

Farm Animals Inspire Humor

Written by Ann DeFrance (Staff Writer). Reprinted from the *Oklahoma Press* (February 1, 2004)

Do sheep experience shear terror? If chickens bounce on a trampoline, do you get scrambled eggs?

And there's the problem of a dog at a water meter with an out-of-order sign, and how does a mother cow with a ring in her nose talk to her daughter who wants to have her udders pierced?

Farmers don't usually concern themselves with such matters. Leigh Rubin, the creator of "Rubes" cartoons, does. And Rubin, who has been drawing the slightly irreverent, highly hilarious cartoons for 19 years, has been discovered by the farming community. His work has found a place in agricultural newspapers and is being sold in farm supply stores.

"Rubes" is syndicated in 400 newspapers, including *The Oklahoman*, which runs it on Sundays. Rubin has four new books collecting his cartoon panels into a Wild Life series – **"The Wild Life of Farm Animals," "The Wild Life of Cows," "The Wild Life of Dogs,"** and **"The Wild Life of Pets"** (Bowtie Press, \$6.95 each).

Rubin doesn't claim an agrarian background. "I just like animals," he said in an interview from his California home. But the agricultural connection pleases him, because farmers "can certainly use a laugh."

The Rubin family has a dog, an Akita mix, which forces him to exercise and occasionally provides material. They did have a goldfish, which "passed on," following which they froze the body. "You never know," he said, "they might find a cure."

After doing cartoons so long, "Sometimes, I think there are no easy jokes left. How many jokes can there be about cows and pigs and chickens and cats?"

Apparently, quite a few. Rubin acknowledged his jokes are not actually about animals; they're human humor applied to other creatures. "I put myself in their place," he said. Occasionally, he hears from the public. They say, "How dare you?" But if someone takes the time to write, he said, "I pay attention."

Rubin and his brother grew up working in their father's printing business. The brother is now a "traveling minstrel" who mixes and records music. Their sister is a veterinarian with a television program in Sacramento. "Ask Dr. Jyl" has hosted Leigh Rubin as a guest.

He calls himself an illustrator-humorist but writes down "cartoonist" when he's asked for his job description. "It gets attention," he said.

His theory is that "the strangest, most dangerous animal of all is two-legged." His idea of the funniest animal is the cow. For a start, he said, cows look funny.

His wife is a vegetarian. He has assured her that "no animals were harmed in making these cartoons."

