



Carl Barks, "The Good Artist," at work on an early Donald Duck comic book story. This image appeared in a 1947 edition of The Hemet News. Full text of the article begins on the next page.

An Introduction to *The Good Artist*

by Joseph Cowles

Five years ago, Google's search engines provided 58,000 hits for "Carl Barks," begging the question of whether yet another Barks site was necessary. Today, in late January 2009, as I set about tuning up and revamping this site, I've again keyed in the old gentleman's name—and came up with about 911,000 hits!

This growth rate of well more than 15-fold in five years may be partially attributable to Google's own expansion and the improved efficiency of its web crawlers. The emphasis here is on

partially. Clearly, worldwide interest in the voluminous works of Carl Barks continues to expand.

Fans of Barks comprise an intelligentsia whose common ground is an appreciation of little cartoon ducks that behave like human beings.

This phenomenon is not new. Krazy Kat and Pogo were extraordinarily popular comic strips of their day. Their grown-up fans conscientiously followed George Herriman's zany antics of pups and cats

and mice with bricks, and Walt Kelly's politically-spiced possum and alligator Okefenokee Swamp humor.

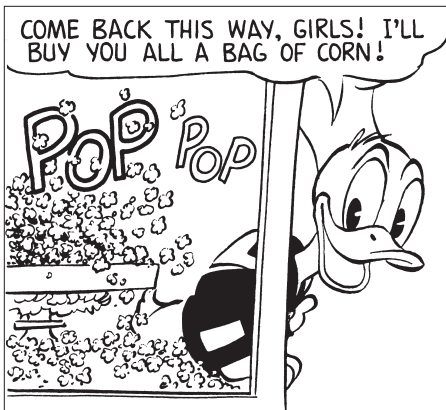
For many years, these two strips held the fancy of huge newspaper audiences, primarily adult readers. Disney stories by Barks, however, appeared in funny books published for children, and were not marketed as literature for adults.

After the deaths of Herriman and Kelly, their strips soon disappeared from common recollection (except for a sprinkling of nostalgic enthusiasts, which include

myself). Barks retired from the comic book world in his mid-sixties to enjoy—more or less—thirty-some years in which he was astounded by the continuously growing numbers of his readers, and saw his work translated into many languages and reprinted throughout the world.

The Good Artist is an online magazine for Barks aficionados. We're here to publish essays, articles, photos, interviews, correspondence, conversations, newspaper clippings, drawings and other items unlikely to have been seen broadly, plus meritorious odds and ends.

What *TGA* is not is an open forum or chat room or endless list of dates, numbers and trivialities. Like a quality print magazine, materials appearing in *The Good Artist* will be carefully selected and decently edited, presented for your intellectual stimulation.



Donald Duck parodies the teenage antics of Disneyland popcorn boy Joe Cowles in the 1962 Carl Barks story, "The Candy Kid."

Some well-meaning friends, a few Barks fans, and one or two family members have encouraged me to share my personal reminiscences of Carl and Garé in those tranquil years before Barks became "discovered." I've promised to do so, in bits and pieces that will from time to time show up as articles on this site.

For the record, when we post something which includes images of Disney-owned characters (such as Lynda Ault's gentle photo of Barks at his painter's easel, which



HE MAKES THOUSANDS LAUGH—Carl Barks, cartoonist, who draws and writes the Donald Duck comic strip for the Walt Disney Comic magazine each month. He and his wife own a five acre ranch in the Hemet-San Jacinto Valley and have been residing there for the past five years. *(Valley Studio photo)*

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DONALD DUCK ARTIST RESIDENT OF VALLEY

By JEAN RECORDS

One of the men who brings the irresistible Donald Duck to life for millions of youngsters in America and has helped to place him high in the ranks of comic strips is Carl Barks of San Jacinto. He and his wife own a five-acre family orchard on Ramona Boulevard and have lived there ever since Barks left the Walt Disney studios five years ago.

The main item on Barks' working calendar is his 10-page Donald Duck contribution to the Walt Disney Comic magazine, published each month by the Whitman Publishing company in Beverly Hills. Frequently during the year he writes 35-page comic annuals and Donald Duck strips for advertising purposes. He states that his output usually runs around 300 pages a year

or 2400 separate drawings, all originals.

DISNEY GETS ROYALTY

Barks is not the creator of Donald Duck, but he and one other cartoonist, Al Taliaferro, who does the daily strips, are the two whose stories and drawings of the duck appear in magazine and newspaper form. Walt Disney, of course, receives a royalty for all publication of his duck, which is drawn by the two men according to a model standard form. However, Barks has occasionally originated a character, and in his stories he frequently introduces a new personality.

One way in which he gets his ideas for his stories for Donald is by thinking of an occupation. He states that he then asks himself, why is the character in

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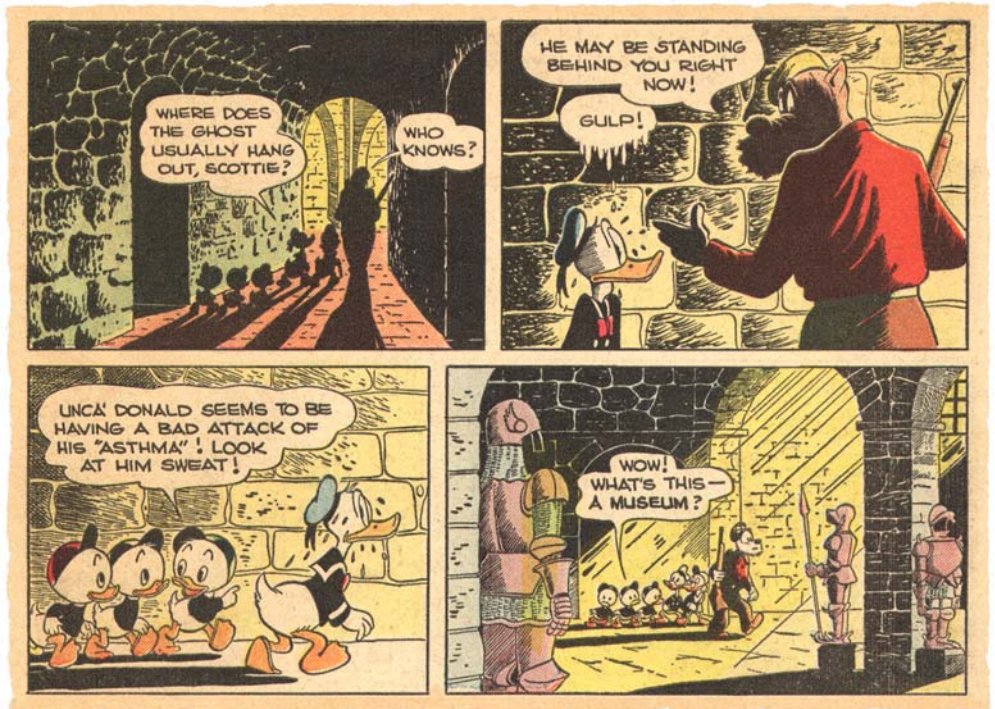
That's enough introduction, right? Many thanks for being here. We hope you enjoy this not-quite-a-blog publication and invite you to return often.

All best wishes,



Joseph Cowles, Publisher
Palm Springs, California USA

TheGoodArtist@wildblue.net



In the November 1947 Hemet newspaper photo, Carl Barks is shown at work on the top half of page five of Donald Duck in The Old Castle's Secret, a 28-page story originally published in June 1948 (FC #189).

that occupation and what can happen to him that's funny. To work out a story Barks takes from five hours to five days. Once he gets his idea he averages 12 panels or a page and a half of work a day.

HAD NO ART TRAINING

The career of this tall, distinguished gentleman, who hardly looks like a cartoonist except for his very obvious sense of humor, started 20 years ago when he started selling cartoons to humor magazines. He had had no art training, but he did have the ability to think of humorous ideas and situations. He did this kind of work until 1935 and then went to the Disney studios, where he started training in the animation department. After he put over an original gag he was sent to the story department and remained there for seven years. He left to come to San Jacinto because of his health.

Once Barks gets an idea for a story he starts sketching in blue pencil. His wife assists him by inking in the black part of the drawings and erasing the blue.

HE WORKS RAPIDLY

After he completes a panel he pins

it above his desk so that he can obtain the momentum that he wishes for the story. The panels are sent to the publishing company six months ahead and sometimes even a year ahead of their publication date.

When he first started in this work five years ago he was able to do only six panels a day. He can now do as many as 24 a day. Now working on a 35-page annual for the Whitman company, Barks, who has two married children and three grandchildren, confesses that he would much prefer to do the fantastic strips, such as Tarzan.

Article provided courtesy of the City of Hemet Public Library Heritage Room archives, and the enduring patience of former Volunteer Coordinator Mary E. Whitney, retired curator of the library's Carl Barks Collection. Special thanks to author Geoffrey Blum, who has generously put us on the trail of this and other Barks treasures.