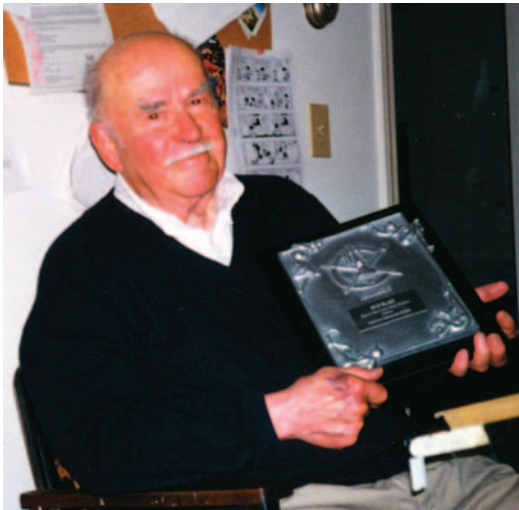


News From

King Features

BUD BLAKE , CREATOR OF “TIGER” COMIC STRIP, DEAD AT 87

Bud Blake, the genial cartoonist whose “Tiger” comic strip was adored worldwide by comics fans for its warm and humorous glimpses into childhood, died on Monday, Dec. 26, 2005 at Maine Medical Center in Portland. He was 87 years old.



Bud Blake holding the plaque awarded to him by The National Cartoonists Society for “Best Comic Strip of the Year (2000).”

Blake created “Tiger” in 1965. Fed up with a two-hour commute, administrative details, long business trips and client lunches, Blake quit his job as executive art director of the Kudner Advertising Agency, having started there at age 18 as a paste-up boy. Even though he was surrounded by what he called “good men and good pay,” Blake realized that all the time he spent commuting and traveling meant less and less time at the drawing board, where he was happiest.

After a three-month sojourn to Spain, Blake returned to his drawing board as a freelance cartoonist for a variety of advertising clients and magazines, such as *Business Week* and *Family Circle*. He created a series of one-panel cartoons, which he brought to King Features Syndicate. The syndicate signed him to do a daily panel called “Ever Happen to You?” But, the panel and extra assignments were not exactly what Blake had in mind for his career. He aspired to write and draw his own daily and Sunday comic strip.

Blake envisioned a strip about a little boy named Tiger and his scrappy group of friends. More of a catalyst than a leader, Tiger pals around with his little brother Punkinhead, his best friend Hugo and his faithful, spotted dog Stripe. Suzy and Bonnie, Tiger’s feminine rivals, and Julian, the bespectacled “brain,” round out Blake’s rich cast of endearing characters.

During this period, King Features Syndicate had turned down more than 50 “kid strips” in search of “the perfect comic strip portraying the wisdom and humor of children.” When Blake submitted samples of “Tiger,” the search was officially declared over. Blake’s characters, humor and artistic talent met the high standards that King Features sought.

“Throughout his long and illustrious career, Bud Blake maintained a reputation as one of the country’s most talented cartoonists. He was highly respected by his peers for the quality and charm of his artwork and his inspiring view of a child’s world,” said Jay Kennedy, editor in chief at King Features Syndicate.

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Describing his characters, Blake often said, “The characters are composites of various youngsters in my neighborhood and from my own childhood.” For example, Hugo was a boy who used to beat up Blake regularly. “I don’t remember his real name, but I know it wasn’t Hugo. I’ll never forget that he was bigger and tougher than the rest of us,” Blake recalled. Stripe, Tiger’s canine companion, was modeled after Blake’s own dog Jenny.



As the popularity of “Tiger” grew, Blake eventually had to give up “Ever Happen To You?” and his freelance work to concentrate on his snub-nosed tykes. The National Cartoonists Society selected “Tiger” three times as the year’s best humor strip in 1970, 1978 and 2000. “Tiger” has been nominated multiple times for the NCS’ top honor, the Reuben Award.

“Tiger” still appears in more than 100 newspapers in 11 different countries. Syndication of the strip will continue internationally using reprints of Blake’s classic work.

Blake was born in Nutley, NJ in 1918 and attended grammar and high school there. As a boy, he was fond of woodcarving, so he left high school to work the carnivals, state fairs and seaside boardwalks as a demonstrator for a penknife company, doing quick, three-dimensional sketches of spectators in balsa wood.

Encouraged by the sale of a few cartoons to the old *Judge* magazine, he studied art at various schools, among them the National Academy of Design. After brief stints as a soda jerker, lifeguard and sketch man in a commercial art studio, Blake joined the Kudner Advertising Agency in New York. He moved quickly from paste-up boy to renderer to layout artist. Finally, by the age of 36, he was promoted to Executive Art Director of the Agency.

Then, on a sudden impulse in 1954, he decided to turn his back on the corporate world to happily return full-time to his drawing board. Blake will be remembered for his individual artistic style and for allowing the kids in “Tiger” to just be kids.

A widower, Blake is survived by his son Jay and daughter Marianna. A memorial service for family and friends will be held at Strong Funeral Home in Damariscotta, Maine. In lieu of flowers, fans may make a donation in memory of Bud Blake to their favorite charitable organization.