

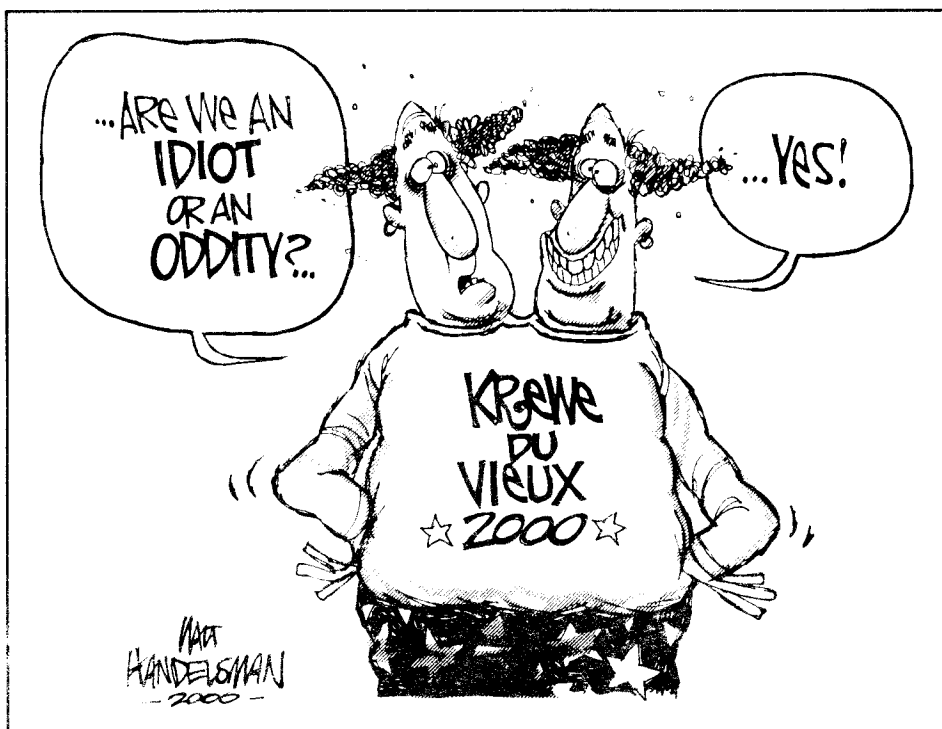
A Cartoon of the Artist as a Krewe King

CHESTYPEAK BAY -- He's won the Pulitzer Prize for his editorial cartoons, not to mention numerous other national awards for cartooning excellence. His work can be seen in the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and *USA Today*. He's Walt Handelsman, the editorial cartoonist for the *Times-Picayune* and the King of Krewe du Vieux's 2000 parade.

He arrives on your front porch before sunrise in the pages of the *Times-Picayune*. (If he arrives in person, please call a cab and send him home.) Multitudes of New Orleanians open their papers in the morning to twitter, smirk and giggle at his seriocomic lampoons of the follies and foibles of the famous, infamous and felonious.

King Walt grew up (well, not really, it's just a figure of speech) in Baltimore, where he was an avid etch-a-sketcher as a child. Later he was a terrible student, guidance counselor's nightmare, class clown and compulsive doodler whose first work appeared in the margins of his math notebook. In his high school yearbook, he was named "least likely to win the Pulitzer Prize." Walt went on to college, working for a degree in art therapy. Although the therapy didn't take, "Learning how to deal with people with mental problems was a good preparation for Louisiana politics," declares the demented doodler.

After college, he went to work at an advertising agency, where he met and married the boss's daughter, the lovely and very understanding Queen Jodie. "If it wasn't for Jodie, God knows what backstreet gutter I'd be lying in," says the King. Meanwhile, Walt continued to draw, making cartoons in his spare time, moving on, or rather, in, from the margins, soon filling whole pages and reams of paper. Putting together a portfolio of portrayals of political peccadillos and perjuries,



he went to work for a chain of suburban Baltimore and Washington weeklies. A few years later, he got his first job at a daily newspaper at the Scranton (PA) *Times*.

Next his majesty also went to work for the Chicago *Crime Tribune* Syndicate. "They made me an offer I couldn't refuse," states the King. In 1989 there was an opening for an editorial cartoonist at the *Times-Picayune*, and King Walt arrived to take his place in the hearts, minds, litter boxes, shipped packages, crawfish boils, and bird cages of New Orleans.

Walt and Jodie have made New Orleans their home. The King says he has no plans to leave, describing New Orleans as Nirvana compared to Scranton (on the other hand, Westwego is probably at least a pleasure palace compared to Scranton). This is especially true for Walt, whose hobbies are "gambling, drinking, carousing, and golf." And when it comes to Carnival and parades, our King is no slouch, though he may stumble and stagger, having

marched with Krewe du Vieux three times, served as Grand Marshall of Jim Monaghan's St. Patrick's Day Parade, ridden in Zulu and Orpheus, and attended the Rex ball. He is still, however, looking for a place to pee on Mardi Gras.

When interviewed by *Le Monde de Merde*, King Walt was immersed in preparing for his reign, soaking his liver in alcohol under the rigorous coaching of 1992 King Angus Lind. (And speaking of coaches and kings, Walt hopes fervently that the Saints will one day be a good football team and that 1997 King Buddy D will be the coach.) Asked how he felt about his upcoming royal ride, he said, "I thought I had reached a pinnacle when I won the Pulitzer, but being King of Krewe du Vieux is truly the climax."

In a time when the so-called mainstream krewes feature two-bit TV celebrities as their royalty, Krewe du Vieux is honored and thrilled to have a Pulitzer Prize-winner as king (though we were really hoping for *Roxanne Pulitzer*).