Fine Toon

March 1, 2000 By Judd Winick

I became a cartoonist because of Garry Trudeau, and the three panels above are a good example of why. I was 19 when these Doonesbury strips hit the papers on March 29, 30 and 31 in 1989. What struck me most was not how revolutionary they were or what barriers Trudeau was breaking. I didn't think, "Lacey [the older lady character] represents people like me—well-meaning but ignorant about the epidemic." I basically thought only one thing: "This is funny!" You want to laugh? Read Doonesbury from later that year when a severely ill Andy Lippincott's parents come to visit. He explains to his mom that he didn't get AIDS from a mosquito but from "a 6-foot-2-inch radiologist." She replies, "A doctor? You're dating a doctor?" Funny. For me, this has always been Doonesbury's uniqueness—Trudeau's ability to use humor to snooker me into thinking about subjects I might not normally consider. This was my first time seeing AIDS in any other context besides grave news reports. It made the disease accessible.

Winick was Pedro Zamora's roommate on MTV's The Real World. His comic-strip novel, Pedro and Me, will be published this fall by Henry Holt. Check out his comic, "Barry Ween, Boy Genius" at www.barryween.com

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