

THE INDEPENDENT

John Donegan: Cartoonist for 'Punch' who also designed the original 'Sunday Times' magazine

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Though perhaps best known for his cartoons for Punch, Sunday Express and other publications in the 1970s and 1980s – especially those featuring dogs – John Donegan was also an award-winning graphic designer who had worked for many years as an art director in advertising.

John Peter Michael Donegan was born in Lewisham, south London, on 23 August 1926. He was the eldest child of Thomas Kieran Donegan, a former regular soldier in the Irish Guards who after the First World War became a member of the Royal Corps of Commissionaires, and his wife Anne Carley, a cook. He had a younger sister Maureen, who survives him.

After leaving school at 16 he was employed as a junior draughtsman in the United Dairies Engineering Company (UDEG) from 1942 to 1945. After the war he worked in a variety of technical drawing and advertising jobs before becoming art director of David Williams & Ketchum advertising agency in 1958, leaving in the early 1960s to join The Sunday Times. Here he famously designed the Sunday Times Magazine (edited by the cartoonist Mark Boxer) when it was launched in February 1962. This groundbreaking and much-imitated colour supplement set the style in art direction at that time, and in 1964 he won the Designers' & Art Directors' Award for his poster designs. In 1968 he became Creative Director of Sharps Advertising in Albermarle Street and during this period began submitting cartoons to magazines.

He became a full-time cartoonist in 1975, contributing to Punch (1975-1991) (including covers) and the Sunday Express weekly strip "Waldo" (1981-84) among other publications. He also produced Clixby (1983) and other animated cartoons for television, and exhibited his work at the Cartoon Gallery (Chester) and elsewhere. In addition he drew cartoons and illustrations for advertising clients including Volkswagen (Germany), American Express (Germany), British Airways, BT, Johnson & Higgins Insurance and others. He also published a number of collections of his dog cartoons – including Dog Almighty! (1986), Dog Help Us! (1987) and For Dog's Sake! (1990) for Souvenir Press – and illustrated Dogs' Tales: The Essential Companion for Dogs' Best Friends (1987) by the actress June Whitfield, though he never owned a dog himself. He retired in 1991 and moved with his French wife Marie-Thérèse to Brennilis, near Morlaix in Brittany, France.

Five feet 10 inches tall and clean-shaven, he wore glasses from the 1960s onwards and had hazel eyes with heavy eyebrows that became hooded with age. Though born in south London he spoke without a strong accent and, unfailingly inquisitive, was self-taught to a high degree in art, classical music, literature, history and aviation matters. Well-respected as an artist by his fellow cartoonists, in later life he said that if he had had the opportunity to attend university he would have studied Classics.

Mark Bryant

John Peter Michael Donegan, cartoonist and graphic designer: born London 23 August 1926; married 1953 Marie-Thérèse Le Bras (one son, one daughter); died Brennilis, France 27 April 2009.