

'Herman' cartoon pioneered in Mississauga

By JOHN STEWART
Staff

Jim Unger, who turned his accidental career as a cartoonist drawing for *The Mississauga Times* into the worldwide Everyman cartoon character known as Herman, died in his sleep on Tuesday at his home in Saanich, B.C.

He was 75 and had been in poor health for some time.

The British immigrant was a graphic artist at *The Mississauga Times* in the early 1970s when then-editor Phil Bingley asked him to fill in for a cartoonist who was on vacation.

Unger liked the work and eventually sent his cartoons off to various syndicated agencies at the suggestion of a reporter at the paper.

He was rejected by all the newspapers he wrote to in Canada, including *The Toronto Star*, but Universal Press Syndicate sent him a contract.

He soon had traded his \$200-a-week job for an international career. His surly middle-aged character known

simply as Herman struck a chord with readers around the world.

Obituary

Mike Toth, the sports editor at *The Times* in those days, remembers that Unger obsessed over every detail of his first cartoons, coming into his office every few minutes to show him a refined draft. "The guy just about drove me out of my mind. But that's where *Herman* was born. From there, Jim Unger was on his way."

Toth said Unger was so successful because "he was able to laugh at himself and laugh at the world."

You'd be having a conversation with him at Smitty's Pancake House in Sheridan Mall — his favourite haunt

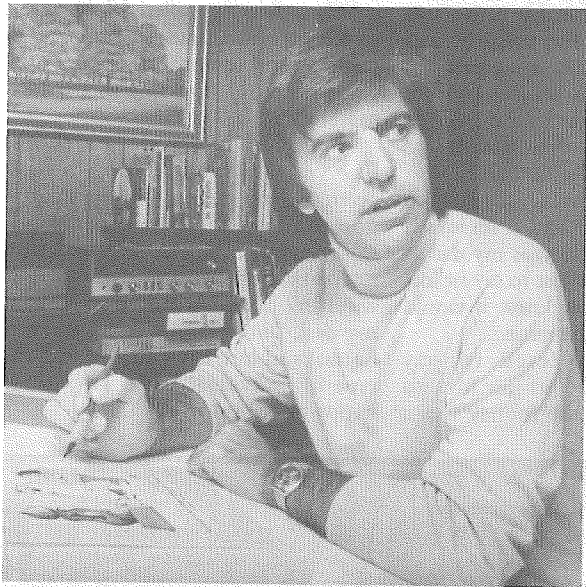
— when "Jimmy would suddenly be in another world and then he'd start dabbing something on the napkin. He had an idea for a cartoon," said Toth.

At the peak of Unger's career, *Herman* was so successful that it appeared in 500 newspapers worldwide. The cartoonist moved to the Bahamas in 1982 for tax reasons.

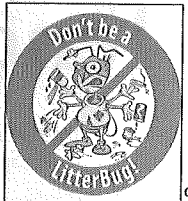
Eventually, the toll of producing a daily cartoon grew too much for Unger, who retired in 1992.

But his many loyal fans insisted on a comeback and he began drawing cartoons again in 1997 for a new generation of fans.

He won the National Cartoonists Society Newspaper Panel Cartoon Award in 1982 and 1987.



Cartoonist Jim Unger, who began his career at *The Mississauga Times*, created *Herman*. He died this week at age 75.



Even a Little
Bit Hurts

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