

Mad Man Model: Syracuse University graduate Draper Daniels provided some of the inspiration for TV's Don Draper

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By [Hart Seely, The Post-Standard](#)



EXAMINING a new "Men in Menthol Smoking" advertisement for Alpine mentholated filter cigarettes are Leo Burnett (left), chairman of the board, and Draper Daniels, executive vice president for Creative Services, Leo Burnett Co., Inc., Chicago, which designed the new ad campaign for Alpine's manufacturer, Philip Morris, Inc.

U.S. Tobacco

Journal Draper Daniels, at right, was a 1960s-era ad executive who is one of the inspirations for the character Don Draper on AMC's series "Mad Men." He is shown here looking at a cigarette ad with ad agency boss Leo Burnett.

Five years ago, a cousin of Bruce C. Daniels called with the kind of news a fellow just doesn't hear every day.

The cousin mentioned a new TV series called "[Mad Men](#)," centered on the martini-lunch lifestyles of Madison Avenue ad agencies in the 1960s. From what he could

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tell, the main character was based on Daniels' father.

"I tuned in, and I can tell you, it was definitely an eerie feeling," recalls Daniels, who lives in California.

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In fact, Daniels' father — the late legendary ad man Draper Daniels — did serve as a loose prototype for the fictional Don Draper, the male lead, played by Jon Hamm.

The show's creator, Matthew Weiner, acknowledged in a 2010 interview that his character took part of his name and various attributes from Draper Daniels, as an embodiment of that seminal era in advertising.

So who was Draper Daniels? And why is he linked to Syracuse?

Daniels, who died in 1983, made his name as the creative mind behind such iconic ad campaigns as the Marlboro Man, Charlie Tuna, Tony the Tiger and the Jolly Green Giant. But he later chucked his billboards to work in the administration of President John F. Kennedy.

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Daniels grew up in the Otsego County village of Morris, near Cooperstown, and — like his own father and his son, Bruce — attended Syracuse University.

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AMC

Actor Jon Hamm as Don

Draper in "Mad Men."

"He was an Upstate New York farm boy," said Bruce Daniels, himself a retired former official for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, who graduated from SU in 1964.

Draper Daniels married his college sweetheart, Louise Parker Lux Cort — another SU graduate. In 1965, she marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery, Ala., and was jailed for her efforts in the civil rights movement.

Bruce Daniels is writing a book about his father, who he feels never received rightful recognition for his work. He said "Mad Men" has raised public awareness by showing the creative and human sides of a new industry that would change America. It has shed light on a profession that for decades was viewed mostly with disdain. After all, nobody likes commercials, right?

Daniels said he hopes to work with SU to better remember his father's legacy.

Bruce Daniels was 10 in 1952, when the Marlboro Man appeared, so he enjoyed a ringside seat to that "Mad Men" world.

"I saw it all," Daniels said. "I had an outsider's, a son's, point of view. My father was instructive enough, an educator, to show me the business."

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Now in its fifth season, "Mad Men" has achieved critical acclaim and solid ratings on the AMC network, where it airs on Sundays. Bruce Daniels still watches faithfully, though he said he's become less invested with Hamm's main character.

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Long ago, the story of Donald Draper began to deviate from his father's path.

"I was intrigued by the characterization of him and the background, the feel of advertising," Daniels said. "But it's fiction.

His father is not Don Draper. He never was. That's fine with the son.

"I am very proud of my father," Daniels said. "He was quite a guy."

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