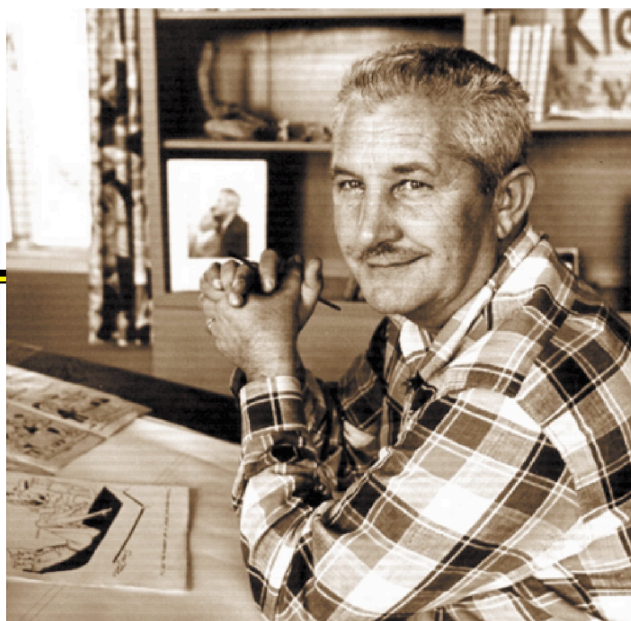


# DON FLOWERS (1908-1968)

Cartoonist,  
Custer City

**OKLAHOMA  
ARTIST**



(Excerpts from an article ©2002 Don Flowers Jr.)

My dad's newspaper career started at age 17, when he ran away from Custer City, Oklahoma, to work for the Kansas City Star. After a stint there and with the Chicago American, he moved to the Associated Press (he was on the AP re-touch desk the day the first photos of the Hindenberg disaster came in over the wire.) His first cartoon was a character called "Puffy the Pig" which the AP began running in 1930. (it was later taken over briefly by Milton Caniff).

My dad came up with "Oh Diana" (sometimes called "Diana Dean") for the AP a year later, and then gave it up to launch Modest Maidens. The AP rarely killed a feature back then, just let it shrink and die, so Puffy the Pig continued until the war, and Modest Maidens (sometimes "Modern Maidens") later was carried on by a succession of cartoonists.

When Modest Maidens started to become popular, my dad was lured to King Features by old man Hearst's personal secretary, who offered him double what he'd been getting paid (just like the scene of Orson Welles stealing the rival newspaper's talent in "Citizen Kane.") My dad started Glamor Girls for King that October. Author/cartoonist Coulton Waugh devoted a page-and-a-half and two reproductions (one Glamor Girls, one Modest Maidens) to Don Flowers in his classic history "The Comics" (Macmillan, '47) and wrote that he "had the finest line ever bequeathed to a cartoonist: it dances; it snaps gracefully back and fourth; the touches relate."

Modest Maidens, Glamor Girls and Don Flowers died almost simultaneously in 1968. At its height, Glamor Girls had close to 300 papers around the US and overseas, but that number dwindled in later years.

I do know firsthand that my dad inspired some prominent latter-day cartoonists. Shortly after he died, for instance, King, which carried his work for 30-odd years, forwarded a request for an original from Sergio Aragones, Mad Magazine contributor and creator of "Groo the Barbarian." (By then KFS had shipped all originals back to their artists, for lack of storage space.) I sent Sergio some dailies, and got back a letter in which he said that as a young boy growing up in Mexico, he's learned to draw women by copying my dad's style from panels that ran down there in a Spanish-language humor magazine called "Ja-Ja." (I later met Sergio at a Portland, Oregon cartoon show, and we swapped more originals.)

My dad had close connections to his more famous contemporaries: He knew both Al Capp and Milt Caniff at the AP, and recalled how he and Capp would go down to the automat and pool their change to buy lunch. Caniff and he remained friends for years, and Caniff continued to correspond with my mom after my dad died.

DON  
FLOWERS