

Season's Greetings From The Animation Guild!



**THE
ANIMATION
GUILD
&
AFFILIATED
OPTICAL
ELECTRONIC
&
GRAPHIC
ARTS**

Philippe Tiliakete

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 2002

FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE, 1952-2002

VOL. 31, NO. 12

NICKELODEON AND CORNERSTONE SIGN WITH THE GUILD

NICKELODEON ANIMATION STUDIOS, a subsidiary of Viacom and a producer of animated cartoons such as *Dora*, *Hey Arnold*, and *Fairly Odd Parents*, has signed an agreement with the Animation Guild after a majority of Nick employees filled out representation cards indicating they desired to be represented by the Animation Guild.

CORNERSTONE ANIMATION, founded by animator Larry Whitaker in 1999, has signed an agreement with The Animation Guild to animate direct-to-video features here in Los Angeles under its Collective Bargaining Agreement. Cornerstone earlier animated a sequence of the Winnie-the-Pooh feature *The Tigger Movie*, released in 2000.

(see *NEW SIGNATORS*, page 4)

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IA negotiates new Hollywood contract

A week of intense negotiations between the IATSE and the AMPTP resulted in a new, long-term contract between the producers and the twenty-four West Coast IATSE locals (including the Editors Guild, Cinematographers Guild, Costumers, Makeup Artists, Grips and others). The agreement was reached late on November 16 at the AMPTP offices in Encino.

fifty-cent-per-hour increase in contributions to the Health Plan over the life of the three-year agreement; a fifty-cent-per-hour raise in wage minimums in the first year of the contract, followed by a 2.5% increase in year two with a 1/2% increase to the Individual Account Plan; and 3% wage raise in year three coupled with an additional 1/2% to the IAP.

The final package, subject to ratification by the IATSE bargaining unit membership, includes a seven-and-a-half to fifteen percent pension improvement for active participants who retire after August 1, 2003; a

The Animation Guild, while not a part of the IA bargaining unit, will be negotiating from the IA-AMPTP template when our contract talks commence in the Spring of 2003.

From the Business Representative

What have we done ... and where are we going?



Scott Sackett

This holiday season, as you decorate the tree and set the Yule logs ablaze, allow me to catch you up on the doings of your guild over the past year:

CGI training

In 2002, the Animation Guild continued to make retraining our members for the brave new world of CGI a priority. Our H-1B grant classes, after a roaring start in 2001, continued to train hundred of members. Classes were ongoing at Gnomon, Studio Arts, and Video Symphony that provided train to five hundred of our members. Multiple classes at Disney and DreamWorks, jointly underwritten by your Guild and the class participants, offered training to hundreds more.

The H1-B grant will end in mid-2003, but the Guild is working to bring more classes on line as the new year progresses.

Grievances

Since January, studios have done more restructuring and downsizing, leading to more on-and-off employment than we've seen in the last decade. Unsurprisingly, the Animation Guild filed more grievances than we have in the last decade. *This year we have collected over \$100,000 in grievance awards for our members.* As I write, we have multiple grievances pending.

New signators

In the past sixteen months, your Guild has signed contracts with a half-dozen new studios. At a time of project-to-project employment, more and more members realize how crucial seamless medical

coverage is. Health coverage has not been getting less expensive. More than any other issue, the continuance of quality medical coverage is the number one issue among animation employees.

The present

As I write, *Treasure Planet*, a good picture, has had a weak opening weekend and Disney has made history by writing off the first animated feature in its corporate history. I hear dark mutterings about where animation is going, is this the end of feature animation as we know it, has it taken a mortal blow?

The answer is: of course not. The Disney studio came close to bankruptcy back when *Fantasia* and *Bambi* failed to take flight at the box office, but the art form — and Disney — went on. Ron Clements and John Musker are terrifically talented artists, writers and directors. One under-performing film does not diminish that talent. Disney will not go bankrupt. Animation will not end. There are too many energetic animation artists whose passion and love for the art form will guarantee its robust survival.

The future

Theatrical animation in all its permutations is too vibrant to waste away. Television animation is exploring areas and pushing boundaries that Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera seldom dreamed of. The question is not "Is this the end?" but what is the next breakthrough, and where will we be going next?

(see FROM THE BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE, page 4)



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 phone (818) 766-7151 ✂ fax (818) 506-4805 ✂ email: mpsc839@mindspring.com ✂ http://www.mpsc839.org

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Pres Romanillos

From the President *2002, the year of transition*

This has been one hell of a year, with the meltdown (oops, I'm sorry, "restructuring") at Disney seeming to happen in slow motion, and few bright spots to point to. The scramble to find safe places to land has rippled throughout the industry, and for many of us the future is cloudier than it's ever been. It is times like this that people look to Local 839 more than ever, and it's fair to ask what we've done this year.

By far the biggest story has been the training, and retraining, of our membership. The press may focus on the supposed death of traditional hand-drawn animation, and on the implosion at Disney Feature Animation, but ten years from now I think retraining will be the most significant development of 2002. Thanks to hard work that began well before this year, your Guild secured hundreds of thousands of dollars of grant money for top-notch training in CG animation through the H-1B and CSATTF programs, which hundreds of you eagerly took advantage of. And we plowed tens of thousands of dollars of your dues money back into the membership in training classes cosponsored with the studios. That was all on top of the training we've long offered through the American Animation Institute.

Because we're powerless to create jobs, and powerless to force studios to avoid wasting millions through poor planning and creative indecision, training is really the only way we can directly influence the job market. Our Los Angeles-based animation community has long been the primary engine behind the animation industry, and by helping make sure our members remain the best in the world, it will stay that way.

Not that we aren't above trying to affect the job market more directly. This year we worked with Tom T Productions to help them be as efficient as possible in getting a series deal with Univision. We're working with Spaff Animation and Cornerstone Animation to facilitate their keeping "out-source" work in town. We're putting out the word to small studios and startups that we want to work with them to make Guild coverage not only possible, but desirable.

We've also been exceptionally active in organizing, so that when jobs are available, you'll keep your

benefits intact. In addition to the studios mentioned above, we've signed contracts with Nickelodeon, Fred Films, and Miramax (hey, when are *they* going to get busy?). It hasn't stopped there, and we expect that in the coming months we'll be writing more articles about newly organized studios. Of course, you can continue to help us with that by signing those rep cards.

We've also welcomed into our Guild a substantial number of new CG artists and animators who have never had union coverage before. For years now we have been the only union or guild with significant numbers of digital artists, and that has never been more true than now. As we work to help our long-term members transition to CG positions, we will work just as hard to make sure we meet the needs of our new members.

As we all know, information is power in this industry, and we've increased our efforts to keep you informed. We cosponsored, with ASIFA-Hollywood and Women In Animation, a series of State of the Industry seminars that played to packed houses. We started a members-only bulletin board to allow everyone to communicate more directly and efficiently, and we expanded our e-mail news service that provides up-to-the-minute job openings.

Last but not least, we became The Animation Guild, a title that better represents who we are and what we do. This change got us some nice publicity and increased notice (and it's also the reason we all got free copies of the *Spirit* DVD; let's hope Disney and Pixar follow this lead.)

It is in times of crisis, when things seem their darkest, that real change is accomplished. We will look back at this year, I'm sure, with some regret. I think we will also look back with pride, at how hard we worked, and at how resilient we turned out to be. Be well, and may you and your families have happy holidays.

— Kevin Koch, Kev839@aol.com

Upcoming contract holidays:

Christmas (December 25)

New Year's Day (January 1)

Martin Luther King Day (January 20)†

NOTE: Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are not contract holidays.

† DreamWorks only

In memoriam

Emmy Award-winning animation writer **HILARY BADER** died on November 7 due to breast cancer.

She wrote for Warner Bros. on *Superman/Batman Adventures* and *Batman Beyond* (for which she won her two Emmys), *The Zeta Project*, and the webtoon *Gotham Girls*. She received another four Emmy nominations for her work.



We have learned of the death of **RUTH BULLINGTON**, who worked as a painter at MGM, Hanna-Barbera and Lantz from 1939 until her retirement in 1973, at the age of ninety-four.



Animator and storyperson **TEX HENSON** died on December 2 at the age of seventy-eight, as a result of injuries from being hit by a truck near his home in Terrell, Texas.

He started at Disney in 1944 and worked on *Song of the South*, *Mickey and the Beanstalk*, *Pecos Bill* and *Peter and the Wolf*. Henson suggested that Chip 'n Dale, who first appeared in *Private Pluto* in April 1943, be given their own series of shorts; the chipmunks went on to star in twenty-three theatrical cartoons.

After Disney, Henson worked in New York on *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. Later in Mexico, he supervised artists working on *The Bullwinkle Show*, *Underdog*, *King Leonardo* and *Tennessee Tuxedo*. He moved to Texas and taught in the Dallas Independent School District.



Painter **MERCEDES HOFFMAN**, who worked for Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera from 1956 until her retirement in 1980, died on November 24 at the age of one hundred and two.



Animator **GLENN MCQUEEN**, who worked for Pixar on such characters as *Toy Story's* Woody and *Monsters Inc.'s* Boo, died of melanoma on October 29 at the age of forty-one. At the time of his death he was supervising animation on Pixar's *Cars* feature.



Animator and director **MIKE SVAYKO** passed away unexpectedly over the Thanksgiving holiday. Since 1980 he had worked for Bakshi, Disney, Kookanooga, New World and Nickelodeon.

FROM THE BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

(continued from page 2)

Wherever animation journeys in 2003 or 2013, there will the Animation Guild be also, for we know that animation workers will need a decent living standard, need respect, need a guarantee of decent health care and pension and wages, even as they explore the far frontier of the art form we cherish.

— Steve Hulett

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Due to a raise in the IATSE per capita tax, there is a dues increase of \$2.00 effective the first quarter of 2003.

*Unemployed members should consider **honorable withdrawal**, which must be requested in writing by January 10 to avoid obligation for dues. Call the union at (818) 766-7151 if you have any questions.*

NEW SIGNATORS

(continued from front page)

Over the past year, the Animation Guild has signed a half-dozen studios to new collective bargaining agreements. As long-term employment at various animation shops has changed to "project-to-project," staff jobs that end when the series or feature ends have become the norm. And more and more animation employees have come to realize that it's ever more important to be covered by a seamless garment of pension and health benefits as they continue their careers.

The Guild is now involved in several different organizing efforts with various studios. As the new year commences, we expect this trend to continue. And as always, the studios signed are related to the level of support we receive.

Letters

To Tom Sito:

Thank you so much for speaking for us all (the artists) in your recent *Peg-Board* article "Do not go gently into that good night" (*November issue*).

We have been scapegoats for the studio execs' lack of imagination, courage and vision for too long. They say the two things that define history are money and power, but these two alone without vision and direction are ruinous. Like Don Bajus said, "Animation can do anything, except save a bad idea."

Unfortunately for us all, formula thinking is the Hollywood way. Too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Suits making armchair decisions based on last years' figures, but out of touch with current opinion. Making love to their computer bar charts, without the slightest feeling or comprehension of what makes art ART, or the processes involved.

I've worked for all the big gun studios now, and one thing never ceases to amaze me. Going all the way to the top, the powers that be will hire the *crème de la crème* of talent for their production. Directors, producers, etc. from all over the world. The best creative people proven in their chosen field, time and time again. And these are people who have worked their way up from the workshop floor so they know what it's about.

But how many times I have seen the surges of creativity stifled and suppressed in these good people by a overwhelmingly negative, and unimaginative injection from a studio exec trying to justify his expensive position!!!! Where do these worms keep coming from?

Here's a little analogy: You wouldn't get someone paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to hire the best legal brains around to defend in court, only to turn around half way through a trial and try to

represent themselves. That would be suicide. (Especially if you were O. J. Simpson ...)

So why do the studio execs like putting a gun to their heads? Very often all that happens is the flow and momentum of the feature/production is reduced from 120 mph to 20 mph or, worse still, a complete stop, with down time and escalating production costs.

If only creative people were left to do the job they were hired for in the first place uninterrupted, I think we could make "great" movies and on budget.

The problem is always going to be, that the suits have not come from the studio workshop floor, and because they have unattached grass roots, will continue to make expensive decisions for us all.

So thanks again, Tom, for speaking up for us.

— A member

Thank you very much for your kind words. I had that piece sitting in my gut for awhile and I finally got it out. I'm glad I could become the voice for so many exasperated artists whose sacrifices, loyalty and patience were rewarded with betrayal and blame.

It reminded me of a troop of Polish cavalry who followed Napoleon's French Army through all his wars. After countless battles and blood the day came when they were told the war was over and they had lost. The Poles could now go home, and probably be arrested by the Czar's men and sent to Siberia. The Poles responded by breaking their lances and throwing them at the feet of their French commander. They said: "We were never defeated! You gave up. We did all we were told to do!"

I feel we animators are in the same boat. We never shrank from a deadline or difficult project. If the films fail it is through no lack of effort on the artists' part. We did all we were told to do.

— Tom Sito

(see LETTERS, page 6)

Alias|Wavefront's **MAYA 4.5 PERSONAL LEARNING EDITION** became available on December 4, but users will have to wait until January to download the software for free.

The Maya 4.5 Personal Learning Edition includes all the new features found in Maya Complete 4.5 software. The watermark is no longer visible when working in wire frame mode so users can concentrate on developing their modeling skills. Also with this new release, it is possible to import different data types, including files from the commercial version of Maya.

Maya 4.5 Personal Learning Edition is part of the Learning Maya/Beginner's Guide, available for \$19.95 at the Alias|Wavefront online store at store.aliaswavefront.com. Free download of Maya 4.5 Personal Learning Edition will begin in January 2003 at www.aliaswavefront.com/mayapple.

LETTERS

(continued from page 5)

Dear Tom:

You have, in the last union newsletter, made a big stink about layoffs. In the past few years we artists have made some significant financial gains, especially when it came to getting paid for feature “quality” work. Unfortunately this is the day of “freelancers” and runaway production.

So many of us baby-boomers are attempting to create our own projects, it is time the Union started addressing the *low-budget* issue again. If an animator wants to make “reel” money in this town, he must address how to play politics and how also to keep his own and his families health while working as many subcontracting jobs as he can handle.

As a now fledgling non-union film producer and publisher, I have looked into and attempted getting a payroll service to handle my very small budgets so I could continue to *go union*!!!! The reply I heard was: you’re too small. In your article you asked the question why don’t the studios pay us like actors? I would like you to remember that the American actors work mostly in restaurants these days. This has gone on since most of the Major Motion Picture Studio Contract Players were laid off in the mid 1960’s. American actors’ work has been going to Canada for several years.

I would love to see an attempt at a low budget contract for American animated films budgeted at less than a million dollars. SAG has them, they even have student film rates. The Musicians Union Local 47 also has a demo rate.

Most animators I know like the idea of retirement. However with foreign competition, computers and the studios inability to invest in untried ideas (mostly due to the high cost of production) the workhorses of this industry are all too quickly being put out too pasture without even a blade of grass to eat. The Union needs not only to look at its digitally enhanced future but also into saving its traditional butt. That is, unless Michael Eisner and his ilk are willing to give out a million or so apiece to the displaced that have helped make his bank account one of “the Happiest Places On Earth” or should I say “the fattest places.”

I for one believe we need to look not toward American unions as our inspiration but to the Canadian actors’ unions. We have got to try now to keep a consistent base wage with benefits so that the cream of our creative talent can continue to

develop and create new art that will keep American talent the most consistent and reliable talent.

Your friend,

— Dave Teague, former Sergeant-at-Arms, Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Local 839 IATSE

In August 2000, Local 839 announced an Internet contract proposal that I think was unprecedented in the history of Hollywood labor. It was, essentially, a contract without wage minimums. We hired a PR firm and took ads in the trades to publicize the contract. A number of companies called to ask for copies of the proposal.

No one signed it. They didn’t even ask for negotiations.

In this and in many other ways, I think the Animation Guild has proven beyond any shadow of a doubt that we are willing to go the extra mile to attract and sign employers to our contract. In the last year we have signed with a record number of non-union studios, including some that had sworn in the past they would never go union. None of these companies have proposed a reduction in wage minimums or benefit contributions — but I hope we would never refuse to sit down with anyone who did.

Whoever told Dave that his company was “too small” to sign a union contract or go with a payroll service, I doubt it was anyone in our office; we have contracts with companies with only two employees. And I know of payroll services that frequently sign agreements with similarly small companies on a project-by-project basis.

I still think it was, and is, a good idea for us to promote low-budget contracts, and I would never object to our negotiating and signing such a contract provided the membership approved it with their eyes open. I’m glad to hear that Dave’s company is interested, and I await his call to our office to open negotiations.

— Jeff Massie

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Training update

As this *Peg-Board* goes to press, we have submitted proposals for our first state ETP training grant, and for an extension to the H-1B grant funding. We expect to hear about these grants in January.

Members can send an e-mail to jeffm@mpsc839.org with your home e-mail address and we’ll put you on our e-mail list for up-to-the-minute information. Otherwise, we hope to have more to report in the January *Peg-Board*.

The Animation Guild, ASIFA Hollywood and Women In Animation present

AN AFTERNOON OF REMEMBRANCE

a non-denominational celebration of departed friends from our animation community

*Ryan Anthony * Hilary Bader * Buddy Baker * Bill Berg * Bob Bransford
Ruth Bullington * Bill Carney * Pat Collins * Raynelle Day * Beverly Felix
Tom Ferriter * Joseph Finck * John Gati * Tex Henson * Mercedes Hoffman
Ruth Howard * Daniel Hunn * Chuck Jones * Katie Kerwin * Larry Kilty
Ward Kimball * Craig Littell-Herrick * Lewis Marshall * Joe Mazzuca * Glenn McQueen
Gene Moss * Bob Onorato * Marian Paxton * Bill Peet * Ernie Pintoff
Don Ruch * Christine Serino * George Singer * Mike Svayko
Alexandr Vinukirov * Thomas Warkentin * Tom Yakutis * Bob Zamboni*

Saturday, January 25, 2003

Food and refreshments, 2 pm * Memoriams, 3 pm

Hollywood Heritage Museum (Lasky-DeMille Barn)

2100 N. Highland (across from Hollywood Bowl), Hollywood

The Afternoon is free of charge and is open to all; no RSVPs necessary.

In the news

Sanders and DeBlois launch production company

Lilo and Stitch co-creators/directors **CHRIS SANDERS** and **DEAN DEBLOIS** have formed Stormcoast Pictures to produce their own animated and live-action projects.

Daily Variety reports that the team is planning an untitled CG animated project directed by Sanders, and *The Gumshoe Chronicles*, a live-action family film that will be written and directed by DeBlois. *Lilo and Stitch* was the directing debut of the pair, who began their collaboration on *Mulan*. They have signed a distribution deal with Disney.

Pooh vs. A Mouse of Very Little Brain

A California court has ruled against **DISNEY** in the long running legal battle over Winnie the Pooh royalties. The appellate court denied Disney's appeal of the sanctions placed on the company by Los Angeles County judge Ernest M. Hiroshige.

According to the November 20 ruling, a jury can now be told as a fact that Disney knowingly suppressed evidence in the case, including destroying a file marked "Pooh-Legal problems."

This ruling is another setback for Disney, which has been in a ten-year battle with the Slesinger family who own the North American licensing rights to Winnie the Pooh.

Stan Lee vs. Marvel

Speaking of lawsuits, Marvel Comics founder **STAN LEE** is suing Marvel Productions for \$10 million, seeking profits from the \$800-million-dollar-grossing Spider-Man feature.

Lee, who created Spider-Man, claims he has received nothing to date, in breach of an agreement to pay him 10% of its profits from films based on characters he created. Lee also seeks profits from the proposed Spider-Man sequel as well as the *Daredevil*, *Hulk* and *X-Men 2* films scheduled for release in 2003.

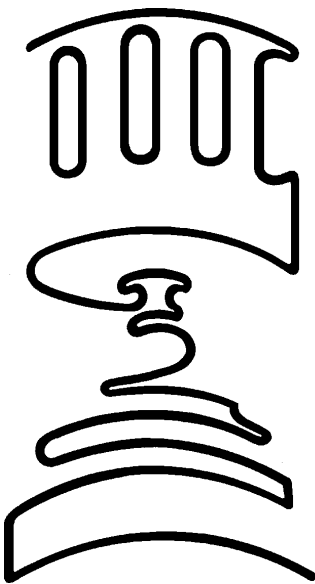
Eisner (almost) names his successor

In an interview in the December 9 issue of *Forbes* magazine, Disney chairman **MICHAEL EISNER** came close to confirming that his chosen successor is current president and COO Bob Iger. Eisner revealed that he has written a letter to the Disney board recommending a successor, and strongly implied that Iger was his choice.

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