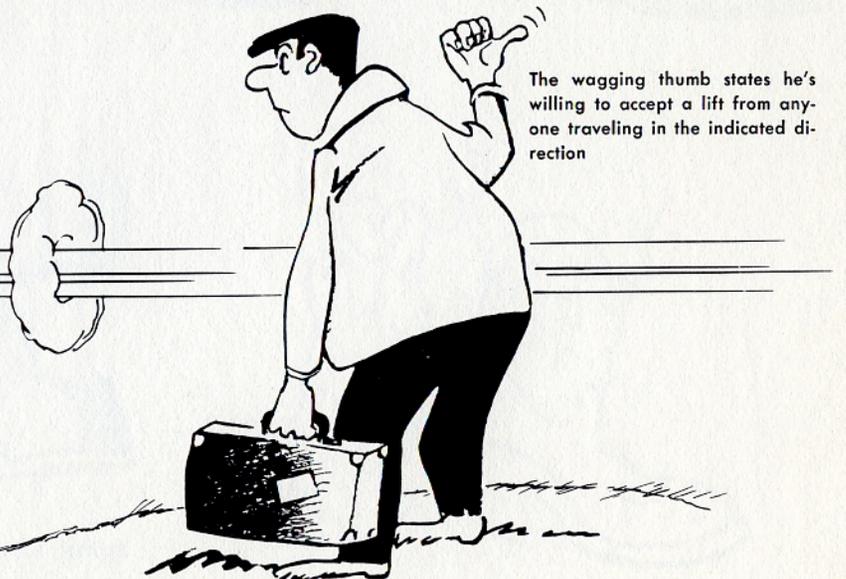
The upraised hand warns members of his congregation that their conduct is observed from on high while the left hand points out their destination unless they mend their ways



The back of one hand to the forehead, fingers clutching a lace handkerchief, and the palm of the other beseeching witness to her agony testify that she belongs to the "Oh, the pain of it all!" school of acting



One hand supporting an elbow and fingers of the other to the lips signify that he's pondering a weighty problem



The wagging thumb states he's willing to accept a lift from anyone traveling in the indicated direction



See, observe and remember the hand actions of the people around you

Feet and shoes

There is something about bare feet that is not too pleasant. Women manicure their toenails to give the big toe an exotic look when it is seen sticking out the end of openwork shoes. But somehow a toe is a toe and is pretty closely associated with corns and bunions. A woman's foot, when covered by a sheer stocking and lifted to graceful heights by a long, thin French heel, loses all suggestion of the chiropodist's surgical touch.

Miss America may wear a scanty bathing suit to expose all the anatomical points on which the experts judge her beauty. But you will notice that her trotters are neatly encased in high-heeled shoes that hide her unsightly toes from view. A bare high instep, when exposed to the eye, is merely bony protrusion that happens to be located somewhere below the ankle. But when this sharp mound is partly covered by the graceful curve of a stylish shoe it becomes the essence of pedal allure.

There are few occasions when the cartoonist is called upon to draw bare feet. But he must not ignore the feet in their natural state. He must, as in the case of hands and other parts of the

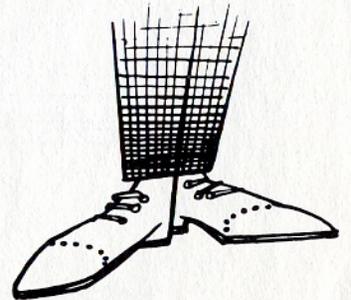
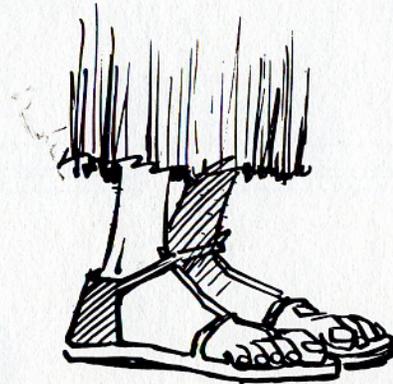
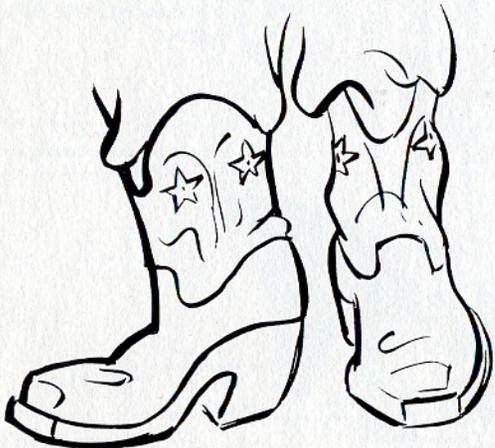
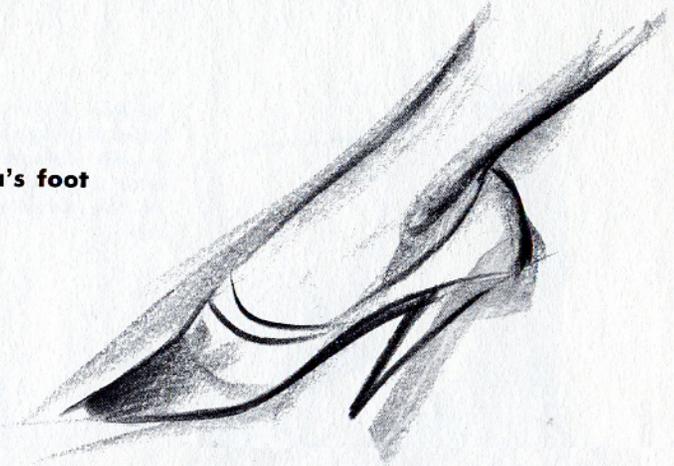
body, know those feet as he knows his brothers and sisters. In the beginning, he must linger with the chiropodist over each toenail and anklebone and learn what the things look like. He must know what's inside the shoe, whether that shoe be a high-heeled French model or a battered pair of Father's slippers.

The cartoonist's mission, as related to the things we stand on, is to draw shoes rather than feet. Drawing shoes is an art in itself. Linger long in front of shoe-store windows. There you will see an infinite variety of clodhoppers, boots and doghouses that will serve you well in your future work. When you get down to using them in cartoons, you will learn to put big shoes on small feet and little shoes on big feet. You will have fun ripping the uppers from the soles so that toes stick out in sly embarrassment or showing entirely bare and unadorned pedal extremities in all their knobby majesty.

Shoes are the cartoonist's delight. They have plenty of character. They can be funny or beautiful. And they can play a big part in expressing the personality of the figure.



Even Miss America's foot
is just a foot until
it is dressed



By their footwear ye shall know them

Action of the feet

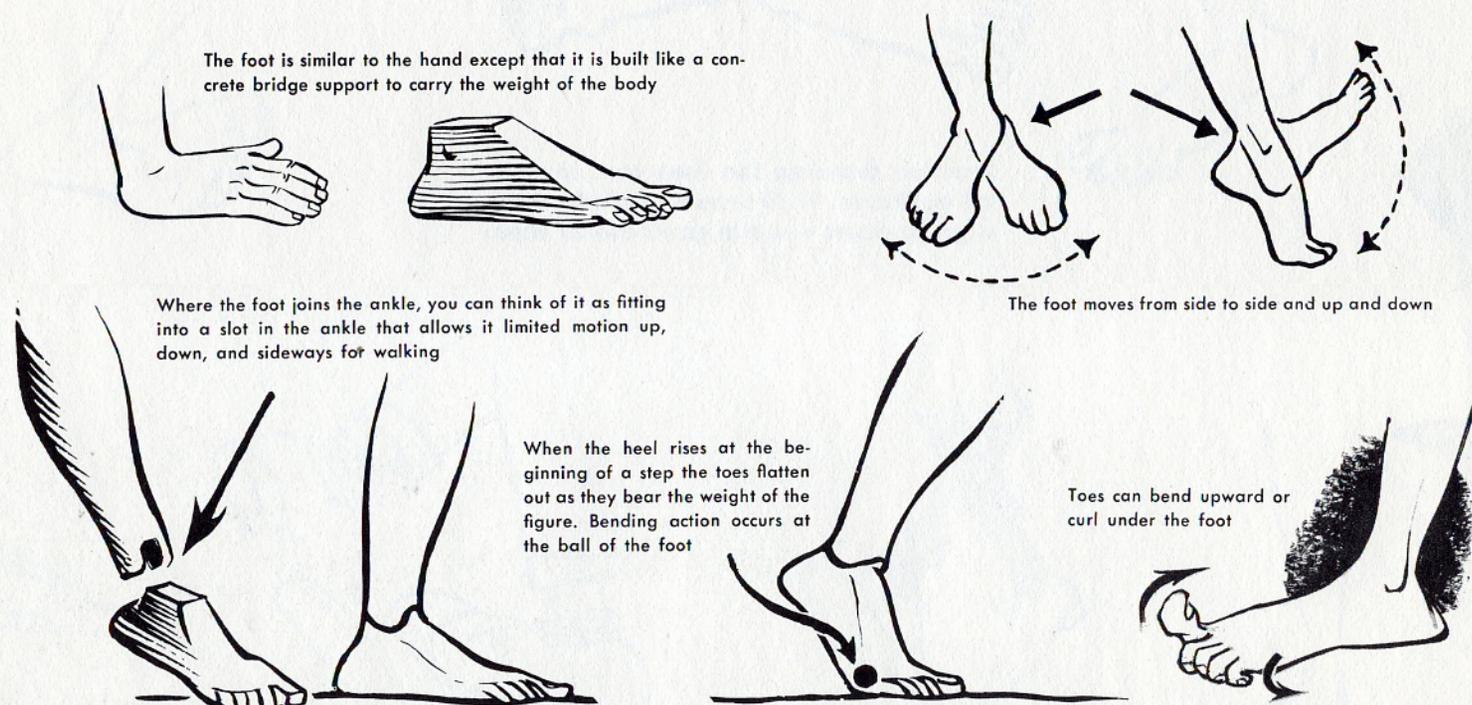
One of the great advantages of being a cartoonist is that you are not limited by set rules governing what the human figure can or cannot do. This applies to feet as well as to other parts of the body. In the drawings on this page you see the limited action of a real human foot. This action is further limited by the shoe, which inhibits the ability of the toes to bend upward or curl under—both very expressive actions.

Many a good action cartoon is spoiled because the feet are too set or stiff, so, when it is called for, try to give the feet expressive action by a little exaggeration. However, exaggerate only such actions as the foot actually can perform, or your cartoon figures

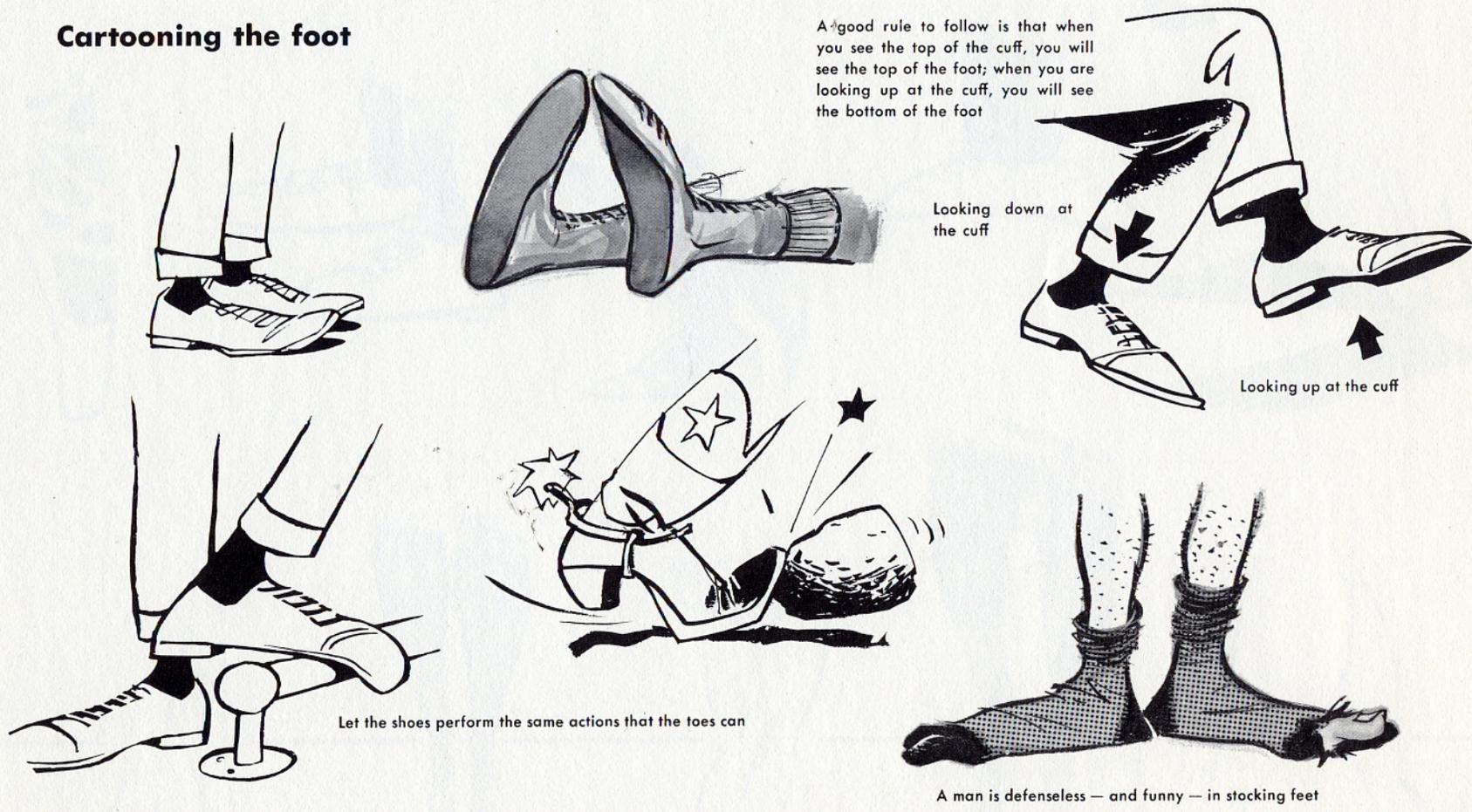
will appear to have their pedal extremities awkwardly out of joint.

Don't overlook the bottoms of shoes. A man running away from you will show the bottom of the foot that is behind. There is a lot of "feeling" to the bottoms of shoes. When a man is knocked down he looks really out if you show him with his feet toward the reader, and the bottoms of his shoes toed in.

Regardless of how you draw shoes, remember they must fit the rest of the character. Don't draw the same kind of shoes on all of your characters. Notice that your friends don't wear the same kind of shoes.



Cartooning the foot



FAMOUS ARTISTS CARTOON COURSE
Student Work
Lesson 5

To study and practice

In this lesson you learn to draw hands and feet -- the two most important details of any figure. After the head, the hands and feet come next in adding expression to your figures. There is a hand gesture or a foot gesture to go with every facial expression and figure action. Learn to use these gestures effectively in your cartoons. Never be careless about hands and feet.

Practice copying the hands and feet in the text until you are sure of their structure. It's also a good idea to use your own hands for models, either directly or as seen in a mirror. The skillful drawing of hands and feet is so important to your future as a professional that we can't overemphasize the need for spending plenty of time on them.

The following assignments give you your first crack at drawing a complete panel picture for criticism. From now on, when you practice, rule panels first and keep your figures inside them. (It will be of help to you at this point to look ahead and give some study to Lesson 11.) Try for eye-pleasing relationships between your figures and the space they occupy. However, we will grade these assignments on the basis of how well you have understood and used the information in Lesson 5. Do both of them in ink.

The assignment you are to mail to the School for criticism

ASSIGNMENT 1

On a sheet of 11 x 14-inch Bristol board, draw a panel 10 inches high and 8 inches wide, neatly centered on the page. In this panel draw a man leaning forward to ring a doorbell with one hand and holding a package or any small object in his other. Make the figure action and facial expression as animated and interesting as possible. Keep the background simple.

IMPORTANT -- Mark this sheet ASSIGNMENT 1.

ASSIGNMENT 2

On another sheet of 11 x 14-inch Bristol board, draw a panel 8 inches high and 10 inches wide. In it draw a man wearing shirt and trousers, seated on a stool with his legs crossed. One hand holds a book he is reading, the other a cigar or cigarette. Try to make the action of his hands and feet as expressive as possible.

IMPORTANT -- Mark this sheet ASSIGNMENT 2.

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