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Above: The masthead of The Animator, the newsletter of the Screen Cartoonists Guild.



Above: the arithmetic of an animation career, 1941.

Sixty-five years ago ...

... in 1941, the employees of **WALT DISNEY STUDIOS** had had enough. And nothing in animation was ever the same again.

In 1937, after a rancorous walkout, the employees of New York-based Fleischer Studios, best known for Popeye and Betty Boop, had gained the first union contract with a U.S. animation studio. In the weeks leading up to the Disney strike, MGM, Columbia, Lantz and George Pal had signed with the Screen Cartoonists Guild. Leon Schlesinger Productions, soon to become Warner Bros. Cartoons, gave in to the Guild after what Chuck Jones later called “our little six-day war.”

Disney artists considered themselves the *crème de la crème* of the animation business, above petty squabbles about money. So, few had complained out loud when, after the smash success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1938, the promised bonuses never materialized. Disney features and shorts bore virtually no screen credits other than Walt’s, and there remained a popular public conception that he himself drew every frame. But hardly anyone said anything.

While a few top animators made as much as \$500 per week, their assistants made a small fraction of that amount. Inkers and painters, almost all of whom were women and including many talented artists who would never break the gender barrier into creative positions, were frozen at \$22 per week.

(see 1941 DISNEY STRIKE, page 4)

Motion capture: what’s it good for?

There was a good turnout on May 30 for the Animation Guild’s panel discussion about motion capture. TAG Executive Board member **NATHAN LOOFBOURROW** chaired a panel of motion capture veterans, and a lively discussion ensued.

JEFF LIGHT, a longtime mocap player at Industrial Light and Magic, recounted how ILM played with motion capture on the live-action film *Casper*, and how George Lucas wanted it developed for his new trilogy of *Star Wars* films, then in development. Light

related how the company looked at lots of different systems, finally settling on the Vicon system where performers could move around in a ten- by twenty-foot space. Vicon couldn’t do facial motion, but since motion capture was needed for battle droids and crowd scenes, facial wasn’t really necessary. What ILM required was actors who weren’t tethered to a system, since they had to do falls and other acrobatic moves, and wires would pull loose and force multiple “takes” before the moves were input into the computer. (It

(see MOCAP, page 6)



From the Business Representative

It's better than you think

A few weeks ago an old acquaintance and animation veteran walked into my office to bemoan the terrible work quality of animation land. Nobody could do a board anymore. Nobody knew what a solid work ethic was. The industry was going to hell in a rusty handcart.

I listened to his monologue, and wondered if he and I were inhabiting different planets. I've been going through studios for some years now, and from my perspective, the industry has seldom been stronger and more robust. Television work is booming. Nickelodeon has dozens of shorts in productions, several of which will grow into series. Cartoon Network thrives, Warners has slowly ramped up, Disney and Universal have series in work and direct-to-video features in development, and IDT Entertainment (also known as Film Roman) is bursting at the seams at its new facility on Hollywood Way in Burbank.

And features are thriving as never before. Remember that "Second Golden Age" of animation when *Aladdin* and *The Lion King* were burning up the box office? Every other conglomerate jumped into Disney's act with big start-up animation business of their own, and most fell on their faces. In point of fact, outside of the Mouse House, nobody made a killing, or even much of a flesh wound. *Quest for Camelot* came and went in the wink of an eye. Fox's big glossy studio in Phoenix produced *Anastasia* and *Titan A.E.* and then closed its doors.

But today, the feature animation resurgence is wide and deep. Within a couple of weeks, we'll have seen three animated features released in '06 (out of four) residing well north of \$100 million in box office grosses — *Ice Age 2*, *Over the Hedge*, and *Cars*. Unlike the mid-nineties, different companies are sharing in this boom. There's a plethora of product in the pipeline and more in development. The new management team at Disney — Ed Catmull and John Lasseter — are on record as wanting to do more hand-drawn features.

What this means for the employment picture over the next two or three years is pretty clear: more work, better salaries, and a more stable environment in which to earn a living. The Animation Guild's membership numbers are now edging toward where they were in 1996 — when they were at an all-time high. Animation directors and board artists who, eighteen months ago, were enduring long stretches

of unemployment and gnawing their nails to the quick worrying about making their next house payment, now work full time and labor at free-lance jobs nights and weekends. (And yes, there are artists still scrambling for work. The "boom" is not a boom if you're not participating in it.)

The cautionary note, now as ever, is that good times don't last forever. At some point, there will be another industry contraction, and the artists and technicians who have the largest skill set and the most extensive network of job contacts will be the ones who survive the downturn.

My advice to animation employees who now ride high is: don't be complacent; don't be obnoxious with co-workers; don't spend every dime of your paycheck on the latest hardware or hot wheels. For the most part, the people who are prospering now are the ones who planned for the last downturn when everyone was ecstatic — and free-spending — during the good years that occupied the middle nineties.

When the next dip eventually occurs (as it inevitably will), and the doomsayer who visited me is temporarily proved correct, be one of the artists who weathers it. That means saving, planning and training *now*, while almost everyone is flying high.

— Steve Hulett



Executive Board chooses architect

The Guild's Executive Board has chosen **JEFFREY M. KALBAN AND ASSOCIATES** of Los Angeles as the architectural firm to supervise the renovations of our new building at 1105 N. Hollywood Way in Burbank.

The Kalban firm came out first in a "charette" competition judged by the Board's building committee and confirmed by the entire Board. The Board was impressed with Kalban's holistic approach to building design. Samples of Kalban's charette are on the TAG Blog at animationguildblog.blogspot.com/2006/06/our-new-house.html, and their website is at jmka.net.

Renovations will begin after the current tenants move out at the end of July.



From the President

You want training? We've got training

We've long recognized that we can't force studios to hire our members, or to keep our jobs here. Our only option is to remain the top large-scale pool of animation talent in the world, which means we have to keep improving and training all the time. One of our goals at the Guild is to help you get that training at an affordable rate.

Pres Romamillos

For years we've focused a lot of our efforts on getting training grant money for classes that are relevant to our membership. Some of that money disappeared when the Bush administration cancelled the H-1B grant program, but the Contract Services Administration Trust Fund (online at <http://www.csatf.org>) money is still in play, and we've teamed up with Studio Arts to bring you classes that are relevant to getting and staying employed. Check out the list at right, then go to <http://www.studioarts.tv> or call (323) 227-8776 for more details. The CSATTF grant application is online at <http://www.animationguild.org/CSATTF2006App.pdf>.

Along with Eric Huelsman at Studio Arts, we're constantly on the lookout for what skills and software are most meaningful in the marketplace, and these classes are the result. Problem is, we know from experience that some of our classes won't fill up, and a fair amount of grant money goes unclaimed every year.

It's frustrating — we hear from members about how expensive training is, how difficult it is to train on one's own, and that many classes offered at community colleges and other places are simplistic or irrelevant. So we do our best to help coordinate the funding and curricula of a slate of classes, based on member input ... and then the grants go begging. We already know we'll likely be sponsoring fewer classes next year, but we don't want this avenue of training to dry up.

Flash for Film & TV TBA July (Please call)	Illustrator 1 July 12th - September 12th	Intro to Photoshop July 12th - September 12th
ZBrush July 12th - September 12th	Lighting 1 July 12th - September 12th	MEL Scripting July 12th - September 12th
Intro to Maya July 12th - September 12th	Photoshop (Film & TV) July 12th - September 14th	Modeling 1 July 12th - September 12th
Textures & Materials 2 July 12th - September 12th	Modeling 4 Blendshapes August 2nd - October 4th	Intro to Comp/VFX (After Effects 1) July 27th - September 28th

All the classes listed above start up again in July. If you qualify for CSATTF funding (i.e., you've worked thirty days at a union shop in the last two years), you'll be reimbursed two-thirds of the cost of the classes upon their completion. And if you are at a studio with an ETP agreement with Studio Arts, your training could be *completely free*.

On page 7 of this issue you will see articles about the free, standing-room-only Christophe Vacher seminar we held at our

(see *FROM THE PRESIDENT*, page 7)

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 phone (818) 766-7151 • fax (818) 506-4805 • info@animationguild.org • <http://www.animationguild.org>

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The Peg-Board is printed on recycled paper.

1941 DISNEY STRIKE

(continued from front page)



ART BABBITT (left), creator of Goofy and *Snow White's* Wicked Queen, was one of the most respected — and highly paid — animators at the studio. But Art rankled at the treatment of his fellow artists and workers. Earlier in 1941, after layoffs followed the box office failure of *Fantasia*, Babbitt joined the Guild, along with other studio stars such as animator **BILL TYTLA**, art directors **JOHN HUBLEY** and **ZACK SCHWARTZ**, and artists such as **WALT KELLY**

(“Pogo”), **BILL MELENDEZ** (the *Peanuts* specials), **STEVE BOSUSTOW** and **HANK KETCHAM** (“Dennis The Menace”). **FRANK TASHLIN**, who later turned to live-action and directed many Jerry Lewis and Bob Hope films, was a Disney story artist and Guild organizer.

In May, after refusing to recognize the Screen Cartoonists Guild, Disney fired Babbitt and had studio guards escort him off the lot. The artists were instantly radicalized. At a Guild meeting on May 28, the motion to strike was made by Art’s assistant **BILL HURTZ** (who later would direct UPA’s *Unicorn in the Garden* and Jay Ward’s *Rocky and Bullwinkle*).

As often happens with strikes, this one was fun at first. Guild supporters dressed in formal wear and sneaked past police to picket the opening of *The Reluctant Dragon*, which ironically featured a documentary about how happy life was at the studio.

Studio picketers carried signs reading **DISNEY UNFAIR!**; **ONE GENIUS VS. 600 GUINEA PIGS**; **LEONARDO, MICHELANGELO AND TITIAN WERE UNION MEN**; and a picture of Pluto with the title, **I’D RATHER BE A DOG THAN A SCAB!** They camped out in the vacant lot where ground would soon be broken for St. Joseph’s Hospital, and were fed by off-duty chefs from Toluca Lake restaurants.

Ironically, the strike might never have happened if Walt had been more honest with his employees about the state of the studio. In those days before newspaper business sections and Internet sites pored over studio profits, only a handful of insiders knew that Walt had ploughed almost all the *Snow White*

profits back into the studio, and had had to borrow heavily to produce *Fantasia* and to finance the move from Silver Lake to Burbank the previous year. The Guild had only succeeded in pulling out about half the crew; leaders later admitted the strike would likely have collapsed if strikers had known the company’s true financial condition. As it was, Federal mediators and the Bank of America forced Disney to the bargaining table after nine weeks, and on September 21 the company settled. Screen credits and a forty-hour workweek* were established, and many salaries were doubled.

Many of the striking artists never returned to the studio, and other Guild supporters who stayed eventually left. A group of what had been Walt’s best and brightest formed United Productions of America (UPA), later to create Gerald McBoing-Boing and Mr. Magoo. The country’s entry into the war in December sent many artists into the armed forces.

The NLRB ruled that Disney had to reinstate Art Babbitt. He and Walt spent years fighting all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in Babbitt’s favor. Having made his point, Babbitt soon after resigned and spent the rest of his career as a respected journeyman animator and teacher, passing away in 1992.

To the best of our knowledge, the only artist from the ’41 strike who’s still active and working is Bill Melendez. (There are, of course, a number of hearty retired survivors.) Among the artists who crossed the picket line in 1941 was background artist **RALPH HULETT**, whose son Steve now works as business rep for the Guild. Effects assistant **REG MASSIE** met inker **NANCY BEDELL** on the picket line; they married a year later, and their son Jeff is now the Guild’s recording secretary, Steve Hulett’s assistant, and the editor of this newsletter.

It’s important to remember what those Disney artists and technicians did for us all those decades ago. If not for them, salaries would be far lower, and health and pension benefits much more paltry. And few if any animation artists would enjoy the benefits and protections of working under an Animation Guild contract.

* Remember the forty-hour workweek?

*This article is based on research by TAG President Emeritus **TOM SITO**, whose book on the history of animation unions, *Drawing The Line*, will be published this fall by the University Press of Kentucky.*

401(k) Plan fees reduced

Good news! The TAG 401(k) Plan has reduced the costs of most of the Plan's mutual funds. Below are the old and new expense rates for funds (that is, the cost of the fund as a percentage of assets).

The funds listed below are those that will be reduced as of July 1; if a fund is not listed, its expense rates are staying the same. A "basis point" is 1/100th of a percent. So, the 103 basis points for the Destination Retirement 2040 fund, as shown below, equal 1.03% of assets.

<u>Investment Option</u>	<u>Now</u>	<u>Basis Points: effective 7/1/2006</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Premier Inflation Protected Bond	79	64	15
Total Return (PIMCO)	90	68	22
Destination Retirement Income	86	76	10
Destination Retirement 2010	93	83	10
Destination Retirement 2020	99	88	11
Destination Retirement 2030	108	98	10
Destination Retirement 2040	113	103	10
Select Diversified Val (Bernstein)	80	69	11
Premier Capital Appreciation (OFI)	97	82	15
Premier Small Cap Value (OFI)	105	90	15
Select Focused Value (Harris/C&B)	105	90	15
Select Mid Cap Growth II (TRP)	110	95	15
Main St. Small Cap (OFI)	119	69	50

So, now is a good time to sign up for the TAG 401(K) Plan. The enrollment deadline for the third quarter is July 1. Attend the enrollment meeting at your studio, or contact Marta Strohl-Rowand at marta@animationguild.org or (818) 766-7151 ext. 101. Contact Steve Hulett at (818) 766-7151 ext. 102 or shulett@animationguild.org or if you have any questions about plan costs.

In memoriam

Noted comic book artist and designer **ALEX TOTH** died May 27 at his drawing table at the age of seventy-seven. He had been in failing health.

Toth may be best remembered for his character designs for such Hanna-Barbera shows as *Superfriends*, *Space Ghost*, *Herculoids* and other heroic series of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the late 1940s he broke into comics drawing Green Lantern and Dr. Mid-Nite for DC. He soon became "the finest artist that comics ever had," as Gil Kane wrote in a 1977 essay.

Toth moved to Southern California and in 1964 did his first work for Hanna-Barbera, which made good use of his affinity for economical composition.

Toth was known for his harsh assessments of his own work and that of his peers. His mantra was composition and storytelling above extravagance. He frequently said: "I spent the

first half of my career learning what to put into my work, and the second half learning what to leave out."

At the artist's request, no memorial service is planned. The family has set up a mailbox for cards: P.O. Box 1556, Holland, MI 49422-1556.

We have learned of the death of assistant animator **KIMIE CALVERT** on December 23, 2005. From 1956 until 2003 she worked for Filmfair, Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Fred Calvert, Rich Animation, Baer Animation, Warner Bros., Amblimation, Hyperion and Calvert-Cobbler. She is survived by her husband, director and producer Fred Calvert.

1985 Golden Award winner **SUZI DALTON** died on April 10 at the age of ninety-five. From 1934 until her retirement in 1973, she worked as an inker, drybrush artist and final checker for Boyd LaVero, Mintz, Warners, Iwerks, MGM, Betty Brenon, Lantz, Snowball, Hanna-Barbera, Filmation, Celine Miles, Bakshi-Krantz and Cannawest.

MOCAP

(continued from front page)

was hard for a performer to do multiple falls and/or head bashes because the system didn't pick them up the first ... or even third time.)

MARIETTE MARINUS worked on an animated CGI television show in South Africa that was on both a tight budget and tight schedule. She detailed how motion capture was both a time and money saver. The show needed to produce a half-hour of animation per week and had only a few days to do the mocap, then a day or two for editorial, and then the production went on the air. While the quality wasn't at a theatrical level, motion capture did permit them to turn over a lot of animation quickly.

TROY SALIBA, the animation director of Sony/Columbia's upcoming *Monster House*, told how the motion capture they used was deployed differently than it was on mocap pictures like *Final Fantasy* or *Polar Express*. Because the characters in *Monster House* were much more stylized, the creators on the show had more flexibility with the animation. The rigs were designed from the ground up to support full animation — full controls were available, and the motion capture data could be dialed on or off at any time. Troy said that motion capture on the characters' bodies got them 70% of the way there, but that doing faces was much more difficult (with mocap providing maybe 30% of the final animation). Troy related: "My background is feature animation, not mocap. When I came aboard, the director of the film said 'This is an animated movie with mocap side by side.'"

Troy said that the kick-off for the shots was the mocap, but that it was basically used as reference in lots of instances. *Polar Express* used a complex facial system, but on *Monster House*, performances were caricatured. "We could amp up a pose if we needed to, and hand-key the facial moves." Mariette said that on the South African television show, they did facial tweaks after the motion capture was done, but time and budget were always a constraint.

According to Jeff, knowing what the motion capture technology will do is a big advantage. He related how he directed motion capture performances on episodes I and II of *Star Wars*, and having the ability to say "action" and "cut," along with knowing what would register well in the system was a huge benefit.

The question came up about "performance" in a mocap feature. Is a given actor's performance in motion capture going to be rigidly adhered to, or is it going to simply serve as a reference for the

animators? Is everything that an actor does pure "gold," or do animators and technicians have the leeway to alter it? The answer: it depends on the director, and the style of the show. Everyone agreed that mocap animation, even when "massaged," tends to have a different feel to it.

Troy asserted that mocap isn't a magic button, a guaranteed way to automatically get a performance. He compared it to live-action reference in traditional animation. Troy didn't have a big problem with motion capture creatively, but he had some issues with how studios sold the perceived benefits of mocap to clients.

Jeff remembered how, at ILM, they had an actor come in to deliver lines. He was hooked up to a motion capture system and gave a performance. Afterwards, an animator, using the performance as a reference, animated the same scene from scratch. And the animator's version was better, but Jeff thought that he couldn't have achieved his result (and certainly not that specific performance) if he hadn't had the original reference and motion capture to analyze. As several panelists pointed out, the strength of mocap is in capturing subtle movements that give a certain texture to the animation, and sometimes those movements are so subtle that they go unnoticed until digitally captured.

Mariette related that in television, mocap can be a way to get footage out quickly and cheaply, but it doesn't look anywhere close to the quality of a feature film. Troy maintained that *Monster House* and other animated features weren't made cheaper or quicker because of motion capture. "You have a hundred to a hundred fifty people on a stage, and actors and technicians being paid for their work, then you have animators working on the footage further down the pipeline. At the end, it's just as expensive and time consuming as non-mocap animation."

*For our next panel on July 25, Executive Board member Cathy Jones will discuss **VISUAL DEVELOPMENT** with leading artists in the field.*

Almost twelve hundred active and inactive Guild members get up-to-the-minute hiring leads and other useful information by subscribing to the Guild's free e-mail list. Just send a message from your home e-mail address to jeffm@animationguild.org with your name in the body of the message.

UCLA Extension class:

Writing for TV animation

In animation anything can happen — but doesn't until a writer writes it. From talking trucks to angst-ridden superheroes, animated television stories embrace a vast field with no limits on sets, costumes, and special effects, and like all good film writing (live or animated), they are told visually and require a solid knowledge of such craft elements as story structure, character, and dialogue.

This course guides you through the entire animated TV script writing process, including how to find the “voice and style” of a particular show, pitch stories, create solid outlines, write the first draft, deal with notes and changes, and finally, write and polish an 11-minute animation script. In addition, guest speakers discuss the business side of animation: how to break in, what agents do and don't do, the process of getting your script to the screen, and how to have a satisfying career in a field where your imagination is free.

Taught by **BROOKS WACHTEL**, Emmy Award-winning television and feature film writer; member, WGAW and TAG, whose extensive credits include over 100 episodes of such animated series as *Spiderman*, *ToddWorld*, *Liberty's Kids*, *X-Men*, and *Heavy Gear*, the Discovery Kid's series' *Tutenstein*, and the pre-school hit *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. Mr. Wachtel just completed a two-part CGI action/adventure feature, *Twin Princes*. His website is at <http://www.brookswachtel.com>.

The class will be held Tuesdays from 7 to 10 pm, July 11 to September 5, at 1329 Public Policy Building on the UCLA campus. It is class X 430.5 (Film & Television) — 3 units and the cost is \$375. Enrollment is limited to 20 students and is now open. Contact: Brandon Gannon at UCLA Extension, (310) 825-9415 or (310) 206-1542.

At the water cooler



On May 28, **BRANDON STRATHMANN** and his wife Carlene welcomed their son Hayden, weighing in at seven pounds, fifteen ounces and measuring twenty inches ...

Dial Press has published **ROGER ESCHBACHER's** new book, *Road Trip*, for children ages four to eight. Find out more at <http://www.sillyroger.com>.

New TAG Lab Evening Hours!

Photoshop, Flash, Maya and more!
(Plus certain software help available)

Mon. 4-9 pm
Tue. 4-7 pm
Wed. 4-9 pm
Thur. 4-9 pm



Sat. 12-5 pm
(Further schedule
tweaks will be
considered at your
request)

Open late to serve you!

Please e-mail us at lab@animationguild.org
or call (818) 766-7151

Vacher demo at TAG Lab

About the way I work with Photoshop, you can say I work for both movies and book covers, and that I use Photoshop from a designer and painter's point of view using all the photographic tricks the program has to offer as well.
— Christophe Vacher

On June 5 we managed to gently squeeze sixteen people into the TAG Lab for Christophe Vacher's demonstration of Adobe Photoshop techniques. The AC was turned up just right, and everyone stayed cool.

Christophe was able to demonstrate how he worked from photo-references and sketches to create finished pieces of beautiful art for book covers and matte paintings. Using his background as a traditional painter, Christophe makes the most of the layers palette in Photoshop to create the effect of washes, and to use elements from photographs to give the feeling of an atmospheric perspective.

His devotion to his craft, and his generosity with his time and know-how, gave us some insights into a sometimes-unsympathetic technology.

— Ken Roskos, TAG Lab Administrator

FROM THE PRESIDENT

(continued from page 3)

computer lab, as well as Brooks Wachtel's UCLA Extension class in animation writing. The opportunities are there, waiting for you to take advantage of them.

So think about adding another arrow to your quiver of skills. Because when it comes to these opportunities, it's a case of “use it or lose it”.

— Kevin Koch

THE ANIMATION GUILD LOCAL 839 IATSE
4729 LANKERSHIM BOULEVARD
NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91602-1864

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We'd like to draw you in!

You are invited to join the recently merged Musicians' Interguild Credit Union. We've combined the best of our respective foundations and now offer even more products and services that will serve all your financial needs.

- Savings, Checking, Certificate & IRA Accounts
- Auto, Unsecured, RV's, First Mortgage & Home Equity Loans
- MasterCard[®]/Gold Mastercard[®] / Visa[®]
- Online Banking & 24 Hour Phone Teller Service
- ATMs and Debt Cards

For more information please call 323.462.6447 or visit us at www.musicianscu.org


MUSICIANS' INTERGUILD
Credit Union
Now Serving the Hollywood Community

 

If you aren't currently employed with a union shop, we strongly urge you to take an honorable withdrawal, which will save you from having to pay any dues until you get another union job.

To take an honorable withdrawal, you must be in good standing — that is, fully paid up — as of the current quarter (that is, through June 30). If you're in good standing, you have until July 10 to take an honorable withdrawal without having to pay the third quarter 2006 dues. Requests for honorable withdrawal must be in writing, dated and signed.

Members on honorable withdrawal are still entitled to most membership benefits. They have "voice but no vote" at membership meetings, and they may not run for union office or vote in union elections.

For further questions, contact Lyn Mantta at the union office at (818) 766-7151 or lyn@mpsc839.org.

Upcoming contract holidays:
*Independence Day (Tuesday, July 4)
Labor Day (Monday, September 4)*