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Milt Caniff Draws Lovely Ladies for a Living



This reverie in black and white features Milton Caniff, creator of "Terry and the Pirates" and "Male Call" and father to some of the most languorous ladies in comic strip history. Grouped around the artist are some of his creations (you may recognize them) and the gremlins which forever haunt his drawing boards.

By Camp Newspaper Service

Milton Caniff (pronounced like a sneeze) is a brown-haired 38-year-old Irishman who works 7 days a week, 365 days a year drawing beautiful women.

These women are incorporated in 2 of the most successful comic strips of our time, "Terry and the Pirates" and "Male Call." "Terry" appears daily in 175 civilian newspapers and the European and Italian editions of Stars and Stripes. "Male Call" is issued weekly to more than 2500 official service newspapers on the Camp Newspaper Service mailing list.

The 2 strips are produced in a glassed-in studio high in the Catskills in Rockland County, N. Y., where Caniff may be found working every night. There, too, may be found Burma and Lace and April Kane and the Dragon Lady and the other comely wenches Milton's quill and brush have produced . . . as well as the artist's real life helpers, his wife, his dog, his 2 assistants.

He Talks With Either Hand

He is an unusual artist in many respects. First, he works hard and loves it. Second, he does his own drawings, plots his own stories, writes his own dialogue. Third, he's ambidextrous. He plays golf, writes and eats soup with his right hand. He draws, paints and plays billiards with his left.

Caniff started drawing beautiful women about the time the other kids in his home town of Hillsboro, Ohio, were drawing mustaches on streetcar posters. He pursued this passion through high school and 4 years at Ohio State University and later on the Columbus Dispatch where he worked until 1930. In 1932 he began an adventure strip, "Dickie Dare," and in 1934 "Terry" was born.

"Terry" was a hit from the beginning. First, it was a spine-tin-gling adventure strip, full of hair-raising action and crisp dialogue. And, secondly, it was full of beautiful dames. This combina-MalayBalay.

Milt Caniff



Caniff and Col Phil Cochran (He's Flip Corkin in "Terry") survey one of Milt's strips at the artist's studio in Rockland County, N. Y.

Burma Was a Lady

First of the Caniff cuties to catch the public eye was Burma, a blonde and slangy number with hips like a boa constrictor and a purple past. Burma has sashayed her way through the Terry strip off and on for the last 10 years, growing progressively more desirable.

Another sensational Caniff lovely is the Dragon Lady, a slo-eyed Eurasian, with a phenomenal figure and a background as shady as a back alley in the Casbah.

Then there is the lady known as Lace, the GIs little playmate and heroine of Caniff's "Male Call" strip. Lace, a home bred beauty with overtones of Lana Turner and Marlene Dietrich and undertones of Jean Harlow and Lauren Bacall, is the sweetest little dish on the TO to thousands of servicemen from Calcutta to Canarsie.

The Man Loves Work

In addition to producing "Terry" and "Male Call," Caniff, who was rejected for service because of a bum leg, has made a couple of major contributions to the war effort. He illustrated OCD manuals for M Day on how to put out incendiary bombs before Pearl Harbor. When war came he did a full page on what to do in the event of an air raid. Later, he illustrated the Soldier's Pocket Guide to China and at least one of his "Terry" strips—the one in which Col Flip Corkin briefs Terry on the duties of an AAF officer, has found its way into posterity through publication in the Congressional Record. Profits from his "Male Call" book, recently published, will go to Army Emergency Relief.

All this keeps Caniff as busy as a man with St Vitus dance in an ant hill, but the man loves work. It doesn't bother him a bit.

"In fact," says he, "I have only one problem. I write all my own stuff. Then I have to go back and draw it, and I write myself into some of the damndest difficulties."