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'Mad Men' Has LB Roots

by *Adrienne Fawcett* (<https://jwcdaily.com/author/adrienne/>) • May 17, 2015

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Editor's note on Sept. 23, 2013: This article was first published in GazeboNews in 2010 during the fourth season of "Mad Men" on AMC. We're publishing it again today on Daily North Shore because the door closes for good on the AMC series on Sunday, May 17, 2015.



(<https://jwcdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/draper-daniels-at-desk.jpg>)

Draper Daniels at his desk at Leo Burnett, upon returning to work after back surgery

By Adrienne Fawcett

Debbie Stockert doesn't watch "Mad Men," and she doesn't spend much time thinking about advertising. But she has strange, coincidental ties to two legendary ad men. She lives in a house in Lake Bluff that was once owned by former Leo Burnett creative chief Draper Daniels, and she grew up in a house on the Lake Forest estate of Albert Lasker, the Lord & Thomas executive who's considered the father of modern advertising.

"Maybe I should consider a career change," joked Debbie, who runs the youth education program at The Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest.

Mr. Lasker and Mr. Daniels have surfaced in today's popular culture as probable models for the Don Draper character on AMC's "Mad Men" cable TV show, which capped its fourth season in October. The dramatic series is set on New York's Madison Avenue in the early 1960s, with all of the boozing, smoking, chauvinism and constrictive lingerie typical of that era. Don Draper is the deeply flawed, brilliantly creative lead character who woos clients by day and the ladies by night.



(<https://jwcdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/106-north-342-web.jpg>)

106 North Avenue, the Daniels first LB home, as it looks today

If you don't watch the show, this story is going to seem really silly. But if you're a fan—and there are a lot out there—it's fun to imagine

Don Draper plopping his brief case on the linoleum at 106 North Avenue in Lake Bluff, where the Draper Daniels family lived from 1947 to 1958, or pushing a manual lawn mower across the yard at 200 Oak Terrace, where the family lived from 1958 to 1966, according to phone directories at the Lake Bluff History Museum and interviews with Curtis Daniels, one of the Daniels' four grown children. Curtis and his twin sister, Marie, and brothers John (Jack) and Bruce all attended Lake Bluff public schools and Lake Forest High School. Friends may remember Marie and Curtis by their nicknames "Nip" and "Tuck" (because she was born first).

In a telephone interview, Curtis said that if memory serves him right, his parents paid less than \$10,000 for the house on North Avenue, and about \$29,500 when they moved across town to the tonier neighborhood of Oak Terrace in '58. Both of the homes have been remodeled in recent years and he figures he might not even recognize them if he went inside.

Neither of the Daniels' Lake Bluff homes resembles the fictional Don Draper's large center-entrance colonial in Ossining, New York, where the TV Don lived with his wife Betty and their three children before she became his ex-wife in season 4.



(<https://jwcdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/200-oak-450-web.jpg>)

The family moved to 200 Oak Terrace in '58

Nor does the Betty character resemble Draper Daniels' first wife, Louise Cort Daniels, according to Curtis. "That Betty family is all fanciful," he said.

Now retired from

the recreational vehicle industry, Curtis lives with his wife in her hometown of Crawfordsville, Indiana.

Curtis said there are some similarities between his father and the Draper character played by actor John Hamm, particularly in their physical resemblance and clothing style. But much of the story is fiction, such as the critical plot line of Don Draper assuming the identity of a deceased sergeant during the Korean War.

"That has nothing to do with my family, it's made up," he said. "The character is loosely based on someone who lived back then and had certain skills and talents at that time. A lot of other things are dramatic tools."

Draper and Cort Daniels moved to Lake Bluff with their children in 1947 and were charter members of the now shuttered Lake Bluff Bath & Tennis Club. According to an obituary for Cort that was published in a newsletter for St. Michael And All Angels Church of Sanibel, Florida, she was a member of the League of Women Voters and was active in the Lake County Democratic Party. "During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s," the obituary writes, "Cort marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., traveling to Montgomery, Alabama, where she was briefly but proudly incarcerated for her activism."

Cort moved to Sanibel Island just before the Daniels' divorce was finalized in 1966, Curtis said. Her obituary states that after her children were grown and her marriage was over, she began a new chapter in her life, working in school administrations until she retired



(<https://jwcdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/draper-and-court-300-web.jpg>)

Cort and Draper Daniels at Lake Bluff Bath & Tennis Club for their son John's wedding reception

in her mid-70s.
She died
peacefully in 2006
at Curtis' home in
Indiana, [Click
here](#)

(<http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/56/RedDoorDec12006.pdf>) for a PDF of the obituary.

When Cort moved to Sanibel, Draper Daniels moved to Chicago. He had been commuting into the city for years, riding the Chicago Northwestern Club Car downtown from Lake Bluff every morning. Draper was the creative head of Leo Burnett in Chicago in the 1950s and worked for the Kennedy Administration in Washington D.C. for a short time in the early 1960s before returning to Chicago's ad business. He died in 1983 after battling cancer, according to *Chicago* magazine.

"He was a giant within his industry," Curtis said. "The work that took place when he was creative head of Leo Burnett are monster campaigns that still have legs today—the Marlboro Man, Maytag Repairman, Charlie the Tuna. He also was behind the Schlitz beer slogan, 'Go For The Gusto,' a phrase that sports casters still use today."

Mr. Daniels (Dan to his friends, Draper to his colleagues) wasn't the only ad man in Lake Bluff. The Village was home to many Leo Burnett execs in the 1960s and '70s, including Dick Stanwood (on Ravine Forest), Bill Hare (near Artesian Park), Bob Williams (lived on either Witchwood or Ravine Forest) and Cal and Marge Gage.



(<https://jwcdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/fran-draper-450.jpg>)

Draper Daniels' mother, Fran Draper, with her dog Vaughn at 424 North Avenue

Curtis said his parents picked Lake Bluff because it was it was more like a small town than a suburb, a place where kids rode their bikes everywhere and had the freedom to roam from beach to ravine to Mr. White's Variety

Store.

"There were no play dates," he said. "Nothing was arranged. During the summer we left home in the morning and came home in the evening. We might call if we stopped at someone's house, or we might not."

The family spent a lot of time with their paternal grandmother, who lived at 424 North Avenue, which Draper purchased for her. Cort's obituary said she and her mother-in-law were great friends.

Chicago magazine last year ran a story by Draper Daniels' second wife, Myra Janco Daniels, a Chicago advertising executive whose firm he acquired in the 1960s. In the article, titled "I Married A Mad Man," (<http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/August-2009/I-Married-a-Mad-Man/>) she wrote about the similarities her husband had to the Don Draper character on "Mad Men" played by Mr. Hamm.

“They have a similar look. Draper Daniels smoked a lot and sometimes drank his lunch, as Don Draper does on the show. He had a lot of energy, enjoyed life, and came up with brilliant and innovative ideas, traits shared with Don Draper. He also liked women, much the way Don Draper does. But the Draper Daniels I knew became a one-woman man after we married. He also quit drinking, when I told him I didn’t want to work with a lush. ...”

But during his Lake Bluff years, Draper Daniels was just a dad, said Curtis. “He never missed our football games, he attended our school functions, he was on the Lake Forest School Board and was active in Lake County politics,” he said. “Things got messy later, but the Lake Bluff years were good years.”

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Yes, quite a few Leo Burnetters have lived in Lake Bluff. I can recall twenty-eight, including those named in the article. Eight of them are currently residents, with four living in Armour Woods.

Undoubtedly, over the last twenty-five years, since I retired, many others have settled here — including some who now work at Leo Burnett. Those are impressive numbers, given that Leo Burnett — although a major advertising agency — is a relatively small company in terms of the number of employees, and given that the employees' homes are scattered throughout the Chicago metro area.

Draper Daniels and I overlapped at Leo Burnett for nine years. Although we didn't work together (he was the top creative and I was a supervisor in the Research Department), I did have many opportunities to see him in action. He had a strong, dominating personality; and he had (I am told) a great sense of humor.

I am not among those who see a resemblance between Draper (Dan) Daniels and Don Draper of “Madmen” — other than a similarity in their names; so I guess that puts me in the minority.

The photo of Draper at work in his office was taken in the London Guarantee Building at 360 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, in the mid-1950s.

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