Race

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Moore, 41, served in the U.S. Army and has worked as a project manager for technology systems in military hospitals, according to his campaign website. Campaign priorities listed on the release touting his upcoming run include ensuring elections are accurate and accessible, pushing back against political corruption, supporting public schools and making it easy to do business in Kentucky.

Two state senators have endorsed him, according to his campaign website – Sens. Reggie Thomas, D-Lexington, and Gary Clemons, D-Louisville – along with 21 current, former or upcoming members state House.

Primaries in the 2027 election cycle will take place on May 18, with the general election set for Nov. 2.

Kentucky's secretary of state is tasked with running elections in the commonwealth along with handling business filings and other records.

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Patsis

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Now, he's celebrating the strip's milestone, and Louisville is one of 15 cities on the tour for his Pearls Jubilee book, a compilation of Patsis' work unlike any other. The book is laid out in Top 10s.

"I don't just rank best," he said. "I rank worst. I rank the ones that got the most complaints. I rank the ones that had the biggest impact, just in terms of like feedback. The ten spiciest, like where I really pushed it.

"In fact, when you open the book, the inside front cover is all people ripping on me. It's all actual email from readers that will shock you."

The book also has letters from prisoners that wrote to the "Pearls" creator.

Just as the cute pig has always balanced out the rude rat, Patsis himself balanced out the celebration by digging into decades of rejection, the rhythm of writing a strip and Louisville's impact on the strip itself.

Before we get to his event with Carmichael's Bookstore on Frankfort Avenue on Nov. 21 at 3 p.m., we'll go back to 7-year-old Stephan who figured out he wanted to become a syndicated cartoonist when he read *Peanuts Jubilee*, celebrating Charles Schulz's world-renowned strip, which later inspired Patsis' 25th anniversary book. Patsis daydreamed in doodles throughout school, but as he says, he was no Picasso.

We'll jump ahead to his first doodle of Rat while bored in class at UCLA's School of Law, then bounce ahead a little more to the nine years as an insurance defense lawyer in San Francisco. (He hated it.)

But he wasn't afraid of rejection.

"At the time, there was a practical thing at stake, which was, I hated being a lawyer," Patsis said. "And that rejection meant I wasn't going anywhere. I had to keep being a lawyer. The effect on me in terms of how it changed me was also practical, which meant, 'Okay, I have to do that' – succeed at the strip – because I got to get out of this law firm."

He never went to art school and had no formal training. Instead, in the late 1990s, on his lunch breaks from the firm, he'd go to a bookstore near his office.

"I sat there on the floor, in my suit, and read 'Dilbert' books," Patsis said. " 'Dilbert' was a three-panel strip, so I was a three-panel strip and I basically memorized how you write that. Like the setup, joke, comment on joke. It's kind of a rhythm to it."

He tried to become a syndicated cartoonist, introducing a rat in a strip with a blob (a precursor to Pig). The strip was called "Rat." It got rejected. The next attempt was about an incompetent lawyer and a rat. That strip was called "The Infirm." It got rejected. Then he tried "Bradbury Road," about a pig and a little boy. Also rejected.

Then one day he took the rat, the pig and the rhythm of "Dilbert" and, Patsis said, "Lo and behold, that was the key – and improving my writing."

He became syndicated in 50 newspapers in January 2002. Eventually, his strip got the attention of Scott Adams, the creator of "Dilbert."

"People always think I went to Scott and asked for his help," Patsis said. "I did not know him at the time. He saw ('Pearls') online ... and he told everyone to read it. That was my big break."

So, maybe you think that's where a comic strip story ends – making it big. But not for Patsis. He's had other ventures too, like "Timmy Failure," a children's book about a comically incompetent child detective. (Can you see a Patsis theme? He once wrote in a strip that "Pearls" was in the funny section of the comics page because "irrelevant banality" is too hard to say.) Disney turned "Timmy Failure" into a movie in 2020.

Recently he's been working on his next big dream: a travel guide of America. Today, he says three out of four things he proposes gets rejected.

"The problem with how I do it and the rejections that I get is, I'm a lunatic, but I write the whole book," Patsis said. "I don't really want a copilot on my journey, that's a stubborn part of me. It's probably not the right thing to do.

"I like to present them with the completed automobile, so to speak, and say, "Here it is. Do you like the 2026 model?' This is the color we use. This is the engine, and then they could say yay or nay. Whereas if you just give them an idea for a car, you're going to spend the next year – most likely with an editor who says, 'Oh yeah, I like the proposal. Where I'd like to see it go is X, Y, and Z.' And you're like, 'Oh, that's not where I wanted it to go, but you bought it, so I guess I got to do that.' So I like to just take a big swing and have them go yes or no."

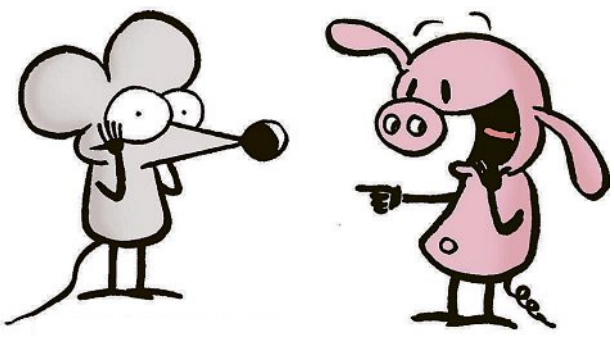
But he doesn't look at it as a waste of time. He looks at how it's shaped his strip. (An earlier version of "Pearls" actually was rejected by the independent comic-strip syndicate he's at now.)

Louisville also shaped the strip. Or, a famous Louisivillian: Hunter S. Thompson.

"He wrote a book called 'Generation of Swine,' and he just liked to use the word, and so I like the word," Patsis said about naming his comic strip. "Then I thought, 'Everything Rat says he thinks is this pearl of wisdom, and it's wasted on Pig, i.e. the swine. So 'Pearls before Swine.'

"Sometimes you hit upon a title that feels like it was just meant to be. Part of it that's great is very unintentionally, entirely unintentionally, but I'm in this field because of my hero, Charles Schultz, and wherever there is a list of comic strips – just by happenstance – my strip will always appear next to his."

Patsis actually visited Derby City back in the spring, taking in Michter's Fort Nelson Distillery, La Bodgeuita De Mima, Muhammad Ali's grave, Hunter S. Thompson's childhood home, the Ali Center, the backside of Churchill Downs, Wagner's Pharmacy, the Louisville Slugger Museum and a stop outside Columbia Gym to see the replica of Ali's red Schwinn bike before continuing on to Keeneland and throughout Lexington. (Prior to his stop he visited Owensboro.)



Rat, left, and Pig from "Pearls Before Swine" IMAGES PROVIDED BY STEPHAN PASTIS/ANDREWS MCMEEL SYNDICATION

"I wanted to do the whole Bourbon Trail, so I did that, which I loved, and I would put that countryside there in my top 10 nationwide for prettiest areas of the country," Patsis said. "You know, the kind of gently rolling green. I thought it was really, really pretty. I went up near Owensboro, where bluegrass music comes from with Bill Monroe."

Monroe is the father of bluegrass, and Patsis writes his strip to music. Always. And the songs do have words.

"People think it would be very distracting," he said, "Which it is. I want to be distracted. I want to not be able to focus and that way I think you write on the right side of the brain, which is the more interesting part."

Lots of time he writes in the car, playing loud music and using the voice memo app on his phone to record an idea he has.

"Then I get to the cafe, as I did today," he said. "What I really try to do is – this is weird to say – but to not be part of the process. I want to watch it. I don't want to be dictating it. ... I'm trying to get the focus of my brain off the writing."

But really, the strip is all portions of Patsis.



Hundreds of newspapers across the country publish Stephan Pastis' comic strip "Pearls Before Swine." GEORGE WALKER IV/THE TENNESSEAN

"Yes, 100%," he said. "And that shifts over the years."

In the beginning as a cartoon creator, he was more like Rat. Cutthroat. Now, he said, as he gets older and a bit calmer, he's more like Pig. That's another little bit of Peanuts inside Pearls.

"That was one of the few questions I remember asking Sparky," Patsis said. Sparky is Charles Schulz's nickname.

"I met him when I was a lawyer. I took the day off at work and drove up to a studio in Santa Rosa. I asked him that question. I said, 'Who are you in the strip?' And he said he was all of them. He didn't think it was really possible to write believable characters if they weren't a part of you because you're the only person you really, really know.

"So when Rat talks, that's really me. Or at least it's the me stuck in traffic yelling at the car next to me."

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