To the Editor:

I am writing in regard to the Paul Hubbard cartoon of 15 April 1980. As I read it I noticed that this particular cartoon was inordinately funny for Paul Hubbard. I showed it to a friend of mine who remarked on its similarities to a cartoon by Berke Breathed which first appeared in "The Daily Texas," the University of Texas at Austin's student newspaper, and later on page 39 of the book Academic Waltz (copyrighted 1979).

Now it is not to be said that I am casting aspersions (if you can call it that) on Mr. Massey's creativity. Indeed, not I have enjoyed Paul Hubbard for a long time, and refuse to believe that Mr. Massey could do anything but first class original work.

However, my friend did point out some obscure similarities. First, there are fraternity men discussing topics relating to sexual promiscuity. In specific, one of them boasts of his conquests while his pet animal makes aside remarks on the side. In the end the animal delivers the punch line, which is something in the effect of "he's a virgin except for..." and then names a case of bestiality.

These I consider far-fetched, and offer some dissimilarities between the two. The main character in the Academic Waltz cartoon speaks of one girl, while the Paul Hubbard character refers to only one, two girls. In Acodemic Waltz the animal is on the side of the two listeners, while in Paul Hubbard it is next to the main speaker. Also, in Academic Waltz the animal is a dog, while in Paul Hubbard it is a cat. The characters in Academic Waltz are drinking alcoholic beverages out of cans; the Paul Hubbard characters hold bottles. Finally, in Academic Waltz the characters moved, while in Paul Hubbard they definitely did not I could go on and on...

As a final note, we would like to say that we believe no ill will towards Mr. Massey and do enjoy his cartoons. This letter is intended neither as a personal attack nor as a derogation of his work.

However, when one's work borrows too heavily from someone else's copyrighted material, it should be acknowledged as such.

Michael A. DeWitt '82
Alan L. Laven '82

Reply from Ken Massey:

There is a tremendous precedent of artists using ideas from each other. Shakespeare is a well respected example. The point is that in passing on a joke, one should seek to add to it and in some way make it their own. This I tried to do in the joke I borrowed from Berke Breathed by changing the punchline to allude to a campus fraternity.

I respect Berke Breathed and Gary Trudeau greatly and have tried very hard to learn from them. Two or three times during the past two years when the semester bore down and all my humor has vanished, I've gladly borrowed from these masters. In a much broader way however, I freely admit to having taken the form of my comic strip and much of the manner of its humor from Gary Trudeau's earlier work. Berke Breathed himself generally adopted Trudeau's very successful format. This idea of adaptive reuse is an old one amongst comics.