

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part XII

**By Pamela Nickell
H.C. Historical Society**

Milton Caniff and his creations are among the many ways association with the Highland County Historical Society has enhanced my particular stay in Highland County these past 30 of the 50 years of the existence of the Highland House.

(Note: The use of 'Highland' three times in one paragraph is a literal reminder that this Society is a countywide entity.)

Before we moved here, I knew the very handsome "Steve Canyon," his colorful cohorts, beautiful women and their international adventures.

What a surprise, then, to learn that their famous creator, Milton Arthur Paul Caniff, was born right here in Hillsboro!

To get to actually meet him, hear his presentation and watch him draw right in the Conference Room of the Highland House was a most exciting experience. Hillsboro has drawn several famous people, but this one originated right here in our own space. An Ohio Historical Marker at the Hillsboro Library commemorates him.

Milton Arthur Paul Caniff was born Feb. 28, 1907 at 149 East North Street. He passed away on April 3, 1988 at the age of 81 in New York City. In the interim?

Amazing accomplishments: Eagle Scout, cartooning for local Dayton newspapers while still a high school student at Stivers, The Ohio State University Sigma Chi member and illustrator for the fraternity publications, the Columbus Dispatch and syndication of "Terry and the Pirates" and "Steve Canyon," two of his several cartoon strips.

His work always exhibits amazing detail, accurately depicted locations, current events, and of course, humor. His characters are beautiful, glamorous, believable and funny.

Their attire, especially uniforms, is accurate to the most minute detail.

Where can his work be seen? A Google search of Milton Caniff listed 11 online sites with eight additional searches. There is a YouTube video of him working.

The Ohio State University has an exhibit. And the Highland House features him on the second floor Wall of Fame with a life-size drawing of "Steve Canyon" drawn by Leland Pennington.

In 1982, Leland introduced me to Milton Caniff when the author was celebrated in his hometown on its 175th birthday. His presentation at the Highland House was fun and



fascinating. He drew a large sketch, ripped it off the pad and gave it away to a member of the audience.

Who got it? Not me! I wonder who did and if it still exists?

- Sources for this article include the idea from Avery Applegate, *The Highland County Magazine*, Volume I, Number IV published by Leland Pennington, Hills of Highland by Elsie Johnson Ayres, and of course, the Highland House Museum.