Guide to the Virgil Partch Cartoons and Artwork MS.M.002

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Abstract: Virgil Partch, also known as Vip, was the creator of the popular syndicated cartoon Big George and also had a successful career as a freelance cartoonist and book illustrator in the United States from the 1950s to the 1980s. In addition to original Big George cartoons, this collection includes original artwork created by Partch for numerous magazines including Collier's, True, and the New Yorker. It also includes art work for two children's books, The Dog Who Snored Symphonies and The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snatcher.
Creator: Vip, 1916-1984
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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Gift of Virgil Partch, 1974.
Processing History
Joanna Lamb, assisted by Anne Nguyen, 2010.
Biography
Virgil Partch, also known as Vip, was the creator of the popular syndicated cartoons Big George and The Captains' Gig. He was a successful freelance cartoonist and book illustrator in the United States from the 1950s to the 1980s and was widely known for drawing outlandish characters with distorted anatomy. His cartoons were published in numerous magazines including Collier's, True, Playboy, and The New Yorker. He also published 19 books of cartoons and illustrated 12 others, including the two children's books, The Dog Who Snored Symphonies and The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snatcher. Partch was killed in a car accident in 1984.
Virgil Franklin Partch was born to U.S. Navy petty officer Paul Chester Partch and civilian Anna Pavaloff on October 17, 1916 on St. Paul Island, Alaska. Partch's father was stationed at naval radio stations in Alaska and the West Coast and the family moved often. In 1929 Paul Partch retired from the Navy and the family settled in Tucson, Arizona where Virgil Partch attended a local middle school. At Tucson High School, Partch played football, baseball, and drew cartoons for the school newspaper. Even at this early stage of his career Partch had adopted the artists monogram Vip. The letter i in Vip was initially meant to represent the f of his middle name, but was so often mistaken for the letter i by Partch's classmates that Partch decided to adopt the letter i, creating the well-known moniker Vip.
Partch attended the University of Arizona as a Fine Art major for one year before moving to Los Angeles, California to attend the Chouinard Arts School, a training ground for Disney animators. In 1937, after attending six months of classes at Chouinard, Partch retired from the Navy and the family settled in Tucson, Arizona where Virgil Partch attended a local middle school. At Tucson High School, Partch played football, baseball, and drew cartoons for the school newspaper. Even at this early stage of his career Partch had adopted the artists monogram Vip. The letter i in Vip was initially meant to represent the f of his middle name, but was so often mistaken for the letter i by Partch's classmates that Partch decided to adopt the letter i, creating the well-known moniker Vip.
While employed at Disney, Partch was often reproached for his refusal to adhere to the guidelines for drawing Mickey Mouse. During the 1941 Disney strike Partch began drawing and submitting freelance cartoons to magazines, and he did not return to Disney following the end of the strike. The first magazine to purchase one of his cartoons was Collier's, a popular magazine published between 1888 and 1957. This purchase led to a long and thriving partnership between the artist and the magazine and represented the first success of Partch as a freelance cartoonist. He would eventually publish works in the New Yorker, the Saturday Evening Post, Liberty, This Week, True, and Playboy. In addition to working as a freelance cartoonist at this time, Partch accepted a position at the Walter Lantz Production Studios. Disagreements over the
depiction of one of the studio's main cartoon characters, Woody Woodpecker, led to Partch's resignation from the Studio and his determination to launch full-time freelance career. Partch's cartoons are easily recognized and frequently include characters with distorted anatomy. His human characters often include an excessive number of fingers, a trait Partch claimed was the direct result of his time drawing three-fingered characters at Disney. He was also widely known for cartoons that depict literal interpretations of common expressions and for his popular sex and alcohol related cartoons.

On September 23, 1944 Partch joined the United States Army and was stationed at Fort Ord in Monterey Bay, California where he drew cartoons for the base newspaper the Panorama. During this period Partch continued to submit freelance work to magazines and illustrate advertisements, and he began to draw numerous cartoons depicting military life which were included in Collier's. In 1945, while still enrolled in the Army, Collier's published the first collection of Partch cartoons in book format, It's Hot in Here. Partch would go on to publish 19 books and illustrate 12 others.

In the 1950s Partch moved to Balboa Island in Newport Beach, California with his family before building a home overlooking the ocean in nearby Corona Del Mar. During this time he began publishing numerous cartoons, calendars, and other materials with True Magazine and also served as the True Humor Editor for a brief time. In 1953 a VIP on Sex cartoon was included on the cover of the first edition of Playboy alongside actress Marilyn Monroe. Partch often met other well-know cartoonist at the Ivy House Restaurant in Laguna Beach to discuss their work over lunch. The group was known to sign autographs and give out sketches during their lunches.

Partch created the syndicated feature Big George in the 1960s about a middle-aged family man. Big George was initially syndicated as a single frame cartoon and was later developed into a comic strip for Sunday distribution. The strip was published through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In addition to creating a second syndicated comic strip in 1977, The Captain's Gig, Partch was also a founding member of the Famous Artist School. In 1971 Partch's eyesight began to deteriorate and he was forced to use an engraver's magnifying tool to complete his cartoons. Partch and his wife were killed in an automobile accident north of Los Angeles, California on Interstate 5 on August 4, 1984.

Collection Scope and Content Summary
This collection comprises approximately 3,700 comics, cartoons, illustrations, and other original drawings and artwork created by cartoonist Virgil Partch, also known as Vip. The majority of the collection consists of original cartoons and comic strips of Partch's syndicated feature Big George, which appeared in over 300 newspapers throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Samples of freelance cartoons that were published in Collier's, Liberty, Look, True, and the New Yorker are included along with original calendar illustrations produced and sold for True magazine. Partch illustrated several books and this collection includes the galleys and original illustrations from two children's books, The Dog who Snored Symphonies and The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snatcher as well as the cover art for Partch's first published book It's Hot in Here. Additionally this collection includes early abstract artwork from the 1940s and 1950s.

Collection Arrangement
This collection is arranged in four series:

Series 1. Big George cartoons and comic strips, 1961-1974 and undated, 10 linear feet
Series 2. Children's Book illustrations, circa 1969-1971, 0.8 linear feet
Series 3. Freelance cartoons, 1944-1974 and undated, 2 linear feet
Series 4. Original art, 1930s-1962 and undated, 2.1 linear feet

Separation Note
The following books were removed from this collection and cataloged separately in Special Collections and Archives:

Armed Farces
The Art of Being A Successful Student
Bar Guide
Big George
Cartoon 62
Cartoon 64
Cartoons Out of My Own Head
Crazy Cartoons
The Dead Game Sportsmen
Funny Cartoons
Hanging Way Over
Here We Go Again
It's Hot In Here
Le Monde Etrange de Virgil Partch
Man the Beast
Man the Beast and the Wild, Wild Women
New Faces on the Barroom Floor
Nowhere Near Everest: An Ascent to the Height of the Ridiculous!
Où Va-T-il Les Cherchers?
Sport am Morgen

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Caricatures and cartoons -- California -- 20th century
Cartooning -- California -- 20th century
Cartoonists -- California -- 20th century -- Archives
Cartoonists -- California -- Orange County
Cartoons (humorous images)
Children's literature -- 20th century
Comic strips
Illustrations

Big George cartoons and comic strips Series 1. 1961-1974 and undated
Series Scope and Content Summary
Big George was a syndicated cartoon and comic strip created by Virgil Partch in 1960 that was published through the 1980s. The syndicated feature began as single panel cartoon, but comic strips were soon added for Sunday distribution. The cartoon follows the antics of a middle-aged man, his family, and pets. Partch's outlandish comic style and common addition of extra fingers were toned down for the syndicate. This series includes original black and white and color cartoon and comic strip drawings, over-sized cartoons created for the Steve Allen Show, and a small number of printed proofs from the syndicate.

Series Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by topic.

Box 20, Folder 4
Cartoon displays for the Steve Allen Show 1964 January
Cartoons

Chronological files
Box 1, Folder 1-14 1964-1968 and undated
Box 2, Folder 1-20 1968-1972
Box 3, Folder 1-17 1972-1974

Subject files
Arrangement Note
The arrangement preserves the intellectual order imposed by the creator.

Box 4, Folder 1 Armed forces 1965-1968
Box 4, Folder 2-3 Baseball 1963-1969 and undated
Box 4, Folder 4-11 Business, male friend 1963-1969 and undated
Box 4, Folder 12-14 Cat, dog 1962-1973 and undated
Box 5, Folder 1-2 Christmas, New Year's 1964-1969
Box 5, Folder 3 Desert 1968
Box 5, Folder 4 Family, home, wife, husband 1963-1969 and undated
Box 5, Folder 5-13 Fishing 1964
Box 6, Folder 1 Football 1964-1969
Box 6, Folder 2
Big George cartoons and comic strips Series 1. 1961-1974 and undated

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<td>6, Folder 6-7</td>
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<td>6, Folder 14</td>
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Box 7, Folder 1-5 | Undated
Box 8, Folder 1-4 | 1961-1963
Box 9, Folder 1-6 | 1964-1966
Box 10, Folder 1-7 | 1967-1968
Box 11, Folder 1-3 | 1969
Box 12, Folder 1-4 | 1970-1971
Box 13, Folder 1-4 | 1972
Box 13, Folder 1-4 | 1973
Box 14, Folder 1-2 | 1974
Box 14, Folder 3  | 1974


Series Scope and Content Summary
Virgil Partch published nineteen books and illustrated twelve others including children's books. This series includes original illustrations and galley proofs from two children's books, *The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snatcher* and *Ludwig: The Dog that Snored Symphonies*.

Series Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by book title.

*The Christmas Cookie Sprinkle Snatcher*
Galley proof 1969 April 30
Black and white illustrations circa 1968-1969
Color illustrations circa 1968-1969

*Ludwig: The Dog That Snored Symphonies*
Original drawings circa 1970

Freelance cartoons Series 3. 1944-1974

Series Scope and Content Summary
Virgil Partch was a successful freelance cartoonist and his cartoons were featured repeatedly in many magazines. This series includes original cartoon drawings that were published in numerous magazine and newspapers. Also included are oversize materials and calendar artwork created for Collier's and True magazines, the two publications that most often features Partch’s work.

Series Arrangement
This series is arranged by publication when known and also by subject or form.

*Collier’s*
Dated files 1944-1960 and undated

Guide to the Virgil Partch Cartoons and Artwork MS.M.002
Subject files

Arrangement Note

The arrangement preserves the intellectual order imposed by the creator.

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<td>Framed magazine originals 1962 and undated</td>
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<td>Box 17, Folder 5-6</td>
<td>King Features Syndicate 1944-1951 and undated</td>
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<td>Box 19, Folder 5</td>
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<td>Folder XOS 1</td>
<td>It's Hot In Here cover art circa 1942</td>
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<td>Box 21</td>
<td>Poster drawings</td>
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<td>The Flying Partches (to Anderson) undated</td>
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Physical Description: Signed "Vipper".

Physical Description: Color finishes.

Physical Description: Signed "Vipper".

Physical Description: Signed "Vipper".

Physical Description: Pencil sketch, grey and red. 18"x62"
Box 21  
**The Flying Partches undated**
Physical Description: Black and rust paint and pastel. 18"x62"

Box 21  
**For A Limited Engagement undated**

Box 21  
**Mano a Mano by Bill MacIntyre 1930s-1962 and undated**
Physical Description: Sketch of matador; paint and pastel.

Box 18, Folder 10  
**Skilton cartoon late 1940s**

Acquisition Note
Donated by David Skilton in 2008.

Folder XOS 1  
**Untitled sketch for painting undated**