



Will the Real Don Draper Please Stand Up? 5 Admen Who May Have Inspired Mad Men

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There's a cottage industry of people claiming they know who the real life person *Mad Men's* **Don Draper** is based upon. Of course, the title of "the real life Don Draper" is a tarnished one, given Draper's theft of another man's identity, a lifetime of lies, alcoholism, and womanizing problem. Oh yes, he exhibited some talent in the advertising business, too.

Nonetheless, there are five contenders for the source of the Draper backstory.

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Draper Daniels of Leo Burnett

Wikipedia says Draper is based on Draper Daniels of ad agency Leo Burnett, so it must be true, right? To be fair, Daniels also has a similar name to the fictional Draper. And, according to this Chicago magazine profile, a similarly underhanded way with women: He tricked his wife into marrying him after he bought her company. Daniels also helped create the Marlboro Man campaign but left the industry in 1962 for a year to work for the Kennedy Administration because he didn't feel comfortable about the lung cancer issue. On *Mad Men*, season four ended just as Draper expressed his distaste for Big Tobacco.

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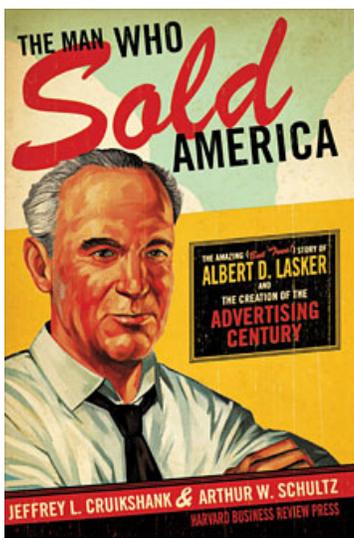
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The founder of Foote, Cone & Belding resigned as chairman of McCann-Erickson in 1964 in protest at handling cigarette accounts. Foote was referenced in the *Mad Men* episode in which, after **Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce** loses the Lucky Strike account, Draper takes out a full page ad in the New York Times to condemn the tobacco business. The ad causes outrage, and Draper is handed a stack of phone messages including one from "someone named Emerson Foote." The ad gets him a meeting with the **American Cancer Society**, which is looking for a new ad agency. Foote later became a director of the ACS. Foote's claim to being Draper is further bolstered by this AMC Mad Men blog item, which gives viewers more background.



Albert Lasker of Lord & Thomas

Albert Lasker ran the Lucky Strike account in real life and advised **American Tobacco** to stop advertising all their other brands and concentrate on Lucky in their fight against Camel and Chesterfields:

Lasker argued that rather than maintaining many modestly successful

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the show, Don Draper coins the term.



George Lois of Papert Koenig Lois

Lois was one of the more famous creative talents to come out of the 1960s, but he's better known for his design than his advertising.

He did several iconic covers for Esquire, including one of Marilyn Monroe with her face covered in shaving cream and another showing Muhammad Ali martyred like Saint Sebastian. Like Draper, Lois has a colossal ego and (back in the day) the sharp looks for the part. But in this list he's more of a dark horse than a favorite.



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Nicholas Francisco of Publicis

Almost nobody (except me) would agree that Francisco is the "real life" Don Draper even though Francisco's life bears many resemblances to Draper's: Francisco had a wife and three kids and led a seemingly normal existence, but was hiding a baroque sex life. Like Draper, he disappeared and resurfaced with a new job and a new name.

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