















Ralph Crabtree:
Campus Comic,
Commentator,
Critic (& Creation
of Ron Wheeler)

It was a warm breezy October afternoon when Ralph Crabtree, amid cheers and red balloons, stepped from the printed page onto the NU football field to acknowledge his victory at the Homecoming polls, even if he didn't win the crown.

Ralph, the comic strip star created by Ron Wheeler appears in the *Daily Nebraskan* campus newspaper. His write-in candidacy was a publicity stunt, both for Wheeler and for Homecoming.

During Homecoming week Wheeler and a Delta Upsilon fraternity brother made a paper mache Ralph head which the friend wore during halftime activities. The masked Ralph broke the traditional Homecoming mold.

But members of Tassels, the spirit organization sponsoring Homecoming activities, disqualified him on these two points:

- -Wheeler's newspaper campaigning was illegal.
- Wheeler could not prove Ralph was an
 ID-carrying University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior.

Though he received the most votes, Ralph was not crowned Homecoming King last Oct. 11.

Wheeler created "Ralph" in January 1975 to satirize the promotional gimmicks used on the UN-L campus by evangelist Josh McDowell. Feeling a personal exasperation, he caught a similar feeling

by Terri Willson



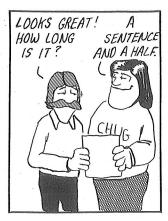














from the student body and captured the feeling in print.

His first strip featured Ralph with a fellow student who complained: "The next person to hand me a leaflet is going to get it shoved right down his throat," to which Ralph responded, "You must be joshing."

"Ralph" has continued to satirize anything from Nebraska weather, to the University Health Center, to the lines in which students wait for hours to drop or add courses.

"You learn as you go," said Wheeler, who is a business major. He is learning the responsibility that comes with being a humorist and an artist. "You don't always realize how far-reaching 'Ralph' is 'til someone points it out."

"Ralph", circulated in the *Daily Nebraskan* to a UN-L student population of some 22,000, is also published weekly in the *Antelope* at Kearney State College. Wheeler said, "You've got to be careful. You don't know who you may offend." This from a guy who in the same breath said, "I don't like to cause an uproar, yet I don't like to be censored." And the basis for his humor: "People should be able to laugh at themselves."

This last basic belief was nearly grounded one day. It was mid-September and cartoonist Wheeler had

left the Daily Nebraskan editor's office, looking shaken.

Half a dozen black students had crammed into the editor's small office and behind closed doors protested Wheeler's cartoon strip "Ralph" which had appeared in print that day.

While the strip traditionally and consistently has poked fun at life at UN-L, this day it had featured a black male with exaggerated thick lips, big ears and sunglasses. His name was "Marvelous Fabulous." He came from the ghetto and was trying out for "Coach Isboring's" football team.

Obviously when he drew that Sept. 11 cartoon, Wheeler did not know that perhaps his satire had gone too far. He had not expected a run-in with the University's black minority.

The next day Wheeler talked to his mother in Omaha on an office phone. "You know that 'Marvelous' cartoon I did? Letters to the editor keep pouring in." Slightly more at ease than the day before, he sat back casually in a swivel chair and told his mother about the campus controversy her son

Terri Willson is a junior, from Lincoln, majoring in journalism.

















was causing. Mrs. Wheeler may have wondered why Ron did not give *all* his spare time to University soccer. The injuries there were more definable.

With four panels of cartoon print, Wheeler had caused 18 letters to be written. They filled the editorial page every day for a week. Black students thought the cartoon was a putdown. Other students thought the blacks were too sensitive. With black ink on white paper wheeler had created what he calls the gray issue in humor—when people do not know whether to laugh or take offense.

Later that same afternoon, Wheeler, in tan jeans, bulky blue sweater and authentic white tennis shoes, was walking from class. His books slung on his left hip, he stopped to talk to a friend. A passerby, overhearing their conversation about the black cartoon, stopped to say he thought it was one of the best Wheeler had done.

Wheeler, not recognized by the student, winked at his friend, tilted his blond head to the right and said:

"Really? Don't you think that Ron Wheeler guy is a bigot?"

"Heck, no," came the reply, "I cut that cartoon out and put it on my bulletin board."

"But you're not black," Wheeler retorted. "Maybe that's why you think it's funny."

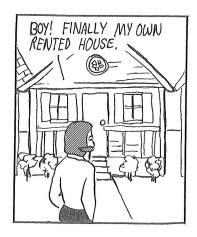
"Wheeler makes fun of everybody. It's supposed to be funny . . . I can't believe people would be that sensitive," the student said.

A glance at the "Rag" (nickname for *Daily Nebraskan*) that day would have proved the student right. "Ralph" featured a big man carrying a Nebraska pennant whom Wheeler called "a *Big* Red Rooter."

Since he first drew the cartoon last year, Wheeler has made several changes—both physical and intellectual—in "Ralph."

And he has added more characters: a girl friend for Ralph, Ralph's freshman brother and a women's libber. Marybeth, Herbie and Libby have been introduced as here-to-stay characters, while others enter the strip temporarily. When state high school basketball teams were in Lincoln last spring, for example, Wheeler couldn't resist drawing a cluster of splotchy-faced adolescents in town for an "acne convention." Often his cartoons will run in three- or four-day series. Once last semester, Ralph's dormie friend Durk went through a four-issue continuing romance.

One can find Wheeler at his drawing table, atop his stool in the *Daily Nebraskan* office, at least three hours a day, three or four days a week. His chin in his left hand, he flips through a stenographer's note-



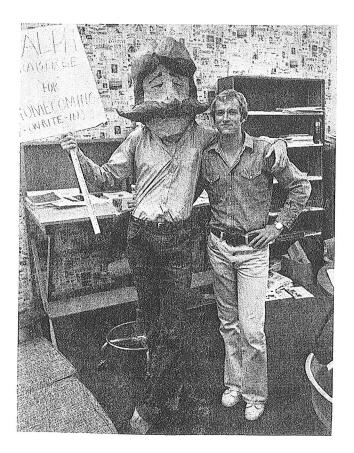












book, scanning several pages of strip dialogue written in bulk over vacation. Stopping at an idea for the next day's strip, he begins the process of transforming Ralph from a hastily-scrawled idea into a character ready for print.

Wheeler explains that the words go first on the empty strip. He carefully pencils them in slanted block letters. Then he sketches the characters.

"This is the fun part," he says, looking up. Today he introduces Ralph's girl friend. After half an hour of experimenting with face sketches on scrap paper, he achieves the right look for Marybeth.

Dipping a pen into ink and bending close to his work, Wheeler outlines his letterings and drawings, bringing them to life with dimension and detail. When the ink dries on the strip, he erases unnecessary pencil lines.

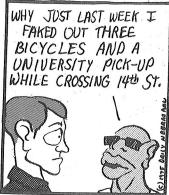
Ralph, says Wheeler, is the typical Joe College. Often he is the brunt of the joke. He is the nice guy who gets taken by everything around him—from the university system to life in general.

Wheeler started drawing soon after he could pick

A masked, but disqualified Ralph. The rise to notoriety...(Photo by Kevin Higley.)

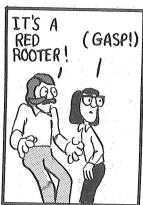


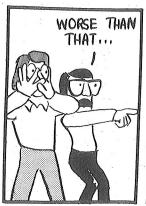


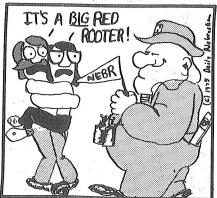












up a pencil. From a box in his room at home in Omaha he can pull out the evidence: pad after pad of sketches and drawings. Some are faint penciled impressions, others completely detailed and finished drawings. But all measure the signs of growth. There are grade-school boy imitations of Charlie Brown and more advanced, original comics.

Though Wheeler says his art teachers hated him because he always questioned their assignments, he saved one note from a college art professor who had encouraging words. Wheeler, who also draws serious caricatures, said he thinks the key to art is discipline.

Flipping through the pages of *Cartoonist's Profiles,* he said, "See how professional and detailed they are."

The guys at the DU house have dubbed Wheeler a "chronic complainer." He'll complain about the cook's food or a brother's stereo turned too loud. But most often his complaints and drawings find themselves in print; either in "Ralph", in *Greek Grafitti* news, or with *Daily Nebraskan* stories.

Characters tear their hair, or yell "Aargh." Bulging eyes, drooping tongues, swept back hair; these are Wheeler's distinctive cartoon character trademarks. They invite the reader to laugh, defy his sense of primness, and make him see the humor in the

typical. What are "Ralph's" chances for survival? "Once I am dedicated to something, I really go with it," Wheeler says.

Over Christmas vacation he took Ralph to the most honest audience in the world—national syndicators who see a multitude of professional and amateur cartoons come across their desks daily. And they've got their eyes out for cartoons dealing with specific topics.

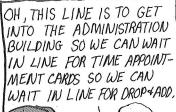
The critics at Universal Press Syndicate in Kansas City told Wheeler that "Ralph" was the best strip they'd seen in a college setting. They liked his humor and his topics. But he said they, the Des Moines Register Tribune Syndicate and the Omaha World Syndicate all suggested he make the cartoon more universal, to include more than the college crowd.

Wheeler acted immediately on these suggestions. In more recent strips he has taken Ralph away from campus and put him in a neighborhood where he's rented a house.

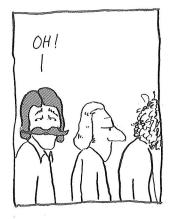
Meanwhile, Wheeler has used his business head to begin to make Ralph known both on and off campus.

He created a Ralph design for T-shirts, had it printed on green, yellow and blue T-shirts and is

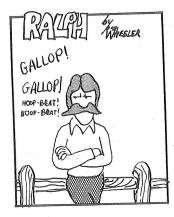






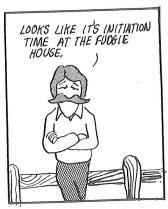


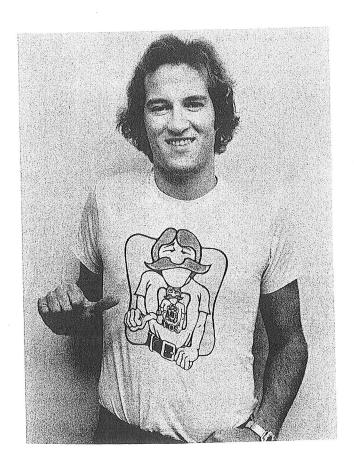












wholesaling his product to University Book Store, Nebraska Book Store and the Bivouac and Hitchin' Post clothing stores in downtown Lincoln. To promote sales, he ran an ad in the *Daily Nebraskan* which read "Give someone you love a Ralph T-shirt for Valentine's Day."

Wheeler also has exclusive advertising rights with another popular college clothing boutique downtown, Jason's.

It seems Wheeler just can't sit still. He has designed and drawn the Greek Rush Book cover for fall rush and is working on the senior yearbook cover, too. And he continues to experiment with the strip. Characters pop into his head and, soon after, onto the paper.

Run ins with editors don't keep him from trying new things. When his work gets especially racy, he is reminded he's not writing for *Mad* magazine.

Despite opposition to censorship, Wheeler is ambitious about "Ralph." There's only one drawback about being the cartoonist he is, he says.

"I wish I could have been born five years before Doonesbury."

Second semester...selling shirts and shopping for syndication. (Photo by Ted Kirk.)

Ron Pins His Hopes on Ral

By Gary Johansen

Ron Wheeler has ridden an inanimate object to fame in his last two years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and he is reluctant to let go of

The vehicle is Ralph, a comic strip

character in the Daily Nebraskan, the campus newspaper dubbed the Rag almost since its first issue years ago.

Ralph at one time or another has been controversial, happy, sad, bombed, in love, a realist, a dreamer — but always popular. Wheeler, the artist, gets plenty of attention.

"I've had a taste of fame and I like it," he said, leaning back on his bunk on the first floor of the Delta Upsilon fraternity house. "I'd hate to have to give up Ralph and do illustrations for a T-shirt company for a living.

"In high school I worked my way to some notoriety as a senior, and college has been the same way. Now I'm going to graduate and I'm afraid I'm going back to being a nobody. Hopefully, Ralph will take off and maintain my pinnacle."

That's a mighty tall order, even for an alter ego the scope and depth of Ralph.

Hundreds of young cartoonists have the same aspirations Wheeler has. They hope to catch on with a national syndicate or major newspaper with strips and characters they feel are worthy of national exposure.

Wheeler, 22, a native Omahan, knows that the professionals won't come looking for him - a la Doonesbury, a comic strip that caught on quickly - so he has prepared an all-purpose portfolio for advertising agencies and syndication companies.

"Last Christmas vacation I packed up Ralph and took him to Des Moines for an introduction to the Register syndicate. The man said the humor was there, but I needed to make the strip universal, not geared to one college campus.

"I also talked to some people in Kansas City and with Ed Fischer, World-Herald editorial cartoonist. They gen-erally made me feel that I could make it with a little more work. To break into a syndicate deal you have to do something a little different, dynamic. You have to make a good presentation just

to get considered these days."
Ralph got started as a protest mechanism in January of 1975. An evangelist named Josh McDowell was coming to the UNL campus and Wheeler took a dim view of the hundreds of publicity posters stuck on anything stationary and a few moving objects, too. Wheeler put Ralph and a friend in a

strip, chided McDowell and published it in the Nebraskan, where Wheeler was working as an illustrator.

Ralph was a hit. Wheeler soon added some friends — Durk, Libby, Chug, Mary Beth, little brother Herbie, Harry and Coach Isboring. Then there was Marvelous Fabulous.

In that strip, published last September, Coach Isboring (a takeoff on N.U. football coach Tom Osborne) says, "Next."

Marvelous replies, "My name is Marvelous Fabulous, and I come from the ghetto."

Coach: "And what can you do?" Marvelous: "Why just last week I

faked out three bicycles and a univer-



Sunday World-Herald Magazine of the Midlands, March 21, 1976



The man displaying the stenciled shirt is Ron Wheeler, Nebraska University senior. The guy on the shirt_is Ralph, his cartoon creation. Below are three strips with Ralph and



















sity pickup while crossing Fourteenth Street."

Coach: "Gil, get Mr. Fabulous a uni-

form right away."

Marvelous: "Just call me Good for short."

The next day the letters poured in, protesting the stereotyped black football player with thick lips, wearing sunglasses. Then a few wrote to praise Wheeler. All in all, Ralph was getting attention - giving everyone on campus

something to talk about.
"I had a philosophy that you could kid anything and everything as long as you were trying to make a joke. I was wrong," Wheeler said. "Earlier I had done a strip on a hick from the farm who could hit a crow with a mushmelon from 35 yards and it didn't create a stir. I guess that made me over-confident."

After Marvelous Fabulous, Ralph evolved into a fun strip as Wheeler concentrated on making readers laugh, no easy feat. "Sometimes I think a strip is hilarious and the editors just look at me with a blank stare. Then, a borderline thing with me brings the biggest laughs you ever heard."

Wheeler is an Omaha Westside graduate and his father is manager of a packing company.

"According to moral standards, I come from a puritanical background, Wheeler said. "There wasn't much drinking in my home. I'd get back from a basketball game and stay in my room and draw. Never went to many parties.

"I've changed some in college, experienced things that were new to me. I don't go to church; I'm spiritual, worship on my own.

'I'm not into marijuana, beer drinking or campus politics. I would like to become more politically involved if for no reason than to work that angle into

my strips. Right now I concern myself with socialistic issues.

Wheeler goes into things full steam. When he first got to Nebraska he joined the soccer team, body and soul.

"We had some guys from Boulder, Colo., in for a soccer tournament and they smoked marijuana all the way here - a drive of more than 500 miles. Then they beat us on the field."

Wheeler is realistic - he'll go into banking when he graduates this spring if he can't make enough money to live on drawing Ralph.

"I hate to consider that I'm coming through the strip as Ralph," Wheeler "He's calm, cool and collected. I'm a worrier, impatient, want things done immediately. Ralph has a moustache; I can't grow hair on my lip. Ralph drinks beer, I can't stand the stuff."

Last year Ralph kicked extra points for the football team and ran for homecoming honors in the strip.

In reality, Ralph won a write-in campaign for queen but was disqualified on a technicality - the judges said he wasn't a fulltime student.

"The year before, my roommate, Gary Brantz, won the homecoming queen title and also was disqualified," Wheeler said. "I don't know what they'll do this year — maybe they won't even pick one."

Wheeler says he won't give up cartooning unless necessary and has a Tshirt (Ralph is emblazoned on the chest) concession going.

"It's easy to do controversial stuff, but I'll stick to the subtle humor. You don't need National Lampoon vulgarity f you have an angle.
"Look what baseball has done for

Charles Schultz and Peanuts.'

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Homecoming King Kalph still lives for cartoonist

By Bob Lannin

Today's game marks the culmination of homecoming week here at UNL. This week's events included the traditional homecoming fare: a float parade, pep rally, homecoming dance and the homecoming display contest.

strip was.

end with the announcement of this year's homecoming And at halftime of today's contest, the suspense will king and queen.

But during the homecoming weeks of 1974 and 1975, what could be termed "non-traditional" candidacies were staged for the royalty positions In 1974, a male student ran for the homecoming queen position, and in 1975, a cartoon character made a run for the homecoming king crown Ron Wheeler, a Daily Nebraskan cartoonist whose strip candidacy partially came about because of Gary Brantz's "Ralph" appeared for six semesters, said the Ralph campaign for homecoming queen one year earlier.

10/2/

LPH ABTREE WELL, 图 Lot Whouse WINNING? AD Z TELL ME, MR. CRABTREE, WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES OF

COUNTING PRETTY HEAVILY ON THE MINDRITY UGTE. FIRST OF ALL, I'M

MUSTACHE THAIL HAVE A NICER CANDIDATES. 9150, I THINK I ANY OF THE OTHER **BMECOMING** (INRITE-IN)

"Gary Brantz was a homecoming queen candidate the year before and there was a big hoopla over that," Wheeler said, "I decided to run Ralph for homecoming queen, it would be a chance to see how far-reaching the

"THIS ALSO SEEMED like just a fun thing to do. There was no big heavy social statement, I always tried for things to do that related to things going on on campus," Wheeler said,

fraternity brother, John Krause, helped construct a papier-mache head in Ralph's likeness, which Krause wore Two days before the game, Wheeler said a Delta Upsilon Wheeler said he kept the campaign localized through the comic strip during the two weeks prior to the game. on the field during the halftime ceremonies.

Wheeler said Ralph's write-in campaign proved to be very successful, and he speculates that Ralph won the election by a two-to-one margin.

IT LAST YEAR, SURELY

BUT MOST OF ALL, IF THAT TURKEY COULD WIN CAN WIN IT THIS YEAR

a two-week "Ralph Crabtree for Homecoming" campaign through his comic strip "Ralph." Ron Wheeler staged a two-week This strip appeared Oct. 2, 1975.

"I didn't know Ralph was going to win until at the game," Wheeler said. "It would have been kind of embarrassing if he'd lost."

Ralph did win, but was disqualified. He had received the most votes in the election, but was unable to establish credentials as an ID-carrying UNL junior.

"That was fine with me, I wasn't going to make a big stink told me if he won, he wouldn't get it," Wheeler said, "The president of Tassels, even before the election, about it," THE CANDIDACY OF Brantz was not quite such a ow-key affair, however.

equal rights attitudes were gaining publicity. Across the Brantz said his campaign came about during the time nation, several men at college campuses were running for homecoming queen in response to the equal rights movement, Brantz said

Brantz said a fraternity brother of his, Dennis Onnen, told him he could get Brantz elected. "Dennis put up signs and worked on publicity," Brantz said. "I ran on the idea of getting a football fan, rather than just a good-looking girl, elected."

for homecoming in several years. He received about 140 votes more than the other candidates, but was disqualified Brantz said his campaign pulled in the largest turnout for allegedly campaigning at the voting polls. "We kind of played it (the homecoming election) up a bit," Brantz said. "After we did all the work and won the election, it kind of irritated us to have them undercut it this way."

D Continued on Page

Ever wonder

The Tom Osborne Show Saturdays from

Continued from Page 4

views for homecoming candidates and wasn't among the finalists chosen. Then Brantz got permission for his write-in Brantz said he went through the intercandidacy.

feelings about the way the situation was Brantz said he doesn't carry any hard handled "I thought it was kind of crazy and fun to do all that," he said, "Plus, it gained all that support.

Brantz is in Little Rock, Ark., working as a corporate actuary for Blue Cross-Blue Shield. In November, Brantz will move to Dallas to take a job with the Lone Star Life NOW, SIX YEARS after his candidacy, an associate actuary Insurance Co. as

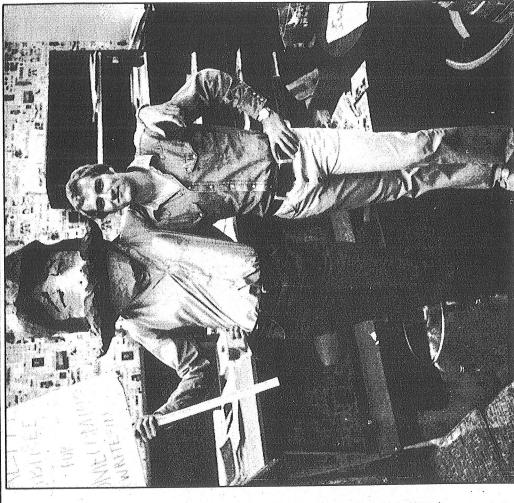
tree, has not abandoned his character yet. Wheeler, five years after the candidacy of his comic strip character Ralph Crab-

of his early jobs after graduation. He began work in St. Louis after graduation, then "I decided I was going to make it or break it with my cartoons," Wheeler said moved to Kansas City. Wheeler said a strong Christian belief has also helped in his various jobs after graduation,

"I still wanted to be a cartoonist, but I didn't know where to go. And then I gave adding that the next day he got a cartoonist's job. The company that hired him had been looking for a cartoonist for three God," Wheeler said, everything over to months, he said.

portray a lifestyle. I wondered what would happen if Ralph didn't sell, but then I resigned myself to the fact that whatever God wants to do-he'll provide for me." Wheeler said, "It was the most exciting "I STILL WANTED to go with Ralph," thing to me, to expand the character and

Ralph, Wheeler said the Los Angeles Times It appears that Wheeler may not have to abandon his desire to make a living through has contacted him with the possibility of syndicating the strip. So the six semester tenure of Ralph at Wheeler through syndication—a tenure at the Daily Nebraskan that included good and bad times and a homecoming candithe Daily Nebraskan may pay off for dacy. "Sure, the homecoming campaign came out of fun-it was one of the many things done out of fun. We got in trouble many times and there were many things that went right. The homecoming candidacy was one of them."



Daily Nebraskan photo John Krause and Ron Wheeler display the form that brought the 1976 Homecoming King title to Wheeler's comic strip creation Ralph Crabtree. Ralph was later to be disqualified.

Cartoon character Ralph job hunting after college

Ralph is looking for a job. In fact, he has been looking for a job since the April 27, 1978 issue of the Daily Nebraskan.

Ralph was the main character of a college-oriented comic strip of the same name, which appeared in the Daily Nebraskan from January 1975 through April 1978.

UNL homecoming king in 1975. He was disqualified because he had no student Ralph was such a popular character on campus that he received the most votes for dentification. Ralph now has a good lead on a job, according to Ron Wheeler, creator of the cartoon character.

The job is with the Kansas City University Press Syndicate which also produces such cartoons as Doonesbury and Tank McNamara, Wheeler said. Ralph would have a new perspective on life, he said. This time he would be "a kid just out of school in a new job in a new

In this way, Wheeler said, he could keep close to his personal cartoon

experiences.

He and a friend, Bruce McMorris, tried to syndicate Ralph on their own for college newspapers in the 1977-78 school year. "But there was no money in school

papers," Wheeler said. "They change editors every semester and there's no consistency."

He is working on a campaign to present the press syndicate with about 30 cartoon One thing Wheeler hopes to say through Ralph is that "it's not easy being out in strips and some promotional information.

the cruel world."

"I didn't think it would be this difficult (to get a job)," he said. "I thought the world would be waiting at my feet." After graduation he worked for the Ralston Purina Co. in advertising and pro-

He decided he wanted to try something different, he said, and worked for Merit Co. in St. Louis in marketing research.

motion.

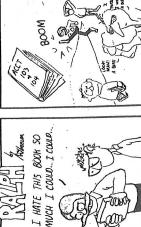
youngest member of the company in that The company decided two months ago that he was too young and inexperienced and he lost the job. He said he was the type of position.

"My savings are dwindling," Wheeler said.

But he said he is looking into a promotion and advertising position in Los Angeles.

Someday he would like to get into animation, Wheeler said.

cartoon. He is working on an idea, but has yet to decide on a subject, he added. He also said he would like to do another









YOU DIDN'T TELL ME COACH ISBORING WAS YOUR FATHER.



THE STADIUM WHERE THED THE I JUST CAME FROM

ME OUT

YOU ARE NOW LOOKING AT THE NEW STAR PLACE KICKER FOR THE FOOTBALL







in a mine an swers to foreign students' legal queries

the indee recommends against

Cartoon celebrity Ralph moving up in real world

By Barbara Lutz

Ralph is alive and well and moving to St. Louis.

Ralph, the cartoon character who was elected UNL homecoming king in 1975, is the brainchild of Ron Wheeler, a 1976 UNL graduate.

For three semesters on the *Daily Nebraskan* editorial page, Ralph, along with his little brother Herbie, his girlfriend Mary Beth and other campus celebrities, expressed the feelings of supposedly typical mid-American college students.

Wheeler, who majored in business administration, is taking Ralph with him to the Ralston Purina Co. in St. Louis, Mo., Jan. 3.

Wheeler is the third person in the last year to be hired for the corporate training program at Purina, he said.

His job will include "creative work" in the advertising, art or public relations departments.

Although he is moving to St. Louis, Ralph may soon be seen in campus newspapers across the country, he said.

Wheeler and UNL student Bruce

McMorris are creating a campaign to sell the Ralph comic strip to 200 campus newspapers. McMorris is the *Daily Nebraskan* assistant advertising manager.

The strip can be adapted for editorial use or advertising with a sponsor, Wheeler said.

The strip would be sold in three packages, he said, for biweekly, weekly or four-time a week papers for a 13-week period.

"It sounds good on paper," Wheeler said, but it isn't a career.

While at UNL, Ralph was seen on T-shirts and in advertisements as well as comic strips.

Last summer. Wheeler did freelance work but channeled most of his efforts into looking for a job. The job search made "good food for the comic strip," he said.

He is not concerned with dollars and cents, but with the quality of his artwork and "some fun on the side," he added.

Ralph has a lawyer but has never been syndicated by a national firm. However, Wheeler said he has more control without syndication.

A syndicate is very money-oriented, he said, and less concerned with development.

Duve says UNL is leader in solving parking problems

By Mike Patten

Persons in the parking coorinator business are few and far between, according to John Duve, UNL Campus Police parking coordinator.

Because of the few people in the business, Duve said they need to have workshops to provide new ideas to solve parking problems.

He recently attended one such work-

UNL also excels is its free-flow parking system, Duve said. In a free-flow parking system, permits are issued to certain area lots, but not to specific parking places.

Parking choices

Duve said this prevents one lot from filling up while a lot next to it remains empty. He said UNL has 6,500 parking places, and more than 10,000 permits issued.

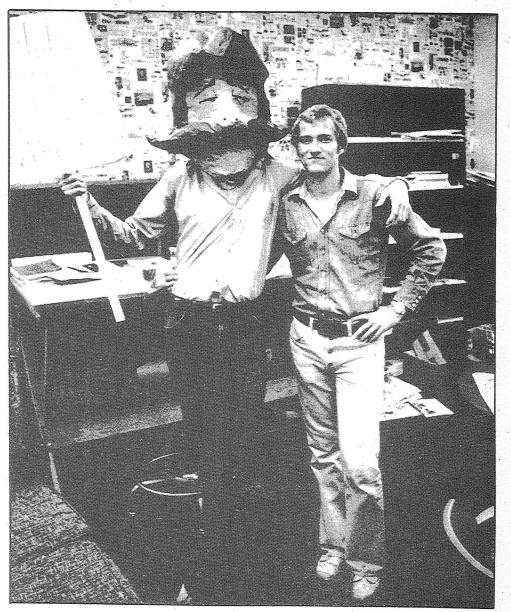


Photo by Kevin Higley

Former Daily Nebraskan cartoonist and recent UNL graduate Ron Wheeler, right, is pictured with a mock-up of Ralph, a cartoon character that made Wheeler known to many students.

Ralph Doesn't Stand A Chance

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU.

Lincoln — Although men are eligible to share in the title of royalty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln this year, one of the male candidates doesn't stand a chance.

He is Ralph Crabtree, the mustachioed star of a daily comic strip drawn for the student newspaper, the Daily Nebraskan, by Ron Wheeler, staff artist and a business major from Oma-

Tassels, which sponsors Homecoming activities, has ruled that men are eligible to compete for the Homecoming title. A king will be crowned in addition to the traditional queen this year.

The ruling follows last year's Homecoming controversy, in which Council Bluffs junior Gary Brantz ran as a write-in candidate for queen and won, but was disqualified for campaigning too close to the polls.

Ralph is following in Brantz's footsteps this year — cartoonist Wheeler is conducting a write-

in campaign for his character in the comic strip.

Ralph first appeared in the Daily Nebraskan in January and has been satirizing campus life

ever since.

Wheeler said he is running the comic hero "for the publicity — both for me and for Homecoming."

The annual event "needs a kick in the pants" to get it going, he said. "It would die if we couldn't laugh at it or have fun with it."

Ralph started campaigning from his comic strip about a week before official candidates were announced. Publicity in addition to the official posters printed by Tassels is illegal.

Wheeler predicts Ralph's campaign will increase turnout at the polls Tuesday and Wednes-

day.

And if he wins?

According to Tassels president Gina Hills, he'll be disqualified for campaigning illegally, but will be announced as the biggest vote getter at the Nebraska-Kansas game Saturday.