

TO: PARENTS, SENIOR GRADUATION ALL-NIGHT “LOCK-IN” PARTY
FROM: PETE WAGNER, MINNE HA! HA! STUDIOS, INC.
SUBJECT: CARICATURE PERFORMANCE ARTISTS
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Greetings!

If you have not already finished lining up your entertainment for this year’s all-night graduation party, please consider having us draw caricatures. But even if you have already booked everything for this year, PLEASE drop this information into the folder for “next year.” We have been drawing caricatures at lock-in parties since they got going in the mid-1980s, and we plan to be around for some time to come.

We are a small company for good reason: there just are not that many people around who can draw caricatures well enough or fast enough to make them suitable for drawing **at events** like yours.

I have been teaching cartooning and comic art courses at the University of Minnesota, University of St. Thomas and Minneapolis College of Art and Design since the late 1970s, and I have helped many, many young budding cartoonists and comic artists get started in their fields. Caricaturing for EVENTS, however, is a specialty that calls for a very, very unusual combination of talents that cannot be “taught.”

While we have seen a few young artists who were very good at drawing caricatures for magazines and advertising, in the nearly 30 years I have been teaching cartooning, comic art and drawing, I could count on the fingers of one hand the number who can draw in a way that works well for entertainment at events.

The main problem is speed. Even the fastest artists can rarely do more than 12 people per hour, and most do 10 or fewer. **Many draw only 6-8 people per hour.** By comparison, I draw 20-25 per hour and Dian and Jonny each draw 15-18 per hour. I have been at events where I was finishing drawing my 5th person, while the artist sitting next to me, sent by an agency or party planner, was *still* struggling with drawing their *first* person!

It would have been easy for me to recruit the same kind of student, amateur and hobbyist caricaturists that Twin Cities area agencies and party planners use, but I always felt it was unethical to do this. I care too much about the client, the art form and the reputation of caricaturists. I also feel it misleads and exploits the young artist to divert them from doing forms of art that they would be better suited for. Therefore, I have used only a small handful of artists who are genuinely qualified for entertaining at events. I’ve sacrificed a lot of potential personal profit, but I’ve maintained my professional and artistic integrity.

This means that in the two busy weeks in early June when all the lock-ins are being held, there are not enough of us to go around to draw at all of the ones that would like to have caricatures. Period. This is an unavoidable fact which it is better to accept than deny. You are probably better off hiring other forms of entertainment than to have slow, ho-hum portrait drawers posing as caricaturists.

If you care about the success of your party, **please consider viewing the online YouTube videos of us drawing at actual events at our main website at www.Kartoons.com, and check our competitive rates at www.WAG.net.** I believe we are **the only caricature artists in the area who have videos up to PROVE our speed and quality, and the only ones who offer a pricing structure that GUARANTEES that we will draw as many students per hour as we promise we can draw.**

Unfortunately, not every agency or party planner who offers caricaturists is entirely honest about the artists they send out. **Because of the high demand during high school graduation season and the low supply of capable artists, many will send out amateurs, students and hobbyists who have little or no ability to perform well at events.** Some make wildly exaggerated claims about the number of drawings per hour their people can do, knowing that you parents are too busy to watch and keep count of how many they actually do. **They offer what seem to be low prices. BUT, because they draw so few students per hour, while their hourly prices may be low, the price per student drawn is actually ridiculously HIGH. They also require you to hire three, four, five, or six artists where one or two from our company could do a *better job* and draw *more* students.**

We have heard horror stories, but in most cases the problem is not an overt failure, but simply mediocrity. While some never show up, or show up late, or do such awful work that the students leave the drawings behind in trash cans, more often it isn't that the caricaturists sent do a terrible job, it's just that their drawings are rather weak in at capturing a likeness or injecting humor into the piece, or they fall short in their interaction with the students, so simply don't add much to the party.

For 2008, we have a number of nights still open. For the past eight years, I have been back in grad school working on a Master of Fine Arts degree and a PhD in Design and teaching at the University of Minnesota. So I have been much too busy to actively call or do any other kind of outreach seeking lock-in parties. Our small troupe continued drawing at about four or five schools per year. This included several who have had us back every year for 15-20 years! But please call us if you are interested, because there is a good chance we may be available for your night. By 2009, we may be all booked up again as we were before I returned to grad school.

I have enclosed or attached a checklist that I hope you find useful when considering hiring caricature artists for your all-night party. Please visit our Kartoons.com and WAG.net websites or contact me at 651-MIN-HAHA (646-4242) for more information, videos, photos drawn at events, availability and fee schedules.

Cheers,

Pete Wagner

www.Kartoons.com

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