

Picture This

If I didn't make my living as a writer I think I'd like to be a cartoonist. There's really only one thing holding me back: I can't draw. (There are some critics who say I can't write either but that hasn't stopped me from being a writer!)

I am a cartoon aficionado and the day Gary Larson retired his Far Side cartoon was a very sad day indeed around our place. I try reading Sunday comics but newspapers are downsizing and the first thing they are cutting are the cartoon strips. As a result, they aren't as good as they used to be.

I can read eight pages of cartoon strips in any major Sunday paper and barely break a smile. That's why I admire the work of cowboy cartoonists like Jerry Palen, Mad Jack Hanks and Earl. It's a great gift, this ability to make a person smile, and rare is the week that I don't get a good guffaw from their cartoons.

Although I'm no artist I could "draw" upon my experiences to come up with punch lines. So, I've come up with what I call do-it-yourself cartoons for publications on austerity budgets. I supply the words and you do the art. For example, draw a picture of a feedlot steer with a packinghouse in the background. Here's the caption: "Hmm, they bring us all the delicious food we can eat and we don't have to do any work. I wonder, what's the catch?"

Got the idea? Good. Here's another. Under the heading, "Why people don't have elephants for pets," draw a picture of an urbanite picking up after her petite pooch with a little plastic bag.

Or how about this one: Two chimpanzees are sitting in a tree at a zoo watching a PETA protest. One chimp asks, "Where did we go wrong? Too much inbreeding, perhaps?"

In a similar vein, be sure to draw this one in color. A hunter is wearing camo pants, camo shirt, camo jacket, a camo gun, camouflage boots... with a bright orange vest and orange cap. One

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deer says to the other, "Does he think we're color blind? The idiot must have dressed himself this morning."

Sharpen your pencil and let's try a few farm animal cartoons. A young bull calf, with an ear tag in each ear and a nose ring turns to his buddy and says, "I wanted a tongue stud but my mother wouldn't let me."

Here's another. At that moment when a preg-checking vet has his arm in a cow up to his shoulder the cow says, "If that pervert would just ask, I'd be glad to pee on a stick."

On a related matter, draw a picture of a masculine bull smoking a cigarette with the caption: "I'd like to kill the fella who invented artificial insemination."

I can also envision a cow after being unloaded on a new ranch turning to the realtor and saying, "I was hoping for it to be all on one level, something with a view, a pool perhaps, less rocks and more grass."

For the more cosmopolitan crowd you could draw a Kobe beef animal in Japan being fed Bud Light under the caption, "Kinda defeats the purpose, don't you think?"

Perhaps you are better at drawing birds. If so, under your picture of a group of geese flying in V formation add this caption: "Would a little variety be too much to ask? For once could we fly in a B, or maybe even a D?" Or, two turkeys playing Russian Roulette on the day before Thanksgiving. "Go ahead," one says. "What have you got to lose?"

Here's a bird cartoon I think cattle ranchers might get a laugh out of: two buzzards are sitting in the middle of the road sharing a road kill. One buzzard turns to the other and says, "Do you notice that after awhile it all starts to taste like chicken?"

The following cartoons are for advanced artists only. Two hunting dogs are baying at the base

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of a tree and looking down on them is the biggest, most ferocious mountain lion in the world. One dog turns to the other and says, "You ever get the idea we might be barking up the wrong tree?"

Or how about a pack of wolves dining on Wyoming lamb with the caption, "Who says there's no such thing as a free lunch?"

Now you know why I'm a writer and not a cartoonist. If none of these cartoons failed to bring a smile to your face don't blame me. After all, you drew your own conclusions.