

# The Comics Journal

## REMEMBERING TED RICHARDS...

Steve Ditlea  
(writer, friend)

May 9, 2023

Ted Richards may not be as well-known as his underground comix contemporaries Gilbert Shelton and R. Crumb, but in retrospect he was most deft in capturing the rebellious spirit of the 1960s through the 1980s in the USA.

Richards was a consummate chronicler of emerging sub-cultures, like the weed-smoking military of the Vietnam War era with *Dopin' Dan* and the kozmic skateboarding scene with *Mellow Cat*, but *The Forty Year Old Hippie* tracked the widest swath of alternate consciousness from fringe to mainstream.

In 1976 *The Forty Year Old Hippie* appeared in college newspapers and alternative weeklies, at a time when the idea of a long-hair in strange garb exploring out-of-it lifestyles beyond one's 20s was the set-up for Ted's gags.

Based in San Francisco, one of the poles of hip culture, Ted was often just reporting on his own existence. A good example was the Hippie's gender-neutral offspring "Child Person", occasionally identified as "he", but actually Ted's daughter Miranda, who grew up to be a talented singer-songwriter.

By 1984, when this New York editor commissioned the last appearance of *The Forty Year Old Hippie* for an anthology on computer culture, Ted had made the transition to a straight job in Silicon Valley and the hippie sensibility had become ingrained in the Tech Revolution.

After his death, members of Ted's family wondered if wherever he was he might be sketching the long-delayed sequel, "The Seventy-Six Year Old Hippie's Final Trip". The Hippie's tag line was "Ain't Been This High Since The Pot Of 69". You could still be there...



Ted Richards in 1972

# **The Daily Cartoonist**

## **TED Richards--RIP**

**Steve Ditlea**

**Having met Ted Richards in 1984 as editor of “Digital Deli”, I was fortunate to have cultivated a phone-based transcontinental friendship over the last few years of his life.**

**We spoke nearly every day about the slow progress he was making as designer of my personal web site [steveditlea.com](http://steveditlea.com). Ted was a perfectionist, though also a dreamer and easily distracted.**

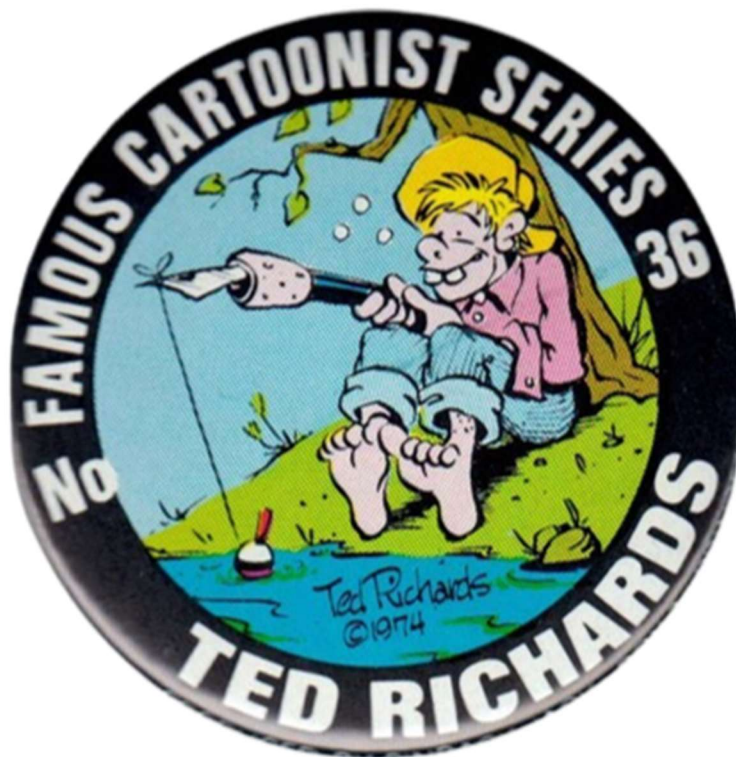
**His life story was one of the most interesting I’ve encountered in over 50 years as a journalist meeting top creators in film, music, tech, business and medicine. Ted was the son of a U.S. Army Special Forces officer—the man who would have collected Che Guevara for questioning had the Bolivian Army not shot the rebel associate of Fidel Castro (a topic in Ted’s Dopin’ Dan #2).**

**When Ted moved to San Francisco after a brief stint in the Air Force, he became a revolutionary in his own fashion; among his most prized possessions was a Little Red Book by Chairman Mao, signed by odd entertainer Tiny Tim.**

**Ted was a member of the Air Pirates, cartoonists who challenged the Disney Corporation over satirical use of characters, reaching the U.S. Supreme Court in a landmark decision on intellectual property rights.**

In the 1980s Ted made the move to tech in Silicon Valley, soon becoming creative director for Atari Home Computer Division. In 1987, he founded AdWare, providing software products and design services for computer clients, including Apple and Microsoft.

Among his innovations was the first “shopping cart” for an e-commerce site. From the 1990s, he became a web site developer, offering enterprise-level development services, consulting, web design and information architecture. In the 2010s he was a principal designer for Deep North, Inc.



Ted Richards self portrait

Famous Cartoonist Series button, 1975.