



Walt Kelly with one of his Sunday "Pogo" drawings.



For 'Pogo' Fans

By Philip H. Love

FEATURE EDITOR OF THE STAR
ist was in Washington, he and his wife Stephanie visited my home. They were expected at 3:30 p.m., but didn't show up until 10:40. "The cab driver got lost," Walt explained. "He followed my directions."

Something that Walt said seemed to irritate his wife. "What did you say?" she demanded. He shrugged. "I don't know. I just went off and left my mouth running."

The Kellys were hardly well settled in their seats when the doorbell rang. "That must be the cab driver," Walt said. "I told him to come back at 11:15."

Walt followed me to the door. "We're not ready to go yet," he told the driver. Then, to me: "He's a good fellow, Phil. Why don't you invite him in?"

So the hacker came in and stayed until 1 a.m.

"Are you a reader of the comics?" Walt asked him. The cabbie said he was and Walt wanted to know what strip he liked best. "Dick Tracy," was the disillusioning answer.

I told the driver about Pogo. "Never heard of it," he said, "but I'll sure read it from now on. Is it anything like Dick Tracy?"

When the time came to go, the taximan said: "Mr. Kelly, my wife will never believe what happened to me. I was supposed to be home by midnight. To prove where I've been, will you please give me your autograph?"

"Gladly," Walt responded. He drew a card from his pocket, wrote on it and handed it to the driver.

"Thank you, sir," the cabman said. Then he glanced at the card. "Why, this says 'Dick Tracy!'"

"A slip of the pen," Walt laughed. "Sorry." He signed another card and gave it to the hacker.

Walt Kelly was born in Philadelphia in 1913 and the family moved to Bridgeport, Conn., about two years later. In high school, he was associate editor of the student newspaper and illustrator of the yearbook. His first job was wrapping bundles of scrap cloth in an underwear factory; the next, smashing faulty switches in an electrical appliance plant. He also worked as a clerk in an artists' supply store and as a public welfare investigator.

Mr. Kelly entered newspaper work as a reporter in Bridgeport, but soon turned to cartooning. He tried freelancing in New York for a while, then went to Hollywood as an artist for the Walt Disney Studios.

It was in 1942, after his return to New York to work for a publisher of comic magazines, that he conceived the

idea of the feature that eventually became Pogo. A swamp beside his home in Darien, Conn., suggested the setting and he decided to have the characters talk the Florida-Georgia "cracker" dialect in which his father liked to tell funny stories. The elder Kelly had picked up the lingo on visits to the South.

The feature began as a comic magazine. The principal character was a colored boy named Bumbazine, and an alligator and an opossum were in the supporting



cast. After a while, Mr. Kelly decided he liked the alligator and the 'possum better than the boy. He named the 'possum Pogo and promoted him to the starring role, advanced the alligator to a more important part as Albert and fired Bumbazine.

Pogo made its debut as a daily strip in the short-lived New York Star. When the paper died, Mr. Kelly received hundreds of letters demanding that the comic be published in one of the other New York dailies. He took the letters and samples of the strip to Robert M. Hall, president of the Post-Hall Syndicate, Inc. Mr. Hall persuaded the New York Post to carry the comic and began trying to sell it to papers in other cities.

Now Mr. Kelly's weekly income from the daily and Sunday feature alone is in four figures and he still does three comic magazines a year and considerable commercial art work. Also, a collection of his daily strips recently was published in book form.

Mr. Kelly is tall, dark and good-looking, with brown eyes, black hair and matching mustache. Black-rimmed glasses and a huge black cigar or a pipe complete the ensemble. He works at home, quite often, with his three children—Kathleen, 7; Carolyn, 5, and Peter, 3—watching every stroke of his pen. "When they laugh," their father says, "I know the strip is really funny."

"POGO" FANS, relax! Your favorite comic still is being drawn by its originator, Walt Kelly. The strange names signed to it lately are only a test.

Cartoonist Kelly, it seems, has developed an inferiority complex in relation to the characters he draws for The Star and about 270 other newspapers.

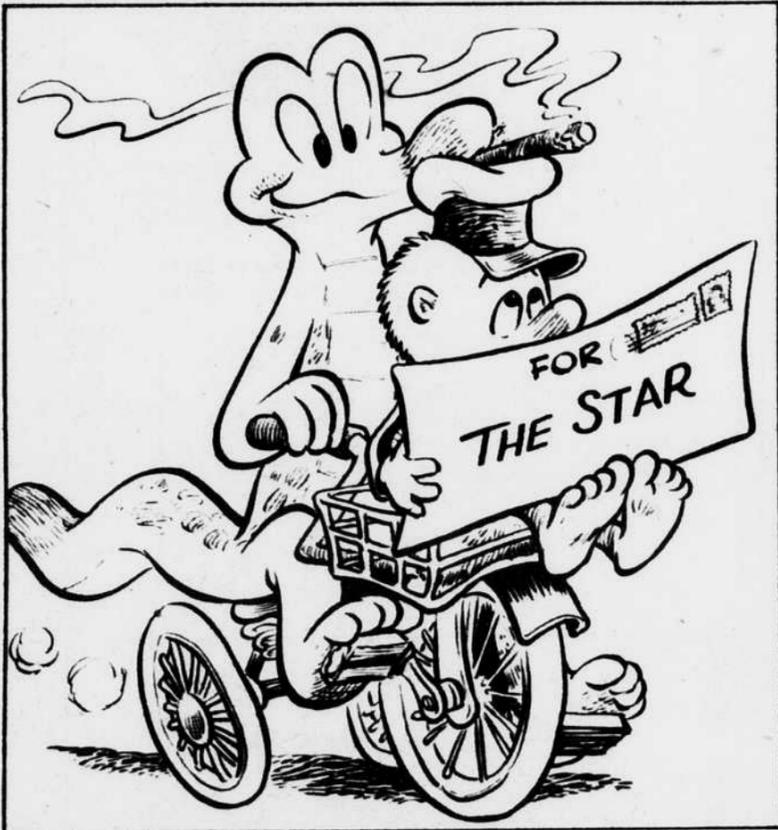
"Millions of people know Pogo," he points out. "Millions know Albert the Alligator, Churchy La Femme the Turtle, Beauregard the Houn' Dog, Howland Owl, Deacon Mushrat, even the lowly caterpillars. But how many of those people know that Pogo and his pals are drawn by Walt Kelly? Why, I'll bet you could sign any name to the strip and nobody would ever notice it!"

That's why Pogo has been carrying such improbable signatures as Moron Mundy, Tuppence Happenny, Cribbage Moonbeam and Pres. Wm. J. Bryan. But Mr. Kelly has lost his bet. At this writing, five readers of The Star have phoned to ask what has become of him and his syndicate reports similar inquiries from readers of other papers.

"If Walt Kelly has been fired," one of The Star's callers said, "somebody's head needs examining. It just isn't right for anybody else to be drawing Pogo."

Actually, it is extremely unlikely that any one else could do the job satisfactorily. Pogo is the product of a sense of humor that is peculiar to Mr. Kelly.

The last time the cartoon-



Albert Alligator and Pogo Possum en route to The Star.



The cartoonist's children, Carolyn, Peter and Kathleen, enjoy a preview.