



# AI Capp: A Life to the Contrary

*Michael Schumacher, Denis Kitchen*

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More than thirty years have passed since Al Capp's death, and he may no longer be a household name. But at the height of his career, his groundbreaking comic strip, *Li'l Abner*, reached ninety million readers. The strip ran for forty-three years, spawned two movies and a Broadway musical, and originated such expressions as "hogwash" and "double-whammy." Capp himself was a familiar personality on TV and radio; as a satirist, he was frequently compared to Mark Twain.

Though *Li'l Abner* brought millions joy, the man behind the strip was a complicated and often unpleasant person. A childhood accident cost him a leg-leading him to art as a means of distinguishing himself. His apprenticeship with Ham Fisher, creator of *Joe Palooka*, started a twenty-year feud that ended in Fisher's suicide. Capp enjoyed outsized publicity for a cartoonist, but his status abetted sexual misconduct and protected him from the severest repercussions. Late in life, his politics became extremely conservative; he counted Richard Nixon as a friend, and his gift for satire was redirected at targets like John Lennon, Joan Baez, and anti-war protesters on campuses across the country.

With unprecedented access to Capp's archives and a wealth of new material, Michael Schumacher and Denis Kitchen have written a probing biography. Capp's story is one of incredible highs and lows, of popularity and villainy, of success and failure-told here with authority and heart.

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