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New Yorker Cartoonist Waxes Philosophic

Every Wednesday at lunchtime for six years, Ken Krimstein walked to the offices of the New Yorker and slid a batch of cartoons through the narrow submission slot. For six years he got rejection letters. Then, one day, he didn’t.

“Next to getting married and my children being born, that was the biggest moment of my life,” says Krimstein, a professional lecturer in the College of Communication.

Now his cartoons appear regularly in the New Yorker, the Wall Street Journal, Barron’s and other national publications. He’s famed for lampooning life’s little annoyances, especially in New York City. His targets include obnoxious signage, discontented couples and people on cellphones. His first sale? A sophisticated woman perched on a tractor at a cocktail party, proudly telling onlookers that she got it on eBay.

Although Krimstein always harbored a desire to be a cartoonist, he began his career as an advertising copywriter. After graduating from college, he landed a job with prominent advertising firm Ogilvy and Mather and moved to New York City. There he became an award-winning creative director, working on campaigns for brands such as American Express and Duracell, yet he never stopped drawing.

“Looking back on some of my early efforts, the ideas were pretty good, but the drawings and the total realization wasn’t,” says Krimstein, who cites practice and persistence more than raw talent for his success. He is also a lifelong student of the art form. As a child, he lost himself in comics by publishers such as Classics Illustrated, eagerly devouring the cartoon versions of great books and the adventures of historical figures ranging from Joan of Arc to Benjamin Franklin.

Now he has given Hannah Arendt the same treatment in “The Three Escapes of Hannah Arendt: A Tyranny of Truth.” One of the most prominent political philosophers of the mid-20th century, Arendt examined the origins of totalitarianism and famously coined the phrase “the banality of evil.” Tall and angular, Arendt strides through a book Krimstein describes as neither graphic novel nor comics biography, but rather a time machine.

“I wanted to take a complicated issue like philosophy, which I feel should be easy for people to talk about, and take it out of the province of specialists,” he says. His next project is to illustrate autobiographies of Lithuanian Jewish children written in the late 1930s that were unearthed in Vilnius in 2017.

“Comics are the perfect tool for scraping the barnacles off of history,” he says.
In January, Eric Landahl (CSH MS ’96), an associate professor of physics and graduate program director, decided to do something a little different for the Physics Department’s monthly colloquium. Instead of hosting guest lecturers to talk about their research, he decided to celebrate the recipients of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physics by discussing part of the prize-winning research himself. He is well qualified to do so because he works in the same field as Gérard Mourou, founding director of the Center for Ultrafast Optical Science, and Donna Strickland, former president of The Optical Society and professor of physics at the University of Waterloo in Canada, who shared half the prize—generating high-intensity, ultrashort laser pulses.

Landahl said, “Fully 50 percent of the Nobel prizes awarded in physics during the past decade have involved the field of optics.” Indeed, for processing signals, ultrafast optics have far outstripped electronics in speed, and nobody expects electronics, despite getting faster, to ever catch up.

The problem Mourou and Strickland solved involves the harm powerful lasers can do to the equipment that generates them. Lasers are created by passing light pulses through what is called a gain medium (titanium sapphire is one example), a material that extracts and amplifies the energy needed to generate a laser. It takes numerous passes back and forth through the gain medium to amplify the laser, exposing the medium to expensive damage.

Mourou and Strickland devised chirped pulse amplification (CPA) to increase greatly the power of an ultrashort laser pulse by using a grating that diffracts the laser light into a range of colors, resulting in a much longer chirped pulse. A chirp is a burst of light or sound that changes in frequency, like a bird’s note that ends on a higher pitch than it begins. The longer chirped pulses move safely through the medium, where they are amplified by a factor of a million or more. Finally, the amplified laser pulse is recompressed to the original pulse width, ready to use at an enormously higher power than was possible before.

Current applications for CPA-enhanced lasers include safe, precision cutting of such materials as diamonds, ceramics, metals, teeth, polymers and high explosives. Machining defect-free heart stents, performing delicate eye surgery and fabricating fuel injector nozzles that improve the efficiency of car engines while reducing greenhouse gas emissions are ways these lasers can improve health care and help mitigate one factor in climate change.

Landahl has built his own small, ultrashort laser in the basement of Byrne Hall with the help of physics students. The laser is one tool he uses to help him with his research on the unusual motions of atoms these intense lasers can induce.
Our Family Gathering
Is Getting Bigger!

Join Us for Alumni and Family Weekend, Oct. 18-20

We’re setting a few more places at the table. On Oct. 18-20, DePaul is expecting a larger family celebration than ever before! Alumni, friends and students who have attended our Alumni Weekend or Family Weekend in the past will find that our new, combined Alumni and Family Weekend offers the best of both events—and a whole lot more!

Coming home to DePaul at our Alumni and Family Weekend means sharing your Blue Demon pride in ways both new and familiar:

Signature Reception—New Day, New Home. Our signature Saturday night reception is moving to Friday night. The beautiful, glass-roofed Winter Garden in the Harold Washington Library forms the perfect setting for mingling and sharing fond memories with other alumni during the expanded 2½ hours of the reception. Take the opportunity to talk with DePaul’s President, A. Gabriel Esteban, PhD, and his wife, Josephine, who will be on hand to welcome you back to campus.

Blue Demon Bash. What could be more neighborly than organizing a block party to get to know the people in your DePaul community? We’re pulling out all the stops to throw an amazing block party on Saturday. You’ll be able to let your hair down and have a blast at the end of a day filled with fun activities for the entire family.

Returning Favorites. DePaul alumni can look forward to attending events they have come to love, including the Fifty Year Club Luncheon and Alumni & Family Weekend Brunch on Sunday morning. College of Law alumni and friends will again have special class-based reunions and programming.

Both the Lincoln Park and Loop campuses will be part of the celebration and geared to accommodate alumni and families. Attendees will have free access to the Ray, discounts at the bookstore, free musical performances and more.

Visit alumni.depaul.edu/alumniweekend in the coming months for updates and details about this special weekend.

Alumni Events

September

12 Phoenix
Desert Botanical Garden
Guided Flashlight Tour

15 Chicago
House of Blues Gospel Brunch

17 Chicago
Chicago Cubs DePaul Day at Wrigley Field

19 Washington, D.C.
Potomac River Monument Tour Cruise

October

5 Hobart, Ind.
County Line Orchard Outing

26 New York City
Oktoberfest Celebration

Friday-Sunday, Oct. 18-20
Chicago
Alumni & Family Weekend
For a full schedule of events and to register, visit alumni.depaul.edu/alumniweekend.

Event and registration details may vary. Please visit alumni.depaul.edu/events for more information.
Blue Demon Challenge Raises Record $780,000

More than 2,000 gifts, nearly twice as many as the previous year, were made to DePaul during the sixth annual Blue Demon Challenge Jan. 31, despite the university being closed because of severe cold. Donors exceeded the targets in 27 matching-gift challenges.

DePaul Harold Washington Academy
DePaul partnered with the City Colleges of Chicago to create the DePaul Harold Washington Academy. About 100 Chicago Star Scholars each year will attend classes taught by Harold Washington faculty on the DePaul campus and benefit from student services and organizations while earning an associate’s degree. They may then enroll at DePaul to earn a bachelor’s degree.

Community Partner Award
The 100 Club of Chicago presented DePaul with a Community Partner Award for matching and sometimes exceeding the scholarship aid that the club provides to families of fallen first responders in the Chicago area.

DePaul Executive Honored
The Financial Executives International Chicago Chapter named Jeffrey Bethke as its 2018 CFO of the Year in the category of large not-for-profit organizations. Bethke is DePaul’s executive vice president and chief financial officer.

Holtschneider Heads ACCU
The Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., DePaul’s chancellor and former president, was named president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, located in Washington, D.C.

Musings

We asked readers: What book have you been recommending to others? Here are some of their responses.

I recommend “The Power of the Dog” by Don Winslow all the time!
Randa Mahmud-Ulankiewicz
(BUS ’06)

“It Doesn’t Have to Be Crazy at Work” by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson.
Mike Goode (BUS ’10, CDM MS ’16)

“all about love” by bell hooks.
Dustin Ruttenberg
(LAS ’13)

“The Silk Roads: A New History of the World” by Peter Frankopan. Does a great job following trade, the rise and fall of nations/empires and depicting the ever-shifting sands of power.
Keith Earl Weber II
(BUS ’13)

“My Brilliant Friend” by Elena Ferrante, along with the HBO miniseries based on the book.
Alison Ishihara Somilleda
(CMN ’00)

“Deep River” by Shūsaku Endō. It was assigned in a DePaul School of Public Service ethics course by Prof. Maureen Scott.
Ryne Chua (LAS MPA ’12)

“Beneath a Scarlet Sky” by Mark Sullivan.
Dan Crowley
(BUS ’10)
Back to the Future FEST

A long time ago—40 years, to be exact—Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne decided to throw a party on then-vacant Navy Pier. The event featured a variety of food vendors, bands and amusements. It was called ChicagoFest.

Mary Lou Vainisi (BUS ’81, MAC ’82) thought that was an idea worth stealing.

“Every year at DePaul, we planned a party in spring that was basically an all-nighter,” says Vainisi, who served on the Program Council, precursor to today’s DePaul Activities Board (DAB). “We had a different theme for the party every year, and in 1979 we decided to do a takeoff on ChicagoFest.”

In case anyone missed the reference, the council riffed on the logo for ChicagoFest, which was a musical note in the water. “We put the DePaul [logo] on top of a musical note and called it DePaulFest.”

Like today’s FEST, the party featured food and music. It also offered free movies, giveaways and carnival games staged in and around the now demolished Stuart Center, which was then the student center. But DePaulFest in 1980 was missing a popular attraction from prior years: quarter beers.

“The drinking age had just been raised to 21, and ZBT [the bar in the Stuart Center] had closed. We didn’t know if anyone would come to the all-nighter,” Vainisi remembers. In addition to distributing flyers and advertising in the DePaulia, worried council members painted the Fest logo on sidewalks outside the Stuart Center in an effort to drum up interest.

Their fears were groundless. Whether it was the promotion or the prospect of a good party, there was a good turnout in 1979, Vainisi says. “There were so many different things to do,” Vainisi says. “You could wander around the building, find something that you wanted to do and just hang out till the middle of the night, which, when you’re in college, is what you want to do.”

While DePaulFest was simply the name for the all-nighter in 1979, the word “fest” was resurrected a few years later. The spring concert now has been named FEST for 34 years, says Rigo Gutierrez, program coordinator for campus activities. Proving that good ideas are still worth stealing, he says that DAB is incorporating fresh activities into the spring concert on May 24, 2019.

Mary Lou Vainisi (BUS ’81, MAC ’82), far left in the back row, enjoyed her time on Program Council.

Top Notch

The Princeton Review ranked DePaul’s undergraduate entrepreneurship program 13th in the nation, jumping nine points from its previous rank. It was the biggest jump among any of the undergraduate programs listed as the best in the nation for 2019.

College Factual ranked the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences 13th among similar programs at 352 colleges and universities in its 2019 list. DePaul is among the top 5 percent of colleges nationwide in the college search site’s rankings.

College Magazine ranked DePaul seventh among the 10 best colleges to study animation.

DePaul Joins Black Metropolis Research Consortium

The DePaul University Library joined the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, a group of universities and archival repositories. The consortium works to document, share, understand and preserve the culture, history and politics of African Americans and members of the African diaspora.

PRAD Students Win Again

For the second year in a row, a team of DePaul students majoring in public relations and advertising (PRAD) won the Fox Sports University competition. Their prize is a visit to the New York City set of the Fox Sports show “First Things First.”

MacArthur Foundation Grant

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation made a $250,000 grant to the College of Law’s Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic. The gift will expand the clinic’s legal assistance to community organizations that serve immigrants and support the student translator corps.
One might get by in life by following set pathways, routines and scripts, and by thinking about problems and their solutions in set ways. Doing so is safe, but also, well, a little boring, isn’t it? If we never veer from our safe routines, things will never improve much. The quality of our lives will stagnate. New inventions won’t be possible. Our arts will be dull. Our science will not advance. We will be unable to solve novel problems.

Creativity makes our lives better, improves our standards of living, produces better art and generates scientific ideas to better understand the world in which we live. How does one get creative ideas? More often than not, creative ideas come from drawing analogies.

Analogies allow us to get ideas about a target domain by importing ideas from other, sometimes very different, domains. The cognitive processes that allow us to draw analogies involve three steps: 1) thinking about a separate domain that might have some relevance for the target domain, 2) mapping the two domains and putting them in one-to-one correspondences, and finally 3) analogically transferring ideas or solutions from the separate domain to the target domain.

Alexander Graham Bell came up with the idea for the telephone by analogy to the mechanical phonautograph (an earlier invention). Niels Bohr received insights on the structure of atoms by drawing analogies to the solar system. Gertrude Stein’s unusual literary style and compositions are said to have been inspired, in part, by analogies to the modern art that hung on her walls.

1. **Expose yourself to a variety of ideas.** If you want to be creative within a given domain, don’t think only about that domain. Read widely. Be open to other fields and very different ideas.

2. **Draw analogies.** As you explore very different domains from your target domain, think about ways that those other far-flung domains might possibly be relevant to your target domain. Many of the potential analogies will be absolutely crazy and ridiculous. That is OK. You never know when a crazy, ridiculous analogy might turn out to be brilliant.

3. **Hang out with people who are different from you.** Diversity is an engine of creativity because we get ideas and draw new and novel analogies when we are around people who are different from us. Don’t just tolerate others; embrace the challenges of being together. Interdisciplinary work, cross-cultural work, racially and ethnically integrated neighborhoods, immigration—these are the engines of human progress and improved well-being. They make us more creative and better off.

By using analogies, you, too, can learn to be as creative as you want to be.

*Jessica M. Choplin is an associate professor of psychological science at DePaul. She teaches classes on cognitive psychology, decision-making and the psychology of women.*