

Forty years ago this month, one missionary's cartoon appeared in the *New Era* for the first time. The rest is history.

By David Dickson
Church Magazines

Doodling cartoons on his math and spelling tests at school may not have earned Val Chadwick Bagley higher scores, but his teachers probably had a blast grading his papers.

"I've always wanted to be a cartoonist," Val says. He would draw every chance he could. On his mission, for example, he kept a regular journal and *four* complete cartoon journals on top of that.

While serving as a missionary in Virginia, Elder Bagley mailed in a cartoon to the *New Era*. The cartoon was picked up and printed in the March 1978 issue, exactly 40 years ago this month.

"In my mind, I had reached the big time!" Val says. He'd grown up reading and loving the *New Era*, especially the cartoons. Seeing a cartoon of his own in its pages was a dream come true.

Val has been a regular contributing cartoonist to the *New Era* ever since. If you've read "The Extra Smile" (now included in "Fun Stop"), you know his stuff. He's also done loads of other projects in his cartooning career, including publishing over 100 books, games, and other items. Yet whenever somebody asks Val what he does for a living, he always has the same answer.

"I always tell them that drawing for the *New Era* is the pinnacle of my accomplishments." (The *New Era* thinks you're awesome too, Val!)

It hasn't been all fun and laughter, though. There have been some major setbacks along the way.

Elder Bagley serving as a missionary in Virginia, USA, in 1978.



Val's first cartoon sent to the *New Era* and published in 1978.

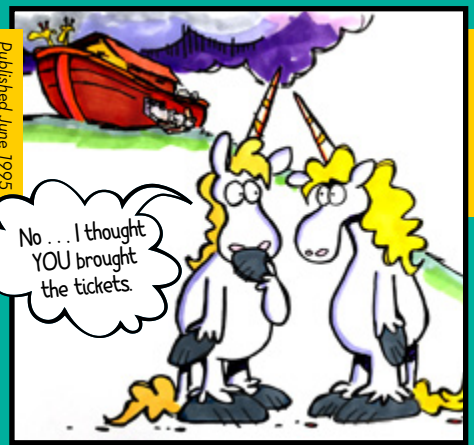




Published April 2005



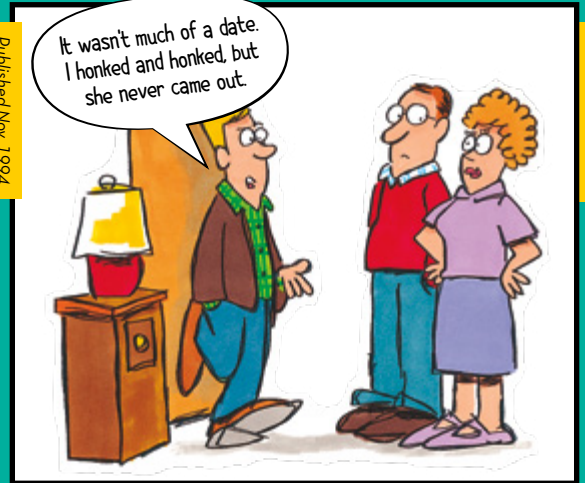
Published June 1995



Published March 2003



Published Nov. 1994



Published Oct. 2004

TIPS FROM VAL



TIP 1

Rejection is part of the game, but don't let that stop you. I still only get about 25% of my work published. That sounds like a lot of rejection, and it is, but how many baseball players can say they hit a home run 1 out of every 4 times at bat?

TIP 2

My mom (along with ancient and modern prophets) counseled me to **always start every day with prayer.** That has been a huge help!

TIP 3

Be careful who you take advice from. When I went to college, my art teacher said, "You'd be a really good artist if you'd just give up this cartooning thing."

TIP 4

Coming up with new ideas is the hardest part of being a cartoonist. **Always be on the lookout for new ones,** including asking your family and friends what they think is funny.

TIP 5

When it comes to your dreams, don't give up! Although I've always liked to draw, I used to not be very good at it. It wasn't until my mission where I kept a daily cartoon journal of my adventures that I improved enough to get my first cartoon published. Even then, I didn't draw all that well. It has taken me years and years to develop my skill.

USE YOUR TALENTS FOR GOOD

"You and your talents, strengths, and contributions are needed urgently in the Church."
President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Oct. 1993 general conference.

"It is so important for each of us to strive to lay up our spiritual treasures in heaven—using our time, talents, and agency in service to God."

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 2014 general conference.

AN ANSWER IN THE TEMPLE

Val remembers hitting his own personal rock bottom. He'd been working for several years designing cheese and hot-dog labels for an advertisement company. Then that company went out of business. He'd attempted college four different times without finishing a single term. He was close to bankruptcy and running out of options. He didn't know what to do next.

So he went to the temple for guidance. While there, he picked up the Book of Mormon and opened to Helaman 12:2. Val read about how the Lord prospered His people "in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art." His eyes landed and stayed on the word *art*.

"It was an answer to prayer," Val said. The next day, he launched his cartoon business. He's been going strong ever since.

A CHOICE HE NEVER REGRETS

Val believes we're all given gifts and that "you get to decide what to do with your talents." Artists can portray literally any subject under the sun. For Val, he chooses to use his time and energy strengthening others in the gospel with his cartoons. "I've especially enjoyed working on anything that has to do with the Book of Mormon."

For the past 40 years, Val's cartoons have made you laugh, lifted your spirits, and brightened your days one punchline at a time. And that's been his goal all along.

"I feel so blessed and fortunate that I get to do this," he says. **NE**

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



Published Feb. 1997



Published July 1996