

# Meet The Author

## Berkeley Breathed



Photograph courtesy of Jody Boyman

Born in California in 1957, Berkeley Breathed published his first comic strip, “The Academia Waltz,” while a student at the University of Texas at Austin. His provocative work struck a chord with a generation of disillusioned baby boomers, and inspired the editors of *The Washington Post* to hire him to write the nationally syndicated strip *Bloom County*, which debuted on December 8, 1980. Both politically incendiary and profoundly silly, the immensely popular strip was eventually published in over 1,200 newspapers worldwide and was awarded the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning. Despite the strip’s acclaim, Breathed chose to retire *Bloom County* in 1989 with the explanation that “a good comic strip is no more eternal than a ripe melon. The ugly truth is that in most cases, comics age less gracefully than their creators.”

That same year he began the Sunday-only strip *Outland* (1989-1995), which eventually morphed into a quasi-sequel to *Bloom County* as characters from the earlier strip joined *Outland*’s cast, such as Opus the Penguin and Bill the Cat. During this period Breathed transitioned into writing children’s books such as *A Wish for Wings That Work: An Opus Christmas Story* (1991), *Goodnight Opus* (1993), and *Red Ranger Came Calling: A Guaranteed True Chris-*

*mas Story* (1994). *Red Ranger*’s prickly nine-year-old protagonist was modeled on the depression-era childhood of Breathed’s own father, while the book’s isolated setting was inspired by Vashon Island, Washington, where Breathed lived in the 1980s.

In 2003, Breathed returned to cartooning with a new strip built around his most popular “Bloom County” resident, Opus, which ran until 2008. However, his acclaimed children’s books have built Breathed a following separate from his cartoon work. His work this decade includes *Edwurd Fudwupper Fibbed Big* (2000), *Flawed Dogs* (2003), *Mars Needs Moms!* (2007) which is currently the subject of a Disney film adaptation set for release in Spring 2011, and his first novel, *Flawed Dogs: The Shocking Raid on Westminster* (2009), a passionate plea for animal rights.

Breathed, renowned for his charitable work on the behalf of animals, was the recipient of a Fund for Animal Genesis Award in 1990 for “outstanding cartoonist focusing on animal welfare issues.” He currently resides with his wife and two children in Southern California.

