

Daniel Day Tells of His Rise as Artist

By DANIEL E. DAY
(Bud Billiken Staff Artist)

Four years ago I sat down with a pencil and a sheet of drawing paper and with the aid of much head-scratching and tongue-chewing finally finished up a cartoon which I sheepishly brought down to the office of the World's Greatest Weekly.

I don't know yet just what happened or why, but nevertheless it wasn't the regular thing. Instead of slinging at me an acid remark about "ham" artist, and asking why I didn't enroll in a correspondence school for errand boys, the officials who interviewed me showed a complimentary degree of interest. The ensuing questions and answers gradually evolved into the following brief autobiography of myself.

Born in 1914

I was born on the 10th of December, 1914, in a little rear shanty on a none-too-popular street in Birmingham, Ala. Five years later my mother died, a tragedy that was followed shortly after by the death of my father, all of which left the world with a rather new and untried proposition on its hands.

Well, while the world didn't handle the exigency after the fashion of a national holiday, my brother Alger and I refused to register a kick, seeing as how Abraham Lincoln hadn't diagnosed a banana split even up to the time he was 10 years old. We simply rested on our youth, and a little later on the generosity and a feather bed in the home of our grandmother, which circumstance incidentally explains, how we happened to know that there was such a burg as St. Meigs, Ala., when the rest of the United States still doesn't know that there's a speck in Alabama by that calling.

Our grandmother was very good to us boys, but at this particular period of our lives, the country was suffering from a serious shortage of good "breaks." At any rate, the next depressing incident in our lives was the death of our grandmother. This happened in 1923 and left us again as wards of the world and at the mercy of some distant relatives who admitted they knew us.

In the spring of 1923, if you figure it up, you'll find I was tagging onto the tail of my ninth birthday cake—only there were no candles on it for the simple reason that there really wasn't any cake to be decorated. All things considered, we began to feel like a set of unwanted step-children, if such things are possible without step-parents, and so became all hot about the collar over the matter in which Providence was handling our particular case.

Came to Chicago

Anyhow the middle of 1923 found both my brother and me in the Windy City, the home of the great Chicago Defender, and, of course, being here, the inevitable thing to do was to visit the Defender plant. That visit marked the turning point towards a series of better breaks in my life, and as I knock on wood, permit me to say that this series shows no inclination towards deserting me now.

And so it was that after visiting the World's Greatest Weekly, after staring goggle-eyed at its two huge presses spitting papers at capacity speed: after having my blood all lit up with the verve, dash and essential vitality that permeates the structure from janitors' quarters to the main lobby, I confidentially ask you, what was there for a youngster to do other than wish to become an integral part of that great throbbing enterprise of a people whose indomitable rise keeps the rest of the world looking anxiously to its laurels?

That was why I sat down and scrawled the picture which I submitted to the Defender officials. And it wasn't essentially the drawing, which by the way, wasn't at all hot, come to think of it now, that took the kinks out of my life-line. Not by a \$20 string of assorted lolly-pops did that drawing induce the man I first showed it to to turn it around and over and upside down in order to show me some sympathy by understanding what it was. Nor was it that drawing that caused Bud Billiken himself to speak favorably of me and express hope for my future. That drawing had nothing whatever to do with the fatherly interest Robert S. Abbott took in me from the very beginning and later caused him to start me onto the realization of my life's dream by enrolling me in classes, which I am attending at present, at the great Art Institute of Chicago, and—paying for my tuition!