Hairbreadth Harry Always Won

PICTURE, if you will, a mustachioed villain complete with top hat, a damsel in distress and a stalwart hero.

If you're thinking a black-and-white silent- movie serial, you are close, but Hairbreadth Harry was in color, in the Sunday paper and played tongue in cheek.

Harry always saved heroine Belinda Blinks from arch villain Rudolph Ruddigore Rassendale, and he usually made readers laugh at the outrageous actions it took to get the job done. Think of the strip as Rube Goldberg meeting Dudley Do-Right.

Creator C.W. Kahles started the strip in 1906. At first, the Sunday funny offered an entire adventure, but Kahles soon realized that suspense sold more newspapers, so he began making the stories more complex and continued them over several weeks.

While his cliffhangers outlived the Perils of Pauline-style melodramas, they also outlived the genre. Harry battled valiantly in a few two-reelers, an early comic book and a Whitman Big Little Book in the 1930s.

But the characters lost their base and the strip folded in 1940, to be revived for a brief time in the 1960s.