Brenda Starr comic collection

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2014
**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Brenda Starr comic collection  
**Dates:** 1947  
**Collection Number:** Consult repository  
**Creator/Collector:** Messick, Dale, 1906-2005  
**Extent:** 3 linear feet  
**Repository:** Sonoma State University Library  
Rohnert Park, California 94928

**Abstract:** Brenda Starr, Reporter debuted on June 30, 1940 in the Chicago Tribune. The strip became a daily feature in October 1945. Brenda Starr was created by Dale Messick, one of the few female cartoonists of her time. Ms. Messick continued drawing Brenda Starr for over forty years. Ms. Messick died in Sonoma County in 2005.

**Language of Material:** English

**Access**

Collection is open for research by appointment.

**Publication Rights**

The library can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Users are responsible for satisfying any claimants of literary property.

**Preferred Citation**

Brenda Starr comic collection. Sonoma State University Library

**Biography/Administrative History**

Dale Messick was born in 1906. She studied briefly at the Ray Commercial Art School in Chicago but left to begin a career as a professional artist. She began working for a Chicago greeting card company in the 1930s and was successful but quit when her boss lowered her pay. She moved to New York City and found work at another greeting card company at a higher salary, and began assembling a portfolio of comic strips. Messick decided to change her first name to Dale to help get her work seen by editors. She produced a number of ideas for strips with titles such as Weegee, Mimi the Mermaid, Peg and Pudy, the Struglettes, and Streamline Babies, none of which were picked up for publication. Dale Messick was born in 1906. She studied briefly at the Ray Commercial Art School in Chicago but left to begin a career as a professional artist. She began working for a Chicago greeting card company in the 1930s and was successful but quit when her boss lowered her pay. She moved to New York City and found work at another greeting card company at a higher salary, and began assembling a portfolio of comic strips. Messick decided to change her first name to Dale to help get her work seen by editors. She produced a number of ideas for strips with titles such as Weegee, Mimi the Mermaid, Peg and Pudy, the Struglettes, and Streamline Babies, none of which were picked up for publication. Messick created the character of Brenda Starr in 1940, naming it after a debutante from the 1930s and basing her appearance on Rita Hayworth. Messick wanted to produce a strip with a female protagonist; she decided a career as a reporter would allow her character to travel and have adventures, adventures more glamorous than those actually experienced by most reporters. Her break came when she came to the attention of another woman, Mollie Slott, who worked as a “girl Friday” (à la His Girl Friday) for New York Daily News publisher Joseph Medill Patterson. Patterson, reputedly biased against women cartoonists, wouldn't sign her up for daily publication in the News, but he accepted Brenda Starr, Reporter for syndication as a Sunday comic, and it made its debut on June 30, 1940. It was quickly a success; its mixture of adventure and romance was popular with both male and female readers. Messick went on to create a number of other comic strips but none achieved the success of Brenda Starr. The only other strip which she worked on which is generally remembered was Perry Mason, which she illustrated. Messick retired from producing Brenda Starr in 1980. Others took over the strip, but Messick wasn't impressed with her successors' versions of Starr, according to a 1998 quote in the Sonoma County Independent: Now it doesn't look like Brenda at all. She looks more like she works at a bank. No glamour, no curves, no fashion — but it's still going pretty good. Following her retirement, she moved to Oakmont, California. She continued to work and created a new strip, Granny Glamour, which ran in Oakmont Gardens Magazine, a local weekly magazine. It ended after she had a stroke in 1998. Her break came when she came to the attention of another woman, Mollie Slott, who worked as a “girl Friday” (à la His Girl Friday) for New York Daily News publisher Joseph Medill Patterson. Patterson, reputedly biased against women cartoonists, wouldn't sign her up for daily publication in the News, but he accepted Brenda Starr, Reporter for syndication as a Sunday comic, and it made its debut on June 30, 1940. It was quickly a success; its mixture of adventure and romance was popular with both male and female readers. Messick went on to create a number of other comic strips but none achieved the success of Brenda Starr. The only other strip which she worked on which is generally remembered was Perry Mason, which she illustrated. Messick retired from producing Brenda Starr in 1980. Others took over the strip, but Messick wasn't impressed with her successors'
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**Scope and Content of Collection**

This collection contains 100 dailies and twenty three Sunday editions of the original hand drawn panels from 1947 and is housed in the Regional Archive of Special Collections.

**Indexing Terms**

- Women cartoonists
- Starr, Brenda (fictitious character)
- Comic books, strips, etc.
- Messick, Dale, 1906–2005